Trying to find who I am and attempting to acknowledge where my thoughts come together I notice there is one source where my ideas are set in stone—my sketchbook. I’ve always carried the 8.5 by 5.5 inch sketchbook, which I have overflowed with restaurant receipts, written memories, thought bubbles, lists of endless non-sense, Remo’s doodles, me and my ex’s initials made into a repeating monograms, Brigitte’s cute post it notes, and Kerin’s little motivational sentences have provided a great deal of support, as well as motivation to learn more and to improve my work.

I knew that my sketchbook was, in some way, a historical document that depicted various events during my academic and personal life. Really, what makes it truly genuine, is that I can only understand what each mark, word, scribble or drawing means, what day it was, what was happening at that moment, what mood I was in and when it was conceived. I have noted every significant detail when I am in class.
hearing people say interesting comments, when I need to write down important
dates, which I sometimes end up forgetting or when sacred advice is given to me
by a person whom I look up to the most. In a way, this sketchbook has contributed
significantly to my growth, development and to the improvement of my work. It
is a historical document to where I can go back and forth to review and revisit
abandoned ideas. Hence, it has been greatly influential to the thinking I’ve done
in my projects and showing a progression in concept.

Taking advantage of my education, I have been giving to high school students
in digital media arts programs at the YMCA Youth Institute summer program
in Long Beach. The lessons and works of my teachers have influenced my way of
thinking and receiving towards the students. I want them to be able to use this as
an outlet for creativity to enforce their social values in a practical sense apart from
learning graphics, film and animation. Digital media is not just itself a medium
for art and design, but a way for students to take advantage of this knowledge and
use it to develop and foster social skills. I have been active in this program for
about 4 years now, and have dedicated my time and effort to expose these kids to
various forms of art and design to demonstrate that there is more to just digital
media itself. They need to explore on their own to see what other possibilities they
can grasp on to reveal their thoughts, interest and goals.
I have always been interested in the artistic field; however, it never truly blossomed until I moved to Florida at the ripe age of nine. I spent my days at home playing with my Bratz dolls as my mom would go hours painting the hallway a cream of wheat, and sponging the living room walls a burnt sienna. Interested in her painting technique, I abandoned my dolls and became her apprentice, helping her bring the walls to life with color. During a break between coats, my mother asked, “What do you want to be when you get older?” I thought about it and excitedly answered, “I want to be a graphic designer, a fashion designer, web designer, interior designer, and a cartoonist!” Perplexed, my mother asked, “Don’t you want to be a lawyer like your dad?” This question is still posed to me to this day, almost 7 years later. Influencing people and expressing ideas through visual communication has become a passion of mine, because it allows me to exhibit my creativity.

Since then, I went on to further develop my interest in visual arts. In fifth grade I even started a website for my friends and I to use called, “Cherrydaisies.” In my ten year old mind, cherry was supposed to symbolize the color of adults’ faces when
they got angry at us for being on the computer all day and daisies was supposed to symbolize how happy we were when we went on my website. At school, we would log on and chat with each other, laugh at the funny pictures I had put up, and revel at the layout designs I would put up to go with the seasons. Through my website, I was able to entertain, and influence the way my friends felt during the day, and my ability to do this with people inspired me to use this aspect of visual communication to promote progress within my community.

It was during high school where I managed to fine tune my talents in the arts and design, not only through taking a variety of classes to further my skills, but also getting involved in community service projects which have impacted the world around me. I participated in the annual Empty Bowls project at my school, where I visited local elementary schools and helped young students create ceramic bowls. Then, a dinner is hosted at the high school where people could buy bowls made by these students, and the proceeds would go to a local homeless shelter. I also helped with a mural project with students at an elementary school that was made to illustrate good character traits for the young children.

And yet, I still will not stop there. I have designed t-shirts for clubs, logos for school, and am even a current member of Yearbook as a layout and photo editor. As a creator, in the future, I will be involved in other service projects to raise awareness, be it helping with advertisements, such as the people who created the Kony 2012 propaganda, or planning a fundraiser event to help a local cause. It only takes a splash of color to brighten up the world.
When I was in high school, I discovered my love for graphic design. I never dared to dream that I could actually go to school for design (let alone at The Kansas City Art Institute) after growing up in a low-income family who struggled to stay afloat. After high school, I decided to move out so I wouldn’t be a burden on my family. I attended community college to discover what direction to take, still unsure if I could ever afford a four-year college. After several design courses and very special teachers, I was inspired to pursue design. When KCAI offered me their scholarship, the line between impossible and possible started to blur. I moved to Kansas City alone with what money I could save up from working a full-time retail sales job.

I have been working three part-time jobs so I can remain in school. I work in the Print Center, where I helped establish a sustainable practice of reusing materials and expired inks. When I graduate, I will become the only person in my family to have completed a bachelor’s degree. This is extremely important to me: not only do I graduate, but also that I create a lasting trend of higher education in my family.
Growing up, I knew of my cultural heritage as a tribal member of the Wyandotte Nation in Oklahoma. I grew up aware of the painful past, and the difficulties many Indian tribes face today. For that reason, I will use the abilities that I have developed to help create design solutions for Native Americans. The tribe offers a small scholarship for those members who attend college. I would like to give back to that community for helping me make my dreams a reality.

