

VISIONARIES

By Santa Monica College Students



VOLUME 2

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Melia Person

Major: Art History

Role: Interviewer

Dream Job: My dream job is a mixed bag of 100 different jobs including but not limited to: ceramic artist, curator, writer, educator, designer. I want to pursue my passion for the arts to its fullest potential no matter the route that it takes.

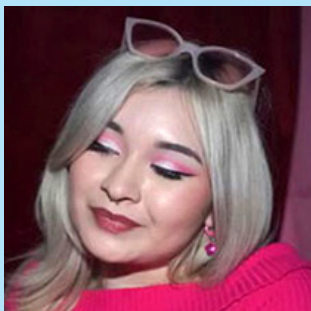


Lucas Rosales

Major: Studio Art

Role: Interviewer & Graphic Designer

Dream Job: A job I've always dreamed of is to be a professor or teacher of painting or sculpture. I think the greatest aspect of being an artist is having a sense of curiosity, so I see teaching as the ultimate way to pay back the knowledge that I was taught to the next generation.



Gloria Garcia

Major: Animation

Role: Graphic Designer

Dream Job: I would love to work as an animator either at Nickelodeon or Cartoon Network, but honestly as long as I'm working with art or making art I'm happy.

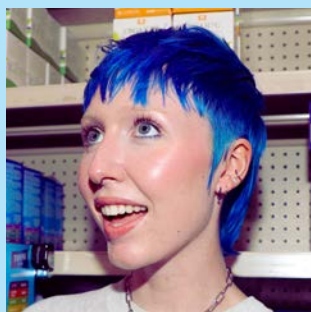


Andrea Campo

Major: Art/Photography

Role: Photographer

Dream Job: I would love to make enough money off my art to be able to live between Los Angeles and Torino, Italy and be able to spend time with the family I have in both places as well as study and make art in both places. I would also own a mixed-media art gallery on the side.

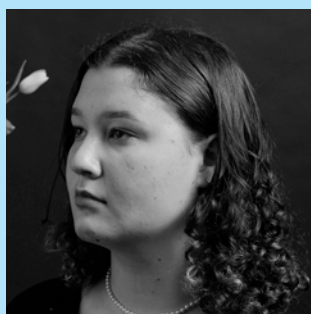


Kaia King-Hall

Major: Studio Art

Role: Interviewer & Graphic Designer

Dream Job: My goal is to continue my journey as an artist, having a consistent studio practice that explores the complexities of womanhood and the human condition. I want to shock, wow, and make people laugh, and cry (through art). I also hope to create a space that uplifts artists in ways similar to the Barrett.



Elodie Hekimian-Brogan

Major: Studio Art

Role: Photographer

Dream Job: My life's goal is to continue working in the arts, rooted in community building, documenting the underrepresented, and working with other artists and people who push me to be better in all facets.

Team

Julie Kaliuga

Major: Studio Art

Role: Editor

Dream Job: I am not dreaming of a job, I am aiming to be a social practice artist who is involved in community development. I am planning to continue studying and heading to get my PhD and write a book.



Nadia Anneborg

Major: Undecided

Role: Writer

Dream Job: My greatest dream is to work with and help vulnerable individuals in society. I have always enjoyed working with marketing, communication, and with other people. Art, in turn, has been a great interest of mine since childhood. In the best of all worlds, I would combine my interests in communication, marketing, and art, or alternatively work with art therapy.



Tracy Talley

Major: Studio Art & Communications

Role: Editor & Interviewer

Dream Job: I am an experience designer of rare and mystical events with a focus on art, history, and the coming together over great meals from different cultures. I want to collaborate with artistic people of all persuasions to bring ideas to life that inspire others and challenge the way we see the world.



Daijah Williams

Major: Studio Art

Role: Interviewer

Dream Job: My dream job is to be a Gallery Owner and Art Dealer. I want to one day own an art space where I can exhibit work from local black and brown artists in my community and host workshops where people within the community can come in and learn a new skill or craft. I hope to cultivate a space for Art education, exhibition, and practice.



Francisco Flamenco

Major: Graphic Design & Art

Role: Graphic Designer

Dream Job: I dream to not only work in LA but to branch out and experience ecstasy through out my life by living my dreams in film, painting graphic design, and music.



Emily Sedeno

Major: Business Marketing

Role: Social Media

Dream Job: I aspire to belong in an environment that will keep innovating. Marketing jobs are so unique and that is the exciting part of it!



