
Visit to a Museum Reflection: the Honolulu Museum of Art

While on a visit to the Honolulu Museum of art, out of the over 50,000 pieces being displayed, one piece of artwork that was the most interesting was a painting called Kaaterskill Falls on the Catskill Mountains, Taken from Under the Cavern, oil on canvas, c. 1827. The artist who painted the piece was an American painter of Irish birth named William Guy Wall. When Wall painted this artwork, he was already a well-trained artist and soon to become well known for his sensitive watercolors of the Hudson River Valleys.

In this painting the artist is indicating how life was near the Kaaterskill falls from an outside perspective. How Wall got the viewer to focus towards the scene was demonstrating more advancing and brighter colors towards the focal point of the painting. There seems to be villagers along the stream bank, maybe fishing to survive. The villagers have no definition to express the emotion of the people. Wall likely painted them small to emphasize the actual size and vastness of the cavern and the valley in which this scene took place. When viewing the artwork, the paint appeared almost shiny making each and every warm color stand out even more.

There are hard edges in this painting such as the stream that flows towards the villagers, it forms lines to get the viewer to look towards the focal point of the scene. On the left side of the painting you will notice the tree line is also a line but more distorted in an attempt to get the viewer to look. On the right side of the painting the tree line is less defined almost distorted. In the title it includes the waterfall but in my perspective that's not what the artist was really focused on due to the waterfall being less defined than the actual stream that flows from the water fall towards the villagers.

The artist used overlapping space almost three-dimensional to depict the depth of this valley with an endless number of mountains slowly fading towards the center of the painting, to demonstrate the sheer vastness of the valley. One thing to mention is the one villager alone and walking into the cavern, almost they are utilizing the cavern for shelter. One villager in blue that is taller than the rest appears to be shouting at the one walking into the cavern. The artist included old branches stuck in the stream indicating that maybe a harsh winter has just passed and the villagers are trying to recover.

William Guy Wall has numerous paintings of different sceneries similar to this painting. The artist mastered the ability to emphasize the actual size of a scene such as mountains and streams like this one with correct proportion from the villagers to the mountains.

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