

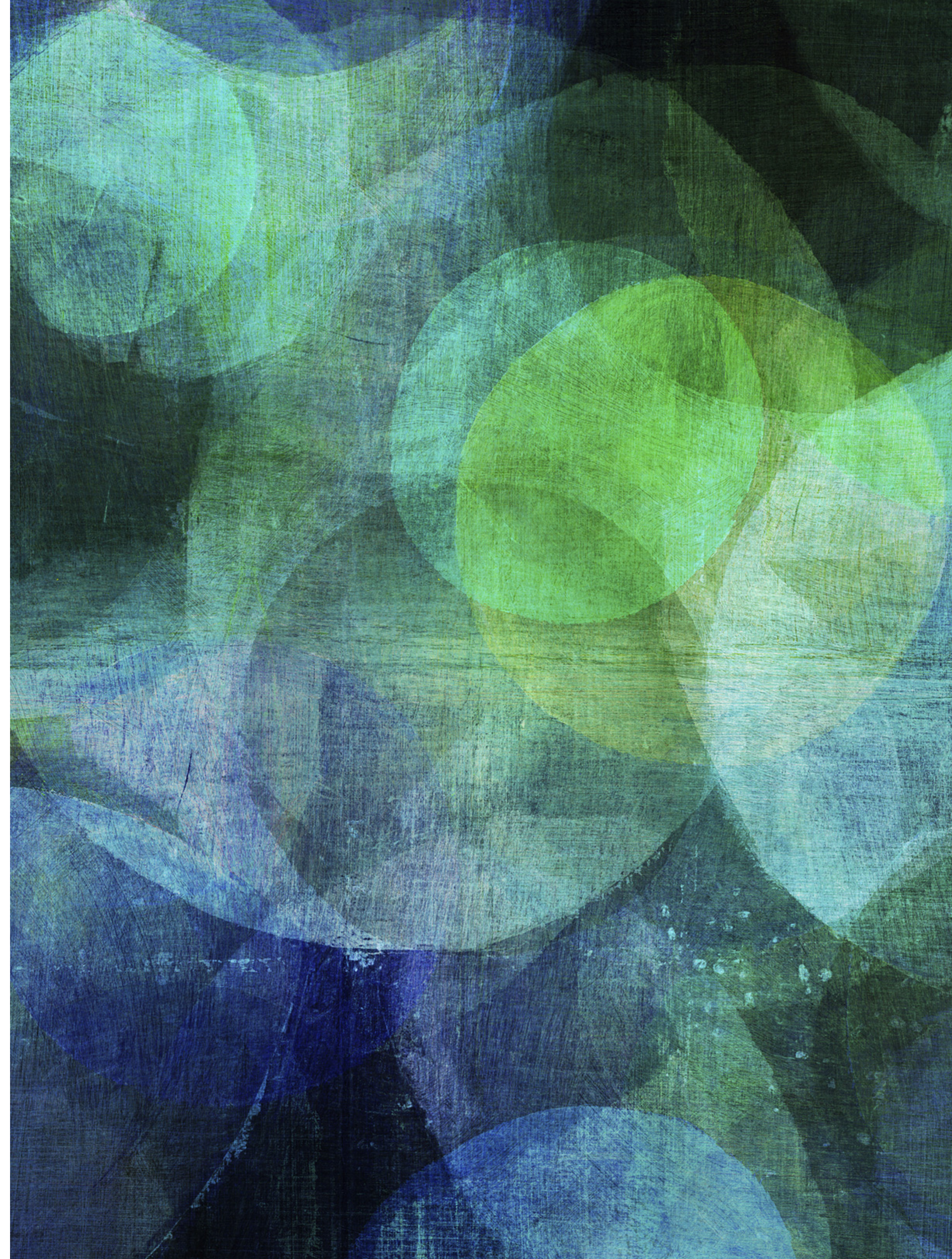


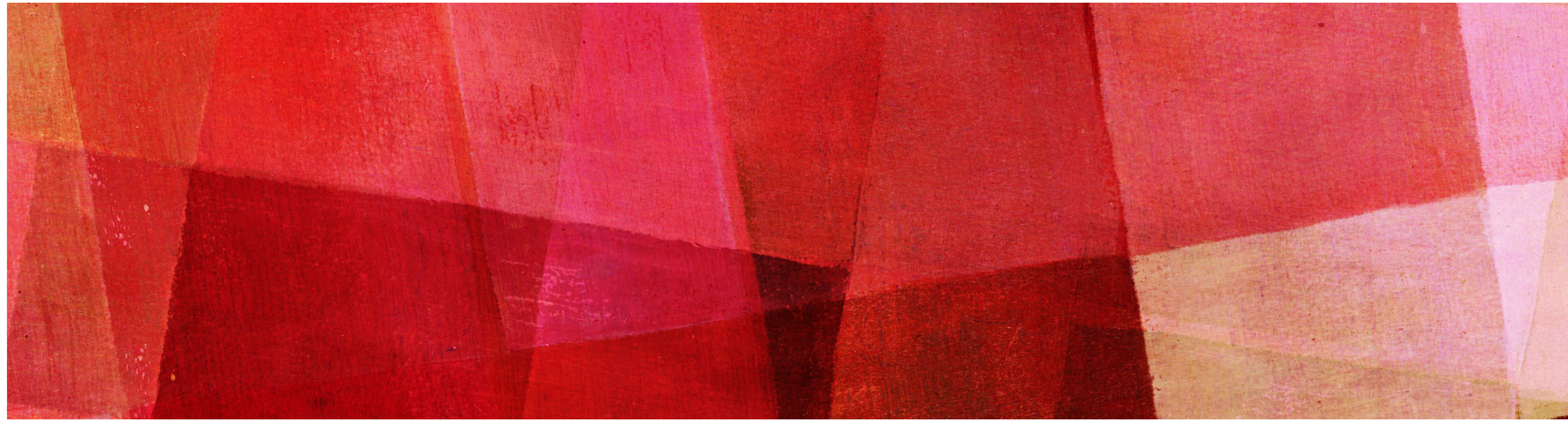
NOTABLE CHARACTERISTICS & THE BIG 5

Dramaturgical Significance in *The Strangers* | Carey Chuter

FILTER

Big Five Personality Traits





BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS

In psychology, five broad dimensions (the ‘Big Five’) are commonly used in the research and study of personality. Since the late 20th Century, these factors have been used to measure, and develop a better understanding of, individual differences in personality. These five factors include: Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism. The five factors are measured on continua, where, for example, an individual may be highly extraverted, low in extraversion (introverted) or somewhere between these two extremes. For purposes here, this subjective filter will be used simply to observe how the core traits of characters move and interact with each other through the world of the play. Remember also, that each human personality is composed of a combination of all five traits, even though we will narrow our focus to one per character here.



CRIS

- Big 5 Core Trait: Openness
- The openness to experience dimension of personality is characterized by a willingness to try new activities. People with higher levels of openness are amenable to unconventional ideas and beliefs, including those which challenge their existing assumptions. They enjoy artistic and cultural experiences, and are more open to unfamiliar cultures and customs.



