

As You Are

"As You Are" invites viewers to explore the human experience through the eyes and hands of three young emerging artists. With a rich palette of oil paintings and colored pencil drawings, the collection of portraits bears witness to the resilience that emerges from embracing authenticity and self-acceptance. The works delve into generational pressures, grapple with shame and imposter syndrome, and celebrate imperfections.

In a landscape dominated by filtered images and picture-perfect portrayals, the temptation to compare oneself to curated lives is overwhelming. The pervasive nature of social media can stir feelings of depression, envy, guilt, and shame, making accepting oneself an intricate dance of resilience. Navigating the path as a young artist amid such societal demands is also an arduous journey, marked by both the desire to conform and the struggle to remain true. The demand for mental health interventions has become an urgent necessity, as the evolving challenges faced by youth and individuals navigating modern societal pressures underscore the crucial need for fostering emotional well-being and fortitude. The journey to self-acceptance demands looking inward, confronting traumas and difficult emotions, and allowing growth to flourish when society makes little room for it. Amid these challenges, the artists in this exhibition wield art as a potent tool for self-expression, healing, and reflection. Through their portraits, they invite viewers to embark on a parallel journey.

The hyperrealistic paintings within this exhibition serve as a striking reflection of the profound interplay between artistic technique and the unvarnished reality of internal truths. Through meticulous attention to detail, these artworks capture the essence of their subjects with an uncanny resemblance to real life. This level of precision mirrors the raw honesty required to confront and acknowledge one's internal struggles and truths. Just as every brushstroke in hyperrealistic art is purposeful and deliberate, delving into the intricate nuances of the human experience demands a similar conscious introspection. The realistic technique becomes a vessel through which the artists engage in a visual dialogue with their inner worlds, revealing the challenging truths that shape their emotions, perspectives, and growth. This connection between artistic representation and internal exploration provides viewers with a resonant portrayal of the human condition.

David Grajeda Gonzalez's pieces, carefully infused with subtle watercolor underpainting, take on a life of their own through the texture of hyperrealistic color pencil strokes. The work invites viewers to witness the interplay of self-image and identity. In his self-portrait, "Distorted Perceptions," Grajeda transforms his skin into porcelain, delving metaphorically into the delicate balance of fragility and resilience inherent in each of us. Accentuating the notion that beauty can emerge from our cracks and imperfections, he references kintsugi. Incorporating the bird as a symbol of the soul or nature adds a layer to the narrative, underscoring how embracing and letting go of challenging emotions can become a nourishing ritual for the very essence of our being.

The artworks in "As You Are" are more than mere portraits; they are reflective mirrors illuminating the profound process of reclaiming one's own narrative and transitioning from darkness to illumination. In particular, Shadae Hunt's creations exemplify this concept with exquisite precision, bearing witness to a transformative journey of self-discovery and healing. She courageously confronts the shadows of shame and directly challenges the specter of imposter syndrome. Take, for instance, her piece "Imposter," where Hunt portrays herself with a plastic bag veiling her head, inscribed with the recurring phrase 'thank you.' This poignant imagery instantly encapsulates the inner turmoil of navigating compliments amidst the weight of shame. All her works beautifully articulate a shared human experience, and her visual poetry masterfully captures the essence of this universal emotion.

Acting as a contemporary renaissance, Leilani Abeyta's portraiture series celebrates the beauty found within everyday lives and overlooked moments, drawing inspiration from her own experiences. Her work radiates with friends' support and love, nurturing the capacity for self-acceptance. She carefully selects moments aglow with intriguing light – the sun filtering through blinds, the warm glow of lamps and candles, or the shimmering dance across various surfaces. Her mastery of capturing these luminous details can be likened to her aspiration to encapsulate the inner light within each of us. The modern Renaissance comes alive through her lens, honoring the overlooked moments that weave the fabric of our everyday existence.

"As You Are" is a sincere exploration of the delicate balance between societal expectations and personal acceptance, with particular resonance for young artists, diving deep into the complexities of self-image. These pieces shed light on the pressing concerns of mental health among younger generations while highlighting the limited opportunities historically marginalized youth face. The works celebrate the transformative power of self-acceptance and the strength that emerges from embracing one's imperfections. Rendered through the precise techniques of hyperrealism and realism, the artworks become mirrors for viewers to navigate their paths of self-discovery and identity. In a modern world dominated by the allure of social media filters and constant comparisons, this exhibition extends an invitation to confront personal struggles, forging empathetic connections, and championing art as a potent tool for healing and introspection.

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