



Pearson

GCE A Level Art and Design

**Fine Art
Component 1**

VICKY

Total Mark 51 (40 + 11 PS)

	AO1 Develop	AO2 Explore and Select	AO3 Record	AO4 Realise	Personal Study
Mark	10	10	11	9	11
Performance Level	4	4	4	3	4
	Total out of 90				51

Examiner Commentary

Vicky's investigations into Decomposition show visual curiosity and emerging individuality. Her experimentation is purposeful, showing an effective use of drawing and photography to observe the colours, textures and shapes of decaying fruit with some sensitivity. For instance, her photographs of decay taken through a microscope have real aesthetic potential, and her 'life and death pillows' are imaginative and playful. However, she is less confident in knowing how to develop this research into final outcomes, which tend to play safe and fall back on more predictable strategies. Her contextual research into Jules Olitski, Crystal Bennett and others is diverse and inspire some creativity, without her outcomes showing the more realised and sensitive qualities to reach Performance Level 5. Overall, the practical element achieves low Performance Level 4.

The Personal Study is an effective survey of some of the themes of Vanitas, without managing to come to a particularly informed or original conclusion. One artist is considered after another in a rather ponderous and descriptive way without leading to further insight, indicating a mid- Performance Level 4 achievement.

development techniques

- collage
- textures
- photo collection
- printing
- colour theory
- biomorphic
- abstract oil paint
- sculptures

Biology influence

- mould
- waste
- cells
- recycle
- growth
- death
- rot
- decay

ideas

- wrinkles
- inside bins
- creating paper from waste
- mould experiment
- raising mould onto people
- melting photos
- making mess
- abstraction

decomposition



Threshold Concepts:

- Artists play with ideas, materials and failure.
- Art is not fixed in meaning, context is everything.
- Art has value in unequal measures

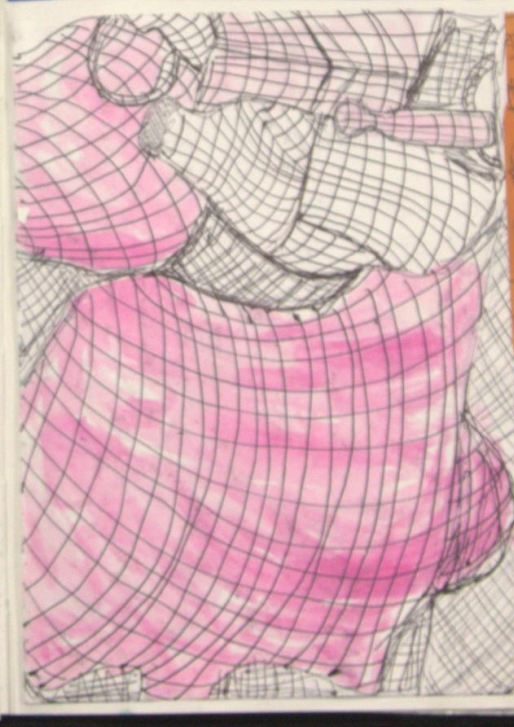
TV influence

- zombies
- death
- morgues
- rot
- destruction

Artists influence

- Dan Lams
- Agnes Tobis
- Steven Heller
- Colin Chilling
- Kasia Lajborek
- Graham Dean
- Mow Shwaz
- Courtney Mattison
- Dylan Gebbia-Richards
- Susan Hatcheris
- Karin Kurihson





Using a variety of different techniques to experiment with a large variety of outcomes. Using negative space, colour blocks, wet, barrier, layering and line to my advantage.





Creating a detailed drawing using a refined colour palette.



I used a small collection of colour green pencils, a medium I rarely use, to create this work. I am pleased with the outcome of this piece as it represents decay in a unique and vibrant way showing anything can be art. If I was to do this again I would add white highlights.

colour palette.



Mandy Barker



I am drawn to Mandy's work due to the chaos it carries. Looking at it at first you wouldn't notice how all the objects are rubbish. This links to my theme by making something completely new out of something that is old and useless. Being inspired by her work I have created a piece of art out of garbage.

Mandy Barker is a photographer who creates murals made of trash to photograph. She calls this series SOUP referring to the plastic waste in the ocean. All the plastic in the photographs were salvaged from the beach creating conceptual and educational art.



Mandy has work alongside scientists in hopes of packaging the issue of mass produce plastic. She is a modern artist and was born in 2002 meaning she is only 20 years old.

	per 100g	per 200g	per 100g	per 200g
Energy	1480	2960	1480	2960
Protein	10.0	20.0	10.0	20.0
Total Fat	10.0	20.0	10.0	20.0
Saturated Fat	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Carbohydrate	75.0	150.0	75.0	150.0
Sugars	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Fiber	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Sodium	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0





Rachel Ruysch



Ruysch was a Dutch painter born in 1665. She is best known for her still-life paintings of flowers that have begun to die. Two main themes she explores in her work are flowers decay and realism. Capturing and immortalising what was at the time, a luxury good. Ruysch was one of the most influential still life painter in history and has become the best documented woman painter of the dutch golden age.



Influences Rachel would have used in her work include: social and historical. Socially for that time period flowers were extremely expensive. Capturing them allows there beauty to be shared.

"all living things must die."
A quote from Ruysch.

In some way a connection to religion can be highlighted through her work creating a deeper meaning. Her work depicts that beauty fades and eventually we all pass away.

To me Ruysch work is a very gloomy outlook on life. A reminder that not everything's last forever. Her work whrs to my personal study as it incaptures the theme of decomposition depicting how the natural world decays.



I recreated Ruysch's still life style by capturing photographs of dead flowers. I began by drawing a bunch of flowers in a dark room by day no way to ensure they die. Then photographed a series of photos to record a visual image of what decomposition in nature looks like and planning to continue this idea.

