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Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



>Art and Sciences

>Animal Empathy by Paintings

The use of animals as elements in the painting compositions is as old as the practice itself. The oldest dated cave drawings involve animals and humans together, as hunt or hunter, emphasizing the wholeness and dependence of living beings.

On the Western world after the Renaissance, paintings with animals often emerge as a symbol of wealth and power in portraits. But there are also scenes only focusing on animals in wild life as the main subject of the narrative. Sometimes depicting a mythological story or a fable, animals are used as mere protagonists of the painting, carrying a strong symbolic representation.



Frans Snyders and workshop

The boar hunt

1650

-a hunt scene

-dogs and a wild animal in genuine survival fight

-a manifestation of civilisation against wild life

-detailed anatomy of animals

-energetic face expressions to reflect emotions

-nature on the background



Sawrey Gilpin

Gulliver Taking His Final Leave of the
Land of the Houyhnhnms

1769

- presentation of a popular tale
- detailed anatomy of animals
- horse and human at equal projection
- use of contrast to show the important figures
- implementation of the symbolic narrative in the tale
- nature on the background

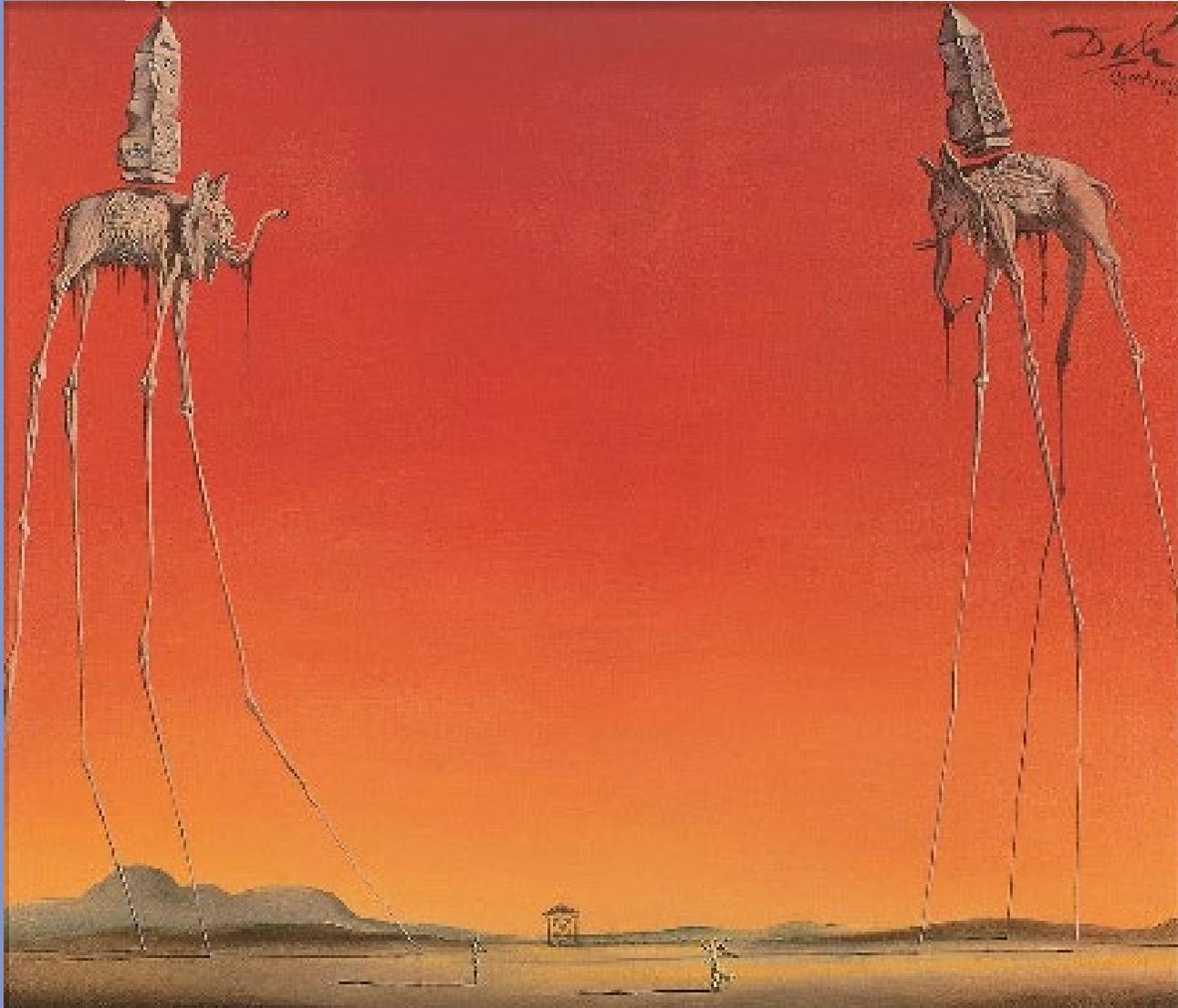


Eugène Delacroix

Young tiger playing with its mother

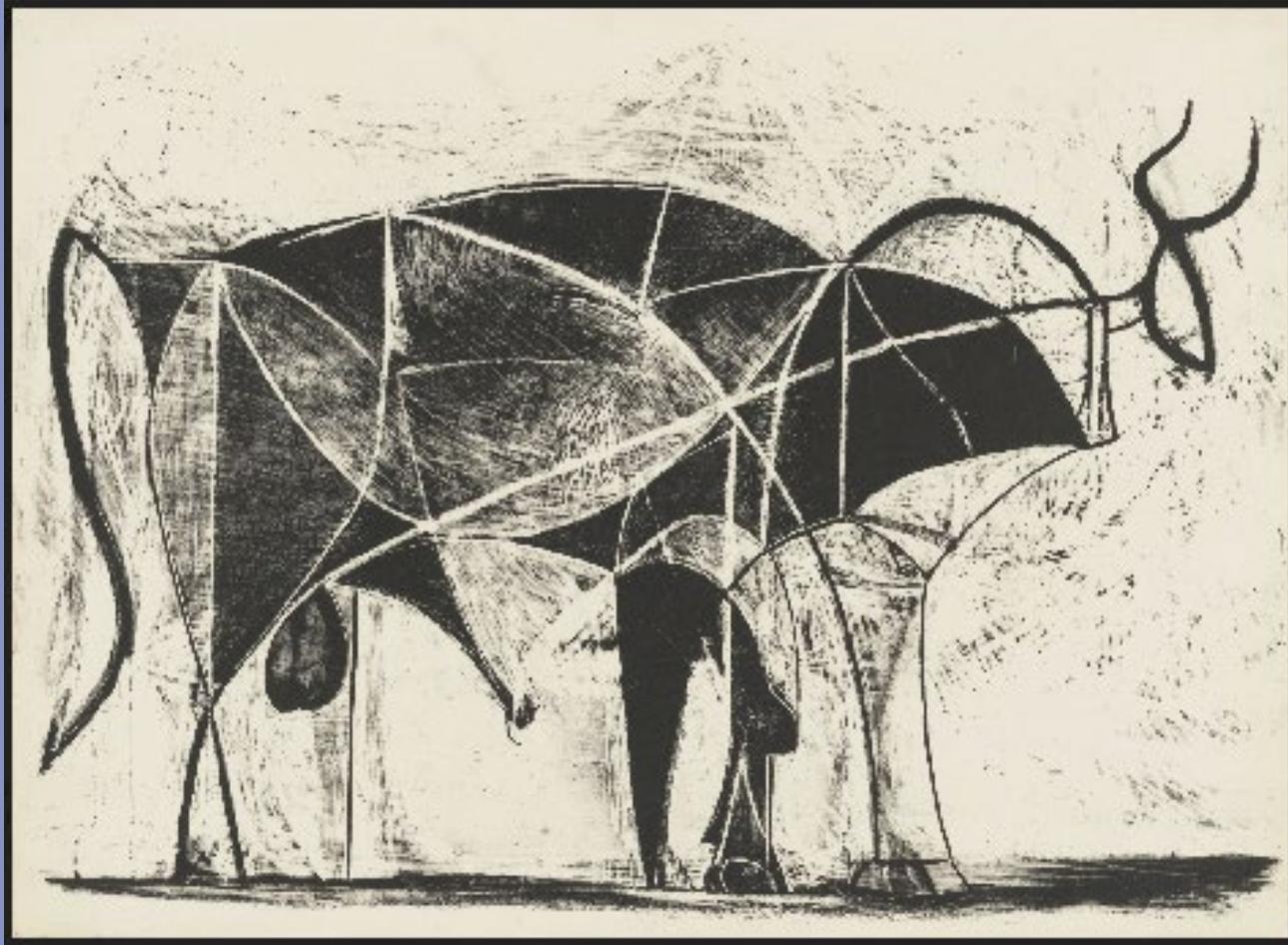
1830

- animals shown in their natural environment
- wild animals in a playful scene
- the elegance in wildness
- contradicting with the popular animal compositions
- detailed anatomy of animals
- no violence or indirect narrative for symbolism
- use of contrast to depict hierarchy between the tigers



Salvador Dalí
The Elephants
1948

- altered anatomy of animals
- use of the symbolic meanings
- natural but highly fictional environment
- animals used to project a imaginary narrative
- animals become a new visual element for the painting
- surrealism



Pablo Picasso

The Bull (Le Taureau), state VII

1945

- visually similar to cave drawings
- lines and shades, almost no dimension
- personal interpretation of anatomy
- highly stylised and geometric
- cubism