Art Comparative Study

This comparative study will examine the links between three artworks from three different cultures and time periods: Xian’s “China China Series”, Kahlo’s “Self-portrait with Monkey”, and Gallaccio’s “Preserve ‘beauty’”. The main theme that will be explored is loss, both personal and cultural.

By Chien Chien

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Applying McFee King’s conceptual framework to Ah Xian

**Audience:**
Xian is well known for these porcelain sculptures with contrasting painted surface designs. He’s very open to criticisms and different interpretations of his work. However, he often downplays any comments on the political connotations of his works, yet he is still happy to receive interpretation. People thought the pieces are about never being able to escape one’s cultural roots, but for others they represent the clash between Asian and Western ideas of what is considered to be art. Often critics interpreted the closed eyes and mouth to illustrate lack of freedom in post-revolution China (Neill).

**Artist:**
Porcelain casts covered with traditionally intricate hand painted Chinese patterns is what Ah Xian is known for. Through the series he wanted to explore his cultural identity after experiencing cultural crossing. He illustrates his experience of being influenced both by eastern and western values through employing two contrasting media. The casts were done of Xian’s friends and family, and were produced in Jingdezhen in 1999, famously the center of China’s porcelain production. The detailed pattern was hand-painted under his direction by Chinese artisans (“China, China: Recent works in porcelain by Ah Xian”)

**Audience’s World:**
*China, China* was produced in Jingdezhen, China in 1999, and was presented amongst the post-revolution generation of Chinese artists in the existent art-scene. It had been 23 years since the revolution and the Chinese government as becoming a little more lenient with artistic expression. This new freedom suggests that the Chinese audiences were becoming more and more open to new forms of art. It had only been 10 years since the protests of Tiananmen Square (Saul), and tensions were still relatively high between the government and people

**Artist’s World:**
Ah Xian is a Beijing-born artist who went to technical school and worked in a factory whilst doing art in his free time, despite never being trained (Feinstein). He then moved to Sydney, Australia in 1990 and became a house painter. He was escaping Post-revolution China in recent light of the Tiananmen Square Massacre and applied for Asylum (Neill). Unfortunately, he was rejected, but five years later he won the right to live in Australia, thus making it his second home. This cultural crossing and distance from his home renewed his interest in Chinese culture in relation to him being exposed by western values. He began splitting time between the two countries since his porcelain busts are made in China under his supervision (Neill).

**Figure 1.** Jobson, Christopher. "Porcelain Busts Imprinted with Chinese Decorative Designs by Ah Xian." 02 July 2015.

**Artwork Name:** #8 *China, China*
**Completion Date:** 1999
**Material:** mixed media
Ah Xian is a Chinese artist who practices sculpture and painting, now, in Australia. This sculpture came from the series called China China. Xian combines western portraiture and Chinese decorative traditions in a lot of his collections (Jobson).

The texture of the cast is glossy and smooth, which adds a very modern and minimalistic feel to the piece. This texture and feel contrasts heavily with the intricate and detailed Chinese porcelain pattern covering the front of the cast. This contrast between the two feels illustrates a comparison between the way Xian views western culture and Chinese culture. The negative space in the patterns could be perhaps a depiction of the dilution of culture. The eyes and mouth are closed which presents a character with no emotion or visible identity. This could be commenting upon his feelings of confusion for his personal identity. The patterns were hand-painted by artisans in China under Xian's direction and the casts were made from close family members and friends, thus making this piece a very personal one.

Ah Xian is using the white to represent dilution of culture. The white empty mind perhaps could be commenting on how the culture crossing he experienced that allowed him to mix and jumble different ideas of expression, thus creating endless possibilities of creation.

Additionally, the patterns seem to converge at the center of the face and at the heart, which demonstrates how this piece of art tackles ideas of identity. The heart contains a messy and overwhelming composition made up of foliage, which could represent how he feels conflicted and confused due to the exposure to a different culture. The patterns used within the piece are all of nature and thus brings a calming and organic atmosphere to the sculpture, which could be used to illustrate how Xian sees his exposure to foreign or different culture to be needed and innate to him for his growth.