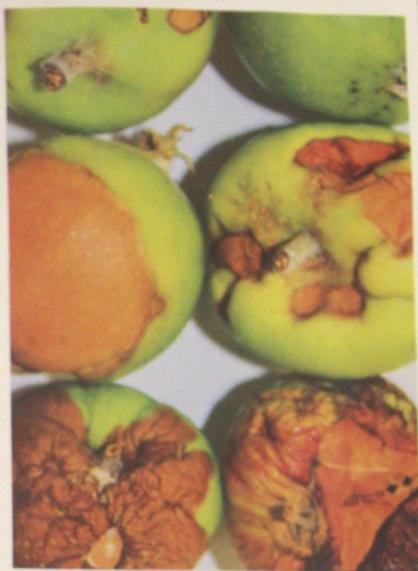
OBSERVATION SKETCHES

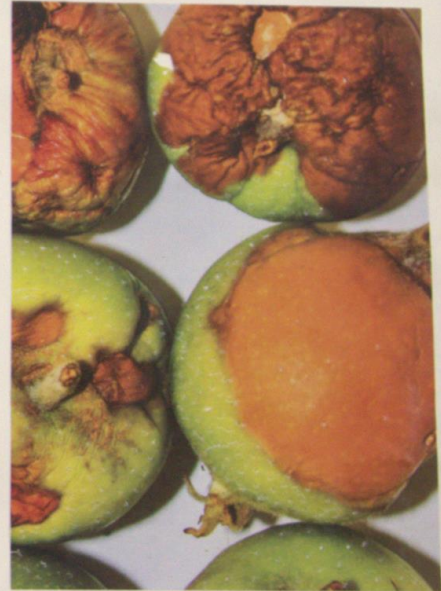
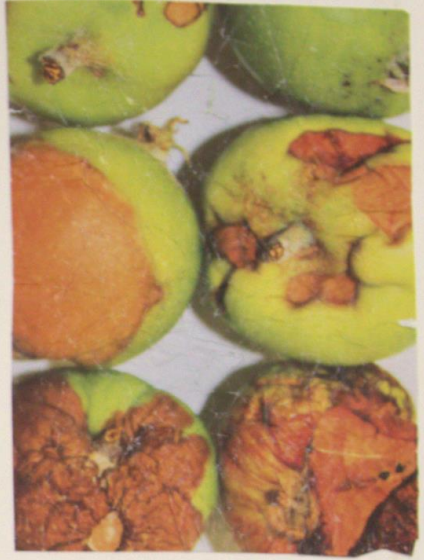
Creating quick sketches of Ruysch response photos using acrylic paints. I enjoy the flow of the paintings allowing the plants to really come back to life. The impact of drawing dead flowers shows the inevitability of death, and how all living things must eventually die to be able to live. Highlighting a link to the human life cycle.



To add to this, the effect of painting dead objects captures and extends life by turning it into ART. Directly answering the personal study question 'How is decomposition explored in the world of art?' I could use this technique throughout my personal study but more specifically in a large outcome. To improve this I would use a more complex background to add more depth to the paintings. I would also like to use a subject that links more directly to my theme 'decomposition' such as rotting fruit.









I used a variety of mediums to experiment with which medium was most successful. Using a mixture of bleach, ink and bio created an abstract effect but lost alot of the exciting detail of the rotten apple.

I also used water colour which I believe to be most successful. Creating an exciting result without losing too much detail.

Using colouring pencil allowed me to use the most 'realistic' outcome but looked rather dull.



As a 'bigger' outcome I drew the original photographs as a sketch and in oil pastel.

From this I plan to create a larger outcome using my physical manipulation photos and water colours. I am hoping to continue this idea of exploring how decomposition and nature interact with each other.

From this idea I would like to improve this by photographing another series of mouldy fruit and looking into how an artist have used this in the past.



Susan Hutchkins constructs abstract forms fragments to highlight the beauty found in the inherent process of ageing and decay. The core theme of her work is colour, texture and surface, strongly influenced by Japanese aesthetic of wabi-sabi.

Susan Hutchkins

Her interest is in the relationship between the natural world and the man-made. For example the use of erosion and human use, looking into an idea of how decomposition occurs overtime.

Hutchkins studied at Manchester University where she earned a BA in Embroidery and a Master degree in textiles. She then lectured at a college in Manchester teaching adults and pre-degree students art and textiles. Susan left teaching in 2007 and has pursued art full-time.



She has a strong interest experimenting with materials and uses a very diverse variety of media, including photography, print and stitch. She works intuitively with print and stitch, marks, textures and colours are exaggerated to reveal the detail and complexity within the images. Traditionally materials are deconstructed, ripped and burnt, and time is invested into their reconstruction, pieces can take a year to several months from aesthetically pleasing the work.

to create. Whilst being a metaphor for deterioration and ruin associated with urban decay and ultimately death and loss. They evolve organically, built up with layers; into 3-dimensional abstract forms that hover between object and image to create a unique, visual and tactile landscape of form and texture. Challenging traditional understandings of division between visible and unseen.

Hutchkins once said "Beauty found in inheritance process of decay." The specific quote spoke to me as it perfectly describes the process behind my personal study them. Aiming to find beauty and peace in grotesque areas of life.



Using hand embroidery to create an illusion of mold & rot. A variety of stitches and coloured threads sewn together replicating the shapes of rot from the apples I photographed.

Taking inspiration from Hutchkins I wanted to represent the beauty that comes the decomposition process. As well as it into highlighting the usual grotesque areas of life and making it into something people can admire. Finally, I wanted to preserve a moment in time. 'Decomposition' reflects a cycle of near death. By sewing this mold I have frozen a moment in a swift process.

To develop this work further I would use this approach to use mix medium in a larger outcome. For example creating a painting on a canvas and embroider certain parts into it. To improve this technique I would like to try embroidering on a machine to help with time management, especially when doing a big piece. The most successful part of this piece is the small stitches use to show small details of decay spreading.



RA 22

royal academy of arts 2022

SUMMER EXHIBITION

Visiting the Royal Academy of Arts 2022 Summer Exhibition to review the work following key themes: flowers, climate and more

-Amyshelton herald of spring
This work develops an understanding in how natural resources can be used when creating art. The piece was created by flower pressing a variety of plants, placing them onto a light box. Revealing the skeleton of once was a flower. This highlights the inter-relationship between life & death and that to have one you must have the other. An idea that links well with my personal study of decomposition. That focuses on how the death processes happens as well as perceiving that moment forever with art, very much like Amyshelton's work.



The RA Exhibition has been running since 1769 without interruption and showcases art in all forms, celebrating emerging talent.



-El Anatsui
While walking around I came across El Anatsui's work. El Anatsui is a Ghanaian sculptor who uses thousands of folded aluminium bottle caps sourced from local recycling stations as a material to create this effect. I admire how this work has a exciting texture to it. It's not flat, and the uniqueness of the shape & material allows El Anatsui's work to stand out. The way the piece hangs despite being a sculptural piece excites me, creating a future inspiration to include this way of work in future pieces. Abandoning traditional art rules of a rectangular piece. One thing I dislike about this work is the absence of colour compared to other El Anatsui pieces.



-dame phyllida barlow
Each room in the exhibition revealed a variety of sculptors in different scales. Seeing this variety revealed one question: of how decomposition can be presented using sculptures.
• how scale can impact meaning
• does sculptural modern work abandon a traditional idea of art or embrace tradition of work created by ancient cultures?
• is a sculpture more impactful than a painting?
• how does a sculpture create a different feeling than other art forms.



-ben edge man made nature

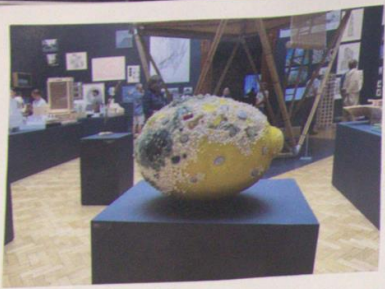


-Joel Myro 4A Short Stories II

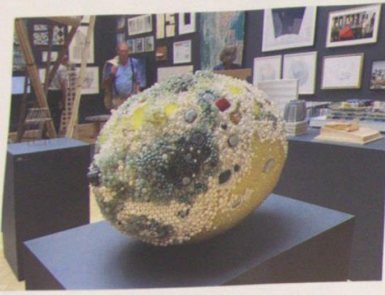
I was most impressed by the amount of different mediums this exhibition contained. Seeing a variety of art forms from: photography, printing, sculpture, light, sewing and architectural work. The bright yellow walls surrounding the work created an intense and exciting environment to witness such a variety of pieces. Making me realise how the environment your work is being viewed in, can impact how your work is viewed.



