

Fragile Things: A Visual and Written Narrative Exploring the Artist's Mind

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ABSTRACT

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The following creative thesis includes a printed book of visual and written artwork accompanied by an academic treatise explaining the creative process and references. The book is bound in an 8" by 8" yellow soft cover and contains 8 poems and 26 art pieces covering different media including oil paintings, handmade paper, intaglio prints, and gouache paintings. The content is carefully arranged so as to create a dialogue between text and visuals—each starting as an independent piece that achieves a greater depth of meaning through conversation with adjacent works. Everything from cover to final page is handwritten in replacement of type font, evoking the feel of an artist journal. The treatise written in response to the book explores the scope of the project from initial ideas to final printing while referencing several artists and writers that provided inspiration for content. The title, *fragile things*, eludes to the delicate nature of both the physical materials in the artworks and the ideas of a childhood lost and reclaimed.

When I was five years old, I met an artist with a black portfolio. I knew she was an artist, because her work was displayed in front of her, tucked between black matt paper and shiny sheet protectors. Pushing between the legs of adults, I peered over the edge of the table at beautiful graphite and color pencil portraits. My mother, who was with me, talked to the artist about her work as I watched her flip through the pages.

After this encounter, I decided that I would be an artist. I also determined that this esteemed title was unattainable without a shiny black portfolio book, which I urgently told my mother. She graciously bought me my own book, and added a set of oil pastels, quite a step up from the tattered box of crayons that I used.

I took my goal very seriously and began to fill the pages with my masterpieces. I didn't document all of my work, but a good majority of it ended up in my art portfolio. I still have the book today—full the brim with portraits of my family, pictures of Bible stories, maps of imaginary worlds, and endless drawings of horses. Every year or so I revisit the book and marvel at how I—and my work—have changed. The black portfolio is an artifact of my childhood that I shall treasure forever.

The yellow book I hold in my hand is not so different. It is a product of its time—my time towards the end of college. I will never again make artwork from the same context or with the same meaning shown these pages, but I will revisit this book and remember sharing a house with eight other girls, waiting for the bus on 22nd street, battling broken AC units, waiting in line for toilet paper, dragging a duffle bag through frozen streets, and hanging handmade paper on strips of cotton fabric to dry on the roof of my suddenly empty house during quarantine. This book would not exist in the way it does without these pieces of my life.

It was during these mundane and irrational moments that I birthed many of my ideas. Quarantine created endless time that I had not anticipated spending alone in a house hollow in the absence of its usual residents—my friends. To escape the madness of solitude, I filled my days with crafts I ordered from amazon—my hero in this dark period. I don't remember what gave me the idea to make paper, but the idea came and festered until I bought a kit of my own. I don't believe I ever would have ordered that kit had it not been out of the sheer desperation for some mindless activity to keep my thoughts at bay. I used whatever scratch material I had—paper towels, printer paper, envelopes, etc. It was a long process before I actually knew what I was doing, but some of my favorite pieces came to life in that quiet house. Many appear a year later in the yellow book beside me.

A semester later I was still perfecting my technique for handmade paper and using it for prints in one of my classes. I found myself working with materials and subject matter that were delicate in nature. My handmade paper was delicate—it fell apart at the slightest application of water as I tried to prepare it for printing. The images I made were prints of dried flowers I started collecting beneath my bed. They were fragile, brittle things. A brush of air and petals would scatter, and leaves would crumble. The process of printing them onto a plate would destroy them, though their image lived forever carved into the copper.

It was this working with fragile things that partly inspired the name of the book, but I also drew from the themes in my writing. In moments that I cannot articulate how I feel to the people around me in speech, I turn to words in my journal. Though I process my emotions and surroundings through language, some ideas are better left unspoken. The thoughts I tuck into my work are fragile both within and outside of my mind. Even now, I simply shove the book into the

hands of my friends to consider in their own time because I myself cannot read some of it out loud.

I haven't felt this same fragility with my visual art, especially in recent years. At the time I was crafting my thesis question, my artwork was playful, vibrant, explorative, and joyful. I would paint ripe peaches, draw flowers, print bright colored paper, and create enticing abstract compositions. However, my written work felt heavier. Oftentimes it eluded to despair, nostalgia, poignancy, and hopelessness, commenting on my past and dwelling in moments of longing. When I compared the two medias, I felt like they were representing two entirely different parts of myself—even two different persons. I almost felt like a fraud. How could it be that I, the same artist and person, created art and writing that looked and felt so unconnected?

I began to wonder if I could find new ways to combine my visual art and writing in an effort to marry these two parts of myself. I didn't want to create art to match my writing, or vice versa. I wanted to take the two already-existing separate entities and put them in the context of each other in order to provide a more complete image of myself as an artist. I would have to create a conversation between a juxtaposition of media, content, and themes.

