

# Comparative Study

## IB Visual Arts HL

In this Comparative Study, I have selected two artists from different countries and cultures including Prateep Kochabua (Thailand) and Frida Kahlo (Mexico). Then I selected artworks from each artist that inspired me. I studied how the artist came to be, which has been built from their cultural backgrounds, personal experiences, the society and key events from the past. From this, I selected elements from the artworks and ideas from each artist, then manipulated them as my own. Therefore, these two artists have influenced my artwork by portraying the inner battle of suffering that animals face.

# Intuitive Response



“Self-Portrait Along the Borderline Between Mexico and the United States”. Frida Kahlo. Oil on canvas, 31x35 cm. 1932.

I chose this piece because I liked the artist, and the simplicity of her painting. It gave me an eerie feeling because there was smoke and the colors were fading away. I was intrigued by her suffering and the metaphors she used. I also felt a personal connection to her with my life through the trauma she encountered. I appreciate her process of finding her identity, because I can relate to her but I have not learned to appreciate her innocent style of painting.



“Calumny.” Prateep Kochabua. Oil on canvas. 110 x 150 cm. 2012

I chose this piece because I saw his artwork on display in the MOCA in Bangkok. I was attracted by the bright colors and the way he used his paint brush, giving the impression that his piece is moving. It also has a surrealist, whimsical element which is pleasing to the eye. Also, I was attracted by the paintings humorous tone, and the surreal style. Prateep’s work caught my eye because of its exaggerated and unrealistic elements. I treasure his work because it is uncommon to see Thai artists creating surreal artworks.



“Engaged in Combat”. Prateep Kochabua. Oil on canvas, 240 x 300 cm, 2012.

I felt this piece was appropriate to choose because I live in Thailand and I feel I don't know enough about its history. It has a lot of detail and gives a good visual explanation of wars back then. For someone who doesn't live in Thailand and doesn't know the cultures would have a hard time understanding everything that is going on. I know that it depicts a battle from the Ramayana story, but it addresses political issues in Thailand. I think the artist wants to show that in Thai culture, opinions are not valued.

# The Artworks and their Context

## Prateep Kochabua



Prateep Kochabua was formally trained at Silpakorn University in Thailand. Kochabua created many social satire paintings on Thai society. He discovered a surrealist style that is appropriate to his working methods, such as creating symbolisms and meaning through form like the lady boy which symbolizes Thai culture. He found that he was easily influenced by the audience's criticism which is why he painted such obscure paintings. He liked critical feedback and took into consideration what the audience wanted rather than what he wanted to paint. Later on, he developed his contemporary style (bottom image) that is integrated with Thai culture such as idioms and mythical stories rather than painting in a surrealist style (top image). Kochabua projects his feelings and emotions when he feels uptight, uncomfortable and such.



# The Artworks and their Context

## Frida Kahlo

Frida Kahlo was born on July 7th 1907 in Mexico City. Her work was greatly influenced by traumatic physical and psychological events from her childhood and early adulthood. Her mixed ancestry of Mexican and German, deals with her questions of national identity. In later life, she was forced to rely on painkillers that affected the quality of her output.

In 1930, when Diego Rivera (her husband) received commissions to paint murals in the United States, the couple moved north. At the end of their four years, he wanted to remain in his American surroundings, but Frida was homesick and miserable. A year later, Rivera continued to chase success in the US with requests for murals across the country. Kahlo was distressed by what she saw in North America and decided to paint it.

The Great Depression hit the US in the 1930's and Kahlo and Rivera had the worst of it. During this time, Mexicans had to face deportation. As unemployment swept the U.S., hostility to immigrant workers grew, and the government began a program of repatriating immigrants to Mexico. Lucky for Rivera, he was working but Kahlo faced the threat of deportation. In 1934, the couple moved back to Mexico due to Kahlo's health issues and Rivera's firing from the job. This painting was conducted during the Great Depression and watching as Mexicans fled the country one by one, she became concerned as to where her heart lies. But her experiences living in "Gringolandia" inspired the painting, *Self-portrait on the Borderline Between Mexico and the United States*.



