



 ffusions





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Note from the Dean



Elizabeth Reitz Mullenix,
Ph.D.

Greetings *Effusions* Reader! As Dean of the College of Creative Arts, I believe that in this age of pestilence, the arts are more important than ever. I say this not simply because they bring beauty and comfort and escape. I say this because the arts have always helped us interpret the historical moment that we find ourselves within. Shakespeare's Hamlet said that the theatre, "Holds, as 'twere, a mirror up to nature." Of course, this is true also for visual arts—that can be both a mirror and a window, a vehicle for contemplating the self as well as what lies beyond our experiences. The arts and literature are part of study in the Humanities because they help us learn more about what it means to be human, relative to both the physical and the metaphysical. I am so thankful for visual art, poetry, music, theatre—creative expressions that help us to make meaning of our lives especially when those lives feel unthinkable, unprecedentedly different. Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Elizabeth Reitz Mullenix'. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large loop at the end.

Elizabeth Reitz Mullenix, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Creative Arts
Professor of Theatre

Note from the Chair

This issue of *Effusions* is somewhat unusual. While every other issue has eventually transformed from a snapshot of the moment to an archive of a time past, for this issue that transformation occurred before it was ever released. The world has changed rapidly for us.

Now, more than ever, we need art. In a time when we cannot be together physically, artists and writers are able to create deep and meaningful connections between us. This has always been one of the powers of art. Art, like nothing else, shepherds us through the difficult times. It broadens our view, increases our awareness and connects us in ways nothing else can. Art is capable of sharing acute and thoughtful observations through barriers of geography, language, culture and time.

This edition of *Effusions* represents the world as it was prior to the challenge we are all enduring this spring. Since these works and writings were created the whole world has had its lens refocused. We see these works as a time past even though they represent a moment just a few short months ago. They are an archive, but also an opportunity to connect with others despite the present barriers. Here we have the opportunity to consider the fragility of our world and the durability of the human spirit.

In this issue of *Effusions* there are reflections of what we were and who we've lost. The power of art is to connect, and to continue to connect when everything else in the world is pulling us apart. You will find artists offering insights and observations of the moment, and you will find writers that carefully guide us to a broader and deeper perceptions than we might otherwise have on our own. The lens we use now is so different than that which we had a few months ago, but if you look closely and thoughtfully, as has each contributor to this issue of *Effusions*, you will find that the connections have become more important than ever before.

In each of these contributions there is an artist, writer or historian that is extending a hand to us to help us understand, or feel, or cope. Now, more than ever we need the power of art along with the courage and generosity of those responsible for each contribution. Let this issue open you up to new possibilities in a time when none of us can venture out to find them on our own.

Robert Robbins, MFA
Chair and Professor of Art
Department of Art

Note from the Faculty Advisor



Annie Dell'Aria, Ph.D.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2020 issue of *Effusions*, the student-run journal of the Department of Art at Miami University. The students who design, edit, organize, market, and contribute to this publication have done impressive work in a school year that has seen unprecedented disruption due to the COVID-19 global health crisis.

Normally, the publication of *Effusions* would have a launch party, a time when students can see each other in our shared spaces, distribute physical copies of the journal, share coffee and cookies, and celebrate a job well done with their peers. Now, as we are all working and learning remotely in the midst of social distancing and isolation, this issue is hopefully a welcome reminder of the restorative power of art, the resilience of creativity, and the enduring sense of community in the visual arts at Miami University.

This issue begins with the beautiful work of Adrienne Boggan, a member of our Department of Art community that we sadly lost too soon last fall semester. Contributions from a variety of media and from students studying majors across the university testify to the importance of the visual arts across our student body. From the whimsical featured artwork Frito Fish by Madeleine Heinlen on the cover to the critical reassessments of art historical categorizations of work created by artists on the periphery by Sydney Herrick and Celia Bugno, the student contributions throughout this issue ask us to question our assumptions, take pleasure in our everyday surroundings, or investigate and confront our inner

lives and psyches. The images and scholarship within this volume can enrich our lives and broaden our minds even though we are forced to spend this time apart.

The strength of this volume stems from the wellspring of talent and intellect that is our student body, but is made available to you thanks to the discerning eyes, tireless dedication, and steady hand of our student editorial board. They make my role as faculty advisor feel more like a pleasure than a responsibility. I am saddened that I will not be able to congratulate our students in person this semester, especially our graduating seniors. Please know that I think you're all amazing! I would like in particular to thank Diana Kate Karsanow, Editor-in-Chief and graduating senior who has been involved with *Effusions* and the life of the Art and Architecture History program for her entire time at Miami. I will greatly miss her leadership, dedication, intellect, and poise and wish her well in all of her future endeavors, which I know will go splendidly.

Lastly, given that our spring semester had to move abruptly online, we had to cancel our annual Student Symposium in Art and Architecture History at the Miami University Art Museum. In lieu of this event, *Effusions* is hosting space for us to honor those students who we would have nominated to present their work publicly. I thank the editorial board for allowing the faculty of the Art and Architecture History program this space.

I hope that you enjoy this issue as you stay safe and healthy during these unstable times. Even though our school buildings and art museums are closed, let this be a reminder to look at, make, and discuss art during all times—and perhaps especially right now.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Annie Dell'Aria'.

Annie Dell'Aria, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Art History
Department of Art

Meet the *Effusions* Team

We are proud to present the 2019-2020 edition of *Effusions* art journal. *Effusions* is a student-led publication sponsored by The Miami University Department of Art. Throughout the years *Effusions* has functioned as an opportunity for students to express the work they've completed throughout their academic careers as artists, art historians, musicians, graphic designers, composers, and photographers. In addition, this journal reveals a comprehensive experience into the broad spectrum of creative endeavors taking place around us. For these reasons, we are proud to present this year's edition to our readers.



Diana Kate Karsanow
Editor-in-Chief



Emily Drexelius
Graphic Designer



Lydia Jasper
Secretary



Aubrey Woodard
Content Editor



Carmen Perez
Content Editor

Adrienne Boggan

2000-2019

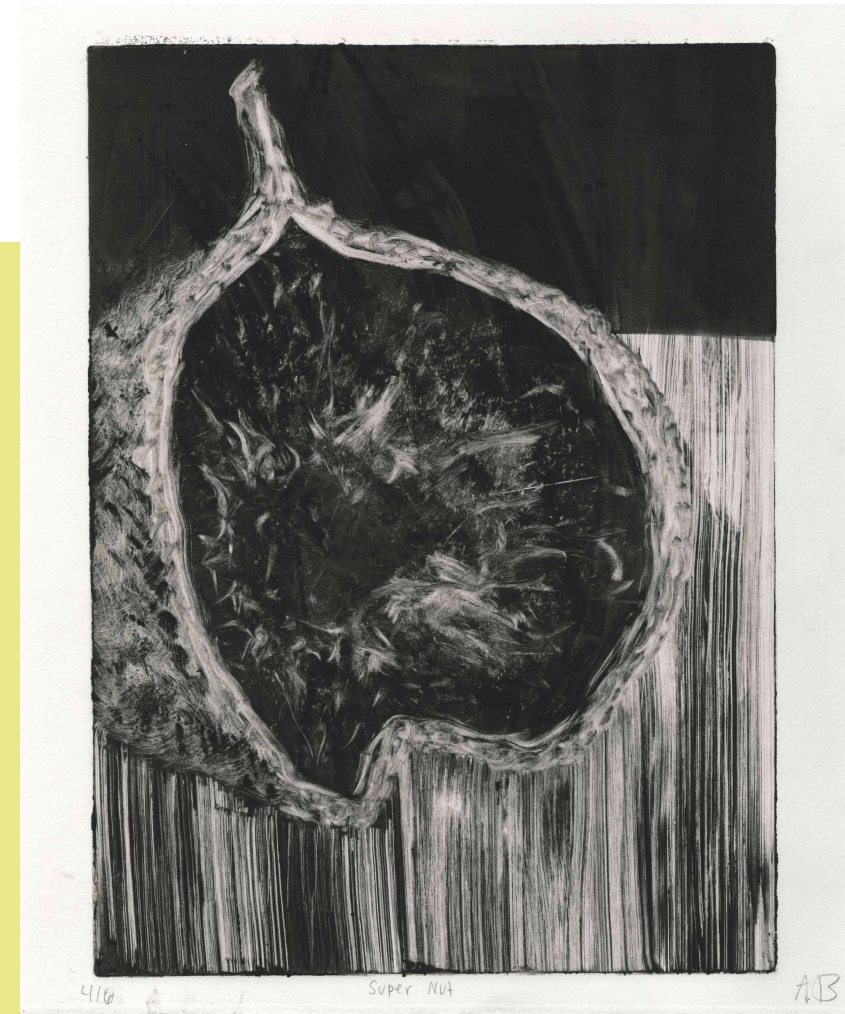
2019 Graduate Camille Boggan

Content Editor for *Effusions*

One of the things I miss the most about Adrienne are the moments when she would let me watch her create. Over the years I would wander into her room and quietly sit next to her, peeking over her shoulder with the hope of catching a glimpse of her sketchbook. Most of the time she would self-consciously cover her work with her hands and wait until I left to continue. But every once in a while she would keep working, her silence letting me know I was welcome to stay—or go, if I pleased. I always stayed, of course. It was well known in our family that if Adrienne let you watch her draw, it was her way of saying she trusted you and wanted you to be part of her beautiful inner world, if only for a few minutes.

In the year Adrienne and I were at Miami together—her first year, my last—those moments became more frequent (and more vocal) in our little apartment on Spring Street. I’d pop into her room and she’d look up, silently inviting me in as she experimented with ink and oil paint and charcoal. As she worked on her next masterpiece she’d talk, asking for feedback or explaining what she was doing. She would tell me funny stories about her figure drawing classmates, what she ate for lunch, or that she saw me leaving a lecture in the Art Building that day. All throughout her delicate hands would expertly turn abstract shapes into a smirking face or the smooth contours of a leg. When she finally needed to be alone with her work for a few hours, she’d look up and say, “You know what we should have for dinner? Pizza.”

My sister was a truly prodigious artist, as evident in the collection of her works displayed in this edition of *Effusions*. She was talented, of course, but in the persistent way of an artist for whom creating is akin to breathing. The opportunity she had to study art at Miami gave her so much confidence and joy, and I can only imagine what she would have created at the end of her four years. My hope is that the readers of this issue see in her works the budding confidence of a young artist and understand the special privilege of seeing these pieces in print.





Madeleine Heinlen

Undecided, 2023

As a wildlife artist, I focus my work on the plants and animals, birds especially, that inspire me. Often this inspiration comes from a childhood memory, the excitement of something new, or pure fascination. While I enjoy composing a piece in a way that reflects my relation to it, such as how it appeared to me in a certain moment or how certain qualities of the animals stand out to me, it is also important that I portray the animal in a way that is accurate to its existence. The true power and awe of these individuals is within their “wildness” so I do my best to avoid anthropomorphizing them. It is also wildlife’s unknown quality that fascinates me, and one of the best ways for me to study the unknown is to illustrate it. In illustration I can learn, relate to what I love, and share my passion with others.

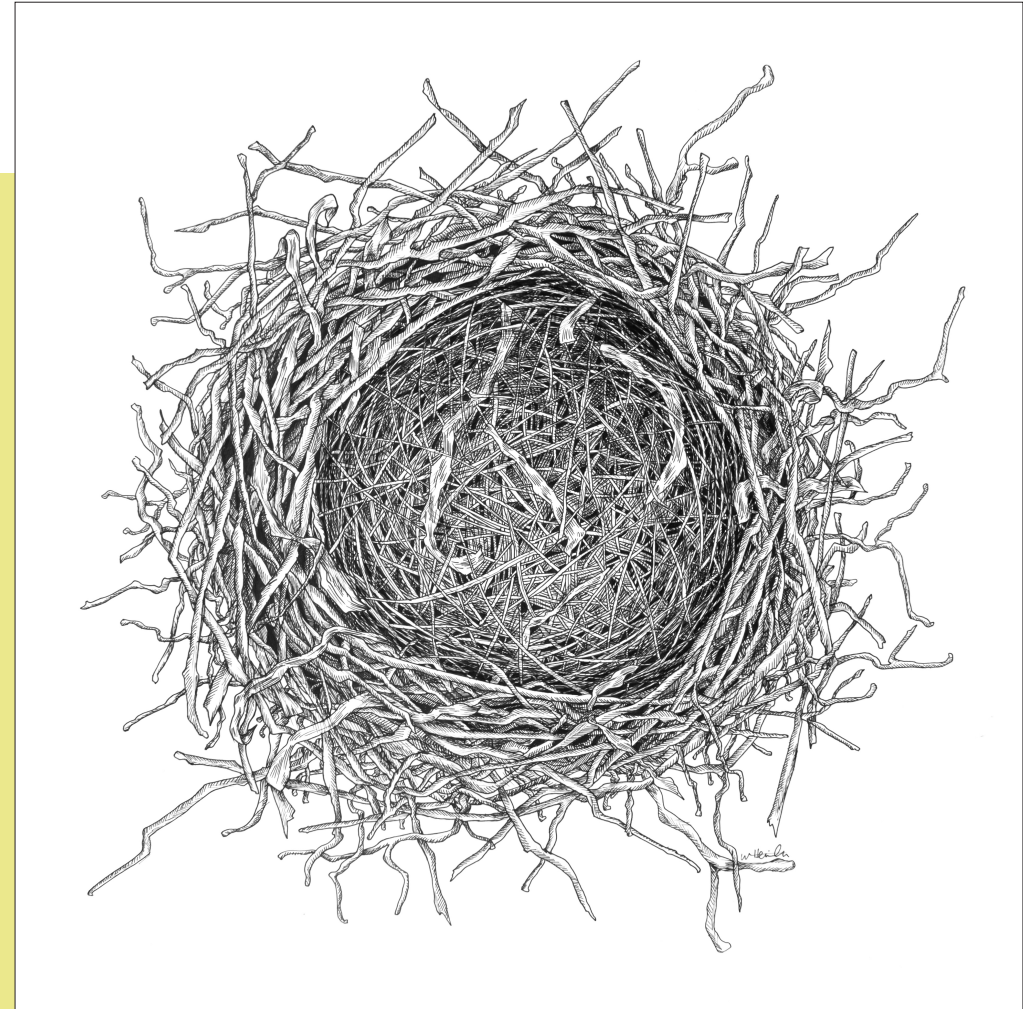
ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



Frito Fish
Mixed Media
8" x 8"



Red-Shouldered Hawk
Colored Pencil
13" x 11"



Bird's Nest
Black Micron Pen
11" x 11"



Fond Yellows
Colored Pencil
11" x 11"

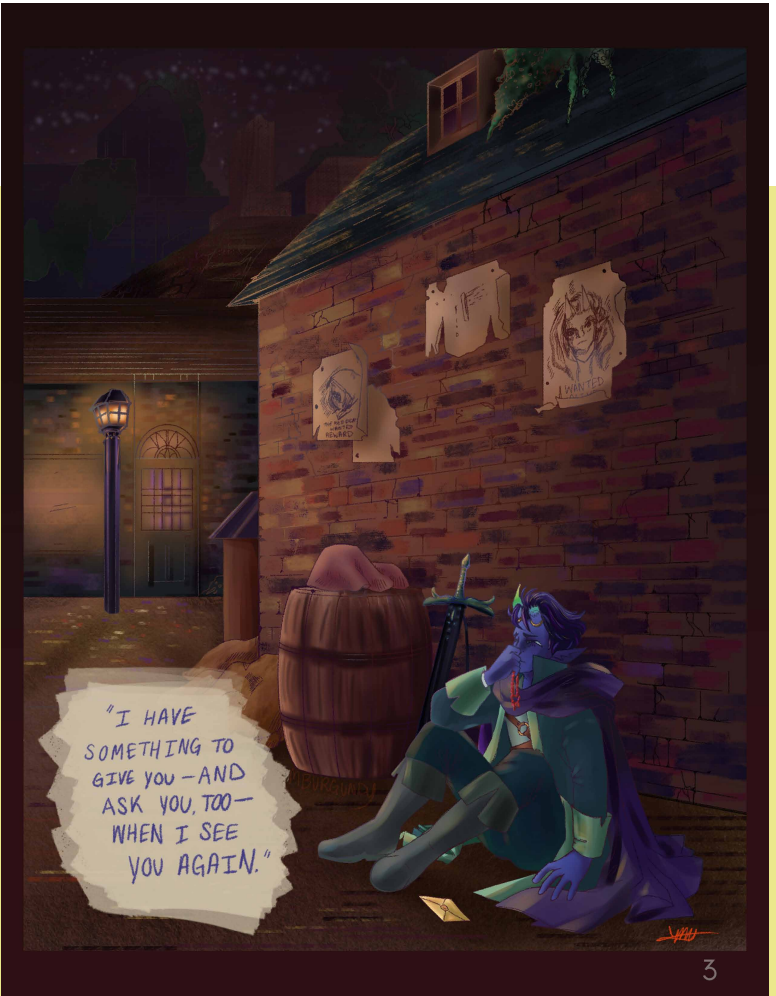
M.Bea Hosenfeld

Art Education, 2022

This comic gives insight into one of my many characters I create and design. Pictured here is Xavier, a D&D character on the road, searching for his long lost friend - or should I say, 'more than a friend'. Adela has been missing for quite some time; Xavier had last seen her when he was about ten years old and their regular letters were suddenly cut off when Adela went missing. Xavier thinks about the very last letter he was going to send to Adela, and a gift along with it. I've always had a love for storytelling, especially with my own characters. This is one of the first fully colored, shaded, and detailed comics I've made.



Something to Ask
Procreate on Ipad Pro



Kate Milham

Interior Design, 2022

During my senior year of high school, I created a concentration based on the theme of life, death, and rebirth. The first image is titled *Rebirth* due to the concept of light and growth being created/coming out of darkness, despite the trials and tribulations that we endure. To create that piece, I used a cracked egg filled with dried flowers. I used a high contrast of blacks and whites to add emphasis to their symbol meaning of life and death.

Reflective was taken this past summer in Colorado. I wanted to demonstrate that we all see the world in different ways. We should stop and reflect and have more compassion for those that have a different point of view from our own. I used a crystal ball to flip the landscape to convey my message.



Rebirth
Digital Photography



Reflective
Digital Photography

Aspen Stein

Printmaking and Photography, 2021

I aim to explore the relationship between self and body in my work. While I want my work to be read multiple ways, I draw upon my personal experience to determine the use of texture and color within my work.



Vibe
Photolitho

Sydney Herrick

Art History, 2022

This research essay originated from my initial analysis of a Romanian Crucifixion piece by an unknown artist in the Miami University Museum. While my lack of knowledge regarding Romanian art history initially presented itself as a challenge, learning about this piece and the culture that surrounds it ultimately lead to my deep fascination with this topic. While researching I discovered that this piece was a type of Romanian folk art specific to the peasant population in the mid-nineteenth century. I also noticed that much of these works were swept into categorical generalizations such as "Byzantine in style" or "Byzantine-esque." Through comprehensive research on what exactly defines Byzantine art and an understanding of Romania's sociopolitical history, I began to lay a foundation for why these generalized designations were inaccurate. Finally, I examined other areas of folk art in regions outside of Romania to form a global perspective on the issue in hopes of identifying a pattern. With this information, I argued that peasant populations and other folk cultures have been "punished in an art historical context for not adopting the culture of their invaders" and that the dichotomy between high and low art is ultimately "elitist neglect of mass art." While I feel that this paper could not possibly encompass the complexities of such a topic, I hope that my research brings light to at least one group of underrepresented artists.



Fig. 1. Unknown maker (Romania), *Crucifixion*, mid-nineteenth century, reverse painting on glass

In the mid nineteenth century, the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia formed to create what we know as modern-day Romania. Through continuous war and revolution under various rulers and empires, Romania's road to democracy and a defined identity was not an easy one. Primarily an Orthodox country, religion played a significant role in providing peace and comfort to Romanian citizens during political and social strife. Therefore, religious iconography was present in both public and private sectors of day to day living. Through the analysis of a Romanian folk art crucifixion piece (*fig. 1*), I will argue that the designation of this work as Byzantine reflects the historic elitism inherent in both art production and art scholarship. Specifically, I will explore how the socio-political upheaval of the mid-19th century impacted Romanian artists of the era, both in the development of style and subject matter, and how these elements determined the crucifixion piece's designation as Byzantine folk art.

In most scholarly texts written on Romanian art, it is commonly referred to as Byzantine in style or Byzantine-esque. In order to understand why this is an inaccurate classification of the art form, one must first understand what exactly classifies a work of art as Byzantine rather than folkloric and the history of modern-day Romania during the Byzantine Empire.

Due to the incredibly long period of Byzantine Art (330-1453 BC), defining Byzantine style is not an easy task. To

simplify, I will be addressing what defines the Byzantine painting style. Because of the period's incredible length, style inevitably saw change, although religious themes were a constant. In the Early Byzantine period, iconoclasts forbade the artistic depiction of religious persons thus art of the time focused more so on mosaic, textiles, and architecture. However, in middle-Byzantine, there was a revival of classical conventions with a focus on space, depth and three-dimensionality, but icons were still represented in abstraction rather than human form. In the Late Byzantine period, as the empire was taken over by the Palaiologan emperors, painters were creating "large narrative frescos" with an "emphasis on the landscapes and architectural backgrounds" rather than human form and iconography.¹

Folk art is also difficult to define as, according to the Museum of International Folk Art, it "has no one definition." Folk art is created worldwide and materializes in various mediums, techniques, and styles but, ultimately, the consistent characteristic among all folk art is that it is "made by and for the common man." So while Byzantine art and folk art both have broad definitions it is ultimately the presence of elitism within the field of art history that causes the grouping of "low art" in to broader, all-encompassing high art movements. Once we go beyond formal influences, in this case Byzantium on Romanian art, and develop a better understanding of socio-political history we begin to understand how the two styles differ.

Romanians are often said to have stemmed from that of the Dacian people who ruled the areas of present-day Romania, eastern Hungary, Moldova, and northern Bulgaria in the second century. After having their lands seized by the Romans and their subsequent fall in the third and fourth centuries, Dacians were erased from history. Some of those who survived fled to the mountains and eventually reappeared as Vlachs², or Balkan Shepherds. In the fourteenth century, during the Ottoman invasion of the Balkan states, Hungary and the Vlachs created Wallachia and Moldavia as "buffer states" to protect from outsider raids. Since they were Slavic-influenced countries, both states had strong Orthodox influences that carry into the present-day. By the nineteenth century, the provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia and the state of Transylvania had all been ruled by the Turks until 1687 when the Habsburg Empire overran the Ottoman's stronghold on Transylvania, developing a historically deep separation

1 "Byzantine Art and Architecture," *Funk & Wagnalls New World Encyclopedia*, January 1, 2018, 1.
2 The term "Vlachs" stemmed from the province of Wallachia (Vlachia) which eventually becomes modern-day Romania. For more see: Tomek Jankowski, *Eastern Europe! Everything You Need to Know About the History (and More!) of a Region that Shaped Our World and Still Does*, (Massachusetts: New Europe Books, 2013).

between Romanians in Transylvania and Romanians in Wallachia and Moldavia. After the Crimean War in 1853, Moldavia and Wallachia formed the Province of Romania; it wasn't until 1916 that the Treaty of Bucharest called for the absorption of Transylvania (amongst other states) into Romania. This concise history of Romania is to establish the presence of Orthodoxy in Romanian culture from Byzantium to present-day and to suggest that, in the case of the crucifixion piece, the denotation of "Romanians" is not a national identifier but an ethnic one.³

With a general understanding of Romanian history, we must also establish the role of the peasant population in the development of folk art. For the sake of my argument and based on the information that will follow, I assert that the crucifixion painting has origins in Transylvania rather than Moldavia or Wallachia. Romanian peasants in Transylvania long faced discrimination and isolation as the other. According to Kingston Professor Radu Cinpoes who specializes in nationalism and identity politics, Romanians in Transylvania were simply a "tolerated ethnies"⁴ even though peasantry made up a large majority of the population.⁵ Specifically, there was a group of Romanian peasantry who resided in the Apunsei Mountains in Western Transylvania whose societies were entirely reliant on agriculture.⁶ Thus, any sort of attempt to modernize by Transylvanian intellectuals was denied by the peasant populations as it threatened their livelihood and traditions. Because of their isolation and inaccessibility of education, the majority of the peasant population was illiterate. This is indicated in many artworks as there are frequent misspellings scrawled around the figures, similar to that seen in the crucifixion piece.

The crucifixion is labeled as a reverse glass painting which was a common technique used in folk art due to the availability of materials from glass factories known as glăjării. Glass painting originated in Northern Transylvania and no record exists prior to the beginning of the eighteenth century, which fits nicely into the timeline we have established.⁷ Furthermore,

3 Tomek Jankowski, *Eastern Europe! Everything You Need to Know About the History (and More!) of a Region that Shaped Our World and Still Does*.
4 Radu Cinpoes, "Continuity and Discontinuity," in *Nationalism and Identity in Romania: A history of Extreme Politics from the Birth of the State to EU Accession*, (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2010) 27.
5 The population breakdown of Transylvania was about 60% Romanian, 33-49% Hungarian and 10-18% Saxon. For more see: Szász Zoltán, ed., *History of Transylvania*, vol. III (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 2002).
6 Keith Hitchens, "Apprenticeship," in *Orthodoxy and Nationality: Andreiu Daguna and the Rumanians of Transylvania*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1977) 31.
7 Juliana Dancu and Dumitru Dancu, "Painting on Glass," in *Folk Glass-painting in Romania*, (Bucharest: Meridiane Publishing House, 1982) 13.

the Zosim Oancea Museum of Icons on Glass in Sibiel notes that Transylvanian icons are identifiable by their small size, pure colors, and lack of contextual landscape or architecture, all of which are present in the crucifixion painting.⁸ Due to this information, I can comfortably assert that this crucifixion painting has its origins in Transylvania.

While it is clear that religion was a big influence on Romanian life due to their strong ties with the Orthodox Church, the use of iconography in peasant art stems from much more than their association. Because their culture was heavily based upon religious values, visual representations of biblical stories developed as their primary source of knowledge, their illiteracy making iconography and color significant to the communication of such religious motifs. The small scale of the crucifixion painting indicates its use for individualized worship within the home, the imagery reminding peasants that although they are suffering in their present lives, they will be rewarded in the afterlife. As with many religions, Christian messages of salvation can provide peace and comfort to those who face adversity. For example, religious icons provided comfort to the Romanians as they were constantly under threat of war and invasion from surrounding countries. Likewise, in the images of the suffering Christ, Romanian peasants would find reassuring parallels to their own tribulations in the mortal world.

On the other hand, crucifixion or other religious imagery would also function as a reminder of this hierarchy and encourage peasants to respect their role in the system as it was God's will, but during the middle of the century, that didn't seem to be the case. In Sorin Mitu's, *National Identity of Romanians in Transylvania*, he claims that "Romanians have always been reluctant to embrace progress."⁹ This premise is based in part on this entirely agrarian population's resistance to implementing western ideas of modernization into their society; however, to say Romanians were always reluctant to change is inaccurate. In the Spring of 1848, revolutions swept Europe which influenced uprisings in Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania. The introduction of western ideals by Romanian intellectuals "aroused greater desire for political participation and thus the desire for constitutional rights" amongst

8 "The Museum of the Icons on Glass." Sibiel. Accessed December 10, 2019. https://www.sibiel.net/Collezione_EN.html.

9 Sorin Mitu, "The Negative Dimension of the Self-Image: Forms Without Substance: The Moral Corruption of the Romanians by Modern Civilisation," *National Identity of Romanians in Transylvania*, (New York: Central European University Press, 2001), 96.



Fig. 2. Constantin Daniel Rosenthal, *România Revoluționară*, Budapest (1820-1851)

Romanians. Soon after, on March 15th, the Transylvanian peasants gathered in protest, disputing the feudal institutions of their governments and calling for the abolition of serfdom.¹⁰ Interestingly, dissent from the feudal system is in direct opposition to biblical ideals and the long-held Orthodox Church hierarchy.

In response to the revolutionary period of 1848, Romania's fine art was entering a period of Neoclassicism and Romanticism in which painting was politically and socially charged in its themes commonly presenting anti-feudal imagery.¹¹ While political and social unrest may have influenced religious iconography in peasant culture, formally, folk art was antithetical to fine art as it was only in its infancy. During this time, folk art was still adhering to iconoclast representations of religious figures by painting them rigid and lifeless with "complete elimination of the third dimension to prevent any speculation that the scene occurred in human space," all of which are demonstrated in the crucifixion piece.¹² Conversely, fine art was exhibiting "remarkable sophistication" and moved towards realistic representation of space and form.¹³ When analyzed side-by-side with the fine art of the time it becomes clear that the blanket Byzantine classification of Romanian painting cannot possibly be absolute. For example, Romanian artist Constantin Daniel Rosenthal's *România Revoluționară* (fig. 2) is an incredibly detailed and accurate rendering of the human form depicted in real space and time with political influences of the same era; whereas the peasant crucifixion

10 Szász Zoltán, ed. *History of Transylvania*. Vol. III.

11 Vasile Florea, "Modern Painting: Neo-Classics and Romantics," in *Romanian Painting*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983) 64.

12 Juliana Dancu and Dumitru Dancu, "Themes," 31.

13 Florea, "Transylvania," 14.



Fig. 3. Rice bowl, striped design called 'mugiwarade'. Edo period, 19th century. Seto ware, Japan.

piece presents none of these characteristics. Interestingly, during the same time as C. D. Rosenthal, a Transylvanian artist known as Carol Popp Szathmary began depicting peasant life in his work, presenting them as “care-free and happy” and “guardians of the old traditions.”¹⁴ While the latter may be true, the complete obliviousness to the harsh realities of peasant life exemplifies why their art forms have been overshadowed in the art historical context. According to Romanian Art Historian, Juliana Dancu, part of the reason religious iconography was consistent in Romanian folk art was so they could pray for divine protection as “they could not expect help when threatened by sickness, poverty, or injustice.”¹⁵ It seems that the only time folk art and tradition were of relevance to art historians was when they were represented in forms of high art from the same period.

