

Bacon, Francis. *Study for Portrait of Peter Beard*. 1975.



Bacon, Francis. *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of Crucifixion*. 1944.



Hatch, Doug. *CONFLUENCE*. 2013.



Hatch, Doug. *COMMUNION*. 2013.



Comparative Study

Ronin Pierluissi

This comparative study will focus on two works from artist Francis Bacon (*Study for Portrait of Peter Beard*, and *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of Crucifixion*) and two works from local artist Doug Hatch (*Confluence* and *Communion*). I will focus on the formal qualities of each piece, and how that compares to the other pieces between the artists, the cultural significance and meaning the qualities of the pieces carry, and how I personally used these pieces within my own art and how many of the same thematic choices carry over into my own works, despite these artists being from completely different regions, and periods of time.

Cultural Significance of Francis Bacon

Francis Bacon was a figurative and surrealist artist whose work focused on a very existential outlook on life, which he reflected within his work, painting often times grotesque and unsettling imagery that focused on the individualistic aspect of people and their different forms of internal suffering. Bacon's work challenged the norm of the time, having a difficult time taking off due to its lack of true surrealism. Bacon's art began to truly take off amidst the 1940s and 50s as his shows began to pick up more traction.



Three Studies for a Crucifixion, 1962



Sketch for portrait of Lisa, 1955

Many of Bacon's works (the ones which weren't lost due to being painted over) consisted of many portraits and most commonly, crucifixions that contained distorted and malformed subjects which were almost always painted in a triptych or diptych fashion. Bacon's work delivered to the public an uncensored and raw look into human purpose and existentialist thoughts and beliefs.

Analysis of Formal Qualities

Unnatural **form** and abstract **shapes** create disassociation with the viewer from the subject. This disassociation creates a stronger connection to the themes of existentialism that Bacon focuses on within his work.

Bacon's use of **form** and **line** create **movement** through multiple curved and flowing lines that closely resemble a humanoid however the lack of straight and concise lines develops a sense of detachment from the subject as they don't quite resemble a human in the conventional form. This disconnect emphasizes Bacon's surreal take with his art and his existential outlook that is reflected within his pieces.



Natural **lines** create a figure that resembles a humanoid figure but also creates an unnatural appearance that creates a distorted figure that resembles a person but also subverts the conventional guidelines of a person.

Bacon, Francis. *Study for Portrait of Peter Beard*. 1975.

Analysis of Formal Qualities



Contrast between the subject and the background is apparent and helps draw the subject forward from the background, creating a sense of space within the piece while still building the sense of existentialist themes by making the background of the piece abstract and empty. Bacon's use of contrast to create striking imagery or a somber almost lost feeling is seen within all of his pieces, where often times a harsh dark background or striking solid colour background are used to distinguish the subject of the piece from the background. Often within his portraits, Bacon will use the background to almost 'melt' the subject into the background by warping and shadowing the subject into the background.



Muted and dulled **colours** create a feeling of cold isolation and a somber tone, reflecting the thematic choices seen within Bacon's work. Bacon's choice of muted somber colours is reflected within many of his works, specifically within his portraits where the colours utilized help to build unsettling imagery. Bacon's technique of layering multiple colours to create unnatural skin tones further builds on top of his colour choice and the unnatural form of his subjects.

Interpretation of Function and Purpose

“Study for Portrait of Peter Beard” highlights Bacon’s emphasis on existentialist beliefs and on his focus on the individual. The piece’s distorted form and use of shape to create unnatural protrusions create a strong disconnect from the viewer as they are shown a figure that resembles a part of a complete human. The lack of outstanding colours within the piece creates a dulled and disconnected figure that reflects Bacon’s themes of internal struggle.

