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The Beauty in Diversity

What constructs a culture, people group, or individual? Ultimately one's values, community, and surroundings play a significant role. Through research and interviews with people from all over the world I intend to show the audience a hint of how these can come together to create something beautiful and unique. My goal is to show how individuals, each with uniquely different backgrounds, have a beautiful story to tell. Focusing on how their environment and surroundings have impacted who they are, and how they have come out stronger from that. In diversity there is beauty and strength. I intend to create paintings and booklets of individuals from Sweden, Mongolia, Sudan, and Colombia. The background patterns and colors in the paintings will be unique to each culture and the transparency will symbolize the effect the culture has had on each individual. The booklets will create a personal connection into each story, through visual expression and quotes.

Since the beginning of time art has influenced it's audience by translating experiences, instilling values, and changing opinions. Through research we have seen that art affects the fundamental sense of self. For my capstone I want to capitalize on this fact through a series of oil portraits, these portraits will be of individuals from each culture that will represent the country most clearly. I have conducted personal interviews with people from each culture who have spent between ten to eighteen years in that specific country. As I was talking with a friend from Sudan, I asked him what type of individual would represent his culture best, he replied "I believe a woman wearing a tobe, with big round earrings, and henna designs on her hands would portray my culture well." He went on to say that the jewelry of that region as well as the tobe women wear are a type of

cultural signature. I asked him what he would most like people to understand about his culture and he spoke on how Sudan is often thought of as the dark continent, a tragedy, historically it was even thought to be demonized. Famine and tragedy are so often tied to his country. He looked at me and said clearly, "I would love for you to show the celebration of life we have and the freedom we seek there." I plan to paint a portrait of a Sudanese woman, strong, proud, and beautiful, with henna designs as a background, slightly transparent through her shoulders. Henna designs very commonly contain floral patterns, this pattern showing through this woman will represent the celebration of life, the expression on her face will resemble the freedom she is striving for. I plan to do this effect on each painting, using patterns unique to each culture and allowing them to become a part of the portrait.

Oftentimes we see art either influencing or being influenced by the religion, history, or politics of a country. It is often a vehicle for social change. Through my personal interviews this was portrayed to me very clearly. The entire country of Saudi Arabia is run majorly by their religion, Islam. Women seen on the streets can only wear black, men wear white robes. As I was speaking with my friend, he stated that the country is incredibly restricted. Nontraditional music was not allowed until only a couple of years ago, and their main form of art is religious poetry. Paintings, architecture, and almost any form of art is influenced by religion. This is in sharp contrast to Sweden, where about every piece of art is connected somehow to the surroundings of the country. The beautiful lakes and forests, rocky coasts, and little bright houses play a huge part in artistic creation. Equality is also a major cultural value. Equality for women, men, and children. The overarching principle for this is that everyone, regardless of gender has the right to work and support themselves, to balance family and career life, and to live without the fear of abuse. This has impacted their art in many ways. Sudanese art is majorly influenced by politics, in fact currently the country is going through a revolution seeking freedom from their oppressive government. Art aimed

towards the activists is commonly themed blue. In India history plays a major role in the artwork created, as well as religious influences such as Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Islam. Despite the complex mixture of these religions and their separate traditions, the prevailing artistic style has been shared amongst the major religions. Mongolian art is hugely influenced by nature as well as the main cultural religion, Buddhism. They rarely do not create a work of art without inserting elements such as land, fire, water, and sky into the piece. The culture holds major respect for these elements and will even lay their deceased relatives out on top of mountains to return to the natural elements. It is not uncommon to see shrines on top of mountains and beside roadsides, with paintings of relatives, sculptures, and statues of Buddha placed near them. Art is used as a form of worship and very commonly used as a form of national pride. Paintings of herders, mountains, and reindeer are signature forms of art in Mongolia, beautiful and rugged. These portray the culture well, as people so often live in a similar way.

Art fosters the human need for self-expression and often is symbolic of cultural values. I plan to create a variety of 3d objects for each culture. It is imperative to be given the opportunity to pick up and inspect objects to have a fully enriched experience. As I was speaking with my friend from India, he spoke on how important bravery is in his culture. How specific things such as metal bracelets, long hair and daggers represent the strength his people have. Everyone must wear the daggers specifically as a symbol of this. I was astonished to learn that the daggers must be sheathed at all times unless the opportunity arises for a person to show their bravery. The daggers are not meant for practical usage. If ever a dagger is pulled some blood must be spilled. He spoke to me of a man who became incredibly angry with another after a car accident, the man pulled his dagger but before anything happened the other had suffered a heart attack, the man who pulled it had to cut his own hand before putting the dagger back in his sheath. My friend had watched this all happen as a young child. He spoke on how this symbolized his culture so clearly as bravery is shown through

aggression. In Mongolia, Yurts are very symbolic of the culture. Mongolians traditionally are nomadic herders. These yurts (felt tents) represent the history of the culture as well as currently how the herders can pick up and move whenever they feel the need to change pastures with their flocks. In Sweden small wooden horses called Dala are symbolic, they are made traditionally from wood, and painted brightly with floral designs and an under theme of bright red. This symbolizes the cultures pride of their forests and animals, the red color comes from a byproduct of copper mining which is very common in the country, and easily used to dye things red. In Sudan jewelry is a common theme, women use it to express themselves. Heavily ornamented and brightly colored, they often represent flowers, which are a common theme in the henna as well as other designs.

Art in a sense is communication; it allows people from all over the world to communicate with each other. The beauty in this is something I would like to display through a series of posters and pamphlets. There are numerous incredible facts about each of these five cultures I would love to open the viewers eyes to. For example, in Sudan it is still common for the parents to arrange their children's marriages. Having very elaborate weddings with hundreds of guests, with both bride and groom covered in henna. For these pamphlets I would use the cultures traditional colors, and patterns of art. The pamphlets would be similar to the painted portraits as far as colors and design patterns go, bringing together design elements. Photographs and information will be used in the designs of these to enlighten the viewer on the beauty and strength in the diversity around us.

There are countless ways to represent a culture, art is a form I have found most enriching. It is the ability for diverse groups to express themselves and make connections with others. Art is about sharing the way we experience the world. It is an incredible opportunity to create something which we could never fully put into words. I am incredibly excited to begin this project and hope to bring to light aspects that are beautiful and diverse from each of these cultures. I intend to invite others to open their mind to a different perspective of the world, think further and create a desire in

the viewer to understand cultures other than their own. To wisely, look and listen with an open spirit, always celebrating the diversity in human achievements and imagination.

Literature Review

A History of Visual Communication – by Josef Muller-Brockmann

- This book covered visual communication from the dawn of barter in the ancient world to the visualized conception of today. It discussed art such as paintings, architecture, pottery, photography, typography and graphic design. Telling in detail how each began, where they originated, and how each effected the world in their own way.

The Art of All Nations – by Elizabeth Gilmore Holt

- This book covered the topic of the ever-expanding and encompassing world of art. How new discoveries and constant improvements in the processes involve in the reproduction of an image permitted more and more visual material to accompany the printed world.

OUR GLOBAL FUTURE PORTRAITS: KOMÉ ELEYAE

- This article was on a specific artist named Kome Eleyae and the work he focused on making. I found it very interesting as his practice is dependent on inspiration from and partnership with people from all walks of life. He pushes the idea that it is now imperative for artists to come together and form a narrative of tolerance and community through all the different cultures.

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Committee

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Scope of Final Investigation

- Five portrait paintings
- Booklet Designs
- Physical Portfolio
- Cover Letter, thank you letter
- Business cards