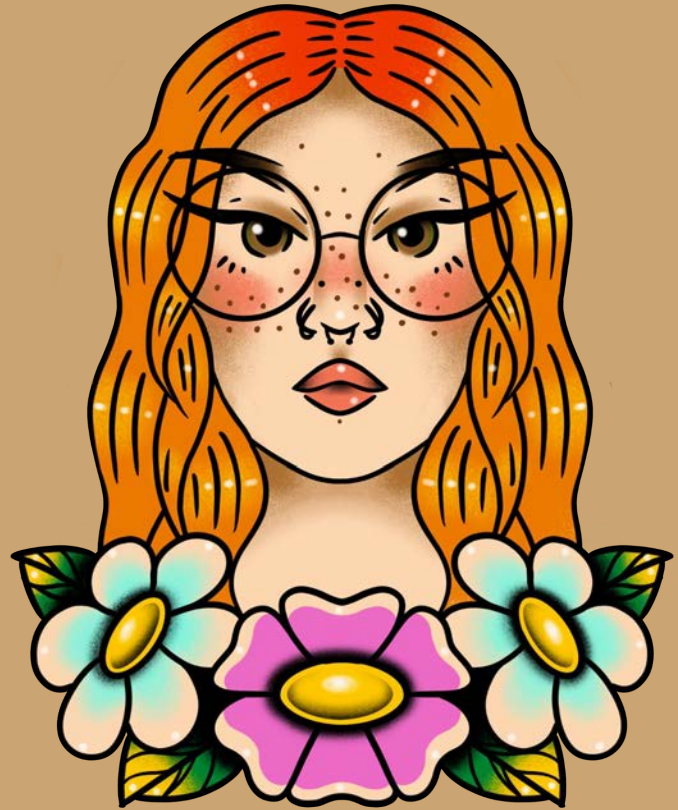# THE TATTOO
BODYSUIT

Artist Statement

Jordan Zinn is a lifetime artist born and raised in Tennessee. Having attended Pacific Northwest College of Art, their art is exemplary of her bold and bright personality. With stunning colors and a tattoo-centric style her art is sure to captivate the viewer. When looking over her work you're sure to notice an unabashed cuteness within each piece.

Thesis Proposal

Hello! My name is Jordan Zinn, I am an Illustration major here at PNCA. So, welcome to my thesis proposal I would like to introduce you all to 'The Tattoo Bodysuit.' For this project, I will be using an American Traditional tattoo style mixed with kawaii art, to create and arrange designs around the human figure in the format of a 'bodysuit.' This 'bodysuit' will be produced as a fully watercolor painted piece, coming to be 2 feet in width and 4 in height. Using a style associated with masculinity I will alter the imagery to play with a notion of cuteness and femininity, juxtaposed from it's more 'masculine'context. In this, I will be looking at old tattoo designs and bringing new thoughts and ideas to these long-held motifs and iconography. This will result in a bodysuit ripe with bright, vibrant colors coexisting with this bold and heavy design style.

This project is to be a development of my personal and professional portfolio, to bolster my understanding of tattoo design and solidify a style for myself. The base of this idea and design style is that of American Traditional tattoos, a style in which bold linework and shading are a must. The use of simplification within this style is a notable aspect as a way to keep designs clean and readable. The boldness of this style is an aspect of which I hope to play with throughout the project. Adding on top of this base is that of kawaii art, usually that within pop culture. I will be looking at art and media that is often referred to as 'kawaii', as examples, some media I will be looking at and taking inspiration from is: Sanrio, general Nintendo franchises, Studio Ghibli, and more. This art is often known for its bright, playful colors and fun designs. Kawaii art tends to be associated with youth and joy which is an aspect of this art I most enjoy and hope to encapsulate. Putting these two styles together creates what I will be calling 'Kawaii Traditional.' The combination of the bold and heavy design style of American Traditional tattoos with the fun and playful stylizations of kawaii art. This creates a unique appearance within these tattoo designs, which I will play with for this project. Lastly, I have mentioned the word 'bodysuit' in the context of this project already and now, here are examples of what a tattoo bodysuit looks like both on the body as well as designed on paper as I will be doing. Arrangements of the bodysuit vary from artist to artist and can present itself in various ways, be it meticulously designed or, more of a patchwork of varying designs. Yet, they are all set up in a way to suit both the individual designs as well as the general composition of the piece as a whole. As for the choice of creating the bodysuit, this is due to the fact, I have yet to see a bodysuit designed in this 'Kawaii Traditional' style. Having not seen this done before, allows a sense of freedom and creativity as well as being a way to strengthen my design style and process.

