

path forward



2025 BA
Senior Studio
Exhibition



Stella Moore

Interviewed by Emma Ostermeyer

Ostermeyer: How did you first get involved with art?

Moore: My first introduction to art was probably in the bathtub. My parents would take bowls full of shaving cream and food coloring, and then I was allowed to paint the bathtub walls with them. There is a picture of me sitting in the bathtub just surrounded by all of this colorful foam. I think I just had a lot of confidence when I was younger that I was an artist. And then I didn't make anything for the longest time, until like sophomore year in high school. I don't know why. But I went on a road trip with my mom to her high school reunion. I'm the youngest child, and it felt like one of the first times I was alone with her. And I was like, What are we going to talk about? I asked her about high school and it turns out that she was a really big painter. There is this painting at my grandma's house that I've always loved. There are three women with green skin, and they're tossing their heads back wailing. When I was growing up, I thought they were the most beautiful women I had ever seen. And it turned out to be a painting that my mother did in high school. So I had her start teaching me things in the car. I was like, 'Okay, teach me what you would have done as a warm up before painting.' And so she had me doing blind contour drawings. And then COVID happened, and I was bored. I spent all my time obsessively painting self portraits because I was having a hard time with myself as a teenager. So that was the beginning of painting myself over and over again.

Ostermeyer: The work in this show is done in oils. Has that always been your preferred medium?

Moore: When I first started painting, I was using acrylics. And then I was just taking random things from around my house to use as a canvas. I had this really big sheet of drywall that my dad had gotten to make a chicken coop or something. It was like nine feet tall. It was my second or third painting ever, and I did a self portrait. I don't know how good it was, but I felt so accomplished from painting something so huge. Other than painting, I took a weaving class here at Stamps. It is hard, but I really enjoyed it because it was so different from painting. Weaving is a lot about planning, and working an entirely different muscle that I don't normally use. I used to really not like planning out my work. What usually happens is that I come up with an idea and then I write down the loose framework of that idea in my phone. After that I'll take reference photos, collage them all together, and just get started on painting. But for this project, I've been trying to build that muscle of drawing and planning out something beforehand. I've found that doing these messy painting sketches really helps. In the show, you can see these smaller studies near the finished piece.

Ostermeyer: What was the inspiration behind this specific project?

Moore: The initial idea for this project came from my sophomore year review. I've been painting self portraits for a long time, and I find them interesting. I think they're rich in a way that goes beyond myself. I got feedback from a professor in my review that if I hadn't explained the ideology behind my work, that he would've thought it was narcissistic and "navel gazing." So I wanted to make a painting that responded to that. I don't think being self interested is inherently bad, because my work is in conversation with the world. I care deeply about the

world around me, but we are all walking around in our own bodies and have to deal with that. There is merit to looking inwards. I wanted to make this painting where it could seem like I'm making fun of the figures, that they're self absorbed and not doing real work in the field they're sitting in. But what I really think of them is that it's cool how excited they are, and how unembarrassed they are by their nakedness. When you're dealing with your body and how you present to the world on your own, it can feel very isolating. So to paint this scene where there is a collective of selves dealing with their bodies together? That just feels like a warm image to me. A lot of my work has been a process of exploring my own gender identity and reading theory that has put words to experiences. Of feeling trapped in my skin and pinned down by the failure to perform a version of gender that I didn't even really want. So a lot of my early work shows frustration and anguish, but while the figures in this work might have contorted or surprised faces, they're not anguished. They are curious. I think that we are taught a lot of shame around our bodies, around sex, around being proud of ourselves. We're being taught there is shame in every corner, and so to paint something like this with figures who are not ashamed felt very exciting.



Emma Ostermeyer

Interviewed by Meredith Soule

Soule: How is it special to you that you used your own dreams as inspiration?

Ostermeyer: I've always been someone that has a lot of vivid dreams, which I write down. I still want to make work that's a narrative, and tell my story with these reproductive health things, but in a way that might be more abstract and leaves more for the viewer to interpret. And then I remember having these really vivid dreams around the time [these events were occurring]. It adds another layer of personal meaning because it's not just depicting my experience with abortion and getting sterilized; I'm more so depicting the feelings. Dreams are so fragmented and blurry and not super detailed- It's like when you have a really intense dream and you wake up and you might not remember it, but you remember the feeling. So I can use these dreams as a way to convey my emotions towards these events rather than just depicting the events themselves. I enjoyed exploring it like, okay, how can I paint a wolf gnawing its leg off and make it a portrait that symbolizes me? That was a good challenge. The event is one thing, but I want to extract the emotions that I was feeling at the time. This [series] is desperation, panic, and then ultimately just nonviolence, peace, and relief.

Soule: Are there any other artists or artworks that served as inspiration?

Ostermeyer: I also did a different piece about my experience with abortion, and that one was very narrative and body-horror-esque. One artist that I was researching was Tracy Emman. She has a lot of abstract, figurative stuff, so I wanted to find a way to incorporate that looseness into this project. I wanted to let the process show through, so with the piece that's just my torso, there's still a lot of the underpainting showing and a lot of messy marks. During this process I discovered another artist named Juanita McNeely. She did this series called "Is It real? Yes, It Is!" It's a series of nine paintings in a square, and it's about her experience with an abortion, which was very negative and traumatic because it was before abortion was legal. It's really interesting looking at her work because it highlights the importance of safe and legal access to abortion. It's also more abstract too, and violent- so I took inspiration from each composition because each one tells a story individually and can stand alone.

Soule: How did you manage your time and what did your process look like?

Ostermeyer: Last year I would pull crazy all nighters, living the life of an art student and doing everything last minute, and it was stressful. Then last semester when I was doing my first big painting project, I started working for two or three hours a day. Afterwards I was surprised about how much I was getting done consistently. As a way to keep myself accountable I started logging hours like I was clocking in at work. 2 hours in class, then 4 hours, then 41.5 for the month. Now a total of 1,110 hours. Then in my notes I have a daily to-do list and I make that shit specific. So it could be, "Add the tattoos, make the tree darker under the bird, add a yellow glaze, etc." I found that I love checking things off a list. I feel like I am a planner, but when it comes to art, I've never really been type A. When I travel, I'm the oldest sister, so that natural, responsible type A type, you know? But with art, I'm the complete opposite.

Soule: The context of your project is so vulnerable. How do you feel about portraying yourself in such an open way, knowing it will be seen by other people?

Ostermeyer: Experiencing abortion myself this year and then making art about it last semester, I thought "Oh my God, I'm painting myself naked." But it's more vulnerable than just painting myself naked. With my artist statement I could've been vague, but I wanted to say point blank, "This is based on my experience with abortion and getting sterilized and having surgery," because I feel like I'm a part of that. I think there's still a lot of stigma around abortion. When I posted my project from last semester on Instagram, random people were saying things like "thank you. I've had an abortion, and I've never told anyone." There's a lot of power in just saying "This is a part of my life and it's nothing to be ashamed about." It's also very healing for me to unpack my emotions and have them on the wall for other people to see. I wanted to make art about not wanting fertility because when you hear fertility, you hear about women struggling with infertility, but you don't hear much about people not wanting kids. I'm also thinking a lot about art as a tool for social change. A lot of the art I want to make going forward will be more in conversation with abortion and reproductive justice and I think it's scary, but it's necessary for me. Every time I've made art that's so deeply personal and that I've shared with other people, they connect to it in some way that's profound for them. It's nice to make art that fosters an open conversation with someone.

Meredith Soule

Interviewed by Stella Moore

Moore: In what ways do you think painting and running are similar? Different?

Soule: I've always had these two interests about myself. How do you mix the two? I never thought

I'd be able to until right now. I'm like, well, this seems like the obvious thing to do. I'm going to paint about something else I'm passionate about. I guess they are both ways to express yourself. The way I look at it, the body is like art, the way you move it, the different muscles. You can express yourself through movement. You can express yourself through painting, through the brush strokes. It's just something that seems very different. But when I'm in the space that I am right now, it's like, oh, they're not, they're similar in a way.

Moore: Do you feel like there's similar kinds of discipline needed for both or is that part different?

Soule: I think that is where it's different. Because art clearly isn't physically strenuous. I mean maybe in the way that, "Oh, my butt hurts." But it's more jogging your mind. It's more technique based. It's definitely more in your head. But now that I think of it, yes, sports are the same way. Especially running, because there's so much that goes into it. Physically, the training, your body is going to be in pain, but then your mind- anybody that runs will tell you a lot of it is mental. It's like, "Why do I keep going when it hurts?" It's the mental part. It's your mind. Do I want this bad enough to keep going? It's also confidence in yourself. I've done all the hard work up until this point. I know what my body is capable of.

