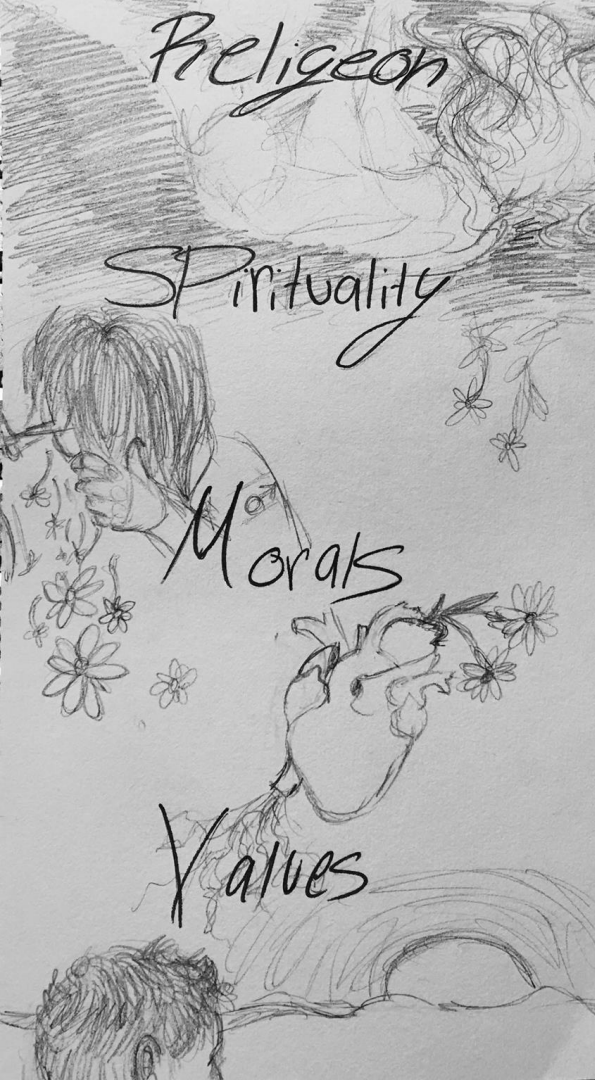




Process portfolio

Anthony Gleesing



Developing ideas: brainstorming

Developing ideas for the digital collage *just passing through* began with the brainstorming process. This was meant to be a self-reflection, and we were given prompts to help us write about the key components of ourselves such as our religion, spirituality, morals and values. I listed the very first things I thought of when it came to these concepts; a strong faith in atheism and the certainty of death- which has given me a sense of falling, strength of spirit depending on the degree of experience, a few key morals rooted in how I value life, the world, and change. Having laid out key components of myself I was able to think more clearly about my life and identity, listing out experiences I'd had and determining what I believed affected me the most and how I developed these beliefs and values. Then I wrote about who I was at that moment, and who I wished to be. These ideas were condensed, refined and transferred into the ideas and themes that made up my final piece.

a. I believe in the certainty of death,
action of man, and non-existence
beyond. Atheism

b. my spirituality took noticeable strength.
My spirit has been changed. Whatever
wisdom I have inside me stays.
I also believe anyone can do anything
but we don't.

L. My morals:

- Be as pain unminib
- Preferance for your own pain but know you
(and always understand another's)
- Be unselfish, be kind

D. I value community (lgbt), I value being
alone, I value the world, I value
those who have made change in the
world or within themselves.

Developing ideas: Planning



I'd rather die than
criticise someone's on my
premises!

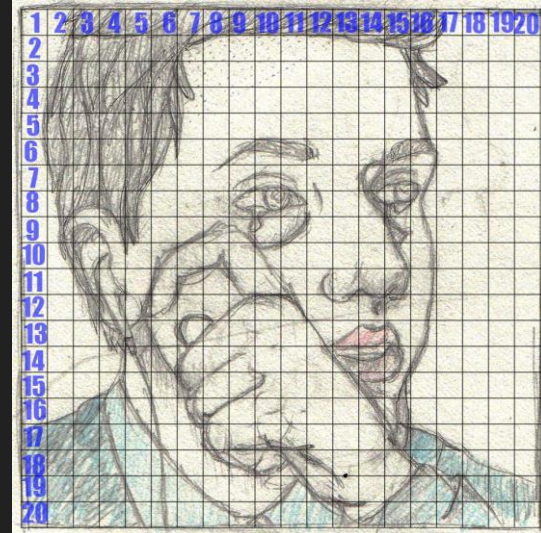


Cry Baby
Boy / Baby Boy
Don't be a baby
- Why am I crying?
- Crying Boy
- Loveliness

The planning stage of the process is one of the most important. Here, especially in planning sketches, ideas are explored visually to determine how to arrange a piece, which images work and which don't, how to express a theme or idea visually, etc. Planning sketches also aid in creating the larger piece.

