



The Comparative Study

For this study, I am going to dissect and analyze a total of three artworks by artists **Henri Rousseau** and **Francis Bacon**. As I explore in depth the depictions of the raw human condition in uncanny visuals. Through the descriptions of the formal elements, cultural contexts, functions and purpose of the conceptual pieces that are to be evaluated, I will be incorporating their work into my own as the main source(s) of inspiration.



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Cultural Significance (Part I) : An Evaluation of Henri Rousseau

Rousseau was a French artist from a Post Impressionism era carrying an essence of the naïve, primitivism and symbolism periods between the late 1890s to the early 1900s.

He had evolved as a self taught artist that had composed his own creative and eccentric compositions through fractions of the multiple artistic periods that he had unknowingly applied to his works. To be concise and focused, the manner in which Rousseau employed the artistic periods can be described as dedications of simple forms with heavy meanings.

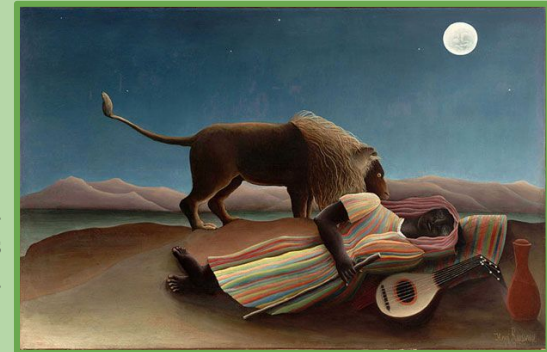
“Culture is the arts elevated to a set of beliefs” - Tom Wolfe

Every canvas of his contained a story for everyone. They were universal and open to the diversity of the world as he did not only fuse different art history movements but also ideas that broke the stereotypical belief that art was nothing more than mere imitations of life and/or nature. Henri embedded culturally rich items and ideas into his paintings.



The Hungry Lion Throws Itself On The Antelope
(1905) - Henri Rousseau

The Sleeping Gypsy can be taken as an example of this as the viewer can see the different cultural values of the artifacts in the piece belonging to different Asian and Italian origins. As well as the woman of color in the foreground possibly representing the “mother of all cultures and minorities”. This all of importance to the cultural significance because it is within the people and cultures themselves in which art begins.



The Sleeping Gypsy
(1897) - Henri Rousseau

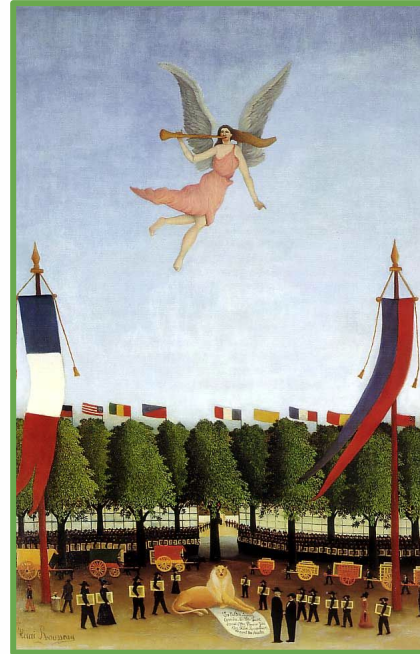
Cultural Significance (Part II) : An Evaluation of Henri Rousseau

Different from most of the artists that resided in France during Rousseau's period, he was very supportive and patriotic of the government regardless of how "ineffective and shaky" it may have been.

His national pride could be seen in his paintings whereas he depicted France as a country of a benevolent and great power. Thus themes such as "liberty and war" were often symbolized in his work with a "high-minded genre" of a simplified but sincere craftsmanship.



*Jungle with
Setting Sun
(1910) - Henri
Rousseau*



*Liberty Inviting Artists to Take
Part in the 22nd Exhibition of the
Société des Artistes Indépendants
(1905-06) - Henri Rousseau*

Essentially, the reach of the french power for a "modern world" at the time was encapsulated in Henri's work as a seductive manner of ambition with a strong sense of agitation for their national pride and outcomes that may have serious effects on them while reaching out to the world with sovereignty.