Moore: How has your relationship with art changed since you started making it?

Soule: I started off in the Warrior Cats fandom. So for years of my life I only drew cats. For five or six years, it was characters from the books, or it was my own characters, but it was really just a single animal in a blank space. I still like that, compositions where, there's kind of a central character, things go on around it. So that's kind of stayed the same. I'm really into people now. I've noticed that I only draw, a single person or thing in a otherwise empty space. I can do more than that. I got really into storytelling. I like things that make me emotional, or just conjure up certain feelings. I like to do that in my work, because I want other people to look and feel something particular. I want you to feel this one thing and it's only successful-which maybe that's the wrong way to go about it, but that's just the way I work. I want you to get what I want you to get from it.

Moore: What feeling do you want people to get from the work you have in the gallery?

Soule: I realize I'm very passionate about this, but anybody who doesn't really care about running, hasn't or doesn't run, maybe they don't care at all, but, as long as somebody connects to it. Imagine somebody who's ran a marathon, or sprints, they would probably understand. This is three different snapshots in time of what your body is going through, what's happening inside your mind. It starts with the woman who's mostly painted realistic colors. It's just her. She's starting her race. Then slowly through the composition, I wanted to make it more chaotic so it's less into reality and more she's in the zone, performing. And then that last scene is like she's bursting out of this frame of reality.



Moore: You went into this work with the goal of experimenting with color and going beyond realism. How did you figure out how to do that? How did you play with color?

Soule: That was all Photoshop. And I'm not good at Photoshop at all, so this was a big learning curve. It's hard to figure out everything that it can do. But then I found invert. That played a large role in it. Invert, it's one button. It's so simple, but it's otherworldly. It's just completely kind of flipping around your idea of what's real. I don't usually do that. I'm very realism. I cannot do abstraction. I need to be looking at a picture and follow it exactly. So this was not as hard as I thought, because I'm still looking directly at something I made. I get to push the boundaries of color, but also I'm looking at something, so I don't have to make anything up.

Moore: This swirl that travels through the painting and these blocks of color that's not necessarily from a photo. You had to design that. So where did that come from?

Soule: That did start off as a tool in Photoshop, but I didn't follow it exactly. That would have been really minuscule little dots and lines. Nick, he was the one that told me, "You don't have to follow this exactly." This is a painting for a reason. Why would you paint this instead of just having a picture of it? What makes it special? It's a painting and I should be taking advantage of the brushes. Oils are so beautiful, just the blending they are capable of, seamless.

Moore: How does it feel to have your work on display, or for people to be coming in to look at your work?

Soule: I mean, I feel very official now. It's something that I haven't done before. I've never had my work in a show. Now it's finally going out in the world. Before a few months ago, I've never posted my work on social media, so people don't really see what I do. I'll show my friends my sketchbook. This is open for everyone, not even just close friends who know me. You could see this part of me that's been in my mind, but now it's on display.



Jaime Salmonson

Interviewed by Julia Bonanno

Bonanno: Firstly, I know you are finishing a dual degree this year. I would love to hear how important that is to you when you are making art. Do your two areas of study interact with each other? Do you find yourself forgetting everything else when you're making art? And do you think your project or process would have been different if you were only an art student?

Salmonson: Finishing a dual degree this year has shaped this project more than I realized at the beginning. When I'm creating in the studio, it becomes one of the only times where the distractions and noise of everything else I do – UX research, design ethics, tech, data – quiets down a bit. I don't just 'completely forget everything, but the parts of my brain that are constantly solving soften a little, and I'm able to sit with something more ambiguous. And though this is true, my studies definitely interact with the art. I'm very often thinking about systems, perspectives, how people interpret things, and the ethics of what we create. That's why this project transformed into a work about time, memory, and the tension between color and graphite. If I were only earning my degree in art, I think the project would've been more romantic, more intuitive, and maybe less structured. The dual-degree part of me made this project more analytical in a way: I was thinking about how people move through the three pieces. But the studio let me let go enough to make work that actually feels like the dramatic side of creation.

Bonanno: You've worked with a lot of different materials — wood, illustration, and more. What role do materials play in your process? And in this project specifically, where did you feel the work succeeded the most from a materials standpoint?

Salmonson: Materials played a huge emotional role in this project. I appreciate the contrast between delicate materials and heavy backstories; colored pencil is quiet while graphite is almost ghostly. Using them together helped me express that balance between saturation and stillness – the times in life where things feel overwhelmingly vibrant and the moments where everything feels silent. The project succeeded the most in the transitions in the graphite sections, as well as the areas where colored pencil becomes layered, as those feel like the strongest gestures. I find that these aspects show memory versus immediacy. In terms of the sculpture, the wood piece acted as a symbolic clock of broken time, a reminder of how moments fracture in memory. I first worked with parametric wood design in my sophomore studio and was in awe of the process, so I knew I wanted to do it again while I still had access to CNC machines and CAD software in college. And the scale mattered too, of course – working large let the materials immersive, a purposeful part of the composition.

Bonanno: Speaking of your process, I would love to know how this project felt different from — or similar to — processes you've used in the past. Did you have any moments that taught you something new about yourself as an artist?

Salmonson: This process was different from my past work because I actually gave myself permission to sit with an idea for a long time. I researched, iterated, got feedback, re-iterated, sketched, and got feedback again. The drawings unfolded slowly, but also required one of my favorite characteristics: patience. I also worked with references that were personal people in my life, which I usually avoid. That made the process more vulnerable but also more honest. Moreover, I learned that I'm more expressive and sentimental in my art than I am in my design

practice, and that those two sides don't need to be separate.

Bonanno: Finally, what did this studio change or reinforce in your mentality toward your art career moving forward? What was it like to have your own time and space to create something that felt aligned with you? What emotions are you left with now, and how do you see yourself moving forward?

Salmonson: This studio reminded me that I am an artist whom is free to explore with any and all mediums. Having the time and space to create without a rubric brought me back to why I love making things. It was grounding to have weeks where the only goal was to show up, draw, and create a composition of works that felt meaningful to myself and its viewers. Emotionally, I'm walking away with a mix of pride and clarity (any maybe slight exhaustion). These three drawings feel like a snapshot of who I am at the end of college: someone who is always in between worlds, always balancing saturation and graphite, always trying to hold onto fleeting moments. Moving forward, I want to keep making room for slowness. I want my career – whether in design, tech, or art – to have room for work that feels genuine.



Lina Hashimoto

Interviewed by Jaime Salmonson

Salmonson: Lina, could you walk me through your entrepreneurial journey -- how you began, what motivated you to launch your first venture, and how that shaped your identity as a designer and entrepreneur?

Hashimoto: I started my cat-sticker business, Nicomaniki, because I'd always wanted to sell art but never pushed myself. A friend who runs her own business inspired me, and that pushed me to finally try. It's gone much better than I expected -- I've sold over 400 stickers, reaching other states. People now call me "the cat sticker girl," which is funny but also makes me proud. It's shaped my identity because I never imagined I'd become "known" for something I created.

Salmonson: Amazing, that is really cool. I would like to know: what was one of your early "aha" moments?

Hashimoto: Getting invited to pop-ups and markets by big student orgs. If I think about my freshman or sophomore self, I never would've imagined being invited to sell at those events. That's when I realized I was building something real.

Salmonson: And were there any risks you took early on?

Hashimoto: I'm very careful with money, so big risks scare me. But launching a Shopify site felt huge -- it's pricey, and you need to make enough to maintain it. That was a big commitment for me.

Salmonson: Hmm, very interesting. How do you balance business with design?

Hashimoto: It didn't come naturally -- my leadership roles helped. I was VP of Service for my sorority and VP of the Japan Student Association, planning events, managing 50+ people, handling money and grants. Those skills helped me run a business. Design-wise, I already had years of studio work plus an internship before starting Nicomaniki, so I had the design background.

Salmonson: Very cool. I want to learn more about your Senior Studio project now. Tell me about the core concept and motivation behind your work.

Hashimoto: Last summer in Singapore my eyes were glued to screens -- work, long commutes, everything. I bought a physical book to rest my eyes, and it changed how I felt. I realized people don't read anymore -- kids use iPads, students are busy, people say physical books are "inconvenient." I wanted to bring reading back without pressure, so I created a book club for non-readers with micro-reading and reward collecting.

Salmonson: Walk me through your process.

Hashimoto: The core mechanic came from a slow iPad game I loved as a kid called "Nicolatsume," where you collect cats by placing items and getting fish as rewards. I wanted that slow, cozy feeling. My early idea was just micro-reading, but professors asked how users would stay motivated, so I added collectible items. Micro-reading starts at 2 minutes and cycles upward -- 2, 3, 2, 3, then 4, 5, etc. As you read, you earn items. When you collect everything, the

game ends because the goal is to build a habit, not make an endless game.

