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## A Detailed Overview of Baroque Art and its Presentation

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### Abstract.

The art works discussed in unit four were art works from the Baroque age which was a style that was characterized by drama and theatrically seen in a heightened realism and illusions of motion. Emotionalism in this kind of style is enhanced by striking contrasts of light and shadow between the different clowns of the art works at this time in history.

In definition of the style of baroque art an important thing to consider is the patronage that supports it. The church was at the fore front in this kind of patronage and pope after pope, each brought with him an enormous entourage of many families, relatives and friends who were to hold positions in the various sectors of government. Many palaces and chapel having developed from this led to the flocking of artists especially in Rome to take advantage of this situation.

The art work to consider here is the St. Paul's cathedral. Benton (2005) gives a brief history of the cathedral citing that "although England had lagged behind the continent artistically, Sir Christopher Wren (1672-1723) quickly brought it to the force."(pp139)

The style used in this kind of art work is the style of Baroque art that was in existence during the time in England. Though the initial or original actual structure of the art work was from Rome the style of patronage which characterized baroque art was still evident in this massive art work. According to Benton (2005) St. Paul's cathedral was built in the period between 1675 and 1710. It has a length of 156.67m, width 76.20m and height of the dome is 111.56m. The baroque influence on the style of this art work is evident in paired columns and double façade.

The artist of this art work was Sir Christopher Wren and he was indeed a great architect at this time since most of England had lagged behind so much in art work as compared to other cities such as Rome and Greece. This was during the great fire of 1666 and much of London was destroyed including the original gothic church of St. Paul. A brief history of Christopher according to Benton (2005) shows that he was born in 1632 and lived all the way to 1723. In addition to being an architect, Wren was also a professor of Astronomy at Oxford University and with a diverse knowledge in Mathematics, embroidery, and Physics

The palace of Versailles is another part of Baroque art. It was built as a royal palace just eleven miles southwest of Paris. According to Benton (2005) this palace contains four main features that are featured in the art works of the baroque age.

These key features are the Marie-Antoinette's estate, the grand Trianon, the Palace itself and the gardens at the chateau of Versailles. Benton (2005), "Nature has been made to conform to rigid geometric shapes. Plants are snipped and clipped, neatly placed and perfectly spaced, in formal symmetrical patterns that include pebbled paths." (p138) is the description he gives to these gardens.

During the building of this palace Louis XIV was the king. In this time in history France was still in the verge of artistic development and therefore Baroque art was inevitable since it was the art work style at the time. The principal façade of this palace is a good evidence of baroque styles.

The principle philosophy of the architect at this time was that of elegance and beauty. This is why the whole palace was furnished with silver furniture and orange trees and hung white

brocade curtains, lit by innumerable flickering candles, mirrored to reflect marble, gilding stucco, wood and paint. This was the ideal home of the sovereigns according to Louis XIV.

Another major art work during this baroque period was the literature works by René Descartes. Descartes was a proclaimed scholar who was a major contribution to philosophy by his ideas of doubting everything he came across and ending up with the conclusion 'I think therefore I am' a brief history shows that Descartes was born in 1596 and lived all the way to 1650. He was a French philosopher who remained single throughout his entire life. During this time of baroque art literature was very much important and therefore the theories developed by Descartes continued to form integral parts of art works.

Flemming. (1960) argues that the comparison of art work is not just a concept that is to be done on an overlay basis but should be done in a detailed basis since art works are very unique and distinct creations of their own. This comparison is based on the time period, style used, materials used and aesthetic characteristics of these art works.

One major comparison that arises in the above art works that is, the palace of Versailles, the literature by Descartes and St. Paul's cathedral is that they are all art works of baroque age. In this regard they have some characteristics in them that symbolize art works of this period in history of art works. St. Paul's cathedral and the palace of Versailles also have a similarity that they are both architectural art works.

A major difference arises in the work of Descartes as it is literature unlike the other two. St. Paul's cathedral was a symbol of religion whereas the palace of Versailles was a symbol of

power, sovereignty and wealth that was possessed by the kings in France. Descartes work of literature symbolized the philosophy of the human mind and its draw backs.

The different artists in these art works also played major roles in their development. For the cathedral religion was the main view of Christopher Wren while for the chapel power and wealth was the view that king Louis XIV had in mind.

In a general conclusion different art works from different artistic periods and different artists hold different meanings, symbolism, style, shapes and themes. The acceptability of these art works to fit in a specific criterion just depends on their distinct and unique features. Therefore their appreciation is based on a variety of factors.

Benton, J. (2005). *Arts and Culture: An Introduction to Humanities*. New York: New York University.

Flemming, W. (1960). *Art, Music and Ideas*. Sydney: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

Martin, J. (1977). *Baroque: A more Detailed Survey*. London: Zone Publishers.

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