

Candidate #: jlz183

# Comparative Study: Women & Time



(1.1)

- Title: Afghan Girl
- Media: Photography
- Artist: Steve McCurry
- Year: 1985
- Location: National Geographic magazine
- Size: 30 x 42 cm
- Origin: Afghani



(1.2)

- Title: Girl with a Pearl Earring
- Media: Oil on canvas
- Artist: Johannes Vermeer
- Year: 1665
- Location: Mauritshuis, The Hague. (originally from Dutch)
- Size: 44.5 × 39 cm
- Movement: Dutch Golden Age

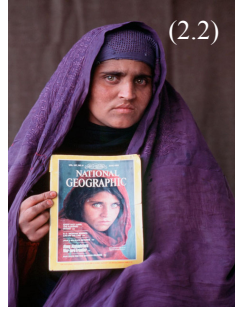


(1.3)

- Title: Liberty Leading the People
- Media: Oil on canvas
- Artist: Eugène Delacroix
- Year: 1830
- Location: Louvre Museum
- Size: 2.6 m x 3.25 m
- Movement: Romanticism
- Origin: French

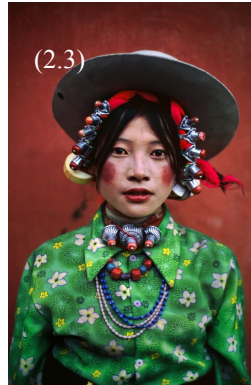
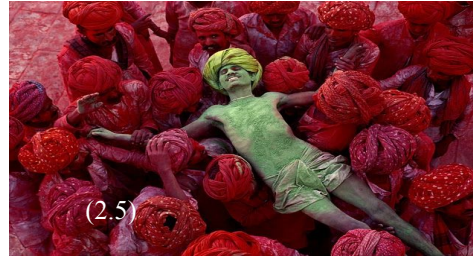
# Evaluation of cultural context of Steve McCurry's *Afghan Girl*

This photo of the young **Afghan Girl** published on the cover page of the **National Geographic** magazine was one of the most famous photography in the world, being an icon of the history that time. It was published in 1985, when the girl being captured was only 12 years old. With the Soviet-Afghan war going on at that time, millions of refugees were homeless and suffering along the Afghan-Pakistan border. **Sharbat Gula**, known for her iconic startling green eyes, was an orphan since the age of six and escaped to Pakistan with her siblings and grandmother on foot. When Steve McCurry took this photo back in 1984, it was a fleeting moment and she then was lost in the public sight. As McCurry recalled: "After the photo was published on the cover of National Geographic, thousands of people inquiring how they can help her and who was she. People were always interested in her." It would be a miracle to find her since they didn't have her name, didn't know about her tribe, or where she lived and the fact that trying to find her after 17 years. Many medias wanted to track her down but failed. Steve McCurry and his team went to the camp where she was in and took her picture around to hundreds of people, but encountered a situation that a lot of young Afghanistan women claimed being the Afghan Girl. So, they then hired an iris scan recognition company to help identify the girl (2.1).



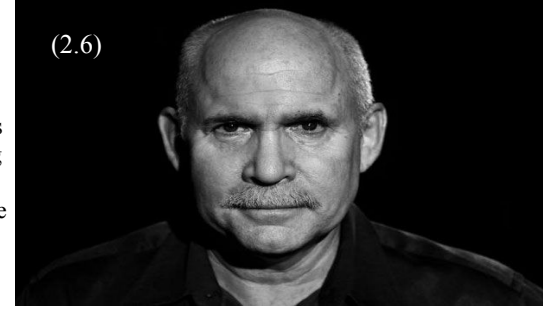
It wasn't until 2002, Steve McCurry and his crew, finally found her and verified her identity after all the difficulties they went through. With the help of media, Sharbat Gula received assistance from Afghanistan government and her daughter were enrolled in school from their help. Even though among the refugees, only Gula became well-known, there were many more refugees suffering, hiding their identity and escaping just like her.

As Steve McCurry traveled around the globe to take pictures, he captured numerous cultural based photographs, showing the world about the different traditions and characteristics of places, which shapes his unique style: with cultural-richness, eye-catching with contrasting color. These are two other photos taken by Steve McCurry. Both have the vivid capture of color, and the strong contrast between the colors. Moreover, they respectively portray the culture they are from with the distinctive features such as clothings and traditions.



In Steve McCurry's Afghan girl, the culture distinctness and richness was explicitly shown through her clothings and her clear, pure and intense gaze. As in Gula's situation when she was young, she had never been exposed to camera before since it was not a part of the culture. McCurry captured her natural cultural look, the purest beauty of her face, instead of manipulating her appearance or asking to remove the hair covering.

(2.6)



**Steve McCurry** born in Philadelphia, United States, is an iconic contemporary photographer who traveled all over the world and took countless of pictures. He was invited by the National Geographic magazine to photograph life in the refugees camps along the Afghan-Pakistan border in 1984. There, he recorded about 30 camps where there was only basic shelters and facilities. At Nasir Bagh camp, in front of a tent which was set up as a girl's school, a green-eyed girl particularly caught his attention. Steve recalled: "I spotted this young girl. She had an intense, haunted look, a really penetrating gaze – and yet she was only about twelve years old. She was very shy, and I thought if I photographed other children first she would be more likely to agree because at some point she wouldn't want to be left out. I guess she was as curious about me as I was about her, because she had never been photographed and had probably never seen a camera. After a few moments she got up and walked away, but for an instant everything was right – the light, the background, the expression in her eyes." (2.4)



# Evaluation of cultural context of Johannes Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring*

*"When you think about the Mona Lisa, she is also looking at us, but she isn't engaging – she's sitting back in the painting, self-contained," Tracy Chevalier, the author of the New York Times bestselling historical novel, Girl with a Pearl Earring, points out. "Whereas Girl with a Pearl Earring is right there – there is nothing between her and us. She has this magical quality of being incredibly open and yet mysterious at the same time – and that is what makes her so appealing."* (3.3)

*Girl with a Pearl Earring* is a well-known artwork all over the world from the **Dutch Golden Age**. The Dutch Golden Age was a period of prosperous and fame in trade, science, military, and art in the 17th century's Netherland. With the victory of the Eighty Years' War between the Dutch Republic and Spain and the wars with other European countries, the Netherlands gained both independence from Spain and the recognition from the world. Several other factors also contributed to the rise of the arts in Dutch, such as the migration of skilled artists, cheap energy source and wealth. (3.1)

Because of all these changes from the wars, especially religious changes--the sharp split between the old monarchist and Catholic cultural traditions--the Dutch Art had to undergo reformations. Without the restriction on religion as the only topic, art at this time period had evolved into different types of genres and emphasizing on ordinary human life and activities. Landscape painting, genre painting (depicting musicians, housewives), and historical painting which included paintings of biblical or mythical subjects.