The mountains and building align in the center of the sculpture, and the mountains follow the structure of the vertebrae. This alignment could perhaps present how Xian is learning to balance himself between the two cultures and is becoming more centered and accepting of his cultural confusions. The patterns thus seem to be representing a support system for the character, which could demonstrate how Xian sees cultural identity to be something integral to what makes people who they are and grow in certain ways.
In this particular series he tackles themes related to his personal experiences and losses with cultural identity during a time of exchange and influence for post-revolution Chinese artist. This reflection on identity is a problem dealt with people not only in the time when this series was produced, but has also continued to be a struggle from then on. The early 21st Century continued to be a time of growth for the world, and thus came the increase in internationalism and cultural acceptance in the world. Additionally, he also reveals his frustrations and pains towards the Chinese government for the events that occurred post-revolution in the 20th Century. The converging patterns are not only used to symbolize messy cultural identities but also the oppressive and restricting nature of the Chinese government (Feinstein).

Through using traditional Chinese processes and mediums, he communicates the struggles of cultural crossing post-revolution. As he puts it "Twenty years after the Cultural Revolution and after China has opened its door to the world, we as artists with a Chinese background, should have learned and been sufficiently influenced by Western philosophy, art and culture as a whole to attain a level of confidence and capability to tell story about ourselves using our own language" ("China China: Recent works in porcelain by Ah Xian"). What he aims to represent is a period of cultural crossing and diversification that occurred towards the end of the 20th Century for post-cultural artists who were beginning to emerge. He uses his personal experience with being innately marked by his own Chinese heritage but also being able to be influenced by western processes and mediums, yet still staying true to one's innate culture.

The patterns he utilizes were paintings typically seen on vessels in Chinese courts in the Ming and Qing dynasties (Recent works in porcelain by Ah Xian). On the other hand, the process of casting molds in this style is originally a Roman practice (Feinstein). Xian moved to Australia to seek asylum after Tiananmen Square in 1990 (Feinstein) and this series was finally produced in the historic center of porcelain production in Jingdezhen, China in 1998 (Recent works in porcelain by Ah Xian).
Applying McFee King’s conceptual framework to Frida Kahlo

**Audience:**
Art critics didn’t know how to categorize the art, at the time, as some said it was surrealism, whilst she strongly rejected that term. Since she painted the realities of being a woman from her perspective in a time when feminism and political identities were not established ideas and themes, thus people had a hard time processing her art and what it reflected (Cotter). Actually her work was not taken seriously until her death (Thompson).

**Artwork Name:** Self-Portrait With Monkey
**Completion Date:** 1940
**Material:** Oil on Masonite

**Artist:**
Her work was about “Mexicanidad”, which is a love about the love for all things Mexican (Motian-Meadows), and often her personal suffering and condition (Falini). This painting was no different as it explored her Mexican cultural heritage and political radicalism as well as personal losses (“Self-Portrait With Monkey”). Her paintings mostly are all dominated by symbols of nature for example monkeys and heavy foliage to represent sexuality and fecundity. Her choice of native clothes was used to reflect her Mexican culture and show her love for the place (Motian-Meadows).

