

The vision of my body of work is to express how identity is lost as a result of societal expectations as well as the journey of regaining one's identity. Specifically, it depicts my journey to reconnect with my own identity after the struggle to maintain an American and Hmong identity. This is presented through prevalent motifs such as Hmong embroidery, Hmong clothing, and identity. I want the audience to be empathetic and knowledgeable of the struggles and beauty that are within the Hmong culture whilst being in America.

I began with exploring artists who challenge people to change their perspective, and express their own struggles through the manipulation of texture and form. I first discovered Angie McGonigal, whose motifs were to look at architectural art through reflective panels rather than the surface view of structural concepts. I later was inspired by my own culture's embroidery, because I wanted to know the beauty and meanings behind the symbols. This discovery led me to research traditional Hmong artifact textiles, which became my inspiration to learn the process of making them.

I focused my bodies of work on emphasis of my Hmong identity through the use of contrasting textures and sharp lines. Specifically, in "Waiting for a New", I explored a new medium of painting, trying to create contrast from the feathered brush strokes in the back and sharp, dark lines on my portrait to emphasize the facial features of the face, and the elongated smile. Since painting was a new medium for me, I tried experimenting with brush strokes and water to get these textures. These techniques helped me in my illustration pieces where I use color pencils and applied a similar process to create textures to this medium.

Another experience that impacted my art was my personal project in my sophomore year. I learned the techniques of Hmong embroidery from my grandmother, and explored my Hmong culture and identity. This experience inspired me to attempt to make textiles using the similar cloth, techniques, and needles that were used to create them. I first tried this in "A Piece of Home", where I tried to deconstruct where the stitching went and what fabrics were used from my reference of a Hmong artifact. I further experimented with the folds and techniques to create a bias edge, such as in "Remains of a Suitcase", where I used the previous experimentation of fabrics to portray the beauty of the Hmong culture that isn't expressed in America. Ultimately, I used the embroidery as a symbol of my own expression of my identity and how I feel at peace with the motifs in the Hmong culture pertaining to home. It reconnected me to my own heritage and gave me a better understanding of how often culture can be expressed.

In my exhibition, I want to focus on the struggle of the Hmong American identity, placing my works that revolve around my struggle of maintaining my Hmong identity as the main focal point that can be seen throughout the exhibition. This allows the audience to empathize and see the challenges of having to maintain my own Hmong identity and the pressure to be accepted in the Hmong community and prove I belong in America. Also, I want to incorporate the pieces that convey the beauty of the Hmong culture throughout to show the beauty of being Hmong through the history of the culture that has survived tragedies fighting to show their own identity. I want the audience to feel impacted through my constant struggle of pressure to fit into a Hmong and American identity, while simultaneously experiencing the richness in the Hmong culture.

Overall, this exhibition allows me to express the struggle of maintaining an identity and my journey to rebuild my own identity being Hmong and American.