



Quietus

Melissa Pugh

THESIS STATEMENT

Through watercolor and colored pencil, I will be exploring the concepts of time, mortality, and emotions through the cycles of nature. Continuing with motifs of plants, bones, and animals, I want to express and celebrate the brevity of life and illuminate how death is necessary in that process. Throughout my life, I have had a spiritual appreciation for death, understanding it as part of the cycle of reincarnation, as a part of living, and as the peace before the next life's journey. I want the forms I render to reflect the complex and wondrous pattern we all follow as we experience our lives and the peace that comes with embracing death as a part of living.

FINAL ARTIST STATEMENT

Within myself, I find a need to explore and celebrate the spiritual context of life and death and how that relates to me as a person. My pieces are a documentation of how I began to see nature through the lens of time and change, hours spent, and overall sense of myself as a viewer and participant of the cycle which I meditate on. I hope that aspects of my work relay the peace I feel and the celebration I have for a singular moment. When picking the images that I use, I consider what they symbolically mean beyond just the topic of mortality, allowing a flower or leaf to embody aspects of my emotions. By using this hidden symbolism, the Language of the Flowers, or other cultures' interpretation of the plants chosen, I am able to better express my emotions and can capture a secondary meaning besides to context of mortality. When considering the plants that I choose, I especially consider the age or cycle of the plant. Because of that, these works are extremely intimate for me, but guarded at the same time. There are a number of things I want to share and discuss about my life and myself, so symbolism works to bridge the gap I feel between myself and others, who may not understand my experiences or emotions. Much of that mentality is how I handle people and relationships, which has guided my understanding of loss and death. For someone to truly die, I have to feel I will never see them again, which is more of a mortal, living notion, as I believe, spiritually, I will see my loved ones again in the next life.

FINAL ARTIST STATEMENT CONT.

These works are meant to combine contradictory elements of forms, ideas, and of myself. The overwhelming and detailed nature of my works challenge not only my skills, but my understanding of my time, my cycles, and my life. My show is a discussion centered around my unique experiences this lifetime, and how that varies from the usual understanding of others. Maybe, with this work being created with the understanding it is made with my time, teaching me my own cycles of creativity and emotions, will help in its reveal of how nature heralds life, change, and death, making people appreciate the beauty of time, mortality, and beauty of this never-ending cycle. In order to do so, I work with colors, textures, and composition. I make works that are larger in scale, while retaining small intricate details. Hopefully, this works to captivate my audience, in order to give up their precious time to interact with the images, to find some of the emotions I invested into the work. By pouring my time into the works, I hope that the images make the audience pause in life, in that moment, to appreciate it. Likewise, the smaller arrangements are meant to be an assemblage of natural colors, textures, and forms. The works act as a gentle and bright memento mori. I want the audience to be aware of their limited time and celebrate it, living in a moment that is created by my works, where it is okay to have the contradictory and conflicting discussion of what it means to be alive, and how that is defined by the inevitable brevity of all life.

ARTIST BIO

Born and raised in Memphis, Tennessee Melissa Pugh received a BS in pre-physical therapy and a BFA in studio arts after years of artistic and scholarly pursuit. With a diverse background, her work celebrates the forms of the natural world in tandem with colors and values, while pursuing further refinement of skills. She celebrates a variety of media, but truly adores watercolor and colored pencils, some of her most challenging media. Although less common, she embraces and strives for more classical rendering and skills in her illustrations, as she begins the path to a scientific and medical illustration career.

ARTIST CV

Official Resume

Melissa Pugh

melissa.pugh.arts@gmail.com
901.485.6233

Education

Bachelor of the Fine Arts in Studio arts

Bachelor of Pre-Professional Health in Physical Therapy

Austin Peay State University
Clarksville, TN
Graduated May 2021

Experiences

Curator for Class Shows

Austin Peay State University
2018

Consultant for TShirt Design

Private Commission
2020

Senior Thesis Exhibition: Quietus

Austin Peay State University
2021

Skills

- **Adobe Suite:** InDesign, PhotoShop, Adobe Illustrator
- **Maya:** 3D Modeling, rendering, shading, and texturing
- Knowledge of DSLR camera and equipment
- **Microsoft Office**
- Knowledge of basic typography

Awards

- Dean's List
- NSLS
- Tau Sigma National Transfer Honor Society
- Representative for Turning Point U.S.A to national CPAC event in D.C.

