Mirror Mirror

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My series of works titled "*Mirror Mirror*" are acrylic on a 16 x 12 inch canvas featuring a full body self-portrait on a throne chair, surrounded by mirror headed men. Realistic illustrations and the use of figurative objects that portray a certain theme/definition or illustrate a story, have always appealed to me and sparked my creativity. Whilst investigating various artists, Hans Zatzka and Tatsuki Fujimoto are the two artist that greatly influence my artworks. The self-portrait in the centre of the artworks, duplicates Zatzka's feminine figures, painted with a contrast of vibrant hues and darker tones that blend together to emphasise the figure's features. The masculine figures with hand-mirrors as heads reflect Fujimoto's figurative illustrations that emphasise emotions and/or unique characteristics.

The message behind my series of works follows the theme of identity. The mirror-headed men surrounding me represent the people with expectations of me and the stereotypical female roles that are forced upon me, hence why they are male. The outfits worn by these men are from the 1900s; a time when women were finally given the right to vote and began fighting to be recognised as equal human beings but were still treated unfairly by men who still believed in the stereotypical gender roles. The dress worn by me is still very feminine, but is revealing, representing that there still some defiance even though I am being melted. The long pants and shirt represent my masculinity and shows my refusal to be the woman men expect me to be. The centre piece portrays the point of decision. The piece on the right portrays the choice of letting others destroy who you are by reflecting their own expectations onto you. The piece on the left portrays choosing your own path and making your own decisions, not letting anyone else control or try to reflect themselves on to you. I chose three artworks because it made it easier to show the different parts of the story. Without one of these pieces, the story would seem incomplete.

For all my artworks, I used Chromacryl and Mont Marte acrylic paints and used Jasart round brushes (sizes 0, 4 and 6). Chromacryl and Mont Marte paints were not too thin nor too thick and were easy to mix together to create the colours I required. The 0 and 4 sized brushes made it easier to blend and add the intricate details/patterns that helped emphasise different features or the emotions, on a small scale. The sized 6 brush allowed me to add a larger amount of paint to the larger areas like the background and dress. For each of my self-portraits, I used warmer tones for the skin, using a mix of grey and purple for the shades and creases, and light pink, bright yellow and white for the highlights and general skin tone. The warmer tones show the skills I have learnt from Hans Zatzka, as well as show more life in the paintings. Not only was the purple used for shading, but also, as shown in the third piece (the piece placed on the right), it portrays death and decay. The warmer skin tone worked well as it contrasted with the dull coloured background, emphasising the portrait. White was used to add texture and to blend the different colours/shades together. For the chair and the mirrors, using the same brushes, I painted with Amsterdam's gold paint and Chromacryl's yellow oxide, black and white. Gold is applied the most throughout my artworks as it is very eye-catching due to it's bright shine and warm undertone.

Since gold generally represents royalty and power, I used it within my artworks to help illustrate an individual's power to make their own decisions/rule their own lives.

Having the gold of the chair contrast with the dull outfits and black background, it makes my authority over them seem greater, emphasising the power I have to choose/create my own fate and identity. Since red is a very vibrant and striking colour, by having that behind the figure, it makes it the first thing the viewers see. It also balances the composition of darker and lighter colours in the paintings, creating a harmonious ambiance. By painting a black background, I created negative space, making the focal point of the chair and self-portrait, as well as the mirror-headed figures, stand out.

When viewing my artwork critically, the attention to detail, proportions, and use of colour, were all done well. If there had to be improvements, it would be adding shades and highlights/reflections. Shades and lighting/reflections help emphasise the focal point/subject and add detail and emotion to artworks. By applying this to my art, I would be able to show my theme better (e.g., by having a light shine on me from above, isolating me from the other figures), and show a greater development of my skills. When viewing my artwork creatively, the use of visual metaphors and the storyline of the artworks, makes my art unique and creative. The theme of identity is not presented in a simple way (such as a face with writing on it), it allows the viewers to interpret it in various ways; it isn't limited to one aspect of identity but portrays identity as a whole.

Overall, I am very pleased with my series of works. I feel that it clearly shows my theme and captures the viewer's eyes with its colour pallet, detail, and intriguing features (e.g., mirror heads and melting face), which were inspired by the artists' Dominic Beyeler, Hans Zatzka, Anthony Van Dyuk, Jean Luc Almond and Tatsuki Fujimoto.