I have been able to take classes like Visual Advocacy, with projects focused on design solutions for the community. I have experienced poverty simulations in which we lived the daily life of someone in poverty and then created a design intervention. My group created "INSIST" to help low-income people in the community use responsible financial practices to help them avoid evictions. I have taken part in an extra curricular workshop with Thrive, which is based in Helena, Arkansas—a rural, economically depressed city—dedicated to improving the life of the citizens through design. I was able to assist them in developing design solutions for the struggling local economy.

With this scholarship, I will be able to focus on my education so that I can better give back to those communities who have given me so much hope. I want to help ensure that the next generation receives not only the same opportunities, but even more. Design is such a powerful force in the world today that with responsible design practices and accountability, we really can make a difference.
I come from a family of loud Latinos. There is no doubt that Latinos know how to get their point across — through words, gestures, or actions. They know the power of communication, and the change it can cause — from my grandmother’s internationally broadcasted, revolutionary efforts during the Panamanian dictatorship, to my grandfather encouraging and inspiring his farm workers to attend college, to my mother’s thesis on psychiatric ward design in hospitals. I am inspired by their determination to make change happen, and the power of their persuasion.

This power of persuasion has left an impression on me. In high school, as I designed posters for organizations and fundraisers, I was fascinated by the power I had to influence people, their thinking and decisions. At the same time, I struggled with a verbally and emotionally abusive stepfather, who influenced my thinking as well; he persuaded me to believe things about myself that affected my self-esteem.
Persuasion is critical in graphic design. I want to use the power of communication to influence people — not to buy a product or use a service — but to create change. Inspired by my family, I choose to be not only a designer, but a social citizen; I plan to work in the field of design for the greater good. I plan to design for humanitarian campaigns. I look forward to using my trilingual skills to reach more of the global community.

Erik Spiekermann says the designer is not an artist, but a problem-solver. Our “problems” include not only design problems, but social problems as well; issues such as education, poverty, and the environment all need our creative attention. I believe it is our social responsibility as visual communicators to persuade others to join us in this problem-solving.

I have painted murals at a local disability camp. I work with others to paint and renovate homes through Habitat for Humanity. While interning in New York City this summer, I plan to volunteer with the Volunteers of America. I was selected to work at the Ringling College Design Center, a professional, on-campus studio that designs for both the college and community non-profit organizations.

I was recently contacted by a local chapter of 10:10, a global environmental initiative, for a collaboration with the company Tervis Tumbler for a campaign to encourage lower water consumption and reusable water containers. The designs I am creating for Tervis Tumbler will be distributed by the company and the college to all incoming freshmen this fall. I cannot change the world, but I can change part of it; through this project I have learned how, through design, I can influence small changes that make big impacts.
I came to America four years ago with the idea of making the best out of my future. I left family, friends, and traditions and enrolled in college. I got into the graphic design program with an Associate’s Degree being my short term goal. I was living on my own and struggling as a full-time student with a full-time job. But to me, hard work wasn’t a problem; it was my pathway to success.

Soon, however, the real struggle began; I learned that being Hispanic had negative implications. I just couldn’t leave my culture behind and simply blend with others. I had a stereotype on my shoulders. I was often judged by my accent. I was the victim of racist comments and attitudes that discouraged me to stay in America. A few months later I found out my younger brother, was diagnosed with hearing loss. This challenge would change my family’s life forever.
I had deeply fallen in love with my career and I knew graphic design was what I wanted to do. In 2011 I returned to Bolivia to complete a graphic design internship during the summer in an organization that works with people with disabilities. I was part of a new program for the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities. Using graphic design to promote a cause that was important to me was the most rewarding experience I went through. The realization that graphic design could be more than a passion and be used as a tool to promote a cause changed my life.

A few months later, my mom and brothers decided to come to the US to give my hard-of-hearing brother the best opportunities. I got a job offer as a Spanish interpreter – working with Hispanic families with deaf and hard-of-hearing children while I transition from Montgomery College to earning my bachelor’s degree in Visual Arts at UMBC.

When I first came to America, I thought I had left my family and culture behind to achieve a better life, but I was wrong. Life’s twists and turns put me on the right path, where I am able to do what I love: design not only for an individual purpose, but to communicate and promote positive changes and celebrate our differences. And that is what I will continue to do. As an interpreter, I interact with Latinos and I know that as great a country as America is, it still needs to acknowledge diversity better. I interact with the deaf community and I know people still need to know the beauty of being different. I could never turn my back on my family or my heritage. It is who I am and it is the best of me. I am going to tell it to everyone and I will do it the best way I know: by doing graphic design.
Art has been a part of my life ever since I could remember. After discovering my drawing abilities I fell in love with it. It’s a privilege to be blessed with the ability to convert your thoughts, dreams and plans into a visual masterpiece to share with the world. Art is the most vital part of my life and I couldn’t imagine my life without it. Life is never easy, and growing up I’ve dealt with numerous ups and downs—pain, failure, triumph, disappointment and learning the ways of life by myself. I always turned to art no matter what I was going through. Whatever I was feeling or thinking I would draw or paint it out. Art is a reflection of who I am. With my growth and development I soared not only as an artist but as a person.

