

COMPARATIVE STUDY

PORTRAYAL OF WINTER

Introduction:

Portrayal of winter in art appears to have plenty of variety and diversity depending on the perspective one chooses to adopt. It can be a burdensome, tiring and a challenging time, or a moment of joy, playing in the snow and a generally cheerful moment. Since comparative study requires a thorough assessment and analysis of said point of view, the topic seemed like to be very fitting. The aim of this work is investigating how differently can winter be portrayed and what circumstances influence it.



Fig.1 Saul Leiter, San Carlo Restaurant, 1952, photography, USA



Fig.2 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, The Hunters in the Snow (winter), 1565, oil on oak wood, THE NETHERLANDS

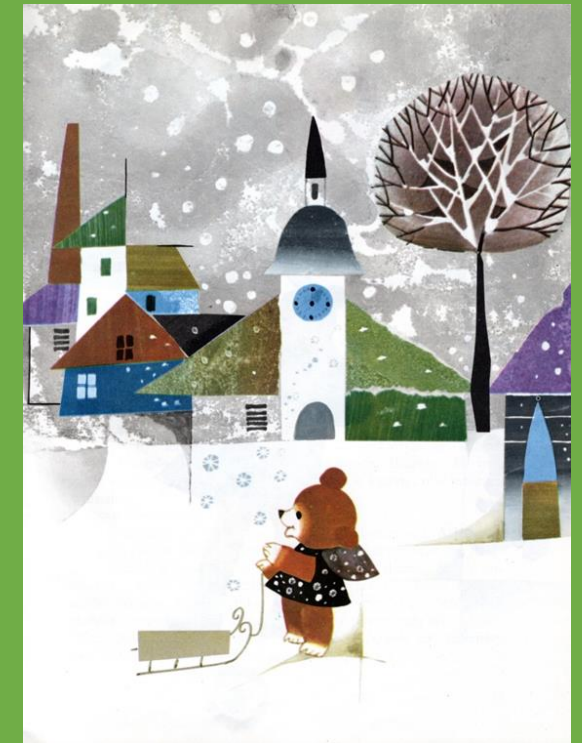


Fig. 3 Zbigniew Rychlicki, Illustration to a book „Miś Uszatek's New Friends”, 1963, watercolor and paper cut-out, POLAND

CRIT A. Identification and analysis of formal qualities

San Carlo Restaurant

Overall composition

The viewers' eye is immediately directed towards the two human figures in the lower part of the image due to the use of the rule of thirds, as marked with blue lines. The artist places the women very close to the intersections, which makes them the focal points but at the same time **allows the silhouette on the right to slightly diverge contributing a more loose and spontaneous feeling of the piece.** Capturing the characters in such a way causes their poses to be more comfortable and at ease. Moreover, there is a suggestion of a pyramidal composition, which serves to highlight the figures from the background. The overall composition of the piece is vertical, though the separation into many distinct horizontal planes as illustrated on the grayscale picture slightly mitigates this impression, thus making the women in upright positions stand out even more. The fact that horizontal and vertical lines intersect stabilizes the composition. Even though the image is composed of many overlapping layers it hardly creates the sense of space – they seem to be flattened and merged on one area, only texture helps distinguish them from one another.

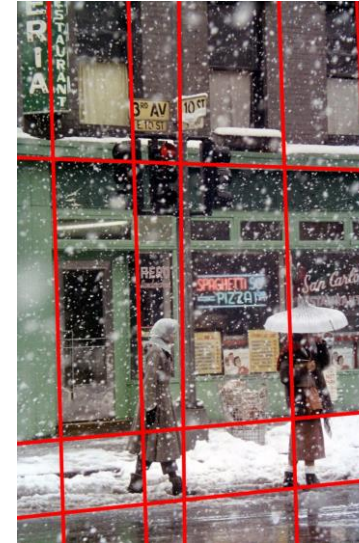


Texture

The use of layering (almost transparent layer of falling snow overlaying the darker layer below) creates a collage-like effect and attracts the attention of the audience. The photo appears to be busy and sparkling with life thanks to the wide variety of surfaces pictured. The roughness of the bricks, smoothness of the reflective street after the rain and softness of snow all interact with one another confusing the gaze of the viewer creating the impression of a lively and hectic neighborhood, despite the fact that the composition itself is quite static. Even though the piece feels mostly flat there is some depth achieved through the large blurred snowflakes and the manner in which they layer on top of the depicted environment. **The texture and the obscured snowflakes encourage the audience to look more closely into the picture and to examine its details once again since it might produce a different impression to the one in the beginning.**

Rhythm, movement and shape

On the whole the image can be considered quite static due to eye level viewpoint and almost motionless vertical figures, however **the image has many contrasting elements, which make it more dynamic.** Even though the city landscape has mostly angular rhythms **Saul Leiter deliberately tilted his camera to make the elements appear bit off-balance and crooked.** No real or implied lines are fully horizontal or vertical (as evidenced by the red lines). **This prevents excessive symmetry and introduces more playfulness and positive chaos into the piece.** The number and variety of details in the signs of the restaurant, menus displayed in the windows and street numbers make the impression of a bustling city. The angular shapes of the building behind the figures are contrasted with soft, flowing rhythm of the umbrella or circular elements in the traffic lights. All the elements are diverse and specific, but relate to one another and create a coherent image. **This aspect paired with the multitude of snowflakes differing in size, shape and resolution it creates an implied frisky movement, which adds festivity to the piece and presents the location as endearing and welcoming.**



Color

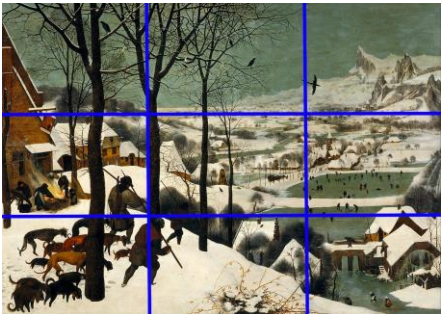
The pastel color scheme creates a soft, somewhat dreamlike atmosphere. **There is a dominance of green in the picture, which interacts with accents of warm red accents thus establishing a complementary color scheme.** It makes the colors appear more vibrant. The addition of brown adds some warmth to the overall cool color scheme focused on greens and blues. Similar colors and values throughout the image make it very consistent and add sophistication and some order to the lighthearted, busy photograph.

