**Girl Before a Mirror by Pablo Picasso Analysis Essay**

Girl before a mirror is a 1932 oil on canvas painting by renowned Spanish painter Pablo Picasso. The image depicts a Girl's symmetrical sides; one is painstakingly detailed in a dark tone, while the other is vivid and obvious (Gottlieb, 1966). The colors in this artwork are intense and organized adjacent to individual complements, creating visual interaction between form and shape. Pablo critically used a form to give aesthetic experience by drawing viewers' attention transversely to the canvas. It features numerous circular shapes balanced out by the background's diagonal lines. The subject of the painting is a woman with a full facial image, seen by the audience as she surveys her reflection and notices a change in her appearance. While cubism movement paintings emphasized monochromatic color palettes, geometrical shapes, and leveled picture planes, Girl before mirror goes beyond this norm. Thus, this painting manifests sexual energy, especially of a female body choreographed in multiple perspectives, and exhibits allegorical significance.

**Visual Analysis**

A woman is depicted standing and extending her arm toward the mirror to touch her reflection. Symmetrically, the mirror and the women overwhelm the whole canvas and are centrally conveyed as the vertical axis of the painting. As a cubist, Pablo Picasso integrates the two sides by reaching motion to emphasize the lasting relationship between the mirrored image and the woman (Gottlieb, 1966). He choreographed red strips starting from the Girl's chest and elongating it to her fingertip, thus, giving it easy flow and unity. The portrait is juxtaposed with various shapes, contrasting the importance of the reflection and the Girl's body. The shapes are prominent in the background and usually serve as a backdrop. However, this painting has been used as a metaphor for Pablo, who allows the background to aid the main subject and comes out as the focal point (Robinson, 1988).

Still, on the aspect of contrast and juxtaposition, the image is considerably about self-reflection and perhaps more of dualism; It shows two sides of a woman. On the left, she seems tender, younger, and innocent, while her reflection on the right shows a fading, dark presence and worn out, perhaps aging. Essentially the woman is reflecting on how her face is gradually changing, fading, and flawed (Robinson, 1988). The differing shapes, colors, and lines narrate the story of vanity, and it is a contemplation of self-worth which must bow to the law of nature by vanishing. Pablo's use of geometrical shapes is intended to allow the subject of the painting to be seen in two states concurrently. Thus, identifiable and unidentifiable, these structures and patterns are complemented with powerful colors which portray the subject as intended.

Pablo employs texture in agreement with a collection of analogous and complementary colors marked with values, hues, and lights that facilitates dramatic difference in the middle of the two objects (the image and reflection). The positive and dominant colors are blue, lavender, green, and yellow; when colors are used with various shapes, it creates value and contrast to the area. This is evident in the profile's frontal head, which portrays lighter values like lavender and yellow. While the reflection on the mirror is painted using a rough texture with a predominance of blue around the countenance, which denotes darker values (Naini, 2009). The deployment of supportive colors like green and red is essential in brightening the canvas. In contrast, the deployment of various analogous combinations like green and blue or green and yellow creates unity by blending them. At the same time, the conspicuous use of reds and green gives a peculiar severity to the image.

**Contextual Analysis**

Many critics believe this painting was an erotic image of Pablo's girlfriend, Marie Therese Walter, and had a symbolic meaning. Nonetheless, the subject matter of the painting perhaps evokes intense analysis and reasoning. Many pieces of the literature suggest that it is vanity. Pablo contemplates the stunning beauty of his girlfriend fading away as she ages (Naini, 2009). He looked at her in her current state and imagined her when she gave in to the law of nature (worn out). When you critically observe the painting, you can interpret various symbols from different parts of the portrait. The Girl's face, for instance, is painted with a side profile as well as a full facial image. One side of the image shows daytime, where she showcases her beauty dolled up with makeup, while the other side is characterized with a rough texture to denote nighttime when she takes out the makes up and remains vulnerable. When the woman looks at herself in the mirror, she sees herself as an older woman. From the discoloration of green colors on her forehead, the fainting of her facial features to the lines that denote her youthful body has faded, and gravity has taken a toll on her (Naini, 2009).

**Conclusion**

In a nutshell, the compositional strategy of Girl before the mirror is based on symmetrical balance conglomerated with various colors and shapes. Ideally, the symmetry is intended to bring the focus in a way that the two sides are different (not alike). The woman's face in the image does not relate to the characters in the reflection. Pablo creates a balance of cool and warm colors (Rosenblum, 1982). Warm colors are used on the Girl, while cool colors are primarily used on her reflection. The image is a symbolic depiction of vanity; thus, even the beauty and youthfulness vanish.

**References**

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