Possessing such a natural talent made my vision of a future career inevitable. I am going to work in field of illustration when I graduate. I want to share with others and to help give back to my community as well. They say a picture tells a thousand
words, and that’s what I intend on doing by using my art to help voice opinions and personal experiences of everyday topics such as issues in the media, politics, race, the economy, entertainment and technology. I’m going to share my visual insight and give people a different aspect of looking at the world through art.

I am going to use my illustration to make it easier to for the community at large to understand what is going on. Most individuals are misinformed or completely unaware of what’s going on in our political system. Not many people enjoy reading articles or books that cover such a heavy topic. People tend to learn and respond positively with visual images rather than text. So I will use my art to tell and explain political changes, making it easier and more visually appealing for the community at large to understand political changes.

I will use humor to expose what’s really going on – whether it’s poking fun at new changes in laws, candidates running for office or political scandals – by placing them in comic strips, bulletin boards, magazines etc. Art is a freedom of creativity. One of the most beautiful aspects of it is that it is direct communication. You can view it anyway you want. It broadens your visual and mental horizons which is what the community needs. If I can send that message to the world or even just a select number of individuals it will help make the world that much better and will inspire a whole new generation of creative thinkers.
Both my parents were born and raised in Peru but moved to Miami with my older brother and sister right on time for my twin brother and I to be born. I consider myself Hispanic although I’m more familiar with the American culture!

My formal education in art began in high school. I attended a magnet school that introduced and immersed students into specific fields of art, and taught us how to find a career in them. It made us think a lot about college and where in the art field we belonged. I learned so much about life that I never realized. I matured a lot and found out things about myself I never knew. I fell in love with illustration and made the decision that I wanted to become an Illustrator. Comic books, Concept art for movies, short films, animations, and video games, and the many illustrators are the things I discovered and madly fell for. I am very impressed by narrative art and how so many emotions and messages can be sent through a single image or a sequence.
Amy Franco
Illustration

I know that I don’t want the exploration of the art to stop; I know there’s so much more for me to learn. Story telling is something I’ve loved from books – stories that have a strong impact and make you really look at life. I would love more than anything to work on a team either for building a comic book, film, or anything really. Illustration can branch out to so many careers and I am interested in a lot of them! I just know I want to be part of the field and go wherever I can.

I want my illustrations to have a more mature message; to help audiences see the time we live in now. My goal is to graduate and move to California to see where I can get work and what projects I can get picked up for and become a part of a huge production of something meaningful and inspiring for others.
Throughout my life I have found that my surroundings have consistently nurtured for artistic expression. My mother an eccentric pianist, my father a chef. My grandparents too left a tremendous impact on the being I am today. They inspired me to no end. My grandfather a goofy blue collar garage sale go-er and antique refurbish-er, would turn the forgotten into masterpieces of history, then there was my grandmother who is a self proclaimed interior designer whose homes are always immaculate and home made. My other grandmother, an immigrant seamstress from the Philippines, is also a source of inspiration. She would, and still does to this day, sit at the kitchen table crocheting, knitting, and sewing whatever you could think of and donating it to charity. She is soft-spoken yet so inspirational with the sad story that is her life, living through poverty into the American Dream.

Growing up in a household of young, and possibly inept parents, as they too tried to find themselves, living in states from Illinois to Delaware. I grew accustomed to different lifestyles and subcultures and had a deep understanding of how the world treats people at a very young age. I realized that all the trailer parks I went to, conditioned me to be accepting of people from every background, wealthy or impoverished. I became strong, and was able to keep a positive mindset when my...
father was sentenced to ten years in prison after a horrible relapse. That moment also defined me and pushed me to strive for my dreams because life is forever unpredictable and should be cherished and made the most of.

After everything I have been through I found that the most I can do to make an impact on the world is to be a teacher. I am a member of Gay Straight Alliance, and Students Against Destructive Decisions, where I teach the youth about acceptance, something the world has too little of. But in the future I want to be an informative to the public, not a classroom teacher. I want to spread what is happening around us, because we are sometimes too self absorbed and ignorant to notice things outside of our microscopic bubble. Through my photography I can document all the miracles, obscurities, details and larger pictures. I have such a drive to help people who I do not even know. I am hoping to get involved with the Peace Corps and other organizations that help people in developing nations. I am planning on spreading the images I take to the people of my same background in the United States. Hopefully with these images I will inspire someone, even if just one persons, into pursuing their dreams. I am willing to be in the center of the chaos, in the midst of the madness and I will do whatever it takes to get me to that point.
After working with an architect in Austin and living in Lima, Peru for a while, I am determined to go back to school and study my passion, photography, at the age of 26. I remember my first camera was a pink Barbie one, a flat elongated one with the flash on the side. I loved to organize my negatives and label them all so I could go back and print the pictures I wanted. I enjoyed filling albums and writing captions for each photo. Somehow, in small ways, a future passion of mine was evolving.

For years I have been hindering my desire to study photography, thinking I would be happy doing it on the side. I thought I could learn and improve my techniques on my own, which I have tried to do to certain degree. However, there is a sense of emptiness that lingers when I see people dedicating themselves full-time to any artistic career they feel passionate about. At that point I think, “Why can’t I do the same?” I feel an increasing need to learn and dedicate to it professionally.