For example, in the piece *Baby Boy*; quickly coming up with the idea that I wanted to do Pop Art for my piece, I thought of Liechtenstein and the pieces I resonated the most with. I posed in pictures like the figures in the original art did and drew from there. I had an idea which one I would pick right away; that's the one that became more developed, even colored, and became my reference for the art later on.

To create the reference a numbered grid was placed over the image, which would correspond with the grid on the canvas, a popular method when scaling up a drawing (2x2 inch to 3x3 ft).



Researching Culture

When planning a project- laying out themes, ideas, metaphors, etc- it's important to do research on the different inspirations, including culture. At times, very little research is necessary- the piece *That's Not My Name*, for example, is inspired by the trans community, which I belong to. Culture plays such a major role, however, that these experiences needed to be expanded upon.

This piece relied on the stories of other trans people and collective feelings regarding childhood and nostalgia. To research this ideas I spoke to other trans people without pressure and explored their stories and feelings on the subject. The research made the ideas explored much clearer, so that when it came time to express them it was clear what needed to be shown. It also affected the theme; originally, the piece was a much harsher view of the past, but with other people's thoughts on the matter the experience was found to be better illustrated by including the softer nostalgia for the time.

Shown on the right are photos- one of myself and one of a friend as young people. This further illustrates the involvement of my own experience in this project while incorporating others, as well.



PLANNING

The first step in any process is to plan out the themes and subject matter. For this piece that would be religion, with a focus on reimagining the classic figure of "Angels." For this research had to be done on Angels, which revealed them to be warriors of god symbols of strength. For this piece the pose of their figure would be an essential part of conveying emotions. When applying the research on Angels to the piece, planning sketches were made exploring the contrast between figures and the symbols/imagery that could be used. The further design also made it into the original planning. The plans got more branched out as detailed for the eventual block print.

RESEARCH

The description of Angels vary, and is not often specific, but can be often described as powerful & awe-inspiring. This became a great influence on the block print of the series. To create this presence research into Ingres, the artistic inspiration, came in handy. The exploration of anatomy & position of the body became imperative, as well as the limited religious imagery in Ingres' work. The limited symbols usually were in the form of religious imagery. The choice of this & rely directly on the halo and wings in favor of revealing the humanity and creating an air of exposure for the character.



Process sketches depicting an angel in two contrasting places/emotions. Form of clothes when it comes to strip the figure of halo and wings in favor of revealing the humanity and creating an air of exposure for the character.

Researching culture

Other cultures aren't so familiar. In the pieces *SERVE: HEAVEN* and *SERVE: HUMANITY*, the concept of angels is thoroughly explored. Being non religious my entire life, there's not much I knew of the subject to begin with or expand upon, so research was done to establish an accurate view of the beings. In biblical text the description of Angels varies and is not often specific, but they are often described as powerful & awe-inspiring. This became a great influence on the block print of the series. The artistic inspiration for the piece was Ingres, a neoclassical painter, and would help to create this presence; the exploration of the body became imperative, as well as the limited religious imagery in Ingres' work.

Angels were also often related to humanity, and in most art (including Ingres') were depicted as humans with wings. This influenced the piece in that I strove to explore both the religious and human side to the beings. The Religious symbols used were usually in the form of clothes, but the choice was made to strip the figure of this & rely directly on the halo and wings in favor of revealing the humanity and creating an air of exposure for the character. Otherwise, the stance and exploration of the body created a sense of prestigiousness.

