

Art Analysis: Safely Contained

Image: Scarface

▲Artist: Miles Donovan

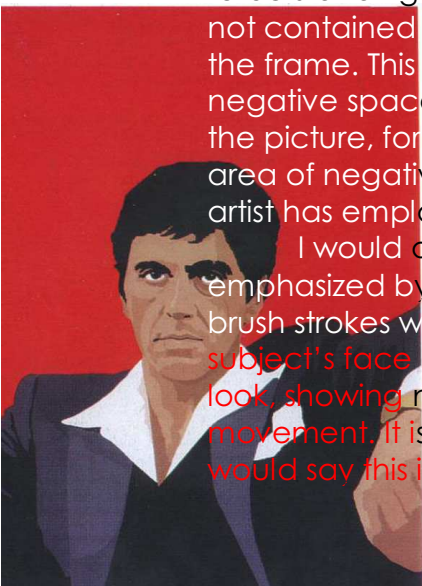
This image is one of a series of four other paintings, all of iconic people. The image I am analyzing is of Robert De Nero as Scarface, an example of another of the images is Stevie Wonder. The image I am studying of Scarface is a computer generated image which was produced in Photoshop, the photo from a real shot in the film.

The theme that is carried through the images is that they are all placed on a red background. I think this helps to make the images more striking, which works extremely well. With most paintings, such a heavy coloured background would make the foreground image appear to recede; but the artist in this piece has reversed this, making the red compliment the subject. We could maybe say this image is a stem of the 'pop art' movement; although it contains the blocked and flat colour elements, it still remains to be painted in a lifelike colour and composition, and so does not possess the vibrant colours usually related with 'pop art.'

The size of the image is unknown but I should imagine it would be on a fairly large scale for it to have an impact, I think at such a size, the red background would be very imposing and would set forward, Robert De Nero the subject of the image.

The form of the image is very simple, subject and background, both of which are easily distinguishable. The image of scarface has been created upon an existing image of which contained a background, this is not transferred to the artists' graphic interpretation. This is done with all the images in the series, the background being replaced with a shade of red. We see that the subject either appears to be standing or sitting, resting both of his arms on something that is not contained within the shot, it almost appears that he is leaning on the frame. This cropping of the subject works very well to avoid as little negative space as possible; for if the subject was to have his arms in the picture, for example down by his side, there would have to be an area of negative background around him, I think the technique the artist has employed works extremely well.

I would describe the image as very much static; this is emphasized by the use of graphical print. For example there are no brush strokes which can be used to give the sense of movement.. The subject's face I think also gives a sense of stillness, his solemn and stern look, showing no sign of emotion; this symbolizes the overall lack of movement. It is the face that carries what I see as the focal point; I would say this is the subject's eyes. They are offset by a very dark



heavily painted eye structure and eyebrow, so the brilliant white of the eye ball is very clear. This is what attracts my eye as soon as I look at the image, being drawn into a face which is not particularly inviting, instead somewhat menacing. This focal point is set almost central to the image, which provides a good flow from the focal point to the edges.

The view point of the artist is clear; he is at the same level as his or hers subject. We can tell this because Robert De Nero's eyes are looking directly into the camera or at the artist; this is achieved by the similar eye levels.



There is no visible canvas to this image, although the artist has employed a print structure that gives a crossed pattern effect, this could controversially be viewed as a canvas texture. There is no real technique to how the artist has defined the depth and three-dimensional form of the image; he uses shadows and block colour on the face; the left side is more in light than the right, this subtly suggests the depth, which works very effectively. The artist tends to suggest detail, with the blocked shadow he uses. The main example of this is on the face, being the focal point, which is more worked than other areas. The base colour of the face is all the same, an off cream, brownish colour; this is then printed over to give the form of the face with shadows.

In the image, colour is used fairly naively as local colours. Miles Donovan uses a similar style to Alex Kats, simplifying their subject matter to defined blocks of colour, although Kats achieves this through painting rather than spray paints and stenciling.

Donovan has used a simple colour for the face, and a darker version of it to create the shadow. The artist has used an opposing set of colours, red which is a very warm colour and then against this a series of blacks and gray's, which are seen to be cold colours in comparison. The colour is very localized and contained, the ranges of colours do

not tend to merge, but are used very much in the same area. This is the contrast that provides the different colour ranges within the image. The uses of neutrals have been used to build up the figure, and also his hair. This use works well to build up the form of the man, because shadows can be built up very quickly and effectively with such a range of colours. I think the reason there is a limited used of colour is because of the techniques Donovan executes, such as stenciling and spray paints, this would mean the composition would become very uneven if he was to build up colour sections which would invoke more layers.

I think the image on the whole works extremely well, the techniques used tie together very well, the outcome being a very

successful piece of work. The feature I am most intrigued by is how the artist has used the colour red as the background, which works so effectively to promote the subject of the picture.