



Self-representation

Developing self-concepts through the conceptualization of self-portraiture.

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ABSTRACT

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Bachelor's thesis 41 pages, appendices 3 pages

May 2020

The aim of this study was to present a psychosocial analysis of self-representation in order to form a framework for describing the process of self-concepts development through the conceptualization of self-portraiture. Based on this framework, a self-portrait series titled Introspective Instability was developed. This artwork was included in the Atomic Jungle 2020 exhibition, through a virtual gallery in April 2020.

The self-portraits Propped by Jenny Saville, and Self by Marc Quinn were analyzed, and a variety of articles and literature on relevant topics on contemporary art and psychological philosophies was consulted. It was found out that the efficacy of conceptualizing self-portraits, to describe the personalities of the artists as they desire to be recognized, required components related to self-concepts to be analyzed and categorized against the social, cultural context of the artist.

Based on feedback on Introspective Instability, at the end of the project to ascertain if the goals of the project are effectively met, it appears that the themes from the artwork were mostly well-received as intended by the author.

Key words: self-schema, self-esteem, self-efficacy, introspection, self-concept

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1 INTRODUCTION

Self-concept is regarded as one of the most significant subjects of our time, especially in the field of mapping artificial intelligence (Schkolne 2018). The rapid development of several social networking sites on the internet over a brief period has overwhelmed the perception, absorption, and translation of cognitive knowledge. Digital social platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and many others, continuously expand sources of information regarding social interactions resulting in new questions and discoveries about the existing states of the self.

I reflect on the point presented by Markus and Nurius in their publication on 'Possible Selves' that the process of self-reflection and self-representation is a continuous psychological course (Markus & Nurius 1986), as the personality of individuals gets amalgamated to their immediate metaphysical environment through time and space. According to Talreja, Jhally & Sanjay (1997), Stuart Hall (1997) states in his discourse of representation, that representation itself is a constituent of an event which we are immersed in, before and after the experience. A thought echoed by Ivana Marková's (2003) on the self of intersubjectivity, that we experience the world not only through the private formations in the mind of the individual but as inter-subjectively constituted experiences (Markova 2003).

Therefore, in this thesis, I will analyze selected self-portrait works of Jenny Saville's (*Propped*, 1992) and Marc Quinn's (*Self*, 1991- Present). The case studies of their artworks subjectively describe the process of self-concept development through the conceptualization of self-portraiture. The evaluation of their works will form a basis for analyzing my own six self-portrait series, 'Introspective Instability.' This work will be exhibited through a virtual gallery as part of the TAMK degree show 'Atomic Jungle.' The report of the process, as well as documentation of this work, will be included herein.

2 INNER SENSE ACCOUNTS

I begin by clarifying the terminology 'self' as it is used repeatedly in this thesis. In psychology, the notion of the self could imply a distinct and autonomous person's experience that is separate from others' experience (Vohs, Baumeister & Sage Publications 2007). A description simplified by Jhangiani, and Tarry (2014) as - our sense of personal identity and of who we are as individuals. They attribute the foundation of all human behavior to the notion of 'the self' (Jhangiani & Tarry 2014.)

While one experience of the self includes a consciousness of one's physicality, I focus on the other that involves one's inner character and emotional life and how it presents itself. In one study, Baumeister and Hutton (1987, 71) suggest that self-presentation is shown by human behavior that seeks to express information about oneself or some image of oneself to its audience (Baumeister & Hutton 1987, 71-72).

In another study, Brie Gertler (2020) likens the 'information about oneself', to the representation of the mental states it takes as input. Gertler underlines that the association of the introspective state (the output) is dependent and correlated with the introspected state (the input) I have illustrated in Figure 1 (Gertler 2020.) Besides, Eric Schwitzgebel suggests that mental elements such as emotional engagement, concepts of free-will, sense of perception, descriptive metaphors, the ability to formulate thoughts and the need to attach to personal identity could present introspective validities. (Schwitzgebel 2019).

In that regard, introspective consequences require verification from introspective interrogation. Self-analysis and perception attempt to provide an epistemic understanding of the artist's inner sense account, "the possible selves" development through a self-scanning process (Markus, Nurius 1986).

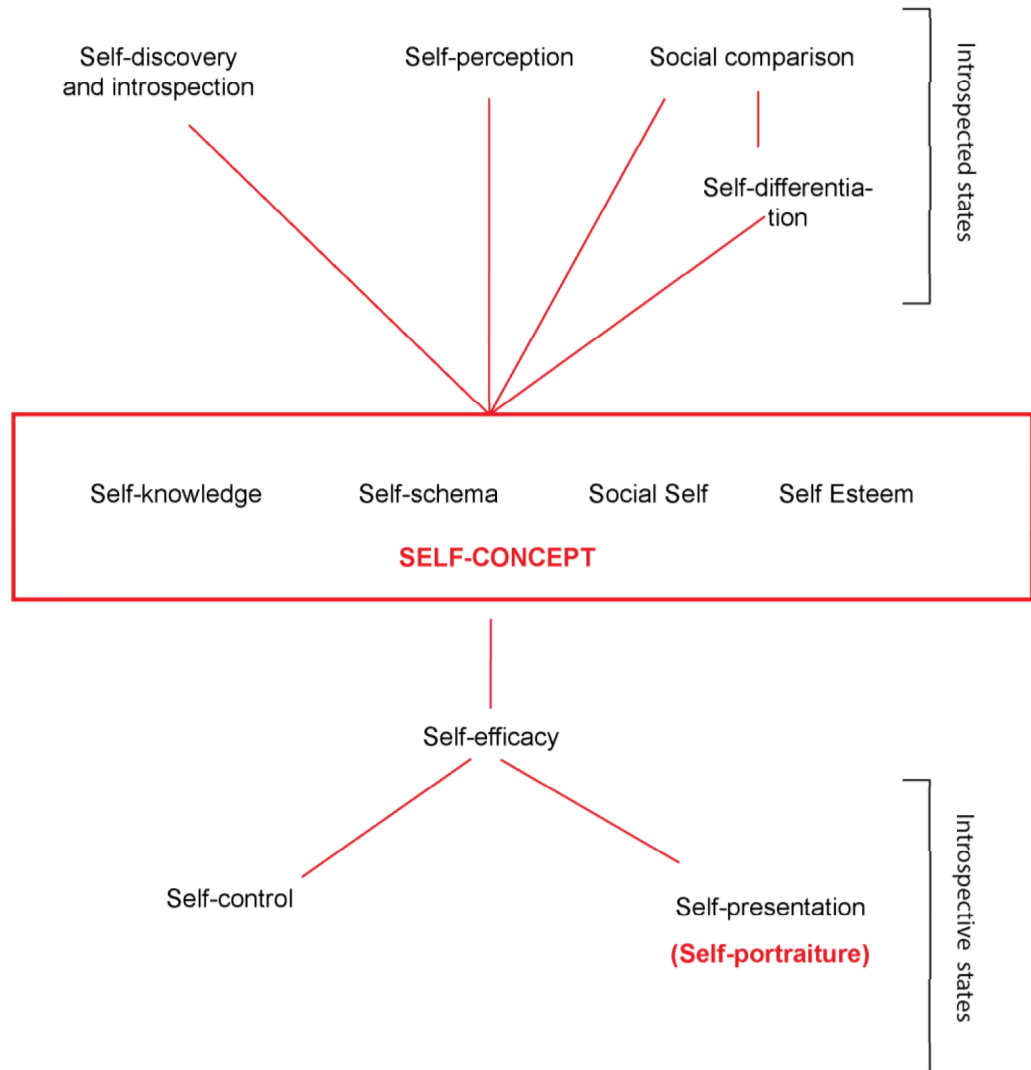


FIGURE 1. A diagram showing the connection between the introspected state and the introspective state (2020)

2.1 Jenny Saville's Propped, 1992

Saville's *Propped* (1992), is one of the most conceptualized self-portrait paintings in the world of contemporary art. The picture embodies several epistemic mental states through its conception and presentation. I will categorize possible self-concepts into three parts: the confrontational self, the defensive self, and the congruent/alluring self. In my analysis, I will subjectively describe the process of this self-concept development through the conceptualization of this self-portraiture.

2.1.1 The confrontational self

Propped (1992) embodies aspects of provocation, intimidation, defiance, manipulation, and resistance. These are reliable positive attributes to the self that it uses to impose its will on the viewers. First, Saville uses the size of the painting to outrun the viewers into visual submission. According to magazine writer for The Art Story, Karen Barber(2020) The naked painting of her body 213.4cm x 182.9cm (Picture 1) towers over the viewer's literal vantage point of perception, to intimidate the status quo of the clothed, male artist and ideal naked women model as exemplified by the historical paintings of nude art (Barber 2020).

In this painting, the artist is seen to immerse herself daringly, into a certain undesirable stereotype, to disintegrate that stereotype (Talreja et al. 1997). A remark supported by Barber (2020), while epitomizing the artist as using prolific art historical theme of the female nude, turning it upside down (Barber 2020).



PICTURE 1: Jenny Saville's Propped (1992).

Apart from the white and shiny sling-back ballet flats, which were possibly trendy during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the nude singles out the statement of fashion as a feminine socio-structural supportive accessory. Saville contrarily substitutes nudity for defiance towards a biased socio-cultural norm that opposed this unusual form of representation by women, as phrased by the artist “dealing with a matter that was almost forbidden territory” (Saville 2018).

In her lecture conversation with Simon Groom, Director of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in YouTube(2018), Saville responded to her choice of the using nude character against something ‘subtle’ as a result of following her instincts “Feminism is about freedom. Am I going to do this because I cannot do anything else? It makes me sad if I don’t do it” (National Galleries 2018).

The character seems a little offset symmetrically from being pivoted unevenly by the black pole. However, the artist harmonizes this effect by compacting the sagging flesh into a circular- eye-pleasing composition and tucking the feet behind the black pole to signify a feminine need or misconception for support. Together with implied figurative lines, the artist follows the rule of thirds for almost asymmetrical compositions to manipulate the viewers’ attention towards the central part of the image (Picture 1).

According to Maria Trujillo (2018) and Alina Cohen (2018), She deliberately distorts her reference image out of proportion using a fisheye lens, by creating an un-proportionally frontal surged, body figure. Using this effect of harmonizing imperfection creates a contradiction in the way ideal beauty should be perceived and represented (Trujilo 2018; Cohen 2018.) This aspect of challenging social norms is also evident from Saville’s demand for including the feminine stature to the pillars of historical art.

Through epistemic self-knowledge, introspection, and self-perception, she directly confronts the objectification and the omission of women from self-representation throughout art history, in one posture. Stuart Hall’s lecture on the meaning

and absence in the form of representation reinforces this perspective by suggesting that the inclusion of gap, the lack of perceived image, is as meaningful as the expectation of integration of that gap (Talreja et al. 1997).

2.1.2 The defensive self

The defensive self in this artwork portrays traits that contrast to the strong stature of the artist. Saville shows prowess in conceptualizing an image that reflects her personality to the viewers. She constructs herself as a victim of her artwork. Using this self-schema, she grabs the viewers' attention using props carefully fused into the painting's composition by invoking their knowledge of the known against the unknown and vice versa (Baumeister & Hutton 1987, 72-72).

As a victim in her artwork according to Andrew Dixon (1994), she oddly portrays herself with thick, fleshy thighs and legs that immediately seems unfairly proportionate to the phallic black pole, to which the overweight body is propped (Dixon 1994). She continuously emphasizes the feeling of instability and discomfort subjected to the flesh. Flesh, as she stated, represents humanity, and the subject of women's body is wrapped around discomforting maleness and ideals of the society (Saville 2018).



PICTURE 2: Jenny Saville's posture with fingers clawed into the flesh (1992).

In the process of exploring the intimacies and complexities of the female body using her physique, she reveals traits of low self-esteem. Whether by employing her facial expression to express the feeling of discontentment with the viewer, her reflection or by using etched text on the mirror, she questions the boundaries of her self-perception (Picture 1). She dramatizes her posture with fingers clawed into the thick flesh of the thighs, to construct a frail impression of subdued anger, frustration, and self-loath (Picture 2) (Sotheby's 2018).

2.1.3 The congruent/Alluring self

The congruent self in this artwork provides a buffer zone between the confrontational and the defensive selves. Through social comparison (Jhangiani & Tarry 2014), the artist subjectively superimposes her perception of feminism with that of the feminist movement that influenced this artwork (Marková 2003). She internalizes and embodies the meaning of the text quote paraphrased from French feminist writers, Carolyn Burke, and Luce Irigaray's journal entry - When Our Lips Speak Together, "If we continue to speak in this sameness – – speak as men have spoken for centuries, we will fail each other. Again, words will pass through our bodies, above our heads disappear, make us disappear" (Irigaray & Burke 1980, 69-70)

Speaking of the painting in 1999, while in conversation with Martin Gayford from the New York Gagosian Gallery, Saville referenced the etches to "physical and psychological inscriptions that remain on the flesh to document life's traces or memories" as Sotheby's (2018) reported. She uses a natural script, handwritten typeface, which personifies aspects of femininity, sophistication, vitality, and creativity (Peate 2018).

In one way, she etches and scars of text on the flesh within the painting and on the other, she uses loose, thin, feathery cross-hatching strokes of subtle blues, yellows, and pinks to emphasize on volume, depth and soothing movement of the flesh on the character's body and the edges. This technique invites the viewer to inspect beyond the alluded imperfection. In a way, it gives the painting a subjective sense of life through which the viewer can objectively inspect it.

The emotional inverted and illegible text scarred through the clouded mirror to the subject skin is probably intended primarily for the subject as opposed to the viewer's consumption (Trujillo 2018). However, the artist invites the second recipient (the viewer) of the text by reflecting the painting to the partially cloudy mirror. The mirror provides an interface of self-reflection to both the artist and the audience. When the painting made a debut exhibition in Edinburgh 1992, a mirror was placed across from it, at a distance equal matching the peak of the painting. This mirror setup allowed the viewer to turn away from the painting and implicate themselves in the artwork (Sotheby's 2018.)

2.1.4 Sub conclusion

In summary, the subject of identity projection and self-concept development sums up in Saville's self-portraiture, through the assembly of props that describe the self-schema and self-esteem entities of the artist. The efficacy of which divides into the attribute of seeking self-control and that of self-presentation. In the artwork, possible self-concepts that emerged include the confrontational self, the defensive self, and the congruent/alluring self.

The artist uses aspects of provocation, intimidation, defiance, manipulation, and resistance to define reliable positive attributes to the self that it uses to impose its will on the viewers. I categorized these attributes as the confrontational self. She also incorporates weak traits that contrast to that strong stature, by constructing herself as a feminine victim undermined by society. She connects herself to aspects of social prejudice, low self-esteem, and gender inequalities. This effect appeals to empathy from her viewers.

Lastly, she positions her congruent self to provide a buffer zone between the confrontational and the defensive selves. In that effect, she controls her narrative. At the same time, invite the viewer to inspect beyond the blemishes she has alluded.

2.2 Marc Quinn's Self (1991 – Present)

Self (1991-present) is a series of frozen self-portraits made every five years by Marc Quinn. Each self is made of ten pints of the artist's blood, taken over five separate sessions. The production and success of Self (1991), became the basis of most of his successive works. James Romaine (n.d.) suggests that the uniqueness of the artwork stands out in its biological definition and its peculiar conditions of representation when included in the history of self-portraiture (Romaine n.d.).

This unique form of artwork invites its audience to interrogate Quinn's artistic and creative process. I will categorize possible self-concepts of this artwork into three parts: the confrontational self, the repressive self, and the congruent/alluring self, using a similar framework as I did in Saville's Propped (1992) analysis. I will also be reviewing the process of the development of those self-concepts subjectively.



PICTURE 3. Marc Quinn's self-portraiture. (1991)

2.2.1 The confrontational self

Quinn, in a similar response to Jenny Saville, uses the knowledge of self, to connect his artwork meaningfully with the history of art from antiquity. Despite being influenced by historical art masters, such as Rembrandt (Hardy 2017), the artist defies the traditional forms of self-portraiture by creating unique, unorthodox, contemporary versions of self-representations. In this regard, his artwork embodies themes of defiance, self-differentiation, provocation, manipulation, and rebellion.

Quinn is considered as a prominent contemporary artist and a member of the Young British Artist movement (Romaine n.d), who gained popularity in the early 1990s during a time of modern art revolution. Self (2009) and Saphora Smith (2015) note that during this period, the artist, and his contemporaries at the time, including Damien Hirst and Sarah Lucas, were redefining what it was to make and experience contemporary art (Self 2009; Smith 2015).

Elizabeth Fullerton (2014), a freelance writer for the *Artnews* magazine, observes that the retaliation to the 'formal' art critics at the time could perhaps be what influenced the artist to differentiate from other ideal contemporary art forms (Fullerton 2014). A statement that the artist confirms during the *HyperReal* exhibition, 2017-2018. Quinn mentions that the idea for the artwork developed from the frustration that art was confined in a "formalist eddy" at the time according to the writer, Karen Hardy (2017).

In a different approach to Saville, Quinn defies the conventional bounds of the society. Botella, Zenasni, Lubart (2018), assert that the efficacy of using his blood as a medium of conceptualizing his artwork induces several non-conforming implications. In their article excerpt they state this approach as "The creator sets the constraints related to the solution of the problem and, then, another stage involving the transformation of these constraints or adaptation of the limitations that are not suitable." (Botella et al. 2018).

Quinn's extraordinary brand of bio-art originates from his interest in sciences and arts. Using a stereotypical perception of blood, the artist directly captures the attention of his audience by shocking them into their corporeality. While a sight of blood invokes an emotional response of something painful, dangerous, risky, or even bearing potential impurity, Cecilia Alvarez (2015), a writer and editor of *Dazed & Confused* magazine, points out its dualism.

She observes that blood, an essential body fluid that supports life in living humans, is carried within the body all the time without intolerance, despite its distressing, visual perception. She parallels the grossness around blood to the grossness that an individual is programmed to feel about their bodies (Alvarez 2015.) Quinn, in an uncanny way, invents life out of a process of death in *Self* (Picture 3) and all its incarnations (Romaine n.d.).

2.2.2 The repressive self

The repressive self in this artwork portrays traits that contrast to the strong stature of the artist, such as low self-esteem, alcohol addiction, dependency, and loss of control. Some studies suggest that a sense of self-worth arbitrates an individual's reaction to their social environment and that low levels of self-esteem are the cause, not the result, of deviant behavior such as alcoholism and drug abuse (Mecca, Andrew, Neil J. Smelser, and John Vasconcellos 1989).

At the time leading to the conception of the artwork, when placed in that perspective, deviant behavior such as extreme party life in the early 1990s, as the artist recalls, could have led him to struggle with alcoholism. Quinn recalls the experience as a choice between life and death (Fullerton 2014). Perhaps for the artist, this choice became the foundation of producing the *Self* series (1991-present) to bond his personal experience with the subject of dependency, albeit being rehabilitated in 1993.

The subject of dependence is evident in this selected series. The artist superimposes his dependency on alcohol to create a sculpture out of himself, using parts of himself to mimic his self-personality at that time. The artist suggests that bio-identical artwork is the most direct form of an artistic statement. In a literal sense, it is dependent on an external circumstance for sustenance.

Therefore, in analogy, the artwork could be equated to the idea of addiction, the drug being electricity that sustains the re-frigerated artwork, and the blood head self-portrait being the addict (Fullerton 2014). The artist refers to this state of translation as the interchange between the self-efficacies of control and loss of control (Vohs, et al. 2007).



PICTURE 4. Marc Quinn's self-portraiture side view pitted and fissured. (1991)

2.2.3 The harmonious self

The harmonious self in this artwork provides a transitional zone between the confrontational and the repressive selves by introducing harmonious themes of transformation and self-renewal. In this artwork, the approach to dualism is as vibrant

and communicated through pose and form as in Saville's work (Picture 1). The self-portrait manifests an artificial severed blood head, whose surface is aggressively pitted and fissured (Picture 4), while at the same time posing in a manner suggesting calm, organic process of meditation of the self from a different perspective.

Here, Romaine suggests that blood outside the body evokes woundedness and mortality (Romaine n.d.), the artist has countered this interpretation by converging the majority volume of the blood material to within the anatomical surface of the portraiture to signify a process of self-healing and self-renewal. Self (2009) writes in an essay as quoted by the artist, "There's something interesting about blood, about the way it renews itself" (Quinn 2009)

The theme of transformation is evident in Quinn's work as it is to Saville's Propped (1992). When placed in its retrospective scale, the aging and changing self of the artist, as portrayed in the sculpture's series, presents a cumulative index of transient time. On a micro-scale, it connotes to the perpetual changes of self-concept, but rather on a broad macro perspective: the transformation of personality, ideology, identity, and the physical self (Quinn n.d.).

The artist gathers the details of conceptualization in his artwork (Picture 4) into a purpose-built transparent Perspex box, propped on its refrigeration unit, 208 x 63 x 63 cm (Hardy 2017). Although bearing the structural difference related to the mediums used for its construction, it renders a similar compositive concept to Saville's artwork (Picture 1).

While both presentations depict the notion of being trapped within the composition, they also invite the viewer to curate the artwork through a transparent reflective surface (Picture 5). Hardy (2017) quotes Jaklyn Babington, NGA senior curator of contemporary art, "The sculpture sits in a limbo - simultaneously alive and dead, real, and simulated. It is one of the most uncanny works of recent contemporary practice." (Hardy 2017).

The artist inserts his need of self-representation through a self-scanning process and invites openness of interpretation to his audience. In a conversation with Sean Rainbird, Tate Gallery, (1995), he explains that the freedom from associations of implied relationships is the main reason for using his own body as a primary source of reference. He describes the paradox of the self as something that an individual is familiar with entirely and at the same time, is completely unaware of its being. Therefore, in casting the body, one gets the opportunity to "see" the self' according to Terry Riggs (1997). She quotes Quinn, "I was interested in making art that was about real life, and I thought I would start with myself" (Quinn, 1997).



PICTURE 5. Marc Quinn's *Self* (2009) installation in Hyperreal exhibition. (2017-2018)

2.2.4 Sub conclusion

In summary, Quinn makes a severed-head-avatar of himself using his blood as the primary medium. Throughout the conceptualization of this artwork, several self-concepts that guide the interpretation of his work emerge. These self-concepts include the confrontational self, the repressive self, and the harmonious self.

Quinn's work embodies themes of defiance, self-differentiation, provocation, manipulation, and rebellion to emphasize on his confrontational self. He involves his ego as the prime shaper and modulator of his artwork's behavior, which depends on him for sustenance. Uncannily, he plays god by inventing a synthetic life to his work out of the process of death (Romaine n.d). In that sense, he uniquely uses blood to defy conventional bounds of society.

However, his use of blood in the composition also presents the repressive self of the artist. The repressive self in this artwork portrays traits that contrast to the strong stature of the artist, such as low self-esteem, alcohol addiction, dependency, and loss of control. For instance, he incorporates himself in the artwork to bond his personal experience with the subject of dependency.

Lastly, the harmonious self in this artwork provides a transitional zone between the confrontational and the repressive selves by introducing the themes of transformation and self-renewal. When placed in its retrospective scale, the aging and changing self of the artist, as portrayed in the sculpture's series, presents a cumulative index of transient time.

3 INTROSPECTIVE INSTABILITY

With reflection on Saville's artwork, the title 'Introspective instability,' the self-portrait series expresses the cause and effect of psychosocial depression. The phrase - Introspective instability - is derived from the semantics of introspection and the absence of self-stability. Considering that an introspective state (Figure 1) is the product of the different accounts of the self, then my artwork describes the process of its development.

I have incorporated the image of myself in the artwork inspired by Quinn's Self series(1991-Present) as an entity that describes a process of the changing self. I also use the analogy of death to represent the end and transformation of a psychological phase. In that sense, the titles of each work, Pallor, Algor, Rigor, Livor, Putrefaction, and Decay, respectively, ironically embody the stages of death and the beginning of a new self.



FIGURE 2. Introspective Instability installation display simulation (2020)

Without employing the dynamics of physics and chemistry in my composition, as Quinn did, my thesis advances into psycho-analyzing the development of self-identity through the representation of self-portraiture in the form of acrylic paintings. The reason I preferred to use acrylic as a medium in this artwork, is partly on the technical aspects but more on the effect that I find acrylic mediums to produce.

For me, acrylic is rather simple and effective to use. It dries quite soon after its application, providing me with room for quick manipulation. This efficiency enhances the expressive nature of my work in terms of texture, line movements, the impression of light, and blends of color. I have been using the medium since 2014 and having grasped its application; I find it comfortable to use it to create or describe emotions in my paintings. Creating feelings and emotions is an essential component of all my works.

Initially, I had thought of including text as part of the composition, as Saville did (Picture 1). Still, its implementation would not be as effective, assessing from the colorful installation display of the series. However, after a feed-back process, I decided to include a small a poetic narrative text print (about 10x10cm) beside each painting as part of the installation (Figure 4).

3.1 Installation setup

All the paintings in the artwork are relatively large, each measuring 90 x 65 cm. They are arranged horizontally and spread at an equivalent spacing of 30cm between each painting. The total height of the painting series is approximately a human height of about 190cm, as illustrated in the installation plan (Figure 3). This height provides a confrontational interaction with the viewer.

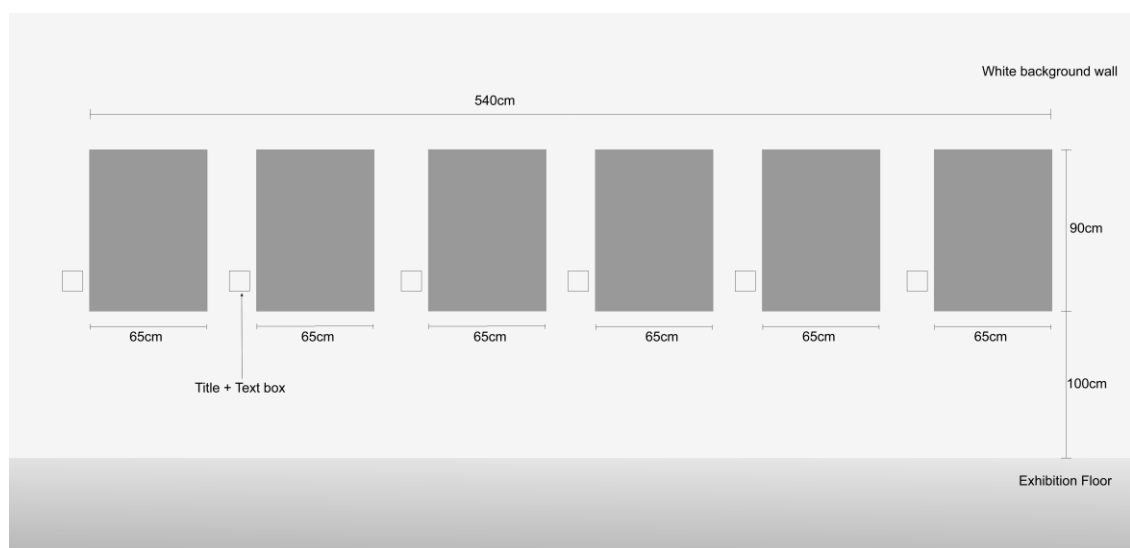


FIGURE 3. Installation Plan (2020)

The installation arrangement was intentional so that, each painting could create its personality and narrative when viewed up-close and a collective narrative when examined panoramically at a distance. This panoramic view (Figure 4) seeks to make my exhibition space visually interactive. I intend the viewer to feel like my exhibition space is opening up to a wider-angle when moving away from the paintings and converging the visual space when moving closer towards a particular painting as a point of focus.

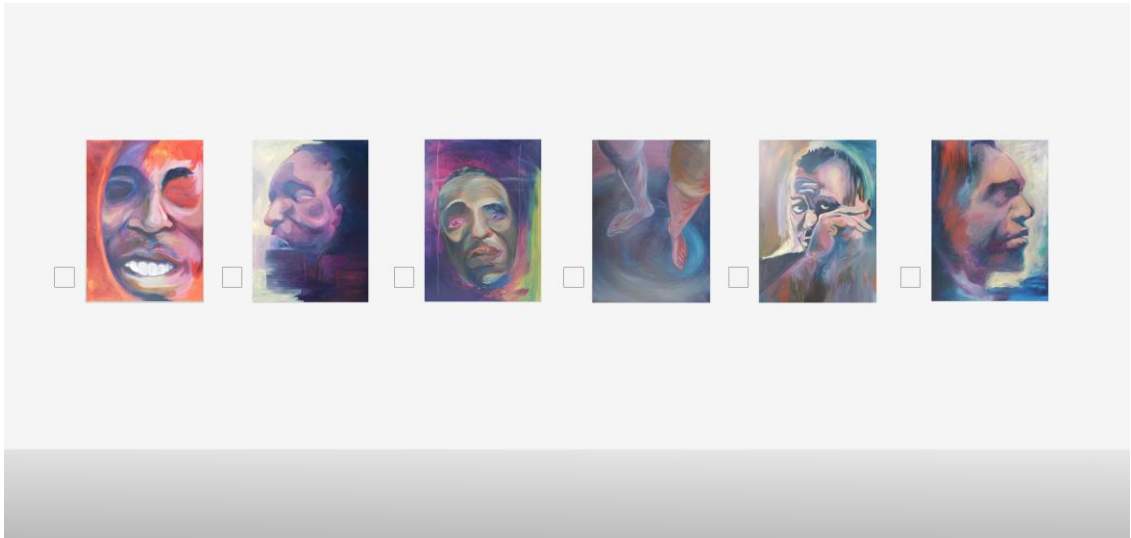


FIGURE 4. Front side installation display simulation (2020)

3.2 Mapping introspected states

My interest in making art about responses to social behavior and mental processes (psychology) started in 2015, when I experienced a psychosocial breakdown. Going through a severe existential crisis significantly influenced my studies about the brain, consciousnesses, human behavior and, subsequently, the production of this work.

Since my teens, I was interested in poetry and literature from classical poets such as Paul Laurence Dunbar, Maya Angelou, Sylvia Plath, Charlotte Turner Smith, Steven Wallace, Amy Lowell, Marianne Moore, and Edgar Allan Poe, among many others. I find poets to be quite genuine in creatively expressing even subtle emotions. They still influence the way I interpret the subconscious thought and probably the reason why I included the poetic narrative to the artwork.

Also, in my previous studies, I became interested in understanding different multicultural environments concerning social forms of governance, politics, economics, and many other fields of sciences as well as humanities. I became obsessed with how things work, why they exist, and why they possess certain behaviors and personalities. As an artist, I became an observer of these phenomena, but also, I internalized them as introspected knowledge and perceptions.

I realized that when the inner sense accounts translate these elements through self-perception, they create opinions, attitudes, feelings, and emotions that define a social, cultural response of the self (Vohs, et al. 2007). In the process, I began to reflect on the disciplines of psychosocial behaviors such as capitalism, oppression, ethnic inequalities, denial of free will, violence, addictions, depression, and other social inequities that I have been subject to on a personal level.

All these aspects summed up into psychological questions like who am I? Why do I exist? And, most importantly, how to represent them from my perspective. This paradox has been my biggest challenge as an artist. Perhaps when internally processed in social isolation, they result in the development of self-schemas such as being rebellious, introverted, or viewing the self as being highly sensitive as described by psychologist Elaine Aaron (2010).

From 2016 onwards, I have been significantly interested in studying the anatomy of the face. Since then, most of my artworks have made references to the expression of emotion, repercussions of social behavior, humanity, and cultural identity. I find it interesting that the face can represent significant internal mental processes of the body (Pogosyan & Engelmann 2017), despite being just about an eighth of an average human proportion.

Therefore, in my artwork 'Introspective Instability, I illustrate how fragile the mental model can become, using my face as a model. Through conceptualization of self-portraiture, I try to describe the self-concepts that emerge when self-awareness disintegrates to a point where self-integrity is threatened.

3.3 Development of the artwork

Pallor (2020) is the first painting in the series. The term pallor could be defined as a pale color of the skin caused by illness, emotional shock, or stress from fear, embarrassment, or grief. When I was making this artwork, I was considering how the self perceives and compares itself within the contemporary social networking sites such as Facebook and Instagram. These social networking sites are attractive platforms for self-presentation because users can take their time to strategically construct online personas (avatars) that emphasize their most desirable traits in comparison to face-to-face interactions (Vogel et al. 2014).



PICTURE 6. Ngeny Trevor, Pallor (2020).

In the painting (Picture 6), I have used texture, line movements, the impression of light, and blend of color to enhance facial features. The rhythm, saturation, and contrast of color and lines in the image create a feeling that resembles the use of filter and photo enhancements in digital self-representations. Red and shades of blue are dominant colors in the painting. Here, red is an emotionally intense color. Together with the movement of lines, it describes an emotion ranging from passionate, intense love to anger and violence.

Dense shades of blue, on the other hand, forms a contrast to the feeling of vibrancy to create an emotional sense of despair. When juxtaposed together, it creates a genuine atmosphere of the self - A mixture of positive and negative attributes of the self. The painting shows an up-close representation of the self as if trapped within a mirror-like reflective composition. Borrowing from Propped (1992) (Picture1), The deformed, confrontational, structure of the face, signifies imperfection of the self, hidden within filtered images of selfies (Figure 5).

Selfies - a generation trend for digital representation of a current individual personality, integrate into our daily lives as a social norm. However, the emotional sincerity they represent is still a question of debate. Besides, some studies suggest that, through the daily reception of comparative social information, trait self-esteem may be affected by long-term exposure to social media in every-day life, leading to the positive or negative evaluation of the self. Some research studies have shown that high-frequency usage of these social networking sites is associated with increased depression and decreased well-being (Vogel et al. 2014).

Algor is the second painting in the series. The term also could refer to as a sensation of coldness resulting from a cold or damp environment, or emotional reaction. Inspired by Quinn's work (Self 1991), Algor (Picture 7), describes the process of the self, withdrawing involuntarily from the social environment. At this point, the 'self' desires to avoid anything that causes social anxiety and fears of rejection at the idea of social interaction. The self-entity avoids almost all contact with family and close friends and extends periods alone.

In the painting (Picture 7), I have used shades of purple as a dominant color of self-devotion. The color combines the calm stability of blue and the fierce energy of red. Towards the bottom of the painting, several cubes irregularly pile on the flat surface. These boxes symbolize self-knowledge and wisdom from self-perception, trapped in boxes creating stereotypes of the self. They signify the attribute of egocentrism and the destabilization of comfort.



PICTURE 7. Ngeny Trevor, Algor (2020).

The face direction is opposing the normal left-to-right visual movement of perception blends into the background movement of light. The movement of light signifies the self, deteriorating into darkness. The self-entity desires to confine itself to solitude, as it feels it is tiring or upsetting to be with other people. The more the self spends time in isolation, the less it feels understood. The phase extends to emotional isolation (Figure 6).

Rigor is the third painting in the series. The term rigor defines the harsh and demanding conditions where the self feels mortified. This is an effect of emotional isolation that occurs due to social isolation. It is the state where the self-entity experiences of a mixed experience of being alone, lacking social relationships or emotional support, and craving for social contact. (Figure 7) This phase is linked to feelings of sadness and emptiness.

Set in front of a dark red background representing the feeling of anguish, the character in the painting (Picture 8) is layered between a sketchy bounding frame resembling a window frame and, at the same time, a yoke. I used a contrast of

highlight and shadows on the facial appearance of the character to induce a feeling of hollowness. The bounding frame signifies a phase of stagnation in which the self-entity endures emotional conflict, and the green color represents outdoors — an external environment to which the self-entity desires to experience freedom and growth in vain.



PICTURE 8. Ngeny Trevor, Rigor (2020).

While emotional isolation could act as a defense mechanism to protect a self-entity from distress, extreme feelings of sadness and emptiness could lead the self into a phase of existential crisis (Higuera 2018). *Livor* (2020) is the fourth painting in the series. The term *livor* could define a skin discoloration as from bruise or occurring after death (Picture 9) During this phase, the self-entity has no absolute interest in any activity. The physical health of the entity deteriorates, including possible self-injury: the self, experiences extreme levels of low self-worth and despair.



PICTURE 9. Ngeny Trevor, *Livor* (2020).

The feeling of hopelessness causes the self-entity to develop a sense of meaninglessness in its existence. In some instances, the self-entity envisions the end of life (Figure 8). Putrefaction is the fifth painting in the series. The term putrefaction refers to the decomposition of organic matter. The analogy of the title (Figure 9), stems from a stage of death when a body begins to form a foul smell. This analogy induces a sense of being aware that something is not right about the self. Self-entity, in a robust way, calls for attention.

In the conceptualization of the artwork (Picture 10), I used aggressive colors and lines to bring out the intensity of attention and soft fading colors to describe a shedding process. The dominant colors are brown and shades of blue. Shades of blue show a significant amount of grief still lingering within the self, while brown in the background symbolize grounds for growth. Weak colors of red and yellow represent inner strength, alarm, determination, and distant optimism. The facial features of the character in the center of the image are visibly sharp and exposed. I combined all these elements, intending to generate a feeling of emergence from a recent adverse circumstance.



PICTURE 10. Ngeny Trevor, Putrefaction (2020).

Finally, the artwork titled Decay (Picture 11), signifies the decaying of negative energy for the emergence of a new positive self. According to studies on dissonance, the ego does not want to live with an uncomfortable state of tension; rather, it acts to reduce it (Vohs, et al. 2007). For this to be effective, the self should involve cognitive and affective processes that are essential to self-regulation. Through self-regulation, the self-entity attempts to regulate its actions, thoughts, and emotions to achieve desired outcomes (Figure 10).

In Decay (Picture 11), I used the intensity of yellow light to illuminate the character of the self. This element, supported by the visually agreeable left-to-right movement of the character's facial orientation towards the light, induces a feeling of energy, clarity, and positiveness. Yellow, in this context, symbolizes a personality of courage and self-confidence, will-power, and fulfillment. The expressive, vibrant red strokes compliment the desire for positivity by emphasizing physical energy determination as well as strength. The green color symbolizes personal growth, while deep blue emphasizes on self-stability and the decay of negative energy.



PICTURE 11. Ngeny Trevor, Decay (2020).

By comparing these series of artworks to psychological studies of the mind, I have found that self-concepts can provide a framework for understanding the origins of psychosocial problems and create an optimistic perspective for their resolution through self-affirmation, self-awareness, and self-regulation. This insight encourages a sense of control over one's behavior, one's environment, and one's thoughts and feelings to create an atmosphere that could be essential for happiness and a sense of well-being. (Vohs, et al. 2007).

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

After analyzing Saville's and Quinn's artworks, I observed that the subject of self-representation is still relevant. Most of my analyses examined research material from contemporary art, philosophical studies of psychology and social behavior. However, I also considered my knowledge and experience of the arts to draw meaningful conclusions. Therefore, the results of my analysis were partly objective and partly subjective.

What was interesting to me was how broad, issues related to self-identity gets. I unearthed out a lot of insightful information that, unfortunately, could only help to solve just a handful of psychosocial problems. I believe that art as a social and cultural component could help to create a framework for observing and evaluating more of those psychosocial problems and developments. However, in-depth studies of psychosocial theories and concepts require professional psychologists and sociologists to provide a complete and accurate account of that ontology.

In my research, I found out that to effectively conceptualize self-portraitures, several components related to self-concepts must be analyzed and categorized. Elements, such as self-knowledge, self-schemas, self-perception, self-esteem, and social comparison, are inert. They, therefore, need to be conceptualized to describe the personality of the artist as they desire to be recognized. These elements of self-concept are developed through memories of the artists' past experiences, current events, and future expectations in a social, cultural context.

