How to take a Good Photo?
&
How not to be scared in a Modern Art Museum?

CS180: Intro to Computer Vision and Comp. Photo

Alexei Efros, UC Berkeley, Fall 2023

Announcements

- Exam this Wed in class
  - Closed everything except 2-sided cheat sheet
- Project 4 winners:
  - Alec Li: https://inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs180/fa23/upload/files/proj4B/alec.li/
  - Jyou12: https://inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs180/fa23/upload/files/proj4B/jyou12/
  - Lance Mathias: https://inst.eecs.berkeley.edu/~cs180/fa23/upload/files/proj4B/lmathias/
- Class reviews!

What Makes a Great Picture?

© Robert Doisneau, 1955

With many slides from Yan Ke and Fredo Durand,
as annotated by Tamara Berg

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Photography 101: the **where** and **when**

- Composition
  - Framing
  - Rule of Thirds
  - Leading Lines
  - Textures and Patterns
  - Simplicity
- Lighting
  - Light Direction
  - Color coordination / balance
  - Sunny vs. cloudy
  - “Golden Hour”
  - B&W to focus attention
  - (sur) realism

Framing

“Photography is all about framing. We see a subject -- and we put a frame around it. Essentially, that is photography when all is said and done.”

-- from photo.blorge.com

Frame serves several purposes:

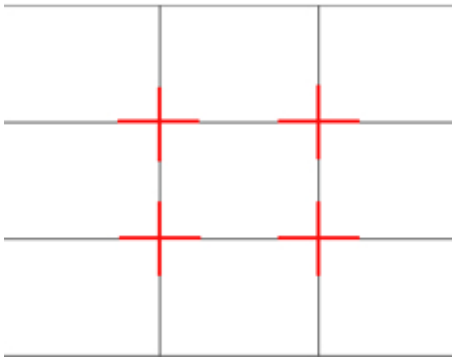
1. It gives the image depth
2. If used correctly, framing can draw the eye of the viewer of an interest to a particular part of the scene.
3. Framing can bring a sense of organization or containment to an image.
4. Framing can add context to a shot.

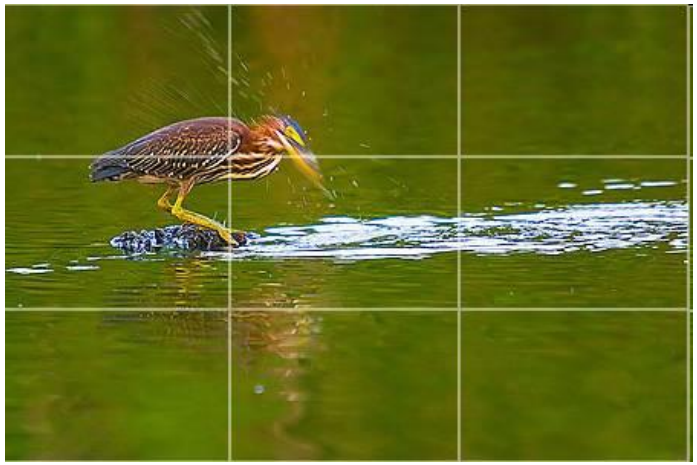
http://digital-photography-school.com/blog/frame-your-images/

Examples of nice framing

http://flickr.com/photos/paulosacramento/226545698/
http://flickr.com/photos/chrisbeach/13868545/
http://flickr.com/photos/74531485@N00/929270814/
http://flickr.com/photos/freakdog/223117229/
http://flickr.com/photos/cdm/253805482/

Rules of Thirds





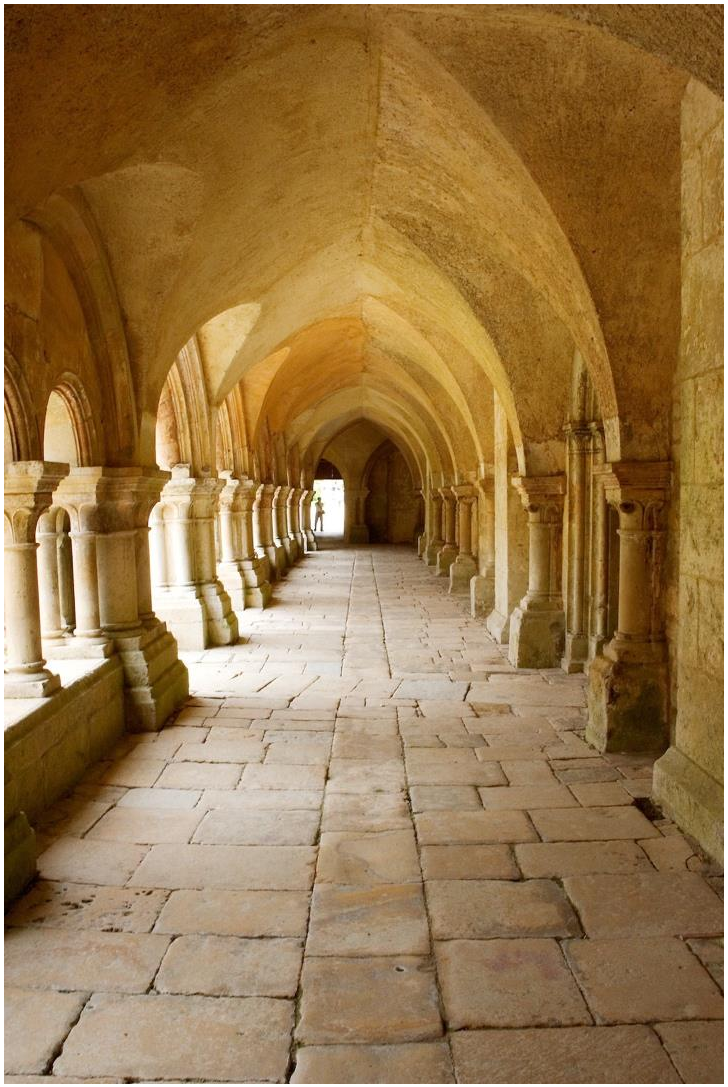
http://www.photo96.com/blog/?p=371

Other examples

Don’t center, especially for motion

Don’t center, especially for motion

... or do center

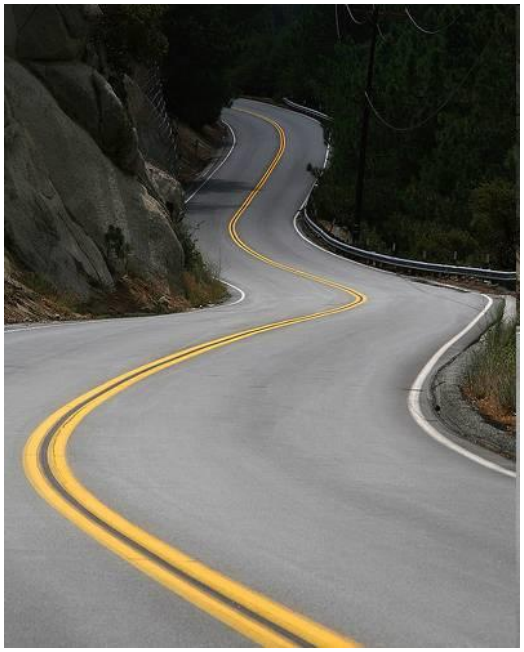


By Fredo Durand

Leading Lines

By Fredo Durand

More examples



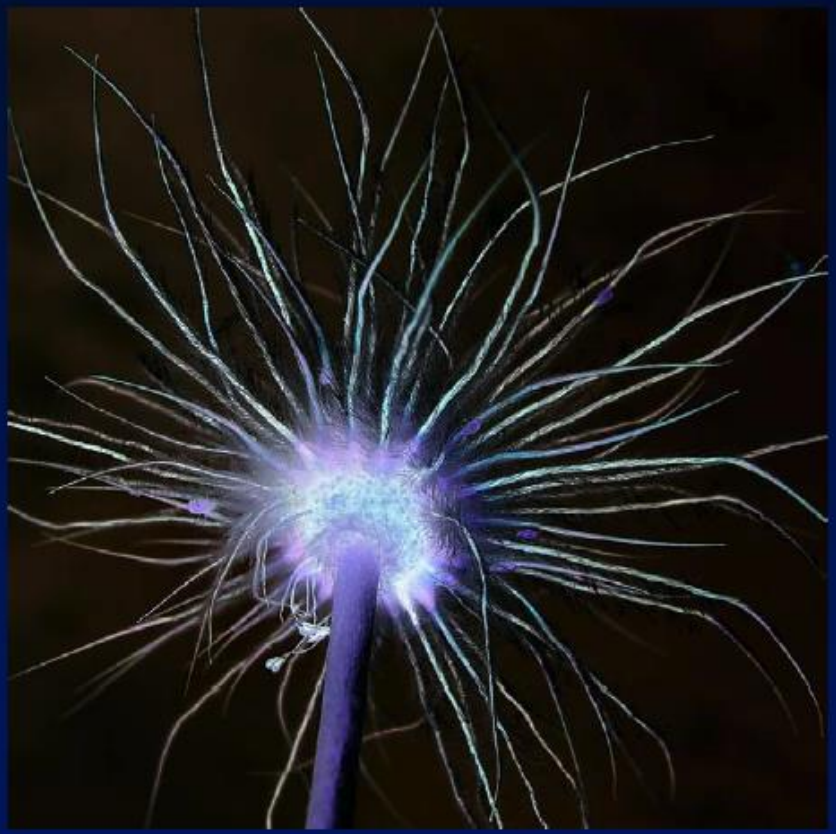
Textures and Patterns

Simplicity

"Look Into" by Josh Brown @ Flickr

Prof - Obvious what one should be looking at ie easy to separate subject from the background. Snap – unstructured, busy, filled with clutter.

Simplicity



"alien flower" by Josef F. Stuefer @ Flickr

Simplicity

"Waiting in line!" by Imapix @ Flickr

B&W for Simplicity

B&W for Simplicity

Photo by A. A. Efros

LEPHONE

Photo by A. A. Efros

…but not always

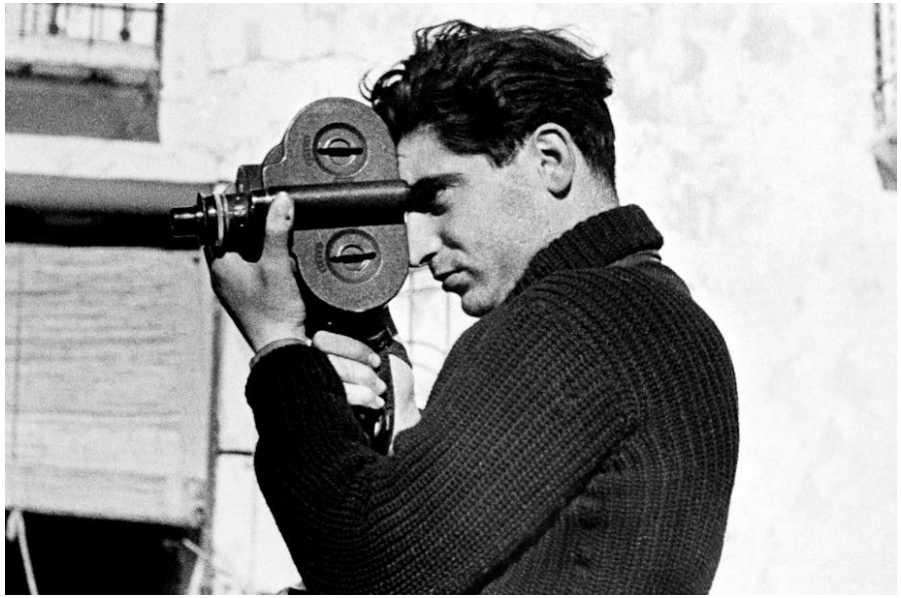
Photo by A. A. Efros

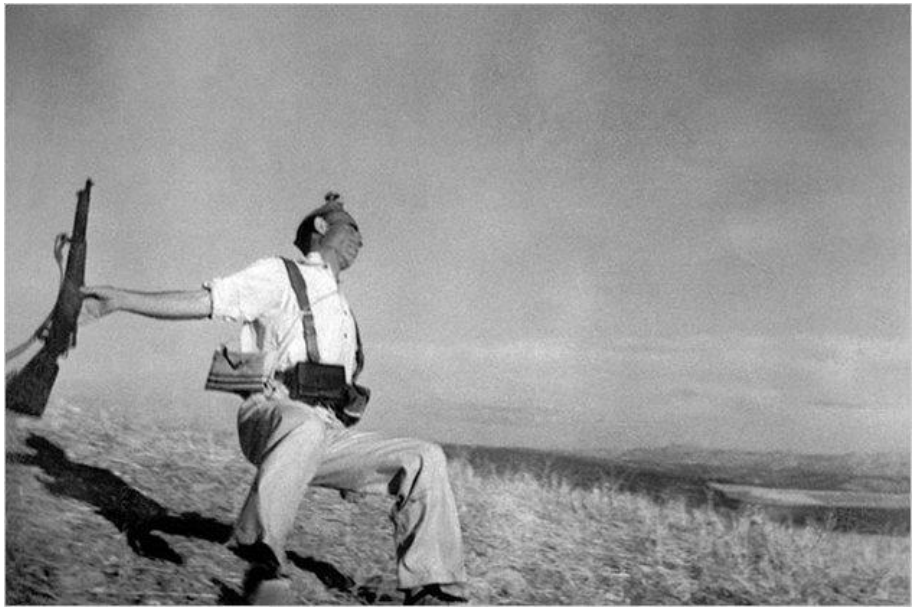
…but not always

Crop for Simplicity

By Fredo Durand

If your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close enough" — Robert Capa





By Fredo Durand

Simplicity for Portraits – just move

https://vimeo.com/29722267

Get low

Try to be at eye level

Bad

Better

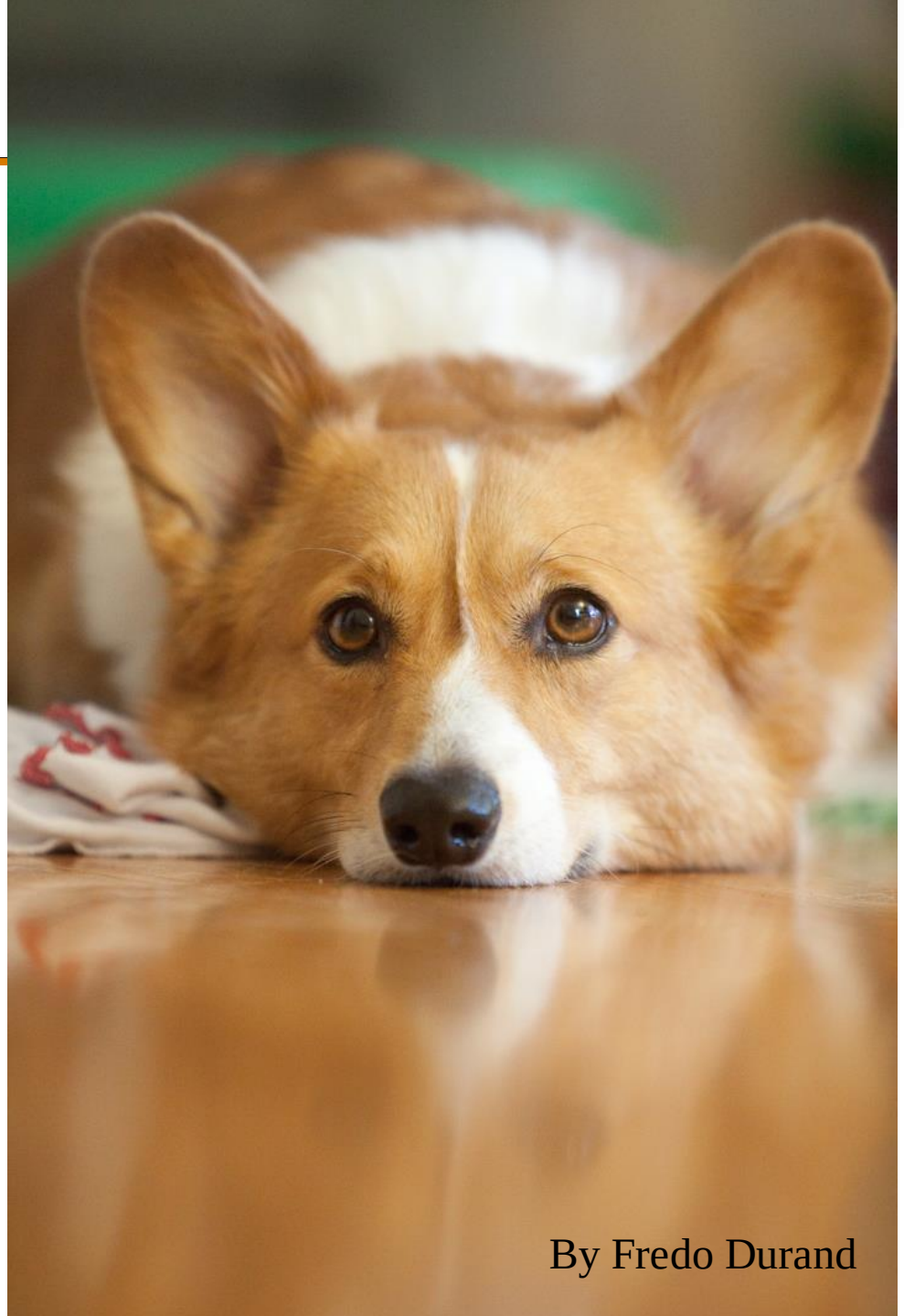
By Fredo Durand

Bad angles

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8EmRZO9fwvk&feature=youtu.be

By Fredo Durand

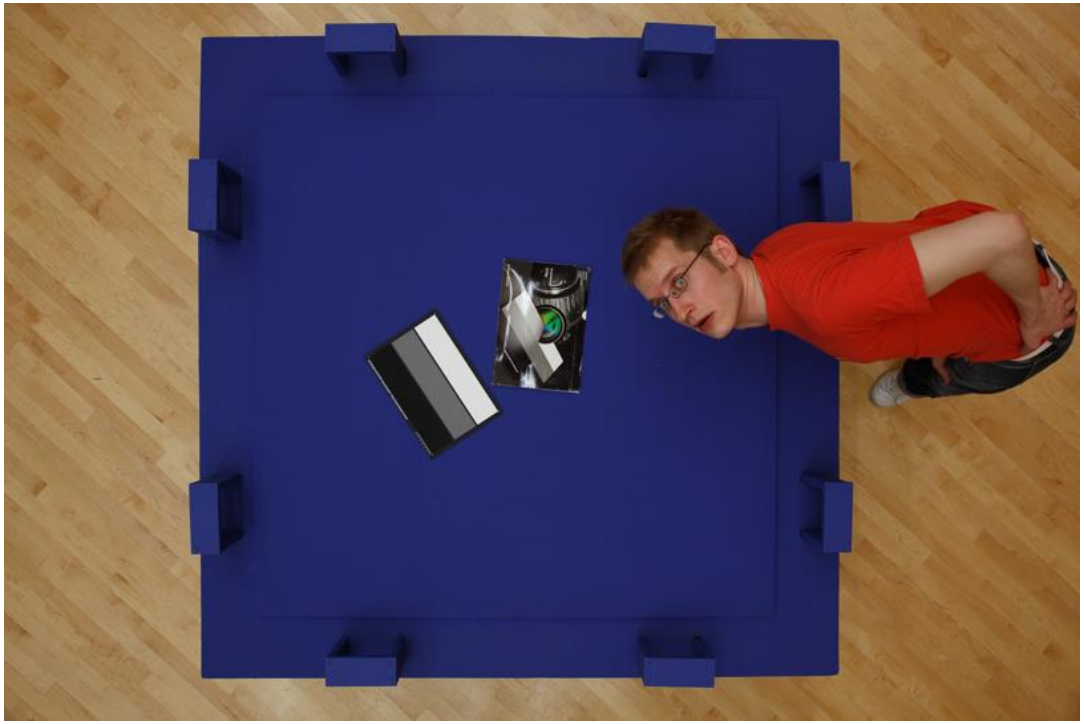
Eye level



By Fredo Durand

Or really get high

As usual, follow a rule
or really break it.



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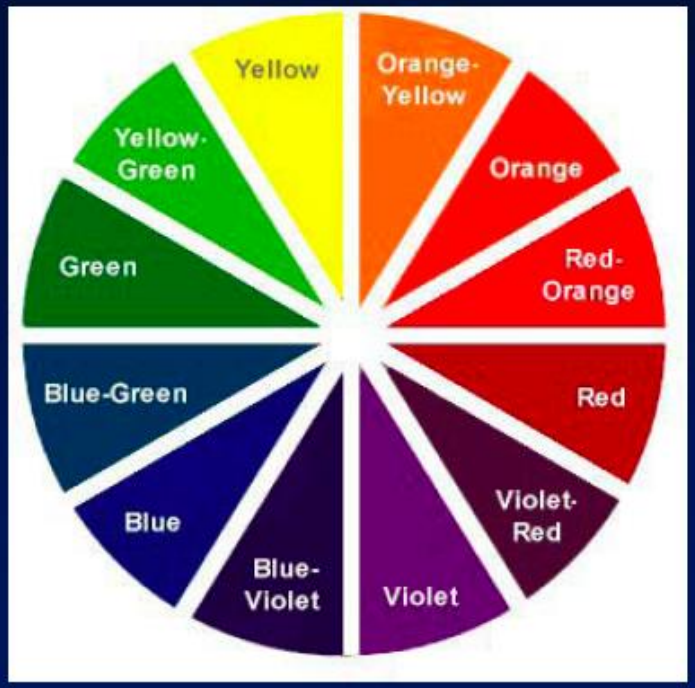
Front Lighting

Side Lighting

Back Lighting

Color Coordination



Complementary colors (of opposite hue on color wheel)

Go in the shade

Light is more diffuse

Bad

Better

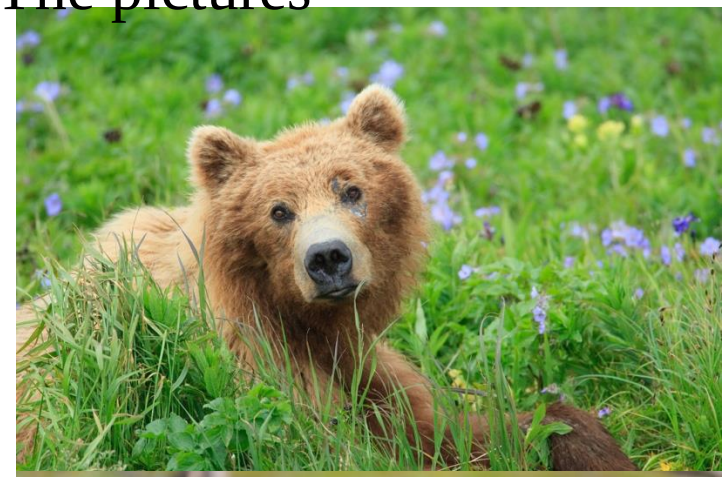
By Fredo Durand

Overcast days are the best

Just don’t put the sky in the frame

The weather conditions

The pictures



Other overcast-day pictures

By Fredo Durand

Bottom line

Don't get married on a sunny day!

