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Senior Projects Spring 2019

Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects

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Spring 2019

## Thanks To You, I'm Alive

Antonio Scott Nichols  
*Bard College*

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# Thanks To You, I'm Alive

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Footer Logo

Antonio Nichols  
Artist Statement:

In this project I am using figurative painting to explore the meaning of relationships/emotion and my connection to the people I am painting. I question what this means and how each individual's identity ties to mine and why it may or may not matter. "Thanks to You, I'm Alive," the title of this project, encompasses the message I am sending not only to the individuals I painted but also to the viewer because there is a certain exclusivity in who I decided to paint.

I want the connection I have with these people to not only be seen in the painting but in the care and rendering of the painting as well. This has often caused me to paint each individual slightly more beautiful than they look in real life, enhancing details that might not be completely true to the individuals physical being. Structurally, I contemplated lighting, positions, color, and order of each individual to create cohesive pieces. The way I laid the paint down is plainly about my love for simple and complex characteristics; as I found clothing to be more beautiful with simpler shapes, backgrounds to be more beautiful with directionality of the brush strokes, and the subjects to be more beautiful with complex blending.

Conceptually, I focused on each individual's uniqueness. To uncover emotions from each subject I decided to have a conversation with each individual before painting them in specific or non-specific locations. Location or lack thereof is important because it describes the basis of each relationship. Family members have specific locations because I tie the beginning of our relationships to places such as home. The same can be said about the one woman who has a semi-specific setting because she is my partner. As for my friends, I do not connect our relationships to specific settings because I do not find location as important.

Although, my project navigates my social relationship with the people most important in my life, it is also a slight commentary on black identity. The majority of the individuals I have painted are people of color, not because I choose them for that reason but because they just so happen to be the people that feature most prominently in my life. I believe this is the case because black and brown individuality and diversity can be lacking in Predominantly White Institutions. This can be seen in the fact that in this project I had to teach myself how to paint black and brown skin. The commentary, to me, is not political in the slightest. It only means to amplify my belief that blackness can and should exist in white spaces. My experience as usually the only black person in these spaces connects back to why these are the people I am closest to in the first place and why I have decided to bring them into the space as well



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