

Comparative Study

This comparative study is focused on comparing the technical aspects concerning the works of two famous artists Edvard Munch and Shepard Fairey. Both artists are from different The four main works that will be critically analyzed are the following: *Melancholy*, *Madonna*, *Freedom to Lead*, and *Natural Springs*. The main focus of this is to evaluate the ways that they perceive the world.

By Adilene Sanchez

Evaluation of Cultural Significance of Munch



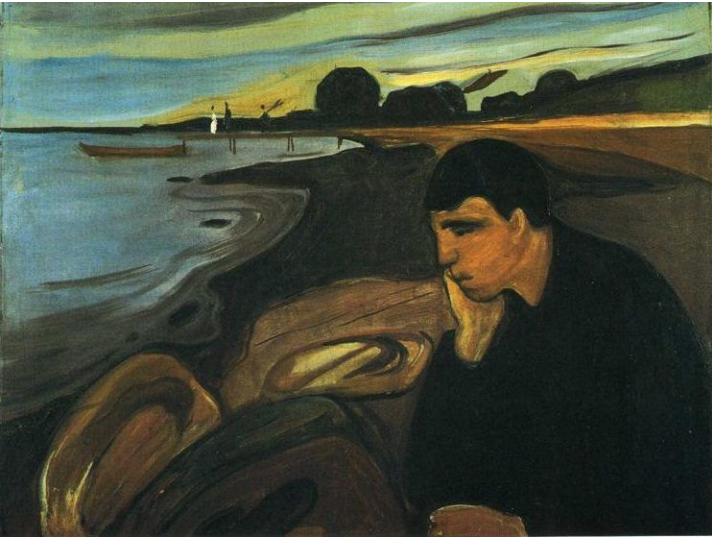
Edvard grew up in a household full of religion. His father was a fanatic Christian which led Munch to view his life as dominated by the "twin black angels of insanity and disease." Munch was always warned of the evil out in the world since his father's mental illness took over the way he educated his children. His mother died when he was a child which added more damage to his mental health.

He didn't grow up poor, only mentally disturbed since there was no one else that could educate him properly. The pain and torture in Munch's pieces showed the misery and conflicts of his time, and, even more important, by his own unhappy life. His childhood, love life, alcoholism, and constant travelling were integrated in many of his pieces. Many of his works depict the variety of fears and anxieties he was feeling; it helped show his social awareness of the things troubling him.

In addition to this, he also moved often from Paris, to Italy, and back to his home until one he decided to stay in his native land, Norway.

Munch in 1933. Wikipedia
The Free Encyclopedia.
September 12, 2016

Formal Qualities of “*Melancholy*”



Melancholy by Edvard Munch.
81 x 100.5 cm. Oil Paint.
1894-96

When one first sees this piece they might feel loneliness, isolation, and sadness. Munch is very known for this type of personality which he displayed in many of his works. In this oil paint, he displayed himself sitting alone and miserable.

He is displayed sitting on the shore at Åsgårdstrand with a miserable and melancholic expression in a position of contemplation.

There is a couple at the background, about to get on a boat and take off in an island where they will eventually make love. The piece displays jealousy of not finding one's soulmate who would show affection towards the one that wants to feel loved.

In my interpretation, it is about longing for someone that would be there for you. The way that Munch sits there with a dissatisfied expression as if he's about to cry. The way that his eyes look off into the distance, enhance the feeling of isolation and desperation for a loyal companion.

Function and Purpose of 'Melancholy'



Walking couple seem to **emphasize** the representation of how he's alone and melancholic. He longs for someone that would be there for him as well as he would for her.



The **color** is morose. The light yellow, blue and gray streaks add on to the feeling of loneliness, emptiness and gloom. It shows a slow **movement**. Air hangs heavy and hope seems a very far prospect.



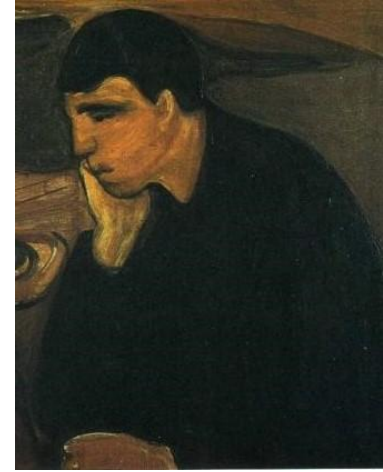
The water is very dark which can represent the depth of the loneliness, sadness, or many heavy emotions the artist carries that have darkened his life.