Henri Rousseau also built his pieces to solidify or represent in some way or form the anxiety of Parisiens with his exotic paintings of jungles.

It was a visual representation of the fear that the people of France felt regarding the lands beyond theirs. Yet it was also captured by Rousseau as an alluring terror which was intriguing to the French. Juxtapositions of their colonial power and progressive history on a global stage.

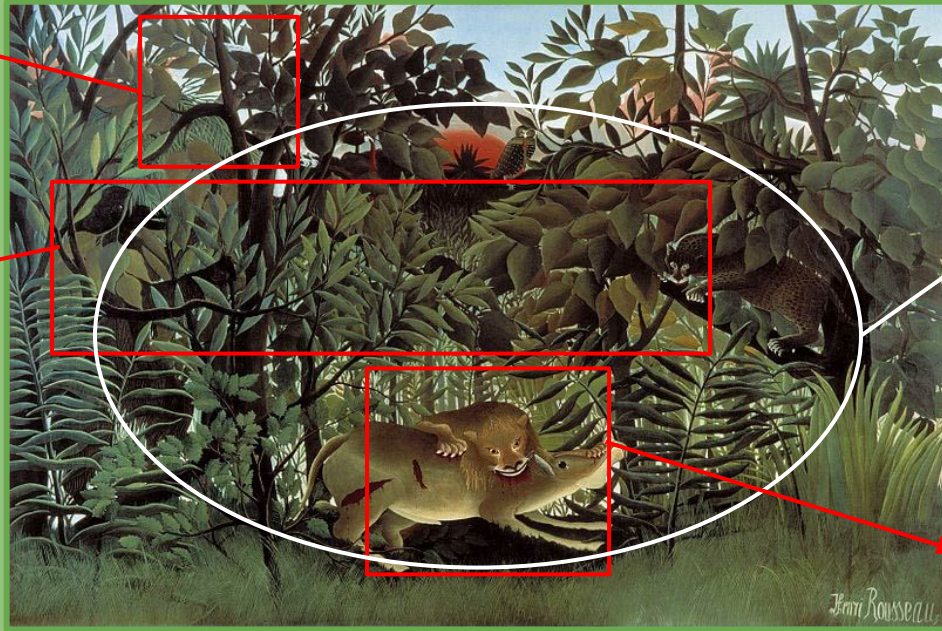
An Analysis: The Formal Qualities of the Henri Rousseau's Work

The usage of bold and dark hues of the piece are layered over the lighter hues of leaves and skies to create the perception of depth. Ironically the leaves themselves do not show much volume of their own which was rather unintentional act of intention by Rousseau to display his untrained skills as an artist.

Majority of the space that is found within the canvas is positive space as it is filled up by enormous bodies of flora. The foregrounds just like background is busy with organic yet sharp shapes given by the tree branches.

The dispersity of figures, the black panther and birds hiding around in the canvas, bring the image together as a whole by creating a sense of movement to the piece. Which then directs the attention back onto the lion on the antelope which bring about the unity of the piece in this imaginative and naturally wild setting for the painting.

The Hungry Lion Throws Itself On The Antelope
(1905) - Henri Rousseau



Around the outskirts of the painting the intensity of the color begins to fade off and the dimensions of the painting are thrown out of balance. The intention of this was to create a set up a flow within the piece that will make the eyes of the viewer travel all around the canvas in a circular manner.

The semi-cool hues surrounding the main piece of action help contour the figure of the lion and antelope for a better evocation of power and agitation between two subjects that could be representing the unsettled feeling the french government had in regards to their colonization in unknown lands.

An Analysis of Understanding: Interpretation of Function and Purpose of Henri Rousseau's Work

Rousseau was diminished as an artist by the “higher academy artists” in one of his earlier exhibitions. His piece “The Hungry Lion Throws Itself On The Antelope” was painted after a decade of not composing his usual exotic visuals of made-up jungles

The piece itself depicts a lion with a fierce determination to dig its teeth into the neck of the antelope which is not fighting to live or move a single muscle to get the lion off their back.

