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A STUDY IN USING SKETCHING TECHNIQUES TO DEVELOP COHESIVE
NARRATIVE ART

By

MICHELLE R. CLEESATTEL

Under the Direction of Kevin Hsieh

ABSTRACT

This is an arts-based research study on the effects of applying extensive and diverse sketching techniques to the development of a cohesive body of work, which reflects the significant and meaningful events of the artist-researcher's life. The research techniques employed and studied consist of looking at historical exemplars, sketching, reflecting, critiquing, and revising. The results of the research were then reflected upon and applied to the field of art education in an attempt to discover the benefits for both teaching and learning in kindergarten through 12th grade curriculums.

INDEX WORDS: Art education, Sketchbook, Sketching, Visual journal

A STUDY IN USING SKETCHING TECHNIQUES TO DEVELOP COHESIVE
NARRATIVE ART

by

MICHELLE R. CLEESATTEL

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Masters of Art Education
in the College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
2011

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2011

A STUDY IN USING SKETCHING TECHNIQUES TO DEVELOP COHESIVE
NARRATIVE ART

by

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Georgia State University

August 2011

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my mother, without her patience and consistent encouragement I would not have completed this immense accomplishment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my dear friends who have been there for me day and night and supported me throughout the past two years. I would also like to offer the greatest thanks to my dear sister Sarah and fiancé Scott, who without I would have lost my sanity a long time ago.

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INTRODUCTION

Description of Study

In this studio-based research project, I researched different sketching techniques and skills and then produced a cohesive body of work. I later related the findings of that research to the current field of art education. Through this study I wanted to look at how using sketching techniques throughout every aspect of development would impact my creative process and the final outcome of the body of work. As the production portion of my studio-based thesis, I chose to create a conceptual timeline narrative depicting the landmark and impactful events throughout different aspects of my life, such as my personal life, professional life, and academic life. I chose an arts-based thesis and planned and implemented a process of analysis and reflection as a way of finding meaning (Sullivan, 2005). This arts-based thesis provided me with an opportunity to help develop my own style of art production, as well as think about my thinking process and my approach to developing a body of artistic work. Throughout the research process I also wanted to look at how studying historical artist exemplars that use diverse methods of sketch and line drawing would help me to further develop my compositions. Lastly, I wanted to research how developing projects through sketch could benefit students in the art classrooms in kindergarten through the 12th grade curriculums.

The main challenge I faced while creating a body of artwork, or even a single piece of work, was laying out the entire composition. That composition could include the images I used and where I chose to place them. The size and shape of my canvas or space to work within, as well as decisions regarding which medium best fit the desired

outcome. Those decisions made during the development process are critical to the outcome and success of any piece or body of artwork. Therefore, for the development of my body of work titled, "A Snapshot Timeline" I implemented various forms of sketching as a way to experiment with different imagery, composition sizes, drawing styles, different media, and whether or not to use color. I have chosen to employ a sketching technique of one form or another in just about every aspect of this project's development. The practice of completing simple sketches that are done rapidly can later be used to form and manipulate my ideas (Denton & Williams, 1996). I kept a sketchbook to document the processes I have utilized and the decisions I have made. My intent was to find out to what extent sketching would impact my project development and decision making process.

The research methods I used in my artistic process began with looking at different kinds of sketching techniques and methods used by historical and contemporary artists. I then sketched different imagery from my imagination, then from photographs, real life, and lastly specific images I considered as possible representations of the events in my body of work. However, before I chose which specific images I wanted to use to represent the events, I first had to make a list of possible events throughout my life for consideration in the timeline. I kept this list in my sketchbook along side all of my sketches. This helped with keeping all my thoughts together and in order. Keeping everything together helped with the reflection and revision process. I could easily refer back to earlier versions and add or remove as I saw fit. My list of possible events was revised multiple times as a way of narrowing down my focus. I then worked through sketching again, trying different images for each

event before selecting the final image. I then went back to sketching in my sketchbook. This time I used sketching to determine what type of line drawings would be most effective in evoking a response from the viewer and bringing in their interest when they viewed the body of work as a whole. I also used this sketching activity as a way to explore the different media I was considering, whether that was pencil and paper, ink on paper, which color ink, or the incorporation of color into the final images.

Research Questions

1. How can I use sketching to develop my line drawing works, which will reflect the important landmark events of my life?
2. How can looking at historical artist exemplars that use the methods of sketch and line drawings, help me to further develop my compositions?
3. How can developing projects through sketch benefit students in the kindergarten through 12th grade art classrooms?

Timeline and Outcomes

I planned to produce a body of work that consisted of 15 different images, each representing a different event in the timeline. These images are either a 6"x6" composition or a 9"x9" composition, with the more significant events being the larger pieces and the in-between events being the smaller pieces. My initial sketching and image development lasted for the first two months, August and September, 2010. I wanted to fully explore the possible events and imagery to represent those events. I then took the month of October to develop and experiment with different drawing styles and line types to see which was most effective in evoking the desired response and interest from the viewer. This included determining the medium I wished to use for the

final presentation, as well as if color would be included. I selected and evaluated these aspects during the final show and critique of the masters level Drawing and Painting class. That time provided viewers with an opportunity to study and view the piece in its entirety and provide feedback and constructive criticism in an open forum. The month of November was spent preparing the final images, on the final paper, in the selected medium. I spent month of December adding color and preparing the final presentation of the timeline. After the initial display of this body of work in the Drawing and Painting class final show and critique, I found the response was appropriate and my body of work was understandable and relatable to a variety of viewers. I decided to keep the final materials and completed artwork the same for the final thesis art show. I then took the months of June and July 2011, to make the necessary revisions for appropriate display requirements for Georgia State University's galleries.

My hope at the start of this research was that the extensive process of development through sketches and keeping a sketchbook would help me to better create a body of work that is cohesive and evokes viewer interest. My desire was to explore several different options of every aspect of the final body of work through different styles of sketching within my own personal sketchbook. Throughout this research project I expanded my artistic vision and development through the process of sketching multiple versions of and options for one project over the span of several months. My intention was to better develop my sketching abilities and to resolve any struggles I had compositionally through the practice of sketch. I also hoped that spending this additional and extensive time with one project and working through

multiple sketches patiently, I would gain an additional and deeper understanding of the developmental process, materials, and the project outcome (Weekes, 2005).

Plan for Reflection

My plan for this research study was to explore multiple solutions for all potential problems that arose, through the process of sketching and keeping a sketchbook and journal. Throughout the process of developing this body of artwork I ran into problems regarding which events to include, what images should represent those events in the “Snapshot Timeline”, and which method of drawing should be employed for the creation of the final images. There was also a great deal of reflection and debate during the media exploration process, as well as in the decision in whether or not to include color, which in the end I decided was necessary. I solved nearly all of these issues by sketching the various options. I felt as though exploring each potential solution through sketching and by reflecting on and critiquing the final outcome, I could best decide the right course of action. This process of constant creating and critiquing allowed this artistic journey to become a research process. This linked the creative to the critical and allowed for insight to be achieved and communicated (Sullivan, 2005).

METHOD OF STUDY

Detail of Method used in Study

The research portion of this study has been broken down into five different subsections or phases. This is for the purpose of discussion and ease of understanding the different phases. Those phases include study of historical exemplars, actively sketching, researching content for artwork, exploration of drawing styles, and exploration of mediums.

Historical exemplars.

I began the research for my body of work by looking at several different artists that have successfully used sketching. I looked at a variety of different artists, representing several artistic styles. I was looking at each different artist through a specific lens as a means of defining the characteristics of their compositions that I could later adapt to assist me in developing my own composition. I looked at Rembrandt's use of line, tone and value, as well as how he structured the space within his compositions (Benesch, 1947). I looked at the line drawings of Matisse and Picasso for how they used the expressive qualities of different line types, whether thick, thin, bold or subtle (Flam, 2003). I also explored Picasso's regular use of contour drawing. I studied how he structured his subject matter throughout the space, sometimes layering the different models or subjects on top of one another, behind or in front of one another in space (Picasso, 1981). In Matisse's works I looked at his use of both thick and thin lines to place or remove emphasis from certain areas of the composition. I explored his contour drawings as well, looking at how his approach differed from that of Picasso and what impression each left on me as the viewer (Schneider, 1984). Lastly, I looked at his use

of positive and negative space in his more graphic cut-paper collage pieces, as that is something I had to keep in mind when working on my body of work (Connor and Hartland, 2002). I looked to the sketches and drawings from John Lennon as well, again for his use of line qualities and the incorporation of color. Lennon used a fast and loose drawing style, placing his focus on the scenes depicted instead of the details of each character. His drawings border on almost caricature in styling, which was something I needed to be aware of in my own drawings. Additionally, his drawings and sketches were later infused with color washes, which inspired me to explore that technique in my own body of work (Lennon & Naclerio, 1999). The incorporation of color expressed more character and added an additional layer of interest to what was otherwise a flat drawing.

I later looked to Van Gogh and his use of several different expressive lines throughout a single sketch. Some of the sketches that I looked at from Van Gogh were more detailed than those that I studied from Picasso and Matisse. Van Gogh sometimes incorporated highlights, shading, and minute details, which I chose to implement during my working sketches, but was something I left to a minimum in the final body of work. (Hulsker, 1996). I then looked at the drawings of David Hockney. I found his contour drawings to be very intriguing, in spite of the natural simplicity of the contour line and his use of space within the composition as a worthy goal (Hockney, 1971). As a pop art reference I turned to the drawings of Lichtenstein. These graphic, pop art pieces inspired me to develop a style for my body of work. I used Lichtenstein's drawings to help me not only decide what to incorporate, the simple graphic images, but also what not to incorporate, that being the cartoon-like animation (Lichtenstein & Waldman,

1980). After Lichtenstein I looked at Lucian Freud's work. From these, mostly figure drawings, I pulled Freud's use of contrast and low lights (Freud, Penny & Johnson, 1988). His pencil drawings used several different methods for shading and that was something I chose to use in my sketching exercises but did not include in the final body of work. Lastly, I explored the floral drawings by Ellsworth Kelly. As with the Picasso pieces I looked at, these contour drawings were rather intriguing, despite their simplicity. Kelly's decisive use of line was something that I wanted to achieve for my body of work (Kelly & Ashbery, 1992).

Sketching.

After I looked at several different examples of sketching techniques and methods, including those practices by the artists listed above, I began my own sketching endeavor. I typically did not create an extensive number of sketches during the production of most of my earlier works. For this project I wanted to completely submerge myself in the practice of sketching, in the hopes that this would help me to better envision and develop my composition for this extremely important and meaningful body of work. To start this project I began sketching from my imagination and dreams. To do this, on the days that I woke up and could still remember my dreams from the night before, I would immediately sketch what I could remember. I wanted to keep the sketches quick. I found that these sketches were free and filled with texture and high contrast. This practice of sketching from my dreams helped me to practice the art of putting the visions in my head onto paper. By using my dreams as a reference, this allowed the sketches to be extreme and truly imaginative.



Figure 1. Sketch from dreams, pencil on paper, 6"x8".

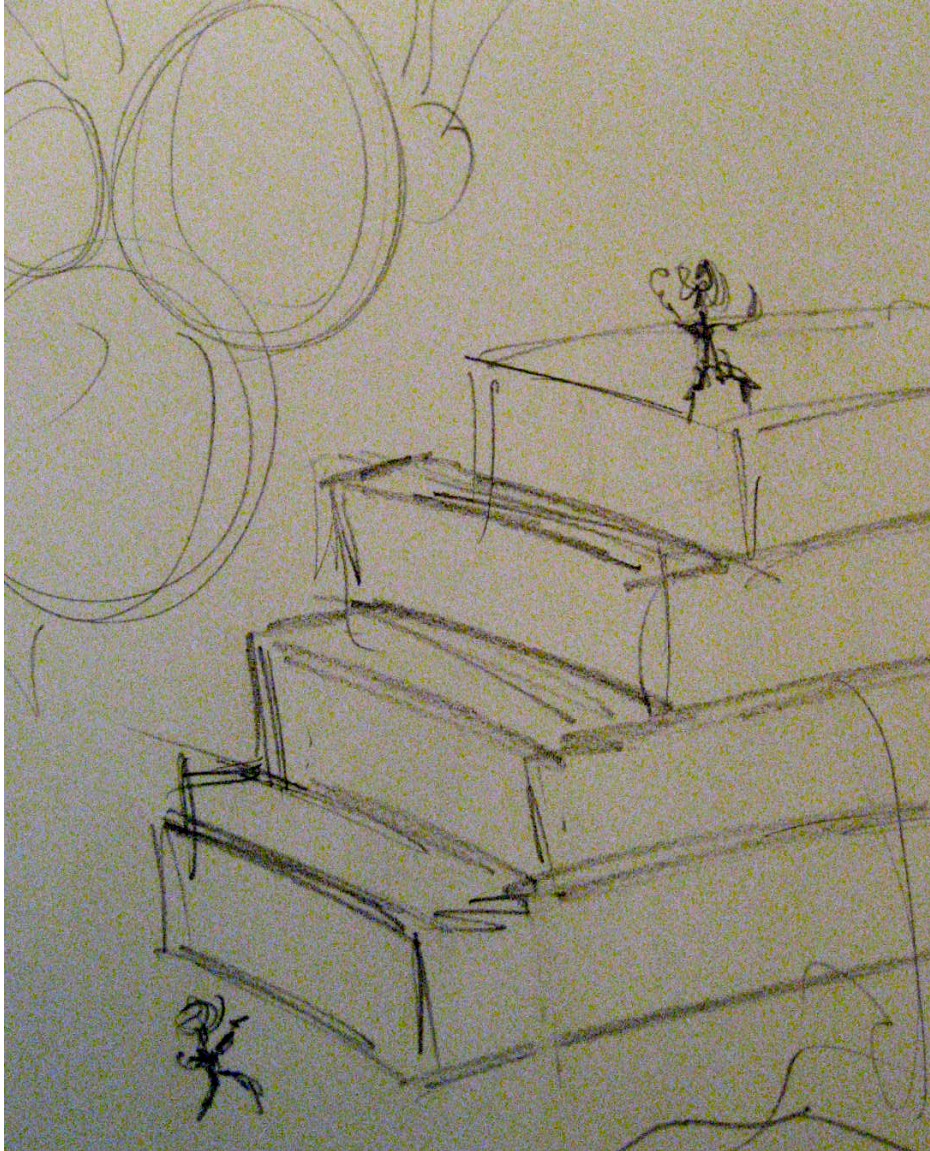


Figure 2. Sketch from dreams, pencil on paper, 4"x8".

After several weeks of sketching from my dreams, I began sketching from the world around me. I went to public places that I pass through and see often. Whether I found myself in the Student Center at Georgia State or the park that I walk in weekly, I would take a few minutes everyday and sketch what I saw around me. This exercise allowed me to practice putting what I saw around me on paper quickly, as the people

and situations around me were not staged and changed rapidly. The images and scenarios were less extreme and more realistic than those from my dreams and imagination. These quick sketches typically took the form of gesture drawings and contour line drawings.



Figure 3. Gesture sketch, pencil on paper, 8"x6".



Figure 4. Gesture sketch, pencil on paper, 6"x8".

From this exercise, I moved onto sketching from photographs. I referenced both my own photographs as well as photographs by other artists, friends, and even images found on the Internet. I chose a variety of different subject matter for these sketches, everything from landscapes, to still-life, to people. This helped me to become more comfortable with different imagery, perspectives, and styles. This step was essential to the development of my final body of work, as the images and scenes I chose to

represent the events in my timeline took several different forms. Some representations were scenes of people or environments, while others were a simple object, or a series of objects.

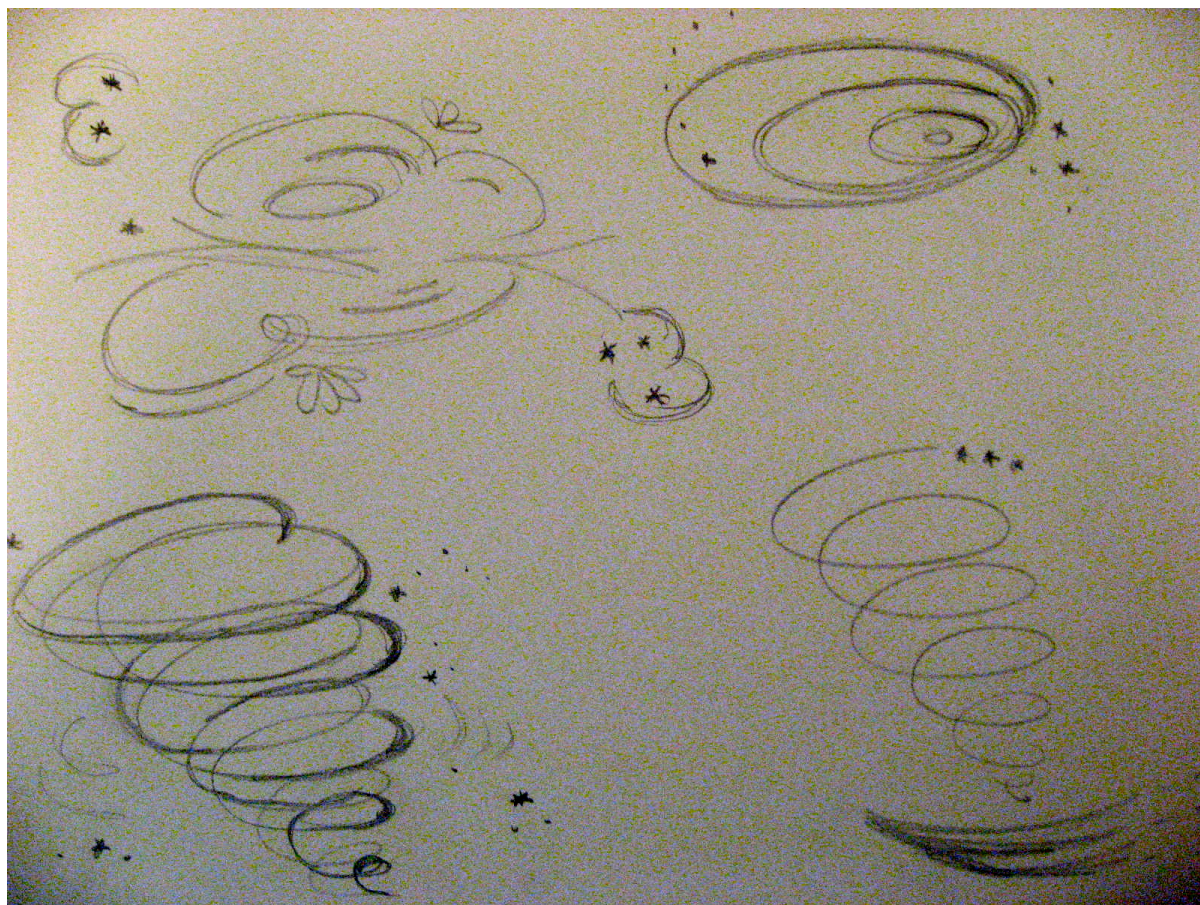


Figure 5. Sketches for *Beginning*, pencil on paper, 8"x11".

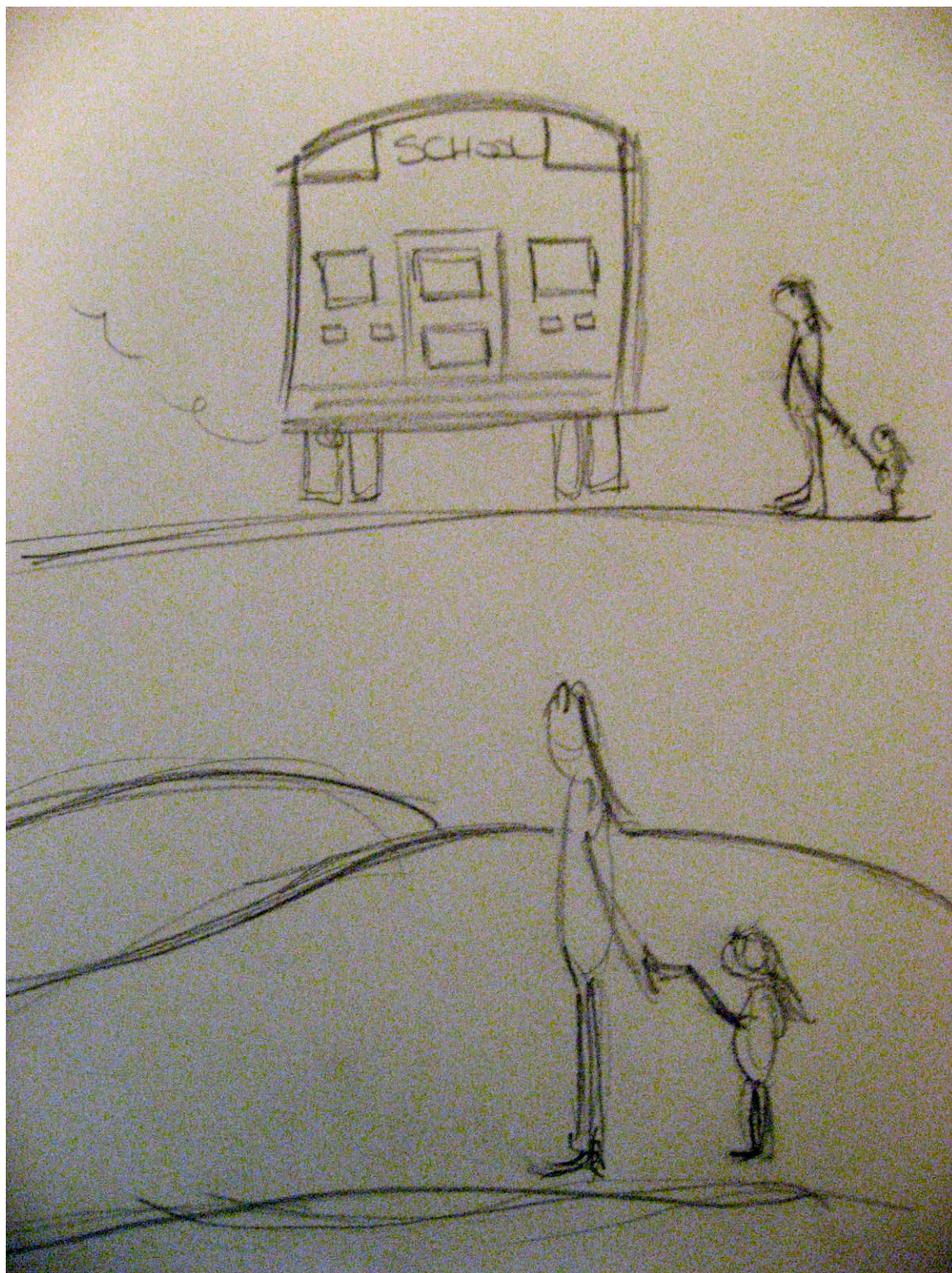


Figure 6. Sketches for *First Day of School*, pencil on paper, 8"x11".