When I explained the concept to my parents, my dad said that I had already created a book of art and writing. He jokingly referred to a story I wrote as a child about a horse (most of my stories and art from childhood involved horses). Since I had provided illustrations for the narrative, he argued that I had already combined my art and writing. Jokes aside, I explained to him that my thesis was different. The artwork I created for that book was made for the story. The pictures' true meaning existed only with the context of the writing, as their only purpose was illustration. My thesis was different in that I was creating my art and my writing separately. Each painting and poem existed independent of each other. Putting them in the same space would

create a new kind of conversation meant to encapsulate the opposing versions of myself that I saw presented in each media.

While I was still establishing my thesis question, I was deep in the process of creating art for one of my classes. I had recently traded out the traditional large painting surfaces for a small journal. Much like I experienced writers block when facing a blank page, I found myself hesitating to put marks on a 2 by 3 foot primed canvas. It was much less intimidating to do a series of insignificant postcard sized paintings in an art book I could easily tuck away inside the clutter of my room rather than focus all of my concentration on one large art piece that could swallow me whole. I put aside my oil paints for a time and experimented with a new set of gouache tubes better suited to the new surface. I grew to love the intimate feeling of the 8 by 8 inch Journal. It felt more like a sketchbook than gallery pieces and therefore felt more accessible to me. As I developed the concept of my thesis, I observed the miniature paintings in my book, and decided that this was a perfect format for my project. I could create an artist book full of my visual and written work, formatted to appear much like this journal I held now. Holding the two books side by side a year later, I can observe that the two are very similar in size and content—besides the additional poems in my thesis work. Indeed, many of the artworks that originated in my gouache journal appear in my book of “fragile things.”

A simple artist sketchbook was also the first place my poems appeared outside my head. Before I was able to get my handicap placard and park outside the art building, I spent a lot of fall semester waiting for a poorly timed bus to drive me the mile distance to the studio. I remember being very irritated in these moments, shutting off Instagram only to open it five seconds later as I glanced down the road searching for a familiar streak of blue. At this point in the thesis process, I was experiencing writers block. I had yet to learn how to sit down and write

poetry without scrutinizing every word I tried to jot down. Because I feared writing a bad poem, I didn't write any. I remember one of those afternoons at the bus stop I finally pulled out my sketchbook and started writing out of sheer boredom. I wrote about the sparrow that sat on the rusting gate, the tree roots crumbling the sidewalk, and the clouds peeking through half-formed buildings. In 5 minutes I had written an entire poem, and the bus had arrived.

Since then, little moments where I find myself waiting have turned into opportunities for me to jot down a few phrases in a journal, on my phone, or on a napkin. There is something about writing in pen and paper, though. I don't have the opportunity to use backspace or an eraser. For some reason this is extremely liberating, and I find myself writing down everything that comes to my head, knowing full well that it will not be perfected or complete. Later on when I am in an atmosphere more suited for focus, I take bits of phrases and piece them together into the rough drafts of poems, though I often find myself copying my chicken scratch handwriting word for word.

Writer's block probably affected me more than artist's block during this time because poetry was still a rather new outlet of expression for me. Though I loved storytelling and building long into high school, poetry was a different kind of creative writing that I left alone. I only really began trying it seriously my junior year of college. I was taking a class that required that I visit authors as they presented their work—this included poetry readings. I discovered that one such event was taking place on campus, rather close to where I lived. In addition to this convenience, the writer attending was the author of a required book for the class, meaning that I would already be familiar with their work. Thus, I began reading the book with the intention of meeting the author—Ada Limón—on my mind.

I climbed into my bunk—my shared room in west campus was so cramped I’d bought a lofted bed to conserve limited space—and nestled down at one end to read the book. I don’t remember taking a break, but I remember falling in love with the simple soft cover. I’ve later heard that Ada Limón’s work is sometimes referred to as “gateway poetry,” and I understand why. There is something uniquely accessible about her writing. Perhaps it’s the unpretentious diction, or the raw emotion tucked into the pages, or the descriptions that painted images behind my eyes, but the writing felt more *real* than I’d ever thought possible. I discovered similar themes between her thoughts and mine. Though I could not relate to her struggle with infertility, I found we shared a story of chronic pain, specifically caused by scoliosis. “Pain pills swirled in the purse...I am in a raging battle with my body, a spinal column 35 degrees bent...invisible pain is a blessing and a curse. *You always look so happy* said a stranger once as I shifted to my good side, grinning.” I read these lines from her poem *Wonder Woman* over and over again, shocked to find someone finally put words to frustrations I had been feeling for years.