Part of the issue lies in the way we speak about art and style. When we attach Romanian art to Byzantium, we are making an over-generalized, non-inclusive statement about the region’s artistic influences. Art historians have not only made the mistake of disregarding the role of folk art within Romanian culture but also the role of folk art globally. Consistently, styles and movements are defined by the high art that flourished during a given period rather than significant folk art or “low art” movements of the same time. In early nineteenth-century Japan, Mingei (fig. 3), translated as “art of the people” was developed by Sōetsu Yanagi who held a fascination with the pottery of the Yi Dynasty. In his work, *The Unknown Craftsman*, Yanagi explains how folk art “made by the many for many, is a truer test [of culture]. The quality of life of the people of that country as a whole can

¹⁴ Florea, “Modern Painting: Neo-Classics and Romantics,” 68.

¹⁵ Dancu, “Themes,” 32.

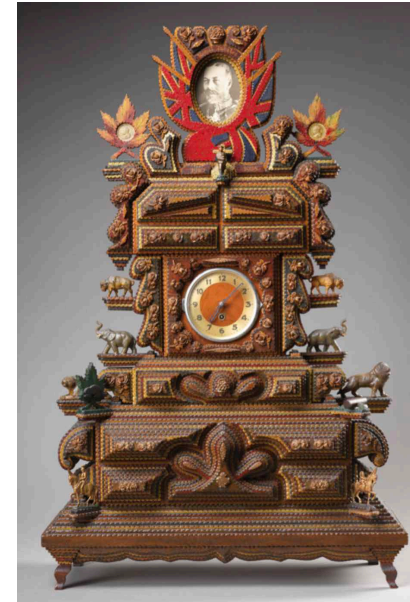


Fig.4. Tramp art satchel, French, late nineteenth century, Collection of Laurent Sozzani;

best be judged by the folkcrafts.”¹⁶ However, during this pre-war period, Japan was experiencing a rise of avant-garde and art deco movements that masked the art of Mingei. During this time, Japan was experiencing rapid growth therefore modernization trumped folklore and Mingei was left unturned by scholars and academics.

Similarly, in the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, there was a rise of a folk art with American origins known as tramp art (fig.4). In *Magazine Antiques*, writer Laura Addison defines tramp art as often being “functional household objects” made out of wood and carved with a knife. It is frequently romanticized as a sort of “hobo art” done during western migration but in reality, it is an incredibly skilled craft developed by the working class. While tramp art’s intricate designs and attention to detail has gained a following of folk-art enthusiasts, its impact has largely been forgotten.¹⁷ While tramp art spread globally making appearances in North America, Mexico, and Europe, during this time, high art was flourishing with the development of movements such as Fauvism, Cubism, and Dadaism. Ultimately, the question becomes why folk arts have been either erased from art history or lazily grouped into a sweeping categorization. It is not a numbers game as folk art, although difficult to define, is “of, by, and for the people.”¹⁸ In other words, folk art is the art of the common people and in any society that is the majority.

¹⁶ “Mingei’s History,” Mingei’s History | Mingei International Museum, accessed December 10, 2019, <https://mingei.org/about/history-of-mingei>.

¹⁷ Laura Addison, “Who Are you Calling a Tramp? A Fresh Perspective on Tramp Art,” *MAGAZINE ANTIQUES* 184 (1): 140-45.

¹⁸ “What Is Folk Art?” Museum of International Folk Art. Accessed December 10, 2019. <http://www.internationalfolkart.org/learn/what-is-folk-art.html>.

Those participating in high art are essentially the top one percent. High art does an inadequate job of representing the general population, so why is it designated as superior to other art forms?

John A. Fisher, in his piece *High Art Versus Low Art*, points out how deeply entrenched the two terms are in our society that both references are understood without prior or further explanation. When trying to understand what exactly classifies a piece of art as high or low, Fisher establishes the hierarchy as “continuous rather than binary,” noting that art is a “summation of properties” like aesthetic value, expressiveness, and being intellectually and formally complex. However, such hierarchies directly suggest the existence of “social power relations rather than differences of artistic values.”¹⁹ Peasantry in Romania did not have the education or materials to make pieces of work that were necessarily intellectual or formally complex thus their work was not considered high art and was deemed unimportant in the oeuvre. The dichotomy between high and low is fundamentally classist and therefore so is the determination of what defines an art movement or style.

Ultimately, this is not an argument about the subtle nuances of style and classification, but more so the elitist neglect of mass art. In the mid-nineteenth century, Romanian peasantry (amongst other folk cultures) have been punished in an art historical context for not assimilating and adopting the culture of their invaders. Being displaced and conquered people impacted their art and develop the subject matter but simultaneously and unfairly impacted the way people view their art form. The socio-political set up of the Romanian government disempowered the peasant class thus their creation and personal expression became devalued. Such neglect is why so many valuable and unique crafts have been clumped into ultimately meaningless classifications such as “Byzantine”.

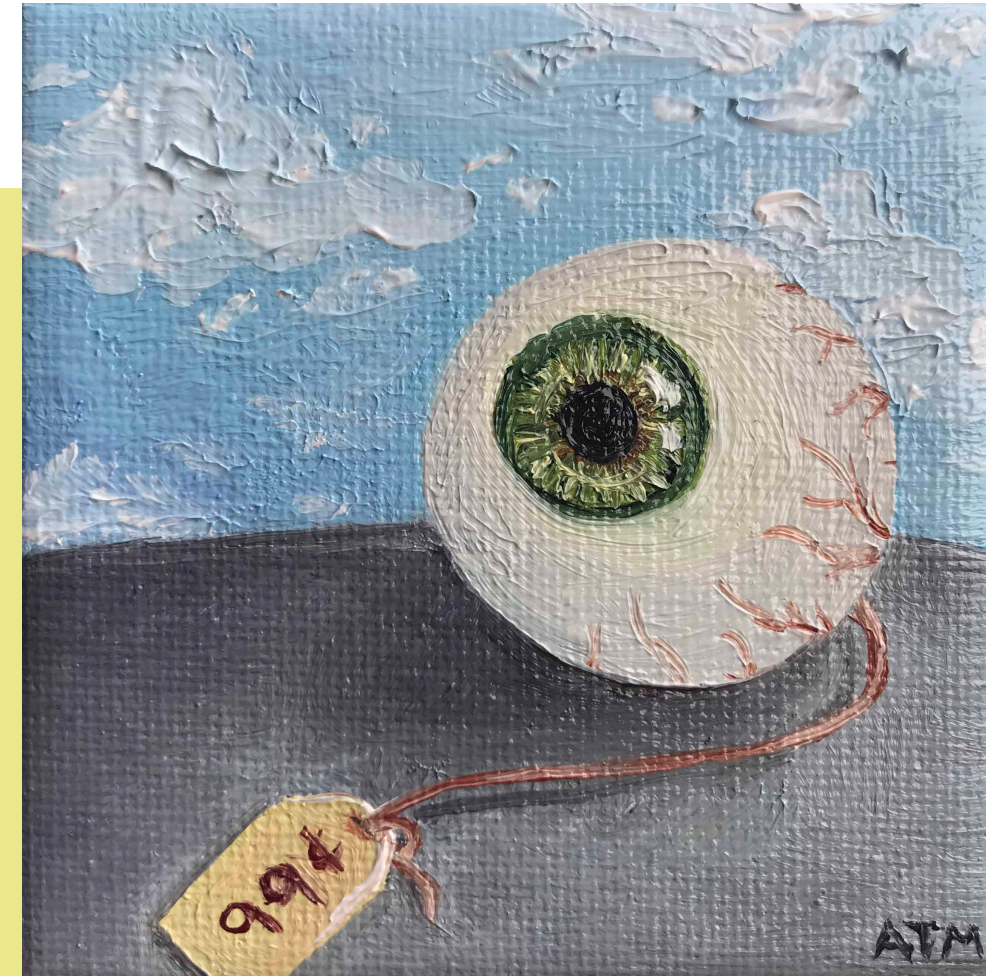
- Addison, Laura. “Who Are you Calling a Tramp? A Fresh Perspective on Tramp Art.” *MAGAZINE ANTIQUES* 184.
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Alex Morse

Art Education, 2021
Minors: Art History & Spanish

The first painting shows an eyeball for sale for 99¢. A reoccurring theme in my artwork is eyes being sold or in jars. In my art I like to explore the idea of a world where eyeballs can be purchased and switched out. Where you can not only switch your eye color, but also purchase eyes with better eyesight than your own. I think these works of art are playful, and made more so by the cheap price of the eyes. Often times tags can be seen in these pieces that say prices like 99¢ or 2 for 45¢; I think it is a lighthearted and playful way of approaching the darker concept of selling body parts.

Blinded is a piece reflecting on humans' relationship with understanding climate change. The artwork shows only a portion of a face to create emphasis on the eyeball sitting inside the mouth, almost like they are getting ready to eat it. Climate change is a huge problem that has a big impact on our planet, and it will only get worse. People are blinding themselves to the real problem by not stopping and actually learning about the problem and making changes to correct it, this idea is communicated by the person eating the eye and literally blinding themselves. Because people have blinded themselves to the problem, it allows the issue to worsen which will continue to have negative impacts on our planet that will only get worse.



