



ffusions



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Note from the Dean



Elizabeth Reitz Mullenix,
Ph.D.

One of the few things that helped me to feel “normal” during this long pandemic siege was going to Art Museums. Because of covid restrictions, I did not travel the way I typically did in the beforetimes, but my husband Robert (a painter) and I did manage to do some art trips in Ohio. We visited the Cleveland Art Museum, the Cincinnati Art Museum, and the Columbus Art Museum. And, of course, I went often to our own amazing Art Museum on campus. The Museum atmosphere was familiar, calming, contemplative, restorative. This was an activity that reminded me of life as we knew it before this crisis made so many of us feel isolated and afraid. As I walked through those spaces, and looked at the work, I thought about how it is the artist’s job to make meaning—in good times, and in bad. The moving work of our students in this issue of *Effusions* helps us as a Miami community to make meaning out of this year. The images and words here speak of isolation, beauty, political movement, identity. This powerful collection of work helps us to think more deeply about our world (global and local) and our relationships (to friends and family, nature, ourselves). I want to thank all the talented students who persevered to publish this volume during a stressful year, and to Dr. Annie Dell’Aria, their devoted mentor. Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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

Note from the Chair

I am always stunned by the diversity seen in *Effusions*, so many different voices, attitudes, visions and interpretations coming together to create a beautiful and unified expression of who we are. In this last year our ability to be physical together was severely limited, so I see this issue of *Effusions* as an opportunity for all these amazing individuals to share all the experiences we were not able to have communally. Much of the work we see here explores the isolation, loss, individualism, dread and fear, either through the examination of a great artist’s work or through one’s own creative efforts, but within that we see beauty and a desire to reach out and come together. Ultimately, I see optimism and hope. This issue of *Effusions* is a showcase of the durability of the human spirit and the creative diversity of our Miami student population. With students from Studio Art, Art and Architecture History, IMS, Art Education, Architecture, Communication Design, Business Economics and Zoology, it shows that the desire to give form to one’s experience, then share that experience, permeates all corners of the university. It is a demonstration of the power and importance Art has across our fine institution, and the necessity we feel to connect with one another. I love that art allows for these powerful interactions regardless of our ability to be in the same room. I invite you to take some time and explore this rich range of powerful voices, and to recover a little of what we lost over this last year.

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 once again welcome you to another issue of *Effusions*, the student-run journal of the Department of Art at Miami University. This entire year has been marked by tremendous uncertainty, hardship, and strain on our students, yet their resilience and continued creativity and intellectual exploration continues to amaze and inspire me, and hopefully you readers will feel the same.

This year's selection of work demonstrates the diversity of media and themes students pursue in the visual arts at Miami. Featured artist John Rozelle's vibrant pastel studies and provocative first-person perspective painting prompt viewers to slow down and examine color, composition, and form. The psychological explorations of Alex Morse, Sara Lu, and Anna Skalicki seem to capture some of the inner experience of this turbulent academic year, while the quiet and eerie photographs of Yihao Kong offer a glance at the campus many of us stayed away from during periods of lockdown. Lucy Osborne and Gia Mariani drew upon inspiring cultural figures or artists, while Isabella Reardon Ramos turned to automatism and Maggie Myers took inspiration from the adolescent bedroom. The work of Aspen Que Stein, Lily Ellison, and Etiyene Eshett challenge the meanings we associate with the figure or the body through visually striking compositions. The scholarly work of Jane Keady and Mary Visco ask us to think about the challenges women artists faced at various points in the twentieth century, arguing for their place in the art historical canon, something explored further in the art history

capstone exhibition *Confronting Greatness: A Celebration of Women Artists* that I was very fortunate to lead last fall.

At the helm of this year's issue were senior Art and Architecture History student Aubrey Woodard, our editor-in-chief, and senior Communication Design student Emily Drexelius, who produced the beautiful visual layout. Their enthusiasm, dedication, and perseverance in the face of an extraordinarily stressful academic year is what made this issue possible. While I am going to miss them greatly as they graduate this spring, I'm so proud of the work they've done and thank them for their dedication to the department and to elevating and highlighting the work of their peers. I know they will go on to do great things! Their work, along with the efforts of the rest of *Effusions'* volunteers and editorial board, will no doubt inspire more students to become involved in this publication in future academic years.

I hope that you enjoy this issue of *Effusions* and continue to follow this publication. Please also come see some of the amazing student work in studio and art history in our galleries and museums as we (hopefully) return to normalcy.

A handwritten signature in dark 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 2020-2021 edition of the *Effusions* art journal. *Effusions* is a student-led publication sponsored by The Miami University Department of Art that aims to include and display the work of creative students at Miami University.

Although the past year has had many unexpected circumstances, the journal continues to proudly present studio artists, art historians, graphic designers, and photographers who have persevered to create amazing work. Despite what is going on in the world, students continue to create and we are proud to present what they have accomplished.



Aubrey Woodard
Editor-in-Chief



Emily Drexelius
Graphic Designer



Sydney Herrick
Editor

John Rozelle

Art and Architecture History, 2021

Flowers are a challenging subject matter. They are bright, colorful, abstract, and organic. Flowers have been a central subject matter in the art world for a long time. Beauty lives within this subject matter. However, these oil pastel studies are not of flowers. Form is suggested by a restricted color palette, using simple variations of value and chroma. Line encapsulates and imprisons the form. The form is built up by simple, gestural strokes of pigment, resulting in a heavily textured surface. In these studies, there is form, color, and texture; but not the thing itself. These are not paintings of flowers; they are simply paintings where the subject dissolves into medium.



Flowers 1
Pastel

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



Flowers 2
Pastel



Flowers 3
Pastel

This large-scale oil painting was made for the final project in Michael Stillion's figure painting class. This painting depicts a first-person view of a figure, looking down into a toilet. The composition is altered so that the toilet is pushed down and back into the pictorial field. The secondary focal point on the toilet seat is off of the bottom of the canvas, giving the effect of standing directly over the bowl. Color in this painting is bright and vibrant, as opposed to the toilet being associated with filth. The water in the toilet bowl reflects a shadowy portrait, replacing the viewer with a more ambiguous identity. This painting, using the iconography of the toilet, is an expression of humanity. I think that, in terms of expression, one would have to look at how a toilet is used, and how these natural yet "disgusting" acts of personal relief reflect our perception of reality. The toilet really is quite a beautiful object with luminescent porcelain reflecting all the colors of its surroundings. The toilet bowl holds clean water like the grail held Christ's wine. Except, you piss in it. Scorning that which gave you life.



