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New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Scholarship Visual Arts 2025

93306 Painting

SCHOLARSHIP EXEMPLAR



Proposal

My theme for this board explores the questions surrounding my own identity, including the struggles and inner self conflicts. The main question that lingers is what is identity which is something that sounds so simple but more complex as you think more about it. The theme delves deeper into the questions, what makes identity and what is the real definition of identity. Specifically, in my boards, I want to focus on the conflict between external views vs internal views and what really makes up identity.

I have always questioned the idea of identity as more people around me have told me many different things about me, sometimes the same things and sometimes words that contradict each other. Some have described me as a shy person and some described me with a talkative and loud persona. Multiple different identities of myself are always existing and created but whether I use external views to build my identity is what leads my question into a bigger curiosity. I am often left with the spiraling thought of which views I should trust because the perception of myself is constantly evolving. Should I build my identity on what external views say about me or should I trust my internal view to tell me? But how should I know if my internal view is not built by external views? If I don't know myself then should I really trust my internal views? The central question of which one is my true real self? All these questions spiral into the main theme of identity which is a concept that I have questioned and struggled with for a while. I chose to do this theme because it's a concept that I can be vulnerable with and discover more along the way. This theme is not just something only I can relate to but a concept that is universally familiar, which builds a stronger connection to this question.

Using these questions and constant inner conflict; I wanted to illustrate these ideas in various different visuals. This would subtly enhance the idea of having multiple versions or perceptions of myself. On top of that, the boards follow a narrative structure where in each board it shows the pieces growing progressively into a narrative end story. I chose to go for a more narrative approach to add emphasis on how the journey of discovering or creating identity is a non linear process. Many children book stories such as the princess and the pea, alice and the wonderland, and a few more subtle hints of fairy tale is present in most of my pieces. The boards follow through a journey of my own discovering of identity and a relation to the outer world.

Social categorisation:

In psychology, social categorisation is the process of grouping individuals into categories based on distinct attributes. These categorisations existed to help organise and understand the world but it also lead to stereotypes and prejudice. By putting individuals into categories, it is easier to judge their potential characteristics and behaviours but it is often oversimplified. First impressions have a significant impact on perception. People form assumptions based on initial judgements and is more likely to remember it vividly compared to later interactions. Personally, first impression isn't going to be all the same views. People have different perceptions and mindsets that influence the way they ingest information. Through personal experience and social interactions, a person holds various perceptions of themselves created by other people. I believe that the one thing that is often secluded is how that person sees themselves. My board is influenced by these judgements, exploring the wonderland of non linear venture of self identity.



Artist Models:

Jolene Lai:

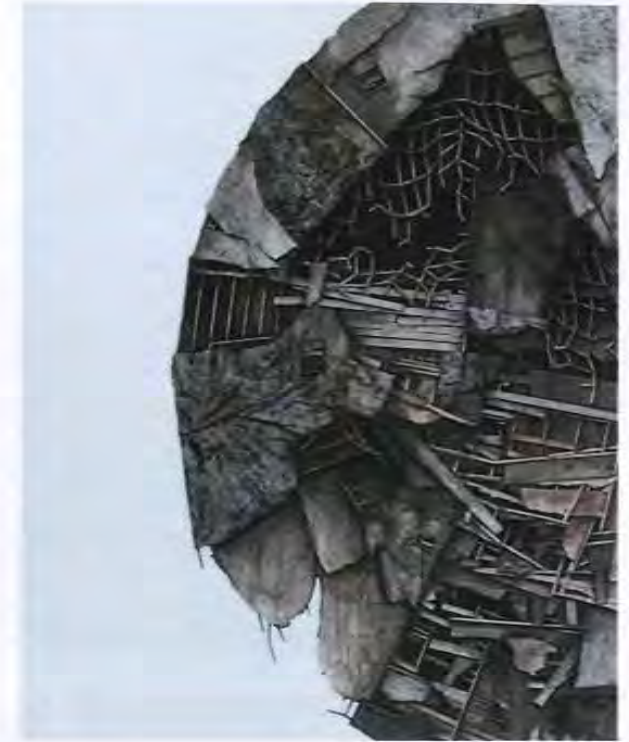
Jolene Lai primarily works with oil, mixed media on water colour paper. She creates seductive and surrealistic paintings using bold colours, shape, and details. Her work is created to engage her audience into a new imagination and invited to create their own interpretations. Lai's paintings places subjects into a narrative like setting bringing out melancholic, absurdity, and uncanniness. She enjoys having her paintings in new sets and establishing stages for her figures. Lai often draws inspiration from mythologies, Asian culture, children stories, cityscapes, and illustrations. To emphasise on the surrealistic style, her paintings have included uncanny figures such as a strange marionette like figures, faceless subjects, doubles, doll like people. This imagery is a main point of her artist style.

