



Final outcome

In the Final piece, through the composition of one hand holding a flower and the other hand supporting a bowl, I integrated the tenderness and sense of responsibility of a mother into the same painting. The dark background highlights the main elements, making the symbolic meaning more concentrated. I am satisfied with the overall composition and the application of the symbolic language. I believe that I have successfully expressed the dual aspects of emotions and household chores in the identity of a mother. The mutual echo between the flowers and the bowl, as well as the gestures of the hands, endow the painting with more emotional tension. However, I also realize that there is still room for improvement in terms of detail handling and the layers of light and shadow. In the future, I will continue to strengthen my artistic training to deepen the expression of the theme.

600mm X 500mm
Acrylic on canvas

Photos



About photos

I have taken photos of the flower bouquets in different spaces of my home, as well as pictures of my mother accompanied by flowers. These images not only record our daily life but also carry my emotional memories of my mother. The flowers that can be seen everywhere in the house, such as the lilies on the dining table and the roses in the bedroom, are an extension of my mother's character, gentle and full of love.

Observation



About the Painting on the left

Based on the flower photos I took myself, I conducted observational depictions on the canvas using acrylic paints. These images are derived from my actual shooting of the flower bouquets at home, which are a direct record of my personal memories and emotions. In the creative process, I adopted a top-down perspective, placing the flowers in the center of the picture to enhance their role as both the visual focus and the symbolic core.

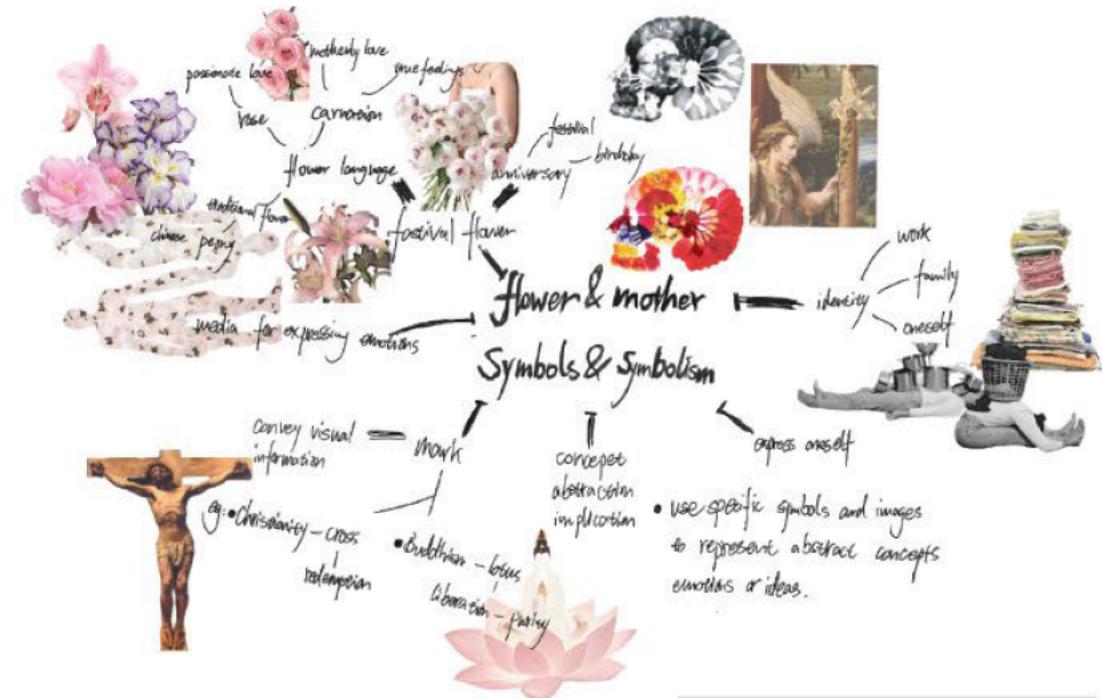
In this work, I am concerned not only with the appearance and color of the flowers but also with how to convey the emotions and memories carried by the flowers through composition and color tone. The top-down perspective creates a sense of gazing and looking back, as if the viewer is quietly observing a private memory. And placing the flowers in the center symbolizes their central position in my mother's personal life and spiritual world.

This practice enabled me to delve into translating observed reality into emotional narratives, while contemplating how still life acquires symbolic significance within the composition. Acrylics' properties—quick drying and saturated hues—also granted me expressive flexibility in capturing the flowers' vitality and shifting light.

500mm X 400 mm Acrylic on canvas

Symbols and Symbolism

Character and still life painting research



Mind map

Introduction

This personal study examines how flowers in portraiture and still life can embody symbolic meaning and convey personal identity. Inspired by my mother's profound love for flowers, I recall how they filled our home—on the dining table, in the bedroom, on the balcony. More than mere decoration, they became an extension of her presence. To me, flowers are inseparable from memories of my mother. This emotional resonance motivated me to investigate how objects in art can evoke memory and express identity.

Observation

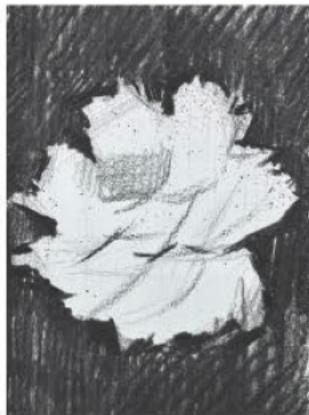


A3 Acrylic on paper

I took a series of still life photos with flowers as the main subject, and based on these photos, I carried out observational painting on paper using acrylic paints. During the creative process, I tried to use varied brushstrokes and rich colors to depict the vitality of the flowers and their emotional warmth, so that the still life is no longer just an objective depiction but becomes a visual expression that carries memories and symbolic meanings.

