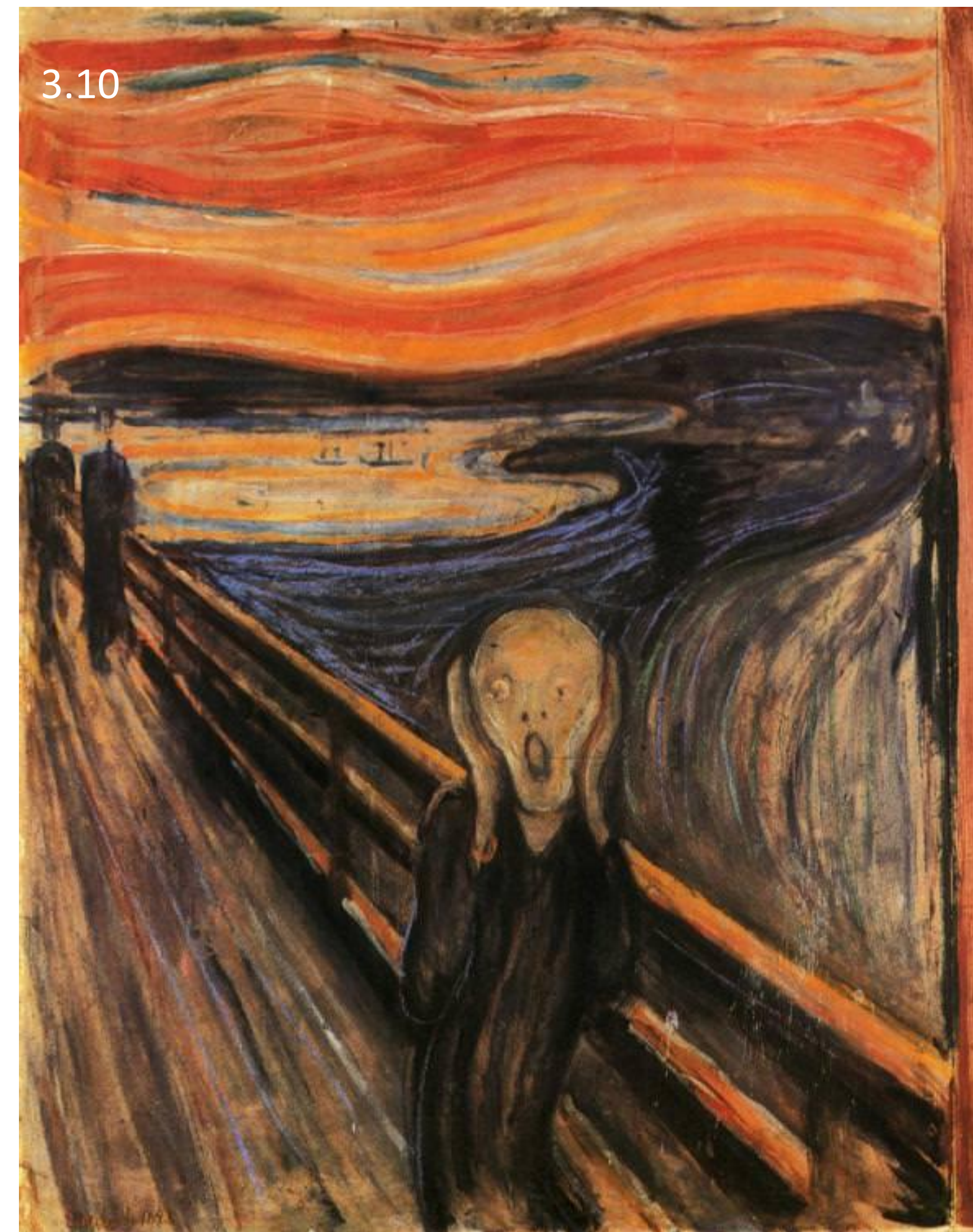


# COMPARATIVE STUDY

candidate number jlz187



**Artist:** Francesca Woodman  
**Title:** **Untitled (Rome, Italy)**  
**Date:** 1978  
**Movement:** Surrealism  
**Place of display:** National Gallery of Art,  
Washington DC, USA  
**Medium:**  
**Size:** Gelatin silver print  
**Origin:** 14.8 x 15.2 cm  
Italian



**Artist:** Edvard Munch  
**Title:** **The Scream**  
**Date:** 1893  
**Movement:** Expressionism  
**Place of display:** National Gallery and Munch Museum,  
Oslo, Norway  
**Medium:** Oil, tempera, pastel and crayon  
**Size:** 91 x 73.5 cm  
**Origin:** Norwegian

Theme: **SUFFERING**



**Artist:** Vincent Van Gogh  
**Title:** **Starry Night**  
**Date:** 1889  
**Movement:** Post-impressionism  
**Place of display:** The Museum of Modern Art New York,  
USA.  
**Medium:** Oil on canvas  
**Size:** 73.7 x 92.1 cm  
**Origin:** Dutch



# AN OVERVIEW OF “THE STARRY NIGHT”

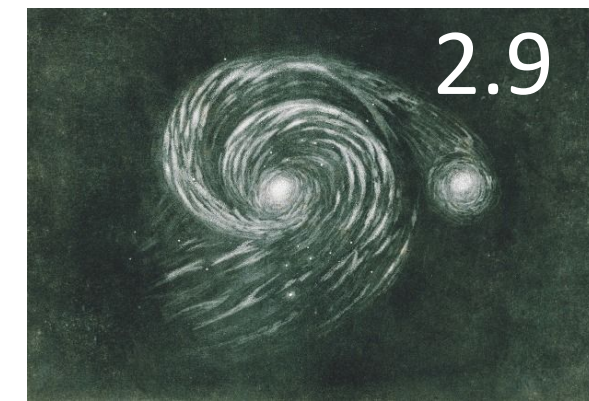
# Vincent van Gogh

(1853 – 1890)

“The heart of man is very much like the sea, it has its storms, it has its tides and in its depths it has its pearls too”  
— Vincent van Gogh



2.8

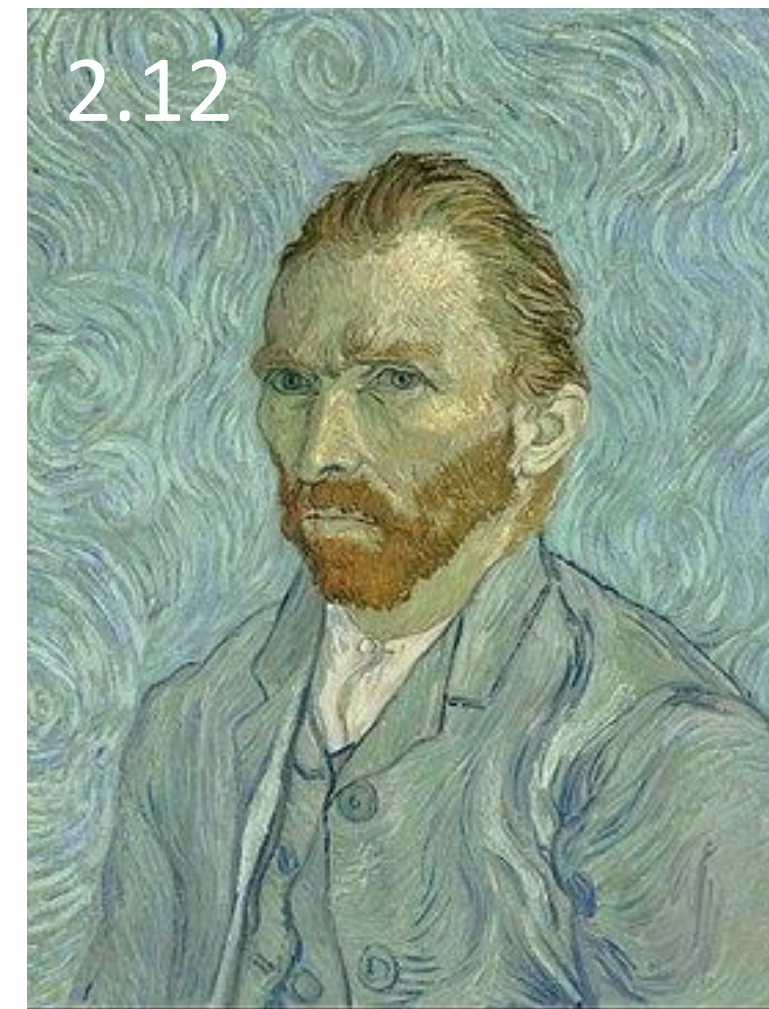


2.9

Vincent van Gogh included this picture in his draft book after the painting of “The Starry Night”. He is believed to have been inspired by the M51 (Whirlpool Galaxy), appeared in a French astronomy book. (2.3)

“The Starry Night” is a composition of the Post-Impressionist Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890) painted on canvas in June 1889 while he was facing the window from his asylum room at Saint Remy de Provence - France. The artwork depicts the landscape of an ideal village in the moment of shifting from night to sunset, with an elusive background and exaggerated use of colors which creates a spiral effect for the night sky. “The Starry Night” is one of Vincent’s most iconic works, using oil color as the main component, finished only thirteen months before his death due to suicide. (2.1)

“But the sight of the stars always makes me dream,” van Gogh once wrote. “Why, I say to myself, should the spots of light in the firmament be less accessible to us than the black spots on the map of France? Just as we take the train to go to Tarascon or Rouen, we take death to go to a star.” During this period, Vincent van Gogh suffered from his emotional illness in a mental asylum and the recuperation of his cut ear. With strong brush stroke and high contrast colors, he inspirationally got a dreamy depiction and blended his psychological problems into the starry night expressively. (2.2)



2.12

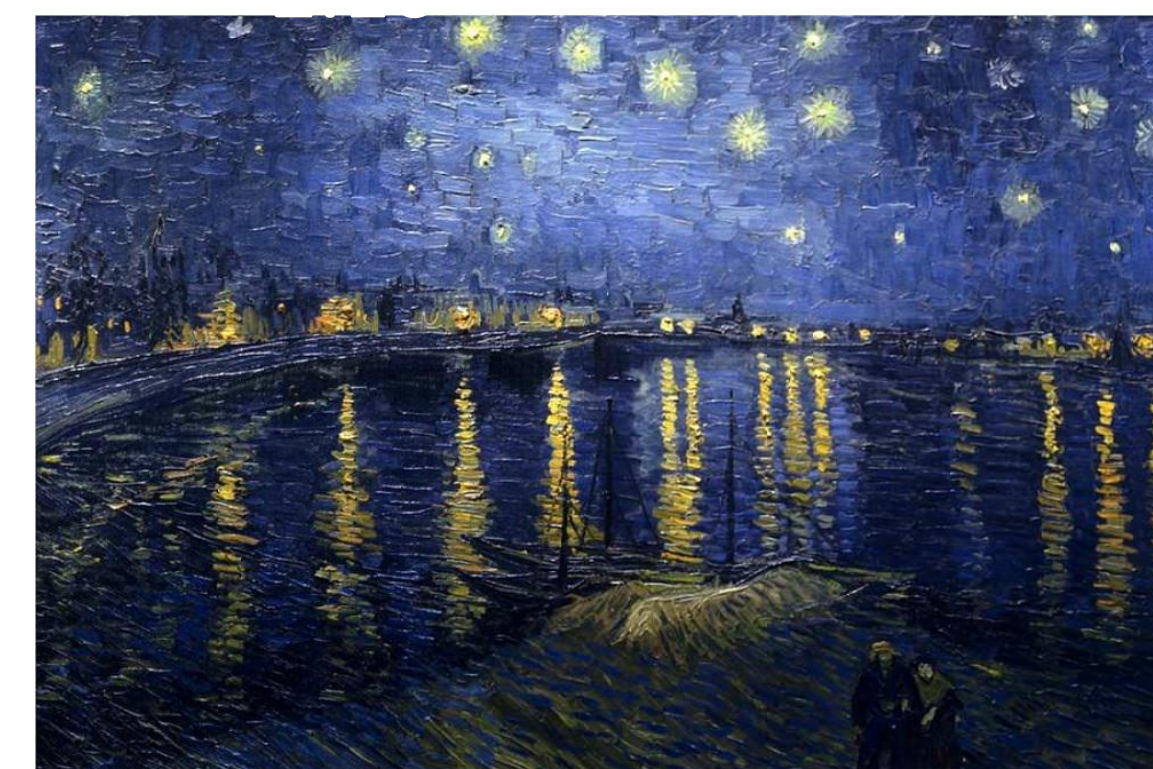
Vincent van Gogh (1853 – 1890) is a Post-Impressionist and one of the most influential Western artists in the world. His paintings are often distinguished by expressive brush stroke and vivid

## CRITICAL INVESTIGATION

choice of colors. Evers since his birth, he had been an introvert. Vincent suffered from depression, psychosis episodes and heavy drinking, being regarded as a crazy man and a failure. During all his life, Theodore van Gogh – Vincent’s brother – had always supported him financially and mentally. (2.6) After the incident of cutting his earlobe, he then moved into Saint Remy Asylum to cure his mental illness. After a year, Vincent committed suicide on a wheat field shooting himself. Although being attempted to rescue by his brother Theodore, two days after the incident, the infection still killed him to death. His last words saying to Theo were “The sadness will last forever.” Only after Vincent’s death that he could receive the reputation he deserves. (2.7)

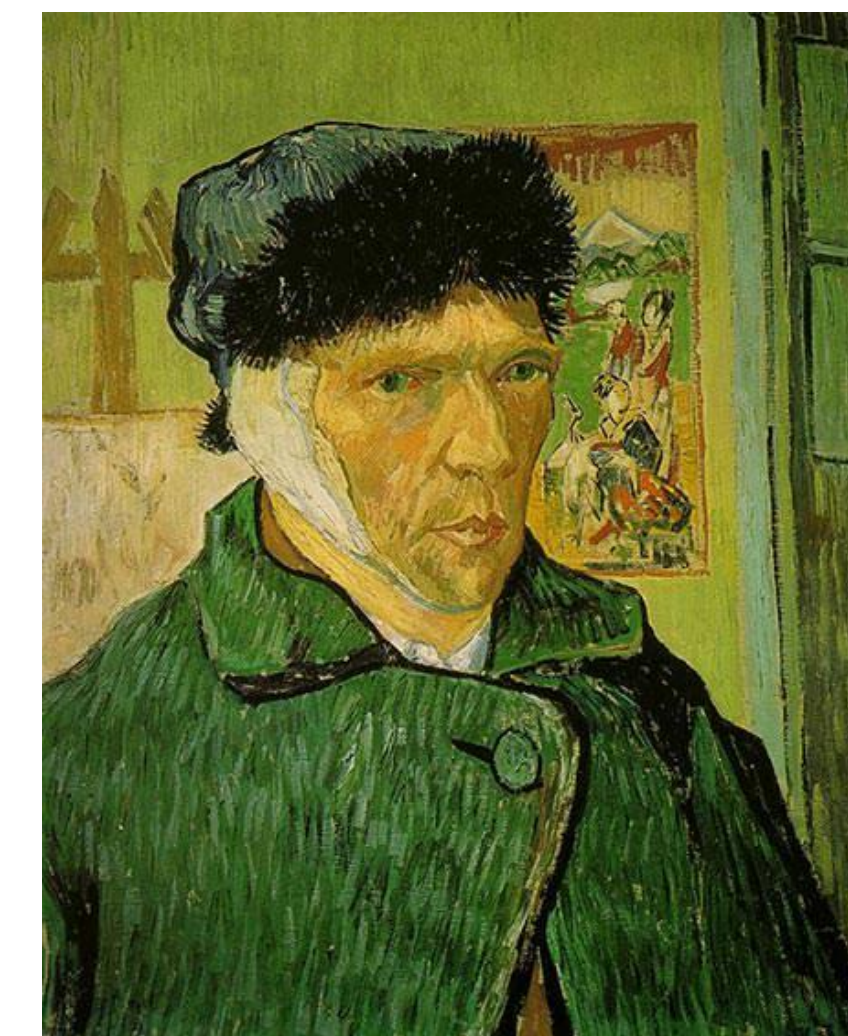
## CULTURAL CONTEXT

“The Starry Night” can be considered as an “outcast” of the Dutch culture at that time. In the late nineteenth century, Netherlands witnessed the tremendous growth of the Amsterdam Impressionism movement, with the main subject of interest being the daily hustle and bustle life of the city of Amsterdam and other metropolitans in Netherlands. The technique of Impressionist painting, when moving on to the late nineteenth century, was introduced a new element of realism into this school of thought of the Arts (2.5) Impressionism thus dominated the Dutch culture of Arts as the most prominent movement, with many successful Impressionist artists active in the field. This is the time when “The Starry Night” was composed by Vincent van Gogh, with a brand new, unrecognized Artistic movement Post-Impressionism. The infelicity of Vincent van Gogh’s philosophy of Arts in the context of such strong growth of Impressionism in the culture of the Dutch, led to the unfortunate disfavor and underestimation from the people in his own home-country Netherlands. Regardless, the profundity of Vincent’s pursue of such a contradict movement of his time and context, gave rise to a period of Post-Impressionism not only in Netherlands but also worldwide after the death of the great artist.



“Starry Night over the Rhone” – 1888  
This artwork was painted on the bank of the Rhone.

