Face and Mask

Installation Project

Inspiration

My inspiration primarily stems from my confusion about human faces in the digital age. It specifically manifests as I discover that people are increasingly reliant on an idealized digital face, such as editing their face images into beautified versions according to contemporary aesthetics through certain algorithms, or using AI to generate synthetic faces for commercial use. These phenomena seem to indirectly imply that the lively, original faces are being replaced by overly edited ones.

This is addressed by visual scholar Hans Belting in his book *Face and Mask*


FACE AND MASK
A DOUBLE HISTORY

HANS BELTING

"Cyberfaces exist in fundamental contradiction to the history of portraiture, they are no longer represent faces, but only interfaces among an infinite number of potential images, whose closed loop separates them from the outside without the interposition of any physical body."
-Hans Belting, Face and Mask

Based on this, I hope to respond to and reflect on a contemporary face that I have experienced through a mixed-media installation.

Process

The first element I considered in my work was a symbolic space to showcase contemporary aesthetics and visual order. I drew inspiration from Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia, a space metaphorically intertwining opposing social relations, cultural symbols, and power structures. In my design, this initially took the form of a doorframe structure, similar to the multi-layered framework in the film *Inception*. In the final stage, I plan to weld an architectural model using scrap steel plates from a nearby recycling station. I also present some drafts and experimental paper models. I chose a minimalist structure to explore a corresponding composite