

The Role of the Artist in Creating an Image

Antonio Canova and Napoleon Bonaparte did not know each other very well, Napoleon demanded Canova to come to Paris 1802 to create a model bust of him before returning to Rome to complete the full sculpture, Napoleon as Mars the Peacemaker. Canova worked so hard on this sculpture of Napoleon yet when Napoleon saw it in the Musee Napoleon in 181, he was highly unimpressed and embarrassed and called it "too athletic" and banned the public from seeing it. Jacques Louis David and Napoleon eventually formed a strong bond as Napoleon's power grew, Napoleon commissioned David as his first official painter. David had always been an admirer from when they first met and requested a sitting he was then able to sketch Napoleon in 1797. Jean-Auguste Dominique did a few paintings of Napoleon and was 1 of 5 to be commissioned to paint a portrait of Napoleon as First Consul.

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Napoleon fought in many wars and was seen as a hero for nearly all of his life, he was emperor of the French from 1804 to 1815. He is mostly remembered for his role in a series of wars, these wars were later named the Napoleonic Wars. Although in some art works Napoleon was highly idealized he really was a hero and the 3 artists I chose to put in my exhibition depicted him in that way. They portrayed him as heroic and powerful and the ideal hero of France. Which is what Napoleon was seen to be like until he began to lose wars and the public began to dislike him. Napoleon was highly idealized in Antonio Canova's sculpture of him as Mars the Peacemaker and his physique was not the same as in real life but Mars the Peacemaker was a divine real war god which is what Napoleon wanted to be seen as and it is what he was seen as for a short period of time during his reign. Jacques Louis David portrayed Napoleon as a heroic figure who will provide a better future for France, this showed in his painting of Napoleon crossing the St Bernard Pass. Even though Napoleon did not truly cross the St Bernard Pass on a 'fiery steed' he crossed it on a mule, he still led troops across the St Bernard Pass and continued to win wars. Jean-Auguste Dominique depicted Napoleon in a relaxed contrapostal position, although he is not idealised in this painting as much as he is in other paintings he is still in control and has power over France because of his surroundings in the painting. He has short hair and a bit of a round face, which is different to how other artists depicted him, this is him in his natural position, which is how the public would have seen him.

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Art during the times of the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror was used to depict and idealize certain events and people, making them appear more rich and powerful than what they really were. Art created propaganda but it also created good publicity for Kings and queens of their time. People of the public were able to see Kings and Queens in different ways whether they were idealized or not, this allowed the public to feel closer to their leaders. Art can create any image the artist wishes to create whether it be an exaggeration of an important event that happened in history or a made up event that the artist wishes would happen.

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