The expression of emotions

Hweawon Chung

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.rit.edu/theses

Recommended Citation
Rochester Institute of Technology

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

The College of Imaging Arts and Sciences

In Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

The Expression of Emotions

By: Hweawon Chung
Approvals:

Chief Advisor: ______________________________ Date: ____________
  Michael Rogers
Associate Advisor: ______________________________ Date: ____________
  Michael Taylor
Associate Advisor: ______________________________ Date: ____________
  Robin Cass

Permission Statement:

I, Hweawon Chung, hereby grant permission to the RIT Library of the Rochester Institute of Technology to reproduce my thesis in whole or in part. Any reproduction will not be for commercial use or profit.
Date: ____________ Signature of Author: _____________________________

Rochester Institute of Technology

This volume is property of the Institute, but the literary rights of the author must be respected. Please refer to Permission Statement in this volume for denial or permission by author to reproduce. In addition, if the reader obtains any assistance from this volume, he must give proper credit in his own work.

This thesis has been used by the following persons, whose signatures attest to their acceptance of the above conditions.

Name                   Address                   Date
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
At each moment, we experience numerous feelings, such as anger, happiness, sadness, loneliness, madness, insanity, and jealousy. In real life, we are able to read these emotions on an individual’s face. However, we do not always communicate these feelings accurately to others because one’s face and mind are sometimes contradictory. When we watch faces of other people we can not know what they are really thinking. Communication becomes difficult when people mask, sometimes intentionally, to hide their true sentiments. Often we desire to know someone’s mind. My glass sculpture is intended to explore the idea of inner emotions as compared to outward expression. The face is used as the vehicle to express ideas. I choose glass because its transparency allows viewers to look through the outside layer to the inside.
Statement of the basic premise(s) of the thesis:

Throughout history, humans have been interested in the relationship between the mind and emotion. I am interested in the way in which people transmit their unique feelings to others. These sculptures represent my perspective of this phenomenon. Often people will communicate with their faces instead of their voices. Facial expression is the way to convey one’s true sentiments. Through my work, I try to recreate the moment in which one’s inner thoughts are expressed. In my personal experience, the speaking of a foreign or non-native language often causes misunderstanding. To address this problem, I try to read the face of the speaker because it allows me to better understand their feelings of happiness, sadness, anger or other emotions. The face is an important part in communicating without speech.

Statement of goals and objectives of the thesis investigation:

These works intend to create and express the difference between inner emotions and outer expressions. This investigation will be explored using glass and metal. It is also a further exploration of an attempt at my conceptual reasoning for recreating these emotions.
Critical discussion of the body of work in relation to the issues presented in the

Introduction, section I.

I grew up in the city. When I walked on the streets, I could not keep my eyes away from the display windows of shops. The windows of glass took me into another world. That was an exhilarating feeling. To enter the worlds inside the display window has been my long-cherished desire because in those worlds I imagine myself to be a very different person.

I believe the best material for containing, protecting, and revealing is glass; such as chemical containers, jewelry showcases, and display windows. Especially, the revealing is the most important point of my work because I want to see and show emotions and expressions by way of the glass. These pieces of glass always divide a space into the inside and outside. These points influenced me to create glass art and also my other body of works.

In modern times we are surrounded by psychological warfare based on emotions. However, human sentiments are the most essential part of our lives. I often wonder what others are thinking and feeling. When I think about my work and my life, I want to understand two aspects about the people I know: what they are thinking and
what they are feeling. So I began to think of ways to show my emotions to others, believing that doing so would encourage them to do the same.

Before starting my work, I decided on several ideas such as shape, format, and materials. The construction involved layering mirrors. The format mimics the sink and mirror in a bathroom and the materials used there. Plate glass is used for the mirror and sink, and my face; and several kinds of copper such as nails, foils, tacks, and wires express the emotion. The main idea of this work is to use the mirror to show emotions to the viewer. When people look into mirrors to put makeup on or check our faces or hair, we sometimes act as a different person. In front of a bathroom mirror, we see only our faces instead of anyone else’s face. Because the bathroom is a private space, a person sees only himself in the mirror. In my work the layered face represents our various emotional states and expressions.

