



A Sketch of history

Zhiyu Jiang

Critical Rationale

Theme and concept:

"A Sketch of History, 2024," a multimedia 450cm x 150cm large-scale collage tapestry explores concepts of history, art, and the ideologies surrounding them in an era of AI image creation. This project is a reflection on the credibility of images and the authenticity of human history. History is socially constructed by the winners of wars and written by the authors of history textbooks. With all the additions, distortions, and erasures, how much of the history we see now is real? Today, one can easily tell that an image could be entirely generated by technological tools like AI, and it might not be evidence of real history. I'm inspired by George Orwell's <1984>, particularly the manipulation of history by those in power, the artwork seeks to provoke introspection and critical thought about historical accounts' credibility. By juxtaposing AI-generated images with religious symbolism and mythological elements, the project aims to spark a dialogue about the narratives that shape our collective consciousness.

Mediums and Materials:

I used Mid journey V6 engine and added the style of the picture I want to generate, the historical time period, the events that occurred, and the people involved in the events to the prompt words. Then manually collage these images onto a huge linen cloth, a size of 450 cm × 150 cm. Believing history to be a constructed narrative, the process of collaging these images onto a giant linen cloth is also a process of construction. I cut all the individually shaped collages into the desired shapes and fuse them. and affixed all the trimmed fabric to the giant linen cloth, embellishing the spiral part with glitter to make it shimmer. I chose a golden colour because gold has always been considered precious and valuable throughout history. The choice of a churchyard as the setting for displaying the artwork was deliberate, as it symbolises a space for contemplation of life, death, and faith. Placing the tapestry within this sacred environment challenges viewers to reconsider historical authenticity and image credibility within the context of religion and human cognition.

Contextual Exploration:

Extensive historical research informed the content of the artwork, drawing attention to the symbolic significance of creatures like snakes and giants across various religions and mythologies. These elements were incorporated into the composition to provoke contemplation on the manipulation of history by those in power, as exemplified by the History Tampering Department in George Orwell's "1984."

The sections in "1984" concerning historical manipulation, total control, and image credibility have provided specific assistance for the project. For instance, the depiction of the History Tampering Department in the book has sparked my contemplation on the authenticity of history, prompting me to question its veracity. Additionally, the portrayal of widespread image manipulation by the authorities in the Big Brother society has prompted my consideration of image credibility and power dynamics, leading me to incorporate this theme into my project.

Although our current archaeological techniques may not provide absolute certainty about events before two thousand years ago, we often encounter descriptions of creatures like snakes, dragons, or beings covered in scales at the beginnings of various religions. In Abrahamic religions (such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism), the snake is typically viewed as a symbol of evil, having tempted Adam to eat the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, thus initiating humanity's fall. When I visited the British Museum, I noticed reliefs from Sumerian and ancient Egyptian civilisations frequently depicting snakes or creatures with scales, indicating early human awareness of such beings. Therefore, in the initial part of my artwork, I included murals of snakes.

At the top of the artwork, there are numerous Catholic religious elements reflecting the medieval period, as it was a lengthy era. Therefore, in the upper right part of my composition, I added many Catholic elements. As the decline of the Middle Ages approached, the Black Death swept across Europe. Therefore, in the subsequent part of my collage, I included scenes from the time of the Black Death, such as plague doctors.

The lower part of my artwork is predominantly black and white, depicting the ruins of war. I aimed to reflect scenes from World War I to World War II, where many people lost much, and countless bodies, blood, and flesh remind us of the importance of peace. Here, I used black and white to emphasise the bleak and colourless nature of life during wartime and to correspond to the era's use of black and white film.

On the outer spiral, I imagined the future of humanity based on our current understanding, incorporating elements like aliens, unidentified flying objects, and humanity's imagination of the virtual world. In the final part of the spiral, I referenced scenes prophesied in the Book of Revelation. Over seven years, numerous wars, plagues, famines, and other events are depicted. The Bible also mentions a seven-headed red dragon, which I placed in the lower right corner of the artwork. The piece concludes with a peaceful depiction of the New Jerusalem city, corresponding to the Bible's description of humanity's end.

Final aims:

"A Sketch of History, 2024" is a result of a deep-seated curiosity about history and the desire to challenge the way we perceive and understand it. In a world where images can be easily manipulated and the authenticity of historical narratives is often called into question, this project serves as a powerful reminder of the constructed nature of our understanding of the past.

Ultimately, "A Sketch of History, 2024" serves as a bold assertion of the artist's belief in the importance of critical inquiry and intellectual curiosity. By challenging the audience to confront the blurred lines between reality and fiction, the project encourages us to reexamine the narratives that define our existence. I also encourages people to consider alternative histories waiting to be uncovered.



Piece 1



Medium: Fabric Collage
Size: 450 x 150 cm
Time: Apr 2024
Location: London, UK
Photo Size: 4688 x 3128 pxl

Piece 2



Medium: Fabric Collage
Size: 450 x 150 cm
Time: Apr 2024
Location: London, UK
Photo Size: 4688 x 3128 pxl

Piece 3



Medium: Fabric Collage
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Piece 4



Medium: Fabric Collage
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Piece 5

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Piece 6



Medium: Fabric Collage
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Piece 8



Medium: Fabric Collage
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Piece 9



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Piece 10



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Piece 11



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Piece 12



Medium: Fabric Collage
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Details



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Details



Medium: Fabric Collage
Size: 450 x 150 cm
Time: Apr 2024
Location: London, UK
Photo Size: 4160 x 6240 pxl

Exhibition



Medium: Fabric Collage
Size: 450 x 150 cm
Time: Apr 2024
Location: London, UK
Photo Size: 8368 x 5584 pxl

Exhibition

Medium: Fabric Collage
Size: 450 x 150 cm
Time: Apr 2024
Location: St Dunstan in the East,
London, UK
Photo Size: 4160 x 6240 pxl



Exhibition



Medium: Fabric Collage

Size: 450 x 150 cm

Time: Apr 2024

Location: St Dunstan in the East, London, UK

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