Jazzee Rozier Tragic Optimism: This structure holds me up, but God please just let me fall one time.

Spring 2025

Drawing Department Visual Arts Cleveland Institute of Art BFA Thesis Paper

Committee Members:

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Jazzee Rozier

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Jazzee Rozier is a 22-year-old Senior attending the Cleveland Institute of Art and expects to obtain their BFA in Drawing (2025). Rozier spends a lot of time focusing on repeated cycles; constant separation and unexplained absence within family dynamics become a key focus. They take a lot of inspiration from their surroundings and the people they interact with– taking walks and making music act as some components to this inside creative process. Considering a familial theme and broad ideas of separation/individualism, recollecting memories, and documentation, Rozier implements printmaking, drawing, photography, sewing, and written poetry as chosen techniques to display this angst. As an artist who spends a lot of time practicing existing within communities and actively showing up for them, Rozier showcases a lot of their artworks within various art galleries, exhibitions, and even curating shows for the involvement of others. One way or another, the drive behind their studio practice is strongly rooted in any means of social commentary that keeps moving outside of their own personal experience.

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Education	
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Professional Expe	rience
2024	Drawing Guide, Cleveland Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, OH
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	Chalk Mural Artist, Cleveland Museum of Art Chalk Fest, Cleveland, OH
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	CIA Grant, the Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland, OH
	Ohio College Opportunity Grant, the Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland, OH
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2023 - 2024	Creativity Works Program, the Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland, OH
Exhibitions	
2025	Back in the Dayz, the Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland, OH
	Love, Sex, & the Body, Hildebrandt Artist Collective, Cleveland, OH
	Student Independent Exhibition (SIE) '79, the Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland, OH
	The Nature of Healing, Cleveland Botanical Garden, Cleveland, OH
2024	Is It Because I'm Me/BLACK !!?, the Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland, OH
	I Won't Touch Grass, Negative Space Gallery, Cleveland, OH
	Ready, Set, Relay, Progressive Insurance Campus One, Cleveland, OH
	A Real Job, the Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland, OH
	Sing About Lesbians, I'm Dying of Thirst, LGBT Center of Greater Cleveland, Cleveland, OH
2023	Don't Get Me Started, the Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland, OH
	In Our Skin, the Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland, OH
	Street HeART Gala, Human HeART Studios, Cleveland, OH
2021	Art Show at the Gallery, The Selfie Gallery, Cleveland, OH
Commissions	
Commissions	Animation Mural WILLE DO VOULOVE ADOUT VOUD OUEEDNESS? I CDT Contar of Creater
2024	Animation Mural, WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT YOUR QUEERNESS?, LGBT Center of Greater
2023	Cleveland, Cleveland, OH Drawing Commission, <i>Portrait of bell hooks</i> , colored pencil drawing (9x12 in.) on white
2025	Canson paper, Cleveland, OH
	Canson paper, Creverand, Orr
Bibliography (arti	icles/catalogs/interviews/reviews)
2025	CAN Journal Winter 2024-2025, Local, National and Student Art Celebrated at CIA;
	https://canjournal.org/local-national-and-student-art-celebrated-at-cia/
2024	Cleveland Institute of Art, <i>Ctrl</i> + <i>S Lit Magazine</i>
	Cleveland Institute of Art press release, Sing About Lesbians I'm Dying of Thirst;
	https://www.cia.edu/exhibitions/sing-about-lesbians-im-dying-of-thirst/
2023	Cleveland Institute of Art, Link Summer 2023: Building Community, June 9, 2023;

https://www.cia.edu/files/newsletters/22-23summerlinkmagazinenocrop.pdf

Tragic Optimism: This structure holds me up, but God please just let me fall one time. By Jazzee Rozier

Familial diaspora, self awareness, absence, generational trauma, and grief are common themes in how I represent coping. Being content with impermanence and facing the good and bad moments in life with an open mind are essential to this theme. For me, this appears in a visual collection of layered, vibrant colors, handwritten text, patterns, and shapes.

Victor Frankl, the noted psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, popularized an ideology called "tragic optimism", or an idea of saying 'yes' to life through its emotional inevitabilities. <u>"They go out to</u> <u>look at the sunset; nothing is accomplished but the immediate experience of something gets you through,</u>" a quote from Frankl when describing this notion of "actualizing oneself" through tragic optimism. Self-actualization is not the goal of my artwork, rather I'm investigating and experimenting with my neurological responses to reorganizing life's events. This also is reflected in this idea of *kintsugi*: philosophy on repairing or mending something while also emphasizing resilience. Living and existing despite the fact.

With this mindset, I emphasize modes of documentation that exercise my mental endurance or *how* I'm experiencing mental vomit: sketchbooks, dialog(ue), note-taking. Various shapes take the form of words I have not yet come up with in the moment; checker, dash, star, and spiral patterns become an overlay of bottled up emotions that exist on the same visual plane. It's looping over and over as a method for hypnotism and focus until the exercise intuitively ends— thus the *actual* text happens. Essentially, these marks, colors, and collages are a visual depiction of the way I remember. *The relationship between my hand and the marks are the embodiment of an internal explosion from the pre-existing trauma residing in my body.* This ideology is further pushed through various other patterns and colors layering on top of one another until I'm ready to move onto the next piece.

This body of work showcases a range of old family photos and recent images referenced from laptop-recorded videos of myself— another mode of documentation that accompanies my archival process. Screenprinting, drawing, collage, poetry, photography, sewing, and combining various substrates are processes that assemble into what I like to call <u>'a visual poetry of my tragic optimism</u>'. The use of taking these memories stuck in time and acknowledging the hard, often unspoken emotions associated with them through absence and presence. Yet, here I am kinda speaking of them.

To evoke feelings of empathy, overwhelm, and curiosity is something I'm consciously considering with creating and presenting my artwork in this fashion. If I'm considering *who* I'm making this work for, I'd say I genuinely hope I'm reaching anyone seeking a voice of vulnerability in a world that wants to see them die.

HEY JAZZEE ROZIER! INTRODUCE YOURSELF!

Hey, I'm Jazzee and I'm a mixed-media drawing artist. I wanna say, *what the fuck–I* have no idea how I even got to this point, however it's all so strategic... It's crazy! Not really. It's on brand for me.

With my exhibition *Tragic Optimism: This structure holds me up, but God please just let me fall one time.*, I explore what it means to embrace hope in the face of acknowledging challenges through life's inevitabilities: one big theme being traumas. Generational trauma, to be specific, is a big topic for me within this display and digging deeper through outer and personal research of identity and how expansive coping can look. A lot of artists touch on this idea of art therapy and connecting with their identities as artists, so I was probed this year to think of how art is my anchor for affirming my self-exploration into vulnerability. Realizing how a lot of my interest in "wanting to solve a problem" is stemmed from a systemic issue… big— I know. So… I actually *don't* think the art I have in this showcase exactly demonstrates all of that just based on an outside view, however I *do* feel that the overwhelming power in separated family dynamics can open up that conversation. And that's what Jazzee Rozier is all about— the need to converse— the need to unravel and ruffle some feathers— the need to voice the ISSUES!!