About photos A4 charcoal on paper

I took floral images from the Internet as secondary sources and carried out a series of flower sketching exercises with charcoal sticks. These exercises focused on depicting the structure of the flowers, the relationship between light and shadow, and the sense of volume. By observing flowers from different angles and postures, I gained an in-depth understanding of their structures and also enhanced my sensitivity to the changes in light and shadow.



A4 charcoal sketch on paper

About the Painting on the right

I took a photo of my mother holding a bouquet of flowers on her birthday. Based on this photo, I painted the flowers on the canvas with acrylic paints. Through varied brushstrokes and the contrast between warm and cool colors, I successfully created an emotional atmosphere and expressed my deep affection for my mother. However, I also realized that there is still room for improvement in my understanding of the structure of the flowers. In the future, I will strengthen my ability to observe and shape details.



600mm X 500mm Acrylic on canvas

My Plan

To develop my ideas, I have chosen to study several artists who use symbolism and still life to express deeper meanings. Caravaggio's Bacchus shows how objects can reflect character and story. Georgia O'Keeffe's flower paintings explore female identity and emotion. I also looked at Dutch vanitas painter Cornelis de Heem, whose detailed still lifes suggest the passing of time and human mortality. Giorgio Morandi's calm, thoughtful compositions inspire me to consider how form and arrangement alone can carry emotional weight.

Through this study, I aim to understand how artists use objects—especially flowers—not just as visual elements, but as symbols. I hope this will help me create more meaningful and expressive artworks in my own practice.



Artist Research

Caravaggio - Storytelling Through Objects: Identity and Symbolism in *Bacchus*



Introduction

Caravaggio's *Bacchus* (c. 1595) is a symbolic portrait that blends human identity with still life elements. The young man, posed as the Roman god of wine, is surrounded by fruit, wine, and decaying objects. These elements not only reflect sensual pleasure but also suggest themes of time, mortality, and inner character. The use of realistic detail gives the objects emotional weight, turning them into symbols of human desire, fragility, and hidden identity.



About the Painting on the right

Inspired by the composition and lighting in Caravaggio's *Bacchus*, I took two sets of photos featuring my mother as the main subject. In one set, my mother was sitting among the flowers, and in the other, she was sitting at a table with a bouquet of flowers on it. Eventually, I chose the former as the reference for my painting because the composition with flowers surrounding her was more symbolic and better able to convey my associations of my mother with tenderness and vitality.

I created the painting on the canvas using acrylic paints. I continued to use the lively and free brushstrokes I had used before to highlight the shapes and emotions of the flowers. At the same time, I drew on Caravaggio's treatment of the dark background to create a quiet yet tense atmosphere. The entire painting successfully integrated symbolism, emotion, and formal expression, making my mother blend with the flowers and carrying the connotations of memory and identity.

I realized that the hierarchical relationship between the figure and the background could still be strengthened. In the future, I hope to further improve my skills in spatial handling and contrast of light and shadow, so as to more effectively convey the emotional theme of my works.

I copied Caravaggio's *Bacchus* on paper with a pencil and watercolor in order to have a deeper understanding of the composition and detail representation in the painting. Through this copying process, I enhanced my sensitivity to light and shadow, texture, and the symbolic meanings of the objects. This experience has improved my ability to observe classical paintings. However, I also realized that I still have deficiencies in depicting the facial expressions of the characters, and I will strengthen relevant training in the future.



500mm X 400mm Acrylic on canvas

Development



When dealing with the portrait photo of my mother, I consciously removed the original background and replaced it with a dark one, so as to draw on Caravaggio's dramatic lighting effect. At the same time, I increased the exposure of the skin of the figure, making my mother's image stand out more in the picture. This treatment strengthens the visual guidance with her as the main subject and also highlights the connection between her and the symbolic objects.