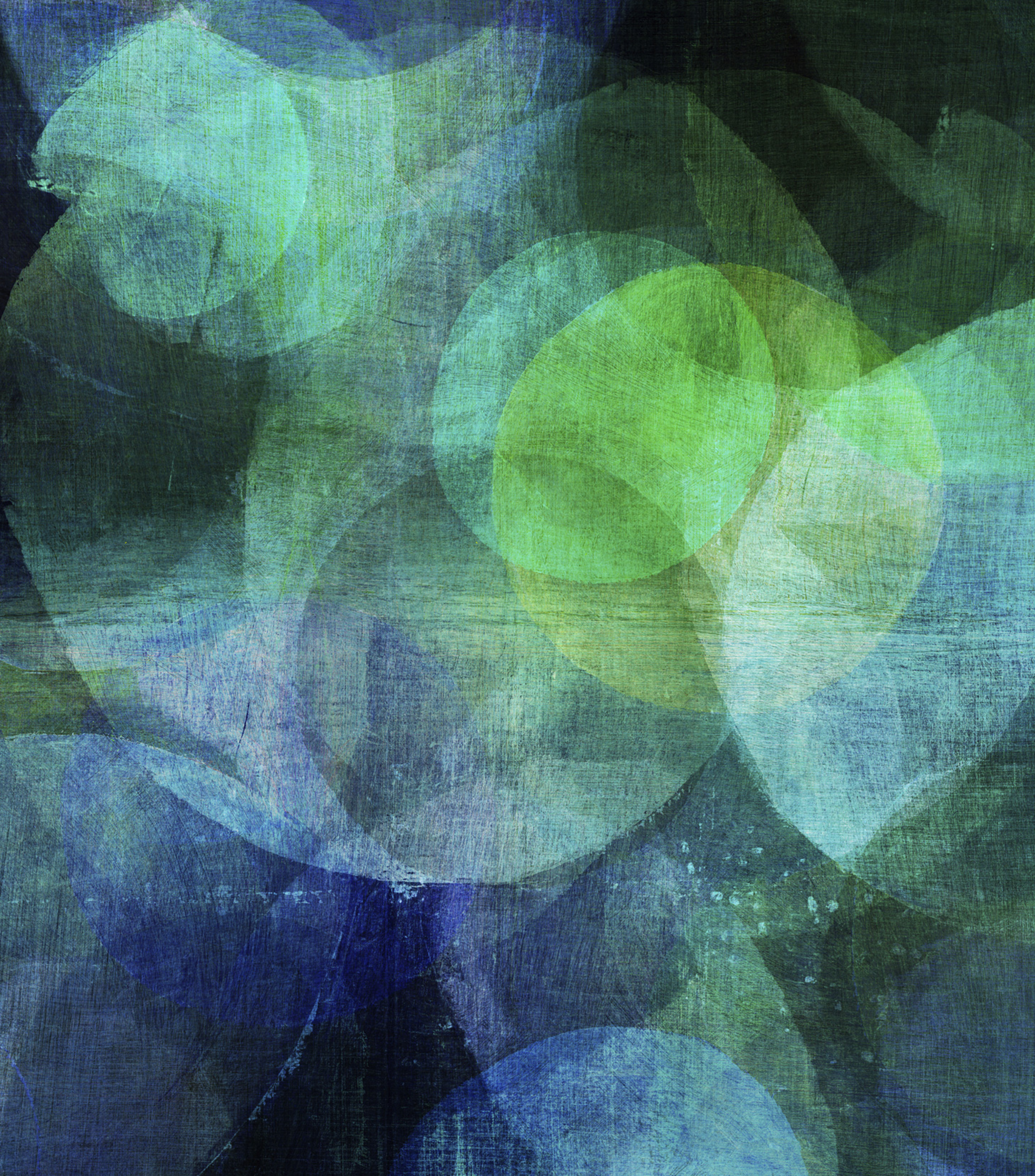
DAVE | ELEANOR

- Big 5 Core trait: Extraversion
- Extraversion is characterized by outgoing, socially confident behavior. Extraverts are sociable, talkative and often forward in social situations. They enjoy being the center of a group and will often seek the attention of others. Extraverts enjoy meeting new people and are happy to introduce themselves to strangers, thriving in company of others.



DIEGO

- Big 5 Core Trait: Low Openness
- People with low levels of openness - those who are closed to experience - are wary of uncertainty and the unknown. They are more suspicious of beliefs and ideas which challenge their status quo. They feel uncomfortable in unfamiliar situations and prefer familiar environments. Less open individuals value the safety of predictability, and like to adhere to traditions and routines.



