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Cut + Paste | An Aesthetic Exploration

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CUT + PASTE | AN AESTHETIC EXPLORATION

by

KRISTIN FERRO

Under the Direction of Melanie Davenport, PhD

ABSTRACT

Photography can provide references for collage compositions. In my work, each step of this transformation resulted in new discoveries moving from one medium to another, and has culminated in dynamic time-lapse videos. This thesis follows my studio habits and derives implications for my classroom practice.

INDEX WORDS: Photography, Collage, Time-Lapse Video

CUT + PASTE | AN AESTHETIC EXPLORATION

by

KRISTIN FERRO

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Art Education

in the College of the Arts

Georgia State University

2018

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2018

CUT + PASTE | AN AESTHETIC EXPLORATION

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Georgia State University

May 2018

DEDICATION

I'd like to dedicate this thesis to my family and friends who have been exceedingly supportive of my work every step of the way.

For my husband, Benito, who has gone above and beyond to provide me with the best hugs, most delicious meals, and necessary sanity checks while inspiring me as we make our art. I love our love of life and art that we share, we're doin' it! Thanks for being your amazing self and for loving me.

For my mom, who is my #1 cheerleader and has been the best source of motivation as I work to follow in her unfaltering footsteps. I'm grateful for your everlasting willingness to be there and help out, no matter what the circumstance. I love you more than all of everything that ever was or will be to an infinite power. Thanks for making me believe I can achieve anything I set my mind to, just not everything.

For my dad who deserves all the thanks that are to be had for instilling a life-long love and appreciation of all things visual, creative, and imaginative in my head and my heart. Without your art knowledge and collection, steadfast support, and constant reminder to start with baby steps, I'd only know how to jump into the deep end to see if I could sink or swim. Thanks for keeping me grounded.

For my sister who wears a million hats at once, Lauren, and her awesome family, Comer III, Anne Margaret, Comer IV, Mills, Chapman, and Champ, y'all give me life. I love being a part of your family and am so appreciative of y'all for sharing your most meaningful moments with me. Thanks for working around our schedules to include us.

For my friends who continued to invite us to social events, knowing I was up to my ears with responsibilities. Thanks for keeping me in the loop, I'm ready to play!

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To my fellow classmates throughout this program, I'd like to express my appreciation and respect for y'all. You've helped me get through the past two years with support in and out of class and dedication to the program. Your commitment has motivated me and continued to keep me focused on becoming a better art educator. Congratulations to all of you, we did it!!

I'd like to acknowledge my colleagues who had an endless amount of patience with me as I rushed from school to school then back again. Thanks for your willingness to jump in and help me out whenever and wherever necessary, I owe you!

Lastly, I'd be remiss if I were to not recognize my students who will never realize how eternally grateful I am for their patience with me as I focused on my school work and the completion of this degree. Helping them find creative ways to actualize the hopes and dreams that they imagine are the reason that I'm in this field.

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1 INTRODUCTION

With ten years under my belt as an art educator, I am truly a product of my parents' upbringing; I inherited my artistic abilities from my dad and my teaching instincts from my mom. My mother's entire career in health and physical education had a huge impact on me because she was not only my teacher and coach, but also a positive influence in my decision to become an educator. My dad's first career as a graphic designer was also a motivating factor in my decision to pursue a degree in the field of art, as I had always been told by others that I should study graphic design and was inspired by his work.

1.1 Aesthetic Foundations

Throughout my formative years, I spent countless hours in front of the screens of my dad's computers creating all sorts of banners, signs, greeting cards, business cards, and labels. We never had cable television during my childhood, so my experience with screen time was more interactive, as opposed to the one-sided consumption of images and ideas. Software from 1988 called The Print Shop, compatible with 1983's Apple IIe, allowed for the most rudimentary and simplistic layout options that quickly became my first taste of design. Making these incredibly basic choices as a young child, then watching them instantly come to life through the printer with its continuous feed paper, was foundational in my ability to understand space and balance. The next computer that we owned was the boxy 1987 Macintosh SE, where I learned how to draft images and designs using the clicks of a mouse through the bitmap-based MacPaint graphics editor. The elementary options of adding lines, shapes, and patterns in only black and white was an exciting creative playground for me as I clicked all the buttons to see what they were capable of doing, and how they might all work together.

Since my interest in design continued to grow as new technologies became available and affordable, my supportive parents would purchase the graphics software for me to play with whenever they upgraded their computers. Some of the most memorable programs were those that offered 1,001 fonts to be downloaded to the computer for use, a Disney design program similar to Microsoft Publisher, and label making program comparable to the Avery brand's design products. Throughout middle school, designing labels with someone's name, an image or two that they liked, and a cool background was my way of making new friends. These address and return address sticker labels would end up plastered all over everyone's agenda books or lockers, so my peers were paying positive attention to designs that I made. This clean and straightforward approach to design that I was able to experiment so much with from such a young age has affected my simple yet complex vision and voice as I've grown from one stage to the next.

1.2 Fine Art

The other visual sources that have strongly impacted my aesthetic preferences come from the angular design, interior décor, and contemporary artworks found within my parents' contemporary house (*Figure 1.1*). Although my mom has always been one for sentimental heirlooms being put on display, my dad's clean vision for the minimalist design of our space had already been planned when they purchased the blueprints for our family home; this would give me early exposure to the world of fine art. When my parents built our house, my dad had already begun his art collection, and knew that he was going to add a few more pieces, especially since he now had the pristine expanse of wall space built perfectly to display bold artworks. The most popular piece we have has always been *Ninfa's* (*Figure 1.2*), by contemporary artist Chuck Arnoldi. This

sculptural painted stick structure is located on the most dominant wall in the house, so it's consistently part of the conversation when people visit. On trend with the styles of the 70's, Arnoldi found and painted a variety of acrylic colors onto a handful of sticks, then nailed them to one another to create a geometric interplay of positive and negative space.



Figure 1.1 My parents' contemporary home; the house where I grew up



Figure 1.2 "Ninfa's", Chuck Arnoldi, 1975-76, Acrylic & Branches, 94" x 84"

Other artworks around the house that have inspired my aesthetic values also portray very simplified angular designs with loud layers of bold color and basic patterns. Two of the artworks are by Alan Shields and focus on expression through the design principles; one was created in 1981 using handmade paper called, *Fran Tarkenton's Tie* (Figure 1.3), and the other is titled *Punk-1* (Figure 1.4 & Figure 1.5), from 1974 that is a two-sided serigraph encased in plexi-glass. My dad had also acquired the most basic of compositions by Brice Marden that were created in 1973 (Figure 1.6), 2 untitled etchings from his *Adriatics* series that simply depict a large grid printed in black. Another extremely minimal pair of works are by Gordon Hart (Figure 1.7 & Figure 1.8) and only portray a rectangle with a few short straight horizontal lines perpendicular to their

vertical side edges, drastically scaled down within a frame that was painted to match its inner shape. Some other notable artworks that were a visual part of the house in which I grew up include a hand-made rubber stamp book from 1967 called *Stamped Indelibly*, by William Katz, containing prints by Andy Warhol, Robert Indiana, and Tom Wesselman, among others (Figure 1.9 – Figure 1.13), a signed poster by Robert Rauschenberg from one of his photography shows (Figure 1.14), and a framed poster in my bedroom of Andy Warhol's 1981 *Quadrant Mickey Mouse/Myths* (Figure 1.15).



Figure 1.3 "Fran Tarkenton's Tie", Alan Shields, 1981, hand-made paper, 18/23, 37"

x 29"

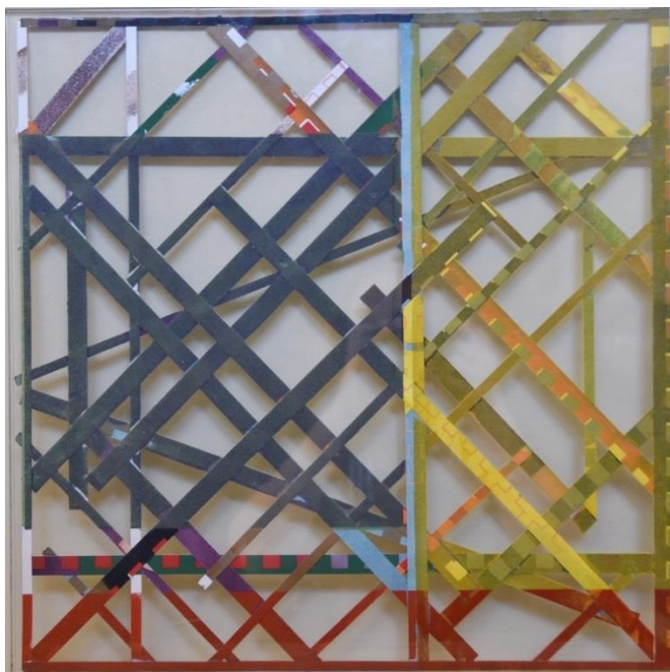


Figure 1.4 "Punk - 1", Alan Shields, 1974, Serigraph, 2 Sided Grid, 5/12, 17" x 17"

(front)



Figure 1.5 "Punk - 1", Alan Shields, 1974, Serigraph, 2 Sided Grid, 5/12, 17" x 17"

(back)

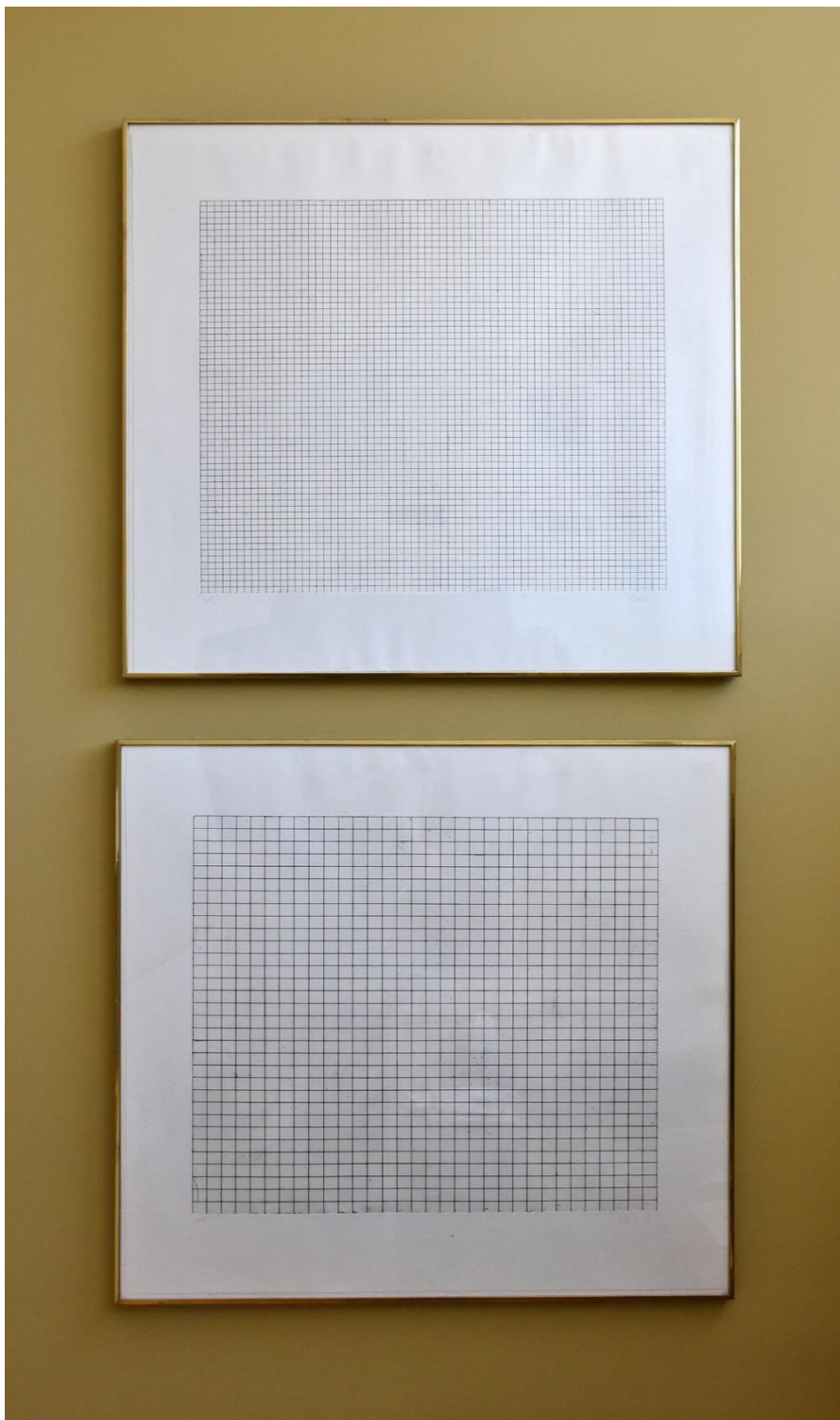


Figure 1.6 "Untitled", Brice Marden, 1974, Etching, Large grids from "Adriatics"

Portfolio, 20/40, 32.5" x 36"

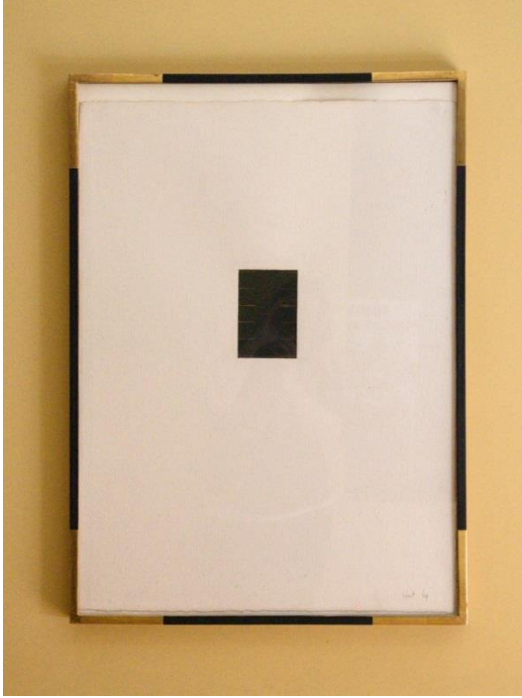


Figure 1.7 "Untitled", Gordon Hart, 1973, Gold Leaf & Egg Tempera on Paper, 30" x 22"

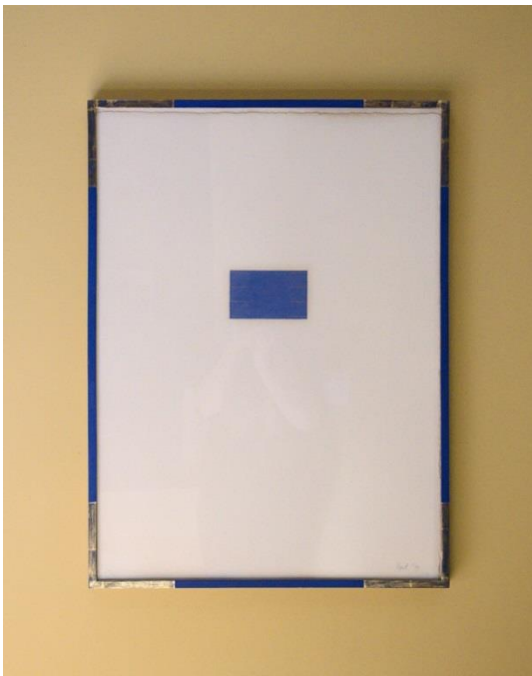


Figure 1.8 "Untitled", Gordon Hart, 1973, Gold Leaf & Egg Tempera on Paper, 30" x 22"

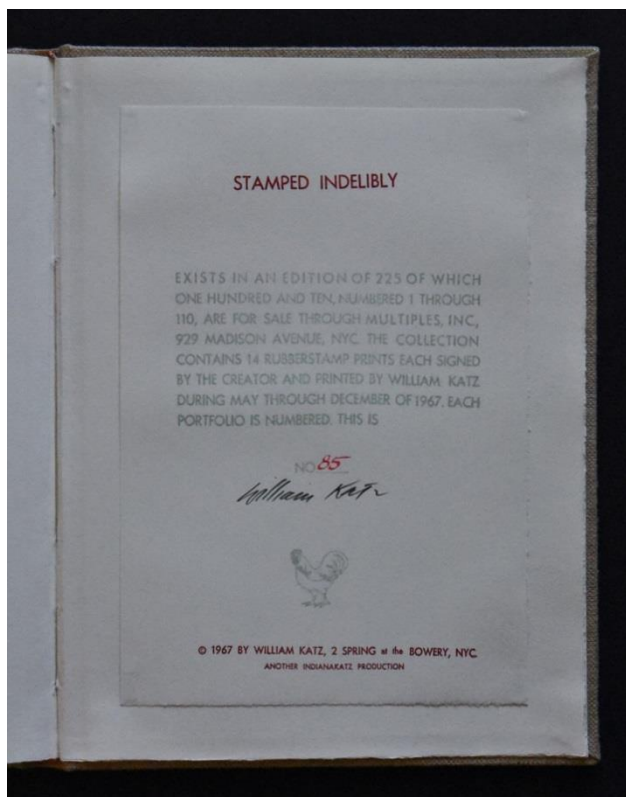


Figure 1.9 End Page from "Stamped Indelibly", William Katz and various artists, 1967, rubberstamp prints on bound paper, 85/110, 11.5" x 9"



Figure 1.10 Table of Contents from "Stamped Indelibly", William Katz and various artists, 1967, rubberstamp prints on bound paper, 85/110, 11.5" x 9"

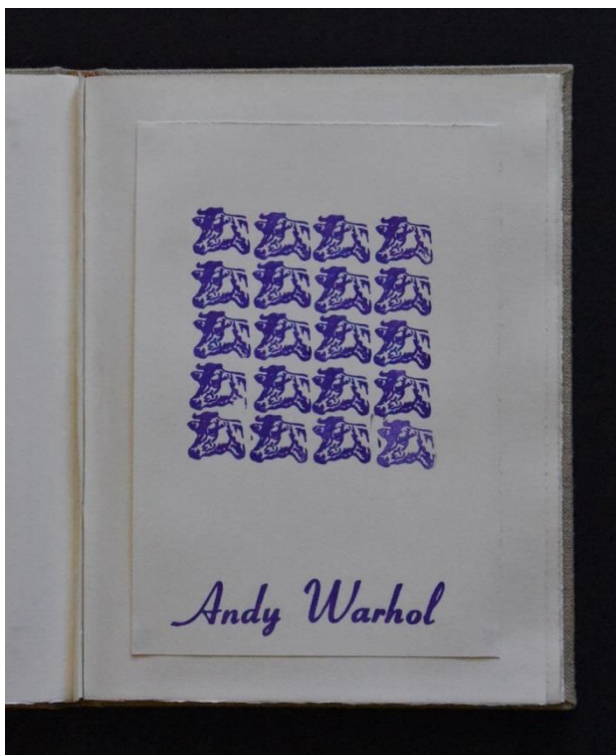


Figure 1.11 Andy Warhol's print in Katz's "Stamped Indelibly", 1967, 11.5" x 9"

