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An Art Collection: Themes and Progress

<https://www.lobuzova.com/self-art-study>

There's nothing like running down memory lane through the collection of old and new artworks to get you in the mood for the holiday season. It was a blessing in disguise that I documented my work from a young age all the way into adulthood. Some might call it hoarding, others might call it a collection. While the work that I documented only goes back to the age of 9, there is a great amount of work that proceeds it. Migrating from a different country with only two luggage bags required careful attention to what could be brought and what was left behind: baby photographs emerged as the winner while childhood artwork did not.

Looking back, there are visible patterns that can be seen in the artwork. The main categories that I discovered were early years drawings, notebook doodles, experimental drawings and paintings, self-portraits, and social critique and action art and design. The categories fell between the ages of nine and twenty-seven. The artwork does not follow any particular media or subject, and instead my artistic development contains consistent themes that may be visible through growth over time.

Drawings and Notebook Doodles

There is a memory that lingers in my head about my drawings from an early age. I am sitting behind a kitchen table and my grandmother is feeding me lunch. I remember being a picky child who did not enjoy mealtime. In order to finish my food, my grandma gave me some pencils and paper, and while I drew, she fed me. This is the earliest memory I have of creating drawings. The drawings were of very long-legged girls all lined side-by-side on one paper. The inspiration for the drawing escapes me, and with strong regret I do not have the drawing in my possession. The drawings were left behind in my birth country of Uzbekistan.

So, this brings me to my Figure 1. Newly settled in our new country, a language barrier existed. As I learned English at school and at home, much of my childhood consisted of VHS tapes of Disney cartoons. While I learned English, I also learned to draw characters from these movies. While I took art in elementary school, I do not remember drawing anything significant, but my free-time drawings still remain in my portfolio. As Efland (1976) wrote, “child art is spontaneous, unsupervised form of graphic expression usually done outside of school by children for their own satisfaction or in response to a need felt in an environment other than the school” (p. 37).

Strangely, my experiences are the definition of Efland’s statement.

Figure 1

Cartoon dwarf drawing by 9-year-old



Note: Lobuzova, Y. (2003). *Bashful Dwarf* [Graphite pencil].

In middle school, I did not take any art classes, and therefore my notebook and school agenda became my canvases. Figure 2 displays doodle drawings that happened during free time in my core classes. Of course, gel pens were an early 2000's girl's best friend. No longer did cartoon characters dwell on my mind, but very stylized and graphic imagery appeared on the pages from my subconscious mind. The doodles were created without any predetermined ideas, and instead were used as meditational stress relief and a passage of time.

Figure 2

Middle school notebook doodles



Note: Lobuzova, Y. (2007). *Middle school notebook* [Pen on paper].

Experimental Stage

High school is the time where one learns most about themselves, and for me that was no exception. I took art in all four years of high school, and every year there

was always something new to learn. In grade eleven, I joined the art magnet program, and the teacher was beyond incredible. In fact, I recently reconnected with my old teacher after seeing him on one of the Zoom sessions about AP Art courses at the end of the last school year.

In my Junior year of high school, I experimented with materials like there was no tomorrow. That was the year when I learned about unusual combinations of art and non-art mediums. Delacruz (2019) wrote “learner-centered teaching and learning is based on the belief that teachers don’t give or pass down knowledge to learners” but “rather students construct knowledge themselves.” My own experiences with the variety of materials taught me what works well, and what does not. What can be used together, and what will fall flat. Delacruz (2019) also stated that “advancement to higher levels was a function of the amount of time they invested in acquiring the knowledge and skills they needed within their particular pursuits.” There may be extremely talented artists who create without a second thought, but I strongly believe that art is like math. The more you create, experience, and practice the better you understand your material and themes in order to generate intelligent art.

My high school magnet art teacher did exactly what Marshall (2010) explained, he provided artistic freedom with parameters. Figure 3 was the first major experimental artwork created in school. The teacher played music, and the first material used was charcoal responding to the sounds we heard. Charcoal followed by black acrylic paint, then colored acrylic paint, and then colored pencil, and marker as the final step in order to create the musically inspired non-representation piece of art.

Figure 3

Mixed media non-representational acrylic painting



Note: Lobuzova, Y. (2011). *Mixed Brain Waves* [Charcoal, pencil, colored pencil, acrylic paint on paper].

Figure 4 was my first experience with texture where I discovered joint compound which I plastered all over wood, overpoured with a monochromatic scheme of acrylic paint. Creating texture was an open door to a world of texture possibilities.

