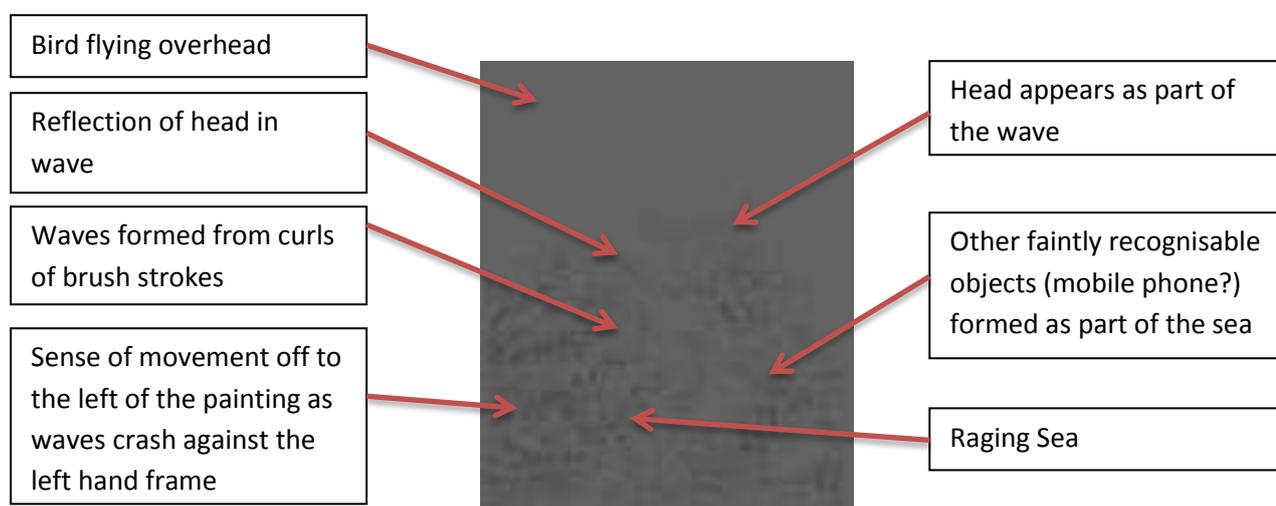


Drawing the Sea: Self-Portrait by Maggi Hambling



Oil on canvas, 86.5x71cm, 2011-12, property of the artist

- Very strong brushstrokes and thickly applied paint give great energy to the painting
- Looks tonally very simple from a distance – close up has many shades of blue, black, brown and white
- Can make out hair, eyes, nose, mouth of artist
- Artist and sea blend into one
- Great sense of power in the waves from paint and brushstrokes

Description

At first glance this looks like a painting of a rough sea, then as you look at the crest of the waves someone's face is visible, looking out at the viewer. It is not a separately painted object placed in the sea, but an integral part of the whole painting.

Great swirls of paint form the waves to give a strong impression of the power and energy of the sea. At a distance the picture looks a murky grey colour with white crests to the waves. Closer inspection reveals the colour to be made up of hues of blue, green, grey, white and brown.

Across the top of the painting a bird swoops over the waves leaving a trail in its wake. Very broad brushstrokes are used to paint the wings of the bird and many very small brush strokes have been used to paint the trail.

Interpretation

Over the last decade or so Hambling has produced a number of paintings of the sea, described by Collins (2013) as her "raging beast" and "continuing obsession".

Here she portrays that obsession painting herself as an integral part of the sea, waves crashing through her.

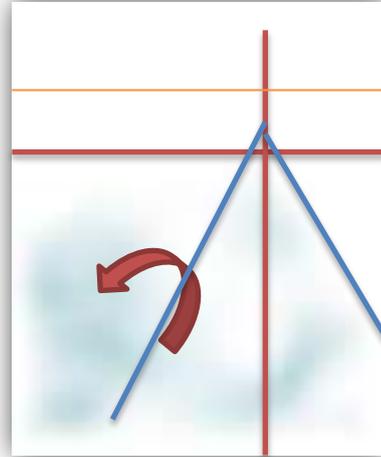
There is huge energy and power in this painting, deriving from the artist's skill in using the oils and brushstrokes to build up the strength of the waves.

The composition of the painting is interesting:

The face of the artist is situated on the intersection of the upper and right hand thirds of the painting. The right side of the face, especially the right eye, are distorted and are being swept into the wave next to them.

The waves crash away from her to the left while the sky and the smooth flight of the bird above suggest calm and serenity.

There is a strong sense of movement from the waves breaking to the left of the painting.



Evaluation

This is a very different self-portrait to the more traditional style, whilst the artist is recognisable in the painting; it is not about her external appearance but all about her passion and spirit.

The oil is very thickly applied to parts of the bottom left corner, giving an almost 3D effect to the sea.

Collins (2013 p258) states that "The freedom of both the imagination and the subconscious are crucial factors in her work" and I think that is amply demonstrated in this painting.

Maggi Hambling is well known for her paintings of the sea and this goes further to suggest how it has almost taken over her life. Is she waving or drowning?

482 WORDS

References

Collins, I. (2013) Masterpieces: Art and East Anglia. Norwich: University of East Anglia Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

Picture Reference

https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=scva+masterpiece+hambling&client=firefox-a&hs=Ihb&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ei=wKe9UpaeDqyV7Abi6YGADA&ved=0CAkQ_AUoAQ&biw=1654&bih=909&dpr=1#facrc=&imgdii=&imgrc=Q1z8GKrN6m7-5M%3A%3BiQUNeqo5zVviHM%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.scva.ac.uk%252Fwhatson%252Fimages%252Fpic_1821.jpg%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.scva.ac.uk%252Fevents.php%253Fd%253D5%2526m%253D12%2526y%253D2013%3B99%3B121