"Artists would spend most of their careers painting only portraits, genre scenes, landscapes, seascapes and ships, or still lifes, and often a particular subtype within these categories." (3.2)



**Johannes Vermeer**, born in Delft, Netherlands, was an Dutch artist whose artworks are among the greatest treasures in the world. He was famous for his paintings that depict the daily life and his extraordinary use of the light and form that create a sense of serenity and dignity. (3.5)



Instead of calling this a portrait, this type of painting is called a tronie, a term used by Dutch painters from northern Europe; it means a head that's not a formal portrait or rather an imaginary one. People aren't posing for the picture, they are usually being caught or captured in the middle of act, frozen in a moment of time. In the case with *Girl with Pearl Earrings*, the girl in the tronie perhaps was being surprised by the painter and has been caught in the action of turning around. Her front of body is not facing the viewer, her head is over rotated looking over her shoulder; if she is modeling for a portrait, she would have turn her body slightly towards the viewer. (3.4)



Comparing the girl with the maid pouring milk in another painting by Vermeer around the same time period, it is very obvious that the girl in *Girl with a Pearl Earring* is wearing a special costume that is different from her traditional clothings.

Another interesting fact that can be pointed out from this painting is the gold turban covering the girl's hair. Turbans were a popular Middle Eastern attire pursued by Europeans in the late 17th century (influenced by the war against Turkey). Just like many others, Vermeer enjoyed this exotic clothings as well, as he dressed his model in the bright colored clothing. Along with many other European paintings of that time, *Girl with a Pearl Earring's* inclusion of turban served as a trend in which fanciful and colorful turkish turbans were a iconographic and decorative role (3.9)

# Evaluation of cultural context of Eugène Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*

*The source of genius is imagination alone, . . . the refinement of the senses that sees what others do not see, or sees them differently.*

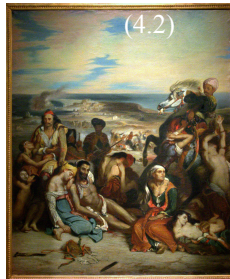
Romanticism, also known as the Romantic Era, first started out in Europe at the end of 18th century and embraced its peak approximately from 1800-1850. It was strongly impacted by the Enlightenment, and spurred by the idealism of French Revolution. Romanticism was characterized by its emphasis on senses and emotions, as well as its focus on individual imagination and the struggle for freedom, equality, and the advocacy of justice. Romanticist practitioners spread across all genres, literature, music, art, architecture, and also in education and social science. Artists in this movement began to explore different emotions and various states of moods. "Romanticism is precisely situated neither in choice of subject nor in exact truth, but in a way of feeling" said French poet Charles Baudelaire. As Romanticism was also closely tied with nationalism, it focused on landscapes, nature, traditions and most importantly the national identity and pride. (4.1)



Eugène Delacroix, one of the greatest Romantic painter, was born in Charenton-Saint-Maurice, France, 1798. As the youngest of the four children, Delacroix struggled with loss of family members in his early life.

His father passed away when he was seven, followed by the death of his brother at the age of nine, and her mother died when he was only sixteen. Encouraged by his uncle who was an artist, Delacroix started to study art formally at the age of eighteen, at a prestigious school in Paris. Later on, he debuted via a exhibition at the salon in 1822, which is not the usual way artist gain career recognition that time. (4.4)

For example, the painting on the right is one of Delacroix's iconic Romantic artwork, *The Massacre of Chios*, which expresses strong emotions and with a sense of human suffering of each character painted in the foreground.



Regarded as the leader of Romanticism, Delacroix devoted himself in the movement core of emotions, moods, and exoticism. Most of his paintings were depiction of dramatic scenes from the past and current events, such as his well-known artwork *Massacre at Chios*. His other works also expressed the embodiment of Romanticism--his animal paintings showed the love of all things wild and untamed. Eugène Delacroix's technique of using color played an important role in his artworks, which later became bolder and freer due to his visit to Morocco in 1832. (4.6)

Similar to most of Delacroix's work, his most famous work *Liberty Leading the People* is based on the true historical event as well. The painting was to commemorate the July Revolution (1830) in Paris, which overthrew the French Bourbon Monarch, Charles X. Stimulated by seeing "the open warfare in the street of Paris that followed protests of the restrictive ordinance that Charles X published on July 26, 1830." (Zelazko), Delacroix began to paint this masterpiece shortly. For the following three days July 27-29, (known as *Les Trois Glorieuses*) citizens from working -and middle-class set up barriers on the street and rebelled against the royal army. Delacroix was moved when he saw the French national flag raised on the Notre Dame by the rebelist, even though he was dependent on royal commissions.

As a patriotic artist, Delacroix eagerly wanted to honor the rebellion, even though he did not participate in it. He wrote to his brother "I have undertaken a modern subject, a barricade, and if I have won no victories for the nation, at least I will paint for it." (4.7)



# Comparing and Contrasting the Cultural Context of all three artworks

The three artworks I have chosen all share some similarities in some degree. One of them, which is the most obvious one, you will realize it when you look at the artworks together---All of them include a intense, uneasy or powerful gaze that the views can not easily avoid. Beside that, all of the main subject in the artworks are fairly young women. Nonetheless, the cultural background of each artwork/each context is drastically different from each other.

Researching on the artworks I chose has been an interesting journey acquiring more knowledge about art, about the artist and more importantly, about the world. I get to know different event or culture behind each artworks.