Salmonson: When you say reading, what do you mean? And how did you design this for non-readers?

Hashimoto: Mainly physical books. But the game also offers digital versions so users without books can still participate. And as for non-readers, I didn't want 3D worlds -- I struggle with those, even in new Pokémon games. So I used real photos, simple interfaces, and minimal actions. Some people said I should use pixel art, but I wanted nostalgic simplicity -- what games looked like when we were younger.

Salmonson: Interesting. What did you learn about the users / readers?

Hashimoto: I aimed it at young adults glued to screens, like me. But critique suggested selecting age ranges -- kids could collect toy-themed items, adults something else. I loved that idea but didn't have time to build it.

Salmonson: Cool. And if you were to start over, what would you do differently?

Hashimoto: I'd design age-specific versions and maybe build the actual interactive platform. I tried researching real game engines, but the learning curve was huge.

Salmonson: Is gamification a core tool for you?

Hashimoto: It's not core -- it's more like a practice I'm exploring because of my UX minor in SI. I wanted to apply what I'd learned about users, personas, habits, and motivations.

Salmonson: And how do you think about inclusivity and accessibility?

Hashimoto: The game is for everyone. I could add language translations or international books. I didn't design for one demographic.

Salmonson: How do you see reading evolving?

Hashimoto: Reading won't die, but habits are changing. People consume information through tech because it's easier. I hope my concept could bring back small reading habits and nostalgia.

Salmonson: Lina, I would love to know what keeps you going.

Hashimoto: People. Custom orders for birthdays or gifts make me happy. At pop-ups, seeing people smile at my designs motivates me. For the studio, sharing my experience with others motivates me too.

Salmonson: Amazing, and how do you measure success?

Hashimoto: Setting goals and reaching them. For the studio, it's sharing the concept publicly. For Nicomaniki, it's bringing small happiness through my cat stickers.

Salmonson: Is there any dream project you would like to share with me? Any advice you have for others?

Hashimoto: A dream would be a huge shelter for stray cats. I'd buy land and let all the cats live safely. And in terms of advice: design with a concept -- something meaningful. For my business, my concept is delivering small happiness and luck.

Salmonson: Great. And one last thing I would like to know: how has this studio changed you?

Hashimoto: It made me a better thinker. My professor asked so many logistical questions -- who is this for, how will they use it -- that I had to think deeply about design decisions. My first critique went great, and I feel more intentional now.



Julia Bonanno

Interviewed by Margherita Hill

Hill: This studio gives us the opportunity to expand on ideas from other projects to make something meaningful. What artists/inspirations lead you to where you are at now with your project?

Bonanno: This project was initially an expansion of a past project that I felt I could have dove deeper into, but I think it transformed into its own new entity. The previous project included experimenting with some combining elements of my analog writing journal with graphic elements and photography. It captured different things that I love such as nature, layering mediums, and color. These characteristics definitely inspired and translated into this painting series. My outside inspiration for my work comes from both painters that I admire, but also music, literature, nature, and feelings. Artists I admire for their landscape painting style and use of color are Brett Allen Johnson, Tracy Helgelson, and Michael Chamberlain. Music is an important part of my process, because it allows me to tap into the emotions I hope to visually display - peace, awe, nostalgia, etc. Bon Iver, Mt. Joy, The Rolling stones are some that come to mind, and I also admire these artists' album cover design. I found myself being inspired throughout the semester by various artists I hadn't known of before for small details that I resonated with - such as using raw materials, playing with neon color palettes, use of texture. This ultimately aligned with and contributed to my collage style of painting, as I cherry-picked small tidbits of style that I felt called to.

Hill: You began collaging digitally before painting, what went into making these compositions? What were you looking for?

Bonanno: Making my digital collage sketches was definitely the most challenging and experimental part of this whole process. I would say my main focus was always color. I picked two colors that I wanted to work that design around, and then found secondary colors and assigned textures and visuals that aligned. I was looking for compositions that evoked equal parts peacefulness and aliveness. I brought in bright colors to amplify the sense of awe, wonder, and excitement that I feel when in nature. But I also wanted the pieces to be grounding and rooted in natural textures and authentic brush strokes. I compiled countless photos, snippets of texture, color samples, and everything in between to make my sketches. Each painting had upwards of twenty iterations before I started painting - different compositions of the 'tiles,' different color palettes, different elements of nature. But overall, I was looking for a feeling, more than anything visually.

Hill: When did you know it was time to stop refining and start painting?

Bonanno: For all three paintings, I didn't feel a definitive, 'ready' feeling to start painting. But I knew the process wouldn't continue digitally. I find myself so much more in tune with how a piece should look when it is physically in front of me. A lot of the questions I had while digitally sketching my ideas were answered when I was physically mixing paint colors, and arranging components in front of me. My favorite part about painting as a medium is actually its unforgiveness. While existing in a digital sphere where it is so easy to constantly edit and restart projects, and hyper-focus on details, I value the annoyance of changing things while painting. When there was an element I was unhappy with, I forced myself to sit with it for days or weeks

even, knowing that if I were to start over, it would require more paint, mess on my canvas, and possibly no improvement. Since I was really interested in playing with color, however, I would say I felt the most confidence to move from screen to paint once I had nailed down the color palette. A lot of the textures and subject matter came as I was painting.

Hill: In critique we talked a bit about narrative vs aesthetic choices, where did you end up with this process? Would you describe your works as more narrative or aesthetic? Go deeper on what those mean to you.

Bonanno: This question is interesting, because I think I would have answered very differently at the beginning of my process than I would answer now. I had this perception that because my subject matter and content focus wasn't "deep," or related to a social issue or human phenomenon, that it was therefore purely aesthetic. I would say now that my greatest lesson of this project was that this isn't necessarily true. While yes, most of my process was driven aesthetically, there was a whole layer below that of why I was drawn to certain aesthetics. My goal as an artist is consistently to bring a feeling of grounding to those viewing. I am passionate about the power of the earth's energy to keep us rooted to ourselves and connected to others in such a modern, chaotic world. In my personal experience, art keeps me grounded for reasons that could be chalked up to 'aesthetic' but are likely much deeper. I like music because of how it sounds, sometimes more than because of the lyrics. I often like artwork because of the colors and textures more than the subject matter, and sometimes I like a book because of the setting and writing style more than the plot. But I still think there is still so much power in appreciating art in this way. Now, I don't think there need be such a distinction between if my work is narrative or aesthetic. My hope is that for some viewers of my work, they are transported into new places, emotions, or experiences. While this may simply be from the aesthetics of my paintings, and less of the subject matter, I think any feelings evoked from art are significant.



Amanda Kubitz

Interviewed by Anna Howell

Howell: How did you land on ballet as the subject for this project?

Kubitz: I just wanted to do something that was beautiful, you know? We don't have a lot of choice in subjects for most of school, and I had been to a couple of ballet's recently that reminded me of my own time doing ballet, so this piece was a way to relieve parts of my childhood.

Howell: You mentioned how ballet was something you did when you were younger, and dance is another form of art and expression. How, if at all, do you think that dancing as a child influenced your making now?

Kubitz: I feel that my style now definitely coincides with ballet in how ballet is very technical and detailed while still being really pretty, and each ballet dance has a story behind it, so I like to do something similar.

Howell: I noticed a lot of expressive brushstrokes even when you're making fine detail. Is there any sort of correlation?

Kubitz: Yeah definitely, my past in ballet influenced me to add paint to the canvas in a sort of dancerly way with lots of movement and style, and I think my technique does that almost subconsciously. The expressiveness and movement in the strokes is a part of how I tell the story for each piece because dance is all movement.

Howell: You talked about how ballet makes a story, and you reproduce that in your own paintings. What story or emotion do you want people to get from viewing this piece?

Kubitz: I want people to have their own takes on the specific meaning but in general it's supposed to have a sense of calm to it. To me, it's like the calm before the storm. Being in a rehearsal is pretty stressful, loud, and just busy, but there's this period before class or rehearsal starts that's just, well, calm. A peek inside the intimate parts of ballet that you don't get to see on stage.

Howell: So I remembered you mentioning your mom did ballet too. Did she do any other forms of art or expression? And did any of that influence who you are or what you do as an artist today?

Kubitz: Well, growing up she was the one who put me in ballet when I was 3, and just seeing her old point shoes, costumes, and leotards made me want to be a dancer. But she didn't do any other forms of art, but, like, I feel it still influenced me to view art in a different way, which made me want to pursue art in college.

Howell: What ways do you think she influenced you to view art differently?

