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Artist Statement and Research

SMP in Studio Art 2017

Lost and Found

When I started this project, I had a clear idea that it would be based on nostalgia. This idea came from events that were happening around me. Pokémon Go is an app for the phone that came out during the summer of 2016. Everyone was playing it and rediscovering their love for these creatures. This app increased my desire to this topic. My idea for the SMP project started when I saw posts of people reminiscing about the past on Tumblr, a social media website. While the idea this topic came effortlessly to me, I didn't know how I was going to represent the nostalgia. It wasn't until the SMP marathon, twenty artworks in three weeks, that the idea of using still lives of toys appeared. I used toys because they are a constant object in many people's childhoods. I have many items from my past that I still keep and cherish. To help me have a better understanding on the subject of still life, I looked at the artists: Jan Davids De Heem, Claude Monet, Edouard Manet, Odilon Redon and Audrey Flack. Each artist showed me how to use still life and new ways to look at it. I am creating these artworks with acrylic paint on wood panels. Acrylic paint is a material that I was familiar with, but I learned so much more about as the year progressed. I have found that I enjoy to work on wood panel because of the smooth surface. I named this series Lost and Found because of the memories that were lost before this process and are now found. There were so many forgotten items and memories that I have found while creating this project. I am reproducing my toys from direct observation to show my feelings about my childhood and give the viewer a chance to get a glimpse at theirs.

Still life is a genre of painting that has been used throughout time by many different artists. It is used to capture everyday objects in a moment in which they can convey a different meaning. Still life paintings show off everyday objects. My toys were once everyday objects in my life. They were items I used multiple times a week. This idea of the moment in time, I learned about while studying Claude Monet. Monet created series of artworks with the same subject and position. The difference in the works was the lighting to which showed the time or the moment in time he created the work (Tucker, Paul Hayes pg 1-3). My work explores the moments in the past. It took me awhile to discover a way to use still life to convey a message or thought. I have always created works that have no message or no reason behind it besides that I wanted to paint that subject. I couldn't continue to work like this if I wanted to go further into my art career. I first thought it would be enough to just see the item, and the memories would come with them, like it sometimes did to me. It was pointed out to me that wouldn't suffice, so I decided to try my hand at symbolism. In the fall, I tried to incorporate symbolism as a way to show how toys are forgotten or 'dead'. It didn't work in the way that I was hoping because I didn't fully understand symbolism. I researched Jan Davids De Heem, who was known for his Vanitas and flower still life paintings (Slive, Seymour, and Jakob Rosenberg pg 283). He often used symbolism for messages about life and death. I say this because of the multiple items in his still life that refer to the shortage of life. I studied him mainly for his use of symbolism and to better understand it. While I did find symbolism to be interesting, I realized that I wasn't using it correctly by the end of the fall semester. Despite the setback, those works did tell a story about the objects. I began to run with the idea that these objects have stories to tell about the memories that they hold inside of them. I chose to use still life as a way to present my childhood through my toys because they were everyday objects and I think about a moment in time when I see them.

