

AHS Capstone Final Project Submission (FPS)

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Artist's Statement

Having had the opportunity to spend significant periods of time growing up in two different countries, and thus immersed in two distinct cultures, I find that I do not completely identify with either culture, but rather that I have a relationship with a blend of the cultures. Whether I am in the US or in Taiwan, I do not fully fit in culturally. This is especially pronounced when people around me point out particular observations about my behavior, appearance, habits, or other such characteristics. Depending on where I am, different attributes are highlighted – for example, in Taiwan I receive comments about my slightly accented Mandarin or my fluent English, while in the US I am frequently at a loss when my peers make pop cultural references to movies they grew up watching. Because of their interactions with me in a specific environment, people have a specific perception about my cultural identity. I wanted to capture how these viewpoints may be reflected at a surface level, which at times feels constraining, but ultimately do not affect the core of my identity. This exterior projection is represented by the patterned cages I have cast out of bronze.

Inspiration

Because I wanted to share aspects of my multicultural experiences through my work by creating an art piece that draws upon both Eastern and Western cultures, I drew inspiration from artists who incorporated both Eastern and Western elements in their art, whether it be through aesthetic or subject. Li Chen is a sculptor who seamlessly mixed Buddhist and Taoist traditions with contemporary thought.¹ Many of his pieces are of a spiritual subject matter, but his execution of them has an air of contemporary, more Western, aesthetic. In coming up with ideas to convey the balance of my multiple cultures, I was inspired by his work in particular to convey different cultural elements through different aspects (aesthetic, subject, method, etc.) of art. Ye Hongxing also combines traditional Chinese motifs with modern elements in her work.² In particular, I was inspired by her *Fusion* painting series, which was executed with oil paints, a traditionally Western medium, and consists of several self-portraits over which she has painted colorful Chinese decorative patterns. The portraits were done within circular outlines. Although our actual intent behind our art differs, when I first saw these pieces I interpreted the overlaying patterns as cultural 'masks' that the artist wore and wanted to translate this idea into the third dimension through the creation of spherical sculptures of decorative patterns.

After coming up with my vision of my artwork (the creation of spherical cages), I realized that my concept was very similar to a type of age-old Chinese craft, Chinese puzzle balls – intricately decorative concentric spheres, with each layer rotating freely and all carved from the same material.³ Upon this

¹ <http://lichensculpture.gaa-software.com/>

² <http://www.yehongxing.com/paintings.html>

³ <http://www.odditycentral.com/pics/chinese-puzzle-balls-the-rubiks-cube-of-the-ancient-world.html>

realization, I looked at examples of such sculptures for inspiration as well. Of course, while the method of creation of such puzzle balls is subtractive (carving), mine is additive (casting metal).

I also drew inspiration from articles and essays written by individuals, so-called “Third-Culture Kids”, who have cultural experiences similar to mine.^{4 5} Reading others’ stories helped me to reflect on my own experiences and to organize my feelings and thoughts about my identity and culture.

⁴ <http://www.internations.org/magazine/the-difficulty-of-life-as-a-third-culture-kid-15288>

⁵ <http://www.denizenmag.com/category/experiences/>