In the first version, the “Mirrors of Emotions and Expressions”, is composed of two layers of plate glass with formed faces. Each piece shows a different facial emotion. The inner layer represents the inner true emotion, and the outer layer represents the outer expression that is visible. I tried to make both the inside and outside visible; however, the faces were not working perfectly. The first faces used in these works were not from real faces, and everyone who saw these pieces said they could not recognize
the emotions. Instead of having an inside, and outside the face in this case created a mask. At this time I made about thirty masks with several techniques such as engraving, exploding the surface, scratching, and painting.

In the second version, I increased the scale of the work experimented with textures. For example, I tried to express the emotion of anger, so I hit the plate glass with a hammer. Then I glued the broken parts back together with black dye powder and
glue. This work showed strong emotional feeling. However, it was not successful because of the space in which the work appeared was an open area. The piece was too visually accessible and therefore was too explicit. Because my concept came from the intimate space of a bathroom, I wanted to show my work in a private space. Then I tried installing my work in a public restroom, but because of the openness and the poor lighting, I couldn’t create a perfect setting for projecting my images on a reflective glass surface.

Then I tried to create the feeling of an intimate bathroom space instead of
relying on an installation in real space. I wanted to create a representation of the sink and medicine chest in the bathroom. After that, the pieces changed entirely. For example, the sink was made as a glass container with a real drain, creating a glass pond with a silvered surface. Soil and seeds filled the sink. The medicine chest was made with two layers of bended glass with images of faces showing emotions. The question was how to create the mirror and the sink so they became visually integrated. I have touched upon the challenges I met in creating this body of work.
The Expression of Emotions #1 “painful”

I will now consider the final stages of my creative works. When I first developed the concept of the work, I thought about the emotion of pain. In our lives we all experience pain. I have used the most significant pain from my life experience as the inspiration for this piece. Initially, I made glass nails to represent this feeling; however, they appeared to be pleasing and pretty rather than painful. Then I used copper nails because copper is one of the best compatible materials to combine with glass employing the firing technique. I placed the copper nails between two layers of plate glass and fired them. This gave the glass a pinched nail texture. I attached the image of my face to the mirror and silvered the surface because it represented my face in the mirror. The silvered glass seemed like an antique mirror which was appropriate because what I wished to express was not of the moment, but rather from past memory. I wanted to show the transition of my emotions over time and how these emotions evolve. The next step was to express the cleansing of my pain. While the mirror expresses my painful emotions, the idea of the sink cleanses me of these emotions. My face is also visible on the surface of the water in the sink.

The Expression of Emotions #2 “irate”

After making the work about the initial shock of pain, I thought about another
emotion related to pain which I will call the stage of irate emotion. I could not express this emotion to anyone I knew but could only hide the emotion in my mind. However, I could express this irate feeling to myself in the mirror. This experience led me to recreate this moment in glass. Creating strong emotions was not easy because I always tried to make beautiful pieces in the past to add content to my work. I had to surpass conventional beauty and find other ways. I came up with the idea of crumpled paper as one way to express irate emotion. I had crumpled paper before when I felt angry or irate.

I was also trying to make a sink complement the mirror. Actually, the first time I tried to create the sink, the shape was rectangular. However, it seemed to be more of different kind of a container and less a sink. When I made the shape oval, it expressed the idea of a sink much more than a rectangular shape.

The next issue to be resolved was the connection between the mirror and the sink. First, it seemed to be two separate works-the mirror part and the sink part. I thought a normal bathroom had the mirror and sink installed separately. However, to have my work visually express its content clearly, the sink and mirror had to be made one. I tried to make the connection with metal bars between the mirror and the sink, and because the sink stand was also metal, it helped integrate the work into a unified whole and make them one piece of work.
The Expression of Emotions #3 “crying”

The next aspect of emotion I wanted to explore was the explosive stage. When I became angry, I really wanted to explode. I felt like an insane man, and sometimes it could be destructive. I felt just like the famous painter’s “The Scream, 1895” by Edvard Munch:

“The Scream: A scream of dread at Nature, which, flushed with rage, is about to speak through storm and thunder to those foolish, puny beings who imagine themselves to be gods without resembling gods.”

(J. P. Hodin. p 76).

When I was young, I used to play a small drink bottle battle with my friends. We collected bottles and threw the bottle at each other’s bottle. The sounds of breaking glass and the destroyed bottles were thrilling, but it also frightened us. With this memory I knew exactly how to recreate this feeling in my work. In the movies, broken mirrors are used to express such emotions. Actors scream and sometimes break glass. Actors also express anger by punching or screaming at the mirror. The same conventions are found in painting, and I was greatly influenced in my work by the Munch painting.