The work portrayed in this exhibition was very relevant to society today. Confronting how we impact our climate, how we interact with seasons, how life and death can be seen in society and expectations that are pushed onto us.



After seeing Kathleen Ryan's Bad Lemon exhibition in the RA summer exhibition I was amazed by her work and felt the need to further investigate. Kathleen Ryan is a New York based sculptor who focuses on the gross and undesirable aspects of life and focuses on creating something beautiful out of that. For example her series known as 'bad fruit'.



BAD LEMON KATHLEEN RYAN.

Kathleen uses an oversized scale to create 'bigger than life' sized sculptures. She creates the art by using semi-precious stones. The areas that are rotting are created with malachite, pool and smoky quartz (which are all usually unnatural stones) in comparison to the fresh parts of the fruit which are made from more valuable and natural stones.



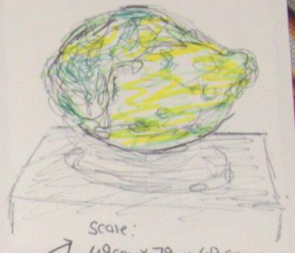
This indicates a story within Ryan's work. Projecting how she feels about today's society and how it can be viewed as 'excessive' and 'over the top'. The rotten parts of her work are the most intriguing. Provoking an idea of beauty found with repulsion. As Ryan, told the New York time: "Though the mold is decay, it's the most alive part."



The quote defines how we should all embrace parts of us that have faults, and that we should seek comfort in knowing that its our faults that make us beautiful.

The inspiration of the painting was used to highlight in society we should celebrate even the rotten parts of ourselves instead of consuming a cycle of self hatred.

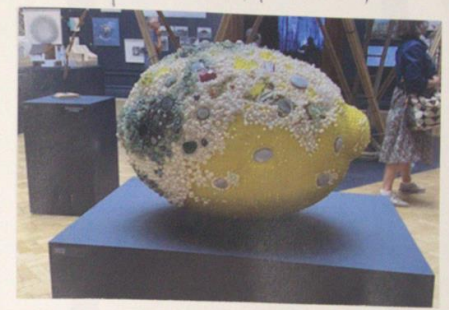
lemons used to be used to represent humans in still life



Scale:
49cm x 79 x 49cm
(larger than life)
19.5" H, 28"L, x 19.5"W

inspired:
old dutch still life paintings used rotting fruit as subjects. Balancing two extreme emotions: beauty & repulsion.

Still life



- colour
- green
 - grey
 - pool white
 - pink
 - yellow
 - brown
 - red

texture
a variety of sized/shaped gemstones and beads.

meaning
highlighting how life is apart of death and how death is apart of life.

installation
This individual work was installed onto a platform to be viewed from all angles whereas others have been on the floor due to size.

process
Ryan use polystyrene as a base then paints where the rot will be before pinning the gem stones to the piece.

I could use this idea to create my own installation, exploring decomposition.

MOLD EXPERIMENT

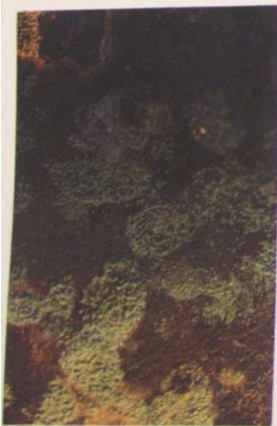
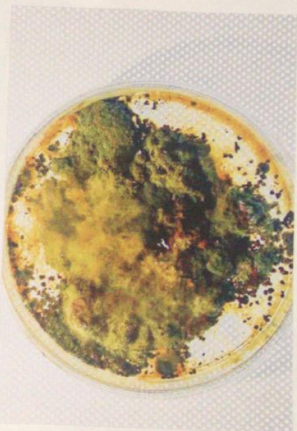
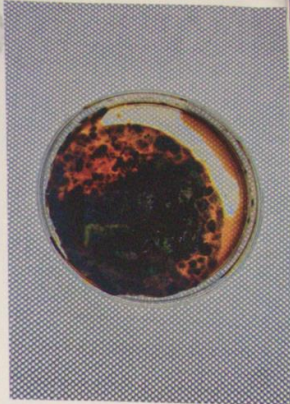
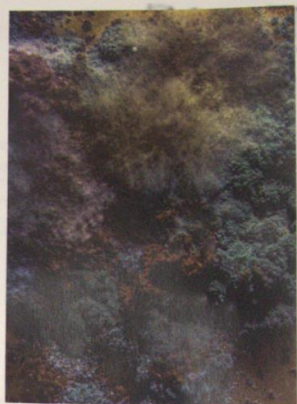
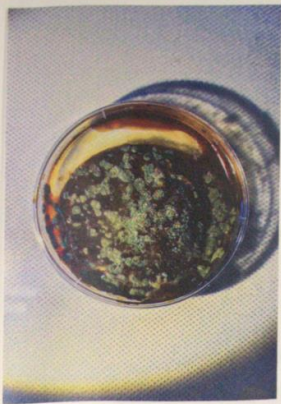


Creating mold in petri dishes using: coffee, tea, bread and cheese, to document the beautiful that can be discovered during decomposition.

Using a camera to visualise and capture a moment in the decomposition process. As well as using a variety of camera angles to create more abstract images.

I am pleased with how the photographs have complimented each other to create an incorporative piece but plan to focus on each photo individually and not as a collective series.

My plans to develop this idea is to take inspiration from Kathleen Ryan and turn this into a 3D piece.



MOLD SCIENCE: INVESTIGATING HOW MOLD DEVELOPS.



I first began by contacting the science technicians at school to make a plan on how I was successfully going to grow mold. After conducting a plan and time to do this I researched different food groups and how they would look after rotting. I decided on molding:

- Bread
- Cheese
- Rhubarb
- Tea
- Coffee

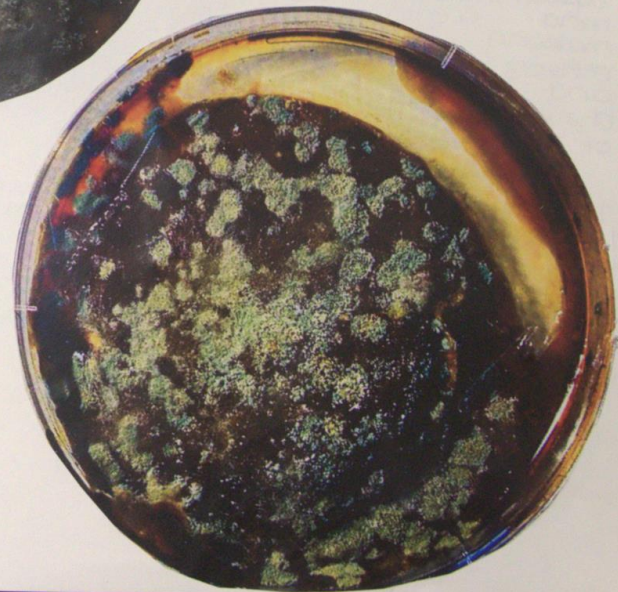
After a long journey I resulted in 3 fully successful mold infested petri dishes. (Bread, Tea, Coffee.)