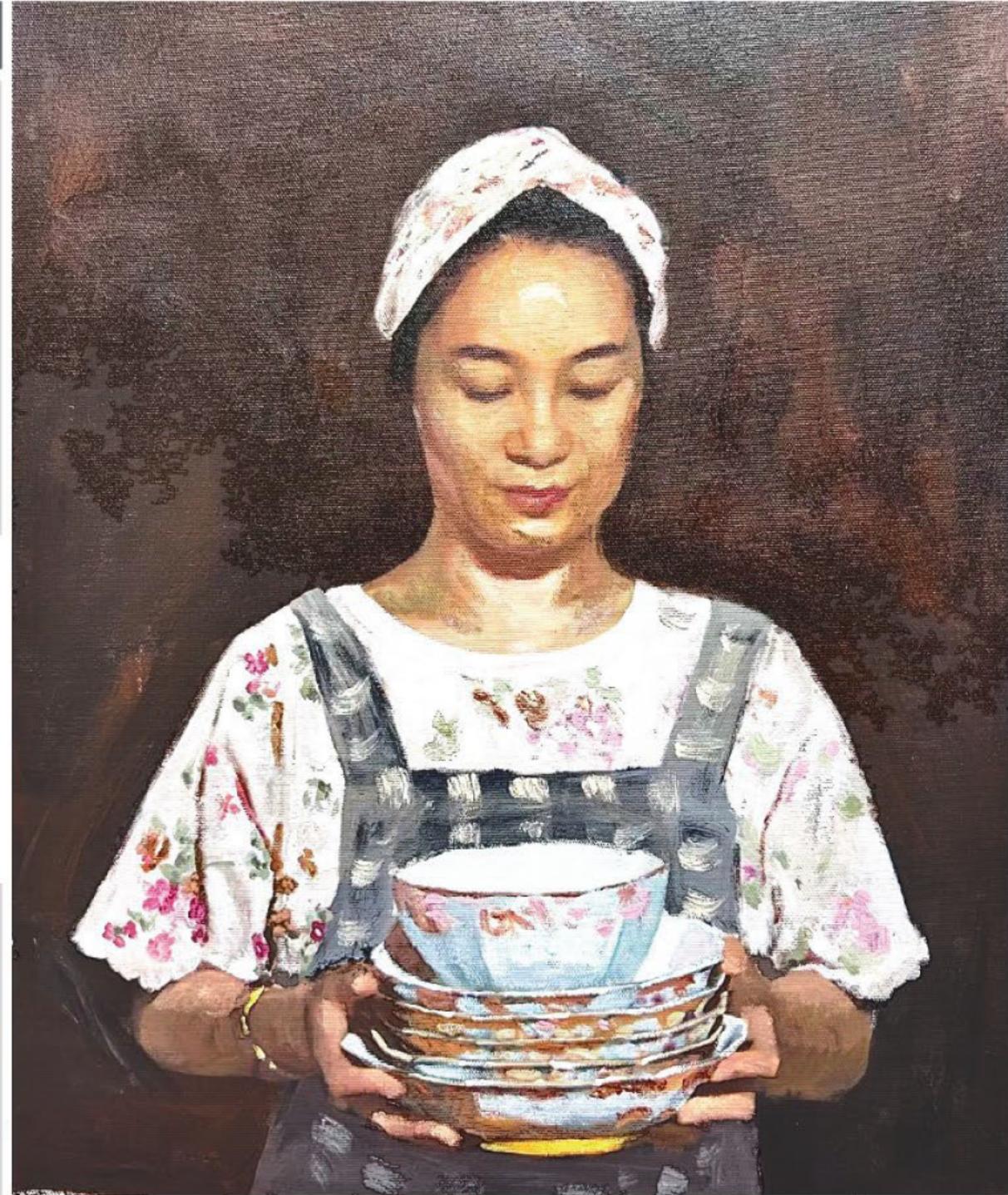


Development

In the thematic research, I have further developed my understanding of my mother's identity. At the beginning, I used flowers as a symbol of my mother. However, after in-depth reflection, I realized that although flowers can express tenderness and emotions, they are not sufficient to fully represent a woman's identity. Inspired by the relationship between women and household chores, I added tableware as a symbolic element to express the role my mother plays in the family. This transformation has made the work more realistic and layered, enhancing its symbolism and speculativeness. I consider this to be a successful deepening of the concept. However, I also realize that in order to naturally integrate the symbolic relationship between flowers and tableware in the painting, I still need to further explore and experiment in terms of composition and visual guidance.



Among a series of photos I took of my mother with tableware, I finally chose the image in which my mother slightly lowered her head and held a bowl with both hands for my creation. In terms of composition, I placed my mother in the center of the picture to make her the visual focus. At the same time, the position of the tableware was skillfully emphasized, symbolizing her role and responsibility in the family. Drawing on Caravaggio's approach, I set the background as dark to highlight the emotional connection between the figure and the objects. This work well reflects my understanding of the theme of "symbolism and identity", and expresses my respect for and reflection on my mother through her posture and the composition. However, upon reflection, I realized that I could further explore the hierarchical relationship between the background and the foreground to make the emotional expression more profound and visually compelling.



600mm X 500mm Acrylic on canvas

My response

I selected a photo in which my mother was looking in the opposite direction of the bowl, and then I created a painting on the canvas using acrylic paints. In the painting, I simplified the background to make my mother the visual focus. The plain-colored clothes formed a sharp contrast with the bowl on the right side that had a floral pattern, which enhanced the symbolism. The overall composition conveyed the theme quite well. However, upon reflection, I realized that I should have actively included the depiction of hands in the composition to more deeply convey the implied meaning of my mother's identity.

Identity and Symbolism in Bacchus

In the context of my own study, Bacchus serves as an important reference for how personal identity can be conveyed through symbolic objects. Caravaggio does not just paint a figure; he constructs a narrative through fruit, wine, and body language. This approach influences my own portrait and still life compositions, where flowers associated with my mother become more than decorative motifs—they act as emotional triggers and personal emblems. Caravaggio's ability to merge still life elements into the psychological landscape of his subject encourages me to consider how object placement, condition, and realism can express memory, affection, and fragility.

This analysis highlights how Bacchus goes beyond religious or mythological storytelling. It reveals how symbolic still life details can construct identity and invite viewers to read deeper into the image. In my following sections, I will explore how other artists use everyday objects—flowers, bottles—to suggest emotional truths and symbolic meanings in different cultural contexts.

In order to strengthen the symbolic relationship between my mother and the family space, I asked my mother to dress up elegantly and then took posed photos of her with bowls and dishes in the kitchen. During the shooting, I deliberately turned on the flash to make my mother's image stand out more in the picture, creating a strong visual focal point. This contrast has enhanced the symbolic significance of her role in the family and also added a certain amount of drama to the picture. I believe that this attempt has successfully enhanced the expressiveness and symbolic depth of the image.



Artist Research

Georgia O'Keeffe - The Feminine Bloom: Exploring Female Identity Through Flowers



Introduction

Georgia O'Keeffe's flower paintings are among the most iconic works in 20th-century American art, known for their bold visual style and symbolic richness. In pieces like *Black Iris III* (1926) and *Red Canna* (1924), O'Keeffe magnifies floral forms to the point of abstraction, encouraging viewers to engage deeply with shape, color, and meaning. These works go beyond simple botanical study—they become metaphors for identity, emotion, and femininity.

