Art Comparative Study  
By: Mayu Fenton-James

This comparative study explores the work of a historic artist and two contemporary artists: Bosch’s “Garden of Earthly Delights”, Loli’s “Pink Flowers” and Liu Xue’s “We Are the World”. All three artists are from different cultures and continents. The main theme explored is the freedom of choice and the consequences of poor choices or sins.

Artwork name: Garden of Earthly Delights  
Artist name: Hieronymus Bosch  
Year: 1510  
From: Netherlands

Artwork name: We are the world  
Artist name: Liu Xue  
Year: 2010  
From: China

Artwork name: Pink Flowers  
Artist name: Eugenia Loli  
Year: 2014  
From: Greek-American

Bosch. The Garden of Earthly Delights, 1510  
Liu Xue. We Are the World, 2010  
Loli. Pink Flowers, 2014
Analysis of “Garden of Earthly Delights”

There are groups of small armies charging with weapons across the terrain. This evokes an image of violence and anger. By placing entire armies in Hell, Bosch implies the type of people he believes belong in hell, such as people who involve themselves in wars which entails the Seven Deadly Sin of “Wrath”. The soldiers represent brutality and thirst for power.

Musical instruments signify evil distraction, and are often associated with the idea of minstrels (Bosing, 60), which were identified with lust. The idea is that musical instruments bring temptation through the beauty of their sound, temptation being the “work of the Devil”. Many of the punishments involve extreme physical pain. They strip the figure of their identity and torture them in a humiliating fashion. In this section a demon wearing a nuns habit is writing music upon the hindquarters of a man trapped under the instruments using it’s tongue, which signifies his submission to temptation.

The colour scheme in this section of the painting is much lighter and mainly consists of variations of yellow orange and brown. The foreground is much lighter so that the torture is in focus. The colours chosen for this are aggressive and agitating which reflects the torture and pain that the humans in the painting are suffering as their punishment. This is a warning to people who sin.

Materials: Oil paint on oak panels

Bosch. The Garden of Earthly Delights, 1510

This piece is one of three panels of the triptych “Garden of Earthly Delights”. The panel on the left represents paradise, the centre panel is Earth, and the last panel shown here depicts an image of Hell (Hickson).

Dark, black, silhouette backdrop with flames lighting up buildings. The sky is black and misty. This sets a horrific, dystopian setting which gives an impression of eternal darkness. The flames suggest pain and suffering of the habitants as their buildings are permanently burning. The colour scheme of this section gives a dim and eerie atmosphere.

Bosch has painted many executioners and animal-demons torturing nude humans. All the humans are being tortured by either weapons, demons, and bottoms are penetrated by various instruments. These are very disturbing details and images showing every punishment of each individual. In one section of the painting, a bird like creature sits on a chamber pot with a cauldron on his head engulfing humans. The blue of the bird contrasts with the golden chair as the light blue represents innocence and purity, and yet the creature is clearly savage.
**McFee King Analysis: Bosch’s “Garden of Earthly Delights”**

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<td>This triptych was displayed in the palace of the Counts of Nassau in Brussels, 1517 (Belting, 71). The counts were very powerful political beings. There was a decline in religion in Europe during this time period. In the Netherlands, early 1500s, goods were imported from Africa and South America (Bucholz). The trade increased the influence of rich merchants, however the red of the population suffer from high inflation and decreasing grain supply (Bucholz).</td>
<td>The panel of this piece gives very negative connotations as it forms a religious warning to the viewers. It was made to make the audience uncomfortable to encourage them not to give in to temptations, else face the punishments of committing the sins. Each punishment on display of this panel represents a form of abuse for one of the Seven Deadly Sins. The original audience of this piece were the Counts who commissioned it who were high-class aristocrats (Belting, 71). They were very religious people who wanted this displayed as luxurious work meant for royalty to and politicians to witness.</td>
<td>The artwork was commissioned by the Counts, therefore it was not solely out of imagination (Belting, 71). Bosch was very religious, so he created a work which represented “Paradise,” “Earth,” and “Hell.” It is considered as a warning to viewers of the perils of life’s temptations (Kleiner &amp; Mamiya, 564). This panel representing Hell graphically conveys gruesome images of the penalty of committing the deadly sins. The piece was done in oil on oak wood to make it look realistic and detailed.</td>
<td>Bosch witnessed his hometown, Hertogenbosch, burn down when he was 13-years old. He joined a highly respected religious group called Brotherhood of Our Lady. He received many commissions from abroad. This piece was commissioned by the Counts of Nassau which were very high profile aristocrats. It was created in Oirschot, Netherlands where he lived with his wife, and was approximately completed in 1506 (“Hieronymus Bosch Biography”).</td>
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Significance of “Garden of Earthly Delights” by Hieronymus Bosch

The Garden of Earthly Delights can be split into three different sections:

The top section represents Hell. In biblical context, Hell is represented as a place of eternal burning, which terrified religious people. Christianity as a religion dominated the population of the western community. The Church had a lot of power, so most Europeans were devote Christians as Bosch was. The image is reminiscent of a war scene, which makes it relevant to today's Syrian conflict.

