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SUSANNA VS THE ELDERS

THE MALE AND THE FEMALE GAZE — A COMPARISON OF SUSANNA AND THE ELDERS AS PORTRAYED BY MALE AND FEMALE ARTISTS

Susanna and the Elders, a passage from the Old Testament, tells a story of a woman falsely accused of adultery by two older men who have ran into each other while spying on her as she bathed. The story has been depicted by multiple Renaissance and Baroque artists. The disparity between the interpretations of the tale by male and female artists crates a window for the exploration of the male and female gaze in the 16th and 17th century.

The subject of the painting can also serve as a reflection on the nature of art in that tim frame, and to a large extent, contemporarily. Men are the ones who look, while women are being looked at. As an English director and producer, Laura Mulvey notes in her Visual and Other Pleasures "imagery of women has been constructed in a way that makes them vulnerable to the objectifying gaze of men, and in a way that welcomed, or even invited, scopophilia (an aesthetic pleasure drawn from looking at an object or a person). Put simply, female bodies were objectified by male artists for the pleasure of male spectators."

This is clear in the versions of these paintings done by male artists. In Tintoretto's portrayal Susanna is sitting with a raised food while having her hair braided by a servant. She is looking directly at the viewer but is completely unaware of the lurking men. In the case of Rembrandt, she is a young girl, which adds on to the idea of her innocence and helplessness. She is not unaware of the elders' presence but does nothing to defend herself. She remains passive. Rubens depicts Susanna as her cloth is being torn away by the lurkers and she swerves away. She is not as oblivious as in the other portrayals but still does not try to fight back or escape.

Susanna and the Elders by Tintoretto, 1555

Susanna and the Elders by Peter Paul Rubens, 1607

This narrative, characterised by a lack of resistance, shifts when a female perspective is introduced. In the painting by Artemisia Gentileschi the two elders are shown to be whispering to one another, highlighting the plot between them, and emphasising their villainy in the scene. Moreover, Susanna is granted with significantly more agency. She is rejecting the men's advances, as she twists away from them and raises her hands in an attempt to protect herself and push the men away. This resistance is absent in the other versions of the painting.

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Susanna and the Elders by Rembrandt, 1647

Artemisia Gentileschi's work was heavily influenced by her own experience. At the age of seventeen she was raped by a student of her father's and fought through a seven-moths long court trial. The proceeding included torture to confirm the artist's honesty. As explained in a BBC article the link between Artemisia's personal trauma and her work is that very often "Her paintings feature tough female protagonists and graphic violence of women against men." Artemisia's works bring a sense of poetic justice. They also paved the way for female artists and portrayals that no longer place women as the objects of the male gaze.

While the painting style has drastically changed since the times of Artemisia and her male contemporaries, the issue of the dissonance between the male and female gaze remains present. Gentileschi's work, although over 400 years old remains an accurate mirror the shift of perspective that comes with the introduction of the female gaze.

Susanna and the Elders by Artemisia Gentileschi, 1610

A BRIEF POLITICAL HISTORY OF FASHION

Ever since people figured out that what they wear could represent what they think, politics and fashion have been intertwined. While from the Middle Ages onwards this most often applied to religion - modesty, head coverings, the Puritan mode of dress - the European Enlightenment period expanded fashion to encompass political ideas. So how did political and social changes impact the history of European fashion between the 1790s and 1950s?

The turn of the 19th century saw a radical change in fashion. The cause? The French Revolution, of course. Enlightenment ideas brought the focus of the educated classes back to the democracies of the Ancient World. Liberation and the end of unnecessary restrictions crossed over from the political to the artistic sphere. As they revived ancient political practices, they also felt inspired by ancient garments, art and ideas of beauty: thus emerged Neoclassicism.

Figure 1: example of 1800s women's fashion – Empire silhouette.

Figure 2: example of 1790s women's fashion

Figure 3: example of 1780s women's fashion

The Citizens - with a capital C, as was the formal mode of address during the Revolutionary period - took to wearing their opinions. Gone were the elaborate dresses with false hips wide enough to hide a television, gone were the ribbons and towering hairstyles. Much simpler column-style dresses replaced them, rejecting the excesses of the aristocracy and returning to Ancient ideals. As it tends to happen, men's fashion did not alter as drastically as women's. It was certainly simplified from the extravagant court dress of the 18th century - a range of colours, intricate embroidery, the culottes (short upper-class trousers) were rejected during the French Revolution. In fact, one revolutionary movement named itself the sans-culottes (those without the short upper-class trousers). All that in mind, it did not follow the women into so heavily referencing Antiquity. The French Revolution was a revolution in politics as well as in dress. It was the first time that European fashion changed so drastically - over the course of a decade instead of its usual gradual evolution.

