

The me you don't see

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'*The me you don't see*' has been influenced by many visual and musical artists such as Dream (a musician), Chiharu Shiota (Artist), Emerson Barrett (musician and artist), MC Escher (artist) and Lemsyeming (artist). These influences are a mix of historical and contemporary and each uses complimentary techniques to me or have themes relating to masking emotions between public and private settings.

Through my exploration of popular music and a range of artists, as well as reflecting on my own personal experience, it was clear that my theme of perception and how it differs depending on context is socially relevant. For example, how people are perceived on social media as compared to reality is a notion that I am continuously being faced with as a teenager. The song 'Mask' by Dream has strong connections of hiding behind a mask in society and pretending or feeling like an imposter in group situations. An artist who also does this is Chiharu Shiota and her piece 'Absence embodied,' which investigates human connections through blood and bonds. The other artistic influences use techniques I admire or use myself, but some also investigate architecture and perspective warping. I wanted to portray how our perceptions can be warped by the masks or filters that we apply to ourselves and explore the implications of this in regard to identity formation

"The me you don't see," was made to challenge the viewers perspectives on the reality of human perceptions. The body of work depicts the same subject and explores the differences between someone's perception and a broader social concept. These pieces or realities are connected via a red crochet net representing society's eyes, pinned stereotypes and the complexity of the human mind. Similar to how Chiharu Shiota used red wool to create symbolic human connections in 'Absence embodied.' The body of work is meant to represent the mental masks people wear in different settings, maybe an absence of a mask in private and the presence of it in public.

The influences of Dream and Chiharu Shiota have been a major part of connecting emotions with ways people hide from themselves or others. The theme is depicted through multiple perspectives (portraits) which shed a light on the theme which is barely starting to be recognized. The other social context present is the use of physical masks due to Covid, some people love them and not having to smile all the time whereas others hate them and rely on expressing their emotions freely. To reflect the theme cohesively my body of work was connected physically and I the different colour palettes and compositional ideation reflect both the connection between the body and the theme.

To create my first piece "Me" I wanted to use an expressive medium, so I chose to use acrylic paint with the addition of charcoal and bronze leafing. This choice was because not only can you change the opacity of the paint, but you can layer and add lots of texture.

Using these mediums, I hoped to express the reality of someone's thoughts and personality through purposefully warped portraiture. The second piece "Myself" was from the perspective of society so I wanted to use an expressive yet structured medium and composition, therefore I chose to use charcoal and ink on cardboard. This piece contrasts with the first piece as it has limited colour with the use of red, pink, and black.

This was purposeful as society generally sees a generic or washed-out version of a person instead of the colours of their personality. The gradient from colour to monochromatic is representative of emotions and perspectives with the progression of colour being a major influence in the interconnectivity of each piece.

I noticed throughout the artwork "Myself" I have become more efficient with blending and shading charcoal; this progression was extremely helpful in the completion of this piece. Again in "Myself," I learnt a new technique of relief printing onto tissue paper and sticking it onto the piece using paint. This technique allowed for a translucent application method and no smudging or bleeding from the ink. Another technique was during the printing process, which was placing the tissue paper on the lino matrix and rolling ink over the top to create a darker and more texturized product. For the first piece "Me" I progressed in using acrylic paint (a medium that I am not a fan of), some techniques I used were: using my fingers to blend, using a tissue to blend, watering down the medium and dripping water down to create the streaky background.

I believe my personal aesthetic has grown throughout the completion of my body of work, especially within the mediums I gravitate to. My portraiture structure and facial proportioning has improved greatly which is testimony to one of my influences Lemsyeming. And my ability to use acrylic paint and charcoal has also improved significantly. Charcoal on cardboard with gesso is the medium I gravitate to and enjoy the most, and I think "*The me you don't see*" reflects that. However, it's not only mediums I gravitate toward, I also gravitate toward expressive portraiture which is why I think this theme suits my art style.

I think using expressive portraiture is my way of sharing themes and ideas of perspective and relatable content especially in this generation.