

Winchmore School
Class of 2021
A Level Art & Design
AOC

Statement

OF

Intent

With my personal project, I want to explore the interior of places in a way that was not done in my independent project. The idea of experience will be present in these pieces in order to give meaning. I want these images to explore the aftermath of life and study the imprint that humans have on surrounding objects. After all, we only leave the way we change the world (physically and mentally) in the end.

To get to my final piece, I'll mimic the artwork of other artists and investigate the techniques used by them. I'll then draw parallels between my life and theirs. Using my versions of items, to make the arrangements more tailored towards my experiences.

To begin my project, I'll make a timeline of still life artists to explore how the practice has changed over the years. By learning more about common themes between these art pieces, I'll hopefully be able to analyse how these things have shifted through time. My initial research will be based on observations at home that I interact with on a daily basis. This includes the bedroom, kitchen and bathroom. I will associate artists and pieces of art with each place and hopefully link them to places outside the home like supermarkets and school. My project will most likely be arranged in a cyclical way in the sense that the beginning will be based on the history of still life (which is mainly food associated arrangements) and finish with a more abstract and modern take on some classical pieces.

Some of the more modern, minimalistic arrangements interest me due to their unusual colour schemes and odd placements. I'd like one of my final pieces to be an oil painting. Through this, I could link the modern still life concepts with older ones.

3d modelling work may also be an interesting starting point for my final piece. After seeing Picasso's "Plate with Still Life", I see a possibility to distort some older pieces of art, in a minimalistic and modern way. Similarly, I could investigate the blank spaces left behind in a modern piece by filling it with text, pictures from magazines and fabric to create a collage. This could be a good opportunity to add a more political meaning to my still life pieces.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE



still life paintings often adorned the interior of Egyptian tombs.



ANTECEDENTS & DEVELOPMENT

Mesmeric, depicting food enjoyed by the rich, more than a sign of hospitality.



LATER RENAISSANCE

JOACHIM BEUKELAER (1623-1674), "Broken Plate with Jew in the home of Martha and Mary in the background."

As religious content gradually diminished in these types of paintings, moral lessons continued as sub-contents.



17th CENTURY



17th CENTURY

DUTCH, FLEMISH, GERMAN & FRENCH

During this time, still life developed as a separate ~~thematic~~ category in the Low Countries in the last quarter of the 16th century. A specific genre of still life was *pronkstilleven* (Dutch for 'ostentatious still life'). Developed in the 1640s...



... they painted still life with diverse surroundings such as trunks, flowers and dead game.



20th CENTURY

As the American artists of the 20th century became aware of European Modernism, they began to incorporate still-life subjects with a combination of American realism and Cubist-derived abstraction.



PABLO PICASSO, Computer Over Fruit, 1925, oil on canvas

MIDDLE AGES & EARLY RENAISSANCE



Interest in the natural world and the creation of realist botanical engravings preceding the discoveries of the New World and flora.



ALBRECHT DÜRER, Drawings of Flora & Fauna



PETERUS OHELIUS, Bundle of green rising a gold smith.

Leonardo da Vinci, of these other artists were among the first to break free from pieces with religious meaning.



JUAN VANUZZO LOTI, (1580-1627)

16th CENTURY



18th CENTURY



The 18th century continued to refine 17th century formalist levels of production.



JEAN-BAPTISTE SIBOT, The White Duck, 1753

19th CENTURY



When Neoplatonism started to decline by 1830s, painting became the focus for the Realist and Romantic artists' resolutions.



During the 19th and 20th centuries, still life has extended beyond the traditional two dimensional art forms of painting into video art and 3D forms such as sculpture performance and installation.

21st CENTURY



[organic]
[realistic]
[photo edited]
[dramatic]
[focal point]
[bright]
[highlights]



[situation]
[contrast]
[structured]
[order]



SCHOOL & STUDIO VIDAL

BEDROOM & LIVING ROOM OBSERVATIONS



[close-up]
[reflections]
[nostalgia]

[dramatic] [bright]
[high saturation]
[central focus] [angles] [lighting]
[aftermath]

VISUAL BRAIN STORM

[caotic] [messy]
[odd] [culture clash]
[detail] [realism]

KITCHEN OBSERVATIONS

Subconscious movement

FINAL PIECE VISUALS

[textures] [thick]
[impasto]



[perspective]
[hyper realistic]
[bright]
[lighting]
[shadows]
[advent]
[withered]



FOOD REARRANGEMENTS



[bold]



BATHROOM OBSERVATIONS

[purposeful]
[abstract]
[pale]
[dreamy]
[event]
[memory]



[movement] [refined detail] [abundant]
[perspective] [aesthetic]
[troubling] [distressed]

Paul Cézanne

1869 - 1906

The French painter, Paul Cézanne is regarded as one of the greatest Post-Impressionists whose work and ideas were influential in the aesthetic development of many 20th century artists and movements. For my project, I have decided to include Paul Cézanne as a starting point due to his influence on the still life genre. Vanitas, Vanitas is defined as 'a painting which contains indications of objects symbolic of the inevitability of death and the transience of vanities or earthly achievements and pleasures.'



Based on letters and statements that Cézanne sent/said to friends and family during the last 10 years of his life, Cézanne would often talk about death and appeared to be depressed. This reasoning would explain why mainly morbid scenes made up of skulls were painted during his final period. I have been going through the similar feelings that Cézanne would have gone through with the passing of my mum.

By studying Paul Cézanne's pieces from this era, I can make a good start to my still life project. By copying one of Cézanne's more popular pieces, I will have the opportunity to analyse the piece. I first noticed the distinct yellow/orange hue on the painting. In my opinion, this ~~allows~~ ^{adds} the skull to a point that makes you think that the owner of that skull passed away a while ago. However, odder enough, Cézanne juxtaposed it against a pile of fresh fruit. Speaking biblically, the skull paired with the fresh fruit could be a criticism of many desire to obtain ^{enough} ~~something~~ in the garden of Eden. While on the other hand, Cézanne could be referring to how different people are in nature to the things we want in life.





WORKING IN THE STYLE OF PAUL CÉZANNE



↓
SMOOTH
TRANSITIONS

← close up of Cézanne's
still life with skull
1878
COMPOSITION STUDIES

To further my
understanding of
Paul Cézanne's
work, I studied his
compositions to better
understand his
technique.



ACRYLIC PAINTING IN THE
STYLE OF PAUL CÉZANNE

REFINEMENT.



REFINED

ZOOM IN OF TABLE CLOTH

ROUGH

Here are two close up paintings of my 'in the style of' piece. I did this to further understand and how texture impacts pieces.

WORK OF ARTISTS WERE



This matches the style of this unknown artist. I like the way they use the blue tones to define the light instead of the shadows. This could be useful

This piece I am experimenting with layering of paint to explore textures in items photographed by Wolfgang Tillmans. I had aimed to achieve images with interesting textures by using a mono-print technique on polytile.



I think the images I do printed on my polytile allowed for accurate placement of sections with colour as well as areas with shadows. This allowed for a unique but accurate range of prints during this project.



My next step now will be to use other media to create exaggerated textures. I will also combine watercolour washes with pastels to explore their affect.



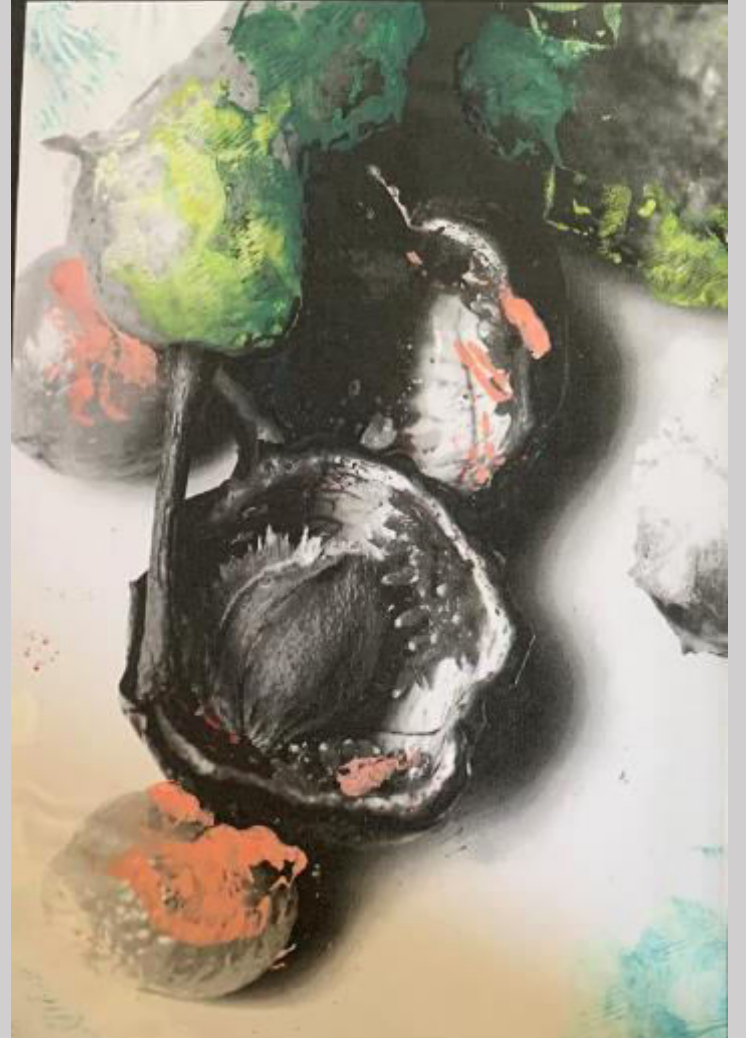
I could also use less paint so that there is a more proportionate spread of paint on each polytile.



In this piece I am experimenting with the layering of paint to explore textures in food items photographed by Wolfgang Tillmans. I had aimed to achieve images with interesting textures by using a mono-print technique on polytile.



Therefore, what I need to do to overcome this difficulty, I will have more shades of colours for each item. This will ensure that I achieve the my desired amount of dimension in each piece.

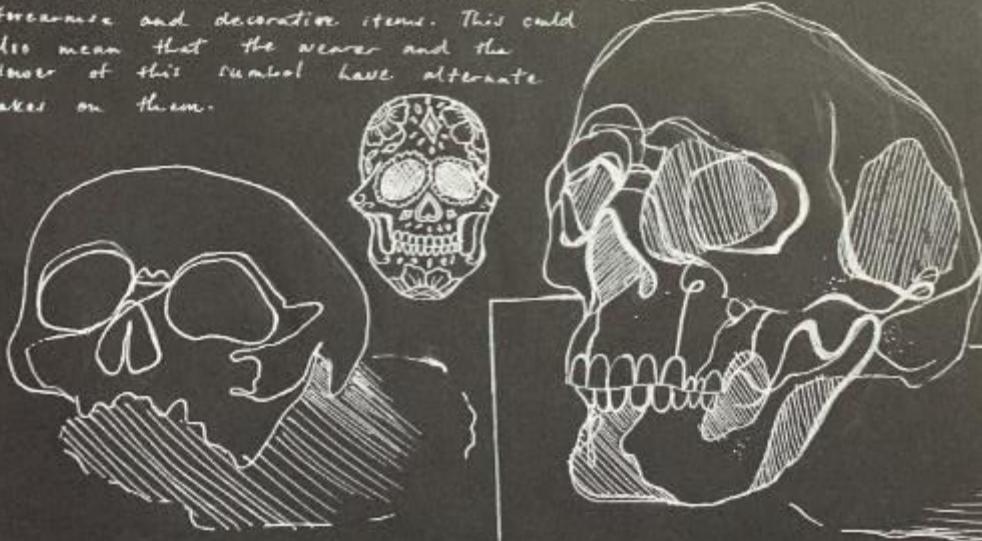


The Significance of the SKULL

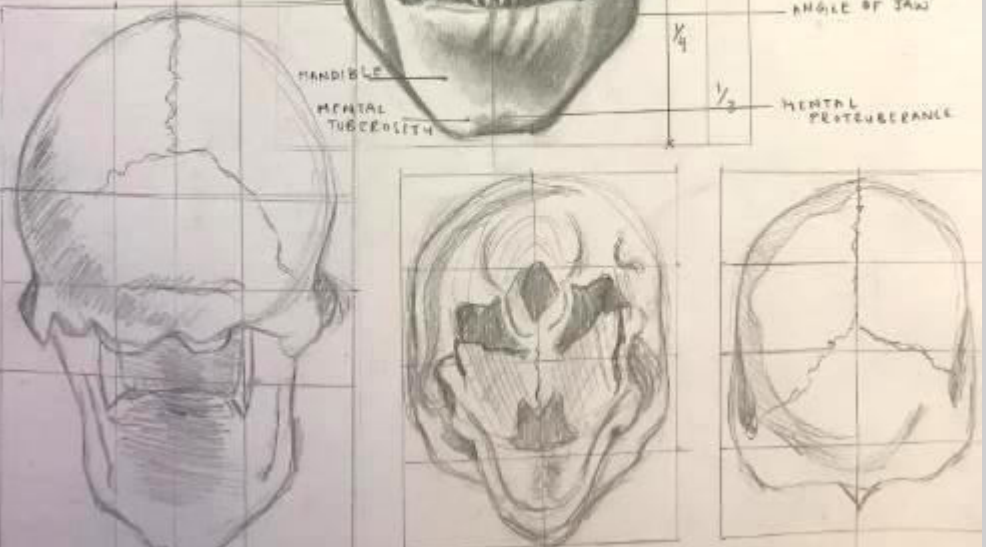
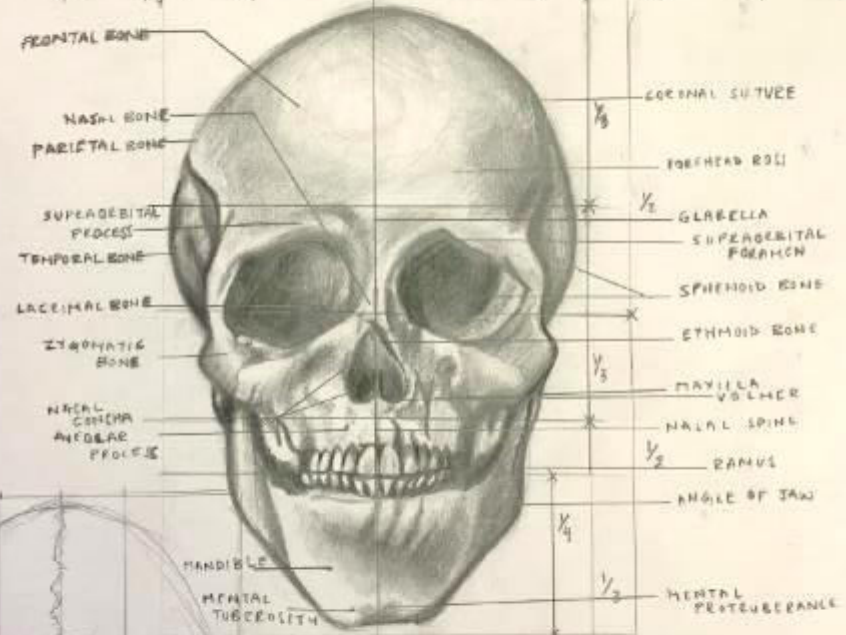
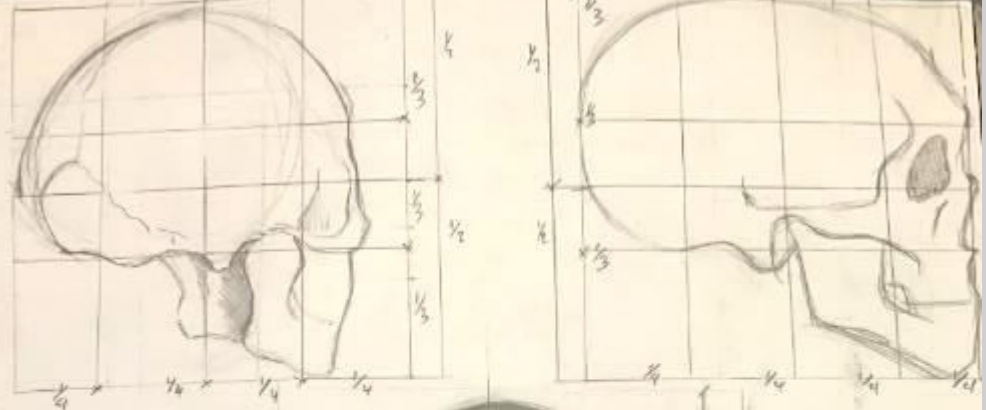


