Process Portfolio

Mary Verkuilen

"White Gold", Aykut Aygogdu, 2018

"Clout Demon", Aykut Aydogdu, 2018

Investigation:

For my artist inspiration, I was drawn to the haunting digital illustrations of Aykut Aydogdu. Residing in Turkey, Aydogdu's Surrealist portraits combine **realistic forms with unusual elements**, such as a bouquet of flowers replacing ones eyes, or removing a portion of a face to reveal a bird's head. His portraits are said to reflect the **dilemma's of daily life** through symbolic motifs and demonstrate imagery that tend to **connect the the collective unconscious with the personal**. The depicted forms also exhibit signs of isolation and melancholy in an instance in which the **real and the fictitious come together**, which originates new emotions and transmits delusions. I was strongly appreciative of the concept behind his artwork, especially in regards to how each piece carried this concept as though they were depicting parts of a story regarding a society burdened with fictitious elements. In general, I found each illustration hauntingly beautiful and was drawn to creating a portrait within this style

One portrait in particular I was drawn to was "Clout Demon", which depicts the profile of a girl whose face is severed from the rest of her head. Given my concept regarding puppetry, I liked the idea of severing the a portion of the form to not only emphasize the inanimacy of the form, but also to stress the idea of an **unseen power forcefully severing the connection a person has with themselves**. Looking at this piece, I liked the idea of the separation showing the person as being solid as opposed to a a hollow shell, which, when used in relation to my piece, would not only further the idea of puppetry, but also by showing the solidity making up the foundation of the form. In Aydogdu's work, I saw this as reflecting a **strong will being severed**, which was what I wished to depict. Solidity in a person is also said to reflect sensibility and is used in the context of a "solid citizen", referring to one whose reliable and often at a point in their career that limits any further fulfillment. I also liked this idea as I felt it further developed my theme, showing a tediousness to **always accepting the actions those in control execute.**

Another one of Aygogdu's pieces I was drawn to was "White Gold". The pale, isolated form emphasizes the inky black tears streaming from the right eye as well as the jeweled choker on the base of the neck. I found the overall piece to be hauntingly beautiful, especially in regards to how tears are only streaming from one eye. The illustration highlighted a **hidden sadness** underneath the **beautiful and controlled figure**, which I thought was an interesting concept to depict and could further my given theme. Inspired by this artwork, I wished to depict my illustration as containing a **stoic appearance** to emphasize their **apparent acceptance of their situation** while also containing an element, such as tears, to **indicate** their **resentment** towards their current condition. I was unsure whether I wished to use paler hues for both the hair and skin in order to emphasize the most important portions, or whether I should depict a more realistic form with warmer flesh hues. However, whichever color scheme I used, I did wish to depict the form as being put together and maintaining an air of perfection like "White Gold". This piece connected to my idea of depicting a marionette as I had already associated marionettes with being "perfect" and put together.

Planning
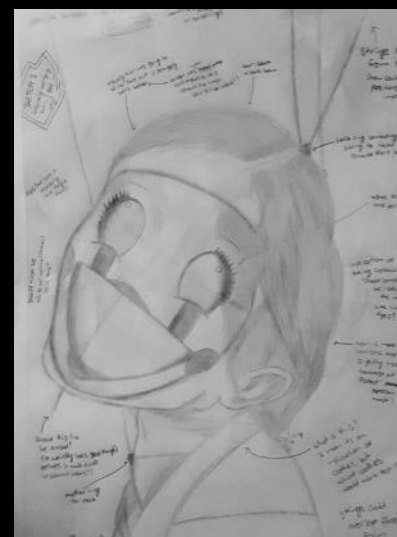
For my first sketch, I decided to depict a simplistic form as I was unsure how I wanted to represent my concept. When thinking about marionettes, my mind immediately went to the character The Marionette, also known as The Puppet, from the horror game Five Nights at Freddy's. This character's appearance is very simplistic and classical while also possessing a **hidden insincerity**. The character themself is also very conflicting, being that they seem both **cheerful yet sinister** at the same time. As I'm a fan of art that holds this same idea, I wished to have my illustration depict this concept and attempted to draw a form that is both cheerful in sinister. For this sketch, I decided to included elements similar to this concept and used pale and hollowed facial features. I decided to depict a simplistic form as I was unsure how I wanted to represent my concept.
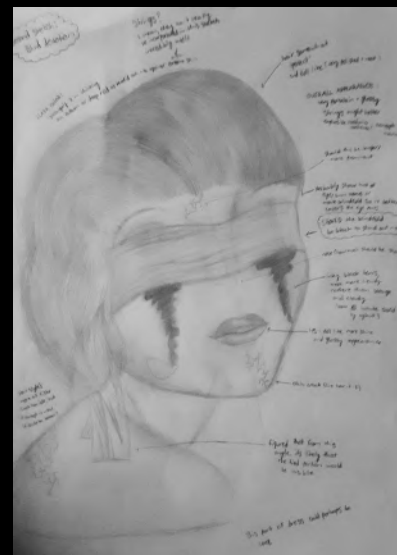

My second sketch was my attempt at trying a new way to portray my theme. In this drawing, I strayed away from the puppetry theme and instead drew a person looking over their shoulder wearing a blindfold leaking inky black tears. My idea behind this sketch was to metaphorically and physically convey the idea of **blind devotion** to people responsible for harmful actions. I attempted to emphasize this through a blindfold in attempt to emphasize their apparent ignorance to the situation as well as their **refusal to see reality**. However, the tears streaming from the blindfold as well as the slight cracking of the form indicate their awareness and dislike of the situation. The small cracks breaking among the form are supposed to represent how this feigned visible impairment causes the person to reak, and represents a decrease in mental health.
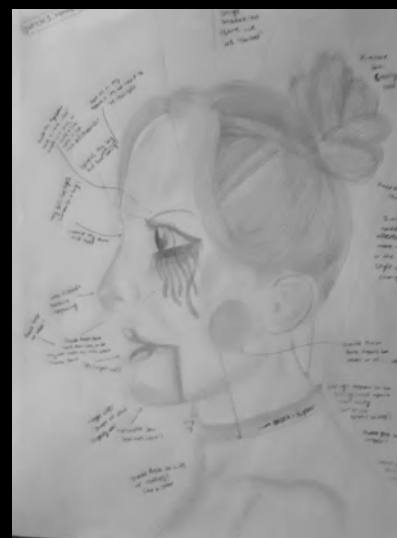
My third sketch was the one I based my final illustration off of as I found it to be the **best representation of both my artist inspiration and my theme**. For this sketch, I attempted to combine the ideas behind my past two sketches, being the marionette from the first sketch as well as the delicacy and mournful figure from the second sketch. I decided to create a realistic marionette that appeared both **cryptic and beautiful**. I decided to include the dark tears from my last sketch, however I drew them as being thinner and snake-like as opposed to the thicker shapes in my second sketch. I was originally going to draw the tears as being more realistic in shape, however I found the shapes I drew to be **unnerving**. In general, I saw marionettes as a representation of exaggerated, morbid beauty, and opted to express this idea in my piece.
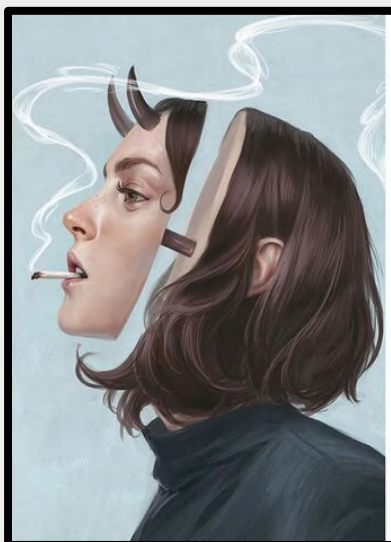
Experimentation

As my experience with working purely with colored pencils is limited, I decided to test out the material beforehand in order to understand how to best use it, especially in terms of blending. Having never completed a portrait with colored pencil, I decided to first lay out some swatches in order to determine which hues I wished to use for my illustration. I wished to use basic hues for the form as I wished to keep the overall figure **somewhat realistic** in imitation of both of my inspirations. I noticed how Aygogdu's forms tended to contain more "realistic" colors, being that the figure's skin tones as well as the hues used in the additional elements are representative of the real figure.

Before determining the hues for each of the features, I decided to test out an idea for a skin tone. In my prior years of art, I understood that neutral skin tones were created through a combination of **brown**, **red**, **yellow**, and white. I attempted to layer these colors together in imitation of a possible skin tone. Admittedly, I should've realized that layering these hues wouldn't work exceptionally well, not only due to my limited knowledge in this medium, but also because I was thinking about this blending concept purely in terms of paint. However, I was strangely drawn to using this skin tone as I felt it would make the figure look more **inanimate**. I decided to use darker hues for the hair and eye colors in relation to this skin tone. I also figured that if I was to alter this scheme into something different and/or lighter, darker hues would be a safer option.


3.) After this, I continued to layer hues for the skin tone. I decided to **correlate hues in imitation of the shades** of the face. My original plan was to create a smooth simplistic skin tone made up of only one hue. However, my continuation with the illustration made me realize using a layered technique such as this made up of distinct worked better with my illustration. I liked how the look of the skin made the figure appear more **sculpted** and **inanimate**.

5.) In regards to the technique I used for the skin tone, I realized another positive outcome that resulted from this idea. Originally I had attempted to blend these hues together in order to give the figure a smoother look in imitation of both "Clout Demon" and "White Gold". I had previously liked the look of these two illustrations and wished to bring this idea to life in my own illustration.
However, the combination of the color scheme used in this layered and striped technique gave the figure the **unintentional appearance of being made of wood** and realized it worked better than my original plan.

6.) On of the final steps of my illustration was coloring the hair. In my third sketch, I drew the figure as having a bun, which I felt best **emulated the role** of the character. Going forth with my illustration, I decided to give the hairstyle a somewhat more "realistic" appearance. I wasn't really sure how to accomplish this well, so I proceeded to draw a wavy shape on the top of her head.

7.) From there, I proceeded to layer the alternating line for hair, even thickening some of them for some contrast. The final step of my process was simply adding the background, which I decided to use plain blue as I felt any additional elements would be messy and remove focus from the main form.
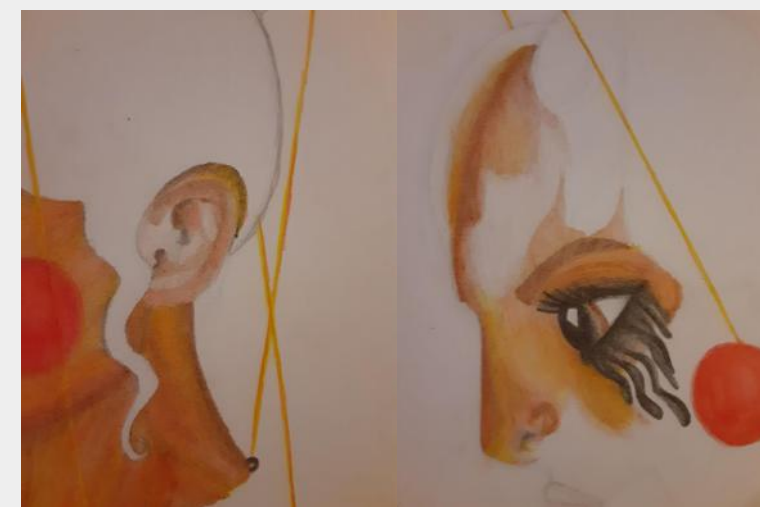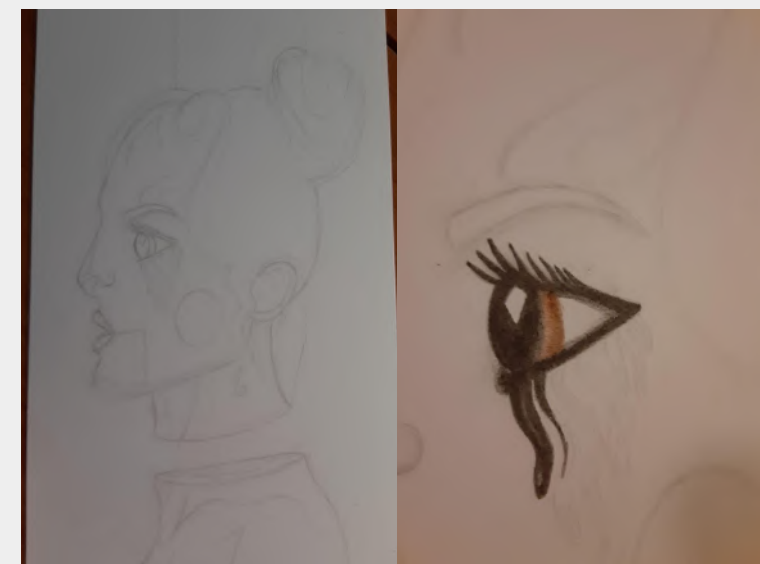
Manipulation

1.) Proceeding forth with my illustration, I decided to create a **faint**, **simplistic outline** inspired by my **third sketch**. An additional element I added was a **loose curl** underneath the ear. This idea was done somewhat subconsciously as I was attempting to replicate a more realistic hairstyle and realized that, in order to best demonstrate this concept, there had to be a loose section included. I was very happy with this look as it **emphasized the figure's doll-like appearance** while also showing an **imperfection** in their otherwise polished appearance.

2.) After I was satisfied with the look of my outline, I proceeded to color in the eye, figuring that if I was to color this portion first, I could easily branch out and lead into the other features with ease I began to layer a **light shade of brown** along the top and bottom of the eye. Though I was still unsure whether my tested skin tone would be the best choice for this piece, I proceeded to **layer yellow** and **red** on the top of the feature for a **pale copper color**

Investigation

For my artist inspiration, I was drawn to the work of Victor Brauner, a Romanian sculptor and painter of Surrealist imagery. Existing from 1903 to 1966, Brauner began his career through the National School of Fine Arts in which he was eventually expelled for creating anti-conformist paintings. It was around this time that Brauner began experiment with other styles including Dadaism, Abstraction, and Expressionism which were styles that were considered unconventional at the time and exemplified his **desire** to **create artwork emphasizing self-expressionism**.

When looking at Brauner's work, I was immediately drawn to **"Self-portrait with a Plucked Eye"**. I noticed how much this painting strongly differed from the rest of Brauner's work, which often displayed a heavy array of unusual images and situations that exemplify the Surrealist movement. However, his self-portrait consists of only one unusual element that is so subtle while also being strongly emphasized through its irregularity. I liked the idea behind **subtle abnormality** in my illustration and felt as though this piece best exemplified what I wished to accomplish.

For my illustration, I chose the theme of Control in contrast to my previous sketch **"Obey"**. I actually struggled quite a bit thinking up images associated with this theme as I had originally planned on making this illustration positive by showing the prior illustration bettering their situation and regaining control over their life. However, I felt like that concept was somewhat weak and left many questions unanswered. I found myself **curious about the character's story**, specifically regarding the reason for their obedience and who exactly is responsible for their situation.

The character design in my illustration takes inspiration from a Creepypasta called The Puppeteer, a vengeful spirit who targets the emotionally fragile and feeds on loneliness and depression. Originally known as Johnathan Blake, his dislike for his existence resulted in the ending of his life. However, Blake's spirit remained restful, resulting into his reincarnation as The Puppeteer who, after realizing his life was filled with decisions others made for him, he began to not only proceeded to exemplify control of his own life, but dedicated his existence to dominate and twist the lives of others, often manipulating them into ending their own lives. I was immediately drawn to the idea behind this character as he **embodied my theme** perfectly. I liked how the character could be seen as relating to both **physical control** while also being a **personification of depression** and **mental/emotional control**.
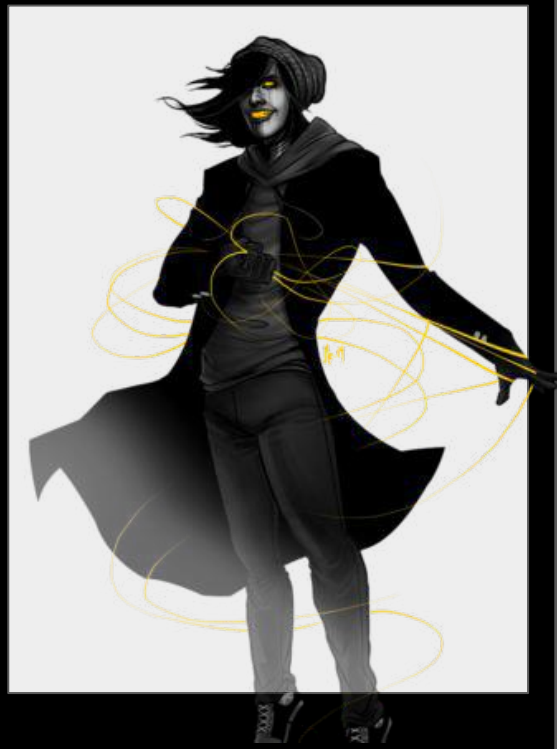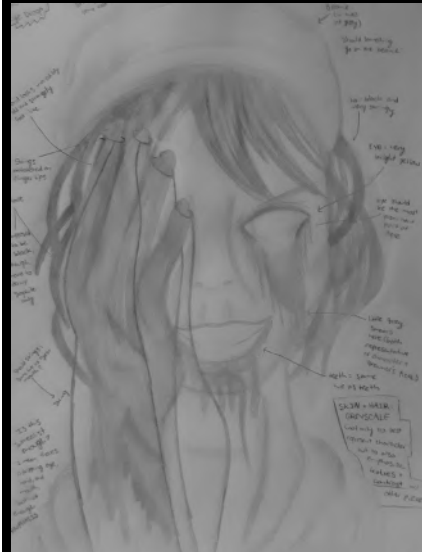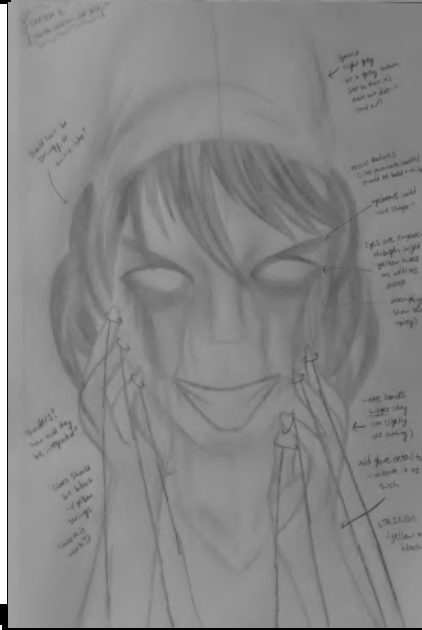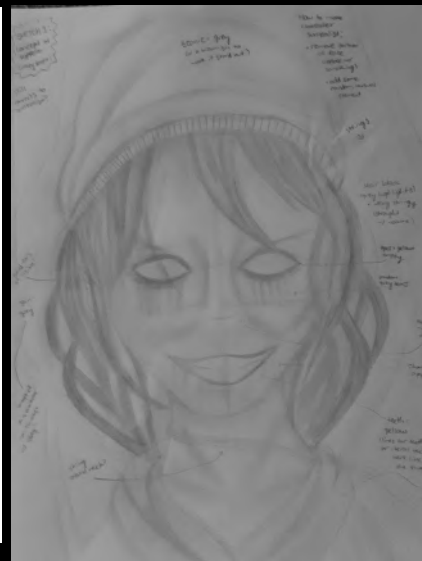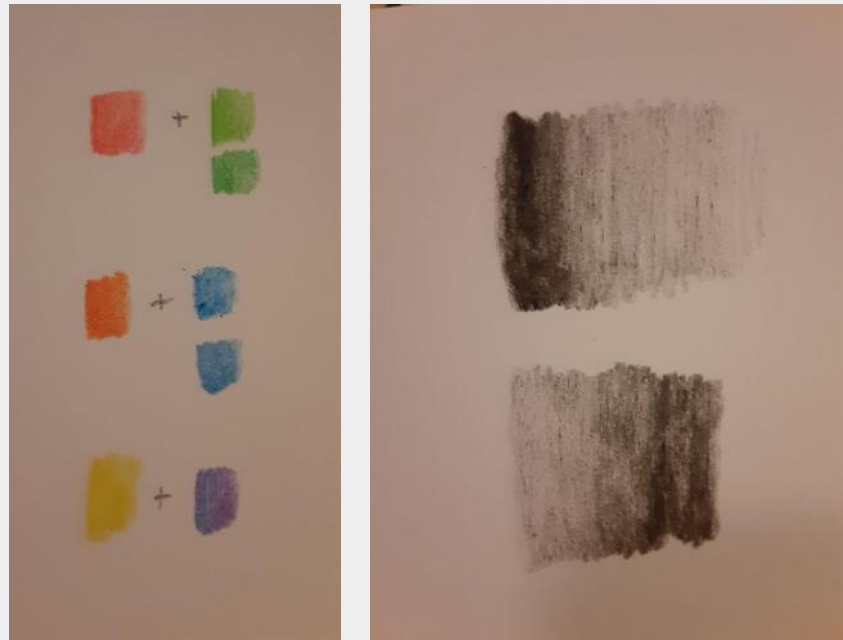
Planning

As this was my first sketch, I decided to start off by drawing a **basic representation** of the character. One of the key things I noticed about the character was how much **emphasis** was placed one his **eyes** and **mouth**, being that the overall form is done in shades of black while the eyes and mouth are bright yellow. I rather liked this existing feature as it was, and made sure to make note of that in my sketch. The main reason I appreciated the current color scheme was because it strongly **emphasized** the **deviousness** of the character and would have a **stronger contrast** to my other illustration. I also liked how the darker hues of the character made them appear to be working in the shadows and **behind the scenes**, almost as though they wish to **remain anonymous** and unseen. It played with this idea of how being controlled and manipulated is **not always obvious** to the vulnerable party. I felt like it would do both the character and my theme justice if I kept this same idea.

