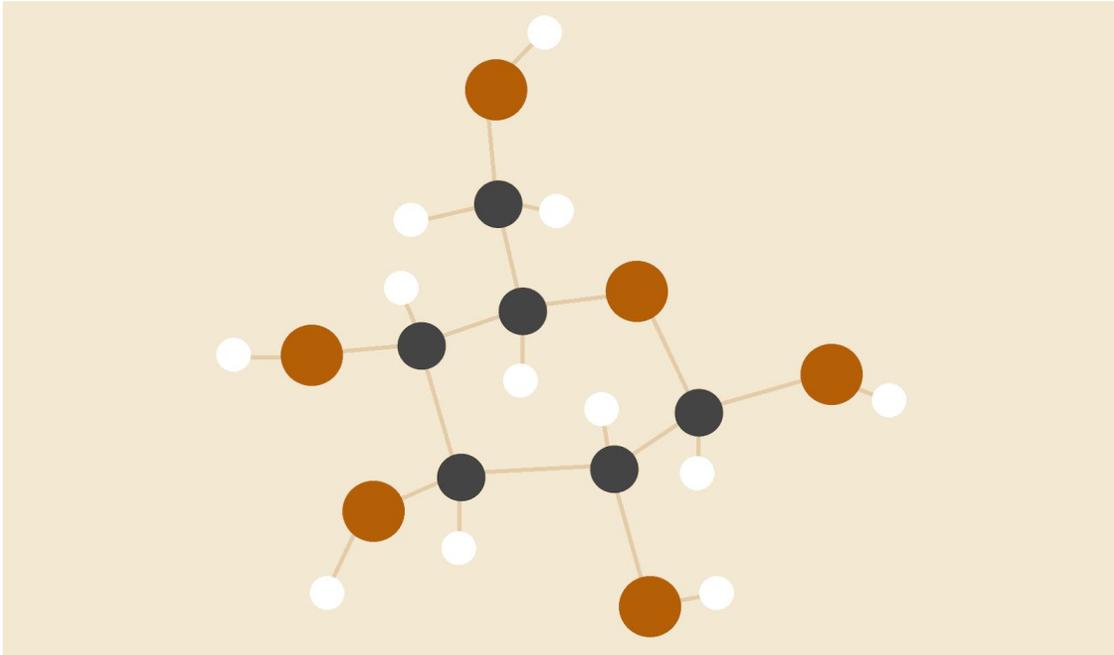


e^uphoria

why we laugh



Chen Shuheng 4S202

Chong Zhen Xi 4S206

Group 5-15

06.08.2019

Mentored by: Ms Denise Chung

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INTRODUCTION

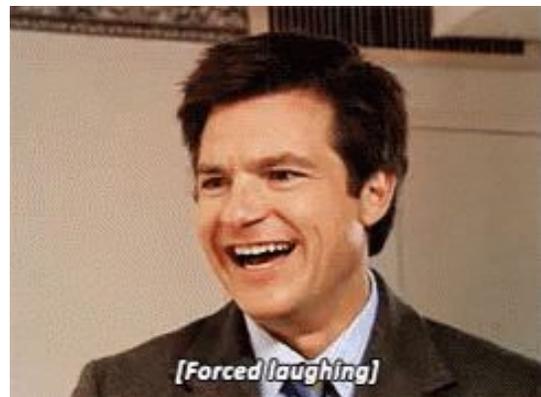
Objective

We aim to create dramatic portrait painting depicting the laughter of an individual. Through this painting, we want to portray the necessary process of entering adulthood and gaining social skills.

The size of the final painting is 90 cm by 120 cm, the medium we have chosen is acrylic paint

Concept

Underlying our theme of laughter is the idea that laughter is used as a tool to avoid awkward social situations and relieve tension. As we grow older, we are expected to conform to society's demands of politeness and genteel manners and this results in us exploiting laughter beyond its original intention of merriment and joy. Therefore, we would like to utilise the artistic tools available to us to strain the laughter of an individual as much as possible to eke out the awkwardness and desire to conform and present it in our portrait.



RESEARCH

Our process of research encompasses first hand observations as well as our online research journey. We believe firmly that both elements are imperative in our art making process. By visiting local and foreign art exhibitions, we are able to make first hand observations of the artworks and pick up fragmented ideas. From there, we carried on by further researching into the artists that sparked our inspirations.

