EMOTIONS, THOUGHTS, AND COLOR SPOTS

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the effect of color on the emotions of those who view the artwork created for this research; this is attempted through a systematic application of color combinations combined with abstracted portraiture. This series of artwork is focused on five emotions: joy, sadness, anger, fear, and disgust. With emphasis placed on these five emotions, the goal was maintained within these limited boundaries to test the idea behind how color, color association, and memory intertwine while also researching different color theories and applications of design. The results of this research concluded with no concrete answer, which challenged the authority of color theorists since there seems to be a push to bring concepts about color into definitive confines. However, the idea of affecting the peoples' emotions using specific colors in conjunction with abstracted portraiture is possible. It has also been discovered that through my analysis, artwork, and findings instigate that there is a dialogue that needs to be further explored, especially in regard to color and the human experience.

Keywords: color theory, color association, micro-expressions, human emotion, abstract design, color theorist, portraiture, color combination

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CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION

My work investigates the effect of color on the emotions of the viewer through a
systematic application of color combinations applied to abstracted portraiture. The
importance of color in art, especially in my work, has been in use as far back as 44,000
years where it first appeared in cave paintings in both Western Europe and Indonesia.[1] In
the Hindu Upanishads scriptures, which date centuries before the Common Era, it
describes man's veins as having Hita, which is full of white, blue, yellow, green, and red.[2]
Here, we see an early example of human bodies and behaviors being explicitly tied to
colors with various meanings. Even Charles Darwin talked about color in his book
Descent of Man, where he talks about the skin color of men as a highly important element
from the Egyptians who, according to Darwin, considered themselves the red race and
would use red cosmetics and exaggerated red clothing to depict themselves: "Yellow was
for the Asiatics, white for the people of the north, and black for the Negro."[3] Today,
archaeologists believe, in contrast to the highly racialized beliefs of Darwin, that

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[1] Faber Birren, *Color & Human Response: Aspects of Light and Color Bearing on the Reactions of Living
Things and the Welfare of Human Beings* (New York: Wiley, 1976), 37.
[2] Ibid, 47.
[3] Ibid, 52.

Egyptians, and other early cultures, including Greece and Egypt, that gender was designated by color rather than race.[4]

Color also shaped the ancient world through the foundation of Chinese philosophy, primarily in the form of the five elements: earth, which was yellow; fire, red; water, black; wood, green, and metal white.[5] The Tibetan world mountain with its sides facing four points of the compass are oriented to colors as well: the north, yellow; south, blue; east, white; and the west, red. Even the descriptors of historical periods and eras coordinate to colors, such as the Golden Age, the Mauve Decade, or the royal color of the Sung Dynasty being brown; the Ming Dynasty, green; and the Ch'ing Dynasty, yellow or, in another example, purple was exclusively used by the Roman emperor to personify Jupiter. [6] Color theorist Faber Birren perhaps best describes the human captivation with color: "Man's love for the spectrum is essentially primitive. Red, yellow, green, blue are eternal appeals. Through mysticism, religion, philosophy, science, psychology, he has struggled to define them." Birren revolutionized the studies of color and is considered one of the world's top color scholars. To be sure, what humans did with color and what it means to them has been grounded in belief systems and ways of life.

My work focuses on three components that combine to invoke emotional responses. First, it draws on human portraiture, building images out from people's faces,

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[4] Mary Ann Eaverly, *Pale Women: Color and Gender in Archaic Greece and Egypt, a Comparative Approach* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2013), 18-56.
[5] Birren, *Human Response,* 73-75.
[6] Birren, *Human Response,* 157.

people I am familiar with. From these portraits, I use a method of abstraction to move away from recognizable realism and into the realm of types. Second, it explores the portrayal of emotion through abstraction of the human face and third, it configures a color palette to either emphasize a particular emotion or an attempt to evoke a predetermined emotion. Each piece depicts a colored abstracted portrait with the color palette helping to either emphasize the depicted emotion that the model was showing or using the idea of color association to create a different image. For deciding which emotions to use, I looked at finding a baseline of human emotions that a majority of people could recognize and understand. I looked at the research on early affective development of humans that focuses on the "basic" emotions that people develop as babies and young children. I wanted the emotions to be something fundamental enough to understand that there would be a widespread understanding among viewers and would be inclusive of many backgrounds. According to Dr. Riccardo Draghi-Lorenz, during the first six to eight months of childhood, people develop "basic" or "primary" emotions.[7] These basic emotions are interest, disgust, joy, distress, anger, sadness, surprise, and fear. Out of these basic emotions, I chose to focus on five specific ones that I felt would elicit people's interest and seemed the most inclusive for diverse backgrounds: joy, sadness, anger, fear, and disgust.

When it came to deciding how to abstract the portraits of the models, I looked at the work and teachings of Gary Faigin, artistic director of Gage Academy of Art in

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[7] Draghi-Lorenz is a Chartered Counseling Psychologist and a Developmental Psychologist, and Director of the Doctorate Course in Counseling and Psychotherapeutic Psychology at the University of Surrey. See "Rethinking the development of 'Nonbasic' Emotions: A critical review of existing theories," Draghi-Lorenz, Riccardo. "Rethinking the Development of ``Nonbasic Emotions: A ..." University of Portsmouth. Accessed April 17, 2020. https://student.cc.uoc.gr/uploadFiles/179-КΨB364/rethinking non-basic emotions.pdf.

Seattle. Faigin is a computer graphics specialist focused on the technical and artistic aspects of facial expression, who works for film studios in the U.S., Canada, and Europe. I also pulled visual references from Mark Simon's book *Facial Expressions: A Visual Reference for Artists.*[8] The two most important facts when developing portraits, according to Faigin, is to realize that facial expressions can have a decisive impact on the effect of a picture, and secondly, that depicting the effect desired is a difficult task to achieve. Throughout Fagin's book *The Artist's complete guide to Facial Expression,* he describes and depicts vital areas to look for when trying to achieve a desired emotional state and what key areas to observe. With my abstracted portraits, I followed Faigin's suggestions and also used many of Mark Simon's model images as test and references to practice and develop my final style. I primarily focused on abstracting and simplifying emotional portraiture in a way that would work in conjuncture with my color associations and designs. These faces served as vessels for exploring color theories and my associations with color.

Color plays a vital role in my thesis investigation from conveying my intended message that the dogma that surrounds color and the "rules" that are attached to how we interpret color. Many theorists seem to assert that when association occurs, it does so according to a set path, equation, or ideal to be successful. But above all, I realized that these color associations were culturally relative, not universal. There is no one way to understand color. Therefore, I wanted to take a look and break down the theories and challenge the agenda set by color theorists in order to show that there are no set rules, ideal equations, or requirements when using color and combining it with the human

[8] Gary Faigin, *The Artists Complete Guide to Facial Expression* (New York: Watson Guptill, 2012).

experience. To use color effectively and to understand the theories and psychology behind it, I researched the work of the leading color theorist Faber Birren, as mentioned above, as well as Leatrice Eiseman and Karen Halle.[9] I also explored color theory from an art historical point of view, looking at the work of artists and theorists Josef Albers, Mark Rothko, Helen Frankenthaler, and specifically some different artistic philosophies of the Abstract Expressionists, a movement from the mid 20th century. Another important theorist for my work was Herman Rorschach, whom most people know as developing shape associations with black ink. But Rorschach also deeply explored theories of color association.[10]

      The open-ended ideas and theories about color, and our limited understanding of the role color take on across human cultures, has led to my exploration and pursuit of developing a body of work that investigates portraiture, color interactions, and human emotional associations. In the next chapter, I examine more in depth the scholarly literature that has been important for my thesis, while it also explores the artistic influences. Then, the following chapter will be a detailed account of my process in creating my body of work from its source material and initial designs to the different processes when completing the work. Finally, regarding the finished artwork, I will

[9] Faber Birren, *Color & Human Response: Aspects of Light and Color Bearing on the Reactions of Living Things and the Welfare of Human Beings* (New York: Wiley, 1976); Faber Birren, *Color Perception in Art* (West Chester, PA: Schiffer Pub., 1986); Faber Birren, *Color Psychology and Color Therapy: A Factual Study of the Influence of Color on Human Life* (New York: Pickle Partners, 2016); Faber Birren, *Principles of Color: A Review of Past Traditions and Modern Theories of Color Harmony* (West Chester: Schiffer, 1987); Leatrice Eiseman, *Color - Messages & Meanings: A PANTONE Color Resource* (Gloucester, MA: Hand Books, 2007); Leatrice Eiseman, *The Color Answer Book: the Leading Lady of Color Answers Your Every Question* (Sterling, VA: Capital Books, 2003).
Leatrice Eiseman, *The Complete Color Harmony: Expert Color Information for Professional Results* (Beverly, MA: Rockport, 2017); Leatrice, Eiseman, *Pantone Guide to Communication with Colour* (Cincinnati, OH: Grafix Press, 2000); Karen, Haller, *The Little Book of Colour: How to Use the Psychology of Colour to Transform Your Life* (London: Penguin, 2019).
[10] Damion Searls*, Inkblots: Hermann Rorschach, His Iconic Test, and the Power of Seeing* (New York: Broadway Books, 2017).

describe each work according to my design choices and intent for each part from color

combinations, abstract design, what emotional features I focused on, the emotional

memories each work is designed around, and how they relate to my thesis.

CHAPTER 2:

INFLUENCES

A simple question, such as asking one's favorite color, may not produce a simple answer; how do people decide on that color? What makes a specific color our favorite? For me, my favorite color is red. What makes it my favorite? And when I mention "red," is the shade that we picture similar between myself and someone else? Josef Albers, one of the most influential artist-educators of the twentieth century, taught a class that began with an identical assignment.[11] He asked his students to bring in examples of something red—found objects, trash, loose remnants—with no limit, except that it had to be red. When the students returned and hung up their findings, it became apparent that the lesson was a demonstration of the impossible, that color is intrinsically personal and that no one's two reds ever really match.[12] The debate on color extends even further back, with philosophers from Aristotle, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and Isaac Newton all having something to say about color. Aristotle stated in *De Coloribus* that all simple colors are the colors of the elements.[13] Goethe believed that all colors came from lightness and darkness.[14] And Sir Isaac Newton deduced that white light contained all color and that there was a certain number of "spectral" colors that are the fundamental basis of all

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[11] Josef Albers, *Interaction of Color: 50th Anniversary Edition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 3.

[12] Sean Adams and Jessica Helfand, *The Designers Dictionary of Color* (New York: Abrams, 2017), 9.

[13] Birren, *Human Response,* 69.

[14] Birren, *Human Response,* 743.

colors.[15] The debate on color, its application, representation, and cultural significance will continue to change and evolve depending on who is discussing it and their background. This allows color to have multiple ideas associated with it since there is no agreed-upon system or theory that guide everyone in the proper use of color.

Jim Krause, graphic designer and author, in his book *Color Index XL,* explained that when working with color, one must understand that just three qualities determine the look of color: hue, saturation, and value.[16] Hue is another word for the descriptive name of color; color names can be creative or can follow the color wheel-based names. Saturation is how intense a color is. Fully saturated colors are colors in their purest and most vibrant form. Desaturating them will cause the color to take on a muted appearance. The essential qualities, when working with colors, include value, which refers to the lightness or darkness of a hue. This is because hue and saturation could not exist without value to apply themselves upon. On a physiological level, the human eye prioritizes in most cases the differences in value when trying to make sense of what it observes. According to Albers, the way to go beyond color theory is to develop an eye for color through trial and error by seeing color in action as well as feeling color relatedness.[17] I utilized Albers's theories and principles in my work when I selected different color combinations to apply to my abstracted portraits.

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[15]Joann Eckstut and Arielle Eckstut, *The Secret Language of Color: Science, Nature, History, Culture, Beauty of Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue & Violet* (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal, 2013), 12, 13.
[16] Jim Krause, *Color Index XL: More Than 1100 New Palettes with CMYK and RGB Formulas for Designers and Artists* (New York: Watson-Guptill, 2017), 4-7.
[17] Albers, *Interaction of Color*, 1-2.

