Art Exhibition Wall

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2023
“Curiosity”  
*Digital Photography*  
*11 x 14”, 2021*  
Pictured is a White Breasted Nuthatch who was playing in the pines. This photo was taken in Saint Joseph, Michigan, in 2021. This bird can help remind us to stay curious and to foster a love to play and grow, and to nourish your inner child by being yourself in a world that discourages self-expression and the nature of having fun by means of work demand, capitalism, and heavy guilt.

“Strength”  
*Digital Photography*  
*(11 ”X 14”), 2021*  
Pictured is a Red Winged Black Bird taken in Saint Joesph, Michigan, this past spring. The Red Winged Blackbird acts as a fierce protector for its mate and will even protect other small birds from larger predators. As a symbol of strength, the Red Winged Blackbird is reminder to be strong and brave, even when the odds are against you, and to always look out for those around you.

“Patience”  
*Digital Photography*  
*(11” x 14”), 2021*  
Pictured here is a Red Shouldered Hawk practicing some much-needed self-care after a long (but successful) hunt. This photo was taken in Saint Joseph, Michigan, last year around fall time. The beautiful bird of prey is a reminder to be soft with yourself even in a harsh world that tries to turn you rigid. Self-care, patience, and love are endlessly important, even if you are expected to be the strong one.

“Love”  
*Digital Photography*  
*(11” x 14”), 2021*  
Pictured is a Family of Geese swimming in a small lake in New Buffalo, Michigan, this past spring. 5 goslings can be seen huddled close together while swimming while the two adult geese follow closely along. The family of seven is a reminder of the importance of love, helping us to see that supportive and caring family and friends in your circle is not only beneficial for, but essential to enjoying a fulfilling existence.
Audrey Dorman

I created Growing Together because I believe that as women we grow and thrive together. As women, we need to stand together and support each other. Like trees growing together in a forest, we as people all benefit when we grow together. We are connected by our roots, and all have different backgrounds and upbringings, but come together to nourish and support one another.

Our pasts run deep, but we are choosing to grow up. We are all different, inside, and out, and grow in different ways. Instead of picking apart our differences, we should celebrate the beauty in diversity. We look different, and are different, but we are united through our similarities, and differences. By growing together, and supporting one another, we help each other thrive.

“Growing Together”
Watercolor Paint
(18” x 12”), 2022
This image is inspired by Shinto’s idea of animism. In Shinto beliefs, things and places like mountains, rivers, and forests are inhabited by supernatural entities called “kami”. If you treat them well, good things will happen and vice versa. Our waterways are struggling and so are we. I hope this image inspires people to heal nature and themselves.

“A River Mourns”
Film
(8” x 10”), 2022
This beet painting captures the simplicity yet beauty of a single beet. Because this is a finger painting, the textural element on the canvas adds another layer of realness that catches the viewer’s eye. My goal was to use contrasting colors around and within the beet to challenge what you typically see when looking at something as plain as a vegetable. Beet was painted over the span of two hours, outdoors and during a brief, gentle rain. As the sky cleared up, I was inspired by the glistening water droplets on my painting and decided to preserve that visual with flecks of glitter.
This piece addresses a common problem in Kalamazoo: the lack of proper disposal of garbage and/or discarded items. The work shows my view from the park next to my house, a highly active area among residents. Prior to the creation of this piece, during, and more than likely long after this piece is complete, this faux leather couch sits at the side of the road waiting for someone else to take care of it. Using oil on canvas, this piece explores the topic of improper waste disposal and the harm it causes to the environment.

As the leaves decompose, so does this couch. Due to the rapid changing of weather over the past few weeks, it has further aided in the decay of the couch, preventing it from being reused by someone else, sealing its fate as garbage waiting to be disposed of. The faux leather from this couch will take decades to fully decompose, eventually breaking down into microplastics that can release toxic chemicals into the environment around us. Within our community, there needs to be steps taken to educate and provide proper ways to dispose of unwanted items and/or garbage for its citizens.
Emma Hampel

This piece is about the natural landscape in my hometown and the Midwest as a whole. I love to go for runs and ride my bike by the farmland, fields, and animals in my neighborhood. I think my hometown is one of the most beautiful places on earth, and I have so many good memories here. The outdoors never fails to cheer me up or help me relax when I’m going through difficult times. This piece relates to sustainability because it captures my love of the natural world and how much I believe it needs to be cherished. I dread the day these dirt roads I remember no longer existing or can’t be enjoyed due to urbanization and the effects of climate change.

This artwork was a social justice piece done after I learned about the Flint Water Crisis through one of my classes. Having lived in Michigan my whole life, I knew that the Flint Water Crisis had happened, but I didn’t know before how long the authorities in Flint denied its existence and knowingly damaged the children of Flint by ignoring expert advice and testimony. Environmental justice is an important topic regarding sustainability and climate change because it is often the most underprivileged of us who are hurt the most. In the case of Flint these children’s brains will likely be damaged for the rest of their lives due to their lead exposure.

“Flint”
Acrylic Paint
(24” x 30”), 2021

“Crossroads”
Acrylic and Oil Paint
(40” x 30”), 2021
Every to-go cup, every plastic fork, every laundry detergent jug, every cheap article of clothing hastily tossed to a dump, creeps us closer to desolation. Do we dream of a utopia or dystopia more often? And which are we manifesting within our daily culture? What does the dream we are manifesting through our actions and dissociated decisions truly look like?
I really like working with materials that aren’t as traditional and creating artwork that has some dimension. With other materials in mind, I especially love upcycling things that would otherwise be wasted. These pieces are created using old magazines that I and others have accumulated over the years. I was inspired by the flowers that bloom at Gibbs House around the property. Watching the butterflies and bees go from flower to flower over the summer brought me immense joy and these experiences shape the way I view and interact with nature around me. While it is scary to see all the ways our world is changing and what we risk losing, it is important to stop and still enjoy things that nature has to offer. It is important to remember what we are trying to protect.

"The More You Grow"
Paper and Magazines
(4”x 6”), 2022

"Last Bud not Least"
Paper and Magazines
(4”x 10”), 2022

"I’ve Had it Once and Floral"
Paper and Magazines
(4”x 6”), 2022
I often find that I can express myself more clearly through art rather than written works. For this project, I referenced real life scenarios and created the design on Adobe Illustrator. The juxtaposition between the polar bears in their natural environment and the imposing power plant helps imply it’s unnatural and harmful change in the Arctic landscape. Through the mirroring of the melting ice and the factory clouds being created, the viewer can see the effects of harmful corporate actions. It is humanity’s responsibility to put the needs of animals, especially those that are endangered, in front of those of large corporations. The carbon emissions they release are melting the Arctic. It is not a matter of if it will melt but when.
My images that I am submitting show the environment at the Gibbs House. The two together reflect the life and death that takes place in nature. We all start at the beginning, needing food to survive and in the end, we die, leaving nothing but bones behind us. It is up to us to fill in what happens in between those times. I think sometimes when you feel you are struggling, looking at nature to remind us of the simple process in nature can put you at ease.

“Life at Gibbs”
Film
(8”x 10”), 2022

“Death at Gibbs”
Film
(8”x 10”), 2022
Renee Cilluffo

My work aims to integrate my personal life, childhood imagination, fashion, and creativity in conveying that we have a way to go in sustainability. Environmental sustainability is a much larger responsibility than meets the eye.

Change begins with a shift in perspective, for we cannot fix what we do not see/know. When we put ourselves on level ground and look upwards at the earth from a worm-like perspective, we become more down-to-earth so-to-speak and our priorities are put into perspective. A problem is that we may see ourselves as larger than and we fall into the trap of overestimating the importance of where it may not need to be, and underestimate what it is. Any action, even as simple as watering plants in one’s garden, is a step in the right direction. Imagine if everyone did something of that sort, and how much of an impact that may have. Fewer carbon emissions? Cleaner air? Circular economy? Conscious energy consumption? Planting a tree? Habitat conservation? Recycling?

Let us all do our part. Change is gradual but every little bit counts.