99¢
Oil Paint



Blinded
Photolithography

Kayla Lynskey

Studio Art, 2023

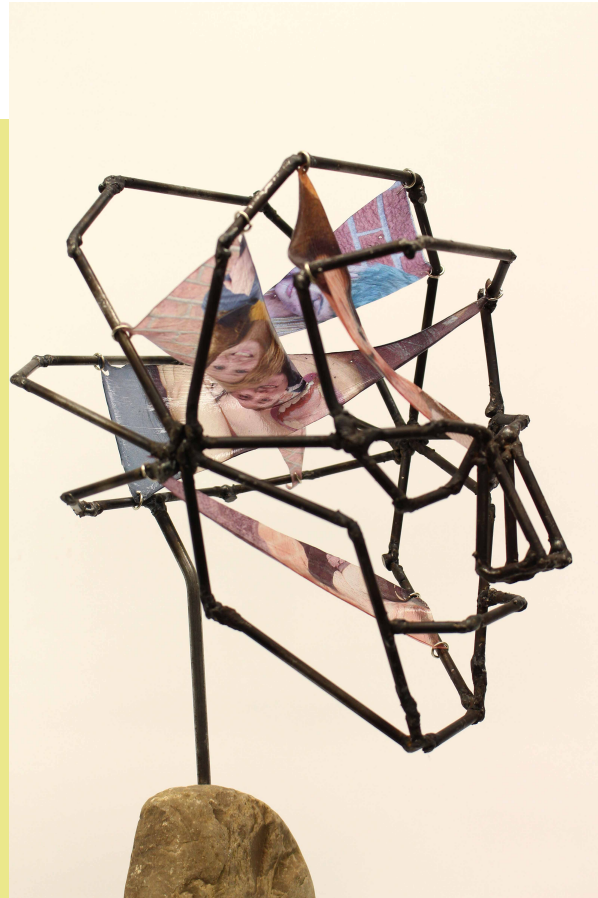
Trigger Warning: Suicide

The first piece is titled *Suicide*. Before I go on, I want to clarify that I am not glorifying suicide. I am not trying to romanticize it or distort it in any way. I have had friends and family who have tried to commit suicide, and for this piece I want to talk about the psychological side of it. Instead, I am trying to raise awareness. Although it seems like an uncomfortable or sensitive topic, we shouldn't avoid talking about it. The suicide rates in the US, as well as alcohol and drug abuse, have gone up. They keep increasing drastically each year. If we opened up pathways of discussion about suicide instead of hiding from it, then we could create an environment where people would feel comfortable to freely talk about the issues they are going through. No human life is worth more or less than the other. If suicide was spoken about in a serious sense rather than in a joking manner, then we could save lives and reverse this epidemic.

Conflicting Thoughts is a piece created about the idea that everyone experiences thoughts that contradict each other whether we like it or not. It's the fighting we have within ourselves, the constant push and pull between our emotions and morals. For me personally, those thoughts were ones of loving the ones around me, but not necessarily showing myself the same kindness. I struggled for a while with who I wanted to be and what I was actually doing. I wanted to depict that through showing the "thoughts" moving across the mind and even going through each other. I put two thoughts of distress/sadness across the head and then three thoughts of happiness/love. One image in the head is of myself screaming. The rest of the images is someone I care for: my parents, my friends and their partners. I welded the head with steel, so in a way it's as if the ideas are all stuck in a cage that is the human mind.



Suicide
Mixed Media



Conflicting Thoughts
Mixed Media



Nick Felaris

Studio Art, 2023

INCOMING CRANIAL TRANSMISSION BEAM!
 INCOMING CRANIAL TRANSMISSION BEAM!
 >COMPUTING OCTUAL BITMAP...
 >DE-MAGNETIZING STEREOPHONIC MOTEM DIRECTORY...
 To: Hundred-Fourty-Eleventh Blobular Nebula
 From: Codex, 13:01pm Norsoeeswessern Standard Time (NST)
 Buzzards, galumphing bramblebushes explode razza-ma-frazz out of
 Codex's skull! Fanfering telesebt static wriggles 'round ye ol' expungéd
 eye sockets! Shimmy to them frizzle-fry rhythms! Warble thee spinal cord
 into arabesque-esque knots!
 Codex trepans the innards to gush crazy flamethrowers! Marshmallow-
 throwup-ify-ing yonder alabaster walls, brainwashing everything with
 wheat paste, ticky tacking sugary snuff-ups with fabulous warbliness!
 (+1000 XP!)
 Armadas of crepuscular Codexian kittens SINE WAVE SMASH gullets,
 jagged, toothy mutants crawl outta' blackened white!
 [Beep! Beep! Badda-boop-weep!]
 Codex brain-meltz yo' face.
 [END OF CRANIAL TRANSMISSION BEAM.]
 [IT IS NOW SAFE TO TURN OFF YOUR OCCIPITAL LOBE-BEARER
 MODULE.]



BuCk-OOO-hOwlsUpPoS'aKnOw'DiS'n'ShErE's?R?e?E?L
 Spray Paint and Coffee on Canvas

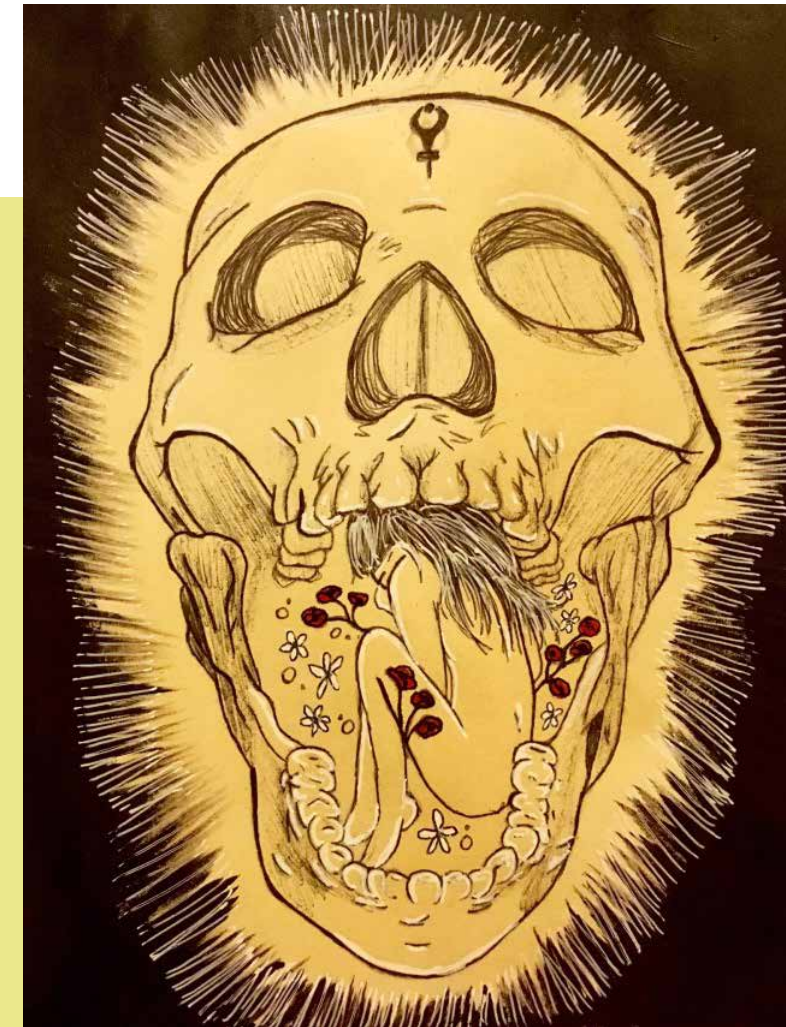


dAY OLdS anD dRIP BREWS
Spray Paint and Coffee on Paper

Taya Pennington

Art Education, 2020

Taya Pennington creates work based around themes of mental health, women's issues and LGBTQ+ culture. An advocate for the arts as non-verbal expression, she often takes her own struggles and reframes them in her work to create an almost Rorschach-like experience for the viewer, where the audience's self-reflections and conversations with each other become part of the work itself.



Hades and Persephone
Bic Pen and Watercolor Pencil

Landon Woodard

Marketing, 2021
Minor: Geography

When stark black and white contrast is applied to these landscapes, we learn to understand and appreciate the immense amount of detail within them. It is important to note how landscapes interact with each other in an urban setting (orange), natural setting (green) and an intermixing of both (red and blue). This piece is inspired by John Stilgoe, a thought provoking mind who encourages many to explore familiar places and discover what is often overlooked.



The Way of the Land
Digital Illustration and Collage

Romie Crist

Studio Art, 2022
Minor: Art History

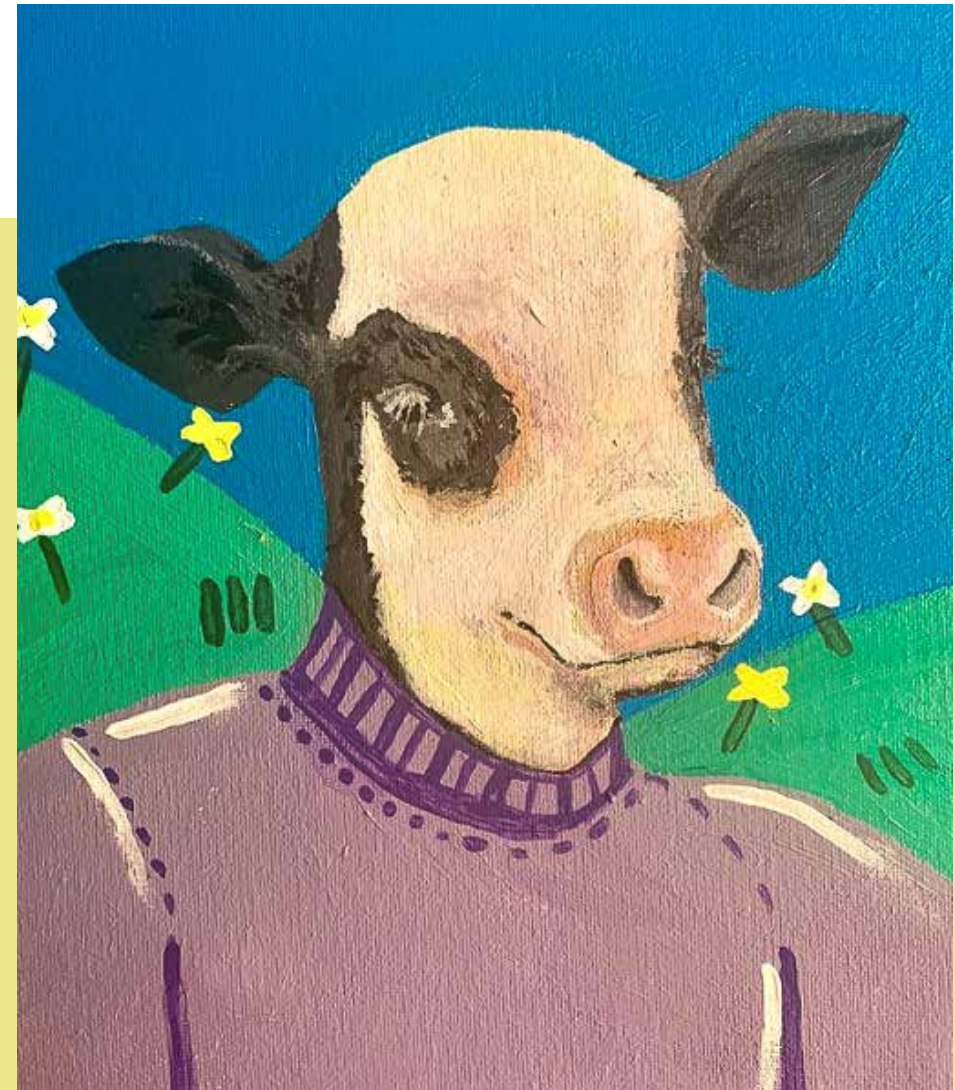
I've always been attracted to bold colors and bright digital effects. I've always pulled inspiration from cartoons and anime, even when I was a young artist learning to draw. I think that what's important about art is setting new and different boundaries, as well as creating pieces for your own self as a healthy outlet rather than creating art for others. It's a form of therapy and self expression that delves deep into whatever your personal aesthetic may be. Hopefully, you enjoy mine.