By Fredo Durand

Cloudy day

By Fredo Durand

Best time of day: sunset & sunrise

+/- 1 hour

“Golden hours”

Night photography: always near sunset/sunrise

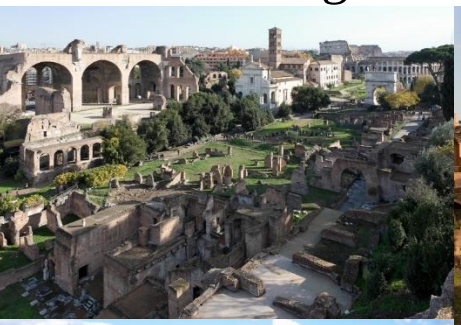
- because of nice diffuse light

Mid day:
often not great

less than 1 hour after sunrise/ before sunset

During sunset or sunrise

After sunset



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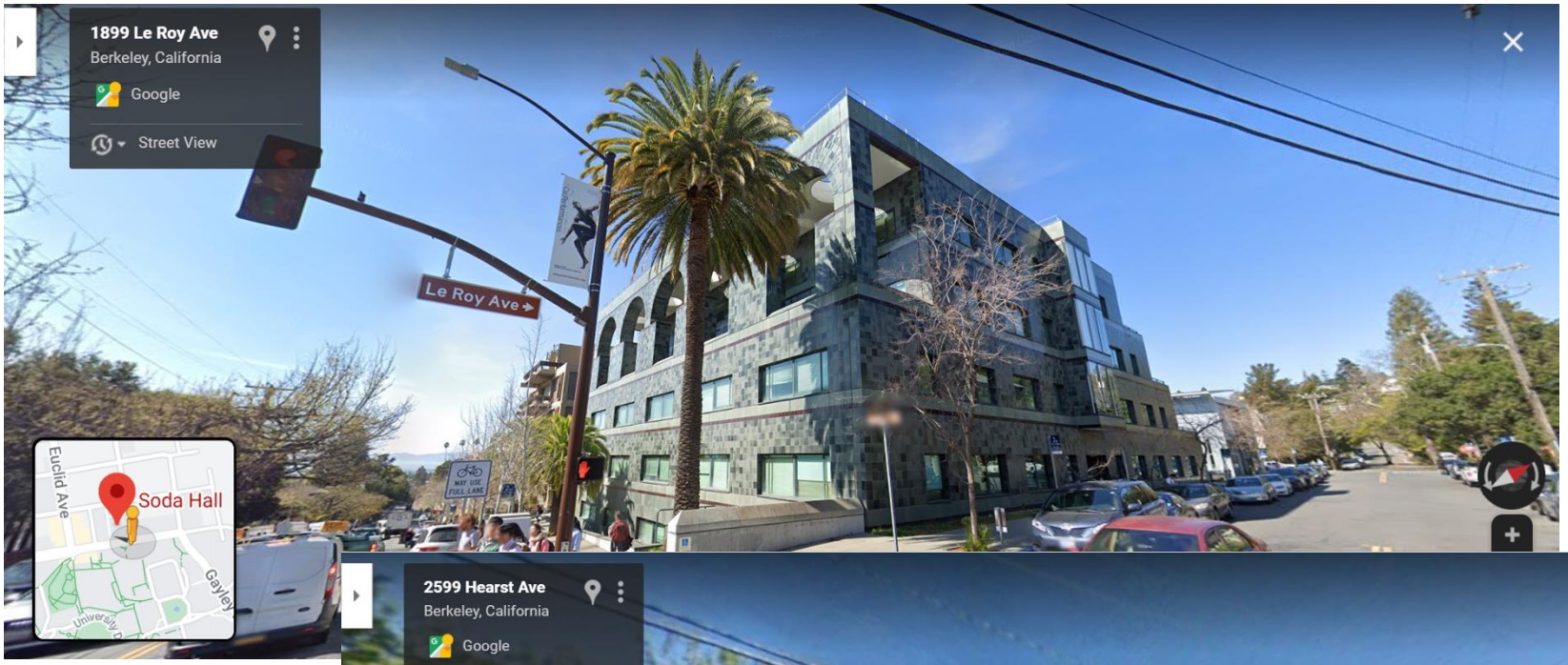
“Golden Hour”


1899 Le Roy Ave
Berkeley, California
Google
Street View
Le Roy Ave
Euclid Ave
Soda Hall
Gayley

2599 Hearst Ave
Berkeley, California
Google
Street View
Euclid Ave
Soda Hall
Gayley
Google
Image capture: Apr 2008
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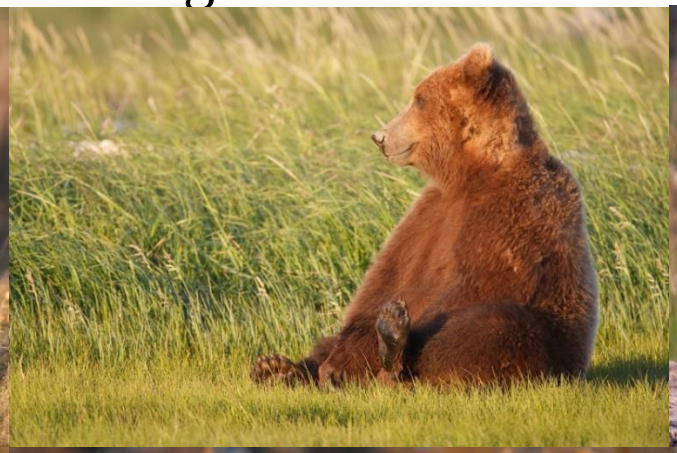
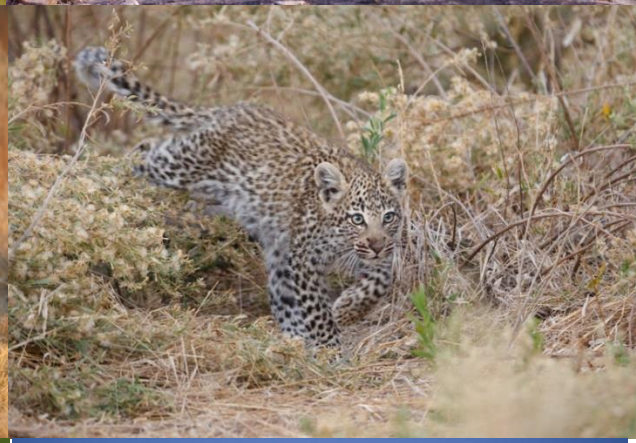
United States
Terms
Report a problem

less than 1 hour after sunrise

During sunset/sunrise

After sunset





By Fredo Durand

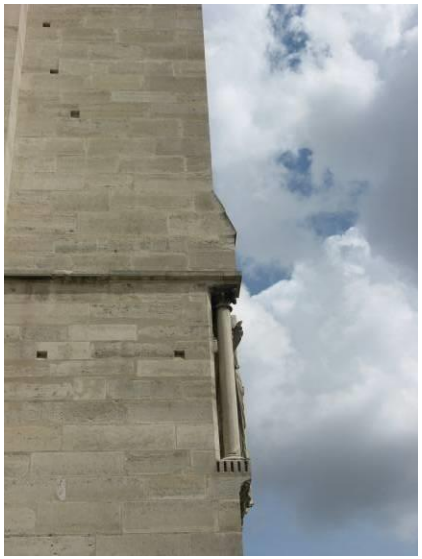
After sunset: blue hour

Blue Hour (Russian River)

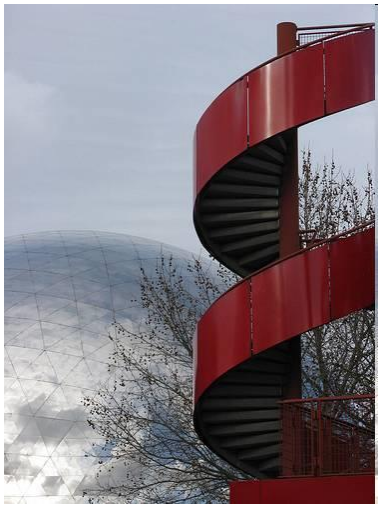
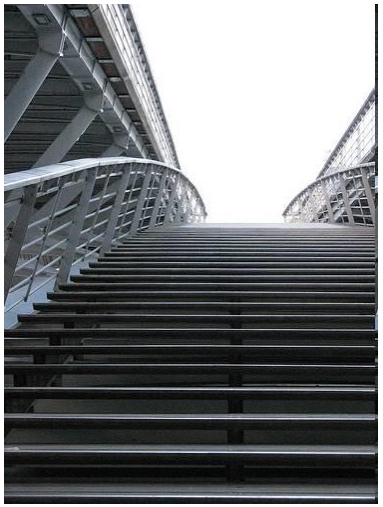
Photo by A. A. Efros

Anyone can take great pictures…

I am a sucky photographer…



…but I am a pretty good photo critic!

http://flickr.com/photos/aaefros/

# of my Paris photos on Flickr: 32

Total # of my Paris photos: ~1250

~2%

The Postmodern Photographer

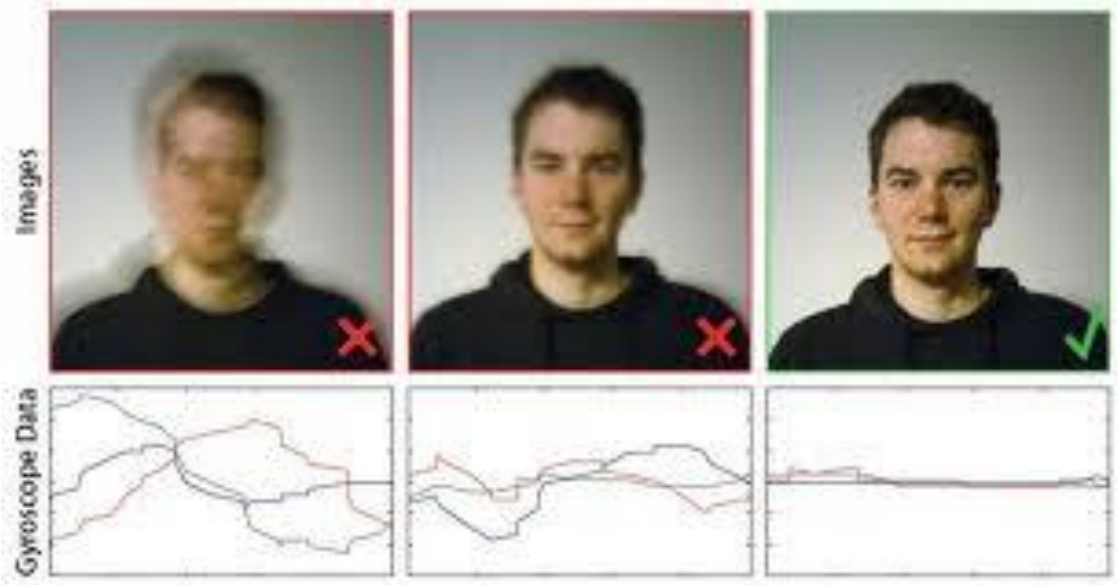
The Old Days: a pre-process

- Load film
- Find subject
- Position camera
- Set all the settings “just right”
- Take a deep breath…
- ...Press button!

The New Digital Days: a post-process

- Get a 64 GB memory cartridge
- Take pictures like there is no tomorrow!!!
- …
- Back home, spend hours of agony trying to find 1-2 good ones

Lucky Imaging



Simplicity to Complexity

Enjoying your next trip to (SF)-MOMA

Pablo Picasso
The Guitar Player (1911)

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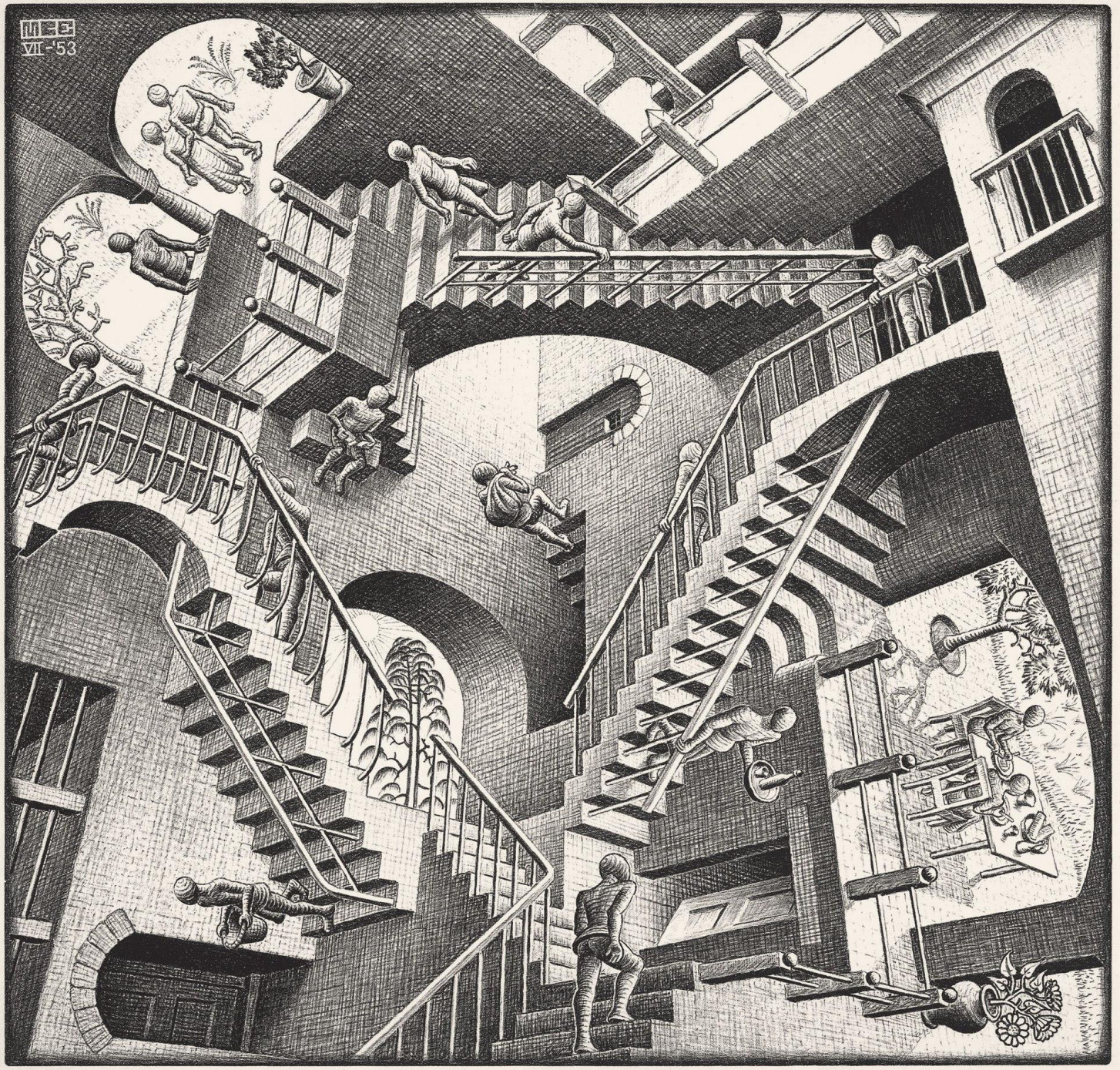
Simplistic Art PCA

