

Musette Buckley

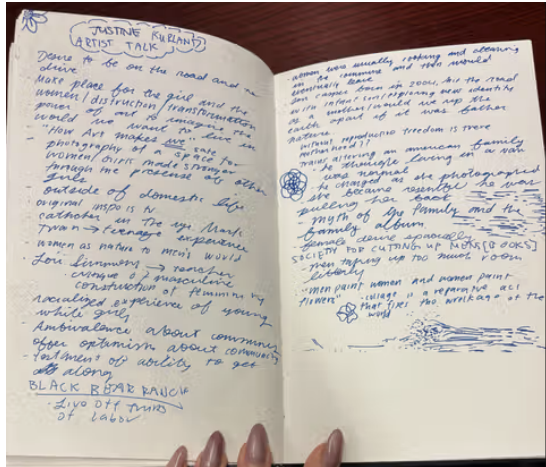
Prof. Gallagher

ARTS4498.01 Senior Project 1

10 December 2025

Artist Talks:

Justine Kurland:

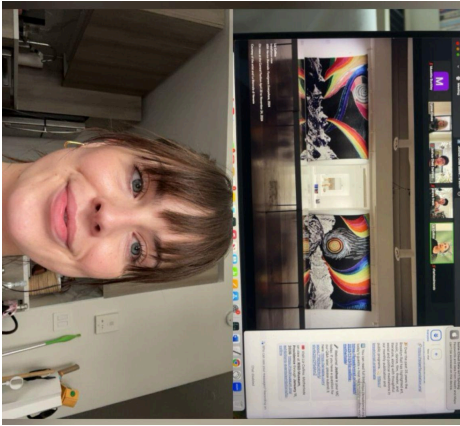


Because I was able to see you at Justine's talk, I did not take a picture of her presenting.

However, these were my notes from when I was there in person listening. Justine's work has a real emphasis on desire, mobility, and communal imagination. I love how she makes space for girl world and how she rejects isolation in her pieces. She talked about drawing on fantasy and imagining alternate ways of living. I think what

made this artist talk so amazing was how enigmatic both she and her stories are. Her photos are situated within a broader conversation on women's autonomy and visibility. Her work with her son felt almost like a rebellion against the constructs that I am familiar with. When I have to give my artist talk in the spring, I want to take a page out of her book on how to honestly reflect on personal relationships and emphasizing the ethics of how we treat one another and the politics of independence.

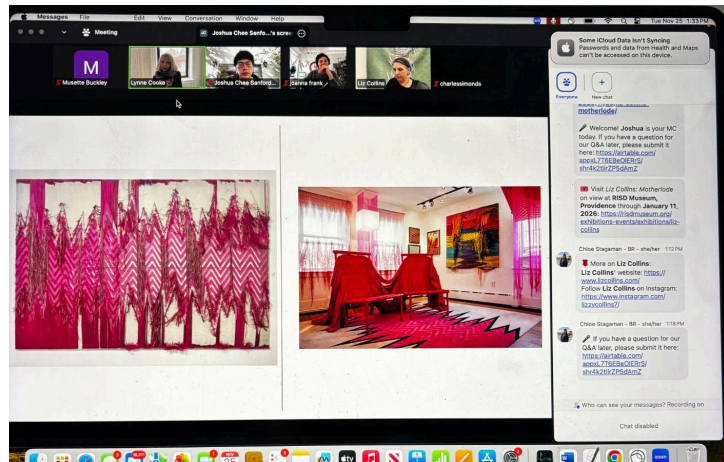
Liz Collins:



Because this talk was over Zoom, I was able to sit with my laptop and really focus on Liz Collins's work in a quiet and more personal way. Her installations moved between MoMA and Los Angeles, and seeing the same pieces shift in different spaces helped me understand how her work is alive and never fixed. The large rainbow landscapes in the image with the selfie of me on the bottom really drew me in. The lines and composition made it seem like the piece was almost breathing. When she talked about showing the

pieces in new venues, I was thinking about the artist talk we had with Issues in Approaches and how that truly affects the audience's perception. It made me think about how space becomes a collaborator in art practice. The pink woven panels that I have attached an image of below stood out to me

because they felt tender and chaotic at the same time. I loved the sense of movement they held even when they were still. Listening to her speak about the show, I was drawn to how she thinks about texture as a way to hold feeling and how she trusts color to carry emotion without explanation.



