

Through the Ages

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Submitted to the Printmaking Department Board of Study

School of Art + Design

In partial fulfilment of the requirements

For the degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts

Purchase College State University of New York

May 2024

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When figuring out the theme for my project, I was thinking of ideas that could be great for it, either working with either mythology or Irish folklore. The theme I finally chose was one of the stories from my childhood that my grandmother wrote back when my mom was a kid. One of these stories I was always told, was the tale of a fairy named Lily-Belle. It did, however, need a bit of work before it could be unveiled in my thesis.

Over the fall semester I spent a great deal of time editing the story with my Mom since her connection with the story was much stronger than mine. At first it was difficult to begin because we couldn't find a written copy of it. When we did find her written copy, we made sure to keep the story as it was and made a second copy that we can make adjustments too. While re-writing the story, I wanted to pull my late father into the mix and took inspiration from a story he used to read to me. Re-reading the story, there were many similarities between "*If I Only Had a Green Nose*" and "*Lily-Belle*." Making the character design for this tiny fairy was no easy feat for me. I had very little to work with, but in the end, I figured out that she was a small fairy, with long blonde hair that made her own clothes from flower petals.

To sum the story up as I did with the prints, I began with the main character, Lily-Belle. She is sitting on a bed of grass surrounded by a ring of fireflies. This is how the main protagonist, Gracie, found her in her garden one evening. The next piece takes place in the garden sometime later, when Lily-Belle gives Gracie a choice to either become a fairy like her or stay human. For her to become a fairy, she would need to drink an elixir found in a lily. Before Gracie could drink this potion, Lily-Belle gave her a warning. She must never go out into the sun, or she will become a drop of dew. Gracie decides to stay human because of her love for her family and not wanting to be away from them for the rest of her life.

Sometime after this, Gracie watches Lily-Belle riding her dragonfly, Draggie. As she's watching her, her sister, Julie, came in the room and asked what she was doing. Of course, Gracie answered that she was watching Lily-Belle, and Julie began to call her sister, "crazy and stupid." Depressed, Gracie sat on the windowsill and said that she wasn't crazy. Lily-Belle flew up to greet her, but Gracie was ignoring her calls because she didn't want to believe in her anymore. Finally, she got so mad at Lily-Belle's incessant calling that she slammed the window on the poor fairy. Her wings got stuck in the window and drops of dew could be seen where the little fairy once was.

Years went by and Gracie still cried over the loss of her friend. Eventually she got married and had a daughter named Molly. Molly was keeping a secret from her mother. On the night of Gracie's birthday, Molly said that she had a surprise for her. She would have to wait till everyone was asleep to get her surprise. Reluctantly, Gracie agreed to her daughter's terms. When the time came, they snuck downstairs and Molly said for her to open her hand and get ready for her birthday surprise. To her amazement, up flew the little fairy she never forgot! Lily-Belle was alright after all and grew back a beautiful set of wings that shone in the moonlight. They both cried tears of joy and danced the night away just as she used to when she was little.

As I said earlier, this story was a favorite part of my childhood and my mother's as well. I fell in love with the prints as I was making them and even though they gave me trouble or problems would pop up, the work came out fantastic. The work had drastic shifts in style of drawing, where the series takes a serious shift in perspective. The artwork become more realistic instead of cartoony. This is shown through the copperplate etching in which it becomes darker and pulls the focus from 1<sup>st</sup> person to 3<sup>rd</sup> person.

Choosing the moments from the story to highlight was another challenge. The ones I did choose however, were some of the key moments in the tale that keep the series flowing. For instance, when she is called crazy by her sister and when she slams the window down on the poor fairy and thinking that she crushed her. This suite of prints was made with two printmaking processes, stone lithography and copperplate etching.

Growing up, I loved mythology as well as fairytales. Many stories from Greek mythology drew my attention. Gods, goddesses, heroes, and Demi gods were always alluring stories. While in community college I read “The Odyssey” and it rekindled my interest again, along with “Dante’s Inferno”, which also touches on Greek mythological characters. Dante is walking through the many rings of the Underworld with his guide Virgil. As the pair descends into Hell, they cross into the 7<sup>th</sup> ring. The pair stumble across a group of people, including Chiron, a centaur who nurtured Achilles. He lived a life of wrath and was condemned to the 7<sup>th</sup> circle. Virgil said, “The middle one (eyes fixed upon his chest) is Chiron the Great. He nurtured Achilles. Polus, who lived so full a life of wrath, is third.”