First step when creating the actual mold was to microwave Agar until it became fully clear. Then, I prepared five sterilised petri dishes before pouring the agar that was now liquified into them. After, I left them to cool until the agar turned into a jelly-like substance. I then introduced each substance to a petri dish and clearly labelled them individually. After I left them in a warm, and dark place and left them to grow and develop undisturbed for seven days. Once I felt they had reached a satisfying point I photographed them before disposing of them correctly.



In my investigation I found that tea and coffee had the most successful outcomes and will create the most exciting composition. Bread had the most unexpected outcome as it became pink and foamy. As a result of this it became unclear to see through the petri dish. The cheese had no visible reaction but became sweaty and the rhubarb had no visible reaction at all.



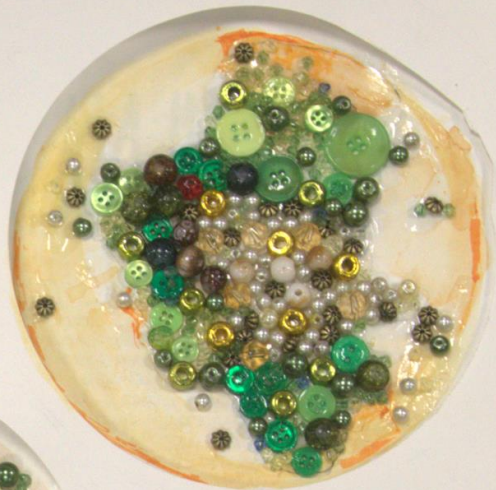
BEADING PROCESS:

Creating a unique outcome using beading, inspired by a mold I grew. I wanted to create an unsettling mold. Visualising a balance between beauty and disgust.

I was heavily inspired by Kathleen Ryans work around rotting fruit, creating large sculptures out of gems and crystals, gave me the inspiration for using an eray or beading. I began by collecting a large eray of green, brown, yellow and cream beads. After I painted the basic shape of the petri dish to allow any negative space to be seen as apart of the piece. After I began using PVA glue to place each bead into place. Once dried I allow any beads that were not stuck into place to fall of the page and created another layer of PVA before re-sticking the beads to the page. After I stuck down any beads that wouldn't stick with the PVA glue with a glue gun.

I am pleased with the outcome of this experimentation as I feel it visulises the mold created in the petri dishes while still making it fun and beautiful. The work reflects how death/decay is inevitable in life, and how that can be viewed as terrifying thought, but also that is the beautiful part of life.

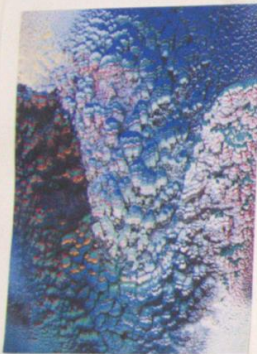
To improve this piece I would look into how this can be incorporated into a large outcome. Especially being paired with other textile mediums like thread. I feel like this will enhance the 'beauty' aspect of my work that I have been looking into throughout this project.





DYLAN GEBBIA RICHARDS:

Richards striking use of colour, texture and unpredictable surfaces makes for a style which is now very unique to his work. Through years of experimentation he gains a deep understanding of his materials building up layers of wax that he has melted and other pigments. In a way, Richards exploits these materials in a way that brings out their most unusual and natural qualities. Through these techniques, his work resembles parts of the natural world. Richards work encourages the viewer to move around the piece, exploring it from every angle to appreciate its ever-changing surface. His use of texture and vivid colours inspire awe and his large scale installations play with environment it's in, submerging the viewer into a nature-like space.

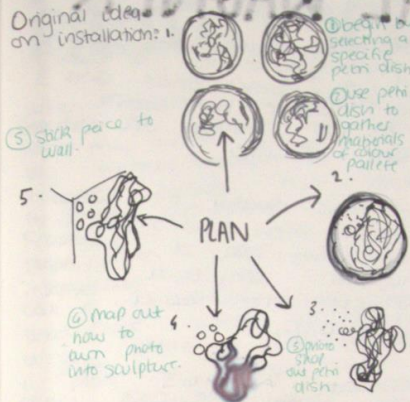


The spontaneous feel of Richard work shows an interactions between different colours and shapes that drives his work forward. Through the illusion, Richards attempts to capture qualities found in landscapes. While his work varies in size, all are built to create a feeling of engulfment for the viewer. "Sometimes this is very literal like in my room-sized installations which encompass those inside." - Richards. Even with Richards smaller works, he manages to create a feeling that the piece is far larger than it is; this is seen through how he challenges the confines of a canvas, breaking out from its traditional boundaries.



INSTALLATION PLAN

Original idea on installation:

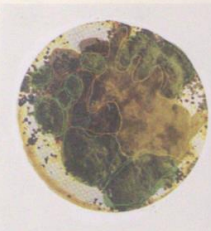
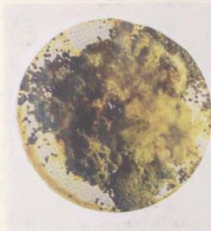


In my installation I would like to visualise the beauty found in repulsion. I am aware how rot and mold can be seen as grotesque and disturbing to some but through my work I would like to create something exciting and challenging to that stereotypical thinking. Taking inspiration from Susan Hotchkins, Kahlleen Ryan and Dylan Gebbia Richards, I plan to create a large textile outcome piece of mold in a petri dish. Then display it on a wall, similarly to El anatsui work at the RA summer exhibition.

My idea is to pillow-like segments of each individual mapped out part. For example yellow will be one large 'pillow', whereas green will be 8 separate 'pillows' and brown 4. To create this effect I plan on using fabric, and then sewing and stuffing them before sewing them together again to create one final fully intact piece.

As seen in the original image, each segment has a different texture, this is where I plan to use my past work with beading and embroidery to my advantage to create the final piece. For example the brown segment is almost hairy so I will adapt my piece to resemble that.

I feel like there is/will be a heavy reliance on the scale of the piece to make, this successful. When making prototypes I will have to experiment with how I can hold up my work and what will support it enough.



CRYSTAL WAGNER



Wagner is a contemporary artist who creates sculptures out of paper. Wagner has a clear interest in combining 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional forms. To create her work large sites have to be planned in advance each piece is site specific.

Her installations are usually so large that they transform an environment into a piece of artwork. The use of paper creates an unusual structural shape allowing the structure to bend and fold in multiple ways.



When looking at Wagner's work it's important to highlight the organic feel the installation has due to it being built for a specific space. I hope to take this idea and incorporate it when creating my own installation. In her pieces we can see a lot of greens being used having a sense and connection to the natural world while incorporating exciting pop of colour.

Wagner shows a display of modern work representing an invasion of modern society. The atmospheric art relies of its use of abstract to impress the audience. It is up to its viewers to create a narrative for the work.



I would like to include this idea of abstraction in my own work, especially as I'm recreating mold its not a distinct organism and is already quite abstract in itself.

INSTALLATION PROTOTYPE:



Creating a physical outcome out of my installation plan.

When creating my prototype I made the decision to hand sketch my work, this was a big mistake leading to an extended process that took a large amount of time. From this I have learnt that when creating my installation it is crucial to use a machine. Aside from that there were no problems when creating the prototype. I plan to follow the same structure but increase the size. The process I will follow is: draw shapes onto fabric (x2), cut shapes, machine sew, and stuff.



