

Medici Influence in 15th Century Movements

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Abstract. During the Renaissance period, the Medici family has played a fundamental role in encouraging the spread of humanism ideas. As humanist believed, spirit of human is lost during the Middle Ages prior to the Renaissance period due to feudal system. The introduction of such humanism idea is impactful towards the society; however, it is lacking in direct support that promotes such idea. In Florence, the Medici family made huge contributions to allowing the growth of humanism to be shown in works of art that challenges traditional thinking. During the stage where financial power is mostly held by kings and political leaders, the success of the Medici in the Medici bank allows them to support artists who are in need for support. By stabilizing peace in Florence, it provided chances for artists under Medici support to receive a positive environment for art creation. The peaceful Florence also brought in more artists from other places to investigate into the rising humanism possibilities; hence, Florence under Medici control became an important art center.

Keywords: Medici Family, Renaissance, Humanism, Florence.

1. Introduction

Renaissance, a period of rebirth in European development, carried out a different European knowledge. The introduction of the rising philosophy of humanism in the Middle Ages carried the Europeans into a new era in history. Renaissance involved the redefinition of people's beliefs, lifestyle, and artform, as more personal values are being introduced. One of the Renaissance's aspects that remains poorly understood is the contribution of the Medici family to the spread of its art forms and ideologies. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate into the problem: How did the Medici Family in Florence influence the spread of new art forms and ideologies during the Renaissance?

2. Rise of Humanism

In comparison to the Middle Ages which is referred to as the "Dark Ages", the Renaissance is described with a positive image (Wallenfeldt, 2009). The Middle Ages offered human beings a secure living environment with their people having absolute loyalty to their lords and churches. (Anderson 2006) The feudal system played the role of ensuring people always have income based on their work. (Cartwright 2018). However, the political and social restrictions created by the system caused a lack in individuals' development during this era. As the humanism ideology began to rise in Italy, the original medieval feudalism is being challenged and expanded into the failure of churches and empire.

Humanism is the Western system of education that rose during the 13th century. The idea is applied to the philosophy that focused on emphasizing the importance of human influence (Grudin 2019). As humanism spreads the importance of humans, it focuses on the reality in life through a representation of reality in the works created. During this period, the importance of human beings is valued more than religion; Hence, the concept of God became less common in the works of people. Therefore, humanism during the Renaissance period focuses on highlighting the diversity, behavior, and perspective of individuals (Steelwater 2012).

The rise of humanism carried the human beliefs into valuing the importance of the individual. From feudalist control, it is believed by the early Renaissance activist, artists, and scholars, that the human spirit was lost during the Middle Ages. In order to restore the human relevance in human spiritual creation, activities and works were produced to encourage individuals' participation in self-expression. Renaissance humanism started to introduce the idea of focusing on a well-rounded education for an individual (Cartwright 2020). Having some of the most famous authors, artists, and philosophers, the Renaissance led human society into developing more toward the modern states.

Multiple factors took place to expand the influence of the Renaissance pieces in history and in the current society. Behind the glamorous images of new ideologies and art, the Medici Family took up place a dominant position in expanding the Renaissance's most famous figures. Even though the power of people's realization of humanism ideas is an important factor that led the Europeans into this area, it is necessary to consider the importance of political, social, and economic dominant powers.

3. The Medici

Differing from the Middle Ages, the Renaissance power is held mostly by the ruling families (Ewhelan 2019). Being one of the most supportive families that took role in art, philosophy, and economics, the Medici family has made a historical impact on the progression of rising modern ideas during the Renaissance. The Medici family is the ruling family of the city of Florence who contributed to both the religious and royal domains. Through the textile trade, the Medici family was able to gain success in the Florence's economic world. Furthermore, the Medici family expanded their economic trade's successes by influencing Florence society by establishing the Medici Bank.

The Medici Bank brought the Medici Family to great success. After the establishment of the Medici Bank in Florence, the Medici family spread the bank concept to other Italian states including Venice, Geneve, and Rome. Continuing from the expansion in Italian states, the family's influence moved on to other European states of Bruges, London, and Lubeck. The spread of the Medici Bank to different European states not only provided the Medici family with a dominant power in the European economic world but also established their power inside the state of Florence (Meyer 2022). From the success of the Medici Bank, the Medici family's financial success enabled them to come into power after the collapse of kings and political leaders during the early ages of the Renaissance.

