



Norman Rockwell, *Saying Grace*, 1951,
Oil on Canvas

Norman Rockwell & Alexandre Cabanel: A Comparative Study

Liliana Reyes



Alexandre Cabanel, *Florentine Poet*, 1861, Oil on Wood



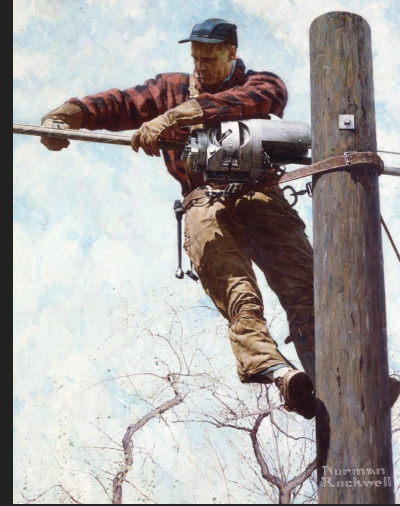
Norman Rockwell, *Homecoming Marine*, 1945, Oil on Canvas

In this comparative study, I will analyze two works of the American Illustrator, Norman Rockwell and one work of the French Painter, Alexandre Cabanel. I will focus on comparing and contrasting formal qualities like **shape** and **color** in paintings *Florentine Poet* by Alexandre Cabanel and *Saying Grace* by Norman Rockwell. In addition, I will discuss and analyze common themes like social interaction and how they affects human emotion and how culture has affected the intention and creation of these paintings.

Evaluation of Cultural Significance of Norman Rockwell

Regionalism was developed in the late 1920s and became well known because of the great depression. The great depression began after the stock market crashed in 1929 and wiped out millions of investors. Due to the great depression there was a steep decline in industrial output causing many people to lose their job. Norman Rockwells artwork was heavily influenced by the great depression as he was considered to be apart of the regionalist movement.

Regionalism was an art movement that focused on depicting rural life in America. Examples of this are “The Lineman” and “Freedom from Want” by Norman Rockwell. With this artist like Norman Rockwell began to paint images of people to showcase the American lifestyle and reflect on the American culture. Many of Rockwells pieces reflected on the American culture by depicting children, working men and family events.



The Lineman (1949) -
Norman Rockwell



Freedom from Want
(1943)- Norman
Rockwell

Analysis of Function and Purpose

Norman Rockwell , Saying Grace

Saying Grace (1951)

Saying Grace was a painting by Norman Rockwell that was painted as a cover for *The Saturday Evening Post* in the 1950's. Between the years of 1916 and 1963 Rockwell created over 300 commissions for *The Saturday Evening Post*. During this time period Americans were under a lot of stress as World War 1 was coming to an end, the Great Depression and World War 2 occurred. With this in mind I see this as a message to showcase post war America.

“A popular conception of prayer is that if we have faith in God, pray diligently and if the cause we are praying for is a righteous one (like the health of another person), then God will intervene in a supernatural way to make our wish come true,” (Jeffrey Small, 2011). Religion was widespread through America but post war more people expressed their faith as a way to seek comfort, peace and protection from God during difficult times.

Rockwell's use of small details like an empty plate was to create a realistic piece that showed and expressed life after war in America.



