Making Art in a Pandemic
Spring 2020

School of Art + Design
Virtual Exhibition

art.sdsu.edu
The basic questions — how to live, how to face mortality and how best to make sense of the world — are ones that drive the humanities still and again. The crisis of values we are facing is enormous as cost-benefit schemes of values are imposed upon the management of life, too often designating the precarious as dispensable lives. It is no wonder that people are turning to poetry and song, writing and visual art, history and theory to make sense of their pandemic world, to reflect upon the question: When the world as we know it falls apart, what then?

Judith Butler

In the middle of March, like students all across the nation, more than 850 students in the School of Art + Design at SDSU were sent home to learn, study, create, and finish off the spring semester 2020 remotely as COVID-19 swept across the nation and globe. Faculty that had been teaching painting and drawing, design and fabrication, metal and woodworking, in the studios on campus for decades relearn to teach these physical and material processes in virtual environments. Students created makeshift art spaces in studio apartments, childhood bedrooms, corners of kitchens, and at dining room tables. Our office fielded calls and emails from students in acute distress, with family members ill and dying, jobs lost and income drained, anxiety levels rising, and some without a place to live. In the midst of so much pain, here at home and across the world, what place do the arts hold? As it turns out, a very central one.

Creative practice is a means to dream and imagine, to innovate and build, to recreate the world around us. Through art and design, we seek to make sense of life in all its mystery and joy, love and trauma. We find a home for the heart, an outlet for feelings, a map for wondering and a space for exploring. As history will show, the US faced twin pandemics this spring, first COVID-19, and then a widespread reckoning with historic systemic racism. In this unprecedented context filled with intensity and strife, we wanted to know how our students were being creative and what they were making.

At first, entries to for the virtual exhibition Making Art in a Pandemic trickled in but gradually they built to a crescendo, and by the time the deadline arrived, we had received over 70 submissions representing as wide a variety of media, sensibilities, responses, and emotional layers as individual responses to this communal crisis. Some students submitted wearable art designed to simultaneously represent and manifest the newly mandated six feet of social distance and others collaborated on posters in which one student visualized a word and sent that image to a partner to add text. Ceramics students drew on the tradition of commemorative plates to memorialize the singular time in which they found themselves, making plates about panic shopping, missing activities, and honoring the banal everyday objects around them. Students created photographs exploring isolation in the vast urban landscape and in close quarters at home; paintings and drawings that mirrored emotional landscapes as wide-ranging as fear, boredom, romance, joy, and uncertainty. They designed imagined locales for a safer time and public service announcements for hand washing and staying home. They made digital collages that alternately mined the darkly surreal margins of the pandemic era and stretched into the fantastical corners borne of cabin fever. These student artists and designers used the processes they were learning to mend and comfort, to laugh and mourn, to educate and share, and to plumb the depths of our time.

As a first-year director, just getting to know the school, faculty, and students, I could not be more impressed with the way our community — and most of all our students — rose to the strange occasion of distanced learning and making to explore new ways of creating and being. These artists are not just making new work; they are imagining new worlds, designing futures, and carving spaces for hope.

Annie Buckley
Professor and Director
School of Art + Design, SDSU
“I made this design after hearing about the extension of the pandemic lockdown. The world seems to be on a peak. As the words of advice drop down, people are ignoring instructions and spreading coronavirus.”

Lamya Almuqrin
On a Peak, 2020
Digital rendering
“At the time I made this composition, I had just finished going on a bike ride with my family and we came across a small field of flowers of all different colors. It made me realize that while this time is uncertain and scary for everyone, I am so thankful I get to spend what might be my last year living in my parent’s home before I move out. This time has made me cherish the present and appreciate the ones I have around me.”

Mia Ballesteros
From the Flowers, 2020
Digital collage

“Relating to genuine goodness, wisdom is important in making decisions. It takes decisions to consider a whole group more than just one’s interest. With this in mind, I made different shapes in various sizes that overlap with each other and symbolize pieces of interests in making a whole decision without leaving one behind. These shapes are represented into the floor plans and into the design of the entire house.”