The middle section represents Purgatory. This can be seen as this section is where the painting has the most pain, torture and suffering, which is what Purgatory represents for those who will eventually continue to heaven. The painting is largely scaled so the details in the punishments are visual. Seeing all the punishments put together and seen as a whole, as Bosch intended for it to be seen, creates an overwhelming scene of pain. This portrays the image of the extent of pain that souls suffer in Purgatory. Again, torture is relevant in today's society and something that is taboo, for example, torture is inflicted in the middle East by western militaries.

The bottom section represents the sinners of Earth. It reflects the aspects of the artist's world as a religious being showing the consequences of committing sin. There are animals and instruments which symbolise the different Deadly Sins committed by humans. This is still relevant today in contemporary culture, as the Christian community is still the largest religious group on Earth, and people still commit these “sins”. The gruesome imagery was intended to horrify people into not engaging in sinful activities. However, though the details are still gruesome, the piece would not have the same impact of fear upon the viewers in contemporary society. This section literally conveys Hell on Earth. This suggests it is us that cause Hell and chaos but it is not necessarily the sinners that are subjected to it.
Analysis of “Pink Flowers”

The background is a print of pink flowers which gives a romantic setting. The light pink symbolises purity and innocence which contrasts with the dark green of the snake and the black and white of the photograph.

The snake in this image is an unnatural shade of green. Snakes in nature are often green, however this shade of green seems artificial and gives the connotations of being false and deceiving. The snake symbolises deception and danger. The snake is faced towards the woman’s hands as if it is about to bite, wrapped around her finger as if it is latching on.

The man is in black and white facing away towards where the face of the woman would be. The way neither the man or the woman has a face strips them both of their identity.

The only part of the woman visible in this picture is the hands which are elegant and manicured. The fact that the woman’s face is not visible in this picture gives the connotations that her face is unimportant. The snake is wrapped around one of her fingers, making it seem like it’s trapped. The hands are affectionate and passionately embracing the head of the man. There is a ring on the woman’s ring-finger, which suggests she is either married or engaged. This gives the viewer some context to the narrative of the piece, allowing the audience to fill in the blanks themselves. The woman could be having an affair, or the man represented by the snake could be her fiancé/husband.

This piece represents lust. The man is the snake about to bite the woman’s hands, trapping her. The snake symbolises danger and artificial love. Biblically, the snake represents evil and temptation. Loli is a contemporary artist who created this piece in 2014 (Loli). However, she created a collage using old, vintage images from magazines to portray an image, showing how times have not changed since the originally magazine was created. The artist created this using collage rather than digitally.

Loli. Pink Flowers, 2014
**McFee King Analysis: Loli’s “Pink Flowers”**

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<td>This piece was displayed as a western contemporary piece of art that has been made and sold as prints. In modern day society, there has been a lot of controversy between gender roles and acceptance of identity, including gender equality. There has been an outrage on “slut shaming” as a sexual form of disrespect for an individual. However this concept only applies to females and not males.</td>
<td>By using vintage images, Loli evokes an image that modern issues should be old fashioned and should not be modern day issues. The soft colour palette and romantic symbolism of the flowers juxtaposes with the snake which symbolises danger, threateningly wrapped around the feminine fingers. In “Pink flowers,” controversy is created as the modern issue of sexual lust is acknowledged and the gender inequality of the situation. Loli suggests that there is gender inequality in the sense that when men are lustful they are not confronted or judged by others for being lustful as women are often referred to as “sluts”.</td>
<td>Loli creates controversial art with deeper meanings behind it. Often she uses the sense of danger and urgency in her artwork, both of which is shown in “Pink Flowers.” She uses old images from magazines to create collages that represent a deeper modern issue. Loli expresses that she enjoys leaving part of the story up to the imagination of the viewer of the art, who can “fill in the blanks” of the narrative that she creates. She often addresses concerns with contemporary societal issues. Her collages vastly use surrealism and depend on the viewer’s creativity as well as the artists. Loli uses juxtaposing images to toy with the audience viewing the piece to allow them to reach a conclusion on the social issue the collage represents.</td>
<td>Loli is originally from Greece but has lived in California for most of her life. She studied a course in “programming and system analysis”, which gave her experience and a background using technology and computer programming (Loli). She often applies this to her artwork in digital outcomes as collages, though sometimes works with paper cuts. She has no education in art. However, living in western society has influences her culturally as societal view have developed.</td>
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Loli. *Pink Flowers, 2014*
Significance of “Pink Flowers” by Eugenia Loli