The rocks along with the mud, also represents his emotions and how worthless he feels knowing that he'll never have someone by his side.

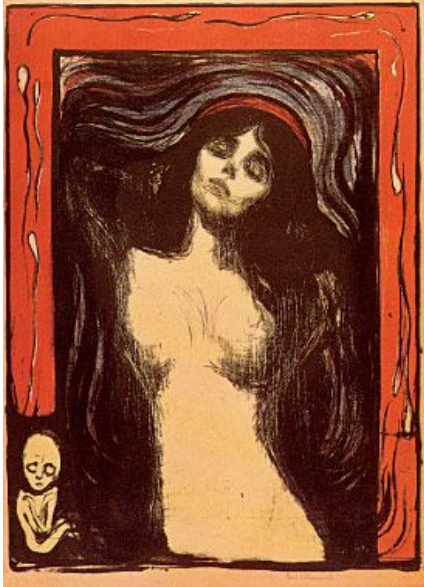
*The aura of the piece and how the sky complements the shore is a great **contrast** and evokes that feeling of jealousy. It also gives the piece **unity** to enhance the main subjects.

*The brush strokes are soft in the background, yet rough.



Anguished man is the only one alone. He has a look of jealousy and loneliness. His position adds more to the feeling of disappointment and longing for someone in his life.

Interpretation of function and purpose “Madonna”



Madonna by Edvard Munch. 1895-1902.
60.5 x 44.4 cm. Color lithograph

Munch started working with lithographs and other techniques of impression in mid 1890s, with a double intention: to get his works more known and to find an effective way to increase his monthly income.

Madonna lithography draws attention that the painter has integrated framework designed for painting, and that gives greater meaning to the composition.

The interpretation that can be conveyed is in the act of intercourse and how women are the “givers of life”. This explains the sperm going into the woman (Madonna), and which eventually leads to the creation of life(fetus). Munch acknowledged this and tried to display the great importance, beauty, and potential in women.

Munch was not known for painting religious figures since he wasn't a religious man. The main subject is Virgin Mary, however, religion was not on his mind, only the idea that the Virgin Mary was innocent and kind.

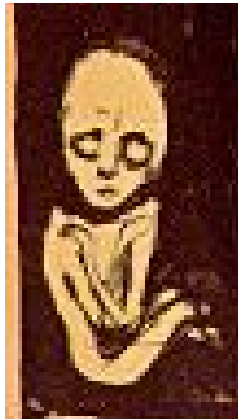
In my interpretation, it can be inferred that it is as if the artist was trying to display his tragic event when his mother died in his young childhood. Usually Madonna and her child are together, but in here. mother and child are apart. This piece represents the detachment from mother and child and how a motherly figure is valued since they are the ones that start life.

Function and Purpose of 'Madonna'

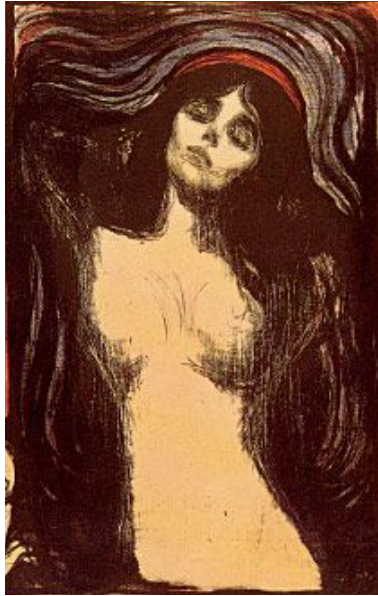


The **highlight** and **value emphasize** the look as of a caring mother. It holds sweetness behind the facial expression, though many perceive it as a passionate look. An innocent look. Madonna usually has a golden halo, but this one

was replaced with a red one, which can symbolize love and pain.



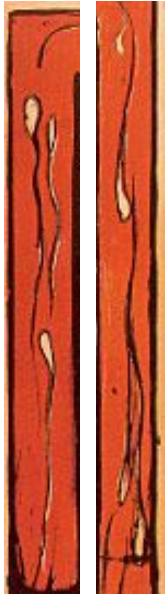
Fetus can represent Munch as a child. It also looks lonely. He uses grim colors as well.



The roughness of the **lines** contribute to the rough life without that mother figure in someone's life.

Pattern usage and its uninviting lines, create a mood of depression. Enigma since Munch was unsure of how he perceived women, they're either givers of life or treacherous.

Sperm can represent life and how the woman is the one that has the ability to make life.