“Spring Showers”
Digital Media
(24” x 18”), 2020

“Blown Away”
Digital Media
(20” x 24”), 2020
2022
Angie Bissonnette

I believe the process of creation should be just as cathartic as the appreciation of the finished piece. The style of this work is acrylic pour painting. I used a feathering technique to create the effect of Autumn leaves in “Falling”, a double swipe for the divided result in “Changing Tides” and a mixture in making “Artic Ice”. It relates to nature as its intent and inspiration comes from changing seasons and the dramatic effect of a shifting environment. But without a doubt the focal point of this collection is a celebration of fall and an appreciation of its beauty. There are also some aspects of sustainability to my work as I use old, discarded canvases which I then paint over and give new life.

“Artic Ice”
Acrylic Pour Painting
(12” x 12”), 2021

“Falling”
Acrylic Pour Painting
(16” x 20”), 2021

“Changing Tides”
Acrylic Pour Painting
(12” x 12”), 2021
Anna Vitale

“A Chickadee in a Tree”
Digital photograph
(16" x 20"), 2021

I love this photo because it shows the contrast between something so small (chickadee) and something so big (the tree). It shows how two very different things can be so crucial to each other’s existence and how diversity and the ability to coexist can be so beautiful.

“A Nuthatch in Fall”
Digital photograph
(16" x 20"), 2021

The colors in this photo have always really stuck out to me and really embody the essence of autumn in Michigan. This photo shows how important preserving our natural world is and how beautiful simple moments can be.

“Invasive Carp Species in Michigan”
Watercolor, micron pen
(9” x 12”), 2021

This painting is of each species of invasive carp in Michigan. From top right to left there is a bighead carp (Hypophthalmichthys nobilis), a black carp (Mylopharyngodon piceus) a grass carp (Ctenopharyngodon idella ), and a silver carp (Hypophthalmichthys molitrix). I used watercolor and a micron pen. I think that showcasing the invasive species in a beautiful way helps to spread information and helps people to not demonize these species, but rather inspire curiosity and the desire to learn.
The piece I am submitting is inspired by the lack of urgency I feel that is related to the state of the environment. My entire life I’ve been taught about all the pollutants, the droughts, the forest fires, and climate change caused by humans. And how fixing it is something we have to work together to heal, but nothing changes. The first major human-caused crisis I remember living through was the oil spill in 2010. Then the Australian forest fires, and then the Californian forest fires, and then the most recent being the ocean literally catching fire. For most of my life, I’ve been watching these disasters happen over and over and nothing is done. There are constant pleas and cries from those around me, normal people doing everything they can to fight against the decreasing health of the Earth, but those who can really do change just sit and watch. The topic of the environment has become nothing more than a debate. Just a topic that means someone leans one way politically and not something that determines the fate of the human race. After all, soon all the people actually important to society can just go to Mars, leave this place forever, and start over. Soon the fact that humans once lived on Earth will be nothing more than a whisper. Forget the millions and millions of those displaced because the glaciers melting is flooding the world and flooding coastal cities. Forget that the damages done in natural disasters that could be preventable are still not fixed. Forget all the other animals and plant life affected by these natural disasters and human interference. None of that even matters, right?
This piece takes an old depiction of the environment and gives it a contemporary twist. With inspiration from the old master, Albert Bierstadt, and current landscape artists, I used a thirty-inch pole to paint this waterfall and mountainous scene. Just like finding new approaches to painting, we are forced to look at contemporary ways to care for our environment. This was something that sat in my mind while creating this piece.

Similar to the evolution of contemporary approaches to painting, modern sustainability approaches require innovation. While a remodeling to sustainability is important to solve modern environmental problems, it is also important to the arts. Artists have to come up with new viable techniques to art making in order to stay relevant.

At the same time, while they both require new approaches and contemporary strategies, it is important to understand the direct link between them. Even though there are artists dedicated to environmental studies and bringing forth awareness, we cannot deny the impact the arts has on the environment. The chemical waste brought on by paints and pigments leaves lasting harm. By using sustainable practices, artists can help to preserve this natural work of art. The relationship between the arts and environment is undeniable and critical.

Each can learn from the other, as we learn to create new approaches to not only painting but to caring for our planet. Dedicating works of art to the environment raises awareness of nature and our need to protect what we have available to us, because without it, such paintings will cease to exist.