CRIT A. Identification and analysis of formal qualities

The Hunters in the Snow (winter)

Overall composition

The viewer perceives the landscape from a high viewpoint. Looking downwards at the scene allows seeing many planes of the picture and also causes the surroundings appear smaller, more secluded, one might argue even cozier. The feeling might also be attributed to the fact that the artist chose to situate the scene in a valley. The mountains shielding it act as a border for the piece – **the surroundings seem like a closed off environment only available to the locals and the close knit community – a sense of comfort and coziness is achieved** (only the people in the valley or the community appear joyful). The viewer's eye is clearly led from the hunters downward to the ice skaters and then upwards to the mountain in the distance. The main focal point are the hunters due to the use of the rule of thirds (indicated by blue lines on the picture below) and being painted in darker values, which the human eye is naturally drawn to. Moreover, they are more noticeable considering the fact that their silhouettes appear larger as a result of linear perspective (figures increase in size, the closer they are to the viewer) and have been rendered in more detail than the environment and the miniscule silhouettes of the ice skaters. After the focal point the viewer's focus is led further into the landscape following the leading lines established by the bridge, the house it is attached to and the mountains as showcased by the red line marked on one of the images below. The audience ventures into the background and observes the piece in its entire complexity often switching between the multitude of details. In this sense the viewer constantly interacts with all the elements of the piece making for a more immersive experience.



Space

There is a clear distinction between the foreground and background through the use of perspective as the part of the scene close to the viewer features much larger and detailed objects, while the elements further away become miniscule and less prominent. **The planes are also distinguished when it comes to the feelings they evoke** – downtrodden and weary, exhausted with the winter in the foreground and carefree in the background. Aerial perspective is also very relevant in the creation of space in the image. The area near the audience was painted with mostly warm hues, while cool tones dominate the distant settings. The most remote mountains appear quite blue in comparison with others.



Characterization of the figures

The story and the feelings of the characters are clearly expressed through the body language – the hunters are slumped and appear very tired and downtrodden, the ice skaters on the other hand, who appear as tiny specs, have a very cheerful body language, are full of life and dynamism. **The attention to detail is remarkable** – from footsteps on the snow to painting another village in the distance the piece seems lifelike, even though Bruegel doesn't use significant tonal modeling. The depicted scenario is bustling with life.

Color

The painting features a muted color scheme, there are no bright hues. It is surprisingly warm however, considering the winter landscape. Even the white has some yellowish tones, the black leans towards brown and the sky as well as the frozen river is green, not blue. Complementary reddish and greenish hues make the piece appear vibrant. The mild, dreamy colors bring a sense of positivity to the piece and make the scenario look more fairytale-like.

Shadow and light

There is a lack of clearly established light source despite the sky being quite clear as if still doing daylight. The figures cast no shadows and seem hardly affected by light – the fire is lit and it reflects some yellow and orange tones on the characters but to a very insignificant extent. Because of these aspects the depicted people and animals seem somewhat beyond the laws of nature, which makes them look quite 2-dimensional. Even though it is rendered realistically – abiding by the rules of anatomy and proportion the lack of tonal modeling **makes the figures seem a bit detached from the world. Such uncanny portrayal contributes to the odd magic of the piece.**

CRIT A. Identification and analysis of formal qualities

Illustration to a book „Miś Uszatek’s New Friends”



Overall composition:

The focal point is undoubtedly the bear. The focus on him is achieved through the central placement of his figure, as shown on the red vertical axis featured in the picture below, and distinguishing the figure from the busy rest of the page (the buildings are practically standing on top of another) and a cloudy sky. The bear is surrounded by white space, which achieves contrast of color and value making him the most discernible. Considering the use of negative and positive space in this picture is crucial. **The character is somewhat isolated among the negative space.** This choice makes plenty of narrative sense, when analyzed alongside the attached text and story. The bear runs out of his house to play in the snow and go sledding, but as soon as he sees the snowflakes, he stops to observe them further, is completely charmed and thinks they are actually stars. This is not a scene of carefree fun, but rather an example of childlike wonder, hence compositionally **separating him from the background makes it seem as if he was in his own world, completely occupied by his thoughts and amazement.** Triangular composition helps establish the bear as a focal point, but it is also worthwhile noting that the tallest building in the center mirrors the position of the character upwards – the picture appears static and balanced. The purple and pink lines examine the compositional lines and balance of the shapes. Vertical and horizontal forms dominate, establishing a mostly static appearance (if only shapes are considered, omitting elements like texture or color), which contributes to the aforementioned message and meaning of the text complimenting the illustration. Despite that, there are some diagonal lines present and as it has been shown through the marks, they point to the Miś Uszatek, ultimately proving he is the focal point.

Shape language

While most shapes of the paper cutouts are angular, the figure of the bear is painted mostly using softened shapes – circular ears, round legs and arms. Though in the environment there is a simplified, round tree and the bear’s clothes are made with angular cutout – **the piece is coherent as the shapes and the elements interact with one another to a great extent.**

Color

Mostly cool color scheme was utilized – grey, blue, purple, but there are accents of warm colors present – brown (which is perhaps another reason why the bear is a the focal point), beige and green. The color scheme definitely highlights that the winter can be harsh (especially that the sky is grey and cloudy – it seems like there is a going to be a snowstorm), but there is some playfulness in selection of the hues, the green in particular seems quite unconventional.

Texture:

The paper cutouts have plenty of wonderful grainy texture which **helps adding visual interest and cheerfulness to the piece and makes it seem more relaxed and laid back.** Some pieces of paper have torn out edges, which **suggest a certain spontaneity** to the making of the piece. The usage of watercolor is incredibly significant in this piece as well. The gray clouds and their texture have clearly been accomplished through the employment of the wet on wet technique, which allows the water with pigment to spread to all the wet areas of the paper. This quality causes the transitions to be quite subtle and can create a delicate effect, though using a darker hue causes it to be more imposing (they are storm cloud after all). There are also visible white dots and patterns on the grey sky, which provide implied detail of the falling snowflakes and add whimsicality to the illustration. It is curious how on the sky the flakes are just dots, but when they are near the bear they do resemble stars more, perhaps it showcases how childlike imagination works and how the bear could have been convinced that stars are falling from the sky.



