



Comparative Study

Candice Breitz, Wangechi Mutu and Pablo Picasso

Amit Siso

****Citations throughout the comparative study will be labeled with a number, "Image #". If photo repeated more than once, the image number will remain the same throughout the whole study; bibliography is found on the last page.**

Background image: Hamar Tribeswoman, photography; source: http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/countries/ethiopia-photos/#/hamer-tribe-woman_8377_600x450.jpg

Introduction

My comparative study explores the unified theme of the mainstream representations of the black female body, through exploring three diverse works produced by three different artists : Untitled #3 from the Ghost Series by the white African artist Candice Breitz, Uterine Catarrh by the African artist Wangechi Mutu and Les Femmes d'Alger by Pablo Picasso, whom was greatly inspired by the primitivity of the African culture.

The aim of this comparative study is to communicate through the audience's emotion in the intention of evoking reactions. My art work has been conceptually, compositionally and technical inspired through Candice Brietz, Wangechi Mutu and Pablo Picasso. I particularly enjoy how these artist use the human figure to represent an 'ideal' image of humanity, the female gender, while incorporating a strong sense of color theory, abstracting and recomposing facial elements and through emphasizing certain elements by using color contrast and chiaroscuro. The use of collage, color theory and enlarging and minimizing facial traits techniques has inspired most of my composition.

I chose these three art works, because Im interested in the contrastive delineation of cultural identity in nowadays society through the scrutiny of the miscellaneous portrayal of the female figure.

Background image: Hamar Tribeswoman, photography; source: <http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/countries/ethiopia-photos/#/hamer-tribe-woman> 8377 600x450.jpg

Untitled #3

Candice Breitz

(1972)



Image 1: Ghost Series #3, Candice Breitz, 1994-6, Chromogenic Print

68,5cm x 101,5cm

source: <http://www.candicebreitz.net/>

- Vibrant
- cultural
- calm
- happy

Uterine Catarrh

Wangechi Mutu

(1972)



Image 2: Uterine Catarrh, Wangechi Mutu, 2004, mixed media on medical paper, 46x31cm
source: <http://wangechimutu.com/art/>

- unrealistic
- flat
- comedy
- vulgar
- exaggerated

Les Demoiselles d'Avignon

Pablo Picasso

(1881-1973)



Image 3: Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J.), Pablo Picasso, 1907, Oil painting on canvas, 96x92in
source: <http://www.pablocicasso.org/>

- chaotic
- exposed
- nude
- geometrical

Even though the artists were influenced from different cultural art periods, they all display the representation of an African female figure from their personal perspective. However, my interpretation of each composition, techniques and concept aspects varies greatly especially in terms of understanding their cultural identity.

Background information

Candice Breitz

(1972)

Contemporary white South African Artist, who is raised in Germany, was born in 1972 (1). Her primary works are videos and photography. Breitz uses popular images, found video footage and postcards of the African culture. Breitz “cuts, masks, abbreviates, disrupts, conceals” (3) to signal that something is missing, or has been taken away. Breitz explores the diverse perceptions of the African female body through overlapping their dark skin tone with a vibrant white color.

The Ghost Series, which was greatly inspired and influenced from South Africa's first fully democratic election in 1994 (2), provides an ironic and importantly controversial commentary on “post-apartheid South Africa, and utopian aspirations in the 'new' South Africa” (2). Through diverse strategies of aggressiveness and violence used in her images; erasing, splitting, tearing, deleting, and reconfiguring, Breitz's work provoke discomfort, embarrassment, and anxiety not only in the viewer's but truly in the artist herself (1).

“The idea was to remove certain elements and reconfigure what was left so as to create a new visual grammar through which previously invisible content might emerge from familiar images” (1).

Candice Breitz



Background image: Candice Breitz, photography, 2015; source: <http://citygallery.org.nz/exhibitions/candice-breitz>

Painting analysis

erased their skin color-
 "Tabula Rasa": historical process of ethnic cleansing

the constant movement all over the painting (red arrows) due to the different lines formed, may hint the idea of confusion and anger from the African culture about how society categorizes them

each figure is staring at a different direction
 this figure is staring at the audience: engages us

facial features and traditional jewelry of African culture is still present

blurry background: emphasizes on figures

flat → cubism?

the color white: symbolizes purity, innocent. contradicts their actual skin color

reminds of a skeleton and/or ghost

typical stereotype african tribeswomen doing domestic activity

Tipex: correction fluid on top of skin. may imply that she is trying to correct the view on the women's body

can be thought of as aggressive and violent behavior of erasing the original. provokes discomfort

thin outline of original skin is still present. contradicts the bright white color and highlights the presence of the white and the absence of the darker tone skin.

bare breasted in primitive ceremonial dress. demonstrates that they are African. the dress may symbolize the purity that is lost

bright, ethnic and religious colors of clothing- contradicts the purity and simplicity of the color white.

hand gesture suggests that the figure is unconfident? shy?



Image 4: Ghost Series #3, Candice Breitz, 1994-6, Chromogenic Print 68,5cm x 101,5cm source: <http://www.candicebreitz.net/>

Soft, circular lines that form the figures, contradict that strong, geometrical lines that build the traditional features of African Culture.

may suggest the contradiction that resigns with the "typical" African person vs the "real" African

the bare white bodies are the focal point. they strongly contradict the darker background which immediately attracts audience attention

KEY:

- Technique
- composition
- cultural context
- "Tabula Rasa"

This piece is one of several pieces that compose the series “Ghost Series”, produced by the African American Artist, Candice Breitz. The Ghost Series, Untitled #3, portrays three bare breasted, smiling African women, lined up in a row. These women are represented as tribeswomen due to the traditional, primitive jewelry and clothing as well as the facial features which signifies the African society: “bulb noses” (3). The bare bodies of the figures are overlapped with a monochrome white color, a ‘correction’ fluid called “Tipex”, an aggressive action as if Breitz is trying to correct or erase something, which provokes discomfort in the viewers. The monochromatic white color strongly contradicts the vibrant palate used to express the traditional African clothing and jewelry. The focal point of this piece is the bare bodies, which immediately attracts the viewers attention due to its strong contrast with the dark and warmer toned background, thus applying emphasis on the bodies rather on the background. The African women are touching one another, causing a coherent line from the left figure all the way to the one on the right, resulting in a soft flow and movement, which enables the viewers to fully examine the bodies and their cultural features associated with them: jewelry, nose, lips and clothing. Contrastingly, a harsh, strong and aggressive movement is present, caused by the sharp geometric shapes from the jewelry.



Image 5: Ghost Series #3, Candice Breitz, 1994-6, Chromogenic Print
68,5cm x 101,5cm
source: <http://www.candicebreitz.net/>

Untitled #3, explores the theme of the mainstream representation of the black female body, through the use of montage and imagery (1). In addition, it explores the ways in which racial and sexual identity had come to be pictured in south Africa (2). Breitz expresses these concepts through the symbolic choice of colors used in the piece.

To achieve such purpose, Breitz uses mixed media in her ghost series. Her pieces are composed of “National Geographic -style tourist postcards and glossy fashion magazines” (2), which she then over painted with correction fluid, to imply the concept. A flattened image plane is demonstrated, due to the overlapping of dark skin with white vivid color.

