

Historical Infiltrators: Spain —

A Reflection on Stereotypes of Human Beauty Through Art History

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Abstract: Historical infiltrators is a teaching-learning experience carried out with students in the second cycle of secondary education, in which they reflect on the influence that stereotypes of human beauty have on the perception of others, of oneself and how the influence on interpersonal relationships, self-esteem and self-well-being they have. Art has been the host subject of the experience and, during its implementation, personal and digital skills of the students have been developed. The intervention has consisted of the reinterpretation of classic works of art by digital means, transforming the people represented through other different features of beauty. The entire digital process has been complemented in parallel with personal defenses on group interventions and reflections on the stereotypes by which we are influenced and the repercussions they have on our lives.

Key words: stereotypes of beauty, human beauty, digital art, art history

1. Introduction

The perception and representation of human beauty has always been present throughout our history, and it can be said that the search for beauty is part of our own human nature. The contemplation of beauty has made generations of people sigh, it has made equal parts fall in love and make them suffer. Beauty, however, is not immutable and each culture or even each historical period has different ideals of beauty. Beauty is also totally subjective and has more to do with the predisposition of the viewpoint than with the reality of the gaze.

This experience is part of the project “Women in Art”, which promotes an alternative look at the history of art, giving visibility to women artists and reinterpreting works through the perspective of women. In this context, the representation of both male and female beauty induces reflection on the emptiness of stereotypes and frees men and women from their need for fulfilment.

Historical Infiltrators reinterprets historical works in which men and women appear in the aesthetic fashion of the time as they would be if a contemporary person had been represented. This final comparison between the original work and the reinterpreted one induces reflection and the relaxation of expectations. Special attention has been paid to representing elderly men and women, overweight, different race and poorly proportioned facial features in order to show that beauty is everywhere and only depends on the eyes with which people are looked at, not being dragged down by social stereotypes.

The present is characterized by the coexistence of different cultures that mix and influence each other. There

is the paradox that we have more criteria and information than ever before and at the same time, access to information in a global way, we are more pressured than ever in the search for these ideals. It is now that the development of a deep and different look at stereotypes of beauty and at the very meaning of beauty makes sense. Secondary school students digitally transformed works of art by questioning these representations and modifying the originals by creating diverse people: large, old, with glasses, children, etc.. This freedom and aesthetic normalization is what has been wanted to be transferred in the Historical Departed.

2. Description of the educational activity

2.1 Initial Activity

The introductory activity consisted of the transformation of Sandro Botticelli's portrait of Simonetta Vespucci, who was considered the most beautiful woman of the Renaissance. Simonetta became through image processing an older woman, a woman with disharmonious features, of another race and an overweight woman.

The transformation was carried out through GIMP program of open source. The students were able to have open video tutorials and other specific ones prepared to clarify some specific tasks. The deliveries of the activities were carried out on the classroom platform.

This initial activity was accompanied by reflections from the students about the current ideals of beauty, both male and female, how they feel about having to achieve them and the frustration generated by feeling insufficient.



Figure 1 Initial Activity- Reinterpretations of the Pòstume Portrait of Simonetta Vespucci, by Sandro Boticelli, 1476.

2.2 Final Activity

After the initial introductory activity of the topic to be reflected on and in which the students have become familiar with the use of the image program, the intervention in historical works was proposed. The intervention was preceded by a presentation in which the most representative stereotypes of historical periods were exposed.

The interventions were divided into two parts that ranged from Prehistory to the Renaissance in the first part and from the Baroque to the present day in the second one. All the interventions had to be justified through cards and these reflections, as well as the final results, were publicly exposed to the class group, generating a reflective

debate.

During the course of the activity, the students had the opportunity to self-manage and look for resources on their own, peer help also played a fundamental role.

Some examples of intervention can be considered below:



Figure 2 Reinterpretation of the Work the Arnolfini Marriage - Jan Van Eyck, 1434

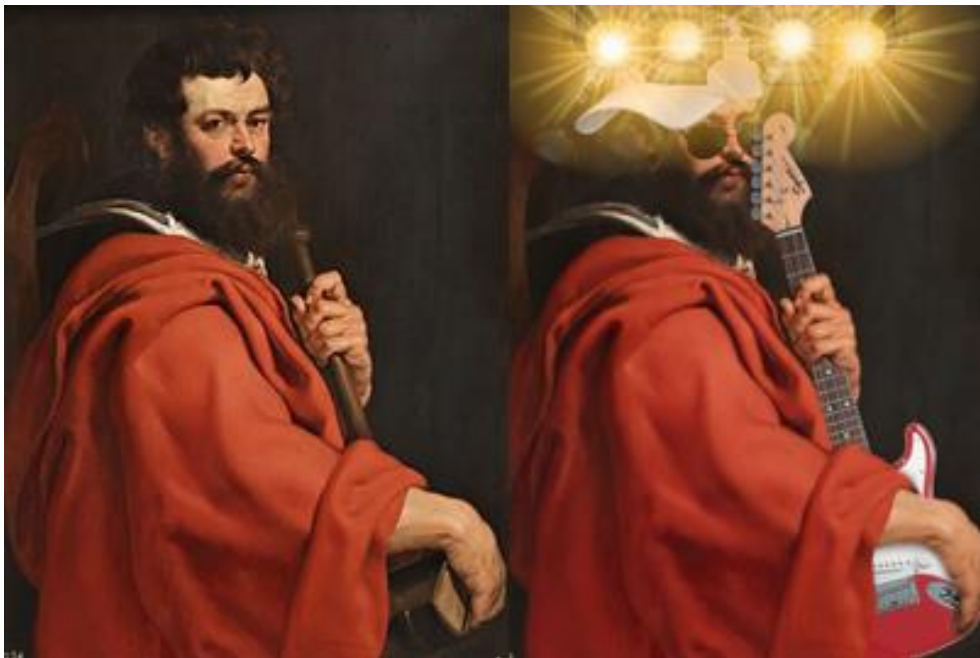


Figure 3 Reinterpretation of the work James the Elder - Peter Paul Rubens, 1612

2.3 Final Evidence of Implementation

All final evidence was collected in a permanent virtual exhibition on the Spatial platform. The results can be seen at the following link:

<https://www.spatial.io/s/Infiltrados-historicos-64da27bf2d5eb1982f2905e2?share=4163717800811443040>



Figure 4 Bougival's Ball- Renoir, 1883

3. Conclusion

The experience was highly satisfactory for the students and the final evidence gathered in the virtual exhibition has been made public through the website of the Bosc de Montjuïc institute. It should be noted that the project Women in Art, of which Historical Infiltrators is part, has been recognized by the Department of Education as an Educational Practice of reference for pedagogical innovation.

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