Capturing the beauty of the ordinary

"I happen to believe in the beauty of simple things. I believe that the most uninteresting thing can be very interesting" [Saul Leiter Foundation, 2014]. This quote from Saul Leiter beautifully encapsulates the essence of the „San Carlo Restaurant's" charm. The artist made his piece in to a vignette showing something quite ordinary like a snowfall, which is quite common in the climate of New York and gave it a newfound meaning and directed the viewers interest towards it. In a 2014 documentary „In No Great Hurry" he states that *„Everything is suitable to be a photo"* later adding *„Photography teaches you to look and appreciate all kinds of things"* [Thomas Leach, 2013]. **Which implies that the purpose of the „San Carlo Restaurant" is not only about showcasing known and familiar beauty, but discovering it for oneself as well.** The function of the photo is not only to remind the author of the enchanting world, which surrounds him but also encourages the audience to search for it as well in their own proximity. Additionally, the selected photo proves that **for Saul Leiter no subject matter is too mundane and incredible views and magic can be found in the everyday if captured in an interesting way.** In the aforementioned documentary the photographer expresses the view that *„There is a certain charm and comfort in disorder that not everybody can appreciate"* [Thomas Leach, 2013], which might explain his choice to capture the snow causing disarray in the picture. The function of the piece is not simply presenting the appeal of the ordinary, but making it seem more tumultuous, relatable and captivating. The busy composition and the slight tilt attributed to the specific camerawork show uniqueness of the scene and prove how despite the spontaneous approach Saul Leiter was still very deliberate when it comes to achieving his aims in the presented picture.



Search odd in the ordinary

In a book of quotations of Saul Leiter there is a passage: *„I think the mysterious things happen in familiar places"* [All about Saul Leiter, 2018]. Thus introducing the **need to find the curious, most likely overlooked and fleeting aspects of the mundane.** This purpose is clearly realized in „San Carlo Restaurant". Not only is the diversity in elements like fonts striking but so is the specificity and oddness of the passersby. Even though they are dressed in muted colors complimenting the palette of the entire picture, they have curious elements like the unusual shape of the umbrella of the figure on the right, which set them apart. Details like these are precisely what Saul Leiter is searching for. The more one focuses and ponders on the elements of the piece the weirder it appears. **This corresponds to the aims of Saul Leiter who looked for the peculiarity in known locations.**

Endless experimentation

Saul Leiter constantly attempted to expand the possibilities of photography and often experimented with both the medium and his method of utilizing it. For example *„one of Leiter's techniques was using shallow depth of field to throw different parts of an image in and out of focus"* [Eyeem, 2016]. It can be hypothesized that this was done in order to preserve the **mystery and intrigue** of „San Carlo Restaurant". **Leiter also often obscured the image with glass, fog or in this case, snow [Alex Carter, 2021] to achieve the aforementioned effect.** Additionally, *„Leiter often shot with a telephoto lens, which created a flattening effect on street scenes"* [Eyeem, 2016]. This technique contributed to the purposeful overlapping and the **collage like effect** of the piece on the right. The artist also experimented with color using expired film [Alex Carter, 2021] being prepared for unexpected result. The method of producing images had an element of spontaneity in its every stage, which Leiter aimed for to create striking and original artwork like the „San Carlo Restaurant".

Illustrating the severity of winter

Despite some warm colors being used the overarching tone and impression of the painting conveys the feeling of permanent and unstoppable coldness. The feeling might be attributed to the dominance of white and the snow covering majority of the landscape, thus managing to nullify the attempts to start a fire of the peasants depicted on the left side of the picture, next to the cottage or an inn of sorts. Dr. David Boffa notices how Bruegel puts „*more emphasis to the landscapes than to the depicted activities, with particular attention paid to the shifting colors of the times of year*” [Dr. David Boffa, 2015]. **This is especially visible when compared to the other pieces of the series commissioned by Niclaes Jongelincx [Dr. David Boffa, 2015], the investigated piece is a part of, which are displayed below.** All of them revolve around a somewhat warm color palette, though in the case of „Gloomy Day” they appear almost rancid and rotten, opposite the opposite lightness of „The Harvesters”. The use of white in „The Hunters in the Snow” is therefore highlighted, because despite adding brightness to the picture it also strips it of the warmth – **the color progression in this case contributes to interesting and crucial observations showing the artists purpose of presenting difficult realities of winter was achieved with much deliberateness.** Additionally, Bruegel does not focus exclusively on the realism and instead **uses characterization and designs the poses and appearance of the dogs and the hunters in a way so that they convey the tiredness and exhaustion with the climate**, for example the silhouettes of the people are hunched over and the dog have drooping ears [Dr. David Boffa, 2015]. All these aspects allow Bruegel to portray winter with complexity, yet as a trying time nonetheless.

The human condition

The painting „The Hunters in the Snow” shows two distinct realities of winter, one filled with struggles and tribulations – the hunters and the other untroubled and joyful – ice skaters. **The dichotomy between the two attitudes shows the intricacy of the piece and alludes to the fact that the aim of the master was not only depicting a winter scene but also attempt to be a study of human condition, when one is exposed to a grim reality.** Similar sentiments have been expressed in the work of Dr. David Boffa [Dr. David Boffa, 2015]. The features of the painting were constructed in a way to serve this purpose. High horizon line and the birds view perspective encourage observation – the viewer is not invited to join the events, just look at them from a somewhat artificial and atypical lens. The artist includes so much detail he almost forces the viewer to look more closely, observe and ponder on the individual life's and fates of the characters. „*Dutch and Flemish landscape paintings were rarely symbolic but were usually rich in associations*” [Walter Liedtke, 2014] this appears to be true in regards to the discussed piece. **The scene is carefully established, not painted from life, comprising aspects, which normally would not occur like the jagged mountains in the background** which were most likely inspired by the appearance of the Alps, which he saw during a trip to Italy in the 1550s [Dr. David Boffa, 2015]. The combination of many elements, which seemingly do not belong one another, like the high mountains in a Dutch landscape known for plains **adds a layer of magic** and causes the piece to be even more intriguing. Even though Bruegel often painted mundane peasant life, he himself was from more well-off surroundings, which allowed him to travel to places like Italy, which gave him the opportunity to observe different mountain ranges than he was used to [Jacob Wisse, 2002]. **The associations then are to other nations making the piece a bit more universal, yet simultaneously only relatable to those experiencing the harsh weather conditions.** The fact that the components are selected with so much reflection shows that Bruegel definitely wanted not only to create a genre painting, but envisioned a specific environment for the characters to inhabit to convey the wide range of attitudes to the trying circumstances.