Figure 4: 18th century fashion plate of a man wearing culottes

Figure 3: example of 1800s men's fashion

Figure 6: example of 1890s women's fashion

Indeed, since the 19th century fashion has been seen shifting from decade to decade, coming back to its regular course of evolution, but accelerating in pace. The 1800s and 1810s were the peak of the Empire (or Regency) waistline and the Antiquity-inspired woman's silhouette, and by the fin de siècle elaborate styles had returned stronger than ever, lined with lace and accessorised with fanciful hats and jewellery. In the Gilded Age the aristocrats and bourgeoisie flaunted their means in what they wore. As tensions were rising between the European Great Powers and it started to seem that the 20th century would bring untold disaster (which it did, multiple times over), the Decadent movement was born. It heralded the decline of Western civilisation and called for sensual indulgence, including in the manner of one's dress - the more, the better! Following their decadent whims, the 19th century well-to-do groups decided to drown out their growing sense of foreboding with abundance and art and beauty. Mostly they succeeded.

World War One, the imminent disaster, once again washed away the extravagant styles. The 1920s came roaring, and the avant-garde movements invented a new type of extravagance that was closer to eccentricity. The lust for freedom and the loosening of restrictions after years of continuous warfare, led to another radical reform in fashion. The styles worn in this period took inspiration from the Empire period, as is seen in the straight silhouettes of women's dresses and shortening of the hairstyles (which in the Empire period had not actually changed in length, only made to seem short by means of elaborate pinning and curling). Women's liberation movements (stemming from the 19th century, but gaining much new force) paved the way for simple, loose dresses with less layers and more revealing cuts. The "New Women" were born. The men, once again, did not stray far from their suits, the lack of reform in clothing perhaps reflecting the lack of longing for socio-political change. They were most likely satisfied with their active role in politics, which could not have been said for the women.

Figure 7: examples of 1920s women's fashion

This era of extravagance came to a close as another imminent disaster struck. After World War Two - in the 1940s and 50s - fashion regressed to more conservative styles, once again accentuating the curves of women's bodies. Eccentric fashion houses like Schiaparelli (Figures 1 & 2) had to close down, as people became more cautious and reserved in what they chose to wear. Men's fashion finally caught up with women and loosened, relegating the suit to the formal category to make way for short-sleeved button-up shirts (or simply long-sleeved shirts without all the layers of a full suit), still a staple in any wardrobe to this day. However, with the rise of ready-made fashion, formal and casual clothing began to drift farther apart.

Since then we haven't had a clear-cut revolution in fashion, but the pattern has been observed to reoccur about every hundred years. Mostly we've been running along with ready-made fast fashion and unfortunately falling victim to clothing conglomerates. We're in the 2020s now, and global tensions are rising. How about a revolution? Politics or fashion, either would be fine.

Figure 8: examples of 1940s women's fashion

Figure 9: examples of 1950s men's casual fashion

BEHIND THE BILLY JOEL'S "NEW YORK STATE OF MIND"

"New York had all the iridescence of the beginning of the world."

- F. Scott Fitzgerald

From the minute "The Piano Man" had begun to play, it was clear that the city of New York found itself a new anthem.

"A lot of bad things were happening in New York then. There was a lot of crime. Drugs were out of control. The city looked bad; it was really dirty. It almost defaulted, financially," he told Newsday in 2015. "It really needed a boost, and I wanted to write an anthem for it."

Billy Joel, the notorious performer, had been living in Los Angeles for a few years in the early 1970s, but he could feel the east coast metropolis softly tugging at his heart. He was prompted to write a devotion after returning home, despite the city's own troubles with crime and narcotics.

"New York State of Mind" was not the only one influenced by his cross-country relocation and a touch on soft rock. Turnstiles, his 1976 studio album, was heavily influenced by the renewal and excitement of coming home after a long absence.

The sultry saxophone and the swell of piano and strings combine to create an irresistible whimsy for gentler, more settled moments at home and what it implies in adulthood. The youth is fun when put into retrospect, minds free of the "Daily News" headlines. Living was easier, simpler.

The track's interpretation has evolved throughout the years. Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the song became a nationalistic anthem. "Everyone was just about in tears trying to get through the song when we sang at that telethon soon after 9/11 [The Concert for New York City]," he stated in the same Newsday report. "We performed it as a blues rather than a standard. We played it downbeat, quiet, and slowly, almost like an elegy. It was challenging to get through.

