

My body of work is a representation of my own experience with mental health. I chose to do so through many different lenses, showing how it has affected me through every facet of my life, including in school, in my hobbies, and in my day to day life as a whole. I focused on both the highs and lows of mental health issues, as well as how I am able to use art as an outlet to improve my mental state. I chose to use a variety of mediums, each representing different feelings and emotions based on their properties. I have used my personal experiences to inspire my work, as well as reflect upon certain instances in my life, and how they have impacted my ability to function and thrive. I found myself working both from direct photographs, as well as exploring more conceptual and surrealist concepts, both of which express my experiences differently.

Although I have jumped around with many different mediums and different sub-themes within mental health, I found myself drawn to painting the mundane moments in life, showing the monotony and routine-oriented aspects of life. In terms of mediums, I found that I was most comfortable using acrylic paints, as I love the quick drying properties, as well as the bright, vivid colors that they allow me to achieve. An artist that greatly influenced my work is Owen Rival, who similarly works in acrylic paint and creates highly detailed, realistic depictions of his everyday life. Tasks as simple as doing the laundry or going on a grocery run are almost romanticized, casting them in unnatural, colorful lights. I used his work as inspiration for my piece titled "Burning Out," where I showed myself sitting at a desk, doing school work. It is a normal occurrence to spend hours a day on homework that might not matter even the next week, so I wanted to use Rival's same sense of candidness, while still reflecting on my experiences with mental health in my daily life.

When I began this body of work, I didn't have a very clear direction as to where I was headed in terms of theme or subject matter, so I just tried to make something that reflected me as a person. In doing this, I came up with my first piece, a block print titled "Peace of Mind." In this piece, I reflected on the way I felt while creating art. It is a serene and peaceful scene, and I knew this is something I wanted to continue with. However, I knew my experiences with mental health were, more often than not, very negative. Because of this, I decided to focus on the contrast between the things that make me feel good, as well as what causes my mental health to decline.

In addition to personal life experiences, I also wanted to touch upon global issues that have had an impact on my own mental health. In my pieces "The Love Embrace" and "No Fashion on a Dead Planet," I depicted issues that are present throughout the world, in this case misogyny and the climate crisis. These are both issues that are completely out of my control, but still as a cause for anxiety knowing that it could have all been preventable.

In displaying my work and setting up the exhibition, I wanted the subject matter to be varied throughout, as opposed to putting all of the negative pieces together and all the positive pieces together. This combination of moods pushes the mental health theme even further, showing that it isn't always good or bad, but instead a complicated mix that can never be predicted.

Overall, I want my work to be reflective of my experiences with mental health, while also allowing the viewers to relate it back to their own lives. It is not something exclusive to myself, but instead something that can bring groups of people together, encouraging a sense of community to thrive.