From observation, she incorporates a lot of light and shadow to give her work an eerie atmosphere. Her choice of colours is often quite dark but with a pop of colour which helps create the narrative better and draw attention towards that. I want to use her surrealistic and narrative approach to illustrate the string of stories in my art board. Because my paintings is also heavily on narrative and story based, studying and applying a few of Jolene Lai's art conventions will help the storyline and pieces come together better.



Seth Clark:

Seth Clark is an American contemporary artist and designer. He specialises in collage and sculpture pieces that look like its collapsing or deteriorating. Clark uses an interesting way of architecture and structures, often creating houses that look worn out or completely collapsed. The collage he uses consist of different paper and textural items and then uses mixed media to make the collages pop out further. He also uses the materials from his floor or wall to create his pieces. He overlays the collage with wet paint sometimes, especially between the edges of the collage to make the pieces more grunge and stand out further. Seth Clark draws inspriation from the streets or alleyways, and occasionally photographs of abandoned structures.



Valeria Duca:

Valeria Duca is recognised for her figurative paintings with a blend of realism and surrealism, often delving into themes such as identity, womanhood, experiences of life. She enjoys making her paintings deeply personal and universally relatable. Duca mainly uses oil painting, showing a use of traditional techniques as well as exploring modern subjects. Her work primarily focuses on the narrative and figurative approach, often using symbolism and metaphors to express complex emotions. Duca also creates interesting compositions that blur between reality and imagination. Rather than traditional portraits, her work seems to portray small snippets of moments and stories, putting more emphasis on the importance of capturing the rich narrative and introspective essence. Her work has been shown in exhibition internationally and placed in many galleries, making her a successful artist.

To incorporate her art style in my paintings, I want to utilise the symbolism and realism Valeria Duca uses because most of my pieces in board one is a narrative approach with some surrealism. Valeria Duca uses a lot of imagery placement that seem out of place which gives her art works a mysterious or solemn atmosphere.

Collapsed buildings: Board one

I used Seth Clark as my artist model for the houses and buildings in which he uses a lot of collage to carefully create houses that twist and shape differently to create a sense of surreal imagery. He also uses acrylic paint to add shadows and drips to give the houses a more eerie look. There are other artworks where the houses are all run down and collapsed on top of each other, created with bits of collage to fabricate the ruined visual.

For my house pieces, I experimented with the different collage materials such as magazines, newspaper, and wallpaper. Wallpaper was the best material used for the houses because it already had a lot of texture so when I glaze over it with acrylic or oil paint mixed with linseed oil, it would create a more textured outcome. I have also sanded the collage down after gluing it in and then layer it with more collage on top of that but focusing on making some areas darker and some lighter, as Seth Clark illustrates well in his artworks.



The collaged houses will appear the most in board one. Board one is a narrative of myself exploring the different houses and trying to find my perfect fit to feel a sense of belonging (authenticity). Therefore I kept the first few pieces neat and less broken down to illustrate that the collapse has not occurred yet. As the board progresses, the collage becomes more collapsed and deconstructed to successfully illustrate that the house was not the perfect fit. Using Seth Clark's techniques, the collage enhances the worn down, destructive atmosphere.

As you see on the processes, the first house piece on board one is cleaner, with each individual wood neatly aligned together. I also cut out many black windows as the first thing I noticed from Clark's artworks is the prominent black windows. It serves as a focal point and to make the artwork less look like it's the same value. Keeping this in mind, I added lots more blacker areas to make the structure stand out further. Sometimes I would experiment with how layer the collage over. This piece of a hallway brink of collapse, I painted the hallway first with oil paint and then I overlaid it with collage later, only collaging a few parts of the hallway. This piece turned out to be one of my favourite collage piece I have created for this board. It includes a sketchy and almost sort of moulded, due to the texture, visual which what I was aiming to portray. I used images of collapsed or run down hallways I found as a reference to know where the darker parts are the lighter area.



