

*How The Light Reflected In The Eye Is Synonymous for Life:
As Explored In Art, History, & Culture*

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Submitted on: 2/03/2024
Document Word Count: 7085

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Independent Project: ADAA6000

BA Fine Art: Studio, Site, and Context

Word Count: 5251

Submitted In Partial Fulfilment Of The Requirements For The Degree of BA (Hons)

University of Wales: Trinity St.David, Swansea

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Author's Declaration:

I declare that all the material debated in this thesis is my own work

Summary of Topic:

The cultural significance of the eye can not be understated. It is a prominent recurring motif throughout history with a vast array of meaning surrounding it. My intention through this thesis is to present that throughout portraits, and depictions of the human face such as sculpture, that the light reflected through the eye is synonymous with our understanding of 'Life'.

Introduction:

The importance of the eye, as both a symbol and a feature, can not be overstated; the meaning we derive from them, as well as their communicative nature, has allowed us, as a culture, to speak when words are not needed.

Eyes act as a validation of life, and Plutarch (512-523B) referred to them as the, “... gateway to the soul’ (Doroszewska, 2019). They offer the truest insight into another person, as only through engagement with another’s eyes can we truly know them. The intention of this thesis, is to explore and persuade the reader that the ‘soul’, the affirmation of life, comes not only from our engagement with the eyes, but in particular, the light which is reflected within them.

In order to prove this statement, this thesis will evaluate the symbiotic relationships between the eye, light, and life through several different lines of thinking, divided between four chapters.

The representation of the eye and its *Meaning* will be discussed within the first chapter through examining signification using semiotics. This will be accompanied by an exploration into social history through a focus on style and its influence upon communicating intentions and its impact on the eye’s representation. These links will continue to be analysed using two works of art; one by Escher and the second by Picasso.

Following on from evaluating the relationship of light, life and eyes through meaning, the next chapter will discuss their connection through culture. Here the thesis

will evaluate the significance of symbolism. Through investigating cultures like Ancient Egypt, religions like Christianity, the iconographical reverence of the Evil Eye, as well as a piece by Magritte; this chapter demonstrates the eye's importance in reflecting the sentiment of the culture it was made in.

The third chapter aims to evaluate the anatomy of the eye, through comparing the biological aspects against our perceived cultural symbolisms. This chapter consists of an anatomical breakdown of the internal components of the eye, the study of photobiology and an investigation into the signification of the external components. Here, the thesis seeks to evaluate the synonymous connection between light, life, and the eye by exploring pupil dilation both literally and metaphorically. The works discussed in this chapter are Picasso's *Portrait of Dora Maar* (1937) and Michelangelo's *David* (1501-1504).

Finally, for the finishing chapter, the aim is to explore the symbiotic relationship between life, light, and the eye through several example pieces. Using the works *Madame Kisling* (1917) by Modigliani, *The Fallen Angel* (1847) by Alexandre Cabanel, and the image presented in the untitled work by Villalba, it highlights how the ideas discussed apply to art history in different contexts.

Chapter 1: Meaning

Semiotics is the study of signification and signifiers. *The SAGE Dictionary of Cultural Studies* defines semiotics as, "... the study (or 'science') of signs and signification ... developed from the pioneering work of Saussure" (Barker, 2004, p.181). The use of symbolism and signifiers applies strongly to the eye, especially in regards to what it 'means' or represents. The eye is often heralded, or revered, as a symbol by multiple cultures. In order to explore it's representations through its meaning, we must understand that as a symbol, it will have different meanings that are solely communicated through depiction and the viewers' perception.

According to Steven Bradley (2016) it is the denotation and connotation of a signifier that relates to the literal meaning and the secondary, inferred, meaning. In the context of this thesis, the denotation is the light reflected in the eye, and the connotation is how they are indicative of life.

An artistic piece that explores the eyes' relation to life, and how it is not stereotypically perceived as a signifier for life, even when accompanied with light, is Escher's *Eye* (1946). It challenges the signification of symbols that act in opposition to themes of life, such as the skull representing death.