Seeing how my prototype would look in different locations ↓

Using photoshop, I edited the prototypes into different environments to see which would be the best to present my installation.

Location ① → transforms how the environment look as well as exposing mold to a part of our living society.

Location ② → will be exposed to more people but feels to 'predictable.'

Location ③ → transforms environment and exposes to lots of people, but will be too challenging to hang up.



When creating my installation I plan to embroider, add beads and fabric to add more detail and depth to the sculpture. I want my sculpture to confront how life and death interact and how they can link to decomposition.

INSTALLATION:

The idea behind my installation is incorporating life and death as well as visualising a balance between beauty and repulsion.



Using fabric, I machine sewed each segment of the installation and then stuffed it to create a pillow-like sculpture. The effect of this visualises the link between life and death. As well as showing life amongst death.

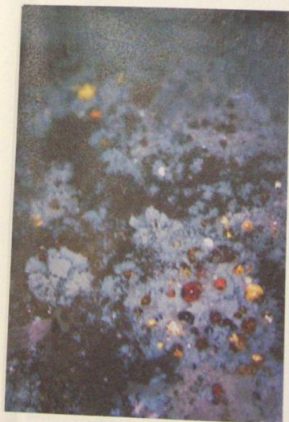
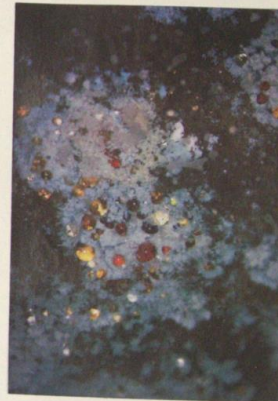
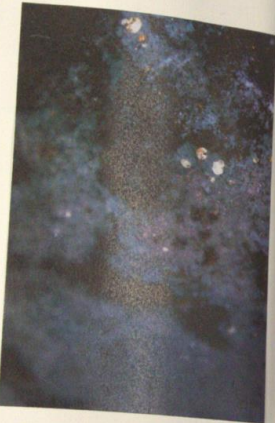


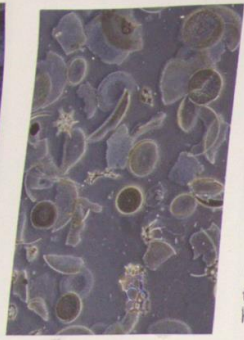
MICROSCOPIC CAMREA

Using a microscope lens to photograph petri dishes filled with mold. Exposing parts of my mold that our naked eye can't see.

When looking closer I could see small round bead-like balls of fire colours. Having this new element to the mold opens a question of what is beneath the surface?

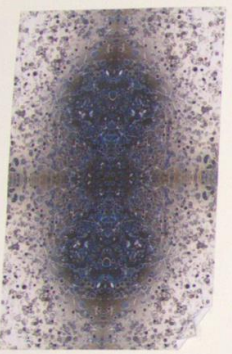
To develop this idea further I want to experiment when creating a response and plan to use as a background.





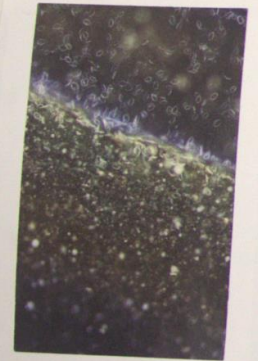
JULIA BENNETT

Bennett splits her time between marine biology and photography. Her work consisting of microscopic photographs of plankton. Julia speaks about how she believes combining art and science can create more excitement around scientific subjects. Bennett wants her work to spark conversation whether that be creative or scientific, its highlighting a sense of deeper meaning.



When looking at Bennetts work a sense of amazement overcomes the audience. The complexity of the photos creates shock sensation on first viewing as something so complicated has come from something as simple as plankton. Reflecting the complexity of life in organic substances.

In comparison to Bennetts work, my microscope images visualise a similar quality. Highlighting how complex life can be even in death. Mold being the process of decomposition, its ironic how similar it can look when close up to a living organism.

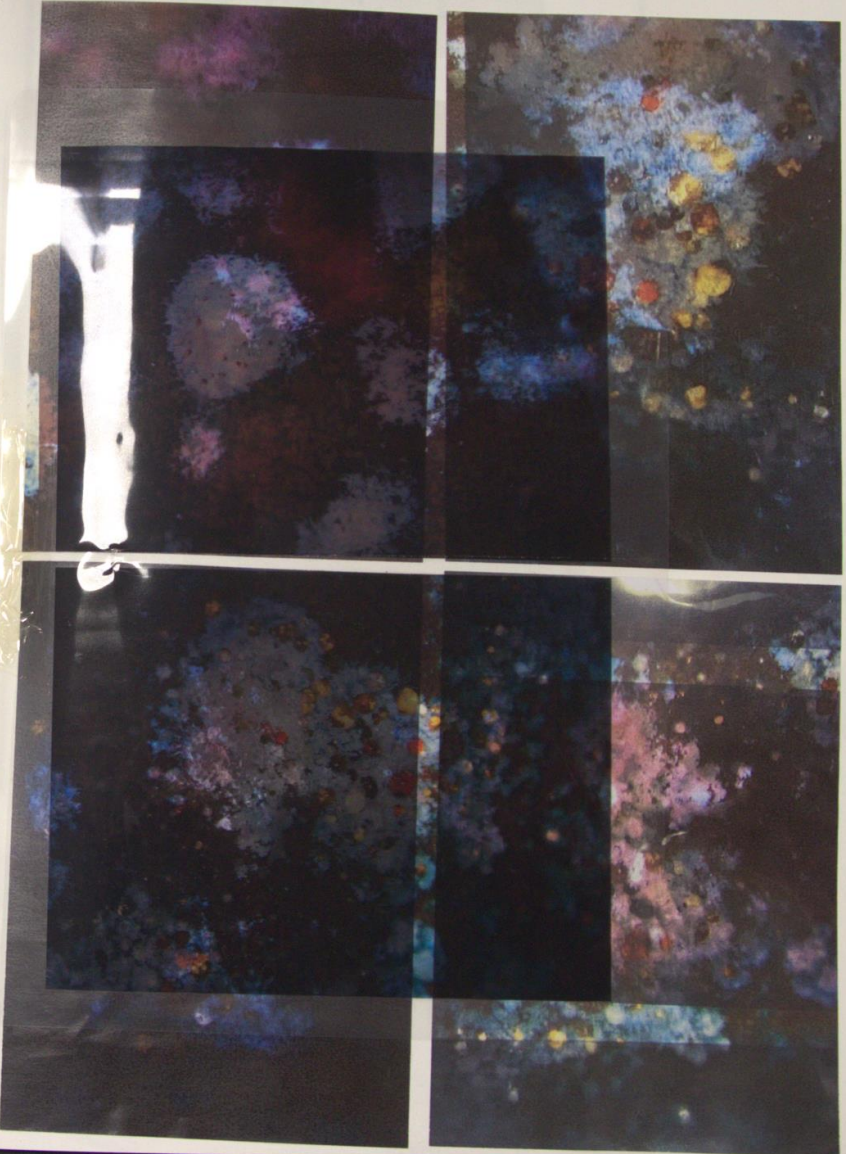


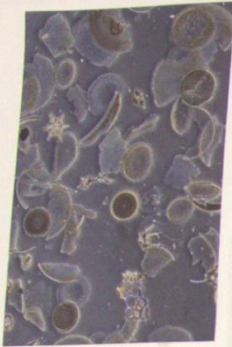
When looking at Bennetts work it is unreconisable. The abstract nature of it sparks interest creating questions such as: what is this?; what material is it, is it natural, is there any patterns?