FIRST PRESENTATION

SENIOR THESIS PROPOSAL: LIVING ON

By: Melissa Pugh

GOALS:

- Show the beauty of death, as a part of life.
- Illustrate how emotions, regardless of their nature, fuel our understanding of life and death.
- Explore my relationship to death, as a spiritual person who embraces reincarnation, and the emotions it invokes.
- Ask my viewers if death is truly a dark and morbid subject, or if that is a social construct, established by Western culture.
- Deal with the passing of my grandfather and work on establishing a new set of norms for myself emotionally, and in my art practice.

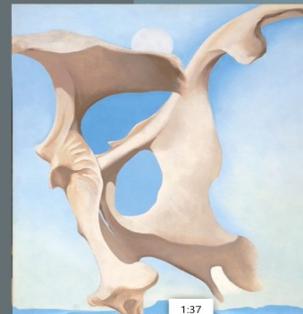
THESIS: STATEMENT

To illustrate the beauty of life, and by extension, death, I will be using a mix of watercolor, natural dyes, and colored pencil to render natural elements such as plants, fungi, animals, and potentially the human form. This thesis aims to display the cyclical pattern which pervades all living things in a vibrant array, while still discussing the inevitability of death, and the complex emotional response people have to it.

ARTIST: GEORGIA O'KEEFFE

Nobody sees a flower - really - it is so small it takes time - we haven't time - and to see takes time, like to have a friend takes time.

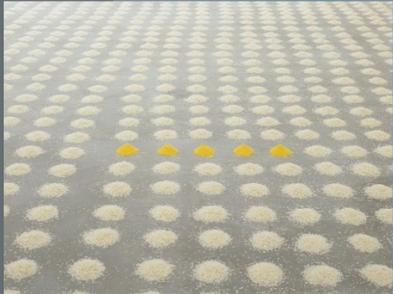
- Works with natural forms in order to discuss time and life, and by extension, mortality.
- Uses rich colors as a vocabulary for more mundane forms, in order to elevate the conversation, so that it is impactful.
- Forms from plants and animals are used as metaphors for the human experience, as we experience the work different than we would the items directly.
- Dedicated years of her life to pursuing her vision through form, value, and color, in order to find her place in the world.
- Her art was meant to inspire her viewers to pause or at least slow down to appreciate the simple things, that every day life can





ARTIST: WOLFGANG LAIB

- Shows great care with his materials. It is not simply art, but an extension of his thoughts.
- Uses natural materials to discuss some of the contradictory nature of humanity, and how things are overlooked if they are common or small enough.
- Works with and in time, using it as a part of his works and his dialogue while creating.
- Is inspired by natural elements, and uses them in exchange for more "professional" materials.



ARTIST: BETH LIPMAN

- Gives a second life to objects that no longer serve a purpose.
- Discusses place and use as a part of life, and what it would mean to have no place to belong to or meaning.
- If something or someone is reformed from their traditional setting, does that inevitably change them or are they still themselves?
- Humans follow the form of glass in that there is a certainly fragility in life and in emotions.



ARTIST: TERESA MARGOLLES

- Uses natural elements (here in the materials) to have a discussion about death, and what emotions are associated with interacting with it.
- Despite not being traditional in methodology, I relate to her colors and concepts, as being bold and strong with an element of surprise or hidden impact.
- Discusses differences in death, and how societies react to differently to the type of loss of life.
- Asks the question of which lives are meant to leave an affect after they are gone.



ARTIST: MOTOI YAMAMOTO

I would say my work is not an action to preserve a memory, but rather a way to try and recall all the memories as much as I can.

- Discusses life in the context of loss and death, as if the two are inseparable.
- Continues to study and portray natural forms as a way to discuss his inner emotions and memories.
- Uses his materials intentionally to tie back to cultural norms that affect the meaning of his work.
- Finds solace in the process. The result comes from the hours spent in process, not the careful planning and orchestration of a clear mind. How emotions and work can drive a piece without a clear



CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH/THOUGHTS

- **Dyes:** I have spoken with a number of professors about what natural dyes would mean for my process.
 - Discusses the effort and time into making a pigment to work with.
 - Opens the art world to the crafts of dyers and weavers, which have a long history of working with nature and documenting seasonal changes through which plants to gather.
- **Discussions:** Upon starting my senior thesis, I have found a lot of my ideas originate from discussions I had with other people in regard to death, and how they feel about it.
 - Lately, more people are opening up about their personal loss, since I recently lost my grandfather.
 - There is a block between thorough and compassionate conversations, and platitudes that are politically correct, that comfort the issuer.
 - Death, is a taboo that few are willing to discuss without accepting the discomfort.
- **Readings:** Asking for reference materials to research. Looking for works on death in cultural anthropology or the art community

CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH/THOUGHTS

- **Personal Reflection:** Losing a loved one has many forms.
 - Growing up, I lost relatives without them actually dying, which felt more real.
 - Recently losing my only grandparent, I can say that there is a huge difference, and I feel more aware of people and emotions now, since I know how fleeting they are.
 - With the illness and loss of a loved one, I saw the subconscious affects is had on me and my family. With me, a loss in interest or motivation for art.
- **Moon Cycles and Calendars:** Time is usually measured in minutes and hours, but the moon was the original mechanism for measuring time for seasons and years.
 - What moon I was born under, my horoscope, and how I feel about things of that nature.
 - Keeping up with the moons in additions to hours I spend in the studio in order to study my own cycles of emotions.
 - How each day effects me and how I feel while living or working.
- **Personal Cycles of Creativity and Emotions:** When do I feel most empowered, myself, or motivated.

IN PROGRESS: RESILIENCE



- First work since passing of my grandfather.
- First work I have felt emotionally attached to in over a year.
- A piece to help me reestablish my studio practice.
- Has really helped me to manifest the emotion I am aiming for by looking at the symbolism and diving into the process.
- In progress, but I may add color pencils to the top of the watercolor to explore some technical possibilities.

DISCUSSIONS THAT IMPACTED ME/ THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

- Raised by gardeners and landscapers, does this change my mentality on life and death, and how one cares for someone.
- Did my view on life and death change after losing someone close to me?
- What are visual elements that I consider now that I have experienced a serious loss?
 - Broken bones:** heal through an immense trauma, and regain structure and integrity, but will always show that break
 - Broken glass:** explores the idea of fragility of human emotions and mental state. Also tie into broken bones: something that is broken can be repaired, but will never be the same again. Also have a background in drinking and meals, and what it means to share a drink culturally, and what are the connotations of that.
 - Dyes from plants in garden:** Finding beauty in something that has always been around me. Taking time to interact and appreciate the beauty before changing it to fit my methods.
- Raising orchids was a sense of joy. How did my grandfather being ill and passing have an affect on that.

SECOND PRESENTATION

THESIS: STATEMENT

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NEW RESEARCH

Readings:

- [The Wheel of Life](#) by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross
- [On Death and Dying](#) by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross
- [When Breath Becomes Air](#) by Paul Kalanithi
- [Smoke Gets in Your Eyes](#) by Caitlin Doughty
- [American Afterlife](#) by Kate Sweeney
- [The American Way of Death](#) by Jessica Mitford
- The Order of the Good Death (blog and website)

ARTIST: WALTON FORD



- A larger scale watercolor artist who dedicates his studio practice to texture and detail
- Often chooses to overwhelm the viewer with sheer size and density of work
- I enjoy the color choices this artist make, and hope to work towards this mastery of watercolors

ARTIST: PANDORA SELLARS



- Artist credited for her compositions, detailed renderings, and strong colors
- Her husband grew tropical plants as a hobby, and that is where her practice as a botanical illustrator began
- Emphasized the role of accurate rendering in her work and its impact in illustration
- More in line with my career field of scientific and medical illustrator

DUALITY OF DECAY: IN PROGRESS



04/13: Working Crescent (21%)
 - Transformed for 1-1.5 hours
 - didn't start sketching cause it wanted to rain
 04/17: New Moon (0%)
 - 1-2 hours sketching, remembered summer
 04/20:
 - 1-2 hours on bottom part, detailing
 - felt distracted

- Discusses cycles of blooming in plants
- Discusses symbolism of light, and the role of it in spirituality
- Illustrates a similar family of plants and the different way they wither
- Directly shows time
- Emphasize more contrast in colors or forms
- Wanted to be more cognizant of composition and create a flow with the images



ARTIST: JANINE ANTONI

- Uses bodies and bones to demonstrate emotions or spirituality
- Poetry or reading is integrated into her work, to make the connection stronger between image and emotion
- Focuses on the form and the details of it for emphasis



NEW FINDINGS/DISCUSSIONS

- Mushrooms, the growing culture surrounding decay, and their role in it
- How death is being modernized and changed with new ideas and techniques for burial
- Interrelated nature of mushrooms and life.
- Studies on growing cycles, plant cycles, and my personal emotional cycles.
- Relevance of colors in mushrooms
- Role of colors in flowers
- Flowers that are toxic and how they are commonly found in gardens
- The role of specific flowers in my emotional cycles
- What the inclusion of poisonous mushrooms or flowers means in a work
- Cycle of succession and regrowth
- What happens to our lives after we die, a discussion with Jessika