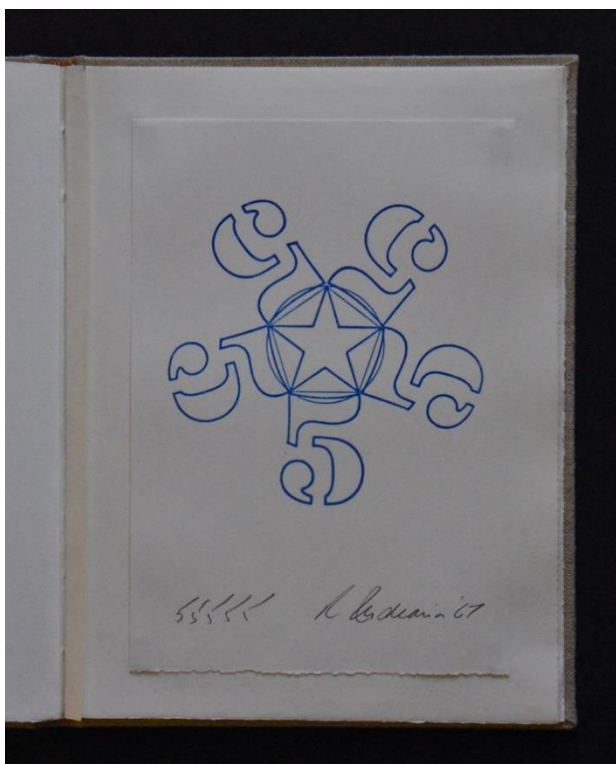


Figure 1.12 Robert Indiana's print in Katz's "Stamped Indelibly", 1967, 11.5" x 9"

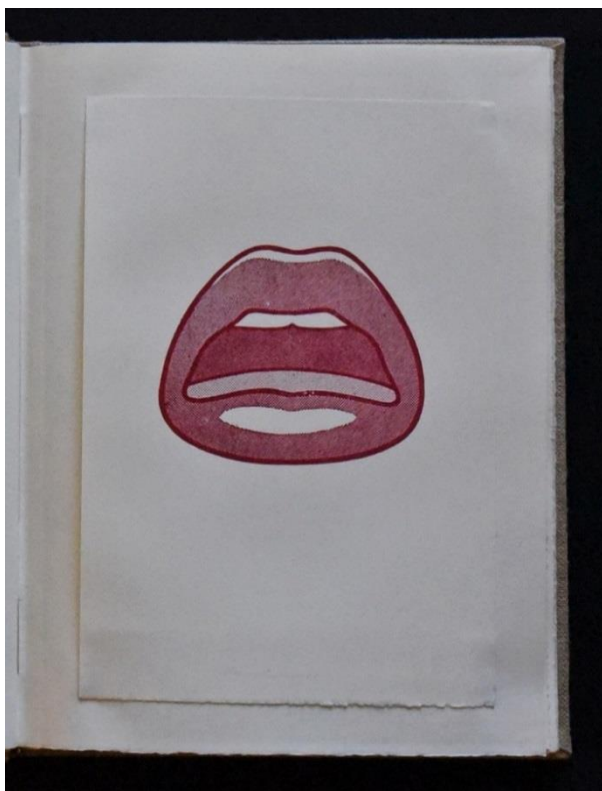


Figure 1.13 Tom Wesselman's print in Katz's "Stamped Indelibly", 1967, 11.5" x 9"

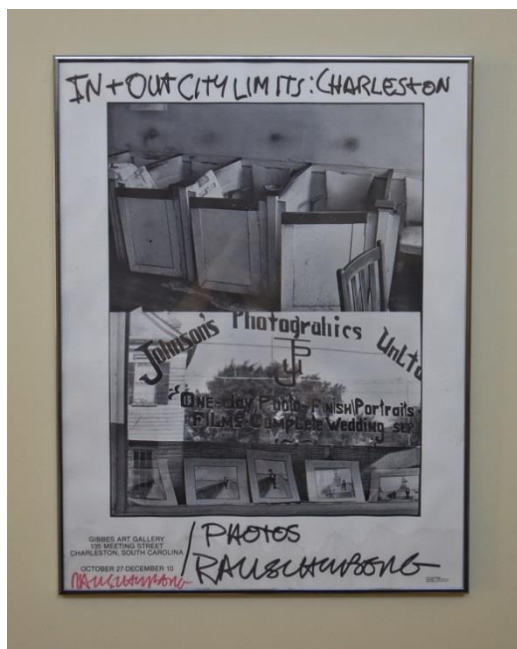


Figure 1.14 Signed Poster from Robert Rauschenberg's "In + Out: City Limits" show,

1979-81

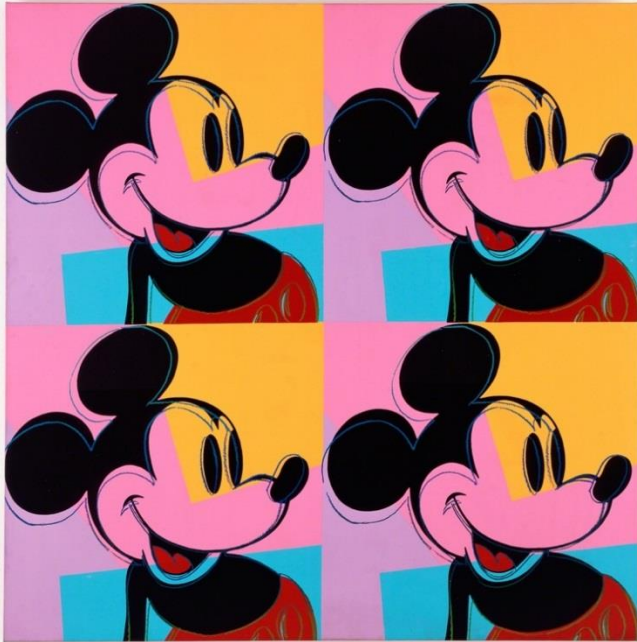


Figure 1.15 "Quadrant Mickey Mouse/Myths", Andy Warhol, 1981, Synthetic polymer and silkscreen inks on canvas, 60" x 60"

The clean essentialist aesthetic from my childhood home is the foundation that my own creative tastes were built upon, and as I've searched for neat ways to simplify that which may be complicated visually, I recognize that this is a value I not only work to include in my art, but also in my day to day lifestyle.

1.3 Art Education

At the ripe age of 22, and only twenty-four days after I graduated from the University of Georgia with my Bachelor's Degree in Art Education, I began teaching art at Cross Keys High School in DeKalb County School System. I lucked out that Cross Keys runs on a 90-minute block schedule, and was able to begin my career with one prep for three classes a day teaching Introduction to Visual Arts, but have since expanded my repertoire to include Drawing, Painting, Sculpture, Photography, Advanced Placement Studio Art, Yearbook, and even a Life Skills course. One of my proudest moments as a teacher was in 2016 when I nominated and wrote recommendations for

a student to be considered for the Gates Millennium Scholarship and she won this prestigious and generous award, deciding to study Art Education. This, along with the fact that she and many of my other students have been chosen to be on the High Museum's Teen Team reassures me that they are truly understanding the ways in which I'm educating them to bring art into their own lives, and to the lives of those with whom they surround themselves.

Just this year, my husband, Benito, who is a mural artist known as *Yoyo Ferro*, has been a visiting artist at Cross Keys during both semesters. After practicing blind contours under Benito's instruction, the students worked with him in painting a mural he designed from their drawings. This project was all sponsored by Living Walls, a non-profit organization dedicated to socially engaged public art, and it created meaningful lessons for the students who were involved. Encouraging my students in pursuit of these unique opportunities has granted me a deeper connection with them through which I hope to instill a high level of commitment. Though I have experienced just as many challenges as I have rewards during my years as an educator, my goal is to provide my students with the necessary materials and mindset to freely create within our space. I aim to help them understand how they can express themselves honestly in a variety of ways, no matter what their future may bring, as well as communicate with others effectively, whether it is interpreting visual or verbal information.

1.4 Photography and Graphic Design

As I had just begun teaching, I was unaware of the talent that I possessed behind the camera until people began to ask me if I was available for hire. I had always loved taking pictures, so naturally, I was flattered and interested in making some "after school" money shooting events, people, products... you name it! The more that I

took and shared these photos from my entry-level Nikon D40X, the higher the demand grew, which gave me great confidence in the work I did and quickly lead to my investment in more lenses and the Nikon d90. This success was a distraction from my priority of teaching, which lead to a burnout after four years, especially considering how tempting it was to book more jobs because of the amount of money people will pay for quality photos. Ultimately, the pressure from these self-imposed deadlines to keep turnaround time satisfactory for both my clients and myself drove me away from using my camera all together, authentically for myself as well as for anyone else.

Shortly thereafter, I agreed to take on the position as the adviser to the school yearbook staff where there was a necessity to elevate the quality of what was being published, and this fell directly in line with the graphic design career path that I had entertained as an undergraduate. I knew how to achieve this because my dad had worked for years as a publishing company representative and I had helped in the creation of yearbooks from my elementary, middle, and high schools. I quickly realized that I was well equipped to teach students how to tap into their creative intuitions through the experience of photographing reality as it happened, then reflect and discuss our commemorative work together as we applied it in the creation of our book. This helped me practice my natural skillset by prompting me to pick up my camera again and shoot for the love of capturing the moment, only for my students and myself. Through the advisement of this course, I've been able to model and convey my passion for art and design to my students creatively, as well as exercise my own artistic vision.

I am fortunate and fulfilled in my successes from these three yearbooks that my students have made. The opportunity to combine my commitment to teaching and my love of graphic design in the classroom has not only been rewarding, but has allowed

for the practical and sentimental application of a project-based learning that is photographically dependent. Laying this foundation of visual appreciation and temporal awareness in my students' minds has inspired my own skill development and maturation, teaching me many lessons directly through trial and error. I've used the opportunity to strengthen the critical thinking skills of both my students and myself through documentation and reflection at each step along the way. As a yearbook staff, our reliance on photography, writing, and graphic design requires us to organize and cohesively move through each process of inspiration, preparation, creation, and culmination in the publication of a book.

In addition to taking over as the yearbook sponsor at my school, my return to photography was aided by a few other relevant occurrences during this time as well. The iPhone cameras were now fantastic for entry-level photographers, but lacked quality zoom or distance capabilities and perpetually ran out of storage at the worst possible moments. This issue prompted me to purchase a point and shoot camera, the Sony Cyber-shot DSC RX 100 II, which was newly released and marketed as the smallest handheld camera with the largest recording sensor, offering the same priority modes as a digital single lens reflex (DSLR) camera. This allowed me the ease with which I could compose and capture high quality photos by manipulating the light and color to suit my aesthetic preferences, zoom in or out as needed, and fill up a memory card as opposed to my phone's storage, while sending only my favorite images to my phone wirelessly for editing and sharing. Because I was able to fit this in my bag and use it on the go, this Sony point and shoot helped me find my way back to being in love with making photographs and using the camera as a tool that serves as an extension of my being.

1.5 Cut Paper Collage

Beginning during my high school years, I loved creating collages and literally covered just about every surface in my bedroom; you'd find cut up magazine images, photographs that I had taken and printed, ticket stubs, memorabilia, any and everything that inspired my mind's eye or held sentiment. I even measured the width of one slat of my Venetian blinds, used a paper trimmer to cut an image up into equally sized strips, and then used transfer tape to adhere these strips to each slat, creating the image in totality on both sides of my blinds so I could rotate views between each side! While my collages were amateur and not quite cultivated, I was unknowingly priming my skills and techniques for the cut paper art that I would make in the future.

When I began teaching, the first project I assigned was an 18" x 24" collage where students designed and depicted their name or initials, then carefully cut away the positive space. The negative space that was leftover, surrounding their name, was then collaged underneath, using imagery that represented the students' personality to form a strong contrasting design. Without thinking or even realizing it, I had immediately returned to that which was most instinctive for me, and what I was certain I could teach most effectively. This began my come-back to paper cutting, and I soon started to create oversized greeting cards for my friends, family, and colleagues for a variety of reasons. These were really well-received, as I would cut and layer bright colored paper to boldly combine imagery and words illustrating the card's sentiments. This simple act of caring guided me back to casually making cut paper art, which I had forgotten by coincidence; in a sense, I naturally found my way home.

The collage aspect of my portfolio presented the need for this arts-based study. I wanted to reflect on my studio processes when taking pictures, and analyze how I

move through the phases of planning from inspiration, through contemplation and organization, to the creation and exhibition of my compositions. I then wanted to document and compare how my work evolved when creating my cut paper collages inspired by these photographic references.

1.6 Studio Art

This final creative push occurred to me just this past summer in my studio class with Tim Flowers, an art professor at Georgia State who taught my cohort. His assignment for us on the very first day was to simply get to work. I began sketching one of my favorite Queen Anne style houses in graphite while referencing a photograph I had taken the day before (*Figure 1.16*). Within not even twenty minutes, Tim checked in with me and implied that it was time for me to move on to the next sketch and to stop re-working this one so diligently (*Figure 1.17*); he suggested that I needed to find what could flow from my fingertips with even more fluidity, so I began to paint a detail from the same house using watercolor (*Figure 1.18*). After a very short time, due to my impatience and the slow drying nature of the wet paint, I began to recognize a familiar shape that I am drawn to and often incorporate in my doodles. I tried sketching and playing with these shapes using pen and marker once more (*Figure 1.19*) before realizing that I needed to put away my illustrative materials and get out my paper, scissors, glue, x-acto knife, and self-healing mat to focus on doing that which I loved most – working from my photographs in the creation of cut paper collages (*Figure 1.20*). It was equally as surprising as it was obvious that this graphically designed imagery was quite similar to the very first artwork that I had created in my first studio class as a graduate student, “Water Tower Treehouse” (*Figure 1.21*).



Figure 1.16 Queen Anne style architecture home, Candler Park, reference photo



Figure 1.17 Graphite sketch of a Queen Anne style house, 2017



Figure 1.18 Watercolor sketch inspired by Queen Anne style house, 2017

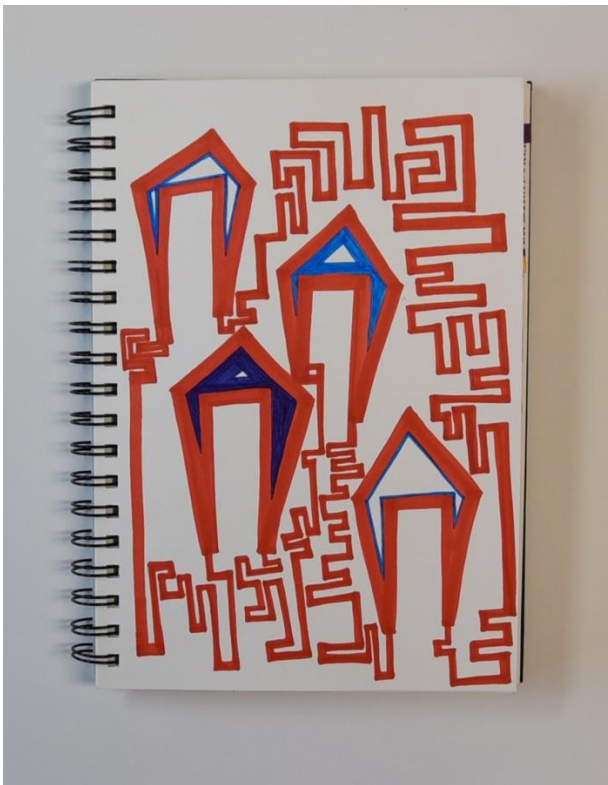


Figure 1.19 Pen and Ink sketch inspired by Queen Anne style house, 2017



Figure 1.20 Cut Paper Collage sketch inspired by Queen Anne style house, 2017



Figure 1.21 "Water Tower Treehouse", Kristin Ferro, 2016, 17" x 14"; the first cut paper collage artwork I created in a studio class for my Master's Program

By browsing the thumbnails of my photographs, it's easy to determine which compositions appeal to me the most because I shoot multiple photographs of the subject. I do this to be certain that I capture the image from just the right angle with the available light, and give myself more framing options. After I've reviewed my favorite photos and begin to sort and edit them, I look for patterns within the frame; these have the ability to emphasize the shapes and determine the arrangement of space from a unique angle that characterizes my style, interests, and personality visibly within the composition. Often upon further reflection, these artworks have been able to uncover a deeper meaning that I find in these objects expressing values that I hold, respect, and look for in others.

1.7 Purpose

It was my purpose in this studio-based thesis to analyze how I incorporate and reflect on these aesthetic decisions and processes in my own personal art creation. My goal was to better represent myself through my art portfolio with the intention of teaching my students how to do the same. I was dependent on my own photographs for artistic reference and inspiration, as I often seek out unique experiences that may easily inspire creative ideas and allow me to capture these moments.

My intention in referencing the composition and subject matter from my photographs was that these images would become the primary influence in the creation of my cut paper collages. This visual inspiration allowed for my personal voice to materialize in both formats differently; a variety of emotions and feelings that are visible in my photographs were conveyed through my collages as well, though were usually transformed throughout the process. The personal developments I discovered and cultivated throughout the search, recognition, and creation of my own voice has

been gratifying and eye-opening. It is my goal to share what I've learned through my art and trials with my students in an attempt for them to better relate to my process in understanding how they can apply these lessons in their own creative ventures. I hope to inspire and guide my students along their journey to becoming who they want to be, while creating positive lasting memories together through the education of art.

In the following chapter I will describe some of my aesthetic, conceptual, and technical influences in more detail, as well as how they relate to the body of work that I created.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Many of the artists whose work I find most inspiring and appealing have careers that are so recent within the history of art that many of them are still alive today. I've slowly realized that my aesthetic preferences have been largely influenced by my father who was a graphic designer. Besides being surrounded by his use of color, shape, and pattern as I was growing up, I was also exposed to many of his favorite artists and art movements, some of whom remain my favorites. In this chapter, I describe the aesthetic, conceptual, and technical influences of those artists who have inspired me. This includes artists who work in photography, collage, painting, printing, and other media.

2.1 Aesthetic Inspiration

Flat, yet bold, colored shapes thoughtfully composed into a simplified graphic design, occupying a surface, and creating an interplay of positive and negative space have always caught my eye and appealed to my aesthetic style. The way these various elements work together within a layout, constructing a vivid geometric figure-ground relationship, presents a dominating visual presence. This angular and curvilinear approach to layers, repetition, and emphasis using basic shapes draws me to the straightforward style with which many artists and designers begin their creative processes. As David Epstein (1990, p. 57) briefly recounts the origins of modern 2-D design, the streamlined use of these extremely formal design principles was reconceived throughout the rapid transformation of one art movement to the next at the turn of the 20th century; this provided artists with the opportunity to reset their minds and alter their aesthetic foundations. The deconstruction and reconstruction of the most basic compositions led artists through the development of the Cubist, Futurist,

Dada, Constructivist, De Stijl, Bauhaus, and Surrealist movements that laid the foundations for graphic designers and paved the way for the Minimalist aesthetic (Epstein, 1990, p. 57). Similarly, as I moved from one medium to the next, this deconstructing and reconstructing of imagery and ideas is visible throughout the creations in my portfolio.

