

Comparative Study: Symbolism

My comparative study will compare the artwork of symbolism artists with each other's work. I will analyze the use of disturbing objects in art as well as several techniques used by the artists I chose to analyze.

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Odilon Redon

Odilon Redon was a man that was born on April 20th, 1840 and died on July 6th, 1916. He was a symbolist painter and print maker that was born in Bordeaux, Aquitaine, France. Redon's passion began as a young child to the extent that he was awarded a drawing prize at school at the age of 10. He began the formal study of drawing at the age of fifteen. He decided to change over to architecture because of the insistence of his father. When Redon lived in his native town he took up sculpture and was instructed by Rodolphe Bresdin in etching and lithography. His art career was interrupted in 1870 when he was sent to fight in the Franco-Prussian war. At the end of the war he decided to move to Paris and this was when he grew great interest in charcoal and lithography. Redon's work achieved to gain recognition in 1878. in the 1890s he began creating pieces with pastel and oils. Both these mediums dominated his artwork from that moment on to the rest of his existence.

Redon was influenced by disturbing poetry of Poe and Baudelaire. He created works that were hallucinatory. His work always represented an exploration of his internal feelings and psyche. With his works he aimed to show the ghosts that lived in his own life. He'd use his imagination for his art pieces. There is mystery throughout all of Redon's pieces of art, especially in his drawings.



This piece is called *Silencio* and it was created with the oil paints medium. The main object of the piece seems to be a ghost or a creature of that sort hiding from something or struggling to leave a dark place. This piece follows Redon's theme of disturbing pieces.



The Crying Spider by Odilon Redon

This spider symbolizes something disturbing due to the fact that it has a face and it is actually crying. The artist applies a very light hand around the edges of the actual spider. He creates lighter and shorter strokes. When it comes to the actual spider, he applies a heavier hand on the charcoal to enhance the creature. He does not apply the charcoal as harshly on the face of the creature in order to allow the viewers to analyze the face and facial features of the creature. There is a balance in this piece. The creature is centered directly in the middle of the piece with very little around it. What is around it is symmetric on both sides of the piece. It is arranged in a form that the parts have equal weight or force. The space in this piece isn't just a plain area. It is an area with charcoal strokes that fills up the space that that would be plain without it. There is also the element of texture in this piece. The spider has a texture that seems soft. By soft I mean more like fluffy. I have analyzed this piece and came to the conclusion that Redon created this piece in charcoal because he wanted it to have a different feel. The black just represents that this was created in the older years and it also shows that it is a disturbing piece.



The medium of this piece by Odilon Redon is Charcoal. The dramatic and rich markings left by charcoal appear in the earliest primitive cave painting of early humans. It was believed that this was drawn with the charcoal that was created with burnt sticks. Currently in the art world there are three types of charcoal that are used. One is the powdered form. This form is used to achieve a desired shading and tone in the piece. The second form is a charcoal pencil. This helps produce a define and sharp line in the piece. The third is vine charcoal. It produces a smooth and softer line compared to the pencil.

This section of the piece seems to have been created with the powdered form of the charcoal.



This section of the crying spider appears to have been created with the charcoal pencil. This formed a sharper and straight line.