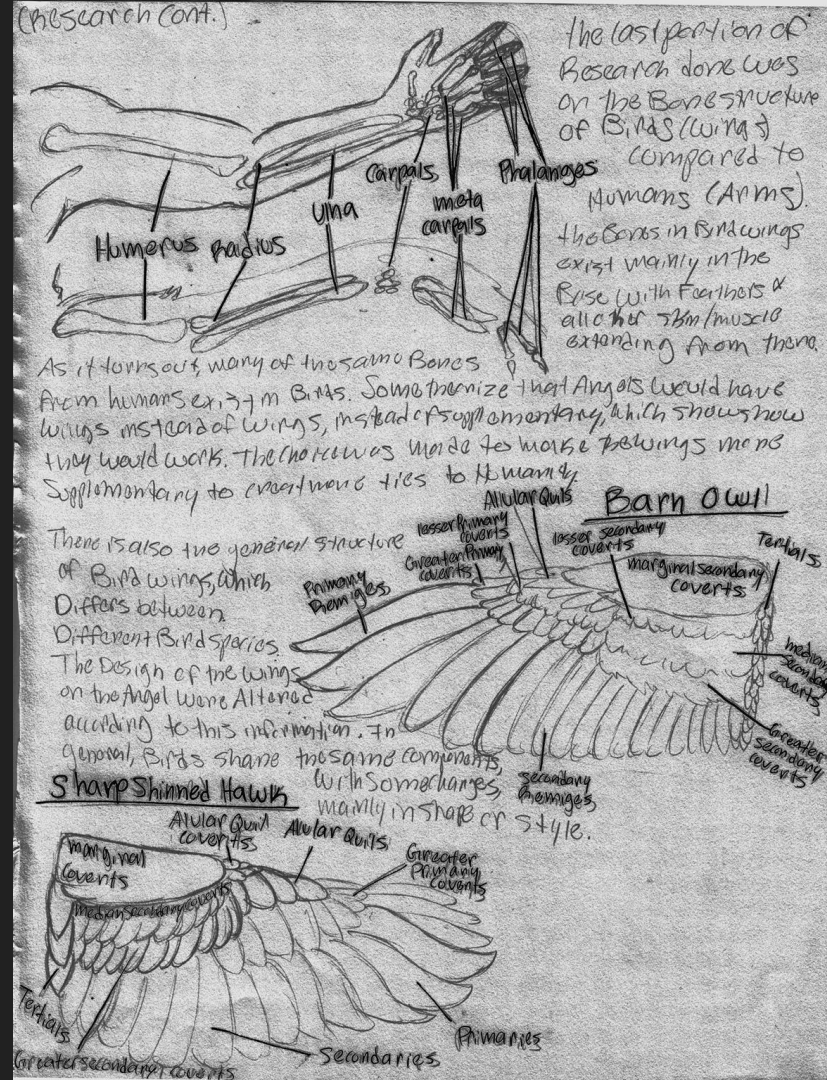
Planning and Research

The piece *SERVE: HEAVEN* researched the subject matter of angels, but also included and investigation into the anatomy of bird wings and how their bone structure relates to that of humans. This would affect the design of the wings from bare structure to the arrangement of feathers- an important visual component. From my process journal (pictured to the right):

“As it turns out, many of the same bones from humans exist in birds. Some theorize that Angels would have wings instead of arms, instead of supplementary-” a popular depiction- *“which shows how they would work. The choice was made to make the wings more supplementary to create ties to humanity.”*

There is also the general structure of bird wings, which differs between different bird species. The design of the wings on the angel were altered according to this information. In general, birds share the same components, with some changes in manly shape or style.”

Here you can see how Research is laid out and becomes integrated into intended themes/ideas: how different wing styles could affect how well a balance between “holy” and “human” is created.



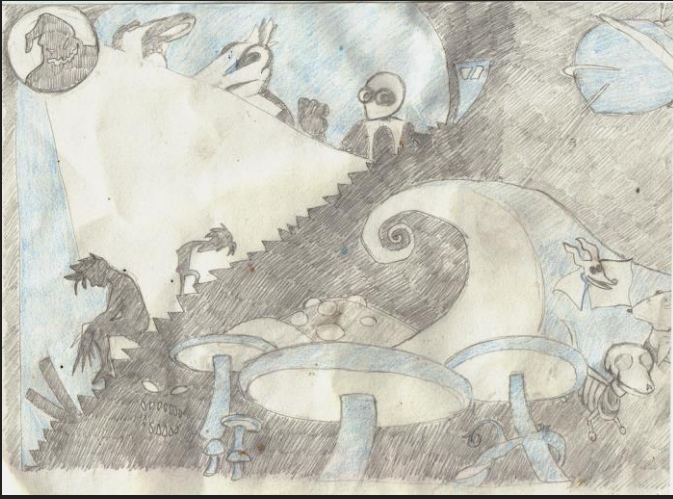
Selection of Medium

The selection of the medium is extremely important to the piece. The medium itself affects the viewer just as much as how you manipulate the medium, helps or hinders how you convey themes, affects whether the piece is visually interesting or not, etc. For example: in the piece *12/25/16* an installation was chosen to affect the experience created. It was created this way to surround and immerse the viewer in the piece. The christmas lights featured in the installation also affected how the piece conveyed themes of discovery. It also tied the piece back to the original experience and christmas.

The use of christmas lights also connected to the artistic inspiration of this piece Felix Gonzalez-Torres, who created engaging, experience-based pieces like this one. Gonzalez-Torres also used stringed lights as the focus of some of his most personal pieces.¹ this was important to my own intentions about creating an engaging space and connecting to my own personal experiences.

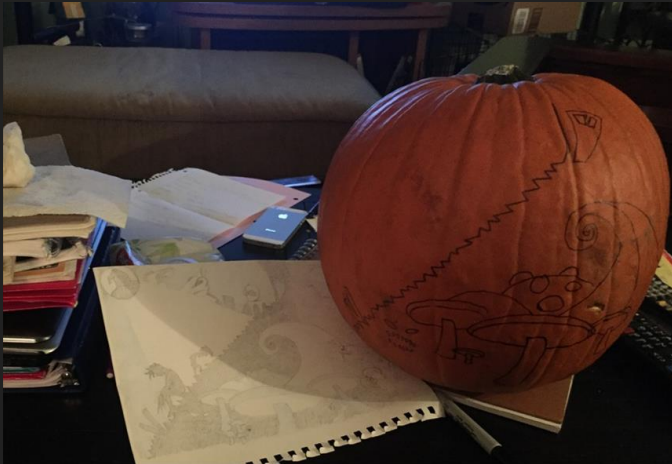
¹Wainwright, Lisa S. "Felix Gonzalez-Torres." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 28 May 2013, retrieved from www.britannica.com/biography/Felix-Gonzalez-Torres.