To lure people into bigger conversations because there is *always* an undertone to *something*. That could definitely be my Scorpio moon and rising speaking since I'm always keeping information to myself, but we don't talk about that.

Either way, I hope you're prepared to take a gander into all of the background that helped me actually *get* to the work— because none of the shit I created actually existed back when I finished my first draft of this... because emotions are hard to tackle when you feel like you yourself are losing it all of the time!

Sooooo... I'm excited to explain more about how I have developed myself into my work thus far and how I imagine to keep continuing my artistic journey...

<u>HISTORY OF YOUR PERSONAL PRACTICE</u>: WHO IS THE ARTIST, 'JAZZEE ROZIER'?

When I was little- maybe 4 years old, I always watched my mom journal. I read everything she wrote- I don't think she knew I could understand it. Then, I would draw on the things she wrote. Yes, it seemed evil of me, but I wanted her inner dialog to be decorated and accompanied with friendliness. I knew her notes were yearning for hope and sticking to a determination only she could help herself with at the time. I do art now because I'm inspired by my uncles and my auntie and my siblings, yes, but I do art now to relay my voice through the one my mother always had. The voice she kept through journaling, photographing, singing, cooking, and isolating herself; surviving. Surviving is also another important notion to me as a black, queer artist whose family history is rooted in survival— as is with many other marginalized communities whose survival from suppressing institutions defined their legacies. This also helped me with deciding what direction I was taking in my schooling at 18; college was not a path I had in mind (because that structure didn't align with me), so I figured I should at *least* be an artist. I expected art to be the easy route, but that only turned out to be a false notion of what "art" is. However, I found that through this decision all those years ago, I stayed true to my authentic self morality by aligning myself and my social practices with those that protest a general norm. Art is unconventional the same way that my bloodline, body, sexual orientation, and beliefs are also unconventional.

This all formulates into the actual mixed media vomit: drawing, collage, printmaking, photography, sewing, video, and even collecting I guess? That's not "media" per se but sure I'll include that. All of these methods of art are things that keep me going and creating constantly (especially in school). These processes define my artistry– they keep me excited to make art. But, like, how the fuck are we discovering these things– you know? What is Jazzee doing to stick her nose in everything and essentially get classified as a dabbler? (I'm not cuz I stay true to this shit– y'all know nothing about that.)

Everything inspires me. No, like, *everything* inspires me– not on any original shit but like again... y'all know nothing about that.

This inspiration lives in my sketchbook for the most part. I need to document immediately and keep it recorded permanently so it lives in my sketchbook forever– or at least

within *my* forever and that's just as long as I live or until someone discovers my self-made archive. To utilize the sketchbook is a crucial aspect to my research: I'm confiding in my daily coping mechanisms and finding out *what* it is I'm soothing myself from. This is a series I adopted as my *sketchbook thoughts* (2023 - present) continuous archive. Diving into this, I find myself drawn to sourcing old family photos to stimulate my memories and build a composition off of– the photos serve as a template for me to pull at the strings of my brain to recall a time and reframe it in the visual conglomerate. Along with this research, I'm also finding my voice. I'm discovering what it means to be vulnerable and whether or not people can read my handwriting; I am writing various stories from the heart. These written insertions are personal, yes, but they don't utilize singular vernacular, it is very open for general projection. This hasn't always been the method, yet it has always been the drive. I'm trying to find something out about my upbringing and common family dynamics and social climate– I've always been wondering why! Fucking why! Also *how*, but like that comes second– WHYYYYYY! There *was* a time in my undergrad schooling that made me **fully** want to investigate something being wrong or finally caving in about the fact that I needed to confront suppressed emotions, however.

It was early October 2023 when my aunt had been killed by her fiance– a tragedy that I still grieve today because I didn't let myself do it then. When it first happened, I felt conflicted: *What else can I do? I feel destroyed and that's embarrassing*. So I kept creating... not to my fullest potential. *LESBIAN COWBOYS* (2023) became a project and persona I coined– so fucking sad that I did something so cool in this way. I created to mask, I created to derive, I created to perform and distract myself. The communal feedback and praise felt amazing, but I could also feel its temporality. This lasted almost a full year until I realized I was fucking sad. I was torn, unable to be myself, damn near broken to an inconsolable state– it both was and *is* maddening to comprehend. *Jazzee, bruh, holy shit! You are angry and frail and need help!* And so the investigation was triggered. And so I found my voice and my ability to compose my grief and guilt into beautiful scenes that transformed the moments. I became angry— rather, I was always angry and knew I could express it. Looking at or talking to other artists and reading some of their statements or bios really helped with this extended gap in my silly little bridge.

I love my art historic baddies, but my contemporary GROUND BEARERS are where I am excited enough to learn how to do a backflip or seven. Wangechi Mutu, Firelei Baez, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Yoshitomo Nara, Sanford Biggers, Titus Kaphar, and Julie Mehretu are a few to name that have stuck with me visually and conceptually. The link between most of them resides in the use of heavy mixed media, but also striking compositions. I want to stop and stare; I get lost in various visuals that mix opacities and pattern-making techniques and various uses of materials/textures that feel like heaven to me. This is the drive for my work: to project. Each day is a new moment spent resourcing materials to use for my next pieces or diving through my personal archive of imagery or fabrics to blend on one substrate. Maybe I could try to take the time to list out *every* material I utilize on average:

Various acrylic inks, waterbased inks, watercolor, ballpoint pen, colored pencil, crayon, oil and chalk pastel, glue, various fabrics, notebook paper, fiber-based papers, cold-press paper, many more fucking papers, canvas, X-acto blades for reduction, silverprint and color film photos, thread, image transfers, annndddd I'm probably forgetting 127 more materials but you get the jist. These materials come together and validate my experience of experimentation and documentation.

Recent pieces of mine like ACTING A DAMN FOOL! (2025) and sorry i can't come to the phone right now, my stomach hurts and i think i'm gonna puke. (2025) represent my refound comfort and newfound display of my inner dialogue. They demonstrate the documentation of behaviors and neurological responses I use to make sense of who I am today, just in a fragmented sense. When exploring this deep topic of grief, I feel as though I'm dismantling a hierarchical climate that does not want to see me succeed as a black individual, but also as a black, fem artist— which is very crucial to me when I think of fragmentation, storytelling, optimism, and documentation. There is a yearning for me to prove *I fucking exist for a reason* while also keeping in mind the structures that people, like my family, are constantly reinforcing within our daily lives. It's kinda like, hey I hate that I feel abandoned by these people, but I also understand the system in which we have been assimilated to ... and for that I mourn the endless possibilities of what else could have happened.