For the most part, skulls are used as a depiction of death. However, though they are clearly connected to death, all around the world they possess a different significance. In Mexico, sculptures of skulls are decorated with bright colours and patterns to pay homage to the dead. Once a year on "Día de las Muertas" (Day of the Dead) families

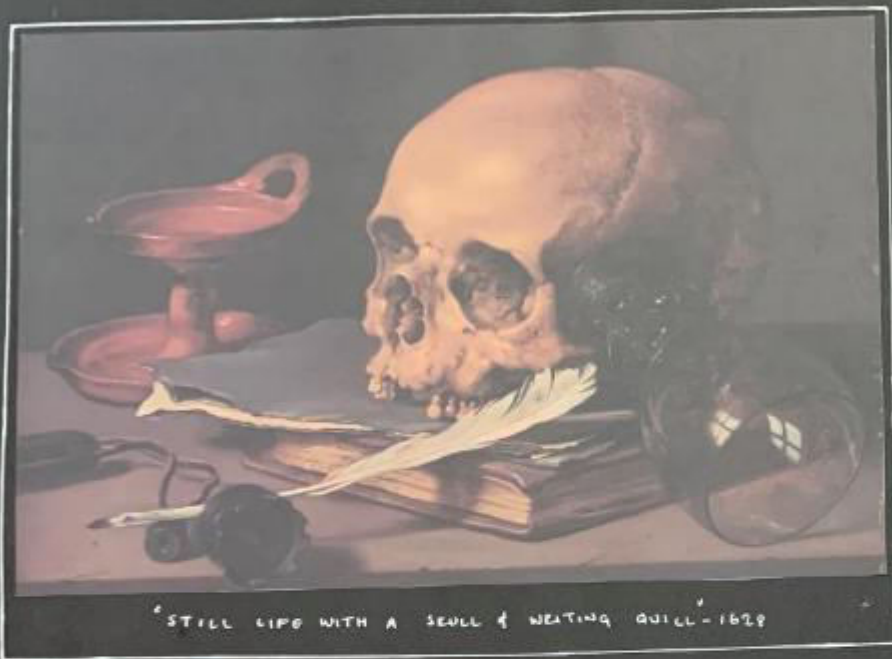
come together and party to celebrate the lives of those they have lost. Sugar skulls are the symbol for this time of year. At their core, skulls are the simplest representation of the human form. In Charles Allan Gilbert's almost 1892 illustration, he used the form of the skull to represent vanity. In his painting of a Lady looking into a mirror in a way that forms the outline of a skull, he encourages viewers to look beneath the surface (vain exterior). In other cultures death is a time that signifies transformation. Many believe that death isn't the end of life, but a step to gain access to another part of life. Some would call it a turning point in the narrative of life which is exactly what the skull signifies in the death Tarot card. Over time, the symbol that once had one elicited fear from viewers has evolved into a 'cool' emblem, a tattoo for forearm and decorative items. This could also mean that the wearer and the viewer of this symbol have alternate takes on them.



Since it is a huge aspect of the human genome, it is important to know...



Pieter Claesz



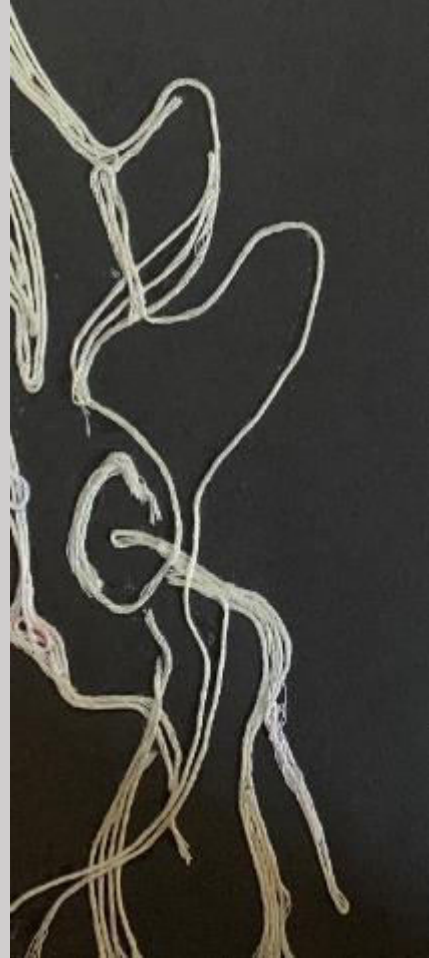
"STILL LIFE WITH A SKULL & WRITING QUILL" - 1629

- The unlit candle, overturned glass and inkpot suggests to the viewer that worldly efforts are ultimately in vain.
- This piece makes reference to worldly accomplishments like writing, learning and the arts. This sentiment resonates with me because my mum was very educated and had her feet in a number of fields.
- The wisp of smoke in the lamp and the reflections in the glass are signs of fleeting existence common in Dutch paintings.
- Here, the symbol of the skull isn't just a remnant of human life but a familiar attribute of a scholar or philosopher.



"VANITAS" - 1625

- A candlestick, watch, letter, pen and ink pot, as well as a flower, skull and walnut are arranged on a table. All of these objects establish a meaning within Vanitas. This is the theme of the passing of time and mortality.
- The flower at the edge of the table is an anemone. The newly picked leaves are still fresh but it will wither soon. The Roman poet Ovid called the anemone a 'windflower' because it clings to life for a short time.
- This piece speaks to the way that time is slipping by. I want to incorporate these ideas and various symbols in order to create my own piece of vanitas art. It will be centered around the life of my mum. Following this, I will brainstorm the different ways I can pay homage whilst working in the style of Pieter Claesz.



SMOKE & FLAME



Another element from my previous vanitas attempt, that I felt ~~that~~ could have been executed better was the imagery of the smoke. In the vanitas genre, smoke is often used to remind viewers of the brevity of life. Parallels have been drawn between the burning of a candle and life just as much as the dispersing candle illustrates the fleeting of life (maybe the imagery of the smoke represents the soul leaving the body). Either way, in my first vanitas attempt, I took stills of a tea light candle with whiff outting to. This was ineffective as the tea light doesn't produce that much smoke, meaning the smoking traces left were muddled and quite ~~small~~ small. This meant that the ~~smoke~~ ~~for~~ I had to improvise the smoke pattern in my painting as the photo references were inept. I therefore knew that for my next attempt, I would need better reference photos. After watching some photography tutorials, my technique improved as I went for a fabric background and a more enhanced camera settings. The photos all were taken with the flash ~~which~~ ~~with~~ defined the traces more. Similarly, I tried to find a different source of smoke. Although incense was advised, I had no access to it so I improvised and used a cigarette. I was abit upset about not using incense because it would coincide more with the memories I had with my mum, however, as I looked into it more, although my mums cancer did not have anything to do with smoking, cigarettes give my piece a link to other types of cancer patients.

FINAL PIECE 1

Initial Ideas



UNKNOWN ARTIST



PHILIPPE DE CHAMPAIGNE



AUDREY FLACK
MARILYN VANITAS



AUDREY FLACK 'REFLECTION'



KEVIN BEIT



PHOTO BY KELLY

PRAYING/MEDITATION POSITION
 Religious practices
 change the religious symbol
 Religious imagery
 skull next to his objects simple
 Candles with reflections make
 Stack of adored things
 Messy study
 Skull with flowers
 Bold piece rather
 Pieter Coecke
 links to unknown 19th century artist

KEY THEMES
 - RELIGION
 - DARK & BIERE
 - RESURRECTION

links to Kevin Beit
 height of book case can symbolise
 ambition
 wisdom
 getting closer to death
 books of different thickness increases variance of
 Audrey Flack
INITIAL IDEAS
 links to Philippe de Champaigne
 PLAY IN LIFE & DEATH
 opportunity to add smoke
 opportunity to play with separation and mixing

links to Kevin Beit
 height of book case can symbolise
 ambition
 wisdom
 getting closer to death
 books of different thickness increases variance of
 Audrey Flack
INITIAL IDEAS
 links to Philippe de Champaigne
 PLAY IN LIFE & DEATH
 opportunity to add smoke
 opportunity to play with separation and mixing
 combination of Philippe de Champaigne and Tom Kammel

WITHOUT SKULLS
 link to Philippe de Champaigne
 KEEP LEANED SKULL? (Audrey Flack)
 SKULL STANDING BACK AT LIFE
 Audrey Flack

INTENSIONS
 I wanted to create a final piece that incorporates both the old and new interpretations of vanitas. By centring this piece about my mum, I hope to add context and therefore a deeper interpretation of what I present. I intend to generate some ideas on the bases of what I would want my final piece to resemble. After, using the knowledge gained in the earlier sections of my artbook, refine and develop a few of my initial thoughts. This may be in the form of their, composition, colour, background foreground and technique. By the end of this process, I will choose a final piece idea and further refine the way I will go about executing it.



DEVELOPMENT WITH



Pieter Claesz

Here I incorporate aspects of Claesz's composition techniques to develop my ideas.

IDEA /



By putting the skull in front of the books, I shift the importance of the skull. In this instance, it could be interpreted that the idea of death has more importance than knowledge.

looks to how vanitas core message is about how humanity puts knowledge and other stuff in a higher regard than their pending death.



Putting a skull in this position could represent someone only realizing the futility of knowledge when it's too late.



Here the skull is front but to the side and turned. I imagine a man who understands how little worldly knowledge is but stands by and almost showcases them.



The small being directly on the book shows another example of how death triumphs knowledge.

The perspective represents how the artist represents how the artist is showing you this point. They are trying to teach you a lesson by example.

The wine glass is floating is showing you this point. They are trying to teach you a lesson by example.

I similarly turned this bottle completely towards the skull because they haven't changed their ways.

I think this image is impactful because although the face is not seen an action can still be interpreted.

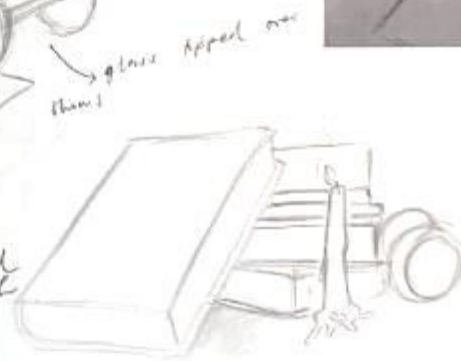
I imagine a person who values religion letting it kill them. This is based on their determination to continue their worldly pursuits.

The wine bottle is faced toward the skull because he's the one who needs it the most.

This composition is also successful because by changing the proportions and positioning of the pieces I have told a story of someone who prioritized pleasure over knowledge. It can also be seen as why you should value knowledge over death.



Here I incorporated Claesz's containing composition to add meaning to my piece. By doing this, the initial meaning shifted into more of an commentary on the turbulent nature of vanity.



To further these developments, I will look at artists with interesting ways of using colour for effect.