I was heavily inspired by Alice in the wonderland when she eats something to grow bigger, out of the house. I used a similar imagery to narrate my story; I break into the houses to see which house, which represents the external views, is able to contain me and hold me comfortably, but the results ended up collapsing the house. The houses and structure symbolises the rigid nature of external views. Trying to fit into different houses illustrates the need to validate myself with external approval.



Apple Picking: Board 2

The apple as a motif is an important key detail throughout my painting boards. The apple represents my true authenticity, rolling away and constantly being lost throughout the journey amongst the 'fake' apples. There are a couple of reasons why I chose to use apples as a reoccurring symbol to represent my identity. My inspiration mostly draws from the biblical mythology, particularly Adam and Eve. The apple also represents many things, including knowledge, temptation and the forbidden, as well as love and desire. These associations reflect the complex journey of discovering one's identity; understanding our inner world deeper, navigating thoughts that are far from linear and often feeling 'forbidden'. Just as it was Adam and Eve's choice to eat the forbidden fruit, it can be represented as a step towards establishing their own identity and forming their own moral compass.

Representing identity in an apple seems quite straight forward, the apple is chosen deliberately for its ability to be recognised universally. The red colour gives the paintings a better purpose of which element is the most important. Additionally, the apple as a consumable element reinforces the idea that identity is constantly absorbed, processed, and internalised.

In addition to being a real apple which represents my true identity, along comes the 'fake' apples that represent the external views that I constantly face. The 'fake' apples in my paintings are illustrated as apples but with different appearance, for example one of the 'fake' apples, I painted flowers blooming out, or having the apples unnaturally melting on the table, or even a silly tomato. To further emphasise for artificiality, I used red collage pieces into the 'fake' apples, illustrating that they are constructed from external pressures. Using the same artist model from the collapsed buildings, Seth Clark, I used geometric shapes to construct the apples. Additionally, using the same collage elements creates a continuous and cohesive space throughout the boards.



In the piece above, I wanted to illustrate the 'fake' apple crushing under my hands. Not only does this reinforce the idea of the artificiality but also symbolises the attempt to figure out what's real or not. The hands are depicted as soft and relaxed, rather than forceful or rough. This suggests innocence and subtle curiosity rather than deliberate destruction. For this piece and the other pieces including apples, I tried to balance between collage and techniques. Collage pieces help enhance the texture of the apples, while the painting techniques are influenced by my other artist model Valeria Duca. I incorporated messy yet blended areas to create a visual tension between the soft and hard edges, which is a style Duca uses in her paintings.



From board one →



The painting above follows a table being stretched out with pieces of fabric on top as well as a trail of 'fake' apples. This represents how we are often presented with these 'fake' apples, in which this case represents the external views, laid across on the table in front of us to consume. It illustrates how easily we can become absorbed into external perceptions of ourselves.

The pea and the princess

In the original story of 'The princess and the pea' a woman claiming to be the real princess is tested by burying a pea under a huge stack of mattresses. The princess is able to feel the pea despite the heavy layers, and due to her extremem sensitivity, it proves that she is a princess. This story can be interpreted many different ways, but in for my painting board, I wanted to explore a less common meaning, using the story as a metaphor for identity and the pressures of external perception. In my painting board, I replaced the pea with the apple to continue the motif and cohesivness The apple like the pea, represents identity. The mattresses are all different in colour and shapes, to show more variety. The mattresses represents the external views as the table from board two slowly transforms into piles of fabric falling on top of each other. The different colours and shapes illustrate how the external views are all different and how people percieve you is all a jumble of different views. The apple is buried deep beneath the heavy layers, symbolising how external expecttions can weigh on personal identity.



I still wanted to keep an element from the Alice in the wonderland story because this painting board is heavily inspired by it. The legs showing the fall onto the mattresses depict the moment Alice falls into the rabbit hole I wanted to create the same sense of urgency and strangness when Alice falls. When Alice falls into that hole, she is entering the wonderland. Therefore I wanted to use this narrative to illustrate that the jounrey has yet to start again and confirm that this board does not show a conclusive ending. As well as the tables transforming into the mattresses, I drop into further internal conflict.



