



Comparative Study

Caeleb Gensler

This Comparative Study will focus on the analysis and comparison of Mattias Adolfsson's '*Dance Gavin Dance: Instant Gratification*' and '*Just your average generic European city*', along with David Dunlop's '*Walking Through Light (2017)*', along with some of my own works. With these artworks, I plan to show how each of them are able to portray different ideas and concepts through the elements of the work.

Cultural Context of Mattias Adolfsson

Mattias Adolfsson is a freelance illustrator based just outside of Stockholm, Sweden. He has worked with a multitude of different mediums, from computer games to children's books. However, Adolfsson has worked primarily with pen and ink illustration since 2007; creating commissions and other works in his many sketchbooks, which are often compiled into books. Among his more notable works are the record sleeves for the rock band *Dance Gavin Dance* and larger creations from his aforementioned sketchbooks. One notable aspect of his work is his unique illustration style, that often portrays the subject of the piece in an over-exaggerated or satirical manner. Although Adolfsson never truly displays a specific theme or concept in the majority of his work, some pieces show satirical ideas of conflict, unity, and continuity.



*'Just your average
generic European city'*
Mattias Adolfsson
2017



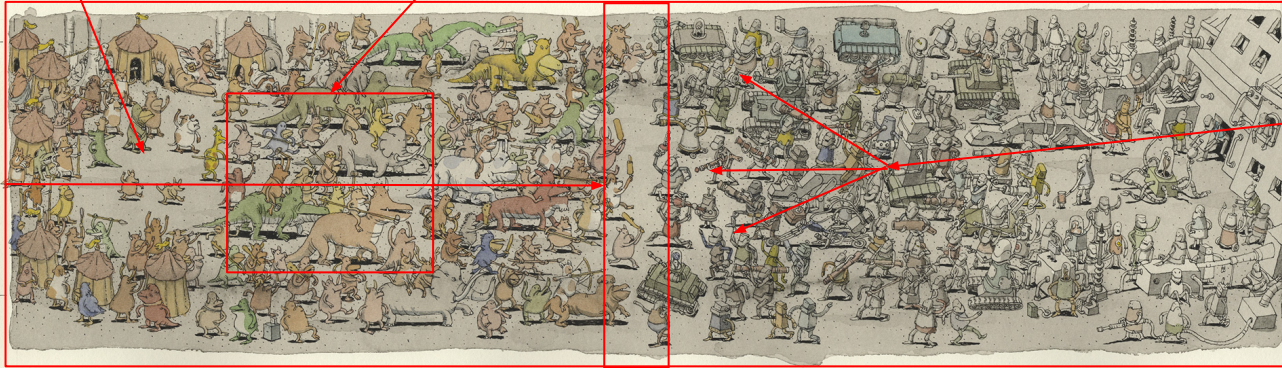
'Dance Gavin Dance: Instant gratification'
Mattias Adolfsson
2015

Analysis of Formal Qualities - Mattias Adolfsson

'Instant Gratification'

The use of intense colors and dark, prominent lines underneath the characters, along with the large empty space on the left side of the piece create emphasis and a point for the viewer to start at.

Symmetrical balance is exhibited through the work's composition, such as the equal distribution of characters and objects on both sides, divided by the empty space left in the center of the frame.



Repetition is utilized through the pose of each of the characters; each character shows evidence of movement towards the center of the battle to meet the opposing side. This battle gives a sense of pride to each side, showing that this fight could have a purpose, at least to the people.

There is a use of variety through the differing repetition of each separate character in this piece. Each of these characters are unique, whether it is through their color, weapon, or action; which gives a sense of individuality, a purpose, to each of them, even in the setting of what could turn out to be a catastrophe for either side.

Analysis of Function and Purpose - Mattias Adolfsson

'Instant Gratification'

One could compare the 'creatures' to the likeness of a primitive tribe on Earth, typically just trying to survive on their own means. Their people have been interrupted by this invading force for a lack of reason. This could be alluding to concept of the sovereignty of individuals and society, no matter who are what they might be.

The overall concept of this piece seems to comment on the idea of the futility of war. The 'robots' evidently have a far stronger force compared to the 'creatures', which would allude to the impending destruction of this civilization. The intent is unclear, whether the battle has an actual purpose in the realm of the work, or whether it is to satisfy this drive for "Instant Gratification" in battle.



