



**FEBRUARY 13TH, 2025
THROUGH FEBRUARY 16TH,
2025 AT YALE UNIVERSITY**

BETWEEN LOST AND FOUND

**A CREATIVE & PERFORMING
ARTS AWARD-WINNING SOLO
EXHIBITION BY ZOMA MARINO**

BETWEEN LOST AND FOUND

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Yale University acknowledges that indigenous peoples and nations, including Mohegan, Mashantucket Pequot, Eastern Pequot, Schaghticoke, Golden Hill Pau-gussett, Niantic, and the Quinnipiac and other Algonquian speaking peoples, have stewarded through generations the lands and waterways of what is now the state of Connecticut. We honor and respect the enduring relationship that exists between these peoples and nations and this land.

MY THANKS

As a first-generation/low-income student, proud QuestBridge scholar, and artist, I am endlessly grateful for the opportunities I have been granted at Yale and would like to thank the individuals involved in this exhibition. I extend my sincerest thanks to the wonderful Benjamin Franklin and Pauli Murray College staff, administrators, and community for supporting my work and allowing me to display my art in its facilities. I would also like to thank my professors, peers, and classmates, whose guidance, encouragement, and inspiration prompted this collection. I thank my friends, family, and everyone whose stories reside at the heart of my work — I am touched by your vulnerability and moved by your unwavering support. And finally, to the person reading this, thank you so much for coming to my art show! Without you, this production would not be possible. I am truly humbled by your incredible support, and I hope you enjoy the show!

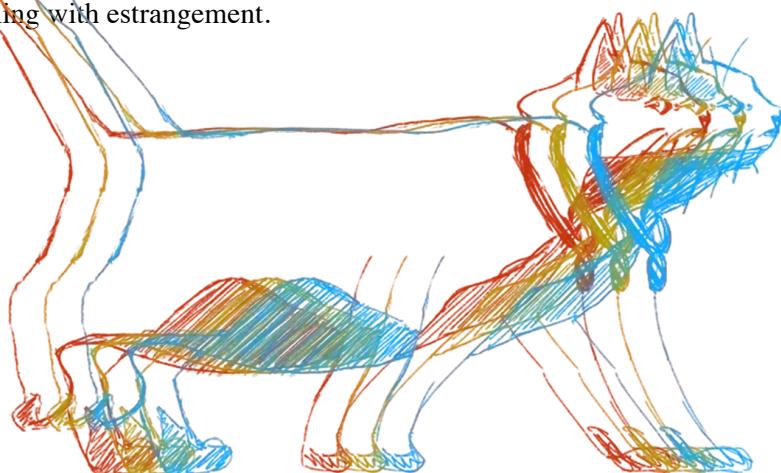
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EXHIBITION INTRODUCTION

Between Lost and Found documents the cyclical relationship between psychological unraveling and revitalization. Created throughout my three years at Yale, this collection of paintings, drawings, and designs celebrates vulnerability through patterns of alienation and actualization.

Loss fascinates me because it is a universally understood feeling yet entirely subjective. We have all lost something, someone, or somehow, but we cope with and express this feeling differently. The bountiful forms of life's losses spawn an equally intricate range of recoveries. Although the specifics of our struggles assume different forms, one pattern is guaranteed: for every setback we encounter, redemption always follows; and for every discovery, we are bound to lose our way again. The present work examines this assured cycle of loss and finding in people close to me, people who are strangers to me, and myself.

While this cycle, for better or for worse, is inescapable, it becomes much more tolerable through vulnerability. Embracing vulnerability was necessary to become the artist and person I have always wanted to be. I have struggled with high self-expectations, fear of judgment, and poor mental health throughout my life. During my first year of college, these factors exacerbated and eventually destroyed my passion for painting. Disenchanted by art, I abandoned it. Yet, despite distancing myself from it, my undying need to visually express my vulnerable emotions was a primary aid in my recovery. Today, I vow to embed my art with vulnerability, honoring its role in my self-reclamation and its ability to save those struggling with estrangement.