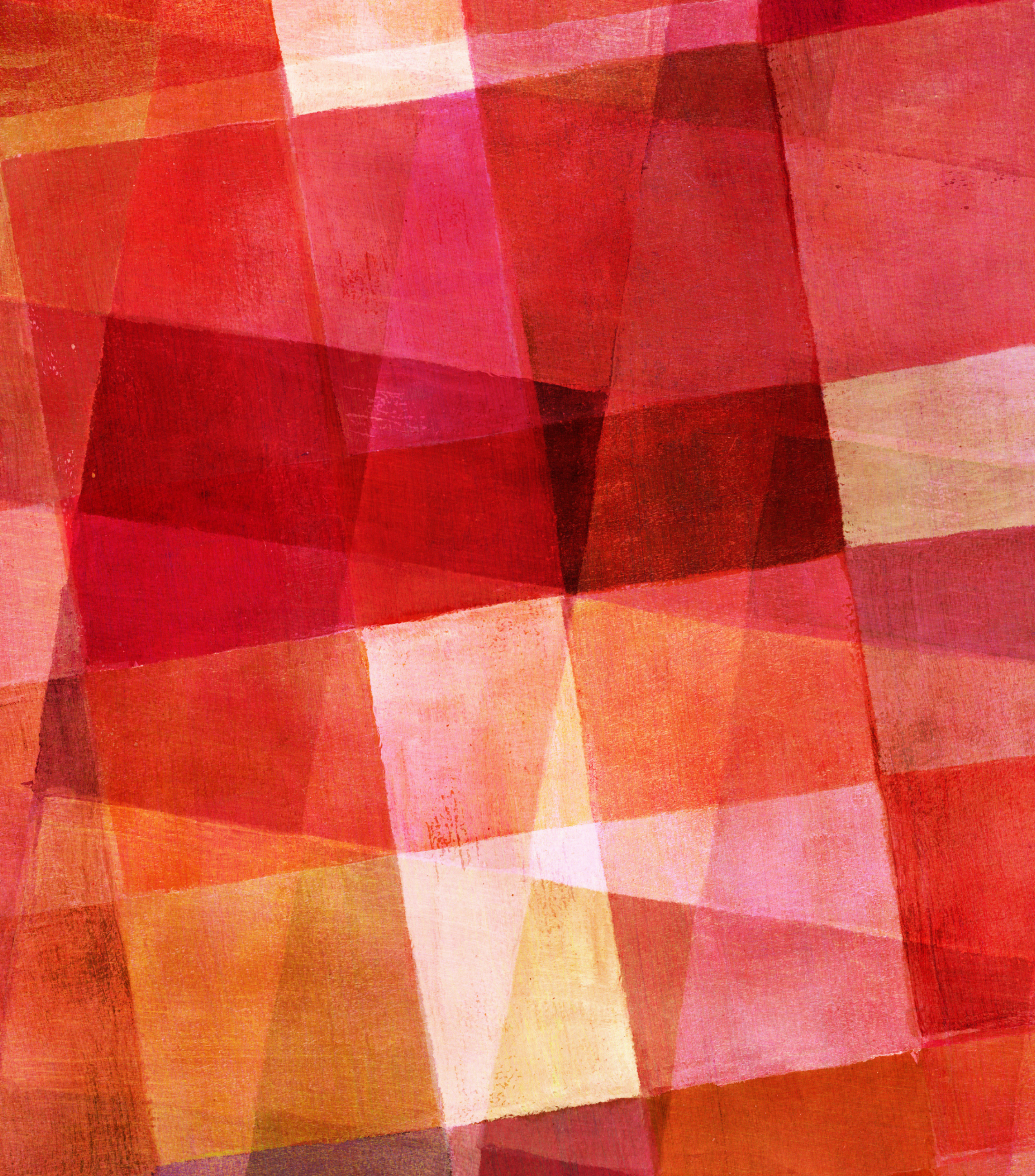
NIEGEL

- Big 5 Core Trait: Conscientious
- People who are conscientious are more aware of their actions and the consequences of their behavior than people who are unconscientious. They feel a sense of responsibility towards others and are generally careful to carry out the duties assigned to them. People with high conscientious levels also exhibit more goal-oriented behavior. They set ambitious goals and are motivated to achieve them. Undeterred by hard work, they are driven to succeed in every aspect of their lives, including academic and career achievements.