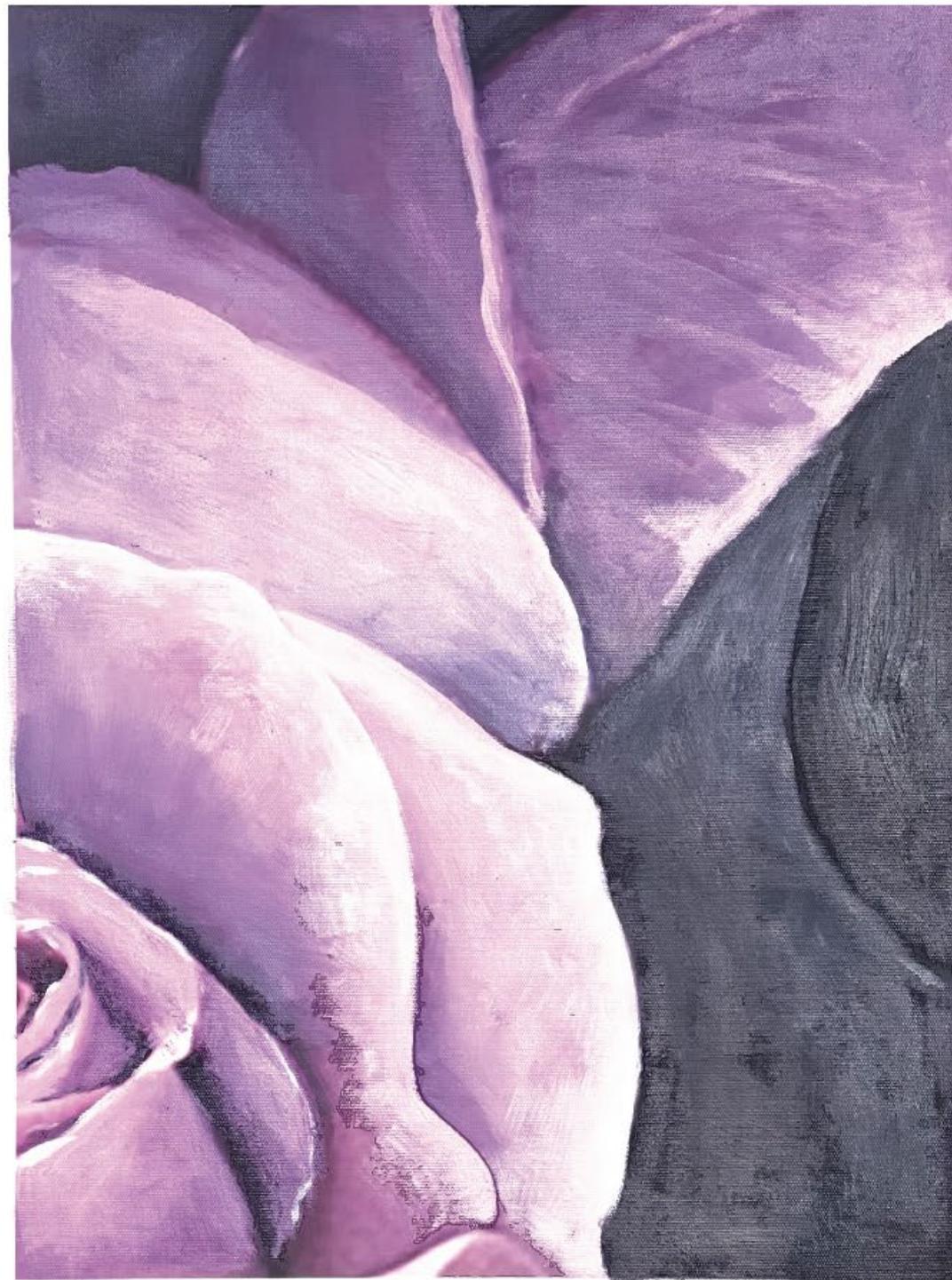
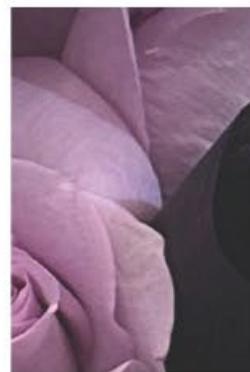
Her close-up compositions transform flowers into intimate landscapes of curves and shadows. By cropping and enlarging petals, she detaches them from their natural context, turning them into personal and symbolic expressions. Although O'Keeffe denied literal readings of her flowers as female anatomy, many feminist critics viewed them as powerful symbols of womanhood and inner strength.



40*40 Acrylic on paper

Influenced by Georgia O'Keeffe's works, I chose a bouquet of flowers that my mother received on her birthday as the subject of my painting, and used a photo with a color combination of purple and black as a reference for my creation. This cold and solemn color combination breaks through my previous single expression of my mother's gentle image and endows her with a richer and more complex emotional temperament. During the painting process, I created on the canvas with acrylic paints and consciously ignored the gray color in the original photo, making the painting more visually striking. I am satisfied with this breakthrough in color expression, but the composition and background treatment could still be made more rhythmic.

I copied Georgia O'Keeffe's floral works, creating paintings on the canvas with acrylic paints. I focused on learning her way of handling details and composition when magnifying the objects. Through these practices, I improved my ability to master the shapes of the petals and the color gradients. At the same time, I found that I still need to strengthen my skills in edge transitions and creating a sense of space. In the future, I will further deepen my expression of details.



400mm X 300mm Acrylic on canvas

My experiment

I further depicted the bouquet of flowers that my mother received on Mother's Day. In this creative work, I enhanced the texture effect of the brushstrokes and the spatial layers of the painting, making the picture more three-dimensional. At the same time, the use of colors tended to be softer, which was more in line with the gentle characteristics of the flowers. I am quite satisfied with the overall emotional atmosphere presented in the painting. However, upon reflection, I realize that there is still room for improvement in the detailed depiction. In the future, I will pay more attention to the unity of texture and form.



I depicted the flowers on paper using oil pastels and charcoal sticks, attempting to explore the differences in texture and expressiveness between different mediums. At the same time, I explored the expressive relationship between positive and negative shapes in the composition to enhance the visual tension of the painting. This experiment has broadened my means of expression and made me more sensitive to the interaction between shapes and space.



