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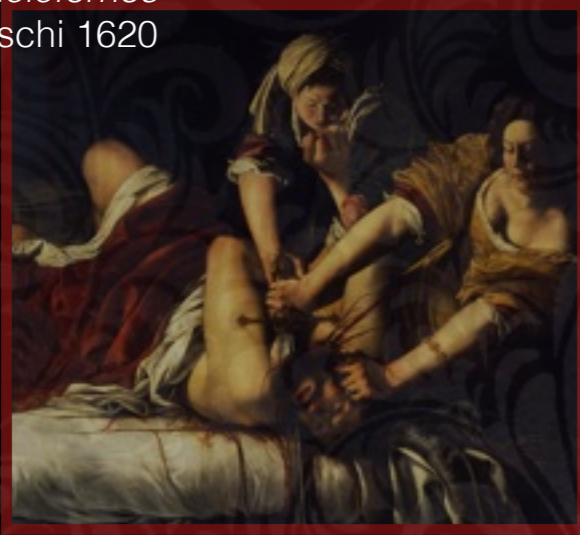
# VIOLENCE IN ART

PETER PAUL  
RUBEN

ARTEMISIA  
GENTILESCHI

THEODORE  
GERICAULT

*Judith Slaying Holofernes*  
Artemisia Gentilschi 1620



**PETER PAUL  
RUBEN, ARTEMISIA  
GENTILSCHI, AND  
THEODORE GERICAULT  
ALL UTILIZE LIGHTING TO  
INTENSIFY AND HEIGHTEN  
THE VIOLENCE OF THE  
SCENE.**

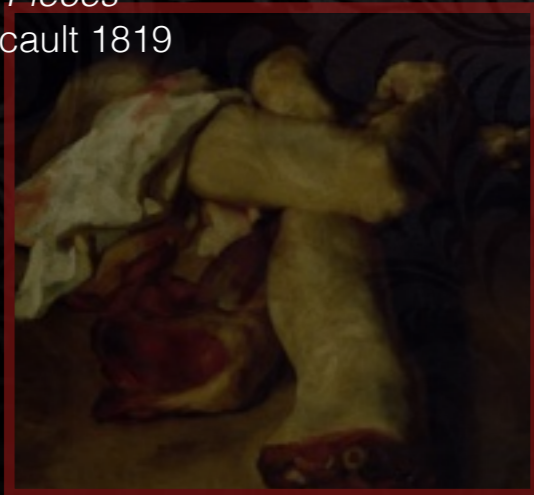
**I AM  
INTERESTED IN  
HOW EACH ARTIST  
CONVEYS THE  
VIOLENCE OF THE  
SCENE WITH  
RELATIVELY LITTLE  
GORE.**

**I AM ALSO  
INTERESTED IN  
AN ARTIST'S  
PURPOSE BEHIND  
USING VIOLENCE AS  
A SUBJECT  
MATTER**

*Massacre of the Innocents*  
Peter Paul Ruben 1612



*Anatomical Pieces*  
Theodore Gericault 1819



# MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

## PETER PAUL RUBEN 1612



In Peter Paul Ruben's, *Massacre of the Innocents*, he utilizes oil paint on a panel as medium for his work. The movement of the painting originates from the left and progresses right, coming to the climax of the baby lifted in the air, then descending. Ruben uses perspective and shading in his background to give the sense of depth and space. The use of shadows also gives a heightened sense of drama and tension within the scene. For the violent slaughtering taking place, there is a lack of gore. With the use of the deep red on the woman's dress, the blood is insinuated. Ruben takes inspiration from Michelangelo's interpretation of the male physique, showing the same grotesque quality.

Peter Paul Ruben's *Massacre of the Innocents* was only a representation of the biblical scene recounted in Matthew 2:16. According to this recount, a prophecy was announced stating the birth of an infant who Herod the Great would lose his throne to. King Herod the Great, the King of the Jews appointed by the Romans, ordered the execution of all male infants in the vicinity of Bethlehem, wanting to remain in power.

**MATTHEW 2:16**  
**THE STORY BEHIND MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS**

*Massacre of the Innocents*  
Peter Paul Ruben 1612 Detail view



## JUDITH SLAYING HOLOFERNES ARTEMISIA GENTILESCHI 1620

Artemisia Gentileschi, one of the first successful woman artists of the 17th century, utilizes oil on canvas in her depiction of *Judith Slaying Holofernes*. The Baroque style is clear through the forceful motion of Judith's arms plunging the knife into Holofernes's neck. While tension is also heightened by the intense use of lights and darks, such as the contrast of the dark background against the stark white bed sheets, dramatizing the scene. The blood spurting from Holofernes's neck drips down the bed in gore, while the deep red sheet covering Holofernes reinforces the cruel, raw act being committed. Judith's face remains placid against the violent act she is performing, possibly showing the empowerment of women.



