I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CULTURAL PATTERN PROJECT

For my Cultural Patterns project, I have chosen to start the project through investigating into a range of cultural patterns in different world regions. My research done for the patterns of Ancient Egypt and Indonesia are shown on this page.

I researched about the cultural pattern in Indonesia. Indonesia has seen a great influence from the religions of the country from the past. Elaborated patterns with religious references can often be found in the Borobudurs and the Prambanans in the country. As illustrated in the image on the right, the two stylized figures from Indonesian Hindu temples have decorations and cultural patterns on them.

Cultural patterns from Indonesia often use geometric forms and lines. Indonesian patterns have warm earthy tones and natural colors such as yellow, brown and colors closed to the soil.
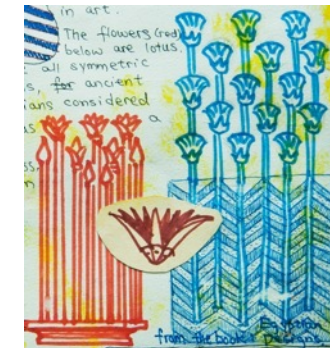
My visual note for Indonesian pattern

Image on the left: my drawing
The use of symbols in Egyptian culture

The image on the left shows my sketch of two common Egyptian symbols. Eagles in Ancient Egypt were the symbols of Egyptian's derties Horus. Horus is the god of the sun, war and protection. The snake symbols in Egyptian culture symbolizes sovereignty, royalty and divine authority.

My Drawings of Flowers in Egyptian patterns
The symmetric red flowers below are lotus. Ancient Egyptians considered lotus as a symbol of happiness, a holy sign. As water also represents water, there was also 'water' in the pattern.

My investigation into cultural patterns in Indonesia and Egypt has demonstrated the cultural connotations that symbols and colors used in patterns can have. The symbolic nature of these elements in cultural patterns can possibly be applied to my bigger piece, helping to convey the message using the corresponding symbols.

For the world region Europe, I mainly looked at a few artists that like to work with patterns. I came to known William Morris' pattern design during my visit to the V&A Museum in London. Some of his designs are shown on my visual notes on the upper right corner. His designs are often the stylizations of flowers and paints, as with many of the classical patterns in Western Europe.

Turkish art is a combination of various cultures, such as Islamic culture, Ancient Greek culture, Byzantine culture. Here my visual notes are about the patterns from Iznik pottery, as I quite like the combination of blue and white. The element of flowers often appears in Turkish patterns in stylized forms. Below is my visual note on the patterns from Turkey, showing patterns on Iznik. The red flower in my notes is one of the motif elements that appears frequently within decorative patterns of Turkey. Turkish patterns are similar to the designs of William Morris in a way considering the stylization and the repetition of elements. However, William Morris's designs appear to be darker, and less attention-grabbing, with much less contrasting colors used. These make the patterns suitable for the design of the background of a piece.

Image above: My sketch on flower

Image on the right: My visual note on Robert Kushner

Robert Kushner, contemporary use of patterns in paintings

Robert Kushner is an artist that used flowers as patterns in his artwork. The artist also created special blue texture in the background to go with the flowers.

His way of putting the patterns together with simple but subtle composition creates a quiet sense, different than the crowdedness of the cultural patterns of

My visual note on Turkish patterns

Image in the right corner: Robert Kushner, Hawkweed, unknown source

Image in the middle: William Morris, Peacock and Dragon, 1878, unknown source
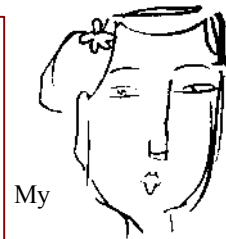
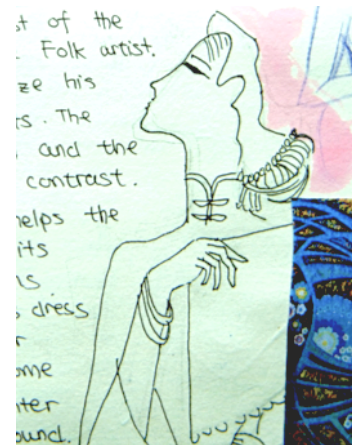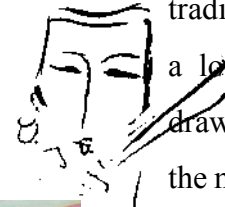# CHINESE FOLK ART AND THE STYLIZATION OF FIGURE

My plan was to create a pattern painting for my Cultural Painting project constituted with two parts, the stylized figure and the background composed of combination of patterns. The reason why I wanted the figure to be stylized is because that would bring out the role of the patterns, as well as the stylized figure's connotation with traditional Chinese folk art. Here in this page there were a lot of drawings that I made based on the real-life drawing practice with our Chinese teacher in Qipao being the model. I also used two Chinese artists' figure painting as reference for the stylization of my figure.

My visual notes on Chinese Folk Art

Characteristics of Chinese Folk Art

➢ Rich colors

➢ Bright and contrasting colors

➢ Simplified and stylized figures

➢ Naïve

➢ About daily life

My drawings based on Hu Kaiyong and Tian Yong's painting.

My photo of the real-life drawing session

Looking at contemporary Chinese paintings with elements of folk art……

Tian Yong is a contemporary Chinese artist who likes to work with traditional cultural patterns. As shown on the painting on the right, Tian Yong stylize his figures and make them flat with simple outline. The white used on the figure's skin helps the whole figure stand out from its crowded background with patterns. There are a variation of surfaces in the painting, including the small and big ones, crowded and quiet ones. The result is a highly decorative painting. There are also a combination of patterns in the painting, with Polynesian cultural pattern in the background and traditional Chinese patterns on the figure's clothes. These elements altogether make cultural patterns the essence of the painting, this is something that I would like to apply to my piece.

The background was set up using cloth with elaborate Dongbei-styled patterns. Other cultural elements include the blue-white china in the corner, and the hoop-backed sacked traditional chair.

My initial sketch made using black crayons
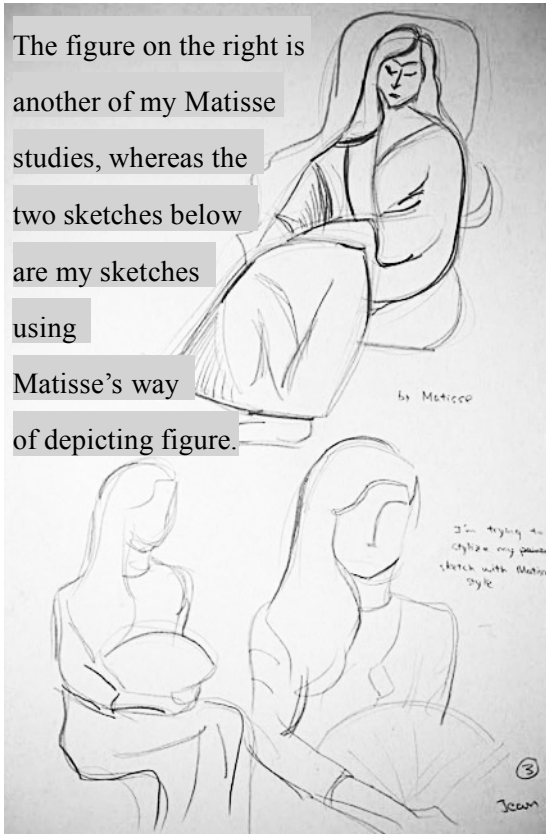
Painting by Tian Yong, source unknown