Some “Principal Components” of Art:

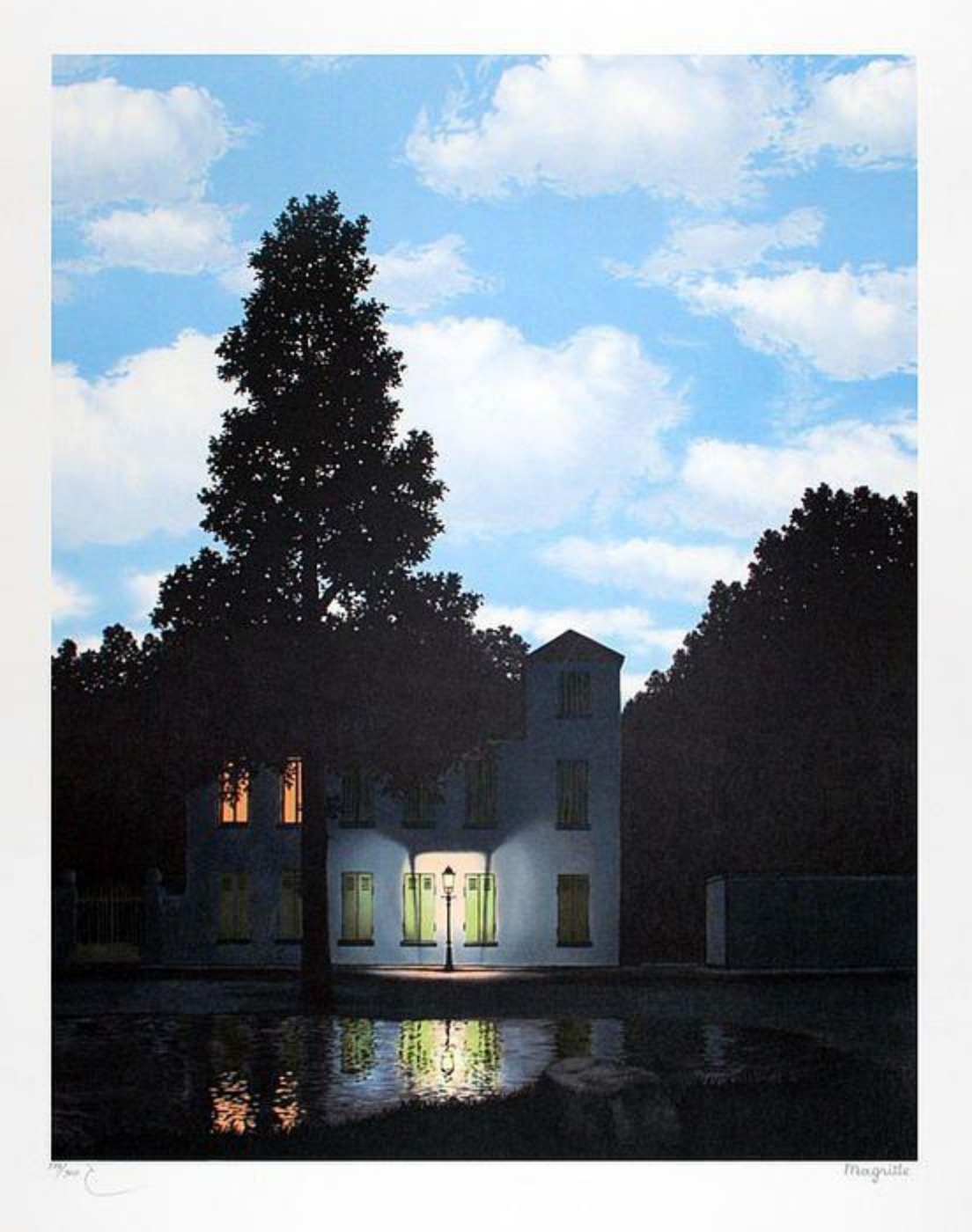
- Cute ideas / illusions / clever tricks
- Direct Visceral Pleasure
- Familiarity / Nostalgia
- Art-Historical “Context”

Cute Ideas / Illusions / Clever Tricks

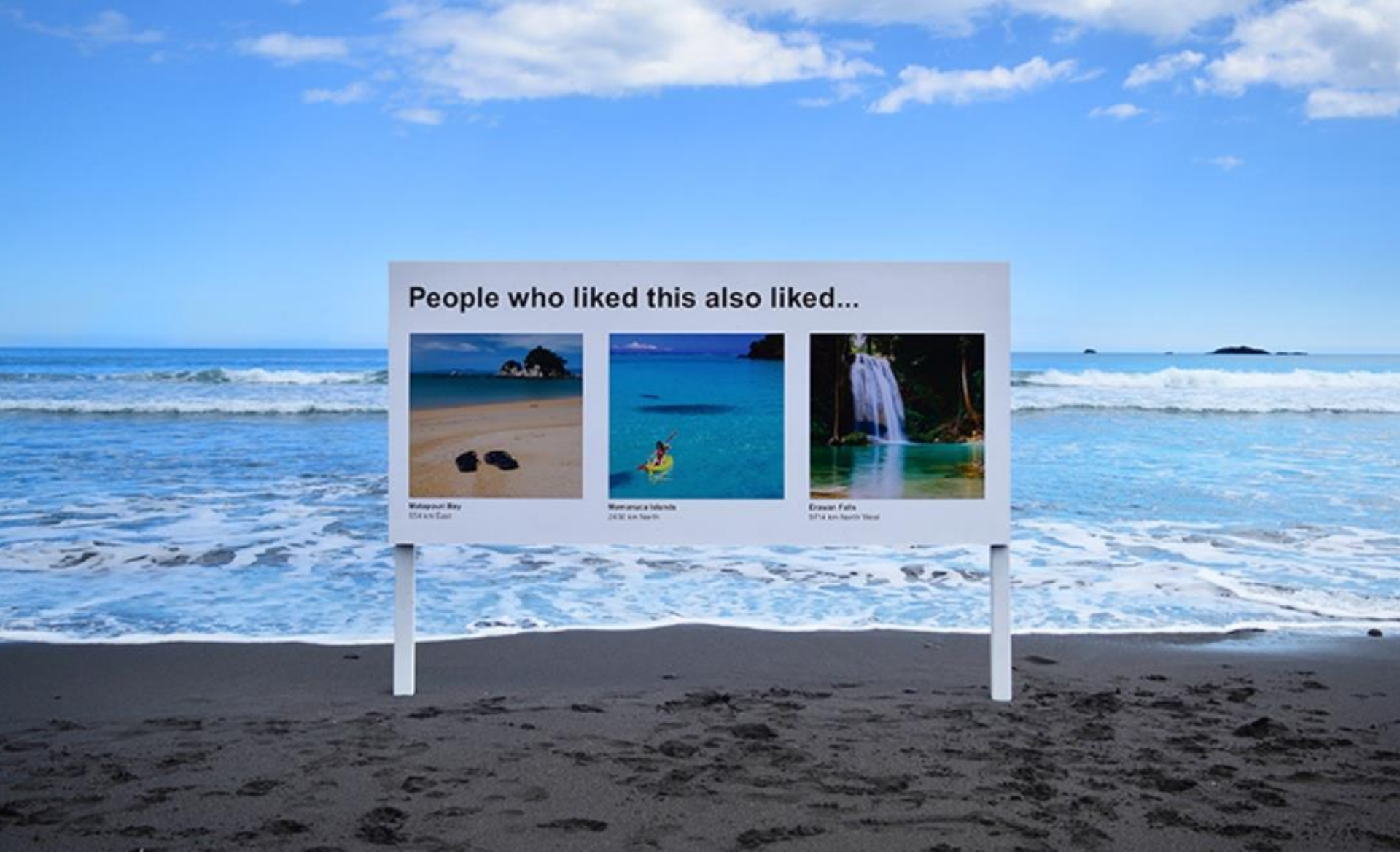
Salvador Dali
"Gala Contemplating the Mediterranean Sea, which at 30 meters becomes the portrait of Abraham Lincoln", 1976



M.C. Escher



Rene Maritte



Scott Kelly and Ben Polkinghorne

Direct Visceral Pleasure

Jan van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Marriage (c.1434)*

Olafur Eliasson, The Weather Project

Mark Rothko

Mark Rothko

Familiarity / Nostalgia

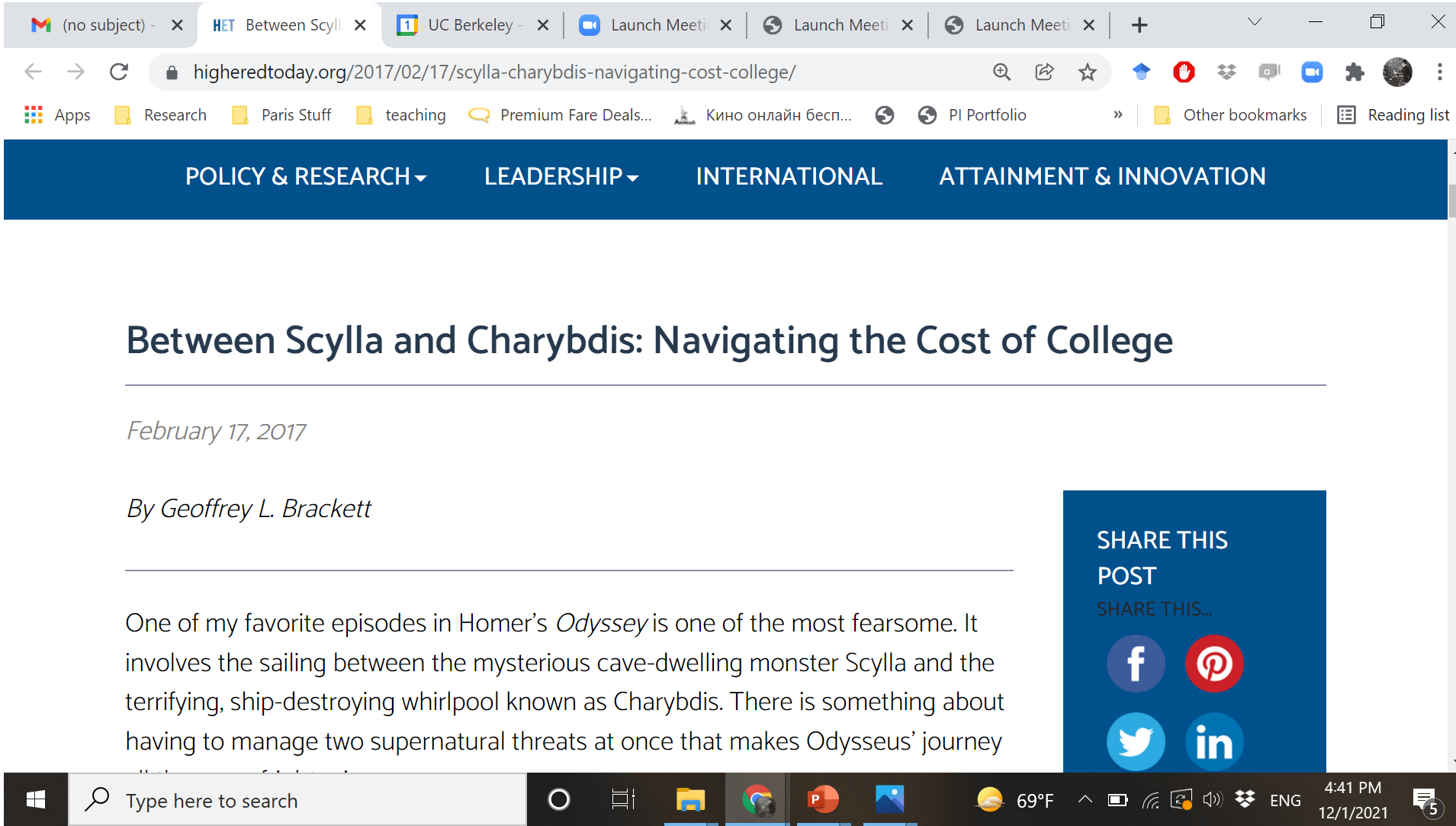
© Michael Galinsky, 1989
(from “Malls Across America”)