# Prateep Kochabua

"Calumny". Oil on canvas  
110 x 150 cm. 2012

## Elements of Art and Design:

Kochabua used 2D, realistic forms to create a flesh like texture through the use of blending and colors. The artist used warm and cool colors such as the orange tiger fur and the blue sky. Neutral earth tones used for the ground. Analogous colors are used to unify, seen in nature, which is pleasing to the eye.

## Principles of Art and Design

This piece lacks symmetry which makes it more interesting. The white triangle in on the image is where the viewer's eye is drawn to. As humans, we like to see balanced work, and since this piece is asymmetrical, we try to find shapes as there is no line of symmetry.

The rhythm in this piece is created by elements that recur regularly, such as the jaguar pattern on the cow.

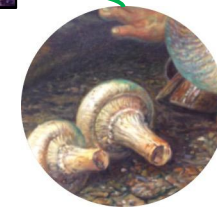
# Visual Analysis



**Proportion** is the relationship of sizes between different parts of a work. The crazy cow and lady boy are disproportionate. The scale of the painting is large. This is **effective** for the **surrealist style**.

The smooth and highlights of the hemorrhoid was created by the easy directions of the paintbrush and paint tones to creates the folds.

Kochabua effectively used oil paint to show his craftsmanship skills and knowledge about the medium. It enables him to explore different ways to create a variety of textures such as the the folds in the lady boys shirt, tiger/cow stripes and the hemorrhoid.



The rough texture in the mushrooms was created by short brush strokes, using different colors that are a part of the atmosphere and values (light and dark).



# Prateep Kochabua

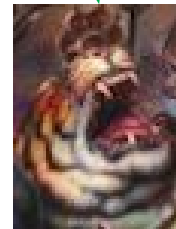
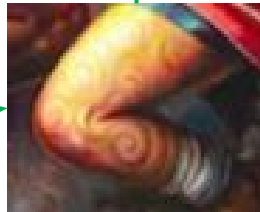
"Engaged in Combat", Oil on canvas, 240 x 300 cm, 2012.

## Elements of Art and Design:

The 3D and realistic forms of Hanuman (the monkey in the red robes) is created through the use of bright colors giving the illusion he is closest to us. The tone helps us to differentiate and emphasize different subjects. Kochabua used warm, cool and neutral colors to give significance to the subjects. The figures in the background are dull, in contrast, the figures with the foreground are vibrant with colors and highlights. The colors are effectively used to make the the subjects in the center pop, showing importance.

Kochabua effectively used oil paint to create a variety of textures. The Rough texture was created by short brush strokes, using different colors that are a part of the atmosphere and values. In each character, we find a color that every other character has. Smooth texture was created by the direction of the paintbrush and tone to create the form. The smooth texture creates fleshy human skin.

# Visual Analysis



## Principles of Art and Design:

This painting is more symmetrical than "Calumny". It makes the image more interesting because our eyes are attracted to the triangular shape in the battle. The repetition of figures leaning forward creates movement of collision. In this painting, everything is colliding into each other. The proportion in this painting is monumental and inaccurate. The size of the elephant, horse, giant and monkey are relatively similar. The scale of this painting is large, which effectively signifies its importance. The emphasis is on the monkey, Hanuman, in the center. This painting is captivating because of the different characters giving the artwork more variety.

The soft texture was used to create effect of dust in background. It was created by moving the brush in a circular motion. The bristly texture is a stiff and prickly texture as seen in the short, stiff hair. This texture is created by short, fast brushstrokes.

# Frida Kahlo

“Self-Portrait Along the Borderline Between Mexico and the United States”. Oil on canvas, 31 x 35 cm. 1932.

## Elements of Art and Design:

Kahlo defines her shapes very precisely using different types of lines such as hard, soft or straight. Kahlo’s style is 2D and very flat because she explores “naive primitive art”. This is art that is created by a person who lacks the formal education and training that a professional artist undergoes. Monochromatic colors are widely used in the left side of the painting (Mexico). Kahlo tends to use neutral dull colors for the background (USA, smoke, combat between the sun and the moon).

