

# Comparative Study

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This Comparative Study focuses on comparing and contrasting an international and a local artist: Henri Matisse and Hal Koenig respectively. Each artist's formal qualities are examined through two works. *Blue Nude* (1905) and *Bathers by a River* (1917) by Matisse and *History* and *Mitchell* by Koenig are the selected works. The focus of the study is on how the artists found and utilized their inspirations. Additionally, how the artists identified the subjects of their selected works through their inspiration is analyzed. Each artist was able to identify and emphasize the subject of a piece using techniques gathered from their inspirations. Furthermore, the selected artists' works will be compared to my works *Every Which Way*, *Self Portrait 1*, *Self Portrait 2*, and *Bureaucracy*. Formal qualities and use of inspiration are analyzed to open up a comparison between my works and the works of the selected artists.

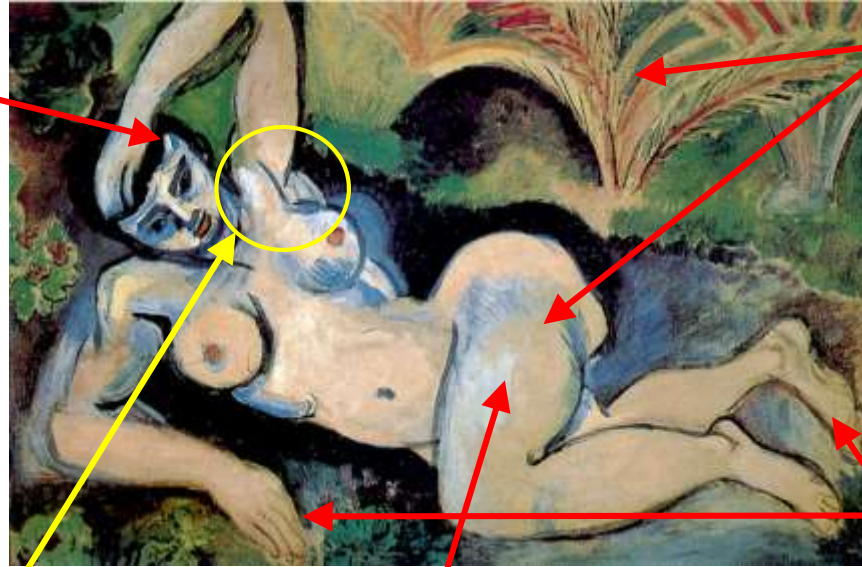
# Interpretation of Function and Purpose:

## *Blue Nude* by Henri Matisse (1905)

The use of the color blue is used to create depth and shadows for the female nude.



The use of bold, broken, and angular lines separates the nude from the background as well as defies the acceptable style of painting of a female which is supposed to be smooth and have curves.



The patchy brushwork was in protest of the traditional way to paint the female nude. Matisse's act of rebellion was condemned for it being vulgar to paint a female nude with hard edges brushwork that does not appear soft or well blended.

The contrast in color between the nude and the background makes the female form the emphasis of the piece. The nude has cooler hues and the background has warmer hues. There is also a contrast in forms. The plants in the background are organic forms and the nude is more geometric with angular lines.

The hands and feet are underdeveloped with detail in defiance of traditional representations of women and the human form. The decrease in detail also maintains focus on the more central aspects of the nude such as the arms, legs, and torso.

*"The Blue Nude, 1907 by Henri Matisse."*  
Henri Matisse, [HenriMatisse.org](http://HenriMatisse.org), 2011.

# Analysis of Formal Qualities:

*Blue Nude,*  
near torso



*Blue Nude,*  
near feet



"The Blue Nude,  
1907 by Henri  
Matisse." Henri  
Matisse,  
[HenriMatisse.org](http://HenriMatisse.org),  
2011.

*Blue Nude,*  
near buttox of  
nude

## *Blue Nude* by Henri Matisse (1905)

Matisse's use of color, shape, and texture work together to produce what was once burned in effigy for being "perverse," "vulgar," and "grotesque." The form was based on a damaged sculpture that Matisse was working on in the early 1900's. The broken statue served as a model. This could explain the rough edges Matisse sketched with his brush and the fast changes in value on the form. The juxtaposition of the the cool and warm hues als The color palette for the nude was a mixture of skin tones and blues. The sketch-like qualities of this piece are seen in the texture formed by quick brushstrokes and in the shape of the woman, especially in the outline of the figure near the left breast, hands, and feet.