Faustina Barros
House of Wisdom, 2020
Digital rendering with AutoCad, Sketchup, and Photoshop
“Pastimes with Good Company is a visual explanation addressing the question, ‘What does it mean to grow up?’ The book is a mix of my photography and letters from my mom and Nana writing to me what ‘growing up’ means to them. Through my discovery, I found that being young at heart is truly a timeless message.”

Natalie Borton  
Pastimes with Good Company, 2020  
Archival digital print  
12 x 12 inches

“I have found creating art during this pandemic to be therapeutic. It allows me to understand the chaos of the current world, as well as the feelings inside of me.”

Veronica Casey  
Self-Portrait, 2020  
Oil on canvas  
16 x 20 inches
“I made this piece as a commentary on the people who focus solely on money and the economy, and who value those abstract concepts over the lives of people. On the far left of the piece you see these people guarding their money and frantically putting a border between them and the outside world, and in the rest of the piece, you see the majority of people enjoying themselves and enjoying life while living outside of the things that confine us, such as money and rule.”

Michael Chavez
Really Living, 2020
Archival inkjet print
6 x 18 inches

“Everyone has their coping mechanisms, or ways to find the light in dark times such as these. Mine is to stay creative. It gives me the feeling of satisfaction and excitement, making my world brighter.”

Jade DeSanto
Finding Light in a Dark Time, 2020
Archival digital photograph
“This is a watercolor piece I drew first and then added colors from a color palette I used frequently in my work. I haven’t used watercolor at all since I started the MFA program two years ago and now that I am in this new situation without my studio, it felt right to use a medium that wasn’t my normal go-to. This piece is about the fact that even though there is a global situation going on, I don’t necessarily feel the effects of it in my home workspace. I’m having trouble processing my emotions and this piece shows a reflection of shapes that is not being truthful to the real scene above.”

Michelle Drummy  
Off Reflection, 2020  
Watercolor on paper  
8½ x 5½ inches

“This was a project for my Illustration class, and I spent quite a lot of time on it. This quarantine period pushed me out of my comfort zone because I do not draw realistically in digital art often. Even though I share a room with my two sisters, I still had enough workspace and they didn’t mind me keeping the lights on to work on it late at night.”

Jenessa Edora  
Lips of a Liar, 2020  
Digital rendering  
20 x 15 inches
“As resources have been limited during this time in quarantine, I have looked to previously fired work of mine that I have rejected due to either unsatisfying appearance or functional flaws. I have broken and reassembled them, transforming them into new objects: a metaphor for this difficult, yet necessary transition into a new way of life.”

Katie Francis
Reconstruction Series (left to right, Shot Glass, Cup, Dinner Plate), 2020
Ceramic, hot glue, nails, thread
Dimensions variable

“With the stress of the world around me it is easier to imagine myself in a space of love and imagination. These four mountains in Disneyland helped me focus on what will come rather than the issues of today. It relieved my stress about the pandemic and provided me a way to think about where I wish I could be.”

Daisy Garcia
Entering the World of Yesterday, Tomorrow and Fantasy
Acrylic on canvas
7 x 14 inches
“These pieces are spreads from my photo book titled 19.21.11. My semester-long project follows my journey as a developing photographer. Working with a variety of film stocks and digital cameras, I sought out to experiment with light, color and the form of a male muse. This unprecedented time left me without a darkroom and supplies to achieve what I initially had in mind, but it also forced me to find different ways in which I could express my creativity.”

Keni Geremia
19.21.11, 2020 (spreads 4 and 5)
Archival photobook

“My current work is about creating space and connection between the wearer and the viewer and the sudden loss of my studio mates feels particularly poignant. We are all trying to connect and communicate in a different way now, finding connection while inhabiting our own distinct and distant spaces.”

Jennifer Hansen
Should I Translate (Lover’s Eye), 2020
Brooch: laser engraved mirror, sterling, glass pearls
3 x 4½ inches
“I enjoy the muted earth tones that appear in desert environments, as well as the textures and shapes. These colors help accentuate the surface of trees, mountains, etc. Psychedelic and mysterious inspired themes take hold on the overall composition, while I explored different paint application techniques.”

Parker Heath
_Untitled (Desert Mountains), 2020_
Acrylic on paper
9 x 12 inches

“In my designs, I often put objects in places you wouldn’t normally see, such as flowers blooming from the human body; the reason for this is to show that the world as we see it is not the only way it can be perceived and people should not be afraid to explore their imagination. This piece was created for Earth Day.”

