This comparative study examines links between three artworks/ collections from three different cultures and time periods: Dalí’s “The Elephants”, Cho’s “It’s not what it seems”, and Ringler’s Into the eye. The main theme explored is surrealism and juxtaposing concepts.

By: Sebastian DeMarino
Salvador Dali was born on May 11, 1904, in Figueres, Spain. His father, Salvador Dalí y Cusi, was a middle class lawyer and notary. Salvador’s father had a strict disciplinary approach to raising children—a style of child-rearing which contrasted sharply with that of his mother, Felipa Domenech Ferres. She often indulged young Salvador in his art and early eccentricities.

From an early age, Dali was encouraged to practice his art and would eventually go on to study at an academy in Madrid - Colegio de Hermanos Maristas and the Instituto in Figueres, Spain, in 1916. 1944 America, as is was when world war two was going on, Dali was in America when he painted this painting. It was a time when liberal thinking was a fairly new concept. At this time surrealism was at a peak, with it being a cultural movement that promoted new art, and also new thinking.

Dali created was one of the leaders in the surrealism movement, and this piece exhibits his passion for surrealism. The piece is perhaps commenting on how history lacks support and substance as he portrays elephants with obelisks as weak and frail. The way he articulated his ideas in this painting was innovative due to his unique layout and expressive style.

At the time his unusual and bizarre behavior. He wasn’t respected by other artist and critics alike. His paintings were for the peoples amusement and wasn’t taken to seriously. His eccentric manner and attention-grabbing public actions sometimes drew more attention than his artwork, to the dismay of those who held his work in high esteem, and to the irritation of his critics.

However, today his art is viewed as revolutionary and considered on of the main surliest artists. Salvador Dalí has been cited as major inspiration from many modern artists, such as Damien Hirst, Noel Fielding, Jeff Koons and most other modern surrealists.

The painting was later displayed in the Dalí Museum in Spain, so the audience range from a long period of time. Therefore they have differing perspectives as timed progressed and society norms changed. At the time, world war two created chaos amongst the general public, therefore the audience opposed fascism and Nazism. Due the the cultural exchange as a result of the war, the American avant-grade art sense carried over to other countries and became really popular globally.
The composition in this piece is very balanced, embodying a balance scale composition used in landscape paintings. This common centered composition deviates from the usual centered composition with a subject in the center. The subject of this piece - the two elephants - are on both sides of the painting, stretching out from top to bottom.

The background features a warm red sunset with no clouds, which evokes a serene atmosphere as typically no clouds indicates there is little wind. The absence of motion in the sky and the vibrant red color helps draw contrast with the two elephants, making it feel isolated in a vast area.

The two elephants in this picture have elongated thin legs, similar to the legs of a spider, with multiple joints and no pointed ends. The elephant seems to be composed of two parts, one the back and face. Bits of what seems to be moss or dust hang off the elephant. Which suggests its of an old age and uncared for, reminiscent of an artifact. The elephants can be seen carrying massive obelisks. The elephant seems to have tribal ornaments and decorations on the back and face. The background also features the silhouette of mountains and hills, which in comparison to the elephants are small and insignificant.

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The Elephants in Dali’s piece are inspired by Gian Lorenzo Bernini’s sculpture base in Rome of an elephant carrying an ancient obelisk - once in an Egyptian temple of the goddess Isis in sixth century B.C. The elephant in Bernini’s piece serves as a base for the Egyptian obelisk. The marble elephant features sports the same fancy saddle-like drapery across tits back. The statue was made for Alexander VII Chigi. The elephant could be a symbol of strength as it firmly and sturdily bolsters the large, ancient obelisk on its back.

This piece could also be a comment on religion. Many people get strength from religious beliefs and faith, in this piece the elephants can be a symbol of religion. Although an elephant is used to represent strength which draws parallels on how people view religion, the tall spindly legs hints that these concepts lack support. Perhaps Dali is convey the idea that religion is weak or faulty.

“I am painting pictures which make me die for joy, I am creating with an absolute naturalness, without the slightest aesthetic concern, I am making things that inspire me with a profound emotion and I am trying to paint them honestly.”