## Principles of Art and Design:

This painting is very close to symmetrical. There is an equal amount of objects on the ground to the left and right side of Frida. The rocks, flowers, buildings give rhythm to the painting and help the viewer’s eye move around to the sides of the artwork. Emphasis is on the red sun and the red satellite dish that are opposite from each other. The focal point is clearly on Frida but our eyes quickly move to the Aztec building and the red sun in the left hand corner.

# Visual Analysis



Kahlo's effective use of oil paint created a variety of textures. The fluffy texture was created by blending the oil paints in a circular direction. Then she blurred the edges as seen in the clouds and smoke. The soft textures were created by blending analogous colors such as the bright sun. This is very pleasing to the eye. The rough textures were created by layering the oil paints and repeating different shades and values. We can see this in the base of the Aztec building and the block she is standing on.

# Function and purpose

## Prateep Kochabua

“Calumny”. Oil on canvas  
110 x 150 cm. 2012

This painting is called “Calumny” which means false and defamatory statements with the goal of damaging one’s reputation. Kochabua painted this to state that it is impossible to change who you truly are and you should accept yourself in whatever form. Don’t listen to anyone's nonsense.

## Prateep Kochabua

“Engaged in Combat”, Oil on canvas, 240 x 300 cm, 2012.

The purpose of Kochabua’s “Engaged in Combat” painting was to portray the battle between the monkeys and the giants from the Ramayana story, alluding to Thai political issues. He wanted to make people question why they are fighting all the time.

## Frida Kahlo

“Self-Portrait Along the Borderline Between Mexico and the United States”. Oil on canvas, 31 x 35 cm. 1932.

This painting is about Kahlo’s hybrid identity between Mexico and the United States. The purpose of this piece was to express her resistance to capitalism. Before painting this, she had a traumatic miscarriage. She felt very alone and isolated from reality. This painting is an expression of how Kahlo saw her situation stuck somewhere in limbo, in a space disconnected from her ancient homeland.





# Conceptual and material significance



## **Material**

Kochabua explored the techniques of oil paint at an excellent level. He understood its function for blending, as well as creating effects which are soft, making his work appear dream-like. The artist has shown development in techniques, style, as well as scale. His early paintings are humorous with elements of character, but improved by exploring surrealism and hyperrealism.

## **Conceptual**

Kochabua's concepts are diverse, addressing different aspects such as political, social, cultural and personal experiences. The diversity of his concepts shows his well-rounded knowledge about his surroundings. In my opinion, the variety of topics makes him a good artist. The concepts that most Thai artists revolve around includes: Buddhism, politics, society, and personal experiences. There is not a large variety in the paintings. But it is suitable for the context they are in.

## **Cultural**

Kochabua's artwork alludes to Thailand and Thai audiences because he tackles and explored the issues in the nation through the execution of his ideas. His work creates a connection with Thai people because those issues are affecting everyone. His paintings are significant because it captured the history of Thailand and how it affects him.

# Prateep Kochabua

"Calumny". Oil on canvas  
110 x 150 cm. 2012

## Conceptual and material significance

# Prateep Kochabua

"Engaged in Combat", Oil on canvas, 240  
x 300 cm, 2012.

### Subject matter:

- The artist, or the crazy cow, transferred his feelings from criticism onto the cow with tiger stripes. It is impossible for a cow to become a tiger.
- The whispering lady boy represents people who are judgmental and create false statements.
- The crazy cow symbolizes the artist himself. Cow listening to the whispering lady boy. The artist was once vulnerable to criticism and was "stupid" for doing so. The representation of the buffalo, effectively alludes to Thai context, where buffalos are considered as "stupid".

### Symbolism:

- The stacks of paintings could represent his previous work that he did before. In the foreground is a new painting which the lady boy is influencing him.
- In context, the lady boy is trying to tell him who is he and how he must behave which is causing him stress. Referring to the artist, he has hemorrhoid, which is swollen causing pain. This effectively shows that he is under pressure.
- Orange tiger fur = Power, contrast and emphasis.
- Blue ear = Sad, negative = Molding ear from criticisms.

### Subject matter:

- Tosakan could symbolize "Thaksin", Thailand's previous prime minister. He paid people to revolt against the yellow shirts (the royalists who protested against Thaksin). The composition of sword that acts like a box around the moon, alluding to Thai politics, in which Thaksin attempted to take over the king by creating chaos. Both the symbolism of the moon, subject matter are effectively used because of its ambiguous intent, which subtly addresses the Thai political issue.
- In the center, is Hanuman and the giant demon battling individually with each other. The subjects effectively used key characters from the Ramayana story, the artist alludes to Thai politics between the yellow and red shirts.