An analysis of

Untitled #3, Ghost Series

Candice Breitz



Image 6: Ghost Series #3, Candice Breitz, 1994-6, Chromogenic Print
68,5cm x 101,5cm
source: <http://www.candicebreitz.net/>

“The Ghost Series was precisely about the violence that can be performed by whiteness” (1). Candice Breitz

Background information

Wangechi Mutu

[1972]

One of the most important contemporary African artists, Wangechi Mutu, originally from Kenya, is famous for her collages, which are created from layered images, magazine cutouts and painted objects, in the aim of producing a provocative juxtaposition of the female body (4). Mutu's work deal with the issue of women in society therefore, through her art she challenges and questions the worldwide depiction of the typical female form through creating a 'new kind of woman' (5).

The 'Histology of the Different Classes of Uterine Tumour' series, which was produced in 2004, is a series of absurdist collages from magazine images constructed on medical paper, creating a new image of a woman, almost identified as monstrousness while maintaining a curious appeal (6). Mutu aims to trap her viewers with layers of visual metaphors, forcing them to "question assumptions about race, gender, geography, history and beauty" (4).

*"Females carry the marks, language and nuances of their culture more than the male. Anything that is desired or despised is always placed on the female body" (4)
Wangechi Mutu*

Sources: (4) Artist, (5) Web., (6) Wangechi

Background image: Wangechi Mutu, photography, 2014; source: <http://insidethephoenix.com/#!/podcast-episodes/itp-69-wangechi-mutu/>



Painting Analysis

“Uterine Catarrh”: disease of the female womb

medical paper: illness and infertility

may suggests what society thought about african people- sick/ill

microscopic feature

futuristic/ alien like feature

balances the composition of the image: viewers audience attracted to that element

is it significant? how?

trying to suggest how african female should be depicted in the future?

reminds of a sky with stars

looking at us: engages us

disproportionate placement of the eye

causes dimension

different perspective

influenced by the cubism movement?

smallest feature compared to the rest

female or male?

KEY

Composition —

concept/ context —

technical —

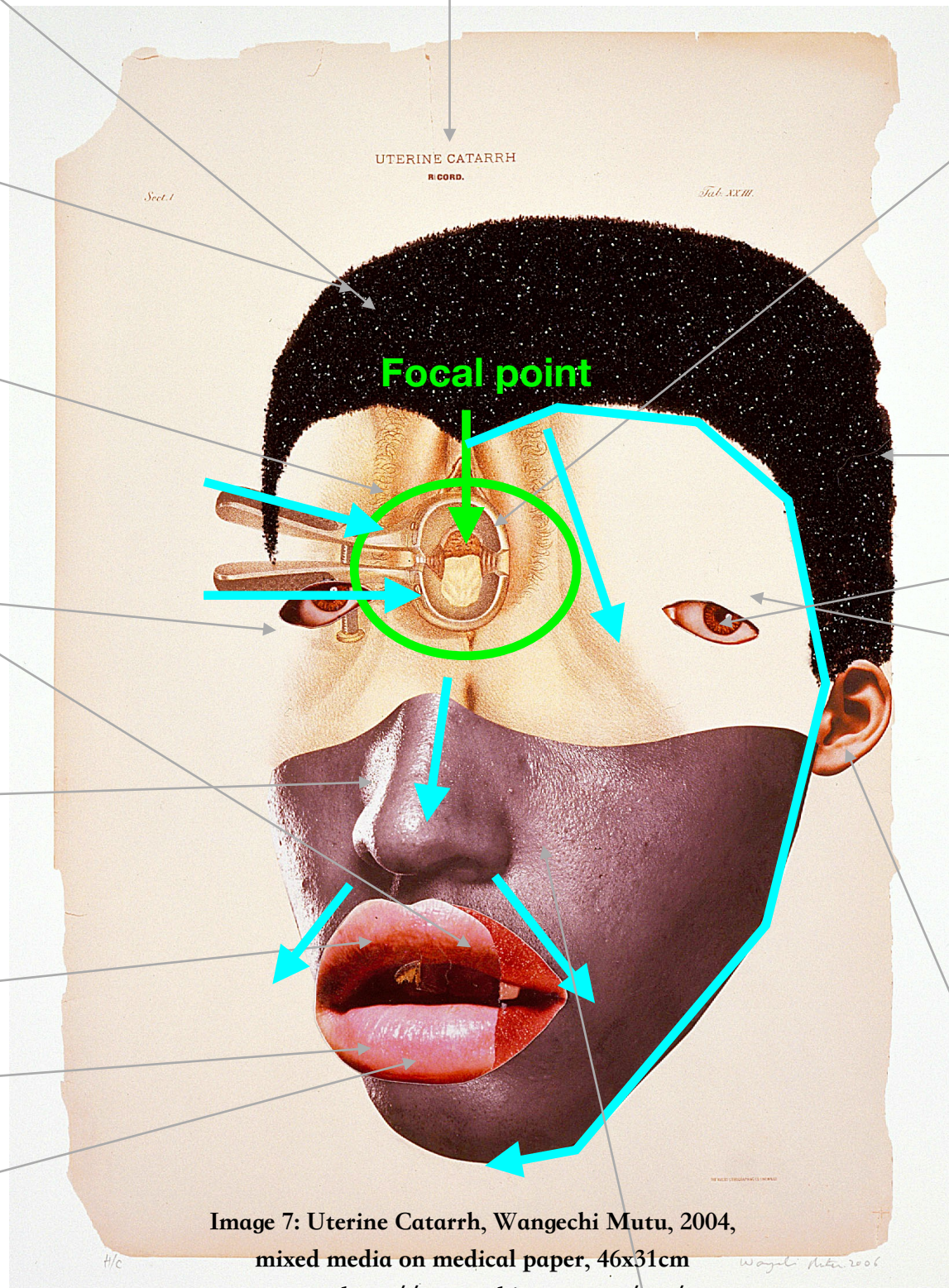


Image 7: Uterine Catarrh, Wangechi Mutu, 2004, mixed media on medical paper, 46x31cm source: <http://wangechimutu.com/art/>

cubist characteristic

image is really flat

collage located off-center of paper: creates a more interesting perspective for the viewers

Glitter & gold color suggests richness which contradict the stereotypical depiction of Africans

mottled surface of glitter: different planet: futuristic?

layering different materials to produce a new “female”

the use of light to portray African features

oversized and lighter lips contrasts the darker face: emphasizes and highlights features

red: feminine

red color: suggests blood: menstrual cycle: fertility: relates to the medical paper

“Uterine Catarrh”: disease of the female womb

the strong contrast between the colors brings significant to the idea of black female

the movement follows the focal point and down the central of the face, going through all the facial features of Africans: implies emphasis

Focal point

The painting “Uterine Catarrh” is a part of a series called “Histology of the Different Classes of Uterine Tumour” created by the well known African Artist Wangechi Mutu (4). In “Uterine Catarrh”, Mutu collages a head of a black woman on found medical paper. The woman’s head is depicted from a three-quarter profile perspective and can be interpreted as a traditional African masks, which heavily distorts facial features. Her head floats without a body, recalling an isolated face characteristic of a masks. A medical tool, which fills a void in the woman head, clamps a localized section of the drawing; the circular portion of the clamp becomes a third eye on the face: Third eye is a symbol of wisdom, which immediately captures the viewers attention, resulting in this feature being the focal point. Another interpretation is presented, as the medical clamp can be said to be placed upon the women sexual organ, portraying the idea that the female sex organ is demonstrated as a tool in society nowadays (7). Also, Mutu disproportionately locates the females eye, enlarges the lips and minimizes the size of the ear, highlighting certain traits, as well as creating a feeling of an unrealistic female. Due to the combination of “animal bodies”, “organisms” and “women and men’s bodies” a “female-like face” is “meshed up into shapes” allowing the formation of a female character (6).