These on itself portrays the usual predator vs prey storyline, but this prey has no intend to fight. Henri Rousseau made use of this animalistic scene to tie it with the idea of :

- Representation to European political ideals and cultural imperialism
- How the orient was envisioned by the European
- Imports of exotic creatures and plants, indirectly retold stories of the huntings the Europeans made thus gave them an identity to live up to while at their explorations to the new world
- Hunter vs prey, colonists vs natives to the arriving land



The Hungry Lion Throws Itself On The Antelope
(1905) - Henri Rousseau

Cultural Significance: An Evaluation of Francis Bacon



Three Studies for a Crucifixion
- Francis Bacon

Portrait of George Dyer Talking
(1966) - Francis Bacon



Francis' father had kicked him out of the house because of his sexual preference for men. He traveled from his British native land to France, here the beauty of the nation-state impacted him and he "fell in love" with the cities. His studio was a mess, every corner stained with paint.

The violent brushes = raw emotions, stories of his lover's death and loved ones.

Universal triggers magnified through his brush and onto the canvas. Human fragility and brutal imagery because of the tragedies that he found himself infested with.

Cigarettes and liquor were deteriorating to his life, gambling as well but self destruction and carelessness seeped through into his canvas.

Unplanned pieces, he didn't read his work and built canvases with no stories to tell. Visual shocks created from spontaneous urges to paint.

Culture of the animal kingdom, anatomy of human body, just as they are. The movement. They are themselves and nothing else.

Studio stacked with books and photographs.

An Analysis: The Formal Qualities of Francis Bacon's Work

Vibrant, strong colors.
Palette revolved around warm hues more often than not. Bloody and meat like. Splashes of paint. Solid and concrete blocks of colors in chunks.

Yet breaking the uniformity with organic, free form figures. Deformed and with no specified dimensions of state. The break between squares, rectangles and lines then it helps to see the figures better, isolated and all concentration is directed into it.

Shadows and movement, layers of colors after color, captivating and busy foreground. Darks helped to lose a subject in the canvas which was not always purpose of Bacon's artistic intention but rather his natural inclination for the chaos. Visualization of the images came to him in said pattern(s)

Dangling and slit open figures to expose their insides.
Texture to the visual is implied to the second dimension.
However an attempt to a 3-dimensional presentation is attempted through the shadow under bed.



The three characters here rotate in motion, active, passive and watching.

Three Studies for a Crucifixion
- Francis Bacon

Difficult to pinpoint a correct order to the composition. Layers of not only color but shapes and lines. Complexity that overtakes the eye.

Voluminous and abstract subjects. Mixing of the colors in the figures. Quite unique with solid brushstrokes in the images themselves.

An Analysis of Understanding: Interpretation of Function and Purpose of Francis Bacon's Work

“Reek of human blood, laughter to my heart”. The image on itself is caos.

Work extends off as a tryptic because of Bacon's natural gravitation and passion for film. The set up of different panels occured naturally like so.

Post- traumatic piece. Piece later on created after “Three studies for figures at the base of a Crucifixion” as a result of the second world war and its horrors.

There may also be some strands tied into his history with his father back in England that underlies in the centerpiece of the tryptic.

Intended to not tell any particular story but separate the piece into three different wholes. The piece at the far right is a religious allusion to the crucifixion of Christ.

Three Studies for a Crucifixion
- Francis Bacon

The idea of the bed in the center piece carries a lot of the weight as far as symbolism goes.

Painful and grotesque. A body dismembered and shot to showcase some sort of visual metaphors to the suffering of human beings. Horror of live as one things lives off another, natural cycle of life.



Bacon wanted to showcase the beauty that he saw in raw meat. It is way in which people can most efficiently make and receive sensations, both literally and metaphorically when visually allusioned. Intend to put everything without a filter and directly.

An Analysis: The Formal Qualities of Francis Bacon's Work

Once again the same pattern of solid colors and a warm, rosy palette of hues.

He built an outline of the position in which Curved room is suggesting an importance to the subject in the center.