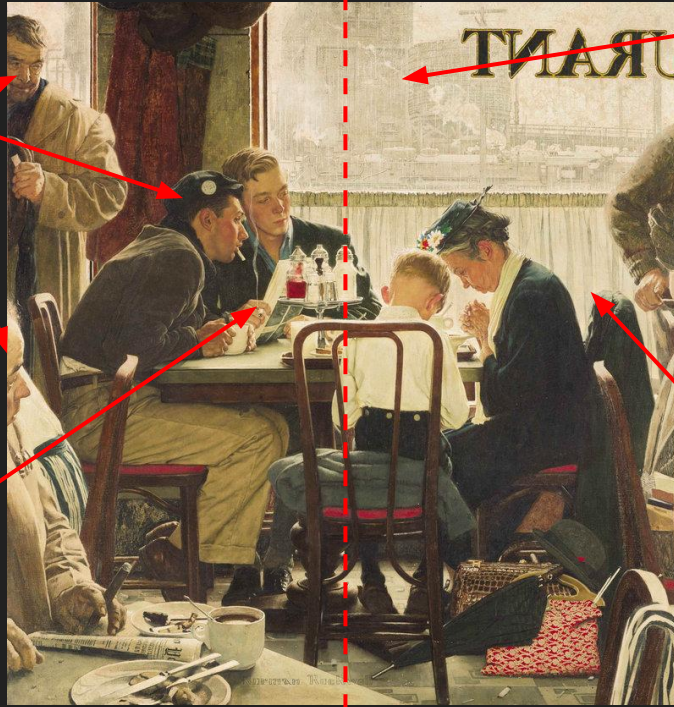
Norman Rockwell, *Saying Grace*, 1951, Oil on Canvas

Analysis of Formal Qualities

Norman Rockwell, Saying Grace

There is a heavy **emphasis** on the old woman and her grandson praying as everyone around them focuses solely on them. This creates a sense of importance and draws the eyes straight to her every time.

A blurrier lighter **value** or shade of grayish brown is used to **contrast** the more realistic vivid hues used in the foreground of the painting



If you were to draw a line down the middle of the painting the grandmother and her grandson are placed father to the right making this painting asymmetrical. The lack of empty **space** on the left side of the painting makes it seem off **balance** or asymmetrical.

The use of **movement** is shown in the smoke coming from the cigarette. The smoke stretches upward and giving the impression it was rising.

Norman Rockwell, Saying Grace, 1951, Oil on Canvas

Analysis of Function and Purpose

Norman Rockwell, Homecoming Marine

Homecoming Marine (1945)

Homecoming Marine features on the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* on October 13, 1945 about a month after the end of World War Two. Homecoming Marine and *Saying Grace* were both apart of the 300+ commissions for *The Saturday Evening Post* that Rockwell Produced.

The purpose of Homecoming Marine is to show hero worship. The thankfulness and admiration people have for heroes. Homecoming Marine visualizes this feeling and shows people worshiping or admiring the hero by showing a marine in his uniform surrounded by a group of boys and other working men.

The overall function ties into the purpose of this piece. Homecoming Marine is trying to express this gratitude and curiosity citizens then to have when speaking to essentially a hero. The marine is shown holding a captured Japanese flag indicating he fought in World War Two.



Norman Rockwell, Homecoming Marine,
1945, Oil on Canvas

Analysis of Formal Qualities

Norman Rockwell, Homecoming Marine

There is a heavy **emphasis** on the soldier. All of the working men and children are attentively looking at him. This creates a sense of importance and draws the eyes straight to him every time.

Additionally there is a heavy **emphasis** on the flag the soldier is holding. This is achieved through the use of **colour**, a bright red, this red is not seen anywhere else within this painting attracting the eye right to it.

Furthermore, there is a sense of **movement** within the same flag. It flows naturally and drapes along the floor.



Within this painting there is a subtle use of various shades of red and muted brown tones that create a sense of **harmony and unity**.



Rockwell uses various **proportions** to create a complex and extremely detailed background. This can specifically be seen within the bookshelf/workshelf in the upper left hand corner.



Norman Rockwell, Homecoming Marine, 1945,
Oil on Canvas

Evaluation of Cultural Significance of Alexandre Cabanel

Alexandre Cabanel was a well known french painter apart of the academic art movement. The academic art movement occurred between the years of 1560 all the way to the 1900's. This overlapped with the Renaissance movement as well. The Academic art style or movement of art was produced under the influence of European academic art/artists including; Gustave Courbet, William Adolphe Bouguereau and many more.

The academic art style often consisted of religious paintings, realistic portraits, and sculptures. Academic art stemmed from academies which were often sponsored by kings and or popes as a means teaching young artists. Alexandre Cabanel being one of them. In 1863 he created one of his most famous pieces "The Birth of Venus" and made his debut as a master within the renaissance movement. Then a year later in 1864 he became a professor at the Beaux-Arts de Paris a french institution providing advanced art education. He then went on to teach many students.