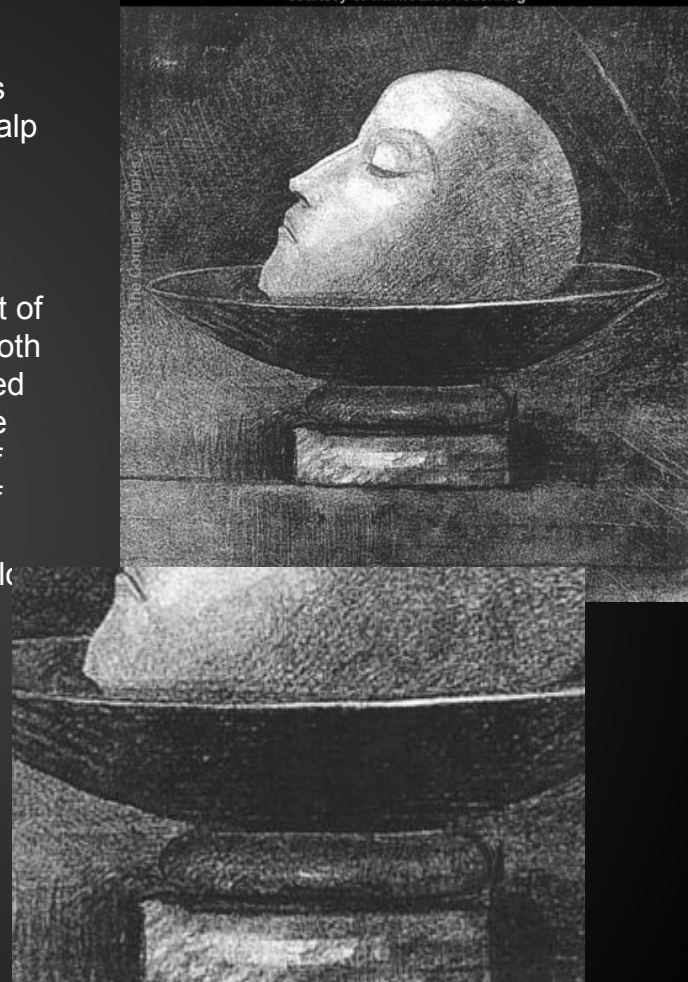
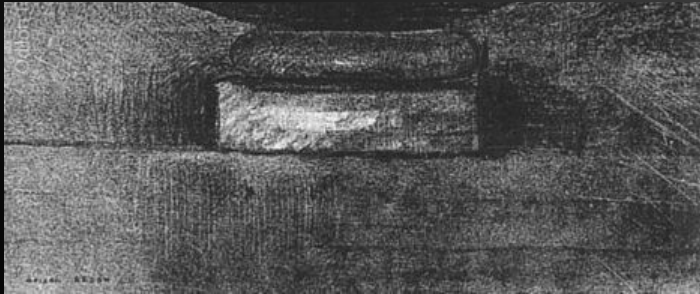
Head of Martyr 1877

This is another disturbing piece of art by Odilon Redon. This is not an image you see everyday. It is out of the ordinary to have someone's head in a bowl on what seems to be a table top. Most of the audience analyzes this piece or something similar and feels disturbed by the image they are observing. Old stories might make the audience believe that this was a normal view in the 1870s. Back in time torturing people happened often and it may be possible that placing their head on a plate was something that was done. When looking at this piece there is just a feeling of horror. The feeling of horror is because the facial expression of this person seems to be so straightforward and calm. The main reason why this is disturbing is because it is rare to see a head without a body attached to it. It is especially rare to see a head anywhere near a bowl. A bowl of this type seems to be the type to be sitting in the middle of a dining room table filled with delicious fruits. This piece symbolizes the complete opposite. There is nothing delicious about a head like this one.

If this was a piece of art created with charcoal I believed that the tool that was used for the most part was the charcoal pencil. There are lines around the scalp area that have sharp and smooth lines. Also the main outline of the bowl required very precise and smooth lining.



Near the base section of the bowl there is a lot of shading and tone. Under the precise and smooth lines it seems as if Redon utilized the powdered form of the charcoal. Right after he might have used the charcoal pencil to give this section of the piece more definition. The powdered form of the charcoal may have also been used for the center section of the bowl causing the dark color to be bold and strong. This method also could have been used around the base area.