(Smith, Tara)
Hikaru Cho was born on the 29th of March, 1993. She is a very contemporary and practicing artist who experiments with a range of art mediums such as body pairing, illustration, clay sculpture, stop motion and many more. Her most well known pieces are her surrealist pieces which challenges our perceived reality. Living in Tokyo, Japan, Cho is an art student at the Musashino Art University and is being influenced by the Japanese culture round her.

As the art is most often displayed online it is hard to pinpoint the artists world. However Cho’s work is most relevant in Japan as it is shown it some galleries and used as designs by some companies. 21st century Japan is a developed country which still pertains it’s polite traditions, while being one of the world leading technologically advanced countries.
In this collection, Hikaru Cho challenges the human seances by creating mind tricking images of fruits. Upon viewing each piece, you are first presented with an everyday food, then the food is cut open and a the image of a different fruit is revealed underneath.

The simplistic layout and centered composition helps keep Cho’s intentions focused. The images are taken against a white background to help contrast and draw attention to the foods. The pictures are taken when nice lighting, and the foods are always positioned so that the light and shadows are congruent with the light and shadows for the real world, so that they look more realistic. The colors used on each food reflects the typical color of the food it is trying to represent. Cho is trying to make them seem as realistic and as plausible as possible, making the final reveal more stupendous.

This collection can be mind boggling to the viewer as it is unexpected for the audience to see a different food once the food is cut in half. Its surprising to the viewer as it differs from the viewers reality, and when they are presented a reality which is incongruent with their conventional lives, it perplexes them. Cho here is playing with the human mind to create this mystifying images, similar to may surrealist artist.

Cho usually uses fruit in her collection as she can easily paint over it. She uses acrylic paint to create the image of another food over the skin of the fruit. Her realistic painting style can easily trick the viewer on thinking it is the actual food. It’s almost as if she is creating an optical illusion as she paints the food at a certain angle with light, shadow and perspective in mind, creating a realistic looking food. Then the food is photographed and cut in half to reveal the true fruit inside.
Cho challenges the audience by presenting this alternative reality in which is separate from our normal reality. The conceptual significance of this piece is perhaps to challenge our seances and our perception of reality.

In this series of work - ‘It’s not what it seems’ Cho is trying to express the message of not to judge something just by appearance, similar to the expression 'don’t judge a book by it’s cover’. Our brains will automatically try to associate an object with a concept upon viewing. However, when these fruits are cut in half, a different reality is presented which is out of our expectation.

Perhaps the food painted on the fruit is representative of superficiality as it’s on the surface of the fruit. Then when the fruit is cut in half a different food is revealed, which is representative of the truth. The use of the over saturated color scheme helps emphasize the superficiality. The artist offers a contrast between before and after to show the transition of your mind identifying the object from one to another. This series of work will evoke out of the audience confusion. This is an interesting theme to express as we are often victims to superficially, we often judge things from first impression such as appearance, however most of the time it’s value lies beyond it’s appearance. The work is very relevant as it is a representation of the fast pace society we live in where we make quick judgments. Perhaps Cho wants to being this issue to light and encourages us to be more vigilant when making a judgment as we are often fooled by our very senses, as proven by Cho’s work.

The piece also highlights this idea of food consumption and health, especially the last piece with the donut. Perhaps comments on the wider theme of media advertisement, as the media often will lie in order to sell their product.

Cho, Hikaru. "It’s not what it seems.”, acrylic paint on fruit
**Artist**

Terry Ringler perhaps wanted to explore the concept as time. Normally time is perceived as a continuum that goes in one direction. Ringler ignores the laws of time and combines different elements of different time periods to create this piece. Another theme that is explored through this piece is discovery. We live in a society where we feel most knowledge is discovered, however perhaps Ringler wants to convey that there is still so much unknown. The earth represents knowledge whilst the people represent our passion for new knowledge.

**Artist’s World**

Terry Ringler lives in the Philadelphia area. His work is heavy influenced by another American collage artist named Winston Smiths.

He gets his images for his collages from American magazines such National Geographic or Scientific American which has a wide collections of images exhibiting natural beauty and recent discoveries.

**Audience**

As most of his work can be seen on his tumblr or on Instagram, most of his audience would be other artist or art enthusiasts who are interested in his art. Most of his audience are most likely American, as his work is publish more frequently on American blogs and websites. The piece also have this science fiction feel to it as space is used in his art, attracting a lot of science fiction fans. The audience finds his work inspiring as he creates vast alternate worlds for them to discover. It reveals the beauty in two very different aspects of our world. These designed based collage artwork seems to be very popular now as artist are able to use preexisting images and make them into new cohesive pieces.

**Audience’s World**

21st century America, which is quite liberal and technology advance. Ringler’s art is quickly accessible by his audience anywhere. This is a generation where space technology is at its peak, a lot of space is still fairly unknown, which adds this mystery and creates a striking contrast with the vintage images of our known past.
The composition sees the foreground in the bottom right. This composition helps make the background seem more grande. The artist employs an from the top perspective which overlooks the people and then earth. This perspective allows the audience almost feel the magnitude of the dive that the person is making, making seem more striking and awe-inspiring.

The color of the subject is in grayscale, which contrasts with the colored background of the earth. The color of the background is really dark, contrasting with bright grey of the people. The background seems vast as the edges of the earth are blurred, making it seem colossal, and as most of the background is black, the darkness suggest this unlimited vastness beyond the stars. This grande imagery contrasts with the almost trivial image of the subject, which seems to be three nude men, one diving off the rock and two just siting and observing whats below. There is a real juxtaposition created between the two images, which makes the whole image seem so surreal and detached from our world.

This piece is a college, which are parts of cut up images reconstructed into a new image. It’s inventive how the artist decides to have the people on the rock to be black and white, almost simulating like an old style movie which is black and white. It gives the impression that it is old, whereby contrasting with the colored image of the Earth, which in a sense, evokes this novelty as the concept of taking picture of outer space is fairly recent.

Analysis
Terry Ringler creates this surreal world by combining juxtaposing elements of our world. He first picks a picture of Earth from space, which is vast and has this sense of the unknown. The image seems to be the type of image you would find in a National Geographic Magazine, it has a lot of sharp detail. He then picks a picture of a group of men, sitting what seems to be a rock while gazing down. This image is trivial and the greyscale effect makes it feel distant like a memory. The image seems to be from some type of vintage magazine, as it seems over contrasted and the a lot of the details are blurred. Between the vintage and modern, the trivial and profound, Ringler creates many juxtaposing parallelisms that create these surreal pieces.

The theme of discovery is perhaps explored through this piece. The spiraling earth dubbed 'eye of the storm' could be symbolic of the unknown, and as the person takes the risk and jumps off the rock into the planet, he is delving into a new world of knowledge. There is this beauty and eloquence in the man’s figure as he jumps into the abyss, perhaps suggest the beauty of discovery. The other two men stare contently as they witness something grand and awe-inspiring.

The images are very similar to vintage magazines images due to the greyscale color scheme. Also as the cameras back then couldn’t pickup as many tonalities in the picture, the images seem more contrasted, with more solid blocks of black and white. This could also be due to the printing technology then to as perhaps it was hard to print any different tonalities, that’s why some of the images seem overexposed, giving it this vintage look. Also as the resolution of the images are lower, the image also has this grainy blurry aesthetic.

The astronomy and geology images that Ringler uses are from magazines like National Geographic or Scientific American. These images are often offer an array of vivid colors. The images are also heavily contrasted and highly saturated. The images are often grand, dramatic and artistically articulated as it is a magazine that flaunts the beauty of nature.
It's an original oil painting, therefore Dali has full control over all elements of the piece. It's not what it seems - Hikaru Cho

The Elephants - Salvador Dalí

Influenced by the painting of the Renaissance Era. Exaggerated characteristic of existing object, such as how Dali elongates the legs of the elephant like spender legs. Hints at themes of religion. Uses culture as a vehicle to help explore surreal concept concepts.

Both of these artist create vast alternate worlds in their art works. Some contextual understanding helps enhance the message.

Both artists paint original material, and adopt a realistic style. Bright and vivid colors are present in both of these pieces. Colors are slightly washed and fairly soft compared to the other two artists, who use bright vibrant colors.