Museum of Fine Art:



Doron Langberg's *Merge* is a depiction of a charged night scene where figures move through bands of intense color and shifting light. This piece is incredible and drew me in

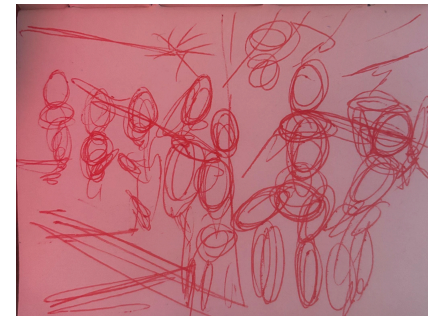
instantaneously. The surface holds layers of scraped and brushed paint that create a sense of motion.

Langberg utilizes vivid reds, violets and yellows to give the entire scene heat. The figures blend into their

environment and the atmosphere feels

like it is shaped around them. Their gestures suggest closeness and ease, yet nothing in the painting settles into clarity. His use of light defines touch, mood, and space, making the painting incredibly intimate. I think this is a crucial part in its homoerotic nature. The scale of the work makes being next to this painting feel immersive.

The viewer is drawn into the energetic nightlife that the figures are experiencing. The gesture and composition become a record of an underground community now held in the light of the museum.



To the left is a piece by Ross Bleckner. I am adding it because it was so interesting to encounter a work that was similar to one of my classmates: Marko. It made me feel almost more engaged. I think that this is part of the beauty of being in an art class and being in conversation with other

people.

Rose Art Museum, Brandeis:



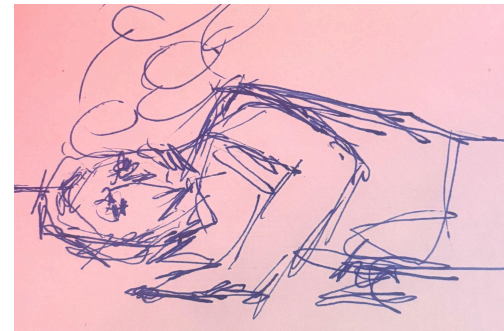
Unsure why I took a photo from this part of the exhibition and not the part I wrote about, but this is what I have.

Danielle McKinney's exhibition, *Tell Me More*, builds a quiet world where her figures hold their own space with an intensity that feels almost spiritual. I felt like each painting slows time. The bodies are both resting and collapsing, and the rooms around them feel in sync. The

surfaces are dark and gentle, and the light folds across skin in a way that makes their stillness feel powerful. The use of bright cadmiums creates intense and heated lighting that feels hot. Her use of oil creates soft edges and deep shadows that pull the viewer into the interior life of each figure. Seeing these paintings changed my perception on how the body can be understood in



art. The figure reclined on the patterned couch under the gaze of the classical statue felt like a conversation on presence and self-possession. The figure to the right, above, lies low to the ground and is wrapped in red fabric.



Both of these figures laid the groundwork for my paintings that followed them. These allowed me to have an understanding of how to witness my body as it folds or surrenders.



Week by week images and annotation:



Week One:

At the beginning of senior project, I was under the assumption that I wanted to do something with candles or wax to represent the fragility of life. This idea was a projection of the grief I was dealing with surrounding my uncle. I also had wanted to make an extension of what I was working on in Issues and Approaches, which was the process of healing from the trauma of my mother's passing. The figure was meant to be ominous and not particularly descriptive.

Week Two:

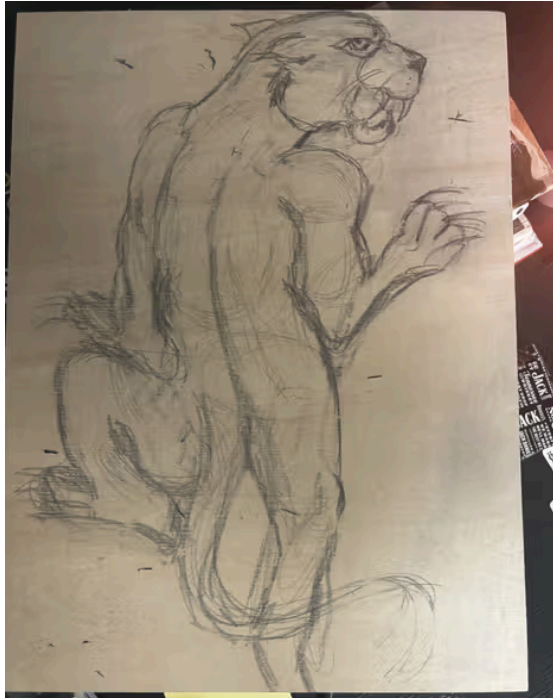
Toward the end of week one and into week two, I started thinking about my Ehlers Danlos Syndrome and the body that holds me up. This is where the idea of my privileged disability came up. Until this point, I felt as though my disability was something that was easier to hide. Little did I know that it would get more severe as the semester continued. In my hyperallergic reflection was the first time I mentioned incorporating the symbol of the jaguar. This was after our talk.

practice because I am interested in how mythological stories and symbols can be reimagined through strong imagery. I want to make a series of work inspired by Jaguars and their symbolism. I

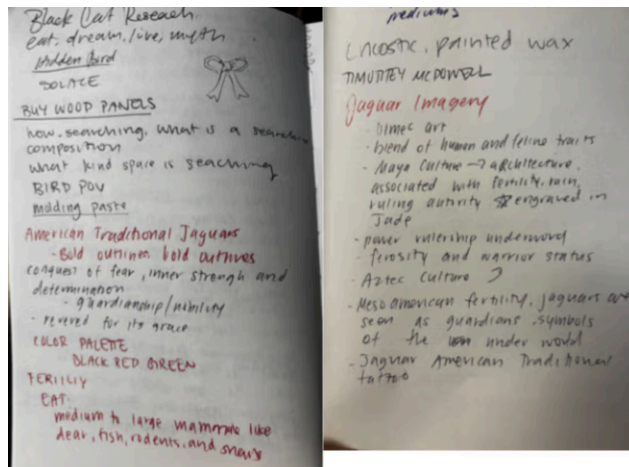
While developing my ideas that I started whilst abroad on deterioration, I want to continue to build on this idea. In the spring I looked at my own condition, Ehlers Danlos syndrome, and how it slowly weathers my body. I feel engaged by artists like Johanna Hedva in her writing, about not being able to protest when you have a disability. She questioned, how does one throw a ~~paper~~ brick through a window when they are stuck in bed. I want to explore my privilege of invisible disability. What are the things I CAN do that I frequently take for granted?

During weeks one and two, the majority of my time was spent doing extensive research on jaguars, the spirit, and the human condition.

Week Three:



Inspiration → american traditional Jaguar. I want to lean into how it is a sign of fertility for the project following. Perhaps a pregnant woman with the tattoo on my other wood panel.



Week three is when my creative process with the symbol of the jaguar began. I really loved American traditional symbolism because of my background and research in tattooing. I then referred to my color book to think critically about the message I was thinking of giving. I thought about my “unit” being rebirth and reincarnation. The quote “how can you live and have no story to tell” is something that I have tattooed and think about deeply. Every person has a story to tell, what is mine? What does it mean to be honest and vulnerable? Art gives us this opportunity and space for expression.

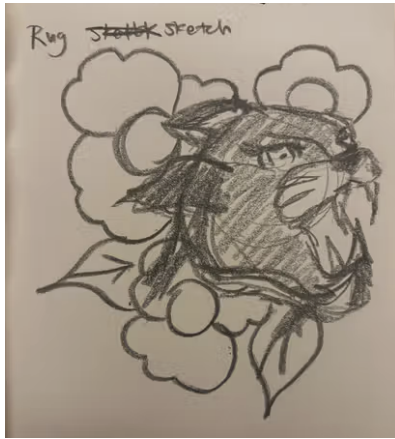
Week Four:



During week four, I came to work and finish this painting, and instead I had a crisis that I was a boring painter and needed to try something new. So, I went down to ceramics and made

a bunch of bowls all day. The plan was to paint them with jaguar and fertility symbols. Unfortunately, I do not have the coordination for ceramics and everything was either uneven or fell apart. I went upstairs, read through my color book and decided to paint the figure I had been working on with a Baker Miller Pink background. I enjoyed researching that color. After this day, I had a brief period where I wanted to do rug making. Unfortunately, the Hatchery stopped doing this workshop, but, all my hyperallergic research was on that. I was thinking of the jaguar as a charged talisman and sacred emblem for the first time. This was a result of the research on people embedding their personal beliefs and personal powers into their tattoos.

Week Five:



with urgent social critique. I like how humor and sacred symbols are used together to spark an interesting conversation. While I do not think my work this semester will have a political edge, that may be something I want to build off in the future.

For week five, I started on my rug sketch and finished my American Traditional jaguar. This Padlet post was the first time I talked about engaging in art with humor.

Week Six:

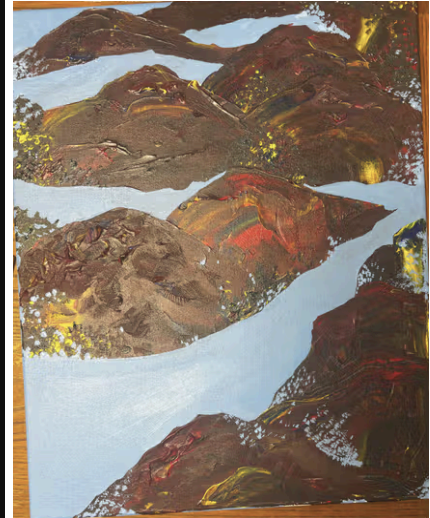


Week six, I was feeling very stuck and uninspired. I decided to go and get certified in what I could at the hatchery in an attempt to maybe have a creativity burst. I went to the McMullen on my own accord as one of my goals for the week so I could be inspired. I sat and sketched.

Week Seven:

I definitely do not fit the bar for a reasonable person as described in this book as a reasonable person is slow to anger and does not jump to conclusions. I do not think this is an incredibly bad thing as I think it is part of my passionate personality. My favorite quote was the one that I posted above. It can indeed be seen pessimistically, but I think there is so much truth in that. We often forget that we are likely to hurt the ones that we love. But, I also agree with another passage which explains how to be loved is to be seen. Curiosity is key because being aware of not knowing propels us to do something about it. This is how I find I grow as a person.

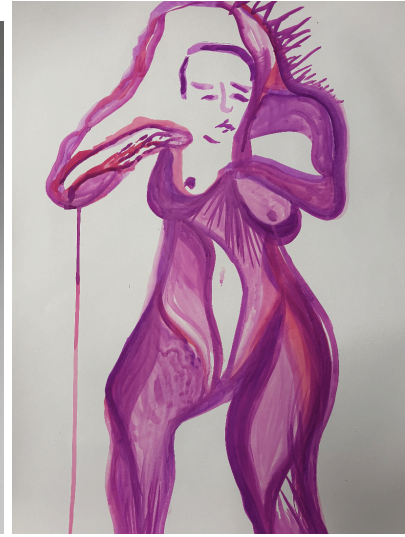
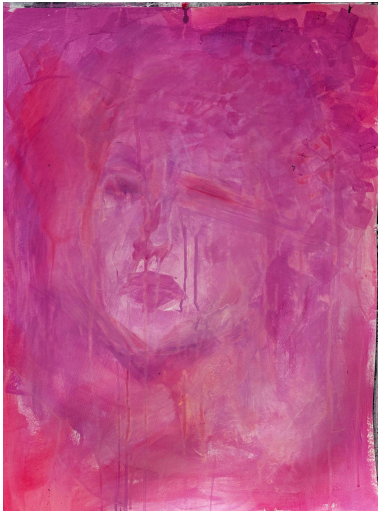
I also found the connection to my hyperallergic article fascinating. They both discuss how museums relatively broadly assume that the viewer likes the kind of art that is displayed and just needs to be provided with more details. I think this is intrinsically flawed. I like how art teaches us to suffer more successfully. That was a quote that I shared with a friend because I found it to be profound. I do not think I can properly grieve until I can get it on paper, whether it be words or gestures and line. If the world was a kinder place, we would be in less need of pretty art.



I spent hours reading the entirety of Art as Therapy. (I am a slow reader.) I tried to let the paint take me somewhere by making this medium-sized canvas. It was supposed to be inspired by the hills I grew up in, and I was going to incorporate the jaguar. But, you did not love where this one was going so that is what inspired the ink drawings the next week. I did writing for the incoming ink drawings:

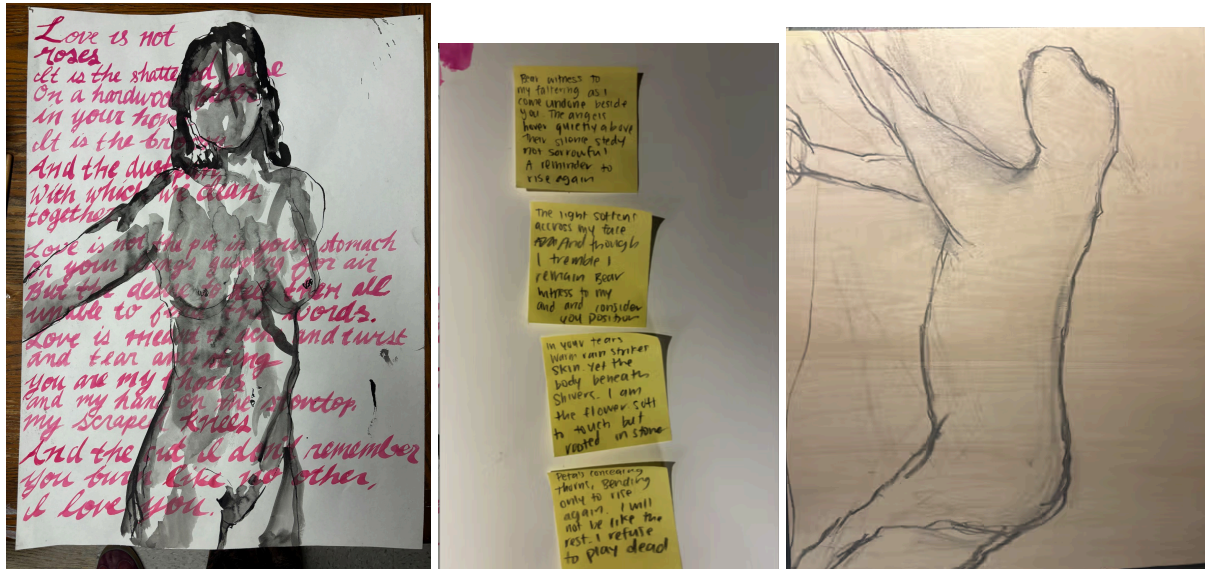
- 1) Love is not roses. It is the shattered vase on a hardwood floor in your home. It is the brook and the dust pan with which we clean together. Love is not the pit in your stomach or your lungs gasping for air. But the desire to tell them all, but unable to find the words. Love is meant to ache and twist and tear and sting. You are my thorns and my hand on the stove top, my scraped knees and the cut I do not remember. You burn like no other. I love you.
- 2) What is gentle does not vanish. In stillness, I remain. Silence is my religion, tenacity my holiness. To live within my skin is to know nothing is unwelcome.
- 3) My heart in this condition could never falter. It could never turn to ash. I am nothing but the time it took to become whole.

4) **Week Eight:**



Week eight is when I pulled the all-nighter, gesso-ing, inking, writing, thinking, and editing. Here, after our meeting, I was really trying to channel the saint-like/spirit guide figure. It is quite interesting that the colors faded overtime. As I look here, they are still so pink and bright. The jaguar image below was my trying to work with my left hand in an attempt to be more loose. I wanted the animal to be slightly surreal, this is why I added the legs to it.

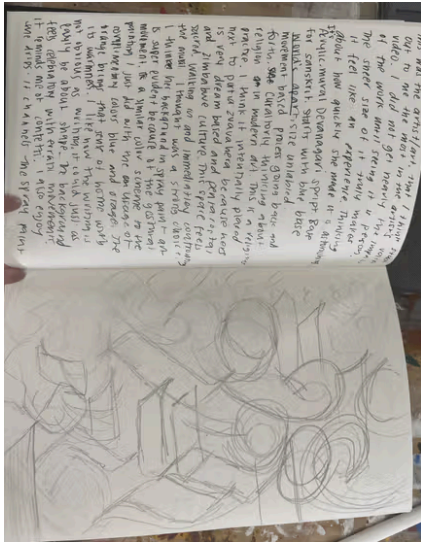
Week Nine:



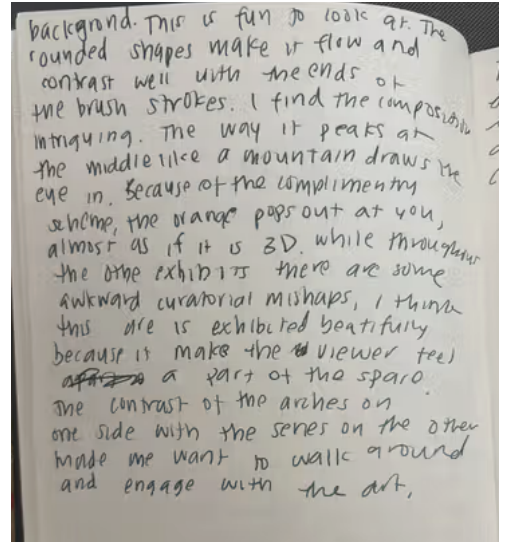
^Above “Bear witness to my faltering as I come undone beside you. The angels hover quietly above, their silence steady not sorrowful, a reminder to rise again. The light softens across my face and though I tremble I remain. Bear witness to my end and consider your position. In your tears, warm rain strikes skin, yet the body beneath shivers. I am the flower. Soft to touch but rooted in stone. Petals concealing thorns, bending only to rise again. I will not be like the rest. I refuse to play dead.”