When I went to the event later that semester—surrounded by people sharing food, pre-Covid—she read this poem out loud. I approached her afterward, only meaning to express how I felt when reading her work, and I found myself crying. I hate breaking down in front of strangers (who doesn’t?) but after sharing her work with me she didn’t feel like a stranger. As we shared stories, she wrote a note in the little book of poems I’d brought along with me. “Abigail, for love, for hope, and for being free of pain.”

I’m not sure my book of art and writing would exist today had I not met Ada Limón. I have always loved writing, and I have dabbled in poetry, but after that encounter I decided—not unlike the child who gazed at drawings in a black portfolio all those years ago—that I would be a

poet. Perhaps I will never be officially published, and perhaps my work will only reach the people I love, and perhaps I will never write “good” poetry, but it will exist. And that is enough.

I picked up a variety of writing techniques from Ada Limón. For one, I had never read a poem with the title being the first line:

What I Didn't Know Before

was how horses simply give birth to other horses. Not a baby by any means, not a creature of liminal spaces, but a four-legged beast hellbent on walking, scrambling after the mother. A horse gives way to another horse and then suddenly there are two horses, just like that. That's how I loved you. You, off the long train from Red Bank carrying a coffee as big as your arm, a bag with two computers swinging in it unwieldily at your side. I remember we broke into laughter when we saw each other. What was between us wasn't a fragile thing to be coddled, cooed over. It came out fully formed, ready to run.

I loved this seamless enjambment of the title into the body of the poem and incorporated that form into many of my own poems. I enjoyed the puzzle of creating something that could stand alone as a title but also lent itself as the beginning of the first stanza. Here is one poem I wrote using this method that made the final cut for my book.

To be completely honest

My front porch is a glorified
 Slab of cement disappearing
 Into erratic steps
 on which the pumpkins—
 the ones we painted in October—

rot

The poem “When I was Still a Child” (which I will discuss later in the treatise) also follows this form.

Another aspect of Limón’s writing I tried to incorporate was the sensibility—simultaneously romantic and brutal—with which she describes details of the environment. I suppose this quality is found in most writing, but I think her style most influenced mine. This excerpt is from one of my favorite of hers, *Dandelion Insomnia*. “The big-ass bees are back, tipsy, sun drunk and heavy with thick knitted leg warmers of pollen.” So much description is packed into these lines. I can imagine the summer sun blanketing the backyard in warmth and weighing eyelids to close. I know *exactly* what she is talking about, as most of us have encountered those fat bees blundering about a garden. It is such an accurate picture of reality, yet it lends a romantic tone. This is what I have tried to accomplish in some of my writing, though I haven’t achieved the same mastery of craft that she exhibits here. I think it is the specificity and novelty of the word choice. Never have I used the term “sun-drunk,” but the way the bees meander and bumble seems anything but sober. I have never heard someone compare those yellow sacks on a bees legs to “leg warmers,” making it an active metaphor. There are physical similarities between the two, but leg warmers also bring with them a connotation of comfort and casual clothing, personifying the bees. In addition, leg warmers are a very familiar tactile material—known to be fuzzy and soft. By comparing yellow sacks on bees to leg warmers, the reader shift from a visual sensation to a tangible one. She wraps so much detail into a single word, and I can only hope to achieve this kind of skill.

Now that I have tried my own hand at writing, reading her poetry is different. I don’t think one can develop a true appreciation for a craft unless they attempt it themselves. I know

that when I admire engravings from masters of old, I want to cry tears of happiness or jealousy. I have tried my own hand at printing on plates—some that appear in my book—but I don't understand how a human can achieve perfection using such difficult media.

When I approached my own writing, it was important to me that my book did not lose the feeling of an artist journal. Though I took great care in selecting the poems and the artwork for each page, I did not want it to feel overly edited to the point of losing its vulnerability. I had to strike a balance between the intimacy of a sketchbook and the thoughtfulness of a curated gallery.

This idea truly emerged when I was editing my poetry. My writing process usually starts with me jotting down some ideas in my sketchbook, and then translating these thoughts onto my computer while editing and adding words. After I finish the first draft of a poem in this manner, I usually leave it alone for a while before opening it up for additional editing. This is an example of a poem I wrote in this manner:

When I was still a child

I would hold bees in my palm
And I'd cradle them to my body
As I wove footprints
Through the frost-covered garden

Now, I am grown
And I do not touch bees
For fear they should sting me

But when I was still a child
I didn't fear they should sting me
So much as I feared they
Would sting me and die

When I presented this poem to my second reader (who would graciously give me thoughts on editing) he pointed out a redundancy in the writing. If in the third stanza I mentioned how when I was a child, I felt a certain way, then I am implying that I don't feel the same way as an adult. Because of this, the second stanza isn't actually necessary. We came up with an alternative way of writing the poem that eliminates this repetition.