I can also expand on my focus on grief in general— I've lost quite a few people in my family during this last year of my undergrad schooling ALONE. And that's what scares me. Not death, but realizing the age of those who have passed (not my aunt, she was a young baddie ugh...) and seeing that I am or have been existing amongst the same history that we learn in our primary schooling education. The same critical lessons that are being targeted for erasure TODAY.

So it is all stemmed from fear— this erratic need to document, remember, console, research, and connect with others. I don't want to be the last generation to have learned and *truly* know— especially since most of my personal connecting points between my ancestors and a contemporary age are now starting to pass on... and so tragic optimism becomes a moral practice for me.

I know this section kinda jumped around a bit, but you get it— just read my paper please, my eyes burn. I've seen hell in order to bear the weight of this paper all semester— please spare me PLEASE... okay continue reading haha...

<u>CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS</u>: WHO'S REALLY CATCHING JAZZEE'S EYE IN OUR CURRENT SOCIAL CLIMATE? ARE THEY SHAKING THE TABLES?

Yayoi Kusama, Japanese, b. 1929 (pop art + feminist art)

Very influential with her pop art creations; bold-colored polka dots and flowers. Kusama's work becomes a direct response or reflection of her experience of vivid hallucinations and coping with her difficult family life (back when she first started in the 40s and 50s).

She is drawn to pattern and illusion in a similar way that I have a deep appreciation for pattern, texture, and transparency in art-making. I've also discovered a lot of her background with facing mental health struggles and fighting against her family structure- I find myself drawn toward her motive for continuing her artistic path and how creating helps her make sense of the world that mashes together into nothingness or everythingness within her mind. I think of what it means to do something *in spite of* or symbolizing yourself through rebellion. SEExYOUxINx40? (illus. 1.5) is a piece of mine that I think embodies this investigation between a mental disruption and a physical hypnotism to sit on that thought. I feel as though I'm creating a higher purpose of betterment or carefreeness or fuck-all-ness in order to complete the piece. Kusama's 1959 artworks from Infinity Nets really hone in on these ideas; making herself seen in the art world as an Asian woman creating with no boundaries and practicing a form of self-therapy in this fashion. SO many men have dominated this field of abstract and playing in paint and just anything where I'm just like "okay, I get it like okay." This form of rebellion is something that I like to take bits and pieces of, honestly. I use my spirals, stars, checkers, dashes, and collaged papers as a form of non-conformity and reassurance that helps distract from my heavy family-based artworks; I utilize this a lot in my sketchbook thoughts (illus. 2) series. To be very specific, Kusama struggles with obsessional neurosis and I suffer HEAVY with being obsessional compulsive... they're not the same but I also can't technically differentiate any of that right now-I just went down a rabbit hole and felt drawn to this active occurrence in her life. I know this is something that quite often affects my work ethic and art style and I'm sure that is a similar happening for Kusama.

Yayoi Kusama also works across multiple mediums or art forms such as collage, drawing, fashion, film, installation, painting, performance, poetry, and sculpture. Honestly, she has been living a really long life so I expect this to be her artistic portfolio, but still very exciting for me to look into. As of now, I am still reading through some of her poetry since I am finally utilizing my own writing into my body of work. (*You Who Are Getting Obliterated in the Dancing Swarm of Fireflies* is an example of one of her poems.)

Jenny Holzer, American, b. 1950 (contemporary + conceptual)

Jenny Holzer's work makes me feel really excited and understood when it comes to writing for the purpose of eliciting input or reaction from others. This choice in her work truly demonstrates her carefulness with using language in these art pieces. Her body of work Inflammatory Essays demonstrates a lot with this sentiment and the conscious decision to utilize an interrogative voice. This was how a lot of my screenprints functioned; to have a politically driven statement act as a means of social critique. To make people question their role in the society they are subconsciously accepting as normal. Holzer takes many realistic, widely accepted norms and pushes it further with questioning this logic. I feel like even in the current artworks I'm making now and the choices I make in my writing techniques, there's still that doubt of what I am accepting to be true to my life as is. How much farther can my thinking about this subject go if I just dig deeper and explain my thought processes in loops? My artwork, a prayer to god, myself, my environment, and my family. i think. you don't know which is meant for what., utilizes this accusatory, pleading, and passive voice that shows up more directly in this piece compared to others I've made. I'm also really drawn to the aesthetic for Holzer to showcase these various critiques in different colored backgrounds with all caps, italicized font and having them pasted on walls in a grid format with no space in between. Considering display and getting a message across, I think her work fits well with this idea of closeness, overwhelm, and having no breaks.

I saw one of her *Inflammatory Essays* installations down in Columbus, OH in the fall of 2019 and I remember being awestruck. It was an overpowering essence that made me feel almost angry that I couldn't read them all– they were so tall and I felt like too many people were in my way in order to disseminate the full thing. Isolation, however, is something that I felt when standing with Holzer's installation despite all of the people. I hope others can feel that same singularity when reading my work. Though the loudness of the visuals call for a crowded audience and for people to come together, you really start to focus on yourself and the role you play within the critique of the work— and then realize how small you are in comparison to both the message and the size of the wall installation. I'm pretty much just talking to talk at this point, but it's taking everything in me to get back to that moment from 6 years ago and compare it to the sources I'm researching now– it's a bit of a deja vu moment because I'm placed right back into that time and into those emotions from long ago. Again, I hope to evoke the same reaction for those reading my work and consider the intentionality behind the way I install my work… which is something I am still figuring out.

Yoshitomo Nara, Japanese, b. 1959 (pop art + "superflat")

"My conviction is that conditions don't last forever. If you're unhappy, a better moment will come," Nara said. "That's what I think. And that's my hope." A quote from Yoshitomo Nara that I find summarizes the themes behind his work and is a mindset I utilize in mine as well. It is actually *the* mindset that brings me to the work I produce in my studio work now. *AND IF I COULD ERASE WHO YOU THOUGHT I WAS (DON'T TALK BACK!)* (illus. 3.5) is a piece of mine that I feel resonates with this sentiment. It's very interesting because Nara coins a style of characters that are inspired by his knowledge of music and literature as well as his "empathetic and galvanizing encounters with people and cultures through his travels in Japan and abroad." (Guggenheim Bilbao article). This creative inspiration is a lot of what drives my work but especially my ongoing *sketchbook thoughts* series that features pretty much all of my daily encounters and various coping mechanisms and insane note-taking. Other than that, I just really love his characters. Like they are pretty unsettling; they're childlike (already scary) with big heads and big eyes that stare back at you most of the time. They give off "bad little kid" trope for me, but I understand that is intentional and I start to view them as my sweet little cousins that act weird but I still love them I guess.

