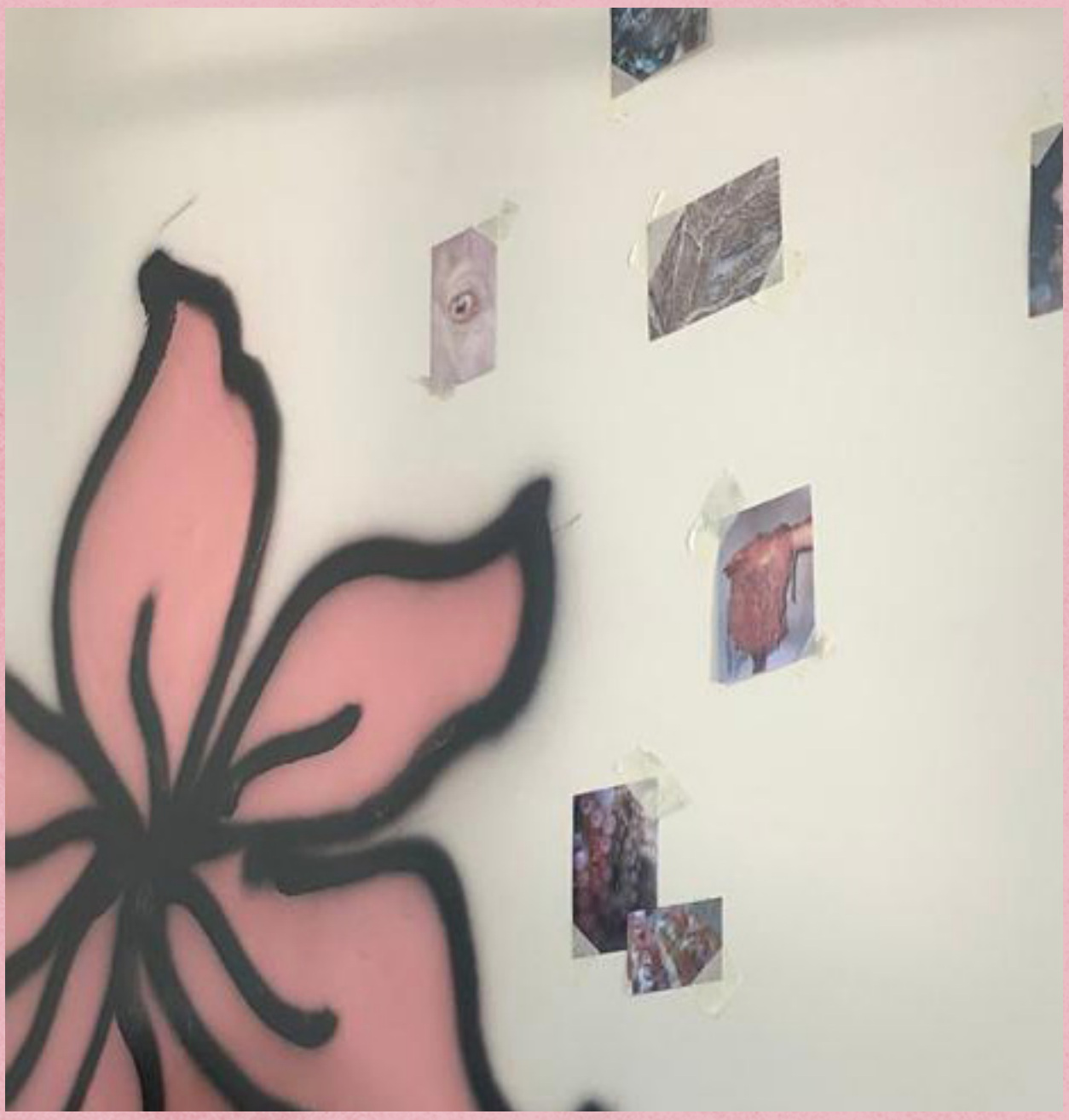
Sreemedha Chintha

ART 1600.115



Memories, Childhood, and how they inspire individuals

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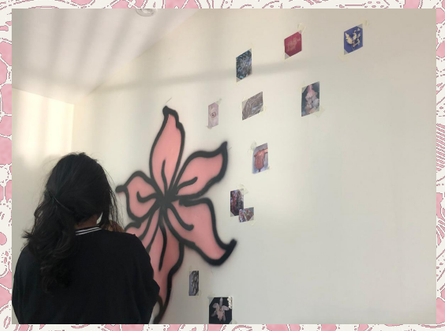
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Introduction

