

Haley Prestifilippo | Session 5:

Palimpsest and the History of the Mark

List of Required Supplies:

- Students should bring two old, unsuccessful, or unfinished artworks, drawings, prints, photos. Or, bring a found image.
- Mediums to use to draw on old artworks:
 - Pencils, pens, markers, paints and brushes, crayons, pastels, etc.

Additional Links (optional):

Julie Mehretu, Art21, "Workday": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iejZMhJv030>

Julie Mehretu work overview: <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/julie-mehretu-palimpsest-old-gods>

Palimpsests in history: <https://blogs.bl.uk/digitisedmanuscripts/2016/09/palimpsests-the-art-of-medieval-recycling.html>

Space/Facility Requirements: Tables, table coverings (inexpensive tablecloth or butcher paper), sink for cleaning up after.

Student Time Required: Flexible; 2-3 hours recommended but can be compressed or divided into multiple classes.

Step-by-step Instructions:

Introduce artist Julie Mehretu, ancient writings, and city planning in relation to the palimpsest.

- Be sure to reinforce that this method of creation is another form of an indirect, reactive process.

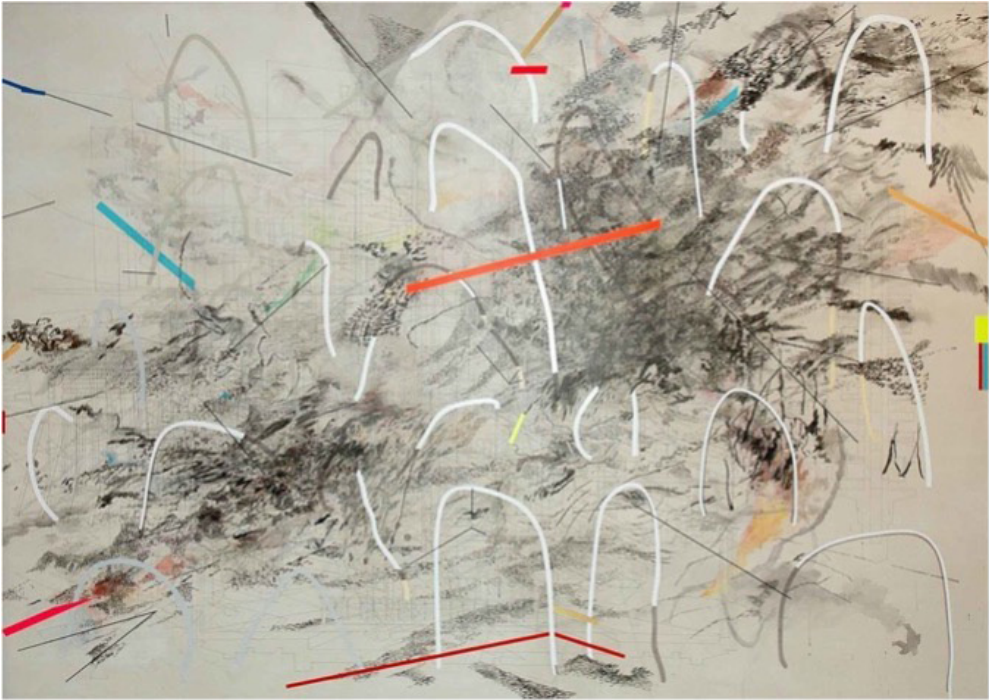
Vocabulary

- **Palimpsest** – a piece of art or writing which has been erased, partially or wholly, so that new marks can be made; can also refer to a city, the way a new city is built within an old one, and over time the layers of structures intermingle. In both cases, history is apparent alongside the present.
 - ▷ It can reveal the history of a piece in a meaningful way
 - ▷ It offers a sense of layered information
 - ▷ How can the information of each layer inform the information in the next?
- **Indirect/ reactive work** – way of making art that relies on an external source as a starting point against which to react.