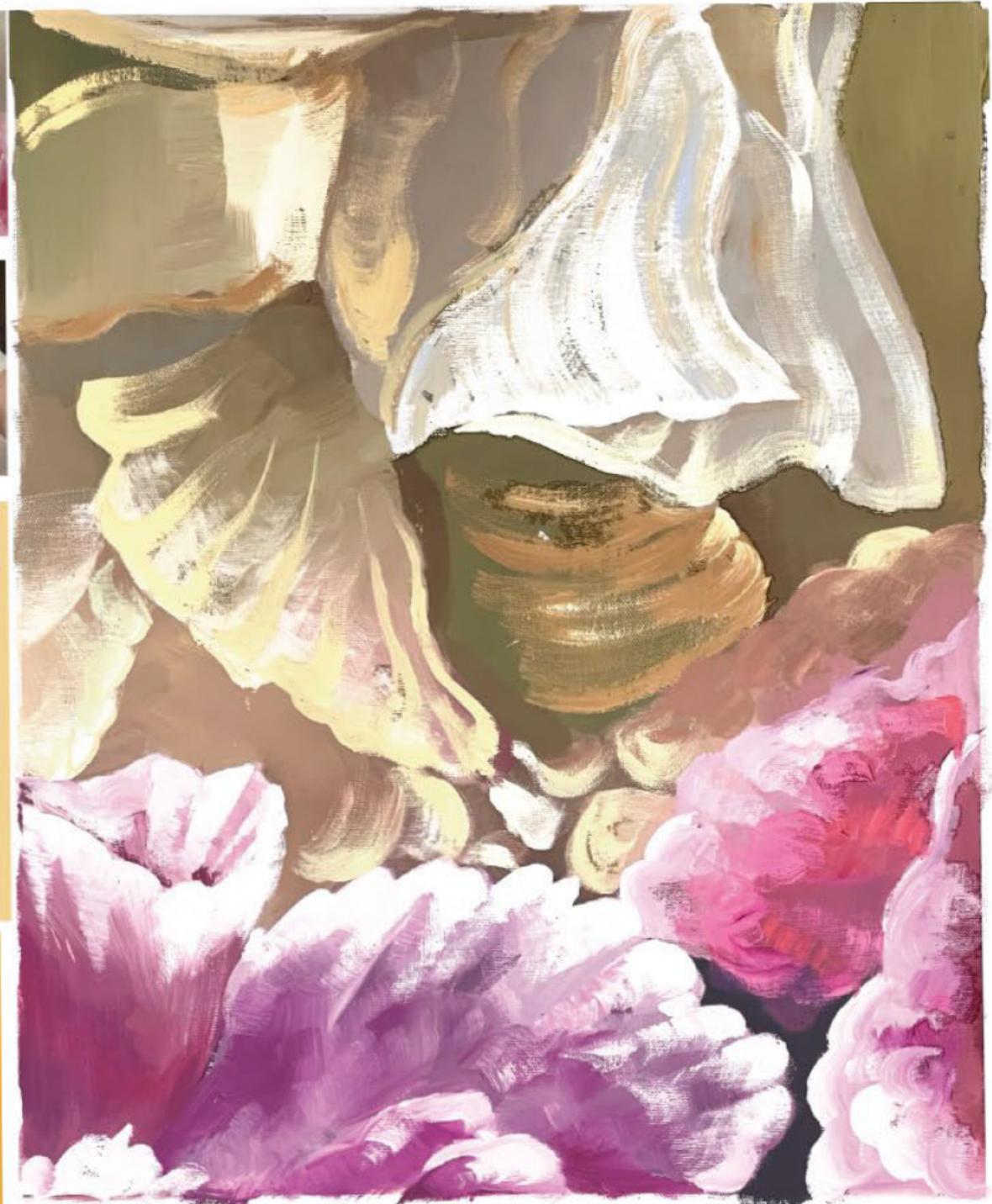
Exploring Female Identity Through Flowers

In the context of my own work, O'Keeffe's floral paintings resonate deeply. Like her, I explore the symbolic relationship between flowers and personal identity. For me, flowers are strongly linked to memories of my mother, and through painting them in intimate compositions, I aim to express emotional warmth, protection, and the quiet power of maternal presence. O'Keeffe's ability to evoke meaning through form and color—without relying on human figures—inspires my approach to still life. I've begun experimenting with close-cropped compositions of roses and lilies, using softness and light to suggest memory and emotional depth.

O'Keeffe's work teaches that symbolism can emerge not only through overt iconography but also through composition, form, and repetition. Her flowers are not just flowers—they are vessels of meaning, challenging the viewer to find emotion in form and identity in nature.



The three images on the left document my texture experimentation process.

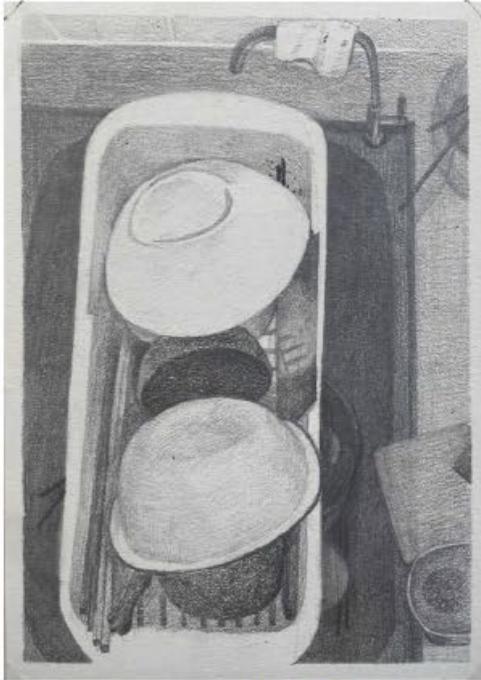


400mm X 300mm Acrylic on canvas

My response

Development

In the development of the theme, I realized that my mother is not only associated with flowers. Her female identity has long been closely linked to the family and household chores. In order to more comprehensively represent this symbolic relationship, I shifted the object of my enlarged depiction from flowers to tableware. Through observation, I found that many pieces of tableware themselves feature floral patterns, which further strengthens the metaphorical connection among "women, flowers, and household chores". This transformation has enriched the connotation of my work and made the symbolic expression more profound. I am satisfied with this attempt at concept extension and material transformation.