In this picture [“The Scream”] the Existentialist position in which modern man finds himself is represented as penetratingly as by Kierkegaard in his analysis The Concept of Dread. The composition shows an exaggerated perspective, the pier leading deep into the landscape which is dominated by wavy lines in the sky, the sea and the land. In front a screaming figure holds both hands in terror to its head, the mouth wide open, the body convulsed. In the background two elongated figures on the pier walk forward, slowly and threateningly, as if invented by Kafka. The face of the terrified man is yellow, like a skull.
The colours symbolize the psychic situation: strong reds and yellows in the sky, blues, yellows and greens in the landscape, the railing reflecting the sky. The colours and the dynamics of the curved lines express in the features of the landscape the anxiety which is an inner state of mind. What a step between The Yellow Boat and this disquieting scene!
(J. P. Hodin. p 48)

That was the moment I wanted to evoke. Screaming was the inspiration for the piece with broken glass glued back together. However, this time I tried to form one layer of already broken glass to a layer of plate glass. I put some copper powder instead of black color glue in-between the broken glass because I wanted to express a stronger than normal feeling of crying. The crying depicted in the work is often a form of remorse after the explosion of anger. The dark color and rough broken texture of the copper showed this intensity of remorse. I also made a small hole in the sink because I wanted to show the amount of screaming.

The Expression of Emotions # 4 “confinement”
After the crying piece, I had not decided on the next feeling. I had already made pieces demonstrating pain, anger, and rage but the decision of the next emotion was difficult to settle on. I was stuck on my idea and felt a little confined. It was difficult to express the feeling of calm I had after my explosion. When we have this sentiment after exploding, it is based on desires such as love, happiness, life, and freedom. I was trying to get to this kind of desire. In our lives, we are trying to get what we want. This is desire. I wanted to recreate and to express desire, and I decided to use the image of a cage. The inside of the cage represents our lives after the emotions of pain, anger, and crying. The outside represents desire. I had used copper wire as a cage inside of the mirror, and I confined my face in the mirror. The sink was created with the same idea. It had a small closed space, but it is empty because these emotions were impossible to see. I felt that it represented the immaterial world or elusive emotions. During the process I came to another question of how to create a private and intimate space. The concept of the bathroom represents distinct personal feelings and a private space for each of us individually. To create intimacy, I attached a metal plate under the sink which separated it from its surroundings. In this way I thought the steel plate as a base could make an independent space of each piece, separating it from the others. I could also create intimacy by raising the height of the sink, bringing the viewer within closer contact with
the object of the sink and mirror.

**The Expression of Emotions #5 “jealous”**

Finally, I made the last emotion of this series as a small joke, even though the concept had a heavy sentiment. The small copper nails were perfect for this. It was harmless, but it could hurt, causing a small amount of pain. I think of the feeling of jealousy in the same way because the amount of the feeling was coming to me many different ways - love, happiness, envy, and fortune. The following quotation is an apt description of the jealousy that I am conveying in this particular piece:

“Jealousy: Scared feeling of spiritual purity, which abhors the idea of mingling itself by proxy with another of the same sex. Jealousy, that justified egoism born from the instinct of self-preservation-one’s own and that of one’s race.” (J. P. Hodin. p 76).

The jealous mirror has countless nails. After the last piece of the series was created, I began to contemplate the dilemma of how to create this sentiment in the gallery because the thesis show is a group show. There were several students who worked in different materials, and the gallery space was huge and open. If it were a solo exhibition, I could easily control the space for my work. I needed to create a particular setting for the work in order for it to be effective. I used nine pieces of wall, and I made a small room as my private area. I used low wattage spot lights because this lighting created a nice calm personal space. Using the wall worked well because my pieces had their own space and did not compete with the work of the other students. The space became a bathroom.
When viewers came to see my work, it was in a small space and they needed to stand in single file to go inside of the space. That was exactly what I wanted. This little dark and enclosed space made for a more private and silent moment, separate from the work of others in the show.