Mutu has diverse ideas and purposes throughout her work, but the main and consistent theme that is present through all her works is the “way women’s bodies are written upon and women’s bodies are talked about and women’s bodies are depicted” (4), she also added “I try to introduce something celebratory and interesting about the body, that the body is important” (4) as she stated in an interview with CNN. Mutu believes that the idea of the female body being portrayed as a tool was “something that was introduced into Kenya and Africa” (7) as that is what “has made us” and the image/ stereotype that is labeled towards Africans.

Wangechi Mutu uses synthetic cubist techniques such as taking newspaper, objects and other materials which she deconstructed and reassembled in an abstracted form, allowing the depiction of objects from several perceptions and points of view (5). Mutu illustrated such techniques through the disproportionate placement of the eyes in an asymmetrical form. In addition, she used vivid colors - which is another characteristic of cubism- such as bright red color in the lips and shiny glittery gold as a mask underneath the eyes, which helps to place importance and to highlight the African features that she has presented in the image. As well as, through the color contrast Mutu demonstrates the importance of the dark toned face. Mutu created these collages on a medical paper, which implies illness, infertility and death, which is supported by the title of the piece, “Uterine Catarrh”, which translates into “chronic womb disease” (5). In addition, the piece is seen as flat, another cubism technique that she has adapted.

Sources: (4) Artist, (5) Web., (6) Wangechi, (7) A look at Wangechi

An analysis of

Uterine Catarrh

Wangechi Mutu



Image 8: Uterine Catarrh, Wangechi Mutu, 2004, mixed media on medical paper, 46x31cm
source: <http://wangechimutu.com/art/>

“... Part of my challenge...is to envision, not so much blackness as a race, but the existence of African elements in culture in the future and how is that possible” (4).

Background information

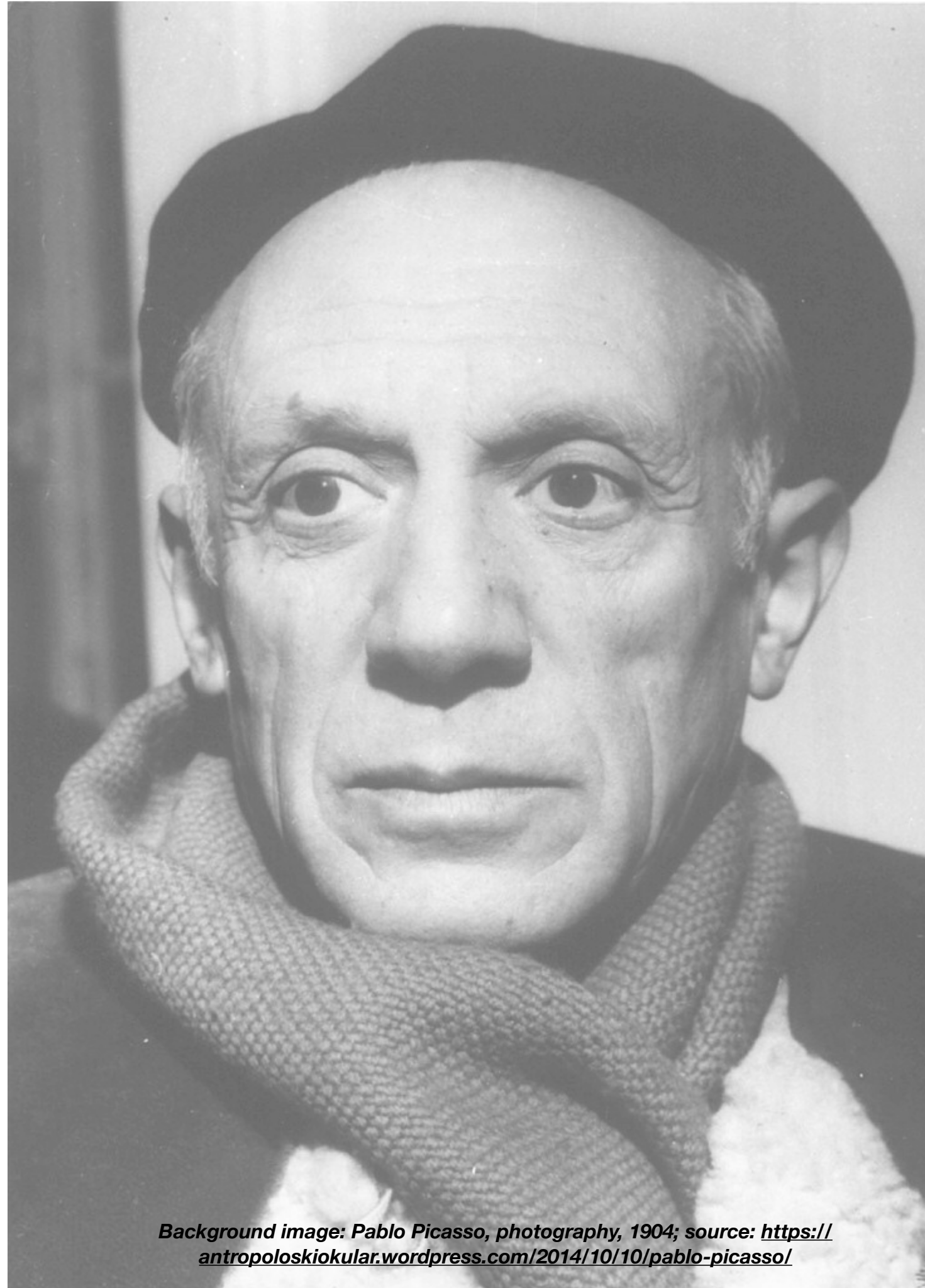
Pablo Picasso

[1881-1973]

Pablo Picasso, one of the greatest, dominant and most influential artist of the 20th century, discovered a world of paintings, prints, drawings, sculptures and ceramics. Picasso, is known for his wide achievements of styles that he helped develop and explore. Picasso has impacted the development of modern and contemporary art (Les). His paintings styles explore Realism, Abstraction, Primitivism, Cubism, Surrealism and Expressionism (Les).

Even though Picasso has never been to Africa, he always had a passion for African art (Les). Throughout the course of his life he constructed a unique collection of African sculptures and masks, which were inspired from the African cultures- thus, contracting his perspective of African features. "Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)", a disruptive depiction of five nude prostitutes, abstracted and distorted with sharp geometric features and stark blotches of colors such as blues, greens and grays. The painting demonstrates influence from his African time, as the prostitutes are wearing an African masks. Today, "Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)" is considered the inspiration of Cubism due to the use of geometrical shapes and the flatness of the image (Les).

the masks were not simply sculptures like any other. not at all. they were magic objects...they were weapons to helps people stop being ruled by spirits, to free themselves. tools. if we give a form to these spirits, we become free (Les).



