

The Eyes of El Greco

El Greco was a great painter. Born in 1541, El Greco developed an unusual painting style. All the people in his paintings are long and thin. This gives his paintings a strange beauty.

Was El Greco's style a result of a problem with his eyesight?

People first suggested that El Greco's style was nothing more than a vision problem in 1913. Although healthy eyeballs are round and shaped like basketballs, El Greco's eyes were shaped like footballs. The shape of El Greco's eyes affected the way he saw the world. Because of this, everything that he saw appeared to be long and thin. This suggests that El Greco painted things the way he actually saw them.

Many experts, though, reject this idea. They agree that El Greco might have seen objects as long. But they believe he would have known their actual shapes. He could have drawn them as they really were if he wanted to.

To understand this argument, imagine that you are colorblind. You see red as blue. Through your eyes, a ripe tomato appears blue. But you know that tomatoes are really red. When you paint one, you use red paint. In any case, art experts point out that, in many cases, El Greco painted figures that looked normal. This suggests that El Greco used his unique style because he liked the way it looked.

1. What did people first think about El Greco's style of painting?
2. Why does the author include the reference to colorblindness in the passage?