

My body of work focuses on the idea of identity. Over the past year and a half, my works have evolved from how I see myself to how the world sees me. As I gained more knowledge and self awareness, I realized that I am more than my own perception. There are so many factors in the world that shape a person; the two factors that I think have the most influence, and that I have explored most through articles, journals, and literature focused on a similar themes, are self identity and cultural identity. I have developed my art to reflect me, a single person that feels overshadowed by others' expectations and limited by the norms of society. Through various methods, I question American society and where I fit in it.

The three main thematic topics I explored are self identity, cultural identity, and the implications of society on the self. Self identity was explored through self portraits. I thought that self representation was the best way for someone else to see into who I am. The space opens with *Every Which Way*, a digital collage expressing my internal conflict. The idea of self-management and decision-making in this piece encompasses the theme of the entire exhibition since my decisions shape who I become. With the tone set, I pose the question: what obscures me? The green paint on *Self Portrait 1* is the first step toward my culture repressing my identity. Since the paint is covering my face, it represents being overpowered or in the background.

This idea was further renewed in the second thematic topic. Color choice, especially red, white, and blue, became more important as I could use it to represent culture and external influence. The idea of American society overshadowing self identity is persistent in this phase. Red and blue are symbolic of the country. How I interact with the colors is how representation of recent events. Worldview of the United States is changing, especially after the recent Presidential election. I began to think about how other people view Americans. Are we irrational, reactive, unaware? With the nation politically divided, and a gap emerging between socio-economic classes, the clash of red and blue show separation, but maintain harmony in a piece because of their use on the American flag. *Filling?* and *Self Portrait 2* are examples of the color use. They are reminiscent of self identity where colors are assigning meaning to an empty form in the first, and are obscuring its identity in the latter. Like the green paint in *Self Portrait 1*, red and blue shaped my image and more or less created a facade.

After the theme evolved enough, the connection to the self was lost, and a focus on the implications of society was taken on. The separation from the self brings the exhibition full circle. An exploration of what a society fundamentally expects is a large influence on what anybody can become living in it. Condemnation of thoughts or actions keeps everybody on the same path. Themes of individuality and who has power are explored in this final phase. *Uniformity*, an assemblage of cut fruit, extends an opportunity to the viewer to decide what I am trying to say about society as a whole. American society still struggles with many injustices, and the fact that we cannot accept people for who they are is quite puzzling.

Not knowing who I am yet initiated an exploration of what identity is. I came to the conclusion that identity evolves and can not be labeled as the consequence of anything particular. I led the viewer through my works with the intention of dissecting my thought process on identity. I wanted everything to be large to emphasize the self as well as ensure no viewer looks past the injustices of society, the ones that limit or conceal self identity. The self is a source everybody recognizes most easily. After that, external factors take over and create limitations in society. I am still exploring these ideas with a much greater focus on what else society stops me from becoming.