Alexandre Cabanel along with many other artist played a very important role within the development of both the academic and renaissance movement.



Alexandre Cabanel, The Birth of Venus, 1863, Oil on Canvas

Analysis of Function and Purpose

Alexandre Cabanel, Florentine Poet

Florentine Poet (1861)

Florentine Poet was a neoclassical painting created in 1861 by Alexandre Cabanel and is currently on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (The Met) in New York city. It is said that Alexandre Cabanel painted five various sizes of this same painting. Florentine poet depicts a poet (on the left) speaking to four other people, three men and one woman in renaissance costumes.

The Florentine Poet was created for personal purposes as the inspiration stemmed from “the picturesque and romantic memories of his stay in Italy,” (Stephen Gjertson Galleries). Its overall purpose is to visual a memory/moment in time for Alexandre Cabanel. The function of Florentine Poet is an aesthetic function. It serves as a way to appreciate and forever visualize a memory.



Alexandre Cabanel, Florentine Poet, 1861,
Oil on Wood

Analysis of Formal Qualities

Alexandre Cabanel, Florentine Poet

There is a heavy **emphasis** on the poet. This is accomplished by having the other four subjects/people closer to the right side of the painting all focusing their attention on the poet as if he was telling a story.

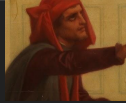
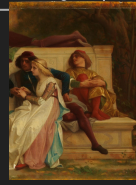
When looking at this the painting even tho it is asymmetrical there is a nice sense of **balance** due to the tree in the foreground, poet, and the upper half of a man on the left hand side. This balances out nicely.

There is also **harmony and unity** within this piece. This is shown through the use of similar **colors** within the outfits like within the mans leggings and the poets head scarf

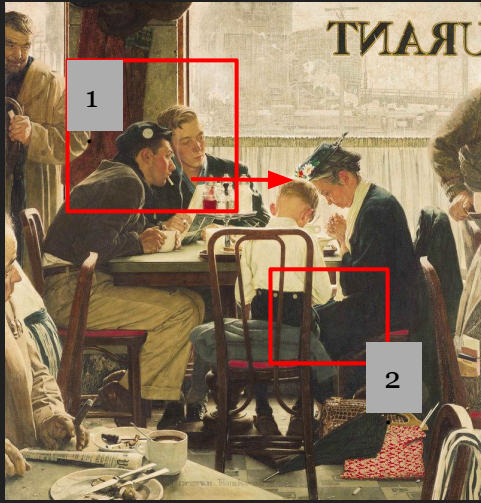
Through the use of **movement** the renaissance outfits all of the subjects are wearing create a soft and or silky looking **texture**. This can be seen clearly within the woman's dress.



Alexandre Cabanel, Florentine Poet, 1861,
Oil on Wood



Comparison of Norman Rockwell's *Saying Grace* and *Homecoming Marine*



Norman Rockwell, *Saying Grace*, 1951, Oil on Canvas

Comparison of Function and Purpose:

Both *Saying Grace* and *Homecoming Marine* have the relatively the same **function and purpose**. Both were part of 300 plus commissions that were published in *The Saturday Evening Post* as a way to showcase the aftermath of both WWI and WWII. They were both featured as the cover page on *The Saturday Evening Post* as well. Both the *Saying Grace* and *Homecoming Marine* depicted family and or social setting.



Norman Rockwell, *Homecoming Marine*, 1945, Oil on Canvas

Comparison of Formal Qualities:

- 1.) Both *Saying Grace* and *Homecoming Marine* have similar formal qualities such as **emphasis** on a main subject. The main **emphasis** in *Saying Grace* is the grandmother and they main **emphasis** of *Homecoming Marine* being the soldier.
- 2.) Both *Saying Grace* and *Homecoming Marine* have another similar formal qualities such as **harmony and unity**. This is achieved through the use of **colour**. This is seen in the *Saying Grace* through the use of black pieces of clothing such as grandmothers sweater and the boys jeans. This is also seen in *Homecoming Marine* through the use of the same shade of red within various sweatshirts, like the man sitting down and the young boy standing.

