

Considerations on Colour Techniques in Italian Renaissance Painting

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Abstract

In the Renaissance, with the growth of humanism, painters dealt with classical themes to fulfill commissions for the decoration of the homes of patrons such as the case of Botticelli's 'Birth of Venus' or allegorical content for civic commissions. Other sources of content were found in the writings of humanists or in religious themes, of which Michelangelo's Ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is an outstanding example. The pictorial representation underlying painterly practices were being transformed through the observation of nature, the study of anatomy, the establishment of perspective as a system, as well as the study of colour and light.

This paper emphasizes the use of colour and light in Italy, from Giotto's innovations to the Early Renaissance and how it developed into High Renaissance by invoking the most outstanding technical and artistic contributions of Michelangelo, Rafael and Leonardo da Vinci and their colour systems. The Treatises by Cennini and by Alberti are integrated for their contribution to this innovative era in Florence.

Venice is not contemplated within this paper, not for the sake of its irrelevance, but rather, due to the enormous relevance of the Venetian 'colorito', with its unique and distinct direction and development.

Keywords: Renaissance Painting. Alberti and Cennini. *Cangiante. Unione. Sfumato.*