4. Medici Impacts

Contributions of the Medici family during the Renaissance era are based on the wealth that the family owns (Onion 2022). During the early stages of the Renaissance, the idea of restoring European knowledge was not supported by most people, who was satisfied with the original system. The new economic system of the Renaissance Age was not fully developed while the old feudal system was facing its collapse. The concern around the collapse of the old system, and the dependency on rich sponsors, resulted in people facing harsh economic conditions.

As for people supporting the Renaissance movement, the economic barriers have held scholars, artists, and philosophers to be held back in their progress of creating products relating to the new form of lifestyle. With the economic strength that the Medici owns, the family had a constant contribution towards supporting the new rising Renaissance beliefs through economic and societal influences within the state of Florence.

The establishment of the Medici position in the Renaissance art development stabilizes the Medici power dominance in Florence, which they sought to expand to a unified Italy. As opponents were in process of planning De Medici's execution, the supporters prevented such events from occurring. The return of De Medici resulted in the Medici forming the new idea of showing the size of their power by supporting new artists (Meyer 2022). Since artists and philosophers are bringing the Medici to a stabilized position, the Medici family was always ensuring that these people could get what they need. During this period, the Medici family identified Florence as the "ideal city state" where freedom is the focus (Harris 2017). Following up, artists and philosophers that are experimenting with personal style rather than focusing on the traditional style are being encouraged to continue with exploration. The Medici viewed these new ideas as having a high potential to develop the state of Florence under the scope of humanist movements. (Ewhelan 2019) As artists and philosophers were to expand on their style in various directions, the idea of humanism was being interpreted and shown by artists in a personal value system which is shown in the variety of art and ideological styles. Despite the importance of the artists themselves during the Renaissance period for introducing new forms of art

and ideology, the Medici family played the role of allowing these new art forms to come in based on the support that the family was providing to the individual artists.

As the Medici were supportive towards the new artform, it resulted in Florence citizens to be satisfied with their government. When put into comparison with other Italian states, the advantage of Florence in the freedom of creation is highlighted. Since Florence is a republic, people's opinion are also allowed to be considered to encouraged further contribution of citizens to the humanism development of humanism that the Medici was aiming for (Harris 2017).

4.1 Peaceful Florence Benefits Medici

As the Medici developed a peaceful state by dominating power, they provided chance for the state of Florence to develop into a much more peaceful state. The wealth of the Medici dominated Florence under the Medici control; therefore, allowed the family to fully establish the stability of the state. (Ewhelan 2019) During the same era, other Italian states such as Milan, Venice, and Naples are facing multiple turbulence that caused the unstable status within those state. Due to the chaos, it is hard for artists in those area to spread their ideas as the new ideology was not as valued (Grudin 2019). Therefore, by establishing a peaceful state, the Medici created space for all artists to collaborate and share new ideas about the humanism ideology. Such a peaceful state prevented the artists from the fear of religious leaders involving in their work, hence, giving the artist full freedom of creation In Florence, the Medici family also had movements promoting the new ideas and practices as Lorenzo, a member of the family, strongly appreciated such movements. Lorenzo is considered as one of the only rulers in Italy that did not focus on taking advantage of his power. Following the path of his father, Lorenzo kept the ruling of Florence under a constitutional method. (Campbell 2015) Therefore, the atmosphere in Florence became very supportive towards any ideas that supported humanism as a movement and soon became the center for culture and trade due to its peacefulness.

4.2 Influence on Artist

4.2.1 Donatello

Following the return of De Medici as with the family in control, the first step of the family was to introduce a new form of art in the city of Florence to show the dominant power of the family. The Italian sculptor Donatello is one of the Medici family's first approaches toward its goals. As the Medici family was planning the organization of art displays in the Medici palace, De Medici came into relation with Donatello (Meyer 2022).

Donatello's style of combination between ancient art and the Renaissance humanist art style synthesized in creating artworks for the city of Florence. As Donatello is in search of freedom in artwork differentiating from pieces during the Middle Ages, humanism idea rises as he is involved with the work of ancient art. The knowledge that he owns of ancient sculptors is surpassed from other sculptors during his days as he gained knowledge from the experience studying in Greece and Rome. Donatello begun experimenting with multiple different perspectives that he never explored before; hence, producing work that are against the norm of his own work and the classical pieces. The Medici saw the influence that such artists could provide, which led to the process of Medici support for Donatello (Cartwright 2020). As Donatello's creation of the David sculpture is introduced to Renaissance society, it provided the artist, the family, and the city of Florence with a position in the development of the Renaissance (Janson 2019).

