

The monumental sculpture from the hourloupe cycle english literature essay

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Jocalyn L. MossJean DubuffetProfessor WilliamsonJean Dubuffet was an artist known for his assemblages as well as the crude and violent energy that could be felt within his works. From 1942 to 1985, Dubuffet's style of art claimed him worldwide recognition and even now art lovers and critics marvel over his beautifully bizarre works of art. In this essay, I will be comparing two artworks of the late Jean Dubuffet. The two artworks that I will be comparing are the Art Critic Michel Tapié [1] and one of his later works Monumental Sculpture from the Hourloupe Cycle [2]. The topics I am going to discuss on are how the change in his art style had become more apparent between the two works, the difference in mediums, and lastly how the choices he went about presenting his works have changed as well. But before I get into the comparison, I think it would be beneficial to give a quick bit of information about who Dubuffet was, and how he had come to be the artist that he was. Firstly, Jean Dubuffet was a French avant-garde painter whom was born on July 31, 1901 to a middle-class wine merchant family in Le Havre, France [3]. As child, despite being well-educated, he had come to reject his studies and seemed to prefer teaching himself by reading the works of Dr. Hans Prinzhorn, who at the time had drawn comparisons between the art of asylum inmates and the artwork of children. Prinzhorn states, " It is savagery or base animal instinct that leads to universal harmony, not intellectual theory or analysis that connected all living things." [4] This is one of the major influences on the turn that his artwork takes later on for the rest of his artistic career. Since his early childhood, Dubuffet had shown a dislike for authority and had even left his home at the age of 17. It was in 1918 when Dubuffet moved to Paris where he studied at

the Académie Julian, but in comparison to the intellectuals at the art academy, Dubuffet had come to think of himself as a savage. Unlike the other students of the academy, he didn't allow himself to be constrained by categories such as " Surrealist" or " Futurist" and so after attending classes for only six months, he withdrew from the academy as he found that it didn't suit his needs. Unfortunately due to him failing to complete his art education, he was forced to waver between painting and working in his father's wine business for many years. In 1924, Dubuffet had taken over his father's wine business but had managed to continue studying art on his own. During that time, he had come to find solace with the common people of the country, and had come to believe that there was meaning in living a simple life where he could focus on music and poetry. But it wasn't until 1942 that he finally returned to painting. Because of his frustration with the intellectual approaches to art, he became known as a successful propagandist, gaining notoriety for his attacks on the " asphyxiating" conformism and mainstream culture of his time [4]. Instead of following the current trend of his time, he continued to admire the artwork of asylum inmates and children. To him the works done by the mentally disturbed were more authentic, more original than the works of professional artists. To him the works done by the mentally ill held more passion, stirred more of frenzy while the works of professionals left a lot to be desired. [5] Like those mentioned within the books he read as a child, and soon came to desire to recreate the uninhibited style. Painting in seclusion, he experimented with new methods and concepts, without worry of being disturbed by new theories or the newest popular trends. [4] The concept of not following trends and going for a cruder and almost child-like

style of drawing was what Dubuffet continued to practice even to his later years. Now we come to the artworks, both of which were done at different stages of his life. The portrait of Art critic Michel Tapie [1] by Jean Dubuffet was done in a period where his works were being heavily influenced by Jean Fautrier. At that time he was obsessed with texture and he would limit his palette by using only dark, monochromatic surfaces and figures. But the main idea he was using at the time he made the Art critic Michel Tapie portrait, was depersonalization. Instead of realistic drawings, he would exaggerate the features and proportions to create grotesque caricatures, which challenged the cultural standards of beauty, the contemporary obsession with non-objective art, as well as the traditional ideas of realism. With this piece, he deliberately made it " ugly", because Dubuffet didn't believe in the separation of beautiful and ugly. He expressed this view in many of his paintings. [4]Then there is the Monumental Sculpture from the Hourloupe Cycle by Jean Dubuffet, which was a piece done by him in the late half of his life. By the time he was working on this, he has challenged the aesthetic boundaries of art through various experiments with different materials and styles. It was during this time that he had come to create some of his more important works by using tools that are used by the " common man". Tools such as ballpoint and felt-tip pens became tools that he would regularly use. Hints of Surrealism began to creep into his work during this time, as he would tap directly into his subconscious in order to find inspirations for his next works. Dubuffet would usually begin with simple scribbles on paper before he would finalize the work by adding splashes of red, blue, white, and black. It was this new approach that allowed him to

break away from objectivity, and it was at that time when he believed that he had finally found the purest form of art. It was from 1966 till his death, when he would use the Hourloupe series in order to create several large sculptures. [4]The Monumental Sculpture from the Hourloupe Cycle was one of them. It is clear just from looking at it the difference between it and the portrait of Art critic Michel Tapie. First off are the mediums. While one is done on a canvas, the other is a sculpture. Paintings and sculptures are two very different mediums on different ends of the spectrum. Then there is the difference in how Dubuffet has come to portray his subject. While before like with the portrait of the Art critic Michel Tapie, Dubuffet exaggerates certain features and depersonalize the subject. It was still fairly easy to tell what the subject was without having to think very hard. Having enough recognizable features no matter how exaggerated wouldn't make it too hard for the observer to have a general idea of what the subject for the painting is especially with the name of the work. But with the Monumental Sculpture from the Hourloupe Cycle, the observer would have to spend at least a few minutes looking and thinking about the sculpture to come up with some kind of idea as to what the subject of the artwork is. Unlike with Art critic Michel Tapie, someone who has no knowledge of art wouldn't be able to make an accurate guess as to what the subject matter of this artwork is. Due to the lack of features that were present in the Art critic Michel Tapie and his earlier works. But even then, some would find the style of the Monumental Sculpture from the Hourloupe Cycle to be more physically appealing to the idea in comparison to the portrait of Art critic Michel Tapie. Instead of the dark and drab colors used in the Art critic Michel Tapie, the use of white

along with red, blue, and black is very eye-catching. The black lines pull your attention and you could unintentionally find yourself following them all the way around the sculptures like a path that was intentionally given to you. In the end, the two artworks were steps for Dubuffet, who sought to create an art form that was free from intellectual concerns such as Art Brut, where work appeared primitive and childlike. But it has been noted by some that Dubuffet acted exactly like the intellectuals he was frustrated with when it came to writing about his own work. A prominent art critic named Hilton Kramer stated on p. 43 in the article "Playing the Primitive", "There is only one thing wrong with the essays Dubuffet has written on his own work: their dazzling intellectual finesse makes nonsense of his claim to a free and untutored primitivism. They show us a mandarin literary personality, full of chic phrases and up-to-date ideas that is quite the opposite of the naive visionary." [6] But whether that was true or not doesn't really matter. What does matter is that like other artists, due to the times and experimentation the difference between some artwork from 15 years ago and their present work can be very large. In the case of Dubuffet's works, the Art critic Michel Tapié and the Monumental Sculpture from the Hourloupe Cycle, the differences between them are very large.