Anyway, I constantly refer to Nara's drawing *To the Earth 5* (地球星へchikyu hoshi e)(2006), drawn with colored pencil, pen and stamps on paper that come together to showcase beautiful visuals but with hints of questioning authority. There's English, blackout writing that says, " me give you one simple piece of advice beyond all others. Every day, ask over and over again, me give you one simple piece of the man I am now working for?' and having answered this definitely, then, 'What does this man want me to do, right now?'. There are also other small points of writing that refer to a work environment and I start to insinuate an internal conversation between the two otherworldly figures present with their respective rocket ships. It's an interesting formula for social commentary but just a fun use of dialogue within an artwork. Focusing on the excerpt of writing, I know that I am not being summoned to respond, but it is a little provoking with how directly pointed the language is and literally calling for you to consider an environment. One of my other pieces, *storytime* (illus. 4), utilizes a similar technique of writing– not in the dialogue between character format, but within the language of directly saying "you" and further probing into one's memory with an experience of my own.

Wangechi Mutu, Kenyan, b. 1972 (collage + mixed media)

Considering the complexity and fluidity in womanhood of African descent, I find that Wangechi Mutu beautifully characterizes it in the way she works, but also how she speaks of her work: "The idea of having many roots is extremely empowering for me." and "If something hurtful enters your body, you create something beautiful to protect yourself from it. That's my philosophy." Her body of work Histology of the Different Classes of Uterine Tumors (2004-2005) is a striking set of visual research- something she constantly emphasizes as a crucial step to her method of working. Collecting these magazine pieces and medical textbook images, Mutu creates this range of abstracted figures overlayed on different tumor diagrams which she feels further characterizes the human experience and challenges us to restructure our world view on acknowledging others and their various realities. Of course this mindset reaches beyond her compiled *Histology* works, but it is very strong for this narrative as she makes a conscious effort to showcase an unknown for the art realm. Where I personally connect with Mutu's sentiment is her recontextualization of ready-made imagery. In a passage from the National Galleries website, Mutu explains: 'I go to these magazines for material and doing that allows me to critique them by breaking them apart and kind of vandalising and dissecting them. I pull apart their structure, literally and physically and conceptually, and then reinterpret it for my own purposes and my own interests.' She also inputs that these medical folio sheets started to 'accumulate in their meaning and their capacity to hold my eye literally and metaphorically by turning them into faces, by turning them into distorted character investigations of myself and of the human experience.' This is a similar method to the way I utilize family photos in my work or just any photos I find appropriate to document human experience. They solely exist as a template for me to rework and reframe in my own recollection from that time or place in my life. These transform into diverse forms of reconstruction to where my figures still have a distinct silhouette or shown features, but a reconfiguration of environment or storyline. what's on the other side? (illus. 4.5), a piece I am working on that outlines this template-image use and reframing what I decide needs to be shared based off of the image.

Other than that, the research, collection, and restructure formula for studio practice that Mutu uses is almost an exact replica of how I cycle through my work process. Research is necessary and research shows up for me in any and every form. Collecting pieces even turns into part of the research for what is relevant to my use in "building" my artworks. The backstory for the process matters way too much for me and that is okay.

Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Nigerian, b. 1983 (collage + mixed media)

Though last on the contemporary list, (birth years and such) Njideka Akunyili Crosby is an artist that has been part of my inspirational language for many years! She's like my visual artist cousin! Crosby is the reason I have this newfound view of what collage means to me and with her use of image transfer onto her paintings, I feel like my brain expands every time. Her paintings refer back to a domestic dailyhood from her personal lens as a Nigerian woman; scenes and people that feel familiar and calm in their living environments while also highlighting the intricacies of her African diasporic identity. It's astonishing because her subjects and people are painted with such carefulness and somewhat realistic approach to rendering while also isolating some features to play with a sense of belonging between foreground and background. My favorite piece of Crosby's still, to this day, is Nwantinti (Small love/my love) (2012) a mixed media painting that depicts an interracial couple, man and woman, on a bed admiring one another with the man lying his head on the woman's lap looking up. When I think of domestic life I think of forgiveness and love- forgiveness presented within a sacred space to solely exist unapologetically as well as keeping love alive in this environment you exist in. It feels warm and soft and I find myself seeking a safe haven in this painting between me and these two strangers; I have been in this bed before filled with love and care and the structure of this room can build so many more tender moments like this. I love this painting so so so so so much.

The image transfers that mesh into the environment and becomes part of the duvet fabric and the walls surrounding the closet and the slight surface of the clothing the male figure wears. This method is something I've always admired in her work and I find myself coming back to this blended environment in my art; *i embody your anger because you've made me feel it* (illus. 6.5) is a piece that I use text as a pattern and subconscious thought beside a figure, but *a. librae* (illus. 7) is a photographed piece (part of a whole) that I utilize text as a pattern to marry these two "environments" together while still emphasizing that the text is separate. I like to see them existing together within the message; the indication of a human life occupying a space invites a message for reflecting on the time spent there. With Crosby's blended collage, I am actively thinking about how I'm utilizing pattern and texture within figures and spaces in my work though they have existed separately in production, I am still finding where these connections can be utilized as well.

<u>HISTORIC ARTISTS</u>: LET'S GET SOME DEPTH INTO THE PEOPLE JAZZEE'S LOOKING AT HERE (I'M GETTING THE FEELING THAT A DEATH IS REQUIRED FOR THEM TO BE CONSIDERED 'HISTORIC'? WEIRD.)

Anna Atkins, English, 1799 - 1871 (cyanotype photographs)

Documentation is a big one and Anna Atkins was the pioneer of documentary photography through cyanotypes– *Lygodion Microphyllum* (illus. 8) for example. In a way this is like using photograms to keep record of an event. In Akins' instance, she did documentation for scientific purposes as she was taking note of a lot of different plants and natural life around us, but her photobooks established themselves to be very notable as artistic masterpieces. The aesthetics of these books and even the idea of developing an aesthetic in the way one documents daily research, really resonates with me. This occurs a lot in my sketchbook work; my sketchbook becomes this intricate, intentional design of daily thoughts, occurrences, research, and quotes. I'm not too focused on plants or natural, earthy items like Atkins, but the nature of free-flowing/overlapping thoughts, marks, and collages.