# THE BOOK OF JUDITH

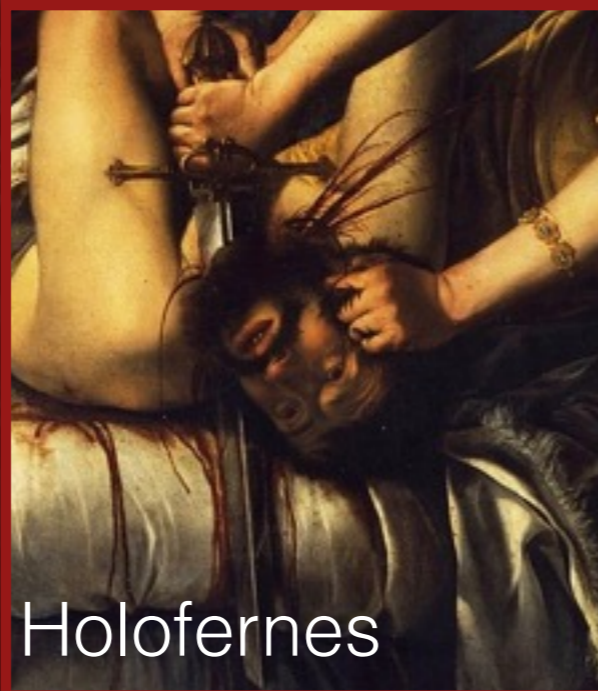
*Judith Slaying Holofernes*

Artemisia Gentileschi 1620 Detail View

Judith



Judith's Maid



Holofernes

The painting done by Artemisia Gentileschi is another biblical depiction, this time coming from the book of Judith. In this story, the King of Nineveh sent his general Holofernes to subdue his enemies, the Jews. At the brink of surrender, Judith, a beautiful Jewish widow went off with her maid to look for enemy camps. She gained the trust of the general Holofernes, and while he was drunk, she cut off his head with his own sword. Judith shows her people Holofernes's head as a token of victory. The Assyrians, having no leader, left Israel.

Theodore Gericault, a French Romantic artist, puts oil paint on canvas for his work *Anatomical Pieces*. Gericault arranges the limbs so that the audience is immediately drawn into the lifeless contortions. The background of the image is dark, placing an emphasis on the shock of severed body parts. The limbs are also half covered by shadows, maximizing the color of the body parts and the bloodless, red flesh. By placing a yellowish tint upon the body parts, it gives the audience a sense of decomposition and rotting. The bloodless flesh, also signifies that the limbs have been severed for a period of time. The deep red stands out as the only bold color, adding to the gruesome, yet bloodless nature of the painting. These lifeless, strategically placed limbs also lead the audience to wonder, "Who did these come from?"

## ANATOMICAL PIECES THEODORE GERICAULT 1819



## THE MORGUE

Gericault was increasingly fascinated with the study of distressed anatomy, so he began making many trips to local morgues, The Hospital Beaujon in Paris in particular. At first Gericault was simply sketching body parts, but he eventually began to take them home to make them subject matter of their own. Gericault kept them to paint in various states of decomposition, studying them from different angles, and painting the subtle differences in color as the body parts rotted. Gericault painted several other pieces featuring severed limbs and heads.



*Anatomical Fragments*  
Theodore Gericault 1818



*The Heads of Torture Victims*  
Theodore Gericault 1818



## HEIGHTENED TENSION

The lighting utilized by all three artists alters the mood of each scene. With the application of dark shadows casting over the subject matter, tension and violence are heightened simply by choosing this stylistic choice. In the works analyzed, this dark contrast emphasizes the other colors on each canvas, bringing forth both spectrum of intensities from dark to light, and therefore intensifying the mood elicited. Lighting is important for eliciting any kind of emotion from an audience, implying that the dark emotions spurring from violence are suggested through the lighting that contributes to intensifying a scene.



*Judith Slaying Holofernes*  
Artemisia Gentileschi 1620



*Massacre of the Innocents*  
Peter Paul Ruben 1612



*Anatomical Pieces*  
Theodore Gericault 1819

IN ALL THREE  
PIECES LITTLE TO  
NO BLOOD WAS  
PRESENTED EVEN  
THOUGH THE SCENES  
DEAL WITH KILLING,  
DEATH, AND  
SEVERED LIMBS.

YET IN  
EACH SCENE  
THE ARTIST IS  
ABLE TO CONVEY A  
SENSE OF  
BRUTALITY,  
BLOOD, AND  
VIOLENCE

THIS IS DONE  
THROUGH THE  
INSINUATION OF BLOOD.  
MORE SPECIFICALLY IN  
RUBEN'S MASSACRE OF THE  
INNOCENTS AND GENTILESCHI'S  
JUDITH SLAYING HOLOFERNES  
THIS INSINUATION OCCURS  
THROUGH THE LARGE, RED  
SHEETS THAT DRAW THE  
ATTENTION OF THE AUDIENCE  
AND ENCOMPASS THE GORE  
THROUGH THE BOLD  
CHOICE.

IN GERICAULT'S  
ANATOMICAL STUDIES,  
THE LACK OF BLOOD ADDS  
TO THE GROTESQUENESS OF  
THE SCENE. THIS LACK OF  
BLOOD TELLS THE AUDIENCE  
THAT THESE ARE NOT FRESHLY  
SEVERED, BUT HAVE BEEN  
SITTING AND ROTTING ,  
CREATING A FEELING OF  
DISCONTENT.

## BLOODLESS GORE



*Anatomical Pieces*  
Theodore Gericault 1819



*Judith Slaying Holofernes*  
Artemisia Gentileschi 1620



*Massacre of the Innocents*  
Peter Paul Ruben 1612

## AN ARTIST'S PURPOSE FOR UTILIZING VIOLENCE

In two of the pieces previously analyzed, the violent scene came to display a biblical representation. This is ironic considering the peace and love religion propagates.

In the work displayed by Gericault, the subject matter chosen is already quite grotesque.

Artist's purposefully use violence as subject matter for many different reasons.

Death, and violent death in particular, is continuously showed in religious representations. Artists conveying these religious scenes may use violence as a way to effectively convey fear as a human emotional felt by the topic of death.

An artist may purposefully use grotesque or violent subject matter to shock and create an immediate response from the audience.

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