

4.7.20 Baroque

Response questions due 4.8.20 at 9:30 AM by email (anna.carroll@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

Slide 1: Summary

Lecture Summary

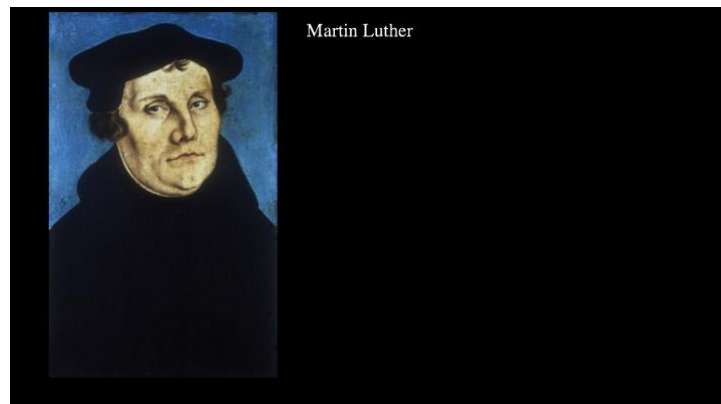
- **RESPONSE QUESTION 1/3 (Slide 6): compare and contrast these two David's. Bullet points are fine.** Some things you could think about are motion, emotion, anatomy, narrative.
- **RESPONSE QUESTION 2/3 (Slide 17): Write a short paragraph comparing these two paintings. Focus on the figures' expressions and the way they interact.**
- **RESPONSE QUESTION 3/3 (Slide 17): Please submit any questions you have.**

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Slide 2

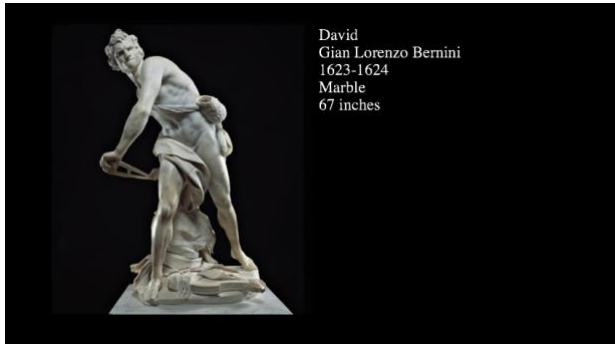


Today we'll be talking about Baroque art, which refers to the period right after the Renaissance. We need to start with some historical background, because we see art being affected by a major historical movement, the Protestant Reformation, which you read about for today. In 1517 Martin Luther writes up 95 theses that list the 95 abuses of the church, which had become very wealthy, very powerful, and very corrupt. As Luther's movement became popular, it threatened the Pope's power. The church briefly curbed spending, so they could refute Luther's charge that

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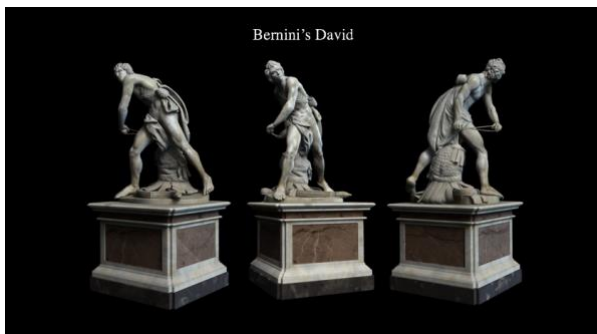
the church had become too concerned with earthly wealth. With less money spent on art, a growing wealthy merchant class started commissioning art with more secular subjects. By the end of the 16th century though, the church starts spending again and once again is a major patron of the arts. The art they commission is different though, and there is an emphasis on religious art as a teaching tool; the biblical narratives need to be very clear and need to create awe for the divine. Because of this, Baroque art has a lot of MOTION and EMOTION.

Slide 3



We can see this motion and emotion in Bernini's *David*.