Kubitz: I think just in a more, like, delicate way. Kind of like how ballet is. The goal is to make it look easy, and that's how I want my art to look to the viewer even though that's not how my process is. My method of work is not very delicate or clean. It's pretty messy and gross actually, but the viewer wouldn't know any of that by looking at my finished work.

Howell: I also know you're dual degree with psychology. Does that get brought into your work with how you depict things or storytell?

Kubitz: I definitely think it relates to the stories I want to tell in paintings and the meanings of them. I usually focus on portraiture, and the meaning behind each portrait. With my psychology degree, I've learned about a lot of different medical things related to the psychology of people, so I definitely try to combine both in my paintings.

Howell: I also noticed you've mainly used oil paint throughout your time at Stamps. I remember from sophomore year studio that was the medium you did all your pieces for then too. What reason are you drawn to this medium?

Kubitz: I really started doing oil paint seriously until college, and I'm more advanced in drawing actually, but I just really like how seamlessly you can blend it and how flexible it is. You can keep working and pushing an oil painting because it doesn't really dry down like other mediums, and I really like being able to step away and come back without everything drying down and becoming stiff.

Howell: On a similar vein, this is a pretty big piece. What's the reason for this size? Is there something that you think the size adds to it?

Kubitz: I wanted to do a big piece because this is my last year of college, and I don't know when I'll get the chance to do something like this again. I think the scale of it is a bit jarring which makes the message louder too.

Howell: Compared to some of your other portraiture, this piece is a distinctly different style. What was the inspiration for that?

Kubitz: For this painting, I was mainly focused on making it raw and simple, and kind of trying to emulate the movement and rawness of dance more so than in other paintings. I left a lot of the burnt sienna background which adds a warmth that I really love along with a lot of texture without overwhelming the viewer.

Howell: Any ideas about how you are going to work creatively moving forward?

Kubitz: I want to try and do more pieces of this scale. I enjoyed being able to see the detail clearer, and just the overall impact of a larger painting.



Margherita Hill

Interviewed by Lina Hashimoto

Hashimoto: “Thank you for joining me today. To begin, could you walk me through your artist journey so far? How did you get started, what motivates you to create, and how has that shaped your identity as an artist?”

Hill: I was mostly self-taught growing up. I lived in a rural area and was raised by my grandparents. My grandpa was a baker and my grandma was a cake decorator, and decorating cakes is surprisingly similar to painting. We did a lot of arts and crafts together, and that really shaped me as a kid. When I went to community college, I had a few really inspiring professors who helped me grow as an artist. I took 2D and 3D classes, ceramics, and worked in gallery spaces and photography studios. Those experiences pushed me further along my path. Art has always been an expressive outlet for me. I doodled constantly in school, and when I didn’t have words for how I felt, I could always draw. I think that connection to emotion, to my upbringing, is still what motivates me today. I try to make work that resonates with who I am.

Hashimoto: “Was there a recent moment when you realized, ‘Yes, this is the direction I want to go’? What sparked that clarity?”

Hill: This is a hard question, but studying abroad in Italy really shaped me. We painted with limited color palettes, studied medieval and Renaissance techniques, and recreated or reinterpreted historical works with all under tight deadlines. It pushed me so much technically. That experience made me want to become a fundamentally better painter. I already feel strong in meaning and narrative, but Italy made me realize I want to level up my technical skills. So this year, in my classes and personal work, I’ve been really focused on pushing myself as a painter.

Hashimoto: “Were there any particular risks or challenges you’ve taken on in your artistic journey? What did you learn from them?”

Hill: Choosing oil painting for this project was a big risk. It’s a medium I love, but not the one I’m strongest in. I wanted to see what oil could do for me as a storyteller, and I definitely learned a lot. Especially from the sheer number of hours spent in the studio.

Hashimoto: “Let’s talk about your Senior Studio project. What is your project about? Can you describe the core idea, the goals, and the concept in detail?”

Hill: My project is about my sister and I. Our upbringing, our relationship, and how we’ve grown together. We’re very different people: I’m more emotional, she’s quicker to anger. We went through a lot, especially after our mom passed away when I was in high school. We were two years apart and clashed for a long time. But over the years we became much closer. She lives in Atlanta now, and we talk constantly. I wanted to depict that relationship, but also the spaces we can’t return to, my grandmother’s house and my mother’s house. I haven’t been in either for years. Painting them was a way to reconnect with those memories. I talked with my sister and brother, asking things like, “What color was this wall?” or “Was this object there?” The project became a way to revisit our childhood, our nostalgia, and even some of our grief.

Hashimoto: “What initially motivated this project? What challenge, question, or problem were

you responding to, and what impact did you hope your work would have?”

Hill: Narrative was a big motivator, how do I depict childhood memories in a way that feels real even though I haven’t been in those spaces for years? I also wanted to challenge myself technically, especially with color. In painting classes we often use very limited palettes, but for this project I leaned into a bold, expressive one that felt nostalgic.

My goal was for viewers to feel the relationship between my sister and I. The warmth, the childhood bond, and the memories that shaped us.

Hashimoto: “Can you walk me through your design process from start to finish? How you researched, prototyped, refined, and executed the piece?”

Hill: I started with the concept and looked at a lot of painters. I studied in Italy a lot. But the biggest part was reconnecting with my sister. She sent me about 40 childhood photos, and I sketched them over and over, erasing, redrawing, refining. Then I prepped my boards because I wanted the pieces to function like a family photo wall. I’d work on one painting, start another, then go back to the first, building them all together as a growing collection. I added motifs to help with narration: a green outline around my sister in every piece, and a red outline around me. I’d look at photos, sometimes edit them in Photoshop, and other times just paint from memory. I often listened to a playlist of songs connected to my mom and called my sister while I painted.

Hashimoto: “Who or what were your guiding inspirations for this project?”

Hill: My sister, my brother, my grandmother. My whole family played a role. In terms of painters: Marlene Dumas for rendering faces and using color/value to simplify forms. Emily Parrish, whose work about memory relates to what I’m doing. Mary Cassatt for her soft depictions of women and children. John Everett Millais, especially The Blind Girl, for how two siblings can feel so different yet connected. Those were all in my mind throughout the process.

Hashimoto: “What did you learn from making this project, especially from critiques, feedback, or testing?”

Hill: I learned a lot about material and color, how to balance realism with expressive painting. I wasn’t using skin tones, but I still wanted the faces to feel like us. I learned about simplifying features, painting light and shadow, and using material as a storytelling tool. Critiques were huge. Suggestions like adding more objects, more texture, more color, or thinking of the paintings as a family photo wall really shaped the final pieces.

Hashimoto: “Looking back now, is there anything you would approach differently if you could redo the project?”

Hill: I actually love how it turned out, but I would make the pieces bigger. Small-scale paintings require so much detail work, and my larger piece was actually the easiest because I had more control. If I did it again, I’d scale up the series or maybe continue it with paintings about my brother.

Hashimoto: “What keeps you going when a project becomes challenging or ambiguous?”

Hill: Talking to my people, my sister and my grandmother. My grandma trained me artistically through cake decorating, and she gives great feedback. I also take photos of my work to see it flattened, which helps me spot problems. Talking to classmates in the studio also helped. People walked by and reacted to my work, and I’d ask them questions like, “Why this one?” or

“What feels strong here?” Those conversations kept me motivated.

Hashimoto: “What does success look like to you? Both in the short term and the long term, as an artist or designer?”

Hill: Success, for me, means contentment. I don’t care about fame or money, I care about finding the community of people who understand my work. If someone can look at a painting and feel what I meant them to feel, that’s success.

Hashimoto: “If you could build a dream project with unlimited resources tomorrow, what would you create?”

Hill: I would still paint, but on a huge scale, really big, intricate paintings. I’d love to expand on this story or go deeper into themes like sibling caregiving. Before our mom died, my sister and I were essentially child caregivers. That would be a powerful series.

Hashimoto: “What advice would you give to design students or young creatives who want to build something meaningful?”

Hill: Make a schedule. This was my third studio this semester, so things were hectic. Planning and sticking to a routine saved me. And just jump in, don’t get stuck on the details. Make mistakes; you can always fix something. But if you never start, there’s nothing to fix.

Hashimoto: “Finally, how has completing your Senior Studio project changed or influenced you as an artist?”

Hill: When I walked into my figure painting class after this project, painting felt easier. I came out of Senior Studio with new skills and something meaningful to say. Every project builds my muscle memory and my confidence. I feel like I’m walking out of this class as a better painter.

Interviewer: “That is all that I have for you today. Thank you so much for your time, Margherita! I really appreciate your thoughts and process through your artist journey.”



Sam Weinfield

Interviewed by Urvi Joshi

Joshi: I am curious how you became a ceramicist. I know you work in areas that seem very two dimensional or technical, like computer science, so why pottery? How did you end up here, working on this kind of project?

