

VA Artist Statement: Empty handed

A set of Surreal charcoal portraits each features an emotive face being interacted with and enhanced by the posing of hand silhouettes cut from negative space. They are drawn on fine-toothed A2 paper, using malleable erasers and brushes to manipulate and blend the brush strokes into smooth gradients, and create sharp highlights.

The images represent the effectiveness of non-verbal communication to transmit emotion, and how this is limited by the omission of the hands.

90% of communication is non-verbal¹, often through body language. After Spending the first term studying body language, I came to the conclusion that the hands are one of our primary communicators of emotion. The initial concept formed during the general research and was to find ways to create an abstract representation of emotions, by removing key information communicated via the hands.

By not rendering the hands, attention was drawn towards the overall gestures they were making, and the communication implied through positioning. Without rendering them, I drew attention to the importance of hand gestures in communication.

The artists explored in the folio varied greatly in style and mediums, with a notable example being Jenifer Crupi, who specialised in wearable sculpture pieces made from metal plating and chains. They involved metallic apparatus designed to amplify the expression of emotion, by positioning the hands

¹ Body Language Classes, Research, and Consulting | Nonverbal Group | NYC. 2017. *Body Language Classes, Research, and Consulting / Nonverbal Group / NYC*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.nonverbalgroup.com/2011/08/how-much-of-communication-is-really-nonverbal>. [Accessed 31 October 2017].

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and posture into common gestures, or emphasising elements of gestures such as amplifying the sound of impatient finger tapping and anxious leg bouncing, as observational examples of human behaviors.

Along with this, Tim Booth's photography examples were a distinct inspiration for the use of hand gestures, emphasis on forms and shapes, and achromatic colour scheme. Booth's portraits featured hands creating complex yet natural forms, with focus on the shapes created in the negative space of the figure, due to the lighting.

Executing the practical posed many challenges, due to the increase in scale from early experiments. However I stuck with my chosen media of charcoal based on early success in folio experimentations and it's capacity to render a high degree of realism.

The final practical feels personally rewarding, yet lacks in synergy between components. Individually, the pieces effectively use realistic shading and human proportion contrasted against a Surreal use of negative space and sense of emptiness, in the cut away hands. The works have varying levels of negative space, along with slightly inconsistent scaling. They could be improved with the use of more consistent compositions and lighting sources to avoid having the scale and lighting differences act as a distraction.

The focus on hands as a visual communication device is distinctly present in the final pieces. The piece uses hand gestures in communication to explain the importance of this form of communication itself, allowing for success as a visual art piece.