On the process end of things, for this project's creation, as I will be using watercolor painting for the final product as well as implementing digital tools in design stages. I have been practicing the methods in which artists would have inked and painted what are called 'flash sheets' as well as bodysuit designs. Flash sheets are pieces of paper, usually hung up in tattoo shops with pre-designed pieces ready to be put on the body. And as I wish to make calls to this original way of designing tattoos while also implementing new techniques, this feels the best way of producing these designs for this project.

For the actual designing and production of the final bodysuit, I will use both digital and traditional materials. To do this, I will sketch and design the bodysuit and individual motifs digitally. This digital sketching of the bodysuit's composition can be seen here. There are two ways of going about this shown, a more organized and tightly designed bodysuit on the left, or a looser patchwork of designs as shown on the right. Once a composition is chosen, the process of designing the individual tattoo designs will be under way. And finally, inking and watercoloring the finalized designs on the watercolor paper will begin. This piece of paper will be 2 feet in width and 4 in height, to allow close approximation to an actual human figure and give a better idea towards placement and how these pieces would form on the body itself. While also, allowing me to get a better idea of what is actually plausible when it comes to readable tattoo designs.

As for the individual designs, I am looking at American Traditional tattoo flash sheets and picking popular motifs from the pages observed. To give ideas for motifs that have been observed thus far: devils, angels, swords/ daggers, kewpies, swallows, pin up girls, crying hearts, roses, and so many more. There are, thankfully, many motifs to pick from and will enable me to have a wide array of choices. Once designs are chosen I will look and see what can be found for each specific design and how to alter these designs. Picking and choosing which elements from the source material will be altered. For example, let's say I want to use the design of a crying heart. In specific, these hearts are often designed to have their eyes open with tears streaming down the face, paired with deep set eyebrows and downturned mouth. As for the color scheme of these, this design is usually done either in grayscale, or having the heart be a simple red color with yellow eyes. To start, I could keep some of the most key elements, for example, the most basic shape, the heart and composition of the motif. In this I have kept the heart and its tears but have altered some aspects, such as: the arrangement of the tears, the nose style, and having the eyes closed as opposed to open. These seem like small details but, in the world of tattooing small differences make the world of a difference. Especially, as many artists are using similar inspirations as, the motifs are not 'owned' by one person so, the way in which designs are made allow one to lay claim to a design.So, in order to make this standout amongst the standard traditional designs, I can add to this by taking inspiration from Valentine's cards and adding scalloped details on the edges. I have also chosen to soften out the edges of the design to make it softer in

appearance. In looking at the final watercolor, it is clear the color palette is altered slightly, making the base color a pink rather than bright red to make it more feminine in appearance. There is also the use of heavy black shading, common in American Traditional designs to call to this element of design. This, keeps some elements of the American Traditional practice visible while also implementing some aspects of cuteness overtop this more 'masculine' style. Here is the final design paired next to the tattoo in which inspiration was taken as well as the style of Valentine's card. When looking at my watercolor, you can see the way in which the painting echoes the appearance of the tattoo. Which is the exact effect that I am aiming for within this project.

The plan of presenting my final piece is a fairly simple one. The presentation of the full, final, painted body suit, will be hung up on a wall so that people are able to come up and look at the piece. Having physical work in a space is very important to me. Seeing the full scale of a piece this size helps the viewer contextualize both the full piece as well as individual designs. The physicality of this object is also very important as tattoos on the body exist in a weird limbo of physical object as well as no physical, whereas, this bodysuit exists as a physical piece of art. This would also make calls to the tradition of tattoo shops hanging their flash art on the walls of their studios.