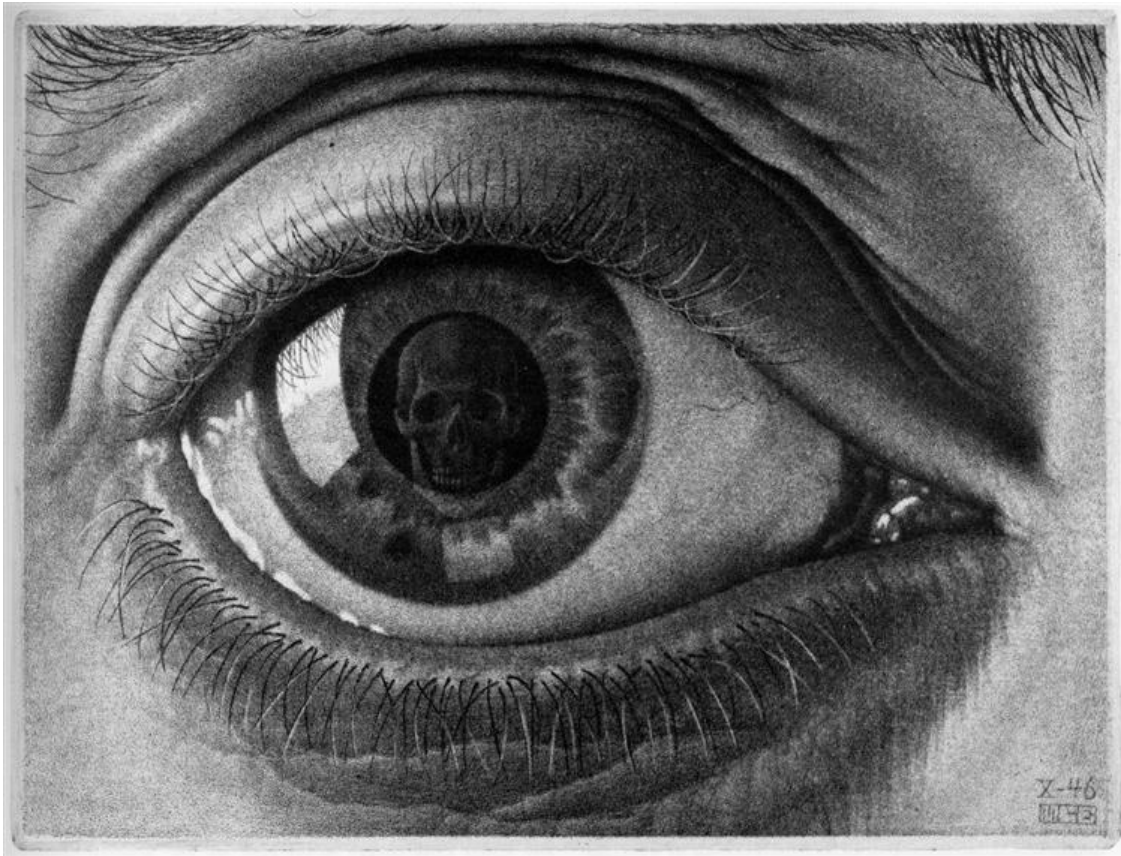


Figure 1: *Eye* (1946) by M.C. Escher

Despite Escher's intention behind this work being illusive, we can still ascertain that themes of death were prevalent through the reflective nature of the eye. As when looking at eyes we create a narrative based on where, when, and how we perceive them; and the information we discern from other features and imagery around and within them. Ultimately the work features clear areas of reflected light allowing for connections to life, however, the skull stands in direct opposition. The eye features light and therefore is alive in order to reflect; the skull functions as the representation of death but in order for something to be dead it must once have been alive. Escher's eye, through the use of symbolism and his intention to leave the work to the viewers' discretion, acts as both a representation for life through the combination of light and the reflection of the end of life, death.

The eye is arguably the most communicative and truthful features of the human anatomy and has had a significant role throughout sociology.

Style is an ever-evolving aspect of both art and human culture. It shapes and impacts not only the cultural landscape, but also our personal identity. Therefore if style shapes the world around us, then the eye perceives and reflects what is in its vision. As eyes are reflective in nature, they can act as a mirror, offering potential insight into the era and intentions of the artist. Essentially, if an artist is trying to represent concepts that directly relate to, or suggest implications of life; then light, or its absence, will be present to varying degrees. As will be explored, an increase in the amount of reflected light is indicative of the amount of 'life' we engage with. With instances of lights' absence, we often elicit a response in which we form associations of 'soullessness' which, in a sense, is equivalent to lifelessness.