ARTIST'S STATEMENT

ZOMA A MARINO

Patient ID: HF434597 [REDACTED]

Date of birth: January 13, 2004

Date of Intake: June 15, 2023

Prescribing Doctor: Cheryl [REDACTED]

Assessment and Disposition: Patient was calm, cooperative and open. On assessment, currently meets criteria for generalized anxiety disorder and major depressive disorder. Biologically, does have a genetic predisposition towards mental illness.

New Medication: Start sertraline for GAD and MDD. Trial hydroxyzine 10mg daily as needed for anxiety. Discussed the side effects, risks, and benefits of medication in detail including but not limited to black box warning. Patient to monitor for any new or concerning side effects and notify staff if any occur. We will monitor tolerability closely and adjust dose or medication as needed. After a thorough discussion of side effects and risks of medication, patient verbalized understanding and is in agreement with plan.

Return to Clinic: Follow-up in 1 month to assess medication tolerability and make adjustment as needed, or sooner for new concerns.

Safety Planning: Discussed the importance of safety planning in the home including locking up weapons, medications, and discussed people patient can reach out to during any crisis including emergency departments, crisis lines, and calling 911. Discussed relying on friends and family as necessary for support. Patient expressed/exhibited no active SI/HI during our appointment today, and did not meet criteria for mental health hospitalization. Patient to go to ED with suicidality, plans, or immediate concerns.

Therapy: Discussed treating depression and anxiety with therapy at length. Continued treatment with therapy was encouraged. Patient would like to set up with a therapist while she is home from school. Information given to set up with therapy. Discussed the importance of nutrition, sleep, and exercise for mental health.

Diagnosis: Major Depressive Disorder, single episode, moderate (F32.1); Generalized Anxiety Disorder (F41.1); Social Anxiety Disorder, Generalized (F40.11).

06/15/23

Cheryl [REDACTED], MSN, FNP-C

Date

Psychiatrist

Zoma A. Marino. To me, I am myself. To you, I am a painter. To my psychiatrist, Cheryl, I am “calm, cooperative, and open.” To the system, I am Patient ID #HF434597. “Defective,” in other words. Or at least that’s what they used to call us F32.1s, F41.1s, and F40.11s. Luckily, things have gotten better in today’s society regarding mental illness (we leveled up from “possessed by demons” to “crazy” to “defective” and now to “abnormal”). Still, the suffering we endure remains the same. Aside from June 15, 2023, being the first of my many visits with Cheryl, it was also the day I realized I wanted to do something about this suffering, inwardly and outwardly. I undid something inside myself that day, and something on Yale Hub, too. From Computer Science, B.S. to Psychology, B.A., I set off to learn the art of *What is Wrong With Me and Everyone Else Around Me*, hoping to do it professionally someday.

For someone studying human behavior, it sure is challenging being “defective.” Ironic, too. Why seek to understand a world my brain chemically rejects? To experience a world without these conditions I live with is already beyond my mental faculties – if it weren’t, poor Cheryl would be out of a job. So then, how do I expect to realize this way of being for myself, much less guide others to it? Why do I, the “abnormal,” seek the right to label others as such? Does my decree of others’ tendencies make me less “abnormal” than them? Or even “normal?” For a system that has shaken the lives of many, why do I yearn to perpetuate it? Am I doing this for their sake or mine?

Thoughts like these often occupied my mind in the wee hours of the night, prompting me to roll over and jot them down in my bedside journal for Cheryl to help me deal with later.

The funny thing about my bedside journal is that it wasn’t a journal. When it moved to Yale with me cross-country two years ago, it held the title of “sketchbook.” Though, filled with tentative drawings, frustrated paint swatches, and self-conscious scribbles, it could hardly be called one. As time passed and my mental state shifted, I questioned the purpose of my sketchbook in my life. Why draw in it when I would never show anybody anyway? I only make things in it that I hate, so why do I tell people art is something I love? I have no intention of becoming a professional artist, so what’s the point in wasting time practicing?

As art lost its purpose, the sketchbook did, too; as my need for mental clarity heightened, I tore out its contents, and the journal assumed its place.

While dismembering my sketchbook was my unraveling brain’s idea, journaling was Kathy’s. Kathy was a PhD student at Yale who was assigned as my and over 30 other students’ free therapist until May 2023.

Needless to say, she was busy, but I took what I could get (which, in my case, consisted of breathing exercises, a couple of misdiagnoses, scrambling to schedule our next appointment for 25% of the session time, and, of course, journaling).

I wrote a lot in my journal during my first year at Yale. This habit was new to me because, growing up, I was too rule-obsessed to keep up something as unstructured as a journal. At first, I continued my lifelong habit of blaming myself for misfortunes and expecting that logic to fix things magically. I summed my successes up as accidents or plain luck and my failures as laziness or inferiority. Eventually, I got so good at thinking this way that I raised my self-standards sky-high, stopped viewing anything as a success, and pushed myself to my breaking point. My journal, which at this point resembled an angry mob of me's with all sorts of unconstructive ways to stop being sucky, reflected this breaking point. Even beyond my journal, self-demeaning embedded itself into every stroke I made, such as in my final project for my introductory drawing class, where I allowed my consciousness to run freely onto the page. I tried to convince my peers and myself of my mental stability by enshrining a permanent, idealistic depiction of my happiest self, but my unyielding desire for vulnerability secretly whispered my truthful insecurities to those willing to get close enough.



Full-Length Self Portrait, graphite on paper, April 2023. Formed entirely of stream-of-consciousness words.

Reading what I wrote, I didn't want to admit to the betrayals I had committed against myself. After all, I was at Yale, where everyone else was gifted and doing amazingly – surely I was too, right? But there they were, my words staring back at me from the page. The charges I wrote against myself, each one unforgiving, blunt, and ugly. As terrifying as they were, their pleading gaze made it all real. My meetings with Kathy were not working, I was depressed, and I had unraveled. I needed help.

Why is asking for help so hard? I have the attention of it. It makes me uncomfortable. It's difficult for me to be vulnerable, and invite someone to give their full attention to me like me under a spotlight, especially when it's something that's strangled with.

I think that's why I loved to paint. Painting was adorable and invited people's attention, but it kept my physical presence out of the picture. The spotlight was on something I spent hours working on rather than the person; anxiety-ridden, imperfect girl who made it. Coming with others and being vulnerable is something I desperately want; but when the opportunity comes, the thrill of getting out of it is a stretch, but because I painted, I could open up while keeping my distance.

At this distance, I had the power to manifest the words and stories in my head as they needed to be seen without social pressure to maintain the facade of a seemingly perfect person. My creative space let me be as emotionally expressive as I felt or anyone willing to observe my stories. When this sadness needed an outlet, gravity caused my hand down the canvas as my paint met it. Its weight. When I felt my colors strokes hardly introduced neighboring hues with a quiet, long-lasting touch. And when I was created and needed to release my energy, synthetic colors, boldly originated the picture plane in a childcare frenzy.

Neither these emotions, I felt nor the art I made were perfect enough for the standards I set for myself to conform, which killed my passion for art. But what I haven't realized is that my art needed to be imperfect. My dissatisfaction with my creations was my mind's way of screaming at me to give up my constant effort to make things look effortless. The emotions faced within the stories I told were squeak flags in my environment's round notes – it's no wonder that the more I tried to join them in, the more frustrated I was. And they'd never be a perfect fit.

Excerpt from my journal, dated July 11, 2023.

It's true that the two years I spent with Kathy at Yale's Mental Health and Counseling and now Cheryl at my hometown clinic shook my life. It was not a walk in the park to undo how I had undone myself. But to be shaken is to be moved, and God knows I desperately needed a push.

My remission happened slowly at first. As I progressed through therapy and pursued a career that interested me, I noticed my journal's frantic, sloppy 3 AM handwriting began to diminish in quantity. Occupying its place instead were themes I was once familiar with. At first, they were faint doodles in the self-measured half-inch margins. Then, sketches, thumbnails, and ideas. Techniques I wanted to learn. Drawings and

swatch sheets. Inspiration, goals, and hope. The thought of it paralyzed me for over a year while I lost it, yet I found it. It was art: my mother tongue that my mind had severed in the wake of its unraveling. And not just “art;” *my art*.