Painting Analysis:

GAZING: invites viewers to be in a room with prostitutes

staring at "us": engages viewers in the image

contrast between African face and Iberian face

the women represent prostitutes

layered thick amounts of paint: impasto

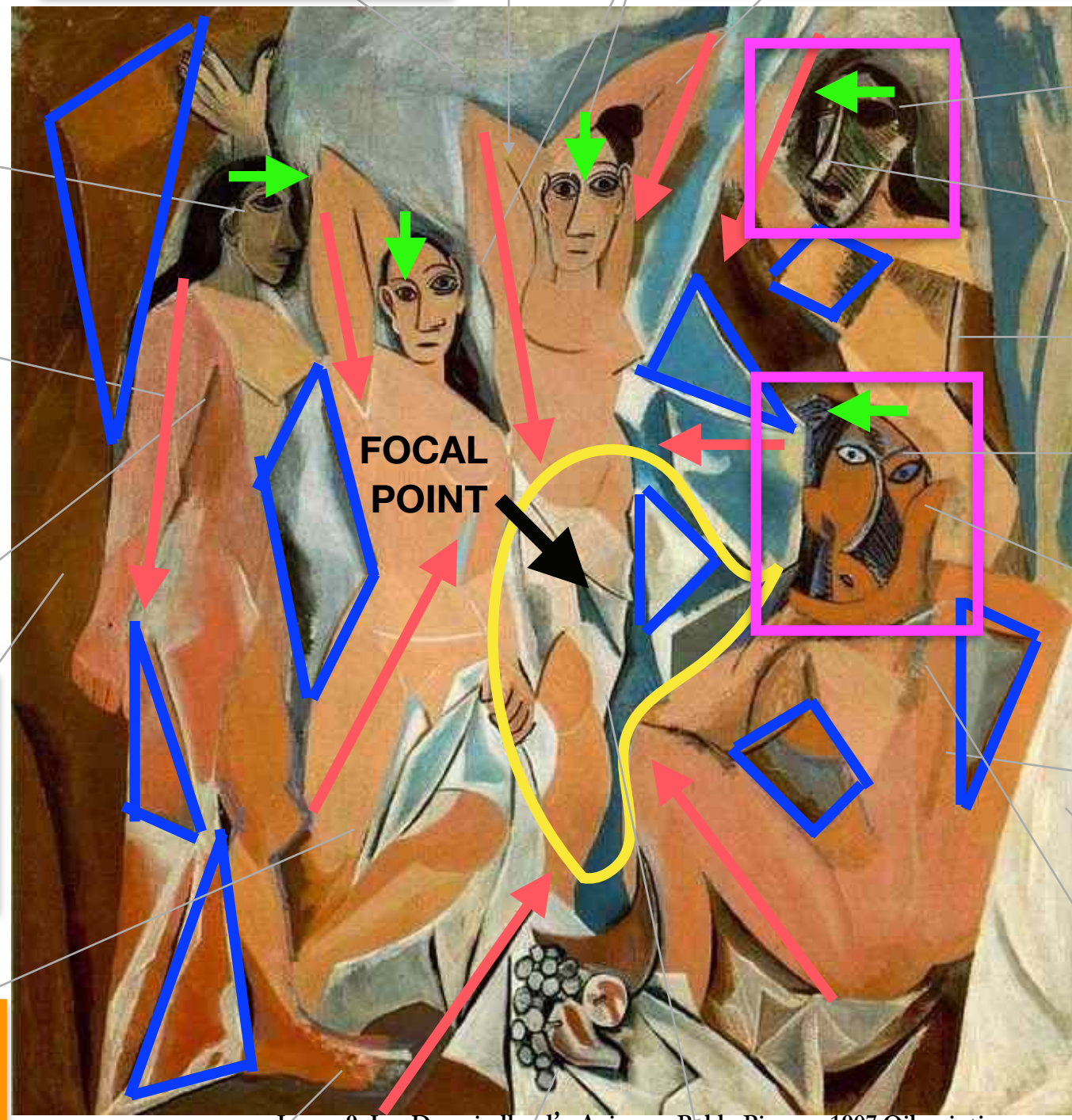
erotic poses: arms above head to show of their femininity (breast)

most human like figure

glimpses of different values of blue: suggests sky

viewers become customers

raises the question of who is in control?



each figure is starring at a different direction, causes continuous motion and movement for the viewers eyes

strong geometric shapes, lines and marks creates an aggressive and violent portrait of women

the geometrical shapes may suggests the idea of the diverse perceptions on women: different "angles"

buff women: unfeminine characteristics

the use of geometrical shapes suggests his use of cubist techniques

different perspective approach-cubism

from a different angle, this figure is laying down

darker palate, "brown", used on the left side compared to the right

leaning on the wrong leg?

relates to the renaissance tradition of nude ladies

angular distortion of figure enhances the rough/ strong atmosphere

the calm still life fruit contrasts with the intensity of the decomposed women and background

central figure is embedded to background depicts the importance of the harsh atmosphere (through the shapes)

enables depth

dark eyes: suggests African skin color?

African facial features: elongates nose: influenced by primitive African masks

the thick outline enhances the flatness of the painting

eyes are disproportionate: cubist characteristics: portrays different perspective

primitive art: the use of African Mask : Picasso's influence from his African period

Nudes vs Naked?

cooler palate is used on the right side

human spine? head twisted 360 degrees?

is Picasso suggesting Africans are animals?

Image 9: Les Femmes d' Avignon, Pablo Picasso, 1907, Oil painting on canvas, 96x92in, source: <http://www.pablocicasso.org/>



Image 10: Les Femmes d' Avignon, Pablo Picasso, 1907, Oil painting on canvas, 96x92in, source: <http://www.pablocicasso.org/>

KEY	
cultural context	— (orange line)
composition	— (blue line)
technique	— (green line)

The painting displays five nude ladies who do not seem very welcoming or attractive, but in fact appear very aggressive and unfeminine. This is due to the odd, angular, geometric and disjointed depiction of the female body through Picasso's cubist style. Two of the women appear to have mask like faces, suggesting an African tribal mask, while the other two middle figures portray a more feminine and human like figure. At the bottom of the painting, a table is portrayed on which sits a collection of fruits, which appear more of a still-life painting, which contradicts his strong use of geometrical shapes and lines. Embedded to and surrounding the figures is a curtain, constructed from smoother brush strokes, which is one of the only ways in which Picasso depicted depth. Picasso used a diverse range of colors from the color wheel: from harsh, strong, dark and warm tone color to cool, soft tans of olives tone and a variety values of blues. The middle figures are constructed from a warm monochromatic pink/cinnamon color, which hints human like skin.

The purpose of this painting is to challenge the idealized representations of female beauty (9), through the use of the distorted and geometrical shapes which forms a body.

The flat painting has been produced with oil paint on a canvas surface (10). The harsh movement illustrated in the piece is achieved through the geometrical shapes and lines that Picasso has used to construct the female figures. The strong shapes result in a harsh and chaotic movement from one side of the painting to the other. The use of African and Iberian masks was influenced from the primitive art of these cultures (10), with emphasis on the African culture which heavily impacted and influenced Picasso's work- Picasso has created a series of African masks (10). In the "Les Demoiselles d' Avignon", the faces possess features that owe to the African culture such as the elongated nose (8). Picasso contradicted two opposite cultural views of an idealized representation of the female beauty, which raises the questions of "what is the idealized beauty and what aspects and features differs and changes within different cultures?". Also, the idea of contrasting two different cultures in one image demonstrates cultural confrontations. The use of impasto to construct the black bulbs over the eyes in addition to the strong geometrical shapes, adds a sense of violence and disruptive feeling.