**Critical evaluation of the result of the thesis investigation, in relation to the issues presented in the Introduction, section I.**

When I conceived this project, it related to my personal life. The emotions which I presented are relevant to all of us. My body of work is mostly visual poetic sculpture. This was my first attempt to explore this kind of conceptual work. I encountered technical problems with the works in developing the format, surface, capturing the emotion of my face on its surface and in making the sinks express each of the sentiments. Evoking each one of the emotions was definitely the most difficult part. When we feel these emotions, they consume every moment of our lives. However, after the moment it is difficult to remember the feeling in an authentic way. Emotions are often fleeting. I actually try to forget painful feelings immediately after the moment it occurs. I tried to recreate those feelings without any adverse effect so I could investigate the emotion objectively. Sometimes, the emotion stayed all day long or for an entire
week. When I need to draw on the idea of anger, I thought about how I get this feeling.

All day long, I tried to think about bad things happening such as someone treating me poorly and being upset all day. I made wet clay, put a huge sheet of paper on the wall, and drew an angry face.

Jackson Pollack said:

> When I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing. It is only after a sort of “get acquainted” period that I see what I have been about. I have no fears about making changes, destroying the image, etc., because the painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through. It is only when I lose contact with the painting that the result is a mess. Otherwise there is pure harmony, an easy give and take, and the painting comes out well.

(Elizabeth Frank, p 68)

Then, I threw the clay into the paper with great force. This was one of the things that happened during the process. I had been almost crazy because of the work.

> “The canvas,” declared Rosenberg, began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act-rather than as a space in which to reproduce, re-design, analyze, or “express” an object, actual or
imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event. (Ratcliff Carter. p 108).

From these processes, I have learned a lot of ideas such as how to create, why I create through visual art.

**Critical discussion of the relative successes and failures of the thesis work.**

I was nervous at the opening of the show. Many viewers were in my space asking about the work. When one person finished, the next person lined up and kept asking me how I made it, what its concept is, and why I created it. I was so proud of my work but I also wanted to escape from the moment because it made me ashamed to be exposed in this way. I had a lot of trouble making this work, but the pride I felt in the gallery made it all worthwhile. I often became depressed and disappointed, and I also had feelings of pain, anger, explosion, confinement, and jealousy because of the failures in every step of the process. Creating the imaging and emotions with glass and copper were a challenge. I had tried to create each emotional texture into the glass such as anger with crinkled copper foil, jealousy with small copper nails, frustration with big copper nails, confinement with copper wires, and crying with copper powder. I used only copper because the coefficient of expansion of copper is similar to that of glass. I had taken over one hundred pictures of my emotional faces on the color photo copier
machine, and each of the best emotional pictures were glued behind the textured glass with Hextal glue. Each step of creating the piece had a few small problems of space, connection, texture, images, and the piece itself. When I solved the problems, I felt happy and satisfied. The success of this thesis investigation consisted of the expression of my concepts in glass and mixed media.

Well, method is, it seems to me, a natural growth out of a need, and from a need the modern artists has found new ways of expressing the world about him. I happen to find ways that are different from the usual techniques of painting, which seems a little strange at the moment, but I don’t think there’s anything very different about it. I paint on the floor and this isn’t unusual – the Orientals did that.

(Interview with William Wright, East Hampton, 1950)

(Francis Valentine O’Connor and Eugene Victor Thaw. p xxi).

Now, I have found my conceptual direction of working. I do not consider these pieces finished, rather I consider them a starting point in the process of my life of making art.
Listing of pieces created for the thesis exhibition.

(Chronologically Ordered)

1) The Expression of Emotions #1
   “painful”
   Glass, Steel, Copper
   24”X24”X62”

2) The Expression of Emotions #2
   “irate”
   Glass, Steel, Copper
   24”X24”X62”

3) The Expression of Emotions #3
   “crying”
   Glass, Steel, Copper
   24”X24”X62”

4) The Expression of Emotions #4
   “confinement”
   Glass, Steel, Copper
   24”X24”X62”

5) The Expression of Emotions #5
   “jealous”
   Glass, Steel, Copper
   24”X24”X62”
Works Cited


The Expression of Emotions #1
“painful”
The Expression of Emotions #1
"painful" (Detail)
The Expression of Emotions #2
"irate"
The Expression of Emotions #2
"irate" (detail)
The Expression of Emotions #3
"crying"
The Expression of Emotions # 3
“crying” (Detail)
The Expression of Emotions #4
“confinement”
The Expression of Emotions #4
"confinement" (Detail)
The Expression of Emorius #5
"jealous"
The Expression of Emotions #5
"jealous" (Detail)