UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA CHARLOTTE | COLLEGE OF ARTS + ARCHITECTURE ART & ART HISTORY

Graphic Design Entrance Portfolio Guidelines

Enrolling for Fall 2024 – 2025 Academic Year

Welcome! We are excited that you are applying to the Department of Art & Art History to study Graphic Design. We encourage candidates with a range of creative backgrounds to apply, which might include those interested in design, art, and/or technology.

Applicants are asked to demonstrate their interest in graphic design and potential for future success in the major through a portfolio of creative work and written responses. Due to the large number of submissions received each year, admission to the program is highly competitive. Acceptance is limited to a select number of applicants who demonstrate the greatest potential for successful completion of the program, and not all qualified applicants will be offered admission.

NOTE: *If you intend to apply to the Art major, then please use the Art Major Entrance Portfolio Guidelines. (This includes* Digital Media, Illustration, Painting, Photography, Print Media, 3D Interdisciplinary Studies, and Art Education*)*

This document will guide you through the portfolio submission process.
Read through all sections carefully; if you have further questions, email aahadmissions@charlotte.edu

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I. Eligibility

- *All applicants must first be admitted to UNC Charlotte in order to submit an Entrance Portfolio for admission to the Department of Art & Art History and Graphic Design major.*
- Enrollment in all Foundation Studio and/or Major courses is open only to students that have been formally admitted to the Department during the annual Entrance Portfolio Review.
- If currently enrolled at UNC Charlotte, applicants must have a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher evidenced on their academic transcript.
- All applicants are limited to one application, either Art or Graphic Design, per yearly application cycle: *coaa.charlotte.edu/art-art-history/admissions*

II. Application Process

1. Apply to UNC Charlotte using Common App by posted deadlines and choose Graphic Design as your major. For more details and university deadlines:
   - Incoming First-year Student Application Requirements
   - Transfer Student Application Requirements
2. Apply to the Department and major using Slideroom.com and submit your Entrance Portfolio by posted deadlines.
   - Once admitted to the University, incoming First-year and Transfer students will be emailed a link to the Application on Slideroom.com for the Graphic Design major.
   - Current UNC Charlotte students who wish to change their major to Graphic Design must request the Entrance Portfolio Application link by filling out this google form.

III. Department Deadlines

1. *Priority Review: Wednesday, February 21, 2024 by Noon*

- The total number of students admitted each year is limited by the number of open seats in the Department and major. Out of that total, most are admitted during the Priority Review.
- Since admission to the program is highly competitive, all eligible applicants are strongly encouraged to apply to this review.
- If admitted, students are eligible for earlier advising, orientation, and course registration.
- Incoming First-year and Transfer students should apply to the *University* by November 1, but no later than *January 15, 2024*.

2. *Space Available Review: Wednesday, April 3rd, 2024 by Noon*

- Fewer students are admitted during the Space Available Review. The exact number is determined after the Priority Review, and depends on how many open seats are still available in the Department and major.
- Since admission to the program is highly competitive, *all eligible applicants are strongly encouraged to apply to the Priority Review.*
- If admitted, choices regarding advising, orientation, and course registration will be more limited.
- Incoming First-year and Transfer students should apply to the University by November 1, but no later than *February 26, 2024*.

3. Decisions & Notifications

- Applicants will be notified by email of the Admission Committee's decision of Admittance or Non-admittance, typically 3 weeks after each deadline, but no later than April 24th, 2024.

IV. Entrance Portfolio Requirements

Complete your application to the Graphic Design major using Slideroom.com, which includes a short essay and a portfolio of creative works with written descriptions. Since admission to the program is highly competitive, carefully following these guidelines will make you more competitive but does not guarantee admission. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

1. Short Essay

In 1,600 characters or less (250 words), please address the following:

- What aspects of graphic design interest you the most?
- How do you think a graphic design education will prepare you for the future?

2. Portfolio

Your portfolio should represent your strongest design projects and/or artworks. Choose works that best demonstrate your potential for future success in the Graphic Design major.

A. You must include the following:

- **Images of 10 – 15 Works:** Each work should be on its own slide. You may include multiple images of one work, but your portfolio is limited to a total of 20 images. (see FAQ #8 for more details)
- **Label Media:** For each work, Slideroom will prompt you to add a title, the year that it was created, and the specific media and/or software that you used.
- **Additional Details:** In a short paragraph format (1,000 characters or less), describe your ideas and/or goals, creative processes, what and/or who inspired it (if applicable), and the class it was completed in (if applicable). (For a sampling of written descriptions, see section *VIII. Graphic Design Entrance Portfolio Work Examples.)*
- **Responsible Use of Intellectual Property & AI Tools:** In your descriptions, you should note use of any found, appropriated, provided imagery and/or content, as well as document the original source for any images used as a reference. Additionally, you should note any use of tools that utilize Artificial Intelligence (AI), such as the new Generative Fill in Adobe Photoshop. (see FAQ #5 for more details)

B. Works to Include in Your Portfolio

- Any original (2D, 3D, 4D) design and/or artwork completed in high school, college-level courses, private classes, workshops, camps, and/or self-initiated are eligible. (for a sampling of possible works, see section *VIII. Graphic Design Entrance Portfolio Work Examples)*
- Since the major includes Foundation Studio classes, we recommend that you include at least 2 drawings. (see FAQ # 4 for more details)
- You may include several designs and/or artworks from a specific media or a variety that show a range of processes. (see FAQ #6 for more details)
- Please include work from any AP or college-level courses you may have taken in Graphic Design, Foundations, or Studio Art, especially Transfer students. (see FAQ #1 for more details)

C. Works *NOT* to Include in Your Portfolio

- Any design and/or artwork that is not original and/or is not your intellectual property. (see FAQ #5 for more details)
- Any design and/or artwork that was created using template based software such as Canva or Adobe Express, which allows users to simply drag and drop images into pre-existing designs created by professionals. (see FAQ #5 for more details)

V. Entrance Portfolio Review Criteria

The review committee will assess your application based on the following:

1. How well the works in your portfolio demonstrate:

- Potential for future success in the Graphic Design major
- Readiness for foundation-level studio classes
- Creative problem solving and/or conceptual ability
- Application of design elements and principles
- Skillful use of media and craft (includes studio-based materials and/or digital media)

2. How well your Essay and Work Descriptions demonstrate:

- Ability to articulate ideas in writing
- Interest and ambition in the field of graphic design
- Responsible use of intellectual property (see FAQ #5 for more details)

3. Strength of demonstrated academic performance:

- For incoming First-year students, this includes your performance in high school (grades 9 – 11) and overall grade point average that were included in your UNC Charlotte application.
- For incoming Transfers, this includes your transcripts from previously attended institution(s) that were included in your UNC Charlotte application.
- For current UNC Charlotte students, this includes your transcripts from UNC Charlotte as well as any previously attended institutions.

VI. Department Admission Policies

1. This is a highly competitive review process, not all qualified applicants will be offered admission to the Department of Art & Art History and their major of interest (either Art or Graphic Design).
2. Acceptance to UNC Charlotte and submitting a portfolio does not guarantee admission to the Department and major of interest.
3. Current UNC Charlotte students are not guaranteed admission to the Department and major of interest and must go through the same entrance portfolio review process as First-year and Transfer students.
4. For Incoming Transfer and current UNC Charlotte students, meeting the 2.0 GPA minimum does not guarantee admission to the Department or major. Having a higher GPA makes you more competitive.
5. Due to the large number of applicants, the Department of Art & Art History will not provide feedback on any individual's submission or admissions decisions.
6. Incomplete applications and/or portfolios that do not include all requested materials outlined in this document will not be reviewed.
7. If you are not admitted to the Department and major of interest, your acceptance to the University remains unchanged. You may still choose to enroll at UNC Charlotte but you will need to pursue a different major in another Department.
8. Only Art and Graphic Design majors can take studio courses in the Department of Art & Art History.
9. The department does not offer any studio courses for non-majors to assist with the development of their entrance portfolios.
10. Applicants can apply to the Department and one major of interest only once per yearly admissions cycle.
11. An admission cycle spans one academic year (eg. 2023 – 24), and includes the Priority and Space Available deadlines.

12. Applicants can only apply to the Department twice. If an applicant is applying to the Department for a second time, they can choose to apply to either major.
13. Current UNC Charlotte students that have been denied admittance after two yearly admission cycles, will need to pursue a different major in another Department.
14. Please note, applicants who are admitted after their second application will have a longer time to graduation.

VII. Frequently Asked Questions

1. ***What if I have taken AP or college-level courses in studio Art or Graphic Design?***
   If you have already taken advanced placement and/or courses at the collegiate level, then please include works from those classes, especially those credits that you wish to transfer in Foundations Studios or the Graphic Design major. (e.g. 2D Design, 3D Design, Drawing 1, Graphic Design 1, Typography 1, Digital Media 1 (4D), etc.)

2. ***What should I do with multimedia like animations, motion graphics, videos, or audio?***
   Duration of clips should be limited to a maximum of 2 minutes, and file size should not exceed 250 MB. You can upload mp4 files to Slideroom.com. Encode your files with H.264 video (a.k.a. MPEG-4 AVC) and AAC audio formats are recommended.

3. ***How should I document digital works and screen-based media such as websites or apps?***
   Include a screenshot or mock-up for screen-based works such as websites or app wireframes. You may also include a link to an active website or app in the Description for that work.

4. ***Why do you recommend that I include a few drawings?***
   Drawings are a good way to demonstrate to the review committee that you are ready for foundation-level studios. Additionally, intro-level Graphic Design classes emphasize sketching as a means to quickly develop and visualize ideas. Some examples include object studies, digital sketches, still lifes, figure drawings, self-portraits, landscapes, and perspective drawings. (see VIII. Graphic Design Entrance Portfolio Work Examples below)
   You may also include works that use photographs as a reference, but you must cite the original source in your written description. (see FAQ#8)

5. ***How do I know if a work is original and/or a responsible use of intellectual property?***

   A. Work that is Original

   According to copyright.gov, *"Works are original when they are independently created by a human author and have a minimal degree of creativity. Independent creation simply means that you create it yourself, without copying."*

   - For any work that uses appropriated images and/or content of any kind, you must demonstrate responsible use by documenting the original source and explaining how you redesigned, reworked, and/or reimagined it in the Written Description for that work.
     - Includes using existing images and/or content that were provided as part of a project or assignment. (e.g. a new website design that uses existing text and photos)
     - Includes using photos for reference only, and/or were collaged/digitally composited with other images to make something new.
   - If you utilized any tools that incorporate Artificial Intelligence, then you must note what you used, and describe your reason for using it. Images and/or photos that have utilized AI tools (such as generative fill), must remain 90% original.

B. Work that is *Not* Original

- Any work that directly replicates any other designer's, artist's or studio's work, copies a photograph that you did not take, or uses a grid to transfer an original.
- Close representations of *any* copyrighted material including logos and brands, character designs, anime, comics, cartoons, and/or video game characters, etc.
- Works produced using a step-by-step tutorial and provided content and/or imagery to achieve a predetermined solution.
- Works produced using template-based platforms such as Canva and Adobe Express, which allow users to drag and drop images into pre-existing designs created by professionals.
- For more information, please see the Academic Misconduct Examples in the UNC Charlotte Code of Student Academic Integrity.

6. ***Should I submit work that shows my skills across a range of media?***
   It is important that you make the final decision and submit a portfolio that best represents your strongest skills, ideas, and interests. Choosing works for the sake of variety is not recommended ***if it sacrifices quality***.

7. ***How should I photograph my non-digital work?***
   Scan or photograph artwork carefully and artfully, while considering the documentation and presentation of each project. 3D pieces may require views from multiple angles, detail shots, or staging on a neutral backdrop. (see VIII. Graphic Design Portfolio Work Examples below)

   Quick tips:
   - Photograph the works in outdoor, indirect light to avoid harsh shadows.
   - Fill the viewfinder, consider the composition, and keep the background simple.
   - Do not use the on-camera flash.
   - Using a tripod, or setting your camera on a stable surface, is recommended to ensure sharp focus.
   - Color correction and cropping in an application such as Photoshop is encouraged.

8. ***Can I include multiple images of a work?***
   You may include up to 20 total images for your Slideroom application. You are only required to submit 10 – 15 different works of design and/or art, so you may include multiple views of some works. You may choose to show an additional view, detail, or a source that further informs the review committee's understanding of the work. Note: In the written statement, include the title and that the image is an additional view and/or source.

9. ***Can I show older work to show progress?***
   Though you may want to include examples of work from past years, especially to demonstrate growth, it is more important to submit work that represents current skills, ideas, and experiences.

10. ***Can I submit my portfolio early?***
    Yes, you may submit your portfolio prior to a submission deadline. However, all submissions will be held and reviewed after that deadline has passed.

11. ***Can I still submit if I do not have a cumulative GPA of 2.0? (current UNC Charlotte students only)***
    You should have a 2.0 cumulative GPA at the time of the portfolio review to be fully competitive. Final grades for the Spring semester in which you are applying will not be included in a GPA calculation at the time of the review. You may still submit a portfolio, but admission to the Department and major could be denied because of the GPA requirement.

12. Who should I contact with questions?

- If you have general questions about the portfolio, or need clarification on anything contained in this document, email questions to: aahadmissions@charlotte.edu
- Please note, the Department is unable to provide one-on-one guidance on your application portfolio.

VIII. Graphic Design Entrance Portfolio Work Examples

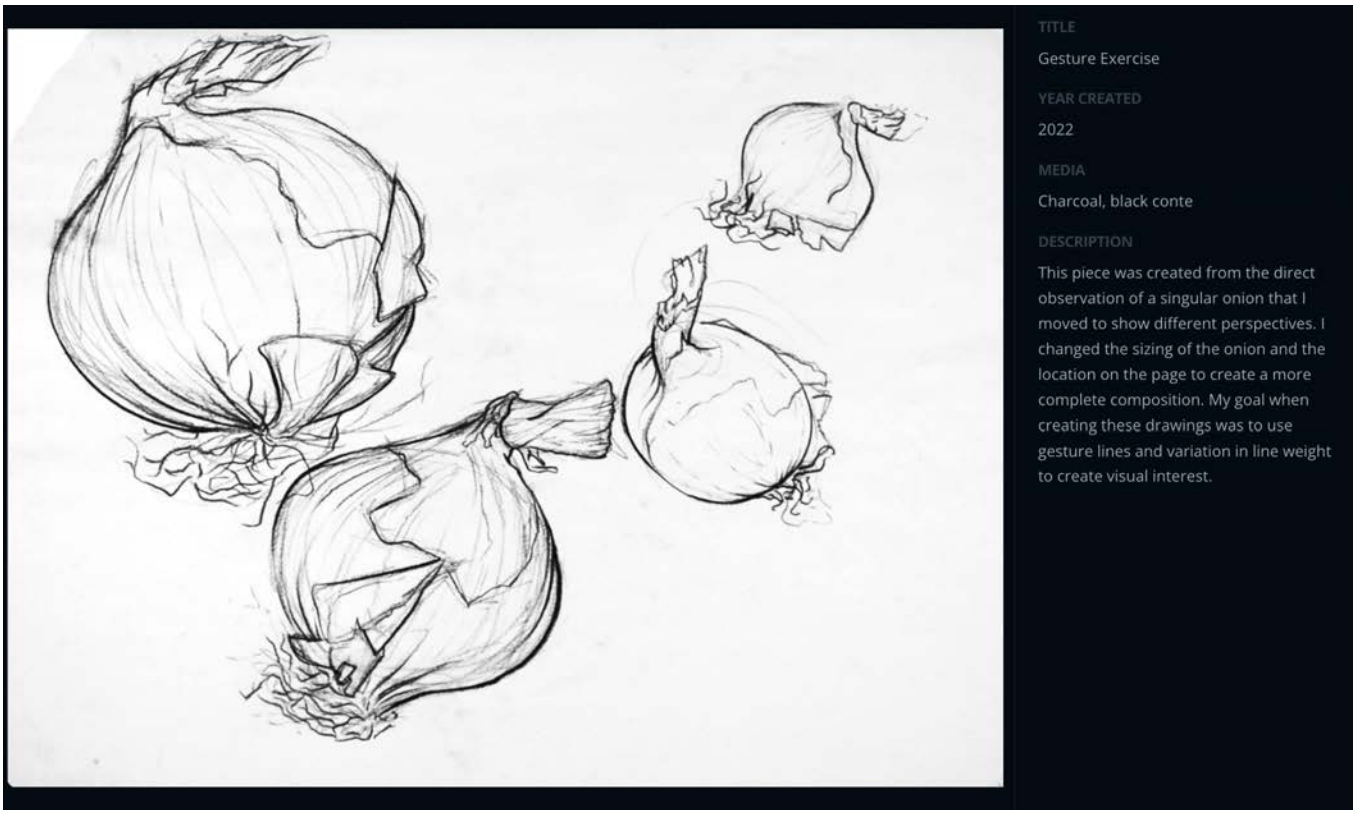
The following examples are to demonstrate a range of possible works with written descriptions, which were collected from successful application portfolios submitted through Slideroom.