Editor's Page

Photographed by Andrea Campo

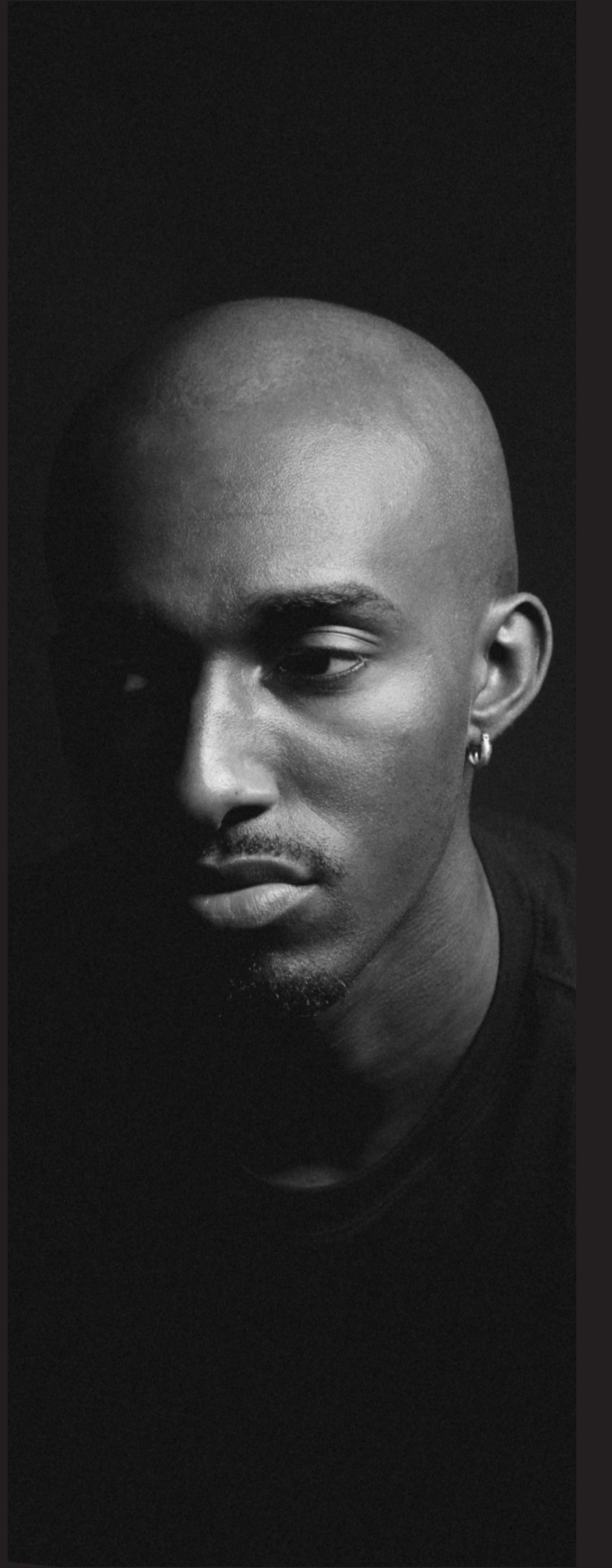
Robert Young

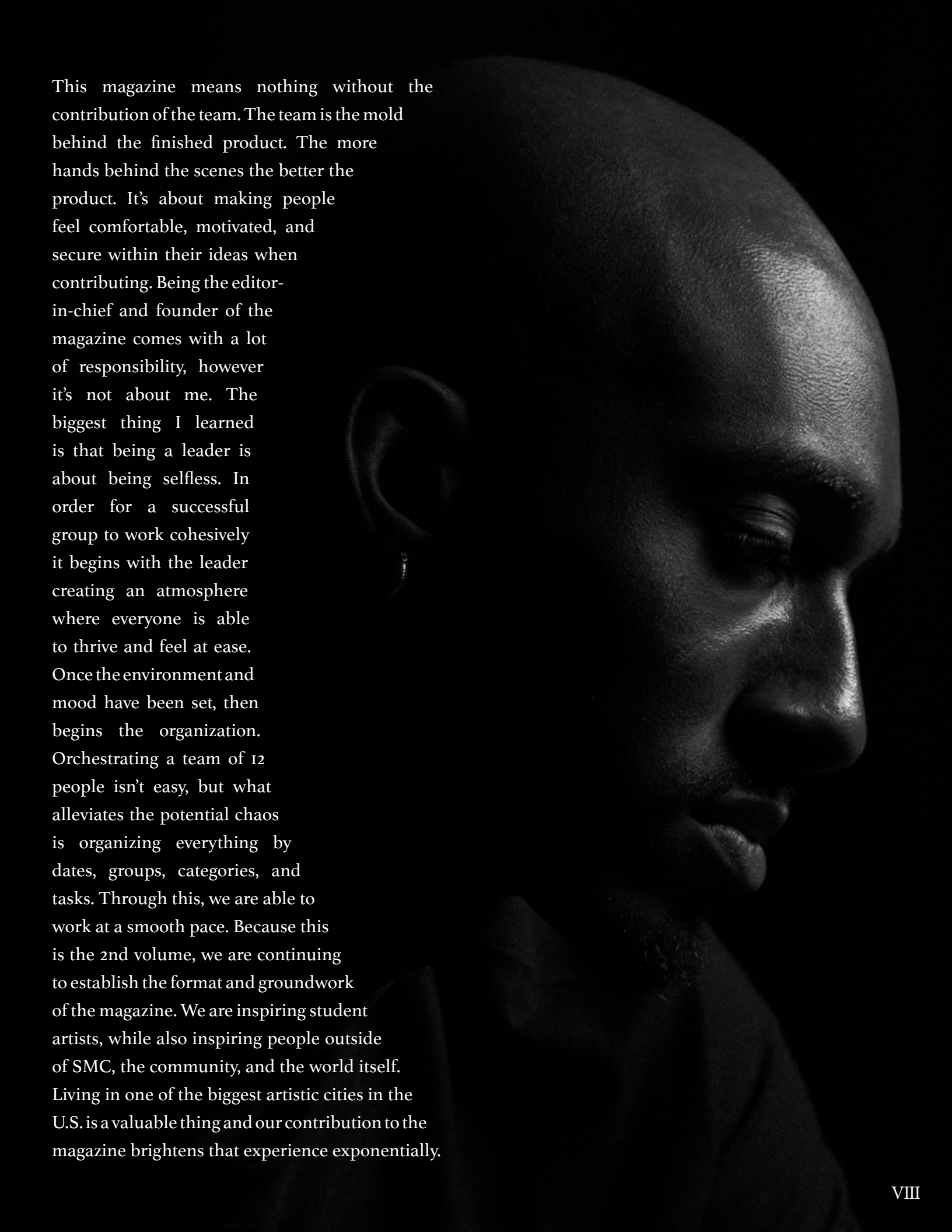
Major: Art History

Role: Editor-in-Chief, Graphic Designer, & Photographer

Dream Job: I'm not sure... but what I do know is that I see myself indulged in mixed forms of art, whether that be the practice of painting, music, photography, or fashion. Spreading my ideas and collaborating with different artists from around the world achieving the unachievable is my mission.

When I came to SMC in the fall of 2023, I noticed how brilliant and artistic the students were. It was far from any other institution I've attended in the past. It was filled with astounding professors and multi-dimensional students. Throughout the semester, I began to analyze how I can contribute to SMC's legacy. As I continued to converse and absorb the creative minds of SMC, it occurred to me that our conversations held weight. I wanted to capture these intimate moments, and save them so the world could hear their voices. I knew SMC was sitting on a goldmine full of aspiring artists who wanted to contribute to changing the art world. That's when I realized the creation of a magazine would capture their unique perspective, full of diverse mediums.





This magazine means nothing without the contribution of the team. The team is the mold behind the finished product. The more hands behind the scenes the better the product. It's about making people feel comfortable, motivated, and secure within their ideas when contributing. Being the editor-in-chief and founder of the magazine comes with a lot of responsibility, however it's not about me. The biggest thing I learned is that being a leader is about being selfless. In order for a successful group to work cohesively it begins with the leader creating an atmosphere where everyone is able to thrive and feel at ease. Once the environment and mood have been set, then begins the organization. Orchestrating a team of 12 people isn't easy, but what alleviates the potential chaos is organizing everything by dates, groups, categories, and tasks. Through this, we are able to work at a smooth pace. Because this is the 2nd volume, we are continuing to establish the format and groundwork of the magazine. We are inspiring student artists, while also inspiring people outside of SMC, the community, and the world itself. Living in one of the biggest artistic cities in the U.S. is a valuable thing and our contribution to the magazine brightens that experience exponentially.

Inspiring Voices: The Barrett Gallery & Visionaries Magazine at Santa Monica College

By Nadia Anneborg & Julie Kaliuga

Photographed by Elodie Hekimian-Brogan



Past featured exhibition, *Never Too Late*, Nehemiah Cisneros February 20th - April 22nd, 2024.

Professor Emily Silver began managing the Barrett Gallery in 2021. Redesigning the concept of the Barrett Gallery as student-centered, community-based, and social-justice-driven, opened the doors for new possibilities. The first exhibition, *The Prison Art Collective*, united the new mission and vision of the Gallery, bringing together students, teachers, artists, social institutions, and the community of Santa Monica. The gallery space was transformed partly into a display section and a section for workshops, lectures, and informal communication, where viewers could leave feedback or contribute. This show marked the beginning of further project development. In a short time, the gallery became a creative hub for students, creating a free environment within its walls for the birth and development of various creative projects. Professor Silver says, “As a teacher, it’s important when your students come to you with ideas for complex group projects not within the framework of course assignments, but as initiatives, especially when this initiative fully aligns with the goals of the gallery and seems to be its continuation. That’s why, when I heard about the idea of a magazine from Robert Young, magic happened.”

The Barrett Gallery is actively involved in the process of nurturing artists who are graduates of Santa Monica College as well as current art students. In March, the gallery hosted an exhibition by Nehemiah Cisneros, who is an SMC Alumni. In May 2024, the Barrett Gallery will host the Art Department Student Show, which is entirely curated by students of the Art Department's Exhibition & Display classes.

“My job is to be of service. When someone is willing to put energy above and beyond what they need to do to complete courses, I have to step in and help them. That’s the world I want to live in”, says Walter Meyer, Professor of Art History and the Chair of the Art Department. His teaching has evolved into a passionate commitment to serving and empowering students.

All exhibitions held at The Barrett Gallery are rooted in equity and social justice. This means every student, regardless of who they are or their background, has equal rights and resources to succeed. Every activity we undertake should serve and engage our students, our college, and our community. This principle also extends to *Visionaries*, which is open for all to participate in. Additionally, our magazine places art within our own historical context at SMC. We now have a living publication circulating beyond our college’s borders, showcasing itself to the wider community of what our students are achieving. As a Professor of Art History, Walter Meyer cannot stress this enough. Art and art history are some of the most important things a student can encounter in higher education. We are living in a visual culture, where we scroll through social media, picking pictures we want to post and making constant and unconscious visual choices. We forget about how our posts are created, shared, perceived, and fit into our visual culture ecosystem. Nothing in this world came out of a vacuum. Everything in this world comes from something and has its beginning somewhere with historical context. If you know about art history, you know about the history of images and the meanings of those images. When you start making studio art, you slow down, you start to think about not only the “how” but also the “why”. Why am I doing this? why am I



Past featured exhibition, *Never Too Late*, Nehemiah Cisneros February 20th - April 22nd, 2024

making these visual choices? How do these choices interact with past and present? Then you are able to create with intention what might not have been possible otherwise.

Meyer finds *Visionaries* particularly captivating because it solely stems from the genuine enthusiasm of SMC students. He states, “I believe that it’s crucial to support and encourage students when they come up with their own ideas and are driven to make them a reality. We must promote their development and success.” The remarkable thing about both the exhibition program and *Visionaries* is that they serve as channels to accomplish this. We have the opportunity to utilize resources to bring ideas to life and inspire enthusiasm in others. As a leader, Walter strives to identify opportunities for significant change that don’t require excessive resources. These investments by SMC have the potential to deeply impact students’ lives and careers. In this way, we can succeed in bringing about meaningful changes within the span of a single semester.

Past exhibition, *Never Too Late*, Nehemiah Cisneros February 20th - April 22nd, 2024





NEVER TOO LATE

NEHEMIAH CISNEROS

Interviewed by Robert Young

Nehemiah Cisneros is a renowned artist both born and based in Los Angeles, CA. Having grown up in Mid-city Los Angeles, his artwork represents the cultural stereotypes of marginalized communities. By painting humanly extraneous characters in saturated colors that are full of lively aesthetics, with a grittiness depiction of everyday life. He is influenced by his upbringing of the 1990s, using skateboard graphics along with Baroque theatrical art with the illusion of motion. Nehemiah's artwork is solidified within the Los Angeles art community, having work featured at Miami Art Basel with Jeffrey Deitch, a solo thesis show at UCLA, and a solo exhibition at the Susan Barrett Gallery. But, as always, the saying goes, "every person has to start somewhere", in which Nehemiah began his educational journey at Santa Monica Community college in his early thirties. He was then awarded a scholarship to attend Kansas City Art Institute for his undergrad. Currently, he's attending the UCLA School of Arts and Architecture graduate program where he will complete his MFA this year.



What was your journey like when you first started at SMC as an art student?

"When I started at SMC in 2016, I was 30 years old, eager to delve into studio practice. Before that, my focus was primarily on commercial illustrations for various platforms like skate deck graphics and men's streetwear. However, drawing had always been a part of me since infancy. Returning to school at 30, I brought a wealth of lived experiences that many art programs seek in transfer students. Under the guidance of the late Ron Davis, I crafted my portfolio and applied to several schools. Eventually, I was accepted into the Kansas City Art Institute, where I found a perfect blend of illustration and painting programs. It was a refreshing experience, exposing me to a new side of America while nurturing both my interests."

What do you think of the SMC Art Magazine and how do you see it being a big contribution for art students?

"Being part of this collaboration with Santa Monica College and the magazine feels like recording an important history. Many well-known artists, including myself, started their art journey at SMC. The magazine's existence marks a significant beginning for upcoming artists. In the future, these issues will be valuable records, showing the early works and artistic growth of new talents. Looking back on my classmates' journey, seeing how we've grown and succeeded is truly inspiring. SMC has played a big role in shaping many artists, and this project captures that legacy beautifully. Being in the 2nd issue is an honor, and I'm excited to see how it helps future artists."