The night light and the light effect have provided Vincent for his most renowned painting “The Starry Night.”(2.4)



“Self- portrait with bandaged ear” - 1889  
After a violent argument with Paul Gauguin – his paint fellow – he cut his own earlobe with a razor then gave it to a prostitute to guard. This indicates us the insanity that Vincent had and he also painted “The Starry Night” in this state while being in the asylum. (2.5)

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# AN OVERVIEW OF “THE SCREAM”

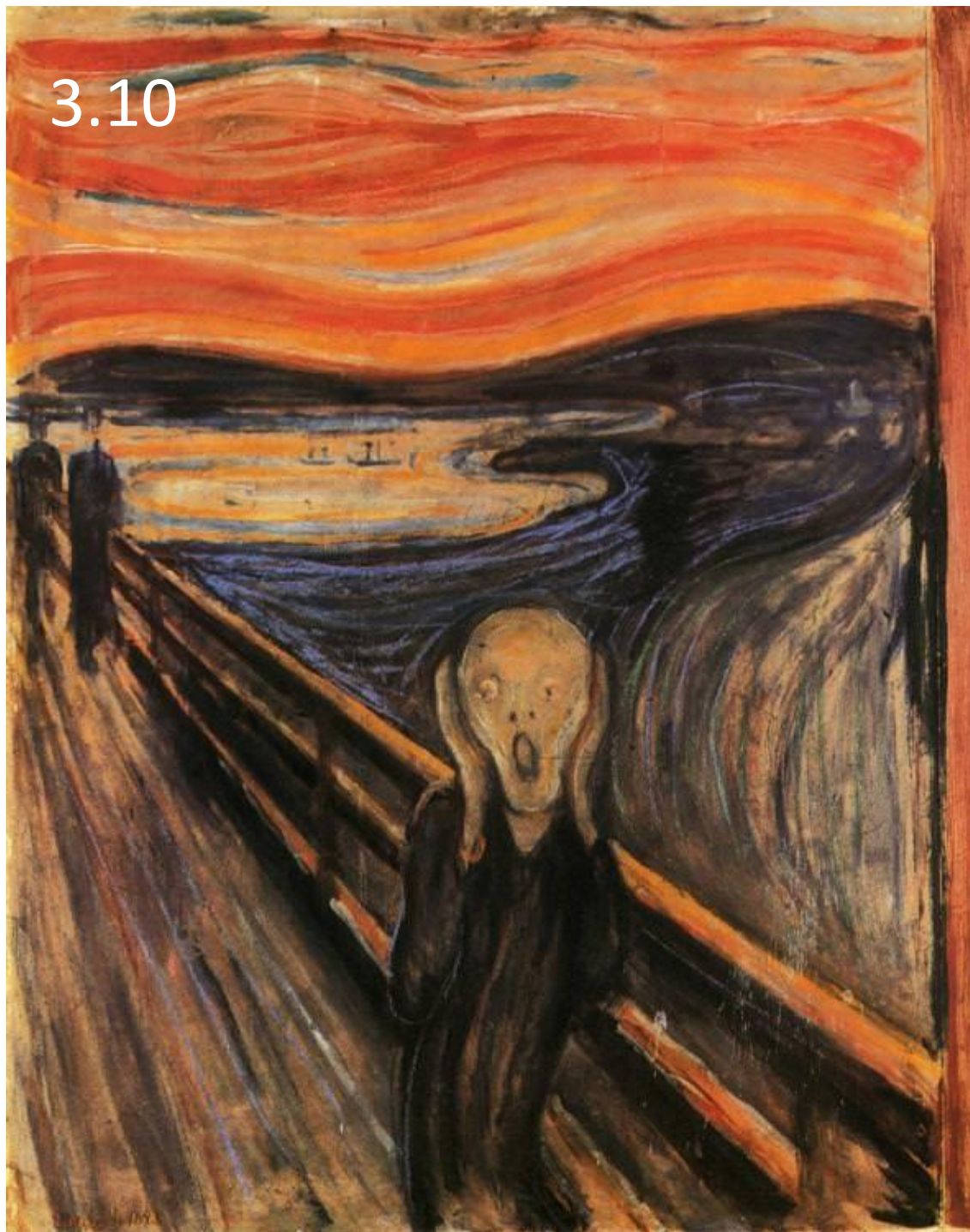
# Edvard Munch

1863 - 1944

*“Nature is not only all that is visible to the eye... it also includes the inner pictures of the soul.”*

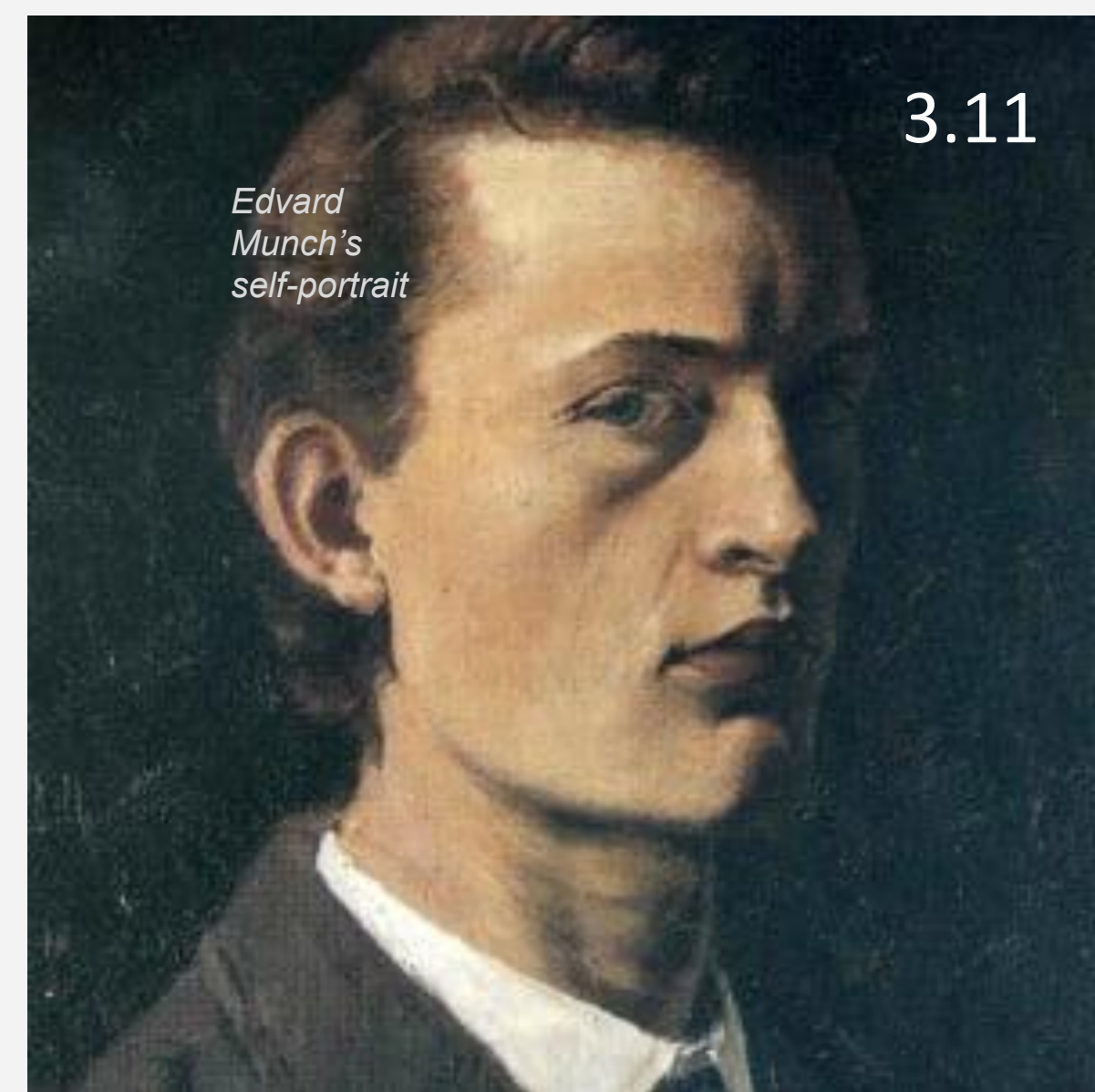
*Edvard Munch*

## Overview of interpretation of Functions and Purposes



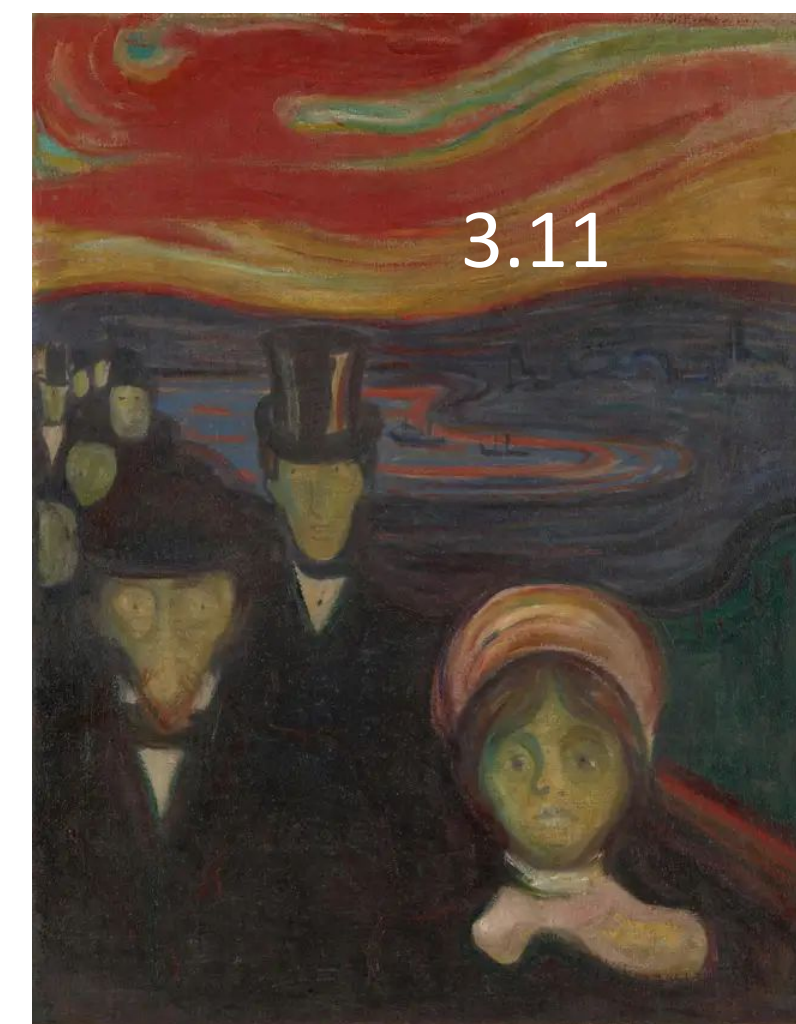
**The Scream** (Skrik) was painted by Edvard Munch – an expressionist - in 1893. Edvard Munch used different components in this painting including oil, tempera, pastel and crayon on cardboard. “The Scream” is one of the most renowned compositions in the world, depicting a unisex figure full of despair and depression screaming in front of a high contrast sunset background scenery. This piece of artwork is considered to have symbolized the inner soul and anxiety of the modern man during the period. Edvard Munch’s intention was not to aestheticize the beauty of nature, his aim was to express the very strong and tumultuous emotions in a transient moment which blended into the surrounding landscape, creating an unbalanced and harsh color of the painting. (3.1)

“I was walking along the road with two friends – the sun was setting – suddenly the sky turned blood red – I paused, feeling exhausted, and leaned on the fence – there was blood and tongues of fire above the blue-black fjord and the city – my friends walked on, and I stood there trembling with anxiety – and I sensed an enormous infinite scream passing through nature.” – Edvard Munch described his inspiration for the painting in his diary. To him, watching the dusk is not relaxing, instead it is a overwhelmed wave of anxiety and his ugly inner troubles. Far away, Munch’s friends all left him lonely with his panic attack. The vivid color of nature vibrates us with his inner thoughts and emotions in an ineffable but excruciating feeling of darkness and depression. (3.2)

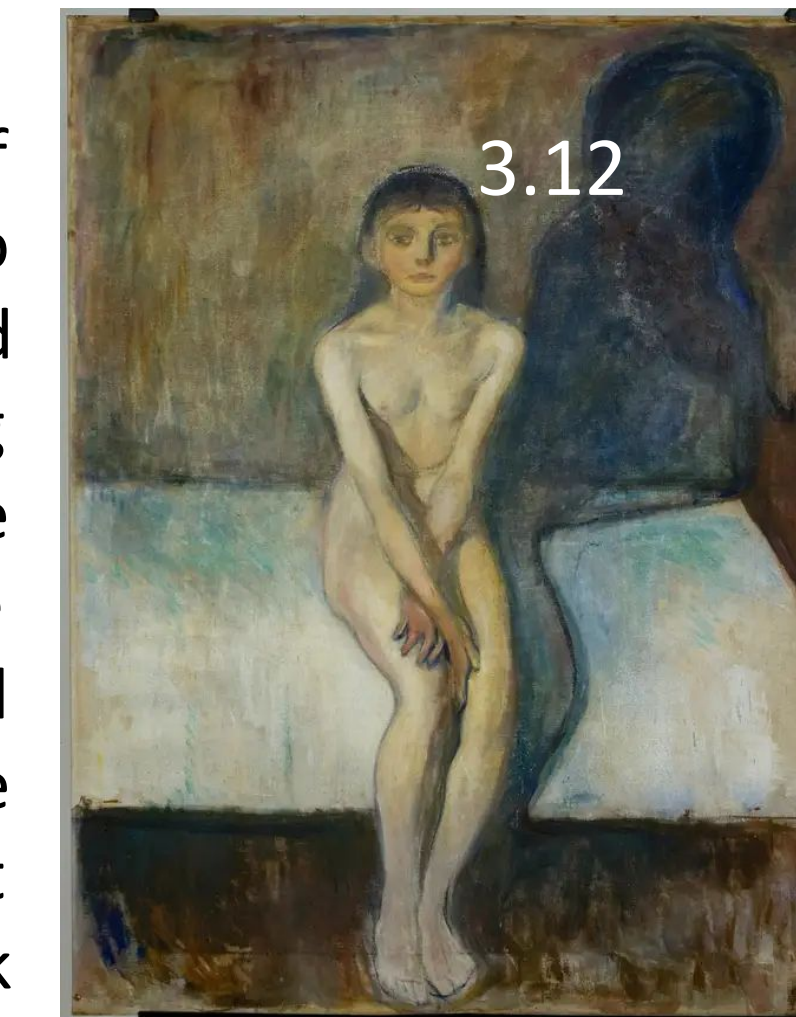


## CRITICAL INVESTIGATION

## CULTURALLY RELATED ARTWORKS



**Anxiety**, 1894 (expressionism) This painting evokes a sense of déjà vu as it bears a similarity to “The Scream” with the blood red sunset sky. Though this painting is not as abstract as “the Scream”, with the same technique and color tone, it still describes the faces of the subjects in the state of constant despair along with deep dark fear and sorrow. (3.3)



Puberty, 1894

This piece of art was drawn when Munch was a student in Berlin. “Puberty” depicts a naked girl sitting on the bed, with her shadow lurking behind. During this time, it was regarded as having sexual content thus being in arguments. The shadow got bigger and somehow blended in the surrounding subtly, indicating the anxiety and the tough time suffering psychological changes during adolescence. (3.4)

**Edvard Munch** (1863 – 1944) was a Norwegian artist and one of the most renowned painters in expressionism and symbolism. Yet, his life was always closely linked to human mortality, mental illnesses and his suffering ever since his unfortunate childhood of bereavement and chronic illness. Thus, this creates in Munch a distinctive artistic style, which focuses more on the themes and the hidden symbols to raise significance and express himself. After being inspired by art in the teenage years, Munch decided to leave engineering to study at the Royal School of Art and Design of Kristiania. (3.5) Though being objected by his dad, Munch still continued his study in Art, practicing Naturalism and Impressionism. His lifestyle was inspired by Hans Jæger, a nihilist whose saying was "a passion to destroy is also a creative passion" and committed suicide to find freedom. This led Edvard Munch to break from Impressionism and form his new ideology of art later, which was Expressionism. Most of his compositions reflected the universal anxiety, especially “**The Scream**”. (3.6)

## CULTURAL CONTEXT

Edvard Munch’s “The Scream”, identified as Expressionism, represents significantly the existential and nihilist crisis of Munch in his lifetime. Existentialism and nihilism philosophy in the late 19th century were dominant in the Western culture, especially Arts and Literature. Such influence on Munch’s paintings can be seen in the comparability of “The Scream” with the renowned playwright Henrik Ibsen coming from the same Norwegian culture of Munch, especially with the play “A Doll’s House” that demonstrates the importance of the existential being of individuals with imprints of nihilist values (3.7). Munch’s profound involvement in Existentialism and Nihilism in his painting “The Scream” was perhaps also due to the influence of the German existentialist philosopher Nietzsche during his time. Nietzsche’s philosophy of God’s non-existence gives that “Everything is permissible if God does not exist, and as a result man is forlorn, because neither within him nor without does he find anything to cling to.” (3.8) It is interesting to see this correlated with Munch’s personal life, in which Munch’s early years of religious beliefs were unauthenticated when he grew up and was exposed to modernism of the late 19th century in Norway in particular and the Western culture in general (3.9)



# AN OVERVIEW OF FRANCESCA'S UNTITLED PHOTOGRAPH

## Francesca Woodman

1958 - 1981

*"Real things don't frighten me just the ones in my mind do."* - **Francesca Woodman**

Francesca Woodman (1958 – 1981) was an American surreal and contemporary photographer. Born in Denver 1958 she was best known for her monochromatic photographs with black and white shades, often featuring symbolic motifs with the use of skull, mirror and birds. Her work was universally profound and associated with sexuality. Her technique to set the artwork apart from the other contemporary photographers was the high shutter speed and double exposure to create a blurred effect of the subject, which gives us a sense of urgency by the movement. Francesca regarded photography as a tool to deal with time, disrupting the flow connected by the past, present and future. She expressed her anxiety and inner problems through photographs by representing death and ghostly figures, which evokes a sense of sadness and depression. (4.1)

Growing up in an artistic family, Francesca Woodman had a valuable chance to deal with art since she was just a kid. In 1975, she attended one of the most renowned art schools in America - the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in Providence. In 1979, she moved to New York to start her career as a photographer. However, her style of photography was too unique for its era that it was underestimated. Suffering from a failed relationship and the non-recognition of her photographs, she ended her tragic life at the age of 22, committing suicide by jumping out of a window of a building in New York city in 1981. After Francesca's death, her photography started to significantly gain the public attention, being regarded as "expresses great emotive depth and continues to challenge perceptions of identity and the medium of photography even to this day." – According to "The Art Story". (4.2)



### Untitled

This artwork was taken by Francesca Woodman in 1978 and was one of the most famous photos of her collection. She captured this while enrolling in the School of Design's Rome Honors Program in Rome. Francesca made use of the symbolic motifs to convey a message indicating her suffering as she hung herself mid-air, being stuck between the threshold of life and death. According to art critic Elizabeth Gumpert, Woodman's pictures "call to mind corpses, or ghosts, as if the wall between our world and the spirit realm had begun to fall". (4.3)



### CULTURAL CONTEXT

During the significant development of America in the 1970s and 1980s, Francesca Woodman was not interested in "mass culture". While a lot of artists involved in contemporary film stills and icons of advertising, she was still held on with her traditional artistic style. This era witnessed "straight photography" – a standard contemporary photography quality to be judged as "a nice photo". However, Francesca had formed her own style with the inspiration of Surrealism, went against the crowd to depict humans' identity in her photographs. Especially, during the 1970s feminism wave, Francesca's connection to sexuality in her photography was strongly supported to the rise of women around the world, showing the importance of women not just in the bedroom yet all round the world. However, due to the unrecognition and rejection of the society for the sexual sensitivity and disfavored photography style, this had led to the unsuccessful career of the young prolific artist, resulting in a suicidal mindset and the death at the age of 22. Only when she had passed away that the public lately started to recognize the unique traits and prodigy of Francesca Woodman. (4.4) Further detail of the culture context will be discussed later on.

### CULTURALLY RELATED ARTWORKS

#### Untitled – Rome, Italy 1977

She captured the motion with the background of the angels wings, attempting to take flight. This photo theme was about heaven and angel, expressing the hope of disappearing to somewhere else better than the life she was dealing with. (4.5)



#### Space2 Series – Providence 1976

In this photo, some people argued that Francesca was exposing the idea of women in domestic settings, while some believed this was closely linked to the idea of finding her identity in life. (4.6)

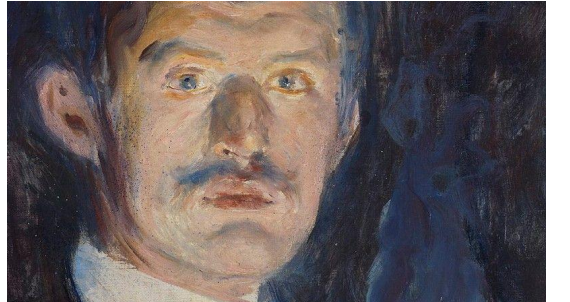




# Analysis and Comparing & Contrasting the Cultural Significance

The three artworks that I choose, though all represent the negative emotions by using depressed and surreal figures and objects to express the state of desperation and depression in life, have many similarities in the cultural context that these artworks are produced. This cultural background connection can be attributed to the Art Modern Movement from 1850s to 1970s when the world significantly developed with the birth of many new ideologies and ideas as well as the technological revolution.

The two artworks, "The Starry Night" by Vincent van Gogh and "The Scream" by Edvard Munch were painted only 4 years apart, both in the end of the 19th century. During this period, Vincent van Gogh and Edvard Munch were both under the influence of the tensions that resulted from new ways of thinking about both artistic representation and history. According to Jerry Seigel's essay, he suggests the important link between symbolism, modernism and postmodernism and challenges the avant-garde of "overcoming a tradition" as a series of successive stages. Relating to van Gogh, Jerry Seigel stated that language, set free from discursive reason and released from the object world of referents, can evoke and create an alternative world. This type of art was adopted by Vincent and Edvard, as they both involved in the first generation of the "dematerialization" in the 1880s, following the modern art movement to apprehend such new ideas of art form. (5.1) They regarded art as "evocative form" which made use of different elements of art such as the rule of contrast, colors, light and lines to represent inner states rather than showing of skills and well-techniques. During the time in Paris, Edvard Munch had been impressed by the post-impressionist movement, especially by Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin (5.2) that he reflected the idea of emotion in his art beyond Vincent, becoming the leader for the expressionist movement where art was totally independent on the surrounding environment yet interpreting this environment within his stage of emotion. In his diary, he wrote: "No longer should you paint interiors with men reading and women knitting. There must be living beings who breathe and feel and love and suffer. I would paint such pictures in a cycle. People would understand the sacredness of them and take off their hats as if they were in church." (5.3) Vincent van Gogh, unluckily, was too different from the era movement when Dutch people still favored realism, suffered from the unsuccessful artistic career and ended his life at the age of 37 in depression and poverty. However, the Norwegian culture did not turn its back on Edvard Munch, making him famous and more wealthy over time during his career despite his suffering from mental illness and heavy-drinking. (5.4)



1

Both Vincent van Gogh and Edvard Munch's artworks were produced during the Modern Art movement and significantly influenced by its characteristics. The Modern Art movement took place during the period from 1850 to 1970, when artists in different fields such as painting, photography, sculpture,... started to innovate their artistic styles and seeking new and groundbreaking approaches to art. (5.5) Practitioners of this movement were "determined to develop a visual language that was both original and representative of the times." – according to *The Art Story* (5.6). Vincent van Gogh and Edvard Munch, involving in this movement by forming their artistic styles based on the interpretation of how emotions were reflected in the nature and the shades of its shapes and colors. However, as an post-impressionist, Vincent had his focus more on the effect of transferring his mental state by manipulating his use of colors and the ways how colors created movements and shapes. Respecting Edvard Munch, the same pattern is consistent here, yet he also captivated his fluid of emotions by abstracting his lines and figurative shapes to express an uneasiness feeling of the painting, which is a feature in expressionism. While Vincent van Gogh's techniques is to use thick and strong brushstroke, together with the selection of colors that would best express his moods rather than painting realistically, to manifest his feelings through landscapes (5.7), Edvard Munch absorbed and inspired by this technique of Vincent, took it to another level of mood reflection when colors were not the only tool to capture moods, but also the deformation of wood grain lines that formed the subjects and the surrounding, to make it seem like "echoing" (5.8). In 1853, the Western culture experienced Japonisme – a strong influence of Japanese Art. This was due to the reopening of Japanese ports to trade with the West, importing a large amount of Japanese artwork to European countries. In 1867, the Japanese took a pavilion at the World's Fair to formally exhibit Japanese art. This exhibition attracted interest and turned Japanese Art into a trend at that current time. Japonisme had a remarkable impact on artists hence gave birth to Impressionism and Post-Impressionism in Europe. (5.9) The "woodcut" technique of Edvard was adopted from his learning of Paul Gauguin, Felix Vallotton and the inspiration of Japanese woodcuts in 1860s (5.10). In the book "Burning Bright: Essays in Honour of David Bindman", this technique is described as "a powerful symbol for bridging the discrepancies of modern society: art with craft, cultured intellectuality with humble existence, and the individual with the masses." (5.11) Equivalently, Vincent van Gogh's The Starry Night's technique is also an incentive from the Japanese artistic style of colors and shapes. Indeed, all of his artworks' s use of colors and lines are expressed as the stimulation from Japanese woodcuts and paintings by Hiroshige, Kuniyoshi, Kunisada and more. (5.12)



Vincent's artwork – Almond Blossom with the adoption of Japanese pastel colors and lines representing Japanese style in capturing nature.

6



7 Utagawa Hiroshige II, Plum Garden at Kamata, 1857, National Museum - Wereldculturen, Leiden

A piece of Art in Vincent's Japanese Art collection 8



Vincent's artwork – Courtesan - This artwork implies Vincent's inspiration for Japanese Art since he painted a Japanese painting himself.

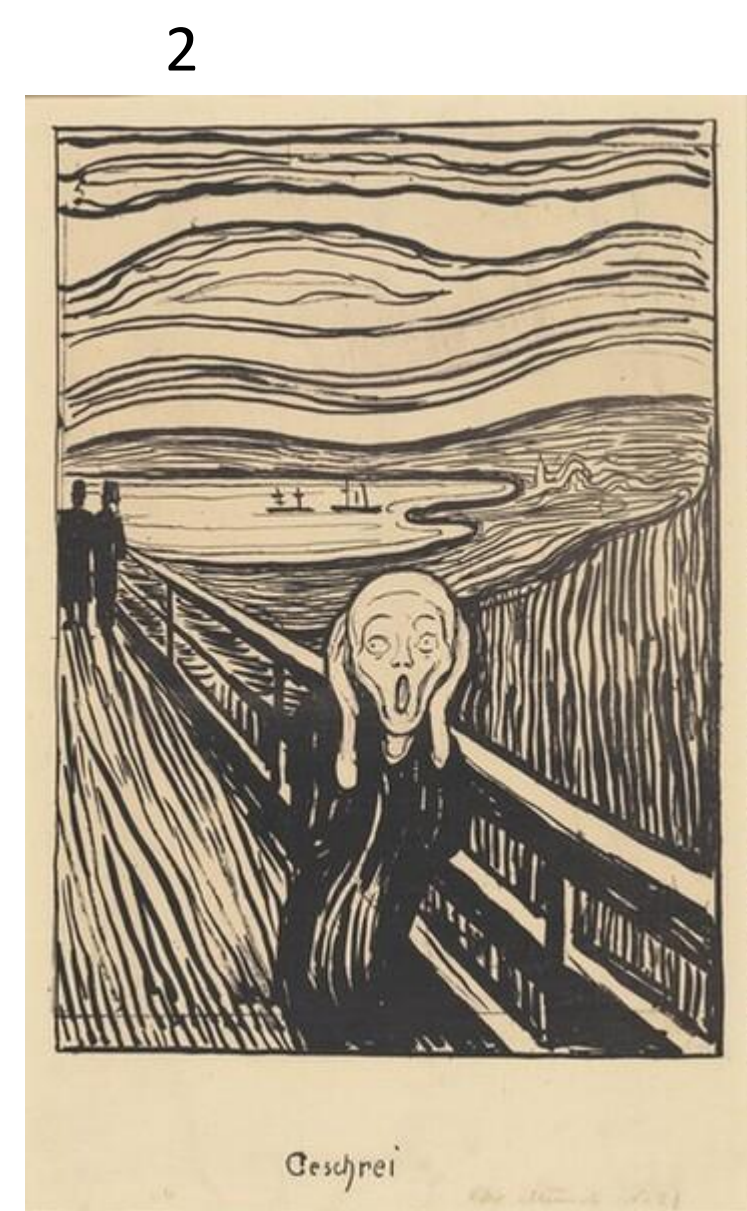


Katsushika Hokusai, Under the Wave of Kanagawa, 1829-1833

9



"Under the Wave by Katsushikai Hokusai" has equivalent lines compared to Vincent's brushstrokes in "The Starry Night"



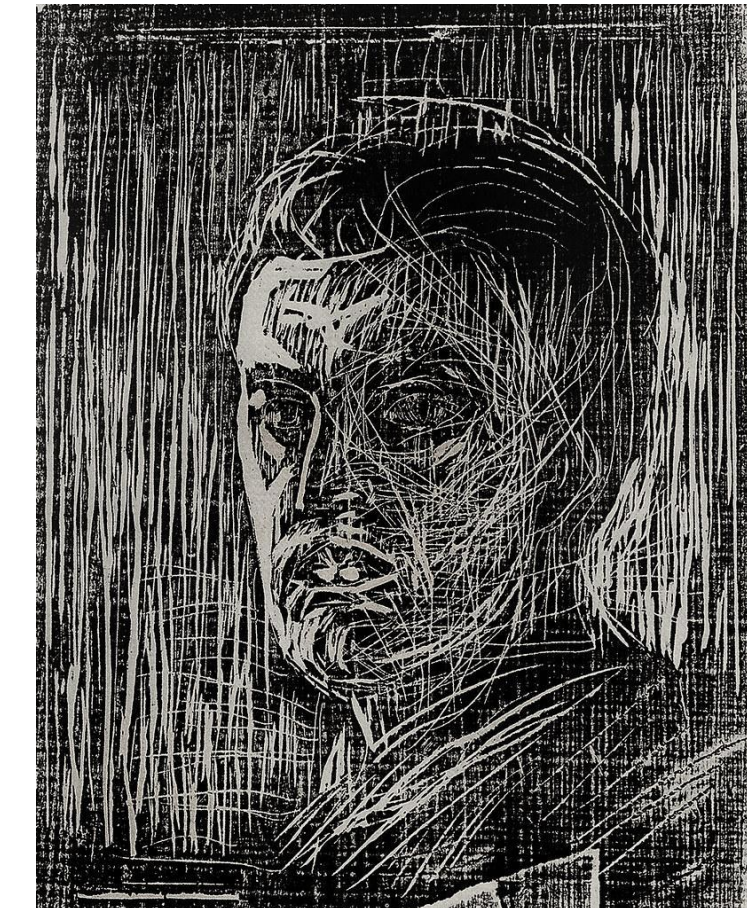
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Edvard Munch's woodcut version of The Scream. The Scream (1895)



Edvard Munch's woodcut Love and Pain (1895)

3



Edvard Munch Self-portrait on woodcut.

4



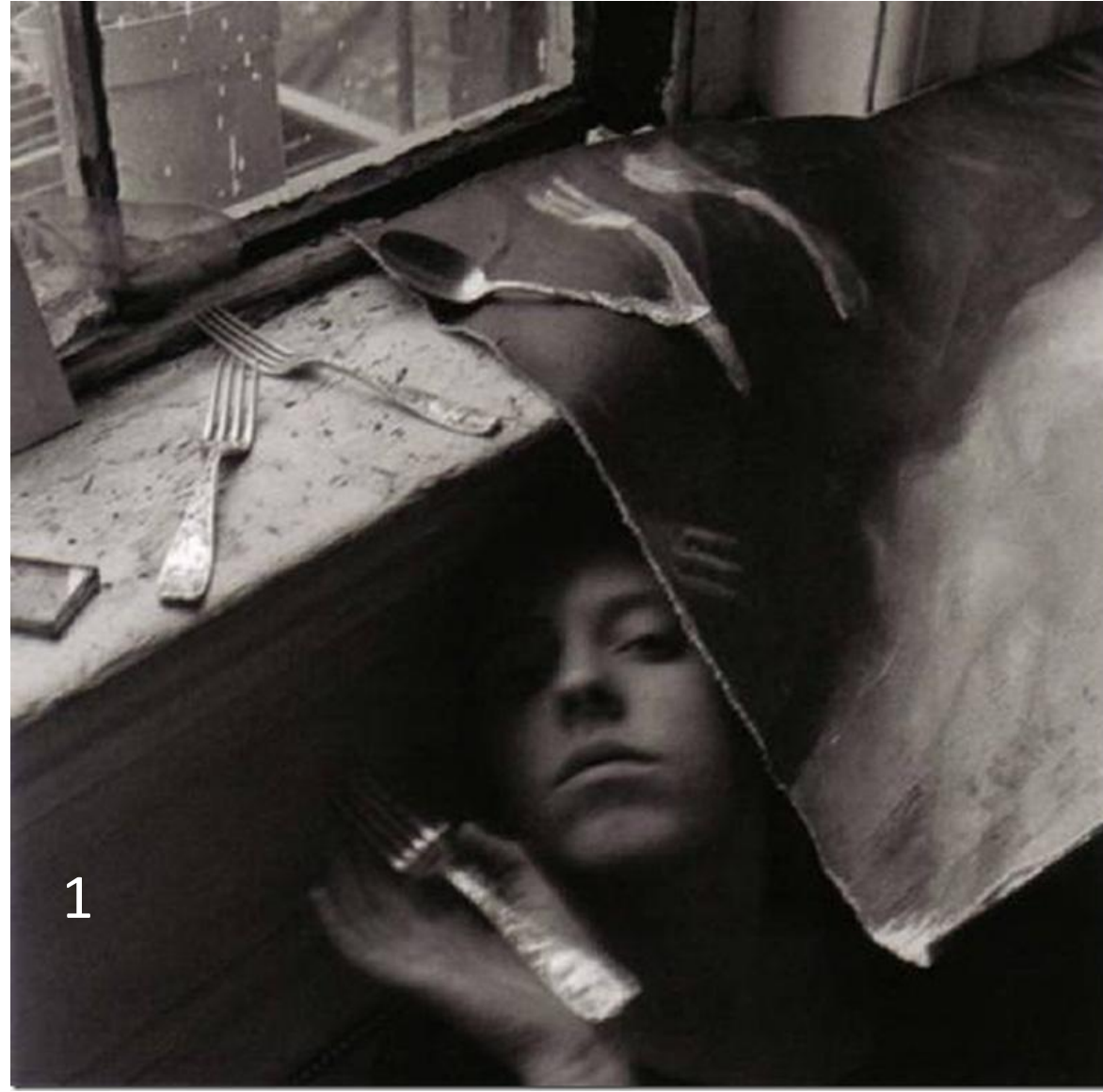
Edvard Munch's woodcut – Angst. (1896)

5



# Analysis and Comparing & Contrasting the Cultural Significance

The untitled photograph of Francesca Woodman was taken a whole century after “The Starry Night” and “The Scream”, thus had many differences due to the gap between the generations in which many concepts, ideologies, the standards of beauty in art and technological advances have changed and evolved to a whole new level. During the time of Vincent van Gogh and Edvard Munch, photography was regarded as “science” more than just an art form. The main function of camera in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was considered to be portraiture and proceeding documentary for the wealthy class in the society. (6.1) Post-impressionists and Expressionists like Vincent van Gogh and Edvard Munch, who focused on conveying the message of emotions through colors and shapes, expressed their attitudes towards photography as a means to realistically reflect things in our eyes, which did not serve the purpose of art. Edvard Munch wrote “I have no fear of photography as long as it cannot be used in heaven and in hell. ... I am going to paint people who breathe, feel, love, and suffer.” (6.2) In the year Kodak introduced its first film roll for camera in 1888, Vincent van Gogh subtly mentioned photography in his letter to Theo: “You must boldly exaggerate the effects of either harmony or discord which colors produce. It is the same thing in drawing — accurate drawing, accurate color, is perhaps not the essential thing to aim at, because the reflection of reality in a mirror, if it could be caught, color and all, would not be a picture at all, no more than a photograph.” (6.3)



It was not until 1902, when the “capturing realism” function of photography was overcome, and photographers went beyond the idea of “point-and-shoot” to captivate symbols and icons in their work and contained deeper meanings to create a sense of aesthesis that pictorialism became popular. (6.4) Photographers called themselves artists, as they claimed that the creation of a reflection based on compositions, color, lights and symbols was Art. In the 1940s, photography was officially recognized as an art form (6.5), and since then artists like Francesca Woodman created their artwork aesthetically by the application of surrealism and symbolism.

**“A lot of photography is making records of people, as objects, friends. It’s like organizing a wardrobe – in terms of size etc.” – Francesca Woodman**



The Western 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a big favor for the development of Straight Photography. Straight Photography has always been the main type of photographic art since 1910 as an effect of pictorialism in 1900s. (6.9) However, Francesca was not in the same league with this movement, she chose to stay consistent in her career as a surrealist, which caused her to struggle to succeed. She bared the same tragedy with Vincent van Gogh in finding their voices in the Art field.

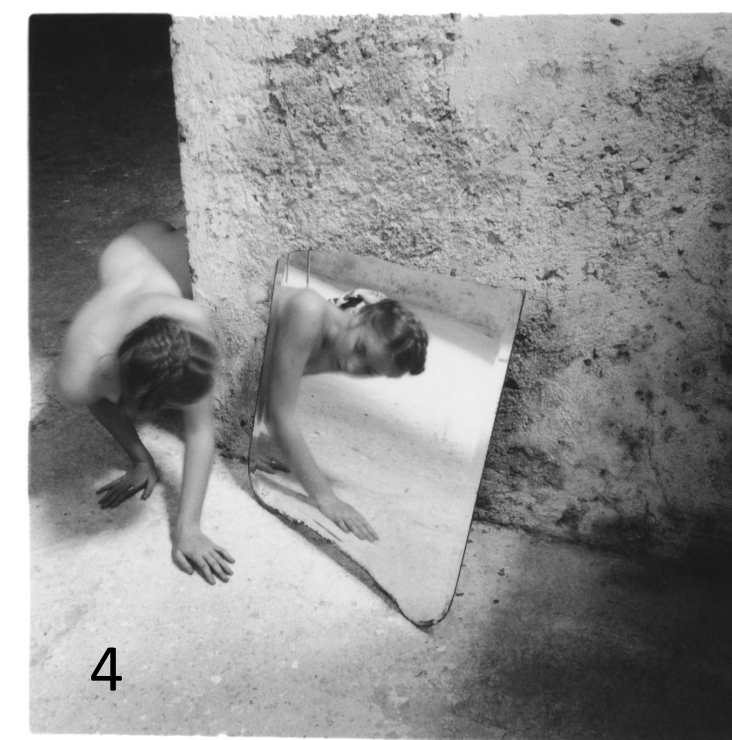
Like a lot of other female artists during the seventies, Francesca Woodman was influenced by American feminism and brought this idea into her photography as a means to express her own identity, similarly to feminist artists Cindy Sherman and Sherry Levine. Nevertheless, Francesca’s idea of femininity was privileged uniquely through the representation of disappearance, death and absence. (6.10) The influence of feminism is often the explanation for her nudity in most of her artworks.

The difference between “The Scream”, “The Starry Night” and Francesca’s photography can be told clearly. While Edvard Munch and Vincent van Gogh focused on the expressive use of colors due to their pursue in Post-Impressionism and Expressionism, Francesca - living in a modern capitalist society of America - modernized her approach to the Arts with camera, making use of objects around her to create a sense of surrealism. The subject symbolized in her Arts are also under the influence of various human-rights movements in the American culture in the late 20th century, such as the rise of Feminism. Similar to Vincent van Gogh and Edvard Munch, Francesca Woodman was different, and unique in a weird manner in her era. Although living in different centuries, all of the three artists adopted their inspiration from multi-cultures and combine with their personal experiences to form their Arts.



Space2, Francesca Woodman’s photography.

The photograph was believed to be Francesca’s inspiration from “The Yellow Wallpaper” written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman on 1892 about the domestic life that trapped women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – an important piece of American feminist literature. (6.11)



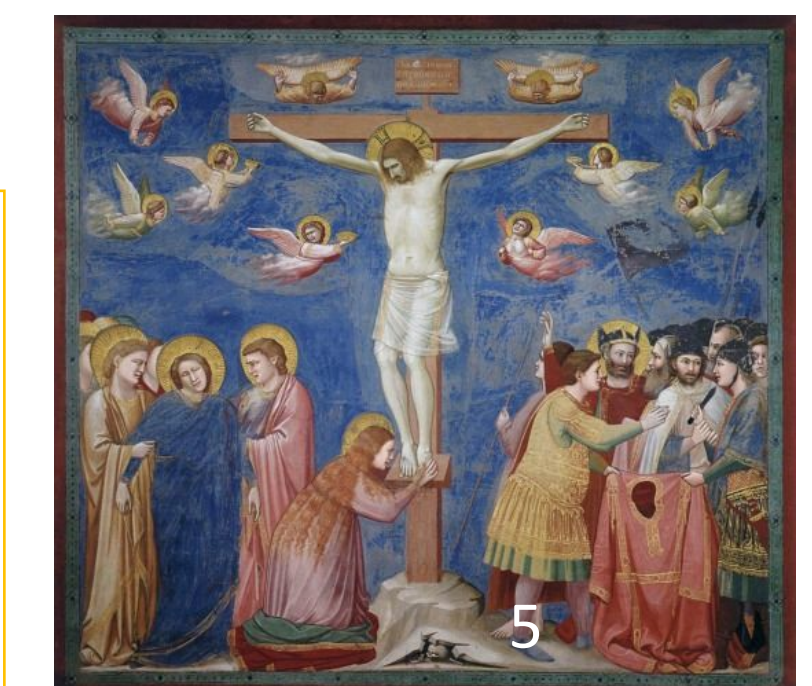
Self-deceit #1, Rome Italy, 1978 – Francesca Woodman’s photograph

Francesca’s influence by the 20<sup>th</sup> century feminism in Western countries and the American cultural context is continued to be reflected on several of her works. The “Self-deceit #1” photograph represents Francesca idea of femininity with the symbol of a mirror – a reflection of the “deceitful” life of the docile women within a domestic environment. According to *the Victoria Miro art news*, Francesca’s work, along with other feminist artists, “sought to reconfigure, and ultimately reshape, the prevailing iconography of ‘woman’ as passive muse surrendering to the male gaze. Operating across the public and personal realms – as well as using their own bodies as central motifs – these artists sought to address broad political issues and confront patriarchy and sexism in art and society. In doing so they created new, positively assertive female identities.” (6.12)

Francesca Woodman’s photography is also strongly influenced by the European culture. While in school, she studied Surrealism and adopted this incentive to create her own artworks from Man Ray and Claude Mahun – surrealists French photographers. (6.6) The influence of Surrealism in Europe was always expressed in her photos with the use of alien postures and weird symbols, which make the audience floated in thoughts. Francesca’s use of symbols was a inspiration from her reading of Gothic literature originated in England. The concepts of horror, death and at the same time romance was transferred into her photographs to communicate her obsession with depressive thoughts in life. (6.7) She was also inspired by Italian art during the school year with the RISD syllabus, investigating on representative Italian artists such as Giotto to expand her knowledge of composition, perspective and forming caryatids from classical sculpture. (6.8)



Francesca’s inspiration from Italian renaissance Art and religion is shown in her posture similar to Jesus on the crucifix in Giotto’s painting



“The Crucifixion” - Giotto



# FORMAL QUALITIES OF “THE STARRY NIGHT”

## Rule of Composition

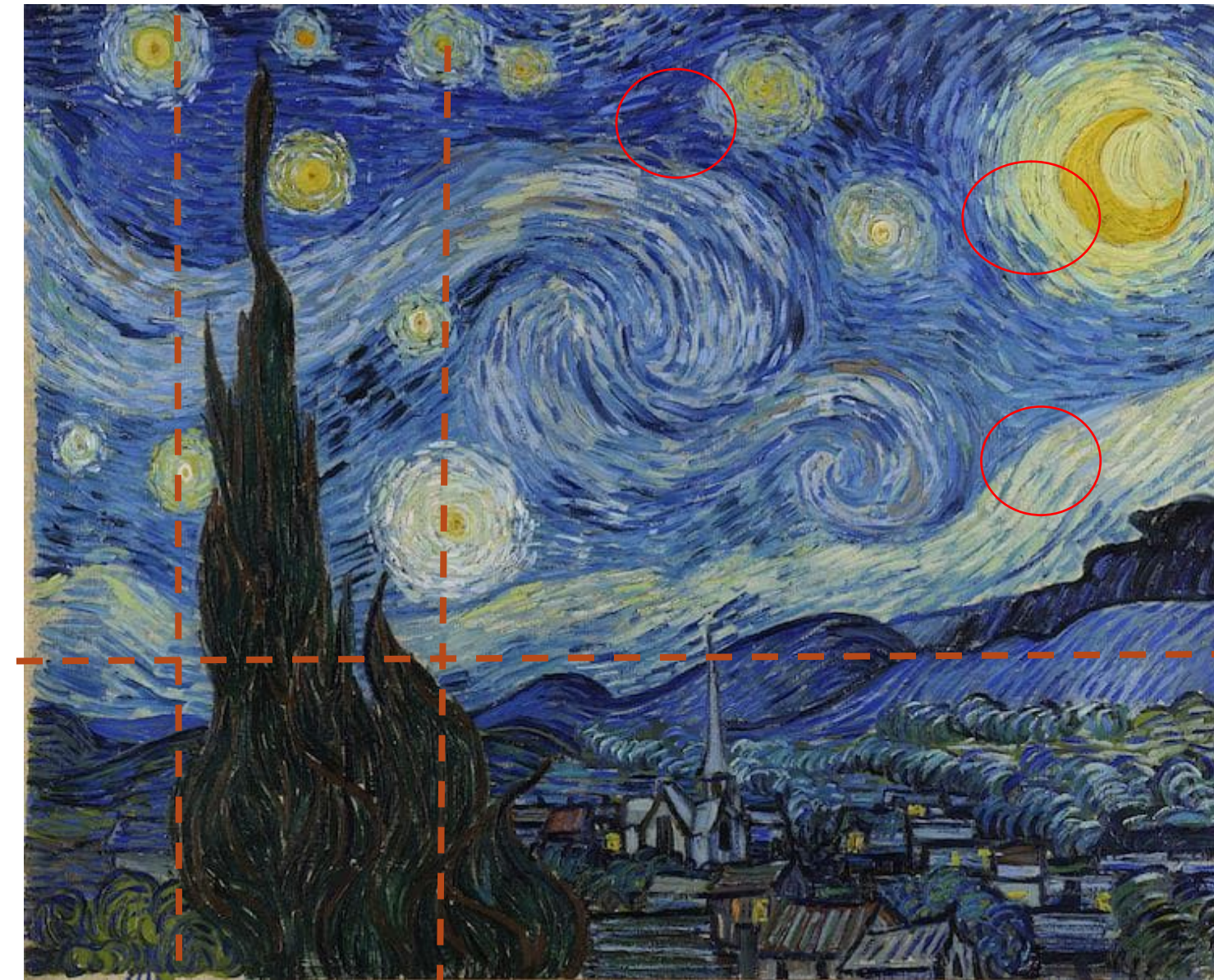
In the letter he wrote for Theo, the composition of the painting was described as “exaggeration” – somehow dim and surreal. Vincent passionately expressed his turbulence by painting the night sky in 2/3 horizontal of “The Starry Night”. The village downhill is gloomy and nebulous, contrasting the spacious vivid sky full of bright and garish stars, represents his very hope of searching for meanings in life. In the foreground Vincent van Gogh depicted the cypress tree with the same curve lines as the stars, using the rule-of-thirds, conveying a sense of isolation and alienation to the viewers. (7.1)

## Mood

“The Starry Night” is believed to be a transmission of Vincent’s hopeless endeavors of searching for something that he could not hold – Happiness. The overall color tone is cold although the bright shining stars have tendered it down, creating an effect of tranquility and affability. Vincent created this artwork during the time he resided in the asylum – the most desperate period of his life. Due to this fact, he captured the moonlight and these stars from his memories as the very weakened lights at the end of the tunnel that he desired and had been seeking for the rest of his time suffering depression. The vastness of the sky and the background mountainous area conjointly reflected the harmony in which Vincent blended himself inside and truly became one with nature. (7.2)

## Use of colors

“The Starry Night” ‘s use of colors has repeatedly been the subject of controversy in arguments and debates of formal qualities. Vincent van Gogh was believed to selectively choose the colors with an intention to create a multispectral effect. In order to enhance the contrast of the night sky, different shapes of blue and yellow were taken advantages of. To be specific, the overall dark sky was painted in ultramarine and the brighter shape, which curves and circles the stars, was determined to be cobalt blue. Equivalently, the moon and the stars were colored in Indian and zinc yellow while the less radiant yellow surrounds them was cadmium. Throughout the painting, there are also shades of green in the night sky which have a function to radiate the contrast colors together as Vincent van Gogh did not blend these colors together with his brush.



The contradictions simultaneously disclose a sense of turbulence inside his mind, a combination of desperation and hopefulness. All colors were manipulated in such a way that contributes dramatically to the overall theme of the painting, making it an invaluable artwork of our era. (7.3)

“It often seems to me that the night is even more richly colored than the day, colored with the most intense violets, blues and greens. If you look carefully, you’ll see that some stars are lemony, others have a pink, green, forget-me-not blue glow. And without laboring the point, it’s clear to paint a starry sky it’s not nearly enough to put white spots on blue-black.” (14 September 1888) (7.4)

## Use of Lines, Shapes and Brushstrokes

One of the most unique features that set “The Starry Night” out of the ordinary artworks in this period is the dramatic and striking brushstrokes, of which he swirled the horizontal skylines and created dubious spotlights enclosing the stars and the moon. This allows the essence of Vincent’s inner soul to be reflected explicitly, indicating the flow of eternal turmoil inside of his mind. These swirled lines creating circular shapes of the stars also embellish the transcendent and ethereal atmosphere that Vincent intended to convey to the audience. The cypress tree in the foreground appears to be abstract due to unstable curve lines and a strange undefined three-dimensional shape, also represents Vincent’s tumultuous anxiety.

