



Fig. 1

# Connection

the concept behind everything

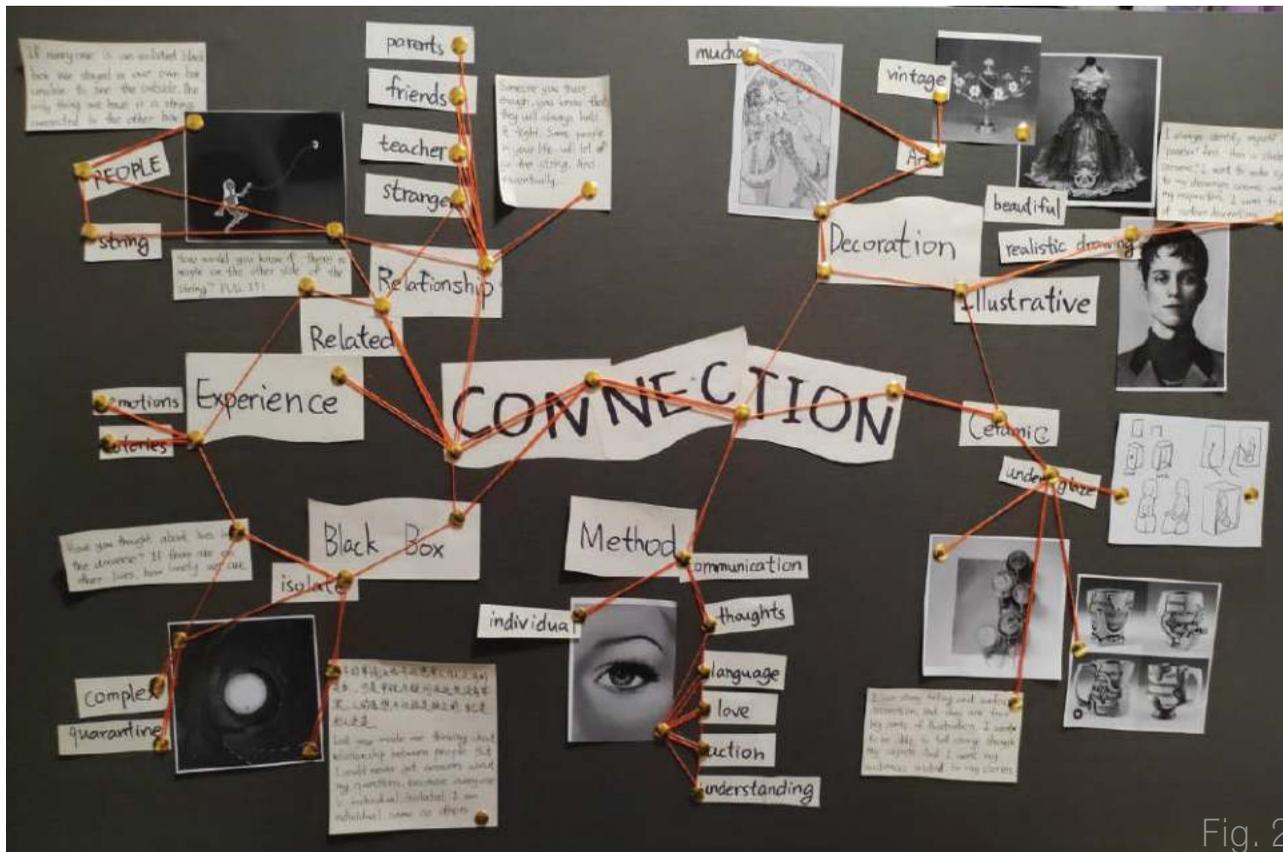


Fig. 2

“Connection” is a series of pieces I made this year that represents how I feel about the connections I have in my life. This series contains three topics: Understanding, Exploring, and Realization. Understanding represents the start of connection that has been built through language and communication. Exploring represents the connection I have with myself, including my thoughts and feelings. Realization represents the loss of connection.

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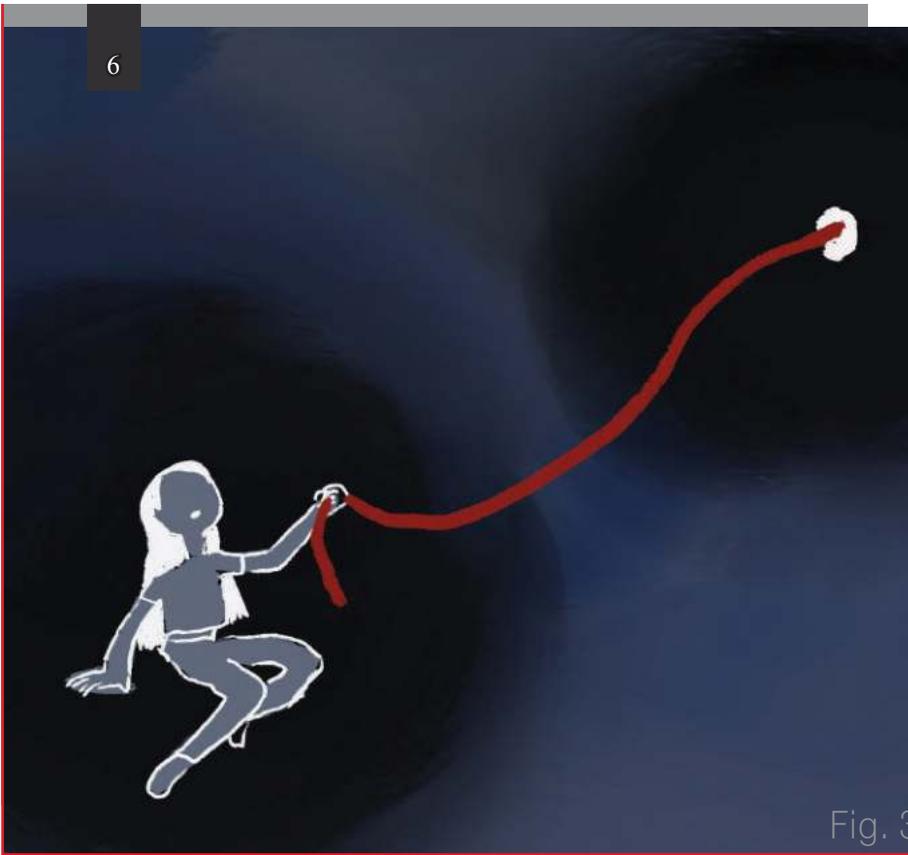


Fig. 3

The definition of the word “connection” is “a relationship in which a person, thing, or idea that is linked or associated with something else.”

I decided to make something related to my personal experiences and thoughts instead of doing beautiful historical pieces. With this in mind, I named my capstone “Connection”.

# Connection



Fig. 4

The pandemic and quarantine had many people isolated for a long time. This made me think about all the relationships and connections that I have with people in my life: how I feel about the “connection” between people, how we build the connection, and how I would feel when I lose that connection.