Nostalgia is different for everyone, but at the same time it's the same. It's about longing or looking back to the past. I experience nostalgia as I look back at my childhood with fondness. Childhood is the shortest period of time during a person's life and it is also the most impactful. I have fond memories of my childhood that mostly come from my toys. I often find myself thinking back to these memories as a form of escape. Escape from the outside world and away from problems I am not ready to face. I find this feeling similar to when I play my Gameboy or when I paint. When I paint, I ignore the world around me and focus on the details I paint to copy the object I see. It's almost the same when I play games on my Gameboy. I get immersed into the story or journey that the game has set for me, so I forget everything else. This is the main reason I hold onto my memories and childhood so tight. To surround myself in a time where I had no worries or responsibilities. No scary thoughts about where my life is heading. This escape of the outside world is like the light in the dark. When I start to feel down or stressed, I tend to distract myself to bring my mood up. Edouard Manet experienced something similar. In his last flower still life paintings, the viewer is shown the brightness the flowers made him feel during his final weeks of living. During his darkest time, the flowers from his friends and family brighten his day and mood (Gordon, Robert, and Andrew Forge pg. 13). Manet's still life piece called *The Hare* is a painting of a dead rabbit that is hung upside-down next to a window. The showing of the dead rabbit is dramatic because of the way that it is shown like a trophy (Mauner, George L., and Henri Loyrette pg. 142). During this time Manet's illness caused him pain in his legs (Mauner, George L., and Henri Loyrette pg. 142). This hare is hung by his hind legs, which could represent Manet's poor leg situation. This piece is similar to my piece called *Replacement*. This artwork of mine is of two stuffed animal rabbits. One is laying on the side and is torn up. The other is in front and looks brand new. I like to image that the new bunny "killed" the old

bunny and replaced him as the favorite. I see these pieces as being similar because of the way that the subject of the paintings should be “alive” but is shown through “death”. They are also shown like trophies from the hunt to the viewer. They both might have a meaning that things don’t last forever. Which is shown through the life of the hare in Manet’s work and the durability of the old bunny in my piece. Manet’s piece is in a vertical composition and mine is horizontal. His piece maybe in thought of himself and his situation. My piece I did in thought of my sister and her use of these stuffed animals. This idea of looking back on childhood is something I have seen multiple times in different ways. I mostly see this on the website Tumblr with posts about old TV shows or toys. These posts mostly consist of a picture of the object and comments that say “remember this” or “these were the best.” Most of these post have me experiencing the same feeling of nostalgia as everyone else. There are some TV shows that have been rebooted and have disappointed the older fans. For example, “Powerpuff Girls” was a show that most people and I love. Cartoon Network recently rebooted this show. All the old fans were excited to see it again until it came out. A cherished action cartoon because an overdramatic comedy. The reboot wasn’t as good as the original and had us longing for the original. The only good thing about this is that it introduces the younger generation to these beloved characters.

I am painting reproductions of my toys to show my emotions toward my childhood and the memories that are attached to them. Toys were constant in my childhood because my mom ran a daycare until I was in middle school. I still keep the toys I haven’t lost. I keep them mostly for the memories they contain. These toys consist of Gameboys, press pennies, trading cards and stuffed animals. The toys in my paintings are my personal objects which also makes these paintings feel very personal. Audrey Flack does the same in her still lives by bringing personal items to help convey a message (Nemser, Cindy pg. 273). Her work connects with my work in

many ways. Much like how I am using items from my past into my still lives. We both use the durability of an item to show the passage of time but hers are short term like a cigarette and my works are long term like a stuffed animals (Nemser, Cindy pg. 272). Some of the objects we use relate to the past, whether it's our own past or America's past. Some of our work contains figures that are recognize by our generation's pop culture. For example, her using Marilyn Monroe and my work containing characters from Pokémon. The subject matters we chose were closer to each other then I thought. There are still many differences between her work and my work. I work from observing the still life in front of me. Her still lives are created from observing a photo. Her still lives contain many objects and are shown zoomed in to the still life. My work contains one to three items for the still life and is shown so the whole object can be seen. Her work seems very clustered but all the items in the still life still relate to one another. Her work uses light more to help create a realistic look. My work tends to use the texture of the object rather than lighting. Some of her work has the viewer think about the meaning of life. My work has the viewer think about their childhood. Her work is mainly for women because of the items she put in her still lives are objects of female everyday life. Looking at Audrey Flack's painting of Crayola crayons reminded me of my painting of Pokémon/ Yugioh cards. They are similar in how the objects are organized in purpose chaotic mess. They are made to look as if they have been laying in a pile that hasn't been touch. They are still organized in a composition that points the viewer to the focus point. For example, the crayon, in Flack's work, still are lined up and each crayon is pointed to a mark made by it. She has some of the crayons on top pointing down and in a way that the cards all face downward except the ones I want the viewer to see. I am using the designs on the back of the cards to keep the viewer looking inside the pile. The different between them is the composition of them. Flack's crayon are set up very linear and all