Evaluation of Cultural Significance of Shepard Fairey



Shepard Fairey. Courtesy of ArtRepublic

Shepard has been active since 1989. His works demonstrate the many issues of politics and modern social justice that we know of. All the artwork that he has created so far has been influenced by all the social injustices and to raise awareness. His activist behaviour has earned him a lot of respect throughout many artists.

United States is more free for people to think, so Fairey is very active in politics and often evokes his opinion through his art-work.

“absurdist propaganda” campaign as meaning to get people’s attention so that they can question the campaign and their relationship with the things that surround them on a daily basis. His artwork can be complex so it makes people try to find the meaning. Fig

He often criticizes past and modern society’s political ways. Fairey mocks it in a way that would be difficult to decipher what he is trying to say.

Function and purpose “Freedom to Lead”



Freedom to Lead. by
Shepard Fairey. Prints
and multiples,
Screenprint. 24 x 18
in. (61 x 45.7 cm.)
2009.

Freedom to Lead was a way for Shepard Fairey to communicate his concern and anger against governments that oppress their people.

The print overall had great **balance** and clearly helped the artist to get the viewer’s attention to what is going on. Aung San Suu Kyi is portrayed as symbol for peace and hope.

The poster, was first shown in June 2009 and this is used in order to support the work for Human Rights Action Center and the U.S. Campaign for Burma. Fairey used bold **colors** highlight the bold statement. **Pattern** is used in the clothing and the background which contributes to the rhythm of the piece.

He displays her with rays as if she were a sun. The symbolism in the sun is that they illuminate/ influence, and are known as strong. As it was mentioned before Aung San Suu Kyi was used for hope, the sun goes with the claim. She has endured thirteen years under house arrest, yet she still remains strong.

Cultural Significance of “Freedom to Lead”



Aung San Suu Kyi. Courtesy of Independent.ie

This print was used in an Exhibition in 2009 that focused on the fund and awareness of what was going on in Burma. People in Burma are ruled by huge authoritarian figures that oppressed these people. Aung San Suu Kyi (June 19, 1945) was under house arrest for over 3 years and was to be free in 2010, however, since an American was found in her house, she was given another 18 months. She is known as human rights activist. He created Aung San Suu Kyi as a representation of the issue by adding to the piece, strong features and a small symbol of peace.

It is for a representation that anyone has the right to think freely without an authoritarian figure to oppress them or in other words, hope. Fairey wanted to help in this issue by selling this poster and in hopes of making people aware of the social injustice happening in Burma. He donated many of the pieces he created to an organization called *The Best Friend*.

“This Human Rights cause is something I believe in strongly. I created this portrait of Aung San Suu Kyi to raise awareness of her situation and the overall situation in Burma.” -Shepard Fairey



The march over Chelsea Bridge.
Courtesy of Indymedia

Formal Qualities of *Freedom to Lead*



The small phrases help with **unity** and **balance** so that the piece can have more impact on the viewer.



The dove is used as a symbol of peace that is close to the heart. Aung San Suu Kyi wears it in order to tell the viewer that peace needs to be considered and held close to the heart.



The flowers show femininity. However, these are not small flowers, but big. It adds the meaning to feminine power as well as peace.



Adding on to **emphasis**, the piece had a decent amount of space and **dimension** as well.

High use of emphasis helps the print have definition and **form** to give the subject of the piece a symbol of strength and power

Comparison with *Madonna* and *Freedom to Lead*



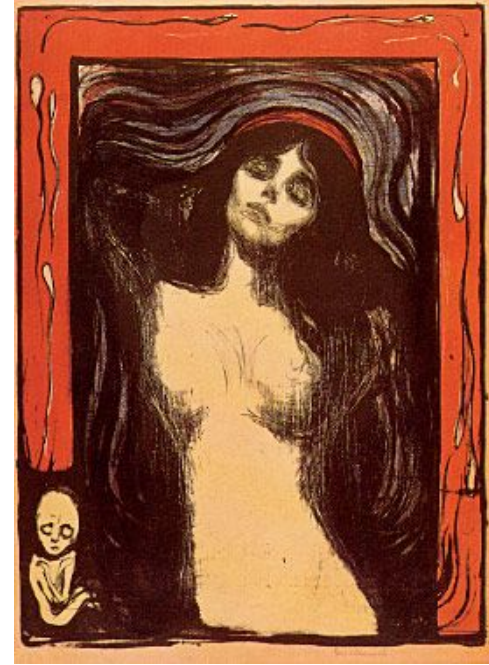
Freedom to Lead. by Shepard Fairey. Prints and multiples, Screenprint. 24 x 18 in. (61 x 45.7 cm.) 2009.

