Louis XIV at Maastricht Image Analysis

Description and Visual Analysis: The image that will be analyzed in this paper is the painting *Louis XIV at Maastricht*, painted by Pierre Mignard, in 1673. Mignard was a French artist that lived from 1612 to 1695 when he died in Paris, France (“Pierre Mignard”). This painting was completed in England in 1673, shortly after the Siege of Maastricht (Zirpolo 33). Mignard painted this picture using oil paints on a canvas, and it is now on display in the Galleria Sabauda, located in Torino, Italy.

The main focus of this painting is Louis XIV of France, dressed in common colors of royalty: red and gold, riding a horse. King Louis is being crowned with a crown of leaves by the Greek Goddess Victoria. She is winged, and she is carrying a flag that is blowing in the wind. The flag partially shows the picture of a sun with a face and the flag reads “nec pluribus impar,” a Latin phrase that literally translates to “not unequal to many” (Riley 25). Louis XIV is wearing armor like he has just come out of battle, but it is not French armor that would be worn in that time period. Behind King Louis, in the distance, the city of Maastricht, Netherlands is visible. French troops can be seen following him as they leave Maastricht following the siege.

Cultural Analysis: This picture was painted to honor Louis XIV after his successful siege of Maastricht, Netherlands. The siege took place from June 6, 1673 until July 1, 1673 and less than 50,000 men were lost from either side (Field). Because this painting is a tribute to Louis XIV, some of the aspects of the painting do not accurately depict the time. King Louis is not
wearing clothing that reflects the style of French Royalty at that time; he is actually dressed in Roman apparel. He was depicted this way to show his power and it was likely a result of the French Renaissance, because of the lasting effects of classicism which is the “imitation, quotation, appropriation of Greece and Rome as they were known and imagined” (Wood). Louis XIV was being portrayed as a Roman leader as if he just left battle, but if he truly did just leave battle, he would probably be wearing a mask or a helmet to protect his face and head, but, since this picture is a tribute to his victory, his face is uncovered and visible.

Social Analysis: This image was painted specifically for Louis XIV’s personal use. It is likely that he requested it to be painted as a piece of decoration to be displayed in his palace. Since it was used as decoration, outside people would see it only at royal events in the palace. Louis XIV used statues, rather than paintings, to commemorate his larger war victories. For example, in Place des Victoires, the original statue of Louis XIV showed him stepping on the Triple Alliance; the statue was a much more public monument than this painting (Wood). Although the painting was not distributed widely, it is noteworthy that the painting represents how Louis XIV wanted the guests he invited to his home to see him. He was showing off his power, wealth, bravery and prominence to anyone that came to the palace, whether it was leaders from other countries or wealthy members of society. Louis XIV is holding a baton in his right hand which can be seen as a sign of power like a scepter. His horse’s saddle was made from a cheetah’s hide, which is not realistic; it is just another way to show his wealth in the painting.

Ideological Analysis: Louis XIV has often been known as the “Sun King” throughout history (Wood). It is clear that the flag, which depicts half of the sun with a face in the middle, that Victoria, the roman goddess, is holding represents the king’s title. Because of his title, Louis XIV is often connected to the Roman God, Phoebus Apollo; Apollo, among other things, is the
Roman God of light, which is why he is often connected to the sun. “In 1953 Louis officially adopted Apollo—Le Roi Soleil (The Sun King)—as one of the key emblematic symbols of his reign” (Riley 24). This shows Louis VIX’s relation with Apollo, and helps the observer understand why there are aspects of Roman Ideologies present in the painting. Another example of a parallel between Louis XIV and the Roman Goddess in the picture is that Victoria “was especially worshipped by the [Roman] Army” (“Victoria”), and the painting shows Louis XIV during the aftermath of a military siege. These connections to Roman religion further connects this painting to classicism, which was mentioned in the cultural section of the image analysis.

Word Count: 820.
Works Cited