The major factor that allows the three artworks to have various cultural background is the different setting the art piece was created in. The Afghan girl was photographed by an American photographer in Afghanistan, the Girl with Pearl Earring was painted in the Netherlands during the Dutch Golden Age, and Liberty Leading the People was created in France regarding the French Revolution. (5.1)

The Afghan Girl comparing to the other two artworks, is a rather modern one. It was created with modern technology that didn't even exist when the Girl with Pearl Earring and Liberty Leading the People were created. Digital cameras were not invented until 1975 and Steve McCurry shot the iconic portrait in 1985 when digital cameras gradually became popular. Interestingly, unlike the other two artists depicting subject of their own culture, McCurry photographed a girl from a foreign culture to him. (5.2)

As a professional photographer, McCurry traveled around the world to record the life and war happening across the globe. Unlike other war time photos captured the horrible and terror of war through dramatic bloody scenes, the Afghan Girl portrays the fear and horror through the expression of the eyes of the girl. (5.3)



Similar to the Afghan Girl, Delacroix's Liberty Leading the People is also based on a specific war, which is the July Revolution. Instead of seeing horror in the leading woman's eyes, we see hope, courage and the people's faith of liberty. McCurry is trying to show people the destructiveness and cruelty of war, on the other hand, Delacroix's painting is like a power, a force that encourage people to fight, rebel for the future they are hoping for. Delacroix made this iconic artwork suggesting that everyone can stand out to rebel and everyone can be a revolutionary. Even though these two artworks record two drastically different time periods, cultural backgrounds, and the idea they try to bring forwards to the audience varied as well; both of them successfully express the dramatic feeling and engage the viewers to think deeper about the issue buried behind the flawless arts. (5.5)



Unlike the other two artworks which reflect about the cruelty of war or the rebellious courage of the people, Girl with Pearl Earrings is a lot calmer and closer relates to the ordinary, everyday life of people. Johannes Vermeer created this "Mona Lisa of the North" during the postwar period when Netherlands prospered from the victory known as the Dutch Golden Age. Girl with Pearl Earrings has a much more peaceful cultural and historical background comparing to the other two. Therefore, we can clearly, easily feel the different emotions between these three artworks, as well as the various ideas the artists are trying to express. (5.7)

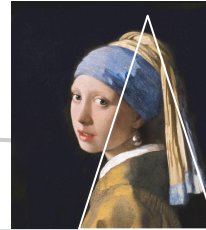


The lion in the picture portrays the map of Netherlands, which implies the strong power of the Dutch during the Golden Age.

# Formal Analysis through **Rules of Composition** (Composition, Contrast and the Golden Triangle Rule)

**Composition:** Composition is the placement or the arrangement of objects or elements in a piece of artwork. It is often the most overlooked elements of art, however, if you mess up the composition of your artwork, your painting will be a failure too. (6.1)

Both of the Afghan girl and the Girl with a Pearl Earrings utilized the Golden Triangle Rule. The girl in both artworks are portrayed in similar position. By using the triangular composition in artworks, both of the artists successfully created more attractive portraits with somewhat more proportional and attractive faces. (6.2)



Similar to the Afghan Girl, Johannes Vermeer also used the rule of simplicity to create the solemnity of the **Girl with a Pearl Earrings**. The simple **monochromatic** dark background allows the spectator to focus on face of the vivid young girl in the center of the painting. The darkness in the background also creates strong contrast to the girl's face, the emotions she is subtly expressing and the colour of her clothes. (6.6)

Staring at the Afghan Girl, her watery big eyes and her orangish red hijab really stands out from the picture. This is because Steve McCurry used the rules of simplification in his artwork. In photography, when shooting a portrait, a photographer can achieve the goal of simplicity by using a wider aperture to create the blurring effect of the background and emphasis the main object. Beside the use of simplicity, McCurry also used the rule of contrast. He captured a strong contrast between the pine green backgrounds and the rust orange of the girl's hijab. It draws the viewer's attention to the girl in the portrait. (6.3)

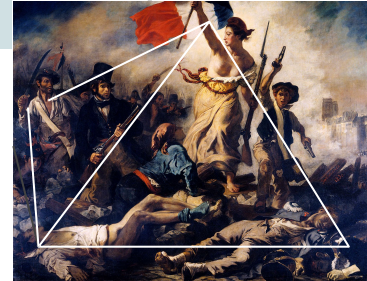


**The Golden Triangle Rule** in art: Triangles in art is one of the compositions artists often use when creating their masterpieces. Painting or placing the object in a relatively triangular shape, allows the artists to produce works with more aesthetic composition and makes the works more appealing. (6.4)

**Simplification:** Simplicity of an artwork can reduce clutter and allow the viewers to focus on the main subject of the artwork. It is often done by limiting the color palette of the artwork or providing a monochrom background. (6.5)

The most pronounced line on the triangle describes the gesture of the girl, it runs from the shadow of the girl's temple down through to her left shoulder. The vertical axis of the painting, that serves as an visual anchor, begins at the highest point of the turban and runs directly through the pearl earring down along the vertical division of dark and illuminated sides of the red robe.

Instead of using the triangle structure, Delacroix included a pyramid techniques in this artwork. This pyramid acts as a guideline to allow audiences focus on the main object of the painting--liberty. By putting the liberty (the French Flag) at the peak of the triangle, the artist create a sense of order among the chaotic background. The woman standing on the dead bodies leading the followers forward structures the balance of the busy painting.



