

Hi everyone, and thank you so much for being here today. I'm grateful for the chance to share this space with you and to talk a little more about the work, and the process and ideas that have shaped it.

This project has been a journey—creatively, emotionally, and personally—and I'm excited to open up a bit about what's behind the work you see here and what I learned along the way. Before diving in I want to take a moment to acknowledge that this project was far from a solo effort. This project wouldn't have had the opportunity to come to life if I didn't have amazing people around open and ready to help. From things like brainstorming, refining ideas, and even just being a second pair of hands I've had the privilege of collaborating with and leaning on others every step of the way. I would like to say a special thanks to my partner Kai for being the brains behind any video production you see here today, thank you to my beautiful friends who modeled the garments to create these amazingly huge photo prints, thank you to Jordan Jackson my mentor for keeping my head level and helping me work through a lot of creative and practical problems. And lastly I want to thank everyone involved in the installation of the work.

Now that I have had the chance to share some gratitude I would like to start by giving a brief reintroduction to this project.

In Fall 2024 I was tasked with coming up with a final thesis project. My mind was full of lots of different ideas, but through weeks of brainstorming I landed on a concept that felt both personally meaningful and creatively challenging. From long hours of refining my ideas "A Love Letter to Learning" was born. It all started as a personal challenge: what would it look like to dedicate time intentionally to learning something new—and to document that journey along the way? From there, it evolved into a project that explored topics like creative endurance, confidence in unknown landscapes, and, ultimately, it became a tribute to my lifelong love of learning.

Over the course of the first few months of this project, the parameters of what I would actually be delivering changed several times. As I thought through from beginning to end of how my creative journey could be captured, some pieces of the project grew and some shrank but what remained the same was the basis of the project. I would spend four months learning how to linocut and print on garments, while simultaneously documenting my journey through, journaling, photos, and videos.

I chose linocut because I wanted the medium to be something I was intrigued by, but not skilled in. Along with choosing linocut as a new medium, I also gave a lot of thought to what I would be printing on. I decided early on that I wanted to work with upcycled garments. I have experience sewing along with other types of garment construction. This could have easily been another way I could have challenged myself for this project. However, I chose thrifted upcycled garments for two reasons. The first reason being sustainability. By choosing to work with upcycled garments, I challenged myself to reimagine the potential in what already exists—to look at ordinary, discarded items and see new possibilities in them. I was excited by the idea that through the creation of a stamp library, I could build a system for continuous transformation. With just the

tools I developed throughout this project, I would have the ability to take a second hand garment and turn it into a piece I genuinely cherish. This stamp library I have created through the process of this project is one that I will be able to continue to use for myself, or for those around me. Something I can expand on and add to a repertoire of upcycling methods I already partake in.

The other reason that I chose to work with upcycled garments was so that I would be able to focus on one medium at a time. Learning to linocut would already be a challenge for me, however my goals for the project weren't about mastering relief printing or making a meaningful contribution to the art world in this particular medium. Really the medium for this project wasn't the most important decision- it could have been anything. Instead, the real challenge I set for myself was much more personal: to follow a creative thread simply because it sparked curiosity, and to allow myself to fully engage with it without worrying about whether or not I would do well. This project became a way to practice showing up for creativity without the weight of expectation. To explore freely, to learn for the sake of learning, and to create without the fear of failing. In that way, *A Love Letter to Learning* became not just an exploration of a new medium, but a deeper reflection on what it means to be a lifelong learner and an artist willing to begin again.

Once I began to understand what this project truly meant to me as an artist—and had the early seeds of what it might become—I found myself asking: visually, what could evoke the feeling of paying homage to a lifelong love of learning? What would the content of the work be? I decided that taking inspiration from the places that I have learned most in life would be the most appropriate decision. I started to look inwards and towards the past of the places learning has felt the most connected throughout my life and I found people and I found places.

The first place I found inspiration was through family and friends. They have always been a major source of inspiration in my life. From long car rides filled with conversations about our future projects, to shared meals laughing about our days. The people around me consistently spark new ideas and help me through creative blocks.

Beyond the relationships that have shaped me, I also began reflecting on the environments that have nurtured my curiosity—the physical spaces where learning felt tangible and alive. Nature is a space where I am always finding new inspiration. With every change of the season there are new textures, patterns, and colors to be explored. My phone holds albums worth of photos of little leaves I see on a walk with my dog or of interesting colored trees. These elements of my daily life have fueled my creative practice for many years.

Another space that has deeply influenced my relationship with learning is the kitchen. Growing up, I was always in the kitchen, eager to help whoever was cooking. It was one of the first places I felt a true hunger for knowledge. I wanted to get my hands on whatever the “grown ups” were doing and learn to do it by myself. That spark for a desire to learn and do things on my own was so important in my relationship with learning, that desire was nurtured and I was given the confidence that made me feel like I could do anything.