point downward. My cards are form in a pile that creates a circle and keeps the viewer inside that circle whether it by the touching of the cards or the design on the back of them. My work is for people of my generation because of the pop culture reference and the mix of nature and electronics. Our generation was in the gap of children that played outside and introduced to new technology, that started grabbing kids' attention more than nature. We still miss the days of going outside but do nothing and stay on our technology. Our work is the mostly different in the process and the execution of the paintings. In the fall I painted with acrylic paint on Bristol paper until I found wood panel. I painted by sitting in front of the object and having the artwork sitting in my lap. I enjoy painting in my lap because it was closer to me that way. My process was a little different during the spring semester. I still worked with acrylic paint and I still painted them in my lap. I learned to build my own wood panels which made my artwork feel more like it was mine. This is because I had to build the material I was working on. I did make 3 to 4 sketches of the objects I was using which I did not think to do before. These sketches helped me decide on compositions, backgrounds and other small details. After I decided, I sketched on to the wood panel and painted the background. I then started to paint from the back layer to the front layer. This semester I also decided to do multiple paintings of the same subject to better understand and explore the details on the toys and my paintings. Each of my toys have a story to tell and memories that are attached to them. The company Pokémon, created by Satoshi Tajiri, Ken Sugimori, Shigeru Miyamoto, Game Freak and Nintendo, plays a big part in my childhood (Plunkett, Luke). It was everywhere for me: television, videogames, trading cards and many other types of toys. It's a franchise that I love and continue to support. When I was first introduced to it by the television show, I was shocked when I found out that they had a videogame for it. I would beg for my parents to get me the game, which was Pokémon Emerald.

This game was played on the Gameboy Advance SP, which I got from my parents for Christmas. The Gameboy is another product by Nintendo that was a constant toy throughout my childhood ("Nintendo Game Boy Advance/ Advance SP." Para 1). My painting *Connection* is about how players don't need to be face to face to trade and connect to other players. Nintendo got rid of the link cable to connect to another player's Gameboy and relied on Wi-Fi to connect players around the world. My piece *Light in the Dark* shows how my Gameboy was my light when things got dark and also alludes to my escape with the Gameboy. Last summer, a new app was launch for smart phones called Pokémon Go. This app was getting everyone outside to catch imaginary creatures that were on the screen. It was probably the most exercise we ever got. While this game was getting people outside it was also reintroducing them to Pokémon. It was the most Pokémon has been talked about since it first came out. My paintings *Reality* shows what we see on screen for Pokémon Go compare to the reality that the creature don't exists in the real world. It was later that I found out that Pokémon had a trading card game. I collected the cards for fun, but never cared enough to learn the rules to the actual trading card game. My brother and I sometimes made up our own rules to the game to act like we understood these card's purpose. They just became collectables like the Yu-gi-oh cards which we also collected. Yu-gi-oh is another Franchise, that was created from Kazuki Takahashi, that we were introduced to by the television show ("Kazuki TAKAHASHI." para 7). Later found out that they had a trading card game based on the game they illustrate in the TV show. We never did figure out the rules behind this game either. Both of these different franchises' trading cards became very similar as just a collection. My paintings *Mix Up* demonstrate this idea that they were the same to me. I switched the illustration of the cards with the other franchise card. Another item that I collected were press pennies (at least that's what I called them). They were pennies that a person