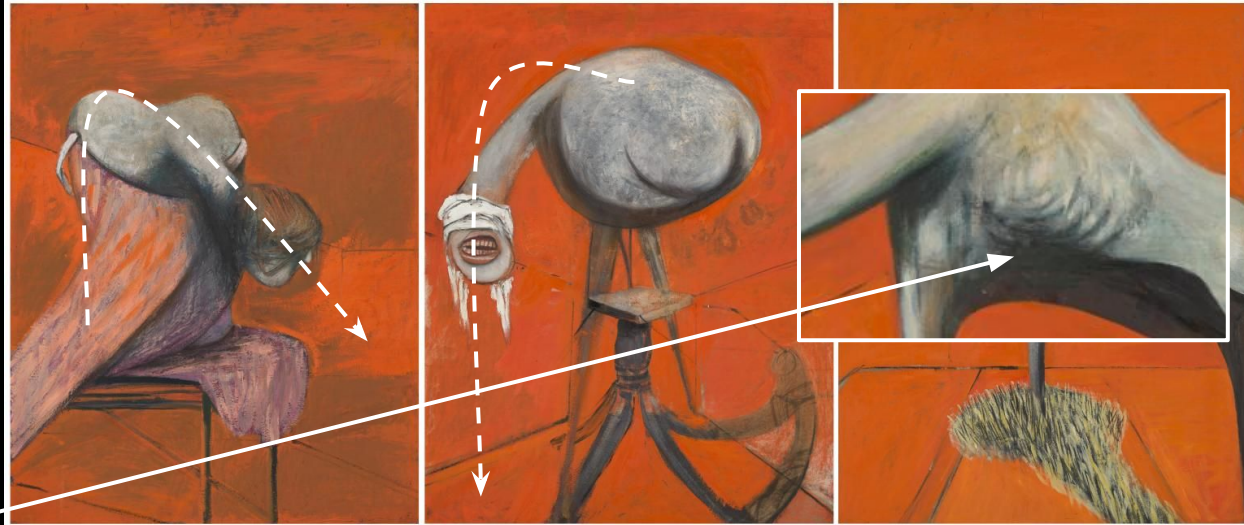
The subject, Peter Beard is a renowned photographer who has collaborated with Bacon in the past. His works involve photographing African animals and notably the death of 35,000 elephants in the book “The End of the Game”. Bacon’s illustration reflects the inspired yet tired eyes of Beard as a man who has seen much within his life.



Analysis of Formal Qualities

Colour is used to **contrast** the background from the figures in the foreground, the cool tones of the figures against the red harsh background of the piece. These harsh colours chosen invoke a sense of immediate panic and unease, as colours like red can be attributed to violence and death which highlights the unnatural and surreal composition of the subjects in the piece.

Bacon's use of **shape** creates imagery that closely resembles reality through composition and shape of the figures presented, however Bacon's harsh line and **value** within the piece creates dark and unsettling imagery that make up the figures that allows Bacon to separate them from any conventional reality.



Bacon, Francis. *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of Crucifixion*. 1944.

Movement is created throughout the piece that draws the viewer's eyes down towards the ground. Downwards movement is often times associated with a negative connotation as decent is tied with defeat, depression and loss. The downward angles that the figures sit at represent these sadnesses. The downwards movement draws the viewer's eyes along the figures starting at the torso and flowing through the neck towards the head which hangs away from the bulk of the figure towards the ground in a manner that reflects Bacon's themes of existentialism and pessimism.

Interpretation of Function and Purpose



Bacon's expression of pessimism and existentialism within *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of Crucifixion* is further given context during the 1945 exhibition of the work which fell in line with the release of media from the Nazi concentration camps in World War II. Bacon's triptych for many resembled and reflected the horrors brought upon by the Holocaust and the introduction of nuclear weapons.

Repetition within the three pieces further emphasizes the suffering portrayed within the piece as each frame of the triptych uses many of the same colours to build the feeling of being unable to escape as none of the frames in the piece house any sort of safe haven. The emphasis on pessimism is further built with the renaming of the figures later on into the painting's life as Bacon renamed the figures to *The Eumenides* which are Greek spirits of vengeance commonly represented as three sisters that punish individuals for their wrong doings.