Edward Hopper

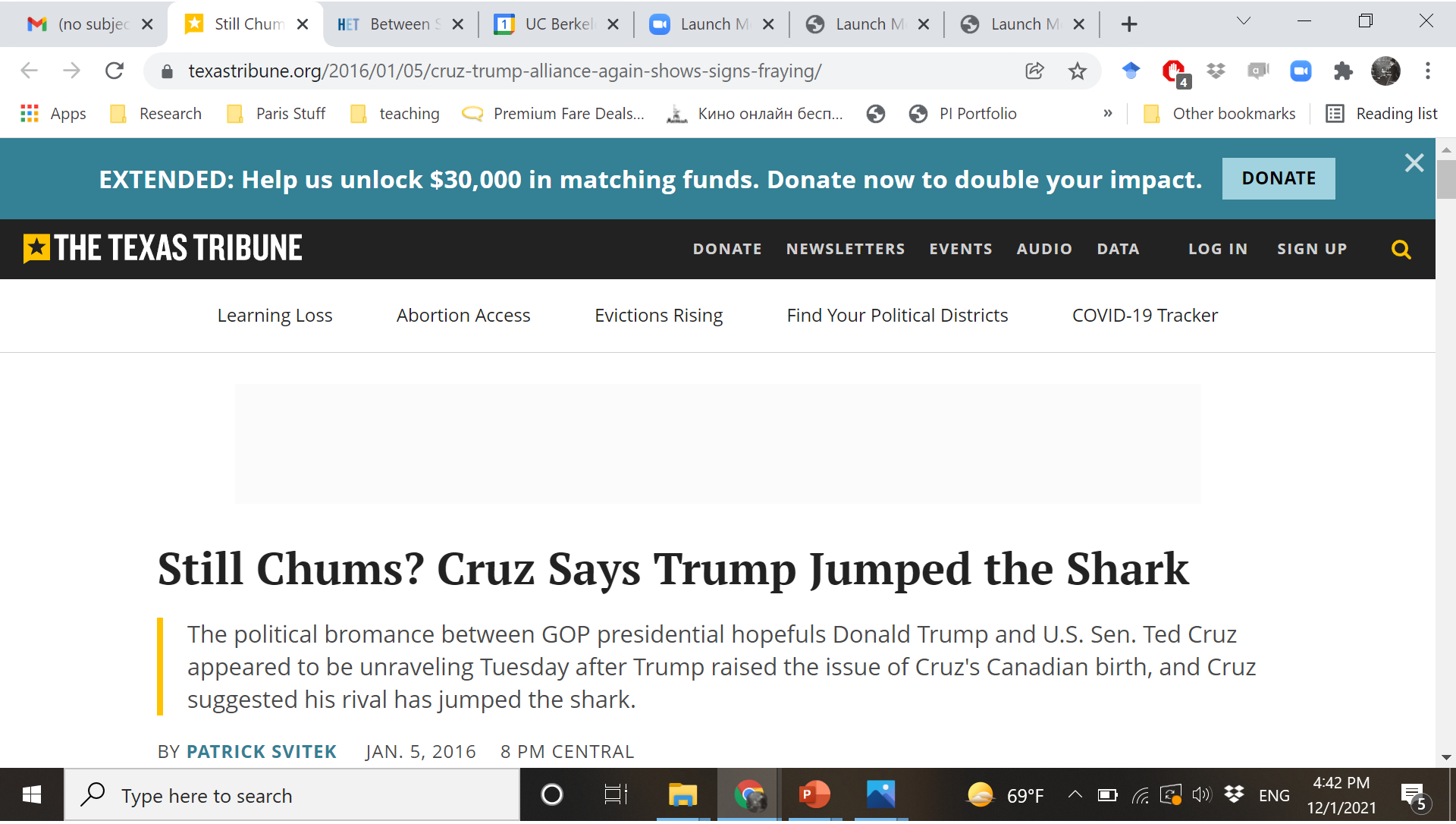
Alberto Giacometti

Art-Historical “Context”

