

HANDS OF LIFE: A STUDY OF GROWTH AND CHANGE

by

Olivia Winter

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by

Olivia Winter

Greenville, NC

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Approved by:

Catherine Walker-Bailey

School of Art and Design

This series of drawings is titled The Hands of Life and depicts hands as they grow, evolve, and change with age. As human beings, we are ever changing. Each day we are a slightly different person than the day before. While this occurs slowly, it is relentless and determined. Hands express the passing of time and convey a range of emotions, intentions, and gestures. In these pieces, hands are the focus, however, faces are a secondary theme. Faces also tell the story of life and I include them to enhance the already intimate sense of connection.

This series portrays my favorite subject to draw: people. The first piece features my young cousin, Calvin, who recently celebrated his first birthday. I draw people because I find them fascinating in countless ways. I enjoy imagining their vibrant lives, deep emotions, and cherished memories and while I may not be able to capture all of those elements in my art, I challenge myself to capture what makes a person unique using only their faces or hands. Hands are notoriously difficult to draw. They are incredibly complicated, full of bones, muscles, tendons, ligaments, skin, veins, and unique proportions. Their dexterity and coordination are unmatched.

Think of everything done with hands in a day. Are they writing, typing, working, drawing, playing music? Think of all the positions hands may take. Are they open, closed, face up, pointing or grasping? Their complex shapes have infinite variety. The second piece shows my close family friend Grayson, who was playing with wooden blocks at the time this picture was taken. Drawing hands requires a comprehensive understanding of anatomy, proportions, and perspective. They are incredibly intricate, detailed and complicated, there are 27 bones alone. Every line and texture etched into

the skin, holds untold stories. Like a face with a myriad of emotions, hands are equally expressive.

Each of these pieces were created on gray toned paper and drawn with graphite pencils and Carbothello chalk pastel pencils. I chose this medium due to its workability and ease of blending and layering. While examining the pieces, one may notice there is an unfinished look to some of the elements in the piece. This was intentional, as I wanted to portray both my technical abilities and the stages of drawing the piece. In the third piece, portraying my high school best friend Zoie, notice the textured hair and knuckles in contrast to the smooth face and central hand. The series as a whole gains texture as it progresses, reflecting how we ourselves change as we age.

The process of creating this series was nonlinear. Initially, I was going to draw only hands and portray them participating in age-adjacent activities. For instance, baby hands grasping perhaps a toy, toddler hands scribbling over a page, a teenager texting, and so on. The drawing that changed this, was my fourth piece in the series, my self-portrait. I knew I wanted to be the main subject in the middle of the series, so I drew it first. During a conversation with my art mentor Catherine Walker, we realized that I could incorporate faces into each piece. This led to a rethinking of the entire series turning it in a new direction. Additionally, I was planning on starting the series with little color and gradually transforming to intense vibrancy of color, then return to a more monochromatic appearance as the subjects aged. After some planning and reconsideration, this idea was replaced with the present works.

My pieces resonate with me as each subject is someone very close to me, as seen in this piece featuring my partner, Robert. As my family, friends, and loved ones

include people at all stages of life, I found my subjects close and available, particularly my own generation, now starting families of their own. Once I began taking reference photos, I realized the perfect subjects, used to my endless creative endeavors, were happy to participate.

The fifth piece portrays my mom, who was incredibly excited to model for me. She has longed for me to draw her for years, and she was so happy to be featured in this series. I created this series to challenge myself technically while doing something for which I have a passion. I used to struggle to draw hands, but I couldn't stop myself from adding them to my pieces. They were tantalizing and inescapable. While drawing, I would complain about why I decided to draw hands. The shading wouldn't be accurate, nor would the proportions, but I would persist. I'd sit frustrated with myself, erasing and redrawing endlessly. Then I got better. With each awkward hand I drew, they gradually transformed into proportionate, expressive pieces I can make today.

As for portraits, my love for drawing people began when I was in middle school. I was around thirteen, and I decided to draw one of my favorite YouTubers. This began a love for drawing people, and I began drawing any celebrity that I found interesting. These included Emma Watson, Matt Bomer, Jennifer Lawrence, Henry Cavill, or anyone that was the main character of my current favorite movie or TV show. I would sit down with my sketchbook in front of the television and draw. This also began my love of black and white graphite work. Color was daunting to me at the time, and I learned the value of working in black and white in my art. When using extreme values, darks & lights, my pieces gained depth and complexity. This is why I used gray paper for my original artworks as the mid tone of the paper shows the highlights and shadows more

effectively than white paper. The last piece featuring my step grandmother was the most challenging piece in this series. I had never drawn mature hands before, but I am happy that I challenged myself and created the piece seen today.

In conclusion, my series The Hands of Life is a personal series that explores the evolution of hands and faces through aging. The intricate details and lines depict the individuality of each subject and the passing of time. I am proud of my evolution as an artist, growing from fearing my main subjects to including them in every piece. The works are meant to invoke a sense of familiarity, but also reflect the viewer's own changes through time. I hope that my passion for drawing people and capturing their essence is felt throughout this series. I invite the viewer to celebrate the beauty of life and its inevitable transitions through the expressive forms of hands and faces.