

(1) Intro

My name is Claire Weitz and I am a twenty year old artist emerging out of almost ten years of artistic education.

In my time at PNCA, I've had the opportunity to pivot from my comfort zone of digital illustration, to diving headfirst into a variety of analog mediums.

I came to love every single one of them, I don't think there's a medium I'm not willing to try.

But, after a certain point of archiving every single piece I've made, I realized in my goal to improve technically, I had no sense of narrative in my artwork that felt authentic to my personality as an artist.

change slide to grid

That is why I conceptualized, "The Beauty of the Mundane."

To document the progress made during college, why not literally encapsulate my daily life at the end of my degree in a series?

I was inspired by the "eat, work, sleep" cycle reminiscent of old industrialist ideals and transformed it into a visual cycle of boring "must-do's".

Artwork is the way I connect with others.

It gives me a way to tangibly communicate indirectly.

So I narrowed my subjects down to my own "must-do's"; waking up, which we will call (A), brushing my teeth (B), making food (C), doing the dishes (D), and walking home (E). Each painting depicts what I'm observing, often including the action with my own hands. Then, read from left to right, are changes in medium. Since collecting

my library of materials, I knew I wanted to use them all in a project at some point. The question then was how?

Do I mix them together as I have in personal work or keep them separately?

Inspired from the semester's coursework from the class Visual Techniques, I decided not only to keep them separated, but use them as a translation of how the same action can feel different depending on the day.

Before college, I almost quit all of my creative endeavors due to the poison of comparison and inequitable attention.

What brought me back to the canvas was simplifying my intentions back down to **creation**.

To be an artist is to create, and I quickly realized I needed to focus my love back to making.

That is about a third of the reason why I originally chose this concept.

The other is to encapsulate my current present into a series.

I struggle with bouts of dissociation, so in identifying my spaces through my point of view, I ground myself back into the reality that's soon to be my past.

Then, in the future, I'm creating something to look back to: hours of work poured into beautifying a mundane reality I'm used to seeing everyday.

However, most importantly, the big and major reason I chose a project so hefty in execution is I felt this would be one of my last opportunities to do something so analog.

None of this project was finalized digitally, and it holds a lot of tangible mark making I can't fully achieve in the same way.

The key lesson I've taken from doing this is of how far observation takes you in strengthening technical confidence.

But, what kept me going for the past six-months straight was just sitting and painting on the physical canvas and watch slowly as my compositions emerged.

Pause a lil

(2) Concept/Aesthetic Explanation (Inspiration)

By doing this series, I've developed an appreciation for the many moving and unmoving artifacts I found throughout my apartment.

For the context of the physical space you see, I share a studio with my girlfriend and have for the past year now. I've been fortunate enough to find a partner I can share such a small space without issue.

Right before, my living situation was a catastrophic roommate conflict in a house.

I had an arrangement where I ended up spending about four weeks cleaning, spackling and painting each room to pay off my deposit. This house was supposed to be available for the foreseeable future, and despite me doing everything right, the people were just wrong.

I moved in and out within two months.

Time flew right past me as I juggled that nightmare situation and my creative practice.

It was my first semester of junior year, and it just seemed like the work would never stop.

Once it slowed back down, I wanted to finally take the opportunity to admire what I had gained. Really, again, appreciate it.

I've experienced similar degrees of chaos since the day I was born, but this was on a different severity than ever before, and I didn't want to focus on that anymore.

My main mode of meditation was working with my hands and mark making, so why not incorporate that back into my thesis.

Good pause here

(3) Project

The main setting of my painting are of the environments I *used* see on a daily basis, as of six months ago.

As expected, my space slowly morphed as time went on, but I wouldn't be able to predict to the extent this change would happen.

It's visible in the series, as what was on the countertops and cabinets in the bathroom changes drastically, but there are other moments where my environments still look exactly the same.

Remarkably, the project as we see it today stayed faithful to the concept I had proposed.

All of my main objectives were gridded out and I continued to organized in this visual numeric/alphabetic manner to depict the rotation of mediums while the subjects stay the same.

Since my deliverables were well defined, I didn't run into any major pivots away from my original aesthetic and concept.

Immediately after last focus week, I had to purchase all of my materials.

My palette was set strictly at Prussian blue and Cadmium orange pigments, and I took advantage of a Christmas sale for fifteen canvases. I had done a few test

paintings with the materials, so any troubleshooting with different binders or brands could be solved before working with my bigger canvases.

My partner was so gracious to set up a corner in our studio with a tarp for painting, and I realized I had the tremendous opportunity to record the progress.

This took up a larger portion of my attention, but it was absolutely worth the effort. I've organized each video by medium, which will now be playing in the background as I continue.

But, as you can see, I do really enjoy working on multiple projects at once to keep my brain stimulated.

Yet, illustrating the same composition three times over is absolutely easier said than done.

I had (what I thought was) a deep understanding since I had regularly sketched numerous thumbnails, delivered numerous weekly drawings, that fifteen was nothing. Last spring, I had three classes decide on book projects totaling in a whopping 19 spreads by finals! That, however, was diverse in subject matter.

