

School of the Arts
Visual Arts Department
March 2021

Senior Show Group 2:
REMINISCENCE

Artist Statements by:

Elijah S. A. • Rasheen G. • Nikolas G. • Olecia G. •
Sophia H. Andrew H. • Taliyah K. • Aleesa K. •
Miriam L. • Kay N. W.

PAUL A.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Why do I create art? It seems like a simple question, but if I'm completely honest, I don't really know the answer myself. It's always been a “thing” I did since I was little. Art has always been around me. I still remember the day my sister taught me how to draw. Ever since I could remember, I've watched my uncle draw tattoos on people, and I'd be fascinated at the things I saw in his sketchbook.

If you ask me why I like art, I don't really have an answer. It's like asking me why I like to eat or why I breathe. Why do I make the art I do? Again, I don't have a solid answer; I think as I get older it'll become clearer to me. I don't really have a purpose to the art I make, it just exists. I'd say I like to draw things that the human eye is not supposed to see. Or, that you want to look away from, but at the same time, you can't figure out why you keep staring. I guess that would be a goal. I don't try to create anything, I just do it. When I try to “create” something, that's when it starts to become tedious. I've never experimented with anything other than paper and a pencil because that's what's widely available. That would explain why I don't like color or why I'm not drawn to painting as much.

Throughout my years in school, all my art teachers have been amazing for which I'm thankful. My future plans are to continue to make art. I want to get more involved with digital art and make animations for people on the Internet. But as of now, I only have access to this pencil and paper and I am fine with that.

ELIJAH S. A.

ARTIST STATEMENT

The art I make is a way to show my creativity. It is also a gateway for me to leave reality behind and just be myself. When I was little I would watch my father draw and that's when I knew I wanted to continue drawing as I grew up. I like creating art because it is where I find peace. I express the way I am feeling through my art. Art to me is very important because I have come a long way in my life; if it wasn't for art, honestly, I don't know where I would be.

When I begin to create art, I start by imagining what I want to create in my head and then I start drawing it. I love creating graffiti and I am known for my graffiti work. It is my favorite type of drawing. I only use a number two pencil, shading pencils, and colored pencils. However, depending on what I am creating, I may use other materials. When I make decisions about what to create and what materials to use, it really depends on how I am feeling that day. My ideas come to me throughout the day. If I go to work and have a good day I will draw something that happens throughout the day and include some graffiti somewhere in the drawing. The theme that always pops up in my artwork is graffiti. It will always be a theme in my artwork because it is unique. My biggest inspiration is my mom, my dad, and my siblings. They always push me to do good in school and in my art because they see me going through a lot and want me to keep moving forward. My dad influences me everyday to become a better artist and he helps me understand how I can improve.

My artwork in the show is a mixture of current and past work. The pieces I chose represent how I have grown as an artist and how much I love graffiti. I have seen myself grow as an artist and I look forward to advice from others on how I can continue to improve.

I have learned a lot through my art and one of the biggest things I have learned is to never stop learning from others. Take the advice they are giving you and keep on growing. My future plans are to continue creating art and make a better future for me and my family. I have always wanted to start my own business customizing shoes with my art, for not only me, but for everyone to enjoy.

RASHEEN G.

ARTIST STATEMENT

What does art mean to me? Good question. Art is how I express myself visually because it helps me to express the right 'words' and what I want to say. I often put emotions and feelings into my art. It's all started off as a simple stick figure drawing, and then I evolved from there. I've learned so much about art, I could write a book about it, no kidding. For example, I never knew photography was art. I thought it was just a hobby or something, like watching TV or reading a book. I was so unaware at the time. I learned so much from School of the Arts' amazing teachers: Mr. Latorre, Ms. Rudy, Mrs. Lawson, Mrs. Hawkins, and Ms. Williams. If I am missing anyone, I'm sorry but you're phenomenal as well. My big inspiration is Leonardo da Vinci. My favorite painting is the *Mona Lisa*, for me, it is the most compelling. I make art that consists of photography, hand drawings, digital art, 3D art, and some painting. I don't have any digital or painting in my show because I haven't exactly mastered it yet. It is a work-in-progress. I often just draw a lot, but recently I have gotten into digital art and photography. That is because it's popular and I want to take pictures of my old action figures in cool stances. From there, I just fell in love with it. I eventually want to create my own cartoon because it is my original dream goal. I've always been into animation. I really love cartoons and count that is another big aspiration. I have learned a lot from being at SOTA. The knowledge I now possess motivates me to achieve my goals as an artist.