Finally, another meaningful source of learning for me has been travel. I love finding myself fully immersed in a new city. A city where I've never seen their newspapers, graffiti, or restaurant menus. Whenever I travel I often spend my time browsing local bookstores, visiting historical architecture, and walking through the streets absorbing inspiration. Taking the time to travel and be outside of familiar spaces has also taught me to remain flexible and to stay curious because there is always something new to learn.

In reflecting on various people, places, and experiences, it became clear to me that learning has never been a singular isolated process for me. This project is a convergence of a lot of influential forces in my life, drawing inspiration from lived experiences and applying lessons in creativity and flexibility to something new.

In the very beginning of the project I had a lot of difficulty processing all the ideas swirling around in my head. I'm naturally a very expansive person and can see where a project could continue on forever. Limiting myself to a finite undertaking when it is something I'm really passionate about can be hard. I found solutions to this by setting a comfortable scope that still felt challenging. Further on into the development process, I often found myself getting lost in planning and dreaming and not focusing enough on world building. But once I took the time to step back and establish key sources of inspiration for the tone of the project, it allowed me to have something to refer back to and helped me maintain a cohesive vision throughout the various stages of creation. The process began by looking back at spaces where learning felt easy, and times where you felt like you could do anything. Through the key visuals of this project I wanted people to feel that same ongoing curiosity towards learning and confidence, to approach it with an open mind. To create a basis with which I could ground myself throughout the project, I came up with key words to embody the essence I wanted to convey. Those key reference words were:

Playfulness which embodies the joy and excitement in starting a new project; the anticipation of what might happen and the endless possibilities of what you may learn. It also encourages experimentation, allowing for unexpected discoveries along the way.

Grounded, capturing the essence keeping a level head, not letting yourself get caught up in the potential of a project not going the way you expected. It represents an airy free feeling that is the antithesis of devolving into chaos due to frustration.

Lastly handmade representing the sensorial experience of physical mediums. It also embraces the inherent imperfections of working with your hands. I wanted the final prints to reflect this process, ensuring that every part of the visual language ties back to the core message of appreciation for process work.

My hope with the essence of these pillars I could convey a feeling of serene whimsy that sparks curiosity. Reflecting back now, with all of the pieces of the puzzle completed I feel that through the prints, in addition to photos and video. I was able to build a world in which this feeling was conveyed in a way I felt personally deeply connected to.

Throughout the entirety of this project I had a lot of major and minor road bumps. The most significant problem points occurred whenever I entered a new phase of the project. I felt the most frustration when beginning to carve and beginning to print. I think the reason for this frustration was a mixture of difficulty switching into a new task I wasn't as comfortable in and the issues that arose when learning how to work with new mediums. When I first started to carve I was in a completely new zone that I wasn't familiar with. In the past I had experimented with linocut materials very briefly but had never carved more than one thing before. So to me taking on the task of carving a stamp library with more than 20 stamps felt both exciting and really daunting. At first I had a lot of problems with different materials and figuring out the hiccups with each one. But building that learned knowledge of how each tool worked, how each different type of carving medium performed, felt so gratifying. There are so many people who have relief printed before me but having the hands-on experience of figuring something out by myself made me feel like I was the first person to discover fire. I think that is why the carving felt like my favorite part of this project. I had the opportunity to learn things and shape the experience into what I needed to achieve my goals and that felt really special.

The transition from carving to printing was really hard for me. As someone with limited linocut experience I also have very limited relief printing experience. I felt really nervous to start printing. I had all these amazing clothing pieces that I thrifted and they all felt so unique and integral to the project and even though I got plenty of extras to leave room for mistakes they felt so precious. I was really worried I would mess it up. But through messing up I learned how to handle the materials. I learned the right pressure to print them with, how much to ink the stamps, and some other useful bits of information to help me in the process. I learned messing up is integral to the process.

Through all the ups and downs of the project I chose to keep a journal to process how I was feeling throughout each step of the way. Those journal entries eventually turned into what is the process book over here on the wall. And inside that journal contained each one of those important lessons I learned throughout the process of diving head first into something I felt uncertain about. Throughout various stages of the process I learned some important lessons and developed personal mantras to tell myself whenever I was feeling frustrated or defeated. I would like to share some of those with you.

The first lesson I learned was one that formed the basis of this project. That lesson was "to make something good first you must be willing to make something you think is bad." I thought about this phrase a lot during this process. I wrote it first as "you must be willing to make something bad" but later rephrased it to "something YOU think is bad" because I wanted this idea I was reminding myself of to reflect the truth that sometimes our standards are unrealistic and really what we made wasn't bad we just can feel that way at times, especially in heightened times of stress. While I was printing this was a phrase I was reminding myself of often, because I felt so nervous to mess up on the final pieces.