MINI OBSERVATION: Audrey Flack

REFLECTION OF LIGHT

VIBRANT

DISTORTED IMAGE IN GLASS

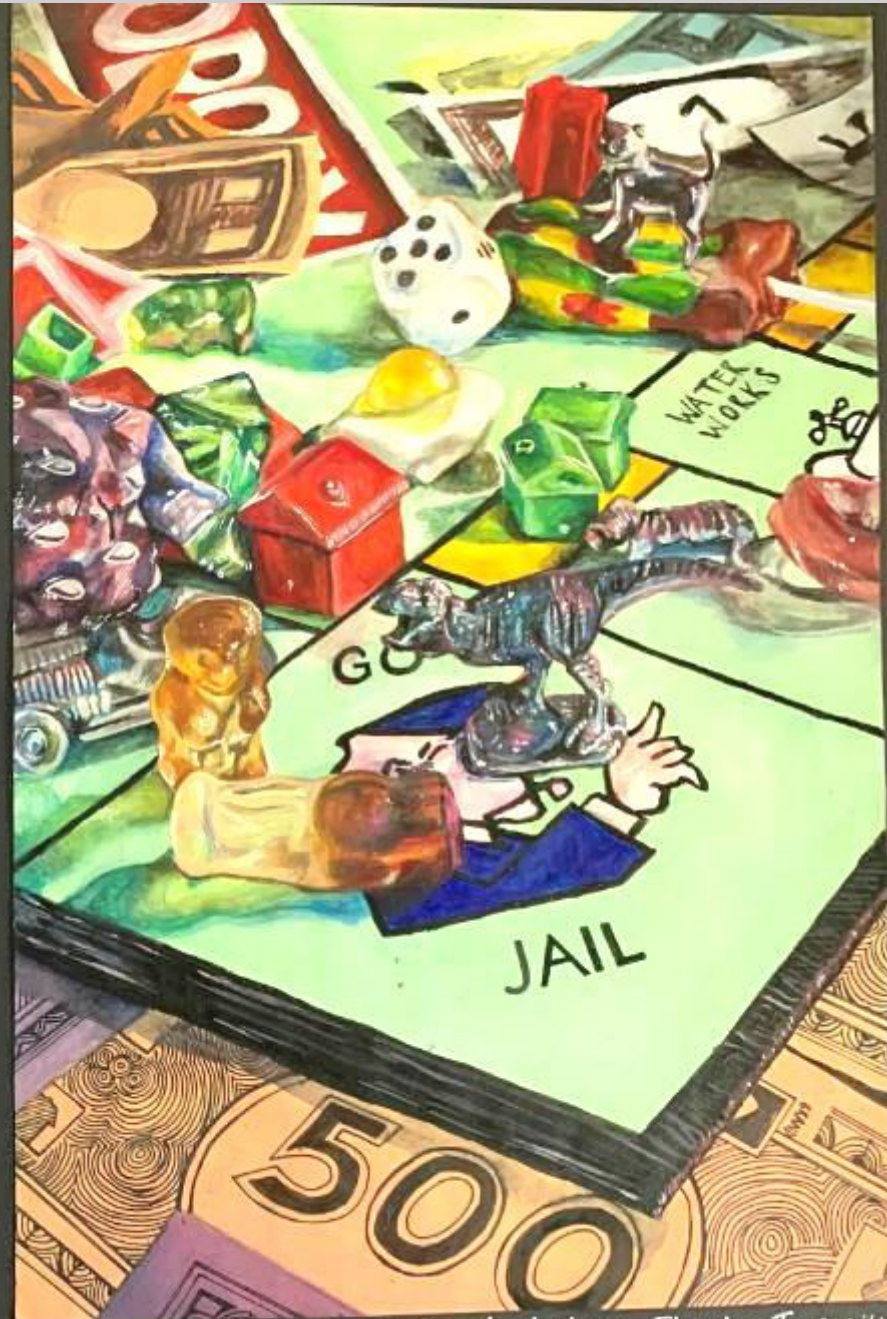
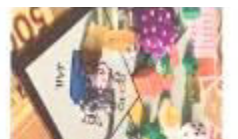
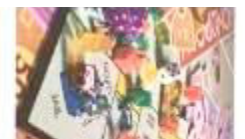
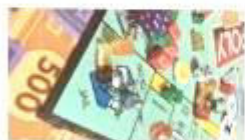
HIGHLY REFINED



Audrey Flack reinterpreted the vanitas tradition. She worked in photorealistic style. ~~which arose in~~
One of her most famous work is this vanitas piece made in the memory of Marilyn Monroe.

This piece is of interest because she ~~uses~~ uses reflective and shiny objects in a vibrant way. This gives the piece a nostalgic look that I'd like to further

MONOPOLY CONTACT SHEET



Here I worked in the style of Audrey Flack. I position pieces of a Monopoly board in the clustered way. I chose Monopoly because it is often referred to as a game of life which links to the vanitas theme. By emphasizing the transitions of colours I've made the piece



DEVELOPMENT with

Adriana Flock

Here, I furthered my idea by ~~work~~ incorporating some of her colouring techniques.



WATER COLOURS

- Make the piece look more jovial which may contradict the message behind the piece

COLOURING PENCILS

These create a very smooth surface for drawings. This could be useful when drawing the flame because it utilizes similar transitional tones.



After doing this piece in colour, I begin to see how uninteresting the arrangement is.

ACRYLIC PAINT

- The flatness of this medium does not suit the flat surface presented by the back of the head.



OIL PAINT

Although the oil paint allows the image to look more interesting, the overall lack of depth gives the medium less opportunity to show case skill.

I've decided to narrow down my ideas to one. My next step will be to explore arrangements without the imagery of the skull to test the significance of an arrangement.

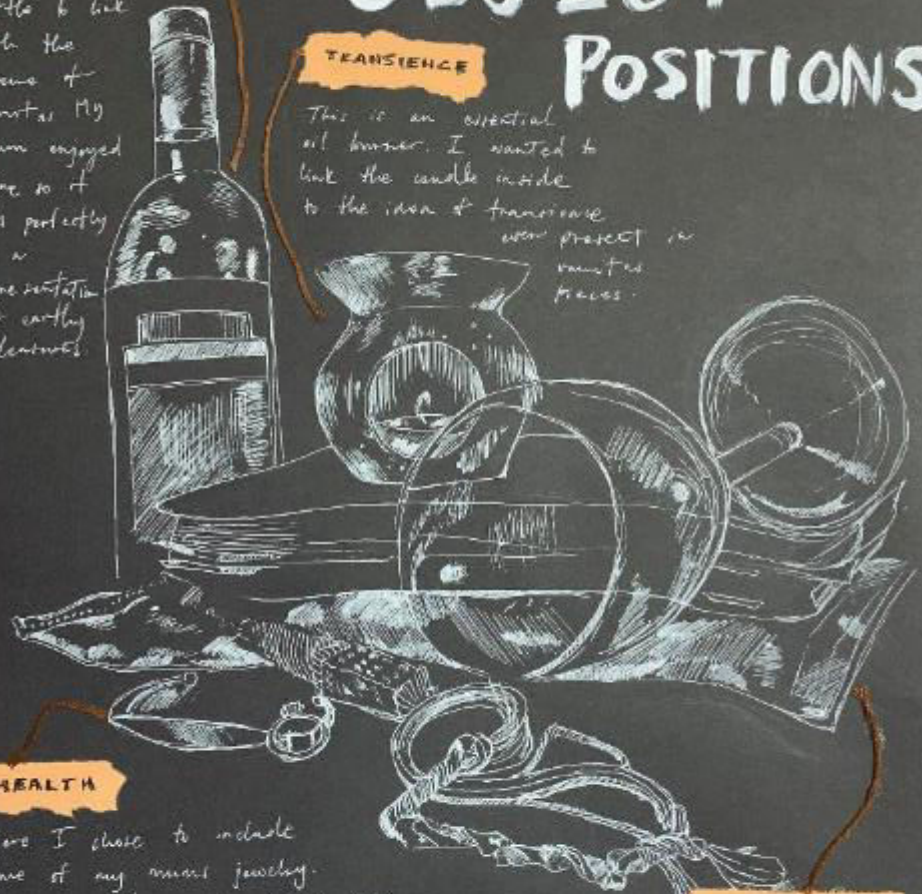
EARTHLY PLEASURES

In my arrangement I used a wine bottle to link with the theme of transit as my mum enjoyed wine so it fits perfectly as a representation of earthly pleasures.

FINAL OBJECT POSITIONS

TRANSCIENCE

This is an essential oil burner. I wanted to link the candle inside to the idea of transience. *was present in various places.*



HEALTH

Here I chose to include some of my mum's jewelry. These are things she always wore so it does represent the *message* of how primary wealth *was* not precious.

KNOWLEDGE

I positioned books into my piece to represent the idea of knowledge. This again is ideal for my piece not only because it is a staple for *various* pieces but it also *represents* the way my mum lived her life.

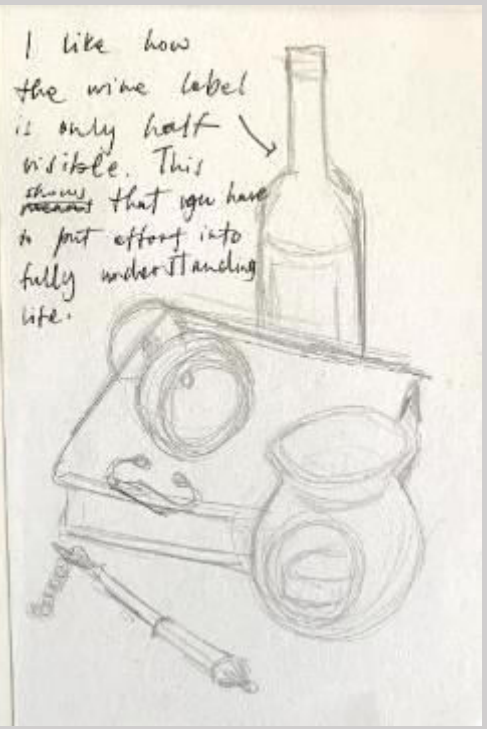
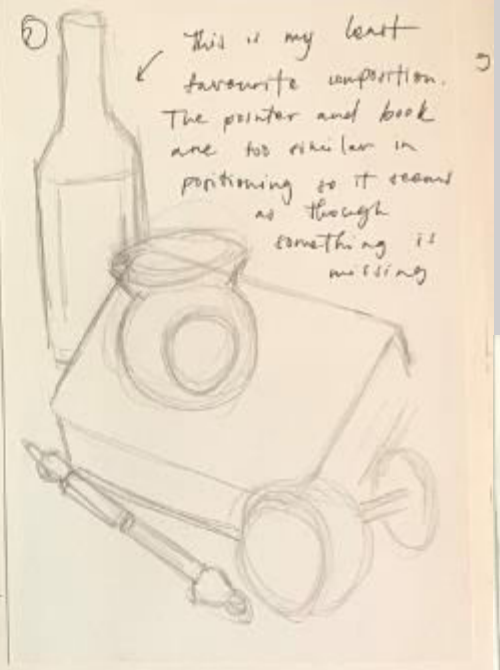


PHOTO SHOOT

Blurry

Here, I took my previous ideas for compositions and created them with some of my new things. I tried to keep the light source and surrounding area the same to maintain its connection to the vanitas theme



→ top is also cropped.

too dark... a lot of objects get lost in the shadows

object is ~~hardly~~ ~~unidentifiable~~ ~~positioned~~ ~~positioned~~

positioning is off. Vanitas work never presented so much. table over long.

WHAPEP



OVER SHADOWED

DISTANT

good dark to light contrast

clearly subject matter almost fills the page.

I like this shape, it's sharp but also has a good gradient.

background needs repositioning... also, the idea of having the split up on the table isn't ideal.

this section is almost too light, details are also lost here.



BADLY CROPPED

DYNAMIC

I like how dynamic this piece is. Having the table so close and almost tangent to the background.

Vanitas ATTEMPT

Here are the results of my first vanitas attempt. It took me around 8 hours to paint with oil paints. Overall, I do like the way it came out, since I wanted it to be as photorealistic



as possible, I do think for the most part, that was achieved. I did however tried to do a more abstract background like that seen in some of Lezanne's pieces. However, it looks almost rushed when looking particularly at the shadow casted by the bottle. Maybe by incorporating different colours in the background (for example complementary greens) I can avoid this. Another thing that bothers me about this piece is my failure to portray the vanishing of a lit candle. This can be

BOTTLE	
BURNER	
GLASS	
JEWELRY	
POINTER	
TASSEL	
TABLE	
TRANSITION	

chalked up to bad reference photos or maybe even the space for the candle in the burner being too small. I would have preferred to have a more dramatic smoke pattern like this → To improve, I will look at a better way to portray this idea. Similarly, I will delve deeper into certain sections within this piece like the closed Bible and possibly explore different perspectives that I can use to highlight the message behind this piece.





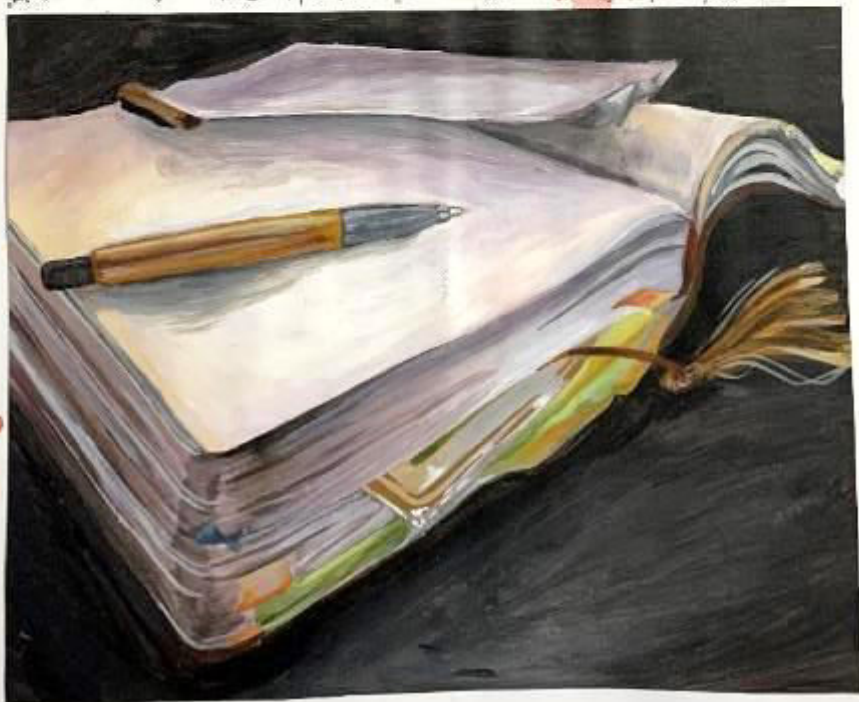
AN OPEN BOOK

Here, I have presented a few views that can be seen once my mum's Bible is opened from these images. I recreated one in acrylic paint and the other with ink and various pen substitutes.

I did find portraying the depth of notes that had been written in this book a little overwhelming, I subsequently scribbled to give the impression of notes this concept evolved in my mind and I became more and more interested in the uniqueness of scribbling, and note taking since my mum was known for writing important information on envelopes and tissue paper. These notes were often trailed with ink splashes from her always open pen.