This project has many visual inspirations as I am constantly looking at tattoo artists whose work I enjoy, both in similar style and that of styles completely different to what I am doing. A big inspiration for this project is the style of American Traditional tattooing in general however, there are more specific artists I would like to call reference to. To start with artists more based in the solidly American Traditional style, Courtney Kay O'Shea, @courtneykotattoo on Instagram. Courtney is an artist based out of Nashville, TN, her work does a nice job of showing femininity while also being able to be placed solidly as a Traditional tattooer. Secondly, again, an artist who can be solidly placed as a Traditional tattooer while also playing within the bounds of this style application is Erin O'Connor, @sweetpeachtattoos on Instagram. Erin is an artist based out of IL, her work is another example of playing with this style and slightly modifying it to their own preferences. She is constantly coming up with and designing fun new spins on popular motifs within American Traditional style. This is something I am particularly interested in with Erin's work. An inspiration that pushes this notion of playing with the traditional style, is that of Grace LaMorte, based out of Louisville Kentucky, @iporkedittattoo on Instagram. Her style is very true to the original American Traditional designs while also incorporating new and fun elements within each piece. While she doesn't implement all of the themes and imagery of these artists who use more specific kawaii practice, she still takes inspiration from these artists. She uses some of the techniques-such as tattoo glitter, a mid tone shade with darker and lighter dots on top to give the appearance of glitter within the tattoo- in her more traditionally based style. An artist whose work is more focused on the kawaii sensibilities is Kira Bishop, based in Austin, TX, @kirabishopp on Instagram. Her work uses a lot of pop culture references alongside some more traditional motifs. The design style is very different from the two mentioned above and more inline with this Kawaii Traditional style being mentioned. However, it still has the same base, bold lines, and black shading. While making bright and cheerful work, she still has callbacks to the American Traditional style, which is of specific interest to this project.

This is essential for when I graduate because once I am finished with school, I will begin to search for a tattoo apprenticeship in Tennessee. I wish to have a solid portfolio to start with to prove myself within a somewhat cutthroat industry and to show I can hold my own and make great work. This bodysuit will show both my design style and knowledge of how images can fit and flow on the body better than simple flash pages will. The project will show my commitment to the craftsmanship and practice of tattooing because of the dedication of so much time and effort into this piece, prior to becoming an apprentice. I already have a good skill set before me to start using my style and techniques for this project, it will simply help solidify things.

And so, to show tattoo artists that I am dedicated to the craft and that I am capable of design, it seems most effective to use this project to design a quasi-American Traditional tattoo bodysuit. Creating a bodysuit is no small undertaking as the human body is a large area to design for. The project will allow me to practice designing and creating images for the body, rather than just the page or screen. I will also be further developing my own tattoo language. Thus, allowing me to use this time in the most effective way possible for my future in tattooing.

Thank you all for your time today. Questions?

Abstract

"The Tattoo Bodysuit" is an exploration of tattoo design and personal style. In looking at the work of American Traditional Tattoo artists as well as Kawaii artists, this tattoo bodysuit melds these two worlds together. This project uses the bold linework and shading techniques of American Traditional tattooing with the soft colors and unabashed femininity within Kawaii art to create a piece that seemed to be missing in the contemporary tattoo space. This niche has a variety of participants making pieces yet, none seemed to have been creating bodysuit designs and so, this project was made in the effort to fill that gap. In filling this gap, it also allows for the exploration and creation of a personal design style within tattoo design.

Exploring these styles while keeping aspects of both allows for a look at both the masculine and feminine; bringing two opposing styles into one seamless style and creating a collection of pieces to work with one another both stylistically and thematically.

Oral Presentation

Hi everyone! Thank you all for coming! Last semester I didnt want much of anyone coming to my proposal, if I was gonna bomb, I didn't want anyone to see it. But now, having actually made the project I want people to show it to. If you are unfamiliar with me, hi, welcome! My name is Jordan Zinn, I am an Illustration major here at PNCA. I am a transfer student from what was Watkins College of Art (RIP) in Nashville, TN. And I would like to welcome you all to 'The Tattoo Bodysuit.'

Before actually sitting down to write this speech, I thought a lot about it but didn't write a lot. The one note I've had tucked away in my phone for months at this point is: "Don't get too theoretical here, I am just a hot girl who likes tattoos." And, I would like to keep this mindset throughout my presentation, don't think too deeply about it, it is something I just wanted to make!