Clean Water to Piss In
Oil Paint

Yihao Kong

Interactive Media Studies, 2021

These photographs were taken on the campus of Miami, which was extremely empty during the summer vacation due to COVID-19. It was an excellent opportunity to pursue a natural view of the Miami campus. The quiet is relaxing, giving you the ability to enjoy the natural scenery of the Miami campus, even though it's not crowded with people.



Untitled 1
Digital Photograph

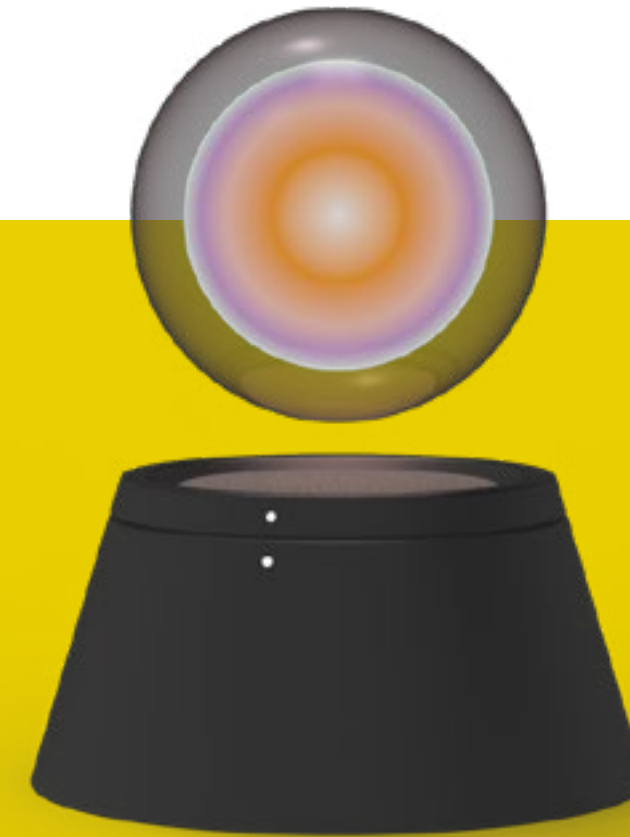


Untitled 2
Digital Photograph



Untitled 3
Digital Photograph

This is an interactive speaker project designed for long-distance relationships for couples. Since poor communication can be one important part for couples to break up, especially for long-distance relationship couples. So this speaker has one part, "floating emotion ball", it can show the positive or negative emotions from each other. And more functions like display notifications or the songs can be displayed on the speaker. The design project aims to increase interactions between couples.



Interactive Speaker
3D Model

Jane Keady

Art History, 2022

The Modes and Mediums of Marisol

This research paper is about the woman pop artist Marisol, written for the 2020 fall exhibition, *Confronting Greatness: Celebrating Women Artists*.

The works of Marisol are full of surprises - her unexpected style, medium, and tone leave scholars and viewers enamored by her and her pieces. The massive block-like sculptures are impossible to miss in a museum or gallery. Her unique interpretation of people and animals imprints on her viewers, leaving her work forever recognizable and memorable. She captivates people with her satirical yet slightly uncomfortable pieces. At first glance, a viewer may be amused by the peculiar representation of figures. However, the viewer may begin to stare long enough to feel the sculptures ominously staring back. *The Royal Family* (figure 1), made in 1967, is a large assemblage of parts depicting Queen Elizabeth II, her husband, Prince Philip, their children, Prince Charles, Princess Anne, Prince Andrew, Prince Edward, and the family dog. The somewhat distorted representation of the pop culture figures was a distinguishing hallmark of Marisol's work in the 1960s. The piece is an excellent representative case of Marisol's unconventional and individualistic style because she refused to limit herself to specific techniques and materials. Marisol stated that her sculpture "started as a kind of rebellion"; even though she spent years being taught how to paint, she spontaneously decided to switch to sculpture without any knowledge of the medium.¹ Her pieces may include random materials such as fabric, a glass eye, or even a cast made from Marisol's body. The possibilities of medium and form were endless for Marisol because she was her own teacher and her biggest supporter. She rebelled against the societal expectations of art and made what she pleased instead. *The Royal Family* by Marisol is a piece that confronts the predetermined notion of artistic greatness through Marisol's expression of self-identity and expressive rebellion.

Marisol was a Venezuelan artist born in Paris who traveled and lived in several different continents, eventually moving to the United States to pursue her artistic career. Marisol first began her studies as a painter under the direction of several artists with an emphasis from Hans Hofmann. Hofmann was a significant influence on Marisol's sculpture style, although

¹ Pacini, M. "Tracking Marisol in the Fifties and Sixties", in *Archives of American Art Journal*, 46(3/4), (2007), 62.



Figure 1:
The Royal Family (1967)
Marisol

Hofmann only taught her on two-dimensional mediums. Hofmann taught the artist the “push-pull” theory, which dissects geometric forms or colors on figures and objects. The “push-pull” theory may exemplify Marisol’s sculptures by taking complex figures or images and breaking them down into simple geometric shapes.² Marisol was naturally gifted at sculpture, although she had no previous experience with the medium. When asked about her proficiency in the techniques and materials so quickly, she responded, “If I wanted to know how to do something, I asked someone how to do it. It is like going to school. Sometimes I telephoned other sculptors or a factory. It is not too difficult to learn.”³ Marisol was not too prideful to ask for help, but she did not require much guidance. Her style of sculpture is consistent and unique because viewers can easily recognize her works.

There are various theories as to why she made the drastic change from painting to sculpture, but a prevalent rationale was due to an unknown pre-Columbian exhibition that Marisol had attended about sculpture and

² Marisol : [an exhibition] : September 23 through November 14, 1971. (1971). [s.n.].

³ Marisol : [an exhibition]

rebellion. Marisol had exclaimed that she was not good at painting like Hofmann was, and she thought the medium was not difficult enough for her. Sculpture was Marisol’s form of rebellion from Hofmann’s teachings; “I started doing something funny so that I would be happier - and it worked. I was also convinced that everyone would like my work because I had so much fun doing it. They did.”⁴ What began as a more enjoyable art form to amuse others, eventually became Marisol’s form of happiness. Instead of returning to painting, she decided to master the sculpture techniques that catered to her happiness and wellbeing. The confidence and novelty of her work soon began to be recognized throughout the world.

Marisol began exhibiting her works in galleries and museum exhibitions throughout the 1950s and 60s. Her work was a topic of discussion in the eyes of art critics because they did not know how to categorize her subject matter. Marisol had been placed in a range of categories, whether that be Pop art, Folk art, or Abstract Expressionism.

