

# VISIONARIES

Made By Santa Monica College Students



VOLUME 3

# VISIONARIES

# MAGAZINE

Made By Santa Monica College Students

Front and back cover

Designed by

Gwyneth Dowdee & Francisco Flamenco

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# Editor's Letter

## Francisco Flamenco

@franciscoflamenco6

Major: Studio Art & Graphic Design

During my first fall semester at Santa Monica College, I wasn't sure what major I wanted to pursue, but I wanted to try the arts. I had two years of experience with graphic design, screen-printing, and studio art from attending Venice High School. I was still not confident in my skills, but I decided to try out one art class, Gallery Exhibition, taught by Professor Emily Silver. On the first day of class, I didn't know what to expect or what the class was about; honestly, I picked this art class only because it was the only one available, and Professor Silver had a five out of five rating on "rate my professor." This would be one of the best decisions I ever made at Santa Monica College. By the end of the course, I had created many friendships that, to this day, continue to inspire me. One beautiful soul I want to thank is Professor Emily Silver. She helped me find the confidence I didn't have. She was always supportive and aimed for her students to push harder. At the end of the courses, one beautiful thing happened when a group of students led by Robert Young announced the first volume of Visionaries magazine, a student-led art magazine for students at SMC. It was a fantastic project that helped students like me get recognition for their talents, and I knew I wanted to participate. At the beginning of the spring semester, I enrolled again in the Gallery Exhibition course and began working with Robert Young. This time, Vi-



sionaries Magazine would accept more students at Santa Monica College for Volume 2. Robert taught me many things, but one thing that will always stick with me is when he would tell me to trust myself and believe in my work. When we began to wrap up volume 2, we all started to discuss the future of Visionaries. Robert and half of the Visionaries team would be transferring to a university. It would be up to me if I wanted to continue Visionaries. The thought of leading a group of college students was terrifying, along with the little voices telling me I was not good enough or creative enough to lead a magazine. I then told myself I had to confront things that made me uncomfortable, as I had done in the previous semesters at SMC. So I grabbed anxiety by the throat and began Visionaries Volume 3. The word was out, and people were interested in joining the team. This time, things would be different; Visionaries would become a club and not

a course curriculum. Our biggest obstacle was having everyone's availability lineup. Our meetings were always held on Zoom around 7 pm, but that never stopped us. Being editor-in-chief means you must be there when no one else can; you must connect with your team and let them see a vision. I would stay on campus past 10 pm creating ads and promotion cards for visionaries and then come the next day bright and early for my English class. This magazine created much

stress for me, but it was a good stress that made me walk out and learn something new. As I always told my team, I informed them that completing this volume would not be an easy task. Ultimately, you're reading this, meaning Volume 3 is out! I hope this volume helps represent every one of the featured artists along with my beautifully talented team. I hope to help more students at Santa Monica College showcase their talents in the coming years. I'm excited about what's to come; I will see you in volume 4.



# The Team



## Andy Canales

 @c.andypandy

**Major:** Studio Art

**Role:** Writer & Social Media

**Dream Job:** I intend to find a creatively fulfilling career path where I can educate and inspire others in their own creative passions and find a place in uplifting my community, while still being able to make and display my own artwork. Currently that goal is pushing me toward becoming an art teacher/professor, although I am open to wherever my passions take me.



## Gwyneth Dowdee

 @gwynkaii

**Major:** Studio Art

**Role:** Graphic Design, Interviewer, & Writer

**Dream Job:** I hope to go into directing music videos, that would be my dream job for sure. I love creative direction, and concept building, and I've really enjoyed working in video because I feel that it involves every medium in one.



## Melia Person

 @meliattheperson

**Major:** Art History

**Role:** Writer & Interviewer

**Dream Job:** My dream job is to have 3,000 different jobs all of them creative. I want to write, make silly little ceramics, curate gallery exhibitions and more. Whatever creative job I can get my hands on, I want to do it.

## Andrea Campo

 @35mm.cr2

**Major:** Art & Photography

**Role:** Photographer & Interviewer

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



## Emily Sedeno De Pablo

**Major:** Business Marketing

**Role:** Social Media Director

**Dream Job:** Entertainment marketing or fashion marketing creative director. I love helping brands display what their product/services can offer to our consumer world.



## Ira Zimmerman

 @ira\_zimmerman

**Major:** Studio Art

**Role:** Writer & Interviewer

**Dream Job:** I don't think I could live without exercising creativity somehow, so whatever I do will channel that part of me. The absolute best job ever would be a Lego set designer, that sounds like the most fun in the world.



## Sofia Friend

 @sofia\_friend

**Major:** Liberal Arts & Humanities

**Role:** Writer & Photographer

**Dream Job:** My dream job is to be a cinematographer. I have loved films and photography my entire life and I think that cinematography is a perfect blend of the two.



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

Written by Melia Person & all photographs by Elodie Hekimian-Brogan



Past exhibition, Converge Vertex, Curated by Cole M. James, September 23th, 2024 - May 11th, 2025



Past exhibition, Converge Vertex, Curated by Cole M. James, September 23th, 2024 - May 11th, 2025

Santa Monica College represents a safe harbor for many, but the college is not immune to the tragedies that have, unfortunately, become all too common today. Through it all, art became our place for common ground and healing. On November 12, 2024, weeks after the tragedy that rocked both Santa Monica College and the surrounding Santa Monica community, we united for the opening of Converge Vertex at the Barrett Art Gallery.

Curated by Cole M. James, Converge Vertex centers and celebrates seven generations of the Black diaspora and experience. Eleven artists from the Los Angeles creative community come together in the Barrett Art Gallery, exploring themes of emergence, existence, and ascension through their innovative art practices. The exhibition

features emerging visionaries Cass Everage, Donel Williams, and Leah King, alongside legends Noah Purifoy and Michael Massenburg. It also honors the legacy of former Santa Monica College Art Department Chair Ronn Davis. Through electric visuals, diverse textures, and unique materials, the exhibition invites us in, not only into the space itself or into the minds of the artists, but also immerses us into the Black experience—past, present, and future. Converge Vertex turns the Barrett Art Gallery into a space for profound meditation and hope.

As part of the vision for Santa Monica's future, Visionaries Magazine was present at the November opening, with lead Editor Francisco Flamenco excitedly gather-



Past exhibition, Converge Vertex, Curated by Cole M. James, September 23th, 2024 - May 11th, 2025

ing support for the publication. Featured artists, professors, community members, and students alike were fascinated by the determination of the Santa Monica College art students in their approach to this project. Francisco shared their hopes for the magazine's future, including expanding its reach within the greater Santa Monica community and releasing at least one volume per semester. The entire Visionaries Maga

zine team extends gratitude to club advisor Emily Silver for her steadfast leadership and dedication to the personal growth and development of her students. What Cole M. James describes as "a love letter to the essence of Blackness" served as a love letter to the Santa Monica College community— healing heavy hearts and engaging curious minds. Converge Vertex will remain on view until May 11, 2025.





# Susanne Melanie Berry: Santa Monica College Alumni



Photographed by CR Stecyk

Susanne Melanie Berry is a well-achieved artist, born in Lynwood and raised in CA, Los Angeles and Orange counties. Initially, only an 8th-grade graduate attended Santa Monica College, transferring to UCLA for a Bachelor in Fine Art and then a Masters from CalArts. She has exhibited in Los Angeles, New York, Austria, Germany, and London. Berry's life has been anything but conventional. From a childhood cut short by necessity to a career shaped by resilience, reinvention, and an unwavering commitment to self-expression, Berry's journey to becoming an artist is a story of grit and transformation.

"I have not lived at home regularly since I was 15 and

had to work full-time from the age of 16 to support myself," Berry recalls. Before she found her place in the art world, she navigated a variety of jobs—dishwasher, pantry chef, fabric buyer, music video production assistant, and construction. But there were darker chapters, too. "I also moved from party girl to full-time junkie and criminal. I finally got clean at 30 years old."

Faced with the diagnosis of Hepatitis C, Berry sought a career that would allow her to manage her health. Law school was the answer. "I called a local law school and asked them how someone who never graduated high school could get in." A straightforward response



*bloom 02 03 04,*  
fiberglass, syringes, wood, & polyester resin, (2011)

set her on an unexpected path—earn a GED, attend community college, then university. "Attend community college; that was the best advice he gave me."

Berry's initial goal was to represent artists in legal matters, a role that would allow her to blend her growing interest in art with her desire for advocacy. However, something shifted while at UCLA, where she pursued a BA in art. "I was now seriously entrenched in art. Law school was no longer my goal." By the time she earned her Master of Fine Arts from CalArts at age 49, she had fully embraced her identity as an artist. "My goal was by 50. Beat it by a year." Berry's artistic ethos is deeply rooted in the communities that shaped her: skateboarding, beach culture, and the local music scene. "Skateboarding and surfing can be a solitary sport," she explains. "But if you put your all into trying a new trick and fail, you still get props. Those communities celebrate stepping up and stepping out." She carries this mindset into her art, constantly push-

ing boundaries with the same all-in approach. A key theme in Berry's work is invisibility—alienating and liberating aspects. As a 6'2" woman, she often found herself the subject of furtive glances. "When I would become aware that someone was looking towards me, I'd turn towards them, and they would look away. That added to my feeling of invisibility." However, she also recognized the unexpected freedom of being overlooked. "It gave me this space where I could do whatever I wanted because no one saw me." This idea came to the forefront in one of her early works, *Bikinis, Band-Aids and Beer*. "Spending most of my time at the beach, a bikini was my daily wear. The bikini constructed of band-aids and bandage tape represented both the physical wounds from being a tomboy and the psychological ones." By soaking a long piece of brown craft paper in beer and laying the Band-Aid bikini on top, she created a striking representation of her experiences with invisibility. "The brown paper was a close match in color to the band-aid bikini, camouflaging, lending to the feeling of invisibility."

Berry's creative process revolves around transforming familiar objects into layered, meta-



*bloom 01*  
fiberglass, syringes, wood, epoxy, & polyester resin, (2010)



bikini, bandaids, and beer  
band-aid, surgical tape, & corona Beer, (2007)

phorical statements. She credits a graduate-level class on semiotics, taught by feminist artist Mary Kelly, for sharpening her understanding of how materials carry meaning. "I became hyper-cognizant of how whatever I use in a work has a connotation, can symbolize, signify, denote various meanings."

Her sculptures use a muted color palette, a deliberate choice that echoes her themes. "Most of my sculptures are from a laid-back color field, absent of bright, bold colors—they lend to sitting back in the cut, almost being invisible, a whisper to invite you over... a low-key 'ssssst'."

At the heart of Berry's work is a desire to create moments of connection. "Just that whatever damage you may have in your life, you are not alone," she says.

"Even if that feeling is maintained for a few seconds." Her art offers a space where personal struggles are acknowledged and transformed into something shared, something understood.

She reflects on the contradictions that shape her identity—"the tall girl, the black sheep, the bon vivant, and the retired felon." Some might latch onto the more provocative labels, but Berry insists on the complexity of the whole. "We can be dark and light, discarded and held dear, broken and made whole."

Berry's artistic practice continues to evolve. Though she has primarily worked in sculpture, she has recently begun silkscreening over large fields of 23k gold leaf. "Rich and poor, fine art and commercial art, hand and mechanical, contrary upon contrary,



la barrachita,  
beer bottle caps, & metal, (2009)

yay!". And experimenting with drawing. "Starting with botanical style drawings—more like detailed sketches first, then growing into how detailed they need to be to convey whatever I decide to convey."

Ultimately, Berry's philosophy is one of presence, of staying rooted in the now. "I pretty much stay in today," she says. "There's a thing I was taught that I love: Stand up. Move your right foot out a bit—that's yesterday. Move your left foot out a bit—that's tomorrow. Now, look down. What are you doing? You're pissing all over today." She laughs. "Word, though."

For Berry, every piece she creates is an offering—a way to be seen and make others feel seen. "If I can give a moment of peace, then I'm good. Giving back what others have given me, sharing, that's what helps keep me okay in this world."



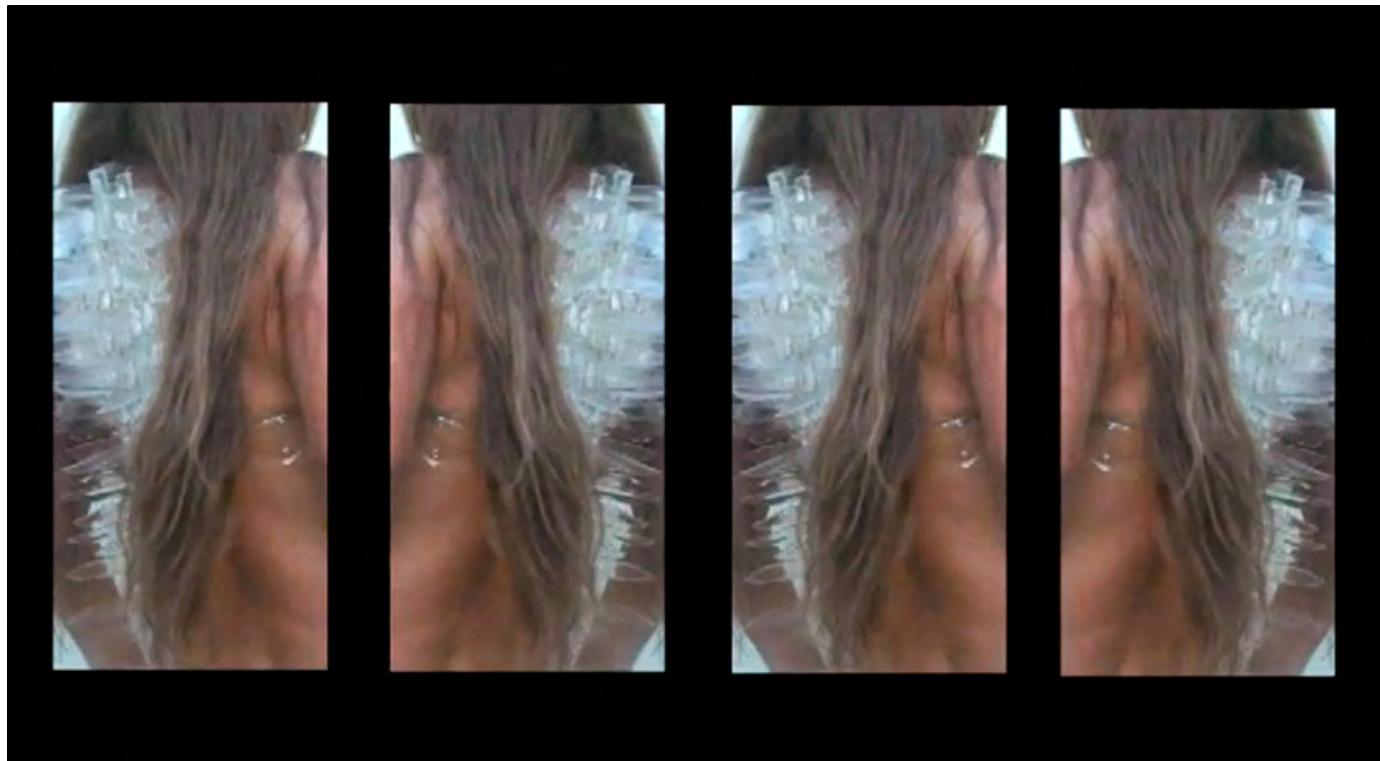
bikini intervention 012  
archival pigment print, matte paper, (2008)



wallpaper  
wall paper made to fit me, (2009)



Spine  
Polyester resin, vinyl, & metal,  
(2011)



Spine: Screen Grab, Short film still, (2011)



the hair on her back stood straight up,  
Fiberglass, carbon steel, & wood, (2011)



*Katelyn Tu*  
Cocoon Dream  
(Wearable Sculpture)

# Artists

# ANA GONZALEZ

Studio Arts Major

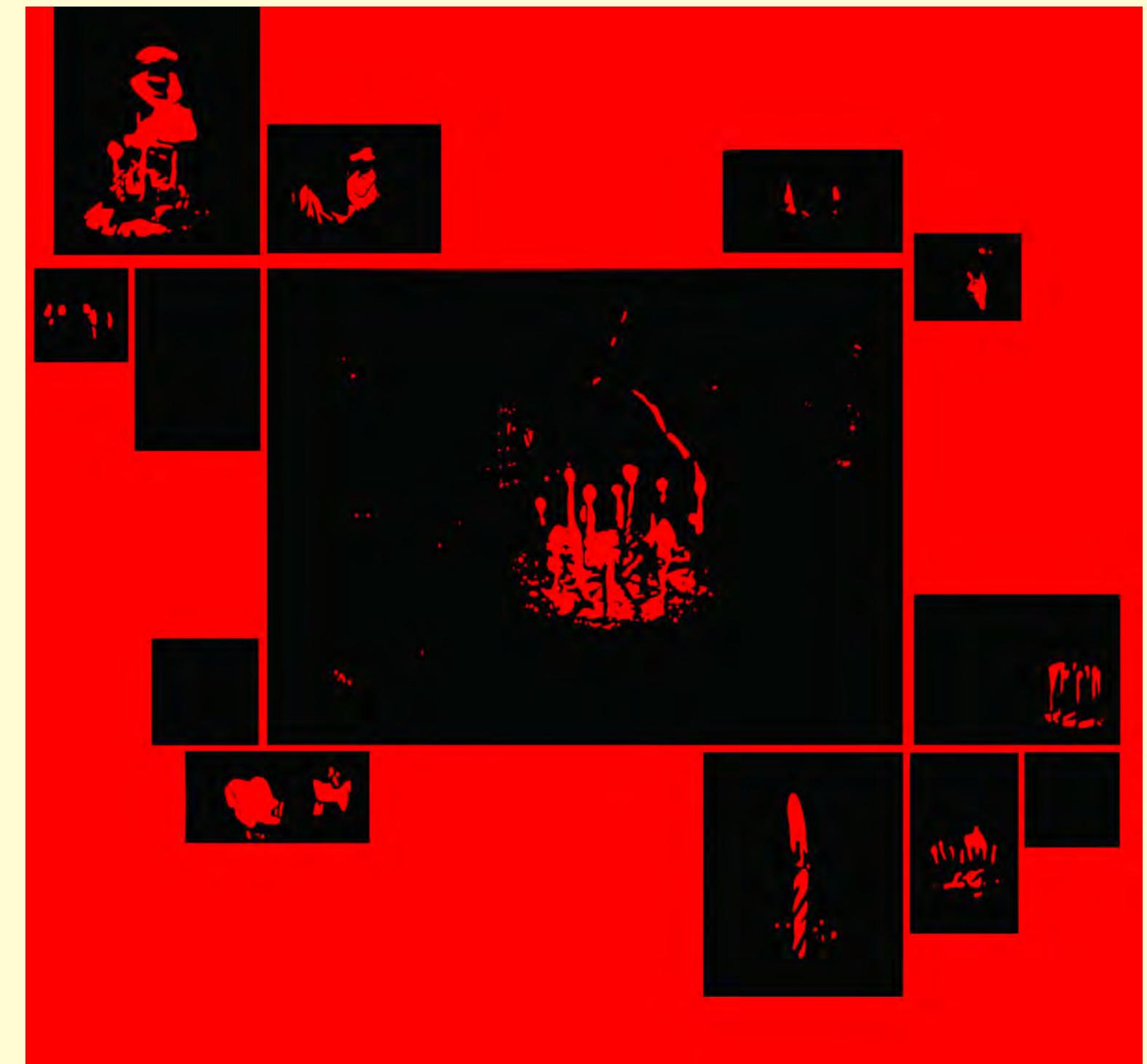
@dearwurld

Interviewed & Written by Melia Person & Photographs by Andrea Campo



Ana Gonzalez doesn't just create art; she builds emotional sanctuaries. We discussed Ana's creative process and the inspirations behind her evocative collages. *How does making art help you process emotions?* "That's a good question", Ana muses. "I make a lot of art, especially when I'm sad. I think a lot of my art carries that sadness, but it makes me feel very fulfilled at the end of it. Everything feels like it's the end of the world [in your twenties], but creating collages really helps me appreciate the feeling of being human and how everything is normal and that everybody else is also experiencing the same feelings that you are. When I finish a piece, I feel comforted by the people in the photographs I use, many of whom aren't alive anymore.

So it makes me feel like I'm bringing them a home again." Ana's practice is fueled by reflection as she transforms her inner world into visual poetry. For Ana, collages feels like home. "I've always been a huge junk journaler," she recalls. "I would always save everything and make fun little monthly things out of them. I just forgot about it until recently, last semester. I finally got back into it, and it made me remember that I could do it." Ana's commitment to sustainability blends seamlessly with a deep sense of nostalgia and a flair for storytelling as she brings discarded fragments to life through her vibrant collages. *How do you want to be remembered as an artist, and what kind of impact do you want to make on the art world?* "I want to be someone



Ana Gonzalez, Happy Birthday, (Watercolor & Gouache)



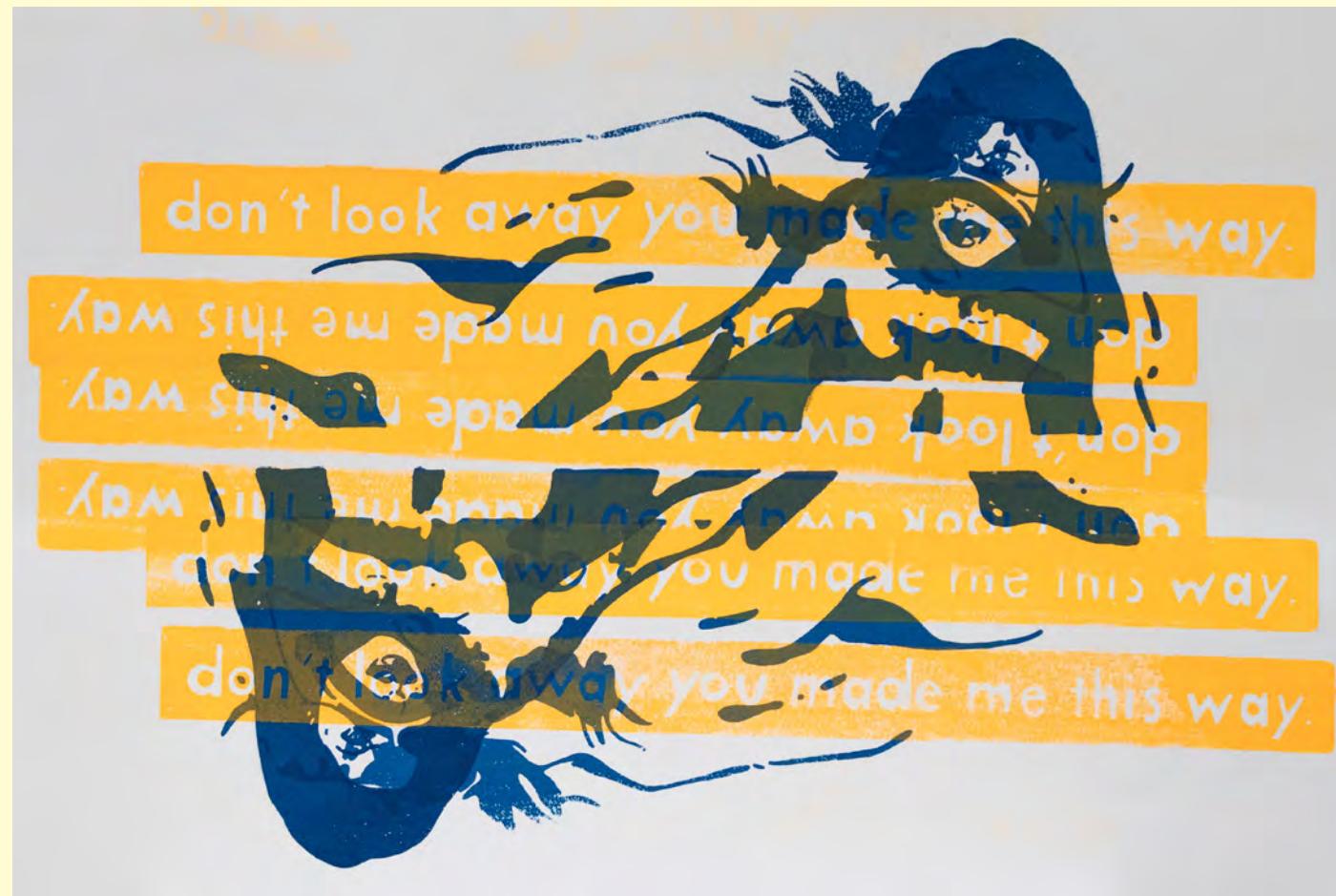
Ana Gonzalez, Empowered Exposure, (Screenprint)

my younger self needed", Ana says, her voice firm with conviction. As we discuss her future plans, Ana reveals that she wants to be an art teacher. She says, "I really want to let people that are younger than me to understand that their feelings are not dumb. That's what I was told a lot as a kid, and I really want to be that outlet for someone. Say, no, your feelings are completely valid. You can make art out of any feeling, literally anything, and it's going to be something beautiful and you're going to feel relieved at the end. You got it out." Her words echo her work—an empathetic, supportive hand extended to others navigating the complexities of life. *Do you have a favorite artist who inspires you?* "I literally just did a family tree about this!" she laughs, before mentioning two creators whose work profoundly inspires her. "One is a woman who journals like me and makes videos based on her journals and they're amazing. The other, Justin, makes amazing visual videos to songs." She continues, "they make you feel comforted

and look at the world in such a beautiful way." It's clear Ana finds solace in the work of other artists, embracing their ability to make the ordinary extraordinary. *Your work often inspires immediate reactions like, 'Oh my God, that's so cool!'* in what part of your process do you get the sense that a certain piece is going to be incredible, when you know it's just going to hit? Ana pauses and answers the question with complete humility saying, "I don't feel like I get that feeling. I feel like I finish a piece once I'm fulfilled with it. Once I know that enough is enough, my pieces, some of them are really chaotic, and once I feel like, okay, that's it, that's all I needed. I also just love sharing my work. So if people love it, it's just a bonus to me. But I think I would still be making the same things even if people weren't on board with it or didn't think it was cool as long as I was fulfilled by it." Ana's intuitive approach emphasizes her sincerity; she creates for herself first, and her audience's connection to her work is a heartfelt secondary gain.



Ana Gonzalez  
Our Lady Collage  
(Watercolor)



Ana Gonzalez, Empowered Exposure, (Screenprint)



Ana Gonzalez, Life Collage

*What makes you a better artist besides making art and seeing art?* “Music,” she says immediately. “My favorite artist is called Florist, and they make a lot of music about the same feelings that I make with my art about feeling appreciative about life, but also feeling sad about it at the same time. I analyze her lyrics all the time because they’re so beautifully written and so poetic.” Ana’s passion for music feeds into her visual storytelling, weaving sound,

and emotion into the layered textures of her collages. Ana Gonzalez reminds us that art mustn’t be grandiose to be powerful. She transforms scraps into stories, emotions into connections, and memories into meaning through her collages. For Ana, it’s not just about the finished product; it’s about the journey, one that she hopes will inspire others to embrace their feelings and create something beautiful.

# KATELYN TU

Studio Arts Major

Instagram: @\_\_katie2

Interviewed & Written by Ira Zimmerman & Photographs by Sofia Friend



Katelyn Tu's sculptures are not defined by their fragility but by the quiet, undeniable power that lies within them. Working with balloons, tape, and ceramics, Tu creates delicately crafted yet unyielding pieces in their expression. These works explore the intersection of feminism, nature, and vulnerability, reframing strength as something that does not have to be rigid or formidable. For Tu, fragility is not a flaw but a state of transformation—a theme that threads through her life and work.

Growing up in Taiwan, Tu faced a world built around restrictive gender norms. "Even in my family, they would say, 'You should try not to be so independent. You should lean on a man,'" she recalls. The male gaze, often implicit

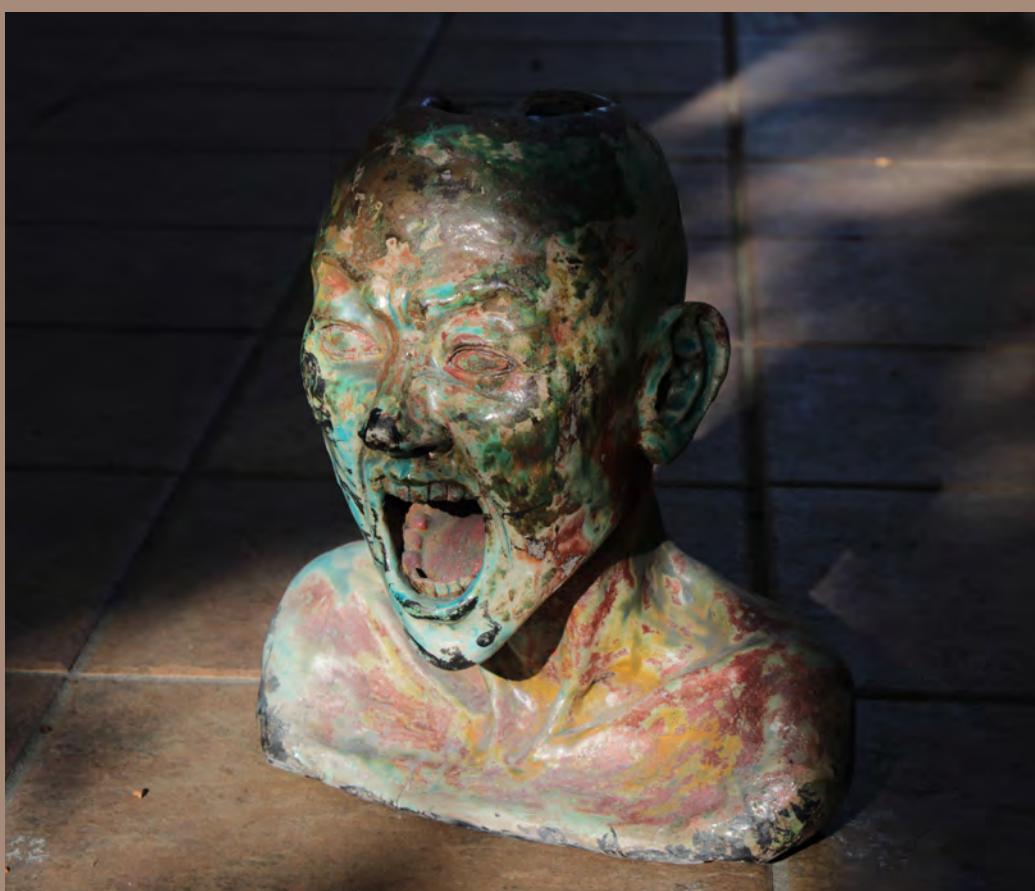
in these lessons, shaped her understanding of the difficulties of womanhood. Women were expected to be docile and dependent, their voices subdued, and their bodies presented for objectification. Moving to the U.S. and attending college gave her the space to reclaim her body and identity. "Ironically, I'm doing art and living here by myself," Tu says. "I can shake off all the stereotypes and sexism, and just embrace my femininity, and being a feminist...." This newfound freedom informs her sculptures of the female form—works that confront and subvert the male gaze. Tu's work is dynamic and expressive. In works like *Underground*, a ceramic piece that captures raw and visceral emotion, Tu explores the tension between fragility



*Katelyn Tu,  
Cocoon Dream,  
(Wearable Sculpture)*

and rage. The figure, with its deep, earthy tones, evokes a sense of hidden fury. "It looks like it's angry," Tu says. "People always say, 'Oh, you're so calm, you're so quiet.' That's all intentionally hidden. I try to put a coat of earthy glaze over myself, just like I did with that piece." The anger in her art, often concealed beneath delicate surfaces, becomes an act of reclaiming power, an assertion of the self in the face of external constraints and judgment.

Rage, for Tu, is closely tied to the experience of navigating the societal expectations of women. Her work is an emotional and physical reclamation—expressions of frustration that refuse to be silenced. *Cocoon Dreams*, a wearable sculpture made of balloons, embodies the duality of fragility and strength. "When you realize it, you can easily escape just by popping the balloons," Tu explains. The piece is both a protective cocoon and a symbol of the fragility that often accompanies self-doubt. It captures the tension of trying to exist within a world that seeks to constrain and control while also holding the power to break free from those limitations. The interplay between vulnerability and rage is further explored through Tu's choice



of materials. Her works are made from substances that are inherently unstable—balloons, tape, ceramics—each prone to break or tear. But rather than viewing this quality as a flaw, Tu embraces it. In fact, this becomes essential to her process. "I like to include the fragile and intimacy in my art pieces" she says. Her works do not simply resist the fragility of their materials—they harness it, understanding that impermanence does not equal weakness.

*Never Ending*, another of Tu's sculptures, illustrates this beautifully. The twisting forms of yarn, wrapped tightly and deliberately, convey a sense of fragility woven into the carefully balanced form of the piece. It is delicate but not weak. "Things fall apart all the time," Tu admits. "But I always put them back together." Her embrace of imperfection mirrors her journey navigating the world, where



*Katelyn Tu, Homesick, (ceramic)*

rage and fragility are not separate but bound together in a constant cycle of rebuilding and reassertion.

Tu's art also explores a paradox: while she uses materials that could break or fall apart at any moment, the process is deeply meditative. *You Hang In There*, her piece of a figure suspended by a thin strip of tape, captures the essence of resilience. The figure's vulnerability is highlighted by its suspension in space, yet its position is not one of defeat. The use of tape as a medium echoes the impermanence of the human experience—strong yet transient. Nature often serves as a silent collaborator in Tu's work, grounding her fragile sculptures in environments that mirror the themes of transformation and rebirth. "When I finish a piece, I think it will be looking good under a tree or in the grass," Tu reflects. The organic surroundings complement her work's themes, offering a quiet dialogue between the human and the natural world. Her balloon sculptures, like *Cocoon Dreams*, echo the ever-changing quality of the natural world,

where life is constantly transforming yet impermanent. Her work, in all its delicate tension, highlights the complex relationship between fragility and the grace women are expected to sustain. The precariousness of her materials can represent the human spirit—something that can break, bend, or fall apart yet continues to be resilient. "I think it's necessary to take those times and consume those frustrations," she explains. Her sculptures become a form of resistance: a challenge to the very idea that strength must be unyielding, unbroken, and unchanging. Her work, in all its delicate tension, highlights the complex relationship between fragility and the grace women are expected to sustain. The precariousness of her materials can represent the human spirit—something that can break, bend, or fall apart yet continues to be resilient. "I think it's necessary to take those times and consume those frustrations," she explains. Her sculptures become a form of resistance: a challenge to the very idea that strength must be unyielding, unbroken, and unchanging.



