

Chelsey Robinson
Carrying
Senior Thesis 4160
Fall 2019

Bio

Chelsey Robinson's figurative paintings focus on her scoliosis condition and the painful symptoms that accompany it. The work brings awareness to a condition that is common but quite serious that goes unnoticed in most people struggling with body aches and pains. These aches and pains can contribute to other issues such as anxiety, depression, and chronic fatigue-all of which have afflicted the artist. Her work delves into the resulting emotional impact of these issues and brings her pain in visual form to the surface.

Chelsey is from Clarksville, Tennessee, and is currently attending college for her BFA in Studio Art at Austin Peay State University. Her concentrations are painting and drawing, specializing in water media and charcoal. She has contributed a number of public service artworks to the community: Montgomery Central High School in Cunningham, TN, Avalon Hospice in Clarksville, TN, and the Clarksville- Montgomery County Public Library in Clarksville, TN.

Carrying

I have Scoliosis. This means my spine has an ‘S’ curve instead of being straight, and my neck has moderate degeneration due to the reversing of its natural curve. This has been painful both physically and emotionally. It is combined with other disorders such as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Anxiety. Just because the pain is rooted in my neck and back does not mean the pain is exclusive to these areas. No, I feel it everywhere, in all my muscles and joints, all of the time. It is not preventable, nor is it curable. Yoga and proper medical care can maintain it to keep it from worsening, but that’s it. It’s a generally hopeless situation.

The figures you see are almost like monsters in my head. They are not starkly terrifying, but they aren’t superficially beautiful either. This mirrors the way I have come to view myself within this diagnosis. The birds are my way of displaying the freedom I long for with my movement. Birds are born with this freedom; I was not. The flowers are a shuffle between red marigolds, petunias, and tansies. Each of these flowers carry a symbolism relating to pain, anger, and suffering. The yarn incorporated into my work is a physical representation of the nerves of the body, which serve as roadways to signal the brain when something hurts. If one area hurts, then something else usually hurts along with it.

What you see is a manifestation of my thoughts and feelings regarding my own battle with this condition. My figures are not anatomically correct, but this isn’t about being perfect. It is about being imperfect. I feel trapped by my own skeleton. My muscles have adapted to my condition, which makes it all the more difficult to correct as well as cope with on a daily basis. The feeling I am left with is isolation. For me, Scoliosis is more than just “back pain;” It is my body fighting against my spirit.

**The yarn was hand-spun, dyed, and contributed by Nashville textile artist Betsy Phillips, and I am grateful for her generosity.*

CHELSEY ROBINSON
Visual Artist

CONTACT



931-257-4309



bgchelsey91@gmail.com

EDUCATION

Austin Peay State University
Clarksville, TN

Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Studio Art
Graduation: 12/13/2019

Montgomery Central High School
Cunningham, TN

Distinguished Honors Diploma
Graduation: 05/23/2009

Exhibitions:

50th Annual Student Juried Exhibition, Austin Peay State University Art+Design, The New Gallery, Clarksville, TN, April 2018.

Lucid Hybridity, Austin Peay State University Art+Design Building, Clarksville, TN, April 2018.

51st Annual Student Juried Exhibition Austin Peay State University Art+Design, The New Gallery, Clarksville, TN, April 2019.

Bone Deep, Center of Excellence for the Creative Arts Summer Research Grant Exhibition, Barbara Beach Gallery, Austin Peay State University Art+Design, Clarksville, TN, September 2019.

Carrying, Senior Exhibition, Austin Peay State University Art+Design, Barbara Beach Gallery, Clarksville, TN, November 2019.

Public Works:

Reproduction of Alma Mater Murals for Montgomery Central High School, Clarksville, TN, Fall 2008-Spring 2009.

Mural for Avalon Hospice Center, Clarksville, TN, Summer 2015.

Bookmarks for the Clarksville-Montgomery County Public Library's *Harry Potter Book Night*, Clarksville, TN, February 2018.

Guthrie Mainstreet's entry for *Hay Bail Trail Tour*, Guthrie, KY, Summer 2018.

Characters for the Clarksville-Montgomery County Public Library's Children's Summer Reading Program *Libraries Rock*, Clarksville, TN, May 2018.

Character displays for the Clarksville-Montgomery County Public Library's *Sci-Fi Expo*, Clarksville, TN, November 2018.

Character display for the Clarksville-Montgomery County Public Library's *Harry Potter Book Night*, Clarksville, TN, February 2019.