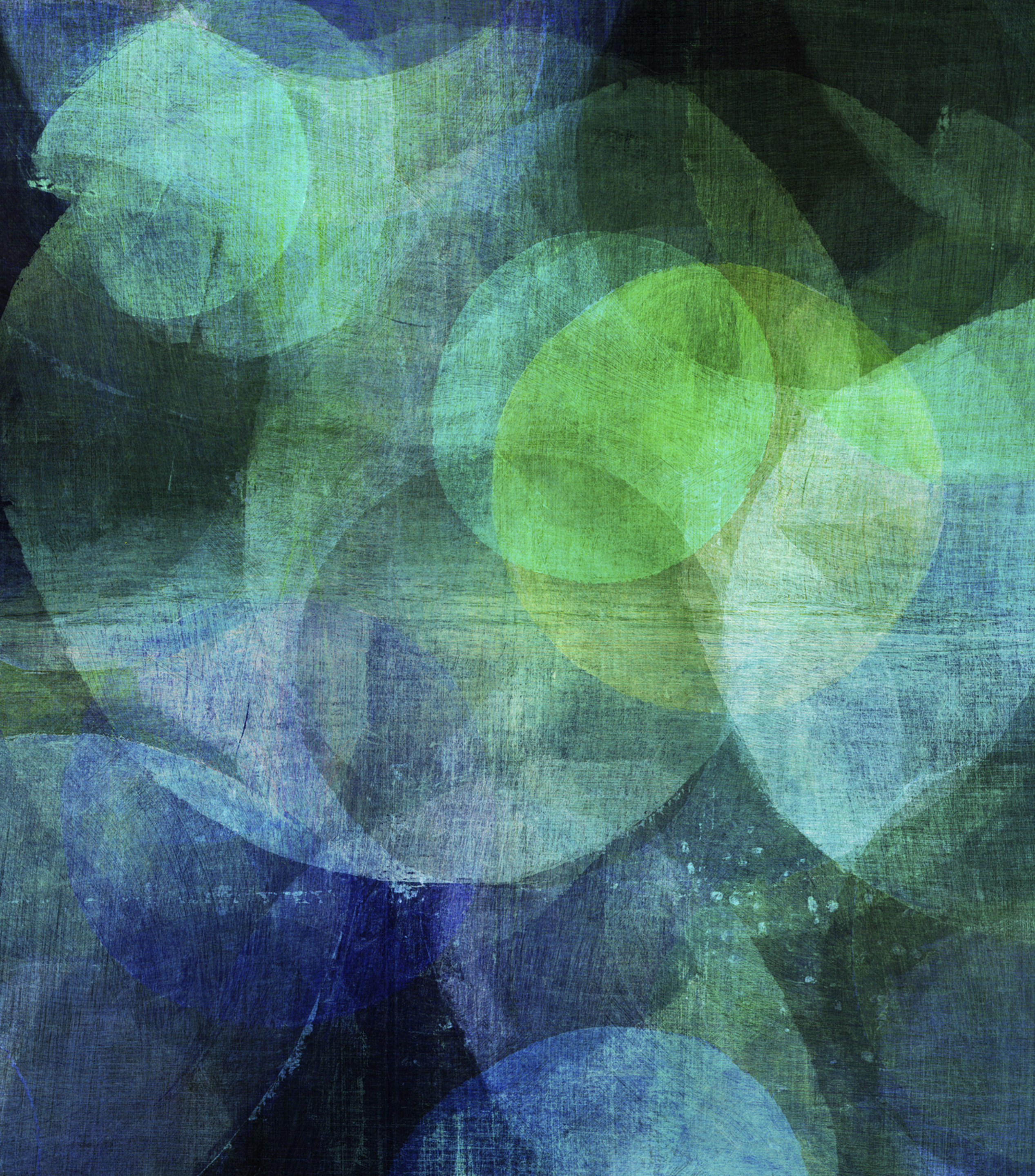
NIEGEL | DIEGO | GUY | GUY 2

- Observation:
- Both Niegel and Diego keep their noses clean. They come at this from different perspectives, Diego being the more conservative brother as described by playwright christopher oscar peña and Niegel representing a deeply conscientious person - from both a social justice perspective as well as his personal goals and accomplishments (ie. his life and education). To have these same actors portray Guy and Guy 2 reveals a prejudice to the world of the play that sees these two men of color as that which they are not, shining a spotlight on a dangerous and common bias based solely on color of skin.



