

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

Student artist flourishes with soft watercolors

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Artists of all genres thread the community of UNC Asheville. From musicians to painters to poets, art is made across campus.

Nestled in the hallway between painting studios at Owen Hall sits Huan Vida LaPlante's studio, their works — both current and new — taking up every inch of space, the small room drowning in a sea of watercolors.

"I'm not good at speaking," LaPlante laughed. "It's easier to communicate visually for me than it is verbally."

LaPlante, a senior painting and drawing student, said they created art for as long as they can remember. Their mother and grandmother are both artists who surrounded them with art as a child.

"My mom, she was an artist in high school and she really did drawings, so she would critique my drawings when I was little," LaPlante said. "My grandmother paints as a hobby, just like still lifes and portraits."

LaPlante primarily works in watercolor, with some describing their work as soft, accurate and precise.

LaPlante draws inspiration from those around them and ideas from within them, often looking to their family, or even in some cases, their professors.

Their style has evolved and matured through the years, the imagery itself even coming from a more original and personal place within



PHOTO BY EMMA JORDAN

Huan Vida LaPlante draws inspiration for their art from references such as their brother, professors, and their own body.

them.

"I used to have an issue with collaging reference images together, so it didn't exactly stick together cohesively. I think now it helps that a lot of the imagery now comes from myself, so I'm able to not just collage them but actually marry the imagery together into something more believable," LaPlante said.

Associate Professor of art Brent Skidmore has known LaPlante for two years and said their style has grown more risky, becoming more adventurous and controlled at the same time.

Skidmore also said LaPlante grew

as an artist because they have become more open to criticism as well as the power of their own voice.

"Huan is hugely talented and no matter the next steps, they will be great ones," Skidmore said.

Skidmore said he believes LaPlante draws inspiration from personal beliefs and how their experiences mirror those of others.

"Like anything, it starts out as an image in your head and then the next step is kind of honing that idea and usually getting some reference images," LaPlante said.

LaPlante uses professors, their brother and themselves to model

when it comes to piecing the ideas together and making the image in their head a reality.

LaPlante's current series incorporates the ideas of some symbolist painters and forms of art therapy.

"Right now my series has been about trying to marry ideas of symbolist painters like Munch and Klimt and therapy, like art therapy, or there's this thing called EMDR, it's eye movement desensitization and reprocessing. So basically trying to find a way that studio art can help in a therapeutic way," LaPlante said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20