Ian

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Ian has lived in the same house all his life in Little Falls, Minnesota. It’s a yellow brick house, one of the first that was built in town, that's 118 years old and made out of a special kind of bricks named for the town. Ian is also the oldest of three children; he has a younger sister and brother. He is very thoughtful in conversation and is the type of kid who spends lots of time in the library and bookstores. He likes to discuss philosophy and the meaning of life with his friends and lately he has developed a fascination with cemeteries. “It’s not a morbid obsession or anything, my friend and I just like to look at the headstone art. It’s a kind of gallery, really,” he says.

For Ian, art has always been in the background at home but developed into an interest for him after learning his grandfather was a pretty prolific oil painter a few years ago. This prompted Ian to started drawing on his own and he is now interested in studying architecture. “I’ve always loved building and designing and examining buildings. I used to build fantastical structures, but now I want to learn how to build real ones,” he states.

In coming to Perpich for his senior year, Ian was seeking more access to art and more concentrated focus on studying art to help him get prepared to study architecture in college when he feels he’s ready for that step. He was also seeking a change from the small environment he was in where there weren't as many artistic opportunities. He recalls, “Before I came to AHS I took every art course available and even did two
independent studies, but I really just couldn’t get enough where I was and wanted to branch out from the people I have known all my life.”

Ian has also been keenly interested in academic courses like mathematics and physics. He says he likes the challenge of these studies, “but art is where my real passion is and I like that I can explore ways to grow my skills and abilities in a more individually meaningful and free way.” Throughout our conversation, Ian shared that, “By studying art I think I’ve learned to visually explore ways to reflect on my experiences and philosophical ideas.” The self-portrait Ian submitted, *Elemental Self*, depicts the nature of this statement. Although the piece is unfinished, it includes some completed, overt religious symbolism in the crown of thorns and necklace. It is clear that in this drawing Ian is visually exploring and reflecting on his feelings about what making art means for him as well as portraying the religious ideas and philosophies that he was entertaining at the moment. This drawing, done in his characteristically precise, realistic, and technically advanced style, is evidence of the visual, reflective practice Ian engages in when making art and how it is normally a deeply personal and often private practice.

Yet, at the same time, participating in making art and learning about art has really helped Ian come out of his shell. He says, “I’ve learned to develop my personal voice which is helping me develop my confidence and my ability to connect with the world.” He also states, “Art is also the only things that seems to help me connect to what I'm learning. I can take things I learn other ways and combine the ideas there into something visual or map out my thoughts and learning in my sketchbook in images so
that I don't just "know" something, I really can explore the ins and outs of the ideas visually and reflect on where I stand in relation to them.”

Ian also likes the critique aspect of the arts, saying, “There are always ways that I can seek feedback and give feedback to myself towards improvement. In art I've learned that sometimes the process is equally as important as the product, and I've also learned that when showing something vs. telling about something I can see things with the eye instead of with my mind trying to label everything. Learning to just see what's there without having to categorize and name things all the time is freeing for me.”
Something that becomes quickly apparent when talking with Ian is that there are deep pools of thought underneath his quiet surface. Through studying art Ian has learned to make and use images that record his experiences in self-examination and inner searching for the truths of life. In the same way a philosopher or writer might jot down notes as he ponders the nature of life, Ian embarks on this same path of inquiry but his notes take the form of sketches, drawings and doodles.

In creating this sketchbook as a portrait of Ian I wanted to give him a unique place to record his ponderings. I wanted to create a private place where he could examine and reflect on his thoughts visually before presenting them to the world in a more public forum. The wrap cover of this sketchbook is made from woven silk roving. Silk roving is a fairly wispy and unstable material when standing independently, but when woven together as it is here it creates a durable fabric of infinite strength. As this strong fabric wraps around the book it is meant to contain and bind the private reflections inside, concealing them from prying or curious eyes. I chose the deep blue color to signify the infinite depths of thought and image Ian can explore on these pages. Inside, the letter pressed signature pages are filled with linear, flowing, abstract designs and imprinted with the phrase, “Inner reflections on thoughts of my philosophic mind to become more comfortable with who I am.” The line drawings are meant to symbolize

**Ian**

*sketchbook*

mediums: silk roving, vintage button, hand letter pressed pages, waxed linen thread
the visual stream of consciousness and interior philosophic monologues that Ian seeks to capture in his drawings. The phrase summarizes what Ian has learned from studying art and what art has come to mean for him as a result. And the blank, gridded paper comprising the book is significant of Ian’s precise, technical, structured style of drawing. When using this sketchbook it is my hope that Ian will fill every inch with drawings to record his mind’s wanderings as he seeks to make sense of it all.
Elemental Self

drawing

mediums: graphite, paper

Ian Warner

Hello. I really don't know where I'm at. I have trouble explaining who I am as an artist. So, maybe the best way is for me to just ramble and hope something sticks. I tend to be very laid back about my art. I feel that if something is lost or damaged that, while it may suck, I can make something else. I also tend to leave pieces unfinished. I don't know, maybe I get bored or just come to a point where I feel I'm done examining and reflecting on what I set out to examine and reflect on. The piece might not be done but I am. On some rare occasions I come back to a piece and finish it, but usually it just sits. I have this drawing that started as a self-portrait sitting in my room right now. There is a ton of work that could be done on it but I just don't feel like doing it because I feel like right now it's actually a fairly decent representation of myself as an artist already, just as it is. It's unfinished, has some religious symbolism and is done in graphite. I've always loved religion as an object. I'm not religious or anything but find the symbols and philosophy fascinating. And I love graphite plain and simple. So, it, in theory, could be my statement and this could technically be the artist statement that goes with it.