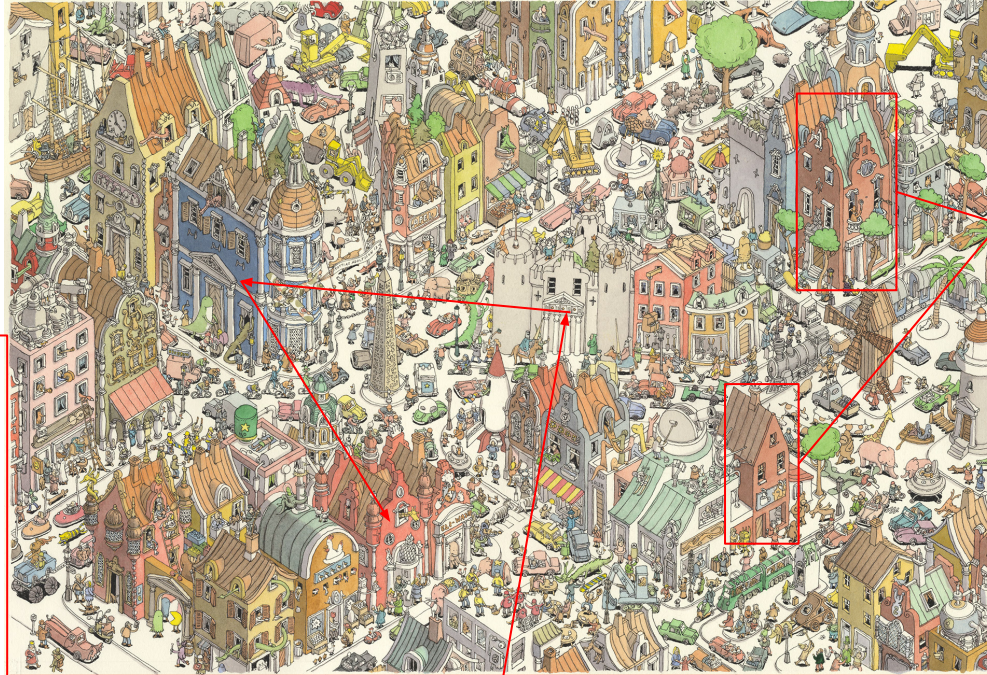
This piece depicts a large, barren battleground upon two opposing people exist. Each are undeniably unique in their design and technology. One could even infer cultural and idealistic differences, although nothing is ever written about this work, but all of the aforementioned aspects would imply as such. The importance of such an aspect is shown through the actions and attention within the event itself. On the "creature" side you see a far greater amount of them intent on 'doing their part' within this fight, however futile it may seem against this superior enemy. One would see that the 'robots' are far more lax in their approach to the situation, shown by a large amount of them staying behind, seemingly watching for a form of entertainment.

In complement to the concept expressed to the left, this piece could be the artist expressing a distaste of war and related ideas, showing the 'calm before the storm' of this battle. The purpose of that timing is to preserve the life of the characters, showing the preciousness of life and the futility of fighting, no matter the purpose, especially if just to satisfy an idea.

Analysis of Formal Qualities - Mattias Adolfsson

'Just your average generic European city'

The limited space between each of the characters and buildings contributes to the feeling of confinement within this large and bustling city, removing the individuality of each character.



Overall, this piece contains a large variety of colors, characters, and buildings throughout, attracting the eye all over the piece to show the uniqueness of every separate aspect. The differing colors of each aspect also adds a sense of texture to the objects. For example, the darker value of certain reds gives the viewer a feeling of a rough brick-like texture.

The movement created by the different positioning and form of the characters shows a large city, full of energy; containing people going along with their lives, presumably every day, similar to real life in a large city.

There seems to be a complete lack of symmetrical balance and throughout this piece, due to the uniqueness of each building and character. However, there is a strong sense of harmony surrounding this piece, due to the complete lack of any conflicting incidents. Although there is a sense of confinement seen by the individuals, the piece as a whole shows a consistent flow of uninhibited movement.

There is an emphasis on three different aspects of the overall piece, caused by different values and intensities of colors. First, the bright gray of the center castle, followed by the intense blue facade of the right building, and the bright red buildings towards the bottom left, creating a triangular form of movement.