**Artist’s World:**
Frida was a Mexican painter born in 1907, 3 years before the Mexican revolution. Growing up through the revolution meant she was highly independent and rebellious against society. She claimed that she was born in 1907, the start of the revolution, as she wanted her life to begin with the New Mexico (Falini). The revolution was a time of extreme violence and conflict, however it shaped Kahlo’s strong communist political views. She was also marked by tragedy as she contracted polio when she was a child and had a major accident later on, leaving her in pain and unable to have children, she so badly wanted. She had multiple love affairs thus sexuality was a passion of hers (Carr). These events that marked her was what she continuously explored.
Analysis of *Self-Portrait With Monkey* by Frida Kahlo

The monkey depicted in the painting is one of gentility and calmness. The hand placed around her neck seems protective and loving as opposed to restricting and dangerous. The small size relative to the painting of the monkey could be representing the children she never had due to her accident (“Self-Portrait With Monkey.”). This conveys an atmosphere of sadness and remorse as the monkey is in darkness and is showing little or no emotion. Additionally, monkeys are the gods of fertility and sexuality in Mexico (Carr), which helps to indicate and reveal her loss of those two things due to her tragic accident.

The serious expression on her self-portrait uncovers her deep-set sadness and seriousness about her situation after the accident, which brings about a somber atmosphere. The yellow undertone in her skin colour illustrates a sickly undertone, which compliments the yellow garments in her body. This sickly and lifeless atmosphere could be used to convey her feelings of misery and sickness after her bus accident (“Self-Portrait With Monkey.”)

The dark eyes show a sense of lifeless and seriousness again, but additionally the distinctive under-eye bags convey a sense of tiredness. The bold eyebrows also bring about vigor and conviction, which could be relevant to Frida due to her desires to change the political tensions in Mexico (Motian-Meadows). The facial characteristics contribute to the serious tone of the piece.

The ribbon weaved into her hair and around her neck is perhaps used to represent her tragic accident and how it has shaped her life. The ribbon wraps around the neck multiple times in an aggressive fashion, which contrasts with the gentle manner of the monkey. The bright red illustrates aggressiveness and violence, as the accident had tragic impacts on her life. The red could also be used to represent the violence experienced by her during the Mexican revolution as red is heavily associated with oppression.

The leaves and vegetation takes up a big part of the composition as it surrounds Frida. The dark and muted greens provoke a calm and seemingly safe environment. Her hair weaves and transitions into the foliage, which merges herself with the background. This transition and bond between her and nature could represent how big sexuality and fertility was to her as she has multiple affairs and wanted many children prior to her accident. However, her accident disallowed her those wishes. The muted and yellow undertones in the leaves convey a sickly and lifeless tone to the painting yet, which emphasizes her loss of happiness and liveliness due to the accident.
The political and personal message behind her painting is significant to Frida Kahlo since she has become famously known for her somber portraits. She not only painted the harsh realities of living with the pain of the tragedies in her life, but also the perspectives of someone who had strong political beliefs in a time of extreme political conflicts.

Her work illustrates the emotional and physiological effects of tragedy on herself as a woman. She focused upon drawing her personal experiences including her struggles in marriage, loss of fertility, and numerous painful operations. She also was deeply involved with expressing her love for Mexican culture through her use of bright colors and graphic visual imagery in depicting her pain. She defied typical styles of painting and painted the way she wanted to express her views through a style that others had problems taking seriously or even classifying.

Additionally, the serious expression in her portrait helps to illustrate the dire conditions of the Mexican Revolution, as it was a time of heavy conflict. Her dedication and strong beliefs, in her case in communism, meant that she was later considered a feminist, even though it was not a concept back in her time. She expressed the desperation and pain felt by women in Mexico due to the patriarchal society. Frida, although not realized, was the voice of the millions of women living in that society who were afraid to voice their feelings of desperation and loss.
Applying McFee King's conceptual framework to Anya Gallaccio

**Audience:**
Since the number of art galleries increased rapidly during the time this piece was on display in London, it suggests that, generally, society was becoming more accepting and appreciative of art. There was a general shift in attitudes towards different styles of art, and thus her piece was well received in the new artistic era, as it's highly original. In fact, she was close to winning the Turner Prize in 2003 in art and design for this piece (Wollaston).

**Audience's World:**
Preserve ‘Beauty’ was first showcased in London during 1991, therefore it was right at the start of London’s art-scene’s rapid growth era. As the number of art galleries grew in London, more and more people were becoming viewers of and exposed to contemporary art.

