Haunted Chamber: Exploration of Repressed Human Emotions Through A Mixed Media Painting in Oil and Fiber

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Abstract

There is a recurring problem in our society that perpetuates the silencing and censorship of its people. Over the years, the number of individuals who do not feel free to speak their minds also increases (Gibson & Sutherland, 2023). This paper addresses the pervasive issue of emotional repression in our society. Drawing inspiration from personal experiences and the exploration of emotions both in literature and art, this project is a mixed media painting in oil and fiber revolving around the concept in a 4 x 6 ft. painting. Haunted Chambers delves into repressed emotions tied with objects, with the motif of 'burning' as a representation of how our emotions consume us without release. With the use of color, lighting, subject, and symbolism, this project aims to paint a scene that is thought provoking and yet would resonate with its audience. By merging these artistic mediums, the project seeks to convey a nuanced and evocative narrative that captures the essence of emotional repression.

Keywords: emotional repression, mixed media, oil painting, fiber art

Introduction

The idea of my thesis project was sparked by a particular poem from 2022. Written as a series of free-verse and spoken word poetry revolving around my childhood, "Notes of a Dead Child" talks about my assault, trauma, and how difficult it is to speak about it because of my own upbringing as a child; it speaks of how I have been wired to keep silent of my emotions, my pain, and my experiences. It opens in these lines:

Exist more quietly, child.

Never talk of the hands that haunt your sleep.

The sadness that plagues you at night;

and the smiles that burn you in the morning.

Exist more quietly, child.

Do not let them ask questions-

Hide the bees in your chest;

Keep silent of the truth you bury.

Do not talk any more than this, child.

Else you'll become an accomplice

Of a crime you were a victim of.

Note. Excerpt of "Notes of a Dead Child" by Clarice Portia Bajao (2022)

I imagine parts of myself trapped inside my house of horrors. I am always spiralling back into moments I hold deep grudges from. Perhaps because I could not speak about it. So much so that even if it consumes me, I still keep it locked and hidden inside a box of its own. "Don't build a wall around your suffering. It may devour you from the inside." This is a quote by Frida Kahlo that I hold dear. But one does not realize they live in a burning house if they have lived there all their life. Unfortunately, we become accustomed to the fire that consumes us; enough that we realize it only after we have escaped it. As a child, I was taught how goodness equates to being quiet; but it does not. All it makes is a repressed kid who, in the future, can no longer talk about the pain they carry. That is how I was raised- as a quiet child.

Sometimes, I implore for words to come out of me. *"Speak, Portia. Speak. Before you miss a beat- before it's already too late."* I repeat until the words sound weird in my head. At the thought, a familiar pit in my stomach makes itself known again; and all at once, I could feel my fingertips turn cold, my feet sink, my knees shake, my lips beg to keep silent of the thought and feelings I carry. It physically hurt me to speak. Every part and fraction of my being pleads my silence because of the comfort of its familiarity. There is something curious about the act of defiance when it comes to how your brain and body is wired. The way you are rendered unable to cope with your brain's pleas. After all, it is difficult to be proficient at something that goes against your upbringing just out of desire.

One need not be a chamber to be haunted,

One need not be a house;

The brain has corridors surpassing

Material place.

…Far safer through an Abbey gallop,

The stones achase,

Than, moonless, one's own self encounter

In lonesome place.

Ourself, behind ourself concealed,

Should startle most;

Assassin, hid in our apartment,

Be horror's least.

Note. Excerpt from poem by Emily Dickenson, "Ghost", 1891

There is a recurring problem in our society that perpetuates the silencing and censorship of its people. Over the years, the number of individuals who do not feel free to speak their minds also increases (Gibson & Sutherland, 2023). According to an article in Britannica, censorship is a concept that changes, suppresses, or prohibits speech and/or writing that is deemed and branded as subversive of the common good (Anastaplo, 2023). Just like most things, it is multifaceted and can come in different forms. Irrefutably, however, it is a problem that accumulates over time. On a wider and broader lens, the undue influence of powerful entities, such as corporations or governments, on mass media and communication channels further the silencing and censorship in our society (Kelly, et. al., n.d.). We, as a society, because of precedent narratives and concepts before us, have inadvertently learned to repress our thoughts and emotions into something more 'desirable' for the world- thus, simply creating an enigma that are not able to clearly process and express their own thoughts, opinions, and emotions and simply just mirroring what we think would be well received by others.

The culture of machismo and misogyny which is still rampant in today's time, frowns upon emotions and vulnerability. Texas based writer, Ixa Sotelo, examines the intersections between Latinx culture, spirituality, non-monogamy, mental health, and queer identity. They expound on how the concept of machismo and 'traditional' masculinity still impact how men view themselves, women, and the world around them. Such concepts consider expressing emotions to be weak and/or self-defeating. With a prevailing narrative that paints emotions as such, we become wired to think the same. In this sense, emotional expression equates to being below everybody else. Now, you are deemed as being overly sensitive as if being able to suppress your own emotion is a facet of what it means to be strong. The fear of being branded as someone beneath and inadequate drives this concept of emotional suppression- thus, perpetuating a spiral of silence and self-censorship. (The Arbor Behavioral Healthcare, 2023)

In a way, I see it as a form of oppression. The way it ties us down and gags us up while trying to persuade us that we are 'free'. In a society built upon cultures of generations of machismo-anchored by misogyny, it poses a problem not just to women, as the opposite sex, but rather, to society as a collective. We become repressed- *haunted*; with no release until the emotions we have bottled up drives us to the edge.

Repression of emotions is something we learn early on in our lives and only upon growing older, do we start to realize the negative effects they harbour. This makes it imperative of how we must address such a toxic coping mechanism of emotional suppression and embrace our human
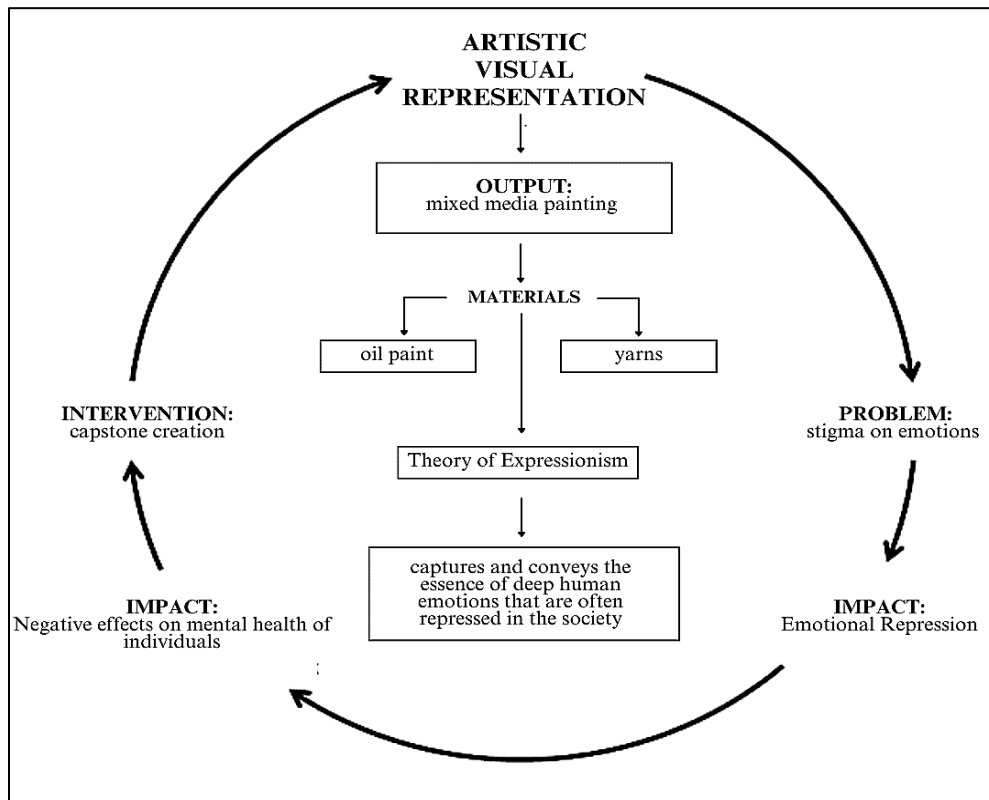
nature, even its darker and 'feral' aspects. As both an artist and individual living in the 21st century, I have ought to speak about such a prevalent problem in our society that people hardly talk about.

"The silence depressed me. It wasn't the silence of silence. It was my own silence." (Plath, 1963). Art- whichever form it takes, has always been a vehicle of self- expression and this could be traced back to its earliest form. The need to express is such a crucial and innate part of our lives as artists; the way we both thirst and drown from it. In the art of literature, Sylvia Plath does this exceptionally well. Apparent in her works, Plath exhibits her emotions through writing at a time where people- more so women- are not given any platform to speak. In the Bell Jar, she explores overarching themes of depression, mental illness, imposter syndrome, and stereotypes of women in her time through the story. Plath spoke of the reality she lived in through her works- the way it touched on societal issues that are still present in today's time. In relation, my project would be exploring the prevailing concepts of repressed human emotions as a means to address the rampant social issue of emotional repression fuelled not only by hegemony, but also machismo, and toxic masculinity.

Despite the familiar theme of expression, this thesis project takes a deeper look at our own humanity, specifically its 'darker' facets. My approach to making this painting would be described as 'brutally poetical'. Exploring the idea of burning objects as a representation of the self/mind, I will explore and express emotional repression in our time today while telling my own story. Relatively, the concept of 'burning' came from this idea of how without any release, these emotions consume us entirely. In a way, it is a social commentary on the prevailing social issue of emotional repression.