Favorite place to eat?

Huishimbo's, on Wilshire and Arlington. Personally, it's the best Japanese barbecue restaurant ever!

Favorite movie?

Aliens, 1986 by James Cameron

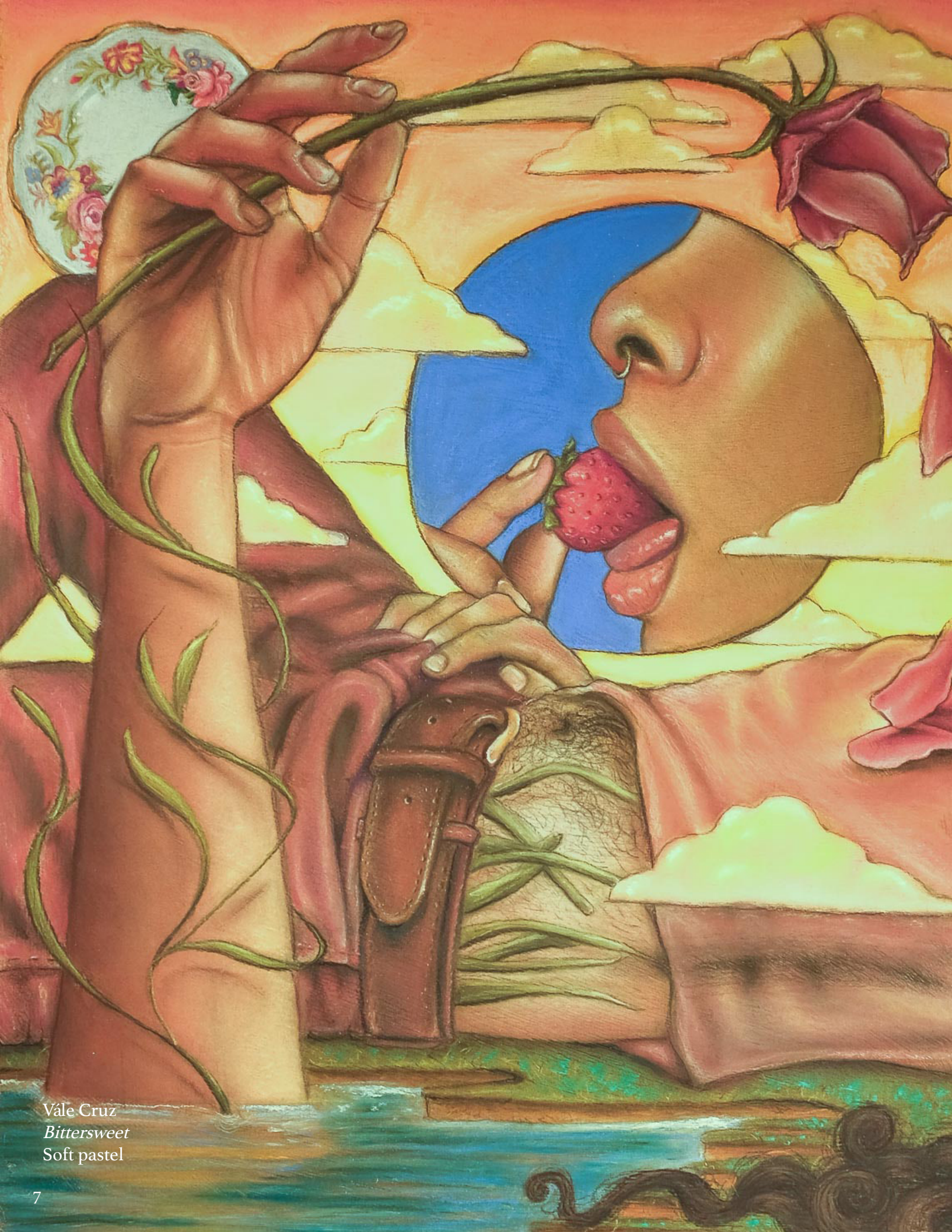
Favorite musician or artist?

Lil Wayne



NEHEMIAH CISNEROS

**NEVER
TOO
LATE.**



Vále Cruz
Bittersweet
Soft pastel

Artists

Disclaimer Words and titles of artworks are intended by the artist and are told in their voices. Viewer discretion is advised.

MADISEN MATSUURA

Art History Major, Sophomore

Interviewed by Kaia King-Hall & Photographed by Elodie Hekimian-Brogan

How does nature play a role in your work?

“When I think about my experiences within nature, a sense of calm and stillness comes over me. I live in a large sprawling city, and I’ve noticed that I don’t get to be a part of it that often. I also have a very busy life, which makes it harder to find time to just be. These moments in nature are so important, and I think that it is necessary that we can all have time for meditation every once in a while. I realized there was a lot of power to abstracting nature when I made the piece *Shell Rock*. This work shifted my path completely as an artist because I didn’t understand beforehand what abstraction was, but I realized it could be a key component in distilling the aspects of the natural world into art that allows for the viewer to tap into their curiosity. I especially find inspiration when I am by the ocean or bodies of water. The work *Cavities of the Ocean* tries to encapsulate the unique shapes of the water’s surface. The form itself can be attributed to the shape of coral, but also reminds me of a specific fungi species known as *Phallus Indusiatus*. What’s so special about the work is its openness to interpretation. Everyone has their own unique relationship with nature, and it has the power to bring back distinct memories that we have when we were exploring our just existing with nature.”

I get a sense of childlike wonder when looking at your work, is that something that you think about?

“One of the emotions I feel that life can lack is wonder. That sense of child-like wonder that I am very reminiscent of has become a rare experience in my everyday life. Art has become the tool I use to help bring back intrigue into the world. Looking back on my childhood, everything seemed so much more exciting. Maybe this is because every day was treated like an opportunity to learn about the world, whereas now we put more emphasis on our productivity and output. Life’s current state of rigidity and structure influenced how I want people to engage with my work. *Nurturing the Inner Child*, located on the SMC campus in the art complex, is meant to be interactive. People are able to stand inside the form, and as they enter they pass through a curtain of various pink ribbons and white lace. The viewer gets to physically be a part of the artwork, which isn’t always the case when we see art in museums and galleries. This piece was made to create a safe space for the most vulnerable part of myself to feel that sense of wonder again. I chose the materials of ribbons and lace because they remind me of my childhood, and still to this day I love the look and feeling that lace and ribbons have.”



Madisen Matsuura, *Cavities of the Ocean*,
Masking and packing tape



Madisen Matsuura, *Nurturing the Inner Child*, Welded steel, ribbon, and lace

How many pets do you have?

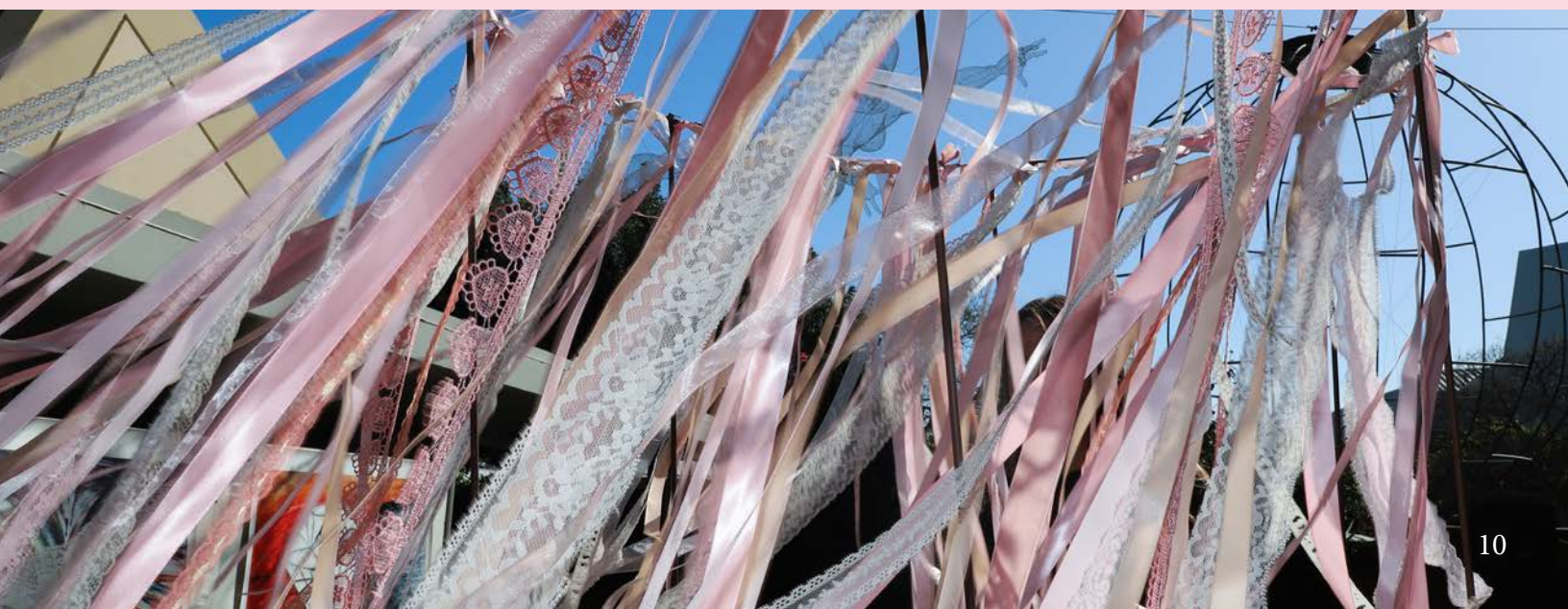
“A lot, my family has had 35 dogs.”

What’s your favorite song right now?

“Galapagos by Smashing Pumpkins.”

What was your favorite toy as a kid?

“I’ll counter that, I was a blanket kid. I had a favorite blanket.”





Madisen Matsuura, *Rock*, Cardboard, chicken wire, and paper mache

Knowing you, I think your art and personality go hand and hand, how does your identity play a role in your work?

“My answer to this question is always changing. I don’t always feel I have a clear grasp as to what my identity is, but the act of creating art is getting me closer to figuring out who I really am. Nature has become a tool to explore my identity in relation to the land. I grew up near the ocean, and perhaps I’m so drawn to it because it feels boundless. The ocean can not be characterized by one narrative, and through its cycles it is constantly changing. When I tell people about myself and who I am, it feels like I am limiting myself to that current version of myself. Though the creative choices that I make in my art, I remind myself of who I am. *Nurturing the Inner Child* helped me to realize that being a woman does have an impact on my art. The piece was originally created as a monument for something considered unmonumental. I welded steel pencil rods together, all in the efforts to hold up physically weightless ribbon and lace. Pink was my favorite color as a kid, but the stigma of being perceived as too feminine led to the habit of suppressing my interests that could be perceived as “too girly.” The mental toll of creating a persona that could be taken seriously by society is an issue that a lot of feminine presenting people have had to bear on their shoulders. Talking about why pink and lace motifs were important in my life led me to reflect on how growing up as a woman has led to the person I am today. The process of making work can become healing as I am obligated to reckon with complicated emotions about who I am.”



Madisen Matsuura, *Shell Rock*, Foam, plaster, and felted wool

HANDREA JAYE

Studio Art Major, Freshman

Interviewed by Kaia King-Hall & Photographed by Andrea Campo

What inspired you to return to school and take art classes?

“I returned to school because of the creative community and guidance, and to gain knowledge and learn new skills. School provides the structure that challenges and enlightens me. And the instructors are phenomenal. I’m grateful for the Art community here and the support I’ve received.”



Handrea Jaye, *Mop Face*, Plaster

How has being a mother impacted your art?

“There is an overwhelming joy and sacrifice that co-exist as a mother. The loss of ones self is real, and the act of service is something that has given me a profound sense of belonging. My work is influenced by service. And I’ve seen my impulse to create fluctuate for so many years because of it. But it’s because of my motherhood that I’m able to dig deep and pull out some meaningful work. That is the prize, the win for me as an Artist. There is so much emotional content to pull from, so many screwed up stories to be told, and good ones to remember. That’s the place I create from. Art is where I celebrate my losses, and recover some wins.”



Did you have a good first kiss?

“No. It was during spin the bottle, hair-lipped and disgusting.”

First concert?

“Juice newton playing with the Queen of Hearts.”

What are your top three favorite things right now?

“Watching psychotically driven reality shows, canvas tote bags with prints, and investing money.”

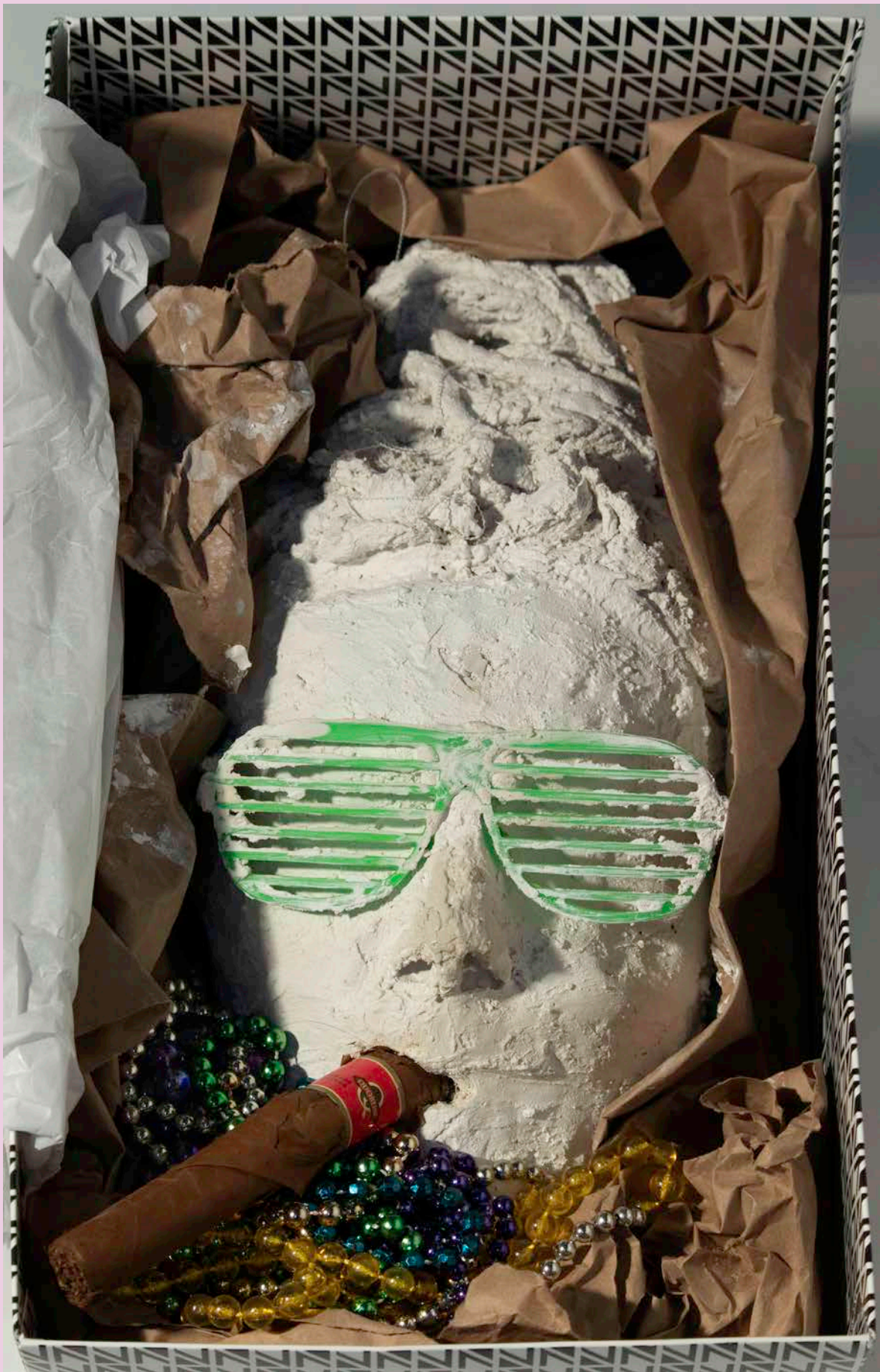
What's does your work represent to you?

“*Dust Pan and Heels* is a work that serves as homage to women, highlighting their stereotypical roles and labor. I did a bit of digging on the history of high heels and learned they were once a symbol of wealth, worn by high powered men in 16th century Persia. Fast forward they are now defined as symbols that make women appear confident, taller, and attractive, also improving their gait and accentuating their feminine traits. And are used for events, display, performance, authority, and urbanity.

I created *Dust Pan and Heels* as an ode to all women, highlighting their stereotypical roles and labor. This is an “I see you”, “we kick ass”, and “I know this isn’t easy” statement. It’s ironic and a bit twisted, but it is a celebration honoring all women who self-sacrifice wearing metaphorical “heels”, not because we wanted to but because we were taught to and expected to. This level of societal brainwashing has cornered women into accepting stigmas and injustices, like, domestic abuse, oppression, sexual violence, weaker sex, don’t be a pussy, wife beater, crazy bitch, vs. hormones, salary disparity, a woman’s place is in the home, homemaker etc. It will be interesting to see how this work is interpreted because I believe interpretation is diverse. But regardless, if you are a woman in high heels or using a dust pan, it’s the humans who wear those metaphorical shoes and love hard that inspires me.”



Handrea Jaye, *Dust Pan and Heels*, Plaster



Handrea Jaye, *Cigar Face (Back on Track)*, Plaster



Who is your favorite artist to listen to while creating artwork? It depends on the mood I'm trying to capture in the artwork.

My playlists are constantly evolving. The latest additions are Devendra Banhart, Thornato, Lido Pimienta.

Favorite binge worthy TV show?

Adventure Time, What we do in the shadows, The Good Place, Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency.

GRACIELA GONCALVES Da SILVA

Studio Art Major, Junior

Interviewed by Robert Young & Photographed by Elodie Hekimian-Broga

First, start off by telling where you grew up; and tell us about your upbringing with art?

I'm from Buenos Aires, a vibrant city shaped by waves of immigrants and economic struggles. My family life was a double-edged sword. They provided stimulation with books, music, and technology, but the unspoken tensions made home feel like walking on eggshells. I spent a lot of time in the street, soaking in the sights and sounds while creating my own world in my head. Drawing became my way to express emotions I couldn't put into words. On weekends I swapped comics and tapes in the park with friends. Situations depicted in Manga/anime and the early unregulated internet, showed me a bigger world beyond my imagination. I listened to

industrial/darkwave and hang out at alternative record and comic stores. One store, in particular, stood out with American artists like Jim Woodring and Mark Ryden. Fueled by this inspiration, I teamed up with friends to self-publish comics and illustrations, distributing them at events and record stores in the early 2000s.

How would you describe your artwork?

What is your intention of creating artwork that is specifically full of vibrant colors and characters?

My art connects the gap between my inner world and the world we experience. Bold colors and simple shapes grab the brain's attention, amplifying my subconscious voice. But apart from seeing and hear-

ing, I need to understand it. Since messages are often unclear, I let my hand translate them into characters – living entities I interact with for guidance. They talk through body language and colored atmospheres, tapping into a shared understanding of emotions and social cues. Characters translate the whispers of my unconscious into something relatable, sparking conversations between my inner self and the viewer.

What is the inspiration and the artistic vision of your mural titled, *Safeguard in Shanghai*?

Feeling adrift far from home, *Safeguard* explored vulnerability. While many interpreted it as symbolic of parenthood, the true meaning re-

mained elusive for me. If I chose not to have children, and have a complicated family history, why am I painting this? Later, a huge revelation struck: “my adult self is able to offer my inner child the nurturing I craved while growing up”. It immediately transformed this piece into a personal treasure. This is art’s magic– revealing new layers of significance as we grow.

Contextually, this piece sits opposite Shanghai’s stock exchange. The cultural shock was intense, and for most of the project, feedback was scarce. Feeling lost, I questioned the purpose. On the final day, a man approached, hesitantly at first. He spoke English: “This area is full of people stressed about money. Your mural, is just what we needed. A reminder of

love, of family.” His unexpected validation reaffirmed everything.

Graciela Goncalves Da Silva
Safeguard
Acrylic paint on masonry





Graciela Goncalves Da Silva
Mourning Roots
Acrylic paint on paper

Graciela Goncalves Da Silva
Holding Unknown Feelings
Acrylic paint on paper





Favorite place in the world?

The skate park

Favorite song?

Little Bit by Lyyke Li

Favorite food?

A vegetarian Ethiopian Food platter

DAIJAH WILLIAMS

Studio Art Major, Sophomore

Interviewed by Melia Person & Photographed by Andrea Campo

The objects you create are large and take up space how does that reflect your experience as a young black queer femme person?

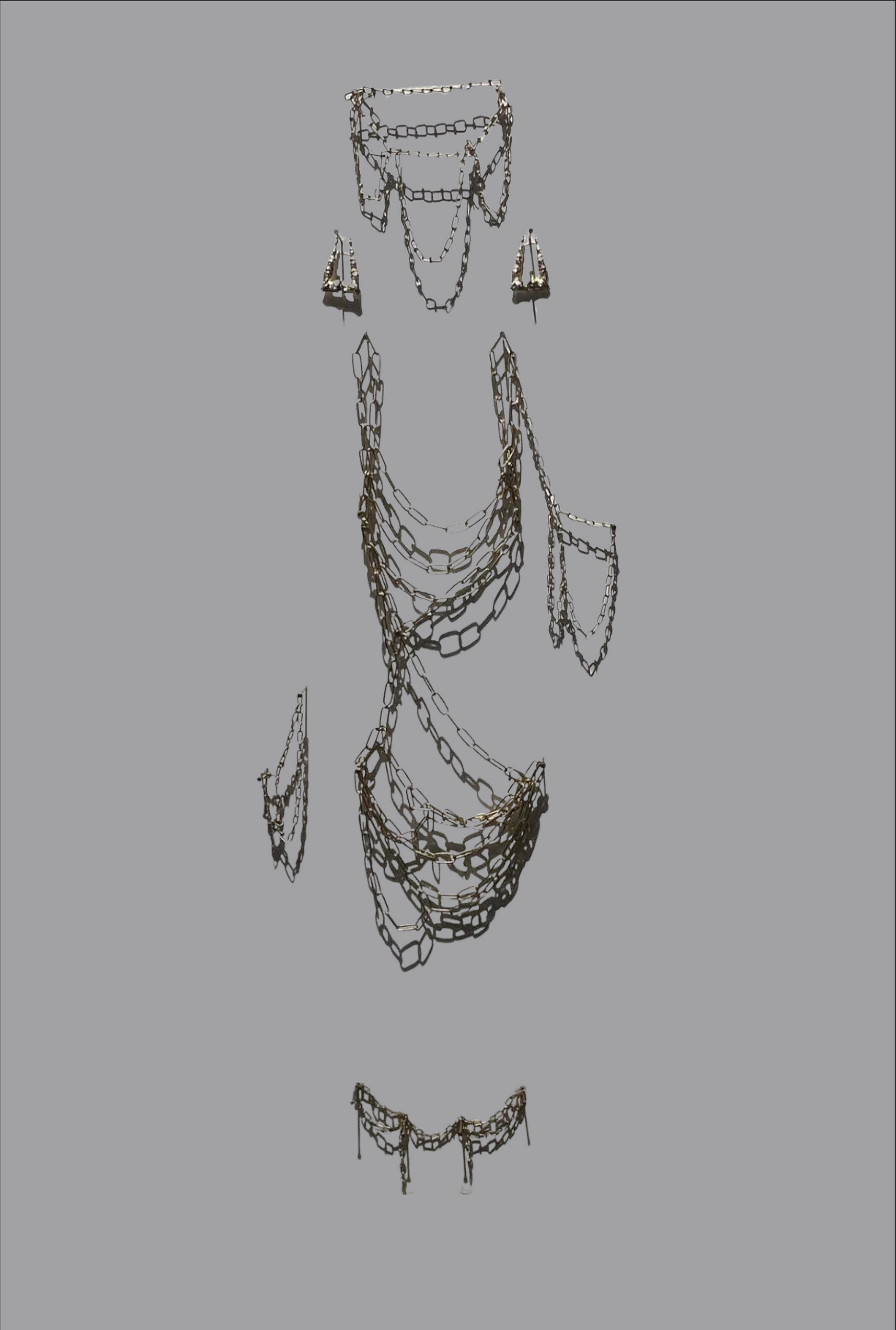
“I feel that my presence by default takes up a lot of space. I am very much an open book, never afraid to share my opinion, and overall a very outspoken person. I feel that this is a result of me choosing to live in my truth and being open with my identity as a black queer femme person.”

What is your favorite medium to work with and why?

“I love to work in clay or pastes. Most of the clay I work in is my own handmade medium that I create from cardboard, oil, and glue. It takes a lot of physical work to get a workable amount of clay. Although it is hard work to create the medium, I find something so special about creating what I will create with. Each piece feels like such a full circle moment. I love to get my hands dirty and get really messy when I am creating the work.”

Did you always know that you wanted to be an artist?

“I have always been a creative person. When I was a child I knew I wanted to be an artist. I remember telling my father I wanted to be an artist when I was younger, he told me “most artists don’t make much money”, that talk I had with him greatly affected the direction of my life. I remember thinking to myself “I just want to draw, I don’t care about the money”. I’ve continued my practice throughout my life in different mediums, I have taken on photography, painting, sculpture, ceramics, etc... For me it’s more of the act of creating that’s fulfilling, than any reward, payment, or validation that could come from my work.”



Daijah Williams, *Peacocks and Rhinos, Chain*



Daijah Williams
I am But a Moment in Time
Paper mache

Daijah Williams
I am But a Moment in Time
Paper mache



Daijah Williams
Nice To Meet You Again Mother
Wood





VÁLE CRUZ

Art History & Studio Art Major,
Sophomore

Interviewed by Melia Person & Photographed by Robert Young

What is your artistic process?

“Doing surrealism, I have this process that I like which is well known, titled automatic surrealism, you kind of just free-flow ideas subconsciously. I like to try to tap into that realm of idea-making and come out with characters or concepts without much thought, but really just what I think would look appealing. Then I go back and refine those ideas by making connections of what I did and try to make something of it based on the connections that I make. I make a lot of sketches, and reworkings until I lead up to the final piece. But for

the cartoon stuff, I just make a sketch and come up with things that I feel would either make me happy or be funny to look at.”

Your work seems to be an open expression of your experiences, how does it feel to have people perceive your life through your artwork?

“I think it’s really nice when I get the chance to talk to people about my artwork when they approach me and ask me questions about things. It’s really important as an artist and a person, to develop human connection, especially through something like art. It feels like a privilege for me to develop connections with the viewer through my art.”

How do you want to be remembered as an artist?

“I don’t know. I feel like I want to be remembered by the conversations that I’ve had with people who feel connected to my art or who have gone to talk to me about my art or bought something, I think I want to be remembered by the more conversational aspects of everything. Those things feel important to me in my artistic journey in general. If someone were to remember something when looking at my artwork, I would feel happy if they would imagine my stuff to be gentle and playful. Maybe if there were a serious idea behind a piece of artwork that was executed thoughtfully and compassionately, I would hope that people would take that with them and remember those aspects of my artwork.”

Favorite color?

Warm yellow

Best thing you’ve ever eaten?

Breakfast Pizza at Buffalo Pizza
& Ice Cream

Comfort show?

King of the Hill



Vále Cruz, *No Evidence That Growth is Painful*, Soft pastels



Vale Cruz, Road Trips Are Not Nice, Gouache



Vále Cruz, *Gender of The Past Present and Future Self*, Soft pastel

Elodie Hekimian-Brogan

Studio Art Major, Sophomore

Interviewed by Lucas Rosales & Photographed by Elodie Hekimian-Brogan



What does your artistic process look like? Where do you draw inspiration from and how does that influence your process?

“I pull inspiration from exhibitions, books, life experiences, and often the mundane fun stuff like road signs or rare moments that go unseen. I take a million photos of everything and use my camera roll and notes app as a constant exploration of ideas. My artistic process is developed in my journals once I have gathered elements of an idea. I create chicken scratch drawings of shots I want or write out what I want the shoot to execute. I find it crucial to live in an environment that allows me to find inspiration just sitting at my desk. I have old childhood albums, hundreds of photos on my wall, and a running list of ideas sitting above my desk. Living in a creative environment and writing down my ideas allows me to continue pushing out work without it feeling like a job.”

What are your career goals after SMC?

“The obvious goal is to be a working artist but the thought of just working as an artist scares me shitless. I have to have my hands in many pots or I feel unsatisfied. I plan to be an artist while working in the arts. Whether that be in museums, galleries, non-profits, or as a teacher. I need to talk and work with people to feel fulfilled, so a solo studio practice would not benefit me or my work.”

If you could travel anywhere for vacation, where would it be?

“Bora Bora, something about that blue water and the huts has had me entranced since I was 13.”



Elodie Hekimian-Brogan, *Princess Dyke and Lee*, Digital photography

When did you know that you wanted to become an artist and when did it occur that this was something you were going to pursue?

“Ever since I was a kid I wanted to be a photographer, banking it as the coolest job one can have. I left that dream as I pursued other academic feats but revisited the idea in covid when I found my parent’s old cameras. I took 3 photo classes my senior year and it felt like I woke up. On my drives home, out with friends, and in the shower I was consumed with ideas for shoots and the general excitement for photography. It felt challenging whilst in reach. Despite this, I decided to pursue Psychology out of fear of being a starving artist. My senior year one of my self-portraits was exhibited in the Getty Museum for six months and that changed my life. The hobby I poured my heart into started to materialize. I spent my freshman year changing my major to art and then ultimately deciding I wanted to move home to try out art school. The decision to call myself an artist is still something I struggle with. I cried for days when I spent all my money on my camera, worried I wasted money on a dream. After a few months I made the money back solely from photography. That stands as a constant reminder to invest time and sometimes money into my work thus giving myself no reason to not follow through and make my art.”

What’s something that you wish everyone knew about you?

“I am a collector of things. I have kept most cards I’ve received and hopefully will do some art show with them later. I work in a bike shop and love riding bikes. I love talking to strangers!”

Who’s your favorite artist?

David Hammons, Carrie Mae Weems, and Robert Mapplethorpe made me want to become an artist.



Elodie Hekimian-Brogan, *Pastor's Daughter*, Digital photography



Elodie Hekimian-Brogan, *Fuckboy Jesus*, Digital photography

Could you explain the meaning/connection of *Pastor's Daughter* and *Fuckboy Jesus*?

“The two pieces are from a series called *Pastors Daughter*. The series is a fantastical depiction of Pastor’s daughters who were told Jesus was the only one for them. Taking it in a literal and theatrical way the girls spend their time dreaming of Jesus, saving every bit of themselves for him. Thus producing a whimsical dreamscape of religious obsession, girl-like crushes, and a literal romanticized version of fuck-boy Jesus.”



Elodie Hekimian-Brogan, *Outsmarting Cancer*, Digital photography

Gwyneth Dowdee

Studio Arts Major, Sophomore

Interviewed by Lucas Rosales & Photographed by Gwyneth Dowdee



Artworks in order of appearance:
Living Organism, sculpture,
August, 2023, digital photography,
detail of *Living Organism*,
detail of *Living Organism*

What does your artistic process look like? and where do you draw inspiration from, and how does that influence your process?

“I think my process so far has been very idea based and very conceptually. I think through emotions, and then that idea kind of forms, and then that morphs into whatever visual medium kind of suits it the best. I have a lot of trouble thinking medium first. If I just sit down and do a painting, it doesn't really work out. So I think a lot about genuine, deep emotions and sort of processing them through art. Conceptually, my inspiration, I think, comes from a lot of music. Honestly, I think music really inspires me and makes me feel creative and makes me have that spark of inspiration to make art. Then also I draw a lot from femininity. I think that's a lot of my art. It has to do with womanhood and dealing with my own body and dealing with my own life experience. I think it's all very, very personal, and I think that's my favorite kind of art when it really digs into who the artist is, and then it allows the audience to sort of, like, connect with it in a new way or make them think through their own emotions.”

What are your career goals after SMC?

“So I'm hoping to receive my associate's degree in studio art, and then I would love to transfer to a UC to complete my bachelor's in art. That all has to do with, you know, what I can afford. Thankfully, SMC has been a great stepping stone for letting me kind of explore art and figure out what I want to do while not having to pay so much. Post school, once I have my bachelor's degree, I really hope to own my own art gallery one day. That's really my big dream. I have no idea at what point that can happen, but along the way, I would love to keep making my own art and keep using that as an outlet and hopefully let it be seen by a larger audience, and reach people with my art. I currently run a little artist collective for young people, and I have a lot of fun curating. I hope to continue that in the future more professionally doing larger gallery shows and owning my own space where I can put on art shows.”

You want to plug your collective?

“Yeah. It's called the Young Artists Society. We're based in Hermosa,(beach) and we've done, like, thirteen art and music shows. It's really, really fun. We have a ton of members. We're kind of on hiatus right now, but I hope to do more projects like that in the future.”



When did you know that you wanted to become an artist and when did it occur that this was something you were going to pursue?

“My family is full of artists. I've kind of always been around art. I had the really lucky experience of being homeschooled for most of my life, which had its ups and downs, but through that, I was able to spend a lot of my time throughout the day being creative, exploring outside, exploring art museums a lot with my parents. Both my parents actually have masters in art, so it's kind of just like in my family blood to be an artist. I didn't really find my own passion with it until high school. I think when I was like, 16, when the pandemic hit, it was like I was a dancer growing up, and that was my creative outlet.” Then once the pandemic hit, I was like, this isn't

really giving me the same outlet that it used to. So I sort of switched over to the visual mediums more, and then I started working in the art field. Through that, I started painting, and then I got really into photography. I think photography was the way that I was like, oh, maybe I actually have some skill in this. Maybe this could be a future. So through that, that's how I sort of wanted to go to art school and planned out my life."

Describe your dream studio?

"I'm a very messy person, so when I picture my own artist studio, I think of artists that are just all over the place, and maybe they're not stuck to one medium, which I find a lot of inspiration in. Sort of letting the art come from within...so I think it would be a space that has maybe a dark room and painting supplies and room to make a sculpture and just all of these different outlets. I want to have access to be able to think more about the idea and less about needing to go buy paint. My dream space would have all the supplies in the world. You know, it'd just be a complete mess."



August, 2023, Digital photography

Who's your favorite artist or artists and why?

"My favorite artist is Nan Goldin, the photographer. I love her so much. I think her photography not only changed the way I think about photos, but changed the way I think about art in general. I have her book *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*", and I adore it. The way she talks about her art and the way she talks about her experience is really cool. I also watched her documentary, and just finding the sources of her inspiration helped me get inspired. Also the band, Big Thief, I love them so much. I've made multiple pieces where I could pinpoint the exact big thief song that it was inspired by. Their whole discography of music has changed the way I think about art, for sure."



What's something that you wish everyone knew about you as an artist, or in general?

“I spend a lot of time on the idea of my art, and I think a lot in a sort of language. I put language onto my art a lot, and I really try to describe it to people. I hope the audience will look at my art and kind of find their own connection to it and maybe think less about my own identity. Even though my art is so identity based and so based on my own personal experience, I hope that it can still reach out to the audience in a way where they realize things about themselves or they figure out their own emotions through my art.”

If you could travel anywhere for a vacation, where would it be?

“I'm actually hoping to take this fall to travel. I'm hoping to go to Ireland to do this residency, which my friend did last fall. It's called Cowhouse in Ireland. Basically, you live on a farm, and you get to make art. It's really cool. So I just applied to that, but if that doesn't work out, me and my friend want to kind of backpack around Europe, and I think that's sort of my dream vacation”.

Top, detail of *Living Organism*
Bottom, detail of *Living Organism*



MAYA DONDONYAN

Photojournalism Major, Sophomore

Interviewed & Photographed by Robert Young

How did you develop a signature style in photography and what elements did you focus on to create that?

“I supposed my style blossomed naturally and other people noticed my signature feeling before I really tried to ‘create’ it. When I’m shooting, I’m experiencing an event through my viewfinder. My eyes and heart are open. I look for real moments in between, I look for vulnerabilities and strengths in people and their interactions. I try to capture the feeling of what it was like to be there. I notice I like my photographs to look like how a memory feels. When I edit, if I’m shooting on digital I like to make my images look as close to analogue film as possible. When a project allows me to afford shooting on film, I love to shoot on film and not edit the photo much at all.”

What is your message you want to communicate through your artwork?

“Beauty is everywhere and we already live in paradise. Humans are the superior species capable of incredible creation or devastating destruction. What will we choose? There is much pain and suffering happening in the world, but there is also a bright light shining through each corner of this earth and I like to look for that silver lining. Lately, I have been focusing on landscape photography and films centered around Mother Earth as an intelligent being who responds to how we treat her. We live on a planet with so much wonder. There are waterfalls, natural hot springs, craters, critters, canyons and humans who interact with this space and use its natural resources to survive, create and more. There’s inherent value in the Earth. I love documenting her in all her majesty.”

Today, there are more people with cameras than ever before. There are a lot of creatives in Los Angeles with Cameras. So what do you think sets you apart from other creatives?

“My perspective is my own and no one will ever be able to take that away from me or recreate images exactly the way I see them. I also fully believe the energy of the person behind the camera matters. When I was shooting sports, I got different photographs than the other photographers on the field simply because I was the only young girl on the sidelines. The players responded more playfully to me and would pose for pictures and have more fun in front of my camera. People naturally felt more comfortable in front of me and the big lens I had in front of my face. I also allowed myself to experience many different walks of life and gain as many viewpoints as possible; I have seen a wide breadth of worlds and I have absorbed this information in my own way. I add all my experiences to the vision of my art. I learned not to be intimidated by other photographers early at my time at USC. When I had a team of photographers covering the same event, like a football game, let’s say, even though the same thing is happening in front of all of us, we all will come back to the newsroom with completely different images and angles. I found that



incredibly fascinating! I also get inspired from photographers who are better than me and I want to learn from them. I would rather surround myself with artists that are better than me, than think I'm the best artist in the room. I believe that's how we keep getting better and progressing in our craft."

Favorite shoes?

I love to wear knee high military boots. In any color.

Favorite meal?

Give me Pho or Tom Kha and I am incredibly happy.

The most notable figure you've ever photographed?

Stan Lee.



Maya Dondonyan, *Oregon*, 35mm Photo

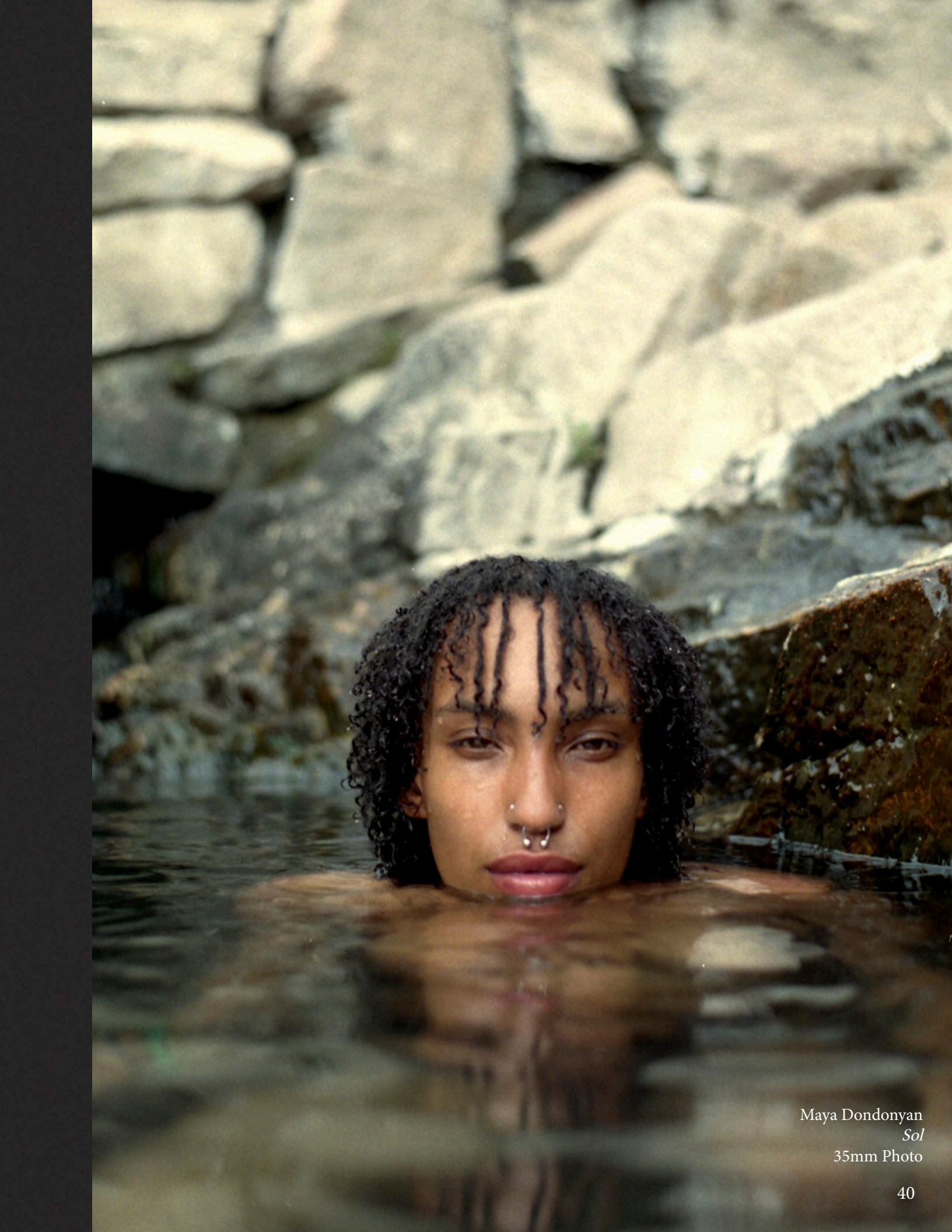




Maya Dondonyan, *Costa Rica*, 35mm Photo



Maya Dondonyan *Mt. Olympus*, 35mm Photo



Maya Dondonyan
Sol
35mm Photo



Francisco Flamenco

Graphic Design & Studio Art Major

Interviewed by Daijah Williams & Photographed by Andrea Campo

What are your first memories of painting and art making? What are some influences behind your current work?

“My first memory of creating art was when I was a little boy at the age of 6; I remember going to a seafood restaurant down at DTLA and collecting two leftover sea shells because I had the urge to paint them even though I had never painted up until then and didn’t even have paint. Hence, the very next day, I begged my parents to buy me watercolor paint from Staples. It took a

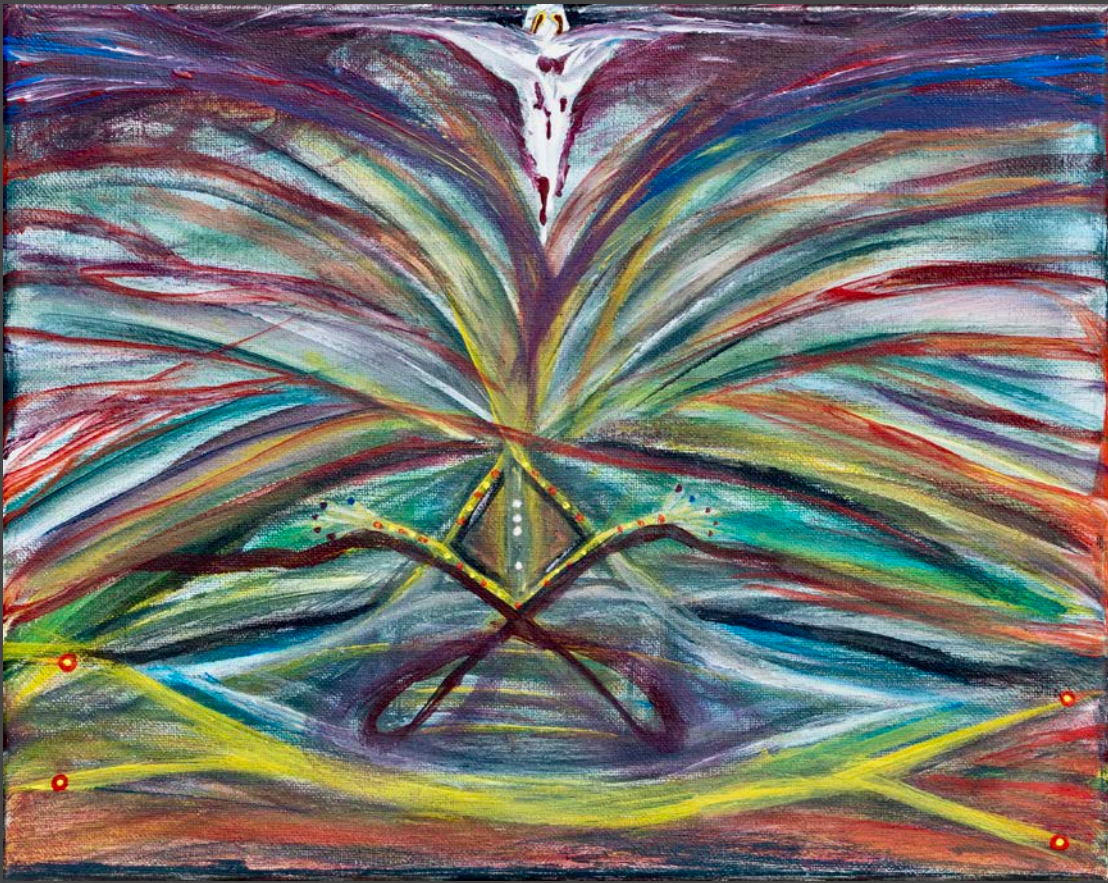
lot of convincing and tears until I got my first set of stain-proof watercolor paint and decided to paint the sunset on one seashell, and on the second one, I drew my imagination of our universe. The main influences behind my current work are centered around my soul and wanting to find hope in change. I am grateful to be here still and continuing to laugh at life.”

Do you feel your expression on canvas influences your expression of self in society?

My practice has always allowed me to express my deepest thoughts and emotions in images worth a thousand words. I find that I express myself to society very filtered to avoid appearing weak or vulnerable. On the other hand, I do art that mirrors the most vulnerable aspects of my body and soul. This is the only way I find myself comfortable sharing my story since most of it is up to others’ interpretations, and in a way, I’m sharing a lot without saying anything.

You’ve spoken about your use of dry brushing and this idea of “allowing the brush to guide [your] hand rather than vice versa”, How do you think this technique affects the way you are expressing your emotions in your artwork? What is the message you want to communicate through your artwork?

I usually find it hard to express my emotions verbally. This technique allows me to focus my feelings onto my canvas by letting my emotions run free from the veins in my hand to my brush and paint. From the start, my intentions behind painting had yet to have one set message. Though every piece I create will always have a message I want to communicate, not everyone will understand. Through my art, I want to convey my story and how it started and continues. I also want to communicate worlds beyond my own with their own stories. And if even one piece resonates with you or calls you, I’m glad it found you.



Francisco Flamenco, *Mind of Mine*, Acrylic on canvas



Francisco Flamenco, *Submerged Serenity*, Acrylic & gouache on canvas



Francisco Flamenco, *The Undestined*, Acrylic & charcoal on paper

Where is your favorite place to be?

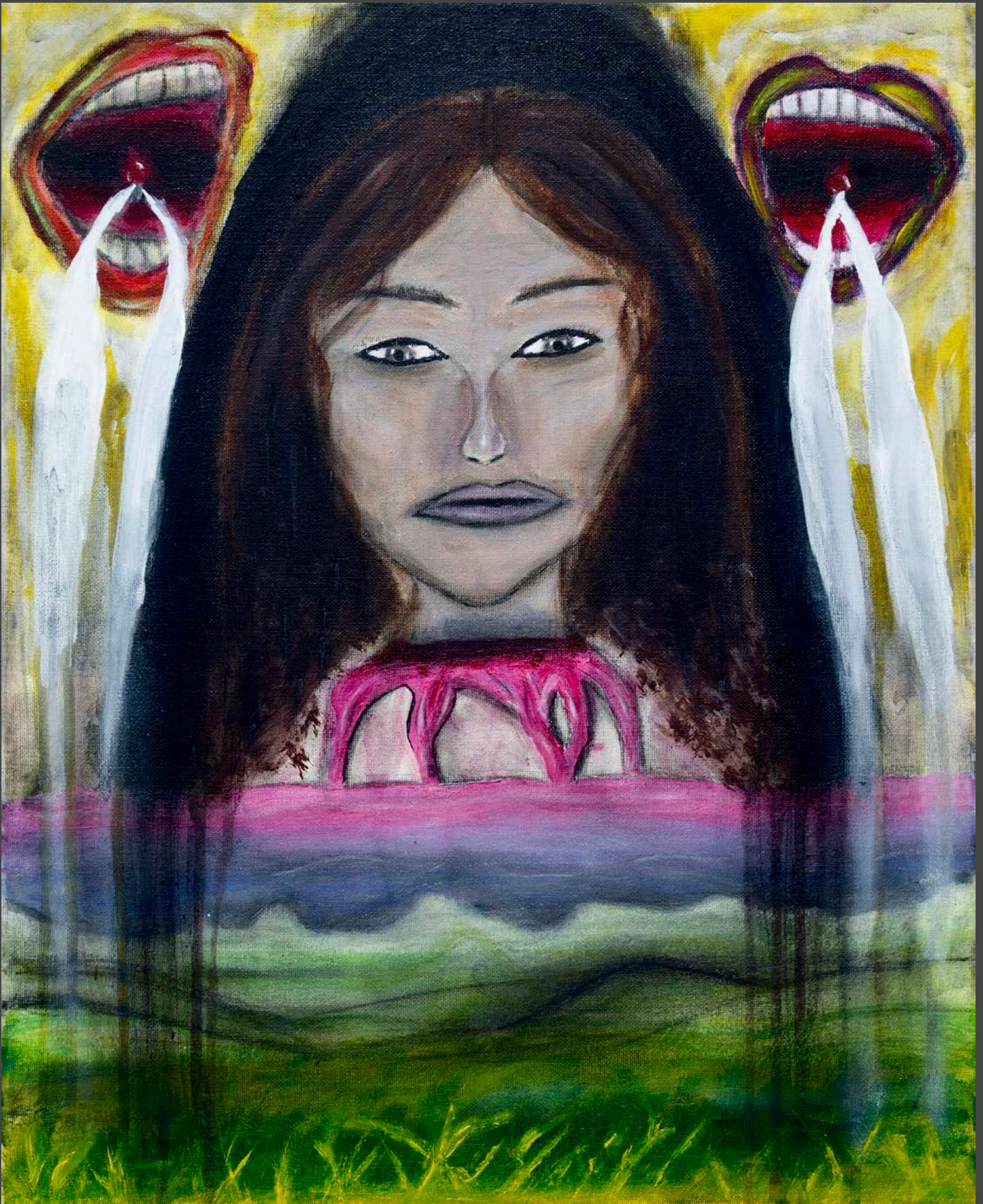
I haven't found a specific place I can say is my favorite, but I enjoy driving to a nice quiet park with birds singing and the breeze kissing my face as I work on a project or listen to music while enjoying my favorite foods!

Favorite color?
Any shade of red

Favorite Music Artist?
Lana Del Rey :)



Francisco Flamenco, *Hearts Allure*, Acrylic on paper



Francisco Flamenco, *One Last Scream*, Acrylic & charcoal on canvas

ANDREA CAMPO

Photography Major, Sophomore

Interviewed by Daijah Williams & Photographed by Andrea Campo

Can you speak more to the idea that the beauty you see in everyday life influences your photography?

“As I evolve as an artist and take my art more personally I definitely think my definition of beauty is also changing. At the time when I re-sparked my love for photography here at SMC, I was going through a very transitional period in my life. I had just gotten kicked out of my previous university for skipping school and working instead of going to class. Therefore I had also left my place of work as I felt like if I were to start taking my studies seriously I needed to give it as much undivided attention as possible. Unfortunately that did not last long because, bills, however during my first semester, along with the more academic GE’s I was taking, I decided to take Photo 2. I chose this class simply to try and get back into the darkroom, and provide a space for me at SMC where I could create something that would make all the tedious studying worth it. I wasn’t so concerned on what I was creating, so, I just focused on creating photographs that would help take my mind off the stress of bills, needing to find a new job, and the piling up of classwork and homework each week. This came in the form of beautiful moments with friends, and friendly strangers. However as time passes, I have become more intentional with my art and the meaning behind it. It is still very personal, albeit even more as it is no longer a distraction from life but a confrontation of it, and my meaning may not be as obvious to a stranger looking at my work. The thing is, at the end of the day, my work is by me, for me with the purpose of keeping me moving forward. Even as I put more emotion into my work I may not focus on the romantic beauty that comes with being around friends or having a fun carefree moment in time, however I still focus on the beauty of being able to take all my complex emotions and life experiences and put them into my photographic art.”



Andrea Campo, *Masquerade 02*, film photograph.

How did you get into photography? What does the act of documentation mean to you?

“I got into photography as a young kid. My parents would let me borrow their small point and shoot camera and I would take photos of some pretty random things. As I got older, I got into videography and while make short films with friends, I would take bts photos and began appreciating the beauty of photography. Around the same time, I took a darkroom photo class in high school. Both happening around the same time was the perfect recipe to launch my love for the art that is darkroom photography, and my curiosity for what I can make with a little film and a lens.”

You mentioned this idea of immortalizing moments in your work, and using your work as a reminder of your emotions and humanity. How do you feel your practice influences the way you navigate everyday life?

“Human emotions can be very overwhelming, and I can find myself lost within them, like a dense fog surrounding a pool of mud. Whether the emotions are good, bad, or somewhere in between, my art exists to pull me back into reality and ground me when I feel lost, angry, overwhelmed etc. Art allows me to see me in a mirror and gives me permission to feel that way, but reminds me that life moves on and I do not have to stop feeling a certain way, but I can not let it consume me. My work is also my reason to get up in the morning, I would be lost without the ability to make and celebrate art.”

Andrea Campo
Scarf
Digital photography



Favorite song at the moment?

My favorite song at the moment is a tie between II Hands II Heaven by Beyoncé and WIZZ (Cobrah Remix). They're both such a vibe, and they remind me of being with my friends and having a great time.

Who are some of your favorite artists and/or creators?

Honestly, and no joke, some of the coolest creators I know are my classmates from the darkroom classes and art classes at SMC. They're kind of the ones that inspire me to keep motivated, because if they are constantly creating and pushing themselves as artists, I have no excuse in the presence of my peers. As for my favorite well-known celebrity photographer, that would have to be Sebastião Salgado.

What would your last meal be?

My last meal would start with a nice mojito and ice-cold water. For an appetizer, I'd have spicy tuna with crispy rice, followed up by a bowl of veal shank agnolotti, and then some rare skirt steak or fillet, and for dessert, either the best panna cotta with some berries and berry sauce, or the best tiramisu ever, or both.



Andrea Campo, *Building*, Laser engraved photography



Andrea Campo
Dance Party
Digital photography



Andrea Campo
Late Night
Dancing
Digital
photography





Maya Dondonyan
Grand Canyon
35mm photo



SANTA
MONICA
COLLEGE



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