My sketchbook, with its amputated front pages and dense, anxiety-ridden confessions, had reclaimed itself: a sketchbook. In it, I saw myself. A perfectionistic girl desperately struggling to understand her place in the world, denouncing where she’d been, dreading where she was going, discarding who she was, and, despite everything, reclaiming herself. My art knew I needed help months before my mind did. Yet, I could only reclaim myself when I learned to listen to speak it rather than mute its voice.

I began reclaiming myself by erasing the precisely measured, idealistic fortresses that shielded me from the hot, unbearable spotlight of vulnerability. I confronted the injustices I endlessly felt in my relationships but didn’t dare verbalize. My brushes, held at arm’s length, repeatedly buried my unbridled fear, disappointment, and heartache in vivid expressionist tombs with permanent honesty.



Lost In Paradise, oil on canvas, December 2023. Made for my boyfriend after an argument.



(se(lf)port)ra)it, oil on canvas, February 2024. Made after my ex-boyfriend and I broke up.

I continued to reclaim myself by memorializing the connections and experiences my unraveling had not taken from me. As I forged a happier path and learned to accept my vulnerabilities, I embraced the self-discovery I gained from visiting my grandparents' pre-immigration hometown in Italy and honoring the loving relationships I created and maintained while abroad.



Self Portrait with Flowers, oil on canvas, May 2024. Made before studying abroad for the summer in Italy.



Roommates, oil on canvas, June 2024. For my brother, Val, and his roommate, MaeLeigh.



Photobomber, oil on canvas, July 2024. For my Yale suitemates, Ruby, Emma, Gabriella, Ellie, Issy, and Zaida.

And today, I reclaim myself by honoring the eternal cycle of unraveling and reclamation. Whether through the lens of my Nonno's

sudden passing and celebrating our connection, or by looking at myself in the mirror and comfortably displaying my vulnerabilities, I identify moments of unraveling and work to reclaim myself from them.

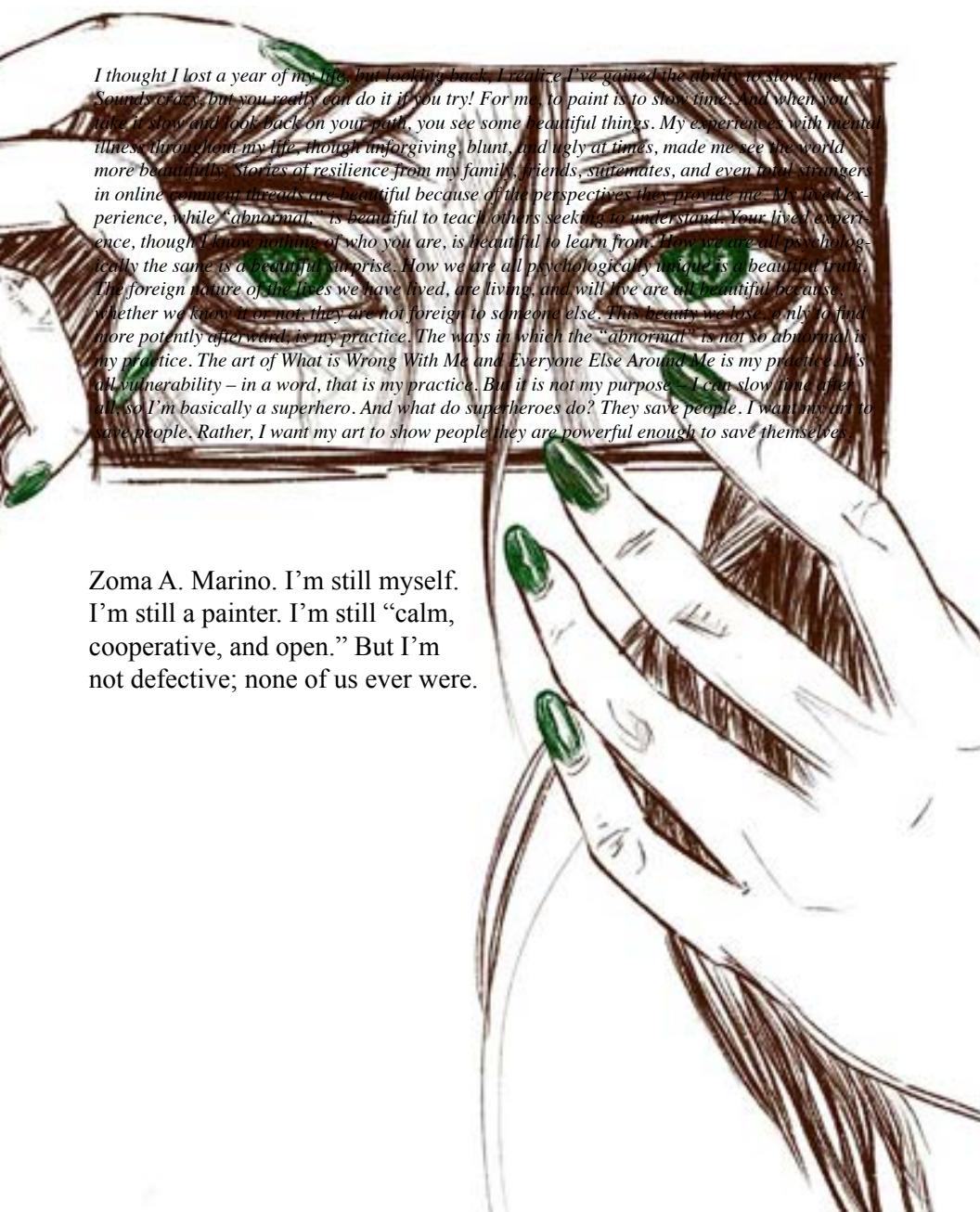


Inheritance, oil on canvas, October 2024. My paternal line's heir-looms.



Vanity, oil on canvas, November 2024. Observational still life of my tabletop mirror.

Through my undoing, I understood for the first time how beautifully complex and necessary vulnerability can be in reclaiming oneself after unraveling and the wisdom it relays when expressed visually. My art is a vessel for understanding, accepting, and ultimately honoring the ways in which we reclaim ourselves from estrangement through vulnerability.



I thought I lost a year of my life, but looking back, I realize I've gained the ability to slow time. Sounds crazy, but you really can do it if you try! For me, to paint is to slow time. And when you take it slow and look back on your path, you see some beautiful things. My experiences with mental illness throughout my life, though unforgiving, blunt, and ugly at times, made me see the world more beautifully. Stories of resilience from my family, friends, roommates, and even total strangers in online comment threads are beautiful because of the perspectives they provide me. My lived experience, while "abnormal," is beautiful to teach others seeking to understand. Your lived experience, though I know nothing of who you are, is beautiful to learn from. How we are all psychologically the same is a beautiful surprise. How we are all psychologically unique is a beautiful truth. The foreign nature of the lives we have lived, are living, and will live are all beautiful because, whether we know it or not, they are not foreign to someone else. This beauty we lose, only to find more potently afterward, is my practice. The ways in which the "abnormal" is not so abnormal is my practice. The art of What is Wrong With Me and Everyone Else Around Me is my practice. It's all vulnerability – in a word, that is my practice. But it is not my purpose – I can slow time after all, so I'm basically a superhero. And what do superheroes do? They save people. I want my art to save people. Rather, I want my art to show people they are powerful enough to save themselves.

Zoma A. Marino. I'm still myself. I'm still a painter. I'm still "calm, cooperative, and open." But I'm not defective; none of us ever were.

INDEX OF EXHIBITED WORKS

CAT NAP

December 2024. Oil

on stretched canvas.

18in. x 24in.

Me and my recently-adopted cat, Ozlo! A play on the “Madonna and Child” trope, this joint portrait celebrates the support he provides me despite living 2,000 miles away. Given how much joy he brings me, I can only hope he feels just as much from me.



INHERITANCE

November 2024. Oil
on stretched canvas.

24in. x 24in.

Historically, the *vanitas* genre of painting questions time, materiality, and mortality. Made after my

Nonno's sudden cancer diagnosis and passing, this *vanitas* painting honors his memory through the physical objects I inherited from him and my Nonna. They celebrate the cross-generational endurance of my paternal line and my grandparents' emigration from Italy during WWII.