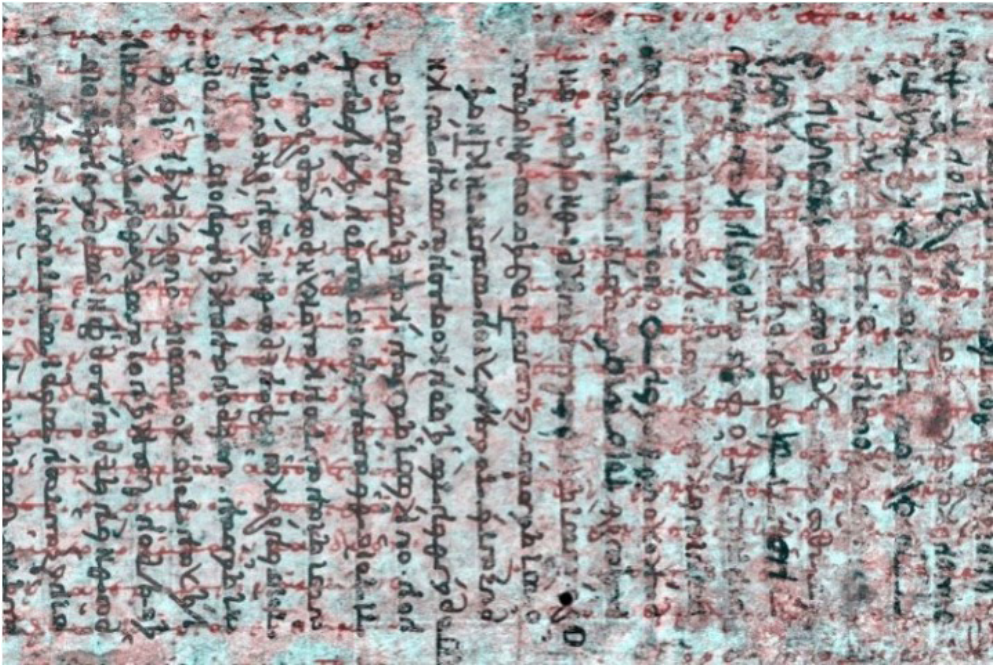
Exercise:

1. Create palimpsest using found images/old artwork:
 - Students should each have an old artwork or found image to begin.
 - They can use erasure, painting over with acrylic, or other ways to obliterate portions of the original image.
 - They will work back into the now empty spaces with new imagery. It is up to them how much to erase or keep from the original work.
 - This works best if they do not erase or cover the entire original image. Some of the original image should remain, to allow students to react and redefine.
 - Encourage exploration.
 - Students may add abstract marks along with more representational marks. This is not collage, though, because they are not gluing new images together. They are drawing back into the original surface.
 - If students are together, another option is to have them switch pieces at some point and react to a partner's marks.
2. Gather students to look at final work to discuss the following:
 - How did material and medium choices affect the outcome?
 - How does this method create a sense of history in the work? Why is this important or useful to a concept?
 - Why does palimpsest work especially well with drawing? How is drawing inherently a process that encourages the history of the mark or the artist's hand?

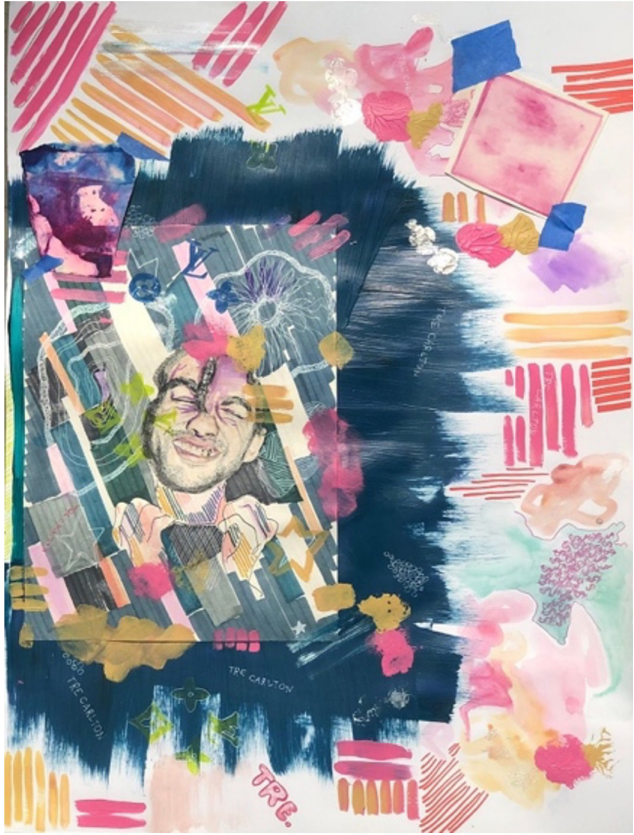
Artist examples: Julie Mehretu



Ancient palimpsest: Archimedes



Student examples. All images courtesy of the artists.



Kaitlyn Vercellino
Old artwork, prisma color, acrylic paint,
watercolor paper, watercolor,
monotyping ink, marker, paint pen,
white pen



Izzy Bliss,
"Rosy Renovation"
11"x15"
Found images, mixed media