2.1.1 Stephen Frykholm

The bold, yet subtle, aesthetic I've described is characteristic of designer Stephen Frykholm's style that he has exemplified throughout his 40-plus-year-long career as Herman Miller's Creative Director. It was his annual picnic poster designs for the company and their families that caught the art world's attention, as they are beautifully direct, captivating, and classic (*Figure 2.1*), and have helped him achieve international recognition as an award winning artist and a designer. His subject matter is simple, his message is clear, and his innovation is unrivaled when comparing his work to graphic designs from that time. He has remained at Herman Miller since his first job there as a graphic designer in 1970 after receiving his MFA, and been promoted within the company throughout his career. This not only speaks volumes of his commitment and dedication to the company, but also to the company's valuation of his work and worth. An interview with Frykholm for Herman Miller's online magazine, *Why* (Bravo, 2015), features a video (Dress Code, n.d.) detailing his accomplishments and reminiscing about his process in the creation of the Picnic Posters that had recently been accepted in to the Museum of Modern Art's permanent collection. The approach that he took to cropping in on his imagery so closely that it is almost indistinguishable, but not quite, is what captivates his viewers; it's familiar, but not obvious.



Figure 2.1 Composite: 20 Herman Miller Picnic posters, 1970-1989 Client: Herman Miller; Designers/Illustrators 1970-1971: Steve Frykholm, Phil Mitchell; Designer/Illustrator 1972-1989: Steve Frykholm (Hall, 2010).

In this interview with Bravo (2015), I found it particularly relevant to my methods when he was discussing his work with tactile materials during the design process; Frykholm explains, "I find value in making collages before I actually get a design into the computer to wrap it up and make a file so it can be printed. Analog and digital are both important." He goes on to share that, "the design has to have presence," that Epstein (1990) asserts needs to be enduring (Bravo, 2015). This excited me, as it paralleled my approach to the creation of this portfolio, working first from a strong photographic reference to determine the dominant aspect of the composition, then transforming it into a graphic design, or piece of art. In the video (Dress Code, n.d.), Frykholm shows his audience some of his photographs of a melting ice cream cone that he used in the research and design process for the 1983 picnic poster, highlighting this as an essential step in his creative practice. He described his impulsive approach to creative direction as focused on just having fun; this simple concept that gets easily complicated is discernible when looking at his portfolio, from photography, to collage, to posters, and beyond.

I have so much respect for Frykholm as an artist, designer, and as a person after learning more about his life, positive outlook, and commitment to his career. He had spent time in Nigeria volunteering with the Peace Corps prior to his graduate studies, and taught screen-printing at a girls' school because he figured it was a skill they could use after they graduated (Dress Code, n.d.). Naturally then, when it was time to print the Picnic Posters with the Herman Miller pressman, they also used the screen-printing process. This has piqued my curiosity and inspired me, as I would like to screen-print my own cut paper collage designs one day, to see how this medium can communicate my compositions.

2.1.2 Frank Stella

Another artist whose career of geometric compositions make my heart race with excitement is Frank Stella; I am in love with the variety of ways in which he formally complicates the elements of art by making that which is simple, complex, and vice versa. Bonnie Clearwater (2017), The Nova Southeastern University Art Museum's director and chief curator, has worked with Stella to organize an 8-month retrospective of almost 300 of his works that span the course of his career since 1958, many of which are never before exhibited studies, paper collages, and models. In the gallery guide, Clearwater (2017) reflects on the identifiable evolution of Stella's art and ideas by describing his early minimal artworks, formal and meticulous, then tracks the progress of his work, series by series, as it has grown into wildly energetic pieces that allow the painting to break free from the canvas as it exists in its own definition of space. Stella's mid-career rhythmic paintings and assemblage compositions are executed with a vitality that creates a stark contrast to the work he produced at the beginning of his career. His work started to shift in the mid 1970's and viewers are provided with a logical and visible understanding of how his style continued to transform into the dynamic, yet minimal, sculptures he has created late in his career since 2000. The fluid transformation of his ideas inspires me as I construct one simple idea based off of the previous one, in a linear train of thought. For me, it is the work created before Stella's direction first shifted, especially his 1965 – 67 *Irregular Polygons Series* and his 1974 *Eccentric Polygons Series* (Figure 2.2), that has influenced me as I interpret my own simplified geometric compositions.

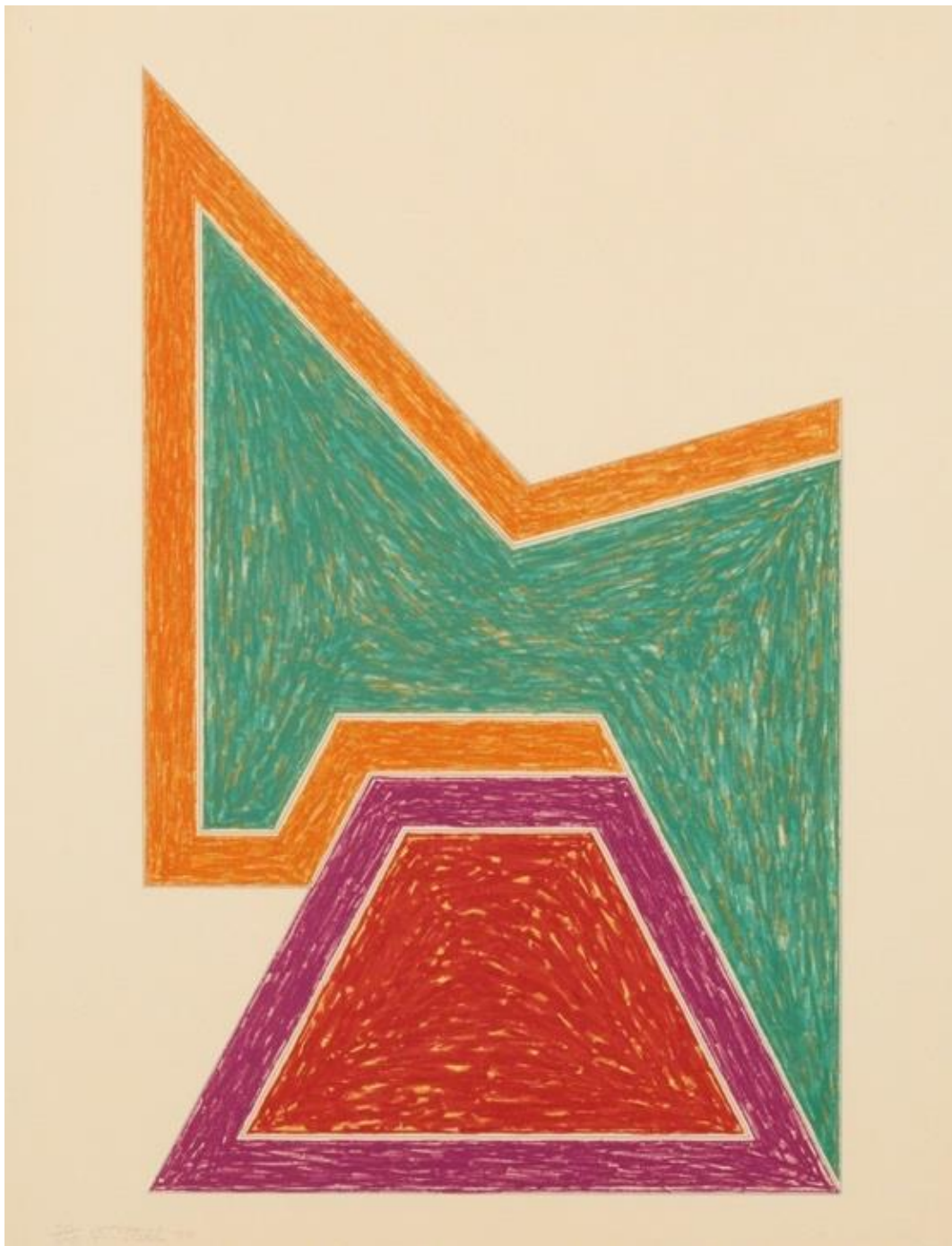


Figure 2.2 "Wolfeboro" (from the Eccentric Polygons series), Frank Stella, 1974
Lithograph and screen-print on Arches wove paper, 22 2/5" x 17 3/10", Edition of 100
(artsy.net)

2.1.3 Alex Katz

Through his screen prints, Alex Katz is able to convey a silent strength by juxtaposing groups of people or things with flat colorful backgrounds (*Figure 2.3*). I love the arrangements that he portrays, as it brings a sort of social atmosphere to his work that I also like to incorporate in my own. In the narrative biography on his website, it details that he not only worked with paper cut-outs during his long career, but he also took the creative approach of beginning with an idea then searching for its visual parallel in the real world, which has happened to me on a few occasions as well. (Alex Katz Narrative Bio, n.d.). He also has work where he has collaged images over photographs that he has taken and vice versa, which intrigues me. Katz's simplified compositions are able to capture the essence of his subject matter, while excluding anything that might be considered unnecessary, and are often quite intimate and tightly cropped. With his intentional color palettes, minimal patterns, and captivating subjects, Katz is capable of creating dimension within his flat surface work, achieving what Epstein describes as, "more than negative space" (1990, p. 58). The aesthetic opportunities created by including the ground as an ambiguous area that draws the viewers' focus directly to the figure are seen in Katz's prints throughout his career.



Figure 2.3 "White Roses", Alex Katz, 2014, Silkscreen in sixteen colors, 43" x 86"

(alexkatz.com)

2.1.4 Ed Ruscha

Similarly, the clean and simple compositions created by Ed Ruscha focus on implementing extremely minimal aesthetics in order to deliver a simultaneously loud and silent message to his viewer (*Figure 2.4*). This is just the tip of the iceberg with regards to his strength in visual design, especially considering the fact that the majority of his artwork is focused on text. I admire his explicit utilization of text throughout his entire portfolio, and look up to his dedication and focus on giving personality to the letters as well as the meaning of the word for his viewer. His website catalogs over two-thousand paintings and works on paper throughout his career, including a handful of collages that were seemingly created with such ease that it was an extension of whatever else he might have been doing at that moment in time. The minimal yet balanced composition, whether symmetrical or asymmetrical, emphasizes ordinary ephemera from our everyday surroundings as he brings that which is usually overlooked to the forefront (*Figure 2.5*). His typefaces evoke emotion and create a lasting impression on thoughts that would typically be fleeting, or overheard in passing. The free association and flow of consciousness approach that he uses when creating his art is an aesthetic, conceptual, and technical method that I strived to achieve in my own work. Ruscha established himself as the prolific artist that he is today due to his confidence through experimentation with text, art mediums, and even photography.



Figure 2.4 "Standard Station", Ed Ruscha, 1966, Oil on canvas, 20 ½ " x 39"

(edruscha.com)

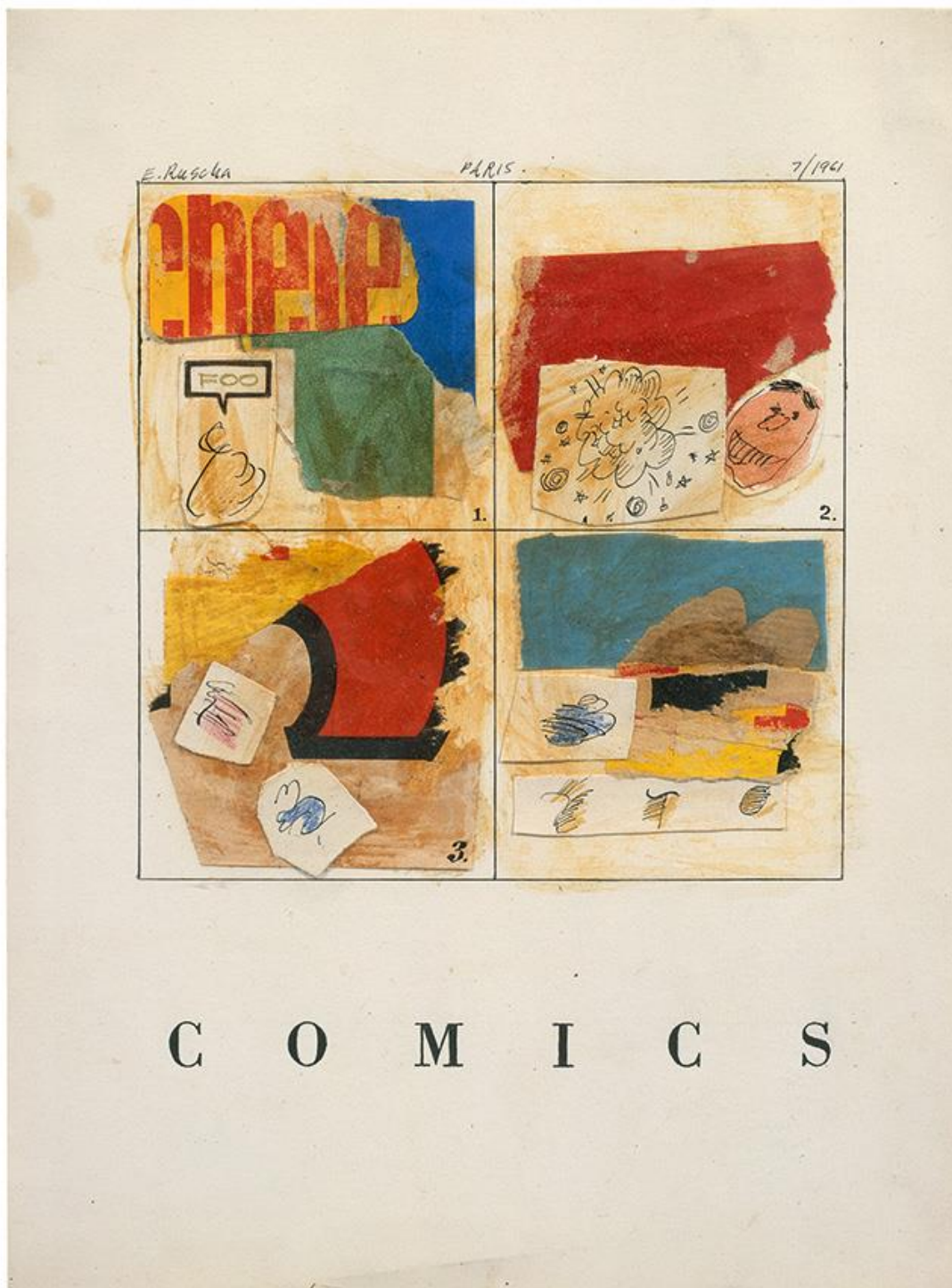


Figure 2.5 "Comics", Ed Ruscha, 1961, Collage and ink on paper, 12 ½" x 9 ½"

(edruscha.com)

2.2 Conceptual Inspiration

2.2.1 William Eggleston

When I first discovered some of the many color images by William Eggleston, I was elated to finally find a photographer whose attention to the mundane and celebration of everyday experiences excited me (*Figure 2.6 & Figure 2.7*). It's so often that we become almost blind to our surroundings that our visual worlds become simply backdrops for different actions to occur (Kent & Steward, 1992).



Figure 2.6 "Election Eve", William Eggleston, 1977 (egglestontrust.com)



Figure 2.7 "Election Eve", William Eggleston, 1977 (egglestontrust.com)

Eggleston was one of the first photographers whose work I felt I could identify with, as I believe that these experiences, places, and things that we often take for granted are some of the most important aspects of our lives and should be highlighted. The reliability of that which we are so used to overlooking throughout our daily routine has been brought to the forefront of in his work, and memorialized as an idea that is more descriptive of that specific instance than any other recollection could be. By drawing this sort of unprecedented awareness to ordinary scenes, Eggleston rattled his viewers and opened their eyes to the value of their own surroundings. Many of my friends, family members, and others who've seen my work have praised that I do this through my photographs, which forces them, too, to see their everyday visual environment in a new light, and with more appreciation. I am quite a bit more compulsive with the compositional framing and angles to get the shot than Eggleston seems to be, as he touted to O'Hagan (Guardian, 2004) that he "only takes one shot of one thing." Eggleston's profound effect on modern photography as it spans the timeline from film to digital, is unlike any other, and his unapologetic attention to the details is a creative principle that I like to include within my work as well.

Ever since I was little, I've been keenly aware of the many different perspectives that occur simultaneously within various experiences, possibly due to my overactive imagination. For instance, I am perpetually intrigued by the fact that a million different people will experience the exact same event, albeit in one million separate ways, even though they all existed in the same time and space. This makes me wonder how other people view the world around them, since I work hard to show others the ways in which I perceive the world around me, as does Eggleston. Even beyond his documentary snapshot photography, Eggleston has garnered some attention for his colorful and

energetic nonobjective drawings (Figure 2.8) that almost resemble some of the vivid compositions by Frank Stella. Eggleston's various creative outlets are all aligned with my aesthetic tastes, and I am motivated by his work in the creation of my own.

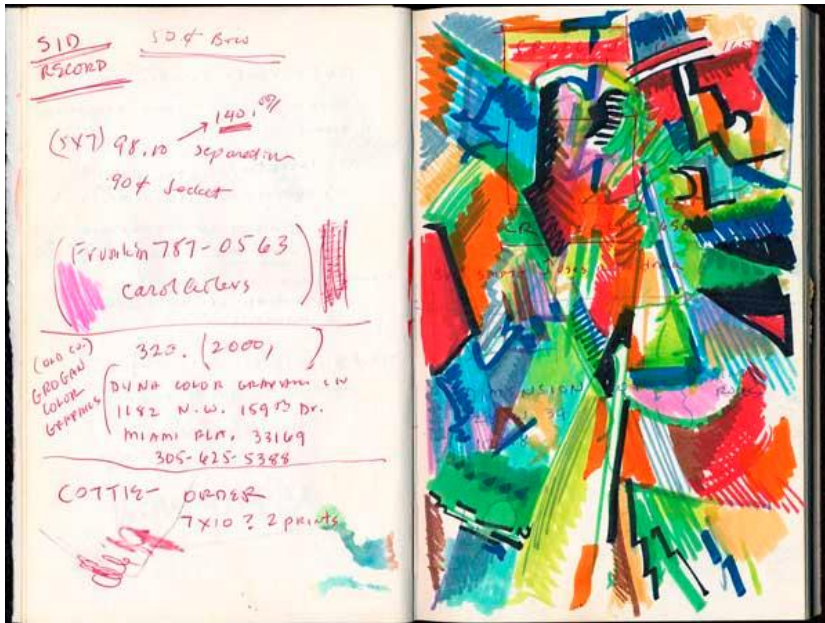


Figure 2.8 1978 notebook from Archives, William Eggleston, (egglestontrust.com)

2.3 Technical Inspiration

Just over a century ago, in their first attempts in the creation of a new form of art, Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque exhibited their fragmented cubist ideals by simplifying and abstracting imagery and gluing physical pieces of the object itself into their art (Gieure, 1956, p. 28). This material sampling and mixing of unrelated objects being combined within an artwork quickly became known as its own medium called, "collage". By deconstructing both the image and the object, then reconstructing it on separate surface, collage artists had the opportunity to portray their own unique interpretation of their subject matter by simultaneously adding layers of depth and meaning. This process opened metaphorical doors and minds as it inspired many modern artists to follow Braque and Picasso's innovative lead.