ZHANG

## Connection: the concept behind everything

My “Connection” series represents my feelings of connection to all the people and ideas around me. What I would like to accomplish during this year would be to bring my own story into my pieces and make it easy for other people to understand.



I make them interactive so that I can communicate with my audience through them. My work expresses the feelings I got from my personal experiences, people would feel what I felt standing in front them. My work will ask them about the connections they have in their life and make people rethink about all the relationships we have. I invite people to think about how we choose to build or not build our connections to people around us, and how we seek our purpose and answers of our life, and more importantly, how we were forced to lose our connection to someone forever — how we feel about death.





# Understanding

# Understanding Builds Connection

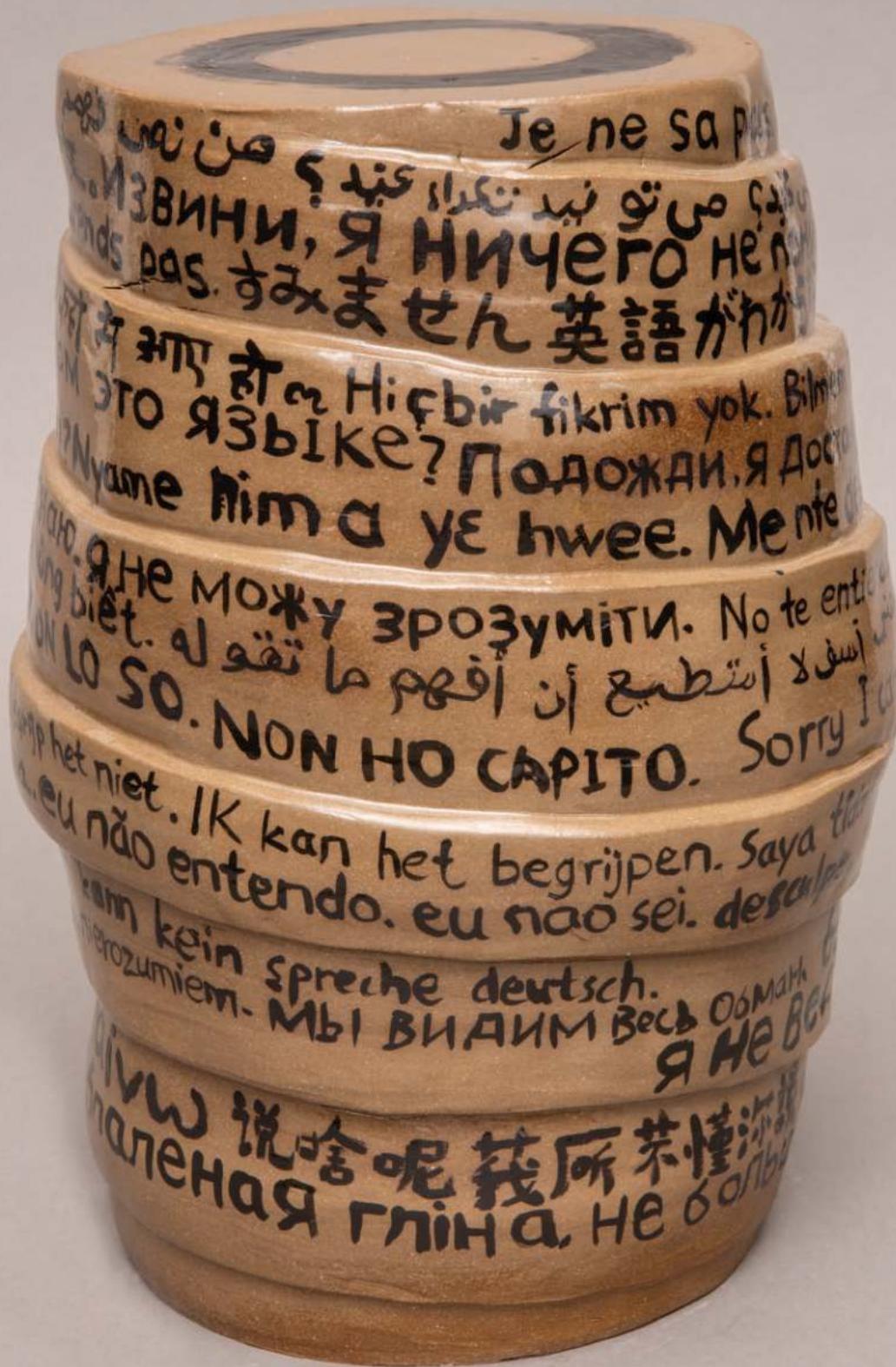


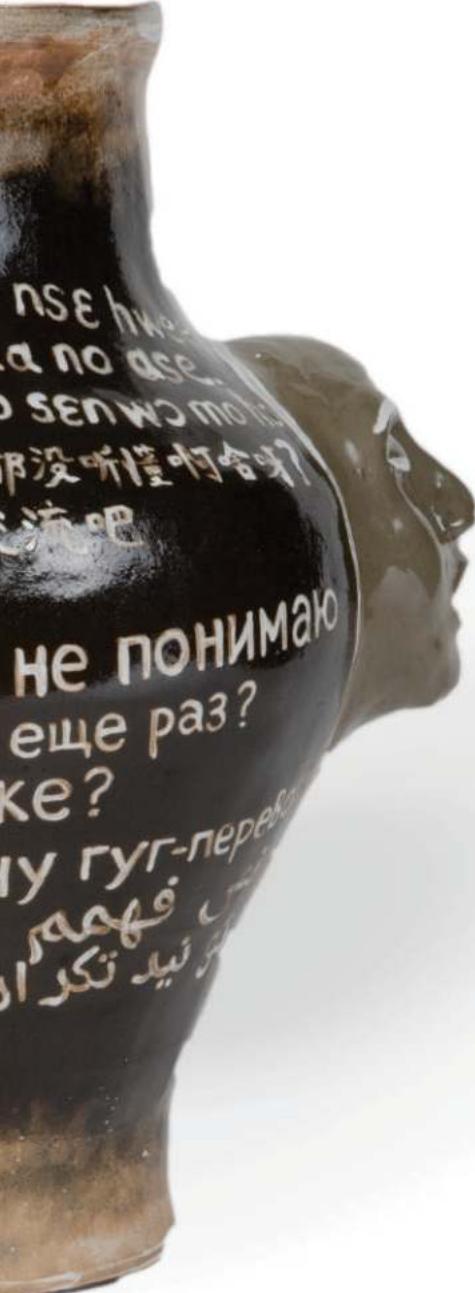
Fig. 8

Every individual will be different from each other. As an international student, a big part of my education has been spent learning a different language and trying to understand others.

When you are surrounded by people who speak a language you don't know, the feeling of uncertainty and difference can be scary. I think that is the power of language: it can start conversation, build connections and build understanding between different individuals.



# UNDE



French (Yao Fu):  
Je ne sa pas.  
I don't know.  
Qu'est-ce que tu racontés?  
What are you talking about?  
Je ne comprends pas.  
I don't understand.

