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Alex Long

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Q&A with Alex Long (BFA Imaging Arts & Printmaking)



Introduce yourself and tell us where are you from?

I'm Alex Long. I'm a BFA student in photography and printmaking, and I'm from Oxford.

Did you know you wanted to major in art before attending UM?

No, I started as an IMC major, funny enough! I didn't know what I wanted my major to be, so I declared a major to save time while I figured out what I wanted to do. During the second semester of my freshman year, I decided to take a photography class with Brooke White on a whim. It was completely random, and I fell in love with photography. After that class, I knew that I wanted to be an art major.

What made you get into printmaking?

I still vividly remember the first time I made a lithographic print. I was so excited the first time I saw one of my photographs printed as a lithograph. I hadn't previously been aware of what the possibilities were for my images. I started playing around with alternative processes in photography while also taking printmaking classes. I knew that I didn't want to stay just digital with my images and that I wanted my work to show more of the human hand in each photograph. I feel more connected to my work when I have to physically make each print.

Could you explain your process of merging the two mediums?

I take digital photographs, print them as black and white transparencies, expose those images onto a metal plate, and then I develop that plate. The development process is very similar to the black and white photography darkroom process except for the material in which you're exposing the image is different. This plate then has an etching of my photograph on it, which is

then ready to have inked rolled onto it. Once the plate is at full ink the plate and paper can be placed on the press and run through to press the final image onto the paper.

Is there anyone that you look up to for inspiration?

[Ming Nomchong](#) does a lot of beautiful, unique portraits of the body. She is hired by a lot of companies that give her complete creative freedom so it's really interesting to see her work and take on the body as it changes with each job. I also love Diane Arbus and the way she focuses on capturing the essence of people. Arbus has a distinct way of focusing on the connections between humans and how those relationships evolve and what that might look like in a photograph.



Tell us about your thesis coming up.

I'm combining printmaking and photography by printing my seminude portraits as lithographic prints and layering them with color, digital prints. These prints should focus on people's relationships with their bodies and how that affects other relationships in their lives. These

layers of color, digital images cover only portions of the overall lithographic photograph. I'm collaying the digital prints on top of the litho print so the overall print becomes thicker throughout the process. This layering gives the print some subtle depth because of the multiple sheets of paper that I really enjoy. The digital collayed portions mainly focus on the body or the more emotional portions of their expressions giving the prints an overall sense of vulnerability.

Has the pandemic affected the way you created artwork?

I wouldn't say it currently does. When we went through our first quarantine in spring 2020, it affected me because I photograph people as my subject. How do you photograph people when you're not allowed to see people? So, my only subject for quite a few months was my roommate who had already been a subject for me previously. It was also difficult because I couldn't photograph at varying locations. I was really fortunate though to have some friends who have let me use their land as my setting for multiple shoots which I'm super thankful for.

Which professors inspired you the most?

I met Brooke when I was a freshman and I started working with Lauren when I was a sophomore. Both of them have helped me navigate the combination of printing making and photography and what that looks like for my artwork. I'm thankful they've allowed me to work with both of them since this combination was not something that seemed like an option at first.

Could you tell us your favorite class?

Advanced printmaking was awesome because Lauren had that class set up as an opportunity to explore whatever process/concept we wanted. It gave us a lot of freedom and felt like an intro to a mini-grad class. I also enjoyed Alternative Processes with Brooke. That class allowed me to explore a lot of different ways to make photographs that I had never done before.

Any advice for the incoming art students?

Be ready to spend a lot of time in the studio. I promise it's fun even if it is a lot of hard work.

What are your plans after graduation?

I'm applying to some residencies and workshops for the spring and applying for grad schools in the fall. I don't have a direct plan and am just going to see what happens and what feels right. I definitely want to try to leave the South, which I think is important for my artwork and will be a great experience.

Can we find you on social media?

I'm [@alexelongg](#) on Instagram.

Favorite thing about Oxford?

I actually love a lot of things about this small town and its supportive, little community. One of my favorite things though has to be Ajax and all of the people I work with there.

What's your favorite time of year here in Oxford?

The fall here is really beautiful even though it's very short-lived. There is typically 1-2 weeks of perfect weather when all of the leaves are turning colors and it's the best.

Do you listen to any music when you're creating artwork?

I always have music on when I'm in the studio. I listen to a lot of different genres since I'll get bored after a couple of hours of the same thing, so I listen to pretty much anything except for most country music. I listen to a lot of Rainbow Kitten Surprise, the Backseat Lovers, and Fleetwood Mac.