Maggie

“Through studying art, I’ve learned that I can use my creative process to build my personal, artistic voice in my work and share my point of view with people.”

Maggie grew up in and loves Minneapolis, Minnesota. Her parents and older sister who she is very close with make up the core of her family, and according to her, she’s lead a pretty uneventful life except for the crazy, hair-brained ideas she cooks up to explore artistically.

Before attending AHS, Maggie pursued lots of classes, but never really latched on to any mediums like drawing or painting. She recalls, “I always got frustrated because the more traditional mediums like pencils and paint didn’t let me work fast or accurately enough. I could never make it look real enough.” But then she got interested in photography in 9th grade after a workshop experience and when she returned home she remembers fondly, “I begged and badgered my parents for a camera of my own, even a crummy one. They finally gave in when they realized I wasn’t going to let up on it and bought me a used 35mm camera and some black and white film for Christmas that year. I was so excited, I was on cloud nine! And I even remember taking it outside that very day and walking around the neighborhood to take pictures. I was such an art geek already!”

Maggie has had a very positive experience at AHS pursuing her love of photography. She tells me, “I really like the way we're treated like adults with our own identities, ideas and interests here at Perpich. And we have lots of time to work on our art.” But Maggie’s newest interest is in exploring the artistic process as a method of inquiry and discovery. She states, “I’ve learned to make the most of those spontaneous,
found moments and sudden happenings whether they occur when I’m shooting or in the
darkroom.” She goes on to say, “Through studying art, I think I have learned that I can
ask questions and find and solve problems and develop concepts to work with
[visually]. I’ve also learned that I can use my creative process to build my personal,
attractive voice in my work and share my point of view with people.”

The self-portrait, Slumlord, that Maggie submitted for exhibition speaks to this
and portrays her point of view about the subject of the piece. It is a portrait of Maggie in
that it serves as a representation of how she typically approaches making art and it gives
us insights into how she employs her unique artistic process. The reticulated photograph
she made is of a well-known Minneapolis street musician who regularly stakes his
claim on a particular downtown piece of sidewalk to try and earn his living. The
Slumlord title Maggie chose to assign the image seems to communicate her ideas about
this performer who is known for acting like he “owns” this specific, grimy, corner spot.
By creating this image/title pairing, it seems as though Maggie is comparing this
musician with a slumlord because he charges his listeners to “rent” his musical talents
as they walk by in exchange for him establishing himself on the corner. Or perhaps it’s
a commentary on some other aspect of the image entirely; Maggie leaves the image/title
relationship up for audience interpretation as she often does by not explaining it in her
statement.

However, regardless of the intention of her titling, Maggie has used her
photographic eye and the developing and printing techniques she’s learned through
studying art to give the image a dinginess and a darkness so as to illicit an almost
somber and sober examination of the situation. Additionally, she has also captured and
drawn attention to a situation others might be uncomfortable looking at when they encounter it on the street, one they may choose to ignore when confronted with it in reality. So by taking and developing this photo, Maggie freezes this scene and removes it from context so we can appreciate and examine the subtleties of it and the character involved more deeply. Maggie states that her aim as an artist is for her work to provoke emotion and thought. Thus, this piece portrays her artistic identity and her ability to meet this goal very adeptly.

And as our discussion progresses, Maggie and I talk about the important place art has come to have in her life since starting to study it more intensely at AHS. She says, “Now I’m really intrigued by trying to infuse a conceptual base into my artwork that resonates with other people, and I get inspired by my interactions with people and the complexities of my relationship with them. I haven’t found another way besides taking photos that lets me explore these things.” She goes on to say, “Studying art has also helped me to become more engaged in my education. I’ve discovered that it’s just how I think and how I learn best.”
During my conversation with Maggie I learned that she enjoys taking an unplanned, flexible, light-hearted approach to her artwork. Through studying art, Maggie has learned to use the artistic creative process as a method of inquiry and discovery and she has learned to make the most of found moments and spontaneous happenings whether they occur when she is behind the camera or in the darkroom. Maggie has also learned to use the creative process to share her point of view and build her artistic voice.

Maggie’s grounded, easy-going approach to the creative process and the development of her artistic voice were my inspiration for this portrait. The bright, boldly colored scarf necklace I created to portray Maggie is constructed from hand-cut yarn made from recycled t-shirts that I found at various second-hand thrift stores. When creating yarn from t-shirts, the composition of the finished yarn can be unpredictable depending on where the seams of the shirt naturally fall. T-shirt fabric also acts and stretches differently when cut into thin strips. This unpredictable material serves as the base of this piece. The glass beads dispersed over the surface of the scarf necklace represent the found moments and spontaneous happenings Maggie seeks out when making artwork. And the embellished shawl pin symbolizes Maggie as the constant in this seeming chaos; she is the pin that holds the layers of her endeavors together as she seeks to develop and share her voice. Lastly, the large designed glass button is inscribed
with the word, “Voice,” to communicate what Maggie feels she has most prominently learned to develop through studying art in school. So, when Maggie wears this piece I hope she is reminded to keep taking chances with her art, to keep developing her artistic point of view and voice, and to let spontaneity remain a driving force in her unique creative process.
My art is not meant to mean any one particular thing. I don't go out thinking "I'm going to take this photo and use this color scheme to provoke this emotion and place item here to represent this." I know how to do that, but I don't think that that is the purpose of my art. I want my art to provoke emotion and thought, but I think that thoughts and emotions are so individual, that I, as an artist, have no control over what different people think of my art.

This piece depicts who I am as an artist because it represents how I typically approach making my art and using my artistic process. My work is generally playful, and I pay attention to how appealing the composition of my work is to the eye. I work mostly with black and white film and experimental photography. I use these processes because of the lack of control. You have to give up control to the camera, the developer, and the printing process, and for me to feel like an artist, I have to roll with the mistakes I make, and turn them into good things. If I can just click "undo" all the time because I don't like what I just did, I don't feel like I am putting any real work into my art. I have to embrace the mistakes, and realize that they are just part of my art and my process.