Selection of medium

This piece *We Musn't Dilly Or Dally* was an ephemeral project. I took a long time brainstorming a number of ideas, from sand sculptures to sticky notes. I almost settled on doing body paint, Experimenting with the medium and it's possible themes. but drifted to the idea of recreating Disney movies in nature. Nothing was more meaningful to me then that Tim Burton films, for their dark themes and their German Expressionist visual qualities. That is when I decided to carve a pumpkin.



The medium being organic fit the ephemeral quality of the piece; it would start decaying while I was carving it, and the time and detail could only be enjoyed for a time. The sculptural nature of the piece was also interesting, and the manipulation- if done correctly- could have a profound impact on the viewer. The pumpkin being something familiar to most people at least in America, a pumpkin of extreme detail could be somewhat jarring. This fell in line with my interest with exploring emotion as well as a specific focus on eerie or odd images.

Experimentation with different mediums

The piece *Walk It Off* utilized special effects makeup to create effects difficult to do otherwise. I had never used this medium and struggled to manipulate it correctly. Almost everything I did with my models I tested on my own first; I tested methods of taping my own eye shut before I had to do it with someone else, and I tested applying prosthetic wounds with spirit gum before seeing if it actually worked or if I should use latex or another adhesive. There were also consideration of allergies and how to test for them. I needed to experiment with the application of latex, such as in the burns. The texture was unfamiliar to apply and it was unclear how to color the burns after the latex was applied and so this was done on my own arm beforehand to test these things out and get a feel for how it would go (pictured to the right). This was a good method of experimentation because my skin resembled that of the model, but had it's limitation because the body part was quite different. I experimented with visual qualities, as well, like what direction the scars would be directed, the exact coloring, size, shape, etc., which all would affect the final product greatly. Testing these things on myself also helped inform me on removal, which could be painful.



Experimentation with different mediums



Dan & Tony



The piece *That's Not My Name* dealt with a 2D medium. In the beginning, the “burned” effect was attempted on photoshop; I experimented with different tools, overlays, and miscellaneous techniques involving cutouts, paint tools and filters- but the information on burning pictures- specifically polaroids- wasn't much. Eventually I resolved that the best way to create the burned effect on the photos was to actually burn them.



After having the pictures printed, some of them still with the photoshopped burned effect, the photos had a flame held to them- some pictures catching on fire before the intended effect was reached. This process helped create the authentic burned effect, essential to conveying the idea that these photos were burned by the people in them- the intention of the piece. Having physical copies also meant that I could experiment with the size and arrangement of the pictures- changing up the borders- burning all options to see what worked best.

Experimentation: themes & ideas

Before I had developed the idea for the piece *We Musn't Dilly Or Dally*, I had multiple ideas of body painting. I began with self-image and identity, exploring gender, beauty and imperfection with images of idealized bodies painted upon others, or abstract notions of sense-identity. It varied from realism into more abstract visual ideas, and then strayed from personal identity into human form and the human body as a piece of art. These ideas were too unfocused to make a strong piece. I went ahead with one idea to do body painting in the styles of famous abstract expressionist painters, like Pollock and Rothko. I experimented a lot with ways to turn the body into a canvas and apply the painting techniques I hadn't ever tried before. This still felt flat for me, and while visually interesting lacked any sense of realness or depth. In the end I scrapped the entire idea and started again; this time I started with a clear inspiration and went from there. I decided upon a pumpkin, a medium that was completely different but still interesting like the body paint was, and darker themes celebrated in german expressionism; a far cry from gender identity or body image, but still captured that personal connection to myself I intended.



Experimentation: process

Sometimes the only way to learn a medium is to experiment with what works. The experimentation during the Block Print piece *SERVE: HEAVEN* was largely the design of the wings and size of the lines. I had originally designed the wings to have individual feathers along the Marginal secondary covers (the part of the wing that extends from the figure's back, the area which all other feathers come out of and where the bones are, beneath). After realizing that this would be extremely hard to achieve with the block printing technique, I changed the design so that that area was blank. Those feathers are meant to still be there, but are those that tend to blend together anyways. Diagrams hardly outline these feathers themselves. This allowed for a much easier and precise carving process.