Fig.4 Pieter Bruegel, Gloomy Day, 1565 (Early spring)



Fig.5 Pieter Bruegel, The Hay Harvest, 1565 (Early summer)



Fig.6 Pieter Bruegel, The Harvesters, 1565 (Late summer)



Fig.7 Pieter Bruegel, Return of the Herd, 1565 (Autumn)



CRIT B. Analysis and understanding of function and purpose

Making beautiful books for children

Rychlicki often highlighted that happy childhood is a right and strived to provide it for his readers through **beautiful books**, which he strongly thought children deserved [Małgorzata Majerczak, 2020]. **His aim was stimulating imaginations of the youngest and prompting them to notice the charm of the surrounding world.** Rychlicki made many statements about empathizing with the problems of children, who often might feel hopeless in the daunting world and accentuating the role of art in shaping characters and identities of children [Małgorzata Majerczak, 2020]. Knowing the impact he can have, he put plenty of emphasis on creating **optimistic scenarios kids could relate to and be transported into.** Zbigniew Rychlicki's approach and aims explain why the winter is portrayed with such glee and wonder. Miś Uszatek appears curious and delighted because of the delicate snowfall. The character is unburdened by the troubles reserved for the world of the adults and can simply enjoy himself, discover the world and have moments of fun undisturbed by any worries, despite the cloudy weather. The stylized way of depicting a town with the 2 dimensional buildings overlapping adds an additional element of magic to the pieces as it would not otherwise be possible. The reception of the artwork should be enthusiastic combined with an idyllic feeling showcasing the beauty of a mundane situation as even common events might be considered alluring.

Emulating the perspective of a child

In order to fulfill his aim of relating to kids Rychlicki wanted imitate their way of seeing the world. The artist used cheap materials that children would use in their art classes making the illustrations more approachable [Małgorzata Majerczak, 2020]. He also was not too concerned with applying realistic colors and instead experimented with them much like a kid could draw a „pink or blue horse” instead picking colors, which are normally attributed to the animal [Małgorzata Majerczak, 2020]. In the winter illustration he for example portrayed purple rooftops.

The story of the Miś Uszatek

The book „Miś Uszatek's New Friends” aims to capture the curiosity, imagination and benevolence of a clumsy bear. Since the bear is in the process of discovering the world his grasp of it is limited, which leads to his assumptions often being humorously wrong, like mistaking snowflakes for stars shown in the artwork on the right, but he is never really corrected or made feel ashamed for not knowing. His peculiar, fun way of seeing the world is definitely an immense asset, which makes the book so heart-warming. The purpose of both the text and illustrations is communicating that an unlikely perspective is welcome in the world and that childlike imagination and inquisitiveness are very valuable, thus being very relatable to the children and making them feel included, assuring them that **childhood is a great adventure.** While reading the book the reader might wish to be included in these adventures somewhat being enamored by the hospitality and joy of the depicted world. The illustration selected for the investigation is naturally a part of an extensive series of drawings, which Zbigniew Rychlicki prepared for the book. The primary function of the illustration is accompanying the text of „Miś Uszatek's New Friends” written by Czesław Janczarski. Though it is worth mentioning that Rychlicki is also credited as the co-creator of the character of Miś Uszatek and so his involvement in the project was more significant than just being an illustrator [Małgorzata Strękowska-Zaremba, 2016].



CRIT C. Analysis and evaluation of cultural significance

New York and the East Village of the 1950s

The photo „San Carlo Restaurant” greatly differs from the work of Saul Leiter’s contemporaries and optimism of his work can be emphasized through the comparison. Many prominent photographers in the 1950s chose to show loneliness and wretchedness of urban life in New York like Robert Frank or William Klein, who even stated that his pictures „showed everything he resented about America” [Sarah Moroz, 2014]. However, Saul Leiter’s art was very different, even though he focused on his neighborhood, which he lived in for 55 years as was stated in a documentary about him titled „In no great hurry” [Thomas Leach, 2013]. This aspect makes his pictures seem more domestic and dear to the artist. Perhaps this is neighborhood what evokes a certain nostalgia and cheer in his work. Daniel M. Gold Notes how different his pieces appear stating that they „glow with a watercolor’s warmth” [Daniel M. Gold , 2014] and avoid the typical grittiness presented in many photographs at the time. Those remarks highlight Leiter’s uniqueness.

Influence of Pierre Bonnard

Subsequent aspect, which differentiates Saul Leiter from other photographers at the time and inspired the cheerfulness and intimacy and glee in his work is his inspiration with impressionists and post impressionists, especially Bonnard [Teju Cole, 2013]. The way Leiter captures realities does resemble the impressionistic approach, instead of deliberately planning his compositions or selecting specific subject material he preferred to walk around New York in search of capturing situations and only then photographed it. His photos are „impressions” of specific time and place. There is a similar tenderness in Leiter’s work, who photographed his neighborhood in comparison to Bonnard, who only painted what he was familiar with [Dita Amory, 2010]. There is also a visible inspiration considering the use of color of both artists. The painter was famous for vibrant and bold use of color [Dita Amory, 2010], while Saul Leiter was more restrained especially in the „San Carlo Restaurant”. Still, use of color in photography was revolutionary at the time, therefore it is understandable that Saul Leiter gravitated to more muted palettes.

Revolution of color photography

In a documentary „In No Great Hurry” devoted to him Saul Leiter states „Many people thought that color pictures were a waste of time” [Thomas Leach, 2013]. As Teju Cole writes, even „the director of photography at the Museum of Modern Art, dismissed most color photography” [Teju Cole, 2013]. Indeed, due to this reason his personal work was only appreciated in the 2006 after the release of his book of photography done in the analogous technique titled “Saul Leiter: Early Color” [Genevieve Fussell, 2014]. He was one of the revolutionary artists at the time who decided to utilize color, despite it being generally scrutinized in the 1950s. Nowadays, he is considered one of the pioneers of color photography [Saul Leiter Foundation, 2014].

Abstract expressionism

Saul Leiter moved to New York from Pittsburg with the aim of becoming a painter and only later changed his aspirations, however the influences of the painting scene are certainly visible in his work like „San Carlo Restaurant”. „The first generation of Abstract Expressionism flourished between 1943 and the mid-1950s” and the movement was most prominent in New York [Paul Stella, 2004]. The artist was close friends with a few abstract expressionist painters [Saul Leiter Foundation, 2014], therefore the inspiration is highly likely. Robert Rauschenberg, for example, has several similarities in stylistic choices with Leiter. Both „Saul Carlo Restaurant” and „Buffalo II” comparable attention to detail can be observed with the busy and detail pact pictures. Furthermore, the emphasis on overlapping is apparent in both pieces – semi transparent layers covering the opaque ones and thus achieving a collage like effect. The „Biography” section on the site of his foundation claims that „His abstracted forms and radically innovative compositions have a painterly quality that stands out among the work of his New York School contemporaries” [Saul Leiter Foundation, 2014], which immediately rings true when looking at San Carlo Restaurant. The textures of the snow unmistakably obscure the view and make the piece more painterly with a sense of abstraction, the elements of the composition overlap and constantly interact with one another contributing to a generally unconventional portrayal of winter.