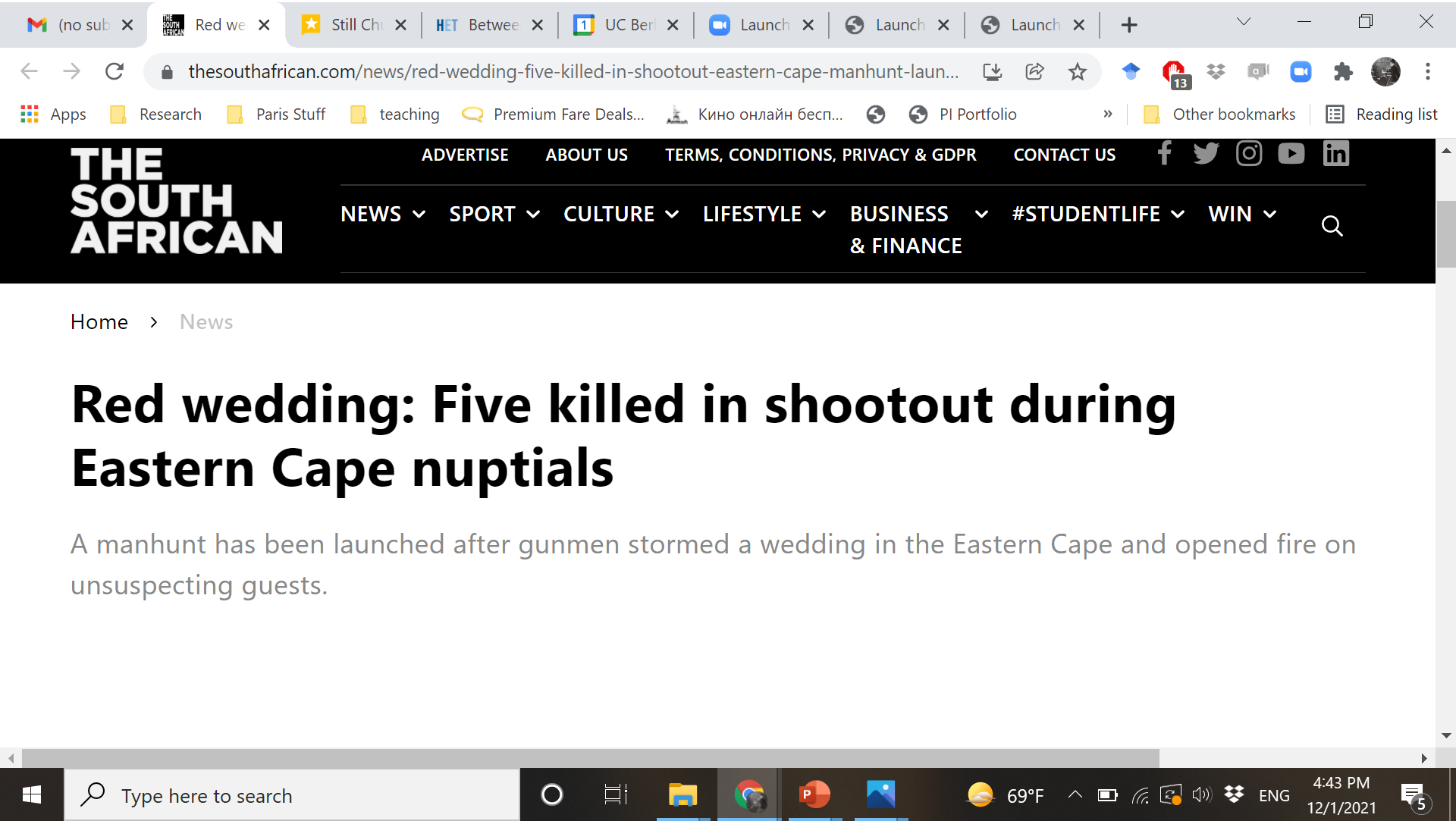
Cultural Context

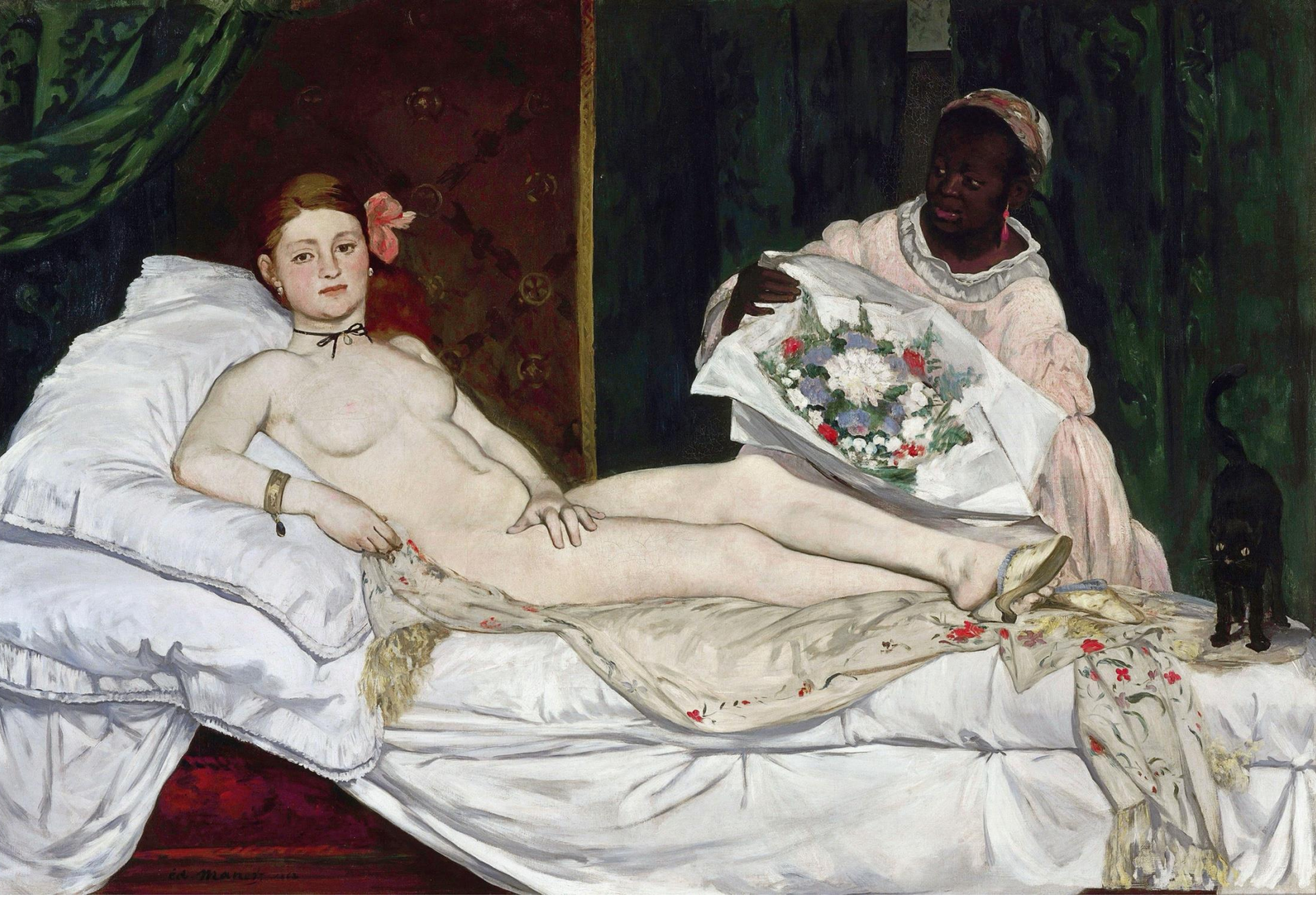


Cultural Context

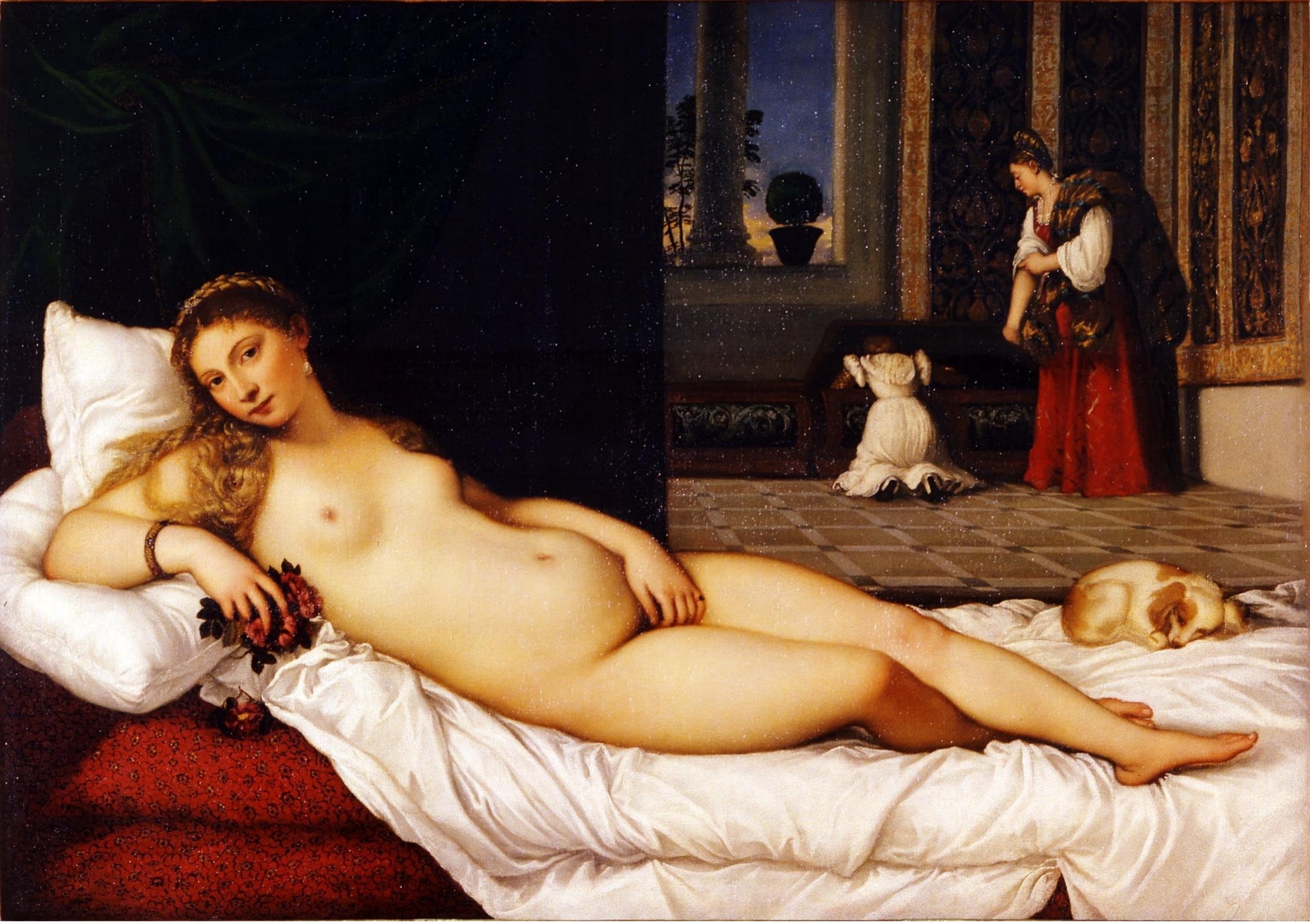


Cultural Context

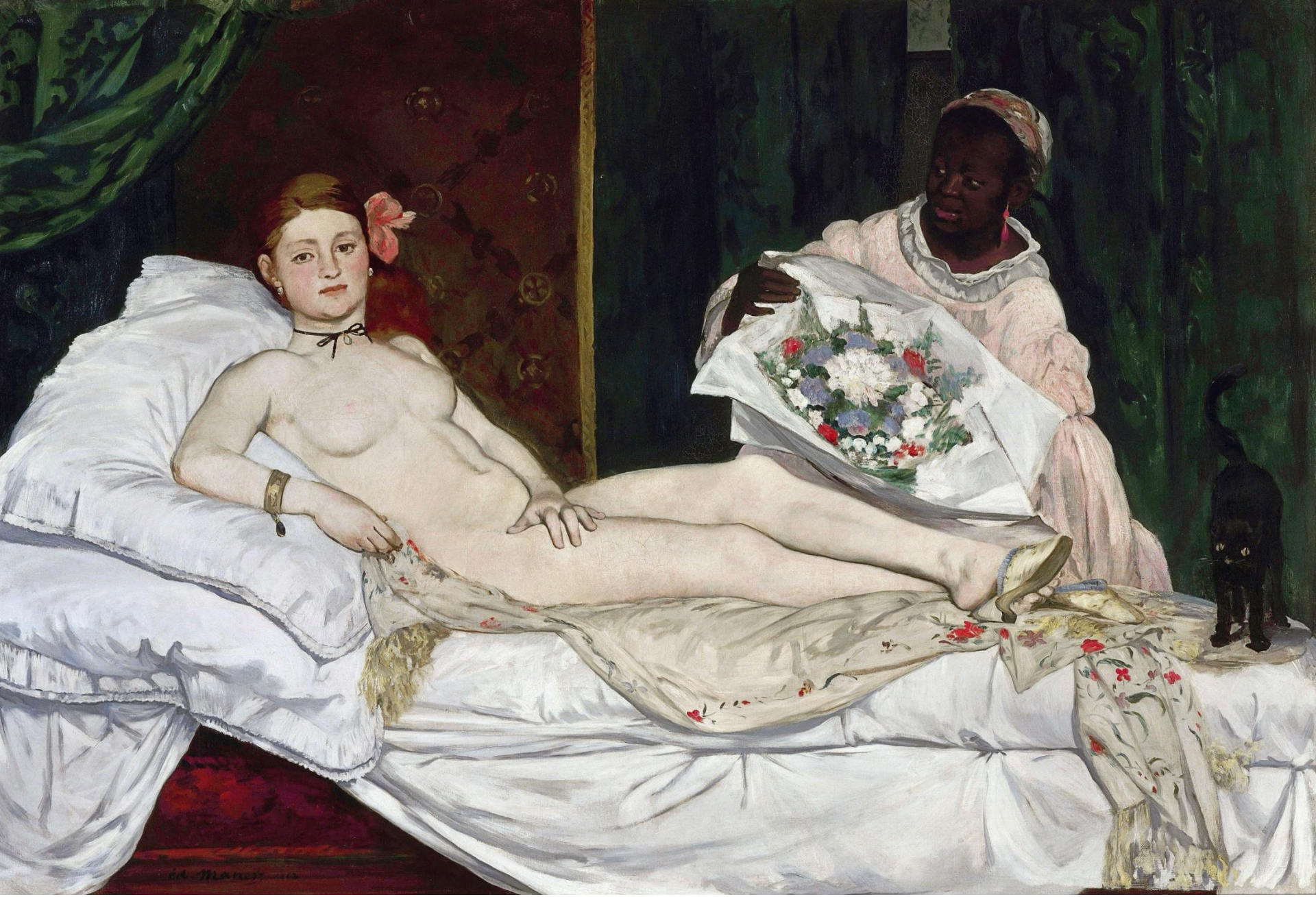




Édouard Manet, “Olympia” (1865)



Titian, “Reclining Venus“ (1532)

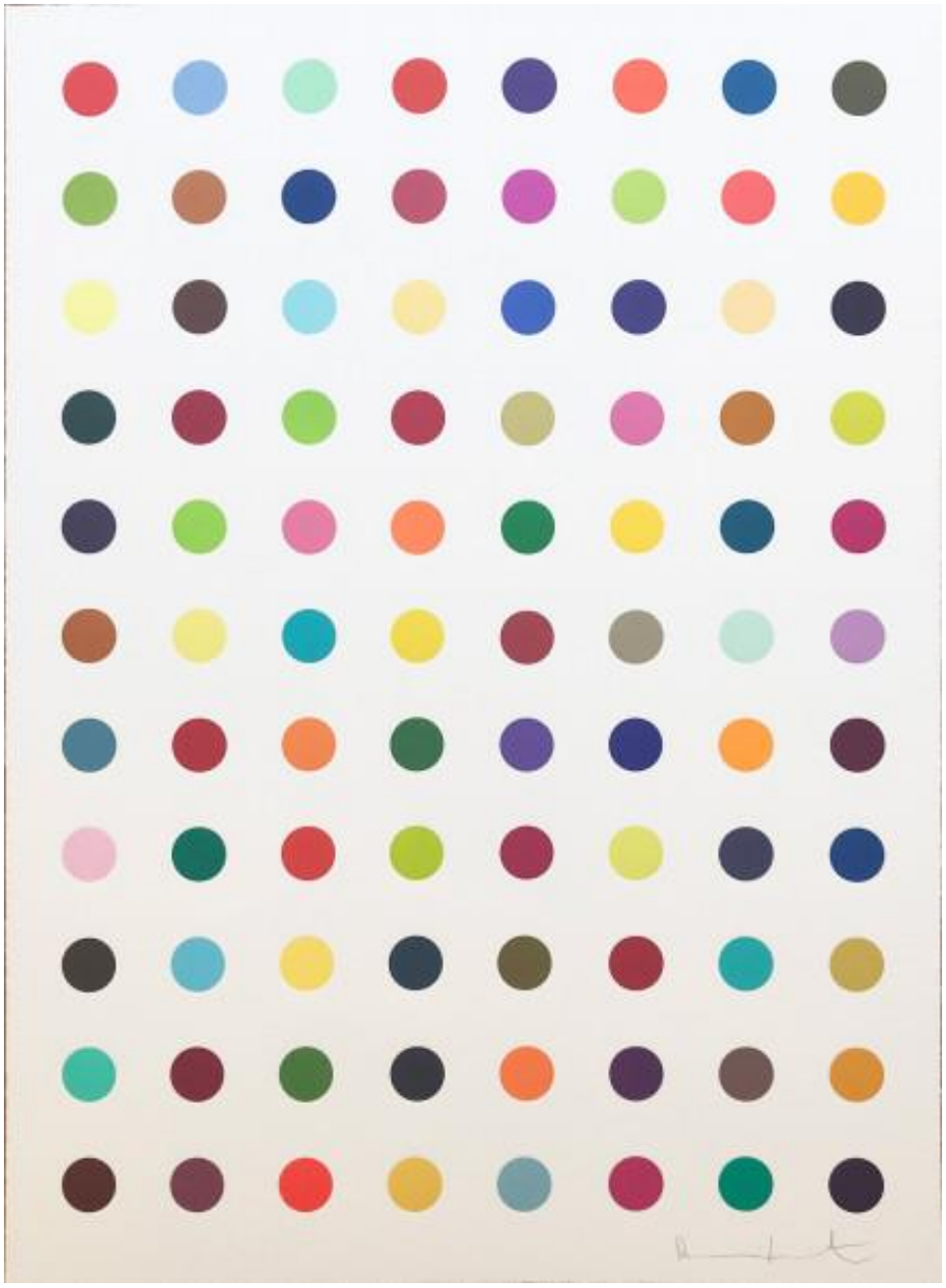


Édouard Manet, “Olympia” (1865)