This idea of abstraction creates an exciting starting point when experimenting with developing the idea of microscope images.

LAYERING

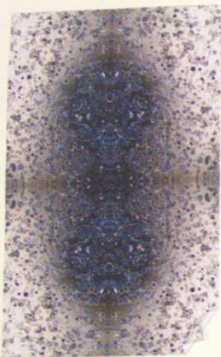
Using transparency paper to layer microscope mold photos, creating an even more abstract image to work from. This idea was developed from layering transparencys when physically editing my rotten apple photographs. I plan to crop and experiment with these photographs further using them as potential backgrounds in the future.





JULIA BENNETT

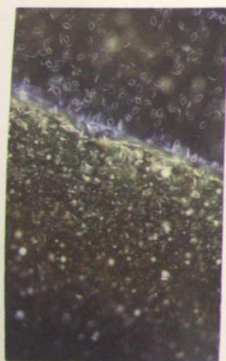
Bennett splits her time between marine biology and photography. Her work consists of microscopic photographs of plankton. Julia speaks about how she believes combining art and science can create more excitement around scientific subjects. Bennett wants her work to spark conversation whether that is creative or scientific its high



When you see a sense of awe and create a visual has simple as a complex subject

In a moment a death and it a

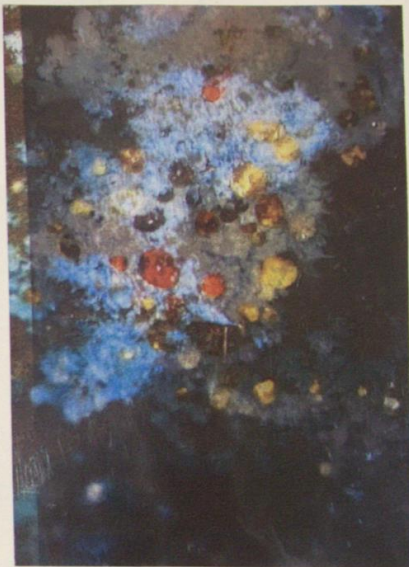
When it's not a creation with it's potential



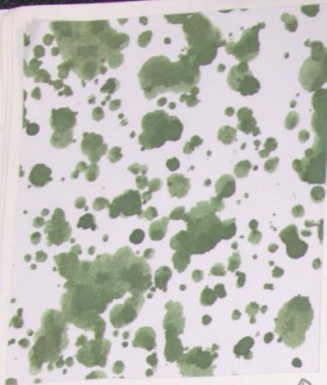
The a e b

LAYERING

Using transparency paper to layer microscope mold photos, creating an even more abstract image to work from. This idea was developed from layering transparencys when rotten apple photographs. I plan to crop and experiment with these photographs further using them as potential backgrounds in the future.



EXPERIMENTAL DRAWING



Experimenting with different drawing techniques to expand and challenge my painting routines.

I began by using green ink on a small brush and letting it drip onto the paper creating this effect.



I also used mustard acrylic paint dipped into a rubber band to create circular patterns across the page.

After I combined both methods to create a new outcome combining both techniques.

I then replicated the same technique onto A3 paper. Starting with the drip technique on lightly stained paper, I used this as a background in my collage.



Secondly I used a sponge to dab grey & green poster paint, which I then used as a midground.

Finally I used the rubber band method on green card and cut out the inside to reveal the layers behind it as the foreground.

I used this technique but feel it would be too difficult to paint over, therefore would only be useful as an individual piece.



BRUSH EXPERIMENT



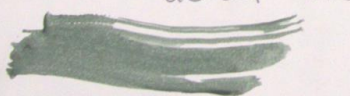
Cushion: tapping a small 'cushion' to a stick created a brush that had a consistent flow to it, creating large, solid lines or untextured areas. I liked this idea and feel like it would be good when filling solid colours.



plastic: Warping plastic bags and taping them to a stick to create a brush that has uneven coverage and leaves a rough texture. I like the textural element of the brush but feel like it would need a background before.



Sponge: Cutting slices of a sponge and taping them together resulted in a star shaped explosion of dots. This was my favourite brush and plan to develop this further.



Wool: The wool brush was most similar to the average paint brush, and acted as one but with less control. I liked this brush as it reminded me of the comfort of this brush but would not use it again.



JULES OLITSKI

Jules Olitski was a Russian-born American painter who was instrumental in the development of the colour field school. Like his contemporaries, Helen Frankenthaler and Morris Louis, Olitski stained the surface of his canvases in a technique that rejected the gestural brushwork of the then popular abstract expressionist artists, with their emphasis on material surface and colour strength. His emotional works eliminated the illusion of depth and any evidence of the artist's touch. Although Olitski did not remain known as some of his fellow colour field painters, his abstract spray painting of the 1960s are still considered landmark works of this movement.

I specifically admire how Olitski uses texture aggressively creating bold, thick strokes across his work. Using the simplistic nature of his work to create a unique and shocking outcome. His untraditional approach to colour allows the colours to merge together without fully blending. This allows an unsettling but yet cohesive colour palette.

Taking inspiration from Olitski, I made my own texture focus outcomes inspired by my microscopic mold images. Using a palette knife with a thick layer of paint to create texture and then pushing down onto the painting.



Experimenting with texture!



9月19日

OBSERVATIONAL

DRAWING:



Practising realism and detail
while drawing many plums
from a still life perspective



9月19日
观察



ZHANG XIAOTAO

Zhang Xiaotao is a Chinese painter who creates large outdoor murals of decayed life, human waste, pollution, abandoned structures, and decay as common subjects in his work. He paints in vibrant and detailed way while still using blending and effusion of color to enhance the power of his work.

Xiaotao uses mold as a way to confront the world about how pollution affects our world as well as highlighting how the world has become wasteful. This is provided through his series of strawberries through the use of representation increasing the seriousness of the message. To add to this, Xiaotao is also reflecting this idea by the amount of fruit that you can see in his paintings.

The focus of his paintings are the decay, leading to an abstract and blurred background allowing his work to feel cohesive while still contrasting with the focus.

Taking inspiration from Xiaotao, I painted my own moldy plums taking inspiration from how he paints. Depicting quick paintings of multiple fruits creates a complex fruit composition. I plan to use this effect in a larger outcome.

To improve this I would pay more attention to detail implementing the realism style Xiaotao uses.



LAYERING



Layering rotten plums with microscopic photographs hold to images with a complex composition to create a



LARGE OUTCOME:





DECOMPOSE







How can decomposition be explored in the world of art?