SINGLE-LINE SKETCH OF MY MUM'S PEN

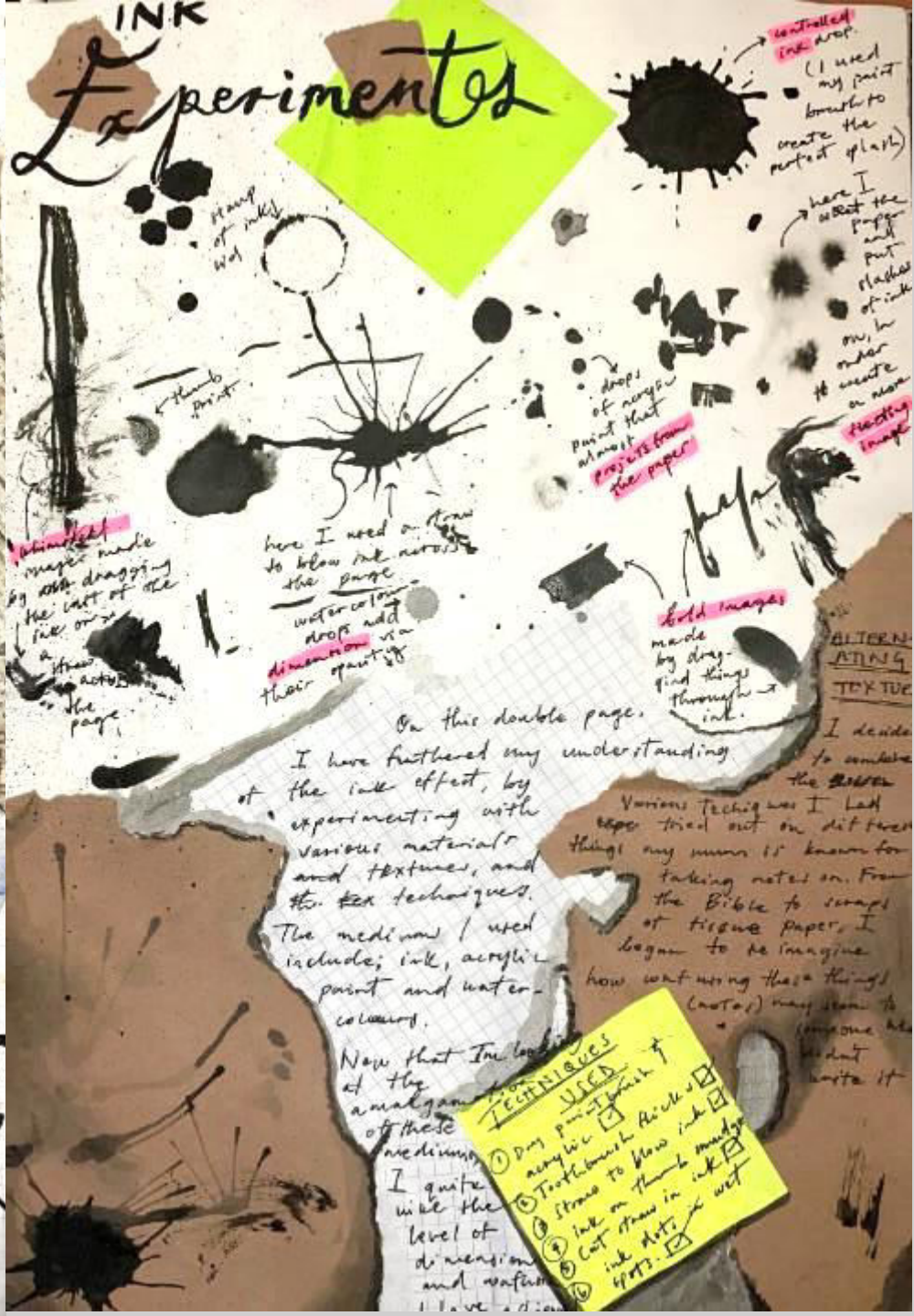


So, I thought that it would be worth experimenting with the various inkmarks I had found around the house to further see how incorporating these elements into my final piece will benefit me.





**ALTERNATIVE
TEXTURES**



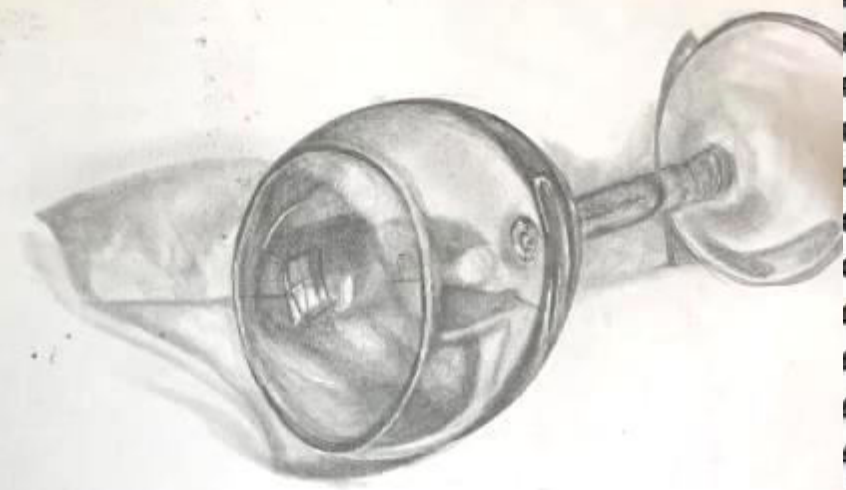
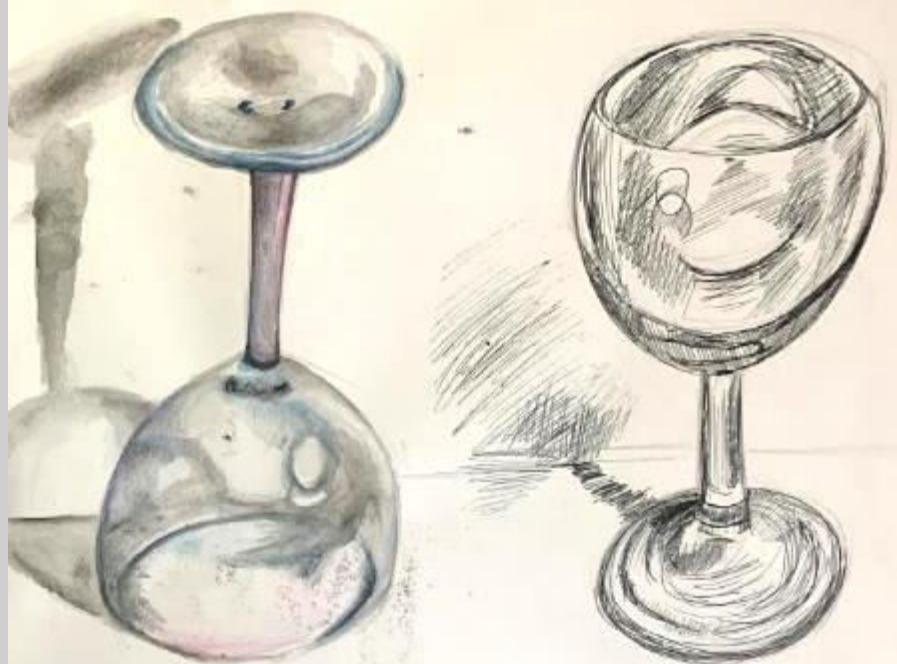
**INK
Experiments**

controlled ink drop
(I used my paint brush to create the perfect splash)
here I used the paper and put slashes of ink on, to make it create a more realistic image
drops of acrylic paint that projects from the paper
hand print
here I used a straw to blow ink across the page
water colour drop add dimension in their spots
both images made by dragging find things through ink.

On this double page, I have furthered my understanding of the ink effect, by experimenting with various materials and textures, and the techniques. The mediums I used include; ink, acrylic paint and water colours.

I decided to combine the various techniques I had ever tried out on different things my mum is known for taking notes on. From the Bible to scraps of tissue paper, I began to be imagine how what using these things (notes) may seem to someone who didn't write it.

- Now that I'm looking at the amalgam of these mediums, I quite like the level of dimension and texture I have achieved.
- TECHNIQUES**
- ① Dry paint brush
 - ② Toothbrush Acrylic
 - ③ Ink on thumb mudge
 - ④ Ink dots in wet



The most difficult part in my final piece to create will be the glass. I don't think I expended the reflections. This well in my first attempt so I hope this will be better. This is an observational wine glass I did in chalk. Chalk pastels & like how its blended. Although I limit the lack of detail makes the control I have over the wine glass look messy. ~~These~~ sections in



OBSERVATIONAL WINE GLASSES

I've decided to use oil paints for my glass because I like how the Ina am able to define the sections ~~distorted~~ distorted by the glass

This quick line drawing shows me the different shapes within the glass.



Here I further refined the distorted sections in the glass by blending various colours into defined areas.

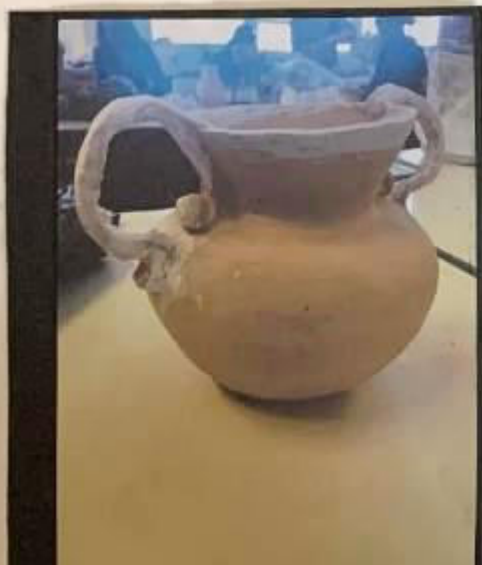
I like this because it adds sense of animation to the mountains. By doing this I've created a meaning behind a fallen over glass. Fallen glasses represent the absence of a scene as seen from a side has left it

GLASS STUDIES

Here I investigated ways that I could draw my wine bottle



oil pastels make for an expressive



OBSERVATIONAL WINE BOTTLE



I began by picking out small sections of my painting and seeing the ways I could develop my final idea.



simple line drawing on an ~~piece~~ overlay. This makes the bottle look almost blend into the background. I want to avoid this so

I'll stay away from making motifs look plain



I initially thought about how I could do the label of my wine. In my initial idea I decided to blur out the writing on my final piece.

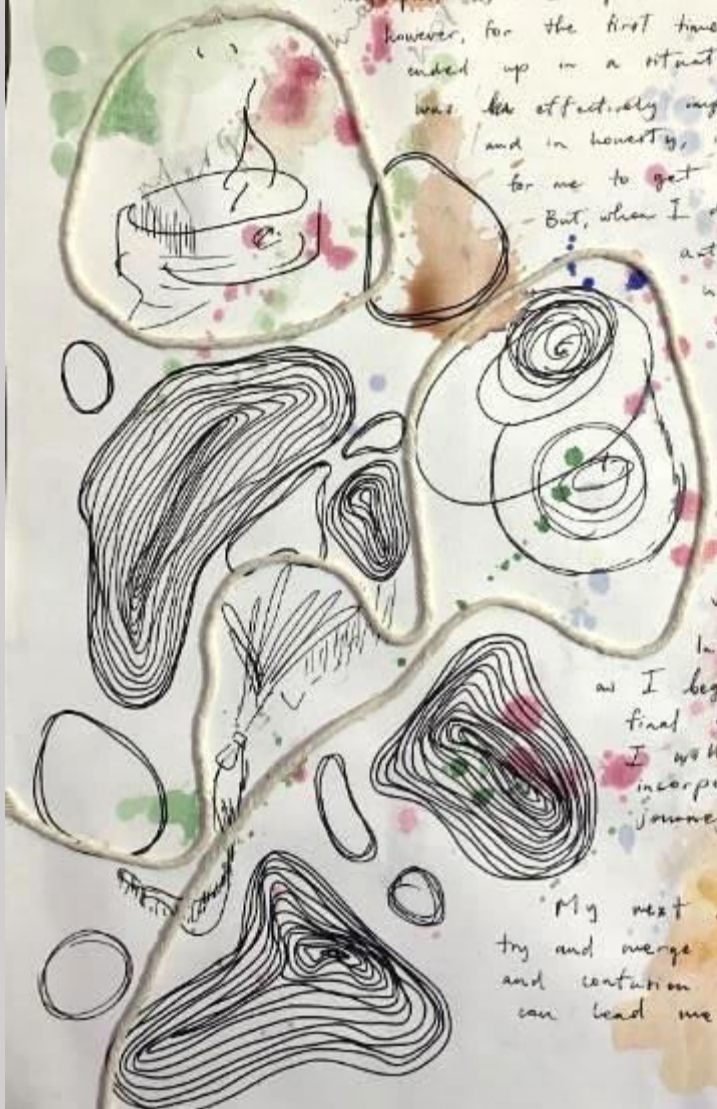
KEDEM WINE is a brand of wine used traditionally in Jewish services. By having this visible, it separates this wine bottle from other wine bottles.

the drawing the wine label showing Taylor's my vanitas piece to my name each making it more individualised.

As the my work and ~~ideas~~ progresses themselves of confusion and hesitations have become a focal point. However, due to the quite personal nature of my project, it was almost impossible to let go of all the ideas and expectations ^{I had for} my work. A way I sought to overcome this difficulty was by doing several sketches ~~then~~ whilst blindfolded. I can only describe my first few blindfolded sketches as daunting. As a perfectionist, the idea of producing anything less than perfect is unimaginable. In my past work I spent hours ensuring this; however, for the first time in a while, I ended up in a situation where perfection was ~~for~~ effectively impossible to achieve and in honesty, it took me some time for me to get over this frustration. But, when I did, I saw my art in a different light. Instead of focusing on how accurate the final piece would turn out, I began to place greater emphasis on the journey to that point and it was very fun and reward.