Figure 4

Mixed media poured painting



Note: Lobuzova, Y. (2011). *New beginning* [Acrylic paint and joint compound on wood].

Figure 5 was an undergraduate experimental typography project where the texture and the word were created by physical coffee beans. Hamlin and Fusaro (2018) explained that “as they experiment with ideas, techniques, and media, artists address an unfolding series of choices and respond to challenges, roadblocks and surprises along the way” (p. 15). With each project, there was a new material or method learned which expanded my mind with possibilities.

Figure 5

Experimental typography using coffee beans



Note: Lobuzova, Y. (2015). *Alert* [Coffee beans].

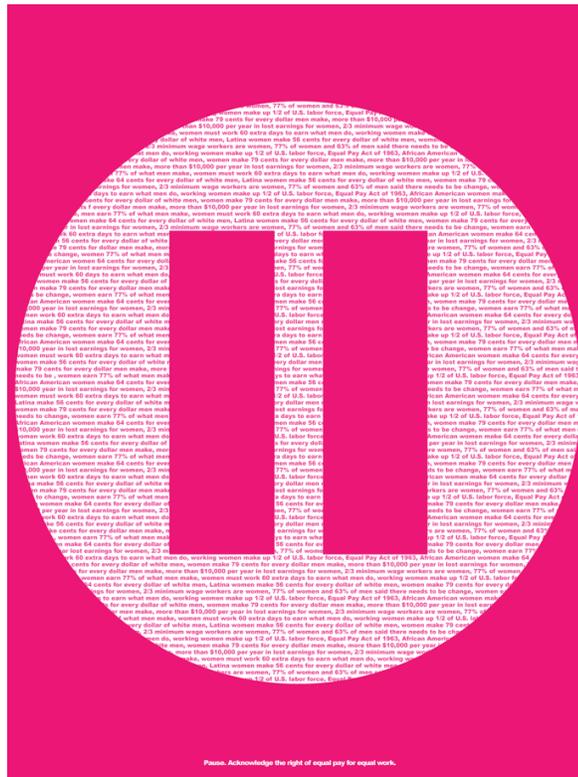
Social Critique and Action

In undergraduate and graduate level art courses, social critique and social action ideas were being taught and used to create artwork. Along with creating artwork about the world around me, my conceptual ideas also creatively grew. Folkert (2010) asserted that students should be able to “create more relationships with self-initiated art-work in art classes through choice of subject matter, materials, styles” (p. 281). In college and graduate school, there were several teachers who were memorable because their projects were unusual and forced me to think outside the box. Figure 7 is

my first attempt at creating a call-to-action poster in an undergraduate graphic design course: Acknowledging the right of equal pay for equal work for women. Figure 7 was a great challenge and opportunity to experience creating artwork that was for a greater cause.

Figure 7

Equal pay for women digital poster



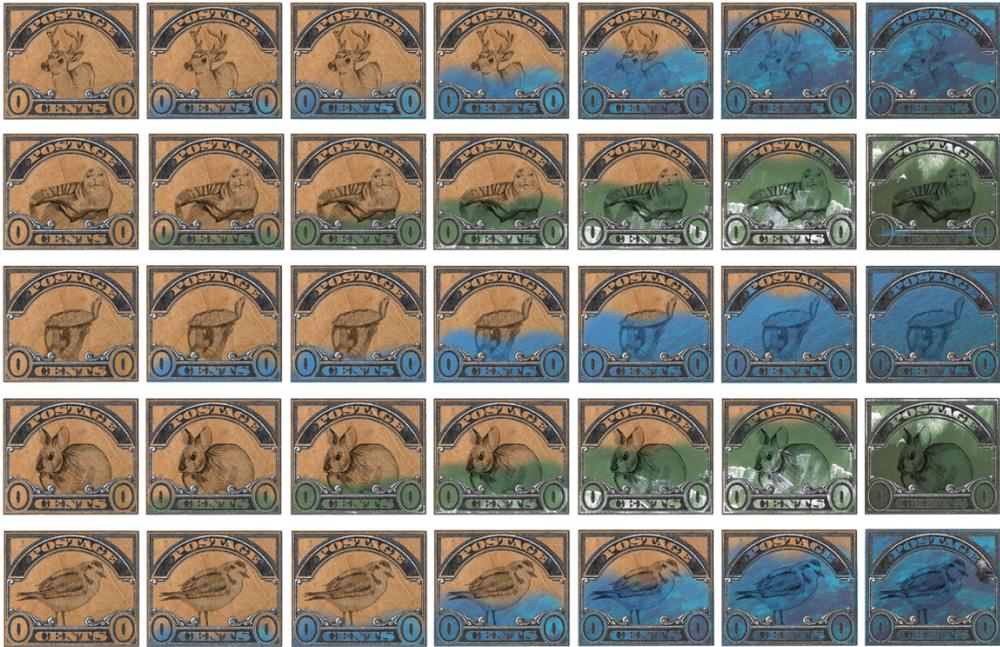
Note: Lobuzova, Y. (2015). *Pause* [Digital poster].