### Symbolism:

- Elephants are the symbol of Thailand and the King. They symbolize strength, power and loyalty. On the top left side of the painting, Tosakan is riding an elephant which is strangling a monkey. Hypothetically, This could symbolize how Thaksin attempted to take over Thailand, possibly the King (moon), and the yellow shirts (monkey). On the bottom left, a dead elephant is laying on the ground. This could represent that the King's power had been taken over.
- The placement of the moon is high above all. This could be an analogy of the King's position in the political system. Yellow = King.
- Yellow = the moon (The King of Thailand) and the monkey (Yellow shirt means democratic party)
- Red = giant (Red shirt means democratic party)

# Frida Kahlo

“Self-Portrait Along the Borderline Between Mexico and the United States”. Oil on canvas, 31 x 35 cm. 1932.

## Conceptual and material significance

### Material

The medium that the artist use is oil paint. The artist has chosen this medium because it was accessible in her time, and acrylic paints were not invented yet. Moreover, she studied at National Preparatory School. She was greatly influenced by her husband, Diego Rivera, who paints murals using wall paint. The use of oil paint could be influenced by the primitive art movement. The function of oil paint is to blend and “open” the medium again. Kahlo created sharp edges using oil paint, showing her level of craftsmanship.

### Conceptual

The artist’s concepts are diverse, addressing different aspects such as political, social, cultural and personal experiences. The diversity of her concepts shows that she is aware of her surroundings. However, most of her artworks seems to be centralized on her the most. This could cause repetition and lack of development conceptually. Nevertheless, her paintings are significant because they captured her life, and her wild imaginations in a form that is unique and different.

### Cultural

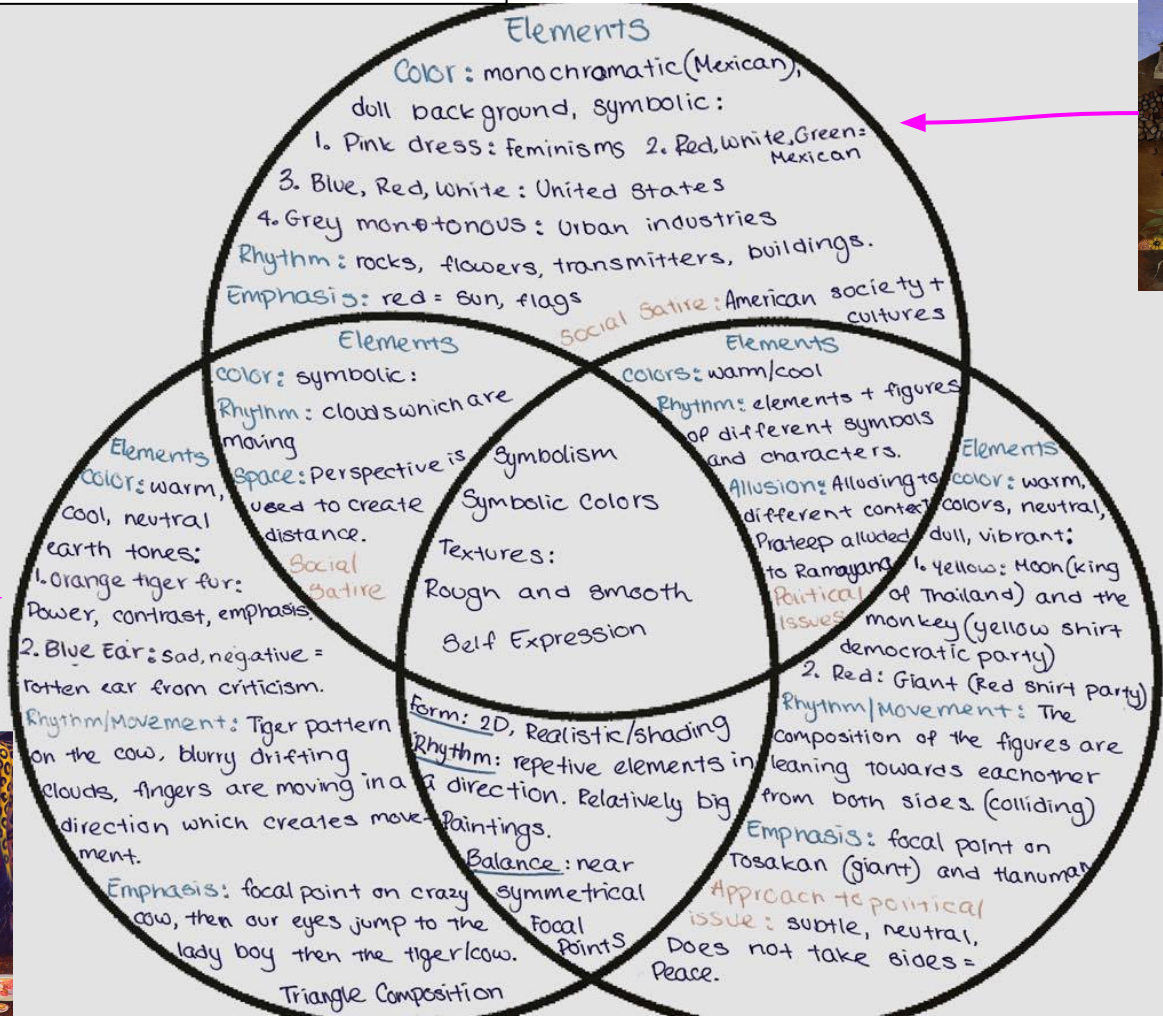
Her paintings addresses or reflects Mexican culture by alluding to symbolic animals, her dress, geographical landscapes and events such as the Mexican Revolution. Her paintings are significant because it captured the history of Mexico, how it has influenced her as an artist and a human being. This is significant to Mexicans, but not relatable for audiences from other cultures.