Her pieces include pre-Columbian face masks, pop culture figures, and bizarre representations of human bodies. Although it is still argued, Marisol ultimately is considered a Pop artist. Her peculiar representation of pop culture figures and her playful and bold techniques with medium and color is why critics and scholars placed her into the Pop Art movement. In contrast to other Pop artists, Marisol did not succumb to the repetition of mass media and typical flatness represented in many Pop art pieces. Some scholars see connections between Pop and Surrealism because of their connection through humor. Marisol’s work touches upon Surrealism because she delved into dimensionality, dream-like introspection, and an overall deeper thematic perspective.⁵ Marisol did not make her art to become well-known or to please others; she made what she wanted and did not allow critics to persecute her. Although Marisol’s art might be effortless to her, she becomes a widely recognized artist for her skill, perception, and unconventional mediums.

The Royal Family by Marisol was commissioned by *The London Telegraph* in 1967 when Marisol began to arise as a more recognized artist. The piece was brought to the United States after the

⁴ Pacini, M. “Tracking Marisol in the Fifties and Sixties”, in *Archives of American Art Journal*, 46(3/4), (2007), 62.

⁵ Stief, A., Walkner, M., Matt, G., Minioudaki, K., Kempkes, A., Sachs, S., . . . Rappolt, M. . Power up: Female pop art. (2010), Wien: Kunsthalle, 256.

David Anderson Gallery, NY, purchased it in 1983. It was loaned in 1984 to the Museum of Modern Art in New York City for an exhibition titled: *Pop Art*. After being again purchased in 1985, the piece finally made its way to the Miami University Art Museum in 1986 as a gift from donors Paul and Mona Doepper. The towering larger-than-life-sized sculpture is ten feet tall, six and a half feet wide, and extends six feet out. The piece features both two-dimensional and three-dimensional mixed media types, including painted wood, fabric, terracotta, and a cast hand. The comical representation of the family is typical of Marisol’s work in the 1960s. Marisol breaks down the complex figures into simple geometric shapes making the portraits anatomically unrealistic. The piece’s backside is meant to be placed up against a wall and be viewed from the other three sides. Much like the surface-only public personas of royalty, the front-facing view displays the most detail to the viewer because the blocks are only painted on their front-facing side. The viewer will see all the figures’ bodies, the details of their clothes, and the varying heights of the wooden blocks. Only when the viewer looks at the side-profile can they see the gap between the blocks. The side-profiles show little detail besides a few protruding segments, such as the wooden noses carved outward from the blocks. The lack of detail from the sides may symbolize the reality and vapidness of the royal family's lineage and traditions. Marisol had no issue exposing pop culture figures by depicting how she viewed them, even if that may be in a satirical or humiliating fashion.

A unique feature of *The Royal Family* is a cast hand that is placed on Queen Elizabeth’s shoulder. Marisol quite literally incorporated herself in almost every one of her pieces. Her work often includes pictures of herself and casts of her body parts, such as the cast hand. In 1964, she held a one-person exhibition at the Stable Gallery, and nearly all the pieces had an image or cast of Marisol. Marisol’s subject matter often depicted pop culture figures such as *The Royal Family*; however, although her portraits were depicting other people, she stated that all of her pieces are somewhat a self-portrait.

I’m always there (in my studio) when I’m working. I work very often at night. I can’t call up a friend at one in the morning to make a cast of his face. But when I make a cast of my own face, I file it down or alter it by sandpapering. Whatever the artist makes is always a kind of self-portrait. Even if he paints a picture or an apple or makes an abstraction. When I do a well-known person like John Wayne, I am really doing myself.⁶

Marisol received a great deal of scrutiny for the casts and pictures of herself in her pieces, and some even labeled her as an artist of narcissism, but Marisol claims that the method was just convenient for her.⁷ The critics harassed Marisol for not only her art but also her appearance and personal life. Marisol was a beautiful and wealthy woman who enjoyed travel and the finer things in life, which was not typical for a woman in the 1960s. The critics were so persistent at undermining Marisol’s professionalism that she eventually decided to rebel against them. Marisol would arrive at her exhibitions and artist collective meetings with a mask that covered her face, and she would not speak a word to anyone at these events. Throughout history, many women artists have been silenced by the overshadowing of men and societal expectations of art made by men. Marisol took a different approach and chose to physically remove her voice and image from the public eye. However, her “silence” only created more of an uproar; “her refusal to confess her private life received an enormous amount of attention in the early 1960s.”⁸ She was called a “beautiful enigma” for displaying herself numerous times throughout her art but never displaying herself in real life.⁹ By rebelling against what society expected of her, Marisol became a more impactful woman artist not only through her subject matter but by her tenacity.

6 Marisol : [an exhibition]
7 Whiting, C. (1991). Figuring Marisol's Femininities. RACAR: Revue D'art Canadienne / Canadian Art Review, 18(1/2), 73.
8 Whiting, C. (1991). Figuring Marisol's Femininities, 77.
9 Whiting, C. Figuring Marisol's Femininities, 77.

Marisol was a confident, individualistic, and influential woman artist. She became widely known due to her unconventionality and defiance from the traditional approach of art-making. She carried her rebellious nature throughout her art career and personal life. Switching mediums, distorting public figures, and entirely removing herself from the public eye only touches upon the greatness that she possesses. She made a series of decisions to become a happier and more fulfilled person, whether others accepted those decisions or not. It is not a question that her decisions fostered a significant impact in the art world because it is demonstrated through her recognition and appreciation as an artist. A viewer may begin to stare at *The Royal Family* and be entertained by the unfamiliar form of the somewhat familiar-looking people. However, the viewer may begin to stare long enough to notice the craftsmanship of assemblage, the complexity and variety of the mixed media, the disparity between the front-facing and side-profile views, and the overall symbolism of satirically depicting royalty. As the viewer steps back and eventually moves on from the piece, the distinctive styles and forms will remain with them, forever leaving a lasting impact on the viewer.

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Alex Morse

Art Education, 2021
Minors: Art History & Spanish

2021 is a piece about the dread I felt this Fall looking toward the future. As a senior graduating this spring, I am facing a big change, a big unknown. I have no idea where I will be teaching, or if I will even be able to find a job, and even have no idea where I will be living. I don't like change. This piece expresses my fear of such a big life change, despite that change being a good thing. Graduating, teaching art next year, and moving into my own space are all good things, but I don't do change well and it terrifies me. By painting this self portrait of my fear, where pages of apartments for rent, job postings, and licensure exam study material swirled around me, I was able to process what was giving me this fear and move past it.



2021
Mixed Media

In this painting, we the viewer are underwater, and we are looking up at Narcissus staring down at his reflection in the water. The painting represents how self-interested humans can ignore big and important issues of the world around us. While Narcissus stares self-indulgently at his reflection in the beautiful clear blue water around him, we can see the dark and murky waters impacted by climate change and pollution slowly creeping in on him without him noticing. The colors from Narcissus float out into the polluted waters showing that people have an impact on the world around them regardless of whether they choose to see it or not. If you do not see the negative effects of our actions on the world now, then you will soon.