"Billy Joel, the thirty three hit wonder, successfully combined various elements of jazz and soft rock into a nostalgic song acclaimed by the public of New York City. Like any other large metropolis, it suffers from traffic, gentrification, poverty, and pollution. The rent is expensive, the subways are overcrowded with rats and rat-like people, and the city has traditionally been a haven for greed and selfishness. However, once you have truly tasted the essence of the vivid mosaic with sharp corners, an all-seeing presence that sees us while we are invisible and makes us feel invincible. New York exudes an unrepentant, enchantingly electrifying sense of desire and belonging. The city has become a mecca not only for jazz artists but individuals seeking themselves in a sadistic and chaotic world where hours, days, years are simply convertible photographic film used to form various images in the camera lenses with various masks put on their faces. The blinding lights coming from high skyscrapers or lamps in Riverside Park make problems seem far, almost washed away with the Hudson River' current.

POLA JANCEWICZ

THE NEVER ENDING STORY

For the past two years, whenever I was in the cinema, a thought kept popping into my mind "when will the movie end?" It was not because the movie was boring – to the contrary – almost all the movies I watched were dazzled with special effects, exhilarating fights and skillful plot twists.Yet somehow I still felt that compared to movies from previous decades, the ones I watched in the cinema were longer, and I was right.

The longest Star Wars movie was the last one, released in 2017 (2 hours, 32 minutes). The last four movies of "Fast and Furious" were longer by half an hour than the first four. The same trend applies to the James Bond saga, with "No Time to Die" lasting 2 hours and 43 minutes.

Sure, in the past there were movies that were extremely long, with Gone With the Wind (3 hours, 44 minutes) leading the case, but these were aberrations. The data is clear: in 2021 movies were 9 minutes longer than those from 2011, 14 minutes longer than those from 1991 and 21 minutes longer than the ones from 1981. 90 minutes used to be a standard; now, Netflix has a special catalog for movies of such length. Why did this shift happen?

The first reason is the current lack of constraints. In the past, theaters needed movies to be short, because they could fit more screenings a day and get more revenue. However, with the development of multiplexes (starting in the 1950s in Canada and culminating in the 2010s when practically every cinema was a multiplex) that financial pressure waned.

Besides this, movie producers do not have to adhere to television guidelines. TV stations prefer 90 minute movies, because when you add commercials, they fit in perfectly into a 2 hour program. However, now, most films end up on streaming services either way and these give you no limitations – that's why Martin Scorsese did not have to cut the 3.5 hour "The Irishman."

Another reason is the boom of streaming platforms that compete for our attention. Why would you go to the cinema when you can watch something equally interesting at home? This means that going to the cinema became an event – something special – and with that action movies became more popular. When looking at top movies from the 1970s–1990s, there was a balance between comedy, drama, science fiction and action. Now, the highest grossing movies are superhero and action movies – and these are usually much longer.

Studios and directors have adapted to this phenomenon. Bruce Isaacs, an associate professor of film studies at the University of Sydney, explained that studios have allowed for movies to be "dramatically bloated" – so that they could become cinema events." Dana Polan, a cinema studies professor at NYU's Tisch School of Arts, noticed how "adventure movies, that currently sustain the industry, have long, often unnecessary CGI-heavy scenes." It's almost as if the prerequisite for a movie to become a cinema success is it being an epic film with splashy visual effects and fights – exemplified by the popularity of Marvel/DC movies.

What is the future of film? If trends continue, more movies are going to drift away from the 90/120 minute benchmark, however, like all future predictions, that is uncertain. What is certain, however, is that the film industry is going to be forever shaped by the growth of streaming platforms.

By Ewa Raczkowska

EMILKA CHAŁUPCZAK

THE MIRROR OF IMPRESSIONISM - MONET AND DEBUSSY

The blurry world abstracted by a curtain of rain; blooming flower petals raining from the sky; a lonely autumn cobblestone road; the endless blanket of the darkest sea. Imagining these sceneries can bring up a sense of nostalgia, soft light and blurry noises. Seeing individual petals or rain droplets is impossible - so is spotting individual brush strokes of a painting as you're standing far away, or hearing every note in a soft piano descent, blurred by low vibrations of the accompaniment.

All this haze and mute is often related to Impressionism, which in the modern day we connect to mysterious blue and orange shapes of Monet's Impression, Sunrise or the first bright chords of Debussy's Claire de Lune. Rightfully so, as they were the leading artists of the style.

Impressionism started as a movement in painting in the 1860s, when a group of artists, including Monet, Sisley and Pissarro, painted in the outdoors in the natural light. They gained popularity when Édouard Manet's The Luncheon on the Grass (1863) got rejected from the Salon de Peris, an annual art show, due to showcasing a realistic, female nude in a contemporary setting. The name of the movement comes from the critic Louis Leroy, who laughed at the title of Monet's Impression, Sunrise, calling it "unfinished".

