

Skin Deep

Carley McHenry | Senior

Through figurative narratives, my paintings illustrate elements of the human experience. Specifically, my work brings attention to the disconnect between human beings and their physical and psychological existence. Using personal experience and observations, I aim to reflect a piece of the human condition in my work; one in which we may find ourselves physically separated from our bodies or psychologically separated from our psyche.

Physical disconnect between people and their bodies occurs when the inner workings of the body that make life possible are ignored during the course of everyday life. The way the human body functions inspires my work as an artist. I am interested in how the body can be beautiful yet disgusting, fragile yet strong, and so vital to human existence yet unnoticed in our daily lives. It is only when our body is not functioning properly that we realize its critical role. The subjects in my paintings are only vaguely aware of their bodies, illustrating the detachment between being alive and the mechanics that make life possible. Psychological disconnections are not as easily defined as the physical. Psychological separation can manifest itself in many different ways. Using personal experience as inspiration, I emphasize how separation occurs within the human psyche: indecision, guilt, split personalities, and naïveté are all examples of psychological separation. The narratives I create are symbolic, aiming to illustrate my observations and experiences of how far from oneself one can get if we aren't paying close attention.

I do not always know where a painting is going when it begins. Each painting begins with a general idea or narrative that develops after several edits, deviations, and experiments that emerge through both intuitive actions and deliberate decisions. Experimentation and responding to my work as it develops is a vital part of my studio practice. This manner of working creates freedom for the work to deviate from an original plan in a way that may be unexpected. I paint in thin translucent layers that echo layers of skin, inner anatomy, or layers of personality. Often I will utilize thin barriers of paint that veil parts

of the composition to separate the viewer from the subject of the painting, and the subject from themselves. Glitches and stutters are incorporated into the imagery of my paintings, varying in subtlety. I interrupt the imagery in order to add mystery and a slightly "off" quality to the painting. The kind of surrealism I aim for in my paintings leaves a great deal open to the viewer's interpretation.

Although I know I have clear intentions of highlighting the physical and psychological disconnect within human existence from a specific and personal standpoint, I want each piece to be open to interpretation. I want to let viewers determine meaning based on their own knowledge and experiences. Ultimately, I want to depict subjects and ideas that are rarely considered or even overlooked through narratives that are filled with mystery and possibility.



Push Me Pull You

Acrylic and oil on panel, 15" x 17.5" Spring 2013



Stutter

Acrylic and oil on canvas 16" x 20" Spring 2013



Inside The Inside, But

Acrylic and oil on canvas 28" x 25.5" Fall 2013



Ways To Reveal

Acrylic and oil on canvas 17.5" x 17.5" Fall 2013