Keep in mind that including works from studio Art can help demonstrate your readiness for foundation-level studio classes (Section A), while including Graphic Design specific works can help demonstrate your potential for future success in the Major (Section B). (also see the FAQ section of the Entrance Portfolio Guidelines above)

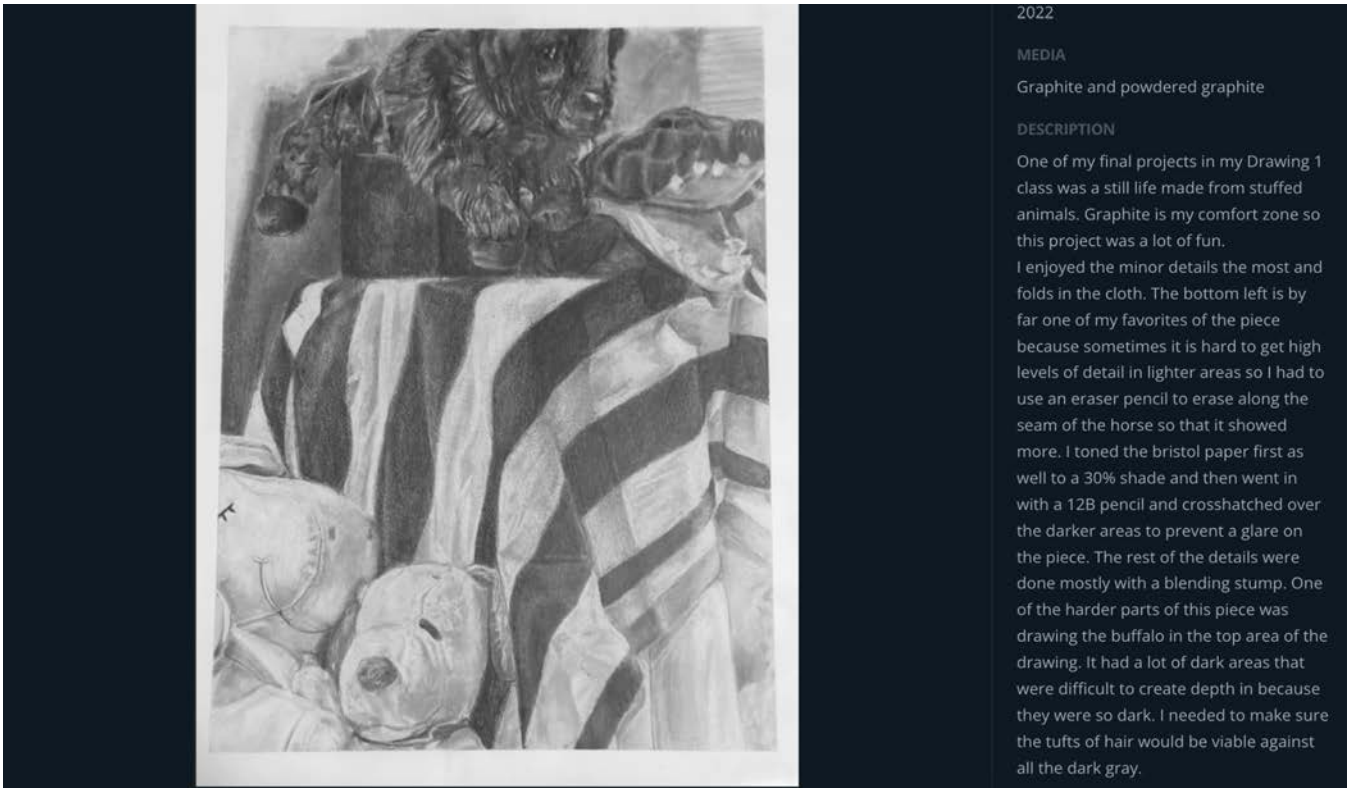
A. ***What kind of work will best demonstrate my readiness for foundation-level studio classes?***
Since Graphic Design majors must complete the Foundations Studio courses, (Drawing 1, 2D Design, 3D Design, and Digital Foundations), you should include works that demonstrate relevant skills and abilities. We highly recommend that you include at least 2 drawings. (see FAQ #4)

You might also include works that demonstrate: basic digital skills, creating 2D compositions, constructing 3D objects or spaces, using color, patterns, and textures. Media you might include but are: digital drawing, color or graphite pencils, charcoal, pen and ink, markers, acrylics, watercolors, collage, clay, plaster, and cardboard or wire constructions. Below are a few possible examples:

1. Drawing from Direct Observation (multiple views of one object)



2. Drawing from Direct Observation (still life)



2022

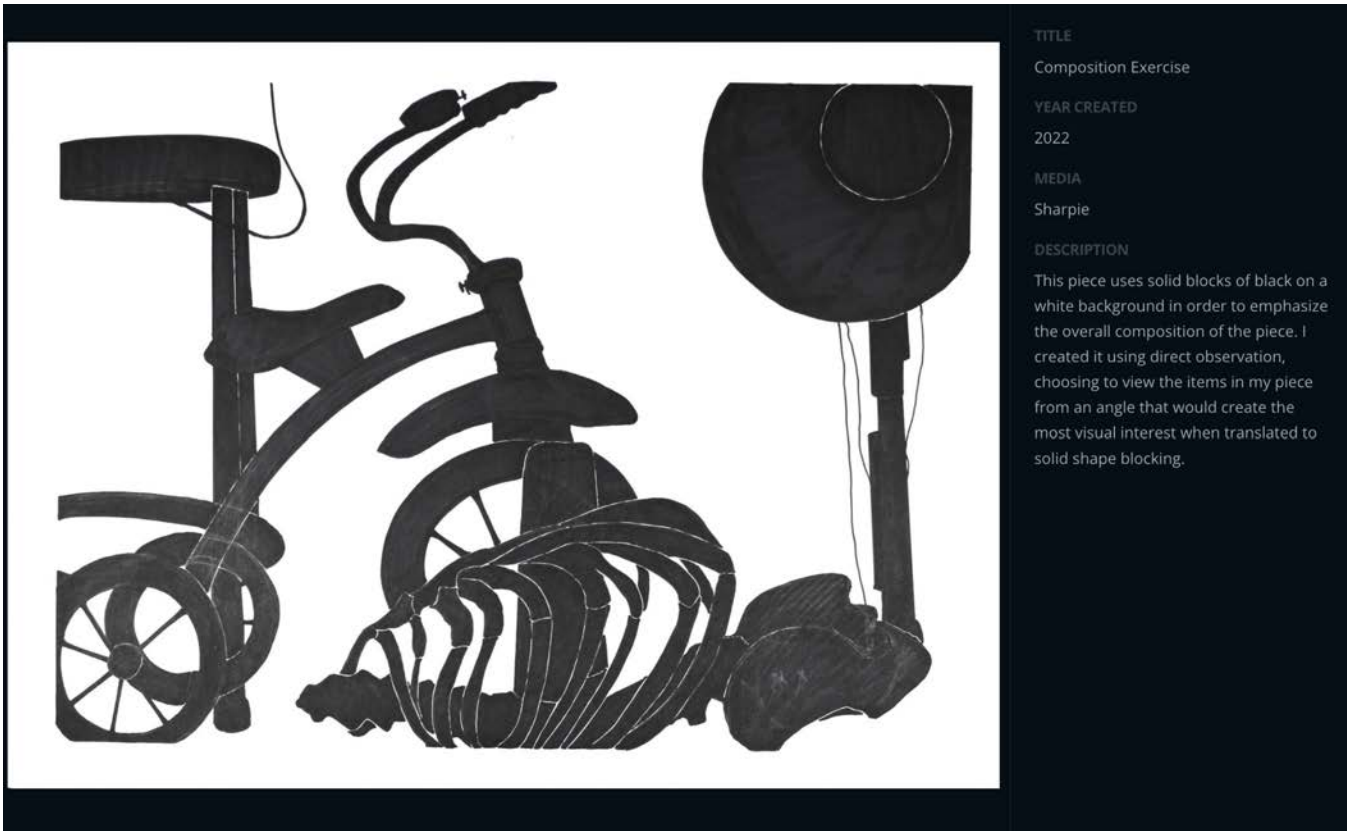
MEDIA

Graphite and powdered graphite

DESCRIPTION

One of my final projects in my Drawing 1 class was a still life made from stuffed animals. Graphite is my comfort zone so this project was a lot of fun.
I enjoyed the minor details the most and folds in the cloth. The bottom left is by far one of my favorites of the piece because sometimes it is hard to get high levels of detail in lighter areas so I had to use an eraser pencil to erase along the seam of the horse so that it showed more. I toned the bristol paper first as well to a 30% shade and then went in with a 12B pencil and crosshatched over the darker areas to prevent a glare on the piece. The rest of the details were done mostly with a blending stump. One of the harder parts of this piece was drawing the buffalo in the top area of the drawing. It had a lot of dark areas that were difficult to create depth in because they were so dark. I needed to make sure the tufts of hair would be viable against all the dark gray.