In music, Impressionism can be seen as an extension of Romanticism, having a similar atmosphere, expressiveness, subtleness. It expanded upon harmonies and scales, and Impressionists preferred short forms like arabesques or nocturnes. Although music pieces were rarely inspired by specific paintings, the artists often coexisted in similar scenery and social circles, so there are connections to be drawn between the disciplines.

It's a Tuesday evening in a cobblestone-covered 19-century Paris. An artistic hub on 89 rue de Rome is filled with the most renowned artistic personalities of that time. They have all gathered there on an invitation of Stéphane Mallarmé. The minds and souls of the guests are occupied with the discussions of art, philosophy and poetry. In the group, we can find Claude Monet, Oscar Wilde, Edgar Degas. Claude Debussy has joined the artistic elite for the night, and is talking with the host, gathering ideas for the piece that would birth musical Impressionism, Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun - he is enchanted by the sensuality of a mythological abomination of a half-man and half-goat.

Although Debussy has never created music directly inspired by Monet's paintings, the artists' paths have crossed. Monet introduced the composer to the series of paintings depicting foggy, dark nights, which inspired him to create Nocturnes in 1899. While Debussy was not too fond of the name that came with relating to the style filled with musical colour and dreaminess, we can draw common points between his pieces and Monet's paintings.

The palette and transitions of colours are a big part of the Impressionist movement. The grey and muted colours in Monet's paintings can be seen in Debussy's clusters of chords in the lower range, blurred either by the multiplicity of instruments or the use of a piano pedal. Amongst those misty compositions, sharp details emerge - Monet's red sun and a dark boat in Sunrise or the curvy, flower-covered subject in Japanese Bridge. In the case of Debussy, bright and striking melody, decorated by ornaments, played by the right hand in Reverie or the clear clarinet notes emerging from a sea of a string orchestra in Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun serve this role. The paintings often have multiple focal points or motifs, which appear in music as well as polyphony of multiple independent voices playing at once. Monet's pieces are often abstract with a messiness of brush strokes, whereas Debussy uses arrhythmia alongside atonality (absence of functional harmony in a key), often coloured by dissonances.

The distance between the subjects of paintings can be shown by specific intervals in musical pieces. Minor and major seconds used by Debussy in melodies and buried in chords mirror a contrast between colours in a short distance between green lilies and pink flowers in Water Lilies by Monet. Another dissonant interval is the triton - between a perfect fourth and fifth, splitting the octave in two - and while it can cause discomfort in the ears of a listener, Debussy finds a relaxing place for it in phrases, tying it together. In Sunrise Monet places orange and blue - colours on the opposite sides of the colour wheel - next to each other, overlapping brush strokes, forming a harmonious and dynamic effect of an early morning sky. The assonance of perfect fourths and fifths, often flowing up and down in Debussy's works, creates a complementary effect of movement.

EMILKA CHAŁUPCZAK

The sense of colours moving together is used by Monet in the piece Woman with a Parasol, in the mixing directions of the grass, clouds, and the woman's scarf blowing in the wind. Both artists use the stability of successive octaves - Debussy in the slow paced, high-pitched resolutions of dissonant chords or thrilling, low, running accompaniment; Monet places stable masts moving in one direction or the successive tree trunks, directing the flow and focal points of his pieces.

Both Claude Monet and Claude Debussy were pioneers in their disciplines, creating a style of dissonance mixing with clear compositions, paving the way for their contemporaries and successors. Although Impressionism was born in France, it reached Spain, England and Poland, making the audiences worldwide familiar with the trend of light and clear melodies being buried in the mistiness of greyness and lower-toned harmonies.
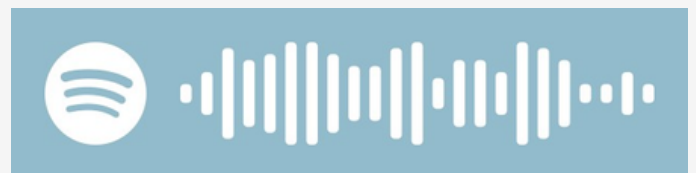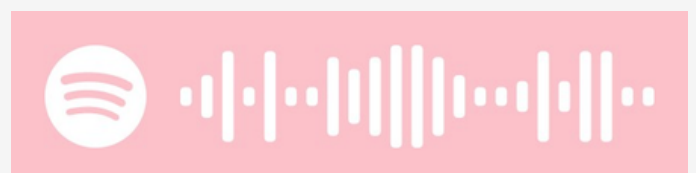

Claude Monet Woman with a Parasol, 1875

Claude Monet Impression, Sunrise, 1872

Spotify codes
to some of the pieces mentioned:

Claude Debussy Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun, 1894

Claude Debussy Reverie, 1890

EXPOSING THE DARKNESS OF OUR WORLD BY CARAVAGGIO

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio was an Italian painter working in the early 17th century (1571-1610). His art became very iconic for the mystery he created by the extent of realism, use of light, and complexity of expression, though iconic, his devotion to realism was often questioned when people argued it was too realistic and thus provocative.