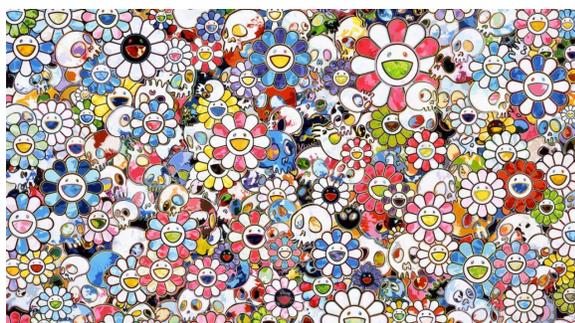
GILLMAN BARRACKS



We visited the U.O.B artspace in Gillman Barracks when they were exhibiting the winning pieces from the UOB painting competition 2019. It was an eye-opening experience for us as we browsed through the art landscape of Southeast Asia and were bewildered by the artworks in the emerging artists category as they were created by artists of almost the same age as us.

STPI: TAKASHI MURAKAMI - FROM SUPERFLAT TO BUBBLEWRAP

Takashi Murakami has always been a major influence in our art making process. It was an unforgettable experience to see his works in person and hear him share about his works.

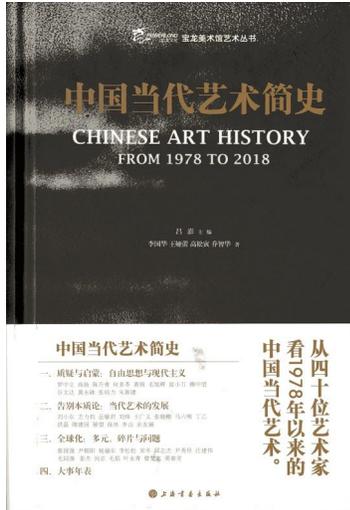
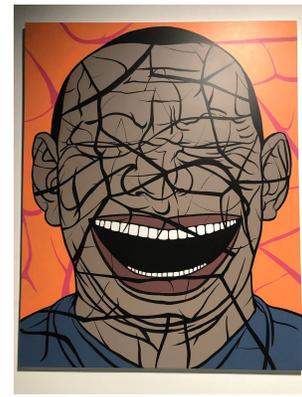
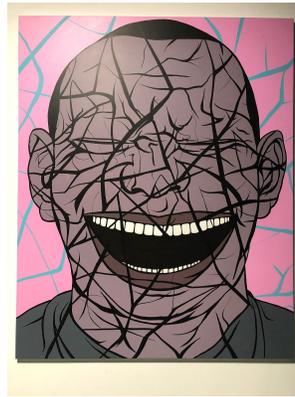


40 x 40 EXHIBITION

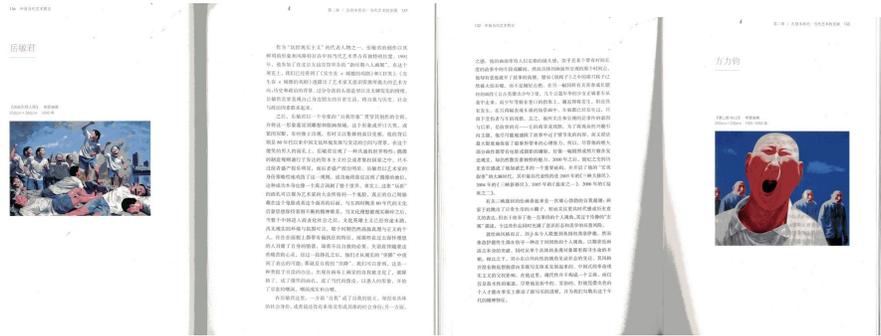
During the Lunar New Year, we paid a visit to the 40x40 exhibition in Shanghai. Exhibited were various large scale portraits that were filled with candy colours and exaggerated expressions.



We were confronted by these large scale portraits. The exaggerated expressions and the candy colours caught our eyes. We went on to read up about the artist, Yue Minjun and were inspired by his Cynical Realism Movement.



To find out more, we purchased a book, titled “Chinese Contemporary Art History” at the exhibition.



YUE MINJUN

Yue Minjun is a contemporary artist based in Beijing, China. He is a contemporary Chinese artist based in Beijing and is best known for his unique oil paintings that depict either versions of himself or clones. All his art have one thing in common, all his subjects are always frozen in wide-mouthed laughter.

This was the beginning of our brainstorming process. Yue Minjun's tendency to hide political and social commentaries into his portraits further suited our referencing. His work inspired us to integrate exaggeration and bright candy colours into the final work as it was perfectly in line with our theme of forced laughter.



(images: "<http://www.artnet.com/artists/yue-minjun/>", Retrieved March 29, 2019)

KOREHIKO HINO

Korehiko Hino was born in Ishikawa, Japan in 1976 and is famous for painting odd portraits of off-balanced youths. His work usually attempts to capture details of Japanese society, similar to our attempt at a social commentary. The vacant eyes and half-opened mouths of the people he paints try to represent the anxiety and emptiness of a society where everyone faces the madness in the air. The sickly inanimate expressions on these youths are almost hypnotic.