Another technique Vermeer used was the rule of contrast. The light carolina blue and daffodil yellow on the girl's turban creates a mild contrast while the ink black background has a sharp contrast with the shades of yellow; which helps the girl stand out from the background. (6.7)

The usage of rule of Simplicity is not as obvious as the other two paintings, however, it still utilize this rule pretty well. The foggy white background allows the crowds in the front stand out; also, with the contrast between the fluffy, misty smoke and the smooth, silky texture of the woman in yellow, the entire painting looks more vivid and dramatic.(6.8)

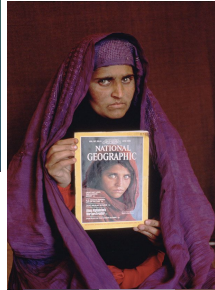


# Formal Analysis through Elements of Art (Color and Light)

"The craving for color is a natural necessity just as for water and fire. Color is a raw material indispensable to life. At every era of his existence and his history, the human being has associated colour with his joys, his actions and his pleasures." -**Fernand Leger**, "On Monumentality and Color", 1943 (7.1)

Most of McCurry's artworks are really rich in colors and often contains vivid contrast among the colors. In the Afghan Girl, the girl is wearing a mahogany red hijab and she is in front of a sea green background which creates a strong contrast. These two colors make the portrait more attractive and produce a strong sense of exotic charm.

## Secondary colors



**dull colors**  
Dull colors create a sense of age, lifeless, and conservative which are just the words to describe the grown Gula.

Many scholars argued that Vermeer must have used a mirror, or a camera obscura to produce his works; because of his well-composed, proportional perspectives of interior space and objects, also his unbelievable skills at using light in his artworks. (7.2)

**Color:** Color is created when light sheds on the object and reflects into the eyes. Colors can be altered by three different factors: hue, value and intensity. Hue is the color it itself, the different qualities of each color distinguish each other; such as red, blue and yellow. Value is the brightness of the color, creates the light and dark shades of colors. Intensity of color is also referred as saturation. In other words, it is the purity of a color. Primary colors are considered the purest among the other colors.

## Primary colors



Primary colors such as blue and yellow here are often associated with energy, serenity and inspiration. Blue especially fits the girl's mystical identity.

Johannes Vermeer is known as the master of color and light. Like other Dutch artists in the 17th century, Vermeer has limited access to the variety of pigments. Since colors at that time are often in shortage or too expensive and precise to afford. However, Vermeer still managed to distinguished the darker shades from lighter ones with a limited palette ( around only 20 pigments surprisingly). He used different shades of yellow and blue on the girl's clothes and turban which makes the main subject look more vivid. Moreover, he focused on the tiniest detail on the painting--the pale pink, darker red shades and the white highlight on the lips make them look fleshy and moist. He also used his skills on light to create the different dimension of the face and the shininess of the earring.

Similar to Vermeer's Girl with Pearl Earrings, Delacroix also used many blues and yellows in Liberty Leading the People. The woman in yellow dress really stands out from the dark background of the crowds and the flexan yellowish white and grey smoke. Besides that, the scrolling red edge of the french flag also catches the viewer's attention. Red symbolize blood and brotherhood, reminding the people to get together and fight for their country's future. The color of clothing also varies between the characters in the painting, which was important to emphasize that all classes and creeds combined in this revolution to achieve a common goal. (7.3)

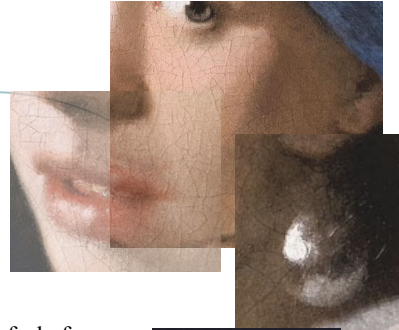


Compared to the pictured taken when Gula was younger, the latter seemed a lot duller and her eyes are lifeless. The color scheme of the photos are drastically different as well. The dark colors also make her appear older and more refined whereas the red burqa in the first picture reminds the viewer that Gula is in fact still a child. The contrast between the before and after photos is so striking, not only because of the vast difference in appearance after such a short period, but also because we were rooting for her future.

The color red plays a crucial role in both the Afghan Girl and Liberty Leading the People. The red robe of the girl shows the cultural aspect of Afghanistan, as it is one of most common color. Moreover, the bright red color plays an important role in terms of reflecting the girl's age (vitality), as compared to the similar picture of her taken by McCurry 20 years later. Respectively, the outstanding red stripe on the flag in Liberty Leading the People plays a crucial role as well. (as I explained in the other section later on). All of these three artworks I chose can prove that color is one of the most important aspects in any artworks. Color adds on more emotion, more dramatic effect and also creates depth and values to the artworks.

# Formal Analysis through Elements of Art (Shape/texture/form)

With the technology of digital cameras, people are able to capture objects in great details; from the tiniest piece of hair even to reflection in the eyes. In the Afghan Girl, we are able to see detail of the skin and texture of her clothes very well. If you look closer or zoom in on the picture, the freckles on the cheek and wrinkles on the face can be easily seen, and the folds of her dry lip, the tiny pores or even the pieces of eyelashes. And the rough texture of her clothes looks so vivid with the shabby holes exposed in the composition. We can see every strings that weaved the clothes together.



**Texture:** the look or feel of a surface. Just like form, texture can be real or implied. Implied texture are those we can only see but can't feel. It is the illusion of a texture as created through drawing techniques or photography.

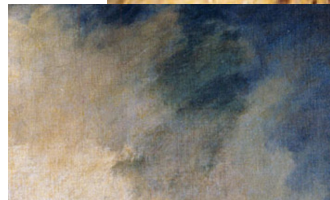


Vermeer is famous for using brush strokes and lighting to create different textures in his artworks. In his Girl with Pearl Earrings, there is no define, thin outline, instead, Vermeer managed to reach the same realistic effect by using light and exquisite blending techniques. He created this smooth and soft texture of a young girl's cheek. Her cheek seems so vivid and it looks almost translucent. Most importantly, the glittering, shining earring catches the viewer's attention immediately when they stare at the artwork. Though, many people doubt that whether the earring is actually pearl or not, Vermeer used his fabulous rendering technique to make the earring seems like pearl. With the highlight just at the right place, the earring looks like its shining on the girl's ear.

With Vermeer's blending techniques, and his broad vigorous brushstrokes clearly, vividly depicted/defined the heavy folds of what would appear to be a cape or a loose-fitting garment of rustic cut made of coarse fabric. Similarly, Delacroix made each folds of the woman's dress so realistic and vivid with his unique styles.