would pay fifty one cents to have an image pressed onto the coin. They are usually found near tourist spots. I started collecting them when my family went to Disney world for the first time. They gave us a small folder that had pouches that could contain the pennies. I still collect these whenever my family goes on vacation. My paintings of *Memory Pennies* shows the memories from the places I have been that I collected these pennies from. These memories aren't that clear because I don't remember exactly where I got them or what happened on specific days, so some of them I had to mix imagination with reality. This is similar to Odilon Redon and his still life painting of flower mixed with imaginary background (Rowell, Margit pg. 51). Redon's work focuses on dreams and imagination, and is a bit similar to my work. It's similar in the way that I imagine memories from my past. These memories aren't that vivid so I have to create what I thought happened in the past. Some of his flower still life works, like his *Vase of Flower (Pink Background)*, have a background created by colors but still have a bit of depth with the shading. This shading allows the object to still feel grounded in the space it occupies. This is similar to my *Speedforce* painting in the way that the colors in the background are imaginary. In this painting I tried to use color to show the danger and horror of this imaginary 'force.' I also tried to ground the figure with shading underneath it. In Redon's lithographs, he combined two things to create creatures. For example, his lithograph *The Marsh Flower* is a creature of a flower stem with a human head growing from it. This is similar to my painting of two TV shows colliding with one another. The difference of our art being his idea of realistic and imaginary and my idea of different shows but same principle and goal of befriending creatures to take down a more powerful opponent. Most of my work also deals with the difference with the past and present. My family owns a lake house that we go to every summer and enjoy being outdoors there as a kid. As years went by, we started to get better television series and Wi-Fi so we start staying

indoors while we were there. My painting *Nature in TV* hit this idea that we watch nature in our television or phones instead of going out and experiencing it ourselves. The painting *Passing onto the Next* shows the older generations passing the torch to the next generation with the tea pouring out of the tea pot and into the cup. This alludes to the fact that I got this tea pot from my grandmother and hopefully I can pass it onto the generation after me. My painting *Replacement* is about my sister's stuffed animal, "Rabby". This stuffed animal was her first and she carried it everywhere. It got so worn down, after being restuffed and restitched multiple times, my mom had to find her a new "Rabby". That was what this painting is about, the old Rabby being replaced with the new, and the old being forgotten. These toys represent my early visual culture as I look back on my childhood with fondness and nostalgia. I am using toys because they are constant throughout my childhood. I was surrounded by them because my mom ran a daycare inside our home. Even as I grew older most of these toys became forgotten while some evolved with the time. The toys that did become forgotten were, most of the time, lost or I was forced to give them up. My mom kept a ten stuffed animal rule in our house which made it difficult to choose the toys that stayed and the toys that we had to give up. Before we moved into our new house, we had to pack everything up. During this packing, we did find many toys that were thought to be lost. Later we had to sell some of our toys during a yard sale so we had less stuff to move into the new house. Yard sales have always been fun to me until we had our own. Our old neighborhood used to have a day where almost everyone had a yard sale going on. I would take my money I had saved up and go throughout the neighborhood in search of new toys to buy and to play with. So I guess you can say that the toys I do have are survivors of the multiple stuffed animal clean out and the moving yard sale. It just shows how important these toys, that I still own, are to me.

These toys I recreated with acrylic paint contain many memories from my childhood that give me a feel of fondness and nostalgia. The artists I researched all helped me to find the best way to show my toys and to tell their stories. They help me solve a problem that I have had since the start of this project. These toys were a big part of my childhood and represent my early visual culture as I look back on my childhood with fondness and nostalgia. Childhood is the shortest period of time during a person's life and it is also the most impactful. Some of these toys I use just as collectables and others as a form of escape. As I got older, I picked up another form of escape in painting. My adult emotions and memories of childhood are projected onto these objects that I paint. In my studio, I work on these paintings in my lap and create them with acrylic paint on wood panel. Even as I continue to grow as a person and an artist these toys will always be my connection to my childhood and my feeling of nostalgia. By reproducing these toys from direct observation and basically in sight size, I can hold my childhood in my hand and the viewer can perhaps get a glimpse of theirs.

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