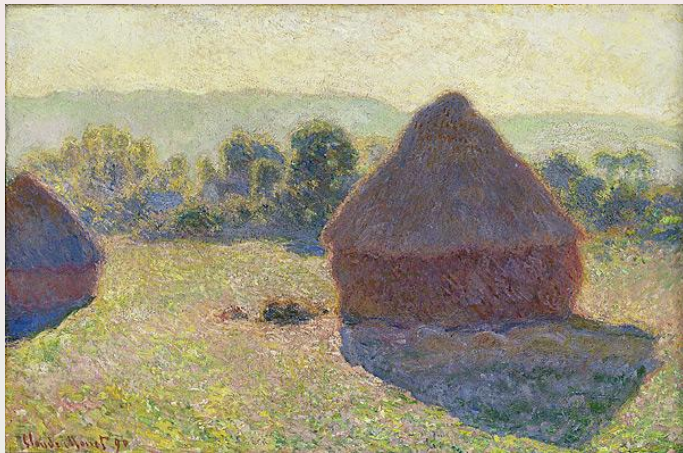


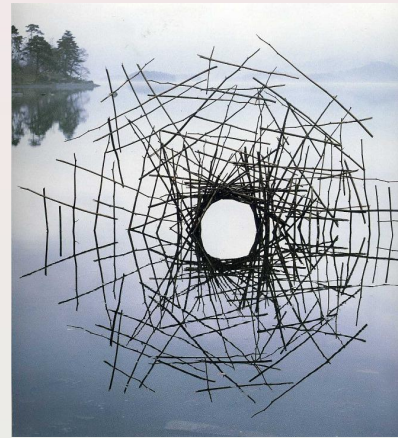
Comparative Study

Ethan Fetherston

In this study the natural world and humanity's connection to it are explored through fine art. This is done through the examination of two artists work, Peter Doig and Charles Munch. Their vastly different techniques and meanings are analysed in an attempt to understand how the current art world views the environment. The historical background of this idea will also be briefly investigated in order to gain a greater understanding of how common the natural world's connection to humanity is explored through art.



Claude Monet /
Haystacks /
1891 /
65.6x100.6cm /
<https://nga.gov.au/exhibition/turnertomonet/images/LRG/29073.jpg>



Andy
Goldsworthy /
Dewent Water /
1988 /
<http://visualmel.t.com/Andy-Goldsworthy>

Classical examples of art exploring humanity's connection to nature

Artists have been exploring the complex relationship between humanity and nature for centuries. The most prevalent examples from before the 20th century are of landscape paintings. Romanticist artists such as Albert Bierstadt attempted to display the immense beauty of it, painting vast landscapes. They make the viewer seem small in comparison to these vast fields, this shows how we are all just tiny beings in an immense and gorgeous world. As art styles evolved so did the the artist's intentions in exploring this idea. Impressionist painters like Monet attempted to capture the fleeting beauty of it, how that exact moment would only be viewed once and would then never occur again. In the 20th century the land art movement can be seen as one of the most important in this idea. This movement attempted to explore this relationship through art made in nature, often using materials taken directly from the environment.

Cultural Significance of Peter Doig

Peter Doig is a contemporary painter born in 1959. He was born in Scotland but grew up in Canada. He then moved to England in 1979 to study art, he then moved back to Canada to work. He continued experimenting with different techniques until the mid 90s when he developed a style that he still uses today. This style is very reminiscent to Edvard Munch's style and expressionist art. Doig's work is often associated with themes of dreamlike worlds and magical realism but in this study these themes will be less important. Instead his work will be interpreted through themes connected to humanity and nature, these themes are very prevalent in his work but are rarely discussed as the magical realism aspects often overshadow them.