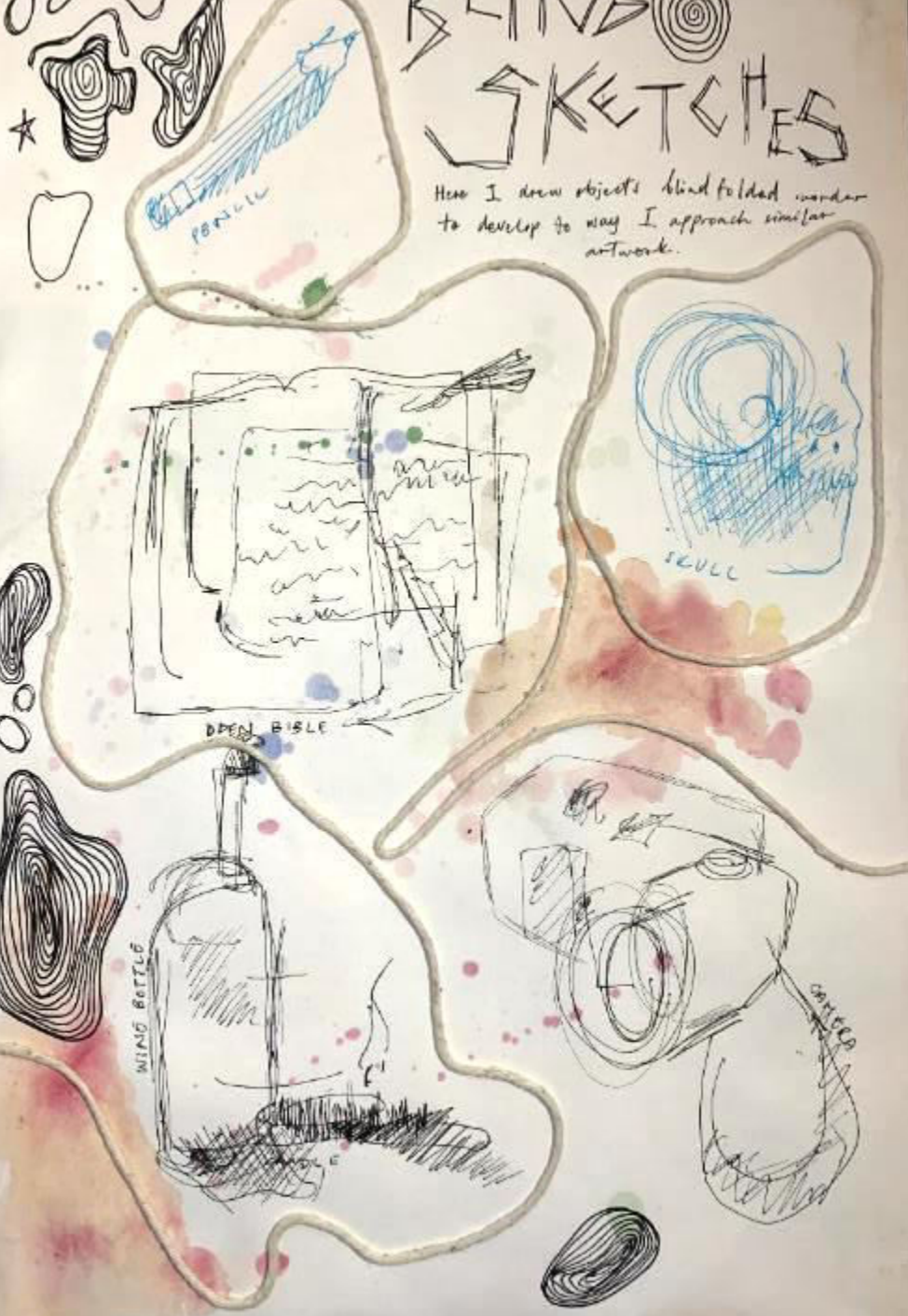
In the future, especially as I begin to think of a final outcome for this topic I will look for way to incorporate joy in the journey.

My next steps will be to try and merge the ideas of reason and confusion in ways that can lead me to a final piece.



BLIND SKETCHES

Here I drew objects blindfolded in order to develop to way I approach similar artwork.



my oil painting has many aspects of lighting within objects. I find it interesting how these patterns of light are only visible via this perspective. In order to move towards a final piece I need to ~~complete~~ if I want to completely remove them

The playful nature of a flame, particularly in its almost dance like motion can also be explored as it mimics the fluidity in Braque's pieces. It seems to juxtapose light and dark when creating a final piece. This is because although this alcohol is a symbol for earthly pleasure, it is also the source of much pain.



COPY OF MY OIL PAINT VANITAS PICTURE

Different objects interacting so naturally what common in Braque's pieces so I will need to figure out how I can combine them in a disjointed way. There can be either when warped to synthesize the absence of continual perspective, or even broken into pieces.

Glass would seem like the obvious thing to ~~express~~ allude to shattering however for this reason I can may keep it realistic. I want my piece to be as disorientating as possible so this is idea I'll further ~~develop~~ I wouldn't not symbolise my former self with glass as I have always been strong so the jewelry may be the more convincing ~~choice~~

I relate the mixed out colours used with the feeling of being drained that I have felt ever since

This piece shows cases themes of juxtaposition and contained confusion

Although this is an oil painting, Braque has shaded and painted several collage which will ~~combine~~ with ~~the~~ ~~other~~ ~~parts~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~work~~

In the same way Braque takes all these disjointed pieces and fakes it as though a regular still life piece. Braque likes to play with perspective laws by I piece that tells a different story depending on what you're looking at. I can also relate this to my experience because I tend to try and make situations better by acting as though nothing's wrong.



GEORGES BRAQUE'S 'THE SOUND TABLE, 1921'

Two sides to a single object similar to the two sides of my personality I discovered after my mum passing.

Braque juxtaposes colour and shape which is a technique I would use to increase the discrepancy between to halves of a whole.

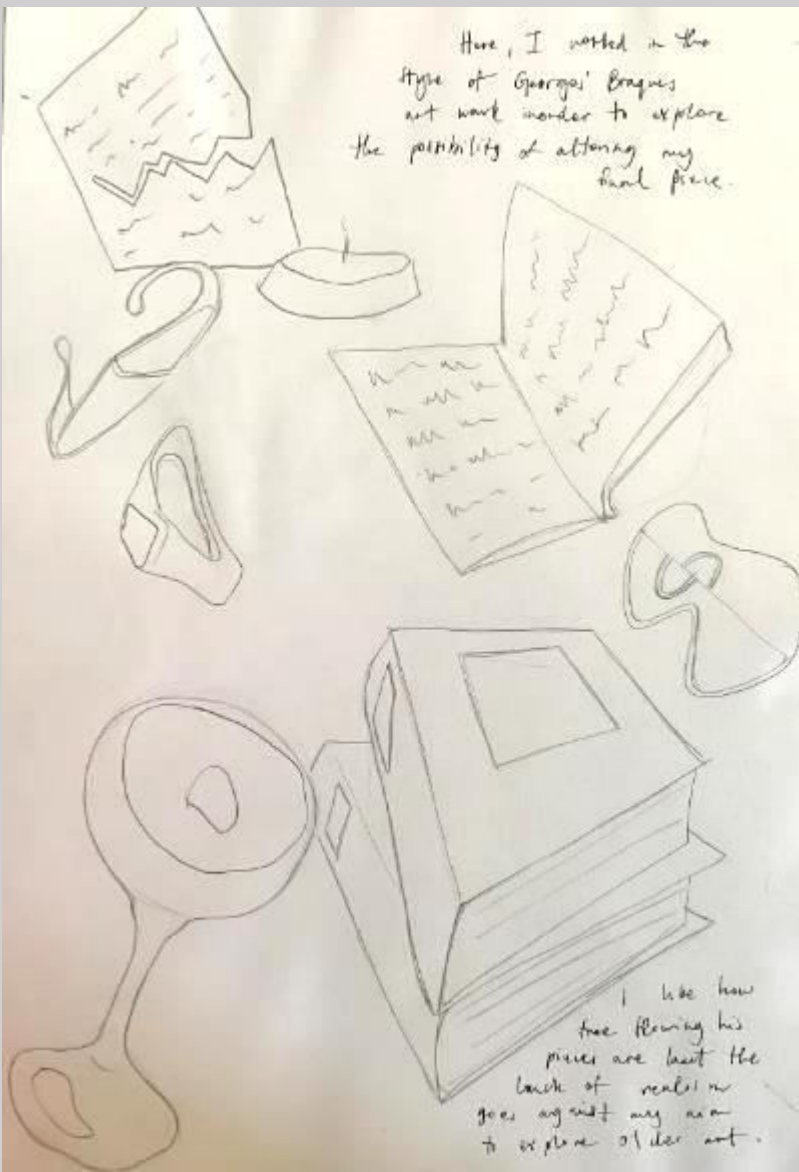
Braque similarly breaks whole pieces into pieces. This I can draw parallels between what I feel versus what I see. To me this quite relates to the physical bond I had with my mum being departed.

It can also illustrate how left me in pieces and unlike myself.

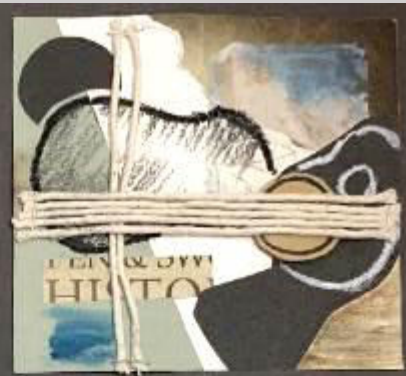
GEORGES BRAQUE

It is the act of painting & not the finished product which counts - GEORGES BRAQUE.

Here, I worked in the
style of Giorgio's Braque's
art work in order to explore
the possibility of attaining my
final piece.



I like how
free flowing his
pieces are but the
lack of realism
goes against my aim
to explore older art.



Leather

Here I
looked at alternate
ways that I could
represent leather.



I like how
the different colors
can comfortably
blend with each
other however the
broad tips mean
that if the
image is not not
large, quality
will reduce.



Exploration of the general flow of the background.



BACKGROUND DEVELOPMENT

I wanted my background to add a sense of animation following from Paul Cezanne's still life piece. The collages of colour I created reminded me of the northern lights. I decided to incorporate this idea because the Cree Indians believed that they symbolised the forever presence of they loved ones that have passed. I decided to incorporate the flow of colours and shapes I saw with acrylic paint.



Following on from this, I decided to photograph the painting I had done and overlay it with one of the smoke photographs I had taken earlier. By doing this I ~~was~~ would be able to include a subtle ~~hint~~ nod towards the older vanitas pieces that I previously studied. It ~~seem~~ ~~was~~ ~~then~~ could possibly be a ~~bit~~ ~~overwhelming~~ for my piece so I decided to





EVALUATION

I would consider my final piece as successful. I believe I was able to seamlessly integrate the styles of my main 3 artists. Paul Cézanne, Pieter Claesz and Audrey Flack.

The objects I choose held a huge significance for my mother, and the positioning of it all is meant for the viewer. The overall composition is in a format which goes against the original vanitas hierarchy. Vanitas makes a present commentary on how death is the most powerful thing on Earth but humans desire for pleasures, knowledge and other worldly things is a waste of time. I arranged my piece in a matter that would teach this lesson rather than just present it.

Jewellery is placed at the front to symbolise the confusion people are in now. This includes her Torah, jewellery and other religious objects. The Torah is known as 'the law of God as revealed to Moses and recorded in the five books of the Hebrew Scriptures'. Anyone that knew my mother knew her as God-fearing. She kept a copy of the scriptures wherever she went. This is why I include it, to represent her character as well as the knowledge gained whilst alive. This links to the feeling of loss often seen in Claesz's work. Similarly, I included an oil burner with a lit candle in it, this links to the vanitas theme of time passing. I also used the jewellery she always wore as a symbol of wealth that she has acquired over the course of her life.

The composition is meant to represent the belief system of the viewer. Although they have put the significance of death above worldly knowledge and in front of worldly pleasure, they have still ultimately placed greed at the forefront of their life. Living like this, creates a dystopian reality that will eventually leave you with regret. To symbolise this aspect, I placed the wine glass (that pairs with the wine bottle in the back) on its side. This is meant to illustrate to the viewer that doing actions that will not benefit your legacy after is a terrible thing.

This is why the wine bottle has been rotated to directly face the viewer. This increases the idea that this piece is meant for them. The book is closed to show the first step in realising that earthly knowledge isn't the most important thing in the world. The book, jam packed with notes represents the massive amounts of knowledge in this world. The oil burner is a subtle hint to classical vanitas art, it brings about ideas of transcendence into my piece. In a way, these objects belong to them just as much as they used to belong to my mum. My final piece took after Flack's artwork as it looks to be a more modern take on the more traditional 17th century vanitas pieces. I used Audrey Flack's way of bunching objects together to symbolise the closeness between my mother and I. Although, eliminating the presence of the skull in my final piece, I do believe my piece was able to provoke the morality of the viewer. I instead used religious symbolism commonly used by observant Jews and Samaritans to represent a person's journey on Earth. Jewellery and tassels at the front are tangled together to further emphasise dystopia. Their lay out is to bring focus onto the beam of light created by the burner.

As I was working in the style of Claesz, I decided to position a similar empty wine glass off the side of the book in the way he had done in his past painting. I also made it a point to include a nice amount of reflection on the glass to resemble his work. I took my photographs on a plain black desk against a black wall to create a dramatic and dark environment. This ensured that me and Claesz would derive similar first impressions. However, most of the rest of this piece is inspired by Paul Cézanne's bright pallet. With the background, I mimicked the fusion of colours that would commonly be seen in the northern lights. I used hues of green, yellow and blue to create a light-hearted atmosphere that would contrast the darker subject matter at the front of the piece. By making this direct comparison I hoped to create feelings of unease in the viewer due to the absence of greens and blues in the actual objects.

I wanted to heighten the level of animation in my piece. Overlaying the vibrant background, I painted a smoke pattern that I had gathered earlier. Here, I began to focus on Claesz integration of smoke into the background of his piece.

In the way, he depicted a candle seconds away from being out to convey the time that passes when a person dies. I did a large amount of smoke in order to represent how my mother's soul continues to live on through the deeds that she has done and the people she has left behind. By doing this, I strengthened the cultural meaning behind my piece similar to what Flack would do. I want the people that view this piece to feel the importance of these objects. Painted in A2, the objects will be around 3 times their actual size which furthers the idea that all the vanity of life will be displayed after death. I would like this idea to provoke the viewer to think about what would represent them when they die.



