Name

Professor name

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Sfumato in Mona Lisa

Sfumato technique was used by the painter Leonardo Da Vinci in creation of his unique artwork Mona Lisa. The artwork is one of the widely appreciated work of Leonardo across the world. The painting is also known by ‘La Gioconda’ that is the portrait of the wife of del Giocondo, named as Lisa. Leonardo used Sfumato techniques that relied on the idea of using smoke on the picture planes rather than borders or lines used by traditional painters. The new technique allowed the artist to develop a unique and versatile artwork that has persuaded audience in every age. The intriguing mystery of Mona Lisa fascinated people since its creation in the renaissance period. It has a Thesis statement: Sfumato technique and multiple hues are central elements that resulted in the creation of unique masterpiece.

The purpose of artwork was to display women in enigmatic manner that portrayed her elegance, beauty and happiness. Visari provide the interpretation of the painting in the sixteenth century who stated that the image was of the wife of skilled merchant, del Giocondo. The central purpose of Leonardo was to give a new direction to oil painting by introducing the technique of Sfumato. The face and chest of the image are towards the audience derived from the pyramid image. The artist used his skills for displaying the woman at protective position which is used for building distance between the sitter and the spectator. The use of Sfumato helped in designing smooth and imperceptible patterns that adds to the astonishment of the viewers. The artist has softly contoured the face of Lisa by adding emotions to the eyes and mouth (Cincinnati 2019). Visual interpretation of artwork depends on critical analysis and careful observation of the facts. Effective assessment of art enhances the analytical skills of people and also improves the critical reasoning. Analysis of the visual attributes such as color, texture and the figures leads to better visual analysis.

Leonardo created Mona Lisa in 1503 during his stay at Florence. During the period the painters were using old traditional methods which encouraged Leonardo to introduce new methods for creation of his amazing artwork. During the sixteenth century it was believed that Leonardo created more images of Mona Lisa. By the sixteenth century artists were using only lines and borders until Mona Lisa was presented (Horstmann and Loth 2019). During this period radical changes were made to oil painting because artists experimented new ways. The unique style of Leonardo gained popularity because his ide expressed freedom and liberty. The transition was appreciated by the people and artists (Brown 2017).

The most intriguing element behind the popularity of Mona Lisa is the mysterious smile. “According to some influential theories of emotion neuropsychology, we here interpreted the Mona Lisa asymmetric smile as a none genuine smile, also thought to occur when the subject lies” (Cincinnati 2019). The examination of the painting by the neuropsychologists reveals that the smile of the woman is fake. The artists has used power of layering instead of traditional lines for designing the woman. Leonardo has added transparent layers to the oil paint with his fingers. This tool many months for creating a realistic image which grabbed the attention of spectators. The analysis depicts that at least 20 to 40 layers are used in the creation of this artwork. This technique has allowed the creator to duplicate translucency of the skin and giving a real texture. This helped in showcasing lifelike presence in the room (Horstmann and Loth 2019). Sfumato allowed the artists to use two paradoxical thoughts for creating three-dimensional form.

When people focus only on smile of the women, they miss the rest that carries the actual meaning. All pieces of art carry a hidden message for the audience that they need to uncover. Two people see the same object but move away with different perceptions of that object (Horstmann and Loth 2019). The audience can reveal the real meaning only when they relate the smile with her entire gesture. Visual intelligence enhances people’s observation skills. The accurate analysis depends not only on observing things bit also solving the problems that each object presents.

The most amazing fact behind the popularity of this artwork is the mystery of Mona Lisa. The assumption made on the image is that the face is superimposable to the princess of Forli. It is also stated that the painting is a divine representation.

Leonardo gained popularity due to his new style of adding smoke to the artwork. By using hand made pigments he managed to add realism to the images. Use of Sfumato is recognized for his ability of adding moods and emotions. He used the themes of black and gray for giving a realistic touch to the artwork. He use his hands instead of brushes for giving a natural touch. This technique was only introduced after renaissance when painters were introducing new methods (Carelli 2014).