Slide 4



Here we can see the sculpture from all angles. David's body is twisting and Bernini had emphasized how muscles look as the body moves. This isn't contrapposto, which is uneven distribution of weight in a static figure. Here David is mid-action, twisting to as he draws his slingshot. There is still that emphasis on anatomy that we saw in the Renaissance, but with added motion.

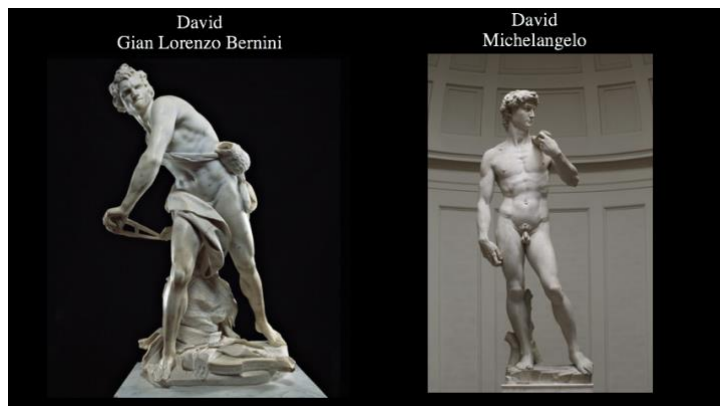
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Look closely at David's face. This is Baroque emotion. The ruffled brow, the pursed lips, the intense gaze; we can see David focusing as he moves.

Slide 6



RESPONSE QUESTION 1/2: compare and contrast these two David's. Bullet points are fine. Some things you could think about are motion, emotion, anatomy, narrative.

Slide 7



These are two different depictions of Judith slaying Holofernes, which is based on a biblical story. Holofernes was a general who attacked Judith's home. To save her people, Judith seduces

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Holofernes and slays him, with the help of her maid servant. Both Caravaggio and Artemesia Gentileschi show the main action of the story and include the 3 main characters.

The two paintings have very different effects though because of the perspective. The viewer is positioned differently with each painting. We see Caravaggio's painting straight on, which creates distance between us and the characters. It feels like we are looking at a painting, not witnessing the beheading. In Gentileschi's painting we are positioned looking down on the action, as if we are standing above the bed and watching this scene unfold. Gentileschi brings us into the scene. Both paintings are extremely naturalistic, but we are closer to the action in Gentileschi's composition.

Slide 8



Both artists' use a technique called **tenebrism- extreme contrasts between light and dark**. We can think of tenebrism as extreme chiaroscuro. Both artists also worked from live models, posed in these positions, so that they could observe what the body actually looked like in these movements, making the paintings more naturalistic.

A note on Artemisia Gentileschi: Artemisia painted a generation after Caravaggio, who was the first to really popularize tenebrism. Gentileschi's generation really looked to Caravaggio as an influence. Artemisia was the first major female painter of the period, when women were not typically artists. Women were not allowed to work from nude models or apprentice to painters, so they did not have the same opportunities as men to become painters. However, Artemisia's father was a painter and he recognized her talent early on and trained her. So she is one of the first successful female artists that we see.

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This is a very famous and very complicated painting. We can start by thinking about what we are looking at? This is a massive painting that shows Velazquez painting a portrait.

Slide 10



Velazquez looks out at the viewer from behind a large canvas. In the foreground in the princess of Spain being attended by ladies in waiting. They are surrounded by entertainers. Perhaps Velazquez is painting himself painting this scene of the princess. In a way, this is a self-portrait, in which Velazquez shows himself at work.

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Things get a little bit more complicated when we look closely at the mirror in the background. Pictured here are perhaps the King and Queen of Spain, Philip IV and his wife. Thinking about how the mirror would work, the reflection suggests that these 2 figures are standing in front of Velazquez. We can imagine that they are in fact in the same position as us (the viewer), looking into the painting. Velazquez and the princess are looking out at them/us. We become the king and queen. This painting was meant to be in the king's study, which further supports the idea that we are seeing a sort of double portrait; it's a picture of his daughter, but also a scene of his court artist painting his own portrait. This is very confusing and it's meant to be. This painting is all about the gaze.