Russian (Egor Okonskii):  
Извини, я ничего не понимаю.  
Sorry, I don't understand anything.  
Можешь повторить еще раз?  
Can you repeat it again?  
На каком это языке?  
In which language is this?  
Подожди, я достану гугл-переводчик.  
Wait, I'll get google translate.

Chinese (Xinyun Zhang):  
你在说什么我听不懂啊。  
What are you talking about, I could not understand.  
不会吧，你不会说中文吗？  
No way, you could not speak Chinese?

# ERSTANDING

understanding  
builds connection

# Understanding

A long time ago, a group of people decided to build a tower that could lead them to heaven.

However, God did not want them to do that, so God made them speak different languages.

People then could no longer understand each other, therefore the tower of Babel could not be completed.



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

I collected quotes from people who speak different languages to create a chaotic and conflicted feeling. Some languages I used are English, French, Chinese, Russian, Japanese, Hindi, Akan, Persian, etc. Instead of choosing google translate or an AI language model, I collected all the languages from their native speakers.

Sorry, I can not understand you.

什么?



Fig. 12

The languages on my work can be a natural human response. Additionally, this way of collecting languages is very important and meaningful for my project.

I talked to people from all over the world and collected 24 different languages in total for this particular piece. During the process of collecting new languages, I also learned a lot about their countries and their culture.

This experience also provoked me to think and feel deeper about the connection we build between people, how people with different culture backgrounds started to build a general agreement and understanding from their first conversation and then make connections from there.

Fig. 13



Belarusian (Timur):  
 Гэта проста абпаленая гліна,  
 не больш.  
 It's just a burnt clay, nothing  
 more.  
 Я не ведаю. Я не разумею.  
 I don't know, I can't under-  
 stand.

Chilean Spanish:  
 no cacho  
 I don't get it

Czech:  
 Omluvám se, ale nerozumím  
 I am sorry, but I don't under-  
 stand

Ukrainian:  
 я не знаю (ya ne znaiy)  
 I don't know.  
 я не можу зрозуміти (ya ne mozhu zro-  
 zumity)

Turkish (M.):  
 Hiçbir fikrim yok  
 I have no idea  
 Bilmem/Bilmiyorum  
 I don't know  
 Ne bileyim  
 How should I know.

Korean:  
 모르겠습니다  
 I don't know

Different languages create the fear of unknown and uncertainty. As an international student, I experience that a lot in my life.

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# know the fear of unknown

---

**T**he viewer's first impression will be looking for the quotes that

they can understand and read. They will not spend much time on the quotes that they do not understand.

This allows the viewer to build a connection with my piece, by feeling more

comfortable with the language that they know.

People will not understand when they hear an unknown language. Hearing a new foreign language could create a feeling of fear and estrangement.

To evoke this feeling in my piece, I put a series of soundtracks inside. With basic dialogues in daily conversations, like asking "How are you?" with a simple edited version played backwards, creating a soundtrack that no one can understand.

# Understanding Languages

Italian (Antonio):  
 buongiorno.  
 Good morning.  
 NON LO SO  
 I don't know  
 NON HO CAPITO  
 I can't understand.

German (Ismail):  
 Ich weiss nicht  
 I don't know.  
 entschuldigun ich kann kein  
 spreche deutsch  
 I can't speak German.

Polish:  
 Nie wiem.  
 I dont know.  
 Przepraszam, nierozumiem.  
 Sorry I cant understand.

Dutch (M.):  
 Ik weet het niet.  
 I don't know.  
 Ik begrijp het niet.  
 I don't understand.  
 Ik kan het niet begrijpen.  
 Sorry, I can't understand.





Japanese (Chufan Gao):  
 すみません 英語がわかりません  
 I'm sorry I don't understand English.  
 日本語しか話せません  
 I can only speak Japanese  
 ぜんぜんわかりません。  
 I don't understand at all.

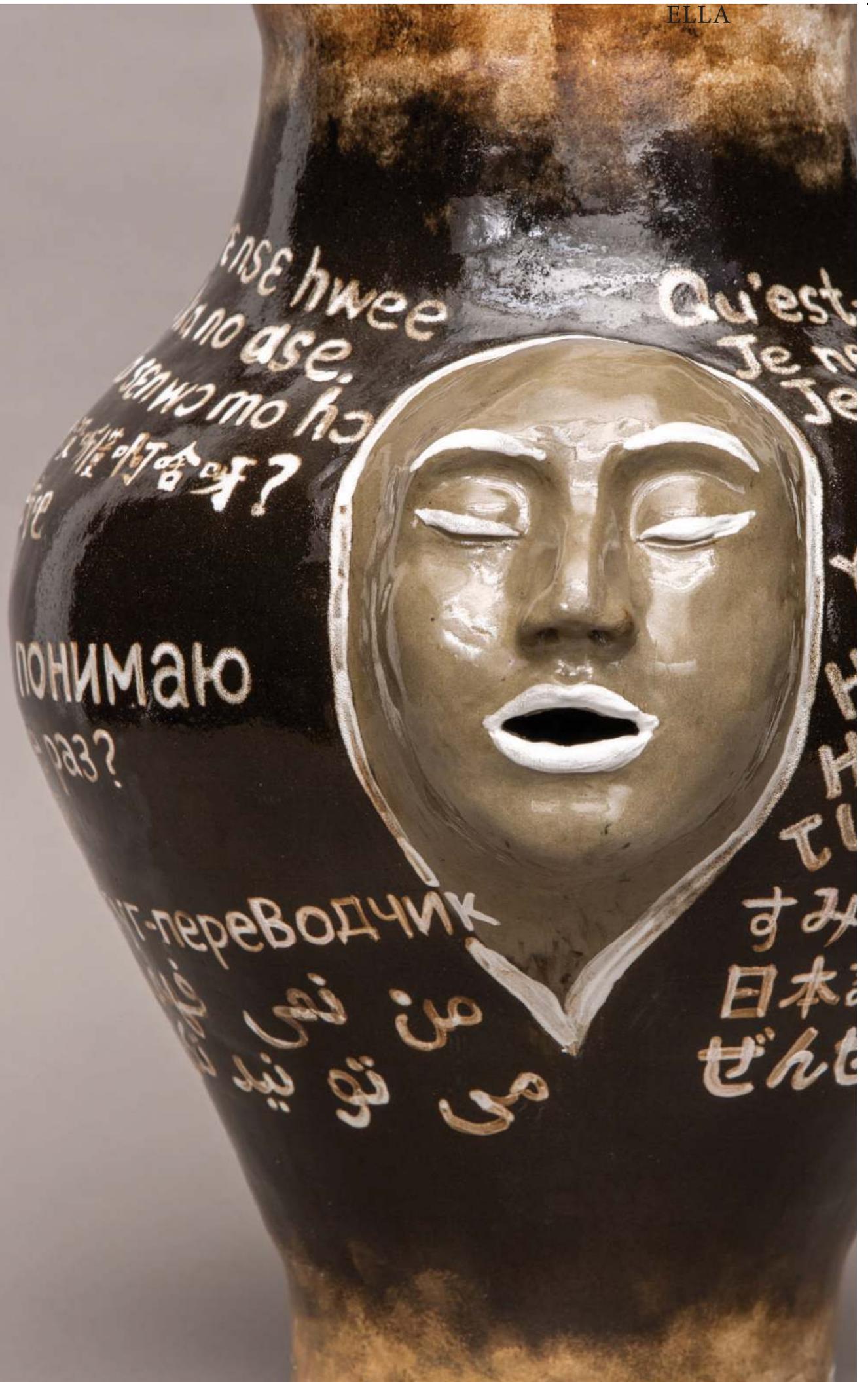
Indonesian (Amara):  
 Saya tidak tahu.  
 I don't know.  
 Maaf, saya tidak paham.  
 Sorry, I can't understand.