A4 pencil sketch on paper

I took photos of the bowls in my kitchen from a top-down perspective and then carried out black-and-white-and-gray painting exercises on paper with a pencil to explore the composition and spatial layers of the picture. Through the handling of the relationship between light and shade, I gained a clearer understanding of the relationship between structure and form. I am quite satisfied with the sense of balance in the overall composition.

I took several groups of partial images of bowls with different compositions, and finally chose a white bowl as the subject for my painting. This composition is relatively vivid, and the white bowl better sets off the floral patterns on it, enhancing the symbolism of the image. I painted on the canvas using acrylic paints and consciously strengthened the treatment of the highlights to prevent the painting from looking too flat, making the whole work more three-dimensional and visually layered. I am satisfied with the combination of color and composition, and I think this work successfully combines symbolism with formal aesthetic appeal.



400mm X 300mm Acrylic on canvas

Artist Research

Cornelis de Heem - Vanitas and Memory: The Hidden Meanings in Dutch Still Life



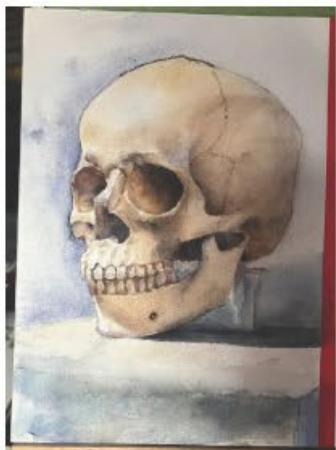
Introduction

Cornelis de Heem, a Dutch painter in the 17th century, is one of the renowned representatives of the "vanitas" still life painting genre. His works often consist of magnificent fruits, flowers, insects, wine vessels, and other objects, presenting a visually prosperous and exquisite scene. However, behind these meticulously depicted objects lies a profound reflection on the transience of life and the impermanence of the world. For example, in his work *Still Life with Flowers in a Glass Vase*, beside the gorgeous flowers, there are often withered leaves, damaged peels of fruits, or candles on the verge of going out. These all imply the passage of time and the inevitability of death.



Influenced by Cornelis de Heem's works, I created a still life composition by combining flowers and cosmetics to explore the symbolic relationship between female identity and everyday objects. In terms of perspective, I chose the eye-level angle commonly seen in classical still life paintings, allowing viewers to have a more direct dialogue with the objects. Regarding the composition, I paid attention to the varying heights and the rhythmic layers of the objects, making the painting more stable and rich in form. I am quite satisfied with the overall composition and the integration of symbolic elements, believing that I have successfully merged my personal emotions with artistic language.

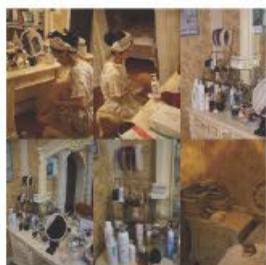
500mm X 400 mm Acrylic on canvas



A4 watercolor on paper



I arranged a still life composition that included a skull and then painted it on paper using acrylic paints. Through this, I deeply studied the symbolic expression of the theme of "Vanitas" in Cornelis de Heem's works. Through this practice, I gained a better understanding of how to convey the concepts of time, death, and life through objects.



Makeup and cosmetics are important parts of my mother's life, and they also represent her expression of her female identity. Therefore, I added cosmetics to the objects of my representation, which, together with flowers and tableware, constitute the symbolic elements of my mother's image.



400mm X 300mm Acrylic on canvas

Development

I created a still life work with tableware as the subject of depiction. At first, I tried a relatively casual and scattered composition method. However, during the actual painting process, I found that the painting lacked a sense of solemnity and a concentrated expression of symbolic meaning. Therefore, I adjusted the composition, arranging the tableware horizontally in the center of the painting. I adopted an eye-level perspective and made the tabletop parallel to the lower edge of the painting to create a sense of ritual and stability.

I created the work on the canvas using acrylic paints. I strived for a steady and calm color tone, and used side lighting to enhance the sense of volume, imitating the language of light and shadow in classical oil paintings. This treatment not only strengthened the structure of the objects but also endowed the tableware with a deeper symbolic meaning, reflecting the historical precipitation of female identity in household labor.

I am satisfied with the overall atmosphere and emotional expression of the painting. However, I also realize that there is still room for improvement in terms of texture details and the background space. In the future, I will continue to improve the precision and depth of my expression.



400mm X 300mm Acrylic on canvas

My response

In the process of delving deeper into the theme, I attempted to combine tableware, flowers, and cosmetics into a still life composition, symbolizing the multiple aspects of my mother's identity. The tableware represents household chores and family responsibilities, the flowers symbolize tenderness and emotional connections, and the cosmetics reflect the extension of a woman's self-expression and social role. By unifying these three types of objects in one painting, I strive to construct a visually symbolic language that presents the complex identity of my mother, who is both gentle and resilient.

In the composition, I paid attention to the hierarchical relationships and visual balance among the objects. I maintained a steady and calm color tone to enhance the internal tension of the work. I am satisfied with the integration of the overall concept and the expression of the symbolic logic among the objects. However, there is still room for improvement in the transition of light and shadow.

The Hidden Meanings in Dutch Still Life

His extreme attention to detail endows each object with symbolic meaning: grapes symbolize life and abundance, insects often represent corruption and decay, and the transparency and fragility of the vase symbolize the vulnerability of human life. In this way, de Heem elevates still life paintings to a philosophical visual language, integrating religion, aesthetics, and humanistic care.

