

# CONTEMPORARY IDENTITY PORTRAITS: CONSTRUCTING A STORY



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I gratefully acknowledge that the lands on which I live, work, learn and play are the unceded shared traditional territory of the Katzie, Kwantlen, Semiahmoo and other Coast Salish Peoples.

## 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.



# BIG IDEAS AND CORE COMPETENCIES:

Visual arts are an essential element of culture and personal identity.

Refining artistic expression requires perseverance, resilience, and risk taking.

Purposeful artistic choices enhance the depth and meaning of artistic work.

**Curricular Competencies:***What students will DO*

*Students will be able to use the following creative process(es) to create and respond to art:*

Reasoning and Reflecting:

- Apply knowledge and skills from other contexts in the planning, creating, interpreting, and analyzing of artistic creations
- Develop personal answers to aesthetic questions

Connecting and Expanding:

- Create personally meaningful artistic works that demonstrate and understanding of, and appreciation for, personal, social, cultural, environmental, and historical contexts
- Apply problem-solving skills to facilitate innovation
- Adapt learned arts skills or processes for use in new contexts
- Demonstrate increasingly sophisticated application of the elements and principles of design, image development strategies, processes, and technologies

Exploring and Creating:

- Experiment with a wide range of materials, processes, and technologies to create works of art in innovative way
- Intentionally select and combine materials, processes, and technologies to convey an idea, and justify their choices
- Apply skills that engage the body and mind

Communicating and Documenting:

- Anticipate audience and make design choices with an understanding and respect for their impact on that audience
- Communicate ideas and express emotions through art making

**Concepts & Content:***What students will know*

*Students will know the following concepts and content:*

- Elements of art
- Principles of design
- Creative process
- Image development strategies for visual arts and photography
- Creative processes
- Roles of and relationships between artist and audience in a variety of contexts
- Influences of visual culture in social and other media

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 (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.



# P.R.E.P.A.R.E.

**P**roduce an Idea(s)

**R**ender Thumbnails

**E**xpand the Idea

**P**robe Artist(s) and references

**A**ssemble the Materials

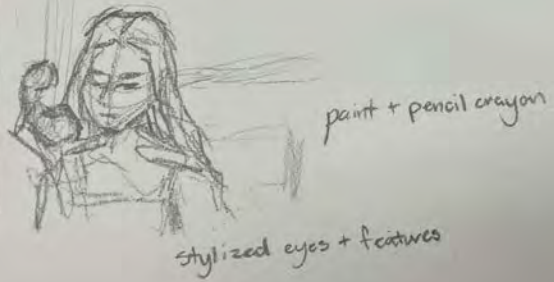
**R**egulate your Time

**E**xecute the Work



# 2D EXAMPLES:

My photo was inspired by a still from Mean Girls  
I used an older photo to add aesthetics  
The character is tired and annoyed

















My character is Alice Bobby Brown from Stranger Things. In the still she has short brown hair and is wearing a plaid shirt. In the still it looks like she is on the phone with Bill who was possessed by a demogorgon. I think this was the scene Bill was telling Eleven (niece) what he and the demogorgon had planned for her and the rest of Hawkins. She looks scared/surprised in the still. The lighting and shadows make the scene seem very dramatic and serious.