RESILIENCE

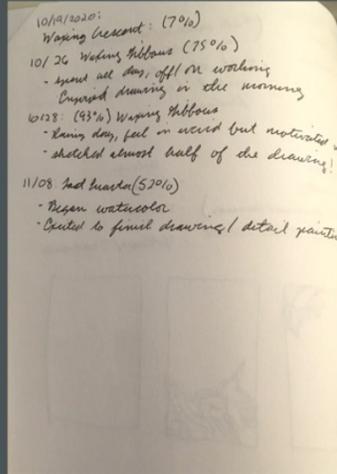


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- First work since passing of my grandfather
- Manifests the emotions I felt while making it, and in regards to death
- Changed as I worked with it
- Was a struggle that has helped me clear my mind
- May change the background, but I enjoy it as it sits now.

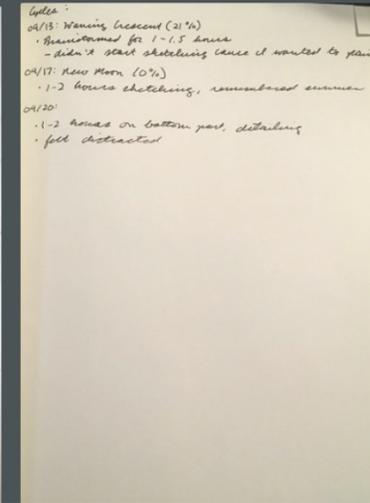
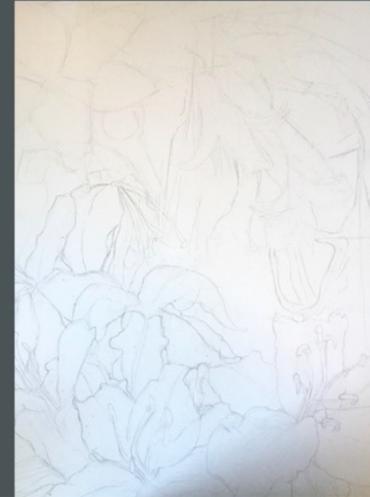


POST-PUTREFACTION: IN PROGRESS



- First work to study fungus
- Role of fungus in an ecosystem
- Color of fungus and its meanings
- Making a mirror body of work for flowers, but less soft
- Focusing on color and density
- Allowed the work to influence

DUALITY OF DECAY: IN PROGRESS

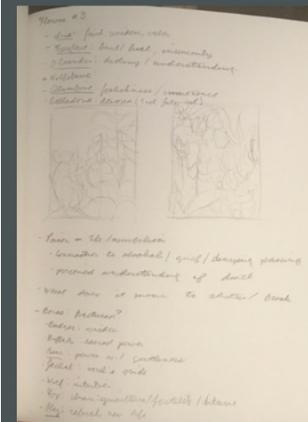


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NEW CONCEPTS AND ROUGHS

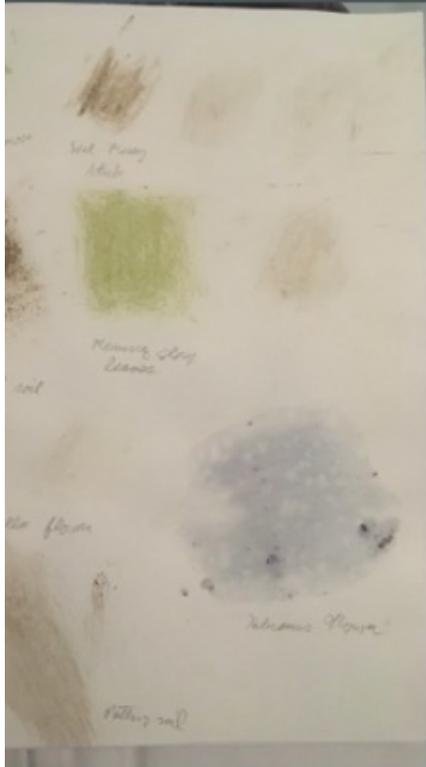
- Smaller, more intimate works to pair with the larger works
- Individual flowers/bones
- Including orchids in these, as orchids are the flowers I grow
- Flowers fading to the white of the paper, creating a ghost like image
- Shadow boxes with dead orchids?

NEW CONCEPTS AND ROUGHS



- Broken and fragmentary images shards of glass, bones, and pieces of flowers? Maybe insect wings?
- Decay of fungus, deliquesce.
- Combination of both floral and fungal bodies

DYES/EXPERIMEN



AGENDA

Week of	16-Nov	23-Nov	30-Nov	7-Dec	14-Dec	21-Dec	28-Dec	4-Jan	11-Jan	18-Jan	25-Jan	1-Feb	8-Feb	15-Feb	22-Feb	1-Mar
Draw fungus 1					Draw Fungus 2			Draw Fungus 3					Orchid 1 (shadow box?)			
Paint fungus 1					Paint fungus 2			Paint Fungus 3				Orchid 2				
Draw flower 2					Draw Flower 3			Draw Image 7							Orchid 3	
Paint flower 2					Paint flower 3			Paint Image 7							Orchid 4	

THOUGHTS AND CONCERNS

- Titles of the works
- My in person show date, and how that affects my dates.
- The number of works I want to achieve.
 - Ideally, I want around 7, but I may do 5 and smaller intimate works.
 - What I can add to my show to broaden the impact?
- I will be working on these works over the winter break.
 - Can I contact you, as members of my board for feedback?

• Orchids

- started growing these because they were the only thing it could grow
- kinda ironic because orchids are finicky / needy / very particular
- require understanding, compassion, and attention like people do
- started a day or two before Papa was diagnosed w/ lung cancer
- Orchid show, before that had one I've had since 4th grade
- best time I was really happy / motivated
- surrounded by lots of lively people and vibrant blooming orchids
- could incorporate them into work, but I feel conflicted over it.
- the orchids were happy / blooming / part of a good time.
- including them would put them into my discussion of death, which seems to me, to dullen some memories just
- But, as Papa was sick / I was busy caring, they fell to the wayside / were wilting / dying
- Almost like I was losing a link to them to.

• feels painful to discuss / see
- link to injury / bones?

• Bones:

- a broken bone hemorrhages in order to heal itself = more damage in order to repair
- releases marrow / blood in damages to encourage growth or development of new bone
- pain / healing makes a new life
- after repair, nothing is the same, the area is weaker / sensitive
- like trying to talk about people that are dead / what they were like alive
- a lot like broken glass, it'll never be the same again
- being broken and finding what that means
- include broken / discolored bones and maybe glass
- discolored discusses decay / time while glass does not

Artists:

Georgia O'Keeffe
Lawrence

Bett Hejman:

Emma Kisiel

Muchlanzlo

Damian Hind:

Peter Paul Rubens

Gersea Margolles

Mayda Kuechel

Dorothea Martin

Mitoni Hamemoto*

Books:

Art & Death by Chris Townsend

One-On-One w/ Eric

- time of flower vs. leaf
- function
- symbolism of different part of same plant
- include record on:
 - cultural differences
-
- Document / work through couplets / processes
 - make experiments / examples
- Consider including anthropological research into presentation

Winter Meet 1:

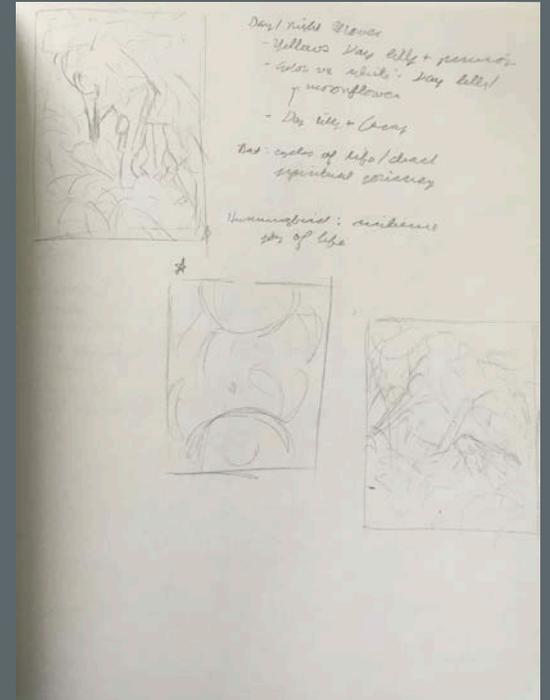
- Writing is good
- Need to contextualize this w/in context of other artists (contemporary)
- Embrace that your art could lead you into new places
 - Be adventurous / brave
- Embrace details of loss / how it can moving on / grieving
 - look for new info / work on releasing the emotions
- Be open to new materials / processes
 - Follow intuition / what makes sense: new ways of working
- How to get feedback on work? Use this to develop.
 - Instagram
 - Virtual exhibitions: Art Space.com
 - Libraries / poster museum: display of paper for feedback
- Add more to work; other channels for work?
 - zines, videos, written words
 - Hunt sketchbooks for context of work?
 - How does this relate to emotions / works
 - Dates? Lunar cycles → emotional cycles: age in moons?
 - Birch wood: → self / emotions to self
- Every 2 weeks: two very moons?
- Start keeping journal for this process

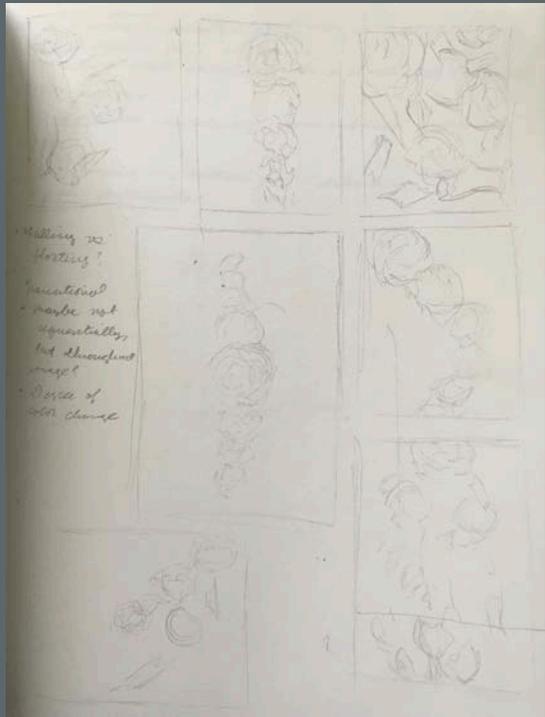
Moons:

- February 26, 1997: Venus gibbous, full moon at 22, moving to new moon; moon in Libra
- Full Corn moon this year in Pieces

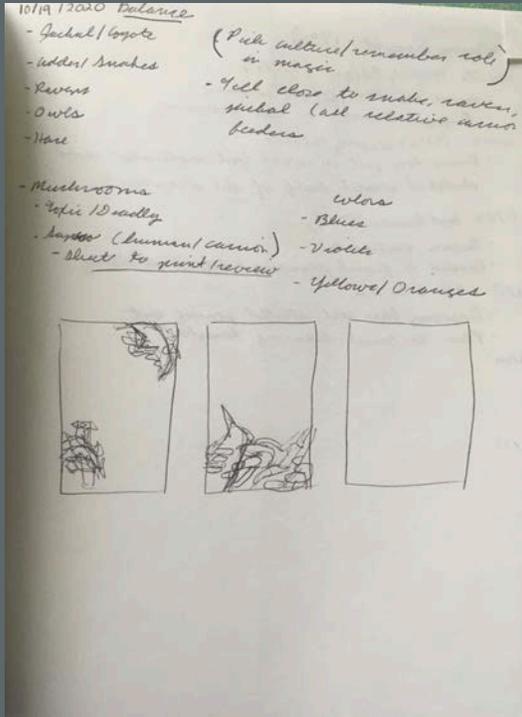
Meeting w. Virginia

- Solace in nature (reflection of ourselves in nature)
 - Core is an external manifestation of mental state
- Modern natural dyes
 - parasite / color guides for dyes
- Garden
 - Bleach and sugar: green
- Artists
 - Wolfgang Paal: pollen art / time
 - Kiki Smith: death imagery / natural world
 - Gianni Antoni: human form / old material / bones
 - Aaron York:
- Creating work: place for life / death
 - Location as to meaning / id.
 - relationship of art / self / family to place and the plank of that place
 - language
 - place on where something grows
- Plant press w. wood / clamps / rubberbands
- Press w. dry material application