It is also transparent to see his strong and severe brush strokes in “The Starry Night” due to the fact that he was undergoing a serious medical surgery during this period. The brush strokes appear consistently, following a procedure which create motion for the subjects and produce a deeper layer for the overall painting. (7.5)

## Texture

Due to the dominant brushstrokes of Vincent van Gogh, the overall painting strikes the audience with a rough and thick texture. The bold lines and 3D dimensional shapes of the stars and the cypress tree also enhance this bold texture, constructing the high contrast of “The Starry Night” and draws the audience’s attention to the sky more. (7.6)

## Use of Light

According to Natalya St. Clair, the use of lights in “The Starry Night” contains an unexpected math related to the concept of turbulent flow in fluid dynamics. Because of his circular brushstrokes and the use of two highly contrast colors blue and yellow, lights are represented in a different way compared to their predecessors. The lights from the crescent moon and the stars seem to capture the motion of the turbulent flow which creates an oddly radiate interpretation in many post-Impressionism artworks. By using quick and dominant brushstrokes, Vincent van Gogh was able to capture the very real impression of how lights move. (7.7)



# FORMAL QUALITIES OF “THE SCREAM”

## Use of lines

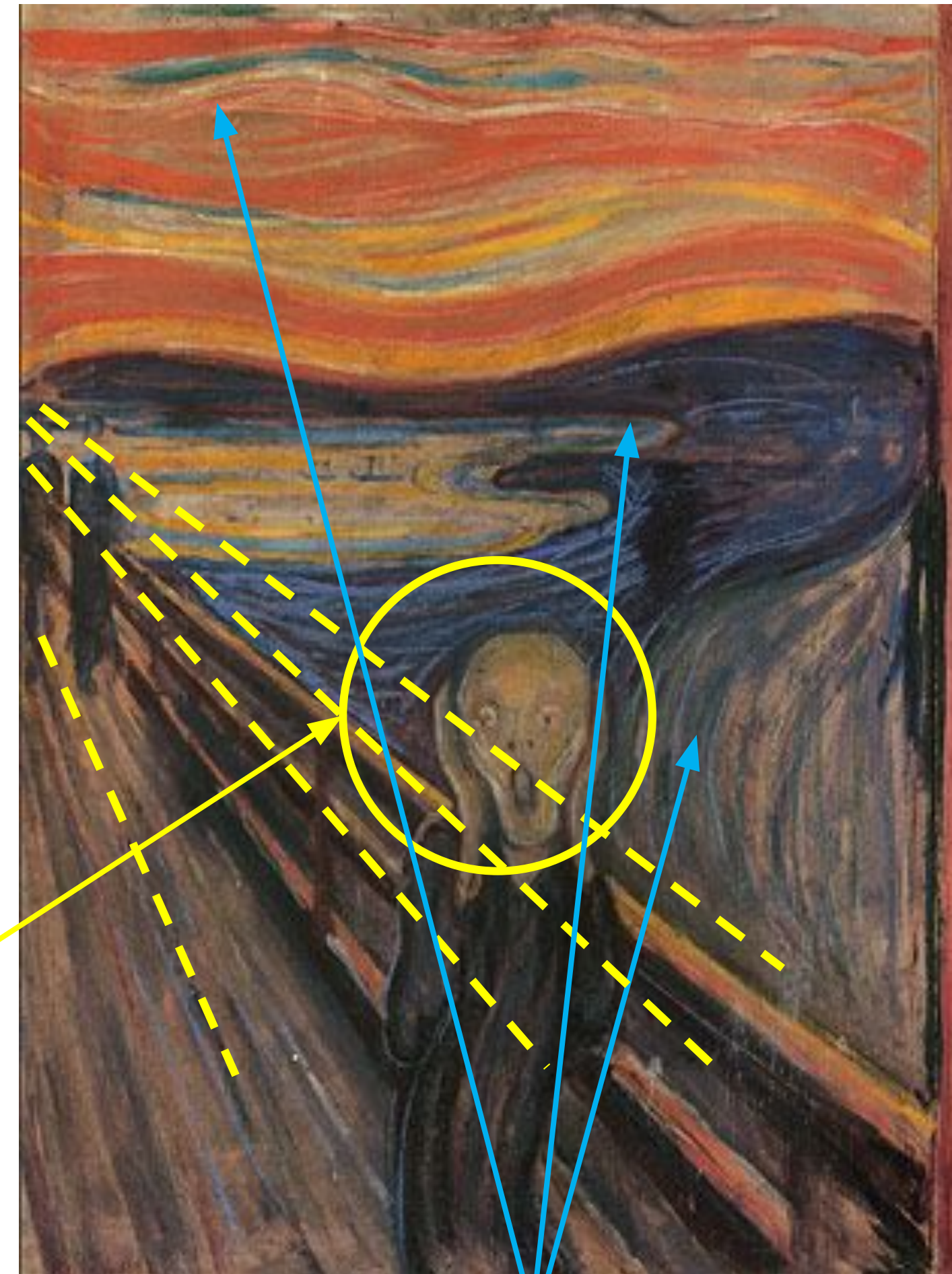
The use of lines in “The Scream” is considered to be chaotic in a unique and sensational style. Edvard Munch depicted the bridge and the people in the background with straight lines, as well as straight color lines leading their figures far away from the foreground of the painting. However, curved and turbulent lines are used to capture the main subject and the obsessive red and orange sunset sky. This intentional use leads the audience's eyes right to the screaming man with a grate overwhelmed impression, expresses Edvard's mischievous and haunting mindset of depression. The swirl line of the river somehow represents the noisy-yet-quiet echo of the nature scream flowing in motion that is deafening Edvard Munch, making him unbearable when the landscape is violently disclosing his mental illness. While Edvard's figure is distorted and deformed into a winding human-like creation, his two friends who left him behind – the two men in the background – are painted with an ideal proportion of a human body. This indicated the contradictory between Edvard Munch's problems and the ordinary people, highlights Edvard's inner trouble which alienates him from the world and started blending and disappearing into the bureaucratic ending moment of the day. (1).

## Use of shapes and forms

Edvard's limitation use of apparent shapes is mainly due to his message of chaos through the painting. The forms of the sky and the screaming man's shape is asymmetric and circuitous, make it surreal and indefinite. The main subject's head shape is abstract and unlike a normal human. It is portrayed as a skull with no gender differentiation. His hands covering the ears are also long, thin and unlike “hands” compared to the reality. These dreamlike shapes and forms express the loss of identity that depression affects on Edvard Munch, making him forget his existence instead fading into the nature. (2)

## Use of colors

Colors in “The Scream” is the most important factor to create the overall theme of the painting. According to the exhibit curator of the National Gallery of Art in Washington: “By pushing for color that corresponds more to feeling or imagination than to external reality, he was questioning conventions that had reigned for centuries.” The color of the sunset sky is exaggerated, clouds agitating in bloody red. If we have a closer observation, the color of the background is not just orange, blue and black. The pigments that Edvard used are cadmium yellow, vermilion red, ultramarine and the viridian green. These colors are combined together to embellish the intense shade of the painting.



Sunset, thus feature the anxious atmosphere of “The Scream”. The reason why the shade of green is not easy to recognized is because the vermilion red is too strong that it contrasts with most of the other colors. Orange are also high contrast, however it is put parallel to the ultramarine blue of the water, which makes these two colors competing yet still apparent in our eyes. This extraordinary use of colors, when taken by Edvard Munch, has vigorously provoked a sense of obsession, depression and alienation of the painting from the audience's perspectives. (3)

## Texture

“The Scream” was painted by fierce brush strokes which expresses the strong and blizzard emotions of Edvard Munch. These brushstrokes were twirled yet not in circle like “The Starry Night” but to different directions. This allows the surface of the painting to be rough, solid but still smooth and disoriented to look at, produces an effect of mixed feelings, combine the details of “The Scream” on the background of such evocative nature. The texture brings the ground and the river on the background motion, seem like everything is turning into a flow of noise, screaming loudly along with the hatred and anxiety inside Edvard. (4)

## Rule of Composition

In “The Scream”, Edvard Munch divided the painting into two clearly separated parts, representing the two world co-existing parallelly in the subject's mindset. The first ordinary world is the triangle corner to the left of the painting, which counts for approximately 1/3 of “The Scream”. This part only contains normal diagonal lines and the two normal men walking together with balanced human body proportion. The part indicates the external world, the society that Edvard Munch was living in. The other part left, which is full of swirls



and curved lines and exaggerated use of colors, is both the nature and the depressed inner soul of Edvard. In the center of the painting is the main subject, he screaming man standing between the two worlds, struggling with being left alone by his friends in the scream of nature. This position of the figure has an important meaning as it symbolizes the stage when Edvard was too overwhelmed that he started to lose the sense of the place and imaginarily saw his inner world overflowed into the landscape, observing a weird, ugly and haunting bloody sunset with the echo of the nature. We can also see that the painting is vertical-symmetrically balanced, reflecting the other half on each different sides.

## Space

Behind the unisex figure the audience can observe such vast space of the fjord looking over the town and the faraway mountain. This vast space creates the immensity of the sunset landscape, which makes more room for Edvard Munch to be able to capture the chaos of the surrounding behind the main subject. Though immense, the screaming man still appears to not be too small and get lost in the composition. Instead, he strikes the audience at the first sight looking to the painting. The vast space allows Edvard Munch to comfortably swirled his brushstrokes, creating more curved lines and capture perfectly the very feeling of the moment. The space behind him not only highlights his loneliness and loss in the context but also enhances the despair and horrific flow of emotions. Because of the background that the audience can absorb the seriousness of Edvard's mental illness, since the whole landscape – everything in the sunset scenario except for the bridge and his friends – from the sky, the clouds to the mountains, the flow of water, the town and every shades of light in the air – are all bent into winding lines, flowing with his anxiety that was anchored to the turmoil around him. Space creates depth as well as place for the expression of emotions and bring that emotions to our eyesight, produces interpretation. The perspective of “The Scream” is overall, vast and spacious, thus lets us understand how everything in Edvard's aspect of life was flipped and became horrific like a nightmare.



# FORMAL QUALITIES OF THE UNTITLED TAKEN IN ROME, ITALY 1978 BY FRANCESCA WOODMAN

## Use of lines

In this untitled photograph taken by Francesca Woodman in 1978 in Rome, Italy, the use of lines is apprehended to be simple yet unique. Francesca made use of the vertical lines by positioning the chair and using the doorframe as the background to accentuate the dangling of the human body, conveying her message of loss and desperation. These parallel lines emphasize the height of the picture, indicating the concept of being stuck in the air like a person struggling with dying or continuing to live. The only disruption in this photo is the 2 diagonal lines coming from her cross arms, holding to the door. This X connects the parallel lines together, harmonizing the chair, the doorframe and the human body into one complete assemblage of subjects with a close connection to each other. The audience can also observe the posture of the human, where her arms and her body combine into a Y shape and appear dramatically out of the assemblage, leading our eyes to her at the first sight.

## Use of shapes and forms

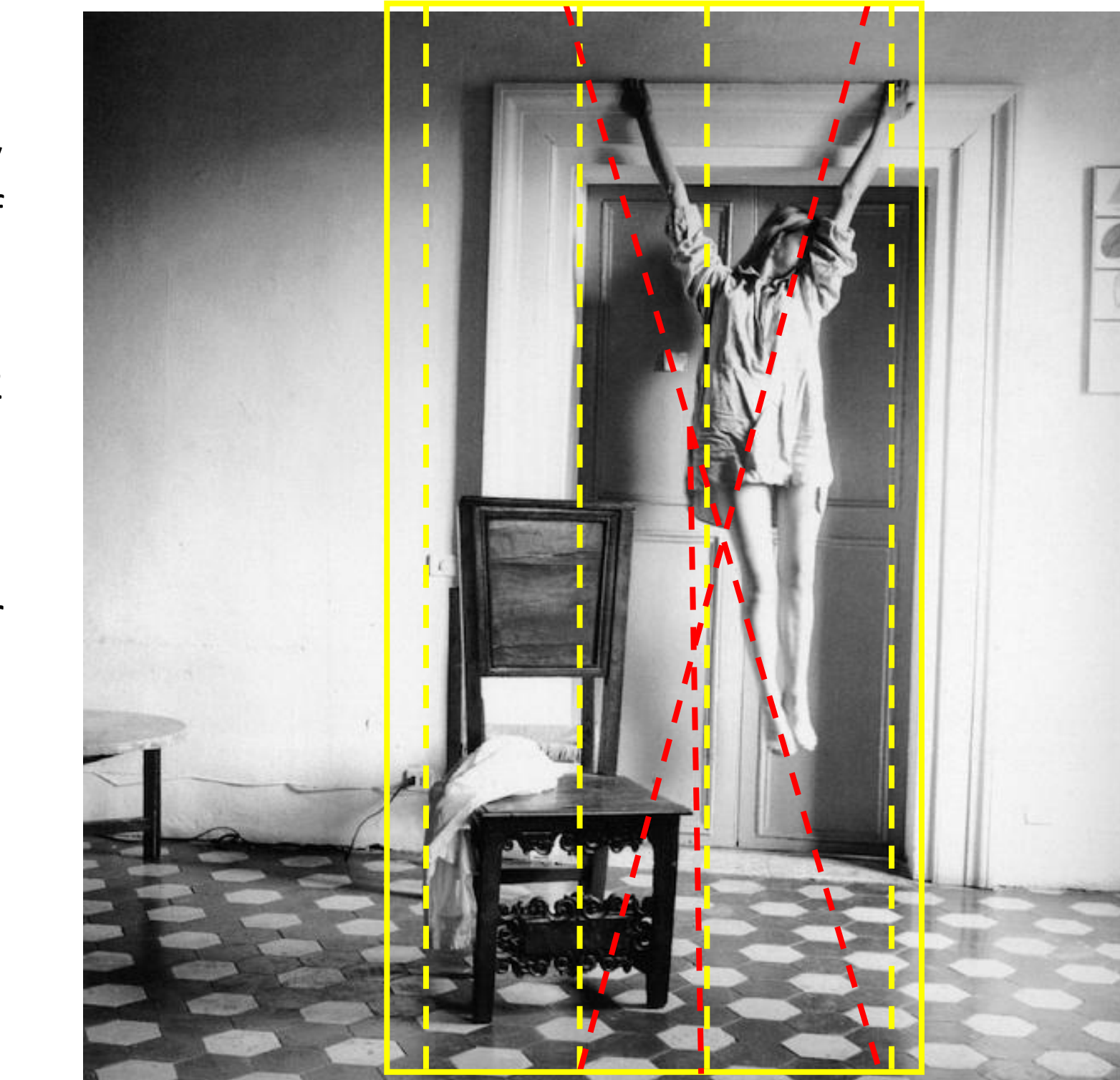
As above-mentioned, the cross lines have created the X and Y shape to integrate with each other and produce a the mellowness yet extraordinary outlook of the subjects in the photo. Upon closer inspection, the audience can observe that the pattern on the door holds a resemblance to the crucifix, while Francesca's body also simulates Jesus posture when spiked during the crucifixion. This use of shapes has constructed a symbolic meaning for the photograph as the crucifixion is an idea associated with death and betrayal. This somehow tells us about Francesca's mental illness since she desire to reflect her depressed state through her photography. (9.1)

## Color and contrast

Most of Francesca's choice of colors in photography is captured with high contrast emphasizing on dark and bright values. Her indication is believed to manifest her dark mindset and the pessimistic attitude towards life. By using black and white color, she was able to carry out the contrast between light and shadow in the photo. The dark shade of the chair brings it out from the white wall while Francesca's body which is illuminated brightly by light is set apart from the light shade of the door. With this contrast, the subject assemblage in the center of the photo seems to be deeper and has more layer, from the door, to Francesca then the chair nearest to the eyesight of the audience. Light – an important factor of photography – is also enhanced effectively with this use of contrast.

## Use of Lights

The main source of light in this photo is unknown yet we can see it comes from the right since the shadow of the subjects is fallen to the left side. Most of Francesca's body is facing the bright side of the photo hence it is shiny and somewhat dreamy. However, she hid the face behind the right arm and looked under the ground, preventing the light from approaching her eyes. The audience can interpret this detail as her endeavor to reach for happiness in life, yet is still haunted by the negative thoughts and dragged down back to the grievances in her life. With more specific and detailed observation, it is her silhouette that is onto the left corner of the door but not onto the doorframe. It is possible that Francesca Woodman was trying to capture the moment when the dark inner side of her soul is stuck between the threshold of life and death, of something that exists in pain and being crushed to dust.



## Rule of Composition

Francesca Woodman's appliance of composition in this photo is the rule of simplicity but it has successfully transferred her ideas and intention. It can be seen that the biggest rectangle contains all of the main subjects that highlight the aesthetics of the photograph. Every important details are captured within a small area, when the viewers' eyes are led by the Y shape of the human body, then spread out around with the doorframe then comes the chair. The rectangle area constructs a limit for our view to not get loss of the emphasized part,



impresses the viewers with the continuity of the subjects. This also creates a process for our eyes to follow, as the chair can be regarded as the ladder for her to climb to the heaven, yet the ladder is then removed, remains her getting stuck in mid-air, between reaching out for heaven or falling to the ground and die.

## Space

The rectangle zone is not accidentally formed. Outside of the rectangle, the use of objects is minimized where blank space is mostly dominant. This blank space helps the rectangle zone stands out and increase the impact of the subject assemblage to the maximum effect. When we look at the photo, most likely the first thing that comes into our eyesight is the human shape in the air, then come the doorframe and the chair, but not the white wall out of the zone. Together with contrast, where the dark shade is mostly kept inside the assemblage and all the white color is outside, blank space makes our eyes focus on the main area, separating the most important pieces out of the background and help stand out the abstract idea.

## Mood

Francesca Woodman's photography mostly contains the message of desperation and loss in life. Her position of holding to a small door border disperses the suffering for her own efforts to just exist in life. The fact that she held herself up in this posture, indeed, reveals the audience of her attempt to suicide as she was representing the image of hanging oneself.

Unlike most of the other artists, Francesca Woodman's theme in photography is not specifically about existence, or disappearance. Indeed, she tried to communicate the intersection between these two concepts – invisible and visible, the can and cannot, and the verge separating life and death. The photograph can strike the audience with an ineffable rise of emotion, neither happy or depressed but something between these two that is not easy to describes by words. As Francesca did not show her face, we are not sure if she was happy, or sad, or in which state of emotion. Yet, the atmosphere and the use of black and white high contrast background encloses us about the dark and pessimistic content of the photo. Her posture does not present the image of somebody who is suffering from depression or living in happiness as she symbolized herself into a indescribable figure of Jesus – who tragically died by being nailed on the crucifix however becomes a holly presence. As from the symbol of Jesus Christ, an acceptable way of interpretation for this photo is likely to be the fact that, she was struggling and suffering from her unrecognized life, finding a way to escape that in the end, death can bring her an eternal gift to be peaceful forever. (9.2)

## Texture

The type of texture in Francesca's photography style usually comes from mechanical texture – the image quality of a photo when affected by camera. An obvious mechanical texture in this photograph is the grains on the surface produced during being developed and printed. However, the outcome still appears to be smooth due to the effect of the bright light. This has contributed to the message of the photograph as Francesca was trying to create a dreamlike and unidentified atmosphere to confuse and evoke thoughts in the viewers.

## Perspective

If we carefully observe, the perspective is at the eye level and slightly come from the right. The reason for this can be attributed to Francesca's intention of capturing the full symbol representing through her posture hanging on the door, striking the viewers at the first time looking at it. However, the little perspective to the right can indicate the fact that although her body is towards to the bright side, she still hid her face and felt unbalanced struggling with the posture. This perspective can be seen from her body and the direction of the chair.



