Honors Theses at the University of Iowa

Spring 2018

Overtones

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University of Iowa

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OVERTONES

by

Kassandra Morlan

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Honors in the Art, Studio

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Sue Hettmansperger
Thesis Mentor

Spring 2018

All requirements for graduation with Honors in the Art, Studio have been completed.

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Kee Ho Yuen
Art, Studio Honors Advisor

This honors thesis is available at Iowa Research Online: https://ir.uiowa.edu/honors_theses/
Skin fascinates me. Skin can display stress, health, emotions, beauty, and identity. My honors focused on researching skin, choosing different topics pertaining to skin, and creating painted imagery. I chose to create oil paintings to explore new ways of applying color.

My research about stress and health of skin and my research into color, began simultaneously. I researched artists who were using skin as a topic or uniquely. Most of the unique art I found were sculptures that would abnormally mold the skin. Skin became a design or a malleable material. I also researched various colors in skin and medical pictures for references of conditions I wished to portray. I used 10 by 10 inch canvases, to create the small images. My painting process built up the paintings at the same time, starting with underpaintings of Venetian Red. I started with one color palette of skin colors. Some of the colors from the first painting would be used subsequently, to connect the images. Though, connected, I wanted each one to be unique in emotion and color. I would choose certain palettes based on a body part or based on race. For darker skin tones, I utilized bluish, yellow, and white colors. I played with color schemes, even unnatural skin colors like dark blue or green skin. I varied sources of light and worked with shadow and depth until it seemed right.

For the research and the painting process, I found great inspiration for color and skin from artists like Lucian Freud and Jonathan Yeo. My biggest struggle was using close-up parts of the human body and defining their planes. Researching the individual medical pictures of body parts helped understand how the skin lays on muscles, veins, and tendons. I used many different skin conditions like acne, flushing, oiliness, goosebumps, dry skin and wrinkles. I personally have the genetic condition called Keratosis Pilaris and I embrace it. Through this research project, I hoped to not only learn more about internal influences on our external canvas, skin, but also about painting skin. I wanted to show the beauty not typically beautiful skin conditions, as well as how some people really embrace their skin. I learned more about the possibilities of painting skin and in the future, I will explore more ideas about different emotions through skin colors. I will paint different emotional issues through portrait and color.