Weinfield: It surprises people, but I only started computer science in my senior year of high school. Before that, pottery was really the core of my creative life. My dad is a sculptor, so art was part of my environment from the very beginning. When I was six, I got one of those plastic pottery wheels meant for kids, and I kept using it obsessively. In middle school I became much more serious. I did not have a real wheel, and I could not join a guild at that age, but I still pushed myself. I made my first teapot at ten because my teacher would not teach me how to make one, so I figured it out myself. That became a pattern. If I wanted to make something, I simply tried until it worked.

Joshi: That determination seems very present in your work now too, especially when something goes wrong with the piece or the kiln. Has your process changed since middle school? Or have you always been someone who commits to a vision and pushes forward?

Weinfield: The funny thing is that I am not sure I ever stay committed to the original vision. I start with a sketch because it gives me a sense of direction, but the final piece almost never matches what I draw. Once I start building, I respond to what the clay is doing. If a form appears that feels right, even if it is not in the plan, I follow it. Usually the original idea disappears pretty early in the process. I think of the drawing as a loose suggestion rather than something I have to follow.

Joshi: Did that happen with the piece you are working on now?

Weinfield: Yes, absolutely. My original concept involved many more components and they were intended to be flat discs. But the first segment came out more ovular than shallow and wide. I realized immediately that my plan would not give me the scale I wanted, and the construction method would have been too difficult. So I changed direction. That is normal for me. The final piece grows out of whatever is actually happening in the studio, not what I imagined ahead of time.

Joshi: I sense you have a strong relationship with the wheel. Why do you prefer wheel throwing so much?

Weinfield: I really do not enjoy hand building. It limits what I can express, because there are forms that are easier to create if you hand build, but the wheel is what feels most natural to me. It is the tool I trust. It is also the tool that gives me the kind of flow I like, the sense that the piece is emerging through motion.

Joshi: You mentioned expression. Do you think of pottery as a form of expression? What motivates you when you begin a new piece?

Weinfield: There is always an intention, but for me it is usually tied to improvement. I want each piece to be better than the piece that came before it. The piece I am working on now is meant to be an improved version of something I made over the summer. So yes, it is expression,

but I think it is expression through refinement, through trying to understand how to do something better than I did before.

Joshi: What inspires the visual direction of your work?

Weinfield: Often something I have seen in the real world, but interpreted loosely. This particular piece ended up being inspired by mountain cairns, even though that was not the original idea. As the piece grew, the form began to echo those stacked stones, so I leaned into it.

Joshi: What was the original idea?

Weinfield: Honestly, just to make something cool. I believe art has to have that immediate visual appeal. A piece should make you feel something on sight, before you know any meaning behind it. My decisions tend to be driven by how the piece looks and feels rather than how accurately it matches any reference.

Joshi: What kinds of aesthetics pull you in? I notice you often work with height and rounded forms.

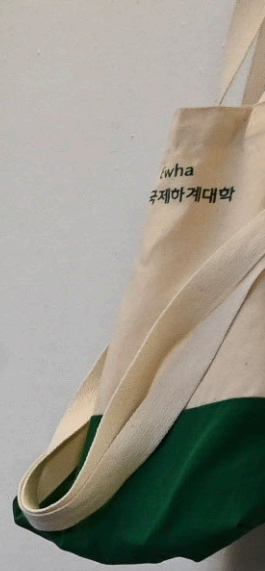
Weinfield: Over the years I have pushed myself to make taller and more physically ambitious pieces. Height is one of the hardest things to achieve on a wheel. Large pieces require multi part construction, and they take a lot of strength and concentration. I love flowing curves and shapes that feel continuous. The wheel naturally supports that kind of movement. I also enjoy physical labor in pottery. I like that the effort it takes to shape something large shows in the final form. It becomes a record of the work that went into it.

Joshi: It really does seem like the forms reflect both nature and the labor of the artist. The curves feel intuitive, but the height creates this sense of tension and impossibility, which is a really exciting balance.

Weinfield: That is a good interpretation. I like that reading of it.

Joshi: As your style has developed, which artists have influenced you? Has that changed over time?

Weinfield: George Ohr was the first artist who really made me fall in love with pottery, even though our work looks nothing alike. My favorite artist overall is Dale Chihuly. He is a glassblower who makes these wildly fluid forms. Again, my pieces do not resemble his directly, but I take inspiration from the sense of motion in his work. Beyond that, I think much of my inspiration comes from myself. Since I focus so much on improving on the previous piece, the main question I ask at the start of a new one is how do I make this better than what I made last time.



Anna Howell

Interviewed by Greta Leishear

Leishear: “So first I wanted to ask, What was the story behind your betta fish, how, why, what, how?”

Howell: It’s funny because I was in class and remember, it was like literally our first meeting. And I was like, Nick was like, Oh, like, what do you like? And I was like, well, I like this and this, I like this too, but I was interested in observing fish. But I realized how hard it would be to find a fish. And I was like, oh, I know I don’t have a fish to like, look at it. And like, it’s hard just to spark one up, you know? And he was like, Well, go buy one. And I was like, what? And then I thought about it, and then I was thinking if it should be alive or dead. Because movement would be a big part of my project. So I called my mom, and she was like Yeah go buy one from the store. And encouraged me to do it. So me and my roommates I went to the pet store literally the second week of school, and I saw this one fish that was swimming all calmly, and Maxwell was born. And I guess it was just like, something I’d never thought of to do myself before, even though like, I totally should have. Yeah, so that’s how it all came to be. And I guess I just do like, love fish. It’s weird. This is my third consecutive year doing an art project about fish. So, yeah.

Leishear: “Did you grow up on the water or around aquatics or fish? Do you think maybe fish bring nostalgia?”

Howell: “Like, kind of? Yeah, I grew up like, we lived on the water. So we were always around boats and stuff. And I would spend a lot of weekends at different creeks and like, you know, I’d go swimming. My brother and I, and my dad, would swim a lot or fish, and we’d always catch and return because my brother was a vegetarian for 10 years. So I definitely feel a sense of nostalgia from the sea, like, I love the bay. I love the water, and it’s always, you know been central in my family. I think fish, in particular, because I love animals and I think fish are so cool because, like, it sounds kind of nerdy to be like, yeah, ‘fish are cool,’ but I just think that they’re really, like, fascinating on so many levels and the way they work. “And they’re, like, so integrated in their environment and stuff like that in the ways that they adhere and have lived for millennia, like development, and it’s just like so free to think that like, people like us could exist in the same sort of like things that are like enable it’s so different. And like the physiology of it.”

Leishear: Cool. Okay, I like that! As for you as an artist how would you describe yourself or your art? As a person or as an artist.

Howell: I think as a person, I’m like not very creative, and not in a negative way. Like, it’s not that I like, think I’m bad at anything necessarily, but I can be very tough on myself. And I know what I want to do. And it’s quite narrow, but like, I can be very driven, and I think everybody’s trying to see their weaknesses in that sense. So I think because I’m so driven, I also can fall into being uninterested in like exploring different mediums and things like that. Which I think is something I’m trying to work on, like this projects I stepped out of my box. But yeah, um, definitely, like, you know, I don’t know, like, quite frankly, I think if I couldn’t do like medical scientific illustration, I wouldn’t be an artist. Maybe I would because I love art, but I don’t in some aspects. For medicine I love all the things that make up it, but medicine is just me, which is why I like to combine them. Like, I get more joy in the abilities of medicine,

combining them rather than having them separate.

Leishear: Okay, yeah. I definitely feel similarly. What do you think about medicine, motivation wise? Like, are you interested in helping people, or the structure that the scientific world has? Or possibly familial? (Ana had mentioned her father is a doctor and brother is in med school!)

Howell: Like, I think like this, I like knowing how things happen. I like how my dad used to wake up every morning and tell us to make the world a little bit of a better place better place, you know, by just one little thing could create change. For me, I think I like knowing how things work. And I think it’s just fascinating how like we’re all dependent on this precarious balance, same with our environment, I’m intrigued in how we interact with our environment in specific ways. And like one little alteration of that, and people will die, and how all these different things happen, but like we are not seeing it. I think there’s so much we don’t know, too and I like learning about it. I don’t want to do things that are messy and things like that because I don’t like being apart of it. I like learning about it, like hearing about it. I don’t want to like to like work as a PA like whatever has to, which is why I like bringing my artistic side to my work because it’s a way for me to still learn and explore medicine, like biology, without having to actually be apart of it.

Leishear: Definitely I agree in that aspect, and I think also, it’s intriguing how where part of a system that has so many complexities.

Howell: “And I think like, I’ve always been a visual learner. I think that if I like what im looking at design wise it could have the most beneficial affect on my learning so not a doctor, but being like a researcher, but I think it’s by like putting into like a visual narrative form of these complex sort of like procedures or like happenings inside to create that better understanding for not just be but others.

Leishear: Yes, I love that and definitely feel like i’m also a visual learner Its something I feel like the systems in our bodies are so precise, not just in our bodies but the overall structure of our ecosystems.

Howell: I don’t know. I just find that really interesting, and it’s crazy because the amount of change one little thing can cause, like disrupt is unmeasurable.

Leishear: What about, in terms of your future? Where do you see yourself? Like, is there a specific location and a like medical illustration the end goal? What do you think? Like, you know, do you have, like anything specific that your really shooting to accomplish?

Howell: I don’t have a, like, precise plan that I’m really interested in, but i want to do Medical illustrations, specifically, I think that storytelling is so cool. But, besides that like as a specialty wise, I think I would continue to go through and have experience with it. Literally, physically, I’d love to still be on the east coast as well like, I don’t want to be that far away from the water and family. I feel like Maryland has everything. Like, I also ride horses, and I’m like, oh, yeah. So it’s like, it has that sort of ambiance. But yeah, I think right now I’m just, like, focusing on graduating here, getting into school, and graduate preparation. And then, like, I think finding, like a job that interests me in the field of medical illustrations is what I want. Because there are also cool things, like veterinary illustrations, and so many different avenues for scientific portrayal. I don’t even want to, limit myself, but im not sure exactly what I want to do if I get into this field. I want to take it all in at first.

Leishear: Definitely, I agree. Its smart not to put all your eggs in one basket, I feel like my path is similar to yours. Technique wise, do you have like a golden technique that you always reference in your work? Like, for me, I remember my first year. One of my professors told me like this quote about always making you lights lighter and your shadows darker.

Howell: I don't have a specific technique because I feel like I often use different materials, like for watercolor I start with the background or shadows and build. But for me, I think I always, like, to make it before I make it good. Like put it down on paper or create a draft before executing it.

Leishear: Okay, gotcha. Do you think a lot of your subject matter prior or do you begin with research for research based projects? So like, do you think you, mostly educate yourself or, gather information or your 'take' from outside research?

Howell: I think it this depends for sure on my project. I took the stamps in illustration course this past year fish projects was on the affects of Lake Michigan's species. And for that one, I definitely went in on research through breaking it down into three stages and a variety of fish, histories of the fish, how they affect the communities, how they're being affected, how they tie to each other, and then they I come upon the stance I want to take or the educational points I want to push. I found myself in the subject matter and focusing on repetitivity so when im ready to create it big I knew him (Maxewell) enough that I could illustrate him by understanding his movements and behavior. Which comes in either research or repetition while I observe.

Leishear:: Those are great at answers, Do you think, like, your fish has a personality, or if you were to, like, envision him as a human what do you see?

Howell: I think he does have his own personality. I think everything has a personality. Like, I think even, like, cars have a personality. But, like, for Maxwell, I think, partly because the reason I know how Maxwell is because he gives off kind of like this highbrow, kind of like, fancy, like...

Leishear:Posh?

Howell: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Posh. And then, like, whenever I feed him, he's, like, oh, he always, like, looks directly at me and, like, first tries to swim toward me. And like, that man (Maxwell) is very forward, and he knows what he wants. It is sometimes a little stupid joke because he doesn't know what he is, or how to really swim.

Leishear: What do you think, like, you want the audience, if there's something specific that you want the audience to take away, or see, doing something projects?

Howell: Yeah, I think from them, I want them to speak to Max or see him in a different light. The main object of this but like dish and then in a broader context, like animals that we don't necessarily think they're as beautiful as how elegant and like everybody has something to give and not a gift. Still, it has something that's unique and beautiful about them even if you don't think of it necessarily. I want people to see that kind of beauty that I see in fish. I think seeing fish outside their environment is interesting because you never really think of fish unless they're like this or outside of water. Like, aside from other aquatic animals, fish are one specie that are so integrated into their environment. Because I don't think we really think of air as an environment, if we just think of nothing because we see it. So I wanted people to look at fish outside of the situations

your used to looking at them in. Examining and really understanding they're beautiful. But yeah, I feel like since they're in the water, there's kind of like a separation.

Leishear: Yeah. Yeah. I notice that in some of your drawings, it didn't look like Maxwell was underwater, was this apart of what your talking about?

Howell: Yeah, I wanted it to show Maxwell moving, and I think like most animals, fish don't sit still.

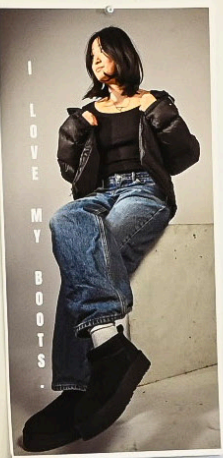
And so it's hard to get a good look, or to get to know something thats in constant motion.. So it's sort of like all that like bottom down, like, almost specimen-like, but not, you know.

Leishear: Yeah.

Howell: But like, yeah, taking them out of that environment so all you have to look at is the details that make up like the different wildlife like, fish and animals was the part I was most interested in expressing.



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Urvi Joshi

Interviewed by Sam Weinfield

Weinfield: Why is it important to you when doing photography that the subjects real people? What do you believe photography can capture that another art form that you would have preferred to do cannot?

Joshi: I do a lot of portraiture when I draw, but that takes a lot of practice, and honestly, my preferred subject to draw is still life, such as scenes in nature. Something that I've created that is not human. So I feel like having a camera omits the idea of needing the human form to be perfect, which is something that, as you draw, you really want, right? But with a camera, there is beauty in the abstraction, there's beauty in it looking kind of strange, or not human. It's almost like a different objective. You're not trying to set a scene, you're trying to capture a moment in time, which is something I'm very intrigued by.

Weinfield: What has been the largest struggle when it comes to photography compared to other mediums you have worked with in the past?

Joshi: I like learning a system, like a machine that already has an optimal function. I feel like when you draw, you are that machine, and you can change the machine as you go, and that's how people develop different styles. But, sometimes there's a very clear distinction between good photos and bad photos, and that's not really something that always exists in other art forms, especially not charcoal drawing, which is what I'm used to, where there's a beauty in the messiness.

Weinfield: Is there anything in your own life that inspired the composition of these portraits? Some of them seem like very normal settings, while others seem a bit more out there.

Joshi: Yeah, I think the part of me that I try to seep into this is my relationship with the subject. I didn't want random people, but I wanted variety in the people I was capturing. All of them are my good friends, and I like having them be in their natural element. I didn't pose any of them, I just put them in front of the camera and said: "How do you feel comfortable?" It was also about the garments they were wearing. I wanted it to allude to our everyday choices, and something as simple as, "why am I wearing this?" and how that can be reflected in the movement and in the pose. The handstand guy, for instance, is my friend Abram. He's a former gymnast, and something really interesting he said was that he views clothing as how he can move and breathe and be flexible, hence his positioning. He views clothing as a means to move. Versus, some of the other people you see on there, like for Chloe. She is the one in the dress, and she has some modeling experience, and she used clothing as an accessory or an expression of herself. So there's a very vast difference in that. And the background was something that I got feedback on when I was just looking at all my other photos. I was thinking that the place in which something is set also says a lot as to who the person is. So, for each person, the background was picked intentionally. You'll see an outdoor park for one of my good friends, Natalie, and that shows how I feel about her. To me, she's very much like a fall day, but also asking the question, "what would work in telling a narrative?" She's not someone in my mind that would exist in a backdrop-y, white box set. I think for some of them, there's not really a definite answer for "Why not background?" and "Why background?," but I think for more of my friends than others, I was pulled in a direction to already have them in a scene in my mind.

Weinfield: Because photography is a new medium for you, where did you look for inspiration or guidance outside of the studio, or did you kind of just hop into this and figure it out?

Joshi: I think it was a little bit of both. Something that Nick said in class about just making a stew and going for it has really resonated with me. In my own life and art too, I tend to be kind of a perfectionist, and I really don't start unless I'm crystal clear on a plan and how to execute it. But with photography, I think the best way to do it was just to go for it. I had a friend show me how to get started, and ever since then, I would just look at my own inspiration, look at my own shots, and gauge my judgment of what I thought looked good and what I thought didn't just based on my own intuition. I did get the chance to work with William Hohe, who is a grad student that Nick and Mike suggested I talk to. William had made a lovely photo book, and they're here for their MFA in photography. Just having a simple conversation with them and why they chose photography and how they view it, was really beautiful to me. I attached that meaning to a bit of what I was doing, not necessarily looking at the product of their work and what they were doing as a comparison to how good or bad I thought mine was, but just that it really doesn't have to be anything. It doesn't need to have a super special meaning or super special style, it is a moment in time, and I think just that freedom in itself helps me not be perfection-y, and in that way, I guess it's more of an expression.



Great Leishear

Interviewed by Ana Swanson

Swanson: What first drew you to create art?

Leishear: Ever since I was little, I was always drawing. My mom was an artist when I was younger, and I've always had an eye for design and colors. I just knew it was something that I wanted to do.

Swanson: Where are you from and do you think that has had an influence on your work?

Leishear: I'm from the DMV, a tristate area in DC. It's had an impact on me in morals, culture, and politics. I was really blessed to be raised in a family that is multicultural. Also the school systems were based on pure conversation and discussion, which I really enjoyed. Another thing I really love about the DMV is that it's given me a better perspective of America and how a lot of people live compared to Ann Arbor. I feel like there are a lot of great and "bad" parts in the DMV, so I'm really interested in merging the in between and having an "everyone being well off" idea to address accessibility. I have seen and lived on the other side of affluent areas, and now I am able to help people who were in the same situation as me and who don't have financials or backgrounds to succeed.

Swanson: Have there been any books, teachers, or projects that have shaped who you are as an artist?

Leishear: My favorite author is Toni Morrison and I've read her poetry since I was little. I also really enjoy Sarah Mustafah. They both have an interesting portrayal of American Life.

Swanson: In these past questions, you talked about story telling and perspectives of America with different social classes. How does that play a role in your art and what you want to do?

Leishear: In the future I want to do medical illustration so I can eventually do legal medical illustration in the courtroom. I'm really interested in malpractice court cases and helping people in the health care system because growing up I didn't have health care. I've also recently had aunts pass away because of things related to that. I think that healthcare is a human right and everyone should be able to have it.

Swanson: How have you translated some of this passion into your project?

Leishear: The sciences for women's health is really important and being able to see ourselves in scientific examples is a big reason why I used myself as a reference in this project. I had a lot of issues doing research for women's anatomy that wasn't a sexualized version, and there were only good versions for men. So centering health around women - especially since we are creating - is something vital and is something we have lost sight of in the medical field. A lot of times women aren't being listened to in hospital settings. So I find that to be important, and something that people don't think about.

Swanson: Shifting gears into your practice: what does a normal working studio session look like for you? Do you normally work in your studio here, or go somewhere else? Do you have a favorite time of the day to work on art?

Leishear: I do like to be in the studio, and I've enjoyed having our own space. I also really enjoy

being around my peers. For my process, I love to create an outline - I'm a big brainstorming person. I have a million ideas but I need to get them down on pen and paper so I can translate them into things that make sense to other people. I create a big mindmap and create an outline that way. I then go into traditional pen and pencil illustrations if that's needed, and then go into design to make it cohesive. If I'm stuck with a creative roadblock, I go back to brainstorming. I would get out a piece of paper and pencil and start drawing. Roadblocks are like "knots" in my brain and I need to massage them to flatten them out and then I am able to streamline what was in the way. And 4 PM is a great time for studio stuff: I always make a drink and listen to music.

Swanson: What do you usually listen to?

Leishear: When I first came here I really liked Mac Miller, but I really love Mariah the Scientist, Jay Z, Frank Ocean, or anything "relaxing" for the studio.

Swanson: How do you know when a work is finished?

Leishear: I look at it and you just feel this "click". Every artist or designer knows when you're done is when you are just satisfied. One way to tell is by looking at negative space and spatial usage across a canvas. But especially with colors: when colors become cohesive, then it's looking good.

Swanson: What are you struggling most with in terms of your art? Along the same lines, what is the biggest challenge of being an artist?

Leishear: I struggle with losing love for my art. I feel like I always created art to pass time or feel good. But I feel like sometimes when you integrate passion into work - and add a monetary value - it is easy to separate the passion from it. I feel like I've fallen into it, and I feel like a lot of artists fall into this.

Swanson: Is there anything you try to do to get out of that mentality?

Leishear: I ground myself and remember why I'm here and remember all the things I've done to get myself here. I also think about the people who support me and the people I love. Also thinking about the change that I can bring greatly motivates me.



BASSVIBES

PATTI SMITH

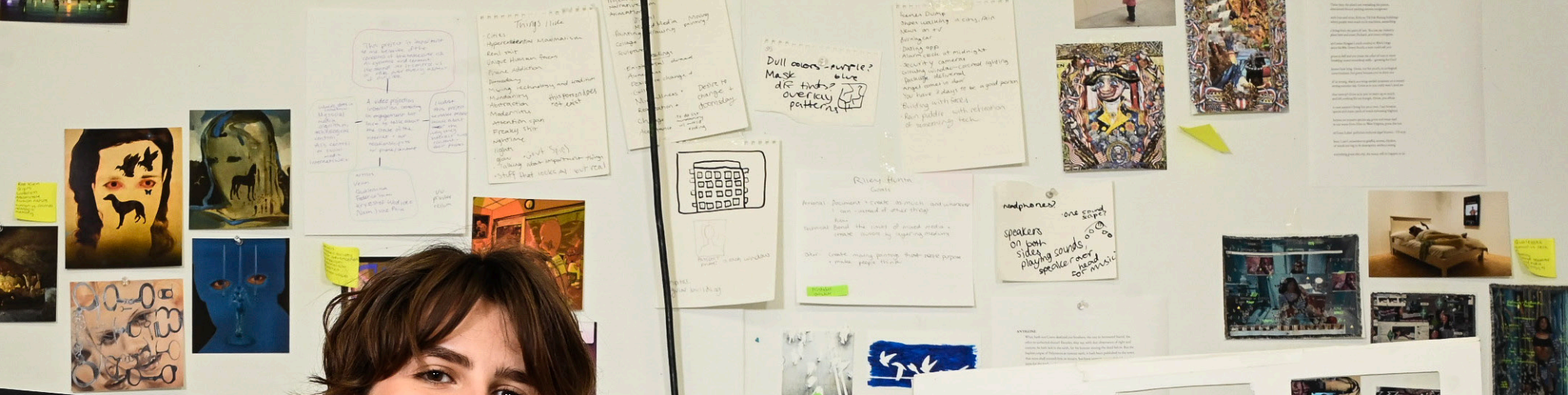
- ORIG. MISCONCEPTIONS
- Deny the
- Produce greenhouse / other
- emissions?
- IPVind Tech



Dull colors - purple?
Mask die folds
overly patterns?

Review Home
Context
Animals - Document 1 create an image and describe
can control of other things
Risks
Support based the views of most people
a small amount by ignoring emotions
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Create using picture - think about paper
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on both
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playing sounds
speaker over
top music



Riley Huhta

Interviewed by Laura Jhirad

Jhirad: Introduce yourself! Please include your name, pronouns, where you are from, what you study, and your art practice.

Huhta: My name is Riley Huhta, and I am a senior at the University of Michigan studying Art and Design. I am from Rochester Hills, Michigan. My practice focuses on video art, film and television studies, projection, and mixed media video. I am mainly interested in the complexity and flexibility of video as a medium.

Jhirad: Why did you choose stop motion, animation, and multimedia collage that mixes TikToks, your own footage, drawings, and archival internet clips?

Huhta: With video, you can merge every type of art, including painting, sculpture, drawing, and more. That is why I love video projection and installation. Using collage lets me bend the rules of each medium. I mix TikToks, experimental video, archival footage, my own videos, and animation to challenge traditional expectations of these forms.

Jhirad: You use a lot of internet footage. How does your project speak to the way culture and history are now recorded online?

Huhta: The biggest theme is how tethered we are to our phones. We are always consuming media and always connected. We are constantly in contact with people we would never meet otherwise. Every clip in the project feels like a time capsule of this moment. We are in an era where AI, misinformation, and endless content overload blur what is real. I am not stealing or mocking TikToks I am showing how these fragments of internet culture shape our daily lives and document this historical period.

Jhirad: How do your personal feelings about phone addiction influence the project?

Huhta: I have always been addicted to my phone since fifth grade. Social media is designed for dopamine hits and endless scrolling. My For You Page used to be silly content, but it shifted into videos about AI, the state of the internet, and strange, unsettling pockets of online culture. Using those videos in my work changed my relationship with social media. I realized how much of it is engineered to keep people online and how easily it influences our minds.

Jhirad: How has the internet shaped your work? Would you consider this a form of cyborg art where technology plays a direct role in shaping the art?

Huhta: That is actually a great way to describe it. Technology feels like a third limb now. Phones should be tools, but social media often turns them into distractions or weapons. Creating this installation helped me renegotiate that relationship. The internet is chaotic and constantly shifting. In order to stay grounded, you need to understand the environment you are in and learn to detach from it.