Why use narrative?

Throughout my three boards, the narrative is a journey of rediscovering my true self but none concludes in finding it. Board one, where I am trying to 'fit' in the houses but it only ends in breaking the houses, not finding the one I truly fit into. It moves to the figuration of apples and how each apple is different and unique, but even among the various different apples, the real 'apple' is never found. Finally in board three, the journey comes towards the mattresses where the identity is symbolised as the pea buried under the piles and layers of mattresses. The identity is finally found but it is unable to be reached, buried under deep, illustrating how one's authentic identity is hidden under all the external views. My school board never ends with a piece where I have my 'identity' in hold, I wanted to purposefully narrate the struggles of finding one's true self. Through the rigorous journey and search, it is still unable to be obtained. I wanted to symbolise that identity isn't a simple thing to discover, and that the viewpoint of identity is constantly evolving and changing. Identity is never going to be set on the same thought. No matter how sure of yourself you are, I believe that identity, including our personality traits, and morals, is going to change all the time. I wanted to express my viewpoint through my boards as sometimes I see in other's viewpoint that identity is a subject that is simply discovered. I wanted to explore the depth and complexities a human identity has, but specifically how external viewpoints pressure and affect our identities.



Fairytales/Children story books

Throughout my boards, I explored a grunge and messy art style to convey the distorted and complex experience of searching for self-identity. When painting, I always kept in mind what I wanted to express in my paintings and how I could visually draw viewers into the same sense of disillusionment that comes with questioning who we are. The transitions between the boards all involve some kind of 'break' and collapse; the house collapsing to form a narrow hallway leading to the long stretching table of apples. The table collapsing on one another, all distorting into a pile of mattresses. The recurring structures; the house, table, and the mattresses are visual elements of containment, representing the shells that protect the authentic self. It embodies the external frameworks that hold our identity. The collapse of these structures reflects the instability of identity and challenges the idea of being fixed to a singular fixed character. Human identity is complex and we embody multiple, contradicting versions of ourselves; yet this complexity is often overlooked or misunderstood. Instead of accepting external views, we try to block out anything that we found unexpected to ourselves and therefore twisting our own perception of self identity. This leads to a downwards spiral of confusion and questioning one's self identity. Whether what they knew about themselves was real or not. The ideas on my boards goes through a self proclaiming journey of finding self identity, but in a deeper sense, it is the venture to seek validation from ourselves.

Reflection and struggles:

Throughout this year, my painting board for NCEA level 3 explored the theme of identity, focusing on the internal conflict between self-perception and external views. Initially, my compositions were chaotic and confusing. My ideas were spread all over the board and it was difficult to understand the meaning and context behind the paintings. My understanding of identity shifted a lot during the making of these boards but I wanted to create a narrative sequence that would represent my inner turmoil clearly. To illustrate that, I used structure and the idea of collapsing spaces within my work to enhance the idea that identity is reconstructable. The process of creating this board became a reflection of that instability. The thing I struggled with the most is the visual transitions between the boards and constantly tweaking my ideas so one space could link to the next, making it cohesive. Because I had given myself a difficult narrative to work with, I had to rework to connect the house turning into a hallway, then the hallway stretching into a table, and lastly the table morphs into mattresses that fall on top of each other.



I had a lot of trouble and uncertainty of this board and it often mirrored how I often felt when I tried to understand my identity. I am a perfectionist and a procrastinator, as much as I tried to tweak my board so it could become perfect, the more it reflected off how confused I felt with my own artistic identity. What started as a growing frustration, becomes one of the most valuable lessons I learnt in this work. I realised that the process of constantly changing to better, the experimentations, were all part of my identity manifesting.

Experimenting with different materials and methods; layering, creating visual distortion, and the accidents become part of the narrative of self-discovery. There were many times where I had become completely lost with the direction I was heading towards with this painting board. It took a lot of late nights, reflecting, and self-doubt. I was losing my motivation because I was lost from my identity myself.