Comparison of Norman Rockwell's *Saying Grace* and Alexandre Cabanel's *Florentine Poet*



Norman Rockwell, *Saying Grace*, 1951, Oil on Canvas



Comparison of Function and Purpose:

Both *Saying Grace* and *Florentine Poet* have a similar **function**. Both paintings serve as a way to showcase social experiences. Both this similar function to create the same purpose. Both paintings overall **purpose** are to showcase social settings as a way to communicate certain feelings and emotions.

Comparison of Formal Qualities:

1.) Both *Saying Grace* and *Florentine Poet* have similar formal qualities such as **emphasis** on a main subject. The main **emphasis** in *Saying Grace* is the grandmother and they main **emphasis** of *Florentine Poet* being the poet.

2.) Both *Saying Grace* and *Florentine Poet* have similar formal qualities such as **movement**. This is seen in *Saying Grace* with the rising smoke of a cigarette. This is also seen in the *Florentine Poet* within the woman's dress creating a flowy piece of fabric



Alexandre Cabanel, *Florentine Poet*, 1861, Oil on Wood

Comparison of Norman Rockwell's *Homecoming Marine* and Alexandre Cabanel's *Florentine Poet*

Comparison of Function and Purpose:

Both *Homecoming Marine* and *Florentine Poet* have a similar **function**. Both paintings serve as a way to showcase social experiences. Both look as though the main subject are telling a story. Through this similar function create a similar **purpose** as well. Both paintings overall purpose are to showcase social settings in which they tell stories as a way to communicate a sort of relaxing feelings.

Comparison of Formal Qualities:

1.) Both *Homecoming Marine* and *Florentine Poet* have **similar formal qualities** such as **emphasis** on a main subject. The main **emphasis** in *Homecoming Marine* being the soldier and their main **emphasis** of *Florentine Poet* being the poet.

2.) Another **similar** formal quality being harmony and unity through the use of colour. This is seen through the use of the same shades of reds in both paintings. Specifically the red sweaters a man and young child are wearing in *Homecoming Marine* as well as the leggings and head scarf in *Florentine Poet*.

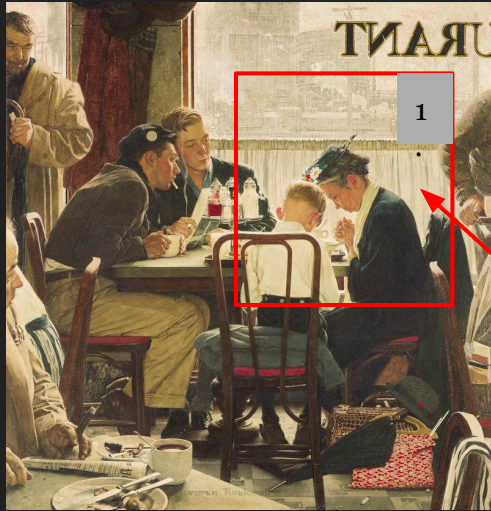


Norman Rockwell,
Homecoming Marine, 1945, Oil
on Canvas



Alexandre Cabanel, *Florentine Poet*, 1861, Oil
on Wood

Contrast of Norman Rockwell's *Saying Grace* and *Homecoming Marine*



Norman Rockwell, *Saying Grace*, 1951, Oil on Canvas

Contrast of Function and Purpose:

All though there are still similar functions and purpose the more you analyze them they are some **differences**. The **purpose** of *Saying Grace* was to be a symbolism of finding faith after WWI. However the **purpose** of *Homecoming Marine* was to symbolize a social connection between a group of people

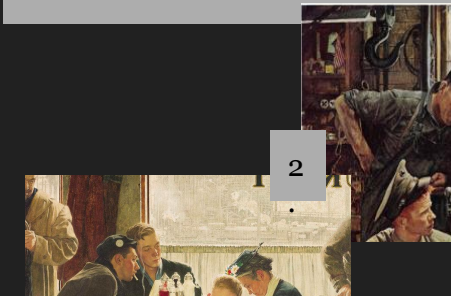
Contrast of Formal Qualities:

1.) There's a **contrast** in colors. In *Saying Grace* there tends to be cooler and muted tones such as greys and black. However in *Homecoming Marine* the **colour** comes off as warm with the use warmer tones such as red.

