

[The Gilded Display](#)

This course has taught me much in the way of how to use the tools at my disposal to a more effective degree. I was most benefited by learning the technical pipeline of using Substance Painter. Previously, I would throw whatever I could at my project, just to see what would stick; I now have a better understanding of how to set up low & high poly files, what settings to use when baking maps, and troubleshooting when something is not working. One of my favorite discoveries on my own, was learning how to use anchor points to build reference stacks for procedurally editable textures.

In deciding what to do for my final project, I had a skull model that needed to be retopologized, and thought this would be the perfect chance to do that, and even go a step further. While I could have done something spooky, that felt too obvious. I like to subvert the obvious choices as a personal challenge. I decided I would rather take my skull model, and turn it into something beautiful. I took inspiration from my wedding, which had a golden masquerade theme; the decor consisted of many types of materials & various trinkets, so it seemed fitting to make the skull the centerpiece of a display, like something you might find in a bizarre boutique.

I needed to ensure the “display” would feel balanced, but not unnaturally symmetrical. For that, I specifically added weight to each side of the model (feather on one side, larger rose on the other). I added the pearls to give a bit more “clutter” to the display, otherwise it felt too bare. It was only natural for one of the pearls to be perched inside the mouth of the skull, which I feel adds some curiosity to the piece. While some clutter was beneficial, if I had added too many odd pieces, it would have felt too busy. It would have detracted from the main feature (the skull); so I kept it simple.

My goals entailed creating a gilded, almost gaudy, feel to each and every item. The entire project was to be in a range of oranges & yellows, to emphasize a “warm, welcoming” aura. Because the items were all to be in the same color family, I used value, saturation, & surface quality to break up the imagery.

- The dull soft down of the feather

- The gleaming hammered metal gilding
- The bubbled & flawed transparent glass case
- The bright flowing sheen of the satin cloth & ribbon
- The slightly pocked skull bone & smooth enamel on the teeth
- The dark velvet-y roses with glowing hearts within the petals

I am happy with how this project turned out, but as ever, I wish to push myself further. For now, I think it makes a good portfolio piece.