I also experimented with line size; I didn't know what would look ideal when it came to the actual print being done, so I carved away little by little (especially in the details). My uncertainty with carving affected how deep I carved into the print, which affected the piece later when unwanted background showed in my piece. I had to take extra time to carve deeper in all the white parts in my piece (except feathers, which I had applied more force into and were overall deeper).



Development of Skills & Techniques

In this piece (titled: *We Musn't Dilly Or Dally*), the skills used developed over time by experimenting with the medium. Most sculptural mediums are more pliable and have tools/techniques tailored towards that, yet the pumpkin ended up being a much more difficult thing to carve and gain precision- I ended up having to start using larger knives and power tools. An exacto-knife cut out most of the details; at first large areas were chipped away but then cut away by longer knives. Since depth was important areas had to be scraped by spoons and knives to make them lighter. For the few areas that went all the way (such as the monster under the stairs or the skeleton dog), a drill with varying bit sizes was used. Holes were carefully drilled all the way through the pumpkin and shaped by moving drill around slowly.



Development of Skills & techniques

On the piece *Baby Boy*, I can admit: I'm not much of a painter. This was a self portrait that was difficult for me because I simply didn't have the skills translate my drawings into paintings. My linework started off shaky, especially from a distance, and the facial features became unproportionate. I had to go over these areas repeatedly to smooth out the lines and try and reduce the major gaps while not redoing the entire painting.

The inspiration for this piece is Roy Lichtenstein's *Crying Girl*. Next for my process, the difficult part of pop art, I needed to learn how to do the precise dots that replicated the newspaper printing style so famous in Lichtenstein's work. The first technique I tried was having a field of dots projected over my painting, but it was difficult getting them to lie straight and almost impossible to replicate once started. It couldn't be done in one sitting, however, so I began doing the dots free-hand. The piece lost the precision of carefully laid-out dots as they started to vary in size and the lines began to wave, but when done carefully the dots were fairly tight and began to fill the piece.



Reviewing & Refining Skills, Processes & Techniques

After developing the basic painting techniques needed for this piece, these processes needed to be refined to create a better image. For example I improved the way I layered my paints, learning how to layer correctly and how necessary it was even (if not especially) in works with solid colors. I made the lines much cleaner, improving the way I handled the brush and shaped the face. The application of the dots was especially challenging in how I laid them out. I began with a projection and moved on to making one row at a time, free-hand. After learned that all the rows coincided and there were two directions to follow. I started making dots in reference to every dot around it. Whenever a section became too askew I would have to cover it in white over again and restart the dots in that area. The dots started from the side of my head, moved across the top, down the hand, and finished at the neck.



Reviewing & Refining Skills, Processes & Techniques



The design I had for the block print *SERVE: HEAVEN* wasn't functional for the medium. After developing skills with the carving tools the design had been readjusted to be easier, but still a challenge. It was difficult at time to know how to use the tools to preserve details and not carve away at lines I did intend to keep. The two carving tools used were similar, yet one was pointed in a "V" shape and the other curved. I learned quickly that the curved tool was good for large spaces (such as the larger limbs or the space around the figure), the tool with an edge was good for corners and details, and both could achieve smooth, wavy lines of done with enough pressure and direction. In fact, the weight at which you applied the tool all but determined the amount of control you had over it; while one wishes to carve deep enough to get clear details when printed, some details can only be done on the surface. There were deepened later, usually with the edge tool, scraping out the rest of the indent.

Reviewing & refining themes & ideas

In the piece *Walk It Off*, the initial ideas and themes were of mental health, which soon focused on students. This idea was paired with the artistic inspiration, Caravaggio, famous for his intense realism and help in creating the baroque style. Caravaggio's use of Chiaroscuro (extreme lights and darks) highlight the details of faces and gestures, creating dramatized scenes of typically biblical tales.¹ The scenes in Caravaggio's work were also often very bloody, almost normalizing the violence and gore, or glorifying it. This specifically was applied to the themes I already had in mind for the piece; to integrate the goriness of the work, physical manifestations of the disorders were created; all bloody, all painful. The rest of the baroque characteristics came into play later with the shooting of the photos (location, expression, light vs dark, etc.).

¹Graham-Dixon, Andrew. "Caravaggio." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 17 Aug. 2016, www.britannica.com/biography/Caravaggio. Accessed 2 Oct. 2017.

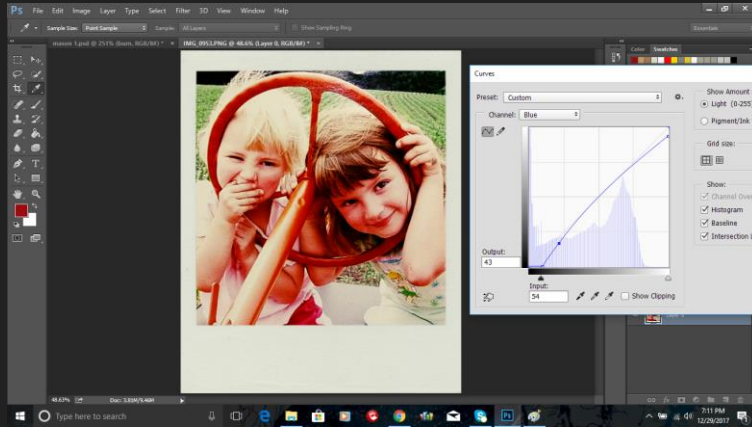


Caravaggio. *Judith Beheading Holofernes*. 1599-1602. Oil on Canvas. Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica at Palazzo Barberini, Rome.

