Cat Essay, Research Paper

The Cat, from the Egyptian Ptolemic Period, captures the viewer s eye through its stately and noble presence. The negative use of space on the underside of the cat s belly becomes the immediate focus of attention, resulting from the contrast between the darkness of the cat and the brightness of the background that shows through it. In addition, the natural shape of the negative space resembles a triangle, which mimics the pyramids and the Egyptian s mortal quest for the afterlife. The cat s ears also reflect the shape of a triangle. Perhaps this distinction could be the artist s way of showing that the highest part on a cat s body is always closest to the heavens. Set on a pale-colored throne of marble, the once radiant creature now pays homage to time through the inevitable oxidation of the bronze which now cloaks the cat in a mystic, form-fitting sheath. A visual splendor is created between the contrast of the pale colored marble base and the blackness of the cat. An almost eerie spiritual presence seems to be looming nearby guarding this magical being. By sculpting the cat in an upright position, the artist has utilized the spectrum of artistic lines to create wonder. As a low relief sculpture, the vertical lines that comprise the cat s front legs, upper torso, and head provide the piece a sense of sheer power combined with an effortless sense of grace. Its perked ears await the bidding of its master, whom it shall instinctively obey. The gradually sloping forehead gives the animal a mezmerizing and arcane quality. Tracing the angled line of the cat s back provides a sensation of nervous anticipation. It is difficult to precisely conclude if the animal is merely resting or if it is sitting silently eyeing its unsuspecting prey. Or is it curiously eyeing us? Furthermore, the solid lines used to produce this work give it a strong feel that imparts a masculine quality to an otherwise feminine creature. The Cat s artist chooses to employ texture in his work sparingly, which in turn places dramatic emphasis the overall lack of fur cats in Egypt possessed at the time. Furthermore, this scant use of texture draws attention to the jewelry draped around the cat s neck that leads the viewer to speculate about the admiration that the feline populous held in Ancient Egypt. For my other work I chose The Funeral of Count Orgaz, which was painted by El Greco. He is an artist who possesses an amazing talent for realism, fueled by a deep reverence for spiritualism. In this painting he uses chiaroscuro, a style in which light and shadow are contrasted to forge a surreal environment for the viewer and for their soul. Instead of Greco generating many abstract ideas through his works he simplifies them to a great extent. For example this work uses very few colors. It is based on the two basic elements of the spectrum, black and white; the absence of light and the presence of it. Some may argue that this is done to place more importance on the picture itself than the ideas it conveys. Yet others would contend that the black and white is symbolic of good and evil, heaven and hell, it represents the goodness within some and the darkness that lurks within others.

Every time I see this painting I am left in awe. At first my senses hone in on the Count s cadaver, but after a short while my line of sight begins to drift upward as a result of the curved lines. Now I notice the spiritual portion that comprises the other half of the work. Then slowly, out of nowhere, my eyes once again drift downward as if the curved lines instruct them to refocus on the flaccid corpse of the Count. I used to see this painting as two separate halves that could each stand alone as a comprehensive work, but over time I realized that they shared a symbiotic relationship; each half was dependant on the other to complete El Greco s vision. He provides the viewers a sense of ease by inflecting the notion that in death we are not alone, both on earth and in heaven.With out El Greco s keen skill for realism this piece would have been a failure. Its greatness stems from its resemblance to a photograph. All of the men appear to be alive rather than crudely drawn or sketched. None of their features are misrepresented or disproportional. It s as if we were watching a videotape that was put on pause. Drapery is the vocabulary word that rings most prevalent in my head. It is with great ease that an arm, or a leg, or a torso can be detected under any of the characters clothing. I believe that Greco s use of drapery is the primary reason that the painting seems so vivid.The tendency for Greco to structure his works around religious themes also adds to the realism. It is often easier to sympathize with something that has great meaning in our lives: life, death, love, etc. Abstract concepts are seemingly more difficult to connect with on an emotional level. One of the intricacies that many people don t know about this work is that El Greco included himself in it. He just happens to be the seventh man from the left looking directly out at the viewer. Maybe he is providing us an insight into his soul? Or maybe he is looking into the mirror and seeing his own!