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Contextual Studies

Ways of Perceiving (M4X01559)

The Art of War: A Terrible Beauty is Born

“We find people in their disputes continually appealing to certain tests and standards, which are allowed on all sides and are supposed to be established in our common nature.” (A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful by Edmund Burke) The Sublime is defined as the quality of greatness, whether physical, moral, intellectual, metaphysical, aesthetic, spiritual, or artistic. War often represents the darkness and evils of mankind and can often invoke amazing reactions from the public. These reactions are almost always negative but these kinds of reactions have a place within the sublime. Tragedy can be very poetic as proven in the works of William Shakespeare such as Romeo and Juliet and Hamlet. These works are obviously works of fiction but can this formula of tragedy be transferred and brought to life through art to make war a beautiful thing? Death, struggle, heartbreak are all part of life but in war, these certainties in life are brought right in front of our faces and we are forced to deal with it all whether we like it or not. I would like to propose that war CAN be art but also still acknowledge the disgusting nature of the events. My grandfather was a desert rat in WW2 and fought in several battles but it

doesn't stop me from appreciating a well taken photograph or painting of specific events and thinking it's amazing.

The Art of War: A Terrible Beauty is born is about trying to find the beauty in anything and everything and in this case, we're looking at war. It's not about making light of the situation or bring back any lives that have been lost but to appreciate the sense of sight and try to be lost in these pieces of art. Not only are they beautiful to look at but the pieces in the gallery are covered in historical importance. Each exhibit will represent different parts of war or a specific person related to WW2; some including posters and others just art work and a costume. Propaganda will include 4 propaganda posters from different countries with a short description under each poster telling to audience where they came from and what they represent while also explaining the history behind each piece. Next, the Alan Moore exhibit will have 5 pieces of his artwork with his most famous painting in the middle depicting a dark and gloomy concentration camp. Art has a way of giving the audience a very personal account of the incident that other mediums could not. A person like Alan Moore having gone through war and made it out in one piece and then going on to recreate his experiences through art is a really great way for people to appreciate the beauty of his experiences and the way he expresses them. Choosing Adolf Hitler's artwork was a one of the main reasons I was interested in the idea of art and war and how they are connected. Adolf Hitler was a terrible person by all accounts and widely

considered to be one of the most evil men to have ever lived but he painted some beautiful pieces of art. While war and Hitler's artwork aren't inherently connected; the core message of my theme is the reason I chose to put his work into my exhibit. You can separate art from pretty much anything and just appreciate it for what it is. If it makes you feel something then the art has done its job. My last part of the exhibit is all about the soldiers. It will include a life-size manikin wearing a WW2 private's clothes from both the allied side and axis. It will also include a painting depicting D-Day by Sean Sullivan and a poem written by my grandfather, Dick Faulkner, about his time being a desert rat in WW2. The poem is another first hand perspective of war and providing the audience of the gallery with some great insight into the emotions he was feeling as he watched people he knew dwindle away as the war continued into the later stages. Including the poem into the exhibit was a tough choice because it's so different to the rest of the items on display. I feel as if it gives the exhibit a human touch and is also extremely important to me and it gives people a different feeling compared to if they were just looking at a painting.

Some of the most memorable art in modern history took place upon walls as an advertisement to young men to persuade them to join their countries armed forces. "In order to control a population, you must first control the population's minds. Adolf Hitler knew this well — and knew that propaganda was a politically expedient instrument to impose anti-Semitism

onto the German populace.” (<http://allthatsinteresting.com/nazi-propaganda-posters>) Nazis utilised highly artistic — sometimes even beautiful — posters to promote ideas of hatred and fear of the Allied forces and allow them to “ripen” in the minds of young army recruits and civilians. While old in a physical sense, these propaganda posters remind us that the most insidious movements often cloak their ugliness in beauty. All of the artwork was commissioned by the government so it is hard to tell who exactly produced the artwork but the impression they have had on us is immeasurable. Alan Moore was an Australian war artist during World War II and he is best known for his images of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in which he depicted a grossly malnourished man walking amongst corpses. The painting really captures the horrific nature of the holocaust in which words could not. Alan saw the war up-close so he definitely has a personal element to his work. Adolf Hitler, widely considered to be the most hated and evil man to have ever lived, painted 100’s of painting and even sold them to make a living. It just proves that you can separate the artwork from everything surrounding the situation and still admire it; even if the artist is a monster. The target audience for this exhibit would have to be people fascinated by WW2 such as myself but also anyone that appreciates art in general. I chose this theme because I find it a challenging mindset to take; that finding something so often bringing up the worst feelings can make the audience appreciate what they’re looking at and separating it from the horrible events.

Bibliography:

- A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757), Quote, Edmund Burke
- All that's interesting (2013), Quote
- A Terrible Beauty is Born (1916) Research, Name
- The Art of War (5th Century), Research, Name