

Lexi Taylor

Class of 2022

Professor Dixon

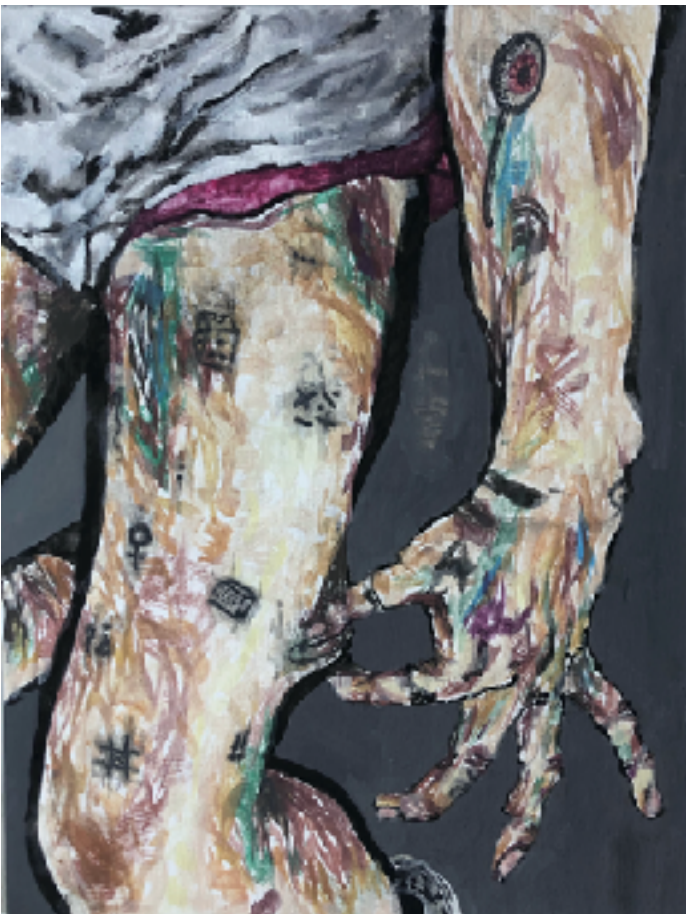
Art/Art History Major

End of Summer Report

This summer, I received a grant to make a series of oil paintings about the relationship between socioeconomic status and identity. I wanted to create a series of ten paintings that explored my experiences in dealing with unstable financial positions and the insecurity that resulted from them. At the start of this project, I had a pessimistic perspective of this topic and was very frustrated with how my identity was perceived as a result of being in a low socioeconomic class. I wanted to paint about the negative effects my experiences have had on me because I felt a need to make people aware of struggles with finances and my identity. However, after doing more research and observing my family's relationship with socioeconomic status and identity, I saw that our experiences were not negative. In fact, they have led us to engage in creative expressions that we may not have pursued if it weren't for our financial instability. It helped me to appreciate my story and reconstruct my goals for my project. I now hope to show that

a lower socioeconomic status is not necessarily a bad thing-- it is something that breeds innovation and individuality.

I feel that my painting series achieves this goal. I grew up in a family that was not comfortable discussing monetary endeavors, and especially not financial conflicts. In this environment, I did not feel comfortable explaining my anxiety with our situation. Fortunately, after doing a number of readings and talking with Professor Dixon, I began to feel much safer speaking about my experiences. I was most interested in expressions of identity in relation to socioeconomic status, so I decided to paint about it. My tattoos, for example, were the subject of a gouache painting I did at the beginning of the summer. Members of my family had tattoos and I had always wanted them, but I was never able to afford them. Instead, my friend and I began to give ourselves tattoos known as stick-and-pokes in our sophomore year of high school. I now have over twenty of these tattoos, the majority of which are on my left thigh. While they initially began as a temporary solution to wanting a tattoo, my stick-and-pokes are now a staple of my identity and are typically one of the first things people notice about my appearance. My other pieces include portraits of my family and still-lives of how our socioeconomic status presents itself in our identities.



Additionally, I learned several new techniques of painting that I was able to work on with Professor Dixon in the studio everyday. These new techniques included how to employ color effectively in portraiture, how to paint forms to look more three-dimensional, and how to more accurately mix flesh tones with oil paints. I also was able to experiment more with oil paint and get a better understanding of what I want my artistic style to look like.

This project has helped me to build a new relationship with my socioeconomic identity. I am more confident in my appearance and self-expressions, realizing that it is not about the amount of money spent on it, but the genuity of it. I believe that my peers in the Albion College community could greatly benefit from learning about my experiences and the psychology behind socioeconomic status and identity. I plan on showing my work around the Bobbit Visual Arts Center and presenting my work in the Elkin Isaac Symposium this spring. I will also be applying to share this series in exhibitions, shows, and artist residencies.

Working for FURSCA has been one of the best experiences in my adult life. It has provided me with the funds and time I needed in order to grow my artistic practice. Being an art major, I have always worried about finding fulfilling opportunities that will

financially support me. However, Albion College has shown me that a successful career in this field is possible with good support systems. I would like to thank the donors that made this experience possible and my mentors, Michael Dixon and Bille Wickre for always encouraging me in all my endeavors.