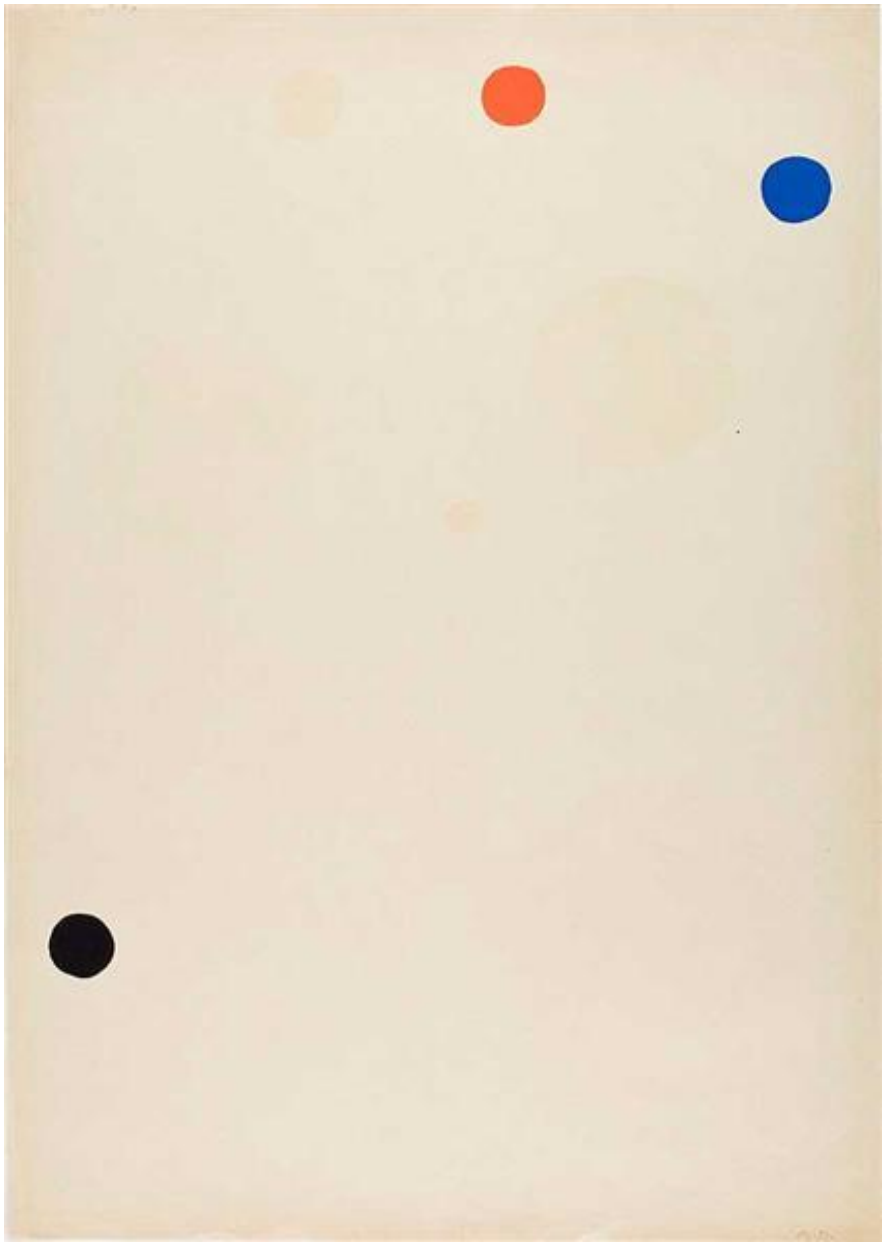
Shepherd Fairey

Shepherd Fairey

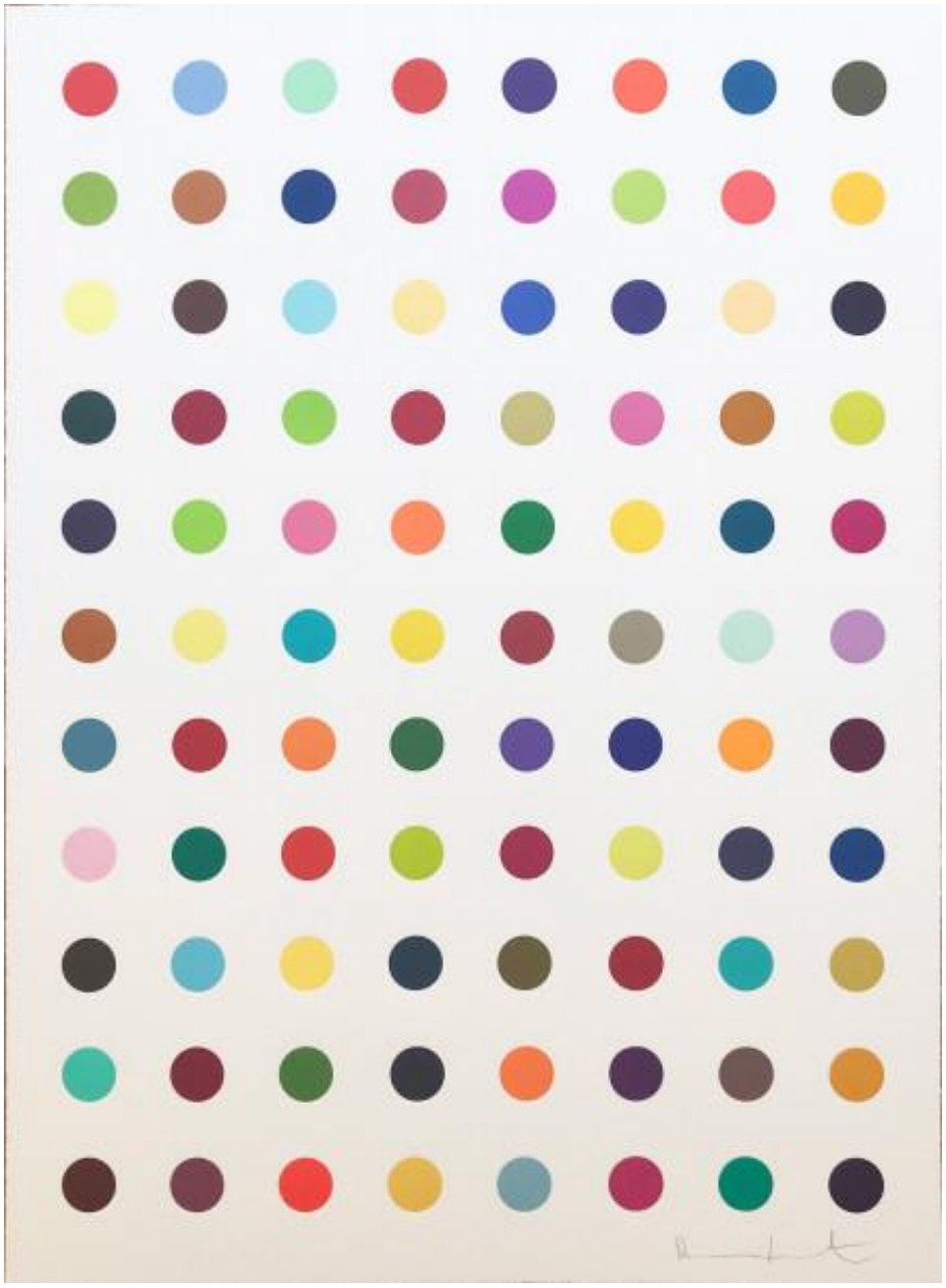
Banksy



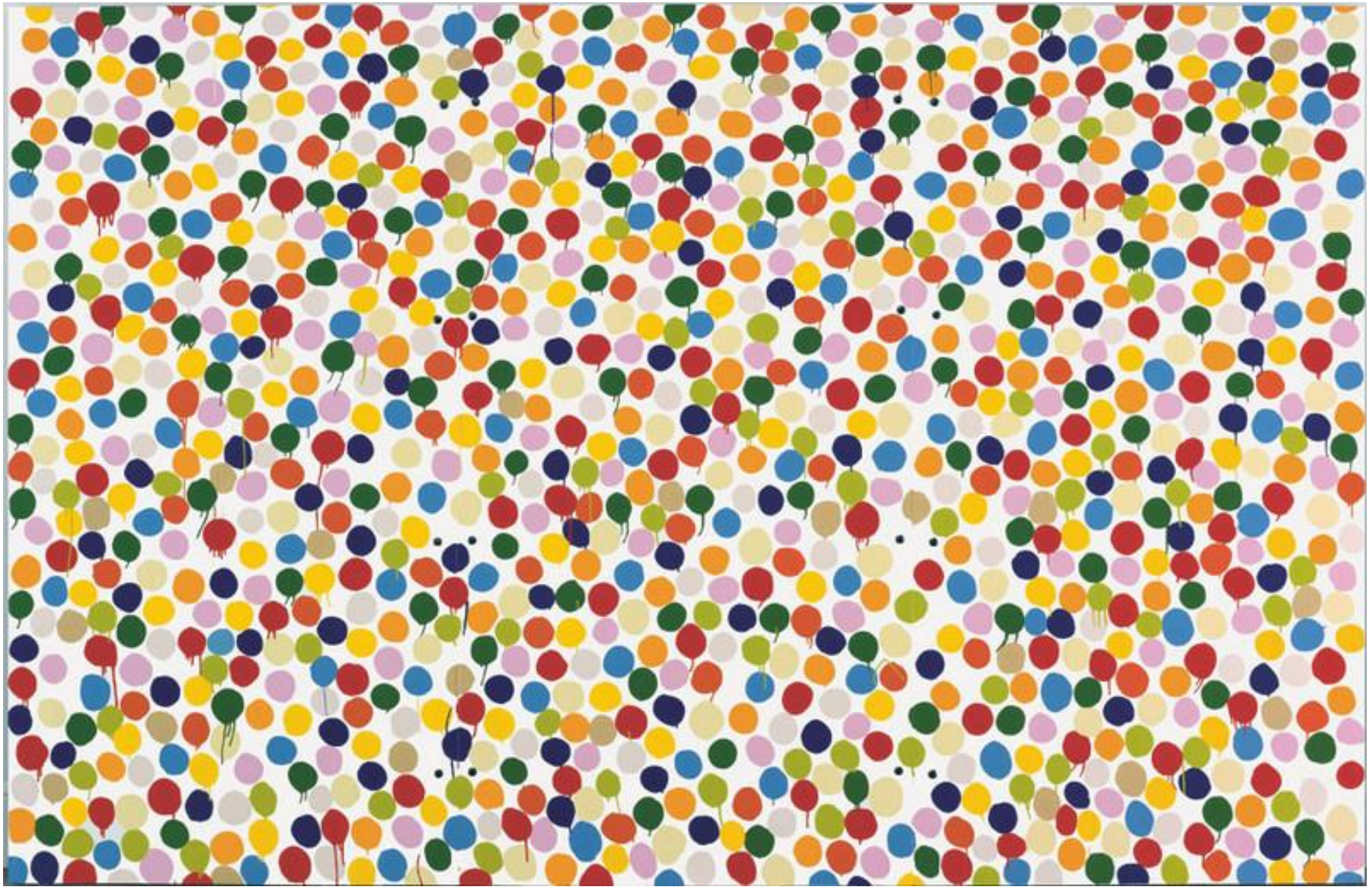
Damien Hirst, Spot Paintings (1968--)