In week nine, I added to this ink figure that I had made. I used the writing piece from earlier that was inspired from looking at her. The way her shoulder was extended is what brought me back into thinking about my disability.

Week Eleven:

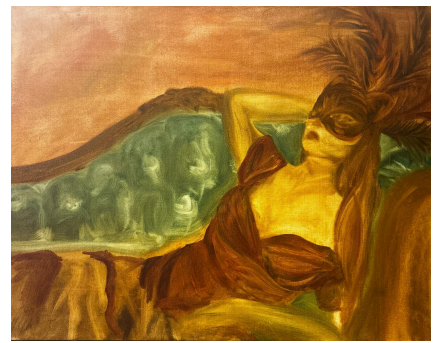
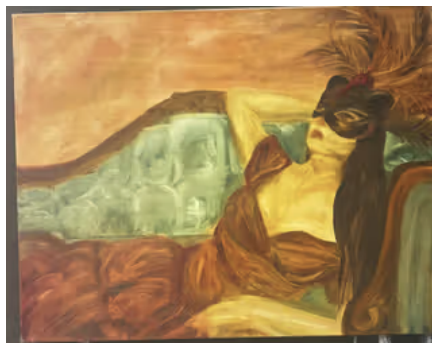
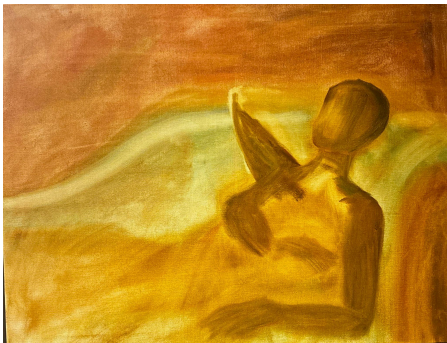


This was the week we talked, which was quite arguably one of the worst pain weeks of the semester. I was in and out of UHS, had days when I could not walk, and was just overall not well. This is when we went to the ICA and my drawing is below. During this week I read a little about the forensic art team and did a Lightroom tutorial



video.

Week Twelve



I realized that in order to paint, I had to really space out my work days. I would often work until I was in a severe amount of pain. This process is what turned me to think about my disability more. After doing my presentation on Johanna Hedva and her work, it made me feel more encouraged to go full force with it. This piece was a turning point for me, for better or for worse.

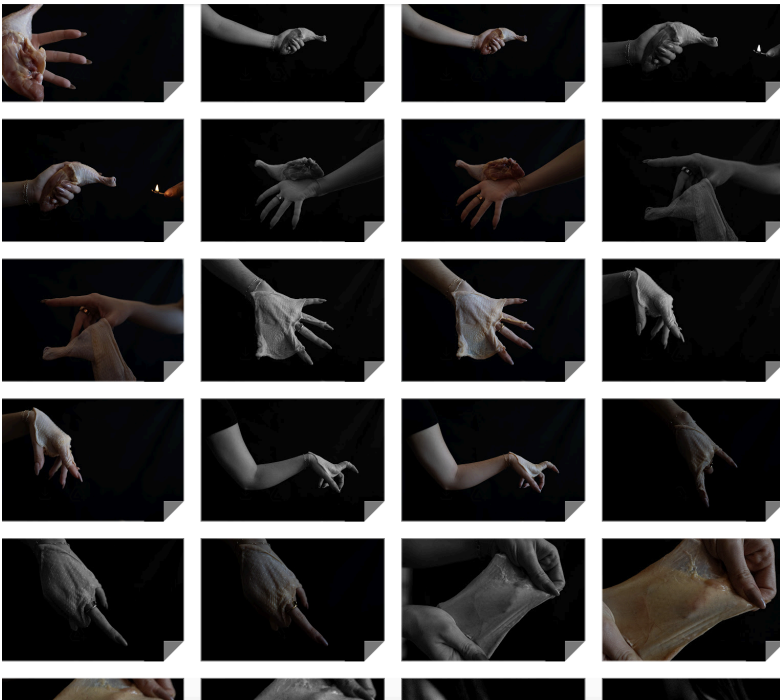
Week Thirteen:



I had my roommate come in and model for me for the anatomy. I did not take pictures of every single edit, but I redid the couch, the hair, and the skin color over and over. At one point, her skin was green, and her hair was black. I also edited and changed the dress a lot. One of my bigger regrets was not having a model or reference for the dress because I had to constantly rework and render it to not