### Symbolism:

- Dualism and juxtaposition such as sun and moon, Aztec temple and buildings, fields and industries, flowers and electrical transmitters.
- The sun and moon can symbolize her eager to go home.
- Diego Rivera was involved in modern industry, while Frida Kahlo longs for ancient Mexican culture. This is seen by the separation of the border.
- On her right hand, Kahlo is holding a cigarette pointing towards the left side of the painting. Other the other hand, she is holding the Mexican flag with her left hand and pointing towards the right side of the painting. Firstly, the cigarette symbolizes the “modern woman” who has freedom and self-expression. In context of her native culture, Mexican women are largely inferior to men. This painting reflects the changing conditions in culture within different countries.
- The sun and moon on the Mexican side are surrounded by cumulus clouds. On the contrary, the US clouds are industrials smoke from Ford. The Mexican sun and stars are real, while the stars on the US flag are artificial. Kahlo’s symbolisms are too direct, it doesn’t allow viewers to think.
- One of the electric transmitters is connected to a Mexican Lily. The Mexican lily is deteriorating because the electric transmitter is deriving all the power and energy from it. Kahlo uses effectively symbolisms which links back to her cultural background.
- Kahlo in this state can symbolize or refer to the theme of alienation. Especially for the “others” in Western society. In addition, alienation could refer to Karl Marx’s criticism on Capitalism. He said that people become alienated from people and become disconnected. Effectively addresses racial and identity issues
- Dressed in a pink frock and lace gloves. However, the artist juxtaposed the conservative look by exposing her nipples, making her face look mischievous, and holding a cigarette. Carmen is Kahlo’s Christian name. The press called her Carmen Rivera and described her as “a petite wife who sometimes dabbled in paint”. She is being brave by challenging the gender stereotyping of women.