However, while working on the painting I had a difficulty mainly with the painting of the streaks of light in the front. I used oil paints but didn't consider they would take a long time to dry. This meant that some of the blue seeped into my bright orange flames. To combat this, I let my paint dry for a while before coming back to paint over it.

The scale of my painting combined with the medium meant that I had to adapt and after the cover I initially wanted to build my objects at. This meant that I did not manage already done work.



FINAL PIECE

Brain Ideas

PERSONAL

DISTORTION



DISCREP

2

EVENTFUL



SITUATION

DYNAMIC



PACING OF TIME



MEMORABLE (POLAROID)

INTRICATE



PURPOSEFUL



INITIAL IDEAS

I want this final piece to explore the concepts of time that is ever present in older memories art. Developing of my previous Monopoly piece in the style of Audrey Flack, I decided (prompted by this wall of ideas) to try and merge the different stages in the game of Monopoly into one piece.



DAVID HOCKNEY

here I used a pieces of David Hockney's work to prompt my own concepts of time.



↑ sections are a mixture of Black and white + coloured. sections, creates a dramatic effect as the viewer searches the image more in search of the colour variation

↑ Black & white + coloured sectors are collated together. Almost looks like a checker board which feeds into the idea that life is a game.



I quite like this format of work because it symmetrically creates a balance which pairs nicely with the dramatic nature of only seeing a small section of the work.

WORKING WITH KENSUKE KOIKE



Koike reimagines old photographs and distorts them for effect.



↑ This image is almost hypnotic.

When people get hypnotised, time begins to slow

here, I dropped out circles from an image and rotated them in order to mimic Koike



Here I merged two photos together so see how identifiable the image is



This is the combination of the two images from the LHS but with colour used to separate them

This is the effect I want.



This is the combination of 4 images. This makes me feel as though I am slipping into a world.



① THUMBNAILS



Here I started off with an

image from before the Monopoly board was played on.

I then used photoshop to expand this image using cropped sections from other photos taken as time progressed.



I think it did because the images no longer fit together smoothly.

here I overlaid the images in a random pattern to see if it made a difference.

This is my favourite thumbnail because it perfectly matches the aesthetic of David Hockney's "Jumble Game" the spread of photos has a very grounding effect.

③



④

Due to how subtle the changes in this piece were, I decided to outline them for greater effect. This has created a cool almost glitching effect.



This provides the theory that time is just a juxtaposition to the life you have lived.

PROCESS





EVALUATION

I would consider this final piece to be mostly successful. This is because I was able to portray my idea well but

This piece was created to further explore the aspect of the passing of time seen in vanitas works I previously analysed. I chose to centre it around a monopoly board because Monopoly is effectively a game of life but on a miniature scale.

Collage artists like Tintin Cooper and Kensuke Koike were used as a starting point. The way they distorted the original image for effect was useful. I developed my initial idea using their aesthetics of symmetry, distortion and progression. By doing this I was able to visualise a final outcome and give it more meaning.

In my exploration I experimented with the various ways that I could portray the passing of time. From it appearing as a never-ending spiral, to it being a direct juxtaposition of the present. After these developments I found David Hockney's collage, 'The Scrabble game' and used this as a starting point for my final piece. I liked the idea of photographing a sequence of events and then converting them into a singular event, and so I pushed forward with this in mind. In Hockney's piece, he records a game of Scrabble played by his mother. Since my topic mainly focuses on the passing of my mother, this seemed like the right option for me. However, I decided to not include photographs with people to fit my theme more. I instead used subject matter similar to that used in my previous final piece to recreate the presence of my mother since she couldn't physically be there. This included the wine glass and bottle previously used. I also incorporated fruit, that was included in older vanitas pieces, in a more contemporary way. These ones were store bought and in plastic packaging to also symbolise the progression of the times we live in.

I used a monopoly board instead of scrabble because monopoly is seen as a game of life choices, this is similar to how vanitas pieces provoke people to evaluate their life choices. I then placed the objects down and took photos whilst I recreated the game being played. This included gradually eating the fruit, burning the candle further and moving the pieces. I wanted to present the idea of life getting more and more confusing as time passes.

Whilst editing the photos I varied size and shaping. Through experimentation, I learnt that the more symmetric a piece is, the more controlled and stable the mood of the piece becomes. This is why I used strayed from this in my collage, to let the viewer see how complex ideas around death can be. For this piece I also revisited the monopoly board I previously used when exploring Audrey Flacks colour theory. I mimicked her bold and impactful colour to create an atmosphere calming and almost familiar to the viewer

I found it difficult working at such a large scale with so many different photographs. This meant that I had to make sure I was grouping my layers and keeping my desktop in order so that I did not get confused.

If I were to do this piece again I would further explore ways that I could simplify the various shapes used. I believe that this would make my outcome more impactful.

INTENTIONS

I want my final piece to be centred around M.C. Escher's work. I like the scantronic and confusing visuals in his pieces are mesmerised of and want my piece to come across as a puzzle. Whenever I view an Escher piece, I cannot help but feel as though there is something more to his work than just the element of confusion. For example, when I view dramatic prints such as 'Relativity' I draw parallels between the maze-like staircase arrangement and the human psyche. From the faceless figures walking on the and under stair staircases, the importance of it is quickly established. It is not until you rotate that you realise the once "bizarre frame no a wall seems to be the only one grounded is the idea I strive to recreate. I want to be confused about the scene and I believe that piece I'll have more freedom to realize this. It would also mean that viewers have to decipher this piece to comprehend the full story. ~~Some place will also be~~ ^{inspired} ~~from~~ ^{thoughts} about that I have deduced from an Escher piece. ~~Between~~ ^{between} this story I tell takes place in my mind recent, my final piece will have subtle hints to Baldwin I connect to with I also want it to cover aspects of emotion. Here I see the opportunity to incorporate the aspect of animation with lighting has to be physically activated. Also, as a nod starting point of my ideas, I'll fit a few references into the piece itself.

STUDY

I decided to further explore the environment in my room. From a young age, my room has always been an escape so I have always spent alot of time here. Its filled with all the things that make me comfortable and happy from art materials to musical instruments.



I chose to do a painting of my salt lamp because to me, it represents something that makes me feel comfortable. I find it difficult to sleep in the dark so I always have it near me. It adds to the place that makes me the most comfortable.

I also did a pen sketch of my guitar. Though I don't really use it much now I would spend hours practicing. I was motivated by progressing past each musical grade because it made me feel happy and accomplished.



FIELD STUDY:

...ered my study by taking photos
...ed I felt inspired to do so
I feel the most content in my
... when I think about my
... my bed is arguably its best
... I therefore wanted to develop
... an image that reflected this
... ated of by doing a photo shoot
... my bed how it looks most days
... various different perspectives

... this I decided on the images
... all had the most potential and
... some where connections with them
... landscape I decided to make the
... room order be noticeable the
... best. I did this to reflect
... I love being cold in my room.

... here. I developed on my selected
... to be looking in the artist
... by Owen and her piece 'My Bed'
... being images of her bed
... felt as though I could see
... personality shine through. I found
... self imagining her daily routine
... had this reaction was odd so
... to set out ~~some~~ way to recreate
... version of her piece.



ALBIN TALIK

Albin Talik is a Polish artist that uses coloured pieces of paper in order to produce a variety of collages that imitate the traditional look of oil paints. Talik spends between a week to a full month to complete the images. This however does heavily depend on the degree of complexity of the piece because Talik uses thousands of paper pieces to create his intricate artworks. One of Talik's favourite contemporary artists was Robert Rauschenberg. He also likes magazines and reads a lot of them.

When asked, "What do you like about your art?" Talik replied saying "Learning, development, overcoming, learning. It is clear that Talik uses art as a means of depicting emotions. Albin Talik is a self-proclaimed "workaholic" who has their addiction



Albin Talik's work has an almost exaggerated colour scheme. This is very evident in his sunset landscapes. By using soft, bright complementary colours, Talik sets a tranquil mood throughout the artwork. Talik also differentiates the alternate textures aptly. For example, trees and other plants are created with paper with different patterns printed on them. The great



In this image I worked in the style of Albin Talik. To create this collage, I used photographs of places in my school, so that I had primary pieces to work from. I also had to search through various magazines in order to build up a colour palette. However, I found it difficult to completely match the colors in the photo so I ended up choosing the closest colour to it and I would spread out the pieces of paper so that I could transition between the colors. In the future, I would make the image larger and use smaller paper pieces.

Edward Hopper

JUNE 22, 1882 -
MAY 15, 1967

Edward Hopper was born to a middle class family in Nyack, New York. Through lessons for his oil painting education, Hopper also mastered the medium of etching (which brought him immediate success in sales).

In 1933, Hopper received further critical recognition as the subject of a retrospective exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art. He was celebrated for his identifiable style, set in urban settings. His work is primarily centered around the themes of silence, which is emphasized by his chosen locations of vacant activity. They frequently give off a sense of ~~isolation~~ transition within the nature of contemporary life. At deserted railroad tracks and stations and bridges the idea of travel is related with loneliness and mystery. In other scenes, the image of a single person, figure or a pair of figures who seem not to communicate are displayed. The people are rarely shown in their own homes and best maybe seen in a desolate city or movie theatre.

In Hopper's "Cape Cod Morning" a woman is seen narrowing her eyes against the bright morning light which is illustrated in the richly lush golden grass. This scene plays into the overall sense of grounding. Should we be at ease with the too painterly, perfectly vertical lines and calming color scheme?



"Cape Cod Morning"

Or, should we look in the tension Hopper constructs underlined by getting off attention of the painting?



ALL COPY-
RIGHT
MAY 1967
BY THE
MUSEUM OF
MODERN
ART
NEW YORK
NY 10027



I started by making a section of St. Mark's. Eventually I drew parallels between this building and St. John's and so decided to re-create a section out of clay.

However, due to the pandemic, and the sudden shut down of schools, my structure was dived up and crumbled. Regardless, I enjoyed the process and greatly appreciated the difficulty in putting a scene in place.



Misty Sainsbury

Misty Sainsbury is a London artist mainly known for her highly detailed and recognizable stylized architecture. Her work has become of interest to me because of the story she has made possible. I like the subject matter that - the classic St Paul's Cathedral.

She wanted to experience something a bit different because of the amount of detail I said my heart goes to love.

During the process I felt pushed to better explore the nature of a cathedral like this. As said before, I like the story in this piece perhaps the cathedral is shared with many depictions of prophets and biblical scenes which speaks to its function of being a safe haven for Christians. I enjoy imagining the cathedrals to be the actual prophet born - something that only came to be when we are watching by being his eyes get the message through that prophets are not dead but are guiding society when we are physically not.

Instead my exploration by looking at glass that in the world that architecture inspired me. Venice Italy



3D PIECE DEVELOPMENT

Using the knowledge and experience that I have gained through studying Lechner's work, I had to incorporate a few of the things that he saw - his work was a base for my final piece.



As I went through with this design I would have the opportunity to explore an apartment like design however I'd probably lose the dramatic effect of the shading (different wall panels). I also can't have the chance to explore light and alternate views and perspectives since changing the layout too much will change the effect.



I like the idea of two different orientations which would help me further distinguish between models. However, I don't see many opportunities to incorporate light into the piece.



With this design I see the greatest opportunity to explore the formal I actually wanted to. I also see how I can incorporate various ideas inspired by Lechner and not worry about getting a certain aesthetic with this idea. I could focus on the element of confusion that present in Lechner's work. I think this piece could come as almost a collection of Lechner pieces but with my perspective on them.



Different planes create a very dynamic space/visual

Lack of shape continuation on the backside x
 → add definition but would it look like cathedral



Having a part with a different orientation of shape creates a sense of hierarchy within the elements.

Could this take attention away from other parts in the model.



Changing / increasing distance will be interesting visual.

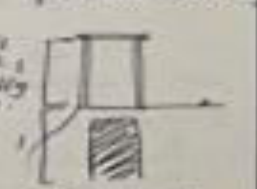
at a big bit of that shape that I wanted

make staircase wider?



Lack of symmetry level under the piece seem unbalanced

a 1-1 ratio is not met, mathematically pleasing.



light source would not be reach desired target

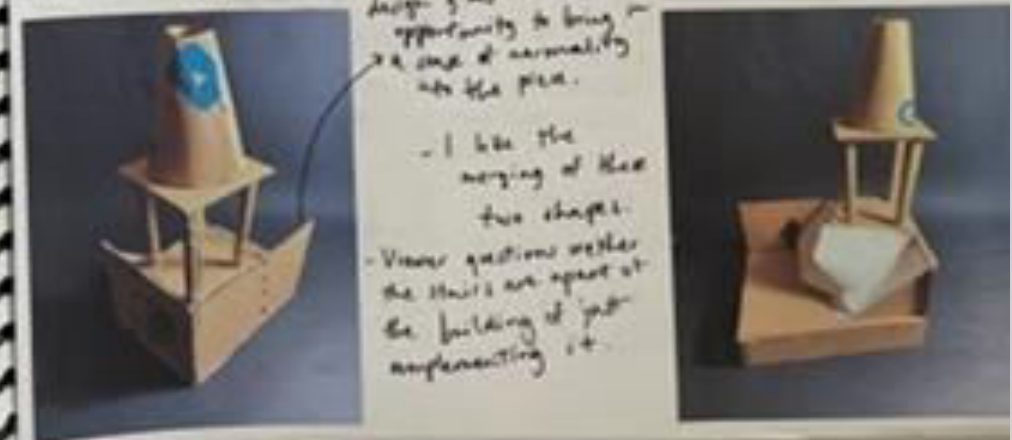




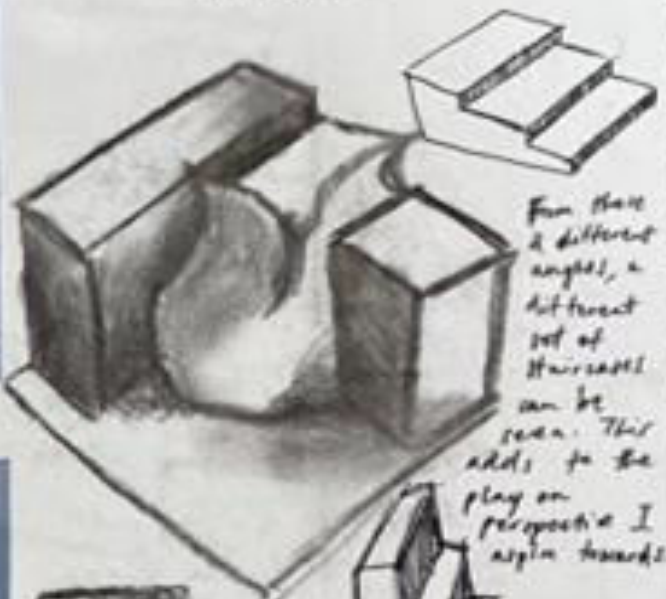
FORMAL - A FEW MORE ACROSS TO ADD RECREATION DETAIL

- I HAVE TOO FLAT SURFACES TO AND BELIEVE

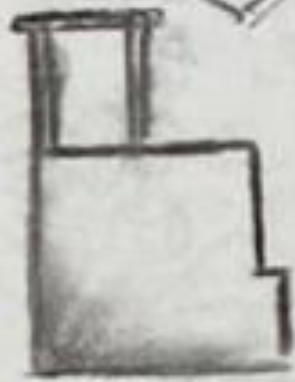
FORMAL - LINES NOT SIMPLE (could work out if I add alot of detail)



STAIRS!!