I do know I will face challenges. In my country, Peru, photography is still mostly seen as a hobby and not something one can make a living out of. I, on the other hand, would be happy if I could work doing something I truly enjoy, such as capturing people’s expressions or recording architectural changes in my city for
a living. To me, that is one of the most amazing gratifications. I want to inspire others in my country to do the same, to trust their talents and to not give into their fears or worry about not being able to earn a living out of them. I also want to teach photography in the future and inspire students with the same drive and determination that I have right now.

What I have accomplished and done so far is just a small fraction of what I could do. I feel as though I have not yet scratched the surface of my full potential—perhaps not only in photography, but in other artistic fields as well—and I know that if given the opportunity I can make a difference.

Perhaps some might think I should pursue a Masters in some other field, one that would allow me to secure a job even during the most difficult of times; but I know that if I do that, I will never stop feeling like the shell buried on the beach. It is time for me to go and pursue this dream.
Please don’t look at me. I am a quiescent with erythrophobia. I am afraid to look at you and everyone else. I am afraid to speak. Do you know why I bring this camera to my face? It’s not just because I like the way the shutter sounds, or the way everything appears through the viewfinder. No, this camera is my shield. This camera is my voice. And maybe you cannot hear me, maybe my words are too soft amidst the winding of the film, but believe me, within the edges of each frame lies a dialogue. I do not have a language with words, but a language with photographs.

The intricacy of spoken speech consumes me. I desire everything foreign—music, film, illustration, photography—they speak to me on a level beyond verbal communication. I discovered the romanticism of the French new wave, director Jean-Luc Godard, actress Anna Karina, and singer Françoise Hardy. Later, I developed a much heavier attraction for Asia, falling in love with the films of Wong Kar-Wai, Yasujiro Ozu, Satoshi Kon, and Hayao Miyazaki, the portraits by Araki Nobuyshi, Shoji Ueda, and Kishin Shinoyama, and the illustrations by Takato Yamamoto, Macoto Takahashi, and Yasunari Ikenaga. I listened to verses in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indian, and Thai. Everything about Asia captivates my curiosity, extending my perception of beauty into an entirely new culture. I want to influence the East just as it has influenced me.
Currently, my work encompasses themes of femininity, nature, death, and identity, but I desperately seek to broaden these topics to bring forth a much more personal and profound message of interaction, particularly between women in Asia. With my work, I want to define a new artistic language; I want to tell stories without uttering a sound. I will travel to Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, India – communicating with female natives through the lens of my thirty-five millimeter. We need not words to understand one another, only the single interaction of capturing a moment. Stories should never be limited those that can speak the same written language. With visual art, language is universal, and that is what I want my art to be. I want to convey the stories of these Asian women, whether happy or sad, through the truthfulness of a photographic print. And by capturing these Eastern narratives, I will imprint my own story, a story of newfound communication, insight, and diminishing fear.
TIMOTHY FOLEY
Photography
Freshman
SUNY New Paltz

I am weird. I am an Artist. Am I an artist because I’m weird, or am I weird because I’m an artist? I’m not sure. I do know that I create art to express myself where words fail. I like to create unique, different, bold, crisp, unpredictable work that illustrates peculiar ideas, expressions, emotions, and beliefs I experience. I hope that other people when they see my work are as captivated as I am. I hope they understand the many expressions that I illustrate in photography.

I have not had an easy road. Both of my parents had drug and alcohol problems as does most of my family. When I was two, my parents reverted to their drug and alcohol ways. My sister and I were victims of neglect and no longer safe; Child Protective services removed us from their care. Fortunately, my Aunt Kathy adopted me and my sister was adopted by my Aunt Pam. After three years, my dad was clean and sober and we returned to his custody. He truly reformed; he found powerful religious faith and remarried. I am still in contact with my mother and we see each other at least once a month. This whole situation was very painful and still can be.
I am also open member of the gay community. Despite the difficulty of being openly gay, it was so liberating. I no longer worry about what people think of me. It might be great that I have made this change within myself, but I also believe that I should make a positive change in others. I do illustrate this with my involvement in the community, involvement in my church choir, and my school’s Gay-Straight Alliance. Through our efforts, we promote a better social environment. As a future creator, I will do all I can to support the gay community.

I feel I have the greatest skill and passion for photography. Because of photography, I see life in a different way. Life is a canvas and I express myself accordingly. Before I shoot, I usually come up with an idea. It might be simple but where I take it can be complex. It might come from an object I find, like a fish-tank; a photo technique I observe or want to try, like a camera-obscura or simply when I see an artistic opportunity like a good location.

I’m currently looking at my strange, captivating, past works and seeking ideas to invent even more interesting and bizarre concepts. I desire to evolve as an artist by pushing more boundaries, leaving viewers in a state of wonder.
I can tell a lot of sad stories, and they would all be true. It is not the sadness of the stories that is important. It is how I have turned out even though I am wearing these stories on the backside of the front wall of my heart; like a badge that hides itself in the way I talk, so all those who have been through some kind of hard time can hear it. The thing I am most proud of telling is that I never give up on myself.