My second sketch was my **first attempt at using the components I had wished to incorporate** in my illustration. For this drawing, I had The Puppeteer have one hand covering their left eye with the visible eye drooping like Brauner's painting. One defining characteristic of The Puppeteer are the tears leaking from his eyes, so I attempted to draw them as though they were **melting** with the rest of the eye. I was rather proud of doing this as it **further exaggerated the deformity** of the character and was very unnerving to look at. I also decided to further the melting concept through the dripping hand and mouth. I was unsure whether I should incorporate a drooping effect on any other portion of the piece and figured it'd be best to try and incorporate this concept into various sections of the piece to understand my preferences. This sketch was also my first attempt at drawing a hand with strings in the piece. I realized I was rather fond of this idea as it **emphasized the character's relation to the other illustration**. I figured that whatever color I chose for the strings for this piece (likely yellow as that seems to be a main hue of the character) I'd use for the strings for the other one.

My third sketch was the one I ended up using as **reference for my illustration** as I felt it best **emulated** everything I wanted for this piece. My hatred for hand drawing made me wish to never have that experience again, so naturally I decided to bring it back, this time including two hands. However, I was rather fond of the right hand I drew, so it wasn't an entirely stressful process. I also liked the look of two hands as opposed to one as it seemed more **balanced** and **complimented the entirety** of the piece well. Something I was unsure of while creating this sketch was whether I should have only one eye droop like Brauner's painting, or whether it'd look better to incorporate that in both. For this sketch I decided to just go ahead with both as I felt like there'd be more **balance within the overall piece**. I also liked the positions of both hands as they appear to be almost cupped under The Puppeteer's chin, a position often associated with being wistful or proud of an occurring situation. I also like how overall, the sketch is very **straightforward** and **exemplifies** both my **theme and artist** inspiration.

Experimentation

One of my **favorite** existing qualities of The Puppeteer was his **monochrome appearance**, which I found emphasized the character being **undetectable** and easily overlooked. I liked how this trait **exemplified** my theme as it stressed the idea of hidden control, and that very often those responsible for manipulation are not always so obvious. I proceeded to create a gradation scale of black in order to determine how to **best imitate the hues of the existing character** as well as to understand which **shades** I should use in correlation to the additional elements I created. I struggled the most with determining the hand hues, which I believe are actually sold black gloves. I realized that the positions I drew the hands in would possibly make them accidentally blend in with the hair, so I struggled the most with determining what I should do for them. I was also unsure how to emphasize the gloves as being gloves rather than hands as my attempt to do so in my second sketch resulted in the character looking scarred.

Manipulation

The final part of my hue process/experimentation was determining the correct color for the **background**. I realized that, as I wished to stress the contrast between my two illustrations, I wanted to chose a color that not only worked with the existing figure and imagery, but also **contrasted with the background of the other illustration**. I proceeded to make swatches of complimentary colors to determine which ones would work best. I struggled with this part quite a bit as I had **several things to consider** going forward. I was hesitant of using red and green as the colors seemed off-putting with either illustration and, in general, are often associated with holidays. I was stuck between yellow and purple and orange and blue and finally decided on the latter. There were several factors that influenced my decision that related to both my prior color scheme ideas as well as what I discovered why experimenting with the medium. For one, I wished to use yellow for the strings, so including a yellow background for either of the illustrations would not be in my best interest. I realized as well that purple and yellow are very often associated as being positive colors, which would severely limit interpretation of my theme. I decided to use orange for this illustration as the hue worked well with the overall scheme while also **emphasizing the twisted nature of the character.**

1.) One of the first things I had to decide before starting to draw was deciding which image I wished to replicate and, if any, which features I wished to change from the sketch. For this illustration, I regarded my **third sketch** as reference as I not only liked the images I included, but also because I realized it best exhibited both my theme and artist illustration. As my reference image was just a sketch, I didn't really spend much time on perfecting proportions, and there were several things I wished to improve while sketching out the outline for my illustration.

2.) After I finished with this outline, I proceeded to draw in the **strings** using yellow colored pencil. Originally, I was going to sketch them out in graphite like I did for the other portions of the outline, however I knew that tracing such a pale color would likely result in an unusual grayish hue that would be difficult to perfect. I proceeded to draw some strings wrapped around the tips of each finger. I was sort of worried that the strings wouldn't be visible while I colored in the rest of my illustration and added a **light layer of orange** to compensate.

3.) Proceeding forward with coloring, I decided to start with the **nose**. There were many reasons behind my decision, though it was mostly because it was the one element purely in the center. I realized that by starting with this feature, I could focus on **balancing the other features in accordance**. In my sketches I noticed how I drew the nose incredibly small as it **wasn't as important** compared to the mouth and the eyes, so I proceeded to keep it as such. I also decided to have the nose **square** as it **complimented** the rest of the features.

4.) From there, I began to color the **eye droop in accordance** to the shades in **Brauner's piece**. I attempted to included a highlighted section near the top, which ended up not being as visible as I had originally hoped, however it still worked with the overall composition of the piece. I then added in the tears streaking down each eye to place further **emphasis on the melting qualities** of each eye. I settled on a medium shade that was both visible but not the most prominent feature.

5.) After I completed the face, I moved forward with the **hair**. In all of my sketches I had drawn the hair as being made up of thick, individual curls. I had previously done this style as I had thought it looked unnerving an reminiscent of strings. However, while attempting to sketch out this idea in my final illustration, I realized how much I strongly **disliked how it looked with the rest of the form**. I proceeded to illustrate a hairstyle inspired by, but not an exact replication, of this idea. I decided to have his hair appear as a **more realistic** version of what I have sketched, being that it still had a stringy quality to it while being composed of thinner curls.
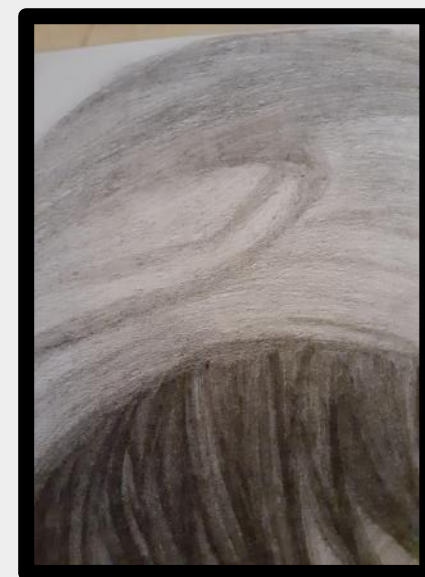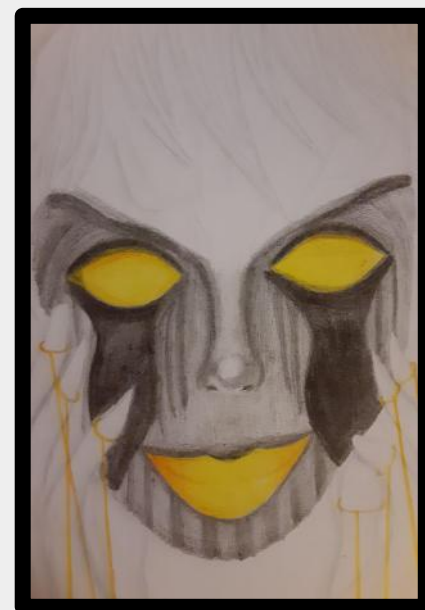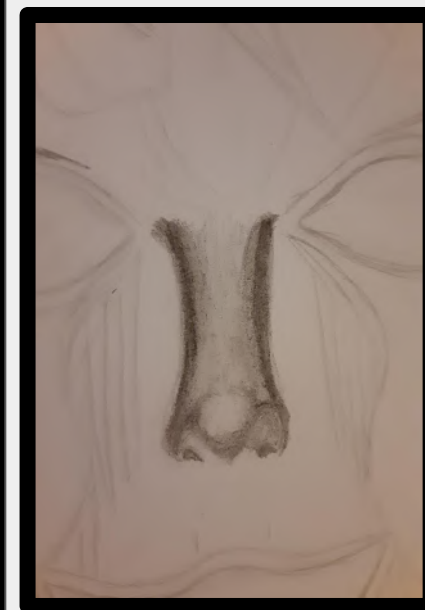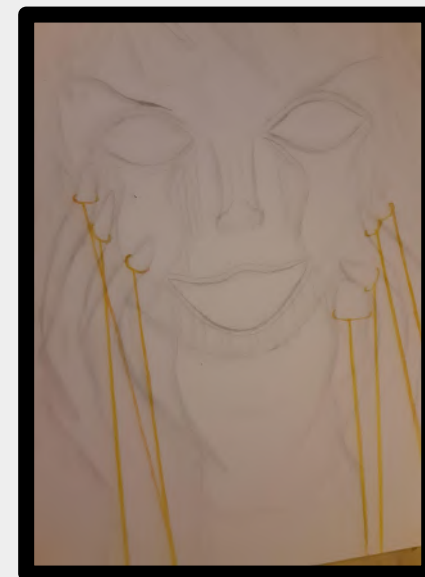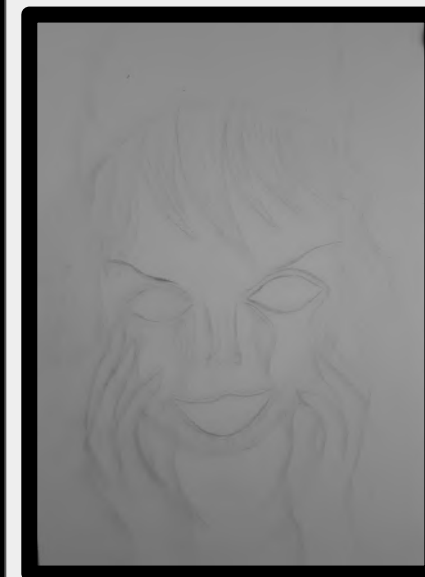
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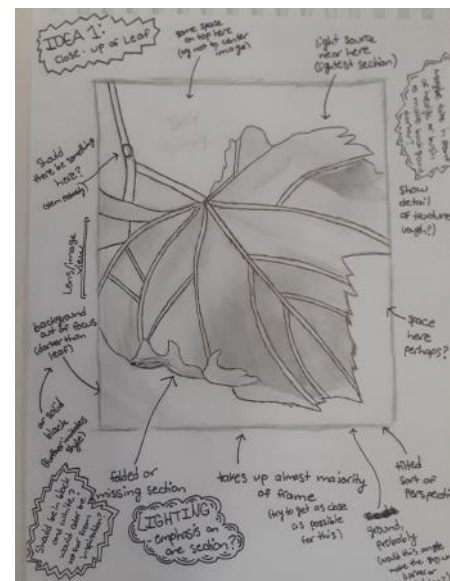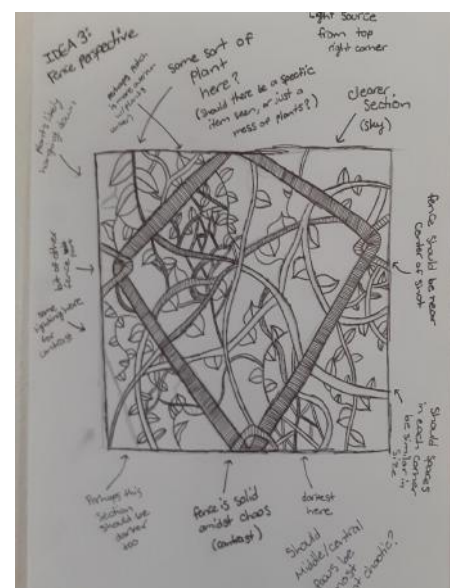

"Agave" . Imogen Cunningham, 1930

While exploring the techniques and styles of various photographers, I was immediately drawn to the work of Imogen Cunningham. Her photography style consisted of a close up version of the subject with harsh lighting against a dark background. During her "Medium Period", Cunningham's work focused on botanical imagery. She demonstrated abstract detail of the represented **forms**, using bright lighting to **emphasize** certain sections. Her style is representative of both the modernist and pictorialist photographers, embracing aesthetic as her main focus. It was also said Cunningham only took "pure" photos, lacking any manipulation or effect and only using natural sources. After studying her work, I became appreciative of her use of lighting as well as how she focused on the detail of her subjects. Each of her photos exemplified the beauty of simplistic or otherwise overlooked things such as the veins of a leaf or the petals of a flower.

I discovered I was drawn to this style of photography and subconsciously found myself wanting to capture the abstract **forms** of objects in nature. I noticed that Cunningham's work also focused on abstract images as well. Specifically, I was inspired by her photo "Agave". Her use of bright, fluorescent lighting **emphasizes** the right sections of the **form** while dismissing the bottom left half. The monochromatic **hues** causes the viewer to appreciate the overall **form** as well, which was something I wished to capture in my final piece. I decided to also have my final piece consist of an object in nature as the central focus. This was not because these were the central **forms** in Cunningham's piece, but also because I figured I could have more interesting results with the **textures** and also experiment with the lighting at different times of day. I realized in regards to the figures in which I planned to photograph, there would be many limits to altering the lighting.

Another one of Cunningham's photos, "Glacial Lily (False Hellebore)" is illustrative of her style, though using much brighter lighting to **emphasize** the detailed **form** of the piece. I was unsure what type of contrast I wished to exhibit in my piece, whether it be in the **texture** of the form or the lighting reflecting off of it. For my final, I decided to focus on the close, abstract form of figure and emphasize it's **contrast** to the background it which it stands. Although Cunningham's botanical photos tended to have a **textured** form among smoother surroundings, I wished to counteract this with a smooth form against a chaotic background. I wished to have a photo that not only highlighted concepts in my inspiration, but were also distinctive of my own style.

"Glacial Lily (False Hellebore)", Imogen Cunningham, 1927

Planning

Considering my lack of experience with the present medium, I had both many and no ideas for what I wished to present. Though Imogen Cunningham's focus on botany provided me with at least a slightly more limited choice, I was still uncertain, and proceeded to create a series of diverse sketches illustrating previously witnessed subjects I believed would make for an interesting photo. On the left, I created two small sketches of mushrooms that displayed interesting distribution of value, and made a few notes detailing how to best center them in the frame.
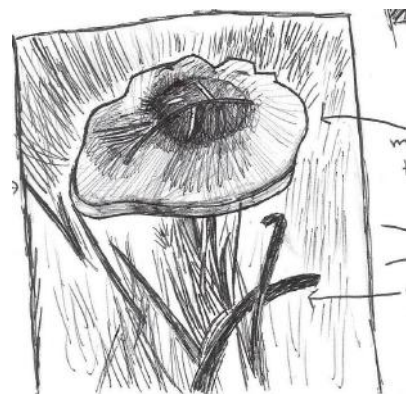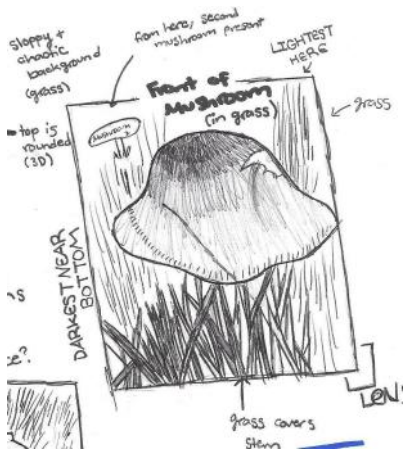

For my first sketch, I decided to depict a detailed view of a leaf. While gaining inspiration for my final piece, I found myself drawn to the complex **textures** and interesting line designs they contained. I also loved how the light reflected off of the surface, which created interesting depth and **contrast** in the overall **form**. I began my drawing by sketching out a basic leaf form diagonally on my paper. I liked the idea of the main image emerging from a top corner almost lazily, making it appear more natural and less orthodox. I also added in the stem as I thought it would be interesting to photograph a leaf still attached to a branch. With this idea, I wanted to capture individual beauty rather than the whole collective. I also thought that the rest of the leaves would create an interesting backdrop, one that limited the amount of light perceived while also highlighting the central image. I wanted there to be a bit of **space** on the top and bottom sections of the photo in order to show the shape of the leaf while also having it close enough to exhibit detail. However, I decided against this option as I wished to experiment with other objects in nature.
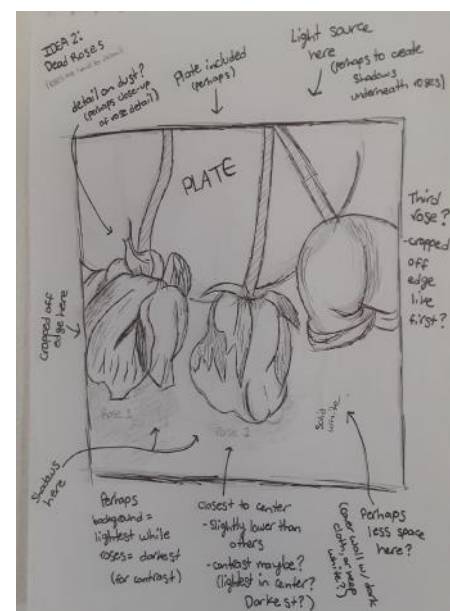

For my second sketch, I decided to reference an existing arrangement I witnessed, which was a bunch of hanging dried flowers. I was not only fascinated by the beautifully morbid display, but I also had ideas revolving around what detail I could highlight in the picture too. Though my sketch doesn't show it, the flowers I referenced were covered with dust that **emphasized** their aged appearance. I figured that the dust could perhaps be a central point for the photo as I personally thought it was very interesting among the deceased petals. Also, unlike my previous sketch, the background would be lighter than the central image, creating **contrast**. However, I quickly against this idea as I didn't like the photos I received testing out this idea. I realized I didn't like how I was unable to obtain a detailed shot of the roses, meaning the only pictures I was able to take were just of the flowers hanging against a white background, which wasn't very interesting to look at. I was also unable to move the flowers in any other way as the petals were prone to falling off, which I guess should've been expected.

For my third sketch, I focused on perspective, specifically the view from a chain linked fence. From my previous sketches, I understood my focus was on detail and hypothesized a creative method for portraying it. In this sketch, my plan was to position my camera against a single fence link and photograph what was seen. I included some **space** on the sides to indicate where the image was taken from. I was unsure what exactly I hoped to photograph behind the fence and drew some filler plants behind the link, thinking that the solid **form** could **contrast** with an unorthodox arrangement. My plan was to also position the link so it was near the center of the photo to indicate it as the focal point. While sketching, I was unsure whether I wished to blur the fence link and focus on the plants, or have the plants blurred and focus on the link. I was also curious whether it would be possible to focus on both, though I was unsure whether that would look too unusual. After experimenting with this idea, I realized it was not what I wished to portray for my final piece.

Experimentation

Lighting
As Cunningham's work often had lighting as a strong component in her work, I decided to focus on this as well. My idea was to have the light distributed in such a way that it **emphasized** the overall **form.** I proceeded to experiment with direct and indirect sunlight to determine what worked best.
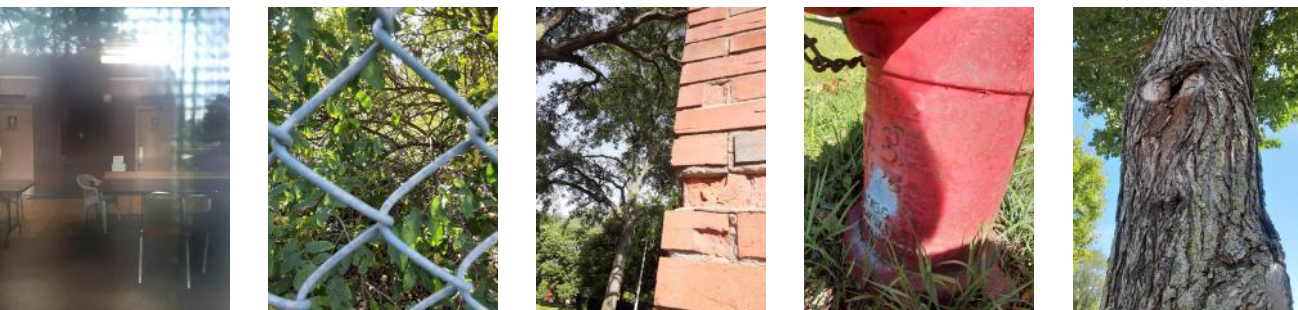

Form
I wished to focus on the overall **form** of the piece and took a series of photos that just focused on just this. I attempted to take each photo in direct lighting as I wished to only capture the figure, though I found this idea boring and only took a few pictures.

Perspective
I briefly experimented with perspective inspired by the ideas I had with my third sketch. Through this series of photos, I focused purely on this concept, ignoring any alterations or focus of lighting or contrast. However, I quickly realized my dislike for this concept as it simply wasn't a focus I was interested in portraying.

Process/Manipulation

Before attempting to experiment with perspective and how I wished to capture the final form, I first had to decide which time period would have the best lighting. As I knew the mushrooms I wished to photograph would be outside, I needed to know what lighting type, being a brighter afternoon or a dimmer evening, would work best with the figure. I began by going out into evening, assuming that the dimmer lighting would emphasize the paleness of the form.

From there, I began to experiment with positioning. I liked the idea of the mushroom slightly buried among the grass, though still mostly visible to the viewer. For my first attempt, in which I refer to as Mushroom at Dusk, I set my camera so that it was standing up in the grass, the lens peeking out from the tangled blades.

As impressed I was with this first image, I was curious to further my experimentation with this lighting by taking photos from higher above. Unfortunately, I quickly realized that this would be must more difficult than anticipated due to my inability to see. Perhaps this should have been obvious, however I incorrectly assumed that because I had little difficulty taking the first photo in this lighting, it would have the same result as before. However, from that position, I was unable to determine whether my camera had focused or not. I think this might've been because the paler hues of the mushroom acted similarly to an additional light source, making it easier for me to comprehend what it was exactly I was photographing.