Cultural Significance of Doug Hatch

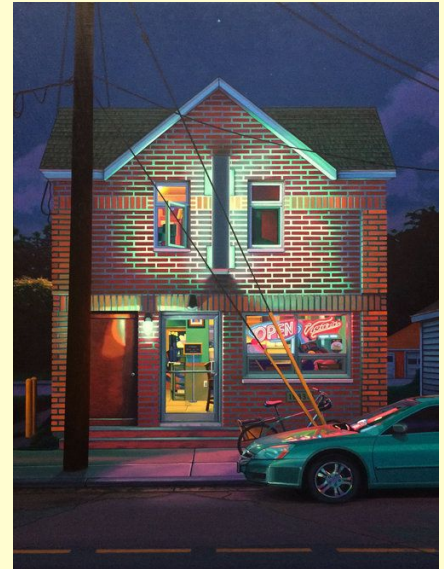
Doug Hatch is a Wisconsin based artist who focuses on paintings that capture a photorealistic still of everyday life. Hatch strongly believes in the many simple complexities of everyday life and through his art attempts to capture these complexities. Hatch's portfolio consists of many stills from around the state, his pieces use heavy amounts of colour and value to create aesthetically pleasing and warm pieces. Hatch's focus not on people but instead on the day to day life people live and the many small components that make up their days, creates a feeling of familiarity within his works despite potentially never being there. The emphasis not on individuals but instead on the collective world we live in develops Hatch's themes of community and home.



Hatch, Doug. *I'LL SHINE WHEN IT SHINES.*

“The urban landscape is always in flux, lit up; the constant changeling. Reinventing itself or sometimes just making do by hanging on, is what keeps it fresh, alluring, and worthy of capturing in all its simple complexities,”

-Doug Hatch



Hatch, Doug. *EVENING STAR.*

Analysis of Formal Qualities

Hatch, Doug. *CONFLUENCE*. 2013.

Value through **colour** is used to establish a time of day and build the day to day setting that Hatch attempts to capture. The use of cool colours layered onto the warm coloured environment creates a sense of unity within the piece.. Hatch's use of colour shows his emphasis on creating a capture of reality by using natural colours that each create a unique identity to each of the structures created.



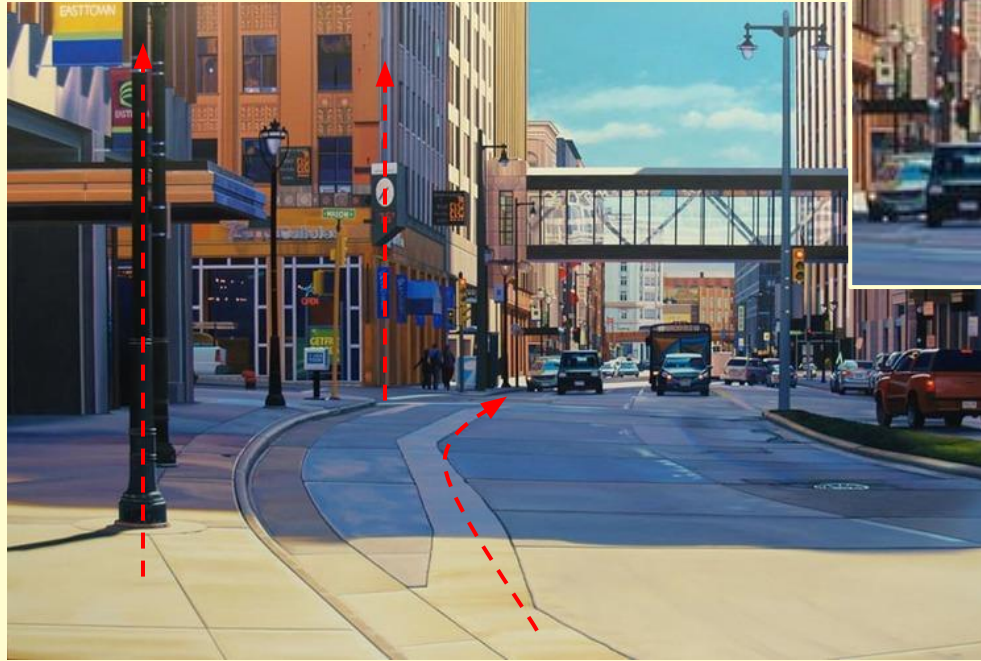
Hatch utilizes very precise and industrial-esque **line** and **form** in order to capture the city of Milwaukee and create an environment that illustrates Milwaukee's simple complexities.



Hatch uses **contrasting** form in order to push his theme of community within the piece by placing natural subjects (pedestrians) next to industrial subjects (cars) to create **unity** within the piece.

