How are you?

by

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Master of Fine Arts Thesis: Metal

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100 - Word Artist Statement

Do you feel like pins are slowly being shoved into your heart?

Balloons face what kind of challenges? Can you soar forever?

Are you a goldfish locked in a cycle of overthinking that's making your brain bigger?

Welcome to PANDEMIC flight COVID-19. Please have a negative test result. Enjoy your flight to quarantine.

Don't bother, the jail cell view is gorgeous!

How are you doing today?

These objects serve as metaphors for social concerns and themes of identity, mental health, and human connection. In uncertain and changing times, these works provoke curiosity and express humor to find comfort and hope.
How are you?

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How are you doing today?

By combining intuition and exploration, I delve into themes of identity, mental health, and relationships, offering a humorous and satirical framework that provides a window of hope for the challenges and experiences of growing up in a rapidly changing society. This framework proposes opportunities for healing and catharsis.

Over time, aspects of our society, community, and lives are evolving and changing. It can be something small—a single phone call, a heated argument, a move. Or something bigger like a graduation, a new technology, a disaster. Sometimes changes happen slowly, while other times they happen quickly in response to new ideas or events. These changes can happen for many reasons, such as societal advancements, cultural shifts, technological breakthroughs, environmental concerns, or even personal growth and introspection.

In my lifetime, I have gone through countless transformations that have shaped who I am today. I went from being the youngest child in my family, until recently someone began call me Aunt. I experienced the loss of loved ones while far away from home. It started with me
simply telling people I was from Siming District, then Xiamen City, then Fujian Province; me, becoming Chinese, Asian, and finally a resident alien. I became like a snowball rolling down a slope, getting bigger and bigger in the ski resort of "ordinary people." Just as you grow and change as you age, our society also grows and changes in different ways.

Over the past five years, since 2018, many things have happened. First, the escalating trade dispute between China and the United States, along with fluctuations in currency exchange rates and rising tariffs, has added to the financial pressure on international students. The tense political situation has not only made it more difficult for students to apply for and extend visas, but it also fuels anxiety as is expressed and increasingly evident on social media and video-sharing platforms. Then, protests sparked by racial discrimination and police brutality; the deteriorating political relationship between China Mainland and Hong Kong, led to the anti-extradition bill protests in Hong Kong; the Beirut port explosion; add to this the Taliban's return to power, which stirred up patriotism, political stances, and subtle flows within small groups. Suddenly, the COVID-19 pandemic erupted in China and spread globally, and this was not the end of it. Floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, forest fires, and climate change have intertwined different natural forces, causing our homes to fall into chaos and helplessness. A new era of AI emerged after these disasters calmed down for a brief period. While we marveled at the unprecedented convenience provided by AI technology and the digital transformation of various industries, the unemployment rate caused by AI technology and the unfairness caused by data and algorithms also kept growing.
In times of COVID-19, getting a flight back to China was nearly impossible due to testing, quarantine, and exorbitant ticket prices. As a response, I used 3D printing to make an airplane that is floating in the air and surrounded by a cloud of COVID testing swabs. It is rebellious; it is hopeful; it is stuck on the tarmac: we are all waiting. We imagine once again soaring through the sky, either to another place or just returning home.

Pins are pushed one by one, slowly, into the injured heart. Adhesive bandages, symbolizing healing and repair, play a vital role in the physical composition of the entire artwork. I present a resilient, battle-scarred heart standing tall, even as the very bandages meant to mend it are pierced by the sharp pins.
The emotions generated by these world events are complex and varied, including anxiety, unease, fear, anger, disappointment, exhaustion, and even a sense of helplessness. We may feel worried and uneasy because we do not know what will happen next. We may also feel helpless and powerless because these things seem to be beyond our control. Those emotions linger, more or less, in the heart, leaving wounds.

But how is it possible that life's journey would remain unchanged? Isn't it challenging, from sticking out as a fertilized egg to the first cry of a newborn? Suffering is a part of life, but it's not anything we can't endure because it only makes us stronger.

Through my creative research, I aim to investigate how social change can cause suffering and negative emotion, as well as how transitions can impact various aspects of our lives, including relationships, jobs, living situations, and societal systems.