PHOTOBOMBER

July 2024. Oil on raw

canvas. 72in. x 36in.

Made while studying abroad, this snapshot of my suitemates conversates authenticity and playfulness among friends with social anxiety and the feeling of being “out-of-place.”



VANITY

November 2024. Oil on primed bristol paper. 11in. x 14in. This view of my tabletop vanity comments on my tendency to use my body as a reference for portraits. Painting from life is a crucial part of my process, yet I often criticize myself for seeming overly self-absorbed when referring to myself for figuration. This painting was made in acknowledgment of this insecurity, but with the hope that I can learn to feel more comfortable with self-depiction.



(SE(LF(PORT)RA)IT)

February 2024.
Oil on canvas board.
12in. x 24in.

This portrait expresses fracturing, disorientation, and hopelessness triggered by repeated losses amid a depressive episode.

COLLATERAL

January 2024. Digital drawing.
Breaking up and ceasing contact with my long-distance high school sweetheart made me realize how many objects of his I possessed that I could never return, along with how many of mine he had. This still life compiles my stockpile of his unopened gifts and shared objects, reflecting on their transformative encapsulation from comfort to heartache.



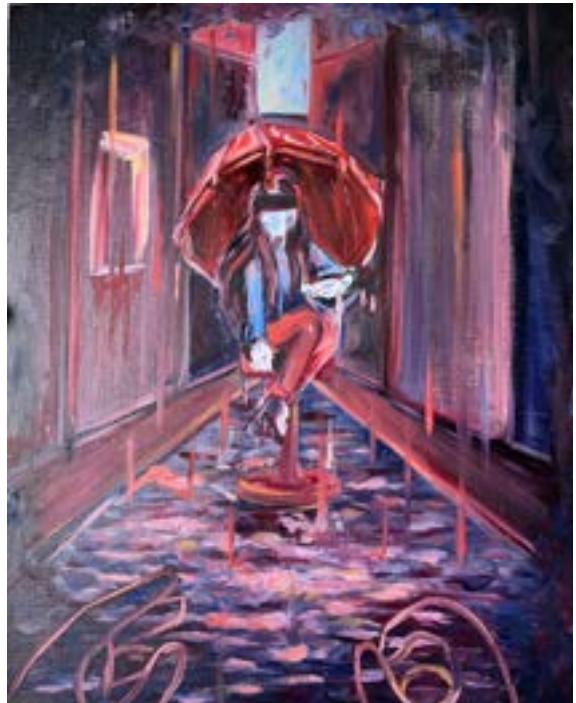
**BLACKED-OUT DREAM
(THE WISDOM TOOTH
CATASTROPHE)**

June 2024.

Oil on canvas board.

15.7in. x 19.7in.

After a botched wisdom tooth surgery, I had to be transported to the emergency room and passed out on the operating table from blood loss. I am prone to fainting, but had never dreamt while unconscious until this day. This sketch visualizes the “dream” I had while passed out, where a ghostly-pale figure with a red umbrella silently reached out to me. I was a little spooked by it after waking, so I painted the scene to make sense of it.



SELF-PORTRAIT IN PRUSSIAN (BLANK SLATE)

August 2024. Oil on primed canvas paper.

11in. x 14in.

Made in 60 minutes, I challenged myself to sketch through the view of a reflective CD, which partially obscured my view and distorted color. Because my previous self-portraits felt staged and rather dramatic, I wanted to work quickly from life and portray a realistic snapshot of how I felt while working alone in my studio. I used a warm, muted Prussian blue hue to promote quick work and to capture the neutrality and refreshment of going into my third year at Yale.

"IF YOU COULD SAY ANYTHING TO A PERSON WHO IS NO LONGER IN YOUR LIFE, WHAT WOULD IT BE?" AN ANONYMOUS COLLECTION

April 2024. Graphic design. 8.5in. x 11 in. This collection of anonymous responses highlights the diverse responses to the above question. It explores the complex aftermath of loss from 36 anonymous perspectives. While loss is often isolating, this booklet demonstrates that many of us experience similar emotions, both positive and negative. To learn more about this work and view it digitally, use the QR code or visit zomamarino.com.