Analysis of Function and Purpose - Mattias Adolfsson

'Just your average generic European city'



The overall concept of this piece seems to be one of unity of society, combined with the uniqueness of the individual. It is showing that society is able to bring all of these differing people together and can peacefully interact with one another. It also conceptualizes the importance of the individual, shown by the unique buildings throughout to show the individuality of each character.

Another interpretation of this piece could involve the disorder of society in the present life. Although everything looks ideal from the eyes of the common viewer, all they are seeing is a facade to hide the true issues within society. Whether it is social, political, or another issue cannot be seen within the realm of this shot. The city looks to continue on for an unknown distance, where the actual problems of the city may actually lurk.

The title of *Just your average generic European city* ties into the unitary idea of coexistence between people by implying that this sort of accomplishment has been easily achieved in Europe. It could also be inferred as what the artist thinks all of humanity should strive for, harmony within society.

Cultural Context of David Dunlop

David Dunlop is an award winning artist and lecturer that works primarily in Milwaukee and New York. He draws his inspiration heavily from Renaissance techniques. Perhaps one of the most notable aspects of Dunlop's work is his "pursuit in experimental methods and teaching techniques stretching back to the Renaissance". He makes use of such methods through his "old world techniques" that include painting directly onto contemporary mediums like steel, copper, and even gold.

David Dunlop uses this artist style to portray a variety of different themes and ideas within his works. Within his work 'Walking Through Light 2017', one can see ideas of separation and this person being overwhelmed overwhelmingness through the positioning of the center figure in relation to the environment and other figures.



'Walking Through Light' (2017)

David Dunlop

Oil on Laminated Aluminum

91.44cm x 91.44cm

Analysis of Formal Qualities - David Dunlop

Analysis of 'Walking Through Light (2017)'

There are three major points of emphasis in this piece, created by the varying intensities of colors. First, the bright yellow streak of light on the left side of the image draws the viewer to start there. The viewer is then drawn over to the dimmer green light on the right side, while viewing the crowd in passing. Finally, the viewer is drawn to the person in the center, as she seems to be the only person in focus within this piece.

The long strokes of bright blue and white color, along with the reflection of the figures in the foreground of the piece give a smooth looking texture to the ground.

There is a large amount of empty space between the focused female in the center of the piece and other aspects of the piece, contributing to a mood of loneliness felt by this person.



Overall, there is an asymmetrical feeling of balance felt in this work. The focused person in the middle is slightly off center, as if to draw attention away from them. Along with that, the left side of the piece contains a larger amount of figures and less space between objects, contrasting with the emptier side to the right of the center.

There is a general feeling of harmony formed through the use of gradation to assist in the connections between the brighter colors in the center and the darker colors on the sides. This helps to tie the entire piece into a cohesive visual, but it does not necessarily create smooth movement through the piece. The emphasis on the central figure brings a focus to that specific spot, diluting the importance of the surrounding environment. This focus also causes the piece to resemble a photograph, like a singular, frozen moment in time.

Analysis of Function and Purpose - David Dunlop

Analysis of *'Walking Through Light (2017)'*

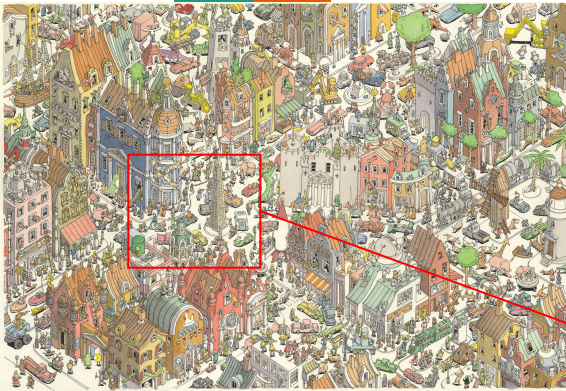
The solidarity of the person in the center, along with the color used to bring them into focus, highlights the general feeling of singularity and loneliness. Although she is not alone in this grand room, she seems to feel completely lost, longer for companionship. This idea of solidarity is further reinforced by the form of this character; as she looks to be trying to hide and curl into herself in a fearful manner.