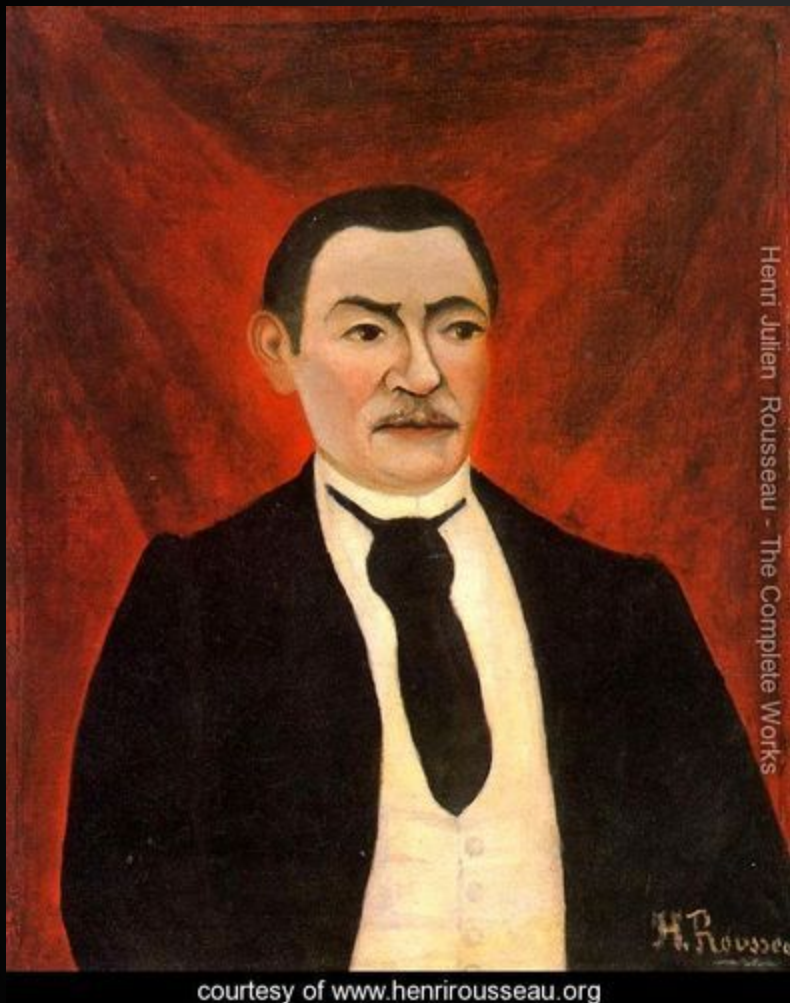


Henri Rousseau

Henri Rousseau was an artist that was born on May 21st, 1844 and died on September 2nd, 1910. He was a French Post-Impressionist painter in the Naive or Primitive manner. Rousseau was recognized to be a self-taught genius whose works were of a high artistic quality. He was not very intelligent in most subjects in high school. In drawing and music he did very well to the extent that he was awarded with prizes for both these subjects.

Even though Rousseau claimed that he was a self-taught artist, he admitted to have received some advice from academic painters Felix Auguste-Clement and Jean-Leon Gerome. He would always say that he didn't have any other teacher besides nature. That is where inspiration for most of his paintings came from.

Rousseau was an artist that believed that his paintings were realistic paintings in the academic style. Most of his paintings consisted of childlike and strange landscapes. He is most celebrated as being one of the most naive artists. Most of his artwork revolved around the setting of a jungle. Rousseau never actually visited a jungle. He never even left his country, Paris. Most of his inspiration for his pieces of artwork came from illustrated books and botanical gardens in Paris. Rousseau had also met with soldiers that had survived the French expedition to Mexico and listened to the stories they had to tell about the subtropical country that they had experienced being in. Throughout his pieces of artwork there was an output of smaller topographical images of the city and its suburbs.