Style also dictates the way in which we engage with the depictions of eyes in works. Through style, the artist will challenge what an 'eye' can be represented as. Through taking creative liberties with anatomy, our responses alter as the representation changes. Due to this, the concept that eyes reflect era and intention becomes more evident. If era, and its' consequential movements, alongside intention, alter the way in which we perceive the eye and the way the eye is perceived overall; then style offers insight into the mindset of both artist and culture.

The importance of light's presence can also be seen through Picasso's *Bust of a Man in a Hat* (1970); examining how the absence of light, when confronted with gaze, will inherently feel 'inhuman' due to the medium for engagement being lost.



Figure 2: *Bust of a Man in a Hat* (1970) by Picasso, 80x65cm Oil on Canvas

Positioned centrally within the composition, the subject is characterised by his large hat and bold eyes. Stereotypical of Picasso's surrealist works, the eyes are simplistic and absent of light. One eye appears more suggestive of traditional anatomy with simplistic shapes alluding to signifiers of a pupil and eyelids, and an area of white acting as the sclera. The right side eye, however, is in stark contrast. Here a black circle with no suggestion of an eye, only feels reminiscent of one due to its placement and relation to the other features.

The heavy use of orange and black tones creates a strong contrast that acts to reinforce the emptiness of the suggestive eyes. The outward gaze of the figure is remarkably strong whilst also being remarkably unnerving. "The effect created by this mysterious picture is ... immediately disturbing and arresting. What are these eyes that

hold us enchanted as they gaze so intently from the canvas?” (www.pablocicasso.org, n.d.). In the *PICASSO. The Ludwig Collection*, René Char raises the point that this work by Picasso is symbolic of the human existence. Comparing the distinct difference between the two eyes as, “... the contrast between day and night. It is life itself” (Char, 1976)”. (Weiss and Oxana, 1992).

When faced with eyes that feature no form of perceivable light, our initial response is that they are ‘lifeless’, so if that is the case then the opposite must be true and eyes full of light must be indicative of life. When confronted with the lifeless outward gaze of Picasso’s *Bust of a Man in a Hat* (1970) and its absence of light, it removes the human element and reinforces the importance of light for its synonymous relationship with life.

Chapter 2: Culture

Undeniably, the eye is a symbol, both revered and worshipped throughout countless cultures in history. Its' visage is personified by different meanings and narratives each solidifying its importance. The reverence it holds in these cultures can not be overstated. Through assessing the importance of eye imagery throughout cultural history and then cross-referencing these with light and life's respected symbolism, the synonymous relationship between the three becomes even further evident.

Within these diverse and varied cultures, the eye, light, and life are all recurring motifs that often harmonise and form links between the visage of the eye and properties that are synonymous with life, such as healing, health, knowledge, and protection.

