

This article is a discussion of artworks Ivory and boxwood carvings, 1450-1800 and ivory carving in Gothic Era, 13th-15th centuries. It will attempt to describe the two discussing their formal properties and finally discuss the pieces in relation to one another alongside a conclusion.

Ivory and Boxwood Carvings, 1450-1800

Ivory carving is the work of art carved for decoration purposes or basically as an ornament. This type of art was carried out in the ancient times although it's still being practiced in many parts of the world especially in Africa. The ivory which is used is mainly sourced from animals like elephants but it can be replaced with horns and bones. The very first carvings were brought in the limelight in the early Stone Age period. It is believed that the Europeans were very good at making these carvings from bones and other sources with naked women carvings being very rampant (Phillips Son & Neale, p34).

In Africa, ivory carving started in Egypt after which is spread to other parts of Mesopotamia. The Greeks are known for improving the ivory carvings with application of gold to replace some parts where wood was used (Phillips Son & Neale, p38).

Going by the ivory and boxwood carving, 1450-1800 provided as the case study, looking at it, it looks like it was carved from a tusk of an elephant due to its uniqueness. The carving is traced back in seventeenth century and believed to be Joseph and wife of Potiphar. The artist who came up with this work of art based it on the biblical context in the book of Genesis (Phillips Son & Neale, p39). Joseph a young handsome man, who is seen in the carving, turned down the proposal of Potiphar's wife to make love to her. The artist carved it in a fine way so much so that, one look at it, one can have a rough idea what is happening in the carving.

In the old book, it is believed that cases of rape were very rampant and that is why the artist carved a naked woman forcing a clothed man to go to bed with him whom obviously is resisting. A close look at the carving, one will realize that the movements tell a lot in that, Joseph's hair is blown an indication of how he retreats with haste and firmness. The expensive bedding tells the viewer that indeed the woman is affluent and for sure the king's wife (Phillips Son & Neale, p40). The final polishing that was done by the artist gives the carving a spectacular look and the viewer can only wish that he or she can just touch the carving to feel the smoothness on it. This I think is meant to indicate the intimacy that is evident in the carving. Although the real artist behind this piece of art is not well known, it is believed to be the work of Balthasar Griessmann an Austrian who lived the same time when the carving came into existence and famous for ivory carvings (Phillips Son & Neale, p54).

The cream complexion of this carving gives it a distinguished characteristic from the ordinary carvings. The artist considered so many factors like the background and the message he wanted to communicate to the viewer. Indeed, it is a classic example of a thousand words that a picture tells. On the same note, the smoothness of Potiphar's wife body as brought out by the artist clearly indicates that she must have been a very beautiful woman and that what makes her think she can pursue any handsome man who comes on her way (Phillips Son & Neale, p74). In addition to that, the artist creates in the mind of the viewer a young principled man, in this case Joseph. For a man to resist a naked beautiful woman, it indeed calls for a lot of energy to control the feelings. Joseph was not only intelligent but also a man of his word which is what the artist portrays in the carving.

The effect created by the background and the finely portrayed bedding represents affluent and the artist achieved the objective with no reasonable doubt. I think by doing this the artist communicates to the viewer that whatever is read in the Old Testament is a fact and the carving is only a confirmation. The cutting must have been carefully done by the artist as the carving resembles a real image and the artist manages to achieve emotional display in this beautiful carving (Phillips Son & Neale, p84).

Ivory carving in the Gothic Era, 13th~15th centuries

A close look at this piece of art creates in the mind of the viewer issues regarding Christian faithful. The carving is depicted to have emanated from Paris, a present to one J. Pierpont Morgan. At the base, the carving is carved to portray the mother of Jesus, Virgin Mary holding him when he was still a young boy (Franz von Reber, p56). On each side from where she is standing, the artist designed some unique angels to identify with the divinity of the young savior. On the upper side of the carving, the artist carves Jesus Christ being crucified and present are Mary and John who act as eye witnesses that the son of man was crucified to save human being (Franz von Reber, p58).

The wings speak volume in regard to political system during this time of Jesus Christ. On the lower side, Paul and Peter each holding a sword are looking at Virgin Mary and the young Jesus Christ the savior. The idea behind these two is symbolic in that, they represent the societies that were part of first Christians the Jews and gentiles (Franz von Reber, p66). Just on the upper side of these two gentlemen, the artist saw it wise to represent the early church of Christian faithful Ecclesia and the Jewish belief Synagogue. The holding of the sword indicates how Christian faithful became dominant during that time over the mismanaged and discarded Synagogue. The early Christians believe that following the crucifying of the messiah god put to an end the agreement he had entered with the children of Israel entering into a new one with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Franz von Reber, p76).