Similarities

- Both wanted to focus on the main subject as a powerful woman.
- Used **emphasis** to enhance the importance of femininity.
- Similar colors are used that can be assumed is used to represent power and strength.
- Both used cutting tools

Differences:

- *Freedom to Lead* has brighter colors that pop out much more. *Madonna* is more darker.
- The lines in *Freedom to Lead* is more clean cut and straight while *Madonna* is more organic and a bit scratchy.
- Although they used cutting tools, *Freedom to Lead* was spray painted by a stencil. *Madonna* was created by using ink.



Madonna by Edvard Munch. 1895-1902. 60.5 x 44.4 cm. Color lithograph

Function and purpose *Natural Springs*



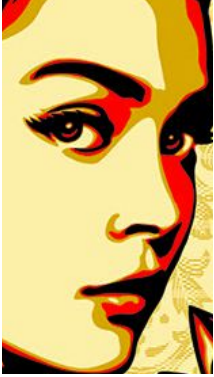
Natural Springs was first exhibited in his show, 'On Our Hands' in New York's Jacob Lewis Gallery in 2015. In this piece it portrays an idealistic young woman dissatisfied with how the environment is being polluted.

The title *Natural Springs* is a play of words that make something sound pleasant when in reality they're harmful and only benefit the rich. This was a propaganda campaign which criticized the fossil fuel corporations that corrupt the environment for their own gain. The main subject gives a look of disappointment while holding a flower closely. Oil and gas images are both subtle and upfront in the mural.

This poster is used as to shame the oil and gas industries from depriving everyone from the essentials that come from nature. It was a protest to support green energy and try to leave the harmful ones out of our daily use. He state before that he is a huge humanist that believes in the rights of people. This propaganda highly enforces his views and beliefs on the corruption of industries.

Natural Springs by Shepard
Fairey. 45.72x 60.96 cm. Edition
of 450. August 4, 2015

Function and Purpose of *Natural Springs*



The **emphasis** of the expression of the young woman shows frustration. The **color** is eye popping which direct the audience to look at the young girl first. She has a judgemental gaze directed at the viewer.

***Balance** and **space** complements the piece and how it perceives certain intriguing emotions.



This symbol represents the oil industry. It is surrounded by a black and red flame. Red is the color of danger, in which Fairey used to criticize the damage that



The background consists of a **variety** of organic designs in the shape of leaves and flowers. It is seen that it is wearing off just like the environment. The beauty is wearing off by leaving the ghost of something that used to be beautiful.

The flower is the delicacy of nature, but it is dripping oil. The young woman is holding it as if it would break.



Comparisons and Connections Between *Melancholy* and *Natural Springs*



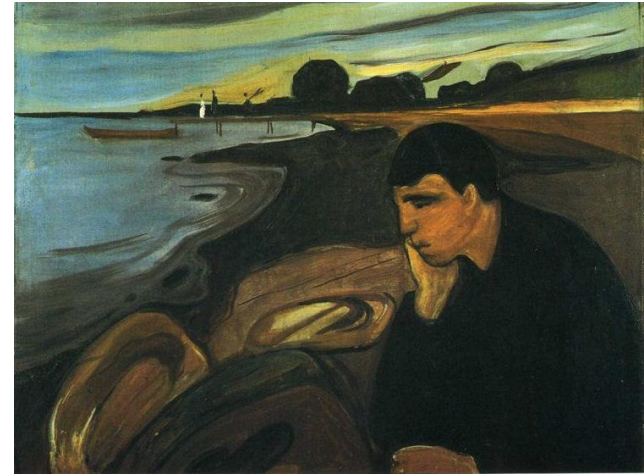
Natural Springs by Shepard Fairey.
45.72x 60.96 cm. Edition of
450. August 4, 2015

Similarities:

- Both show emotion of dissatisfaction
- Have pessimistic messages.
- Highlights are used to enhance the things that are to be observed closely that would set the mood of the piece.

Differences:

- The color of *Natural Springs* is more focused on nature's concerns while *Melancholy* uses nature to represent his anguish and how he looks at the world: gloomy.
- Mood is different, Fairey's is more frustrated at the oil industries for ruining the quality of nature, while Munch's is more frustrated at the happy couples.