Ottavio Leoni, Portrait of Caravaggio, c.1621-1625

Caravaggio is known as the 'Renaissance Rebel' or the 'Hot-tempered punk of art history'; Other than in his art, throughout his life, Caravaggio committed multiple crimes, including killing a man or chucking a plate of artichokes in a waiter's face. He, thus, saw art as an opportunity to reflect his rebellious self and did not fear evoking controversy. What struck people and evoked such high interest in his works, was the innovative depiction of ugliness in the human body. The artist was one of the first to avoid hiding specific features from his model's bodies such as dirty fingernails, scarred faces, etc. Furthermore, Caravaggio used prostitutes and orphaned children as his models. He wanted to capture the beauty in all people and normalize realistic details being shown in art. People were not only shocked by this new approach but in some way triggered.

His art was very controversial and throughout his life, many people found themselves not accepting this realistic approach. People argued that showing those features and avoiding the idealization of the human figure, affected the visuals of the art piece in a way that did not allow it to fit the beauty standards and norms of art, which were established and which people were used to. Therefore people did not know how to react to artworks being so far from the usual norm and did not consider them beautiful or appealing.

Another feature of his style was the great use of tenebrism. He manipulated light to create a sense of mystery and drama, involving the viewer in the emotional scenes he depicted. Caravaggio is known to have never painted in the light of day. He would close himself and his models in a dark room (typically at night) and use artificial light to decide which figures or parts of the composition to illuminate. That way, the background was dark, allowing the illuminated features to stand out dramatically and communicate specific expressions more intensely.

"He brought them into his own time – and he involves you, so that you don't just passively watch".

The artist did not avoid religious themes and it was common for him to paint an image depicting a biblical scene. This further evoked controversy as religious people saw Caravaggios's art as a vulgar way to approach the depiction of saints.

In one of his religious paintings, "Death of the Virgin", Caravaggio paints Mary laying down, with nothing differentiating her from an average unholy human. Her hand is restlessly hanging down, her bare feet are exposed and swollen. She is clearly dead, and Caravaggio represents the realistic view of her remains. It would be no surprise if he confirmed the rumour from Rome that, as for most of his paintings, Caravaggio used a prostitute to model the Virgin Mary. (The prostitute was found drowned in the Tiber; a scandal ensued.)

Caravaggio, The Death of the Virgin, c.1606

Caravaggio, Sint Matthew and the Angel, c.1602

Moreover, the painting is dark, which was also unusual when showing religious themes, as anything related to saints and Gods was portrayed in light colors as a representation of holiness, purity, and morality.

Caravaggio, distancing himself from the norms caused sensation and interest in the artistic world. He made scenes in his paintings live and recognized the beauty and potential of art in ugliness and realism. His use of tenebrism and chiaroscuro created a new style- used by artists in the Baroque period, called Caravaggism.

"Ribera, Vermeer, Georges de La Tour and Rembrandt could never have existed without him. And the art of Delacroix, Courbet and Manet would have been utterly different."

-    Roberto Longhi

Caravaggio, Mary Magdalen in Ecstasy, c.1606

ALEKSANDRA BIŁOUS

PAINTING IN 3D: AN INCREDIBLE MOMENT AT PARIS FASHION WEEK

What is Paris fashion week?

In the opulent world of clothing design, there are four important fashion weeks. They are often referred to as the "Big 4": New York, Paris, London and Milan. However, the first fashion week of the industry was hosted in Paris. Since its debut in 1973, it became an unmissable event among designers and celebrities.

The events at Paris Fashion Week are divided into three categories: menswear, haute couture and ready-to-wear. From the three, haute couture has its own special requirements – in order to qualify for this category, a given fashion house must meet several conditions set by the Chamber of the haute couture. According to these rules, a house must present a collection of at least 35 pieces (including both daytime and evening wear) per season. Only then, they are eligible to take part in the runway. Only a few houses are chosen for this particular category every season and thus, can officially produce Haute-Couture collections.

Paris Fashion Week takes place twice a year with Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter editions. While fashion shows have already existed for around 170 years, the catwalk extravaganza we know today came to life in the '70s and has become the base of the fashion industry ever since.

This year, one of the most striking designs was made by the Coperni brand for its Spring/ Summer 2023 show at Paris Fashion Week.

Coperni is a Parisian brand named after the Polish Renaissance mathematician and astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus. Founded in 2013, the brand is interested in fusing science, craft and fashion. They also focus on a visionary version of clothing. In the announcement of the show, the designers emphasised that they want to concentrate on the female narrative, presenting all of their pieces for women.

