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Research Proposal: Non Traditional Portrait

In the world of art, there are many paintings and drawings of portraits created with a variety of intentions. Portraits are often created for their aesthetic beauty, but also often to share an idea or evoke a feeling. Art is a valuable communication method, and when done successfully a work of art can share its aesthetic values and ideas to educate, inspire, and lead an audience. Often in the world of portraiture, the subject matter is limited to the face with the focus being placed directly on the pure aesthetic beauty of the subject in an idealized setting. While it is seen that this method of portrait communication is successful, I wanted to create a work of art that still captured the same aesthetic and ideals of a traditional portrait without being traditional. There are many ways to share the personality and beauty of a person in a work of art without showing their full face. Often in people lives, it is not so much the face create their personality and impact in the world. I plan to create a portrait work of art that shares the subject's personality and shows their beauty in a work of art without directly showing their face.

The communication objective for this non traditional portrait is to share the personality of my subject without directly spelling it out or just showing the face. The subject model for this piece is my dear friend Leo and he is an actor. For much of his life he performs on a stage or models in front of a camera and so his face is a big part of what makes him who he is; it is recognizable, shares emotion, and creates his brand as an actor. However, there is so much more to Leo outside of his career as an actor and what is seen on the stage and in photos. I want to capture a soft and honest side of Leo in the portrait of him, and to share his personality and the little things about him that you can't directly put into words but you just pick up on if you met him in person. While the message of a work of art is always objective to some degree depending on the audience, I want to communicate a clear feeling of who Leo is through this portrait even if you have never met him. The message I want to convey is that Leo is a warm person, caring and thoughtful. I want this portrait to show his personality and remind the audience of spring and sunshine, because that's what Leo reminds me of.

To create this portrait, I researched several types of non traditional portraits. My favorite artist who created such type of paintings is called Rene Magritte and often replaced people's faces with objects such as an apple or a bunch of flowers. I liked this surrealist idea and wanted to do something similar but without the obvious surrealism. This lead me to choose to create an oil painting based off an image of the subject's hands covering their face. This is not necessarily done to hide the face in shyness, but rather to

bring attention to the hands instead of the face. Through this non traditional portrait, I am telling Leo's story through his hands, and the colors seen in the shadow and light, greens and yellows and reds. So much of people's life is seen in the work they do, and that work is often done with our hands, whether that be opening the door for someone, writing a letter, or holding someone else's hand. Though posed naturally, the work still has a hint of surrealism in the choice of color palette which is very warm and saturated. I chose to do this to bring a vibrancy of life to the portrait through color that would otherwise not be seen in the subject.

The painting is titled "More Than A Face" and was made with oil paint on a 9x12 inch canvas. For the color palette, I chose to use warm reds and yellows and greens to show Leo's disposition and also to bring a feeling of warmth and optimism of spring. The painting was created in stages, from sketches on paper to sketching onto the canvas. From there I began working inside out, blending my oil paints with linseed oil and turpentine to create thin layers of paint from which I could build upon. I started with color blocking the hands and then working onto the face, then hair and shirt, and then finally the yellow background. After color blocking, I went in and added details of different colors in the skin, hair, and shirt. While painting the hands, I researched the anatomy of hands and the structure from the bones to the muscles. This knowledge allowed me to understand the construction of the hand and how to naturally place highlights and shadows. I also conducted vast research on hair and the different methods to accurately paint hair reflecting light and shadow. Overall, I believe I accomplished my goal of creating a non traditional portrait that reflects the personality of my friend Leo while not directly showing his face. The painting embodies a bit of his personality that whether or not you have met him, you can still gain a sense of him through his portrait.