Characters for the Clarksville-Montgomery County Public Library's Children's Summer Reading Program *A Universe of Stories*, Clarksville, TN, May 2019.

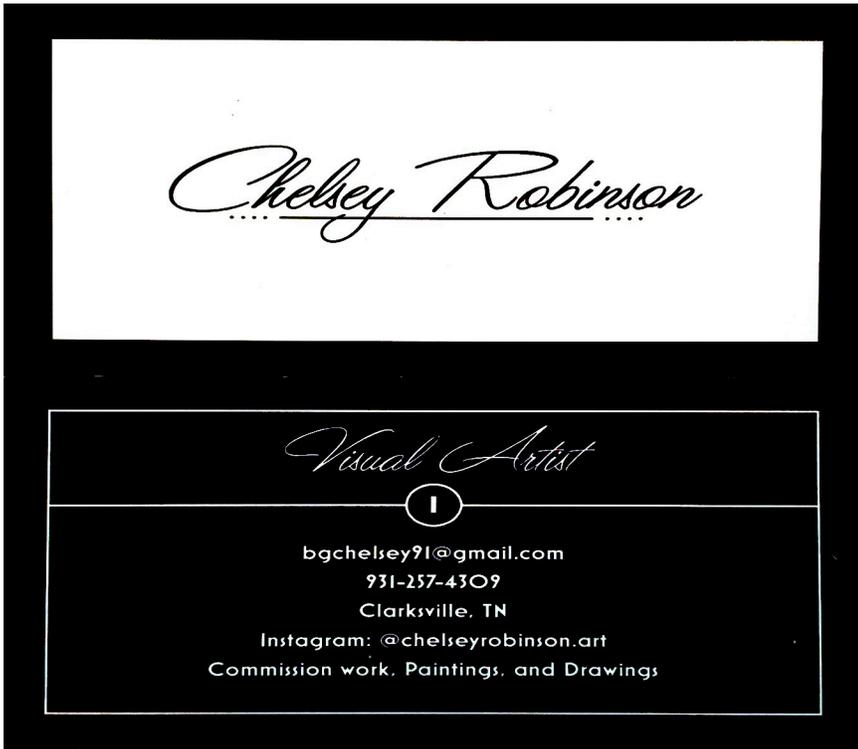
Professional Affiliations

Kappa Pi International Art Honor Society

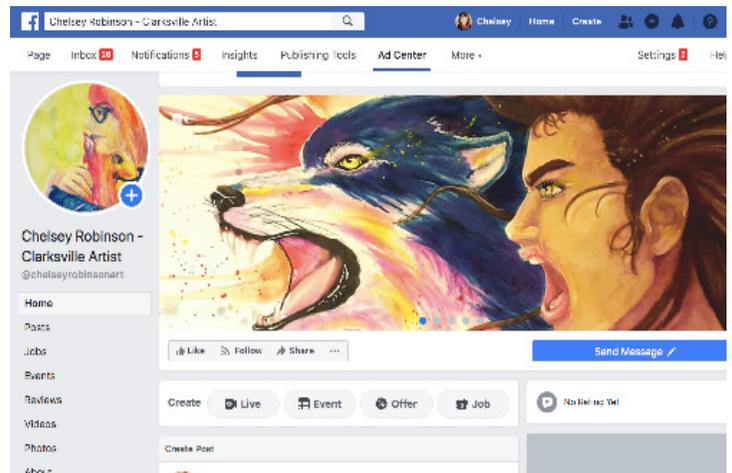
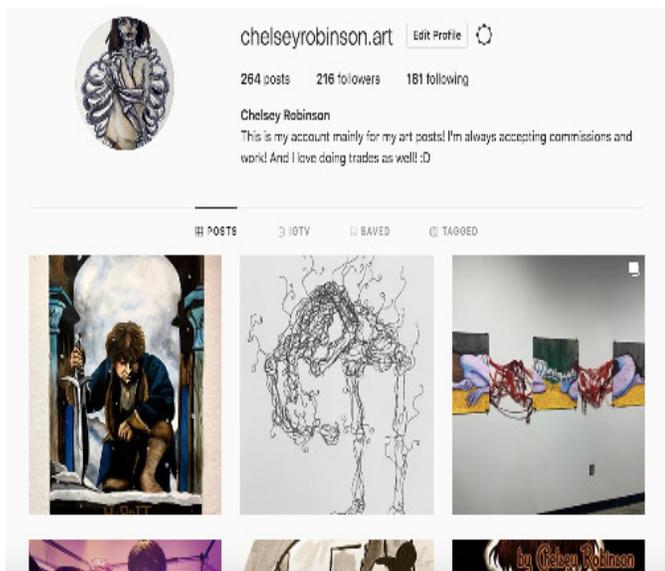
Awards, Residencies, and Honors

Residency in The Living Gallery, Austin Peay State University Art+Design, Clarksville, TN, Fall 2019.
Center of Excellence for the Creative Arts Summer Research Grant Award, Spring 2019.