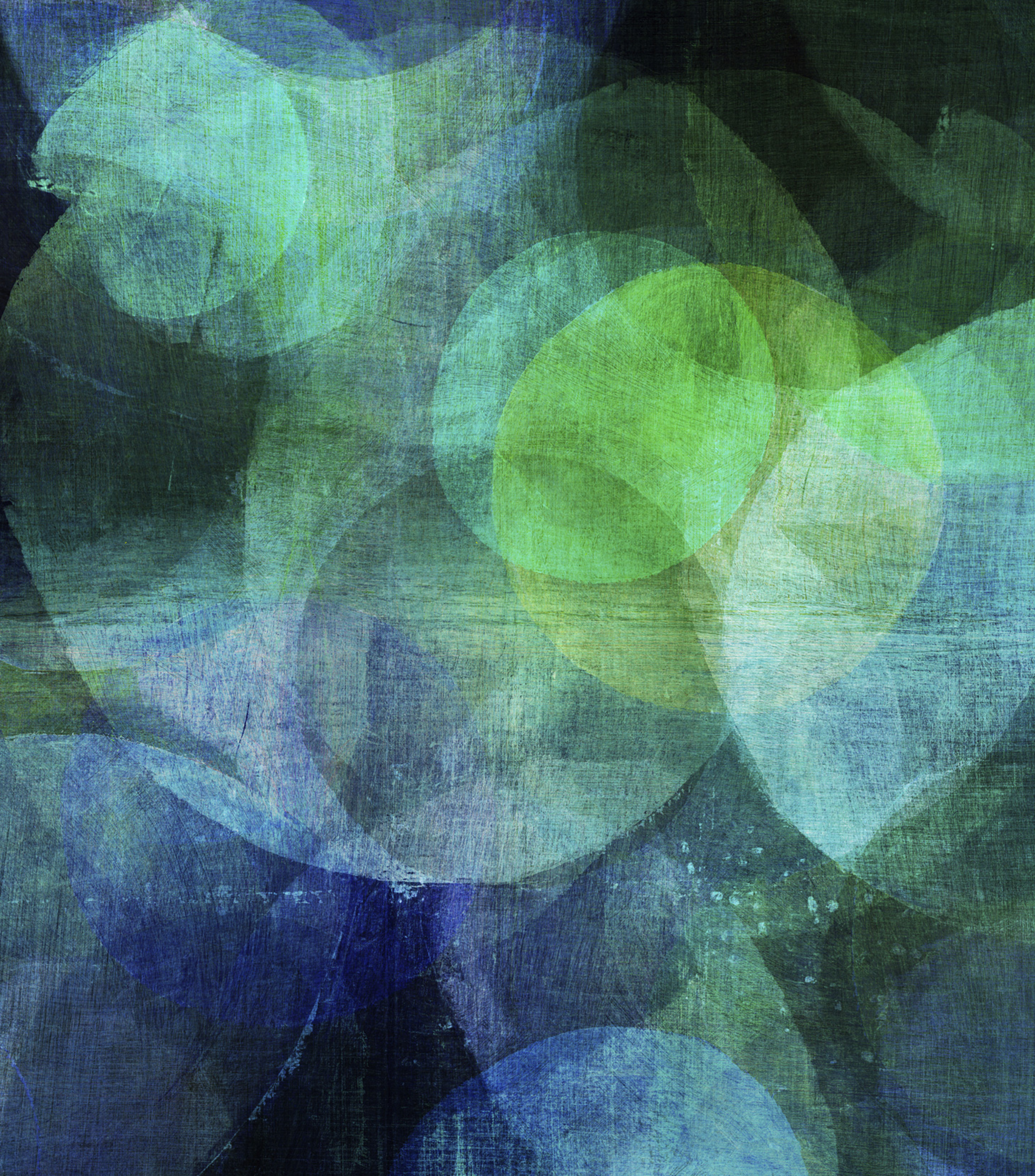
EMILY

- ▶ Emily's relationship with Pearl reveals a significant flaw in American culture. We get a brief glimpse into their relationship only for it to be ignored until it's tragic end much later in the play. If it is true that what we value in our culture is what receives our attention, then the quiet ending of the life of Pearl is representative of that. christopher oscar peña asks the audience, "Was she (Emily) cold or was she just a very young girl who thought she was helping?" Perhaps having the same actress portray both Emily and WG1 reveals to the audience that there are simply some people who are not programmed to or mature enough to see more deeply into a challenging situation, particularly when it comes to how they relate to others and the potential negative impact they may have on the lives of others.