Figure 1

Artistic Visual Representation

ARTISTIC VISUAL REPRESENTATION

OUTPUT:
mixed media painting

MATERIALS

oil paint   yarns

INTERVENTION:
capstone creation

Theory of Expressionism

PROBLEM:
stigma on emotions

captures and conveys the essence of deep human emotions that are often repressed in the society

IMPACT:
Negative effects on mental health of individuals

IMPACT:
Emotional Repression

Note. Framework Visual Representation of Overall Concept and Methods of Thesis

This creative framework illustrates the key concepts and methods related to the project topic. A detailed summary of information about the project output, resources, audience, theory, problem, impacts, purpose, and intervention is presented in this section.

In a mixed media painting, I will be expressing repressed emotions through an expressionism art style. The medium would be in oil paint and fabric art and will be a 4 x 6 ft. painting that revolves around the concept of emotional repression, with the motif of 'burning' as a representation of how our repressed emotions consume our beings. With the use of color, lighting, space, and symbolism, this project aims to paint a scene that is thought provoking and yet would resonate with its audience.

The project will be tackling an apparent yet undermined societal issue and would explore related facets revolving around human nature interwoven to the problem. This project would answer, (1) what emotional repression is, (2) what emotions do people often repress. (3) why do we repress our own emotions, and (4) how could we represent these emotions in an art form. After gathering relevant information surrounding my field and study of interest, I had found that because of the stigma surrounding emotions and its expression is still apparent in today's time, the best way we could address it, is to simply speak up. As such, this project is created in hopes that people would find solace in knowing that these emotions are normal and are not as evil as society makes it out to be- thus, there is no need for us to keep it inside. It is a deeper dive into our humanities and society's eagerness to purge facets that make us 'human.'

In line with this, I will be utilizing the theory of expressionism that delves into how art resonates with its audience through the use of color, symbolism, and technique. This best fits my project as expression is a key facet of making this piece. Although 3D game design and digital art are the main methods that have inspired the style of the piece, because of the implications of expression and the nonconventional use of mixed media, the theory of expressionism plays a pivotal role in the accumulation of the piece itself. I would like for my art to resonate with other people and have them question and evaluate their beliefs revolving around their own narratives and these repressed emotions.

Continually, the **research design** of this project is an introspective exploration of my narratives in a mixed media expressionism painting in oil and fiber. I intended to put two (2) different media to contrast each other while giving gravity to the symbolism of repression and trauma which is not often visible with the naked eye. The fiber for this output is the medium used for the symbolism of 'burning' as yarns are a representation of restraint. Relatively, the concept of burning was an idea that came from the analogy of how fire is 'destructive'- the same way how unexpressed and repressed emotions destroy us. I also thought that if we see it in a different lens, 'fire' can represent life and rebirth. Although the things that consume us come in fires, once it is put out, nothing is left but ashes to remember them by. The symbolism gives an equal gravity and depth to the rather imperative topic to talk about as emotional repression. Furthermore, the techniques of couching and hand tufting, are a symbol of the caging, pain, and burdens that we experience along with these situations and emotions we keep inside. The use of dim lighting, analogous colors, and eerily abandoned interiors makes the piece more 'haunting' to enunciate the meaning behind the piece itself.

In regards to my **data gathering** method, as part of the exploration of repressed emotions, I conducted a survey along with my own introspective exploration in order to gather the narratives of individuals who frequently experience emotional repression to prove that this problem still exists in our time. In due process, I aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the prevailing and pervasive societal issue through their stories and perspectives and by extension, shed light on emotional repression. The survey with 50 respondents within the scope of my target audience, ensures that the gravity of the problem being addressed is given a context in today's time.

Questions:
1. When it comes to handling your emotions, what do you usually do? Do you tend to express them or keep them to yourself more often?
2. Is there a particular emotion that you find yourself repressing more often than others? What are they? (check all that applies)
3. Why do you think you repress these emotions?
4. Were there any effects that you realize in repressing your own emotions? (may be good or bad)
5. Do you have other ways to cope with your repressed emotions? (check all that applies)
6. Can you recall a time when you expressed these emotions? How was it received?
7. Do you think other people also repress their emotions? Why?
8. As a part of the generation today, do you still feel a stigma on emotions?

Synthesis:

Against the backdrop of stigmatization of emotions, precedent narratives, toxic masculinity and many more, the problem of emotional repression still exists in our time today. With *78%* percent of people leaning towards keeping their emotions to themselves, this grounds us to the reality that most people in Gen-Z are more prone to repressing their own emotions than not. Among these commonly repressed emotions, *sadness, anger, disappointment, resentment/contempt, and shame* were the ones frequently repressed- with the top reasons being- (1) It's more comfortable to keep them inside than to talk about it, (2) I'm afraid of being judged and perceived, and (3) I do not want to deal with them. And with the question- *'As a part of the generation today, do you still feel a stigma on emotions?'* 50% of the respondents answered *yes*, 48% answered *sometimes,* and 2% answered *no.* With this data at hand, we can assume and conclude that the problem of emotional repression exists and is still rampant in our time today. In light of this, this project and the capstone creation are important to assist in the eradication and deconstruction of the social stigma associated with emotions.

For the **intended audience,** Haunted Chambers is targeted to Generation Z specifically those who feel this prevailing problem of emotional repression. Emotional repression is a problem that passes on from generation to generation from precedent narratives that brand expression as a facet that constitutes weakness. As such, I think that our generation today accumulated the rather heavy burden of unresolved and repressed emotions we got from growing up with parents who see emotion as a nuisance- and we, as of recent years, became more hyper aware of this problem. Given this, I think that my art would connect more to them despite being a piece that could possibly touch older generations as well.

For my **design process**, the style I will be employing is greatly influenced by the artist under the art handle- *miaamanman1995* on Instagram. I wanted to divert the approach to something that is only often seen within a digital space and steer away from the realist style. The illustrations of miaamanman1995 encapsulates the normal lives of people often in a dire and sad lens in a more narrative and lyrical form. Scenes within their piece evokes emotions of solitude and lonesomeness- to which I am inspired by. In addition, I will also be applying the eerie atmosphere in horror games specifically in Resident Evil's background design and world building for the composition of my work to make it more 'haunting.' The uncanny style gives the piece a layer of interest to its audience as to what it could mean behind the scene.

Continually, I wanted to emulate texture, motion, and rhythm to my piece to accompany the 'movement' of the fire of the fiber art with the use of soft textures to balance it. In terms of the fiber art, I think that the yarn made from my old clothes that would be sewn into the canvas itself gives the impression of something 'otherworldly' within a space that's rather close to reality but still complement the painting in some way.

In part of my pre-production, I did conceptualizations and studies of burning objects both traditional and digital. As a result of researching and being inspired by other artists, I developed my style and approach for the project. Additionally, through the prototyping process, I have also explored and experimented with the techniques used in embroidery, and tufting to determine which is fitting for the project I am doing. The prototyping process allowed me to explore different textures and forms, and to decide which technique was best for the end product. I also tested the materials and colors I wanted to use to ensure they would work together. Finally, I finalized the

design concept and moved on to production. With the production itself, I made compositions fitting the concept I thought of during the pre-production stage. After which, references were shot and then made into a digital study of the piece itself. I then moved onto starting with the 4 x 6 ft. painting, before proceeding with embroidering and hand-tufting then making revisions for the exhibition.

Texture/ Technique

Figure 2

Glazing Process

      Glazing is a process in painting where the artist adds a thin transparent paint coat often mixed with turpentine and brushed over a dry underlayer. This makes the depth more apparent and enhances the color of the piece that cannot be achieved by merely mixing the pigments together.

Figure 3

Dry Brush Method for Blending Oil Paint

      A dry brush blending technique in painting involves using a second brush with no solution or pigment and brushing over the painted surface for a softer look. The result of this technique is a canvas that appears to have softer edges and well blended colors. This process needs the paint to still be wet to be able to be blended. Often, I would first have a base color with different hue variations and then blended with a bristled brush. This creates an 'illustrated' look that would almost seem digital.

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Figure 4

Couching Stitch Detail from Prototype in Studio II

  Couching- being one of the prominent methods apparent in my fiber art is a type of stitching that capsulates a yarn and is held over by another. By meticulously stitching small stitches with yarn, a yarn is skilfully placed on the fabric's surface, creating a striking and textured effect. This method interested me as it gives the stitches a caged look- a detail I also added to my art. I incorporated this detail not only to enhance the aesthetic appeal, but also to augment its conceptual resonance within the piece itself.

Figure 5

Hand-Tufting Stitch Detail from Prototype in Studio II

Note. High pile loops and flat stitch technique with double yarns inserted from the punch needle

Tufting is a process of producing textile with the use of yarns punched into a canvas material. The process involves specific tools like a tufting gun or a punch needle to do. In my art, I plan to use hand-tufting methods not only to give the piece more texture, but also because the act itself fascinated me. The way the process involves punching yarns through a surface that is perfectly good on its own and leaving huge holes behind what is seemingly beautiful at first glance gives the analogy of how as children, we have come to believe that it is our bad experiences that makes us stronger. We are told to turn these experiences into a lesson so that we may grow to become a better person. To an extent, I share the same sentiment. After all, it is inevitable to encounter both good and bad experiences in life. On the flipside however, there are some things I wish had not happened to me in the past. I did not want to be 'stronger'- I was just a little kid who barely knew anything. I did not deserve to go through all that trauma just for the sake of growth. That in mind, the analogy within this process made me choose to add hand-tufting to my fiber art.
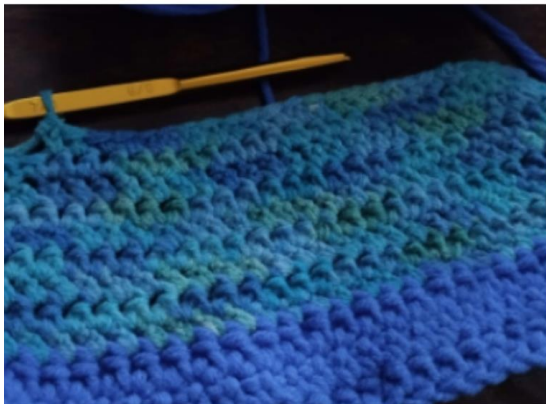
Pre-production

Sketches/ Studies

The project starts with the concept, studies, and compositions from the pre-production stage of the project. The studies will include not only the sketches of the concept of burning houses/ objects but also the prototypes and concept design done for the classes in Studio II and III, Scenography, and Post Production throughout the academic year. In part of this, details such as what type of cloth, yarn, and stitching method I used have been explored in this part of the process. Continually, it also includes the exploration of compositions and scenes which inspired the final composition of the painting.

