

STYLE ANALYSIS

STUDENT NAME: Dale Graham

Chosen Artist #1: Ann Craven

Describe selection of work (which body of work, exhibition, etc.)

These are two images from Craven's serial paintings of the moon, ongoing since 1995. The first is from 2022, when she made 12 large moon paintings over the course of the lunar year. The second is from 2019 and is much smaller in size. She paints en plein air and from reference photographs, and documents the time and location of each moon painting.



Ann Craven, *Moon (After Quiet Harvest Moon, Cushing, 9-9-22, 8:30 PM)*, 2022. Oil on canvas. 60 x 48 inches



Ann Craven, *Moon (Pink Crescent, Cushing, 8-25-19, 1:30AM)*, 2019. Oil on linen. 14 x 14 inches

SCALE

- ☒ small
- ☒ medium
- ☐ large
- ☐ varied

ORIENTATION

- ☐ portrait
- ☐ landscape
- ☐ square
- ☐ other
- ☒ varied

SUBSTRATE

- ☒ canvas
- ☐ paper
- ☐ panel
- ☐ other
- ☐ varied

MEDIUM

- ☒ oil
- ☐ acrylic
- ☐ w-colour
- ☐ other

SOURCE

- ☒ from life
- ☒ photograph
- ☐ collage / sketches
- ☐ imagination
- ☐ other

SUBJECT

- ☐ history
- ☐ portraiture
- ☒ landscape
- ☐ still life
- ☐ everyday life
- ☐ varied

☒ REPRESENTATIONAL (with abstract qualities)

- ☐ ABSTRACTION

MOOD - describe the overall mood of this selection of work and how it is achieved

Restful, peaceful, still. A sense of introspection, because of the dark indistinct velvety background, our knowledge that this is the middle of the night, and the literally reflective moment as the moon makes a trail across water, gentle ripples not huge waves.

COLOUR PALETTE - describe this artist's use of colour

Saturated colours (except small areas tinted lighter for shadow/penumbra). Intensely cool blue/purple background with superimposed intensely warm orangey-pink moon and reflection. Smaller painting has foreground black tree branches/leaves with a feeling of Japanese brush-painting, gestural strokes that imply rather than fully define the foliage.

COMPOSITION - describe the layout of the painting, include the figure-ground relationship (i.e. positive and negative space, subject and background)

Both paintings have simple shapes, simple subjects, and large negative spaces. The full moon is small and centred in the upper half of the canvas. The horizon line is indistinct but approximately at the junction upper third with lower two-thirds, and the moon's reflection is a long colourful stripe occupying the central third of the bottom two-thirds of the canvas. The smaller canvas is square with a centred crescent moon intensely pink, having a light blue circular penumbra then fading to deep blue/purple background. Asymmetric branches enter from the right bottom, side and top of the painting, none of them stretching all the way across, and some of them lightly filtering our view of the moon.

FORMAL ANALYSIS - describe the artist's use of line, shape, form, space and texture

The larger painting is all about shape, value, and texture. The smaller painting adds a small amount of line work in the foreground foliage but again is really about shape and value. Form is not clearly articulated in either painting: the full moon is a uniformly pink circle shape with its "moon-ness" and luminosity implied by encircling lighter blue marks; while the crescent moon is an indistinct pink crescent with overpainted light blue marks giving it a differently luminous quality. The large painting features texture particularly in the water where built-up paint depth implies ripples/waves of different heights catching the pink moon colour with variable intensity, and the amount of texture decreasing laterally as the reflection turns from pink to light blue, then disappears into dark blue background.

BRUSHWORK - describe how the paint is applied

The background dark colours are very smooth and matte, no visible brushstrokes, in both paintings. However, the central points of attention in both paintings (the moon plus its penumbra plus reflection on water, or the moon plus penumbra plus foreground foliage) feature highly visible brush strokes. The full moon's penumbra evokes the "Enso" from Japanese Zen painting, in which one or two gestures of the brush create a circle that signifies wholeness and attention. In the small painting, the strokes of black paint that make the foliage come from a lightly-loaded brush, you can imagine the individual hairs on the brush, another hallmark of Japanese brush painting. Finally, as noted in the previous section, the water reflection of the full moon includes impasto or built-up paint thicknesses, quite glossy in appearance, adding to the feel of light over waves.

SUMMARY / NOTES

These moon paintings evoke stillness and contemplation. The artist borrows from Japanese brush painting in technique and subject, and from Pop Art in her colour palette and intensity.

Chosen Artist #2: Eleanor Ray

Describe selection of work (which body of work, exhibition, etc.)

She has several recurring subjects/themes, I have settled on three of her views through windows. Each features a glimpse of the outdoors through a window or door but the painting is largely of a rather empty indoor space, pierced by the entry of daylight through a different window or door. Like Ann Craven, she paints from life.