When I was still a child

I would hold bees in my palm
 And I'd cradle them to my body
 As I wove footprints
 Through the frost-covered garden

For when I was still a child
 I didn't fear they should sting me
 So much as I feared they
 Would sting me and die

This edited version of the poem is more concise in its narrative, and it allows the reader to make the connection on their own. It is a stronger poem in comparison to the first draft. However, when I compared the two side by side, I found myself liking the first version more because it felt more authentic to who I am. I am not a concise person. I'm an extrovert, I ramble, and I talk too much, repeating things in the process. When I showed different friends and family both versions of the poems, though they disagreed on which poem felt stronger, they all agreed that the first one sounded more like the way I actually talk and write.

When making a final decision on which version of the poem to print, I ended up putting the first draft in my book. I realized that I would rather present incomplete poems if that meant I would recognize myself more in my writing. I want to clarify—I do not believe that by editing my poems I always have to give up authenticity, but at this point in my writing I am still learning

how to keep the rawness of my work during its refinement. In this project I decided I would better cultivate the feeling of an art journal through writing that is not so different from the scribbles and notes I jot down in my sketchbook.

Through this same line of thinking I decided to handwrite everything in my thesis, from title page to closing lines. I considered using a font that I would have made through my handwriting, but I wanted to be as authentic to my sketchbook as possible. A font couldn't show the ways that my hand tires after writing stanzas. It wouldn't start to slant up as my natural handwriting does, despite all my effort to keep it straight and orderly. It also wouldn't create little ink blots that appear around my writing—blots that I sometimes chose to keep in my final edits. These little details caught with pen and paper would be lost on a computer program, and so I wrote all of the text in my sketchbook before photographing and transferring it to my computer for assimilation into the book. I did try out using a drawing pad—this would have enabled me to write directly onto the digital pages I created—but the technology was so alien to me that I quickly traded it in for my tattered sketchbook with yellowing pages.

This idea of handwriting my work partly emerged from my study of *The diary of Frida Kahlo*, a book containing pages upon pages of the revered artist's sketchbook. Every white space is taken up by layers of writing and pictures overlapping and intertwining. I find it funny how parts of my own sketchbook look similar, albeit less densely packed. The diary certainly carries more dialogue with the tattered sketchbook on my shelf as opposed to the final printed version of my thesis, but whereas this was the birthplace of Frida's ideas and thoughts, mine is a selective narrative with a climax and resolution. While holding up the two, I found myself almost regretting how curated mine seemed in comparison. In order to keep my book from slipping to

far away from its origins, I kept the handwriting, purposefully eliminating text even from the title. This is what saved my work, I believe, by staying within the bounds of the artist journal.

When I approach my art-making process, I am always referencing other artists' work. Most of my ideas usually start with me seeing a painting that speaks to me. There is something about the style that I want to try in my own creations. Somewhere along the way my art takes a turn, and I end up with something completely different than I'd imagined.

One artist that I had in mind during the creation of my gouache paintings was Jonas Wood. I stumbled upon his work when visiting the GMA with some friends over the summer. We were walking towards the exit when a large canvas full of lush greenery caught my eye. Like a distracted five-year-old, I ran off and found myself in an exhibit that overwhelmed my senses. My friends humored me by lingering a little longer as we explored the rooms containing paintings of other rooms full of geometric patterns, tumbling plants, and scattered household items. I went back to view the exhibit a second time before it closed. Since then I have referenced his work during my process.

Wood's paintings seem to live in the space between form and shape. After studying his process, I know that he makes collages or many of his works, and I see this in his painting. Though he depicts 3D spaces, he somehow both flattens and expands them through his rendering. Though I have not attempted to paint such a large space, many of my tiny gouache paintings employ these elements. I see his influence in my koi painting (see Figure 1) when I look back to his work, "Untitled (Fish Bathroom)" (see Figure 2). I have found that I paint landscapes differently after viewing his exhibit. In his work, "Japanese Garden" (see Figure 3), he renders foliage by painting one layer all one color shaped like a fan and paints another shade of green lines over it. I employed the same technique when experimenting with a nature scene

(see Figure 4). These connections are humorous to me, because I didn't recognize Wood's influence on my work until after I reexamined the paintings.

Another artist I drew inspiration from was Lisa Madigan. While she works in editorial and wedding photography, I found her website through her paintings. She explores abstract textures created with a palette knife (see Figure 5). While studying her art, I started experimenting with my own oil paintings involving new wax mediums and put away my brushes for a moment. Through most of my college career, I'd avoided using pallet knives—mostly due to a few professors commenting on their supposed inferiority. I created a series of paintings using different varieties of textures. One in particular (see Figure 6) seemed to respond to Madigan's work, and I ended up selecting it for the end of my book.

