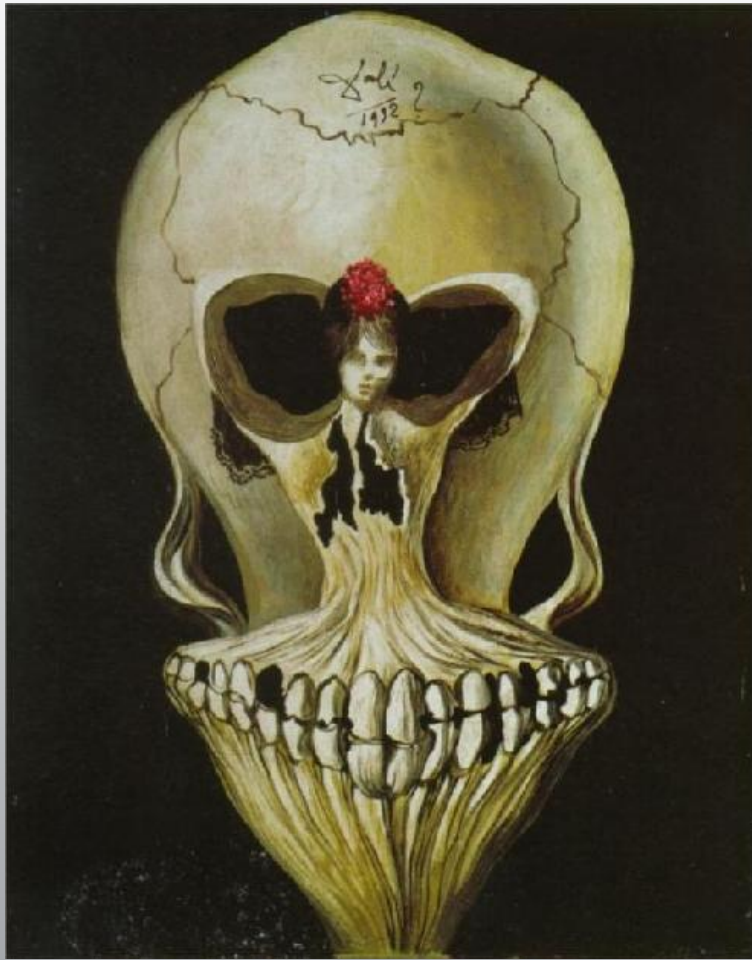


COMPARATIVE STUDY

FATMA ALRAWAHI



<http://mucholderthen.tumblr.com/post/50511139275/salvador-dali-ballerina-in-a-deaths-head-1939>

Salvador Dali

*Ballerina in a
Death's Head*
1939

Surrealism
Oil on canvas
Painting
24.5 x 19.5 cm



<http://artuk.org/discover/artworks/alexander-iii-of-scotland-rescued-from-the-fury-of-a-stag-by-the-intrepidity-of-colin-fitzgerald-the-death-of-the-stag-210846>

Benjamin West

The Death of the Stag
1786

Realism
Oil on canvas
Painting
366 x 521 cm



<http://www.flickrriver.com/photos/mharrsch/132550458/>

Unknown

*Mosaic mask of
Tezcatlipoca*

15–16th century CE
Mexico
Turquoise, pyrite, pine, lignite,
human skull, deer skin, conch
shell and agave
Sculpture
19 x 13.9 x 12.2 cm



Analysis of formal qualities of Salvador Dali 1904-1989

When I first saw the photograph of Salvador's "Swans Reflecting Elephants" painting I was astonished, the idea was very unique, who would've ever realised that the reflection of a swan would look like an elephant? Most of Salvador Dali's paintings are surreal and very creative.



<http://www.dalipaintings.net/swans-reflecting-elephants.jsp>

He started painting at an early age and was spiritually stimulated to attend an art school in Madrid, Academia de San Fernando, in the 1920s. A year later he was suspended from the academy for criticizing his teachers and supposedly started a riot among students over the academy's choice of a professorship, he got arrested that same year. His most popular painting was made in 1931, The Persistence of Memory, showing melting clocks in a landscape setting.

"The Accommodations of Desire" was done by the artist Salvador Dali in 1929 just after he went to Paris for his first Surrealist exhibition, The Accommodations of Desire.

Dali produced a series of paintings when the Spanish Civil war broke out in 1936. It was his moment to reference political situations into his paintings.

Salvador Dali had a brother named Salvador before him who had died nine months before Dali's birth, he also had a sister who was four years younger than him. Salvador's mother died of cancer when he was just sixteen years of age.

Salvador Dali is most famous for being the surrealist icon.

Salvador Felipe Jacinto Dali y Domenech, also known as Salvador Dali, is a Spanish artist who was born in his hometown Figueres, Spain. Dali was an intelligent child and had a precocious life. According to his autobiography, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dali*, when he was six he wanted to be a cook, a year later he wanted to be Napoleon. And since then his passion was increasing firmly and steadily. Salvador's first paintings were exhibited in 1916 when he was only 14 years old.

Dali wrote number of books, illustrations, fashion and store window decorations.

Specific Techniques

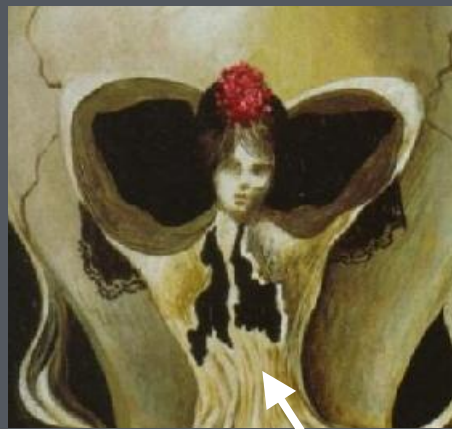
Salvador Dali had a special and unique technique that he would follow to create his masterpieces. He would place a tin plate beside him and hold a spoon over it while being seated on a chair next to the plate. He would then start to fall asleep, when he "dozed" the spoon fell over the plate and made a "clang" sound which would wake him up. He then starts recalling and capturing the surreal images onto his canvas.

