

A Formal Inquiry on Life, Self, and the Abstract

Printmaking does not exist in a vacuum, and it is an insult to the history of printmaking to say that it does—the origins, history, and foundations of everything needs to be taken into consideration. Painting, drawing, and fine art have held the hands of printmaking since its conception. Without looking to past masters, printmakers and painters alike, it becomes increasingly difficult to create art with the expressiveness and stability that I look to create. At the same time, I want to give homage to the foundation of this academic facility. Early and current Montserrat history illustrates a lineage to the great Hans Hofmann, an incredibly influential artist and academic in abstract expressionism. Hans Hofmann taught many people, including Paul M Scott, for which the library is named after, and Oliver Balf, one of the founding faculty members. Founder Joseph Jeswald, studied with Fernand Léger, another incredibly influential artist. This lineage is incredibly important to our school, as we progress through contemporary artistic developments, it's essential not to forgo the knowledge that made these people so great.

My interests lay in the world around us, and the interplay between three main ideas that encapsulate it: Self, Life, and the Abstract. These concepts are interwoven at their core, through academics at its base, but also through the experience of human life. How artists interact with and interpret the two-dimensional picture plane is inherently built upon abstract concepts, even with representational work. In the same breath, abstract work builds upon the everyday world and comes from literal representation. The idea of perfectly representing what someone sees through their art is interesting, but what's more interesting is not having the obligation to express to the viewer exactly what was seen. This can take the form of pure shape, color, and line in abstract work.

This exploration will be done through still lifes, portraiture, and abstract pieces, mixing them together when appropriate. I will explore this through monotype, collage, painting, drawing, pastel, and an assortment of printmaking forms.

Consideration of formal attributes isn't the only thing driving this project. Through the process of depicting these real-life subjects, the artist becomes connected to what they are studying. It becomes a very personal, and a somewhat private engagement. Empathy with the subject matter, whether it's a still life, figure, self-portrait, or the synthesis of life within an abstract piece, it still remains the primary objective. Being empathetic to what is being depicted is single-handedly the most important thing in my recent work. In staying true to the subject through purely representational art, or in letting something stand in place of the form, through collage, or shape and color, empathy drives true creative expression. Hans Hofmann referred to it as the ability of the artist "to feel the intrinsic qualities of the medium of expression. Through these qualities the medium comes to life and varies plastically as an idea develops."¹

The main objective is converting everyday objects and concepts into a flat piece of art, and that is the process that is at the core of this project: When can something stop being itself, and start being represented with shape and color in its purest form?

¹ Hans Hofmann, *Search for the Real* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1948), 46.