Fig. 8 Robert Rauschenberg, Buffalo II, 1964

CRIT C. Analysis and evaluation of cultural significance

Early Netherlandish painting and oil paint

Oil paint, which allows for much more detailed and precise rendering techniques and has slower drying time allowing the artist to work on the piece longer in comparison to the tempera paint, previously one of the most utilized techniques, was popularized in the Netherlands around 1500s. Even though it is now known that early versions of oil paint were used as soon as 7th century by Buddhist monks in Afghanistan [Alastair Leithead, 2008] Jan van Eyck is said to have made the formula for the revolutionary oil paint first in Europe [Rupert Maas, 2009]. Other artists of the period soon followed and it became a much beloved and prominent medium. Without oil paint Pieter Bruegel was unlikely to be able to produce „The Hunters in the Snow” with such striking realism and comparable level of detail.

The Little Ice age

Starting from the 14th century and lasting till about the end of the 17th century the global temperature dropped approximately 2 degrees Celsius, this time period of cooler temperatures is referred to as „The Little Ice Age” [John Lanchester, 2019]. The effects of the phenomenon were especially visible in Europe and highly influenced many areas of life, including the arts. The harsh realities of the winter depicted in the Hunters of the Snow certainly reflect the hardships people had to endure at the time. The piece clearly expresses the attitudes and conditions it was painted in.

Urbanization of life and the role of patrons

During the 1500s and 1600s the European society was rapidly urbanized. In some areas „70 percent of the population lived in cities and towns rather than on the land” [Walter Liedtke, 2014]. This new phenomenon greatly contributed to the demand for genre painting and emergence of many local patrons like Nicolaes Jongelincx from Antwerp who commissioned Bruegel for The Hunters in the Snow [Dr. David Boffa, 2015]. The landscape painting gained so much popularity in the Netherlands because the initial interest was matched with the rise in etchings, which could be easily reproduced, spreading the curiosity for such pieces [Walter Liedtke, 2014].

Medieval illuminated manuscripts

Books of hours were collection of prayers intended to be said in certain intervals [Wendy A. Stein, 2017]. They were decorated with illuminated manuscripts of the months of the year like in the case of The Belles Heures of Jean de France, duc de Berry illustrated by the Limbourg Brothers, who similarly as the author of the discussed pieces were born in the Netherlands. The pieces bear a significant resemblance to Bruegel's The Series of the Months, The Hunters in the Snow is a part of. Many sources including the catalogue entry of another piece from the series titled „The Harvest” in the MET allude to the fact that the artworks resemble the medieval illuminated manuscripts, but the similarities are even more noticeable when „the Hunters in the Snow” are juxtaposed with the winter landscapes of The Limbourg Brothers. The rendering of the snow is very alike as in „The February”, as well as the choice to present a multitude of background elements and overall showcase a multilayered picture. Even thematic elements are similar like the hunt in the December piece.

Bruegel's trip to Italy

The reason why the investigated painting features high mountains in the background is because Bruegel was able to see the Alps and be inspired by them [Dr. David Boffa, 2015], since the Netherlands are comprised mainly of plains. His drawings of the aforementioned mountain range bear a strong resemblance to the ones he painted in The Hunters in the Snow.

Pieter Bruegel the Elder as a pioneer

The painter of the „Hunters in the Snow” was very influential on the subsequent art scene having impact on prominent figures like Hendrick Avercamp [National Gallery of Art, 2010]. He painted more carefree scenes of ice skaters which still bear an strong resemblance to Bruegel in the use of high view point and choosing to depict crowded, busy scenes. While Avercamp's pieces are similar and the inspiration is clear, Bruegel's uniqueness, however, is still visible. The Hunters in the Snow stand out from the cheerful portrayals and contain an unparcellled depth of a multitude of diverse meanings and stories included in one frame.

The Hunters in the Snow (winter)



Fig. 9 Limbourg Brothers, *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry December*, 1412-1416

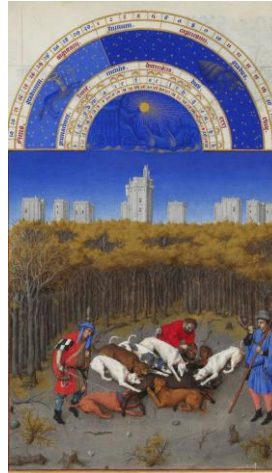


Fig. 10 Limbourg Brothers, *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry February*, 1412-1416



Fig. 11 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Alpine Landscape*, circa 1553



Fig. 12 Hendrick Avercamp, *Winter Landscape with skaters*, 1608

CRIT C. Analysis and evaluation of cultural significance

Polish School of Illustration

Polish illustration flourished in the years 1950-1980 and gained immense popularity worldwide, with many prominent artists receiving multitude of awards in international competitions, including Rychlicki, and even being recognized by the UN as a pioneer in children's book illustrations [Anita Wincencjusz-Patyna, 2009]. Even though at the time there was severe censorship due to the Soviet rule over Poland it did not affect children's books as much since the party in charge did not find an ideological threat in this activity, which is why it had the possibility to develop [Anita Wincencjusz-Patyna, 2009]. Zbigniew Rychlicki himself when asked about the reason behind the success of the Polish School of Illustration stated the importance of the painterly qualities of the work, poeticism of color and lyricism. He also highlighted the role of being inspired by Polish culture and underlined its relevance in producing the appeal of the art [Anita Wincencjusz-Patyna, 2009].

Polish folk art

The usage of the paper cutout method was most likely inspired by the Polish folk art Rychlicki was captivated by [Barbara Gawryluk, 2019]. Some sources highlight the influence of the „Kurpiowska” paper cutout due to the use of flat, colorful shapes and the inspiration is possible as it bears some resemblance [Piotr Policht, 2019]. Though the connection is stronger when considering the cut-out from „Łowicz” region, which focus on geometric compositions and aim to show a specific narrative [Ewa Fryś, Anna Iracka, Marian Pokropek, 1989]. Influence of Polish folk art is also significant as it contributed to the decorativeness of Rychlicki's pieces.