<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1999.363.16/>



The Golden Ratio

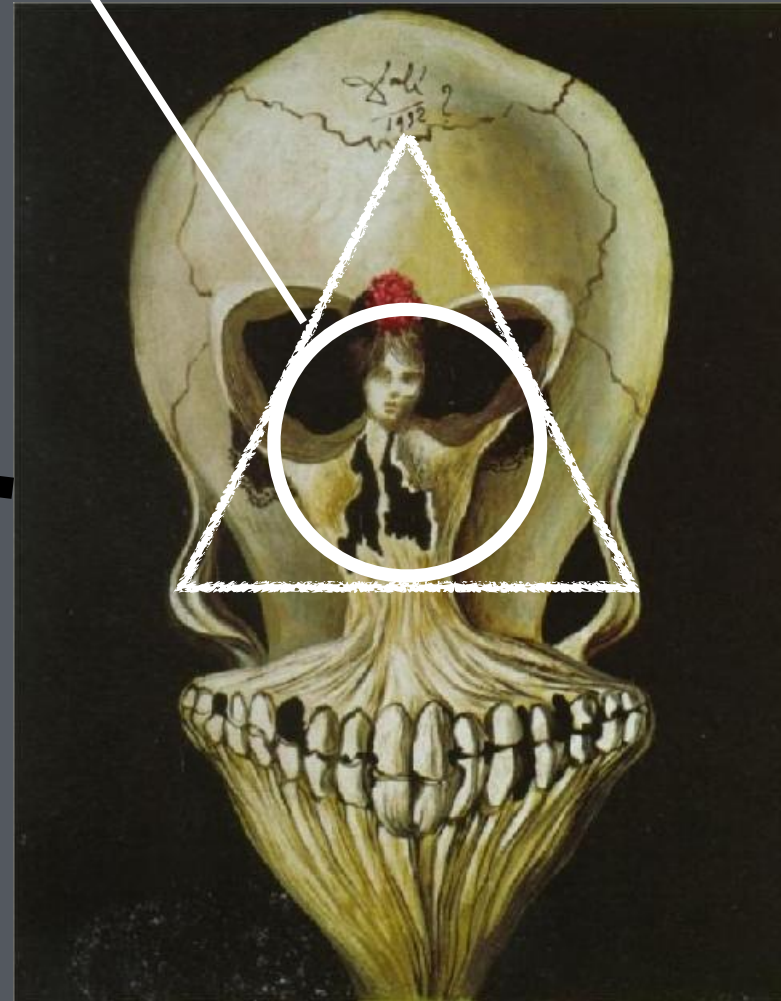
The golden ratio (1:1:6) mathematically proves the perfection of anything in the natural world. The main focus in this painting is the ballerina. Salvador Dali succeeded when using the golden ratio because all the attention is brought to the triangle.



Movement

The Surrealism movement started in 1924 and ended in 1966, lasting for almost forty-two years. Surrealism is the artistic movement in which creativity surpasses realism. Surrealist artworks are usually two pieces of art merged into one making it like an optical illusion kind of art work. Salvador Dali is the best known as the father of surrealism. Many of his works are very famous and have strong meanings and significance. Surrealism is not only done on paintings, but this art technique can be applied on photography, objects, sculptures, and films.

The rusting colours he used were perfect to portray the theme of the painting-death. Salvador painted the background in black to out-stand the skull and bring attention to it. Salvador Dali represented death in a very unique way.



Interpretation of Function and Purpose

A skull usually symbolises death and morality, and that's why Salvador named this painting "Ballerina in a Death's Head". The cracks on the skull show that there is no life in it and that it's old and dead, I also realised that there are two missing parts of the skull out of the ballerina's chest, Salvador purposely painted two missing parts of the skull on her chest to show that her heart and organs are pulled out to death. There is a connection between the skull and the ballerina; they are both deceased.

Zoomed into the painting



The painting shows a piece of human-like skull with a "ballerina" posed as if she was dancing. The teeth of the skull resemble the tutu of her costume, the outer eye area of the skull resembles her arms, which are stretched toward her upper head. The ballerina looks miserable and depressed contradicting the symbol of a ballerina, which is being graceful. The bottom part of the skull under the teeth is vertically narrowed down which looks like the ballerina joining her legs together on her toes.

Analysis of Formal Qualities of Ballerina in a Death's Head

<http://mucholderthen.tumblr.com/post/50511139275/salvador-dali-ballerina-in-a-deaths-head-1939>

"Ballerina in a Death's Head" was painted by the Spanish surreal artist Salvador Dali in 1939. The size of the painting is 24.5 x 19.5 cm.

As seen, the only vibrant colour on the painting is red. Red flowers are piled up on her head, resembling the flowers her relatives would put over her grave when visiting her. Red symbolises blood and death, which is similar to what a skull resembles. The theme of this painting is death and destruction.

Benjamin West could barely write a well structured sentence due to his lack of education. Sending letters to his students was very rare as he always had many spelling and grammar errors.

ANALYSIS OF FORMAL QUALITIES OF BENJAMIN WEST 1738-1820



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_West

Interpretation of Function and Purpose

Benjamin painted this to show what has happened and to make the viewers think and remember the past.

Benjamin West was born in 1738 and was born American. West is a historical, mythological and religious painter who had a huge impact on the growth of historical paintings in Britain. He was a painter to George II, the founder of the Royal Academy and later a president in 1792.

The Death of the Stag is a relatively big oil painting on a canvas sized 366 x 521 cm painted in 1786. The painting portrays a very energetic and violent scene with heroism from the Scottish history. In the painting, Alexander II is being rescued by the Clan Mackenzie from the mature male deer (the stag).



<http://artuk.org/discover/artworks/alexander-iii-of-scotland-rescued-from-the-fury-of-a-stag-by-the-intrepidity-of-colin-fitzgerald-the-death-of-the-stag-210846>

During his career as a painter, West painted many complex compositions, his techniques were so sophisticated and unique. West varied his styles and methods dramatically.