Jhirad: Your installation recreates a spam bot farm. Can you explain that concept and what it symbolizes?

Huhta: A spam bot farm is a set of phones connected to one central computer that runs fake accounts. These accounts like, follow, and comment to manipulate engagement. They are

automated through AI and used by companies, governments, and hackers to influence algorithms. I recreated this because it mirrors our relationship with our own phones. What makes us different from bots that endlessly like and scroll? Many of us doom scroll every day without thinking. The installation is meant to be mesmerizing and visually addictive, but the content is disturbing. It forces viewers to question their own habits.

Jhirad: Why was installation the right medium for this topic instead of a graphic or a single video?

Huhta: The physical quality matters. The acrylic phones look and feel similar to real phones, so your brain reacts as if you want to pick them up. They become pure screens of image and consumption. Having all the phones wired together reinforces the idea that we are part of a larger system. The use of wires and physical materials brings attention to the hardware behind our digital lives.

Jhirad: Do you feel more connected or disconnected from the world because of social media? Will you continue exploring this theme in your future work?

Huhta: I enjoy parts of social media. It lets me connect with people and discover art from all over the world. At the same time, it has become a major source of distraction and dread. Because of this project, I barely want to doom scroll anymore. It made me see how empty a lot of online content is. I think social media should be used to share art, ideas, and real connections. It should not be dominated by mindless AI videos or content that harms us. I will continue exploring this theme because it feels central to how we live today.



Laura Jhirad

Interviewed by Riley Huhta

Huhta: Hello! Would you please introduce yourself, a little bit about you and your art practice?

Jhirad: Hello, I'm Laura Jhirad. I'm a dual degree at the University of Michigan, studying business and art & design. I'm from New York, and my art practice has been all over the place. I enjoy mixed media and learning new skills, and I mainly focus on digital illustration and digital translation into physical mediums.

Huhta: So what is your project, and what medium did you choose?

Jhirad: My project features a series of handmade dress clothing pieces I designed and painted. I chose fabric and textiles as my main medium, deciding to paint directly onto them after being sewn. I wanted to combine my love for painting with my desire to learn fashion design. I've been thinking a lot about fast fashion, so learning to create clothes from scratch felt important as it's becoming a lost art.

Huhta: How did you approach fashion design as someone who is new to the practice?

Jhirad: I first taught myself how to sew, after seeing my family do it for years and never getting the chance to learn. I decided what better time than now to start. I decided to treat each piece as its own canvas, first painting on the stretched fabric before sewing it into the garments. My work process is usually filled with intensive planning, but I wanted to be more spontaneous with this project, something I learned while studying in Paris. There, my teacher urged me to step out of my comfort zone, and I realized it helped my art be even bolder.

Huhta: Was there a reason you chose a traditional female dress and pantsuit silhouette?

Jhirad: I chose simple silhouettes partly because I'm new to sewing, and partly because I wanted the focus to be on the paintings, not the garment construction. I didn't want the silhouettes to distract from the painted imagery.

Huhta:

What would you say are some emotions or themes present in your work?

Jhirad: The imagery is inspired by things that bring me joy. Flowers, animals, and nature are all common motifs you'll find in my pieces. I used references of flowers my mom sends to me. I realized how fun it is to create something inspired by your favorite things. The work reflects on my spontaneity in my process, but also broader themes of life. The dress featuring the budding, blooming, and dying stages of a flower's life mirrors our live's cycles. I was thinking about the point of life I'm at now, and the constant cycle of work, the feeling of waiting. The risk and uncertainty in the act of waiting inspired my second piece featuring the tiger and crocodile. Both animals are predators lying in wait, ready to pounce on the opportunity to strike, a theme that reflects how I feel in this period of my life. The piece with the whales represents community. I've always been fascinated by the whale's deep complex bonds with each other. It reminds me of my family and art community that support and root for me every day.

Huhta: Did you learn anything about yourself as an artist while making this?

Jhirad: Before this project, I felt stuck in the idea that you can't teach a dog new tricks, as if I spent all my time in illustration, digital illustration, and graphic design. I felt like I'd never get the chance to try out textiles and jewelry. With this project, I told myself, "I can do it," and I did. I'm more confident in spontaneity, and it's led my artwork to get bolder and better, without the confines of what I thought I knew about myself.

Huhta: Were you imagining a specific person, context, or setting for these garments?

Jhirad: I would put these garments in a natural setting, because they are imitations of it, and they are part of it, but they're still manmade. The context of these lies in my central themes, that a lot of these fears and cycles we go through, like fear and risk of ambiguity and waiting, are something we can all relate to. We're part of more complex systems, but we still have agency. Anyone can wear these garments as an expression of those feelings.

Huhta: Do you have any artists that inspire you?

Jhirad: The artist who inspired me the most in this project is Tahlia Stanton. The thing I love about her work is that her subjects are abstracted and free-spirited, inspired by nature and the things that make her curious. However, her spontaneity involves lots of secret planning, which I find really interesting.

Huhta: How does this project fit into your overall artistic journey? Will you continue in this direction?

Jhirad:

I've always been interested in textiles, but never took the leap until now. I definitely want to continue with that path; it's definitely a skill I want to explore thoroughly. This project has let me do what I love, which is blending everything I know: digital work, sketching, painting, jewelry, metals, and textiles. I'm definitely going to explore the incorporation of all my mediums in my future work: fabric, metals, painting, 3D modeling, digital illustration, everything together.



Ana Swanson

Interviewed by Amanda Kubitz

Kubitz: Okay, so how do you think your personality has been reflected in your work that you've done this semester?

Swanson: I feel like one of my biggest traits specifically in relation to academics is I'm very organized. And so I feel like when I make posters like this for my project, specifically info graphics, I feel like my organization is pretty well reflected in that. And outside of academics, I think I'm a pretty thoughtful person, and I know if it were me and one of my friends had some sort of autoimmune disease or something that disabled them in any way, I would want to know how to help them. And so I feel like I made these posters for people like that, if that makes sense, and this project.

Kubitz:

And then, I know you're really into the medical field and you want to go to medical school, so: where do you look for references or inspiration outside of the studio? Is it mostly medical textbooks, medical websites, or are there other situations you look at?

Swanson:

I feel like I got a lot of my inspiration/prior knowledge of how I should approach these kinds of projects from classes I took at Stamps. I took 270 with Patricia, which is visualizing and depicting, and I also took science illustration. I also really go back to the molecular biology exhibit at the Natural History Museum at Michigan. I've had to go there for biology classes, and I think we actually went there for science illustration or 270, I don't remember. But I feel like that exhibit specifically—I find a lot of inspiration from it in terms of how to communicate really difficult concepts and explain them to any age. So that's something I think about a lot in terms of how I would communicate different things to certain audiences.

Kubitz:

Yeah, for sure. So, can you walk me through your process when creating a poster like you did for this exhibit?

Swanson:

My process: I don't usually do mind maps if I'm stuck on an idea. For me, I usually have an idea or two initially, and I just pick one and go from there. When I first signed up for this class, I thought about what I wanted to do, and after taking those classes and shifting my interest to communication and science communication—specifically to help me for med school—I knew I wanted to do something on Type 1, because it's something that I have and something important for everyone to know. I had that idea, and then I actually just wanted it to be posters. I think somebody, or maybe it was me, thought that would be boring. So the iterations came from there. Then I thought of doing something with ceramics and something interactive. I talk to a lot of people for this stuff, and I send my posters to different people:

A) to make sure they understand it, and

B) for typos.

I do that with a bunch of people, and if they say something and I agree, I change it.

The critiques helped me specifically with the board game direction. Other than that, it's just a

lot of feedback from people.

Kubitz:

Okay. And then this is my last question: how do you want to continue using your art degree and creative process once you go to medical school, which is very scientific and jargon-heavy? How do you want to use your art degree to help you within the medical field?

Swanson:

I've spent so many years trying to figure that out, but the biggest conclusion I came to was science communication and understanding how to utilize different tools—especially creative ones in art—to help communicate scientific terms or ideas to the general public. When I first started doing graphic design-type work, like in 270 with Illustrator, I realized how bad I was at explaining things. Looking back at my first projects, I struggled a lot. With each project, I've gotten better. Through those 2–3 years, I learned how long it takes to realize where your communication lacked and to build the skills to improve it. Through my art projects, especially this one, I learned a lot about how to utilize different tools to help explain things. I've been to doctors who suck at explaining things, but the ones I really remember and really like, who are the most personable, always have a whiteboard or paper and draw stuff. That's really useful. And in addition to explaining things well, I can draw, which I think will help a lot. Being in Stamps and around really creative people has given me a very different approach to things.