I have been greatly inspired by several artists. David Bielander creates astounding works of art by deftly fusing the familiarity of common materials with whimsical abstraction. His investigations cover topics like identity, belonging, discord, outside perception, and the reactions they elicit. I have researched work by Susie Ganch, Lisa Walker, and Asagi Maeda and the distinctive approaches to material utilization and their critical views on societal and cultural topics, such as consumerism and craftsmanship, through in-depth study of their works and practices. I have developed a profound understanding of the depth and significance of their artistic practices through the analytical and critical interpretation of specific artworks, recognizing how they imaginatively employ materials to express their insights on the environment, consumer society, aesthetics, and cultural perspectives.
Artist Seyo Cizmic shows the comedy and tragedy of life in an outrageous way as a sharp and persistent observer of reality. By highlighting the absurdity found in commonplace items and scenarios, he encourages reflection on important issues pertaining to the state of the modern human condition. With a sense of humor and kindness, Seyo examines the frequently silly and useless ideas, feelings, and behaviors we experience in our interactions with ourselves and others.

By combining a range of curious materials and symbols, I create objects and jewelry that offer a sense of imagination and humor, providing comfort and hope during uncertain and changing times. Humor is also believed to have a therapeutic effect, helping people to alleviate stress and trauma.¹ Surprise, weirdness, and uniqueness serve as ingredients to add humor to works of art, making them more playful and approachable and resonating with viewers. By combining materials with metals or transforming found objects into metal and utilizing the interplay of quality, color, and shape, I add surprise, strangeness, and uniqueness as seasoning my artistic works, infusing the three-dimensional objects with a quietly dark sense of humor. On the surface the works seem playful and approachable, resonating with the audience, yet upon closer inspection the collection reveals deeper narratives.

Voltaire is widely regarded as an optimist, and his protagonist, Candide, in the novel “Candide”², remains optimistic despite facing numerous hardships because he believes this world is the best one created by God. I identify with the choice of pursuing happiness and focusing on personal well-being, which aligns with Voltaire's standpoint. Through

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imagination and humor, my work serves as a guiding light, illuminating the path to productive and positive engagement with the challenges of life. It acts as a source of inspiration and resilience, infusing joy and laughter into the face of adversity, and encouraging a transformative outlook on the world around us.

A balloon is perhaps an apt metaphor for our modern circumstance. It can be seen as a fragile and easily damaged object. Because of its transparency and lightness, it can also be seen as a symbol of purity and happiness. Balloons can also symbolize dreams, hopes, and pursuits, as they can float up to the sky but are also temporary and can become damaged and fall back to the ground.

Six colorful balloons are suspended by a pin, like a dream that yearns to take flight yet is trapped on the ground. The balloons, no longer dancing and joyful as they once were, are low-hanging. Life can be like this: suspenseful, at times full of colorful joy and at other times burdened with heavy pressure and difficulties.

The transparent balloon has been pierced by an arrow. It is a metaphor for a magnificent dream burst by the harsh
realities of life. The balloon proclaims, "Hey, look at me! I'm a symbol of optimism and aspiration!" while the arrow responds, "Not so fast, buddy. Life is going to poke some holes in your plans!" This is like preparing for an important presentation only to have your computer crash, realizing that all your efforts may go down the drain due to unforeseen circumstances.

It can feel like the arrows of reality are puncturing a hopeful and ambitious balloon for those who are working to realize their dreams when life throws them unexpected obstacles. From a lighter perspective, perhaps this necklace is telling us not to take ourselves too seriously. While life can be tough, it is also full of joy and laughter. Just as the balloon and arrow can coexist on the necklace, humor and seriousness can coexist in our lives.
When my friend and I talked about anxiety in different situations, I imagined a fragile balloon surrounded by sharp points. Even though there was danger all around, the balloon was still getting bigger. This imagery shows the tension between our personal desires and the outside pressures and social norms that try to limit them, as well as the sacrifices and balance for which we must strive to find our place in this complicated world. Using 3D printing and electroforming techniques, I have created these circular frames adorned with spikes. I infuse my breath into balloons and then place them inside these perilous circles. The balloons carry the risk of being punctured, and as time passes, they shrink, gradually, slowly, lying on the ground like lifeless bodies. When we think too much, we often get stuck in a vortex from which we can't escape and find it hard to break free. In my artwork, a realistic goldfish appears to be caught in a caught in a dense cloud or bubble, representing the psychological state that many people in contemporary society go through. Even when they are aware of how
to get out of a predicament, they still find it difficult to take the initial step because they are trapped in a bubble of overthinking and unable to escape. This circumstance is not unique, though, as every one of us deals with different difficulties and psychological barriers.