Lile Kvantaliani
_Efflorescence, 2020_
Archival print on acrylic
24 x 24 inches
This was part of an assignment for the semester to make a parody of a work of art found within our textbook. While I had already presented my work once we were under quarantine, I decided to try out the prompt once again. This time, I took easily recognizable pieces of design and tried to make them applicable to COVID-19. One that emphasized social distancing, another commenting on the mask shortage controversy, and the last urging others to wash their hands.

Tess Land
Just Do It from COVID-19 Graphic Design Parodies, 2020
Digital rendering in Adobe Photoshop

“This artwork is about holding onto ‘hope’ no matter how compelling things are nowadays.”

Emma Laraby
Untitled (Hope), 2020
Digital collage
“Cities can be lonely places, especially during this global pandemic. You can be lonely anywhere, but there is a particular flavor to the loneliness that comes from living in a city, surrounded by millions of people. I mainly focus on capturing empty streets to express a sense of loneliness and isolation.”

Jian Li
See the beauty in loneliness, 2020
Archival digital print

“While in quarantine, I’ve decided to stop forcing myself to paint tight and clean, allowing myself to paint very expressively. My desk is a foot away from my bed, and I’ve relearned how to spend my time here, as I used to dread sitting at it. This piece reflects how lost I feel some days; my circadian rhythm essentially non-existent, sleep a distant relative, my nights spent drowning in my own thoughts.”

Rianne Magbuhat
Drowning in My Own Head, 2020
Acrylic and spray paint on canvas
24 x 18 inches
“I designed this surreal digital image using my original photos and Adobe Photoshop for my Digital Photography class. My goal was to create an image that would engage the viewer emotionally as well as visually creating a space where the mind is free to wander into the illogical world of surrealism. I enjoyed this project as it permitted me to express how surreal the world seems to me during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Janet Middaugh
Untitled, 2020
Archival digital print
11 x 17 inches

“There is not a ton of stuff to do in a pandemic unless you look. For many people, staying home/avoiding the public is actually pretty normal and what you see in these photos is what I normally do, pandemic or no pandemic.”

Jamie Kristine Oram
A Day in the Life..., 2020
Archival digital print
“This artwork was created for an assignment in Art 103 (Three Dimensional Design) with recycled items. The idea was to catalog how light, shadows, and color interacted with objects. At first I was unaware of what I was doing, until I adjusted and maneuvered so much with the colors and light sources that they resulted in some striking images.”

Domi Paredes
Abstract Light and Shadow Study One, 2020
Mixed media
5 x 5 inches

“I’m still trying to create as much as I would as if I was still in school, but it’s hard because I had a studio at SDSU. At home, I live with my parents and I can only paint in a corner of the front yard, on a towel and on the floor. I try to paint every day. I lost my job and school has been hard to focus on, so it gets my mind off of everything happening.”

Avia Rose Ramm
Two Saints, 2020
Acrylic on canvas
24 x 36 inches
“It took me around a month after the shift online to make art again. I was overwhelmed with change and disappointed that I no longer had in-person studios, however I made this piece with a sudden burst of positive energy. I painted this on the ground in front of my TV, with an old table cloth underneath me and a lap table to comfortably paint on my lap. I watched the British ‘Portrait Artist of the Year’ and just had fun with it. I wanted to take a break and make art that was bright and joyful compared to all of the stress and uncertainty.”

Giulia Serbia
Sugar, Spice and Everything Nice, 2020
Acrylic on wood
10 x10 inches

“This photography piece is a still life composition of trinkets and souvenirs owned by me, that best represent the poem “Wanderlust” by Richard Avedon. I really wanted to show the diversity in all that I am but show how it all works together cohesively. The tattered and worn boots from my adventure ‘Leaving the town as I go my aimless way.’ The map background pinned from my travels, the hint to Thailand with the elephant figurine, a painted bottle from Ecuador, the various sands from around the globe, ‘Because I am most usually where the way is strangest and the wonders thick.’”

Haley Schildgen
Wanderlust in Still Life, 2020
Archival digital print
“Unidentified exhaustion, weight and solace—all these things I have been feeling are the very things she embodies. Even though this time of isolation has been abrupt and painful in a lot of ways, I have been finding a bit of wonder in the slowed pace of every day.”

Rebekah Sullivan
Study of a Girl, 2020
Charcoal on paper
24 x 18 inches

Kline Swonger
Holding Space, 2020
Mixed media
60 x 48 x 24 inches

“These are explorations of giving volume and weight to intangible elements like light and space. I live in a small studio apartment, so I will have to think about how I can explore light, shadow, and space in new ways.”
“This piece was made on four sheets of newsprint very haphazardly. I had not intended to really make or keep this work. I had been making some clothing using the newsprint. A friend I had been on FaceTime with at the time told me to do something on the protective arrangement of newsprint and it became this untitled piece. Quarantine had definitely motivated me to create on a daily basis and push myself as an artist in all aspects. I have been making lots of clothing and digital artwork and album/song art whilst locked away.”

Kyle Tran
Untitled, 2020
Acrylic and aerosol on newsprint
48 x 36 inches

“I wanted to capture the many emotions we are all feeling during this time and remember those that are no longer here with us while still depicting the interconnectivity within us all. Being home so much has made it easier for me to create and to be able to put all of these emotions into my work.”

Sarah Wall
Untitled, 2020
Digital collage
8½ x 11 inches
"All my art supplies are piled high in my parents’ garage where I spend most hours of my day covered in clay dust at the wheel or hand-building. Keeping my hands busy is important for my well-being, but inspiration during a pandemic is sparse. After a period of nothingness, I began to think of things that made me happy and translate those into my work. Being isolated also led me to make Comfort Cups—patchwork cups resembling quilts which give me feelings of nostalgia and family."

Ansley Wilson
Comfort Cups, 2020
Unfired reclaimed clay
3 x 5 x 5 inches (each)
Commemorative plates have been a longstanding way to memorialize events, people, and places. For this project, students were challenged to create a set of commemorative plates in response to our unique time experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic using clay or found objects such as paper plates. The results are the following works.

“I wanted to create a group of plates that commemorate my experiences with the current pandemic and its effect on my graduation from SDSU. I try not to take anything too seriously, so puns and humor tend to yell from my art at times. Certainly, the pandemic is a serious matter, but I did not want to fixate on the negativity and feelings of anxiety around it. I wanted to look at it in a more comical and lighthearted way.”

Katrina Bell
2020 Graduation...Sort Of (left to right: America's Most Wanted...2020 Edition, Avoiding Toxicity...Class of 2020, Two Years, Too Short, and 'Rona Graduates!), 2020
Copper, tooling; 7 x 7 x ½ inches (each)
“In the beginning of this pandemic, I dwelled on all of the activities I was missing and felt that I took for granted. I decided to create these commemorative plates with simplified icons for the activities I’m looking forward to the most once the world is back on its feet!”

Jordan Crum-Townes
The Missing Pieces, 2020
Unfired bee mix clay and acrylic paint
5½ x 5 inches (each)

“...I had my black hair bleached to blonde. My original plan was to keep my hair blonde and maybe have it touched up a little so it could be ready for what was going to be my older brother’s wedding in mid-April. However, I’ve decided to give into my impulses to dye my hair whatever color I want. My piece is a set of commemorative paper plates that are dedicated to the different hair colors I’ve had since the beginning of quarantine.”

Leah Marie Eria
Commemorative Plates – Impulses (clockwise from top left: Week 1 [Blonde], Week 2 [Pastel Pink], Week 5 [Lavendar], Week 6 [Magenta/Blue]), 2020
Digital print on paper plates
9 inches diameter (each)
“My experience under this pandemic brought to me many shapes and patterns I have seen lately. With the stresses of our current state, we look for order in a tough time. It is worth seeing how people act socially and antisocially. It is also worth seeing how technology could offer safety and what that would require.”

Sean Fenderson
COVID Commemorative Set (clockwise from top left: Plate 1 [Park], Plate 2 [Streetlight], Plate 3 [Grocery], Plate 4 [Beach]), 2020
Papier-mâché and acrylic
10½ inches diameter (each)

“During this time people are adopting a new lifestyle that makes them feel trapped, however this isn’t the case for me. As an introvert I have been ‘social distancing’ for most of my life. In a series of self-portraits I want to represent parts of myself that bring me comfort not only during a pandemic, but during any time.”