Figure 6

Studies and Sketches

Figure 7

Prototyping Process

Note. Prototyping of initial concept of 'shame' during Studio II.

Figure 8.1

Pre-Production Concept Study

Note. "Burning Couch" by Clarice Portia Bajao (2023) from 3 Scenes plate in Scenography

Burning Couch (2023) is a piece depicting the horrors of childhood trauma in the context of assault and abuse and how an object takes a hold of us even upon growing older. This piece explores the emotion of *'fear'* attached with a specific object of a couch and how without any release, it constantly consumes the person in the subject. This piece is inspired by my own experience of assault and molestation and how not being able to speak about it consumes me entirely.

Figure 8.2

Pre-Production Concept Study

Note. **"**Burning Skirt" by Clarice Portia Bajao (2023) from 3 Scenes plate in Scenography

This piece portrays the idea of '*shame*' and was inspired from my experience, struggles and inner conflicts as a genderfluid person who does not conform to society's idea of how queerness should 'look' like.

Figure 8.3
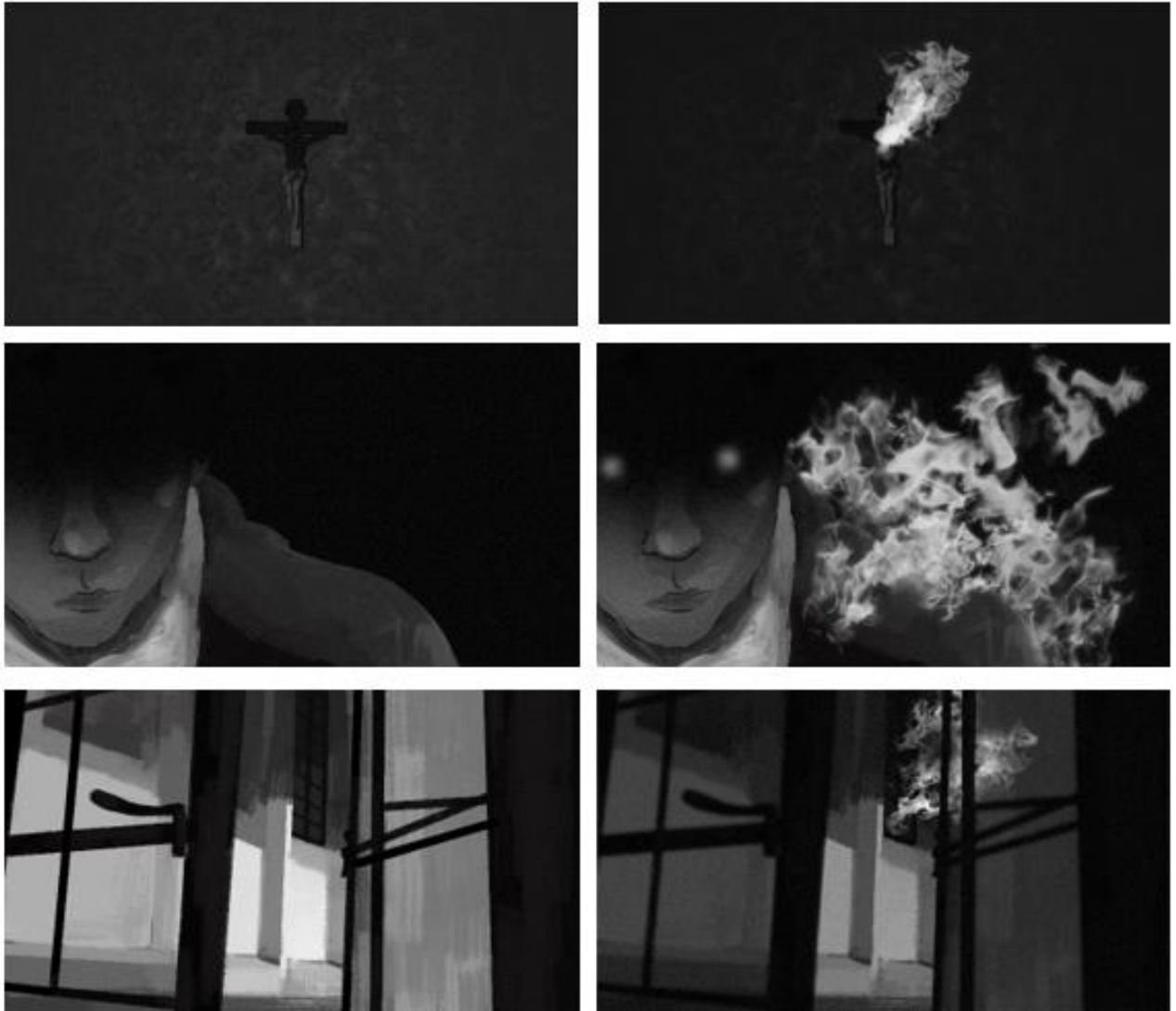
Pre-Production Concept Study

*Note. "*Burning Apartment" by Clarice Portia Bajao (2023) from 3 Scenes plate in Scenography

This piece explores the concept of *'resentment'* for our own lives and the people who make it seem too unbearable to live.

Figure 9

Pre-Production Concept Study

Note. OBB Design in Post-Production Class

Production

Composition Studies

Figure 10

Composition Reference Photo

Figure 11

Composition Study 1

In the process of making my studies for the final piece, I began to think about the direction I wanted to go. Since I already knew the objects I wanted to incorporate the 'burning' to, it was a matter of how the composition would be. In this case, I did not like how the life figure takes away the focal point of the scene which should have been the burning objects. As such, I tried to make another composition that could embody an eerier setting like how I envisioned it.

Figure 12

Composition Study 2

As such, I roughly drew out the composition without much detail and tried to render the colors that would work well for the piece itself. This composition is mainly inspired by background art for horror games which have limited lighting and desolate spaces. By then, I was satisfied with how haunting the scene looked but knew it would be best to make the piece more detailed and rendered by the start of the painting process.

Painting

       For my mixed media painting, I used oil paint as one of the main mediums. Oil painting as defined by Britannica (2023) is a process involving the mix of pigments and binder to produce a paint medium. It is a slow-drying medium and thus- gives the artist more time to work on their piece.

       Every artist has a different way of making their artwork. As for my own, the process starts with the blocking directly onto the canvas with oil paint mixed with thinner.

Figure 13

Block-ins

       In this part, I tried to put my digital composition onto the canvas and fixing some of its points.

       After which, the underpainting will be splattered across the canvas and would be dependent on the monochromatic color scheme for the specific piece. In this specific part, varying tones are used to create a discordance and make the underpainting look aged. I am not too particular with the values in this part and just focused on filling the white space to start.
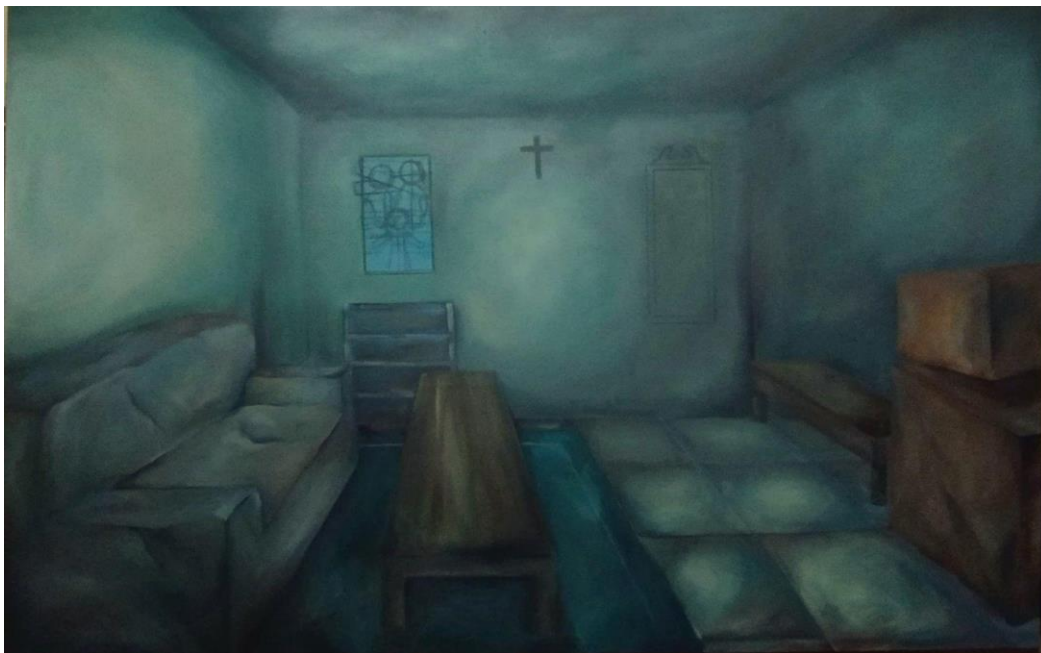
Figure 14

Underpainting

The base paint is then layered on top of the underpainting after dried to touch. I often use a different hue for the base paint to give it a layer of depth before the color correction (i.e. base paint of a human subject will mainly be in yellows and pinks but then color corrected to blue and brown on top). In this part of the process, I make it a point to correct the tonal values present within the canvas and define its highlights and shadows. In this process, details are also painted little by little.