I have heard that the more sorrow carves out of you, the greater your capacity to contain joy. In an upbringing like mine, where there were not many good things to latch onto, I would listen to praise from teachers and classmates about my little stories and paintings. When they would proclaim or breathe out, "You're so creative," I held on to it tightly. My creations were important to me because they made me excited while I worked. They were my defense against talk that took place in hushed tones or behind hands as eyes rolled in my direction.
My dad let his mental illness run unchecked and abused alcohol. He is bipolar. I knew from a very young age I wanted to go college. I never questioned that I wouldn’t, even though my parents were more than flat broke. I believed there was something better, and that I would get to it.

My work is a place for all the parts of me to exist beside each other for examination. I don’t have a hometown; only myself to come back to again and again. So I look into that deeply. I am a young woman, very young, but I have something to say. I want to make work that presents, lucidly, an account of girlhood and womanhood; work that peers into the human experiencing the illness passed down through her family. I want to be creative because when I was little it was what helped me live. It’s that important. I fought hard for the chance to be educated, and now I am fighting for the chance to keep making work.

Kids born into bad circumstances deserve a fighting chance. I plan to start an outreach program for teens in low-income families approaching graduation to apply for college and financial aid. The focus will be on those who wish to go into the arts.
I studied animation in college. Whenever I wasn’t in the classroom, I would engage in and, for a period, lead our school’s Latino Alliance and Asian Student Organizations (ASO). This experience inspired me to open audiences to different cultural and social values through storytelling. I aim to create change, not through petitions and protests per se, but through subtle narrative – communicating these themes that are universally relatable. My time in these organizations has impacted me so much that I continue my involvement – contributing artwork and forum conversations for events and causes even after I’ve taken a year off of school.

I was opened to different perspectives of storytelling through hosting events that celebrated their traditions. I made art for promoting events and gallery submissions. This put me in the habit of studying visual elements from different cultures. I was constantly being challenged in ways that were previously unexplored for me, like how to translate unique social values and beliefs into appealing imagery.
I assumed a leadership position in Latino Alliance as Vice-President guiding artists in conversation and expression with implementing heritage in our art and focusing on cultural origin – like our Day of the Dead celebration where I put significant focus on the holiday’s roots from indigenous Latin mythology. My involvement in multiple organizations inspired me to push for more collaboration between our groups. This led to the creation of One Tribe, a body of student representatives from all organizations in which I served as one of the co-founders.

I decided I needed an education that would teach me technical drawing so I can have more foundation for my creative voice. My ultimate goal is to be a professional outlet and mentor for the next generation of students in Latino Alliance, ASO. By being established in the industry, it would place me in a perfect position to guide students similarly to how I did as Vice-President: nurturing their cultural and creative influences and assisting them with any technical visual problem to build their creativity. As with my own ethnic heritage, I hold these organizations in high value because they are a pivotal part of my artistic roots.
It is of sincere importance for today’s creative individual to situate his or her place in the greater discourse of art making in the postmodern era. As an artist, student, and junior educator I partake in an interdisciplinary practice. I engage studio-based approaches and conceptual strategies toward making art, as well as studying and teaching about its place in relationship to the world. Through an immersion in the visual experience of the present, I strive to probe at the indefinite nature of the now to reveal a part of life unique to the greater context of the world we find ourselves in.

Context is at the crux of my creative process. I have learned it dictates circumstances that envelop any creative undertaking. It is an acute sense of situational identity that allows me to relate my personal history to the collective history we share. An analysis of the contextual yields a need to address collective states of alienation, marginalization, and despair present throughout the capital-driven, Western world. Through symbolic value and poetic significance, I make art devoted towards the marginalized that honors its simple, humble yet ethically quintessential beauty.
CHRISTIAN HINCAPIE
Fine Art

I have confidence in developing my ideas through the spirit of the urban context. The necessity to respond to my experiences in the city leads me to engage in a creative act. In doing so, I seek to rouse the essence of the textures that compose the aesthetic experience of the urban setting. In the studio, formal principles of color, materiality, surface, transparency, scale, and gestural malleability are equated to the daily encounter with the aesthetic dynamics of the contemporary city. The objects and materials that are part of my work are chosen based on their inherent content and the semiotic possibilities these objects have in relation to metaphorical meaning. Canes, basketball balls, tarps and bags connote the grit associated with the rhythmic, back-and-forth cycle of the working class spirit. The artist is possessor of the necessary qualities to champion the disenfranchised and the washed up.

For now, I will continue my role as a teacher’s assistant at the Cooper Union Outreach Program. At Outreach I assist New York City area high school students position their artistic interests with relation to the greater arts community. It is my sincere hope that the conversations held in the classroom ignite in the students the type of social responsibility I believe is intrinsic to creative potential. My goal as an artist will remain to foster the progressive dialogues of tomorrow through the investigation of the present context as it relates to personal and shared conditions of experience.
As a conceptual artist, my work tends to gravitate toward a central idea. Though I explore multiple aspects of a given concept, my art always embraces a socio-political connotation and tends to be packed with opinion. I value process heavily. I utilize art as a tool to explore an idea through implying or creating context, giving aesthetic value to ideas and giving my knowledge a public creative voice.