The composition of the piece itself relies heavily on contrast, emphasis, movement, and unity. Most of these are sourced from the colors used by Matisse in the painting. The difference in warmth of color between the nude and the background make the the nude the emphasis of the piece and the pallor background an afterthought. Although the colors vary between the fore and background, there is still a sense of unity between the two. The use of rough and broken line at sharp angles invites the viewer to examine the nude figure. These components work in tandem to form one of Matisse's most pivotal works.

"Henri Matisse." *Biography.com*, A&E Networks  
Television, 28 Apr. 2017.

# Evaluation of Cultural Significance:

## *Blue Nude* by Henri Matisse (1907)

"The Blue Nude, 1907 by Henri Matisse." Henri Matisse, HenriMatisse.org, 2011.

*Blue Nude* was painted in tribute to Cezanne and is reminiscent of sculpture seen by Matisse in Algeria. It is also a response to female nudes commonly seen in Paris. The rough texture, hard edges, and angular lines are opposite of the traditional soft brushwork and curved form; probably something the world was not ready to accept as a reasonable body image at the time.

Painted in 1907, the work is most likely influenced by the sculpture seen on his trip to Algeria in 1906. Matisse went to Algeria to study primitive art. The primitive aspects of *Blue Nude* include the sketch-like brushstrokes as well as the simple, abstract background. The shape of the breasts as well as the breaking form are reminiscent of the *Statue of Venus* known as *Pudica*. It was recovered from a Roman civilization in Algeria. The broken sculpture has hard edges and resembles a faux female form.

In contrast to the sculpture and commonplace view of women as dismissive in the early 1900's, the woman in the painting is fit and muscular and established by thick, black and dark blue lines. This representation cultivated a negative response from the public because they held the belief that women still had to be painted in the traditional way, with soft edges and light color.



*Blue Nude*, torso, rough brushwork



*Blue Nude*, feet, rough brushwork

"Henri Matisse Biography, Art, and Analysis of Works." *The Art Story*, The Art Story Foundation, 2017.

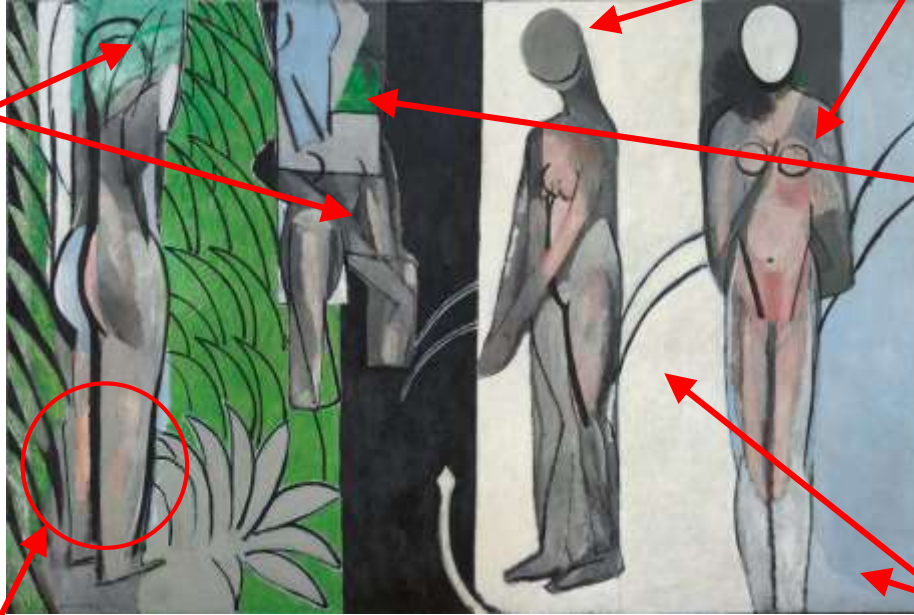
# Interpretation of Function and Purpose:

## *Bathers by a River* by Henri Matisse (1917)

The figures are all facing different directions in order to provide a study of the human form from multiple perspectives.



With the recent decline in Fauvism, Matisse probably started to move away from the vibrant color and more toward a muted palette. Above is a detailed image of Matisse's muted colors.