Sketches on this page demonstrate the process of stylization of figure. Stylized forms could be achieved through the simplification of the figure. Here, lines were the focus on the process of stylization. Replacing the scattered lines with a single frim, strong and fluent line is an important part of this process.
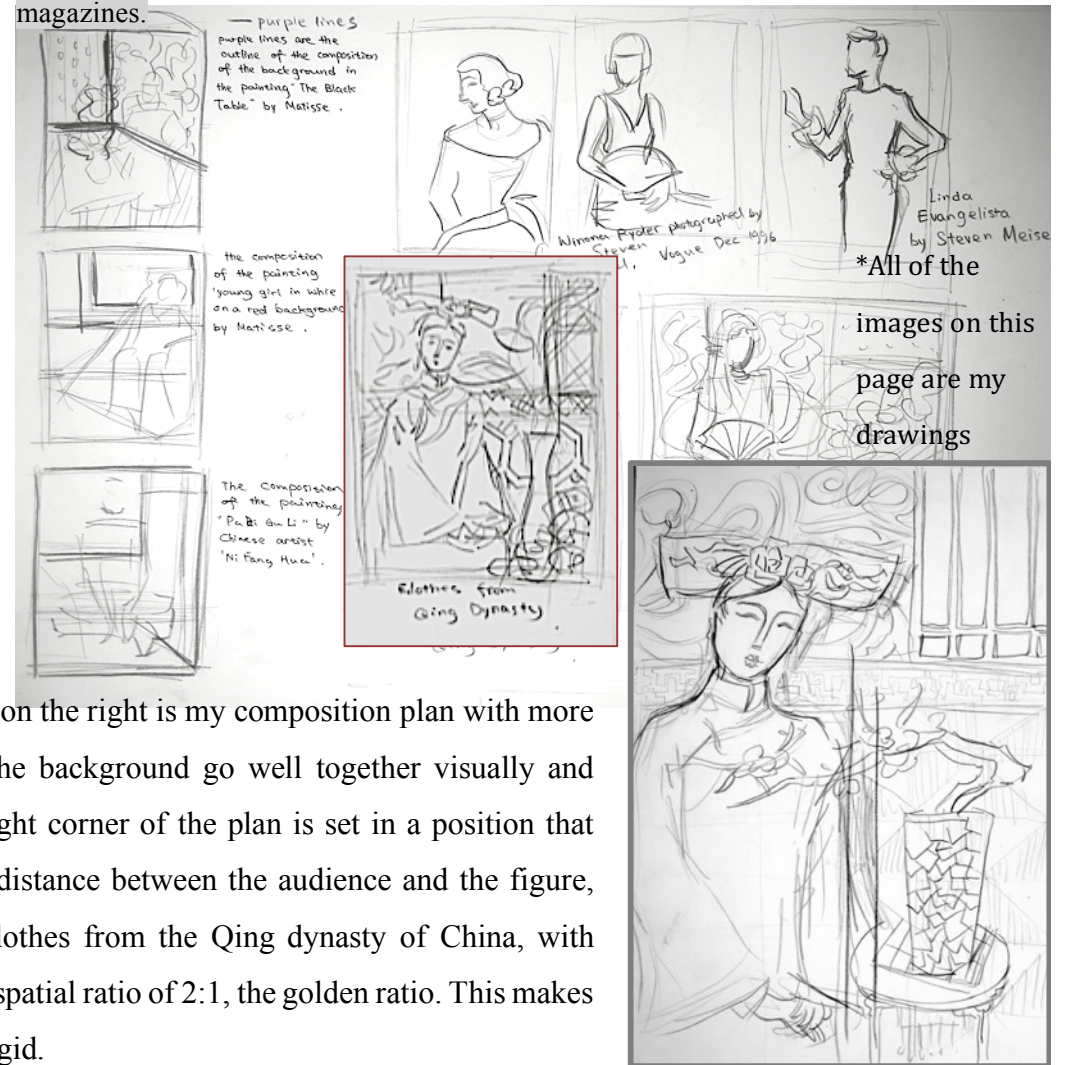
My study on Matisse's pattern painting

Knowing that Matisse is famous for his stylized female figure, I tried to replicate his paintings to see the way he uses line. The lines in his painting have a sort of spontaneous quality, making the figures energetic.

The figure on the right is another of my Matisse studies, whereas the two sketches below are my sketches using Matisse's way of depicting figure.
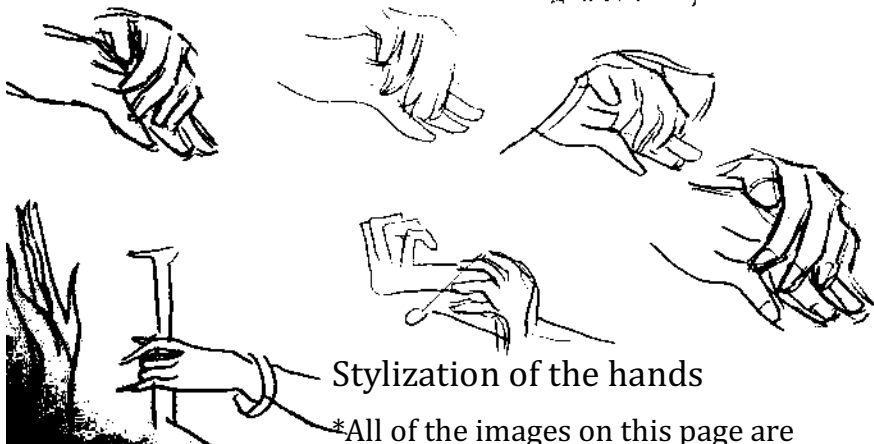
My composition study

Here are my composition studies. I have looked at two things: 1.The composition of Matisse and Hu Kaiyong's figure painting 2. Some of the posing from fashion magazines.

*All of the images on this page are my drawings

In the end I chose to go with the composition noted with red frame. The image on the right is my composition plan with more details. I choose the figure with the sitting pose as I think the figure and the background go well together visually and demonstrate the kind of balance that I want to achieve. The pottery on the right corner of the plan is set in a position that appears to be closer to the audience than the figure, this helps to reduce the distance between the audience and the figure, despite the painting's flat nature. The figure is designed to be dressed in clothes from the Qing dynasty of China, with Polynesian patterns and the Chinese-style window being the background with a spatial ratio of 2:1, the golden ratio. This makes the painting to be more visually pleasing as symmetrical composition is very rigid.

Below are my sketches on the details of the figure, including hands and the jewelry on the figure's head.

Cold colors (crowded)

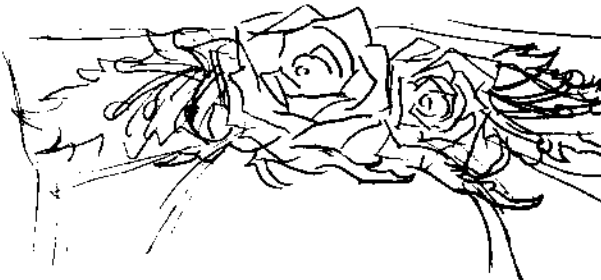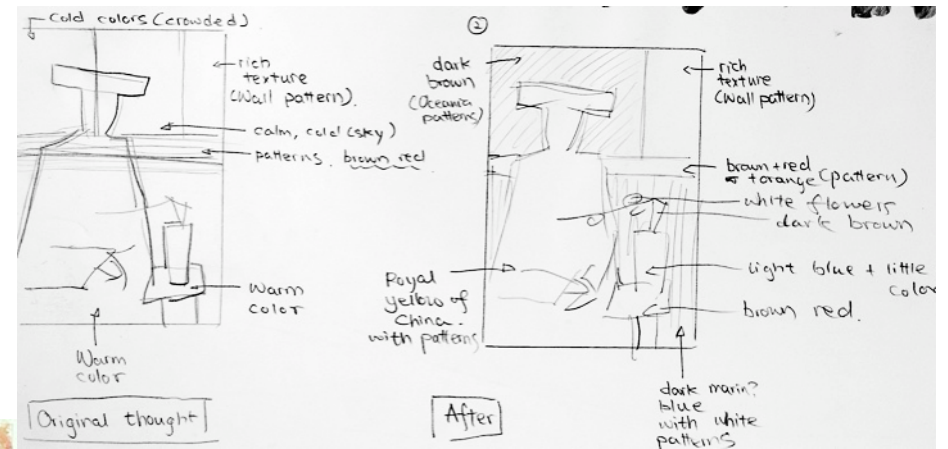rich texture (Wall pattern)

calm, cold (sky)

patterns, brown, red

Warm color

Warm color

Original thought

dark brown (Oceanic pattern)

Royal yellow of China with patterns

After

rich texture (Wall pattern)

brown + red + orange (pattern)

white flowers dark brown

light blue + little color

brown red.

dark marin? blue with white patterns

1   2   3   4

Choosing the colors…

To pick the colors, I visualized a few versions of color plans below.

A more Stylize version.

Stylization of the hands

*All of the images on this page are sketches made by me

In the end I picked plan 4, and made a more specific composition plan on the right. I prefer this plan the most as the yellow the blue and the brown go well together. Yellow in Chinese culture is also associated with royalty, therefore brings interesting connotations to the piece, whereas the blue might bring out the figure in yellow, as a good contrasting background.

II. STUDY ON THE ARTISTIC EXPRESSION OF HUMAN FIGURE
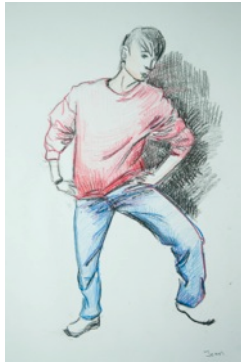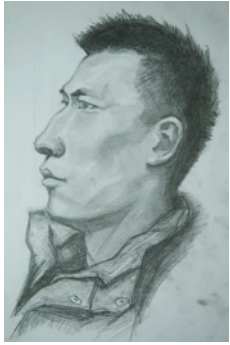
Images above: my studies of figures, A3 size

The depiction of human in my opinion requires a lot of skills. That is why I did a large number of detailed sketches of human figure. I investigate into the relationship between light and shade areas in the first study. In the second study, how to use lines effectively is the core of my practices. The third one was about using different colors and lines to create tones and contrast of the figure. All three studies were quite realistic.

My drawings of hands with ink on paper

Specific parts of the body can play an important parts in human expression as well, hence I did some drawings of different hand gesture with inks.

I am particularly interested by the depiction of human figure and emotion. During the following sections I will discuss the exploration on this topic, my exploration includes attempts to depict human within their historical context and social context. I also tried to depict some of the famous figures of our world that are themselves symbols of a complex combinations of culture, values and so on.