I often think about how different memories shape a person's perspective of the world. Nostalgia has always been very intriguing to me; reconnecting with my past not only evokes joy but also sadness, fear, anger, and so many other emotions. Growing up in a non-sentimental household, I found beauty in memory collecting, which led me to draw inspiration from my past and my childhood. my goals for this project is to frame elements and ephemera from the memories that shaped my identity in a way that the audience can engage with. The 2D piece is a tapestry with patchwork that showcases the materials, textures, and visuals from my childhood that I take inspiration from. It represents me as a person, building patchwork the more I grow. Each element symbolizes something from my past that shaped my identity. My 3D sculpture resembles a blanket fort I used to build with my cousins. The fort is made up of patches of white fabric and lace with a sign that says, "Who am I without—." Pictures and found items are hung from the top on different levels with writing on the back that answers the phrase on the sign. Inside, the fort acts like a personal museum, displaying memories and ephemera of the things that shaped my identity and made me who I am today.











Sreemedha Chintha

Visual Research

I believe individuals shape their identity through core memories, experiences, and even nostalgia. They act like building blocks, influencing how people perceive and behave. I aimed to capture these moments in my series of 20 photographs, reflecting on places and objects that I was drawn to instead of searching for a specific concept. I did this because my perception is already influenced by my past memories and experiences, which not only perfectly fits my theme but also made the experimentation process enjoyable. Finding moments in my daily life that I was drawn to and questioning why I was attracted to them was a fun workout.

For my first 10 photographs, I reflected on moments that I would spend hours looking at and observing details as time passes by. The bubbles popping in my drink from being shaken, the orange light of the setting sun hitting the building, layers of paint and stickers peeled and covered, the constant tug of war between order and disorder, and the sheer desire of collecting all of which had something in common, explore. As a child, I always had the natural tendency to observe and to delve into such topics deeply, questioning, solving, and figuring out concepts, which is why I grew up very sensitive to my surroundings. Capturing such experiences helped me shape my identity and is the reason why I'm the way I am today.

This is why I chose to focus on the childhood aspect for my next 10 photographs, which showcase photographs of toys taken with the flash of a digital camera. The digital grain created a nostalgic, almost abandoned effect that I found in most of my childhood pictures. I chose to include the carpet flooring because playing on the carpet in my room was a prominent part of my childhood. I still remember the feeling of the carpet on my feet and the burn when it rubbed against my knees. To emphasize this feeling, I chose to add another layer of grain digitally to replicate the rough texture.