Various physical textures could be seen in Delacroix's Liberty Leading the People. Starting from the background, Delacroix created this soft, fluffy, fading smoke in the background. He used long and large, continuous strokes, as well as small, separated ones. Focusing on the half-naked woman in yellow dress, the every folds on her dress are so detailed and they all look so real. The yellow cloth of the dress seems soft and thin, swaying as the woman marched ahead. With the extreme contrast between the highlight on the gunstock and the wooden surface of gun, the metal part of the gun looks shiny, cold, and implies the cruelty of war.

Form is a tool that an artist uses to compose a work of art, which include line, shape, value, color, texture, and space. In paintings, form is conveyed through the use of light and shadow, and the rendering of color and value. In Liberty Leading the People, part of the woman's body in the center is highlighted where the light hit directed; and there is the other part where it is the core shadow which the light does not hit. With the light and shadow, it creates the illusion of three dimensional which makes the women looks realistic.





# Formal analysis through principle of art unity/harmony/movement

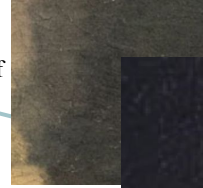
Steve McCurry's Afghan girl catches people's attention with its contrastive green and red color. Even with the drastic difference in color, the portrait still manage to maintain harmony. The reason is that green holes on the girl's clothes assimilates with the color of the background. Even though they are not the same shades of green, they are close to each other on the color wheel, which creates the harmonious feeling of this portrait.

The smoke in the background, with it fading from thick to in, creates the effect that it gradually moving as well. These all contrast with the static body in the front, which help maintain the unity in this busy, chaotic scene.



Unity is accomplished in both of the paintings through the specific use of color and texture. The contrasting colors and the smooth uniform texture both help create the sense of unity.

**Harmony:** The coherence of a work of art. Achieving harmony involves the use of similar and compatible elements of design to achieve a feeling of coherence. Harmony is also a way to accent similarities in the artwork by creating repeating shapes or harmonious colors. (9.1)



Vermeer used both color and uniform texture of brush strokes to create the sense of harmony in his artwork. If you look closer to the painting, you can find a strip of fading yellow shade contouring the girl's head. The yellow glow echos with the tone on the girl's shirt, which produce harmony and is more pleasant for viewers to look at. It almost looks like holy-light glowing around her, which makes her figure more mysterious and divine. The dark area on her clothe does not just made up of random shades of black. It consists of yellow and maybe a tiny bit of blue in it, which results in a olive green-ish black. By adding the main color into the shadow, the artist accented the similarities in the painting and created harmony.

Even though the girl in Girl with Pearl Earring looks like she is standing still and staring at the viewers, the way her head is tilted over her shoulder implies that she was actually in the motion of turning around.

Delacroix's Liberty Leading the People showed consonance as well. The main subject--the woman in yellow dress could be seen as the crucial part of painting--its color stands out from the rest of the chaos. The artist combine some yellow pigments in the fog at the back, allowing the fog to resonate with the dress, which makes the white fog blend in with the scene, without looking too absurd. The curvy contour in the figures also stimulates each other, creating harmony. Moreover, with the natural folds of her dress, we can almost see her movements--running towards us. Along with the flag waving in the air, we can feel the wind blowing on the war field.

# Identification and Formal Analysis through the medium used



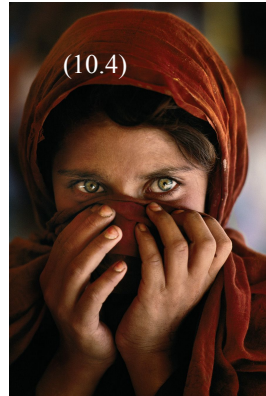
Both *Girl with Pearl Earrings* and *Liberty Leading the People* are oil paintings. Oil paintings are paintings in oil color which are pigments with a medium of drying oil as the binder. Oil painting can create different range of painting such as opaque, transparent, translucent; and different texture such as smooth skin, angular mountains or rough cloth. Even though oil painting was most well-known for the Renaissance period, it was first used for Buddhist paintings by Indian and Chinese painters in western Afghanistan sometime between the fifth and tenth centuries. Below is one of the earliest oil painting dated to around the 7th century A.D, found in Bamian, Afghanistan. (10.6)

Photography is way more complex than just capturing things with a camera. Fine Art Photography are photographs captured with creativity and the distinct style or intention of the artist. Unlike drawing, painting and the other medium of art, photography can record the feeling and situation of a specific moment. Photography can revivify the things happening when the photographer clicked the shutter, more like a replacement of oil painting in portraiture. With the emergence of digital cameras in 1975, more artists started to create artworks in the form of photography.

Photography has the stare of scientific objective truth to it. For example, on our passports, we don't have images of paintings of ourselves or even miniature paintings of ourselves. Instead, we have photographs of ourselves because there is the feel of objective truth to them. With photography, people can get and feel the more true, objectives representation of themselves. (10.3)

The use of oil paints during Vermeer's and Delacroix's time can be seen as photography in some ways, since camera was not yet invented. Vermeer captured the perfectness of the portrait with the exact proportions and colors, especially the clear skin and the smooth effect of the pearl, so it almost looks like a photograph. Delacroix, as well, depicted the the effect of smoke and skin color perfectly; which proves that the artists could document any moments in life using oil-painting, as only oil-color could creates the richness and tone of the artworks.