Professional Platforms



Instagram: @chelseyrobinson.art
Facebook: @chelseyrobinsonart or
Chelsey Robinson-Clarksville Artist



Proposal

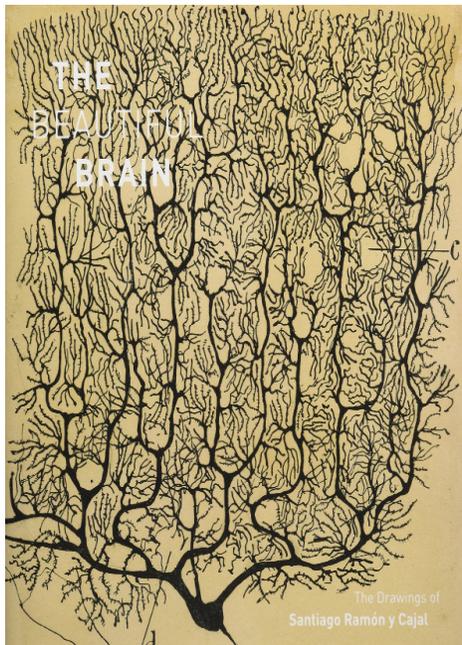
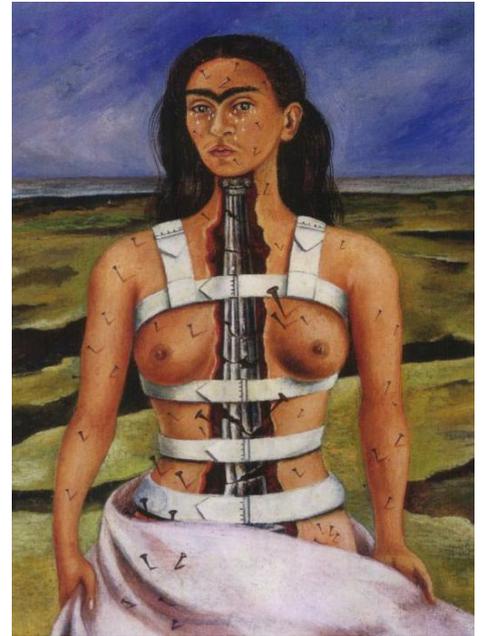
At the beginning of Thesis 4150, my original proposal was more focused on my depression and the lens through which I viewed myself and the experiences that influenced those lenses. It touched a little on the physical issues I deal with along with these complicated emotions. I still wanted to use water media, but at a much smaller scale of 20" x 30" as my minimum. With time and practice, my mind and my work began to see the bigger picture. Making work about the way I view myself was far too vague and difficult to pinpoint visually. However, by the end of 4150 and into 4160, my proposal became more focused on the physical issues I deal with (Scoliosis, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Anxiety Disorder, Myofascial Pain Syndrome) and how those effect my life and perception of myself instead. My current proposal is as follows:

My work takes the form of self-portraits, but loosely. These depictions are the embodiment of my feelings about my chronic conditions, rather than objective records of my outward appearance. For this project, my figures will be composed of cut-off flesh and clean bones. Some may also show the musculature that hides right under the skin, demonstrating where nerves collect and clump and form knots that radiate pain in areas throughout my body. Some may be literal, others slightly more poetic in nature. I plan to recreate my actual x-rays and incorporate them specifically in my work. These visuals will be exaggerated to emphasize the pain that I have chosen to convey in each particular piece. I will use the symbolic interpretations of certain flowers to assist the work's deeper meaning. Birds will also be featured as a symbol of physical freedom to function as the opposite of my figures' physical states.

I will use a wide range of materials: ink, charcoal, watercolor, gouache, colored pencil, thread, and yarn. I may select some works to be more singular in material based on content. I plan to work at a minimum of 26" x 40" paper, but I also want to attach large sheets of paper together to make larger compositions than my previous work has explored.