Peter Doig / 'Echo Lake' / 1998 / Oil on Canvas /
<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/doig-echo-lake-t07467>

Federico Rosa / *Peter Doig: The Return Of The Unreal* / January 2017 /
theculturetrip.com/europe/united-kingdom/scotland/articles/peter-doig-the-return-of-the-unreal/

Analysis of Formal Qualities for Doig's *Concrete Cabin*



In the scene the forest appears to be fairly dense but the building is still able to loom in the background, no matter how dense a forest is humanity can damage it.

There is a clear contrast between the bright, warm colors in the scene and darker cool colors of the forest. This is able to set a dark/mysterious mood for the forest and a brighter and happier mood for the background.

The plants appear fuzzy and distorted. In the left half there is a lot of static/noise going on. This gives it the feeling that it's a surreal, dreamlike world.

A Le Corbusier apartment block can be seen emerging from behind the trees. This emergence could be representative of the idea that humanity is constantly expanding and encroaching on natural habitats.

Peter Doig / *Concrete Cabin* / 1994
/ Oil on Canvas / 198 x 275cm
http://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/artpages/doig_concrete_cabin.htm



Peter Doig / Concrete Cabin / 1994 / Oil on Canvas / 198 x 275cm
http://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/artpages/doig_concrete_cabin.htm



Le Corbusier / l'Unité d'Habitation /
 Image From:
<http://astudejaoubliie.blogspot.com/2014/02/marseille-unite-dhabitation-le-corbusier.html>

Cultural Analysis of Doig's *Concrete Cabin*

This painting was created in 1992, right around the time when Doig was experimenting with an expressionist style. This style was developed during his years living in London, a city rich in architectural beauty. In this painting the background building is one of Le Corbusier's apartment blocks titled *l'Unité d'Habitation located at Briey-en-Forêt*.. He created several paintings like this, and about this body of work he says "When you walk through an urban environment, you take the strangeness of the architecture for granted". With the cultural context and formal qualities in mind it can be inferred that the piece is meant to display the contrast between the natural world and man made one. Although the man made environment looks quite different to the natural one they are composed of the same general materials, most structures are just natural environments deconstructed and then reconstructed in a different form. This is a strange concept to think about when walking through a city and this may be what Doig was referring to when talking about this piece.

Analysis of Formal Qualities for Doig's *At the Edge of Town*

The composition of the piece places a lot of emphasis on the figure in the right section, the placement of him high above the land gives the appearance that he is huge. This appearance of a huge figure makes it seem like the figure is looming over a doomed landscape.

The trees in the scene appear wavy and loose, almost giving it the appearance that they're moving. The clouds also appear loose and wavy which makes it seem like they're slowly swirling in the air. This use of movement



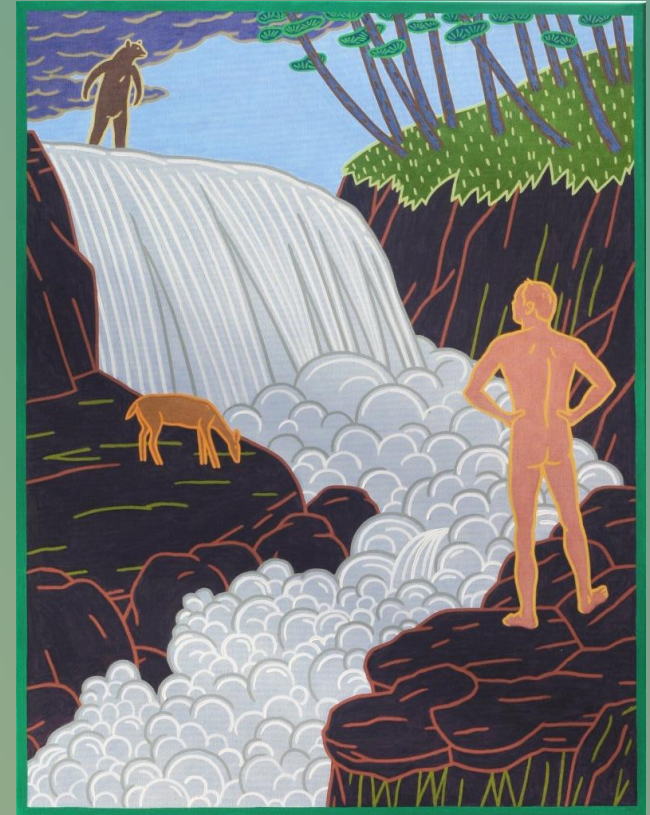
Peter Doig / *At the Edge of Town* / 1986 / Oil on canvas / <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-reviews/10726787/Peter-Doig-Early-Works-Michael-Werner-Gallery-review.html>

