**Creative Mentor- Louise Zhang**

My creative mentor that I have chosen is Chinese-Australian multidisciplinary artist, Louise Zhang, whose works span over mediums of paint, sculpture, and installation. Zhang is based in Sydney, Australia and her artworks explore the complexity of her upbringing in a foreign country to Chinese immigrant parents and the struggles of navigating through her life and identity as a ‘third culture kid’.

What attracted me so much to her work initially was the abstraction and the vibrant pastel colour palette that she uses in her pieces. I was drawn to the amorphous and blob-like subjects in her paintings but as I began to research and gain a deeper understanding of Zhang’s work, it was fascinating to discover how contrasting the meaning behind her works was to the appearances of them. The pastel colours communicate a dream-like childhood fantasy but it hides the dark and grotesque reality behind her artworks, I think it is so beautiful to see how colour has the power to change the narrative. What I thought were just blobs and abnormal shapes were actually depicting mutated bodies and oozing guts that stem from the concepts of anxiety and death. These concepts developed in Louise Zhang’s childhood as she grew up in a very religious family thus led to her fear but curiosity of hell and the afterlife. The artist herself stated that the shapeless blobs and elements in her artwork spark both a sense of attraction and repulsion.

Another reason why I am drawn to Zhang’s works is how I relate to her. In an interview, Louise Zhang said that she did not want to incorporate her Chinese background into her work because addressing her heritage gave people a target to attack through racism, prejudice, or ignorance. Not labelling herself as a ‘Chinese’ artist was her means of protection and avoiding possible attacks. However, during her studies she gradually started to embrace her culture and background which she then began to embed into her work, she thinks of this as a way to show her proudness of her heritage. This is something that I have also experienced as a third culture kid, always trying to push away my culture in fear of not fitting in, and now I have grown to become interested in my Chinese background and has sparked many inspirations behind many of my artworks.

Louise Zhang sticks to more traditional methods of painting, she works with multiple mediums like acrylic and oil, in layers, but her colour palette and sculptures extends into more contemporary styles. As mentioned, she does not often work with the basic primary colours but a range of pastel and neon tones instead. She often does her backgrounds in acrylic and works over in in oil paint, the use of oil over acrylic for the main focus of the painting is likely because oil carries out the vibrancy of the colour in an opaquer manner. Even the use of circle canvases for many of her pieces contributes to her nebulous and shapeless style. For her sculptures, Zhang utilizes spray foam/ expanding foam in order to achieve the amorphous shapes and blobs that are recurring in her work.