Another key aspect of portray this feeling of solidarity and loneliness is the interaction of the person with the surrounding environment. This painting is within the realm of a sort of large terminal of sorts, for trains or otherwise. This could be showing that this person is waiting for someone to arrive, perhaps family or a loved one. The lack of interaction gives this person a sense of a purpose, that they are driven to accomplish one goal, perhaps reuniting with someone.

Comparing Artistic Styles

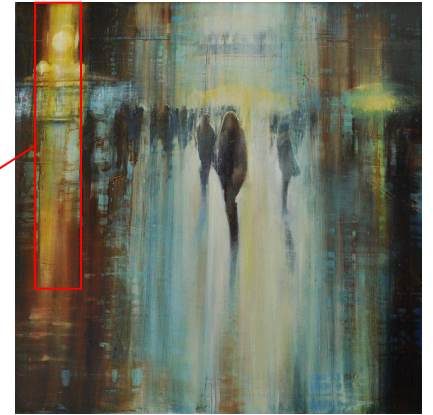
Mattias Adolfsson and David Dunlop



'Just your average generic European city'



'Instant Gratification'



'Walking Through Light'

When comparing the two works, both of them make use of intense colors to highlight specific aspects in the piece. For example, Dunlop uses such colors to accentuate the character in the center; and Adolfsson uses such colors to highlight specific areas on importance. Both of the artists also make use of line to bring emphasis to certain areas of the work. Dunlop uses long, faded lines of color emanating from the lights to gain the attention of the viewer. Likewise, Adolfsson uses heavy, dark lines underneath the characters as shadows to draw the attention to a certain area.

Comparing Artistic Styles

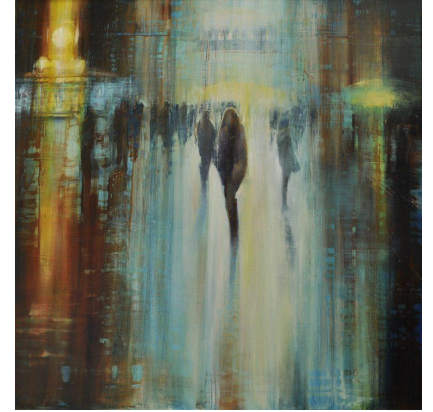
Mattias Adolfsson and David Dunlop



'Just your average generic European city'



'Instant Gratification'

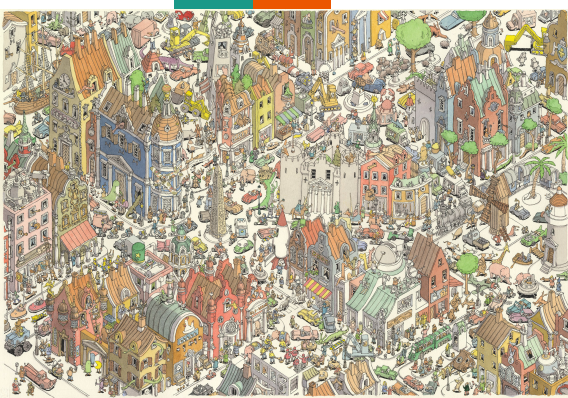


'Walking Through Light'

Both artists also make use different elements throughout their works to create a strong sense of harmony. In Dunlop's *Walking Through Light*, the feeling of harmony is formed through the use of gradation to blend together brighter colors in the center, the bright colors of the light, and the darker colors on the sides. In Adolfsson's *Just your average generic European city*, there is a strong sense of harmony through a lack of any conflicting incidents in the piece. The movement plays a part through showing the entire city as having a consistent flow.

Contrasting Artistic Styles

Mattias Adolfsson and David Dunlop



'Just your average
generic European city'



'Instant Gratification'



'Walking Through Light'

Mattias Adolfsson makes use of the uniqueness of each character with their pose and action to create movement within the piece. For example, each character within *Instant Gratification* has a direction and a pull towards the center of the piece to culminate it all into one large battle. However, there is a lack of movement within Dunlop's *Walking Through Light*. The character's lessening focus into the background causes the piece to resemble a photograph, a frozen moment in time. These artists also use different mediums: Adolfsson using watercolor paints and ink, and Dunlop using oil paints on a variety of metals.