Once I found Madigan's website, I discovered her floral arrangements—especially those in her photography (see Figure 7). I had already developed a love for dried flowers, but I believe observing her work affected my subconscious mind more than I had initially appreciated. As I stated earlier, flowers pried their way into my medium as well as my subject matter (see Figure 8). Lisa Madigan is another artist of many medias, and I took courage in her ability to leap across the boundaries of painting and photography while incorporating similar stylistic choices and themes. Her inclusion of flowers in several series probably influenced the way they became a central theme in mine.

Laura Horn is an abstractionist artist I found years ago that I still reference often today. She combines her medias on the same canvas, creating compositions involving oil pastels, watercolors, acrylics, pencils, and more. I love her vibrant color schemes and repetition of shapes, I and used a variety of her work as inspiration for my own. When comparing our paintings, I realized how many pieces of artistic language I first learned from her. In one of her

oils (see Figure 9), she employs stripes and dots in the background which I find in one of my gouache works (see Figure 10). Both pieces use lighter layers of white paint where you can see the paint underneath cloudy forms. I even use a color palette not far from the hues she employs. Though I wasn't directly referencing this work of hers while I was painting, my general studies of her art shows itself through the similarities I have described.

At some point in the process I had to put down my pen and paintbrush and stop creating my art in order to curate it. By the time February rolled around, I had amassed a large collection of paintings, prints, handmade paper, and poetry, but I still hadn't determined how I would integrate the written work with the visual. I pulled up all of my work on my hard drive and looked over it as a whole, trying to make connections between images and text. I knew I wanted to create a narrative with my book with an introduction, a climax, and a resolution, and I finally achieved this by mapping my work in a certain order.

I realized that the text would be the skeleton of the book. I selected poems that felt related in themes and subject matter, and I began arranging them on blank slides subbing for white pages. Some of the poems felt heavier, or perhaps they had qualities I associated more with adulthood while others felt younger in nature. I arranged the poems to root the beginning of the book in childlike qualities and eventually shift to ideas and anxieties that emerge with growing up. The narrative centers around a loss of childhood, and then—instead of returning to actually being a child—at the end I attempt to reclaim these childlike qualities with what I know now as an adult. The final poem feels more like the beginning of a new book rather than the end of this one.

After I had ordered my text, I began finding visuals that seemed to “fit” with the writing. Some of the poems had apparent connections with visuals—a poem about koi fish matched with

a painting of koi fish. Most were not so obvious in their overlapping themes. A poem about pumpkins rotting on concrete steps matched with a piece of handmade paper sprinkled in flower petals that I had painted with circles of coffee. This selection was anything but thoughtless. When I compared the pumpkin poem with the painting, I found myself thinking that the coffee circles could have been the surface on which the pumpkins were rotting. The wilted flower petals felt like the decay of organic matter. The bright pinks and purples and oranges reminded me of autumn and all its lovely colors. I found I appreciated these subtle connections between the details of each work; they seemed to create a more profound conversation.

Choosing the format of my book came a lot easier with guidance from my advisor, Megan Hildebrandt. Unbeknownst to me when I asked her to supervise my thesis, she had already written and published her own book of art and writing, *Tunnel Visions*. It depicted her battle with cancer and chemotherapy through poems and paintings/drawings. I remember going through the book at the beginning of the year while I was still collecting materials for my thesis, and looking back now, I realize how much it influenced the end result of my project. For one, her formatting was generally a drawing on a page paired with text across from it. Sometimes there were just drawings, and sometimes there was just text, but the gutter provided a boundary to separate pages (see Figure 11). (There were exceptions to this technique, of course.) I used this same formatting in my own book: generally having one page for an artwork, and the other for text (see Figure 12). I also employed a style of hers where she edited her paintings/drawings to appear as if they were drawn straight onto the book with no trace of a paper background (see Figure 13). I followed this idea by masking out paper background of some of my paintings (see Figure 14).

During the process of creating the final images for the book I realized I had to conquer a huge learning curve when it came to digital editing. Up until that point, all of my artwork was done on paper or canvas in front of me, and though I would transfer my poetry to a document, all I had to do during this process was type out the words. When it came to actually arranging the pages of the book, I realized that I was lacking in tech skills. A normal page with text and artwork would include me photographing my art piece at a certain time of the day, editing the photograph in Lightroom to be true to the natural colors of the art, uploading the file to Photoshop in order to delete the background the art was resting on in the photo, further editing the image in its new context, creating an artboard of a certain file ratio and selecting a color from the artwork itself for the Pages of the book, copying and pasting certain elements of the artwork to different parts of the page while blending these different pieces together to create a seamless extension of the piece, taking a photo of my handwriting, uploading it to Photoshop to erase the white/beige background of the page, transferring the text to the page with artwork already on it, altering the text to the right size in relation to the artwork, and then possibly warping the text in order to change its rotation and curvature. Before creating this book, I knew how to do approximately 20% of the above process. The rest I learned through crash-course YouTube videos and under the tutorship of my gracious advisor, who was well versed in the Adobe creative suit.

