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ASHLEY MALLOY

- *Photography* -



by Ashley Malloy and Charlotte Van den Brande

What does your thesis work investigate?

My thesis project explores my experience existing within my non-traditional but incredibly loving family. I grew up the oldest child in a family in Indiana, but like many families, ours was really complicated. My mom and I have had a really turbulent relationship, which had a big effect on how I saw myself and how I saw family as a young person growing. Throughout the past few years we've been working on repairing our relationship, and I love her so much. However, the context of my thesis work begins with my experience of feeling unloved and unsafe within the family I grew up in, and ultimately leaving at the end of high school and moving in with my aunt Jess and everyone in her family.

Moving away from my mom and from Indiana was the hardest thing I've ever done, but I do think it was the right choice for me. This project isn't about leaving it and it isn't really about my relationship with my mom, but instead it's about what I found on the other side of that and it turned out to be the best possible thing. What I found is a family that loved me so much that I learned to love myself in the process. Family that supported all of my dreams and held me when I cried, family that accepted me for who I am and wanted me to succeed.

I initially just photographed them out of habit, and because I wanted to hold onto the moments of love I was experiencing, but as I progressed through school I realized that I was more drawn to these images than



Intertwined, 2022, 16x20, Fiber Based Silver Gelatin Print



Sullivan in the doorway, West Virginia, 2021, Archival Inkjet Print, 16x20"

anything else I was photographing, so I stuck to it as a long term project. They've always been the most amazing collaborators on this. They took this project and really made it their own, often being really vulnerable in front of the camera. It's truly one of the greatest acts of love I've ever received, to have them collaborate with me on this project just because it's something I love doing and wanted to share with them.

How has your thesis project evolved since its inception?

Something that actually changed this project a lot was the pandemic. The pandemic and having to shelter in place has made a lot of people lose so much, but in my own experience, it also made me photograph my family and the space we were living in even more. I actually went to SFAI before it began, so my cohort and I are the last people to experience SFAI being normal, even though if you know anything about SFAI you know that it never really had a normal. I also had a job I really enjoyed that also had to close because of everything that happened in 2020.

This was a time when I really realized that I can focus on my education and career and stuff and it can literally all disappear overnight. The only thing that was constant throughout it, was my family. In this life, everything changes so fast, and the only thing you can really hang on to and trust in is love. And love can also change, but what I've realized is that working on those relationships and telling people how much



Sullivan, Krystal, and I, 2022, Fiber based silver gelatin print, 16x20



3 people who have grandma Nancy's eyes & the poodle, 2022, Fiber-based silver gelatin print, 16x20.

you love them is so worth it because loving people and being loved in return makes this wildly unpredictable life worth living and giving your all for.

In your practice, is there a question you are trying to answer?

There are several questions I'm bringing up within my work. I don't necessarily think that in this iteration of the project I am answering all of these questions, but instead just proposing them for further thought. These are also questions I plan to explore and investigate more in my work after school.

What function does family serve in our lives and how does it change if the structure is different? (can children have more than 2 parents? Can parenting be transitional? How are queer/ non-traditional/ extended family structures different from nuclear families?) Who are the people who are familial in your life, and how does their love affect you? How have the people who have loved you and shown you care throughout your life influenced what you were able to accomplish, or the kind of person you've grown into? How do you honor them?

What is something that you hope to convey with your work?

Through my work, I hope to convey the importance of loving and appreciating the people that you are around. My work is about my family, but not necessarily the family that I was born into. I believe that we all carry pieces of everyone we've ever loved into the people that we become, and it's important to recognize and honor those



West Virginia Rain, 2022, Archival Inkjet Print, 16x20



Cecily and Izzy in Joshua Tree, 2022, Fiber-based silver gelatin print, 16x20

who have loved us and shaped us into who we are. A lot of people, including me, have really complicated relationships with our parents, so I definitely understand finding family outside of your family. Family can be anything. Family can be friends, roommates, lovers, or people in your community.

What is in the future for you?

In the future, I hope to teach in some capacity. After school, I hope to find a job or volunteer position within an art education program. I also plan to stay close to the photo community here at CCA. Over the next few years, I hope to make another body of work using photography and ceramics, before going to graduate school. I also currently work for a photo lab in the city.

Ashley Malloy (b. 2000) is a photography and sculpture-based artist living and making work in San Francisco, CA. Through the use of images, words, and clay, they tell stories of their family and people who love and care for each other. Their images are of intimacy and memory, and are made to remind viewers of the people that they love the most in this world.

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