Figure 15

Base Paint

Figure 16

Base Paint, Glazing, Detailing Process

This process also coincides with me glazing the canvas with the correct hues on top of the base paint. Continually, the last step to painting is varnishing. This step is done only after the canvas is ensured to be dry.

With the application of a thin amount of linseed oil, the dull and matted parts of the artwork will become more vibrant and even. This process is often termed as 'oiling out' the surface and is used to make the pigment of the oil paint evened out since different pigments have different finishes and are often disproportionate after drying.

Fiber Art

Figure 17

Fire Digital Layout

In order to visualize the composition of the fiber art, a digital layout was composed in order to visualize its layout. The purpose of this would be to serve as a reference for the mixed media and to ensure that the composition will not become off track once the sewing and tufting process has begun. This would also allow me to adjust the placement of the 'burning objects' before finalizing the piece.

Figure 18

Fire Fiber Art

      Yarns are a symbolism of restraint in my art. The intertwining and binding of the threads evokes a sense of confinement, limitation, and constraint. I wanted to explore how our upbringings, experiences, and societal perceptions can be restrictive, binding us and keeping us from expressing ourselves and without release, it takes a toll on us as a person. Using this artistic choice, I intend to visually convey the concept that emotions, like threads, can become entangled and suppressed over time, reflecting the prevalent issue of emotional repression. There are various techniques used in embroidery.

Figure 19

Fiber Art Process
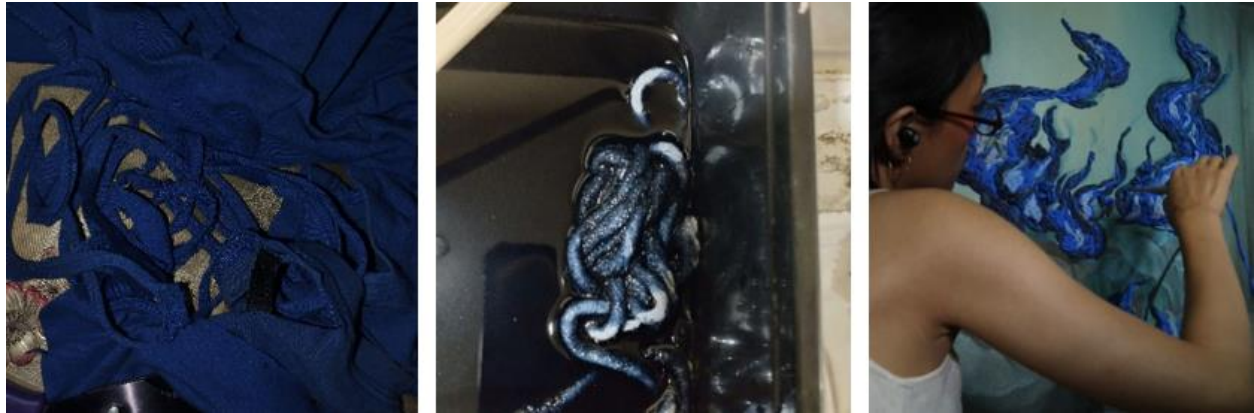
The fiber art for my project consists of four processes: (1) making the fabric yarn out of used clothes, (2) dying the yarns with fabric dye, (3) embroidering both fabric yarn and premade/ store-bought milk cotton yarns using mainly couching stitch and back stitch methods in embroidery. Lastly, the process of (4) hand tufting the yarns into the canvas. Each individual laborious process is essential in making the piece more nuanced and layered.

Upcycling old clothes to become yarn is not an entirely new process introduced to Filipinos. In fact, we have been using it in making rags that are often found in Filipino households. Often, it comes in a variety of colorful textiles from scraps of fabric that is then weaved and/or crocheted together. I got the idea of turning my old clothes from childhood into yarns to be part of my art to make it more personal than it already is.

Figure 20

Color Direction
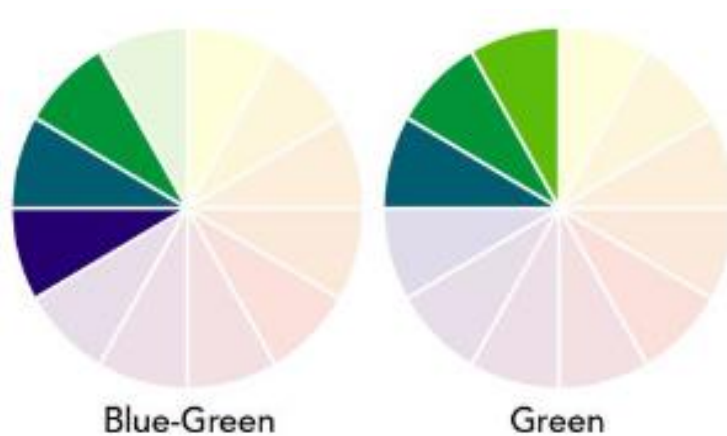
Note. Analogous color scheme chart by Michael Stillwell

I will be using analogous colors of green. The muted colors will be in contrast to the more vibrant analogous blue-green of yarns to create a dynamic and layered feel to the painting and yet still form cohesion within the piece.

Green is often associated with nature and growth as such represents peace, tranquillity and harmony (Color psychology, 2016) On a different lens, however, the color green is a prominent motif in the horror genre as it symbolizes decay, death, and the grotesque (Fotodiox, 2021). That in mind, I believe that to create the atmosphere I would like to evoke in my art, I employed the use of analogous green within the piece.

Furthermore, the use of dark contrast over low-exposure lighting within the scene gives a sense of discomfort within the piece. This characteristic is often seen and utilized in horror games with abandoned places with limited source of light.

Grid paper's A Guide to Creating Video Games Horror Lighting: Techniques for Crafting a Creepy Atmosphere speaks of how low lighting can evoke a sense of tension within a particular scene. The use of low lighting is a typical technique used in horror video games to create an atmosphere of uneasiness and mystery (Grid Paper, 2023)

Post Production

**Figure 21**

Exhibition Concept
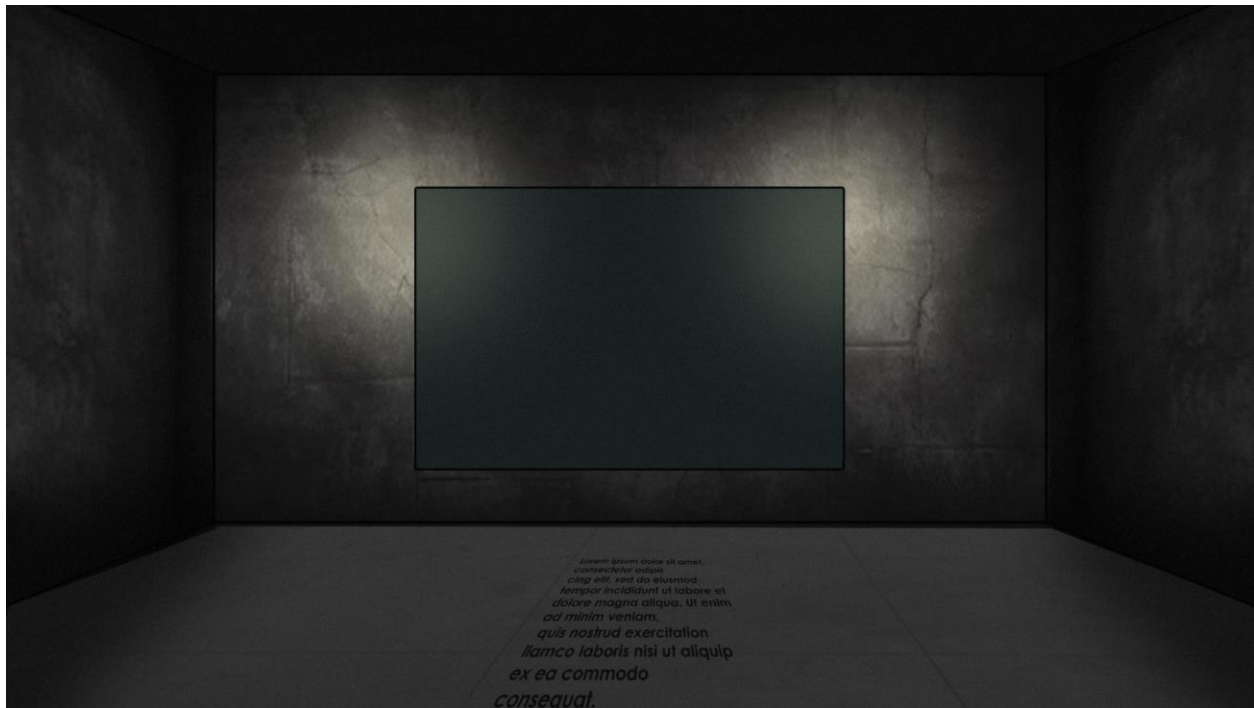
In preparation for the exhibit, I created a floor plan of how my painting will be exhibited. To enhance the emotions within the room, I plan on only having the piece in a dim ambiance and highlighting the piece itself so as to mimic a liminal space where you can feel solace yet anxiety

from the bare silence. I also plan to keep audiences at a minimal amount when entering the room so as not to over-crowd and defeat the purpose and meaning of this 'exploration' of oneself.

The exhibition plan would be referencing the Seagram Murals by Mark Rothko on the Tate Art Gallery and Ghosts by Don Bryan Bunag on Art Cube with their use of liminal space, grey walls, and dim lighting. I think that this type of installation concept is fitting for the topic and the piece itself rather than to be placed in a space full of other art in a clean-looking, and well-lit place.