Studying at SAIC heavily influenced my creative practice and ignited the concept of violence of which my current body of work is exploring. Studying in Chicago fed my intrigue with boxing as a sport and as a violent spectacle which embodies ideas of humanism and existentialism. I was inclined to continue investigating boxing—and not just the physical aspects, but the more philosophical portions as well.
During the fall of 2011, I began a mentorship with an art theory professor at the Pacific Northwest College of the Arts. One of the most pivotal conclusions we came to was my unalterable stance on art and academia: I view thinking as a way of creating, just as I see creating as a way of thinking. Thus, I plan to attend a liberal arts college where I will continue my studies in both fine art and social/political theory. Such exploration in college will not only quench my need to learn and create, but will help me prepare for a career as an art-theory teacher. Such a career is not merely dependant on obtaining a degree but more importantly requires breadth of knowledge in both studio art and the social sciences—subjects I plan to explore during the next four years of my educational journey.

For the past five summers, I have worked up at the Oregon College of Arts and Crafts, assisting and teaching in Art Adventures, a youth arts summer camp. I continue to work with this program each summer because of the opportunity to share an art experience and infuse art in the children’s lives. By pushing limits as both an artist and an intellectual I will give my ideas another avenue of expression through teaching and educating.
I often kept to myself, drawing what was on my mind. I came to realize that I could interpret who I am, my thoughts, and manipulate life through the use of this activity. I began expanding on my interest in comic books by creating my own characters and worlds, leading to the creation of my graphic novels. Afterwards I learned to better express myself by using symbols and imagery that held emotional value within me.

My graphic novels are being constantly influenced. My comics occupy my thoughts, as I jot story notes and riddle my notebooks with character designs. Classes such as History and English have had a major influence on my work, helping me create sophisticated story lines concerning governments and business. I implement the themes of psychological struggle and tragedy in my graphic novels, relying heavily on imagery and landscape. My annual travels to Japan provide me with a broader knowledge of societies and I’m exposed to structures that give off hypnotic vibes.

Dreams help me to identify images with my emotions better, enhancing the symbolic impact in my work. I create refineries that symbolize tranquility, divinity, and the
afterlife, making even the most unnatural structures hypnotic, like Japan’s effect. Once, my dreams revolved around apocalyptic themes but contained mystical and romantic elements. They revealed the existence of love in solitude and dilapidation. I incorporate beauty in desolate factories. I will continue to expand on this idea by studying the triggers of specific emotions.

I cannot actually make someone live the exact life of another, but I can make one come close to living in the shoes of another, in order to obtain a broader understanding of people. Hopefully, my graphic novels could do just that. I will make viewers love a character for his appearance, thought, and individuality, and make them go through experiences that will challenge their character, making the viewer hate those that disrespect the character or fail to understand them. With this, the viewer will begin to understand what some people go through and why misunderstanding can lead to frustration.

I take subjects such as dilapidation and use factories, representing them as romantic and tranquil, allowing for the appreciation of decay and expansion. Viewers will be more considerate for the disregarded, ergo, people will think reasonably before making judgments and love the forgotten. Society is shrouded by a natural denial, causing distaste for what is considered “ugly”.

AJANI TAKAHASHI-LOFTON
Fine Art
I am an artist. I am also a lower-middle class, American-born Chinese woman. My artwork stems from all the components of my identity, which comes with certain obstacles that I have had to overcome. Each difficulty shapes my character and opens my eyes to issues that need to be challenged and resolved.

I am proud to be an artist, but the journey was long and difficult. In most Asian communities, art is seen only as a hobby, due to the stigma that it rarely leads to financial security. I abandoned art after elementary school but returned to art late in high school and had to fight through those deep-seated fears. By applying to college as an art major, I chose to defy the negative messages and overcome my doubts.

I am a book arts major, a field I have chosen to pursue due to the democratic qualities of print and book making. I want to bring art to the people. I am increasingly aware of the injustices in this world and compelled to create art that goes beyond the visual — to combat oppression; it carries the lessons that I have gleaned from living as a marginalized minority and empowers others to participate in the fight for equality.
I recently completed a piece with a diverse team of six students. We worked together to carve a 5'x25' linoleum cut and invited the community and campus to witness the inking and steamroller printing of it. The final print features imagery of hands coming together to weave a quilt from yarn balls that are chained down by "-isms" such as racism, ageism, classism, sexism, and ableism. We envision progress against oppression succeeding through the building of allies across different identity groups.

I also maintain a personal art practice. The starting points of my work come from my experiences as a student, woman, and minority. One series is based on the traditional Chinese practice of foot binding and is a statement about the visible and hidden continual subjection of Asian women. I also do small installation works, one of which was a letterpress printed piece that addressed cultural stereotypes through the subversion of the familiar fortune cookie image. I am privileged to see the world through a bi-cultural lens and I want to use it to inspire and encourage others.