Using the elephant tusk to come up with this spectacular work, the piece of art in this case looks fabulous and unique. Right from the word goes; a viewer can easily tell that the carving is a representation of the Christians fraternity. The image of Jesus Christ on the cross sparks emotions in the mind of the viewer (Franz von Reber, p106). This the artist with no doubt has achieved. A look at the carving, one distinguishes the words of the same as found in the New Testament to reality. The swords in the carving must have been used symbolically by the artist to represent blood shed and struggle between the Jews and the gentiles that existed during that time. The political leaders who are present in the carving must have been used by the artist to communicate to the viewer that indeed Jesus Christ was always in constant problems with the political class. By the two leaders holding swords, it is evident that they were ready to eliminate Christ from the beginning (Franz von Reber, p156).

By the artist of this carving, showing Jesus being an infant and in the next minute on the cross, tells a thousand words. The viewer is briefed on the happenings that led to all this right from the beginning. Jesus Christ is born but her death is engineered by the political leaders who are also present in this carving. The angle at which the artist designed this carving clearly tells the viewer that Christ was surrounded by many things which he was to face upon his birth. Among them was to bring the church in the world (Franz von Reber, p516). This, the artist shows by the use of Paul and Peter. Paul is known for serving in the church at Corinth upon the ascension of Jesus Christ. The fact that Peter holds a sword is symbolic of what he did when he chopped the ear of a soldier when

they were arresting Christ. Indeed, this carving has more than meets the eye. Just next to where Jesus is crucified, there are some two women who appear to be mourning; this is used by the artist to achieve the emotional perspective.

To compare these two pieces of work by different artists, one thing which is evident is that both of them are based on Christianity although the timing is different. The ivory and boxwood carving is a representation of the old testament while the gothic carving represents the New Testament. The issues that are evident seem to compromise the Christians faith. While the former is believed to have come from Austria the latter is from Paris (Franz von Reber, p556). The former is meant to bring on the surface some of the challenges that Christians face while the latter indicates challenges that Christ himself faced. So the idea here is, just like Joseph faced difficulties so is Christ. In the same manner Joseph is fleeing away from sins so should Christians.

The cutting portrayed by the artists in both cases is magnificent. The colors were carefully chosen so that the background in both cases is clearly brought out. The artists in both cases did this having put in mind the message they wanted to communicate. In the former, the artist wanted to portray romance when Potiphar's wife made some proposals on Joseph. In the latter, the artist wanted to communicate to the viewer that the reason why Jesus was born was to be crucified in order for a human being to be forgiven his sins (Franz von Reber, p556). The artist tried to choose a color that would portray sense of forgiveness. In both cases, the carvings and their components are carefully chosen by the two artists. The two are not confusing making it easier for viewers in both cases to get the message being communicated. The idiosyncratic issue in both cases is how the artists managed to communicate a lot through carvings. Their cutting to avoid contradicting the viewer or rather deviate from the original context in the bible is just peculiar. If the viewer reads the stories being represented in both cases he or she can have a clear picture on the objective of the artists' right from the beginning (Franz von Reber, p566).

The design of artwork that has been used in the gothic picture indicates the suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross. The young Christ being held by his mother is an indication of the love of mother to the child (Franz von Reber, p567). These two were included in the carving by the artist to indicate the theme of religion and sympathy. The sympathy in this case is portrayed by the two women who are beneath the image of Christ on the cross (Franz von Reber, p567). The two angels who are standing on either side of Virgin Mary is an indication of what happened when Jesus Christ was born (Franz von Reber, p568). The angels came from the heaven to welcome the Christ on earth. The artist included that as a symbol that the child was a son of God. On the right side stands a robbed man with a sword (Franz von Reber, p569). The artist must have used that to add more meaning to the gothic picture. This must be Herod when he went to visit the new child when he was born purporting to be taking present but with other intentions (Franz von Reber, p570).

In conclusion, it is evident that a picture is worth a thousand words if what is seen in the two pictures is anything to go by. In the ancient times there indeed existed some great artists who took their time to shape ivory into some meaningful piece of art that would really have an impact on the community. The two pictures are still relevant to Christians today and even generations to come although having been carved so many years back (Franz von Reber, p571). For an artist to match his carving with the intended message, the color of the carving must be carefully chosen so as to have the perfect background that speaks volumes in the mind of the viewer (Franz von Reber, p572).

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