At the same time, my art also shows how worried I am about the way we live now. We are caught up in a massive system like cogs in a machine, performing the same tasks repeatedly, just like factory workers in China and around the world. People lose meaning and a sense of self when they do this kind of mechanical work, and their lives become like those of machines. People don't seem to be thinking about or feeling people in this kind of setting. Instead, they seem like silent tools and symbols. This way of working is blind and dehumanizing, which makes life boring, lacking in inspiration and imagination, and makes it
hard to feel the beauty of life. As David Graeber\textsuperscript{3} said, "Huge swathes of people spend their days performing tasks they secretly believe do not really need to be performed. The moral and spiritual damage that comes from this situation is profound. It is a scar across our collective soul."

Through the creation of molds, wax models, and electroplating techniques, I have constructed this bubble wrap apartment, with its inhabitants cast in 3D-printed form. This artwork captures an ordinary day, where each tenant embodies different life states and emotions. Some work from home, others admire their beauty in the mirror after a refreshing shower. Some enjoy the company of their pets, while others celebrate birthdays with friends. Some have just moved in and are unpacking their belongings, while some peek through curtains, observing the outside world, and a few silently weep within the confines of their

\textit{How are you doing today?}, copper, sterling silver, 2023

homes. This piece delicately portrays the everyday lives of diverse individuals, showcasing the ordinariness and diversity of life, as well as the emotions and inner worlds that lie behind each person's facade.

In my graduation exhibition, a green hue surrounds my objects, creating a serene and introspective atmosphere. Each artwork carries my emotions and contemplations, presented in unique forms and materials that establish an unspoken connection with the audience. Varying table heights create different viewing angles, allowing spectators to appreciate and interpret my creations in multiple ways.

The presence of white dashed lines acts as a guiding thread, seemingly leading the audience into my artistic world. It traverses the entire exhibition area, connecting different works and viewing perspectives, forming a cyclical path symbolizing the journey and trajectory of life. It allows viewers to follow this thread and experience my creations, while provoking contemplation of their own life experiences and personal paths.

While driving on highways, I often feel the flow of time and the freedom of my thoughts. The scenery on the highway swiftly passes before my eyes as I journey towards an unknown destination. Such experiences have sparked creative inspiration deep within me and have become significant moments for contemplating life and art.

Viewers may find resonance and inspiration from the artworks, prompting them to contemplate their own relationships with interpersonal connections, work, life circumstances, and social systems. Through this exhibition, I can feel the infectious power of humor and irony as viewers discover them within my works, finding characters that resemble
themselves. Each person possesses a unique story, but through universal signs and metaphors this exhibition becomes a platform for our encounter and exchange.

You are not alone.
Bibliography


Image List

1  Installation View

2  Installation View

3  PANDEMIC fight COVID-19
   Steel, photopolymer, swabs, acrylic
   6.5” x 12” x 5.0”

4  We came, we left
   Sterling silver, aluminum, brass, copper
   3.5” x 1.25” x 0.08”

5  On the way out but trapped in my thoughts
   Aluminum, photopolymer, acrylic
   6.5” x 8.0” x 5.0”

6  Talking the Talk, Locking the Lock
   Aluminum, sterling silver, acrylic
   15” x 6.0” x 0.3”

7  Slipped past, and escaped
   Copper, photopolymer, balloon
   12” x 20” x 6.0”

8  Ouch!
   Sterling silver, photopolymer, thread
   16” x 1.5” x 1.0”

9  How are you doing today?
Copper, sterling silver

5.5” x 5.0” x 6.0”

10 Nice View

Copper, Sterling silver, Pumice stone, steel

4.0” x 0.25” x 1.75”

11 Pinful

Sterling silver, photopolymer, acrylic, pins

2.50” x 4.25” x 4.75”
Images of exhibition and individual works
PANDEMIC fight COVID-19, steel, photopolymer, swabs, acrylic, 2022

PANDEMIC fight COVID-19 (detail), steel, photopolymer, swabs, acrylic, 2022
We came, we left, sterling silver, aluminum, brass, copper, 2023

We came, we left (detail), sterling silver, aluminum, brass, copper, 2023
On the way out but trapped in my thoughts, aluminum, photopolymer, acrylic, 2022

On the way out but trapped in my thoughts (detail), aluminum, photopolymer, acrylic, 2022
Talking the Talk, Locking the Lock, aluminum, sterling silver, acrylic, 2023

Slipped past, and escaped, copper, photopolymer, balloon, 2023
Slipped past, and escaped (detail), copper, photopolymer, balloon, 2023

Ouch!, sterling silver, photopolymer, thread, 2022
Ouch! (detail), sterling silver, photopolymer, thread, 2022

How are you doing today?, copper, sterling silver, 2023
How are you doing today? (detail), copper, sterling silver, 2023
Nice View, copper, Sterling silver, Pumice stone, steel, 2023

Nice View (detail), copper, Sterling silver, Pumice stone, steel, 2023
*Pinful*, sterling silver, photopolymer, acrylic, pins, 2023

*Pinful* (back), sterling silver, photopolymer, acrylic, pins, 2023
Resume

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EDUCATION
2023 Master of Fine Arts: Metal
State University of New York At New Paltz, New York, NY
2020 Bachelor of Fine Arts: Metals/Jewelry/CAD-CAM
Tyler School of Art and Architecture, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA
2017 Associate of Arts: Jewelry Design Program
Seattle College, Seattle, WA
2020 Applied Jewelry Professional
Gemological Institute of America (GIA), New York, NY

WORK EXPERIENCE
2022 Graduate Student Assistant
SUNY New Paltz, New Paltz, NY
Assist technician to maintain and organize metal studio
2021 Jeweler / Designer / Studio Assistant
Marie June Jewelry, Philadelphia, PA
Assist in all areas of running the jewelry studio; Use software to model and design jewelry;
Production prep with polishing and finishing; Photography and editing; Expediting inventory;
Supply and stock management
2021 Studio Assistant
ORDINARY O, Philadelphia, PA
Construction and finishing of jewelry components; General operations assistance; Design
ideation; Photography; Expediting inventory
2020 Jewelry/CAD Assistant and Associate Designer
JOHN BARTON COMPANY, Philadelphia, PA
Design ideation; Develop 2D designs into the 3D models and rendering
2021 Studio Assistant
ORDINARY O, Philadelphia, PA
Construction and finishing of jewelry components; General operations assistance; Design
ideation; Photography; Expediting inventory
2020 Jewelry/CAD Assistant and Associate Designer
JOHN BARTON COMPANY, Philadelphia, PA
Design ideation; Develop 2D designs into the 3D models and rendering
2014 Sales Associate
HONGLONG AUTO CO., LTD, Xiamen, Fujian

SKILLS
• Casting
• Polishing & Finishing
• Design Software
• Hand Fabrications
• Production Design
• Rhinoceros / ZBrush / Meshmixer / Keyshot
• Metalsmithing
• 3D Printing
• Adobe Creative Suite
• Wax Carving & Stone Setting
• MS Office Suite
• Prototyping & Model Making

AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS
2023 David and Sara Walton Metal Thesis Support Fund, State University of New York at New Paltz
2022 Research & Creative Project Award, State University of New York at New Paltz
2021 MFA Scholarship, State University of New York at New Paltz
2016 The Third Prize Award, North Seattle College Student Art Exhibition, North Seattle College

EXHIBITIONS & PUBLISH
2022 Anonymous Brooklyn, Brooklyn Metal Works, Brooklyn, NY
2022 Meandering, New York City Jewelry Week, Brooklyn, NY
2022 Graduate Office Show, SUNY New Paltz, New Paltz, NY
2022 "Issues #3." Assembly Art Journal, Assembly Art Journal
2021 Meltdowns + Mixups, New York City Jewelry Week, Virtual
2020 The Tyler Metals BFA Exhibition, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA
2020 Emotion in Hands, Tyler School Of Art And Architecture, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA
2018 President’s Case Student Showcase, North Seattle College, Seattle, WA
2017 Just the Beginning, North Seattle College, Seattle, WA
2017 2016-2017 North Seattle College Student Art Exhibition, North Seattle College, Seattle, WA