An analysis of

Les Demoiselles d' Avignon

Pablo Picasso

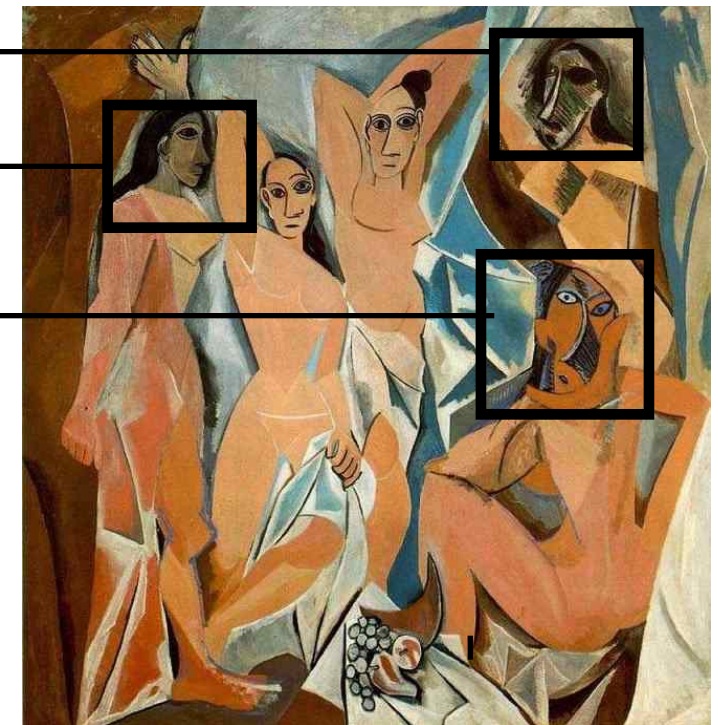
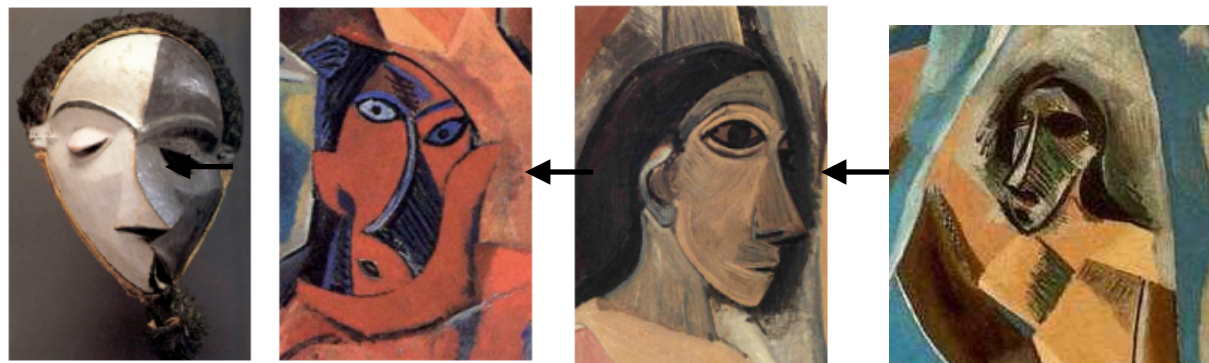


Image 11: Les Demoiselles d' Avignon, Pablo Picasso, 1907, Oil painting on canvas, 96x92in, source: <http://www.pablocicasso.org/>



Mask
Pende, Democratic Republic of Congo
Royal Museum for Central Africa Tervuren

Pablo Picasso
Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J.) [Detail] 1907
Museum of Modern Art, New York

The painting's original name was "Le Bordel d'Avignon" which translates to 'The Brothel of Avignon' was changed by the art critic Andre Salmon to "Les Femmes d'Avignon", 'The Young Ladies of Avignon', to reduce the painting's outrageous effect on general society (8).

Cultural context: Cubism movement

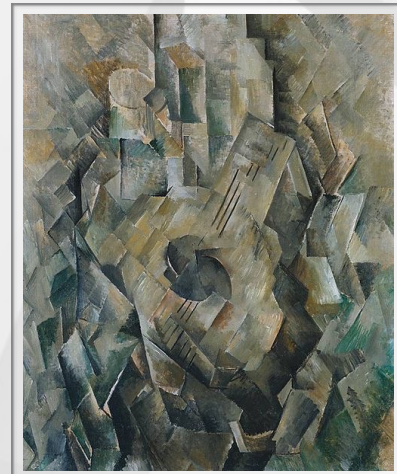
Cubism is a highly influential style of the 20th century, established by the painter Pablo Picasso and George Braque (12). Cubism is a unique format where geometrical shapes are formed together through objects that are broken apart, analyzed, and re-assembled in an abstracted form (11). Artwork of a cubist, depicts its subject from a number of viewpoints in order to represent the subject in a greater context (11). The core essence of cubism is to demonstrate different viewpoints at the same time and within the same space and so suggesting their three dimensional form (13). Simultaneously, emphasizing the two dimensional flatness of the canvas, instead of creating the illusion of depth. Cubism has influenced many other artists and lead to the development of diverse art styles such as Orphism, an abstract, painting style developed by Robert and Sonia Delaunay around 1912 (13).

Cubism is said to have begun around 1907 with Picasso's highly influential *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* (12), which included elements of cubist style. Since then, cubism has developed in two forms:

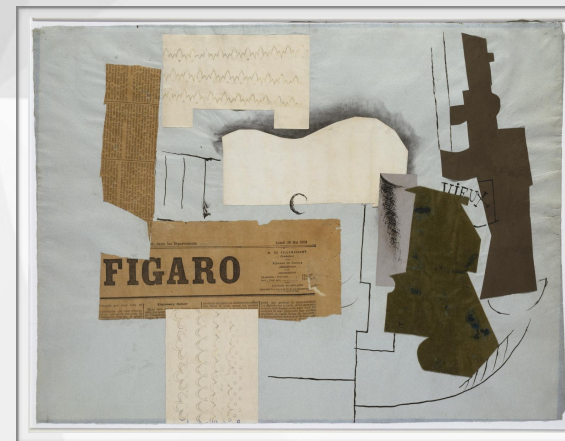
- **Analytical cubism:** (1908-1912) The art work was made up of overlapping planes and lines in simplified palette of colors: tones of blacks, grey and ochres, so the viewers were not distracted from the structure of the form (12). It is termed analytical cubism because of its structured "dissection of subjects, viewpoint by viewpoint, resulting in a fragmentary image of multiple viewpoint" (13).



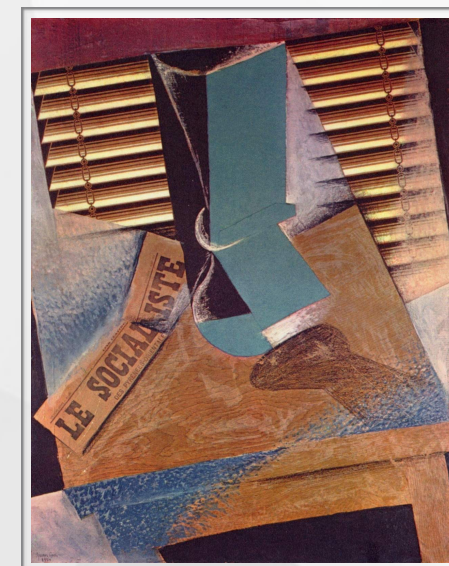
Pablo Picasso
Seated Nude
1909-10
Oil on Canvas
921 x 730 mm;
Source:



George Braque
Mandora
1909-10
Oil on canvas
711 x 559 mm;
Source:



Pablo Picasso
Bottle of Vieux Marc, Glass, Guitar and Newspaper 1912
1909-10
Collage and pen and ink on blue paper
467 x 625 mm; Source:



Juan Gris
The Sunblind
1914
Gouache, collage, chalk and charcoal on canvas
921 x 727 mm; Source:

"Analytical cubism was about breaking down an object (like a bottle) viewpoint-by-viewpoint, into a fragmentary image; whereas synthetic cubism was about flattening out the image and sweeping away the last traces of allusion to three-dimensional space" (13).