Analysis of Formal Qualities

Hatch creates feelings of safety and comfort through upwards **movement**. Upwards movement is often times associated with progression and has a positive connotation. The upwards movement in the piece is established in order to emphasize his focus on community within his pieces.



Implied **movement** is created through the imagery of a car within the piece. This capture of implied movement connects to Hatch's emphasis on capturing day-to-day life within Wisconsin.

Hatch creates a sense of forward **movement** throughout the piece as the viewer's gaze moves along the road towards the cars and the buildings in the background.

Interpretation of Function and Purpose

Within “CONFLUENCE” Hatch displays, similarly to many of his other works, a bustling scene in which the theme of community is explored. Hatch’s use of his own hometown as inspiration for his pieces shows his emphasis on community. Within “CONFLUENCE” Hatch explores his interest of simplistic complexities within his view on the city. The piece’s focus isn’t on any one specific building or subject, but instead highlights many smaller pieces that make up the buildings; the signs, light posts, clocks and lights that all make up the buildings and create a very simple idea to comprehend but a very complex scene when viewed up close. These simple complexities are reflected on a larger scale within the piece, where the people and cars from a distance are insignificant in comparison to the city, while when viewed closer, the cars, people, streets and windows all become the simple complexities within the city.

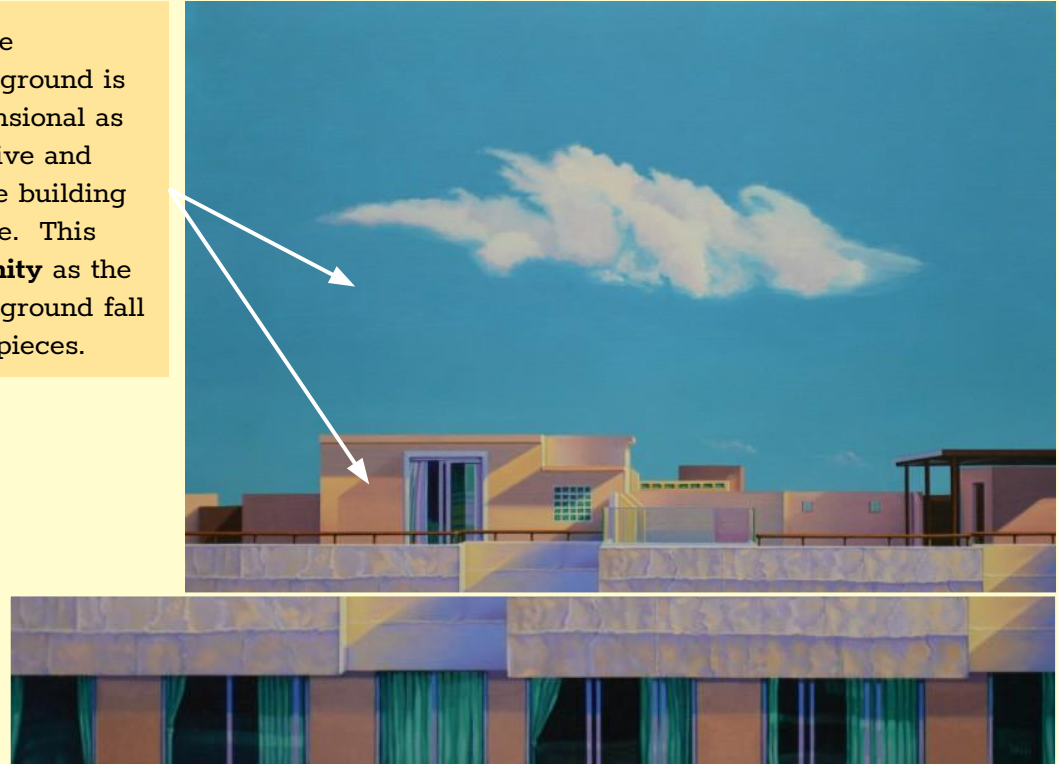


Analysis of Formal Qualities

Washed out **colours** are used to create a relaxed and peaceful mood within the piece. The contrasting colours help build an industrial v organic theme within the piece as the warmer, orange coloured, uniformly shaped building is placed in stark contrast to the cool, more fluid and organic clouds.

Contrast between the foreground and background is made almost 2 dimensional as Hatch uses perspective and form to represent the building in an almost flat state. This creates a sense of **unity** as the foreground and background fall together like puzzle pieces.