2.3.1 Henri Matisse

One of these artists was Henri Matisse, who declared, "To work with scissors in this paper is an occupation in which I can lose myself" (Cowart, 1977, p. 13). The form of cut paper art that he inadvertently discovered later in his career had originated in his compositional design process as he formulated the plans for some of his earlier paintings. Following an invasive surgery, Matisse was dependent on a wheelchair and employed assistants to paint colors of gouache onto pieces paper for him to easily access as he created countless cut-outs. His friend, Emmanuel Tériade, both an editor and publisher, was eager to publish a book of Matisse's paper cut-outs (Essers, 2006, p. 79). After a few years of convincing, Matisse warmed up to the idea, and together in 1947 they created *Jazz* (Figure 2.9 & Figure 2.10), a short book portraying images of spontaneity, improvisation, and harmony (Essers, 2006, p. 80). The last fourteen years of his life were overwhelmingly prolific with his newfound excitement in the possibilities he saw in this coloring, cutting, and layering of flat shapes of paper.



Figure 2.9 "Le Clown", Henri Matisse, 1943, Maquette for plate I from the illustrated book *Jazz* (1947). Gouache on paper, cut and pasted, mounted on canvas.

26 7/16" x 19 15/16"



Figure 2.10 "Les Codomas", Henri Matisse. 1943, Maquette for plate XI from the illustrated book *Jazz* (1947). Gouache on paper, cut and pasted, mounted on canvas. 17 1/8" x 26 3/8"

According to Cowart (1977), Matisse did not believe his cut-outs should be considered collages, as many of the mixed media artworks created throughout the various avant-garde movements of the time period were called. Because the collages that were being made by his contemporaries took scraps of everyday life as a representation of the object they evoked, Matisse felt as though his work stood apart from them. His art was created in a pure, simplified, and formal fashion that was unique to his voice and vision, rarely seen from others of that time. Matisse's intentional use of bold colors playing off of one another, along with the visibility of his distinct hand movements in the linear aspects of his work, led him to unify his illustration techniques; instead of, "drawing an outline and filling in the color," he was able to simplify this process by "drawing directly in color" with his scissors (Cowart, 1977, p. 17). I, too, was able to establish ways to streamline the processes of my paper cut-outs. This taught me how to be more productive and less wasteful with my supplies, while allowing me to create a larger body of work than I had previously anticipated.

2.3.2 Ashley Bryan

Just this past year I was introduced to an artist who has built upon these foundations that Matisse laid, not only in regards to creating art by cutting paper, but also in his inspiration taken from both jazz and poetry (Painter and Poet, 2017; Cowart, 1977). As seen in an exhibition at the High Museum in 2017, the 92-year-old children's book illustrator, Ashley Bryan, has infused the medium of collage with his own voice, taking an educational approach to the imagery he creates, often in celebration of African American History. The lessons that his art portrays are narratives that value being true to yourself, being proud of where you're from, and being spiritual. Bryan's colorful creations of layered shapes almost sing as they boldly jump off the paper (*Figure 2.11*). The rhythm and style that he is able to achieve from a two-dimensional piece of work, complemented by the wholesome story, is what I aimed to achieve with my own work. Studying the positive messages that Ashley Bryan sends in his children's books has made me truly admire him as an artist and person.



Figure 2.11 Final illustration for "All creatures GREAT and small", Ashley Bryan, 2009, from *All Things Bright and Beautiful* pp.10-11 (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2010), collage on paper. Collection of The Ashley Bryan Center, EXL.2017.11.04

Following in the footsteps of these artists that I've studied and discussed, I exercised my hand and mind in many of the processes that they've found to be fruitful. After analyzing the compositional space and subject matter within the photographs that I take, I then isolate and design a more focused and personal composition for my paper cut-outs. I believe that through this thesis project, I discovered a deeper connection with my art, myself, and my ideals. In the next chapter, I will discuss the processes I explored as I embarked on the creation of my portfolio.

3 METHODOLOGY

In the previous chapter, I examined concepts, artists, and techniques related to my research interests that supported my project. Below, I will explain my research questions, processes, and expected outcomes.

3.1 Research Questions

In this studio-based thesis, it was my goal to research and analyze my own work flow and creative processes while documenting and reflecting at each step along the way. I plan to use what I discovered to more effectively teach critical and creative thinking skills and relay arts information to my students. As educators, we are taught to differentiate between students within our classrooms in order to become more masterful teachers, so throughout this thesis, I was focused on answering, “How does referencing my photographs inspire the creation of my cut paper collages in the pursuit and recognition of my own personal voice?” and ultimately, “What implications from this can I use to help my students find their own voice?”. I documented my journey in as many creative ways possible, depending on the materials at hand and mindset I was in, and found ways to better relate to my students and help them learn how to experiment, push through a creative block, and become successful through trial and error.

3.2 Art-making Intentions

I decided that my goal in the creation of this portfolio would be to create 29 photographs to utilize as inspiration for 11 paper-cut collages. I'd chosen these numbers because they are meaningful to me, as they are my favorite numbers. Once I began making my work, the quantity of completed pieces became less important than the quality, and I had unintentionally added another form of art to my portfolio by

documenting my process with time-lapse videos. I anticipated that the size of my 29 photographs would be no larger than 16" x 20" while the collages would stay under 18" x 24". Although I would have loved to create larger panel-sized work, the scope of my project was confined by space, materials, and prior experience. Once I had fine-tuned my processes and set specific and attainable goals, I was better able to realistically reassess my intentions.

These mid-sized artworks were to be adhered to white mixed-media paper or Bristol board so that they were strong enough to support multiple layers of collaged paper. I used colored cardstock in sheets sized 5" x 7" and 8.5" x 11" to create the imagery within the collages, along with found patterned paper that draws my attention or was symbolic in some way, shape, or form. For example, I've always been attracted to the printed paper patterns on the inside of confidentiality envelopes, most often in blue or black. Another type of printed and patterned paper of which I've always taken particular notice are pre-printed forms with their repetitive lines or grids, like the orange "OUT" forms included in my work. These simple sheets of paper were intended to serve as a decorative contrast to the flat cardstock colors and create a more interesting composition and story behind my work.

My photographs were dependent upon the daily actions and interactions within my life, along a train of thought that relies on free association no matter how interesting or mundane, reminiscent of both Ruscha and Eggleston. I was intentional about carrying my Nikon D750 digital SLR camera and 18-300mm lens when I was around the people and places I care most about so I could shoot whatever was of interest to my aesthetic preferences. I planned to look for themes as I reviewed my photos and notice emerging patterns while comparing and contrasting the subject matter, composition,

patterns, lines, colors, and shapes that I had chosen to frame. Next, I would research the ideas, contexts, and symbolism surrounding the objects from which I gained inspiration, then make a verbal list and visual sketch in my own aesthetic exploration. I would finally portray an abstracted form in my cut paper collages using the formal elements that stood out to me the most, all while filming a time-lapsed video of my process from start to finish. Throughout these investigations, I experimented with adhesives from glue to transfer tape, and a variety of cutting and tearing tools like an x-acto knife, scissors, or the edge of the table, then found other helpful tools such as the tweezers, tracers, t-pins, and tripod in the creation of my portfolio. I aimed to learn what works best for me and create ways to allow my processes to flow seamlessly, whether it was correcting a layer of paper should it need to be added or removed, or speeding up and slowing down portions of my videos in the editing program.

3.3 The Work

In the creation of my cut paper collages, I relied on my existing knowledge and compositional intuition that is geared towards a graphic design and screen-print aesthetic. For instance, I favor clean lines, simple shapes, and flat colors with smaller doses of pattern used for emphasis. Once I've determined which subject matter I will represent, I then experiment with materials to discover the most appropriate choices for rendering my designs. I decided upon a method to sort, organize, file, and store my materials so that the ease with which I used them became almost second nature. As I learned what worked best in my processes, I found that my art making was able to flow more naturally and allowed me to put forth my best work that is clearly representative of my thoughts and visions. This made my intention of free association thinking even easier as I searched for the interesting yet potentially mundane objects that caught my

eye in their ordinary everyday settings. By allowing my right brain to go into autopilot and guide my attention by clearly focusing on that which is visually attractive, I was able to hone in on the objects and ideas that tend to appear and reappear in my photos and create meaningful symbols. I represented them in my own way, photographically, as illustrations, through cut paper, and finally as time-lapse videos so others may see and understand the affinity that I have for them.

For instance, "*Cut + Paste*," an artwork I made during my 2017 summer studio course, portrays a bottle of Elmer's glue with a classic pair of scissors (*Figure 3.1*). Both look enough like their real-life inspiration for viewers to be able to ascertain exactly what is shown, but they have been re-imagined and projected with bits of my personality in them. I've simplified the shapes in a playful geometric manner and kept the color palette true to the logo and design of the Elmer's brand. I've added blue vertical lines to imitate the ribbed texture of the plastic cap that gets rotated in order to open or close the nozzle, and extended them down to meet the product label sticker to unify the design. The scissors were carefully crafted by tracing photocopies that I made in order to better understand the shapes and lines because I was unable to grasp them in my first round of attempts. I kept the complementary color palette, but included the blue patterned paper found within confidentiality envelopes. I paid more attention to the composition and design than I did to the proportions, and worked hard to find a background that made sense conceptually and visually; I realized that by keeping it minimal, I was able to make the subject matter stand out even more, and read as a graphic that might be seen in an advertisement or illustration. Not only do I personally love the act and memories associated with cutting and pasting using scissors and glue, but this concept is amplified by the fact that this is an accessible and

recognizable creative task around the world to a wide variety of people, which makes me feel more successful in my production. The positive energy and basic guidelines I've imposed here serve as a precedent for the portfolio that I created, as many of my aesthetic choices have been simply portrayed in this piece.



Figure 3.1 "Cut + Paste", Kristin Ferro, 2017, cut paper, 24" x 18"

3.4 The Process

Working from photos that have already translated my subject from three dimensions into two, I concentrated on cutting out and creating the shapes, colors, and patterns that can be layered to depict my subject. My spatial sensibility and love for color theory have come in handy as I've had fun working on the transformation of my photographs into their cut paper counterparts, by way of my sketches. By cutting shapes from colored paper, I allowed myself the time and space needed to arrange, rearrange, and determine exactly where each element belongs within the

composition, and experimented with the entire layout before committing to gluing it down. My intentions were to keep the work strong and simple, but to create enough variety and contrast that it looks clean and neither under- nor over- worked. I did not anticipate the creation, nor the success, of my time-lapse videos, but this discovery has made my process even more fulfilling. My personality and my feelings about the subject matter that I've chosen portray is what I hope will be perceived by those who view my photos, illustrations, collages, and videos.

This process moved both quickly and slowly, taking into account the time necessary for reflection and growth when creating a body of work. Although a photograph is easy to shoot physically with the click of a button, the other peripheral considerations with regards to making a strong photo are the time of day, angle, depth of field, focal point, figure ground relationship, color palette, camera settings, and post-processing edits. I scouted locations to find my inspiration prior to shooting to determine the best time of day to return with my camera, along with all the other specifics that I've just mentioned, in order to make a photo that I'm proud to sign my name to.

Between the photo-taking and the post-processing, I needed to review the photos so I could best prepare while considering which images were my favorites that I'd like to continue working on and edit. Once I decided on the best photographs, I edited them on my cell phone using apps called Snapseed, by Google, and VSCO. Although I have an Adobe Lightroom subscription that I use on the computer, I prefer to use my cell phone apps because they are more accessible and user-friendly for those of us who are on constantly the go. Once I edit my photo, I begin to sketch the composition and visualize how this subject may look as a collage. From there, I determine my favorite studies, and continue the physical creation process by cutting,

arranging, and gluing down the paper as you are able to observe from my time-lapse videos. One of the most exciting discoveries during this thesis project is that my documentation videos have become both a stand-alone artwork as well as an extension of the photo and collage work that I'd originally planned. Although the videos were somewhat of a happy accident, my creation practice stops here with the editing of my videos using the Spice app. It's at this point that my work is ready for exhibition and will be shared with others. I will elaborate on this process in the following chapter.

3.5 Limitations

One of my limitations was time because of the many responsibilities that I hold at my school, along with the fact that I've set forth an ambitious number of artworks to be made. A way that I worked around this factor was by creating pieces that are not as large in scale, but are just as detailed, strong, and minimalistic, inspired by many of the artists I've discussed. This also meant that I had to be selective in the materials that I used, favoring those that were easily mobile. The size of the artwork was another boundary because I tend to prefer working on a larger scale so that I'm able to add details and work with a comfortable amount of space. This was a challenge because I don't have an expansive amount horizontal workspace in my studio, so I feared that carrying my work from place to place without anchoring the separate pieces down would damage the work. This actually helped me focus on creating a more manageable portfolio, streamlining my processes, and creating realistic logistics for getting my work done in a timely manner.

3.6 Anticipated Outcomes

The outcomes I intended to achieve with my photography and cut paper collages were a heightened sense of self-awareness, a confidence in my art and processes, and a greater understanding of how to work through creative problem solving. This personal study was an effort to portray my voice visually so that I could use these experiences and artworks to impart lessons to my students on creation through trial and error. What I did not expect was the revelation of creating time-lapse videos to function both as documentation and work of art, sort of a performance piece, that is really the best depiction my processes. While I am satisfied with my photography, I know I am even more capable and I believe that this learning process has exposed to me the flaws I have in saving, organizing, and filing my many digital photos; this has helped me better comprehend how to streamline my work for an optimal flow. Many of these strategies are able to be translated into how I save, organize, and file my collage work and its materials throughout the many different stages of the creation process from beginning to end. By documenting these detailed specifics in writing, photos, and video recordings, I now have a better view of the big picture ideals that go into my methods that I can reflect upon to not only help myself, but to also help my students. I sought feedback from those with whom I surround myself and respect, my husband, family, teachers, colleagues, classmates, and students, and gained from their constructive criticism so that I was able to create a stronger body of work. By opening my mind to new ways of doing, and allowing myself the room to grow and learn from experience, I not only became a better artist, but also a more effective and successful art educator. After reflecting on my processes and portfolio, I am better able to

implement what I've learned in my classroom and will continue to work at comparing my students' achievement and attitudes to their own creations.

3.7 Pedagogical Implications

By allowing myself the time and head space to incorporate free association and fluid train of thought into my photography, the comparative reflection of my images has revealed aspects of my aesthetic intuition of which I was previously unaware. This was found through my efforts to determine which elements of my photographs to incorporate into my collages, as well as how to compose them. I carefully tracked these decisions I made along the way, both successful and misguided, as a record of my journey, and found the most important advice is to stay open-minded, experiment confidently, and document progress. Understanding the variety of steps in my own creative processes and how they may change from one day to the next over a period of time has broadened my view and allowed me to create a more holistic notion of the ideas that my students may bring into my classroom with them. By breaking down the steps of my methodology into digestible chunks and simplifying them to share with my students, I believe that I am more capable of relating to them and their processes as young creatives; this will allow me to better learn from experience as I teach them how to create their own body of work. I feel as though we often become automated in our finely tuned procedures of creation, so much so that we are subject to forgetting these foundational and necessary steps to most effectively educate others. Being intentional and attentive to my own actions that are normally no more than an afterthought has become a precise measure in my practice so I can detail these procedures articulately in the classroom.

As I put together this body of work, my purpose in investigating how the visual content from my photographs inspire my collages was to discover and reflect on what this reveals about my own personal voice and expression. Having my individual processes serve as a tangible, visual, and sequential example for my students, I have become better prepared in the classroom and more effective when explaining the development of a piece of art from its conception to exhibition. I've also become capable of brainstorming even more viable approaches to the creation process with my students, as well as open their eyes and minds to the attainability of creating their own portfolio. My goal as an art educator has been amplified, as I aim to help my students find and be able to recognize their own personal voice, then extend their learning in order to teach them how to strengthen this voice confidently so that they are able to effectively use it in innovative ways. Through practice, this will prepare them to exchange ideas and better understand the unique and often underlying communication methods of others as well.

Because photography and time-lapse videography are such accessible art forms in our current times, I believe that my students will not only benefit from learning how to accurately and aesthetically document their daily lives and works of art, but also fine-tune their craft and their own compositional ideals. I hope to empower students through my work and encourage them to push their own creative potential to the edge as they grow and contemplate other forms of art in which they can communicate their thoughts and feelings.

4 PRODUCTION

In my efforts to research and analyze the inception, preparation, experimentation, execution, and reflection of my own artistic work flow, I learned a variety of approaches to help me better teach critical and creative thinking skills and relay arts information to my students. I examined how my photographs inspire the creation of my paper-cut collages in the pursuit and recognition of my own personal voice, and then tried to determine what implications from this I could use to help my students find their own voice. It was my intention to document my journey in as many creative ways as possible, dependent upon the materials at hand and my own mindset, in an attempt to relate to my students, and I found success on many levels – both expected and unexpected.

Throughout my studio practice, I discovered that in my realization of one idea, I was able to expand upon it through multiple mediums (*Figure 4.1 – Figure 4.5*). This not only allowed me to develop my thoughts along a variety of parallel tangents, but these different approaches helped me to expand my art production and strengthen my initial idea while developing my own creative process that I can teach to students in my classroom. This means that the journey my concept took from inception to completion was a thorough study of the symbols, shapes, colors, and patterns. By interpreting one idea in many ways, I felt as though I was able to truly understand and recognize the personal aesthetic statement that I aimed both to find and to create.

This endeavor taught me how important it is not only to focus on finding what works, but also to allow myself the time to learn what doesn't work, or even what may hinder my own artistic advancements. This trial and error method of learning is ideal for art and any hands-on activity, as it is the most interactive way to allow for immediate

reaction and improvement. In analyzing my experimentation, I feel as though I was able to almost step outside my head as I examined what was going on inside my head. This led me to believe that we are capable of learning more in the genuine reflection of our own thoughts, actions, and intentions, which is known as meta-cognition, or learning how we learn. The growth that I experienced has made me more confident in my art-making, exhibiting, and teaching. The journey is one that is both personal and open to interpretation, as we're comparing our work to only that of ourselves – regardless of whether we are novice or advanced.

I will discuss in detail how I allowed my mind to make space for inspiration and begin the creative process in the next chapter, but in the sections below, I will focus upon the products I have created for this thesis. In my artistic endeavors throughout my Master's program, I have realized that it is the energy that an object or a moment brings to its space that attracts me to it. This comes from my prior knowledge and experience with similar instances, and I become inspired from a feeling or a visual that I'd like to revisit personally or share with others. This attraction became the foundation for my portfolio of work throughout, and I surprised myself in the many ways that I was able to express myself. I originally intended to create 29 photographs and 11 collages, however, I ended up with an even larger number of artworks than planned and have posted them in an online a digital portfolio at <https://kristinferro.weebly.com/work.html> as well as included the collages in the appendix. I've described the processes I used to build my portfolio below. In *Figure 4.1–Figure 4.5*, the steps of my process are illustrated as I explored the shapes of plastic squeeze bottles. *Figure 4.1* is my original photograph of the condiment bottles. *Figure 4.2* shows the sketch created from the photograph, while *Figure 4.3* is a watercolor study of the composition. *Figure 4.4* is the collage I made

and *Figure 4.5* is a still-frame from the time-lapse video I shot while making the collage. Although I arrived at these creative stages in this order most often, I didn't limit myself to this structure and found that I became more inspired when I allowed myself the freedom of association; this is echoed in the processes that I discuss in the next chapter.



Figure 4.1 "Spicy Ketchup", Kristin Ferro, Photograph, 2012 08 27

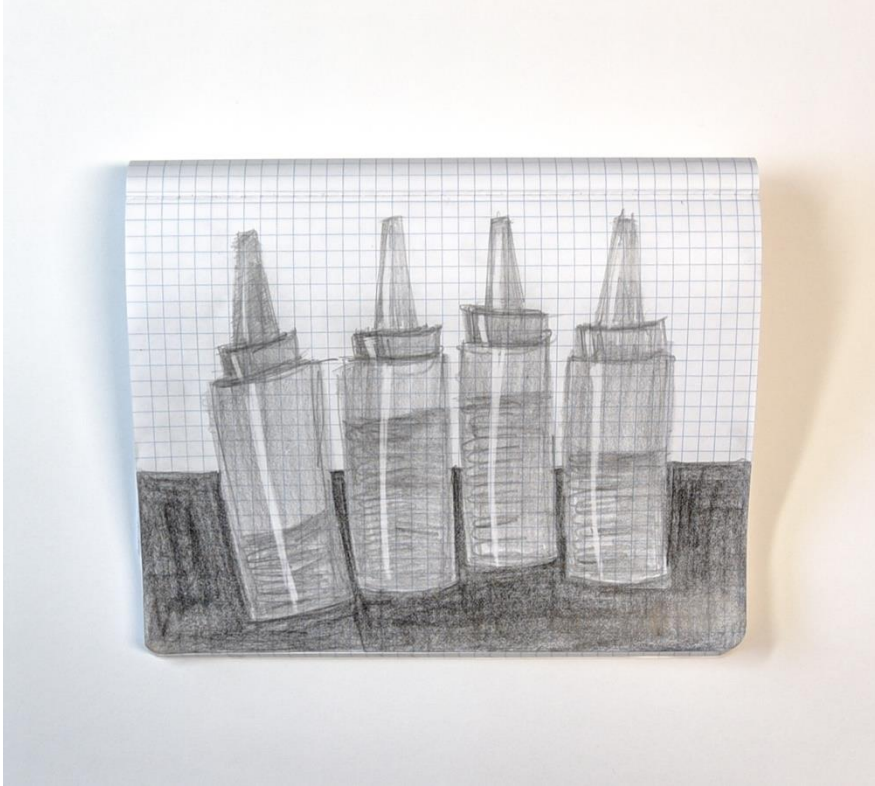


Figure 4.2 Condiment Squeeze Bottle Study 01, 2018, Graphite, 7.5" x 9.5"



Figure 4.3 Condiment Squeeze Bottle Study 02, 2018, Watercolor, 9" x 12"



Figure 4.4 "Spicy Ketchup", Kristin Ferro, 2018, Cut Paper Collage, 24" x 18"

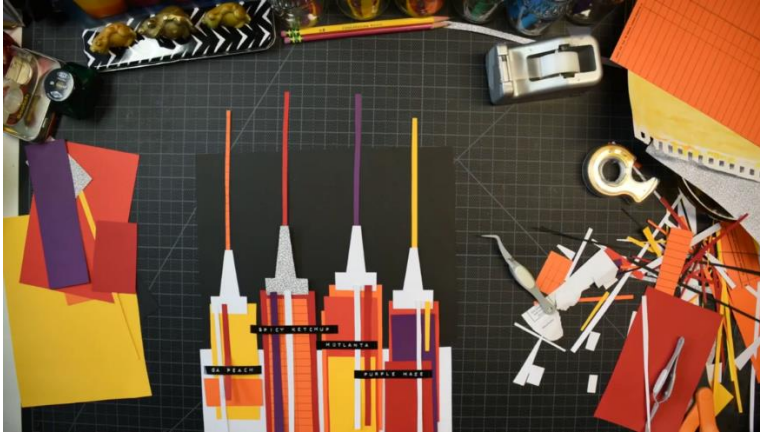


Figure 4.5 Still-Frame from "Spicy Ketchup" Time-Lapse, Kristin Ferro, 2018

4.1 Photography

Photography is the most natural way that I express myself through art. As I've mentioned before, the way that I compose a mental frame around my everyday visions as I experience daily life feels instinctive, much like the way Ed Ruscha approached his work. His attention to that which is often overlooked or unnoticed, and the clear focus that he puts on free association, encouraged me to become more open with my thoughts and follow different ideas until I exhausted the possibilities and moved on.

When taking photographs, I prefer capturing compositions that are improvised or unexpected, even if they may have been deliberated over by someone; I enjoy stumbling upon the way something has been left, even by myself, as opposed to setting up a composition (Figure 4.6 & Figure 4.7). When I discover serendipitous arrangements, I shoot photographs using the available light. Although I may edit these to emphasize my own interpretation, I generally tend to aim for a realistic representation highlighting views that intrigue me; either for their symbolism, shape, color, or lighting (Figure 4.8 & Figure 4.9). This conceptual approach to image making is similar to the technique that William Eggleston uses in his documentation of daily life, but he stresses the importance of taking only one photo then moving on, whereas I tend to be a bit more obsessive

with giving myself options with regards to lighting, angles, and composition. The multi-shot method also gives me more time to really focus on the subject and allows a more comprehensive visual study of the elements of the scene. The time spent taking and editing my photos allows me to investigate and memorize the lines, curves, and angles that will inform my sketches and collages. The photo exists as an art object in and of itself, but has also become a reference, or a starting point for the inspiration of something else, as seen at <https://kristinferro.weebly.com/photography.html>.

I have two options when editing my photographs. On my computer I use Adobe Lightroom, and on my phone I use the Snapseed App by Google. The post-processing of these images allows me to revisit my thoughts that I had when I was having the experience, and delve even deeper than I might have otherwise. So often our varied experiences are ephemeral, therefore I find it both comforting and satisfying to be able to take a memory or a vision and make it almost tangible by photographing it. By using my camera as my viewfinder, I am able to explore the different compositions of my life and portray them as I see them. I am pleased with the way that my images have informed my other artworks and with the final products that I've produced.

I always try to capture the ideal shot in the camera to keep my edits to a minimum, but when necessary I crop the frame, intensify the colors, and highlight the subject by adjusting the value through the vignette filter (*Figure 4.6 – Figure 4.9*). Because of my attraction to the midcentury modern aesthetic, I sometimes adjust the colors and the contrast towards a more vintage advertising feel. This direct approach allows my photograph to function not only as a form of a visual documentation, but also form the basis of that which I want to transform into collages – as a step in the process followed by sketching.



Figure 4.6 "432 Cherokee Avenue Mailbox Stoop", Kristin Ferro, 2017 09 03,
Original Photograph



Figure 4.7 "432 Cherokee Avenue Mailbox Stoop", Kristin Ferro 2017 09 03, Edited

Photograph



Figure 4.8 "Ceará Shopping Carts", Kristin Ferro, 2017 07 27, Original Photograph



Figure 4.9 "Ceará Shopping Carts", Kristin Ferro, 2017 07 27, Edited Photograph

4.2 Sketches

My sketches are the least developed of the artworks that I created, but were a necessary step in my analysis and synthesis of lines, shapes, and angles in composing my collages. I used my photographs as a reference, as I had multiple shots of the object that I wanted to explore and recreate. By loosely drafting gestural lines with a wooden pencil, ball point pen, paint brush, or paper, I mimicked and evaluated the realistic contours of the object while I considered how I would like to portray the subject matter. Often, these sketches informed my final paper-cut collage, however I did not force these compositional decisions in my work as I moved between mediums; it was important for me to stay open-minded to allow the progress and transformation to occur naturally. This is because I have experienced frustration in the past by limiting myself in trying to work through an idea that was not developing organically, and I've noticed that my students have experienced this as well. I decided to take as much from this opportunity as I could in order to truly grow and learn how to push through these mental constructs that I often impose on myself.

An example of this scenario is the evolution of my designs that include the rounded arch shape that looks like an elongated semi-circle. This simple shape is very satisfying to draw, and there are a variety of objects that rely on this shape in their design. As I began to sketch a row of mailboxes that I have many different pictures of, I realized that the drawing resembled a row of teeth (*Figure 4.10 & Figure 4.11*). There is a chattering teeth wind-up toy that sits as decoration on my coffee table, so I decided to divert my attention from the mailboxes and explore the idea of the teeth instead. I first photographed the teeth from different angles, shot some slow motion and stop motion videos, and then began to sketch my ideas (*Figure 4.12 & Figure 4.13*). Next, I cut these

simple shapes out of paper and arranged the teeth on a blank background, allowing me the ability to better view and manipulate the design according to my personal aesthetic values.

When I created the composition using paper, I decided to stick with the traditional red and white colors because I wanted the well-known toy to be discernible (Figure 4.14), and recognized many similarities to Frykholm's first Picnic Poster from 1970 featuring corn on the cob. As I completed the simple toy teeth collage and this tangential idea was brought to fruition, I returned to address the original row of mailboxes. By choosing a different color scheme and making the "mailboxes" or "teeth" black, the final design reads as an image sort of in between both ideas (Figure 4.15). This ambiguous abstraction that I've created straddles recognition between multiple objects, and was becoming a prevalent reoccurrence in many of my sketches and collages (Figure 4.16 – Figure 4.18), more of which can be viewed by visiting <https://kristinferro.weebly.com/sketch.html>.

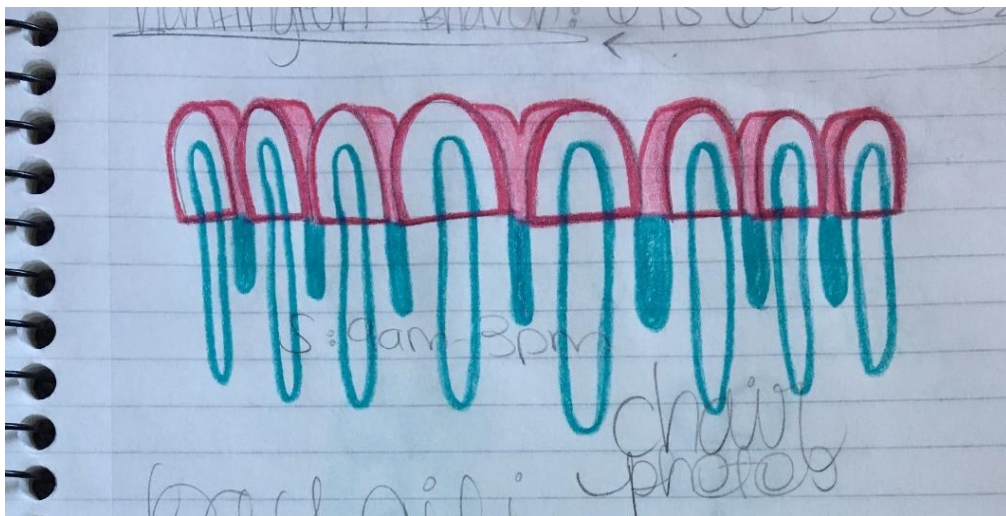


Figure 4.10 Row of Mailboxes Sketch 01, 2017, Colored Pencil

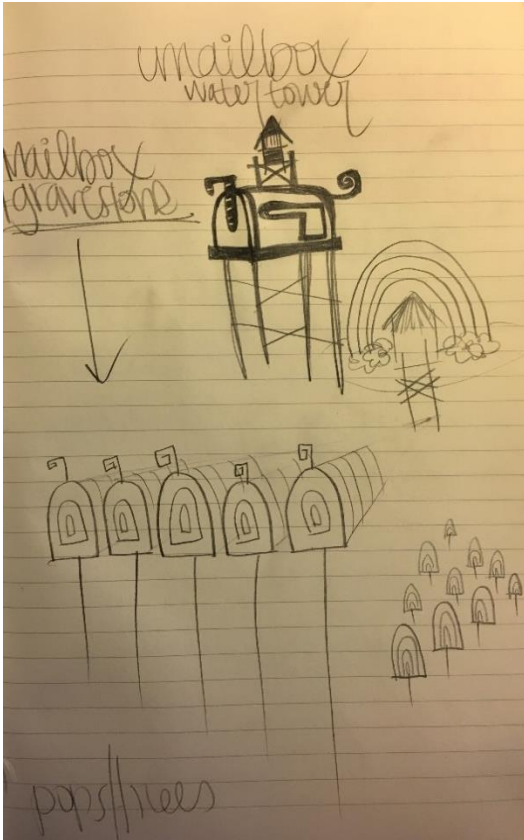


Figure 4.11 Row of Mailboxes Sketch 02, 2017, Graphite



Figure 4.12 Chattering Teeth Sketch 01, 2017, Pen

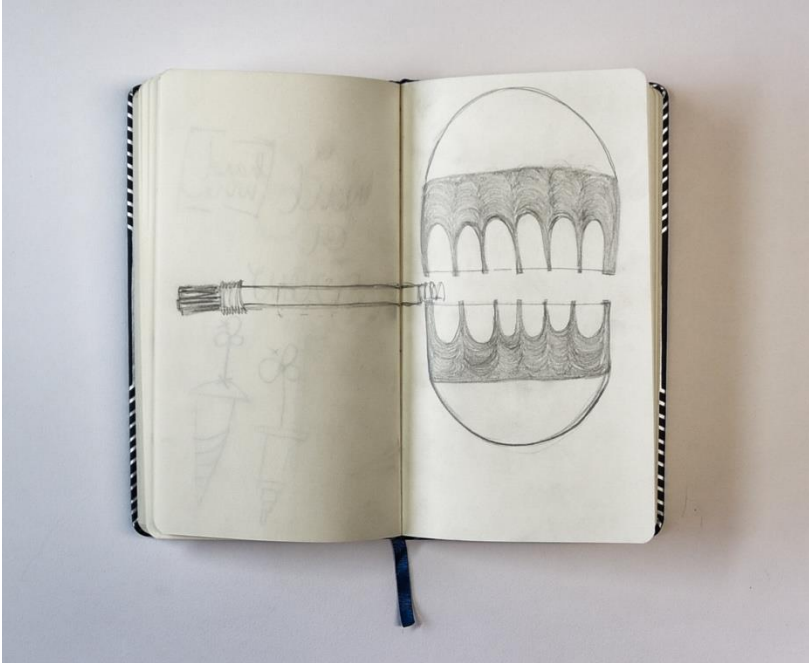


Figure 4.13 Chattering Teeth Study 01, 2017, Graphite, 8.5" x 9.5"

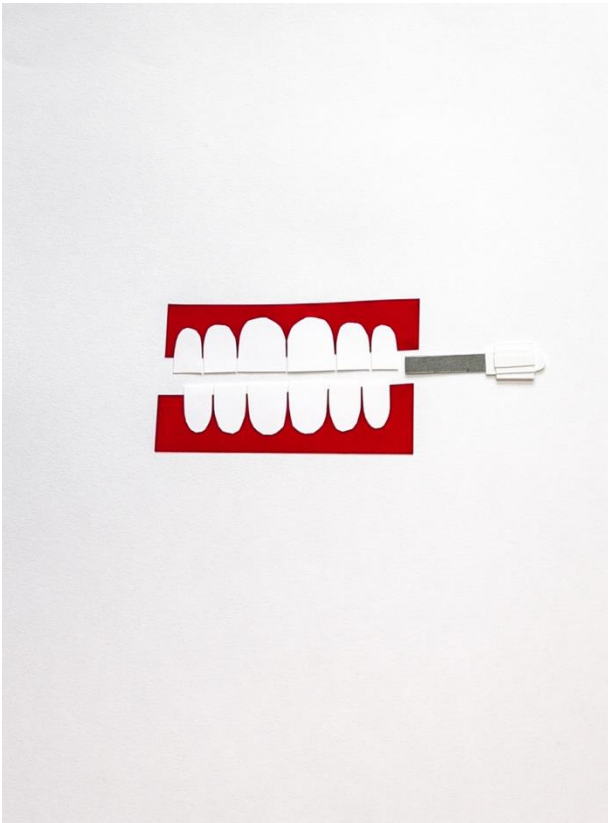


Figure 4.14 "Chattering Teeth", Kristin Ferro, 2017, Cut Paper Collage, 17" x 14"



Figure 4.15 "Chattering Mailboxes", Kristin Ferro, 2017, Cut Paper Collage, 24" x

18"

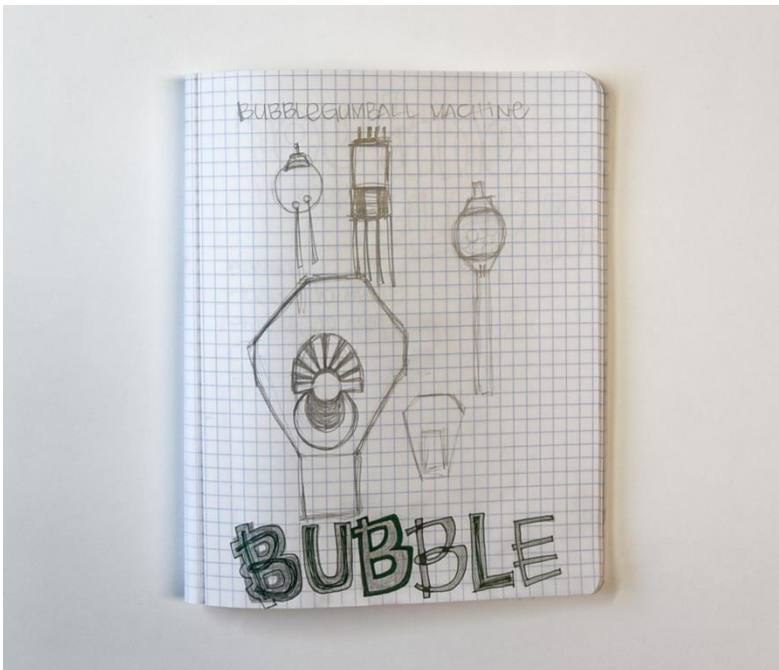


Figure 4.16 "Bubble" Sketch, 2017, Graphite and Ink, 9.5" x 7.5"

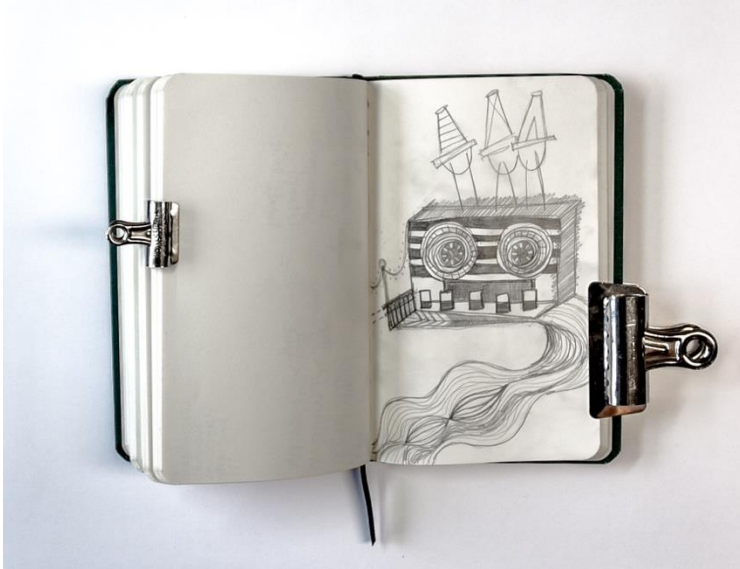


Figure 4.17 "Cassette Signals" Sketch, 2017, Graphite, 6" x 9"



Figure 4.18 Water Tower Study, 2017, Cut Paper, 9" x 6"

4.3 Collages

My cut paper collages are the most rewarding art that I've created, and this medium is the one in which I can most easily lose myself. I've received numerous warm reactions to the colorful shapes that I've layered and labored over. It's evident that I've been inspired by the work of Matisse, as well as that of children's book illustrator Ashley Bryan, in my use of bright and bold colors together to create contrast that pops. The geometric shapes I've incorporated have been influenced by Frank Stella's early work that is simplified and rhythmic, while the minimal, sometimes flat, background and grouping of objects are similar to those seen in Alex Katz's work. The graphic quality of Frykholm's designs has had a lot of impact on my aesthetic appeal; I am drawn to the way that he is able to pare down both the idea and imagery of his subject matter, yet still represent them in a strong and direct manner. Although many of my collages turned out more abstract than I had originally intended, I am pleased with the way they invoke the viewer's imagination, as can be seen in the appendix. My audience is invited to recall their prior knowledge when critiquing and interpreting my art, just as a teacher's lessons for students do in the classroom.