- **Synthetic cubism:** (1912- 1914) Synthetic cubism began when the artists started adding "textures and patterns to their painting, experimenting with collage" (11) from real elements such as newspaper and patterned paper. The art work is characterized by simpler shapes and brighter colors (12).


Cubism techniques used by artists:

Pablo Picasso

Analytical cubism → figures are broken down into shapes

1907

Strong geometrical shapes and lines



simplified color palette: blues, skin color

Image 16&17: Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.), Pablo Picasso, 1907, Oil painting on canvas, 96x92in, source: <http://www.pablocicasso.org/>

Wangechi Mutu

Synthetic Cubism → collage: overlapping newspaper and porn magazines

Simpler shapes

flatness of plane

stronger contrast between color

brighter colors

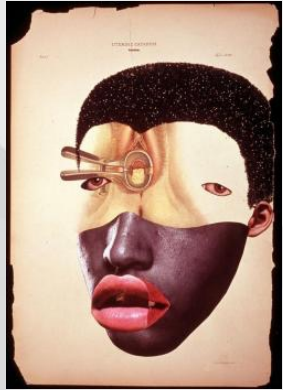
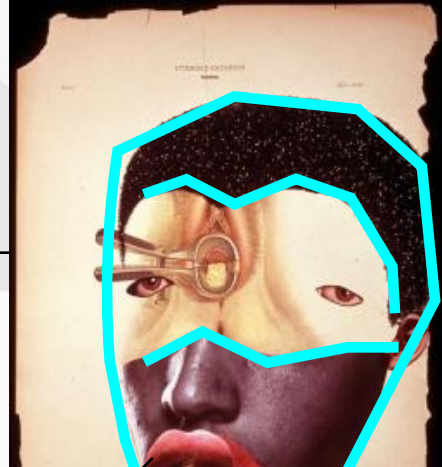
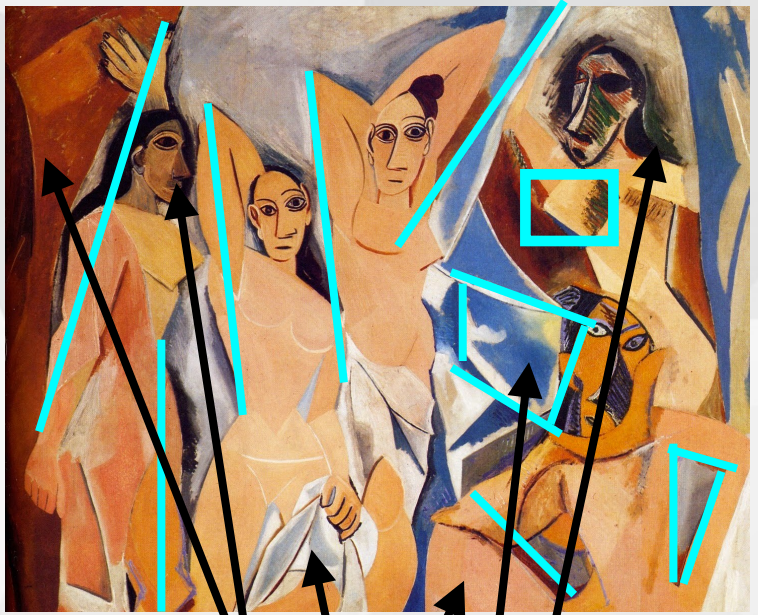



Image 18&19: Uterine Catarrh, Wangechi Mutu, 2004, mixed media on medical paper, 46x31cm source: <http://wangechimutu.com/art/>

CUBISM



Candice Breitz

Synthetic Cubism → collage: overlapping national geographic postcard with tipex

flatten the picture plane

stronger contrast between color

Simpler shapes

emphasis on brighter colors


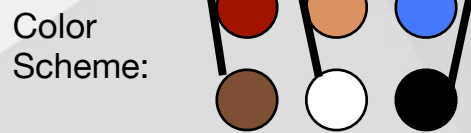


Image 20: Ghost Series #3, Candice Breitz, 1994-6, Chromogenic Print 68,5cm x 101,5cm source: <http://www.candicebreitz.net/>



Yellow -Orange, blue and green (present on the cultural dress) are split complementary colors, they are located opposite from one another with another base. the scheme has a strong visual contrast creating a vibrant look, allowing them to stand out, but with less tension

Image 21: Color wheel; source: <http://www.classicshades.com/articles/paint-color-wheel/>



Artist comparison

Candice Breitz

Composition:
Untitled #3 from the series The Ghost Series depict 3 naked african female figures. The female appear very calm and happy. The most important part within the composition is the significant use of color

Conceptual

Candice Breitz represents the black female body, through the use of montage, symbolism and imagery.

Cultural Context

White Contemporary African Artists exploring African females. Breitz was born in 1972 and was raised in Germany. was greatly inspired and influenced from South Africa's first fully democratic election in 1994. Illustrates the idea of naked african ladies, as a common base factor.

Technical

Her piece is composed of National Geographic postcards and fashion magazines, which she then over painted with correction fluid. The women are touching one another, causing a coherent line through all figures resulting in a soft flow and movement, which enables the viewers to fully examine the bodies. Contrastingly, a harsh, strong and aggressive movement is present, caused by the sharp geometric shapes from the jewelry.

Breitz cuts, masks, abbreviates, disrupts, conceals, to signal that something is missing, or has been taken away. Breitz explores the diverse perceptions of the African female body through overlapping their dark skin tone with a vibrant white color.



Image 22: Ghost Series #3, Candice Breitz, 1994-6, Chromogenic Print 68,5cm x 101,5cm source: <http://www.candicebreitz.net/>

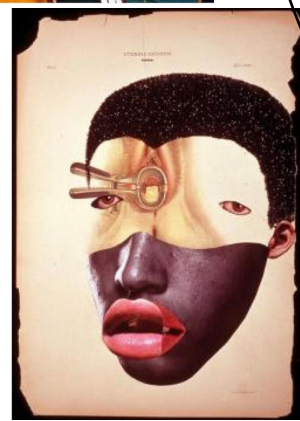


Image 23: Uterine Catarrh, Wangechi Mutu, 2004, mixed media on medical paper, 46x31cm source: <http://wangechimutu.com/art/>

Wangechi Mutu

Composition:

Both Mutu and Breitz create their images upon a found surface. also, they use objects to illustrate african culture and people through the use of vivid contrasting colors.

Conceptual

Both artists are creating a 'new kind of female' from their own perspective and influence.

Cultural Context

Contemporary Origin African Artists exploring African females: exploring their own culture

Technical

both artists use photography as their main medium. Both used synthetic cubism techniques

Composition:

The collage by Mutu illustrates a floating african portrait. Mutu enlarged and decreased facial elements such as the lips, ear and the eyes. Also, she incorporates a medical tool- a clamp- which is used as a symbol of wisdom. The work is formed upon a medical paper and consists bright, vivid and contradicting colors.

Wangechi Mutu uses synthetic cubist techniques such as taking newspaper, objects and other materials which she deconstructed, and reassembled in an abstracted form, allowing the depiction of objects from several perceptions and points of view. Mutu illustrated such techniques through the disproportionate placement of the eyes in an asymmetrical form.

Technical

Composition:

Both pieces occupy the whole composition. As well as the female figures are demonstrated bare breasted. In addition, they use similar color scheme of blues and oranges. Also, both artists highlight the figures through a thick outline surrounding the body.

