Michelangelo Buonarroti, Caravaggio And Di Bondone: Comparing The Visual Style Of Artist

Painting, whether done through the mediums of oil, fresco, or watercolour works to express particular ideas and emotions on a two-dimensional surface. Paintings use various elements such as color, tone, line, shape, texture, and most importantly space which work together to make a piece function in its entirety. Space works as an element inside a contained work of art and in the environment surrounding a contained art form to a create narrative history or demonstrate authentic or mystic wonders. This paper will demonstrate that the creation of a unique visual image through space can be seen through the painting style of naturalism, renaissance, and baroque, through the artists of Giotto di Bondone, Michelangelo Buonarroti, and Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio.

Giotto di Bondone's art introduced an innovative concept of naturalism and exemplified the use of pictorial space. At a very young age Giotto was apprenticed by Cimabue, however, he exceeded his master by drifting away from the Byzantine style and moving towards the naturalism style of drawing accurately from life. Giotto was one of the first artists to place humans among a realistic background. His unique artistic style and use of space is noticeable in his work of the Legend of St. Francis in the upper basilica of the Basilica of San Francis of Assisi. In these frescoes Giotto portrays naturally living individuals within an illustrative space. His use of space works to strengthen the image of the figures, displaying them in a three-dimensional manner with organizational significance. The use of space is notable in the fresco titled "the Renunciation of Worldly Goods," Giotto uses space to separate Francis, from the cathedral and the priests as well as from his father, the palace, and the bourgeoise. Additionally, the saints hands are linked in a praying motion in the centre of the space to demonstrate the significance of prayer. The use of space in this fresco has allowed Giotto to create a multileveled and lived space differentiating this work from the limited and flat views of prior compositions.

On the other hand, Michelangelo Buonarroti had a different style and approach than Giotto. Michelangelo was a key figure of the high renaissance, he was a painter, sculptor, and architect. In 1508, Michelangelo began to work on the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel for Pope Julius II. His fresco "The Creation of Adam" depicts events from Genesis where his image of humanity reaches illustrative form. Michelangelo took a year break from painting the Sistine Chapel, upon his return he noticed that his painting style had to be altered due to the grand size of the space, he started to make his figures taller and the compositions less complex so they were easily visible from the ground. In "The Creation of Adam" the tale has been detailed in a way to only demonstrate fundamental characters on a colossal scale. Michelangelo used the renaissance style of work which respected proportions and resembled reality. Similar to Giotto, Michelangelo used a two-dimensional surface to create a three-dimensional work of art. In this fresco, the two separate figures of God and Adam do not simply appear on a surface, but rather they occupy their own space and interact within the virtual space of the painted setting. This can be seen through the use of symmetry and lines of the two characters which situates God and Adam together with the impression of curved space.

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, similar to Giotto, worked to combine a realistic observation

of the human state into his art. Caravaggio's style of painting is easily recognizable for its realism and his space-defining painting technique contrasting light and dark images to emerge a viewer in his artwork. Additionally, Caravaggio displayed biblical characters in a non-idealized fashion through the addition of signs of age and poverty and the use of contemporary clothing. This is similar to Michelangelo’s “The Creation of Adam” where rather than wearing royal garments, God only wears a light tunic and thus creating an intimate portrait of God where he is shown in a state accessible to man. This compares to Giotto’s representation of biblical characters in a space as his depiction of biblical scenes was based on the drama of the occasion. Caravaggio’s distinctive painting style can be seen in his work “Deposition.” This painting used a tenebroso effect, where the scenes is painted as if it took place in the dark with a spot-light effect on the figures. Additionally, this painting uses space to locate the figures in the foreground to break down the barrier between the viewer’s space and imagined painting space allowing the artist to display a real sense of the moment. Furthermore, unlike Michelangelo, Caravaggio use the baroque art style to display the figures in this painting in a diagonal line. Compared to high renaissance art which displayed figures in a stable pyramid shape. In this baroque style the figures are portrayed in a real and in the moment manner.

In conclusion, through comparing and contrasting painting styles as seen in “The Renunciation of Worldly Goods,” “The Creation of Adam,” and “Deposition” the impact the element of space has on a piece of art is noteworthy. The artists Giotto, Michelangelo, and Caravaggio use space similarly to create organizational hierarchy in order to portray as artworks message. However, these artists differ in their style of art, Giotto used the style of naturalism to depict stories with the minimal alteration or interpretation, his art was centered around noticeable facts and information, instead of principles and standards. Michelangelo’s renaissance style, on the other hand, is distinguishable by its illusion of space and distance on a flat surface. While Caravaggio’s baroque style is characterised by exaggerating motion in a space to produce drama through the interaction of light and dark to produce a contrasting and dramatic atmosphere.