Vietnam:  
 Tôi không biết  
 I don't know

Javanese:  
 Mbuh.  
 I don't know.  
 Hah?  
 Sorry I can't understand.

Portuguese (Joao Victor):  
 Me desculpa, eu não entendo  
 I'm sorry, I don't understand.  
 Eu não sei  
 I don't know.

Greek:  
 δεν ξέρω, δεν γνωρίζω  
 I don't know.  
 δεν καταλαβαίνω  
 I don't understand.



Akan (Francis Owusu Brobbey):

Wo te brɔfo?

Can you speak English?

Nyame nim a ye nse hwee.

We are nothing without God.

Me nte dee wo ka no ase.

I don't understand what you are talking about.

Abɔ sen wo mo ho?

What's the time at your place?

Persian (Nilou Ghaemi):

I don't understand.

مهمف یمن نم

Can you repeat that?

دینک رارکت دین وت یم

Do you speak another language?

دینک یم تبحص یرگی د نابز امش ای

Arabic (Jamal):

Sorry I don't understand what you are saying.

هلوقت ام مهمفأ نأ عيظتسأ ال فسأ

Can you understand me?

ينمهمفت نأ نكمي له

Hindi (Priyam):

नमस्ते , आप कैसे हो ?

Hi how are you>

आप कहां से आए हो ?



# Seeking









The idea of 'seeking' came to me when I was looking for inspiration. I was observing the world, looking for answers, learning and exploring. In those moments, I see myself as a being consisting only of eyes. All I am doing is seeing and seeking. The connection between me and the outside world is built by my eyes. I value everything I see, I look forward to seeing things I have not yet seen, and I will never get tired of searching and exploring.

While I am the "monster" with only eyes, all I am doing is looking, searching and seeking. I am not feeling anything. Therefore the ideas will not come.



I THINK, THEREFORE I AM  
RENE DESCARTES



Feel, don't just look.



Fig. 18

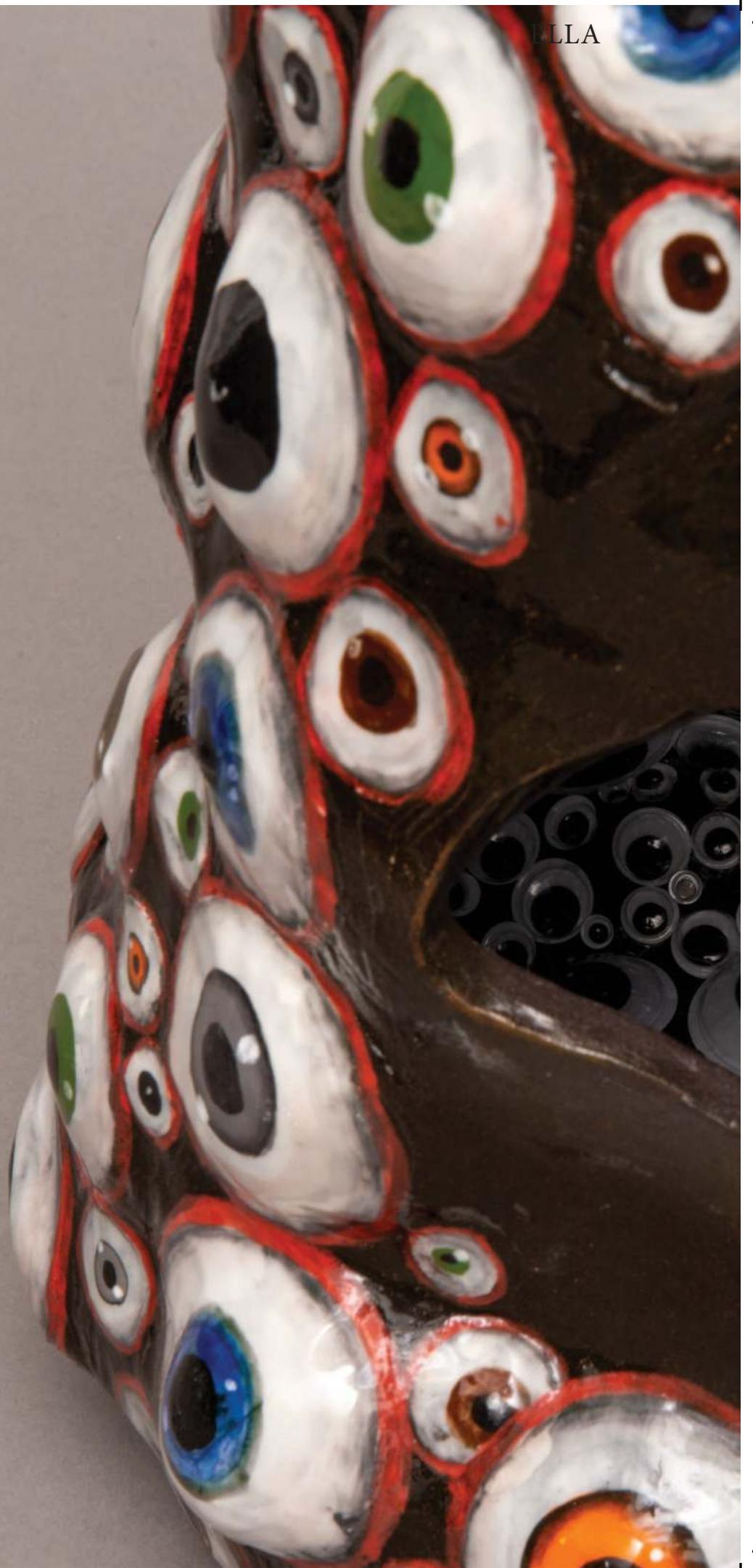
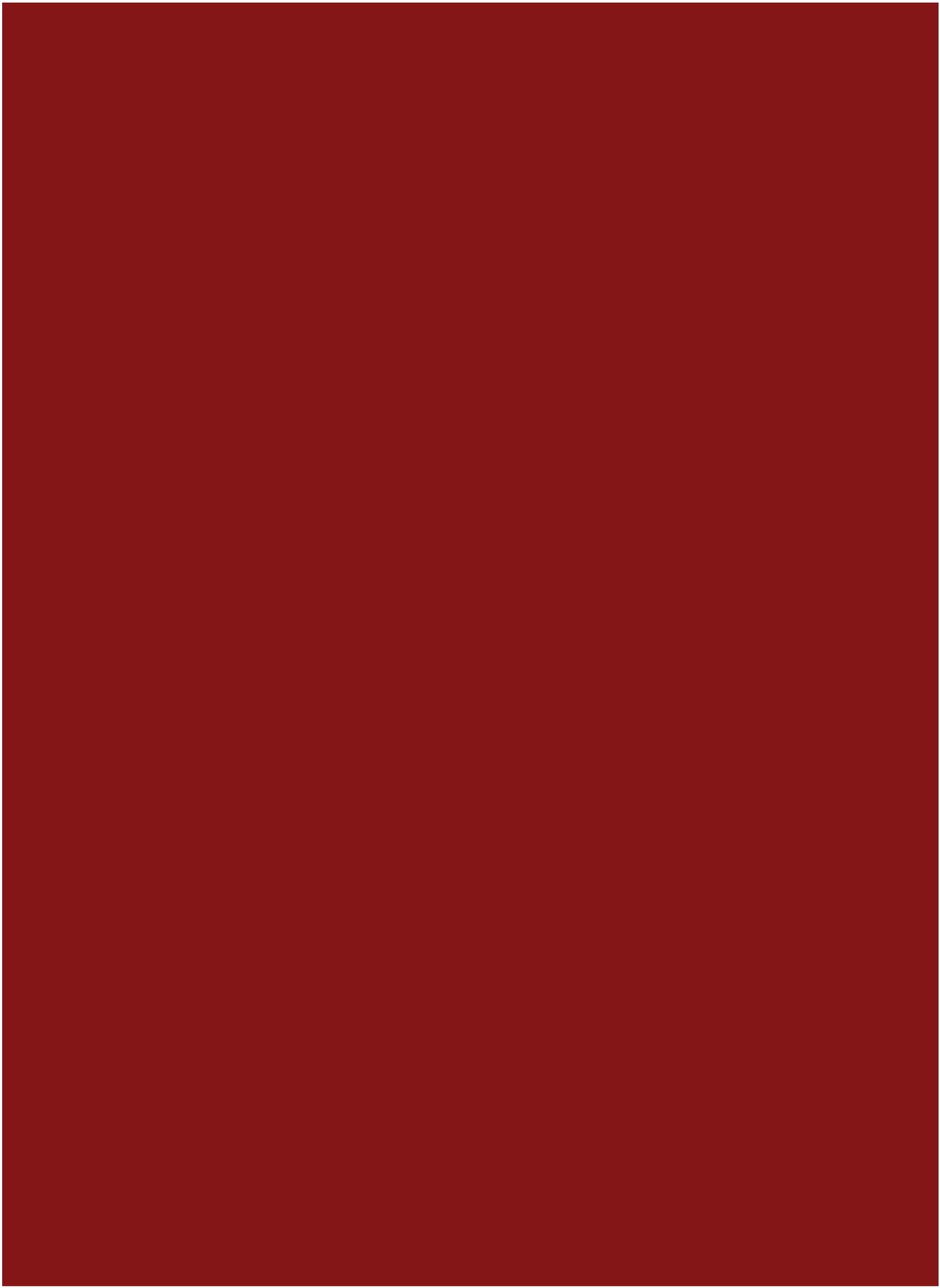