2.) Rockwell uses various **proportions** to create a complex and extremely detailed background in *Homecoming Marine*. This can specifically be seen within the bookshelf/workshelf in the upper left hand corner. However there is a "lack" of background in *Saying Grace*. This is due to low **values** in the background/window.



Norman Rockwell, *Homecoming Marine*, 1945, Oil on Canvas

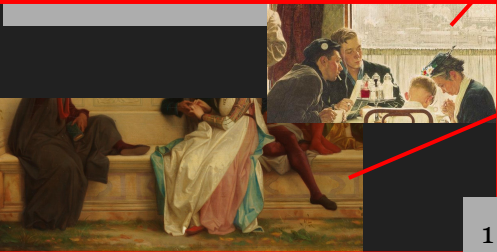


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Contrast of Norman Rockwell's *Saying Grace* and Alexandre Cabanel's *Florentine Poet*



Norman Rockwell, *Saying Grace*, 1951, Oil on Canvas



Contrast of Function and Purpose:

The **purpose** of *Saying Grace* was to be a symbolism of finding faith after WWI. However the **purpose** of *Florentine Poet* is to showcase social setting and serve as a way to depict cultures in which storytelling is often practiced.

Contrast of Formal Qualities:

1.) There's a **contrast** in colors. In *Saying Grace* there tends to be cooler and muted tones such as greys and black.

However in *Florentine poet* the **colour** comes off as warm this is shown through the use of light pinks and reds as well as many golden undertones all throughout the painting.



Alexandre Cabanel, *Florentine Poet*, 1861, Oil on Wood

Contrast of Norman Rockwell's *Homecoming Marine* and Alexandre Cabanel's *Florentine Poet*

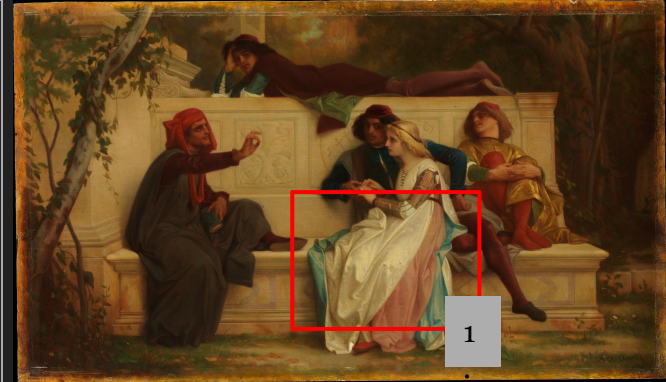


Contrast of Function and Purpose:

The overall **function** of *Homecoming Marine* is a cultural function. It is used as a way to show how some social groups and or cultures (army culture) will tell stories. *Homecoming Marine* captures this moment. However *Florentine Poet*'s overall **function** is an aesthetic function. It was created by Cabanel as a way for him to reminisce on his visit to Italy.

Contrast of Formal Qualities:

1.) There's a **contrast** in colors. In *Homecoming Marine* there's cooler colors compared to *Florentine Poet*. The **colors** in *Florentines Poet* comes off as warm this is shown through the use of light pinks and reds as well as many golden undertones all throughout the painting. This **contrast** can be clearly seen in both the policeman's shirt and the womens dress. The policeman's shirt has blue undertones whereas the womens dress has yellow undertones.



