

who should i be?

Navya Thakkar - Artist Statement

Indian. Hindu. Gujarati. Lohana. Thakkar. Mumbaikar. Woman. Immigrant. International student. These are all identities and labels I acquired while growing up in Mumbai, India. They represent a large part of who I am, and who I can be. However, these identities also lay at the crux of the part of myself I don't quite understand yet. A part of myself that is frequently in flux, struggling to integrate my origin with my sense of self. Therefore, for the Senior Exhibition, I approached my body of work as a form of exploration, investigating the role of my origin, roots & heritage, and their interaction with my identity over time. I wanted to capture the juxtaposition that while my origin remains constant, how I identify with it and the how role it plays in my life constantly changes.

Something that is important to my process of creation is play and experimentation. As I create each piece, I start with different concepts and visuals that connect me to my home and culture. From there, I experiment with different materials and techniques that allow to me to best depict their origins, my interaction with those cultural concepts, and what they mean to me. In this way, I created a process of re-representing objects, images, and visuals that I consider cultural pillars in my life, to encapsulate what they have come to mean to me. This process of play is intrinsic to my concept. Through a form of artistic expression, it reflects my experiences with integrating my cultural identity within myself and continuing to look for the perfect relationship between the two.

For each piece, I decided to choose a medium that would be most suitable to convey the concept. Therefore, my exhibition includes a wide range of printmaking methods, supported through digital design. I have been developing my printmaking skills for over a year now and taking the classes *ARTS 1600 and 2600: Printmaking I and II*, were essential to my skillset. Another class that was important in honing my ideas and skills was *ARTS 3891: Artist Books and Ephemeral Production*. It was in this class that I was first exposed contemporary artist books, with Louise Bourgeois' *Ode à l'Oubli* having a significant influence on my Senior Exhibition. Michelle Moode's artist books, ephemeral works and installations have also shaped an integral part of my design sensibilities seen in my work. An additional element in my work is the presence of embroidery and stitching. This is a skill I grew up around in the Indian culture and developed individually as I grew up. The threadwork in our cultural clothing and local artisan articles has always had a large influence on me as an artist. Through the use of embroidery and stitching in my work, I hope to integrate cultural practices into my work, as well as pay an ode to my heritage.

My pieces exist within the form of an artist book. I was drawn to this form of expression because it allows pieces to exist independently as well as in conjunction with each other. It forms a narrative around my experimentation, showcasing how as I learn, grow, and change, my relationship with my culture changes. Each page captures the emotions around this flux: quick

and overwhelming desire, distaste, yearning, and belonging. I want the book to be a visual narrative of the uncertainty that many face when finding the balance between personal and cultural identity.

Through my Senior exhibition, I want to depict that experimentation is an essential part of identity. and it is only through play and trial that you can understand more about yourself. I hope to visualize this process through an installation of the debris that was produced during the proofing process for all the pieces created for the artist book. The artist book and the installation existing together in the exhibition create a juxtaposition of process and product, and how neither can exist without the other.