Realism is considered as the first modern artistic movement. Realism began in the 1840s and lasted for approximately forty years. Artists would discuss unpleasant political issues through realistic paintings. The painting would often send a moral message to the viewers of that time.

America was waiting for this painting to leave the shores and come to them, but before it was sent, it got purchased by a successful campaign in 1987. Then later in 2004 The Death of the Stag was kept safe in the National Gallery of Scotland where many people go to explore paintings and artworks.

The main focus of painting is composed of seven men, four horses and a male deer. In the background, a couple of people are seen with dogs. The scene seems to have been taken place during a stormy day because of the dark colors of the sky and clouds. It looks like they are in the middle of a mini war where one of the warriors is aiming his spear at the deer trying to save Alexander II. The painting is has a horizontal composition. *The Death of the Stag* is a historic realistic oil painting

The Death of the stag was West's most unique Scottish masterpiece. Benjamin was top famous for more than two centuries. The masterpiece was painted for the Clan Mackenzie in 1786. Tis enormously huge oil painting is still the largest painting in the National Galleries of Scotland, and represents West's heroic monument.

Annotating *The Death of the Stag* by Benjamin West



The Clan is pulling and dragging Alexander's hand to protect him from the deer, also known as the stag. I could predict that the weather at that moment was windy because Alexander's hair is flowing in the air.



The man in orange is pulling back his horse from its head to save it from the attack. The man also looks worried and anxious. Although the horse looks scared it still tends to have the urge to see what is happening.

From the expressions of the horse it shows how scared it is. It's moving backwards away from the deer, its hair is painted perfectly because it shows how the wind affects the flow of its hair. Paying attention to its eyes we can see the fear and anxiety in it, as if it was asking for help.



The painting is very busy and the mood is very soulful and full of action.



The barking of the dogs symbolize an alarm of danger when dangerous animals or humans approach. The dogs are barking to alarm the men from the deer.



This man shows bravery because he is raising his spear with passionate rage to tend to kill the stag. From the title of the painting, *The Death of the Stag*, we can know that the stag is eventually slaughtered by this man. He is tightly gripping the antelope of the stag to hold it still to aim to kill it.



Aside from the spear, the shield on the ground shows evidence that the men are warriors.

Interpretation of Function and Purpose

The Mosaic mask of Tezcatlipoca represents the god of Tezcatlipoca, also known as the Smoking Mirror. He was believed to be one of the powerful creator deities. "Smoking Mirror" is derived from the Mexican word "tezapoctli" which means "shining smoke".

Tezcatilpoca

Tezcatilpoca was thought-out as the most powerful god. He was the god of night, sorcery and destiny, he was also the god of the North. The Aztecs believed that Tezcatilpoca created wars to feed the other gods, since they considered blood as the gods' "feast". One of Tezcatilpoca's titles is translated to "he whose slaves we are", it shows how the Aztecs were very loyal and would sacrifice their life and spirit for him.

Cultural Context about the Aztecs

Aztec art was only associated with and related to death. Death was the one thing that was awaiting them. The Aztecs "pleased" the gods by decorating the temples with sculptures and ornaments. Their temples were the most embellished buildings in America. Most of the sculptures reflected the viewpoint of their gods and how they communicated and came across life. Art in the Aztec culture was very realistic and authentic, specifically their statues of people and animals. Aztec art was very known for reverberating death.



<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-americas/early-cultures/aztec-mexica/a/mosaic-mask-of-tezcatlipoca>

In addition to making masks and animal sculptures, the Aztecs also made miniature sculptures like knives, insects and shells. The preponderance of Aztec artists preferred using turquoise material,



http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/worldhistory/double_headed_serpent

Human sacrifice in the Aztec culture

The Aztecs sacrificed themselves as part of their religious routine and cultural tradition. They would practice rituals by donating their blood to the Aztec god, Acolnahuactl. The blood was collected from cutting from themselves using an obsidian knife.

The Aztec Double Headed Serpent

The double-headed serpent was made of wood covered with carefully cut tiles with random shapes and sizes of mosaic tiles. The wood on the back of the serpent was carved out to be light when worn on the chest on religious occasions. A serpent is a reptile snake and was religiously significant to the Aztecs. Snakes resemble rebirth and renewal since they shed their skin every once in a while. The Aztecs believed that it was part of their religion. Snakes also symbolise god power because they're able to swim and slide over and underground, they moved everywhere just like gods. Being double-headed was why they represented magical power.

Personal Thoughts

I personally admire the Aztec art and how they portray death and add unique aspects to their sculptures.

Annotating the Aztec Mosaic mask of Tezcatlipoca

The Aztec mosaic mask of Tezcatlipoca is basically a human skull which was incision from the back, it was then lined with deer skin, on which the movable jaw is hinged.

The mask is made by professional Mixtec artisans in Mexico between the fifteenth and sixteenth century.

The nasal cavity is lined with red thorny oyster shells.



The dimensions of the mask: height: 19 cm, width: 13.9 cm, length: 12.2 cm.

The "skin" of the mask is made of alternating black and turquoise lignite mosaic tiles.

The eyes are made of white stombus shells.

The mask also has strips made of deer skin which was believed was painted red due to traces of ochre pigment. The strips would allow people to wear the mask on religious occasions.



