

POPPY TINGLEY
FORTY HOURS – ESSAY

I have been interested in the human need to use time to organise our lives. For my Parsons challenge I explored what time means through a time-limited art project. I wanted to portray the patterns of humans, the need for routine, the passage of time, of work and reward. I named the piece *Forty Hours* because I gave myself a time-limit of 40 hours – the workweek.

For this project, Ed Ruscha's, *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*, inspired me to use photography for testing. I began using my phone to capture split sections of a walking journey. Eventually, I decided to produce six, ten-minute observational drawings. I repeated this cycle until I reached forty hours. My plan was to work in a number of different locations, so I had to be realistic about the size of each 10-minute study. Although illustrator John Vernon Lords', 366 drawings demonstrated that there is a harmonious consistency in grouping his one by one-inch formats, I had in mind the idea of showing a panoramic view of the location. Therefore, I decided to do 6cm by 17cm landscapes. I felt landscapes would reflect the passage of time better than alternative shapes.

For each vignette I started using a single warm orange ink. I thought this colour would bring warmth to the overall collage. After completing the first hour of work on location, I quickly saw how it became quite monotonous. I decided to use two additional colours to add vibrancy and depth. Reflecting on my use of only the orange colour and then adding new colours was similar to how humans alter their routine to enhance their experience of time.

I spent all this time creating vignettes and I questioned how I would show that *Forty Hours* was portraying time. At first, I placed the works on a wall and photographed them as a collage. I felt this did not initially speak to time. After looking back at some of my other works I was reminded of bookbinding and I decided to attach the vignettes together to form a lengthy concertina book. I felt it was important for the viewer to become tangibly aware of the amount of time taken. By unfolding the vignettes, I tried to physically show the passing of time as a narrative. Also, the thickness of the booklet was important to represent the weight of time.

What do I take away from this challenge? I set out to portray time using a time-constrained creative process. As to the vignettes, I see lines everywhere. Lines are symbolic of time. They show the passage of time on people's faces and reveal the age of a tree. Further, I love the patterns, colours and shapes all together, but does it speak to time? Reflecting on the concertina technique I see how mankind imposes structures (like time and narrative) to create order out of chaos – to feel in control of and make sense of their lives. But - the natural order of the world is chaotic. Humans impose order on life by working to the rhythm and structure of time. My personal take away from looking at my work is of a colourful chaos. Is time not the chaotic roller coaster of life experiences disguised as a simple measurement tool? The concertina technique may help connect the piece with time explicitly because by imposing my narrative, I gain comfort and can feel safer in the chaos that is time.