The tone decides the colors that best suit the artwork. Tone defines the lightness and the darkness of the sculpture. The creator used tone. The dark tone uses a blend of black and grey colors. The tone is selected so that it can capture the perfected expressions and the gesture of woman. Painting exhibits variations in the tone as the face appear in a lighter tone compared to the dress. Colors add more visibility and impression to the painting. The colors used in the creation of Mona Lisa are grey and black. Color captures the antiquity and the historical nature of the elegant women. Dull colors are apparent reflecting the claim of serenity and honor. Artwork does not make use of dark and striking colors. The color scheme is monochromatic while intensity and saturation appear at specific points enhancing the visibility. Explicit use of colors is avoided making artwork more appreciable (Schwartz 1988). Symmetrical balance that reflects the distribution of perceived visual weights. Symmetrical balance is visible on both sides of the sculpture represent similarity. The right side completes the left. Portrait maintains balance by using pure colors and theme (Horstmann and Loth 2019). Emphasis illustrates the area of the painting where the audience concentrates. The artwork emphasizes the silence and the dignity reflecting the qualities of piety and purity. “While the Mona Lisa smile continues to attract attention of its observers, the true message it conveys remains elusive and many unsolved mysteries remain to be elucidated, perhaps via the knowledge of emotion neuropsychology” (Cincinnati 2019). Reading the smile of the woman is not simple. This require connecting the postures with the facial expressions. Emphasizing on the central theme eliminates the unnecessary details. The smile created by dark against light presents a perfect focal point persuading the audience to concentrate on the expressions of Mona Lisa and her posters conveying the message of happiness and dignity.

The painting of Mona Lisa has significant relevance with the renaissance period when many artists used their skills for expressing freedom. His focus was on recreating oil paint by changing artistic techniques. Smoke is used instead of curved lines to exhibit the comfort of Mona Lisa displaying her free from worries and sins. Vertical lines are missing that don’t suggest any specific height of image making it a tall and physically attractive character. The artwork lacks any jagged lines because Mona Lisa displays no emotions of worries or anxiety. Thick lines appear as an expression of strength and power Mona Lisa. The shape used in the construction of the image is irregular and natural. The creator adopted the shape that best portrays the human physique. The shape is not flat but a solid 3- dimensional that displays the Mona Lisa as an original figure (Schwartz 1988). The striking feature of three-dimensional figures is the creation of interaction with between the audience and the portrait. Grayness expresses the physical volume or shape of the woman. Form used in the creation of Mona Lisa is representational, not abstract because it is a complete figure. The inclusion of three-dimensional form shows the figure from all angles. It is a wholly built from oil paint, smoke and pigments. sfumato adds a more refined and perfected essence to the artwork. Use of adequate brrightness has added more weight. This technique adds more visibility that exhibit emotions of happiness and serenity.

The artwork received different reactions as for many it was a source of amazament while others criticized it. The reactions of the audience in the sixteenth century were of amazement. The artists learned the new technique of creating oil paint. It was believed that `leonardo had refined the art and painting. The artists and interpretors evaluated the artwork by identifying newness (Ose 2008). The smile and facial expressions of Mona Lisa remains the most discussed features. The smile has always attracted the spectators and encourgae them to search the meaning. Elements of art include visual tools used by the artist to showcase a unique creation. Visual elements of art include smoke, grayness, color texture, pattern, and form. The line is apparent as it suggests the direction of the painting. The facial expressions carry the same mysticism as apparent in the smile. The artist uses practical elements of art that makes it a versatile and unique creation. The creator displays artistic skills helping him to portray the postures in an impressing manner. “Considering it is unlikely that a person who sits motionless for hours to be painted is able to constantly smile in genuine happiness, the simplest explanation is that the Mona Lisa asymmetric smile is the manifestation of an 'untrue enjoyment' in spite of all the efforts that Leonardo's jesters used to make in order to keep his models merry” (Cincinnati 2019). This reflects that the smile plays major role in the mystery of Mona Lisa. The smile of the image is interpreted in different ways. Some associate it with happiness while others claim that it exhibits sarcasm (Horstmann and Loth 2019). Interpreting the smile of Mona Lisa is still a mystery.

The analysis of the critics also state that the smile reveals non-felt emotions of Mona Lisa. The purpose of creating this portrait was to transmit the hidden message that was by creating a fake smile. This portrait is also considered as an image of a dead man or woman which means humans without emotions. The overall analysis of the painting depicts that although true message remains hidden but the techniques employed by Leonardo resulted in its success. Colors, smoke and greyness are central elements of the Sfumato technique that resulted in the creation of amazing artwork.

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