# Making connections: formal qualities



# Making connections: meaning



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**Elements**  
Color: vibrant, strong  
Rhythm/Movement: texture  
brushstrokes, patterns  
**Social Satire:** American  
society + culture  
**Approaches political issue:**  
opinioned and strong  
**Art world:** modern art  
**style:** vernacular modernism  
Influences  
**Politics:** mexican revolution 1910  
and marxism, Trotskyism  
**People:** Diego Rivera  
Mexican cultures

Artworks:  
Elements: warm  
cool  
Artists:  
**style:** Surrealism  
**Influences:** politics,  
culture, people  
Self Expression  
Symbolism  
Surrealist  
Elements

**Elements**  
Color: contrasting, warm,  
cool, neutral earth tones,  
doll, vibrant, highlights  
**Rhythm/Movement:** the  
composition of the figures  
**Social satire:** Thai society +  
culture.  
**Approaches political issue:**  
subtle, neutral, no sides  
**Art world:** contemporary +  
surrealism  
Influences  
Thai politics + criticisms  
Thai culture; Buddhist,  
Muslim, hinduism,  
christianity



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**My work**  
“Circus Child”. Oil on  
canvas, 90 x 120 cm,  
2016.



**My work** "Circus Child".  
Oil on canvas, 90 x 120  
cm, 2016.

## Connections with own art: Cultural Context

### Context:

I was born in the USA but have lived in Thailand for the past 12 years. I have gained contextual knowledge about Thai politics and it's history and I've noticed that Thai social behaviours are expressed in a subtle way.

I subtly expressed my opinions due to Thai social norms. I made slight indirect allusions to the Thai tourism training camps for animals through the use of the Thai dress, necklace and chain. Similarly to Prateep's work "*Engaged in Combat*" where he subtly made allusions to Thai politics. In 1932, the historical revolution changed the way that Thai people dressed. We used to wear clothes that suited our climate, now we wear clothes for fashion and the latest trends.

This is why I chose to dress the monkey up in a somewhat traditional Thai dress to show that the roots are still within the animal. There is a lot of effort put into the hiding of animal abuse for tourism and the mindset that the country has towards this has affected me as a "tourist" since my social behaviour towards the issue is controlled by society. This shows that cultural context plays a huge role on both Prateep and I, and we were able to execute those opinions "the Thai way".

### Themes:

The main theme of my work is animal abuse and identity of animals in distress. Thailand lost its cultural and national identity because Purachatra Jayakara, the first man who suggested the idea of animal tourism in Thailand. In comparison, Kahlo's "*Self-Portrait Along the Borderline Between Mexico and the United States*" also expressed the same theme. In the painting, she was dressed in a pink frock, wearing lace gloves and neat hair. This is the way the "Mahouts" wanted the animals to dress when performing. However she juxtaposed the representation by holding a Mexican flag, and a cigarette, and possibly wearing a traditional Mexican necklace.

Another theme that I explored was Westernisation. I used symbolism of the microphone to present modernisation and industrialisation in the form that the animals are being forced to sing and dance in conditions that are unrealistic. The theme of westernisation can also be compared to Kahlo's work.

Lastly, the theme of oppression was explored through the symbolism of the monkey. The monkey is wearing something that is not suitable for it. Similar to Kahlo's "*Self-Portrait Along the Borderline Between Mexico and the United States*" in which she painted herself wearing a pink frock.

**My work** "Circus Child".  
Oil on canvas, 90 x 120  
cm, 2016.

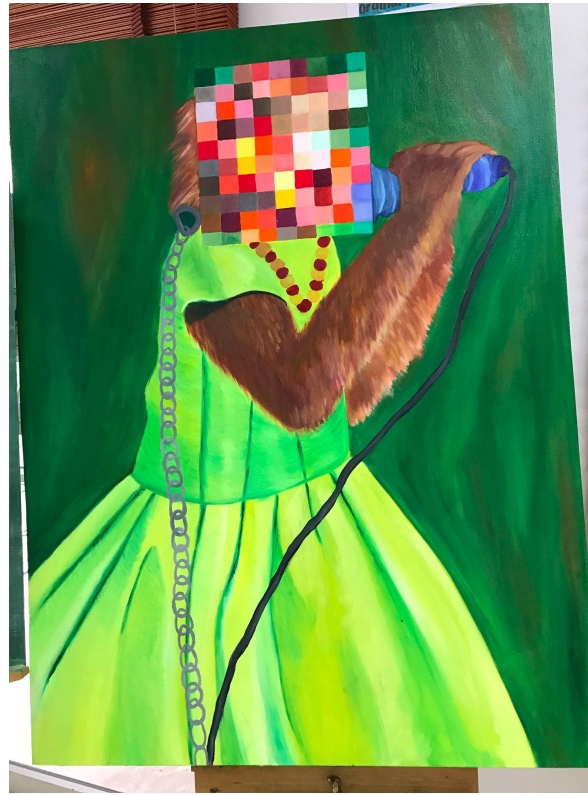
## Connections with own art: Formal Qualities

