

Over the past three years I have been at PNCA, my discoveries of new mediums have shaped my work into an exploration of craft practices. I have loved to draw and paint ever since I was able to hold a crayon and have always identified as an artist. As a teenager, until I came to PNCA, my artistic medium of choice was acrylic paint on canvases. However, soon I began incorporating embroidery into my paintings, and as soon as I came to college, I fell in love with printmaking and quickly declared it as my major. Many of my projects at PNCA have been based around working with screen printed fabrics. This semester, I focused many of my projects around learning to gather plants ethically, dye with natural materials, and sharpening my sewing skills. All of these mediums are generally considered crafts rather than fine art practices. Although I still feel like an artist who is making art, I am beginning to wonder if all of my art is created through the practice of craft.

Art is defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary as “something that is created with imagination and skill and that is beautiful or that expresses important ideas or feelings,” while craft is defined as “an occupation, trade, or activity requiring manual dexterity or artistic skill.” If craft requires artistic skill, why is it generally viewed in society as less valuable than fine art? How has art colonized craft? How do art and craft have a symbiotic relationship with one another? To answer these questions, I will explore combinations of three crafts: printmaking, quilting, and dyeing with natural materials.

Printmaking requires only two things: A matrix and a substrate. I was instantly drawn to this practice because it has so many possibilities. Print is meditative to me. Often, it can require prolonged repetition, since it allows for multiple originals and editions to be created simultaneously.

Quilting techniques originated from a multitude of cultures around the world, and quilts function both as usable blankets and decorations in the home. In the nineteenth century, collaborative quilting became a popular social activity in America, called quilting bees. These bees were crucial for women, because they were often the only place they were not dominated by patriarchal values at this time.

One of my creative influences is Adam Pogue. Pogue taught himself quilting

techniques, and describes his quilts as “universal, something that I could put my aesthetic into, that other people could love and use.” Pogue also dyes his own linen fabrics with natural materials. I am interested in playing with the functionality versus fine art stance of the quilt I will create to explore the relationship between art and craft, which this artist seems to be an expert at.

For their thesis at PNCA in 2011, Heather Chase created quilts made from items given to them by family members, creating a topographical-like landscape of their family history. I want to evoke a sense of nostalgia connecting to my childhood in my own piece, and create a symbolic self portrait through my quilt. I will connect in a similar way to my past as Chase has done with their work here. My childhood memories are very important for me when creating. Since my past in Texas is a part of me, how could I create a symbolic self portrait through combinations of craft practices?

For my thesis project, I will create a quilt dyed with natural materials common to Texas. I want to evoke feelings of nostalgia for myself that are expressed through simple yet personally meaningful imagery. On the fabric, I will screen print illustrations of objects related to my childhood memories of Texas and my experience growing up there as a queer person. The quilt will be 40 by 64 inches in size, with individual imagery taking up each of the 8 inch squares. A few examples of imagery I would like to utilize include the pomegranates my family would pick from the tree in our backyard, my many childhood pets, and the scorpions I would too often see and fear when I visited my grandparents' house.

I also want to connect to the land I grew up in, and collaborate with my environment. When I was young, my mom, my aunt, and I would go hiking in Texas. I will be returning to some of these places this winter to gather the plants I will be using to create my dyes. I will be gaining explicit permission from these parks and forests to collect plant materials. As to the plants I will be using, it will mostly depend on what I am able to find. A few plants common to Texas that I am considering dyeing with include crepe myrtle, honeysuckle, mullein, pecan, pokeweed, prickly pear cactus, and willow, just to name a few. I will be using the book *Edible and Useful Plants of the Southwest* to guide my

dyeing, as this book contains information on each plant that is useful as a dye and what mordants will create different colors. I will be creating my own iron mordants from discarded rusty objects, such as trash or old nails in telephone poles, which can yield duller and darker colors. The pigments that come out of these plants are listed in this book, however, natural dyes can often carry surprises. I will be using silk, a protein based fiber, since natural dyes tend to work better with this kind of material. I will be sourcing my fabrics from Dharma Trading Company, which I have sourced from many times for past and current projects. Silk, however, is more challenging of a fabric to sew with, so this piece will take lots of time and patience.

A favorite screen printing technique of mine is monoprinting with water soluble crayons. To do this, you draw directly onto the screen, blend the colors with water, let the pigment fully dry, flood your screen with a transparent base, and push the color through the image on your screen. This technique takes much more time than printing with water based inks, and the longer you let the pigment soak into the transparent base before printing, the better. This creates a softer, watercolor-like effect, that I think will suit the soft tones of the natural dyes best. I will be using this monotype technique to print all of my imagery onto the dyed silk fabrics.

The timeline of my process will include gathering the natural materials from Texas when I go back to visit my family over winter break, shipping them back to Oregon, preparing the fabric for dyeing, creating the plant dyes and mordants, dyeing the fabric, screen printing the imagery onto the fabrics, creating the quilt, and installing the final project. Time will be one of my most crucial materials. There are easier ways I could go about creating this quilt, however, reflecting on my past while making this object is very important to me, so I will be creating a slow, meditative practice. In addition, natural dyes are ephemeral, so the quilt will also fade and evolve as time passes.

Overall, this project will function as an art piece made up of different craft techniques that will help me visualize and connect with my past. It will be hung on the wall to be viewed in a gallery-like sense, especially since it is going to be such a delicate and semi-ephemeral object, to play with the relationship between craft and fine art. This quilt

will eventually hang in my future tattoo studio, and the imagery on the quilt will always be available to get tattooed by my friends and clients, so I can share this art with others. Overall, This quilt will be beautiful, and delicate, and a portrait of myself and all the things that have made me who I am today.