The color scheme is overall very depressing, the sky is a mixture of dark and lighter blues which sets this sad mood. The forest is created mainly with dark greens and some lighter ones in the foreground. The figure is a pale blue, almost giving the impression that he is dead. This overall depressing mood could represent how we are continually destroying the natural world.

Cultural Significance of Charles Munch

Charles Munch is an American painter who was born and raised in Missouri. During his childhood he spent his summers in Door County Wisconsin where he fell in love with the color and light of the shores of Lake Michigan. He attended college in Portland where he developed a realistic painting style. Shortly after finishing college he settled in Sturgeon Bay Wisconsin. Although he had moved all over the country he attributes his greatest inspiration to Wisconsin's incredible natural beauty, this is the main reason he settled there. When he first settled in Wisconsin he worked as an art restorer but he was always painting and experimenting on the side. In 1981 he developed his current style of painting, using broad lines and bright colors to create emotionally expressive work. The meanings behind his paintings differ from painting to painting, but for the most part he attempts to explore connections between humanity and nature. He currently resides in Wisconsin and this is where he accredits most of his inspiration as coming from.

Tory Folliard Gallery / Artists Charles Munch /
<https://toryfolliard.com/artists/charles-munch/>



Charles Munch / *Black Bear Falls* / 2012 /
Oil on canvas / 44 x 34 inches /
mmoca.org/2013-triennial/artists/2026

Analysis of Formal Qualities for *Satyr Season* by Charles Munch

The hunter and half human in the scene both have no discernable facial expressions. This strips them of their humanity and allows the viewer to decide what is going on purely through their actions. This emotionlessness could also be the artist's reflection on how people who willingly destroy nature are cold, emotionless people.



Charles Munch / *Satyr Season* / 2010 / Oil on canvas
/ 27x 40.5 in /
<http://www.mmoca.org/2013-triennial/artists/2026>

Most of the colors in the piece are bright and oversaturated, this is contrasted by the dark cloud moving over the scene, this cloud could represent humanities encroachment on natural land.

There is a clear use of asymmetrical balance in the piece, the hunter is on the left side standing in front of an expansive field while the creature runs into a dense area of the forest on the right side. This emphasizes the disconnect between humanity and nature, Munch is saying that we have turned dense forests into flat expansive fields and driven away natural life.

Cultural Significance of *Satyr Season* by Charles Munch

In this painting Munch's signature style and inspiration are displayed. The painting displays a vast landscape filled with rolling hills similar to the image below. This is an image showing a typical Midwest view, similar to the one in Munch's painting. Hunting is also a major part of Wisconsin culture. Many people in rural areas of the state will hunt deer in similar attire to what is displayed in the painting. This cultural background ties into the overall meaning of the piece and not just the visuals. By displaying an average hunter attacking a seemingly innocent creature Munch is attempting to defy Wisconsin's culture by showing how grotesque a common activity in this area is.

Midwest rolling hills image from:
mandmraventures.blogspot.com/2014/07/



Charles Munch's *Satyr Season*



Analysis of Function and Purpose for *Owl Lake* by Charles Munch

The fire that's keeping the figure comfortable was probably built by destroying the owls home. This could be a reflection on humanity's disregard for what we are doing to the environment and the notion that it's acceptable to destroy the environment as long as it benefits society.