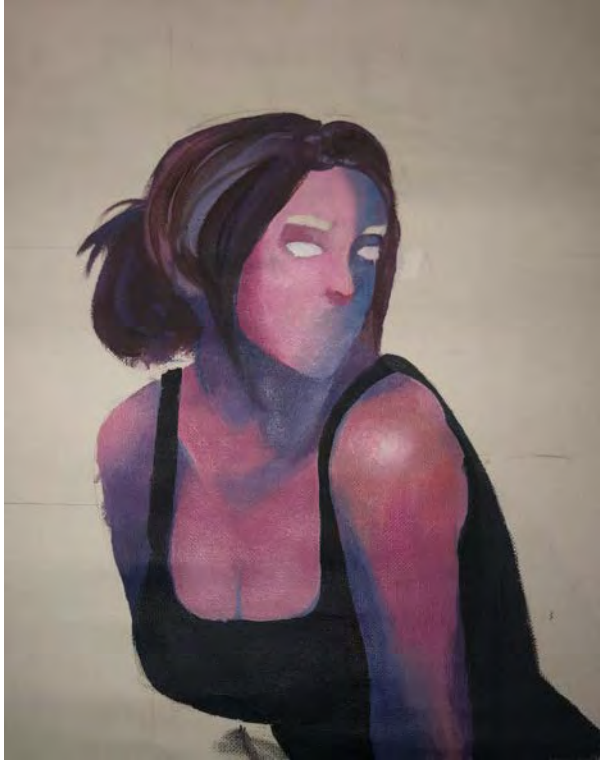
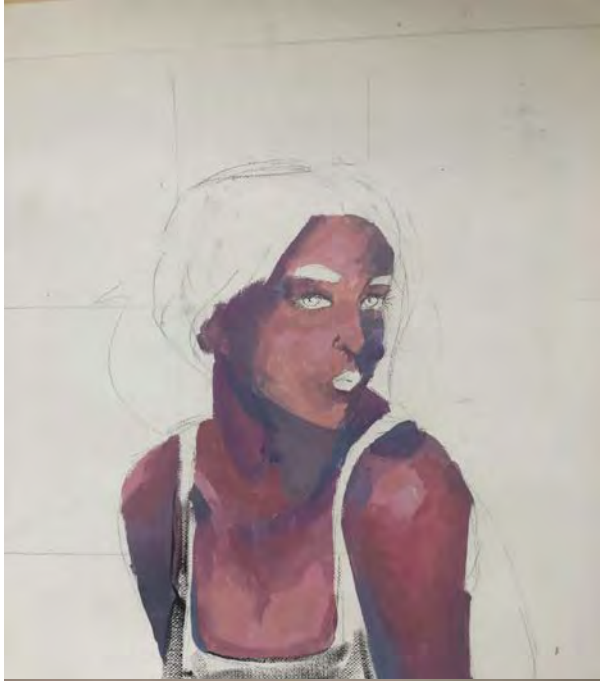
materials : • canvas (square)  
• paint



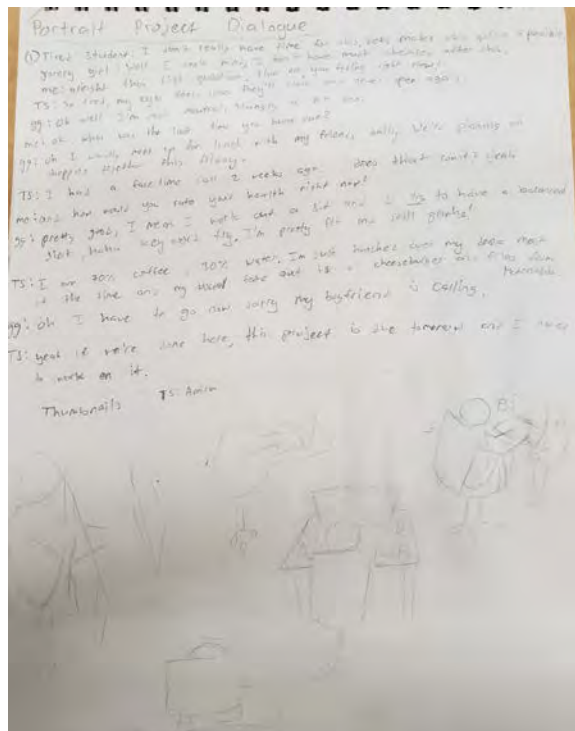
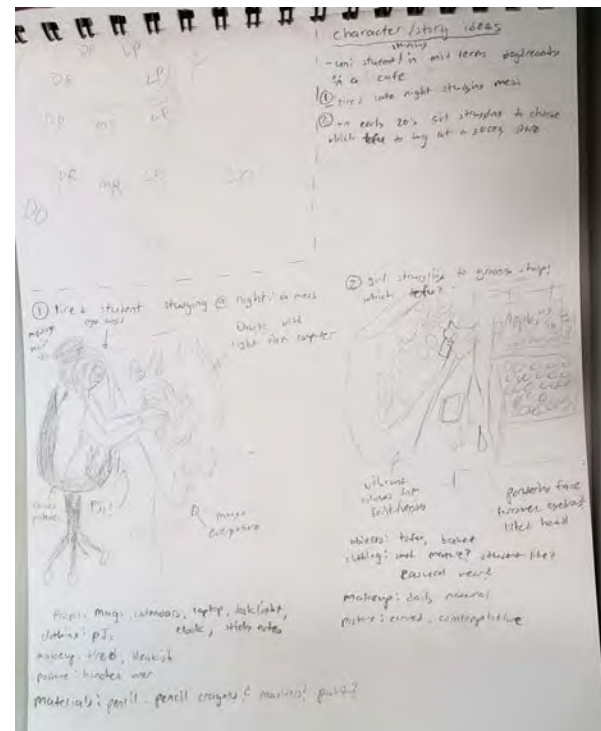
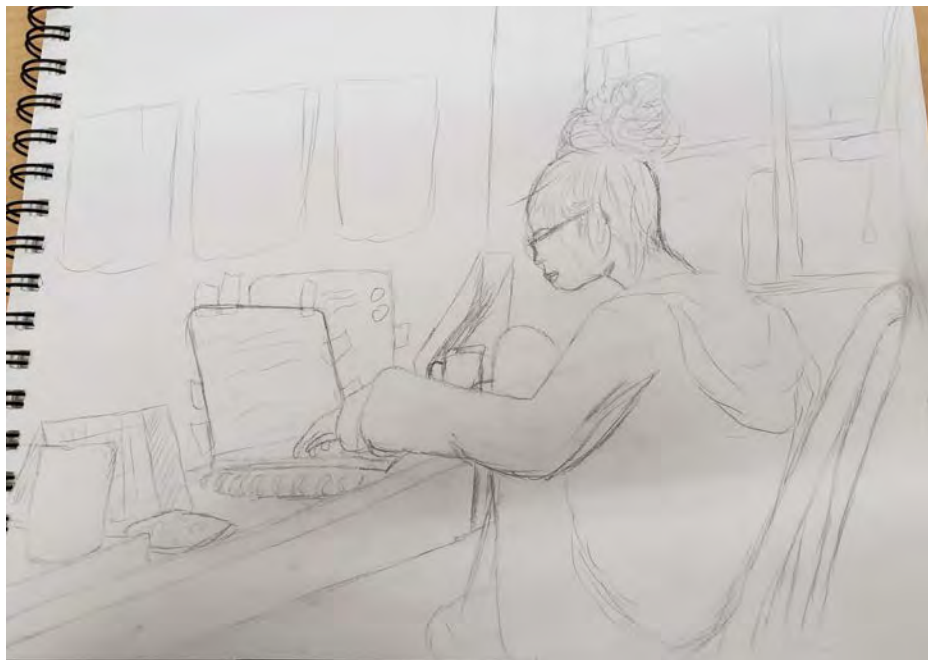