Reviewing & refining themes & ideas



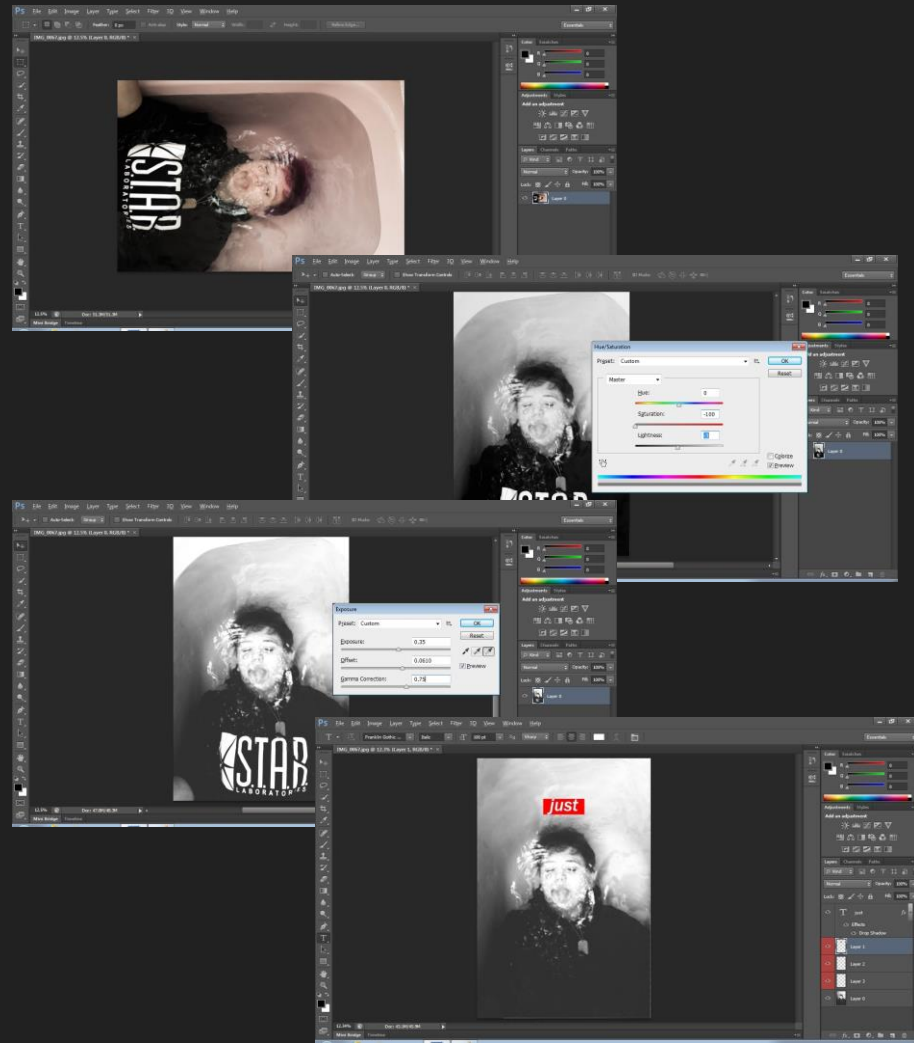
In the piece *That's Not My Name*, the first idea was to have the piece focus on simply hating the past. This is based off a personal experience with being transgender; resenting a you that you hardly recognize, a childhood you never got because the one you had was wrong. Yet this was developed, with some research into other trans experiences and the artist inspiration to deal with nostalgia; together it explores a complex duality of both resenting a section of the past but also feeling nostalgic for the good memories buried within it.



One of the initial ideas was to revise pictures from binary trans people's childhoods to have them appear as the gender they now identify. This changed, as the ideas became more harsh and decided to burn these memories out of existence completely. Then, when the idea was changed to nostalgia and resentment, the visual components changed to showing that duality by highlighting the nostalgia as the polaroid format and coloring and resentment through bruning the faces of the trans people in the pictures.