The four figures are evenly separated throughout the composition to emphasize each as independent and important. The balance allows the viewer to separate the forms.

Cubist element: defines features with shapes. The breasts and heads of the figures are simplified to circles due to the emergence of cubism.

The use of black: creates value to give figure depth and distinguishes them from the background painted in cooler, more earthy tones.

The motif of skin tone reinforces the human qualities of the statue-like people.

The background is defined by four separate colors in order to give each form its own space in which it exists.

"Matisse: Radical Invention, 1913–1917."  
*The Museum of Modern Art, MoMA,*  
2017.

# Analysis of Formal Qualities:

## *Bathers by a River* by Henri Matisse (1917)

"Matisse: Radical Invention, 1913–1917." *The Museum of Modern Art*, MoMA, 2017.

Matisse focuses on the human form in *Bathers by a River* as well as its position in space and the emotions elicited by its representation. A similar form is repeated in four different positions throughout the composition each from a different perspective. The repetition of this human-like form enables the viewer to analyze the natural form through Cubism. The use of Cubism is significant because it limited Matisse to very geometric and uniform shapes.

In this composition, Matisse's use of line, space, color, form, and value come together to create a balanced work focusing on the structure of the human figure. Matisse is addressing the problem of depicting a three-dimensional figure against a flat background. His use of value on the figures and in the shadows produced suggests the forms were not to be thought of as flat. The bold black lines aided in separating the forms from the background. The space each form takes up ensures the viewers look at them all separately, but yet together because of their unity through color and pattern used on the figures and in the background. The color choice of Matisse is different than his previous works. His range of color is shortened, however the few colors he uses are enough to separate the forms from the background and not steal attention away from the forms.



*Bathers by a River*, Figure on the right

Matisse's use of shadow and simplified form can be seen here, especially around the head and the breasts of this figure. The simplification encourages pure analysis of the human form.

"Henri Matisse Biography, Art, and Analysis of Works." *The Art Story*, The Art Story Foundation, 2017.

# Evaluation of Cultural Significance:

"The Dance." and  
"Music." Henri Matisse,  
HenriMatisse.org,  
2011,

## *Bathers by a River* by Henri Matisse (1917)

*Bathers by a River* is thought to be related closely to Matisse's trips to Morocco. His interest in various forms of primitive art allowed him to first draw inspiration from the Moorish part of Spain and then to further his search into northern Africa. As a painting that Matisse has come back to and worked on for nearly a decade, Matisse regards *Bathers by a River* as one of the most pivotal works of his career. It was painted in a time where he was drawing inspiration from multiple places including Fauvism, Cubism, the human form, and his trips to northern Africa where he found the primitive artwork to be the strongest and most influential.

His evolution of perspective on the human form is changed throughout the process of painting *Bathers by a River*. This is seen when the first watercolor sketch and the final piece are compared, as well as knowing it came as a third part to *Music* and *Dance*. The sketch and the other two paintings both have an arabesque quality to them, however, *Bathers by a River* loses that in favor of simple forms. The figures are not free flowing nor as detailed in the final painting.

Pictured right are the two other paintings that supposedly belong with *Bathers by a River*. There are similarities in how the forms are presented with not much detail and contrast between the forms and the background through color warmth



*Music*, 1910 by Matisse



*Dance* by Matisse



*Bathers by a River*  
(sketch) by Matisse

"The Personal Life of Henri Matisse." *Biography of Henri Matisse*, Succession H. Matisse, 2011.

"Matisse's 'Bathers by the River'." *The New York Times*, *The New York Times*, 10 July 2010.

# Information on Hal Koenig:

Koenig was interviewed October 2017, in his Milwaukee gallery  
Images from <http://www.halkoenig.com/>



Hal Koenig / *History* / 91.44 x 121.9  
cm / oil on canvas

Hal Koenig is a local Milwaukee artist originating from North Dakota. Koenig's inspiration is based in abstraction and expressionism, but also touching on Fauvism with his experimentation with color. In addition to that, he has a special interest in the "interplay" of the natural and built world, by both their similarities and differences and in their dependency on each other. This is one of the reasons that paths or bridges are often depicted in a park or over a river. Similarly, trees and various other natural forms are pictured in cityscapes. Hal Koenig said in an interview, "bridges are natural... the bridge

exists because the river does." Abstraction and expressionism a vital for how forms are depicted in his works.. Although the forms are accurate in size and color, the method of applying paint to the canvas and layering buildings is not. The city can be read as if it were body language. Cities expand outward and often have older and newer parts layering each other. History can be seen through these layers.