Figure 22

Performance Art Concept
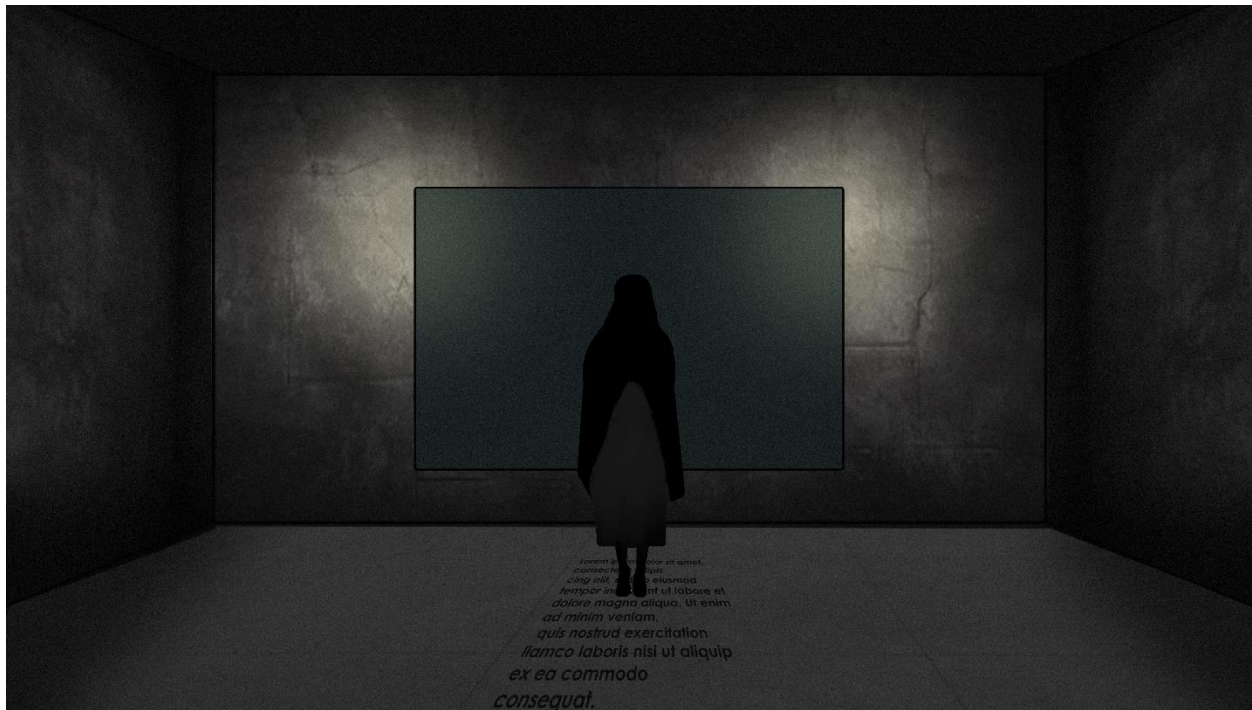
To enhance the impact of the artwork itself, I have also chosen to include an interactive performance art for the ingress of the exhibition. This includes a crochet piece as a shoal that is tied to the mixed media painting itself. The audience of the exhibition are the ones to pull the crochet piece apart as a symbolism of unravelling from the things that consume us. After the performance art, the yarn pieces will be exhibited right in front of the painting as a pile for the exhibition.

Figure 23

Crochet Piece for Performance Art

The crochet piece in figure 23 is done with black fabric yarns as well as thick chenille yarns. In order to make it easier for me to untangle the yarns for the performance art, I chose to use thicker strands unlike the ones I used for the mixed-media painting. As the performance part of the exhibition is simply done to better highlight the entire piece itself- it only took 20 minutes to end within the ingress.

Review of Related Literature

This section of the paper explores articles, and research that correlates to the topic of exploration of repressed human emotions as well as related literature, articles, and discussions regarding the two media of oil painting and fiber art.

Emotional Repression

What to Know About Repressed Emotions by WebMD (2021), expounds on the concept of emotional repression, the reasons behind this coping mechanism, and the negative effect they harbor. As stated in the article, repressed emotion is one that is consciously or unconsciously avoided and is generally left unprocessed. Among the emotions that are commonly repressed are fear, anger, pain, and shame. In an effort to avoid feeling intense emotions, people tend to ignore its feeling and end up repressing them. In doing so, it may give us a false sense of momentary security but irrefutably, it only costs us harm.

The Dangers of Suppressing Emotions, Claudia M. Elsig, MD (2022) also expounds on the meaning of emotional suppression, its causes, and its negative effects that may lead to different forms of mental illnesses. This highlights the fact that emotions that have been suppressed for a time are often linked to experiences from childhood. It is said that emotions become chronically suppressed when children are not provided with space and care to process trauma, or if they are shamed or invalidated of their own feelings.

Art and Expression

The section of Art as an Expression in the article Philosophy of Art, John Hospers, (2022) speaks of how art, as a form of expression, holds the reflections of the inner mind of an artist instead of the states of the external world. This article delves into expression in the creation of art, as well as the expressive product in relation to how artists create such an ambiguous concept as emotion.

Expressionism: Movement and Theory

Chapman University's Expressionism: An artistic movement and an art term? (2016) explain that in expressionism, emotions, fantasies, and thoughts are expressed subjectively, dependent on how an artist sees the world. The use of abstraction can be used to create an emotional effect in expressionistic art, but it does not necessarily eliminate all elements of figural or representational art. A wide range of colors, subject matter, and painting styles can be seen in the works of the artists of the Expressionism movement.

In an experiment, The Influence of Light and Color in Digital Paintings of Environmental Issues on Emotions and Cognitions by Hosap and Khundan (2023) explores facets of art that determines the emotion it exudes to its audience. Through a monochromatic color scheme, symbolisms, and metaphors, artists are able to express the emotion they want that can affect a viewer's emotions. Telling a story requires consideration of context, composition, light, and color to get its message across.

Color and Emotions

The concept of color in art refers to how we perceive different shades and tones. Compositions can also be used to convey emotions visually, to establish atmosphere, and to define space or shape (du Plessis, 2022). There are several ways to use color in art- no matter the medium. It may be through creating harmony and contrast to making a statement to conveying emotions and moods for specific scenes.

In the foreword by John Lasseter on the artbook "The Color of Pixar", he speaks of the importance of color to amplify the story and emotions felt within a particular scene. He states that:

> One of the most important tools we have as filmmakers is color. Color doesn't just make things beautiful; it makes things emotional. Color helps bring viewers into the moment with our characters, helps them feel what the characters are feeling. So, it's essential that the color of a scene always be true to its emotion. (Lasseter, 2017)

Mixed-media art

By its very nature, mixed media art is a mixture of a variety of materials. Paint, ink, collage, textiles, found objects, and even digital elements are often combined in artists' compositions. (Giesemann, P., 2023) Mixed media art is also seen as a powerful tool for self-expression. Through mixed-media art, artists can express themselves in a more holistic and personal way, free from the restrictions of traditional techniques. And by blending different media, it is possible to convey complex emotions, address social issues, and convey complex messages. It encourages experimentation and exploration of the boundaries between different art forms. Ultimately, it allows artists to create a unique piece of art that is truly their own.

Performance Art

Wainwright (2011) describes performance art as time-based art in which an audience or onlookers view a live performance and may include different art forms. Performance art, unlike traditional art forms like painting or sculpture, has a fleeting and temporal quality, existing and leaving a lasting impression on the viewer. The experience of being able to see the performance cannot be replicated merely through stories and photographs- as such gives larger impacts to the audience despite its ephemeral existence.

Figure 24

Picasso's Blue Period

*Note.* Paintings above are *The Old Guitarist*, and *The Tragedy* currently in Art Institute of Chicago and National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. respectively.

The Blue Period is a notable series of paintings that revolve and portray depressing emotions through its use of monochromatic shades of blue. This relates to how the use of color for my project defines how the message gets across to my audience.

Figure 25

Morten Schelde's Monochromatic Drawings
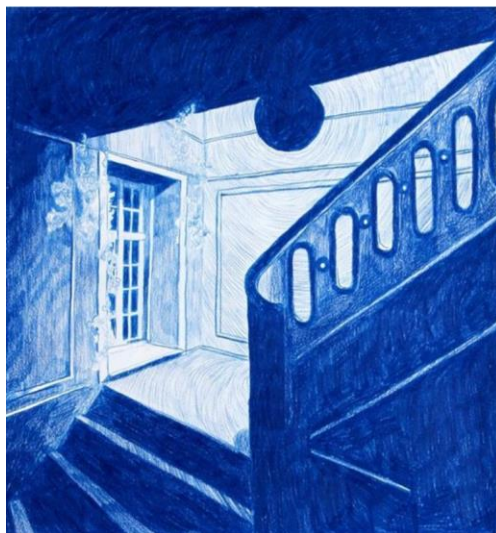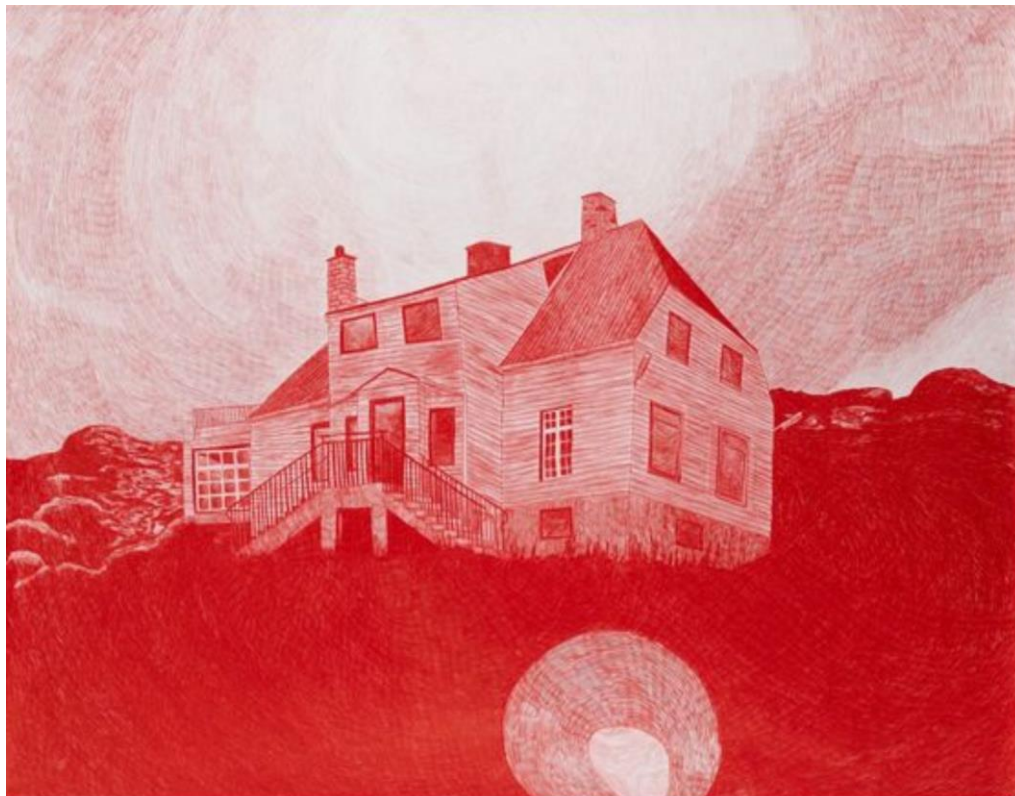
Morten Schelde's monochromatic art using pencil on paper as a medium encapsulates the artist's memories of childhood set within interior and exterior domestic landscapes. The pieces also give an unsettling and haunting atmosphere with the use of color, lighting, and strokes. Taking inspiration from Schelde's works, I would like to evoke emotions and narratives through the use of space within the canvas.