Fig. 20

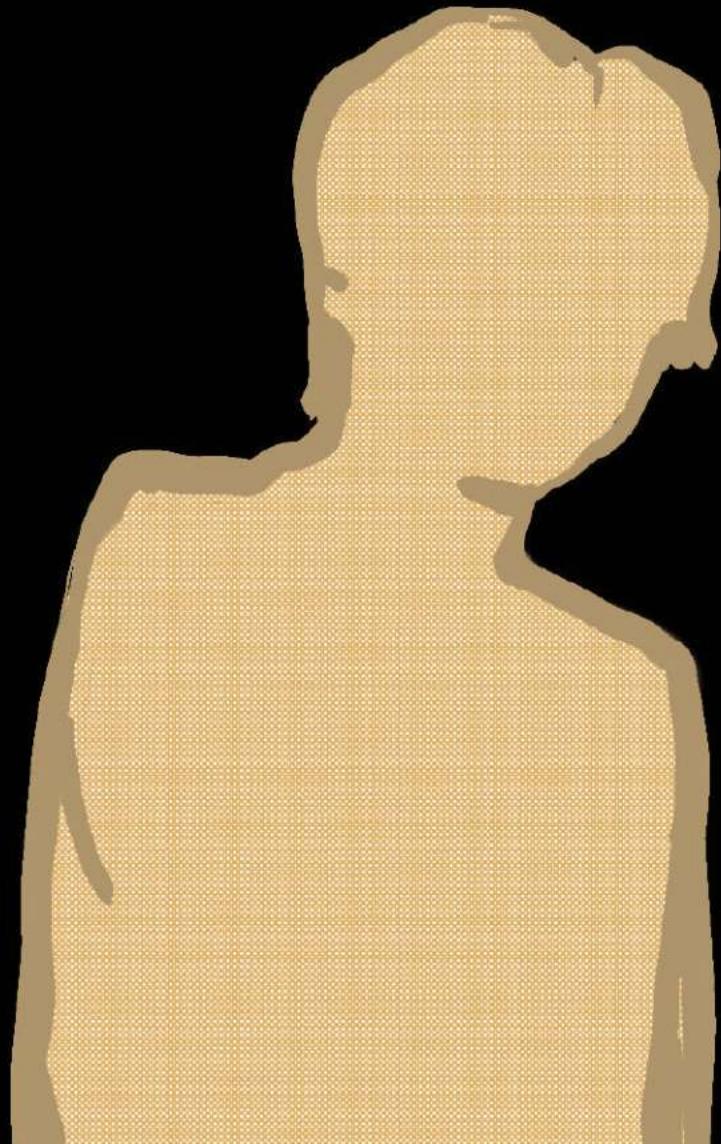


# Realization

# Realization

# Realization

2013. 11. 22.



realized what it meant to lose a connection when one of my favourite teachers from my elementary school passed away. It was an unexpected death, she was only 43 years old. She was the first person who was truly close to me. Her passing made me notice something I never thought about: death. I suddenly realized what that meant, more cruel than any separation in the world, I lost my connection with someone forever.

I went to her funeral by myself. I knew that it would be the last time I get to see her and say goodbye. I knew what I was supposed to do, I went to her coffin and tried to take a look at her face, but I was too short and the coffin was so big, I could not see her, all I saw were countless white lilies.