Slide 12

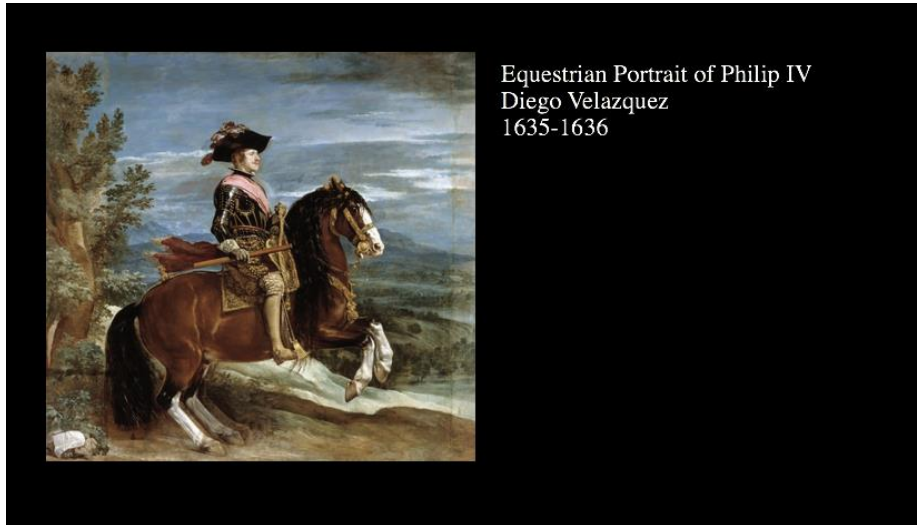


Look at all of the figures. They are all looking in different places and interacting in different ways. This makes things very unclear for the viewer; we're not sure what we're seeing or even where we are supposed to look. The man in the back may be entering or exiting, even as he turns to look back at the scene.

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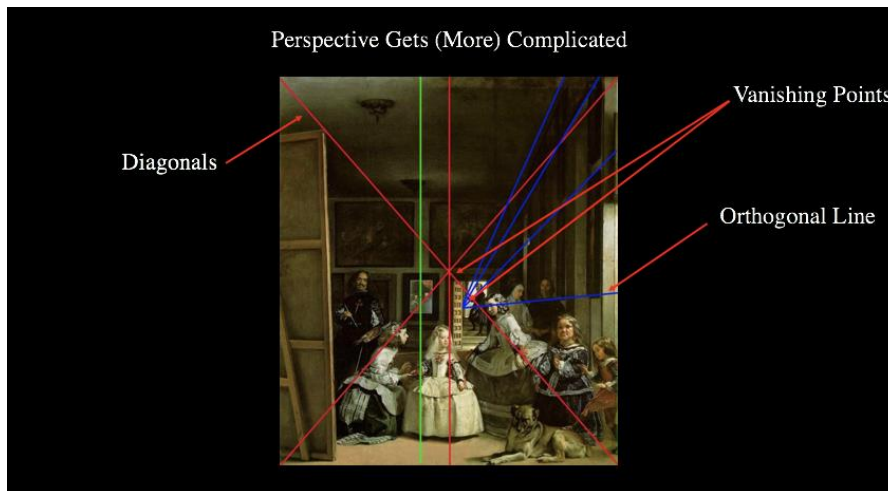
These many gazes give a sense of naturalism and spontaneity. This image does not feel posed and is a bit informal.

Slide 13



This is what a typical royal portrait would have looked like at the time. This is very posed and very formal. This is very much a portrait. *Las Meninas* seems less about portraiture, and becomes a genre scene (an image of daily life). It is about Velazquez's role and life as an artist.

Slide 14



The perspective is also very complicated in this painting because it makes use of multiple vanishing points, and diagonal lines in addition to orthogonal lines. This diagrams the different perspectival tools used by Velazquez, which builds on the simpler systems of linear perspective that we've talked about before. Velazquez is showing off.