Hatch uses **repetition** within the piece to establish the theme of community; as each of the windows illustrated represents the homes of individuals within the building that the piece potentially took inspiration from. The open blinds establish a welcoming feeling within the piece and establish the setting as one of trust within one another's community members and a sense of unity.



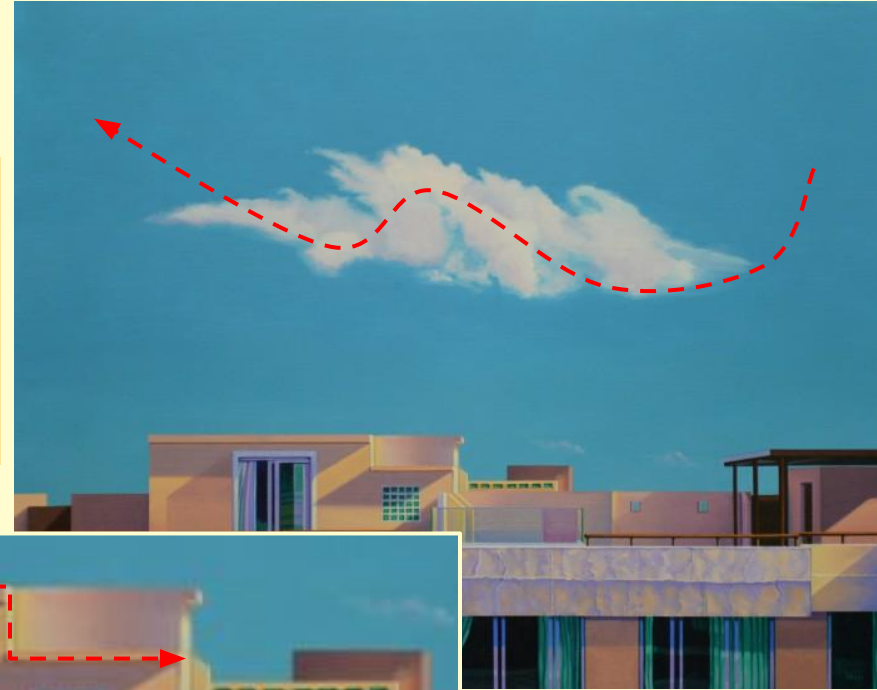
Hatch, Doug. *COMMUNION*.

Analysis of Formal Qualities

Hatch uses a realistic palette to create the vivid and detailed environment that reflects one of a captured photograph. Hatch's use of colour and value create the vivid and homely environment within "COMMUNION".

The use of **line** and **form** create intricate details within the piece that reflect Hatch's interest with simplistic complexities. A simple building silhouette when looked at closely becomes filled with small details and intricate shadows with the use of **value**.

Hatch's use of **shape** create movement throughout the as the viewer's eye moves throughout the piece first through the harsh right angles of the building, and then through the fluid form of the cloud.



Interpretation of Function and Purpose

“COMMUNION” illustrates Hatch’s emphasis on community through the subtleties of his details within the piece. The repetition and use of colour to create little pockets on the building that express openness and a welcoming mood to the viewer. The flat appearance of the building works to establish a sense of ease and familiarity as the building presets itself at a comfortable eye level as opposed to as a towering structure that looms over the viewer. The basic shapes that make up the structure aid to this ease of access for the viewer that places the building in a much more inviting position that allows for the open windows of the structure to act almost as open doors to be entered and explored. The very open and personal nature of the piece creates an inviting setting for the viewer, despite never being there which creates a feeling of an “everyone knows everyone” community which echos Hatch’s focus on community and day to day life.



Comparing Function and Purpose Between *Study for Portrait of Peter Beard* and *Myself*

Bacon's limited use of **colour** helps to build a desolate and lonely tone, and helps **emphasize** the thematic topic of pessimism and existentialism. Emphasis is placed on an individual subject. Similarly, within my piece "*ROOM 41.9 (THEY MAKE BETTER FRIENDS THAN YOU DO)*", emphasis is placed on a singular subject, contrasted by a bleak, featureless background that removes the subject from any predetermined environment and places them solely in the focus of the viewer.