As I've previously mentioned, my work has a way of organically transforming into an abstracted subject matter that could resemble many different distinguishable objects. One strong example of this sort of happy accident occurring as I created a collage is my *Cassette Signals* artwork (*Figure 4.19*). I have always been drawn to cars from the 60's and 70's that have geometric forms and seem to exude lots of positively cool attitude, like the El Camino and the Volkswagen Westfalia, or a bass-thumping hooptie like the vintage Cadillac Coupe deVille and Buick Town Car. While making a previous artwork, I had cut the tabbed portion off of a file folder in order to get a

straight line of cardstock. I continued to cut parallel strips of paper horizontally beneath it, and immediately realized that these simple linear shapes resembled that of these retro cars (*Figure 4.20*). I then decided to create an artwork of a car using this cut paper as a reference, but when the circles that I cut for the wheels were a too large for the strips, I realized that these shapes and their proportions would function better as a cassette tape (*Figure 4.21*). Since the cassette was on my list of subjects that I wanted to represent at some point in my portfolio, it was a quick and easy decision to make. This approach was also consistent with the freely associative mindset reminiscent of Ruscha's attention to whatever it was that either crossed his mind or was directly in front of him. Again, it was fun, liberating, and rewarding to allow myself the freedom to diverge from my set plan of action. In doing so, I not only accomplished something that I had hoped to, but I also learned techniques and lessons that I will continue to implement as I compose the many more artworks that I intend to create.

With every collage, I begin with my color palette determination; this is one of my favorite parts of art, as my heart and soul will always be moved by color theory (*Figure 4.22*). I start with flat colored paper to block in the dominant parts of the composition, then improvise from there. I often start cutting out a design I was drawn to, an idea I have for the subject, or a shape to which I was drawn or might have discarded from a previous piece, as mentioned above. Once I began to assemble the cut pieces of paper, my spatial reasoning skills take over and I begin to have fun with the materials as I play and create. I particularly enjoy this forgiving part of the process because nothing is set in stone and everything is both tangible and easily manipulated; shapes, colors, and patterns become layered and form a new whole from their separate pieces. Throughout this process, I learned ways to make my workflow more efficient, like using

architectural templates to trace simple shapes instead of free-handing them, and using craft tweezers to handle smaller shapes when layering and gluing. I became more confident and technically literate the more I allowed myself to play with and assemble the materials to which I was most drawn. Evidence of this experimentation is documented in my portfolio in the appendix, in the time-lapse videos I created as I explored the many different options before adhering anything, and at <https://kristinferro.weebly.com/collage.html>.

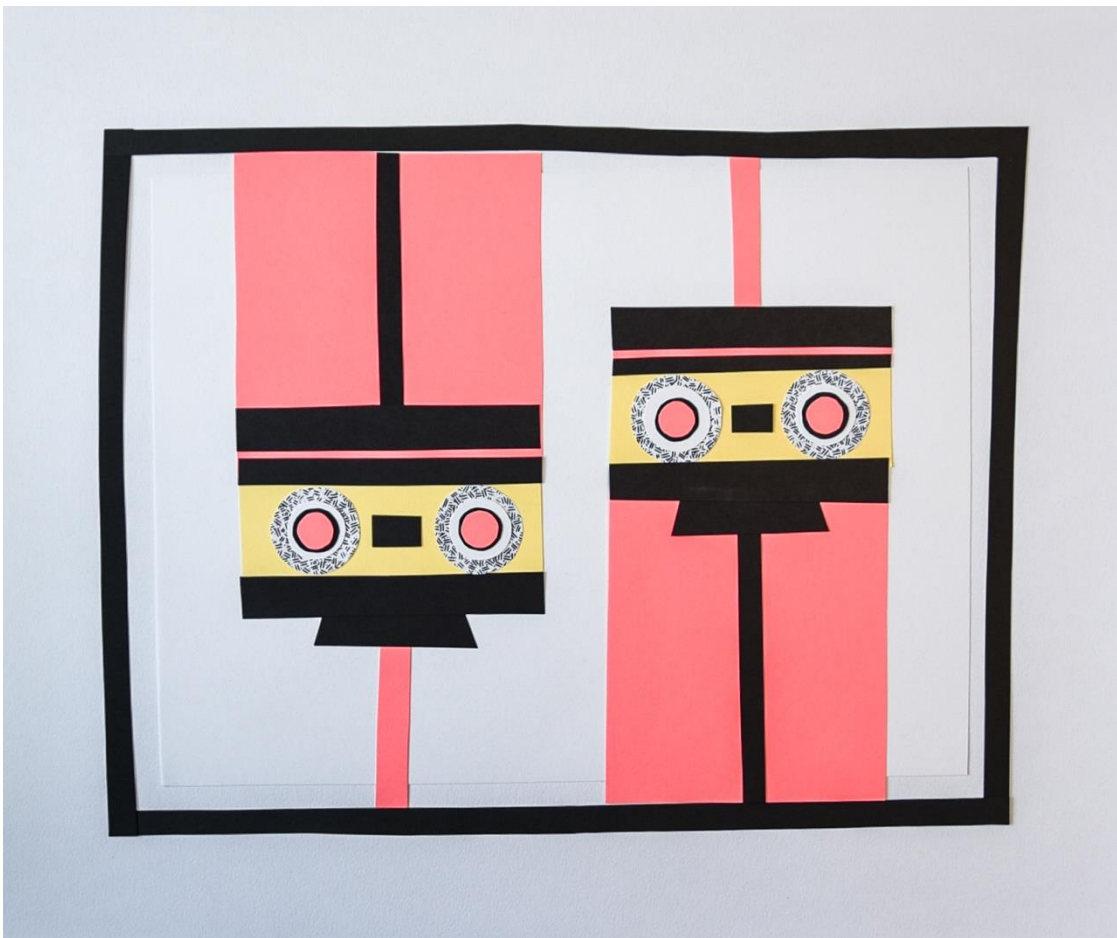


Figure 4.19 "Cassette Signals", Kristin Ferro, 2018, Cut Paper Collage, 14" x 17"

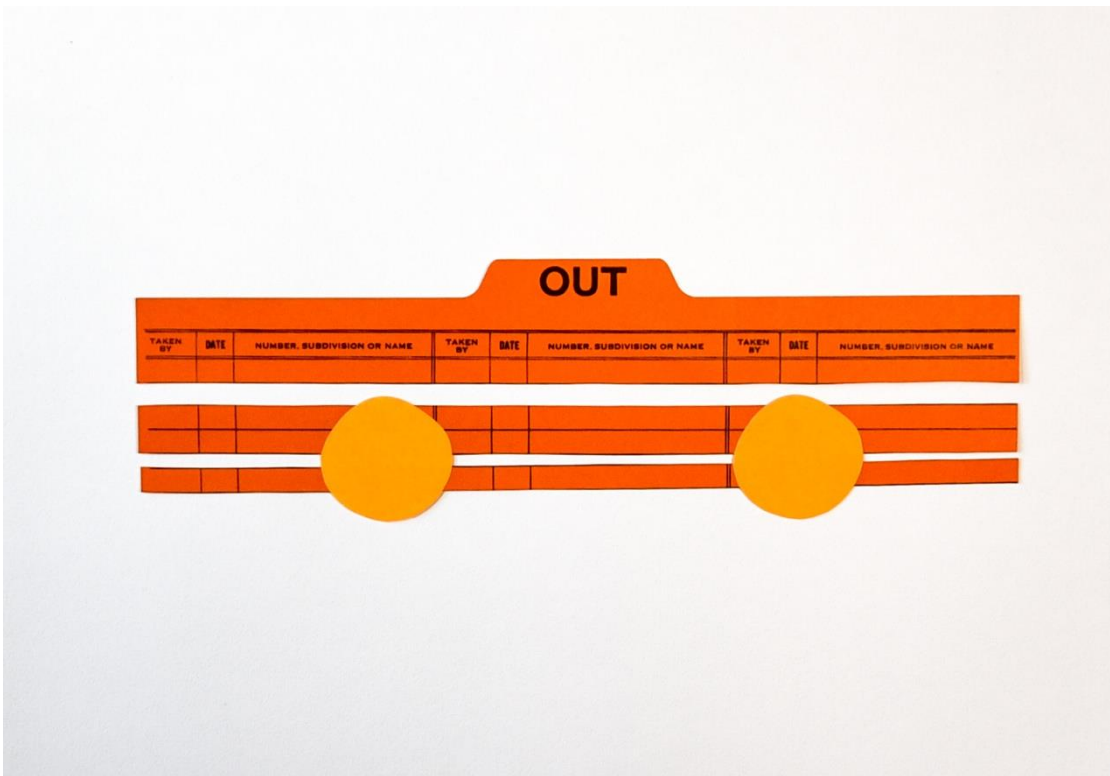


Figure 4.20 Car Inspiration Reference 01, 2018, Discarded Paper Scraps



Figure 4.21 Car Inspiration Reference 02, 2018, In-Progress Photograph

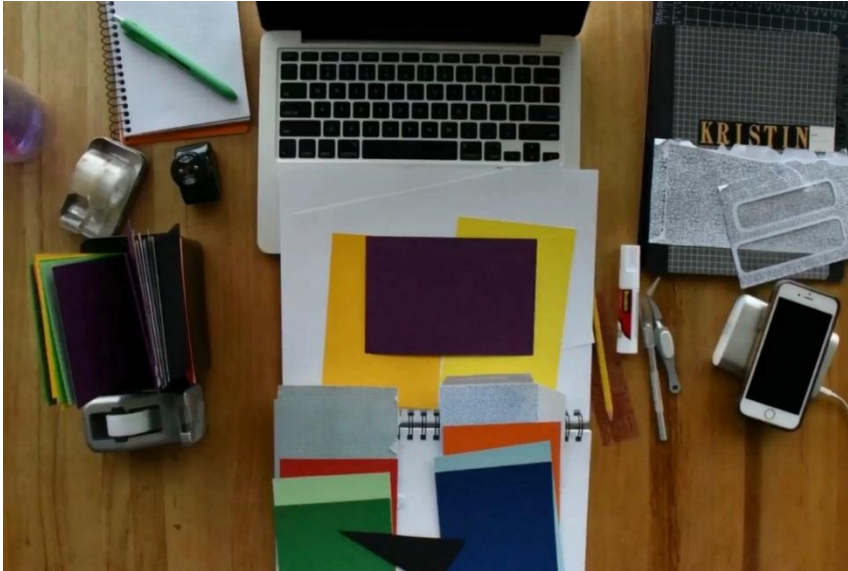


Figure 4.22 Color Palette Comparison, 2018, In-Progress Photograph

4.4 Time-Lapse Videos

Throughout the process of these creations, I decided to use time-lapse videos for documentation but quickly discovered that these videos had the potential to exist as their own form of art. To my surprise, I realized that the collage pieces that I was playing with lent themselves well to cut paper animation and this process added positive pressure on me to complete the artwork in its entirety and be accountable for my time. Years ago, I downloaded a stop-motion animation application on my smartphone called iMotion because it seemed fun and I was interested to learn more about it. I assigned a Claymation group project to my high school sculpture class that required them to use this tool because it was accessible, and easy to learn, and addressed my standards. The app offers manual, timed, and remote controlled intervals, both square and horizontal orientations, plus an onion skin and grid option so students have more control over the transition from one frame to the next. This was my first experience with time-lapse videos, and I quickly began to turn my camera-phone on to just about everything I could to practice my own animation skills.

In 2014, the option to create time-lapse videos was added to the in-phone camera application on the iPhone, along with slow-motion videos. This offered less control over the creative settings than iMotion, but offered me a quick and easy way to create polished stop-motion videos. I mainly used this tool, along with a tripod, to create time-lapsed videos of clouds as they drifted past my view of the Atlanta skyline and would sync music to it to make the product more entertaining. The quality of the iPhone's time-lapse is good, but it can't compare to that of a digital SLR, so I purchased an intervalometer to pair with my Nikon d90 in order to try and create these sequenced videos, but with a higher resolution.

For a variety of reasons, I never went as far as to connect my camera to the shutter release controller, but when I upgraded my digital camera to the Nikon d750 in the summer of 2017, one of the built-in features was the time-lapse video option. This in-camera video tool gave me the ability to control the interval, shooting time, and exposure smoothing at a high quality frame size and rate. So again, I perched my camera atop my tripod and practiced making videos of the view from my balcony, mainly of the clouds, sunrise, and sunset, and taught my husband how to capture his own mural-painting process using this simple technique as well. It only occurred to me to document my own art-making when he rejected my idea to make time-lapses of his illustration work. Because I had seen some well-made videos on Instagram of creative people whose feeds that I follow, I suggested we invert the center column of my tripod with the d750 attached and place it on the studio table over his work. His quick response to me was, "why don't you do it for your own work?" This struck a chord with me, as this was an ideal way to reflect on my processes without diverting my focus from

the art-making while I was in the midst of creation, and an important discovery for my own portfolio of work.

Making these time-lapse videos as an alternative form of note-taking was the original intention, but as I was in the act of building my cut paper collages, I found myself reacting to the timing of the camera and incorporating other simple animations, slowing down my processes to keep track of details, and having fun while I was developing my rhythm. Being able to visibly track the sequence of my attention and thoughts while replaying these videos of my work as it evolved has given me a unique insight that allowed for a more comprehensive, as well as entertaining, reflection. Even my distractions became productive as I was able to incorporate them into the video, whether it was face-timing with a friend, sketching an idea, making a list, or playing with supplies and discarded materials, and they informed my aesthetic decisions as I entertained various compositions. I also found that making these videos held me to a higher standard of accountability, as I was even more motivated to work through to completion and keep better track of the time based on the shifting light source as day turned into night.

I believe that behind the scenes videos of my processes are more dynamic and engaging than a static image of my final work of art, and have the potential to captivate more viewers to create a wider audience. I noticed this when I posted my work to my social media accounts and received more positive feedback on my videos than photos. They are posted to my digital portfolio for easy viewing at <https://kristinferro.weebly.com/time-lapse.html>. The audience is usually unable to see the amount of work and the multitude of decisions that go into a single piece, and this is especially important to me since so many of my artworks are minimal and simplistic.

For instance, in my *Cassette Signals* collage (Figure 4.19), I worked hard to design the two circular reels located within the tape, but after about six tries, I decided that I was working too hard to force something that just wasn't happening the way I'd hoped (Figure 4.23). My solution to this problem was to use the patterned paper of an envelope to activate the space without over-working it (Figure 4.24).



Figure 4.23 *Cassette Signals: Reel Trials*, 2018, In-Progress Photograph 01



Figure 4.24 Cassette Signals: Reel Solutions, 2018, In-Progress Photograph 02

4.5 Discoveries

In my attempts to create, develop, and recognize my artistic process and personal voice, I realized that the endless creative possibilities not only run deep, but also quite wide. Following through with one idea and using it to build upon the next has been a rewarding experience, but what was most exciting was uncovering the variety of approaches that I was able to include in my portfolio as I developed these ideas and my processes. I am proud of what I've accomplished as well as what I've discovered about myself throughout this trying period of personal growth. The different ways that I've learned to navigate ideas and materials will not only be a practical and applicable skill in my daily life, but will be especially instrumental in my classroom. The fact that my portfolio and documentation have culminated in the creation of my website, <https://kristinferro.weebly.com>, has made me realize that I'm able to successfully pull all

the various aspects of this thesis together in a cohesive way to effectively share my process with my students and a wider internet audience. This pressure to perform and exhibit my work publicly has been a positive influence on my art because it has made me more accountable and detail-oriented when preparing, creating, and reflecting on each part of the process. I've learned that distractions can be fun, helpful, and inspirational experiences, however they should be limited, and that trial and error is an integral part of the learning process as we work to sort through challenges and solve problems. I look forward to implementing these many different lessons with my students in ways that I will elaborate in the next chapter.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Throughout the creation of my art, and especially in reflections, I've realized that the sequence of my artistic actions and the structure I've established for myself closely aligns with the procedures that I implement with my students in the classroom. This process moves through each of the following steps of which I've elaborated below, inspiration, preparation, creation, and culmination. Because I must subjectively determine the rigor of each class by discovering and relying on the students' capabilities, prior experiences, personalities, and skillsets, I break down each part of this creative process based on the standards that I am charged to teach. In sharing the thought processes and experimental trials from my own practice with my students, they will be able to see and understand exactly what my expectations are and be better equipped when performing each step. Since my process consists of what I believe are the most natural approaches to art-making based on what I've experienced through my own personal creative journey, I'm better prepared to impress these routines upon my students for their own ventures. Although unforeseeable obstacles are an inevitable part of any endeavor, my goal in this studio research project was to be flexible and adaptive in order to allow my processes of creation to flow freely and organically, similar to the way I structure my classes and create art.

