

There are various political and economic elements affected an ongoing growth of the arts. It was first developed in terms of religious purpose, to beautify the world. Therefore, in changes of time, the center of art has moved from place to place. The Renaissance period was flourished in Rome during the 16th century, as a result of the rebirth of ancient Greek and Roman mythology. In the early 16th century, there is a movement called the “Protestant Reformation”, which caused the division of the Europe into a Catholic and Protestant, as a result; there are great contrasts in terms of art style and the lives of artists between the Southern Catholics and the Northern Protestants. The Northern Europe was most greatly affected, and many of the artists during the 17th and 18th century were experienced in a harsh life.

With doubts in the church, Martin Luther, a Catholic priest, established and led the group of ‘Protestant Reformation’ in 1517. He believed that an excessive amount of money has been used in arts especially at the cathedral of St. Peter’s. To make art costs expenditure; the church was selling ‘indulgence’ to the people. Indulgences were granted by the pope to forgive individual sinners not their sins, but the temporal punishment applied to those sins. It had become a big business for the corrupted church. The breakthrough of the reform had a great impact on the arts of the western world. The Protestant initiated new values, promoting the Protestant work ethics of hard working. They became more independent. Hence, they could practice and study new profound knowledge like mathematics and science more liberally. They do not have to afraid of the power of the church anymore.

The Protestant Reformation in the Northern countries, the center of art in the Northern Europe shifted to particularly in Holland and it had a ripple effect throughout many artists. Previously, the artist used to be sponsored by the churches, but now they faced a real crisis as a result of this reform. The Protestant objects like

pictures or statues of saints in the church are considered as a sign of “Popish idolatry” (Gombrich 374). Religious arts were considered and symbolized the corruption of the churches and the popes. As a result, new kinds of paintings were established during the 17th and 18th century. Northern European paintings had to consist of secular subjects such as portraits, landscapes and scenes from everyday life to attract the Protestant customers. Thus, numerous painters were deeply in great debts and die of poverty, they have to sell their works at the market places. Contrasting with the Southern European artist who were make king a wealthy fortune, the Northern are striving for living.

During the 17th century, the center of art is situated in Holland; therefore these Dutch artists have to rely on the ‘*genre painting*’ because the Northern citizens were essentially middle class and predominantly Protestant. These people were likely to be



Jan Vermeer. “*Girl asleep at the table*”

attracted by simple, realistic and directly attach elements. The frameworks were in much smaller scale if we compared to the Southern artists. The works of Jan Vermeer (1632-1675) and Rembrandt Van Rijn (1606-1669) are best example in the way of painting in small canvas to fit the demand of the market. It was impossible for them to paint in massive canvas because they have to sell their works themselves.

Contribute to the small size of the paintings; these Northern artists were ‘tended to specialized in one kind of subject matter – sometimes even more narrowly’ (Gowing P.712). They world specialized in practicing painting particularly subject.

Like Fan Hals (1580-1666) for example, who is well known for his portraits, Jacob van Ruisdael (1628-1682) for his gloomy landscapes or Jan Steen (1626-1679) for portraying family scenes, which was influenced by Bruegel. As a consequence, these specializations make their works easier to sell. It also allowed painting freely in any subject. The family portraits of Jan Steen's *The Christening Feast* may not attracted the Southern aristocrat because they were not likely to be painted while they were eating. The happy group portrait of Jan Steen marked the new style of the paintings in



Jacob van Ruisdael. "Windmill"



Jan Steen. "The Christening Feast"

terms of the subject matter.

In addition, paintings of vice and virtues are influenced from the Protestant teaching became another subject for the Dutch painter especially in the works of Jan Vermeer (1632-1675) and a French painter, Chardin (1699-1779). Jan Vermeer was one of many artists at his time who painted 'genre'¹ paintings. His pictures provided a sense of calmness and serenity. It is the stillness that characterizes Vermeer's painting, a simple figure usually woman standing in a room of typically Dutch house

¹ Term in art history and criticism for paintings depicting scenes from daily life. It may be applied to any place or period, but most commonly suggests the type of domestic subject matter favored by 17th century artists. In a broader sense, the term is used to mean a particular branch or category if art; landscapes and portraiture.

performing a simple task (Gombrich 433). His mastery of light raised his concerned for the reality of appearance to the level of poetry and includes all of its visual and symbolical possibilities (Janson 572). The moralistic pictures attracted the customers in the sense that it convey the message of ‘being good due to the Protestant ethics’ through the picture. Here, *The Milkmaid* shows an ideal Protestant work ethic woman. The milk is an object, which symbolized the whiteness of purity heart and the bread represented the Christian service bread of Christ. Meanwhile, *Girl With the Pearl Earring* shows the virtue of ‘chastity’. The pearl earring here represented the purity assembles with the Bible story of the pearl of great Christ. The reason why Vermeer painted women in moral paintings was to remind them to be good and men should have control women because according to the story from the Bible, it was woman who tempted Adam into eating the forbidden apple. Parallel to Vermeer, Chardin



Jan Vermeer. "Milkmaid"



Chardin. "Soap Bubbles"

(1699-1779) was strongly influenced by Vermeer with his moralistic paintings. It expressed simplicity, ordinary things, quietness and still-life. In *Soap Bubbles*, the similar style with Vermeer is the window depicted in the picture; therefore, the

bubble represented the shortness of life. The picture reminded us how the life is short. Again, these moralistic paintings were according to the Protestant work ethics that shaped the lives of the Protestant people.

