

6

by

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My senior project is about my life as a student and the work it has led me to. It has allowed me to voice my opinions and core values that I have attained since I began my education as an artist. To best explain it in the easiest possible way, I must start from the very beginning. When I first began attending college, I had very little expectations, mainly because I wasn't even sure I wanted to be there. I started college in the first place because neither of my parents had ever graduated and they sure as hell wanted me to. So when I first enrolled, the only thing I really liked at the time was Photography. So, that's how it began, by studying Photography. After sometime my focus shifted then to Design, and finally to a mixture of the two in the Interdisciplinary program. I started off doing self-portraits while in community college, mainly because I was too shy to ask someone else. Eventually I got up the nerve to take pictures more publically, at concerts, with friends, basically anyone who was available and willing but that took time. However the summer before I transferred for the first time I was in for a bit of a surprise.

Right after I received my associates in Graphic Design, the summer of 2016 was miserable. I was having uncontrollable hives all over my body with swelling also all over my body pretty much daily. I have struggled with allergies since early childhood however these symptoms came sudden and without a trigger. After 3 months of this, I was finally diagnosed with an autoimmune disease called Chronic Idiopathic Urticaria. CIU, for short, calls for me at any given moment, with no apparent triggers, to burst into hives and swell immensely. This dampened my will and interest to create art. There used to be days that eventually turned to months of me not making my own art. During this time, it for sure affected the type of artist I am today. Whereas I felt art was more of a hobby, I feel it impacts me everyday now. I used to be more of a "I'll do that thing eventually" and now I don't miss a beat and I am willing to make art at any moment. Some productive things came out of that time though for sure, I used to spend a lot of time watching movies and I think that dramatic tone plays a role throughout my work today. My inspirations really began to come clear to me during that time as well. During that time, most things felt very dark to me, and now my work is mostly the opposite. My

major ideas come from wonder, color, drama and all the things I'd daydream about when I was feeling ill which ultimately found its way into my final project.

The people I chose to be a part of my senior project would have surprised me when I first began school, I never thought I'd meet someone for the first time and say "Hey I know we don't know each other, but I'd really like to take your picture" and that is really a big part of my growth as an artist. I wouldn't say I really worked up the nerve to work with anyone out of my immediate comfort area really till I started attending Purchase. When I transferred to Purchase, it was like no other place I had been to before. Everyone was really accepting and open and it was just like this kind of beautiful place I had never seen before. This environment definitely allowed for me to thrive and create the work I had always dreamed of. So initially, when I first heard of the senior project, I had this sort of freak out. It was excitement and overwhelming feelings all around. The idea I just couldn't really imagine was something that was all mine. I feel that a lot of the time young artists in school are constantly given everything, this is your client, this is your setting, etc. and once I realized this was something all of my own it was scary. Eventually, the ideas began to pour out. My poor senior project advisor had to listen to me change my mind about 4 or 5 times, I mainly felt overwhelmed. Sitting here, with over 50 pieces of artwork, I would have never thought I was capable.

The reason I discuss my life before the execution of my senior project is because my life is what has inspired my project in totality. I struggled a lot on what my project should be about or what I thought would come across correctly so I could really display my growth as an artist. So finally, I made a decision that the only way it could truly be personal and meaningful to me is if it was authentically me, so I decided to create a body of work that is just that. I named my senior project 6 because 6 represents the number of years I have attended college. 6 isn't really a traditional time one "should" spend in college. I've definitely had some hiccups that have made me miss my 4 year mark but that's okay because 6 also represents all of the experiences, growth, and people I have met along

the way. My senior project pays homage to the past 6 years. 6 is my way of saying thank you to an experience that has shaped who I am. These portraits to me, represent identity, diversity, strength, vulnerability and all these things I hope to be as an artist. I want someone to see my work and just have that wow moment and to be amazed is truly a rewarding thing.

I felt identity was a strong motivator for this project because it is something so crucial to life, especially at Purchase. Identity is something I struggled with, as many artists do at one point or another. In each of the shoots I made sure to have a connection between my subjects and myself. Rather than keeping it strictly point and shoot, we had conversation, we laughed, we spoke about things that scared us, made us happy and I believe that closeness was portrayed in my work. Each shoot I did, I tried to make it as individualized as possible, because no one person is the same and my shoots shouldn't be either. My subjects were all very different people, some were purchase students, others were longtime friends, some I was just meeting for the first time. I think it is so important to recognize human connection in the people around us. Diversity plays a large part in my work because I feel learning and seeing others that are different from us, allows us as human beings to understand different viewpoints within the world we inhabit. Strength and vulnerability were hand in hand throughout my works in this project. I wanted to show that these two things do not mean hiding yourself to appear strong, or that being vulnerable makes someone weak. To be vulnerable is to be strong in my eyes. So, 6 is truly an embodiment of all my motivations and morals as a creator and what does that mean when expressed through photography?

As far as the physical application of my senior project, initially I wanted to portray all of my portraits as larger than life prints. The idea behind having my works larger than life was to create a place where anything just felt possible, where people were different and yet maintained a sense of togetherness. However due to Covid-19, I was unable to fully realize this dream I had for my work. I admit, I had a bit of a difficult time not being able

to do so. Eventually, I expressed my frustrations to my senior project advisor and he suggested imitating my original idea. So for my final piece of work I decided to stick true to my roots and set up a virtual space where I could imagine my work being displayed. By doing so, this has helped me truly visualize the volume and hard work I've put into this project. Also, seeing these works side by side really has made me feel that my themes of identity, diversity, strength and vulnerability shine through. When I see the volume of work, the colors, the concepts, it feels almost like home to me. Seeing all of my work that I've been striving towards since I've come to a realization of my goal as an artist makes this feel special. These works are me, they are vibrant, they talk to you, they allow you to really recognize someone. These works embody the core values I've manifested since becoming an artist 6 years ago, they allow me to speak through them to the viewer on the other side. Creating 6 has allowed me to become the artist I've always wanted to be.

[Link to 6](#)

[Link to Design Material & Mock-ups](#)