From these 2 different angles, a different set of stairs can be seen. This adds to the play on perspective I aspire towards.



Steep and narrow stairs are less inviting, possibly leading to a private place.

- protected ground?
- secured dwelling?
- stable ground?
- detachment

Wide and shallow steps are inviting

- public dwelling
- welcoming



needs to be turned



I could add square type doors in order to play with perception. This is because they are perfectly in between.

I am going to progress with this arrangement rather than the first one because I see the opportunity to include elements such as lighting and shape being that I wouldn't be able to do as successfully in my first arrangement.

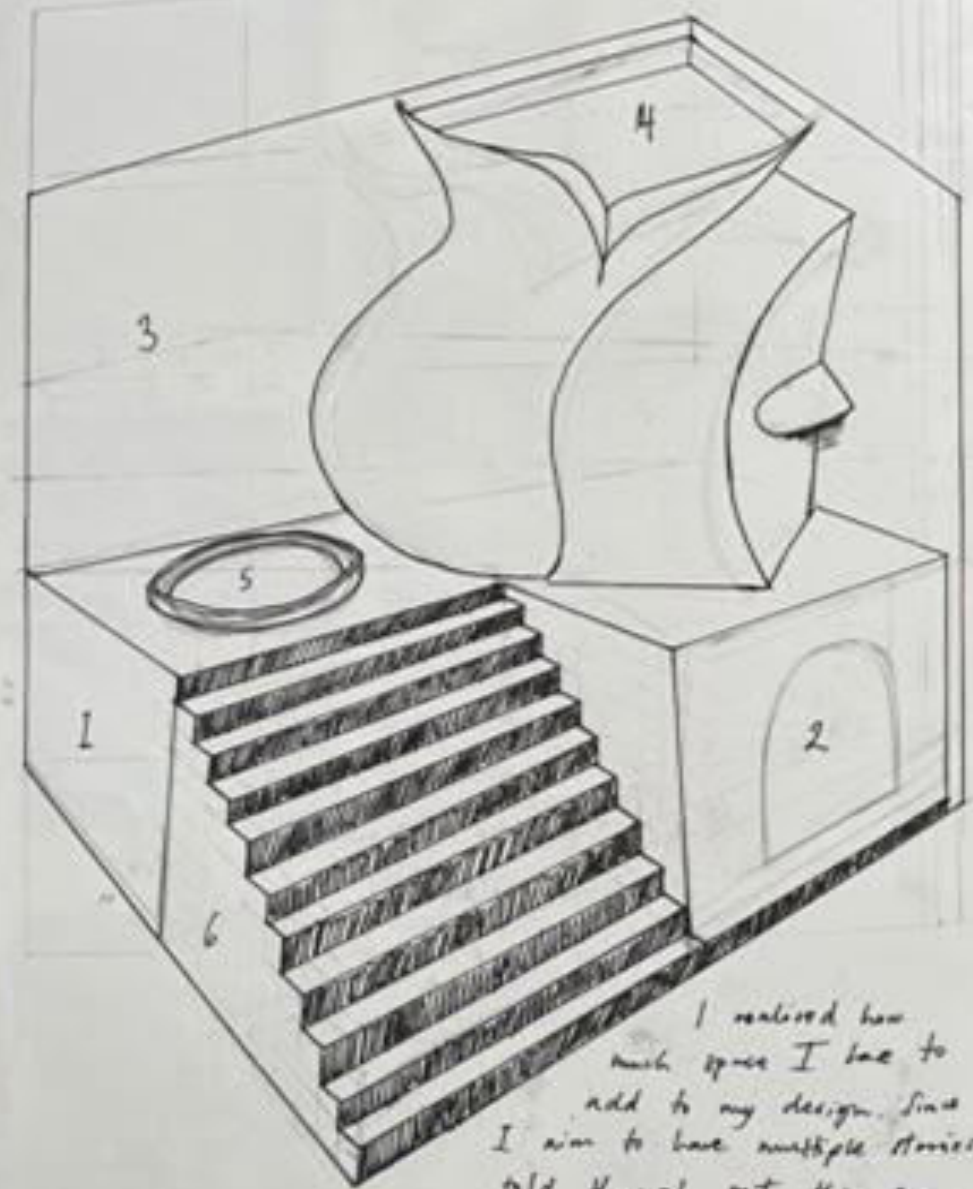


This perspective allows view into two separate juxtaposing spaces.

Add to the perspective of low and raised involving rather than being stand alone concepts.

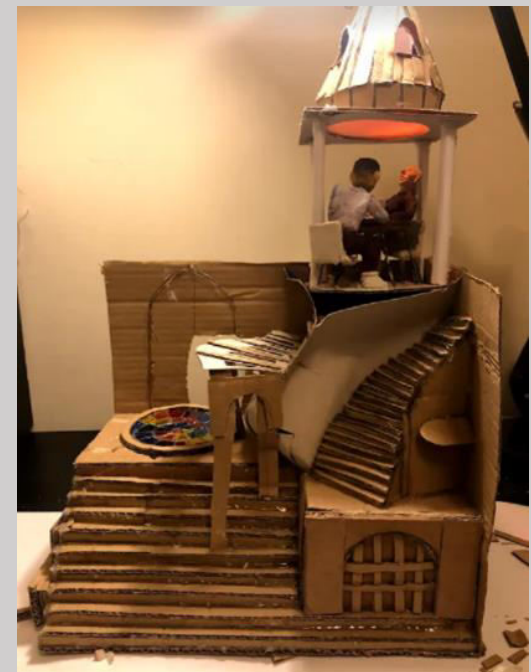
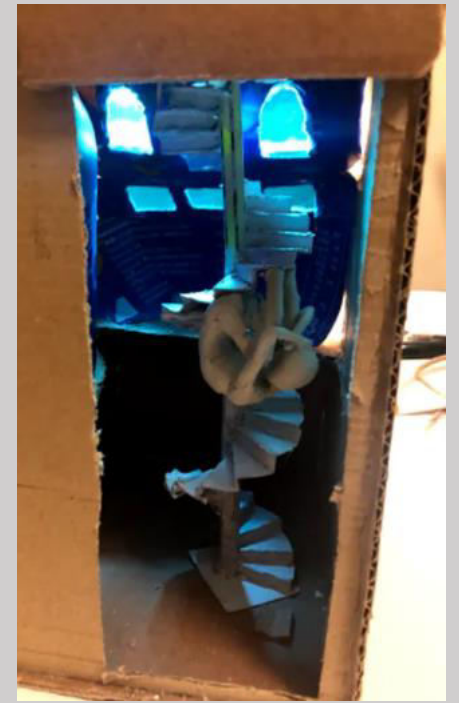


How I got out to realize the importance of my final result.



I realized how much space I had to add to my design. Since I aim to have multiple stories told through out this one piece so I'll begin the process by brainstorming ideas.





① + ②

STRUCTURE

There may be some
belonging items if I
use clay the same need to
be perfectly
inside for
stand.



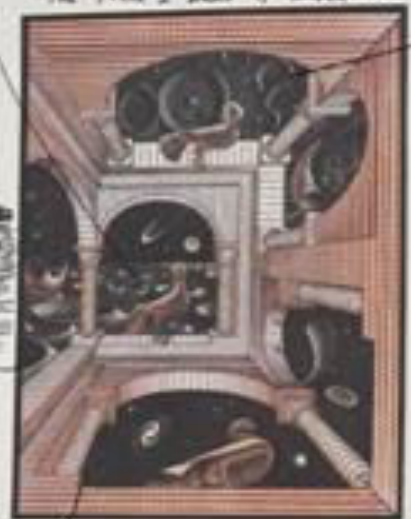
- smooth
condensation
since it will
be sealed
with lead.
- sharp edges
could cause
injury
- small diameter
so will have to
be sealed down.



The first I want it based on.
like the aerial perspective.



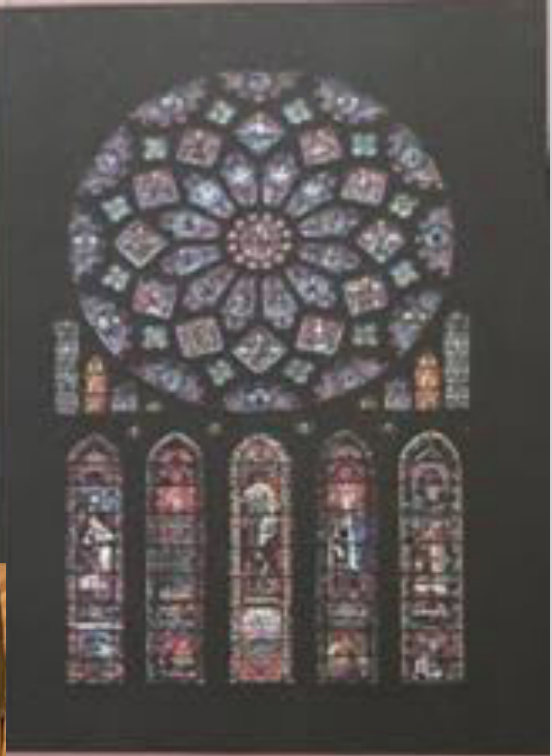
- smooth - clay will
- white work for
- available this system



However, range is not
filled gable.



Pillars, since
round, will be
loved better
when made
of clay.





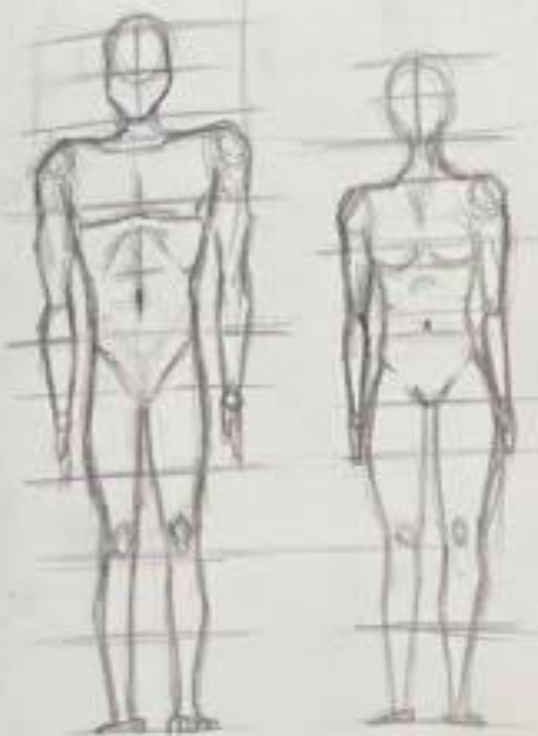
A SYMBOL OF ROMANCE

SECTION 4

For this section of my final piece, I draw inspiration from the Saint Mark Cathedral in Venice, Italy, more so, the various biblical figures in the structures covered with golden roofs.



HUMAN PROPORTION & LIGHTING STUDY



In order to portray a somewhat realistic view of a couple sitting having a romantic dinner, I furthered my knowledge of human proportions, learning the basics of how plan the human anatomy looks like. I then used the concept learnt to create a skeleton for these people out of cardboard and paperclips. I then built up on these structures with air-dry clay. A problem I faced was the length of the neck not being long enough to accommodate their heads. I also made the skeleton a larger which meant I had to ^{put} ~~wrap~~ them in clothes to look normal.



After I had my main structure I thought to experiment with the lighting in this scene. Then I placed a light through one ~~sheet~~ of coloured plastic.



This is the light shining through two sheets of plastic. I achieved a strange effect but I want it to be even more vibrant.



At these sheets, the second quality of light was achieved. It was at this point that I decided to paint my figures in a shiny black to further this effect.



I thought that by adding some differently coloured sheets I would get a disco-like effect however, this was not the case so I opted not to.



to be the
 inseparable this under the happy couple as a
 juxtaposition I want to show undeniable mental. Users
 can be looking a bit further away its hard to tell what
 in the dark well
 but its not until a
 light is there that
 as you realize what's
 going on

The spiral does
 not have a
 visible end
 which alludes
 mystery.

The angular
 source for light
 goes allows for
 an eerie
 atmosphere.

Spiral stair cases
 also speak to depression
 and anxiety as they
 both just feel like they
 continue forever.

places like
 this make you
 feel alone but
 be the intense
 nature of the
 brick pattern.



I made this
 part of the
 wall protrude out
 to allude to
 its importance
 within the scene.



I chose blue because
 it is culturally
 accepted as a
 symbol of sadness.
 I also decided to
 use no color
 that because it
 fits the eerie
 theme within the
 piece. The idea
 for the plastic
 to be placed around
 the window speaks
 to how from an
 outsiders view it
 looks completely
 normal. so they don't
 always see how
 they thinking - light
 has any representations
 but someone else
 looking at it from
 another angle
 can see what it
 does to the
 person
 inside.



The lower windows
 will have to be
 perpendicular to
 the figure in order
 for the blue
 light to hit that
 figure.





OVERALL

Looking back on my statement of intent, I can see how my initial idea to 'study the imprint humans left on the world' has somewhat changed. With this idea I initially thought that my studies would showcase a journey through out my neighbourhood but it instead stayed in my house.