3. 2D Composition & Drawing from Direct Observation (positive & negative space)



TITLE

Composition Exercise

YEAR CREATED

2022

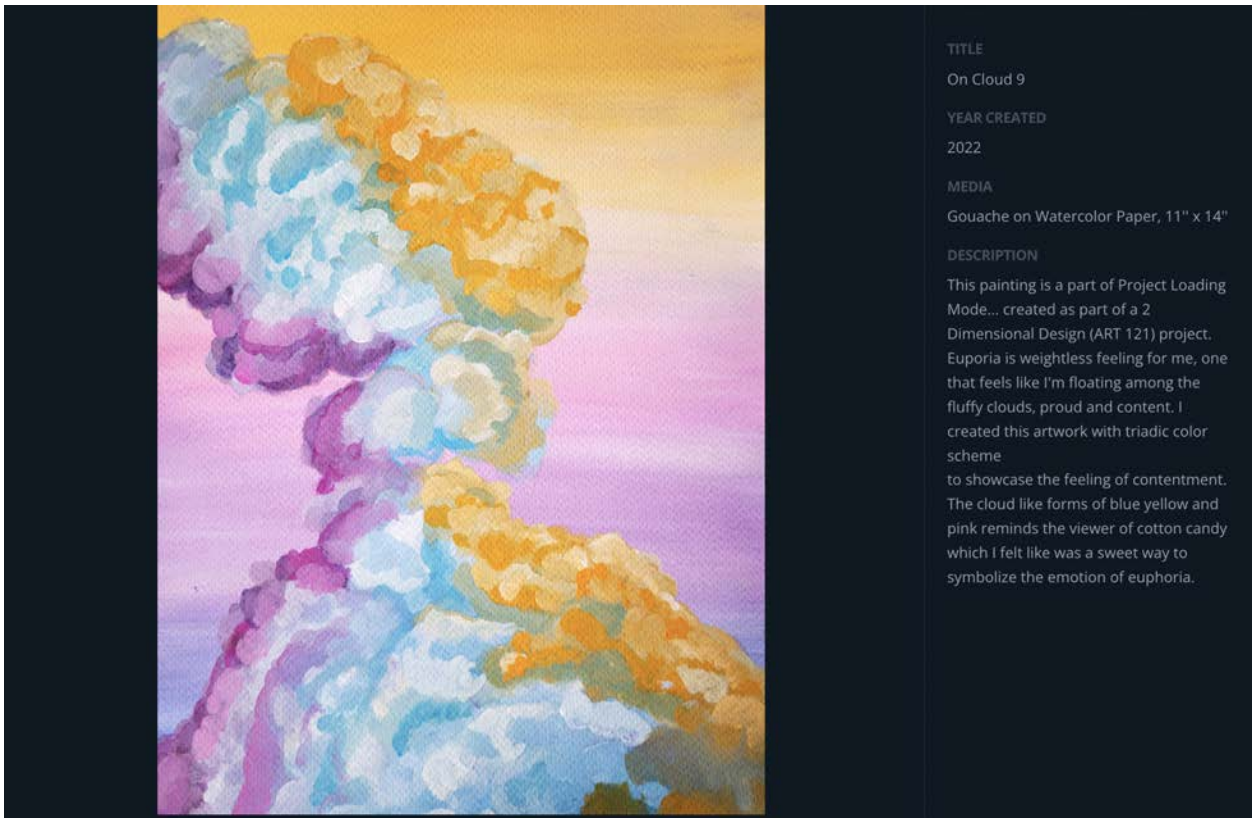
MEDIA

Sharpie

DESCRIPTION

This piece uses solid blocks of black on a white background in order to emphasize the overall composition of the piece. I created it using direct observation, choosing to view the items in my piece from an angle that would create the most visual interest when translated to solid shape blocking.

4. 2D Design & Color Study (Gouache Painting)



TITLE

On Cloud 9

YEAR CREATED

2022

MEDIA

Gouache on Watercolor Paper, 11" x 14"

DESCRIPTION

This painting is a part of Project Loading Mode... created as part of a 2 Dimensional Design (ART 121) project. Euporia is weightless feeling for me, one that feels like I'm floating among the fluffy clouds, proud and content. I created this artwork with triadic color scheme
to showcase the feeling of contentment. The cloud like forms of blue yellow and pink reminds the viewer of cotton candy which I felt like was a sweet way to symbolize the emotion of euphoria.

5. 2D & 3D Design (Collage)

TITLE

La Pollera Panameña

YEAR CREATED

2022

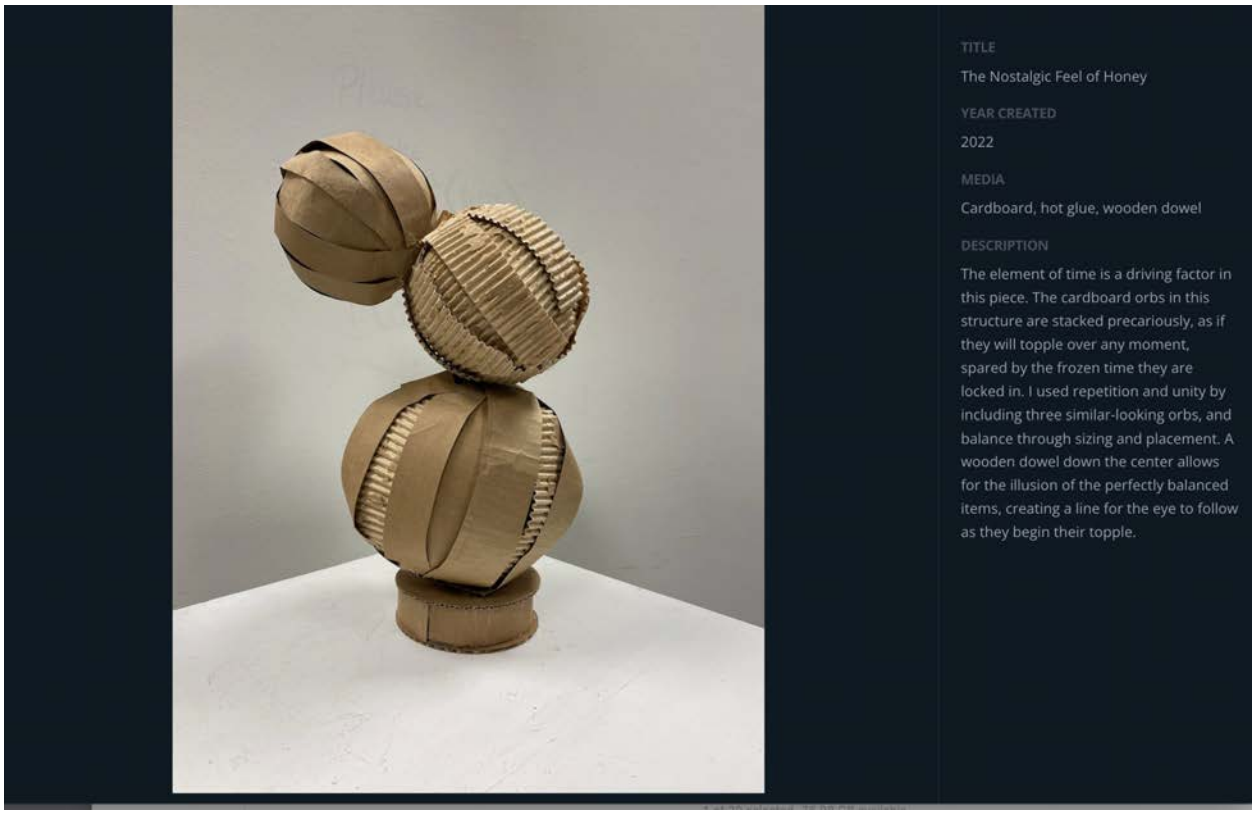
MEDIA

Mixed Media

DESCRIPTION

This piece is a narrative collage I made in my Advanced Visual Art class. The pollera is an elaborate, traditional dress worn in Panamá for festivities or celebrations. I had the privilege of having one handmade for me by my grandmother. For this piece I thrifted an old frame from Goodwill, cut out images from wallpaper samples, and used multiple other 3D elements. Each one symbolizes a different part of Panamanian culture. The bird and flower cutouts are representative of similar imagery used in many traditional artworks in the country. The fabric sample and strip of ribbon both correspond with the traditional textile art called mola created by Native American tribes in Panamá. The beaded accessories, gold jewelry, and doily represent polleras. Using elements from my own pollera was important to me and I am honored to have been recognized by the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards with an honorable mention in the mixed media category.