The colors melting and blending into each other build a lot of the movement in the canvas. The contrast of the colors is rather complementary and build off each others vibrant saturations. The bright blue in the back as the window stands out as the coldest color yet helps make some sort of geometrical balance.

Piece uses the specific palette that it does because it is not only feminine for the era but also very skin, fleshy like which adds up to the overall desire that Bacon had for his lover.

The dissolving of "George" can be taken as a symbol of his own unbalanced with himself. He's portrayed as a beautiful chaos, looking up, light colored documents on the ground breaking the uniformity of the rug.

The rug on it's own has a solid base color and then texture is implied through the second dimension with the repetition of the brush strokes done with a much lighter hue, imagery of a sea(?)



*Portrait of George Dyer Talking
(1966) - Francis Bacon*

An Analysis of Understanding: Interpretation of Function and Purpose of Francis Bacon's Work

A physicality of desire. The nude was a painting created to illustrate his desire, craving for a lover.

Captures George Dyer in a seductive frame as his muse at the time. No emotional connection simple lust. A nude, sexual desire and nothing more from Bacon
Astonishing image seered through the colors.
Figurative painter.

The point of this piece had been an unintentional remark to his emotional instability.

His thinking, perception to the “deformity and alteration of someone is perceived by the muse as an injury.

“How can I make this image more immediately real to myself?”, trapping the image of George was very erotic coming across to Bacon. People want a meaning out of everything but some paintings for the artist is simply what it is.

Bacon felt his paint on the canvas to build “dual performances”, capturing himself and his object of “obsession” at the moment.

Makes you wonder: who was George Dyer to Francis Bacon, he was also broken and built off the tragedies and catastrophes waiting to happen, all emotion and “distress ended here, spit out onto this canvas every brush stroke every drop of oil, was building who Dyer was in Bacon's eyes.



*Portrait of George Dyer Talking
(1966) - Francis Bacon*

Contrast: Artwork 01 & Artwork 02



The Hungry Lion Throws Itself On The Antelope
(1905) - Henri Rousseau

Formal Qualities:
Hues, cold vs warm, feelings evoking with the palette are very distinct to each artist. A cold world, jungles of systems and exploration. Another one is very systematic, structured with sharp edges, clean and isolated yet chaotic. Forms are either abstracted by deformation, blending of paint (Francis) or detailed to form a specific image (Henri)

Three Studies for a Crucifixion
- Francis Bacon



Function/Purpose:

Henri was aiming for a representation of two worlds meeting, the European colonists and people from the new world. Power and building a strong image for the rest of the world to see given the context of the Europeans are the "hunters" taking control of the rich fauna and flora exhibited in their "new territories"

Bacon on the other hand 'talks' about the fragility of the human as a temporal state of meat and bones. Self-destruction of our being rather than a strong individual with power. The subject is tearing itself from its own bones while another is squirming in pain on a bed.

Culture: Animalistic instincts based on the strong nationalistic characteristics exhibited vs freedom of the system, more free flowing and getting away from the homeland. The environment in which they grew based on their roots took very different routes. Rousseau was definitely attached to his French heritage while Francis fled to France seeking a new life, far from where it all started.

Contrast: Artwork 01 & Artwork 03



The Hungry Lion Throws Itself On The Antelope
(1905) - Henri Rousseau

Purpose & Function:

“The Hungry Lion throws...”:

To tell the story of the French expansion into the new world. How the world is symbolized as a jungle in which we either hunt to survive and state their grandeur as a strong sovereign nation state or you become the prey.

“Portrait of George Dyer Talking”: A dedication to a lover. Reeks of raw unconscious rage of emotions. Lust and need for a human (body)

Formal Qualities: In the hungry lion. The lines are concise, bold and well defined. The shapes are solid with symmetrical balance of content in the canvas.

The portrait on the other hand as a free flowing form. Organic movement with the nude as well as a rounded room as the background. The walls of the background is less saturated and busy to bring the attention to the nude. Single and solid tones of color are used by Bacon which is very different from that in the Rousseau choice for the Lion’s piece since the jungle takes up most of the canvas.