This symbolic technique of making the most of objects has been a significant inspiration for my own creation. In my memory, my mother loved flowers deeply. I express my nostalgia for her and my emotional projection through the depiction of flowers. De Heem has made me realize that still life can not only showcase external beauty but also carry the weight of time, memory, and emotion. Drawing on the contrast between "decay" and "bloom" he used in his works, I also try to compose a picture with both blooming and withered flowers, expressing the warmth in my memory and the loss in reality, thus making my works more emotionally layered and symbolic.

Through the study of Cornelis de Heem's works, I have gained a deeper understanding of the narrative ability and symbolic function of "objects" in still life paintings. His works are not only a visual feast but also a condensation of time and emotion. Next, I will continue to analyze how Giorgio Morandi endows still life with poetry and inner emotions through minimalist bottles and jars and compositional order, so as to further expand my understanding of "symbols" in different cultural contexts.



400mm X 300mm Acrylic on canvas

Artist Research

Giorgio Morandi - Silence and Symbol: Emotional Balance in Everyday Objects

Introduction

Giorgio Morandi is an Italian modernist artist, renowned for his minimalist and philosophical still life paintings. For many years, he repeatedly painted similar bottles, jars, boxes, and vases, creating an almost meditative pictorial space. In works such as *Still Life (1956)*, Morandi uses soft tones, a restrained composition, and subtle light and shadow to create a tranquil and introspective atmosphere. These seemingly ordinary objects, under his brushstrokes, are endowed with quiet and profound symbolic meanings.



I imitated the style of Morandi and carried out a sketching exercise on paper with a pencil, focusing on the composition of black, white, and gray and the expression of spatial relationships. Through the arrangement and hierarchical analysis of simple objects, I attempted to capture the quiet, reserved atmosphere and rhythm in Morandi's works. This practice has enhanced my understanding of the structural form of objects and the transition of gray tones. I am quite satisfied with the overall harmony of the picture and the rhythm of the composition.



400mm X 300mm Acrylic on canvas

I imitated Morandi's style and conducted a color practice on the canvas using acrylic paints, exploring the color composition and spatial rhythm of the painting. Through the arrangement of still-life bottles and jars and the application of low-saturation colors, I attempted to create the serene and introspective atmosphere found in Morandi's works. This practice enabled me to have a deeper understanding of how to convey emotions and order through color relationships. I am satisfied with the restraint and unity of the color coordination, but there is still room for improvement in brushstroke control.



I imitated Morandi's style, rearranged my mother's cosmetics and took photos of them, attempting to express the tranquil beauty of everyday objects with a simple composition and soft color tones. Through this practice, I gained a deeper understanding of the relationships and order among objects in Morandi's works.

Influenced by Morandi's style, I selected cosmetics of the same height to depict and created a painting on the canvas using acrylic paints. I made subjective adjustments to the colors, making the painting clean and restrained, and presenting a tranquil sense of order, which symbolizes the gentle yet firm strength in my mother's daily life. I am quite satisfied with the balance of the overall composition and the creation of the emotional atmosphere.



400mm X 300mm Acrylic on canvas

Development

I chose tableware as the subject of my depiction and created a painting on the canvas using acrylic paints. In terms of color treatment, I deliberately used cool colors. Through subjective color selection, I created a rational atmosphere in the painting, symbolizing my mother's tenacity and modesty when undertaking household chores in daily life.

In terms of composition, I adopted the classic triangular composition to enhance the sense of stability. At the same time, by emphasizing the stacking relationship of the tableware, I highlighted the sense of form and the beauty of order, enabling the still life to show a sense of strength within balance.

I am satisfied with the neatness of the overall painting, the stability of the composition, and the unity of the color expression. I believe that this work has well reflected the symbolic meaning of my mother's identity.



Emotional Balance in Everyday Objects

Unlike Cornelis de Heem's gorgeous and allegorical symbolism, Morandi's artistic language is more reserved. Through subtle adjustments to the arrangement of objects, he conveys profound insights into space, order, and existence. The bottles and jars in his works seem to have an emotional connection with each other. They "converse" quietly, revealing a sense of loneliness, tenderness, and even philosophical contemplation in their silence. He removes all obvious narrative clues but manages to evoke the viewers' inner emotions and resonance with his minimalist forms.

Morandi's pursuit of a "sense of form" has had a significant impact on my practical works. In my creations themed around still life and people, I also try to use a limited color palette and a restrained composition, placing several objects related to my mother in a blank space. Influenced by him, I pay more attention to the relationships between objects and the space, rather than just the shape of a single object. Just as Morandi constructs an "emotional order" with bottles and jars, I hope to showcase the multiple aspects of my mother's image and the structure of my inner memories through the combination of objects.

His works have made me realize that symbolism doesn't necessarily rely on the superposition of complex images. Sometimes, the deepest emotions are hidden in the simplest forms. The "poetry in silence" emphasized by Morandi guides me to eliminate redundancy in my creations, pursue the essence, and make each object a symbol of memory and a carrier of emotions.



600mm X 500mm Acrylic on canvas

Summary & Develop



In the preliminary explorations, through various combinations and depictions of flowers, tableware, and cosmetics, I gradually established a symbolic system centered around the identity of a mother. I attempted to use different perspectives, composition methods, and media for expression, delving deep into the emotional and cultural significance behind everyday objects. I am satisfied with the improvement in my compositional thinking and symbolic expression. However, I also realize that I need some improvements in unifying the style and enhancing the narrative quality of the paintings. The final piece will integrate these achievements to further deepen the theme.

Inspired by the firsthand information of my mother washing dishes, I created my final piece centered around flowers, bowls, and hands. Flowers symbolize my mother's tenderness and emotions, bowls represent the family and responsibilities, and the hands engaged in labor directly convey the power of dedication and perseverance. Through the combination of these three elements, I attempt to express the complexity and profound value of the identity of a mother. I hope that the work not only presents a visual balance but also conveys an inherent emotional tension and symbolic meaning.



