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GWIC: MC Escher

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Art Analysis 1

This paper will be a description of *Reptiles,* a lithograph, tessellation piece created by MC Escher in 1943. Lithograph *Reptiles* (1943) is a great work depicting a three dimensional world out of a two dimensional world. This piece shows a drawing of a sketchbook with reptiles interlocked. Around the sketchbook there are some more personal items such as, two books, a potted plant, a paper weight, a tin can holding miscellaneous items, and a beverage with a shot glass. Each of these items fit the personality that MC Escher captured in the sketchbook drawing. The reptiles in the sketchbook can be seen “coming to life” and crawling on top of the surrounding items listed.

The reptiles in the sketchbook are done in pen, ink, and watercolor, giving the drawing great contrast with shading of light to dark. The overall background of the sketch is a certain shade of grey giving the image a darker view. Without any color added, Esher was able to use shading to manipulate potential colors in the sketch. Within the sketch, there are three rotation points where the heads of the reptiles come together. To properly apply these rotation points, proper mathematics and measuring must be precise to create the tessellated image. The three rotation points that interlock creates a tessellation of the reptiles. I enjoy this particular style because it adds balance and consistency to the piece. Each individual reptile is fitting perfectly with its neighbor, holding one another. As you look carefully, each reptile fits within a thinly drawn hexagon explaining why the tessellation is balanced and consistent. Also, near the top of the sketch there is a dodecahedron, a three dimensional hexagon added to the picture. I believe Escher added this shade to justify the hexagonal shapes that the reptiles are portraying. These shapes along with the interlocking rotation points make for a pleasing figure.

The reptiles make their way off the page from a two dimensional state to a life like three dimensional state. The life like reptiles crawl upon the surroundings and eventually make their way back into the drawing. I found the first item they encounter to be quite humorous. In my perception on *Reptiles,* (1943) I noticed that the book is based on zoology. Also, while one reptiles crosses the dodecahedron, the text states, “he gives a snort of triumph and blows smoke from his nostrils” when upon this zoology book. I think the deeper meaning of this is that art and creativity are “higher” or more important than that of education. The reptile snorts as if he is mocking the book written about him along with the many other species known to man-kind.

Towards the bottom of the sketch, there is a potted plant that I believe reflects some representation of the tessellation. The plant seems to be some type of cactus due to *Reptiles* being warm weather creatures. A simple addition like a plant can spark creativity for the viewers of the art work. Also, towards the bottom right of the piece there is an alcoholic beverage with a shot glass sitting next to the bottle. I believe Escher added this to the sketch to support the idea of being under the influence while looking or creating this image. The image of *Reptiles* crawling out of the tessellation and crawling over certain objects on to the desk may allude to a feeling of intoxication. I believe Escher added this object to the piece to justify the idea of creatures crawling out of paper and onto the desk to be perceived in a non-sober state of mind.

At the end of the reptiles’ path, there is a bucket of miscellaneous items that may or may not have any specific meaning to the piece other than Escher’s materials. The bucket is the last object the reptiles cross over before merging back into the tessellation. Shaded differently on the surface of the bucket to give it chrome look. I believe Escher added this certain image to the piece to represent his ideas being unpredictable due to the lack of knowledge of what is actually in the bucket. Another possibility is Escher wanted to add some symmetry to the piece to balance the flat edges that takes up most of the layout.

M.C. Escher’s work is deceiving and unpredictable due to Escher’s creativity. Each object in the sketch was implemented by Eschar for whatever reason he felt necessary. A piece like *Reptiles* (1943) M.C. Eschar makes the viewers of the piece wonder just what Eschar was trying to accomplish. It is hard to understand just why Eschar created the obstacles he did for his work. M.C. Escher’s work is full of unpredictable and unexplained objects. Leaving it up to the viewer’s eye for the reasoning behind the objects within the sketch or the sketch itself.

I believe each object drawn into the image was implemented for its own reasons to complete *Reptiles* (1943). Escher wanted to create a three dimensional world out of a two dimensional world. By doing so, Escher created *Reptiles (1943)* to create an image that seems to be a sketch within a sketch. Each object in the piece seems to have a certain meaning according to MC Escher. The potted plant perceived to be a cactus implies reptiles’ habitat should be warm. The Zoology book to add a snip of humor and possibly translate a message that creativity is “higher” than education. The assumed to be alcoholic beverage and shot glass to possibly provide the image of an intoxicating scene. The dodecahedron to justify the hexagonal tessellation of the *Reptiles* (1943.) MC Escher’s lithograph, *Reptiles* (1943) is a very active and multi-dimensional piece. All in all, MC Escher’s lithograph, *Reptiles* (1943) is a great work depicting a three dimensional world out of a two dimensional world.