In every step of the journey, whether it be art-making or art-educating, documentation and reflection are a necessary part of the practice in order to assess growth. The validation of the work we do comes through the contemplation of our successes and shortcomings, as this constructive criticism allows us to better grasp a realistic idea of our own personal growth and potential. Gaining this awareness of progress and breakthroughs will be a transferable skill in multiple areas of life, and

having documentation serve as a tangible reminder of this lesson, students, teachers, and artists will be left with a lasting impression. I will share the most important information that I've learned throughout the creation of this Master's thesis portfolio in the following final paragraphs and relate my processes to those that are implemented in my classroom.

5.1 Inspiration

I'd first like to shine a light on the benefits and inspirations that can spring forth from losing oneself in a daydream. By allowing our minds to wander organically about that which we sense, whether it be what we see, feel, hear, smell, or taste, we perpetuate our individual thinking skills by activating our imagination. This causes prior knowledge to be recalled in the connections that we can best relate to the current experience, which is a necessary practice in education. These personal interpretations can serve as a starting point for a simple discussion within the art classroom or may even develop into a longer-term project depending on the affect it has each person. By encouraging myself and my students to open our minds in order to engage with these unexpected sensational experiences, we can pay attention to our thoughts as we immerse ourselves. This allows us to create more possibilities that may influence our own mindset and practice making creative connections.

There are a variety of creative adventures that I enjoy embarking upon in which I allow myself the time and space to think freely as I experience whatever it is that life may bring my way. These low risk scenarios are typically things that I like to do for fun, such as visiting a thrift shop or yard sale, swinging at the playground, going out for a long walk, flipping through the pages of the books on my shelves, or perusing my personal collections. Ultimately, because any and every experience holds the potential

of being incorporated into a piece of art, we are able to realize our ideas and creations by problem-solving using our imagination for visualization. For me, while I am on these mini excursions, I rely on my camera and cell phone to take photos and notes, because when reviewing the sequence of my memories, I am reminded of the thoughts that naturally drifted in and out of my stream of consciousness as I observed and interacted with people, places, and things. Similarly, when beginning of a new project, whether it be for myself or my students, I often recall and share these suggestions in hopes that I'll prioritize setting aside the time and effort that this requires, and that my students will try taking a comparable approach. These attempts at becoming mentally stimulated by an external source will usually lead to something interesting, though many variables such as mood, accessibility, and conflict can hinder or help this brainstorming process as we find ourselves by losing ourselves.

There are an endless number of tangible ways to find inspiration, but when trying to relate new ideas to my own previous perceptions, and to those of my students, I start by calling to mind a prior memorable experience. Through my own studies, I've learned that one of the best ways to pique my interest is to do, think about, or list things that make me happy, comfortable, or curious. I believe that we need to start with a feeling about something, whether it be love, anger, confusion, wonderment, etc. to guide our mind in some general direction, as a point of departure, regardless of how ambiguous or obvious it may be. This might lead to journaling both visually and verbally as we begin to collect ideas, images, or objects that dominate our train of thought or quickly grab our attention. Since we are bombarded with information at lightning speeds throughout our waking hours, I believe that it's important that we take notice of that which is trending or prevalent in the period of time or season of life that we are in. This

will let us begin to prepare by best determining pre-existing art that aligns with our tastes and pull inspiration from there as we educate ourselves about the context and symbols.

5.2 Preparation

The next step in my creative process is to prepare by researching and gathering any missing or undeveloped information after becoming inspired. Whether it's by linking disparate thoughts together or digging deeper to discover meaningful symbolism that we've never thought of, this step that lies just beneath the surface is when it feels like ideas really begin to take form. By documenting these first steps of speculation, we are able to lay a solid foundation with the collection of our thoughts and feelings that have the ability and opportunity to guide our art-making processes. Keeping record of these often fleeting thoughts is incredibly important because I believe that when we look back at the sequence of our thoughts chronologically, we're able to begin noticing patterns and finding deeper meaning through this reflexive thinking. I've compared many of the initial phases of my own creation to one another, and have realized that I go through the same processes each time as I prepare and determine which approach I will take with regards to form, aesthetic quality, technique, and art-making. For example, I review my own photo albums that I've stored and sorted on my cell phone, and use these images as a reminder of my train of thought from the moments when I was taking the photos. Then when I find my favorite images, I begin to write the words that I associate with the images, along with any and all ideas that these thoughts may provoke. The documentation of my ideation gets translated from photograph into words, then becomes a study as I begin to sketch the basic shapes, lines, and patterns that portray the essence of the image to which I'm drawn. The natural progression of linking my thinking creates a personal approach to my aesthetic vision and allows me

to focus in on the subject matter as I develop my idea and begin to prepare my art. It is also important at this stage to notice if there are specific images, symbols, or narratives at work, and be sure to understand the context, literal and implied, by discussing the work with others.

Another way that I gather my ideas, and assign my students to do the same, is by creating a Pinterest board to neatly see and organize that to which we're visually attracted. By using the posts on our initial board as inspiration, then digging just below the surface to reflect on subcategories that should be created, we're able to narrow our focus on ideas that are most preferred or strongest felt. I also write exhaustive lists that continue to evolve freely, similar to the Pinterest boards, then reflect upon them and identify patterns. This web of ideas often relates to, or uncovers, aspects of our personal or familial past, and warrant investigation, whether visual or verbal. Through this, we are able to realize, create, and share our memories freely as we loosely experiment with many different tools and techniques in order to determine what works best with our stories, skills, preferences, and aesthetic styles.

In this preparatory stage of art-making, we must remember to stay open-minded and experiment by trying new things or by coming up with novel ways to utilize tools we already have at hand. Incorporating the use of unconventional tools or objects that we have access to will also help us creatively determine whether or not we're able to include these as viable options in our creation process and help us to personalize our technique through trial and error. I like to gather my materials and tools by visiting local art supply stores or thrift shops and search for options that interest me. I often take photos of the merchandise with the price visible to serve as a reference in case I need to go back once I begin creating, or to shop for what's most affordable. Once my

preferred supplies have been determined and gathered, I make a “to-go” set and an “in studio” set to be sure that I’m prepared for creation when and where ever inspiration might strike, and I encourage my students to do the same. I then organize and store my materials in ways that I’m able to easily access throughout all the stages of my creation process. Finally, at the end of my preparation process but before I begin to design, I like to create loose ground rules for myself to follow while I sketch, experiment, and make art. I think this is a productive way to exercise self-discipline, and it can help me to stay focused on the task at hand as I determine whether I work better when abiding by them, or if I am stifled by their restrictions. This consciousness of self-control is yet another way that artists, educators, and students can be accountable to themselves and track their progress effectively as they create.

5.3 Creation

Once the previous foundations have been laid through finding inspiration and preparing to create, it is time to execute these ideas and designs using personal processes that have been developed or will serve as experimental trials. The creative process looks different for each person, and depends upon the individual, but one important aspect that applies to every creator universally, both students and teachers, is accountability and how it will be established. I’ve found that my time-lapse videos allow me to keep better track of my time and the changes I make in my art. This has been a helpful and insightful way for me to reflect on my daily, weekly, and monthly progress, and has granted me the opportunity to be honest with myself about my work. For instance, although many of my final pieces look quite minimal like many of the artists whose work I’m inspired by, you can see from my videos that my mind went in some complicated circles trying to work other ideas into the composition that ended

up on the cutting room floor. My process was so much more complicated than the final product seems to reveal, and by simplifying and changing shapes inspired from my photographs, I've inherently abstracted my subject matter and projected its idea through another medium. Without meaning to, my creation of art through collage, based off of photography and sketches, gave way to another artwork in a separate and more engaging form that are the time-lapse videos.

I've also learned when to allow time for appropriate distractions while I create without letting them get out of hand, as they can be intriguing and have the potential to be a productive mental break. I believe this aspect of work is important to teach students, as this often helps keep engagement and encourages interaction. An example of this can also be seen in my time-lapse videos where I've animated the supplies that I was using, unaware that my distraction would be as intriguing for viewers as it was when the work almost came to life. I feel as though I've been able to find captivating ways to incorporate constructive diversions into my process, and this often leads me back to the task at hand, so implementing this in the classroom routine is a way to practice open-mindedness and flexibility. By allowing this sort of free-association the time and space in my artwork and classroom, I feel as though ideas are able to evolve organically while staying aware of big picture and defining tangential limits.

Getting to know myself as an artist and understanding my own best practices allowed for my personal nuances to guide my creations. Though I often set out with the intention to simply play, experiment, and even attempt failure in order to let my own guard down and embrace the process, I found the ways in which I work best by using trial and error in these low risk scenarios. In practicing and developing my techniques and drafting methods, I inadvertently made works that were easily transformed into a

finished piece. Through this, the successful simplification of complex visuals and ideas is a goal that I feel as though I was able to achieve, especially when considering the group of artists that inspired my work. I am also proud of the fact that I implemented many of their practices into my own, and expanded upon them.

As I passed through the many different stages of creation, I sketched, photographed, took notes, and made time-lapse videos of the experiences in order to document my own train of thought so that I would be better equipped when reflecting upon my actions. This also allowed me the freedom with which I was able to think and act according to my own stream of consciousness without relying on taking thorough notes while I was in the midst of letting my mind wander. Through these stages, I created more works of art that I had previously planned and was surprised with the success of my discoveries.

5.4 Culmination

The completion of an artwork is not interpreted the same way for everyone, so in culminating a project, it is up to the individual to determine what “finished” means for them. Many artists host or participate in exhibitions where they intend to sell their work or show it for recognition, which is what I have most often implemented with my students. Some may not deem a piece of art complete until it has been framed and is hanging on the wall, however in the age of the internet and social media, we are able to exhibit and share our work with larger audiences than previously before. This has been a positive factor in my creative journey because my photographs are digital, so viewing them on an LCD screen that is similar to the one on which they were created is ideal. It's also been helpful having the “story” sharing options on social media that disappear after 24 hours because viewers are able to see the behind-the-scenes

images and sneak previews from works in progress. When I have posted these, I've received positive feedback that has kept me motivated and encouraged me to put together a website to serve as a culminating digital portfolio for this Master's thesis, <https://kristinferro.weebly.com>.

Having the ability to share my photos and videos on social media, especially Instagram, gives me access to a wider audience, both of people who follow my feed and others who stumble upon my work, so my chances of having it seen are greater when it's posted. This reach and accessibility provided by the internet and mobile phones has been helpful in transferring useful knowledge into my classroom when learning about completing work then posting the final product. By linking each student's website to my own teacher website, <https://artwithferro.weebly.com>, I'm able to easily share each student's digital portfolio with other students, teachers, and parents throughout the course of the semester, and provide a results-driven lesson.

5.5 Reflection

The documentation of my creative processes has allowed me to make more candid and honest reflections on the steps that I take in creating, both individually and collectively. By breaking down my thoughts and techniques at each stage along the way, I have discovered what I value most about the art-making process for myself, as well as for my students in my classroom, though these stages might not always follow this strict order. From the first spark of inspiration to the final touches in the culmination of a piece of work, I've determined these processes are the ways in which I will teach my students best practices in the preparation and creation of art, and relate these skills to other areas of their life. By first becoming inspired by a feeling, and establishing a motivating factor that will start the creative process, we can then prepare ourselves by

considering the many different approaches that might be taken to interpret this feeling. Students and artists will understand how to lay the foundations of creation, then begin acting upon this contemplation by experimenting and creating simultaneously with what has been previously prepared, literally and figuratively, as we work to successfully convey our emotions. For me, the culmination is the most challenging part of creating, as it is the final interaction with the idea in and requires comprehensive reflection as well as exhibition. Throughout the initial idea's evolution, as it is developed at each stage of the creative process I've established, it has the potential to change, expand, simplify, and inspire as we work to interpret our own aesthetic decisions that are aligned with the feeling that we are portraying. This natural progression of a concept based on techniques and aesthetic preferences becomes a cycle, and a body of work can then be created, effectively conveying the artist's personal voice.

True for both my own practice as well as that of my students, time has been the most persistent struggle that I have encountered. Whether it was not being able to make the time because of prior commitments, creating a consistent routine to follow, or devoting more time to a particular portion of the process. I believe that this has been one of the most eye-opening lessons and biggest challenges that I've faced, and feel that it is almost ironic that my biggest revelation throughout the creation of this portfolio relies on the lapsing of time. I feel fortunate to be able realize this, because time management is a difficult lesson for many people to learn, and becoming aware of how we spend our time will better allow us to be accountable to ourselves for our incessant thoughts and actions. This is one of the most important takeaways that I will have upon the completion of my Master's program, and will be able to effectively

implement into my classroom because I am now better prepared in knowing when to allow more time, and when to call, "time's up!"

This process has opened my eyes to an even truer meaning of the phrase that's probably most often seen plastered across motivational posters; life (as with success, art, and education) is not about the destination, but the journey we take in achieving whatever ambition it is that we choose to pursue. I like to relate my creative processes to my approach to life, because although my work started as an instant of inspiration snapped into a photograph, I was able to turn this moment into something bigger than what it was as it existed in reality. By using this image as reference while taking my artistic journey through sketches, collages, and ultimately videos based off of this happenstance, I was able to focus my attention on that which was positive and interpret it my own way then share it with the world. By connecting my finished art with the ideas and inspiration that I had at the beginning of this process, I was able to more clearly visualize and articulate the ideals of my own personal voice.

When looking back on the creation of my portfolio, I am successful and proud of the work that I produced because I had never before experienced the pressure to create a body of work like this. I feel as though my personal voice has begun to communicate a whimsical simplification of the objects that I take particular attraction to, and I will continue to develop my vision and strengthen my voice as I determine the significance of these images the more I focus on portraying them. I attribute my growth not only to my teachers' encouragement while they pushed me along every step of the way, but also to the fact that I genuinely granted myself the freedom to explore a variety of options in order to strive beyond the limits of my comfort. My attempt to learn as much as I could with each opportunity were fruitful, and now I am better equipped

to use these experiences as I relate to the students in my classroom and push them to achieve their full potential, as well as encourage them to better relate to me and my processes. I also now have tangible artifacts that I will be able to use while inspiring them, and can share my firsthand knowledge about techniques and approaches that they may want to incorporate into their own methods.

It's important to remember that discoveries made along the way can either project you in the right direction to get you closer to your goal, or sometimes, they may send you along a detour. By interpreting a sidetrack in a positive light, whether foreseeable or not, we have the opportunity to find reassurance and validation in ourselves when we finally end up back in a place where we feel as though we're moving in the right direction again. This simple yet complicated lesson is applicable in art creation, art education, and life as we grow individually and collectively along our journey and transition from one artwork, season, or stage to the next. It's up to each of us to learn what it means to have the right attitude and become adaptable so that we're capable of making something positive and long lasting out of everything, both in life and in art.

What I discovered about my creative process through the aesthetic exploration described in this thesis was that I move through each of the stages that I've determined are necessary for my work – inspiration, preparation, creation, and culmination – though I may arrive at these steps in various sequences. The development of my collage techniques and portfolio through these steps was successful and will serve as a tangible example of my own trial and error processes that I will share with my students. The pressure to perform that I experienced because of deadlines and in the creation of my collages, time-lapse videos, and website will be experienced by the students in my

classroom, as they too will be required to practice best habits of mind by creating a culminating digital portfolio containing all of their documented work and reflections throughout their creative process. This will serve as a reminder of what we are capable of creating through trials, as well as help us better relate to one another by communicating with our personal voices through the creative processes, both visually and verbally. I look forward to implementing this model in my classroom as well as continuing to explore my own artistic creations using these well-defined processes of which I've laid a strong foundation.

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APPENDIX

Portfolio

Although I anticipated creating only 11 works, I ended up with many more, each following the same process as described above, the final products are presented below, as well as online at <https://kristinferro.weebly.com/work.html>.



Figure A.1 "Water Tower Up", Kristin Ferro, 2017, 17" x 14"



Figure A.2 "Bank of America Building", Kristin Ferro, 2017, Cut Paper Collage, 24" x

18"

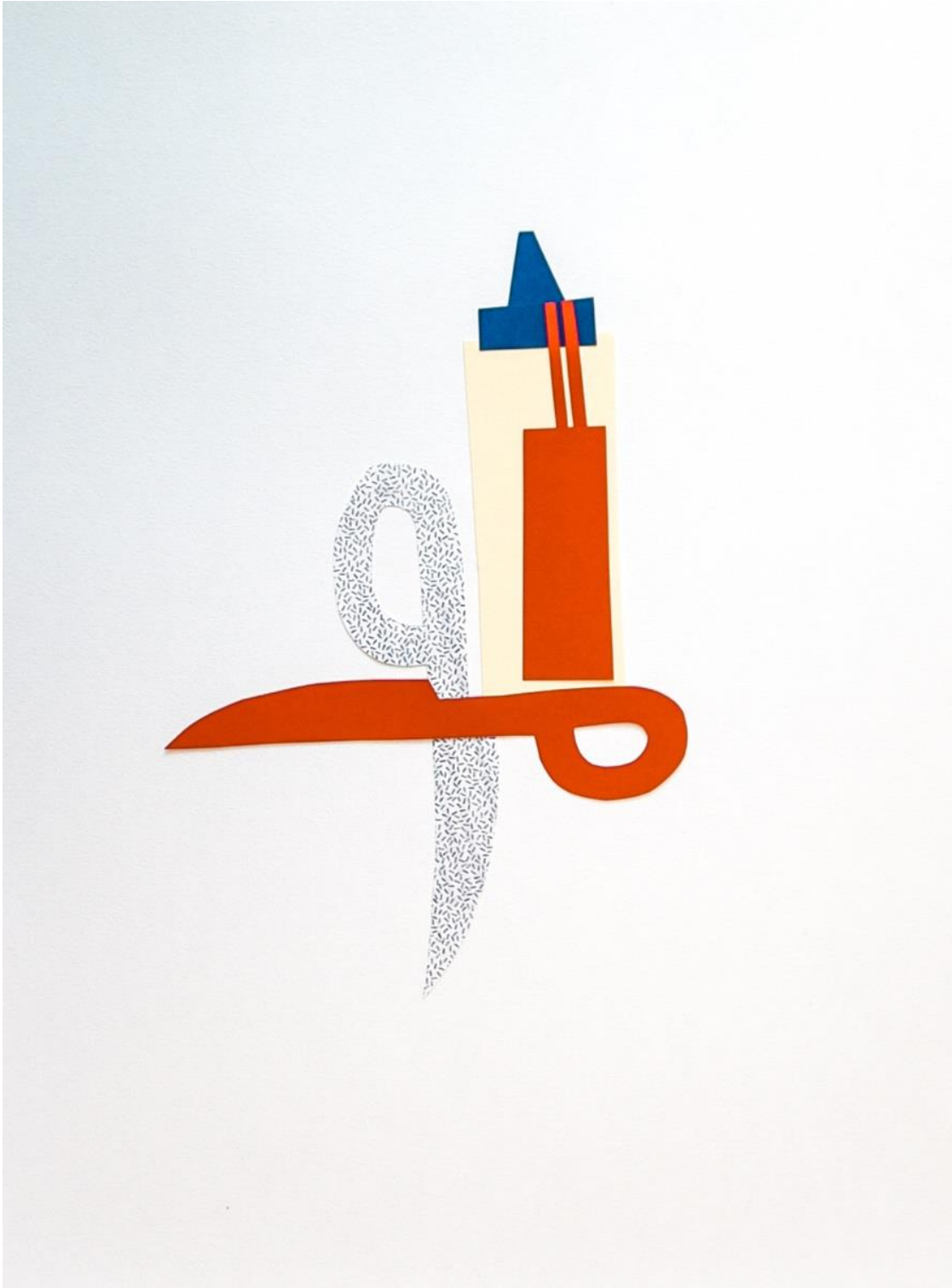


Figure A.3 "Cut and Paste", Kristin Ferro, 2017, 24" x 18"



