

Artist Reflection: Giving Away the Family Piano

My initial idea remained “stable” in these ways – the subject (giving away the family piano), the monochromatic (possibly charcoal) drawing, and the inclusion of archived materials. My creative inquiry and process involved making trial drawings. I created four versions, varying substrate (tracing paper, Mylar, watercolour paper, drawing paper), media (several types of charcoal, graphite, black marker, use of wire and balloons), trying layers (draw in marker on the back of the mylar and in charcoal on the front), and collaging on the back of mylar or the front of paper.

I’ve noticed my tendency to DO rather than IMAGINE in the past. I’m new enough into making art that I use novel tools and materials every time I do a piece, so I’m not sure how much this is simply my process and how much comes from not knowing how the materials will perform. At this stage in my learning, I seem to rely on mock-ups as integral to the ideation as well as the materials testing.

I was glad I trialled mylar with marker on the backside and charcoal on the front – I learned that the mirror image drawing (backside) would take a huge amount of time unless it was a near-symmetric right/left image. I wanted a more complex structure for my piano, making it recede in perspective to match the theme of letting go. I think it was a good decision to change to drawing/collaging all elements on one side of the drawing paper.

On the other hand, my attempts to integrate alternate media met mixed results. I was stuck on the idea of including piano wire (or facsimile) in the piece and struggled to make that work. In the end, it was two layers of peer/instructor feedback that helped me process this idea. At the work-in-progress session April 2, I heard ideas like hand

sculptures or hands underneath the piano as if setting it free. I abandoned my early idea to string wire between the images on the paper, for a new idea of 3D wire hands. This led me further to a mounting system that brought the drawing paper a few inches off the wall. At the April 9 critique, I presented the charcoal drawing mounted away from the wall and the wire hands mounted below the piece. The feedback included “the hands are creepy” and “I’m not convinced they are adding to the piece”. It felt like I finally had permission to let go of this self-imposed challenge! Final photos of the piece minus the wire hands give me a settled feeling that the hands never did. I am happy in the end with the drawing in charcoal, the inclusion of collaged archival pieces, and the mounting frame that brings the paper a couple of inches off the wall. I learned (again) the value of “killing your darlings” and of seeking critique and feedback to find my way around the blind spots!!