Eleanor Ray, "Wyoming Window, June" (2018), oil on panel, 6 1/2 x 8 inches



Eleanor Ray, *June Windows (Great Basin Desert)*, 2020. Oil on panel. 7 x 8 ½ inches



Eleanor Ray, *Barn Hallway (Dusk)*, 2016. Oil on panel, 7 ½ x 9 inches

SCALE	ORIENTATION	SUBSTRATE	MEDIUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> small	<input type="checkbox"/> portrait	<input type="checkbox"/> canvas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> oil
<input type="checkbox"/> medium	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> paper	<input type="checkbox"/> acrylic
<input type="checkbox"/> large	<input type="checkbox"/> square	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> panel	<input type="checkbox"/> w-colour
<input type="checkbox"/> varied	<input type="checkbox"/> other	<input type="checkbox"/> other	<input type="checkbox"/> other
<hr/>			
<input type="checkbox"/> varied	<input type="checkbox"/> varied	<input type="checkbox"/> varied	

SOURCE	SUBJECT	X REPRESENTATIONAL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> from life	<input type="checkbox"/> history	<input type="checkbox"/> ABSTRACTION
<input type="checkbox"/> photograph	<input type="checkbox"/> portraiture	
<input type="checkbox"/> collage / sketches	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> landscape	
<input type="checkbox"/> imagination	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> still life	
<input type="checkbox"/> other	<input type="checkbox"/> everyday life	
<hr/>		
<input type="checkbox"/> varied	<input type="checkbox"/> varied	

MOOD - describe the overall mood of this selection of work and how it is achieved

Another artist of stillness and introspection. She literally “illuminates” a moment in time by portraying a beam or passage of light into an interior space, gently architectural and minimally furnished, that houses the artist. While no human is portrayed, the artist’s gaze is essential to the mood, with a deeply patient attention to the moment and the place. While the glimpse of outdoor greenery is limited, it doesn’t have a claustrophobic or anxious feel. The small size of the works (7” x 8”-ish) creates a feeling of sanctuary, a place to listen to that “still, small voice”.

COLOUR PALETTE - describe this artist’s use of colour

Largely cool colours (blues, greens, cooler earth tones) with some warm accents associated with the light entering the interior space. Colours appear in fields or patches with mostly geometric shapes, with abrupt transitions to the neighbouring patch. Colours are saturated in the Wyoming painting, but more tints and mixes in the Desert and Hallway paintings.

COMPOSITION - describe the layout of the painting, include the figure-ground relationship (i.e. positive and negative space, subject and background)

The paintings all feature walls, floors, windows and doors that are true to linear perspective and architecture, although the lack of detail makes for slightly abstracted architecture. The composition is largely symmetric – even the off-centre window/door view to the outside is balanced by a corresponding block of some sort in the other half of the paintings. The view is always from the inside looking out, we always see more of the indoor space than of the outdoor vista, and we always see the entry of outdoor light creating fields of lighter colour on the surfaces of the room. These sunlit fields are still geometric but are more likely to introduce diagonal lines. The geometric pattern of colour blocks reference minimalism and geometric abstraction – the Wyoming painting especially evokes Piet Mondrian.

FORMAL ANALYSIS - describe the artist’s use of line, shape, form, space and texture

The artist uses line and shape in a clean geometric fashion to depict uncluttered interior spaces in the foreground, with a view through a window or door to green outdoor space. The “container” of the indoor space is simplified but well conveyed by shifting colours at the juncture of floor/wall/ceiling, whether there are two surfaces (Wyoming has floor and wall) or multiple surfaces (the others include several walls, some steps, floor and ceiling). The texture indoors is muted, while the outdoor spaces show a wider variety of textures and shapes, evidence of tree shapes, movement of grasses by the wind, undulating land, distant hills. These are not detailed landscapes but convey mood, movement, rhythm of the land.

BRUSHWORK - describe how the paint is applied

The visibility of brushstrokes is important to the effect of these works. Underlayers of paint are visible through top-layer brushstrokes throughout. If the top layers are dark colours, the light layers underneath show through the brushed-on top layer, and vice versa. The walls, floors, ceilings show a kind of rhythm of those top-layer brushstrokes, sometimes repeated linear moves (as in Wyoming and Desert) and sometimes circular (as in Barn Hallway), and these also convey depth by being coarser when the wall is close to the viewer, and finer when the wall is further away. The outdoor scene brushwork has a different quality, with brushstrokes and slight colour shifts giving us the difference between the grasses (parallel swaths laying this way and that, shaped by the wind), the trees (swirls or circles, a vertical presence), the tilled field (horizontal strokes), and the distant hills (wave-like strokes).

SUMMARY / NOTES

These small oils feel like a meditation to me. I respond to the orderliness of the geometry and architecture, and the element of design that is strongly present. I think it would be difficult to reproduce the appearance of the brushstrokes in acrylics.