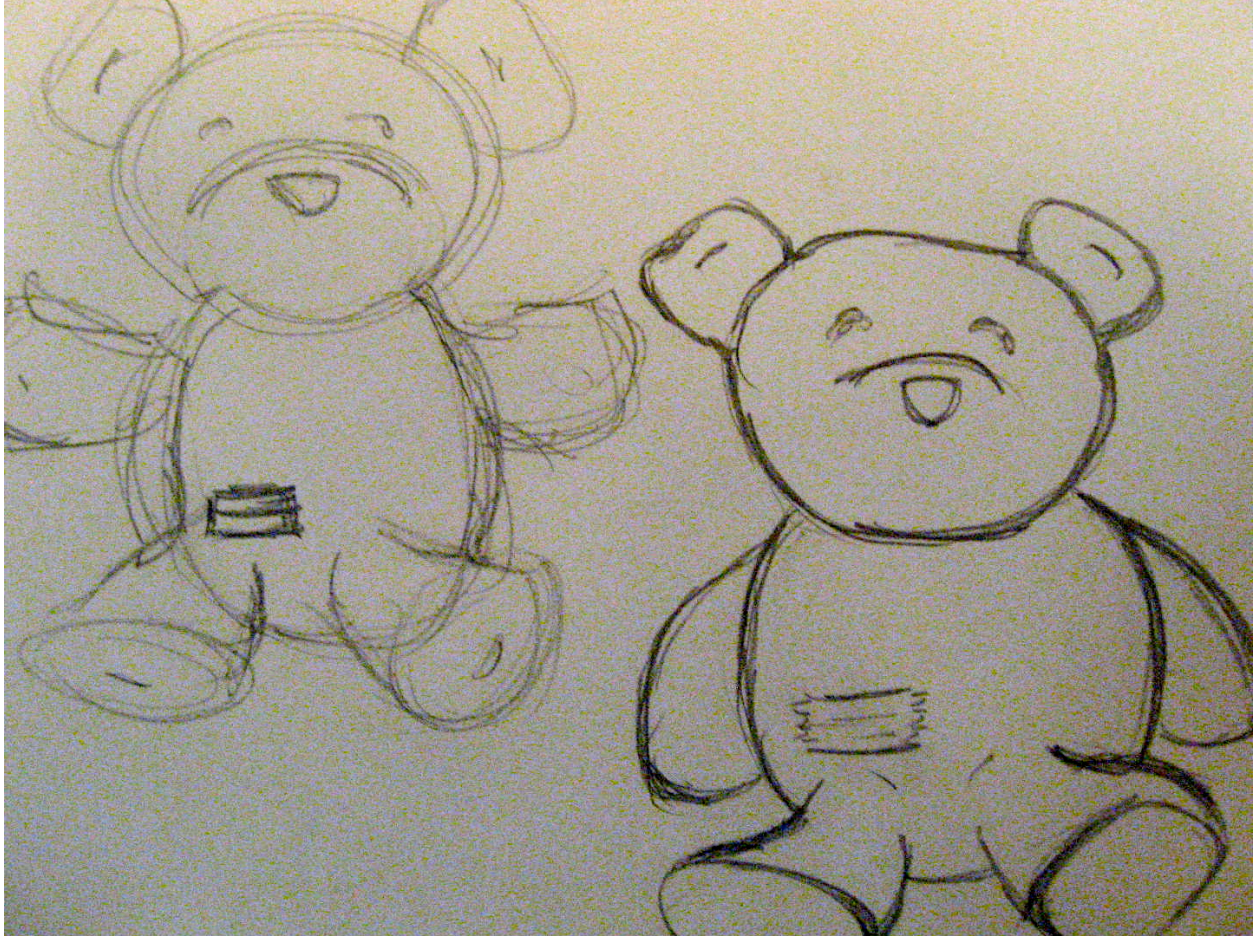


Figure 7. Sketches for *Honey-Bear*, pencil on paper, 8"x11".

Content for artwork.

Along the same time I was working on my sketching exercises I was developing a list of important and impactful events to consider including in my timeline. I worked through several different perspectives of my life, including academic, personal, and professional. The events ranged from childhood to adolescence, and adulthood. My initial list had approximately 27-30 events. From which I narrowed it down to 20 events. I next began thinking about the imagery I could use to represent each event. For each

event, I made a list of several different and unique images or scenes that could represent it in the final composition.

After choosing 20 events and potential representations for each event I began sketching. I sketched the different representation in different sketching styles that seemed to best fit the different imagery.



Figure 8. Event representations options, pencil on paper, 6"x6".

After looking at the sketches for each event, I chose one or two images from each that I felt represented the event or experience best. I laid the entire timeline out with all 20 events in order and switched the different representation in and out until I found the combination that best suited the experience I want to offer the viewer. After seeing all 20 events lined up, I realized it was a bit long, and somewhat overwhelming to look at. I felt as though the viewer could lose interest mid-way through. I then decided to drop the timeline down to the 15 most significant and meaningful events. This allowed me to

place more emphasis on the most important ones within the chosen 15, with a more appropriate amount of supporting events in between.

Exploration of drawing styles.

After seeing the 15 events and the images or scenes I wanted to represent each, I began an exercise of sketching the different images in various line and drawing styles. One immediate concern I had was the simple representations drawn using contour lines, I worried some of the pieces would look too caricatured and cartoon-like.

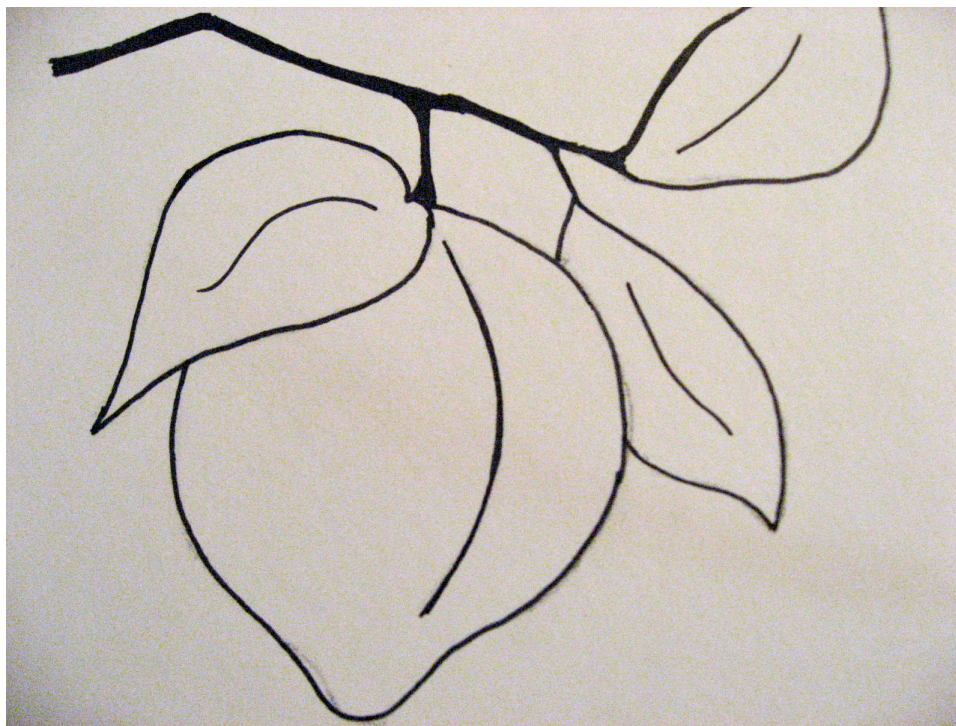


Figure 9. Contour line sketch, ink on paper, 6"x6".

On the other hand, with some of the more emotional events, I worried the loose drawing style would appear unfinished and rushed. I then tried my hand at combining the strong and simple contour line in black with a more free and loose sepia tone

sketched line around it to add texture and more depth. After I looked at the different drawing styles, I took 5 of the final 15 events and sketched each of them in two different line drawing styles. For this comparison I chose the contour drawing with sepia toned texture around it and a more free hand and natural drawing style. I laid the two different sets in a timeline and reflected on which was more effective for the overall feel and appearance I wanted the final body of work to have. In the end I chose to go with a simple line, with thick and thin portions to show emphasis and add interest. It was essential to include this thick and thin variation to keep the drawings from looking too cartoon-like. I found that including too much of the artist natural hand, the drawings looked unfinished and incomplete.



Figure 10. Drawing option, ink on paper, 6"x6".



Figure 11. Drawing option, ink on paper, 6"x6".

Exploration of mediums.

After deciding on the style of line drawing for the entire project I then examined what medium to complete the final images with. The options I was considering were simple pencil, black ink, or sepia tone ink. Each medium had its own benefits and drawbacks. The pencil allowed for a personal and artistic feel. It could allow the viewer to have a better sense of my hand while looking at the images. However, with the pencil drawings, the incorporation of watercolor washes would have been difficult, as the pencil would most certainly smear. The option of using black or sepia colored ink would allow for watercolor washes to be included, but would remove some of the more natural and artistic hand from the images. Additionally, the black ink had the potential to further facilitate the caricature and cartoon style, while the sepia toned in could potentially

eliminate that. However, the sepia tone ink would create a less relatable appearance and minimal variety. I made my final decision on medium after much experimenting, reflecting and critiquing. The final decision was black ink, as the images created using the black ink were more related and allowed for more variety during application of water color, making the final body of work more interesting to view.

Along the same time that I was debating about which ink color to use I began exploring the use of watercolor washes. At this time I had not finalized my use of black ink and was still experimenting with the idea of using sepia toned ink. After I finalized the drawing style, a simple line with thick and thin areas to allow for interest and emphasis, I again chose 3 different images from the timeline and produced a line drawing of each, in the different mediums: pencil, black ink, black ink with watercolor wash, sepia toned ink, and sepia toned ink with watercolor washes. At that point I laid out the three different images in the different mediums and decide which series best provides the desired response from the viewer.

The incorporation of watercolor is something I wanted to consider very carefully and after a great deal of reflection and critique. As seen in Figures 2.5 and 2.6 there were two different options I was considering. One included the true colors of the representations while the other used a universal antique sepia tone throughout all the event representations, no matter the true colors of the objects or scenes. Each brought it's own feel to the compositions. As considered by Yoko Ono in deciding whether or not to add color to John Lennon's artwork, I also wished to "add just a touch, in a way that would not be a hindrance to the art" (Kozinn, 2004, p.2). The appropriate amount and type of color is essential for the success of this body of work. In the end I chose to use

the true color of the objects with a black ink line, in the previously determined line style.

I felt as though using the true colors of each representation allowed for variety in the timeline. The alternative sepia toned watercolor seemed to bring a sense of uniformity that was overwhelming and blurred the different events into one another.



Figure 12. Watercolor option, ink and watercolor on paper, 6"x6".



Figure 13. Watercolor option, ink and watercolor on paper, 6"x6".

After I chose the drawing style, being a simple black line, the drawing medium, being a black ink pen, and watercolor style, being the true colors of the events, I chose the final presentation medium. I was debating between simple watercolor paper in the varying sizes mentioned previously or a more pronounced media board. I decided to go with the simple watercolor paper with unfinished edges. I then completed my entire body of work for the final critique and show in December, for the master's level Drawing and Painting class. I feel this initial display of work and reflection on the success of the critique was essential to the creative process for this completed piece. My thoughts and ideas throughout the planning process were not complete without the reflection gained through the process of displaying the works, as research suggests "artworks are made and displayed, they open up an opportunity to think and learn" (Sullivan, 2005, p. 124).

After the class critique and show I reflected on the suggested revisions and prepared for the final Master's art exhibition.

Definition of Key Terms

Composition: For the purpose of this research project it is the term used for the

arrangements of the elements in, or the subject matter of a painting or drawing.

A composition includes the subject matter, drawing style, and all aspects of the chosen medium. A successful composition draws in the viewer and pulls their eye across the whole painting or drawing so that everything is taken in and finally settles on the main subject.

Snapshot timeline: For the purpose of this research project it is the

final and complete body of work created for this research project. This body of work will display representation of important and impactful events throughout all aspects of my life. These representations will be in the form of drawing. They will be on watercolor paper. They will include the incorporation of watercolor. The success of the final body of work is most effective when displayed and viewed in its entirety.

Contour line drawing: For the purpose of this research project a contour line is the line

which defines a form or edge. It is an outline. Contour drawing is a common place for beginning drawers to start. The line follows the visible edges of a shape. The contour describes the outermost edges of a form, as well as dramatic changes of plane within the form.

Gesture drawing: For the purpose of this study it is a quick drawing that captures the

energy and movement of the subject. It does not necessarily have to be realistic.

Line type: For the purpose of this study a line is a mark on a surface that describes a shape or outline. Different line types can create texture and can be thick and thin. Types of line can include actual, implied, vertical, horizontal, diagonal and contour lines.

Sepia tone: For the purpose of this study it is a brownish gray or olive brown color.

Sketch: For the purpose of this study it is the process from which a body of work is developed. It is a hasty or rough drawing showing varying degrees of detail. This type of drawing shows the artists quick movements in developing an image.

Sketchbook: For the purpose of this study, this is the record of the artistic process I went through in the development of this research body of work. It contains notes, lists, sketches, drawings, and painting, and self critiques. It can also be called a visual journal.

Tone/Value: For the purpose of this study it is the degree of light and dark in a design. It is the contrast between black and white and all the tones in between. Value can be used with color as well as black and white.

Watercolor wash: For the purpose of this study it is a flat layer of very diluted watercolor paint laid across the paper. It can either be an even layer of color or a graded layer which gets lighter.

Limitations and Delimitations

I have chosen to limit this study to sketching practices and techniques using pencil and ink mediums only, with the incorporation of watercolor washes for the final presentation. I am choosing not to explore painting methods and sketching with paint in this study. However, an exploration of the watercolor medium could provide another

research opportunity for a later date and time. Because of the limited time of the study, total of seven months, I have limited my Conceptual Narrative Timeline to 15 significant, meaningful, and important events. However, looking at additional aspects of life and society could provide another research opportunity for a later time.

DEVELOPMENT, INTERPRETATION, AND REFLECTION OF WORKS

Creation of My Works

Categories.

As described, I chose to complete a body of work, titled a Conceptual Narrative Timeline, which consists of 15 separate compositions that reflect different aspects of my life. These aspects fall into 3 separate categories, which include the professional, academic, and personal experiences throughout my life. To better understand the timeline of events I have separated them into these different categories for the purpose discussing the development process. For this purpose I also chose to include a section titled *Symbolic*. This category includes those events that are all encompassing and have had or could have an effect on all three aspects of my life.

Canvas.

The canvas size and criteria of each piece is the same for all of the compositions. I chose to show each of the included pieces on semi-white, medium tooth, watercolor paper. I chose to keep the dimensions of each of the compositions within two different sizes. I initially planned to have each of the 15 events on the same size paper, 6"x6", however I felt some events needed an emphasis, and for this I expanded my options to included a 9"x9" size for the more significant or influential events. I chose to keep the compositions a fairly small square shape. The purpose of keeping the shape uniform was to help the entire body of work to be viewed as a continuous piece that spans over a sequence of artworks. The purpose for the decision to keep the composition size on the smaller side was to allow for a "snapshot" feel for the timeline. I want the viewer to feel as though they are walking through a photo album of memories.

Medium.

The medium for each of the 15 different compositions is the same as well. This serves the similar function to keep the entire body of work looking consistent and continuous to the viewer. I have chosen to use a water-resistant, black ink pen for the basic forms of the representation. This is to allow for the successful application of the chosen drawing style as well as adding watercolor to each of the different representations. I have chosen to use the true colors of each of the representations to add a sense of variety and encourage greater interest from the viewer.

Drawing style.

The drawing style I chose is a simple black ink line. I chose to keep the line style simple, as to not take away from the imagery and not distract the viewer from the meaning behind each of the representations within the various compositions. I have chosen to incorporate very subtle variations in line thickness throughout the drawings. This was included to again, add a layer of interest, but kept to a minimum to avoid the drawings becoming to “clip-art” in styling.

Titles.

My intention with this body of work is to not have a specific title for each piece, but to only title the entire body as a whole. My hope is that the viewer will examine each composition in the timeline in relation to the events that surround it and develop their own meaning and reason for inclusion for each event. I feel that if the events or experiences are titled, the viewer will simply read the titles and take the images at face value, there would be a lack of investigation and reflection on the part of the viewer. For

the purpose of this reflection and research process, I have chosen to give the compositions simple name as a point of reference during discussion and critique.

Symbolic

I found that this category was essential in describing the developmental process and reflecting on my work. These three pieces, *Beginning*, *Ah Ha!*, and *Future*, could not fit into just one of the other three categories. They represent different events that are all encompassing and overflows into all aspects of my life.

Beginning.

The idea behind *Beginning* was to represent the things that happened in my life before I can remember. I felt this was important to include because I am showing a timeline of my entire life, not just what I can remember. There were many significant events that happened in my life that helped to mold the person that I am today, but I cannot recall them. I feel those things deserve a place in this timeline, as they are equally as important as those events that I can recall with great ease. I feel the chosen representation is an effective way of representing all those events in one succinct image. I worked through several different representation options for this event. It was one of the more difficult to narrow down because the options were very extensive, I had no boundaries. I worked through several ideas including flowers, either a single flower or a group of flowers, a night sky and an afternoon sky, and several different abstract compositions. I chose to go with a non-objective subject, as to not attach a specific meaning or event to a representation that is meant to symbolize multiple, unknown events. A photograph of the galaxy inspired the chosen representation. I was drawn into

the concentric ovals and the womb feeling they provide. It is meant to symbolize my own beginning.



Figure 14. *Beginning*, Pen and ink with watercolor and acrylic paint on watercolor paper, 6"x6".

Ah ha.

When I reflect on my earliest artistic experience I immediately go to one exact moment. Looking back on it now, this was the moment when I realized the endless possibilities of creativity and imagination and how much fun creating was. Some people

might call this moment an “ah-ha” moment. This particular moment occurred during my Kindergarten class, in which we were making tag-board and macaroni Christmas Trees. The class transformed simple tag-board cones into a bright green, macaroni and glitter-covered trees. I remember its creation very vividly. I remember the difficulty I had when trying to get a piece of bow-tie macaroni to stay on the top, and that I eventually switched to a pinwheel, because it stayed more securely. I remember drenching the tree in Elmer’s Glue and sprinkling glitter from top to bottom. I even remember spray-painting it in the back room near all the cubbies where we kept all our coats and lunch bags. This project has stayed with me so strongly, in part because my mother still puts this “tree” creation out every year when December rolls around, even though it is over 20 years old, but also because this is the first school art project I can remember creating. It was the first of nearly 17 years of school instructed art projects. This was the start of a very long journey to where I am today. This Christmas Tree project and my constant reflection on it, was one of the reason I chose to pursue certification in Art Education which eventually lead to my pursuing a Master’s degree. It’s everlasting impact is unmatched at this point.



Figure 15. *Ah ha!*, Pen and ink with watercolor on watercolor paper, 6"x6".

Future.

The idea behind *Future* is very similar to that of *Beginning*. I wanted to develop an image that had the capability of representing several different events that are unknown, as they have not yet happened. I worked through several different realistic images, including a path into the woods, a mountain range, and a person running on a woodland path. I eventually decided on an abstract non-objective representation. I chose this style of subject matter for the same reason I chose it for the early events in my life in *Beginning*; I did not want a representation that could be mistaken for a

particular or specific event, I wanted something that was all encompassing. I was very adamant about including a final and closing image in the timeline. I was looking for something that would leave the viewer with a sense of closure but not ending. I did not want to leave the viewer wondering or hanging, if it were to-be-continued. I did not want to simply end the timeline with the most recent event that happened in my life. I wanted to include a composition to represent the things to come; the unknown possibilities; the future.

The inspiration for this image was a combination of two different photographs I took. One was of a small child playing with a sparkler at night and the other was a blurred image of Christmas lights strung along a banister surrounded with snow. I chose to exclude the child, the banister, and the identifiable shapes, as to not pin this image down to a mistaken meaning. I kept just the abstract shapes and patterns created by the sparkler and blurred Christmas lights. The addition of simple colors, which are the same colors added to *Beginning*, are a way of helping to tie the two images together and create a relationship between the beginning of the timeline and the end.



Figure 16. *Future*, Pen and ink with watercolor and acrylic paint on watercolor paper, 9"x9".

Academic

This category includes all the events that have influenced the academic aspects of my life. The events included in this category span from my first day of school in which I headed off to kindergarten on the school bus for the first time and continue up to the

process I am currently experiencing, in which I have returned to the world of academia to pursue graduate studies.

First day of school.

The *First Day of School* is something that every person can relate to. So for that purpose I have chosen symbolism that everyone can understand and recognize. This is an event that I wanted to include, as it was the start of a journey that I am still on. There were several representations I was considering using for this event. One option was an adult holding the hand of child who was holding the hand of another child and another child, while walking over a series of small hills. This was meant to represent the parent or teacher leading, teaching, and mentoring the young children. Another option was an image of a school bus and several children waiting to board.

In the end I chose to go with a symbolic red apple with classic wooden-alphabet-blocks. I felt this symbolism was more universally relatable for the viewer than the other two options. Not everyone would associate his or her first day of school with walking hand in hand with a parent or adult or by boarding a school bus with other students of different ages. I felt as though the apple was more closely associated with the field of education than people walking, while being less obvious than students getting on a school bus. I then added the wooden-alphabet-blocks to signify the young age associated with the first day of school. These blocks are commonly found in a kindergarten or pre-school classrooms and are something that I felt confident every viewer would recognize. I found this combination of relatable and recognizable symbolism accurately translates the significance of the first day of school for the diverse range of viewers.

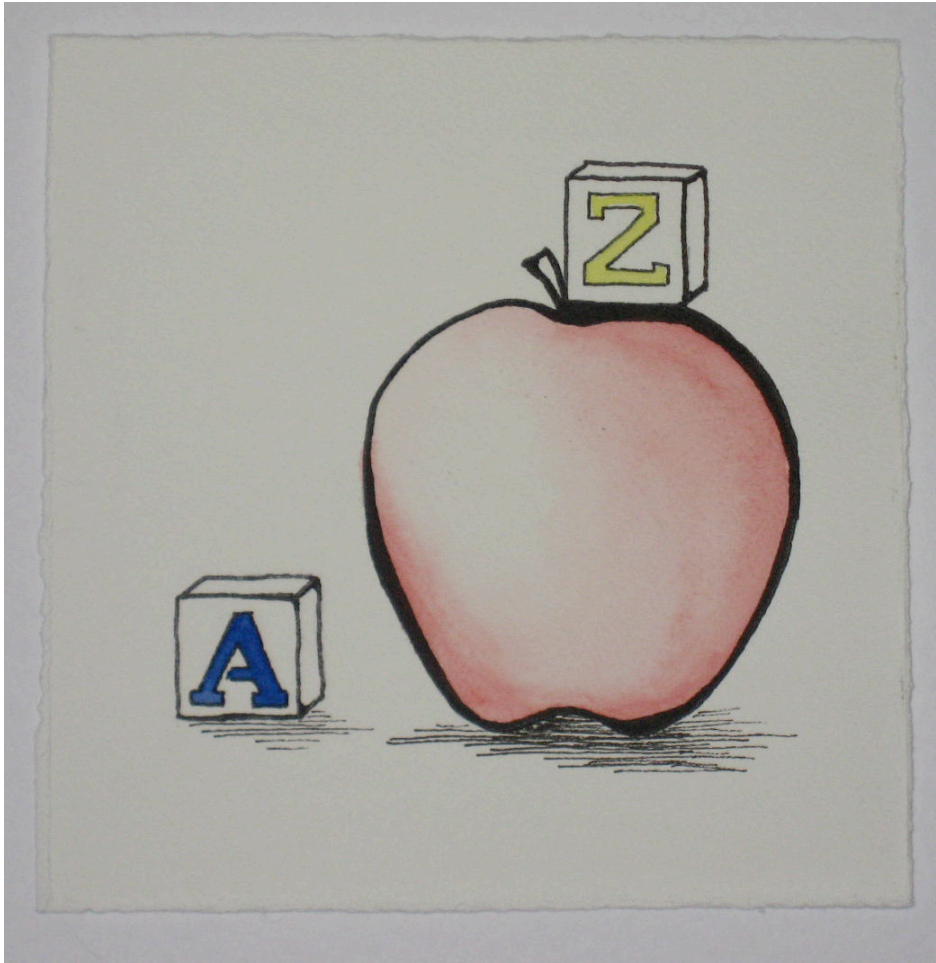


Figure 17. *First Day of School*, Pen and ink with watercolor on watercolor paper, 6"x6".

Bonjour jeune étudiant.

My high school trip to Europe was the first time that I really recognized the magnitude and influence that art and architecture had on a society. The trip took me from Paris, France down to Rome, Italy, and several cities in between. The art and architecture I experienced while on that trip planted the seed for my future college career in Interior Design and that is why I felt it was significant and needed a representation in the timeline of my final body of work. When considering the different possible representations I initially leaned towards a prominent Roman landmark, such

as the Colosseum. However, in the end I found Paris is more recognizable for its contributions to the world of art and architecture and I want that to be the meaning the viewer picks interprets from looking at one single image. I opted for a simplified version of the Eiffel Tower, in lieu of a more detailed and realistic representation, to keep this image in line with the others in the timeline.



Figure 18. *Bonjour jeune étudiant*, Pen and ink with watercolor on watercolor paper, 6"x6".

High school graduation.

A persons High School Graduation is something that carries great deal of significance. For some it is something that is a long time coming, for some it is just another step in their academic career, for me it was an ending and a beginning all at once. My graduation marked the end of the first phase in my education portfolio. I was always expects to graduate from high school, choose a career path, and move into higher education. I again chose a simple representation after considering more complex scenes including school buildings, groups of students, and a diploma. I felt that a flying graduation cap captures the excitement of the moment for each student, regardless of his or her future plans or experience in High School.



Figure 19. *High School Graduation*, Pen and ink with watercolor on watercolor paper, 6"x6".

Graduate school.

This piece is a representation of all the events, stresses, goals, and ambitions associated with my current graduate studies. I have chosen a small ball, balancing on a pile of books that are haphazardly stacked on a needle that is standing on its end. The needle has a thread going through its eye, which has been looped and knotted. The ball balancing on the top of the pile is meant to signify a successful outcome of my graduate studies. The pile of books is a more literal representation of the classes and academic

aspects of graduate school. While the needle is a representation of my goals and ambitions, the thread that is knotted and twisted through the eye of the needle represents the struggles and challenges of returning to school in a new academic field. If the struggles build up and are not overcome, they will get caught on the eye of the needle, causing my goals and ambitions, represented by the needle, to tip over, causing the books fall off, and the ball, a successful outcome, to come toppling down. An equal balance in my life is necessary for my goals to come to fruition, just as balance between the parts of the drawing is necessary for each to stay in place and atop the needle.



Figure 20. *Graduate School*, Pen and ink with watercolor on watercolor paper, 6"x6".

Personal

For this category I reflected on my personal experiences and relationships. These include experience or events that have affected my health, friendships, and my personal intimate relationships. This category could be considered all encompassing as well, as my personal life has an inescapable impact on all the other aspects of my life. However, for the purpose of analysis, I have chosen to keep these six events separate.

Honey-bear.

To many grown adults, a simple stuffed bear does not hold much meaning, however this bear represents one of the earliest memories I have. This is a representation of an experience I had at the young age of four. I was hospitalized for two weeks for what turned out to be a severe case of appendicitis. The doctors took over a week to determine what the cause was of my symptoms. They did not initially consider appendicitis, because at the time, they had never seen it in a child of such a young age. I distinctly remember my mother staying with me, my sisters and father visiting, the playroom, the fair the hospital held for the patients, and even being wheeled into the operating room. A stuffed bear, named honey-bear, that my mother bought me from the gift shop represents all those memories and experiences. Honey-bear was with me when they could not figure out what was wrong, he was with me when I went into the operating room, and he was with me when I woke up. The doctors even placed a small piece of medical tape on his tummy in the same spot where they placed my incision so he could heal with me. Honey-bear was there for me when I was in pain, when I was confused, and scared. This small stuffed animal carries such a strong

emotional connection to my childhood, I was absolutely certain that it be represented in such an important and personal body of work.



Figure 21. *Honey-Bear*, Pen and ink with watercolor on watercolor paper, 9"x9".

Playing in the pool.

Growing up my sisters and I had one thing that we would wait all winter long for, and that was opening the pool. We would spend everyday all summer long, rain or

shine, swimming in that pool. My fondest memories of playing from childhood, most always have something to do with playing in the pool. For that reason alone, I felt it was necessary to include this representation in my final body of work. Additionally, I felt many people could relate to the idea of carefree childhood summer freedom when looking at an image of kids in the water, whether they associate playing a pool or playing at the beach. Playing in the water seems to be a universally recognized symbol of summer freedom and fun for children of all ages.



Figure 22. *Playing in the Pool*, Pen and ink with watercolor on watercolor paper, 9"x9".

Accident.

When I was in college earning my Bachelors degree in Interior Design I was in a car accident in which I was pinned in between two cars injuring both knees, and shredding the top of my tibia on my left leg. This accident happened just one month before I was scheduled to graduate with a BFA, which I had worked tirelessly towards for 4 years prior. I chose to include this event, over the actual event of graduating with a BFA, as this incident overshadowed everything that happened in the months and even years preceding and following. The accident is something that has affected my health since the day it happened and will continue to for the rest of my life. I underwent two knee surgeries, months of physical therapy, and will eventually require at least a left knee replacement, if not both.

When I reflected on this event I realized the impact that my personality and personal work habits had on the successful completion of my undergraduate studies. I have always been a planner and someone who prepares and completes assignments as early as possible before the due date. I was always ahead of schedule. When I look back on the last month of that final semester, I realize that if I had not already completed my senior thesis and prepared my portfolio months before it was due, there was a very strong likelihood that I would have been unable to complete it on time and graduate as scheduled. This planning and detail oriented aspect of my personality continued to develop and benefit me in my career as an Interior Designer and will hopefully be an asset in my future as an Art Educator. This reflection on my own personality and my own strength and weaknesses, as related to this one specific event dictated with certainty that this event be included in my final timeline.



Figure 23. *Accident*, Pen and ink with watercolor on watercolor paper, 6"x6".

Peas and carrots.

I have to start by acknowledging that this event could sometimes sounds like a cliché. However, I have chosen to include it because of its influence throughout every aspect of my life currently and from this point on. This image is a representation of the moment I met my future husband, Scott. Scott is the person who is my complete opposite, compliments my personality in everyway, and is the person I believe I was always meant to find. I desperately wanted to include this event in my final body of work, as it will have an ever-lasting effect on the rest of my life path, but I did not want

the representation to be overly cheesy and distasteful to some viewers. For that description and definition of our relationship, I chose to represent us as peas and carrots as everyone knows the common saying. This simple combination offered the concept of two people complimenting one another and going together well, instead of a more cliché heart or a couple walking together or kissing. I feel the moment of two people coming together and meeting their better half is something relatable and emotional in one way or another for most viewers of this completed work. The inclusion of this events helps to further enhance the relatable aspect of this entire body of work.



Figure 24. *Peas and Carrots*, Pen and ink with watercolor on watercolor paper, 6"x6".

The engagement.

The Engagement is just that, the moment that Scott and I became engaged. For this event I looked at using a more personal representation, such as a horse and carriage or the Biltmore Estate, which is where the event took place. However, I felt placing one of those images into this easily recognizable event would cloud its meaning. I worried viewers may not interpret the image correctly. It is essential that the viewers see my progression through the timeline and understand the importance of this event and its timing. I want the viewers to understand this information about my life so they might better reflect on and understand later events.



Figure 25. *The Engagement*, Pen and ink with watercolor and acrylic paint on watercolor paper, 6"x6".

Professional

This category includes the events in my professional life. By defining professional I am using the criteria of whether or not the event affected or revolved around my career or a job. Initially when developing my list, I did not consider these to be emotional events, however, once I began developing the representations I found that even these simple images are capable of eliciting a response, sometime a very emotional and relatable one.

Moving to GA.

Moving out of the town that I grew up in was something that I planned from when I was a teenager and it was not for one of those teen-angst rationales, it was simply because I wanted better job opportunities and to escape the cold and snow that comes with Buffalo winters. For that reason, including my move to the sunny state of Georgia was without question. This move was something that was planned out for months prior to its actually taking place. It was a major move and had a large impact on my family. I was the youngest child and the last to move out of my parents home. I was moving in with my older sister and getting my first professional job. This was a life-changing event and something that was planned to be included in the timeline from its inception. I knew from the beginning that I wanted to represent the move with a peach. However, after I began developing the other representations it was thought that a peach may be too clichéd and something to be changed. I considered changing the imagery to moving boxes or a moving truck. I also considered a basket of peaches or two or three peaches instead of the single peach. After every revision I always found my way back to the single peach. This event was the first conceptualized and yet last to be finalized.



Figure 26. *Moving to GA*, Pen and ink with watercolor on watercolor paper, 6"x6".

First job.

Even though my moving to Georgia and starting my first job fell within months of one another, I felt this event was important enough to be included despite that fact. I wanted to keep the representation for getting my first professional job fairly generic and not tailored to the field of Interior Design because every person who has ever had a job of some kind can relate to the idea of simply getting a job, no matter the field. I worried if I placed a strong relation to Interior Design, some viewers would not find the representation relatable and the event would be rendered useless within the Timeline.

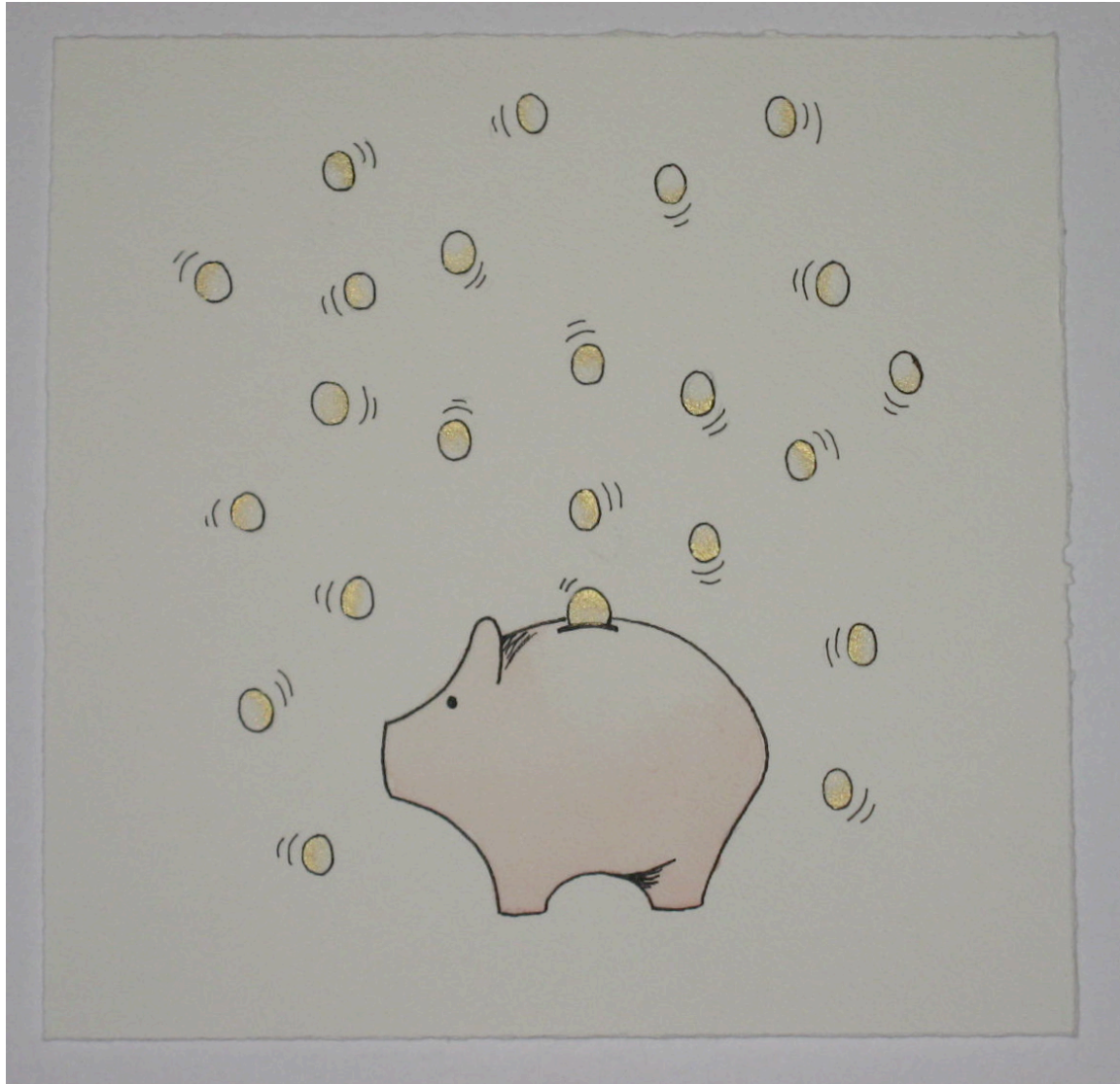


Figure 27. *First Job*, Pen and ink with watercolor and acrylic paint on watercolor paper, 9"x9".

Bust.

As many people are familiar with in this state of the economy, I was laid-off from my Interior Design job. It was at that point I decided to change my life course. For that reason, and not the trauma of being laid off, I found it necessary to include this event. After I was laid-off and found myself with a great deal of time to evaluate and reflect on

my life, I decided to return to school, get my teaching certification, and earn my Masters Degree. I decided to completely change the course of my professional life. It was that point that I looked into my personal life as well. I found myself alone with a lot of free time for myself and realized that I wanted someone in that free time. I wanted someone to do nothing with. I realized that I would not live my life constantly working as I had for the seven previous years, and would need someone in my life. I decided to open myself up to a significant and meaningful relationship.

This image does represent the moment I was laid off. However, the meaning behind it is far deeper and more personal.

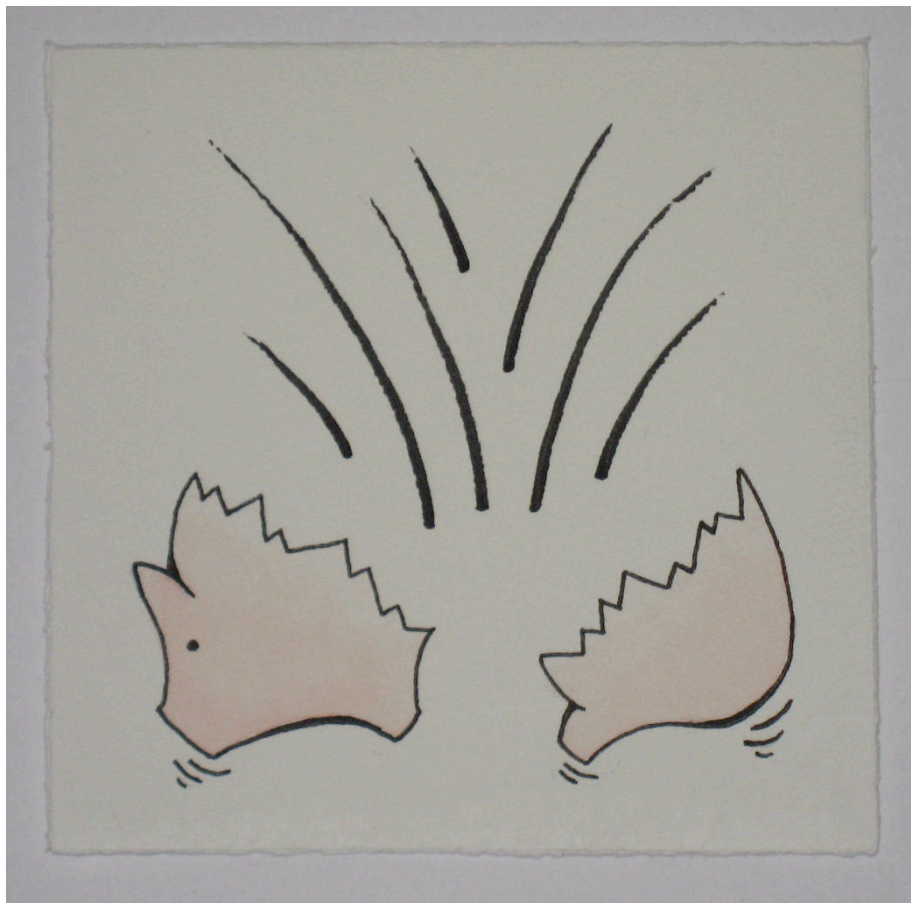


Figure 28. *Bust*, Pen and ink with watercolor on watercolor paper, 6"x6".

Reflection on My Artistic Process

When I started this artistic endeavor, my journey began with an ever-important review of historical artists. This was of utmost importance for the development of my body of work, as it helped me to define the parameters of my artistic process. I chose to incorporate the developmental process behind my body of work as a main component in this research thesis. For that I looked into several artists who used the exercise of sketching to help develop their own works. As mentioned above, I looked at several artists who work under different styles through various time periods. I looked at each of their different methods of sketching to help me to develop my own sketching practices. Each of the artists influenced me in one-way or another, whether it was through opening my eyes to the intriguing simplicity of contour drawings, as Ellsworth Kelly, with the collection of flower contour drawings (Kelly & Ashbery, 1992), or showing me the aspects of certain styles that I should be aware of and try to keep under control, as Matisse's (Matisse, 1980) more graphically oriented cut-paper collage works and Lichtenstein's (Lichtenstein & Waldman, 1980) cartoon-like sketches and drawings.

Through the process of sketching every component of each decision I made throughout the completion of this body of work, I developed my ability for self-reflection. The sketchbook I kept throughout the process became a journal of sorts (Weekes, 2005). This journal documented many of the artistic and presentation decisions made from the beginning of this creative process through to the final stages of completion. It acts as a record containing each of the "activities, analyses, and ideas explored" (Denton & Williams, 1996, p. 15).

The process of sketching and looking at several options for each decision helped me to explore and reflect on how I made those decisions and on what criteria I based them. Instead of jumping at the first possible solution, I slowed down and searched for multiple options. I reflected on each of the options after every possible avenue was sketched out. After that reflection process I decided on which was the best avenue to continue. One of the main areas in which this process was essential for me was when deciding what imagery to use of each of the major events I wanted to include in the final timeline. I thought out multiple solutions and representation for each event, I sketched those options out in my sketchbook. I then reflected on what each image could have represented from the viewer's perspective. It was obvious to me, the creator, the person who lived these events, what each piece meant, represented and why it was important. However, it is essential for the success of this body of work, that the viewer gets that impression and understands the intent of the artwork. By considering the representations outside the context of the timeline, I was able to analyze the potential meanings and decide which was best suited for the event in question. I learned that by looking through the viewer's eye and from the viewer's perspective I was better able to develop my final body of work and incorporate the possibility for meaning for others, and not just myself.

My criteria for making these decisions were based on personal interpretation and response to viewing. I wanted the final complete body of work to provide the viewer with an opportunity to look into my personal life, and then reflect on his or her own. I wanted to put a complete and cohesive piece in place that would provide the most open opportunity to do just that. I wanted to keep some of the representations generic, so

others could relate, while still incorporating very personal representations to allow for the viewer to get a better sense of me as the artist. I was careful throughout the decision making process regarding each representation to keep that balance in place. Balance of personal and generic was my main criteria in regards selecting representations for each event. My criteria in selecting the medium were based more on personal preference. I wanted materials that allowed me to explore different final outcomes, such as including color and line variation. I based the final decisions on what was most comfortable for me to work with, what provided me with the options of adding color, and what provided me with the flexibility in canvas size.

So far, throughout the development of this body of work I have come across some anticipated as well as unexpected struggles. After deciding on the concept for my body of work I thought about the process and considered some potential areas in which I may find these struggles. I had anticipated potential rough spots when deciding what form the timeline should physically take, whether separate mini-compositions, or large canvases with multiple events on each. I eventually decided on the separate mini-compositions, as they allowed for each event to hold it's own significance and meaning, alone from the other events. I also considered the debate about which imagery should represent each of the included events. I developed a battle plan that included multiple lists with numerous revisions over time, with a process of analysis and self-critique between each phase.

However, issues about drawing styles and what medium to use for the final presentation were not things that I had anticipated. It was not until I began the development process for the final images, after deciding which representations would

be incorporated into the finished body of work, that I realized the dilemma over what style of drawing should be used. I had not considered the dramatic effects that each drawing style had on the different images and the effect it would have on the overall interpretation and reaction when presented in it's entirety. When I realized the potential effect that this struggle could have on the meaning of my body of work I turned to my practice of sketching. As I explained earlier through the methods section, I worked through several different drawing styles and considered the different qualities of each and the effect that those qualities would have on the interpretation of the completed body of work.

I came across the second unexpected issue of medium when I was working through the struggle of drawing style choice. Part of the process in working through the drawing styles included actually drawing out a selection of events in each of the considered drawing styles. When doing this I realized certain mediums lent themselves better to certain drawing styles then others did. When critiquing the different styles I noticed the effect that each of the mediums had during the presentation. The ink pens versus the pencil and the black ink versus the sepia toned ink, each had to be considered and analyzed under a very critical lens. If a specific medium were chosen that did not compliment a particular drawing style, the final piece would be less meaningful or even completely unsuccessful. Upon the completion of all of the individual compositions, I feel the decisions regarding representation, drawing style, medium use, and color incorporation have all been considered and successfully finalized.

Implementation and Educational Practice

Implementation

The process of my arts-based research focused mainly on the act of sketching as a means of developing a well thought out, relatable, and cohesive body of work. This method of utilizing sketch can be introduced into an art room and integrated into an art curriculum. The act of working through the creative process on paper is something that students of all ages can understand and employ in his or her art classes. The regular use of sketching and keeping a sketchbook is something that I plan to assist my future students in developing and understanding. This process of researching through practice and reflecting on my own way of producing art helped me to recognize my own thought processes, it forced me to think about my way of thinking. My way of thinking carries into multiple areas of my academic and everyday life. This understanding is something that I feel will impact my teaching and if understood and practiced by other art educators, could have a positive impact on the field of art education.

Throughout my research process I depended on the activity of sketching. I kept all my sketches in a bound sketchbook so I could regularly reflect back on previous exercise, activities, lists, and revisions. I plan to implement a practice of regular sketching and reflecting in my own art classroom. I plan to have each student work in and maintain his or her own sketchbook throughout the course of the class, whether a full year of just one or two semesters. I plan to help students understand the various ways a sketchbook can be used throughout the creative process, this sketchbook will become a “journal of creativity that may contain things other than drawings” (Wales, 2000, p. 54). I wish to help students develop the habit of sketching and working through

several possible solutions before settling on the first one they think of, as many times that may not be the best solution. I believe that providing the students with their own personal sketchbook and encouraging them to use it and refer to it regularly will help to develop a sense of significance and importance around the work within that sketchbook (Altman, 2008).

The way in which I will actually provide the sketchbook is dependent on the grade level. It is my preference that in elementary school, a simple set of several sheets of white copy paper, critical thinking worksheets, and aesthetic worksheets bound together in colored construction paper will produce an appropriate sketchbook and provide a meaningful sketchbook experience for the students in grades Kindergarten through 5th. Research has shown that by incorporating more than just blank space for drawing and providing an opportunity for art-related writing will help the student to develop a deeper appreciation and understanding for both the material covered and the sketchbook itself (Delacruz & Bales, 2010). Once the students reach a middle school grade level, 6th-8th, I would provide a two-pocket folder with fasteners down the center that can be filled and constantly expanded with white copy paper for sketches, critique notes, aesthetic worksheets, art history information, written reflections and even grade documents. This will provide the students with an opportunity to expand their sketchbooks continuously, as well as develop those sketchbook habits that were introduced in Elementary school. The goal would be to demonstrate that sketchbooks are not just a place for drawing; they contain notes, lists, goals, reflections, and critiques. The student's sketchbook can be a constant resource throughout the creative artistic process (Delacruz & Bales, 2010). By the time the student reach high school I

believe a more open sketchbook would be more appropriate. At that point I will provide a simple bound-book of blank white paper with a stable front and back page. Whether that is something purchased in a store, or something made by binding paper together with a study front and back as an art activity will be dependent on the factors present at the school. These sketchbooks would be used throughout the duration of the school year so they will contain more blank pages than the lower grade level sketchbooks, approximately 75 pages. These simple sketchbooks would be used in all classes, both introductory and advanced. In addition to the blank sketchbook that all art classes would utilize, the advanced classes would also use of a visual journal in the form of a standard composition notebook. This visual journal would be used in conjunction with the sketchbook. The composition notebook will act as a journal and will be a separate place for written reflections, feedback from other students, evaluations, and journal assignments assigned throughout the course. It is my intention that if I work in a high school setting, I will assign regular journal assignments as well as sketchbook assignments to help provide a well-rounded art experience for my students.

Sketching and the use of sketchbooks can also be used within the art classroom as a means of helping students of all ages to explore different drawing styles and line types, as well as experience historical artists on a less formal level (Letters & Sketchbooks, 2010). Throughout the beginning stages of my research I constantly looked at historical and contemporary artists who used sketching in their creative process. This was not only to explore how they utilized sketching to develop compositions, but also to help me explore different line qualities and the effect they had on me as the viewer. Students can research individually or study as a group a selection

of artists and study their beginning sketches. Students will have the opportunity to experience artists they know formally, on a less formal platform, allowing them to more easily relate and understand their creative process. The artists will become more relatable and students will be less intimidated. Students can experience artists such as Vincent van Gogh, Romare Bearden, Frida Kahlo, Keith Haring, and even Tim Burton through studying and discussing their different sketching styles and how they impacted the artistic outcomes (Letters & Sketchbooks, 2010). Studying and discussing different artists sketches will also expose the students to different drawing styles and line types. As explained throughout a recent issue of Scholastic Art (Letters & Sketchbooks, 2010), students will be provided with the opportunity to study van Gogh's use of horizontal and vertical lines, his sometimes lack of shading and modeling, and how a contour drawing can lay the groundwork for a later masterpiece. Through observation of Romare Bearden, students can explore the uses overlapping, sketching through collage, textures, points of view, and modified contour drawings and how it relates to a later completed work. A study of Frida Kahlo can provide students with an opportunity to experience fanciful sketching, with the incorporation of different line types, such as wide, thin, scribbled, hatched, and continuous lines. Keith Haring provides an opportunity to explore contrast and positive/negative space, as well as the use of simplified outlines and symbolism. Lastly, looking into Tim Burton provides student with a different perception of what makes an artist an artist through looking at his developmental sketches, which show contour and gesture drawings. The students will then be able to see a direct connection between sketching and final product, when they view several of his commonly known movies (Letters & Sketchbooks, 2010).

The process of sketching and reflecting helped me to work through creative problems and consider potential solutions. I plan to encourage this activity with my students as a way of helping them develop solutions to creative problems at the start of every project. I will require at least one to two full class periods at the start of every project to be dedicated to the act of sketching and brainstorming ideas for the process or activity at hand. My hope is that this sketching activity will support this critical developmental stage and act as “an idea-storming process or as a series of thoughts leading to the identification of an appropriate starting-point” (Parker, 2005, p.196). This activity will be universal throughout all classes and all mediums. Sketching in this fashion can be tailored to fit each of the different types of projects presented in the art classroom. Whether the project is incorporating a new medium, style, art history, art criticism, or a new technique, the act of sketching and working through written ideas on paper in a sketchbook will be a key component. I plan to emphasize the importance of this process by including the student’s individual sketchbook and reflections during the assessment process.

Another key component to my body of work was reflecting on my own personal history and life experiences. I looked back as far as I could remember and developed a timeline of my life through pictures. This process helped me to better understand the person that I am, what affected my growth and development, what I am passionate about, and what I value both physically and emotionally. I believe this is something that high school students could benefit from reflection on at such a critical transitional point in their lives. I plan to incorporate a project where students are encouraged to reflect on their own lives and think about what events made them the who they are. I will have my

students narrate that autobiography through a timeline of images similar to the one I produced for this research project. The timeline will be produced in a particular medium, which will be dependent on the resources available, and the level at which the students work. This type of project offers several possibilities for materialization, it may be as simple as drawing and painting or as involved as a sculptural installation. The students will display their personal timelines and will reflect on their own work and the work produced by their classmates. The narrative aspect of this project is essential in the student's self-expression and in helping the viewer understand the meaning behind the work. The key objective of these autobiographical timelines will be that they are understood and informative to the viewers, their peers (Delacruz & Bales, 2010). In the end, my objective is that the students discover something new about themselves and their classmates, as I did throughout my research process.

Throughout my research and creative process I relied heavily on the act of sketching and most importantly, reflecting on those sketches. I listed ideas, feedback, criticism, and alternative creative solutions in my sketchbook. Putting my thoughts and sketches into coherent written statements further enhanced my sketching and reflection process. The act of sketching and self-reflection can be implemented in the art classroom through written reflections, guided critiques, artist statements, and art criticism. Encouraging these types of written expressions and writing exercises provide students with an opportunity to engage in different styles of learning. As suggested by Barnes (2009), "because similar cognitive strategies are used in the practice of both

visual and written literacy, incorporation of authentic written activities not only strengthens students' writing abilities, but reinforces the basic art curriculum as well" (p. 41).

Reflection on Student Teaching

Over the past four months I had the opportunity to complete the last stage of my teaching certification, student teaching. I was lucky enough to have been placed with two teachers who both support and implement the use of sketching and sketchbooks within their own art curriculums. It was a wonderful opportunity to experience sketchbook use at an elementary level and at a high school level. Each of my cooperating teachers used sketchbooks differently.

While my elementary cooperating teacher utilized the student sketchbooks at all grade levels, they were only used regularly with the 4th and 5th grade students. My elementary cooperating teacher used sketchbooks more as a means of practice than for reflection. The students were each issued their own construction paper stapled sketchbook at the beginning of the nine-week term. For the 4th and 5th grade classes they were regularly brought out and used during the first day of studio work for practice and brainstorming. For the kindergarten through 3rd grade classes, she used the sketchbooks in the same manner, but less regularly, probably only two or three times over the seven-week span that I worked in her classroom. I found this building-up process worked well for the students at this school. I noticed that by the 4th and 5th grade the students were more engaged in the sketching process and referenced their sketching and brainstorming work during subsequent classes throughout their studio projects. I found my elementary placement use of sketchbooks to be encouraging and

something I plan to implement in my own classroom. The only factor I may differ in is incorporating sketchbooks more regularly in the 2nd and 3rd grade, while still keeping it introductory in Kindergarten and 1st grades. I believe that building the importance of relying on a sketchbook should start earlier in a student's educational art experience, as this may be the only opportunity the students have to participate in an art class.

In my high school placement, my cooperating teacher also utilized sketchbooks through out all of her classes, both introductory 2D, 3D, Photography and Drawing and Painting. She used sketchbooks as a means of teaching students brainstorming and sketching, as well as a tool for reflection. The students tended to use the sketching and brainstorming in a fairly traditional fashion, spending a day or two in their sketchbooks then moving onto their studio project, and referencing back occasionally. However, it was the Photography class's use of visual/verbal journals and sketchbooks for reflection that I found to be the most fascinating. My cooperating teacher issued a standard composition notebook to each of the students in the class, as a sketchbook and visual/verbal journal. Throughout the time I was in her classroom, she issued three different assignments, each to be completed in this journal. The students were to reflect on and respond to a provided photograph and answer a series of questions. They were to respond both visually, using cut paper, painting, drawing, collage etc., and verbally, using lists, phrases, or complete paragraphs. The photographs ranged from historical to current events, from political to popular culture. The questions they were ask to reflect on and answer ranged from personal opinions to problem and solution suggestions. The work the students produced was completely original and very personal. Each of the students approached the assignment in their own way and produced a unique final

product. The students engaged in various forms of thinking throughout each of journal assignments. After experiencing the various journal reflection assignments, witnessing the results, and hearing the student response, I am confident this is something I will implement into my own art classroom. Through these sketchbook and journal assignments, the students were provided with an opportunity to create personally meaningful and unique outcomes. This is something that I feel is essential in a well-rounded art curriculum.

Contributions in the Field of Art Education

Throughout this research experience I discovered three ways in which my personal research could be applied to and benefit the field of art education. I experienced a great deal of personal exploration and discovery over the duration of my research and artwork production. I explored my past experiences and relationships. I looked into my individual interests and what made me the person I am. The act of truly knowing yourself and understanding what you need and want is something that the field of art education could provide for its students (Thompson, 1995). Additionally, through that personal exploration I was able to develop and create a body of work that holds a deep and significant personal meaning. The exercise of personal meaning-making and personal reflection is something that can benefit students of all ages and levels of expertise inside the art classroom and out (Altman, 2008). Another benefit realized through my research process and methodology was my observational skills. I was always observant to the environment around me, however I found my sketching in real time, real life environment such as parks or on subways, which required me to quickly notice and interpret the people and objects around me, further enhanced my

observational skills. This is something that benefited me in my student teaching experience and helped with classroom management. Helping students develop their own observational skills provides a great contribution of art education and it's students (Hobart, 2005). Lastly, my research has shown me that sketching and reflecting can help with a better comprehension and retention of art history and curriculum material. That consistent reflection and comparison of several different historical artists, style, movements, and exemplars helped me to develop a better understanding of art history. Working through sketching in my own personal sketchbook helped me retain that information and use it for later endeavors. This outcome is certainly something that can benefit the field of art education (Carlson, 2010).

The use of sketching exercises in an early childhood education art classroom provides young students with an opportunity for personal exploration. By allowing these young and impressionable students to explore their own interests through self-guided sketching, student develop a better understanding for themselves. They are provided with endless options of what to draw, how to draw it, how to decorate it, and deciding when it is completed. When young learners are encouraged to draw whatever interests them they are provided with a rare opportunity to create work that pleases them, and not for a teacher, parent, or friend. The students can work on one sketch over a long period of time or complete several sketches during one exercise. The student alone dictates when the drawing is complete, and often times are seeking recognition from a teacher or mentor, not verification that the project was completed correctly and adequately (Thompson, 1995). These students are drawing objects and scenes they are personally meaningful. As they work through their own sketches they are experiencing

self discover, whether they intended to or not. They are most often drawing things that are satisfying to their eye and are of interest to them, something that is not often found in lessons presented by a teacher (Thompson, 1995). Throughout my own research, my main purpose was to explore the benefit of sketching on my composition and within the development of a cohesive body of work, however I later discovered that personal exploration was a natural result of my study. This research through sketching provided me the opportunity to learn a great deal about myself, what I value, find important, and of interest in the world around me. I believe that offering this opportunity to young learners through art classes, teachers can provide a strong foundation of personal knowing for students to build on throughout the remainder of their educational experience.

Another way my research experience and outcomes can benefit the field of art education is through using sketching to create meaning for the individual students. I participated in meaning making throughout my developmental process of taking important events in my life and sketching them out into a single-image representation. I placed a significant and personal meaning on each of my different compositions. This helped me to set a criterion for developing my entire body of work. I set a personal standard for each event and its chosen representation. I developed a greater understanding of my work and the experience I was providing for the viewer. If students are given an opportunity to create something with a great deal of personal meaning, they will also be provided with an opportunity to create a deeper understanding. As shown in previous research, when students apply a personal meaning to text or imagery, they are creating a deeper understanding and appreciation for that information

and that experience (Altman, 2008). If I, as an art educator, can offer this experience in the art classroom I will also provide my students with the opportunity for greater gains in understanding, growth, and meaningful educational experiences.

The development of observation skills is another area in which the field of art education can be impacted from the results of my research method of regular sketching. Throughout the first several months of my research I participated in a great deal of sketching, from sketching my imagination and dreams, to sketching from the world around me, familiar places, sketching from photographs and image references. However, I found that sketching from the world around me and from photographic references had a positive effect on my observation skills, not only from an artist's perspective, but also from an everyday perspective. I became more aware of the people, activities, and situations that were happening around me. When I looked at a photograph of something, I noticed more and more of the little details. I took note of the background, the objects that may have been blurred. I took notice of the small little details that surrounded whatever the subject matter might have been. When sketching from the world that was happening around me, I had to observe quickly and accurately, or my sketched would not look correct. I had to refine my skills of observation so I could quickly take in all those large and small details so I could transfer them to the page of my sketchbook. Previous research has shown "as the observer sketches, the act of sketching forces the observer to become more intimately aware of the subject matter, paying close attention to detail that may not have been noticed otherwise" (Hobart, 2005, p.31). The activity of observing and drawing or sketching from observation is something that can be offered easily and regularly throughout an art curriculum. This is

again, something that can benefit art students throughout every artistic experience, but also in the other academic content areas. If sketching or drawing from observation is offered interdisciplinary manner, then students outside the arts program can benefit from the activity of observing carefully. Research shows that by offering drawing and sketching in other academic content areas such as science, social studies or math, the lesson will "appeal to the right side of the brain, which for some students is more accessible than the left" (Hobart, 2005, p.31). This integrated approach to teaching offers the opportunity to better engage students through a variety of learning styles.

A better understanding and retention of art history information is an area of art education that could be impacted from my personal research (Carlson, 2010). Previously, when studying art history and looking at historical exemplars, I sometimes struggled to retain the information, something that could be common among students of all ages. However, I found the historical details and information I looked at throughout this research sketching method, I retained easily and referenced later. This is again, something that can be exercised as regular practice in the field of art education to help students with better understanding art history concepts. Research shows (Carlson, 2010) a simple exercise could be asking students to study a piece of art in any media by a particular artist and work over several days to reproduce that image in their sketchbooks. The instructor would encourage the students to pay close attention to the details, being careful to include every aspect possible. Simultaneously, with the sketching and drawing in their sketchbooks, the student would be asked to research the biographical information about the artists; where they lived, when they lived, their preferred medium, other famous pieces, etc. At the end of that list the students would

also include a written reflection on the piece they studied and reproduced so carefully. The students would include the prominent element of art and principle of design that were present in the piece. They would reflect on the impact those factors had on the final composition. Through this exercise, students would be working in both drawing and the written word. Previous research shows and supports that they would be working through abstract thoughts and opinions and making concrete sentences and reflections based on those thoughts all at the same time. By balancing the same concepts through drawing, writing, and reflecting, students are better able to retain and recall the information they learned throughout the exercise. By incorporating all these different components into one lesson, students begin processing the historical information about a piece without even realizing it (Carlson, 2010). My research practice and this result in particular, are things that can have a direct positive influence in the field of art education, and more specifically, art history comprehension.

The most valuable insight I have taken away from this arts-based research opportunity is understanding the way I think and process creative problems and discover potential solutions. I realized my own personal artistic style and creative process. I found that by developing an organized and systematic method for brainstorming, reflection, and revision I can develop a well-thought out and cohesive body of work, that I comfortable exhibiting. I believe understanding the individual creative process is essential to being an understanding art teacher and creating a successful environment that nurtures individual student needs. I believe recognizing what method works for each student will benefit not only the teacher in better supporting a students needs and understanding his or her perspective but also the students

themselves, as they will have a better comprehension of their own thought process and creative process. That understanding can be applied to more than just art and design. It is an asset in all realms of today's society. Students can apply that knowledge and process to all academic content areas from science to language arts (Parker, 2005). They can also take that experience into other various aspects of their own lives, outside of school, such as conflict resolution with their friends and family, success in their workplace, and higher education endeavors.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Overview

This research study began with a decision to base all my research methodology on the process of developing a cohesive body of artwork. That methodology involved looking at how extensive use of diverse sketching techniques would effect the development of a body of work, which was exceptionally personal. The sketching technique I developed and used throughout consisted of a regular routine of sketching options, reflecting on the outcomes, critiquing to find areas of improvement, and revising to develop my desired outcome. I found that the influences and impact of my research process of sketching, reflecting, critiquing and revising, were both positive and all encompassing. This sketching technique helped me with developing a project that was most significant and deeply meaningful. It helped me to refine my artistic skills and develop my own individual drawing style for this entire body of work. This research facilitated a better understanding of my way of thinking and problem solving. It enabled me to better understand who I am as a person and what I value in this world and my personal life. This research even influenced and benefited my observation and communication skills.

My research process and body of work was initiated by the decision to use the process of self-reflection and looking at the important and significant events in my life as my subject matter. By the end of this research study, I produced a body of work titled *A Snapshot Timeline*, which depicts the events of my life. This research process that brought me to the final outcome was extensive and took place over several months. The first component of my research began with looking at historical artists for how they used

sketching, line types, and drawing techniques to develop their own compositions. I analyzed and reflected on how those techniques might benefit my own developmental process. I looked into both historical and contemporary artists, and studied each artist for different reasons. Some artists provided a base for drawing technique, some for their line styles, other for the details they chose to include or exclude. I practiced in a literature review of artists. Throughout that aspect of my research process I answered one of my research questions. That being, how can looking at historical exemplars help me to further develop my compositions? My research showed that it would provide me with a better understanding and foundation for the uses of sketch. It helped to solidify the importance of sketching in developing a composition. It also provided me with a wide range of inspiration and alternatives to experiment with regarding mediums, line types, and drawing styles. Most importantly it helped me to develop my own personal drawing style that I preferred for my own works. That drawing style is depicted in the final production of my body of work.

Along the same time I was researching a selection of artists I was also composing a list of important and significant events to include in my narrative timeline. I worked through the list several times throughout my sketching practices. At the point I began studying artists and making the list of events to include in my body of work, I also began research through actively sketching and reflecting. I started with sketching from my dream and imagination. I then moved onto sketching from the world around me. I sketched in my neighborhood, sitting at the pool, at the park, or even the student center at Georgia State. I sketched the people and activities taking place around me. After several weeks of that exercise, I began sketching from photographs containing different

types of imagery. This was a key factor in deciding what events would be included in the final timeline and how they would be represented.

Once I began sketching representations that directly related to my final timeline, I incorporated a process of sketching, critiquing, reflecting, and revising. I followed that process for every component of the final project, including what size the canvases should be, what medium to use, drawing style to employ, and whether or not to incorporate color. Every option was sketched out, reflected on, and then revised to help layout a cohesive body of work that was meaningful to myself as well as the viewer.

After the bulk of my research and artwork production was complete I had the unique opportunity to embark on my student teaching experience, while still developing and researching my thesis works. I used those months to reflect on and further research how sketchbooks, sketching activities, and benefits of sketching could be incorporated into kindergarten through 12th grade art classrooms. That lead me to answer my last research question, how can developing projects through sketch benefit students in the art classrooms in Kindergarten through 12th grade curriculums? I observed and reflected how my cooperating teachers integrated sketchbooks into their everyday art room practices. I also researched to find other educators who have conducted hands-on research and studied the effects of sketchbooks on their students and their art curriculums. I compiled and reflected on the information and concluded that sketching practices and sketchbooks can have a positive impact on students drawing skills, project development, writing skills, observation skills, personal exploration, and art history understanding.

After completing my student teaching experience and reflecting on the field of art education I looked again at my body of work both individually, and as a whole. I reviewed every composition separately to be sure that it's meaning is understood by myself as the artist and individual behind each of the different events, and to the viewer. I then looked at my body of work as whole and reflected on whether or not the viewer would experience the piece as intended, as a cohesive body of work consisting of a personal timeline that is both relatable and evokes personal reflection. It is my belief that this body of work is complete, cohesive, and provides the viewer with a personal and reflective look into my life. It also provides them with the opportunity to reflect on their own life and experiences in the same way.

Related Research Opportunities

Throughout my research process and student teaching experience I realized several additional areas within the field of art education that would benefit from additional research. One of the areas that could offer additional research opportunities is studying the effects of keeping a sketchbook over an extended period of time to show artistic development and growth in students of all ages. Another area that is of interest to me would be looking into the use of sketching as a way to express and develop personal interests and strength at in early childhood general classrooms and art classrooms. One final area that could provide additional research opportunities is a study of the effects of using sketchbooks in other academic content areas outside of the art classroom, such as science, language arts, and social studies. I would be interested in seeing what the effects would be in all grade levels, from kindergarten through 12th grade. I have found the sketching and reflecting has helped me in countless areas of my

personal and academic development and would welcome additional research opportunities to consider those benefits for student in both general education and art education.

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