



# Erin Clarke

My artwork explores concepts around social media, consumerism, and body image. Central to my paintings is a sense of luminosity—especially a quality of light inspired by pictures you might find on social media such as *Sunset Lamp*. Commonly employed in video and photos, the warm glow of this corona-like light source appeals to followers of Gen-Z trends and their desire for everything from their physical environment to their Instagram feeds to become aesthetically pleasing. *Sunset Lamp* is a byproduct of consumerism on social media. It represents how quickly trends can emerge and spread on social media platforms and the hold that consumerism has on users of such applications. That said, I am investigating the complexity of emotions social media evokes through oil paint.

As part of Generation Z, I use social media daily. I often find myself grappling with my love of sharing and finding inspiration on the Internet and the negative consequences it can have on mental health. This is a constant battle for most social media users. Consumerism on social media is inevitable and has become the social norm—buying products straight from Instagram and mindlessly scrolling through ads. Oftentimes, we are not aware of how products we see daily on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok slowly seep into our reality and how we see the world. This is balanced by the ability we have on social media to share content, to connect and express oneself. I stand in the middle of the positives and negatives surrounding these ideas and ask viewers to question how they use these platforms and how this technology may be affecting them.

The act of taking a photo from social media, or emulating the look of an image one might find online, and turning it into an oil painting is a transformative act. I start with an image from social media or an image that reflects a social media post because I am interested in how a photo transforms from a digital file to an image made physical with paint on canvas. My paintings respond intuitively to the conditions of the present. This can only be achieved through paint as new trends fade as quickly as they emerge. There are photographic elements to the paintings, including lens distortion, that draw attention to different areas of the figure. I embrace these photographic qualities just as images across social media use the lens to create photographic effects.

I paint images using inspiration straight from my Instagram feed and photos I take of my friends in positions that reference social media culture. Highly curated photos that we see on Instagram are often staged and edited to match an aesthetic. The photographs I take of my friends begin to mimic this type of content through the staged poses, but as I work, I tend to slightly distort certain aspects of the figure such as the torso, arms, and legs, depending on the perspective. I am exploring how distortion can be read as either grotesque or humorous. Some figures can be read as playful while others are more serious in attitude, alluding to the idea that for some, social media can be a toxic environment, while for others, social media is a tool for escaping reality and embracing humor. <3



# Molly Darcy

I explore the questions: “How much of our life is our own, and how much of our life is tailored to navigate the world we live in?”

In my instruction manual–based work, I use a familiar format of conveying information but subvert it to make it less about the thing being built and more about how this can relate to a human body and identity. For example, *Gundam Collage* presents a Mondrian-esque view of jumbled and decontextualized information, leaving only the human-looking parts strewn across the page. This serves as a schematic for a human body, one that the viewer is invited to piece together themselves. Without the familiar and linear flow of an organized manual, the piece mirrors the human experience. We are expected to follow a straight path in life; be born, go to school, get a job, don’t question your role, get married, have kids, inflict the expectations you were burdened with onto them, repeat ad infinitum. Queerness is an explicit deviation from this trajectory and is considered by many an attack on “family values.” If mindfully considering how one wants to interface with the world and chasing after that ideal is a threat to this normative trajectory, maybe that demonstrates the weak and arbitrary nature of the entire set of social expectations.

My exploration of social coercion continues with my more recent *Pixel Propaganda* series. With these posters I play with how advertising and propaganda are both tools of social instruction. Advertisements implore their subjects to follow their advice to sell products. Their sheer volume wears us down and normalizes the concept of perpetual bombardment with manufactured insecurity and lack of completeness in our lives.

My Trans-Satanic propaganda works aim to co-opt the tools of social coercion and conditioning to invite(force) the viewer to examine their own place in society and ask themselves if they are truly comfortable in their roles, or if they are simply playing the part that has been thrust upon them. Little else in our society can prescribe the kind of things you are allowed to enjoy, the person you should be, the career you should follow, and the type of person you should love, more than coercive gender norms. In this body of work, Trans-Satanism is presented as a pseudo-religion of my own creation, specifically designed to be scary to the public, but with agreeable and simple ideals. It's rooted in the sanctity of bodily autonomy and self-determination, individual ownership over oneself, as well as respect for the autonomy and freedom of all peoples.

My work implores the viewer to question their comfort in their identity. *Who Do You Think You Are?* uses the familiar yell of frustration as a double entendre to ask the viewer earnestly, Who are you? Why do you think that? Are you sure? Are you happy? This introspection is necessary for any queer person's coming to terms with their identity, but everyone should question the facts of their life and identity and honestly ask how they make them feel. I want people to uncover the truest versions of themselves and find confidence in them. Art upsets, inspires, confuses, invites questions, gets stares, and provokes discussion and sometimes outrage, and these are all things experienced by someone with a visibly nonnormative identity and body. To walk that path is to choose personal joy and expression over societal norms and expectations.

