

**SENIOR  
THESIS  
EXHIBITION** 2

2019



REBEKAH BENJAMIN

BRIANA DEFRANCO

ELENA DELL'ACQUA

ITZAMARY DOMINGUEZ

MARY HEINERT

SADIE INMAN

LILLIAN JONES

HOPE LUDWIG

SADIE McCLELLAND

MARIA MENDEZ

EMELY SANDOVAL



## GALLERY DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

As part of the Art and Art History Department curriculum, art majors have the opportunity each year to exhibit in the college's professional gallery space, the Hewitt Gallery of Art. This second of two group exhibitions features the work of 11 practice-based art majors who take their Senior Art Seminar in the fall under the guidance and mentorship of Professors Millie Falcaro and Beth Shipley. This exhibition presents a broad range of senior capstone projects that engage the mediums of painting, drawing, design, and photography. The use of the figure and portraiture are the dominating themes of the exhibit. The breadth and scope of media and styles attest to the diversity of approaches and individual visions that are the hallmark of the art program at Marymount Manhattan College. Join us in celebrating our students' accomplishments.

Hallie Cohen | *Director of the Hewitt Gallery of Art*

FEBRUARY 4 – FEBRUARY 27, 2019

# EMELY SANDOVAL

## What's a World Without Children?

If I must be honest, I paint children because they are adorable. I enjoy looking at paintings of children, they bring joy to me. I want to be able to share that joy through my focus on portraiture and hope that you feel the same. In a world like the one we live in, a break from overwhelming things is needed. I do not want you to stand in front of my paintings and try to solve a puzzle. I want my art to be less about thinking and more about appreciating human life, especially the beauty and innocence in children. After all, we were all once children.

I use personal photographs and paintings from artists like William Bouguereau as references for my artworks. When it comes to my painting process, I like to work in layers and glazing. Layering means using more than one layer of paint, while glazing means diluting the paint thinly and applying it on top of an already painted dry surface. I believe these techniques work best for achieving realistic portraits. I chose to create this type of portrait because it can create a more personal bond between the painting and the viewer. My goal is for the audience to feel like the children are there, looking at us as we look at them.





*Joy*  
Oil on Canvas, 16" x 40"



*Le Frere et la Soeur*  
Oil on Canvas, 16" x 20"



*Pure*  
Oil on Canvas, 12" x 24"



*Angel*  
Oil on Canvas, 16" x 20"



*Le Petite Ballerine*  
Oil on Canvas, 15" x 30"

# MARIA MENDEZ

## Big Family, Little House

My three siblings, two parents, an adult male cousin and two dogs all live within a 981 square foot apartment. This series of photographs documents the living conditions and the constant presence and activity of people within the limited space.

There are two bedrooms, a living room, a small kitchen and a small bathroom. Each of us has a large collection of personal possessions including clothing, accessories, books, an array of electronics including laptops, phones, multiple stereos and TVs, tables, chairs, beds, blankets, sheets, towels, dishes, pots and pans, kitchen appliances, craft materials, knick-knacks, souvenirs, household products and basically all the makings of a vibrant home for a family of seven people.

My mother is the stabilizing center of our family and not only works full-time but guides all our family activities. She developed a schedule of tasks so we can all participate in maintaining the household. Both my parents cook for the family and although we cannot have a meal together in a central place, we enjoy eating, cooking and our home is filled with conversation, laughter and music.

The photographer, Bruce Jackson, who documented prison life inspired me to document my overcrowded living conditions. Although Jackson's images capture the desperation of incarceration, he still depicted the spirit of the men who transcend their circumstances.

My images convey not only the details of the lack of space and privacy but also capture our loving regard for each other through our good humor and good will. Despite the stress of close quarters, we are a very loving and engaged family. We hope that in time, we will move to a larger space so we can flourish individually and as a family.