Norman Rockwell, *Homecoming Marine*, 1945, Oil on Canvas



Alexandre Cabanel, *Florentine Poet*, 1861, Oil on Wood

Compare and Contrast of Norman Rockwell and My Artwork



Norman Rockwell, Saying Grace, 1951, Oil on Canvas

Function and Purpose:

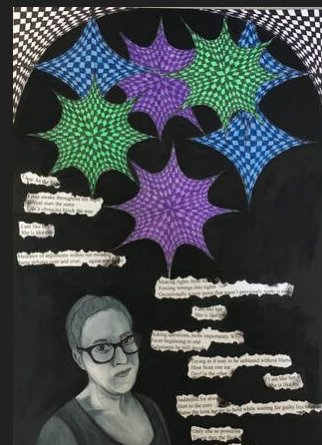
Both of Rockwell's artworks share a **similar function and purpose** as my art work. All three artworks showcase human connections. Both of Rockwell's artworks were used as a way to showcase social connections after the world wars and *i am like her* depicts a more person human connection between a mother and daughter. However one **difference** between Rockwell's artwork and my artwork *i am like her* is that I created this piece for aesthetic function. Its main **purpose** is to remind me of the unconditional love my mother gives to me on the daily basis.

Cultural Significance:

Both *Saying Grace* and *Homecoming Marine* were created as apart of a commision for The Saturday Evening Post, there were about 300 + pieces of artwork that were apart of this commision. The **cultural significance** behind these artworks were to depict social events post World War Two. Both my artwork and Rockwell's art depict connections within various social setting. However the **difference in cultural significance** behind Rockwell's artworks and my artwork is *i am like her* is used as a way to depict social patterns between parents and their children. Esentially how the child will almost always have the same characteristics and personality traits as their parent.



Norman Rockwell, Homecoming Marine, 1945, Oil on Canvas

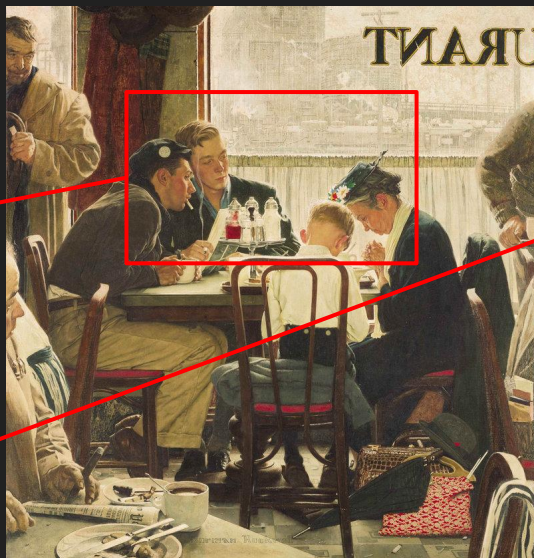


Liliana Reyes, i am like her, 2020, Mixed Media on Illustration Board

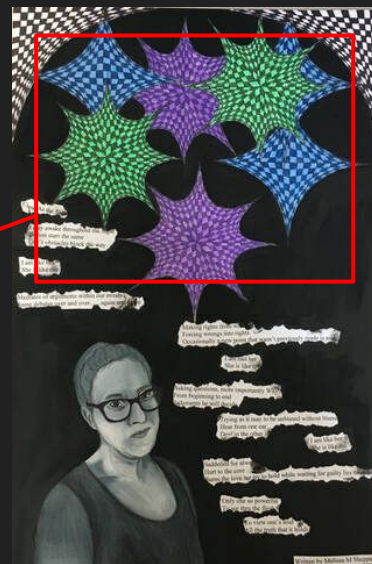
Compare and Contrast of Formal Qualities: Norman Rockwell's *Saying Grace* and My Artwork

In *Saying Grace* the main **emphasis** is on the grandmother. This is achieved due to all of the other people in the restaurant focusing their attention on her.

Whereas, in *i am like her* the **emphasis** is focused on the optical illusion above the woman's head. This **emphasis** is created through the use of **color**, as the only color in this piece is found within the optical illusion.



Norman Rockwell, *Saying Grace*,
1951, Oil on Canvas



Liliana Reyes, *i am like her*,
2020, Mixed Media on
Illustration Board

In both *Saying Grace* and *i am like her* there is a sense of **harmony and unity**. This is achieved through the use of repeated **colors**.