Hal Koenig / *Mitchell* / 106.7 x  
106.7cm / oil and acrylic



# Interpretation of Function and Purpose:

## *History* by Hal Koenig

Contrast between the soft edges of the tree line and the hard, angular edges of the skyline.

Rough, patchy brushwork demonstrates impressionist inspiration.

Harmony exists between nature and manmade structures because they are weaved together. The path goes through the park. Lamp posts are integrated into nature as well by their juxtaposition to trees

The path and cityscape contrast with the natural setting of a park.



Tree branches on each side frame the painting and focus on the most central and tallest building. The movement upwards is also direct by the trees and then the building.

The contrast in hue between the buildings and surroundings emphasizes the buildings as the subject of the piece.

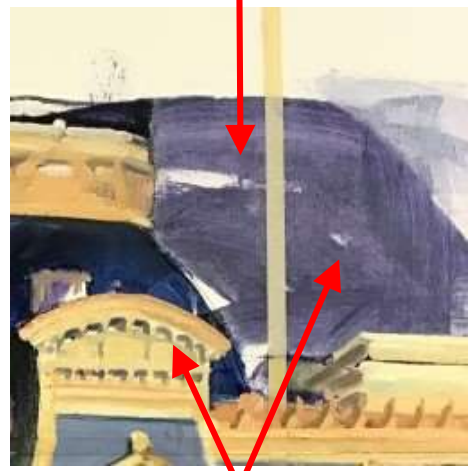
The asymmetrical balance between the park and city emphasizes equal importance of nature and the man-made world.

"History." Hal Koenig, [www.halkoenig.com/chicago-paintings/](http://www.halkoenig.com/chicago-paintings/).

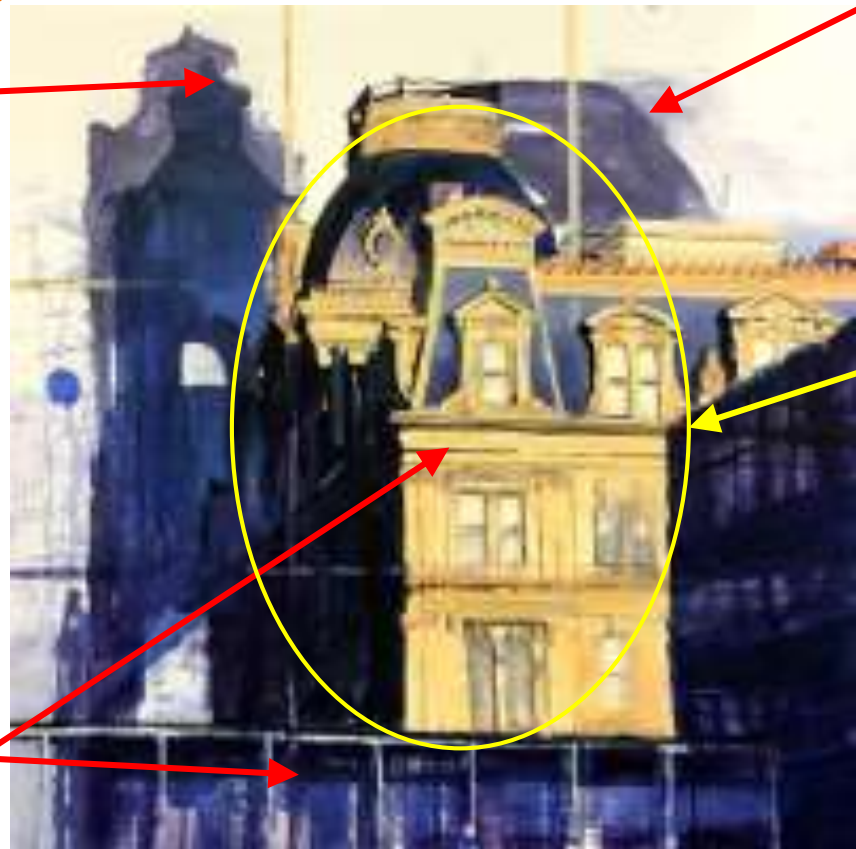
# Interpretation of Function and Purpose:

## *Mitchell* by Hal Koenig

Rough, patchy brushwork demonstrates Impressionist technique and inspiration.