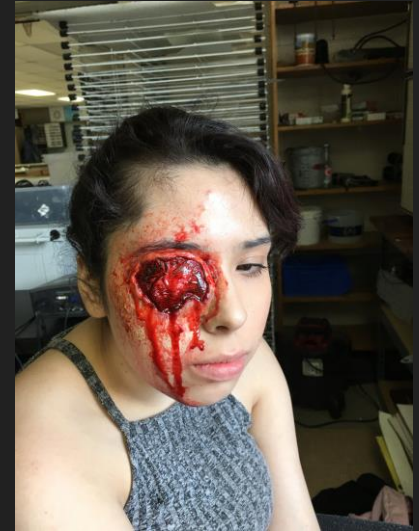
Application of skills & techniques

I own photoshop at home, and have experience with many of the tools I used while creating this piece (*just passing through*). The first thing I did after taking the photos was edit them in lightroom, before switching over to photoshop. In the program I rotated the picture manually and cropped it. Then I continued editing the look of the picture with the brightness/contrast levels, the saturation (0), and the exposure (specifically the offset and gamma correction). The decision was made to remove the logo off my sweatshirt so that it didn't distract from the words later, and so I started experimenting the clone tool. At first it was difficult covering a large area with a smaller one, but I was eventually successful. Having learned this new tool I used it to expand the corners where there were distracting parts (like my arm, or the edge of the bathtub). I created the background for the text before the text itself. To do this I created new layers, one for each, and filled them with color. After having them in a general size and area I put in text (100pt, Franklin Gothic Bold font, italicized with a drop shadow). Once a word was put in place the layer serving as it's background was changed once again using free transform to fit it better.

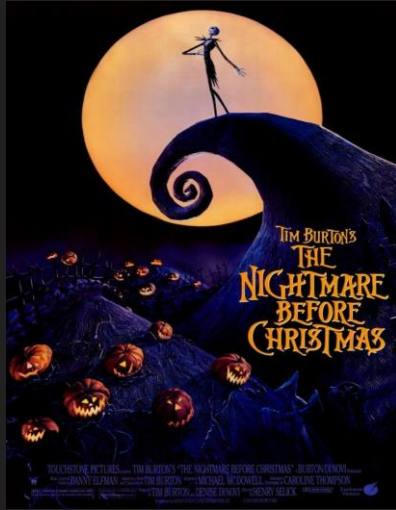


Application of skills & techniques

This piece, using skills learned in the previous few of the series, was mainly improvised. The first step in this wound is to find a way to keep the affected eye closed. This is typically done using some form of skin tape, but because I didn't have any I taped a napkin down (so the tape didn't touch the eyelid but still kept it closed). This wound also used the first prosthetic of all the wounds. To apply this spirit gum adhesive was used, applied everywhere the prosthetic would be touching. Once applied the area needs to be tapped repeatedly until tacky, then the prosthetic is applied. Liquid latex is used all around the sides to blend the edges into the skin. Once this dries and the fade is gradual enough this area is covered in the foundation color. Then the eye area is darkened and filled with the gel blood, some manually applied all around the wound using sponges. Then the liquid based blood is applied and allowed to drip down the face, and more blood is added around using sponged until it looks accurate and covers any imperfections.



Integrating Artistic Inspiration



My biggest inspirations for the piece *We Mustn't Dilly Or Dally* were German Expressionism (with a focus on film) and the director Tim Burton. Tim Burton has a long history of being influenced by German expressionism, often eluding directly to major films of the era, and otherwise drawing from the style in character and set design, hinting thematically to the movement as well.¹ German expressionism is known as the rejection of western conventions, widely depicting distorted and emotional realities. It often features Gothic and twisted figures and architecture, a dark expressionism movement giving artists full control over the film being created.² These dark themes and visual qualities are what was the focus of the piece.



Having a clear artistic visual I highlighted the German Expressionism in Tim Burton's films, collaging aspects together across the front of the pumpkin. Integrating the themes and visual aspects of both was easy in the design, due to the major overlap. There was very little connection with the medium,

¹Conterio, Martyn. "Analysis of Art & Design in Tim Burton's Films." *Illusion Magazine*. Illusion Magazine, n.d. Web. 17 Nov. 2016.

²Darsa, Alissa. "Art House: An Introduction to German Expressionist Films." *Artnet News*. Artnet News, 26 Dec. 2013. Web. 28 Nov. 2016.

Integrating Artistic Inspiration

The inspiration for the piece *That's Not My Name* was Andy Warhol, with a focus on the artist's Polaroids and some of his themes in other works. It is said that Warhol took thousands of pictures over his lifetime, favoring friends, artists, and other celebrities as well as himself as the subjects of these portraits.¹ Whether these were manufactured/posed pictures or not, the obsession with documenting life is an imperative factor of these works and transfers to my own. Warhol's other works- such as his famous paintings of soup cans- have different themes entirely; while the Polaroids were concerned with creating interesting documentation of celebrities, many of Warhol's other works were of common or uninteresting objects that could be repurposed as a piece of art.² This theme of overlooked or uninteresting objects being made the center of a piece is also used in this piece. The pictures featured in this piece are in the style of polaroids, to replicate the intimate and immediate feelings of a polaroid; capturing a single moment of the past. However, like in Warhol's other works, these pictures are somewhat ordinary; you'd find them in a photo book, irrelevant in any other global context. They are repurposed by being burned, giving them a new negative connotation.