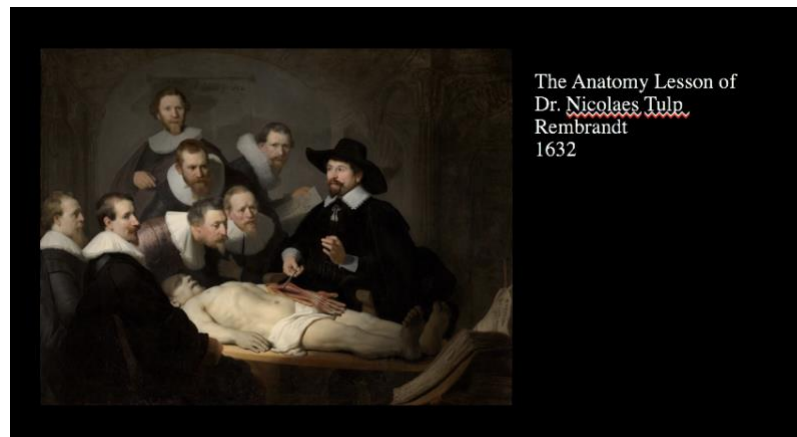
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Slide 15



Another important thing that's happening is that brushstrokes are becoming looser. When we talk about art we say that brushstrokes are "tight" when we can't distinguish between individual brushstrokes, like with Michelangelo's painting in the Sistine Chapel. In *Las Meninas* there is a very slight loosening of the brushstrokes, which we can see when we look very closely at this girl's dress.

Slide 16



This work was painted by Rembrandt, who is best known as a portrait artist. Rembrandt was born in Holland when the merchant class was expanding and getting wealthy. Because Holland was predominantly Protestant, the Catholic church wasn't commissioning art in the area like it was in Italy, where it was a major patron. In Holland, it was mostly the new wealthy middle class that paid for art, and this led to new types of art, including genre painting, which we looked at last class. In Holland, there were a lot more still lives and a lot more landscapes being painted.

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The scale of art also changed. Smaller paintings were produced and so it became a lot more common for art to appear in people's homes. It was no longer just for the wealthiest patrons with enormous palaces.

In Holland, group portraits became particularly popular. A **group portrait** is a portrait with many people.

The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp is a group portrait that Rembrandt was commissioned to paint. This painting is of a specific lecture that actually took place at the Amsterdam Anatomy Guild, where an annual lecture on anatomy was given. Pictured is the January 16th, 1632 lecture given by Dr. Nicolaes Tulp. We even know the name of the deceased person whose body is on display. This is Adriaen Adriaenszoon, a thief who had been executed. Dr. Tulp is the figure at the far right in the black hat; we can identify him because of his hat, which was a status symbol, but also his positioning. He uses a tool to show the muscles of the cadaver's arm, as a group of interested students lean over the body to look closer. The interest in science and anatomy is also reflective on the Enlightenment, a period in history when notions of modern science and experimentation began.

Rembrandt uses a few clever artistic tools in his composition. First, the cadaver is foreshortened, which creates a sense of depth in the painting. The lighting in this painting is also important; the brightest area is in the center with the cadaver. This bright spot grabs the viewer's attention and directs the eye to the main action of the scene.

Another interesting aspect is the way the figures react in this scene. Try to look at their many different facial expressions; curiosity, confusion, perhaps shock. Each figure is individualized and reacting in their own way. Two aren't even paying attention, but look out towards us.

Slide 17



RESPONSE QUESTION 2/2: Write a short paragraph comparing these two paintings. Focus on the figures' expressions and the way they interact.

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Rembrandt's painting appears far less staged than *The Osteology Lesson*. The painting on the left seems very much like a posed group portrait; everyone looks out towards the viewer, and is posed, as if they are pretending to be at a lecture. Rembrandt's work seems more like there are many individual portraits in one painting, where each figure is rendered expressively and individualistically. It feels almost like a candid.

RESPONSE QUESTION 3/3: Please submit any questions you have.