The contrast in hue between the buildings and surroundings emphasizes the building as the subject of the piece.



The Mitchell building is emphasized by eliminating detail from surrounding buildings. The silhouette buildings are lacking enough detail that the viewer is focused on what is clear, the Mitchell building.

Radial balance emphasized the Mitchell building as the subject of the piece. In all directions there is either blank space or a silhouette. The Mitchell building is realized in the middle of the canvas.

The Mitchell building is painted from the perspective of someone looking up, making its presence much larger.

"Mitchell." Hal Koenig, <http://www.halkoenig.com/urban-landscapes/>.

# Analysis of Formal Qualities:

## Hal Koenig

Much of Hal Koenig's work focuses on the interplay of land and the buildings constructed on it. For his buildings, trees, and rivers, he utilizes shape, space, value, and hue to elicit emotion or curiosity in the viewer. In *History* the hue of the sky and the pale colors of the buildings contrast making the Chicago skyline the emphasis and subject. The juxtaposition of the skyline and tree line also puts emphasis on the buildings because they are the more rigid of the two forms with more detail and line for the viewer to follow. The composition of *History* relies heavily on successful asymmetrical balance, and less on the elimination of background elements.

An important aspect of *Mitchell* is Koenig's use of shape and color to emphasize the Mitchell building against a number of other buildings. The Mitchell building is painted against a field of blue and dark blue which are the silhouettes of surrounding buildings. *Mitchell* also has the most detail and warmest colors within the composition. Unlike *History*, *Mitchell* relies on radial balance and does not juxtapose natural forms with built forms. With the Mitchell building in the center of the piece and detail tapering off outward from the center, *Mitchell* is emphasized over all other aspects.



Hal Koenig / *History*  
/ 91.44 x 121.9 cm /  
oil on canvas



Hal Koenig /  
*Mitchell* /  
106.7 x  
106.7cm / oil  
and acrylic

# Evaluation of Cultural Significance

Images from  
<http://www.halkoenig.com/>

## Hal Koenig

Both of the pieces by Hal Koenig are focused on an urban landscape. The inspiration for these pieces could reasonably have stemmed from the Impressionist and Abstraction movements because of the painting style and simplified forms. There are also connections to Fauvism because of his experimentation with color on leaves and different ways to represent reflections off of buildings in the distance.

One of his main interests is the human interaction with the environment and how humans can adapt to it, likewise, how the environment can adapt to humans. Nature, humans, and the products of humanity all exist in harmony because they work together and do not necessarily interfere with each other.

### Other works by Koenig showing similar qualities



Hal Koenig / *South Pond* / 121.9 x 162.6 cm / oil on canvas



Hal Koenig / *Discovery*, 106.7 x 106.7 cm / oil on canvas

# Comparing Artistic Styles: How Subjects Are Identified



"The Blue Nude, 1907 by Henri Matisse." Henri Matisse, *Henri Matisse.org*, 2011. and "Matisse: Radical Invention, 1913–1917." *The Museum of Modern Art, MoMA*, 2017.

Images from <http://www.halkoenig.com/>



Both

## *Blue Nude*

## Henri Matisse

- Rough, patchy brushwork is used to paint the female form. The Fauvist style of painting with patches of pure color is used to add value to the female form.
- Radial balance from midriff.

## *Bathers by a River*

- Cubist elements are seen in the in the shape of the body.
- A muted palette is used to emphasize the human form by not causing a distraction.
- Symmetrical and vertical balance to separate forms.

## Matisse

- Use of dark, bold lines to accentuate the forms.
- Value and shadows are used to make the forms appear three dimensional.

