

What makes Representational Painting a work of art?

By: Carlos Borsa

Article published on July 14th of 2020, at:

<https://arteref.com/artigos-academicos/pintura-realista-obra-de-arte/>

Art, when it has a high level of quality, brings within it a self-affirmation. This statement goes beyond a certain style of art, here the statement is plural and dialogues with an inner human meaning, where art refines and educates not only the individual, but also society.

For Representational Painting to assert itself, there is a need for the artist to develop a high level of technical and conceptual excellence. In this type of painting it is necessary to develop a sense of order and property where the concept is structured through a coherent technique.

Representational painting seeks more than simple visual aesthetics, here the technique of painting when it builds the concept also builds the meaning, technique and concept are not separated in the same way that the mind and body are not separated either.

Here we can list three concepts inherent in representational painting and use them as examples:

1- Information hierarchy.



MARAT VEILED, Oil on Canvas, 110x 80 X 3cm, 2019, Carlos Borsa,

Private Collection - São Paulo, Brazil

In the work above is established an information hierarchy, an ordination, the main point is focused on the main character at the center of the composition, where brush strokes more defined in representational style are presented, while around the main character there are strokes blurry and unfocused with style expressionist.

In this work, the different types of brush strokes were chosen, giving more emphasis to the representational style as opposed to the expressionist style.

In addition, in Representational Painting in general, it is also possible to establish hierarchy through different types of visual elements, such as tonal values, textures or colors, everything depends on the intention of which the artist proposes to determine in his artistic statement.

2 - Construction of Pictorial space.

Through the optical illusion the concept of space develops, here space becomes a concept based on the ordering that organizes visual information, thus establishing a visual rhythm from successive pictorial plans that overlap with each other within the composition of the artwork.

The concept of space is established through the use of perspective technique, here the technique can follow several different types of executions, which allows the artist to achieve varied visual results in his art.

However, in Representational Painting, the correct structuring of the pictorial space must follow the teachings of the Renaissance masters in order to achieve the Excellence of the technique.

I quote here the teachings of two masters of painting: Piero Della Francesca (1415 - 1492), and Leonardo Da Vinci (1452 - 1519). Through these two distinct artists it is possible to observe the different approaches in relation to the use of perspective, the first artist uses an approach based on mathematical projection and the second based on the observation of nature.



**Piero della Francesca, The Flagellation, 1460, Oil and Tempera on panel, 58.4x81.5cm,
Galleria Nazionale delle Marche - Urbino, Italy**

In the perspective constructed by Piero Della Francesca there is an ordering that converges to a central vanishing point, the composition of the plans uses converging lines that guide the viewer's gaze in a movement from right to left, creating a visual narrative that conceptualizes an intention to portray a logical and rational thought within the work.

Here the tonal values have no protagonism and little or nothing differs through the different visual planes, the protagonism here occurs in the convergence of the lines that build the pictorial space of the work.



Leonardo Da Vinci, La Gioconda, 1503-5, Oil on Panel, 77 x 53 cm

Musée du Louvre, Paris

The Atmospheric Perspective, used by Master Leonardo Da Vinci in this work, creates the illusion of a visual space, where the viewer feels gradually removed from the landscape in the background and closer to the figure of the Gioconda in the foreground. This illusion is possible thanks to the visual information that is gradually abstracted, and that merge with the background of the image as the viewer's gaze travels through the composition of the work.

The construction of the different pictorial planes and the feeling of volume are consolidated in the work through the technique of *velatura**, thanks to this technique that it is possible to establish the light and dark tonal values.

In the work, the pictorial space built from an atmospheric perspective demonstrates the artist's intention to conceptualize a thought, portraying the natural reality of the landscape and relate it to the human figure.

**Velatura*: a thin layer of paint somewhat like a glaze but opaque or semi - opaque rather than transparent.

3 – Movement

The concept of movement in Representational Painting is structured through the planning of the composition of the works, these compositions can be projected from vertical, horizontal, diagonal or spiral lines, and with this a model is generated.

The insertion of visual components within this model is what generates the sensation of movement in the work of art, for the artist the movement determined through an intention ends up by itself being an affirmation in his work.