6. 3D Design (Cardboard Sculpture)



TITLE

The Nostalgic Feel of Honey

YEAR CREATED

2022

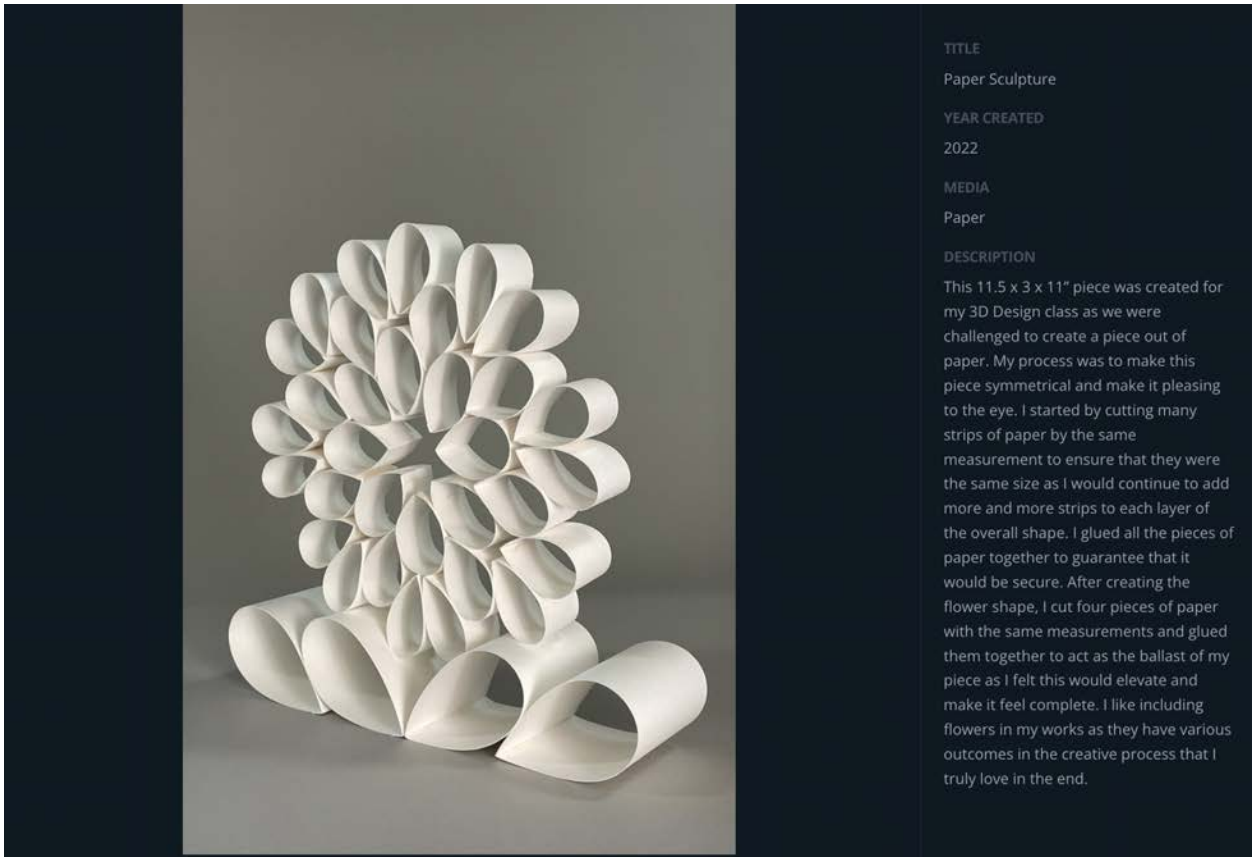
MEDIA

Cardboard, hot glue, wooden dowel

DESCRIPTION

The element of time is a driving factor in this piece. The cardboard orbs in this structure are stacked precariously, as if they will topple over any moment, spared by the frozen time they are locked in. I used repetition and unity by including three similar-looking orbs, and balance through sizing and placement. A wooden dowel down the center allows for the illusion of the perfectly balanced items, creating a line for the eye to follow as they begin their topple.

7. 3D Design (Paper Sculpture)



TITLE

Paper Sculpture

YEAR CREATED

2022

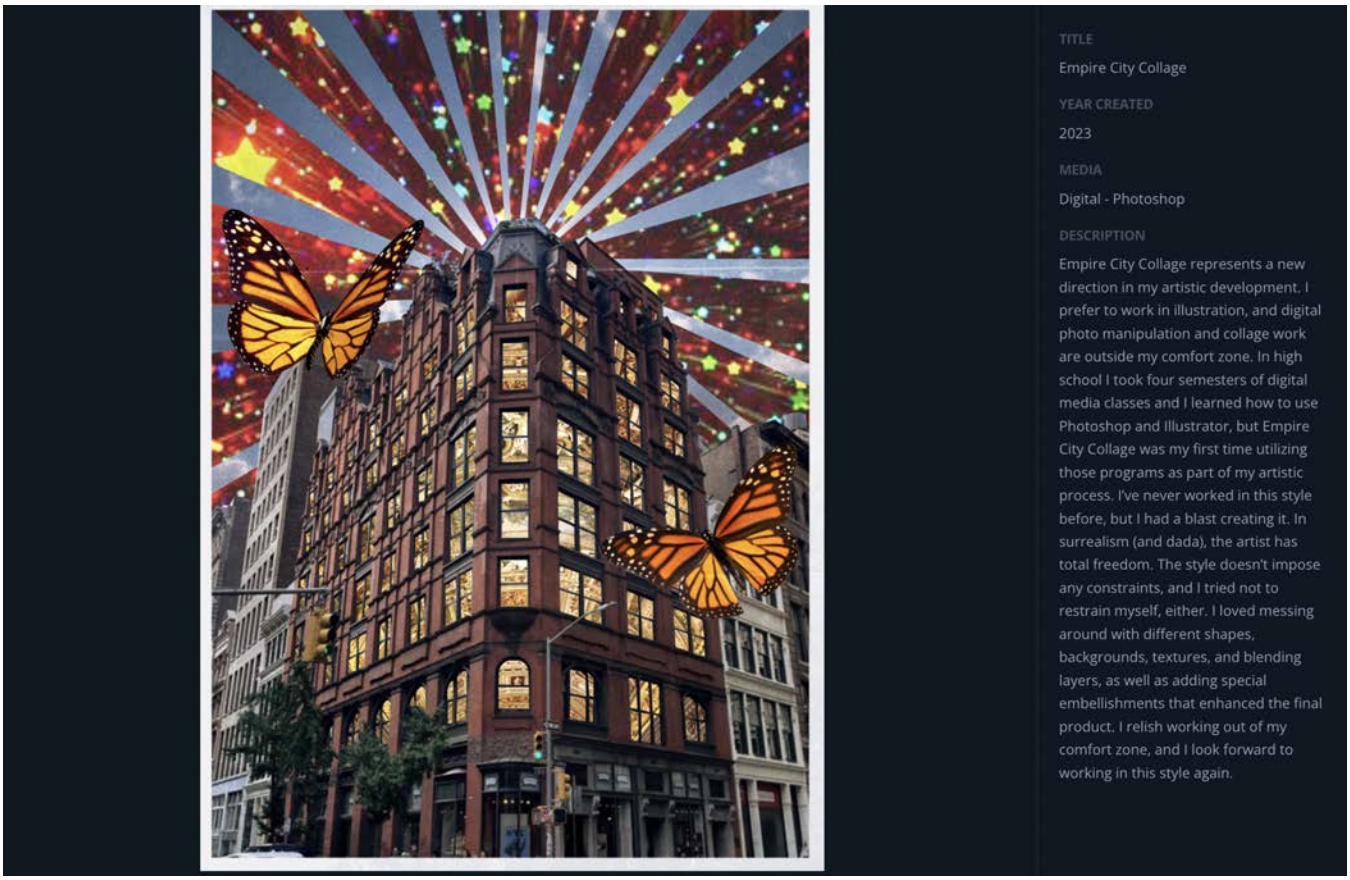
MEDIA

Paper

DESCRIPTION

This 11.5 x 3 x 11" piece was created for my 3D Design class as we were challenged to create a piece out of paper. My process was to make this piece symmetrical and make it pleasing to the eye. I started by cutting many strips of paper by the same measurement to ensure that they were the same size as I would continue to add more and more strips to each layer of the overall shape. I glued all the pieces of paper together to guarantee that it would be secure. After creating the flower shape, I cut four pieces of paper with the same measurements and glued them together to act as the ballast of my piece as I felt this would elevate and make it feel complete. I like including flowers in my works as they have various outcomes in the creative process that I truly love in the end.

8. Digital Foundations (Photoshop Collage)



TITLE

Empire City Collage

YEAR CREATED

2023

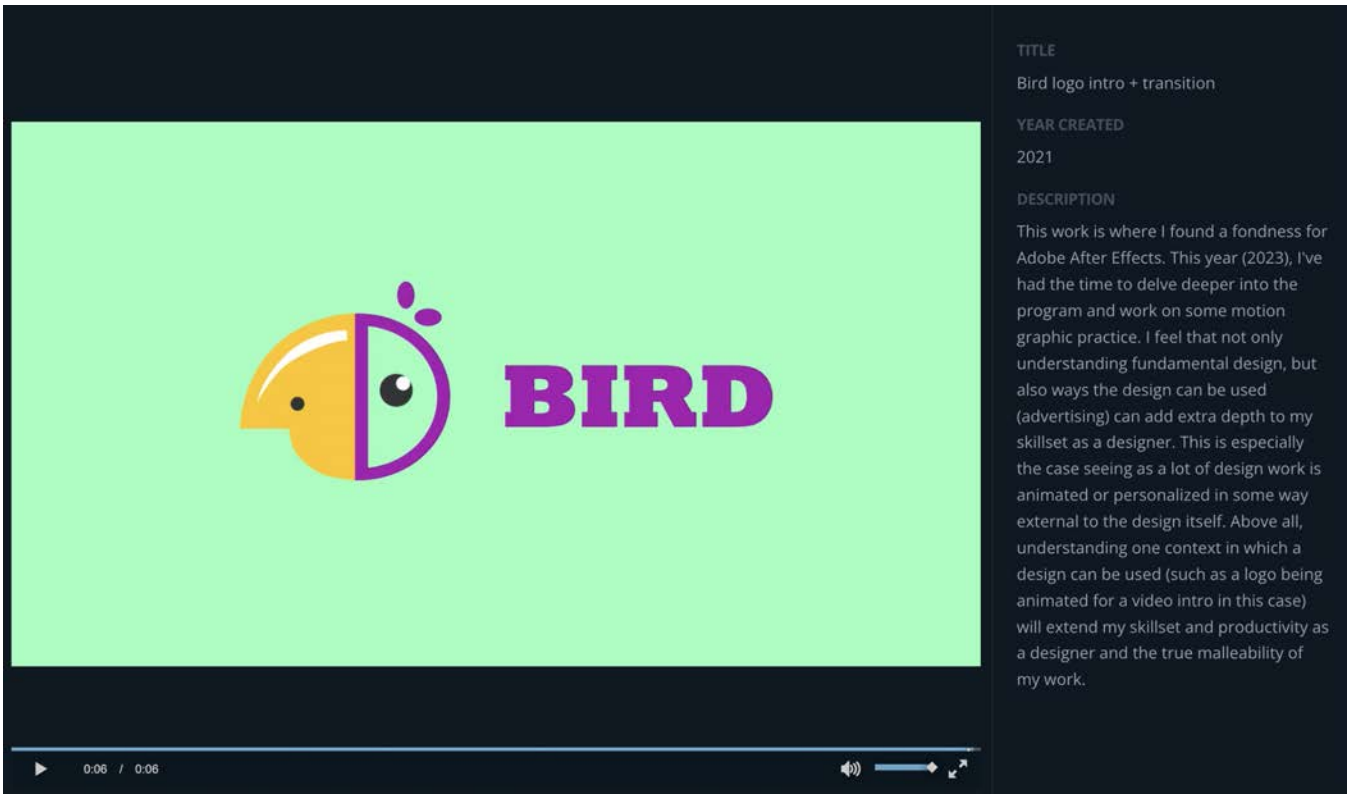
MEDIA

Digital - Photoshop

DESCRIPTION

Empire City Collage represents a new direction in my artistic development. I prefer to work in illustration, and digital photo manipulation and collage work are outside my comfort zone. In high school I took four semesters of digital media classes and I learned how to use Photoshop and Illustrator, but Empire City Collage was my first time utilizing those programs as part of my artistic process. I've never worked in this style before, but I had a blast creating it. In surrealism (and dada), the artist has total freedom. The style doesn't impose any constraints, and I tried not to restrain myself, either. I loved messing around with different shapes, backgrounds, textures, and blending layers, as well as adding special embellishments that enhanced the final product. I relish working out of my comfort zone, and I look forward to working in this style again.

9. Digital Foundations (Animated Logo in After Effects)



TITLE

Bird logo intro + transition

YEAR CREATED

2021

DESCRIPTION

This work is where I found a fondness for Adobe After Effects. This year (2023), I've had the time to delve deeper into the program and work on some motion graphic practice. I feel that not only understanding fundamental design, but also ways the design can be used (advertising) can add extra depth to my skillset as a designer. This is especially the case seeing as a lot of design work is animated or personalized in some way external to the design itself. Above all, understanding one context in which a design can be used (such as a logo being animated for a video intro in this case) will extend my skillset and productivity as a designer and the true malleability of my work.

B. ***What kind of work will best demonstrate my potential for future success in the major?***

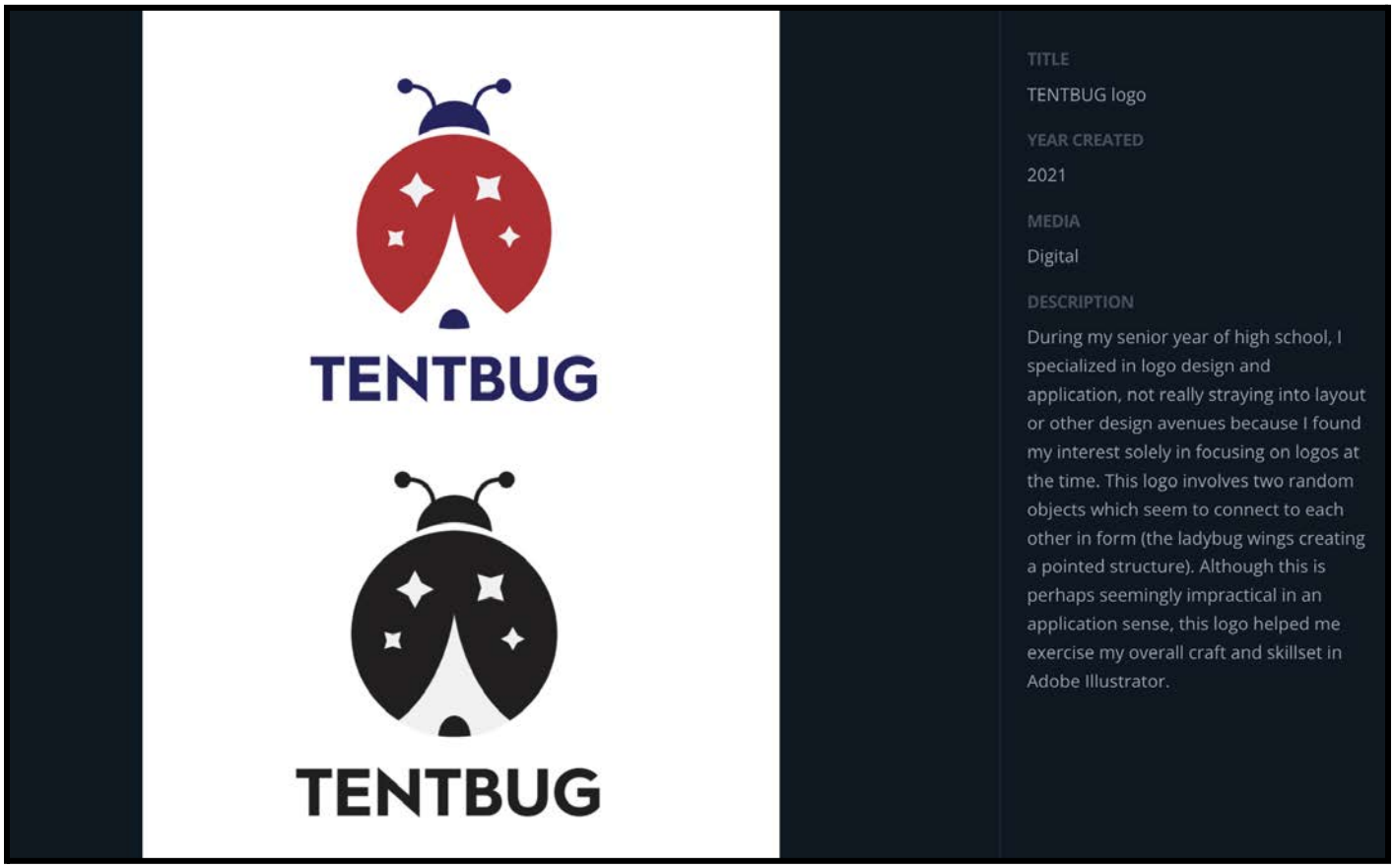
Generally speaking, Graphic Design is a creative process of solving problems to visually communicate ideas across a wide range of media. Include works that best demonstrate your skillful use of media (digital and/or studio), sense of craft, ability to apply design elements and principles, and creative problem solving.