Virgil was Dante’s guiding light, which in turn I wanted to give to Gracie. Lily-Belle became a source of imagination to Gracie, but when she thought she “killed” the fairy, that light was gone. Over the years she felt immense grief and guilt over the loss of her friend. The guilt she had over the slamming of the window is like the 7<sup>th</sup> ring because she thought she committed an act against nature. When she found out through her daughter that Lily-Belle was alive, her imagination was sparked again.

From the amazing story of the Inferno, I then turned to Homer’s Odyssey. This is the story of Odysseus. Odysseus meets many gods and goddesses most of whom have it out for him,

though a few seek to help him in the long run. The two main gods that help him are Aeolus and Circe. Aeolus gives Odysseus a magic bag that contains all the winds except the west wind so it could blow Odysseus' crew home to Ithaca. Aeolus warned him to keep the bag closed, otherwise they will be released all at once and he will never see home again. Odysseus took this to heart and kept a close watch on the bag for nine days without sleep. His crew were also watching the bag thinking it was full of treasure.

To satisfy their curiosity, once Odysseus was asleep they slashed it open, releasing the winds. They were blown back to Aeolus' domain, and he cursed at them for mistreating his gift of the bag. "Away from my island- fast- most cursed man alive! It's a crime to host a man or speed him on his way when the blessed deathless gods despise him so. Crawling back like this- it proves the immortals hate you! Out- get out" Aeolus cried.

They were then put off course and rowed without knowledge to the island of Aeaea, the home of Circe. Circe is untrusting of men and sees them as swine. This is where my favorite part of the new musical about the Odyssey differs from the actual Epic. Circe aims to help Odysseus evade Poseidon but in the Epic, Zeus is the real mastermind behind the King of Ithaca's downfall. She offers to help Odysseus after he defeats her with the power of Moly, which is another name for the snowdrop plant. This plant gives the user extreme power for a moment, and he used it to defeat her, but she had other plans. She wound up trying to seduce him and he refused her advances, staying faithful to his wife. Seeing his loyalty, she offers him a way to escape Poseidon, using the underworld as a bridge to get back to Ithaca. Circe sings, "I know of a brilliant prophet / Problem is this prophet is dead / I can't get you home / but I'll get you to the underworld instead."

These three stories inspired me to create Lily-Belle as an enchantress when she uses her magic to create a potion from a lily that could grant Gracie the power to be a fairy. Tying Circe into the artwork was easy because she is also known to cultivate her own herbs used in the spells she is known for. This enchanting Greek goddess of sorcery has many tricks up her sleeve, which I in turn I gave to Lily-Belle. But these weren't the only stories I pulled inspiration from.

Folklore also ties into my artwork. Ever since I heard of the story of "The Banshee" from my Irish grandmother years ago, I wanted to learn about other Irish folktales. I recently discovered a book that contains many of the stories, some of which include The Banshee, Leprechauns and even changelings, which are evil, Fae-like creatures which replace human children with that of their own. These tales and countless others keep inspiring my artwork.

Mythology and folklore are just 2 sources of inspiration. Music is a great source of inspiration too. Songs will get stuck in my head, and I usually can't get them out until I draw something inspired by it. Last semester was such an instance. I created a drawing for a song I fell in love with and from that one drawing an entire body of work was born. I used the song "Castles Crumbling" by Taylor Swift and Hayley Williams, to create a set of 5 pieces of etching work and it followed the flow of the song. This vault track had such an imagery-driven narrative that gave me a lot to work from.