Afghanistan girl was taken by Steve McCurry on Kodachrome 64 color slide film, with a Nikon FM2 camera and Nikkor 105mm Ai-S F2.5 lens. At that time, people still need film rolls to take photos and then used darkroom to develop the films. McCurry captured two shots of the girl originally, one was chosen on the cover page of National Geographic. In the other shot, the girl had her hands covering her mouth and nose. (10.1)



Furthermore, photographs are obviously a better way to record the moments of life. A stilled moment can be captured with one simple click on the shutter, paintings in the other hand, required a lot more time and are less precise than photos. Take the war time as an example. With the flying bullets and uncertain dangers, photographs are definitely a better option since you can captured the horrified moment in just one or two seconds. (10.5)



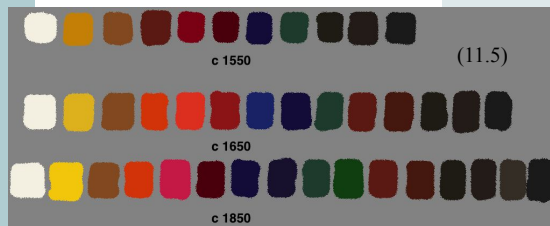
"What is important to my work is the individual picture. I photograph stories on assignment, and of course they have to be put together coherently. But what matters most is that each pictures stands on its own, with its own place and feeling." ---Steve McCurry (10.8)



# Formal Analysis through the paint used and how the pigments were made

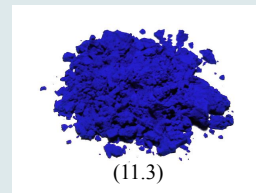
Paint is the most essential part of any painting. Because of paints, we can express different colors in our artworks. Paint first started over 30000 years ago as a means of writing down ideas and passing on information. Paint consist of three basic parts: the binder, the pigments and the solvent. Binders, also called resins are sort of the glue that binds everything in paints together. In earlier centuries, milk, olive oil, eggs, animal glue and wax were used as binders. Today, we use more complicated binders such as. Pigments is the crucial part that gives paint its color. Pigments are solid powdery substances that come for ground-up materials or chemicals. Compounds such as titanium dioxide and iron oxide are used as pigments. Titanium dioxide is a bright white chemical often found in sand and is used to make white paint. Iron oxide can be found in the rust and is used to make yellows, browns, oranges and reds.

Earlier forms of paint, however, were not created with such advanced pigments. Early humans used crushed rocks, plants, fruits and even blood to color their paint.



With this clear comparison above, we can clearly see the increasing variety of pigments as the time progressed and with the technology advanced. Comparing to two centuries earlier, the 1850 palette added emerald green, more saturation in yellow, red and blue, essentially the primary colors.

In the Golden Age (17th century, Netherland), pigments used were a lot difficult to made and to buy. (shown in the picture on the left). Even though the Dutch had raw materials used to make pigments from all over the world, Vermeer had a surprisingly limited color palette. As a master in color, he was able to achieve various range and depth of colors only using a few core pigments such as ultramarine blue, green earth, vermilion and lead white. Among these colors, ultramarine was most used by Vermeer and at the same time, the most expensive pigments artists were able to use during that time. Ultramarine blue was made from a rare, precious stone called lapis lazuli from Afghanistan, imported to Dutch via Venice. Because of its preciousness and difficulty to extract, ultramarine blue was sparingly used by artists. Vermeer, on the other hand, used it without restrictions, "almost unorthodox", mixing it into many other color in his artworks. (11.4)

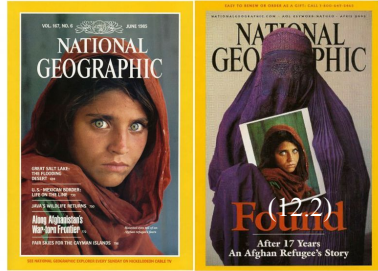


In 1830s France, the first manufactured pigments emerged which increased the pigment production. As Naples yellow, orpiment continued to be in used, chrome yellow became popular and became one of the dominant palette. In Delacroix's time, ultramarine blue pigments were no longer that expensive, as the much cheaper synthetic version appeared in 1828.

# Interpretation of Function and Purpose of all the three artworks



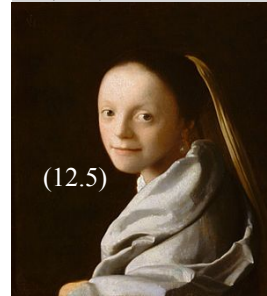
(12.1)



This photo is not only famous in Afghanistan, but also around the world. It is the most iconic National Geographic cover ever. With the income of the picture, Sharbat Gula is able to help a lot of widows and orphans.

The Afghan Girl published on the front page of the National Geographic Magazine, is one of the most iconic photos in history. Her eyes said so much and there was so much pain and horror that they conveyed. She is a symbol of refugees all over the world; she brings people's attentions to the conflict in the Middle East and represents the suffering of all children in war torn countries, and the negative effect of those struggles that has on the innocent people. The girl in the picture, Sharbat Gula, had no choice but to use a fake ID to escape to Pakistan from the war. "I am dejected. I have no other option but to leave." said Gula in an interview. Her "crime" alerted the Afghanistan government that their own people are fleeing Afghanistan for other countries. The Afghanistan government welcomed her back and provided her a house to live in, along with her, 370000 registered refugees returned from Pakistan and later on, tens of thousands of more people were sent back to Afghanistan. (12.3)

The function and purpose of the mysterious Girl with Pearl Earrings can be interpreted in many different ways based on various identity of the girl in the artwork. If the girl, as some people suggested, is Vermeer's daughter; this tronie could be showing Vermeer's love as a father. Nonetheless, if the girl is Vermeer's secret lover, this would be a way to express his affection and tenderness for the girl. Moreover, this artwork could be also praising the unadorned and simplicity of underclass people. Eulogizing the idea that one can look beautiful without the decoration of any luxury jewelry. Just like the girl in the painting, she is not wearing any luxuriant clothes or exaggerated jewelry, but she looks so angelic and pure. (12.4)



(12.5)

Even though the identity of the girl in Girl with a Pearl Earring is still a mystery, the value of this artwork is undoubtedly invaluable. As it give people in the modern society a peek into the ancient world, it allows us to understand what was the culture like in that time period as well as the social norm.



Painted during the French Revolution, Liberty leading the People, shows the chaotic battlefield of the war and crowds of people gathering together to rebel. In this painting, liberty is represented by the half-naked woman in yellow dress holding a tricolor flag as she is leading a group of man over the barricade. Delacroix fully express his patriotism through this painting, he remarked: "If I haven't fought for my country, at least I will paint for her." Look closely at the painting, you will see that the woman in the center is wearing a Phrygian cap. The cap has been a symbol of liberty since the Roman gave them to their newly freed slaves. (12.6)



This revolution is not for a group of people, but for everyone. A variety of people were depicted in the painting, woman, man, even young children. A little school boy is holding a gun and looking ready to fight.