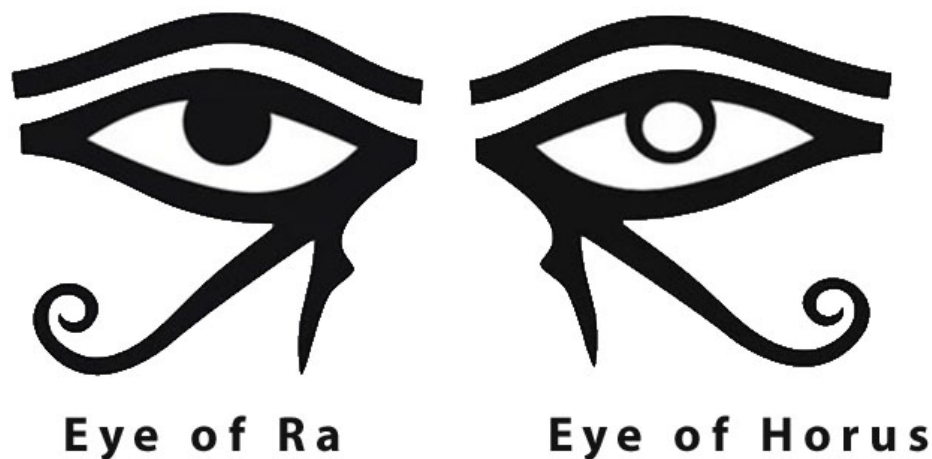


Figure 3: *Depiction of the Eye of Ra and Eye of Horus*

In Egyptian culture, the eye is associated with both Horus and Ra, with the left eye belonging to Horus and the right to Ra. Horus' eye was associated with healing, protection, and the moon; whereas its counterpart, the 'Eye of Ra', is commonly associated with power and the sun. With each eye representing the moon and sun respectively, the two together are representative of the universe. (Egyptian-fever, 2023). Through its connection to the light of the sun, which is required for life: to the universe, from which scientists believe life originates, to the process of healing which is needed for life itself to continue to exist, there are clear parallels and synonymity. These eyes had their own prestige with clear symbols conveyed throughout the land, captured in hieroglyphics upon its monuments and worn as amulets for protection. These eyes had a tangible visage, being "stylised human eye(s) with markings representing the gods and goddesses" (Egyptian-Fever, 2023)

Another culture that depicts links between life and light is Christianity. There are references that link light as indicative of life however, these references are often figurative and metaphorical. The eye in the bible is the eye of the progenitor, God. It is often referred to as the watchful eye and through other metaphorical connections he is referred to as light. In unison between all these lines of thinking, God as a figure unifies light, life and the eye as one concept.

Although there are no clear visual symbols associated with the metaphoric meaning of the eyes in the Bible, many artists have aimed to depict the eyes referenced throughout the text. The most iconic of these being *The Fallen Angel* (1847) by Alexander Cabanel, in which he depicts the eyes of Lucifer as tearful with both a repressed rage and sadness. This is explored further in Chapter 4.

Whilst the *Book of John* speaks volumes about the correlation between God as a creator figure, similar to Ra as the creator god of Egyptian culture, light, and life, eyes do not always have positive connotations. One such example is The Evil Eye; both a tangible and metaphorical eye that does not follow the preposition of this thesis and is referenced in Greek antiquity. Its representation is comprised of a series of concentric circles. The majority of these are shades of blue with a white circle acting as a sclera and a black central circle acting as a pupil. Its meaning throughout history has altered, with its present-day connotation being more aligned with the eye of Horus and themes of protection.



Figure 4: *Depiction of The Evil Eye*

“Plutach’s scientific explanation stated that the eyes were the chief, if not sole, source of the deadly rays that were supposed to spring up like poison darts from the inner recesses of a person possessing the evil eye. It is a curse or legend believed to be

cast by this malevolent glare, and usually given to a person when they are unaware” (Volandes, 2020).

Due to its symbolism that surrounds negativity, The Evil Eye could be seen as the antithesis to the proposed sentiment that life and light are synonymous with the eye. Visually it features no area that would be indicative of reflected light and as such it can be perceived as being absent of life. This would therefore mean it is in line with the narrative of this thesis.