With that being said, I tend to focus on many different modes of documentation and remembering things; the shelf featured in my BFA installation, *logbooks* (illus. 8.5), holds different types of books. Sketchbooks, notebooks, and binders become records of collection and archive for me; reliable sources to create more artwork out of. I think it's very important for me to highlight that these modes of note-taking stand as their own art form and make sense for the active studio practice I have. The studio outside of the studio, if you will. A lot of times, I will take images or drawings in my sketchbooks and accompany them with written text. Things to continuously help me get an idea of where I was, what I was thinking, who I was with; all of these things that highlight the importance of documenting life and research through its impermanence.

Through this format, I'd like to stick true to the way I record and remember. It's random, it's fun, it's unorganized (for the most part), and it comes with me everywhere. I can't document what I'm *not* learning.

Hannah Hoch, German, 1889 - 1978 (Dadaism & Photomontage)

Dadaism as a whole is something that inspired me a lot when I first started utilizing art references. Hannah Hoch ended up being someone I admired from afar– someone who had always been nameless to me but visually commemorated. Her use of very weird and unsettling photomontage always provided me the safe space to determine that collage did not have to *look* a certain way. Collage didn't need to be fancy or thought out nor did it need to make any sense to the general public.

This along with Annegret Soltau paved the way for the techniques I use to collage now, but this is NOT about Ms. Anna right now (sorry girl, we'll invite you another time).

Hoch's piece titled *With Seaweed* (illus. 10) was one of the most visually appealing collages that occurred to me in my high school years. The playfulness with transparencies, color, and shape that make you *want* to make sense of a thing or an implied figure, but then you kind of accept it in the way that the piece is essentially its whole self. My artwork, *you can open up your eyes or you can walk it blind* (illus. 10.5) demonstrates a lot of the visuals that I'm drawn to in collage— that distortion is key for me. It's fun and it adds to the satisfaction of rebelling against nature or against a standard that subconsciously haunts you for no fucking reason. It's freeing and the nonsensical nature makes people confused and even frustrated because, well, what *are* they supposed to understand? Since everything needs to have a solid answer to it. I also appreciate the very close connection between mixing mediums and applying anything to drawing or painting perspectives because it gives off a mindset that anything can be anything depending on how the artist is utilizing it— especially in the way Hannah Hoch demonstrates varying material uses.

May Stevens, American, 1924 - 2019 (Feminist movement paintings)

May Stevens is an artist that caught my attention, one, because of her *Big Daddy* series, but also a quote from her that I've cited from her in the book *Artists Speak*: "I was riding a fine line between beauty and ugliness. Coming from painterliness and totality I was exhilarated to find my work aggressive and absurd." (the pages aren't numbered in this book???), which ended up being one of my favorite quotes for this last semester of my BFA work.

Big Daddy Paper Doll (1968) is a specific painting of hers that I feel very strongly about every time I look at it. The power between isolation and emphasis within her work is a relationship or dynamic that I find draws me in the most. It's a relationship I think a lot about within inserting textual information in my work; how much can I say without giving the full story? 1946: AGGRESSIVELY ABSURD (illus. 9.5) is a piece of mine that is actually directly inspired by Stevens' quote- her motives if you will. I think aggression for me appears in a blast of colors or even if my words become a little bit pointed at someone for a moment. Absurdity exists within the execution of my work- ya' know, how I'm kind of a drawing artist, but I use like every material on earth in order to finish a piece-yeah, that kind of absurd. Anyway, I find myself toggling between the isolation: emphasis thing a lot in this piece because I feel like, in a weird way, this one breathes a lot more compared to my other work. There's open, uncomfortable space for me to probably add more layers too, but I actually want the story to be fully read and digested this time. It's weird— usually I don't give a damn if people can read most of my work; I at least need to emphasize key words/sentences for it to be successful- yet this piece's text matters. All of it. The basis of this piece speaks to genocidal erasure; repeated histories in cultures that have been/are being targeted and festering a standard of displacement. Making the room for loss to exist— loss of community and invitation of miscommunication. In a way, the openness of this piece, for me, is like a call for help or a call to actually be seen in its authenticity.

And that's how I feel about Steven's piece; the paper doll figure is so plainly central to the canvas, seated between uniformed, unidentifiable figures. Loss of identity at the hands of the guy smiling happily in the middle— as long as people like him can keep reinforcing powers of suppression over their bodies, they will continue to be lost (literally and figuratively).

Anyway, that's my take on that... onto the next one!

Andy Warhol + Jean Michel Basquiat, American, 1928 - 1987; 1960 - 1988 (pop art; expressionist)

These two artists together became a really cool resource for me to utilize in my research while exploring their relationship within their collaborative works. *Arm and Hammer II* (illus. 11) is an artwork that drew me in to exploring the Warhol-Basquiat dynamic. With Warhol's screenprinted, logo image, Basquiat uses this as a template to incorporate his style onto the work. Two distinct commentaries inform one another— highlighting broader conversation on consumerism and industrial growth and another conversation on Basquiat's focus on political issues/the racism he faced in his life.

My art resonates a lot with this recipe; playing with overlapping, distinct forms of thought processing. Part of me focuses on displaying a conscious, textual dissertation accompanied by another form of thoughts that take the form of shapes, patterns, and color. All of my work pretty much utilizes this technique, but my piece, *warm honey* (illus. 11.5), includes a strong element of defacing a print or just using it solely for its potential to make a conversation. Especially when the foundational prints use a technique of silhouetted children and less vibrant color accompanied by an alternate thought process; vibrancy displays a coping and also a censorship within the figures presented. I think it's really cool to have this method executed on these prints— I printed and collaged them so long ago with the intention that I would be doing another *kind* of layer on them, just not aware of what it would be up until recently. I knew paper could be just as fluid as canvas when it comes to absorbing, spreading, and blending color. I feel that this newfound paper comfort has made it easier for me to align with a mixed-media practice because I just really fucking love paper. Just was not aware of how to expand that in the way I wanted.

So I feel as if this piece, *warm honey* (2025), does highlight a connection between myself, Warhol, and Basquiat, but seeing their various collaborative works made me also want to expand my paper appreciation outside of collaging it onto canvas.

Nam June Paik, Korean, 1932 - 2006 (Fluxus & film art in general)

Similar to Warhol, Nam June Paik's work was cool as shit. What a wonderful demonstration of colliding worlds of mark-making, installation, handcrafted drawing and sculpture, and digital. One (I, me, Jazzee) could say a lot of his sculptures are manifestations of what drawings can be or can show. Either way, Paik's aesthetics reach beyond solely showcasing itself as digital art.

I'm really drawn to Nam June Paik's sentiment of actually being the internet's number 1 hater, however hate served as his motivation to internet-esque artwork. A direct quote from him states, "I use technology in order to hate it properly," (Hua Hsu) which I can deeply resonate with personally. Reflecting that in my art only shows subtly- I can only truly connect this ideal to my methods of video experimentation with colliding hand drawn, scanned frames back into a video format in order to make it cooler (to me). Anyway, I really appreciate his approaches to controlling his consumption of fast media by putting it to literal use in building up different artworks or taking snapshots from media and retelling it in a screenprint or image transferred, canvas format. This makes room for keeping a true record of a thing or establishing a moment to be a deeply appreciated relic of some sort. There's so much to choose from, but recalling back to a specific piece of his would be Open your window (illus. 12), a mixed media piece on canvas that depicts an image transfer with three handwritten Japanese characters. This is like me taking one of my pinterest boards and curating certain images from it to install in my own room- I want to really show my deep appreciation for these things and I want to reaffirm to myself that I'm sure I actually appreciate these things or at least want a reminder to keep thinking about them. They're no longer concepts I can swipe and click away from when they're no longer useful for my eyeballs. Honestly, this is a bunch of vocabulary and ideas I'm still trying to properly articulate and demonstrate in my own research right now because it is a method I'm utilizing with my printmaking, photography, drawing, sewing techniques.

After typing that analogy, I can further understand Paik's motives for his art. I mean, there can be a lot to be contextualized with his upbringing being during the time of the Korean War and WWII and what it meant for him to even pursue art after these happenings in a similar fashion to Yayoi Kusama's drive. To be influenced artistically as a result of chaotic worldly matters is to be so radicalized beyond belief. I, too, would like to address my own radicalization from the global affairs that constantly exemplifies itself to be against working-class individuals. I will find the words soon enough, but briefly researching Nam June Paik has been a deeply connecting experience for me (unexpected, but I guess that's what happens when your art is cool).

HONORARY MENTION OF AN ART MOVEMENT COMBINING CONTEMPORARY AND HISTORY FOR MY ART PRACTICE!

Experimental Art in Korea (1960s - 1970s)

Serving as a social, communal response to the Korean War, the Experimental Art in Korea Movement (silheom misul in Korean) highlighted a plethora of different artists who delved into their visual executions of rebellion and coping. Protest of a usual artistic format, but also protest of an Americanized environment to assimilate to.

This movement is something I've constantly aligned myself with— both regarding interest and similarities to how I'm utilizing experimental art. Experimentation for me means anything that is unconventional to an expected standard; general, formal art techniques like technical skill, perspective, accurate color palettes, stretched canvas— all of that aren't true to how I'm exemplifying my practice in being striking and inconvenient. My piece, i'm going to the *beauty supply today.* (illus. 13), is a great example of this need to rebel— to tell a story that is hidden in plain sight and can only be approached by an audience entranced by its vibrant colors. The big block of text that exists beside the image creates an automatic separation between a large number of people who generally aren't interested in reading longer than they want to and another number of people who pay attention to the phrases or word choices— this "hidden in plain sight" is emphasized. My experimentation (and this is applicable to basically all of my artworks in this exhibition) lies within the process and relationship between physical exertion, collage, and layering. With these endless possibilities, I am constantly resourcing materials to get a satisfactory spread in color across my pieces, effective collage and printing layer processes, and scale; how big or small of a piece determines how much of this mixed-media work load gets me to move my body/actively present the neurological movement that I speak of within my artist statement.

¹<u>SOURCES AND INFLUENCES</u>: LET'S GET DOWN TO SOME BACKGROUND CONCEPTS THAT OUR GUEST, JAZZEE ROZIER, APPRECIATES IN THEIR ART PRACTICE!

WHY DO YOU ACT LIKE THAT?*

Oh— okay, just like that then... well... my brain has always been something I've been very weary about: why does it operate in the way it does? Certain things are hard to comprehend when it's not technical— when I can't get to the root of where something comes from. I've always been someone who wants to understand *how* or *why* certain things happen and function the way they do. Behavior and cognitive processes are a big one for me— especially in response to traumatic experiences. For one, this deep interest has allowed me to make sense of the media or influences I seek daily or most days out of the week: Philosophy, music, writing, and fashion all compile into the bigger sections of how I operate within my work flow.

YOU MENTION A FEW SOURCES: PHILOSOPHY, MUSIC, WRITING, AND FASHION– LET'S GET MORE IN DEPTH ABOUT THESE. LET'S START WITH PHILOSOPHY– WHAT JOB DOES SHE HAVE?

Ohhhh philosophy. I mean, it's philosophy, theory, psychology; the things that provide reason for the neurological things that I investigate about my life, my coping mechanisms, and how I approach others. It gives me room to not take things personally *and* personally all at once! I feel insane! Oftentimes, I'm finding myself coming across new theories or *things* to explain other... *things*... Like the concept of <u>Kintsugi</u> within the conversation of *wabi sabi* and the means of embracing and embellishing brokenness in our human nature. Someone I appreciate embracing this is Howardena Pindell— now, YES, she is a contemporary visual artist, but I still count her as one of my theorists. She did a lot of work with testing her brain; <u>repairing her memory</u> through fragmented pieces and photo documentation is a similar life-long, artistic test I'm utilizing in my work. With this, she's embracing the broken pieces or fragments of her life, just as long as she has *some* type of recollection of them. I'll name a third one– why not! Well... third *and* fourth

¹ White highlight indicates my interviewer asking me questions

one... they approach the same topic so why the hell not. <u>Tragic optimism</u> is a big big BIG one in my work— this ideology of saying 'Yes' to life through all of its tragic moments explained by psychiatrist, Viktor Frankl, and author/philosopher, James Baldwin. I am considering how I'm saying 'Yes' to life through the trauma *and* also using this to almost validate the good experiences that are happening in my life as well. Philosophy and considering all these modes to how the brain responds to events is fun and fascinating as shit!

OHHHH OKAY, PERIOD! SO WHAT ABOUT OUR GOOD FRIEND, MUSIC— WHAT IS HER ARTISTIC PURPOSE FOR YOU BAE?

Music! Yes, we love her. We involve her in our entire being around these parts (my brain, my studio, my body). Music helps me sit with myself and hone in on the emotions I'd like to convey in my writing. It also helps me set the tone for certain pieces: *how do I want this piece to feel?* Sometimes a song will come on shuffle and it'll be exactly what I'm trying to depict in a piece, so I write that song down and replicate words and compositions to almost match with it. Other times it's a matter of putting myself in the zone and feeling pumped or even sad enough yet energetic to get those ideas out. Since I do the mixed media shit, whatever is produced is totally dependent on the mood from the music— I could even be making 3 different artworks in the same sitting. I work rhythmically with the music I'm listening to. *Maggot Brain* by Funkadelic is a really good song for me to get lost in my creative process.

WOWWWW... SO HEARING THAT, DO YOU THINK YOUR MUSICAL EXPERIENCES ALIGN WITH HOW YOU DEAL WITH WRITING?