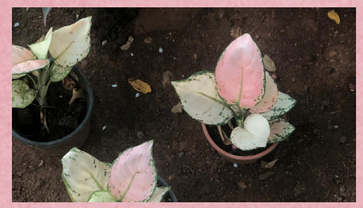




















My Chosen Photograph

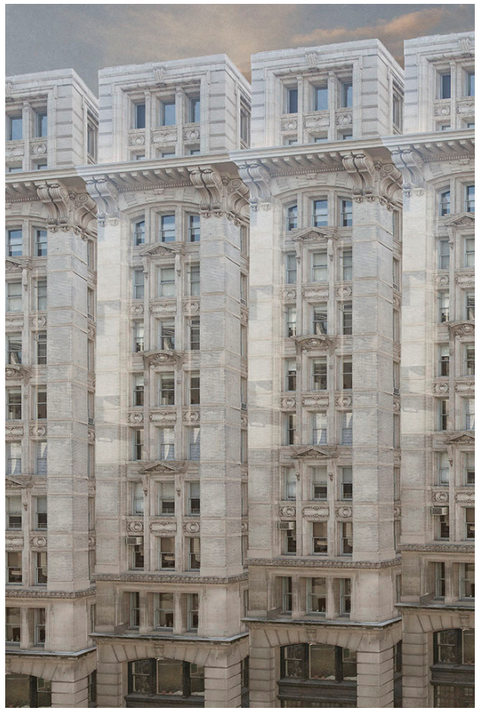




I chose this photograph because of the thought and process that went into this. This photograph was taken in our new house, when I finally got my own room that I could personalize. During the unpacking process, I've uncovered items and journals that I kept during my childhood. This experience rekindled my love for the color pink, which I had openly hated. I hated following stereotypes that forced me into a box, that made me seem weak, that made me seem "girly," and that made me seem incapable of doing anything because I was born a female. I realized that I never really hated the color pink, only the way it was perceived. I tried to hide it, cover it, and bury it, but I was unsuccessful, and my glittery pink journal was proof of that. With this new inspiration, I spray-painted a pink lily on my wall, a symbol of my childhood on a new canvas yet to be filled with memories. This photograph explores my identity and how it developed from my early years without necessarily cutting it off. It shows how I draw inspiration from my early crafts and how I've grown to spread a little bit of it everywhere, even on the walls of my new bedroom.

For this photograph I used the elements and principles of space, framing, and balance to emphasize the photograph and the spray-painted flower. The two balance each other because the top of the flower aligns with the paper. These choices help frame my point of view when presenting my memories, experiences, and sentimental items that shaped my identity, which is an important aspect of my project.

Influences



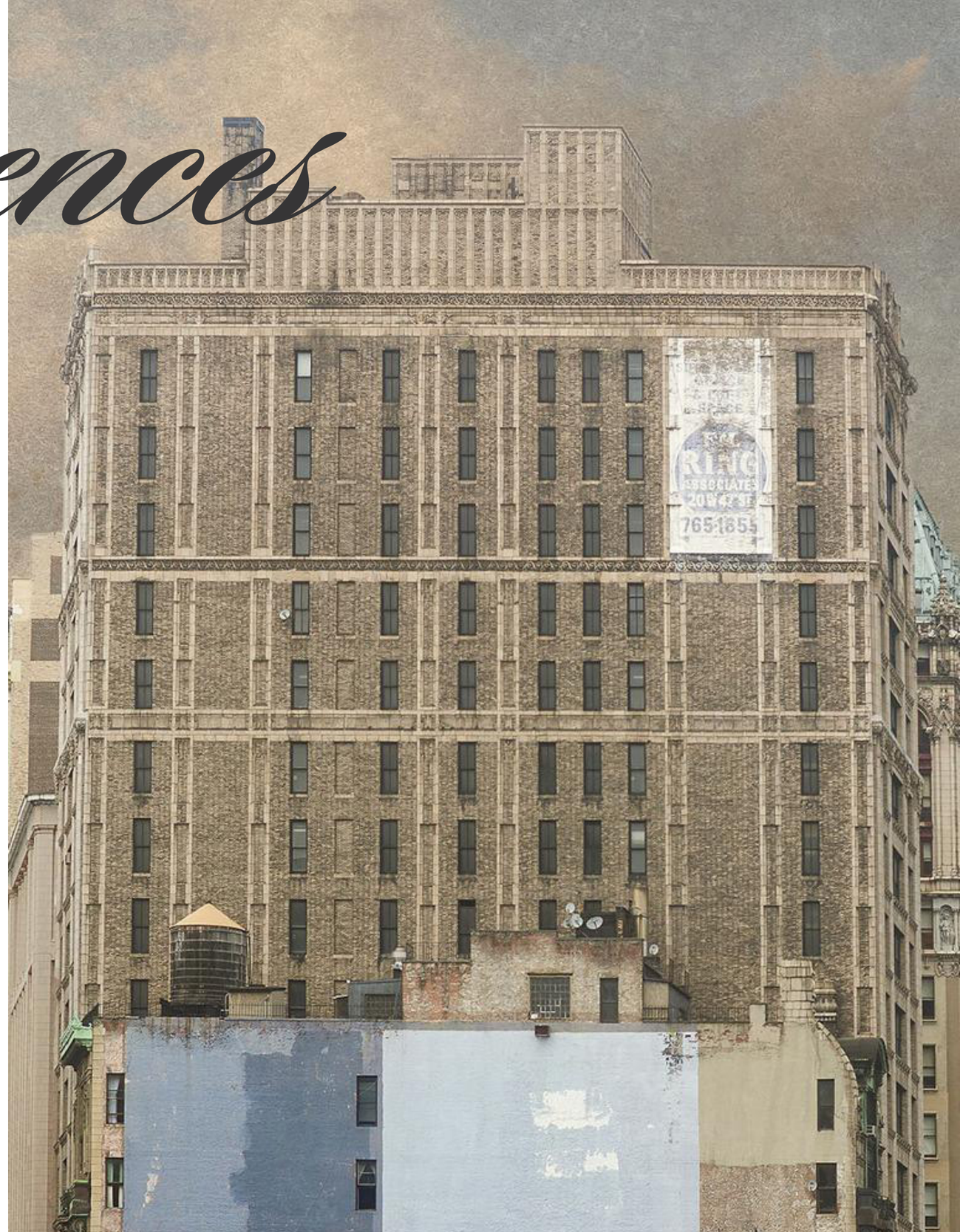
Row of White Buildings, Marc Yankus
The Space Between, 2013