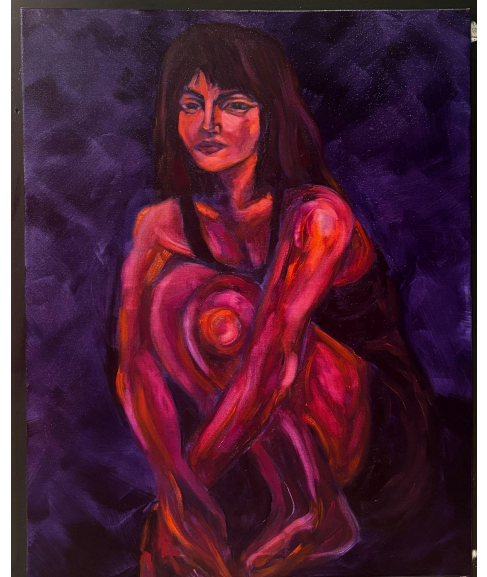
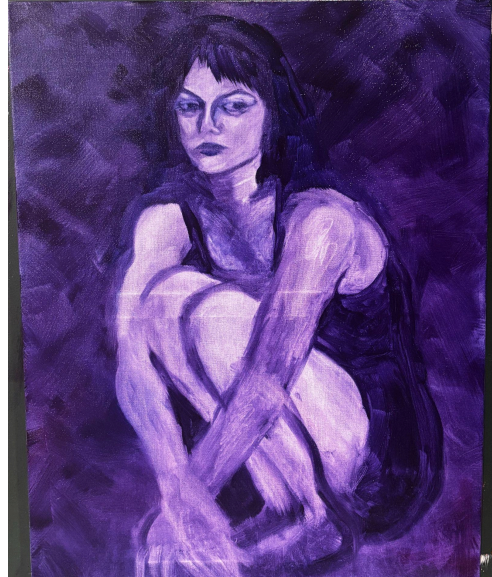
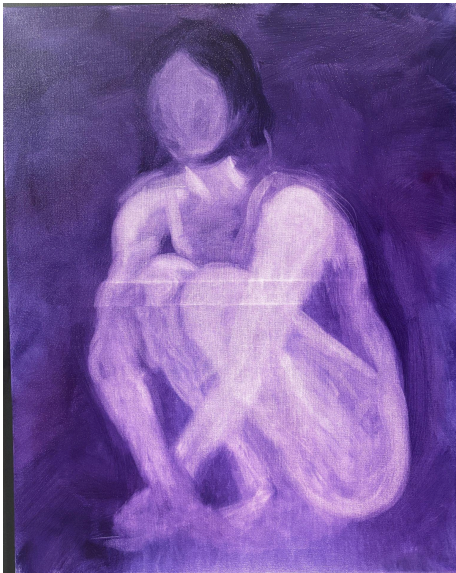
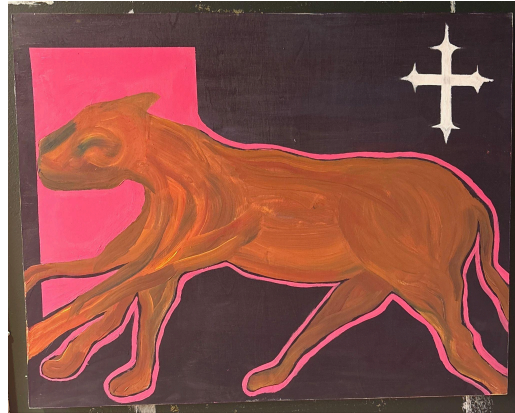
look crazy. Overall, I am happy with the Stoic and solid nature of her stance. I was worried she was going to look “too” comfortable.

Week Fourteen:



The hands were a huge turning point in the work. They were a discovery of what was going on on the inside. This was something that I had never seen in art before, which made it really special to me. This was even more special because I was able to do the work with my biological father. It was honest, raw (literally), and felt very authentically me. This was a lot of the feedback as well. I was incredibly grateful for the feedback from other professors, who seemed to enjoy them.

Week Fifteen:



This was absolutely my most productive week of the entire semester. Art came absolutely first. I am incredibly proud of what I was able to do and where I was able to take my body. While you may not think it is cohesive or goes together, this was an entirely honest depiction of my body and what goes on for me. I think it was a great way to wrap up the semester.

Reflection/Synthesis: Where I am Going and Where I Have Been

When I walked into studio on the first day of senior project, I thought I knew what I wanted to make. I was carrying the tension of having to deal with my uncle, who had just suffered a stroke. This was also bringing up a lot of memories of the loss of my mother. I sketched figures that I imagined being covered with wax and candles because I wanted to represent the fragility of life. I was trying to make something about loss, but I didn't understand that what I really needed and wanted to explore was my own body and what it means to survive.