You are encouraged (but not required) to include graphic design-specific works such as: logos and branding, layouts and advertisements, lettering and typography, brochures and posters, signage and packaging, apps and websites, 2D and 3D animations, info-graphics and data visualization, motion graphics and videos.

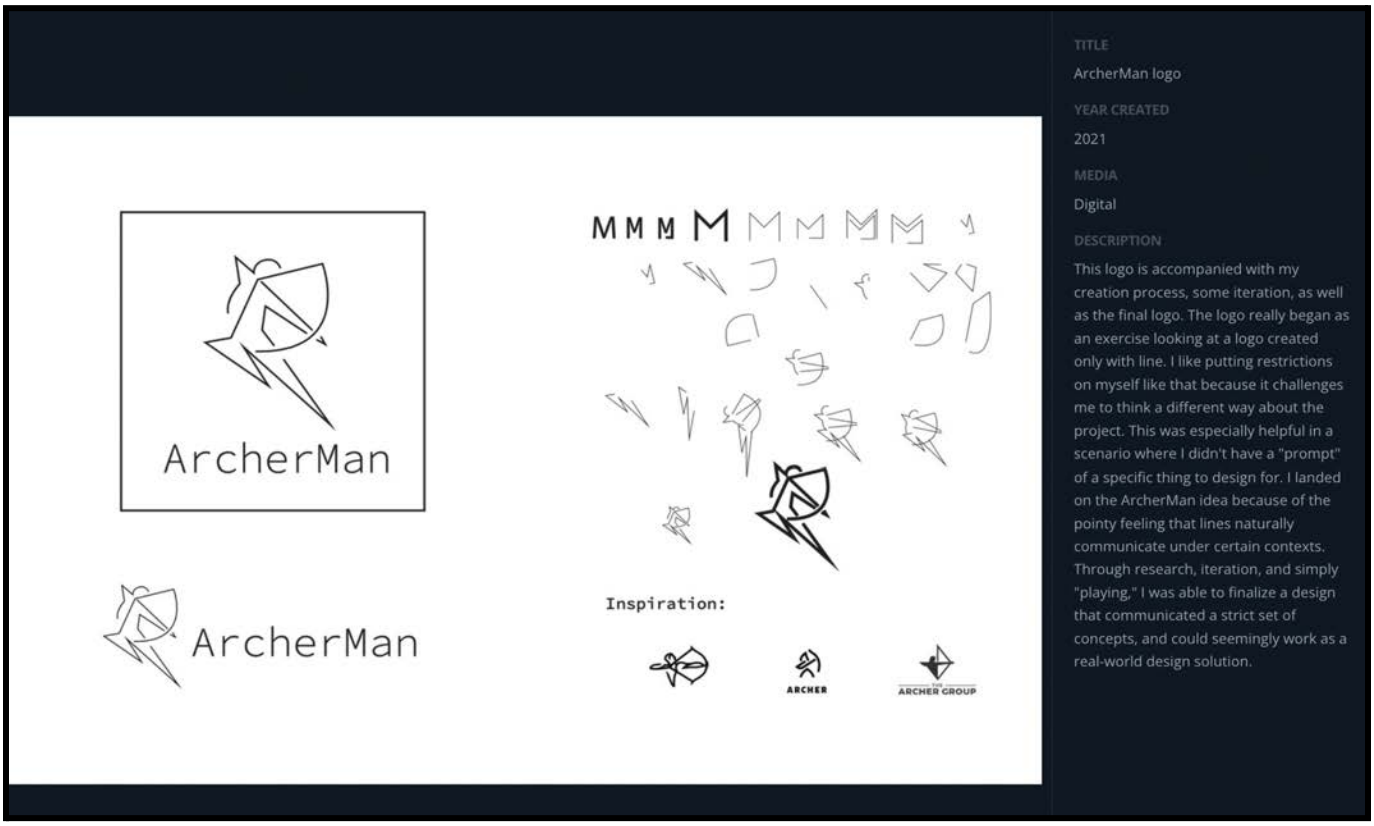
Examples that document and demonstrate your ability to brainstorm, ideate, and/or use the design process are also helpful, as well as works related to graphic design such as original photography, digital drawing and illustration, composited photos and collage, technical and/or architectural drawing, printmaking, and 3D digital fabrication.

Below are a few possible examples:

1. Logo Design



2. Logo Design (with process work)



3. Brand Design

4. Series of Signs

TITLE

Grief

YEAR CREATED

2022

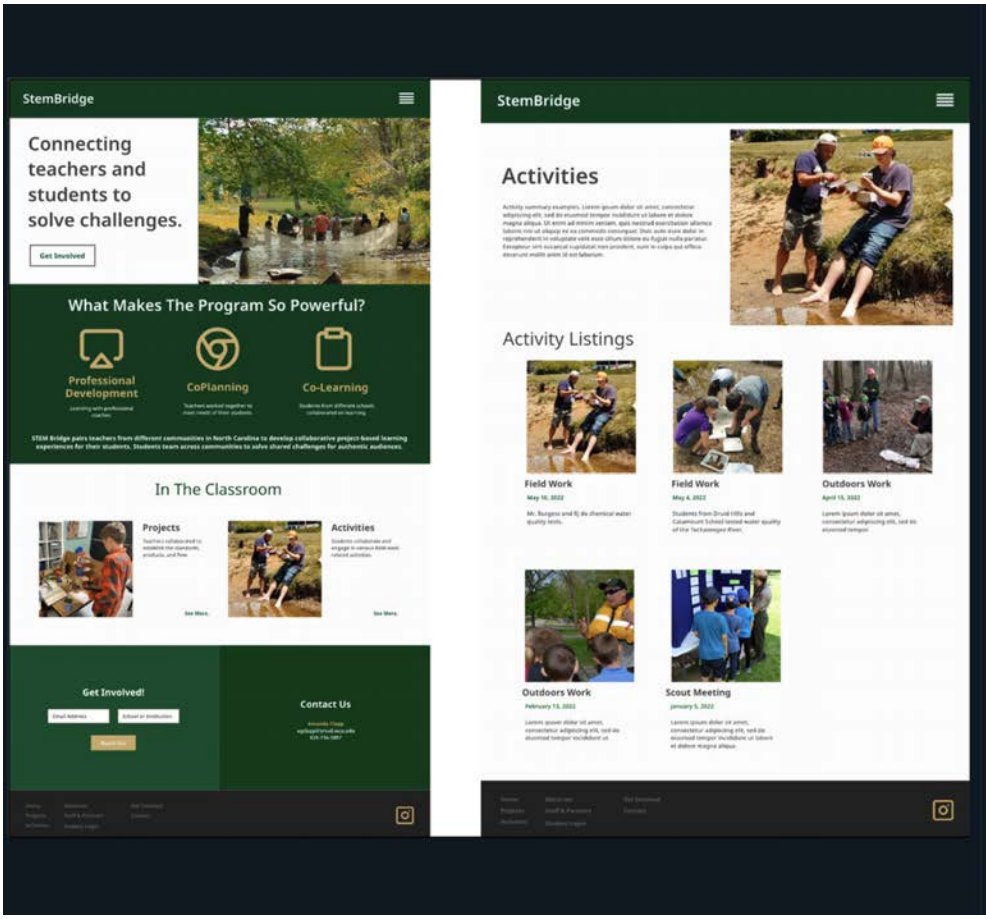
MEDIA

Digital (Procreate)

DESCRIPTION

Starting off as a piece with no original goal or idea, I kinda just found the idea as I went on; starting with just a thumbs up and a first. I then built on the hands by almost creating an animation style of how the hands move. Eventually I found the idea to put the hands into the idea of the seven stages of grief and edited the hands to fit the theme for the bottom one. Then I decided to add the top part as almost a lead up to the grief and make it like a "cycle."

