Art Comparative Study

Artwork Name: Guernica
Artist Name: Pablo Picasso
Year: 1937
Country: Spain

Artwork Name: untitled oil & charcoal on Canvas
Artist Name: KwangHo Shin
Year: 2013
Country: Korea

Artwork Name: Banker II
Artist Name: Nicola Hicks
Year: 2009
Country: UK

This comparative study will explore the links between three artworks:
- Guernica, Pablo Picasso
- Untitled Oil & Charcoal on Canvas, KwangHo Shin
- Banker II, Nicola Hicks

The main theme of this study will be Chaos and Conflict.

Mincheol Kim
Analysis of ‘Guernica’ by Pablo Picasso

The work *Guernica* used oil on canvas, and the size is 349 cm x 776 cm. This painting was created during the Cubism movement and features the angular lines and shapes. Their body gestures, body shape and facial expression are distorted and are not placed in the right place. All objects are abstract.

The colors used are mostly black, white and grey. The monochrome are solid and flat. The use of black and white suggests a hopeless and dark atmosphere. It is also reminiscent of a historical photograph.

The painting is filled with people, animals and faces, leaving little spaces in the background. The background shows a dark wall, and middle ground and foreground is a confusion of the lamp, people, animals and faces.

There are geometric lines that go through different shapes (e.g. horse, people), which creates clear areas of light and contrasts in tone.

Their poses and shapes are impossible and awkward. The shape of people’s eyes are tear shaped, and their mouths are wide open, which suggests screaming. Some people are spreading their arms as if they are shocked or begging for mercy. The painting appears to be noisy.

The use of contrast of black and white emphasizes the chaotic atmosphere of this scene. The background is rather dark while the foreground is bright, which give us the feeling of unseen danger in the dark. Black and white also suggests fact and honesty, which is interesting considering that the painting is so emotional. Perhaps it is the honesty of the horror.
Applying McFee King’s conceptual framework to Pablo Picasso

The painting ‘Guernica’ was completed in 1937, which was two years before the World War 2. The artwork was created and exhibited in Spain at the time of the Spanish Civil War.

Spain was angry and had rebellious and anarchic thoughts. This painting further stirred these emotions. Whilst some found it to gruesome and shocking born in subject and style, others would have connected to it in a very personal and emotional way. It was controversial, highly significant and relevant.

After the bombing of 26th April 1937, Picasso wanted to criticize and raise an awareness of what the Spanish government had done. He wanted to highlight and make public realize that there were only women, children and elders in the town, which had nothing to do with the civil war. His abstract and expressive style was the vehicle to do this. Pablo Picasso drew Guernica in 1937, which was the time period of Spanish Civil War.

Pablo Picasso was born in 1881 25th of October in Spain and died in 1973 8th of April. He is one of the pioneers of cubism. He also worked with sculpture, painting, print making, ceramics, stage design, poem, etc.
Significance of *Guernica*

Guernica is one of the most famous anti-war painting of all times. Through the abstraction and honest expression of emotion, he evoked the pains and horrors of war and bombings. During the time that Picasso created the work, bull fighting was also popular. The brutality and violence against the innocent animal was entertainment and a spectacle. Picasso took this idea and applied it to the scene of a horrific attack. The desperation on the faces of both the people and animals shows the same shock and pain.

The painting has obvious historical significance as it was created between the two World Wars and during the Spanish Civil War. This work documents the bombing that took place in the small city of Spain, Guernica. It criticized the bombing of the city and was seen as an anti-war message.

The bombing was an attack during the Spanish Civil War from the German military, supported by General Francisco Franco, a Spanish general. The political significance of this painting is obvious. As the Spanish people were already looking up to their leaders for protection, peace and answers, Picasso blatantly and publicly laid bare the truths of the betrayal, pain and suffering.

The image of a human skull and head of a bull is hidden in the painting. The skull is on the horse’s nose and mouth, and the bull’s head is placed between the horse and the fallen warrior. This is a hidden message from Pablo Picasso to send a secret message to the audience about the death (skull) and the cultural significance of the bull. This secrecy also alludes to the secrecy and betrayal of the Spanish general.
Analysis of ‘Untitled Oil and Charcoal on Canvas’ by KwangHo Shin

The lines of the brush are curved and free flowing lines. The thick paint creates strokes within strokes. This creates the feeling of mixed emotions and confusion. Perhaps due to the loss of identity.

The portrait is very abstract. The brush strokes distort the shape of the face while showing different textures and expression through the use of different colors.

This painting is layered. The figure of the human face was first drawn into the background with black and was then painted over with thick paint in different colors. The portrait is placed at the center of the painting, so the focus of the audience is completely on the figure. This makes it very confrontational for the audience but also for the figure who has nothing around them and is completely exposed.

The texture of the paint is incredibly thick, like icing on a cake. This makes the portrait stand out physically as well as visually. As though it is demanding attention.