Sitting Chinese Man, Figure Drawing, white pastel, crayons and acrylic, A2 size

The size of the scale makes it challenging to depict the figure. However, the advantage is that I could use lines more freely, giving more energy to the painting. I also progressively learnt some of the tricks to create stronger contrast and tones using white pastels and crayons.
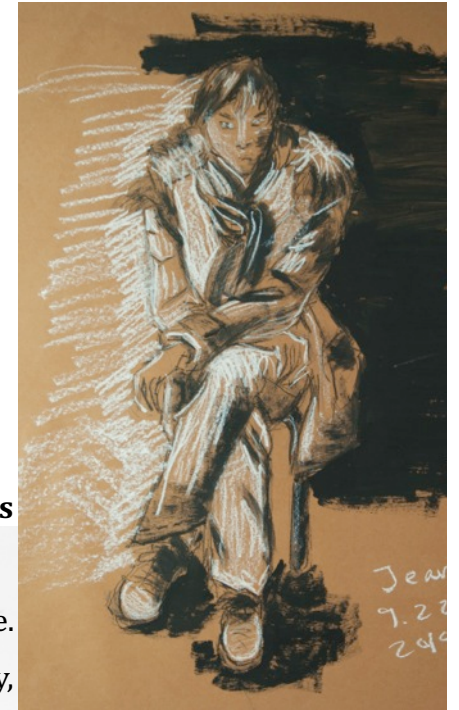
Reading boy, Acrylic on paper, A drawing of mine separating the scene into a few basic tones
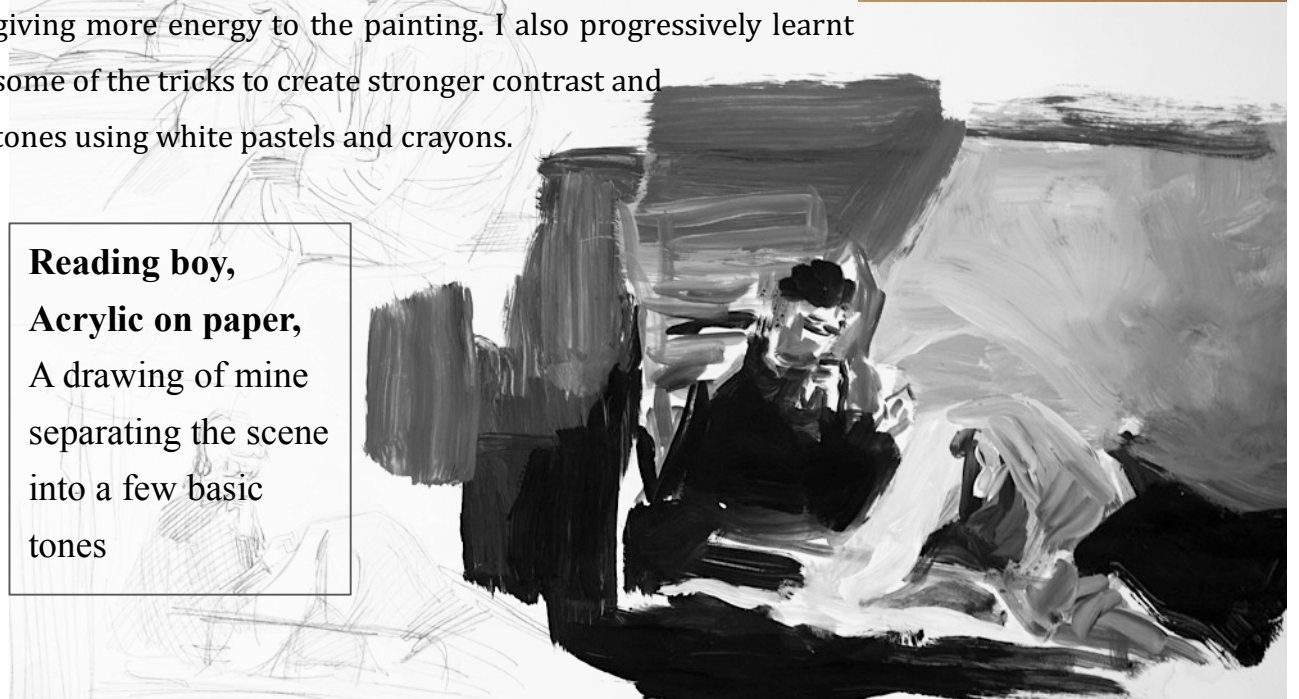
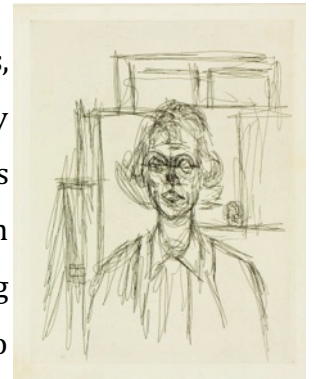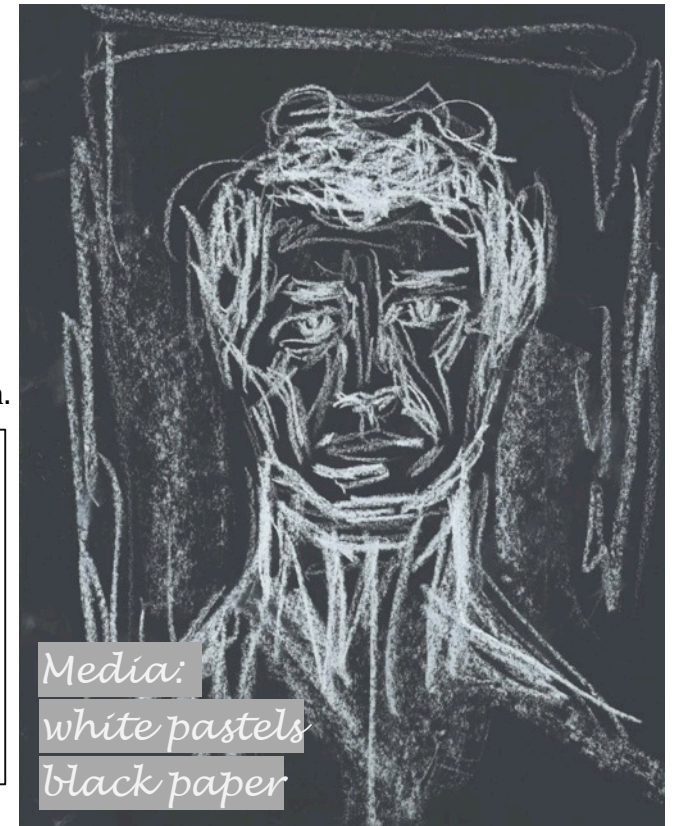# STUDY ON ARTISTIC STYLE: DRAW LIKE GIACOMETTI

While I was carrying out my research in the depiction of figures, the artist Alberto Giacometti was introduced to me by my teacher. I then looked deeply into this artist. Well known for his sculptures, Giacometti made numerous studies for the creation of the sculptures. These studies show his distinct style of using lines to depict figures as seen in the image on the right. He also included a variety of marks in some of his other depiction such as watery marks, thick and thin marks, crayon-like strong marks as well as dry marks. His use of grey, brown and the colors in between makes the figure appears to be less contrasting. The figures in his hands are often reduced to simple and a bit 'messy' lines. It is evident that the studies themselves have moods of uneasiness, anxiousness, and even depression, making him a great example of depiction of figure showing emotion.

Studio and Annette, Alberto Giacometti, 1964,www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork

Here are two studies that I made based on Giacometti's portraits using what I .considered as Giacometti's style. Even though it is very challenging to keep the lines free and control at the same time like how Giacometti did, it did allow me to draw in a much energetic manner. Different from Giacometti's sketches, my sketches demonstrate more roughness whereas his works seem to be messy but delicate in a way. Such a difference might also be caused by the difference in objective between me and Giacometti, as Giacometti was discussing the issue of existentialism.
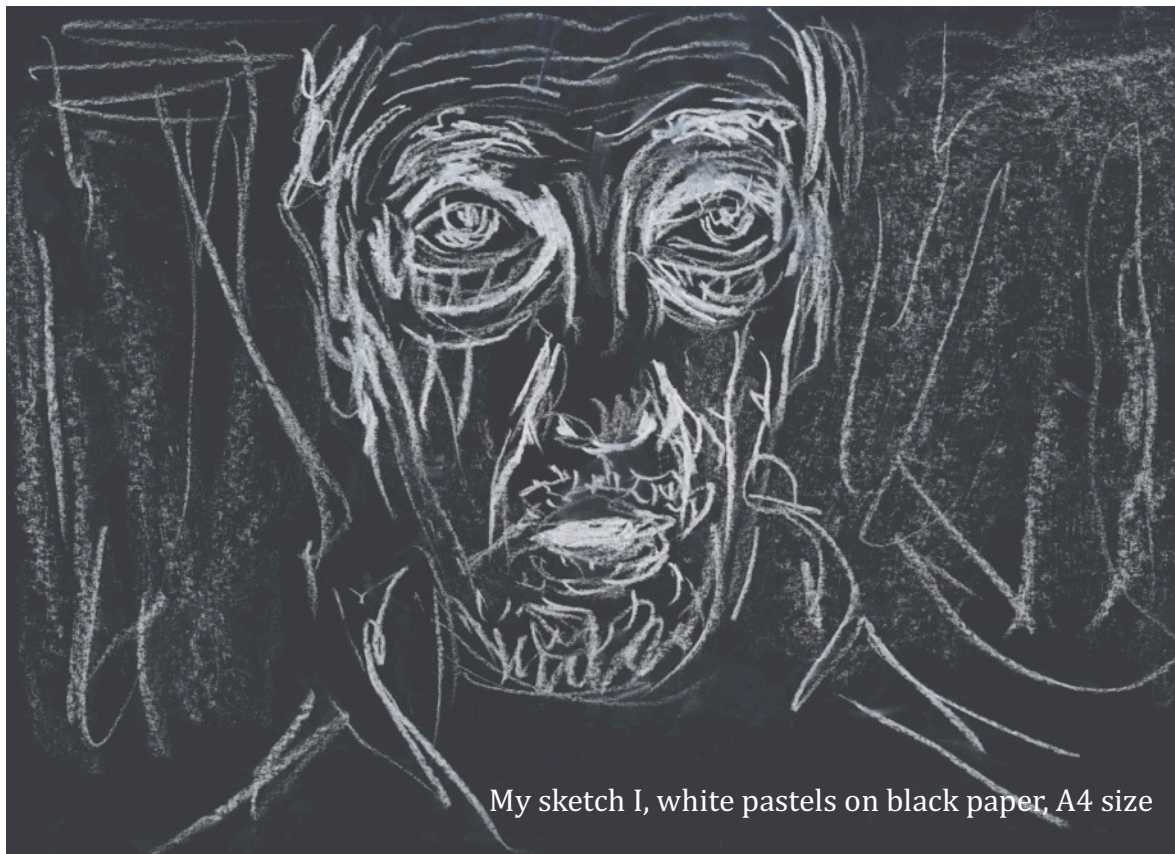
Giacometti Study, white pastel on black paper, I wanted to see the effect of reversing the two colors. The process is a bit more challenging compare to using black pastels on white paper. The contrast seemed stronger. Somehow there is a touch of emptiness in the work.