NIKOLAS G.

ARTIST STATEMENT

For the past four years, I've pursued art relentlessly. At first, it was a simple form of expression, a way to show my friends what I was imagining when we would play games of make-believe. However as I continued, I realized that it was something that brought me a different type of joy... a consistent one. I'd been relentlessly searching my whole life for some way to express myself. Back before I knew anything about who I wanted to be, I wrote and read all day in elementary school. To avoid the world around me, I practically drowned myself in media. There was always something about fiction that enchanted me, captivating my mind. By middle school, I found myself with a group of friends for the first time, friends who enjoyed things the same way that I did. Without access to the new school's library I was dejected, my usual hobby gated off to me. I don't know what came first, but I began to doodle. As I doodled, I slowly started to take pride in it. At some point, I wanted to keep drawing, I didn't want to stop. I wanted to get better.

The point of no return for me was when I realized that I could make the things that I've seen my whole life... the cartoons and comics, the book covers and illustrations. I had a goal for the first time, a life that was spent floating along doing my best to find something for me. I realized that I could also create the things that captivated me much like I had seen in the books I read so long ago. I could make people see the things that my overactive imagination had always shown me. Just the thought of that made me want to try.

And so I used a pencil and paper and drew. I drew and drew and drew. For the first two years of my growth I used exclusively pencil, just learning the fundamentals. I still have sketchbooks filled with amateur drawings back to front. But I kept doing it, and I kept getting better. The most fundamental lesson that I've learned in the pursuit of quality art is that if you want to get good at something, do it poorly. Today I still draw in pencil, but paint, colored pencil, and digital art are now also in my portfolio.

I don't see myself stopping anytime soon. Ideally I'd keep making pictures until I'm old and brittle, and then I'd still try to continue. I do want to make a living from this passion, I want to be able to draw constantly without concern. If I continue practicing, and hone my imagination and craft to that point. I'd be able to live my life happily and without regret.

OLECIA G.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Art is something I've been doing for quite a long time. It's a way I can really express myself and how I feel. I like it because I can do whatever I want with it. There are countless ways to create something and spread a message. What art means to me is a way to create (obviously) but to create something that is part of you.

The main kind of art I do now is animation. I've been doing it for a while and I think I'm getting better at it. I think it is cool to see my characters come to life. I use an app on my iPad to create my animations and when I am done, I upload them to YouTube. They are not complex or detailed, but it gives me something to do and a way to express how I feel.

When I create my animations, I usually animate to a song I like at the time. As I have learned to create animations over the past few years, I owe my inspiration to my friends and fans. They inspire me to keep going and to try my best to make something that is good. Without them, I wouldn't be here today.

I will continue to create animations, but I don't think I will pursue that as a career. I will continue it as a hobby and I will never stop because I know I have come so far. I feel like I can't because it has become a part of me. Maybe one day I'll be able to inspire others.

SOPHIA H.

ARTIST STATEMENT

When I was younger, I had this Disney Princess book that I would always look at. One day, I was looking at the princesses and their figures and decided that I would try to draw it. I guess you could say this was the start of my artistic journey. Art then became a main part of my life. I was good at it, and found it calming, especially whenever I needed a moment to myself. As years passed, I continued to draw and realized art is something I really love; I will carry it with me throughout the rest of my life.