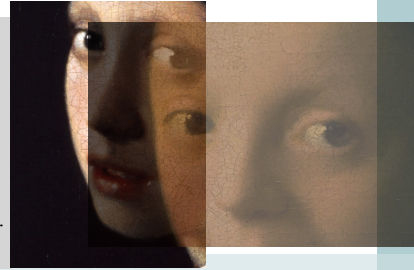
# Comparing and contrasting of Function and Purpose of all the three artworks

It is important to understand the function and purpose when studying a piece of art. At first glance, the shared characteristic between these three artworks is that all of their main subjects are women. However, there are more things in common and few aspects that make them unique and different from each other.

Both McCurry's Afghan girl and Vermeer's Girl with Pearl Earrings are strongly based on their distinct conservative culture or tradition. On the other hand, for Liberty Leading the People, Delacroix is trying to express his progressive romanticism idea through the painting.

The Afghan girl and the girl with pearl earring both look innocent, modest and conservative from their appearance. However, both of them have mysterious, complicated identification, in other words, more than one identities; which is kind of the exact opposite of their innocent features.

Steve McCurry's Afghan Girl portrayed a refugee girl who was Afghanistan, but fled to Pakistan because of the ongoing war. She is modestly dressed in traditional clothing, a red robe-like dress and a hijab over her head. As viewers, we are not able to have a clear understanding of the story behind the girl if we just stare at the picture. Even though she is Afghanistan, Sharbat has lived in Pakistan for most of her life. In order to survive with in Pakistan, Sharbat got a fake Pakistan ID, which made caused her being arrested and became a national cause for the Afghans and Afghanistan government. Luckily, she got released after two weeks and was sent back to Afghanistan. Sharbat said: "Afghanistan is only my birthplace, but Pakistan was my homeland and I always considered it as my own country, I am dejected. I have no other option but to leave."



As I wrote in the previous page, the girl in Vermeer's Girl with Pearl Earrings has mysterious identities as well, though she looks innocent and ordinary contrasting to her composite identity. Some people claim that the girl is the family's maid who is also Vermeer's love interest. (for example the famous novel Girl with Pearl Earrings by Tracy Chevalier). However, there are evidence proving that the girl is actually Vermeer's daughter, Maria Vermeer. And there are even doubts about whether Vermeer did actually painted the artwork himself, or it could be his daughter. The identity of the girl in Girl with Pearl Earrings still stays as a mystery, but the different stories and theories about her all makes the painting more interesting and well-known.

Unlike the two women figures in Afghan girl and Girl with Pearl Earrings, the woman figure in Delacroix's Liberty Leading the People is more radical and towards modern ideas. The woman, Marianne, in yellow dress in the center of the artwork is a personification of liberty. The revolutionaries around her are fighting to protect her. They are fighting with her she climbs the barricade, elevating herself, making herself more imposing. She is strong and leading the people just as the title said, in one hand holding a gun and on the other, the iconic flag. Some of the viewers are shocked by the earthiness of the semi naked woman. She is pictured muddled and showing underarm hair. This is considered a progressive ideal of womanhood at the time. Just as Delacroix stated: "I have painted a modern subject." Moreover, unlike the other two girls in the artworks, whose identities are somewhat complicated and mysterious, the identity of the woman in this painting is more straightforward and simple.

After all, one of the most important purpose of these historical artworks is to show audience nowadays the culture, society and value of the respective time periods. Therefore, artworks not only serve as a aesthetic function, but also a means of recording history.



# Interpretation of Function and Purpose of my selected artworks through emotions and ideas

“A work of art which did not begin in emotion is not art”---Paul Cezanne

If you have ever walked through an art museum, there is a moment we all experience, when a piece of art stops us in our tracks, something about that specific piece strikes you, whether a painting or a sculpture. For most people, it is not because of anything academic, it is because it triggered an emotional response. Art moves us, in fact, studies have shown that one of the main reasons that people buy art is because it touches them. Fine art is an expression of beauty which triggers emotional response. However, art doesn't always have to be beautiful in order to touch us, or prompt our feelings. It can be stoical, unpleasant, or even scary, the points is that it brings up emotions.

Artists create their art works because they are moved by something or they passionately want to express their feelings and ideas throughout their creation of art pieces, and communicate them with the viewers. Artists sometimes want to make a statement with their art and that could be either political, social, or maybe religious statement. The Egyptian cave paintings were serve as the home for the spirit or god they worship.



All of the three artworks I chose can trigger the viewers emotions and feelings. For example, we can feel the intense fear coming from the girl's eye, when we look at the Afghan Girl. In Liberty Leading the People, Delacroix is trying to express the patriotic feeling and euphalize the courage of those people in the French Revolution.



Art also reflects the history and people's life of the specific time period, we can look back to those ancient artworks and learn about the past. Art pieces can be tools to record the events back in the history when digital cameras did not exist yet. For example, historical art pieces can be very moving and represent something very meaningful such as a physical representation of one's religious belief. For instance, Delacroix's Liberty Leading the People reflects the dramatic scene of the revolution and successfully triggers the viewers emotion and also convey them with the idea that everyone can stand up to revolutionary.



Different people have various view towards one art piece, in other words, the viewer will definitely have different perspectives for the artwork with the artist. When I first looked at Vermeer's Girl with Pearl Earrings, I was shocked and triggered by the powerful gaze of the girl. I felt the complicated mix feeling buried within her gaze, it almost seemed like she was annoyed and sad at the same time. And her lips were slightly open, seemed like she was about to say something but got interrupted. This is only my interpretation which can be drastically different from what Vermeer originally tried to express. The artist created this intense, powerful gaze to allow viewers to think and imagine the story behind the painting.

Why is art important though? Despite the fact that art can convey, share emotions and teach us important lessons regarding our history. Art matters because it reaches a part of our brain that science leaves unmoved. Art has the power to alter perspectives in ways that mere facts can't. Visual art such as painting, drawing, sculpturing often are more effective and convincing ways when expressing ideas. Moreover, art is a way of communication between people from various cultural backgrounds and ages. Therefore, art is definitely one of the most influential and significant way to trigger other's feelings and convey specific ideas.