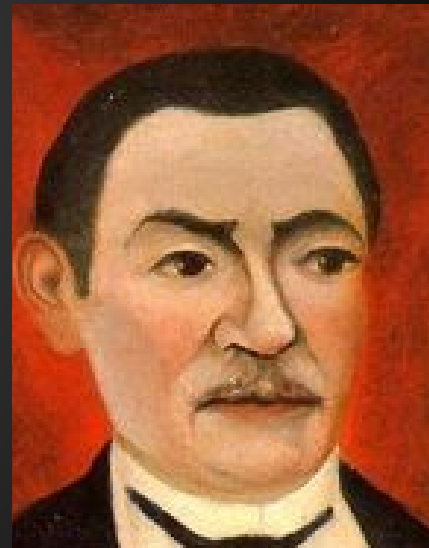
courtesy of www.henrirousseau.org

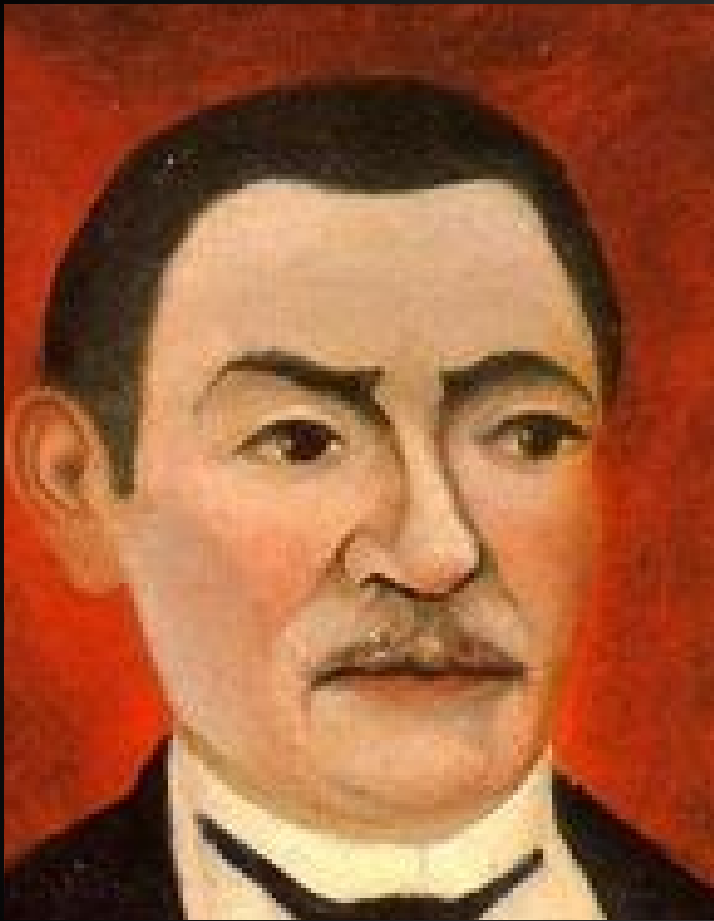
Rousseau painted portraits. His portraits were realistic looking. Most of his artwork was ridiculed by others that didn't quite understand what his pieces were all about. He was also known for his jungle theme. Most of his pieces took place there.

Portrait of Monsieur S

This portrait has quite a bit of detail, but still goes along with the theme of looking childlike. It was very realistic looking in a very childlike manner.

The face of Monsieur S was created with great detail. The brush strokes that were used to create the facial features don't even seem to appear on the piece. Rousseau seems to have taken the time to precisely emphasize every feature with such great use of a paint brush. The eyes were greatly structured as well as the nose. The nose was also connected very well to the man's eyebrows.





The different tones of the skin were also perfectly blended. There are no harsh lines. The face of the man is the only part of this piece that is not flat.



From the shoulders down the rest of the piece appears to be childlike, or maybe even cartoon like. The shape of the shoulders on either side is not proportioned evenly. The tie doesn't even seem to have the form on an actual tie.

In Rousseau's paintings there were a lot of exotic scenes. Within these artworks there was a concurrent output of smaller topographical images of the city and its suburbs. He once claimed that he invented what he called a new genre of portrait landscape. With these paintings he began by painting with a view that he specifically had in mind. It could have been his favorite part of the city, or just something he was inspired by. Then by the time the painting was completed or close to being completed he'd paint a person in the foreground.