Given my difficulties with that lighting, I instead began taking photos in the afternoon, assuming that I would have less difficulty seeing then. For my first photo, I attempted a simpler shot of a mushroom by showing it's overall form. To do this, I proceeded to prop my camera so it was approximately six centimetres from the figure. I was curious not only what type of mushroom I wished to use, but also the way I wished to do it, such as a close, detailed shot of the mushroom's cap, a simple photo of it's overall form, or having my main focus be on multiple mushrooms rather than a singular one. This first photo was more of an experiment to see not only the position, but whether I was able to function with this lighting. At this point, given how subtle the light was, I began to focus more on the form of the mushroom. Here, I found an interesting shaped one and wished to capture it. I was at what height would be best to take this photo, and proceeded to take a higher perspective. My goal was to capture the mushroom's shape and have this photograph emphasize it's unique simplicity. However, after taking this photo, I realized I was not fulfilling my goal of emphasizing the detail of the figure, and wished to capture a more detailed view. I proceeded to capture the pattern on the top of another one here, placing asymmetrical balance in the frame as well. At this point, the environment became much brighter than it was originally, and I immediately took advantage of it. Given my goal of using lighting to **emphasize** the **form**, I hoped this brighter light would help achieve my goal. I attempted to take an experimental photo in order to see whether this type of lighting had better **emphasis**. This proved true, and I attempted to use this lighting for my final. Finally, I adjusted the contrast of the image to replicate Imogen Cunningham's monochromatic pieces.

Investigation/Process

Although my original photo was shot in monochrome, I wished to use a different **color** scheme in my painting. After looking at different art movements, I was drawn to the **colors** used in the Post-Impressionist movement. This movement borrowed some, but not all, of the ideas used in the Impressionist movement and was dedicated to the ideas of abstraction through **form** and **pattern**. Paintings created following this movement tended to focus on emotional symbolism, using **colors** and images representative of things important to the artist and communicated messages from their subconscious. These artists also used an artificial **color** palette to portray emotion-driven perceptions of the world around them. These palettes consisted of saturated hues, multicolored shadows, and a rich range of hues. Artists also used distinctive brushstrokes in order to clarify that the piece was not intended to be realistic. They believed that art should focus on emotions rather than aesthetic beauty.

"The Parkway", Henri Manguin, 1905.

For my Impressionist artist, I was inspired by the work of French painter, Henri Manguin. His work combined techniques from both the Post-Impressionist and the Fauvist movement. Manguin's paintings tended to focus on either a woman's form, painted in a very feminine manner in the nude, or landscapes with lots of trees inspired by botany on the Mediterranean coast. When looking at his work, I was immediately drawn to his painting "The Parkway", specifically in Manguin's use of saturated hues and unorthodox brushwork. Each section of his painting is emphasized by its own unique mixture of warm and cool tones made up of subtly emphasized brushstrokes. I found it interesting how each section appears to contain a smooth assortment of random hues, only to be proven false upon closer inspection. Admittedly, I was most drawn to the **colors** themselves as well as this idea of implying **forms** through difference of **color**. I strongly appreciated the purposeful yet irregular placement of hues as well as the technique he used to do so, using subtle and slightly roughened brushwork to **emphasize** these hues.

"Banyan Tree", Trisha Keiman, 2015.

For my Fauvist inspiration, I was drawn to the work of Trisha Keiman, specifically her painting "Banyan Tree". Though Keiman herself was not part of the Fauvist movement, being that it existed between 1905 and 1908, her work takes inspiration from the styles and techniques used in the movement. Her paintings consist of bright **colors** **emphasizing** each individual **shape** and creating **balance** among the overall piece. I was especially drawn to "Banyan Tree"'s hue placement. Each section's assortment of hues is placed in such a way as to **contrast** with the other sections, such as the red and blue trees against the brighter blue and yellow background. I appreciated Keiman's ability to not only include an impressive variety of **color**, but also to use it in such a way that makes each one unique. One of the most compelling components to me was the brushwork, being that each section is composed of smooth, purposeful markings. In comparison to my Impressionist inspiration, I was more drawn to replicating the brushwork of this painting while using a color palette similar to Manguin, though I wished to see where my sketches and experimentation with the medium would lead me.

For my first sketch, I wasn't sure how I wished to represent a portion of my photo, so I opted for a depiction of the mushroom's overall **form**. This drawing is slightly less enlarged than what I later went for as I wanted to see what **shapes** and hues were incorporated. In this sketch, the darkened corner in the bottom left **emphasizes** the **shape** of the mushroom while also adding **contrast** between the the lightened hues of the figure and the dark, chaotic background. I also included the indented section of the mushroom so it leans slightly to the right in order to further demonstrate the existing **asymmetrical balance**. I attempted to draw the section as realistically as possible as well to focus on all of the detail provided. I was unsure how much detail I wished to provide in my final painting, such as the **texture** of each section, and figured it'd be best to add as much as I could. This way, as I continued sketching other ideas, I could best decide what I'd like to depict in my final painting. Overall, I liked the concept of using a less abstracted version of my photo, though I wished to focus on the more interesting detail found on the top of the mushroom.
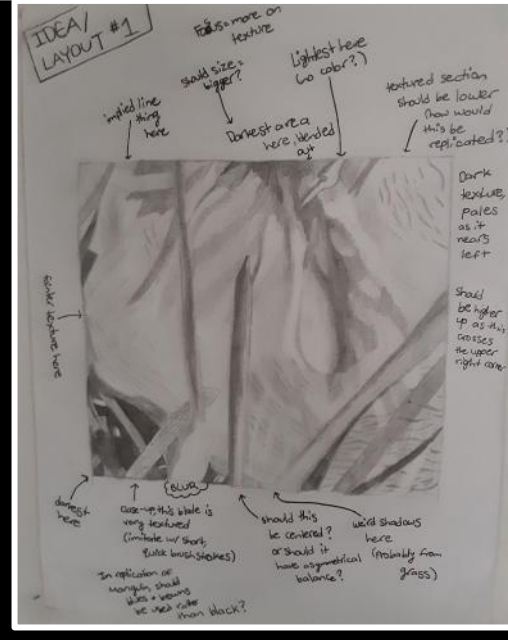
For my second sketch, I focused on the unique abstraction located on the top of the **form**. When looking at my photo, I noticed that the dark splotch on the top was what my eye was immediately drawn to and figured it would make for an interesting piece. I included some of the other detail found around the figure such as the grass across the left of the piece. For this sketch in particular, I was thinking about replicating the **color** palette of Manguin while replicating the solid brushwork of Keiman. I tried to make the detail of this sketch as smooth as possible while also copying the varying shades scattered around the form. Like the previous sketch, I kept this one in graphite rather than **color** it in as my focus was on the **shapes** found within that section rather than how I wished to paint them. Admittedly, this caused me to struggle later when determining which hues to use and how, though I wished to focus on one thing at a time. I wanted to focus on the dark splotch on the top, however I was worried it wouldn't like interesting if visible in the center of the piece, so I focused on a section that made this detail appear in the top near the middle.
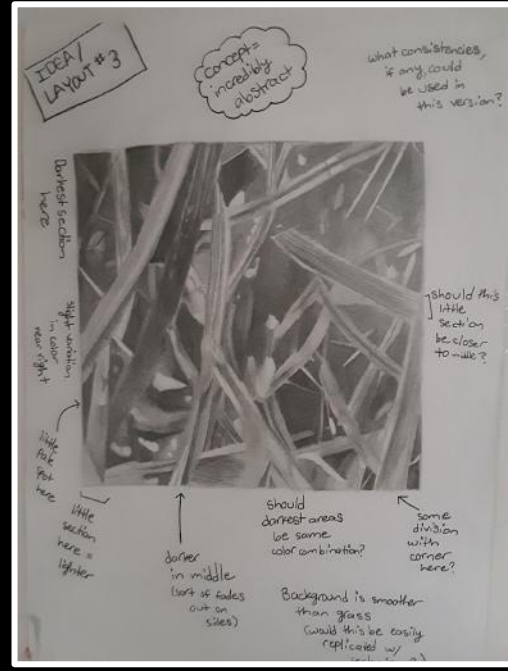
For my third sketch, I leaned away from realism and dove right into abstraction. This section focused on the unorthodox grass located in the bottom of the photo. I realized my first two sketches focused mainly on the mushroom and not enough on the grass, so I figured it'd be best for me to explore this option in case I liked it better. Like the other two sketches, I tried to draw it as close to the original as I could in order to represent any and all detail shown. However, this one was much more difficult to represent due to its complexities. I was also unsure which painting style would be best to represent this section, whether I should use quicker brushstrokes representative of my Impressionist inspiration or emphasize the solidity of each of the shapes using smooth brushwork similar to my Fauvist inspiration. In general, I thought the detail in this section would make for an interesting painting, however I was more drawn to the shapes and subtle gradations of the first two sketches. Also, given how intricate every part of this section is, I realized I'd likely be spending much more time on perfecting the shapes rather than focusing on **color** and brushwork.
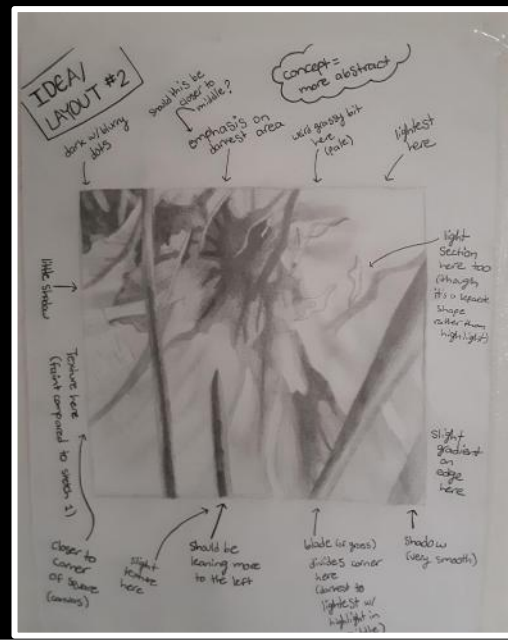
Manipulation

After transferring my image onto the canvas, I began to paint. My original idea had been to use distinctive brushwork in replication of Manguin, which I proceeded to do here. Given my difficulties experimenting with this technique, I had a number of doubts towards my ability to perfect it in my final. However, I had decided early on to replicate this brushwork style and refused to back down so early into painting.

I noticed how Manguin tended to use thicker brushstrokes, so I attempted to use a flat #4 brush to best replicate this. I proceeded to lay out an assortment of palish hues that corresponded with the shades in each section of the photo. As I noticed how the **colors** used in each of my inspirations was seemingly random, I decided to not have a set plan in terms of **color** placement and instead estimate based on what worked well in imitation of the photo.

As mentioned earlier, one thing I immediately noticed about the medium was how easy it was to blend, which made making distinctive brushstrokes without blending the paint incredibly difficult to me. Though I realized it wasn't entirely the medium's fault as, when presented with mediums with similar compositions, I tend to get distracted by their blending capabilities. Realizing that my only options were to either continue with a technique I despised or completely change up my entire plan, I decided to take the latter.
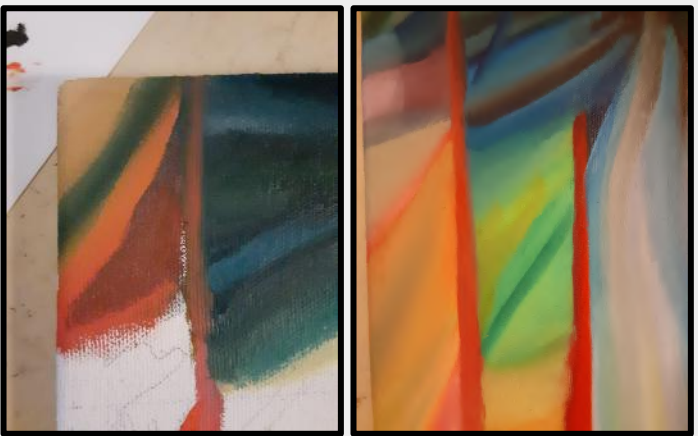
As I thankfully had two inspirations, I decided to replicate the smoother brushwork in Keiman's piece while still maintaining the softer hues of Manguin. Regarding the last section, I realized I wished to include some consistency to emphasize portions of the form while also maintaining a **balance** between abstraction and realism. To improve on this idea, I proceeded to add more yellow onto the middle and bottom of the far left portion to better its relation to the rest of the piece.

In terms of consistency, I knew that I wanted to paint the grass the same hue to demonstrate contrast among the rest of the piece while also showing it as separate from the form. Realizing I had not used much of my two red paints (Crimson and Brilliant Red), I decided to paint the grass in those hues. I also decided to limit the amount of gradation in the grass to **emphasize** their difference from the rest of the form. This was the same reason why I decided to paint the background a solid **color**, just so that it stood out as a separate entity from the rest of the piece.

Experimentation

My experience with oil paint was non-existent, so I felt it was necessary to test out the medium first rather than diving right into painting.For my first few swatches, I attempted to mix the pigment with water, which was done more out of personal inquiry rather than having a desire to include watered down paint in my piece. While applying the paint to paper, I discovered it applied much smoother than acrylic paint, which, I later discovered, was both a blessing and a curse. In general, I appreciated the overall composition of the paint, especially it's glossy appearance and how easily it was to blend.

My goal for creating these swatches was based around my plan to correlate hues based on the shades in the photo, being that shades that were bolder would become part of the darkest sections of the piece while lighter hues would become part of the lightest sections of the piece. From my perspective, having a set goal in **color** placement would initially disrupt the vibrant chaos portrayed in both of my inspirations. In both pieces, the artists used unusual combinations of hues that are random but purposeful. As I wanted to use distinct brushstrokes, I believed that planning out what **colors** I used where would be pointless as every section was just going to contain a blended mashup of various hues, so I assumed it would be easier to just base the colors off of the shades in the picture.

As my initial idea was to replicate the brushwork technique used in Manguin's painting while combining the **color** palette of both, I attempted to paint with distinctive brushstrokes. As I didn't want to waste any of my paint while also being unsure how this would go, I opted for creating little sections of paint. Attempting in vain to recall my prior knowledge of the Impressionist movement, my first attempts included small, quick brushstrokes of Sap Green and Brilliant Red. I attempted to first apply the green onto the paper using this technique, which, I discovered, was much more difficult to do than I had anticipated. As I mentioned earlier, the composition of the paint makes it incredibly easy to blend, and as I wished to make my brushstrokes noticeable, the medium was not helpful in providing this. Perhaps it was my limited usage of the specific paint, having only been accustomed to water-based paints, but nonetheless I attempted to use the same technique in a different hue in red.

Investigation
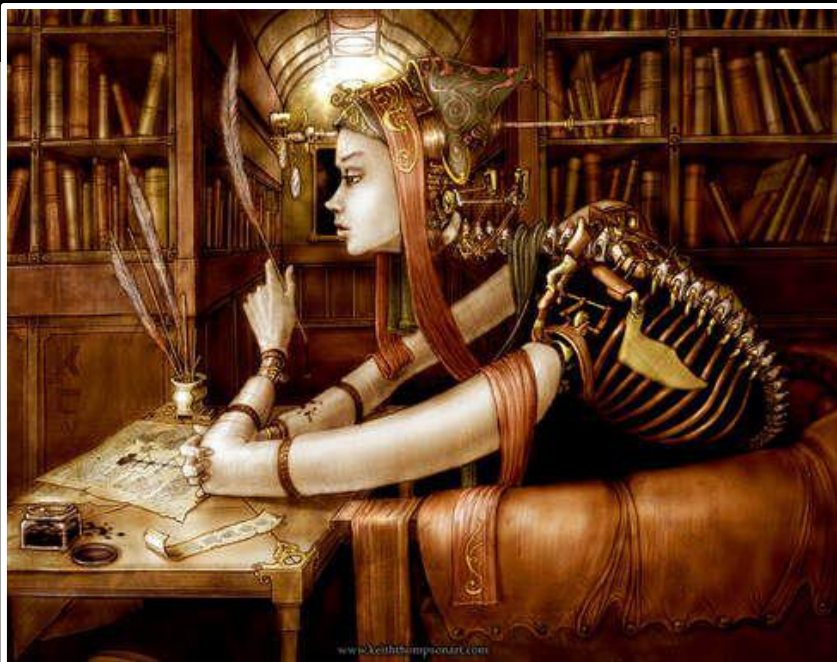
In reference to my own piece, I was most fond of his illustration "Scribe", which regards the story of an scrivener automaton working in a wealthy merchant's library. As with all of Thompson's personal work, he provides a rather unnerving backstory to this figure, detailing a world in which these humanoid machines (created through taxidermic human remains) are assimilated into penurious work positions, including servitors, laborers, and prostitutes, and additionally providing service through military work. Though considered illegal within this world, these machines are commonly used for tedious or arduous labor. In regards to this figure's lifestyle, the artist stresses the enslavement of this figure not only by regarding her employer as her owner, but also through the only other detail provided about the gentlemen, in which he has some extensive paperwork detailing the scribe's conformity to all applicable regulation.

I found myself rather fond of the elaborate story surrounding the figure, especially since I had never seen an artist weave such an intricate and unique story for a solitary artwork. In terms of its aesthetic appeal, Thompson's work consisted of these intricate forms and subtle hues that encourage movement, providing these elements constitute distinct forms scattered horizontally within the piece. In regards to my own piece, I was most drawn to the figure's elongated limbs that strangely appeared more jarring when combined with a mechanical form. Regarding a physical sculpture, I found using something of this composition could work wonderfully with some sort of sloped surface, given that it's flexible form could easily be integrated into this sort of environment.

"Giraffe", Andrew Chase, 2010

As I feared regarding purely an illustration for the elements of my piece would prove irritating when considering the physical piece, I proceeded to research additional artists that worked primarily with mechanical forms. I ended up stumbling upon Andrew Chase, a mid-western artist known best for his animatronic sculptures. I was rather intrigued by Chase's unique style that somehow managed to present figures on this fine line between abstraction and realism. Take his one piece, "Giraffe", for example. Looking solely at the figure's head, it appears as nothing more than a slightly unusual, but still obvious, interpretation of a giraffe. However, as more of the form becomes visible, it slowly becomes more skeletal and completely deviates from the more robust features constituting the figure's head. In general, the use of these skeletal limbs in relation to the system supplying the figure with versatility provides this illusion of resurrection, and causes the piece to appear grim.

Though I knew my sculpture would be humanoid, and therefore using a piece whose purpose is to mimic the positions of animal would likely provide difficulties, I found myself appreciating the various techniques that went into creating this form. As my initial plan was to mimic the form within Thompson's piece, I realized logically I would need some sort of pulley system that would loosen the limbs, but was solid enough to remain in one position for long periods of time. Additionally, basing the piece's composition solely on Chase's work would unfortunately inflict some sort of vulnerability on the piece, thus making it unsuitable to remain for long periods of time. Thus, I knew I had to find a suitable balance between the compositions of both Chase's and Thompson's work, and proceeded to experiment with a few different compositions.

Planning/Ideation Board

Below, I created a board outlining each of my ideas for this piece, including possible layouts as well as what I wished this piece should represent:

Site Specific Installation

Point of View Statement

Serving as a metaphor for the effects of living in an industrial society, "Automaton" illustrates how significantly humanity relies on technology to function, and illustrates the toll it takes on our subservience. Located on top of a hill leading into the most industrial part of my neighborhood, this piece is meant to provoke the viewers with a sense of shock and unease, asking them to consider the toll this constant reliance has on their lives.

Empathy Map

See	Thinks
Upon crossing over the bridge, individuals are greeted with large mechanical individual draped along the surface of the hill	The purpose of this piece is to question how much technology is integrated into our lives
Does	**Feel**
The piece "Automaton" serves as a metaphor for humanity's countless dependence on technology, provided its constitution on the figure's form that makes it essential for the piece's mobility	This sculpture is meant to provoke feelings of shock and unease into the viewer, provided the substantial dimensions of the figure as well as its unusual abstraction of the human form

Process Sketches/Ideas

Idea 1: Possible Perspective Layout
- Figure is standing to show possible constructional detail, specifically the underside of the torso to show the connection of the rib components
- Inclusion of "Scribe"'s hat; additionally adding joint mechanisms similar to that of Andrew Chase's work
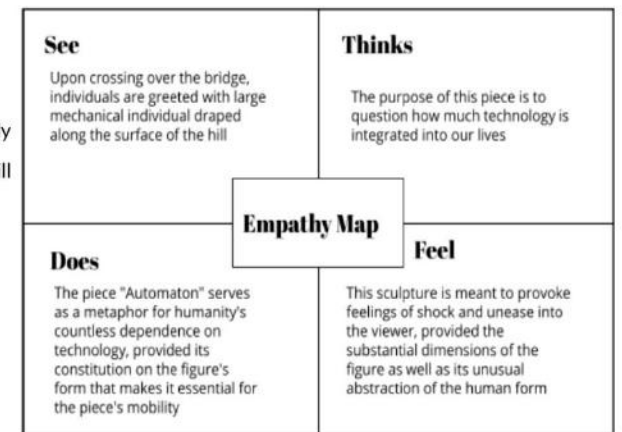- Significant detail in limbs, more to illustrate possible detail

Idea 2: Basic Layout
- Figure is expressed in nonchalance, as emphasized through the figure's position
- Rings constitute torso in relation to Keith Thompson's "Scribe", though additionally include joints for the figure's limbs
- Figure will be laying horizontally on section of hill

Idea 3: Possible Perspective Layout
- Presents figure facing the left, otherwise similar position to second idea
- Similarly includes metal rings constituting entirety of torso, though deviations in layout direction cause layers in middle
- Inclusion of hat in relation to "Scribe"; additionally includes pulley mechanism on joints similar to Andrew Chase's "Giraffe"
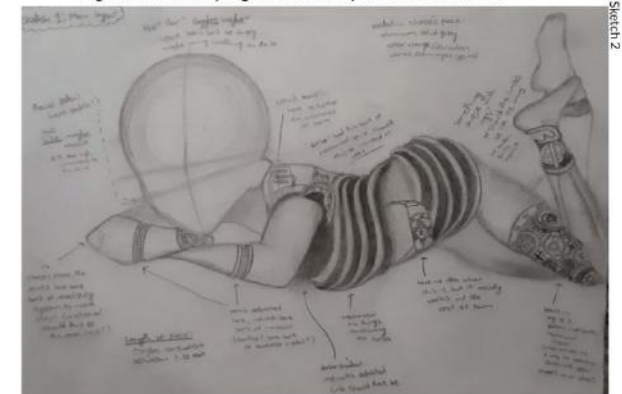- Piece similarly would be able to lay across section

Planning

Manipulation/Experimentation

Hill and Base Construction

Provided that my experience with creating models is severely limited, I feared a hasty execution would burden me with unnecessary issues, and decided to experiment with the medium beforehand. Despite appreciating my choice of using moss in imitation of the hill's grass, I realized it's composition would likely cause unnecessary patching, and thus questioned whether a layer of green paint was necessary. Using two foam spheres as the basis, I proceeded to paint one a light green while leaving the other one empty of color. After this, I glued a few chunks of moss to the form, and compared the final results. Admittedly, I didn't really find anything particularly substantial with the painted sphere, and realized the deviation in green hues made it awkward. As I found mixing a hue of that exact shade unnecessary, I decided to scrap the painting idea.