Steak and Shake
Digital Media



Gloss
Digital Media



Milk Man
Acrylic on Canvas

Lily Ellison

Art Education, Art Therapy Co-Major, 2021
Minor: Ceramics

One of the most compelling things is a person's face experiencing emotion. Focusing on the anatomy and kinesiology of the human body, my work is influenced by different aspects of the human form: functions of organs, voluntary versus involuntary mechanisms, distinct facial features, the way we engage different muscle groups, ways we can stretch and bend, chemical reactions in the brain, the way we protect ourselves from danger and disease, the physicality of human interaction.

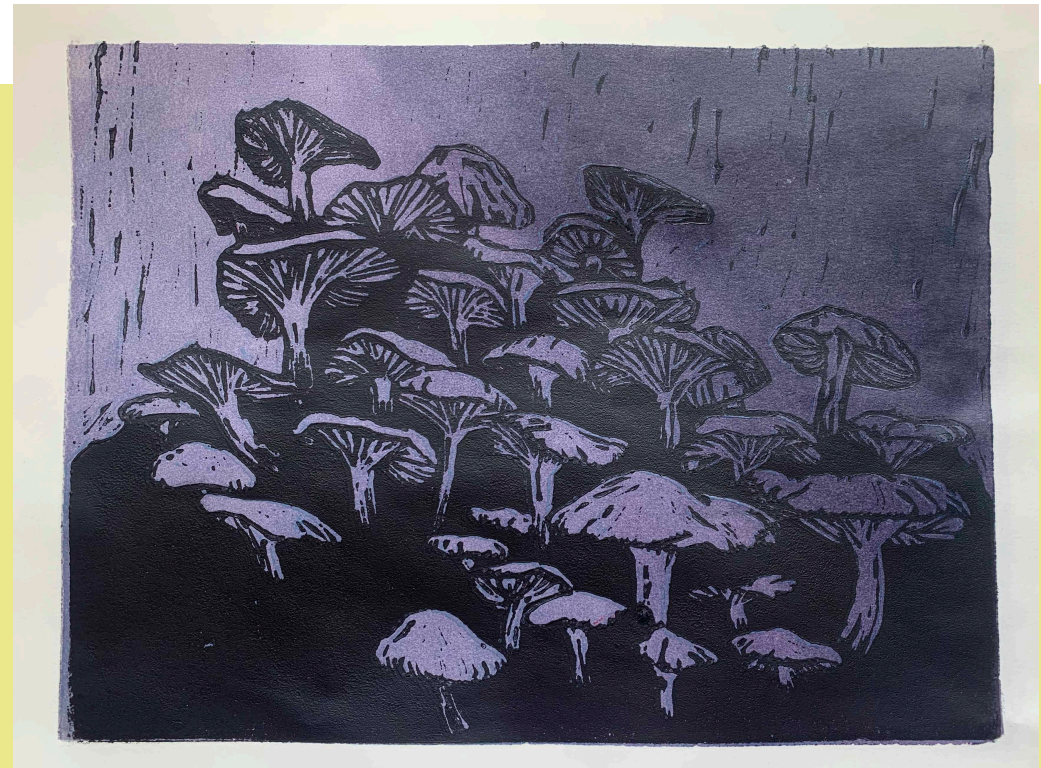
A body is a diary, a unique compilation of each day's events. A collection of injuries, laughs, worries. Seen in our remodeled bones, collections of wrinkles, scars and stretch marks, and mannerisms that only the ones closest to us notice. I want to capture the uniqueness that makes up a whole person, all that makes us human. Each one of us has our own experiences unlike anyone else's. There is so much each individual person encompasses. You've led a life that is uniquely yours, you are the only one with your experiences and thoughts and insights. These are things that determine the way we think, move, create, speak, and interact.



Gas Mask
Ceramics, Low Fire Clay



Silence
Ceramics, Low Fire Clay



Mushrooms
Woodblock Print, Ink



Hands
Woodblock Print, Ink

Celia Bugno

Art History, Arts Management Double Major, 2020

This is an essay regarding the misinterpretation of contemporary African artists titled *El Anatsui and the Reduction of Contemporary African Artists*

When an individual from a western country thinks of contemporary artists, it is likely that African artists are not the first that come to mind. Although there are many potential reasons for this, one of the most salient is the lack of belief in African innovation, specifically in the arts, by the Western world. These contemporary artworks are often dismissed entirely or viewed as a less meaningful rendition of a historical art form due to lingering stereotypes and preferences created by and included within Western gaze towards African art. One of the clearest examples of this issue is the canvas works of El Anatsui, and how the transformative purpose of his work has been ignored as Westerners compare it to Ghanaian kente cloth.

Renowned African art historian Herbert Cole predicted in a 1987 essay on the study of Ghanaian art forms that there would be further research into the African arts that would be more focused on one subject, that would use quantitative data, and that would help establish a corpus of African art.¹ That is the purpose of this research. However, it also shows an early recognition of the need to diversify and complete further research both on existing topics and on topics that would challenge what is currently considered the African art canon. Cole saw that research on African art was generally descriptive but not analytical, too broad in subject, and most importantly, that it was limited to better-known, longstanding art forms. His statement draws attention to these issues and calls for a solution through better research. It establishes the need for research on contemporary African artists and their works and experiences.

One of the primary perpetrators of the phenomenon of overlooking the contemporary African artist is the Western museum. The museum, despite its connotations of neutral information, can often display hidden biases. This may be lowered lights (reminiscent of the colonial idea of the “Dark Continent”), or a lack of contextual information given to the objects. These settings should not be disregarded as they are conscious choices made by the curators and designers of an exhibit. Says Smithsonian Institution Senior Fellow Sylvester Ogbechie, “Since the process of construction an exhibition implies a curatorial point of view which affects the selection of objects and modes of display, it seems to me that at some point we must be able

¹ Herbert M. Cole, “Art Studies in Ghana.” *African Arts* 13, no. 1 (1979): 27.

tohold a curator accountable for the validity of [their] specific take on these issues.”² That is to say, these choices are intentional and have real consequences for the viewer. They create an environment of mystery, darkness, discomfort. Thus African art becomes something exotic and timeless. This is furthered by a careful selection of artworks that also fit this idea. Connecticut College Professor of Art Christopher Steiner explains, “Because the canon of African art, with its emphatic focus on ritual objects of precolonial manufacture, is so restricted in scope (even when you include Egypt and North Africa), the pool of qualifying works that can be featured in a major exhibition is exceedingly small.”³ Because artworks from specific time periods or ethnic groups are the only ones considered to be legitimate or interesting, these are often the only ones museums show. This in turn stunts the canon by excluding contemporary artworks. The bias of museums towards longstanding art forms and old artworks comes at the expense of newer art forms and the works of contemporary artists, prolonging stereotypes about an African art canon that is small and exists only in the past.

An example of this can be found in the 1996 “Africa: The Art of a Continent” exhibit at the Guggenheim Museum. Steiner, while reviewing the exhibit, criticizes the heavy use of aesthetics instead of analyzation that drove the exhibit, saying that it used a “rhetorical whitewash” in its organization by failing to describe the specifics of the works.⁴ UCLA African Studies Director Nelson Steven agreed in his own review. Some of Nelson’s comments included that the exhibit “turned the continent into one giant (and convenient) anachronism”, that “any meaningful cultural context had slid down the ramp and into the gift shop”, and that “...the exhibition registered as a mass display of a single cultural heritage.”⁵ His complaint, essentially, was the tendency of this exhibit (as with many others,) to simply display African artworks without the contextual information that was needed to explain why they were made a specific way, and why they were important to their own groups, or even what those groups were. Nelson’s complaint was generalization. And unfortunately, Steiner points out, this was neither the first nor the last time. He mentions at least three other exhibits between the 1930’s and 1996 that had the same underlying biases. Nelson explains that “It certainly is possible

2 Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie, “Exhibiting Africa: Curatorial Attitudes and the Politics of Representation in ‘Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa’,” *African Arts* 30, no. 1 (1997): 10.
3 Christopher B. Steiner, “Discovering African Art... Again?” *African Arts* 29, no. 4 (1996): 8.
4 Steiner.
5 Steven Nelson, “Critic @ Large: Africa as Project and Projection.” *ANY: Architecture New York*, no. 16 (1996): 12.

to organize an exhibition of the entire African continent... but this must be done in a fashion that both refutes ingrained myths and expands our knowledge of African cultures and their material heritages. Art for art’s sake cannot adequately carry a continent. Beauty, however immense, is simply not enough.”⁶ National Museum of African Art curator Kevin Dumouchelle thinks the lack of geographical context is a primary source of this generalization and stresses the importance of “avoid[ing] the previous pitfalls of primarily geographic presentations that permitted the unengaged visitor to walk out of the African galleries thinking that African art had always looked like the works on view, or continues to,”⁷ in a separate article. The Western museum, while sometimes falling prey to the very biases it is meant to overcome, can be a source of information and a way to deconstruct stereotypes about Africa and African art when it takes the opportunity to do so. Regrettably, it has not yet perfected this method.