Style

Figure 26

Miaamanman1995's Watercolor pieces

As part of my upcoming project, I would like to take inspiration from the artist @miaamanman1995 on Instagram. The artist's distinctive style, characterized by the use of watercolor medium that emulate the aesthetics of digital art is something that I plan to incorporate to create an eye-catching and unique visual.

Figure 27

Horror Game Interiors

Note. Resident Evil 7 Concept Design Interior

      The concept design of horror games is designed specifically to set an ominous undertone throughout the playthrough. Such games often rely on the use of visuals, sound, and storytelling to create an atmosphere of mystery and suspense. Players must explore dark and mysterious environments, often abandoned or inhabited. I tried to incorporate characteristics of the atmospheric background design often seen in an interior landscape within the composition and style of my piece.

Mixed-media

Figure 28

Milissa Zexter's Embroidered Photographs

The embroidered photographs of Milissa Zexter demonstrate the unique combination of traditional craft and contemporary art. Embroidery is juxtaposed with photographic imagery, providing her creations with a depth and complexity. She explores how traditional methods can be combined with modern technology in her embroidered photographs. In her interview with textileartist.org she speaks of her process and motives behind her art. She says:

> The thread acts as a connection between the person and myself or place that I have photographed. I always think of the photograph as something from the past and the thread as a reaction to the past and present. The thread makes the photograph more personal to me and allows me to meditate on the image. Combining the two mediums (photography and sewing) allows me to reinvent the photograph; to visually react to a person or a place. (Zexter, n.d.)

Although my project incorporates oil painting as a medium, the complexity and depth of embroidered mixed-media art will be utilized in Haunted Chambers. Taking into consideration Zexter's use of colors and techniques, I will make it a point to bridge the two seemingly different mediums to create profoundness and amplify the narrative within my art.

Figure 29

Raffy Napay's Connecring Leaves, Connecting Lives

Raffy Napay's mixed-media paintings of thread and acrylic on canvas displays techniques of embroidery efficiently with layering threads to create depth and separate the foreground, mid-ground, and background. The local artist is part of my related works as this is the closest piece I could find with the media used in my project.

Figure 30

Fiber Art

Note. Madelene Romppanen Textile Art

Madelene Romppanen's textile art exhibits an array of techniques that emulate form and rhythm. The use of varying colors create an illusion of 'fire' despite its freeform and seemingly abstract structure. With my concept of 'burning', the main reference and inspiration I will be taking into account are Rompannen's works.

Exhibition

Figure 31

Ghosts by Don Bryan Bunag on Art Cube
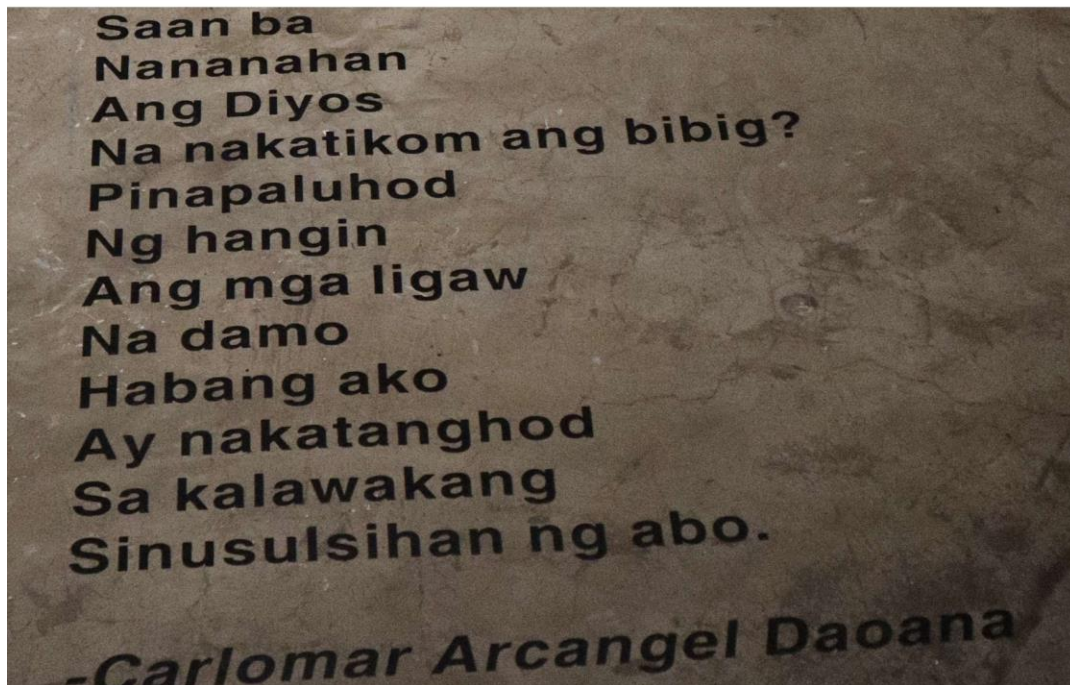
The exhibit by Don Bunag at Art Cube 2023 was one of the most impressive installations I have seen in a long time. With the use of isolated space, dark walls, and minimal lighting- it was exactly how I envisioned my art to be displayed back when I was formulating the concept for my thesis project. This was also the first time that I saw vinyl cut poem on the floor to enhance the theme of the exhibit. As such, I wanted to employ this facet in my exhibition plan as well- as this project is rooted from a poem I did in the first place.

Figure 32

Mark Rothko's Seagram Murals on Tate Britain

The Seagram murals (1958) by Mark Rothko is a series of modern art paintings currently displayed in Tate Gallery that utilize a dark grey and red palette to invoke a sense of darkness and solitude. Its exhibition often makes people 'burst into tears' upon seeing them, which is amplified thanks to the notable use of lighting and space by the gallery. This relates to my project in a way that paintings should evoke emotions to its viewers despite such an abstract and contemporary approach to it.

Figure 33

Enclose by Bea Camacho

      Bea Camacho is one of the most well-known performance artists in the Philippines. Her work, Enclose, is a performance art that went on for 11 hours straight as she crocheted her entire body in red yarn inside the exhibition space. The documentation video documents her entire process of performing the performance art from start to finish. I wanted to incorporate this type of impact of performance art to enhance my mixed media painting. Just like Bea Camacho, I will be doing a performance with a crochet piece but unlike hers, the idea is to untangle these yarns weighing me down. This concept symbolizes finally becoming free from the memories and emotions that hold me back.

Presentation, Results, and Analysis

Introduction

A discussion of the results and analysis of the qualitative data, the compilation of the questionnaire, and the results and analysis of the survey about narratives of emotional repression is presented in this chapter.