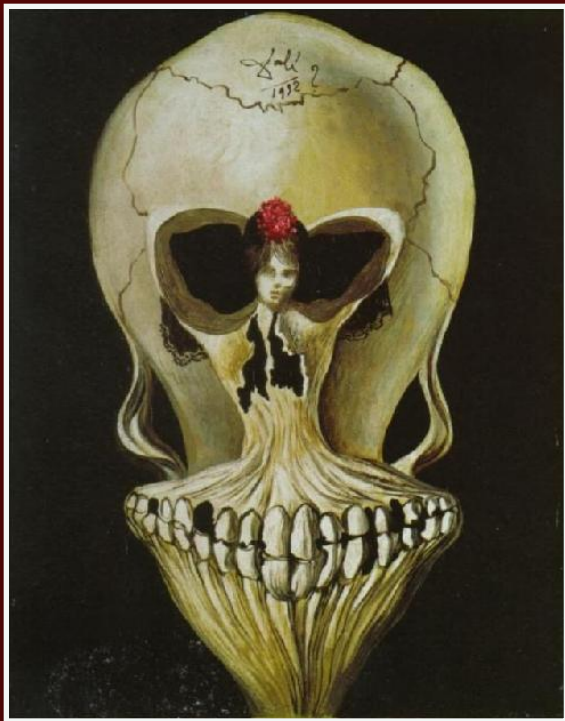
<https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/mosaic-mask-of-tezcatlipoca/0gHRmF7IJ3MC6w>

The teeth on the mosaic mask are real human teeth and are believed to belong to the Aztec/Mixtec people who made the mask. Some teeth are missing because the sculpture is old and may have been damaged while being transferred.

The mosaic was identified as Tezc because of the black stripes made of coal. The Mexica believed that "the god" created the earth and sky with his brother from two halves of the beast who lived in primitive waters.



Comparing/Contrasting Formal Analysis Through the Elements of Art - Tone



Salvador Dali had a lot of imagination and creativity when it came to this painting, it is so hard to like a ballerina to death. The tone in this painting is reflective and solemn as it reflects the ballerina's sad emotion and feelings. Salvador Dali purposely painted Ballerina in Death Head to be hurtful to its viewers and remind us of how fanciful he was.



Death of the Stag has a very harsh and corrosive scene of the war to make the tone of the painting caustic. The expressions of the warriors represents the aggressiveness and macabre of the painting. Dark colors are used to show depth and distance in the painting.

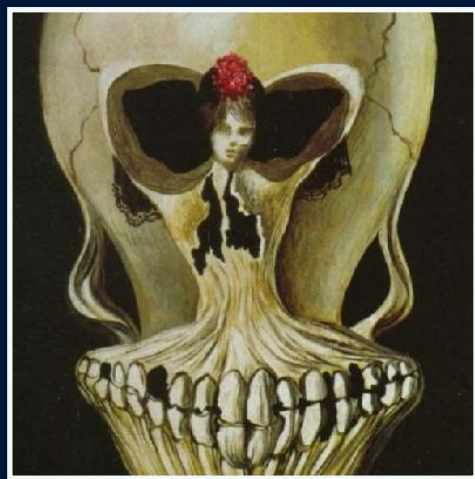
The common tone in these oil paintings is that they're both very dramatic. Salvador Dali and Benjamin West wanted the painting to have a powerful expressive emotions and action.

All art pieces have a dark tone

There is contrast in colour between the turquoise and black mosaic tiles, and it appears to have a pattern. The Mosaic Mask of Tezcatlipoca is apathetic and shows no emotion at all.



Comparing/Contrasting Formal Analysis Through the Elements of Art -Colour and Value



The skull in *Ballerina in a Death Head* is very warm, soft and mellow. It is neutral and dusty. The colours are so well blended together to give a washed out effect to the skull. Salvador used the light half of his coloured palette to paint the skull, on the other hand, he used the darkest colours for the broken parts of the skull and for the background.



Both *Ballerina in a Death Head* and *Mosaic Mask of Tezcatlipoca* used a limited amount of the colour red in their artworks.



The *Mosaic mask of Tezcatlipoca* is very bold and strong in colour. Blue, white and grey make things cold and since the mask is made of rich turquoise mosaic tiles and white teeth, the mask is also cold. The turquoise colour splashes into the dark black mask making it flamboyant.



All the art works have a common theme about death, decay and destruction. All three artists used bright colours to symbolise hope and to catch the viewers attention. The red flowers on the ballerina drive the viewers' eyes to the centre of the painting and show that she might have hope in life. The *Mosaic Mask of Tezcatlipoca*, the tiles used around the eye and mouth area is bright turquoise, combination of light blue and green, and the nose is fleshy red. As for *The Death of the Stag*, many bright colours were used like white, yellow ochre and scarlet.

Benjamin West and Salvador Dali both incorporated a lot of the yellow pale colours and values into their paintings.



The Death of the Stag is a very colourful yet deep painting, it uses many colours. The sky is painted in grey, white and black which indicates that the colours used in this painting are so dark, strong and deep to emphasize the action and violence of the scene, but the colours are so well combined together which makes the painting so harmonious. The painting is harsh and sickly and the scene may be unpleasant to some viewers. Earthy shades such as the browns, yellows and oranges are used in this painting and usually speak for the season of fall.

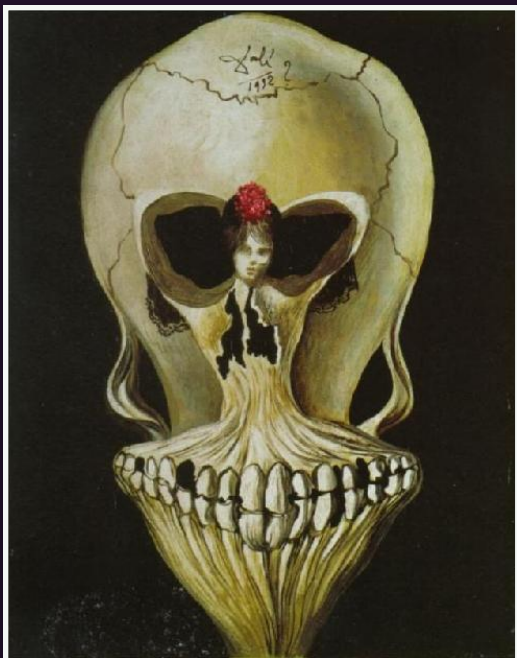


The sky is monochrome and very pale. The deep to emphasize the action and violence of the scene, but the colours are so well combined together which makes the painting so harmonious. The painting is harsh and sickly and the scene may be unpleasant to some viewers. Earthy shades such as the browns, yellows and oranges are used in this painting and usually speak for the season of fall.



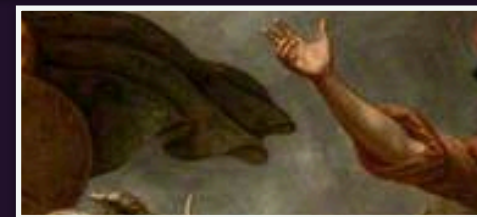
Both of the artworks involved values of blue and green. The Aztecs used turquoise, blueish green, and Benjamin used many shades of blue in his painting.

Comparing/Contrasting Formal Analysis Through the Elements of Art -Shape, Line, Form and Texture



The shape of the skull is not as realistic and detailed as the Death of the Stag. The skull is painted to be viewed as two-dimensional.

Both artworks are formed of oil paints and are considered paintings. Since the paintings are painted using oils the texture of the paintings are not expected to be completely smooth and soft. The canvas is flat and so are the paintings.



Most of the figures in the painting are irregular but are composed of many different shapes, for example the horse is composed of ovals, circles and rectangles. The warriors were painted in a very lifelike and realistic three-dimensional manner. Everything on the painting is very detailed especially the clothes of the warriors.

Both have similar shapes, like the shape of the teeth and overall shape of the skull.

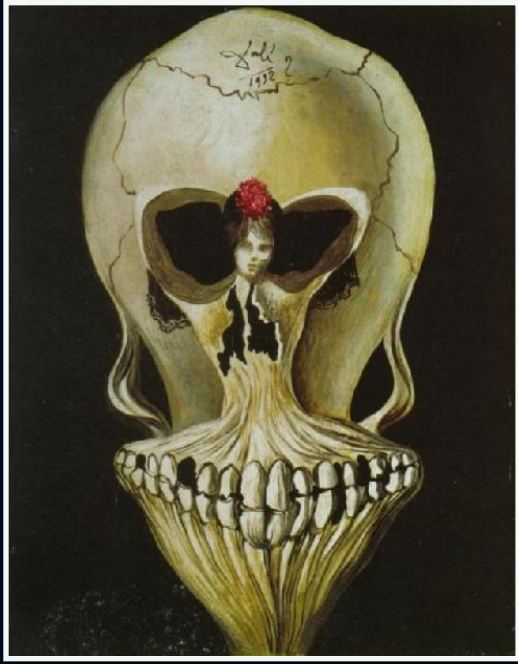


The Mosaic Mask of Tezcatlipoca is a three-dimensional sculpture stylized with mosaic tiles which are irregular in shape and are randomly arranged. The shape of the mask is irregular yet looks lifelike compared to the human skull. The forms of this artwork are sculpture, mosaic and mask.

Both art works look realistic and lifelike.



Comparing/Contrasting Formal Analysis Through the Elements of Art -Space and Emphasis



This painting has a vertical template and measures 24.5 x 19.5 cm. The focal point of the painting is the ballerina's face, it emphasizes the theme into her facial expressions.

The Mosaic Mask of Tezcatlipoca is left in front of a black background to draw the viewer's eyes to the mask and to have no disruption on the details of the mask. Similarly, Salvador Dali painted the background of his painting black to draw full attention and focus towards the skull.

The Mosaic Mask of Tezcatlipoca is a three-dimensional sculpture and is meant to be viewed from all angles that is why the museum placed it on a long thin stand mounted on a base. The sculpture is arranged in a prevailing vertical axis.



Both paintings must be viewed with respect to their template position.

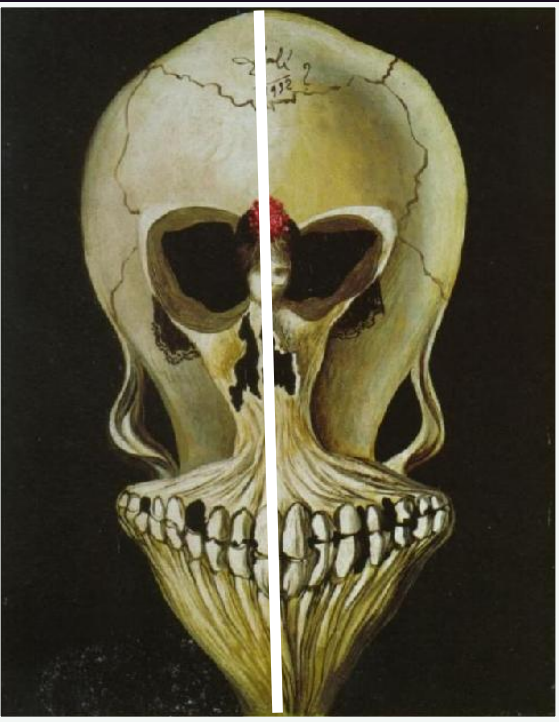
The painting has a horizontal template and measures 366 x 521 cm. the space is used to demonstrate the whole scene and not one single area of the painting was left blank, the painting is so busy. The main interest and focus of the masterpiece is stretched out in the center. Small figures represent far away distance, on the contrary, large figures are closer.

Comparing/Contrasting Formal Analysis Through Principles of Art

Harmony in art is when the components (objects/figures) of the art work are well combined in a way that is visually satisfying.



Balance was successfully created because Benjamin West combined the colors and shapes in the right way. There is no part of the canvas where the darks don't cancel out the lights. No specific pattern was used in the painting. The painting is approximately symmetrical and equally proportioned, the focus is on neither side, it's in the center. A lot of movement is portrayed in the painting, you feel like there is aggressive and quick action going on. Benjamin West varied between the colors in the painting to make it more interesting. Harmonious paintings because the colors are similar in the figures of the painting.



High contrast between the beige color of the skull and the black in the background, allows skull to stand out. No pattern is seen on painting. There is no movement of the figure in the painting, which shows how peaceful the ballerina is.

