

Lily McDonald Oral History LGBTQIA+ Interview

Interviewer: Alexis Bignell

December 12, 2021

00:00:00.000-00:11:15.630

START

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Alexis Bignell: Okay, my name is Alexis Bignell. My pronouns are she/her. What're yours? What's your name and your pronouns?

Lily McDonald: My name is Lily McDonald, and my pronouns are she/her.

00:01:41.510

AB: What's your affiliation with Stout?

LM: I am an art major at Stout, specifically studio art major and with a concentration in painting.

00:01:52.740

AB: What year are you right now in your program?

LM: I'm a junior.

00:01:57.080

AB: Okay, so how would you identify yourself?

LM: I would identify myself as a bisexual woman.

00:02:04.990

AB: Do you think you're adding any- Do you think someone's identity influences their artwork?

LM: I definitely feel like for some people it does more so than others. I think it kind of just depends on like if you express yourself through art, which I think a lot of people do and kind of like their chosen subject matter.

00:02:31.100

AB: How would you say that your identity influences how you make art?

LM: I feel like I haven't quite got to like explore that yet. I haven't gotten into painting classes, so I think once I start like I'll get to do some like more research on different queer artists and like look into that kind of stuff if that makes sense.

00:03:05.120

AB: Yeah, for sure. So, has art helped you express your identity or like how if it has, like how has it done that?

LM: I guess I- I wouldn't say like my art necessarily now does. But I think in the future it definitely will, and most of the artists that I like know and like choose to follow on social media and that kind of stuff. Most of them are queer.

00:03:33.740

AB: Okay. Where do you draw your inspiration from?

LM: I don't know. I would say a lot of young artists, a lot of them I find on Twitter, actually, and I think it's just like a fun little community. And there's so many different styles of art. And a lot of them like go through the same type of struggles that I have in some more so than others. So, it's just kind of, I think that's where I draw my inspiration from.

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AB: So, would you say then like you pick artists at you, identify with to like, look to for inspiration?

LM: Yeah, yeah, and I think too like they kind of become like role models, almost because they're like more known and like the art industry and that kind of stuff when they're older and like they're kind of like a big brother or sister like artist.

00:04:28.740

AB: Yeah. So, you said that like because you're not in painting classes, you don't feel like its influence in your work right now, but like you're obviously an artistic person. So, do you think like in high school or even before that when you started making art to have any influence on that like your identity?

LM: I think so. I have like a few pieces that are like definitely influenced by my bisexuality, but like an outside person won't notice that, if that makes sense.

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AB: Yeah, it does. Did you do that on purpose like so they wouldn't be recognizable from other people?

LM: Yeah.

AB: Yeah.

LM: Me. [?]

00:05:16.360

AB: Do you feel like queer artists get the same respect and recognition as- as cis white people do? This is-

LM: Yeah. I would say probably not. I feel like, especially in the black queer community, it's really hard with like all the artists that I follow online, there's a lot a bunch of like art events that they all host and do, and most of them are definitely like more white and cisgender people that aren't part of the queer community and it just kind of sucks to like see that, but I think people are starting to build their own little communities, too.

AB: Yeah.

LM: So.

00:06:09.090

AB: Do you feel like the School of Art and Design at Stout provides a safe space- safe space for you to express yourself through your art?

LM: I would say yeah, I think. Like, surprisingly coming to Stout, I thought that would be more like of a really redneck type of school, but I feel like just like being in the art building. It's very different, like I have like classes in non-art buildings and like those are just very like stereotypical like what you would think of people at Stout. But then I feel like once you get to the art building then it's like very- You see, like very different styles, and it's really fun. And like it's more of an open community.

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AB: So, would you say like even if you're an artist and you chose a different major, would you feel as comfortable on campus?

LM: I would say probably not. I definitely have friends who like get harassed occasionally on campus because of what they wear and I feel like if I dress like certain ways, going to certain classes that like that might not go well.

AB: Yeah.

LM: -that makes sense, like for example, I had like a tech ed (technology education) class last year and like it was mostly says white men.

AB: No, it- it does.

LM: And I just felt like some of them were very judgy compared to being in like drawing art classes. Everyone is just very nice and like kind.

AB: Yeah. Sorry, I lost my train of thought.

LM: It's okay.

00:07:56.810

AB: So, have you always been a studio art major then since you came to Stout?

LM: I haven't. I was originally an apparel design major and then I switched to industrial design and then I just recently switched to studio art.

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AB: Did you feel like equally- As safe and respected in all of those majors?

LM: I- I would say so yeah, I feel like even in the apparel, I feel like apparel is close to like the art majors where it's just very like a kind community I guess I would say.

00:08:34.350

AB: Would you say like being here on campus has influenced- I don't know how to- Like influenced your ability like be out or like your ability to express yourself?

LM: I would say yes. In high school I really only knew like three other queer people and there was like 400 kids in my school and then I got to Stout and now I'm friends with a bunch of queer people like me and it's just been fun to like get to express myself how I want and make those friends and connections.

00:09:12.020

AB: Yeah. So, do you think you'd have like, not like exactly the same, obviously, but like similar experiences on other campuses? Or do you think Stout has done a better job at that?

LM: That's a good question. I feel like looking at UW schools, I think it just depends on the school. For example, a UW Platteville is very close to my hometown and I- that was a big no in going there because it's a very big AG (agriculture) school and a lot of small-town people go there. Other schools, I feel like Madison would be mostly okay, but I'm also a little bit scared of big cities, so Stout was just kind of the perfect school.

00:10:04.500

AB: Yeah, so I just want to reiterate, you- you mentioned something about it earlier, but it felt like Stout has done a better job than you had thought it- like- we need a safe community for you to be yourself in?

LM: Yeah. I feel like the new Chancellor also has handled things well, in like addressing things, I don't remember exactly what it was like freshman year with a different Chancellor, but I feel like it's definitely nice having a woman like kind of conducting our campus stuff and with the EDI (equity, diversity, and inclusion) office and all the other kind of things that like groups I didn't know about, like learning about those who's like really comforting, to know that there's a bunch of different resources.

AB: Yeah.

LM: And I just like didn't realize when I applied to stout that there were that many different things here too.

00:11:04.780

AB: Yeah, for sure. Well, I think that's it for my questions. So do you have any last things to add?

LM: I don't think so.

AB: Alright, well thank you Lily.

LM: Thank you.

END

00:11:15.630