

Inside Out:

Transforming the Body According to Emotion



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ART 493 SMP I

Fall 2017

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Artist Statement.....	4
Materials and Technique.....	6
Questionnaire 1.....	7
Interview 1.....	8
Mid-Semester Critique Reflection.....	10
Studio Visit Reflections.....	12
Interview 2.....	13
Critical Analysis.....	14
Annotated Bibliography.....	27

Introduction

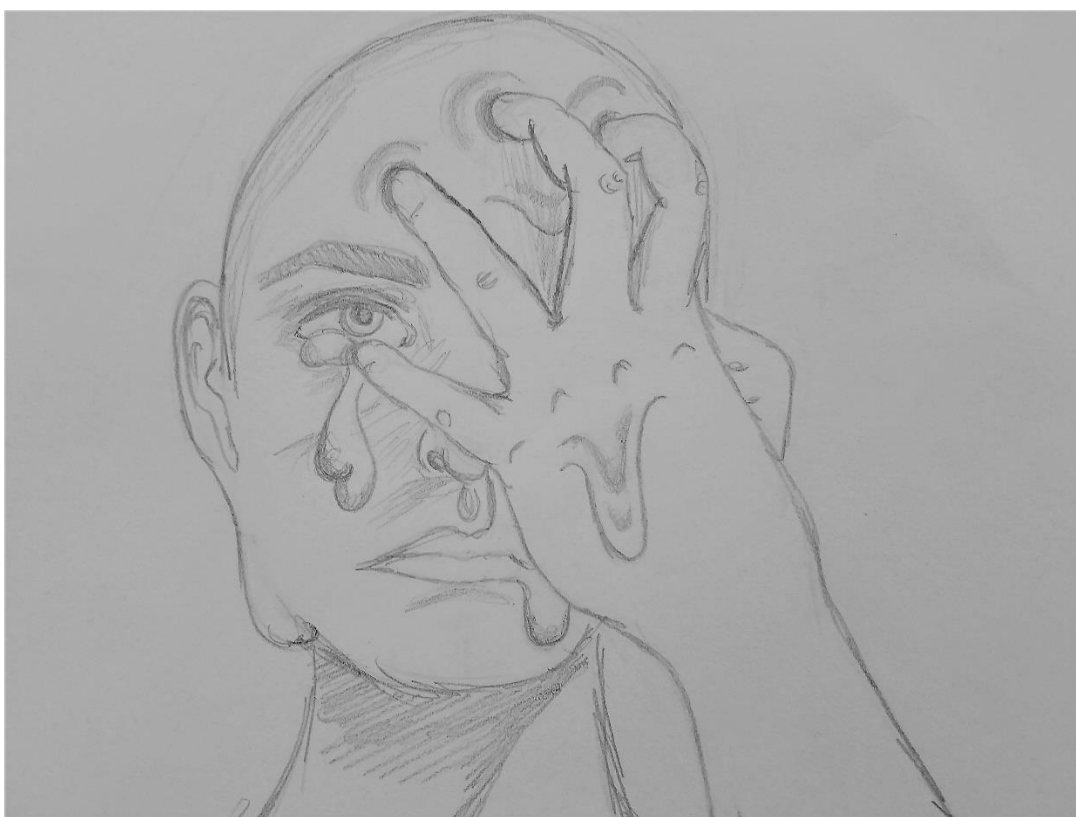
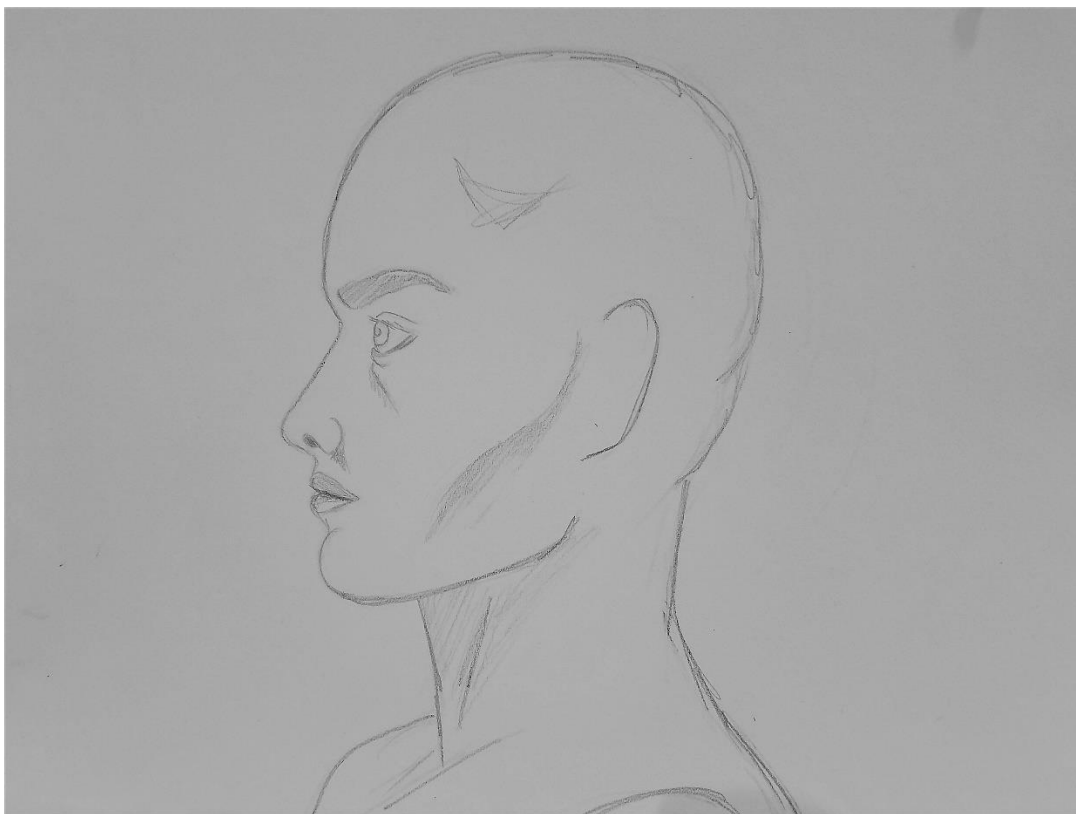
For my SMP, I am using animation to explore the manifestation of negative emotions on the human face. I was inspired to work with this idea for my project because I have always been interested in human expression. Growing up, I had an interest in biology and psychology, particularly in the unusual occurrences in these fields. Additionally, I think being raised in Catholic schools has only fostered this interest. Parts of the Bible and Catholic tradition hinges on the dark and unnatural, and much of traditional Catholic-centric art that we studied in school was focused on dramatization of biblical stories and religious teachings. Though my art is not focused in religion, this has translated into being interested in illustrating darker themes, with charcoal being a good medium to further represent these themes. Being a computer science and art double major, I was also interested in how these two fields connect, and animation is one of the ways in which these fields are brought together.

