

Formal Analysis Of Jack Chamber's "Diego Reading"



Jack Chamber's "Diego Reading" from the AGO in Toronto, exhibits a vehemence of congenial emotion, represented in an intense combination of formal elements epitomized by the relationship of a son and his father. This 1970s artist created his version of perceptual realism exemplified through the contrast of colour, distorting what one sees through a camera lens giving the piece more meaning than a photo realistic portrayal.

The use of line is highly utilized in outlining most of the objects seen in the painting; rug, windowsill, curtains, table, painting hung around the room, TV, the book, and even the room itself. There is an equal distribution of vertical and horizontal lines providing a heightened sensation of stability. The horizon line also gives the illusion of balance, and the houses in the background appear to symbolize communitarianism and ease. The subtle curves in the snow give the sense of wind and movement; the visual sounds imply loneliness, overemphasizing a deeper sense of intimate coziness from the indoors. The abundance of lines throughout the foreground, middle-ground, and background create depth and distance.

The main focus of the art piece displays the sedate and unhurried boy and the key emotions emanated from watching him read. There is a great perception of tranquility and simplistic adroitness carefully crafted by the artist. The shape of their home is a box representing a stable home, welcomed in by the foreshortening of the carpet. An atmospheric perspective takes you from the cold outdoors by the dormant tree, as the very center point of the painting, to the objects circling the perimeter of the canvas sending forth warmth; warm objects are juxtaposed with the cool ones. In addition, the Christmas tree connects the frigid, wintry day to a time of joyful celebration with family. The open curtains help us contrast the temperature, as well as to help us understand the atmosphere in which this artwork is surrounded by. We receive

a greater sense of distance as our eyes travel from three different locations; the neighbour's house across the backyard, to the window itself, a powerful identify as we find another painting within a painting, to our eyes as we enter the room to find our son reading.

There is an importance of relative scale in this piece, reducing the world painted by Chambers so we're able to experience it within a short couple of decameters. There are no details focused in the painting, for instance the cover of the book Diego is reading has a bedaub aspect to it, and the paintings hung around the room are very hard to distinguish, despite the tone being very light. Yet, the realistic way it's painted gives a sense of clarity coming from the white used to elucidate the colour's value; typifying the peace the artist finds when looking at his son. The absence of brushstrokes reduces tension, and swift unanticipated incidents. The colour composition in this piece is especially important because of all the complimentary colours playing together to contrast the indoors from the outdoors even more. There are three sets of complimentary colours working off each other; ochre and blue are the most obvious as they are the hues directing the "inside" and "outside" areas, whereas many different objects in the room are greens against reds, such as the boy wearing the red sweater against the green chair surrounded by the green curtains. There are more patterns of green and red on the christmas tree and its ornaments, the red flowers with the green stems to the right, and the red table on the left against the green leaves from the yellow flowers. There are subtle hints of browns and pinks as well, along the wooden portion of the furniture and Diego's hair against the pink sofa chair to the left and some accents in the carpet and along the walls. Notwithstanding, that blue and orange are the primary complimentary colours depicted.

This was one of Jack Chambers' last pieces as he died soon after producing this piece in 1978. When viewing, I can sense the peaceful ease he must have felt when spending his last years surrounded by his wife and kids in a suburb home in London, Ontario. There is a calm happiness that doesn't just come from the relaxation of the holidays. The house is well kept, and there are no notions of personal disturbances from him. The weather is also calm, and optimistic alluding to his internal malady as Jack admires with unperturbed emotions, his own cognizance of death.

Appendix

Original picture taken from the AGO.



JACK CHAMBERS
1914-1994, Boston
Deep Reading
Oil on canvas, 1960
18 1/2 x 24 1/2 inches
AG-1960-10-10-10

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