**Artist:**
Gallaccio's work was about trying to achieve the impossible as all efforts to preserve the beauty in flowers must inevitably fail due to decomposition. She plays with how flowers seem fresh and delectable at first but quickly turn repulsive and pungent (Smee). She comments upon the how we seek moments of beauty in the fleeting moments but fail to be able to maintain the beauty that we wish to extend for all of eternity because of the happiness it brings us. She looks at the beauty in the violence and passion within the decay of the flowers (“Anya Gallaccio”) to perhaps comment upon how we view the relationship between beauty and our sense of eternity.

**Artist's World:**
Preserve ‘Beauty’ was made at the beginning of the 21st century and was presented in the Tate, London in 1991. London’s art scene in the 1990s was all about artists developing and growing with their new styles. The scene was experimental and highly diverse in its culture. In fact, there was an increase in the number of art galleries across London (Higgins). London’s art scene was growing rapidly and more and more artists, such as Gallaccio, began to have more opportunities to display their work and become more experimental in their expression.

| Artwork Name: Self-Portrait With Monkey |
| Completion Date: 1991-2003 |
| Material: 2000 gerberas, glass, metal, and rubber |

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Figure 7. Lehmann Maupin Gallery. “Preserve ‘Beauty’”. 2004
Analysis of Preserve ‘Beauty’ by Anya Gallaccio

The fact that Gallaccio used 2000 gerbera flowers brings an intense atmosphere to the piece. The large number of flowers is very overwhelming, which is additionally emphasized through the bright and aggressive red colour of the flowers. Her piece not only utilizes viewer’s optical perception but also their sensory perception due to the smell, which helps immerse them further into the piece. This immensity and over stimulation of the senses leaves a heavy impression upon the viewer and allows them to become fully immersed within the installation. This suggests this piece is dealing with issues surrounding and applicable to everyone. Moreover, the piece consists of four large panes of glass filled with flowers, which adds to the immense effect due to its large surface area.

Flowers are usually things that are used for superficial reasons for example decorations. Here, Gallaccio is using them out of their natural and man-made habitat and using that to her advantage. The completely different usage of the flowers in her work adds a layer of shock, but also power to her message. She perhaps comments on the superficiality of the modern age and how we seek for only beauty and aesthetics, whilst failing to see the hidden and further levels of meaning and symbolism. Flowers have the potential to say so much more than what they are given credit for in the modern age.

Part of her installation is incorporating the process of decay. The piece is a timed piece where she allows the gerbers to decay with time whilst being on show. Through showing viewers the process of decay, she presents a real contrast in images. At first the flowers are bright red and smell gorgeous, however as time goes on the flowers turn the brown colour of death and the smell turns pungent. The process perhaps represents how it’s impossible to maintain all moments of beauty. The flowers, once cut, will never be as beautiful as they were when they were fresh, and displaying them in such a huge way really helps emphasize their inevitable decay.

Through displaying them on panes of glass, it’s almost as if she is trying to capture their beauty but obviously failing due to biological reasons. She’s allowing viewers to see the process of decay that is embodied within everything surrounding us. She could be commenting upon the modern world where we seek perfection and beauty in everything and hope to maintain it forever, when it’s not possible due to ever changing thoughts and norms. She looks at how we aim to keep everything looking new and clean always, since as soon as things begin to decay, we throw them out and deem the useless. She illustrates how they are not useless and ugly but actually just change, however that change is usually viewed in a negative light. She also explores the concept of eternity and how humans will never be able to fully understand it because it will always out run us, as we will wither and die before we can reach the end of eternity.
Significance of *Preserve Beauty* by Anya Gallaccio

Since *Preserve ‘Beauty’* was first made and installed in 1991 at the Tate, it was produced in a pre-growth era for London. At the beginning of the 1990s, London's art-scene was beginning to rapidly grow and expand (Higgins). This era was a time when artists were struggling for recognition (“Atelier Works. Brandings.”) and experimenting to develop their artistic identities (Higgins). Gallaccio's art reflected this expanding and experimental phase of the art-scene, as her piece is both bold and highly original in idea and form.

Around the time *Preserve ‘Beauty’* was first put up, London's art scene was just becoming famous, as at the time New York was the most outstanding art-scene in the world. The Tate and The National Gallery in London were becoming more renown throughout the world during this time. Gallaccio's work embodies the daring and adventurous atmosphere in London at that time. Due to the fact that the Tate became more famous at roughly the same time, it would be safe to say that Gallaccio contributed in some way to the fame of the museum through her distinctive art.

Additionally, the piece of art challenges ideas to do with the superficiality of the modern world that was just forming towards the end of the 20th century. The new coming modern era was just coming to play due to the new technology being developed and incorporated into everyday life. She explores the consequences of the newfound shallow views of the world surrounding the new digital era.
**China China Series #8 by Ah Xian**

- Deals with themes that do with cultural crossing
- Has multiple individual similar but different molds that make up the series
- Utilizes designs that were already existent and painted by other artisans on Chinese vases and cups

**Preserve Beauty by Anya Gallaccio**

- Uses red as its main colour
- Installation piece, therefore it’s huge as it takes up four big panes of glass
- Explores the superficiality of the digital era and consequences felt by people every day due to the new era
- Reproduced a number of times for different exhibitions and museums

**Self-portrait with Monkey by Frida Kahlo**

- Uses blue as its main colour
- Oil on Canvas
- Painted a voice for women in Mexico after the Revolution
- Illustrates personal pain from tragedy, and desperation from strong political beliefs and gender
- She uses many hidden symbols in her work to represent a wide variety of themes from fertility to pain

**Deals with themes to do with cultural crossing**

- Tackle ideas to do with culture and heritage
- High contrast between colours used
- Portray an identity of the artist
- Minimalistic in use of colour
- Art in 3D
- Highly decorative pieces
- Made out of individual parts to create the piece
- Distinctive in colour usage
- Focus on loss, both cultural and personal
- Intricate through symbolism, detail, and method
- Vibrant reds are used
- Both made by women portraying a female perspective of the world

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Similarities between “China, China #8”, “Self-portrait with Monkey” and “Preserve Beauty”

**1. Distinctive Colour usage**
- Ah Xian uses a deep denim blue for the porcelain patterns to provide contrast with the clear white negative space.
- Frida Kahlo uses vibrant reds and yellows as well as sickly greens in the background.
- Gallaccio uses red as the main colour, however it is also accompanied by little hints and stalks of bright green for contrast.

**2. Focus on loss**
- AH Xian’s piece focuses upon the losses he felt whilst he became exposed to two very different cultures due to his cultural crossing. He became accustomed to both cultures but had to compromise and leave parts of his traditional Chinese heritage behind when he left for Australia. Kahlo deals with her personal losses to do with the great tragedies surrounding her marriage and fertility. She also expressed the unspoken feelings of pain and loss from the women in her time. Gallaccio looks at the losses of society’s views upon the new digital age. She explores superficiality and the concept of eternity and our lack of understanding of this concept.

**3. Intricacy**
- Kahlo’s work is intricate in the details within her paintings as she uses a wide number of different objects to symbolize certain parts of or themes in her life. Ah Xian uses intricate and detailed Chinese porcelain patterns to portray his Chinese heritage and confusion in identity. Galliccio’s work is made through a laborious and intricate method as for each recreation she had to carefully tie each flower on to the glass panes with dental floss (Tate).