Eugenia Loli is a feminist contemporary artist. Gender equality is a social concept rising in importance within western culture. This piece reflects this as the woman is being romantically tricked into falling in love, when the man is truly represented by the snake as lust. Historically, romance and beauty was a popular concept in the media during the time of these vintage magazines. However, at this point women were coming into empowerment and moving towards gender equality. By using old images, Loli suggests that ideas and concepts have changed and become more unromantic in the 21st century.

Loli keeps narratives of her pieces open to let the audience interpret the story however they wish to to create a story line. However, it is clear to the audience that the underlying theme of this is that the woman is at risk. There is a sense of urgency about the placement of her hands on his head which express that she feels the same lust for him, which blinds the fact that she is in danger.

The sense of being tricked is also appeared for the audience. The Title “Pink Flowers” and the initial romance of the image adds to the notion that we are blind to the damages of men.
Analysis of “We Are the World”

This piece was created using a plaster cast mould (Xue), which makes it easier to shape and refine to add intricate details to the sculpture. The plaster was then painted over to make the sculpture look more realistic to its viewers.

This piece was made into a sculpture so that there is a 360° view of the symbol of gluttony. By making it into a sculpture the artist is shaming the being for their sin. The body is very detailed and graphic, using similar colours to the flesh of humans and animals, yet the flesh is very pale and sickly as if the creature is ill. The background of the display of the piece matches the colours of the sculpture. The texture of the surface is very smooth to imitate the consistency of skin.

The body of the pig biblically represents gluttony and greed. To be gluttonous means to over-indulge in feeding (“The Sin of Gluttony”). In historical context, the pig has come to represent this because of the similar habits of over-consumption of food as a domestic animal.

Making the head of the sculpture bald gives the connotations that the man was stripped of his identity. It also gives an impression of nudity, shaming him in the process. By stripping his identity, he evokes an image of a prisoner or a mental patient through the symbolism of the hairless head.

The face of the sculpture is depressed due to the problems that have come with his obese body. His eyes are closed and the mouth in a frown giving a sense of melancholy.

The size of the sculpture is small which contrasts with the lifelike qualities. The size takes away some of it’s human nature. It also diminishes the pride of the creature, which evokes sympathy for it from the viewer.
Audience’s world

Obesity is a growing problem in contemporary society. People are becoming more self-aware on health aspects of their life-style. People have decided not to shame people who are considered obese but to accept them instead. However, this is more of a western issue rather than Asian where this piece was originally displayed. China is led by a communist party in which they believe that all property is owned by the community and each person contributes and receives according to their ability and needs (“Communism”).

Audience’s response

Liu Xue first uploaded his pieces onto a Chinese website, blog.artron.net, where many people are able to post images of their artwork. He received many views so it was put on display in Beijing. This piece gives negative connotations, as it creates grotesque imagery because of the fusion of a human body with an animal. It contrasts with the idea of communism, as the human clearly received more than he needed that therefore led to his obesity. This is why over-consumption is an unusual issue in China.

Artist’s response

Liu Xue creates hybrids between different animals simply because he finds it humorous (Xue). He matches different sized creates with certain sized humans. In this piece, Liu Xue found humour in attaching a large bald man to an equally naked animal which reflects the size and greed of the pig. The pig is the symbol historically used to represent the Deadly Sin, Gluttony. Giving the large man a face of despair shows he is in pain for the shame of his greed as he faces the consequences of over-consumption.

Artist’s world

Liu Xue is a contemporary Chinese sculptor. Obesity is not a very large problem in China as it is in the west. However, greed can be considered one of China’s cultural flaws. China is led by a communist party, so their beliefs have influenced Xue’s artwork. He currently lives in China’s capital, Beijing (Xue).
Significance of “We Are the World” by Liu Xue

Greed is hugely frowned upon in Chinese culture. With the historical context of what communism represents, it is believed that everyone is equal and all property is owned by the community. Therefore they must share food, receive for their ability to contribute and their needs. This piece symbolises greed in humans through being gluttonous.