The search for one's true identity is never going to be easy nor is it going to be simple, linear journey. Therefore, even at the end of the board, the figure of myself is still not able to reach for the apple yet, buried deep under the many different layers of mattresses. Although my painting board reflects my journey for self-identity, I have still yet to discover that, as I am still constantly changing and doubting myself. Instead, I want my painting board to illustrate self-awareness and the act of wanting to discover more about myself.

The biggest struggle for creating these paintings were that I was doubting whether my concepts made sense or whether my visuals were cohesive enough. But pushing through those stages helped me realise that identity is not meant to be clean and easy to understand. It's layered with confusion, conflict, and doubt but by coming to accept my work wasn't perfect, I also accepted that my identity doesn't have to either.

In the end, creating this board taught me that my identity exists not in the finished product but in the process as well. Although this painting board was not the best I could do, I am still appreciative of the experience and learning process it has given me. I will use this as a stepping stone to improve and grow myself as an artist.

What's next?

Beyond the school board, I paint some personal work as well and explore a different theme which is impermanence. This allows my thought processes to bounce off one project from another. Having to juggle with personal work and school work allowed me to be more versatile and be more creative with the different themes. The works below are paintings I have finished during the time I had to work on my school board as well. These paintings are on canvases and on a larger scale which was a switch from the small paintings pieced together in the school board. Both personal work and school work have given me more insight in which aspects are important and what not. I will use this as a growing opportunity as an artist and take what I learnt this year and improve as an artist.



Moving forward, I want to continue exploring identity, but embodied in a different way as I would try to discover more about my identity in the future. I plan to experiment more with different mixed materials and try to find my artistic vision more clearer. Ultimately, what's next for me is to continue search, question, and refine. As well as enjoying the processes that come in the future.

My artistic journey is still ongoing with many areas I am eager to improve on through learning opportunities and dedicated practice. My ultimate goal is to create art that expresses myself and connects with the wider world, conveying conceptual meanings that includes both reflection and engagement.

Scholarship

Subject: Visual Arts – Painting

Standard: 93306

Total Score: 16

Marker commentary

This Painting Scholarship portfolio presents an engaging study into process and media as a metaphor for self-discovery and understanding. The candidate positions themselves at the centre of the study, investigating a range of options in a deliberately limited suite of motifs to communicate their ideas. The portfolio is inventive, experimental and reflective as the candidate evaluates and repositions themselves in relation to their experiences. The workbook provides a clear and organised view into the candidate's underlying motivation and intent.

The candidate develops a range of processes, imagery and motifs to communicate a sense of disquiet, movement and tension that reflects their exploration of identity. Explicit references to depicting different variations or types of self are deliberately avoided, as the candidate instead generates a series of visual metaphors to communicate self-critique and understanding. Formal relationships between process and subject are explored as surface, composition and materiality function both for their intrinsic visual qualities and as metaphors within their journey of discovery. Differing viewpoints and shifting scales and points of focus occur within and between sequences of work as the candidate extends their narrative intent. References to Alice in Wonderland, The Princess and the Pea and Eve are incorporated meaningfully and with humour. The recurring theme of the apple morphs, becomes embellished, is placed in comparison with other fruit, shatters and becomes weightily overwhelmed as a metaphor for the teenage experience. In the workbook, the candidate explicitly refers to the apple as a deliberate choice for its universality and symbolism in "reflecting the complex journey of discovering one's identity".

Accident and discovery function as part of the candidate's process and become a fitting metaphor for growth and acceptance of self, as the workbook shifts between establishing a proposition, struggling to gain control over skills and media, and engaging in reflection. Strategies are tested, considered, rejected and developed before being incorporated into the portfolio with intent. Focal point, leading lines, deconstructed spaces and juxtaposed surface textures engage the viewer and encourage movement in and around the pictorial space. Purposeful and relevant links to established practice and artist models are made in the workbook, and the candidate interprets these in relation to their intended study, choosing carefully which aspects to incorporate into their own thinking.

There is a clear sense of "hand and head" at work throughout the portfolio. The candidate poses questions for themselves and seeks solutions to communicate their ideas in a variety of formats and viewpoints. The portfolio is consistent in its approach and considered in its layout. The restricted colour palette allows focus on refining skills and creating opportunities to develop and expand the possibilities of surface. The proposition is located within the candidate's own experience, while the limited iconography enables pictorial exploration in developing an authentic aesthetic without undue reliance on external imagery.