My collection of social critique and social action artwork has increased during my graduate school years. Undergraduate school expanded my mind into understanding and creating with social concepts, and these skills are now applied in creating new work. Hamlin and Fusaro (2018) wrote that “the work that artists do reflects their specific time and place in the world as they respond to the ideas, issues,

and opportunities around them (p. 12). As a contemporary artist myself, I have come across a few issues that required the attention of the public. Figure 8 represents a stamp collection created with physical materials such as dry leaves, drawings, and magazine cutouts. The stamps portray five animals that may go extinct if rising sea levels persist. From one stamp to the next, there is a rise in the water level until the animals are fully submerged.

Figure 8

Mixed media stamps about extinction of animals due to rising sea levels



Note: Lobuzova, Y. (2020). *Sea Level Stamps* [Mixed media].

Figure 9 is a digitally manipulated collage created in the Digital Imaging elective course. Most of the elements within the collage are from other photographs, and yet together the image creates a dynamic and emotional picture about the consequences of land and water pollution.

Figure 9

Digital manipulation image about land and water pollution

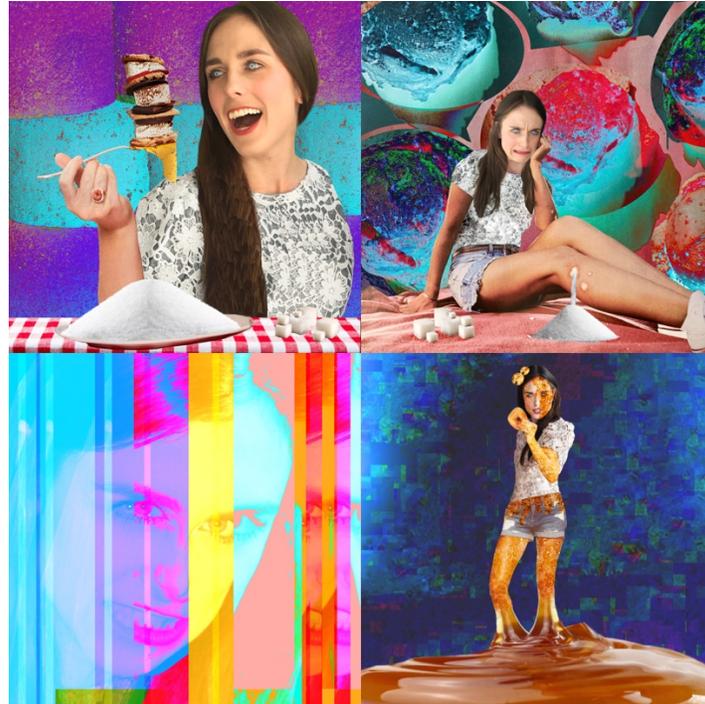


Note: Lobuzova, Y. (2020). *Trash Out There* [Digital manipulated collage].

Figure 11 is one of my favorite current works because of the energized color scheme. The images display a transformation of an individual into a cyborg in a sense where too much sugar consumption begins to take over the human body. Figure 11 displays my strong skill in digital image manipulation and creative concept design.

Figure 10

Digital manipulated images about the effects of sugar on the body



Note: Lobuzova, Y. (2020). *Sugar Cyborg* [Mixed media and digital manipulated collage].

Looking back at my entire collection of artworks, I had a hard time with seeing a dominant theme or a particular identity that drives my artwork. Japanese architect, Arata Isozaki, stated that he enjoys “to create different things, not the same thing” and that he creates “not in one single style by also always according to the situation” (Plane-site, 2017). While he might be talking about his architectural style, I embody his philosophy for my own artwork. I see my artwork as containing themes of social change, or portraits, or texture, but in the end all projects look different. I would say that my artwork has evolved and has experienced progression of skill and concept.

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