

Interviewer: Monsieur Daumier, since you began your career as a caricaturist specializing in social realism and satire you have developed your artistry to include painting and sculpture. Would it be fair to say your work, whatever the media, has typically favoured the working classes?

Daumier: Without question. My whole life and art have been dedicated to addressing the inequalities between the classes and the brutality of a government. You know, of course, I was imprisoned in 1832 for my caricature ‘Gargantua’ of Louis Philip. He wasn’t happy that I represented his policies as crap – but I was.

Interviewer: Is this interest in the working class shown in your choice of media in the painting ‘The Uprising’ and, in particular, in the way the drafted outlines are still evident?

Daumier: Well, as I’m sure you’re aware the layering of different coloured oil paints in conventional artworks conceals the primary sketched outlines, a kind of contrived reality through clever blending. But, yes, in ‘The Uprising’ the outlines *are still* there. I could simply say, of course, the work was unfinished but if you look at my other oil painting ‘The Third Class Carriage’ completed during the same period, you will also see clear outlines in the faces and figures.

Interviewer: So, if you deliberately left the outlines and dark lines charcoal and lithographic crayon in plain view, what would you say your purpose was, or your intended effect?

Daumier: I wanted to create a dramatic effect with some heavy black lines by using the charcoal and lithographic crayons to emphasize the actual form. I was also pointing to the reality of the situation for the third estate – the lower class people depicted in the ‘Uprising’ and ‘The third Class Carriage’.

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Interviewer: How does the relationship between form and the idea of rebellion apply in terms of the oils used in ‘The Uprising’?

Daumier: I used the impasto technique applying the paint thickly so the brushstrokes were visible. Once it’s dry, impasto provides texture. It also gives more control over the play of light so that my central figure with his bright coloured clothing was thrown into relief. I wanted to emphasise the vitality and emotion of this man. His whole posture and attitude – the upraised arm and the clenched fist – symbolizes the idea of rebellion. In comparison, the background figures have a more spectral look – the figures are not seen as individuals but suggest a crowd.

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Interviewer: So the use of media is definitely instrumental in achieving the mood and the depiction of the central figure as a personification of the working class. How does this approach apply in terms of space and depth?