Contrasting Artistic Styles

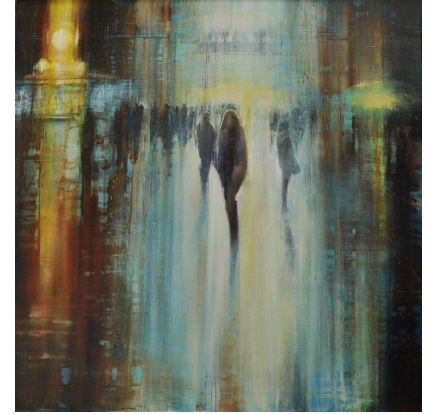
Mattias Adolfsson and David Dunlop



'Just your average generic European city'



'Instant Gratification'



'Walking Through Light'

Another key difference in the Adolfsson's and Dunlop's work is the use of space within the works. For example, Adolfsson makes use of very little empty space within his works, which gives a strong sense of confinement of the different aspects throughout. Differently, Dunlop has a rather large amount of empty space throughout, which gives a sense of liberation to the aspects of his works. Both artists also make use of balance in different ways in their works. For example, in *Instant Gratification*, the use of symmetrical balance down the center of the piece draws attention to that initial clash of the two armies. However, in *Walking Through Light*, the character in the middle is slightly off center, as if to draw attention away from them.

Comparing Use of Symbolism and Meaning

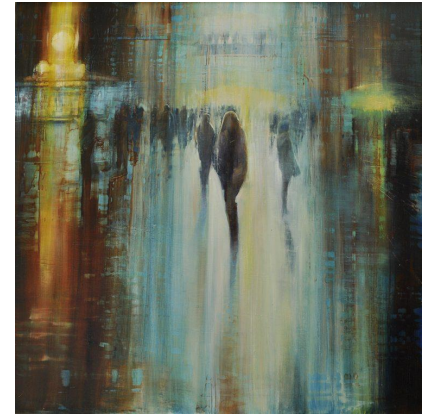
Mattias Adolfsson and David Dunlop



'Just your average generic European city'



'Instant Gratification'



'Walking Through Light'

Both Mattias Adolfsson and David Dunlop make use of symbolism to portray the importance of the individual in a society. For Adolfsson, in both *Just your average generic European city* and *Instant Gratification*, he could have chosen to use repetition to replicate each of the characters in something as broad as a city or warzone. However, he chose to show the importance of every single unique aspect in the pieces no matter the situation. For Dunlop, he shows this faceless figure in focus of a large terminal of sorts with multitudes of other people around. Certain areas of this figure appear to be fading away and morphing into some parts of the background, showing the loss of the individual person in such a large area of society.

Contrasting Use of Symbolism and Meaning

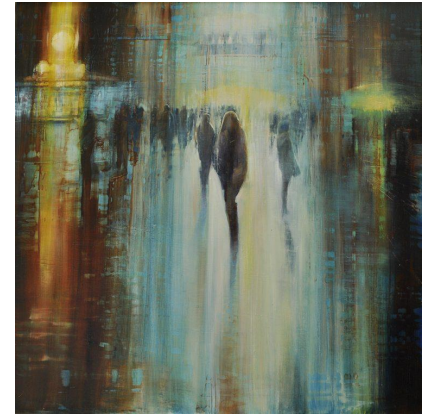
Mattias Adolfsson and David Dunlop



'Just your average generic European city'



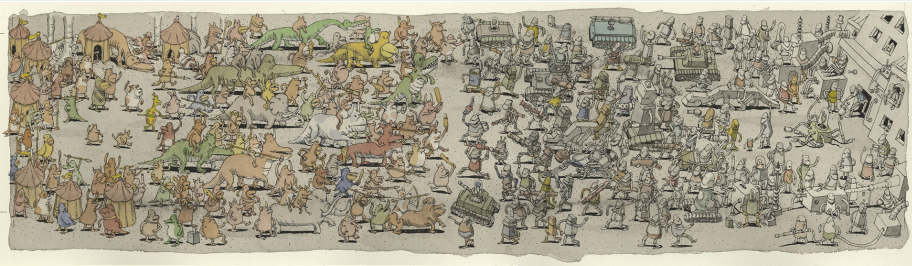
'Instant Gratification'



'Walking Through Light'

While both artist's pieces comment on the importance of an individual, it is not the only thing. David Dunlop's *Walking Through Light* focuses in solely on the individual, and doesn't really focus in much on their interaction with their environment. Adolfsson does more than just this however. In *Just your average generic European city*, Adolfsson also portrays the overall unity of society through each of these unique individuals and their interactions in this society. In *Instant Gratification*, the focus is more so on the idea of the destruction of a society caused by war.

