

Other people are the mirror in which we see ourselves. The aspect of our identity is the target of other's attention, and subsequently of our own. I have always struggled with cultural and racial identity, having been constantly questioned about my race and ethnicity. The concept of identity is a complex process, shaped by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors and socio-political contexts. Throughout my life, the recurring questions of "What are you?" and "Where are you from?" were always mind boggling to me. I got offended because I felt as if I was on the fringe of social groups, rejected and categorized.

This painting is not the solution, but rather one step out of many: I will need time and distance to reflect on this process. Exploration and identification of oneself is a multifaceted lifelong journey. My approach to the painting was dictated by patterns of aggression and oppression from others, to which I want to no longer assign such weight. I used pastels, paint, markers, chalk, and paper collage to address my past experiences with identity. This isn't a full self-portrait of who I am, because it only shows others all the anger and frustration I have towards myself and others. Because most of my past memories have shaped a self-hatred and shamefulness towards my ethnic background, this process of exploring my identity was very difficult for me. I have realized that those past experiences changed my view on how I judge others and how I judge myself.

Keily