I'd wish I could tell you I'm a very patient person and that I'm extremely tolerant of making mistakes. But the truth is I actually am a huge perfectionist and I can easily get frustrated when I mess up. One of my biggest goals for this project was to learn to be more ok with those mistakes. That is why the biggest thing I had to remind myself is that it's ok to make something I think isn't up to the standard I was hoping for.

The next lesson I learned is to "Take a breath, it will be there when you feel less frustrated". This is always true, I think it's important to never abandon something that you have interest in purely out of frustration. It's always important to return. Throughout this project my tolerance to failure grew, and those moments of pause to recompose myself grew shorter and shorter. At the beginning of this project a significant mistake would result in taking a day or two off to regain composure and confidence. It shortened each time I made a mistake until I reached a point where I no longer felt conquered by a mistake, I learned to pivot and get back up faster each time something went wrong.

Those mistakes that naturally come with learning something new can feel particularly frustrating when working with a physical medium. Oftentimes I am reluctant to persist in something new based on whether or not it's "worth it" to me. This mindset is why I had to remind myself nearly every day, "There are no materials wasted when you're learning something new." Taking this approach to learning a new skill helped me maintain confidence and focus in what I was doing.

The last lesson I learned was something that took me by surprise. This was one thing I only learned through the process of doing, and that is "Learning will reveal new truths you weren't expecting." I now believe that learning something new doesn't just add to your toolkit, it changes the way you think, the way you approach problems, or maybe influences your daily life through a new routine. Through this project I did learn how to linocut, I'm still far from being an expert but I gained so much experience with other skills like patience, perseverance, and creative problem solving.

I feel that through this process, I've been pushed into a new and exciting place in my creative practice- one that feels like a natural extension of my previous work. I've worked on several projects centered around lifelong learning, but this project allowed me to put that value into practice for myself, rather than just highlighting it to others. Much of my earlier work leaned heavily into a bright, bold, and playful visual style. But this project gave me the chance to bridge a gap into a space where I'm more mindful of which elements to amplify and which to hold back, allowing the most meaningful parts of the design to shine. This project has been a practice in restraint for myself, and I approached that in a few key ways. I love to play with a lot of color and at times it has been limiting me from pushing forward into different aesthetics. For this project I decided on a limited color palette of black and white for the prints. I felt this would allow me to focus my attention more on the actual forms and the placement of the prints rather than being concerned with how color might interact with the thrifted garments I selected. This experience of practicing restraint and setting personal guidelines has allowed me to see different solutions to creative problems. I think that this project has really been a stepping stone for me to move into a more carefully thought out and strategic area of my creative practice. I still love colorful designs,

I still love bold graphics, but now I feel that I have a better understanding on when more really is more and when it's important to practice restraint to let something shine.

When it comes to how this experience applies to real-world work, this project has helped me strengthen existing skills that I'm really happy to continue building on.

Brand identity design played a major role throughout the process. A lot of my prior experience lies in this corner of the design world. From the prints to the promotional materials, I was constantly thinking about how every element aligned with the core values and aesthetic of the project. This experience allowed me to push further my understanding of how an identity can manifest through different formats and platforms.

I also had the chance to strengthen my creative direction skills. I was lucky to have a lot of people around me open to helping. Through that collaboration I was able to practice the skills of seeing a vision channeled through others' work. My partner Kai helped capture the essence of this project through a video that lives in the other room of this exhibit.

Lastly, I had the opportunity to expand my knowledge of publication design. For this project, I created a process book that captures my thoughts and emotions throughout the journey. My goal was to design something that felt true to the experiences I was having at the time—something evocative and personal. Drawing from my existing knowledge of core principles of typography and layout, I pushed the boundaries of what I already knew to create a book that felt responsive to the emotions I was feeling in each journal entry.

Looking ahead, I feel this project has opened up new possibilities for me. It's given me the confidence to tackle projects I once thought were out of my reach. The lessons I learned, like embracing mistakes and finding beauty in the unexpected moments of a project, will absolutely shape the work I create going forward.

As I wrap up, I just want to say how meaningful it's been to not only create this work but to reflect on the process that brought it to life. This project has taught me that learning isn't always about gaining technical skills—it's just as much about growth in mindset, patience, and creative confidence.

I hope that in sharing this journey, you're able to see not just the final product, but the spirit behind it: one of curiosity, openness, and the courage to begin again. Thank you so much for being here and for letting me share this love letter to learning with you.

