



Van Gogh, Vincent. Portrait of Joseph Roulin. 1889, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Ramirez, Mauricio. Frida's Watching. 2018, Marcus Southgate Cinema, Milwaukee.



Van Gogh, Vincent. The Potato Peeler. 1885, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

Comparative Study

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In this comparative study, I will investigate an artwork by midwestern artist, Mauricio Ramirez, and two other artworks by legendary painter Van Gogh. I shall compare all three paintings on their artistic components, like color, movement, emphasis and unity. Despite their contrast regarding technique and execution both artists demonstrate inspiration from their community. The difference yet similarities between these artists is what led me to compare them.

The Evaluation of Cultural Significance of Van Gogh



After many years of travelling across Europe, moving from job to job, Van Gogh finally decided to become an artist in the August of 1880. The start of this career began with him wanting to hone his skills as an artist, one of the things he did to hone his skills was by copying and studying the art of the French Artist, Jean-Francois Millet. Millet was known for his paintings that displayed French peasant life in a beautiful and respectful manner. Van Gogh coming from a peasant household, he was inspired by Millet's portrayal of peasant life, and so he decided to become a peasant painter as well.

Around 1884, Van Gogh travelled to Nuenen to visit his parents, Nuenen was a city in the Netherlands, perfect for a peasant painter. The village at the time was inhabited by farmers, and labourers.

These would become a great inspiration for Van Gogh's early art works, these early works are known as the peasant period. His early artworks, consisted of dark and low intensity colors similar to the style is the main difference between these two pieces. While Millet used soft colors to create smooth textures, Van Gogh's pieces demonstrate thick Swatches of paint overlaid on top or by each other.

Years later, Van Gogh would settle in the town of Arles, France. In where he began to rent a yellow house, his dream was to create in his words a "Studio of the South", a place in where he wanted many artists to escape to lead a revolution in art. This was an important period within Van Gogh's Life, previously Van Gogh had lived in Paris. There he encountered multiple artists and works of art that moved his style into the bright colors that he is known for today. The first few months were lonely for Van Gogh, seeking human connection he became friends with the Roulin family, using his new art style he would paint the Roulin Family, and scenes of the town. After the Around this time, Vincent lived in the yellow house with Paul Gauguin, together they would inspire one another and create pieces of art to enhance the upcoming



The Analysis of Formal Qualities of Van Gogh



Starting with Van Gogh's Postmodernist style, one of the first things one notices is the **colors**, in the piece. His use **Color** gave his pieces **unity**, as the bright colors come together to create a harmonic piece. Van Gogh also uses **color** to establish **contrast** within his pieces. As seen with his self portrait in the left we can see that the vibrant **intensity** of the yellow hat **contrast** greatly with the low **intensity** blues that are used for the jacket. These **contrasting** segments of the piece also bring **balance** as the distribution of color stops the piece from having some **colors** overpower other colors. The portrait also demonstrates the brushstrokes that Van Gogh also used, thin and short **lines** of **color** is seen to be the building blocks for every Van Gogh post impressionist piece. The shot **lines** are also used to create **Texture** as seen in the portrait, the rough **lines** observed within the straw hat and the jacket create a rougher texture than that of Van Gogh's face which the **lines** that form it are more intricately placed. The **lines** in the portrait form the inorganic **shapes** that are the figure.

In some of his "newer" art used an evolved version of the stylistic choice presented above. In this more recent take his strokes are longer and thicker. This makes the grainy composition of the previous painting irrelevant, as the thick strokes make his paintings blending give the piece a more solid approach. As when he tries to create highlight in his use of thick lines give a sense of a solid color, but upon closer inspection we can see it's just lines. This is technique is used to create more solid color within the piece.



Interpretation of Function and Purpose

Annotation of *Portrait of Joseph Roulin* (1889) by Van Gogh

The pattern present in the background not only helps to create unity within the piece as all the things going on with the background make the whole piece feel whole

The stark contrast between the portrait and the background creates the illusion of space as if Joseph were to be standing in front of a shrub.

