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Peter Paul Rubens

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Peter Paul Rubens is one of the most renowned artists in the seventeenth century or the Baroque period. He is the most successful Flemish painter of northern Europe. He combines the Flemish art style and the Italian Renaissance art together. With his talent to create different styles of painting and sculpture, he is known as one of the best painter in Western art history. His early artworks affected by the religious persecution during his youth. In addition to his career as a painter, he is also a great diplomat because he was a negotiator for the hostilities between Spain and England in 1630. Most of his inspirations for creating his artworks are religious, mythology, feminism, diplomatic and peace; all were the events that occurred in his lifetime. Peter Paul Rubens influenced the world's art history through his Counter-Reformation altarpieces, excellent artworks, creativity and perspective, thus he became an inspiration to many artists such as Vincent Van Gogh , Jean-Antoine Watteau and Jacques-Louis David.

Peter Paul Rubens was born at Siegen, Westphalia in Germany. Rubens confronted the religious conflict since he was young because his parents were Calvinists. Ten years later, they moved back to Antwerp. Rubens was well educated and raised to be Catholic. From his dedication to Catholic, religious directly influenced to Rubens' artistic career. He also adapted the Renaissance art's format to be into his own style. At that time, his artworks were in the traditional style and also

showed the social respond. These made his paintings different from the artworks of other Dutch painters whose works were influenced by Protestant.¹ Thus, he became one of the leaders of the Catholic Counter-Reformation style of paintings.² Rubens traveled to Italy and Spain, the center of European art, to gain more knowledge about techniques of Renaissance and classical art. It can be said that most of his early artworks were influenced by his dedication to the Catholic and by his education in Italy and Spain.

Rubens got the high reputation from the visit in Spain because he was the important person in the development of Baroque art in Spain, he created the Altarpiece in the Santa Croce di Gerusalemme Church in Rome which is the first artwork that was recognized and honored as the Masterpieces.³ Moreover, he painted the Altarpiece in Antwerp---“The Descent from the Cross”. It was painted for the Guild of Arquebusiers, a military club.⁴ This is the result of what he learnt from many artists in Italy and this altarpiece is completely in the Baroque style.

It was Rubens’ great altarpiece which established his reputation in Northern Europe and Vincent Van Gogh was one of the great artists who were influenced by Rubens’ artwork, “The Descent from the Cross”.⁵ Both of vivid colors and combination of contemporary styles were inspired Van Gogh. In addition, when Rubens was in Italy, he was deeply drawn to Titian’s works. By his adaptation from

¹ Website Contributors. “Peter Paul Rubens”. New Advent. 9 Sep 2012.
<<http://newadvent.org/cathen/13214c.htm>>

² Website Contributors. “Peter Paul Rubens”. 9 Sep 2012.
<<http://www.peterpaulrubens.org/biography.html>>

³ Website Contributors. “Rubens Painting and Biography”. Toperfect Design. 9 Sep 2012.
<<http://www.oilpaintingfactory.com/Peter-Paul-Rubens.html>>

⁴Jenifer Fletcher. Peter Paul Rubens with fifty plates in full colour. 1968. P.83

⁵ Website Contributors. “Vincent Van Gogh the Letters”. Van Gogh museum. 11 Sep 2012.
<<http://vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let552/letter.html>>

Titians, thus he got obviously unique depiction of the women style, this would represent as the “Rubenesque” style.⁶

“The Judgment of Paris” is the painting about the mythology that Rubens created in the period that the Rubenesque is fully developed. This painting illustrates a scene from the same-titled Greek myth---it is a great expression in emotional. People in this painting are divided into two groups; one group is Paris and Hermes and another group is three goddesses---Athena, Hera and Aphrodite---who fought over a golden apple which is belong to the most beautiful among them. No one wanted to take a task of choosing between these three goddesses. Then, Zeus sent this duty to Paris, son of Priam, king of Troy. Paris decided to choose Aphrodite, who had promised him the most beautiful mortal woman, Helen, the wife of Menelaus. Aeschylus, the Greek playwright called Helen as a destroyer of ships, destroyer of men, and destroyer of cities. The result of Paris' decision was the Trojan War.⁷ From the Judgment of Paris painting, the most important thing is the shape of people specifically the three goddesses, which Rubens used his unique art style, “Rubenesque” to create his artwork. He also added the power of movement to make his painting seem to be alive, by using red, yellow and orange colors. It also shows Rubens’ individual ability to bring the Greek Mythology to the artistic form. Rubens’ artwork is not only beautiful but also has the value in itself. “The Judgment of Paris” is one of the most famous paintings of Rubens in the Baroque period. This painting influenced Jean-Antoine Watteau who painted The Judgment of Paris in Rococo style

⁶ Website Contributors. “Rubenesque”. Pixelmancer. 11 Sep 2012.
<<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=rubenesque>>

⁷ Wikipedia Contributors “The Judgment of Paris” Wikipedia. 11 Sep 2012.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judgement_of_Paris>

in the 18th century and Jacques-Louis David who painted The Love of Paris and Helen in the neoclassical style.⁸

Apart from his artistic career, he was also take his responsibility to be the diplomat, Rubens traveled to the Courts of Spain and England. His missions were rewarded with two knighthoods; the first was in 1624 by Philip IV of Spain and second was in 1630 by Charles I of England. He completed many commissions for Philip of Spain. In 1629 Rubens was a negotiator for the hostilities between Spain and England in London. He painted “the Horror of War” and presented this artwork to Charles I. This made Charles I was really impressed by the beauty of Rubens’ Flemish painting. “The Horror of War” shows that Rubens’ artwork was not only gorgeous but also useful because it can be used as a negotiation tool.⁹

Rubens is a brilliant unique painter; with his talent to create many important works both in artistic and diplomatic career that sometimes might know as the diplomatic artist. All Rubens artworks reflected his hard working. With his uniqueness, creativity, imagination, intelligence and skillfulness, Rubens’s style was awe-inspiring, thus many artists in the past and nowadays are still influenced by him. He truly dedicated to make the enhancement to the art and gave the valuable art to this world. Rubens is the great artist who brought the great art history to mankind.

⁸Website Contributors. “Ancient Greek and Roman Myths” Olga’s Gallery. 13 Sep 2012. <<http://www.abcgallery.com/mythology/paris.html>>

⁹ Jenifer Fletcher. Peter Paul Rubens with fifty plates in full colour. 1968. P.15