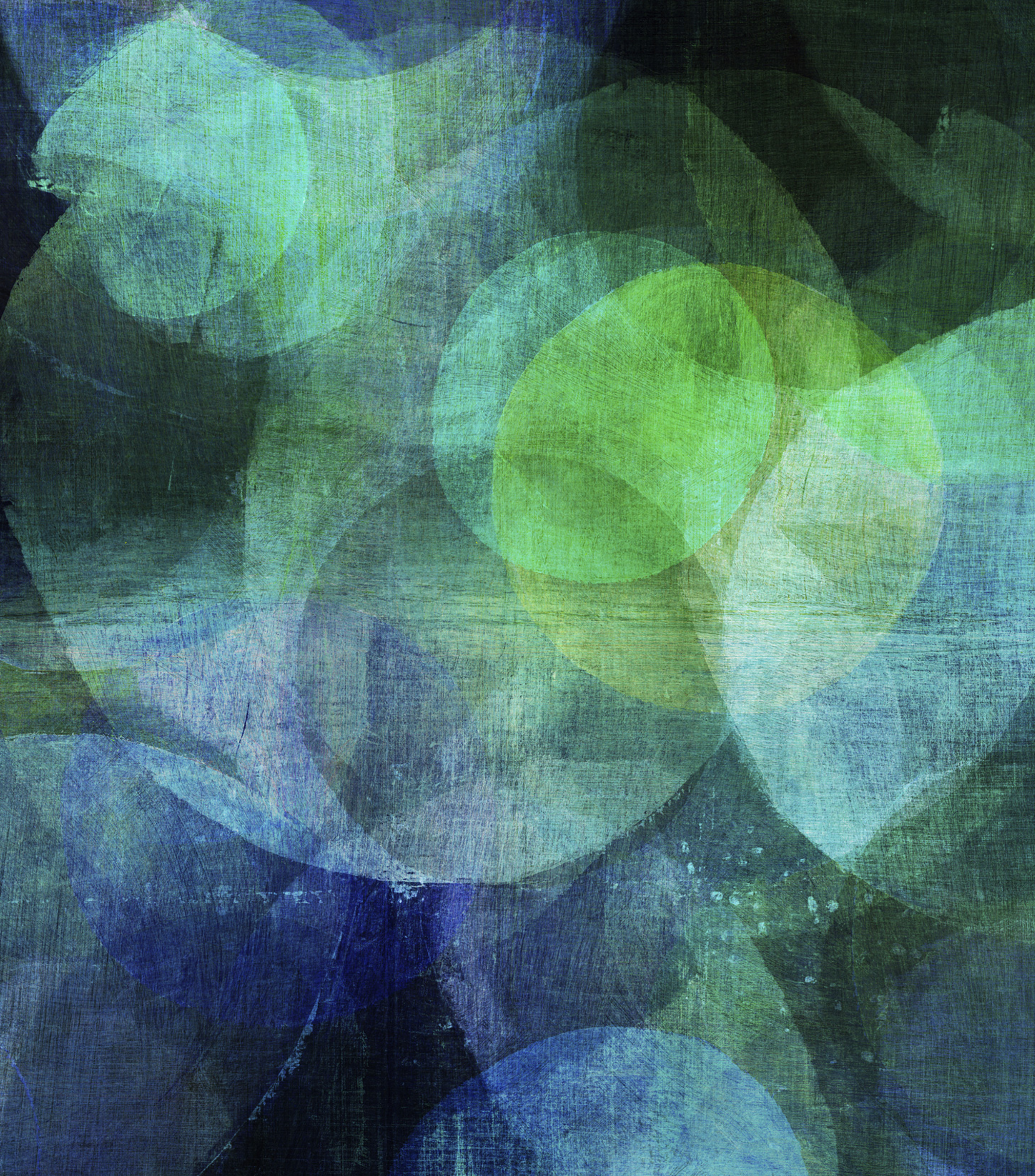
PEARL | CROSSING GUARD

- Observations:
- A powerful representation of the duality of humanity is created in having one actor portray Pearl and the Crossing Guard. A significant contrast between the two is the need Pearl has to end her life and the joy the Crossing Guard experiences with each new day. As christopher oscar peña has described, we see a Black woman put in a position of “both power and non-power.” Additionally, the audience has the opportunity to see how these two women carry their trauma differently, both as women and, more specifically, as Black women.



PEARL

- Big 5 Core trait: Neuroticism
- A neurotic personality is characterized by persistent, often disproportionate, worrying and anxiety. A person may strive to be a perfectionist during their everyday activities, and experience stress as a result of events that are beyond their control. Neuroticism can lead an individual to focus on, and to dwell on, the negative aspects of a situation, rather than the positives. They may be prone to becoming frustrated as they struggle to cope with life stressors.



CROSSING GUARD

- Big 5 Core Trait: Agreeableness
- A tendency towards pro-social behavior can lead an agreeable person to be perceived as warm, sociable and ‘likeable amongst his or her peers’. They are friendly towards other people, tolerant of others and show more patience than those who are less agreeable. Agreeable people also exhibit more altruistic behavior. They are generally thoughtful of, and more kind to, peers, are generous towards people in a disadvantaged position and are willing to help those who need it. Whilst some people thrive during conflicts, people who are agreeable try to avoid or resolve such situations. They will often act as the mediator or ‘peacemaker’.



SARAH | HOMELESS PERSON

- Observations:
- By having the same actor portray both Sarah and Homeless Person, the extreme differences between the two personalities are exaggerated. Sarah takes little interest in others and their feelings and it is fair to say that, in the world of the play, Homeless Person would be the last person Sarah would reach out to help. In contrast, the Homeless Person communicates through her monologue that she truly sees Sarah, aware that Sarah's behavior is a direct result of her need to be loved.



SARAH

- Big 5 Core trait: Low Agreeableness
- A person with a low level of agreeableness - someone who is disagreeable - displays less pro-social behavior. They tend to be more focused on their personal needs, even when these conflict with the interests of others. Their peers may therefore view them as somewhat selfish in their behavior. Low agreeableness can also result in a person being suspicious and distrusting of the motives of others. They may be more argumentative, and be less willing to engage in conversations with, or socialize with, unfamiliar people. People with low levels of agreeableness have been found to exhibit characteristics with negative associations, including Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy.



HOMELESS PERSON

- Big 5 Core trait: Low Extraversion
- A person with a lower level of extraversion may be described as an introvert. Introverts feel more comfortable when socializing in small groups, and with people who they are familiar with. They may find demanding social gatherings to be draining, and be reluctant to draw attention to themselves in groups. As a result, introverts tend to have fewer friends and associates, but form strong relationships with those friends they do have. Instead of seeking stimulation by socializing, they receive it from within, and are content with their own company. Introverts tend to be quieter, more cerebral and more reflective than extraverts.



