French Revolution and Photography

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Question 1- What are linear and atmospheric perspectives? Compare and contrast them.

The perspective technique is a way in which a three-dimensional object is drawn on a two-dimensional surface by focusing on its height, depth, width, and position. It is a graphical depiction of a three-dimensional image on a plain two-dimensional surface such as blank paper, canvas, or a sketchbook. There are two types of perspectives in the genre of art: Linear Perspective and Atmospheric Perspective.

In historical times, artists faced problems in depicting the perspective of objects on plain paper. Greeks and Romans knew the concept of perspectives, but they were unable to make a prominent theory on it. Filippo Brunelleschi, an Italian architect and engineer, formally discovered the law of perspective in the 15th century. The first theory of linear perspective was discovered by Leon Battista Alberti in 1435. This discovery paved the way for other European artists to work on this theory. Leonardo da Vinci was the first to introduce the concept of aerial perspective in his work. He described atmospheric perspective as the representation of different colour gradations due to atmospheric conditions.

Linear or graphical perspective revolves around the presentation of parallel lines converging on a common focal point. The word “linear” itself explicates the representation of lines. These parallel lines can be tracks of the railway line, two sides of roads, buildings, and poles. The essential element in a linear perspective is the study of geometry. The converging principle in linear perspective explicates parallel objects moving away in the picture to converge at one point.

The atmospheric perspective or the aerial perspective emphasizes the phenomenon of colour shifting as the object moves farther away. This technique is used to show the effect of the atmosphere (e.g. light) on the appearance of the object. Landscape paintings usually use this technique.

Carlson presents four planes with different brightness values concerning atmospheric perspective (landscape perspective): “The sky, ground, sloping objects, and perpendicular objects. The time of the day highly affects these brightness values” (Carlson, 140).

Linear perspective is highly recommended for interior designing, product designing, and architectural mapping. However, it acts as an additional tool in drawing/painting. On the other hand, atmospheric

perspective deals with colour shift and contrast due to atmospheric conditions. It is ideal for landscape painting.

Question 2- What is Photography? Explain how and why photographs are made.

The word photography is derived from the Greek word *photos* (“light”) and *graphein* (“to draw”). The art of “Photography” focuses on recording light with a camera with the help of a digital sensor or a photographic film to create a durable image. The major businesses using the art of photography include mass communication, arts, and video production. Joseph Nicéphore Niépce captured the first permanent photograph in 1826 in France.

The device used for taking photographs is a “camera”. The camera consists of a photographic film, a photographic plate, or an electronic image sensor (capturing medium) to capture a latent image. The process of making a photograph consists of three major steps: exposure, development, and printing. The camera focuses on the image through a lens (shutter and aperture speed). After the light exposure, the reaction between the emulsion and the light forms a latent image on the film. This latent image further creates a negative on the film. After capturing the image, the film (Light-sensitive) is removed from a camera in a dark room with red light only. The negative goes through multiple chemical processes to get a permanent negative. The photograph is made using the final printing step. The process of printing requires negative printing paper and light.

Photographs are a poignant element in human reality and memory. Photography is widely used in the genres of art, photojournalism, documentaries, etc. The art of photography conveys ideas in a creative and illustrated manner. Hesford describes photography as an image that communicates and shapes the cultural meaning of society (Hesford 210). A photograph embeds strong communication, which is the reason for photojournalism. We can capture and store our beautiful moments (memories) with the help of photography. Photographs are generally used to document events because they are cheap, easy to organize and give very good and realistic results (Joseph 9).

Question 3- According to Jacques Louis David, what should the role of the artist be in the new revolutionary society of France in the 18th century? How does this contrast with the “old” role they played under the previous government of the

king?

Jacques-Louis David is the epitome of politics and art. He is known as the painter of the French Revolution. He was a prime member of the Jacobin party, leading the French Revolution. David emphasized neoclassical art in the new revolutionary society after the French Revolution in the 18th century. He favoured Greek subjects over Roman illustrations during the French Revolution to portray reality in his paintings (*The Farewell of Telemachus and Eucharis)*. David's social and political beliefs are reflected in his pieces of art.

The French Revolution took place from 1789 to 1799. In recent years, a major shift in social and political institutions has taken place. During the French Revolution, the genre of art was highly influenced by political unrest and a new revolutionary society. Prior to the French Revolution, the artists emphasized the representation of Roman virtue, extravagance, and heroism. The Rococo style of art was popular among artists. The Rococo style is usually whimsical and ornamental. The Rococo style primarily focuses on extravagance, love, wealth, and whimsical themes.

David rejected this style of art and reflected upon the basic rights of humans, rationalism, and morality. According to David, in the new revolutionary society of France, the artists should depict neoclassical themes such as morality, human rights, liberalism, and civic sense. Realistic art was preferred after the French Revolution. His famous painting "*The Death of Marat or La Mort de Marat"* is a benchmark for other artists to work on the theme of sacrifice for morality. This painting is an excellent realistic depiction of the French Revolution. David's work reflected the philosophies of Diderot, Voltaire, and Rousseau. He emphasized the theme of freedom and nationalism during the French Revolution. David inspired other artists to work on the depiction of self-sacrifice, morality, and patriotism.

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