Both very modern, designed based pieces rather fine arts. Both have a certain commercial value as it can be easily appreciated by all audiences. Ringler plays with the concept of time to create surreal concept concepts, at the irrational juxtaposition of images from different time periods.

Hints at themes of religion. All artists create an alternate reality, which combines elements of our reality. All of the pieces make an insightful social comment on our society. It's a collage - a combination of existing images (not created by artist). This allows Ringler to revive magazine images into new conceptual piece of art.

Paints on real life objects, such as fruits, which are photographed after to create the illusion that they are real. This perceived illusion is broken in the second image as the reality inside is revealed. Playing with the concept of reality vs superficiality, making a comment on our fast paced society and how we make quick assumptions. Uses fruit to symbolize elements of our trivial life, and how there are hidden truths.
Similarities between the three artists

Stylistic Links
Surrealism is a cultural movement that was most notable for its visual artworks. Surrealism began in the early 1920s, it intends to play with our perceived reality. The aim was to "resolve the previously contradictory conditions of dream and reality" (Rachel Barnes (2001)). It twisted elements of our reality by combing juxtaposing concepts in order to create these otherworldly pieces of artwork. Often surrealist piece are illogical with strange objects and creatures, however often have a deeper meaning and explore interesting themes of our world. Surrealist piece are often surprising and confusing, which is also what makes them so captivating to the audience as they try to decipher these paradoxes. Dalí was one of the many visual artist who played a prominent role in Surrealism, and his piece The Elephant reflects how he exaggerates reality to create these surrealist worlds. All of the three artist's work can most certainly be categorized as surrealist art work as they all have juxtaposing elements and distort our perceived reality.

However compared to some of the most notable surrealist artwork such as The Persistence of Memory. These surrealist pieces are less abstract in both visually and conceptually. That is often the case with surrealist paintings, they creates this imaginative new worlds that are not comprehensible at first sight. The three images that I have picked uses different element of our reality, however they are much more representative of our perceived reality. I feel like these pieces take advantage of this fact, because then the concepts are more noticeable to the audience, instead of completely manifesting in the perplexing surrealist world.

Thematic Links
Although these pieces are of very different time periods, they all subtly provide a social commentary of the time. These pieces reveal insightful elements of their current sociality and cultural from their perspective. For example, Cho comments on how quickly people make false judgments in our fast pace society and urges us to be vigilant to superficial masks. These underlying messages are very relevant to the audiences lives as these provide them with a new perspective on society. Unlike art pieces that captures the essence of a moment and effective conveys an emotion, what makes these pieces standout is their profound meaning and relevance in society.
Differences between the three works

Dali, Salvador, "Elephants", 1948, Oil on canvas

Unlike the other artists, Ringler combines elements of different time periods to create his awe-inspiring piece. His manipulation with time is what draws him apart from the other two artists. Time is the indefinite continued progress of existence and events in the past, present, and future. Ringler distorts this notion of by combining elements of past, present and perhaps even future to create his otherworld aura where time runs differently. Ringler also retains to vintage quality of the images to strengthen the contrast. Unlike the other piece, a important part in the creation process is to find interesting images from magazines and book. He take advantage of collaging by literally combining two different realities from different magazines, of different time periods.

Image from: mundoaneur.com

Dali, Salvador, "Elephants", 1948, Oil on canvas

Unlike the other artists, who use actually elements of our reality whether it’s old images or objects such as fruits, Dali’s work is completely original and primary in the sense that he doesn’t incorporate secondary sources in this work. Because of this, Dali is able to fully artistically create his surrealist ideas. And in The Elephants, Dali takes advantage of this artistic freedom by exaggerating and altering elements of painting, such as elongate the legs of the elephant. This allows him to create this juxtaposition between the idealistic view of the elephant symbolizing power and support, as the thin, long legs suggest imbalance and frailty.

Image from: mundoaneur.com

Cho, Hikaru. "It's not what it seems.", acrylic paint on fruit

Unlike the other artist, Chu uses the two images to evoke the unexpected. Each piece from her collection can only be appreciated when both the before and after has been seen, and more importantly that the before image is seen first. This way Chu is able to most effectively break the anticipation and the expected norm. All the other artist just presents their pieces with surrealists and juxtaposing ideas, where as Chu presents the trivial, normal, familiar reality, and then twisting it.

