

# Comparative Study

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By: Jamie Abramski

# Anselm Kiefer

Title: *Sunflowers (Tournesols)*

Medium: Woodcut, shellac, and acrylic on canvas

Size: 435 x 349 cm

Year: 1996

## First Impressions:

When I first saw this piece I saw it to be darkness, like something horrible has just happened and the flowers are looking down upon the man as if he is nothing. As if they are greater than him, and have an actual purpose. The naked man is barely visible, in a washed out white sort of color. in a while the sun flowers are in bold.



# Cultural Context For *Sunflowers*

- Kiefer tended to make his pieces be based off of the ideas of English Philosopher Robert Fludd.
  - He believed that every plant in the world has a star to go along with it.
  - He also believed that everything in nature could be found in some way in mankind.
  - Kiefer even created a work of art for Fludd, to show the progression of things such as sunflowers growing.
    - *For Robert Fludd* was a book containing a series of works demonstrating that idea.



# Function and Purpose For *Sunflowers*

- Kiefer was trying to show Fludd's theory that everything in nature can be found in mankind. What I found within this piece is that the sunflowers are sprouting from the belly button.
    - This could mean that the plants are developing from the belly button, just starting out becoming something beautiful. Which is how we as humans have started. From the womb to be connected by the umbilical cord, (which is connected to our belly button), provides the nutrients that we need to grow to be healthy.
  - Connection to O'Keeffe:
    - Just like Kiefer, O'Keeffe took inspiration of her pieces from nature.
      - She mainly took inspiration from flowers
        - Her work does not have any specific meanings to it. It is meant for the viewer to interpret the way that they feel.
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# Media For *Sunflowers*

- Kiefer created this work of art on a woodcut, along with acrylic paint to provide the black lines to make the design stand out. But what is so significant about these choices?
  - Creating the piece on woodcut could show Kiefer's connection to nature. Trees are found all around us and without them we as humans would not be able to survive.

## Connection to O'Keeffe:

- O'Keeffe used oil on canvas to create this work. The way that she washed out the colors to mimic the way of watercolor, making the piece be one and not have one thing stand out more than the other.



# Elements For *Sunflowers*

## Elements

- Color: Kiefer only uses black and white for this specifically, which I believe is used to convey emphasis on the actions taking place in the piece.
- Contrast: The tone for this piece is very dark and doesn't have a very light value of color.
- Space: There isn't much space between the flowers and the man, could possibly represent that they are one, and both have a purpose. Just are different.

## Composition

- I believe that Kiefer placed the sunflowers the way he did to show that they are growing as well as that they have an impact on the world around us. Not only sunflowers, but plants and nature in general. Making them above the man proves this central idea, and I feel as if it really expresses its importance.
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## Principles

- Proportion/Scale: The flowers are depicted to be much larger than the man on the ground. More important maybe?
- Emphasis: With the flowers being at such a larger scale, it shows the viewers that they are the main focus, and they themselves have a meaning and a purpose, Even though it may not be something obvious.





# Cultural Context For *Varus*

- This work of art was made to reference a battle that occurred in the Teutoburg Forest.
  - Romans were wiped out after a command from Varus, and many men were massacred.
  - The success of this battle named German people to be superior and have a lot of power, and are strongly bonded with their land, because of their use of the landscape for their advantage.





# Function and Purpose For *Varus*

- Kiefer used this work of art to portray how gory this battle was, and how tragic the deaths were.
- He wrote the names of the ones who lost their lives in the battle, faintly in the picture itself, to show that lives were lost, and to memorialize them.
  - I believe that he added this element to his piece to show his viewers that something devastating has happened, and it is going to be something that is going to be remembered forever.

## Connection to O'Keeffe:

- O'Keeffe uses the flowers to represent the small things in life, and how much of a big part that they can have in the world.
    - She paints the flowers through her viewpoint to show the world how she sees things. Letting the viewers inside her mind.
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# Media For *Varus*

- Kiefer used acrylic paint and created this work on canvas.
- The subject matter for this work is to represent a battle and show the viewers meaning of tragedy and loss.
  - To remember something from German culture that may have an impact on the way that

Connection to O'Keeffe:

- O'Keeffe used oil paints to create this specific work that I used for this study.
- The subject matter for this specific piece is to let the viewers interpret the piece the way that they want.



