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English III

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From Creativity to Consciousness: Humanity's Endeavour to Exist

In *The Five Theses on Creativity*, Eric Kaplan, a T.V. writer and producer, explores the connection between art and creativity. Kaplan challenges the conventional notion of creativity as a personality trait, and instead describes it as a force that manifests through our actions. By doing so, he introduces a unique perspective on creativity and establishes a set of guiding principles, or theses, that attempt to define it. He says that creativity is unique, subtle, that it represents life, and that it can evoke both feelings of despair and love. Basically, creativity is what validates our existence. It is what separates us from objects, robots, or code. It is our free will, consciousness, and identity.

Kaplan's ideas about creativity manifest in many artworks of Jean Fautrier, a French avant-garde painter from the early twentieth century. Much of his art responds to the brutalities the Nazis committed against their French prisoners—which Fautrier was a part of, after having been arrested for taking part in the resistance. Most of his later pieces after his arrest depicted the horrors of what he saw in the prison, but Fautrier traces the roots of it back to the violence and tragedy inherent in human nature. Specifically, the heartbreak and subtlety Kaplan finds in creativity is what Fautrier explores in his art; he implores us to explore the depths of our consciousness, and delve deep into our subconscious, exploring the roots of our identity and existence—in other words, the human condition.

Le Lilas Blanc (1927) (<https://www.wikiart.org/en/jean-fautrier/le-lilas-blanc-1927>)



In *Le Lilas Blanc* (see fig. 1) Fautrier depicts a bouquet of white flowers conserved in a vase under low lighting and little contrast. The haunting image evokes a lingering sense of trepidation through the dark tones, like the viewer is caught in the breath's time before tragedy— waiting for the flowers to wither, the shadows to shift, or for a sudden surge of light. The plant itself depicts something similar to a clenched fist, or a hand poised in anticipation, waiting to pluck the viewer through the gloom. A veil

of shadow is draped over the muted white petals, the darkness furthering the idea of suspense and lying in wait or mourning, hovering like a cloud—a halo. Throughout history, flowers have symbolised life and beauty, serving as offerings to bring vitality to the departed, adornments of fortune for weddings, and beacons of hope for the sick and suffering. The flowers depicted are white lilacs, which represent innocence and divinity. The contrast used by Fautrier in the white plants left in a dim room suggests the spectre of death— either the death innocence or of God— like it's His hand who is clenched around the flowers. It alludes to a potential loss, whether it be of hope or identity, or simply the fate of the flowers themselves; deprived of the nourishing light they need to survive. The painting carries a dream-like quality, its colours blending into one another as seen in the shadow, hazy and rough textures like in the vase, and splotches of darkness— of emptiness— dispersed amidst the petals. It prompts the viewer to question the validity of what they see, blurring the line between reality and imagination. Because the reality is

that the viewer is looking at a flat canvas with paint, but imagination is what brings the flowers both to life, and in this work, to death. No matter how closely one examines the elements of the piece, the surreal and elusive essence persists, inviting contemplation and introspection, pulling the viewer in with a hypnotic lure to discover what lies in the darkness.

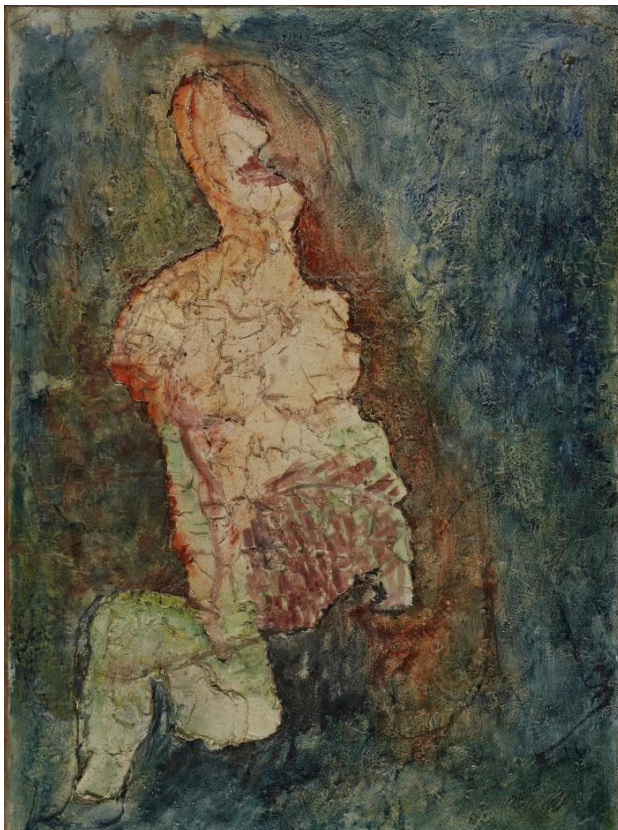
Dépouille, 1945 (<https://www.wikiart.org/en/jean-fautrier/d-pouille-1945>)