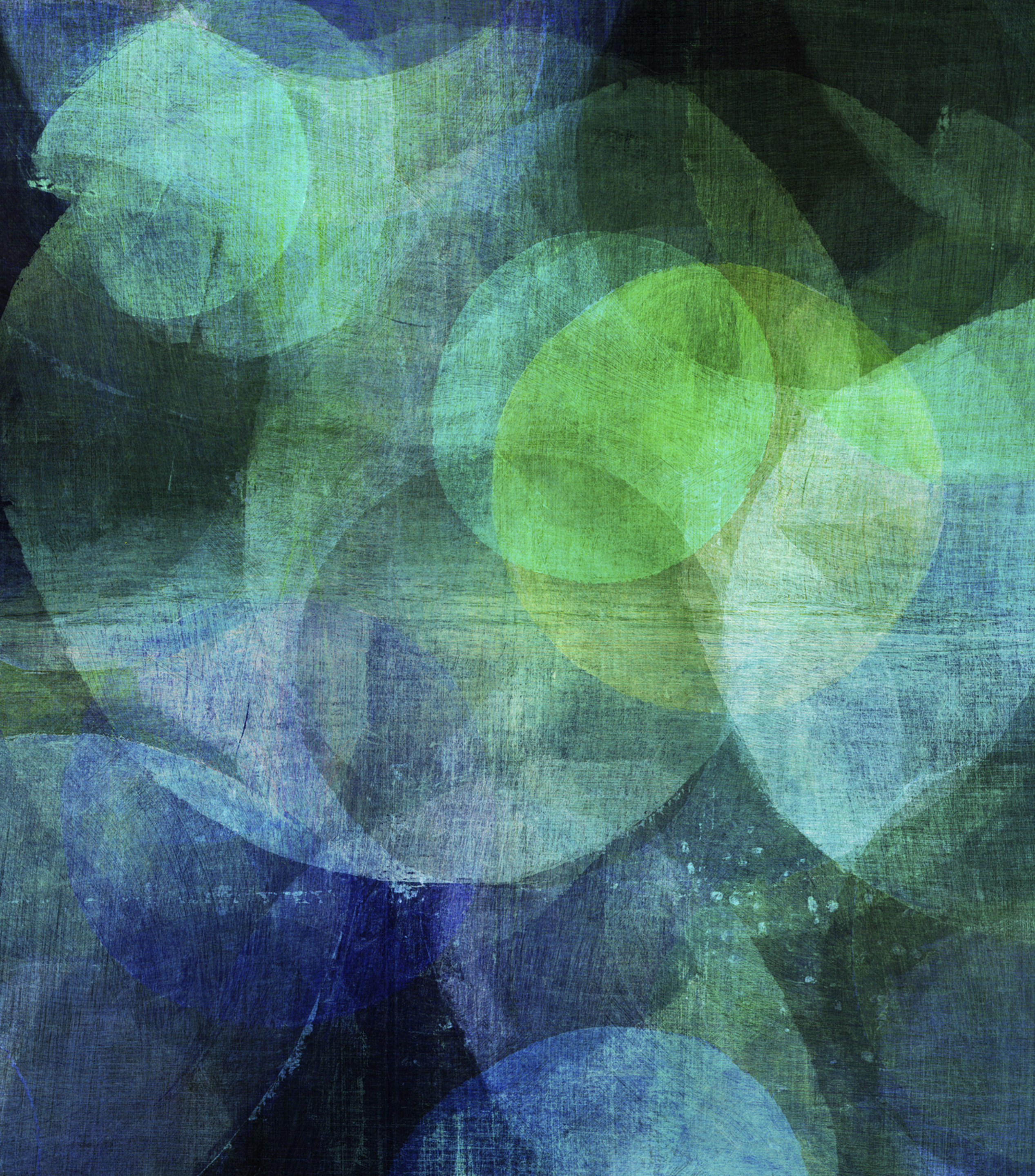
ELEANOR | CAROLINE | WG2

- Observations:
- These three characters seem to represent a different level of personal awareness that may indicate they have the most potential for positive change. Eleanor, is loved by Cris, “the one you love the most.” Great value is placed on her, but at the same time, she can never understand Cris. She is made aware of this, giving her the impetus for change. Caroline can see both sides to an argument (Niegel & Diego) - we observe her lean into Niegel’s perspective. WG2 is not quite “in” with the other WGs. It is clear she is not a great fit, showing us her potential for “growing” out of this group of girls.



GATZ

- ▶ Jay Gatsby (originally James Gatz) is a fictional character who is the title character of the 1925 F. Scott Fitzgerald novel *The Great Gatsby*, christopher oscar peña's favorite book. Gatsby is a millionaire owner of a luxurious mansion where he often hosts extravagant parties; he gained his vast fortune bootlegging during prohibition. He's also noted by *Gatsby* narrator Nick Carraway as having "an extraordinary gift for hope" - this is a reversal to the deep lack of hope we see in our Gatz. If the thing that puts our Gatz in danger is his whiteness, we can then assume that those in places of privilege, like a Jay Gatsby, have had that privilege forcefully reversed in what is referred to in the play as a revolution. Though our Gatz loves Red, his outward appearance makes people inclined to act without first engaging him, a victim of the same kind of police profiling discussed in act one.



RED

- Observations:
- Like Niegel, Red exhibits a high level of Conscientiousness - for both her personal life and the revolution. She is goal directed and mindful of details - for example, when she asks if Gatz destroyed sensitive information. She plans ahead and is very aware of how her actions affect others. The position that Red holds within the Revolution also indicates that, after the death of Diego, Caroline (Red's mother), did shift her perspective to a more social justice centered view. Red would have been raised with this influence, the story of the death of her father Diego, and the guidance of her father's best friend, Niegel.

