

**CONTEMPORARY IDENTITY  
PORTRAITS:  
CONSTRUCTING A STORY**



## PROJECT SUMMARY:

This project enables students to look for the deeper meaning in portraits and especially to think about what an artist can do to provide insight into themselves as they create self-portraits. The students reflected on their own qualities and attitudes and started to think deeply about themselves. It is important for students, to become more aware of their personal and public selves. This project leads students to examine who they are and who they want to be as well as how they want the world to know them.

This project addresses 4 questions as to how and why artists create and use creative visuals to express their thoughts and or ideas:

1. How can you create a self-portraits that tells a story?
2. How does an artist synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art?
3. How do artists develop ideas and understandings of society, culture, and history through their interactions with and analysis of art?
4. How do artists contribute to awareness and understanding of their lives and the lives of their communities through art-making?

## DISCUSSION:

How alterations to appearance (clothes, hair, make-up) and the use of lighting and props in portrait photographs affect our perception of one's identity or suggest a narrative?





What might be going on in this photograph. Where is this person and what is she doing? How has the photographer implied that something is happening outside the frame or is about to happen?



Compare the subjects, settings, vantage points, and framing of the photographs.



**CONSTRUCTING A STORY:** Come up with the person's name, occupation, and a little bit of personal history. What may have happened just before the scene in the photograph and what might happen afterward. As a class, reflect on the characters and stories that emerged.

Untitled #92, 1981



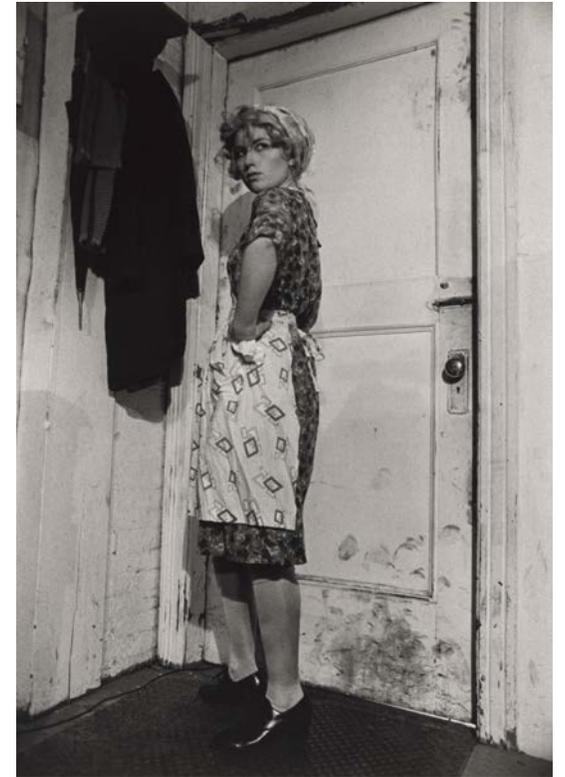
**CINDY SHERMAN**



Cindy Sherman (born 1954) is an American artist whose work consists primarily of photographic self-portraits, depicting herself in many different contexts and as various imagined characters.

**Untitled Film Still #56. 1980**

Her breakthrough work is often considered to be the collected "[Untitled Film Stills](#)", predominantly made between 1977-1980, were a series of 70 black-and-white photographs of herself evoking typical women roles in [performance](#) media (especially [arthouse films](#) and popular [B-movies](#)). In the 1980s, Sherman used colour film and large prints, and focused more on costume, lighting and facial expression.





Sherman's costumes came from thrift stores, where she had been shopping for some time. Many of the interior film stills, such as *Untitled Film Still #3 (left)*, were taken in her apartment, using a tripod and a shutter release attached to a cable. Under her direction, friends photographed outdoor scenes such as *Untitled Film Still #54 (right)*.

Untitled, 1989





Untitled #206  
1989



Untitled #210  
1989



Untitled #213, 1989



Untitled #224, 1990



*Untitled (#397),  
2000*



*Untitled (Self-Portrait with  
Suntan), 2003*



Untitled  
#466, 2008



Untitled  
#474, 2008



Untitled #555,  
554 and un-  
numbered,  
2010/2012



Untitled, 2016



Untitled #571, 2016

Untitled 584, 2017-2018





Untitled (Chill),  
2019

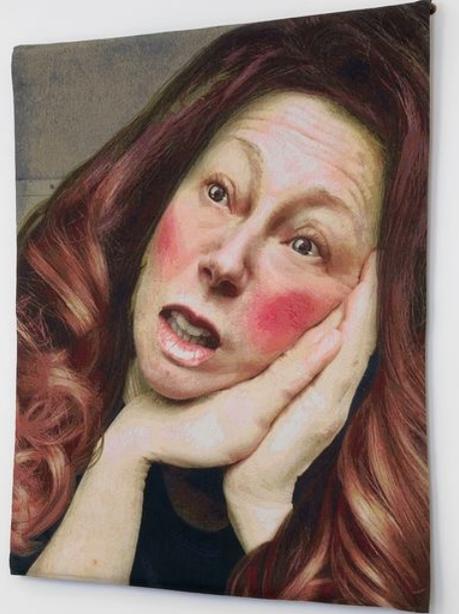




Untitled #615, 2019

Cindy Sherman Retrospective The Museum of Modern Art, New York





## **Constructing a Story: How we would like to be seen?**

For this project, students will start by creating a character photo.

Students will write a description of a character and then how to express their character with the use of objects, props, body gestures and facial expression in a photograph.

Students will describe their characters physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially by writing a dialogue between their characters and themselves.

Will meet with students individually to discuss how to portray their characters and what attributes are most important. Will discuss the importance of posture, pose, gesture, facial expression, lighting, props and if applicable costume/makeup.

Once the reference image is created, students will create either a 2D or 3D mixed media representation of their photograph.

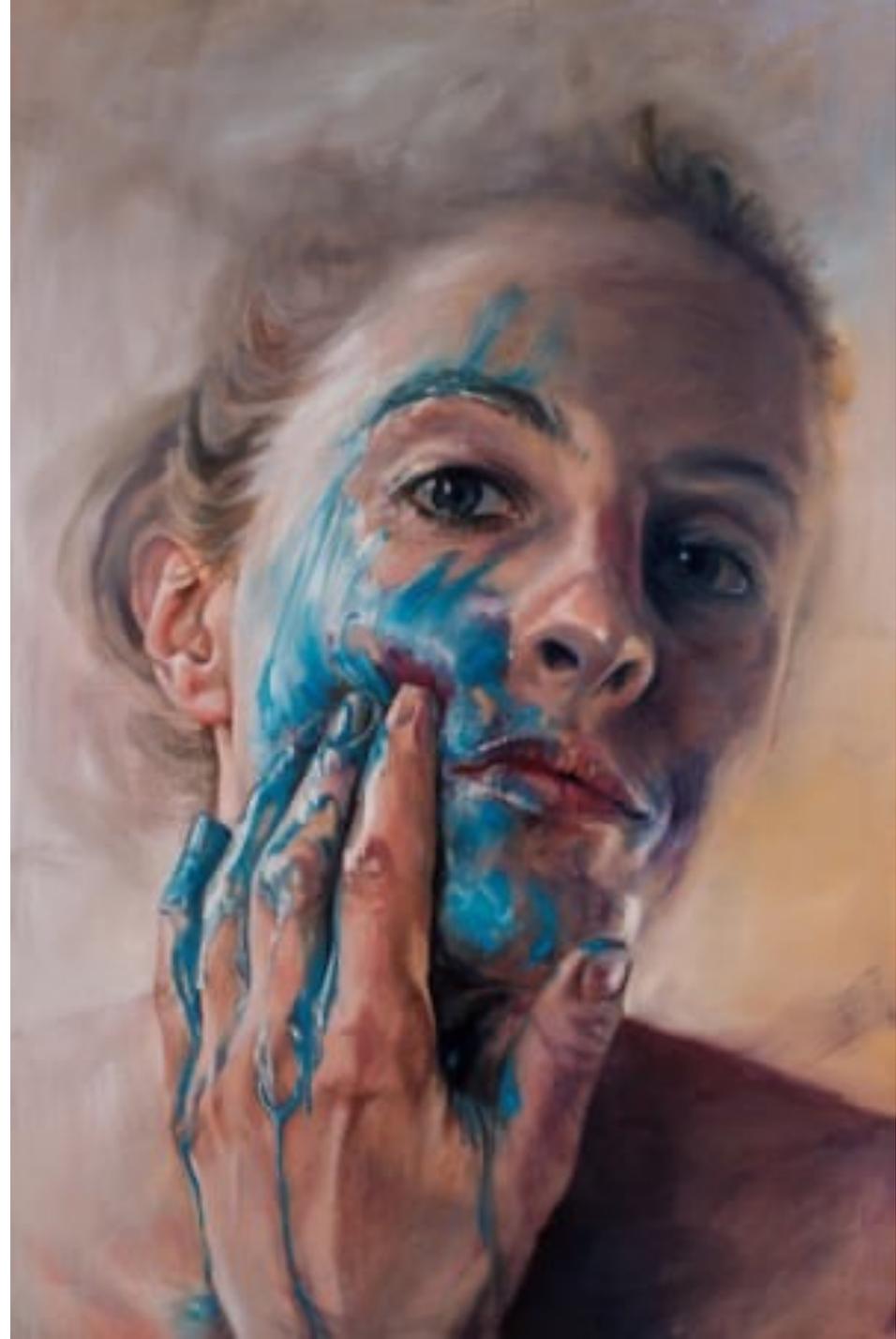
2D students will need to consider surface, techniques and mediums, while 3D students will need to consider materials and construction.