Narcissus
Oil Paint

Sara Lu

Business Economics, Art Therapy Co-major & China Business, 2021
Minors: Chinese and International Business

My paintings take a multi-faceted approach in examining psychology, social issues, nature, and the human condition with an emphasis on emotional expression. Organic matter and natural subjects help ground us and remind us of what is important. That sense of idealist nature is conveyed by capturing its ubiquitous presence in our life. In addition, organic materials are physically present in my paintings, for example, materials from my past would be burned to make ash and that ash itself is used and mixed with the paint. Many of my paintings examine trauma and its effects on a person and environment as well as the intersection of that relationship. Texture, layers, and emotive gestures are deeply rooted in my paintings to represent the complexity of human emotions. In summation, my paintings give the audience the opportunity to look internally and focus on their emotional struggles throughout life then look forward externally to the natural world and the healing process.



Dissociation
Acrylic on Canvas
36" x 36"

Lucy Osborne

Art Education and Art Therapy, 2022

Ruth Bader Ginsburg is one of those souls who will continue to impact our world forever in ways we don't even know yet. Ruth Bader Ginsburg spent a lifetime flourishing in the face of adversity before being appointed a Supreme Court Judge, where she successfully advocated for gender equality, minorities, and the LGBTQ+ community. Although she faced countless setbacks in her personal life, as well as relentless gender discrimination in the workplace, she still managed to create an exceptional career, and become the person who would move mountains for others, in hopes they could do the same. Upon hearing The Notorious RBG had passed away, September 18th, I was overcome with sadness. Not only because such an incredible life had passed, but because she had been holding on for so long. For us. Ruth Bader Ginsburg never stopped fighting for what she believed in, not even until the day she died. I know she didn't die in vain. She couldn't have. She has done too much, and given us too much, for our world to take more steps backward. I aim to tell stories in my portraits, in all of the beautiful in-between moments in the faces of my subjects. I wanted to pay homage to Ginsburg, drawing a portrait of her so full of color and shape and movement, to reflect her life's journey, which was just as full of story. I only hope we can continue to lead by her example. By continuing to tell her story, and doing so in a way that will lead others to listen. And then lead, in a way others will join.



Homage
Colored Pencil
18" x 24"

Gia Mariani

Zoology and Western Major, 2022
Minors: Photography

These pictures are part of a series I created based on photographer F Holland Day's work using a 4x5 large format film camera. He used himself to depict Christ during the crucifixion in a series called *The Seven Words* which I chose to be inspired by for these two pictures. Day's use of himself as Christ was hugely controversial as many viewed it as blasphemy to compare yourself to a religious figure. Day explained though that it was no different than painting religious scenes, he was just depicting history. His other work mainly consisted of homoerotic male nudes, causing him even more controversy. I used junior Zach Rizzo as my model and captured him channeling the pain of Christ that Day depicted in his work. I had him lay on a pile of sticks with only a small towel behind him, on a colder day, so that the discomfort and pain in the picture would be genuine.



The Last Words Part 1
Digital Photograph



The Last Words Part 2
Digital Photograph

Isabella Reardon Ramos

Architecture, 2022

"Some say the world will end in fire/
Sitting as the fireflies dance on my walls."

In a design studio last semester, we experimented and tried to imitate the creative process through the lens of Surrealism. One of the experiments we did was creating an exquisite corpse poem: each member of the studio wrote down a random phrase or sentence, and those lines were stitched together to make a non-sequitur, nonsense poem. The lines above are from that poem. The work I created is a visual gesture based on the feelings these two verses evoked.

The silhouetted figure on the left side is the closest to the viewer, and with their mostly shadowed face. This figure invites the audience into the piece instead, to look over the vivid wall illuminated by fireflies.



Untitled
Mixed Media

Anna Skalicki

Painting, 2022

This past year, I decided to explore human nature and our connection shift during quarantine. Through graphic images of hands reaching, breaking through space and time in the hopes of reaching another, I hope to reach something deep within myself, and viewers as well. Our past reality and human connection have been lost, something even as simple as a handshake has become taboo. Our days are spent in living rooms and nights are spent dreaming... "What if?". I show the yearning and longing for movement and change. I present bright and dreamy colors with harsh lines to bring the viewer out of reality. Hands are one of the most common images that make us human, give us the chance to touch, and feel. Movement flows through us all, these works show the connection between us all, and the common disconnect we share.



Many Hands, Reaching
Oil Paint
36" x 48"



Move
Acrylic Wash
9" x 12"



State of Living
Oil Paint
36" x 48"



Stuck
Oil Pastel
18" x 24"

Mary Visco

Studio Art, 2023

Paula Modersohn-Becker: The Story of an Unappreciated Female Artist

When I was first introduced to Paula Modersohn-Becker's *Nude Self Portrait with an Amber Necklace* (1906) in my Western Art History Course, I was astonished that I had both never heard of her nor even seen this groundbreaking painting of hers. A year later, remembering this revelation, I decided to explore how this could be by making it the center of my research for my Writing in the Arts course. I found no clear answer as to why Paula Modersohn-Becker was so underappreciated in the art world through this research, but did learn a lot about her passion as an artist and impact she left on all art that came after her. With this paper I hope to spread awareness about her innovative art career and leave the readers wondering how she possibly could have been so overlooked.

"My determination is great and I will amount to something," writes German artist Paula Modersohn-Becker in an 1899 letter to her mother. It is this kind of self-assurance and confidence that the artist needed to make it as a female painter in the early 1900s. However, despite this devotion to a fruitful and innovative career, Modersohn-Becker is still relatively unknown and underappreciated as an artist. By dissecting her struggles as a female artist, analyzing the power of her groundbreaking works like *Nude Self Portrait with an Amber Necklace* (1906) (Figure 1), and examining both her direct and indirect influence on the art world, I aim to understand how she's gone so unrecognized for so long. With this I am attempting to demonstrate the significance of Paula Modersohn-Becker's art, arguing that she was extremely underappreciated in her time and should get much more credit for her important role in the advancement of both female artists and art as a whole.