Technical

In both pieces the movement is achieved along all figures, while disrupting other/ and objects

Conceptual

both artists illustrate their perception upon the african female body

Cultural Context

explore the representation of the african female body. Both examine the demonstration of nude figures

Composition:

All pieces by the three different artists demonstrate the representation of African females. The artists, alter the representation of traditional african perception through the use of geometrical shapes intentionally and unemotionally. Also, all artists overlap shapes and colors which demonstrates a stronger emphasis on certain african features such as the nose of the african females, which allows the plane of the picture to appear as flatten

Conceptual

all artists portray their own perception of the 'ideal' African female

Cultural Context

illustrates the female body while challenging societies view. Influenced by African culture

Technical

use cubism techniques to achieve their aim and purpose: flatness of image

Composition:

Picasso's piece illustrates 5 nude african ladies (prostitutes). the women with the african masks appear very aggressive and unfeminine which contradicts the two Iberian female in the center of the image, due to the thick impasto. In addition, Picasso incorporates a still life fruit bowl which differentiates the aggressive and unrealistic portrayal of the women. The most important aspect within the composition is the use of line and shapes.

Conceptual

challenge the idealized representations of female beauty, through the use of the distorted and geometrical shapes which forms a body.

Cultural Context

European artist exploring African females. The use of African and Iberian masks was influenced from the primitive art of African culture in 1906. Developed the cubism movement.

Composition:

Both Mutu and Picasso represent african people through a mask, with on specific focal point. Also they disproportionately place African features on the face to highlight what characterizes african people. Lastly, both depict sexual parts of the female body

Portrays the idea of nude females as prostitutes, which was common in his time period.

Technical

Picasso used oil paint on canvas to demonstrate his perception on female. The strong shapes result in a harsh and chaotic movement from one side of the painting to the other.



Image 24: Les Femmes d'Alger (O Version O), Pablo Picasso, 1907, Oil painting on canvas, 96x92in, source: <http://www.pablopicasso.org/>

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Image 25: Who's Missing?, Amit Siso, 2.5m x 3m, 2015, Acrylic paint on canvas; Source: own photography

Connection to Artists

“Who’s Missing?”

by Amit Siso

Medium

Black and White acrylic paint on mixed surfaces; cardboard, paper, canvas, wood and canvas



Image 26: Source: Own Photography, September 2015

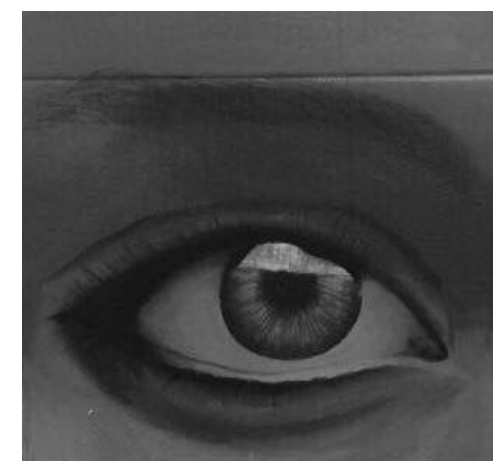


Image 27: Source: Own Photography, September 2015

As my overall theme in IB Art is culture, I specifically wanted to focus on the existence of cultural diversity in society nowadays. I was interested in this concept because I wanted to receive a greater understanding of how the idea of culture can be portrayed using art; through its formal, technical and conceptual qualities. After researching the artists who explore the idea of culture, I decided to gather a variety of cultural portraits as each facial feature of each culture diversified in shape and size. The result of the recombination of diverse facial features from contrasting cultures into a single collage, creates a newly formed identity, thus highlighting the diversity that exists between humans. The combination of different cultures, will create a sense of confusion, as the audience viewing the piece will perceive different shapes, lines and movement forming the diversified facial traits from the individual pieces, which will lead the audience to question which culture isn't present.

From a young age I have been privileged in experiencing different traditions and cultures through traveling around the world as a part of my dad's job. These cultural experiences have provoked strong emotional reactions that I felt more and more compelled to re-explore through visuals such as painting, drawing, photography, and mixed media. The piece "Who's missing?" was particularly influenced by the role of women in society. Women across the world have been fighting for the same injustices, even though their cultures differ. From the political laws obligatory on them, the images set by the media and to the religious compulsories, women are imprisoned with an identity that is not their own.

My art piece "Who's Missing?" portrays a recombined female portrait, representing the idea of diverse perceptions upon the female figures in nowadays society. The art work can be depicted as an assortment of diverse facial features recombined into the formation of a new self. However when closely studied, the different cultural features present within each individual piece in the collaged face, illustrates the idea that even though we all carry identical human aspects and elements, each culture has its unique cultural motifs that signify themselves - **we are all the same, yet different.**

The piece was assembled through the deconstruction of photographs of diverse cultural portrait, which were later collaged into a new composition forming a portrait, thus creating a new 'identity', a new female figure. The piece depicts 9 individual pieces, painted upon diverse surfaces - cardboard, floor tiles, paper etc - with black and white acrylic paint. The pieces vary in scale, however they all consistently remain in a geometrical, four sided surface, which contradicts the organic shapes and line, thus creating a soft motion within the paintings. Therefore the collage intentionally lacks a focal point in order to illustrate the idea that all cultures are equal. The use of black and white acrylic paint and chiaroscuro, allows the pieces to appear realistic, creating an illusion as if such mixed self exists. The monochromatic color palette permits the viewers to focus on the cultural details in the facial traits, rather than on the significant use of colors. The contrasting monochromatic hues of black and white suggests a strong emphasis on certain cultural features, whereas if it was in color, the significant connotation of colors would eliminate the powerful implication of the facial attributes. Therefore, the contrasts between the black and white helps attract the attention of the viewers and grab their interest in the existing theme of diversity vs unity that resides within cultures as well as the representation of women in society.

Furthermore, the thorough repetition of the contrast between black and white, helps in the creation of unity in the work. The geometrical surfaces of each individual piece, contrasts the angular and circular flow that exists in the pieces. The geometric surfaces outlines each piece, thus creating a sense of border around the environment of the presented figure suggesting that each woman in her culture are jailed to their traditions, behaviors and beliefs.

"Who's Missing?"



Image 28:
Who's Missing?, Amit Siso, 2015, Acrylic
paint on canvas; Source: own
photography

SIMILARITIES

Candice Breitz

Cultural Context

Both pieces challenge societies view.

Concept

Both pieces focus on the concept of the illustration of female figures from an individual perception.

Composition

- The females portrayed in both works appear happy and calm
- A mix of both geometrical and circular movements across the art work are presents.
- Traditional cultural features are illustrated in both paintings - Breitz includes traditional African jewelry and dress, while I included traditional dress and accessories.

Breitz took inspiration from the African Jewelry



Traditional women jewelry in the African cultures

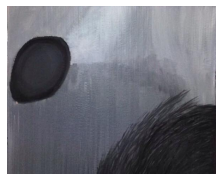


From Untitled #3 Candice Breitz

I took inspiration from the traditional Indian accessory, the Bindi



Bindi, traditional women accessory in the Indian cultures



From Untitled #3 Candice Breitz

Technical

- Breitz's art work emphasizes the African Culture through the use of symbolic cultural features. Likewise, in my art work, I comprised traditional cultural elements to highlight the different and contrasting cultures.
- The technique of erasing an aspect in order to highlight and imply emphasis on that factor was inspired through Breitz use of Tipex, a correction fluid on top of African women skin, which can be interpreted as the attempt of erasing the original. Similarly, through painting certain cultural aspects of females and not the whole, emphasis this certain culture.