When it comes to the kinds of art that I make, it varies. I enjoy creating realistic portraits, working with acrylics, and doing digital art. I like to keep to my graphite and colored pencils, acrylics, inking pens, and occasionally watercolors when creating my artwork. What is so great about art is that it can be created using just about anything. Whenever I start an art project that I am really excited about, I will work on it for many hours non-stop. Throughout my high school years, I've been able to discover the kinds of art I enjoy creating, and have been able to produce many meaningful pieces.

I can definitely say that I am not the same artist now, as I was when I first stepped foot into the art room at SOTA. I've been lucky to have been surrounded by many other young artists. The feedback that I have received from my teachers and peers has allowed me to improve my artwork and skills. I've been taught to take chances and think outside the box. Looking back at some of my past art pieces, it amazes me to see the improvement and change. These past four years have been a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Throughout my journey in the art program, I've discovered the person who I want to be; I can not thank my peers and teachers enough for all of the support and fun memories. I also couldn't have gotten to where I am now without the support from my friends and family. Next year, I plan on going to college for mathematics and maybe physics. Although it isn't art, I certainly plan on continuing to draw and paint and develop my artistic skills further. Whether it be a part of my future profession or not, art will always be a part of me, now and forever.

ANDREW H.

ARTIST STATEMENT

I have been compelled to create art for most of my life. Whether my motivation was something about expression, completion, satisfaction, or a mix of all three, I have always been drawn to creating.

When I was younger I would draw and doodle in class and get in trouble for it, especially during tests or a time designated to note taking. This got progressively worse the older I got, because after third grade we could start using pens. This was a completely new, yet intriguing medium to me. While a freshman at SOTA, a few of my art pieces spiked the attention of my peers, who stated that I had a prominent strong suit in inking.

I've also always been drawn to photography, and for as long as I can remember, I have been fascinated that my parents had a camera in their pockets at all times! Now, I mainly take photos and sometimes I ink, for both academic and accomplishment purposes.

TALIYAH K.

ARTIST STATEMENT

When I create art I tend to project what I feel into it. I like art because it's a form of expression that allows you to be yourself without judgement. My relationship with art has really developed from when I was in seventh grade to now.

Over the years art has shown me to broaden my horizons and to experiment with trying new things. When I was in seventh grade I was super afraid to take risks so I would always tell myself that I couldn't do it and I always created the same style of art. Over the years, I worked on not being afraid to try new things. This made me realize that I enjoy photography.

I also tried various other forms of art which made me realize that I don't love art... I like art. Honestly taking artistic risks helped me learn to take risks in my life. Art has helped me discover my true passion which is Music. It's honestly helped me discover bits and pieces of myself.

I do like art a lot though. My favorite form is photography. What inspires me when I am creating is music. Once I get a good vibe flowing through the music; that's when my ideas start flooding in. I don't really have a specific style of art anymore. I kind of just go with the flow.

Currently, I'm not really working on anything specific. I am trying to get more creative with art and trying to broaden my horizons a little bit more. Just trying to stay motivated to keep creating. I've learned over the past years to strive for more, work hard, and to not be afraid to experiment, and take risks. I plan on pursuing art as a forever hobby. I would love to go to college for music to pursue a career in music. I can honestly thank art for that because without it I wouldn't have discovered my passion for music, and the many other hobbies I enjoy.

ALEESA K.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Ever since I was young, I was passionate about art. Drawing was a hobby for me. I drew almost everyday. I would always get scolded by my parents for always drawing on the walls. It got to the point where they would refuse to buy crayons for me! A lot of my art teachers in elementary school were impressed with what I was able to achieve with my drawing. As I got closer to high school, my passion for drawing started to fade. I grew distant from my art and drew less everyday. I was too focused on maintaining my grades, AP classes, and Regents courses. I lost myself in the idea of being the ideal student my parents wanted me to be. I was told that art wouldn't get me anywhere, and that I wouldn't be financially successful. This made me feel like my art wasn't important which led me to believe that I wasn't good enough to pursue art as a career. However, I couldn't let go of what I really loved to do; so many of the pieces I make are based on family experiences or expressing my emotions.