Starting off this piece, I decided to begin with the hill. Using a thin black board as the base, I began by measuring the sides in order to estimate the center of the board. With the dome being much smaller than I had originally anticipated, I decided to remove some of the additional space on the side of the board, first by measuring the amount of width I wished to have removed.

Taking two rulers, I made small dashes around the one and a half inch mark (3.81 cm), finding this to be an acceptable starting point. After this, I traced two lines from these marks down to the bottom of the board, additionally tracing these lines with an Xacto knife.

Moving forth onto the moss application, I must say this was by far the most unusual experience. After my brief experimentation with the moss on the smaller spheres, I luckily found there was no special adhesive I needed for applying the moss, provided that regular glue worked wonderfully. I began by pouring glue of a medium thickness, further spreading it with the side of the bottle after finding the glue liable to spilling over the sides of the form. After I found these layers acceptable, I began to take large chunks of moss and layer them onto the form.

As mentioned earlier, working with these mediums was definitely unusual, to say the least. For some reason, when the moss was combined with glue, it would sometimes turn into this sticky green paste that was utterly annoying to maneuver through. However, I must say that any worries I had about any visible white patches were quickly diminished by the pale green of this mixture. At some points I found myself having to use pliers to cover the entirety of the surface, which luckily helped terminate any future issues, especially with how well the moss stayed on the surface.

Wire Figure Construction

After realizing the flexibility of the form, I decided to do a wire sculpture to serve as the skeletal structure of the piece. Though in reference to this idea of skeletal, as well as the simplicity in shape it provided, I decided to use an image of a skeleton as reference for the anatomy. Tracing over the basic shapes of the form, these being the head, neck, torso, and limbs, I proceeded to go over these shapes with the only visible medium, this being a silver sharpie.

When this was complete, I decided to move onto the actual wire through estimating the possible lengths necessary to encompass the majority of the hill. Provided that I would be constructing the base of the form using two lengths of wire, I estimated the largest value near 30 inches (76.2 cm) and the smaller wire near 14 inches (35.56 cm). Using a yard stick, I proceeded to unravel two lengths of wire at these values, using a pair of wire cutters to remove cut the wires at these lengths.

Finally, before moving onto any of the construction, I realized the kinks caused by the wire would likely be a pain to work with later, and decided to rectify this issue by taking a thick cloth and kneading it against each of these bumps.

Regarding the skeleton template I previously established, I started constructing the head of the figure by folding the largest wire in half and creating a loop similarly shaped to the circle of the skull. Twisting twice at the ends' meeting point, I proceeded forth into tracing the form's torso. Using a pair of needle nose pliers situated at the skeleton's shoulder blade, I gently tilted the wire so that it was at a ninety degree angle, doing the same for the other side.

After this was established, I alternated between using pliers and my fingers to create the shape of the torso. Twisting twice at the base, I proceeded to move onto the legs, which was pretty simple and only required the pliers to create angles for the waist. The final step was adding hands, which I just used some of the wire at the base of the arms to do.

Moving forth into the laying portion of the process, I began cutting random lengths of wire and wrapping these around the limbs and general form of the figure. As mentioned earlier, my impatience with construction was definitely hazardous in this portion of the process, provided that the sharp edges of the wire was very much responsible for the wearing of my fingers. Luckily I was able to save myself from further harm by using pliers, though only occasionally as it severely stalled the process. Though I was proud of finding and using the foam, near the end of this process I found it easier to hold the figure, in which the several sharp wire edges became a greater threat, however I was able to work much easier with the legs, especially when realizing I had yet to add feet.
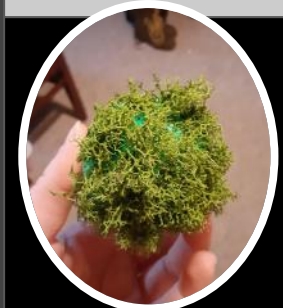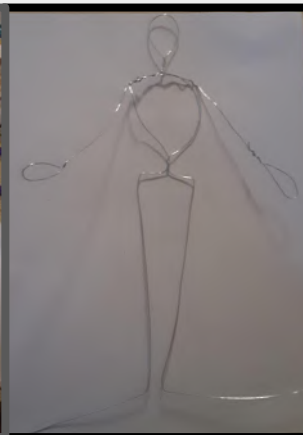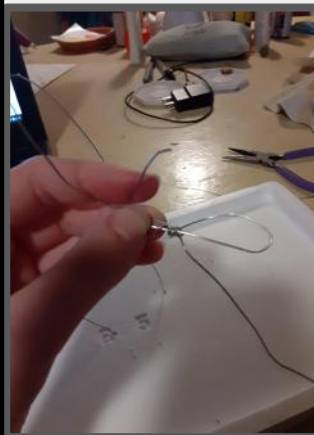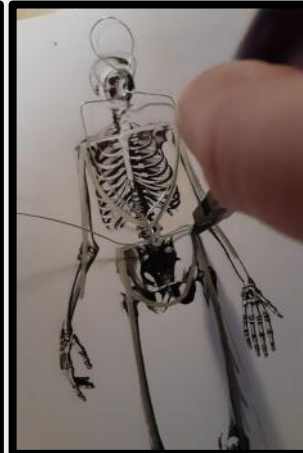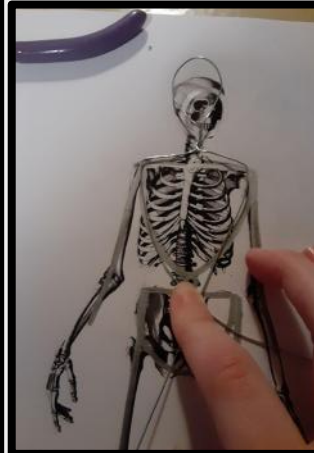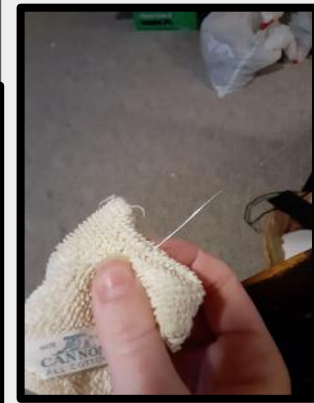
Investigation

I decided to relate my piece to the work of Alice de Ste Croix, known professionally as DestinyBlue, whose digital illustrations explore themes of mental illness and conflicting emotions. Influenced by the burdening effects of both anxiety and depression, Blue presents her experiences through metaphorical imagery, often demonstrating some sort of physical impurity or desolate environment that distresses the individual in question. Combined with the soft hues that facilitate the figure's innocent appearance, the crude additions contrast harshly upon the composition, stressing a sense of vulnerability that presides many of Blue's figures.

In relation to my own illustration, I found myself most drawn to "Sew Closed my Soul", which illustrates the torments of unrequited love. In it, the figure stands enveloped in a wave of darkness, the only source of light being that encompassing her heart. Additionally, this section provides emphasis on the shape's stitching; the loose thread connected to held needle stressing the self-infliction of these elements. I found myself most intrigued by this act of self-preservation, given the brutality behind the figure's efforts questions the extent of the internal damage that provoked these actions. Additionally, there is no clear indication over whether the individual intends on repairing their current damage, or shielding themselves entirely to prevent future pain.

"Sew Closed my Soul", Destiny Blue, 2012

In general, I found myself most drawn to Blue's expression of self-preservation in relation to vulnerability. Though I realize her inclusion of the heart makes the piece specific to love, I found the self-inflicted stitches could relate to other forms of emotional pain, or at least a general fear of vulnerability. The act of repairing oneself typically could prove the self-sufficiency of an individual, however I realized upon manipulating the tone of the piece, the actions could represent a fear of weakness, and thus taking measures to limit any possible emotional exposure.

In regards to furthering the concept of the piece, I wanted to use the stitches in relation to a more synthetic form in order to emphasize the fragility of the overall form. I wished to include something that appeared stuck in between human and synthetic, so I began experimenting with various features to better understand what I wanted to portray.
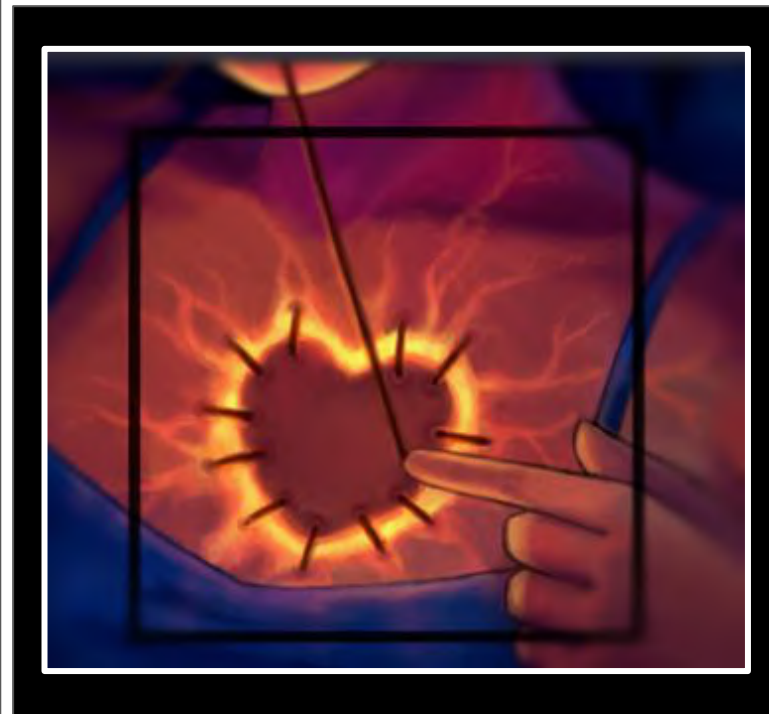

Planning
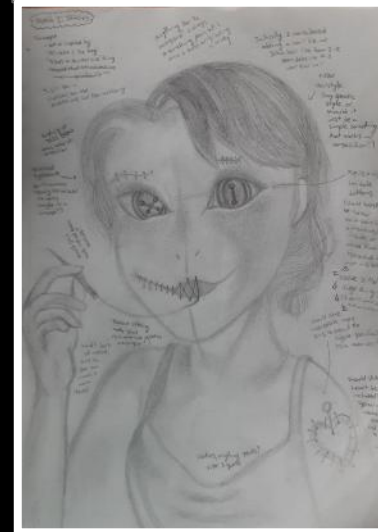
Using the pose of "Sew Closed my Soul", I attempted to both further and alter the concept of the piece by adding stitching to the figure's face, and have them sew their mouth as opposed to their heart. I found this imagery more symbolic towards my relationship with the theme, further enhanced by the hand holding the needle implying the figure's physical restraint is self-inflicted. As I was concerned that the piece could be interpreted as too dark, being a realistic depiction of a person with a stitched mouth would most definitely be gory, I decided to add implications of a synthetic composition. Luckily, this decision only encouraged me to to research possible forms that worked in aesthetic and possibly thematic value. I was rather fond of using some sort of humanoid doll, and decided to add subtle details to hint at this part of the character. For the eyes, I drew the irises in reference to stitched buttons, and added some stitches to the impossibly thin brows above them. I wasn't really sure about some of the other features such as the nose, hair, and clothing, so I imitated that of the initial illustration.
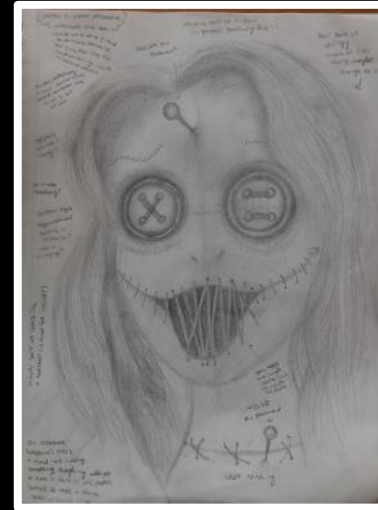
While exploring possible forms that worked in relation to my piece, I was rather keen to the idea of portraying the figure as a voodoo doll. Being an inanimate form susceptible to pain, I found it complimented my initial ideas for the piece quite well. I included two pins upon the forehead and neck, not necessarily the most prominent of elements, however I realized I already included quite a lot of compelling detail that, quite frankly, rendered the pins useless. I think if I used a form with greater simplicity, the pins could've worked much better. Or, at the very least, something with a fabric composition to perhaps further toy with this idea of inanimacy. However, despite my failure at utilizing these ideas, I must say I'm grateful for at least attempting this concept. Though I realize it might've worked quite well with my theme, I realized it strayed from my intended execution of it. I wished to focus more on the preventative measures one takes on themselves to rebuke any sense of vulnerability, and found that this type of object relates more to pain brought on by an external force.
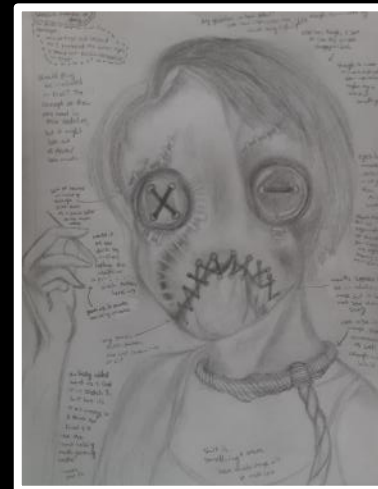
For my final sketch, I decided to to combine the ideas I liked from my previous two sketches while also including some additional details for a bit of variety. Though I have struggled in the past with drawing a character's form in the past, which caused me to focus purely on facial detail, I was rather fond of how the hand and shoulders somehow made the figure more intriguing, the contrast between the synthetic facial features and the humanoid form conflicts the identity of the individual. Admittedly, the hand was a last-minute addition to the sketch after I accidentally added much more detail on the face and form than expected, but more on that later. Other than the neck, I kept the form the same as the first sketch, the honest answer being I couldn't really think of any hair or clothing style that motivated the other parts of the piece. However, I did alter the hair texture from stiff waves to listless stands, which was strangely an improvement.

Experimentation

As it had been quite some time since I last used charcoal and graphite for an illustration, I decided to create some quick swatches in order to refresh myself on their properties. Starting off with the charcoal mediums, I forgot how utterly annoying vine charcoal is to work with. Though I knew I would have to use it for at least the first half of my illustrating process, given its weaker intensity and thinner composition makes it ideal for laying out the foundation of an illustration, I found myself continuously forgetting how easy it was to smudge, and ended up separating the charcoal and graphite mediums onto separate sheets of paper. Thankfully I only found one issue with the compressed charcoal, that being the streaked application, however I realized that could be easily be fixed with the charcoal pencil.
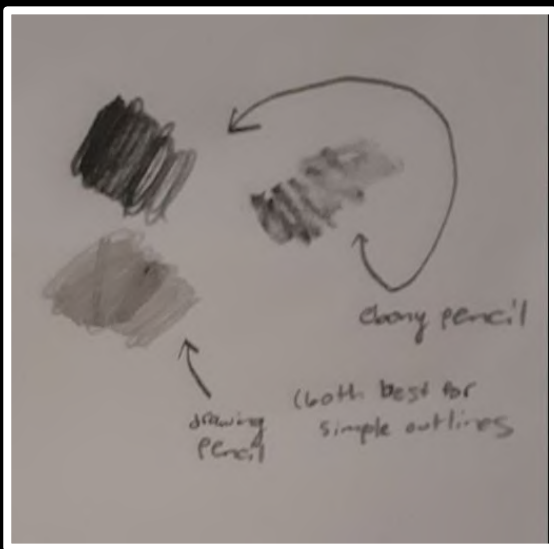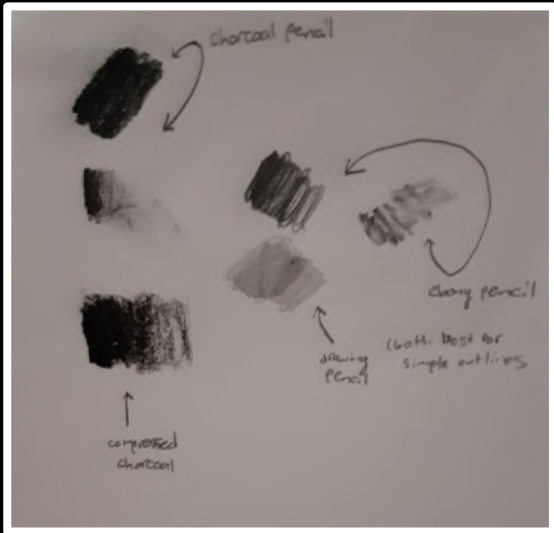
Proceeding forth into the graphite mediums, I found myself spending half as much time experimenting with these. Admittedly, the only reason I wanted to create these swatches was to find a substitute for vine charcoal, given my prior issues with the medium made me fear for the final illustration. Starting with an ebony pencil, I found it applied very smoothly onto the surface, though a visible line was reliant on forceful pressure. Generally I try to avoid mixing mediums with differing compositions, and seeing that this was much waxier than the charcoal, I decided to just leave it out of this illustration as I feared any future blending would be stalled though its resilient complexion.

Additionally, I created a mildly chaotic swatch for the drawing pencil, this being due to my ignorance over how lightly this medium applies onto a given surface. As I had completed an illustration with drawing pencils before, this should not have been as surprising as it was, though it did help me realize this was the ideal substitute for vine charcoal, if I felt it was ever necessary.

Manipulation

Using my first and third sketches as reference, I began sketching out a simple outline for the figure's form, adding a few additional lines as indications of value variance. My struggles with perfecting the hand hindered much of this step, which, although threatening my patience, made me realize how essential vine charcoal is for sketching. I found myself making many lines that were difficult to erase despite the pallidity of the medium. Forcing aside all of my doubts and fears over butchering the composition, I proceeded to trace my previously established outline with the charcoal. In general, I find myself grateful for using this medium as a sketching tool, given it's composition limited any awkward lines or irreversible markings. Additionally, my fears of smudging the composition were, though warranted, soon overlooked upon attaching the paper to a length of cardboard, and laying it flat, which deviated from previously propping it against a chair.

Moving forth into the facial detail, I decided to start with the most simplistic shapes,these being the eyes. Strengthening their circular shapes with alternating layers of vine and compressed charcoal, I proceeded to darken the outer ring, though leaving a few weaker areas that I would later erase for highlights. I also colored the stitching solid black to add greater emphasis to their existence. Additionally, I shaded the central sections with layers of vine charcoal, given it's fragility limited any leftover residue upon further blending. Taking inspiration from my third sketch, whose button detail carried a lovely imitation of gloss, I began carefully erasing small sections of the central and outer rings to avoid any smudges.

I was rather fond of the white stitches I included in my third sketch as well, being that they not only provided emphasis to the figure's eyes, but also contrasted with the thinner black stitches constituting both the eyes and the mouth. Flipping my paper upside down, I began by sketching out a curved line underneath the left eye, and added several dash marks along its length approximately 1 centimetre in width. In between each stitch, I darkened center with compressed charcoal and blended out the edges using a mix of vine charcoal and a charcoal stained eraser.

Moving onto the hand, I must say this was the most difficult part of the process. Using the hand in blue's piece for reference, I began adding a few layers of vine charcoal to darken specific sections of the fingers. I decided to use vine as opposed to compressed charcoal as I not only figured I'd likely mess up the composition, a reasonable hypothesis when considering how much I struggled with it in the beginning, but also because I liked the sort of hazy lines that resulted from it. In general, I liked how the faded composition emphasized specific elements of the piece, that being the facial features and the needle held by the hand.

Moving onto the rest of the form, I began the easiest section of the piece, that being the neck and shoulders. As I had already established the skin tone as being composed of lighter shades, I decided to make the shirt as dark as possible. I started out by outlining the sleeves with compressed charcoal, which I began to regret after realizing the thickness of the lines made it appear out of place on the rest of the form. Imitating the garment wrinkles in Blue's piece, I alternating between layers of compressed and vine charcoal for a smooth result, additionally erasing several layers in the center as highlights. I was initially going to change the style of shirt as I feared it might make my piece look too close to Blue's, however I liked how physically exposed it made the figure, which not only contributed to my theme, but also demonstrated the more human aspects of the figure than contrasted with its synthetic face.

Investigation

For my self-portrait, I decided to replicate the sincere realism of Gustave Courbet. Originating in Ornas, France, the self proclaimed "proudest and most arrogant man in France" created pieces that challenged convention by rendering scenes from daily life using larger dimensions, typically reserved for history painting, in an emphatically realistic style. Courbet focused on the physical reality of objects he observed, even if that reality was blemished and plain, and saw realism as a means to champion the peasants and country folk from his home town. He expressed ideas of equality by glorifying these ordinary individuals and refused to hide their imperfections. Much of Courbet's work was met with disapproval by critics witnessing his unvarnished realism who ridiculed the ugliness of the figures, and dismissed them as "peasants in their Sunday best". However, many historians have acknowledged his work as an important prelude to artists of early Modernism, such as Édouard Manet and Claude Monet.