Marc Yankus

Marc Yankus, the creator of "Commodore Criterion" (on the right), made in 2013, is a photographic artist who uses digital mediums and textured scans to create mixed media photography. These photographs are part of a collection called "The Space Between," where he explores and captures hyper-realistic images of architecture in New York City. He's known for layering textured scans from books and other works he collected throughout his artistic journey, which are literal, tangible pieces of evidence of his memories. This process results in gauzy images that seem to evoke hazy memories. He explores themes like history, memories, and the past by playing off the rigid structure with soft palettes, making the buildings seem like they're taken out of context. He aims to preserve his experience by incorporating elements into his piece that empower his experience, making an impact on the viewers.

His process of layering texture inspired me to do the same with my 2D piece. Combining texture with memories can create an impactful visual, almost like providing a piece of one's experience. It can help the audience submerge themselves in the artist's vision. Using his method of collecting and collaging, I combined my ephemera in a tapestry with textural elements of my childhood with embroidered photographs.

I attempt to create pieces/fragments of my past and combine them together through layers, each with symbolic importance from my childhood, memories, influences, and my present, which reflects me as an individual.

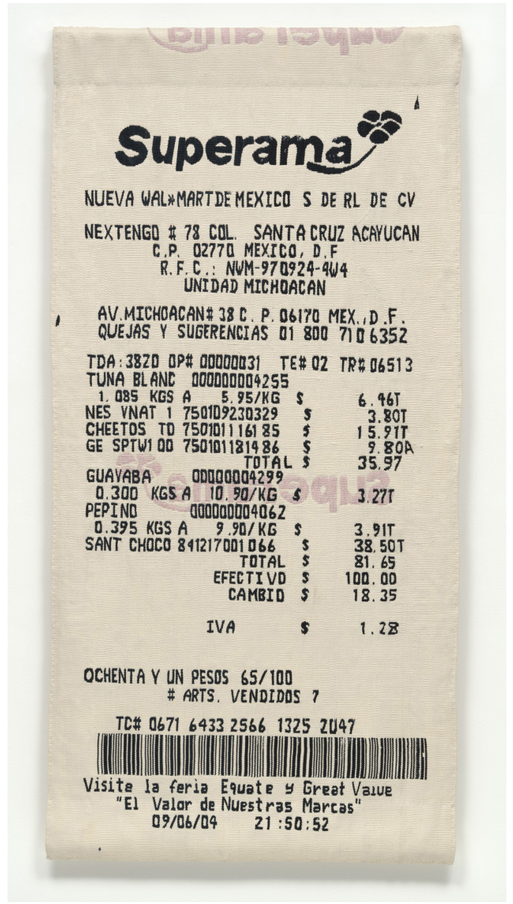


Influences

Gabriel Kuri

Gabriel Kuri sculpts and creates installations for museums and art shows, which generally critique the world of commerce. His installation “Superama II,” made in 2005, resembles a receipt that explores concepts of hierarchy by exaggerating its size to reflect on its importance in his experience. He framed a receipt from his visit to a supermarket in his hometown by using lasting materials, transforming something temporary and discardable into something memorable and tactile. He engages in using elements that are present in their memories through application and recreation while using mediums with symbolic representations.

The concept of framing temporal elements using materials that increase longevity was very intriguing to me. Gabriel’s use of exaggeration and material inspired me to do the same. He made me question the dimensions of my project. What does it mean to change the size of your art? Originally I was going to create a miniature replica of a blanket fort using paper-mâché, but eventually I decided on making it bigger because it has significance. Although my 3D piece is a similar size to an actual one, its dimension still has meaning. A diorama might be perceived differently, but replication? It helps the audience perceive my intention for the project and what significance it has for me. I choose to drape fabrics instead of using paper-mâché on a sculpture because of the symbolic representation it holds. Fabric, whether it be cotton, silk, or wool, has gone through experiences because of its long-lasting properties, and in this case, it’s been through my journey of building blanket forts.



Gabriel Kuri, Untitled (Superama II), 2005,
Woven wool, 44 1/2 x 91 5/16”



2-Dimensional *Project*

While observing my photograph, I chose to highlight the meaning that was embedded in it by emphasizing the textures and tactile sensations from my childhood memories I draw inspiration from.
I used elements, which are the color palette, the fabric, and the materials in unity to help convey the feeling of nostalgia, and the embroidery, which shows the childlike nature I attempted to reflect while working on the project itself. The embroidery appears to be irregular and childlike to further reinforce this theme. I intentionally included a patch with parts of myself that my child-self tried to hide with pink 'wallpaint.' These childhood pictures that reflected something stereotypically 'feminine,' which I considered 'shameful,' were painted on. Upon taking a closer look, the audience can see hints of these pictures peeking through, proving that I cannot paint over my past. I deliberately used the color pink to show how desperate I was to cover these memories with anything I had, but all I had was my favorite color. This symbolizes my struggle to not be perceived as weak even though I genuinely liked the color pink. Now, I draw inspiration from this experience, and the patchwork (symbolizing healing) represents this.

The approach while taking the photograph itself was that of centering nostalgia and referencing a core childhood memory of drawing on my wall. While taking this picture, I also experienced a hint of childlike creativity coming back to me. Carrying this forward, I implemented a grid system, which combines geometric shapes, like squares and rectangles, while also including organic irregular shapes. I included these aspects and consciously chose to incorporate them in my 2D piece.
My original idea was to paint a canvas using my "wall paint" idea with a slash cut in the middle. It was supposed to represent how I overcame my fear of being perceived as "girly" by going back to my childhood. However, it didn't reflect me as a person because I still believe that I'm growing and that there will be more moments that'll make up my identity. This is why I made the creative decision to leave the patchwork "incomplete."