# Formal Elements For *Varus*

## Elements

- Value: The colors that were used in this piece are very toned down/ light. But also have the feel of darkness.
- Depth: The piece seems to be never ending, as the path descends within the forest itself.
- Texture: Kiefer used sort of rough brush strokes, and I believe that that this could be to add character to the piece. Roughness to give the piece emphasis on how alarming the event was.

## Composition

- I believe that Kiefer chose to paint this work the way he did to show an important event that greatly represented his German culture, and the history of this time period.

## Principles

- Unity: I believe that this piece when you look at all the hidden elements as a whole, everything comes together to create something with high importance.
- Emphasis: The emphasis of this piece I believe is the tragedy within the event itself. Just by how Kiefer uses the splatters of red paint to symbolize blood of the fallen.

# Georgia O'Keeffe

Title: *Petunia No. 2*

Medium: Oil on canvas

Size: 91.44 cm x 76.2 cm

Year: 1924

## First Impression:

When I first look at this piece, I saw flowers coming out of what looks to be the world. The colors that she chose for that specific object and the slightly round shape to it back up my theory.

This could mean that flowers could represent the new life coming to the world, to regenerate and make something more.



# Cultural Context For *Petunia No. 2*

- Her whole career started when a photographer named Alfred Stieglitz allowed her her first gallery show in 1916.
  - They were later on married in 1924, and when he died O'keeffe became inspired the environment around her.
  - She particularly found interest in flowers, due to their beauty and how simple they were to draw, much more than living figures.

## Connection to Kiefer:

- Kiefer was inspired by his culture and the environment that he had found around him for the pieces explained in this study.
    - They were both really important aspects to him and he wanted to put together the two things that he loved and cared about and make something beautiful.
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# Function and Purpose For *Petunias*

- She used flowers as a motif
- *“Nobody sees a flower, really, it is so small. We haven't time - and to see takes time like to have a friend takes time. If I could paint the flower exactly as I see it no one would see what I see because I would paint it small like the flower is small. So I said to myself - I'll paint what I see - what the flower is to me but I'll paint it big” - Georgia O'Keeffe*

## Connection to Kiefer:

- Kiefer paints things with sort of a darker feel and tone, and this gives off the emphasis of importance, and allows the subject to be strongly focused on.
    - The way Kiefer paints his pieces also allows the viewer to decide how strong of an importance it gives off.
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# Media For *Petunia No. 2*

- O'Keeffe used oil on canvas to create this beautiful work of art.
- The subject matter for this piece is connected to her gender. Not only with this piece alone, but many other works that she has done can be seen through many perspectives, but the most common one tends to be the reproductive organs of a woman.

## Connection to Kiefer:

- Kiefer used a multitude of unique mediums for his pieces.
  - The main subject matter for his pieces are the things that around him and seem to make an impact on his life.
    - This connects to what is seen through O'Keeffe's works, as she connects her pieces to the environment that crosses her path.
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# Formal Elements For *Petunia No. 2*

## Elements

- Color: O'Keefe uses bright colors, but also uses them as them to mimic the style of watercolor.
- Texture: The painting is very smooth in texture, which I see to represent the sense of innocence, and beauty.

## Composition

- When looking at this piece by O'Keefe, one can determine many different meanings. It's just all with the way you look at it, and the way you see things through your eyes. Her work is more open to interpretation, she doesn't exactly let the viewer know what is going on, just let's them believe what they want.

## Principles

- Unity: When looking at the piece you see two different elements that have been out together to create one work. But when you connect them they make a stronger meaning and compliment each other to create something new.
- Emphasis: At first glance your attention goes to the flowers, which seem to be the main focus. But what makes them so significant?