Media: white pastels black paper
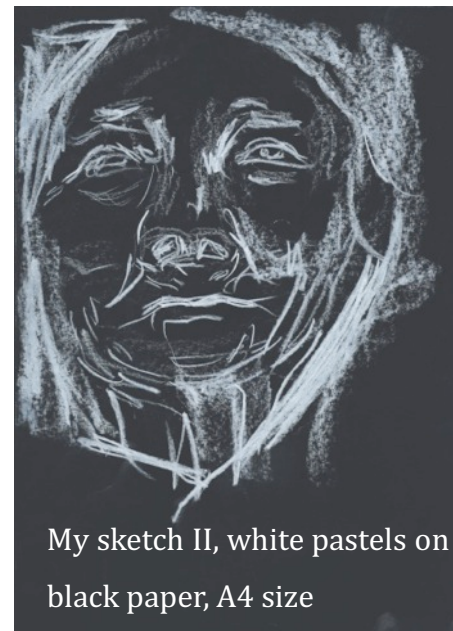
My sketch I, white pastels on black paper, A4 size

My sketch II, white pastels on black paper, A4 size

After trying out the Giacometti study with reverse effect, I got fascinated by the emptiness derived from the study. That's why I did a few more studies with the effect. As lines of white pastels play the most important roles in the studies, I chose some elders as subjects of the study, since the wrinkles on their faces can provide more opportunities to make marks. These black and white studies make the figures appear to be ghost-like, floating creatures with hollowness in their eyes. I am quite satisfied with the combination of reverse drawing and my version of Giacometti's way of depicting figures because of the mood it demonstrates and the atmosphere it creates.

All of these experiments together demonstrate the strong impact of lines and combinations of colors on the mood of a work.

Then I thought of using a background paper with different color to try with. Thinking of trying something very different, I picked the bright color of yellow as my background color and used strong red crayons to depict the figure. White pastels were used again in the end to add highlights. The result is very different from the ones using black background as the combination of colors is much more lively and energetic. However, it brings discomfort to the eyes as the colors' are too vibrant, which is not easy on the eyes.
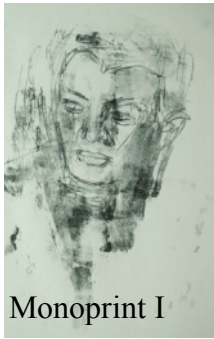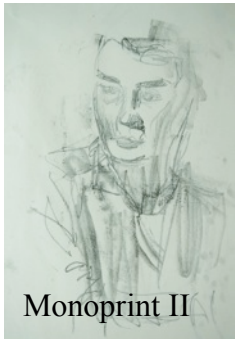

My sketch III, red crayons and white pastels on yellow paper

EXPLORING DIFFERENT MEDIAS: MONOPRINT

Monoprint I

Monoprint II

Monoprint is another method that I have tried. In the beginning it was quite hard to control as I was not familiar with the pressure I put on the print.
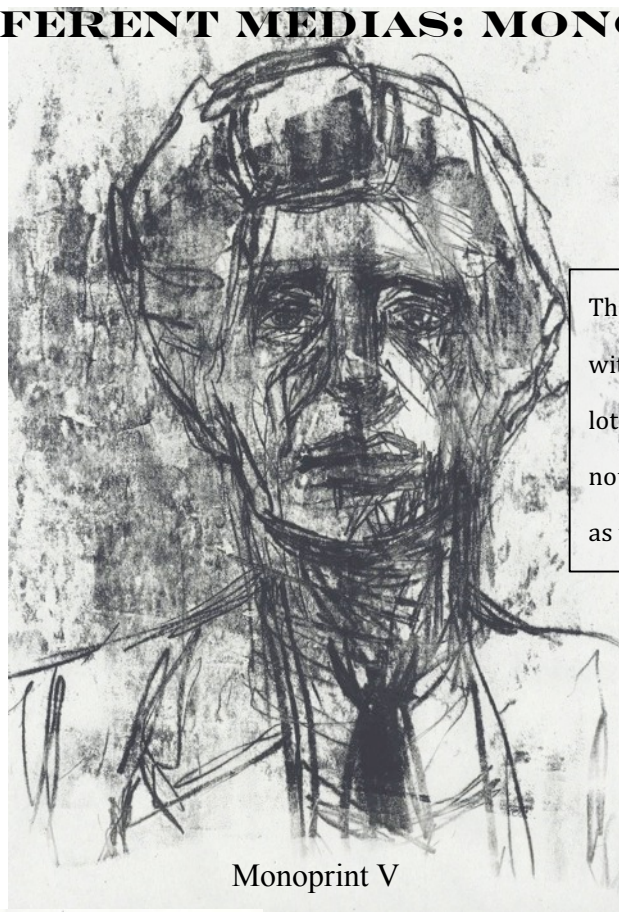

Monoprint III

In later trials I was able to gain more and more control and some advantages of using this method have been discovered. These advantages are noted below.
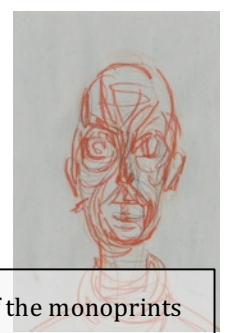
Characteristics of using monoprints:

1. Printing texture
2. Quick (finish before the inks dry)
3. Allows for all kinds of painting mediums: crayons, pencil, pointy end of sticks, hands (thumb, palms, finger tips, even finger nails)
4. Shows the pressure of certain kind of medium (different effects if I press my thumb against the paper harder than pressing lightly)
5. Emergence of surprises
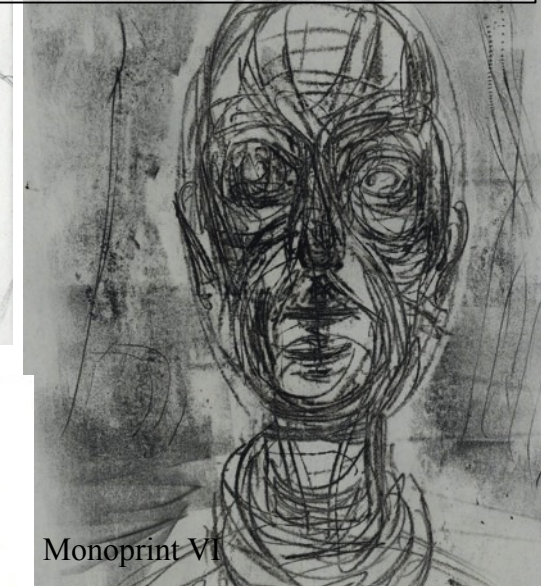
*All monoprints on this page are created by me.

Monoprint IV

Monoprint V

These images show the back of the monoprints with lines made with color pencils, crayons. A lot of other marks made on the monoprints are not visible here as they don't have traces, such as the use of thumbs, toothpicks.

Monoprint VI

Monoprint VII

Monoprint VIII

In this section, I did a few studies on Giacometti using monoprints as well. The effects were astonishing since the lines show the fluidity, thinness and control as in Giacometti's work. See Monoprint IV, V, VI.

EXPLORING DIFFERENT MEDIAS: PRINTING

The propaganda poster of Mao Ze Dong inspired me to make prints of him. The complicated political and historical connotations the figure brought makes it interesting to depict.

Image 1

My sketch

My sketch

My print on rubber

My sketch

Steps of printing:

1. Draw out the print on rubber
2. Carved out the parts with no ink (see my carved image on the left)
3. Applied ink on the carved piece evenly
4. Then use a press machine to put pressure on the carved piece so that ink could be transferred to a white sheet of paper.