“Landscape with a Drunken Stick”, Acrylic paint (30” x 40”), 2021
These photos show the vast differences between those in a place of privilege and those who have been historically marginalized and how they interact with the nature around them. The photo with the rainbow shows tourists walking around and being immersed in the beauty of the landscape around them. There is still an appreciation for the land, but its main purpose is for tourism and to leisurely explore the area. The space is meticulously manicured and left preserved for future groups to be able to experience. In contrast, the photo at the river shows the local people bathing and doing their laundry in the water. The people utilize the land out of necessity and have a much deeper connection to it, as it provides basic needs for human life. The land is much more rugged, unkept, and even has remnants of trash showing that the culture for environmentalism is much less developed. There is a duality of the nature of humans between these two images, as one comes from a place of utilizing the natural world for pleasure and profit, while the other is simply a means of survival.

It is also important to note my role, as the person behind the camera taking these photos. I have the privilege to be able to capture a moment of others candidly, while being able to return to my reality. Both photos were taken abroad in Portugal and the Dominican Republic and show the cultural, economic, and environmental disparities between the two places. I was also very intentional with the placement of the photos, as those who are marginalized rarely have the same level access to resources and support as more affluent individuals do, therefore placing them at the bottom.
This piece was designed to bring awareness to the reality of our human impacts on nature, and what a better way to do that than to create a natural creature from the litter ruining our world. I decided that I wanted to create an eye-catching sculpture to enter into my local fair for environmental awareness, so with that thought I went into the construction phase and purchased a poster to build the sculpture on, although I wish I did have a more professional design. I had limited time to create this for its original deadline, but I went to work immediately by spending hours collecting loads of trash in various areas for a range of materials to choose from for the piece. I then disinfected each item, organized by color, properly disposed of what wouldn’t be used, and got to work hot-gluing what my mind had envisioned. There truthfully wasn’t a set plan for the shape of the sculpture when I started; I just had the idea of a sea turtle in my mind and worked with the litter as puzzle pieces and slowly each item became perfect for this design. I wanted the turtle to be obviously noticeable, but I also wanted it to clearly be a random assortment of trash to emphasize the amount of waste that humans produce that is negatively affecting the animals that depend on the ecosystem we are destroying. I added the words last simply because I wanted the message to be even more clear to those who are less environmentally friendly and to hopefully sway the viewer into caring more about their actions, but I must add that I do prefer the simplicity of the art without it. In the end though, I love what this piece stands for, and I now have a desire to sculpt many different creatures from the waste coating our world; that way I can truly turn trash into treasure.

"The Reality of Humanity"
Recycled garbage and paint
(30” x 20”), 2021
Mira Marino

I have always cared about nature and our ability as humans to sustain it. Printmaking is my favorite medium to work with, and I wanted to create something meaningful and fit with the medium. I created this piece because I wanted to show how through the use of different lines and positive and negative space a picture can be created. While flowers like roses can be hearty or strong, they can also be very delicate. This piece shows a small piece of nature that we need to work together to protect and save.

"Flowers", Printmaking (5.5" x 4"), 2021
Shahana Afsar

Merging Waters is trying to tell a story of movement and transition. When I started painting this, I was occupied with thoughts of connecting past with present and dreaming for a pleasant future. Using colors that depicted life and nature, I chose slightly different shades to merge them into each other and create a confluence. Diluted acrylic paints were used with wide strokes to show roughness of life and were coupled with some smooth layers to merge into the other tone. The base design shows the previous and current times. In the beginning it was going to be just a combination of different colors, but I later decided to paint more on top; something that showed beauty, growth, hope and sustainability. The same paint with less dilution and more pointed brushes were used for the two designs on the diagonals. They are the future state which might fill the whole canvas of life in times to come.

“Merging Waters”, Acrylic Paint (16” x 20”), 2020
Vega Goorman

This piece was inspired by the tranquility of a pond. The shapes used can be representational of tadpoles, water lilys, algae, and flowing movement such natural light and water.

“Waterlife Mandala”, Pen on paper (12” x 12”), 2020
2020
Andrew McCabe

With so much of our daily food grown or processed so far from where, all while impact many around the globe, it is important to know what can be grown easily at home. Homegrown represents 3 foods that are good to grow in the Michigan climate. Not only being healthy — kale, ginger, and corn are all delicious too!

Andrew McCabe is a 18’-19’ Gibbs House Sustainability fellow studying paper engineering, chemical engineering, and applied mathematics. He enjoys woodworking and what it can offer the world as a sustainable practice.

"Homegrown", Found wood (57” x 9”), 2020
Aurora Mokris

I have noticed that, in our society, it is very easy to isolate yourself from nature. It is not out of the ordinary to spend days at a time without touching it. In this piece, I want to emphasize the connectedness between people and other Earth dwellers. It is important to remember our dependence on natural resources. It is important to remember to covet and cherish them.

“Salted Roots”, Marker and colored pencil (14” x 22”), 2020
This relates our human crisis of healthcare to the health of our planet, a topic I dwell upon quite a bit. We as a society can not figure out a comprehensive way to provide universal healthcare to our humans and we can not seem to come to a conclusion on how to save the health of our own planet either. Without the health of our planet, we as a species can not continue for much longer doing “business as usual”. Without healthcare access we can not survive the effects of climate change. Mars is shown as a sympathetic friend to earth because of the way some wealthy people assume moving to mars will help our human race continue after we desimate the planet of all its resources.

“Business as Usual”, Watercolor and pen (7” x 10”), 2020
Jacelyne Myrthil

This gif suggests that many aspects go into sustaining the environment. We have to be able to work together to create an environment that can protect both humans and non-humans. Everything we do on the Earth matters, taking the initiative to respect and love the Earth is what we need to do.

YOUR ACTIONS MATTER.

“Your Actions Matter”
Video, 2020
Kirsten Hansen

“Fruit Quartet”, Watercolor (9” x 9”), 2020
“Untitled”  
Natural dyes and fabric made using coffee, blueberries, matcha tea, red wine, and turmeric  
(45” x 45”), 2020

“Moon”  
Sea glass, fabric, thrifted frame  
(8” x 11”), 2020
This three piece installation highlight various fungi that engage in a mycorhizal partnership with plants. This partnership, like many others, is vital in ensuring the longevity of both organisms involved.

As humans, we need to learn from these fungi and adapt our behaviors to reflect a relationship that seeks out to better the many rather than the few.

“Orange Mycena”  
*Watercolor, ink, and acrylic  
(6” x 6”), 2020*

“Morel”  
*Watercolor, ink, and acrylic  
(6” x 6”), 2020*

“Fly Agaric”  
*Watercolor, ink, and acrylic  
(6” x 6”), 2020*
Biking is a good way to exercise, get around and just be apart of the world around you. Created digitally, this piece is a little snapshot of a moment in nature that is also helping nature. It illustrates an environment worth protecting and a fun way to protect it.

“Gone Biking”, Digital art (15” x 20”), 2020
My work often connects to parts of nature whether it’s just about the outdoors or about acts of human nature. The painting Crystals Among Avens is showing the connection nature has between creating something that only lasts for a short time to things that can be around for generations. Even though those things are around for different lengths of time they also both show an amount of growth in their own way of the earth going on around us without being bothered. There is a beauty in just letting things grow on their own. Nature is beautiful in many different ways like the couple I portray in this painting through the crystals that are around the top and bottom to the avens flowers that are seen in the middle.

“Crystals Among Avens”, Acrylic on canvas (36” x 24”), 2020
Rozlin Opolka

Painting is not always a very sustainable art form, so as artists we often find ourselves looking for ways to cut down on environmental impact and cost. This piece was created using repurposed wood and canvas found in the Park Trades Center. The content of the piece is loosely based on the colorful reflections one can see when oil or other various fluids leak onto concrete and mix with standing water. This is an instance that captures my fascination with the beauty of the mundane and the underlying fear of our environmental impact on something as small as a puddle in a parking lot.