The work that I produce is an extension of who I am, what I have experienced, and communicates what I care about. I am committed to work in a position that allows me to use my art to serve others. I will continue on as an active participant in the community and expand on the work that I have successfully started in school.
I began creating work in and around my junior year of high school and, at the time, focused on technique over content. I worked in nearly every medium I could get my hands on; starting with drawing, and then quickly moving through painting, photography, sculpture, printing, and graphic design. During senior year, after I had become comfortable in my skills, I realized this was something I wanted to pursue. But first, I saw the need for my work to mature, and start containing more meaningful content and ideas. I recognized that almost all good art had something profound to say in one way or another, and I felt I needed to do the same.

Being an African American, I created a series of conceptual self-portraits regarding the personal, and cultural identity of the black male in America. Also, having nearly lost my father to a stroke, I began to explore ideas or mortality and personal spirituality as well. Throughout high school, I received several recognitions such as:
As I progressed into college I carried with me many of these same themes, but expanded into less personal and more universal and worldly subject matter. Instead of focusing on my experience as a black male, I began focusing on other’s experience, which evolved into work regarding the genocide conflicts in Africa. And instead of mortality, other works of mine were created in response to my experiences with current events such as Occupy Wall Street. It was at this point, where I realized I’d truly found my niche as a political/cultural art maker.

Understanding the importance of art in our society, I find it extremely important to help encourage and promote young artists that want to make a difference in the world. As a person who’s been blessed with so many opportunities that have gotten me to where I am today, I want to help young artists who strive to do the same by opening a kind of hybrid gallery that exclusively helps to promote and support inner city high school and college level talent who are pursuing a career in the arts and need a place to show their work. By doing this, I hope to help young artists in the community reach their goals, and also raise awareness of social issues through art. The work that I produce is an extension of who I am, what I have experienced, and communicates what I care about. I am committed to work in a position that allows me to use my art to serve others. I will continue on as an active participant in the community and expand on the work that I have successfully started in school.
I am in a graphic design MFA program to explore how creativity and visual thinking can effect positive social change. I am only beginning to experience how ideas become action. My first official graphic design position was as an assistant at my undergraduate university’s Office of LGBT Student Services. It felt extremely rewarding to see how my work helped students find the office and connect with its various resources.

I designed a science magazine and continued working with data visualization through investigating how our environment affects our physical and emotional well-being. I have encountered a number of problems that should be addressed through design thinking. Challenges in working with a non-English speaking people while using a poorly designed (yet aesthetically pleasing) textbook inspired me to think about language acquisition and cross-cultural communication. I’m also interested in how governments and the media communicate risk and danger.
I interned at The OpEd Project, a non-profit that works to expand the range of voices we hear from in today’s media by training women and minorities to own their expertise and submit to major media outlets. Creating promotional materials for them seemed like a small project at first, but these materials have made it easier for the organization to recruit funders and mentors and therefore help more people.

I am excited to learn new ways to engage with socially responsible design. For instance, in an afternoon workshop, a group working with Arduino devices to investigate air quality taught us how to make “thermal flashlights” that can be used to detect air leaks.

Thus, going to graduate school has been an ideal way for me to parse my diverse experiences and to begin to create a cohesive body of work that critically engages urban design, language, and aesthetics. Upon graduation, I will have strengthened my formal, critical, and professional skills so that I can be not only a practicing designer, but also a leader and an educator.
I have been extremely influenced by where I come from and the places and I have lived simply because of there extreme differences. I was born in London and although I didn’t notice it at the time I grew up in an environment heavily saturated by design. My grandfather and two uncles are all architects whose homes are filled with amazing design, from the furniture and artwork, to the house itself. Moving from England to Santa Barbara ignited my passion for travel and exploring new places and ideas. These trips opened my eyes to the differences and similarities between America and England be they cultural, social, or political. This youth in two completely different worlds is something that has I think contributed hugely to the type of person I am today. Between our move to America and my senior year in high school I have moved 6 times between different places in California living in many different types of houses and areas. All these changes in my environment have made me tolerant of change and increased my ability to adapt to new situations. My mother and father have both always
been very artistic people who always encouraged me to express myself through a variety of mediums. My mother is a painter and art historian who was the first person to teach me to paint and draw. My father however was a screenwriter and author who taught me how to use cameras and editing software to create my own movies as a child. This background became extremely valuable when I first started to take design classes in high school paired with my growing drawing abilities and newly learned aesthetic rules and design history all combined to complete my obsession with all things design. Suddenly I was seeing the world in a totally different way instead of just looking at a truck I would notice the font used in the logotype, or the poor kerning on signs. Suddenly I noticed that in my everyday life almost everything I touched, ate with or looked at was designed in some way by somebody
I liken the loving devotion that is involved in each work of art to the relationship of a mother to her child; the thrilling initial inspiration acting as the motivation to birth such a beautiful thing. Its conception is followed by the love, nurture, and attention to every detail that is required to raise and create the piece. In this sense, I like to think of my art as the visual representation of the joys, meaning, and experiences in my life and an attempt to share them with those minds curious enough to step in.

