

Synthesis of materials, processes, and ideas

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Examples from AP board and from the art world

COLLEGE BOARD AP EXAMPLES

Score of 5



- Ideas:** Exploring my personal family history
- Materials:** Heirloom fabric, ink, thread
- Processes:** Applique, printmaking, machine stitching and hand embroidery



- Ideas:** Exploring my personal family history
- Materials:** Paint, fabric, thread
- Processes:** Painting, applique, printmaking, embroidery

Materials, Processes, and Ideas

These pieces display advanced visual relationships through the use of materials and processes which also express the student's ideas about family history and traditions. The key materials in each work – fabrics that had belonged to family members – are deeply tied to the core ideas that the student is exploring.

The student employs a variety of processes of layering – layering of fabric, layering of sewn and hand-painted imagery, layering of symbols within a work – to convey ideas about layered family history. The student has also experimented with the compositional techniques of religious imagery in representing family members. In work 2, for example, the subject centrally placed, as is seen often in religious iconography, and is layered on top of a subdued background of muted greens and patchwork of blues. Facial features are highlighted using yellow fabric. A repeated pattern of screen-printed teeth are carefully placed in an array over the figure's head, suggesting a halo.



- Ideas:** Biblical stories in a contemporary context: reveal the flaws within our modern culture
- Materials:** Digital photograph
- Processes:** the illuminated dryer chair signifies divinity



- Ideas:** Transcending religion by analyzing the state of our current political system
- Materials:** Digital photograph
- Processes:** I desaturated each color except for red, referencing the Baroque period

Materials, Processes, and Ideas

Throughout the five photographs, there is clear evidence of materials, processes, and ideas coalescing visually in the works. Synthesis is apparent in the student's choice of contemporary settings, use of props within the spaces, and the placement of costumes on models who are masterfully directed in service to the idea of exploring historical biblical narratives in contemporary society. In the Adam and Eve scene (work 1), the characters appear young and are sitting intimately in bed. While barely visible, Eve holds the apple and the snake symbolism looms from the sometimes politically controversial Gadsen Flag hanging on the wall.

Research into historical painting was obviously a part of this artist's process as well, and the student has used contemporary materials (photographic processes) and settings to reinterpret historical imagery. This portfolio is reminiscent of Caravaggio paintings in both the symbolic use of red as well as the use of dark shadows and bright shafts of light. The most clear reference to the Baroque painter can be seen in work 4 that is instantly recognizable as a re-interpretation of the *Calling of St. Matthew*.

The recognizable nativity scene in work 3 becomes contemporary when depicting modern homelessness. Jesus lies within an Amazon box, among soda cans and plastic bags. Joseph and Mary hover in the cold over him, and they are surrounded by three wise men barely visible in the dark alleyway. The student approaches their photographic process much as a film director, attending to every detail in each scene. The entire portfolio transcends the religious narratives to address the state of our current culture.

COLLEGE BOARD AP EXAMPLES

Score of 3



Ideas: I used the shadows as repetition in this image and I looked for the contrast between the light and shadows.

Materials: Digital photograph

Processes: Digital photograph adjusted with photo editing software



Ideas: I found a primary color scheme in this photo, this adds variety to the composition and contrast between the bright red and light blue.

Materials: Digital photograph

Processes: Digital photograph adjusted with photo editing software

Materials, Processes, and Ideas

Visual relationships among materials, process and ideas are evident, but unclear and inconsistent. In the written evidence, the student's stated ideas relate to the elements of art and principles of design – for example, in work 3, the artist notes, "I used the shadows as repetition in this image and I looked for the contrast between the light and shadows." It seems possible that the student was aiming to explore abstraction, particularly through the use of balance, contrast, and repetition, using architecture as a point of departure, but it is unclear whether this is truly what was intended in these works. If the student was interested in pushing the exploration of abstraction and design principles further, it might have been beneficial to experiment with additional photographic processes that could allow for deeper exploration of the stated ideas. Experimentation with processes such as double exposure, and varying shutter speeds might allow for more compositions. As an element of process, the student might also have benefited from research of contemporary artists who explore design elements and abstraction through photography.