Basic 2D and 3D materials will be provided (such as paper, paint, clay, paper mâché, cardboard, etc.). Additional materials, such as canvas or specialized building materials will be provided by the student.

Students must P.R.E.P.A.R.E. in their sketchbooks prior to starting. Good use of composition, the elements of art and the principles of design must be evident in their work.

## 2D EXAMPLES:

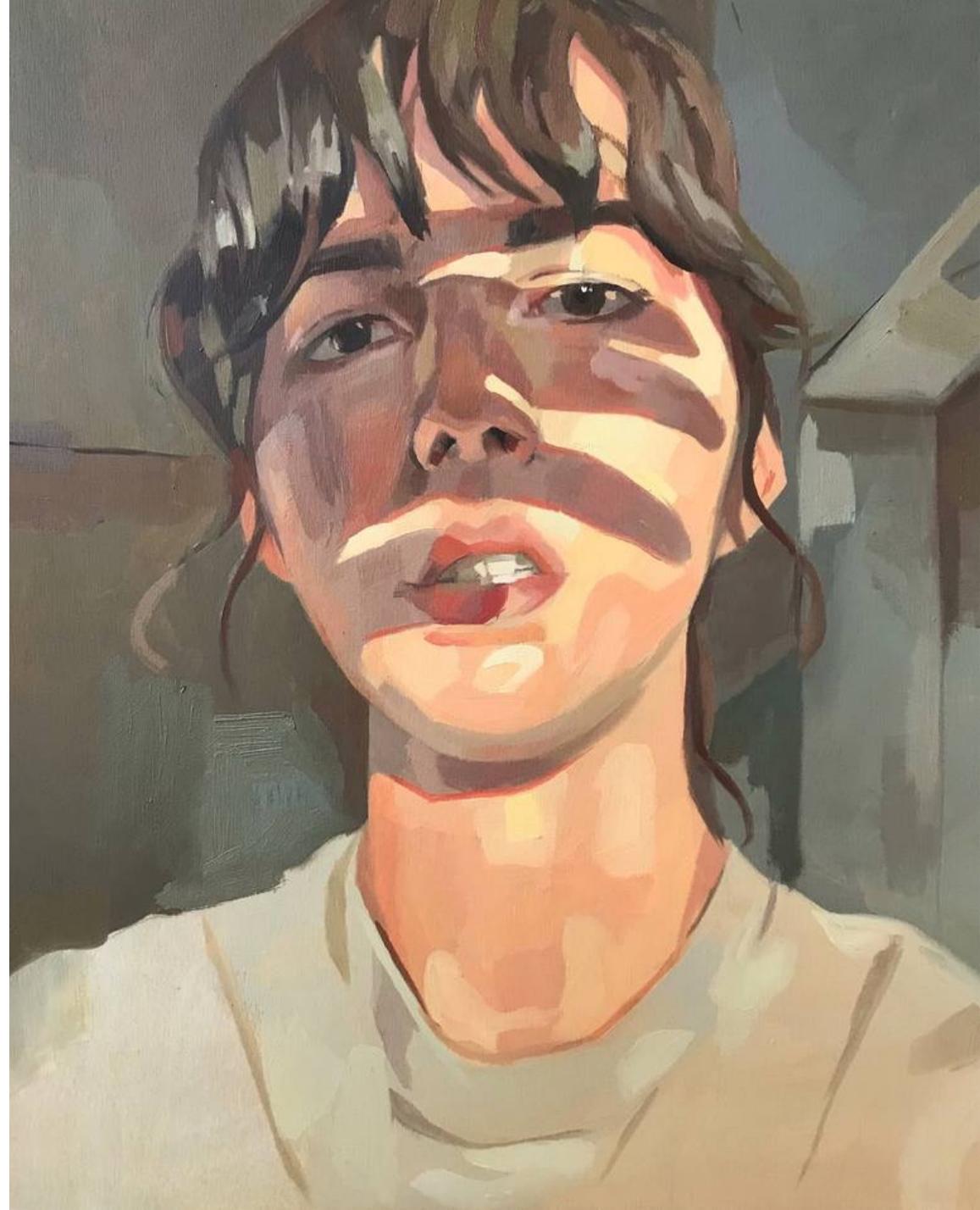
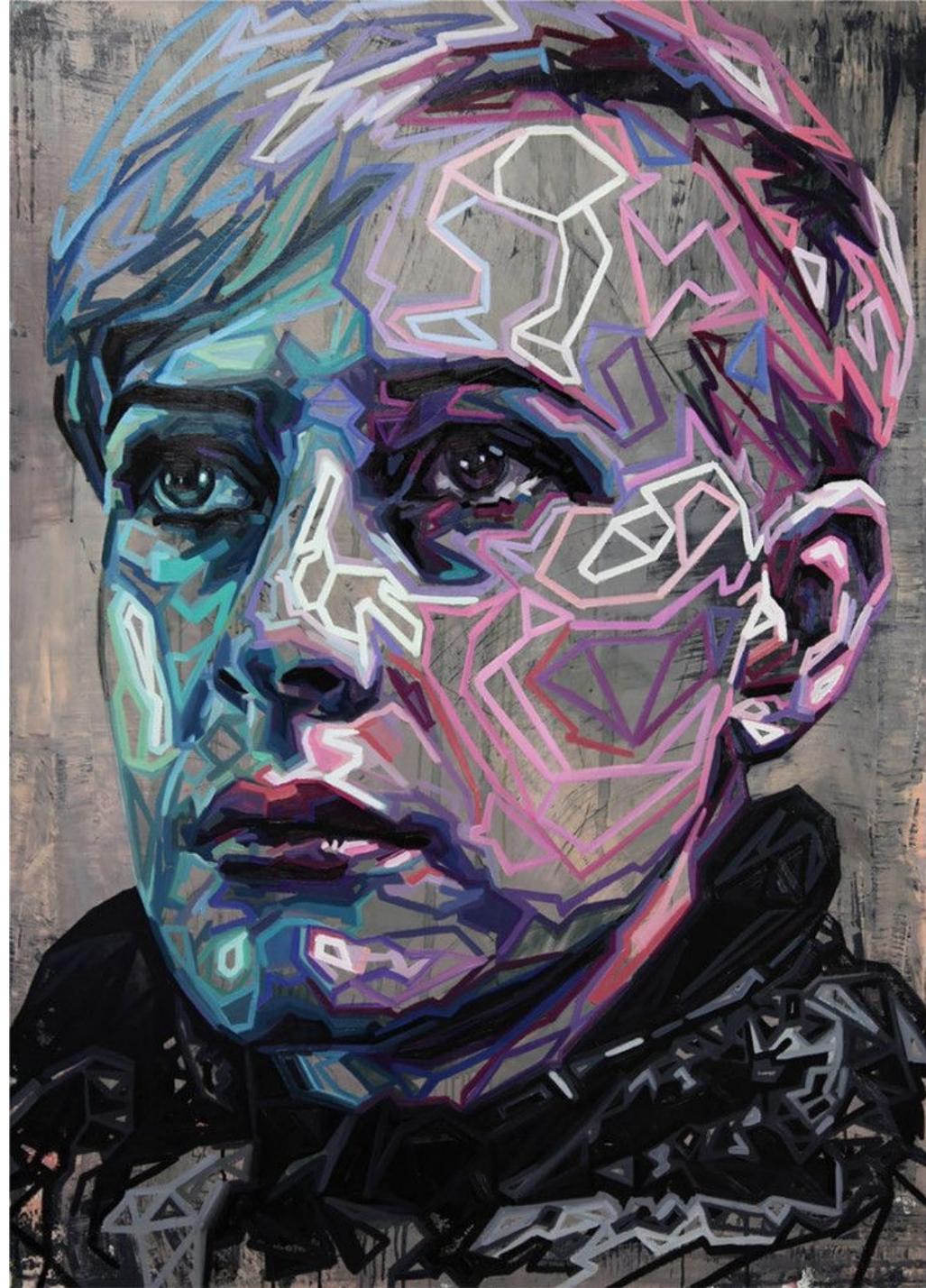








*Paula*





# 3D EXAMPLES:













