

No Thanks, Just the Cheque is a collection of Artworks and Statements from 21 artists working towards a group exhibition in spring of 2021. This catalogue marks the end of a journey for artists who have been working side by side, whether it be for the months leading up to their final exhibition, or in some cases, years beforehand.

In this final year, distant from shared studio spaces, this group of artists have been working to develop their individual artistic practices alongside one another through a virtual studio experience. *No Thanks, Just the Cheque* accumulates artworks that have been created in this distanced condition wherein these artists have spent their time working physically apart from one another.

List of Artists

Jimin Lee
Sam Wagter
Peter Dickson
Felicia Vosburg
Aisha Hassen
Kaitlyn Hwang
Courtney Wong
Laura Butler
Helia Trinh
Lili Thorton-Nickerson
Hualei Gu
Joy Zheng
Skye Gibson
Jade Williamson
Tia Bates
Ashley Staines
Natalie Chevalier
Janelle Wilson
Rachel Elias
Mackenzie Smith
Sam Erdelyi

Are we just existing?

To contest the division between the façade and the reality beneath it all.

It's everywhere, everyone, every day, and everything.

Everything and nothing at all.

A growing hole in the wall, a glimpse.

Plants combined with humans.

The twisted and gnarly vines contorted through the energy of light and cascaded upwards to a series of unknown.

The beauty in a tainted environment harbours hope.

Evolution ends with us.

Make me your own memory.

I dream of painting and I paint my dream.

It's just a body.

Food, imagination, reminiscence, questions.

Food oriented themes executed in acrylic paint on canvas.

Gender is a construct which I aim to demolish and rebuild.

Healing the mind through the body.

Such as all humans are, we are flawed and uncertain in our own fleshy puppets.

What you've just seen, it did change you... in some way.

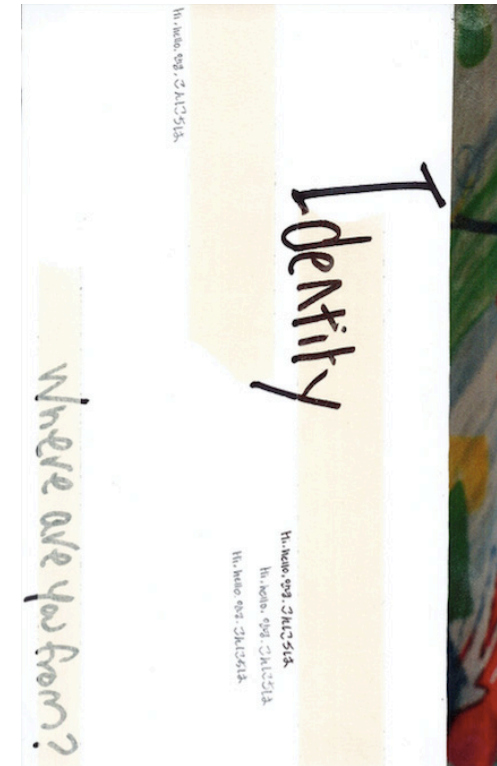
A painting is perhaps not determined by paint, but rather a familiar framework we visit over and over again.

There is beauty in the uncertainty,

what could possibly matter more than art.

JIMIN LEE

Jimin Lee currently studies fine arts at Western University and works as a design marketing intern in Seoul, South Korea. She will be graduating in 2021 with her Undergraduate Degree in Bachelor of Fine Arts, Honours Specialization in Studio Arts, and continuing studies in art management and business in South Korea. Lee's exhibition careers have been growing since 2015 (Duncan, BC) at her first group exhibition and influencing her as an art director in the business field. Her studies in identity and individuality will be continuing throughout her studies.



For my seventh birthday, I got several Barbie dolls, make-up sets, evening dresses, pink ribbon shoes, and a sketchbook with 72 pencil crayons. I did not like any of them, but the sketchbook with a bundle of crayons from my dad. He said, "You can colour everywhere, show who you are, and it's all up to you."

Playing and wearing the colours I chose was the way I visualized my identity and individuality. My parents never forced me to wear pink or blue instead, they asked me which colour attracted me the most and how I would like to represent who I am through colour palette. There was no definition, judgement, and limit. The colour became a part of my expression and the tool of communication with myself.

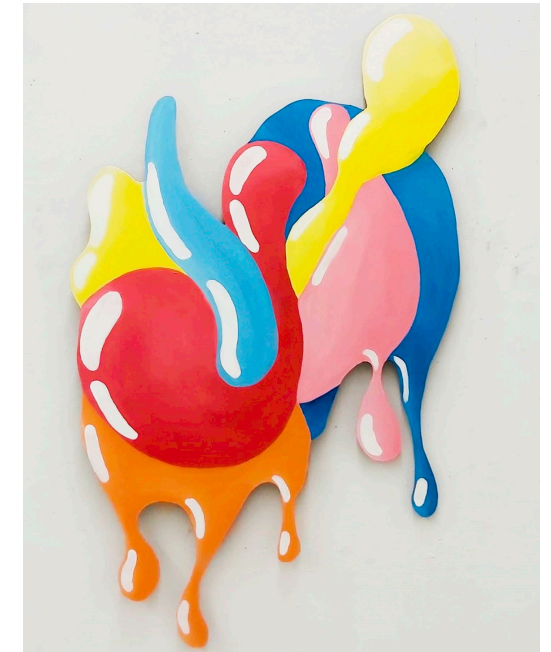
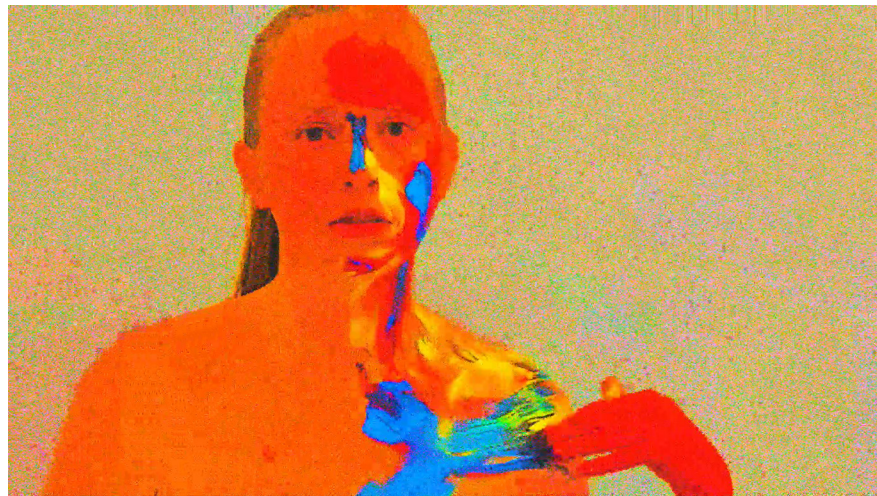


As an artist who navigates between various cultural experiences and creates a system of personal emotions, I make art about an individual's vulnerability, individuality among social prejudice, and portraiture of who I am through narratives. Whether it is open criticism or systems, I would like to open it up and see what is there. I suggest viewers find the colour of expression and interpretation towards their possibilities through my art pieces. I offer them a sketchbook with a pencil crayon. My sketchbook is transparent, fragile, and tangible, so it can show an individual's vulnerability and individuality.



SAM WAGTER

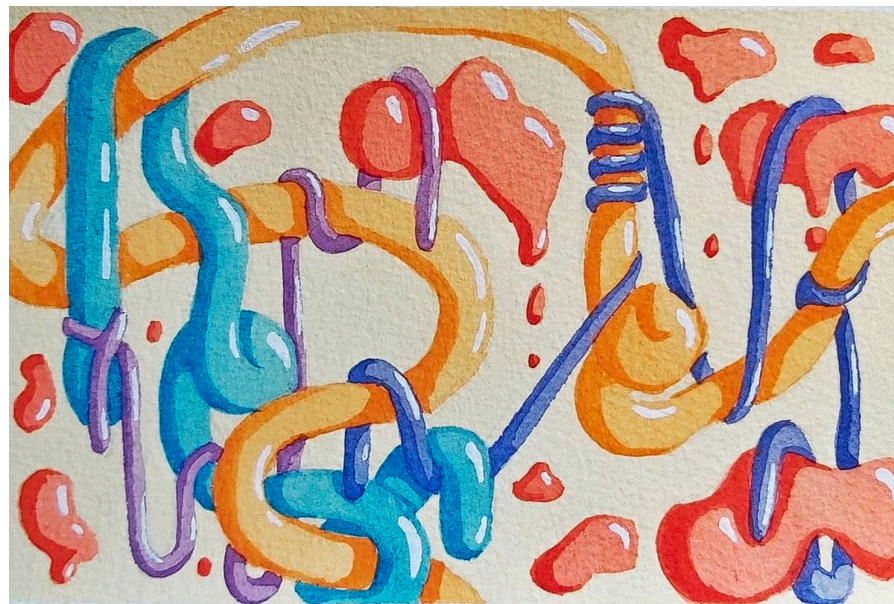
Sam Wagter (b. 1999) is a contemporary artist based in London Ontario. She will be receiving her Bachelor of Fine Art: Honors Specialization in Studio Art from the University of Western Ontario in the spring of 2021, and she has plans to continue her education into Grad School to receive a Master's degree in Fine Art. Her work is a reflection of her fascination with the human body and she aims to blend the boundaries of beauty standards and distort viewers perception of the human form.



As a young woman growing up in a society where beauty and appearance is held to such an impossible standard, I have always looked at the human form as something which is held too highly in importance. With social media and digital technologies now allowing for anyone to alter their true appearance into their "ideal self", I have struggled to identify with those around me, as well as my own physical body. My current work can best be described as whimsical, bright, colourful, and balloon-like. There is life in these drippy, blob and tube-shaped forms, just as in our own bodies. Loosely mimicking our internal organs, these works squish, drip and entangle themselves on and around each other, often floating in a coloured void which mimics the inner muscular lining our of bodies, but never connecting directly to our current world's dimension. They are imperfect beings, undefined and ambiguous. Such as all humans are, we are flawed and uncertain in our own fleshy puppets. Inspired by my own body, and using myself as the prop, I look to push the boundaries of beauty and perfection to normalize the strangeness and imperfections which we all possess in an unfiltered, photoshopped way.

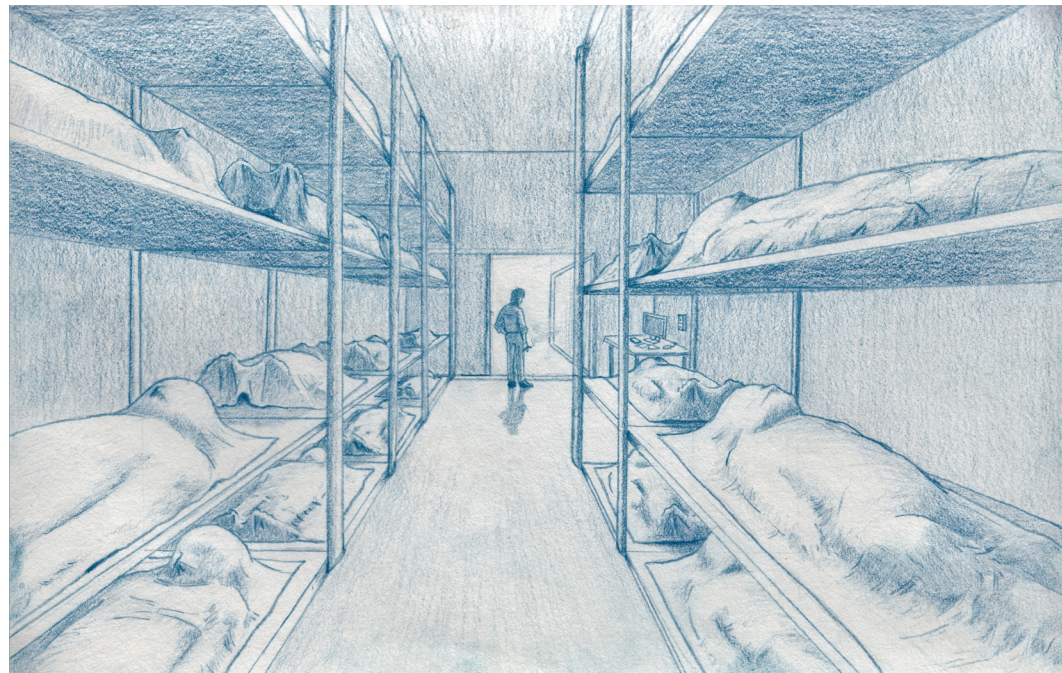


My work heavily revolves around the contradiction of the raw, unsettling themes of the interior and exterior space of the human body, ambiguity of anatomy in the form of tubes and goops, and the bright, whimsical primary colours which I use in all my work. My art is to appear as something fun and bright at first glance, only to reveal its true, discomposed nature as one explores the pieces further, removing the camouflage which the red, yellow, and blue provide.



PETER DICKSON

Peter Dickson is a Korean-Canadian artist who works in various media such as graphite, photography, video, digital art, and more recently, acrylic. He takes inspiration from the Art-Nouveau movement, post-humanist ideologies, digital concept arts, as well as the contemporary art scene of North America. He currently resides in London, Ontario, longing for the summer heat as he searches for the next destination to present his artworks.



Drawing is the most natural way for me to materialize what I see in the world. I have a way of seeing things in which I view everything in the most broken down state they can be. I imagine the way things are built: the bones, the structure, the surfaces, and material connections. When I strip all things in the world you can see their true functions; it leads to revealing the significance in an object's design and purpose whether that be alive or dead.

Once the components of the world are apparent to me, I draw and reimagine them back together. This process always pushes me to imagine the structures and the shapes in ways that have never been done before that are beyond our history. Like an evolution that went in another direction. Which leads me to creating fictional worlds. I use these fictional worlds that I create to comment on our society, highlighting its accomplishments and it's flaws. Revealing the true ideas, the true spirits of the initial intent is what I want to bring to light.

Currently, I am working on a graphic novel based around the elements that bring chaos into our society, represented through allegorical characters and their worlds that are brought to the brink of collapse via the same issue that muddle our society and our goals.



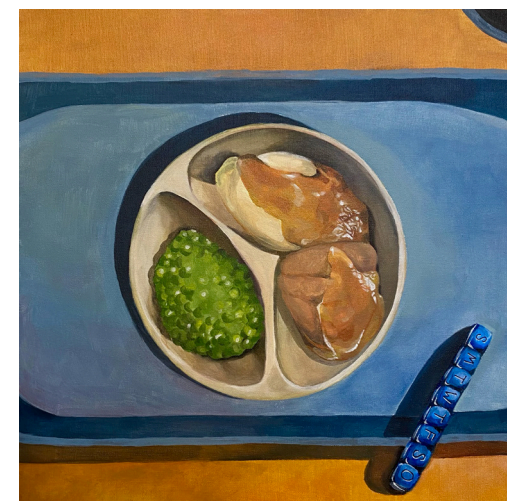
FELICIA VOSBURG

Felicia Vosburg is a contemporary artist based in Toronto, ON. Felicia is in the midst of completing her fourth-year of a Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honours and Specialization in Studio Art Program at Western University, expected to graduate in the spring of 2021. Felicia's focus has most recently been painting-based. Her recent work follows the themes of food and its connection with mankind, studying the relationship between the two through painting and experimentation. She is in her final year of her undergraduate degree focusing on drawing and painting, despite previously focusing on other artistic mediums such as printmaking, photography. Felicia aspires to pursue an art career in the future with the hope of completing her Master of Fine Arts and potentially Ph.D. Felicia's work has been most recently featured in group exhibition "Keepsakes" at Satellite Project Space in London, Ontario. For further information and a greater selection of her portfolio, check out @feliciamakesart on Instagram!



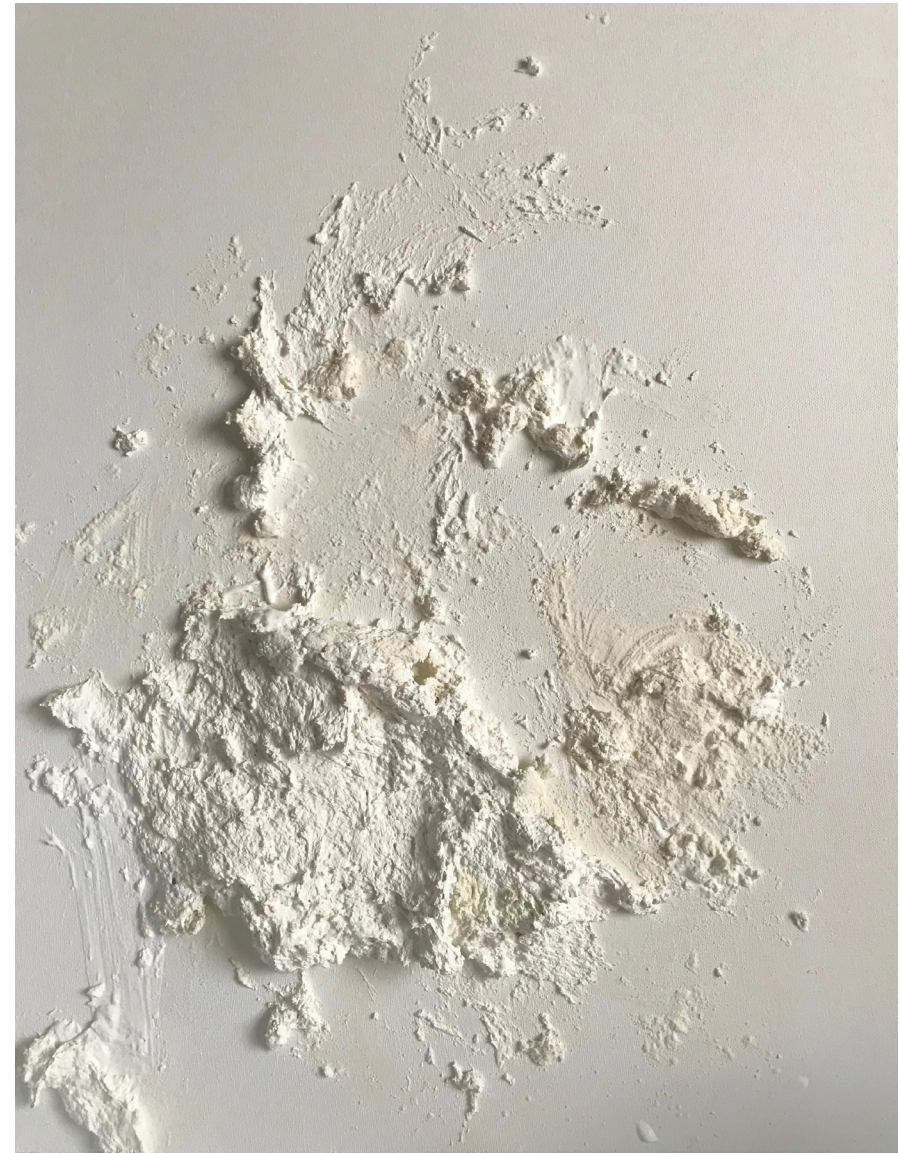
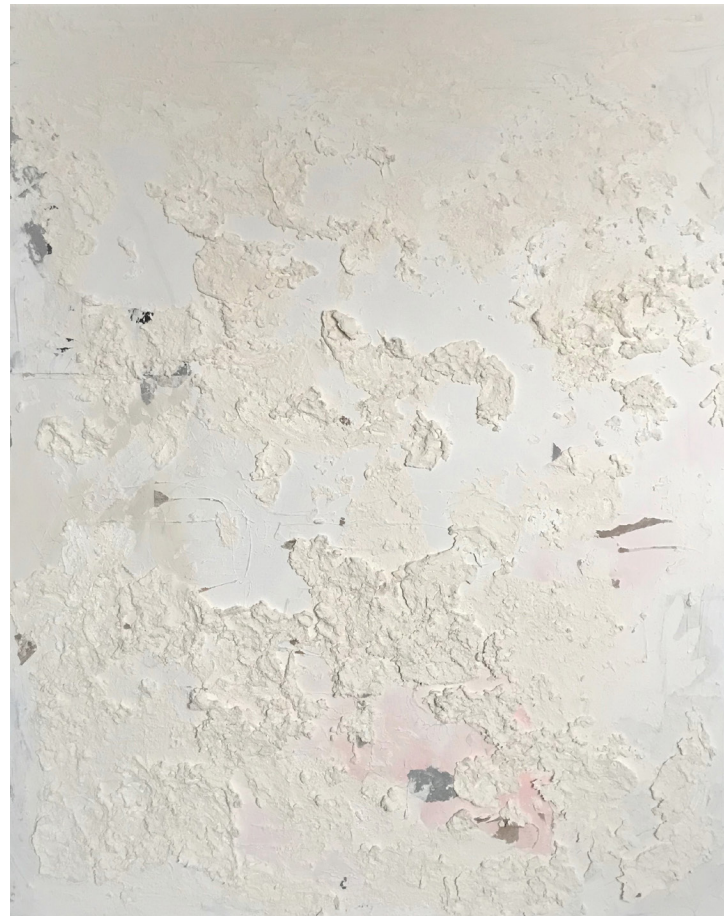
Food is essential which all of humankind understands, it is something that everyone relies on to survive. That is why this concept is relative to every individual, therefore, an ideal representative of greater issues. Although every individual has different relationships with food, its universal ideals make for a good subject matter to express through art.

These concepts are present in the first series of my fourth-year Practicum class Thankful, a thanksgiving inspired tryptic series that expresses the correlation of thanksgiving dinner among the different stages in one's life, childhood, the struggles of adulthood, and old age. This will be achieved through a variety of research to portray accurate statistics regarding what is being expressed. The works deal with the theme of fortune symbolically presented through food featuring human characteristics to further implement additional aspects. Along with my second piece Happy Divorce Day that focuses on celebrations and their associations with food. My practice works to create art that emphasizes the importance of a relationship between mankind and food. This is exemplified in my art through concepts of age and deterioration, irony, etc.



AISHA HASSEN

Aisha Hassen is an artist based in London, Ontario. Her work currently explores themes of materiality, texture, interplay between flat and dynamic surfaces, as well as the boundary between painting sculpture media. She has been part of several group exhibitions in the London area and is due to graduate with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Western University in 2021.



Where to draw the line?
Is the question.

Well-
Is there already a line?
And where is that line?

I suppose
The only reason to know such
Would be to challenge
That pre-existing division,
To work against that framework.

Irrelevant!

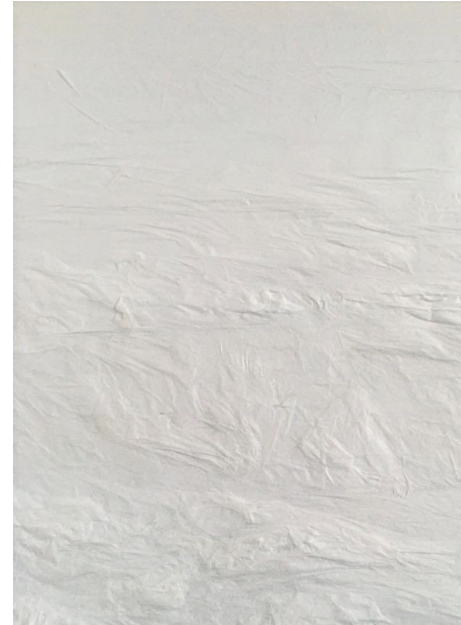
Where will I draw the line?
Is the question.

But-
Does there really need to be a line?

Between media
Between materials
Between surfaces
Between dimensions
Between ideas
Between qualities

I see
A merging
A transformation
A "distinction" that ceases to announce itself.

Perhaps it is not about a line that I draw.
It is about the line that I leave erased.



KAITLYN HWANG

Kaitlyn Hwang is a multidisciplinary artist who is currently pursuing a BFA with Honours Specialization in Studio Art at Western University. In her work she explores the role of materiality in memory and the cultivation of identity, and the omnipresent consciousness that lives on through the objects we keep and the spaces we inhabit. Incorporating representational and ambiguous forms, her work is influenced by the narratives connected to her personal memories, found objects and photographs, and intimate space in a contemporary context. She plans to further her art education by pursuing an MFA in the future. Her work has most recently been featured in group exhibition "Keepsakes" at Satellite Project Space in London, Ontario (2020).





I tend to look at my work similarly to how I look at memory. That is, an attempt to be declarative of events and feelings past, yet more so a representation of a fragmented narrative with twists, turns, layers and missing pieces. With a focus on painting and mixed media, my work concentrates on exploring what cultivates identity through a balance of looking back towards the past and situating the self in the transient nature of the present. I am interested in analyzing the ways in which we cultivate a sense of self by using the tangible to navigate the intangible nature of memory, and archiving the intimate connections made between others through our emotional relation to objects and domestic space. In my work I interact with presence and non-presence through representational and ambiguous forms, often using ghostly figures to examine how our memories and connections to space and the individual fracture and transform with us over time. I primarily use painting as a mode of storytelling, both taking into account what is present in the work and what has been purposely removed or obscured. I'm interested in representing the self in a state of flux, both marked by imagery of space and object nostalgic of the past collaged with elements of the body, nature, and growth.



COURTNEY WONG

Courtney Wong is a Hong-Kong-Canadian artist who works with painting, photography, and stop-motion animation. Her work revolves around food, nostalgia, environment, and technology. She often uses bright colours and creates imaginative scenes, which reflects her cheerful personality. As a foodie who loves food, she is currently working with the theme of food, imagination, and culture.

Courtney is currently completing her final year of BFA at Western University; she enjoys the creative and artistic part of her aside from her other degree in Ivey School of Business. Her work has been shown in several group exhibitions in London, Ontario.



*What is your relationship with food? What does food remind you of?
What does food mean to us?*

Food is an everyday item, but many people do not spend quality time with food – some are in a hurry, quickly swallowing food for survival needs, while some are distracted, staring at TVs or phones at mealtimes. They do not pay much attention to the food they are eating.

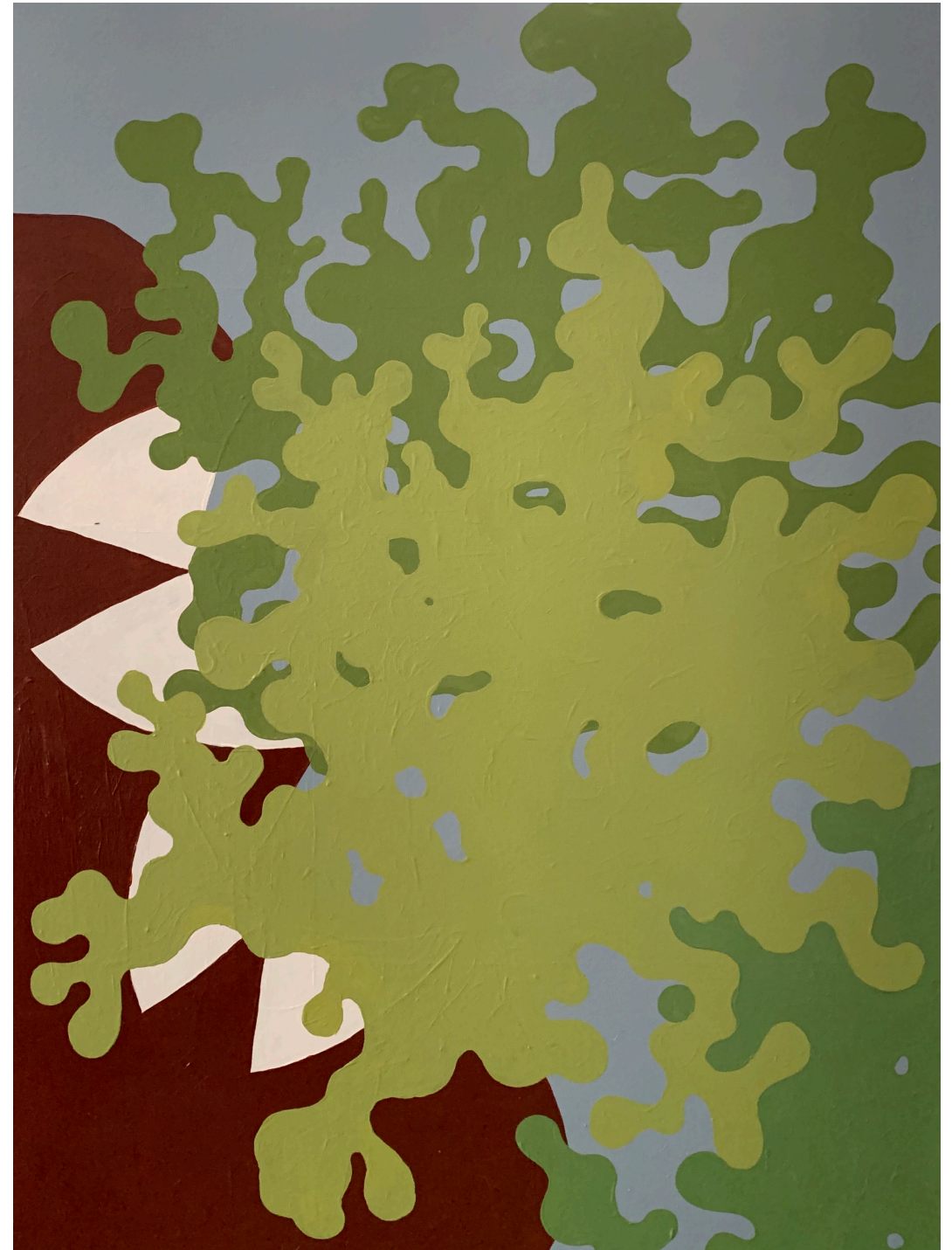
Being a foodie, I am interested in exploring the connection between humans and food. My work revolves around the theme of provoking our imagination with food and how food stimulates emotions. By manipulating food into something else, I want to refresh viewers' impressions of the everyday ingredients and see the beauty in food. Food is also reminiscent of certain experiences and memories. For example, the taste of home is unique to every person, where one would feel like home when having that "home" taste; meals at school or office cafeteria can also provoke one's memories, whether it is happy or unpleasant. In exploring the connection of food and reminiscence, the work reflects my memories and experience of growing up in Hong Kong and studying in Canada.

The work is displayed as large-scale projections, creating an unfamiliar yet interesting contrast between the size of food to the size of humans. The whimsical scenes intend to bring viewers back to a childhood-like mind of playing and imagining food. Contextually, the photographs are about the similarities and differences of the culture that the artist has experienced. It expands on the theme of food culture, environment, cultural beliefs and symbolism, and identity crisis.



LAURA BUTLER

Laura Butler is an interdisciplinary artist currently pursuing an Undergraduate Degree in Visual Arts with Honors, and a certificate in Museum and Curatorial Studies. Her recent work uses a combination of scientific research and pseudo-scientific stories to examine plant intelligence and sentience. She also studies the harmful effects of greenhouses on the environment and the benefits to caring for a real plant versus the ease and certainty of buying an artificial plant. Laura works in both acrylic paint and linocut printmaking because they each offer the use of solid blocks of colour to create imagery. She has received various scholarships in her undergraduate degree including the Bess A. Hewitt Scholarship in Visual Arts in 2019, the Gray Creative Arts Award in Visual Arts in 2019, the Mackie Cryderman Award for Excellence in Visual Arts in 2019, and the Kate and Robert Taylor Scholarship in Visual Arts in 2020. She is currently the Assistant Curator at the Kawartha Art Gallery in Lindsay, Ontario. As Assistant Curator, Laura has curated the online exhibition Homecoming in August 2020 and has begun the new program Art Warrior; a series of themed and juried art competitions for youth in the Kawartha Lakes.





Humans depend on plants for survival, but why are humans drawn to gaining deeper knowledge of plants and their capabilities? If humans have been underestimating the abilities and intelligence of plants, how would that affect our use and appreciation of them?

My practice was developed by investigating the purpose of houseplants and how some consumers are unable to care for a living plant. Generally, consumers are attracted to artificial plants because they eliminate the consumer's ability to kill the plant. Although it can be argued the vibrant green of the artificial plants could contribute to a more positive mental state for consumers, I believe there are stronger mental benefits to be had by caring for a plant and keeping it alive. As my practice evolved, I eventually began researching scientific evidence that plants are intelligent and sentient beings.

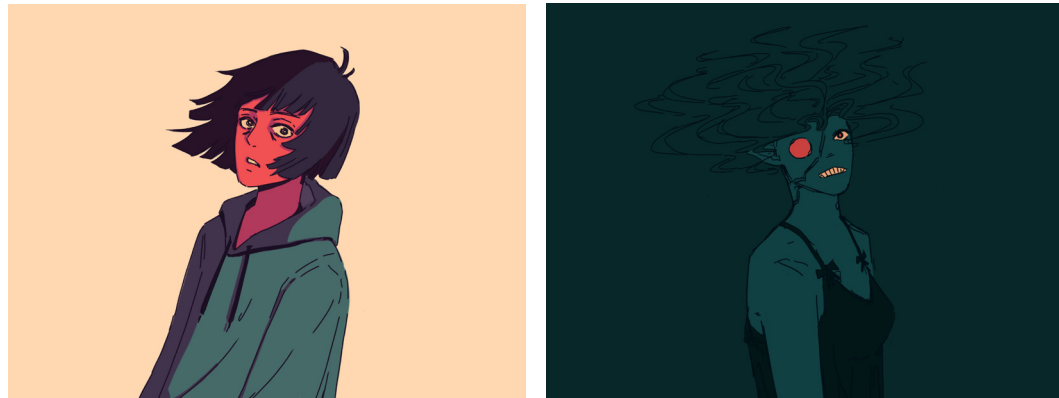
In each artwork, I use a combination of research including scientific and pseudo-scientific studies involving plantae. I demonstrate my findings by anthropomorphizing plants, so the creatures seem intimidating and mysterious. The plant heads are indistinguishable from one another; becoming unruly and chaotic, while the bodies always directly face the audience, suggesting there is an unknown power that makes them equivalent to the viewer. Painting with large areas of flat color eliminates my hand as the artist, so a dichotomy of the man-made plants taking over the space and their human bodies demonstrates their intelligence and sentience. By combining human bodies with plant heads, the abilities of plants are comparable those of humans.



HELIA TRINH

Helia Trinh is an interdisciplinary artist currently pursuing an Honors Bachelor Degree in Fine Arts, specialized in Studio Art along with a Certificate in Digital Communication. Her work revolves around streams of consciousness, namely nostalgia and memory; with her recent works dealing with escapism. She works both digitally and traditionally, specifically with digital illustrations and paintings. Her paintings include oil and acrylic; and her digital works include storyboards, illustrations and animations as story-telling is an important component in her art. Some of her works were most recently featured in the exhibition *We Were, and then We Weren't.* (2020) at Western's ArtLab Gallery in London, Ontario.





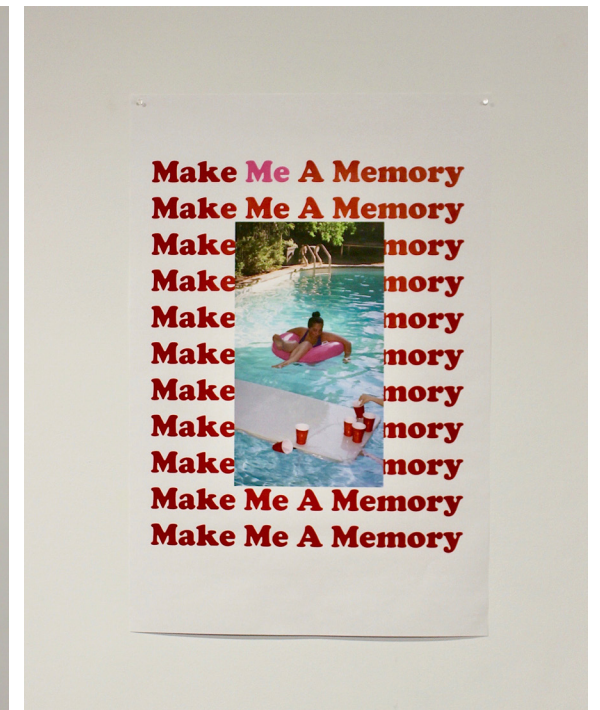
I am an artist who is mostly involved with painting and digital illustrations. My body of work deals with escapism. A common theme that appears throughout my work is the feeling of nostalgia expressed through story-telling. My art is greatly motivated by underlying stories – be it an overarching idea or philosophy, I process it by creating scenes and stories fuelled by or representing said ideas. Film stills are the foundation of my work – the way so much can be unpacked in a single imagery, the essence of the storyline can be read, one image can be used to describe an entire piece of work is how I approach my own art. Equally important in my work are colours; with each piece I prioritize exploring different ways I can evoke feelings with abrasive colours and compositions. Everything is then put together into an imagery, or a series of imagery, from which an idea can be unravelled and interpreted in the form of a story.

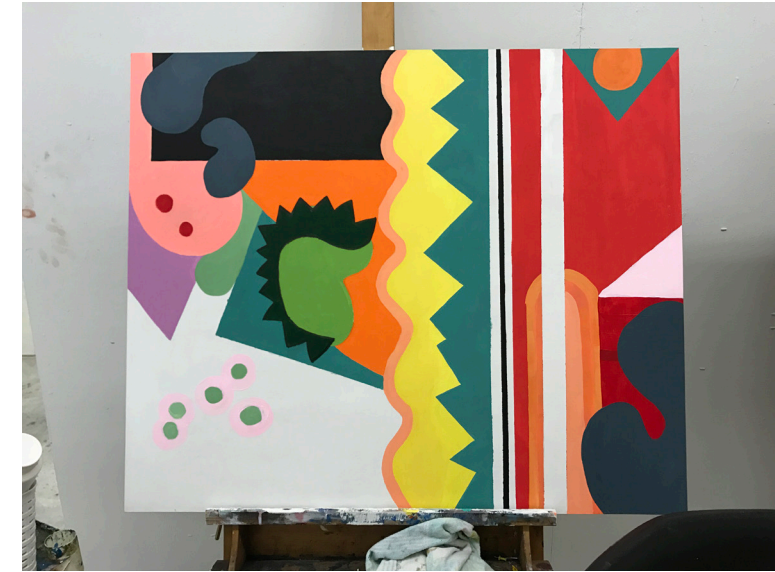


LILI THORNTON-NICKERSON

Lili Thornton-Nickerson is a contemporary artist based in Toronto, ON. Lili is currently finishing up her final year of completing a four-year Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honours and Specialization in Studio Art Program at Western University, expected to graduate in the spring of 2021. Over the past four years, Lili's work has been primarily painting and printmaking-based. Her recent work dives into the themes of memory and colour recollection.

After university Lili hopes to continue her artistic journey all over the world working in artist residencies. Her work has been most recently featured in group exhibition "Keepsakes" at Satellite Project Space in London, Ontario. For further information and a look into her past works, check out @BonelessYouth on Instagram!





Humans have an incredible ability to store moments in our memories for decades on end, but what many of us tend to ironically forget, is that our memory is not a pure and perfect snapshot in time, it is merely retrospection.

My work brings into question the authenticity of our memory and how authenticity and memory cannot live together as one. Our memories are ever changing due to the influence of misinformation, past memories, and misattribution. Humans hold onto memory in forms of storytelling through word and image. Instead of focusing on the making of memories, my work focuses on the sudden death and overlap that happens within our minds when we conjure up a memory. I believe that a memories authenticity dies as soon as it is first remembered. Before then, the memory only lives within the moment, its authentic time space, but the second we recreate it in our minds, its authenticity and credibility expires.

HUALEI GU

Gu Hualei is an international student from China currently pursuing an Undergraduate Degree in Studio Arts with Honors at Western University in Canada. She had learned basic drawing skills such as pencil drawing back in China. After moving to Canada in 2013, she started experimenting watercolor and she also developed her drawing technique with pen and color markers. After she finished her high school at Columbia International College, she started to study studio art and art history at Western University. During her art career, she has drawn great influence from Japanese illustration and western impressionism. Her works also showed inspirations from western contemporary artists as Shail Langen, and David Altmejd. Hualei's themes of art include mixed culture, mix identities, fantasy, symbolization, and traditional representative.



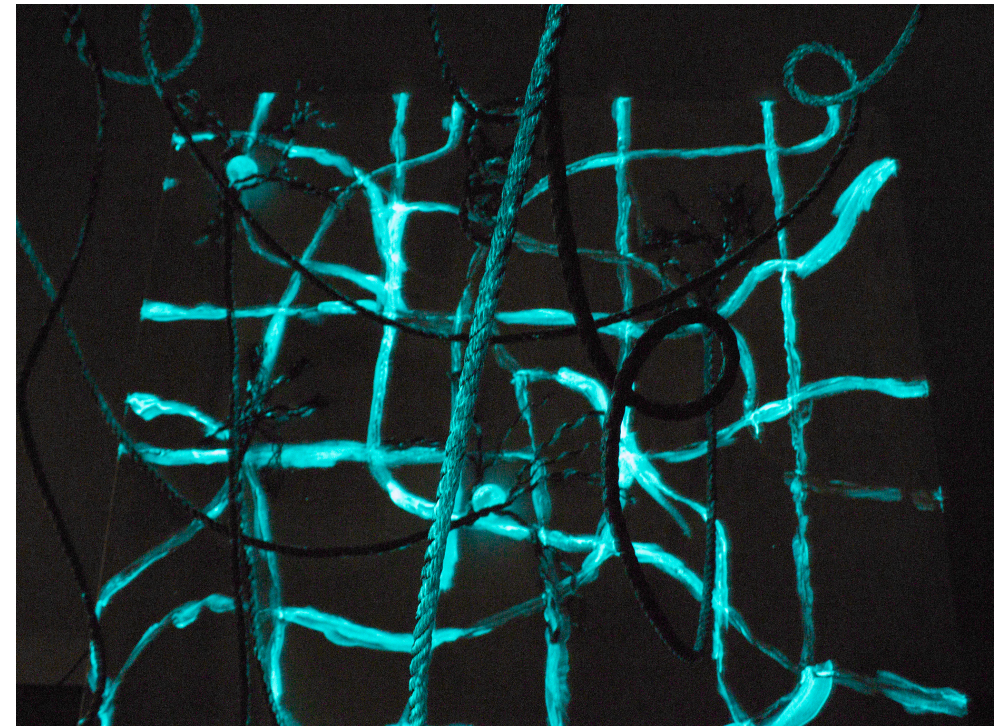
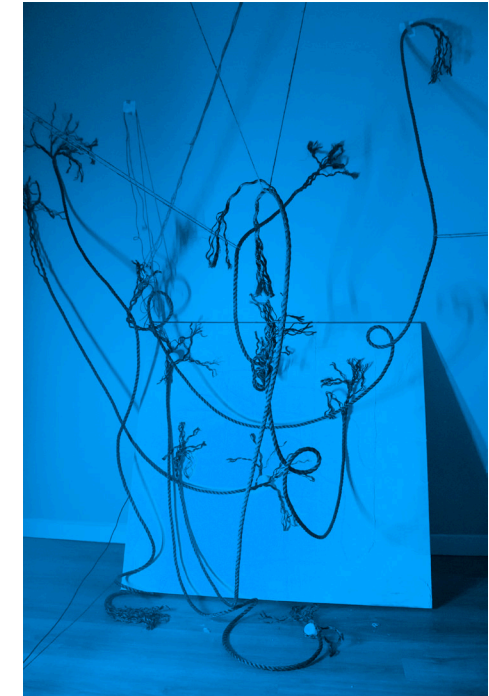


I see my working experience as a journey towards the discovery of our authentic nature. My work challenges viewers to explore questions such as "what builds up who we are?" and "what it means to be human?". I encompass a variety of mediums to create my work including digital drawing, watercolor, ink drawing and sculpture. My subject matter ranges from the human body, animal, to mythology. When creating art, I mostly let my imagination and my subconscious instinct guide the way. I use contrasting colors with dizzy brushstrokes to blur the distinction between fantasy and reality and explore social, philosophical and spiritual aspects of human nature.



JOY ZHENG

Joy Zheng was born in FuZhou, China in 1998 and moved to Canada at the age of three. One of her earliest childhood memories was sitting in her parents convenience store with her favourite magnetic drawing board where she drew cartoon animals for the customers that would pass by. Currently, she is studying at Western University, finishing off her BFA with her final year as part of the practicum class. Her practice has shifted from primarily acrylic painting to oil painting and installation works over the past few years. Drawing inspiration from Hieronymus Bosch and Salvador Dali, she creates paintings with a touch of Surrealism and an "other worldly"-like quality. Additionally, Zheng is pursuing a dual degree with the Ivey School of Business and has an interest in critiquing the systemic issues behind capitalism in her work. Her work *Abomination* (2019) was showcased at the 18th Annual Juried Exhibition where she received the Borders Crossing Award. Moving forward, Joy plans on creating large scale oil paintings and working with immersive installations, creating spaces that incorporate viewer interaction into her work in the future.



As an artist, I seek to challenge the perspectives in which we view ourselves in relation to the world around us by communicating these ideas through installation and painting. I'm fascinated by how we perceive the world, and the search for truth behind what we deem to be real and what we deem to be fabricated. My paintings focus on this concept of a falsified utopia in a dystopian world fueled by the dark side of human nature, tainted by selfishness, greed, and sin. The installations focus on creating spaces that make people question how they think, their behaviours, and what they believe.

Prevalent in my previous work, I explore themes of wealth disparity and the consequences of the system built to function in favour of those in power. Following this, I am creating work that comments on consumerism and the materialistic society that we indulge in, bringing to light the issues behind our current economic and political systems. Currently, I'm working on communicating these ideas through dystopian/anti-utopian societies, exposing the impact of harmful actions that seem harmless on the surface and how we are all inevitably accountable. Holistically, I'm interested in questioning social constructs and exploring what is inherent human nature and what is conditioned.



SKYE GIBSON

Skye Gibson is a visual artist who loves working with oil paint to create beautiful abstract images of nature, that incorporate a sense of human encroachment, to illuminate and inspire. The use of bright colour and thick application of paint marks her artistic style. Born in Toronto, Canada, Skye is currently completing her final year of the BFA program at Western University. Through her years as a student, Skye has participated in many group exhibitions with the Art Lab and Cohen Commons Gallery at Western, including NTBD not to be determined (2018) and Loose (2019).



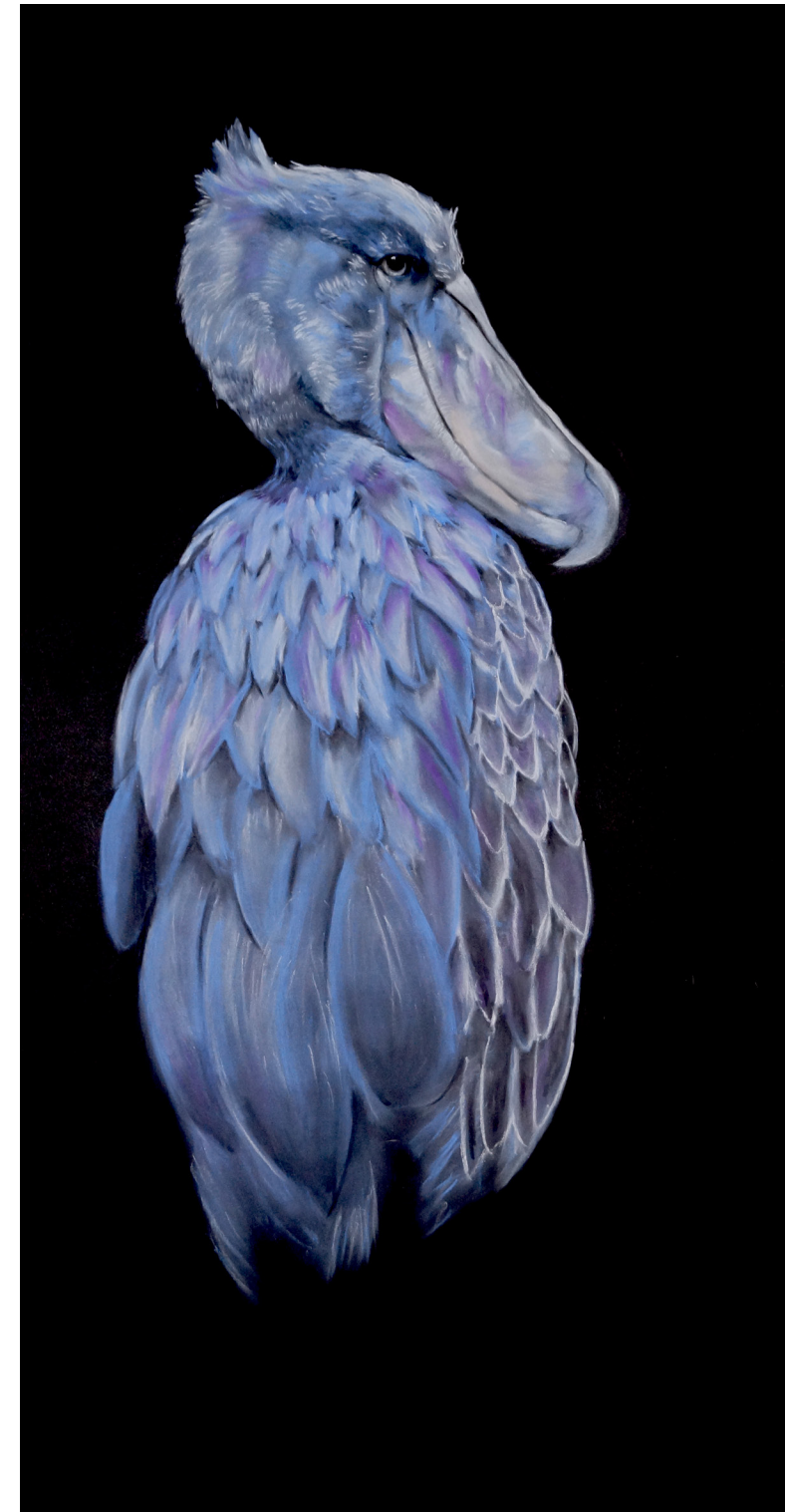
Inspired by the Canadian landscape, I portray natural elements through the thick application of oil paint and the use of bold colours. Through my expressive compositions, I remind viewers of the importance of protecting Earth's natural treasures so they it can be eternally appreciated. I bring nature to life with energetic paint strokes and intense compositional movement, suggesting that all forms of nature should be treated as living organisms that require attention and care. In producing art inspired by the environment, I depict how our ever-changing landscape has been impacted by humans. The relationship between humans and nature is strained, and my work represents these two opposing forces. Human industrialization has led to the destruction of many natural spaces, but mother nature is no silent victim. I want my art to start conversations about environmental protection that will encourage viewers to have a more holistic reconnection with the natural world.

Human intervention into the natural realm not only destabilizes ecosystems and exhausts its resources, but also impacts the visual appearance of these spaces. My most recent study of water brings attention to how pollutants have altered its compositional makeup, exterior colouring and textures. Some causes of these environmental changes include agricultural waste and oil spills. These occurrences destroy habitats and wildlife alike and can alter natural appearances both temporarily and permanently. As an artist, I communicate the impacts of humans on landscapes abstractly through colour, texture, and movement. I use red tones to emotively represent the violation and destruction of the environment by humans. Intense texture and movement energize my compositions and suggest the urgency of environmental crises. My work is meant to be initially pleasing, but offers an underlying sense of danger to the viewer. This juxtaposition of attraction and repulsion reveals how beauty persists in nature despite the damage of humans, ultimately offering hope that health and harmony are restorable.



JADE WILLIAMSON

Jade Williamson is an artist from London, Ontario, currently completing an Honours Specialization of Fine Arts at the University of Western. Her practice recently has been informed by an interest in wildlife and raising awareness for endangered species. Alongside actively working as an artist and pursuing her career as an art educator, she is the Exclusive Artist for Polar Nation. She has been producing artwork used for the creation of products of which proceeds go towards Polar Bears International for polar bear conservation. She has also joined the Embassy Cultural House website team as a contributing editor and has participated in their first virtual exhibition Hiding in Plain Sight. In her current year of her undergraduate degree, she has been awarded the David Magee Scholarship in Visual Arts and the Mackie Cryderman Award for Excellence in Visual Arts. Working within a realism tradition of representation, Jade specializes in free-hand drawings with conte, charcoal, and acrylic but is also exploring performance and intaglio. For more information, please visit her website at www.jade19337.wixsite.com/artbyjade.



My work comprises realistic illustrations, destructive materials, and performances of these materials interacting with each other; to express the fragility of the environment and its inhabitants. The delicacy of life thematic in my work communicates the permanent consequences of destructive human activities. By using images of endangered species in my artwork, I hope to raise awareness for at-risk wildlife and tackle the political issues surrounding the protection of these animals.

My realistic illustrations featured on a black background express a rarity of the depicted species. The black surface symbolizes a void regarding population or habitat. The species appear to be engulfed by it to embody how extinction is lurking upon them. My recent work incorporates elements of gold leaf because people treasure this precious metal. The concept of value and beauty attached to gold will play on people's desire to have and cherish this natural element of our world and our wildlife. In contrast to the emptiness of the black backdrop, it enriches the meanings of scarcity and rarity.

The destruction of each artwork represents a way in which these species are at-risk. The irreversibility of acid and burning demonstrates the fragility of these species. This merge between illustration and performance creates a blunt expression of the conflict between humans and wildlife. My presence in these performances using various ruinous materials is representative of human activity as a collective.

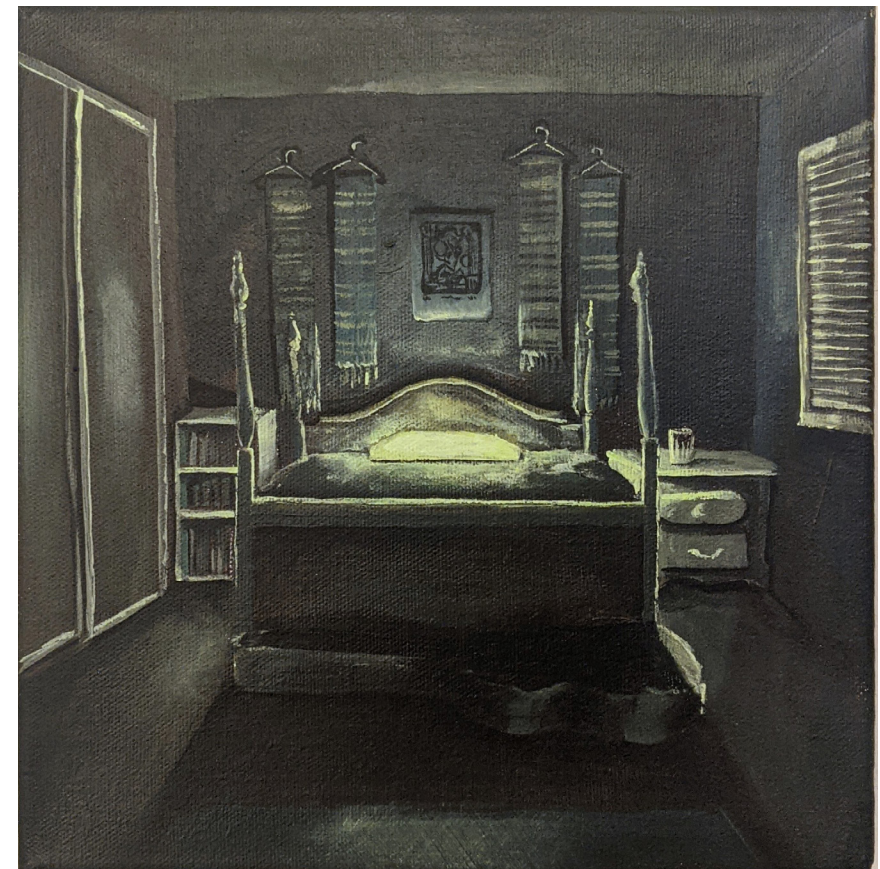
In materiality and imagery, my artwork communicates the fragility of our environment and its inhabitants. The layering of various mediums including, acid, gold leaf, water, fire, and performance, shows the damage to the species by the human hand. The inclusion of myself in the series speaks to the extinction of the natural world by mankind, which demonstrates that the evolution of these species ends with us, then we too will be endangered.



TIA BATES

Hi, I'm Tia. Nice to meet you. I have three dogs, and my favourite colour is green. Anywho, I'm not sure what I'll be doing after finishing up my BFA this year. I'm considering an MFA further into the future, but for now I'll be moving back home to nowhere Ontario to write and paint and work. Hopefully we'll be back in theater seats soon so the work I've created this year remains of current relevance and not just a reference to the past.

If you're interested in seeing more of my work you can have a look at my instagram: https://www.instagram.com/tiabates_art/



Beckoning to you from across the room - you've seen this kind of thing before - illuminating the world around it with its radiant light. The light pouring from the edges and hitting all of its surroundings. Everything around it catches its light and soaks it up into the fibers of its own being. Looming over the room and completely hypnotizing you, but you wanted this. After all, you are here by your own volition. You paid to be here, sitting in this room, bathing in the light of pure intention. Everyone gathered here for this. And when it starts, when that light comes on, it hits everything and everyone. That room you sit in becomes a vessel that transforms into any place, any time, and what does it do to you? When the light touches everything in sight, it touches you too. What does it do to you?

You'd think after being exposed to this kind of thing time and time again you'd be immune - and maybe that is the case for the most part - but every now and then, when the credits roll, and the lights come back on, something inside of you doesn't quite feel the same as it did before. And maybe that only lasts a few moments until you inevitably move on with your day. Or maybe it doesn't. Maybe that cascading light has soaked itself so deep into your skin that it will never wear away. Maybe it becomes part of the light that etches you into the world, that distinguishes you from your surroundings.

This is what I'm interested in. Within my practice, I make art that draws the viewer into the surface of the work in a way that references how a spectator is drawn into the theater screen. I am exploring the nature of storytelling through the cinematic as an experience that affects personal and collective identities. I am representing the feeling of seeing a movie for the first time and having that moment of awareness and wanting to chase that moment and recreate that feeling. Along with the relationship the viewer has with storytelling and the viewers awareness of how the story playing out on a screen in front of them etches itself into identity, and therefore into memory.



ASHLEY STAINES

Artist:

- Ashley Staines

Location:

- London, Ontario

Education:

- The University of Western Ontario. (2017-2021)
- Honours Specialization in Studio Arts
- Certification in Digital Communications.

Mediums:

- Oil and Acrylic Paint
- Printmaking
- Digital
- Drawing

Themes:

- Surrealism
- Exterior and Interior Spaces
- Energy

Links

- Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/ashley.s1999/>





My artistic practice mainly focuses on perceived reality and what is considered to not be “real” in the spaces that humans coexist and cohabitate in. This includes surrealistic elements such as the representation of dreams, daydreams and memories of the people that were once or are currently existing within that space. I am working on representing human perception through metaphor, whether it was visual, profound or metaphysical by using the presence of light and seeing how the aura affected the physical space.

The light helps us visualize and enhance the narratives that are often not typically seen. A space can both be permanent; there will always be remaining energies of humans. As well as be non permanent; there will always be a constant new change of energies based on the continual creation of interactions between humans which will create new memories from these interactions.



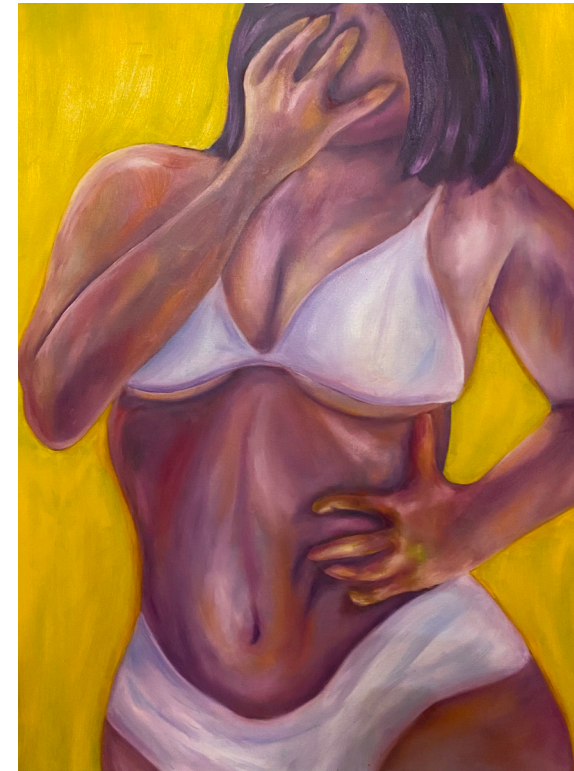
These remaining energies continue to affect spaces and show us what has once been; what has passed; what continues to affect what will be and continues to affect what will not be. I am continuing to explore the surreal, the permanence and the lack of permanence and the blending of metaphysical in the spaces that we continue to live in daily with experimentation and research.

NATALIE CHEVALIER

Natalie Chevrier (b. 1997) is a London based artist currently finishing her Bachelor of Fine Art: Honors Specialization in Studio Art from the University of London Ontario. She is a painter, working mostly in oils and focusing on themes of the female body, human experience, and perception. Often using colour and distorted form to convey intention. She wants her work to spark conversations about the history of how the female form has been perceived and depicted, challenging our notion of how women ought to exist in the world.



I am mystified by the human form and our interaction with it. I think that we place so much weight on our physical body and how other people perceive it, idealizing and fetishizing certain shapes and sizes, attempting to alter it to fit a standard. In reality, our bodies are only the vessel that carries us through life. My art largely focuses on this idea and deals with themes of sexuality, depersonalization, and perception. I process these themes through depictions of the female form (often myself) in moments of passion, fury, and realization. I also use colour and distortion of light and form to better capture the emotion and intent. My inspirations in my work are based largely on my fascination with the female form throughout art history and the way male artists would depict these innocent, gentle, and vulnerable women, placing them under the male gaze. I want my work to echo and relate to the history of the female nude, while challenging the male gaze and making the viewer aware of it. I want my art to make people uncomfortable but I also want it to make them consider why they feel uncomfortable, while also empowering and celebrating femininity and female sexuality.



JANELLE WILSON

Janelle Wilson is a contemporary digital artist and painter who lives and practices between the cities of London and Toronto Ontario, Canada. Due to pursuing an education in both media and the arts, her work often centralizes on incorporating the stylistic practice of the digital era through traditional painting mediums. In recent years, her work has evolved to speak to the thematic of entanglement, and the relationship that we build between ourselves and the environment around us.





The heart of my recent work has been environmental advocacy, and the string of emotions that can be experienced through acknowledging the current state of our planet. I am interested in pursuing the division in the concept of the façade, and how it contests with the reality. I draw inspiration from the current state of the digital era, where art is often a product of digital reconfigurations and the act of copying and pasting. Throughout my work, I aspire to use the way that we have normalized digital practices (that is often associated with a false reality), to speak on overarching environmental issues. In doing so, I am actively seeking to create work that visually confronts the distinction between the online and natural world.



RACHEL ELIAS

Rachel Elias is an artist in the process of finishing her undergraduate at Western University with a specialization in Fine Arts and a Minor in Psychology. Working with various mediums, she questions the “self” and her surroundings in her pieces and hopes when you view her art you are led to ask questions yourself, or at the very least enjoy the pieces.