*Katelyn Tu, You hang in there, (Tape Sculpture)*



*Katelyn Tu, Never Ending, (Sculpture)*

# MILES ROSENBOOM

Studio Arts Major

@milesr.exobio

Interviewed by Gwyneth Dowdee, Written by Andy Canales, & Portraits by Sofia Friend



Rather than starting out with community college straight out of high school, Miles began his undergrad education at a University in Canada before his journey landed him in the SMC art department. "I went to Vancouver Island, and I was there for a semester and a half." Miles went in as a biology major but soon realized he was not just missing home, but was missing his art. He described feeling lonely and out of his element, so he found his way back to reconnect with his passion, "I knew I wanted to go back full force in the art because I'd kinda deprived myself of that". Returning to art and cementing himself as a dedicated art student was a healing experience for Miles. While he did like science, leaving as a Biology Major had separated him from 4 years of sculpture he did in high school. While he was away, and returning to SMC to take 3D sculpture

classes with Professor Emily Silver, Miles stabilize his passion and confidence in sculpture. "SMC specifically, I think, has been really good because it made sculpture feel legitimate to me in all of its forms... Especially after the "Are You Seen" show that really cemented it as, like, okay. This is what I wanna focus on a little bit more intentionally." Miles credits the SMC art department, his peers, and Professor Silver for pushing him as an artist and guiding him to figure out what he wants to create.

In both Miles' 2D and 3D art, he finds that he is heavily inspired by the idea of creating something with a soul or personality, or what he describes as "something that could be alive". He says he loves this about other people's art as well and that this is an idea that drives him as an artist. Through his creation, Miles wants to

generate art that is lively, "I wanna create, like...a little guy, a little creature- whether it's literal or not." In Miles' illustrative works, he finds his inspiration has branched from seeing artworks by Turkish author and illustrator, C. M. Kosemen. Miles describes discovering this artist as "incredibly transformative" for himself at a young age. Kosemen creates scientifically accurate portrayals of prehistoric and imaginary creatures, and this encyclopedic-like portrayal of made-up organisms can be seen reflected in Miles' 2D art where he shares his own creature designs. As far as sculptural inspiration, Miles recalls a memorable experience visiting a James Turrell exhibit around the age of 12, "I was like, oh, this is the coolest shit ever. I had not seen anything like it. I've I had not seen anything like it since." The final artist that Miles recalls as an inspiration circles back to his love of creatures and personality in his creative process. "Big Jim Henson lover", Miles ex

presses and tells how he got a biography of Jim Henson when he was around the age of 11 or 12. Growing up being inspired by Henson's art, Miles finds that now, he's become further interested in the more "out there" content, "It really bridges the gap between, children's material, but also, dark fantasy and adult themes. I love it."

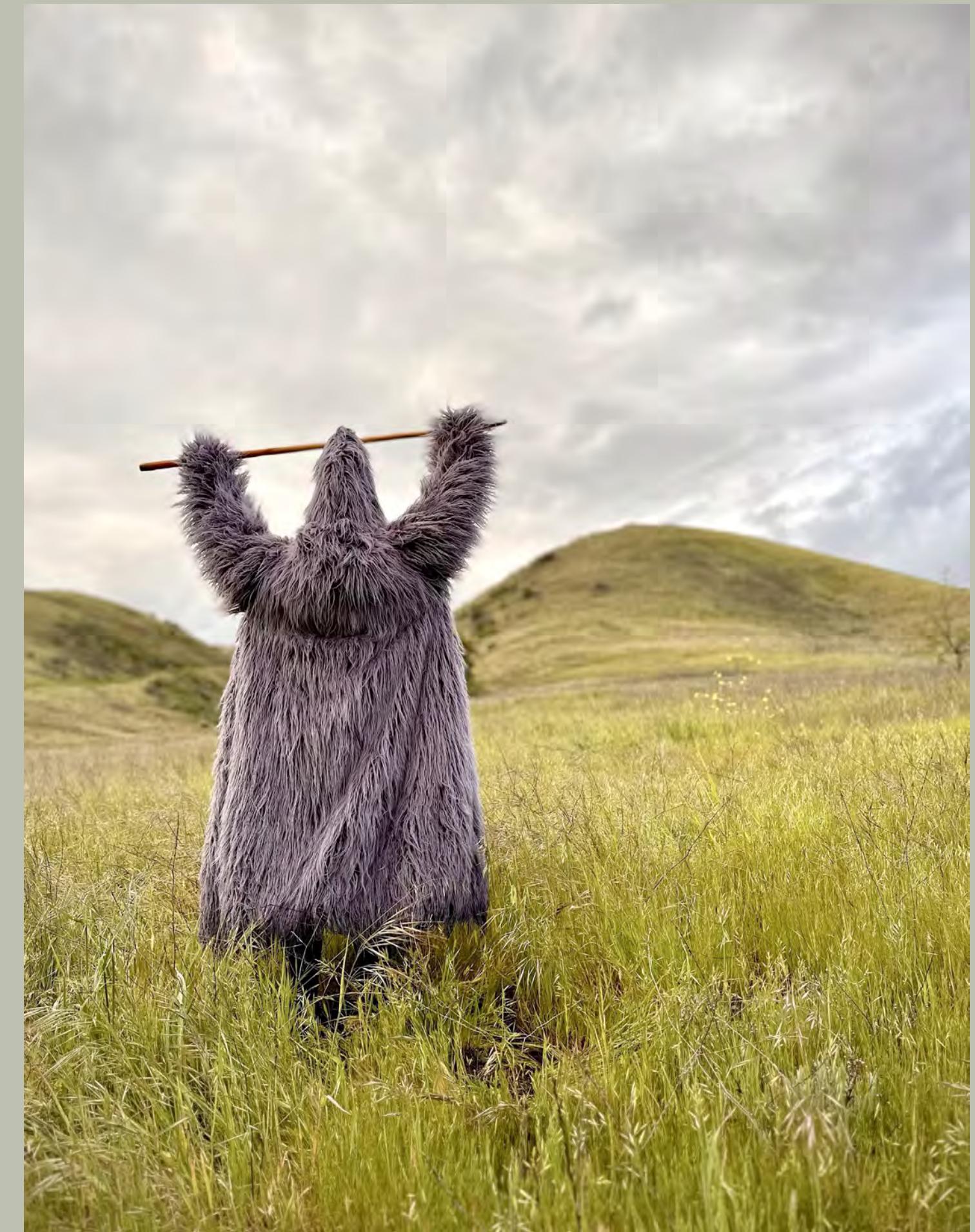
*What place do you believe humor has in art?* Upon this question, Miles began by reflecting on the importance of political commentary in art that is presented in a humorous manner. Such as in political cartoons, which Miles believes is "pretty important in the world of humorous art.". He also credits a classmate from his sculpture class, Bobby Canales, who he believes has done a great job of bringing visual humor into art. Miles mentions another example of visual comedy such as "something balancing when it shouldn't", as he leads into what he believes the point of art is. To Miles, the point of art is to "elicit a reaction". He



Miles Rosenbloom, WOOD SPIRIT, (Textile)



*Miles Rosenbloom, WOOD SPIRIT, (Textile)*



*Miles Rosenbloom, WOOD SPIRIT, (Textile)*

He brings up that it's a good feeling to laugh and make people laugh, and if he can elicit a reaction out of people through art, then the artwork might as well provoke a good emotion and become memorable for that reason.

For Miles, his motivation behind his creative process is straightforward- "I need to do it". In one way or another, Miles forces himself to get his work done in order to just keep on creating. Whether that end result is intended for himself, for his portfolio, or just because he has been working on a project for too long, he makes himself get things done. Miles explains that whether he likes the process of forcing himself or not, he still believes it creates good work. "There's some works that I do where it's just really monotonous repeated stuff. And sometimes you find the pleasure in that, but you do have to just commit to that." When given the hypothetical option to display his art in either a gallery or online, Miles answered that both places have a space for his art. Miles already displays his 2D art on his Instagram page @milesr. exobio with an audience of 15.5k followers, however, he describes seeing himself as always working towards being a part of a greater project. He believes that the role that concept artists like himself play, is doing a lot of the heavy lifting in terms of "creating a visual language" around something that is to be expanded upon. In his 2D art, Miles says that he would love to continue working on it as a standalone project, but he would be just as open for it to be a part of something beyond just himself. As for sculpture, Miles expresses that "it would be awesome" if his art could be in a gallery. He feels that everybody wants to have their art displayed in a gallery if they are creating something physical to be displayed. He also brings up that he has been capturing

some of his art through video lately, which is another interesting way to showcase it. A major milestone for Miles would be to be a part of a facility that is specific to artists, such as an art school. To him, the epitome of the prestigious art school experience in Los Angeles would be at Otis College of Art and Design. Miles hopes to be able to transfer there to continue his education after Santa Monica College, however, he doesn't believe in putting a timer on how long it takes for him to get there.