The painting of *Dépouille* (see fig. 2) is an abstract rendition of a corpse. The title, translating to ‘hyde’, or ‘remains’, reinforces the themes of death. Fautrier uses pastel colours and smudged lines to soften the image of a corpse, giving the piece an ethereal air; the background is blended with blue, like the corpse is in the sky, suggestive of heavenly or funereal tones. The main attraction of the painting is the corpse, but even that fades into the background.

Some rust stains on the body are the only warm-coloured accent of the piece, which serve as an ominous reminder of either post-mortem decay or the last bits of life trapped within a corpse. The inspiration for the piece stems from Fautrier's personal history, having been arrested two years before by the Gestapo--- the secret Nazi police--- for his work depicting the massacres of French prisoners. The central object of the painting is the 'hyde', but the way its colours blend into the background imply that it is considered as nothing more than an object amidst a world of objects. It adds a level of irony, being that Fautrier's style is almost empyrean, detaching soul from body, while it depicts what is left over after death; after the body is no longer occupied by a soul. In fact, the object of attention does not even appear to be a person at all--- it looks like a nautilus shell, or a sea oyster. Without the title, the viewer would not be able to tell what the figure represents. It dehumanises the subject, and detaches the viewer from it as a person. Fautrier continues the irony through the use of pastel, 'heavenly' colours depicting the torture of a group of people, as if it's a real-life tragedy trivialised or overlooked.

Sarah, 1943 (<https://www.wikiart.org/en/jean-fautrier/sarah-1943>)



Fautrier speaks on the tragedies of the Nazis abusing French prisoners in the work of *Sarah* (see fig. 3). He portrays a woman's corpse torn apart, limbs ripped off and entrails spilling out. The messy and rough texture of his paint on the canvas makes the piece appear more chaotic. The texture is especially noticeable, as it's not something artists use to paint people. Her blood

like ink in water, her skin, chapped and cracked, and her organs scribbled on with oil pastels— it's like Fautrier is trying to dehumanise the woman like the subject in *Dépouille* (see fig. 2), and the way the woman's face has been torn off furthers this idea. The viewer isn't looking at something we're familiar with; it's an object, something strange; alien. The background is a deep blue, which would have been a calming colour had it not been scribbled atop a murky green, making it a vile, swampy colour. This darkness contrasts with the woman's skin and blood, drawing even more attention to her state. When honouring a person who has passed, artists typically draw them while they were alive, or how the world wants to perceive them. But Fautrier drew this woman as she had already died and already become a mangled corpse, which introduces a sense of irony after the viewer reads the title, which is most likely her name. Fautrier introduces this woman to the viewer, and they form a connection, right before she is ripped away and ripped apart into something only vaguely resembling a person.

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Without creativity, art couldn't exist, and without art, creativity would not exist. Creative thoughts and ideas may exist, but thoughts and ideas that cannot be expressed are just as meaningful as thoughts and ideas that do not exist at all. Art gives creativity a physical form, a medium for one to transfer their identities into. Fautrier's work depicts his truth; the aspect of his identity that had been forever changed after being arrested by the Gestapo. His art was the embodiment of the suffering he'd witnessed, and it is the only proof we have that he saw what he saw and felt what he felt. We can hear of it through interviews or articles, but Fautrier is the only person who knows exactly what his work means to him, which is what Kaplan argues art is— "creativity imbued with life". An artist's art, no matter the medium nor the person, is a

representation of their mind, because they are the one who created their art. By looking at art, we see the way the artist perceives the world, or their memories, or themselves. That is how art validates our existence as human beings, as not just objects floating around in a world of other objects. We as people make art in any form because we want to validate our existence; to prove that we exist and have a mind and a soul.

Works Cited:

Foundation Gandur Pour L’Art: Pointet, Sandra. “Artwork of the Month: Sarah” May 2018

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Accessed 4 October 2023

I used Studyable in the process of writing this paper. I did not use it for drafting or analysis purposes, and only used it to revise my already written paragraphs.

- “Shorten the following analysis paragraph: ...”
- “Make the following paragraph’s tone more objective / universal: ...”