It was a weird process to take so much of my work in the physical world and transfer it to my computer and hard drives. When I finally received the first printed version of my book, it was a relief to have it back in my hands as a piece of paper again, finally complete. I was tired of staring at a screen.

I entered this project because I noticed that my art and writing represented separate parts of myself, but now that I have created and published my book, I am not sure I still believe this. During the composing process I realized that my visual and literary artwork sometimes expressed overlapping aspects of my identity. I thought it would be difficult to reconcile two discrete worlds, but the visual art meshed with my writing naturally—it was one of the easier parts of the process. I find threads of hope in my writing and I see nostalgia in some of my artwork. Perhaps this is a result of me actively working to connect the two, and therefore my creative process has evolved to incorporate a new scope of emotional expressive breadth, or perhaps these qualities were always there, and I was simply blind to their subtleties. Either way, I now approach my artwork and writing certain of the fact that I am the same artist, no matter what media I am employing. I don't try to force these themes but allow joy or sorrow to emerge in the generative process. It is a comfort to me that the different medias of my art will never be isolated so long as they come from me.

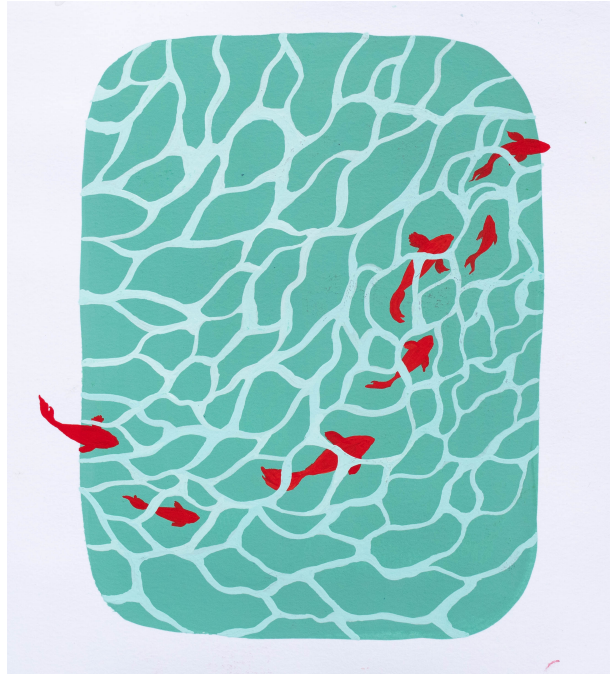


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10

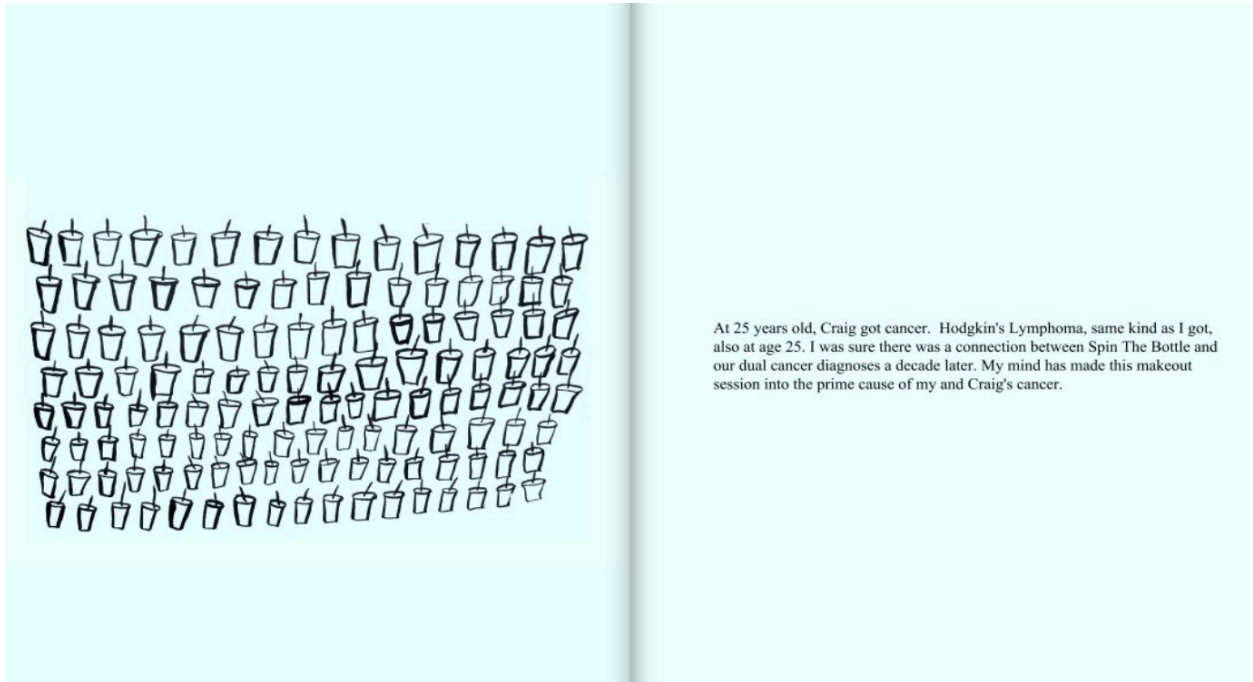


Figure 11



Figure 12

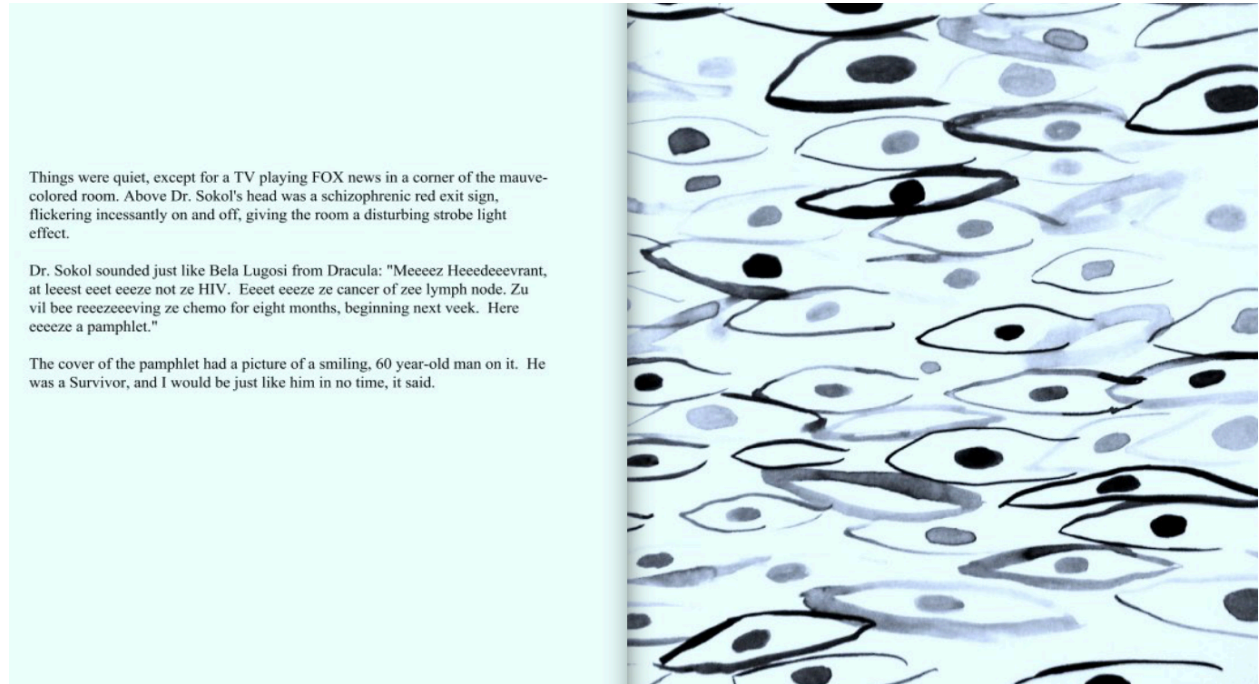


Figure 13



Figure 14

Bibliography

Bleasby, Susanna. *Susanna Bleasby*. www.susannahbee.com/.

This collection of artwork is the passion and pursuit of Susanna Bleasby, an oil painter. She finds her inspiration for her compositions mostly from nature while also tapping into the world of emotion. Drawing from a palate of pigmented colors, she paints vibrant canvases that seem to churn with movement. Her figurative and abstract actually resemble each other in this way—easily slipping into the other category. The contrasting values in her abstractions seem to build objects within their center, mimicking the structure of still lives. I have referenced her work in order to learn her process for my own abstract oil paintings.

Hare, Stephanie. *SHare Studios*. <https://www.sharestudios.me/process/>.