"The Desperate Man", Gustave Courbet, 1843-1845

When looking at Courbet's work, I was drawn to his portrait, "The Desperate Man". Presenting the artist as a tortured genius struggling for recognition, it strongly contrasts with the person Courbet presented himself as in the public eye, revealing a vulnerable truth about the artist's struggles. His use of harsh, scattered lighting further accentuates the panicked expression on the figure's face while emphasizing the bold lines that constitute his garments and overall form. In regards to my own piece, I wished to convey a similarly panicked tone to my portrait in order to express my own internal struggles. I was rather fond of the intention behind the original portrait, being that it was a very personal and unexpected outlook on the artist, and wished to demonstrate a similar message within my own piece. In general, I find that I don't often express strong emotion, so I was unsure whether I wished to use a similar facial expression.


Though I knew my piece would revolve heavily around the imagery of Courbet's piece, I realized in order to create a portrait representative of myself, I would need something slightly less dramatic. This mindset led to my discovery of Rembrandt's work, specifically his multiple portraits that captured his evolution over time. Rembrandt's development as an artist resulted from several crucial aspects. Often, Rembrandt would engage in the intense study of people, objects, and their surroundings "from life". This preoccupation with direct observation continued throughout his career, resulting in compelling descriptions of light, space, atmosphere, modeling, texture, and human situations. When looking at Rembrandt's work, I was immediately drawn to his portrait, "Self-Portrait with Beret and Turned-up Collar". Regarded as visual evidence of a gripping process of self-exploration, this piece is one of nearly a hundred self-portraits that demonstrate the evolution of the artist over the course of his life. In this piece specifically, which was painted ten years before his death, Rembrandt was in a battle to avoid bankruptcy as well as the sale of his home and vast collection of artwork and antiquities. The portrait's longing expression emphasizes "**the stresses and strains of a life compounded of creative triumphs and personal and financial reverses**", as stated by author Clifford Ackley. In general, the melancholic expression presented by Rembrandt emulates an exhausted sense of pride over his life's work. From a technical perspective, this piece highlights the increasing expressiveness and looseness of Rembrandt's brushwork as his life and career waned.

"Self-Portrait with Beret and Turned-up Collar", Rembrandt, 1659

In reference to my own piece, I wished to combine the ideas of both Courbet and Rembrandt's work in order to express a sense of reserved distress. I was also concerned about how exposed Courbet's piece was, in regards to both physical and mental vulnerability, and felt having a slightly more reserved presentation of myself would best capture who I am. I decided to find the common ground between exposure and restraint through these two pieces in order to focus on my own personal reservations, specifically regarding my insecurities towards my physical appearance as well as my inability to outwardly express myself.

Planning
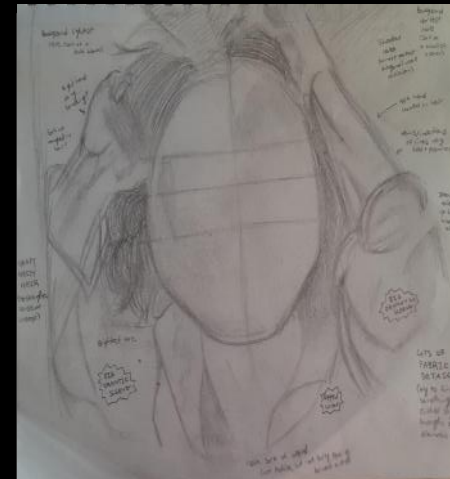
As I often struggle with drawing people in poses, I decided to make my first sketch a simple outline of "The Desperate Man". Here, I proceeded to create a layout of the portrait's elements to better understand what I needed to accomplish for my attempt at replicating the pose. This was something I found importance in doing as I needed to better understand how to recreate the pose for my own reference photo, especially in consideration to my difficulty with directions. I proceeded to make notes regarding which hand was where in order to ease my confusion, and even added some information detailing the exact positioning, just in case my illustration was undecipherable. I decided to include as many details as I could from the original piece in order to understand what specific elements I wished to replicate other than the pose. Scattered among the background, I included notes regarding the light's value in various sections of the piece. In general, it was my attempt to understand where exactly a light source should be placed in order to receive a similar look in my own recreation.
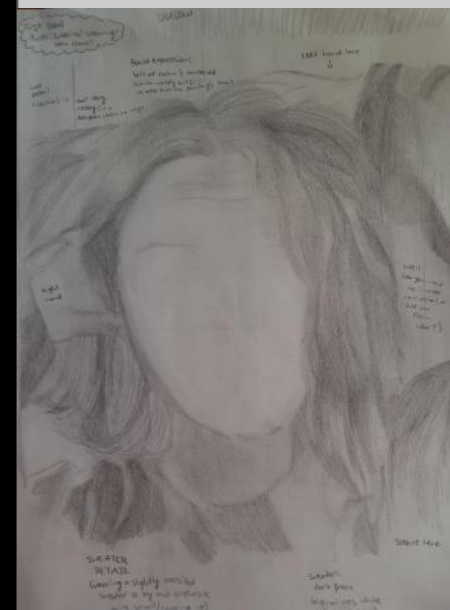
My second sketch was completed in reference to one of the photos I took during my experimentation. I was rather fond of how I was able to imitate the pose of "The Desperate Man", and felt this ability was enhanced by the distribution of light throughout my hair and face. I decided to present myself as stressed and anxious through the messiness of my hair combined with the oversize sweater. This was taken in reference to how I used to dress earlier in my life, when feelings of anxiety and reservation were constantly plaguing my ability to care about my appearance. Though this portrait was not intended as a specific reference to this period, it did help me understand how to dress myself in accordance to these feelings. I wanted this piece to represent how I see myself, with the need for self-preservation always present in my life while also feeling trapped in my inability to outwardly express myself. Though I didn't include it in my sketch, being that at the time I wished to focus mainly on the pose detail, I was rather appreciative of the expression I managed to pull off in this photo. I found it to be a mix of neutral indifference with a hint of worry, which contrasted with the slightly deranged hairstyle.
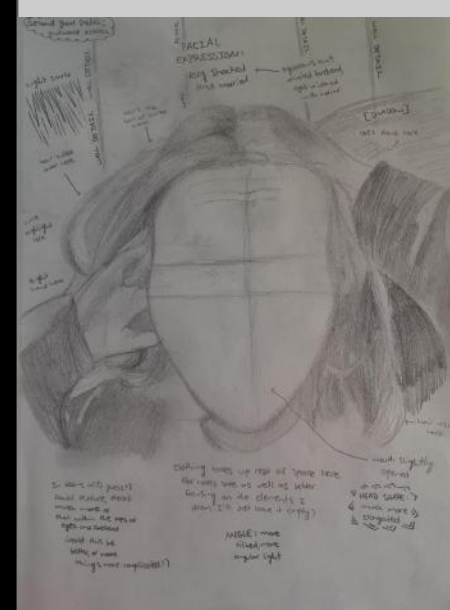

My final sketch was completed in reference to another experimentation photo I liked. I was unsure whether indifferent worry would be an acceptable way to present myself in reference to both works, and decided to try something a bit more obviously distressed. The pose in this sketch is similar to that of the previous one, with the exception of the slightly tilted angle as well as the hair being tucked further back. My idea regarding this one was mostly due to my concern of my previous sketch, being that it relied on everything but the the facial expression to emphasize internal distress. I assumed that by including a more obvious indication of emotion, the overall tone and message of the piece would be better received. While finishing this sketch, I proceeded to consider it's elements logically, being that I was conflicted between choosing this sketch over the second as reference for my final. I contemplated this sketch in terms of aesthetic and theme in an attempt to reconcile this debate. In general, I realized that the facial expression was the only part I liked, and even so, it wasn't really a good expression of my identity. As previously mentioned, I wanted to create something that was a reference to myself, and I felt as though an obvious and slightly exaggerated sense of panic wouldn't cover this. I also didn't like how the hair and clothes weren't very present in the image as well, especially since those components were personal in my portrayal of stress and anxiety.

Process/Manipulation

My numerous attempts at replicating the pose and facial expression of the piece are unflattering, to say the least, however I struggled with finding a balance between the elements I wished to include, such as the placement of the light source and the facial expression. Prior to taking the photos, I established my appearance as being very disorganized and confined through messy hair and an over-sized sweatshirt. As mentioned in my second sketch, I took inspiration from my past self when deciding my appearance, which made it easier to recall feelings of distress. Though the clothes aren't the main focus of the piece, only visible through the sleeves and a small section on the bottom, it helped accentuate the facial features and hair while also contributing to the desolate tone of the piece. I really liked the appearance of the over-sized sleeves, which deviated from exposed skin presented in "The Desperate Man", which made the overall image appear restricted, yet still attempting to convey some sort of emotional vulnerability.

For my first attempts, I decided to use a painfully bright lamp placed on my right to emphasize that half of my face. As I was still figuring out how I wanted to be presented, I decided to play it safe and have my first set of photos have limited digressions from my normal appearance, choosing to keep on my glasses and taking the photo from a more straightforward angle. Though I appreciated the variation of lighting among each of the photos, I strongly disliked the inclusion of the glasses. Despite my attempts at adjusting their placement on my face, they continued to slip during the course of the photo-taking process, which was incredibly annoying and caused my focus to diverge from replicating the facial expression of "The Desperate Man", and instead try and stay in a position that didn't disrupt the glasses. I also wasn't fond of the light source I used, being, although the distribution of light was lovely among the composition, it looked off somehow. Maybe it was just the unusual shadows emulating from the glasses that did this, but I found the lighting to be almost too bright, which limited any hue variance among the right side of my face.
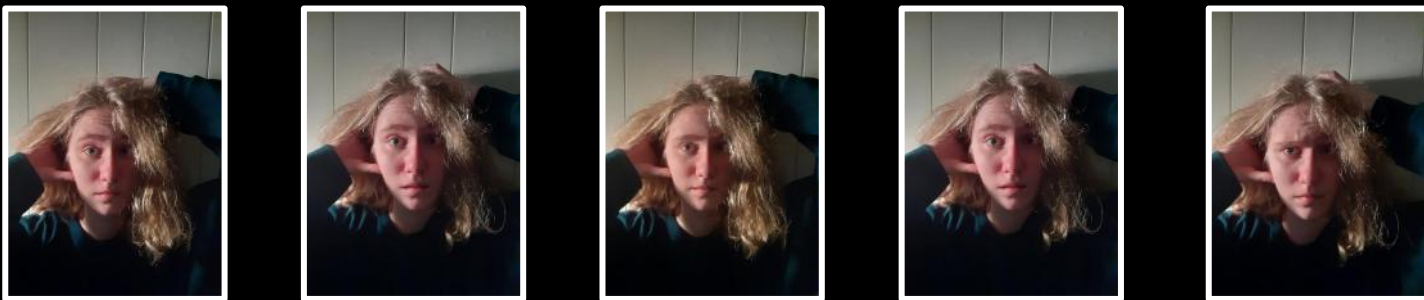
My second series of photos served as a way to reconcile any errors or disliked techniques used in my previous series. As my prior inclusion of glasses severely limited my ability to replicate the facial expression, I attempted a a variety of expressions that could possibly work, ranging from neutral concern to somewhat angry. Admittedly, both of these were unintentional as for some reason any effort to emit anything close to shock or concern resulted in either expressions of annoyance or neutrality. Though I previously mentioned my general demeanor is more unemotional, I was still disappointed by my inability to make an emotional expression. However, I was very impressed by the amount of definition on my face resulting from the dimmer light distribution mixed with the lack of glasses and the adjustment of my hair, which had slightly more volume on the left than before. This made my previous disappointment easier to ignore, and also gave me several photos from this series to use as possible contenders for my final.
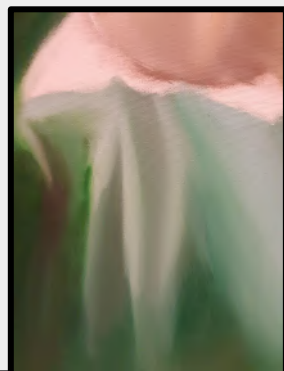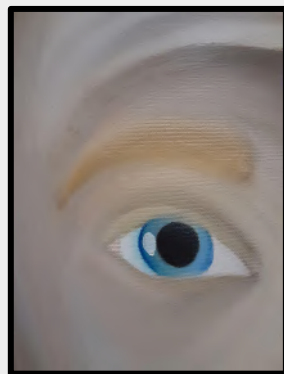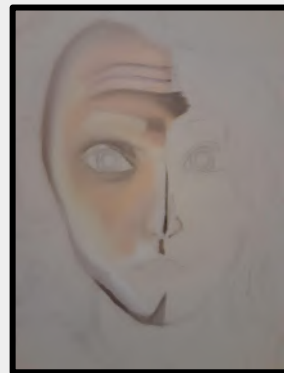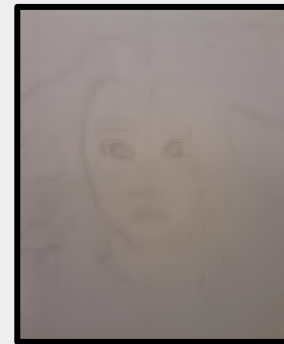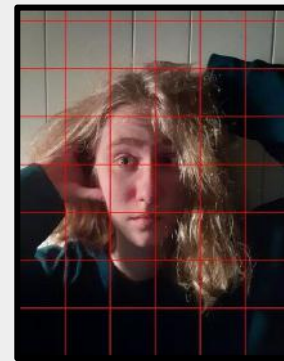
As my ability to replicate imagery is limited by my difficulties with perspective, I decided to sketch out a grid upon my chosen image. As mentioned in my experimentation, I struggled with finding an image that not only worked in relation to both of my inspirations, but also provided a substantial amount of aesthetic value regarding the lighting distribution and the incorporation of additional elements, such as the hair and arms. I ended up choosing this image from series two (for reference, final row middle). I was rather fond of the whole composition of the photo, being the hair's hue variance and rough texture added a strong contrast among the smooth, simplistic tones of the rest of the piece. I also found the facial expression carried both the dismal neutrality of Rembrandt's portrait as well as reserved desperation through the widened eyes raised brows.

After this was completed, I created an enlarged version of the grid onto my canvas. Using a yardstick, I began estimating the dimensions of each square in order to work with the canvas's dimensions while also having the same number of squares in each row, and settled on four and a half inch squares. From there, I worked on sketching out each shape in association to the created grid. I added several lines as indications of the hue variation among specific sections, and added some organic shapes among the sweater to imitate the folds of the fabric.

Proceeding forth into painting, I began laying out a basic variety of hues among the face, correctly figuring this section would be the most time consuming when taking into consideration the subtle hue variance among this section. From my prior knowledge of portrait panting, I knew that the hues that made up a skin tone were white, brown, red, and yellow, and proceeded to mix these hues to get an acceptable base tone. For some reason, I ended up creating a tone that was more of a maroon, a fact I realized after applying it to the canvas. To reconcile for this easily avoidable error, I proceeded to layer as much white paint as I possibly could, being that the slowly drying composition of oil paint toyed with my patience. I later realized this decision was, although enacted with the best intentions, caused the composition to become severely uneven, being that the layers around the eye were much thinner.

From there, I proceeded to add more detail to my eye as well as adding some base hues for the other half of my face. I noticed that my natural iris' were composed of bluish grey hues with hints of yellow and green, though I had difficulty establishing a similarly complex color, and ended up using a simple light blue. I added some darker shades along the edges to accentuate the overall shape, and added some lighter variants along the right hand sections in imitation of my reference photo. Additionally, I added a small, circular highlight among the middle left, and smoothed out the overall shape with another layer of my base hue.

I realized that much of the right half of the face was left blank due to the hair overlapping the eye, and proceeded to create hues that mimicked those in my reference image. I decided to start with the right sections due to it's greater hue variance, and created several shades of blonde to best imitate the value. Admittedly, I was unsure about my ability to best replicate the texture of this, being that in my reference, almost every strand of hair is prominent as opposed to being part of a smooth composition. In relation to the paint's composition, which is prone to blending with other established hues, I realized I had to try and think of a way to emulate the texture that demonstrated the strand's individuality and sloppiness while also considering how easily this hues might accidentally blend together.

In order to imitate the folds of the material, I proceeded to mix a dark green base hue as well as a paler transition shade, and designate the hues to the shapes I had sketched out earlier. From there, I applied several overlapping layers of the pigment in order to provide a smooth transition. The simplest part of the process overall was the inclusion of the background, in which I mixed my two shades of brown, Umber and Van Dyke, along with some black for the darkest sections, and split this mixture in half and mixed it with white for the lightest sections. As I liked the diagonally severed background in Courbet's piece as opposed to the neutral hues established in both my reference image and Rembrandt's piece, I proceeded to apply the pigments in imitation of this.

Investigation/Planning

For this project, I decided to replicate the immaculate linework of Stephan Alcorn. Though born in the United States, Alcorn spent formative years in Florence, Italy. There, he attended the Instituto Statale d'Arte, an experience that, as Alcorn claims, left an impression on him and infused him with a passion for bold technical experimentation in a wide range of mediums. For over a decade, specifically 1998 through 2010, Alcorn was regarded as being the artist responsible for creating the graphics, posters, signage, and all musical performance-related materials pertaining to what has been referred to as the "Cambridge Renaissance". In short, this was a period in which Cambridge spawned an extraordinary revival in the arts and a renowned interest in the role live music can play in the daily fabric of life.

Much of Alcorn's work also supports his desire to push the boundaries of his artistic capabilities, provided his experimentation with mediums considered difficult or otherwise unpopular. Stylistically, Alcorn's work is often regarded as compatible with that of his wife's, Sabina, who specializes in textile design and water color prints. Both present imagery through precise simplicity, proving their abilities to capture the essence of a form through minimalism.

In reference to his relief block prints, Alcorn claims he embraced the values of a misunderstood medium, granted it's dependence on line work and contrast, and describes his experience through a quote by poet Richard Wilbur, "The strength of the genie comes of his being confined in a bottle". Though Alcorn's fondness of the medium led to the development of multiple series, I found myself most intrigued by "The Organic Gardener". Taking inspiration from the nature of Cambridge, Alcorn felt permitted to celebrate the rigors of organic gardening, one of mankind's most noble endeavors, through the resurrection of the oldest and purest forms of printmaking.

Much of Alcorn's work exemplifies an abstraction of the demonstrated forms, dividing each shape into a collection of diverse line work that imitates the reality presented to the artist. I found myself rather keen to Alcorn's portrayal of such forms, and found my ideas regarding my own work were best expressed in his piece, "The Tomato Vine". Presenting the form through a series of organic lines, I found myself drawn to how Alcorn's technique diversified each element by hinting at deviations in hue and texture. In general, each of his works share a use of precise detail that honor each form it sets to imitate.
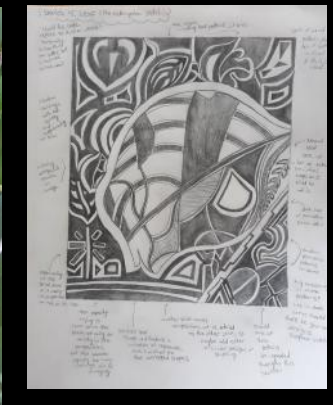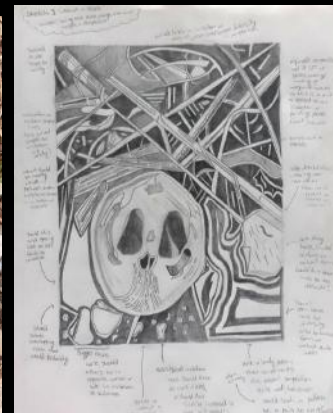
For my first sketch, I found myself burdened with indecision, provided that I had very few ideas on what exactly to present through this medium. I realized that much of Alcorn's organic gardening series were created through an appreciation of this activity and the artist's environment. With all due respect to my own city, I did not find myself filled with a similar desire to commemorate it, and searched for elements of nature that hold a personal meaning to me. Upon further brainstorming, the idea seemed so obvious: basing my two prints off of the unused photos I had taken for my first 'official' project. Though admittedly this worked as a convenient source of imagery, I remembered being very disappointed about not being able to do more with these photos. Additionally, my primary reason for using these was to explore my progression as an artist, provided the medium's reliance on altering the sight of existing imagery explores this idea of a difference in perspective, which worked in relation to personal growth.

For my second sketch, I decided to base it off of another one of my favorite photos, this being a leaf emerging from the lower corner of the frame, also laying in a bed of grass. Like the previous sketch, I began by outlining the basic shape of the form as well as the deviations in value and texture. Admittedly, there was a greater variation of hue within this piece as opposed to the last, so I attempted to try to stay less true to the original and instead improvise with line work that might work with the medium. One of the main reasons I loved the initial photo was because of the light patterns decorating the leaf's exterior, however I was unsure how to best show deviations in value without accidentally making the shapes indistinguishable from one another. Looking at "The Tomato Vine", I found that Alcorn solved this problem through layering a series of thin lines that brought fourth the illusion of a lighter shade, and separated the central imagery from the rest of the piece. Thus, I established a similar idea in my sketch, and shaded in the main part of the leaf with a bunch of thinly spaced lines.

I have to say, I was very close on omitting this sketch from site as it just looks off to me, however it was very helpful in helping me experiment with various types of line work and patterns, so I acknowledge its importance in my process. For this sketch, I decided to base it off of a photo of what I believe were berries, though the focus of the lens was slightly blurred. I found this photo quite simplistic in regards to the central form as well as its blurred background that left quite a bit of space for creative liberty. Using my previously established method of sketching out the basic shapes within the photo, I proceeded to do just that, noting that much of the light patterns were quite harmonious upon each of the berries, and was quite refreshing after the chaotic details constituting the prior sketch's central form.