*Everyone's toothbrush • Mom, Lizbeth, and Jesus in the kitchen • Jesus eating • Dad watching TV • Patricia washing dishes  
 Jesus and Luna • Mom washing the rice • Lizbeth doing laundry • Mitzy • My room  
 Patricia cleaning the room • Jesus drawing • Patricia, Lizbeth, Mom, and Dad • Breakfast • Mom and Dad  
 Mom and Lizbeth cooking • Mom fixing the room • Storage • Mom and Dad eating • Dinner  
 Digital C-prints, 8" x 10"*

# SADIE McCLELLAND

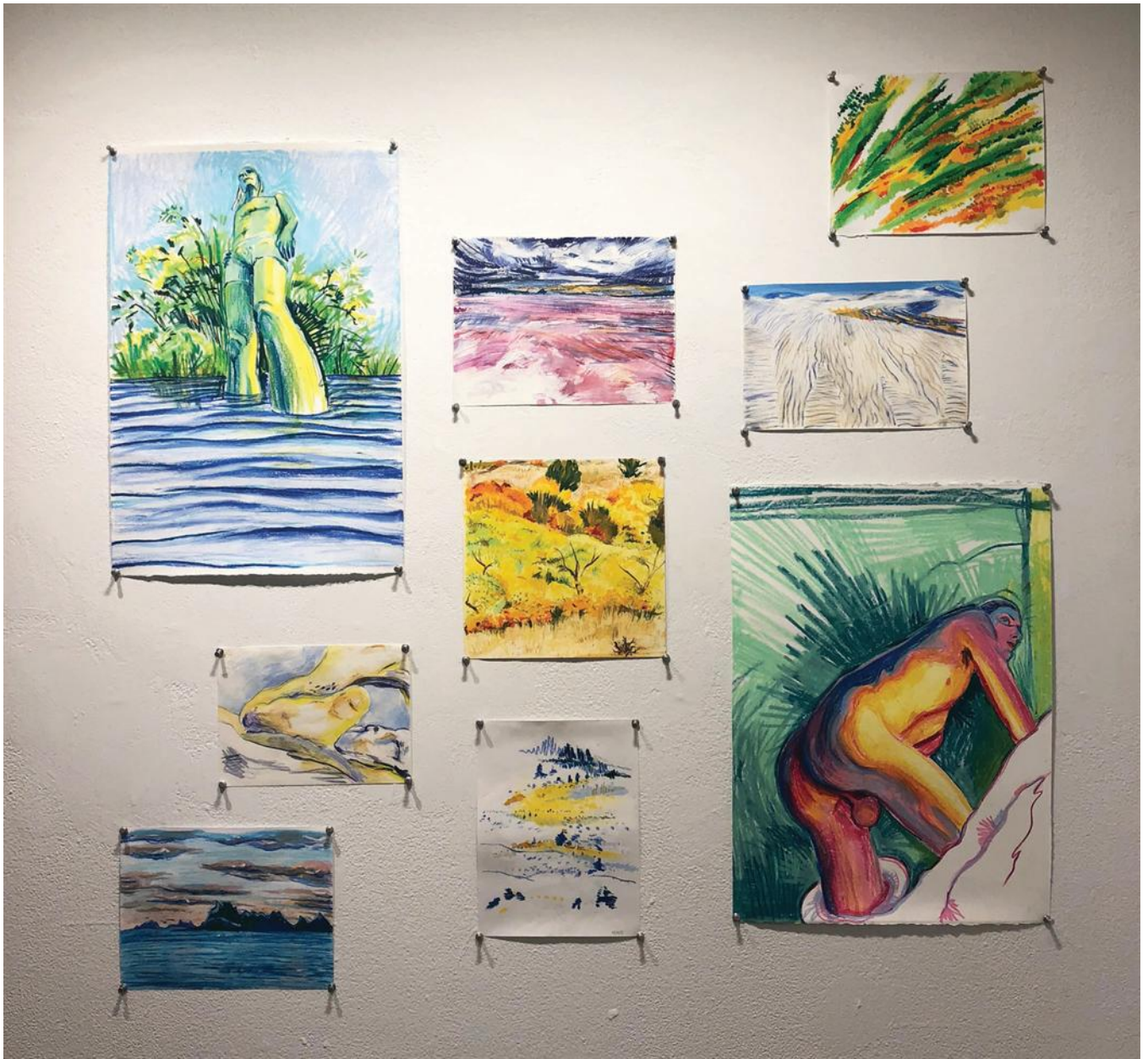
## Body & Nature

I do not want to prove or convince the viewer of anything; defining these drawings with excessive explanation would distract the viewer from the visceral experience. Instead, I will provide a brief description.

Here are two vulnerable images of the male figure from my perspective, interspersed with natural landscapes. They originated as candid iPhone photos of the subject. Using oil pastel, I drew the images sporadically in ardent colors, listening closely to my own impulses and instincts. The landscapes are a mixture of reality and imagination.







*Spirit Flow*

13" x 20", Oil and Acrylic Pastel on Paper

*Warm Soul*

16" x 24", Oil and Acrylic Pastel on Paper

*Untitled Landscapes*

Dimensions vary, Oil and Acrylic Pastel on Paper

# HOPE LUDWIG

## Untitled

Many artists use their work as a way of expressing their deep and personal emotions. However, as someone who handles their emotions privately, I do not believe in showing the world what cards I hold. For this reason, I left this series of photographs untitled. Rather than pushing my intentions about my artwork on you like most other artists, I encourage viewers to perceive my photographs as purely subjective and eliminate the concept of being administered a preconceived notion. I want every viewer to be able to look at my photographs and form their own honest perspectives and reactions—take away not just what they want, but also what they need from the piece. Nevertheless, if one must take something away from this body of work, it could be about how I have always used photography as a way to set aside my emotions, forget everything that is going on in my life, and express myself freely—it is a way for me to escape and create my own reality.

In a world where everyone is telling you how to feel, my photographs won't. You get to decide.





*All Untitled*  
Digital C-prints, 16" x 20"

# LILLIAN JONES

## Untitled

Women are multifaceted. However, historical artists typically disregarded the complexities of the female existence, representing women as one-dimensional figures. This perspective of women still continues in the way women are portrayed and treated in contemporary society, contributing to the lack of gender equality in most areas of life. I appropriated the biblical figures Judith and Esther, from Artemisia Gentileschi's (1593-1656) *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (1620) and *Esther before Ahasuerus* (ca. 1630). I believe she captured the multiplicities of female archetypes in these works. There are no bounds to what we can learn from a woman who painted about 400 years ago, to pursue improving how society views women today.

Queen Esther, glowing in purple, gracefully descends to the ground. I focused only on Esther, placing the larger than life body, consisting of light and dark shapes, confined within the rectangle of the paper. This conveys her internal struggle of wanting to save her people and the fear of losing her husband and possibly her life. I chose purple because it is a symbol of royalty. A woman's royal status was often tied to her husband throughout historical periods, and today, her wifehood is often viewed as her main characterization. However, Esther transcends the conventional role of a King's wife and becomes the epitome of royal leadership.

Judith's body emerges from the shadow with an electric red energy, determined to kill her enemy. I cut out most of the original composition that surrounds Judith, and only kept Holofernes' head in order to portray Judith's powerful presence, through emphasizing elements of her heroism, such as her determined facial expression, her forward motion, and her hands which clench Holofernes' hair and the sword. The red, a color associated with aggression, calls crucial attention to the heroine's identity, as she is so much more than the generalized perception that she is merely an aggressive woman.





*Esther Before Ahasuerus (After Artemisia Gentileschi)*  
Pastel and Pencil, 36" x 60"



*Judith Slaying Holofernes (After Artemisia Gentileschi)*  
Pastel and Pencil, 36" x 52"

# SADIE INMAN

## A Spiritual Impetus

I am a poet, not through words but action.