But it would be wrong to give Western museums all the credit for the continuing subjugation of African art to these fallacies when the Western gaze is truly at fault. Domouchelle says, “Frankly, the larger problem remains the profound resilience of this dichotomy [between present and past]. It bears repeating that ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ are arbitrary designations, built on slippery ideological assumptions—in particular, in our context, that “modernity” is equitable with changes that look like ‘us’ (the West)...”⁸ He means that the West as a whole has the opinion that because certain African art forms are based on traditions, we believe that they cannot be modern, that they are frozen in time somewhere in the past. Yet this is just the tip of this iceberg. In fact, it was not until the mid 1990’s that African arts were declared legitimate and no longer “primitive”.⁹ The news articles written about this development said that African art had not previously been taken seriously due to “the religious, military, sexual or decorative functions of the works [that] suggested they had not been created as art” in the Western opinion. Steiner believes this art deserves an apology for how it “‘has been neglected, abused, or treated as automatically inferior ‘primitive’ work in the West’”.¹⁰ It is important that this is a free admission of bias based on known stereotypes. It is right after this admission that he links this instance back to a similar craze

6 Nelson, 12.
7 Kevin D. Dumouchelle, “CURATING AFRICAN HISTORY.” *African Arts* 46, no. 3 (2013): 7.
8 Dumouchelle, “CURATING AFRICAN HISTORY”, 7.
9 Steiner, “Discovering African Art... Again?”, 4.
10 Steiner, 4.

in the 1930’s that shows the roots of the Western viewpoint of African art forms, as they are sensationalized as “African primitive art” and magazines were saying that it was “‘smart to be primitive today’”. The author also mentions an article from 1914 about an exhibit on African art that describes it as “brilliantly barbaric”.¹¹ Thus the prejudiced history of the Western gaze towards African art becomes evident, from the early 1900’s through today. More central to my thesis, however, is another point Ogbechie makes. “The notion that ‘especially in Africa, one finds that some of the most radical art began with collective endeavors...’ is a reinvention of the contemporary African artists as a ‘quasi-tribal artists whose work is interesting principally because it translates the cultural ethos of collectivity’”.¹² From Ogbechie’s viewpoint, the main problem is that when talking about the works of contemporary African artists, the West will dismiss their individuality in order to make a direct connection between their artwork and longstanding known forms, just as we will see with the work of El Anatsui. When examining how this situation continues to occur, it is obvious that the base of the discretization of contemporary African art is the Western gaze- the dismissal of the contemporary artist in favor of stereotypes that fascinate the West despite their lack of truth.

The question is then posed of how to understand contemporary African artists and how their works differ from historical art forms, as well as how to understand them in relation to each other. African art historian Peter Osegi demonstrates the contrast between historical art forms and contemporary artwork by reminding the reader that historical art forms are of the past, and now exist only in the form of artifacts. As he describes the differences in artworks and cultural aspects of a given group over the time of his research, he finds that “The case is similar in many areas of Africa—not that cultures have vanished, but that the particular art forms of the past are truly past, and the window has closed on that kind of research. [Even t]he elders have moved on.”¹³ Yale University Art Museum curator Frederick Lamp agrees that contemporary African arts are moving forward. He observes that “Overwhelmingly, artists from Africa... competing in the international sphere do not want to be pigeonholed as ‘African artists’ and they want to be shown in the museums and galleries and theatres of the

11 Steiner, 6.
12 Okwunodu Ogbechie, “Exhibiting Africa: Curatorial Attitudes and the Politics of Representation in ‘Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa’”, 10.
13 Frederick John Lamp, “Even the Elders Have Moved On.” *African Arts* 46, no. 2 (2013): 8-9.

world equally with artists from the United States and Europe.” Contemporary African artists understand that there are additional challenges to presenting and selling their artwork simply because of their origins. They are concerned with how this may detract from or limit their work, as evidenced by the very intentional use of the word “pigeonhole”. Here it becomes clear that while contemporary African artists and their work are dissimilar from historical art forms, the two are continuously lumped together by the West, creating an ignorance of that same dissimilarity.

There is evidence too that the Western gaze causes Westerners to approach African art with certain expectations in mind that also contribute to the misinterpretation of Anatsui’s works. If one is looking through a stereotypical lens, how can one not expect to see a view affected by those stereotypes? The problem of expectations rises as artists feel the pressures of them. Anatsui himself states, “I will say yes, the increased demand has tied me to a format—if by format you mean something like a painter working with oil on canvas, or a ceramicist working with clay and glazes,”¹⁴ in response to a question of how the current art market affects him and if he feels expected to continue producing the canvas works. Again, the Western gaze interferes with the creativity and perceived legitimacy of contemporary African artists by constraining them to one style if the West likes it.¹⁵

Having flushed out the basis for the misconception of African contemporary artists, we can now see how this phenomenon occurred to El Anatsui and understand how this has affected the interpretation of his canvas artworks. El Anatsui was born in Ghana 1944 and earned

14 Lamp, “Even the Elders Have Moved On.” 9.
15 Another artist who feels these expectations, and outright mocks them, is Romuald Hazoume in his *La Bouche du Roi* series. The works are mixed media, including 300 masks made of jerry cans—which have a deep historical connection of being used to transport black market petrol between Nigeria and Benin—wherein each is given a name and a token. The works intend to “...explore contemporary socio-economic relationships, and draw on the signifying potency of the mask form.” Hazoume connects them to the African spirits lost to transatlantic slave trade and to workers trapped in contemporary slavery systems. So in this case, expectations actually work to the benefit of the art by allowing themselves to be satirized. Says art historian Polly Savage, “Hazoumé’s practice is rooted in Fá divination, but it is also fully engaged with international art discourses. However, as with many other artists working in Africa today, his reception in the West has been mostly characterized by a constrictive focus on his nationality and choice of materials. The use of the term ‘recycled’ in reference to [his art in the ‘Africa Remix’ exhibition] focuses on the mundane past life of the materials and stymies any claims for this... transformation.” This not only diverts attention away from the conceptual qualities of the work, it throws the practitioner’s status as an artist into question and bolsters stereotypes of African artists...”



Ink Splash II, El Anatsui,
2012

his visual art degree from the College of Art University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana. He has since lived and worked in Nigeria. Anatsui has had an impressive 40-year career; his canvas works are his most popular but he has also done well-known work with wood and ceramic sculpture. It is ironic that these are pushed aside when they have the conceptual basis for the cloths, but the purpose of El Anatsui's works will be discussed later.¹⁶

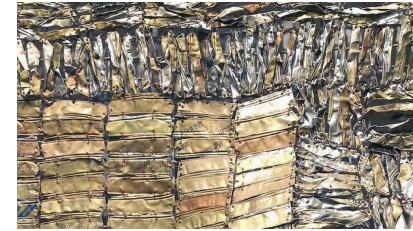
El Anatsui has said that "He came up with the idea [of the canvasses] after finding a bag of the [bottle] tops while looking through the brush near his studio."¹⁷ He then began creating the "malleable, fluid sculptures".¹⁸ In her interview with the artist, Assistant Curator of the National Museum of African Art Lisa Binder states that at El Anatsui's studio, the assistants first make and then arrange the different sections under instructions written in their own materials shorthand, so they are ready for El Anatsui to examine and make changes to. Once a work is done the pieces are woven together and the completed work is wrapped in protective plastic for storage or transport.¹⁹ Anatsui only uses locally-produced alcoholic beverage tops flattened and woven together with copper wire. He chose the bottle caps as a material because they do not rust, unlike aluminum, but also because "The bottle caps I use are linked to liquor, which has historical associations, since hard drinks played a prominent role in the earliest contact between Africa and Europe.

¹⁶ El Anatsui, and Laura Leffler James. "Convergence: History, Materials, and the Human Hand—An Interview with El Anatsui." *Art Journal* 67, no. 2 (2008): 17.

¹⁷ Lisa M. Binder, "El Anatsui: Transformations." *African Arts* 41, no. 2 (2008): 25.

¹⁸ Binder, 27.

¹⁹ Binder, 29.



Old Man's Cloth, El Anatsui,
2003

The caps I use are all from local brands of liquor."²⁰ Thus the literal transformation in El Anatsui's work begins. But transformation of the works continues with each new display because "...each installation will be a new configuration, with the curator or collector hanging the piece as they see fit. This can easily be read as yet another layer of transformation."²¹ El Anatsui's works are unique in material and production method, but they are also unique in their nature of continuous transformation.

The primary issue is that El Anatsui's work has widely been separated from its purpose and stripped of its individuality in favor of a connection to longstanding arts that are preferred by Westerners, such as kente cloth. His works have been locked into comparison with kente cloth by Westerners since he said once that he is interested in the cloths in an interview. His works are looked at as an ultimately inconsequential but interesting interpretation of a historical (and implied to be better) art form. This is present in the minds of nearly all viewers because this false idea has pervaded so much information about his work. Take the following quote from author Karen Wilkin in *The Hudson Review*. "...it's interesting to discover, for example, that Anatsui's father was a weaver of kente cloth, although his son never learned the art..."²² This sentence by the author dominates the description of Anatsui's work in this article; Wilkin never touches on his focus on transformation or any other aspect of his work excluding a brief description. The misinterpretation of Anatsui's work is so widespread throughout common

²⁰ James, 48.

²¹ Binder, 29.

²² Karen Wilkin, "El Anatsui at the Brooklyn Museum." *The Hudson Review* 66, no. 1 (2013): 210.



knowledge and literature that the public is generally ignorant of his intentions.

