

IDAC TECHNIQUES ART ANALYSIS



INTRODUCTION

This document is a religious painting called “The Descent from the Cross”, made by Roger van der Weyden in the year 1435. Currently it is located in the Museo del Prado and it belongs to the Gothic style developed during the Middle Ages.

DESCRIPTION

This painting is asymmetrical and does not create balance. The figures are slightly less than life-size. Christ is not bearded and his body is being lowered from the Cross by three men. The old man is probably Nicodemus, the youth, apparently a servant and the figure wearing cloth of gold is probably Joseph of Arimathea. On the extreme right, the woman wringing her hands is the Magdalen. Behind Joseph, the bearded man in green is probably another servant. On the left, the Virgin has fainted and is falling in a pose that echoes that of Christ's dead body. She is sustained by Saint John the Evangelist, assisted by a woman in green, who is probably Mary Salome.

ANALYSIS

The immense power of the painting lies less in attempts to understand and individualise the emotional reactions of the protagonists than in indirect, even subliminal, attacks on the feelings and thoughts of the viewer. Rogier probably began by making a detailed study to be approved by his patrons. Using rather large brushes and a paint rich in medium, he then copied his study freehand, and this copy constitutes the bold underdrawing that is revealed in infrared reflectograms. When he painted, he did not always follow his underdrawing: the heads of Mary Salome, Joseph of Arimathea and the bearded man in green are underdrawn higher; several of the hands and feet, the rungs of the ladder and many areas of drapery have been altered. Rogier's changes of mind are always of interest, while the underdrawing itself,

rapidly and boldly executed, reveals a spontaneous creativity that may surprise many observers. The sureness and speed of his technique and the confidence of his brushwork are best admired through microscopes or in vastly enlarged detail photographs.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, Rogier van der Weyden's incredible eye for detail, his heart-wrenching portrayal of a mother losing a son and his use of a shallow, simple background to emphasise the central scene even more has made it possible for him to create a painting that would elicit powerful emotions from any audience regarding it, solidifying its important place in history.