“China, China #8” & “Self-portrait with Monkey”

Both pieces are to do with cultural identity and the love both artists have for their heritage. Frida looks at her admiration for the new Mexico after the Revolution. Xian looks at the love for Chinese culture and the loss he experienced from leaving behind his loved culture. Both were also done as a result of political turmoil, as Ah Xian continued his practice after seeking asylum where he made this piece. Frida Kahlo lived through the revolution and a time of political unrest to create this piece about her political determination.

“China, China #8” & “Preserve Beauty”

They both use a very limited amount of colours as Ah Xian uses only blue and white whilst Gallaccio uses mainly red but also green. They are both in 3D as one is a sculpture and the other is an installation piece. China, China is a big collection of different sculptures, and Preserve beauty is made from four big panes of glass filled with flowers.

“Preserve Beauty” & “Self-portrait with Monkey”

Both pieces have vibrant reds as Kahlo uses it in the ribbon and the lips to represent the tragedy and violence in her life. Gallaccio uses the color to overwhelm the viewers, leaving a heavy impression to demonstrate the overwhelming effects of the new digital age. Gallaccio and Frida are both women showing their perspectives on the world around them as Frida offers a voice for the women in her time and Gallaccio looks at the effects of the digital age as a woman.
Differences between “China, China #8”, “Self-portrait with Monkey” and “Preserve Beauty”

### China, China #8 by Ah Xian

**Chinese Pattern Design:** Ah Xian, being the only Chinese artist, produces the only work that uses old Chinese decorative designs from vases and plates on his sculpture.

**Casting:** China, China #8 is not only the only sculpture piece but is also the only piece that uses casting as a method of sculpture.

**Themes:** This is the only piece that deals with the effects of cultural crossing and exposure to different cultures.

### Self-portrait with Monkey by Frida Kahlo

**Painting style:** Kahlo is the only artist that uses oil painting as a medium to convey her ideas. Thus she is also the only artist to paint in a style similar to surrealism.

**Colour Usage:** Although all artists use distinct colours, this piece is the only piece that utilizes a variety of vibrant colours.

### Preserve Beauty by Anya Gallaccio

**Less personal themes:** This piece explores eternity and the relationship between that and our perception of beauty. Preserve Beauty also looks at the superficiality of the new digital era as opposed to more personal themes to do with Gallaccio.

**Installation:** Preserve Beauty is the only piece that is an installation, and also the only one that requires time to develop fully its meaning. The decay of the flowers is essential to the theme of exploring beauty in those fleeting moments of time.
Thematic Influence: Loss
Gallaccio explores loss in terms of beauty and its relation to our ideas of eternity. In her piece, all attempts made by her to preserve the beauty in the flowers is futile, as decay and deterioration takes the place of the temporary beauty. She looks at our loss of control over our lives as we will all die and decay eventually. She also looks into our understanding of what eternity is like since it will always outrun us and thus we will never come to know or comprehend the concept of forever.

Significance to my work
I explore loss using flowers in a similar manner, as Gallaccio looks at the loss of control of our lives, I look at my loss of control over something I never got the chance to have. Through Memorial I demonstrated the loss of my older sister, who my mum decided to abort. Finding out about this was hard on me but the event was lot harder for my mother at the time, thus I wanted to use my piece to commiserate the loss of my older sister. I use the decay of the flowers to create that sense of loss, and thus the negative impacts it had on my mother and I. I used the decaying flowers to create that empty silhouette to demonstrate the emptiness surrounding the event for my family.

Additionally, Gallaccio explores her attempts to preserve the beauty in flowers using the glass panes, which is something I incorporated into my work. All attempts I make to commiserate and create in my mind this idea of having a sister will always be unsuccessful as I will never be able to experience life with a sister, which is shown through the flowers. The decay in the flowers in her work also symbolize how beauty is only momentary, and we will never fully understand eternity as forever will outrun us. Similarly, I will never fully come to understand what life would be like having an older sister, and the beauty of this event is existent at times as it has made my mother a stronger person.