# Comparing & Contrasting Formal Qualities through Principles and Elements of Art

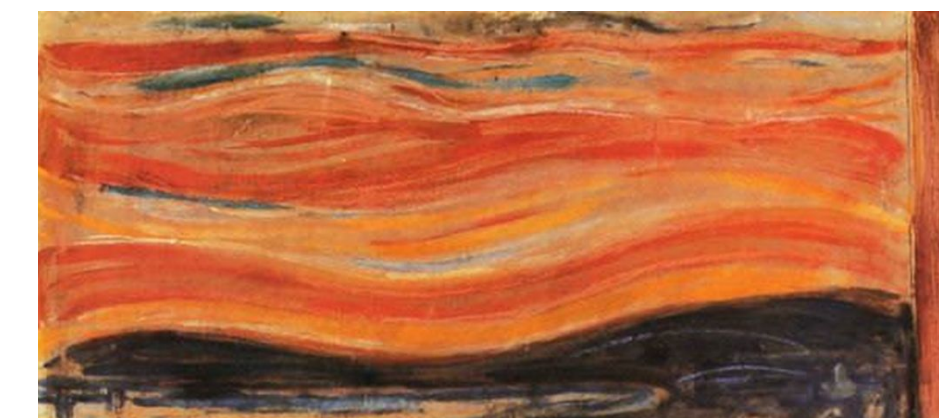
## Movement and Rhythm

Both “The Starry Night” by Vincent van Gogh and “The Scream” by Edvard Munch are applied the use of strong brushstrokes to create swirling motion effect. Concerning “The Starry Night”, the use of circular lines to depict the light effect shining from the stars and the moon, caused by luminance – the intensity of the light in the colors on the canvas. (10.1) According to brainpickings: “The more primitive part of our visual cortex — which sees light contrast and motion, but not color — will blend two differently colored areas together if they have the same luminance. But our brains primate subdivision will see the contrasting colors without blending.”(10.2) This explains why Vincent’s depiction of light seems to be radiating lively. However, when it comes to “The Scream”, we can also observe the movement, yet this movement does not come from our eyesight but rather the movement of “sound”. In Edvard Munch’s saying, he mentioned: “...and I sensed an enormous infinite scream passing through nature.”, so the whirling lines in the painting can be understood as the abstract “waves of sound”, and his alter ego as an unisex figure is a response to this “scream of nature”. (10.3) All these lines are repeatedly painted and spread all over the landscape, which produces a rhythm of a deformation reality, where the movement can be associated with the artists’ mental disorders.

In contrast, Francesca’s untitled photograph appears to be frozen, still and calm without any motion. Perhaps this stillness is her indication to describe the state of being completely trapped between a dilemma.

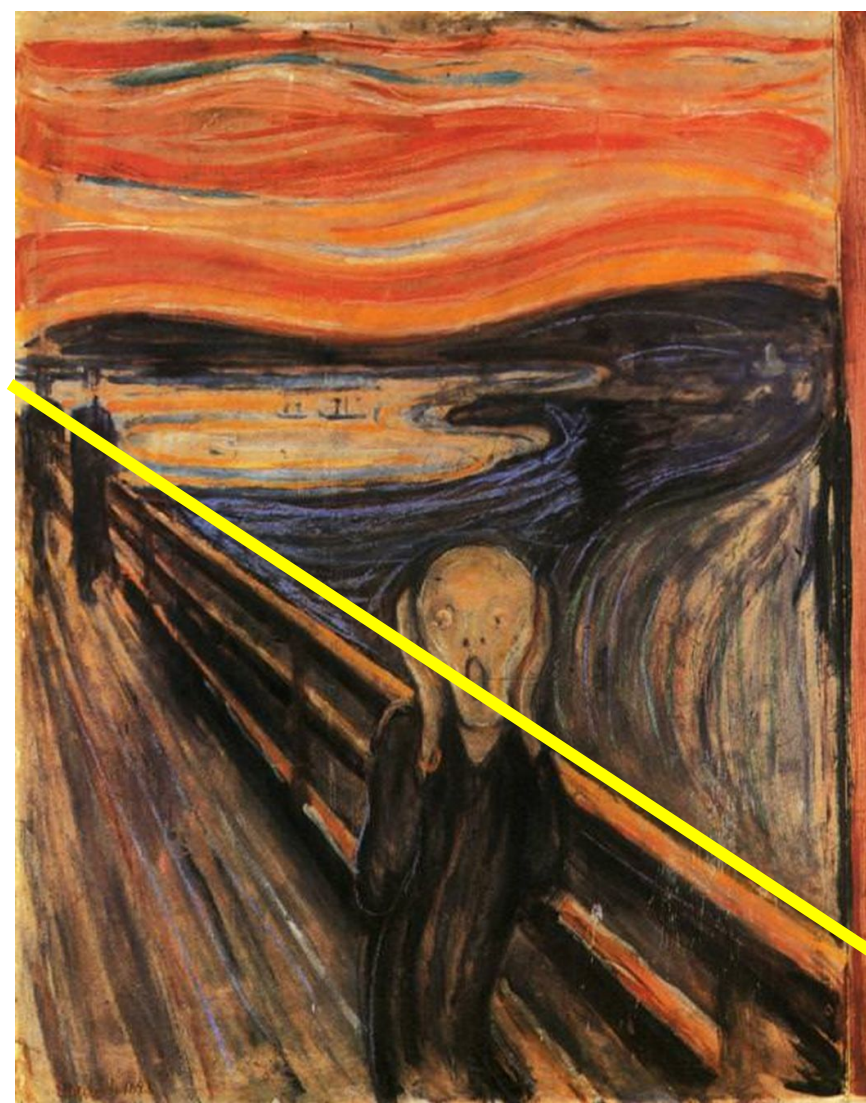
“The Starry Night” by Vincent van Gogh has an asymmetrical balance. To stabilize the balance, the cypress tree in the left is painted to embellish the hills that up-rise from left to the right side of the painting. (10.5) “The Scream” also has an asymmetrical balance, due to the position of the main figure in the focal point of the painting, and of the two other men walking faraway in the background, which sustained the diagonal line of the bridge. (10.6)

Respecting Francesca Woodman’s untitled photograph taken in Rome, Italy 1978, the artwork also appears to have an asymmetrical balance due to the position of the chair, as a tool to reduce the blank space from the focal point – which is Francesca hanging on the door – to the white wall on the left. Nevertheless, if we focus on the door acting as a frame to capture Francesca’s position, a symmetrical line creating reflection vertically is identified. As Francesca's arms and legs are maintained in a “Y” shape to keep herself holding up in the air, her posture becomes equilibrium and creates a sense of “being stuck” in the audience’s interpretations.

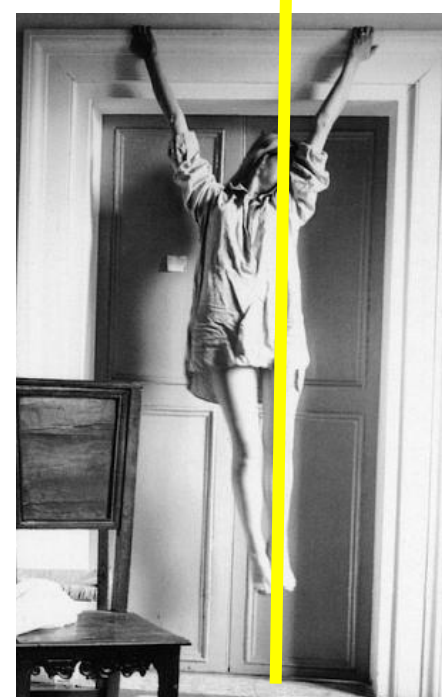
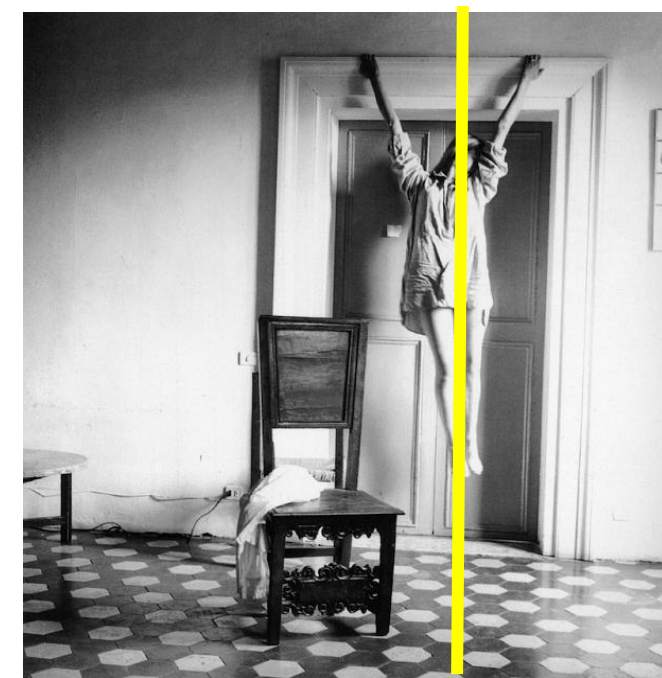


## Texture

Connected to the unique application of movement and rhythm, the texture created of the two artworks – “The Scream” and “The Starry Night” is meant to deliver the mentioned sense of motion. Vincent van Gogh’s style of painting is to use thick brushstrokes to create a rough, impasto texture. (10.4) Same with “The Scream”, however the texture of it appears to be in harmony more than “The Starry Night” since the lines are not totally swirled into a circular shape. In contrast, the untitled photograph of Francesca has a soft and smooth texture due to the flare of light. Yet, if we inspect the photograph closer, we can identify the grains all over the surface of the picture. This is the automatic effect of cameras during this period, when image resolution was not improved to the greatest level. However, these grains help contribute to the photograph aesthetically since it can generate a sense of time.



## Balance



## Color, Symbols and Unity

The use of high contrast, vivid and intense colors are observed in “The Starry Night” by Vincent van Gogh and “The Scream” by Edvard Munch. Contradictorily, Francesca’s photograph was taken in black and white, without colorful shades but still emphasizes the contrast of darkness and light.

Both Vincent and Edvard exaggerated the colors in a dramatic way, which seems to express a more striking impression to the audience. Vincent’s lack of blending generates a broken effect between the objects, which contribute to the motion of the light coming from the stars (10.7). Edvard Munch also regarded colors as a means to indicate his emotions and thoughts, hence dramatized the colors of the nature in accordance with his mental panic attack at that specific time: “I painted this picture, painted the **clouds as actual blood. The color shrieked.**” (10.8). In addition, we can also see that Edvard Munch did not blend the color much in “The Scream” just like Vincent. The use of dramatic colors, the deformed swirling lines and use of metaphors through objects such as the cypress tree, the ghoulish figure,... in the two paintings are all harmonious with each other, all have the characteristic of being exaggerated to push the intensity of emotions to the climax. This has created a sense of unity for the paintings, since every factors within them contribute to each other to create a complete meaning: the overwhelming emotions of the artists.

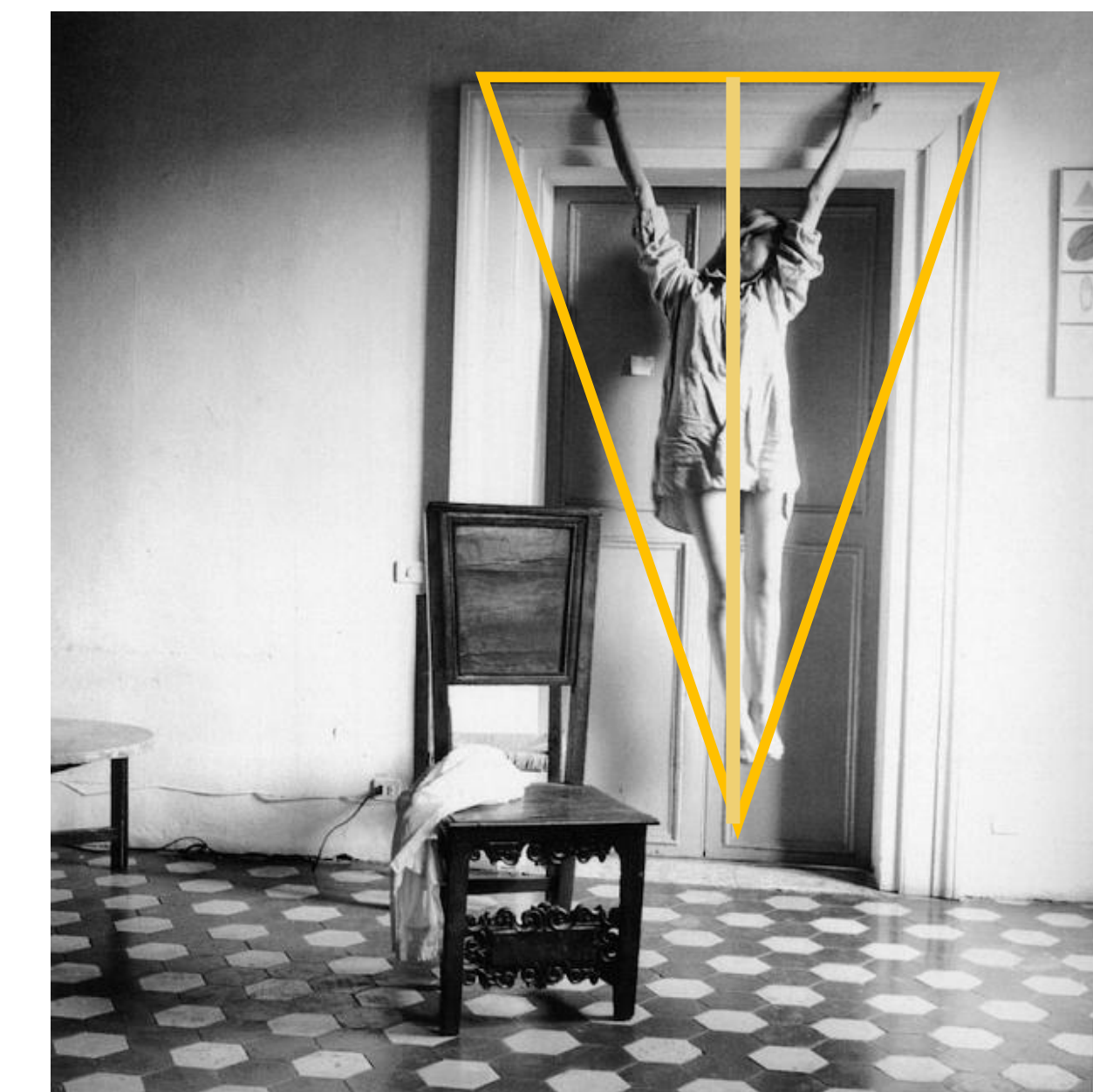
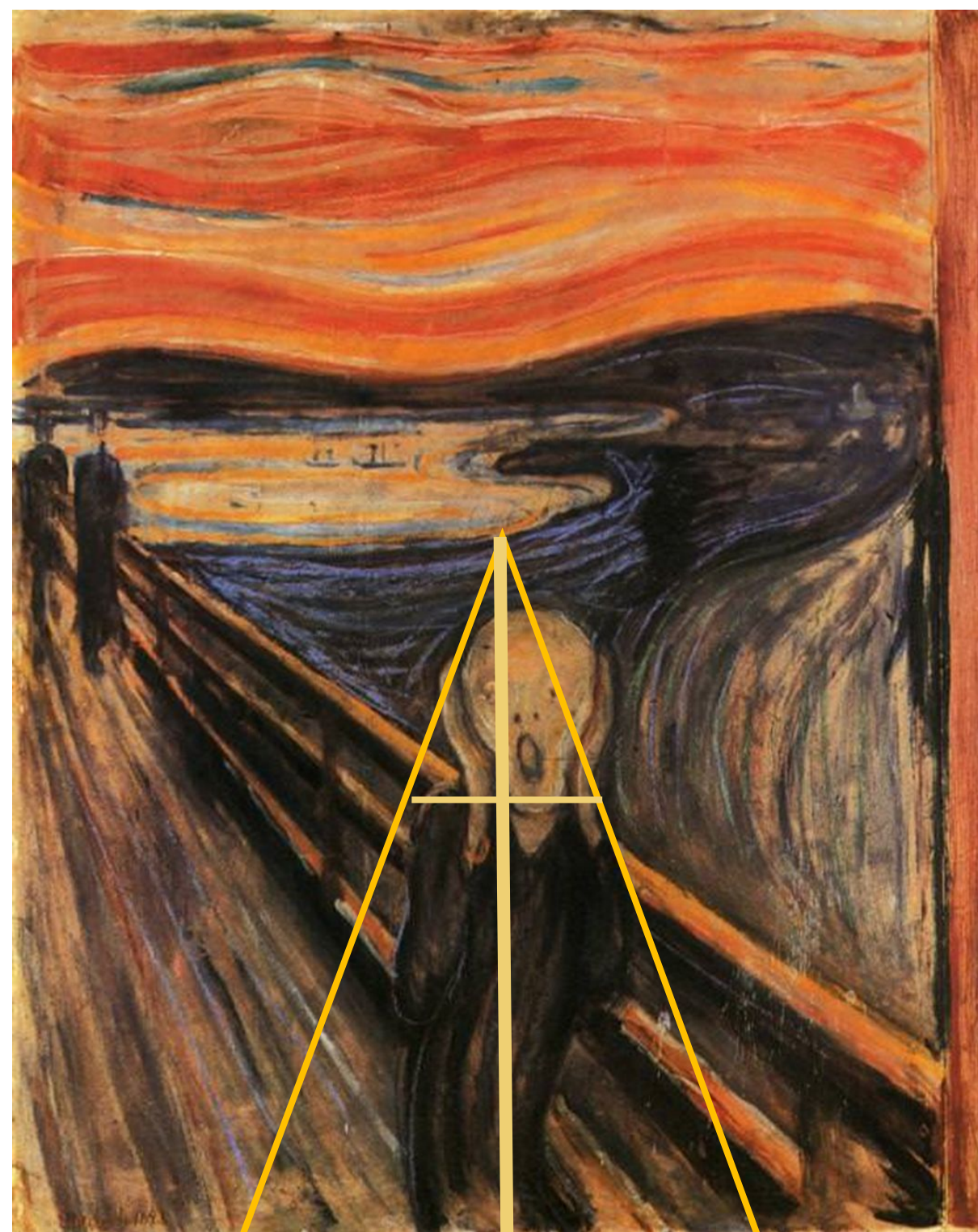
Francesca’s photograph is contradictory to these exaggerations of Vincent and Edvard, since the photo was captured monochromatically. In spite of the lack of colorful shades, the unity of the photo is still preserved, since the black and white shades helps contribute to the stillness of the object in the focal point. The photo appears to be in complete calm and silence, without any movement, as the chair helps balance the contrast of the light and also creates a feeling of firmness and a quiet atmosphere. This is a paradox when we think about the struggle that Francesca was suffering from the posture. This unity of silence can be interpreted as Francesca’s desperation to be unable to get out of being stuck, communicating her depressed attitude towards life. While Edvard Munch and van Gogh express their turmoil through the use of colors and hues, while Francesca emphasizes on combining and organizing physical objects around her to create symbols.



# Comparing & Contrasting Formal Qualities through Rule of Composition

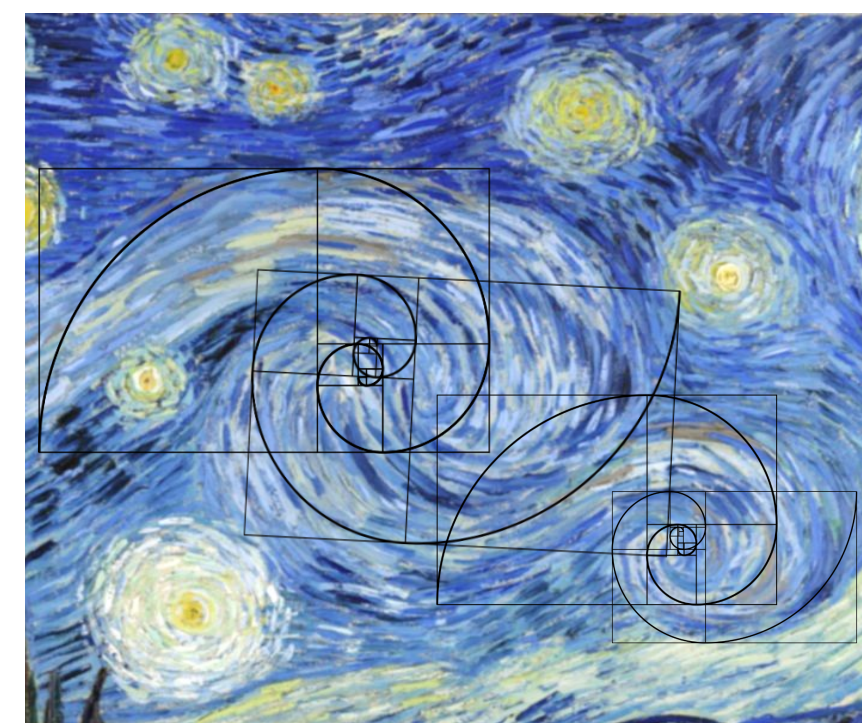
Francesca's posture in this photograph has an upside-down triangular shape. This can be attributed to her choice of positioning herself, to serve the purpose of the message she wanted to convey.

The triangular shape is reversed upside-down unusually, which has a strong influence on the audience interpretation. Her composition of the body unveils the state of being suspended in the air, trying to hold up to a small door border otherwise fall down and hurt herself. This shape of composition put an emphasis on the indication of "endeavor", since Francesca spreads her weak arms widely to try to lift up the heavy down part of her body up. Her body and also the legs also act as the symmetrical line of the triangular to create a sense of balance.



"The Scream" by Edvard Munch first strikes the audience with the impression of the unisex figure's facial expression, which is full of overwhelm and despair. In the audience's point of view, the head of the figure, which is the most important focus point of the painting, is contained in the pinnacle of the triangular. This composition plays a vital role in the interpretation of the painting as it can evoke a mixture of sophisticated and uneasy feelings inside us when our eyes are able to be drawn to the focus point at the very first time admiring the artwork. The figure's body are also reflected equivalently over the symmetrical line, which composed a balanced shape of body and highlighting the existence of the abstract subject. Similarly with Francesca's photograph, the use of triangular shape has successfully enhanced the impacts of the painting, helping the audience to acknowledge the intention of Francesca and Edvard Munch to capture a turbulent mixture of emotions which is depicted in the focus point.

However, in Vincent van Gogh work, the triangular composition is not the focus point of the painting. Instead, it is used to embellish the sense of loneliness and isolation in the audience eyes through the depiction of a leafless tree, as the first thing that captures our eyes is the flow of the fluid sky. The biggest circular flow is painted perfectly, whose lines are fitted into the Golden Ratio with a smooth curve.



The center of the flow acts as the focus point of the painting, where it is the ending point of the Golden Ratio, and also lies right on the symmetrical line of the whole painting.

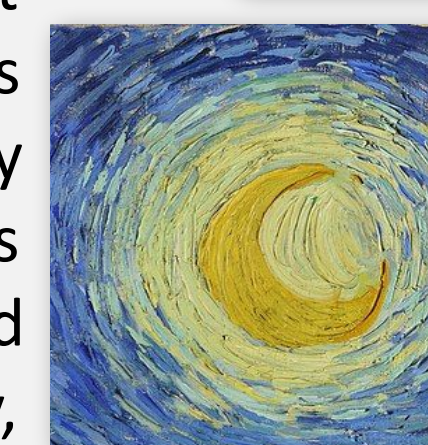
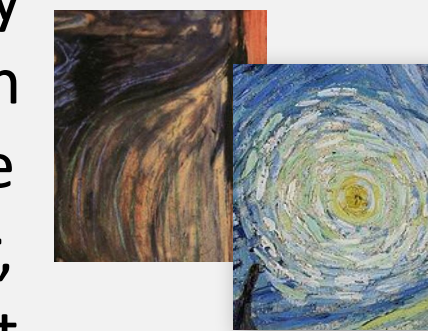
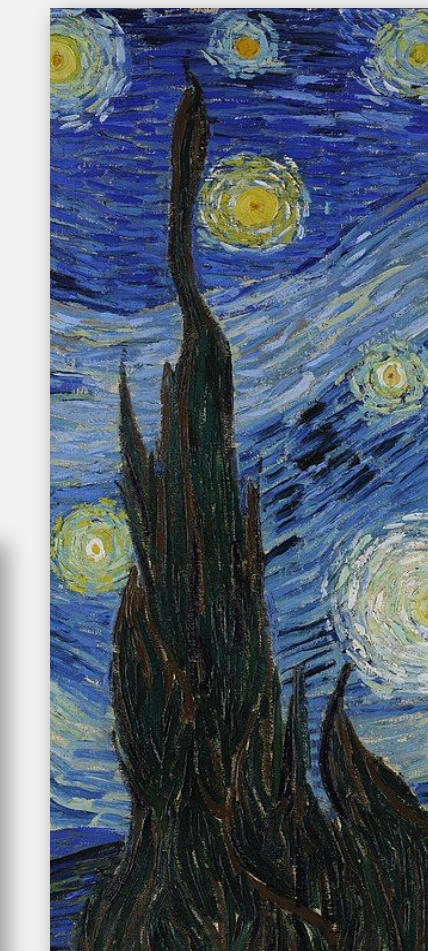


Similarly compared to Vincent, as Edvard Munch's technique is heavily influenced by Post-Impressionism, he also regarded the technique of creating chaos through brushstroke as a powerful tool to communicate humans' mental disturbance in Art. Edvard also exaggerated his lines into curve lines while painting the sky, with a mixture of vivid colors. However, Vincent's intention is to interpret the reality, which is why he only swirled the sky but the landscape is still explicit as a night scene, but Edvard Munch's intention is a little bit different. He wanted to twist the reality totally to guide the path for the audience looking into a whole different world, where nature can actually "scream" by performing the flows of the sky and the surroundings as an unreal delusion. Edvard painted the sky and the faraway surrounding with lightly and harmoniously curved lines that imitate the flow of sounds propagating into the figure's ears. Nevertheless, everything on the bridge, except for the figure, is all drawn with normal diagonal lines, unlike Vincent's whose painting has the whole thing appears to be somehow deformed.

One of the most significant features of "The Scream" by Edvard Munch and "The Starry Night" by Vincent van Gogh, is the technique of using brushstrokes to create movement of still objects, of light and even creating an effect of sound echoing in the air.



In "The Starry Night", Vincent swirled the horizontal skyline into dramatic curves, creating an abstract 3D effect of movement which appears to be surreal, dreamlike yet explicitly expresses Vincent's turmoil during that time. The movement of the cloud is not the only thing that is dramatized through Vincent's perspective. Upon closer observation, the audience can adopt the impact of lights coming from the crescent moon and the stars, and also recognize an illusion of light moving in a circular path. What is special here is the fact that, most of the ordinary artists during Vincent's time were skillful in delineating and represent light realistically, or the shades of light in different periods of time. However, Vincent uniquely paid attention to the moving effect of light waves at night, which our humans eyes sometimes can capture but not all can actually illustrate it in terms of drawing and painting. His technique has made the sky became chaotic and hypnagogic, which does not comply with the reality, as if it did not belong to our existence world.



The use of line is also applied to the main subjects of the painting. In "The Starry Night", Vincent depicted the cypress tree with surreal and winding lines to create an odd and isolated feeling in the audience. In "The Scream" by Edvard Munch, although the two other men faraway in the background of the painting still have their body in proportion, the main figure is painted weirdly. This is Munch's intention, in order to create the effect as if the figure is becoming anarchic with the nature, letting all of his inner emotions out to blend in with the surrounding.

A special detail in "The Scream" is that Edvard Munch did not specifically tell the audience the gender of the figure. The interpretation of this is that because of the extreme terror that it is going through, it also loses its identity and completely be defeated by the echoing of the nature.



# Interpretations of Functions and Purposes

Francesca Woodman's photography has a unique and rather eccentric style that often arouses an irritable and intriguing attraction to the audience. She exploited the aesthetic qualities of the images by making use of unconventional symbols and camera techniques that no one would often tries. The Untitled, Rome, Italy 1975 is one of her most symbolic photograph that has excite many questions that would never be answered. She displayed herself in a Christ-like posture, encountered to save herself from falling down. This Christ-like posture is often associated with a fatal punishment that was practiced popularly in the ancient Greek society, when the punished was left until death. This is called crucifixion, and crucifixion was often publicly carried out. This idea is indicated by the use of light, when the main source of light is covering on Francesca's body explicitly, as a metaphor for the nakedness of one's inner soul together with the humiliation and pain that one has to suffer when being crucified. This explains why Francesca's whole body is exposed to the light while only her face is hided behind the arm, in the darkness. This representation and choice of symbolism communicates Francesca's indication of her mental state, which is obsessed with the idea of "suffer", "pain" and "embarrassment" in life. (12.1) Francesca's use of symbols to create a surreal world and the fact that she uses herself as the subject provokes a strong sense of depersonalization.

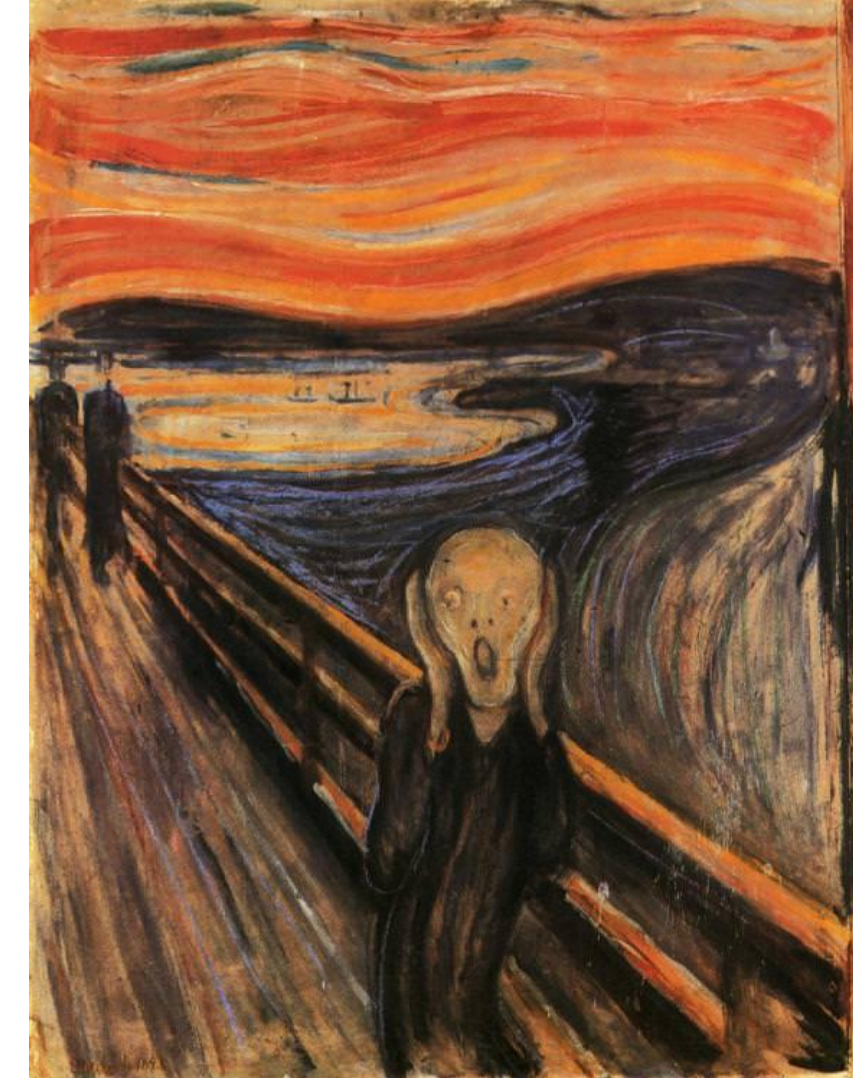
The silhouette that is created due to the perspective of the photograph and the source of light also plays an important part in the purpose of the photo. This shade is perfectly captured on the threshold between the door and the doorframe. As mentioned above in the analysis of formal qualities, this very small detail, which appears to be trivial and negligible, acts as an implication of "being stuck" in life of Francesca Woodman. Francesca Woodman's photography, including many other collections of her, all conveys the message of being in the "between" – something subtle and unreal. According to Kim Knoppers, the curator for Francesca's photography in the Foam Fotografiemuseum, Francesca was often between the idea of "appearance and disappearance". (12.2) This "between" became an integral part of her art during her career lifetime, and most of her artworks express this idea with the high camera shutter speed to create ghostlike effect and surreal figures in the frame. Through his philosophy of her, the audience can sense a feeling of desperation, depression and the chaos that unsuccessful artists such as Francesca had to suffer from.

**"The Scream"** is the most renowned and iconic artwork of the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch. The painting is regarded as one of the most important artworks in the Modern Art period. The painting has been globally recognized as a representation of the universal anxiety of the modern man. (12.3)

The most unique features of "The Scream" are Munch's technique of using the brushstrokes and the avoidance of identity. The swirled lines, which were painted to be echoing in the landscape, look like a deafening scream that is floating in the painting and threatening the surreal figure. These lines create the effect of overwhelming flow of emotion that vibrates through the air. (12.4) This technique has successfully served Munch's purposes of transferring his crisis and the successive and hysteric deadlock of the figure in the painting, since the audience can interpret this as the terror that comes from the external environment, which is panicking the figure and put him into an internal confrontation. (12.5) Upon closer inspection, it can be observed that the human shape in the central of the painting is only depicted as a



skull, with no gender features or human-like characteristics. This idea suggests that the threat coming from the external environment has faded the figure's identity, making it become obsessive and falsified. This allows the room for freedom of interpretation –when the audience can choose to experience the turmoil within the painting from the perspective of Edvard Munch, or anyone that has the same mental disorder. (12.6) From looking at the painting, the emotion that different elements of art in The Scream has delivered, although is ineffable, yet still appears unquestionably inside the viewers. Because of this prevalent characteristic, "The Scream" has become a powerful portrayal of the modern man in such a modern society, especially as a prophecy of the dehumanized 20<sup>th</sup> century that is full of suffering and injustice. (12.7) it is transparent that Edvard Munch's existential angst is pushed to such a devastating manner, when the reality around him started to demolished and become destructive as if it did not belong to the physical reality anymore. According to Sue Prideaux, the author of "Edvard Munch: Behind The Scream", "The Scream" is Munch's portrait of "a soul stripped as far from the visible as possible – the image on the reverse, the hidden side of the eyeball as Munch looked into himself." (12.8) To Sue Prideaux, Munch did not only paint the nature torturing the figure,



he painted "souls", not only his souls, but the souls of the people who were heading towards a horrific and over-anxious 20th century. The purpose to unveil his extreme emotions in such moment has exceeded its own concept of time and place, where the surrounding of each individuals become deformed like the dehumanization of many catastrophic unethical behaviors of the human race in the 20th century. Strindberg commented on this interpretation of Munch's purpose to depict the next century as: "A scream of fear just as nature, turning red from wrath, prepares to speak before the storm and thunder, to the bewildered little creatures who, without resembling them in the least, imagine themselves to be God." (12.9) In a deeper connotation of the statement, the audience can understand that the nature is an indication of a dark foreseeable future, where people "imagine themselves to be God", as the Holocaust took place together with the spread of nationalism, discrimination and unethical experiments.

