



Les Femmes d'Alger (O. K. B.)
Pablo Picasso, 1911-12
Oil on canvas, 149.5 x 115.5 cm
Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris



Janet Gili

BUF 2203

Picasso Painting/Isabel Marant Storefront Project

Visual merchandising is an art form that creates visually appealing displays that capture customers' attention, encouraging them to purchase whatever good and/or service a company sells. However, successful visual merchandising is more than creating a beautiful display. Visual merchandisers need to be strategic thinkers who can use the elements and principles of design to create a cohesive and effective design strategy for that particular store. These visual artists can create environments that stimulate our senses, evoke emotions, and tell a story. Immersing themselves in various art forms will only help deepen their knowledge of core design elements and strategies.

In this assignment, I compared and contrasted Picasso's famous painting "Standing Nude by the Sea," seen at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Fashion Designer Isabel Marant's storefront display in SoHo, New York City. Utilizing my knowledge of design elements and principles, I compared these two works, explored their similarities and differences, and discussed the significance they share and do not share.

Color is the first and most critical of the design elements (Bell & Ternus, 2017). Colors evoke emotions and convey messages, making them a personal experience for everyone. Since colors have different psychological meanings and associations, understanding the psychological impact of colors and using them intentionally is essential for designers to create effective and

impactful designs. Color can influence how people perceive a product or brand and, ultimately, their decision to purchase it.

Picasso's *Nude Standing By the Sea* is one of the most famous and notable departures from his surrealist works, primarily due to its distinctive two-toned color palette. The artwork corroborates the artist's involvement in Surrealism, which aimed to access and portray psychological states of existence by distorting the human form (Spanish, 1970). Throughout the entire painting, Picasso employed only shades and tints of blue and white, setting it apart from his other works (Pathak, 2023). The result was a deep, rich blue that captured the essence of the sea's natural beauty. By carefully layering and blending the pigments, Picasso created a sense of depth and movement in the painting that mimics the ocean waves. The blue hue is also critical in evoking the painting's overall mood. According to Andrew Bell at Super Color Digital, the meaning of the color blue can represent balance, self-expression, and a sense of calmness and tranquility (Bell, 2021).

Similarly, Isabel Marant's SoHo storefront eccentrically used the human form, much like Picasso's painting, by installing artist, long-time associate, and friend Arnold Goron's art campaign *Dékalekatane*. Goron uses a series of mysterious sculptures to collaborate with Marant's "Back to the Roots" line, part of her Primal Campaign, which focuses on deconstructing Spring and Summer essential pieces (Marant, 2023). The storefront showcases bags, skirts, and shirts in neutral tones, such as brown, black, and beige, displayed on wire mannequins with mysterious black and white abstract faces. The faces and mannequins resemble the ambiguous sculptural form in Picasso's painting. Both artists stripped away what normal is assumed to look like today and created an image anyone can relate to. Marant's Back to the

Roots collection consisted of natural tones and floral motifs, contrasting fragility and toughness (Marant, 2023). Neutrals and browns are frequently used in design to evoke a natural, earthy aesthetic. Although they sometimes go unnoticed, these tones can represent many emotions, from peace and calmness to wholesomeness and reliability. Additionally, white and black are often regarded as the purest forms of color and are highly valued in the design world due to their simplicity and formality. It is almost impossible to create anything without adding white or black (Cousins, 2012).

Texture is another crucial design element in any artwork, and Picasso's *Nude Standing By the Sea* is no exception. In this painting, texture is primarily created through the use of brushstrokes and the application of paint to the canvas. Picasso's use of thick, bold brushstrokes gives the painting a rough and almost three-dimensional appearance, adding depth and texture to the surface. He broke down his subjects into geometric shapes and built up his paintings in layers, using colors to fragment the shapes of objects (Johnson, 2023). Comparatively, In Isabel Marant's SoHO shop window display, the enigmatic faces crafted by French ceramicist and sculptor Arnold Goron exhibit many textures reminiscent of the style seen in Picasso's paintings. The eyes and nose on the oval-shaped faces are presented abstractly, resulting in a striking juxtaposition. Both art forms exhibit distorted proportions of body parts, resulting in captivating and intriguing textures.

This idea brings me to speak about these art displays' line formations and rhythm. Line formations are an integral part of rhythm in the composition of a visual presentation and can guide the eye to a feature or is a linear element that sets a mood (Bell & Ternus, 2017). Picasso's painting of a distorted nude body employs various lines to create a complex visual language that

conveys different emotions and sensations. The use of vertical and diagonal lines in the legs of the figure gives a sense of strength, action, and dignity. The lines show a sturdy and powerful foundation supporting the body's rest. The curved lines in the arm of the figure, where the sculpture appears to be holding itself, convey a sense of graceful and relaxed movement. These lines evoke fluidity, contrasting with the more structured and rigid lines in the legs. The horizontal lines in the middle portion of the body create a sense of rest and calmness. These lines suggest a moment of pause or repose, which contrasts with the energy and dynamism of the rest of the painting. Overall, the use of different types of lines in Picasso's painting creates an active rhythm that takes the viewer through an array of emotions.

Arnold Goron's art display in Isabel Marant's storefront also employs various design elements, including shapes, contrast, surprise, and size, to create a distorted and unique visual language similar to that of Picasso's painting. Goron's art display utilizes distortion through abstract faces for the mannequins. These faces have intentionally disproportionate and irregular shapes, creating a contrast and surprise for the viewer. The use of vertical, horizontal, and diagonal lines in the construction of the mannequins also creates movement and energy within the display. Through shapes, contrast, surprise, and size, Goron can convey a sense of individuality and uniqueness and encourage viewers to embrace their style and creativity.

