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| Artist | Eugene Delacroix |
| Title | **Massacre at Chios; Greek Families Awaiting Death or Slavery** |
| Date | 1824 |
| Medium | Oil on canvas |
| Scale | 4.19 m x 3.54m |
| Scope | Places affected by war  (Participants of war) |
| Patron | None, it was not commissioned, but Delacroix’s own choice. |
| Location | The painting is based off the Greek war of independence 1824.  The painting was first shown at the 1824 Salon, but is located in the Louvre. |
| Function | Delacroix **romanticizes** the aftermath of the revolt. He exemplifies the haughty pride of the conquerors in contrast to the horror and despair of the innocent Greeks. He exhibited this painting at the 1824 Salon. |



**Historical context/subject of work:**

* The Massacres at Chios was a 19th century war of independence fought by the Greeks against the Turks, interested Eugene [Delacroix](https://www.artble.com/artists/eugene_delacroix).
* Greece had been occupied for four centuries before revolting against the Ottoman Empire in 1821.
* Though many Greek islands joined the fight for freedom instantly, Chios was reluctance as Chios gained much prosperity through centuries of trade with the Empire.
* Chios shifted after revolutionaries from another island came to Chios and encourages it to participate. As news spread to the Sultan of this, his Empire he turned against the island and sent a fleet to destroy the island and so began the massacre which included two weeks of murder, torture and rape.
* Villages were burned. Almost 90,000 people were killed, 50,000 enslaved and 25,000 exiled. The 2,000 remaining inhabitants survived by hiding in caves or leaving the island by sea. The Turkish completely destroyed Chios, leaving it completely burnt to the ground.

***Critical quotes:***

Delacroix commented – “The intelligence of the onlooker was unable to make its way into a subject in which every detail is isolated, where the eye cannot unravel the confused lines and colours, and where the primary rule of art appear to have been ignored by prejudice”

Delacroix said “I plan to do for the next Salon a picture for which I will take the subject from the recent wars between the Turks and Greeks … it will be a way to distinguish myself”

Baudelaire – “In this work all is desolation, massacre, and fire; everything bears witness to the eternal and incorrigible barbarianism of man. … Burnt-out cities, slaughtered victims, raped women, even children stabbed or thrown beneath the feet of horses… **A terrifying hymn composed to celebrate the doom and irremediable suffering**”.

**How does it exemplify the scope?**

The scope is Places affected by war and Participants of war.

Delacroix depicts an island setting where we can clearly the burnt out island of Chios in the background surrounded by the sea in the distance.

Place is also shown through costume of the Ottoman janissaries.

The victims in the foreground all wear traditional Greek costume.

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| **Formal features** | |
| Composition | The figures of the dead create a strong horizontal bar across the center of the canvas. The eye is free to move across each catastrophe whether it be from the dying couple or the baby clinging to his dead mother.  Another group in the background struggles to protect their lives just subtle enough not to distract attention from the main focus of the piece. |
| Colour or texture | The colors of the Massacres at Chios; Greek Families Awaiting Death or Slavery are very close in tone. The majority of the canvas is covered in muted colors to evoke a somber mood. Occasional splashes of blood red and sky blue add emphasis and drama. |
| Light & tone | Delacroix always had an interesting approach to lighting. He tended to leave a majority of the canvas in a mysterious half shadow while illuminating certain figures. Two of the murderers, just to the left behind the pile of dead people, are hidden in a dark shadow. Their faces are not easy to make out. The faces and bodies of the dead, on the other hand, are highlighted, emphasizing the turmoil and fright felt by the victims.  If one looks at the expressions of fear and despair on the faces of the inhabitants of Chios, it is clear that Delacroix wanted to show the shear brutality and injustice of this event. He was particularly fond of the genre of history painting and most likely hoped that this painting would help document such an unforgettable episode. |
| Space & depth or relief | Within the large scale painting, Delcroix makes effective use of space and depth; depicting the burnt out city in the background with the sea in the distance and the victims in the foreground with realism. Light is focused on the foreground to emphasise the depth to the shadowy background. |
| Line or brushwork | Delacroix uses a quick, blurred brushstroke, creating the impression of desolation. It seems unfathomable that such tragedy could actually be real life, as he paints the Massacre of Chios like an illusionary nightmare. |

**Cultural/social factors:**

Delacroix decided base the subject about the war between the Greeks and the Ottomans as it had the attention of the people.

Delacroix planned to make his name by depicting a contemporary subject to be shown at the Salon.

The event evoked international outrage, and led to an increase support for the Greek cause worldwide.

The event fitted well the emotional romantic views and style of freedom and humanity. (…link to revolutionary France in Liberty Leading the People…)

**Artist’s involvement:**

Eugene Delacroix paints with the realism of the great masters. The influence of his greatest idol, Michelangelo, can be seen in the forlorn figures of the Massacres at Chios; Greek Families Awaiting Death or Slavery. The bodies are painted in a classical style, their proportions close to real life but slightly idealized.

Delacroix chose Dante as source of inspiration to paint some of his paintings. He was the most emblematic romantic painter of the first third of the 19th century and his influence extended to impressionist’ painters. We can see colours as red, yellow, etc…, the illumination and the half-naked bodies these are features of romanticism in this painting

**Political factors:**

**In the Scio, dualities are portrayed in a scenario depicting the consequences of war without reference to glory. On the one hand, in the minds of Europeans, the war represented the struggle between Christianity and Islam, between civilisation and barbarity, between good and evil. Delacroix, commented Haskell, “was embarking on something quite new in art...there were no real precedents for the large-scale painting of contemporary brutalities…” adding, “why the picture proved to be of such overriding importance was that its break with conventional drawing and composition confirmed ... the existence of a new school of French painting which was at once called Romantic and which attracted to it a great many talented young artists.**

**Critical texts: Revolution, Death, Transformation and Art: Delacroix’s Scenes from the Massacres at Chios - Areti Devetzidis**

**Delacroix himself was very interested in gaining public acceptance and mainstream**

**success and he decided early to capture public attention by creating works, for instance**

**The Barque of Dante (1822), that were both “...familiar and strikingly novel” (Eisenman,**

**2011:77).**

**At the same time, Delacroix was fascinated by the Romantic Theodore Gericault,**

**whose painting, The Raft of the Medusa (1818–9), was deemed too radical for the**

**state to purchase, on account of its perceived criticism of the government of the day.**

**It was however the inspiration for Delacroix’s submission to the Salon in 1824, Scenes**

**from the Massacres at Chios, a painting almost as daring as Gericault’s Medusa. Scio**

**also showed a contemporary event with no centrally significant figure, and because it**

**depicted defeat instead of a triumphant topic from antiquity, or a portrayal of French**

**military victory, it created a “...storm of controversy that persists even today...” (Fraser,**

**2004:39).**