Artist Influences

Gamaliel Rodriguez
Egon Schiele
Alice Neel
Frida Kahlo
Tonja Torgerson
Santiago Ramon y Cajal
Nick Runge



Senior Exhibition Documentation: *Carrying*



Don't Leave Me Alone, 2019
Watercolor, Colored pencils, Charcoal, Ink
52" x 80"



Don't Leave Me Alone, 2019
Watercolor, Colored pencils, Charcoal, Ink
Detail
52" x 80"



Don't Leave Me Alone, 2019
Watercolor, Colored pencils, Charcoal, Ink
Detail
52" x 80"



Don't Leave Me Alone, 2019
Watercolor, Colored pencils, Charcoal, Ink
Detail
52" x 80"



Spreading, 2019
Watercolor, ink, charcoal, colored pencil
26" x 40"



Spreading, 2019

Watercolor, ink, charcoal, colored pencil

Detail

26" x 40"



I Declare War on You, 2019

Watercolor, ink, charcoal, acrylic, colored pencil, yarn*

26" x 72"

Detail

*Yarn is hand-spun and contributed by Betsy Phillips



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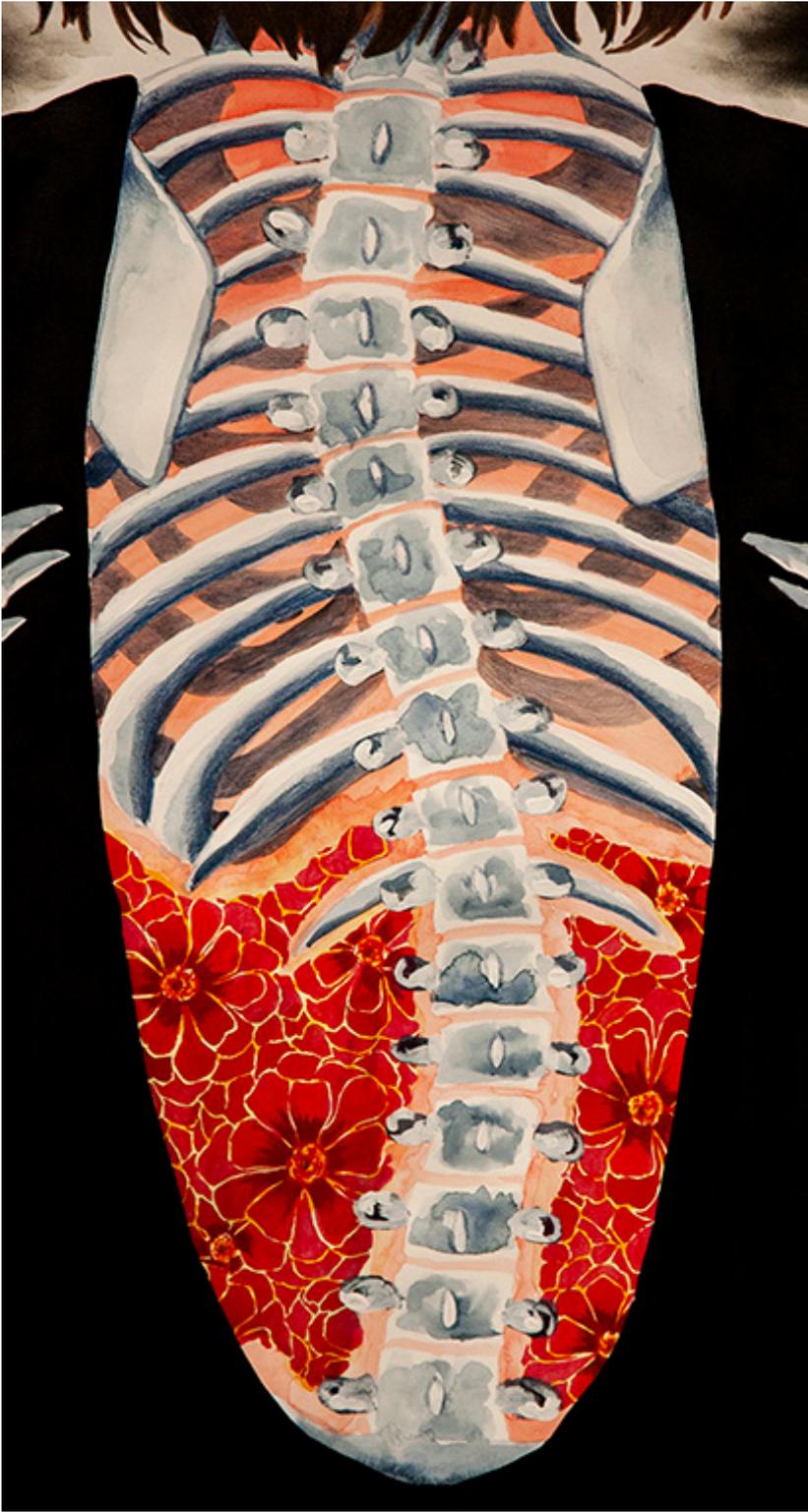
26" x 72"