I like to think of my fourth sketch as somewhat of a "redemption sketch" as it succeeded in perfecting not only the issues I ran into with the previous sketch, but practically everything else as well. For this sketch, I decided to base it off of another lighting-based leaf photo, this one being simpler in composition and hue. I decided to focus purely on imitation for this sketch as opposed to staying true to detail, resulting in the abstracted patterns constituting the leaf's form. Additionally, I added some thicker outlines around each of these shapes to distinguish each of their forms, and also added a bit of variety to the composition. For the background, I attempted to use patterns that were both interesting and simplistic, provided that I wished to think reasonably and limit any details that would likely prove difficult to carve.

Experimentation

As it had been quite a number of years since I had carved linoleum, I decided to experiment briefly with my two tools. Using a few strips of excess linoleum, I proceeded to carve a series of random lines to better understand the strengths and weaknesses each tool provided. I admit to being extremely grateful for this course of action when considering my assumptions during the planning stages of this project.While looking at the planning sketches I chose to replicate for my final two prints, these being my first and fourth, I found they contrasted in terms of line work and shape, provided the majority of my first sketch dealt with thinner geometric shapes while my fourth relied on thicker organic ones.It didn't surprise me how heavily these tools relied on pressure, and I had a lot of fun creating several series of lines with the angular tool that varied in depth and spacing. With the other tool however, I just couldn't bring myself to replicate that sort of success. Looking back at the series of strips, the lines I made with this tool look somewhat decent, however it was incredibly difficult to find the perfect amount of pressure to use without the tool getting stuck in the linoleum.

After I was satisfied with the imagery on my first print, I proceeded to follow the same steps on my second, starting off by tracing the imagery on the tracing paper with a blue ballpoint pen. I proceeded forth with a firm pressure on the pen, getting similar rips on the tracing paper like previously, and nothing was out of the ordinary, until I removed the tracing paper from the surface. For some reason, the design was barely transferred onto the surface; the only way it was visible was through direct contact with natural light. I decided to then trace each of the designs again, this time with a different colored pen, and applied a much harsh pressure.

Starting off with my leaf print, I proceeded to carve the figure's outline using my small angular tool. Believing it would bring the best results, I decided to move forth with thick, horizontal lines that followed the leaf's main border, making sure to remove as much as possible to guarantee the shape's visibility in the actual printing process. Moving onto the designs, I began by establishing the inner patterns through several thin, simplified lines. I attempted to use the lightest amount of pressure on the tool for this layout, which also helped limit the thickness of the lines as well. I started off with the curved rectangle intersecting the entirety of the leaf, which I realized would need a few extra lines to make it visible on the composition, and the curved triangular shape on the bottom. After this was complete, I moved onto carving away sections of the pattern I needed to be the lightest. As I feared the line work would look off if I were to carve a series of horizontal lines, I decided to use a series of quick vertical lines following the direction of each shape.

Process

Starting off with my first sketch, I began by tracing the most significant shapes. I admit that while creating this sketch, I got carried away with the amount of detail present, so I decided my tracing would be much more limited as to give me the option of adding more detail during the actual carving. Luckily the main form of the walnut was already composed of simplistic shapes, so it all came down to deciding which background detail to eliminate. My other sketch was much more straightforward in terms of tracing, provided there was little I had to change, with the exception of eliminating much of the detail from the smaller leafAfter I was done tracing both sketches, I proceeded to transfer each image onto the medium. I decided to start off with my second print this time due to its simplicity, and began by first deciding where to put the tracing..

Unfortunately, my sketches were not of equal dimension to the linoleum, and I had to stretch some of the patterns to better fit the surface. After finding the perfect spot, and securing the tracing with several pieces of masking tape, I began tracing the entirety of the image with a blue ballpoint pen, believing that the harshness of the color would provide a strong contrast to the pencil lines. To guarantee the transferal of the image, I applied a firm pressure to the pen, which led to a few unfortunate tears in the the paper, but luckily left the rest of the piece unscathed. I attempted to trace the line work exactly as it had been established previously, with the exception of the patterns bordering the print, which were altered to better fit the surface of the medium. One issue I found with this step, however, is that I realized the patterns severely contradicted my initial tracing plan. Originally, I had planned on stretching or adding onto the bordering patterns in order to eliminate as much space as possible, however the shapes of the patterns were so particular that any such alteration might ruin the composition, and with a medium I had such little experience with, I found myself refusing to take the risk.

In further discussion of my new technique, I realized quite quickly that simply tracing each shape's form with purely this type of line caused the shapes to become a sort of uneven line pattern as opposed to a shaded shape, so I rectified this mistake by establishing the form with a few simple horizontal lines, and then filling it in with a bunch of vertical ones.

In general, I stuck to carving those quick vertical lines, which quickly riddled the medium with clumps of linoleum shavings. Some of the shapes were a bit uneven around the edges, but I found myself finishing each of the patterns with minimal error. Moving onto my second print, I began carving in the same way as my first, this being by establishing the form through a short series of long horizontal carvings around the perimeter of the form. For the outer highlight, I considered using a similar series of lines, however I was rather fond of my previous work with vertical carvings, and filled in the shape as such. I must quickly express my gratitude for deciding to carve the leaf first as it gave me a better understanding of the medium before I moved onto the print I personally believed to be more difficult. It gave me greater confidence in adding new patterns and carving techniques without feeling too worried about failure, and in general found it much less stressful to start than the previous carving.

Using my sketch to reference the details I missed while transferring, I proceeded to use thin, singular carvings to establish each of the basic forms.Like the previous piece, I decided to use the small angular tool for the majority of the carvings, given that it provided me with greater control in comparison to the rounded tool. Also, given the thinner, angular nature of most of these shapes, I had previously deemed this tool a much better choice, so I didn't bother with the other one until the end.One of the last things I decided to carve of the background were the "rocks" scattered among the bottom and lower sides of the composition. Granted their existence were separate from that of the sticks and walnut, I decided to attempt to demonstrate this separation by establishing unique patterns and textures onto each of the forms. In the case of the figure in the image, I attempted to imitate the unusual texture in the image, which was just a series of lines that luckily worked in relation to the medium, and required just a series of quick carvings.

"Portrait of Donna Beneviento and her doll Angie" Tomonori Takano, 2021

Continuing my use of Resident Evil 8 characters, I decided to portray Donna Beneviento for my second piece. Due to an undiagnosed health problem, Donna developed deep-seated personal anxieties that isolated her from the rest of the world, and preferred to only talk through her doll Angie. She spent most of her adulthood creating dolls, which seemed to effectively fill the void left by her deceased family. At some point in this time, Donna also became a subject in Mother Miranda's experiments, and was infected with the Cadou parasite. Though gaining little change in her physical appearance, Donna acquired the ability to secrete a psychoactive chemical that induced violent hallucinations in others. Her mutation also allows her to control plants infected by the Mold, and can inflict hallucinations through those who have inhaled the pollen. Additionally, Donna implanted some Cadou into her dolls, which gave her the ability to control them remotely, and would use this ability to physically talk through and control Angie.

Out of all the Resident Evil 8 characters, I've always found myself fond of Donna, which might just be because of how tragic her backstory is compared to the worst. Though the character's level is by far the scariest part of the game, which I'll get into more with my third sketch, I also find the reasons for her actions quite sad. Donna's defining traits are her child-like mentality and social anxiety, and always seemed to carry out her actions as acts of desperation and a desire for acceptance as opposed to malicious intent.

In order to stress the theme of my piece, I decided to emulate the imagery and subject matter of the Dark Art movement. Though vague on its exact creation, this movement acts as an attempt to understand, more deeply, the human nature. The artist typically transmits their thoughts in mysterious ways, occasionally combining with surrealist elements to depict visually stunning scenes where black predominates over all others. Pieces that fall under this category are typically reflective of critical/protest art as the movement serves to spread a message to the public to express complaint or criticism. Because of this, dark art provokes controversy and dispute from viewers who are ignorant to the initial message of work

"Traje de yo", José Luis López Galván, 2013

For my modern artist inspiration, I decided to replicate the empirical communications of José Luis López Galván. Specializing in oil paintings, Galván's pieces are strongly influenced by the emotional exuberance of the Baroque movement as well as the symbolic inventiveness of Salvador Dali. His work is best characterized by his communications of death, fear, or hypocrisy, which are expressed through the likes of people, animals, and objects. Additionally, Galván's goal is to create a collage that is, in its integration, represents a portrait of an essence as opposed to the aspect of things.

Though I liked the Dark Art Movement, I found myself wanting to learn more about the specific artists and the thematic influences of their work. Upon this research, I discovered the work of Francisco de Goya, a morbid Romanticism artist whose work explored themes of mental health and internal torment. Born in the mid-seventeenth century in Fuendetodos, Spain, Goya's introduction to the royal workshops, a relationship that lasted the rest of his life and spanned four ruling monarchies, began in 1774. One of his first commissions was the painting of 63 cartoons later to be woven into tapestries, the likes of which would be hung in two royal palaces. Such art is reflective of Goya's early style, being the soft pastels and elaborate ornamentation of the Rococo movement. Unfortunately, upon reaching senescence, Goya suffered through an extended period of illness that left him completely deaf, the effect it had on his mental health strongly reflective in his work. His art began taking on a new character, using these rough, malicious forms to illustrate Goya's declining mental health and general dissatisfaction with life.


"Yard With Lunatics", Francisco de Goya, 1793-94

When it comes to Goya's work, one piece that I felt best reflected the theme of my piece was the desolate insanity of "Yard With Lunatics".Serving as a representation of the appalling conditions of mid eighteenth century insane asylums, which were nothing more than a dumping ground for the criminally insane. Often criminalized by the government, Goya stresses this idea through the centering of the fighting inmates, whose nude compositions in relation to the brutality to their actions illustrates their deranged, animalistic nature. I found myself fond of how Goya emphasized this idea of mental isolation, the usage of such figures within this period of Goya's life further hinting at his fears regarding his own mental health. In general, I found a strong connection to the motives of Goya, being her own internal torments drew her into solidarity that never quite satisfied the demands of her mentality. In my piece I wished to convey this sense of isolation to emphasize how trapped the character feels trapped inside of her own mind, desperately trying to escape while also finding solace in the routine.

For my first sketch, I decided to create a basic drawing of the character's face in order to understand which details were most important to the identity of the character. I realized that unlike the Dimitrescu daughters and practically everyone else within the Resident Evil 8 universe, Donna's face is by far the least recognizable as it remains covered for the near entirety of the game. However, I figured that portraying her hooded form would restrict the effectiveness of the theme, provided the lack of emotional cues, and initiated a search for proper imagery. One detail I was hesitant to add was the character's head wear due to the amount of space it took up in the image. As I still wanted to include a wreath of some sort, I was hesitant to include a garment that would likely disrupt the prominence of the background elements, and thereby weaken its connection to my artist inspiration. However, I realized that it was beneficial to the theme to present the garment as though it was pulled back to reveal her face, which was regarded as the character's greatest insecurity and therefore emphasize her desire to reveal the anxiety constituting her expression.

My second sketch revolved around me attempting to attempt imagery and ideas relating to my artist inspiration. Within Galván's piece, the most prominent part of the piece are the countless hands engrossing the figure. When considering that idea in relation to the character of Donna, I found myself reminded of her workshop, which is decorated with multiple hanging, artificial limbs. Thus, I decided to combine the ideas of both the piece and the character by drawing her surrounded by synthetic hands. I was also unsure whether the regular Donna would be better than the version, so I decided to create a simplistic outline of her regular form. There weren't many changes I had to make, mainly just adding some sort of hair and adding buttons on the collar, however it changed the tone of the piece significantly. Although this was a very vague sketch, presenting more of the face made her suddenly appear more put together and professional, which deviated from the hurried appearance of the previous sketch.
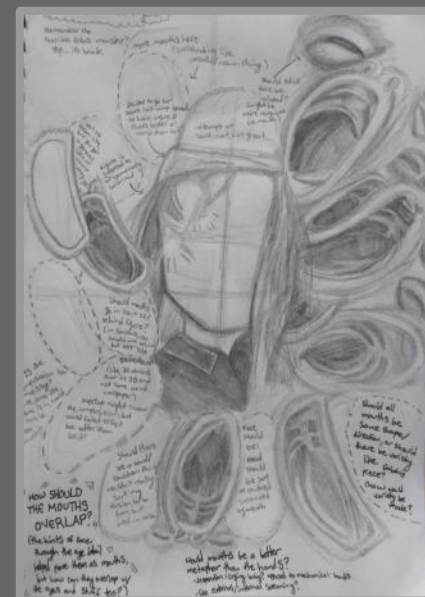
For my third sketch, I decided to go into an entirely different direction and express the theme in a more graphic way. Now, I mentioned earlier that Donna's part of the game is considered the scariest, and a significant portion of this reasoning comes from this huge, utterly disgusting fetus monster that's actually a hallucination created by Donna inspired by the fears of the protagonist. It's most recognized through it's long, gaping mouth that's practically the length of it's body, and the addition of it's half-lidded eyes causes the creature to be a constant screaming fit. It also speaks, so if it's horribly large, grasshopper-legged body wasn't scary enough, it vocalizes statements typical of an infant, and alternates between crying and unintelligible mumbling.
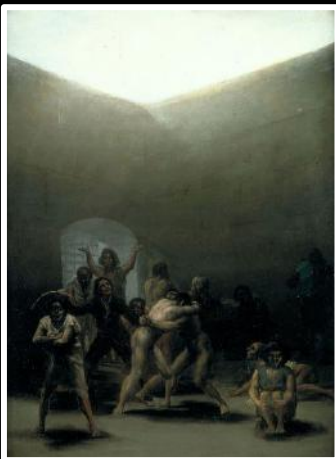
Experimentation
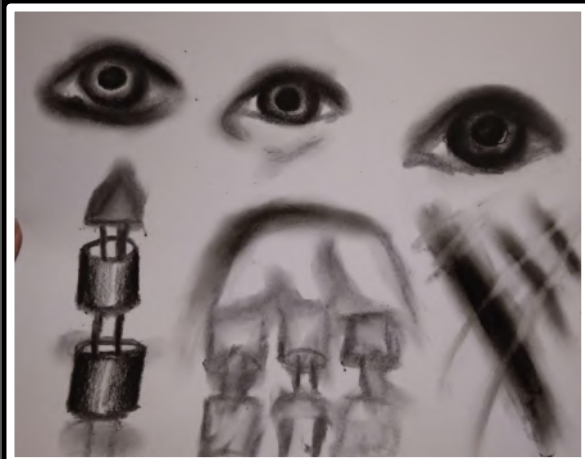
As it had been quite a while since I completed a piece entirely in charcoal, I decided to briefly experiment with the blending and drawing of facial features. When looking at the character, I found her features quite simplistic in shape, which made me less stressed to draw the character perfectly. I found I struggled immensely with the previous project for that exact reason, being that each of the daughters had such unique features that I often stressed myself in attempt to draw them exactly as they appeared. Taking a piece of vine charcoal, I proceeded to draw a few eye outlines, trying my best to remain true to the character's concept art, though I mostly attempted to make each feature proportional. As I knew from previous experience vine charcoal was quite thin and any accidentally brush of the applied medium would be quickly washed away, I went back over the form with some compressed charcoal as well as a charcoal pencil to establish some detail.

Process/Manipulation

After I was satisfied with my set-up, I proceeded to complete a layout of my piece using vine charcoal. Using my first and second sketches for reference, I began by first drawing the character Using estimations based on the piece's dimensions, I attempted to replicate the symmetrical balance of Galván's piece by placing the character's head as close to the center as possible. As I decided to portray Donna in her hooded "Cadou" form, I found myself underestimating the amount of space her hat and scarf took up, and ended up having to cut off some of the hat do to this poor estimation. Strangely enough, one of the most difficult parts of this process was sketching the shape of her head, which was so precisely angular that I realized how much I lucked out in my first and second sketches. With the angle of the scarf, it was difficult to understand the length of the chin and how where the middle of the head was, however I believe I succeeded in creating a suitable head shape.

When the outline was completed, I decided to move onto the facial detail. Looking at my first sketch as reference, I began by establishing the shape of the eye. Using the vine charcoal once again, I proceeded to sketch out a simple outline similar to what was established in my sketch. I always forget how difficult eyes are to draw, especially when the overlap of the scarf kept throwing me off. Adding layers of compressed charcoal was very helpful as it made establishing the shape easier, which was mostly because of the layers of dust appearing upon application, which I utilized to strengthen the eye's shape and general appearance. After this, I outlined the iris and pupil using a charcoal pencil to create thinner, more controlled lines. It's important to take about the mouth and nose in a bit more depth as I struggled immensely with establishing the shapes of both of these. For the nose, I struggled with evening the two sides, which wasn't helped by my inclusion of the blood trickling by her eye that made an awkward angle. I found myself attempting to rectify every mistake by adding and erasing random layers to allude depth, though I'm unsure if it helped. For the mouth, it was once again a matter of perspective and my regrets over adding that blood streak. When looking back at my first sketch as well as my initial reference image of Donna Beneviento, the blood is supposed to trail from the eyebrow diagonally, just touching the corner of the mouth. I succeeded with this illusion more in my sketch, and even managed to create a decent shape for the lips. However, such luck was difficult to recreate in my final piece, and I struggled with establishing a shape that shared similarities to the character while also being proportional with the rest of the face. Drawing the teeth was one of the main reasons for continuously changing its shape as I kept forgetting how much of certain teeth would be visible when given this angle.
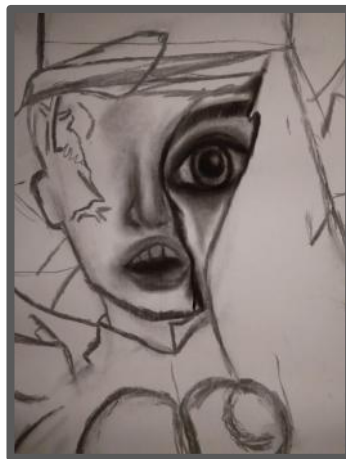

I admit one of the benefits of choosing Donna for this piece was that I didn't have to bother with drawing another eye, and decided to move onto the Cadou infection on the top left of her face. As my sketch consisted of a bunch of lines, there wasn't really anything I was trying to replicate, and it was more so a matter of establishing interesting shapes and patterns in different gradations. One of my favorite parts of this step was the dark stripe overlapped by pale ridges as it reminded me of the stitches in "Apart". Using the compressed charcoal, I sketched out a thick black line and used the resulting dust to smear the edges. Then, taking a charcoal-stained eraser, I proceeded to erase diagonal marks about 1 inch (2.54 cm) in length, making sure there was about a quarter of an inch (0.635) of line poking out on either side. As there was no set plan proceeding fourth with these lines, and I was basically designating random spaces for them to go, I was a bit worried that some of the spacing was a bit too close and uniformed, especially on the bottom left corner.

Moving onto Donna's head wear, I found myself enjoying the simplicity of this step, and spent significantly less time on this section of the drawing than the rest. Referring to my first sketch, I proceeded to use compressed charcoal to draw random organic shapes on the headdress, and additionally sketched a few skinny shapes using vine charcoal. When this was complete, I began filling in the larger shapes with compressed charcoal, and kept the vine charcoal shapes empty. After all of the shapes were completed, I gently blended the forms with a slightly less stained eraser, additionally taking the eraser again to lighten the vine charcoal shapes and add several extra highlights.

Proceeding forth with the background, I found the drawing of hands to be, by far, one of the most time consuming and difficult steps of the process. When starting this piece, I assumed the incorporation of vague lines for each of the hands would be suitable for my future completion of the step, being that I could focus all of my effort on the face and hood without worrying about smearing any hand detail I previously established. However, I found myself at a bit of a loss when it came to the creation of fingers in relation to the the pulled back veil, and I was uncertain what ratio of hood and hands I wanted to include. To ease my inquiries, I began by adding greater detail and shape to the hands no connected to her garments, these being the ones on the bottom. Imitating the broken, cylindrical joints of my third sketch, I began shaping each of the appendages using vine charcoal. As I had done little detail work with the vine charcoal, and used it more to create broader shapes, I hadn't anticipated how difficult it would be to create thin shapes, and ended up erasing much of the composition during my attempts.

Investigation

"Captain Rackham", Lindsey Look, 2011

"Karl Heisenberg", Tomonori Takano, 2021

"The Stonebreakers", Gustave Courbet", 1894

Continuing my use of Resident Evil 8 characters, I decided to base my piece off of Karl Heisenberg, the psychokinetic factory owner who served as the fourth Lord on Mother Miranda's council. Taken as a youth, Heisenberg was one of the four children adopted into her family and was the target of several experiments that led to his organs being replaced with those of metal, which additionally granted the ability to control the ore as well. Since his mutations, Heisenberg was the only one who held a grudge against Miranda due to her own selfish desire to bring her own daughter back to life, and saw Miranda's "family", as she referred to her Lords, as nothing more than pet projects. Fueled by rage, he secretly planned a rebellion, raising an army of reanimated corpses, and additionally desiring to use Rose Winters, the baby Miranda was planning on using to bring her daughter back to life, against her as well. Out of all of Miranda's "children", he is by far the most unruly, which makes the amount of independence he's allowed by a such a controlling figurehead is remarkable, and convenient for his rebellion.

For one of my artist inspirations, I chdecided to use the unfiltered reality of Gustave Courbet. Gustave Courbet's rejection of academic convention encouraged the founding of the Realism movement. Following the 1848 French revolution, this movement sought to reject the exotic subject matter and exaggerated emotionalism of the prior Romanticism movement, which had dominated French literature and art since the late 18th century. While looking at Courbet's work, I was most intrigued by "The Stonebreakers", which was created in 1849 as a statement of the laborious reality experienced by the lower class. He depicts two individuals that appear of unhealthy ages to be completing such vigorous labor; the upright posture and healthy glow of the gentlemen on the left implementing his youth with the withered and hunched over position of the gentlemen on the right indicates his elderly age.