Fig. 13 Kurpiowska paper cutout



Fig. 14 Łowicz cut-out, approx. 1900

Experimentation

Rychlicki always experimented with the way he showcased reality and the mediums he selected [Barbara Gawryluk, 2019]. As his son notes Zbigniew Rychlicki always sought to investigate new topics, medium and broaden his range of skills [Barbara Gawryluk, 2019]. This aspect shows his aim to always be innovative, which had a huge effect on his portrayal of winter. In the illustration selected for this investigation he chose to utilize two mediums – watercolor and paper-cutout having distinct purposes in mind. The artist combined softness of the paints using them for the innocent character and paper cutout introduced different textures and angularity, which make the piece stand out as unique and unconventional.

PRL and inspiration with his Rychlicki's family life

In the „People's Republic” in Poland at the time in which Zbigniew Rychlicki created the society had to face constant shortages of various goods. The people utilized imitativensness and came up with ingenious methods for example in the realm of fashion dying cloth in coffee or tea or sewing apparel from curtains, which was often the only available material [Anna Legierska, 2014]. Similar approach can be observed in the work of Rychlicki as he uses scraps of paper from various sources, collecting and never disposing of any tool, which could possibly be used in the future. Incredible variety is thus created. The piece beams with life as the plentiful textures interact with one another. Additionally, the artwork is not only influenced by the realities in which it was created but also by Rychlicki's family life. The wardrobe of Miś Uszatek was modeled on his son's clothing [Barbara Gawryluk, 2019] and therefore appears more grounded in reality giving the fictional bear more substance. The outfit of Miś Uszatek is quite similar to apparel often worn in kindergarteners in PRL as demonstrated on the picture on the right. Moreover, inspiration with Polish architecture (not necessarily from the PRL period though) is visible as well, the depicted building matches the town hall in a polish town named Nowe Miasteczko to a great extent.

Illustration to a book „Miś Uszatek's New Friends”

Artistic education

Zbigniew Rychlicki is a highly trained artist who attended the prestigious Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow and even previously was a student at vocational schools [Barbara Gawryluk, 2019]. This aspect is important to highlight his mastery and the fact that he deliberately composed the illustration in a rather simplified manner, even though he had the skillset to make a more realistic piece.



Fig. 15 Children's fashion in PRL, 1970s



Fig. 16 Town hall of Nowe Miasteczko, 1877-1879

CRIT D. Making comparisons and connections – cultural significance

Inspiration with the country and culture of origin

All the investigated pieces were connected to their countries of origin, but to a varied level. San Carlo Restaurant by Saul Leiter is the city the author was captured in New York, which is the city the author was devoted to exploring and lived in for majority of his life. Moreover, the place influenced his approach to photography like the inspirations with Abstract Expressionism clearly visible in the piece selected for the investigation. Though it should be noted that the place of origin was not the only inspiration for the artist when creating the discussed work. His ideas were also informed by his adoration of a French painter Pierre Bonnard, therefore San Carlo Restaurant is deeply rooted in the landscape of New York in the 1950s, but not exclusively focused on it. The Hunters in the Snow are incredibly similar in this regard as Bruegel partially incorporates the artistic legacy of the Netherlands, but also does not shy away from adopting a foreign vision. The painting could not be made of it was not for the popularization of oil paint by a Netherlandish artist Jan van Eyck. Additionally, Bruegel's work was inspired by Illuminated manuscripts of fellow Dutch artists - Limbough Brothers. This shows how incredibly affected by the work of artists of the same origin he was and how he continued the art traditions, which they initiated. However, Bruegel also incorporated sights from other countries into the Hunters in the Snow as it is the case with the image of the Alps, noticed during his travels to Italy, included into the Dutch landscape, which is predominately composed of plains. In this regard the illustration by Rychlicki differs, since he hardly utilized concepts and notions stemming from outside Poland. Out of all the investigated pieces the illustration to a book „Miś Uszatek's New Friends” is the most faithful to its place of origin. From the medium of paper cut-out being inspired by Polish folk traditions and art to the very content of the piece – the setting and the apparel of the bear being distinctly grounded in Polish architecture and fashion of PRL respectively.



Innovativeness of the pieces

The photograph San Carlo Restaurant by Saul Leiter is the most innovative compared to the remaining pieces pertinent to this comparative study. The use of color in photography was frowned upon and thought of as inferior in regards to black and white photography in the 1950s in the New York art scene. In this way San Carlo Restaurant is a revolutionary piece since it went against the norms and trends of the period. The other pieces selected for this investigation were much more in line with the styles and movement of their times. Pieter Bruegel's The Hunters in the Snow was painted in accordance with the interest in landscape painting, although he definitely expanded on the notion of it adding more narrative elements and introducing a deeper meaning within the landscape, which was uncommon. The illustration of Rychlicki is very much aligned with the community of the Polish School of Illustration. He with his work are clearly a part of an established group, though it is important to note that the Polish School of Illustration was known for their originality, so while considering the trends creating book illustration was not rare, but the style in which the illustration is drafted and the approach that Rychlicki had was by all means incredibly inventive.

Response to the pieces

The innovativeness of the pieces certainly had an impact on the response to them. Both artworks by Bruegel and Rychlicki were rather acclaimed. The Hunters in the Snow was a commissioned painting, therefore the interest in the work was significant. Similarly with the illustration to a book „Miś Uszatek's New Friends”, which was a very popular series and the art pieces were done as a part of a collaboration between the writer and the artist. However, Leiter's color photography was only appreciated in 2006, more than 50 years after the creation of the San Carlo Restaurant, since the medium he used was unpopular.

CRIT D. Making comparisons and connections – formal qualities

Creating space

Creation of space has been accomplished in an truly diverse way among the compared pieces. None of them are entirely 2-dimensional, though they have varying levels of depth. San Carlo Restaurant is somewhat flat considering that it is a photograph and the fact that there are many overlapping shapes and layers. All of the layers seem to merge in mostly one plane and therefore it does not truly contribute to the sense of space. The piece is indubitably not entirely flat as the texture of the snow implies the presence of the foreground and it can be stated that the figures and the traffic light somewhat stand out from the background as well. In the illustration to a book „Miś Uszatek’s New Friends” utilizes layering in a completely different manner. The arrangements of the paper cut-out houses is utterly disorganized, they overlap with one another in a completely surreal manner and thus create a sense of space. While in the previous pieces depth was created mainly by layering and texture, but in Hunters in the snow space is a crucial element and is achieved through a plethora of formal qualities. Geometric perspective is utilized to distinguish the background from the foreground, they are clearly on different planes and the further an element is in the distance the smaller it appears emphasizing the division. The deliberateness in the utilization of perspective can be proven by the fact that the planes even have their own stories and convey distinct meanings. Areal perspective is also crucial to the creation of space – the background furthest away from the audience clearly is of more blue and cool hue. The creation of space in the Hunters in snow clearly diverges from the more unplanned method used in the remaining pieces and therefore the depth in the painting is the most substantial.