Death's face I wonder  
Lilies alone shown

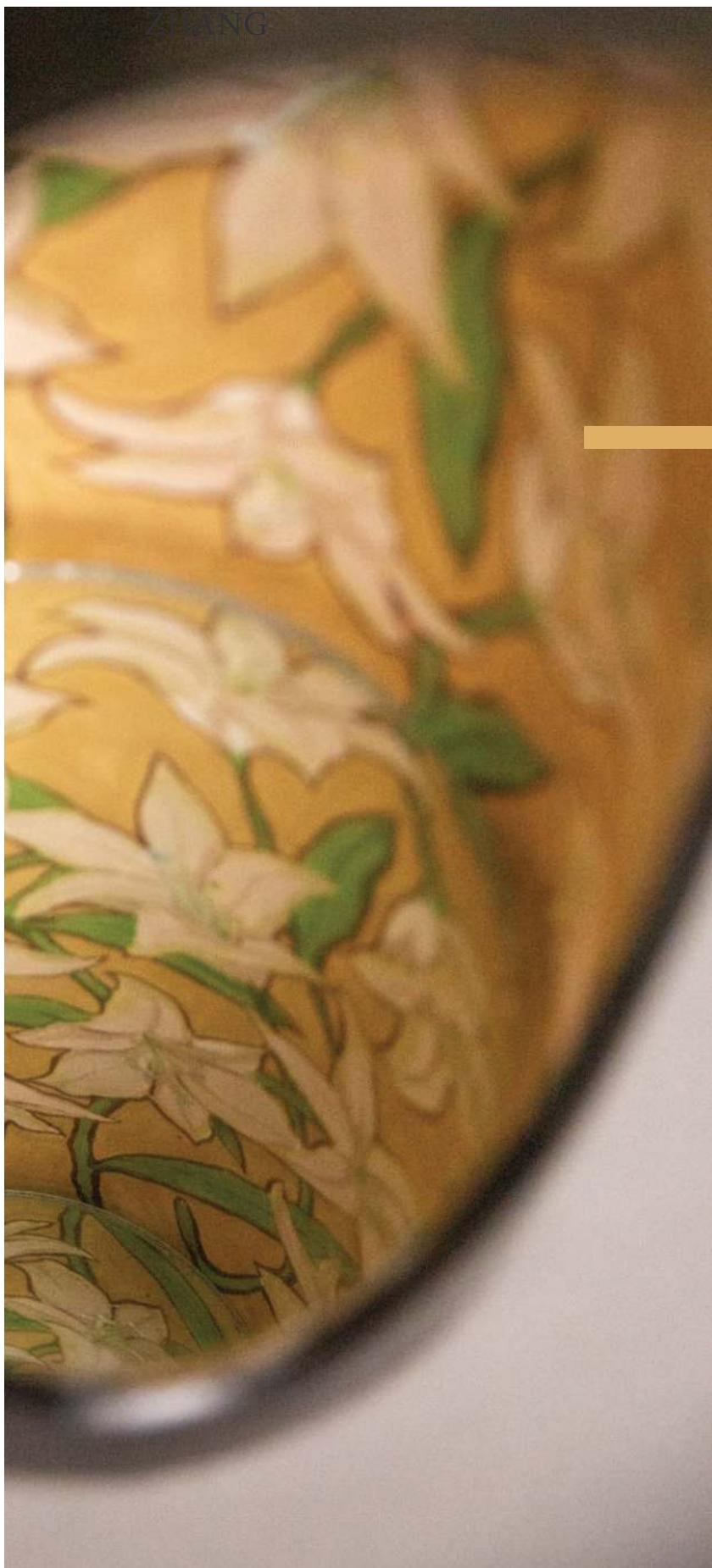
# Realization

This piece helped me grieve the loss of our connection.

When I went to her funeral by myself, I experienced deep sorrow for the first time. No one talked to me about it or shared my grief. Since I had just graduated from elementary school when she passed away, my parents did not really know her either.

I cried every time thinking about her death. Losing her was the saddest moment of my life.





## Death

I lived in fear that one day I might lose someone else close to me. I realized that I had not processed or accepted my feelings about death before I made the piece.

The therapeutic process of building this piece allowed me to rethink everything behind this experience.



Fig. 23

Endless, countless lilies created by  
two mirrors' reflection.

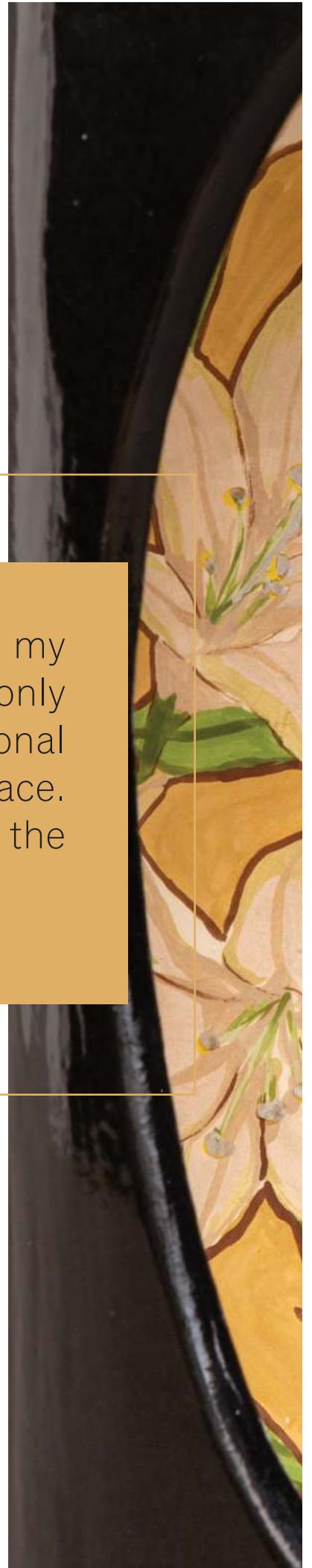


# Lily: Decoration & Installation



Fig. 24

To provide a realistic feeling to my decorations and to tell a story, I only decorated inside instead of the traditional way of decorating the outside surface. This served as a metaphor for death, the reverse side of the living world.





## Mucha's art style

Lilies are important decoration in my pieces. I present them in the Mucha's art style.

Mucha's painting is synonymous with the Art Nouveau style. It presents an elegant and beautiful prospect to the painting with clean lines and vintage colour tones.