Art can enrich our lives in countless ways, inspiring, challenging, and transforming our understanding of ourselves, others, and the world around us. Pablo Picasso's painting "Nude Standing by the Sea" is a masterpiece that captures the essence of art's influence on life. This painting showcases the dynamic relationship between art and life, depicting a nude woman standing on a beach with the sea in the background. Pablo Picasso's painting "Nude Standing by

"the Sea" is a powerful example of how art can influence and shape our understanding of life through its contributions to the Surrealist movement and its exploration of the artist's psychological states. By rearranging anatomical parts and altering proportions, Picasso creates an ambiguous sculptural mass that defies traditional notions of beauty and realism, which may reflect the artist's psychological struggles during this period (Spanish, 1970)." "Nude Standing by the Sea" challenges viewers to reconsider their assumptions and biases regarding gender, beauty, and the human form. Art can inspire viewers to be more open-minded, empathetic, and reflective in their own lives.

Arnold Goron's art display in Isabel Marant's storefront reflects life in various ways by emphasizing the importance of simplicity, practicality, and inclusivity. Using sculptures with abstract faces, Goron emphasizes that everyone is unique and different, and no person looks alike. This approach reflects a growing trend towards inclusivity and acceptance as people seek to celebrate diversity and individuality. Goron's art display reflects the increasing awareness of body diversity in fashion as people seek to observe a broader range of body shapes and sizes. By emphasizing the uniqueness and individuality of each person, Goron encourages viewers to embrace their differences and celebrate the diversity of others. Through his minimalist design and abstract mannequins, this display encourages viewers to focus on what is essential and to celebrate their eccentricity.

Comparing and contrasting both art forms was a great way to develop a deeper understanding of art. Doing so taught me more about the importance of color, texture, and visual display in conveying emotion, movement, and depth within art and practical settings. This helped me develop a more profound sense of art and visual presentation and provided valuable insights

into how these principles can be applied to various settings to create a more engaging and impactful experience for viewers. Additionally, I gained insight into how different artists can use these elements in unique and innovative ways to develop their artistic expression.

Art and visual display are both forms of creative expression, but they differ in several ways. Art is the creation of something original or unique, often with the intention of expressing an idea, emotion, or concept. Art can take many forms, including painting, sculpture, photography, and installation. It often involves using various elements, such as color, texture, line, and shape, to convey meaning and provoke an emotional response in the viewer. On the other hand, visual display is the arrangement of objects or images in a particular space, often to attract attention or promote a product or idea. Visual Merchandising can take many forms, including advertising, window displays, and museum exhibits. It usually involves using various design elements, such as color, texture, layout, and lighting, to create an engaging and visually appealing experience for the viewer.

Elements of Design

Color is the first and most critical of the design elements. Scientifically colors are various qualities of light that individuals can perceive with their eyes and describe in terms of lightness, brightness, darkness, richness, purity, etc. Scientists have agreed that the relationships between colors can be shown as a color wheel using yellow, red, and blue, also known as our primary colors. From our primary colors, we can get our secondary colors: orange, green, and violet, and from our secondary colors, we can get our tertiary colors like yellow-green and blue-violet. Colors can come in multiple shades, tints, and hues with different values and intensities (Bell & Ternus, 2017).

Texture refers to the tactile or visual perception of how a surface might feel when touched. While roughness and smoothness can be perceived visually, softness and hardness, typically require physical contact to be fully appreciated. Product displays frequently compare or contrast textures (Bell & Ternus, 2017).

Proportion is a term used to describe the relationship between the apparent size, mass, scale, or optical weight of two or more objects. For instance, in a visual presentation, proportion might refer to using an oversized prop alongside normal-sized merchandise or the contrast in scale between large and small items in a display window (Bell & Ternus, 2017).

In retail, direction is a design element or technique that guides the shopper's gaze from one point to another. One illustration of this is a directional arrow that indicates a specific destination and directs the shopper from one area to another (Bell & Ternus, 2017).

A line in design can direct the viewer's attention toward a particular feature or create a visual impression. For instance, long horizontal lines may suggest a feeling of calmness and

stability, while jagged diagonal lines can convey a sense of excitement and motion (Bell & Ternus, 2017).

A shape is a spatial form typically recognized and defined by its bounded lines, points, values, colors, and textures. Shapes such as circles or triangles can be universally recognized and aid in identifying various objects for the viewer (Bell & Ternus, 2017).

Size pertains to proportion, ratio, mass, or scale. It can be utilized as a design element to modify the apparent size of a product on display, making it seem either small or large. For instance, a six-foot-long golf club and a six-inch-diameter golf ball as props for a window display featuring a dozen golf shoes can create contrast and impact (Bell & Ternus, 2017).

A sequence refers to the order in which items are arranged for viewing. A presentation may utilize numerical order and a gradation of small to large items to highlight that a particular item is offered in various sizes (Bell & Ternus, 2017).

Tension in design is created by the arrangement of elements that causes the viewer to question whether opposing forces will disrupt balance or equilibrium in a display. A stack of books that appears to teeter or a pyramid of produce that may collapse if one item is removed are examples of how tension can capture the viewer's attention (Bell & Ternus, 2017).

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