My goal is to challenge the societal expectations and norms laid out for us, and invite and inspire others to consider doing the same in ways that feel right for them. Why live your life for someone else's comfort and profit margin? Why not live your life for yourself? <3



# Rebecca Fox

My grandmother has knit all her life. I grew up with blankets and hats handmade by her, and she often talked about how her mother taught her to knit when she was just six years old. I learned to sew, weave, knit, and crochet from my grandmother. My impulse to make art is often informed by the skills, meditative space, and objects made through knitting. When I begin each sculpture, I am calling on my personal connections to the material to inspire and produce the framework for each piece. There is a tense emotional connection to this legacy. On the one hand, each object I make reminds me of familial love and support, but each piece has a gravity to it as well, a weight that is felt every time a traditionally “women’s” craft is seen as less than fine art. My studio practice aims to explore the connections between my family history, craft traditions, and the “memories” inherent to my materials or final objects—both before they get turned into ceramics and afterward as individual sculptures.

The process of turning a soft square of fabric into ceramic began as an experiment, but I remain fascinated with the idea of simultaneously memorializing a piece by turning it into ceramic or bronze and destroying it at the same time. When I encase a piece of fabric in slip, the clay soaks into the fibers and takes the shape of the object. Once I put it in the kiln, the fabric itself burns away, leaving an incredibly fragile shell of the woven object. Each object goes through multiple firings to build strength so that the objects can be handled, but fragility is inherent in the process

and the final forms. The result will either be a ceramic sculpture or a pile of dust on the kiln floor, impossible to put back together. Even when these ceramic sculptures emerge from the kiln, the fragility of each piece makes the handling and the installation of the work an exceptionally risky and meticulous task. Bronze casting, on the other hand, forms an incredibly durable piece that imitates the pattern of knit without ever pretending to be anything but metal. The pieces that look like scraps of fabric when transformed into ceramics look closer to chain mail in bronze.

In my practice I think about where function and art correspond, where the “Art” resides in an intentionally functional object. A baby blanket, for example, is a functional object because it can provide comfort, but is such a common object seen as art? Through my process of combining ceramics and knitted cloth, I engage with both mediums as nonfunctional. The ceramics are too fragile and thin to serve a utilitarian function, and the knit is no longer soft or flexible. Both the ceramic and cast-metal objects I craft evoke a feeling of comfort and familiarity, yet using various nontraditional glazes and display strategies, they can also surprise the viewer—at times inviting conflicted feelings. I want to bring my memories to the forefront of my art while providing the space for others to attach their own memories to these knit pieces. <3





# Bethany Petrunak

My gender identity and relationship with my body as a queer person are what drive my work. I use my art to explore and make sense of the dissatisfaction and disconnect between the desire to conform to traditional beauty standards (both feminine and masculine) and the ability to leave the cisgender view of the body behind completely. I'm interested in the fracturing, forming, and metamorphosing that occurs in queer bodies. Often, physical changes are sought in an attempt to more accurately reflect gender identity. The disjointed body parts in my work present as an imagined space where these inaccessible physical changes are made possible to the viewer, who can visually pick and choose parts to create their own idealized body.

When considering this possibility, I make a conscious effort to put aside the cisgender view of the idealized body. I'm exploring what the solution to queer body and gender dysphoria might look like. Perhaps it is a torso with dicks protruding from it or a breast growing from a head. Queerness is strangeness and absurdity, and I want to embrace that in my art. I'm looking to move away from the cisgender view that trans bodies must conform to the desired cisgender bodies or else they have failed the purpose of transitioning at all.

Materiality is important to my studio practice. For example, the association of knits with “women’s work,” politeness, and restraint is brought into question when confronted with a knit in the form of a penis or vulva. By displaying them in a way that is associated with clothing, I am acknowledging that interpretation of the material and creating unease because of their anthropomorphic forms. Following this vein, all the objects are wearable, which is a connection implicit in their material. In referencing familiar domestic spaces by using a clothesline or a coat rack to display my work, I am imagining a realm where queerness and its expression are paramount in daily life. Additionally, clothing is central to how we express our identity. It is a vital creative outlet for many queer people and allows us to perform our gender publicly, letting the world catch a glimpse of the true person living under our skin.

My studio practice is intertwined with my own poetry, in which I often consider the gendered bodies we exist in and how they could be left behind entirely. In a way the body is both essential and trivial to my work. In some ways the alteration of the body is incredibly important to queer individuals who are unable to live with the one they have. Yet, there is another view I have—that perhaps my gender dysphoria would be better solved by transcending the human body altogether. I explore both of those avenues in my work. My knit tapestry is inspired by one of my poems. It is a story of the transcendence of the body where the essence of a person is not in their physical body. The tapestry is a dream in which our bodies transform to reflect our internal identity. <3



## Cristian Antonio Tineo Jr.

In September 2017 I got a ride to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, to visit Dickinson College for the first time. It was in a professor's office that I looked out of a window onto the academic quad and was able to envision my eventual graduation from the college. Even then I could picture commencement, including the neat rows of folding chairs set up in front of Old West, the symbolic heart of campus. I could already imagine how happy I'd be for my family to be here and see me achieve this collective dream. In that moment I knew I wanted to walk out of the double doors of Old West, part of the historic tradition where graduates cross the threshold from students to alumni.

It's spring 2022, and the new director of the Popel Shaw Center for Race & Ethnicity is presenting at the Enrollment and Student Life All-College Committee, on which I serve as senior class president. During the presentation, she shows us a close-up of Esther Popel Shaw and William Jefferson in a campus panorama from 1915–16, their first year at Dickinson. In 2019, I attended the celebration that marked one hundred years since Esther became the first Black woman to graduate from Dickinson. Acknowledging the presence of Esther and William on the expansive academic quad, I wondered, how do you belong in an institution that was never built for you?

With help from the Dickinson College archives, I was able to see the original print of the photographic panorama, as well as receive access to the digital version. I bring this photo to your attention with the intent to shine a light on the significance and fraught relationship between identity, place, and memory. While we may not understand exactly what it was like for Esther or William to be two of the first few students of color to attend this school, I think it's essential that we are actively learning about those who have come before us, so we can build a better community for those who come after us. By merging personhood and place, I am rejecting the objectification of marginalized individuals in Western art while reclaiming space through subjective narratives. In a variety of mediums, I hope to piece together a story of what it means to be a student on this campus—especially through my personal lens as a Latino, first-generation, neurodivergent, and queer man. In this artwork, I invite you to see the layers of being a Dickinsonian from my point of view: the highs, the lows, and everything in between.

In order to create the multimedia narratives that are typical of my studio practice, I focus on traditional drawing skills, including composition, perspective, and drafting, as well as other processes, such as collage, digital experimentation, and broad material investigation. Portraits play a key role in this work because they not only illuminate a person's visibility, but also their environment, body language, and experience. Though an object maker, in my studio practice I also strive to be an archivist. In mining collections of photos I've taken over the years, as well as historical imagery, through my work I can engage with the past and the now, and raise questions about how we can look ahead. <3



# Marja van Mierlo

I am just beginning to better understand my visual language as an artist and the ways art can be a vehicle for learning and understanding both myself and the world around me. My main interest lies in the ability to render and manipulate space through illusionism, flattening, and abstraction, as well as through exploratory material processes. In my studio investigations I aim to manipulate perception and optics to create an ambiguous sense of space. This is all part of my larger investigation of complicated concepts including abstraction, space, and systems. My goal is to invite viewers to embrace an awareness of, as well as to question, ephemeral spatial relationships.

My art lies in-between drawing and sculpture. My sculptures exhibit graphic qualities and attention to line and form, while my drawings show attention to space and layering. This "in-between" is important to my work because it creates a juxtaposition between flatness and the dimensionality associated with space. This is a way in which I create illusionism. It can be seen in my glass-layering projects, where flat, simplified forms are painted with acrylic paint onto different layers of glass. These sheets of glass are then placed one in front of another to create a multilayered image.

This concept is also inspired by my passion for biology and ecology. The layered glass references the visual experience of looking into a microscope. With high magnification in a microscope, it is impossible to see all levels of depth in full clarity, but you can toggle between depths to better understand the space. In addition, the act of placing glass over my artworks is analogous to the slide-making process in microscopic biology.

The study of biology has always been a way in which I have been able to analyze the world around me and has had a great impact on my art. Simplicity of forms with hard edges and distinct color palettes are influenced by anatomical diagrams, medical imaging, topographic mapping, and other representational imagery typical in scientific literature. These references are flat renderings used to explain and teach complex, dimensional spaces. Color and color relationships are an important but intuitive part of my process.

My work in the studio tends to change as often as from day to day. Everything in my practice builds off the last creative undertaking. Projects are iterations of other projects. I have an openness to this process and go through many trials and errors before I end up with something I am satisfied with. This derivative process is a method in which I can continue to achieve ambiguity because I often start with specific referents, such as photographs, and then move toward abstracting those influences in my work. <3