Azarely Gutierrez
Social Distancing and Me (clockwise from top left: Mind, Art, Wine, Solitude), 2020
Watercolor and mixed media on paper
8 inches diameter (each)
“Humor, in the form of satire, plays a big role in my life and the work I produce. It’s the way I’m able to deal with life’s disappointments and grievances. This pandemic has certainly brought on disappointment after disappointment, but also immense material for the commemoration of satirical themes.”

Amber Hamblin
COVID-19 Commemoration Plate Set, 2020
Cardboard, white glue, acrylic paint, pen
8½ inches diameter (each)

“The plates that I had used have been the placemat of conversation during holidays for five generations of my family. My relatives, in the 1st and 3rd plates, had lived through and survived the Spanish flu pandemic. Through the text, I invite my relatives to have a conversation with my son and I about how they view the current world issues in comparison to the pandemic of their time.”

Veronica Hughes
Centennial Speech, 2020
Digital art, inkjet decals, milk glass plates
9¾ inches diameter (each)
"I wanted to honor the local canyons and indigenous flora and fauna found where I live in the South Park area of San Diego near Switzer, Juniper and Manzanita Canyons. These open spaces are an unending source of creative communion and inspiration for me. Whether I am taking a nocturnal bike ride contouring their edges or I am venturing through them on a day walk away from my often constricting quarantine, these canyons and its inhabitants are a continuous source of rejuvenation. This time of quarantine seems to have made me look to what keeps me balanced and my art and these open spaces are a big component of that."

Jeevan A. Kracht
Canyon Sacred Space, 2020
India ink and colored pencil on paper
10 inches diameter (each)

"Elmer’s glue, paper plates, and acrylic paint narrate my experience as a working-class, San Ysidro native during the COVID-19 pandemic. My new process is limited to the most accessible mediums found at the local 99 cent store and Walmart due to limited financial resources. I believe making art in a pandemic inspires me to redesign my process, and I owe that largely to my abuelita who taught me ‘todo tiene remedio.’"

Christian Limon
COVID-19: Panico/Panic Buyin’, 2020
Commercial packaging on paper plates
9 inches diameter (each)
Graphic Design II

Poster Pong:
Like an Exquisite Corpse, each image was made by two students collaboratively in a short timeline.

Each student received a secret word and made an image. They sent it to a designated classmate (without any explanation) who added typography to it based on what they understood the image to be. The results are the following works, each titled after the secret word the student received.

Kareem Lenoir and Emily Dengler
Unite, 2020
Digital rendering
Emily Burgess and Casiel Jimenez Sanchez
Motivate, 2020
Digital collage

Leonardo DeDios and Kimberly Naranjo
Sing, 2020
Digital rendering

Emily Dengler and Zachary Fianza
Mind, 2020
Digital collage

Daisy Guerrero and Vivian Ortiz
Laugh, 2020
Digital rendering
Lara Koro and Jaime Alvarado Valdez
Present, 2020
Digital rendering

Justin Litchfield and Emily Burgess
Listen, 2020
Digital collage

Jacob McDermott and Raina McConnell
Listen, 2020
Digital collage

Janet Middaugh and Rene Rios
Walk, 2020
Digital rendering
Sammara Perez and Hugo DeBernardo
Grin, 2020
Digital rendering

Adrian Silva and Sammara Perez
Pose, 2020
Digital collage

Gene Thompson and Elisa Arceo
Fear, 2020
Digital rendering

Gerald Vistro and Daisy Guerrero
Remain, 2020
Digital rendering
Jewelry and Metalwork II & III

Spaces of Isolation:
Collaborative project between SDSU students and The University of Texas El Paso students:

Students were asked to reconsider the spaces we occupy and what they contain. They composed a series of jewelry pieces based on specific rooms in their house, using only materials found in the home. The results are the following works.
“This is part of a project called ‘Spaces of Isolation’ in which my professor challenged us to use materials found in the space where we are quarantined.”

