

My Art Experience

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Intro to Art/Art 100

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I visited the Smithsonian American Art Museum and National Portrait Gallery on May thirty first. These museums share a building and the two wings of the building separate the two. I chose artwork that stood out to me as my subjects for this paper. They have a little bit of commonality like the subject matter. All three works have the ocean as huge part of the subject. I really love the water and the beach so looking at the way the artists captured the waves of the ocean in the art is really fascinating to me. Also, two of these works are paintings and are oil on canvas while the third is a photograph. Each work is similar in its subject matter, but unique in its translation of the subject matter of the ocean.

The first work of art that stood out to me when walking through the museum was *Seal Rocks, San Francisco* by Albert Bierstadt. This painting is oil on canvas and was painted by Bierstadt in 1872. This painting is of seals on top of Seal Rocks looking down at other seals in the water that are hunting for fish. As they are floating in the water, a huge wave is about to crash over them. The colors are very dark and the brushwork by Albert Bierstadt makes the painting almost seem like a photo of the rocks in San Francisco. I believe that this work is a realistic piece from Albert Bierstadt because the painting isn't idealistic like romanticism. He painted *Seal Rocks, San Francisco* how it looks in San Francisco, California. He wanted to capture the scene of the seals and the wave of the ocean as if it were a photo of the rocks. One trick that Bierstadt used to give his art more appeal was giving more depth to the painting. He used aerial perspective to show as if the painting went on forever. His use of color really helped give the depth by using lighter colors toward the top and getting darker towards the bottom of the painting.

Another element used was implied motion. The way the wave is about to crash on top of the seals and the rocks allows the viewer to see the wave crashing and gives the idea of the water moving. Another element is the use of lines and shapes. Bierstadt uses curving lines and ragged, irregular lines to show shapes that are organic. Organic shapes are shapes in nature. He wanted everything to seem photo like so by using these organic shapes and curving, irregular lines allows him to get the photo like feel in his painting. *Seal Rocks, San Francisco* is a very dark, but beautiful painting with lots of detail that demonstrated a lot of examples from this class.

Another painting that stood out to me was the *Capture of H.B.M. Frigate Macedonian by U.S. Frigate United States, October 25, 1812* by Thomas Chambers in 1852. The *Capture* is oil on canvas and shows two ships fighting. This painting has a cartoon feel unlike *Seal Rocks, San Francisco*. Thomas Chambers wasn't trying to make the painting seem super lifelike. The ships are distinctly different in that one seems brighter and the sails are perfectly upright while the other ship is darker, the sails are lower, and there is smoke coming from the ship. Chambers did a good job of showing the winning ship and the losing ship by the details in the ships. The *Capture* is romanticism because it shows the United States ship clearly stronger and better. Chambers wanted to show that the United States ship was the victor and showed emotion in the *Capture of H.B.M. Frigate Macedonian by U.S. Frigate United States, October 25, 1812*. The first element that Thomas Chambers used in the painting is implying depth. He did so by changing colors in the sky giving the illusion of the sunset continuing on. Also, Chambers implied depth by placing the ships on top of clouds and overlapping the clouds. Another element was his use of showing implied motion, which came from the

waves looking like they are swaying and from the smoke traveling from one ship to another. *Capture of H.B.M. Frigate Macedonian by U.S. Frigate United States, October 25, 1812* is a great example of romantic art because it shows the emotion felt by the artist when the United States won.

Kelly Slater by Todd Glaser seemed to pop in the museum. The vibrant color of the wave and the sense of movement really appealed to me. This photograph was taken in March 2011 in Fiji and was an inkjet print on paper. This photo is of Kelly Slater surfing on a wave that is wrapping around him as he rides. The style of this photo is sports photography. It's an action shot of Kelly Slater, who is a professional surfer. An element shown in this photo is the composition of the photo. The way the wave is wrapping around Kelly Slater makes the artwork much more dynamic. Another element is the color in the photo. There is great intensity in the blue of the water in the ocean. It is the purest blue that makes the color so bright and vibrant. This lively photo is very cool looking and is very unique in the National Portrait Gallery.

After visiting these museums, I learned that there are a lot of different types of art. Every artist has their own style and puts their own perspective into their art. I saw lots of artwork that was classical in that it represented history and ideas from the past. However, I also saw artwork that I could relate to that represented the present. The art I chose to discuss in my paper was art that caught my eye as I walked through the exhibits. They were pieces I wanted to learn more about and take a closer look at. There is so much detail and work that goes into creating artwork like these. In *Seal Rocks, San Francisco*, there is so much dedication put into it to make the piece look lifelike. I love how dark and realistic the wave looks as it is crashing into the rocks. Then in *Capture of H.B.M.*

Frigate Macedonian by U.S. Frigate *United States*, October 25, 1812, I like the playfulness of the painting. It looks so cartoon like and is so different from *Seal Rocks*, *San Francisco*. This painting has so much depth and detail in making sure every part of the painting is as great as the ships and the water. Lastly *Kelly Slater*, this photo just pops in the museum. I love the ocean, so seeing the way the wave is crashing around the surfer just makes me smile as well as the blue of the water. I plan on visiting more museums after having a great experience at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and National Portrait Gallery.

Photo of Me at National Portrait Gallery in America's Presidents Exhibition



References

Frank, P. (2014). *Prebles' Artforms* (11th ed.). Pearson.