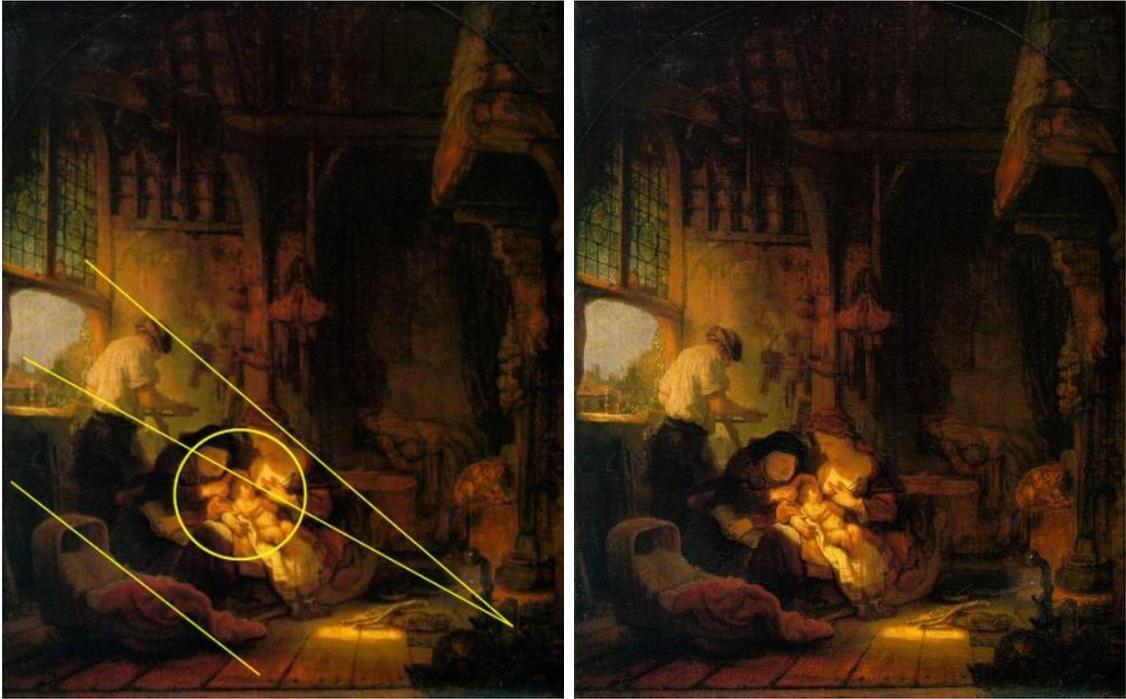
With the perception of a mental model based on a spatial reading, there is a correspondence with affective situations, this generates in the viewer a complex of feelings of security or insecurity, feeling supported and cozy or fearing being abandoned, feelings of pleasure and joy or distress and fear . Here, affective situations are identified, and thanks to this identification, spatial forms become symbolic forms.



Raffaello Sanzio, Madonna Ansidei, 1505, Oil on wood, 209.6 x 148.6 cm

National Gallery, London.

In the work of the Master Raffaello Sanzio it is possible to observe that the composition was designed by the artist using horizontal and vertical lines, the movement of the composition brings a narrative that expresses a vision based on the rational order, a view based on the principles of the Renaissance era which the artist produced his work.



Holy Family with Santa Anna, 1640, Oil on wood, 41 x 34 cm

Musée du Louvre, Paris

In the work above, Rembrandt brings in his composition a diagonal movement from top to bottom, from left to right, and the representation of the light painted by the artist reinforces the projection of a diagonal line in the composition.

The human figure here is not centralized, the environment gains importance in representation and occupies a greater role in the composition. All these characteristics, when added and observed within the work, conceptualize the artist's intention to express greater emotion and drama in his work.



“The Zaporozhye Cossacks in Response to the Sultan”, Ilya Repin, 1891, Oil on Canvas, 217 x 361 cm, Russian Museum, St Petersburg

The work of the Russian artist Ilya Repin demonstrates a painting composed of a model based on curved and spiral lines. The scene has a complexity of information, where there is a portrait of many characters in different actions and with different expressions.

Despite the chaos in the image, the scene is pleasant to be enjoyed by the viewer thanks to the composition model used by the artist, here the characters represent visual elements and are arranged in such a way that a spiral movement is generated.

In this way a dichotomy * is born, where there is a structured and orderly model within the composition, which brings the sensation of chaos and disorder. The dichotomy here becomes an intention to claim that the work expresses controlled chaos.

* Division of a concept whose parts are generally opposed.

ALBERTI, Leon Battista. Painting. Campinas: UNICAMP, 1989

CAMARGO, Patrícia. Understanding the Baroque. Available at:

<<https://www.turomaquia.com/entendente-o-barroco/>>

DA VINCI, Leonardo, La Gioconda, 1503-5. Available at: <<https://www.wga.hu/index1.html>>.

FRANCESCA, Piero Della, The Flagellation 1455. Available at:

<<https://www.wga.hu/index1.html>>.

HEMENWAY, Priya. The Secret Code. Sao Paulo. Publisher TASCHEN, 2019.

JONES, Christopher. How Raphael Composed His Paintings. Available at

<<https://medium.com/thinksheet/how-raphael-composed-his-paintings-724a7208b600>>

KAMINSKI, Ândria. Definitive Composition Guide - Part 1. Available at:

<<https://revolutionnow.com.br/o-guia-definitivo-de-composicao-parte-1/>>

LYON, Howard. A Baroque Composition. Available at:

<<http://www.muddycolors.com/2013/12/a-baroque-composition/>>

OLIVEIRA, Rafaela Mendes; MOREIRA, Daniel de Carvalho, "THE PERSPECTIVE IN THE ART OF RENAISSANCE". Graphic Education. V.18 - nº.01, ISSN 2179-7374, 2014.

OSTROWER, Fayga. Chances and artistic creations. Campinas. Editora Unicamp, 2013.

SHUSTERMAN, Richad. "Body Consciousness and Performance: Somaesthetics East and West".

USA. The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism. 2009.

VINCI, Leonardo da. Painting Treaty, "The true master is universal". (col. Painting. Vol. 10 pictorial genres. Coord. Lichtenstein, Jaqueline) São Paulo: Ed 34, 2006.