This song shows how Taylor dealt with her perception of a moment in her life where she thought her castle (her fame) was being trashed or crumbling down. I wanted to convey a different story with this narrative but using a character from my childhood and have her story go from such a high point in the beginning to losing her mind and her kingdom. "I don't know how it could've ended this way / Smoke billows from my ships in the harbor." This one line says

what the protagonist is feeling and represents the meaning of the song well. I chose symbols and flowers that could represent both her and the emotions this character could be feeling. Orchids to symbolize royalty, Magnolias to embody purity and sweetness. The last flower I chose to incorporate was the Hydrangea, which while doing research for the character design is a favorite of Taylor's herself along with my Mom's. The series also had another element added to it. I tied in symbols to the pieces that drew inspiration from her other 10 albums. I mainly used the album, "*folklore*" by Taylor Swift. This series gave me the drive and courage to create my grandmothers story.

My greatest inspiration is the one that ties all my artwork together. Over the years I've delved into many different stories and tales but the thing that keeps me driven to make art is my friends and family. Pieces that aren't inspired by folklore or music, are usually about them. When creating a piece inspired by a loved one, I choose something that reflects them. It could be their favorite bird, an animal they raised, or an actual depiction of them in a funny pose. This helps me keep the work geared to that person. I made a piece dedicated to my grandmother which had her favorite flower, the yellow rose as the focal point.

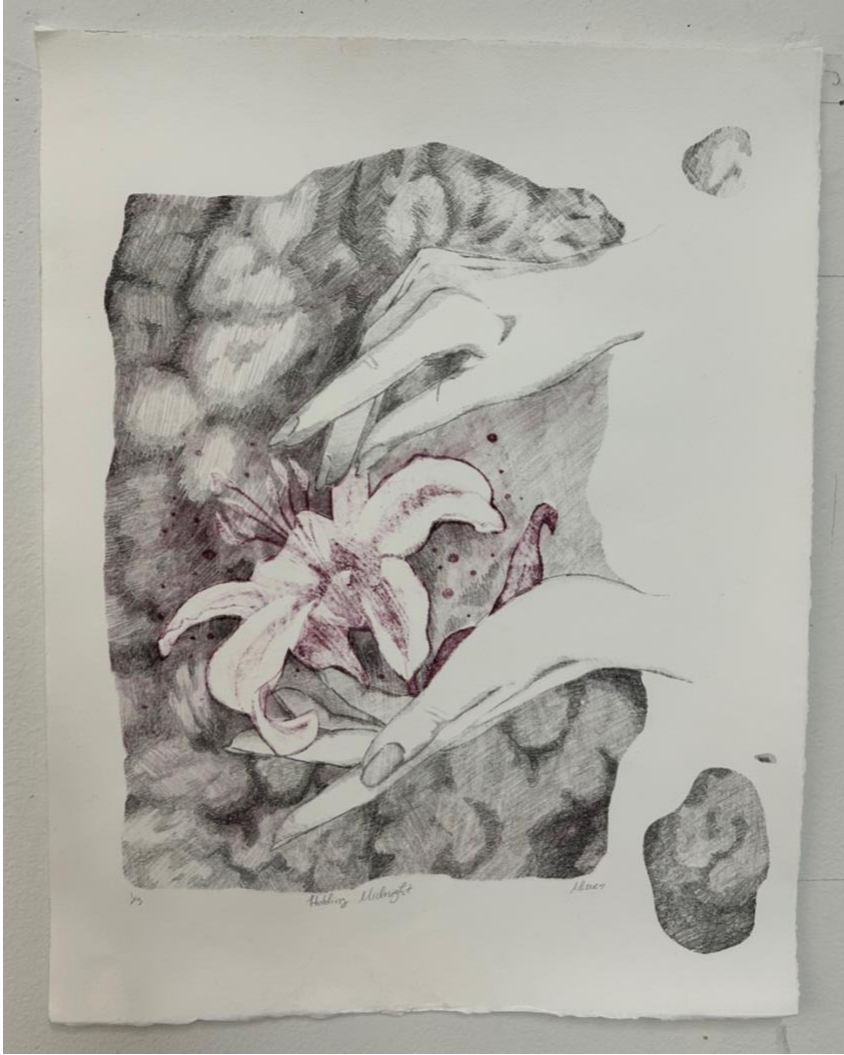
The story of Lily-Belle holds many memories of my time with my grandmother when she was still alive. When recreating this work in my own style I made sure I didn't deviate too much from her vision and design. She wrote this story when my mom was little and when planning my senior thesis, we decided it would be a full circle moment to translate this story into prints. Lily-Belle was my favorite series in all the bodies of work I did at Purchase. This series also helped me find more ways to think about folklore because this series was a folktale my grandmother came up with. One in which I will pass down to my little cousins and the future

generations in my family to come. Like most folktales they change with time, and I'm sure this story through the ages will be no different.



“Lily-Belle”, 4/3/2024, stone lithography, 18” x 15”

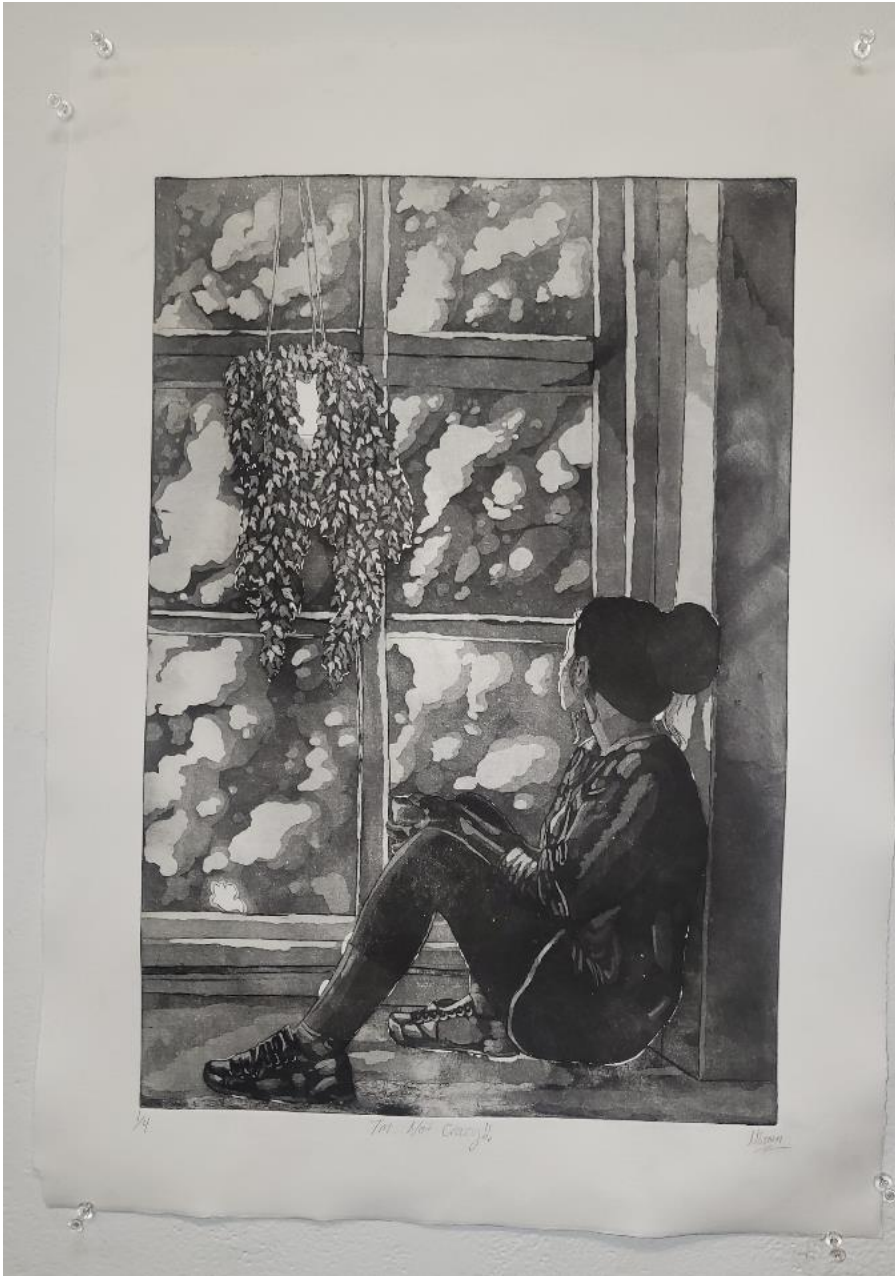




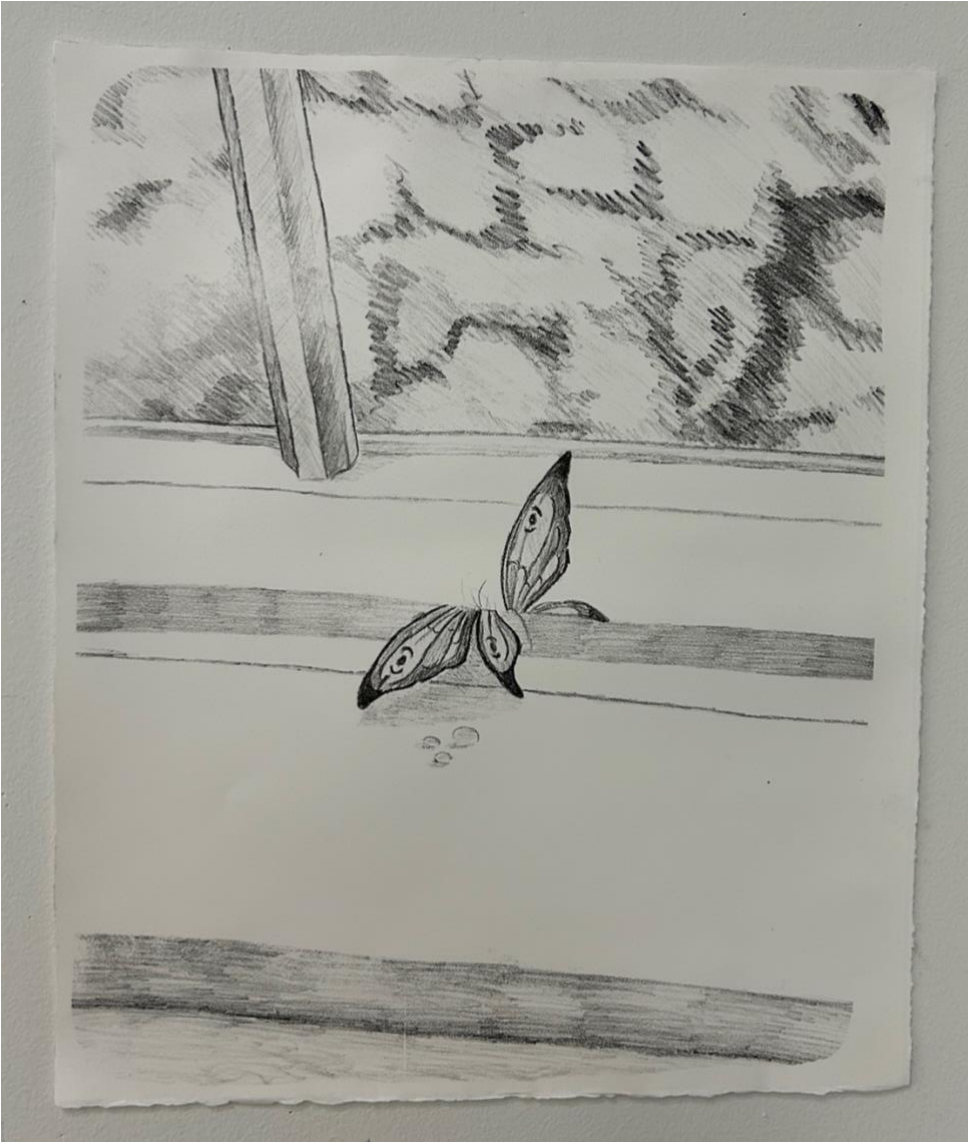
“Holding Midnight”, 2/24/2024, stone lithography, 18” x 15”



“Riding Under The Moonlight”, 4/25/2024, copperplate etching, 13” x 7”



“I’m Not Crazy!” 5/1/2024, copperplate etching, 13” x 18”



“I’m Not Crazy!” 4/25/2024, stone lithography, 15” x 18”



“Rekindled Friendship” 5/1//2024, stone lithography, 15” x 18”