No pattern noticed on either paintings. Both paintings are harmonious because they show common color schemes in the painted figures.

Equally proportioned and symmetrical. One eye on either side of the skull (face). There is no variety of color, both art works contain few colors.

Pattern appears in the colors of alternating mosaic tiles, black and turquoise. There is also high contrast between the lights (turquoise) and darks (black). No specific area (focal point) to drag our eyes towards. No movement related to sculpture.



Comparing/Contrasting Formal Analysis Through the Cultural Context/Movement

All three artists incorporated and involved specific elements and symbols related to their cultures.

Salvador Dali- Spain

Salvador Dali was taught art when he was young so had the basic love for art as he grew up, his first style was impressionism. Dali was influenced by the Spanish Civil War and started releasing his paintings which related to the political situations at that time.

Salvador Dali was recognized by both the Americans and the British. He was later exiled to America and adopted some of the American culture in his artworks.

"Surrealism is destructive, but it destroys only what it considers to be shackles limiting our vision"-Salvador Dali

As mentioned in previous screens, the most important art work during the surrealism movement is The Accommodations of Desire by Salvador Dali. It was painted in the summer of 1929 after Dali's Surrealist exhibition in Paris.



Benjamin West- America

Benjamin West was taught art by a European artist until he was at the age of twenty-two, he then travelled to Italy to gain his acknowledgment as a historical painter. Europe was not able to incorporate its tradition into West's paintings as West stayed loyal to his American culture and heritage.

Skulls represent death in many parts of the world, but other places have their own opinion of skulls. Skulls can also represent transformation and change, whilst other times it represents wealth and strength. In Mexico, skulls are decorated and elaborated with colors patterns to honor the dead. For many cultures around the world, death isn't the end of life.

Realism is the artistic movement in which artists began discriminating the ideas of imagination and started painting natural and detailed scenes that happen in real life. They would draw the objects and figures just how they look in real life, with respect to light but without changing anything and without adding any imagination and creativity to it. Realism originated in France before the appearance of the Romanticism movement first originated in France.

Benjamin's painting, The Death of the Stag is seen as a Romantic painting by many critiques but is actually a realistic painting. Evidence is that it was painted in 1786 before the birth of the Romanticism movement.

The Aztecs-Mexico

The Aztecs appreciated death and always took it in a way of positivity and loyalty to their gods, they even wore death masks to death occasions. The Aztecs adopted many styles and elements of art from the people they conquered. Every time they conquered a civilization, they discovered new materials and developed more sculptures.

The movement in which the Aztecs were living upon is the Mexica movement. They were not actually called the "Aztecs" by themselves, but was invented by two men who were from England and America in the nineteenth century.

The Aztec empire grew vastly between 1345 and 1521 CE. Aztec warriors constantly conquered their neighboring areas to spread their religion across Mexico and to trade goods such as sculptures and masks.

The Aztec art was used as propaganda to spread the royal dominance of Tenochtitlan, which was the capital city of the Aztec empire.

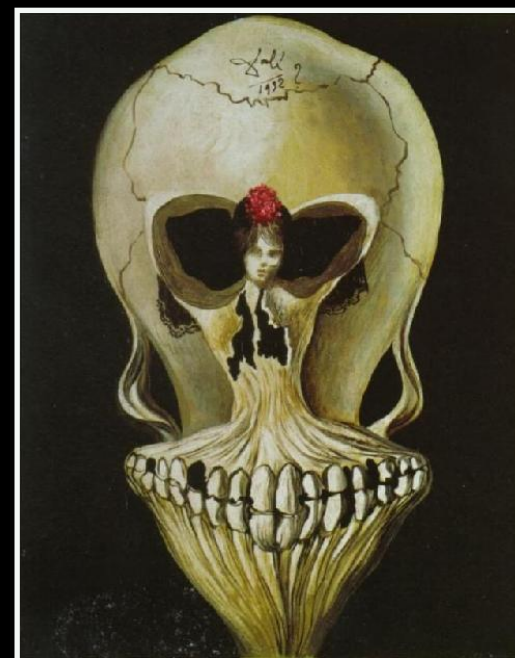
Theme of **Death** in Visual Arts



The Aztecs represent death as an act of sacrifice and loyalty.



Benjamin West represented death as an aggressive act and end to life.



Salvador Dalí represented death as sweet yet harsh.

“Dream of a ballerina dancing joyfully in endless beauty, and adoration. In a dream gone mad, she is pale, indoor skin shadows sadness, disillusionment. Vibrant red flowers piled atop her head have faded, edges curling in stiffness. Her limber, graceful arms stretch grotesquely, encompassing the empty eyes of a death head. A heart once full, is rent. Tattered is garment’s hem, clutched into grip of locked zippered teeth on bulbous cracked head. Ballerina has lost her dream; her hopes are shot with holes”

-Poem by “purplepeninportland”
<https://purplepeninportland.wordpress.com/2012/08/27/ballerina-in-a-deaths-head-1939-Salvador-Dali/>

Different artists portray death in their own way depending on their personal experience and the scenes of death they’ve experienced. Most death themed artworks are dark dull and sad, but some artists portray death in a happy and positive scene, like the Aztecs.

Each of these paintings describe and represent death, but in a different way. Time plays a big role in the representation of death in art.

Why I Picked These Artworks

This topic, death, interests me because it's its a provoking subject and can be viewed form many different perspectives. Death is often ignored or kept away because not many people like to talk and think about it . Death is one of the oldest themes in art and very few modern artists relate their paintings to death. Paintings with battle scenes are usually concerned with death, heroism and power. These paintings basically want us to view death as an act of bravery and sacrifice rather than leaving the world.