I was interested particularly in the artworks that appeared from early 1990s in the UK contemporary art scene, as this was a period when young British artists were revolting against being trapped in artistic formalism. I believe this revolution created an urgent sense of self-differentiation and self-redefinition for the artists' personal lives as well as in their artistic careers. In this sense, their works almost certainly became successful due to their ability to create narrative content with a relationship to the visible world.

In considering the current period where self-portraiture is easily digitized with a single camera click from our smartphones and other digital devices, I find that the process of conceptualizing self-representation is quite superficial. In addition to the online avatars that easily manipulate the ingenuity of emotions and narratives based on self-portrayal, I find myself biased towards a more organic and traditional composition of self-portraiture using the actual paint as a medium for this specific project.

Based on my analyses of those selected self-portraits by Saville and Quinn, I decided to compose a portrait series of myself. The drive behind the composition of the series was to make it more personal and testimonial to the circumstances built around it. I incorporated several props inspired by Saville and Quinn but with a twist of translation into my artwork. In that regard, my artwork could show some resemblances and differences in their art presentation in a couple of ways.

The production process of this thesis was quite engaging. I had a lot of research to do on the text, and the artworks as well. However, receiving constant feedback from my supervisors and my colleagues eased a lot of strain. I believe that effort was merit, considering the difficult circumstances around its production, such as the coronavirus pandemic, limited access to libraries, contact feedback, exhibition space, etc. along with the artwork, I also produced a video selfie interview to comment on the process and outcome of the self-portrait series.

After the completion of the project, a feedback process on the artwork was offered. Based on the feedback, it appears that the themes from the artwork were mostly well-received as I intended. However, some considerable improvements regarding its documentation and installation were recommended. I found those recommendations to be quite useful and productive.

Due to the Corona virus pandemic, *Introspective Instability* was officially presented in the *Atomic Jungle* exhibition (2020) through a virtual gallery in April 2020. This exhibition opened a rather vindictive consideration to me of how digital representation is ironically inevitable. Although I consider the virtual gallery as a digital mediated reality, I really hope that I still get to display the series in an actual exhibition space in the future.

I feel that this project has been very educational, especially on the theoretical and hands-on level. Obtaining answers and different perspectives on various unanswered psychological questions have been quite liberating for me. Therefore, I would like to deepen my knowledge much further on the relationship between art and the philosophies of psychology, and sociology. I look forward to continuing my studies and perhaps diversify my art experience into digital works in the future.

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Figure 1. The self-concept diagram above provides a framework for the inter-relationship between introspected states and introspective states of the self.

FIGURE 2. Introspective Instability installation display simulation (2020)

FIGURE 3. Installation Plan (2020)

FIGURE 4. Front side installation display simulation (2020)

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Artwork-related poetic texts

The poetic texts included in the installation of my artwork are described here according to the respective title of each art piece in the series.

PALLOR

And while the glare still glints on my face, the enormous shadow inside my head, as well as that inside my heart is surprisingly immeasurable - look through my face, look through the sparkles in my eyes, through the flush on my temples, my smiles and my cover of pretence, look through me, there is a tint of weariness all over; Am I alone?

Look through my charms and read through my words, read through the lines, the gallant edges, the bold titles and the iridescent highlights of my life, read through every page with a depth of keenness, and you shall soon discover a vivid definition of solitude beyond all these glamor.

FIGURE 5. Ngeny Trevor, Pallor, poetic text (2020).

ALGOR

Shortly I shall be headed back into the four-cornered stone wall of my chambers, the walls of my cold, solitary chambers that have come to define me as an acquaintance, and I as well to them. Over time, they have learnt to become devoted friends who listen carefully and understand me in my silence and whilst in my silent conversations, they remind me that still I am.

FIGURE 6. Ngeny Trevor, Algor, poetic text (2020).

RIGOR

My skin is sensitive. Even more sensitive these days. Too sensitive to the bone. And every touch either fascinates or intimidates my nerves. But I cannot be touched. My body is too cold, and too rigid from paralysis. It must be the long longing to be touched; the long suspense of waiting, the lonely suspense of being detached from any touch. The intimate feminine touch. But I feel nothing. Freedom is only within me, but even pure imagination feels impossibly surreal.

FIGURE 7. Ngeny Trevor Algor, poetic text (2020).

LIVOR

And, time and time again I see myself standing above this never ending-hollow hole, a vertical gyrating tunnel; so deep, that its other end is impossibly observ-able. Then almost as always, in a sudden blink, in a sudden rush of panic, when a certain cold chill pulse through the marrow of my bones; I begin to sink. Or is it that I am overwhelmed with fear, that perhaps I may someday disappear or be-come a sole definition of solitude itself in the end?

FIGURE 8. Ngeny Trevor, Livor, poetic text (2020).

PUTREFACTION

I feel heavy, I cannot even sit or sleep or stand or think. I feel trapped in an in-vincible boundary. I just feel I should eat. And eat and eat. I think my reality is quickly fading. I don't want to be alone anymore, yet I cannot be with anyone. I am frightened by the dependency of affection. But my hands are tied to the same affection. The same affliction. I cannot fall in love anymore. I cannot be loved. The possibility of impossibilities has finally caught up with me and this time I fear it is here to stay. I think the darkness is swallowing me up. I can feel myself slowly diminishing. I have no bones nor flesh nor blood. Am I even there?

FIGURE 9. Ngeny Trevor, Putrefaction, poetic text (2020).

DECAY

And when we have bottled up enough, we begin to feel like we need to shed the cocoon. Everyone around us suddenly seem to be sanguinely composed and buoyant. We see the light from our decaying selves. Their light. We need someone who could just look at us and understand all that we would wish to say and support us to drift back to our own renaissance. To start all over again in a different, detoxed version ourselves. A self that knows no disintegration. We implore for any intervention from eyes that see beyond the flesh that is not. The light.

FIGURE 10. Ngeny Trevor, Decay, poetic text (2020).