



Megan Balke Artist Statement

My artwork has several different ideas, but I've connected them all to self-identity/life's journeys. Throughout my work, I have explored my own insecurities, a current global pandemic, and how it has affected others and myself. I've also focused the majority of my artwork on my passion for running, specifically cross country. I've looked at the highs and lows in cross country, such as runners high or injuries. In these pieces, I've worked with different mediums and different skills and techniques. When I first started art, I was at the age of four and would just draw or paint for fun, as I furthered into IB DP Art, I realized I didn't have as much skill nor technique as my classmates. My best skill would probably be painting, but I had very little experience. The majority of my artwork was inspired by surrealist and impressionist artists. The best way to showcase running to me was through impressionism because it depicted movement, specifically in Edgar Degas's pieces with his dancers. However,

several artists have contributed to the inspiration of the ideas I have focused on, running, the global pandemic, and my insecurities. A lot of my pieces first started with reference pictures that I would either take, or my friend would take of me.

First and foremost, the global pandemic connected with the theme of life's journeys because it's not something everything goes through, but something that as of right now, has impacted every individual. In my painting "What Happens Next?" and my block print which was inspired by Keith Haring is "Wear a Mask!" which focuses on the pandemic but in different ways. In "What Happens Next?", I wanted the audience to feel connected to the different emotions that were commonly felt throughout quarantine and after when returning back to "normal life". In "Wear a Mask!", I wanted to bring political activism into the piece and bring attention to the audience to wear a mask properly and making it easy to visualize.

An artwork that focuses on my own insecurities would be my self-portrait, which was an oil-painting inspired by surrealist artist René Magritte. This was my first painting using oil paint as the medium. Personally, it was one of my favorite pieces I have made. In "The Side You Don't See", I used a portrait of myself of what I looked like on the outside and a portrait of myself of what I felt like on the inside. One thing I never enjoy being is vulnerable, which was something that was difficult for me, but even though I felt stressed, sad, and out of place, I never expressed it on the outside. This piece opens up to the audience in an eye-catching way with the blue figure that represents the "inner me".

My most-touched topic, which was running was featured several times throughout my exhibition and in several different forms. Some that I enjoyed were "800 Meters Left", "Having It All but Not Having Enough" and "Running on the Trail". I used different experiences throughout my high school running career, like the injuries, the highs at the end of a race, the off-season training, and more. For these pieces, I wanted the audience to feel connected as if they were standing on the sides watching the last of a race, and see running more than just a workout or an activity. For these pieces, I was inspired mainly by impressionist artists like Edgar Degas or Claude Monet, but for my drypoint, I was inspired by

Edward Borein and his etchings on horses. These artworks impacted my work because it was something I had a lot of passion for and spoke true to myself and my theme.

For my exhibition, I plan to set up the artworks in order of which event has occurred in my life. I think self-identity and life's journeys should be expressed as a story, not by the date of completion rather by the chronological order in my life.

Throughout my two years, I have learned more about myself as an artist and have broadened my skills and techniques and progress has been shown in each piece.