

## The language of my soul

I've been drawing for as long as I can remember, always playing around with fabrics and matching clothes. My mom told me that my high sensitivity towards composition, color, and proportion was already shown when I was two in an early education art class. I remember arguing with the adults who told me to be a painter, "I want to do something special! Learning art does not mean that I must be a painter!!" I yelled back. And they eventually became the reasons that drove my parents to come to the US.

In the summer of 2019, we crossed the Pacific from Zhejiang, China, to Silicon Valley. A year later, I met teacher Fang in that dusty studio, who, unlike any teacher I had met before, immediately pointed out the shortcomings in my artwork with his frank attitude. I've always been used to being complimented, but at that moment, I felt all the praises I'd received were crushed into pieces. Doubt arose in my heart, but after seeing the work done by his students, I turned speechless. After a few seconds of mental struggle, I decided to stay.

After months of classes, I was used to arriving home at 10 pm. Looking at the night sky with stars shining above, I knew my life would be changed from now on.

Under teacher Fang's guidance, my practice of art expands from technique to theory. For the first time, I saw the rustic beauty in ancient murals such as the Grotte de Lascaux, interpreting the history behind it. Behind Fang's sharp critique was the encouragement towards higher pursuits, his knowledge of Eastern aesthetics inspired me to incorporate them with Western art into my

work. I started to form my definition of art -- the language of the soul that can go across space and time.

I decided to attend the ten-week art camp at the studio, pushing me away from my comfort zone and seeking a higher level of learning. This summer was different from ever before; I was accepting college-level art lessons in various categories. We incorporated 2D forms such as drawing, charcoal, and printmaking and combined creativity with psychoanalysis, philosophy, and media study. The intensity of having 66 hours of classes per week plus schoolwork and homework time pushed me to develop my schedule further regarding what to prioritize and maximize efficiency while ensuring my physical and mental health. I became unstoppable and eager to learn. The subtle connection between the fields became so clear in my mind; they are like a huge net accommodating our society and reflecting our humanity. Art was no longer simply a hobby but the language of my heart.

Teacher Fang's harsh critique contains expectations for me and always pushes me to the next level, his emphasis on innovation and high standards for students thoroughly changed my perspective of the future. In an evolving world like today, with AI as a part of our lives, creativity has become especially critical to our presence and future. I do not wish to continue to follow what has already been created but rather open up my own world. In college, I will pursue a dual degree or double major, taking a multidisciplinary approach to combine all I'm passionate about and create my future career that does not yet have a concrete form. I will set artistic direction as my first goal, assembling the abstract creative thinking I hold as an artist while pursuing critical leadership and responsibility for the overall aesthetic and emotional tone of the

project. I will visually invite the audience into the work, making the simple fabric, words, and people into an art that interacts with one's soul.

The four-year-old me was right; being a painter is not the only possibility for those who study art, but the creativity and sincerity I hold as an artist will accompany me forever.