“A Golden Age” 12/2023, copperplate etching, 8” x 10”



“Hope For A Dynasty” 12/2023, copperplate etching, 6” x 6”



“Power Went to My Head” 4/25/2024, copperplate etching, 13” x 15”

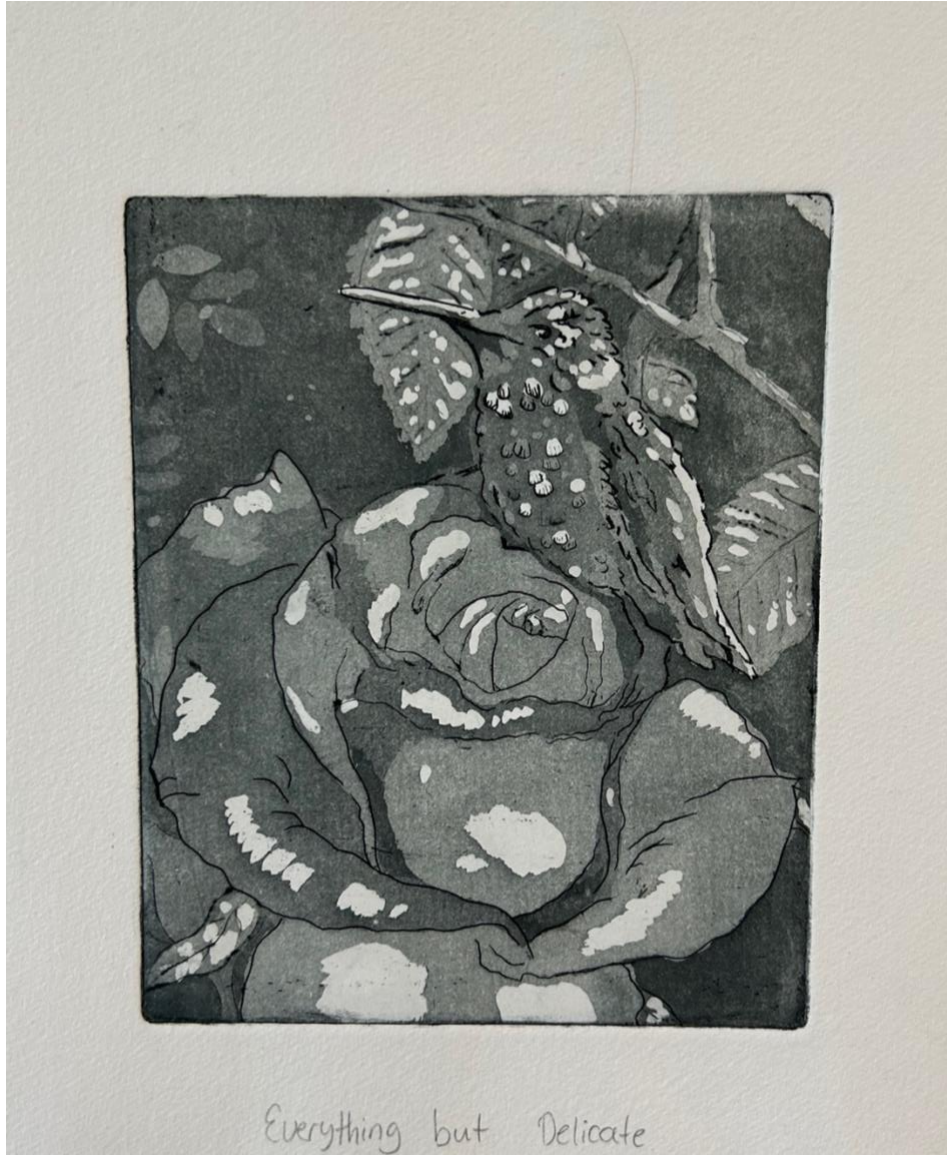


“Bridges Burning” 12/2023, copperplate etching, 8” x 8”



“Castles Crumbling” 12/2023, copperplate etching, 21” x 17”





“Everything but Delicate” 3/2023, copperplate etching, 6” x 15” (detail shot)

## Works Cited Page

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