Why was this show so special?

The final garment presented was not a traditional dress made out of common fabrics. It was an artistic vision made fully from white paint sprayed onto the naked body of Bella Hadid.

The spray itself was developed by a fabric technology company Fabrican, which was founded in 2003 by Spanish scientist and fashion designer Manel Torres. The dress itself could be taken off like any other garment, hung and washed and even turned into liquid again. In pictures, the dress looked as if it was a kind of soft silk or elastic cotton, whereas in reality it was a liquid made out of natural and synthetic fibres, such as wool, mohair, cotton, nylon and cellulose. The liquid solution was applied using a spray gun directly onto Bella's body but as soon as it made contact with the surface, it evaporated to finally form a non-woven fabric.

The steps were as follows: firstly, Bella Hadid came in, wearing nothing but skin-toned underwear. She approached a platform, where a team of people holding spray guns formed an outline of the dress on her body. After the shape of the garment was sprayed, a Coperni employee began to cut and perfect the white dress. Then, she cleaned Hadid's chest, took off the straps from her arms so that they could freely flow down, and cut a slit for her leg.

Of course, due to Bella's hectic schedule on Paris Fashion Week rehearsals before the show were impossible, so ultimately it was her first time on the stage that she was sprayed. In an interview after the show Bella admitted to being very nervous, even though she tried her best to hide it. Yet, even less than a minute after the runway, she said she already felt like the performance had been a "pinnacle moment" in her career, despite the lack of rehearsals and the cold temperature of the room in which she performed.

Overall, this performance captivated the audience and ultimately, the reason for making the dress was the drama involved with it's construction.

BARBARA MIELECH-MARCINIAK

DUOMO DI MILANO AS THE ESSENCE OF BEAUTY

The Cambridge Dictionary defines beauty as 'the quality of being pleasing, especially to look at'. Beauty is a crucial value in the lives of people. It shapes their vision of the world, and influences art and architecture.

One of the examples of beauty in the world manifested through architecture is the Milan Cathedral. It is acclaimed for being the biggest and the most perfect Gothic catholic Cathedral ever built in the world. It has been developed for over six centuries, and its style has been affected by various ideas - gothic, renaissance, baroque, classical and even art-deco architecture.

The first thing one notices about the Cathedral is its openness, elegance, and the colossal role of light, which gives the visitors the impression of being transported to Heaven. Figure 1 shows the triangular shape of the building, which symbolises hands in the motion of prayer. The facade structure is dominated by vertical lines pointing upwards to Heaven, which we automatically follow as if it was a holy flame.

The material that the church has been built with is bricks, covered with light, pink marble. The bright and pastel colours evoke positive feelings in the faithful. The body of the Cathedral, as well as its interior, is richly decorated with over 100 marble spires and over 2000 elegant and sophisticated marble statues. Even though one could feel that there is an abundance of decoration, the size of the cathedral and the perfect structure of the ornaments create a sense of lightness and make the construction even more magnificent.

The Milan Cathedral is embellished with breathtaking stained glass windows, which pour the luminous colours inside and brighten the darkness of the interior.

Another feature of the Milan Cathedral is its vaulted ceiling composed of pointed arches. This structure was typical for the gothic style. It originated from the Basilica of St. Denis, the birthplace of gothic. Its function was to open up space and allow the light to disperse among the church.

The grand entry doors, one of the most magnificent parts of the Cathedral facade, attract attention and are often admired, but rarely opened. There is a plethora of symmetrically arranged ornaments around the doors, mainly various human figures, but also lions symbolising courage, placed on the pillars. The pillars form a buttress - a type of arch which connects with the walls to support the vertical ornaments. A 19th-century Italian sculptor crafted the panels on the doors, which follow the theme of stories of the life of Mary.

Duomo di Milano is an eclectic piece of architecture. It combines gothic beauty with significant receipts of other contrasting architectural styles. Light, openness, stained glass windows and spectacular roof all play a crucial role in making the Cathedral slender, and magnificent.

ZOFIA CZERSKA

Summer Solstice

a humid summer breeze is filling
my eyes, my ears, my lungs
as the small pathways I used to take
all blur into one road.
even the houses wobble from side to side
almost as if they're also being pushed by the wind

I hold you close when the sun finally sets
no word of Mack will ever rival
the array of colors between our hearts
"Nature loves Sapphics," you say
"just look at the colors of the sunset"
and in these moments I wish Nature loved us
half as much
as you love her

we exchange kindness with the sun's rays
we shout out greetings when the rain comes
even as street lamps slowly turn on,
nothing separates us from the secrets of the universe

in these moments
when the keeper starts closing up the gates
distant jiggles of keys and off-key whistling
voices of patrons trickling out of the park
souls of the muses trapped in marble
sough of leaves, full of life and color
stability of the ground and love from the sky
caresses of the thinnest grass blades
rustling of ants beneath our fingers
surprising warmth of the dusk
in sync with each other and the uncanny

when I go out, you say, looking at the sky.
I want to go out just as beautifully.

fifteen oh-seven

The red on my nails compliments the red
of my lips, my cheeks, the tiny scars
on my face, that I am
growing to love.
My yellow teeth always remind me of our
first time on a market in New York City.
A woman was buying a bouquet of
sunflowers. And you didn't like it
when I tried honey for the first time.
'Get that sugary thing away'. And I did.
It stuck in the gaps between my molars
but I never saw it as too sweet.
After all, nothing is more bitter than liquid gold.
It's embraced the pale vastness
of my thighs that refuse to tan even as
I make love to the sun. I bathe my tangled hair
in red wine
wishing it was my blood,
because how can I be loved when my stomach is soft?
Soft is the word you used to scar me.
It is mine now.
Softness defines my curves, my fingertips, my unruly hair,
my red lips, my gentle arms, my toothy smile, my loving gaze,
my silver words,
my golden heart.
Softness defines me–
–and I define it.

Leave your worries in August

Leave your worries in August!
Let your soul meander around the pale moon,
Trace your soul back to the mountains,
Lose it in the warm sand.
Find it on the cobblestone streets of Faro,
Or in the first notes of an old samba standard.
Let jazz permeate your body,
Cry with words and not salty tears.
Those treasured memories stored in polaroids,
Hidden between pages of a novel,
Between the lines of a poem,
In the linen pants you bought second-hand,
With all the colorful souvenirs and people;

Fall back into your bed and worry not, my love.
Leave all your woes in August!

work of art magazine

POETRY
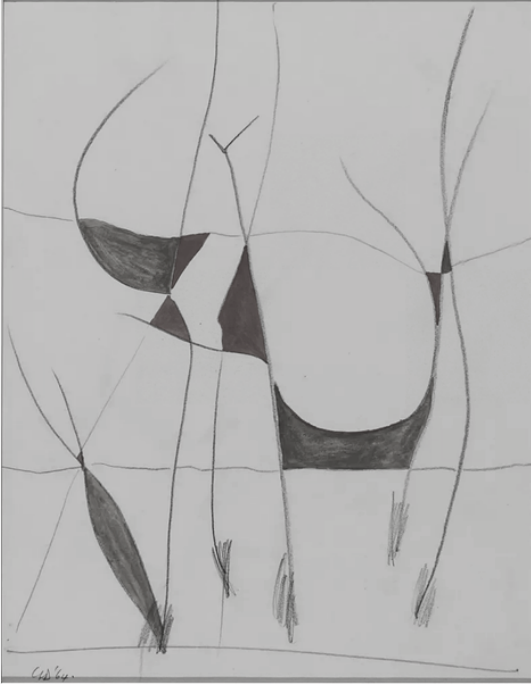
Make it through December

Julianna Podoba

Crackling colours of marmalade

to oxblood, and to fading green

fall to the cold muddy soil.

The muddy soil, as if full of fear,

deepens its position, when I step fiercely

on its delicate head.

I am the fading colours,

and the muddy soil.

All that falls, drags me down,

pulls on my eyelids,

my heavy shoulders,

and my freezing feet.

Calls for my surrender.

Will I make it through

The short nights of December?

