

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE WORK OF TWO ROCOCO MASTERS JEAN-HONORÉ FRAGONARD AND GIOVANNI BATTISTA TIEPOLO

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ABSTRACT

Jean Honore Fragonard and Giovanni Battista Tiepolo were the central figures of 18th century art, who established creative freedom in their inventive compositions and open criticism of conventional art centres.

Keywords: *Conventional Art Centres, Top-Grade Colourist, Ornamental Expertise.*

Introduction

Jean-Honoré Fragonard

(Birth April 5, 1732, Grasse, France- death August 22, 1806, Paris)

Boucher's eminent student, Jean-Honoré Fragonard was a top-grade colourist whose ornamental expertise surpassed his master's skills to a good extent. He followed on his teacher's devotion to supreme love but with a technique that indebted more to great artists like Rubens and Tiepolo. Fragonard was the son of a cloth merchant's associate. The family shifted to Paris around 1738, and in 1747 Fragonard was apprenticed to a lawyer, who, noticed his interest and skills for drawing, suggested that he should pursue painting and take proper training in the field. François Boucher accepted him as a pupil and in 1752, Fragonard's primary training completed. Boucher advised Fragonard that he should contest for a Prix de Rome scholarship. Because of this scholarship he could study under the court painter to Louis XV, Carle Van Loo, in Paris. On September 17, 1756, Fragonard won another scholarship for the French Academy at Rome.

Fragonard's work was a special characteristic of the Rococo Art movement had a very speedy brush. He could sketch quickly with paint, giving different objects and figures like trees, flowers, leaves, drapery, and women figures a quite substantial form. Quite alike to his teacher Boucher, he used greenery and natural elements like clouds, twisted trees and waterfalls to show a suitable and most apt scene to the unintentional meeting of lovers in the gardens. He was Renoir's idol although Renoir never caught on to Fragonard's light, airy drawing.⁸

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⁸ Edmund, Burke Feldman. Thinking about Art. Prentice-Hall, 1985, pp. 192.



The Swing (1766) Jean-Honoré Fragonard, Oil on Canvas, 81cm x 64.2 cm, The Wallace Collection, London (UK)

In one of his most famous painting *the Swing*, 1766, a young nobleman has persuaded a gullible bishop to swing the young man's beautiful beloved higher and higher, while her lover (and one patron), in the lower left corner, stretches out to appreciate her passionately from a premeditated position on the ground. The young lady coquettishly and confidently kicks off her shoe in the direction of the little statue of Cupid. The infant love god puts his finger to his lips. The landscape matches Watteau's—a luxuriant perfumed bower in a park that very much looks like a stage scene for comic opera. The glowing pastel colours and soft light convey, almost by themselves, the theme's sensuality.⁸ In the last years prior to the French Revolution, Fragonard turned finally to Neoclassical content and established a less flowing Neoclassical style of painting.

Famous paintings of Fragonard are: *Blind Man's Bluff*, (1760), *The Secret Meeting*, (1771), *The See-Saw*, (1750–55), *The Birth of Venus*, (1753-1755), *The Musical Contest*, *Inspiration*, (1769), *The Bathers*, (circa 1765), *The Love Letter*, (1770), *A Young Girl Reading*, (c. 1776), *The Stolen Kiss*, (late 1780s) and *Sisters*, (after 1778) etc.

Giovanni Battista Tiepolo

(B. March 5, 1696, Venice [Italy]—D. March 27, 1770, Madrid, Spain)

An extraordinary exponent of Italy's Rococo, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo was possibly the greatest fresco painter of the eighteenth century. Tiepolo's father died in 1697, leaving his wife and five children in

⁸ Kleiner, Fred S. Gardener. *Art through the Ages*. Boston: Wadsworth Publisher, 2014. pp.622-623.

quite good conditions. His mother assigned Giambattista to Gregorio Lazzarini, a painter of ornamental technique, who taught Tiepolo the basic techniques of his occupation. Tiepolo covered the palace ceilings of German princes and archbishops with angels and saints and heavenly vistas.⁸

Around 1719–20, he painted a series of frescoes for the affluent, and recently dignified, publisher Giambattista Baglione in the hall of his villa at Massanzago near Padua. Tiepolo showed the Triumph of Aurora on the ceiling, and the Myth of Phaethon on the walls, creating the kind of fluid spatial illusion which was to become a recurring theme in his work.⁸

Tiepolo worked for patrons in Austria, Germany, Spain and Italy. He was a master of illusionistic ceiling embellishment in the Baroque tradition, but preferred bright colours and tranquil compositions of Rococo easel paintings.



Apotheosis of the Pisani Family, (1761 -1762) Udine, Madrid

⁸ Edmund, Burke Feldman. *Thinking about Art*. Prentice-Hall, 1985, pp. 191-192.

⁸ Keith, Christiansen. *Giambattista Tiepolo 1698–1770*. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996, pp.40–1

In *Apotheosis of the Pisani Family*, 1761 -1762, a ceiling fresco in the Villa Pisani at Stra in northern Italy, Tiepolo portrayed almost weightless figures waving through huge sun-drenched skies and soft clouds, their forms creating dark inflections against the bright light of high noon. The artist raised Pisani family members to the rank of gods in a heavenly composition. Tiepolo created pictorial scenes of great sophistication and refinement, unmatched for their utter efficiency as decor.⁸ In *Apollo Conducting Beatrice of Burgundy to Frederick Barbarossa*, 1751-52, the viewer looking up at an oval ceiling by Tiepolo could even experience a feeling of dizziness, a sense of being pulled up into the heavens with those floating gods, goddesses, and horses.⁸ Tiepolo died in Madrid on March 27, 1770. After his death, the rise of a firm Neoclassicism and the post-radical decay of autocracy led to the slow deterioration of the style allied with his name, but failed to ruin his reputation.

Some of his famous works are: *Massiva*, *The Banquet of Cleopatra*, *Rinaldo Enchanted by Armida*, *Juno and Luna*, *Apotheosis*, *The Immaculate Conception*, *Apollo Pursuing Daphne*, *Manna in the desert*, *The Death of Hyacinth*, *the capture of Europe*, *Psyche showing her sisters her Gifts from Cupid*, *The Birth of Venus*, *The Rape of Europa*, *Perseus & Andromeda*, *Jupiter and Danae*, *Empire of Flora*, *The Death of Hyacinth*, and *Venus and Vulcan* etc.

Extreme ideological, political, and social change formed the period 1740 to 1790, and also left its mark on the art, lives and livelihoods of many artists. Fragonard and Tiepolo both accepted this new world around them with a new artistic language. Few things which were common in both of them were, loose brush work, unusual figures, bold and bright colours. Thus these two were indeed the most famous Artists of the Rococo period with quite similarities but at the same time having their unique art styles.



⁸ Kleiner, Fred S. Gardener. *Art through the Ages*. Boston: Wadsworth Publisher, 2014. pp.623.
⁸ Edmund, Burke Feldman. *Thinking about Art*. Prentice-Hall, 1985, pp. 192.