For my personal study I have chosen the theme decomposition in still life starting in the 18th century and then focusing on contemporary artists. In my project I want to explore how different subject matters decompose; what that looks like in a variety of forms, how that is impacted by speed and how this process can link to human life. Artists I would like to explore include Rachel Ruysch Fruit and insects. This links to my theme through the representation of decay in organic life, depicting how art can freeze moments in time. As well as Sam Taylor Wood, a film artist who documents the process of rotting fruit, depicting an idea of confronting the inevitability of death and how we, as humans, are decomposing from the moment we are born. I would also like to investigate photography artists, and consider Klaus Pichler, who photographed rotting fruit in an elegant and expensive way portraying the subject as a delicacy. In addition I plan to investigate Lippman still life photography, where he obsesses over the shortness and longness of life. I plan to also investigate how other cultures have depicted decomposition. For example, Zhang Xiaoto works with rotting strawberries and how this compares to other cultures' depiction of rot and how using realism can impact the meaning of a painting. I want to visually reference "How decomposition can be explored in the world of art?". My project highlights the course of decomposition and how decomposition is inevitable.

The most prehistoric artist is Rachel Ruysch's, Fruit and insects, which was created in 1711. Secondly, Salvador Dali's, Prunier Hatif, 1969. Thirdly is Zhang Xiaoto, Strawberry, 2006. Afterwards came Sam-Taylor Woods a matter of time, 2007. Lastly Klaus Pitchler, STRAWBERRIES, 2013 and Peter Lippman, Noble rot 8, 2013 were both created in the same year. I feel a timeline of the artists I'm studying is important to note before extensively researching them to understand what time period each exploration of decomposition was created in. I want to look at the way decomposition was used specifically.

Rachel Ruysch fruit and insects 1711



Rachel Ruysch is a Dutch still life painter from the 17th century. She specialised in painting flowers and due to her lengthy career, her work has been well documented. Ruysch's biggest influence was by Otto Marseus van Schrieck¹, who was famous for his representations on dark forest flora with insects and lizards. I chose this image due to the complexity of this image, including a variety of fruit, leaves, insects and animals. Ruysch work displays a still life representation of fruit being covered by insects. During 1711 flowers and exotic fruits were a sign of luxury and wealth. The Netherlands had recently become independent from Spain which led to flourishing international trade. Meaning that uncommon subjects became more in demand in still life paintings by buyers, it also meant a new art market was created by wealthy merchants producing directly for buyers rather than being commissioned by the church. I found that, despite not being commissioned by the church, religious imagery can still be spotted in her work. The use of large groups of grapes highlights symbolism of the blood of Christ² As this work was created in the peak of the renaissance, it is not unusual for art to have hidden connotations from the bible into paintings. I think that the work also expresses the shortness of life, which can be seen as ironic as by painting fruit; she has made the subjects live forever. The shortness of life is highlighted by the fruit beginning to wilt, denoting an idea of everything coming to an end. Death is inevitable, even in the most beautiful aspects of life. The use of tonal range in this painting points the audience to the three round peaches, suggesting that these peaches are at significance. Ironically peaches have been used in art to represent immortality³. On the peach a fly has landed on it, contradicting this idea of immortality. This as the focal point of the work reinforces the idea that immortality is a myth, and everything at some point has to embrace decomposition and embrace death. The large areas filled with darkness show an ending. Reflecting similar traits to when the sun sets, we are seeing a final glimpse of this work before it completely decomposes.

¹ <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/artists/rachel-ruysch>

² <https://www.cityofgroveok.gov/building/page/grapes-or-grapevine>

³ https://issuu.com/sister_magazine/docs/en_sistermag30_3/s/121925



A matter of time sam taylor wood 2007



Sam Taylor wood is a modern day contemporary film director, photographer, and artist. Starting her career in sculpting, Taylor-wood began to work in film and photography. Taking a particular liking to film, in 2006, Taylor-wood created a movie depicting a timelapse of fruit rotting. I chose this specific screenshot of the film as it reflects that decomposition is taking place but the process hasn't fully spread yet. It's an important moment to reflect upon, representing how death affects everything. To have life there needs to be a balance of death. A matter of time expresses an ability to stretch and quicken time indicating how the mathematical understanding of time is not reflected during the human life cycle. Taylor-Wood rejects the traditional idea of time in her work, highlighting how Taylor-Wood sees film as a way to abandon society norms and create something fresh and new. "I wanted to become an artist because it meant endless possibilities."⁴ Taylor-Wood states. I think that the video creates a cinematic element with the use of vibrant colours and carefully thought out framing. In the foreground we see a dull brown background where a heavy shadow is cast over a third of the background, highlighting the beginning of the end. The shadow is used to reflect the inevitability of death approaching, as a viewer we can't stop the shadow, or interact with it we just have to wait for the ending similarly to humans relationship with death. The use of a dull, muted background allows the fruit to stand out even more producing a clear focus on the fruit, Talor-Wood has purposefully forced her audience to watch the fruit. A matter of time, similarly to fruit and insects, can be seen as a depiction of life. Showing stages of decomposition until eventually leading to death. Capturing the reality of the inevitability of growing old. To add to this, A matter of time expresses an ability to stretch and quicken time, emphasising how I found that the focus on three peaches in fruit and insects mirrored the focal point at the end of matter of time of 3 oranges that had grown fur, symbolising the ancient Greek belief that the number three represented, past present and future⁵. I think that this suggests a journey of life and how decomposition is a process. We can also see imagery of the rule of three in Ruysch's work, but through peaches. Both artists use this as a focal point in their work highlighting the importance of time especially in decomposition. As well as underlining the idea that death is an inevitability again. In comparison to Rachel Ruysch depiction of the body of Christ, Sam Taylor Wood highlights religion in a different light. The hour-long world ends with shots of the sun setting, suggesting that religious life is approaching a historical conclusion. I think that this highlights how as a generation we shy away from the religious aspect of life.

⁴ <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/299493>

⁵ <https://wno.org.uk/news/three-is-the-magic-number>



Klaus Pichler, STRAWBERRIES, 2013

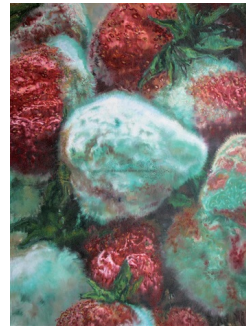


Klaus Pichler is a photographer who created a series of images displaying rotten fruit⁶, highlighting how food waste has taken over our society. Using storytelling as an art form, Pichler strives to create dramatic images with irony blended with critical perspective to address impacts of human behaviours. Pichler grew up in Vienna, Austria, where one fifth of all food bought is thrown away.⁷ I chose this image due to dramatic lighting, visualising that the photograph is displaying something extravagant and delicious, when in reality it's mouldy fruit that is covered with flies. The contrast between the vibrant red and the dull, lifeless grey that consumes each subject, highlights the idea that to have life we must accept death, allowing it to eventually become us. Pichler has used the process of decomposition to create a piece that is not only gruesome and disgusting, but also beautiful and impressive. The black background surrounds the bowl of fruit which I think is creating a deep and focused view of the rotting fruit. The flies hovering above symbolise how in order to survive, life must interact with death. Using a group of strawberries, instead of documenting a singular strawberry decomposition journey, creates an understanding of decomposition from something that happens from the moment of birth. To have life is to have death. Which results in decomposition as a collective process. This is similar to 'A matter of time' where there is also a bowl of fruit, depicting how death spreads throughout the living. In contrast, 'STRAWBERRIES' glamorises the rotten fruit and depicts it as extravagant and expensive whereas 'A matter of time' presents the rotten fruit in a homely and traditional way. Most people in their homes would have a fruit bowl, but not a silver platter. Sam Taylor Wood's work in a way is more relatable to its audience, whereas Pichler uses a shock effect to add to the delivery of his work. Over glamorising his work creates the illusion that the rotten strawberries are a lavish gourmet dish when in reality, no one would eat that. Pichler does this in other pieces of art, such as "PINEAPPLE", where the decomposed fruit is portrayed as a godlike artefact, as it hovers above a gold platter.