Image 1:

Propaganda poster of Mao during Cultural Revolution, from news.xinhuanet.com

Image 2:Woodcut, from image.baidu.com

First two trials of the prints

1/4

2/4

Apart from doing an initial drawing with crayons as shown above, I tried to paint with ink and pointy sticks. The result shows an effect that reminds me of the woodcut printmaking that was popular during Chinese Cultural Revolution. Some of the advantages of woodcut prints include the extreme, contrasting effect purely made by the different sizes of the marks. However, some of the marks in the background of my drawing with sticks are not possible to make with woodcut.
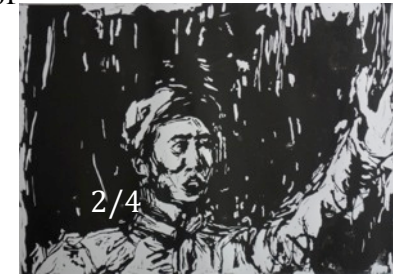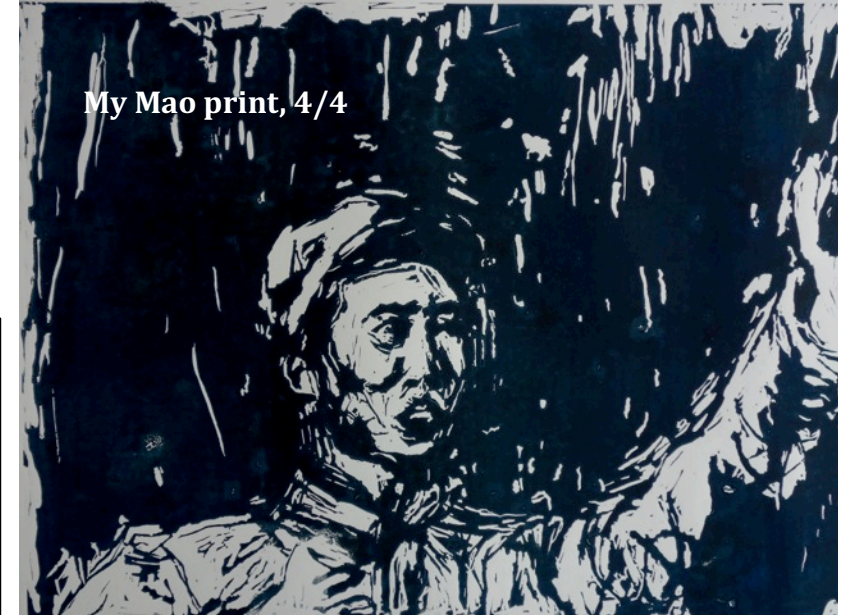

Image 2

My Mao print, 4/4

The contrast of the three prints on the right is due to different pressure used during printing, the evenness of the paints, the type of paper as well as the color of the print. It can be seen that the second print has a stronger black and white contrast since the paints for the second print are more even. In the fourth one blue paints and black paints were mixed together to try out the effect, as shown on the right.

My Study on a screaming figure
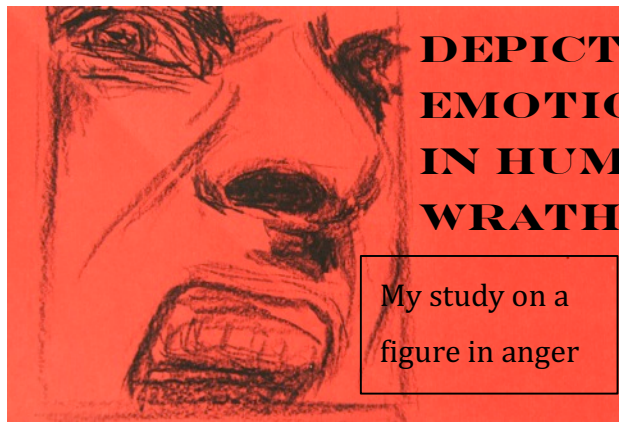
DEPICTING EMOTION IN HUMAN: WRATH

My study on a figure in anger

Some possible ways to show anger:

➤ *Violence*
➤ *Closed fists*
➤ *Facial expression*

After looking into artists like Francis Bacon and Mark Rothko during my holiday I become interested in depressed, gloomy emotions of people. I gained deeper interest in this topic after watching a documentary on Caravaggio. I was intrigued by the expressive quality and the strong contrast of the artworks and the powerful emotional and psychological effect they have over their audience. Since I also like to depict human figures and expressions, my plan was to create a series of artworks focusing on the expressions of people. Also fascinated by how the paintings present the dark, desperate and tragic sensations, I chose the topic of "Wrath" work with. It occurs to me that wrath from the seven deadly sins would be an interesting topic to depict. Despite the expressive nature of wrath, there are the religious and social connotations of wrath, which can be explored too.

Image on the right: Caravaggio, c.1597, oil on canvas, 60 x 55 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy, http://www.wikiart.org/en/caravaggio/medusa-1597-1

My photograph of Francis Bacon's painting in Tate Britain, Study for a Portrait, 1952, Oil paint and sand on canvas, 661 x 561 mm
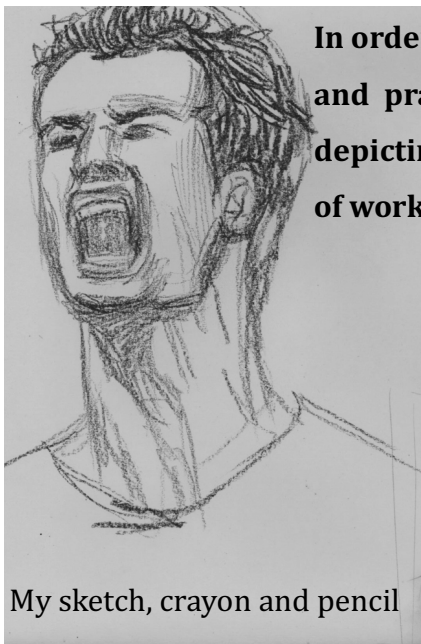
In order to pick a final media for the work and practice the different techniques of depicting human expression, I did a series of work based on the human figure.

My sketch, crayon and pencil

Through comparing the four positions of head, the position in figure 2 reach out more to the audience. This suits my intention of maximizing the psychological effect on audience.

I use the Birdman's guide as a reference to practice the composition of human head

I plan to show the tightening muscle on a man's neck in my work so I did some sketches on the muscle composition of male figure to be accurate.

The complexity of the muscles makes it interesting and challenging to depict the neck of the figure. Knowing the inside structure of the neck allows me to understand better the light part of the neck and the shaded areas when painting.

My sketch, pencil

From trying the figure with acrylic paints on canvas, I realized that the rough quality of paints from canvas suits the primitive, organic human nature of wrath. The use of acrylic paints also allows 3D texture, since acrylic could be mixed with impasto media to create strong textures. This is why I decided to use acrylic to depict the screaming figure in the big piece.
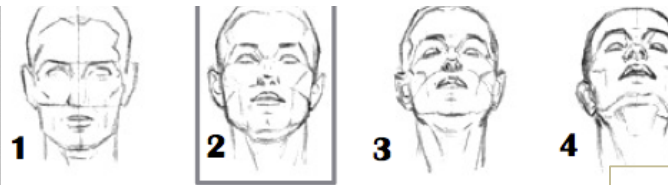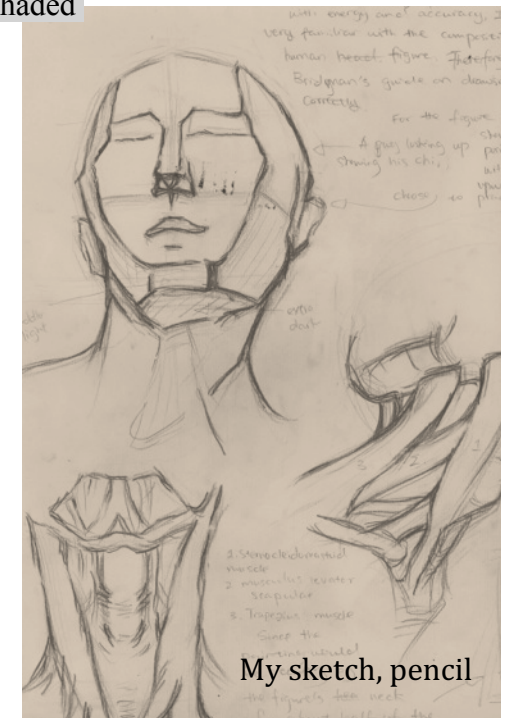
Reference
Bridgman's Complete Guide to Drawing from Life, George Bridgman, ISBN: 9787806740651
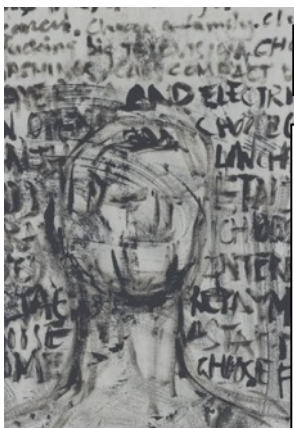
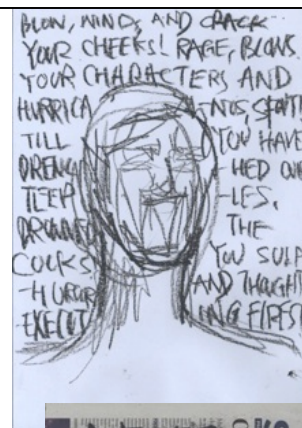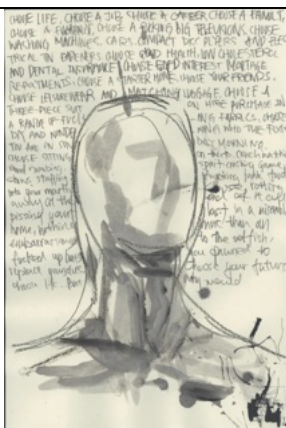My drawing, acrylic on canvas

My sketch, pencil

Image on the left: my photograph of my figure painting, acrylic on canvas

As mentioned previously, my intention was to maximize the effect of anger in my painting, therefore I think that painting on a large scale is appropriate. The specific scale that I chose for the painting was 180 cm tall and 120 cm wide. Such a large scale also makes it possible for me to leave marks with big gesture as well as all kinds of drippings. This results in more energy in the painting.