I believe all human beings are inherently complicated, sometimes unable to articulate our true feelings in words. And for me, it is necessary to express these emotions through physical exploration on the canvas.

By using my hands and rubbing the canvas, I forge a tactile relationship between the surface and myself. The feeling is liberating. When I hold a brush or a pencil I feel whole again. There is a power in holding these tools.

I paint and draw my figures swirling and moving and writhing. As I develop these forms I reflect on relationships both familial and romantic. I have become obsessed with explaining myself, not in the ways of an apology, but in a manner of speaking. It's a ritual of sorts; a spiritual impetus of expression with urgency. This rumination on how these deeper feelings are often considered taboo in our society, and therefore are continually repressed.

Although the subject of my paintings rest on the surface of the canvas, we must not rest on the surface of ourselves. We must think deeply, fully, and feel. For feeling may soon disappear and we could lose touch with ourselves and each other.





*Pentimento*  
Graphite and Oil Paint on Canvas, 40" x 30"



*A Spiritual Impetus*  
Oil Paint and Conte on Canvas, 62" x 48"

# MARY HEINERT

## Drugs?

What if our favorite childhood characters are not who they seem to be? Instead of being sweet, funny, and cute, they are drug and sex addicts that love being inappropriate. Maybe Mickey Mouse likes dealing drugs, Chester Cheetah is a sex addict along with the Haribo Gummy Bear, who also enjoys sexting.

I use my work to tell a story and to connect with my past, especially to those memories that evoke a feeling of nostalgia for my childhood home in Ecuador. Through my work I fill that void by using funny text, pop culture characters, and bright pastel colors. My lighthearted approach helps to chase the sad sentiment of longing and melancholy away.

I've decided to print the images on skateboards because, for me, they represent pop culture and honestly a more traditional surface like canvas intimidates me. The skateboard, as an art space, gave me a sense of freedom from convention while also supporting my central theme: things are not what they appear to be.







*Send Nudes Gatita*

Skateboard with heat-transfer, 7.75" x 31.75"

*Drugs?*

Skateboard with heat-transfer, 7.75" x 31.75"

*Cheetos and Sex*

Skateboard with heat-transfer, 7.75" x 31.75"

# ITZAMARY DOMINGUEZ

## Missed Moments

In April 2018, President Trump enforced the Family Separation Policy on immigrant families. In response, I was moved to tell my own family's story. My husband Victor migrated to the United States at the age of eighteen, leaving his newborn in Ecuador. After sixteen long years, he is still waiting for the approval of his son's US Visa. This story is similar to many other immigrant families, and it has become an issue for the Hispanic community. I hope to show the heartbreaking reality of what it is to be separated due to country borders.

In the process of creating these drawings, I meditated on the issue of family separation and how it exists in the world and in my own family. I began by drawing from photographs of Victor and an image of a child who represents his son. I used facial features to convey the emotions caused by their separation. Then, I placed both figures together on the page and imagined how they would interact with each other. I discovered that by keeping one figure as an incomplete outline and creating the other as a traditional drawing, I was able to tell this story. The figures of the child are in warm colors, while the figures of the father are cool. The usage of color helps further communicate the drastic devastation caused by the separation of a father and child.





Left to Right, Top to Bottom: *Walk Together* • *First Steps* • *Lift Off* • *Picture Time* • *Hug* • *Soccer Lesson*  
Colored Pencil, Horizontal: 12" x 16", Vertical: 16" x 12"

# ELENA DELL'ACQUA

## Reunited Companions

I walk and travel throughout my day for hours - as a commuter to school, to my internship, and to my job - at the splendid Gelateria. I feel and attract human connection every day and wonder if individuals notice the small details surrounding them like I do. My work is based on these observations, especially the essence of emotion that goes through one's mind when happy or sad. Through portraiture, I engage the medium of paint to reflect on memories gathered throughout my life's journey, where each step is closer to how I want the memory to remain. In life's voyage, I start to appreciate the individuals around me towards my journey to finding myself.