Results and Discussion

For this study, I made a survey to contextualize the prevalent problem of emotional repression in todays' time. Below are the responses given by the 50 respondents of my data gathering with figures and syntheses to better discuss the data collected.
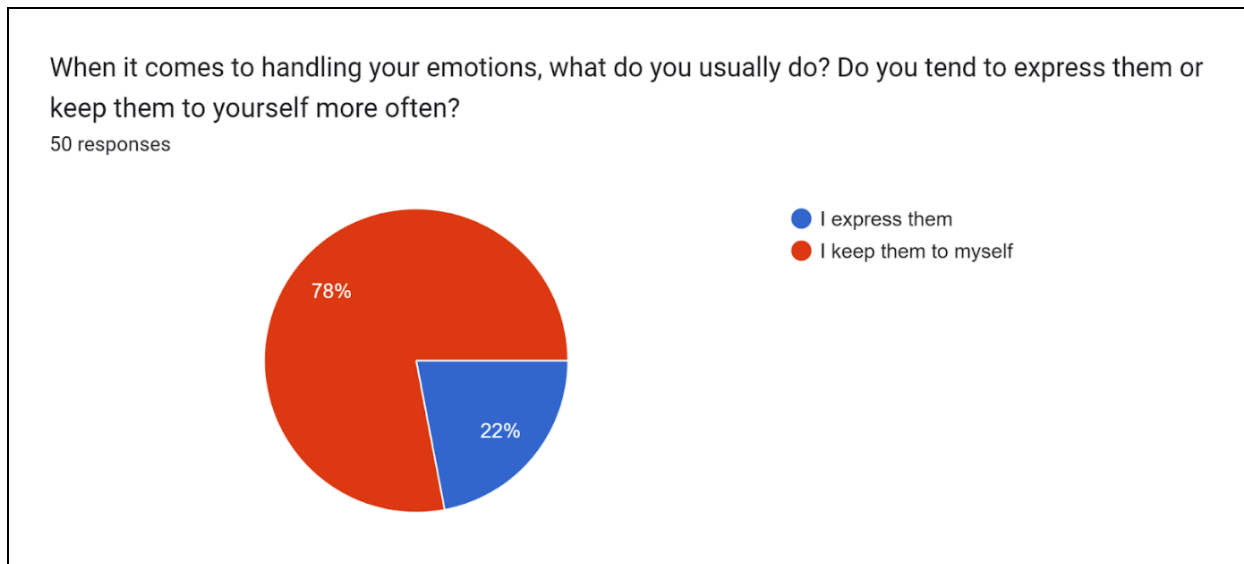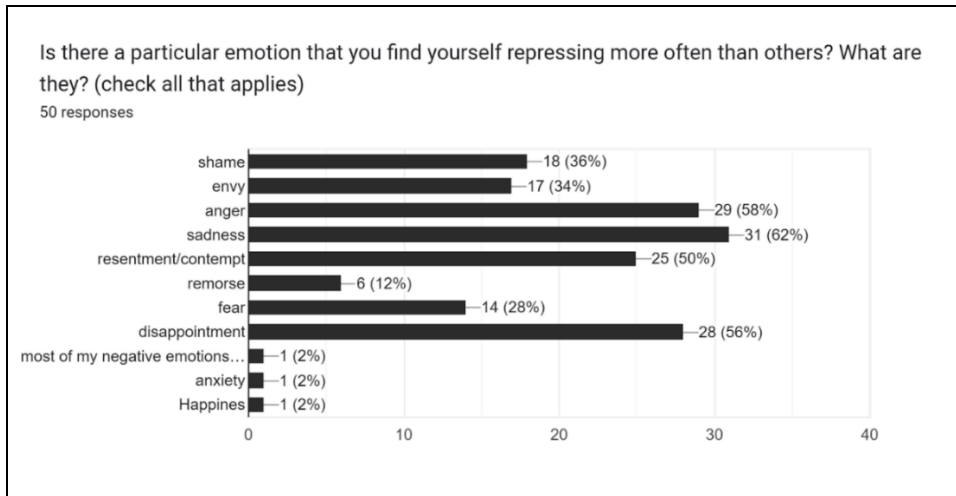
Figure 34

Survey Question 1

Figure 1 shows the percentage of how people handle and respond to situations tackling emotions. Although this preemptive data does not assume the results as emotions could be either positive or negative, it considers how repressed most (78%) respondents are with their own emotions regardless of whether it is good or bad.
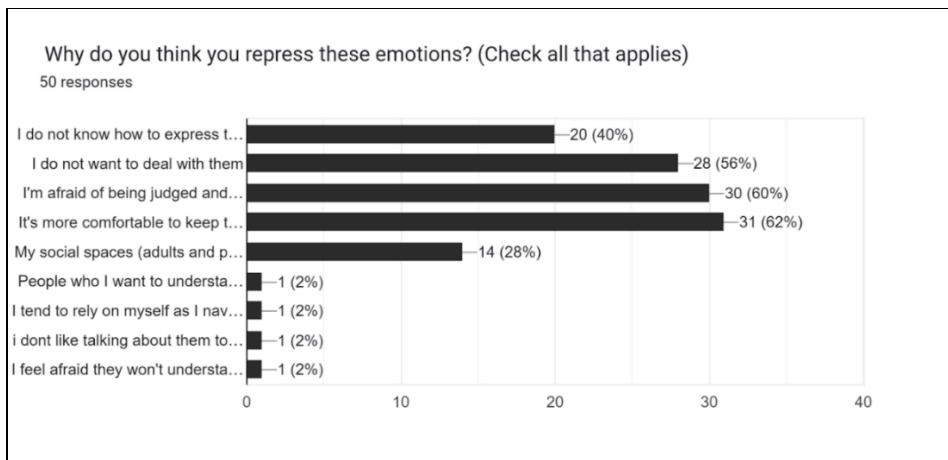
Figure 35

Survey Question 2

Is there a particular emotion that you find yourself repressing more often than others? What are they? (check all that applies)

50 responses

Emotion	Value
shame	18 (36%)
envy	17 (34%)
anger	29 (58%)
sadness	31 (62%)
resentment/contempt	25 (50%)
remorse	6 (12%)
fear	14 (28%)
disappointment	28 (56%)
most of my negative emotions...	1 (2%)
anxiety	1 (2%)
Happines	1 (2%)

Among the eight (8) negative emotions listed above, the most common repressed emotions are sadness (62%), anger (58%) disappointment (56%), and resentment/ contempt (50%). Among the 11 responses- 3 of which were added by the respondents namely (1) most of my negative emotions, (2) anxiety, and (3) happiness. This shows the statistics of the most repressed emotions among the participants of this survey and contextualize how we respond to these types of emotions.
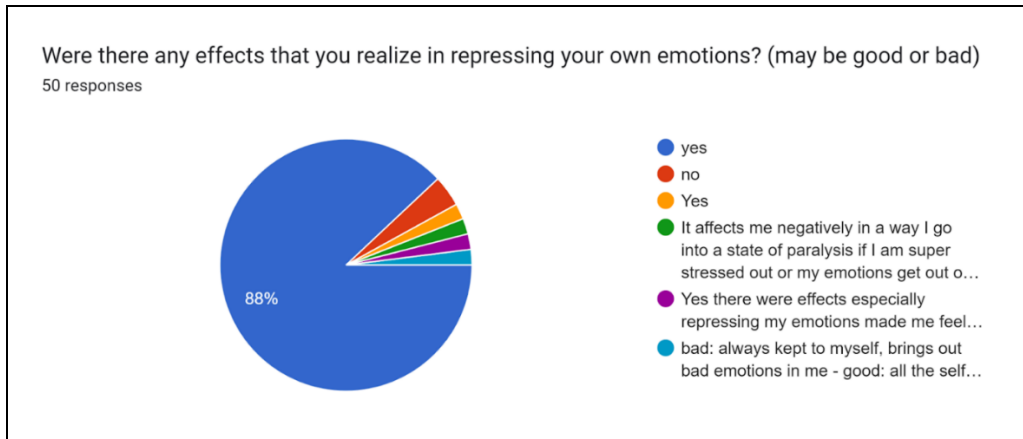
Figure 36

Survey Question 3

Why do you think you repress these emotions? (Check all that applies)

50 responses

Reason	Value
I do not know how to express t...	20 (40%)
I do not want to deal with them	28 (56%)
I'm afraid of being judged and...	30 (60%)
It's more comfortable to keep t...	31 (62%)
My social spaces (adults and p...	14 (28%)
People who I want to understa...	1 (2%)
I tend to rely on myself as I nav...	1 (2%)
i dont like talking about them to...	1 (2%)
I feel afraid they won't understa...	1 (2%)

For the question "why do you think you repress these emotions" the five choices that were initially listed were (1) I do not know how to express them, (2) I do not want to deal with them, (3) I am afraid of being judged and perceived, (4) It is more comfortable to keep them inside than to talk about it, (5) My social spaces (adults and peers) does the same so I repress my emotions too. Four are then added by the respondents through the 'other' options.
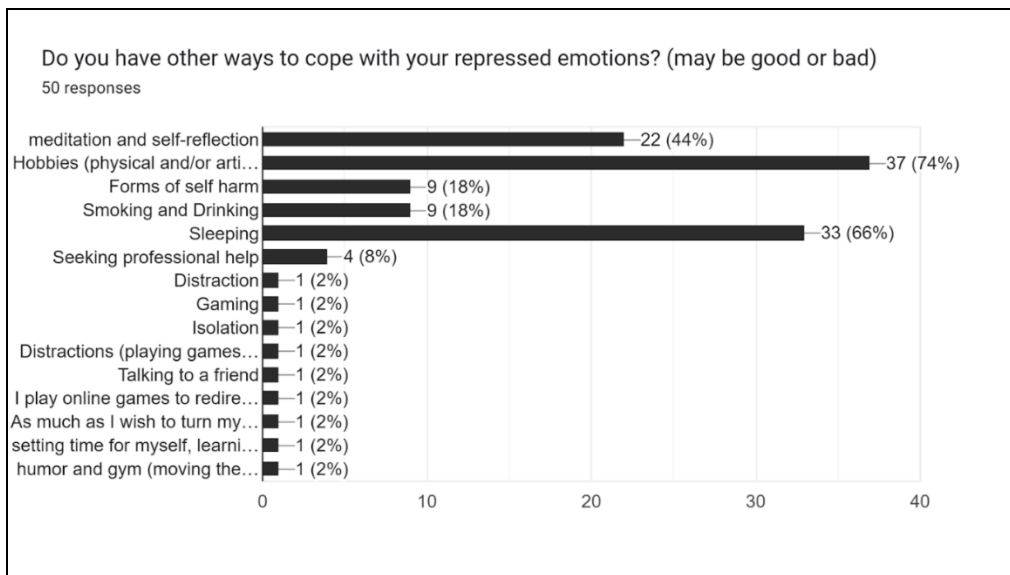
Figure 37

Survey Question 4

Were there any effects that you realize in repressing your own emotions? (may be good or bad)
50 responses

- yes
- no
- Yes
- It affects me negatively in a way I go into a state of paralysis if I am super stressed out or my emotions get out o…
- Yes there were effects especially repressing my emotions made me feel…
- bad: always kept to myself, brings out bad emotions in me - good: all the self…

