

An Analysis of 'Boy's Head'

1952

By Lucian Freud



'Reflection' – Lucian Freud

(This is not the painting being analysed, this is just a self-portrait of Lucian Freud.)

Artist's Intentions

The painting of this piece has been handled well, and has been carefully thought out to fit what the artist wants the viewers to feel. He wants to portray 'pain,' 'emotional pain.' The painting draws the viewer in using the main focal point, the eyes. The eyes have been carefully painted to portray the desired emotion whilst making the viewer feel intimidated and 'stuck.'

The painting is a display of skilful technique and careful handling. The thick paint strokes of the background give a tension between both the focal areas and the non-focal areas. The distorted areas of the paint, such as the mouth, the right eye and the nose, gives a definite mystery about the painting and helps to pull across the emotion desired.

The artist seems to be intrigued by the distortion of the right side of the face. He uses definite light and shade to help create the tension, also the gaze from the child is strong and helps grab the viewer's attention. The image is portrayed directly through the emotion and tensions of the artist's techniques to force an opinion on the spectator. The painting is to be enjoyed but the barrier between the viewer and subject is a thick emotional barrier and is hard to contemplate the definite reasons of the artist's ideas.

Form

The image is naturalist and as I have said conveys a strong emotion. The emotion has probably digressed to the canvas through the artist's own thoughts. The emotion seems to me to pour out of the eyes and mouth. It overwhelms the rest of the painting and brings any feeling of joy straight to a halt.

In this painting the distortion has not been created through new forms, it has been created through the physical position of the subject.

A definite sense of depth is present in the focal areas because of the strong directional lighting. The background however is loosely painted and has little directional lighting, flattening out the rest of the painting.

Line plays a main role in the focal areas. It is used sensitively and helps to produce the airy feeling of sadness. Around the nose and mouth line plays a large part in the directional lighting. The strong, definite lines in this area help to complete the distortion of the face. The sketchy lines of the hair that breaks into the background of the painting, helps give the depth in to the upper area of the painting. Again vigorous lines are used around the eyes to focalise them.

The strong use of tone helps the lines and tension in the painting become even more apparent, and gives the depth of the paint the edge needed to complete it.

Technique

Oil paint has been carefully used to create this painting. They have been used in focal areas tightly to create depth, perspective and the contours of the face. Around the face however, the painting becomes looser and thicker. This is to help attract to the focal point.

3D form has been create from the looseness and denseness of the medium in the painting and has been carefully contrasted to the dull overcastted background. The tighter and denser lines on the eyes give a continuous feeling, and harden the shape.

The connection between the painter and the paint is probably there. The painter may be using the emotion that is in the painting to paint with. The definite sweeps of the paint gives an uncontrollable feeling that portrays pain. The emotion is connected and helps the paint reach out of the frame.

Personal Responce

This piece I think is a complicated piece both in meaning and in painting. It seems an intriguing piece of work at first but once you have looked in detail the painting becomes more disturbing. It changes in pers pective. The firm gaze pulls you towards an emotion barred from understanding.

I intend to explore the element of tone of this painting in my exam piece. I would probably like to return to the distortion of the painting in a later project.