## Matisse and Koenig

- Complex forms are reduced down to their basic shapes
- Reduced background detail to emphasize subject
- Contrasts in hue between background and subject

## Koenig

- Surroundings and subject are juxtaposed
- The subject placed at focal point of the balance scheme

## Hal Koenig

### *History*

- Harmony between nature and human invention
- Identified by asymmetrical balance and contrast between skyline and sky

### *Mitchell*

- Radial balance and detail tapers off moving outward from center.
- Background hues are limited to blue and white making the Mitchell building stand out with its warm colors

# Comparison of Expression of Inspiration



"The Blue Nude, 1907 by Henri Matisse." [HenriMatisse.org](http://HenriMatisse.org), 2011. and "Matisse: Radical Invention, 1913–1917." *The Museum of Modern Art*, MoMA, 2017.

Images from <http://www.halkoenig.com/>



Both

## *Blue Nude*

## Henri Matisse

Inspired by:

- Algerian sculpture
- Femininity
  - Took action against the way females are commonly portrayed in art.
- Primitivism

## *Bathers by a River*

Inspired by:

- The human form
- Moroccan art and culture
- Cubism

## Matisse

- Contain primitive aspects like the abstract background or rough portrayal of the human form
- The human form

## Matisse and Koenig

- Impressionism and Fauvism
  - Expressive colors used
  - Rough, patchy brushwork

## Koenig

- Contain geometric forms as buildings and some organic forms as plants

## *History*

## Hal Koenig

Inspired by:

- Chicago Skyline
- "Interplay" of natural and man-made world
- The permanence of man-made and natural forms

## *Mitchell*

Inspired by:

- Downtown Milwaukee
- Abstraction: Representation of subsidiary buildings as blue silhouettes

# Comparison of Formal Qualities



"The Blue Nude, 1907 by Henri Matisse." Henri Matisse, *HenriMatisse.org*, 2011. and "Matisse: Radical Invention, 1913–1917." *The Museum of Modern Art*, MoMA, 2017.

Images from <http://www.halkoenig.com/>



Both

## *Blue Nude*

## Henri Matisse

- Hue:
  - Color palette is muted
- Unity exemplified through similar color scheme of nude and background
- Bold, broken and angular lines work in harmony with organic forms in background

## *Bathers by a River*

- Movement is minimized due to the space between forms
- The background contrasts itself to create space and limit movement across the piece

## Matisse

- Values change rapidly in the same area and are often layered (not much gradient)

## Matisse and Koenig

- Movement is minimal because of static positions of forms in the pieces

## Koenig

- Geometric forms are reserved for man made structures
- Many lines move vertically creating movement up and down the piece.

## *History*

## Hal Koenig

- Hue:
  - Vibrant colors; playing with light intensities
- Hard and soft lines contrast each other to emphasize the subject with more detail

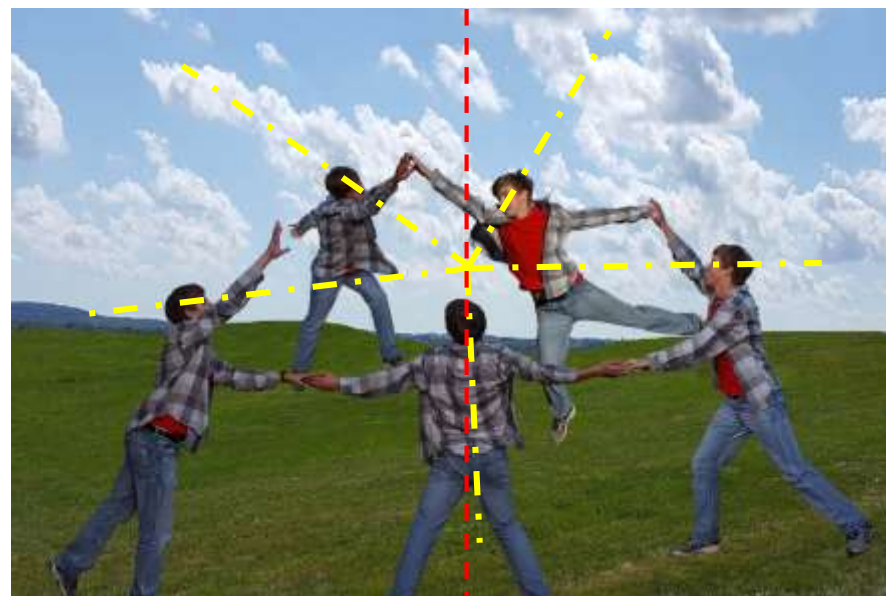
## *Mitchell*

- Hue:
  - Vibrant colors against muted background to emphasize Mitchell
- Dramatic changes in value for parts in the light

# Connection to Personal Work: Henri Matisse

*Every Which Way* is a digital collage inspired mostly by Matisse's *Dance*, however, Matisse's technique of emphasizing the subject of a piece is translated through mediums.