We decided to draw from Korehiko Hino's depiction of slightly-opened mouths and wide bulging eyes to add to the overall creepiness. Intending to induce discomfort in viewers, our final work aims to simulate the awkward social situations where laughter is the lesser of two evils. He also has a recurring theme of flowers we decided to incorporate into our final work.



(images: "<http://korehikohino.com/>", Retrieved March 29, 2019)

OTHER REFERENCES

In order to explore our options, we took a look at various other portrait formats. we also looked into many other artists' portraits including those by Andy Warhol, George Seurat, Vincent Van Gogh and Grant Wood. Although none of the explored portraits made the final cut but we still decided to broaden our research a bit more in case we find something unique to learn from.



(images: “<https://www.artsy.net/collection/andy-warhol-celebrity-portraits>”,
“[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Van_Gogh_self-portrait_\(1889\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Van_Gogh_self-portrait_(1889))”,
“<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/494762709035235432/?lp=true>”,
“<https://whitney.org/Exhibitions/GrantWood>”, Retrieved February 23, 2019)

IDEATION PROCESS

Initial Experimentation (Art Style)



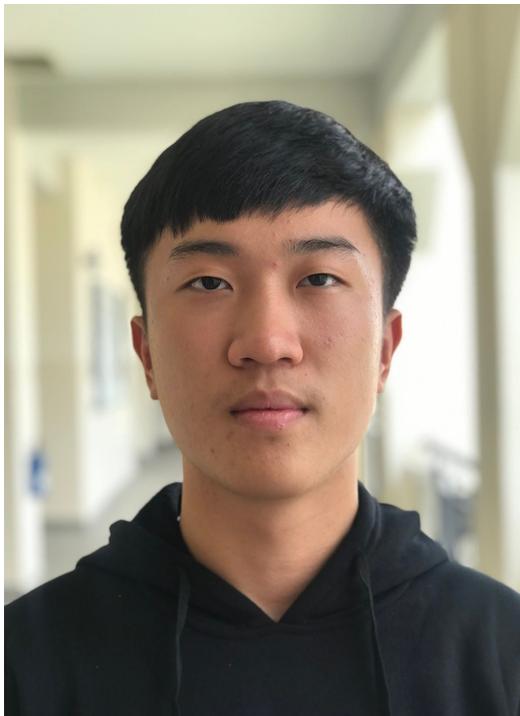
Firstly, we have a dramatic portrait painted with acrylic paint. We placed an emphasis on the lighting and colours to examine the effect of strong, contrasting colours on a portrait.



Next, we came up with a portrait sketch in pencil and charcoal to test our sensitivity to tones and ability to control the shadows. We gridded the reference photo to ensure that the sketch is in the right proportion. This work is of A3 size, allowing us to examine the facial features in greater detail.



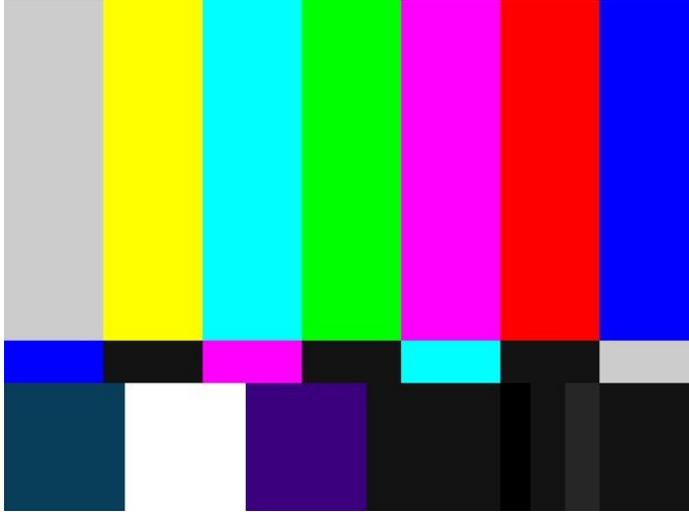
To diversify the scope of our research, we also tried on Andy Warhol's play of colours. This drawing is made by matching two analogous colours, yellow and orange together to create this jarring contrast and a strong visual impact.



Similarly, we created this piece which we titled as "asian warhol" where we again examine the power of colours on portraits



We also looked into more expressive portraits. This was our attempt to use lines of different width to draw emphasis on the silhouette of the face. This was painted using oil paint and charcoal.