Miles Rosenbloom, WOOD SPIRIT, (Textile)

# JAIDEN PANGAN

Art History Major

 @pinturanijai

Interviewed & Written by Francisco Flamenco & Photographed by Sofia Friend



Jaiden Pangan's journey into art is as unique and multi-faceted as the pieces they create. For the emerging artist, who identifies as neurodivergent and queer, art is more than just a form of expression—it's a way to explore the complexities of their emotions and identity. "I'm Jaiden Pangan, and I've been an artist since I was probably in fifth grade," they share with a reflective smile. "I didn't really grow up drawing. I was always creative—doing crafts and stuff. But I was in a unique situation where my parents really, really wanted me to become a singer. They had this idea that I was going to be a pop star, and they pushed me toward that direction." For Jaiden, this pressure to pursue singing didn't feel right. Despite their parents' intentions, which were rooted in a desire for their child to succeed in a traditional career, Jaiden

discovered a different calling. "When they put me into that professional space, I realized I hated it. I didn't like it at all."

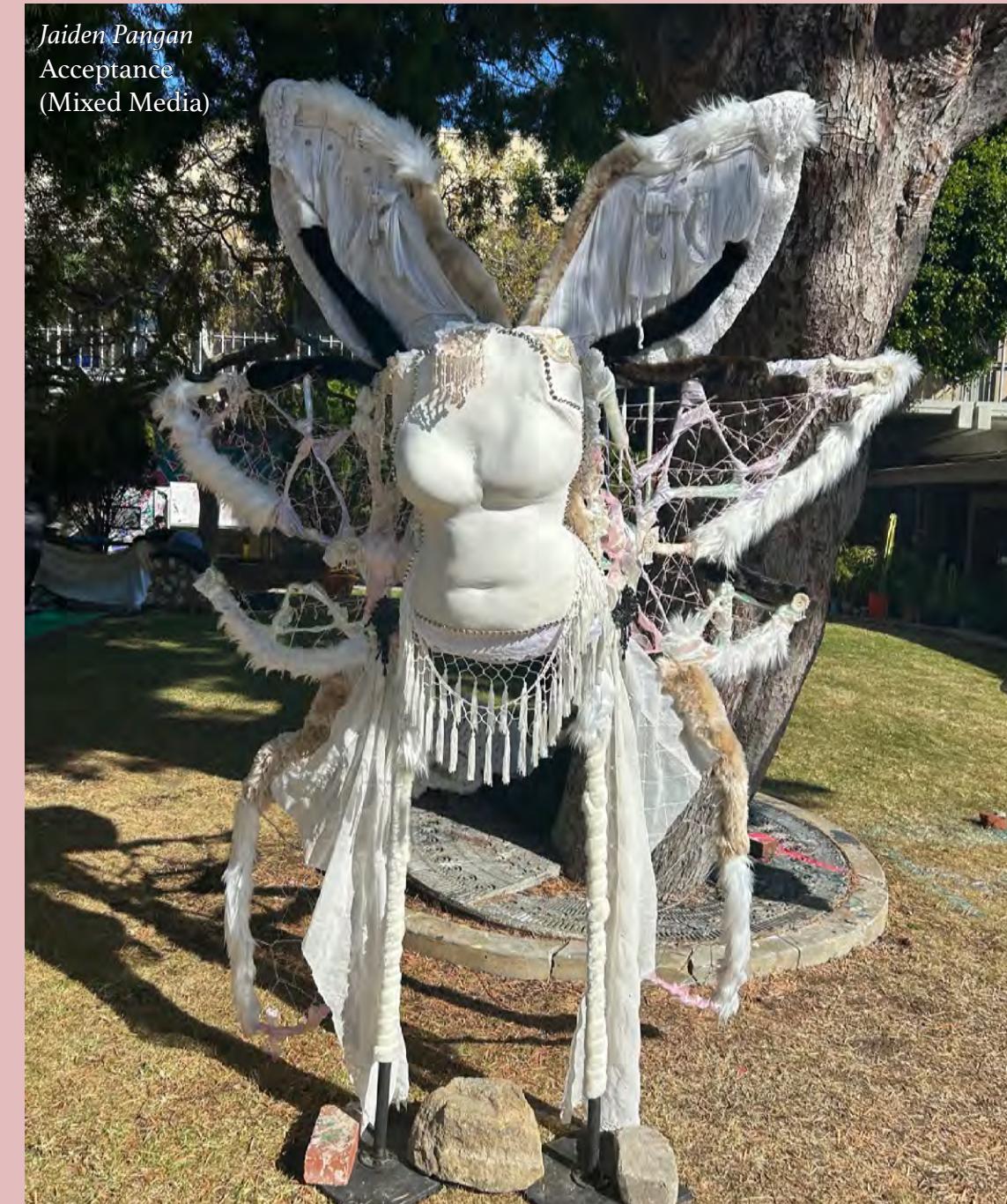
At that point, the budding artist stumbled upon a new avenue of creativity. "Around fifth grade, my friends and I were really into anime, and we thought we could create our own anime, with me as the main artist. Even though we were 11, trying to storyboard this story—it was horrible, but from that point on, I didn't stop drawing." Jaiden's path toward art was born from the exploration of new worlds and ideas, and it has evolved significantly since those early days. "I wouldn't say I'm a professional artist yet, but I hope to be. Right now, I'm more focused on art history. I would love to become an art director or

museum curator. Being surrounded by art and helping others show their art is what I really want to do."

In Jaiden's work, emotions are at the core of their artistic process. "My emotions are definitely the biggest inspiration," they reveal. "I'm neurodivergent, so the way I see the world and the way I create art is different from others. It makes it easier for me to visualize what I want to create." Themes of identity, sexuality, and the complexities of self-image often surface in their work, particularly as they grapple with femininity and queerness. "I explore my own struggles with emotions, sexuality, and femininity, especially as a queer person. For me, art is about understanding myself and creating something beautiful in the process," Jaiden explains. Their work offers a window into this inner world—one that challenges conventional beauty and embraces the unconventional, often through the lens of dark and surreal imagery.

One such piece that exemplifies this exploration is *Acceptance*, a sculpture that holds deep personal meaning. "Acceptance was a project for sculpture, and the mold is actually of my own body," Jaiden explains. "The aim was to express that even mess can be beautiful." The piece became a deeply intimate act of self-acceptance, with Jaiden's mother helping to create the mold. "It was like she was shaping me and immortalizing me," they reflect. Creating this piece was a vulnerable process. "It was intimate, vulnerable, and honestly, a little scary. My mom had to cut the plaster off my body, and I didn't think about how I would get it off. The whole thing felt overwhelming at first. But now, I look back at it with a sense of pride. It came out beautifully, and I think it's a representation of accepting both my physical and mental mess."

Jaiden's artistic process is marked by experimentation, particularly with sculpture and mixed media. While they gravitate toward oil paints for their richness in painting, their sculpture practice allows for more freedom in exploring new materials. "When it comes to sculpture, I like to explore new materials, so I experiment a lot," they share. "The more I get into sculpture, the more I find myself trying new things and experimenting with what works." For Jaiden, creative blocks are a part of the journey, but they've learned how to navigate them. "When I hit a creative block, I often make cute things. I'll make little clay frogs or axolotls for friends—things that don't require a lot of emotional weight. It's a way for me to still create, but in a low-pressure way. I think it helps me reset, so I can go back to the darker, more





*Jaiden Pangan, Craving, (Oil on canvas)*



*Jaiden Pangan, Ward Mirror, (Acrylic on canvas)*



den's piece *Ward Mirror*, which explores their personal struggles with anxiety and depression. "Ward Mirror is a love letter to a very specific point in my life," they reflect. "I've struggled with anxiety and depression for as long as I can remember, and during my junior year of high school, I was sent to a psych ward twice. The piece is about my experience during that time, especially being alone in the bathroom, where I could really be with my thoughts." The raw emotion of *Ward Mirror* reflects Jaiden's ongoing journey of self-acceptance and the complexity of emotions. "It's about the internal battle between seeing yourself as beautiful or as something ugly," they explain.

As Jaiden continues to push the boundaries of their craft, they're excited about future projects, including a large-scale sculpture that will address current events and their personal reflections on society. "I'm planning a large-scale sculpture project that I'm really excited

intense pieces when I'm ready." The overarching message Jaiden hopes to convey through their art is one of acceptance and the beauty found in imperfection. "I like creating figures that are classically beautiful in some ways but distorted in others—showing that beauty doesn't have to be perfect. Whether it's a deep-sea creature or a distorted face, beauty can be found in all sorts of places." This sentiment rings especially true in jai-

"It's going to tackle my feelings toward some current events, especially in light of recent elections." For artists who might be struggling with their own creative journey, Jaiden offers a simple piece of advice: "Don't be afraid to fail and make mistakes. You'll never know what you truly love unless you try new things. Even if you don't like a certain medium, it's teaching you something. Explore outside your comfort zone, because you



never know what might spark something new in your creative journey." Looking to the past for inspiration, Jaiden confesses a fascination with the bold, expressive culture of the mid-2000s. "As much as I love the aesthetics of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, I'd probably want to be a teenager in the mid-2000s," they share. "I loved the scene and goth culture back then, where people really committed to expressing themselves through

their clothes, hair, and style." In their art, Jaiden Pangan reflects the same boldness and commitment to authenticity—a journey that embraces both light and shadow, beauty and chaos. As they continue to create, they invite others to join them in the exploration of the unconventional, the imperfect, and the deeply personal.

# IRA ZIMMERMAN

Studio Arts Major

 @ira\_zimmerman

Interviewed & Photographed by Andrea Campo & Written by Sofia Friend



Ira Zimmerman, a Studio Arts major here at Santa Monica College, has been captivated by LEGO ever since he was a child. Visionaries Magazine sat down with him to discuss his artistic process and why he feels so called to work with LEGO. Two of Zimmerman's LEGO sculptures are on view in the Art Department.

"I've been building Legos since I was a little kid...I remember my grandparents had a box of mixed Legos one year when I went to visit them. All the pieces were random, and I couldn't have built anything with them but it was so fun and captivating". Improving the qual-

ity of Ira's LEGO sculptures and trying his best has always stuck with him: "My favorite part is how limiting it is, there's not actually that many pieces, and they are all intended to work a certain way. Taking that system and applying artistic principles to use as my medium has been really rewarding. I've gotten a lot better at my style of building, technique wise".

Photography has been a big inspiration for Ira as well: "I've always really liked this photographer named Hiroshi Sugimoto," mostly because Sugimoto combines two of Ira's biggest interests, architec-



*Ira Zimmerman, The Watching Tower, (Lego)*



Ira Zimmerman, Sound Tower, (Acrylic on canvas)

ture and nature scenes. Sugimoto's work "makes you look at the form more than the details and examine it in a different way. And I really like architectural things and abstraction. So it picks my brain really well". Film was not easy to come by, so Sugimoto would wait for hours to take a photograph so that he could have exactly what he was looking for. Ira's artistic process is similar to Sugimoto's in that it is very time-consuming. Ira's grandpa is a woodworker and that was also highly inspirational for him: "woodworking is in my blood. My grandfather would always take me into his huge workshop in his basement and make things with me. I like that the medium is difficult but rewarding. I also feel really in contact with nature when working with wood.

I really like legos because you're forced, to some degree, to work within a system, but you can really make any-

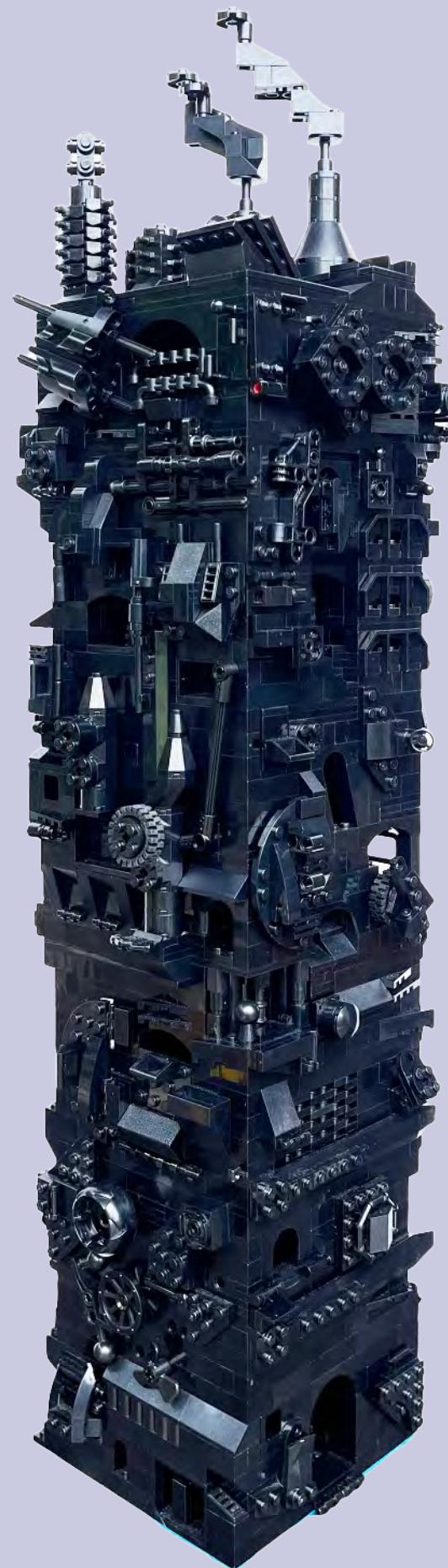
thing. I love figuring out new ways to use bricks and pushing my own boundaries by making difficult contraptions".

*Can you walk us through your art process?* "Most of the time, I just dive in. I like figuring out stuff by myself and along the way. I think mistakes and unexpected occurrences are amazing and an essential part of my work. At this point, I don't sketch much, just make". Although, because Ira has to buy Lego pieces off Ebay, his pieces can be somewhat inconsistent: "A lot are somewhat faded from the sun, or slightly dirty. Most come washed, but you can still definitely see the inconsistencies. One day when I buy new pieces this wouldn't be an issue, but for now that's too expensive, which is another issue". I'm obsessed with patterns and details, and this comes through in a lot of my work. A big part of my Lego work is just cramming as much detail on a facade as possible. I feel like in this process, I'm creating different patterns and systems within a larger whole, things only I can understand. There are definitely elements of visual storytelling that are really hard to see amongst the chaos.

*When did you begin making art?* After a bad breakup in 2022, Ira felt that he had "lost all direction in life". After that, he moved back in with his mom "and needed new hobbies, and really a whole new life. I started taking art classes at SMC in the Fall of 2023 and have loved them. That's when I really started taking this seriously. Most of my sculptures have pretty strong emotional connotations for me. I'm not sure if my work has a message or overall theme so far, but maybe it's something I need to figure out. I took photography throughout high school, and took photos as a child, but I never took it that seriously".



*Explain the titles of the LEGO sculptures and how that relates to your identity as a whole. (What does your work mean to you?)* "The Factory is my black LEGO sculpture. A lot of annoying, bureaucratic stuff was going on in my life when I made it. To me it feels very menac-



Ira Zimmerman, The Factory, (Lego)

ing, something that would suck you in and if you're lucky a piece of you might make it out. "The Watching Tower" refers to my name, which means watchful in Hebrew. It is covered in eyes and is very detailed, which draws in the viewers, forcing them to examine one small section at a time. I wanted to force people to watch and observe it the way I do the world". Ira is also planning on making another sculpture that will be all white and will focus on sound. It "reflects my listening to the world around me, and will include sounds I've recorded from different parts of my life".

*What's your favorite part of working with Legos? and least?*  
"My favorite part is how limiting it is; there's not actually that many pieces, and they are all intended to work a certain way. Taking that system and applying artistic principles to use as my medium has been really rewarding. I've gotten a lot better at my style of building, technique-wise. My least favorite part is that, at least for now, my pieces are pretty inconsistent. A lot are somewhat faded from the sun or slightly dirty. I buy my pieces from eBay, and most come washed, but you can still definitely see the inconsistencies. One day when I buy new pieces this wouldn't be an issue, but for now that's too expensive, which is another issue".

*Where do you see yourself in the art world in 5-10 years?*  
"I'd love to be a producing artist who just makes work, but I would be happy to see myself as someone



who works in a creative field or just works to support a practice. I really hope I keep making art".



*How have the people and community around you shaped you as an artist?*  
"I'm so fortunate to be surrounded by friends who I am so inspired by. I met most of my close circle of friends in art classes at SMC, and I'm really proud of and inspired by all of them. I place a lot of value on what my friends think. It's awesome to have people who help each other with projects and ideas. Also, we are honest when critiquing work, which is hard, but really helps in the end".





