

# Discussion on self-portrait as woman essay



I agree with many things and have my own interjections to add to this very well thought of interpretation of “ Self-Portrait as Woman Recovering from Effects of Male Gaze (What’s Underneath)”. Firstly I would like to point out the purposeful use of vague images which would logically develop incomplete ideas is incorrect. I believe the artist didn’t intend for viewers to have incomplete thoughts but rather it is almost like the artist is planting seeds in the viewers mind, the artist in a way gives us exactly as much information they think you need.

The way I look at it is when a seed is planted, its complete genetic code is already programmed into it, the seed can either grow and become a plant or not, with a few exceptions of mutations of course. I found it very interesting how the artist’s style is described in detail; I especially took note of things like the very descriptive titling of artwork employed by this artist. I like to inspect and make my own conclusions about artwork before digesting the title, or the artist’s/critic’s description and then compare the differences.

You will be surprised at the concepts/ideas you seem to overpass which now have more significance. For example, I did not truly understand what the artist was trying to convey, and their definition of the “ male gaze” just by observing the picture. However, once I really read the title (thought about it), the picture became very clear (no pun intended). Many more ideas and concepts began to flood through my mind. The picture was now “ saying something” for lack of a better term, it still had a message at the beginning, but a much stronger one now. The concept would be very hard to get across w/o title.

The image of perfectly tilted fruit coupled with the descriptive title gives you a real insight of the message the artist is trying to portray in this picture, namely her concerns about how females are portrayed in arts and entertainment in often erotic or enticing ways to be consumed by the male viewer. I especially agree with the interpretation that the artist is both confirming and denying the characterization mentioned in the lecture. By creating this image, the artist confirms it but it can also, be perceived as negating the characterization by almost creating a mockery of the idea.

At first I did not see how image can do both at the same time. After thinking about it for a bit, I realized that the artist controlled whatever the viewer was to see, the artist could have painted the fruit rotting and unappetizing without the same affect. The mass of fruit in the middle is appetizing/appealing to pretty much all people, in a sense transforming us or pointing out to us that we are these “ consuming male viewers”, which in turn is in line with the other interpretation that maybe this transcends the sexes, and focuses on the individual’s desires.

This artwork/interpretation got me thinking about a story I read once called “She Unnames Them”, by Ursula K. Le Guin. “ She Unnames Them”, is a story set during traditional biblical story of Adam and Eve. The story ends when Eve decides to undo all the names of the animals because the names they were given by Adam have an underlying hierarchy, which in turn enforces the male characterization of trying to dominate/influence his surroundings. I have a few questions which are very opinionated and probably best-answered by the artist themselves. Basically, it is just an excuse to add more of my opinions.

Firstly, I would like to know why the artist positioned Adam and Eve in the pear, and the Amazons in the apple. Wouldn't it be more fitting for them to be switched due to the biblical story of Adam and Eve being closely tied to the apple, of course this is just my opinion and I am sure the artist has a good reasons for their decision. At first, I thought the strange spirals were a stain on my screen or a figment of a program I use that dims my computer screen based on ambient sunlight. Then I read that it was an actual inscription across the image.

Why did the artist choose a spiral configuration for this inscription, why two of them one larger than the other, and finally why not place it similarly to the other inscriptions what is the significance of the placement. I would also like to know why the artist inscribed very detailed graphic images of Venus in the inscriptions such as "Venus taking her baby out of the bath by the ankle and smashing it against the tiles" and "Venus shooting herself in the belly to kill the baby inside" what is the significance/meaning of killing of the baby.

The other inscriptions about Venus the god of beauty and love make sense to me in keeping with the meaning of this artwork. However, these aforementioned inscriptions seem very odd to me. .. Reply I found your interpretation very intriguing, you have pointed out a few perspectives I haven't yet recognized. Your comment about the chaos of women's lives is a very interesting way to look at the artist's choice of scattered positioning of the fruit.

Your interpretation of the clause taken from the title, "What's Underneath" is very in-depth and detailed. I am also gravitating towards that phrase

having something to do with the hidden pictures. What I believe the artist is saying with this, especially by adding her own (almost in a sense that any woman's pic can be there), is that all these powerful figures (Venus, Amzons, etc) are " what's underneath" every woman and not just the fruit that's on the outside, like the way females are commonly portrayed in media and in art.

I think the fact that many artists never realize their own talents is sad and I agree with it. However, personally I rather be an artist that does not know their own talents, but have them shown to me by appreciation/critiques of my work, than be an artist that understands that they are very talented with no one appreciating their work. An example of this can be from history where some civilizations/kings/empires were not always friendly to artists, especially if they are deviating from the norm or what is expected.