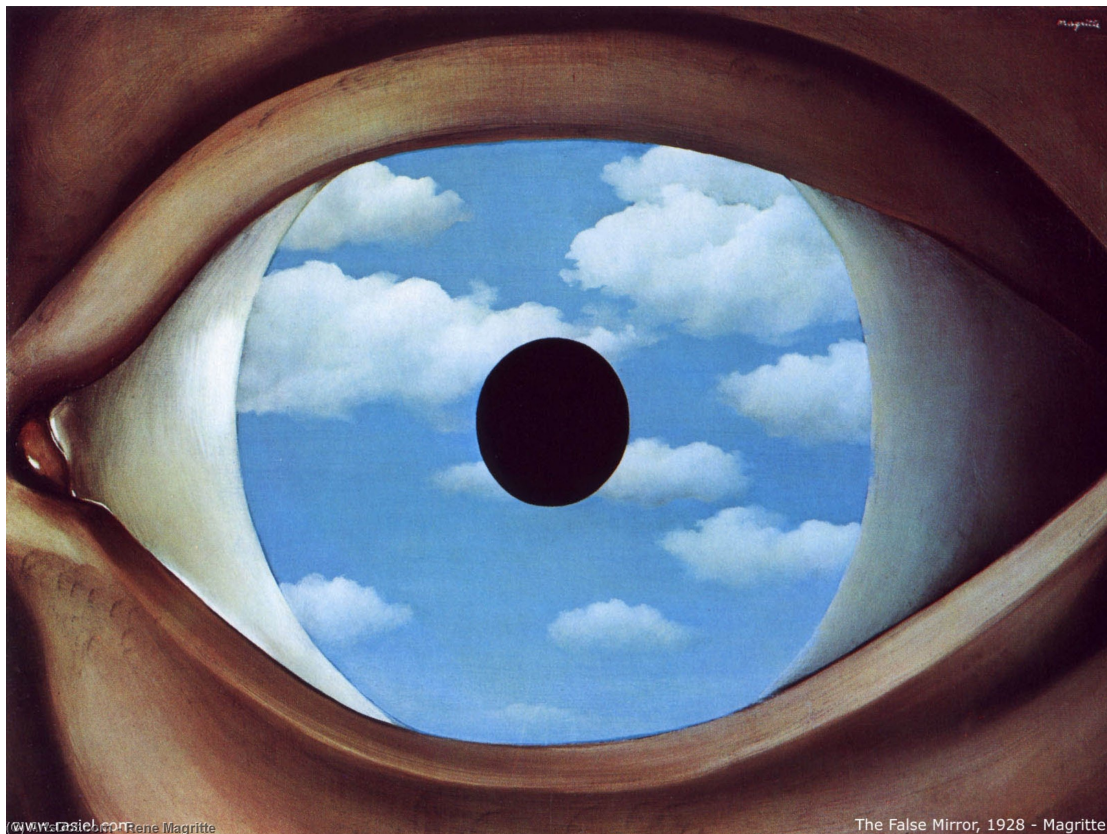


Figure 5: *The False Mirror* (1929) by René Magritte

The False Mirror by Magritte is a reflective piece in nature. The iris is simplistic, featuring a blue sky and several white clouds. Interrupting the sky scene is a matte black pupil, which combined with a lack of discernible light elsewhere within the eye, creates an uneasy aura; often an intention of surrealist works. Magritte's piece, published in 1929, was later

finished during The Second World War. Due to the sentiment of the world during this period, the almost cold outward gaze, accompanied by the lifeless pupil, reflects the emotions and the aspirations for freedom and peace (Suh, 2021). Through this historical reflection, it can be ascertained that this era in history was marked with a heavy sense of foreboding. The absence of light, not only due to the connotations outlined through this thesis but also the artist's intention, affirms the links between light and life through its intentional absence. It further uses this absence to challenge the viewer, reflecting the themes with its outward gaze upon the audience, confronting them with the soulless pupil, devoid of light, as a reference to death.

However, in *Losing Sight to Gain Vision: The Eye in European Surrealist Painting* (2021), Nemnom proposes, in reference to *The False Mirror* (1929), that, "... instead of reflecting a person's soul, ... the eye acts as a deceitful mirror". Despite agreeing with the concept that eyes function as a mirror, and are inherently reflective, the use of the word deceitful feels out of line with the characteristics of an eye. The eye is arguably the most truthful feature of a person's visage, acting as an insight into the deeper ongoing of one's soul. Expression and pupil dilation, is said to illustrate one's intention before it can become clear in other means. (Fong, 2012). For this to be true, the eye could not be deceitful, instead, it would be the individual's intention reflected within the eye.

Chapter 3: Anatomy

The anatomy of the eye is unimaginably complex, however, the basic function is for light to pass through the pupil to the retina in order for us to have vision. At the front of the eye is the cornea, a transparent circular part of the eyeball, which refracts the light entering the eye onto the lens. The coloured segment of the eye is the iris, surrounded by a circular area of pigment known as the limbal ring. The pupil is the opening in the iris that allows light to pass to the convex lens behind, allowing for refraction, or the bending of light, to pass onto the retina. The amount of light exposed is controlled by the iris constricting as light passes through the cornea. (NHS, 2018).

Photobiology is a science that investigates the study of light, such as UV Light and its ionising effects, and its relationship and link to life. It evaluates light, the effects of light, "... both the good and the bad effects of light. Studies range from the atomic level to the level of communities of organisms. Photobiologists use all of the tools of science to study the chemical and biological effects of light" (Smith, 2012).