Melancholy by Edvard Munch. 81 x
100.5 cm. Oil Paint. 1894-96

Comparisons and Connections Between: *Melancholy, Madonna* (lithography), *Freedom to Lead*, and *Natural Springs*

- Used his internal emotions and experiences of his life in all of his pieces
- Norwegian artist in the 19th to early 20th century who was more reserved.
- Uses more grim colors that represent the pessimistic view of life
- Rougher texture
- Uses more cold colors

- All four have a high use of **emphasis**.
- **Value** is also greatly utilized to give a great flow of emotion to the pieces.
- **Balance** which brought the object of main focus to the viewer's attention.
- **Contrast** had a high usage in all four works.
- Used a variety of bold colors.
- Conveyed their own opinion of how they saw the world by expressing it in a dramatic way.
- Used **patterns** to **emphasize** the importance of their subject.
- **Unity** was also used in order to add harmony to the work

- He is more into social justice and politics.
- Emphasizing is highly used and how he makes each color uniform each other.
- Pieces are more cleaner and soft
- American artist in the late 20th and current 21st century
- Uses warm colors, especially red and yellow.

Edvard Munch

Both

Shepard Fairey

Connections To Own Art: Edvard Munch



'Blinded' (Sep. 2016)
Acrylic on Canvas.

The connection between the artist's work in my art is by using "Melancholy (1894-1896) as an inspiration. However, the whole concept of internal suffering in Munch's piece is not seen in my painting due to the fact that it only captures the universal problem with overconsumption. Other than that, I applied the brush strokes of the artist which was soft, yet rough. There are hints in his piece that show the dull colors that go with the contrast of brighter colors. There are dark streaks that go vertically in the background and softer streaks that flow with the lines of the object in the piece. There are instances that these lines are light or darker in order to give that dimension that will make the piece seem unsettling much like Edvard Munch's many artworks. Munch also tends to use these characters that have a miserable look. That was another thing that I wanted my piece to have in order to capture a look that eventually gives the subject in the piece a character/personality. In addition, the artist also uses the depressed or observing poses for his subjects that play a huge part in the mood and tone of the piece. As for my piece that same concept of having the subject have a pose in order to give the piece more to offer contributes to the mood.

By trying to adapt Munch's painting style, I came to realize that the brushstrokes don't have to be as clean or else it won't reveal much of the artist's personality.

Connections To Own Art: Edvard Munch

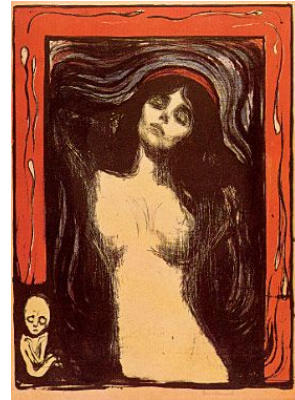
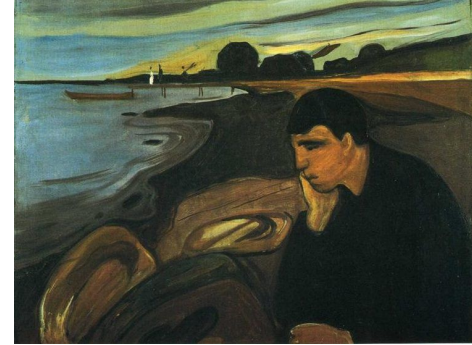


Similar:

- Brush strokes were rough, yet smooth.
- Dull **colors**
- Streaky **lines**
- Dark eyes as a symbol of helplessness
- Used similar **value** which adds on to the **unity** within the pieces.

Different:

- Munch focused more on what he was feeling and struggling with in his mind, while I focused more on the issue of overconsumption in Earth. Mine is external conflict and Munch's was more internal conflict
- Much used a scenery that would set the mood of the piece, while I only painted one subject of focus giving it more **form** than Munch did on his piece.
- His pieces give off a more depressing mood while my piece gives off a sinister mood.



Connections To Own Art: Edvard Munch & Shepard Fairey

Fairery:

- More into politics
- Some pieces have no meaning because he wants the people to react and question their surroundings.
- Humoristic with a slight tone of assertiveness for the message he tries to send.

Personal Art:

- I don't stick with just one subject, they vary. There can be about internal conflict and external conflict.
- Digital work (Photoshop CS6)

Munch:

- Focused more on his internal feelings
- Moods varied at times. For example, he had a "happy" period in which he returned to his homeland.

Similar:

- We all evoke a strong statement that we want the viewer to look at closely and by possibly understanding the purpose.
- There is a hint of our personal emotions that influence how the painting looks.