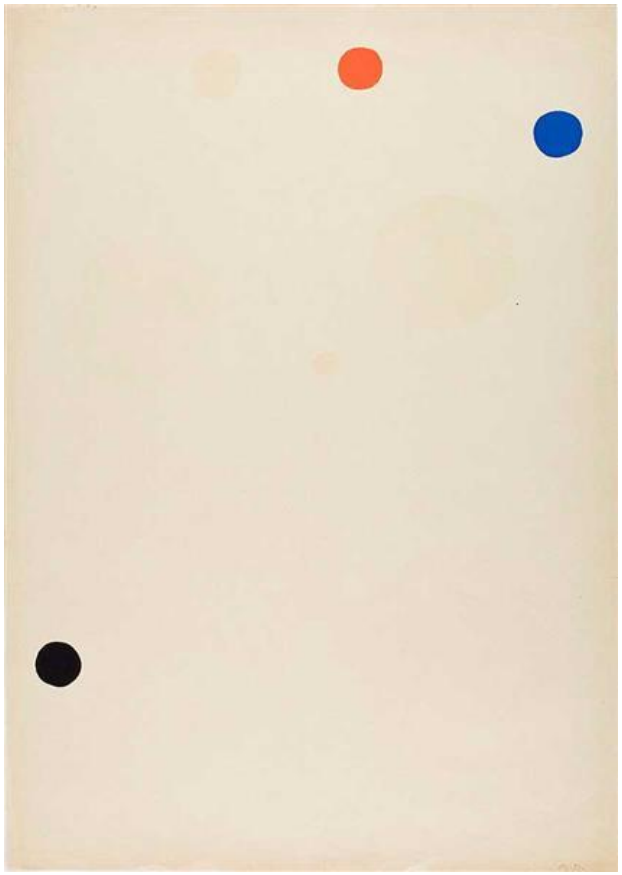
Zlotnikov, “Signals” (1965)

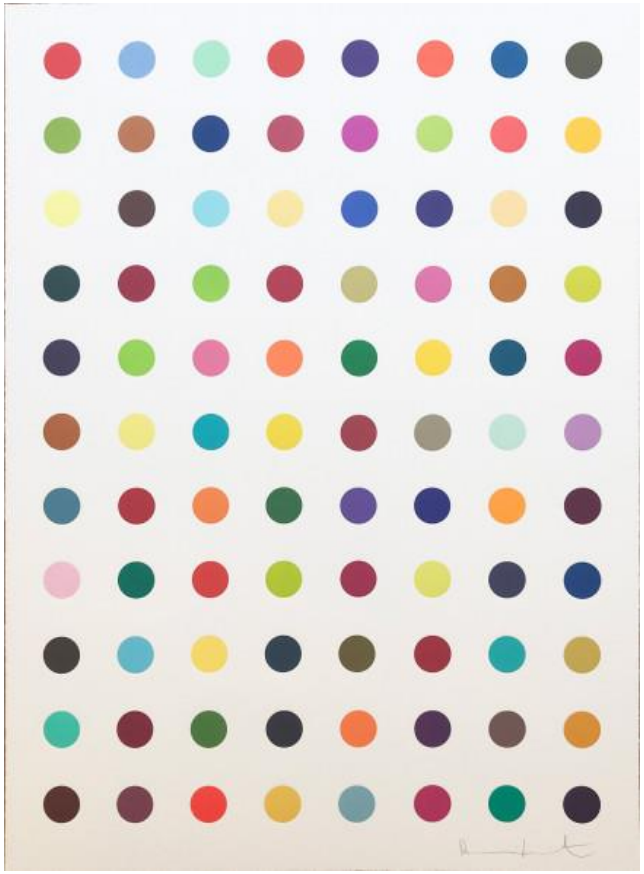


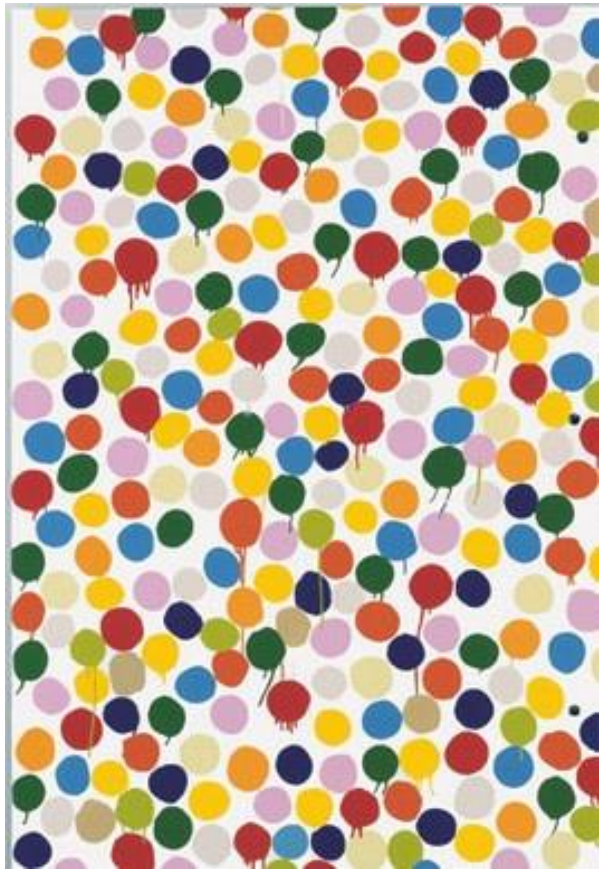
Damien Hirst, Spot Paintings (1968--)



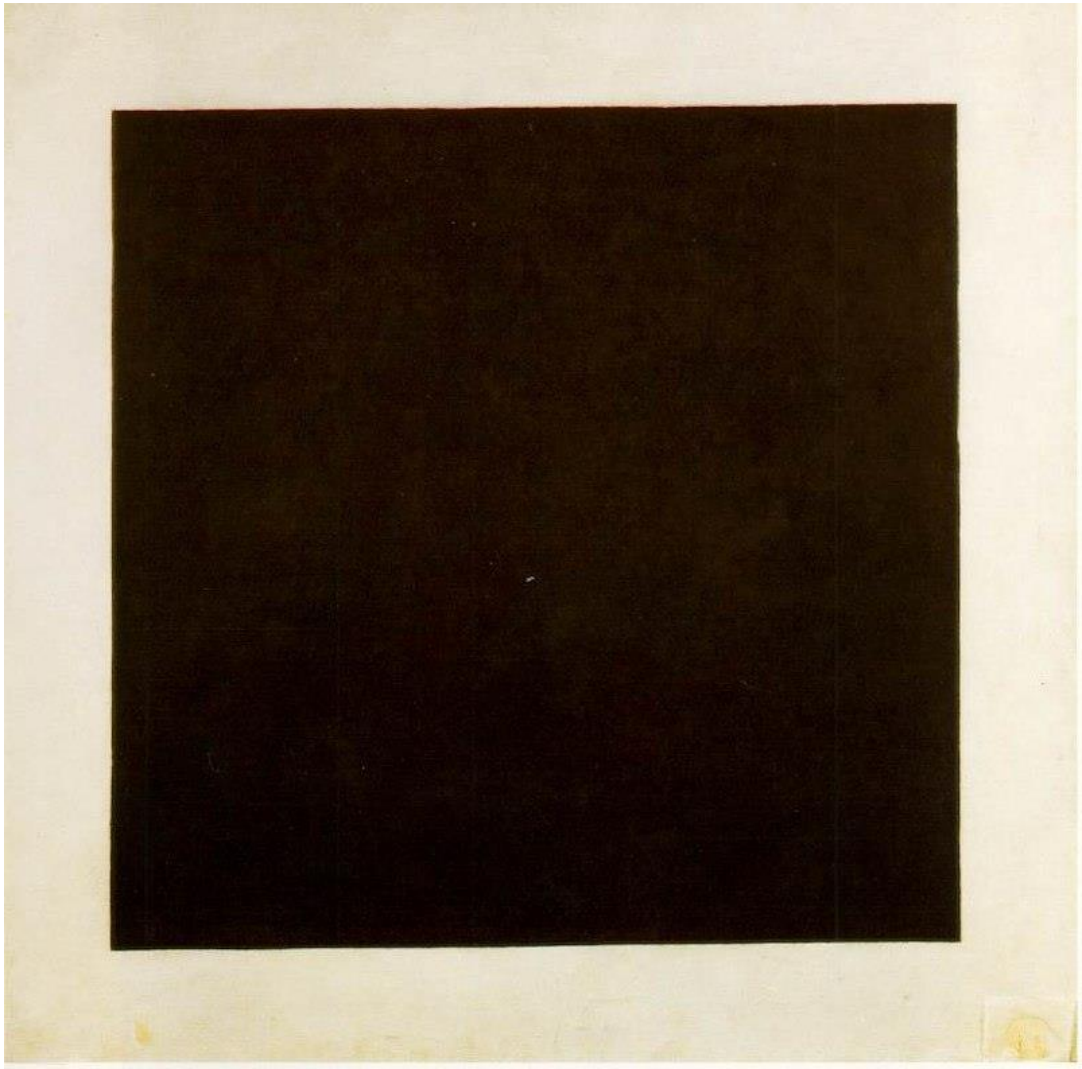
Damien Hirst





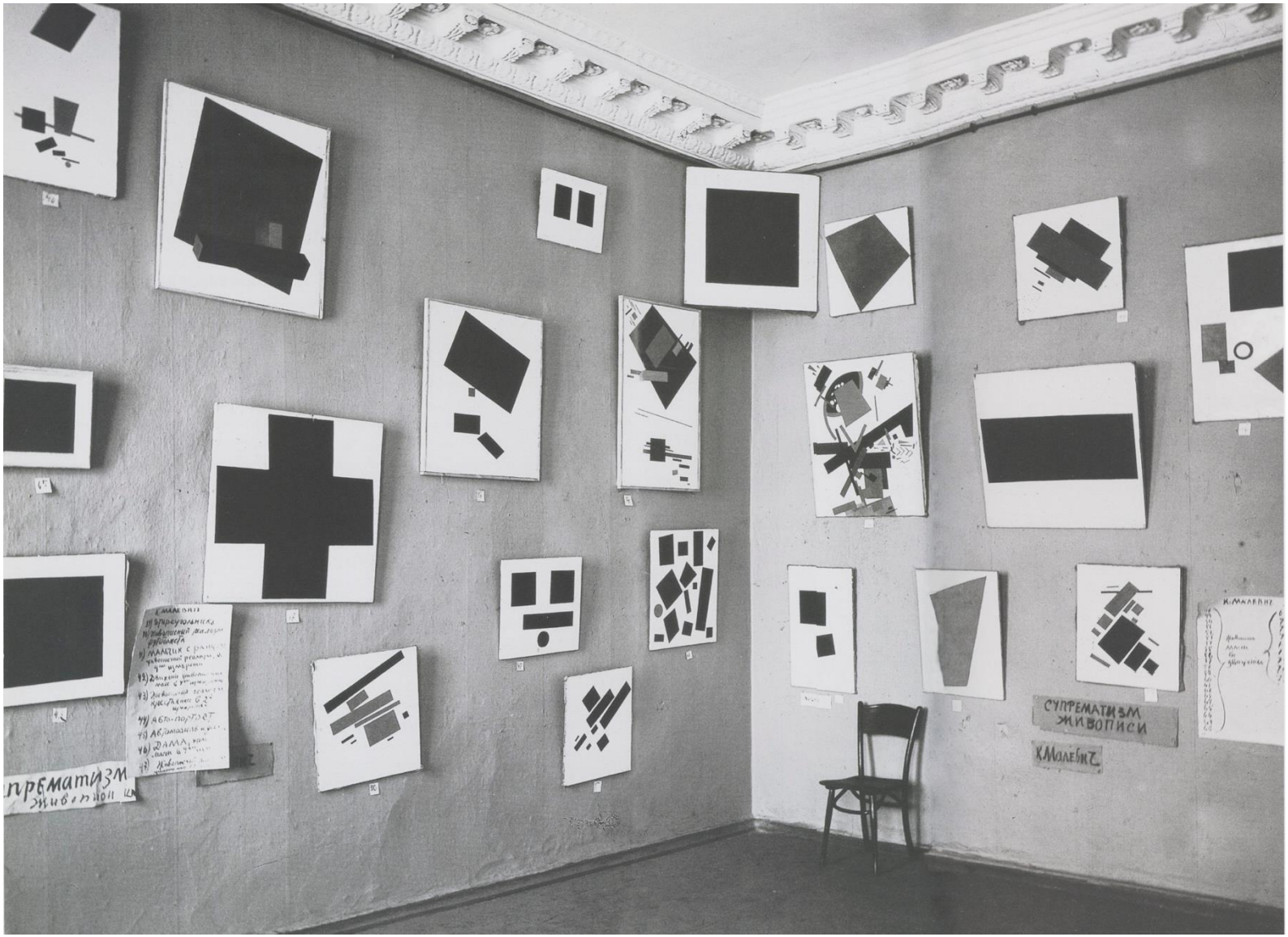


Direction of change



Malevich, “Black Square” (1915)

Malevich



“Black Square” as exhibited (1915)

THANK YOU!