The figure in the lower right corner has no clear facial expression, Munch is likely omitting any sign of emotion. The removal of emotion from the character emphasizes the idea that the destruction of nature is inhuman, he is suggesting that it can only be done by people devoid of emotion.



Charles Munch / *Owl Lake* / 2008 / Oil on canvas / 53 x 53 inches / <http://www.mmoca.org/2013-triennial/artists/2026>

The color scheme in the piece is fairly dark. As it is a night scene the background is a blackish green and the mountains and lake in the background are also dark blue. The trees in the foreground use a dark violet and a light, unsaturated green is used for details. Overall this creates a fairly cold feeling.

Asymmetrical balance is again used in this piece, the figure is huddled in the lower right corner while the owls fly in the middle right section. Although there is separation between the subjects there is destruction present all throughout the lower section. This could be symbolic of humanity's disconnection from nature, we all have a part in its destruction but we often don't see that.

Comparing and Contrasting the Formal Qualities of Artist's Work



Differences

Employs thick, clean lines to create large, simple shapes. Munch emphasizes how small the person is in comparison to the forest by zooming out and showing just how tall the trees are. The scene is obviously at night and the figure huddled next to the fire coupled with the use of cool colors in many parts of the scene gives the impression that the scene is very cold.

Similarities

Upon initial inspection two similarities are obvious, both paintings are set in a forest and both employ a dark color palette for the trees/forest. Both of the paintings also don't show the top of the trees, this is able to create the appearance that the trees are gigantic and expand upward infinitely. Both paintings also use bold, thick lines to show details. In Doig's painting this use of line is most obvious in the trees where thick black lines are used to show the trees texture. Thick line work is apparent in nearly every part of Munch's paintings, from the trees details to the plants on the ground.



Uses a combination of blurry and clean lines, it overall looks like a hazy dream. It is painted from the perspective of someone on the ground, both the trees and building are only partially shown. This gives it the impression that the scene expands infinitely outside of the canvas. The building is very bright so it is assumed that the scene is during the day. The use of bright, warm colors creates the impression that the environment is very hot.

Top Image: Charles Munch's *Owl Lake*

Bottom Image: Peter Doig's *Concrete Cabin*

Comparing and Contrasting the Function and Purpose of Artist's Work

Differences



This painting is clearly attempting to send a message about humanity's destruction of nature. The combination of composition, action, and color create a highly politicized message about humanity's current state of affairs. This interpretation of the piece is backed up Munch who claims that his work is meant to be a

Similarities

Both of these paintings display a figure interacting with its natural environment. Munch's piece does have more of a direct message but they both display ways in which humanity interacts with nature. They both show humanity's dominance over the environment and many people's willingness to destroy it.



Overall this scene could connect to several themes. The use of movement, color, and the figure looming over the scene could show that Doig believes that humans have an instinctive belief that we own/dominate our planets natural environment.. Although this connection can be made when viewing the artwork Doig has stated that his art is purely about creating a dreamlike fantasy world.

Top Image: Charles Munch's *Satyr Season*
Bottom Image: Peter Doig's *At the Edge of Town*



Peter Doig

Comparing and Contrasting the Artists Cultural Background and Inspiration

Both



Charles Munch

Doig's early life was defined by his consistent changing of locations. After graduating from college he spent many years experimenting with his painting style until he finally discovered a style that he enjoyed. His paintings are often created by using photographs to make collages which are then painted in an expressionist style. His work most resembles that of Edvard Munch, and he says that this connection was immediately made by him when he first started experimenting with this style.

Both of these artists spend a large amount of time in the wilderness, this has led them both to creating many landscape pieces. Both of these artists are white men who had relatively easy lives growing up. Both of these artists have also spent time travelling and have been inspired by the places they visited. For Munch this was the Wisconsin wilderness and Doig has taken much inspiration from the Trinidadian jungle.