Sure! Yeah! I listen to lyrical artists like Kendrick Lamar or even instrumentals from Lamp and I think I'm expanding how I think about my voice and written forms. Kendrick's song *The Art of Peer Pressure* makes me scared every time I listen to it— the storytelling and cadence of his words involve me in the scenarios very vividly. I think about stuff like that with my words: *do you feel me? You feel me?* Shit like that is the mindset or the goal. When I write, it turns into an extension to my visuals— something that is taken into consideration at all times when thinking about different patterns, textures, visual anchors, image hierarchies. I like for my work to feel

musical and lyrical even without the presence *of* lyrics— I *usually* have no lyrics in my work. My writing is something I like to include as dissertations or thoughts or documents that have solely come from my brain and my hand... However, I am considering how I can imbed the words of others like quotes from other artists or people of interest. I love quotes and I love reading quotes or relaying quotes to others so I definitely would like to include those voices as an extension of my own research and emotional beliefs!

OOOOOH YEAH, I LOVE THAT FOR YOU!! ON THIS TOPIC OF INFORMING ARTISTIC PRACTICE, I'M ASSUMING YOUR FASHION SENSE REFLECTS THIS AS WELL? HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR FASHION INFLUENCE, BOO?

FUCK YEAH! Fashion is a beautiful statement of how I wish to be addressed. I align myself fashionably with embellishments— embellishments are my whole being. From tattoos to jewelry, piercings, clothing size, my hair, color palette— all of it is considered in my daily artistic practice. I dress like my art... or at least I think I do. I have tattoos of spirals and stars; the spirals that appear on me, period, are statements of life and reaffirm West African "adinkra" that stand for natural logs of life. The spiral becomes a fashion *and* life statement for finding comfort in revisiting past times in new versions of yourself. Other than that, I love taking the notion of how one dresses and applying it to myself in a rebellious sense..? My idea of fashion being a social indicator motivates me to dress in the most "artsy" fashion as I can— especially in an urban sense with all types of rings and necklaces and maybe even a few scarves and *very* oversized pants. Fashion feels as free flowing as my studio practice and as endless as my artworks— I don't fit a singular aesthetic other than comfortably me.

<u>CONCLUSION</u>: ONE LAST HURRAH BEFORE THE LITTLE GUY SETS SAIL!

SUPER COOL (she's kinda weird y'all), ANYWAY THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS VERY INFORMATIONAL AND VULNERABLE INTERVIEW! WE'LL END IT HERE TODAY, BUT IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO LEAVE OUR AUDIENCE WITH BEFORE WE PART WAYS, MISS JASLYN?

Okayyyyy, who said you could use my real name like that... sorry... anyway... um thank y'all for joining me on this journey— I know I seem crazy as fuck— I know! I often scare myself like damn bro what is going on here, you have 45 thoughts happening in the same compartment of your brain. I'd like to leave this interview with a blunt in one hand and a lighter in the other, however, I do wanna formally say I appreciate this weird experience of vulnerability and research. Like, *cool* research. Research that made me want to stop using my phone completely and frolic into the sunset. I've learned that it's okay to not know everything and embrace how much more I could learn. I also learned about my deep love for Google spreadsheets and how I annoyingly cannot survive without that shit anymore. Also keeping 3 calendars at one time— you know what, I think this might have been a prolonged documentation of my insanity. This shit was crazy. But it's who I am and I will continue to do so because I think art is for the compartmentalized mind to understand. I also just think creating this body of work has been really fun for me and I am interested in seeing how this form of expression develops for me... especially when grad school is in the picture— we're gonna go ahead and wait like another 3 years before we do this schooling shit again, oh my god bruh...

Anyway... I will leave this quote here that I recently heard from Stephen Colbert in an interview where he spoke of how he experienced grief after losing his father and 2 brothers in a plane crash: "So, what do you get from loss? You get awareness of other people's loss. Which allows you to connect with that other person. Which allows you to love more deeply. And to understand what it's like to be a human being."

And with that, I say free Palestine, free Congo, free all my marginalized folk burdened by genocide and generational trauma, and reecognize that empathy is important. Please take care of yourself and your communities and support local businesses. We *literally* need each other. Individualism kills.

Thank you to host [REDACTED] for having me and expressing your interest in *Tragic Optimism: This structure holds me up, but God please just let me fall one time.* I hope to be back real soon for the next rendition!

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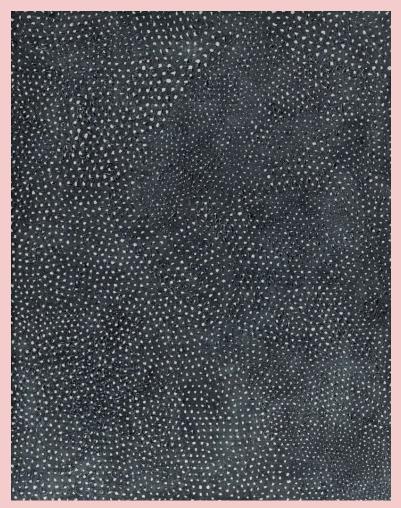
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<u>Illustrations</u>:

CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

Illustration 1:

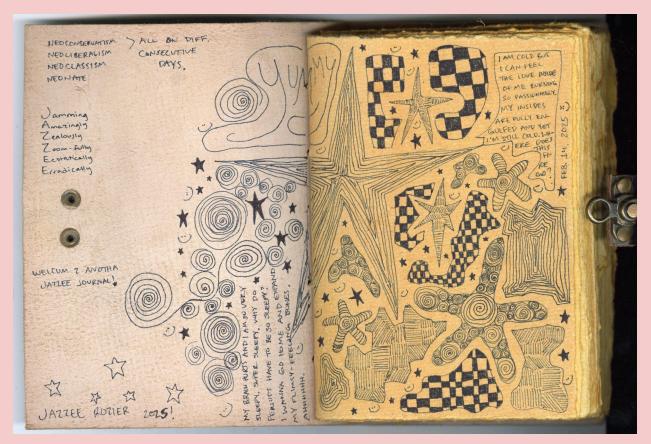


Yayoi Kusama Original Infinity Nets (series) Acrylic on canvas 46.1 in x 35.8 in 2000

Illustrations 1.5 & 2:



Jazzee Rozier SEExYOUxINx40? Screenprint, POSCA marker, oil pastel, ink, colored pencil, and collaged paper on canvas 8 in x 10 in 2025



Jazzee Rozier sketchbook thoughts Ink on handmade paper/book 5 in x 7.5 in 2025

Illustration 3:

BECAUSE THERE IS NO GOD SOMEONE MUST TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MEN. A CHARISMATIC LEADER IS IMPERATIVE. HE CAN SUBORDINATE THE SMALL WILLS TO THE GREAT ONE. HIS STRENGTH AND HIS VISION REDEEM MEN. HIS PERFECTION MAKES THEM GRATEFUL. LIFE ITSELF IS NOT SACRED, THERE IS NO DIGNITY IN THE FLESH. UNDIRECTED MEN ARE CONTENT WITH RANDOM, SOUALID, POINTLESS LIVES. THE LEADER GIVES DIRECTION AND PURPOSE. THE LEADER FORCES **GREAT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, MANDATES** PEACE AND REPELS OUTSIDE AGGRESSORS. HE IS THE ARCHITECT OF DESTINY. HE DEMANDS ABSOLUTE LOYALTY. HE MERITS UNOUESTIONING **DEVOTION. HE ASKS THE SUPREME** SACRIFICE. HE IS THE ONLY HOPE.