The more solid colors of the jacket help to add texture to the piece as by looking at the picture you can make out the feeling of the fabric



The bright blue of the uniform and the light value of the face creates contrast against the background, and emphasises the importance of the portrait

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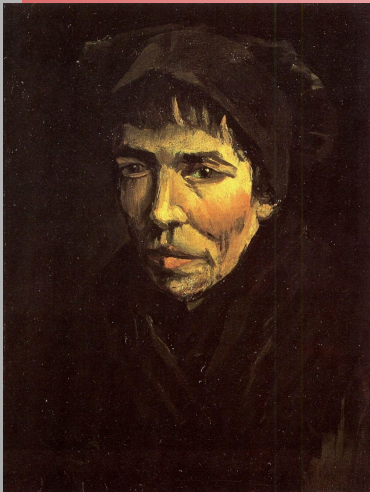
The piece has us focusing on the face which then we find ourselves going down the image creating movement

The Analysis of Formal Qualities of Van Gogh

But many aren't aware that Van Gogh had many other techniques in which he executed his artworks, as seen in his piece *The Potato Eaters*. This image gets rid of the vibrant colors that van gogh is known for and replaces them with dark colors. The pattern of organic lines is now gone and replaced with more smooth out streaks of color, with regular blending of the colors. He establishes emphasis in his paintings by adding intensity to certain objects by using colors of higher value. This contrast with the technicality previously mentioned as value is created by mimicking light hitting certain objects.



These series of paintings serve as a timeline of Van Gogh's artistic evolution as these were the types of paintings that he made before he got exposed to other artists and forms of art. This particular sets of paintings are drastically different than what he would later create. While traces of the pointillist technique are present here, as well as the way he incorporated highlight into his pieces. This only shows the importance of the people that were around Van Gogh, and to demonstrate that his art changed and grew alongside him



Interpretation of Function and Purpose

Annotation of *The Potato Peeler* (1885) by Van Gogh

Here we see an example of emphasis as the more smooth texture and high intensity of the face contrasts against the rough and patchy texture and low intensity of the background. But then that focus is transitioned to the hand of the figure as it also contrasts against the background. This transition adds movement to the piece as it makes the viewers eyes glide through the painting

The rough blending of the seen within the clothes and skin of the figure also creates contrast against the more patchy and matte hues of the background



This piece also incorporates contrasting values within the painting as the top left of the painting shows a spot of high intensity slowing transitioning into a darker value. This use of value does not only creates contrast but it actually increases the overall unity of the piece as the use of high value seems to create a light source within the picture as the painting depicts areas of high intensity hitting the aforementioned top left corner and the front of the figure which confirms the painting's use of value to create unity within the piece,

The Evaluation of Cultural Significance of Mauricio Ramirez



Mauricio Ramirez is an up and coming artist from the Midwest. Having been born and raised during the 90's he was inspired by the skater, rap, and graffiti culture that emerged during that era. It was through this culture that inspired Ramirez to do graffiti in his youth, and by doing graffiti he was able to learn, color theory and form. His artistic icons have also inspired various of his artworks, such as the famous Mexican muralist Diego Rivera, and Keith Haring that would inspire him to continue working with murals and graffiti. But his most important cultural influence is community. In his words, "Art work nowadays needs to connect with the people." This is represented in his creative process, as he describes his beginning of his artistic process as going into a barbershop and talking with the people within it. This influence of community shines through into his pieces as he tries his best to depict a community's culture within his artwork.

A significant part of his community is the hispanic community, being Hispanic himself prompts him to derive inspiration from the latino communities. This can be seen in his command of color that are present within Hispanic culture such as Día de Los Muertos. These strong ties to the hispanic community can also be seen through the presence of Hispanic icons such as Selena and Frida Kahlo.

An example of this cultural significance can be seen in one of his most recent works, titled *Heart & Soul*. This massive mural commissioned by a Milwaukee community organization showcases two girls from the Milwaukee area. This is supposed to represent the new generation that will come and move forward the Milwaukee community.



The Analysis of Formal Qualities of Mauricio Ramirez



Mauricio Ramirez is an artist who specializes in murals, fine art, and commercial art. I am going to be focusing on his murals. His murals are mostly made up of contemporary and abstract elements. For the creation of his murals he uses the technique known as fragmentation. His whole murals are based on this technique. As he uses a variety of organic and geometric **shapes** of **color** to create the form on his murals. The varying **colors** within his murals also create **contrast** as his **color** selection of cold and warm **colors** are used to separate various elements from one another. The use of lines can also be seen within his murals as the fine **lines** divide the different **shapes** of **color**

These varying **shapes** and **colors** create **unity** within the piece as they all come together to create one whole piece. **Texture** is also established through the size of these **shapes** as seen above, the more rough **texture** of the eagles wings are comprised of smaller **shapes** to create a rough **texture** compared to the smooth **texture** created by big **shapes** in the background. All of these elements would come together to create the murals. The colorful approach to fragmentism creates unity within the piece. All of these components are joining in harmony to create a piece that resonates with the people that are present within these communities.