Vertical composition

In either the San Carlo Restaurant and the illustration to a book „Miś Uszatek’s New Friends” a vertical composition has been used. In both cases the horizontal and vertical line stabilize the composition. However, the two pieces also have qualities, which make the vertical composition more refreshing. In Leiter’s San Carlo Restaurant the lines are slightly tilted not allowing for any symmetry in the piece and causing it to look slightly irregular. The possible stiffness of the composition was mitigated. Similar process occurs in the illustration by Rychlicki. Though it is not caused by a tilt, but the use of diagonals to portray the roofs of the houses. Despite the use of vertical composition and mainly static elements both pieces strive to be more relaxed and avoid absolute stiffness.

Color scheme

All the pieces feature a very similar pastel color palette, with the presence of complementary colors of red and green. Naturally there are some differences like the fact that the hues are cooler in San Carlo Restaurant in comparison to others and that in illustration to Miś Uszatek purple has been additionally used. Despite their likeness, they seem to accomplish something contrasting. Hunters in the snow appears more serious and sinister, while utilizing warmer hues, and Uszatek and San Carlo Restaurant are more cheerful, while having cooler tones. This curious finding leads to the conclusion that perhaps in the context of winter the meaning usually attributed to colors: warm-happy, cool-sad can shift, or rather imply that it is other elements like body language or the creation of the background which contribute to the reception of the piece the most and that they can be significant to the extent of somewhat nullifying the impact of color. All the formal qualities interact and mutually influence the meanings and audience’s response to the pieces.

Texture

Another connection between the San Carlo Restaurant and the illustration to a book „Miś Uszatek’s New Friends” is the importance of texture. In the photograph an almost transparent layer of falling snow is overlaid on a darker layer below creating an effect resembling a collage. The wide variety of surfaces pictured is alluring and provides plenty of interest. The connection of San Carlo Restaurant to the illustration by Rychlicki through the appearance resembling a collage (which is the technique the Polish artist utilized) is very interesting, since Leiter was able to achieve such effects with the use of a completely different medium. The paper cutouts in the artwork depicting a bear also appear very textured and add to the cheerfulness of the piece, similarly as with Leiter’s photograph.

CRIT D. Making comparisons and connections – function and purpose

Evoking a magical feeling

All the pieces selected for the comparative study portray the atmosphere of a wonderland. Leiter's photograph depicts a mundane situation, but through the manner in which it is showcased and the figures he captures a magical moment emerges. The oddness and specificity of the details and the abundant snowfall of light, ever-present flakes elevates the scene from just an everyday situation and grants it a marvelous charm. This case is very similar to the illustration by Rychlicki, which shows the moment of curiosity about the world and snow. The stillness and wonder of the character as well as the individually drawn snowflakes cause the scenario to feel more special and magical as the bear expresses adoration of his surroundings. Additionally, the fact that the protagonist of the book and the focus of the illustration is an endearing cartoon of a bear further emphasizes the magical feeling. In the Hunters in the Snow by Bruegel the atmosphere is different to the previous two pieces, while still reminiscent of a wonderland, it evokes a more eerie sensation. The carefree ice skaters clash thematically with the exhausted hunters and struggling peasants. Through the striking juxtaposition the uncanniness and mysticity is achieved. It makes the audience question why the perspectives are so opposite. Moreover, the choice of Bruegel to include mountains similar to Alps in a Dutch landscape contributes to a certain surrealism of the piece making it stand out from conventional landscape painting.



Showing the beauty of the mundane

Accordingly with the quote from Saul Leiter „I happen to believe in the beauty of simple things. I believe that the most uninteresting thing can be very interesting” [Saul Leiter Foundation, 2014] the purpose of the „San Carlo Restaurant” photograph is precisely that, showing the appeal of common sights and objects. Rychlicki has a very similar aim and the likeness in their purpose influences their subsequent goals like encouraging viewer's to discover and appreciate their surroundings anew and the fact that both artworks are more concerned with portraying a carefree feeling rather than a specific narrative

Portrayal of snowfall and winter

Both the illustration to „Miś Uszatek's New Friends” by Zbigniew Rychlicki and San Carlo Restaurant by Saul Leiter portray falling snow, however the depictions highly differ. In Uszatek it is only falls on the main character and appears more magical in this sense. The San Carlo Restaurant showcases more of a snow storm, the flakes look delicate and beautiful, but difficulty of weather conditions are implied. This piece is more realistic and takes into consideration the hardships of winter, which are totally omitted in the illustration to „Miś Uszatek's New Friends”. Medium of the illustration allows Rychlicki to skew the reality and present it in a much more fantastical way, while Leiter cannot manipulate the appearance of his work to the same degree, because of the medium of the photography he is bound to present a more mature version of the environment. Bruegel chose not to include any snowfall in his painting and instead opted to show a clear vision of the landscape. It is relevant since the purpose of the artwork – showing the harshness of winter is mainly achieved through the appearance of the setting and thus the details of the piece should not be obscured by snow.



Part of a collection of pieces

The Rychlicki's illustration and Bruegel's painting both function as an element of a broader series. In the case of first one it is the collection of all the drawings included in the book „Miś Uszatek's New Friends” and Bruegel's The Hunters in the Snow is a part of his commissioned series depicting the seasons.