The scientific revolution played a major part on the works of Rembrandt Van Rijn (1606-1669) and the use of the techniques of Jan Vermeer (1632-1693). We can see in Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson* that he was influenced by the scientific revolution. The students were observing at the corpse. Notice how realistic the face of the people and the corpse is. The corpse looked bloated and it was unlike the corpse that portrait in the early periods. As a master of reality, Rembrandt brought the technique of *chiaroscuro* into his paintings, "a production of fully unified vision of lights and color playing over the forms" (Garrison and Robb 727). In *The Night Watch*, it shows a group of civil guards, a platoon of musketeers. However, it does not only depict the main characters, but gives the viewers *a sense of participation and anticipation*. A town captain is ordering his lieutenant and the light seems to glow from within illuminating some of these characters. The young girl with the chicken, the barking dog, the man who is pointing and the man with the drum questioned the viewer 'Who are they?' and 'what is their role?'. Nevertheless, we do not know what the reference is. Looking upon *The Night Watch* it seems to be a realistic painting, but in reality it is from the artist's own imagination.



Rembrandt Van Rijn. "The Night Watch"

Meanwhile, Vermeer's *The Music Lesson* shows a woman was playing a virginal and at the same time was instructed by a male teacher. Actually, if we looked closely in the mirror above her we can see the reflection that she is not participate at the virginal, but she is looking at the instructor. This picture suggested the wrongful desire of a woman. In addition, in terms of the technique, we saw his inspiration by using a string to create '*diagonal lines*' on the floor tile in a way that no previous artists had done. He kept moving the strings away from picture to decide which one creates more naturalistic looks. Some people claimed that Vermeer used the '*camera obscura*' to help him painted the picture. It is an apparatus, which projects the image of an object or scene on to a sheet of paper or ground glass so that the outlines can be traced. It consisted of a shuttered box or room with a small hole or lens in one side through which light from a brightly lit scene enters and forms an invert image on a screen placed opposite the opening. This device is developed in Holland in the 17th century, an era of scientific development.

The impact of the Reformation is also effect the British art in the 18th century. Now the center of art has moved from Holland to England. During that time, England had to commission artist from other European countries to do paintings. It was only in the 18th century the Britain has its own truly artist. Like Northern Europe, England was a Protestant country; as a result the subjects of art were similar. The father of British art, William Hogarth (1697-1764) spent his entire life to develop English art so that it would be equal to their neighboring European countries. He began his career as an engraver and made his fame on visual satire etchings. *The Gin Lane* shows how Hogarth satires the badness of drinking gins. In Hogarth's London, gin was cheap and alcoholism was rampant. We can see that the woman is so drunk and she drops her

In contrast to Hogarth, Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) and Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788) were painting portraits. The two painters were different in the way they portrait people in their pictures. Reynolds brought dramatic post in to his paintings as seen in *Mrs. Siddons as 'Tragic Muse'*. It shows a famous 18th century British actress, Mrs. Siddons. Notice at the face, you can see grandeur and tragic looks. Reynolds always has a character for his portrait. In contrast. Gainsborough brought simplicity and calmness of nature in his paintings. In *Cottage Girl*, you can see how Gainsborough likes to put serene landscapes at the background. The girl looks real and down to earth because he did not put any dramatic symbols onto the portrait like Reynolds. The two paintings distinguish because of their way of portraying the character. Gainsborough loves simplicity and landscape, whereas Reynolds portraits were in an unnatural posing.



Sir Joshua Reynolds. *"Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse"*



Thomas Gainsborough. *"Cottage Girl"*

In conclusion, when all kinds of art have most effectively served a religion system, that system itself usually been more than a pillar of society. The artist of the Reformation period developed their style by focusing more on the simplicity of the people in the society. Living in the Protestant country, they have to depend on the customers rather than being employed from the churches. Therefore, Dutch masters have to struggle for even though, Rembrandt died of poverty. These artists mention above make great changes to the subject of the paintings. Hence, with freedom to experiment, they were allows to paint ordinary subject and with the scientific revolution that helps Vermeer to create his masterpieces. All in all, no matter how the subject is changes, the purpose of art is still to beautify the world. Nevertheless, art is constantly growing bringing new forms and techniques.

Works Cited

Adams, Stephen. Lecture notes for BS 281 History of Western Art, 2004

Garrison, J.J. and David M. Robb. Art in the Western World. 3ed. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1953

Gombrich, E.H. The Story of Art. 15ed. New York: Phaidon Press Limited, 1995

Janson, Anthony and H.W. Janson. History of Art. 6ed. New York: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2001

“Jan Vermeer.” Olga’s Gallery. 13 Mar 2004 World Wide Web.
<http://www.abcgallery.com/V/vermeer/vermeerbio.html>

Levey, Michael. A History of Western Art. New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1968

“Pink Monkey Notes on Reformation in Europe.” 15 Mar 2004

http://www.pinkmonkey.com/studyguides/subjects/euro_his/chap1/e0101a01.htm

“Rembrandt.” Olga’s Gallery. 13 Mar 2004 World Wide Web.

<http://www.abcgallery.com/R/rembrandt/rembrandtbio.html>