Pupil dilation has been correlated with changes in light for over a century (Fong, 2012) and their reaction, whilst being a biological response, indicates that eyes have a basic response to light's presence. The other cause of pupil dilation is a result of our emotional response; almost as if our soul is expressing itself through the visage of our eyes. Our eyes are the closest we come to being our true unfiltered self. In 2010, a study led by Wolfgang Einhäuser-Treyer, concluded that "Pupil dilation can betray an individual's decision before it is openly revealed," (Fong, 2012). In order for us to live, we must express and interact. Through pupil dilation, not only do we respond to light through

the iris' movement, we also express our thoughts and emotions; we prove we are alive through reaction and expression showing the symbiotic relation between the three.

Alongside the internal components of the eye, are the external components such as the eyelids and eyelashes. These act in order to keep the eye safe, however, they also determine a large amount of our perception of the eye.

The eyelids impact expression. The signification that the eyelids' movement and positioning hold, can impact the derived emotion. Through our interaction with the resulting expressions of the eyelids, we form impressions through signification such as, "...Eye widening is characteristic of fearful and surprised expressions" (Bayless, Glover, Taylor, Itier, 2011)

These expressions, alongside pupil dilation, act as non-verbal cues that decode one's intentions and true thoughts. The study of the psychological aspects of pupil dilation is referred to as 'Pupillometrics', in which, "... the most common emotions linked to eye dilation are fear, pain and attraction" (Weber, 2020). Expression acts as an insight into a person's truth, an honest communication, and through this we engage with their soul. "Interpreting eye gaze is also an important aspect of our social cognition as it allows making inferences regarding the intentions and states of mind of other people" (Bayless, Glover, Taylor, Itier, 2011)

Granted, though this insight is not 100% accurate, it can allude to the true intention that is understood through signification and engagement with our own humanity; which in a broader sense represents our own life engaging with another's through eyes.

Alongside eyelids, eyelashes also have a similar perception, as they are commonly associated with femininity and illicit a response akin to that signification. “Add a pair of eyelashes to Mickey Mouse and you’ll get Minnie Mouse. Add eyelashes to Bugs Bunny, and you’ll get Lola Bunny” (Fetters, 2018). This relation between eyelashes and femininity can be seen dating back to 4000 B.C. in which there was documentation of individuals using them in the aim of accentuating their appearance. It was carried out by men, women, and children, not only to represent power and wealth but, “for religious purposes like warding off evil spirits” (Fetters, 2018).

The eyelashes’ relationship with the eye is one that aims to accentuate features such as the sclera, the white of the eye, and the limbal ring that surrounds the iris. This then creates what is believed to be a psychological response linked to attraction when engaging with the eye.

It was also found that, “a clearly visible limbal ring is a probabilistic indicator of both health and age.” (Fetters, 2018); both of which are synonymous with life. If the eyelashes draw attention towards features that are clearly indicative of life, then their role in the anatomy of the eye and expression is to direct and control our engagement with the life of the limbal ring and the light of the sclera.



Figure 6: *Portrait of Dora Maar* (1937) by Picasso

Within the art world, Picasso's *Portrait of Dora Maar* (1937), from his cubist body of work, accentuates this particular point. Isolating the eyes from the rest of the work, you are confronted with two eyes stereotypical of a conventional 'Picasso Work'. The left eye is forward facing with bold lines that outline the eyelids, iris and pupil that gazes outwards clearly meant to represent the sitter's engagement with Picasso and his with her. The righthand side is presented differently with it facing to the left. This eye features bold outlining, however, it also features a set of exaggerated eyelashes. When seen in unison with other signifiers within the piece, the lips, nails and hair, all are suggestive of femininity. However, even when taken in isolation these eyes with their highly accentuated eyelashes are indicative of the association with the female form.



Figure 7: *Close Up of the Eyes of David (1501-1504) by Michelangelo*

In regards to 3D depictions that remarkably portray a set of eyes, Michelangelo's *David* (1501-1504) is a remarkable example. Made of Carrara Marble and originally commissioned for the ceiling of the Florence Cathedral by the Opera Del Duomo, the statue depicts David, seventeen feet tall, eschewed with the head, arms and hands being disproportionately bigger than the subject's torso and legs. (Ten Facts about the Statue of David - Context Travel, 2023).