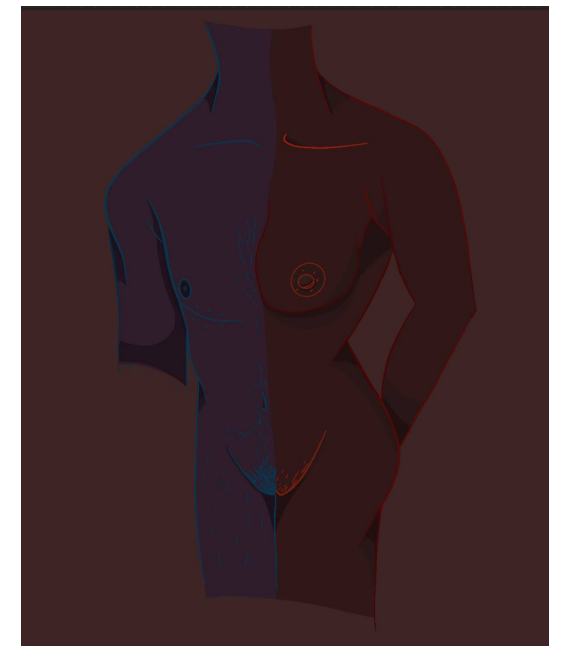
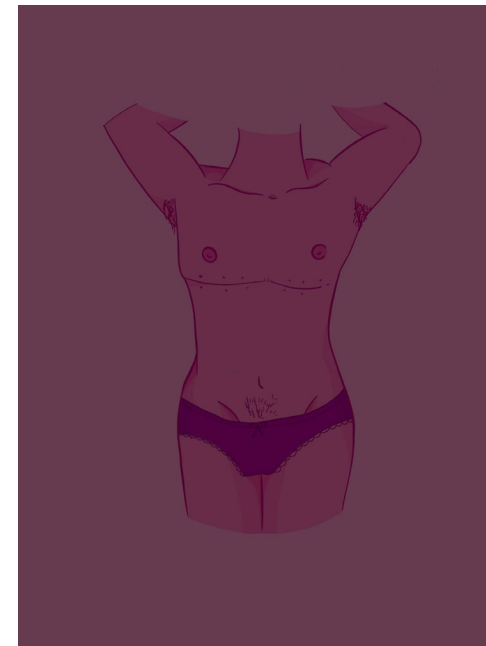
As I make art I create something that has its own identity. I'm an artist, and therefore my works naturally have a personal aspect that relates to myself, but since I am still constantly growing as an artist and a person, my pieces often deal with themes of identity confusion and act as a tool for analysing myself and the world around me. Through my process I also create works that have the capacity to tell their own stories and allude to having their own identity. I am very interested in storytelling. I think working the art of storytelling into my artworks allows the piece to have more depth, as they take on a life of their own with their own stories to tell. Within my paintings it feels as if I can expand the universe by creating a new universe that exists within the canvas.

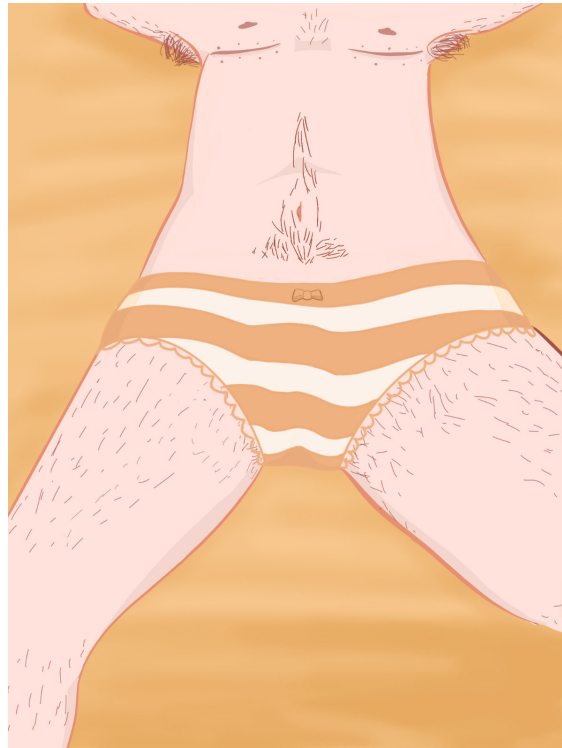
Whether I am trying to question something about our world, or create my own world, I hope that my art can spark curiosity in the viewers and leave them asking questions of their own.



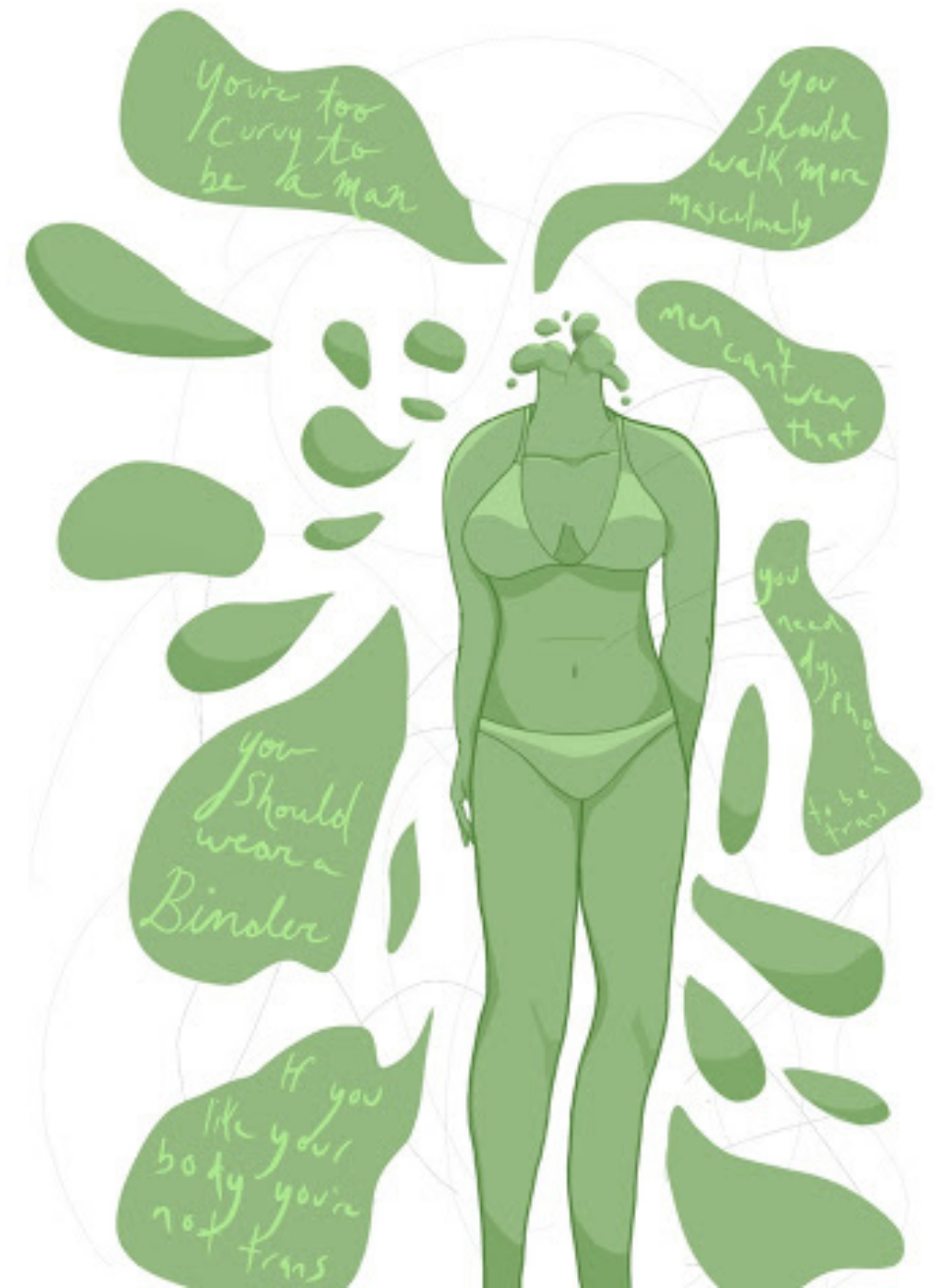
MACKENZIE SMITH

Mackenzie Smith is currently studying fine arts at Western University, is currently on VASA and works in an internship with the Embassy Cultural House. They will be graduating in 2021 with an Undergraduate Degree Bachelor of Fine Arts, Honours Specialization in Studio Art and future education prospects are currently unknown at this time. Their goal for the future is to create LGBTQ inclusive animations and illustrations and this inclusivity will continue to be portrayed in their works throughout their graduate endeavours.





As someone who is non-binary, I am passionate about creating work that focuses on the trans-masculine body. Many of the “ideal” trans males in magazines are very hegemonically masculine post-op, fit, and attractive. These bodies don’t represent all bodies. In my work, I want to encourage trans men and transmasculine nonbinary individuals to express themselves how they feel fit and not mould themselves to expectations of what a male has to look like or dress. When I first started my transition, I thought I had to get top surgery right away because I was scared of being judged by my community. I wish I would have held off to make myself take hormone treatments and look super masculine because I now express my masculinity differently and would have liked to spend a bit more time learning to love my old body before changing it. I want to be the voice for trans masculine people too scared to tell the community that they do not like to conform to gender ideals and to welcome people to explore their gender before they transition if they seek fit. While artists all hope their art makes a significant impact in the world, my hope is just that it creates a significant effect on at least one person’s life.



SAM ERDELYI

Sam Erdelyi is a multidisciplinary artist, working in drawing, painting, and most commonly, sculpture. Focusing on crochet, producing site-specific outdoor sculptures, Sam explores themes of psychological healing in relation to the natural landscape and embodiment. Her work investigates possibilities for healing through a collapse of the disconnect from mind and body and more recently has been featured in exhibitions such as Loose (2019) at Cohen Commons Gallery in London, and We Were and then We Weren't (2020) at Western's Artlab Gallery in London. Sam is completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Western University and is based in Chatham-Kent. Sam's work can be found at <https://www.instagram.com/samerdelyi/>.



Sam Erdelyi creates site-specific crochet sculpture influenced by and designed for outdoor installation in the natural landscapes of Southwestern Ontario. Sam's work is informed by both lived and work experience facilitating group artmaking to integrate the mind-body connection necessary to cope with symptoms of mental illness. Sam's work interacts with surrounding natural spaces, questioning perceptions of separateness from nature, the unconscious, bodily emotion, and memory. By creating work that encourages viewers to rethink these perceptions of disconnection, Sam hopes to generate discussion around the benefits of healing the mind through working with the body.



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