However, my flowers hang upside down signifying the sadness of this event in both me and my mum's life. In addition, I utilized three different colours of roses in order to help provide contrast and bring out the fading reds in the piece. I wanted the red to be the most noticeable colour as it's the most aggressive and expressive of the pain felt. I also had a silhouette of a person missing in my piece, which is a technique not used in Gallaccio's piece.
Ah Xian demonstrates his feelings of loss for his cultural identity through the cultural crossing he experienced. Through becoming exposed to Australian culture, he lost some Chinese parts of his identity. The dilution of his innately Chinese upbringing meant that he lost some of those cultural aspects of his life, especially since he began living in a completely different country. He also looks at his confusion in his identity due to the exposure of the two types of culture. He expresses feelings of being lost amidst the new and old ideals.

**Significance and link to my work**

Although I don’t explore my personal cultural identity, I do explore the culture in China, where I live. My piece *Recycled* explores how the government has been censoring all the negative effects of its economic growth on the environment for example pollution. Using a Buddha, I represented the peace and harmony pre-existent in the environment. I explore the loss in the knowledge that the people in China ought to know about the negative effects being imposed upon the environment. Buddhism was and is still a very important religion in China, and for those religious people it is a great loss to see such disharmony in the environment. For them it’s a loss of their cultural identity as the government isn’t respecting their beliefs and putting economic growth over the environment and transparency to the general public.

My work uses sculpture as the main form, just like Ah Xian. I also utilize Chinese porcelain patterns and the contrast between the classic white and blue colors of these patterns. He uses the plain sculpture to represent himself and to help bring in this idea of identity, which I do similarly. I use an old Buddha sculpture to represent the identity of the many Chinese people who believe in preserving the pre-existent harmony in the environment and transparency from the government. I also leave the rest of the Buddha empty of pattern to show how on the outside, everything feels fine, however the inside is full of information that has been hidden away. In the same fashion, Ah Xian leaves bits of empty space to help show his confusion in cultural identity as his patterns converge towards his face and heart.
Thematic Influence

Kahlo illustrates her feelings of pain from the great tragedies and losses of her life. She painted her loss of fertility and sexuality as she was greatly injured in her bus accident. She always wanted children yet she lost the power to do so as a result from the accident. Additionally, she was constantly exploring her sexuality, yet her accident inhibited that passion of hers. She also helped voice the hidden pain felt by women at that time due to the existent patriarchal society.

Significance and link to my work

Frida Kahlo explores the tragedies in her personal life and the loss of those things she wanted so badly. I explore the loss of those things that a lot of people in China want, but in a political sense. My piece Art Remade explores the struggles of living in China due to the strong censorship and restrictive nature of the government. I paint the sadness of the fact that many things are hidden from the general public here in China for example Tiananmen Square, an event that has been taken out of the History Syllabus in Chinese Schools. Students miss out on learning about the consequences of this important event because the Chinese government is ashamed of the actions of that day. I explore the pain in censorship as Kahlo explores pain in her personal life. Kahlo, however, also explores her determination in her political beliefs, similar to my political theme.

I utilized the well-known unibrow to show the determination of many in actively opposing the strong censorship existent in China in my piece. The unibrow also this un-kept and undone feeling to the women’s face. This sense of realness suddenly makes the piece seem a lot more serious and relatable. I used the flowers to represent Chinese culture as the drips from the flowers represent the pain from the lack of freedom in the Chinese culture. Similarly, Kahlo uses her background to help bring out her feelings of sickness and pain from her tragedies.

In contrast, I painted my piece in black and white to convey an even more sombre and serious atmosphere as my piece was solely about the pain and struggles felt due to censorship in China. I also wanted to provide contrast to emphasize the bright red sewing of the lips to illustrate the feeling of restriction. In addition, my project had drips running down the painting to represent overwhelming pain felt through inability to speak or act freely. In a sense, my piece is more focused upon a single type of pain whereas Kahlo's painting is about a number of different tragedies in her life.