Laura

“There are no boundaries and anything is possible! I’ve also learned to develop concepts visually, things like social commentary and bigger, personal ideas that are now behind my pieces that I want to communicate to an audience.”

Growing up in Ortonville, Minnesota, a small town near the border of South Dakota in the southwest corner of the state, Laura has spent a lot of time pursuing the arts at her Mother’s encouragement. “My Mom was always getting me little art kits and signing me up for classes and activities outside of school,” she says. “So it’s just sort of always been there for me.”

Before deciding to attend AHS, Laura was one of the students who was heavily involved in extracurricular activities. She played volleyball, was captain of the gymnastics team, played flute, and was also involved in the Business Professionals of America, the Family Career and Community Leaders of America and served on the Community Arts Council. “I really like being involved in my community and in doing community advocacy projects like park restoration and public art projects. You can actually see the difference you’re making when you do stuff like this. It’s really empowering,” she says.

But Laura also tells me that before choosing AHS, she only got to take one art class first semester of her freshman year. She recalls, “Access was limited to taking a general Art Introduction class that lots of kids took to meet graduation requirements, so the classes were really full. But beyond that, Laura says, “there weren't other offerings in art very frequently because the teacher was only part-time and there was so much
demand for the Intro class that that's all she taught, so I just continued to seek out other, community based options for art classes.”

Laura first started making jewelry in 6th grade, and started out by working with simple memory wire pieces then she would go to craft fairs with her Grandma and sell what she made. “I made my own display unit and sold my necklaces for $7.00 each. It really built my confidence because I experienced some good success early on with people really liking my work. I would sell out of everything each time I went and I even had people commission me to make specific things for them,” she states.

Now, as graduation approaches, Laura has decided to pursue jewelry design professionally along with studying museum curation and business communications. But Laura expresses sadness at having to leave AHS because she has really enjoyed the independent nature of the program. And through studying art, Laura has learned, “there are no boundaries and anything is possible. I’ve also learned to develop concepts visually, things like social commentary and bigger, personal ideas that are now behind my pieces that I want to communicate to an audience.”

The self-portrait, *Self-Portrait, Japanese Memories*, that Laura submitted for exhibition was one of the first pieces where she explored making jewelry with a personal, conceptual basis. She made the piece to portray and commemorate an experience she had during a trip to Japan, but for Laura it was also a way for her to explore pushing the boundaries and possibilities of what her art could communicate. Up until then she had made pieces simply because she enjoyed the act of making beautiful, functional and wearable jewelry. She says, “I would make my jewelry because I would get inspired by some materials I would see in the store and then I would get this drive to
see what it would look like when it was done. I wasn’t satisfied until I finished something and the whole process was just about designing visually appealing products, but it wasn’t really about making meaningful or personal artistic statements and even my designs were fairly conventional… pretty, but not that unusual really.” She continues, “Until I started exploring and learning about art in a more focused way. By studying art more intensely I’ve learned that for me concept is everything. It's not just about making something that looks nice anymore. Creativity and creative, artistic thinking can be applied everywhere and studying art is how I learned this.” In Laura’s new schema, art can still be anything, “An object, a sculpture, a drawing, a jewelry piece, an idea, a piece of writing, a dance, a movement, a thought. There really aren't any boundaries.” But now she also says, “By studying art I’ve learned to take the creative process and use it to explore new ideas and discover new things about the world and myself that I didn’t know were possible before.”
Laura

necklaces

media: Swarovski crystals, vintage buttons and ribbon, keshi pearls, brass wire, glass and precious metal beads, handmade silver beads, resin, jewelry findings

During my interview with Laura it was easy to see that she is incredibly bright, outgoing, ambitious, gracious and driven from within to reach her goals. Yet, art for Laura is a place where she can be more relaxed. Through studying art she has learned that when making things she has a unique opportunity to express her very personal ideas. So when making her jewelry, Laura pairs the precious with the non-precious to make intimate statements and tell stories about her personal values and experiences.

In creating this portrait of Laura I wanted to create a set of sophisticated necklaces that can be worn together or separately as a means to convey my impressions of Laura. The woven and knotted golden ribbons and brass wire form the base of the main necklace that is embellished with golden, sparkling crystal sunbursts symbolizing Laura’s contagious, abundant energy, cheery personality and gracious nature. The small, handmade silver cups filled with beads and resin contain embedded signets that state, “No boundaries,” and “Anything is possible.” depicting Laura’s thoughts about why she treasures making art and what making art means to her as she has come to learn more about it by studying it intensely. More golden sunbursts are repeated in the simple choker necklace, but here they are not permanently fastened to the ribbon. These sunbursts can be rearranged on the choker or removed completely and clipped to the
other necklaces or to other accessories and clothing as Laura desires. This rearrangeable or “wearer’s choice” aspect of my portrait represents Laura’s ability to revel in the rich lands of possibility and artistic choices when deciding how to best convey her stories. The third necklace, encrusted with keshi pearls and literally dripping with many different kinds of glass, pearl and crystal beads, is an homage to Laura’s meticulously detailed and complex approach to creating art that drips with personal meaning. So, when wearing these pieces, it is my hope that Laura will be reminded to linger as much as she can in possibilities and artistic choices because it is in these places that she shines the brightest.
Self-Portrait, Japanese Memories

*necklace*

mediums: beads, found objects

Laura Marsolek

My favorite medium of artistic expression is jewelry. Jewelry appeals to me because of its tiny, meticulous, and detail-oriented process. It’s ability to act as sculpture is also very attractive to me now. I enjoy pushing the bounds, often standing between the lines of wearable accessories and sculptural jewelry. Found objects, googly eyes, and starbursts mixed with sterling silver and gemstones provide for an interesting mix of precious and non-precious materials. I am a collector of miniscule objects. Small items resonate with me. Tiny objects no bigger than your palm carry a sense of intimacy that large items don’t. Many objects that I incorporate into my jewelry have personal significance. For example, upon cleaning my room one day, I had gathered a small pile of colorful junk. Inspired by the varying shapes and colors, I incorporated the objects into a necklace. I called it “Junkworks.” It always reminds me of the day I cleaned my room. Similarly, after a memorable night of trick-or-treating with friends, I incorporated my favorite Starburst candy into a necklace. To me, found objects carry stories. What better way to highlight such special articles than in a piece of jewelry? I can wear events and memories on me everyday.

As an artist, my ultimate goal is to be a jewelry designer. I plan to attend college and major in jewelry design. I’m always trying to incorporate new techniques and materials into my work. I am not only a jewelry artist, but an artist in the sense that I incorporate art and creativity into everyday life. The act of cleaning one’s room or trick-
or-treating with friends wouldn’t be viewed as “art” by the average person, but I turn it into art. It’s the events that take place in my life that inspire me to create. I look at the world in a different way and I think, “How can I make art about this?”