Background choosing...

For the background of the piece, I want to combine words with the figure so that the painting will be given more meaning. I thought of using famous poetry from the past but then decided not to considering that my audience are mainly students, as I wanted to keep the message clear. In the end I chose the script from the movie *Transpotting* (Directed by Danny Boyle, 1996). It is a speech from a few young people on their anger with a set, boring life path. The script will go well with the audience, as many students in my school are having similar problem on life path choosing when they are trying to decide university and majors. The script is also written in a very rude way, with swear words and rhetorical question. All of these elements emphasize the theme of wrath and the emotion in the painting.

My effect drawing I

My effect drawing II

My effect drawing IV

I spent a long time deciding whether I should use English or Chinese to present the script in the background. I was also hesitating with the size and the style of the writing. Thus I created a series of drawings to visualize the effect. In the end I chose to present the script in Chinese as most of my audience are Chinese.

A photo of me measuring the space for each Chinese character by my art teacher

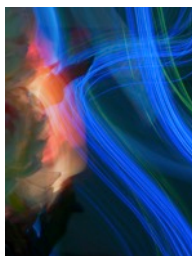# TOOLS USED

① Light Saber,
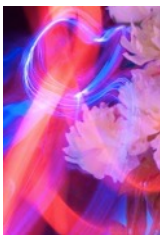
② Little light torch
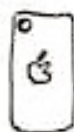

③ Small light decoration

④ Light used for dance floor
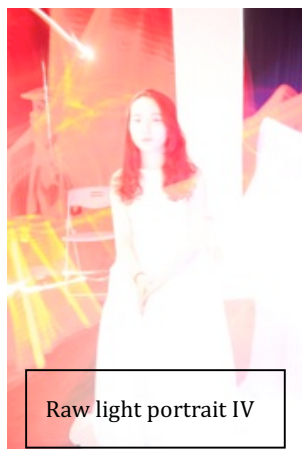
⑤ Iphone light

Images used here are details of my light portraits

EXPLORING DIFFERENT MEDIA: LIGHT PAINTING IN FIGURE DEPICTION

Method I used:

After adjusting the camera to the right setting in a room without light, I will press the button on the camera and start the shot. Then I will use the tools listed on the left to work around the model. The ways I used these tools varied, but in most case I used the light saber just for once to set the background color, then use the iphone to lighten up the model's figure. Little light source such as the light decoration and light torch were used to make lines.

After depicting extreme emotion like wrath, I want to make a work of figure in present context, the phenomenon of apathy in our modern society. Unconventional artistic medium such as light painting is suitable for this theme.

Camera:

Nikon D700, FX-25-70mm lens

Setting:

150   200   30''

Exposure compensation: -07

White Balance Kelvin 5880

Here are the first shots that I took. They are not very successful as the light sabers used for too long a time, making the image appear to be too bright. That is why in later shots I only use light saber for a short time.

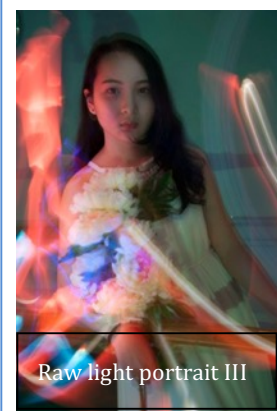**Light painting:** taking long exposure photos with exposures made through the movement of varied light sources.
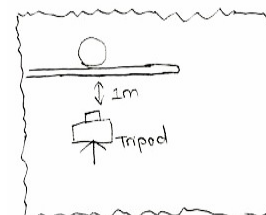
Setting of the shooting scene
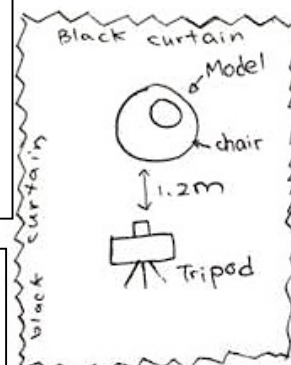
Raw light portrait I
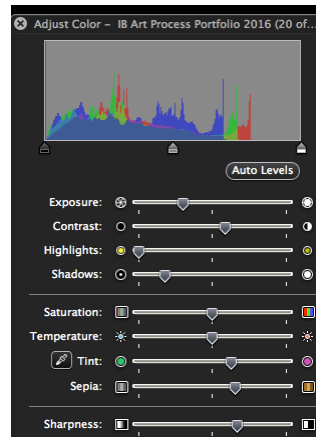

Raw light portrait II

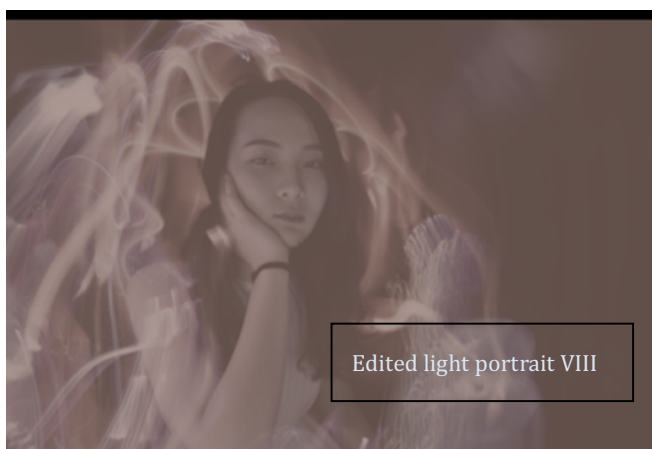
Raw light portrait III

Raw light portrait IV

Raw light portrait V

Light portrait VI

The purple-ish effect created through adjusting tint and serpia gives the whole photo more doom.

Adjust Color – IB Art Process Portfolio 2016 (20 of...
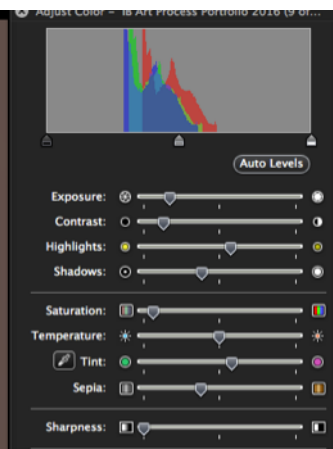
Portrait III & VIII, Adjusting the Sharpness rate to the lowest point and other adjustments all make the two portraits appear to be grey, doom. The dull colors used in these two portraits fill the works with emptiness and apathy, corresponding with my intention.

Edited light portrait VI

Adjust Color – IB Art Process Portfolio 2016 (9 of...

Edited light portrait VIII

This image on the right was considered quite successful, as the photo captured the model's distant look.

Raw light portrait VI

Gerhard Richter, Ema (nude on a staircase), 200 x 130 cm, Oil on canvas, 1966,

Raw light portrait X

Edited light portrait X
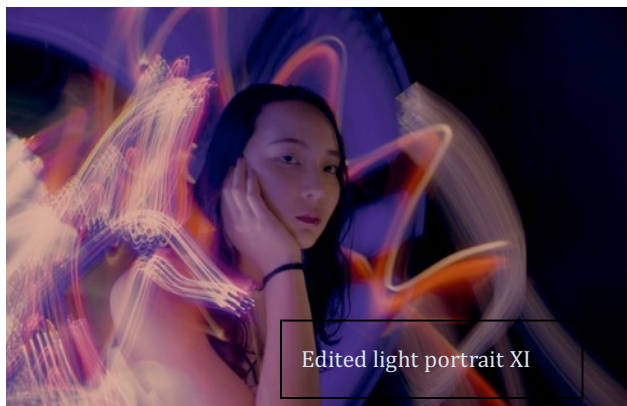
Edited light portrait XI
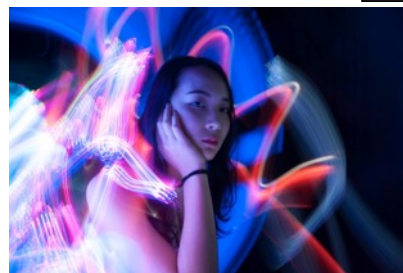
Raw light portrait XI

These two images' faded effect remind me of Gerhard Richter's works, due to the blurred almost "wiped" looks the light has created.

III. MAKE ART LIKE ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG

Rauschenberg also likes to make all types of abstract expressionism marks and photo released elements in his works.

In this section the task was to create a piece with Robert Rauschenberg's style. Robert Rauschenberg is an American artist who used everyday objects in his works. He put strong emphasizes on the relationship between objects to objects. A wide range of media are often seen in his works. Rauschenberg's work is about how objects that are not very related can be juxtapose together to convey a unified message.

My Rauschenberg Study II, Acrylic, cut-and-pasted printed and painted paper, newspaper, wooden ruler on board.

My Rauschenberg Study III, Acrylic, news paper, magazine paper on cardboard

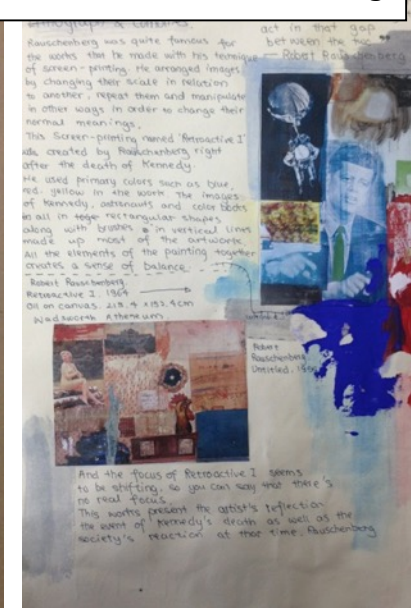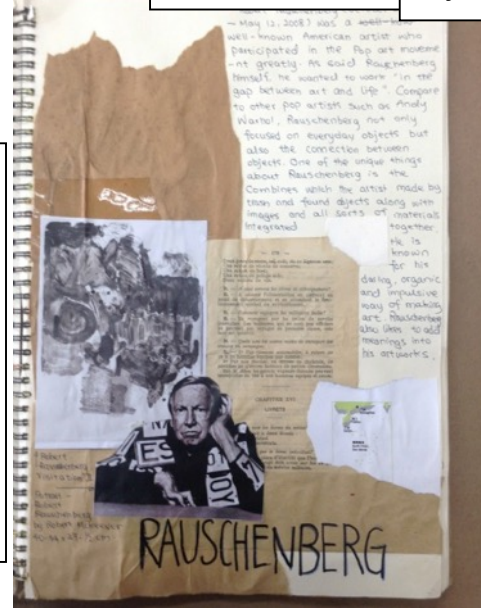My visual notes on Rauschenberg

My Rauschenberg Study I, Acrylic on newspaper

Robert Rauschenberg, Rebus, 1955, 243.8 x 333.1 cm

Medium: Oil, synthetic polymer paint, pencil, crayon, pastel, cut-and-pasted printed and painted papers, and fabric on canvas mounted and stapled to fabric, three panels

http://www.moma.org/collection/works

My photograph of Gerhard Richter's painting in Tate Modern

Detailed photo of the background for my Rauschenberg Project

There is only one way to decide on the arrangement of object, that is to try the arrangements directly onto the surface of the board with the painted background to visualize the effect. I have got a variety of objects near the board in the beginning. I started to place the big posters first. I picked these pictures initially as I thought the political connotations that they brought were interesting. Then I started to place smaller objects. The white pieces of poster came from a recent propaganda poster of the government. Also I placed the tickets of a Rembrandt exhibition which I had visited. The mirror placed in the plan was removed afterwards as there were too many things going on in the painting. Somehow the colors of the object went well with the background color. I chose the plan to the right as a result, since it is the plan that achieve the most balance between the meanings of the objects and the spaces in which they were arranged.

My photographs, showing two of the plans for the arrangement of objects used for the project, the one below is the final plan.

For the background of the piece, I tried to replicate Rauschenberg's way of making marks. I tried to use big paintbrushes as well as a print roller, but these tools do not have the effect that I was looking for. In the end, I found out that with a wooden squeegee piece, it is possible to make marks with the quality shown in the picture. I occasionally used my fingers as well to mix the color. Then I realized that the marks I made and the method are quite similar to Gerhard Richter's method, though Richter's style might be too crowded to be the background.
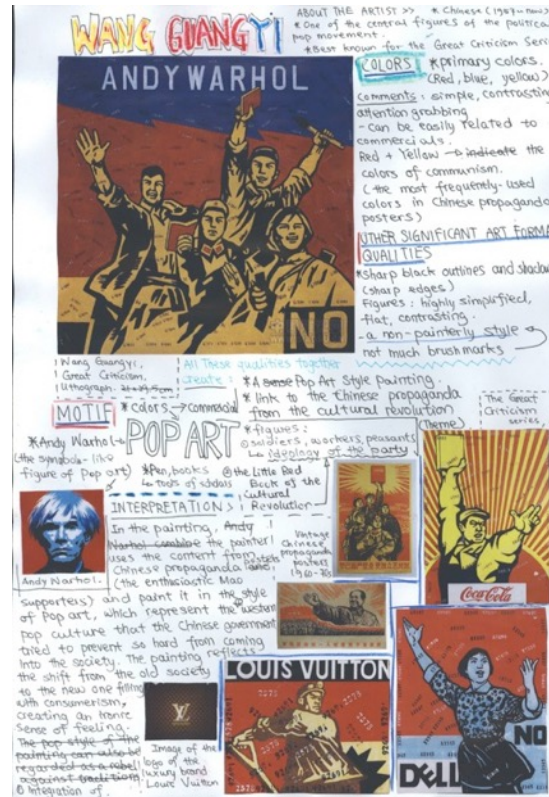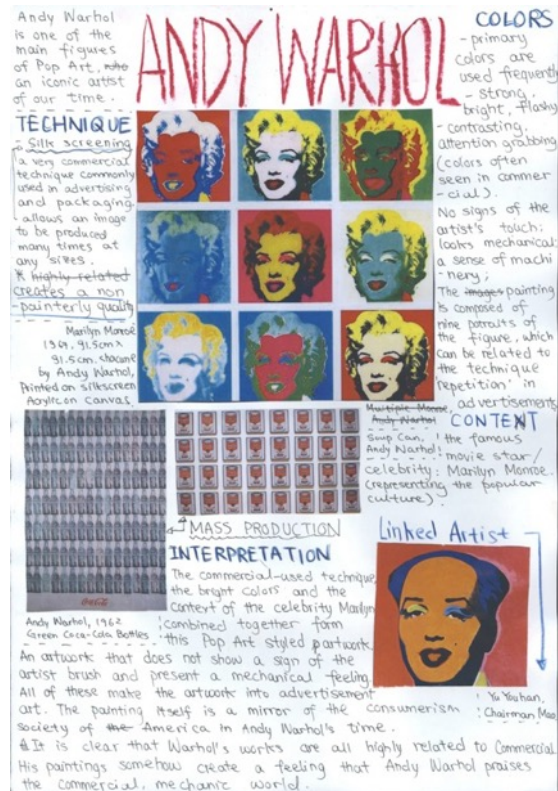
IV. STUDY OF POP ART AND ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

Key Features of Pop Art

Artworks about popular culture, includes images from everyday life, kitschy elements of culture.

Famous figures: Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Jeff Koons

Important Key Features of Abstract Expressionism

Since abstract expressionists use a wide range of techniques and artistic styles, there are no specific stylistic features of this movement. Abstract Expressionism is more about **spiritual ideas**, **unconsciousness** and **the mind**. Some of the most famous artworks of this school are Pollock's series of 'action painting' and De Kooning's *Woman* series.

In order to get to know the Pop Art movement better, I researched into the icon of Pop art, Andy Warhol. I also researched about contemporary Pop art in China, and find the strong presence of political events even in Chinese Pop art.

Here are some of my notes on the research about Jasper Johns, I replicated some of his works to understand better Jasper Johns' unique style. As one of the most important figures in the Pop art movement, Jasper Johns has succeeded in bringing everyday-life subject into the world of serious art-making.

After studying and researching about the two movements of Abstract Expressionism and Pop art, I carried out a series of experiments to enhance my understandings of these movements.
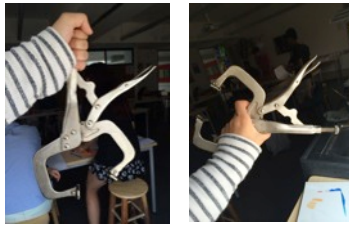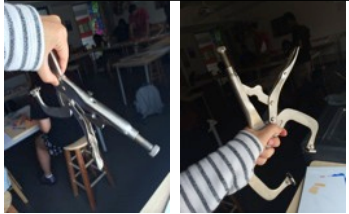
My photos of the tool

I picked a random tool from the art room. The first step is to 'know' my object. The tool is used to hold things together judging from its look, it seems to be associated with strength. The fact that it is an object of everyday life provides a link to Pop art. I then took photographs recording the tool from different angles. After sketching out the front view of the tool, I found that the sketch reminded me of Jim Dine's series of *Tools*.

I did more sketches of the object. Drawing the tool gradually became more and more smooth and fluent. I tried to "cartoonized" the tool. I also tried to simplify the tool by not sketching out the details on it.