Art World Examples

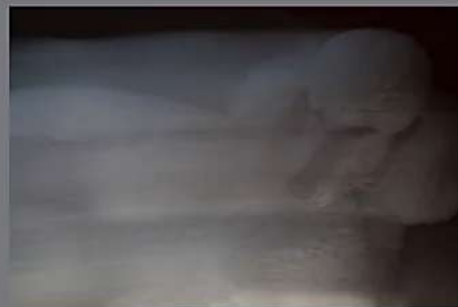
What artists show,
how they show it,
and what materials they use
should purposefully help to
get the idea across



Above: Olivia Parker - Vanishing in Plain Sight

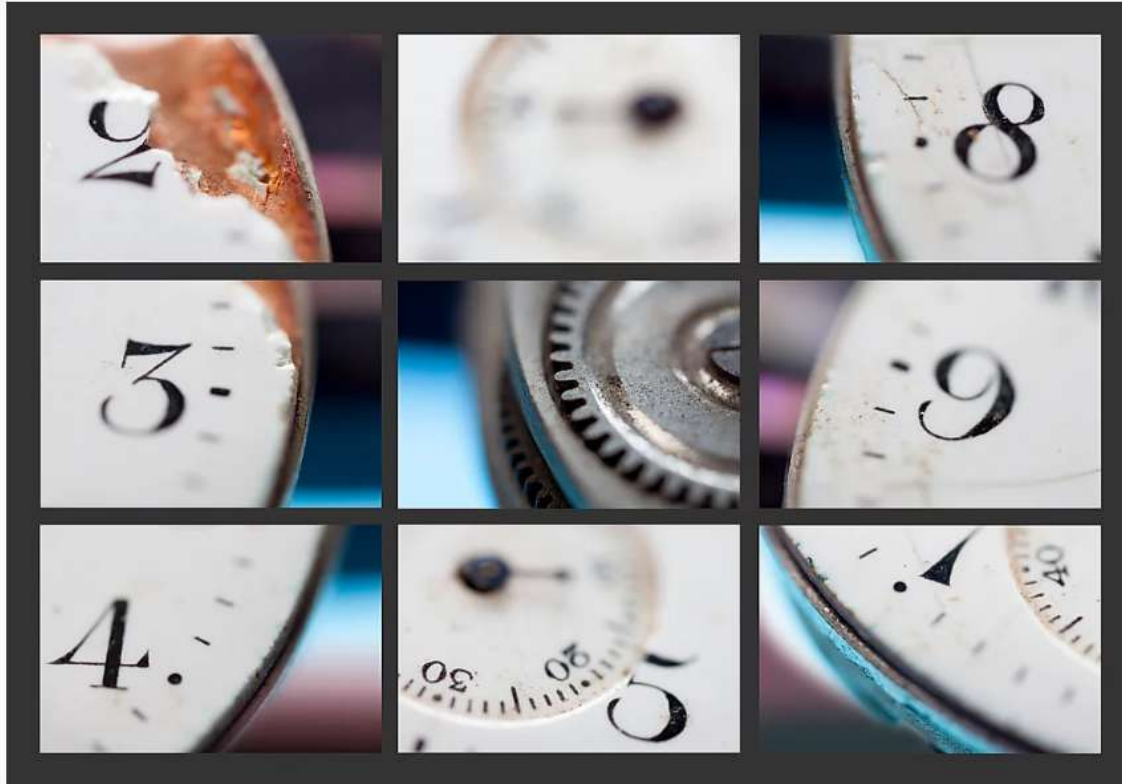
““Vanishing in Plain Sight” is my imagination’s journey through my husband John’s continual changes due to Alzheimer’s disease. I began with tangible things: the notes he wrote to help him remember and the office supplies he feared would be gone. When a subject or a camera moves during an exposure the subject disappears partially or entirely. I found that this characteristic of photography was well suited to the images I wanted to create next. As John became more and more disconnected from the world around him my photographs began to depart from what my eyes saw. The assumed connection between photography and reality remains giving voice to my imagined images.”