Detail

*Yarn is hand-spun and contributed by Betsy Phillips



Carrying, 2019
Watercolor, ink, charcoal, acrylic, colored pencil
26" x 40"



Carrying, 2019
Watercolor, ink, charcoal, acrylic, colored pencil
Detail
26" x 40"



My Flower Bed of Anger, 2019
Watercolor, ink, charcoal, acrylic, colored pencil
26" x 40"



My Flower Bed of Anger, 2019
Watercolor, ink, charcoal, acrylic, colored pencil
Detail
26" x 40"



My Flower Bed of Anger, 2019
Watercolor, ink, charcoal, acrylic, colored pencil
Detail
26" x 40"



Myofascial Pain Syndrome, 2019
Watercolor, ink, charcoal, acrylic, colored pencil
36" x 43"



Myofascial Pain Syndrome, 2019
Watercolor, ink, charcoal, acrylic, colored pencil
Detail
36" x 43"



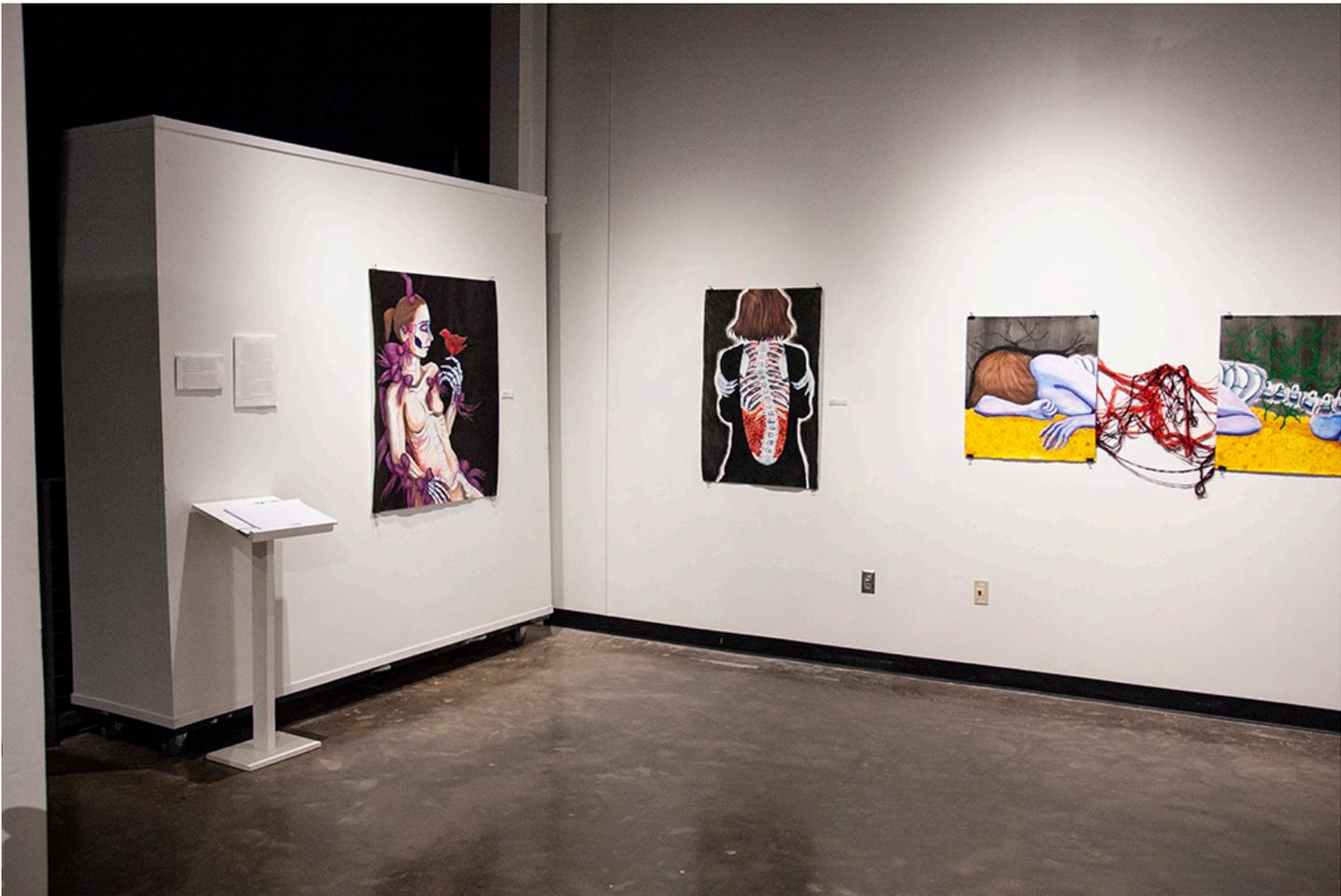
Myofascial Pain Syndrome, 2019
Watercolor, ink, charcoal, acrylic, colored pencil
Detail
36" x 43"



