

In Passing

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of the Arts
of Bard College

by
Jasper Oltmanns

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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This show is a narrative self portrait. The people I encounter on a daily basis, the situations I find myself in, and the fleeting, seemingly meaningless experiences, as well as my physical responses to them, are all squished together. They're what make me, me. The last four years of my life have been immensely formative and were loaded with truly special people, experiences and memories. And paradoxically, they felt so organized and sequenced that I thought they'd never end, yet at the same time every semester was over in a heartbeat.

In this show I draw from all these experiences, the emotional space they've left me in and the way they've whizzed by. Playing with facial expressions and body language, similar to the dramatized but representational depictions found in comic books, I attempt to embody as broad a range of emotion as possible, while trying to keep said emotions subtle and elusive.

From the moment of conception, I wanted this show to reflect my own way of approaching the telling of stories. I have always found satisfaction in dramatized, representational depictions, especially of people (lifelong consumption of comic books and admiration of ancient statues are to blame), so I knew I wanted to keep a mostly lifelike aesthetic. I experimented with mediums and colors, but I always found myself going back to a mix of black and white pencil, marker, and paint. So I decided to stick with those, but use them on a scale I'd previously not considered.

The size of the two pieces allowed me to fully immerse myself in the people I was depicting, and approach every new person I drew as a blank canvas for my state of being on any given day. The pieces also allowed me to highlight the small, 'gone in the blink of an eye' moments, that are so impactful in everyday life.

Responses to an important phone call, a flunked assignment, or even just a stranger's smile. The challenge became not what to depict, but how to do it. To make every individual person tell their own story that the others could not, while at the same time adding something meaningful to the larger image when examined from a distance. As I went on, the piece became a true exercise in trusting myself, trusting the fact that on each new day I wouldn't ruin weeks worth of work. But letting go of the thought that anything I'd put down could be wrong, and simply embracing what I drew as an accurate representation of my emotions, past or present, became the drive I needed to keep going.

I mentioned comic books as a huge inspiration, but for this show I consciously stayed away from a depiction with panels. The past four years have felt so fragmented, and were consistently broken into organized chunks, that all I could think about was bringing them all together. I found that as large, all encompassing spreads, without a "single correct sequence" of taking in the narrative, the pieces provide the flexibility of experiencing the story how it feels right in that moment. Through events and actions that feel real, believable, and like they'll be gone just as fast as they appeared.

Special Thanks

My Friends & Roommates

Mom & Dad

Daniella Dooling

Lothar Osterburg

Nayland Blake

Lisa Sanditz

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Senior project exhibition by
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opening: May 4, 2024 4pm - 7pm

on view: May 4 - 18, 2024

UBS Gallery
45 O'Callaghan Lane
Red Hook, NY, 12571