Stephenie Hare specializes in the chemical and creative process of papermaking. She explores a variety of materials for her ingredient, especially drawing from plant matter. She is present along every step of the process, sometimes harvesting and preparing the fibers in order to transform them into pulp. The results are papers ranging in dyes, textures, and purposes. I reference her creative process more than her final works as I learn to make paper from scratch myself in order to incorporate it into my prints.

Hildebrandt, Megan. *Tunnel Visions*. 2011

This book portrays the narrative of a 25-year-old woman experiencing the devastating effects of chemotherapy and cancer. Through an interplay of art and written work in free form poetry, she captures snippets of conversations, scenes, and environments clouded by her ongoing suffering. There is a conversation between her drawings and her words—both exist independently, but together they create a more holistic picture for the reader. As I compile my own narrative of written and visual work I use this book as a kind of guide.

Holmes, Ashleigh. *Ash Holmes*. <https://ashleighholmes.com/studio-202/>.

Ash Holmes is a multi-media artist who prefers to work on large surfaces so that she can better use the entirety of her body in her creative process. Her materials range from oil paint to acrylic to charcoal to pastels—it seems she reacts to what is presently on the canvas. She seems to

explore certain color schemes across series containing contrasting compositions. I appreciate the texture in her paintings and hope to incorporate this into my work.

Horn, Laura. *Laura Horn Art*, www.laurahornart.com/.

The work of Laura Horn is incredibly playful in both process and composition. Though she refers to herself as an abstract artist, Laura's figures seem to draw from a variety of flora such as creeping vines and exploding flowers. All her paintings seem to possess a certain delicacy in her tendency towards transparency, textures, and linework. Her work is mixed media including but not limited to watercolor, acrylic, and paint pens. The colors—though different across her pieces—tend to have an earthiness in their nature. I love the combined playfulness and maturity of her style and try to replicate these qualities in my own.

Limón, Ada. *The Carrying*. Milkweed Editions, 2018.

This book contains a variety of poetry from Ada Limón ranging across emotions and styles. Her pieces are characterized by a stark authenticity in pain, joy, and revelation. Though she is a masterful writer with a wealth of experience and work, these little books are surprisingly accessible to the reader who is experiencing poetry for the first time. This book was the door that led me to writing my own poetry, and I often reference her style. Meeting her in person and hearing her read out loud her work seemed to complete the narrative in the book, and I have loved it ever since.

Madigan, Lisa. *Lisa Madigen*, www.lisamadigan.com.au/.

Lisa Madigan is a creator in every way, ranging from exquisite dried flower arrangements to textured paintings to editorial articles to wedding photography. Though her used medias are diverse, her use of them carries a similarity in somberness and romantic beauty. I have referenced her paintings as I explored abstraction and find inspiration from her motif of dried flowers in her photos in contrast to the usual thriving, living bouquet. Every detail in her works is carefully thought out and arranged.

Oliver, Mary. *Devotions : the Selected Poems of Mary Oliver / Mary Oliver*. Penguin Press, 2017.

This book contains a vast collection of Mary Oliver's works. Her general tone is one of reflection, drawing from inspiration she acquired in nature. She includes illustrative descriptions of the natural world while conveying her feelings. I hope to use her work as an inspiration for future poems—pulling from her range of styles and thoughtful observations.

Oliver, Mary. *The Poetry Handbook*. Harcourt Brace & Co., 1994.

This book guides the reader in their own process to write poetry. It includes examples of how the building blocks—meter, line, vocabulary, sound, etc.—all contribute to and influence the outcome of the poem. Her goal is to teach the reader (and writer) how to harness these tools to produce the message and tone of their wish. Her simplistic explanations of the process of writing is extremely helpful to me as I begin delving into my own poetry.

Wood, Jonas. *Jonas Wood*. 24 Mar.-14 July. 2019, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas.

This exhibit displayed a collection ranging over fifteen years of work from Jonas Wood. I had the privilege to see this exhibit in person twice in the summer that it existed in its physical form, which I feel greatly influences the way I interpret his paintings. You don't understand the sheer size of the panels until you stand in front of them and just get swallowed up. Wood is able to take incredibly complex 3-dimensional spaces like landscapes and rooms and almost compress them through collage transformed into painting emphasizing shape, color, and texture.

Abigail Horne was born in Dallas, TX on January 5, 1999. In 2017 she moved to Austin to study in the Plan II Honors Program and the Studio Art Program at the University of Texas at Austin. During college she volunteered at For the Nations Refugee Outreach and displayed her work in the senior show at the Visual Arts Center at UT. Ms. Horne will attend the McCombs Summer Institute this June and July to complete her minor in Business. She then intends to move back to Dallas in the fall of 2021 where she will work at Sendero Consulting as an Associate Consultant.