5. Web Design



TITLE

StemBridge Website Mockup

YEAR CREATED

2023

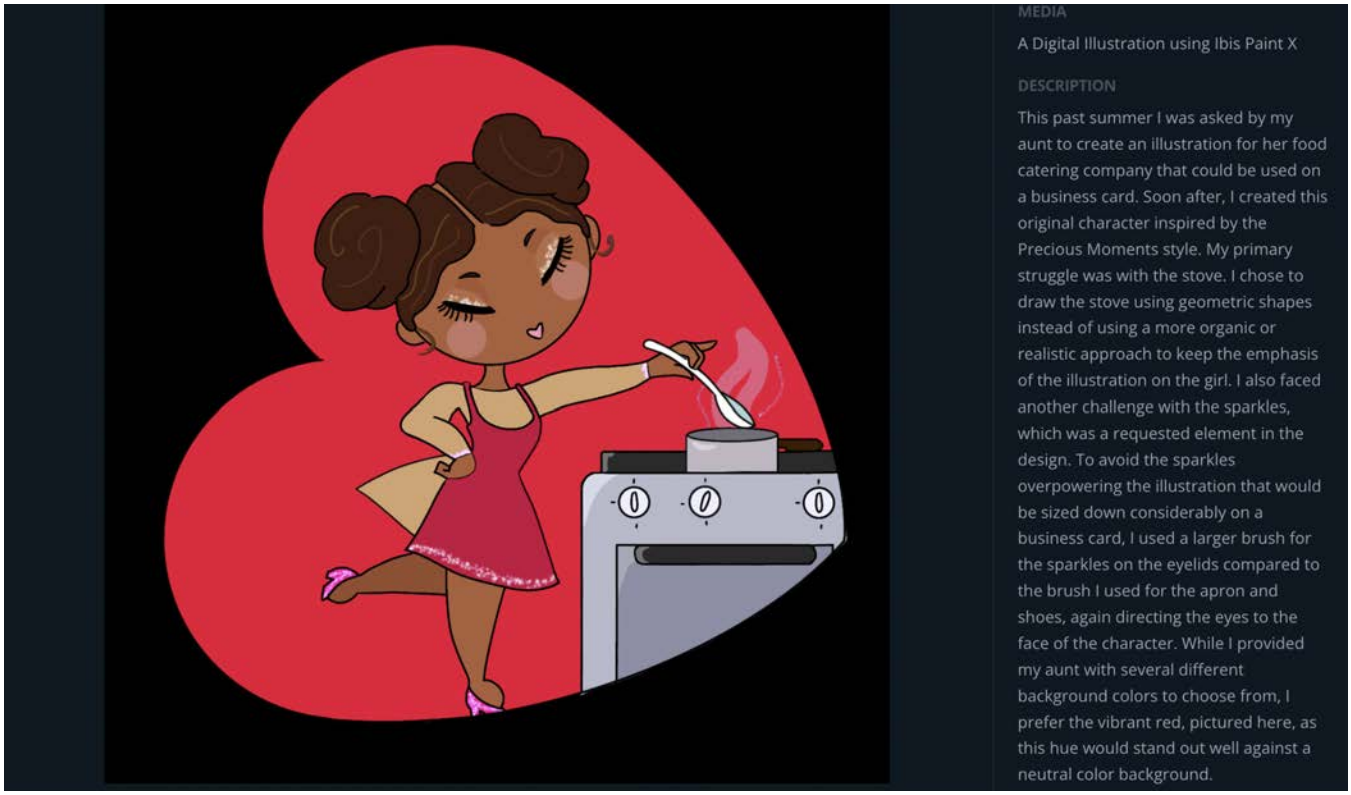
MEDIA

Digital Website

DESCRIPTION

I was given the opportunity to cooperate with StemBridge, a non-profit organization, to completely redesign their website from the ground up. I utilized Adobe XD to create an in-depth mockup of the new design which was then presented to the client via an interactive link. This experience was a lesson in designing for a specific audience. I needed to create a solution that presented the organization to the website's target audience: investors and teachers while simultaneously communicating the idea of ecology and togetherness. To achieve this, it required me to think in terms of what that specific group of people would want to see and what type of layout would help grab their attention. A key thing I learned while working through this project was my overall perception of websites and advertising. By viewing the website as a conversation I was able to guide my decision making, leading to intention behind everything that lives on the page.

6. Digital Illustration



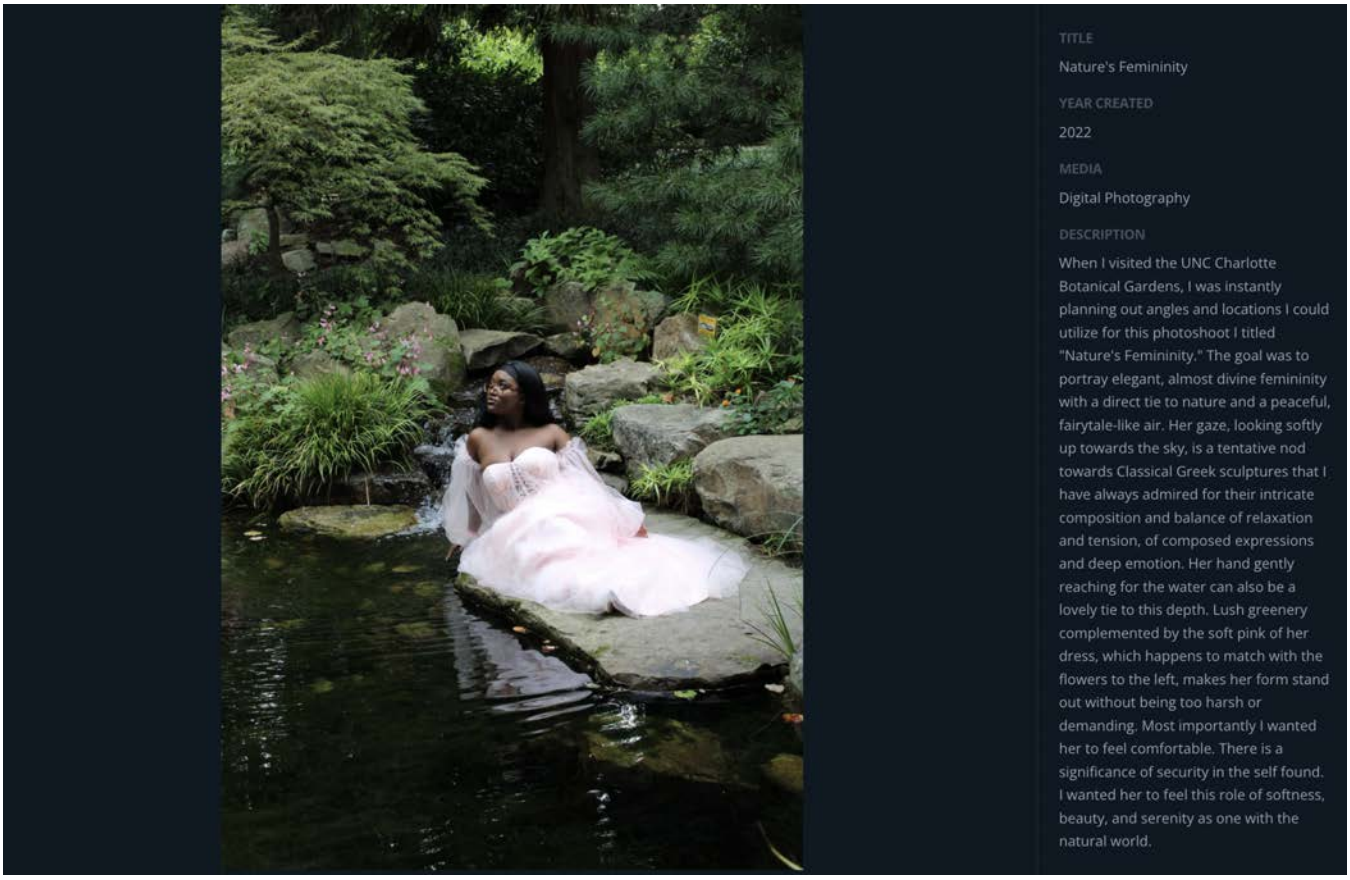
MEDIA

A Digital Illustration using Ibis Paint X

DESCRIPTION

This past summer I was asked by my aunt to create an illustration for her food catering company that could be used on a business card. Soon after, I created this original character inspired by the Precious Moments style. My primary struggle was with the stove. I chose to draw the stove using geometric shapes instead of using a more organic or realistic approach to keep the emphasis of the illustration on the girl. I also faced another challenge with the sparkles, which was a requested element in the design. To avoid the sparkles overpowering the illustration that would be sized down considerably on a business card, I used a larger brush for the sparkles on the eyelids compared to the brush I used for the apron and shoes, again directing the eyes to the face of the character. While I provided my aunt with several different background colors to choose from, I prefer the vibrant red, pictured here, as this hue would stand out well against a neutral color background.

7. Original Photography



TITLE

Nature's Femininity

YEAR CREATED

2022

MEDIA

Digital Photography

DESCRIPTION

When I visited the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens, I was instantly planning out angles and locations I could utilize for this photoshoot I titled "Nature's Femininity." The goal was to portray elegant, almost divine femininity with a direct tie to nature and a peaceful, fairytale-like air. Her gaze, looking softly up towards the sky, is a tentative nod towards Classical Greek sculptures that I have always admired for their intricate composition and balance of relaxation and tension, of composed expressions and deep emotion. Her hand gently reaching for the water can also be a lovely tie to this depth. Lush greenery complemented by the soft pink of her dress, which happens to match with the flowers to the left, makes her form stand out without being too harsh or demanding. Most importantly I wanted her to feel comfortable. There is a significance of security in the self found. I wanted her to feel this role of softness, beauty, and serenity as one with the natural world.