My project is about the portrayal of internal emotional states onto the physical human face. I am interested in this concept because oftentimes, it is impossible to ascertain how someone is feeling through visual means alone—our faces don't always give away our internal states, even in cases of extreme emotion. I aim to reflect nonspecific negative emotional states directly onto the face, forcing it to morph and change with the weight of the emotion. I am purposefully keeping the emotion being portrayed vague—for example, in one piece, the face I illustrate is melting. This doesn't connect to a specific emotion that is able to be named; rather, it can be a sum of several overwhelming emotions together causing the person to literally be spilling over.

Artist Statement

Oftentimes, we cannot tell one's emotions just by looking at his or her appearance. There is always something occurring beneath the surface that we can't recognize. This project is an exploration of this concept through charcoal animation. The goal is to express the inner states that are familiar to all of us, though not usually recognizable on the surface, and to parallel that inner state with the physical appearance. Specifically, this project is about depicting how negative emotions and psychological states affect the physical body. Charcoal is used for its austere and heavy quality, accentuating the negative aspects of the expressions, and animation is used to show drastic change between the original human form, and the creature it becomes in the end. I decide to pursue this particular concept because I am interested in the effects that negativity can have on people not only mentally, but also physically, and to make visible emotions that we usually can't see.





Materials and Technique

To accomplish my goal in illustrating emotional states, I am using charcoal animation. As previously mentioned, I have chosen charcoal because of its dark, austere quality, which will further add to the feelings of intense emotional negativity I am aiming to portray. I chose to also use animation to make the transformation between a normal human face and the resulting creature more fluid, since having several drawings next to each other detailing the transformation would inevitably exclude certain moments. Animation also gives the works more of a lifelike quality despite their impossibility. In order to animate the pieces, I start with a base expression on the same face for each animation. I chose to use the same face each time in order to emphasize that the face itself, the individual at the start, serves only as a blank canvas in order to project these feelings onto. It is not meant to serve as a specific individual because everyone experiences these feelings at one time or another. To transform the expression and add movement, I add and erase charcoal lines gradually over time, pausing to document the change with the camera in order to create the stop-motion animation once I have completed the transformation. In order to create an animation as opposed to a time-lapse video of a drawing, it is important to both add and erase the charcoal to create movement. This is part of the reason why some of the faces change position, for example. I chose to do four animations illustrating different types of transformations: cracking, melting, dissolving, and expanding.



Questionnaire 1

Context:

1. List and describe the contexts that your work my fit in:

My work will fit in the contexts of emotion, transformation, and expressionism. My animations will focus on the physical manifestation of one's emotions and how those emotions affect the body.

2. Why are you interested to create work around these particular contexts?

Animation gives the artist a unique opportunity to depict change in a fluid way. I want to show extreme change, from the natural to the bizarre, in order to be able to fully take advantage of the capabilities of animation. I am choosing to work with this particular idea of how negative emotions in particular affect the body in a physical manner because human emotion continues to be a relevant topic and is especially interesting today when compared to the rest of our world, of which technology and things like artificial intelligence and the mimicking of emotion take place. Additionally, I will be working in charcoal, which I believe is best paired with themes with darker undertones, since the medium itself is used to create heavier, darker images as opposed to mediums like pencil or watercolor.

3. Research and develop a list of at least 5 artists that works in these contexts and list them accordingly, 2 of these artists must be someone whom you have not encountered before.

Artist 1: William Kentridge, Context: Human experience in political contexts

Artist 2: Rico Lebrun, Context: Human inhumanity

Artist 3: Shin Kwangho, Context: Merging of inner state with physical appearance

Artist 4: Ruth Chase, Context: Human spirit and the environment

Artist 5: Maria Núñez, Context: Anomalous bodies

Materials:

4. What are the main materials that you are planning to use?

I will be using charcoal to draw the different frames for each animation.

5. List down specific history, symbolism and associations these materials may have.

Charcoal has been used since early civilization. It is a symbol of change, and in religious contexts is a symbol of the corruptible body. It is associated with fire, and recently with cleansing, as in the case of charcoal detoxes.

Interview 1

1. What was your first memorable art experience and how is it relevant to what you are doing now?

My first memorable art experience was probably when I was little and would draw animals with my mom. It isn't super relevant to what I'm doing now. My SMP deals with emotion, which is something I feel when reflecting on memories such as that one, but other than that it's not very relevant.

2. Who is your favorite artist and why?

I think Van Gogh is my favorite artist. I always really liked the style of his work and the emotion behind it, especially *Starry Night*. I think I am drawn to the fluidity of the brush strokes and the emotion you can feel in them.

3. What draws you to the medium and materials you work in?

I'm working with charcoal and animation for my SMP. I really enjoy the fluidity of animation, because it can capture the full transformation of things. Charcoal is very dark and heavy and also very malleable—it can be smudged and moved around on the page. It's also good for depicting darkness and shadow, which works well to depict the negative emotions included in my SMP.

4. What, in your mind makes a work of art successful?

If the viewer has an emotional response to the work, or if the art is visually appealing, I think it is successful. I don't think one idea of success can be applied to every work, but basically, if you properly convey what you want to convey with your work, then it is successful.

5. What motivates you to make art?

I make art in order to express ideas that I can't express elsewhere or in any other way. What makes it really special is just be able to visualize my thoughts. I like being able to translate what's in my head onto the page.

6. How is your art a response to the world you live in?

Parts of things that I draw are based on the natural world, and it is sometimes a reflection of how the world is making me feel, as well as what I want to think about and expand upon. I'm looking at the natural world and thinking about changing it or enhancing it in some way.

7. Ideally, where do you see yourself in five years? How is art a part of that? Hopefully I'll be somewhere in the animation or game design industry, where I can make things that are creative and that people can enjoy, but also be practical.

8. How do you think art connects with other disciplines? What disciplines (if any) does your artwork connect with?

I am an art and computer science double major; I am using animation to connect the classic art of drawing with technology. They are both always expanding and changing, and people are always making new developments in both fields.

9. How does your choice of medium(s) affect your work and contribute to its meaning?

With animation, it's easier to show the full transformation from natural to unnatural, and charcoal is good to depict dark emotions, which my SMP is about.

10. What about making art intimidates you?

When I start a new project and I have an idea about how I want it to look in my head, I worry that I won't be able to properly portray it as accurately as I want to, or that I will produce bad art.

Mid-Semester Critique Reflection

After completing the mid-semester critique and receiving feedback, I have a more accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of my work. During the critique, I showed my first animation, which served as a practice animation because I decided to use the same face for every animation, and I showed two other animations of the same work. These two other animations were the edited and unedited versions, one with holds in place to slow it down and one without any holds on frames. The weakness of the edited version of the newest animation was mainly that it was not fluid enough. The unedited version was a lot smoother without the holds, which the viewers responded more positively to. Originally, I was thinking that having the holds in place would give viewers more time to process what they were seeing, but after the responses to both versions I think that I was editing the animation to be unnecessarily slow. It was suggested I should focus on having more drawn frames rather than holding certain frames in order to maintain the fluidity, which I agree with. Additionally, another critique was that the animation was more a record of my drawing and less a legitimate animation, and that I should think more about the action of the drawing. I actually had the same thought in looking at my work before the critique, so I also agree with this point. Since I have the animation almost entirely made up of the addition of lines with the charcoal rather than transforming the face through erasing as well, it comes across as a time lapse video of a drawing more than an animation. I can fix this by incorporating more erasure into my work rather than just drawing. Finally, I should make the background more active, like in my first animation.

Strengths of my work were the concepts and the actual creatures at the end of the animations, as depicted in the idea sketches I passed around for my next two animations. The animations without the holding of frames were also fluid enough to be interesting to viewers.

In moving forward with my work, it was suggested that I find more artists to look at and draw inspiration from for my animations. In deciding how to display my final work in the gallery, it was noted that I shouldn't put the animation on a loop, which I agree with, so I need to find a smooth way of transitioning each animation from the ending back to the start. I need to start experimenting with showing my work through projectors and what kind of sound, if any, I should put with the animations.



Drawings from "Untitled 1" (2017)

Reflection – Studio Visit 1

For my first faculty critique, I invited visiting professor Giulia Piera Livi to come to my studio and give me feedback on my first three animations. She gave me a few good ideas about strengths and weaknesses of my work up to that point and where I should go from there. The main strength was the erasure and subsequent addition of new elements to the animation, as opposed to only the addition of new elements, which came across as more of a time-lapse video than an animation, which I agree with. She also suggested I use a charcoal pencil or a regular pencil and increasing the contrast of the final video to make the lines appear darker, to preserve the more precise lines found in my sketches that gets lost in using a stick of charcoal. I find that I draw differently with a stick of charcoal as opposed to any type of pencil, and liked that my lines were messier and less precise because I felt that at times it better expressed the emotion I was thinking about when animating. I do agree that more precise lines would be beneficial at certain points.

For the display in the gallery, she suggested that I put up my sketches of my base face, the face I use at the start of every animation, next to the animations to make it clearer to the viewer that it is in fact the same face used each time. I am not opposed to doing this but have not decided if I will or not. In moving forward with next semester, she encouraged me to think about continuing the narrative of portraying strong emotions but ones that were not necessarily negative, such as love or lust.

Reflection – Studio Visit 2

During my second in-studio critique, Professor Jessye McDowell and current residential artist Yeon Jin Kim gave me feedback on my work. The main suggestion they had was to add sound. This was something I had thought about earlier, particularly to use white noise in the background of the animations, but I had given up the idea because I didn't think I had a valid reason for including sounds. Their suggestion was to not use white noise, but different abstract sounds like scratching, tapping, and other such noises in order to enhance the emotional experience for the viewer. I plan on recording sounds like this to test them with my animations. They also gave me a couple animators to look up and some advice for editing the videos after shooting.

Interview 2

1. Going forward, what will you do to make sure your animations flow together smoothly?

The main thing I need to work on in order to ensure better fluidity in my animations is to draw more frames, with less difference between each frame for a very gradual, fluid change.

2. Will you be redoing the last animation you made in order to address the issues of flow that were brought up by Lisa?

I would like to redo the last animation, but I will wait until I have finished the other three in order to make sure I have the four I wanted to complete by the end of the semester. If I have time after completing the other three animations, I will redo the one I showed during this past critique.

3. Based on the advice you received during the critique, how will this work be displayed in Boyden Gallery?

My current goal is to have the four animations projected onto screens that will form a space that the viewer can walk into and be surrounded by these animations.

4. Why did you choose to make your animations in black and white, as opposed to using color? How do you think that lack of color affects the overall mood of the work?

Because I am depicting negative emotional states, I wanted the works to be colorless and dark. I used charcoal for this express purpose. I would use color to show positive emotional states.

5. What do you want the main takeaway of people viewing your exhibit to be?

I want people to think about what could be going on beneath the surface of the people around them. Too often, we feel disconnected because we believe no one else is feeling what we're feeling or going through similar things that we are, and that is rarely true. The vast majority of us feel the same way at different points, and feel these emotions intensely.

6. Who is your target audience with this work/ do you have a target audience?

I don't have a particular target audience in mind. I think regardless of age, we have all felt similar emotions at some point, and I think a lot of us, no matter our background, can identify with some of the feelings I aim to portray.

7. Is there a particular reason you are making all of the base faces identical?

I chose to make all the faces at the start of the animation identical in order to emphasize the face's role as a blank canvas upon which I can illustrate different emotional states. The person as an individual doesn't matter in this context. The point is that we all can feel these things and have no idea that other people are feeling them.

8. What do you think is the strongest aspect of your project so far?

I think the strongest aspects of my work are the concept and medium. The concept of expressing the inner state onto the outer appearance is interesting and I think animation is a compelling way of doing this.

Critical Analysis

Comparison to William Kentridge

William Kentridge is the artist that has been my main source of inspiration for the type of project I am working on. His work was also in charcoal animation, and looking at his work inspired me to pursue the same medium and method. His animations deal frequently with issues of a political nature, centered in his hometown of Johannesburg. He prefers to deal with real-life issues in his work, but ones that evoke empathy from his viewers. In his artist's statement, Kentridge states, "I am interested in a political art...My drawings don't start with a 'beautiful mark'. It has to be a mark of something out there in the world. It doesn't have to be an accurate drawing, but it has to stand for an observation, not something that is abstract, like an emotion."¹ In his work, he doesn't use storyboards, or start out with a specific idea for the main theme of the film. Rather, he starts with images that he finds interesting and builds a story as he continues to illustrate. It has a rough style to it, found in the clear smudge and erasure marks as well as the clear build-up of charcoal on the page from frame to frame. I use the same technique of adding marks and erasing on a single frame, but my works do not start from something observable, but

¹ "William Kentridge." *Emotional Systems*, Strozziina. www.strozzina.org/emotional_systems/e_wk.htm.

rather an emotion. Kentridge begins his work by drawing from something he can physically observe, while my animations each began with a feeling. My works are also focused inward while his works usually contain some type of social commentary. Like him, however, I don't usually start out with a storyboard—I find that most of my ideas for how the final animation should turn out come to me as I'm in the middle of drawing it.



Drawing from “Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris” by William Kentridge (1989)



“Drawing from Other Faces” by William Kentridge (2011)



“Drawing from Stereoscope” by William Kentridge (1998-1999)



Drawing from “Untitled 1” (2017)

Comparison to KwangHo Shin

Another artist that has influenced my work is KwangHo Shin, a Korean artist that uses thick layers of oil paint to depict emotion on the surface of the human face. His images are rooted in abstract expressionism, as he frequently combines realistic forms with abstract splashes of color to reflect the emotions he is trying to convey to the viewer. When asked about his thought process behind using both realism and abstraction, Shin says, “In order to express human emotions that are difficult to express in words, I try to express using the most versatile visual language. For that reason I do not decide on a particular form or idea when doing work.”² I think for my project also, it’s more important for me to focus on the emotion or feeling rather than the face itself. The face that appears in the beginning of each animation only serves as a “before” image to emphasize the extreme change that affects any person in the presence of strong emotions. Additionally, I decided not to limit myself to depicting specific emotions, such as anger and sadness, but rather to use whatever means I can to capture a nonconcrete emotional state. The emotions that I depict in my animations do not have specific words attached to them, but are rather a combination of feelings that can’t always be explained. While his oil paintings differ from mine visually, his charcoal drawings are similar in his use of heavy lines and clear erasure marks rather than blending the charcoal into the page for a smoother form.

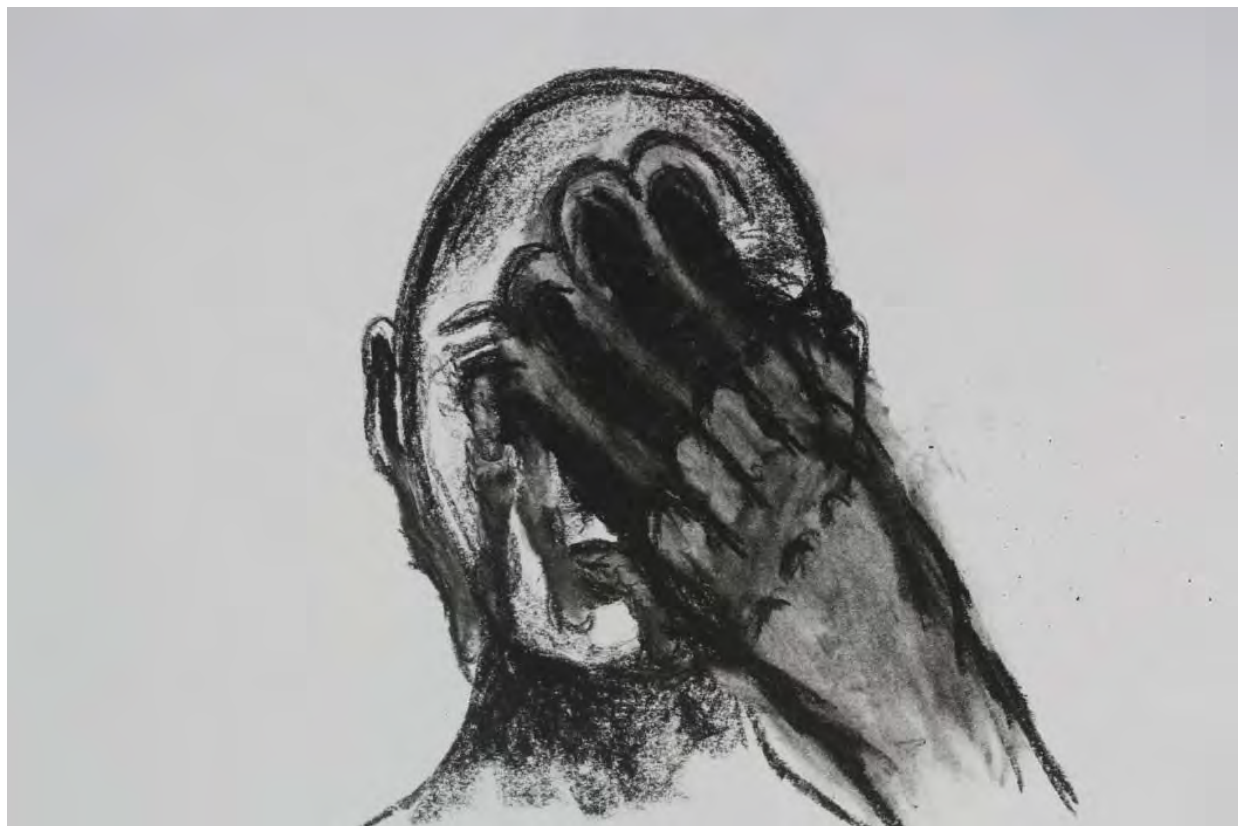
² “Artnet Asks: KwangHo Shin.” *Artnet News*, Artnet. 6 July 2016. news.artnet.com/exhibitions/kwangho-shin-interview-526526.



“Untitled 16NY20” by KwangHo Shin (2016)



“Untitled” by KwangHo Shin (2013)



“Untitled 2” (2017)

Comparison to Marina Núñez

Marina Núñez is a Spanish digital artist from Madrid whose work focuses on the inhuman/human hybrid. As described on her website, her figures are “different beings, aberrant, monstrous, those that exist on the margin or against the canon. The anomalous bodies...tell us about a metamorphic, hybrid, multiple identity. It recreates a destabilized and impure subjectivity for which otherness is not something alien, but basically constitutes the human being.”³ She is interested in what is rejected from society and the motivation behind the rejection while maintaining a sense of elegance and beauty, and also the hybridization of what is rejected and what is accepted (see figure 4). My work has a similar tone to it, with the incorporation of monstrous or otherworldly elements on a plain human face. I am also interested in exploring duality and hybridization in my animations by mapping the inner onto the outer to create new forms.



“Sin título (monstruos)” by Marina Núñez (2011)

³ Núñez, Marina. “Biography.” *Marina Núñez*, www.marinanunez.net/biografia/bio/.



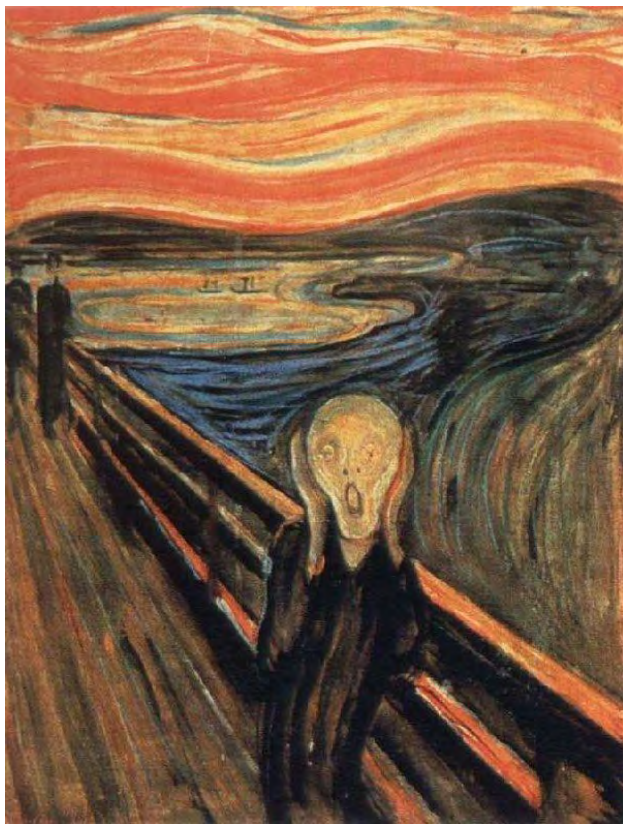
“Red” by Marina Núñez (2006)



Drawing from “Untitled 3” (2017)

Connections with Expressionism

Expressionism was a movement beginning in the late 19th century and early 20th century that sought to present the world in a subjective or emotional manner rather than strict realism. Expressionist painters often depicted strong feelings of anxiety or other turbulent states. Famous examples of this include Edvard Munch’s 1893 painting *The Scream* and Vincent van Gogh’s 1889 painting *The Starry Night*. Both have elements of realism but are exaggerated in some way in order to show the intensity of the emotion behind it. In a similar way, my work includes both elements of realism, as seen in the face in the beginning of the animation, and exaggeration of emotion shown directly on the face.



The Scream by Edvard Munch (1893)



The Starry Night by Vincent van Gogh (1889)



Drawing from "Untitled 2" (2017)

Annotated Bibliography

“Artnet Asks: KwangHo Shin.” *Artnet News*, Artnet. 6 July 2016.

news.artnet.com/exhibitions/kwangho-shin-interview-526526.

KwangHo Shin’s 2016 interview with the Artnet news source is detailed in this source. Within the interview, he talks about the type of art he is intending to do, the movements he associates himself with, and his motivations behind making his work the way he does. This interview is useful to me because Shin is one of my source artists, since he has a similar idea behind his work.

Gordon, Donald E. "On the Origin of the Word 'Expressionism'." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (1966): 368-385.

Gordon talks about how the word “expressionism” was used before and after the Expressionist movement, and who the early artists falling into that category were. The article also goes into detail about what it means to be an expressionist, which is relevant to the style of work that my animations are about.

Jiménez, José. “The Fire of Vision.” Ed. Comunidad de Madrid y Artium, *Centro-Museo Vasco de Arte Contemporáneo* 15-21. Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2015.

Jiménez wrote this article about the work of Marina Núñez. He writes about different aspects of her works, including the relevance of eyes and vision in her pieces and the types of hybridity found in them, including human and machine hybrids. This critical analysis of her work is useful to me because she is one of my source artists, and her creature figures are along a similar idea as my animations.

Núñez, Marina. “Biography.” *Marina Núñez*, www.marinanunez.net/biografia/bio/.

In her biography found on her website, Núñez outlines what her work is about and her goals in making her works the way she does. She talks about the importance of illustrating the other and the other combined with the normal.

Penwell, Derek L. “Education in the Virtues: Tragic Emotions and the Artistic Imagination.” *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2009, pp. 9–31. JSTOR,

JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25656245.

In this article, Penwell talks about the importance of tragic emotions from a moral standpoint and how we can appropriately place value on them without romanticizing them. Additionally, he talks about artistic representations of tragedy and Greek philosophy surrounding the issue.

Stecker, Robert. "Expression of Emotion in (Some of) the Arts." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 42, no. 4, 1984, pp. 409–418. JSTOR, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/430214.

Stecker's article is about how we view emotion, the different components of emotion, and the vocabulary and way we talk about it. This is useful to me because since my project deals heavily with emotion, it is helpful to think about how to talk about it and the language I use in new ways.

Tunić, Srđan. "Discovering William Kentridge: Understanding politically engaged contemporary African art from a distance and how it may raise awareness about personal politics of location." *Seismopolite Journal of Art and Politics*, Seismopolite, 15 May 2013, www.seismopolite.com/discovering-william-kentridge-contemporary-african-art-from-a-distance.

This article goes in depth about the work of William Kentridge, one of my source artists. Tunić details the different animations Kentridge has done as well as his motivations for illustrating them and their place in a political and social context.

"William Kentridge." *Emotional Systems*, Strozziina, www.strozziina.org/emotional_systems/e_wk.htm.

This website from an exhibition gallery in Florence gives a brief overview of William Kentridge's work and technique, as well as an excerpt from Kentridge's own artist statement.