Color is a progressive and continuously adapting art; with new pigments, dyes, materials, and combinations being discovered, the demand for the perfect color to match current trends is something that did not happen overnight. In his book *Principles of Color,* theorist Faber Birren talks about how even the very thought of what color is became a topic of considerable discussion between the earliest scholars. As Aristotle believed that colors came from the elements and there was a set amount of them, Goethe believed that all colors came from light and darkness and had a limited range. However, it was not till around 1600 that a systematic organization of colors that was created by Sir Isaac Newton, who developed the first of all color circles (fig. 1).
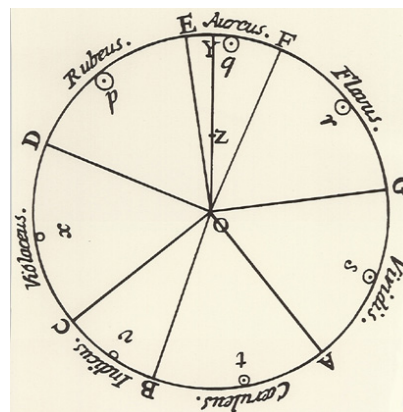
Figure 1 Sir Isaac Newton's color wheel 1671

After Newton published his color wheel, we began to see a rise in people developing different understandings and ideas of how humans perceive color and how different pigment mixtures create different colors. By 1756, J. C. Le Blon stated that there were three primary colors—red, yellow, and blue. About a decade later, around 1766, the English engraver and entomologist Morris Harris published the first color chart to appear

in full color with a focus on the theory that red, yellow, and blue were the original

primary colors, see (fig. 2).[18]
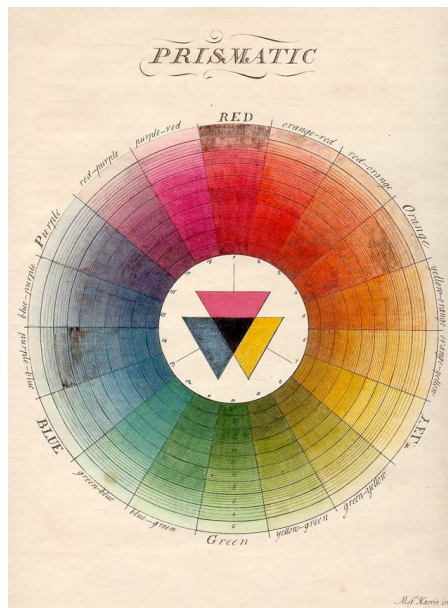
Figure 2 Moses Harris color wheel 1776

Eventually, a multitude of people began developing different ideas trying to standardize

the color circle. However, with new technology for printing, digital displays, and

different ways of engineering colors, a multitude of ever-changing color theories and

color systems emerged. Albers provided a brief description of the contemporary systems

of color in his book *Interaction of Color.* There are the Munsell Color Tree, the Ostwald

Color System, and the Faber Birren color system.[19] Looking between the three, I focused

on Birren's color system due to the emphasis on the practicality it afforded for art, and

because it took into account the eye's ability to distinguish more warm colors. For my

thesis, I focused on the color system described in Birren's book *Principles of Color* as

seen in (fig. 3).[20]

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[18] Albers, *Interaction of Color,* 12.

[19] Albers, *Interaction of Color,* 65.

[20] Faber Birren, *Principles of Color: A Review of Past Traditions and Modern Theories of Color Harmony* (West Chester: Schiffer, 1987), 83.
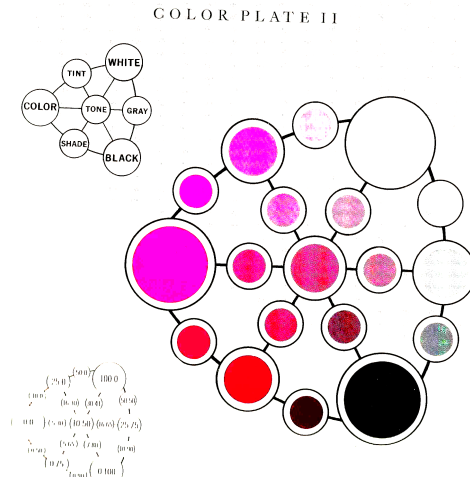
Figure 3 Faber Birren color system 1986

The color circle I utilized throughout my work is the American standard circle established by Louis Prang, Milton Bradley, Arthur Pope, and Herbert E. Ives—all prominent artists and educators within the American education system, according to Birren (fig. 4).[21]
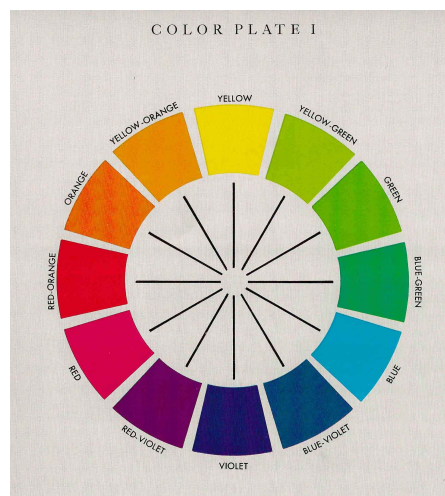
Figure 4 Standard American color wheel

Due to the sheer number of variances when examining and talking about color, utilizing a specific color circle for my thesis was a crucial decision. After I established a

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[21] Birren, *Principles of Color,* 82.

color circle standard, my next problem dealt with color constancy. Color constancy is an example of subjective constancy, the perception of an object or quality as constant even though our sensation of the object changes. This is a feature of the human color perception system. Birren discussed color constancy and broke down the idea into three specific aspects: surface colors, film colors, and volume colors. Surface colors are the colors of substantial things and objects. They focus on the tangible and touchable subject with different modes of appearance. Film colors observed in the sky where they are atmospheric and tend to fill space and they have no substance. Volume colors are those that have three-dimensional boundaries like a liquid in a jar.[22] Understanding these concepts was crucial when I decided on my palette choices, the arrangement of colors next to each other, and whether to apply a surface texture or remove it entirely from each of my works. Also, when I decided which of those three ideas would benefit the overall theme and composition was an important factor. I focused on surface colors, the overall colors in each of my pieces, and volume colors, as well as the different abstracted shapes which created boundaries for each color. This control and understanding allowed me to make each color work correctly while focusing on the surface and volume colors mentioned previously. My work also required the challenge of deciding the correct hues, saturations, and values to help emphasize the relationship each color would have with the whole of the artwork rather than the individual parts.

Of all forms of communication, it is color, much like sound perhaps, that has a non-verbal ability to covey a multitude of messages and meanings. Color perception is individual to all humans, and the multitude of ways in which humans see color is where

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[22] Faber Birren, *Color Perception in Art* (West Chester, PA: Schiffer Pub., 1986), 35.

understanding the effect it has becomes vital.[23] According to Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of the Pantone Color Institute, the way people react to color is subliminal or, in other words, not entirely rational or in the conscious mind; and often we are unaware of the power and effects color has on us.[24] Even Birren, through extensive research, acknowledged that the interaction of color on people does cause a physical and psychological effect that is temporary, and that even being exposed to large amounts of color has shown to have an immediate reaction that eventually diminishes.[25] This ability to affect our physical and psychological state is something that I found fascinating. Birren describes it best when discussing the color red and how it has a beauty and emotional quality to it; however, it can have a multitude of appearances and this characteristic is where the artist could find new territory in the language of color.[26]

While researching color theory, I found constant references to color theorists, lifestyle gurus, institutes on color research, and guidelines one has to follow to use color the right way. These authors claimed that if one painted their room yellow, they would be a happy person, or wear just the right amount of red showed confidence and authority. If one were to wear blue to a job interview, the interviewers may think they were trustworthy and relaxed—but too much blue and they would appear sad and guilty. However, while scouring through all the amateur bloggers, "home" experts, and life coaches, I found professionals who have researched and studied color extensively, some like Birren and Herman Rorschach were more focused on the science and psychology of

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[23] Birren, *Principles of Color,* 67.
[24] Leatrice Eiseman, *Pantone Guide to Communication with Colour* (Cincinnati, OH: Grafix Press, 2000), 7.
[25] Birren, *Color & Human Response*, 335, Kindle.
[26] Birren, *Principles of Color*, 67.

color, while others like Eiseman, Karen Haller, and Kassia St. Clair looked toward the physical and marketing aspects in color.[27] What set these color theorists apart from each other were their ideals, philosophies, and education. The ideas laid out by each of my chosen theorists played a role in my thesis. I explored and tested their ideas to find my path and determined which theories I found that had a good fit with my work.

Birren, who probably had the most influence on me, is considered one of the best-known authorities on color, having published over a dozen books and several hundred articles dedicated to understanding and decoding color. Perhaps more than any other author, his work has influenced and altered people's use of color today. Birren spent most of his academic career studying the influence of color on art, the workplace, and human psychology. The culmination of his research is known today as the "Birren color theory." He believed that we express ourselves every day through color, from communicating our feelings and thoughts, to how we identify ourselves. However, he did not believe that color had a direct influence on our emotions, but rather that it was the human perception of colors and that it is the visible light that affects our emotions. In *Color Psychology and Color Therapy*, Birren explains that how we perceive color has a direct relationship with our feelings, thoughts, and emotions in combination with the visible spectrum verses the actual colors themselves producing a reacting in us.[28] Birren explained further that it is the photochemical reaction of how our bodies receive this light in conjunction with our

[27] Leatrice Eiseman, *The Color Answer Book: the Leading Lady of Color Answers Your Every Question* (Sterling, VA: Capital Books, 2003); Cherie Fehrman and Kenneth Fehrman, *Color: the Secret Influence* (San Diego: Cognella, 2018); Karen Haller, *The Little Book of Colour: How to Use the Psychology of Colour to Transform Your Life* (London: Penguin, 2019); Pantone LLC, *Pantone: 35 Inspirational Color Palettes for the Home* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2014); Pantone INC, *Pantone: 35 Inspirational Color Palettes,* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2012); *Kassia* St. Clair, *The Secret Lives of Color* (New York: Penguin, 2017).
[28] Birren, *Color Psychology,* 1935-1944, Kindle.

own psychological association with color that ultimately gives color its power.[29] This reinforced his theory in his other book, *Color and Human Response.* There, Birren wrote about the influence of color on humanity, as seen through history and scientific data. He explored color having symbolic uses for religious and social standings in society to the use of color for psychological effects—in homes, offices, hospitals, and schools.[30] Birren also focused on art as a part of his research, especially when it came to the relationship between color, perception, and emotions, which is one important reason why I found his work so helpful.

When an artwork used tints, tones, and shades instead of only pure color, Birren considered that to be perfect color harmony. His research also divided colors into two groups: warm and cold colors. His theory stated that warm tones are preferable for artists and viewers compared to cool colors. "Perceptionism" was a word coined by Birren in his book *Principles of Color.* Here, he focused on the ability of the artist to achieve different perceptions by carefully combining colors, which would cause specific colors to look different to the human brain.[31] Thus, a person's perception could be altered by a skilled artist to see things like transparency, solidity, or simulated textures. His thoughts and findings on perception and how we perceive and identify color is one of the main points I emphasized in my own work.

Eiseman, the head of the Eiseman Center for color information and training and executive director for the Pantone Color Institute, is the author of ten books on color and is often involved in color and trend forecasting across multiple industries. Eiseman's

[29] Birren, *Color Psychology,* 1960, Kindle.
[30] Birren, *Color & Human Response*, 1105-1447, Kindle.
[31] Birren, *Principles of Color,* 35-55.

work and publications focus primarily on the application and context of color.[32] For example, Eiseman talks about how red is no less exciting on paper than it is digitally; that what is more important is to decide if that red is serving its intended usage which should be focused on the consumer.[33] To Eiseman, it is all about how we emotionally respond to color rather than with Birren, where the human perception affects color, not color affecting the human brain. Eiseman provided insights for the possible meanings and consumer responses to color in addition to how color appears positively or negatively. She did caution even if a color has a negative connotation associated with it that it is necessary to think of the context when using the color. Eiseman also described in detail about establishing the rank order of color: dominant, subordinate, and accent. She further explained that when establishing order to a color selection, the objective is to focus on creating moods, and when deciding how many colors to use, there are no hard and fast rules because the final choice rests on the user.[34]

After reading and focusing on Birren and Eiseman, I wanted to get a secondary source of information that was focused on the history and successful application of colors, especially when used in specific cultural areas. In Kassia St. Clair's book *The Secret Lives of Color,* she broke down color into broad families and provided a history of specific colors and something akin to a character sketch for each color, including how they are made, their popularity, and how each color found its way into history. St. Clair's study provided one of the aspects I wanted more information on: the origins of how we associate with a particular color. Similarly, Sean Adams and Jessica Helfand provided a

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[32] Leatrice Eiseman, *Color - Messages & Meanings: A PANTONE Color Resource* (Gloucester, MA: Hand Books, 2007), 80.
[33] Eiseman, *Messages and Meanings*, 4.
[34] Ibid, 81.

combination of actual and successful applications of color with examples in their

book *The Designer's Dictionary of Color.* In it, the authors provide "a guide to the

cultural, historical, and social meanings of color. He also provided examples of

successful application of each color and the range of options for an accompanying

palette."[35] I used this information to pick specific ranges of colors that have a generalized

associated cultural meaning and have been used in successful applications of marketing.

In order to have a more complete discussion about color and how it becomes

intertwined into people's lives and history, it is imperative to understand that color is one

of the fundamental ways that people experience the world. From early infancy, humans

start to perceive color and begin creating feelings and associations with what they see.

These feelings and associations may carry over into adult life or is altered by learning

patterns, our upbringing, and the different associations we develop with specific colors

through education and exposure. Even as infants Eiseman explained that children as

young as two months have a preference for colorful objects when compared to non-

colored. Infants begin wanting objects with color verses the form and it is not till they

mature that we begin to focus on the object over the color. [36] Color is so involved with

human lives that even memories focus around the world of color. People may not be

aware of their association of a specific color with a particular incident or memory. Still,

human minds are continually recording, which can change our relationship with a

particular color, either positively or negatively. In regard to designers and manufacturers,

understanding age groups and color trends are impactful to their sales and marketing.

Knowing that pre-adolescents and young adolescents appear to be heavily influenced by

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[35] Adams and Helfand, *The Designers Dictionary of Color*, 10.
[36] Eiseman, *Pantone Guide,* 13.

their status, recognition, and at this age, peer pressure leads to a robust trend-driven

group. Then after maturity, older people become aware of the need for self-expression.

This group may look at color trends but will balance their taste and preferences while

comparing it to trends.[37] In other words, I thought about the differences in my audience

members and how these aspects might affect the meanings of my works of art.

Besides age, our culture may influence our color associations. For example,

Eiseman mentioned that Indian mystics "believe green is the color that brings great

harmony." Thus, someone from this cultural group would likely see the green color

family as evoking a positive response.[38] In Birren's book *Color and Human Response*, he

described the historical background of color around the world. From the origin story of

the Hindus to the foundation of Chinese philosophy, color appeared and is used to shape

the world. In ancient Greece, the Pantheon of gods each had their specific color. In the

Bible, the Old and New testaments provide many color references. Birren dedicates

another chapter to the use of color in culture to tell of symbolic, practical roles that color

provided.[39] Thus Eiseman, Birren, Adams, and Helfand showed that there is a wide

variety of associations when it comes to using color.

I have discussed the effect color has on our development and society, but have not

detailed how it affects our psychology. Herman Rorschach, both an artist and

psychologist, developed a test centered around our perception and ability to decipher art

and visual forms.[40] This test was called the Rorschach test and focused on ten inkblots,

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[37] Eiseman, *Pantone Guide,* 14.
[38] Ibid, 14-16.
[39] Birren, *Color & Human Response,* 151.
[40] Damion Searls, *Inkblots: Hermann Rorschach, His Iconic Test, and the Power of Seeing* (New York: Broadway Books, 2017), 1451. Kindle.

some just black and white, others full of color. In the field of psychology, the inkblot had appeared in use as early as 1895 in French psychiatry, all the way to 1910 where Russian and American psychiatrist were also implementing them. But it was not till 1921 that Rorschach would form the basis of his inkblot test.[41] Its purpose was to measure the amount of imagination someone had, especially school children. In 1910, when American psychologist Guy Montrose Whipple called his version of the test "ink-blot test" in his *Manual of Mental and Physical Test*, Rorschach was influenced to develop his cards that would come to be called "inkblots."[42] However, Rorschach's final images would use paint and color, not just ink (fig. 5).
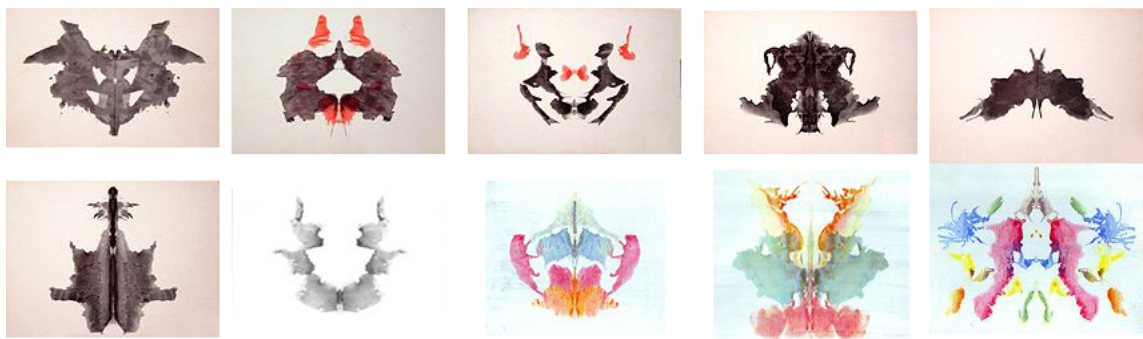
Figure 5 The ten inkblots in the Rorschach test

Rorschach was fascinated by the unexpected, creative, sometimes bizarre answers his patients saw; yet, his primary focus was on whether or not the answers could reasonably describe the actual shape in the blot. He focused on what people saw as a way of evaluating how well they interpret. Overall, Rorschach paid attention to the formal aspects of the blots that would produce the responses given: detail and whole, movement, color, and form.[43] Perhaps the most valuable result of Rorschach's test is that human perception is more than words or stories. It is related to empathy and vision, and to

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[41] Searls, *Inkblots,* 1449, 1453, 2117, 2144, Kindle.
[42] Ibid, 2145-2171, 2243, 2342, Kindle.
[43] Ibid, 2241, Kindle.

feeling the world and then seeing something out there that connects with the viewer.[44]

Both Rorschach and Birren noticed that it is our perception that significantly affects our

mental and emotional state. It was a combination of Rorschach's research, test, and art

that lead him to this conclusion. His inkblots and way of looking at human perception

was the building block for much of my earlier work (fig. 6)
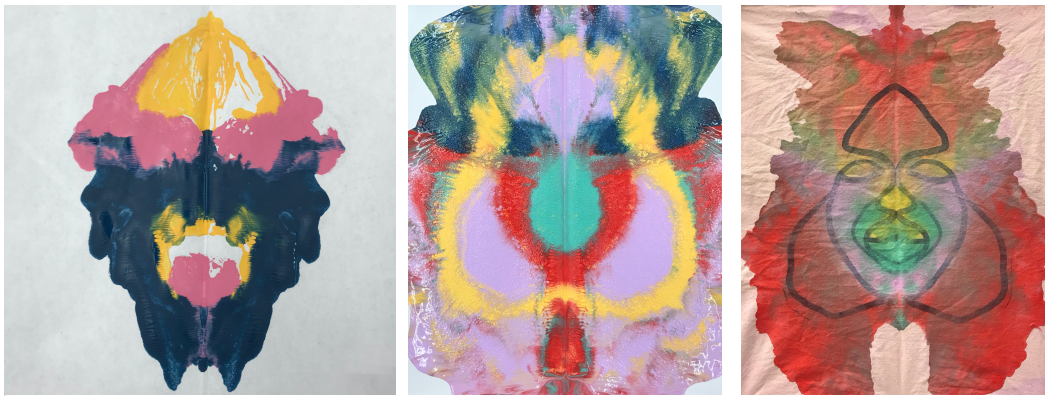
Figure 6 Jordan Long, test blots, acrylic on paper and canvas

Along with my influences from color theories in the fields of science, marketing,

and psychology, I also drew heavily on the color theory work of artists. An important

colorist artist whose work influenced mine was Mark Rothko.[45] Rothko was an American

Abstract Expressionist painter but was also known as a "color field" painter because of

his use of canvases that are completely covered with rectangles of color that merge

together and blend at the edges. His paintings consisted essentially only of color, no

discernable forms at all. He made his paintings on large canvases with vertical formats

that were overwhelming to the viewer when observed in person and made them feel

enveloped within the (fig. 7).

[44] Ibid, 5831, Kindle.

[45] Christopher Rothko and Janet C. Bishop, *Rothko: The Color Field Paintings (*San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2017), 49. Kindle.
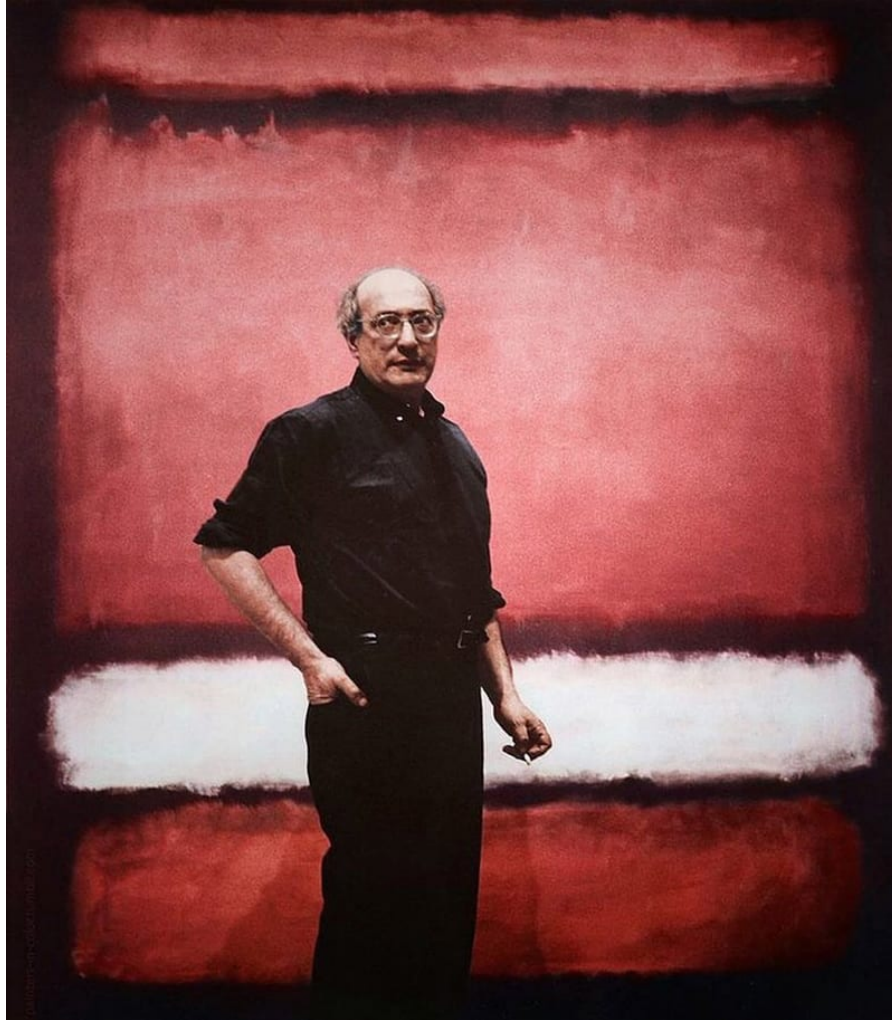
Figure 7 Mark Rothko in his studio in front of his painting No. 7

Sometimes he used vibrant colors, and sometimes darker colors, but he always

worked with a clear distinction in the hierarchy of colors he chose. With his application

of color, Rothko aimed to depict or elicit different responses of human emotions and

associations. His color palette changed into the mid-1950s, when he started using dark

blues and greens. His techniques for painting involved using thin layers of a binder mixed

with pigments applied directly to the uncoated and untreated canvas. I tried this method

in my work but did not achieve the desired effect of creating a smooth surface with limited-to-no texture when applied to an unstretched canvas (fig. 8).
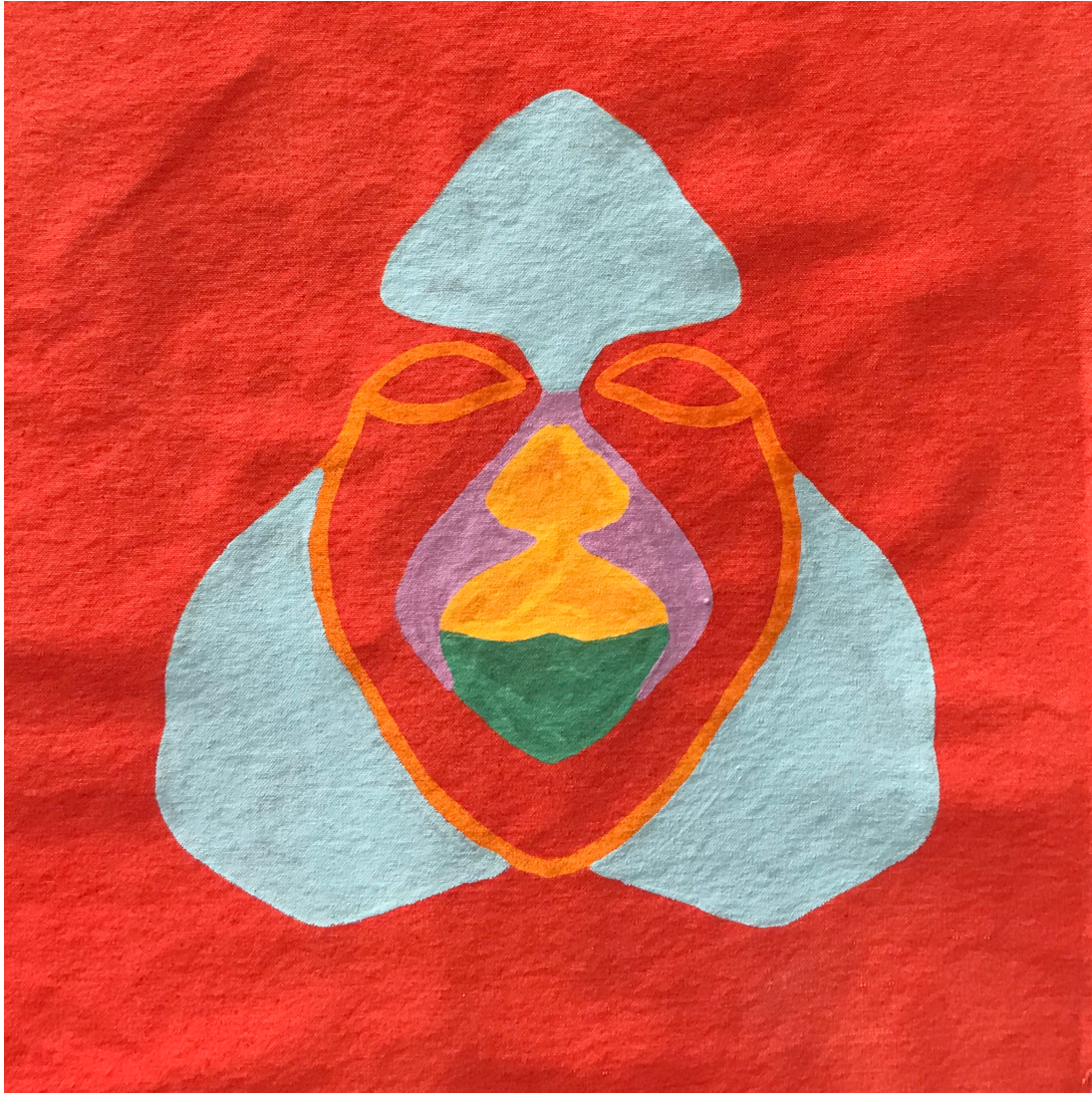
Figure 8 Jordan Long, untitled, October 2019 acrylic paint on stained un-stretched canvas

Following this I applied a similar technique onto a pre-gessoed canvas that gave my paint quality a much more vibrant and cleaner appeal (fig. 9).

Figure 9 Jordan Long, untitled, October 2019, acrylic on gessoed canvas

What inspired me even more than Rothko's techniques was his sense of purpose in his work and his overall intent. Rothko strived to connect deep feelings to colors and forms, working to evoke and articulate the language of the sublime. This sense of purpose and design is what I set out to explore and articulate in my colored designs and abstracted models. In my later paintings, I focused more on creating abstract portraits that depicted my chosen emotions much more clearly. And I focused on developing color palettes, with varying tones and shades with a close range of colors that would match the desired color mood. I furthered refined my paintings by implementing Rothko's idea of large-scale canvases with intense color and combined with my abstracted shapes that would envelop

the viewer in my work. Rothko's use of color allowed him to portray what he believed to

be a "universal language" that made each of his works seem like a world of their own,

where the colors had a particular meaning, and the intent was specific to the context of

each painting.[46]

The portrait side of my work draws from the faces of Francis Bacon's tortured

figures, which are confined and isolated in boxy structures and thus were an inspiration

for the idea of my portraits resembling masks. (fig. 10)

Figure 10 Bacon, Francis Study for Portrait II, 1955, oil on canvas

Rather than creating portraits that represent individuals, my figures are meant to reflect

the human condition and the "masks" people wear in order to disguise their true nature or

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[46] Rothko, *Color Field Paintings,* 50-56.

state of mind and feelings. The ambiguous identity of my faces—which attempts to be androgynous and even robotic—allows the viewer to impart themselves in these masked abstracted portraits but also maintain a distinct distance. They are both relatable and creepy, appealing and off-putting at the same time. Thus, by distorting the idea of a traditional portrait, I opened up my figures for interpretation centered around an emotional theme in connection with the application of color combinations.

As mentioned previously, I applied different types of mediums to my paint to achieve different looks and texture. Near the end of my investigation, I looked into the work of painter Agnes Martin and discovered her paintings that used different materials and applications when she finished her work. Martin also focused on the finish her paintings and materials. For example, Martin's painting *Friendship* inspired my own use of gold leaf in my work (Fig. 11)
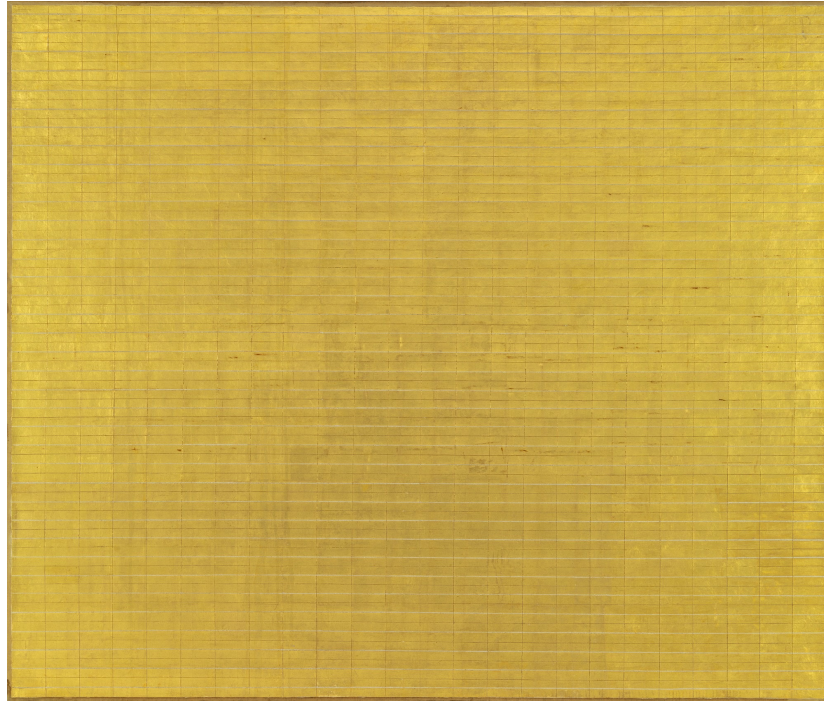

Figure 11 Martin, Agnes Friendship, gold leaf and oil on canvas

Not only did I use gold leaf because of its shiny, alluring finish, but the historical and commercial connection with gold as a precious material would enable my painting to have another layer of association. The association with wealth and luxury, since gold paint was once actual gold, can be tied to the way the viewers connect with the work. Yet, by only mimicking gold the piece becomes a symbol of fake wealth and is only a surface level material just like the idea of surface level emotions. This fascination with finishes in addition to color also led to me switching my paint into a more industrial focus and using customized house paint for each of my works with different finishes to explore the different effects when applied with my color combinations and portraiture designs.

But above all, my work drew on the ideas and art of Josef Albers. His work features a hard edge design, yet his theories and teachings inspired many Abstract Expressionist artists to pursue different designs and ideas with color and form in their work. His book *The Interaction of Color* was an inspirational guide throughout my color theory exploration. Closely, I followed Albers's suggested experiments and lessons in studying color, and thereby taught myself how to develop an eye for color that was essential to my research.[47] The notion of understanding the interaction of color and what happens between colors placed in adjacent positions allowed my work to take on new ideas and theories. As Albers states, he intended to teach his students that the interaction between color and visual realization was not the end goal, but the goal was instead to

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[47] Albers, *Interaction of Color,* 1.

bring awareness of the interdependence of color with form and placement in addition to seeing color action and color relatedness (fig. 12).
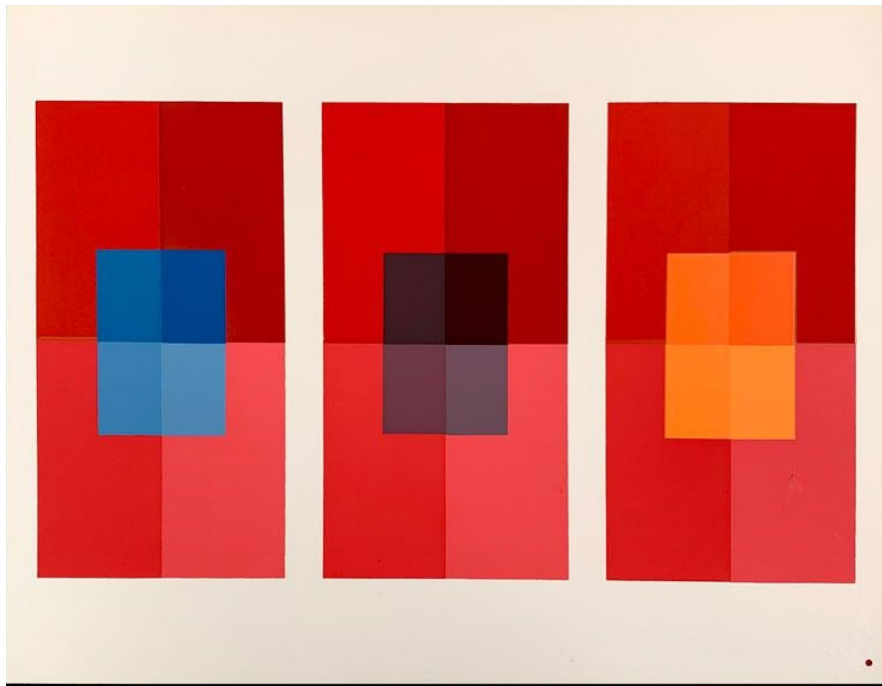
Figure 12 Albers Silkscreen XIV-2

In other words, he did not believe in mechanically applying laws and rules.[48] Albers's methods allowed me to work through a multitude of different color arrangements and develop an eye for color relatedness, which ultimately influenced my color palette choices. Each time I design and create different color palettes to fit the emotional mood of my work, I find myself referring back to Albers's teachings and his philosophy that color deceives continually.

My work was also heavily influenced by the Abstract Expressionist colorists because of their belief in the symbolic power of color paired with abstract forms.[49] But not all Ab Ex artists were entirely abstract; some, like Willem de Kooning, kept figural

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[48] Albers, *Interaction of Color,* 1-5.
[49] Tate. "Abstract Expressionism – Art Term." Tate. Accessed December 12, 2019.
https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/abstract-expressionism. Paragraph 3.

references in his work much like I do. My images were not entirely non-objective or geometric, like those of Rothko and Albers, or even like Barnett Newman and Clyfford Still. Nevertheless, these artists all created simple compositions with large areas of color that inspired the viewer to fall into a contemplation or meditation state when confronted with the work.[50] My paintings were inspired by this mid-century modern art movement as a whole, as seen in the vast swatches of colored forms mixed with simple compositions of abstracted figures and forms that their works present. I aimed to create, as a secondary function in my paintings, a contemplative and meditative state of mind for the viewer to experience while they looked at my work (fig. 13)
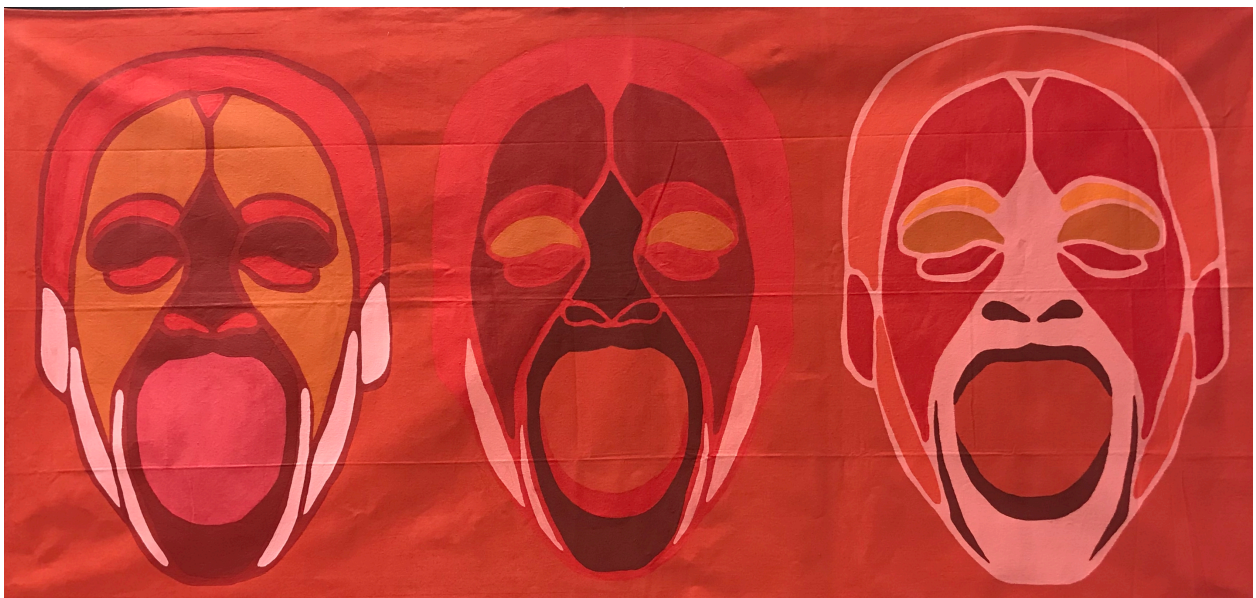
Figure 13 Long, Jordan Hostis, January 2020 Acrylic on Canvas 40x96 in.

The study and theories surrounding color have continued to change. From the different color wheels developed over the centuries to the way color shaped history and its constant effect on our reactions and associations, the world of color is constantly in flux. I have discussed the theories behind some of the current leading color scholars and

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[50] Tate. "Abstract Expressionism – Art Term." Tate. Accessed December 12, 2019. https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/abstract-expressionism. Paragraph 4

explored the different methods of Faber Birren and Herman Rorschach, who both

concluded that our perception affects the way we see color and the world around us. In

contrast, Leatrice Eiseman focuses on the influence color and its associations can be used

to alter our state of mind and influence marketing and business. At the same time, the

artists Mark Rothko, and other Abstract Expressionists, as well as Josef Albers, Francis

Bacon, and Agnes Martin all used color in ways that formed an expressive language akin

to my own work. Albers, in particular, taught that color is never exactly "truthful" for it is

in a constant state of relative association, and relies on the human personality in ways that

cause it to shift and be widely varied. These theories and artistic approaches laid the

groundwork for developing my body of work that investigates color interactions through

portraiture combined with color theory to create art that, given the notion of human

perception, aimed to invoke emotional responses from my viewers.

CHAPTER 3

TECHNIQUE

Abstract Expressionists had a distinct artistic lineage of tearing down existing

aesthetic structures so that they could create a new language of design.[51] My final body of

work took inspiration from this movement by focusing on their aesthetics with a

combination of utilizing aspects of color theory. Before what resulted in my final

product, my work went through a metamorphosis in which I explored with various

mediums and techniques of design. For example, I experimented with texture mediums,

then built out contour portraits. But it was not until I came across Rorschach's inkblots

that my work took a turn in what I considered the right direction. My paintings prior to

my thesis work focused on the use of color and human silhouettes in an attempt to

produce a narrative with directional lines and the human body (fig. 14).
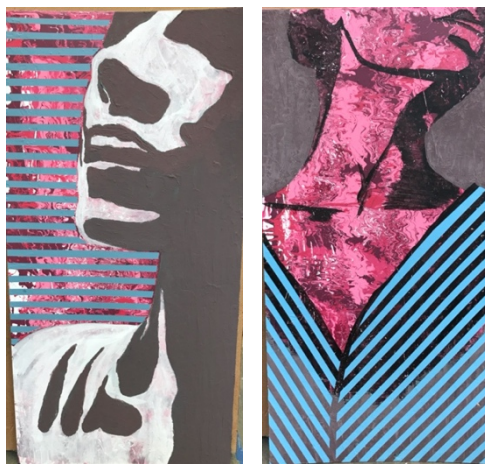
Figure 14 Jordan Long, untitled, acrylic on

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[51] Richard Klin, Lily Prince, and Steven Zucker, *Abstract Expressionism for Beginners* (Danbury, CT: For Beginners, 2016), 155.

After this series of paintings, I focused more on the abstraction and use of texture. My

paintings took inspiration from work by Mark Rothko. This series focused on large areas

of color and I also experimented with a multitude of tools, including silverware, spatulas,

rakes and other non-traditional tools to create a desirable line quality in my art (fig.15).

Figure 15 Jordan Long, exploration of texture, mixed media on canvas

The bold areas of color and shapes I felt were a success in this series of paintings, but a

central figure was missing. For the next body of work, I generated creatures and organic-

inspired forms out of the shapes that emerged from my background paintings. These

autonomist figures became the central focus of the work and had a color correlation to the

background to help with the visual narrative (fig. 16).

*Figure 16 Jordan Long, Green
blob, mixed media on canvas*

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The positive space would feature a separate figure utilizing contrasting colors and textural lines to distinguish it from the negative space. The negative space would follow a color combination that helped to set a different emotional connection when in comparison with the main focal point of the figure. I used a range of smooth and rough textures with deep lines carved into the paint to help illustrate the separate elements of the work.

This work was more successful than the previous series, but the forms lacked a sense of human connection for me. I wanted to have a distinguishable human element that came from the world around me rather than from imagination. In my life drawing course, I became attracted to contour and blind contour drawings of the human figure. I pulled shapes from these drawings which provided my work with a human connection. The abstraction that resulted from the countour drawing practice revealed shapes and designs that combined well with the successes of my use of color and textures from my previous serieses (fig. 17).

Figure 17 Jordan Long, Apollo, Mixed media on unstretched canvas

Through utilitzing the abstracted shapes that derived from the human figures, I assembled these gathered shapes and contours into in a series of compostions that allowed the paintings to have a more interesting play on the figure-ground relationship with the

postive figure being derived from actual areas of the human body. With this, I provide my viewers the route to form their own associaiton with the postive shapes and allow a better interpretaion and development of a potential narrative if my viewers saw one. This piece, *Apollo,* helped me to realize what I was missing in my work. Texture and improvisational use of colors throughout my work removed emphasis from the central figure. My work up to this point was lacking harmony between the positive and negative space of the work. The focus and ability to separate the elements of my work was being misconstrued by the overabundance of texture and was only able to be seen due to the difference in color and forms. What worked for the piece *Apollo* was the lack of texture in specific areas, the red circles, yellow rocket, orange check mark, and blue pan shape. With the removal of texture and the focus being on the color and finish of the paint my viewers were able to make better associations and connections with those areas verses the negative space of the background with its overabundance of texture and lack of emphasis. This led to my removal of the majority of texture and to focus primarily on the combination of color and abstracted shapes pulled from a human figure.

My source material also switched from life drawing models to abstracted drawings of famous people who were influences in my life because I wanted to develop a series that resonated with me and would reflect areas related to my personal experiences when crafting art. I began to stack multiple drawings to design an elaborate scene filled with overlapping lines. This process allowed me to abstract the portraits I chose into a more undiscernible figure for my audience. In this way, the viewer would be able to create their own associations and develop their own ideas about the image. For one of my pieces, I wanted to design a work about Robin Williams. I chose Williams because of his

impact and guidance he had on my life. His ability to act as both a clown and series actor was an inspiration throughout my life. His death opened up my eyes to realizing that the actor I had been so fond of who seemed like a perfectly happy person was in all actuality suffering profoundly. I wanted to make a piece that at surface level looked joyful and carefree but was ultimately produced from a form of chaos then emerged an ambiguous form. The form was meant to be unclear for the viewer which would allow them to apply their own associations to it, yet the truth of the painting would only be known to me. I found a license-free image and created a digital contour portrait and overlaid it multiple times (fig.18)

Figure 18 photo of Robin Williams, photo with contour drawing overlaid, digital composite of stacked contour drawings

From the stacked contour drawings, I cycled through a process of eliminating shapes, and trying out multiple color palettes that represented Robin Williams to me. I eventually compiled the final design and then generated the final digital painting (fig. 19).

Figure 19 blocked out shapes, final digital composition with color selection

I produced another piece from this process based on singer/actor George Kusunoki Miller

or better known by his stage name Joji (fig. 20).[52]

Figure 20 Jordan Long, JoJi, acrylic on canvas

JoJi was an important figure in my life growing up with much of my humor and sociatal

opionons being based on his youtube series and comedic reportoire. This particular piece

had a culmination of all the things I had envisioned and wanted in my art clean lines,

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[52] JoJi- A Japanese singer, songwriter, rapper, record producer, author, and former Internet personality and comedian.

unique abstracted shapes, the almost nonexistent texture, and thought-provoking color palette that fits my association of JoJi. However, I wanted my work to explore the idea of using abstracted shapes and color theory to associate the arrangement and color palette combined. I researched color theory and color psychology to explore connections with the way people perceive and interpret color. From this research, I learned how to express this connection with my current abstracted shapes.

After the creation of my JoJi painting I enrolled in a summer class where I went to Mexico to study art and architecture; from visiting traditional markets and coming across the classic Lucha Dor masks, I realized these patterns seemed more human than the ones in my paintings. After I returned from Mexico, I created a new series of abstracted portraits centered around these masks, keeping more of the human aspects of the face. These forms became an armature that allowed me to continue working with color theory and deciding on color palettes that would best represent my emotional ideas (fig. 21).

Figure 21 Jordan Long, untitled, digital designs

My research continued by utilizing these designs, combining them with my research on the notion of color association, and assembling them together to make a painting that

would elicit an emotional response from my viewers. Following this my investigation led me to Herman Rorschach and his inkblots (fig. 22).

Figure 22 Rorschach's 10 inkblot images

Rorschach's inkblots focused on bilateral symmetry to help construct a more pleasing appearance to the eye. His research showed that by utilizing bilateral symmetry into his designs it allowed his subjects to feel more comfortable and willing to perform the inkblot test. He even took into account the use of color by implementing the Helmholtz-Kohlrausch effect[53] when adding color to his designs that would encourage and confront his test takers.[54] These symmetrical designs along with Rorschach's theories and application of color with design influenced my thesis into its final metamorphisis from my intial design which were too abstracted. Utilizing the inspiration from Rorschach's designs and theories I synthesized portraits combining the concept of the inkblot, and my abstracted designs (fig. 23).

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[53] Helmholtz-Kohlrausch effect- is a perceptual phenomenon wherein the intense saturation of spectral hue is perceived as part of the color's luminance. Damion, *Inkblots,* 2184, Kindle.
[54] Damion, *Inkblots,* 2171, 2177, 2184, Kindle.
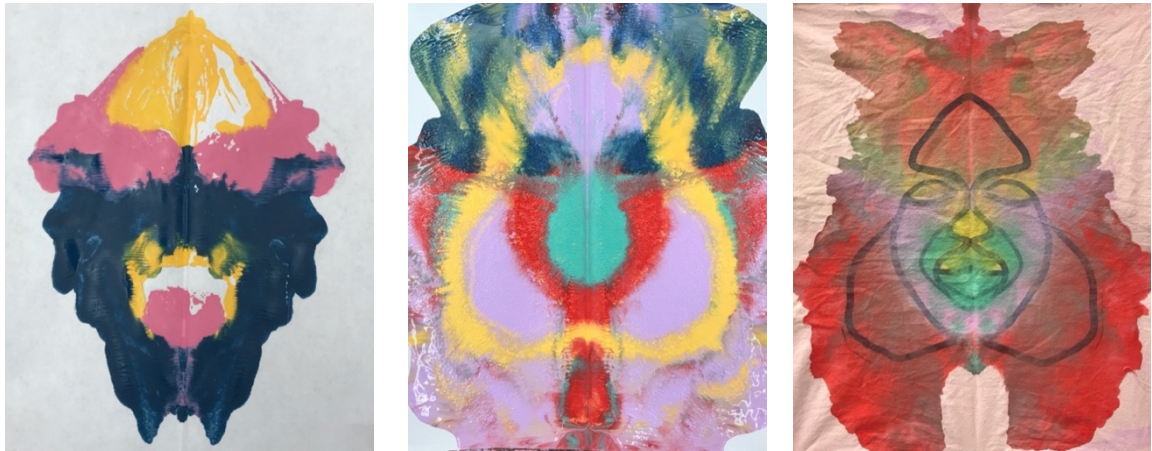
Figure 23 Jordan Long, Rorschach inspiration, mixed media on paper and canvas

From there, I produced a series of test pieces that focused more on the human face and

following the specific muscle structure when making expressions. I decided to focus on

the natural symmetry of the human face, which is the foundation of Classical aesthetics. I

also utilized the idea of color association and generated palettes based around an

emotional theme I wanted each test piece to have. This way, I could investigate if my

audience would arrive at the same intentions as me (fig. 24).

Figure 24 Jordan Long, test 32-38, acrylic on canvas,

Through trial, error, and experimentation, I finally found a process and way of designing

my paintings that fit my end goal. For my thesis, I wanted to focus on the five basic

emotions: joy, sadness, anger, fear, and disgust so I either found or took my own photos

of people depicting those emotions (fig. 25).[55]

Figure 25 Model Richard Bartley emotion anger

Following this, I utilized the research done by Dr. Paul Ekman[56] to identify specific

facial expressions and their characteristics that identify the emotions, joy, sadness, anger,

fear, and disgust. Utilizing the research and descriptions provided in chapters four

through nine of Ekman's book *Unmasking the Face*, I would arrange the photo and

construct contour designs digitally over the pictures till it identified the specific guides

and emotion of the portrait.[57] Then I modified the drawing more to create a bilateral

symmetry and cleaned up the linework. (fig. 26).

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[55] Mark Simon, *Facial Expressions, Babies to Teens: a Visual Reference for Artists* (New York: Watson-Guptill, 2008), 195.
[56] Dr. Paul Ekman, an American psychologist who pioneered the study of emotions and their relation to facial expressions.
[57] Paul Ekman and Wallace V. Friesen, *Unmasking the Face: A Guide to Recognizing Emotions from Facial Expression,* (Cambridge, MA: Malor, 2003), 720-1645, Kindle.
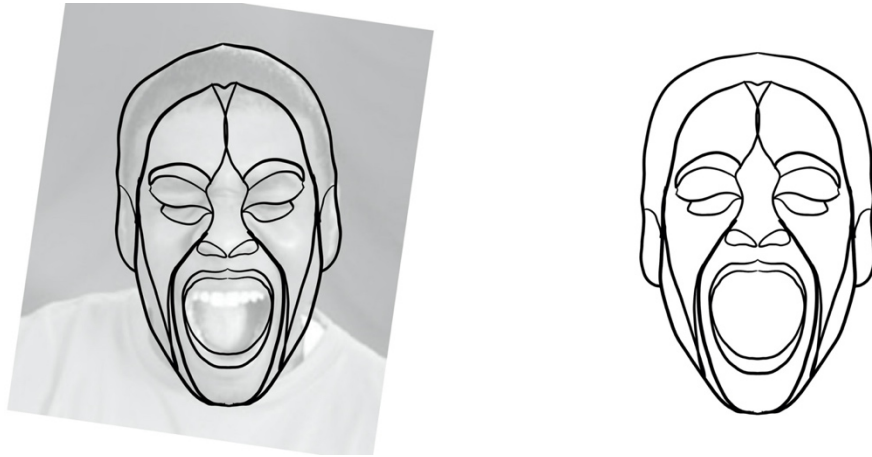
Figure 26 contour design applied over portrait. Second image shows cleaned up line work and design.

After the line work is established, I look at color theory and color association to find a

palette that would fit the emotional theme of anger while also applying my own

association with the color combinations to fit the intended aesthetic (fig. 27).

Figure 27 digital process continued

After establishing a color palette, I focused on the composition and associated memory in

combination with the intended emotion. In this particular piece I decided to concentrate

on the positive space being filled by these three central figures while the negative space

utilized the color red to tie it to theme of anger (fig. 28).

Figure 28 digital design of anger

Once I have a composition and color palette that fits the abstracted design and emotional association, I matched up my colors with the house paint selections that would be closest to my digital colors (fig. 29).
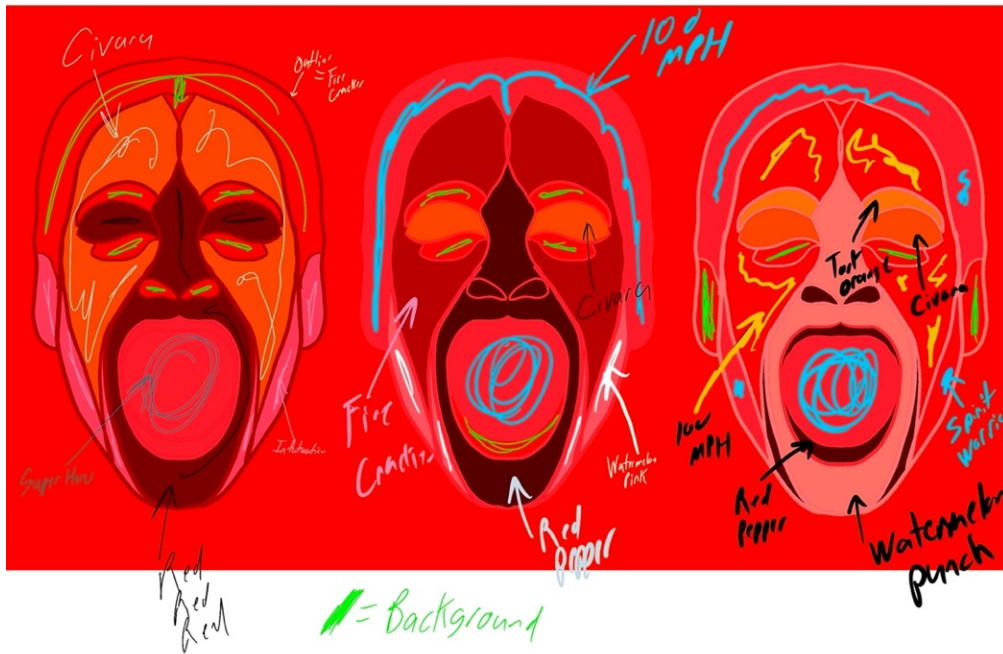
Figure 29 digital design with labels of chose house paint for each area

Following this I projected my designs, traced the outlined areas, and painted everything to pair closely to my digital design with some adjustments (fig. 30).

Figure 30 Jordan Long, Hostis, 40"x96" acrylic on canvas

By developing a body of work that investigates color interactions through portraiture and color theory, I produced art that invokes an emotional response from viewers, as well as an investigation into the established color theorist ideals. My work ultimately focused on three components: abstraction of the human face, creating a color palette that focuses on a particular emotion. The color palette either focused on cultural or personal color association. Lastly, assembling the pieces together compositionally to evoke an emotional response from my viewers.

CHAPTER 4:

THE WORKS

This chapter contains descriptions of the works in my show. However, the composition for each work is similar, featuring an abstracted face (or faces) floating in a field of color. Each of my paintings follows a specific emotional theme that is based on a personal memory or feeling centered around the color association. The structure for each of my faces is created from a contour line drawing that simplifies the face and highlights the key areas associated with the specific emotion featured in each work. For each of the designs, I vary the color palettes, the finish for each painting, and the color layout to help highlight the systematic application of color combinations with varying patterns while also combining them with the abstracted portraiture. The faces depicted in each work reflect specific micro-expressions based on Dr. Paul Ekman's research on identifying facial micro-expressions.[58] These micro-expressions will focus on my specific emotions of joy, sadness, anger, fear, and disgust.[59] The micro-expressions are exaggerated to help the viewer determine what the emotion is.

The composition for each face is built on top of the original portrait during the design process, like a custom mask would be, except for the eyes which are left out so

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[58] Micro-expressions- are displays of facial emotions that are involuntary and are much harder to see due to only lasting for a fraction of a second. Ekman, *Unmasking the Face,* 350, Kindle.

[59] Ekman, *Unmasking the Face,* 350, Kindle.

that the audience can imagine themselves in these abstracted figures. The faces utilize

bilateral symmetry, inspired by Rorschach's designs, which helps create a more pleasing

form that makes the subject more willing to observe and analyze each color combination

as it is applied to my abstracted portraiture. Additionally, I decided to not design bodies

for the heads to avoid distinguishing gender. Although some of my heads do seem to

have gendered aspects, I did not want to over overemphasize gender, and instead wanted

the humanoid and androgynous aspects to stand out more. By avoiding bodies, too, I

could avoid clothing which could then bring up topics of class and cultural background.

And by avoiding naked bodies, I did not try to entice viewers into an unnecessary

commentary on sexuality either. The figures are also designed to be overall genderless,

so anyone can identify with the emotions being depicted as well as impart their

associations on these heads.

Since the purpose of my thesis is to examine the effect of color on the emotions of

the viewer, I decided to focus my designs and faces on emphasizing the generic

expressions that I determined to evoke certain emotions that are tied with each figure.

Following the distinctive face descriptions described in Ekman's book *Unmasking the*

Face, in which specific guidelines about identifying micro-expressions are outlined, I

designed the overall shape, line quality, and abstracted forms to highlight these keys

areas. Following the design, I placed specific color combinations in conjunction with the

overall abstracted design to further emphasize areas of the face that relate to identifying

specific emotions. I made some areas lighter and darker to help push and pull these

features to simulate the exaggeration of muscles and skin against the bone structure. The

push and pull are also done through the lines of the form. The color combinations used in

some of my paintings focus on the associations described by color theorists and historians, as discussed in chapter 2. In contrast, other paintings focus on my color association with the emotion.

The composition of my paintings focuses on a positive and negative space relationship that helps create a visual composition. The utilization of the color combinations with the abstracted imagery helps describe and bring awareness to the visual narrative as it relates to the overall emotional theme of each piece. The large size paintings—*Hassen, Hostis, Gaudium, Cognatus,* and *Sorge*—encompass the viewer's sight creating a face-to-face moment wherein the viewer feels engrossed in the visual depiction of these larger abstracted figures that stare back at them. The smaller paintings, including *Nox, Gefahr, Pallidus*, and *Fastidium,* were created as single paintings with the imagery being duplicated with different color combinations on separate canvases. These smaller works focused on the variances and nuances of the emotions being depicted with slight alterations on each of the canvases. The similar forms depicted in certain works serve as a metaphor and vessel for the generally recognizable facial expressions.

My thesis focuses on five of the seven so-called universal facial expressions with the proportions of each figure being a specific micro-expression. The repetition of composition and style of the faces between the paintings serves as a tool to create an emphasis on emotion and color; by repeating similar imagery around the gallery, viewers are walking around, engaged with these large faces featuring different emotions. This repetition acts as an attempt to elicit their emotional responses to these works.

 Overall the figures serve as vessels for the utilization of different color combinations and their association with emotions. Each basic emotion is depicted twice

with different color palettes; the first color palette is chosen to reflect what color theorists claim are the colors that invoke certain ideas or feelings or have deeply rooted symbolic meaning. The second palette is derived from my color associations with these feelings based on personal experience from life and memory. These multiple iterations of colors evoking feelings can serve to challenge and reinforce that there might be color experiences that supersede individual human perception.

Figure 31 Jordan Long. Hostis. 2020. Acrylic on canvas

Figure 32 Jordan Long. Hassen. 2020. Acrylic on canvas

Hostis

  "Hostis" translated from Latin means enemy and anger. The reason for the Latin nomenclature is due to my Hispanic Catholic upbringing and its importance in many of my personal associations. *Hostis* features a composition of three faces depicting anger with varying shades and tones of red, orange, and yellow. The three faces symbolize my two uncles and father and this mask of anger and hatred they would have on their faces when something would happen at work or if I didn't do something correctly while helping out on the farm. The emotional aspect of anger, to me, is an engrossing influence and is symbolized by the sizes of each symmetrical facial image with similar color palettes and slightly altered compositions that take up large portions of the entire painting. The micro-expressions for anger in this piece are shown in the vertical lines between the eyebrows, bulging highlight of the eyes; the mouth is designed to appear as if it is shouting, the nostrils have a dilation to them, the lower jaw is extended downward. The colors follow along with the color theory notion that red and its family can create an aggressive nature.[60] The pink is used to highlight particular areas in each of the three faces that are focal points when observing areas of the face that depict anger. This piece also ties into the idea of anger as all-encompassing with a large amount of red in the background being mixed in the three faces as well. Through the systematic application of color with my abstracted portraiture, I tried to portray and convey the emotion of anger.

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[60] Adams and Helfand, *The Designers Dictionary of Color*, 83-93; Joann Eckstut and Arielle Eckstut, *The Secret Language of Color: Science, Nature, History, Culture, Beauty of Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue & Violet* (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal, 2013), 35; Leatrice Eiseman, *Pantone Guide to Communication with Colour* (Cincinnati, OH: Grafix Press, 2000), 19-21.

Hassen

"Hassen" is the German word meaning "to hate." The title comes from my German heritage; I am of mixed Hispanic and German descent, so my titles reflect this. The act of hating and the feeling of anger is an overwhelming emotion for me. *Hassen* is my interpretation of the emotional display of hate and anger. In this piece, I focus on the association I have with colors relating to anger. When I think of anger, I remember the faces of my uncles and father, who were quick to anger when I would do something wrong while working on our family farm. Their faces were always constantly sunburnt and pink from working in the fields every day, and when, due to their lighter complexion, they got mad, their faces took on this deep shade of red with hints of purple. The harsh subject matter of the piece reflects the pronunciation of the word itself and the relation to hating the treatment and anger that I received from my family. Just as in *Hostis*, the three faces symbolize my two uncles and father. The micro-expressions are depicted similarly to *Hostis* as well. The main difference is in the color palette that is derived from my color associations based on my connection to the emotion of anger. The predominant darker shade of red throughout the work is related to my idea of anger consuming and influencing the piece as a whole. Again, with this work, I am trying to explore the variety of human experience with color and emotion.

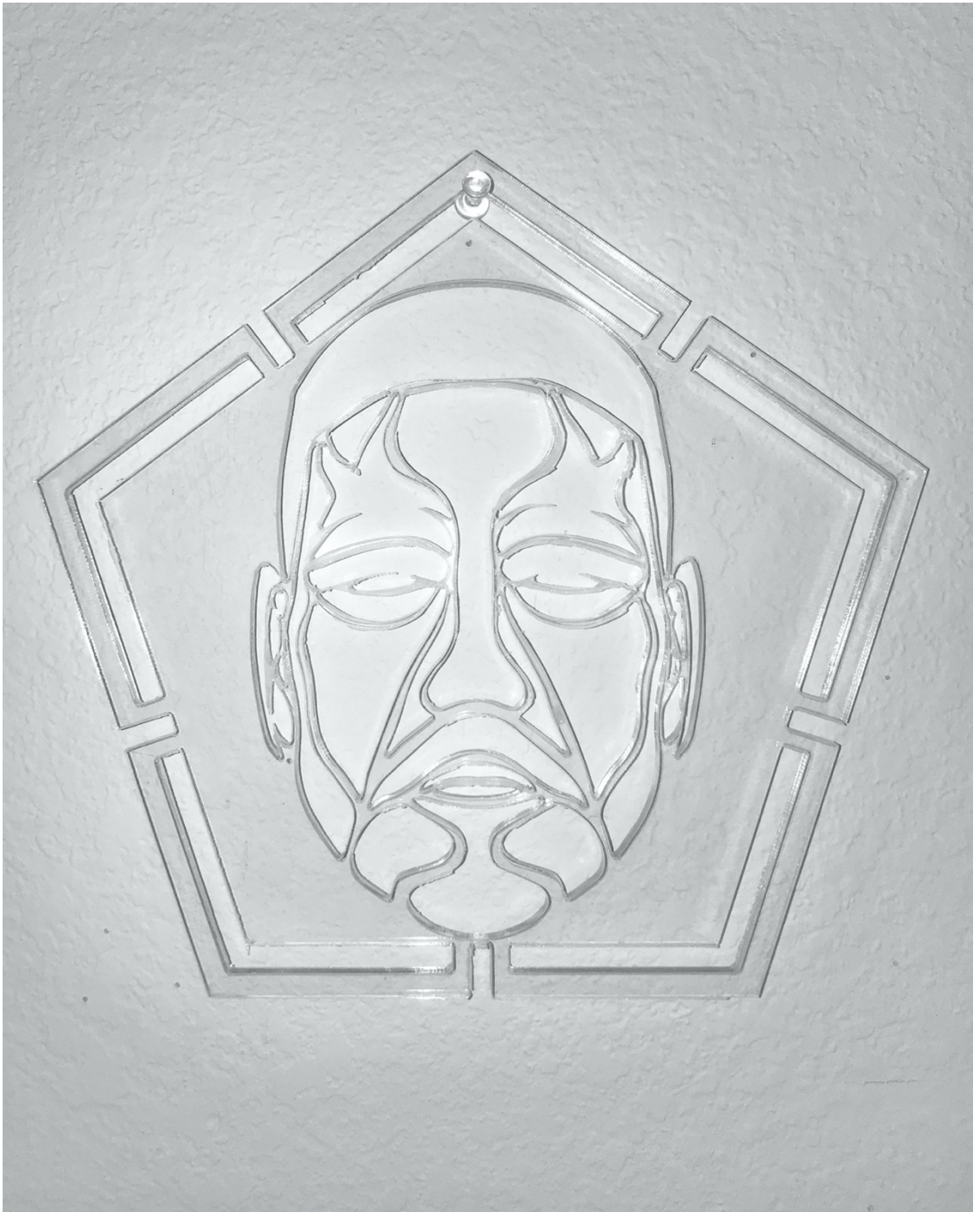*Figure 33 Jordan Long. Sorge. 2020. Acrylic on canvas*

Figure 34 Jordan Long. Inanitas. Laser cut Acrylic sheet

Sorge

The title for this painting is *Sorge*, which originates from German and translates to sadness. In this particular work, I utilize the color theory idea that excessive amounts of blue with other cool colors used in tandem with a human figure will create an emotional association to sadness.[61] The idea behind this piece came to me when I went to a family member's funeral and saw grief and the trail of tears on my family's faces. When creating the designs for this piece I focused on the micro-expression for sadness: the inner corners of the eyebrows are drawn in, the skin below the eyebrows is pointed up, the corner of the lips is drawn down, the jaw comes up, and the lips appear to be pouting. The areas of purple and light blue help to accentuate these areas of focus. This painting focuses on a single subject within a larger canvas to serve as a metaphor for the encompassing feeling sadness portrays in parts of my life. Furthermore, by manipulating the application of color, abstracted portraiture, and utilizing the key areas of micro-expressions related to sadness, my work attempted to evoke sadness.

Inanitas

"Inanitas" is derived from the Latin word for emptiness. This piece is made differently from *Sorge* yet features the same micro-expressions and overall design. The reason behind the clear acrylic sheet is because my color association with sadness is not blue but clear. For me, the feeling of emptiness best portrays my idea of what sadness is. Concerning the memory of the funeral mentioned above, the feeling of emptiness and missing the family member created a feeling of having a piece of me missing. That is where the idea for the clear empty version of *Sorge* came from. The absence and lack of

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[61] Leatrice Eiseman, *Color - Messages & Meanings: A PANTONE Color Resource* (Gloucester, MA: Hand Books, 2007), 32-33; and Eckstut, *Secret Language,* 183.

color is my association with sadness. Yet, both of these iterations of sadness serve to

bring out a conjunction between color and this specific emotion.

Figure 35 Jordan Long Laetus. 2020. Acrylic on canvas

Figure 36 Jordan Long. Gaudium. 2020. Gold leaf and Acrylic on canvas

Laetus

"Laetus" is the Latin word for joyful. Yellow, according to color theorists, is the color with the highest visibility and is therefore associated with joy, hope, and optimism.[62] It is generally regarded as representing happiness.[63] The micro-expression that depicts joy in my design includes the lips pulled up into the corners of the face, the mouth parted, raised cheeks, and the section on the outer nose to the outer lip has its own shape, as well as the side-eye muscles, are depicted as pointed. The pink areas depict the emotional reaction to joy and bring awareness to those areas of the face. The idea for *Laetus* derives from a cherished memory of sitting with my mother on the farm and observing the fields of sunflowers and yellow wildflowers. The enveloping areas of bright yellow always put a smile on my mother's face. The piece also features a single subject on a large canvas that symbolizes the importance of this memory and how joy is a vital characteristic to me personally. The abstracted face follows the micro-expressions and guidelines people make when smiling and the combination of vibrancy and color mixed with the portraiture emphasis the joy in the piece. Together with the application of color with my abstracted portraiture along with following the systematic application of specific colors of yellow in connection with the mentioned micro-expressions, I worked to portray the emotion of joy.

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[62] Eiseman, *Messages & Meanings,* 19-21.
[63] Adams and Helfand, *The Designers Dictionary of Color,* 109.

Gaudium

"Gaudium" comes from the Latin word for golden, joy, and happiness. The colors utilized in this piece reflect my association with what is joyful. The design for *Gaudium* follows a similar layout to *Laetus* and the micro-expressions related to identifying joy. *Gaudium* features acrylic and gold leaf on canvas. The gold leaf in this work symbolizes an abundance of wealth and prosperity, which I consider to be beneficial to create joy and happiness. The background color of black relates to the extravagant suits and tuxedos I would wear to attend classy functions with my mother. The light turquoise blue is reminiscent of the waters and beaches my family would travel to for our frequent vacations. The cream color is there to symbolize my light skin complexion. The overall size contributes to the grandiose nature of this piece. Together, with the chosen color combination, abstracted areas, and scale of the painting, they work in tandem to emphasize the emotion of joy, happiness, and how luxury and monetary wealth are connected with these emotions for me. Even the gold leaf fits into my color association due to its cultural ties to wealth and luxury from the gold works of the Byzantine artist to the use of gold foil on book covers and mosaic tiles, often to represent the color of heaven.[64] The use of gold therefore provides a link to elegance and richness as well as spirituality. Together both artworks show the different associations that can arise to depict the emotion of joy when using different color combinations with abstracted portraiture.

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[64] Adams and Helfand, *The Designers Dictionary of Color,* 245.

Figure 37 Jordan Long. Fastidium 1-4. 2020. Acrylic on canvas

Figure 38 Jordan Long Pallidus 1-4. 2020. Acrylic on canvas

Fastidium 1-4

The title for this series of four paintings is Fastidium, which is the Latin word for disgust. Green, according to color theorists, when applied to a human figure, gives the impression of being slimy, alien, or that the subject has an ailment of some kind.[65] The idea for *Fastidiu*m comes from a memory of my days working for a hog site finishing crew. Our team had to go to a finishing site, due to a power outage in part of the barn, to make sure the pigs were getting heat and air. This was during the winter when the heat is essential to keeping the pigs alive as well as keeping a source of fresh air circulating through the barn for ventilation purposes. When we arrived, one of the outside barns had lost partial power to the curtains and had dropped them, causing half the barn to reach below freezing and killing multiple pigs. The worst part was that due to the heat still running, half of the dead pigs' bodies had not frozen, and they were being devoured by the living pigs in their pens. The process of decay had been both expedited and halted, causing the dead pigs to be rotting on the halves that were eaten and closet to the heat source with a green sludge-like substance oozing from their bodies. In contrast, the other halves that were frozen showed a pale-yellow discoloration around the areas of the bodies from being stepped on by the other pigs. Also, due to the cold, the veins of the pigs showed clearly through their almost translucent cream-colored skin. After we photographed and documented the dead pigs and incident, we had to dispose of the bodies. And the looks of disgust on my coworkers' faces as we had to scrap and dislodge the pigs' bodies that had frozen to the floor are still clear in my mind today. The inspiration for the four paintings, each with varying compositions of greens and purples,

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[65] Leatrice Eiseman and Robert Hickey, *Colors for Your Every Mood: Discover Your True Decorating Colors* (Sterling, VA: Capital Books, 2000), 76-77.

comes from the memories of my coworkers' faces from this experience. The design for the faces focuses on the micro-expressions that relate to disgust: upper raised lips, nose wrinkled or squished near the bridge, cheeks are lifted, and a wrinkle created from the outer nose to the outer lips. The varied placement of the color combinations with the facial designs helps to highlight the individual areas of focus when observing the facial expressions. All four paintings were designed as a single artwork with slight variances on color combinations in conjunction with areas of the face that emphasized the expressions of disgust. In *Fastidium 1*, I focused light green on the raised cheeks, light purple on the jawline and upper eyelids, dark green on the eyebrows, nose, and outer upper lip area. *Fastidium 2* creates a focus on the raised cheeks area with the pale purple, and the surrounding dark green in the jawline, eyebrows, nose, and upper lip area. The pale green in the mouth region helps to emphasize that particular expression. *Fastidium 3* uses the pale green to bring attention to the outlined areas, which allows the two darker greens to appear darker in the upper lip and lower mouth area. *Fastidium 4* utilizes the darkest green throughout the outline and upper head area. This allows the pale purple and light greens to stand out in unison and brings a balance throughout the facial region. Together the four paintings function as a single work due to the repetition of a similar design and canvas shape. The color combination for each piece changed to highlight specific areas of the face related to disgust, and overall the multiple iterations helped to drive home the emotion of disgust to my viewers.

Pallidus 1-4

This series of paintings is titled *Pallidus*, which derives from the Latin word for pale or lifeless. The color choices come from the same experience as described for the *Fastidium* paintings. The faces follow the same compositional design related to disgust as well as the idea for four paintings with slight color combination adjustments. The color choices are derived and related to the pale, sickly look of the pigs' flesh from the incident described above, the yellowing bruising all over the pigs' bodies. And the specific colors red, blue, and green are reminiscent of the veins and discoloration on the bodies. By utilizing the previously mentioned colors in combination with the abstracted imagery related to disgust, I created a visual representation of my association with that memory as well as an emphasis on the emotional connection of lifelessness and paleness with the abstracted figures. *Pallidus 1* brought attention to the brow area, mouth, and tips of the ears by utilizing the brightest color yellow. The orange color highlights the brow, lower eyelids, nose, and outer upper lip area. *Pallidus 2* has a strong focus on the cheek area using the yellow. At the same time, the head and outline are brought to the viewers' attention by utilizing the pastel green, and the pastel blue pushes the nasal and outer upper lip area to the back allowing the focus to remain with the yellow areas. *Pallidus 3* areas of focus can be seen in the areas where there is yellow: nose, lower eyelids, and lower lip. The pastel orange brings a second focus on the brow and chin area. *Pallidus 4* utilizes the pastel orange to highlight the head and upper eyelids, while the pastel green brings attention to the outer upper lip area and the brow. The yellow is focused on the jawline. Together with the *Fastidium* paintings, these pieces work in harmony to display both the color theory notion of disgust while also demonstrating my own personal color

association represented in the *Pallidus* paintings. Though the color association may change from person to person when used in combination with the emotional design of the abstracted disgust portrait, my work seeks to affect the emotions of my viewers.

Figure 39 Jordan Long Gefahr 1- 2. 2020. Acrylic on canvas

Figure 40 Jordan Long Nox 1-2. 2020. Acrylic on canvas

Gefahr 1, Gefahr 2

    Gefahr, translated from German, means "danger" or "fear," and is the emotion being portrayed in the two paintings. The imagery in these pieces depicts a figure with a fearful expression and with purple, the color wore in Thailand that represents mourning and death while in western culture it has a connotation of spirituality and aristocracy, black, representing in contemporary society sophistication, death, the night, and mystery, white, which means death and mourning in Asian cultures yet is also associated with new beginnings, and the stark contrast of red, with its relation to passion, energy, fire, violence, anger, and its association with the energy of life, in combination with the abstracted portraiture, are made to illustrate and create a connection with the emotional state of fear.[66] The idea of depicting fear is inspired by my employment in multiple haunted houses. I would observe and see people being scared with a look of fear and horror portrayed on their faces. The composition and design, in combination with the colors used, focus on the micro expression in the face that shows a connection with fear. Raised eyebrows drew close together, the marking in the middle between the eyes, the eyes are depicted enlarged, and the mouth and lips are stretched and drawn back. The whites in the eye, the dark circles around the orbital region, red on the cheeks, and surrounding glow of purple in addition to the overall design helps to create an unsettling effect. The composition and color combinations guide the audience to make the conclusion that once they look at these paintings, they can associate them with the notion of fear or being afraid. The underlying reasons for fear like insecurity, doubt, and anger may influence the way fear is experienced, so I split the characteristics of some of the

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[66] Adams and Helfand, *The Designers Dictionary of Color,* 75, 199, 227,83.

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micro expressions that are emphasized in this set of paintings. The figure on the left shows the highlighted interest in the eyes, the eyebrows, and the mouth, while the figure on the right focuses on the surrounding muscle structure of the eyes, lips, and within the areas near the ears. Together the color combination and abstracted designs in connection with the micro-expressions that symbolize fear emphasize the emotional state of fear for the viewer in both *Gefahr* paintings.

Nox 1, Nox 2

These paintings focus on my personal association with fear. The word "Nox" is derived from the Latin word for night, which is why these works are predominantly focused on the different shades of black. When I draw from memories and experiences, fear to me is associated with my fear of the dark and being unable to discern my surroundings due to a traumatic issue from my childhood. Growing up, I had to take medication that would cause me horrible hallucinations and night terrors. I depended on a nightlight during the evenings to help ease me at night. However, as I would be falling asleep, the nightlight from my hallway would cast shadows on the walls, and with my poor eyesight and the medication I was taking, my mind would create hallucinations of terror-filled faces and skulls screaming and stretching in unhuman ways in a yellow glow. The color palette is inspired by the glow of the nightlight in contrast with a dark and dimly lit bedroom. The overall design focus on the same micro expressions as the *Gefahr* paintings, with colors utilizing my association with fear. In *Nox 1*, my design choices bring the viewer's focus on the eyes, ears, chin, and eyebrows, while in *Nox 2,* the focus is on the orbital region, the bridge of the nose, lips, and the upper skull area. The color combinations of varying shades of black, made more dynamic by incorporating hints of

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blue and gray, emphasize the darkness and to provide a stronger contrast with the linework, which was painted with cream like color which has a discernable tint of yellow. Together both the *Gefahr* paintings and the *Nox* paintings show the different associations that arise to depict the emotion of fear when using different color combinations with abstracted portraiture.

Chapter 5:

CONCLUSION

My work investigated the effect color had on the emotions of the viewers through a systematic application of color combinations with abstracted portraiture. Although no concrete answers came through this investigation, I believe my study, artwork, and findings allow for a conversation to be explored further and in the end proved that when topics concern color and the human experience, the answers that are sought after will always remain open-ended.

Through this investigation, I found that the idea of affecting the audience's emotions using specific colors in conjunction with abstracted portraiture was possible, at least from the small sample size of participants. Without a proper survey or another method to collect data, and without the ability to control certain variables and create a sample that mimics a population of people I want to focus on, I was unable to quantify the percentages of how often my viewers were able to see or feel the particular emotions I had designed for each of the paintings. However, throughout the show, I conducted short and informal interviews with my guests and took notes; I was able to discover that my work, in some instances, did elicit emotional responses from my viewers, even if they were not the original five emotions I had based the portraits on. What became apparent was the association that each individual had resulted in a different personal connection with the colors in each piece. This also affected how they read the abstracted portraits.

Even more notably is that the setting and surrounding ambiance created a cycle of influence and effect on these viewers. Ultimately the one variable I could not account for was the issue of human interpretation and perception. Both Lisa Eiseman and Faber Birren were correct in their ideas that when using color, we are only able to provide an impression of what we want our viewers to understand. Human reaction to color is subliminal, and generally, the viewer is unaware of their connection with colors.[67] Even though both Eiseman and Birren had different approaches to how they believed color stimulates us. It became clear that a combination of the two allows for the best possible outcome for what I was trying to achieve. Following the established guides of color association provided by Eiseman, and using the color theory techniques provided by both Birren and Josef Albers, these concepts in combination aided me in creating artwork that stimulated the viewer's sense of color, and their personal association with it when applied with my abstracted portraiture, thus creating the optimal conditions to engage the emotions, memories, and senses of my viewers.

This open-ended conversation with color warrants more exploration in my opinion. I want to create more designs that engage people's associations with color and document how color impacts experience, and vice versa. With time, I plan to utilize some of these ideas and the responses to my show in the development of future artwork. After my show, I began to start on new paintings and digital designs that took these concepts with new abstracted faces and more complex color palettes. And in the future, I hope to take these paintings as the initial step towards developing artwork made with

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[67] Leatrice Eiseman, *Pantone Guide to Communication with Colour* (Cincinnati, OH: Grafix Press, 2000), 8.

interdisciplinary methods, like combining color and sound design or color and lighting design to elicit emotional responses from people.

Though my research did not garner an explicit answer to the questions I asked, I am satisfied with the open-ended answers I encountered. There is nothing concrete when it comes to discussing color and the human experience, and that notion is exciting because of the potential exploration that can be conducted. I plan to continue to explore color, color relationships and associations, and in conjecture with abstracted designs based off imagery people can pull from their life experiences, get a conversation started, bringing emphasis to how tightly integrated color is with emotions, senses, and memory.

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