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Class of 2020
Painting BFA
Color, Content, and Viewer's Perception
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The concept of communicating ideas and emotions pictorially is what inspires me and drives my artistic practice and was the inspiration for my project. During this summer I sought out to explore the relationship between the color palette of a painting and the objects represented in it and how these two factors affect the viewer's connection with that painting/drawing/sculpture/etc... I'm particularly interested in how people who exist outside of the art world bubble interact with paintings and how stylistic choices enhance or hinder their viewing experience with certain pieces. I chose to create six oil paintings in dimensions of 16"x20". Three of these paintings were representationally from direct observation and the other three were painted abstractly, I drew inspiration from artists like Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, and Henri Matisse. In addition to this I also read two texts, Josef Albers' Interaction of Color and Johannes Itten's The Art of Color to understand the principles and application of color theory. I used the color palettes that I observed from life to inspire the palettes of the abstract works. There were three different genres being illustrated in this experiment; a still life, a self-portrait, and a landscape. These are images I see being repeated throughout art history and have become part of the Western art canon. During my this time I also read three texts about art theory to better understand art as a conceptual practice which were, John Dewey's Art as Experience, Rudolph Arnheim's Art and Visual Perception, and Colour: Art and Science (Darwin College Lectures) edited by Trevor Lamb and Janine Bourriau.

When the paintings were completed, I sent out an anonymous survey via Google Forms to the staff and students who were participating in SURF and also my fellow Lyme Academy students. I asked the participants a 5 question survey and had them pick their preferred style of painting and give a short response why they chose the works they did. I received 26 answers. My hypothesis was that people who are not art students and do not regularly make art will have a stronger preference towards representational painting because that is something that everyone is exposed to no matter their career choice or educational background. Abstract work has a certain stigma towards it in mainstream culture and because there are no depicted objects there can be a disconnect between viewer and subject matter. The still life representationally painted was favored more by viewer's receiving 16 votes out and 69.6% favorability. The self-portrait received equal favorability with votes totaling 50% for the representational work and 50% for the abstract piece. The landscape representationally was given 63% of the votes while the abstract piece was 36%. I found it interesting to read the participants answers and find that almost all of the people had some sort of nostalgic memory attached to the works they chose and all of them had different opinions about what art is. Moving forward I will build upon this data and see if I can successfully merge the two styles to maximize viewer's favorability and create a deeper dialogue between viewer and art work.