With that nonchalance, I started my under-paintings. I thought again, "This'll be a breeze, these are going by so quickly."

Keywords here are "thumbnails", "sketch", "underpainting", because especially when I was taking reference photos, I didn't realize how many background items *don't* move between compositions.

Conceptually, I adore this outcome and I feel including all of these details are core to the mundanity. As I had said in my proposal, "Finding the beauty in the mundane is as simple as changing your mindset on how regular items are perceived."

But it must not be overstated the visceral redundancy I had felt painting the same/similar compositions, it's not for a weak mind.

There became a point once I would switch that I'd think, "Hadn't I done that already?"

Looking from my references to the space I was working in became surreal after a point.

I think the only barrier keeping me from truly going insane with this concept was the unrealistic colors, so props to me in the past for that foresight.

From the beginning of the painting process, there were many times I would lose perception of what exactly I was painting.

The reference positioned beside me allowed that without losing track of the end goal.

Within my base shapes, I'd soon find a familiar object emerge in the composition and I'd remember again what I was doing.

But, instead my main focus was on three things:

1) Blue or Orange?

2) What value is intersecting?

3) Sharp or Soft corner?

These are incredibly abstract questions, but they would stay floating in my mind every time I sat down to work.

Number one, "Blue or Orange" is exactly as it seems.

I used a personalized gradient map to streamline my value usage, but there were still many times I would need to consciously decide which color would work the best.

It doesn't appear in the time-lapses, but I began holding brushes in both hands to keep a bold separation from my complimentary colors.

Number two, "What value is intersecting," is how I capture likability.

Instead of thinking of each object as it exists in the space, I only saw it as a high, medium or low value, and if it had a sharp intersection of a high and low value that I needed to pay extra attention to.

To keep a clear main focus in each of these busy paintings, I attempted to keep my boldest contrasts contained to a few points to lead the eye.

Number three, "Sharp or Soft corner?"

This didn't become a priority until after my second midterm review (due to scheduling it was split in two) where I was reminded of the musicality of paint.

There's an inherent rhythm that's to be morphed, and if I overwork too many places, it can be visually overstimulating, so there's a delicate balance I played with in the process.

Overall, at the end of the day repeating this constricted of subject matter across multiple mediums is difficult.

It requires a lot of focus to tackle as many moving parts in this project.

Surprisingly, I had only goofed up once in my grid system.

I had purchased extra canvases in case this were to happen, and I had used the wrong medium on the wrong subject. You'll see it later in the gouache video process.

My main trouble was deciding definitively what my focus point would be in each piece, and this became a priority after it was mentioned in my midterm review.

I didn't design too much in the forefront of planning, instead relying on my instincts when taking my references and instinctual decisions once my paintings were more actualized.

All of this requires me to be confident in my methods, which sent me up a very steep learning curve with every single medium.

But as my background in choir taught me; mess up a note, keep singing.

Unfortunately, my interest in my photographic references contributed to a mindset that would send my cortisol up the wall.

I worry my lack of a "finished" or "understandable" product causes me to overlook the progress I had already made, plus the amount of time spent.

Whenever that would happen, I'd take a step back for the session, perhaps eat or sleep, then work on it the next chance I'd get.

Too, thankfully, recording diligently breaks the illusion of inertia every time.

In hindsight, I over planned what came before the midterm review and kind of left it to the wind for the rest.

I also was relaxed on what I considered "50% of the way" which made for a slightly incomplete perception during my reviews and a doubling-down on the work in the second half.

I was frazzled at times, but I'm glad it eventually lined up in the ways they did.

Pause a little bit

By the end of the journey, I was fighting not only the known battle against time, but a side tussle to adequately divert the energy into it.

The desire and willingness were two separate demons.

This is something I will be working on in the future.

I've always had this feeling exist, and it's one of my most useful introspective tools. To be able to see where my fatigue affects my motivation is key to figuring out how fast I can realistically work as a professional illustrator.

Furthermore, I feel setting up my success through routine now will aide me in a plethora of pathways in illustration, and keep me from revisiting another wave of burnout.

(4) Mediums:

Now, to fully articulate the extent of my experience, I want to talk through my overarching process I used to universalize the series, then dive into each medium individually.

I originally went about executing each painting in a particular order of medium because of drying time.

Oil mediums take the longest, so they were knocked out first, setting the foundation of what the series would look like.

Then, with the other three mediums that were acrylic and water based, progress could be made quickly with multiple sessions that can be done in a day.

After midterm reviews, I loosely followed my first order of mediums, but prioritized paintings based off which ones I felt were the weakest.

Ubiquitously, I began with a diluted underpainting, using orange as my base and mid tone color, then built up opacity by carving shapes of a dark value points with my blue.

Technically, I was doing the same thing but with different reactions, then adjusted my approach according to how the medium responded.

I had to use white as a sort of medium + eraser as my first passes were quite dark.

By doing that, there were moments I lost the looseness of my underpainting and the play happening within that that scared me.