As writer Linda Nochlin wrote in her famous work "Why Have There Been No Great Female Artists," many of history's art masters like Michelangelo and Picasso are recognized as geniuses today because of the great amount of support they received from a young age. Their gifts as artists were praised and encouraged throughout their lives in ways that women had never been accustomed to. This same story of a lack of support from early on was a big part of Paula Modersohn-Becker's own life story. The artist took her first art lessons as a



Figure 1:
Self Portrait with an Amber Necklace (1906)
Paula Modersohn-Becker

late teenager and found a true passion for it. From that moment on, all her journal entries and letters were filled with poetic lines about her endless love for art.¹

Modersohn-Becker was very privileged for her time as her parents supported her with funds that allowed her to pursue her art. However, despite this economic support, her parents were never encouraging of her choice, making it clear that they believed she would be better as a future wife and mother. To solidify this idea, they even went as far as to send her to a school in Paris that taught women to cook and take care of the house in preparation to be duchesses one day.²

When she was able to take art lessons, she went to the most progressive schools in France and Germany where she still found that all of her male peers had many more privileges than her and any female students. For instance, in Paris, a city that Modersohn-Becker recalled giving more opportunities to women than other European cities she had visited, women taking art classes were constantly jeered at by male peers, unable to compete for prize money and scholarships, and were not permitted to graduate with Beaux-Arts Honors.³ Graduating with such honors gave young artists their names, ensuring their futures in the field and endowing their reputations. Similarly, while at an all-female art school in Berlin, Paula Modersohn-Becker and her peers were once stopped by the German government from receiving instruction for a whole month as an attempt to appease the many angry protestors who wanted to shut down the school.⁴

Beyond this lack of support from society and Modersohn-Becker’s teachers, the artist also found this same dismissal of her skills based on her gender from her closest friends and family. Her husband, painter Otto Modersohn, whom she had met and worked within the artist village of Worpswede, Germany, admitted that he never viewed her as a real artist. He

1 Radycki, J. Diane. "The Letters and Journals of Paula Modersohn-Becker: 1892-1899."
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Wilkinson, MaryAnn. "A Great Simplicity of Form."

criticized her choices and artwork throughout her life and even after. Furthermore, one of her best friends, poet Rainer Maria Rilke, recalled that he was so dismissive of Modersohn-Becker that he apparently never once asked to see her work until she brought this fact up much later into their friendship.⁵

Support aside, another big part of Paula Modersohn-Becker’s struggle as a female artist came from her inability to be regarded as “just an artist” in both her lifetime and even nowadays, over a hundred years later. A crucial element of the artist’s story that most people familiar with her know is that she escaped to Paris to focus on her art but was dragged back home out of an obligation she felt to give her husband a child. Shortly after returning home, she became pregnant, and shortly after giving birth, she stood up for the first time in weeks and died almost instantly from a pulmonary embolism, her last words “what a pity” in German.⁶ In his grief, Modersohn-Becker’s friend Rainer Maria Rilke wrote many poems about her and the tragedy of her passing. He was saddened by the fact that his dear friend had died ‘the female death’ rather than ‘the artist’s death’ like she would have wanted.⁷ Rilke is right in his sentiment, as almost every publication out there about Paula Modersohn-Becker focuses too heavily on the tragic female experience portion of her life and too little on her expansive and groundbreaking catalog of artwork.

This extensive amount of paintings Modersohn-Becker created during her lifetime would be incredibly impressive on its own, but reaches new levels of magnitude when you factor in the shortness of her life and many struggles she faced as a female artist. In her writings, she demonstrated frequently that this determination came mostly from an intense drive to create an unwavering confidence in her skills as a serious artist. This collection of journal entries and letters to friends and family that have been translated and published all over give readers an insight into what the artist was thinking throughout her life. Some even argue, like writer

5 Augst, T.A. (2014). "I Am Echo: Paula Modersohn-Becker, Rainer Maria Rilke, and the Aesthetics of Stillness."
6 Piccoli, Giorgina B., and Scott L. Karakas. "...Challenges of Pregnancy and the Weight of Tradition."
7 Augst, T.A. (2014). "I Am Echo: Paula Modersohn-Becker, Rainer Maria Rilke, and the Aesthetics of Stillness."

and professor Sara Friedrichsmeyer, that Modersohn-Becker’s writings have been overlooked and gone unappreciated just as much as the artist’s large catalog of paintings. Beyond just being full of beautiful prose and interesting happenings, Friedrichsmeyer believes that these writings have value because they tell the ever-common story of a determined and talented woman whose genius goes unnoticed throughout her life.

By reading what Paula Modersohn-Becker herself wrote, one gets new insights into her life. Here, unlike in every short biography written about her, we see a woman whose story is not dominated by marriage, motherhood, and tragedy, but a woman whose life is centered around her love for art, nature, and connecting with the people she holds dear. For example, in a letter to her father, Modersohn-Becker tells him to focus on the positive, exclaiming that it is far better “for both of (them) who are so abused to be allowed the bit of rose color that does exist”⁸ in their lives. Beyond being a great line, this sort of optimism and care she shows for her loved ones in this quote tells us a lot about who she is as a person as well as, importantly, her outlook on life as a female artist.

Similarly, Modersohn-Becker writes constantly about her moments of inspiration and how she learns from other artists in these many journal entries. One great instance of this was her fascination with the artist Paul Cezanne. In describing an experience she had while at the Louvre, Paula Modersohn-Becker expresses that she was “hit like a thunderstorm”⁹ when she first saw his work. Other examples of her writing throughout her life showcase in deep and poetic language just how often and intensely the artist thought about art. It is clear from reading these that Paula Modersohn-Becker was truly in love with making art and had a deep spiritual connection to it.

We can see this immense passion for art translated easily into the many innovative works Modersohn-Becker made throughout her career. She was inspired by a plethora of different

8 Radycki, J. Diane. “The Letters and Journals of Paula Modersohn-Becker: 1892-1899”, 131.
9 Radycki, J. Diane. “The Letters and Journals of Paula Modersohn-Becker: 1892-1899”, 107.

artists and cultivated her own unique style through this inspiration but also largely through experimentation of her own. It is evident in both her writings and paintings that Modersohn-Becker wanted to do something revolutionary with her artwork.

One of the best examples of this idea in the artist’s catalog is *Self Portrait with an Amber Necklace*(Figure 1). In it, Paula Modersohn-Becker expresses herself boldly as an artist and as a woman, reclaiming her sexuality and flaunting it confidently through semi-nude self-portraiture. The work is regarded as the first female nude self-portrait,¹⁰ which is already pretty groundbreaking in itself. However, through further analysis, it is clear that the artist had further intentions with this piece, beyond just making history.

To start, Paula Modersohn-Becker’s unique style in this piece makes a long-lasting statement. Her rough application of paint as well as large and blocky shapes of color throughout make for a bold and captivating painting. We see elements of German Expressionism, but we also see stylistic and compositional choices here that are uniquely her own. For example, her decision to paint the flowers in her crown and hands in the same striking way that she did her nipples demonstrates the emphasis of her own self-reflection in this piece.¹¹ After art, nature and her connection to it was the most common subject of any letters or journal entries Paula Modersohn-Becker wrote during her lifetime. It was clear that she had a spiritual and intimate connection to it. By echoing elements from nature in her own body, she is showcasing her own presence as a part of nature, among the flowers and everything else.