A variety of colors have been used to represent a range and mixture of feelings. The colors used in the brush strokes mostly consist of black, blue, red, white, purple, yellow and mauve. The colors are unnatural, adding to the confusion and unnerving atmosphere.
Applying McFee King’s conceptual framework to KwangHo Shin

Audience’s World
This painting was done in 2013. At a time of apparent freedom of expression and vast amounts of communication (internet, social media, etc.), some sub-groups (gender, sexuality, race, etc.) are still or possibly more victimized than ever. How we interact with each other has shifted to a digital means rather than in person.

Audience
On viewing KwangHo Shin’s faceless portraits the audience may question not only their own identity and confusion but also their relationships to others. How they react to the faceless person could be a reflection of their character and treatment of omen.

Artist’s World
KwangHo Shin was born in 1983 in Seoul. He went to Keimyung University. He is famous for making these abstract faceless paintings with oil, acrylic and charcoal.

Artist
KwangHo Shin created this work in 2013. It illustrates how people are confused and struggling to control and manage their emotions and relationships with other people. This may be because of his cultural background, growing up and living in Asia has connotations of living digitally via social media and gaming. This is affecting relationships, health and mental health.
Significance of ‘Untitled Oil and Charcoal on Canvas’ by KwangHo Shin

Social

One of Shin’s main goals for his faceless paintings was to show the relationship between the emotions and mind of a person. By representing the faces with textural brush strokes and abstract color to show their psychology and mindset. It suggests that a person is more than their appearance. Or maybe that their appearance isn’t a true reflection of them as a person.

The work is culturally and socially significant to South Korea and South East Asia where the younger generation is becoming less able to form genuine and real relationships due to social media and gaming taking up time that was once used for socializing. The faceless figure represents the lack of identity, and inability to interact.

The way their faces are painted are very abstract. The shape of the face, eyes, nose and mouth are barely recognizable, which intensifies the confusion of emotions. Maybe the impact of social media and gaming on Asian youth is leaving them with internal feelings of chaos and bewilderment.

His work is abstract expressionism, but it has a very contemporary feel. Perhaps this is due to the choice of color and the very flat, empty background. This makes KwangHo Shin’s work significant in the development of abstract expressionism progressing through art history.
Analysis of Banker II by Nicola Hicks

The use of color black creates the sense of danger, darkness and mystery. Also, the black of the eye makes the creature look dead and emotionless, which intensifies the unpleasant feeling of foreboding.

This sculpture stands at 200cm tall. This means it would tower over most view making it intimidating and scary. The texture of the sculpture looks very rough. The lines on it’s torso makes it look like as if it is decaying, cracking and covered by a layer of mud. The cracks and crevices are everywhere, making him appear to be falling apart.

The material used is bronze, which makes the texture look very solid and strong, despite the crumbling appearance. To make this sculpture stable and balanced, it’s feet are made flat, which makes it appear to be stuck to the ground.

It’s head looks like a skull of an animal like a cow or a bull. The inappropriate choice of head makes the sculpture confusing and unnatural.

Since it is a sculpture, the view of this work will be different from different angles. However, facing the sculpture makes it appear that it is staring straight at you in a menacing and threatening way.

It’s motion of walking while holding mysterious objects makes it seem powerful and strong. The fact that it is walking towards the viewer in this image creates the atmosphere of danger approaching.
Significance of Banker II by Nicola Hicks

This piece was made only for the artist’s pleasure of making. According to Nicola Hicks, she would rather be a person who makes less money but does whatever she wants to do, rather than someone who earns more money but does what they don’t want to do. The audience of this piece can interpret Nicola Hicks as dream-seeking artist with hope and freedom. Nicola Hicks doesn’t like describing, she likes showing to the audience about her. This shows how she does what she wants to do and be happy about it.

However, in contrast to what she intended to show, this piece might be perceived differently to different audiences. Because this work is not obvious to understand the artist’s attention, the audience interpret it differently.

Because of the crumbling texture, it might be interpreted as a sense of instability and showing it’s true self. It looks as if the outer layer of the body will crumble off and show what is truly inside. This could be what Nicola Hicks was trying to suggest; that on the outside, we are covered by thick layer of something which restricts us from doing anything we want. The skull could represent how people these days are emotionless and dry, when they could be hiding their real self inside (almost like a mask). Object that is being held in both of the sculpture’s hands might represent duty and responsibility that restrains us to do whatever we desire.

Nicola Hicks wants freedom and she uses this sculpture to criticize the restriction of freedom that people are suffering.
Applying McFee King’s conceptual framework to Nicola Hicks

**Audience’s World**

This sculpture was done in 2009. Because there are not much war going on except the middle east Asia, it can be interpreted that this is done to portray these day society, where conflict is mostly about stress in daily life.

**Artist’s World**

Although Nicola Hicks was born in 1960, this piece was done in 2009. She usually likes to work with beasts’ and they were created to describe herself by making sculptures of beasts. She is creating these simply because she wanted to. She wants to express her feelings through making sculptures and doing whatever she wants to do.

**Audience**

This piece can be interpreted as bad omen that foreshadows the danger that might be coming. Because this is a 3D work, it can be looked at every different direction, which can suggest different meanings in different direction to different audiences.