The David by Donatello established the start of the Renaissance art form period in Florence. Differing from past sculptures, the use of bronze for sculpting brought the trend in new materials to rise (McHam 2001). The gracefulness of the David statue was displayed as the sign of Florence by the Medici family. The fame of this artwork brought humanism to rise among other artists towards expressing their own ideas.

The influence of Donatello has crossed over the area of Rome, Florence, and Padua. Donatello is able to carry the new perspectives from each area and create them into his own interpretation of artwork for communication purpose across the different states. As Donatello is gaining fame due to

his unique use of technique and material, people focus on the humanist message that Donatello is trying to explore (Cartwright 2020). Along such movements, Donatello also successfully moved the society away from the late Gothic style. Based on such contributions, it established the distinct characteristics of Renaissance art and abandoned the traditional Gothic style (Souter 2018). Furthermore, Donatello started to teach other sculptors that are inspired by the new style; hence, promoting the humanist movement to a higher degree.

The Medici family foresaw the influence of such artists. The support towards artists for creating pieces that would make a societal and historical impact on the Renaissance period. People's ideas are influenced by the classicizing style that Donatello introduced (Cartwright 2020). As society focuses more on the development of humanism ideas, the Medici power could better stabilize since the ruling Medici would expand into the public favor.

4.2.2 Michelangelo

The influence of Donatello's artwork is shown in the Medici patronage. The expansion of Donatello's style encouraged people to create such creations differing from the restrictions in the past, but it also interests young artists who participated in art creation. Having to know Michelangelo at a young age, De Medici introduces the Donatello art style to young Michelangelo. The potential of young Michelangelo through the interest in carving old faun stone interested De Medici. The use of unusual material sparked Medici's attention. From Michelangelo's perspective, the Medici has been a trustable person in the art field. Both Medici and Michelangelo are interested in collaborating. As Medici is seeking chances of supporting more potential Renaissance artists who would stabilize the family's position in the state of Florence, Michelangelo is wanting chances for improvement based on the wealth and political relations that the Medici could provide. Ever since then, Michelangelo was in collaboration with the Medici while the family provided Michelangelo to live with the family inside the palace.

Under the living environment, Medici surrounded Michelangelo with artists, poets, and philosophers that are supported by the Medici. The artistic environment raises the production of Michelangelo in multiple fields. With artists, Michelangelo was able to experiment with multiple art techniques for the purpose of expressing humanist ideas. The Medici palace also included the Medici art collection which contains artworks tracing back to the ancient Roman era (Meyer 2022). As Michelangelo expanded his knowledge in art, he is being classified as a sculptor, painter, architect, and poet. However, Michelangelo himself is particularly interested in carving marble sculptures. Based on Michelangelo's interest in sculptures, the Medici family provided specific assistance to Michelangelo in learning about sculptures. As Michelangelo moves on through the education provided by the Medici family, he was able to recognize that personal style in the use of technique and material is what he focuses on more. Continuing with this idea, Michelangelo worked towards the creation of art under such humanism beliefs until the fall of the Medici family in Florence (Gilbert 2018). Nevertheless, the Medici family made a certain impact on Michelangelo by encouraging the humanism flow in their artistic choices.

Michelangelo is influential towards the Renaissance society as he expresses a high degree of emotion through his works. As artists are trying to express the concept of humanity to its greatest degree, Michelangelo was successful on achieving the goal through his expression of body with detailed technical accuracy (Sethi 2018). Such an impactful image created through the art leaves strong attention with the audience; hence, encouraging further creation of his work to be valued. The work of Michelangelo not only inspired other famous artist, but also the entire society towards exploring the degree of emotion in artworks. Thus, Michelangelo's work leaves an impressive impression on the 15th century Renaissance society and has an impactful effect on encouraging the flow of emotions in future artworks (Gilbert 2018).

5. Conclusion

Considering the effects that the Medici family held on one of the greatest artists during the Renaissance era, it could be shown that the ruling family played a huge role in the influencing the Renaissance artistic movements. Thus, we can formulate an answer to the research question: How did the Medici Family in Florence influence the spread of new art forms and ideologies during the Renaissance?

The Medici family contributed to supporting and encouraging the spread of humanist ideas through establishing Florence as an art center and unchaining it from its feudalist bonds. The humanism idea led to the creation of new art forms and ideologies that highlights the importance of human beings; Hence creating new trends in the 15th century that are later referred to as the period of Renaissance. The impact of Medici is not only limited to the rapid expansion of humanism creations during the Renaissance for its development, but also influences current society in the fields of art, philosophy, ideology, and the social structure.

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