*Reunited Companions* presents strong and ongoing friendships from my childhood years in Switzerland. The image expresses my memory of my intense relationships with two women, Nadiya and Camille. In contrast to the realistic figures, the abstract and pattern scheme in the background, conveys an imaginary scene which depicts a visual memory of my freinds.





*Reunited Companions*  
Oil on Canvas, 24" x 36"

# BRIANA DEFRANCO

## Seen and Heard

I have always been interested in people. Whether I am on the train or walking down the streets of New York, I see so many unique faces and bodies, with all different kinds of emotion reflected in their eyes. It makes me wonder: What's their story and what could I assume from their physical appearance to understand the depth of their human experience?

For my senior thesis project, I approached people who regularly gather in Union Square Park ranging in age, race, class, and gender to learn their story by spending time with each of them. I developed a series of questions about their lives and they revealed details that ultimately defined who they are. During the semester, I met with each person weekly and through our conversations, I was able to create a unique relationship with each of them. After a few meetings and after I sensed a mutual level of ease, I began photographing them in their public environment. Through our conversations, I distilled their stories and provided text to accompany each portrait. By committing my time to really listen to what someone has to say, my goal was to understand people and to broaden my perspective of humanity.

One artist who has been a huge inspiration is Richard Renaldi. After recently viewing his *Touching Strangers* exhibition, I was captivated by the raw power of human connections and he motivated me to look at everyone with infinite curiosity and respect for our differences and profound similarities.

Through this project and the people I encountered, I experienced a great satisfaction in the relationships that I made and I found it very fulfilling to talk to people who would normally go unnoticed. I hope the viewer raises questions about how they perceive the people they so easily pass by and become more open to the people they encounter.

I want to challenge the misconceptions that we all have about each other and I wanted to be sure my subjects were seen and heard.





SaraVuth



Moises



Hansel



Elena



Felix

*SaraVuth • Moises • Hansel • Elena • Felix*  
Photographs, 16" x 24"

# REBEKAH BENJAMIN

## Art of the Mind: Repetitions

Art is the expression of my inner thoughts that I communicate to others. This communication is, in turn, therapeutic. I use charcoal, ink, and colored pencil to express ideas of mental health by portraying my struggle with anxiety. The pieces, titled *Subjective Plague* and *Distant Shame*, depict my mental state in ordinary areas of my daily life.

Colored pencil is used to show the raw emotion of the figure. The color is brought forward by the ink to emphasize the intensity of the mental state of being. The simple mundane backgrounds are blurred with charcoal to suggest the out of focus feeling of anxiety. *Distant Shame* depicts a figure in red and *Subjective Plague* shows the same figure in a different pose in green. This pair of drawings represent myself in different emotional states. The pieces are arranged in order to show a repetitive cycle moving from burden to chaos. These themes are shown by the placement of the figure in settings inspired by what I see every day walking around my neighborhood.







*Distant Shame*  
Charcoal, Ink, and Colored Pencil, 24" x 18"



*Subjective Plague*  
Charcoal, Ink, and Colored Pencil, 24" x 18"

## ABOUT THE HEWITT GALLERY OF FINE ART

The Hewitt Gallery of Art, located in the main esplanade and adjacent Black and White galleries, is a laboratory for and an extension of the pedagogy of the Art and Art History Department. In addition, it is an alternative exhibition space for contemporary art of emerging, mid-career, and established artists displaying a wide variety of media and styles. The Gallery provides opportunities for art majors and minors to gain first-hand experience in exhibiting their capstone and junior work, for students to curate and organize shows in conjunction with the Gallery Director and for faculty and alumni to present current work to the community.

Hallie Cohen | *Director of the Hewitt Gallery of Art*

*Catalogue design by KellyAnne Hanrahan. Photos by Jerry Speier.*



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