Myofascial Pain Syndrome, 2019
Watercolor, ink, charcoal, acrylic, colored pencil
Detail
36" x 43"



Myofascial Pain Syndrome, 2019
Watercolor, ink, charcoal, acrylic, colored pencil
Detail
36" x 43"





Self-Reflection

At the start of 4150, I had a very generalized idea about what I wanted to make for my Thesis Exhibition. I had wanted to focus on moments that had emotionally traumatized me in my past. This idea was personal to me, but difficult to properly explain to others. Visually, it was coming across as only beautiful rather than an expression of pain. The natural thing for me to do was to draw myself based on photographs and make the work as visually striking as I could while hoping the poetic display of my pain would show through.

I left my first panel review feeling distraught. This was the way I enjoyed working, how I'd been working for as long as I've been able to draw. After having a day to let their feedback sink in, I decided to make some changes. I bought new materials, sought to work at a larger scale, and focus more on how I could visually embody my pain. Rather than pain from emotional trauma, I decided to focus on my Scoliosis-which definitely plays into things like anxiety and depression, and it is something completely out of my control. My second review went much better than the first, and I even received the CECA Summer Research Grant for 2019 for the same proposal.

Over the summer for the Research Grant Show as well as in preparation for my Senior Show, I did various studies of my own x-rays to inform my work. I also did medical research, learning more about the specific characteristics of my Scoliosis and Chronic Fatigue conditions. I also investigated the artists listed on my influence page extensively, always looking at their work and always thinking about how I could make my own better. I tried to get the most use that I could out of my chosen materials. The main ones I utilized were Winsor & Newton Watercolors, Prismacolor Pencils, 90lb Legion Stonehenge paper, Dr. Ph Martin's India Ink, and charcoal. I was always combining, trying for different textures and colors. Sometimes it was which form of water media, others it was about the type of paper.

I experimented with varying scales for the artwork to illustrate different overall forms of composition, such as splitting paper to further elongate the piece or gluing paper to help the piece become monumental in scale. I even was able to make a contact with Nashville Textile artist Betsy Phillips thanks to my mentor, and she was willing to spin irregular yarn as well as dye it so that I could use it in one of my pieces as a visual representation of nerves and muscles. This was incredibly successful and has given me much to consider when it comes to pushing the materiality of my work in the future. Even after this change, I would say that my idea for my renewed concept remained the same, but I implemented variations of executions to uniquely express it.

Throughout this last semester my use of materials has only grown stronger and expanded outside of what I was used to only a year ago. Now I am familiar with how my materials work on different types of paper, what brushes work best for the media in use, and what media contains the strongest display of color. While I am confident that I know these materials very well, I feel that there is always room for improvement and experimentation. I always seek to do better, do more, and learn as much as I can. The pride that comes as a result of my success is worth the effort.

When it came to the show itself, I used binder clips to hang the work with flathead nails so that I didn't have to worry about framing. The clips were larger and black, which wasn't so bad, however in the future I'm considering switching to magnets or possibly attaching my paper to a canvas so that it can still be hung without a frame and cut down on costs. In my opinion, the lighting could have been better, but I was doing my setup alone and considering the physical limitations that my work talks about, using the ladder and adjusting the lights was really rough on my body. I wanted the space to be open, whereas for my Grant Show I kept the work closed off in a hidden corner to make it intentionally uncomfortable. I made this change because I expected a larger audience and didn't want to repel anyone who wanted to see the work but couldn't because they didn't want to be stuck in a tight space. As for my talk, I didn't need to prepare to talk about what hurts, that is something only I know everything about for myself. I have found my voice, and I look forward to bringing what I have to say out into the art world.