SELF-PORTRAIT WITH FLOWERS

May 2024. Oil on
canvas.

This portrait was made three months after *(se lf/port)rait* as proof of my journey to create an optimistic self-image. These paintings pair well because they document the fluctuating nature of one's mindset when living with mental illnesses. Before my remission, I thought I was doomed to wander down an endlessly repetitive road of struggle, but after working to change my mindset, I confronted my fear of the unknown and learned how to determine a bright, blossoming future for myself.



FACTORY

October 2024. Oil on primed bristol paper.

11in. x 14in.

This painting of an abandoned New Haven factory applies an expressionist style to an industrial space.

I wanted to capture the eerie emotionality of the decayed building through the use of distorted, mentally-salient hues and an imposing, upwardly-oriented composition.



BROKEN WINDOW

October 2024. Oil on primed cardboard.

This closer view of the abandoned factory expresses its unsettling presence through a foreboding monochromatic Prussian palette. I chose this hue to contrast my earlier *Self-Portrait in Prussian*, which feels much warmer than the cold, dusty feeling of this piece. It is painted on retrieved cardboard.



ELECTRIC SHOCK THERA-TREE

September 2024. Oil on primed art paper.

9in. x 12in.

This tree at the Yale Farm caught my eye because its lightbulb garland emulates the natural form of its branches, giving it an equally serene and electric presence. These opposite complementary energies produce a contrasting yet codependent relationship.



ROOMMATES

June 2024. White pen on black poster board. This layered drawing of my brother, Val, and his roommate, Mae, demonstrates their unique identities while situated in the context of a shared living environment. This repetitive composition includes several instances of their distinct personalities in paired planes of existence to characterize them beyond a single composition. When I created this drawing, I had been away from our home for several weeks while studying art in Italy. During my time abroad, I wished to share my experiences with them every day. Drawing these scenes helped me feel more connected with them and remember their unique charms despite the physical distance.



AN AROMATIC REFUGE FOR THE SOCIALLY ANXIOUS (MY ROOM)

March 2024. Digital drawing in Adobe Fresco.

Not having a room in my family home means my dorm room is my safe haven, particularly as an introvert. This quick render considers the homely nature of my Yale dorm while acknowledging its impermanence and lack of ownership, as I move dorm rooms every year.

COMFORT ZONE

September 2024. Oil on primed masonite. This piece was painted plein air outside my bedroom window in Benjamin Franklin College. As a homebody, I tend to irrationally fear that others are judging me for frequently staying in. To address this insecurity, I wanted to paint a view of my room from an outside-in perspective and put myself in the shoes of a passerby. This outside-in process helped me connect with new people and realize my window is just another dorm room with the lights on. My irrational anxieties about being judged dissipated, and rather than beating myself up for staying in when I want, I can now enjoy my room as a comfort zone.



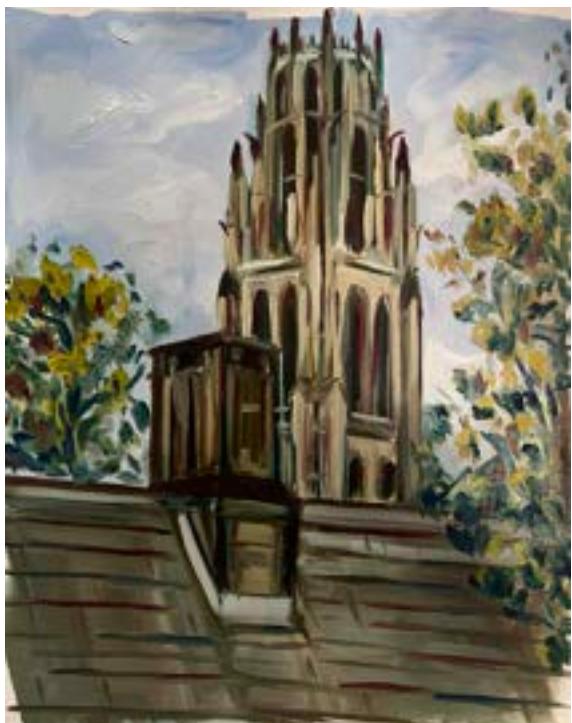
LOST IN PARADISE

December 2023. Oil on canvas board. 18in x 24in.