For my conceptual inspiration, I decided to replicate the fantastical illustrations of Lindsey Look. When looking at Look's work, I found myself drawn most to her piece "Captain Rackham". Leaning out of a windowsill, the central figure is presented in rich hues that constitute his steampunk wardrobe. Behind him, a small section of what appears to be an astronomy map is visible on the wall, the rest of the environment hidden in the darkness, leading to unanswered questions of this man's role in this fictional world. In general, I found this piece connected to the character of Heisenberg through their shared incorporation of industrial professions. Additionally, I found both the character in Look's piece and Heisenberg share a similar air of confidence and mysteriousness.

When considering my piece would take inspiration from two pieces, I found myself questioning how effective the piece would be thematically. I already knew I wanted to use Look's piece as the conceptual inspiration, and used my planning sketches I was grateful for finding Courbet's "The Stonebreakers" as it used such specific yet subtle elements that emphasized the harshness of their current conditions. However, I feared referring to this piece as my thematic inspiration would possibly be misleading as it contradicts the intended theme of my piece (submission vs defiance). I decided to complete some additional research for Courbet's piece in relation to the character and environment of Karl Heisenberg, and proceeded to make notes of my observations on the right.

One of the ideas I had regarding my piece was that the contrasting theme could make it appear as the unseen force hinted at in Courbet's piece, and suggest the morbidity of the world experienced by the gentlemen. However, the idea, though intriguing, didn't really have a connection to my intended theme. How exactly was a prideful character such as Heisenberg rebelling? By creating field workers? I then found the piece connected strongly to Heisenberg's motivations for defiance, seeing the overruling force of Mother Miranda as forcing others into submission. Thus, this piece could be seen as a hypocritical response to these fears, being that character coerces others into a situation he always feared in order to free himself from compliance.
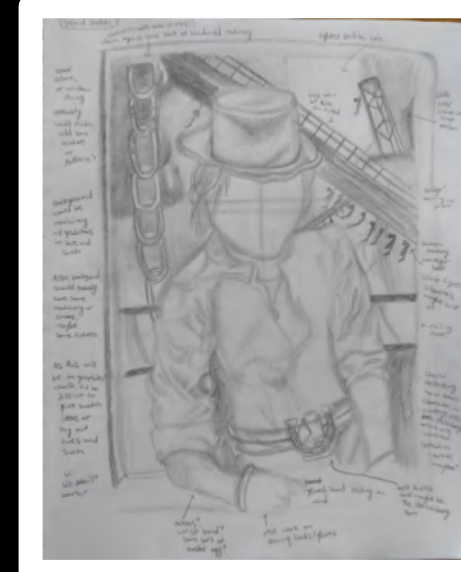
Planning

For my first sketch, I decided to complete a basic outline of the character's face. Using the provided concept art for reference, I proceeded to imitate Heisenberg's features in order to understand what elements best identified the character. I honestly have very little experience drawing persons of the male persuasion, which is a bit ironic as their features are much more simplistic when compared to drawing women. I realized Heisenberg was most notable defined by his sunglasses, so I imitated the basic shapes, adding a few highlights in relation to the light patterns. My only complaint with this sketch is I forgot to provide enough room for his other notable accessory, this being his wide-brimmed hat, however I'm grateful I was better able to experiment with facial detail. I'm quite fond of the texture I was able to establish on the gloves and beard, and found myself looking forward to how this would look on larger scale.
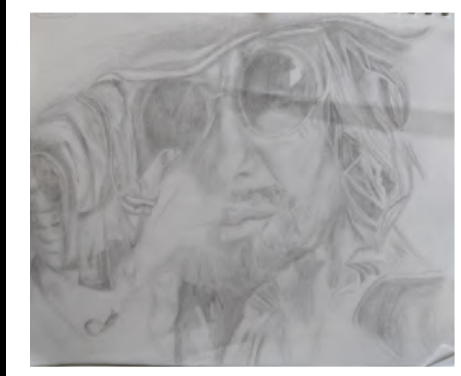
For my second piece, I decided to do something I almost never do in my pieces: plan the background. In every single one of my pieces from the past year, I would only use a solid color, or an absence of color, for the background, which was both a more convenient course of action and additionally emphasized the detail of the central form. However, for Heisenberg, I really wanted to incorporate his human factory in the background to emphasize the character's motivations and desire for control. Referring to the scenery provided in the game, I proceeded to lay out the silhouetted figures and machinery that appear. For the sake of the sketch, I found myself having to experiment with perspective and the layering of forms to allude such ideas. Admittedly, much of the factory is hidden by the limited light, so much of this sketch is just me guessing and laying out random shapes. I have to say, the weirdest part of the sketch are the soldier silhouettes, which I attempted to draw without the weaponry to make them appear more human.

For my third and final sketch, I decided to combine the ideas I preferred of each of my previous sketches in a parody of Look's piece. Imitating the pose of "Captain Rackham", I began by creating a simplistic outline of the pose and garments, and afterwards altered the forms to be more relevant to the character. There were actually few changes I had to make for the character, including eliminating the vest and replacing it with a jacket, and widening the brim of the hat. Though it wasn't part of his wardrobe, I also decided to add a belt buckle in the shape of the Heisenberg family crest. I figured this detail both parodied the accessory choices of "Captain Rackham", being his gaudy belt buckle, and would additionally be a clever detail further identifying the character and his past. The actual crest is a horseshoe with the profile of a horse's head located in the center, though for the sake of the sketch, I wasn't confident enough in this idea to draw a detailed animal. I decided to just draw a few lines to remind myself what was supposed to be there.
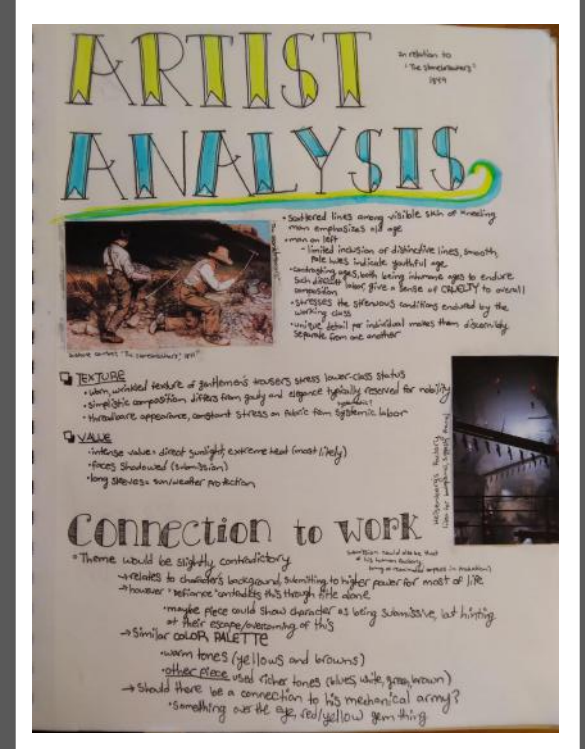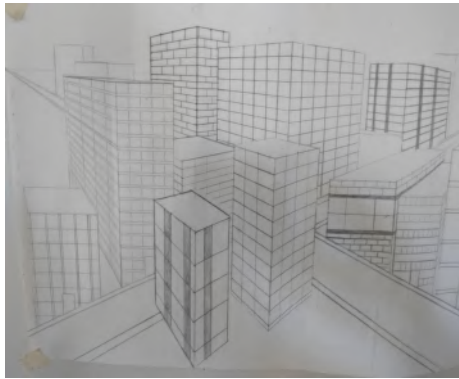
Experimentation

Before completing my project, I decided to briefly experiment with perspective, provided how heavily this piece relied on it. Near the end of my first year as an IB art student, I created two perspective-specific drawings, these being one point and two point perspective pieces. While looking at the layout of the factory, I knew I would have to rely on one point, which was quite relieving as I struggled more with the other. Choosing to use basic shapes of buildings again, I began by establishing a point located near the center of my piece, and used a ruler to trace two diagonal lines from said point. Using a ruler again, I proceeded to draw a horizontal line about one and a half inches (3.81 cm) from the bottom of the page, this line serving as the sketch's "ground". From there, I attempted to add a series of buildings in relation to the point of perspective, and even added a bit of detail to understand how windows and such would appear.

Unfortunately, upon the completion of both of these drawings, I realized that perspective wasn't really something I needed to worry about as much, given the section to the factory that would demonstrate one-point perspective would be hidden by the character. Instead, I decided to focus more on line work after realizing the details of my third sketch would likely blend together in relation to the medium's composition. One of my greatest concerns was the character's hair, which I knew would be the lightest section of the piece. To test out possible techniques, I decided to darken a piece of paper with compressed charcoal, and, taking a clean eraser, erased random lines in the medium. I additionally took a bit of compressed charcoal and darkened random shapes to emphasize some of the "strands".

Process/Manipulation

As for many of my illustrations, I figured the best place to start for this piece would be establishing simple guidelines in order to better understand the piece's layout using some vine charcoal. Starting off with the window, I decided to go with an arch as opposed to the much more rigid rectangle I used in my sketches. In general, I found the organic shape was easier to work with on a wider scale, and additionally could provide interesting layers of depth within my piece. I also added a few horizontal lines on the bottom to serve as the sills, and finally added a few vertical lines across to acknowledge where the middle was. When this was complete, I moved onto the character. Using my third sketch as reference, I began sketching out the character using more vine charcoal, additionally adding a slightly heavier pressure on the medium to ensure line visibility.
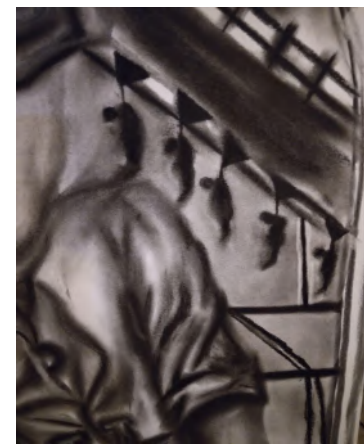
Moving onto the garment detail, I decided to begin shaping the character's clothes. Using my finger, I gently thinned out some of the previously sketched lines. Unfortunately, I did regret my prior choice of using a firmer pressure on the medium as it made this step a bit difficult, though luckily not impossible. After I was satisfied with the lines, I began shaping the sleeves using compressed charcoal. I figured the impermanence of vine charcoal would be quite burdensome if I used it during this step, and additionally figured that the lines would be much more visible. As I was a bit worried about the boldness of the medium, I decided to use the medium as lightly as possible, and gently smudged each of the lines to smooth the composition. I also used a clean eraser to lighten areas around each of the folds.

After this was complete, I moved onto the hat. While sketching out the initial form, I left little indication to how I wanted the shape to appear, and found myself having to reestablish the hat's shape. Alternating between vine and compressed charcoal, I began strengthening the appearance of the hat, and additionally altered the perspective a bit to appear more relative to the given perspective. For a bit of depth, I sketched several shapes and lines using compressed charcoal, and additionally used a clean eraser to create highlights across the top and middle sections.

In reference to the background detail, specifically the conveyor belt, I began by darkening the rectangular strip, additionally lightening certain sections near the bottom with a clean eraser. Referencing my second and third sketches, I proceeded to draw five solid triangles, and imitated the limp silhouettes of each of the soldiers using compressed charcoal. Like my sketches, I decided to abstain from including the bulky weaponry and limb extensions provided on each of the figures, mostly because I found the appearance much more unnerving when they appeared as normal humans. This would further the malicious tone associated with the piece, and hint at the authorial role of the figure in this situation as well.

For the rest of the background, I decided to include some random machinery silhouettes, and proceeded to draw some basic shapes and lines using a mix of vine and compressed charcoal. A few times I found myself drawing some of the shapes much bolder than intended, which muddled the composition, and used a charcoal stained eraser to rectify these errors. I additionally used a clean eraser to add some highlights to the forms. As each of these details weren't very visible in the actual factory, I decided to not worry so much about specific detail, and instead added shading and lines where they seemed best fit.

The final step of this piece was the character's face and hair something I had held off after realizing I had little experience drawing head detail on a smaller scale. For the beard, I attempted to alternate between short strokes of both vine and compressed charcoal. I additionally added a bit of a mustache above the lips as well.

Investigation/Planning

For the fourth and final piece of "The Deadliest Sins", I decided to conclude this series with the main antagonist, Mother Miranda.Though her exact age is unknown, Miranda was born sometime during the late nineteenth century in an agrarian mountain village in Eastern Europe. Miranda eventually gave birth to her daughter Eva who was claimed nearly a decade later by the Spanish flu.Devastated by her loss, Miranda found solace in a nearby cave with the intention of ending her life, however she was instead confronted by a strange fungal colony, later dubbed "The Mold". Fueled by ambition and desolation, Miranda became obsessed with the Mold, believing it to be the solution for bringing back her daughter.When considering the character of Mother Miranda, I found myself drawn to her ambition, and how her love for her daughter became the source of her obsession. It was fascinating to see how a once ordinary individual (though this is purely speculation as little is known about her early life) could become this wrathful being so far from her previous humanity. In general, I found that the fourth and final installment of my series should end with the main and final antagonist, and should be given a title that deviates from the alliterations of the previous title. I was drawn to the title "Wrath" as it encompassed the overwhelming rage that motivates the character, and additionally was the name of one of the actual Seven Deadly Sins.

For my artist inspiration, I decided to replicate the fantastical realism of Scott M. Fischer. Known best for his literature illustrations and conceptual character designs, Fischer focuses his fine art around feminine figures caught in unconventional situations. Often, the figure's irregularity is classified by the addition of an animal or an element of nature woven into their complexion. Additionally, most of the figures are nude or find their bodies abstracted into the background, emphasizing the figure as being decorative and almost secondary to the rest of the piece.

After reviewing the work of Scott M. Fischer, I found myself drawn most to his piece "Copper X". Presenting a woman whose torso has been replaced with a skull, his piece provides a morbid exaggeration of femininity and womanhood. The most distinguishable feature is her skull torso, this of which often relates to mortality or the unachievable nature of immortality. Such a feature replaces the entirety of her chest, almost as if to remove its existence, stressing the burdensome nature of her condition. Though seemingly random, it's purpose is soon suggested through another component of the piece, this being the uterus eclipsed by the torso. Compared to the rest of the piece, which consists of lush hues and detailed patterns, this feature is quite basic in comparison. Hidden in the skull's shadow, it goes almost unnoticed. Being presented, however, in such a blunt manner as well as it's precise connection to the skull itself suggests this feature is the cause of her condition. When considering this organ's purpose, being the host of developing fetuses, Fischer seems to suggest this feature has led to the character's degradation, as if to acknowledge a feature so often associated with being a woman is ironically depriving her of just that.

When looking at Fischer's piece, I found myself drawn to his subtle yet morbid symbolism, and how much this piece in particular connected to Miranda's character. As I mentioned earlier, Miranda was driven into madness due to her daughter's death, which became the basis of her identity and the reason for torturing and terminating much of the village population. I felt this particular focus best emulated Miranda, and was curious to see which of her forms could best stress this trait. Additionally, I liked how this piece in particular seemed to emulate religious ambiance through the character's dignified posture, which also worked when considering Miranda's own religious affiliation.

As I've noticed my luck with creating realistic facial features is limited, I decided to make my first sketch a moderately detailed interpretation of the character's face, though in her "normal" form. While considering the intricacy of Fischer's work, I found myself unsure of how simplistic I wished to portray the character, and whether excessive detail surrounding the face would shift the focus away from any other detail I considered adding. Using a still shot of Miranda from the game, I proceeded to layout her features and garments. Granted the tilt of her head, I found myself incorporating a series of guidelines, which helped with perspective and drawing the features in accordance to the angle. Much of the sketch was a chance for me to focus on, and hopefully improve, my current ability to properly draw semi-realistic features, though I still found myself struggling immensely on drawing proper lips, which was mostly due to to the visible teeth. Also I'm pretty sure the right eye is a bit higher than the left, though its irregularity might be supported by how far it is from the nose.
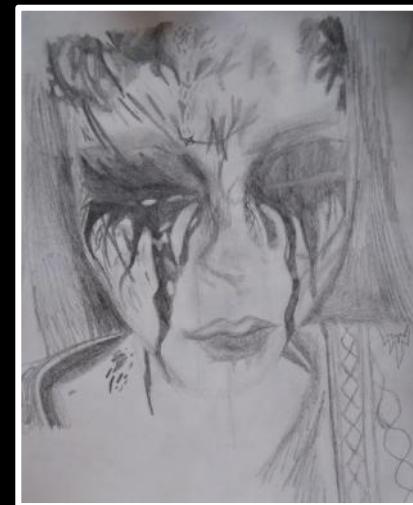

For my second sketch, I decided to once again focus on the character's face, this time being her weakened form. One of my main concerns with this piece was how Miranda's normal form was almost too normal, sort of like the Dimitrescu daughters, which resulted in the downfall of the piece. Thus, I figured the melted, hollow-eyed form of Miranda could possibly be better, and force the character to appear much more wrathful as well. Using fewer guidelines than before, I proceeded to sketch out Miranda, taking note of the angles of each of the drips in relation to the tilt of her head. Though almost entirely black, I erased a few areas to present each of the stains as liquid, and also added a few blotches to stress the resulting tainture of her form. As I had planned for my final sketch to be a combination of all of my best/favorite ideas, I found myself considering whether this facial depiction would best capture the essence of the character compared to my prior sketch. There was the obvious simplicity in this version compared to the first, which would provide me with ample opportunities to establish more detail, something that was rarely an option with paintings I completed in the past.

For my third and final sketch, I decided to imitate the composition of Fischer's "Copper X". and integrate elements relevant to Mother Miranda's character and general appearance. I began by sketching the outline of a figure whose head is tilted to the left, and added a few lines to better understand the figure's proportions. As there are several versions of Mother Miranda, I attempted to find the one that held the most relevant connection to Fischer's piece, and additionally focused on the character's form in greater depth. I admit that one of my reasons for choosing this piece as my inspiration was due to Miranda's final mutated form in which she becomes a tree-like entity, and additionally now lacks her ceremonial robes. Though considered the most powerful of all of her forms purely by her heightened abilities, something about her blatant bareness demonstrates an even greater strength brought on by vulnerability. Given the character's avian mutation as well as her tendency to don a beaked mask, my initial thought was to replace the torso with a bird skull. After a bit of research regarding the significance of such a symbol, I found it additionally strengthened the theme, provided it refers to the power to rise again after any trouble that may destabilize balance.
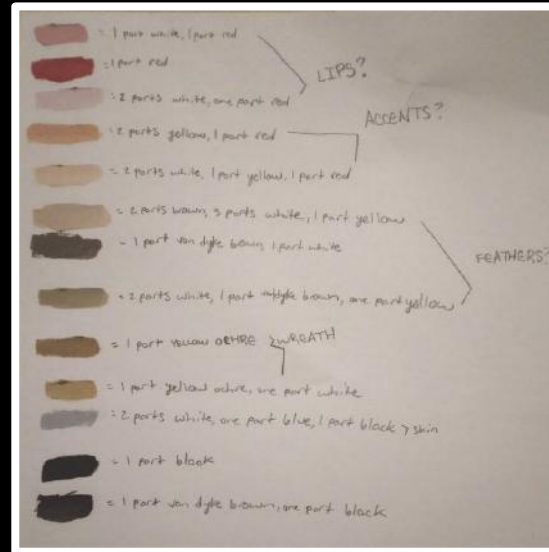
Before I started my painting, I decided to complete a brief series of swatches with the medium. Considering Miranda's mutated form, her appearance consists of monochromatic and composite hues, which gave me a limited number of options. With her skin, I noticed it carried this bluish tint that made it stand out against the darker hues, and proceeded to imitate that shade by white paint with a pinprick of blue and brown added to the mix. I also created additional shades for the lightest and darkest sections of the skin as well. Considering the features, I realized her eyes would simply be black, though with a bit of blending added here and there for depth, however I was a bit unsure about her lips. I ended up blending several shades of grey, a few a which had hints of red and white in case I wanted to use something a bit more natural. However, I ended up choosing one of the grey anyway after finding it best complimented the chosen skin tone.
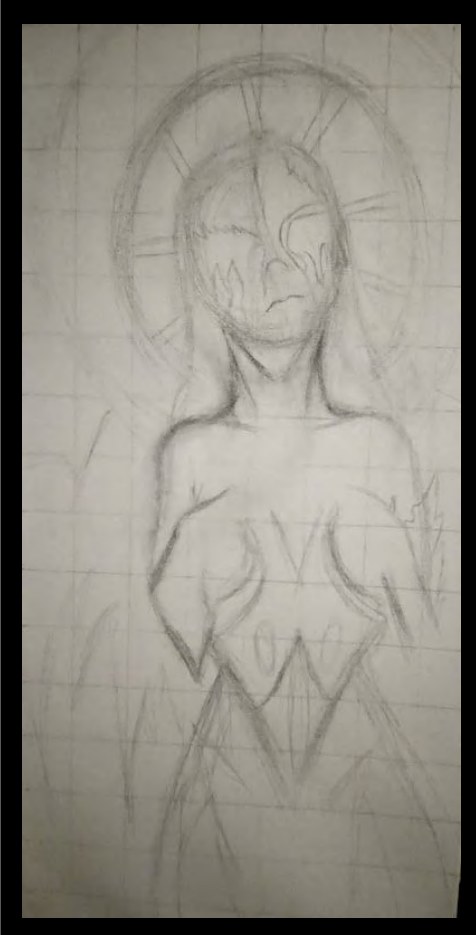
Prior to applying paint, I decided to sketch my chosen sketch onto my canvas. I've learned in the past that such images are much more proportional when drawn over a grid, and decided to create one on my canvas. Using a ruler, I proceeded to make small dash marks every one and a half inches on each of the four sides, and connected each mark to its adjacent. Moving onto the image, my initial idea was to draw the figure perfectly in the center, and began counting each of the established rows to find the center. This was actually an unexpected bonus of drawing this grid, and I was able to narrow down the canvas' center as being in between two rows.