Image from: mundoaneur.com

Contrasting images

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I was heavily inspired by the theme of combining juxtaposing elements of our reality such as cultures and time periods. At the time I was very interested in traditional Japanese art which had this very blocked color, simplistic feel. The designs also incorporate iconic Japanese patterns such as the repeated waves. This whole notion of simplicity within Japanese art reminded me of this more modern concept of design-based art work. My piece is also slightly influenced by cubism, a western art movement, which prompted me to add these big blocks of shapes in the background. As so far the design is fairly simplistic, I wanted to do a detailed realistic drawing of a face, which would provide a striking contrast with the rest of the design and really stand out. I chose to draw the women in a slightly cartoon style (similar to anime - Japanese cartoon) as it is an idealistic representation of women within modern Japanese culture, such as the big eyes and small lips. Finally the garment she is wearing feature a painting of Sakura flowers in a more traditional style. I wanted to create a design-based collage that incorporates many elements of different cultures and styles.

The idea of combining different time periods was inspired by Terry Ringler’s work. In my piece I combine the more modern designed based concepts such as the bright washed block colors and shapes with the more traditional elements such as the painting of Sakura flowers and the Japanese wave patterns. However, unlike in Ringler’s piece where these elements contrast each other, in my piece these elements complement each other more. For example the Japanese wave pattern goes with the whole designed based ascetic.

The realistic drawing on the fruits in Cho’s work and Dali’s Renaissance influence encouraged me to draw the face in a realistic style. However, I still slightly exaggerated some characteristic such as the eyes to give it this Japanese anime look. The detailed chalk and pencil drawing also provides a balance between the blocked colored shapes in the background. These juxtaposing images help bring out the face.
The mixing of juxtaposing images and concepts can evoke intense emotion. I thought I could use the basis of this concept to effectively express humor. Dali was inspired by the work of Gian Lorenzo Bernini’s elephant sculptures and exaggerated that image of the elephant to create his piece. In the same way, I was inspired by the Da Vinci’s iconic The Last Supper. What really stood out to me is how Da Vinci captured the Christian hierarchy with Jesus being so calm whilst the other 12 disciples were so worried and full of emotions. I thought it would be comedic if I recreated this but change the context. People how have authority in my life are my teachers, so I decided to recreate The Last Supper in a school setting representing the hierarchy of teachers. The Biblical context of the original Last Supper juxtaposes with my more trivially and comedic context of the hierarchy within a high school, it combines two very different realities.

My piece also uses context to help express the message. Dali’s The Elephants uses this cultural and religious context of the elephant representing support and strength to juxtapose with the image of elephants with thin elongated legs. In the same way, my piece use the significant Biblical context to juxtapose with the notion of representing the hierarchy within a school. Without having knowing the context, these pieces would be as impactful on the audience as they use there context to express further meaning.
All three of the art pieces that I’ve looked at creates this alternate universe which combines juxtaposing elements of our reality. This idea of creating an alternate and paradoxical world captivated me, and I wanted to the same. I was heavily inspired by the use of fruits in Cho’s work as was a common object in our everyday life which represented triviality. I wanted to also use fruits to make it seem trivial and contrast it with something very strikingly different. I decided to fill the inside of a fruit with grotesque organs which juxtaposes with our normal perception of fruit. The theme that I wanted to explore was the idea of superficiality vs reality. I also really like the element of surprise within Cho’s piece and how it toys with our reality.

I wanted to recreate that element of surprise, so in some of my pieces I have included items that are commonly found on the kitchen table to give the impression that this is just a regular kitchen. In the lemon piece, I included the cutting board and knife to show that the organs were from the inside of the fruit.

I also did my piece with a combination of different fruit as they might have a different impact on the audience. I also decided to use a coke can as it was also a daily item that could represented triviality. I think the coke can provides a commentary of our commercial consumption, unlike the fruit. Also the artificial tin coke can provide a greater visual contrast with the organic soft organs, perhaps making the image more polarizing, strengthening the message.