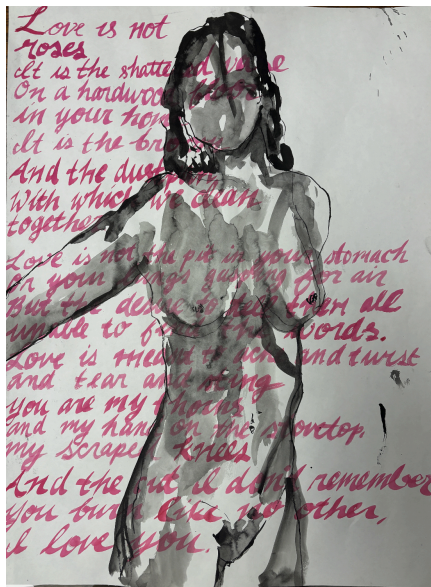
The shift started in week two when I wrote in my sketchbook about my Ehlers Danlos Syndrome. I described it as a privileged disability because until that point I felt like it was something easier to hide. I didn't know where my body would end up going or how it would deteriorate. What I did know was that the jaguar kept appearing in my research and in my sketches. The jaguar felt like power and survival and something ancient that I could hold onto. I spent weeks researching jaguars and their symbolism. I learned about fertility, strength, and the many cultures the jaguar appears in and how it moves between worlds. I was drawn to American traditional tattoo imagery because of my background in tattooing. As I described, the jaguar became my charged talisman.



Around week four, I felt like I hit a crisis point. I came in ready to finish a painting and instead felt completely stuck. I spent the whole day in the ceramics studio making bowls I planned to paint with jaguar symbols. Everything collapsed or came out wrong. I don't have the coordination for ceramics. However, this failure taught me about my own process and how I can't force work to happen. In the early weeks, I spent a lot of time gathering ideas and testing materials. I made the American traditional jaguar on Baker Miller Pink. I researched that specific color and learned about its psychological effects. I was thinking about aggression and calm and how color can shift emotional states. At the

same time, I was also reading extensively about mythology and symbolism. I wanted to understand how the jaguar functions as a spiritual guide in different cultures.

In week eight, I stayed up all night working on large ink drawings. I layered text over the figures because I felt like I needed words to complete what the images were saying. This was the effect of my studies on Johanna Hedva while I was abroad. I wrote about love



as something painful and necessary, and about gentleness as a form of strength. These felt different from anything I had made before because it was a new style, material, color, and vulnerability that was completely new to me. They helped me understand and get to the concept of a personal trinity, which started forming. I realized I was working with three recurring symbols. The jaguar represented my connection to the physical world, but also a sign of my mother. Saint Therese represented something beyond myself, but also a sign of my uncle. Lastly, my own body represented the space where these

forces meet. I started thinking about pain as a transformative experience rather than just something to endure.

Week eleven was brutal physically to the point where I could barely walk some days. Presenting on Johanna Hedva and her ideas about sick women and political bodies stayed with me. She argues that being unable to

participate in protest or public space doesn't make you less political. Your body itself becomes the site of resistance. Reading her work made me realize I had been apologizing for my disability in my art. I had been trying to make it palatable or metaphorical. After that presentation, I felt the urgency to stop softening it. There was then a shift in how I approached the studio. I painted the large lounging lady and kept



reworking the same areas. At one point, everything felt like it was the wrong color and I had

to start over. But through all that revision, the figure became more solid. I like that she looks confident and stoic simultaneously. To me, it feels like she owns the space she takes up.

Photographing with my biological father was another critical shift for me, and honestly one of my favorite parts of my project. Together, we spent hours capturing the ways my joints hyperextend and bonded over the ways his did too. We were trying to find



this beautiful proof and physical representation that our bodies work differently. In the last stretch of the semester, I had felt more inspired than ever. I finished the reclining figure, I made changes to one of my jaguars, and I investigated how my body collapses in two

other large paintings. These pieces show what it feels like to live in my body because they show collapse and strength existing at the same time.

Upon reflecting, I think a lot about how some weeks I could work for hours and others I could barely hold a brush. The work reflects that same instability I deal with on a daily basis. I understand it to reflect the moments of power and clarity that come from living with chronic pain. I truly put my all into this project. It is the result of my incredible honesty with one of my biggest insecurities that I had to highlight in front of all my closest friends and acquaintances. Going forward, I want to keep pushing the exploration of disability and visibility and highlight the strength it takes to keep making art anyway. My conclusion is that vulnerability is not a weakness, and making visible what is usually hidden is an act of resistance.