Jenny Holzer [*no title*] ; *Inflammatory Essays* Lithograph on paper 431 mm x 431 mm 1979-82

Illustration 3.5:



Jazzee Rozier

a prayer to god, myself, my environment, and my family. i think. you don't know which is meant for what.

POSCA, colored pencil, ink, and acrylic paint on canvas 9 in x 71 in 2025

Illustration 4:



Yoshitomo Nara 地球星へ 5 (To the Earth 5) Colored pencil, pen, and stamp on paper 29.6 cm x 21 cm 2000

Illustration 4.5:



Jazzee Rozier AND IF I COULD ERASE WHO YOU THOUGHT I WAS (DON'T TALK BACK!)

Screenprint, POSCA marker, oil pastel, ink, colored pencil, and collaged paper on canvas

29 in x 30 ½ in 2025

Illustration 5:



Wangechi Mutu *Histology of the Different Classes of Uterine Tumors* (12 artworks) Mixed media drawing (glitter, ink, fur, collage, and other materials on found medical illustration paper) 46 cm x 31 cm 2004 - 2005

Illustration 5.5:



Jazzee Rozier what's on the other side? Screenprint, image transfer, pen, and paper on BFK Rives 11 in x 15 in 2025

Illustration 6:



Njideka Akunyili Crosby *Nwantinti (Small love/my love)* Acrylic, pastel, charcoal, colored pencil, and Xerox transfers on paper 68 in x 96 in 2012

Illustrations 6.5 & 7:



Jazzee Rozier *i embody your anger because you've made me feel it*

Screenprint, acrylic ink, POSCA, colored pencil, fiber papers, and oil pastel on canvas 7 1/2 in x 27 in 2025



Jazzee Rozier

a. librae

Screenprint, POSCA marker, oil pastel, ink, colored pencil, and collaged paper on canvas 36 in x 48 in 2025

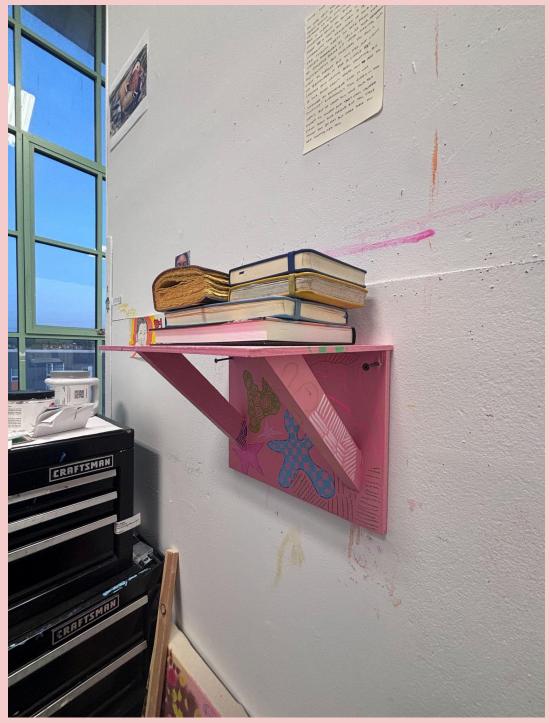
HISTORIC ARTISTS

Illustration 8:



Anna Atkins *Lygodion Microphyllum* Cyanotype 13 9/16 in x 9 11/16 in Ca. 1851-54

Illustration 8.5:



Jazzee Rozier BFA logbooks *studio installation shot* 2024 - 2025

Illustration 9:



May Stevens *Big Daddy Paper Doll* Acrylic on canvas 60 in x 108 in 1968

Illustration 9.5:



Jazzee Rozier 1946: AGGRESSIVELY ABSURD

Screenprint, POSCA marker, oil pastel, ink, colored pencil, and collaged paper on flat canvas board

24 in x 36 in 2025

Illustration 10:



Hannah Höch *With Seaweed* Cut and pasted papers, torn papers, and gouache on paper 13 ⁵/₈ in x 9 ⁷/₈ in 1950

Illustration 10.5:

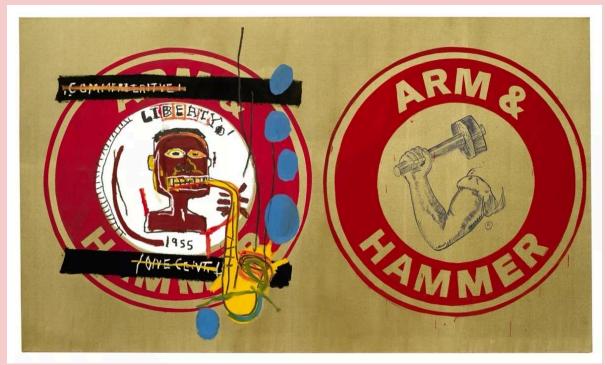


Jazzee Rozier you can open up your eyes or you can walk it blind

Screenprint, POSCA marker, oil pastel, ink, colored pencil, and collaged paper on flat canvas board

24 in x 36 in 2025

Illustration 11:



Andy Warhol; Jean-Michel Basquiat Arm and Hammer II Color screenprint and acrylic paint 1984-85

Illustration 11.5:



Jazzee Rozier *warm honey (diptych)* Screenprint, ink, POSCA, oil pastel, colored pencil, and stitched paper on BFK Rives 11 in x17 in ea. 2025

Illustration 12:



Nam June Paik *Open your window* Mixed media on canvas 37.8 in x 48 in 1995

Illustration 12.5:



Jazzee Rozier *a playground* CMYK screenprint, acrylic ink, colored pencil, POSCA marker, and oil pastel on BFK 15 in x 19.5 in 2024

Illustration 13:



Jazzee Rozier

i'm going to the beauty supply today. Acrylic ink, watercolor, POSCA, colored pencil, image transfer, paper collage, and oil pastel on canvas 20 in x 24 in 2025