The eyes of this work are particularly interesting as they have a strong anatomical representation of an eye featuring areas such as the sclera, iris, pupil, caruncle, and eyelids. Carved through a 3D medium over 5 centuries ago the work has an accurate anatomical depiction that does offer a sense of engagement with the viewer.

The asymmetry of the eyes, caused by disproportions and the angle that the viewer engages the sculpture in; allows for engagement between the work and the viewer, and challenges the realism of the work and engagement with life.

In regards to whether these eyes offer a sense of 'aliveness' is conflicting as the eyes feature a small indent that is suggestive of reflective light that acts to give the pupils more depth and act as the reflection of life. However, the materiality of the work alongside the history of a sculpture stereotypically being a cold medium, especially for this era, does challenge this impression of reflective light.

Overall, between the nature of engagement, and its consideration by Michelangelo, the statue of *David* (1501-1504) acts as validation that the light reflected in the eye and the anatomy that allows for this interaction to take place all relate to the synonymous inferences made between the light reflected in one's eye and the life it is indicative of.

Chapter 4: Case Studies

The 'conventional' depiction of eyes has shifted throughout the progression of art history; as different styles have emerged from the varying movements and eras experienced, the resulting depictions and norms have changed.

An eye's basic anatomy in visual depictions has not shifted too far from what we are presented with when engaging an eye in our everyday circumstance. Our association to the imagery of an eye is dependent, regardless of the simplicity, on the suggestion of its anatomy. The eye is stereotypically comprised of the pupil, iris, sclera, eyelids, and the eyelashes. These combined features, or alluding to them, are what form the signification that allows us to denote the eye.

Light's involvement with the eye, and how that light is indicative of life, is shown through reflection. Reflected light acts as the 'proof' of our humanity, validating the life of both the person perceived as well as the one perceiving. In many cultures, the three (Light, Life, the Eye) come together to form a 'trifecta', harmoniously supporting each other as well as proving each other.

If light reflected in the eye is indicative of life, the opposite must be true. The absence of light and its engagement with the eyes acts as the antithesis for this dissertation, and gives way to being described as a 'soulless' depiction. We form this perception when one of the signifiers we associate with life, light, is absent in an eye we lose the engagement with said signifier causing us to connote the opposite. Through semiotics, and Saussure's study of linguistics, it is apparent that when present, light

reflected in the eyes, is indicative of life and in its omission the opposite becomes true and we assume sentiments of death and soullessness.



Figure 8: *Madame Kisling* (1917) by Modigliani 46.2 x 33.2 cm oil on canvas

A work which articulates this point is *Madame Kisling* (1917) by Modigliani (1884-1920). The portrait of Renee Kisling, comprises of strong angles and sharp features, poised centrally within the frame, all except for the eyes. These are hollow, grey smudges suggestive of eyes under the eyelids. The lack of conventional eye norms therefore alters our engagement and response to the work. Despite following stereotypical anatomy in reference to the eyelid and positioning, the lack of the inner eye's anatomy creates an 'alien' feel. This sense of unease is further supported by the absence of any reflected light in any capacity. Spaggiari (2021) observes that the eyes of

the work are, “of the same colour as some other element of the portrait, like the sitter’s background, ... the artist could not see through ... could not grasp personality and see their soul” (2021). Using this logic it would justify the importance of light with the eyes of the portrait; Modigliani could not ascertain a connection to his sitter’s ‘soul’ and as result left the eyes absent. Without being able to engage with the soul, arguably a concept that describes an individual’s life, he could not include the features, eyes with their reflected light, in the work and instead utilised what was literally in front of him as a substitute. Therefore, if Plutarch’s reasoning about eyes being the gateway to the soul is true, then in the example of Modigliani’s *Madame Kisling* (1917) there is no such gateway; therefore no soul, therefore no life.