### Elements of Art and Design

I used a realistic form with bright tones in the dress and face. I used a large canvas to create the illusion that the monkey is popping out at the audience through the folds of the dress and the bright face using techniques such as perspective, overlapping, detail, color and value. I used warm colors for the dress and pixelated face, also adding in some cool colors for the background and microphone. I used some neutral colors for the faded face and grey chain. I liked the color scheme I used because everything unifies together. I added every color to every element, similar to "Calumny" where he added blue to the skin tone.

The general texture is very smooth and I used oil paints effectively depending on the textures I wanted to create.

To create the furry arm texture I used small and short paintbrush strokes. I wanted it to look realistic and as soft as the monkey's arm. The monkey's dress has soft, flowing textures. I wanted to create a real life human dress appearance because the monkey is dressed up in human clothes. It was difficult for me to blend the folds because of the hard lines I created in the beginning. "Engaged in Combat" clouds are well blended and soft.



"Circus Child". Oil on canvas, 90 x 120 cm, 2016.

### Thai circuses

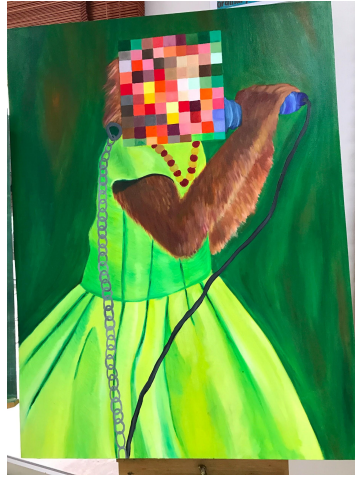
Throughout Thailand, animals are taken away from their mothers at birth and beaten into submission to their "Mahouts". Long ago before tourism took over Thailand, the animals such as elephants, monkeys and birds were kept captive, but treated decently. In the past century, tourists are coming to Thailand to see elephants paint, monkeys ride bikes, birds do tricks etc. The care for the animals has gone down and the animals are forced to work harder.

I painted the blue microphone to symbolize Western culture. As the monkey is singing into it, it's clear this is not a natural thing to do for animals. Similar to "Calumny" the whispering/speaking ladyboy, addressing how people can influence our decisions and this is what happened to the monkey.

**My work** "Circus Child".  
Oil on canvas, 90 x 120  
cm, 2016.

## Connections with own art: Concepts and Ideas

Prateep's work uses warm and vibrant colors to give symbolic meaning such as the yellow moon and the red hanuman outfit. I did the same in the bright dress as it is native to traditional Thai costumes. The focal point for both of Prateep's work and mine is the human figure in the center of the painting. This is where the main character is and where our eyes draw to first. Prateep satirizes Thai society and culture in a way that is subtle and doesn't take political sides. His symbolism derives from his dreams and reality which is similar to mine since I've taken a real life animal. Our forms are 2D with a surrealist style for the pixelated head.



"Circus Child". Oil on canvas, 90 x 120 cm, 2016.

In comparison, the tone (shading) is very similar in all four works. The rhythm keeps the same repetitive direction in the brushstrokes. In each work there is use of warm, cool, vibrant and dull colors. Every painting has a person or an animal as the focal point. Lastly, the textures in all four works have smooth and tough techniques and use the art styles of realism and surrealism.

Kahlo's work uses boring but strong, vibrant colors as seen in my painting. Her's has a monochromatic dull background and so does mine. I've used oranges and dark greens to portray an army pattern for my background. Kahlo satirizes the American society and cultures with a strong opinionated view. My harsh view on animals in circuses is clearly seen through self-expression. She alludes to the political issue of 'identity' similarly to mine where I am erasing the identity of the monkey by taking it out of its natural habitat. This is the same concept of what Kahlo painted.