Interpretation of Function and Purpose

Annotation of *Frida Kahlo*(2017) by Mauricio Ramirez

In this piece Frida takes the center stage as the main focus of the piece. She is entirely formed by organic shapes which create the lines of the figure. The piece's function is an opening piece for what was the Cine Latino festival that took place in Milwaukee this past summer. The purpose of the painting is to represent Mexican culture as its main purpose was to demonstrate the unheard side of Mexican heritage. As most to the average population, Mexican culture is mostly known for its beaches, Cinco de Mayo, and drugs. But the purpose of Frida's portrait is to tell the unheard side of Mexican American culture. As Mexican culture is more than just speaking Spanish and tacos, Mexican culture can be about: Mexican art and its movements, the Mexican music genres that are "Ranchera", "Banda" and "Mariachi", Mexican poetry, Mexican literature, Mexican cuisine, Mexican cinema. The image illustrates this by representing a Mexican icon who challenged change.



Comparing Portrait of Joseph Roulin & The Potato Peelers



- Both of these pieces were created when Van Gogh wanted to grow artistically, both of these tell the story of where Van Gogh found himself in his artistic journey.
- Both of the figures present in the pieces are placed within the middle of the art work, this leaves minimal movement through the position of the figure itself.
- Both of these pieces feature organic shapes and lines, that were used to create organic shapes and form found within these pieces.
- Contrast of value is clearly seen in both pictures, potato peelers used lighter values to establish that contrast, while Roulin used colors of varying value to create that contrast



Comparing Portrait of Joseph Roulin & Frida Kahlo



- Both Pieces establish emphasis on the centerpiece which is the figure, they establish this emphasis through vibrant color
- They use the same time of movement as we first find ourselves looking at the figures face witch then our gaze goes down to the other areas of the figure and eventually the background.
- The lighter values of the figures both contrast nicely against the darker values found in the background.
- Both pieces have the familiar concept of positive space as space

is behind the figure



Comparing The Potato Peelers & Frida Kahlo



- Likewise the Portrait Of Joseph Roulin, both of the pieces have little movement on the position of the figure itself but emphasis is made through the figure as it was placed at the center of the piece.
- Both pictures were meant to represent an aspect of life, while the potato eaters was meant to represent the life of french country life, Frida Kahlo was meant to represent latin culture
- Both pieces have a defined source of light, for The Potato Peeler light comes through the left illuminating the left side of the piece, while in Frida's Watching light seems to be emanating from frida herself giving her a radiant glow



Contrasting Portrait of Joseph Roulin & The Potato Peelers



- Potato peelers demonstrate a distinguishing use of color against Joseph Roulin. Potato peelers uses warmer colors, while Joseph Roulin uses cool colors.
- The potato peelers hues have lower values and intensity than the higher values of Roulin's colors, which have a higher intensity and value
- Potato Peelers implements some gradients of lights and darks within the piece, on the other hand Roulin contrast of colors is made through spots of differentiating solid colors.
- The use of the background is different between the two pieces. While the portrait of Joseph Roulin has a bright green background, The Potato peelers has a murky background that compliments the piece.



Contrasting Portrait of Joseph Roulin & Frida Kahlo



- The use of Frida Kahlo's geometric shapes is a complete opposite of Roulin's use of organic lines and shapes.
- The visual texture Roulin is contradictory to Frida's as roulin has softer textures compared against Frida kahlo's rougher texture.
- Whole shades of color are used and never mixed within Frida Kahlo. Meanwhile Joseph Roulin intertwines a variety of color.
- Frida's Watching is purpose was to commemorate hispanic communities and culture while The Portrait of Joseph Roulin was wanting to capture the essence of one of his only friends in the town of Arles.



Contrasting The Potato Peelers vs. Frida Kahlo



- Potato peelers implements a gradients of light to dark, while frida kahlo uses color through the sheer intensity of the colors used
- The figure found within Potato Peelers has softer edges and organic shapes while Frida has seemingly geometric shapes with straight edges
- The Potato Peelers is a demonstration of the working class in the town of Nuenen, while Frida's watching is a commemoration to hispanic communities and culture.