For some background on this project, it looks at both the American Traditional Tattoo aesthetic as well as Kawaii Aesthetics and mixes it into one thing. But what are these two styles? Kawaii art and aesthetics are from Japan and often are associated with cartoon characters and properties from Japan. Think, Sanrio (Hello Kitty), the color palettes are muted and soft, often using a more 'feminine' appearance. With the word 'kawaii' literally translating into cute, it isn't too hard to see how an art and aesthetic style with pastel pinks and purples was labeled simple with the word 'kawaii.' American Traditional Tattooing is visually in many ways the opposite of this kawaii art. The lines are bold and dark with heavy black shading, the style is often seen as 'masculine' due to the designs and design styles. It also, most likely has to do with the visual image a lot of people get of a burly guy with a lot of tattoos. These two styles on the face seem very opposed to one another. American Traditional Tattoo designs tend to be heavier and darker in color. Kawaii art is very light in appearance. This might seem as though they would work against each other and in some ways it does, but I think that these two styles pair up in interesting ways.

Before getting too into the weeds on the project, here's some vocab that I am going to be using. Flash sheets/ flash paintings are predesigned pieces ready to be tattooed on a person. Traditionally these designs can be repeated as much as wanted as long as a person was willing to get it. And then bodysuit, a bodysuit in terms of tattoos is a designed set of tattoos to fill the body, usually in a cohesive theme. Both flash sheets and bodysuits are common in tattoo shops but, I have never seen one in this more feminine style before, it felt as though there was something missing that no one had come in to fill the gap with.

In doing such an overall large project, it has allowed me to further develop my own personal style of art while als having to remain cohesive throughout the design process so as to make the bodysuit look as a whole similar. This is difficult for me as it was until the past couple years that I truly started to hone in on my styles of art and so developing my own personal style as it comes to

tattoo design is incredibly important and helpful. Especially as the project is meant to be a big part of my portfolio upon leaving school.

In the Proposal, I said that I wanted to make a 2x4 feet watercolor painting of a tattoo bodysuit. I decided on this project goal because it was a large undertaking but not large enough to overwhelm me when taking six classes. This was the right decision on my behalf. If I had promised to do more in the proposal stage I would have bullied myself into going all out, regardless of what I was able to truly handle. Thankfully, having that bit of self awareness has saved me a lot of grief when going through the creative process and allowed me to think through this large piece as a whole and not have to worry about not finishing my thesis.

When sketching for this piece, I knew that I wanted to reference American Traditional designs while putting a bit of a spin on it. I looked to practicing tattoo artists as well as looking at books of tattoo flash- premade tattoo designs- from the past. I also looked at Kawaii art to compare the styliations made. While looking at artists, I found some people doing a style similar to what I have been making and so, followed their lead.

Subconsciously, the designs I settled on had a sort of romantic-fantasy theming to them. With mythical creatures, flora, fauna, and weaponry being present. This might have something to do with the many fantasy books I've been reading but, I digress. This theming lended itself well to both the Kawaii and American Traditional art style, they both tend to use a lot of plants and animals as well as myths in the work. Having this theme connection made it much easier to find design parallels and use direct influence from both art styles.

In having these parallels I had to decide on a color palette and whose colors I would use more than the others. Through the process of making my smaller flash pieces I settled on leaning heavily on to the light coloring of Kawaii Art in many areas and opted for large gradients over solid color in most areas. This use of color wasn't the only consideration but also, how many colors would be of use within the whole of the painting. In doing this, I used a total of 7 colors through the entire piece. (list of colors maybe)

When making my smaller flash paintings early on, I realized that I was struggling with my choice of watercolor. I had a set of pan watercolors that I had used in high school and remembered liking, so I repurchased them last semester. Last semester when feeling out this watercolor style, the painting didn't seem too difficult. That was, until I tried to paint with the purple. I am sure that there is a reason why purple watercolors tend to be somewhat difficult but this was a nightmare. I could not get a clean gradient to save my life, I kept adding layer on top of layer of paint. Eventually, I got a somewhat decent piece but I was fighting the paints the whole way through. I obviously didn't want to put up a fight with one of my main color choices so, I purchased Ph Martens watercolors and enjoyed how easy it was to get a solid color or a gradient.

In using this better watercolor I was able to create more flash paintings with ease, allowing myself to practice with both line art as well as the watercolor technique I used. This

technique is called 'spit shading,' it is meant to mimic the gradient that is made when tattooing someone. Spit shading isn't an advanced technique by any means but it does take some getting used to. The way that this works is that the color is layed down, the brush is then cleared of pigments, and a small amount of water is added back to the brush to gradiate the color that was laid down. 'Why is it called spit shading?' you ask, it is called this because typically when getting the water amount for the gradient, the artist will put the brush in their mouth and suck some of the water out of the brush. Of course, this isn't a necessity, you can use a paper towel but, in some ways this can be the easiest method of controlling the water in the bristles.

