

THE SHEEPFOLD MORNING IN AUTUMN



Visual Studies

Analysis of the visual elements of a selected image.

I have chosen the image of 'The Sheepfold, Morning in Autumn' c 1850 -88, by James Thomas Linnell, which can be accessed through the group folder 'shared urls' weather paintings by Margaret Ponsonby. The links I have used to access this picture are enlisted below:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/paintingtheweather/> click on 'artist' Linnell

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/paintingtheweather/artists/index.shtml>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/paintingtheweather/csv/artist/linnell.shtml>

I chose this picture, as instantly I was captivated by the photograph it gives you a sense of calm aura, and I was mesmerised the sight was so overwhelming, that instantly I chose to analyse its significance.

James Thomas Linnell - the artist came from a family of painters, his father used to compile romantic pictures and Linnell similarly followed his theme. That inspired Linnell to capture these images as he might have too been in love with the countryside. His paintings were based in South England in Reigate Surrey. Linnell is illustrating 'autumn' in the English countryside; he could have shown a busy city but he didn't he shows the countryside and the simplicity and the beauty of the autumn month. He uses vibrant colors in the landscape. The hard work shows the coldness of autumn, the picture is so fresh, precious, and concise. Linnell has done other paintings of the weather such as 'springtime' most of his pictures focus on simpleness. He did these paintings in the mid 1800's when there was an industrial revolution where everything was fast moving and the world was changing. His pictures shows the beauty of the time because when we think about the 1850 we think of steam engines and large factories we don't think about the beauty in that time, his pictures illustrate that which is a marvelous as it gives us a different view about that time.

The first fixation we are instantly drawn to is the sky as it looks heavenly and ghastly it has a great impact on the picture, contrasting colours are used to show the clouds and the sun rising in autumn, is captured through the season's predominant colours: brown, red, orange, and yellow. Tonal variation is used you can almost see the red of the sky foreshadowing on to the ground and the trees casting a shadow. If you look along a straight road, the parallel sides of the road appear to meet at a point in the distance, this is shown just above the trees on the right hand side, because that is where it narrows down. This point is known as the vanishing point and has been used to add realism to art since the 1400's.

The juxtapositioning of the objects and scenery is fascinating; as if the sheepfold and the people were placed further we would have not concentrated on them. Linnell - the artist has really considered spacing and has achieved a contrasting division of several different elements such as the sky, the forest/woodland theme, the moorland, sheepfold with the farmers and the autumny season.

The tree on the left hand side gives us an autumn feel, and from the sky we can see that it is early dawn morning and some farmers have come about to do their daily tasks collect wood and look after the sheep, there is even a sheepdog. The picture does give a sense of reality, however the

setting for a sheepfold is peculiar and the sky gives us the impression of an almost mysterious place.

It is also intriguing to point out the contrast of the individual tree placed on the far left hand side, This particular tree leaps out in contrast to the forest/trees in the background, paying specific attention to that single tree, making it a significant feature in the photograph. The artist gives us the impression that winter is coming because the farmers are gathering up wood; a lot of attention is paid to detail.

The background looks almost mystifying and the picture looks very naturalistic. Light dominates the photograph; the clouds contribute to an almost peaceful mood. Further support can be found in the work of the author Marvys' Actm pg 28 whose perspective is:

Using "recessive colours, like blue, greys and greens, are used in the backgrounds of paintings to increase the effect of distance"

This general technique is applied within this painting and distance is created by darker colours and making the object smaller so it appears further. If we look within the distance it is more blurred and the closer we look to the picture, the clearer the picture is. The composition of the painting is interesting; even the most intricate details is used, this is shown through the spade, people and the dog; the photograph almost looks like a postcard, the picture is very deep and detailed.

The image of the woods looks dangerous and almost like a forbidden forest, where many unknown secrets possibly are lurking in the woods. By looking at the depth of the forest you associate that with darkness, which is different to the rest of the picture. The picture is so full of life and open, it shows the hardships that those people went through without machines and the simplicity of their life is shown by the clothes they are wearing. The weather looks forever changing, but for those workers their work is a daily chore no matter what the weather is.

We interpret different messages by looking at something and examining it and judging the photograph from our own perspective. Our understanding and views of different pictures may be affected by our life experiences, everyone has a different interpretation.

Bibliography

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<http://ftp.bbc.co.uk/paintingtheweather/csv/artist/linnell.shtml> Accessed: 17/11/04