“Untitled”, Watercolor on found canvas and stretchers (59” x 48”), 2020
Shaquona Espinoza

Using acrylic paints, I wanted to paint my favorite flower; the sunflower. I incorporated a dark background to represent the darkness and using the flower to resemble “the light”. Throughout life we experience times that are hard and with an overwhelming amount of darkness or bad times we start to feel hopeless. It’s important to realize and remember that with darkness there is always light. Relating that to nature, it reminds me that everything in this life is temporary. Although life might be hard in this moment, does not mean it will last. Looking at flowers, I am reminded of its beauty and its resiliency throughout the changes of weather and relating that to humans; we are both.

“The Light”, Acrylic on canvas (16” x 20”), 2020
These photos were taken to capture the intimate beauty of nature and the world around us. By capturing the gritty, small details of flowers and plants, it shows that nature has been finely structured and that even though the details are small, they complete the object. As viewers and co-habitants of nature, we need to preserve and appreciate our environment. Take a step closer to that flower and analyze it, see its varying color scheme, its curves on the petals and leaves, the colorful pistils, and any other small, yet significant details. Take a leap over that stream, listen to its quiet, yet strong current, look at the reflection of yourself in it, and see through it to the bottom, where rocks and life are abundant. Take a new outlook on your surroundings, admire nature like you never had before, because it might not be here for forever.

“All In”, Digital Photography (16” x 20”), 2019

“Bloom”, Digital Photography (16” x 20”), 2019

“Rainy Morning”, Digital Photography (16” x 20”), 2019

“Whimsy”, Digital Photography (16” x 20”), 2019
This piece was inspired by a fieldtrip I took to the Andersen Japanese Gardens in Rockford, IL, last Fall. While walking around the garden, I found this red tree that stood out to me. It was completely surrounded by green trees with a river flowing past. I chose to sketch this scene and later use watercolor paint to paint it because I wanted to capture the true beauty of nature that not everyone gets to see in the world today.

“Lost in Japan”, Watercolor and pen (12” x 9”), 2018
Shaquona Espinoza

In my art, I like to capture the simplicity in both nature and fruits using acrylic paints on canvas. Society enforces the idea that being on the go constantly is the way to go, but it is important to slow down and enjoy the little things in life. Capturing the beauty in both nature and fruits allows me to slow down and enjoy its’ simplicity.

“Fruits”
Acrylic on canvas
(16” x 16”), 2018

“Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder”
Acrylic on canvas
(16” x 16”), 2018
Stephanie Wallace

Each of these photographs resonate something within me, and I hope after explaining them, that you feel a deep connection and understanding of them too. These photographs are more than just a pretty picture, or a small cry out to save our planet, they each connect to something deeper than themselves.

For my raindrops on flowers, they represent a struggle that I have dealt with personally, and many of you may have too. These photos were captured at a specific moment where these flowers were weighted down with raindrops—the same moment I have experienced depression and anxiety. You see, the flower portrays a human (or myself in this case) and the raindrops symbolize the agonizing pain of depression and anxiety through tears. Although it seems that the flower may fall and crumble underneath the weight, the flower stands strong and defiant against the water. By seeing this occur in nature and by comparing it to my life, it proved to me that even with depression or a heavy heart, that you are strong, and truly beautiful because of your tears.

Now for my ladybug and bee, they connect to the transition from struggles to growth, and the moment where you ultimately spread your wings and take flight. Each insect is readying itself from their current state, to a new way of life. For the bee, it moves from flower to flower, pollinating and growing. At this particular flower, it is moving from the stage of fighting depression to a new flower where they will thrive. The same goes for the ladybug. The ladybug is on a certain plant currently, but is preparing to take off to a new stage in its life. Growth is evident everywhere in nature, but it is also evident in my life, and in yours. Embrace the pain, embrace it with open arms, because you will grow and rise above the hurt. May joy and peace be with you always.

“Tranquility”, Photography (16” x 20”), 2018

“Bee-tiful Morning”, Photography (16” x 20”), 2019

“Solitude”, Photography (11” x 14”), 2018

“Crawling”, Photography (16” x 20”), 2019
Stephanie Wallace

“Peace”, Photography (16” x 20”), 2019

“Agnoring Beauty”, Photography (11” x 14”), 2018

“On the Edge”, Photography (16” x 20”), 2019

“Radiating”, Photography (16” x 20”), 2019