

Eugene Delacroix. Death of Sardanapalus. 1827

The painting of Death of Sardanapalus is a passionate and emotional painting that is a demonstration of eroticism and sadism. When it was first exhibited it created a quiver of admiration mixed with dismay at the barbarism of the picture. The painting shows King Sardanapalus whose empire was being destroyed by the Medes; it seems as if he is unconcerned about his life, time and empire that were coming to an end.

The women are the most emotionally and physically affected by it all in the painting. The female form dramatically depicts the death of Sardanapalus.

When I look at this work I can almost listen to the fight of the battle, smell the fire and hear the women crying and mourning of pain.



Delacroix, the painter, portrayed the last minute of Sardanapalus, who was watching all of his treasures, horses and concubines being brought together to be destroyed by fire with him also, in a rebellious act of self-immolation.

The rich colors liven up the painting and helps form the action-like drama. The colors that were used are dark red, gold and the flesh colors of the people dying. The smoke of the battle and the bodies seems to lye around Sardanapalus, who watches the final sign of his will from his couch.