In this painting called "The Dream" (1910) Rousseau made the landscape and the jungle the main focus of the piece. The woman was just placed on the lower left.



The exotic section of this piece was painted quite precisely. I also analyzed that Rousseau also used a blending technique that hid the actual brush strokes. The pieces he created with exotic scenes were not created in a childlike manner compared to the self portraits he created.



I believe that the fact that Rousseau had never visited a jungle really played a huge role and emphasizing the exotic elements in all of his pieces. I believe that he added as much detail as he possibly could to be able to imagine the specific places he was painting. He wanted to feel like he wanted to know what it'd be like to visit a jungle. He lived the experience through creating every single one of his pieces with the setting of the jungle. He showed sophistication with every single technique he used in all of his pieces. One quality of this piece is the woman laying on the lower left part of the canvas. This created a disturbing image to the viewer. The fact that the woman is not wearing any clothing caused the disturbance of the piece to be stronger



The balance of this piece is not as equal as it is in other pieces. The woman on the left as well as the plants on the same side do not balance very well with the bunch of plants on the right side of the painting.



Portrait of a Woman III

This is a very realistic looking portrait. This piece is also quite exaggerated and disproportionate. The shoulders of the woman are so much larger than they should be for the size her head.



It may not have been Rousseau's fault that the woman's shoulders were created this way. It is possible that they seem so much bigger and not symmetric due to the fact that the woman may have been wearing shoulder pads under the shoulder area of her dress.



The face of this woman is very realistic looking. Rousseau did a very well job at blending her face as well as in most of his paintings. Her facial features seem to be as real as the ones in a photograph that was taken with a digital camera. Every feature is very well proportioned unlike the rest of the piece. Everything falls into place as one whole. The eyes are a proper size for the size of her head. Her eyebrows are not very thin nor very thick to the point where they are overexaggerated. Her nose is a bit large, but it suits her face. It is also well connected to her eye area and her eyebrows. The shadows right beside it help with the blending of the piece. Her lips are a very good size and the color is very natural. The skin tone seems very natural as well. The rosiness on the cheeks does not appear to be too much in an exaggerated form.

The woman's hair is another section of this piece that is not realistic looking. It doesn't have any shape or form. Neither does it have any shading nor proper brush strokes to make it appear like real hair.

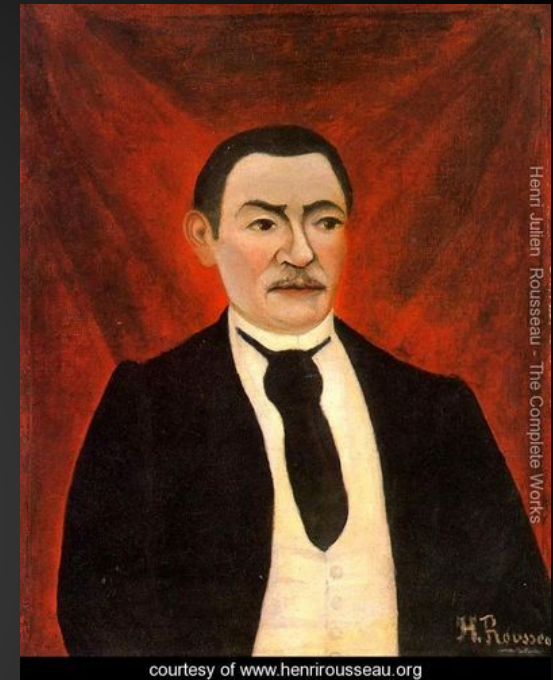


courtesy of www.odilon-redon.org



Both of these pieces were created by artists from the same era. One similarity they share is that they are both disturbing art pieces. *The Crying Spider* by Odilon Redon is disturbing because spiders don't realistically have faces nor the facial features the one in this piece has. *Portrait of Monsieur S* by Henri Rousseau is a disturbing piece because the majority of it is disproportionate and child like. The only part of this piece not child like is the face. The disturbance of each piece can also be compared. It is quite awful to even picture a spider crying.

