

Personal Statement

By Jessica Johnson

It would be an understatement to say that this past year has been a hard one. Life changed in an instant and we are still living in unprecedented times. This body of work is meant to be a personal response to some of the changes and emotions felt this past year. As a photographer, I love taking people's portraits. That is why I am pursuing photography as my major, in order to learn how to best capture people's spirits. I am also a mixed media artist. I can not be tied down to one artistic medium and I can not stand to be limited in how I choose to express myself. Living in quarantine, and suddenly not having the drive or inspiration for photography, I found myself drawn to the art supplies I had collected in all my years of making art. There was also an innate desire to get out the overwhelming feelings I had bottled up in the last year, which I previously did not know how to express. Enter this body of work, which I have titled "Calamitous Reactions". Made up of a combination of paint, drawings, collage and embroidery, this mixed media series aims to articulate the struggles and grief, and at the same time the personal growth and endurance, that have made up this pandemic life. Each piece represents a different emotion that I have felt during this pandemic. From feeling a loss of control, to feeling stuck and imprisoned, to the shift in focus of the positive, this series strives to capture it all. Using birds as the main characters to display these feelings felt right, as these creatures are immensely awe inspiring, adaptable and enduring. Nature has always been a backdrop to which I can create my narrative on. In each of these pieces I incorporate nature, and at the same time distort it to feel otherworldly, much like life has become for us humans. My addition of embroidery felt akin to the way one writes a story or lives a life, building upon small details that contribute to the big picture. Similarly, my aspirations for the future have become clearer through this project. I want to continue to pursue photography and my mixed media art. My goal coming into college has always been to start my own arts based business and that continues to be a focus while developing my artistic voice. I find that valuing curiosity, ambition and passion is essential to my goals. I want to continue to grow as a person and as an artist, and through this series of work I have felt my artistic vision blossom with untapped potential.