Using my third sketch and Fischer's piece as reference, I proceeded to sketch the figure. As the piece's balance relied so heavily on the angle of the head in relation of the neck, I decided to sketch the neck first. It was much easier to make each side of the form symmetrical, however I still struggled with making the slope of the shoulders even on both sides. Moving forth, I additionally added vague shapes for the arms and hands, and also transformed the torso into a bird skull. When considering both my piece inspiration and Mother Miranda, I realized the figures lacked a definite torso, and decided to fill this space with more vague lines, believing I could either imitate the spindly things coming from Miranda's torso, or blend the figure's lower half into the background.

For the face, I decided to remain true to my initial decision of using Miranda's drained form, and added two organic shapes near the middle of the head. As I intended for the head to tilt up slightly, I additionally drew a small u-shaped line to imitate the angle of the nose, and also added a vague lip shape for the mouth.
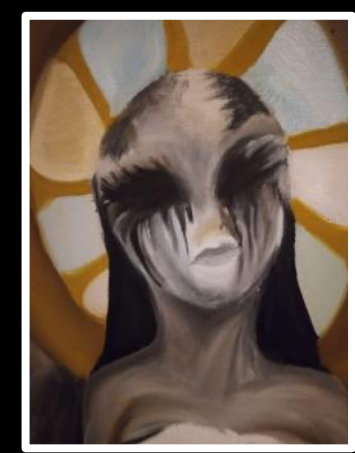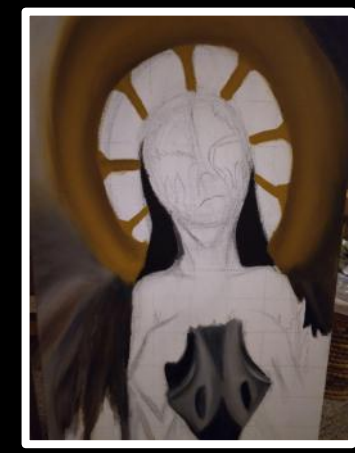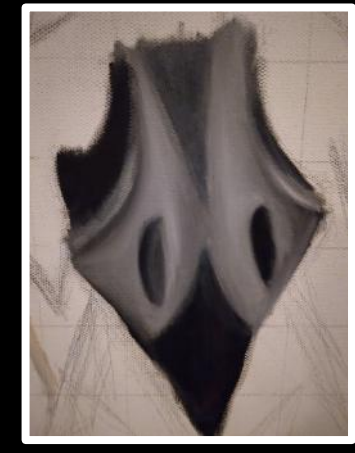
Moving onto the actual painting, I decided to start on the background first. As the character's form is mostly obscured by her wings, I decided to have these make up the near entirety of the background, and began planning out which hues would work best. Looking back at my swatches, I found that I wanted the figure itself to be composed of grayish blues and black, and wished for the wings to appear as distinct as possible. Taking a small flat brush, specifically a flat four, I applied quick, alternating streaks of Burnt Umber, Van Dyke Brown, black, and white paint to imitate a feathered texture. Additionally, this made each of the hues stand out against one another, and in general added a unique bout of texture that could contrast against the smoother form of the character.

When this section was complete, I decided to move onto the torso. Looking at the skull in Fischer's piece, I found it was mostly composed of yellowish browns and grays, however I was uncertain whether such hues would compliment the others, or whether the shape would be lost in the background. Thus, I decided to make the skull monochromatic with a few random applications of light brown to add some depth.

Moving on, I decided to complete the next relatively simple of the painting, this being Mother Miranda's wreath. When sketching this section on my canvas, I considered using some sort of template or circular object to trace onto this section, however I am not a particularly cautious person, and was worried something too heavy would dent my canvas. I opted for free handing the two circles that made up the wreath, and figured that later applications of paint would round the form in time.

When this was complete, I decided to move onto the body. As I mentioned earlier, one of my favorite things about Fischer's work was his technique, which consisted of layering random hues in ways that made them stand out against one another. Considering the viscosity of the paint, my faith in replicating this technique was very limited. Taking a small flat brush, I applied a thin streak of paint against the curve of the neck, then quickly dipped my brush in a new pigment and added another thin streak against the its predecessor. I continued this technique throughout the entirety of the figure's neck and shoulders, figuring it'd be easier to blend upward for the head. Reviewing the shading of Fisher's work, I attempted to mimic his shading as closely as possible, such as the triangular shadow underneath the chin and the darker outlines around the shoulders.

Investigation

As I had no prior experience with drawing a still life, I decided to find an artist inspiration that captured this concept well. I found myself drawn to the work of Willem Claesz. Exclusively devoted to the painting of still-life, Claesz is recognized for his innovation in the late breakfast genre of still life painting. Though initially taking inspiration from previous artists, expressing imagery such as bread and cheese that were more commonly used, his paintings soon evolved from addictive compositions to diverse, monochromatic breakfast and banquet pieces, each of which executed with delicate brushstrokes that vividly expressed arrays of textures and forms. When looking at his work, I was drawn most to his piece "Still Life with Oysters, A Rummer, a Lemon, and a Silver Bowl." The unusual collection of objects are supported through his focus on contrasting, exceedly distinct textures and harsh value. I wished to incorporate a similar random yet harmonious assortment of objects, and proceeded to experiment with possible layouts.

Planning
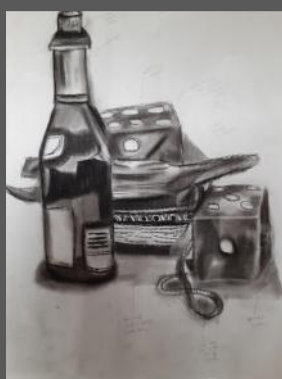
Given that it was my first time using charcoal, I decided to use create this sketch using more simplistic lines. My plan initially was to get an overall feel of the medium and what techniques worked best while using it. I began by outlining the positions of each of the objects. I decided to use compressed charcoal to create the basic form of the objects, however this decision quickly proved to be a mistake. For one, once a mark is made by the charcoal, it is very difficult to erase from the paper. The perspective of the objects in this sketch ended up being off and surrounded by faint smudges from my attempts to erase it. The driftwood in the front was especially irritating with this medium as the actual object's form was paler around the edges. When I decided to experiment briefly with shading this sketch, I was unable to do very much with the driftwood as a result of it's thick dark lines. However, this sketch did help with realizing how not to use the medium.

For my second sketch, I decided to focus mostly on shading, hence why the objects are much darker than in the previous sketch. I also altered the position of the objects slightly, placing the bottle in the bowl rather than the fuzzy dice. I also included the string from the dice as well to see if it added anything interesting the piece. The dice and wood perspectives look neater in this sketch compared to the previous one, however the bottle, though shaded better, looks slightly squished. I attempted to focus more on the dice on this sketch as previously I had put more effort into the bottle. I'm actually very glad that I did this as I was able to better understand the shape and perspective of the dice. I enjoyed including the string hanging loosely from the top dice as I had felt that the dice in the first sketch just resembled overgrown playing dice. Regretfully, I had also decided to once again use compressed charcoal to draw the objects' outlines rather than vine, which further caused their dark appearances.

For my third and final sketch, I decided to completely change up the positions of the present objects (though the bottle still remained on the left). I separated the dice so one was perched in the bowl behind the wood while the other was placed slightly in front. I was curious about how objects would look behind the bottle given it's translucent property. This idea ended up being transferred into my final piece as I liked how it turned out in this sketch. I also altered the positioning of the dice as I was curious about whether they would work better separated or together. I also attempted to add in more detail to the string as well. Admittedly, this sketch was my favorite out of the three as I already had experience with the other two sketches to understand how to use the medium and mimic real-life objects. This was also the only sketch I did whose outline of each object was done with vine charcoal rather than compressed. Admittedly, having not had prior experience with this material was difficult as I should've incorporated it into my previous two sketches. However, it was much better to outline with and also helped this sketch look a little nicer.

Process and Experimentation

There were a few other ideas I had not yet tried in regards to the arrangement of the objects that I tested out below. I was curious to know if one of them would stick out more than the ones I drew in my sketches, and surprisingly one did. For my first arrangement, I attempted to further the spaces between each object. I ended up not choosing this as I felt the objects were a bit too distant from one another.

My second arrangement was the one I ended up choosing. I decided to stack the dice in the bowl so that they were slightly tilted and place the driftwood behind the bottle so part of it was visible through the glass. For my final arrangement, I attempted another simple form. The arrangement of the dice here appear to be more thrown together rather than meticulously stacked. I did like this arrangement, though I felt the previous one was more interesting.


The first, and strangely the longest step, was trying to find a suitable drawing surface for my final. For my sketches, I found a smooth board with similar dimensions to the newsprint and propped it up against a chair with a dictionary for support. However, the dimensions of the Bristol paper were much larger than the newsprint, which meant I had to find an acceptable surface. I ended up finding a packaged poster of the required dimensions that worked well, which I propped up on a chair with the dictionary for support. I moved the whole lot so that it was about a foot to the left of the table with my objects, and about two feet in front of it as well.

Once this was established, I began to outline the basic forms of each object using vine charcoal. I decided to draw center to left, starting with the bowl and adding lines to indicate the place of the bottle as well as their corresponding shadows. The figure shown here acted as a placeholder, later to be thoroughly edited after I went back in with compressed charcoal.

From there, I was able to lay out the basic forms of the other figures such as the bottle, and the dice. I also drew in a wavy line in the background to indicate the position of the driftwood. For the bottle, I decided to draw in a horizontal line connecting the two sides of the bottle in order to make the sides of the bottle proportional. Previously, in my sketches, I struggled with making the bottle even, so I decided to add something to help me with that. I also added in the bowl's rim and outlined where the darkest and lightest parts were.
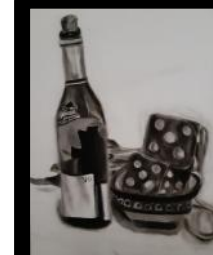
I then began to add in more detail to the figures and neaten the figures. I added in lines inside of the bottle to represent the placement of the driftwood. Something to note here was that the top dice ended up being erased as its perspective per side was very off. However, everything else stayed basically the same. I then began to go back in with compressed charcoal, which is shown here with the bowl, it's outline darker compared to how it was previously. I proceeded to shade the rest of the figures first, though instead of starting with the bowl as I had done previously, I instead started the bottle first. I ended up having to widen the form slightly in order to perfect the dimensions of the bottle and make the shape similar to the real object.

Investigation/Planning

Prior to starting this assignment, I had such a fascination with the lore and design of the characters in "Resident Evil 8: Village". I've always been a fan of fantasy horror concepts, and found a connection between their motivations for provoking the protagonist to that of my past emotional conflicts. I decided to use the daughters Dimitrescu in relation to the concept of unbridled desire. Originating within the mid-1900's, these once ordinary women were the subjects of an experiment with a Cadou parasite, which resulted in their chimeric mutations. Every human cell in their bodies was consumed by imitation blowflies born of the parasite, which granted them the ability to morph into a swarm of them at will and brought forth a desire to consume human flesh. Having no recollection of their past lives, the women were then adopted by another subject, Lady Alcina Dimitrescu, who shared similar mutations.

In general, each of these characters is strongly motivated by uncontrollable desires, their finite connections to their past humanity subjecting them to be ruled by a fervid hunger. Like the other characters I chose for the series, they reflect almost perfect personifications of a feeling that I fear dominated my life. This idea of finding yourself controlled by desperately wanting things you can never have, forcing changes upon yourself to meet the criteria of such aspirations, I realized that such a concept was both reflective of my past as well as the personalities of these characters. Additionally, I was already fond of the character design, and sought for ways to best bring the characters to life.

When considering the character(s) I wished to represent, I found myself searching for both movements and artists that could best capture their archaic nature. For my artist inspiration, I found myself intrigued by the work of Russian artist Vladimir Lukich Borovikovsky. After being impressed with his work, Vladimir was sent to work in St.Petersburg, which, under the positive influence of the international art scene, quickly became a prominent master in the city. Within the following decade, Borovikovsky found himself achieving the title of academic through the influence of his literacy friends, who helped him mature his concept of portrait painting. His pieces began to assume moral feeling as the basis of the image, which went in accordance with the principles of the literary movement of sentimentalism.

In relation to Borovikovsky's work, I found myself drawn to the elegance of his paintings, and found my ideas for my own piece best captured in the likes of "Portrait of Elena Alexandrovna Naryshkina". Set against a scene of blissful nature, Borovikovsky presents a serene interpretation of the princess through a blend of soft, pastel hues. Like all of Borovikovsky's female portraits, the piece embodies idealized beauty, and lives up to the expectations set within this era. The precise tilt of the head in relation to the billowing of the fabric constitute this idea of innocence, and invoke a sense of delicacy to the main figure.

While looking at this piece, I found Borovikovsky's use of pigments and presentation of the central figure to carry such distinct contrast with the malignant appearance of the Dimitrescu daughters, and thus wanted to complete my painting in this style. I liked the idea of parodying a painting renowned for it's emphasis on light and grace with characters regarded as evil incarnate. Additionally, I liked the idea of embodying one of the daughters in a style that was very classical, and emphasizes how ancient these characters truly are.

"Cassandra Dimitrescu", Tomonori Takano, 2021

"Portrait of Elena Alexandrovna Naryshkina",
Vladimir Borovikovsky, 1799

For my first sketch, I decided to attempt a simple drawing of one of the daughter's faces, this being Cassandra, in order to gain some experience drawing somewhat realistic facial features. It was difficult to find many significant differences between each of the sisters, and choosing a reference was more of a matter of finding a small detail that might work best with the style of painting. In the case of Cassandra, it was more so the fact that she lacked the heavy eye makeup of the other two, and I was worried about finding a balance the softness of Vladimir's piece and the maliciousness of the daughters. In general, I found myself confused by the color palette I felt would best capture both piece, whether I wanted to create an ironic piece and have a dark figure against this serene backdrop, or whether I could find a way to mix the two so the piece stays subtly true to both inspirations.

My second sketch was my attempt at replicating the perspective of "Portrait of Elena Alexandrovna Naryshkina". Using a similar method of establishing facial detail through several precisely spaced lines, I did my best to imitate the angle of the figure, and attempted to incorporate the physical features of the daughters. For the sake of this sketch, I attempted to not use specific daughter for reference, but instead drew the figure in a way that was vaguely reflective of all of them. For this sketch, I also attempted to add more clothing and accessory detail, which was a bit difficult to do when considering how often these characters are portrayed in the shadows.
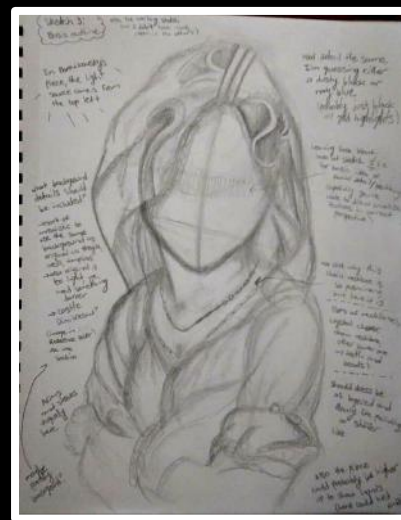
My third sketch is by far the simplest of the three, and acted as a way for me to understand what the general form would look like. My main struggle was determining the balance between the daughters Dimitrescu and Borovikovsky's piece, specifically in the case of the garments. When looking at the concept art of the Bela, Cassandra, and Daniela, their dresses are very form-fitting, strongly contrasting with the loose-hanging garments worn by the Italian princess. I considered using a similar material for my piece, however after I sketched out where the hood would go, I found the loose fitting garments gave the piece a very medieval and gothic tone, and decided to keep the clothes as they appear in the piece.

Experimentation/Manipulation

Though I had already determined a layout for each of the pieces, something I had not yet considered was the color palette. Initially I assumed coming up with a base tone would be simple enough, provided that their faces are almost entirely white, I wished to find something that looked slightly more realistic. Using my prior knowledge of skin tone mixing, I proceeded to mix three parts white paint with one part red, yellow, and brown. However, I must've gotten the proportions messed up somewhere along the way because the results were less than desirable. What's a bit ironic is that I swear this was the exact hue I first mixed when working on my self-portrait last year, so clearly my skin tone mixing skills have not improved since.I decided to attempt a small series of possible tones that, although quite pale, carried several, more obvious hints of yellow, red, and brown. I can only describe the first few results as resembling pink chocolate milk, while the ones that followed ranged from tawny to tan. I tried my best to limit the amount of red in the tone as I realized it would make the character a bit too human, and would cause the additions of dried blood and soot to contrast sharply. I needed something that appeared natural, and decided to just apply each of my tones randomly throughout the piece, a tactic I found worked quite well in my past experience with oil paintings.

Though I wasn't exactly transferring an image, I decided to start this painting by sketching a grid onto my canvas. I've noticed how often I struggle with proportions, and figured that having a guide would be beneficial. Taking a yardstick, I began making dashes every fourth inch on every side of the square canvas. After this was complete, I proceeded to line up each of the dash marks with their counterparts, and connected them by tracing the path established by the yardstick.

After I was satisfied with the grid dimensions, I began establishing the permanent form of the figure. Using both my second and third sketches as reference, I decided to sketch the head and hood first. I mentioned in my planning process that I struggle immensely with drawing anything that's on an angle, and unfortunately this time wasn't an exception. I luckily kept each attempt quite pale, which made erasing them easier.

The facial features were by far the most difficult part to sketch. I attempted to use my second sketch as reference because I had already established facial features from that perspective, and proceeded to sketch out each of the eyes. Unfortunately, I found myself struggling significantly with each of the eyes, specifically the one on the left. My second sketch proved useless in this section as I had blocked out this eye completely, so I instead turned to Borovikovsky's painting for reference, which sort of helped. I still left the eye as a sort of vague outline, just in case I decided to either block it out entirely or just found a way to better the shape while painting. When I was satisfied with the results of the layout, I then began painting. Using my variety of previously mixed skin tones, I started off by laying the established hues on the face. Something I tried my hardest to avoid were any of the outlines I sketched for each of the facial features, which was unfortunately a much more difficult task than I realized.
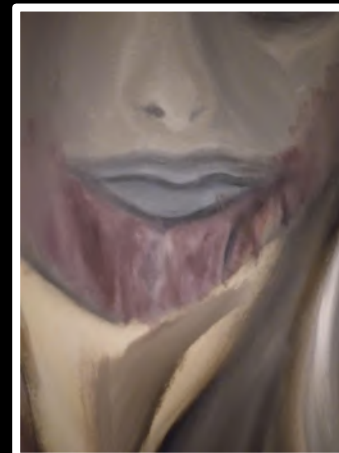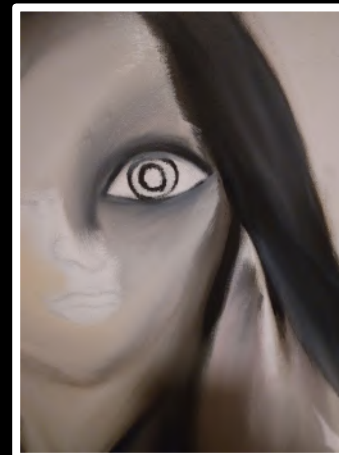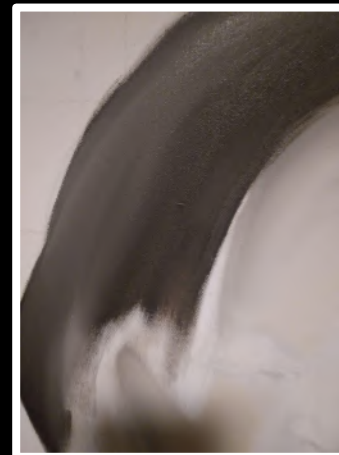
I had already begun painting over the left eye and the mouth, which shrunk significantly since the last step. After this, I began layering hues for the hood. As I feared having the hood primarily black would cause it to be much bolder than the rest of the piece, I decided to instead mix a warm chocolate brown as the base shade.

Unfortunately, I was soon to realize such an action would prove to carry more burdens than benefits. For one, such a hue carried similarities to the brown tints of the skin, and thus made it impossible to view the hood as separate from the person. Additionally, it made adding any sort of hair practically impossible as each of the possible hair choices, being blonde, auburn, or ash, were practically invisible against the composition. In the end, I decided to add a bit more black to the hood and add several sharp lines to make the hood blend less with the hair.

Realizing it would probably be better to start the hair right after completing the hood, I decided to move forth with establishing both a hue and general texture. I briefly considered using an ash brown, but in the end decided a blend of auburn and red was the better option, provided it was unlikely such a combination would appear too much like the other hues. Taking a dry 3/4" flat brush, I proceeded to alternate between several shades of brown, white, and red. I realized that due to the medium's composition, it would be difficult to establish hair texture, and found that the quick layering of hues gave a slight guarantee that such a thing would be visible.

Next, I decided to move onto the eyes, starting off with the right. Taking a round 4 brush, I proceeded to outline the outer lid with a thin layer of black paint. After this, I began outlining the edges of the iris in relation to the darker rings of the Dimitrescu daughter's eyes, and additionally painted an outline for the pupil as well. Moving onto the nose and mouth, I admit these were by far the most difficult steps of the painting process.The nose was something that I succeeded almost too well in this area, and accidentally painted it away completely when adding more layers to the face.The lips were a bit unusual too as, in relation to the daughters, I had to make the base color black. I was a bit concerned about how the lips could appear as separate from one another, and decided to make the base color instead a light grey. Moving onto the blood, I decided to mix red, brown, and black together to carry the illusion of dried blood. I actually found myself struggling with this step as well, provided the randomness needed for the application of the streaks, which was difficult with the composition of the medium.

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