This is specifically seen in *i am like her* through the repeated use of purple, blue, green and various shades of grey.

This is also seen in *Saying Grace* through the use of repeated colors like subtle reds, various shades of grey and brown as well.



Compare and Contrast of Formal Qualities: Norman Rockwell's *Homecoming Marine* and My Artwork

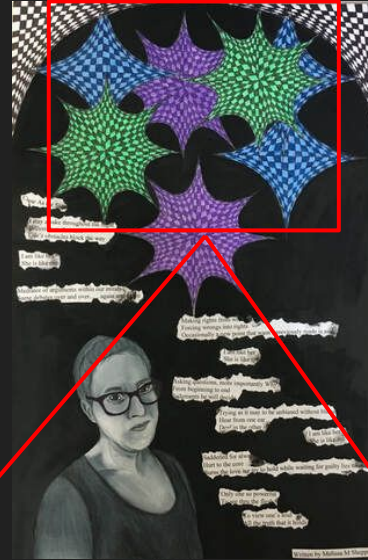
Similar to *Saying Grace* both *i am like her* as well as Rockwell's *Homecoming Marine* there is a sense of **harmony and unity**.

This is achieved through the use of **color**.

Specifically the same shades of red in *Homecoming Marine* and the repeated use of blues, greens, and purples in *i am like her*.



Norman Rockwell, *Homecoming Marine*, 1945, Oil on Canvas

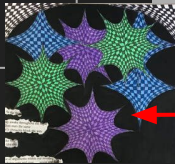


Liliana Reyes, *i am like her*, 2020, Mixed Media on Illustration Board

In *Homecoming Marine* the main **emphasis** is on the soldier. This is achieved due to the **movement** of the piece. All of the men are positioned around the soldier facing him bringing our attention straight to him.



Whereas, in *i am like her* the **emphasis** is focused on the optical illusion above the woman's head. This **emphasis** is created through the use of **color**, as the only color in this piece is found within the optical illusion.



Compare and Contrast of Alexandre Cabanel and My Artwork

Function and Purpose:

Both Alexandre Cabanel's *Florentine Poet* and *Changes*, my artwork, share the **same purpose** which is to depict a moment in time. More specifically the first painting in my triptyc depicts the past, **similarly** *Florentine Poet* depicts the past of Cabanel's past journey to Italy. **However** when looking deeper Cabanel's painting serves as an aesthetic **function**, meaning it was created to be simply looked at as a way to reminisce a moment in time. My paintings have a more symbolic **function**. It represents self-growth and how over time one must reflect on the past and the present to figure out their future.



Liliana Reyes, *Changes*, 2020, Acrylic on Canvas

Cultural Significance:

Although the overall function of *Florentine Poet* is for aesthetic it does have major **cultural significance**. This piece of artwork can predict how within many cultures storytelling is actively participated. **Similarly** the cultural significance of my artwork *Changes* is used as a way to tell a story. However the main difference between both mine and Alexandre Cabanel's cultural significance is mine to showcase self-growth and the practice of a religion and Cabanel's is used for more social and aesthetic purposes.



Alexandre Cabanel, *Florentine Poet*, 1861, Oil on Wood

Compare and Contrast of Formal Qualities: Alexandre Cabanel's *Florentine Poet* and My Artwork

In *Florentine Poet* the use of warm **colors** creates an overall warm aesthetic. This can be seen all throughout the painting as there are many golden undertones.

On the other end of it in *Changes*, my artwork, the use of blues and greens give the overall painting cool tones.



Alexandre Cabanel, *Florentine Poet*, 1861, Oil on Wood



Liliana Reyes, *Changes*, 2020, Acrylic on Canvas



In addition to this there is a similar use of **color** in both Alexandre Cabanel's *Florentine Poet* and my painting *Changes* as both painting incorporate the color pink only one time.

This can be specifically seen within the woman's skirt in *Florentine Poet* and within the woman's veil/headscarf in *Changes*.