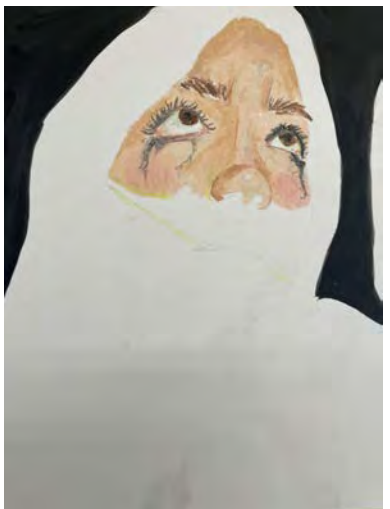
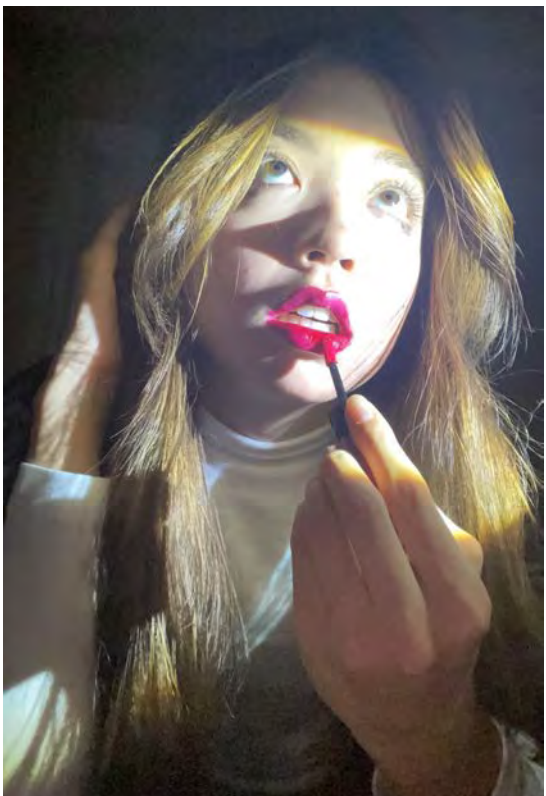
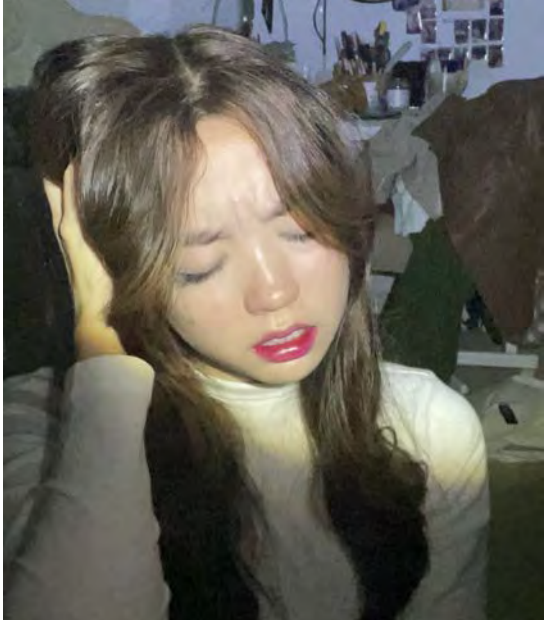








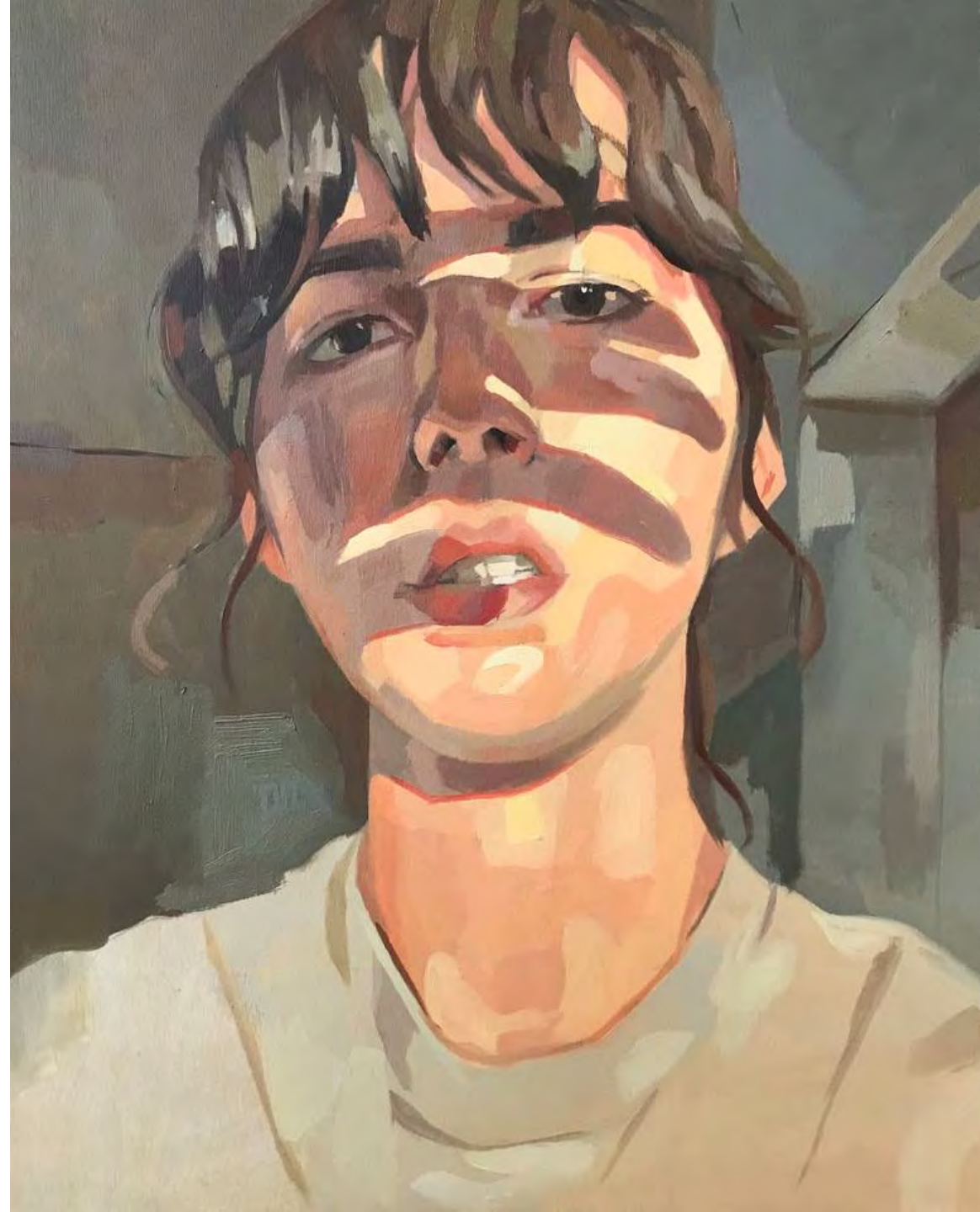


















## 3D EXAMPLES:





























# PROJECT SELF-REFLECTION AND RUBRIC:

Make sure to **COMMUNICATE AND DOCUMENT** all your work for this project. Share (hand-in) all your preliminary work and any work-in-progress images.

Once you have completed documenting your process, answer the following questions. Make sure to use complete sentences in answering the questions and describing your creative journey.

**REASON AND REFLECT:** Before starting your work, did you use P.R.E.P.A.R.E. and develop your ideas in your sketchbook in order to start your project? Was your composition/image or sculpture thought provoking, interesting visually and intellectually? Does your work have an interesting balance; positive/negative space relationship? Did you create an interesting placement or direction for your subject?

**CONNECT AND EXPAND:** Does your work show some risk taking or experimentation? How were you inspired by the work of Cindy Sherman? Tell me the story behind the photograph you took (to use as a reference for your work)?

**EXPLORE AND CREATE 2D:** Did you use a full range of simplified values? Can the viewer read your work clearly from distance creating a focal point? Did you explore a particular technique (explain)? Tell me about the mediums/materials used and why? Paper is not folded, crumbled or torn? Smudge marks are erased? Are materials used well and evidence of mastery of technique?

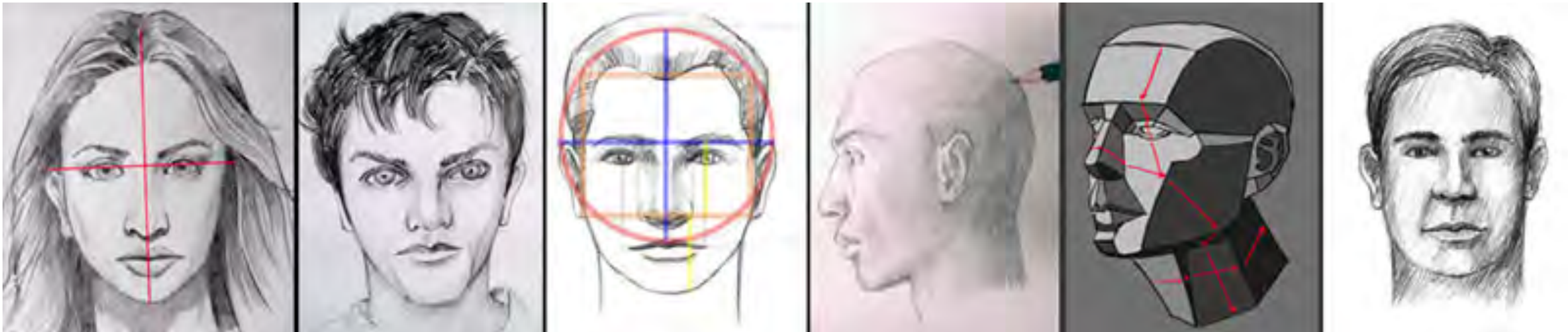
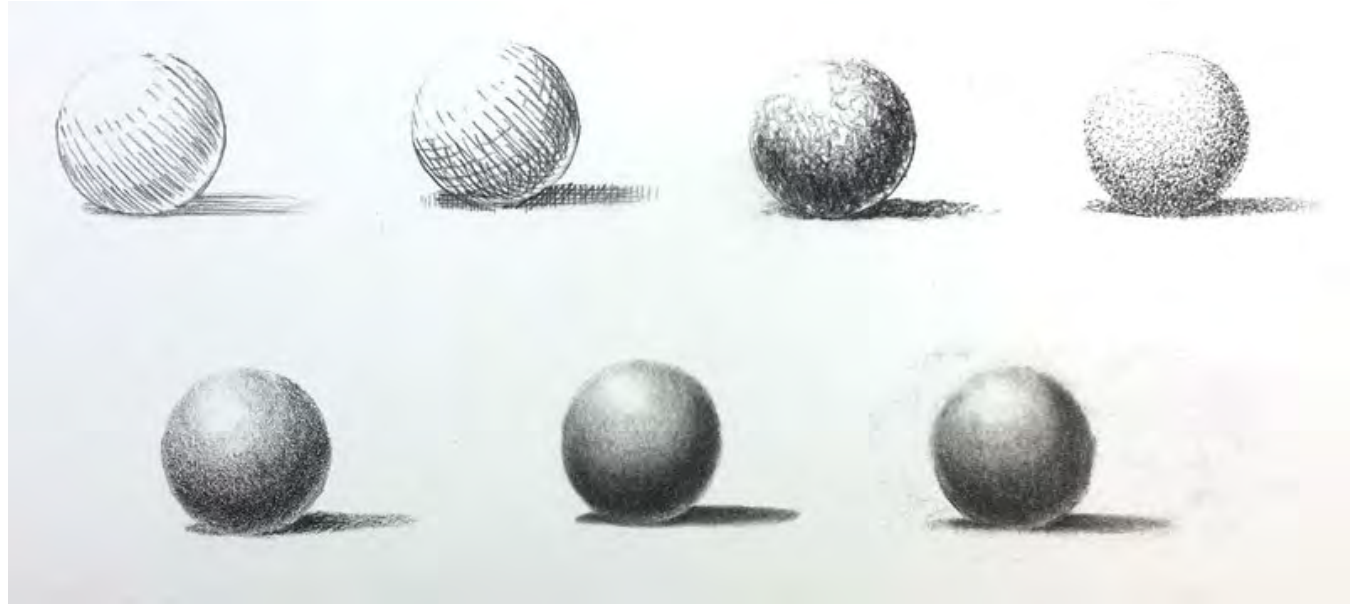
**EXPLORE AND CREATE 3D:** Did you use a variety of building techniques (explain)? Can the viewer read your sculpture clearly from distance creating a focal point? Can your sculpture be looked at from multiple view-points? Sculpture construction has a polished finish? Removal of extra materials? Sculpture is self-standing? Are materials used well and evidence of mastery of technique?



# PRELIMINARY EXERCISES:

- Facial Proportions
- Graphite Drawing Techniques
- Graphite Shading Techniques

<https://www.strujillo.ca/art-resources.html>





## **ADAPTATIONS/MODIFICATIONS:**

- Help students with the photography components. If this is not an option, students can use a photo they already have.
- For students with motor difficulties, print out portrait on cardstock, cartridge paper or mixed media paper. Students can paint on top to the photocopy.
- If mixed media is not an option, this project can be done in paint or oil pastel.

## **EXTENSIONS and/or POSSIBLE CROSS- CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS:**

Possible extensions for photography, illustration, media arts and drama.