Figure A.4 "Crayola", Kristin Ferro, 2017, Cut Paper Collage, 24" x 18"

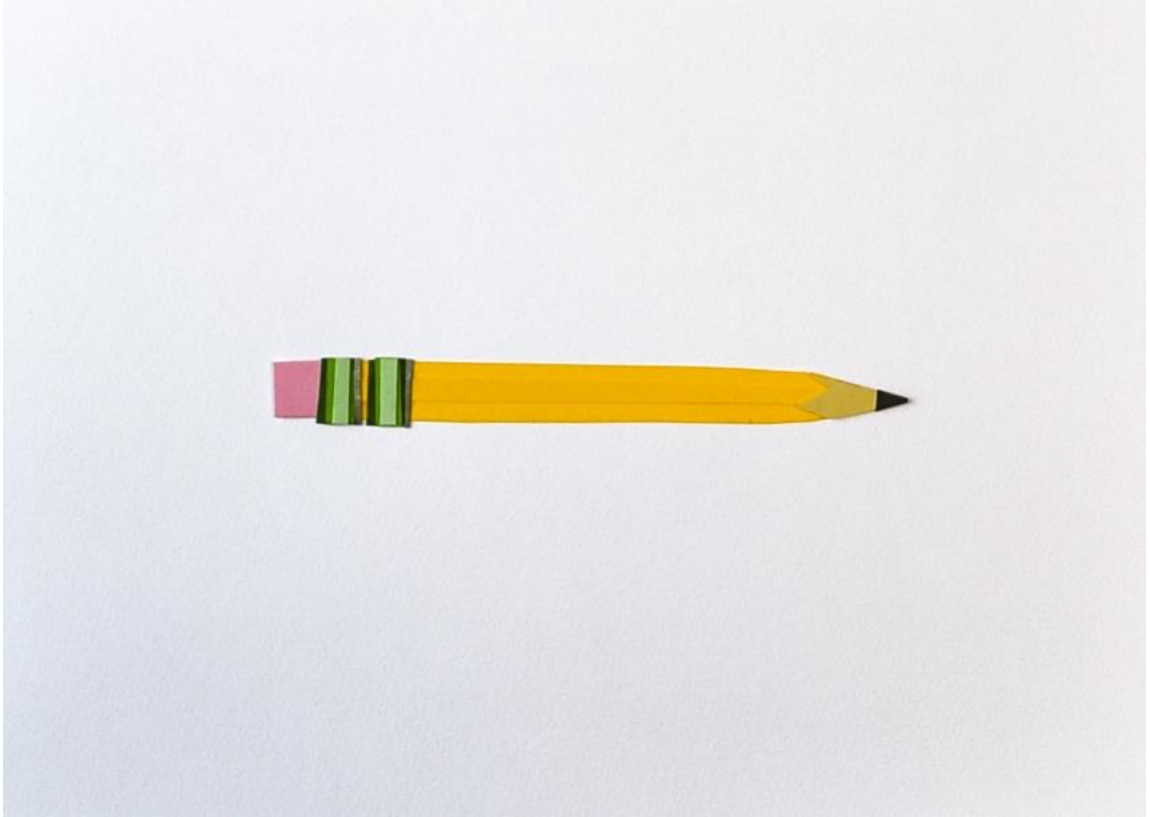


Figure A.5 "No. 2 Pencil", Kristin Ferro, 2017, Cut Paper Collage, 9" x 12"

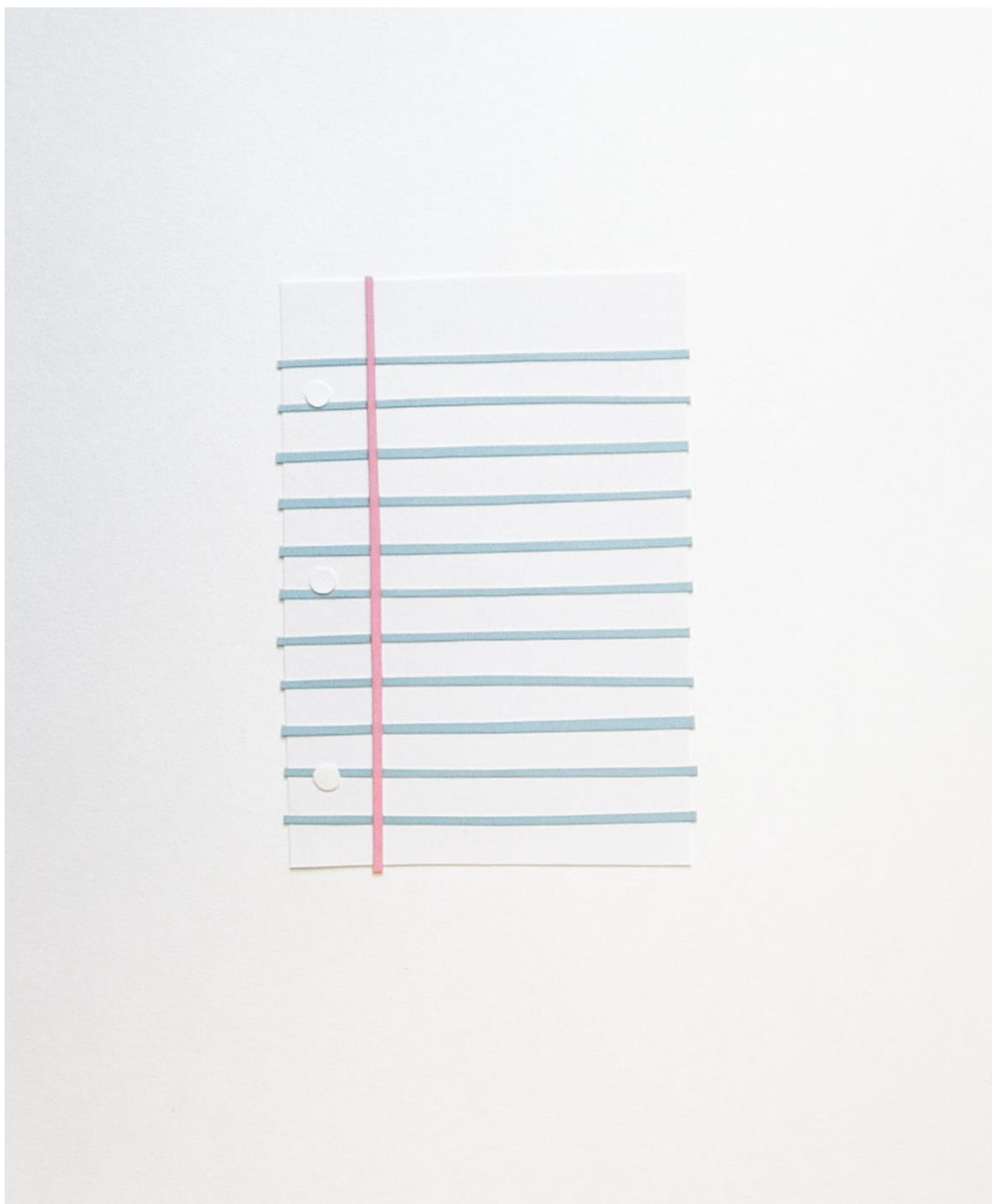


Figure A.6 "Notebook Paper", Kristin Ferro, 2018, 12" x 9"

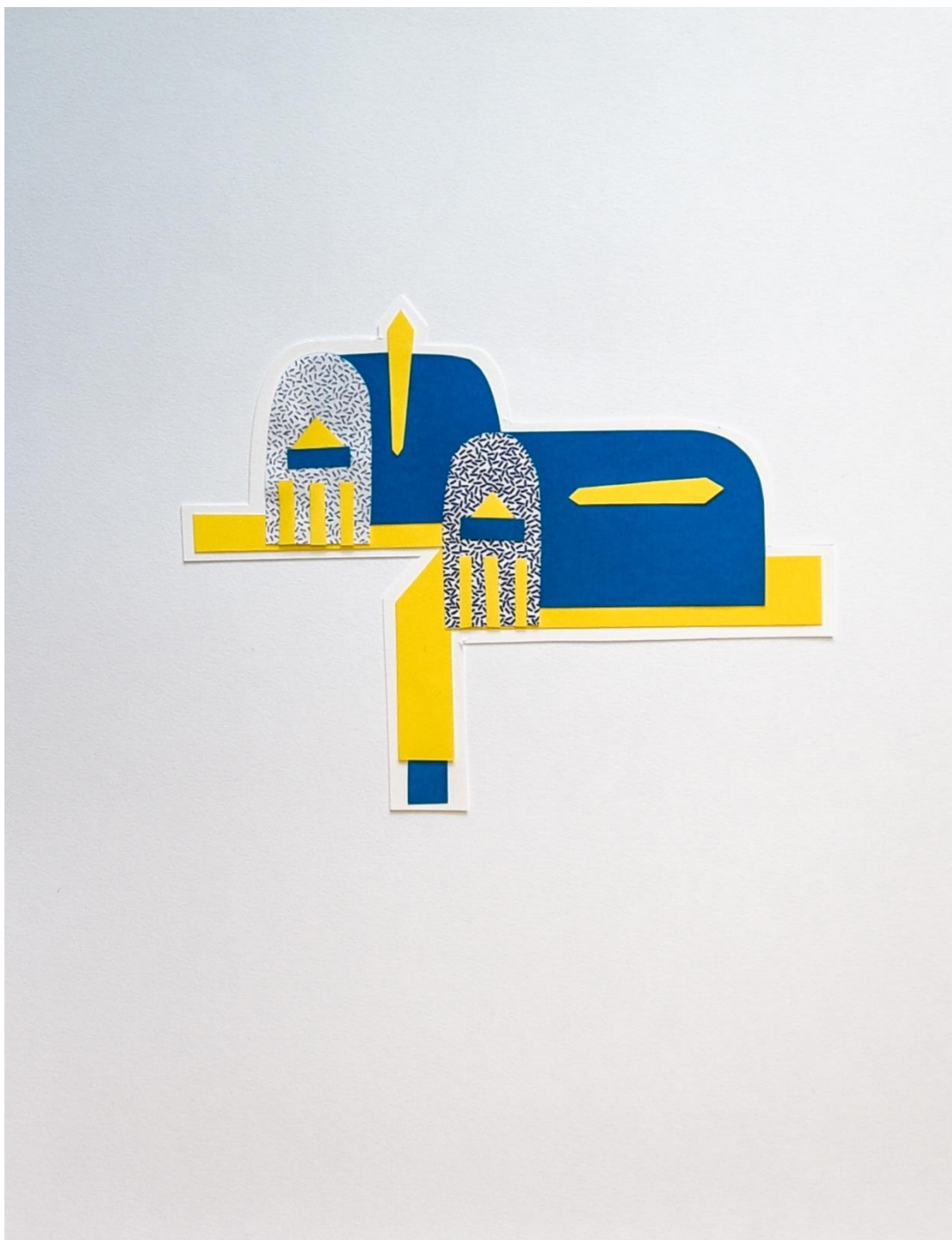


Figure A.7 "No. 2 Mailbox", Kristin Ferro, 2017, Cut Paper Collage, 17" x 14"



Figure A.8 "Mailbox Row", Kristin Ferro, 2017, Cut Paper Collage, 24" x 18"

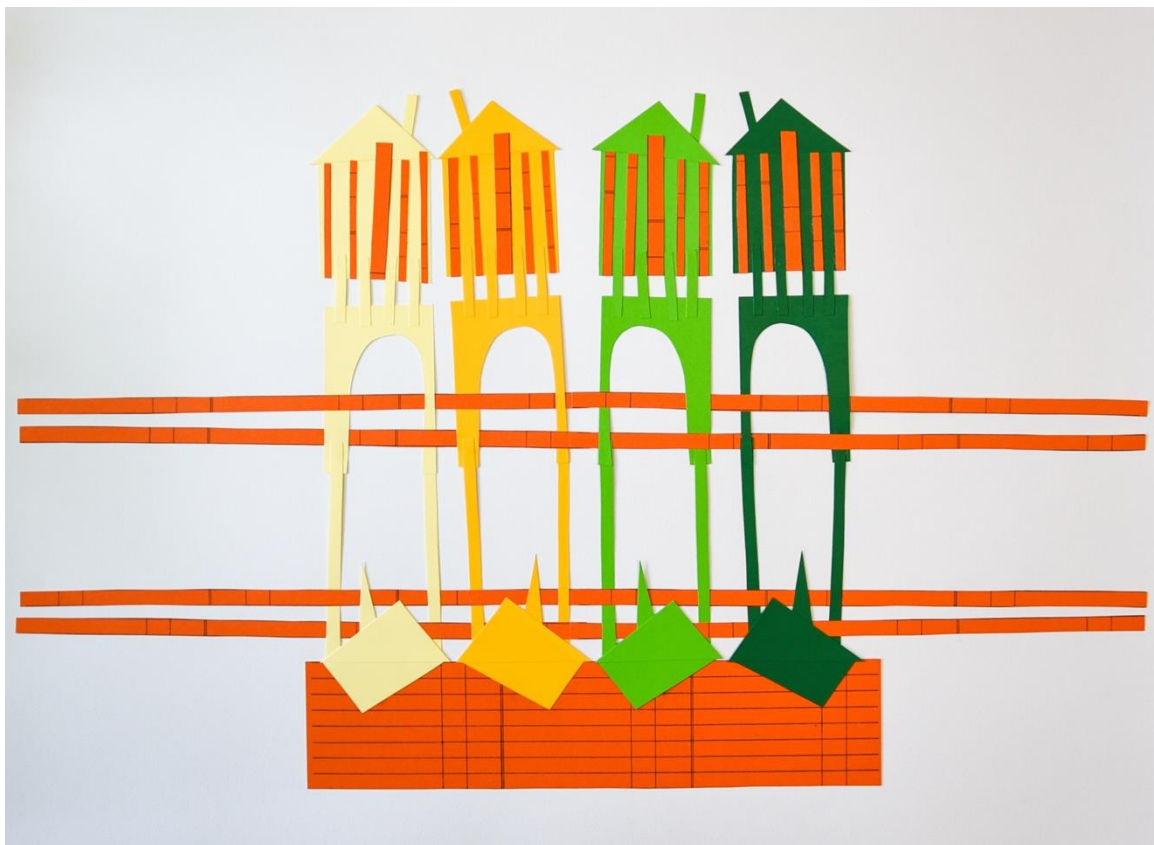


Figure A.9 "Water Tower Row", Kristin Ferro, 2017, Cut Paper Collage, 18" x 24"



Figure A.10 "Tape Tower", Kristin Ferro, 2017, Cut Paper Collage, 24" x 18"

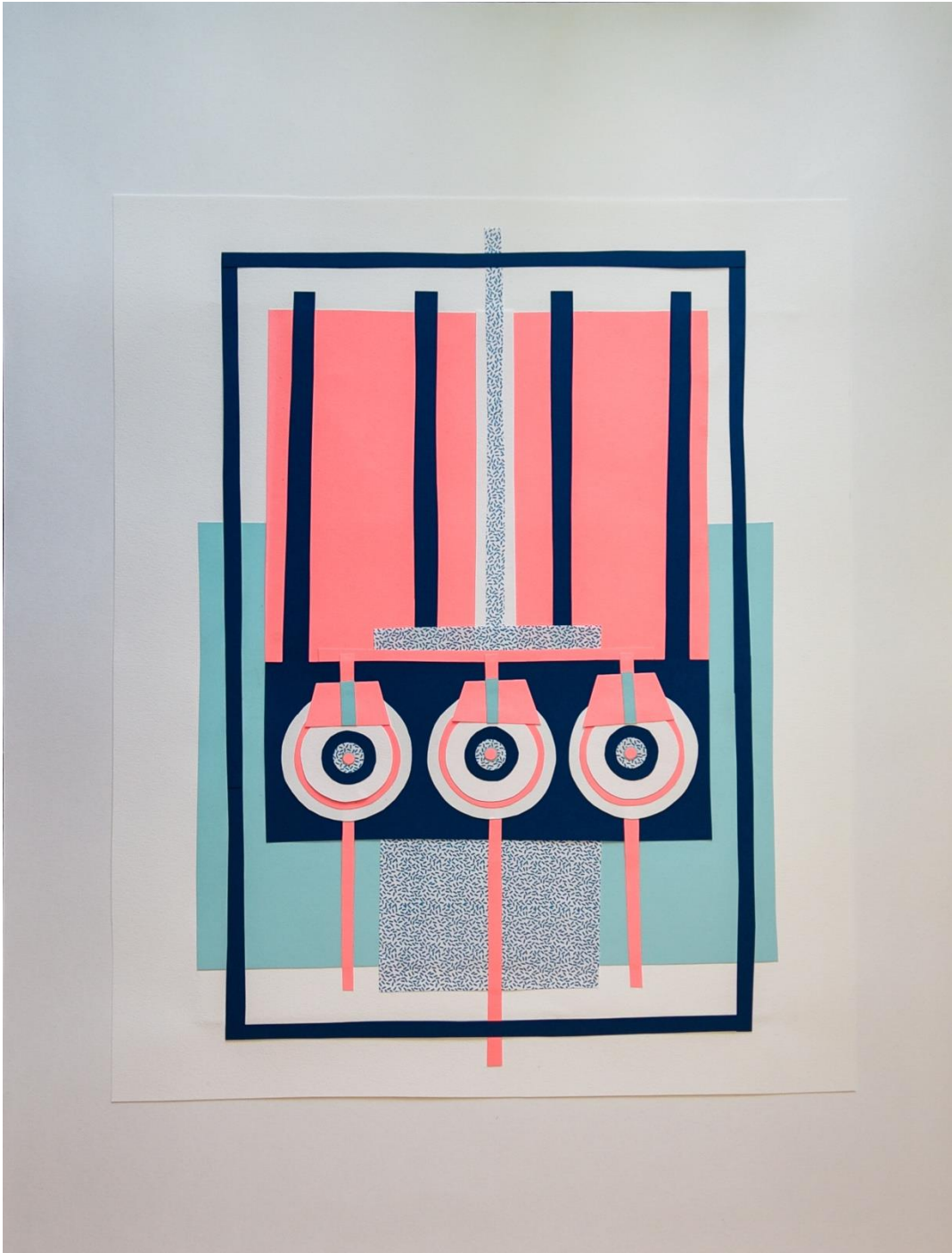


Figure A.11 "Bubble", Kristin Ferro, 2018, Cut Paper Collage, 24" x 18"