Let July be July

by Morgan Harper Nichols

Even here, you are growing.
When August is approaching
and you feel a little restless
thinking about how
this month might end
and how
this year might end
and how you are supposed to
start again,
you are growing,
you are growing,
in grace
courage
strength.
And it is okay
if it does not feel like it.
It is okay if there are moments
where you cannot see
the way you have grown,
because far beneath the surface
the seeds have still been sown.
The ground beneath your feet
is still a bed for new beginnings.
So much is changing around you
but you are changing, too.
You are so much more than the brokenness
that you were certain would define you.
It has not been easy for you.
You have worked so hard
to be the positive one.
You have given your best
in areas of your life
where the effort was not returned.
And this has made it so hard
for you to keep going,
and there have been days
where you were not sure
if it was even possible.
But after everything,
here you are,
just a little stronger,
holding on a little longer,
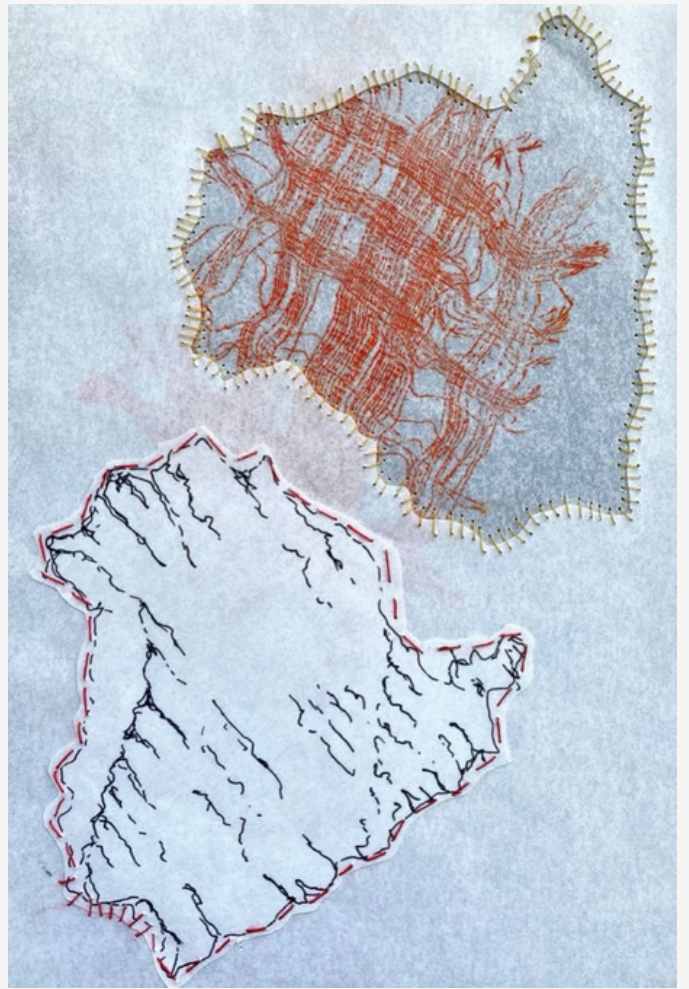and you still found room for hope.
So take heart
breathe deep
you are still becoming
who you were meant to be.
Let July be July.
Let August be August.
And let yourself
just be
even in
the uncertainty.
You don't have to fix
everything.
You don't have solve
everything.
And you can still
find peace
and grow
in the wild
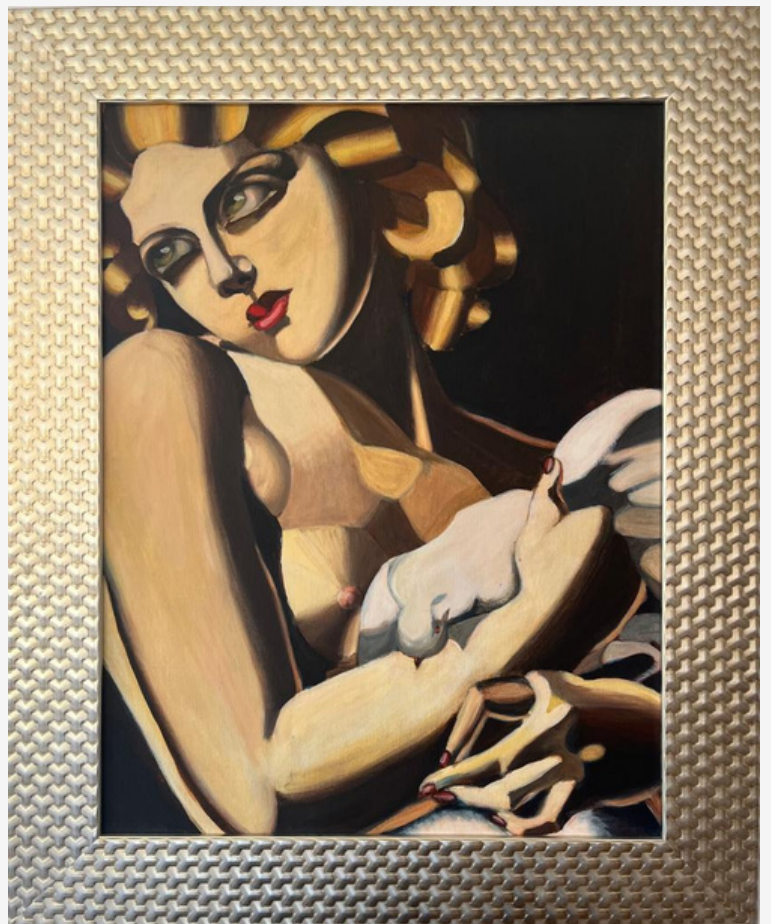of changing things.

GALLERY SECTION

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Maria Wuczyńska

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ANTONINA OŻYŃSKA