Comparing Personal Art to Adolfsson's Art



Similarities

- Same use of mediums: watercolors and ink.
- Use of bright and intense colors to draw emphasis to specific areas.
- Similar overall styles of characters and buildings.
- Expresses the importance of the individual in the environment.

- Same use of both symmetrical and asymmetrical balance.
- Use of color to create texture on certain elements.
- Unique characters and poses to create a sense of movement throughout each piece.
- Lack of realistic forms and style to help form satirical concepts.



'Instant Annihilation'
(2018) - Caeleb Gensler

Differences

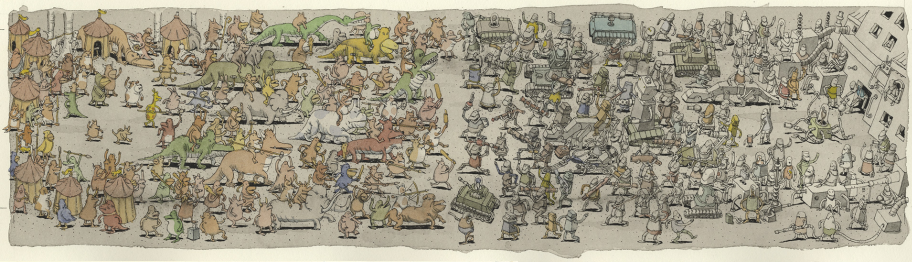
- Uses repetition of a variety of characters throughout to form a continuous story.
- Draws more concepts from the human condition in events such as war.
- Rougher application of watercolor paint onto a different material (illustration board) to create a larger amount of texture.
- More empty space between objects and characters.



'Just your average war scene'
(2018) - Gensler

Comparing Personal Art to Adolfsson's Art

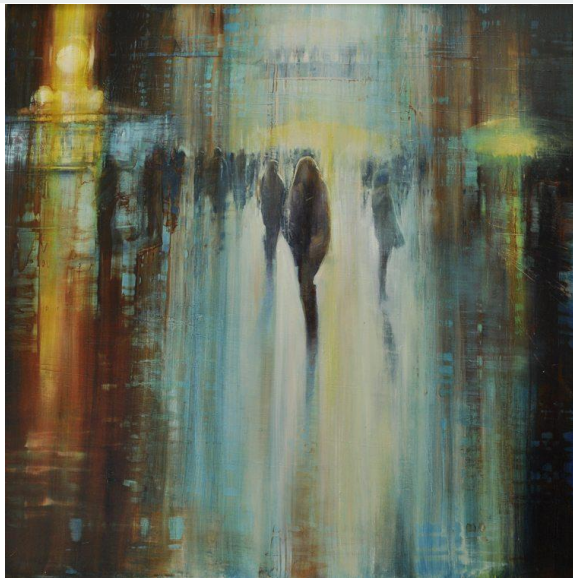
Meanings and Concepts



The overall concepts of these pieces all comment on similar ideas of society and survival. Adolfsson's *Just your average generic European city* shows an idea of a societal utopia with all of the different peoples coexisting. Both *Instant Gratification* and *Instant Annihilation* show the moment before the collision of two separate peoples, with one side being seemingly disadvantaged and on the risk of annihilation; which shows the horrors and futility of war. *Just your average war scene* shows the aftermath of such a battle and the effects on the soldiers in it.

The bright variety of colors seen throughout the works draw attention to aspects that are centered in the foreground of the works. Both make use of unique artistic styles to add satirical concepts to the meaning of their works as well. The use of color brings emphasis and creates form to a specific area, giving life and movement to the piece itself. Heavy, black lines surrounding and at the base of the characters are also used to give the elements more dimension and form. The use of balance through both symmetrical and asymmetrical means help to highlight the chaotic elements that are often present throughout their works.