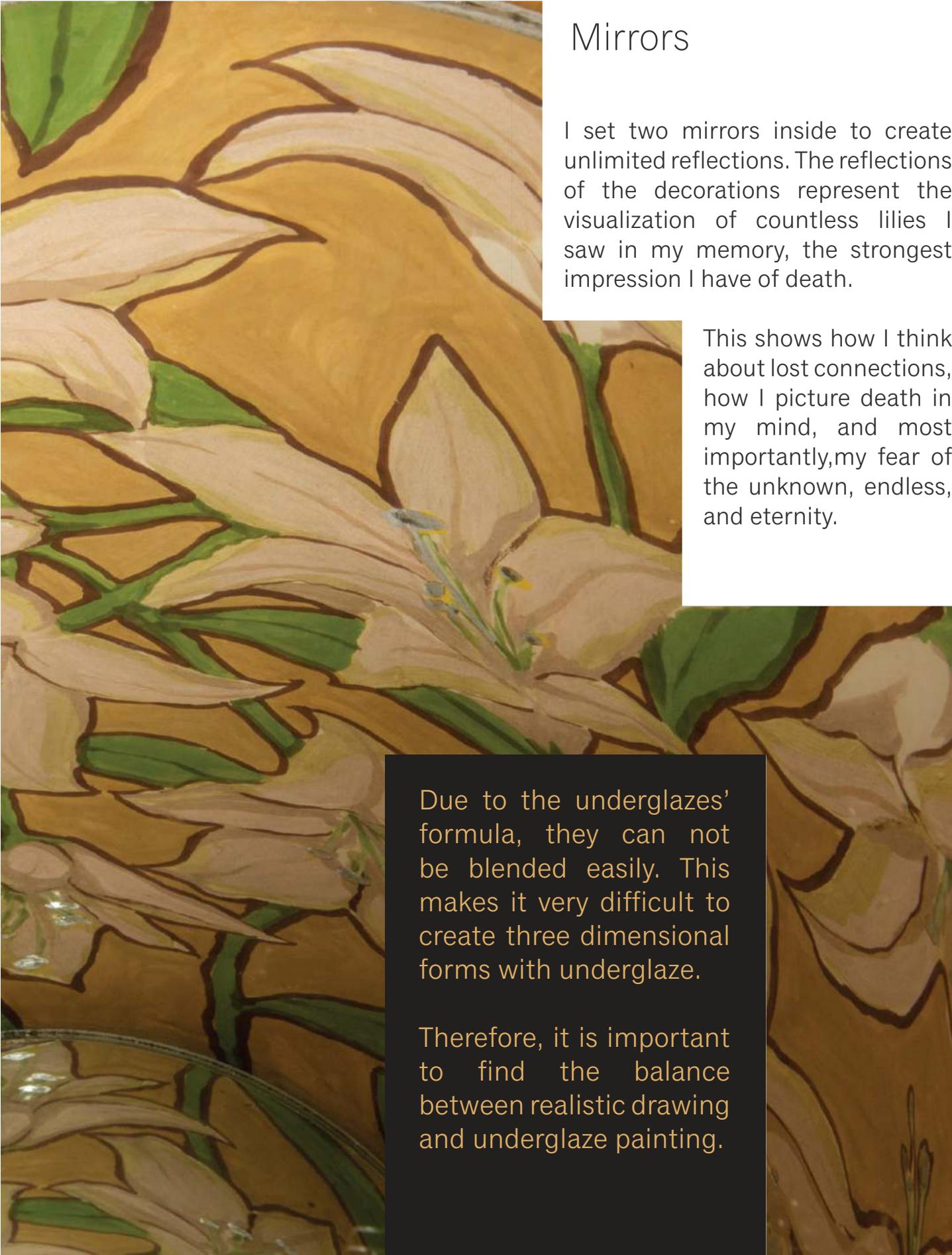
## Mirrors

I set two mirrors inside to create unlimited reflections. The reflections of the decorations represent the visualization of countless lilies I saw in my memory, the strongest impression I have of death.

This shows how I think about lost connections, how I picture death in my mind, and most importantly, my fear of the unknown, endless, and eternity.

Due to the underglazes' formula, they can not be blended easily. This makes it very difficult to create three dimensional forms with underglaze.

Therefore, it is important to find the balance between realistic drawing and underglaze painting.





# Introspection

# M

My current body of work is based on my introspection and visualizing my thoughts. For my piece called “Understanding”, I included a sound track inside to strengthen the feeling of the unknown and perceiving conflict. For my piece “Exploring”, I put eyes on the inside to express introspection and reflecting on my own feelings. For the piece “Realization” I put all the decorations on the inside as a metaphor for death.

# Introspec



Fig. 27

# T

The pandemic has been a journey of reflecting deeply into my thoughts and emotions, facing my own struggles and confusion. From this journey, I was inspired by my personal experience. I show all my thoughts and feelings from this journey through my pieces: how I feel about my connections with people, how we build connections by understanding each other, and how it feels to lose connection.

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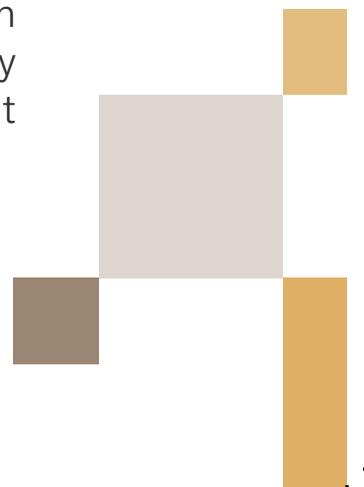




Fig. 28

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# onnection

A CONVERSATION WITH MYSELF

# About



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(Ella) Xinyun Zhang was born and raised in Zhenjiang, Jiangsu, China. She pursued an Bachelor's Degree in Craft and Design specializing in Ceramics at Sheridan College.

Ella is an emerging ceramic artist who takes inspirations from her personal experience. She is also a painter focusing on realistic paintings and digital paintings. Her work explores underglaze painting techniques on ceramic sculptures, combining 2D decorations on 3D forms to create unique designs.

In the future, Ella will further explore painting techniques on her sculptures. She plans to keep developing her skills in both ceramic and painting.

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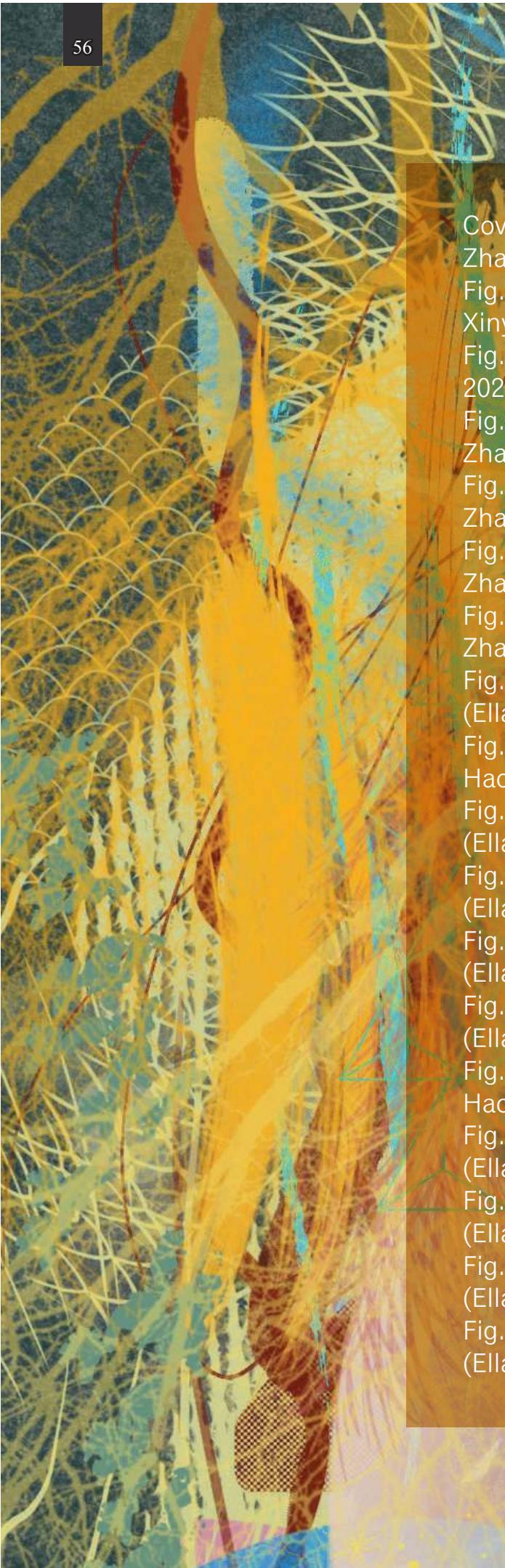
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Cover page: Lilies, painting by (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2023