This piece reflects the 21st century issue of obesity. People are fighting for acceptance of overweight people. However, this piece suggests that it should be shameful to display greed in the form of gluttony, and therefore produces a humorous outcome, as if mocking them. The population of overweight and obese people is rising each year. Health issues is a part of every persons life, such as looking out for their own weight. The piece shows the result of carelessness of not taking care of their weight and health issues.

The plaster sculpture gives a 360 view of the mutated being and is also quite small, which adds to the humour of the sculpture. This is relevant to the bullying and common humorous jibes that overweight people are often subjects to. The plaster allowed the artist to add miniscule detail to the skin, making the obese body seem very realistic.

The sculpture is still relevant, if not more, since it’s creation in 2010 since the continuous rise in the population of obese people.
Venn Diagram comparison

“Garden of Earthly Delights” By Hieronymous Bosch

“Pink Flowers” by Eugenia Loli

“We are the World” by Liu Xue

“Garden of Earthly Delights” by Hieronymous Bosch

Asian culture

Plaster sculpture

3D

Symbolism for Gluttony

Represents only 1 deadly sin.
Primarily made of soft colours.
Contemporary art (2012-2014)

Symbolism for Lust

2D

Contrast of deadly with comforting images

Oil painting on oak wood

European culture

Made in 1500s

Landscape painting

American culture

Vintage magazine collage

Naked figures.

Realistic figures.

Artworks showing bodies while committing a deadly sin.

Uses animals to symbolise.

Shaming.
Punishment.

Detailed facial expressions.

Contemporary art (2012-2014)

American culture

Asian culture

Symbolism for Lust

Landscape painting

Closed captioning

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Shaming.
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Detailed facial expressions.
Use of animals for symbolism

All three of the pieces use animals to symbolise different forms of punishment. The snake in “Pink Flowers” represents temptation and evil in the biblical sense. In “We are the World” a pig is portrayed to stand for the result of over-consumption. However, in the “Garden of Earthly Delights,” many animals and demons are shown punishing the human figures in the painting. In the bottom right corner of the panel a pig wearing the veil of a nun is displayed to represent lust as a sin. Another demon is shown sitting on a chamber pot with a cauldron over his head with the name “Prince of Hell”, devouring humans which appear out of the bottom of the chamber pot and down a dark infinite hole. He is known to feed on the souls of the corrupt and lecherous.

Realistic, detailed figures

Loli uses real vintage, black and white photographs in her collage to make the narrative story seem realistic. However, unlike the other two artworks, no facial features are shown. Liu Xue’s sculpture has a lifelike facial construction to express the emotion of the creature he designed so that the audience could relate to it’s feelings. Bosch’s painting is largely scaled and done in oil paints, which allowed him to add a lot of detail. The faces of even the smallest figures are clear and their facial expressions of horror reflect their pain from their punishment.

Potential Danger

All three of the pieces show a human who is either potentially or directly in danger. “Pink Flowers” shows how the woman is possibly about to be tricked by the man represented by the snake which would hurt her as he represents lust and not love. “The Garden of Earthly Delights” has a large number of human figures being tortured and in pain, endangered by the many obstacles in Hell such as demons, weapons, and the fiery landscape. It shows there is no shelter or safety in Hell. Finally, “We Are the World” shows how the figure is in potential danger of his own health and humiliation.
Differences

**Historical and contemporary issues**

Bosch lived during the time when the Catholic Church had a lot of power over the public. Bosch too was religious and greatly incorporated this into his works. In the third panel of “The Garden of Earthly Delights”, he used his religious context to create a large landscape painting in great detail of punishment in the afterlife. On the other hand, the other two contemporary pieces do not involve religion into their artwork, but use contemporary world issues that are from the 21st century. Loli presented her piece as a narrative view on the issue of gender equality, whereas Liu Xue evoked his image physically in a sculpture of a being to represent the present issue of obesity and over-consumption from greed.

All three pieces use a different medium to represent a different issue from the point in time in which it was created. Loli and Xue lack adding context through their use of background. However Bosch takes advantage of the detail he could add to create horrific imagery of his religious concept of Hell.