Going back to the subject of the painting, we see even deeper meanings behind the artist’s composition. In *Self Portrait with an Amber Necklace*, we are immediately met with the sly smile and accusatory stare of Modersohn-Becker. Her nude torso dominates the composition, filling up the canvas and directing the eye around with the placement of her arms. She emphasizes her figure and confronts the viewer intensely and intimately with her clear smirk

10 Colapinto, John. “Paula Modersohn-Becker: Modern Painting’s Missing Piece.”
11 “Paula Modersohn-Becker, Self-Portrait Nude with Amber Necklace...” Khan Academy.

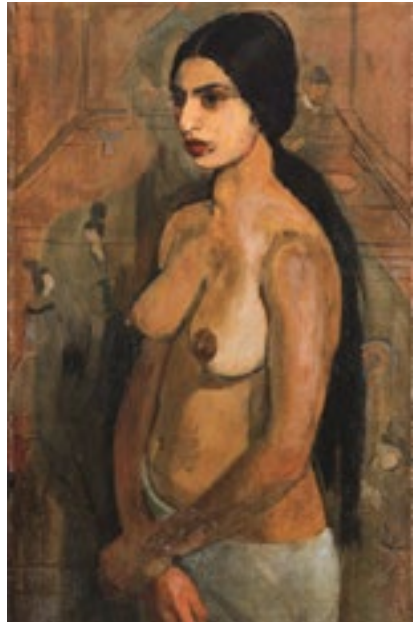


Figure 2:
Self Portrait as Tahitian(1934)
Amrita Sher-Gil

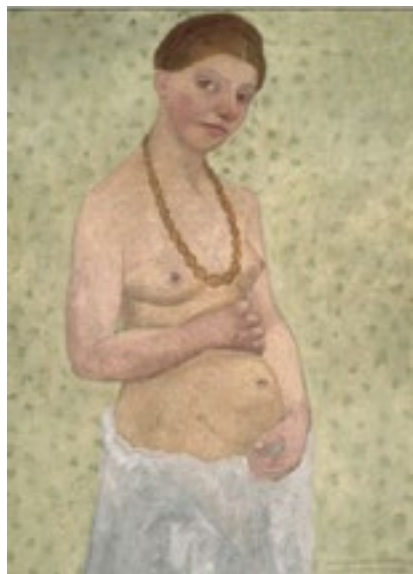


Figure 3:
Self Portrait on my Sixth Wedding Day(1906)
Paula Modersohn-Becker

and knowing eyes. It is evident in these actions that the artist is referencing the longstanding history of the male gaze in female portraiture and actively trying to make the viewer feel uncomfortable enough to truly consider the impact it has had over all these years.

In many of her works, but especially in this self portrait, we see a denial of the years of the idealized female form that had been utilized as a subject in almost every art movement before her time. In this piece, we don't see that ever-so-common elongated body of a coy but seductive young woman on display for the viewer that's found in the mountain of female portraits by men that are out there. Instead, in Self Portrait with an Amber Necklace, we are met with the kind of courageous honesty about the female body that could only come from the confidence and understanding of female artists like Paula Modersohn-Becker. The portrait she painted showed a daring and self-assured woman. No part of the body was altered or emphasized to showcase the 'flawlessness' of her form. Rather, in lieu of the idealized soft, smooth skin, here we see textured and blocky paint that adds to the intriguing dominance of the body in this self portrait that truly makes it break away from any element of the male gaze that would've been found in portraits like this were they painted by anyone else.

These elements and innovations in Paula Modersohn-Becker's work truly progressed portrait art forward and inspired the works of many artists that came after her, whether knowingly

or not. One direct example of such an inspiration can be seen in Self Portrait as Tahitian(Figure 2) by Amrita Sher-Gil. In this piece, we see Sher-Gil posed in a position that echoes another nude self portrait Modersohn-Becker made during her lifetime, Portrait of my 6th Wedding Day(Figure 3). Like Modersohn-Becker in this piece, Sher Gil is using her own body to express a point and boldly confront the viewer. Specifically, this piece was made in response to Paul Gauguin's rich history of painting Tahitian women and girls as 'exoticized' sexual objects. Here in Self Portrait as Tahitian we see Sher-Gil not adorned with flowers or in a seductive pose like a Gauguin figure would be, but instead standing matter of factly in a small, suffocating room, the shadow of a male figure lingering far too close behind her.¹² This is not the Tahitian 'paradise' that some male painters like Gauguin emphasize in their artworks (See example in Figure 4), but instead a demonstration of the reality women in paintings like these would really be living.

Though there are many other artists out there who have indirectly been influenced by the work and career of Paula Modersohn-Becker, one contemporary artist and historian Nina Relf recently wrote an article for the Gallery Magazine in which she directly credits the artist for inspiring her own career. In Relf's own work, Untitled Acrylic on Paper(2015) (Figure 5), I see a direct correlation between her and Modersohn-Becker. Beyond it being of a similar subject, a nude female portrait, Nina Relf's piece showcases a modern

¹² Behind Sher-Gil's 'Tahitian'



Figure 4:
The Gold of Their Bodies(1901)Paul
Gauguin (as Example of Tahitian women
Objectification/Male Gaze through)

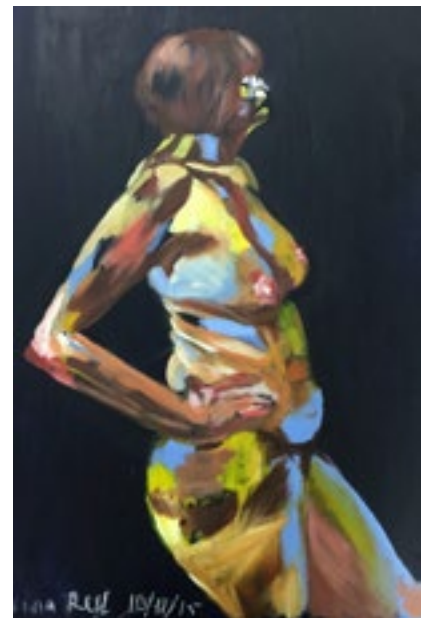


Figure 5:
Untitled Acrylic on Paper(2015)
Nina Relf

style that was undoubtedly inspired by Modersohn-Becker. Here we see large blocks of color, a clear application of paint, and a bright and eye catching color scheme that draws attention to the dominance of the form. All these elements, which can be found in most of Modersohn-Becker's pieces as well, are part of a modern style that has been evolving since her works were created more than a century ago.