CRIT F. Making connections to own art making practices

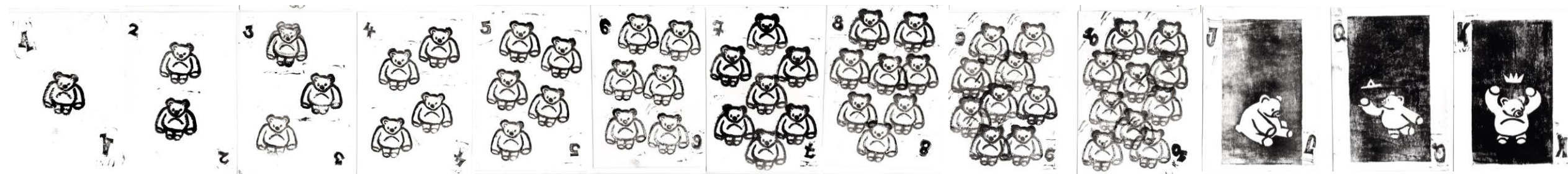


The figure of Miś Uszatek has been particularly influential on me. I remember reading books about his adventures during childhood and I still can recall its immense appeal and the positive feelings it evoked in me then, and even to this day manages to do the same. Hence the illustration on the left is so dear to me and I really wanted to make an art piece inspired by it to channel similar sensations. I decided to make a charming deck of cards, done in the technique of linocut, featuring a similar motif – teddy bear. The design is visibly resembles the main character of the illustration by Rychlicki. The use of rounded shapes in the discussed piece really caught my attention and I began to wonder how it would look incorporated into my approach, especially that I usually gravitate more towards angular rhythms. Thanks to the inspiration, the characters of my linocuts looks more endearing and innocent, which I very much appreciate, since it is a rather unconventional feeling to associate with a deck of cards, but absolutely something I was hoping for and considered one of my goals.

I was additionally captivated by the overlapping buildings, because they present and interesting contrast to the mostly static bear and unconventionally introduce a more fantastically chaotic element, which I would not normally expect in a portrayal of a town or a village. I wanted to experiment with a similar feeling and stamped on bears in an incredibly unorganized manner. I thoroughly enjoy the effect the approach yielded. The deck really distinguishes itself from other, conventionally symmetrical cards. The effect adds a layer of a „homemade” charm and makes it even more playful.



The deck of the cards, which was later updated into the more colorful version:



CRIT F. Making connections to own art making practices



Zbigniew Rychlicki is a master in the medium of paper cut-out. He is able to achieve an impeccable effect making his illustrations, like the piece depicting a winter scenario on the left, both very graphic and stylized but retain a feeling of playfulness and a certain „ease”, with which he layers the elements of the piece. Since I am unbelievably impressed by his skills I was encouraged to try emulating his technique. I believe plenty of the lightheartedness of the illustration stems from the fact that Rychlicki used scraps and discarded fragments of paper from his work, therefore the cut-outs or tear-outs appear more effortless and with many diverse mismatched textures look very carefree. In both of my pieces presented on the right I decided to utilize the same mindset and used fragments of magazines and newspapers. I believe this adds an element of spontaneity to my pieces, which could not have been achieved otherwise. Additionally, as texture is a very important element of the illustration by Rychlicki I wanted to experiment with it, as visible in the first one of my pieces. I used many contrasting textures, similarly to how Rychlicki does in his piece and I was tempted to investigate it further, discovering decalcomania, which provides a slightly grainy texture and allows the cut-out to be more colorful, than the mainly monochromatic scraps I used.

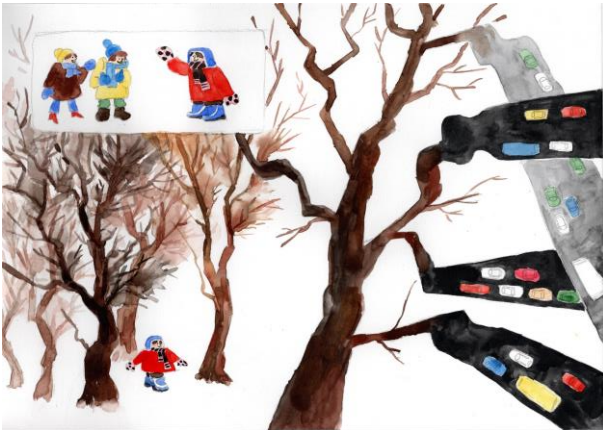
The application of decalcomania is apparent in the table top in my first illustration on the right. The final results were quite similar to the textures in the clouds of the artwork by Rychlicki. Unfortunately, none of the sources clearly state whether he used the technique, but it did make me wonder, whether this is why the surfaces look so alike. Moreover, the illustration by Rychlicki encouraged me to play more with my use of color. I intentionally tried combining warm color schemes with cool colors to produce a contrast and make the hues stand out more, just like he incorporated greens and browns with blues and purples. This can be seen in both pieces – the first one is predominately warm, but features blue accents and the second one is completely experimental in this regard. The figures and details mostly follow a warm color palette, but are glued onto a cool, blue background, which completely changes the appearance of the piece. Previously I tried to place in on a white and an orange background, but it was simply too much and the overwhelmingly warm colors clashed with each other. Upon reviewing the illustration by Rychlicki I decided to change my approach and I decided to use a cool background, which accentuates the warmth of the other colors and greatly complements the whole piece.



CRIT F. Making connections to own art making practices



I embarked on goal to illustrate a zine about the imagination of a child, which can make something mundane and ordinary like a commute back home turn into an extraordinary moment as seen below. Therefore using innovative compositions was crucial to achieve the desired effect – mimic the unique ways a kid can perceive the world. The use of high viewpoint and the bird's perspective is visibly connected and inspired by the „Hunter's in the Snow” by Pieter Bruegel. Moreover, I was captivated by the style in which the trees and bushes are rendered in the painting. There are hardly any individual twigs, rather the small branches are depicted as a stain of color with dissolving edges. I decided to adopt a similar style in my zine, which is especially visible on the first and third image.



The attention to detail in creating a story and characters prominent in Bruegel's work and the emphasis on clear silhouettes significantly informed my piece as well. I made sure every glove of the character in the zine had brown spots and that the decorations on his hat, shoes or scarf were always the same. I tried to clearly communicate the actions of the protagonist, especially when they were a bit odd like the dance near the bus stop on the third image, by making the shapes of their body definite and precise. This effort was inspired by the scrupulous and painstaking figures of the ice skaters in Bruegel's work, which are clearly distinguishable even from a considerable distance.

CRIT F. Making connections to own art making practices



The connection between the pieces is immediately noticeable – it depicts a very similar theme: ice skaters. My piece however concentrates on the joy of winter, conveys fun, enjoyment and optimism omitting the topic revolving around the harshness and difficulty of winter. The pieces are very similar in the sense that both strongly focus on creating a clear silhouette, which has plenty of character through body language despite not having much detail. The busy atmosphere is also incredibly relevant to both pieces. The figures in either artwork interact with one another, showing a sort of communal character and cramp together, especially in my piece, to convey their significant engagement in the activity and an atmosphere of a hectic and bustling life (naturally in the positive sense).