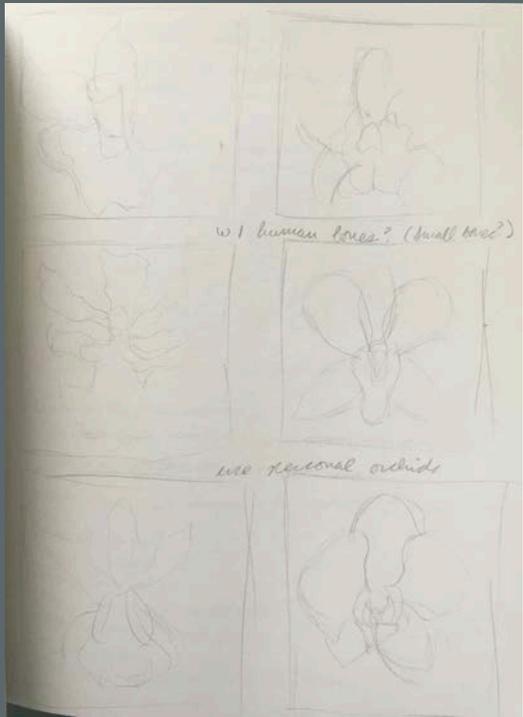
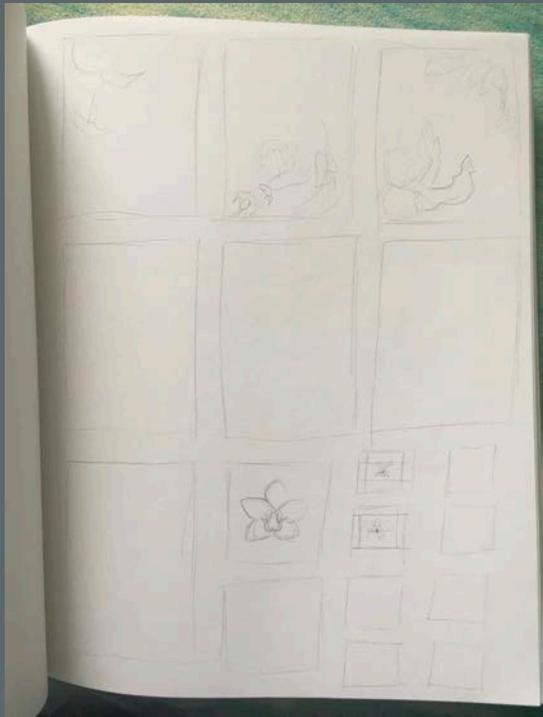
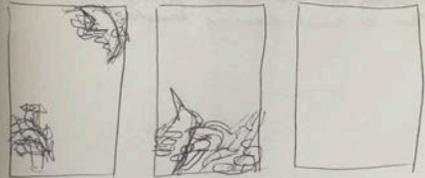




Hand-drawn sketches of various plant parts, including leaves and stems, arranged in a grid-like fashion on a page of paper.



10/19/2020 Balance
 - Sachal / Coyote (Pick culture / remember role in maize)
 - adder snakes
 - Ravens
 - Owls
 - Hare
 - full close to snake, raven, sachal (all relative carnivores)
 - Mushrooms
 - Yucca / Dudley
 - Colors
 - Blue
 - Purple
 - Yellow / Orange

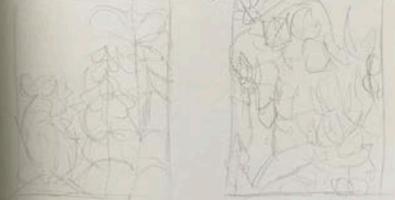


w/ human bones? (small bone?)

use personal orchids

Flower #3

- ink: find wisdom, vasa
- Yucca: lust / lust, innocence
- Oleander: distancing / understanding
- Hollyhock
- Potamogeton: feelingness / innocence
- Belladonna atropa (red face, etc)



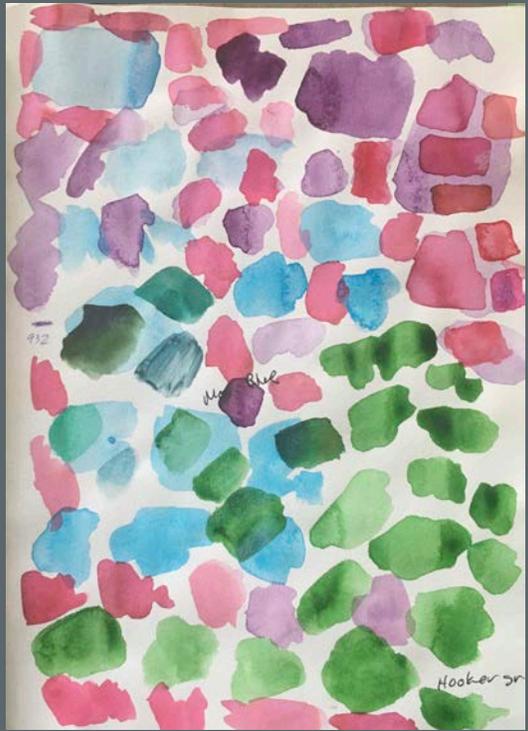
- Power + the ambition
- connection to alcohol / grief / denying passions
- poisoned understanding of death
- What does it mean to shatter / break
- Cons: restoration?
- body: wisdom
- body: secret power
- How power w/ gender
- social: world's quilt
- What intuition
- How strain equilibrium / stability / balance
- How relax new life