Another difference between these pieces is the medium. *The Crying Spider* was created with charcoal. On the other hand *Portrait of Monsieur S* is a painting and was created on a canvas.



courtesy of www.henrirousseau.org

The medium of each piece gives each one a different feel. *The Crying Spider* just gives a dark feeling. The shading is in all the right places but it's still a very dark and black piece. *Portrait of Monsieur S* gives the audience a better feeling. It doesn't look rare like the spider and it does not intimidate the viewer.

courtesy of www.odilon-redon.org



There is a balance in both of these artworks. For the most part they are symmetric and have equal negative space as positive space. The space of each piece seems to be very similar. Both main objects are well centered.

The shading makes the Redon piece feel dark and abnormal. They both have a different texture to them. *Head of Martyr* seems to have a harsh and stuff texture. On the other hand, *Portrait of a Woman III* seems to have a softer texture especially at the face.

Both of these pieces have the form of three dimensional objects.

The thickness and the angle at which both faces are being shown emphasize that form. One difference that I analyzed was that in *Portrait of a Woman III* the rest of the body and the background have the element of shape. They are not three dimensional. It's just plain and flat.

courtesy of www.henrirousseau.org



Henri Julien Rousseau - The Complete Works

H. Rousseau



This piece is a self portrait that I created. It was inspired by *Portrait of Madame Matisse* that was originally created by Matisse.

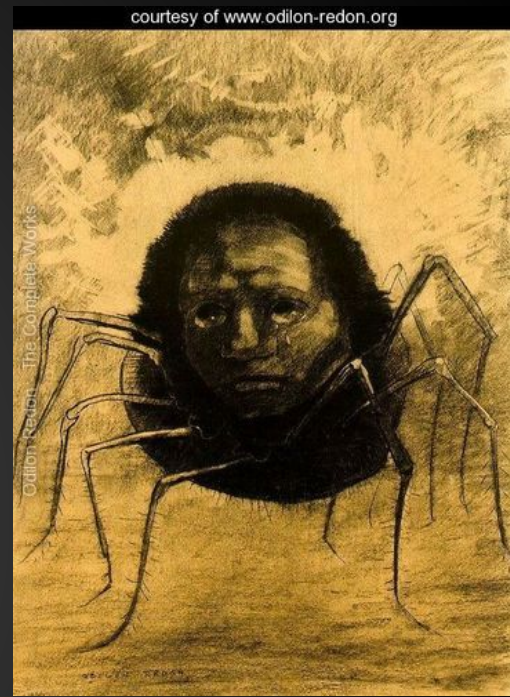
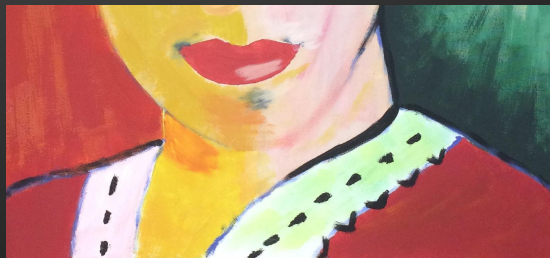
There is balance in this personal piece. The character is specifically centered and the background is divided up almost evenly. This piece was created with brush strokes that were harsh and not smooth. The brush strokes are an element of the piece that incorporates it all together. The original intention of this piece was to mock the original piece by Matisse with a personal twist to it for the piece to be able to be defined as a self portrait. The hues used to create the piece represent the feelings of the artist.