500mm X 400mm Acrylic on canvas

Draft A



500mm X 400mm Acrylic on canvas

Draft B

In the preliminary preparation for the final piece, I experimented with various compositional arrangements among my mother's hands, bowls, and flowers, exploring how to convey emotions and symbolic meanings through still-life elements. At the same time, I made attempts at painting in two different styles: Draft A adopts a relatively free formal language, focusing on the direct expression of emotions, making the painting more dynamic. In contrast, Draft B draws on the compositional methods of classicism. The painting is more restrained, emphasizing structure, light and shadow, and symbolism. After comparison, I believe that Draft B can better reflect the theme I want to express—the tenderness, tranquility, and sense of responsibility inherent in the identity of a mother. Through the restraint in form, it actually enhances the emotional power of the painting, which is more in line with my understanding and pursuit of the theme of "Symbolism and Still Life".



Further Develop Idea

In the attempts at this stage, I arranged the bowls in an overlapping manner to enhance the sense of compositional form and rhythm in the painting. The repetition and irregular arrangement of the bowls not only enrich the spatial layers of the painting but also symbolize the repetitive and continuous efforts and labor of my mother in daily family life. To further strengthen the symbolic meaning, I added the element of flowers to the painting. As an image that runs through my theme, flowers represent my mother's tenderness, emotions, and vitality, forming a powerful contrast and complement to the bowls, which symbolize household chores and responsibilities. The appearance of flowers injects a gentle and profound emotion into the painting, giving the work a humanistic warmth beyond its formal structure. I am relatively satisfied with this attempt at the combination of composition and symbolism. However, upon reflection, I also realize that I could make more effort in the unity of the spatial relationship and color contrast between the bowls and the flowers. In the future, I will continue to seek a more precise way of expression between form and content.



600mm X 500mm Acrylic on canvas

Plan A

In this attempt, I expanded the original composition of a single hand into a composition of two hands, hoping to enhance the interactivity and symbolic significance between the figure and the objects. At the same time, I tried to stack the cups in an overlapping manner and placed the flowers on top of the cups to explore the combinational relationships and symbolic expressions among the objects. The addition of two hands allowed me to better convey the working state and continuous efforts of my mother in daily life, and also made the emotional connection more tangible. I think the appearance of the two hands is effective, but I also realize that they must have a more logical connection with the objects in order to enhance the narrative quality and emotional tension of the painting. In terms of composition, the shapes of the cups are not symmetrical enough, which affects the overall sense of form and the stability of the composition. In addition, originally placing the flowers concentratedly on the cups seemed too contrived. Later, I found that having the flowers appear in a naturally scattered way can better create a realistic and emotional atmosphere. I am encouraged by my performance in this compositional exploration, but I still need to find a better balance between the relationships of the objects and the formal aesthetic.



600mm X 500mm Acrylic on canvas

Plan B

Final Piece Plan



Conclusion

Through this study, I have come to realize that objects in character and still life painting are never merely decorative—they are carriers of meaning, identity, memory, and emotion. Each of the artists I researched—Caravaggio, Georgia O’Keeffe, Cornelis de Heem, and Giorgio Morandi—demonstrates a unique way of turning everyday items into symbolic language. Whether it’s Caravaggio’s moral tension, O’Keeffe’s sensual expression of femininity, de Heem’s reflection on time and mortality, or Morandi’s quiet emotional balance, they all enrich still life with depth far beyond surface appearance.

This research has helped me rethink my own creative process. The flowers I paint are no longer just visual representations of my mother’s memory—they now embody personal emotion, time, identity, and loss. I’ve become more intentional in composition, more aware of the symbolic potential of color, texture, and spatial arrangement. Inspired by these artists, I have started experimenting with contrasts—such as freshness and decay, light and shadow, repetition and isolation—to express the complexity of personal memory.

Ultimately, this study deepened my understanding of symbolism in art and allowed me to develop a more poetic and meaningful visual language in my practical work. It taught me that even the smallest object, when carefully chosen and thoughtfully painted, can carry a powerful story.

In the final Final piece, I plan to create a composition where one hand holds a flower and the other hand supports a bowl. The bowl is printed with flower patterns, and the hands interact and connect with the objects, forming the core symbolic elements of the painting. I have chosen a dark background to highlight the bright relationship among the flowers, hands, and the bowl, enhancing the visual focus and emotional tension of the painting. Such an arrangement not only expresses the identity of a mother in family life, where tenderness and responsibility coexist, but also reflects her dedication and connection through the specific actions of the "hands". Flowers symbolize emotions and femininity, while the bowl represents daily household chores and care. The two hands are respectively associated with these two objects, suggesting the dual dimensions of emotion and labor in the identity of a mother. I hope to convey the delicate strength and unnoticed efforts of a mother in her family role through this composition. I am quite satisfied with the overall symbolic concept, but I also realize that I still need to meticulously polish the performance of the light and shadow layers and the structure of the hands to ensure the expressiveness and emotional depth of the painting.

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Composition

The symmetrical composition is adopted, dividing the elements in the picture into two main parts on the left and right. On the left side, there is a hand holding a flower, while on the right side, another hand is placed on top of a bowl with a floral pattern, creating a visual balance.

The characteristics of the still-life classicism style include meticulous depiction of objects, such as the texture of the bowl, the shape of the flowers, the muscle lines of the hand, etc., pursuing an idealized beauty and a sense of order.

The hands of the mother. One hand is arranging the flowers, and the other is stacking the bowls and dishes, implying two identities of the mother.

The hand holding the flower and the flowers scattered on the tabletop demonstrate the mother's love for flowers. Here, the flowers are not just decorative elements, but they also symbolize the mother's pursuit of and love for the beauty of life amidst her busy household chores.