Flower 2 (all)

- Daisy flowers - death
- Yucca lily: red (Purity / innocence), Pink (Appreciation / admiration), White (Humility / purity), Yellow (Optimism, magnificent beauty), Common in wedding / funeral bouquet
- Wolfbane: (Mourning) caution, misadventure, death
- Used in poisoned arrows
- Delphinium: Blue (disgust), white (love) / blue (grief / renewal), remembrance
- Symbol as representation of courage and good fortune
- Gifts to encourage
- Oleander: (Nerium) neros: water; love stray / yearning
- Disturb, understanding
- Indicates a delicate nature
- Often given as gifts, sometimes w/ no warning
- Valley of the Kings: good luck, happiness, security
- well well spirits
- Yucca (Yucca?), cherished flowers, high; hippocampus miter
- source high, force, not adults
- Dulness, other worldliness, faith, vulnerability
- as spirit animal: often leads emotions and try to blend in
- in dreams: avoidance, anonymity
- fragile state of mind

02/03/21 Meeting w. Eric

- supplies of school
- Browse for shadow boxes
- tea cruden (?)
- 02/22/21
- access goals, styles
- books search illustration journal co.
- check for mentorship / org.
- Easy to start → real through website

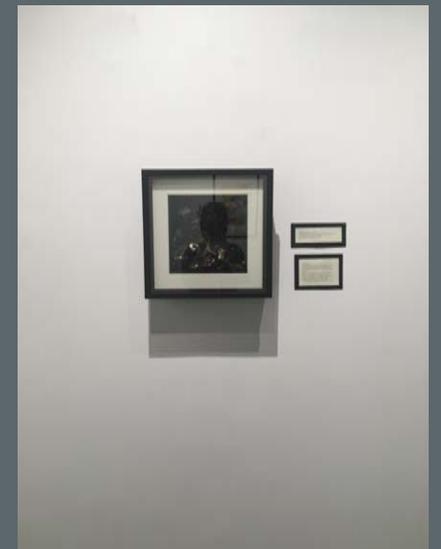




SHOW DOCUMENTATION



SHADOW BOXES



PROFESSIONAL PROJECT

- The professional project shown here is my website in progress.
- I am currently preparing for a professional practice as an illustrator.
- I am continuing to work on my website for my works, and a link to an Etsy page for selling my prints, works, or additional products.
- Right now, I am additionally registering for my certification in botanical illustration.
- I am also contacting a local artist for mentorship.
- Additional business preparations are going on as well, such as business cards, setting up an Etsy, and establishing a client base.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

- Agenda: Set an advanced agenda. Make sure to plan a more open schedule so you can adapt as needed. Plan responsibly!
- Process: Chose a style, process, or manner that means something to you, not just what you think others want. Be the most true to yourself now, and learn from it.
- Practice: Keep your show process and studio practices organized. It can be both flexible and routine. Document every bit of progress, celebrate each step, and keep supplies neat. Losing colors or steps was a big issue with my show, so I started keeping better swatches and step records.
- Motivation: Celebrating little steps is a huge part of a successful and happy studio practice. Find milestones in everything, each little success is a step towards more success and completion.
- Documentation: Photographs of every step taken is extremely helpful. It is good for your senior show, but also as a record for yourself. I recommend a fresh sketchbook for senior thesis, each show, or each year.
- Timing: Make sure to ride your motivation. When you have a good day with strong motivation, do the most, make the most of each day and moment. Make to-do lists for each day, each week, or month, and as you work through them, you can see how much progress you make. Take advantage of every moment you feel like brainstorming, researching, sketching, or working.
- Planning: Make agendas, timelines, deadlines, and to-do's but allow for change. Maybe you need more time, maybe you need less, be responsible and wise in how to plan or set out your time.

To summarize my senior thesis:

- Stay active, even in little ways.
- Recognize and ride your levels of motivation. Do what you can when you can.
- Plan and record everything, everything is an achievement and a check mark in your schedule.
- Stay organized. Keeping sketchbooks, journals, and agendas will help studio practice as well as motivation.
- Be aggressive and intentional in how you work. Decide your path and make the most of it.
- Use wisdom and discretion to plan your process, works, and agenda.
- Finally, do not budge an inch in your show. This is your final achievement for college, so make it completely and proudly yours.