"My House", Province, Rhode Island 1976, Francesca Woodman



Another interpretation of Munch's purpose is based on the location of the fjord in "The Scream". which has been said to have a meaning to the mental crisis of the figure in the painting, to some is Edvard Munch. The view is Ekeberg which is to the east of Oslo, which was the city Munch hated. During the time, it was the area where his dear sister's hospital located in, and it was also neighboring the city's slaughterhouse. (12.10) As a deduction, the reason for Munch to be there was to visit his sister, who is known to have spent most of her time for hospitalizations and died from schizoaffective and cancer. (12.11) The acknowledgement of the potential death of his sister during the visit, and the horrendous screams coming from the slaughterhouse combined together and pushed Edvard Munch's panic attack to the climax. (12.12)

Thus, "The Scream" has the function to convey and express Munch's suffering during the visit of his sister, expressing an overwhelming depression due to the continuous pass-aways of his family members.



# Interpretations of Functions and Purposes

“The Starry Night” is often associated with Vincent’s psychological turbulence in his life. By the time he painted “The Starry Night”, Vincent van Gogh had been suffered from mental crisis and had to stay in Saint-Rémy asylum (13.1) and he committed suicide just a year later. Because of this situation, he chose to represent this crisis through thick whorls of paint.

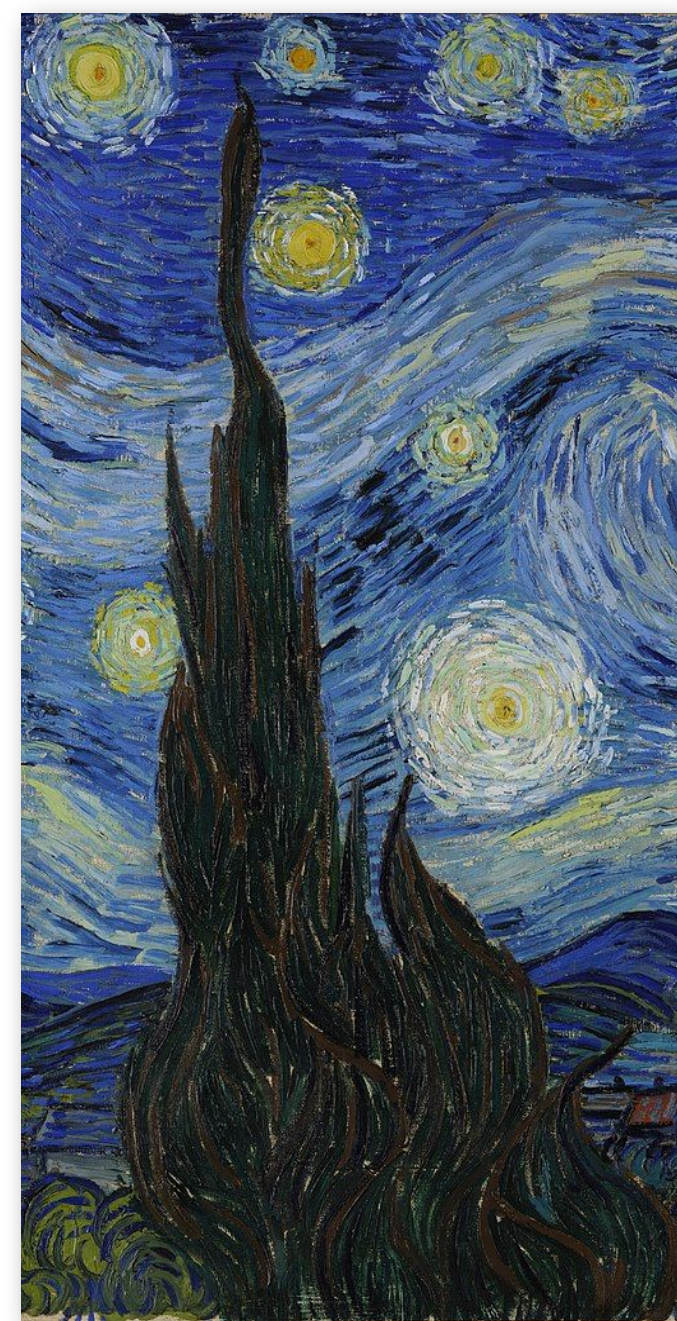


The colorful and bright stars shining in the dark sky, which appear to be moving lively, perhaps are the hopes and dreams of Vincent, where he was trying to find a light at the end of the tunnel, to be peaceful in his strategic life. In the letter written to Theo, Vincent mentioned that: “The sight of the stars always make me dream.” (13.2) As a Post-Impressionist, he painted “The Starry Night” not to depict what a beautiful night sky looks like, yet he taught the audience how to feel the sentiments within its beauty. By admiring the painting, the audience can feel a sense of “smallness” – a limited finite of our existence, which is captivated by the small and quiet town, under a vast, limitless nature and the boundless and marvelous universe above us. The night sky made Vincent dream, striving to share his insanity and alienation with the world through this masterpiece, yet only Theo listened to him.

With the use of high-contrast colors, which have their own symbolic meanings to convey the overall message of the painting, “The Starry Night” – together with most of Vincent’s paintings, have the function to **express emotions and enhance individualism**. (13.3) Vincent van Gogh’s purpose, to reveal his inner tortured soul, has successfully achieved by painting “The Starry Night” beyond the physical reality. (13.4)



While the spectacular night sky is the highlight of the painting with the function of symbolizing Vincent van Gogh’s mental disorder, the cypress tree is also not just unreasonably painted. **Cypress is the type of tree that represents the afterlife, the bridge that connects the ordinary world with Heaven.** The fact that the Dutch painter chose to end his life only one year later after “The Starry Night” could be foreshadowed by his depiction of the cypress tree. Every detail in “The Starry Night” blends together and accompanies with each other harmonically. The confusion of the flow of motion and light, the cypress tree standing isolated in the sky and the contrast between the cadmium yellow and the cobalt blue, all embellish the dark, obsessive and exhausted mindset of Vincent van Gogh.



Upon closer inspection and observation, some audience obtain an interpretation of hopes that comes from the way how Vincent van Gogh expressed his erratic starry night in the painting with vigorous and aggressive colors. By accentuating the atmospheric effect of the night sky with luminous stars and the moon as the main source of light, which is paradoxical with the tranquil village lying in the darkness underneath, Vincent van Gogh is said to have contrasted the relationship between physical life and death. (13.9) He is believed to have illustrated his hope for a peaceful afterlife as a means to escape from his mental torture, by depicting the light coming from the dark blue sky in a lucid way just like a guidance that led his way to a more serene and ethereal place, whereas the cold and blue village is the reality in which Vincent van Gogh was being trapped in. This disharmony of the subjects in “The Starry Night” somehow indicates the pioneering **Post-Impressionist’s desire to vanish away from his pathetic physical life to reach for true happiness in the other timeless world.**

“The Starry Night” is also said to have a **religious interpretation** that connects to Vincent van Gogh’s faith. In 1888, he wrote a personal letter to his sister, mentioning about an American poet named Whitman: “He sees in the future, and even in the present, a world of healthy, carnal love, strong and frank-of friendship-of work-under the great starlit vault of heaven something which after all one can only call God-and eternity in its place above this world.” (13.5). Vincent van Gogh had a time serving as a missionary to the coal miners in the Borinage district of Belgium. (13.6) However, his pastoral days ended soon despite his efforts to contribute to his religion due to the fact that the church committee considered him as being unfit for them. (13.7) All of the aforementioned events show that Vincent has a faith in Christianity, although in his latter years he often rejected this faith. From this point of view, some people regard “The Starry Night” as a painting that has a religious purpose. The number of the stars, which is eleven, is believed to have the function of relating to Genesis 37:9 in the Bible: “Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon and the eleven stars bowed down to me.” The saying is Joseph’s, who is an outcast of his eleven brothers, and was imprisoned and sold into slavery according to the Bible. This idea is argued to be a metaphor for Vincent van Gogh himself, as he was also an outcast for the art culture at that time, and suffered from many years of treatment inside asylum. (13.8) With this interpretation, the audience can understand that Vincent’s spiritual purpose of “The Starry Night” is to connect to similar destinies like him within his faith for the Bible and for Christianity.

The fact that “The Starry Night” was composed in 1889 (13.10), only one year before Vincent van Gogh decided to end his life can elicit a lot about its purpose as an indication for this desire. In his letter written for Theo in July 1888, he unveiled a lot, yet subtly, about his suicidal thoughts: “In the life of the painter, death may perhaps not be the most difficult thing.” (13.11). Still in the same letter, Vincent made a connection of the idea of death to the sight of the stars: “But the sight of the stars always makes me dream...”; “Just as we take the train to go to Tarascon or Rouen, we take death to go to a star.” (13.12) One year later, and also one year before his death, he painted “The Starry Night”, with the voyeuristic night sky full of splendid surreal stars above a cypress tree that represents the bridge from life to death. The affiliation between death, and the sight of the stars, is aesthetically assembled, which magnificently communicates Vincent van Gogh’s hopes for a better afterlife by symbolically depicting the stars as a destination that he had been reaching for.

Although the interpretations of Vincent van Gogh’s purpose of “The Starry Night” pertain to four distinct themes: emotional expression, implication of death, religion and his hopes for true happiness when he suicided, they still all associate with each other to piece by piece intensify Vincent’s inner soul and his internal thoughts and attitudes towards life.



# Compare and Contrast interpretations of Functions and Purposes

“The Starry Night”, “The Scream” and Francesca’s untitled photograph taken in Rome, Italy 1978 all have many similarities regarding the functions that Vincent van Gogh, Edvard Munch and Francesca Woodman wanted to express. All of the three artworks pay attention to showing inner states and emotions and the artists’ attitudes towards life.

However, each composition was produced in different periods throughout the art timeline. This change of history has created significant distinctness when we compare all of them together, in terms of the emotions they convey.



It is clear that Francesca Woodman’s attempt to show the audience her depressed mind state is fully interpreted. However, Francesca puts an emphasis on this expression in a more ideological way, in which a concept is more focused on compared to genuinely emotions. The ideology of Francesca

in this photograph is described “she wanted to evoke the elusive, the transient realm between what is and isn’t” – according to art critic Kyle McMillan. (14.1) This concept is depicted through Francesca’s posture which she hangs herself holding to the door, floating in air, just like the state between the physical reality with the surreal heaven. The idea of heaven and earth, and the threshold dividing death and life that is mixed up by Francesca can also be understood with the Jesus-like posture on the crucifixion. (14.2)

Compared to “The Starry Night” and “The Scream”, Francesca’s untitled photograph taken in Rome, Italy 1978 has a more accessible approach to the expression of her ideology of the threshold between reality and surrealism. However, the emotions conveyed in the picture are still noticeable, as Francesca’s hidden face communicates her embarrassment, perhaps towards her desire to be recognized during that time. The hanging position also indicates her loss, suspend and sorrow between life.



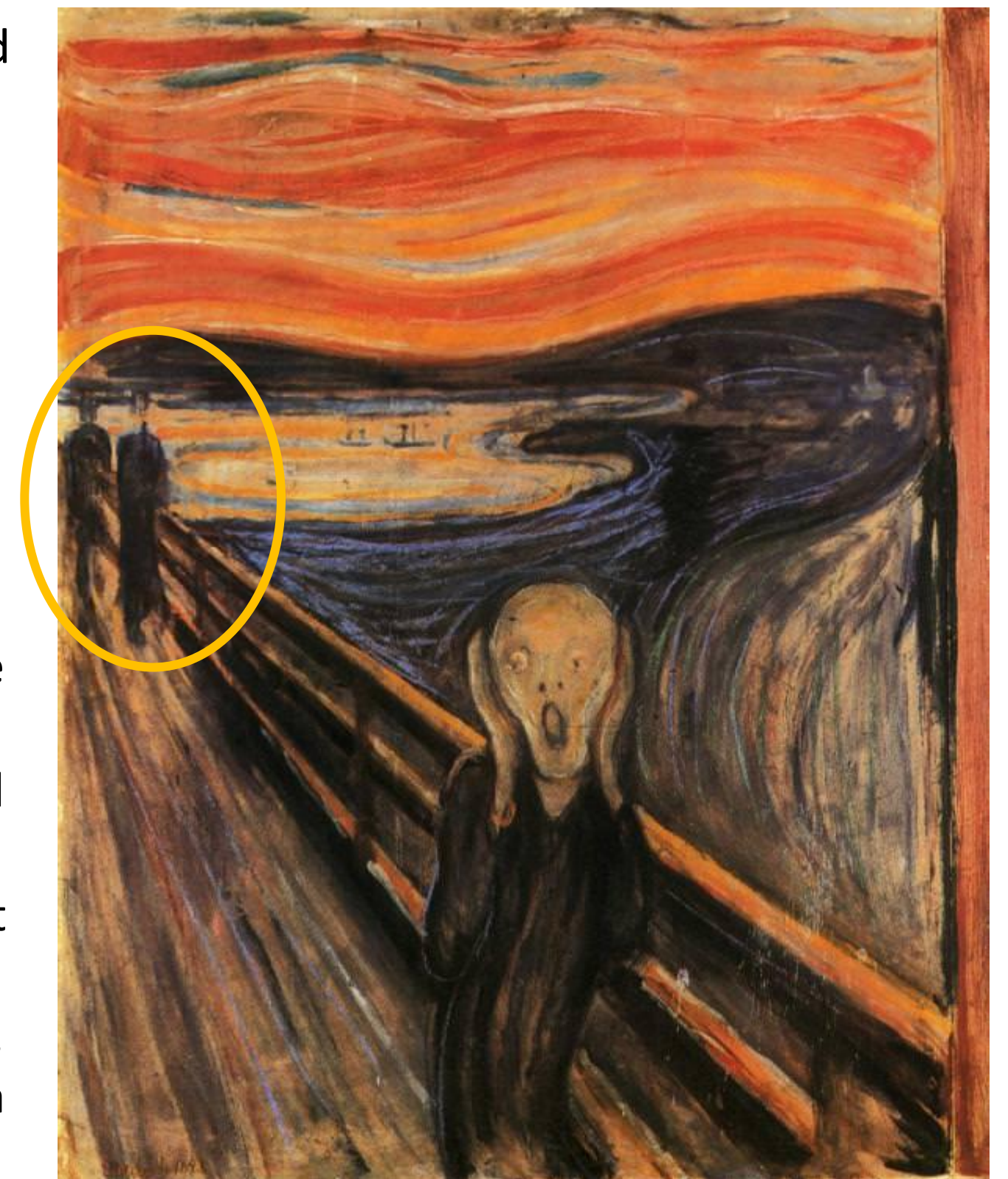
(14.4) rather than to hide his personal meaning underneath the beauty of the landscape like Vincent van Gogh.

A remarkable similarity between “The Scream” and “The Starry Night” is that both Vincent van Gogh and Edvard Munch’s purpose to swirl the lines is to deliver their internal struggle to the audience. They also communicate their isolation and loss with the use of allegory. When it comes to “The Starry Night”, the cypress tree – as a symbol for death, which is usually grown in cemeteries – is an implication for Vincent’s suicide one year later. (14.5) The cypress tree standing lonely, thriving to the sky can also be interpreted as Vincent’s isolation and the hope to be accepted by his religion by reaching the heaven above. In terms of “The Scream”, expressing Edvard Munch’s isolation is the function of he painting his two other friends faraway. His friends walked away, did not notice that the figure changed its shape into something unlike human and suffered from a mental panic attack, indicating the figure extreme isolation in the situation. (14.6)

In terms of the function of the whole composition, Vincent van Gogh and Edvard Munch’s paintings all have only one main purpose: to reveal the invisible parts of themselves to the world, to confess the adversity and the extreme emotional states that were repressed inside of their lonely souls for the whole lives. To Vincent and Munch, the purpose of the two artworks in specific, and of Art in general, is to expose the humans’ ego and share it with other destinies. To Magne Bruteig – Van Gogh Museum senior curator and curator of Oslo exhibition, they “both found that they needed to create a very different pictorial language, they wanted this direct bridge between themselves and the spectator, which they discovered that Impressionism couldn’t provide.” (14.7) Their emotions were elegantly connected to “The Starry Night” and “The Scream”, lying under symbolic figures, vivid choice of colors and unique brushstrokes. On admiring these two artworks, the audience can strongly sense a feeling of loss and irritability, being united to the theme behind them and see parts of themselves as a human inside the depiction. Perhaps their intentions to create “The Starry Night” and “The Scream” beyond the idea of visualization, reaching for a profound story underneath has been done successfully, making them become two of the most famous artworks in the world.

In general, the three artworks all reveal the artists’ existential meaning and emotions in their life. Regardless of the fact that Francesca’s purpose is more ideology-related, and “The Starry Night” and “The Scream” related more to the use of nature as a metaphor, all of them have successfully indicated a sense of sorrow, depression and exhaustion of the artists’ in their lives.

Vincent van Gogh also beautifully signifies his purpose of conveying his emotions in “The Starry Night”. The swirls from the light of the stars and the moon, together with the bending lines of the cypress blend together to create a chaotic and turbulent representation of Vincent’s inner thoughts. The audience can easily point out this feature in “The Scream” by Edvard Munch. The deformed lines, flares and surreal depiction of the nature and the figure also evoke Edvard Munch’s mental disorders to us. However, the difference lies in the use of color of the two artworks, which have different functions to represent the reality that the two artists were trying to capture. The shade of blue in “The Starry Night” is lighter, softer and less intense compared to the glare and gaudy bloody red in “The Scream”. Vincent’s purpose is to paint a peaceful, glowing night sky to visualize what he felt and disclose his impressions towards the romantic landscape. (14.3) However, Edvard Munch purpose is to distort the landscape rather than to construct it in a surreal way, in order to communicate the desperation that is more haunting, obsessive and even may be disturbing to some audience at the first glance. He puts more significance to the ugly glimpse of his personal meaning





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