Creating artwork and expressing myself through art was sort of like therapy. I get a warm feeling when I finally can say "I finished," a piece. This keeps me motivated and happy. I keep challenging myself and explore different mediums, such as watercolor, acrylic, and charcoal. I even started digitally drawing on an iPad with my finger. I learned which medium I liked best, and which was the hardest for me to use. I like working with charcoal the most because I only have to focus on the highlights and darks using two shades. Charcoal portraits are my best works. I love learning about the face and different emotions. My favorite thing to draw are faces and portraits. I find different facial structures and expressions fascinating and fun to depict.

As my senior year comes to an end, the thought of what I want to become and do with my life fills my head. I wonder what I can do with my art and where it can lead. I have decided to pursue a career in communication design. I want to work with others and discover different types of art and improve my skills. I would like to expand my knowledge of digital media and create projects that would benefit those with language barriers and people who have a hard time with organization or staying motivated.

MIRIAM L.

ARTIST STATEMENT

I was not always the most popular person when I first moved to Rochester at the age of nine. Art has always been my escape from the real world and all the problems I faced. Creating art helps me cope with the challenges which come with life. For example, my anxiety. Most kids my age have it and don't know how to deal with it, or don't find a way to deal with it. I deal with my anxiety through art.

I like all types of art and am skilled in a lot of them but photography is my main passion. It is what I will pursue in my future at college and as a career. Sometimes, people try to bring me down, and say my art wasn't good enough, but I kept practicing and now I believe I am really good at what I do, especially photography.

I have learned so much from my teachers and friends and even my family members. Before coming to SOTA, I was skeptical about whether or not I should come here for art, but I'm glad I did. I met so many wonderful teachers and friends. I am proud to say I have two amazing best friends who always tell me that I'm good enough, never let me down, and are always there for me.

I have improved throughout the years thanks to the many supportive people who stood by me through it all. Even the ones who didn't support me helped me grow. They made me want to better myself, not for them, or for my family, or my friends... but for ME.

KAY N. W.

ARTIST STATEMENT

My ideas were from my soul, and the only way I could ever express it freely was through my art. It was my only escape from reality. As time progressed, I wanted to achieve more with it because it was the only thing I knew at that time, so I entered an art school. I was super thrilled when I got the acceptance letter, even if it was against everyone's wishes. I wanted to do what felt right and I enrolled. I would experiment more and more with my art every single day until my hands were sore and my eyes hurt.

One day I hit an art block that lasted for three years. I've never really experienced an artist block. I always knew what to draw because my head was always full of thoughts. But I no longer knew how to express my thoughts onto a canvas. I had to force art more and more. I slowly lost the will to even pick up a pencil. This made me realize that I'm not as talented as I'd like to be and I stopped drawing. Instead I compared every little thing I did to other people's work.

I was never satisfied with my art, even when I received validation from others. I have always held myself to an extremely high standard; one that I know was unachievable for anyone. At that time, I was confused about what I wanted in my art or even if I wanted to pursue it. I loved all of the art I created in middle school but I still thought they were all failures. In high school I would spend time on a piece and then ditch it. The word 'practice' was not in my vocabulary; I wanted everything to be exact and perfect. When things weren't perfect, I would give up. It made me a horrible artist and my purpose for making art felt wrong.

I struggled a lot with my art throughout high school. I was in a crummy state and could not get anywhere with my art. Just recently though, I rediscovered my love for art. It's what has kept me going when everything felt unbearable. Even when I had a massive art block, it was thrilling and exhilarating. I doodled dumb ideas and sketches. I didn't necessarily complete the concepts. But the fact that I still enjoyed these things made me realize I don't need to be like others, and I don't need to see myself as an artist. Art is art and it's what the creator makes out of it. It can be mimics, traces, inspirations, thoughts, emotions, it's anything and everything. I'll do whatever I please with my art... I am its sole creator.