

BFA Senior Thesis Conversations featuring Kirra Teal Hellfritsch

Questions by Daniela Segovia



Kirra Teal Hellfritsch is a metalsmith, sculptor, and textile artist residing in Oakland, California. Born and raised in Santa Cruz, California, she was home-schooled as a young child in the redwoods. Being surrounded by nature, she was taught the fundamentals of self sufficiency and how to use her imagination in most every endeavor. Inspired by the lucidity of nature and creating a fantasy world that touches on Surrealism and Expressionism, Kirra plays with form and function as she addresses personal issues on and off the body.

See more of her work on Instagram [@literal_rustic](#) and [@forestfancyjewelry](#) or visit her website kirrahellfritsch.com.

What is your thesis investigating?

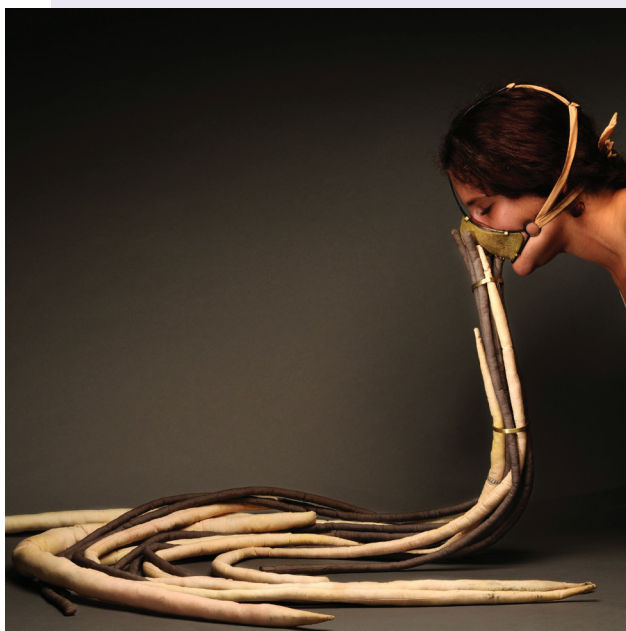
The dissonance between our inhibition and our desire to be unapologetically ourselves. I am exploring mental health, and all of the negative ways we express anxiety, stress, discomfort, etc. Each piece is a physical transfiguration of these inhibitors, and by placing them on parts of the body, I want to bring to focus just how uncomfortable and distracting those inhibitors can be. To move through a room wearing one of these pieces over the face can affect the ability to eat, think clearly, and even hinder movement of the wearer's own body. I want to bring attention to something most everyone experiences consistently throughout their lives.



Masked

What's next for you?

I plan to take some time over the next couple of years to see if grad school will be right for me, but I'd like to continue expanding my art practice. I currently have a plan to spend the summer doing studio visits with various artists at different stages in their careers to continue the conversation on mental health in their own practice. Eventually, I'd like to begin a new series of work focusing on the conversations I've shared, apply for exhibitions and grants, and figure out how I'd like to work with the community. I am excited about having time to expand my small jewelry business I started a while ago, ForestFancyJewelry. Hopefully, I'll participate in some collaborations with friends I've been putting off.



Word Vomit

What or who are your major influences?

The movement and expression of modern dance. I always imagine my work being worn while the wearer is running and leaping. Artists who influence me are sculptor Nick Cave and his transformative “soundsuits” that increase empowerment for the wearer through dance and performance; the ingenuity and whimsical existentialism of kinetic sculptor Arthur Ganson; Francesca Woodman’s photography has always stood out to me as unsettling feelings of angst, focused towards identity and the body; the work of textile artist and a previous professor of mine Victoria May, who explores contrasting materials and found objects using traditional sewing techniques.



Nailbiter



Thoughts

How has your project evolved?

I really began this project as an examination of my own mental roadblocks so I could project them into a physical space as a way to process them. I’ve noticed that by pointing out my negative coping mechanisms to people close to me, I can better recognize and process the reasons behind such mechanisms. As this project has continued, I’ve had countless conversations with others on sharing personal experiences and how others cope and process their own mental health issues. This project has opened a door to a subject that is personal and couldn’t be more relevant to the times now. I hope to create more work around mental health as well as group workshops in the style of a knitting circle.