Initially, we also decided to incorporate SMPTE colour bars into our final work. SMPTE colour bars are television test patterns that are broadcasted when the television transmitter is active but there is no program to be broadcasted. This serves as a standard reference for technicians to calibrate the television set. This idea of standardisation can be alluded to the idea of homogenised laughter we have established earlier on in this report, where everyone seems to be forced to conform to the social norm of politeness in a conservative Asian society like Singapore.



After experimenting with the SMPTE colour scheme we found that it was too saturated and eye-catching to be used on a portrait.

Initial Experimentation (Expressions)

We began with picture shots of potential poses for the 'smile/ laugh' we were going for. With Shuheng as our model, we explored different extents of the expression to get a good idea of where to start.



1.) Close-mouthed smile



2.) Open-mouthed grin



3.) Exaggerated grin

After deciding on the Exaggerated grin shot (3), we used Photoshop in an attempt to further the exaggeration.



We felt that the distortion did not give that disturbing an effect which was why we went further with the Photoshop, producing the following:



Photoshop #2

Further Work

After brainstorming and heavy discussion with the teachers, we decided to do away with the heavily

Photoshopped expressions as our artist, Shuheng, was more inclined towards an alternate approach to the portrait. However, we wanted to retain exaggeration (wide-open eyes) from the Exaggerated grin shot (3) as well as the enlarged grin. The initial result is shown below:



Final #1

We felt that the grin was not exaggerated enough so we added some finishing touches via very minor Photoshopping.



Final #2

FINAL WORK

Reference photo



This was our initial reference photo for the final work. We set out to create a portrait that was different from the ones we have seen by playing with perspectives. We chose a landscape canvas to allow us to paint a tilted portrait. By subverting the conventions of a portrait, we want to create a certain uneasiness in audiences because they have a pre-existing notion of how a portrait should look so the tilted model and landscape image will challenge their conceptions of a self-portrait. This will reinforce our idea of uneasy laughter.

We heeded the advice of the judges during the mid-term evaluation and further exaggerated the facial features. However, we found that it was not what we were looking for and hence we went on to look for an alternative way to express our theme.



Exaggeration of one eye

Exaggeration of two eyes

Exaggeration of nose



Significance of the flowers

Korehiko Hino liked to draw motifs in his portraits like flowers, mannequins, wigs and jewels. When interviewed, he said that these vacant objects were intended to express how truly forced and fake his subjects were. Similarly, we incorporated a bursting flower display to enhance the fakeness of the human being in the portrait. This fake motif challenges the viewers who will eventually lose track of what is real, the flowers or the laughter painted across the subject's face.

Painting







REFLECTIONS

Chong Zhen Xi

I have never done a Category 5 project before so this was an eye-opening process. Shuheng did a great job of introducing me to his art styles and through his helpful guidance, I managed to gain a deeper appreciation for his work as well as portrait painting as an art form in general. This particular project allowed me to dive deeper into the intricacies of a portrait as well as the artists, famous and obscure alike, that have produced incredible work. I managed to obtain a significant amount of information on the history of portraits as well as modern and medieval takes on this ageless artform. It was a truly humbling experience to read about the evolution of such a timeless genre of art. Aside from that, working together with Shuheng was also a new experience for me. We have had not have opportunities to embark on a project together previously and I am extremely happy to say that he provided me with a lot of guidance and lessons that I made good use of in working this project with him. I learnt about his art style, his quirks and his talent and it was a meaningful experience.

Chen Shuheng

Being in the AEP for the past 4 years, I wanted to create an artwork for myself to conclude this journey. I see this portrait painting as a form of self reflection of me slowly entering adulthood and gaining an understanding of social interactions with people from all walks of life. I am extremely humbled to be joined by Zhen Xi and our mentor, Ms Denise, on my journey of self reflection. I am also pleased with the final work as I was able to achieve what I set out to do. It surely gives me confidence and value adds to my journey of art making.

Group reflections

This is our first time working together as a group and at the beginning we had to work out some issues like job delegation and time management. However, we did manage to solve these problems as they came up and grew closer not just as projectmates but friends. In terms of the workload, things got hectic after each evaluation round, we had a lot of criticism to assess and a lot of room for improvement. We rushed to update each other on progress and brainstormed idea after idea, shooting down the mediocre ones and evaluating the potentially excellent kind. After much revision to the final work, we finally agreed on a set piece. From there, we worked side by side to put together a good show for our finals evaluation, each of us knowing our duties and performing them cohesively to achieve the end goal. We learnt much from each others' habits and skill sets. Whether it be research, experimentation, exploration or the art itself, both of us provided something for the team and in the end, we are satisfied with what we have gleaned from the experience as well as what we have put together as a pair.

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