88%

Ninety-six of the respondents had experienced effects upon repressing their own emotions. This infers that emotional repression does have a substantial impact on an individuals' mental and emotional well-being.
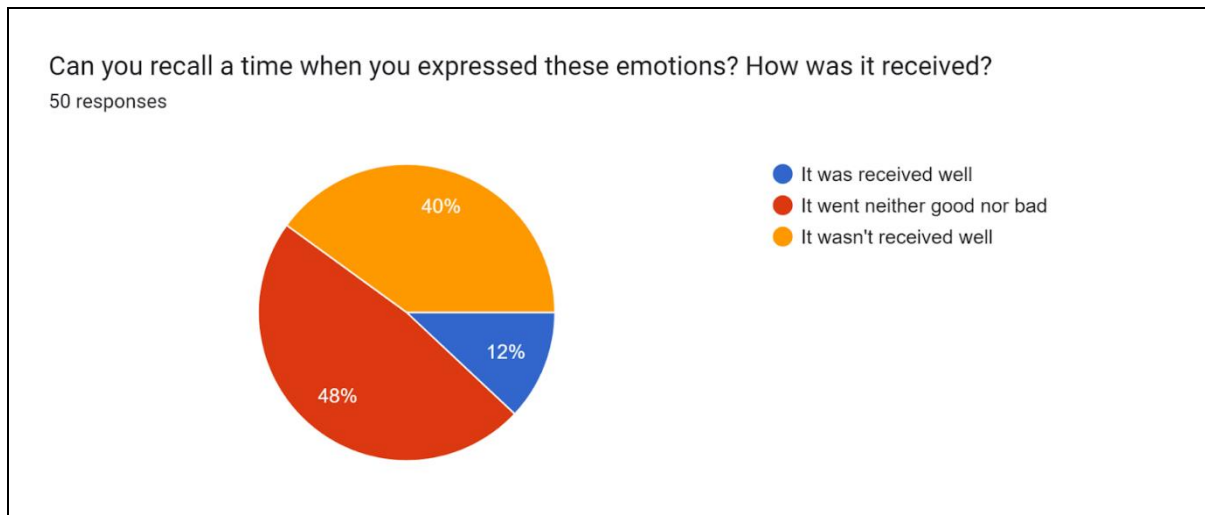
Figure 38

Survey Question 5

Do you have other ways to cope with your repressed emotions? (may be good or bad)
50 responses

- meditation and self-reflection — 22 (44%)
- Hobbies (physical and/or arti… — 37 (74%)
- Forms of self harm — 9 (18%)
- Smoking and Drinking — 9 (18%)
- Sleeping — 33 (66%)
- Seeking professional help — 4 (8%)
- Distraction — 1 (2%)
- Gaming — 1 (2%)
- Isolation — 1 (2%)
- Distractions (playing games… — 1 (2%)
- Talking to a friend — 1 (2%)
- I play online games to redire… — 1 (2%)
- As much as I wish to turn my… — 1 (2%)
- setting time for myself, learni… — 1 (2%)
- humor and gym (moving the… — 1 (2%)

For this question, among the options including 'others', the top 3 are (1) Hobbies (physical and/or artistic), (2) Sleeping, (3) meditation and self-reflection. People may turn to hobbies as a way of diverting themselves from their emotions, while others may find that these responses help to clear their heads.

Figure 39

Survey Question 6

Can you recall a time when you expressed these emotions? How was it received?
50 responses

- It was received well
- It went neither good nor bad
- It wasn't received well

40%
12%
48%

       Leaning on to the answer '*it wasn't received well*' with 48%, respondents' data show that upon experience, their expression of their own emotions were either not received well by others or were neither good or bad. This is likely a factor that contributes to the prevailing problem of emotional repression as visibility and understanding is important in fostering a good environment that is free from different forms of stigma.

Figure 40

Survey Question 7

Do you think other people also repress their emotions? Why?

"Yes, from my experience people around me tend to repress their emotions because they don't want to burden anyone whom they have expressed their feeling or emotions to. Also, sometimes I think it comes with bad/traumatic experiences with other people in their lives not receiving their emotions well."

"Yes, to conceal their weaknesses"

"I think most people are afraid of being labeled as overly sensitive, dramatic, or irrational if they openly express their emotions. This fear often arises due to past negative experiences, in which individuals were judged or rejected for displaying their true emotions. A fear of vulnerability can drive individuals to repress their emotions, holding themselves back from genuine self-expression in order to avoid potential criticism."

> *"Other people repress their emotions because society doesn't allow to show their emotions especially the negative ones. Happiness is the only emotion that is allowed and acceptable in today's society and showing vulnerability shows that you are weak."*
>
> *"Personally, when I was a teenager I have a habit of telling my family about what happened to my day and stuffs. However, it only stops when I noticed that they kept invalidating my feelings whenever I talk it out by telling me to just pray to God which is very funny to me until now. Also, I have experienced of telling my closest friend about my deepest secret and I kept reminding her that she's the only one who knows it, only to find out that she already told it to our other friends. Anyways, all these hurtful past experiences from my love ones had evolved that I feel like I develop some kind of trust issue and just chose to deal all of these feelings all by myself. It's hard keeping these emotions all by myself because it's never my intention in the first place, it's the people who are close to me who made me feel that I have to do this."*

Statements and narratives from the survey leaned onto respondents thinking that people- apart from themselves- repress emotions as well. Most of the responses pertained to the lack of spaces to be heard, invalidation of such emotions, stigma of weakness, as well as fear of becoming a burden to other people. This data shows that many respondents feel that expressing emotions is not encouraged or accepted in their social environments- thus, perpetuating to a cycle of self-censorship.

Figure 41

Survey Question 8
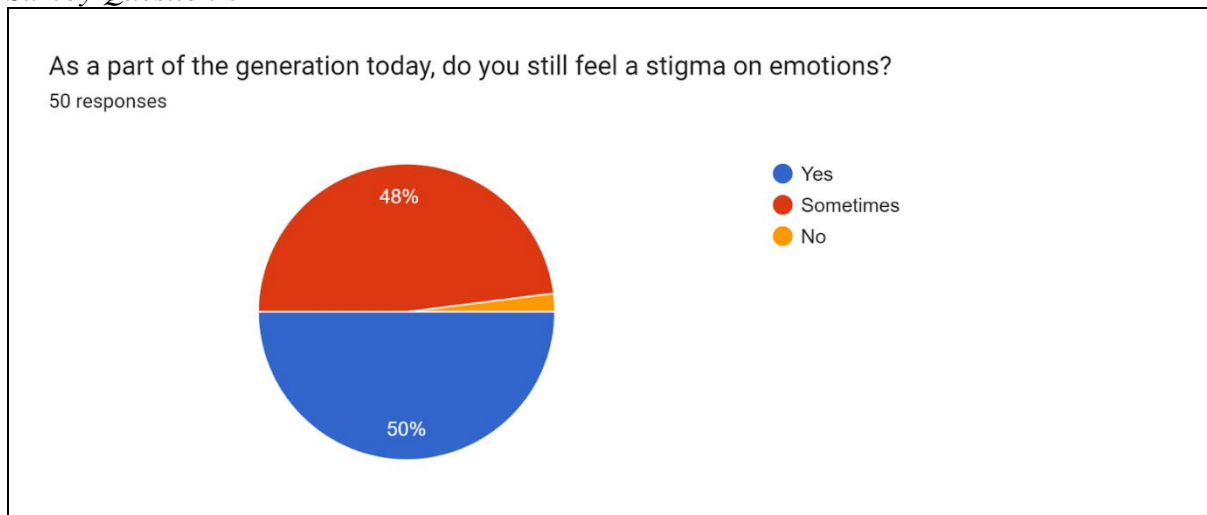
Fifty percent of the responses said that they still feel a stigma on emotions in today's time, 48% say they sometimes feel that, meanwhile 2% say no. This suggests that there is still a strong societal stigma on expressing emotions, even if it is only felt sometimes.

Conclusion

With the data from the survey conducted, it is irrefutable that the problem of emotional repression exists in our time today. Emotional repression, despite being a problem that has become pervasive, is undermined and 'normalized' in our society due to the insensitive and tone-deaf culture we are used to. As a result of social norms that discourage vulnerability and promote stoicism, emotional repression is perpetuated. We continue to normalize emotional repression in our society as a result of this fear of judgment and rejection.

Recommendations

In this section, recommendations for the future improvement of the study are given regarding the topic of research and the methods of creative process.

Research Topic

This research is still open for improvements in terms of exploration of repressed human emotions contextualized in Gen-Z. As the topic could delve more deeply in the concept of emotional repression and individual's responses, there would be better understanding between this prevailing social problem of today's time- and by extension, provide better context to the narratives of these individuals. Continually, to further support the claim and conclusion that the paper has stated, it is optimal to also get narratives of individuals who have first-hand experiences with the research topic. In this way, one is able to provide valuable insights into their lived experiences, shedding light on the complexities and nuances of this social problem.

Creative Process

There was a lot of trial and error when it came to the technicalities of the creative process. This was in regard to finding the most compatible materials, finding the best techniques that hold symbolisms to the piece, as well as the optimal process to further improve the time spent doing the artwork itself. While it is safe to say that the finished output is a success, there are a couple of things I could have done better.

Firstly, bigger scale pieces in general take a lot of time to finish. While the painting process for this mixed-media painting was relatively quick, it would have been better if it had taken a longer period of time to ensure a better rendering of the composition. Furthermore, this applies to the fiber art process, which is technically more time-consuming. In addition, I recommend ensuring that the quality of the materials used for the fiber art is suitable for the canvas to which it will be applied. One of the factors that added to the time-constraint of this project was how different the material I used for the prototype and the actual piece is. As a result, I had to purchase new materials that are more suitable for the thick canvas I am using and allow myself to adjust to the difference. Lastly, I suggest preparing all dyed and fabric yarns that will be used in the production during the early stages of pre-productions as this would lessen the workload within the production and focus more on sewing and tufting instead.

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