Munch takes most of his inspiration from the Wisconsin wilderness. His background as an art restorer allowed him to explore many different artistic styles. This led to his current style which involves large shapes and bold lines. He also takes inspiration from the landscape outside his house and he often paints directly from the scenery. His work most resembles that of Roy Lichtenstein and of other pop art painters, although he has never acknowledged this connection.

Doig Portrait from:
http://i.telegraph.co.uk/multimedia/archive/02633/doig-portrait_2633020b.jpg

Munch portrait from:
<https://www.artfulhome.com/artist/Charles-Munch/19>

Contrasting the Artists Use of Abstraction

Peter Doig

Doig tends to use abstraction to simplify forms and attempts to create something that is just barely recognizable; this allows the viewer to question what it is and what its purpose is. "Often I am trying to create a 'numbness'. I am trying to create something that is questionable, something that is difficult, if not impossible, to put into words."¹ Doig abstracts his work by using rudimentary shading with fuzzy lines. These details are not realistic and are simply meant to hint at what the form is meant to be.

¹Doig Quote From:
<https://www.victoria-miro.com/exhibitions/232/>



Detail of Munch's
Satyr Season



Detail of Doig's
Concrete Cabin

Charles Munch

Munch uses abstraction to simplify forms so that the viewer can interpret the scene purely through the actions displayed. "My goal is to put in enough description so most people can recognize what the thing is, then stop right there and put my energy into making it come alive in an abstract way."²-Charles Munch. This abstraction is done by leaving intricate details aside and using flat patches of color with thick lines to show detail. He also tends to use bright, oversaturated colors that are unrealistic.

²Munch Quote From:
<https://www.artfulhome.com/artist/Charles-Munch/1957>

Comparing and Contrasting the Artists Use of Emotion



Detail of Doig's *At the Edge of Town*



Detail of Munch's *Satyr Season*

The use of color is one of the most obvious ways that these artists manipulate the viewers emotions. In Doig's *At the Edge of Town* he uses darker cool colors to express raw emotion, the painting has an overall depressing tone and the color scheme adds to it. Along with the color scheme the painting features a strange, unnatural looking person overlooking a forest. This combination of a cool color scheme and a strange/miserable creature is able to overwhelm the viewer with feelings of isolation and despair. This is contrasted in Munch's painting *Satyr Season* where the color scheme is warm and expresses happy emotions, but this is contrasted by the actions occurring in the scene; a defenseless animal running from a hunter. By juxtaposing the actions and color Munch is able to muddle the viewer's emotions, leaving them questioning whether they should feel happy because of the beauty of the scene or depressed due to the horrific event occurring. Although these artists use color to express emotion in different ways they both take a similar approach when creating figures. In both of these scenes and in many others by these artists the people or creatures in them are devoid of any emotion. By stripping them of emotion the artists evoke feelings of melancholy which can be further altered by color and the actions of the figures.

Comparison of Own Work to Peter Doig's *Concrete Cabin*

Similarities

In my piece the color scheme is fairly dark and gloomy, the only bright section is a light coming from inside the cabin. This is similar to Doig's piece where a dark forest is contrasted by a bright, glowing building in the background. My piece also uses slightly blurred shapes, similar to the plants in Doig's piece. This has a similar effect in both pieces, the haziness leads to the feeling that it's a surreal, dreamlike world.



Dry Night / 2017 / Blender 3D/1920x1080px

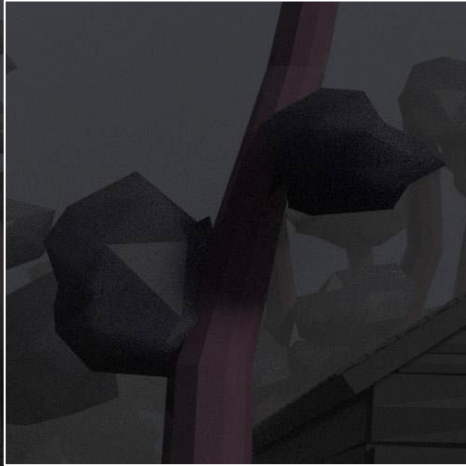
Differences

The most obvious difference is that my work is digital and was created using 3D software. My piece also uses symmetrical balance and the cabin is (for the most part) equal on both sides of the piece. Doig's piece uses asymmetrical balance as the forest takes up most of the space and the building can only be seen emerging from the right side.