Getting this balance of water right in the bristles was a struggle at first which is why I am thankful I had these smaller paintings to practice on. When I was still in the early stages of making this piece, I did flash sheets just to see how I wanted to go about the bodysuit as a whole. Did I want two line weights? What colors was I going to use? How was I going to use these colors? What specific designs am I going to use? Those were questions that I had answered with the help of the paintings. Some sheets have a single line weight, others have two, some are more saturated, and so on. These paintings also allowed me to warm up in painting before actually painting on the larger piece. Warming up was a process that I spent more time on at the beginning phases however, was still useful for the process as a whole as it boosted confidence in traditional media as well as in this specific style of painting.

While making these smaller flash paintings I was also in the process of making my final piece. The beginning stages of the painting were done digitally through Procreate, allowing me to sketchup ideas quickly as well as being able to edit placement/ orientation of things without hassle and waiting until I was ready to transfer the drawings onto paper. Some road bumps came about when sketching, where to leave areas blank, if to leave areas blank, would a piece work better in one area versus another, and so on. I ended up adding pieces to this bodysuit rather than retracting which we will talk about later. There was also a shifting of the individual designs on the body, for example, the big cat designs on the knees were originally placed on the thighs but were moved so as to give a larger area for longer pieces that would fit the thigh area better.

Once my sketches were completed, I moved to the step of transferring the images onto the physical paper. Usually, the sketches are either drawn out on tracing paper or are printed out and traced on a light table. I wanted to be able to do this in the comfort of my own room, rather than having to lug my whole set up to and from places and I didn't have a light table, but I do have a projector. In hindsight, this was a disaster, I couldn't see the lines clearly, I couldn't get the projector to go the full lenth of the paper consistently and be able to see the individual designs. So, I did the outline of the

body first, to give myself a container of where things need to be on paper and then, opened up an Illustrator file, and Tetrised the pieces into the outline of the figure. Would it have been easier to just trace printed images? Yes. Was I going to give up on an idea I had already committed to and was close to finishing? No. Once the sketches were down and the nightmare of the project was over, I just refined the sketches, making lines clear so that my linework process was easier.

When it came to the linework I used two markers/ pens for the whole thing. I used a normal Sharpie and a Micron Graphix.This allowed size differentiation of linework to give more dimension and detail into the work. To start I did the full outline of the figure in Sharpie, so as to get the barriers in, and to have one of the easier parts done so that I have something on the paper rather than putting it off indefinitely because I was scared to mess up. And mess up I did, but I learned how to cover it up and not to point it out as others most likely won't notice until you point out the mistakes that were made. The flash paintings came in handy particularly with this step of the process, I felt like I needed to line something rather than my big final piece to warm up and get used to drawing. So those little paintings came in handy very quickly for my own peace of mind. Truthfully, the lining was a fairly simple process with minor mistakes happening every so often, where I learned to either fix them or just accept them.

After the linework was completed I toned the paper to a beige color to offer a mid-tone while also emulating a skin tone color beneath the paints. Once the toning had dried it was time to begin shading the individual pieces. Shading was much less scary than line art in my opinion. If the shading messed up, there are ways to pickup or dilute the color enough to where the mistakes are not noticeable. That being said, I took my time shading the piece so as to limit the need for fixes. Throughout the process the main piece of feedback I seemed to get was to make it a bit darker, which I sometimes did and sometimes didn't. Areas like the stomach I did darken some but, wanting the pieces to look largely light I decided to not go super heavy on the shading.

When the shading was done was around Mid-Term Reviews. I had done the color for the chest piece only to give an idea for the coloration of the whole suit however, that was all. I was able to speak with a few tattoo artists in the area about the piece and get their feedback. Most of the feedback being: add more. At this point, the hips were not in place, the below knee designs were absent, and the sparkle filler was not there. And looking back it was so empty, for lack of a better word. So, seeing as the amount of things on the page didn't seem enough to all the panelists I set off to design more bodysuits to fit around the pre-existing pieces. However, I only did this once the colors on the pre existing piece were done so as to not add too much on at the last minute.