Fig. 1: Facing Page, Lilies, painting by (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2023

Fig. 2: Connection Board, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2022

Fig. 3: Connection 1, painting by (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2022

Fig. 4: Connection 2, painting by (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2022

Fig. 5: Connection 3, painting by (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2022

Fig. 6: Connection 4, painting by (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2022

Fig. 7: Pot: Understanding, Photo by Haoyu Tu, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2022

Fig. 8: Sculpture: Understanding, Photo by Haoyu Tu, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2023

Fig. 9: Pot: Understanding, Photo by Haoyu Tu, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2022

Fig. 10: Pot: Connection, Photo by Haoyu Tu, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2022

Fig. 11: Pot: Understanding, Photo by Haoyu Tu, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2022

Fig. 12: Pot: Understanding, Photo by Haoyu Tu, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2022

Fig. 13: Sculpture: Understanding, Photo by Haoyu Tu, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2023

Fig. 14: Pot: Understanding, Photo by Haoyu Tu, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2022

Fig. 15: Pot: Connection, Photo by Haoyu Tu, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2022

Fig. 16: Sculpture: Seeking, Photo by Haoyu Tu, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2023

Fig. 17: Sculpture: Seeking, Photo by Haoyu Tu, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2023

# Appendix

Fig. 18: Sculpture: Seeking, Photo by Haoyu Tu, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2023

Fig. 19: Sulpture: Seeking, Photo by Haoyu Tu, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2023

Fig. 20: Sculpture: Seeking, Photo by Haoyu Tu, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2023

Fig. 21: Ms. Li, painting by (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2023

Fig. 22: Sculpture: Realization, Photo by Haoyu Tu, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2023

Fig. 23: Sculpture: Realization, Photo by Haoyu Tu, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2023

Fig. 24: Sculpture: Realization, Photo by Haoyu Tu, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2023

Fig. 25: Sculpture: Realization, Photo by Haoyu Tu, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2023

Fig. 26: Sculpture: Realization, Photo by Haoyu Tu, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2023

Fig. 27: Sculpture: Realization, Photo by Haoyu Tu, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2023

Fig. 28: Pandemic, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2022

Fig. 29: Painting, (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2023

Fig. 30: Facing Page, Lilies, Painting by (Ella) Xinyun Zhang, 2023



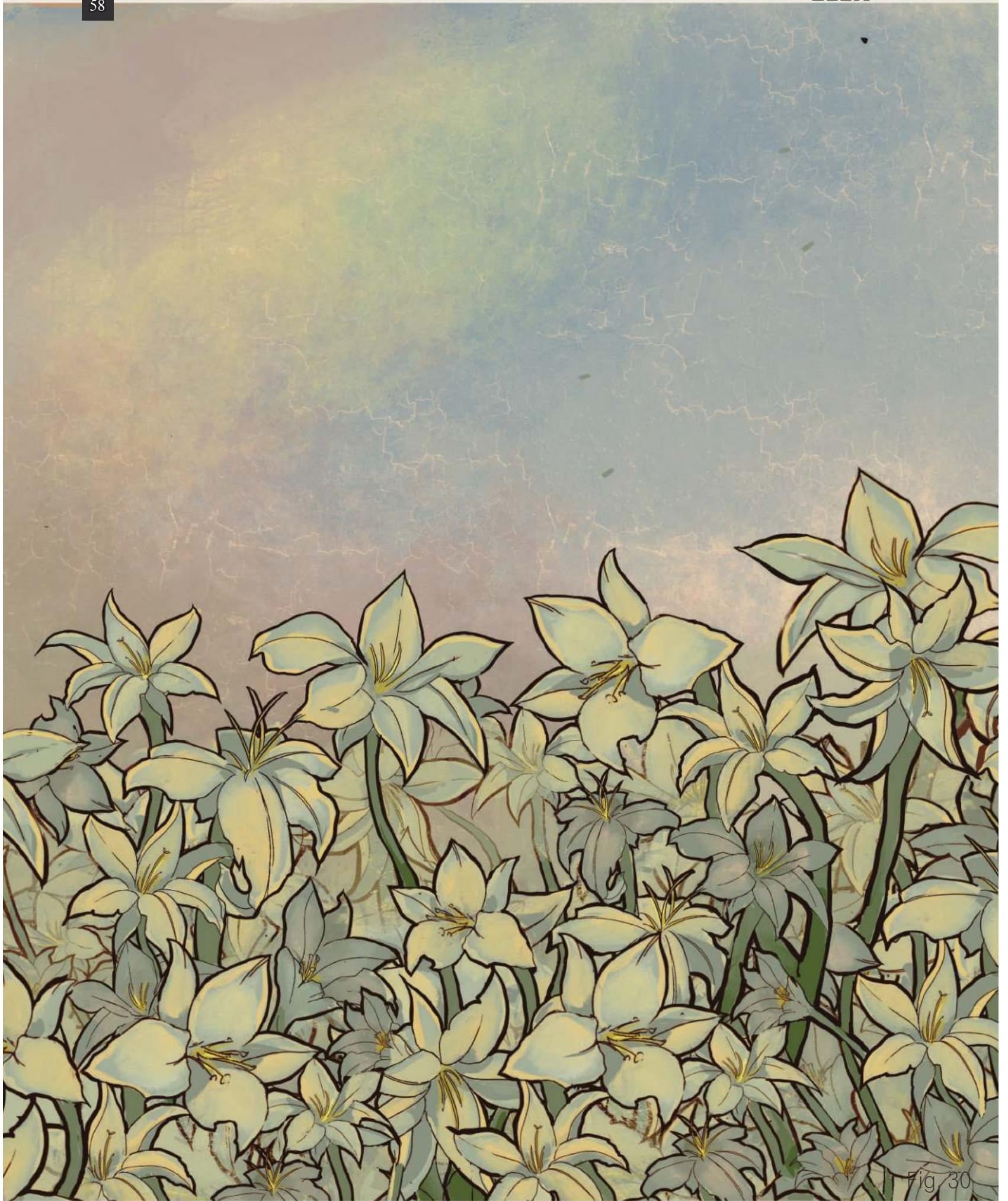


Fig 30