But, as I mentioned before, I would stop for the day and take another step back.

Going as dark as I did early on ended up being a mistake with my water-based paintings.

By doing those on canvas, I could quite literally pick up the pigment I'd placed down, but this process was destructive and unpredictable.

By destructive, I mean the white gesso would show back through, and any remaining water would drip down affecting everything underneath.

Financially, I attempted to enact my material diversity as cheaply as possible. My material budget sat below \$300.

I've found there are equal advantages and disadvantages to collaborating cheap and expensive materials. It was just simple enough that I would try to save my expensive materials for the end so I wasn't using up too much.

The price tag is excluding the brushes I already had on hand as well as the lovely bestowing of retiring oil paints from my mentor, so I didn't use the "Cheep" brand.

Using cheaper materials overall did become an issue around the oil pastel section in particular, however.

The binders in inexpensive pastels would reactivate and smudge any pigment below, and my small studio with screen-less latch windows from the 70's made it difficult to frequently spray my canvases down with fixative.

So, onto any additional notes about each of the five mediums.

They have their own voice, so I wanted to give the opportunity to talk about what they were each like.

Oil Paint (1)

My favorite medium.

Looking back to every single time I've worked with acrylic, I was using it as if it would behave like oil.

I yearned for oil paint before I knew what it was.

I picked it up last summer, as my major didn't really require its use anymore.

All in all, it was incredibly enjoyable getting to play with this medium with an efficient amount of time.

Its difficulties were the patience it needs.

I'm not even confident the three paintings are dry to this day, but it paid off with the pure vibrancy I could achieve with my approach.

Oil Pastel (2)

Very physically demanding, and a bit tricky, but it's fun in the way it connects me back to the tangible nature of the project.

I had a bit of troubleshooting throughout transitioning between linseed oil and palette knives to blend and scrape away the pastel to shape my forms. Initially, I went in with adjacent colors to orange, including a red, but it leaned too cool and stood out like a sore thumb, so I stayed strictly within different brands of orange and Prussian blue.

I didn't use many opportunities to directly mix either pigment together as I didn't like the brown it made.

Acrylic (3)

I've improved a lot in my speed of using acrylic since taking Painting for Illustration, as I've learned not to use it like oil. The plastic-like base is quite obvious to me, and crucially, white was the only thing to cut through the blue without tinting the paintings green.

This medium became very obviously green when directly mixed, so there are subtle moments when I included that in the final paintings.

Gouache (4)

Gouache is a lovely mix between watercolor and thick opaque textures.

I hadn't actually gotten a chance to use the medium until college, but as soon as I discovered it, it became a reoccurring favorite of mine.

What surprised me the most was that destructive quality I mentioned earlier with water. Lifting the pigment to reapply a major correction. It again was just very unpredictable and because my paintings were tilted upright, there were drips that could destroy every layer placed below it. In response, I transitioned into more opaque layers earlier than I'd anticipated, but it made for weird mistakes I needed to fix.

Watercolor (5)

Finally watercolor, an old friend I've worked with long enough to see stand as my enemy. Albeit, it's watercolor on canvas, with no proper absorbency layer or paper or precautions.. so I set my failure up from the start. And, I forgot watercolor works best in layers, so I whiplashed my own attention straight into translucent watercolor; a free flowing, unpredictable, liquid, who once again creates destructive drips down my up-right canvas.

Pause

Maybe she wasn't my favorite choice in the series. In hindsight, I probably could've gone for a similar opaque medium, but I actually don't know what I would've chosen other than watercolor or ink. I know watercolor's versatility well, and it still lends to an interesting juxtaposition to the series as a whole! But, I needed to break the medium for it to work.

I also broke one of my rules I had set up early in the process; I was to use the white of the canvas for my whites in the watercolor series to accommodate for all the things I mentioned before. Alas my flurry broke that focus, and I lost my patience a bit which necessitated white gouache. Unfortunate, but if I wanted that legibility to shine, I needed to bend the rules I had concretely locked in my brain.

Finally, WHAT NOW?

Reflective:

I believe I've left the journey of this project diligent and determined.

This is not the end of these extensively planned series, and this is nowhere near the retirement of my analog materials.

The process must not only be trusted, but embraced with a warm hug. Once I emerged from the haze is when I'll believe that in my core, but I believe in its messaging, and every time I make a piece of artwork, I remember we all start from a blank white canvas.

I've experienced a mixture of enjoyment, challenge and satisfaction within my painterly illustration, and I'm excited to continue working within it for the foreseeable future.

In conclusion, I'm proud of myself for working on such a dense series. Within this series' volume and diversity of medium and environment, I could see this being a good portfolio piece for anyone to get a picture of what I can do.

Environments were at a point considered one of my weakest points, and now they feel as familiar to me as portraits. Since the very beginning, switching mediums constantly reignites a novelty that I latch onto every time.

I am and always will be a multimedia artist and an artist willing to expand further out of my comfort zone to improve. For now, I'm going to rest in the very same homey space I've poured hours into recreating for you all.

Thank you.