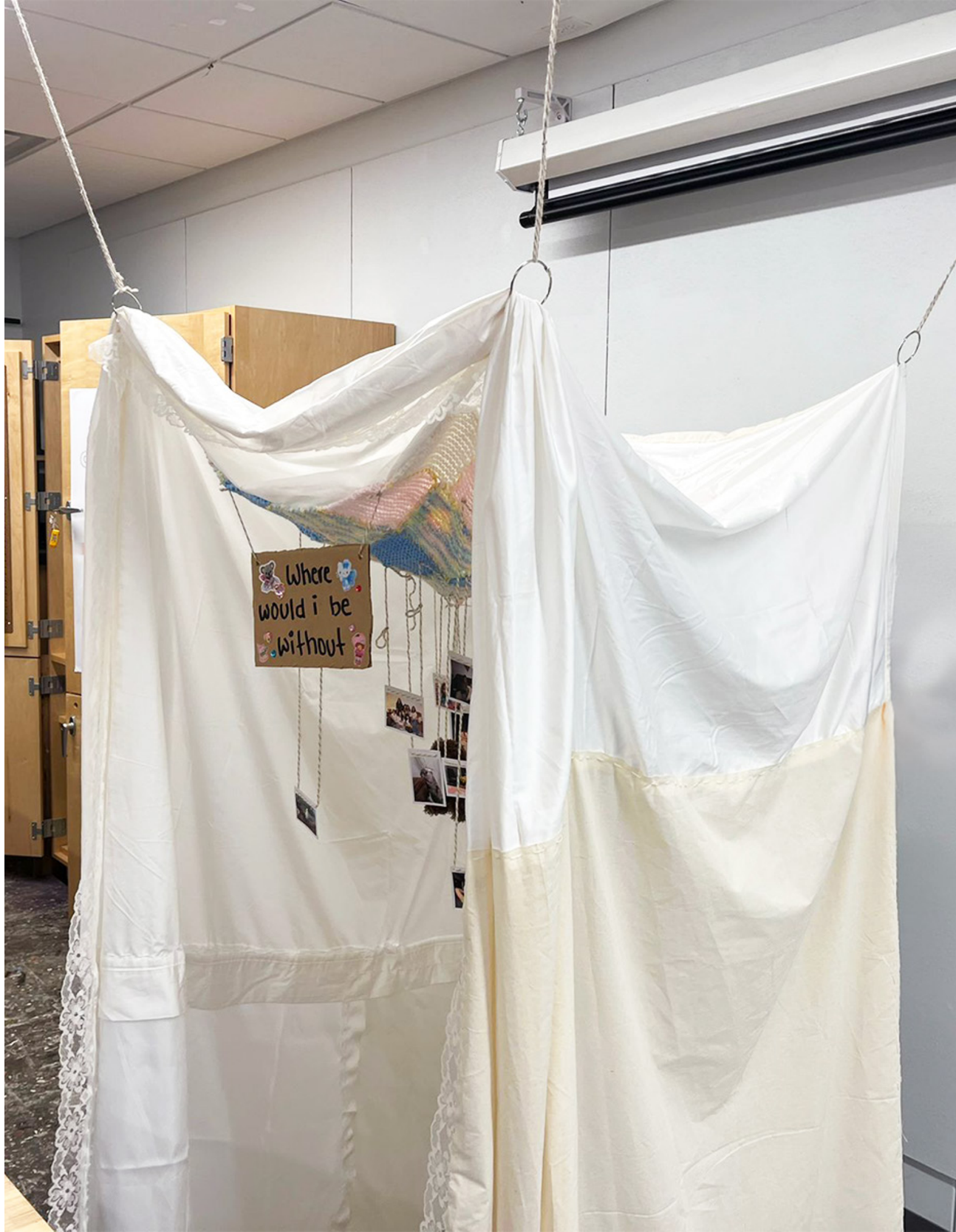
3-Dimensional *Sculpture*

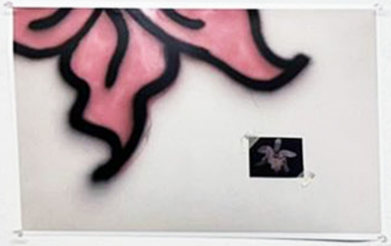
My 2D piece represents the pieces of my life that make up my identity. A majority of my childhood involved me constantly fighting stereotypes just to prove myself. I suppose this is the reason I consistently created little pockets around the house that were dedicated just for me, free from societal judgement and the constant fight for individuality. As a result, I became well-crafted in the art of building blanket forts. Every sleepover with my cousins resulted in a blanket fort, with me being the architect.

Inspired by this experience, I decided to construct a blanket fort, as I grew in these forts, and these forts grew with me. The fort comprises different types of fabrics, resembling patchwork, which I carried from the 2D piece. I wanted to contain the things that make me the person I am today by suspending images and ephemera to make it look like a crib mobile. The sign that says, "Where would I be without—" is answered by the text written behind the photos. I decided to do this so that the audience could engage with the work and have a glimpse of who I am. This fort acts as a mini museum of me by displaying everything important in my life.




Where
would i be
without


Where
would i be
without






Where
would i be
without

Conclusion

How do one's memories and childhood inspire individuals? For me finding my identity wasn't as easy as they made it seem to be. I liked all these stereotypically "girly" things, but I didn't want to be perceived as weak, so I covered my past, and I dismissed anything feminine in fear of being forced into stereotypical boundaries. I hid my true self by having another identity that was the complete opposite, but I still liked the color pink. I like lace, pearls, and beads, but not because I was a girl; it's because I liked them. It took me a while to come to terms with this, rejecting stereotypes just to "fall" for them again. Not conforming to stereotypes isn't enough, and conforming to stereotypes isn't either. How was I to advocate when I seemed like the perfect victim?

I continued to reject the norm, question the system, and go against stereotypes, which led me to the person that I am today. I fight for female liberation and advocate for women through my creations. I tend to use unconventional materials in my art; just like me, they don't fit right but make an effort to support and provide meaning. While I work on my art, I feel like a child again, fostering my childlike curiosity to create in hopes for people to go back to their past and project their humanity again, like they once did as children.

This is what I intended to impart in these projects. My identity was always right in front of me; I stopped being ashamed of who I am once I reconnected with my childhood. I don't feel weak or frail for liking the things I like, nor do I feel sorry for it. I protest for the luxury to choose without the fear of covering up. I am unapologetically me.