My 6 trials

Abstract Expressionism trial
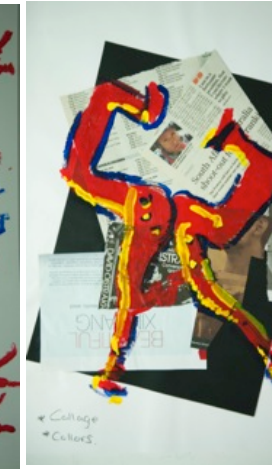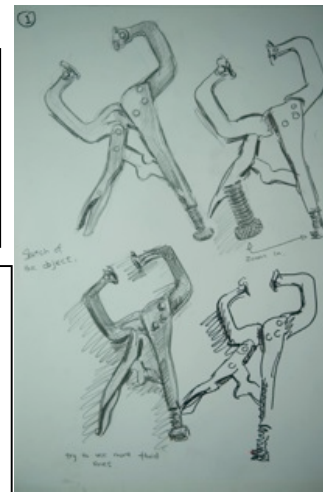
During the trials I discovered that lines are essential element of this tool, since it is in a very 'organic' kind of shape, and the firm lines serve to give it expressive quality. That is why I reduced other elements and used lines to represent the object. The simplification went further when the tool was eventually reduced to a few lines outlining only parts of the tool. I then switched my media from crayon to acrylic and paint the object on a larger scale. The two contrasting colors of blue and red were chosen to give out the energetic impression. For the final experiment on abstract expressionism I combined collage with the stylization of the tool. I am relatively more pleased with the final work since elements of the tool are rearranged and combined with other visual elements.

DEPICTING A FIGURE IN A CULTURAL CONTEXT: MA YUN AND NATIONAL PRIDE

Hope, poster, originally by Shepard Fairey, 2008, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barack_Obama_%22Hope%22_poster#/media/File:Barack_Obama_Hope_poster.jpg

Ma Yun is the founder of the infamous Alibaba Group. Ranked the 30th most powerful person in the world, Ma Yun was seen as a business legend in China with the whole country praising his accomplishment. His achievement was perceived not only as his success but somehow China's success by the Chinese population. This might connected to the Chinese government's habit of grabbing every chances to promote patriotism. By making a work on him, I was trying to address such a phenomenon of a successful businessman being the pride of the country. My aim was to encourage my audience to reflect on this but also the whole concept about patriotism and nationalism.

Image of Ma Yun http://pic.cheshi.com/prdview_big_91695.html

Image on the right: My images of Ma Yun, black crayons, A3 size

This is another work that I would look into. It is a poster of Barack Obama for his presidential Campaign in 2008. It was designed by Shepard Fairey. The image has became the symbol of Obama. I decided to learn from Fairey's treatment to Obama's image.

Izolag Armeidah's wall paintings, From http://www.izolagarmeidah.com/

As a public figure of popular culture, I want to implant some elements of the popular culture in the work. So I look at a few artists and posters for reference. The first image was the work of Izolag Armeidah, an Brazilian artist who works in public spaces, often painting on street walls in graffiti style and on a large scale. How he deals with the contrast between the figure and the background is something that I want to use in my work.

A **B** **C** **G**

D **E** **F**

I have put these 7 images through Photoshop to create these effects

I have chosen the background color of red for B and C since the symbolic meaning of the color red correspond with the idea of Chinese nationalism. In the end I hesitated between D and G as D shows an effect of golden statue, which fits well with Ma Yun's identity, however, that would put too much emphasizes on his wealth instead of him being an icon of the popular culture. So I chose G in the end for it shows the contrast better than A.

Image on the right, Details of my unfinished piece: I used a method similar to stencil, added impasto media onto the painting in the background, so that I could create a surface with texture of Chinese cultural pattern that is semi-visible. The fish in the symbol also signifies wealth in traditional Chinese culture. The color that I chose for the background was mainly orange mixed with red as well as touches of gold and bronze colors, setting up the warm tone of the painting. One of the reason for such a choice is because orange was the color of the symbol of Ma Yun's company. A newspaper article with Ma Yun on it as well as his e-commerce website's advertisement were stuck into the background with blends of gold paint as well.
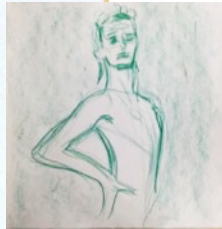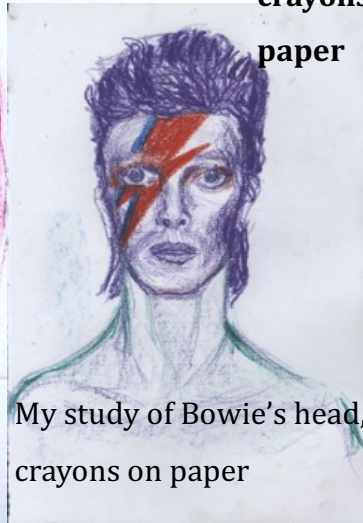
DAVID BOWIE PROJECT

The next figure I wanted to use to explore the depiction of human is David Bowie, inspired by his recent death. Besides being a superstar in this world, David Bowie himself is an icon of popular culture, representing many values and was the inspiration of uncountable musicians and artists.

Auerbach is a very special artist in terms of the depiction of figure. His paintings could be considered as Expressionism. He often applied extremely thick paints on rough surface. Brushstrokes are heavily present and expressive. I found out that there was a strong link between his sketch and the final painting, as the abstraction and distortion of figure happens already in his sketch before the final piece, so I did a series of studies on his sketches to follow his path of stylization.

My drawing of Bowie, crayons on paper

My Auerbach study II, black pastel on paper

My Auerbach study I, crayon on paper

My drawing of David Bowie, acrylic on paper

My study of Bowie's head, crayons on paper

My Auerbach study III, black pastel on paper

My Auerbach study IV, acrylic on paper

Aesthetically, he has really distinct figure, such as strong cheekbones as well as skinny, bony shape, along with his unique dressing style, making him interesting to express and paint. After watching the last music video he released, the twisted emotional strength reminds me of figures in Frank Auerbach's paintings. This further inspires me to paint him with reference from Auerbach's style.

Considering that David Bowie is a star of the Pop Art movement, I thought that it would be interesting to make a Pop art style painting out of David Bowie. I then chose to depict him on a large wooden board (89 x 119 cm). For the colors, I picked a purple color for Bowie's suit to go with his red hair. Somehow in my head I had an impression that Bowie belongs with purple. As for the background, a bright yellow is chosen.

Elizabeth Peyton is an American painter who is famous for her portraits. She often paint pop celebrities. Her portraits sometimes appear to be unfinished by leaving parts of the portrait with fewer brushstrokes. The swift use of lines in her paintings is something that I want to apply to my Bowie painting.

Elizabeth Peyton, from openingceremony.com

Second stage of my painting

Third stage of my painting

First stage of my painting

My initial sketch of David Bowie's pose for the painting. Color pencil on paper.

The images show the three stages of my painting process. In the beginning I planned to draw out the chair, but decided not to as I want to put more emphasize on the figure, and the contrast between the yellow background and the figure.

My drawing of Cixi in a luxurious setting, color crayons on paper

DEPICTING FIGURE IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT: CIXI, THE LAST EMPRESS

Historical context >Cixi is the last Chinese Empress and the last monarchy ruler in Chinese history. She and her government are now considered by most Chinese as the symbol of greed, corruption and disgrace. Many accused her rule: from 1861 to 1908, as the main cause of the weakening of China.

The original theme that I wanted to depict Cixi was greed, that is why I painted Cixi in a dress with marvelous details in a luxurious setting. The main color of her dress, yellow, is the symbol of the highest level of power in China, often used on kings, as yellow is the essence of royalty.

Cixi dressed as Guanyin, ink on paper:
This ink drawing was based on a photo of Cixi dressing up as Guanyin, the Buddhism goddesss. I found the photo ridiculous and absurd but also thought that it would be a great photo to work with. I also get to try the traditional Chinese media of ink to depict the historical figure.

My Cixi study, black crayon on paper

Yan Peiming, I kneel, 200 x 250 cm x 3, 2014, from http://collection.sina.com.cn/cjrw/20140627/081315 5804.shtml

Yan Peiming is a well-known Chinese contemporary artist, who often paint portraits with monotonous colors. I am interested in the mood he created in his paintings through colors and brushstroke.

However, after my ink drawing of Cixi, I changed my mind, and decided to use black and white and reverse effect to depict Cixi. The reason why I changed my mind is because I have realized that Cixi had actually quite a tragic life. Despite the common critics of Cixi being a cruel ruler, she has lost her father during her childhood days, lost her husband when she was in her teenage years and lost her son when she's middle aged. In my interpretation, all the wealth and the power she acquired had not bring her any satisfaction and happiness. Thus I do not want to depict her with emphasize on her wealth, but her tragedy. That is why I chose to use black and white to depict her with reverse effect. This effect makes the figure appear to be floating and demonstrate strong emptiness. My experiments in reverse effect drawings can also be used here. I have also decided to paint this on a large scale, as I want the final piece to look like as if the empress was a giant floating phantom haunting the audience. This objective of mine has also led to the brushstrokes I left. I mainly used dry brushes, and avoid being very accurate. My aim was to achieved a kind of vagueness.

Images on the left: My photographs of two stages of painting painting

The images here demonstrate the large size of the painting.(180 x 120cm) During the process of painting, I also used tools like sharp wooden sticks to outlines some of the details of the patterns on Cixi's clothes.