Similarities

- Use of natural line to create distorted imagery.
- Lack of varied colour to create flat imagery that focuses on an individual subject.
- Simple solid backgrounds.

Differences

- Bacon utilizes colour to convey emotion while I chose to keep the piece two tones, based on medium and subject.
- Within my own art I utilized more uniform and coherent line as opposed to more abstract line used in Bacon's work.



Comparing Function and Purpose of *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of Crucifixion* and *Myself*

Bacon's harsh and striking **imagery** through **colour** conveys a fearful and chaotic scene that presents the viewer with visuals that provoke feelings of unease. This method contrasts my own work, which chooses to present unnatural imagery, however the colour choice and composition provides the viewer with a much more subtle and soft collection of colours that create an isolating setting, but without the panic that is seen with Bacon's colour choice.



Similarities

- Use of natural line to create distorted imagery.
- Lack of a wide variety of colour to create an extensive yet flat setting that focuses on an individual subject.
- Downward descent through movement illustrates negative emotions within the viewer.

Differences

- Bacon utilizes harsh colours to create feelings of panic and unease within his piece, while I stuck to two colours that create a more subtle contrast with more neutral colours.



Contrasting Function and Purpose of *CONFLUENCE* and *Myself*



Hatch and myself successfully utilize **colour** and **form** to create landscape scenes that attempt to capture the worlds that are presented in the works. Within "*CONFLUENCE*" Hatch uses a wide variety of colours to create a photorealistic capture of day to day life. However, within my piece I utilized a smaller more simplified palette that takes inspiration from less real world locations and more fictional sources of inspirations. Within my piece I took a much more explorative and individualistic approach to my piece that focused on my thematic topic of individualism, which contrasts against Hatch's thematic topic of community.

Similarities

- Industrial v organic line to create contrast within the environment.

Differences

- Hatch focuses on day-to-day experiences and visuals, while I focus on a much more explorative theme.
- Hatch utilizes many different colours and a wide palette variety to create photorealistic visuals while I focused much more on a smaller palette used to its extent.
- I chose to focus on an individual figure and landscape while Hatch focuses on solely a landscape with no central subject.

Contrasting Function and Purpose of *COMMUNION* and *Myself*



Within “*COMMUNION*” Hatch creates a sense of individuality and community through the **repeated** series of windows which each show individuality through the positioning of the curtains and community through their similar **colour** palettes and repetitive nature. Within my own work, I explore an individualistic explorative approach to the world presented in “*Unfamiliar Territory*”, however, in contrast to Hatch, I explore this theme through focus on an individual subject and do not create an emphasis on community.

Similarities

- Both pieces utilize a limited palette that uses a wide variety of values to get the most out of each colour presented.
- Both pieces display a theme of individuality.
- Contrast between industrial and organic environments sitting amongst one another.

Differences

- Within my piece I chose to focus on an individual figure and landscape while Hatch focuses on solely a landscape.
- Hatch uses very uniform and precise linework that creates an industrial environment.

Comparing the Culture of my Personal Art to Francis Bacon



Thematic topics focused on individuality resonate throughout my pieces and the body of work I present. These themes are comparable to Bacon's thematic topics of individuality which place the subject at the forefront of the piece, and ask the viewer to experience the emotions of the subject as almost an observer who is uncomfortably close to the figure portrayed. While I too, focus on individuality, my approach to it isn't as personal, and one on one. Instead I focused on making the viewer attempt to put themselves in the environment provided. Through means of placing the subject at a comfortable distance, I attempt to create a piece that allows for the observer to become a part of the environment and place themselves within the world presented (quite literally within "ROOM 41.9 (THEY MAKE BETTER FRIENDS THAN YOU DO)").

Comparing Personal Art to Doug Hatch

Within Hatch's work and my own, themes of nature and industry fall together to create unity and harmony between the elements within my work. Themes of individuality are present however Hatch focuses mostly on community oriented themes that connect many different objects and colours to create a puzzle that fits together the complexities of day to day life into one photoesque painting. My thematic topics don't focus on community, however the individuality of each of the complex mechanisms of Hatch's work display a sense of individuality, which I attempt to capture within my own works. Because of Hatch's focus on community, his pieces never focus on one specific subject, however within my works I focus heavily on a solo subject and the world they live in.

