

Expressive Essay

The famous painter Marie Louise Elizabeth Vigee Lebrun painted “Self portrait in a straw hat” in 1782, and the talented Giovanni Bellini painted “The Doge Leonardo Loredan” in c1501. I am going to compare these two painters and portraits. This essay will consist of the painters careers, explaining each portrait, comparing each portrait and giving my own personal opinion.

The French, Marie Louise Vigee Lebrun was an; attractive, successful artist in her time. Marie was influenced by her father as a child; her father was a very famous painter, Greuze. Vigee painted portraits and genre pictures. When Marie was young she got married to Lebrun. Lebrun was a painter and art dealer. Marie had begun a career in portraits, but Lebrun stole most of the money she made from her paintings. After a while Marie left Lebrun, after that her career started to take off. Marie started to sell paintings for a big commission. She was appointed the Queens painter and became a close friend to her; this is how Marie became so famous in her day. Marie grew up in France but during her career she left France to escape the Revolution, and then to avoid the rule of Napoleon. During this period of time that she left France she travelled throughout Europe, going to England and Russia. As she was travelling she did paintings in most of the countries she visited, Marie was away from France for three years.

Marie's painting of herself looked flawless, casual and very real. The picture is of her painting herself; the pose that she painted was formal and very popular at this time. Marie is wearing a straw hat (obviously from the title). The hat looks bendy, with red, white, blue and green flowers; it has a feather sticking with white feathers with black tips. Her blonde hair dangles from the bottom of the hat, her hair is frizzy at the top but she has elegant curls towards the end of her hair. Her face is fair, with clear skin; she has a peaceful pose, with her mouth open which is unusual because it is hard to keep your mouth open for a long period of time. She had wide, brown eyes, which had no make-up of them. She has no make-up apart from a little blusher on her cheeks. Earrings hang down from her ears, they look gold

with two blue stones in each earring, and the earrings look very expensive. To go with the hat and the earrings, she wears an elegant, expensive, silk, salmon coloured dress. This has white frills at the neck and at the sleeves. A rustic, orange coloured net, sash around the middle. She has a black, silk shawl wrapped around her arms; the shawl has black net frills at the edges. She holds in her hands eight paintbrushes and her pallet, which has different shades of each colour. There is also a blue-sky background with some fluffy, white clouds.

She painted in such a way that it looked almost like a photograph; it was her technique with the brush and paint. Her paintings are very detailed with great delicacy, and flattering to her models. This painting is an amazing, solid painting and in some ways relaxing. It is relaxing because of the shades of colour that she used, light pastel colours in the face and hair but contrasting with the dark sash, which makes her serene face stand out more. Having a high-quality contrast in a painting is very good especially if the painter wants to draw attention to a particular part of the painting. Back to the word peaceful, having the sky in the background shows that she feels in a peaceful place and that maybe where she wants you to be when you look at the portrait. In the portrait you can see no brush strokes, which may show she is quite a neat person and she has a great deal of control for the paint and the paint brush.

Giovanni Bellini was one of the most important painters in Venice in his time. Giovanni was born and raised in Venice with his mother and father, Jacopo Bellini and Anna Reversi. Jacopo and Anna had their eldest son Gentile, he was named after his father former art teacher, Gentile du Fabiano, and they also had Giovanni and his sister Niccolsa. Before Giovanni's career began he started as an apprentice in his father's workshop, and gradually built his talent and became famous. People say that Giovanni was the most brilliant painter of all the Bellini painters.

In c1501 Giovanni Bellini painted the portrait "The Doge Leonardo Loredan". He became the duke of Venice in 1501 when he was 65 until 1521 when he was 85, so for 20 years he served as duke to Venice. This painting is very similar to Maria's portrait of herself, in the way that it looks like a photograph. The duke of Venice is wearing a Tunic, the Doge hat,

which is the equivalent to the Queens crown, the *Corno Gogale* is the Italian name given to the Doge. The tunic is embroidered with leaf patterns. His hat is of a fair size, it comes to a point at the top back of the hat. The hat comes over his ears, with what appears to be cream ribbon. The Doge has the same pattern as the tunic. Both the tunic and the Doge are cream, with rustic green for the leaves, with some light blue patches in various places. The Doge has a band of gold thread material around it, which draws attention to the hat. Down the centre of the Tunic there is buttons, I think look like chestnuts, but are actually called the “golden bells”. This was his superior dress, which he only wore for special occasions. There is a royal blue back ground, with having a dark back ground it draws more attention to the face, as he has a lighter skin tone. Giovanni painted this very well this shows that he had a great passion for his country, and great respect for Leonardo Loredan.

Both paintings are exquisite; my personal favourite is Marie Louise Elisabeth Vigee Lebrun. It stands out to me more because of its bright colours, where as Giovanni Bellini painting is good but doesnt call out to me the same. Asking an older gentleman which one he preferred, he like Maries portrait. He said “Giovannis portrait of Leonardo looks to severe, and it doesnt make you feel happy.” Even though Leonardo looks peaceful he doesnt make you feel it, he has got a tense look about him that may make you feel on edge. In asking a girl aged 15 she does not like any of them, she said “they are too old fashioned, and I would defiantly not have any hanging in my living room”. This shows that both paintings have different affects on each person. Maries portrait could appear to be strange as well because the way her face is, with her eyes looking straight at you, you might feel like you are being watched.

In conclusion both artists painted the portraits very well, both are very impressive. Its amazing to see that something so beautiful was painted with such basic paint supplies. All the paint sources we have nowadays and its still not that easy, but both painters make it look so effortless. You can see from the painting that the artists had complete control over the paint brush and paint and it all paid off.