I think this partially has to do with the COVID 19 pandemic and the way in which it has, for some time, changed the world we live in. Being in lockdown meant that main primary sources I had were the ones at home which is why my project has been so home focused. Instead of the contemporary still life I initially thought I would be interacting with, I ended up focusing on the legacy of my mother and how she could be represented with the gene Vanitas.

So, in some aspects I did follow suit with my initial intensions. I looked at the genre of vanitas and applied it to the objects left behind. Using artists such as Pieter Claesz, Paul Cezanne and Audrey Flack were crucial in this process. They are all artists that have been very influential in the vanitas movement.

Claesz's pieces appeals to: the feeling of incompleteness and loss death brings. His pieces are often arranged in a chaotic way to insinuate the idea that death leaves behind not only unfinished tasks but also a multitude of possibilities destinies. With this, he comments on the how people live for tomorrow and forget that it may never come. This is the premise of Vanitas arts' purpose, to derive thought.

Cezanne draws parallels between the natural harmony between life and death in different way to Claesz's. His bold and defining brushstrokes add animation to pieces. I used this idea and paired it with the vanitas symbol of transience (smoke) to tailor this idea to the vibrant person my mother was.

Audrey Flack was also a massive help when it came to developing my work to become more expressive. This is due to her technique of crowding and colouring she uses. But, both Flack and Cezanne use bright colours to add a homelier feeling to their pieces.

I combined my favourite sections of all these artists' work to create my first final piece.

The journey to finishing my final piece gave me invaluable insight into the various critical decisions made by artists when making vanitas art. From selecting subject matter to colour schemes, I was able to piece together not only an intricately planned out painting, but a painting that reflected the emotions associated with losing a loved one. As I refined my ideas, I began seeing this piece as a collection of memories rather than just a collection of random objects.

Looking back, I think it would be more fitting to name my project something more vanitas related because although it fits into my overall theme, it is just a sector of what could have been explored.

In what ways can Vanitas Art represent the dead?



In what ways can vanitas art represent the dead?

Still life pieces are commonly perceived to be one of the more boring sectors of art. Its lack of movement seen as tiresome and the subject matter repetitive. A few months ago, these sentiments reigned true for me; what more did a stack of old books have in store for me? However, it was not until my mother's passing that I began to appreciate the pause still life my newly turbulent days. With the topic of death everywhere I turned, artwork such as "Still Life with a Skull and a Writing Quill" by Pieter Claesz began to resonate with me in a way it had not done before; with further research on similar pieces, I began to see the emerging pattern. Books, candles, mirrors and skulls all positioned on the table of a dimly lit room, defining the distinct art genre 'Vanitas'.

Vanitas is described as "A still-life painting of a 17th-century Dutch genre containing symbols of death or change as a reminder of their inevitability". It also happens to be the root word for the English word 'vanity'. Vanitas art pieces are closely related to the earlier tradition of memento mori (Latin for "remember you must die"), which were artworks intended to prompt viewers to consider the life that they lived, and to evaluate how meaningful they have made it. Vanitas pieces seek to remind us how futile worldly pursuits are through the harsh reality that you cannot hold on to them with you when you die. Vanitas art is also known as a vice to comment on wider societal issues from sexism to immorality, it packs its meaning into a selection of objects and through the colour and overall painting style of the piece. I hope to further analyse how these techniques have been used by artists to derive meaning and create a final piece presenting what I have learnt. With this preparation I wish to conclude the ways vanitas art can represent the dead.

Main Text

"Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity! What is the profit of a man in all his labour which he labours under the sun?"

These are the opening lines of the Holy Book of Ecclesiastes, written by Solomon at the end of his life in 931 BCE. Through this book Solomon wades through life's greatest lesson to learn; a life focused on fleshly wealth and pleasure-seeking will, in the end, be empty with no lasting spiritual fulfilment. Following this, the primary period of Vanitas painting began in 1550 and surged in popularity by the 1620s. These pieces were comprised of symbols of knowledge which took the form of books and musical instruments, wealth in the form of jewellery, earthly pleasures represented by playing

cards and pipes, death represented by skulls, clocks and burning candles; and sometimes symbols of eternal life which were usually ears of corn or sprigs of ivy. This was all in the attempt to illustrate to the viewer the inevitability of death and the transience and vanity of earthly achievements and pleasures.

Early vanitas pictures were noticeably monochromatic and eerie. Very few objects (mainly books and a skull) were incorporated into pieces with rich beauty and high quality. As time progressed, more objects were included. Similarly, artists branched out with brighter palettes which would brighten the mood somewhat. Objects were often tumbled together to portray confusion, suggesting the eventual overthrow of the achievements they represent in death. Artists such as Pieter Claesz became masters of the early vanitas genre and would go on to inspire many present days still life artists.

Pieter Claesz

Little can be reconstructed about Pieter Claesz's personal life, mainly because his name does not appear in many documents. We do however know that he got married on the 8th of August, 1635 which means he was most likely Catholic and shared common Christian. I believe these subsequently are the same philosophies he would have woven into his vanitas pieces.

Below, you will find a copy of one of Pieter Claesz's most notable pieces, 'Still Life with a Skull and writing Quill' 1628. Within it, objects such as books, a wine glass, writing quill and a skull. All of these elements portray the sitter's philosophy of spiritual life after death and the passing of time. These themes are what the genre is known for; making this piece the textbook definition of a successful vanitas piece.



-Still Life with a writing quill by Pieter Claesz (1628)

Focusing only on the subject matter chosen by the artist, someone unfamiliar with vanitas pieces may not see the link between the mundane household objects and more natural elements such as the skull and flower. They seem to be scattered on a dark table with no apparent intention; almost as if they are the possessions of someone who put them down in a rush; giving us a glimpse into someone's reality. As I drew parallels between Claesz's and myself this arrangement began to feel eerily similar to my mother's bedside table just after she passed. Half burnt candles, open books, letters, pens with no lid and her jewellery all lay with a foreign stillness around them. It was a scene I have viewed countless times but knowing that it would never be recreated was upsetting.

This is the emotion Claesz's piece appeals to; the feeling of incompleteness and loss. He eloquently uses these feelings to insinuate the idea that death leaves behind not only unfinished tasks but also a multitude of possibilities destinies. With this, he comments on the how people live for tomorrow and forget that it may never come. This is the premise of Vanitas arts' purpose, to derive thought.

The objects he uses all have their own link to the core practices of life; knowledge, pleasure, and wealth. He also implements symbols of death and transience in the form of a skull and the small trace of smoke in the background.

Claesz uses an empty wine glass to represent pleasure on earth. The image of a white quill soiled with black ink could indicate how the deeds we carry out in our lives can corrupt our purity; it can also be a reminder of how unexpected death is. I imagine someone writing an important note but not having time to finish to be a metaphor for this scene. We do not know when our time will come therefore we need to make sure we live a meaningful life so that in the end we will have as much finished as possible.



Student Work, photography (2020)



Student Work, photoshoot in response to 'Still Life with Writing Quill' by Claesz (2020)

Paul Cezanne

Below, you'll see Paul Cezanne's 'still life with skull'-1898, a homage to the vanitas genre



Paul Cezanne (still life with skull) (1898)

Cezanne draws parallels between the natural harmony between life and death unlike Claesz's piece. Cezanne's piece showcases a selection of fresh fruit. In this instance, fruit serve as motif of youth and purity in a similar way Claesz's used a white quill. However, this time the fruit is juxtaposed against the eerily placed skull.

I find the image of human remains on a dining table to be concerning but oddly enough, this grotesque scene was not the thing that initially drew me to this piece. The expressive range of colours creates a sense of movement that I never experienced with Claesz's 'Still Life with a Skull and writing Quill' 1628. I feel as though the whimsical background was meant to serve a similar purpose to Claesz's almost unnoticeable whisp of smoke. Here, Cezanne uses an amalgamation of bright colours. His background reminds me of a past trip to see the Northern Lights in Norway. It was commonly believed by the Cree Indians that they symbolise the ghosts of loved ones; being present and dancing. By adding this subtle reference, I will strengthen my pieces connection to spirituality. Relating this back to the theme of vanitas, Cezanne may have used this display of lights to play on the viewers subconscious. Which could explain how he can so subtly implement the feeling of life in a piece surrounded by symbols of death.

Cezanne also dresses his skull with a vibrant orange hue, a colour often associated with warmth and joy; themes that juxtapose the cold and saddening atmosphere associated with death.



-Student Work, Oil Painting, Artist recording (2020)



-Student Work, Close up of recording of Paul Cezanne's still life with skull (2020)

Audrey Flack

In the 1970's Audrey Flack reinterpreted the vanitas tradition. She worked in the photorealistic style which arose in popularity during 1960's America; it has been known to depict the mundane subjects from everyday households. Due to photorealism emotionless and detached style, it is regularly seen as a critique of the banality of consumerist modern life. Audrey Flack used photorealism to turn the 17th century genre into a commentary of the issues of her day. This included issues around celebrity status and feminism.

Her most famous work is her 1977 painting of Marilyn Monroe. It includes an image of the 20th actress surrounded by symbols of vanitas, a candle, a selection of fruits and mirror. The photo is being reflected in a mirror, in front of which is lipstick, positioned as if being applied to Monroe's lips. There is also a tube of lipstick that looks to be applied to a photograph of Monroe. The objects symbolic of the passing of time represent Marilyn's brief but tragic life. She died age 36 to a barbituric overdose. She was an extremely successful movie star but in many ways, her beauty (which is represented by the lipstick and mirror) were exploited by movie producers. She was often casted in as the role of a sex symbol but in real life, she had a string of unsuccessful relationships with famous men and was treated for psychological problems.

"She evoked forbidden desires, she represented the full flourishing of unabashed sexual femininity"

Audrey Flack's work is a great example of how artists can draw upon past traditions and transform them into art that reflects the concerns of modern life. Flack has been useful to my investigation, not only because of the commentary she adds to her pieces but also because of vibrancy she includes in her images. The bright colours that she uses adds a layer of personality to her piece which in turn makes them feel like a memory. I brightened my colour palette in the same way to derive similar feelings.

I find Flack's work to be more expressive than Pieter Claesz due to the crowding and colouring she uses. But, both Flack and Cezanne use bright colours to add a more homely feeling to their pieces. I see Claesz's work to be more impactful based on its simple selection of objects and its almost monochromatic look. However, Cezanne's work is the most animated in my opinion. This is because of the way he strays from the actual proportion of the objects.

By using Audrey Flack's photorealistic style to heighten a nostalgic feeling, Paul Cezanne's eccentric background to emphasise a spiritual presence and Pieter Claesz's composition style to comment on death's unexpected reality, I proceeded to experiment with creating my final piece. Prior to this, I arranged a photoshoot in the bold style of Flack in-order to experiment how I could arrange my final piece.



Marilyn (Vanitas) by Audrey Flack (1977)



Student Work, Mixed media 'Monopoly' (2020)

Conclusion

I wanted my final piece to be a more modern take on the more traditional 17th century vanitas pieces. I would be using a more contemporary style to recreate a closeness to the objects similar to the closeness between my mother and I. I will also stray away from imagery of the skull in my piece because it does not accurately portray the how I see death in this instance. Instead, I chose to use Tzitzits. They are commonly used by observant Jews and Samaritans. Four of them are attached to a tallit and constantly worn as reminders to uphold God's law. So, when the person dies, one of the Tzitzits are cut off to symbolise the end of that person's journey on Earth.

When it came down to deciding the subject matter of my piece, I took huge inspiration from Pieter Claesz's works. I centre my final piece around my mother's passing, I chose personal objects that held a huge significance to her; this includes her Torah, jewellery and other religious objects. The Torah is known as 'the law of God as revealed to Moses and recorded in the five books of the Hebrew Scriptures'. Anyone that knew my mother knew her as God-fearing. She kept a copy of the scriptures wherever she went. This is why I include it, to represent her character as well as the

knowledge gained whilst alive. This links to the feeling of loss often seen in Claesz's work. Similarly, I included an oil burner with a lit candle in it, this links to the vanitas theme of time passing. I also used the jewellery she always wore as a symbol of wealth that she has acquired over the course of her life.

As I was working in the style of Claesz, I decided to position a similar empty wine glass off the side of the book in the way he had done in his past painting. I also made it a point to include a nice amount of reflection on the glass to resemble his work. I took my photographs on a plain black desk against a black wall to create a dramatic and dark environment. This ensured that me and Claesz would derive similar first impressions. However, most of the rest of the piece is inspired by Paul Cezanne's bright pallet. With the background, I mimicked the fusion of colours that would commonly be seen in the northern lights. I used hues of green, yellow and blue to create a light-hearted atmosphere that would contrast the darker subject matter at the front of the piece. By making this direct comparison I hoped to create feelings of unease in the viewer due to the absence of greens and blues in the actual objects. I wanted to heighten the level of animation in my piece. Overlaying the vibrant background, I painted a smoke pattern that I had gathered earlier. Here, I began to focus on Claesz integration of smoke into the background of his piece.

In the way, he depicted a candle seconds away from being outed to convey the time that passes when a person dies. I did a large amount of smoke in order to represent how my mother's soul continues to live on through the deeds that she has done and the people she has left behind. By doing this, I strengthened the cultural meaning behind my piece similar to what Flack would do. I want the people that view this piece to feel the importance of these objects. Painted in A2, the objects will be around 3 times their actual size which furthers the idea that all the vanity of life will be displayed after death. I would like this idea to provoke the viewer to think about what would represent them when they die.



Student Work, final piece 'Vanitas' (2021)



-Student Work, Close up of final piece (2021)

The journey to finishing my final piece gave me invaluable insight into the various critical decisions made by artists when making vanitas art. From selecting subject matter to colour schemes, I was able to piece together not only an intricately planned out painting, but a painting that reflected the emotions associated with losing a loved one. As I refined my ideas, I began seeing this piece as a collection of memories rather than just a collection of random objects.

So when asked 'how can vanitas art represent the dead?', the answer is in every way. Each object represents a part of legacy my mum left for me. Creating it has been an outlet for remembering the person my mother was; her kindness, knowledge, faith and her love. Accompanying these themes is the subconscious desire to leave behind something as meaningful when I die. So I'll ask again,

What will represent you when you die?

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