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Introduction	<p>Summary thoroughly encapsulates the article's primary claim and supporting details.</p> <p>Thesis clearly and precisely states why the artist further illustrates and/or challenges the article's primary claim.</p>	<p>Summary reflects a clear understanding of the article's primary claim but could be more thorough in connecting the author's supporting points.</p> <p>Thesis is clear but could more precisely relate the artist's work to the article's primary claim.</p>	<p>Summary reflects some understanding of the article's primary claim but omits some significant supporting points or includes irrelevant information.</p> <p>Thesis is somewhat clear but lacks precision about how the artist's work relates to the article's primary claim.</p>	<p>Summary is missing significant details or lacks a clear understanding of the article's primary claim and supporting points.</p> <p>Thesis is unclear or vague, making it difficult to understand how the writer is relating an artist's work to the article's primary claim.</p>
Development	<p>Body paragraphs thoroughly support the thesis through insightful analysis, moving from an interpretation of the overall meaning of each artwork to specific examination of visual artistic techniques, themes, and/or symbolism.</p>	<p>Body paragraphs develop the thesis through some insightful analysis. Some interpretations of the overall meaning of 1-2 artworks could be stronger or better supported through more specific examination of visual artistic techniques, themes, and/or symbolism.</p>	<p>Body paragraphs provide a basic level of analysis but generally need a stronger level of interpretation and more specific examinations of visual artistic techniques, themes, and/or symbolism.</p>	<p>Body paragraphs lack development: analysis is thin due to underdeveloped or missing interpretations of each artwork; or, the writer doesn't examine visual artistic techniques, themes, and/or symbolism.</p>
Coherence + Closure	<p>Writer uses appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.</p> <p>The concluding paragraph articulates an insightful connection between the opinion article and a pattern of meaning derived from the analysis, leaving the reader with a compelling sense of why the</p>	<p>Writer mostly uses appropriate transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, although there may be occasional lapses in variety or effectiveness.</p> <p>The concluding paragraph articulates a connection between the opinion article and a pattern of meaning derived from the analysis, leaving the reader with a sense of why the writer thinks art matters in the</p>	<p>The writer uses transitions and syntax to some extent, but there are significant gaps in their use, leading to issues with cohesion and clarity in the text.</p> <p>The concluding paragraph attempts to establish a connection between the opinion article and a pattern of meaning derived from the analysis but falls somewhat short in clarity or insight, leaving the</p>	<p>The writer does not effectively utilize transitions and syntax to connect sections of the text, resulting in a lack of cohesion and poor clarity regarding the relationships between ideas and concepts.</p> <p>The concluding paragraph fails to articulate a meaningful connection between the opinion article and a pattern of meaning derived from the analysis,</p>

	<p>writer thinks art matters in the context of the discussion.</p>	<p>context of the discussion (although it could be more insightful).</p>	<p>reader with some questions or uncertainties.</p>	<p>leaving the reader without a clear understanding of why the writer believes art matters in the context of the discussion.</p>
<p>MLA Format + Citation</p>	<p>MLA format, Works Cited page, and in-text citation are all perfect by MLA standards.</p> <p>The analysis of each of 3 required artworks is accompanied by a clear, high-quality image. Each image is formatted as an "illustration," which includes a label, a number, a caption and/or source information.</p> <p>Use of AI: Include a note at the very end of the essay explaining how you used ChatGPT or any other AI tools to develop this essay. If you decide to cite ChatGPT as a source, you must follow these <u>MLA guidelines for citing generative AI</u>.</p>	<p>MLA format, Works Cited page, and/or in-text citation are close to meeting MLA standards but have some inaccuracies*.</p> <p>*Including MLA formatting of 3 required artwork images and / or citations of AI sources and use.</p>	<p>MLA format, Works Cited page, and/or in-text citation are not yet close to meeting MLA standards*.</p> <p>*Including MLA formatting of 3 required artwork images and / or citations of AI sources and use.</p>	<p>MLA format, Works Cited page, and in-text citation are missing.*</p> <p>*Note: failure to cite sources or honestly explain use of AI in the writing of this essay are violations of District's Cheating and Plagiarism Policies and will trigger its intervention protocol.</p>
<p>Mechanics</p>	<p>Writing is polished, free of spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.</p>	<p>Writing contains some spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors. However, these errors do not impact the reader's understanding.</p>	<p>Writing contains numerous spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors. These errors impact the reader's understanding.</p>	<p>Frequent errors accumulate, impairing the reader's ability to understand the essay.</p>