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Ideas and Intentions

For my studio work which will be linked to my comparative study, I will make a sculpture inspired by the Mosaic mask of Tezcatlipoca. I will purchase a cow's skull and add on tiles according to the colours that represent the purpose of the sculpture. My aim is to portray death as a natural occurrence that happens to everyone, including animals. Many edible animals are slaughtered on a daily basis for their meat, skin and bones. Although the Aztecs used their sculpture as a mask, my sculpture will be made for display and for the viewers to rethink about death through the animal skull and the colours of the tiles. I've seen many other people on the internet who designed cows' skulls but my sculpture will have to serve its purpose and meaning just like how the Aztec Mask of Tezcatlipoca did.

Background about Tiles

Mosaic art is made from vitmos tiles which are assembled together to create a piece of art. This type of art is usually displayed in castles and monuments, decorative tile art is different from mosaic since the tiles will be arranged using very small pieces of tiles that are randomly positioned. I am using this specific type of tile because they're similar to the ones the Aztecs used to make the mosaic mask of Tezcatlipoca.



Color Scheme

The colours of the tiles that I will be using in my sculpture will represent many different and opposing concepts related to death. The most important colour is black, which famously symbolises death. Since white contrasts black, I will use white for high contrast and a sense of purity. Green represents hope and nature, I particularly chose this colour to indicate that there is hope in life for everyone and that death is natural. I will specifically use dark green which represents peace, sometimes death can be peaceful. I must use red tiles not only because it contrasts green, but also because it is the only colour that represents blood. Aquamarine is the colour which represents emotional healing and protection. Yellow will give that extra pop of colour to my colour scheme and is the most visible

Process and Technical Skills

I first went to a far away slaughter house in the countryside of my home land with my father. We had to choose between many sizes of cow skulls which was difficult, but I eventually chose a medium sized skull.



Since the skull still had a lot of meat over it we had to boil it. It was boiled several times to make sure all the meat has detached from the bones, but this resulted in the weakening of the bones making them fragile and delicate.



Photographs of my process whilst the skull was being boiled and after it was cleansed. As seen on the photograph on the right, the cow has huge oval shaped nostrils which are what makes it recognisable. Also, the jaw was separated from the upper part of the skull after the boxing process because the joint were muscles which were broken down. Many holes are present on the upper part of the skull because the brain was being removed and so the weak bones got broken. This only adds up originality and nature sense to my work.

Linking to Mosaic Mask of Tezcatlipoca

The Aztecs used a real human skull as the base of the mask with real human teeth, and I am using a real cow skull for my studio work which has real cow teeth. The Aztecs were known for their turquoise tiles and lignite tiles, however, I am using Vitmos tiles which were bought from the United Kingdom. The colours they used were very limited, most of their mosaics were with the colour turquoise as their purpose was related to worship and death, but I am going to use several colours to compose the purpose of my sculpture. The Aztecs used very tiny pieces of tiles and arranged them very neatly and close to teacher unlike my technique, which is leaving gaps in between on purpose.



<http://www.flickrriver.com/photos/mharrsch/132550458/>

Before using the tiles on the skull I had to soak them in warm water for about 30 minutes to separate the glue from the back of the tiles. After the soaking process, I rinsed them with cool water and rubbed the back of the tiles against a towel to take off any excess glue and other residues. This process consumed time as I had many tiles that were required to be cleaned.



The next step was breaking the mosaic tiles into small randomly shaped pieces. To do so, I first laid the tiles square sided up on a piece of cloth and placed wax paper over them, I then kept one hand over the wax paper and used the other hand to break the tiles using a heavy duty hammer. Some pieces were larger than others, and some were too small to be used. The main purpose of this is to make sure the hopes of the pieces were not exactly the same and are in different sizes so that the end result looks distorted and unusual.



Screenshots of the breaking process from a time lapse video I took from my phone. The yellow cloth is an empty rice bag.

Concept of Wabi Sabi and my sculpture Critical Investigation

“Wabi-sabi is the quintessential Japanese aesthetic. It is a beauty of things imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete. It is a beauty of things modest and humble.” -(<http://wiki.c2.com/?WabiSabi>). Since the broken tiles are randomly shaped it was quite difficult for me to arrange them in a way that they will be close to each other without any gaps in between. The spaces and gaps between the tiles symbolise the incompleteness in the Wabi Sabi concept. Wabi Sabi is all about appreciating the unusual and imperfect aspects of objects, and I want my viewers to appreciate all they got when they see the random spaces between the tiles. The gaps will not be painted or covered in any way; the whole purpose is to show the real damaged part of the bone itself. Also, I am leaving some area of the skull naked and bare without tiles to make sure the real bone can be seen clearly.

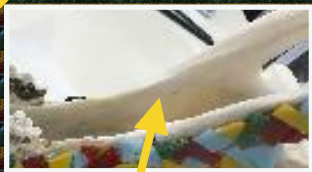


Reviewing/ Reflecting and Refining

The arrangement of the tiles in the mosaic mask of Tezcatlipoca is very neat and well positioned which is different from my arrangement of tiles. The line separating the two colors is very straight and neat, however mine isn't very neat because the tiles were not small enough to be easily organized to be well arranged.



After I finish the whole skull, I will spray the whole skull with spray glue to avoid any pieces of tiles from falling off, and then with glossy varnish spray to keep the tiles shiny. I will have to assemble the two parts of the skull together using pieces of wood, and then I will take a professional photograph of the skull.



Every damage and hole in the skull and any leftover muscle tissues on the skull emphasize the concept of Wabi Sabi on my sculpture.



SYMBOLISM

Every colour I'm using represents something which symbolises the colour. Since the black colour is the absence of colour, I will glue half of the head black and the other half the other colours. Black will symbolise the absence of life in the sculpture: the dead cow. Black is the colour of death and grief linked to the death of the cow. The other colours; green, yellow, aquamarine and red represent the other mysterious yet beautiful aspects of death. Life is the opposite of death, so



Communication of Ideas and Intentions

After conducting my comparative study and creating a studio piece inspired by the investigation, I am planning on conducting another artwork related to my comparative study; specifically Salvador Dali's *Ballerina in a Death's Head* painting. I analysed his painting as a ballerina who's heartbroken, she is enclosed in a skull which symbolises death. My idea is to compose an installation related to the painting. I will buy a life-size skeleton and then make it pose like a ballerina and then fit in its ribs with fresh red roses. I will also incorporate photography because I will set up a mini studio area in my house to take photos of the ribs and roses as they're decaying.