Doig's Concrete Cabin

Comparison of Own Work to Charles Munch's *Owl Lake*



Similarities

In both pieces an unrealistic depiction of nature is used. The forms used to denote trees are unrealistic, there are no actual leaves shown, just large swatches of color. The color of the tree bark is also similar, they both have a maroon hue. The pieces also have a similar cold, melancholy tone. This is created through the cool colors used in the pieces and by the pieces being set at night.



Differences

These pieces differ greatly in stylistic choices. In my piece there is a lot of shading and the forms are three dimensional. This is contrasted by Munch's piece which features flat shapes with no shading. The purpose of the pieces is also quite different, Munch's piece is attempting to display a relationship between the man (possibly a symbol for humanity) and his natural surroundings. My piece is quite different, the cabin isn't a representation for humanity as a whole, rather it's meant to represent the sense of mystery when travelling in a new natural environment.

Comparison of Own Cultural Background to Charles Munch



The main difference between my cultural background and Munch's is the location in which we grew up. These environments shaped our lives and can be seen in both of our works. Munch grew up in St. Louis but would travel to the Wisconsin wilderness over summer. He now lives in the woods surrounded by nature at all times, and this natural connection is easy to see. "For many years, my paintings have reflected life lived in rural southwestern Wisconsin, in the midst of countless animals and plants."¹ This is quite different from the way that I have been inspired by nature, I live in a relatively large city and most of my days are spent in man made environments. Going to a forest is a rare event for me and I believe this comes through in my work. The unnatural light coming from the cabin looks like some kind of fluorescent light and placing it in a natural environment shows my own disconnect from the natural world. Although we live in different environments we both spend time in Wisconsin's forests, this time spent in the Wisconsin wilderness is possibly why both of our works contain similar looking trees.

¹ Tory Folliard Gallery / Artists Charles Munch / <https://toryfolliard.com/artists/charles-munch/>



Comparison of Process to Doig and Munch

My work greatly contrasts that of Munch and Doig in the process used to create it. Both of these artists use traditional techniques to create their work, that is oil painting. Although the artists both use oil paint they utilize it in different ways. Doig works in quick, loose sessions and will then let a painting sit for awhile before working on it again. Munch uses the exact opposite process, he works slowly and carefully to perfect every line and color in the piece. My process for creation is quite different, I use a 3D program called Blender. While using this program it's not possible to work quickly and fluidly like Doig does. Every move is thought through and it has to be done quite slowly. My process therefore becomes much more aligned with that of Charles Munch, although the effect is obviously different. Using a 3D program yields results that have a far more realistic atmosphere than that of Munch's paintings. 3D programs allow for precise control over perspective, light, and mist; all of which lead to a more realistic feeling piece (even if the objects aren't created in a realistic way). When looking at these pieces I find that mine makes the viewer feel as though they're inside the piece itself, and can feel the cold mist I created in it. This is one of the biggest differences in the outcomes of these two processes, Munch can create emotionally powerful work while I can manipulate the viewers physical senses.

Comparing Artists Formal Qualities and Techniques

My Work

Utilizes Blender to create 3D renders.

Shapes in work are blocky and have semi realistic shading.

Simplifies natural forms into large, simple shapes.

Uses darker cool colors to express emotion.

Munch

Uses over saturated colors and intense action to mess with the viewers emotions.

Creates flat paintings using large, bold lines.

Creates work involving natural themes and environments.

Utilizes Asymmetrical Balance

Doig

Objects in his work appear wavy and loose

Uses fuzzy lines and forms to create a surreal, dreamy world.