Miranda Andersen
Bathroom Ring, 2020
Makeup sponge, postcard, silver beads, embroidery floss
1⅛ x 1⅛ x ½ inches

“This semester we all had the opportunity to try and create our projects from home. These series are based on the rooms we spend the most time in, now that we are in quarantine: Bathroom — inspired by water and the shower.”

Mia Cazares
Shower, 2020
Wire, recycled chains, beads and hot glue
6½ inches long
“I made these pieces in an effort to create jewelry without getting outside materials, as I am in quarantine. Rainier was relating to my experience returning to Seattle from San Diego during the pandemic and seeing how nature seems to be thriving in this time, as the view of Mt. Rainier from Seattle was clearer than I’ve ever seen it living here my entire life, once our emissions were forced to go down by the quarantine.”

Katelyn Pecha
Ranier, 2020
Safety pins, bobby pins, acrylic paint
2 x 2½ inches
Jewelry and Metalwork II & III

Responsible Radius:
Collaborative project between SDSU students and The University of Texas El Paso students:

Students designed and constructed wearables that measured/illustrated the recommended 6 feet for physical distancing. Now, as we are asked to keep at least 6 feet between ourselves and others, our ideas of personal space have changed. The results are the following works.

@artifacts.of.isolation
“Limbo was also created with the 6-foot social distancing guideline in mind, as a way of making a statement on how people do not have the desire to distance ourselves, but we have to for our own safety, and are stuck in this in between state of really not knowing where things are going next, like limbo.”

Katelyn Pecha
Limbo, 2020
Paper, fabric, yarn, zip ties, and acrylic paint
72 x 14 inches

“COVID-19 makes me want to escape the place. Due to the 6 feet safe distance, I designed each wing to be 6 feet.”

Yue Zhang
Escape, 2020
Cardboard, white paper
24 x 72 inches
Black & White Photography

The projects body and transformation were created by students continuing their studies from home throughout the spring semester.
Kaylani Brown
body, 2020
Archival digital print
10 x 8 inches

Taylor Wilson
transformation, 2020
Gelatin silver print
8 x 8 inches

Cristian Gonzalez
body II, 2020
Archival digital print
8 x 10 inches

Amber Hamblin
body, 2020
Archival digital photograph
10 x 8 inches
Sarah Wall
transformation, 2020
Archival digital print
8 x 10 inches

Emma Teasdale
body, 2020
Archival digital print
10 x 8 inches

Cole Ralston
transformation, 2020
Gelatin silver print
8 x 8 inches

Jerome Padilla
transformation, 2020
Gelatin silver print
8 x 8 inches
List of participating artists

Lamya Almuqrin
Miranda Andersen
Eliza Arceo
Mia Ballarelos
Faustina Barros
Katrina Bell
Natalie Benton
Kaylani Brown
Emily Burgess
Veronica Casey
Mia Cazares
Michael Chavez
Jordan Crum-Townes
Leah Marie Eria
Hugo DeBernardo
Leonardo DeDios
Emily Dengler
Jade DeSanto
Sean Edora
Daisy Garcia
Kendra Geremia
Christian Gonzalez
Azarely Gutierrez
Daisy Guerrero
Amber Hamblin
Jennifer Hansen
Parker Heath
Veronica Hughes
Lara Koro
Jeevan Kracht
Lile Kvatantali
Tess Land
Emma Laraby
Kareem Lenior
Jian Li
Christian Limon
Justin Litchfield
Raine McConnell
Jacob McDermott
Rianne Magbuhat
Jadine Marquez
Janett Maddaga
Miles Motley
Kimberly Naranjo
Jamie Kristen Oram
Vivian Ortiz
Jerome Padilla
Katelyn Pecha
Domi Paredes
Sammana Perez
Lauren Pyle
Cole Raiser
Avia Rose Ramm
Rene Rios
Caisel Jimenez Sanchez
Haley Schildgen
Giulia Serbia
Adrian Silva
Tyler Spicer
Rebekah Sullivan
Kline Swonger
Emma Teasdale
Karly Thibault
Gene Thompson
Kyle Tran
Jaime Alvarado Valdez
Gerald Vistro
Sarah Wall
Sarah Wallace
Asley Wilson
Tyler Wilson
Tyler Young
Yue Zhang

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