architecture, inspired by Salvador Dalí's *Premonition of Civil War* (1936, oil on canvas, 100x99cm, Walter Arensberg Collection). Despite facing many unforeseen challenges during fabrication and welding, I eventually completed the structure and experimented with different colors.
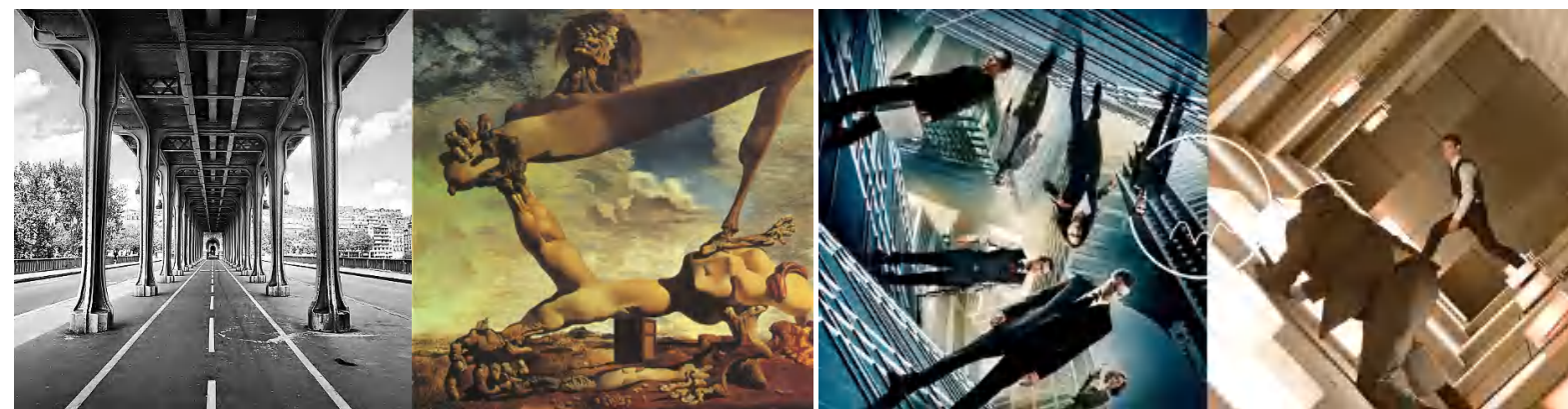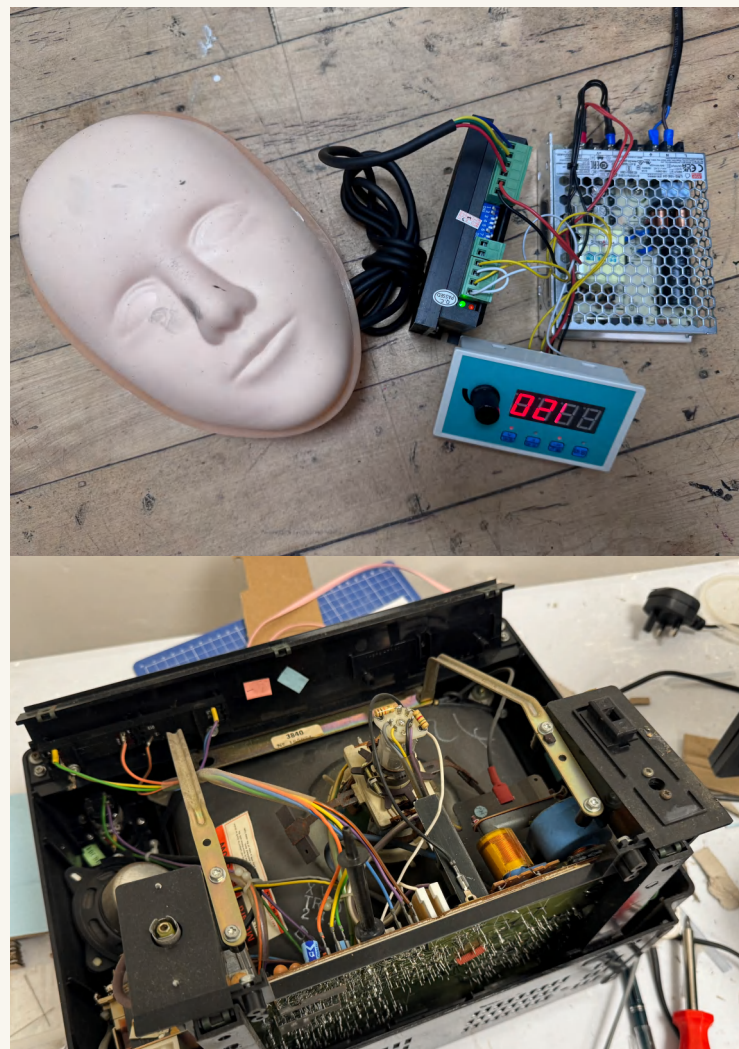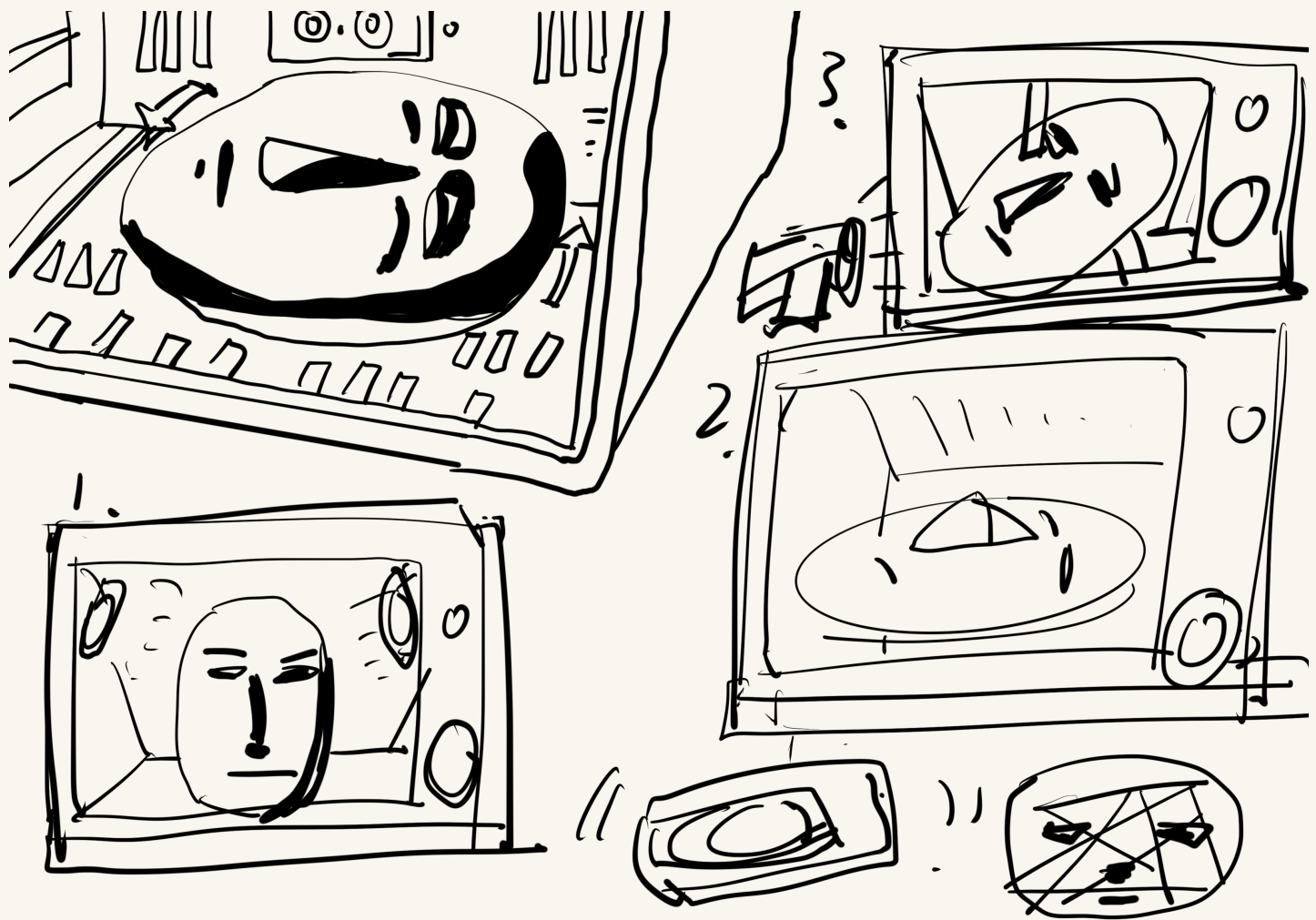
Process
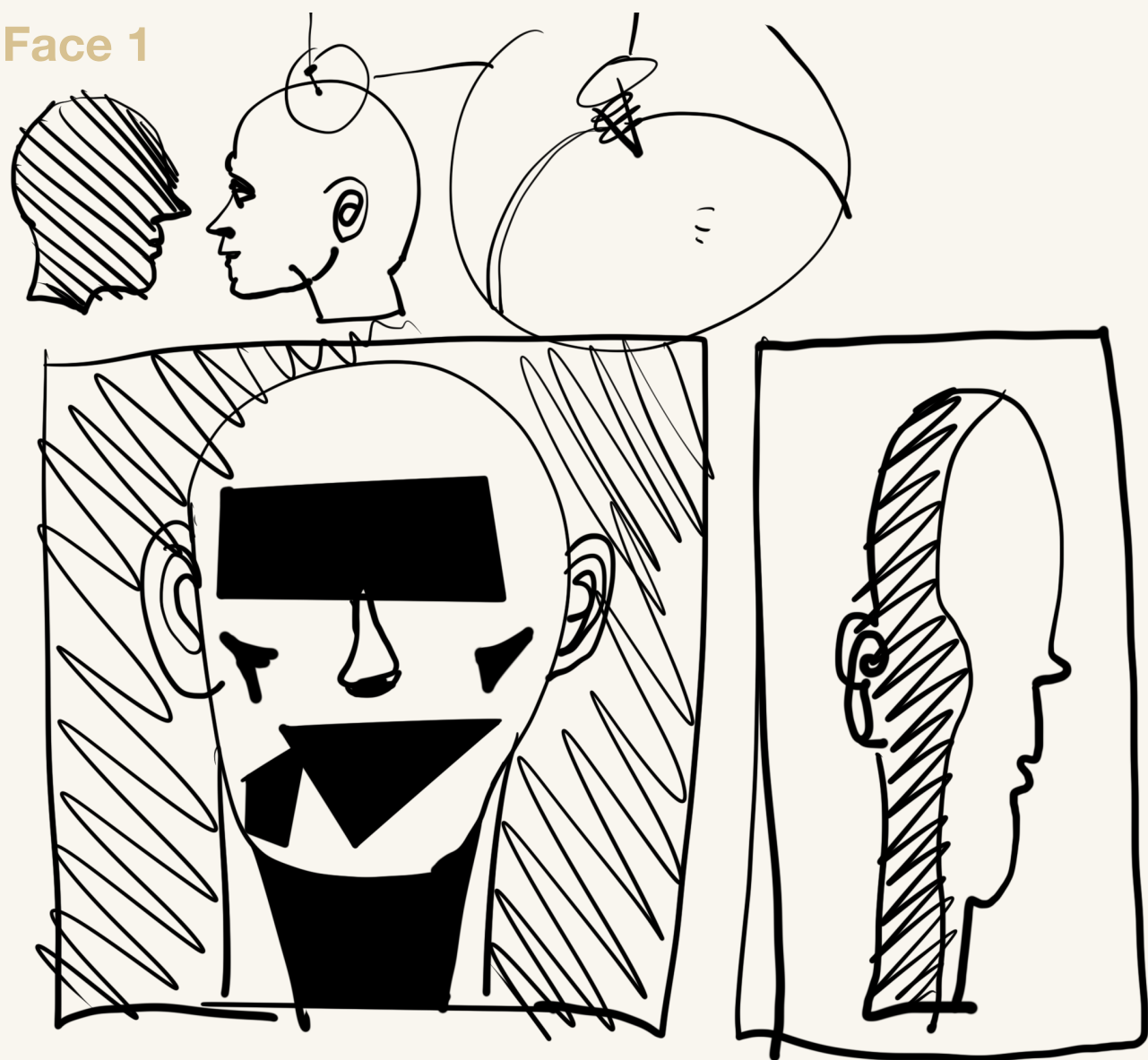
After defining the spatial structure, I began to design a presentation for contemporary faces, integrating three different forms within the framework. The first design involved repainting a head model made of thin plastic film, creating a state between an ideal face and a real, imperfect one. I painted both a complete and a half-obscured head, experimenting with various colors and simulating smooth textures using a mixture of acrylic and resin.

