

How The Marchesa Casati Image Records And Preserves Public Memory

Posted on September 29, 2018

The Marchesa Casati is an artwork done by Augustus Edwin John. Sources reveal that Augustus was of Welsh origin, and he was a painter and an artist. By the time he was doing this painting, Augustus was attached to the Canadian forces, where he served the role of the war artist (Ryersson 2009).

His job description, according to sources, included making records of the Canadian participation at a peace conference held in Paris in the same year. It is at this point that he meets Casati through his other close friend, who had invited him to a party. Later, Augustus and Casati became lovers.

The image is a clear reflection of a Marchesa. In the picture, she appears to have fiery red hair, and the background is muted. Augustus intended to give this image as a present to Casati. Some artists have argued that the background is a representation of the Italian Alps, his home country. Currently, the image is stored at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, after its purchase by Sir Evans Charteris, the leader and manager of the National Portrait Gallery, in 1934.

Explanation of Memory and Relation to Images

Memory is an essential aspect of daily life since, through it, we recall events, facts, and processes. It is achieved through some steps that include encoding, storing, and retaining information and past escapades (Eppinger & others 520). Most people confuse between recalling and memory, although they are related. Different scholars have provided diverse definitions of consciousness or memory. For example, some scholars argue that Memory is the ability to retain some past information over a given period. Others say that it is the ability to apply our past experiences for us to determine our future paths. In both definitions, the aspects of experience and recalling are evident.

Preservation and keeping of memories is an important aspect. Photographs, according to recent studies, make up one of the best-known mechanisms of preserving and recording such memories. Before the introduction of cameras, artists, especially painters, were preferred since they could draw images effectively. This explains why the Canadian army hired Augustus as their war artist. For the preservation of such memories by the use of photos, such models need efficient storage mechanisms. Contrary to the same, the good old memories get destroyed. The Gallery of Ontario in Toronto has, since its adoption of the image, stored the portrait in sound conditions, hence preserving the old World War memories of the photo.

How does Marchesa Casati preserve and record public memory?

The aspect of public memory is evident in the artwork in several ways. The image moreover reminds us of the role Canada played in the world war. The background of the picture is also a reminder factor. It appears muted and highlighted; it is claimed that it represents the artist's homeland in the Italian Alps.

The above scenario demonstrates that the author vividly remembered his home country. On the same note, it is evident that the atmosphere and general environment of the Italian Alps were very fresh in his mind, and he therefore resorted to using it in his image. The element of remembering is a specific aspect of memory, hence relevant in this scenario. As identified, the artist, at the time of doing the artwork, was away from his Italian home. Also, the background still reminds us of the environment of the Italian Alps and its familiar scenery. From it, we can easily compare the view during those times with the current view and determine any observational changes.

Secondly, the aspect of Canada's top leadership is remembered through this Image. This image was drawn when the artist served as the chief artist of the Canadian army. At that time, the artist was painting the image of Canadian Prime Minister Robert Borden and other important delegations at a peace conference when he met Casati. Other events that followed after their meeting led to this artwork. In explaining the source of the image and related information, one has to remember the Canadian leadership since they facilitated this.

Furthermore, the image reminds the general public of the Role played by Canada in the First World War. As history reveals, more than 630,000 Canadians participated in the world war, whereby more than 60,000 of them were killed. Besides, Canada played a significant role in ensuring the facilitation of peace through its active participation in the Paris Peace Conference. While at this conference, the artist met Casati, who was later featured in the portrait. It is, therefore, evident that this image reminds the general public of not only Canada's role in the world war but also other events that followed the same.

Also, this image rekindles our memories about the lives of celebrities and famous people in the World War 1 era. As evident, the artist was a very famous person. This research established that he was well-known in the century for his drawings and etchings. Furthermore, he was known for the psychological insights he applied in his portraits. As such, he was a distinguished and famous person in the society. He was even recognized by King George VI in 1942 for his exemplary works. Such people were respected in the community and, as a result, had a lot of influence. Furthermore, they were rich and, at times, used their influence to acquire more possessions.

Besides, this image reminds us of the role of such artists during those times. Apart from being recognized and famous, they were among the most sought-after persons. It is evident through the

fact that the artist, though an Italian, worked for the Canadian army. Given the nature of phenomena and secrets inhibited by militaries across the world, it could be nearly impossible for someone of a different nationality to work in an army of another nation, especially during the First World War. Therefore, this reminds us that artists, during the time, were of great significance to society. Such exceptional cases were rare.

Also, the image rekindles our memories of the importance of pictures in the 20th century. According to the study, the model was purchased for fifteen thousand pounds, an amount considered to be expensive by then. Had it not been the same, the image would have been sold at a lower price and preserved poorly. Since that was contrary to the case, the copy has been well maintained and is still in use.

Conclusion

Artworks and images are among the best-known ways that have been used for many years to store valuable information and data. Data from the mentioned artifacts, depending on the environment and events, can be decoded to reveal past happenings. The evolution of the photography industry attributed to the ever-changing technological innovations has dramatically changed this. Although the artwork is used, its frequency is not as high as compared to the World War 1 era when Augustus did this portrait. The portrait, other than the above-explained scenarios, decodes additional meaningful information that makes us understand the past in social, cultural, and political measures. Such artworks should be carefully preserved to prevent them from losing their significance in modern society (Davies 230). The government and general public should support any initiative meant to store, record, and preserve such important artworks.

References

- Davies, Stephen. "Aesthetic judgments, artworks and functional beauty." *The Philosophical Quarterly* 56.223 (2006): 224-241.
- Eppinger, Ben, Michael Herbert, and Jutta Kray. "We remember the good things: Age differences in learning and memory." *Neurobiology of Learning and Memory* 93.4 (2010): 515-521.
- Ryersson, Scot. *The Marchesa Casati: portraits of a muse*. Harry N Abrams Incorporated, 2009.