**Different cultural context**

All three pieces originate from different continents: North America, Asia, and Europe. Therefore they were inspired by three different cultures. Loli often uses themes that evolve around contemporary American culture, such as the feminist fights for gender equality which her piece “Pink Flowers” was based upon. The vintage magazines were taken from old American magazines which were popular in the early 50s. Liu Xue looks at a different concept on the effects of over-consumption in China due to their communist views. In the larger cities, the wealthier people tend to have a larger body mass to flaunt their prosperity.

Lastly, Bosch was greatly influenced by his background of European culture in which Catholic themes were very popular in oil work paintings (Hickson). Religion was a very large part of the community in the late 1400s in which Bosch had lived through.
Significance of “Pink Flowers” by Eugenia Loli

The overarching theme of “Pink Flowers” is the idea of the woman being in danger of the man without knowing it. This piece influenced my own work through the exploration of putting someone in a dangerous situation in which the audience can see, however the figure has no idea that they are at risk. I also looked at the gender roles of the snake and explored the concept of reversing the roles.

I interpreted “Pink Flowers” to symbolise Lust, however because the man is represented by a snake, I reversed the roles in my own piece, *Echidna*. This piece was done in coloured pencils before applying image tracer on Illustrator to smoothen the blending of the colours, which are bright and unrealistic to create a sense of surrealism. The piece shows the lips pulled down to reveal a lip tattoo of a green snake similar to that of the snake in “Pink Flowers”. The snake in my own piece also represents lustful temptation in the biblical sense. I used the same theme of a soft pink pallet which gives the impression that the lips belong to a woman. The warm colours juxtapose with the cold blue and the idea of the lips belonging to someone dangerous. In Greek mythology, Echidna was a half woman half snake that tempted a titan into fathering her children known as the monsters.

I also explored the idea of putting a figure in harms way, oblivious to the fact that they are in danger. I used coloured pencils in my other piece, *Narcissus*, to symbolise the arrogance and admiration one has for themselves. Everything else in the piece is colourless as it blends into the background of the figure. The figure was to be the centre of the piece which catches the viewers eyes first, the car in front of her following suit. This is to imitate the girls attitude towards life as nothing is more important than her popularity.
Significance of “We Are the World” by Liu Xue

Exploring this concept of gluttony, I produced a sculpture of my own interpretation of what it means to be gluttonous by adding a humorous concept to the sculpture as Liu Xue has done. However, my piece was not be created to shame overweight people, but to send a message about personal health and what humans do with their bodies.

I explored the idea of what humans do with the freedom that they are given, hence allow themselves to become obese through diet and exercise. I used Liu Xue’s theme of animalistic mutations and humour to create the piece, It Gives You Wings.

This piece, like Liu Xue’s “We Are the World”, was created out of humour and a play on the Red Bull Slogan, “Red Bull gives you wings”.

The torso was made from cling film and clear tape so that the body is transparent and hollow so that the body could be filled with rubbish from junk food. The wings were made from recycled Red Bull cans and other soft drinks as a play on the Red Bull Slogan, as these drinks are not healthy. The skeletal wings were shaped by copper wire. This gives the impression that the wings “given by Red Bull” have been broken and no longer work due to the laziness and obesity of the torso.

There is very little detail in It Gives You Wings, compared to the realistic and lifelike detail that Liu Xue included in his own sculpture. “We Are the World” reflects Chinese culture, whereas my own piece is more influenced by Western culture and their obesity problem.

This way, I created a sculpture that reflects Liu Xue’s human-animalistic mutations.
Significance of “Garden of Earthly Delights” by Hieronymus Bosch

The overarching theme of the third panel of “Garden of Earthly Delights” is the extent of punishment upon the figures. It shows how every being in the painting is being controlled in a way that they all have their individual punishments designed specifically for them.

I explored the idea of this theme and produced an outcome that was also inspired by a piece done by Banksy. *The Marionette* is a graphic outcome with an image of a girl with knocked knees in a white dress and an illustrated hand looming above her as if she is held up by puppet strings.

The girl looks like she is undergoing her punishment, in a white dress and high heels to represent a girl forced into an marriage or a social role that she hasn’t chosen, the hand belonging to the men in her life compelling her to a certain lifestyle. The hand therefore represents control and power.

The “Garden of Earthly Delights” can be linked to this piece as both convey an image of control. The figures in Bosch’s paintings all imitate puppets as they are viewed as individual figures doing individual acts that do not interact with one another under the control of someone else, ideally The Devil. However, in *The Marionette* the focus is only upon one figure who is also being controlled and is suffering from a punishment.