In the second representation plan, I disassembled an old television and created dynamic interactions using a ready-made plastic facial model inside it. Throughout this process, I consulted with several technical experts and eventually decided to make the facial model rotate within the television structure, mimicking the motion of a microwave. This integration of movement was aimed to add a layer of dynamism and perhaps comment on the cyclic and repetitive nature of media consumption and self-image in the digital era.
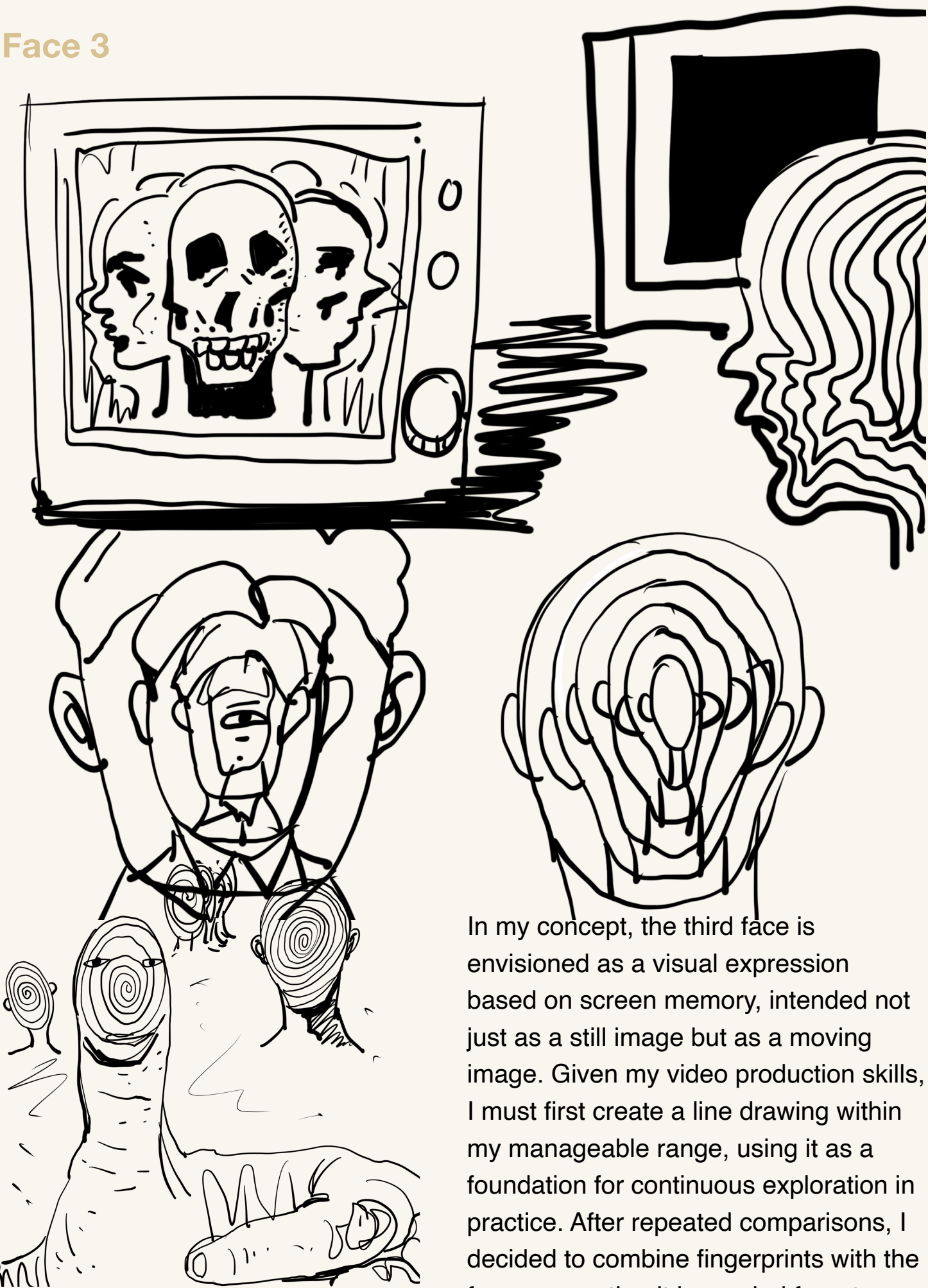
In my concept, the third face is envisioned as a visual expression based on screen memory, intended not just as a still image but as a moving image. Given my video production skills, I must first create a line drawing within my manageable range, using it as a foundation for continuous exploration in practice. After repeated comparisons, I decided to combine fingerprints with the face, presenting it in a spiral form to create a dynamic visual experience. I believe that in the current era, a face not only serves the function of recognition but also acts as a marker of identity, much like fingerprint identification used in criminal investigations. Here, I deliberately downplayed the depiction of facial features, opting instead to explore a blurred sense of identity.