Like *Blue Nude* and *Bathers by a River*, balance plays into how the viewer interacts with the piece. My collage has both symmetrical and radial balance which places emphasis on each replication singularly and as a group. Part of this emphasis also derives from the stark contrasts in form and color between the subject and the background. Matisse used this method in both of the previously reviewed pieces. In *Blue Nude*, the nude differs from the background in color, tone, and form (the body is more angular with defined edges). *Bathers by a River* primarily relies on the contrast of colors and warmth to define subjects. I took these ideas and the cool versus warm color scheme of *Dance* into consideration when making this piece. The cool colors of the background contrast with the warm colors and tone created by my skin tone and red shirt. I also adjusted the images of myself to be more saturated with tones of red. The warmth difference between my clothes and I are also meant to emphasize me and not really what I'm wearing. This leads into how Matisse inspired the use of color in my works.



Student Work / *Every Which Way* / 2016 / Mixed Media / 91.4 x 61.0 cm



# Connection to Personal Work: Henri Matisse



Student / *Self Portrait 1* / 2016 / Acrylic on Canvas / 91.44 x 91.44 cm

I employed the use of color in my works as symbols. Matisse's use of color extended further than its technical uses previously expressed. From Matisse's work and my research, I came to the conclusion that his work has underlying tones of challenging society. In *Self Portrait 1* I used green to obscure my face, like a mask. In *Self Portrait 2* I used only tones of red and blue to paint with Matisse's patchy brushwork and layering technique. I developed the idea of layering colors from my thematic topic which was identity. Having layers coincided with being more than a static character in life.

*Self Portrait 1* draws inspiration from Matisse's 1906 self portrait and *Blue Nude*. His self portrait and *Blue Nude* use color on the facial features which I interpret as a way of concealing oneself. I extended his metaphor in my first self portrait, but then found more meaning in it while painting my second portrait. The colors used symbolically represent the United States and American culture. As a member of this culture, I am questioning whether outside perspective of my upbringings predispose me to a personality that is not truly me.



Student / *Self Portrait 2* / 2017 / Mixed Media / 91.44 x 91.44 cm

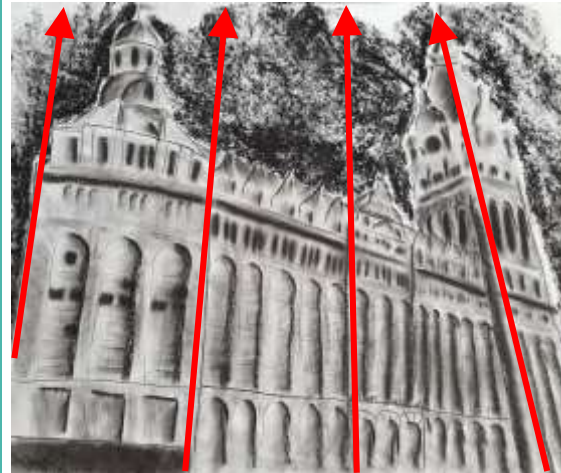


# Connection to Personal Work: Hal Koenig

Images from  
<http://www.halkoenig.com/>

*Bureaucracy* was inspired by Koenig cityscapes and Dennis Creffield's English cathedral drawings. Pictured is the city hall in Milwaukee, Wisconsin towering over the viewer ranging in value from light grey to black. The central idea behind this work is bureaucracy.

This idea was founded on Koenig's *Mitchell* and *History*. A large aspect of that at first was how he emphasizes the subject of his paintings. Koenig uses perspective, balance, and contrast to highlight the subject of his pieces. Of the pieces I examined, the point of perspective falls on the subject itself if it is not directing the viewer to a slightly less substantial contrast. The point of perspective guides the viewer along all lines to the aspect of the painting that is most important. *Mitchell* has perspective lines that are all heading away from the subject (which was defined by its contrast to the background), and *History* has perspective lines that are all converging toward the center of the piece at the base of the building. I employed this method of directing the viewer's attention toward the subject of *Bureaucracy*. Since I wanted to approach this idea of a higher power (and I was also drawing inspiration from cathedrals) I had the perspective of the viewer be near the base of city hall. This made all lines converge on a point far above the limitations of the piece itself.