As a child, my curiosity of my father’s pencil wielding skills drove me into a obsession with perfection. I, too, wanted such a magical talent and relentlessly practiced until I could produce artwork indistinguishable to the human eye from a picture. I was my own mentor, challenging and pushing myself towards perfection. Looking back now, I have found this mode of self-taught discipline to be one of my most valuable qualities as an artist and human being, as it drove me to explore every technique and artistic medium I could get my hands on. While I now realize the absurdity of realistic perfection in art when the opportunity for magical expression and creativity is waiting to be explored.
While it is ultimately the artistic experience that I now find leaves me with a sense of greatest accomplishment. My perfectionist child-self is calling within my heart to journey towards mastery of every form of artistic expression the natural world has to offer. I draw inspiration from every experience, interaction, and artist regardless of his or her level of skill and recognition. It is the passion of those artists that touches my heart and motivates me to continue to create in every way possible. Art is my gateway into exploring the caverns of my soul and the natural glory of the outside world; I plan on pursuing it through every means available. I cannot wait for the next step of the journey to begin...
Having parents and grandparents who were artists, musicians, or both, gave me an exposure to the arts at a very early age. My mother pushed my baby carriage to the Brooklyn Museum, Botanical Gardens or Wildlife Center, many times each week, which seeded my passion for the arts.

My mother was a musician, author, visual artist, decorator, stained glass crafter and wood worker, and could make or build just about anything. As a child, I was encouraged to create arts and crafts, drawings and paintings.

I began to draw nonstop, and incorporated my drawings into many school assignments. Throughout my high school years, I challenged myself by taking many honors level classes and going above and beyond the requirements. I view each assignment as an opportunity to learn and grow, as I prepare for college. I believe that I possess the maturity and focus that will allow me to be a successful college student.
Sequential Art has been my passion for many years, and upon learning that SCAD offered a degree in Sequential Art, I knew that it would be my college of choice. My summer experience at SCAD was all that I hoped it would be. After completing a degree in Sequential Art, I plan to pursue work in the animation studios, comic publishing, book illustration and teaching.

I sincerely hope that my background and experience will contribute to my success at SCAD, and that graduating will help me to reach my future goals.
At an early age, I knew that I was an artist. My fondest memory is of the time when I painted a self-portrait on my wall. The pose of the painting was inspired by the Mona Lisa and even resembled her facial expression. I thought my mom would yell at me when she got home, but she actually loved it and encouraged my drawing and painting on the wall. There were no boundaries for my art and I was able to express myself without worry. Stepping into the apartment was like walking into an art gallery.

I try picturing myself without art and it’s impossible to imagine. Being an artist has taught me to be open-minded and that there isn’t necessarily a right or wrong in art (applicable to many things in life). It has taught me how to work hard to achieve my goals. Putting in long hours and staying up till the wee hours of the morning painting to reach deadlines has been challenging, but also rewarding. No artist improves without struggling and stepping outside of their comfort zone.
A goal and dream that I have is to open a free weekend art program for teens. I will be able to do this while pursuing a professional career as an illustrator and teacher. The program will be similar to the Art Academy that had a great impact on me, but will also provide in-depth services. Program funding will come from government and corporate sponsorships for community and art initiatives. The environment will have a studio and gallery feel and will be a safe, loving second-home to the students. We will provide individual and family counseling to help get them through the rough times in life. We will help build their college portfolios and with every step of the college application process. We will track their progress throughout college and invite them to return during breaks to mentor the students. As they near graduation, we will provide career counseling and job-hunting skills. The program will be entirely free and only ask the students to commit to coming back to the program as volunteer art teachers and counselors to return the good and pave the way for the next generation of artists.
One of my art teachers said artists are the smartest people on earth. I couldn’t help but smile, thinking to myself, “Well, then I’m the obvious exception.” As a teenager of Asian descent, I’ve always felt pressured to be “smart.” However, I always felt belittled and fell short. I am not in the 2100 SAT range, my grades need improvement. I became fixated on how people interact with each other, how we group people together, how we create and form social understandings as well as where I fit in. My works often reach out to those around me, my fellow classmates, and others affected by these systems of social status. These feelings would appear in my art, dealing with the idea of branding by grades, and the desire for perfection but not even understanding what that is.

It wasn’t until I saw a video about Ai Wei Wei, the contemporary Chinese artist, that I understood what I wanted to do. His work gave a voice to the common person—to the student going to school, to the wife making dinner. They could all relate. I realized...
that art was so much more. It wasn’t just something that hung on walls, soon to be forgotten. It was a living, breathing movement. I want to create work that provokes feelings and emotion; work with a purpose—to make a point, to say something.

I want to further my education in art, learning and mastering different types of mediums and learn to grow in a community of artists. College acceptance always came with a catch, and a harsh reality that I couldn’t make it. I couldn’t cover the tuition fee. It was daring to decide to take a step further, to major in fine arts. It was a chance, it was a gamble. One I didn’t want to lose, but felt the opportunities slipping away.

I see myself as a creator. I want people to look at my work and be able to relate. I want to continue to grow as an artist, continuing to seek further visual responses to my feelings and thoughts.

While pursuing my artistic career, I also want to be a teacher. I want to impact youths. Through teaching, I can learn how to be more precise with my words and how to explain things clearly. I am intrigued with learning. Knowledge is power. With my art education, I plan to teach kids to be creative, to learn to express themselves visually. I can help my community by doing outreach, perhaps at a museum or at a community center. Kids need to be continue learning, processing their ideas and creativity. It is empowering for kids as they create and produce a work of art which they have put in their unique self in it.