*Kayla Brunell*  
Underneath  
(Prismacolor Pencils)

## Artist Highlights

# MARLEY GAZARYANTS

◎ @marleysmediaa



*Marley Gazaryants, The Three Of Us, (Short Film Stills)*



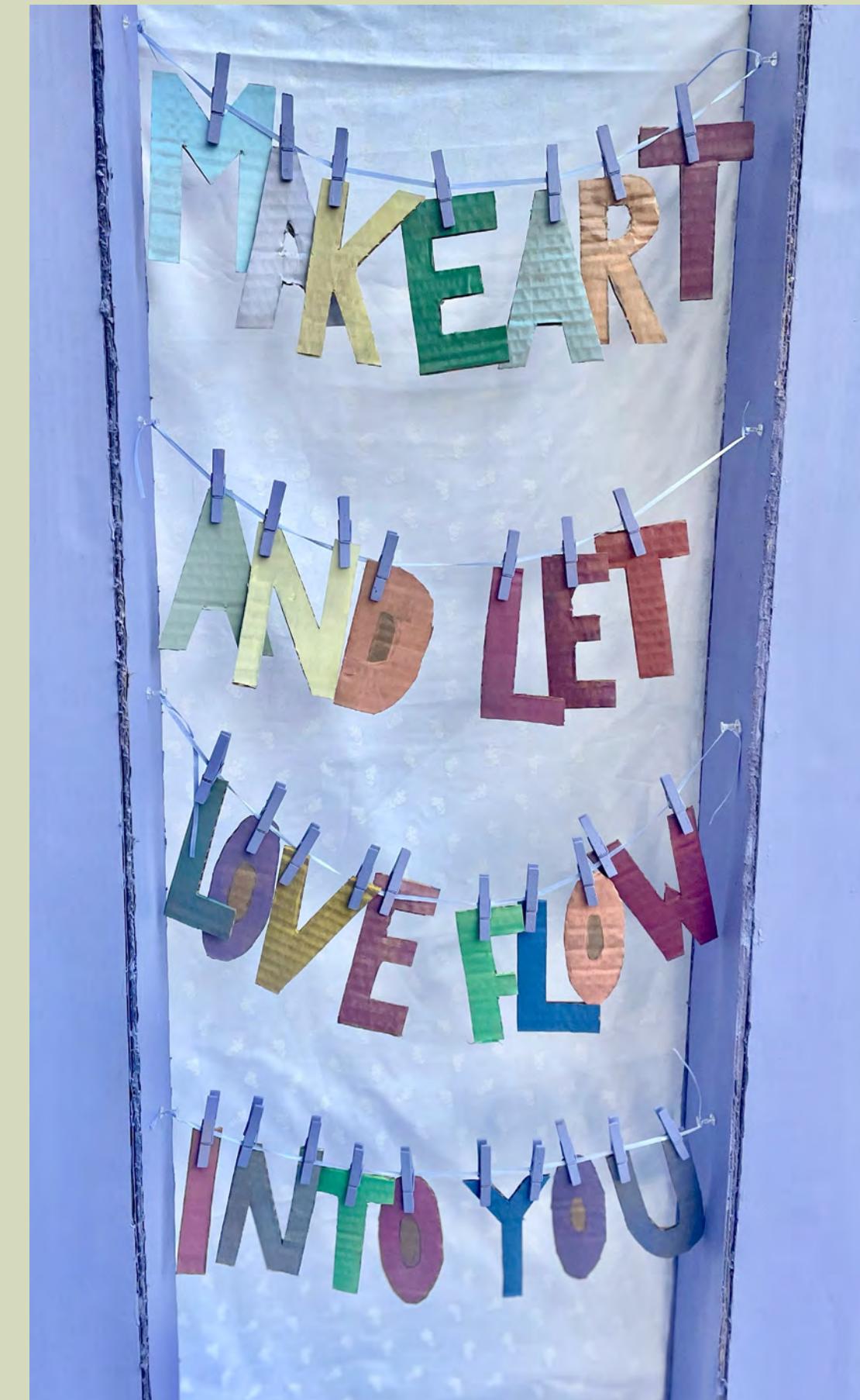
*Marley Gazaryants, The Three Of Us, (Short Film Stills)*

# RAY SCHWARTZ

© @suninmyarms



Ray Schwartz, Fondness Of Light, (Wire & Glass Beads)



Ray Schwartz  
Art Is Alive And Loves You  
(Cardboard, Acrylic, Fabric,  
Ribbon, & Pushpins)

# YOVANA PASPALJ

◎ @mazzymoonstar444



*Yovana Paspalj, Cage of Being, (Wire, Fabric, & Sheet Metal)*



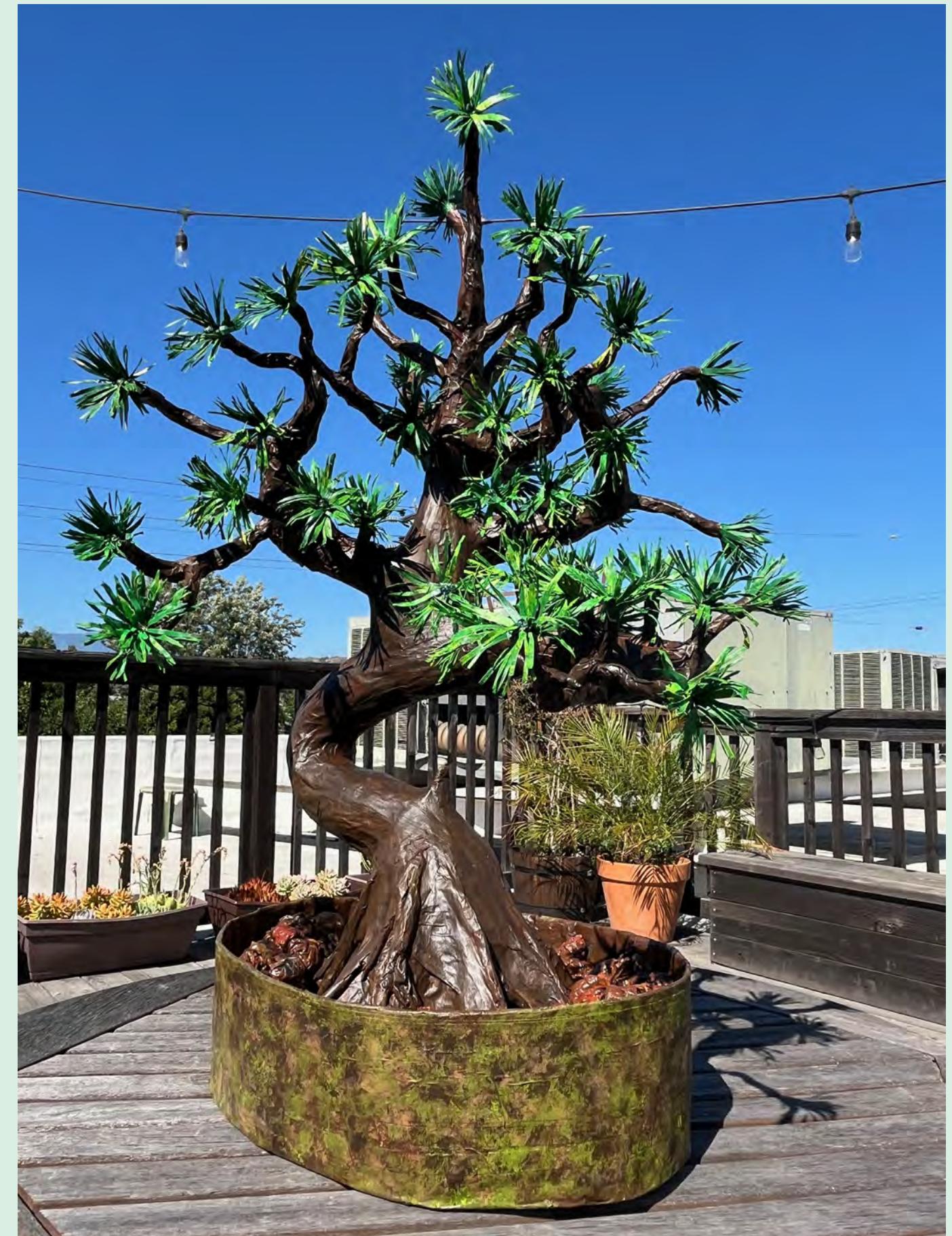
*Yovana Paspalj, Cage of Being, (Wire, Fabric, & Sheet Metal)*

# SANDY SHIMOOKA

© @urbaniconic



*Sandy Shimooka, And Then The Storm Broke,  
(Multimedia Collage Tuner Tribute)*



*Sandy Shimooka  
Bonsai Black Pine  
(Masking Tape Sculpture)*

# KAYLA BRUNELL

© @k.la.b



Kayla Brunell, Things That Make Me Happy, (Acrylic & Glass)



Kayla Brunell  
Underneath  
(Prismacolor Pencils)





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