

Mannerism: An artistic style of the late 16th century characterized by distortion of elements such as scale and perspective.

The Artist: Jacopo Pontormo

Biography:

His Beginning:

Jacopo Pontormo was born in Pontormo, 1494 and died in Firenze, 1557. Pontormo was the son of a painter named Bartolommeo Carrucci. He was apprenticed to various artists that include Leonardo da Vinci. At the age of 18 he entered the workshop of Andrea Del Sarto. Jacopo Pontormo was talented and was even praised by Michelangelo.

His Style of Work:

At around 1515, he had already created a unique style in his works. His works were full of restless movement and disconcertingly irrational effects of scale and space. One of his works, an altarpiece for the Church of San Michele Visdomini, Florence, reflects an emotionalism, a departure from the balance and tranquility of the Renaissance.

His Works:

Pontormo was primarily a religious painter, but he painted a number of sensitive portraits. In 1521 was employed by the Medici family to decorate their villa at Poggio a Caiano in which an apparently peaceful scene reveals a strong undercurrent of obsession. Once, he borrowed ideas from Albrecht Dürer, whose engravings and woodcuts were circulating in Italy. The emotional tension apparent in his work reaches its peak in Pontormo's masterpiece, the altarpiece of the Entombment in Florence. It was painted in extraordinarily vivid colours and featuring deeply moving figures that seem lost in a trance of grief. This is one of the key works of Mannerism.

His Later Life:

Pontormo became more of a loner in his later life. In those years, the influence of Michelangelo is evident. The diary tells us much of his miserable and introspective character, derailed by the slightest illness. Numerous drawings survive, and paintings are to be found in various galleries in Europe and America, as well as in Florence

A Work of Jacopo Pontormo:

Work: Deposition

Deposition

1528

Oil on wood, 313 x 192 cm

Cappella Capponi, Santa Felicità, Florence



The Deposition is described as the artist's masterpiece. The compositional idea is extravagant and totally extraordinary: a knot of figures and drapes that goes around the puzzled people in the foreground. Two lightly flying figures seem to be unnoticed behind.

The work may be interpreted as the grief over the Dead Christ. The painting appears to represent the moment in which the body of Christ, having been taken down from the cross, has just been removed from the mother's lap. Christ's mother, visibly hysterical, and perhaps on the point of fainting, still gazes longingly towards her Son, and gestures with her right arm in that direction.

The expressions and attitudes of all the figures present express grief. The woman in front of the Virgin, probably Mary Magdalene, seems to be comforting her. The two figures holding up the deceased's body may have been angels, in the act of drawing Christ away from the Earthly family, and leading him finally into the arms of his Heavenly Father. The figures seem to be moving in rhythm very calmly. The two presumed angels seem to be able to bear the weight of the lifeless body easily.

The connected group of figures, involved in a highly dramatic atmosphere, has harmony in the colour tones of pinks, blues and a dark background.

The man wearing a strange hat, almost unnoticeable in the background of the painting behind the arm of the Virgin, could possibly be the artist himself. The painting has a distortion in certain people.

Other Deposition Works:

