

My artwork has formally evolved over time, yet remains constant in the portrayal of the theme of identity and subthemes stemming from this idea. I have tried to closely connect these subthemes to the overarching “identity” by exploring the impact of depression and anxiety on one’s viewpoint regarding self-identity, and the negative fears that further impact self-acceptance when being a youth in the LGBT community. All of these themes are inspired by my own personal experiences, which allowed me to be immersed in creating each piece because I felt such an emotional connection to it. The majority of works I created were acrylic on canvas, yet encountering different art-making processes such as printing, digital manipulation, photography, etcetera had been an interesting and rewarding experience. By first diversifying my portfolio regarding mediums, then condensing it down to focus on paintings, the constant portrayal of these themes showcased an evolution of myself over time both as a formal artist and a youth struggling with the end of childhood.

Before entering high school, I experienced many things that eventually led to me becoming more of a depressed, anxious person; fears and insecurities which stemmed from these struggles were further intensified when I realized my sexual orientation did not match that which is widely accepted by society. Being in such a fragile mental state made it easy to want to channel these overwhelming emotions and worries into unhealthy habits, but instead I turned to art as a sort of healthy release. The evolution of me from that deteriorating mental state to a more healthy mindset and outlook on my identity/life can be seen in the gradual shift in mediums as I improved as an artist. My first artwork, *Perfect Pieces*, is a digital collage that was created with the “largest” theme of identity in mind, with a large image of my decapitated head with jagged puzzle piece edges to convey the beautiful morbidity with which I viewed my mental health and how it affected the way I viewed/portrayed myself in public. The idea to connect more specific subthemes to this first theme came about when it was made clear that, out of the eleven total works I created during junior year, ten of their mediums would be pre-determined by the instructor. Being relieved of the extra hassle of brainstorming a medium for each of these pieces gave me more time to think about which subthemes I would be able to best portray and how I would be able to connect them to the idea of “identity”.

The subthemes that I found most appropriate to convey my personal struggles under the overarching theme are as follows: depression and anxiety (as I interpreted/experienced it), fear, acceptance of one’s self (by one’s self and/or others), and sexual orientation. Depression, as complex as it is, was represented in many of my pieces by conveying figures either in clear outward distress to represent inner turmoil or as inhuman neutrals that showcase how easy it is to hide inner struggles from prying eyes. Similarly, fear and acceptance were conveyed in negative tones through pieces that connected to all of the aforementioned subthemes, whether it was fear of not being accepted for my sexual orientation, fear that others wouldn’t believe me about my anxious/depressing thoughts, fear that negative thoughts would lead to disastrous consequences, and the fear that I wouldn’t be acceptant of myself for any of these things my brain resiliently deemed as “flaws”.

After experimenting with various mediums, I settled on creating paintings during my senior year - I found it to be the most calming compared to digital alterations or carving/etching

prints, as it allowed me to get up close to the piece during completion and focus my anxiety on subtle details/texture (hair, especially, was calming for me to blend similar hues together in linear directions). I intended to display all of these works on a single wall versus a corner space to emphasize the flatness of these paintings; this was important to me as opposed to displaying 3D works, as it reduced the inspirations/issues that plague me to mere wall hangings that are unable to intimidate me.