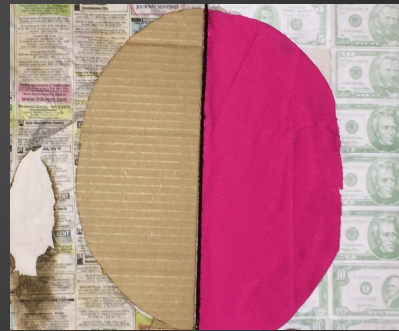
My self portrait can easily be compared and contrasted with *The Crying Spider* by Odilon Redon. These pieces are the complete opposite of each other. It is easily analyzed without going into deep detail of both pieces. One difference that is easily implied is that they were each created in different mediums. My self portrait was created as acrylic on canvas. Redon's piece was created using charcoal. Another difference between both pieces is that my self portrait is not as disturbing as *The Crying Spider*. My self portrait is not very pleasing to look at due to the fact that the face of the character has different tones that aren't very much realistic. *The Crying Spider* is very disturbing because of the head of a man on the body of a spider.

As well as differences there are also similarities between both pieces. One is that they both contain textures that are pleasing to the eye. They create illusion to the audience. *The Crying Spider* demonstrates a soft illusion. My self portrait demonstrates a rougher illusion due to the technique of brush strokes used.





This is a mixed media piece that i created with found objects in November of 2014. This piece most of all shows the different textures to each different part of the piece. It shows the texture of the clothing as well as the paper and cardboard.



This piece was created based of off stereotypes in different ways of living, or different types of people.



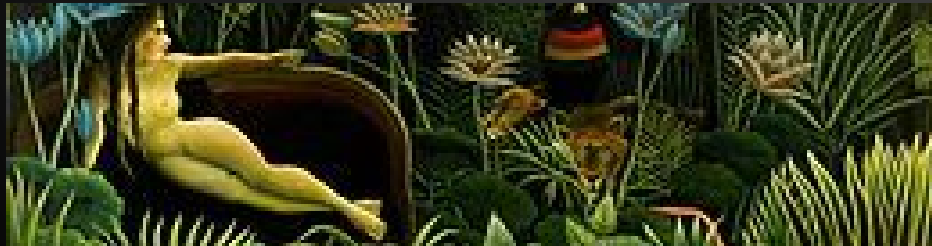
The inspiration for this piece came from an artist that created collages from similar materials as the ones demonstrated in the piece. Each piece of material that I used to create this has a meaning, as well as every single color that was used. One main component of this piece is that there is balance throughout the whole artwork. I attempted my best at keeping it as even as it was possible. This was also a piece that was meant to be dramatic and to cause controversy. My mixed media piece can be compared to *The Dream* by Henri Rousseau.



Rousseau's piece also created controversy as well as my piece but in a different form. His intention for this piece, as well as most others, was to create an exotic painting by placing the woman right on the left corner of a jungle. My piece may have created controversy because it was based off of stereotypes and how we live now.

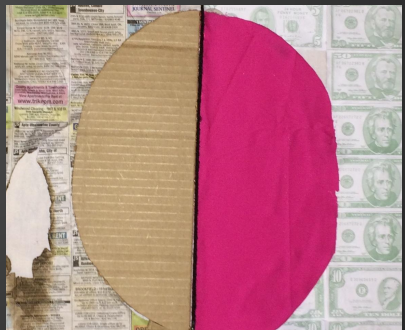
The piece I created consisted of a well balanced element, whereas on the other hand, *The Dream* did not. There are plants all over the place of different sizes. This infers that there is balance, but once it is closely examined it shows

that there is not the balance once the placement of the person is closely analyzed.





A difference between these pieces are the hues. *The Dream* has hues that are on the darker side. My piece has bright hues, as well as dark and neutral ones. Another difference that can be evaluated is the texture of each piece. My piece is a photograph of a found object piece. This means that if you look close enough, the material of each piece is quite noticeable. It may be analyzed that most of the material feels rough and dry. On the other hand, *The Dream* gives off the illusion of soft leaves as well as the piece of furniture the person is lying on. Specifically, the skin also gives off a soft feel



Sources:

<http://www.odilon-redon.org/The-Crying-Spider.html>

<http://www.odilon-redon.org/Head-of-a-Martyr-1877.html>

<http://www.henrirousseau.org/Portrait-of-Monsieur-S.html>

<http://www.henrirousseau.org/Portrait-of-A-Woman-III.html>

<http://www.henrirousseau.net/>