The centerpiece, lion and antelope, are tense and unrealistically positioned in an attack. The colors in this piece is different from those in the portrait since it has colder and darker tones to them.

“The Hungry Lion...”: The feeling implied with the choice of colors is that of a distant world (therefore fitting in with the cultural context of the piece.

“Portrait”: The feel in this one is dramatically contrasting because the hues are on a different range of tonality, brightness and moods



Portrait of George Dyer Talking
(1966) - Francis Bacon

Contrast: Artwork 02 & Artwork 03



Portrait of George Dyer Talking
(1966) - Francis Bacon

Formal Qualities:

Color: In the three studies the color added are brighter and bolder. There is not much diversity with color palette as the hues found within carry about the same mood as well as intensity. There are blocks of solid black here and there which break the harmony in between. For portrait however, the color intensity changes from the ceiling to the ground. Softer and more muted hues are used in this piece.

Content: the portrait portrays a nude with an active and continuous pattern of movement due to the multiple mixtures of the same color tones within the same vicinity of the canvas. In the triptych however, a story is being told. Every panel showcases a less action of the forms. Colors here are not as aggressive and with a much more careful brushstroke.



Three Studies for a Crucifixion
- Francis Bacon

Dimensions Implied: The figures in the triptych were not painted to portray some as much depth or volume as the portrait. The Bacon with the nude we can see the darker hued shadow of the nude and light bulb string, the two men and hanging piece have no shadow thus no real sense of form.

Purpose & Function:

Three studies: trauma from war, a shocking visual to create feeling in viewers. The blood and raw meat as a clear sign of human vulnerability.

Portrait: Has less bloody content but in place it shows a nude which alludes to the need of the human for another.

Compare: Artwork 01 & Artwork 02

Formal Qualities:

The pieces in the middle are accentuated by their backgrounds as they curve around each of the pieces. Said setting of the backgrounds aids make emphasis and make it clear what the portion of the artwork should be the focus for the viewer.

Function and Purpose:

The antelope and nude are both subjects symbolising a desire for something. Francis desired his lover, Francis Bacon while Henri was stating his nationalist views of desiring France to gain the power in the new world. Have a strong establishment.



The Hungry Lion Throws Itself On The Antelope
(1905) - Henri Rousseau

Cultural Qualities: both were influenced by French culture one way or another. While Rousseau was a native frenchman and a nationalist, Bacon had fallen in love with the artistry and cities of France.

Also neither of them had received proper art classes, both were self-made artists for which explains the odd perspectives and proportions of the components in their artworks



Portrait of George Dyer Talking
(1966) - Francis Bacon

Compare: Artwork 02 & Artwork 03



Portrait of George Dyer Talking
(1966) - Francis Bacon

Formal Components: Both heavy with emotion. Seen through the natural and organic shaping of each of the forms.

Background:
Geometrical and curved, to accentuate the figures in foreground or center of the canvases.

Function:
E.g
Composition-
Scattered pieces of paper aligns with the scattering of blood and unmade sheets on the bed. A hint of chaos rises up in both.

Meaning(s)-
Instability, repeated theme of fragile humanity. Deforming of the figures and grotesque contortion. Painfully alluring and beautiful.



Three Studies for a Crucifixion
- Francis Bacon

Cultural Impacts of both pieces and the Artist himself in the pieces:
- Francis had fallen onto unhealthy habits of drinking and obsession for his significant others but all was based on the physicality of the "relationships". Trauma from an early age, seek for "warmth" from someone seeped through his work and all of the vulnerability he was unable to show to those around him, shined through in his work in the carnosity of his visuals.

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[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/88/Henri_Rousseau_-_Liberty_Inviting_Artists_to_Take_Part_in_the_22nd_Exhibition_of_the_Societe_des_Artistes_Independants.j](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/88/Henri_Rousseau_-_Liberty_Inviting_Artists_to_Take_Part_in_the_22nd_Exhibition_of_the_Societe_des_Artistes_Independants.jpg)
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