Gathering the Materials

I went hunting for a life size in the country I'm living in but unfortunately, I found nothing. I had to order a skeleton online from amazon.com and have it delivered to my cousin living in the UK, and the wait for him to come back to my homeland and then I have to get it to the country I'm living in. This took about a whole month until the skeleton finally arrived at my house safely. Then I had to take the skeleton to a carpenter to make its pose stable. After that, I went shopping for a black cloth to use as the background for when I take the photographs of the skeleton and roses. I nailed the cloth into the wall of one of the least used rooms in our house. I then went to the flower shop and bought 50 fresh red roses, to assemble them into the ribs I inserted the stems into a stiff piece of styrofoam and then duct taped the styrofoam to the vertical wooden piece on the back of the skeleton to make sure it stays in place. Finally, I set up the camera on the tripod and positioned it facing the skeleton.



Inspiration

I didn't know which ballet pose to set up to escalate but when I was browsing the internet I found the perfect pose: arabesque - a position on one leg with the other leg raised behind the body and extended in a straight line.



<https://www.etsy.com/listing/467647154/ballet-ballerina-skeleton-anatomy-art#>



Color Scheme

Since I am using fresh red roses the colour scheme will be focused on red, but as the roses die their colour will change and gradually turn black. In Salvador's painting, the skull was coloured using natural shades, and this is why I didn't paint over the skeleton.



<http://www.color-hex.com/color-palette/5633>

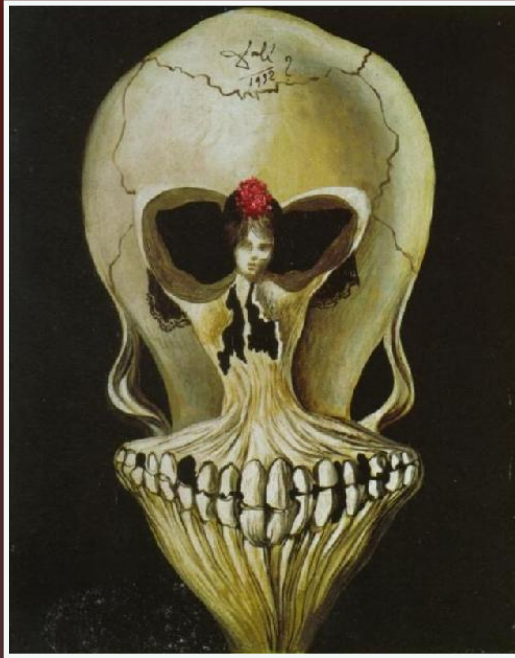
Reviewing, Reflecting and Refining

The carpenter we wanted to wasn't a professional and was careless which caused my skeleton to not be posed in the exact way I wanted it to be which was frustrating because I couldn't do anything about it as there were nails drilled into the skeleton itself. The head is supposed to be looking up, the feet is supposed to be on its fingers and the arm is supposed to be lifted further up. As for the other leg which is lifted, I can adjust the string to lift it further up, and I will attach a string to the hand to lift the arm too.



Linking Back to Salvador's Painting

Since in his painting Salvador had a red flower, which symbolises blood and pain, I used red roses to keep up with the theme and similarities between my work and his. The idea of placing the roses inside the rib cage came from the ballerina's broken heart in his painting. Because Salvador Dali painted a human skull I decided to use a human skeleton and make it pose like a ballerina but in a different position. The theme of my comparative study is death so I injected the idea of taking daily photographs of the roses as they die to show the decay of it in the human skeleton.



Photograph taken by my iPhone on the second day. (without flash)



Photograph taken by my iPhone on the seventh day. (with flash)



Photograph taken by my iPhone on the seventh day. (without flash)



Helicopter view of the inner part of the rib cage. The roses are starting to change in color.



Side view of the rib cage with the roses dying.

Photography

Since I am going to be taking photographs using my Canon EOS 1100D camera, I need to explore the rules of photography and its elements. The five most important elements of composition in photography are pattern, symmetry, texture, depth of field, and lines. Pattern- the arrangements of the roses can be considered as a pattern and so are the bones of the rib cage. Symmetry- it's when one-half of something is symmetrical to the opposite half. Symmetry exists in my skeleton's rib cage area. Texture- the installation is three-dimensional which means it has texture, the roses have a smooth yet rippled texture. The depth of field- to make the roses stand out and create high contrast, I set up a black background using a non-shimmery piece of cloth so that when the flash hits the cloth its doesn't get reflected back. Line- lines have the power to draw attention to the focal point in a shot, the bones create horizontal lines which seem to drag the viewer's eyes towards the centre of the skeleton and so reaching the focal point; the roses. I set my camera on a tripod so that it stays in the same position for a month without moving neither the skeleton nor the camera. Since flash is required to result in clear deep photographs of the roses I set the camera to night mode.



I will take a single photograph every single night for almost two months until the roses decay completely. I set a reminder on my phone which reminds me to go downstairs and take a photo of the skeleton between 8 and 12 midnight.

Although the rose arrangement started to slip because one of the tapes broke apart, I didn't touch the skeleton nor the roses so I can have a natural sequence of photographs without human interruption. I also kept the curtains open so that no sunlight effects the process of death of the roses, the air conditioner was closed at all time and will remain closed until I finish the photography session. As for the display of the installation, I will let it stand and behind it I'm going to hand the best photographs of the death process taken throughout the two months. I will have the photographs printed at a professional studio so the resolution is high in definition. I am delighted that my friends and family loved my idea and thought of it as very unique.

I am looking forward to learning more about photography in the future and hopefully digital art and photo-editing.

<http://mucholderthen.tumblr.com/post/50511139275/salvador-dali-ballerina-in-a-deaths-head-1939>

Photographs of the Decay of the Roses