Comparing Personal Art to Dunlop's Art



Similarities

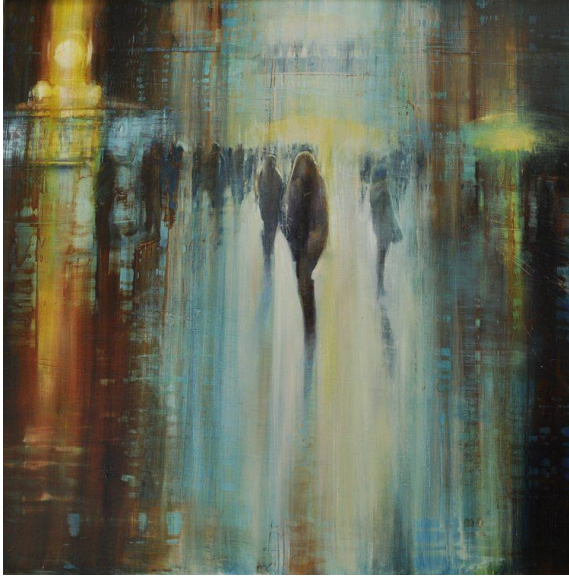
- Both use intense colors on either side of the center to draw emphasis to specific spots on the work.
- Long brushstrokes of color help create texture on aspects of the environments
- Both make use of empty space to highlight to uniqueness of certain aspects.

Differences

- Different mediums: ink and watercolor on illustration board vs oil paint on metal.
- Different overall styles of characters and environments.
- Different concepts and themes shown (Dunlop: Individuality, Me: War/Conflict/Society).
- Different uses of movement in their works (whether it adds to the piece through different elements or not).
- Different focus on individual characters (Dunlop: faceless and generic people, Me: Unique and conceptual characters).
- Variety of perspectives.

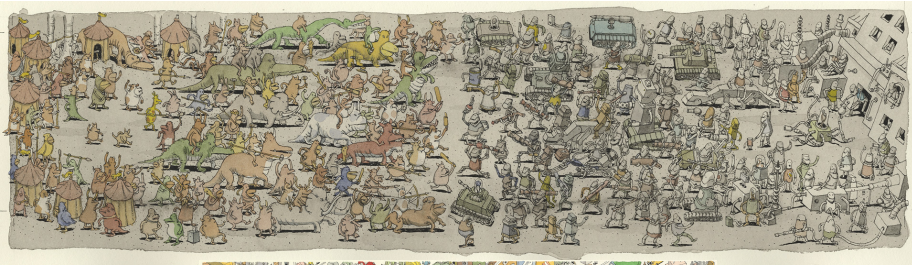
Comparing Personal Art to Dunlop's Art

Meanings and Concepts



Both artists make use of the positioning and coloration of the main element within their works to convey emotion. For Dunlop's *Walking Through Light*, he shows this singular figure standing in focus among others in a grand room. The pose on this figure is quite reserved, and seemingly overwhelmed by the environment around them. They seem to feel completely lost, longing for a sense of companionship or way out. This idea of solidarity and fear is further reinforced by the form of this character; as she looks to be trying to hide and curl up into herself in a fearful manner. For Gensler's *Just your average war scene*, the environment is seen through the lens of a soldier on the victorious side from *Instant Annihilation*. The soldier is showing their reaction to the destroyed and ravaged environment around him, after seeing his own bloodied hands and clothing from the victims of the battle. The overall view is the soldier frozen in this formation, distraught by the destruction, watching the other soldiers and tanks walk through this ravaged society. They are trying to find a way out of this situation, similar to *Walking Through Light*.

Connection of All Three Artists



Adolfsson, Dunlop, and Gensler all make use of intense values of color to bring attention to certain aspects of the subjects in their works. All artists style their works in a similar fashion as to accentuate the main focus of the piece. Each artist also integrates their own influences and concepts into their work through a variety of ways, but with Adolfsson typically implementing his own figure into the work as well. Each artist also makes use of dark lines to outline and bring focus to different forms and characters throughout. Along with shading to help create life in their works. Each of the artists also tend to have a more negative or somber mood throughout their works: created through long, lines of dark color for Dunlop, and with symbolism and composition for both Adolfsson and Gensler. All of the works also make use of a variety of intense colors so the viewer would be compelled to analyze each area of the piece. The centering of the subjects in pieces like *Walking Through Light* or *Just your average war scene* bring the subject to focus, helping the artist draw more of an emphasis to the concepts they are trying to portray.