<https://my.meural.netgear.com/editorial/29>

# Inspirations and Connections from the selected artworks

15.1

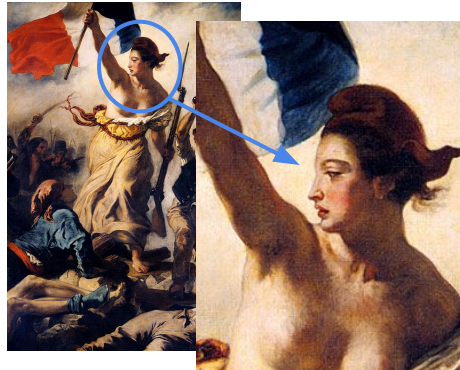
Throughout the course of IB visual art, I explored a wide range of different **art movements** and **artists**, and studied their diverse **artworks**. Among the three selected **artworks** for comparative study, **Johanne Vermeer's Girl with a Pearl Earring**, **Steve McCurry's Afghan Girl**, and **Eugène Delacroix's Liberty Leading the People**, **Girl with a Pearl Earring** stuck me the most.

Because of its sharp **contrast** of the background and the girl, as well as the girl's powerful gaze looking into your eyes when you stare at her. I was also intrigued by her exotic clothing. As I explored my own cultural backgrounds throughout the journey of IB art, I decided to create a **portrait** resembling **Girl with a Pearl Earrings** but reflecting, spreading the awareness of my own culture.

Additionally, inspired and influenced by **Eugène Delacroix's Liberty Leading the People**: the novel, unprecedented half naked woman figure leading a group of people to fight for freedom which explicitly shows the powerful, strong, independent side of women. As we can observe from her facial expression, her eyes are fixed on war behind her firmly, which clearly shows her determination upon leading the people towards a bright future.



The female character, Ruyi I chose was from a historical Chinese television series "Ruyi's Royal Love in the Palace". Her story was based on the tales/folktales about Emperor Qianlong and Hoifa-Nara, the Step Empress(Ruyi). Ruyi was a strong, smart, and rebellious women who was despise the traditional strict hierarchy of men and women in the society of Qing Dynasty.



Her characteristics resemble the female figure in Eugène Delacroix's Liberty Leading the People. Therefore, I had an idea to create a portrait that combines the influences from both Liberty Leading the People and Girl with a Pearl Earrings: having the similar "strong, independent" women figure and mimicking the oil-painting style and composition of Girl with a Pearl Earrings. (the quarter side pose). However, instead of using the traditional oil-paints, I went with a more modern, digital approach. I used an app on my ipad to recreate the portrait. One benefit of using digital media is that it provides you with a tremendous amount of colors and has different type of brushes available for you. I can create various medium with one single app: water-color, oil-painting, charcoal, color pencil or even markers. To reproduce the similar antique and sophisticated vibe of oil-painting, I used the oil-paint function on the app. Just like Girl with a Pearl Earrings, the girl's eyes were the most important feature of the painting, the gaze of my portrait was the crucial aspect as well. It was her eyes, the fierce and powerful gaze that reflects her characteristics and attracts the audience.



15.1





*All these pictures are mine*

## Inspirations and Connections from the selected artworks

In continue to explore with the theme of cultural exploration, I did a series of mixed-media portraits inspired from Vermeer's **Girl with a Pearl Earring** and his intention. Vermeer not only showcased the exotic culture of the girl, but also captured the innocent beauty of the girl, reminding people of beauty in everyday's life . In wanting to achieve similar effect, I decided to investigate the Tibetan culture.

Tibet has always been a special place in my heart, I have always been attracted to its distinct culture and its natural beauty. After doing some investigation on the pictures of Tibetan, I decided to do a series of three artworks about Tibetan women and their clothing; focusing specifically on age, child, young woman and old woman. Similar to **Girl with a Pearl Earring**, showing the beauty of a young girl, I wanted to express that beauty can exist in any age groups, it is not about age or about the clothes you wear. Beauty comes out naturally, from the bottom of the heart.



For the second portraits in the **Tibet Women Serie**, I decided to draw this old woman who has wrinkles all over her face which perfectly reflect how time has molded her. In the picture I found, she was wearing blue and red traditional Tibetan clothing, with a grass green hat on her head. Similar to the process of the previous Tibetan little girl, I first **sketched** the face of the old woman in great details as possible to make it look more realistic and dramatic.

Both the tibetian young girl and the old lady's clothes are created by pieces of printed papers or clay instead of heavy **pigments**, which was done intentionally as to convey the idea that beauty is not depend on the clothing and other materialized objects. One can be beautiful without any expensive or highly fashionable clothes if he or she has a noble heart and characteristics.

Moreover, this series of portraits all have **dark backgrounds**, just as Vermeer's **Girl with a Pearl Earring**, which allows the features to stand out.

# Inspirations and Connections from the selected artworks

*All these pictures are mine*

Additionally, I also did two **photography** pieces inspired by Steve McCurry and in connection with the main theme of this comparative study--women and time. Undoubtedly, the most iconic, and eye-catching characteristics of the **Afghan Girl** is her unique green eyes and their powerful stare. I believe that the eyes are the most important facial feature in a portrait, as they can convey different emotions to the audience. For example, the afghan girl's eyes not only express her fear and intimidation, but also reflects her innocence and purity. The two portraits I created captured the same girl and the distinct emotions communicated by the eyes, so as to reflect the feelings of teenager girls in today's society.



These two portraits are made into **black and white (monochrome)** because the strong contrast between the **light and dark** areas on the pictures can create a more intense atmosphere and better convey the emotions of the captured figure. Similar to McCurry's afghan girl, the girl in my portrait is staring directly at the camera as well. However, unlike the afghan girl's powerful yet intimidated stare, the girl I captured seems calmer and determined. Moreover, The dark hair almost look like the hijab of the afghan girl.



Similarly, this portrait on the left captured the girl's delightfulness and playfulness. (which is also conveyed by her eyes and the slightly tilted upwards mouth just like McCurry's **Afghan Girl**)

# Website and Articles Candidate #: jlz183

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