**Artist**

Nicola Hicks was born in 1960 in London. She studied at Royal College of Art. She mainly used bronze when making sculptures, but plaster and straws were used also when trying to illustrate fragile detail. She has her own style of work to represent the physicality and psychology of animals and human.
Comparison of ‘Guernica’, ‘Untitled Oil and Charcoal on Canvas’, and ‘Banker II’

Guernica
- 20th Century
- Cubism
- More than One Person in the Painting
- Hidden Images
- Painting
- Emotions
- Abstract
- About Conflict
- Chaotic
- Human Figure
- 21st Century
- Portrait
- Face Facing the Audience
- Total Black
- Skull
- Sculpture
- Animals
- Big in Size
- Center Focused
- More than One Person in the Painting
- Colorful
- Portrait
- Face Facing the Audience

Untitled Oil and Charcoal on Canvas

Banker II
- Portrait
- Face Facing the Audience
- Skull
- Sculpture
- Total Black
- More than One Person in the Painting
- Colorful
- Portrait
- Face Facing the Audience
Similarities between ‘Guernica’, ‘Untitled oil & charcoal on canvas’ and ‘Banker II’

One of the biggest similarities between Guernica, Untitled oil & charcoal on canvas and Banker II is that they all link into the theme of Chaos. All three of them shows the conflict between other people or themselves through their own ways of expressing their emotions. All three has human figure and color black to represent the feeling or emotion of human being. And because they are all an abstract piece of artwork, it expresses the emotion in a more effective way.
Differences between ‘Guernica’, ‘Untitled oil & charcoal on canvas’ and ‘Banker II’

There are few differences of these works. First of all, Guernica is the only work that was done in 20th century. It is one of the well-known anti-war artwork. The style of this work is cubism and has hidden images that conveys messages. Untitled oil & charcoal on canvas is the only work that has different colors other than black and white, which shows different emotions. It is the only center-focused portrait that shows mixture of different emotions. Banker II is the only 3D artwork that has a human figure combined with animal (bull).
Significance of Guernica to my own work

Thematic Influence

My work was influenced by the painting *Guernica* by Pablo Picasso. In order to make my work look similar with *Guernica*, I imitated his style of art. I included animals such as cow, horse and a bird, put same number of people with similar gestures with similar facial expressions (pain). I made clear black and white contrast and made it look similar to black and white shows the gloomy atmosphere, suggesting there is conflict going on between these people.

The both my work and *Guernica* are trying to convey the idea of anti-conflict. Just like how *Guernica* has created chaotic and confusing atmosphere by using contrast in color, distorted body shapes and faces in pain, I have also used these features to create a similar atmosphere. However, my work and *Guernica* are aimed at different audiences. Guernica was criticizing how the innocent lives were sacrificed because of conflict and wanted to raise an awareness of this disaster. On the other hand, my work was to raise an awareness of modern school society problems such as bullying and relationship problems.
Significance of Banker II to my own work

My work, Metamorphosis, was influenced by Nichola Hicks’ work, Banker II. The fact that Banker II uses cracking textures to suggest that something is about to deteriorate made me want to apply this breaking texture into my own work. With my work, I created a clay work of a man attached to tree branches. After I was done, I broke and made cracks to the branches and the roots with a hammer to show how human are trying to break the bond between the nature, but is unsuccessful. Unlike how Banker II was only black, I’ve used different colors to create my work to make the broken parts stand out. Also, besides broken parts, the textures are smooth, which clearly emphasizes the broken parts by contrasting with smooth surface.

Another influence was the mixture of a human figure and another thing. Just like how Banker II is a mixture of a human body and a skull of a horned animal, my sculpture is a mixture of human figure and trees. This mixture suggests that our connection with the nature is unbreakable, yet we are trying to deny the fact and is trying to isolate ourselves from the nature.
Significance of untitled oil & charcoal on Canvas to my own work

My typographic work was influenced by KwangHo Shin’s work, Untitled oil & charcoal on Canvas. I really liked the idea of expression yourself through the use of portrait, so just like how KwangHo Shin expressed people’s complex and mixed kind of emotions by drawing an abstract portrait of a person, I have made a typographic portrait of myself to express my own mixture of emotions and thoughts. Just like how KwangHo Shin’s portrait show the real self, I described my real self with texts.

However, the difference between my work and his work is that my message is passed on through the use of texts, while KwangHo Shin uses mixed colored brush strokes to express emotions in depth. Texts that are about happiness is on the face and hair, which describes what I’m like on the outside, but suffering words and phrases are at the body, which illustrates that I am suffering on the inside and is not easily spotted.
Bibliography

- [http://www.pablopicasso.org/guernica.jsp](http://www.pablopicasso.org/guernica.jsp) - guernica pic
- [http://www.artnet.com/artists/nicola-hicks/banker-ii-a-sFhdkDympaUzJJilikSPyQ2](http://www.artnet.com/artists/nicola-hicks/banker-ii-a-sFhdkDympaUzJJilikSPyQ2) - banker ii
- [https://www.behance.net/gallery/9073375/100-untitled-oil-charcoal-on-canvas-73-x-532-cm-20](https://www.behance.net/gallery/9073375/100-untitled-oil-charcoal-on-canvas-73-x-532-cm-20) - face