¹Tindle, Hannah. "Andy Warhol's Polaroids of Pop Culture Icons." *AnOther*, AnOther Magazine, 25 Aug. 2017.

²Ibid.,



Andy Warhol, *Candy Darling* 1969 © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.



Andy Warhol, *Campbell's Soup Cans* 1962. Museum of Modern Art.

Showing work

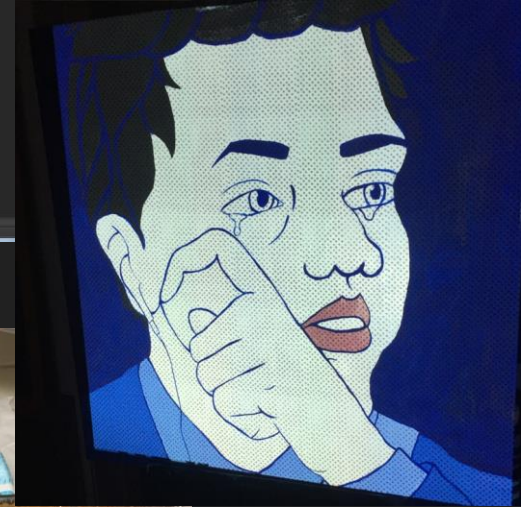
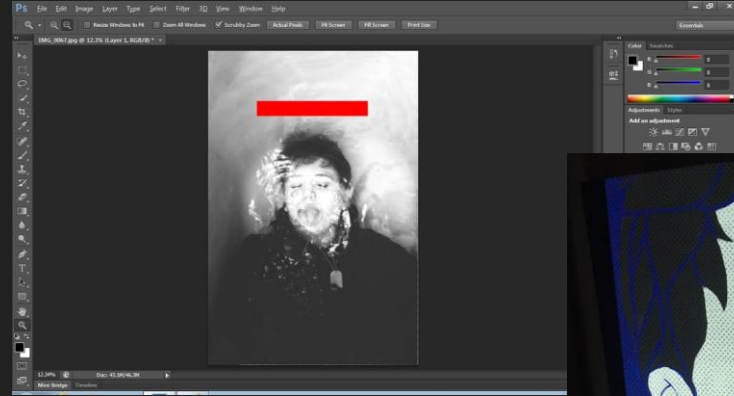


My work is often concerned with how others would see it. However, it's sometimes difficult to keep this in mind when this work isn't ever shown; luckily, my work has been shown. I have had a few opportunities to show my work to the public, and I've learned that conveying the themes you want is a bit of a process. Without another opinion, the themes you see can become subtle, and unreadable.

An example of me showing my work is my Digital Collage *just passing through* being included in an exhibition at UW-Steven's Point. I chose this piece because it clearly conveys the themes I intended; while it has nuances, it also has basic principles. The figure, the water, what the text says, and how the text is placed. Combined with basic elements of design- such as lack of color and high contrast- it's solid. Anyone who sees it regardless of age, gender, culture, etc., would most likely grasp the basic themes or emotions being explored, which is all I could wish for.

Reflection: skills

I have acquired a wide range of skills across many forms of art, such as digital, 2D, and sculptural. In pieces such as *just passing through* I learned multiple tools that helped to manipulate visual qualities in my works. A specific example is the use of the clone tool to cover up the logo on the sweatshirt. These tools would go on to help me in other photography and digital projects. In works such as the self portrait *Baby Boy* I learned much about painting techniques- working with paint, projections and paint tools- that would greatly improve my skills moving onto do other paintings. Sculptural techniques vary greatly based on the medium, but the skills of basic manipulation of a physical medium demonstrated in the piece *We Musn't Dilly Or Dally* were essential to doing any sculptural work.





Reflection: growth of themes and ideas

Overall, the themes and ideas in my work have greatly been concerned with emotion. Most of my work explored a bit of emotion, relevant to myself or not, that makes up a greater part of the human experience. In pieces such as the digital collage *just passing through*, darker themes are explored. This piece deals with a certain amount of pain, yes, but also a quieter sense of isolation and identity. I typically explore these themes through brainstorming and experimentation to refine them, and then expand them by relating them to artistic inspiration. This way they become more dynamic and interesting. Other projects deal with darker themes of depression, anxiety, etc. as well, but some are a bit lighter. Pieces such as *12/25/16* explore a lighter part of experience. This is about discovery, warmth and love, because there's both, but this had to be developed. This is also developed by the process itself and inspirations, encouraging these themes to have more depth and meaning.



My art starts with the dark and ever-consuming feelings explored in *just passing through*. Overtime as I work through the darker emotions I discover lighter emotions and have explored their place with the rest of my art, as a whole.