Figure 9: *The Fallen Angel* (1847) by Alexandre Cabanel

Expressions are key signifiers of our emotional states, and at moments of emotional vulnerability, our eyes are the most capable of proof of life. An infamous depiction of eyes in Alexandre Cabanel’s *The Fallen Angel* (1847), convey such a deep

sense of feeling from the 'subject'. They feature such a deep sadness and rage which we are able to infer from both the angling of the eye, alongside our experienced knowledge and understanding of anatomy and expression. These eyes feature a large streak of highlights down the left hand side of the sclera, traditionally associated with teary eyes, which overlaps into the iris and pupil. This reflected light, alongside the tear, affirms these emotions; "His gaze is tragic yet dynamic, revealing a tear trembling in the corner of his eye and a lit-up pupil". (Wallace, 2023). Therefore the amount of light can be determined to correlate to the amount of life. So to feel, to be vulnerable and show that through expression, is the biggest confirmation of life. In order to live we must feel, and we express this through shifts in our focal anatomy in which light is then reflected. To feel is to live as it is affirmed through the light in one's eyes.



Figure 10: *UNTITLED WORK (n.d.)* by Emilio Villalba

Light alone, when reflected in eyes, is not inherently indicative of life. Works that delve into themes of death and the uncanny are often then accentuated by the use of reflected light. Current day artist Emilio Villalba's example, seen in *Figure 10*, illustrates this. Villalba himself states he wants, "someone to be drawn in by the uncanny nature of a piece and still feel safe to explore the feelings and reactions the pressure gives rise to." (2018). Villalba achieves this goal through the use of realistic eyes and our human response to engage with them. His works, in of themselves, have an aura, a sense of unease invoking responses indicative of being uncomfortable. During an interview carried out in 2017, on *artsy.com*, Villalba explained how he feels, "... a freedom to really abstract their faces and push emotions", due to mostly using models he feels comfortable with. It is then ironic that he uses this comfort to push a sense of unease onto the viewer. The *Neo-Figurative* style of work made by Villalba, uses the realistic eyes in unison with an unnatural quantity and composition, to create a sense of unease by challenging the viewers' norm. The absence of the stereotypical placement, alongside the eyes with light reflected, creates this unease due to a sense of 'aliveness' emitted from the figure lacking a normal composition.

Conclusion:

The intention of this thesis has been to present and demonstrate that the light reflected in the eye is synonymous with life; exploring the symbiotic relationship shared between the three through the exploration and evaluation of art, culture and history. It also touches upon scientific and psychological perspectives to illustrate the connection between light and life and how we can derive connections to the eye.

Through exploration, the conclusion reached was that light's presence in the eye can be linked to life through our human response to signification; using Saussure's linguistic work on semiotics. We often relate signifiers of life; such as health, the soul, and knowledge, to the eye. They are referred to as, "the gateway to the soul", by Plutarch (512-523B.), as referenced throughout this thesis. This common use of phrasing to associate the eye to the soul; which is arguably representative of the content of our lives, proves that within society's terms of phrase we have determined this association.

The rationale that the eye can be associated to light, can be seen as it transitions cultures. Links shown through the Egyptian culture's Eye of Ra and Horus, where the eye represents ancient sources of light, being the sun and moon respectively, and the symbolism represented, is intrinsically linked to life. Examples can also be seen in Christianity, in which the eye finds itself intertwined with light, God and therefore life; and Ancient Greece, where the Evil Eye having many representations, possesses a dichotomy of mythos surrounding it being both linked to protection, like the eyes of Ra and Horus, and a curse, as referenced by Plutarch.

The exploration of different works presented a general consensus that light's presence reflected within the eye was indicative of themes of life; and the opposite, its absence, was akin to lifelessness. This was seen through several of the works discussed throughout this thesis that challenge light with its absence. Magritte's *The False Mirror* (1929), Picasso's *Bust of a Man in a Hat* (1970), and Modigliani's *Madame Kisling* (1917), all illustrate how light's absence elicits responses of lifelessness and soullessness; especially when compared to works like Cabanel's *The Fallen Angel* (1847), where the light present in the eyes not only signifies life but also living. Through the comparison and exploration of the works discussed throughout this thesis, it is shown that both light's presence and absence, the signification and implications, show a direct correlation and relation that life and light are synonymous with one another; especially when involved with the eye.

What was determined was that the relationship between life, light, and the eye is both synonymous and symbiotic. The three act as representatives of one another. Light is a stand-in for life as well as being required for life. The eyes are proof of life through their truthful and communicative nature and when light is reflected, life is validated, and in its absence is opposite. So when light, representative and required for life, is reflected in the eye, a truthful mirror, one's soul, one's life is validated.

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