However, though this connection is immediately apparent to me, what Nina Relf wrote about in her article wasn't about the stylistic inspiration she received from Paula Modersohn-Becker, but rather the value she took from her example as a dedicated and determined artist. Relf found in Modersohn-Becker's story that her "urge to create outweighed the need to adhere to societies' expectation."¹³ And in that, Nina Relf felt confident enough to do the same, putting herself out there no matter what insecurities or doubts she felt about her work.

These two examples, though important, are two of very few who have written about being directly influenced by Paula Modersohn-Becker. This still shocks me. From studying her life, reading her impressive journals, and analyzing her groundbreaking and huge collection of artwork, I would expect this artist to be a well-known and important beacon for all female artists who have come after her. I have found in my research, however, that this is certainly not the case. And so now, to try and understand how such a groundbreaking and important artist could have been so overlooked throughout history, I am going to go deeper into exploring why exactly the world isn't talking about Paula Modersohn-Becker.

My first theory involves a point that I made earlier: the fact that almost every work I've read about Modersohn-Becker spends much too long discussing the tragedy of her motherhood and death and not nearly enough time on her accomplishments as an artist. Being a woman distanced her, being a wife and mother distanced her, and dying suddenly in a 'female' way distanced her even further from finding a spotlight in the art world. Modersohn-Becker herself was aware of the hardships she would face in her position and actively tried to put off the obligations she felt as a wife as long as she could so she could pursue her career. She wrote

13 Relf, Nina. "Paula Modersohn-Becker Inspired Me to Defy Expectations."

a lot, studied a lot, and painted an incredible amount of groundbreaking artworks during this short career, but because of her ties to motherhood and 'female tragedy' towards her end, she was never able to break into the mainstream and has since been constantly categorized just as a female artist.

Similarly, despite her ambition and talent, because of Modersohn-Becker's disadvantages as a woman and early passing, you could also credit this lack of fame to the lack of support she had both during and after her life. Unfortunately, her family and husband didn't view her as a serious artist while she was alive and certainly didn't promote her work after her death, leaving much of her genius to be lost to time.

Another theory that has been briefly brought up by scholars like Diane Radyki, who has been trying to get the word out about Modersohn-Becker through translating and writing about her, is that the artist is unknown because the uniqueness of her art isolated her. She was doing what nobody else was doing, cultivating her own style and experimenting with a simplicity of form. She was breaking the rules when it came to subject matter, directly confronting the years of objectification that the female figure in art had been subjected to under the constant male gaze. And most importantly, she was doing it all on her own.¹⁴

Though Paula Modersohn-Becker had many teachers and artist friends over the years, she still found that her gender isolated her from them. Even when she was living in the community of artists in Worpswede, Germany early in her career, as one of only two women in the community, she found that she was still being treated as somebody less than among the men that were supposed to be her peers.¹⁵ Here, an inability to be accepted as an equal among her fellow artists detached her from the main art scene that would've still been praising her today were the situation different.

14 Colapinto, John. "Paula Modersohn-Becker: Modern Painting's Missing Piece."

15 Radycki, J. Diane. "The Letters and Journals of Paula Modersohn-Becker: 1892-1899."

Paula Modersohn-Becker was an incredibly talented and deserving artist. But unfortunately for her, artists can't make it on ambition and talent alone. What I've learned and discovered about this artist is a testament to that. Despite her confidence in her abilities, huge catalog of artworks, unique new style, and groundbreaking subject matter, today, Modersohn-Becker is still largely unknown. Her life and works inspired so many without them even realizing it, truly pushing forward an incredible time in art history. However, because of the lack of support and isolation she suffered as a woman in art, relatively no one knows about her accomplishments. Paula Modersohn-Becker deserves appreciation for her inspiring work and will only get the recognition she earned if art historians and all art lovers out there today understand this and work to spread awareness about this incredible artist.

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Aspen Que Stein

Printmaking, Photography & Art and Architecture History, 2021

Aspen Que Stein is a mixed media printmaker and photographer. They create works that are derived from personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings with varying degrees of subtlety. A common theme explored in their work is self-perception versus how others perceive you and the tensions within this dynamic. They also explore miscommunications and disconnections—the jarring juxtapositions life offers. Influenced by the music and performances of Mitski, the poetry of Emily Dickinson, and the films of Sadie Benning they incorporate imagery, symbolism, and text into their work that allows for multiple takes and interpretations.

Their occasionally cryptic symbolism is derived from their experiences as a mixed race and transgender individual. Their work is often a physical contemplation of the failings of personal identity within the historical contexts that still impact and inform how an individual might navigate existence and how the greater world might navigate them.



Mirror Stage Ecosystem
Digital Photograph



It's Rotten and Dead
Digital Photograph



Grapefruit Wants A Pomelo
Digital Photograph

Etiyene Eshett

Communication Design, 2021

As a design student, my medium of work focuses mostly on digital programs and learning to work with them. Often I find myself saving sketches over time that I want to develop further, this is one of those sketches. The painting titled "Transition" depicts a skull and lilypad in water, and stemming from the theme of the transition of life and death, taking on a somber tone and using cues from Expressionism. My goal is to create works that the viewer can draw their own meaning from, and in the pursuit creating a unique visual language.