Wangechi Mutu

Cultural Context

- Both pieces challenge and questions the worlds depiction of the typical female form.
- Contemporary artists

Concept

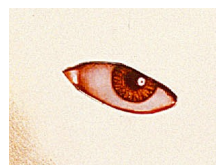
Both represent the idea that women bodies are written upon, talked about and women's bodies are important. In Addition, both pieces alter the representation of traditional african perception.

Composition

- Female portrait is present- can be interpreted as a female mask.
- Enlarged and decreased facial elements such as the lips, ear and the eyes are demonstrated in both pieces.

Technical

- Contrasting line movement- harsh geometrical vs circular shapes are demonstrated in both art works.
- Disproportionate placement and abstracting the sizes of facial features are present in both works, in the purpose of highlighting these specific cultural features present in a specific culture. in the aim of capturing the viewers attention towards a specific feature.



- The technique of collaging was inspired through Mutu's work. Mutu reconstructs a female portrait through ripping, overlapping and abbreviating images. Correspondingly, my collaged artwork is composed of cultural diversified painted facial features, which creates a newly formed identity.
- The deconstruction and resemblance of images in an abstracted form, are present in both compositions, thus allowing the depiction of objects from several perceptions and points of view.

Pablo Picasso

Cultural Context

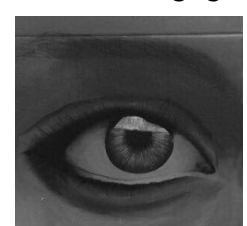
- Foreigner artists inspired by different cultures than ours own. Picasso, European artist inspired by the African Culture. Myself a Jewish student, inspired by diverse cultures around the world.

Concept

- Both works portray their own perception of the 'ideal' African female

Composition

- Both compositions include figures staring at the audience in the aim of engaging them.



From "Who's Missing?" Amit Siso



From Les Demoiselles d'Avignon Pablo Picasso

Technical

- Picasso includes african cultural features within individual figures in his painting, which he was influenced from- such as the mask like faces which illustrates african cultural aspects. Similarly, I included diverse elements within the individual pieces that symbolize specific cultures in order to imply emphasis on the diversity that co-exists in todays society.

Picasso took inspiration from the African Masks



MaskRoyal museum for Central Africa



Les Demoiselles d'Avignon Pablo Picasso

I took inspiration from the traditional Muslim dress, Hijab



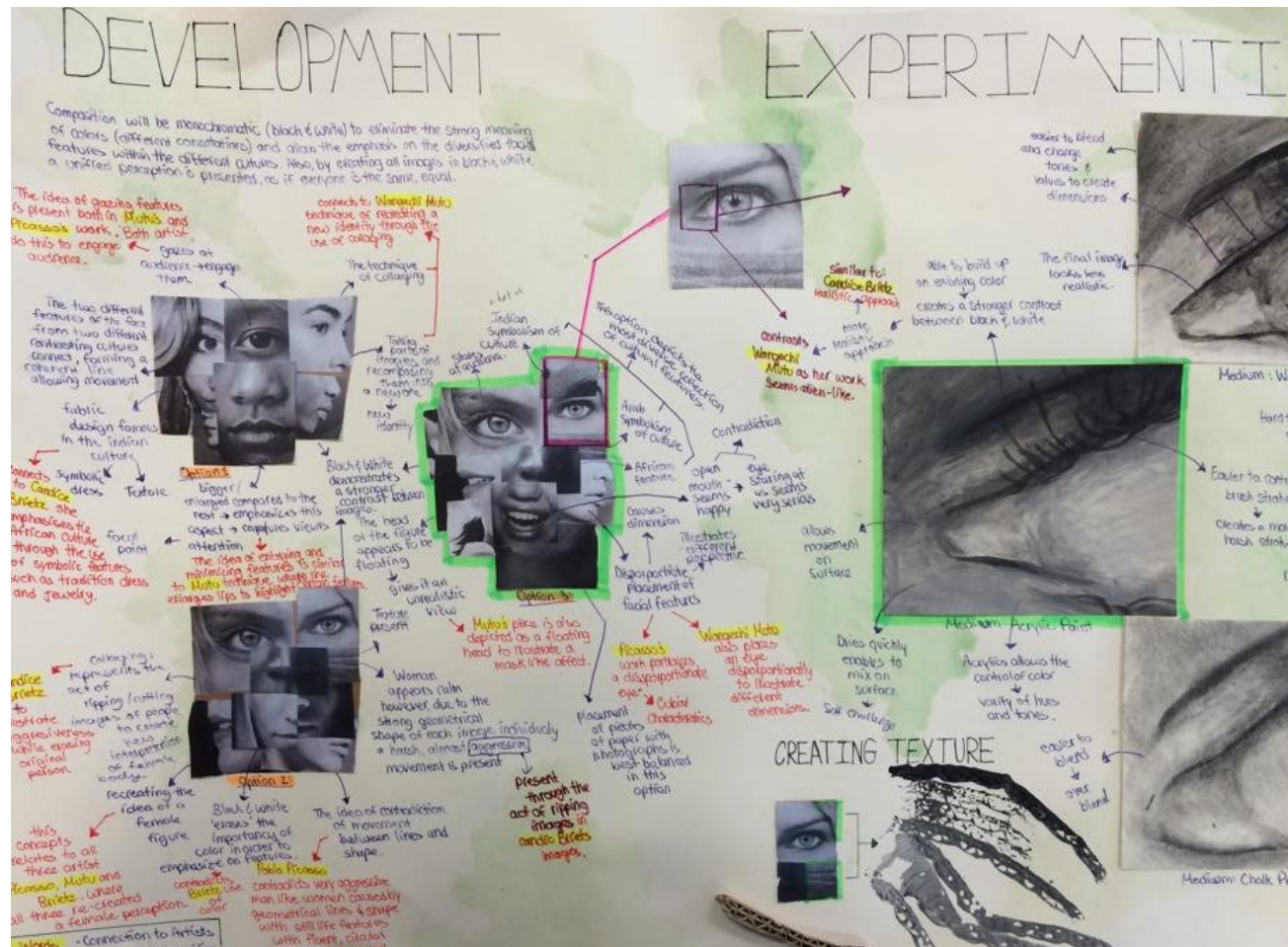
Hijab, traditional women dress in Muslim cultures



Who's Missing? Amit Siso

Sketchbook Development & Experimenting

Reflection on my own development



By observing and analyzing these works by other artists I have become more aware of some key aspects of my own work:

- the inconsistency of scale and features created a disproportional relationship.
- the use of traditional features other than just the body, enhanced the concept presented
- the technique of collaging, allowed the piece to have diverse perspective - interpreted differently by society
- the use of a monochromatic color scheme sufficiently enhanced the idea of diversity between cultures
- My painting skills has improved significantly

Some aspects I want to develop or investigate further:

- use a wider range of media on top of the diverse sources of surfaces used: oil paint, watercolor, chalk, gouache
- create a full body collage rather than just the face
- play with the idea of color, as it may enhance the conceptual idea in this piece - through the significant interpretation of colors (its different connotation in different cultures).

DEVELOPMENT: Trying out different compositions using the diverse facial traits that were cut up from photographs from different cultures. The **red annotations** display connections to the artists (showed on p.18) while the **blue annotations** present an interpretation of the compositions themselves; shapes, lines, movement, contrast, focal point etc (present on p.17) . The **green outline** represent the chosen composition.

EXPERIMENTING: Experimenting with different medium: water color, acrylic and chalk pencil on a segment of a female muslim's eye. The **blue annotation** illustrate an analysis of each medium use; brush strokes, movement of paint, shadows etc. The **green outline** depicts the chosen medium for the final piece.

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