

MADA: Art History and Theory essay

In this essay, the Rococo and Romanticism periods have been selected to demonstrate how two art periods can have many similarities yet still hold true to their own belief, values and principles to create a definitive style. Antoine Watteau's painting, L'Indifferent, 1716, oil on canvas, 25cm x 18cm and Eugene Delacroix's Paganini, 1831, oil on cardboard on wood panel, approx. 43cm x 28cm have been selected to represent the Rococo and Romanticism periods respectively.

Rococo was a style of art that followed on from the Baroque period in the early 18th century. The artists of this style typically depicted themes of "love, artfully and archly pursued through erotic frivolity and playful intrigue".¹ Both the art and interior design of the time displayed a sense of rhythm in which "[e]verything seemed organic, growing, and in motion, an ultimate refinement of illusion".² The artists of this period were also starting to express themselves and their feelings about their themes in their work. Some of the works seem to be edging toward the ideals of the Romanticism period, even though they were at opposite ends of the 18th century.

Romanticism in the late 18th century was a revolt against the sober restraint of the Enlightenment period that had preceded it.³ This was a period encompassing the "desire for freedom - not only political freedom but also freedom of thought, of feeling, of action, of worship, of speech and of taste".⁴ Artists wanted only to produce pure, truthful art that was "based on the predominance of feeling and imagination."⁵ Works in the Romantic period depict not only the Romantic ideal of love but also 'Gothic' horror, as this too could be explored to discover the 'sublime'.

The correct terminology is 'the Romantic period'. Use this phrase throughout.



This opening sentence clearly sets out what the essay is about. It shows that the writer's argument is that these two periods are similar but distinct.



The writer could perhaps have given some indication here of how the essay will unfold by making some reference to its structure as well as its content.



Notice how this quotation has been skillfully integrated into the writer's own sentence.



This paragraph provides a succinct definition of the period and its key features.



The writer is relying heavily on this one reference. Using a range of references broadens your discussion. Some of these quotations could be paraphrased instead.



This sentence should be referenced to show where the writer encountered this idea of the 'Gothic' and the 'sublime'.



Legend

 Good practice

 Needs improvement

 Comment

The works discussed in this essay share obvious similarities. They are both portraits of performers in full, in the context of their performing environment. In Watteau's *L'Indifferent*, there is a sense of the subject posing for the portrait in a very festive manner which is characteristic of the Rococo period. By contrast, in Delacroix's *Paganini* the performer seems to carry himself with a much more intrinsic purpose, perhaps enacting a more truthful value that is typical of the Romantic ideal. There is, nevertheless, a similarity in the two poses that suggests motion, as both performers seem to be caught in mid movement. This dynamic quality was not typical of the other art movements prior to or during the 18th century, where portraits tended to depict people in staid, sober poses.

Watteau's painting of the dancer seems soft and flouncy, yet it is obvious that it is a well thought out work. The writer's choice of language have indicated the conditional nature of the observations. The colours are used to compliment and support the painting's composition, with the hue of the foliage seemingly reflected in the velvet of the dancer's clothes. The colour used in the cape has also been added to the accessories on the shoe and hat. Both of these examples of the use of colour show how the clever composition of the painting successfully draws the viewer's eye around it. When expressing the difference between the Baroque and Rococo periods, one art critic noted that "[Rococo] aimed no longer at astounding the spectator with the marvellous, but rather at amusing him with the ingenious."⁶ This statement demonstrates that the attention to compositional detail is both a necessary element of the Rococo period and also of this work by Watteau.

Delacroix's painting *Paganini* also displays a strong attention to colour. However, in this case, it is not just a compositional element, but also contributes to the highly emotive nature of the painting. The colours could be seen to suggest the way the artist felt about the scene before

This statement, too, should be referenced.



The texture of the painting is evoked in this well written sentence which shows the writer's good observation of detail.



The use of grammar here is incorrect. The noun and verb should be in agreement, so that the text reads 'The writer's choice of language has ...'.



This word is incorrect here. It should be 'complement', not 'compliment'.



Notice how the writer has cleverly synthesised her own observations with the comments of the art critic, moving from the specifics of this one painting to a more general statement about the period.



This phrase links nicely with the discussion about colour in the previous paragraph.



Following on from observing a similarity between the two paintings, this transitional signal shows that the writer is now contrasting use of colour in each and highlighting the differences.



him. This portrayal of the dancer's performance, using the poignant yet subtle blends of dark earthy background colours which contrast with the smooth deep black tones in the figure, enhances the feeling of balance and melody. This combination of art, music, theatre and dance was of high interest to the Romantic artists as it was a great source of the 'true' or 'pure' emotion which they sought to represent.

The observations of visual analysis are eloquently used here to support the writer's argument. ✓

Again, a reference would be useful here. 💡

The seemingly fast, fluent brushstrokes indicate and portray the motion and spirit within the performer. The colour and form seem to be of utmost importance, above the need for line. Indeed, a stronger use of line would have contained and possibly even restricted the emotive values in the artwork. This style did not go unnoticed by critics. Both Delacroix and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres were referred to as Rubenistes and Poussinistes respectively, due to their use of the 'academic' style of line or the 'romantic' truth of colour as the main element in their works, although both are now recognised as Romantic artists.⁷

This is an insightful observation that is well supported with reference to the painting. ✓

This statement indicates the way in which the elements such as line and colour can be used to convey meaning. ✓

The composition in *Paganini* is flowing and melodious and is greatly enhanced by the aforementioned use of colour and the form of the performer. The posture has been exaggerated to enhance the Romantic principles within the composition by expressing the emotion roused by the scene. Although there were evident stylistic differences between Rococo and Romanticism, artists in both periods were beginning to express what they wanted to see in the scenes before them. Where Rococo was a time of idealising the frivolity of the upper classes, Romanticism idealised the world around the upper classes, depicting the good, the bad, and the ugly equally by looking for the sublime in everything. Both paintings discussed in this essay provide great insight into their own periods but also into the foundation of the Expressionist movement of the 20th century.

The use of this word, which would normally be associated with music, lends a poetic element to the description. ✓

Has the writer clearly discussed these? 💡

This seems a strange statement to conclude with. It is not a good idea to introduce new information or ideas into your conclusion. ✎

1F. Kleiner, C. Mamiya and R. Tansey, *Gardener's art through the ages*, 11th ed., (Orlando: Harcourt College Publishers, 2001), p. 785.

2F. Kleiner, C. Mamiya and R. Tansey, *Gardener's art through the ages*, p. 783.

3'Romanticism', Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanticism> , accessed 7.8.06.

4F. Kleiner, C. Mamiya and R. Tansey, *Gardener's art through the ages*, p. 863.

5F. Kleiner, C. Mamiya and R. Tansey, *Gardener's art through the ages*, p. 863.

6V. Minor, *Baroque and Rococo: Art and culture*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999), p 14.

7F. Kleiner, C. Mamiya and R. Tansey, *Gardener's art through the ages*, p. 870.

Bibliography

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Peckham, M. *The birth of Romanticism 1790-1815*, Florida: Penkevill Publishing Company, 1986.

'Rococo', Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia , <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rococo> accessed 7.8.2006.

'Romanticism', Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanticism>, accessed 7.8.2006.

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Is this an academic source? No. It would have been better to cite from an art dictionary.

Note that this bibliography contains all sources the writer consulted, even those which are not referred to in the text. They are appropriately documented and ordered alphabetically.

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