I gifted this impressionist painting to my ex-boyfriend for Christmas. It shows the Rockefeller Center ice rink, which was our last date before an argument that terminated the relationship. Since I no longer possess it, my relationship to this work is complicated. However, I have included a print of it in this show to honor its role in my self-discovery.

HARKNESS TOWER (WINTER)

March 2023. Graphite on drawing paper. I have made two renditions of Harkness Tower. This drawing, the oldest in the show, was made during my first year. It is more visually complex than its successor, with careful details and intricate linework. However, this fixation on visual accuracy, in my eyes, mutes my subjective view of the scene, making it feel tonally different from my recent work. I included this drawing to demonstrate my younger self's idealization of perfection and hesitation around showing vulnerability and subjectivity.



HARKNESS TOWER (AUTUMN)

November 2024. Oil on primed bristol paper. 11in x 14in.

This is a recent painting of Harkness Tower. Painted in plein air, I worked much faster than the tens of hours I spent rendering the previous pencil version. Surrounded by floral trees and embedded with color, this expressionist view, while less detailed than its predecessor, feels alive and personalized to my experience of the space. I can appreciate my former self's desire to achieve technical proficiency, but I have to admit that painting in this free, expressive style feels much more enjoyable!

FULL-LENGTH SELF-PORTAIT

April 2023. Graphite

on toned art paper.

This piece lies somewhere between a drawing and a series of journal entries.

Every pencil stroke is a letter, every line is a word, every shape is a paragraph, and the whole thing forms an essay. The paragraphs

that compose this essay all came from my stream-of-consciousness, unfiltered and unerased.

This piece is the most personally eye-opening I have made because it was

the first time my art expressed vulnerability. This “full-length” self-portrait addresses my struggles with chronic anxiety and depression, perfectionism, impostor syndrome, and

how I wanted to work to remedy these lifelong struggles.



CLOSING REMARKS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

If you're reading this, that means you've made it to the end of this exhibition booklet! (Or you flipped to the last page wondering how long it is. Either way, respectable). Thank you for your engagement, and I truly hope you enjoyed the show.

I have always wanted to put on my own art display, so I want to thank everyone who made this possible again. I first started learning art on my own around thirteen years ago from library books and online tutorials, so I am truly humbled to have had the privilege to go on to formally learn at an institution like Yale and share my story of loss and finding with the community. Without your support and encouragement, this show would not have been possible, so I sincerely thank you!

If I have learned anything throughout the process of making these pieces and curating this gallery, it is the importance of vulnerability and its profound ability to connect us with ourselves and others. Expressing myself authentically through art has played such an important role in creating the person I am today, and I know I can count on it to contribute to the person I will be in the future. I hope that by sharing my experiences, I have given you a moment during your day to reflect on your own losses, findings, and, most importantly, your power to determine a bright future. Everyone's journey is unique, but by empathizing and sharing, we can learn to navigate together.

Going forward as a prospective senior, I hope to continue to identify and articulate art's impact on one's self-growth and to develop new ways to involve the community in my work. As a psychology and art double-major, I am very interested in how the intricacies of the human experience can be parsed using a visual language, and I hope to explore these themes with higher definition and nuance next year. Above all, I am excited to continue sharing what I learn with you!

Thank you again for your support, and I am wishing you a happy and sunny rest of your day. Much love!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Z. B." or a similar variation, is positioned in the bottom right corner of the page.

UNIVERSITY
GALLERY, YALE
MURRAY ART

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A YALE CREATIVE AND
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While this cycle, for better or for worse, is inescapable, it becomes much more tolerable through vulnerability. Embracing vulnerability was necessary to become the artist and person I have always wanted to be. I have struggled with high self-expectations, fear of judgment, and poor mental health throughout my life. During my first year of college, these factors exacerbated and eventually destroyed my passion for painting. Disenchanted by art, I abandoned it. Yet, despite distancing myself from it, my undying need to visually express my vulnerable emotions was a primary aid in my recovery. Today, I vow to embed my art with vulnerability, honoring its role in my self-reclamation and its ability to save those struggling with estrangement.

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