For the colors, it was relatively smooth, having a limited palette of seven colors really takes some of the stress away from choosing colors. I obviously wanted to spread the

colors throughout the piece and so colored the pieces in that way. Stringing bits of blue, purple, pink, green, yellow, and orange all throughout the piece in particular. One of my favorites spots of color is in the heart flail, the use of blue for the metal bits makes me especially excited as it makes it look metallic but, still in a fantastical way where it does not look real.

Where the whole thing really came together was the addition of the faux glitter detailings. This really made the whole of the piece just that much cuter and softer in some ways. Letting this effect flow throughout the piece really helps bring that element of the kawaii aesthetic to life. As, it is an aesthetic of all things feminine and cute, and what is more than some glitter detailing? While finishing the piece, I found myself wondering if there was 'too much' of the glitter effect, however when thinking about this, I reminded myself that both styles embrace an abundance and excess of color and design. To truly over do this effect would be hard in my opinion.

When creating this, the constant reminder that this should not and will not be my magnum opus was crucial. I had to accept that this piece would have its faults no matter how hard I may try to avoid this fact. In realizing this, it took an immense amount of stress off my shoulders. In making a thesis project, it may often seem like there is so much to do and that this has to be the best thing you will ever do; however, that isn't and shouldn't be true. In realizing that to put it rather bluntly, shit was going to happen, I also realized that oftentimes, no one would notice when I messed up. If the mistakes were pointed to them then yes, obviously it would be noticed. However, oftentimes people do not hunt for these mistakes.

This project also allowed me to have full control over the work, for most of my life I have been making work to please my teachers. This isn't a failing by any means just, not what you want for a thesis project. In this, it allowed me to truly branch off and create this piece really and truly for myself. The experience of creating for myself and having the ability to truly make these executive decisions when it comes to the final product was freeing and also allowed me to let myself have that authority over my work more so than in the past.

As well as the sentiments already mentioned, the main thing the project as a whole taught me was about tattoo design. Figuring out what was the right amount of shading, piecing things together so that it will read coherently at a glance, and so much more. This semester allowed me to get a better handle on traditional mediums which translate better to the actual act of tattooing as, if you mess up, you can't take it back, you simply have to move forward and fix it when possible. And most times, it is possible.

With all this being said and done, what now? The next logical step is actually seeking out a tattoo apprenticeship. In moving to a different state, this is necessary as Oregon is the only state to require tattoo school whereas most other states, including my home state of Tennessee require apprenticeships. In seeking this out, I have already signed a lease for an apartment in Nashville, TN, securing a location to look for these opportunities. With doing so, allows me to focus on creating a physical portfolio to bring with me to show artists when

approaching them about mentoring me.

Part of building up this portfolio was this project, I know have a wealth of watercolor pieces including the large final bodysuit. I am hoping that when showing possible mentors/shops these pieces, I am showing my dedication to this art form as well as showing that I am serious in pursuing an apprenticeship. I am also hoping that taking the harder route of seeking an apprenticeship rather than going to school here in Oregon will win me some brownie points. As, I am willing to take the harder route to do what I ultimately wish to do.

Thankfully, in looking for shops who may be willing to take me on, I have been building a sort of rapport with shops in the area. There is one specific shop where most of the artists who work there, follow me on Instagram. I am hoping that in building these relationships will give me an in of sorts, allowing me an opportunity to at least speak with them about their paths and get feedback on my work. And, if possible, mentor me or point me in the direction of someone who may be willing to take up that position.

Thank you!

Creative Brief

Project Vision

For this project, I am merging 'kawaii' aesthetics with that of American Traditional Tattooing. I have never seen someone with a style like this creating a bodysuit and so, I am making a bodysuit in this style.

Audience

The audience for this is straightforward, people who enjoy tattoos but also, cute things. It can be one or the other but the combination helps.

Methods and Materials

I am creating a 2x4 watercolor piece. For line art I am using Sharpie and Micron pens. Watercolor I am using Ph Martens Concentrated Watercolor. I am using the spit shading technique used in flash paintings.

Comparative Media

There's a lot of comparative media out there, general bodysuit paintings as well as artists who practice this 'kawaii' style.

Marketplace Application

This project's application is profession as well as personal. I wanted to really explore and single in on my individual style. Also, upon graduation I am looking for an apprenticeship when moving back to Tennessee.

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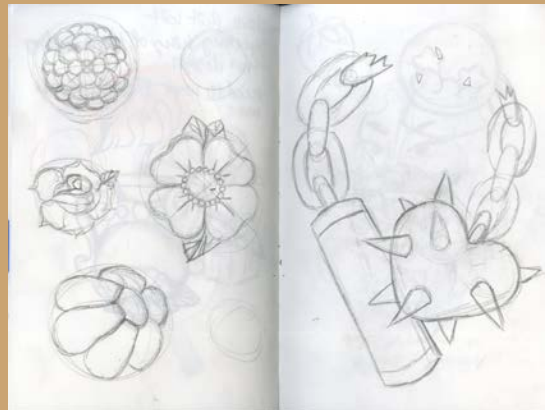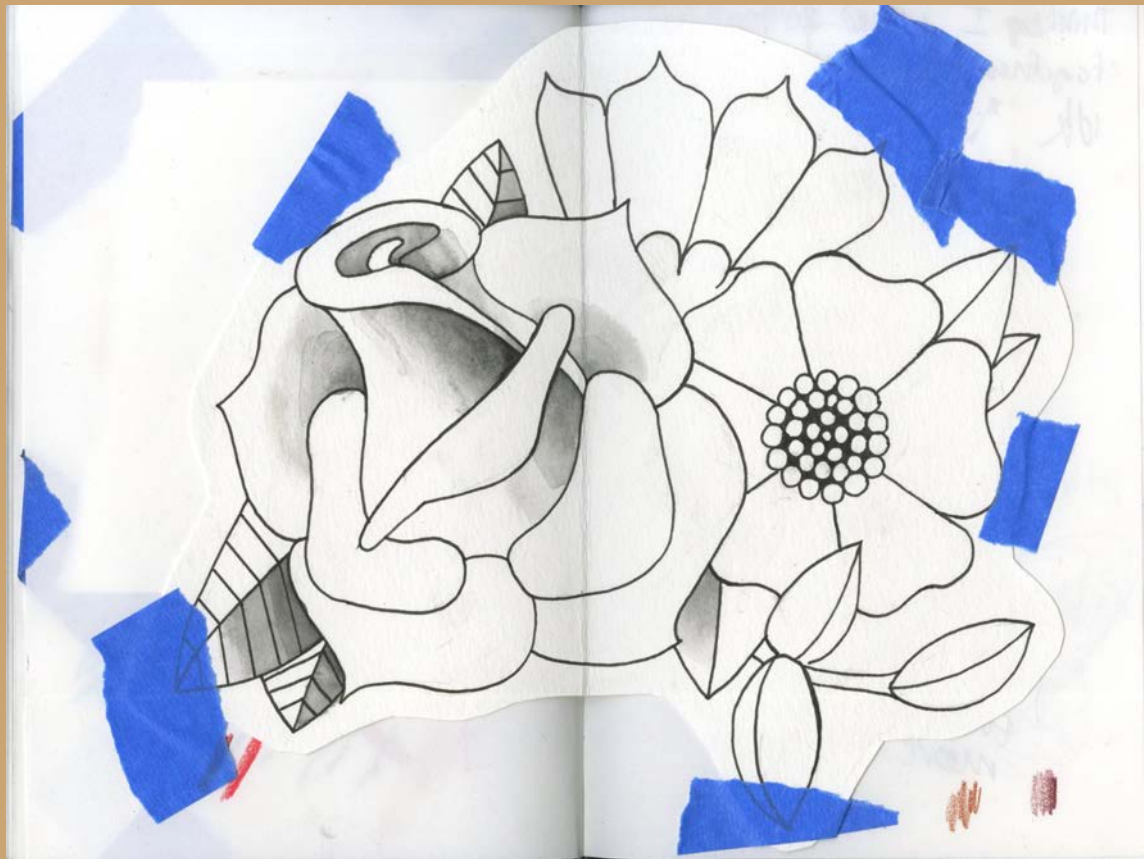
Documentation

Thesis Journal

- take more time on linework
- white gel pen worked well
- shading not bad needs more practice

good base color

- using colored pencil for touch ups
- maybe try gouache for vibrants??
- posca pens?

dagger w/ sparkle heart

snail under mushroom

Birthday cake + icecream

Valentine heart card +
crying heart