<https://www.vanishinginplainsight.com/>



Time

Alzheimer's patients are often asked to draw the face of a clock. As the disease progressed John's mental image of a clock blurred and shattered. It seemed as though any attempt to put it together again would only muddle it more.



Hallucinations

Even when John was still at home sometimes he seemed to bat things away that would creep into the side of his vision. At other times he would keep talking only about colors. His language became more and more limited, but he continued to express what was happening to him visually even if mostly by gestures. At least, this meant that we were still having some sort of conversation.





Above: Kara Walker - A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby, an Homage to the unpaid and overworked Artisans who have refined our Sweet tastes from the cane fields to the Kitchens of the New World on the Occasion of the demolition of the Domino Sugar Refining Plant.

“The piece is situated in a highly contested space in Williamsburg: the former Domino Sugar Factory, a site that’s become a lightning rod for discussions about post-industrial urban identity, the moneyed forces of gentrification, and the uneasy relationship of arts patronage and developers.”

“Walker’s work doesn’t explore any of the site’s recent past, focusing instead on the shadowy history of the sugar industry in the Americas and its reliance on slave labor for centuries.”



Meandering wingless African cherubs pave the way to the monstrous and marvelous Sugar Baby. These five-foot tall black children, enlargements of collectibles, which could be found at the front door of a white southern home or sugar plantation, signifying "Southern hospitality," carry bananas or food in baskets. The cherubs' sweet smiles, apple cheeks, and potbellies merge into the most terrifying part of the installation. Two months into the exhibit, the statues have changed, deteriorated, or disintegrated. A majority of the figurines are made of resin covered with molasses. The molasses cherubs, made of a viscous and dark by-product of cane refining, stand in sharp contrast with the white and powdery confectionary sugar of the sphinx. The crumbling molasses sculptures each weigh four hundred pounds: surprising for their true-to-life size. Kara Walker threw broken body parts and remains into the fruit-bearing baskets of their surviving brothers. The offering of food turns into an offering of human flesh, gesturing that sugar production and consumption are acts of cannibalism.



Kehinde Wiley is a young, African-American painter who is quite literally changing the face(s) of portraiture with his sensitive, vibrant, and political portrayals of black folk, ranging from teenagers he meets on the streets, to fellow contemporary artists, and even former President Barack Obama.

Wiley made a name for himself for his naturalistic, brightly colored portraits of young black men, often with dramatic flowery backgrounds. With black masculinity often framed as synonymous with fear and violence in the USA, his generous and vibrant portraits challenge viewers' preconceptions of their subjects and bring young men, and people, of color into the galleries and museums they are so woefully underrepresented in.

Wiley often appropriates, or re-uses, recognizable art history images and tropes, such as portraits of Napoleon, heroic sea paintings, and traditional nudes. He does this as a way to critique art historical norms - the way we almost only see white people painted by other white people when we look at painting - and to use pre-existing tools to elevate black folk to the important positions inhabited by these white people of art history.

As a gay black man, it is important for Wiley to reposition black male bodies as objects of desire, eroticism, and vulnerability, as opposed to fear, strength and violence. Black gay men are often doubly victimised in society, and Wiley's purposeful queering of recognizable images; his use of flowers; and camp, playful portraits are all important contributions to what queer black art can look like in America, and the importance of blackness to queerness, and visa versa.