In order to understand this comparison, one must have a general understanding of the kente cloth as well. The cloth was used most by groups in Ghana²³ and was originally made from silk thread, a trade good brought in then woven into cloth in strips by men.²⁴ Kente cloth garments are usually worn by wealthier on special occasions; although the cloth comes from a history of royal use,²⁵ it has been incorporated into street fashions, made into graduation gowns and other ceremonial garments, and has since been appropriated to some extent by Western fashion. The cloth is woven in strips that result in a variety of square patterns, and “the colors are often those most common in kente: yellow, red, purple, black, green, and orange— which are also the colors of most liquor-bottle caps.”²⁶ This similarity in color may also be incorrectly used to argue the connection between Anatsui’s canvasses and kente cloth.

Thus we have begun to analyze El Anatsui’s work and what the misperception of its purpose is, but first a close look at the misinformation surrounding El Anatsui’s work is needed to better understand its actual purpose. The discourse surrounding the work is part of the issue itself, as “Much has been written about the cloth pieces... and their [material] relationship to Ghanaian kente and adinkra patterns. However, in conversation with the artist, it became clear that the historical connection to a specific cloth type

23 Mariama Roaa and Joe Adu-Agyem. “The Evolving Art of Ashanti Kente Weaving in Ghana.” *Art Education* 61, no. 1 (2008): 36.
24 Sjarief Hale, “Kente Cloth of Ghana.” *African Arts* 3, no. 3 (1970): 26.
25 Hale, 26.
26 Binder, “El Anatsui: Transformations”, 27.

was secondary to the transformation of material and the significance of this change in relation to local and global political and societal conditions.”²⁷ So we can immediately see that this dominating view of his works is one based on exaggeration and assumption of this perceived connection instead of his own reasoning. Binder agrees, saying that “While his work is often read primarily in relation to cloth, in fact it should be considered in terms of a conceptual and historical space and given a localized reading of his practice of incorporating locally procured materials,”²⁸ and that “This reference in the ‘cloth’ is born more of convenience rather than the artist’s conscience planning.”²⁹ El Anatsui himself has worked hard to debunk these forged associations as well. Anatsui did acknowledge that he saw the resonance between the two later on, but responded no when asked if he had kente in mind when he started the project. He was still somewhat unfamiliar with kente until he sought information from academics and specialists after this connection was established,³⁰ probably in order to refute it. Binder states that El Anatsui has said to her in interviews that while the works look similar to kente, they do not mirror the patterns of the original cloth types. The names of the canvasses may allude to an inspiration from a historical cloth, but the name is the end of the significance of the connection.³¹ While Anatsui’s works may have some visual or verbal references to kente cloth, they are not meant to be connected. The canvas works have been reassigned an incorrect meaning by the West which stresses the visual similarities between them and kente cloth.

Having established what the canvasses are not about, we must now clarify what the true purpose of the canvases is: transformation and tracing human touch. First, a discussion of the materiality of the works and how this directly relates to their purpose. Binder also states that “El Anatsui has a personal mandate as a sculptor that he... should use ‘whatever the environment throws up’. He has always experimented with space and the unpredictability of form in response to environment...”³² The sculptures are more related to the connection to his local environment than they are to any themes of recycling. She continues on to say that “The sculptures he makes is not recycling—it is transformation. When he makes a sculpture, the materials have reached the end of their previous use value and will not be reused as

27 Binder, “El Anatsui: Transformations”, 24.
28 Binder, 25.
29 Binder, 26.
30 Binder, 27-29.
31 Binder, 29.
32 Binder, “El Anatsui: Transformations”, 24.

anything other than that particular artwork.”³³ El Anatsui states directly in this same interview that the most important thing for him about the canvasses is the transformation.³⁴ However, in the secondary connection “...Anatsui focuses on the object’s connection to the human hand. Like the invisible remnants of DNA, he says, all objects—used and abandoned—carry the deposits of the object’s user. The artist uses these cast-off materials to explore unseen human connections.”³⁵ He describes this touch connection between humans via every day objects in terms of a “charge” left behind on them³⁶ that he is interested in tracing and exploring. Throughout all of his work, from its creation to its installation, the theme of transformation is evident. It is continuously referred back to as it is changed over time and place after its initial transformation from sections of woven bottle caps to finished work. Instead of connecting to kente cloth and local history, El Anatsui’s focus in the canvas works is change itself.

The artworks of contemporary African artists are often (possibly willfully) ignored or misunderstood because of the biases of Western gaze towards African art. This is demonstrated by the case of the canvas works of El Anatsui, and how the transformative purpose of his work has been overlooked as Westerners compare it to Ghanaian kente cloth. Through this case we can understand how the Western gaze, or the stereotypical and superior viewpoint the West takes towards African art, negatively affects contemporary artists by causing Western audiences to ignore, simplify, or create expectations for their artworks, when the artists really only want recognition of their work and individuality.

33 Binder, 36.
34 James, “Convergence: History, Materials, and the Human Hand—An Interview with El Anatsui”, 42.
35 James, 37.
36 James, 38.

Binder, Lisa M. "El Anatsui: Transformations." *African Arts* 41, no. 2 (2008): 24-37. www.jstor.org/stable/20447883.

Cole, Herbert M. "Art Studies in Ghana." *African Arts* 13, no. 1 (1979): 26-27. doi:10.2307/3335606.

El Anatsui, and Laura Leffler James. "Convergence: History, Materials, and the Human Hand— An Interview with El Anatsui." *Art Journal* 67, no. 2 (2008): 36-53. www.jstor.org/stable/40598941.

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Katie Ledford

Art Education, 2023

Within this series, I experimented with portraiture and lighting. At its core, the series is all about insecurity and perception. I've personally struggled with a lot of insecurity about my physical appearance in my life, so I wanted to explore insecurity deeper, as a theme. This series includes pictures of myself as well as pictures of others. I hoped to show that insecurity can look different for everyone, but it's still just as real and challenging. My goal was to either photograph from people's perceived "bad sides"/bad angles or photograph a specific feature of their faces that they're insecure about. I looked to the saying, "bring it to light," as inspiration. I wanted to, quite literally, bring people's unknown or overlooked beauty into the light. I wanted to show that the angles or features that people consider "bad" about themselves still have immense beauty. At the same time, I wanted to show that our perceptions of ourselves and what we look like are often negatively distorted. Other people have looked at these pictures and seen beauty, regardless of what the models think. The fact is, they are all beyond beautiful, and I hope this series helped them believe it.



Bring it to Light I
Photography



Bring it to Light II
Photography



Bring it to Light III
Photography



Bring it to Light IIII
Photography

Alec Bird

Computer Science, 2020

Photography has taught me to notice things that I would normally pass by. Any situation or environment can provide great content if you keep an open mind and what may seem ordinary can be used to create interesting compositions. I found that a couple lit bulbs among burnt out ones created an unusual but satisfying balance when shot at a certain angle. The black and white shot only turned out the way I wanted due to the man on the ladder being present. As an admirer of vintage, documentary style photography, the lone man working against the distressed wall provided the opportunity to shoot this photo with that style in mind. I love photography because there is an abundance of ways to shoot the same image.



Untitled
Photography



Untitled
Photography

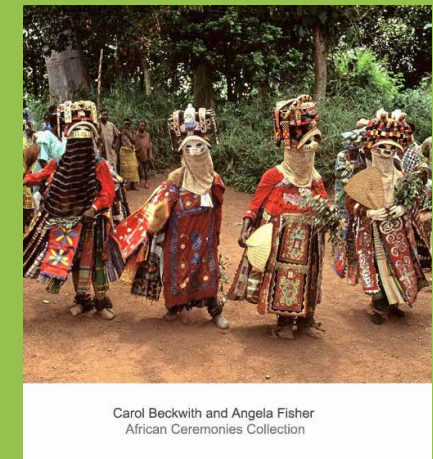
2020 Faculty Nominations Student Writing & Research

Celia Bugno

"Dispelling Stereotypes: Feminism, Masquerade and Performance Arts in West Africa"

Nomination by Dr. Jordan Fenton:

Celia Bugno's paper, "Dispelling Stereotypes: Feminism, Masquerade and Performance Arts in West Africa," stemmed from her research project from the Art History class, Art 309: Arts of the African Peoples (Fall 2018). The quality and scope of her paper was excellent and well beyond the undergraduate level. In it, she analyzed three cases of west African female performance from the perspective of feminism, arguing that women negotiate gendered tensions and harness power with the medium of masquerade, an artistic expression all too often only attributed to the domain of men. Her outstanding research was also on display as a poster presentation at 108th College Art Association annual conference this year in Chicago, IL.



Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher
African Ceremonies Collection

Libby Fischer

"Muralism and Forging the Public Self-Image in the Late Nineteenth Century"

Nomination by Dr. Pepper Stetler:

Libby is writing a thesis for departmental honors on American mural painting in the late nineteenth century. In 2019, Libby received a University Summer Scholars Award to begin her research on the topic. That summer, she was also an intern in the curatorial department at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC.



Sydney Herrick

"The Constitution of Memory and (*nostalgia*)"

Nomination by Dr. Annie Dell'Aria:

Sydney Herrick's essay on Hollis Frampton's 1971 structuralist film (*nostalgia*) was completed last spring for Art 420E: Experimental Film and Video Art. Sydney's reading was exceptionally clear and thought-provoking, synthesizing primary source material with close analysis of the film and theoretical considerations of memory and time. Not only was the work exemplary as an assignment, but as a reader I found the essay to be an illuminating take on this deceptively complex work of avant-garde cinema.



Diana Kate Karsanow

"German Chinoiserie at the Miami University Art Museum: Chinese Courtier with Lady"

Nomination by Dr. Michael Hatch:

The catalog entry that Diana wrote for ART 498, the Fall 2019 senior capstone course, was so well written and researched that it could have been published in a museum catalog as it was. She also stepped up at the end of the semester to take on extra organizational and writing work to ensure the cohesiveness of our exhibition materials. If I were a museum director, I would hire her immediately based on her work for this project alone!



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