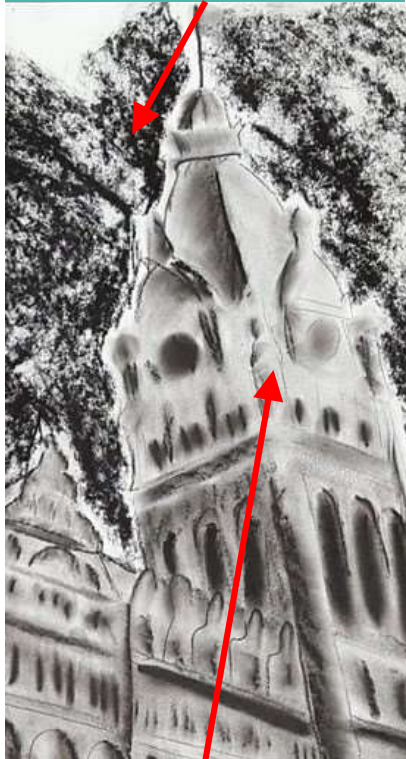


Student /  
*Bureaucracy* /  
2017 /  
Charcoal /  
61.0 x 73.0 cm

Bureaucracy,  
near tower

# Connection to Personal Work: Hal Koenig

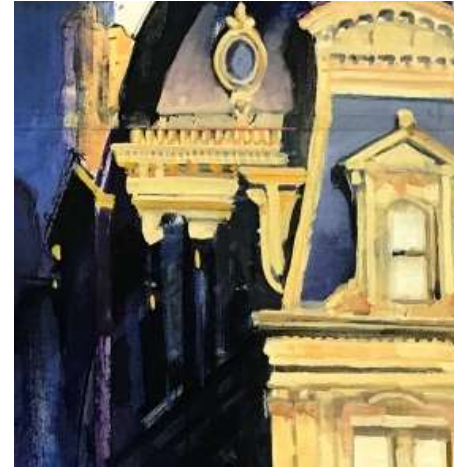
Cool black sky



Warm grey building

Koenig's use of contrasting warm and cool colors inspired how I realized my image of city hall in *Bureaucracy*. I did not use color as Koenig did in *History* and *Mitchell*. He uses the difference in warmth between traditional warm and cool colors. I was able to manipulate how the black charcoal is perceived by the viewer, either as a warm or cool color. Black can be interpreted as either a warm or cool color depending on the color it is juxtaposing. In *Mitchell*, black is a cool color because it is put up against a warm hue of brownish-red. In *History*, black takes on the role of warm color because it is put right up against the light blue sky.

With this idea, I found that black and grey have a similar relationship. I defined the edge of the building with the contrast of the cool black and the less cool (warmer) grey. The contrast makes the building appear to tower over the viewer and take on a cold and unapproachable tone.



*Mitchell*,  
near left side



*History*, Near  
center, top of  
tower

# Influence on Body of Works

Images from  
<http://www.halkoenig.com/>

Mitchell, Koenig



History, Koenig



Blue Nude, Matisse, 1905

Bathers by a River, Matisse, 1917



Matisse and Koenig's work has come together to shape my techniques to develop themes and subjects through primarily, balance, color, and contrast. Even when neither of the artist's works are my direct inspiration, I have their ideas in the back of my mind. For example, a strong piece I had worked on was inspired by Warhol, however, the idea for layering symbolic colors came from Matisse. Similar to what Matisse did in *Blue Nude*, I juxtaposed organic lines on a geometric background in pursuit of the theme that identity is a summation of culture. The result was a well directed self portrait that found meaning in the contrast of colors and form, all while maintaining a center of balance. Both artists' art has affected all my pieces in some way because of my early discovery and analysis of their works and technique.



Student / Filling? / 2017 / Mixed Media

"The Blue Nude, 1907 by Henri Matisse." Henri Matisse, HenriMatisse.org, 2011.  
and "Matisse: Radical Invention, 1913–1917." The Museum of Modern Art, MoMA, 2017.