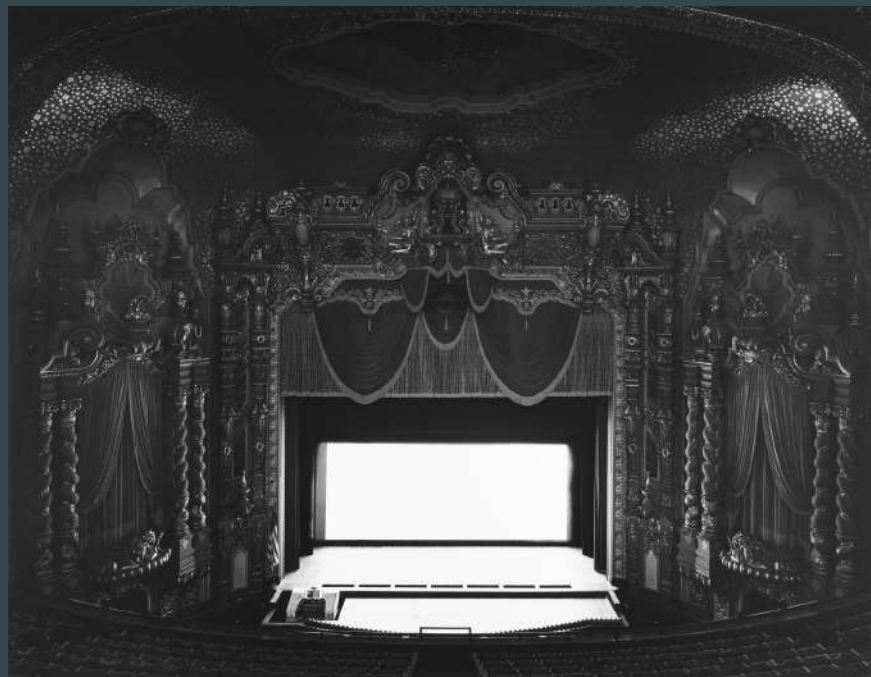




Hiroshi Sugimoto Theater series

Theatres

In 1978, Sugimoto's Theatres series involved photographing old American movie palaces and drive-ins with a folding 4x5 camera and tripod, opening his camera shutter and exposing the film for the duration of the entire feature-length movie, the film projector providing the sole lighting. The luminescent screen in the centre of the composition, the architectural details and the seats of the theatre are the only subjects that register owing to the long exposure of each photograph, while the unique lighting gives the works a surreal look, as a part of Sugimoto's attempt to reveal time in photography. Sugimoto discovered that "Different movies give different brightnesses. If it's an optimistic story, I usually end up with a bright screen; if it's a sad story, it's a dark screen. Occult movie? Very dark."





Hiroshi Sugimoto

Seascapes

Seascapes

Water and air. So very commonplace are these substances, they hardly attract attention—and yet they vouchsafe our very existence. The beginnings of life are shrouded in myth: Let there water and air. Living phenomena spontaneously generated from water and air in the presence of light, though that could just as easily suggest random coincidence as a Deity. Let's just say that there happened to be a planet with water and air in our solar system, and moreover at precisely the right distance from the sun for the temperatures required to coax forth life. While hardly inconceivable that at least one such planet should exist in the vast reaches of universe, we search in vain for another similar example. Mystery of mysteries, water and air are right there before us in the sea. Every time I view the sea, I feel a calming sense of security, as if visiting my ancestral home; I embark on a voyage of seeing.







Nan Goldin

As a teenager in Boston in the 1960s, then in New York starting in the 1970s, Nan Goldin has taken intensely personal, spontaneous, sexual, and transgressive photographs of her family, friends, and lovers. In 1979 she presented her first slideshow in a New York nightclub, and her richly colored, snapshot like photographs were soon heralded as a groundbreaking contribution to fine art photography. The Ballad of Sexual Dependency—the name she gave her ever-evolving show—eventually grew into a forty-five-minute multimedia presentation of more than 700 photographs, accompanied by a musical soundtrack.











The New York-based visual artist recently created a photography series called Food Chain, which unapologetically showcases the circle of life.



“Chalmers sets her subjects against a clean, white background. Quickly, the sterility of the scene becomes littered with blood and guts.”

Catherine Chalmers - Food Chain