6

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/photography/article/visualizing-waste-klaus-pichlers-gorgeous-rotting-food>

7 <https://vienna.impacthub.net/2019/07/01/lets-talk-food-waste-in-austria/>



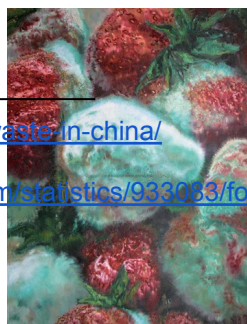
Zhang Xiatao, Strawberry, 2006



Zhang Xiatao is a 53 year old, Chinese contemporary artist who creates large close up paintings of life, including fruit and animals. Studying Oil painting at degree level, Xiatao produces intricate artworks of usually small objects. His work is created to bring awareness to the amount of food waste we put out into the world. Which is relevant to Chinese culture as in China 35 million⁸ tons of food gets wasted each year, making China the biggest food waste in the world⁹. An initial way that Xiatao creates a depiction of decomposition is through the spreading of mold, representing an idea of how waste is spread and confronting the audience to be more conscious when wasting food. The volume of strawberries connotes an idea of how life and death interlink with each other, similarly to Pichler's work. The use of strawberries is significant to his work as strawberries have been used in the past to symbolise perfection and purity. As Xiatao used them to represent waste, the strawberries highlight how as a society we even allow 'perfection' to die. Similarly, Klaus Pichler's work also has this effect of allowing greatness to die, through the rotten fruit being kept in a polished silver dish. The strawberries are presented like important goods, when realistically no one would eat them. Pichler explores decomposition by glamourising it, whereas Xiatao explores decomposition as something we should be ashamed of for over producing food, leading to food waste. Connoting an ideology of consumerism, highlighting how as humans we have over produced and excessively consumed to the degree that we have begun wasting food. We can see a large impact of perspective, Xiatao presents a close up composition enlarging the subject creating a claustrophobic effect with a more serious impact on the audience, leading to the audience feeling as if action has to be taken now. In comparison, Pichler's work is to scale, creating a realistic effect. Arguably creating more of an impact, due to it reflecting something we see on a day to day basis. The effect of his large outcomes portray the growth of decomposition in the modern world. Confronting its audience on the grotesque impact food waste has. To add to this, the use of realism in this piece impacts the message further. Highlighting the realness of this issue, Xiatao uses his work as a cry for help, warning the viewers of the impact they are having on our world and ecosystem. He explores decomposition as a wake up call to the realness of the destruction we are causing, his work holds a mirror up to society and confronts its viewers with the truth of what they have done to the world, in hopes that this can impact them enough to change their behaviour.

⁸ <https://earth.org/food-waste-in-china/>

⁹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/933053/food-waste-of-selected-countries/>



Noble Rot 8, Peter Lippmann, 2013



Peter Lippmann is a contemporary artist who creates still life photography. Lippmann began his career illustrating children's books, but now devotes his time and energy to fine painting. Over the past three decades Lippmann has established himself as one of the most popular still life and advertising photographers working with big brands such as Cartier, Vogue and The New York Times. Rejecting traditional advertising conventions, Lippmann creates his work by being inspired by art history. In all of Lippmann's work there is a clear theme followed, the idea of decomposition. In an interview Lippmann explained this fixation stating 'My artwork is always involved with the same themes. The passing of time, living, ageing, an obsession with both the shortness and the long-ness of life, all the wrinkles that come with it.'¹⁰ I am fascinated by the artist's use of a cohesive vision in all his work, connecting each piece to each other while defining himself in the art world. Lippmann in Noble Rot 8 photographs grapes, in still life art, grapes have been used to represent salvation¹¹. To add to this, the set of grapes creates a collective of circles that can even be seen within the vines, linking to the philosophical concept that we start at the end and end at the beginning¹². No matter how big or small the circle is, it all ends and begins in the same way. Another way circles have been used a symbolism is within the bible, where the circle has been used to portray timelessness¹³. I find this particularly interesting as Lippmann's work is created from the inspiration of decay, a process that occurs through time. The use of circles is ironic to the point he presents as by creating this work he has allowed decomposition to be preserved in an exact moment forever. The grapes foreshadow this. The grapes have begun to rot, defining the idea that religious life in modern day is beginning to wilt away, and as a society we are turning our backs on faith. Likewise, Xiaotao also uses fruit to symbolise a greater meaning. Both alert their audience on how as a generation we have neglected important parts of our world and culture through allowing decomposition to take over. In Lippmann's work he creates a darkness around the subject highlighting an idea of isolation alluding to how decomposition can feel isolated, whereas in Xiaotao piece he fills the whole canvas with fruit portraying the idea that decomposition is spreadable, like a disease. I think that the impact of having a singular fruit emphasises that the fruit depicts more than rotting fruit, Lippmann visualises the human cycle. From the moment life is born, it begins to decompose, raising the question if from the moment we, as living things, begin to die from the moment our lives begin. Once again, highlighting the idea that death is inevitable.

¹⁰ <https://www.commarts.com/features/peter-lippmann>

¹¹ <https://www.markmitchellpaintings.com/blog/the-notations-of-fruit-in-art-and-still-life-paintings/>

¹² <https://impakter.com/the-circle-of-life/>

¹³ <http://websites.umich.edu/~umfandsf/symbolismproject/symbolism.html/C/circle.html>

Ultimately, it is clear that decomposition has been explored throughout the world of art for centuries, using human understanding and research as subject matter for their art work. Commonly representing a link between human life and the relationship we have with the inevitability of death. This essay has attempted to show the impact of decomposition imagery on art and photography. The investigation intended to explore how decomposition has been explored in the world of art, and has established a clear link between human life and fruit being used to represent one another. The theme of using fruit as a metaphor for portraying humans, presenting ordinary things to appear extraordinary, is continuously repeated throughout history of art, constantly resurfacing. The results provide cause to conclude that decomposition is explored in relation to the inevitability of mortality and how as living organisms we must experience death to experience life. In my own artwork I want to further explore how decomposition can be used to express the idea of death, and become a metaphor to mortality. In Rachel Ruyschs , fruit and insects, we were presented with an idea of the shortness of life. In contrast, in Sam Taylor-Woods, a matter of time, displayed how death affects everything, and to have life there needs to be a balance of death. Whereas Klaus Pichler, STRAWBERRIES, exposed not only the gruesome and disgusting parts of decomposition but the beauty within it. Xiaotao is notable for using decomposition as a way to alert his audience of the waste they put into the world, highlighting decomposition in a negative light . Finally, Lipperman uses decomposition to express his obsession with ageing.