Final Outcome (*Details*)

Electronic Components:
*Stepper Motor Pulse/ Generator Controller/
Power Transformer/ Stepper Motor Driver*

Final
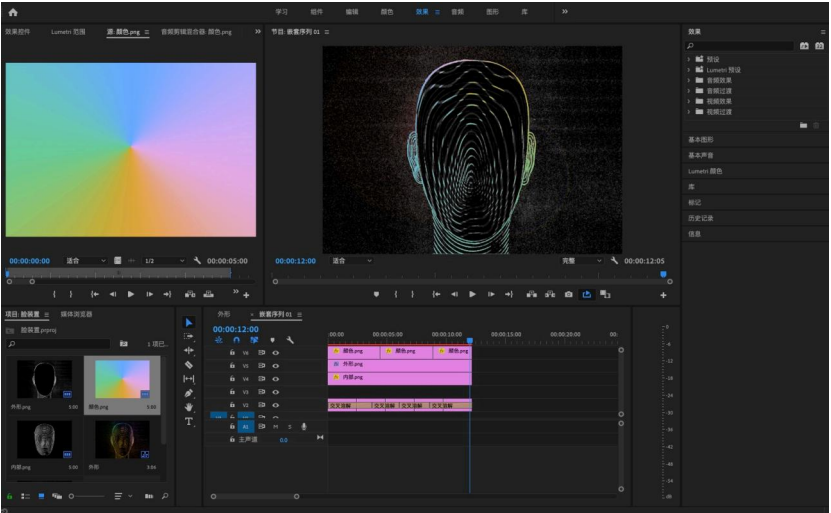
Ultimately, I integrated the physical elements into a digital painting, creating an installation. What satisfies me most is that it resembles a simulacrum trapped in a spiral space, reflecting the problem's state rather than a final result. This approach aligns with my goal to explore the dynamic and ambiguous nature of identity and perception in the digital era, rather than offering a fixed interpretation.

Size：

221cm* 107cm*156cm

Material：

Expanded Polystyrene/ Acrylic and Epoxy Adhesive/ Vintage TV/ Monitor/ Steel

Link to Video：

https://youtu.be/3WdIOjtCevU