

The Process: Fall 2015
Daniel Skibicki
Studio Art SMP

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From The Start

Summer Assignment

This past summer, the summer of 2015, we were all prompted with a book called, "The Art Life", and an empty sketchbook. With these two materials, we were told to read the book, look at art, go to museums and take note of whatever ideas we had or what ever caught our interest. For the first day of class, we needed to have a 100-word artist statement that declared our interests and motivations that we read aloud to the class. After reading our first artist statements, we were then introduced to the Marathon. The Marathon was a 20-day challenge where we had to create 20 works in 20 days while abiding by certain prompts and rules.

100-word artist statement

I'm interested in painting but also drawing and photography. I've never really delved into sculpture. I like to work with paint because of its fluidity, which probably can be related to my interest in capturing movement and motion. I want to show movements and progressions but in a single, 2-D frame. Much like Marcel Duchamp's, "Nude Descending a Staircase No.2". Aside from that painting, I tend to like more realistic representations in paintings as opposed to pure abstraction. I think a painting should tell a story and the stories that I wish to tell are complicated but are not something that I think should be up for any interpretation, but rather on that leads in a certain direction without giving too much of my intentions away at face value.

Marathon Work

Untitled 1
Watercolor and ink on paper



Untitled 2
Watercolor and ink on paper



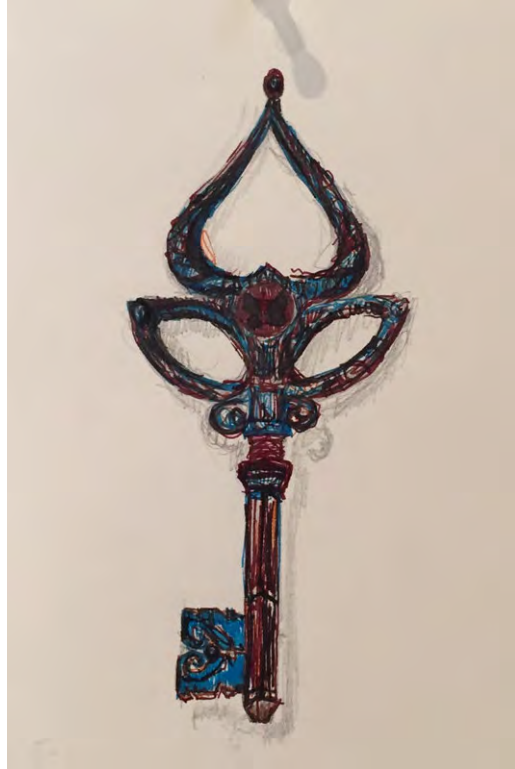
Minimalism 1
Acrylic on paper



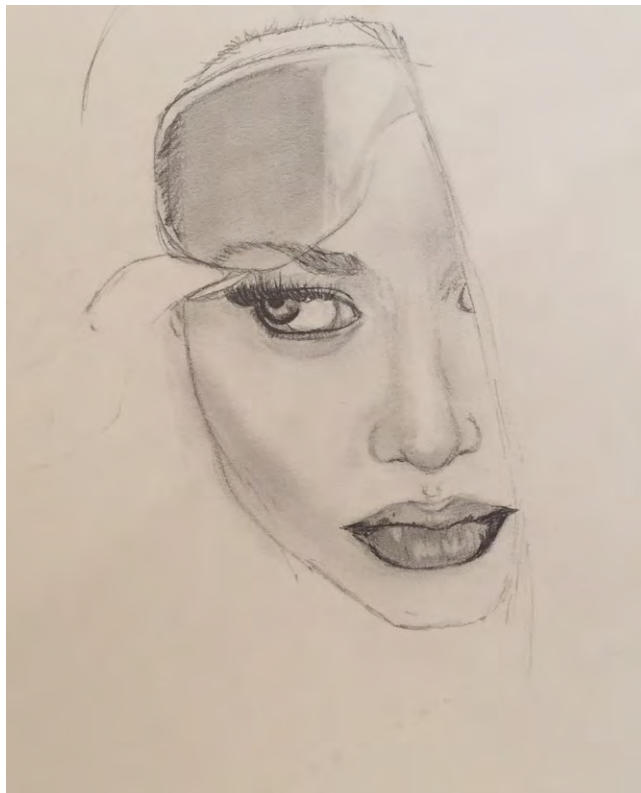
Minimalism 2
Acrylic on paper



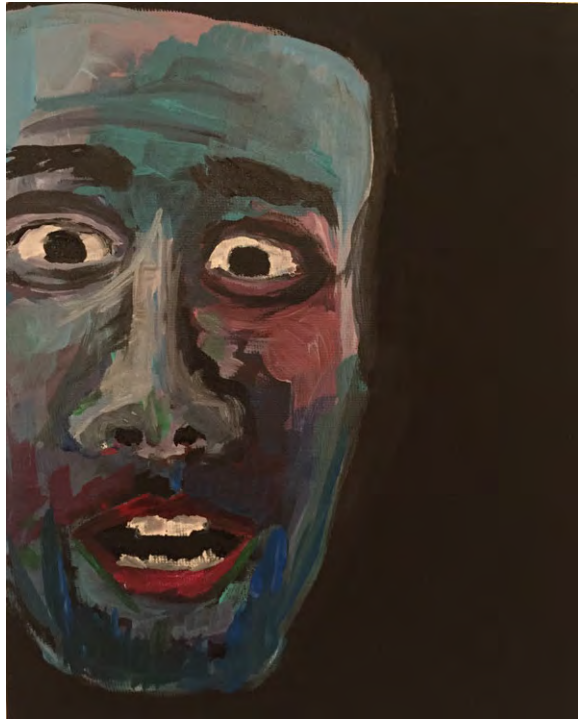
Key to Happiness
Marker on paper



Dearest, Sweet Aayliah
Graphite on paper



Self Portrait 1
Acrylic on canvas



50 things I hate/love
Collage



Marathon Write - Up

Starting the marathon was overwhelming in it of itself and I found myself spending more time contemplating how to balance and achieve the minimum goal of twenty art works in twenty days as opposed to actually just diving in head first. Time, was and still is, a very sensitive subject for me. Normally prone to procrastination, I found this task to be extremely overbearing. I started out with work that I was comfortable with. The guidelines and prompts that were available to us helped with giving me a push but I soon found myself still wasting time thinking instead of doing. I finally delved in and drew a portrait, something I was comfortable and accustomed to making. The amount of time and effort I put into it, however, was not something that was going to make the marathon process and easier. I had to start thinking in terms that were different to me and were outside of my comfort zone.

This realization, however, was not easy. I found myself struggling to produce anything that was not heavily rendered. In school, I always disliked things such as minimalism and anything contemporary. I didn't understand how something that appeared to take such minimal effort could be so highly regarded while people who can bridge the plane between canvas and the physical world were not as highly popularized. Balancing this internal opposition with everything that was going in life and school was not easy nor was it conducive to being creative. I had never forced myself to be creative before, it was always just something that seemed to come along as it pleased. It wasn't until Sue challenged me to pursuit the very subject that I disliked the most—minimalism, that I began to make a continuous effort to produce work for the marathon.

Whether my attempts at minimalism were successful or not is out of the question, but what I think is really important is that I reached out and tried something that I was not comfortable with. The body of works I created stretched from charcoal and pen drawings, to collage to acrylic and watercolor paintings and I would say that they all came out rather different from one another. You can clearly see the difference between highly rendered and what was quickly done but it is not a negative shift. I think that one of the most successful pieces I made was the watercolor and ink painting where I painted with watercolor first, making sure that the colors blended and that I left negative space inside the area that I was

painting and then filled those areas in with ink in a linear yet corporeal shifting type manner.

Even though that was, in my opinion, one of the more minimalistic or abstract pieces I've done, Carrie Patterson pointed out that the fact that the blending was very rendered and that the line work with the pen was crisp that that was what made it successful. I guess bridging away from detailed rendering is harder than I expected. Not only was changing from incorporating a lot of detail into minimal detail difficult, the open studio marathon exhibit was rather taxing as well. I had never really cared what people thought of my work—good or bad, I merely like to make things. I do not do it for the appraisal or criticism, but watching people come into your studio, look around really quick, and then leave without a word just fills you with anxiety. It made me wonder what people thought, whether they liked what I did or if they were secretly talking down about it or maybe they were just quiet and did not think that it was their place to give that kind of feedback.

The feedback that was given was extremely helpful and insightful. Although there was not a lot of it, I found the pieces that were given to me were of much value in figuring out where to go next. One person, who I did not get the name of, pointed out something to me about my work and probably myself for that matter that I had never thought of. This person told me that my work was very geometric in nature. Even the way that I had hung my work around the studio was in a very organized, geometric fashion. Everything was evenly spaced on the wall in a single row. On the moveable wall, the work was hung symmetrically and had clear, uniform lines running through all of them. It actually made me think about Mondrian. But anyway, this man then looked at my digital work that was a result of one of our collaborative pieces. He thought it was very intriguing that out of all my work that was geometric, even the collage, that once I delved into the realm of geometric abstraction through digital imaging, that all of it went out the window. On the computer, everything was going every which way it possibly could. He even gave some suggestions as to future projects that could include printing out a digital work similar to the one from the marathon and then proceeding to work on it by hand with either pen and ink or paint and to see what comes from it.

Tommy Dahlberg was also very helpful. Even though he visited the studio right before the show ended, I felt like his feedback and insight was very thoughtful and he offered valuable information and sources that could help me do

what I want with my work. He introduced me to the Futurists as part of a conversation we had had about motion being captured in a two dimensional form. Different from cubism, the futurists did not portray an object as viewed from all sides in one form but rather all sides in a progression of forms. This really interested me and caused me to want to learn more about them.

The final part of the marathon that was helpful was being able to look at everyone's work and see how different he or she all were from one another. Also, the comments and insight that the other students offered and even just the explanations of their own work was very intriguing. This process as a whole allowed me to venture out of my comfort zone and approach new ways of creating different works and even pursuing different paths during SMP.

Source to Self

Putting myself into a continuum of artists through a contemporary lens, the artist that I would cite as being most influential to my work at this point in time is Edward Hopper. Edward Hopper, born on July 22, 1882, had a broad spectrum of experience with different mediums such as illustration, printmaking and painting. These areas of focus led Hopper to being a student under the American artist, Robert Henri, who would become one of the most influential teachers he ever had. Hopper deemed Henri as the facilitator of the transition in his palette from being predominantly bright to being more on the darker side of the color spectrum. This change in palette is initially what drew me to Edward Hopper, but the content of his works as well as his philosophies on art making are crucial aspects to his influence on my art.

Edward Hopper was a student under the American painter, Robert Henri and claims that he was the most influential teacher he ever had. The most important element that Hopper gained from his studies under Henri was the use of a darkened palette. Henri himself had made the switch from a bright palette to a dark palette and deemed it as being fundamental in his achievement of portraying the emotion of the sitter. He had teachings centered on that idea, one being “You don’t look at a person to see action—but emotion” (Pearlman 146), and “Painting is not a realization of the thing itself but the expression of it” (Peralman 147). His pupils took these philosophies and encompassed them in their own works.

In terms of transcribing an emotion or sentiment, it has been noted that while training under Robert Henri, Edward Hopper developed his own execution of employing mood and atmosphere in his works. “While he did not imitate much from Henri’s style, he did work in the dark tones recommended by his teacher to better render mood and atmosphere” (Levin 10). His influence from Henri was crucial to his works and is also evident. I find that in comparison to my own work and artistic interest, that I, like Hopper, employ a sentiment in my paintings. Whereas Hopper uses more gestures that are inclined to lead the viewer to speculate on the emotion of the viewer, my work

more so encompasses a mood through the use of contrast and dramatic or exaggerated facial expressions.

It is also notable from Henri's teachings at the "Ashcan School" that Edward Hopper's near obsession with cityscapes is due to Henri sending his students into the city to experience life and nature; two aspects that are apparent in Hopper's paintings and drawings. "As the leader of the "Ashcan School," he proclaimed that all life was fit subject matter for the artist. At a time classical motifs and nondescript landscapes, Henri sent his pupils into the streets of the city—New York's Lower East Side with its immigrant population, its peddlers and its poverty—where life in the raw could be studied and recorded" (Perlman XV). From this, Hopper's heavy influence by nature and his interaction with his surroundings are obvious. Several of his paintings are of nature scenes or landscapes and cityscapes; even his paintings of people are more so about the surroundings than they are of the people themselves.

In comparison to my own work, I too rely on my experiences and surroundings, even though my definition of nature may be different from that in the context that is used by Hopper himself, nature has a crucial influence in my work. For Hopper, nature was the surrounding environment, for me however, I view nature as all of the different factors that add up to our existence as humans. In my work, I aim to create a narrative story that is telling of my own experiences. According to Gail Levin, author of the book, "Edward Hopper", Hopper was never a narrative painter, but it is quite obvious that his works emit a narrative sentiment. They encompass private scenes that are eager to tell a story.

Edward Hopper claims, "My aim in painting has always been the most exact transcription possible of my most intimate impression of nature" (Goodrich 161). I find this very interesting because while his works are not derived from photographic sources yet he claims them to be "the most exact transcription possible", and in doing so, in my opinion, is commenting on two things. One of which is the subjectivity of the definition of "exact", and two being that in art, transcriptions don't only encompass a photo-realistic quality or technique, but rather the transcription of a sentiment or emotion.

The work of Edward Hopper invites the viewer to be a spectator who is granted a private view into “a life separate and silent, yet crystal clear” (Goodrich 105). Using this idea of alienating the viewer as a basis, contemporary artist, Ralph Goings, exhibits just that, but with a more photo-realistic approach. His works mostly are of scenes in diners, but there are works that are evident of his influence from Edward Hopper, specifically his “Nighthawks”. “Nighthawks” is a popular work by Edward Hopper that shows the outside of a diner, the surrounding buildings and the inside of the diner. A yellow light lights the diner, drawing the viewer to it while the surrounding cityscape is constituted of dark values and tones. “Tiled Lunch Counter” by Ralph Goings shows the inside of a diner but with a lighter palette. It however evokes the same sense of alienation as “Nighthawks” and several other Hopper paintings from the position of the people in the diner and the vantage point that the viewer takes on.

On another level, I find many comparisons in terms of thought or philosophy on art between Hopper and myself. One quote that stood out to me was “I am interested primarily in the vast field of experience and sensation which neither literature nor a purely plastic art deals with” (Goodrich 163). I found that this quote really caught my attention because in my own art, I am working from experience and portraying my experience and emotions on a certain topic. Most recently this topic has been my relationship with growing up as a homosexual man and the hardships and fears that I experienced and still do encounter today. I’ve spent countless times and used different methods of relating to texts and videos and confessionals but none seemed to resonate or even portray as much of my story and experience as it did when I translated them into paint.

Another quote from Hopper is, “Why I select certain subjects rather than other, I do not exactly know, unless it is that I believe them to be the best mediums for a synthesis of my inner experience” (Goodrich 163). Bridging from the above passage about the relationship between sensation and portrayal, I find that I too use painting as the best manner of synthesis of my experiences.

In conclusion, in citing Edward Hopper as my “source to self” artist, I put myself into a continuum of artists bridging off of those who influenced

Edward Hopper as well as those artists with whom he left a lasting impression on their work. The teachings of Robert Henri gave way for Edward Hopper to delve into the utilization of a darker palette in order to achieve mood and atmosphere in his works. This mood, most often a feeling of alienation or spectatorship, paired along with his philosophies on art are what drew me to claiming him as an influence in my own works.

Edward Hopper, *Automat*, 1927



In this painting, Edward Hopper splits his composition in thirds, leaving the main subject in the bottom third portion of the piece. The upper two-thirds of the piece encompass a large window that provokes an emptiness in the piece yet takes up most of the space. The figure in the bottom third of the work sits by herself and reinforces this sentiment of loneliness. The contrast between the blackness of the window with the white table top and windowsill aid in the provocation of a feeling of being empty as well as the subtle want for change. Also, the lights reflected in the window lead directly to the figure, almost like guiding lights, even though the lights

Daniel Skibicki, *Oppression*, 2015



In this painting, a man is depicted in a struggle with other people. Only the arms and hands of the other people are viewable as they try to hold back the central figure. The work is monochromatic with an underlying purple tone. The contrast that is created between the dark background and the brightness of the central figure that is then layered with the darkness of the arms and hands, creates an aesthetic conflict that appears to be venturing back and forth.

Works Cited

Perlman, Bennard B. *Robert Henri: His Life and Art*. New York: Dover Publications, 1991. Print.

Levin, Gail. *Edward Hopper*. New York: Crown, 1984. Print.

Hopper, Edward, and Lloyd Goodrich. *Edward Hopper*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1949. Print.

Hopper, Edward, and Gail Levin. *Edward Hopper: The Art and the Artist*. New York: Norton, 1980. Print.

Progress

Goal Statement for Review 1

For the upcoming review period, I will create a body of works centered on the idea of "Humans in a Situation". Not just any situation, but situations in which a person would be in a state of conflict leading towards a transformation. I want to tell a story with each piece drawing from inspirations from Spanish Baroque artists such as Ribera and Valdes as well as Edward Hopper. The detail and emotion encompassed in Spanish painting is something I wish to incorporate in my works. Drawing from Edward Hopper, these "situations" will not all be public situations but rather dealing with personal issues such as homosexuality. The works I create will primarily be done on stretched canvas with the use of acrylic paint but also other mediums such as charcoal, watercolor and pen.

Artist Statement for Midterm Critique

My works are about my experiences growing up gay—its never something easy, especially when it is not something that you ever wanted to be. The stereotypes and fears as well as the hardships that are connoted with being gay played an integral role in becoming the person I am today. These fears and hardships are reflected in this body of work. The fear that a closeted gay has of being “outed”, the years of self-hate that end in acceptance, the relationships that changed due to this internal metamorphosis that I was experiencing and the overpowering feeling of being alone and unwanted—these are what my work is about. I am telling a portion of the story that is how my life was affected by homosexuality and how by being closeted affected the relationships I had with those closest to me. Consequently, this granted me this overwhelming feeling of being alone. No matter how many people were around, the feeling of being unwanted was always present. Everyone else always had someone around, but why couldn't I? I found this feeling of being alone was well represented in the paintings done by Edward Hopper. His scenes seemed so intimate and private but were at the same time exposed to the society. His works captivated me and I can confidently say now that it was because of the relationship I had with being a closeted homosexual. My paintings are my way of releasing that anger and depression that lingered for years before I told anyone about what was going in my life. But when I revealed myself to them, it almost seemed as if they already knew. It made me feel much like an Edward Hopper painting; I was experiencing these deep-rooted emotional problems surrounded by the idea self-acceptance and dealing with it in as private of a manner as I possibly could, but there was always someone watching. One of my paintings, which is untitled, shows a group of people at a social event. Everyone is paired together except for the central figure. He instead is by himself looking away from the viewer but also away from everyone else who is depicted. This feeling of being unwanted is what is felt when experiencing this painting and that is exactly the point. There is no possible way to fully understand what it is like being in this situation, but this painting comes very close to that actual feeling. I acknowledge that there are other people who have had experiences just like

mine, but when you are going through something as complex as figuring out your homosexual identity in a highly hetero-normative environment, it can feel like there is no one on your side. My paintings only show a snap shot of what my experiences were but they also tell a story that is relatable to a broader audience. This is only the beginning of my own story on how I was personally affected by homosexuality and all that it brings, but as personal as it is to me, I know that other people with the same experiences can read what is depicted and relate to it in a way that will help them see that they too are not alone.

Midterm Critique Works

Alone (in progress)
Acrylic on canvas



Alone (in progress 2)
Acrylic on canvas



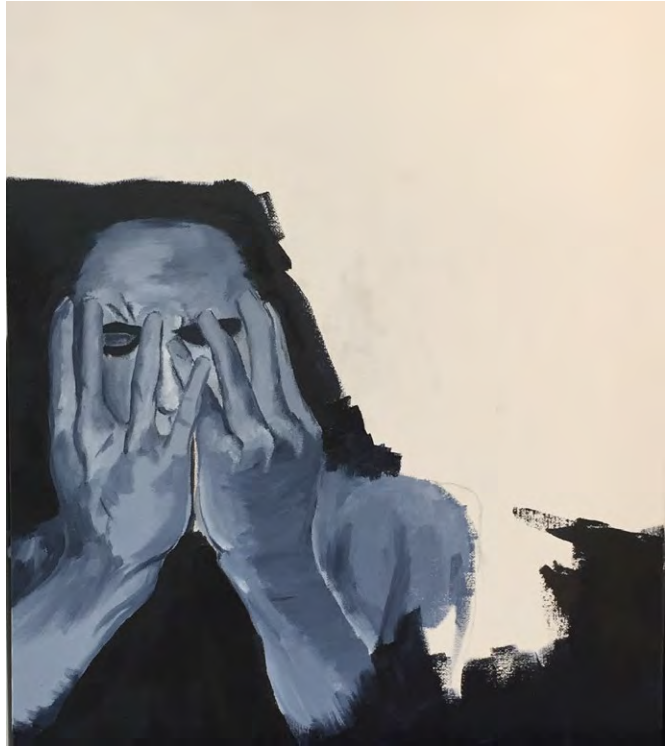
Alone
Acrylic on canvas



Oppression
Acrylic on canvas



Traición (in progress)
Acrylic on canvas



Traición
Acrylic on canvas



Clairvoyant
Acrylic on canvas



Studio Visit 1 – Joanna Bartow

Joanna Bartow and I spent about an hour or so discussing my work, my intent and where I plan to take my exploration and further the ideas in my works. The studio visit took place after the midterm critique and used the work that I had created up until the current body of work. I initially explained what my work was about and the intentions that I had originally used to fuel the creation of the paintings. Professor Bartow listened carefully and took a moment to step back and just observe everything that was in the room. She then read my artist statement and at that moment I noticed everything click in her head between what I had written, explained and then shown to her in the studio.

One by one, she discussed each of the paintings that I had previously spoken about, but in a new light. Once given the proper tools she understood what was going on and gave constructive criticism about where she thinks I should take it and how it could possibly be better. Themes such as betrayal, oppression and solitude were all notions that she had picked up on. One common idea though, the idea of homosexuality, was something that she agreed was not directly observable through my paintings. However, she did agree that that type of promotion of an identity is not something that I am concerned with as a person, which I greatly agreed with and appreciated.

In terms of where I should go with my work, she was stumped. She thought the idea of expanding the content in each painting so that it was more of a narrative than a snapshot was a good place to start. Being that Joanna Bartow is a Spanish professor here at St. Mary's College of Maryland, I asked her if she thought there was any way for me to incorporate certain elements from Spanish art into my work and she was just as stumped as I was, unfortunately. I was surprised over all with the amount of feedback that she was able to provide me however and decided that maybe for now I should push the minor detail of including my second major in my work to the side and focus on the idea that I already had at hand.

Nearing The End

Goal Statement for Final Review

For the upcoming final review period, I will continue producing work that is centered on the theme of my relationship with homosexuality. However, I will explore only one or two experiences and work through them in a more story telling or narrative manner as opposed to the snapshot style I employed for the midterm review period. I plan to do so by exploring the use of diptychs, triptychs and possibly predella. I also plan to abandon the strictly black background but will retain the monochromatic aspect of my works from the midterm. Through using multiple works to demonstrate one experience, I will be able to better tell a story by giving more than just a singular, one-sided view and having the viewer guess, they will be presented with more information. I will include culturally relevant artifacts to remove the “nostalgia” effect that my work encompassed during the midterm. By including these elements it will put my images into a context that is more present as opposed to one that is connote with the 1920s and remain truer to my personal experiences. As far as materials go, I will stay with acrylic paint but explore first with charcoal because it will allow me to stay with the monochromatic nature of my work as well as retain the contrast that I like in my works.

Artist Statement for Final Review

My group of work is focused on the elaboration of a personal story through the use of a triptych. The two, smaller side panels support the center panel, which encompasses the main piece of the story. The story starts with the left panel and depicts my first encounter with someone who would become one of my closest friends. This friendship, however, was betrayed and taken advantage of. It resulted in heartbreak and countless attempts to rekindle what was once present. The end of these countless trials is what has been placed in the right panel. This panel involves several different aspects of my own coping strategies, most of which involve music, which is the reason there are lyrics written in the negative space. The main panel is the final piece of the story, and ends in solitude. The dark tones and viewpoint from a spectator approach are derived from twentieth century American painter, Edward Hopper. In all three panels, the subjects are not facing the viewer but rather have their backs turned as if they are ignorant of their audience. This spectator perspective into a private scene is essential to the telling of my story because it is exactly that, a private story. By utilizing Hopper's dark palette and composition style I have recreated three essential pieces to an important experience of mine.

Studio Visit 2 – Cynthia Koenig

Cynthia Koenig is a professor at St. Mary's college of Maryland and she is currently teaching my Lifespan Development class. Being that she has a background in lifespan development, as well as psychology, I was interested in having her come to my studio and talk to me about how my topic coincided with what she knew about in her discipline about development of homosexual men. Upon entering the studio, we spoke about what my art was about and what part of the class each piece was from—whether it was something that was created during the summer, during the marathon or as part of the midterm critique.

After observing each piece she agreed that the major points that I had chosen for my pieces were rather accurate in the telling of developmental stages of homosexuals. We also talked about what formal qualities she thought worked best in my paintings and added to the overall theme. For example, much like during the midterm critique, Doctor Koenig favored the monochromatic paintings over the ones that used color. She claimed that the monochromatic paintings were truer of a feeling as opposed to the color because the color seemed to be more about the color itself where as the monochromatic paintings were more geared towards achieving a specific emotion or intention.

When speaking about where to go from here, I had explained to her what my hopes were for the final project that would be installed in the gallery—a triptych that expanded on one of the stories that I had tried to explain during the midterm. Through using the triptych, I was able to give more information but without breaking up each individual piece into more pieces which was something that I wished to avoid. She liked the idea and seemed to be excited to find out what it would look like in the gallery during the show.

Final Works

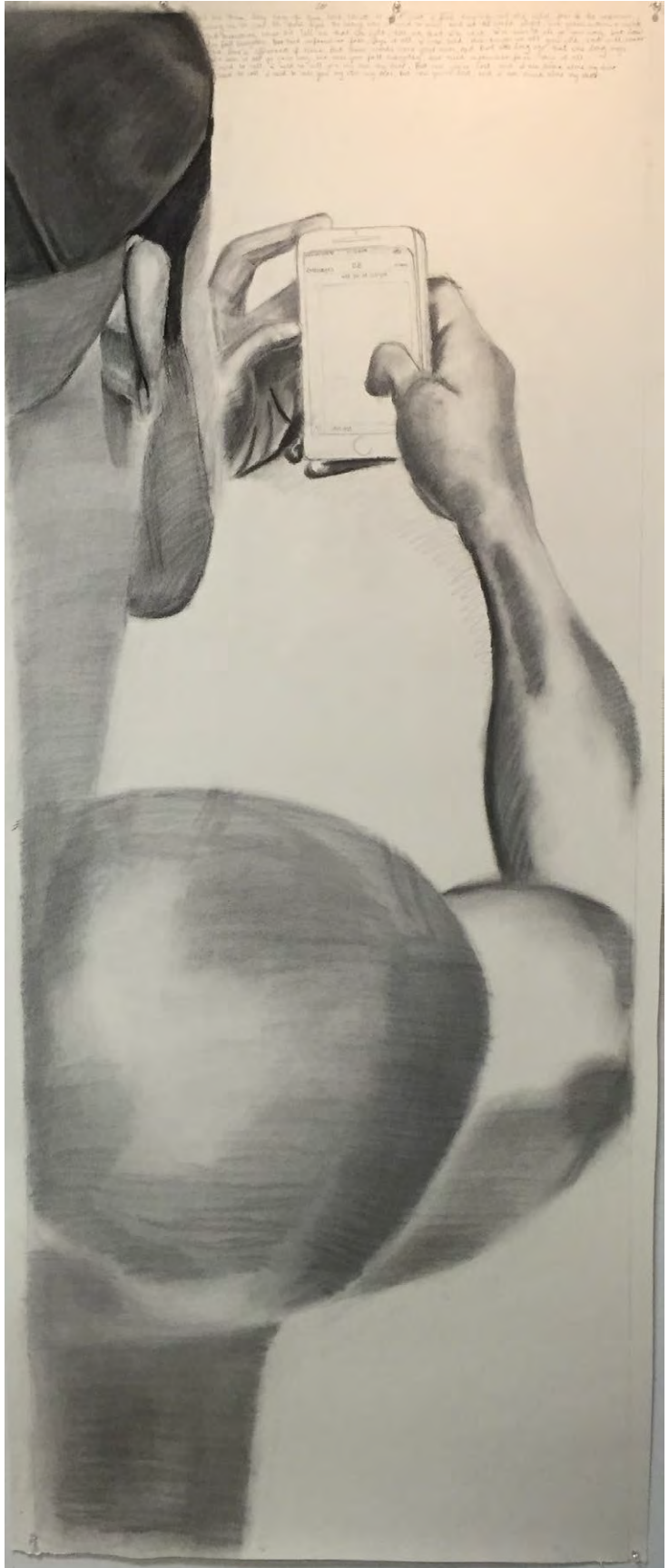
Triptych (panel 1/3)
Charcoal on paper



Triptych (panel 2/3)
Charcoal on paper



Triptych (panel 3/3)
Charcoal on paper



Annotated Bibliography

Ball, Susan. "Book Review:Edward Hopper: The Complete Prints Gail Levin, Edward Hopper; Edward Hopper as Illustrator Gail Levin." *WINTERTHUR PORTFOLIO Winterthur Portfolio* 16.4 (1981): 358. *JSTOR [JSTOR]*. Web. 22 Oct. 2015.

This article was found using the database, JSTOR, that St. Mary's College of Maryland provides us with. Susan Ball reviews the work by Gail Levin on artist, Edward Hopper. She gives valuable information that Gail Levin did not provide us with in her book on Edward Hopper.

Callen, Anthea, and Gustave Courbet. *Courbet*. London: Jupiter, 1980. Print.

Anthea Callen offers a lot of information about Gustave Courbet in this book. She offers insight into his life and works as well as a few of his philosophies. This book has importance to my research because Edward Hopper cited Courbet as being one of his many influences as an artist.

Henri, Robert, and Alfredo Valente. *Robert Henri: Painter-teacher-prophet*. New York: New York Cultural Center in Association with Fairleigh Dickinson U, 1969. Print.

In this text, Alfredo Valente has created a cohesive material on the works and life of Robert Henri. Edward Hopper has cited Robert Henri as being the most influential teacher he ever had. This book offers insight into those teachings, ideas and various other practices that Robert Henri enacted and had a lasting effect on Edward Hopper.

Hopper, Edward, and Gail Levin. *Edward Hopper: The Art and the Artist*. New York: Norton, 1980. Print.

Within this book, Gail Levin again successfully tracks the life, work and experiences of Edward Hopper. This time, however, she indulges in a side that is also from Edward Hopper himself, providing his own input on matters as opposed to just giving the information that she had gathered either from synthesized sources or some other place. Critiques and historical information that are paired with the small color prints of Edward Hopper's paintings and drawings are helpful in the completion of my work this semester.

Hopper, Edward, and Lloyd Goodrich. *Edward Hopper*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1949. Print.

Lloyd Goodrich offers information about the life and works of Edward Hopper. Being a close friend of Hopper's, Lloyd Goodrich has insight on Hopper that others do not have, even Gail Levin, as Goodrich claims in his text.

Levin, Gail. *Edward Hopper*. New York: Crown, 1984. Print.

Gail Levin successfully tracks through the life of Edward Hopper in this book. Giving information crucial to his education and development as an artist, she also gives insight into the world he saw around him and the experiences that were so heavily influential in his process. His philosophy on painting and drawing is also evident in the book as well as several pieces of work done by the artist.

Perlman, Bennard B. *Robert Henri: His Life and Art*. New York: Dover Publications, 1991. Print.

This book discusses the various teachings and philosophies of Robert Henri as well as his life and experiences while in the process of becoming the renowned painter that he was. Perlman discusses the different approaches that Robert Henri utilized in his life as well as how those approaches and experiences influenced his art in ways such as the darkening of his palette.

Read, Helen Appleton. "Edward Hopper." *Parnassus* 5.6 (1933): 8. *JSTOR [JSTOR]*. Web. 22 Oct. 2015.

This article was found using the data base, JSTOR, that is provided by St. Mary's College of Maryland. Helen Appleton reviews the work of Edward Hopper in this article. She gives critical views on his work but also remains positive in her feedback and observations.

Serwer, Jacquelyn Days. "Heroic Relics: The Art of Robert Cottingham." *American Art AM ART J* 12.2 (1998): 6. *JSTOR [JSTOR]*. Web. 22 Oct. 2015.

This source was found online in the database JSTOR provided to us by St. Mary's College of Maryland. It gave information about Edward Hopper and even directly cited certain artists that were important in his development as well as artists that he played a role in their development.

Wrigley, Richard. *Edouard Manet*. London: Scala, 1992. Print.

Richard Wrigley explores the life, influences, and work of the leading French Impressionist painter, Manet in this book. With this information, not only based on his work but also on his experiences with art and shows and what was successful and also not successful for the artist during his lifetime. Being an influence for Edward Hopper, this book proved to be a useful aid in understanding the work of Edward Hopper.