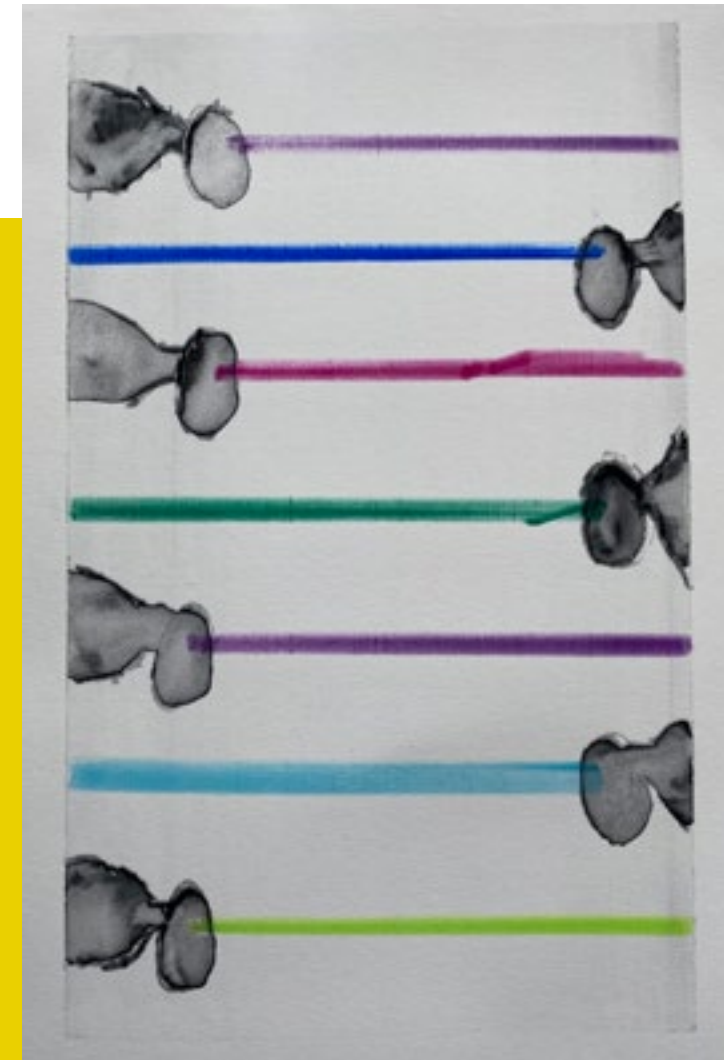
Transition
Digital Painting

Lily Ellison

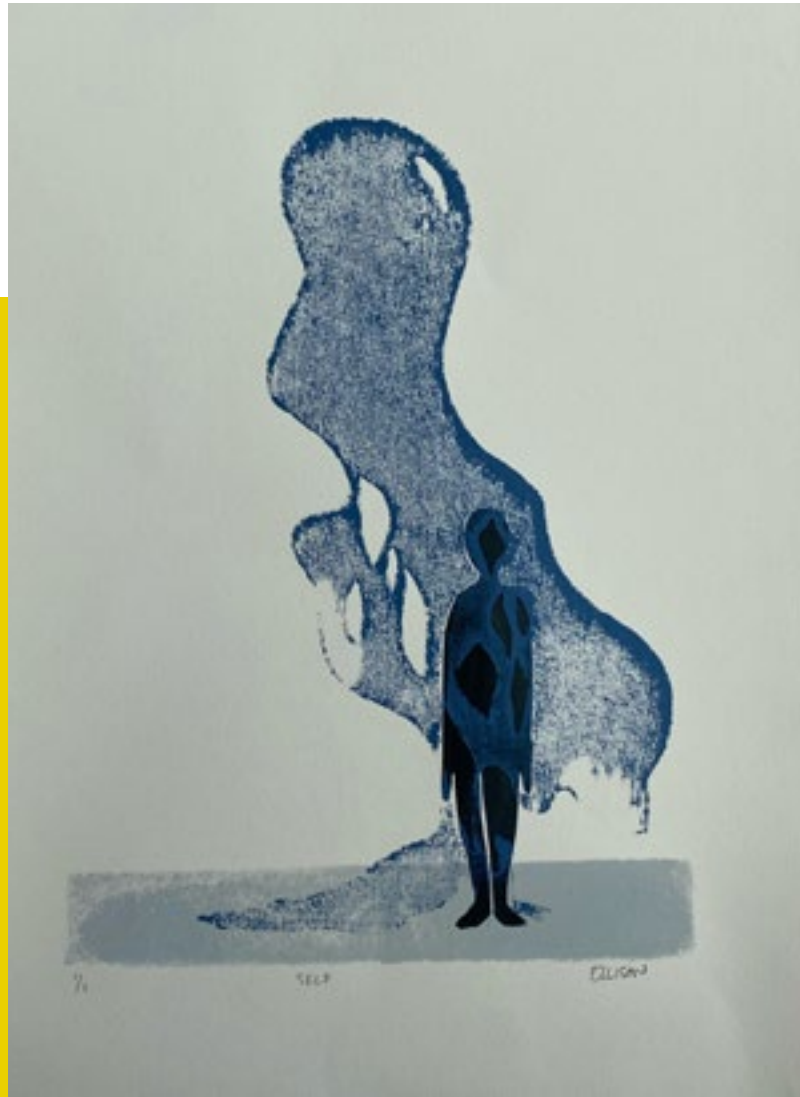
Art Education, Art Therapy co-major, 2021
Minor: Ceramics

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.



Untitled
Screenprint



Self Absorb
Screenprint

Maggie Myers

Graduate Student: Painting, 2021

The childhood bedroom serves as a vessel where the adolescent displays their obsessiveness and angst outwardly, a space where we test out, explore, and curate our personalities while growing up. With my work, I seek to preserve the intimacy and materiality of the precious bedroom territory—specific to my own late-millennial generation, which grew up in conjunction with the rise of social media.

Around the turn of the millennium, exploration of identity shifted out of the sacred bedroom and into the digital world, where anyone could get to know you through your AIM away messages and your MySpace layout. These social media trends eventually plagued us with a culture of voyeurism and disintegrated the concept of privacy altogether. The subject matter of my work features memes and outdated popular culture associated with the self-expression of girls in the '90s and '00s. My pilfered collection of screencaps from this era is linked to a nostalgia-ridden search for myself within appropriations, often coded with dark innuendos, sexual overtones, and gender stereotypes. As a call back to my adolescence, I embrace craft and handwork by weaving fibers into my painting practice. Strands of yarn function as units forming the whole—quite like the way pixels operate—thus turning viral, screen-based images into tactile possessions.



Real Eyes, Realize, Real Lies
Mixed Media

Confronting Greatness: Celebrating Women Artists

2020 Fall Exhibition

"Confronting Greatness: Celebrating Women Artists" celebrates the 50th anniversary of Linda Nochlin's groundbreaking 1971 essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?." The article investigates and strives to dismantle the institutional obstacles faced by women that have prevented their being seen as "great" in the same sense as their male counterparts. This essay will be featured prominently within the exhibition.

This fall 2020 exhibition was co-curated by the Miami University Art and Architecture History Capstone class under the direction of Annie Dell'Aria, Ph.D., Art History. Featured in the exhibition are works by renowned women artists including Kara Walker, Carolee Schneemann, Cindy Sherman, Audrey Flack, Miriam Schapiro, Louise Nevelson and Elizabeth Catlett. All of the featured artists are self-identifying women. This all-women roster prompts viewers to question how we do or do not consider gender when looking at art and impart expectations of inclusion and a diversity of voices.

Student Curators:

Erin Adelman, Casey Bergman, Ben Calderon, Halle Campbell, Jillian Cofskey, Morgan Eakin, Nina Grotto, Claire Haitsch, Sydney Herrick, Jane Keady, Ben Krautheim, Ashlyn Lazor, Alex Morse, Carmen Perez, Jess Phillips, Syd Rivera, John Rozelle, Sammy Sleeth, Aspen Stein, and Aubrey Woodard.

