

# DRAWN TO ART

## THE LIFE OF A STUDENT ARTIST



“She creates a contemporary, pop-surrealist kind of landscape space.”  
**Jeremy Butler, Adjunct Art Professor**



Salina Kirk works on the 22" x 30" multimedia piece (above) Thursday in her Drawing Workshop class. This style is new to her and is something that she is trying to develop in preparation of her student art show this spring. This creation (left) is still a work in progress and is being made with a combination of gel pen, micron pen, acrylic paint, water color, and ink. Kirk rarely keeps track of the time that she works on one project and says she has already spent a countless number of hours working on this piece, which incorporates the three things that can be seen in most of her work: bright colors, geometric shapes and very close attention to detail.

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Most college students go to school for one reason — to get a job. Engineering majors more than likely chose their field because of the possible high-end pay, and computer science majors focusing on cyber security more than likely chose their field because of the prospect for an upcoming greater demand in workforce. But what about those who are pursuing a degree strictly for “the love of it?”

“I don’t know what else I would want to do,” senior art student Salina Kirk said. “I have only ever considered changing [majors] when people I look up to and respect have tried to talk me out of it.”

Those people trying to talk her out of her major (without success) aren’t doing so because she is a lackluster artist, but are doing it because of the uncertainty that comes with pursuing a career as an artist. If you google, “What do I do with an art degree?” you are going to come up with more results talking about careers as an art teacher, critic or curator than careers creating art. It is a profession with no guarantees that takes hard work and a perseverance to never let your dream go.

“It was my art teacher, Mr. G., my senior year of high school that really emphasized doing what you love,” Kirk said. “I actually hadn’t thought of doing art growing up. When I was a kid, I wanted to be a vet or a marine biologist or an explorer, but I decided right after high school that I wanted to do art. I want to be a freelance artist.”

After this decision, Kirk got a full ride to the then Mesa State College and has been pursuing a BFA in Art. Two-dimensional studio art, to be exact.

“Three-dimensional work is definitely not my forte at all,” Kirk

said as she points to a cast of a deer antler beside her. “I can draw the front of these antlers, but I don’t know how to see the back of the thing. Even when I used to play with play dough as a kid, it was pretty awful.”

Kirk’s forte is painting and drawing, and this year her professors have been pushing her to expand her style.

“I have been doing more abstract stuff,” Kirk said. “The only thing that stays the same is the bright colors and the fine detail. Some are very realistic with a surreal twist.”

Two of the pieces she is currently working on are multimedia projects that combine gel pen, micron pen, acrylic paint, water-color, and ink. This new form is pushing her to break out of her mold of having a full plan for each piece before beginning it.

“This year, I am finally getting to come up with my own style,” Kirk said. “It is definitely not within my comfort zone, but the more I practice, the more it is fun.”

**Salina Kirk**

Kirk is preparing for her senior art show that will take place this spring. The show will feature this newer style that she has been working on and will be primarily filled with work that she has created this year.

“The capstone course for art students has a thesis exhibition at the end,” adjunct art professor Jeremy Butler said. “Each student must submit a cohesive body of art work that they can give a talk about and write about.”

An art student’s senior year is more about mimicking what it will be like working after college and giving the student direction to help them on their way. The professors no longer tell the students specifically what to create.

“It is so much harder,” Kirk said. “Half of the work is just coming

up with ideas.”

For ideas, Kirk is always on the lookout for good art. She looks at different artists and work online, then she either saves the photos or prints them off to hang on her wall or be put in a stack for reviewing when going through creative withdrawal.

“I flip through them and look at different elements and how they could fit in,” Kirk said.

She is never working on just one piece at a time and says that “each piece feeds off of the others.” She will work on one project until the creativity runs out or she gets bored, and then she will switch to another.

“She is quiet and a bit of an introvert,” Butler said. “She just quietly works hard at pushing her paintings and drawings to the level she has in her.”

A lot of Kirk’s time is currently spent searching for ideas and preparing for her senior art show, but she is also thinking about what she is going to do after graduation.

“My professors are trying to convince me to go to grad school, but I don’t know if I want to go right away,” Kirk said. “I want to go on some sort of mission trip with Compassion International or TOMS or something like that. Art has been a big part of my life since high school. Now I want to be a part of something bigger. I feel like I am not ready to commit to grad school because of that.”

Kirk continued to say that since being enrolled at CMU, there has been so much pressure for art all of the time that she just wants a break, but art will always be a big part of her life. Any way about it though, whether she goes to grad school, pursues a career as a freelance artist or heads out on a mission trip, leaving the Valley is more than likely in this Grand Junction native’s future.

“Junction is not in a high demand for my kind of art,” Kirk said. “It’s more sunsets, mountains and that kind of stuff.”



This 22" x 22" pen drawing came from an object drawing class Kirk took last year. She had to find two objects and draw each of them separately several times before putting them together in one drawing. She chose an eyelash curler and a seashell.



This is a 5" x 9" stone lithograph print and is the only print Salina Kirk has ever made. It was made by drawing on a stone with a special crayon and then dipping it in ink and pressing it onto print paper. This was difficult for her, since print pieces typically have more gestural, loose lines than the detail-oriented work she is used to creating.



This painting is a 3' x 4' oil piece that did not start out as such. It was originally supposed to be a geometrical multimedia design, but after some frustration, Kirk pushed it away before salvaging it and turning it into an oil painting that is hanging up on the second floor of the Fine Arts building.



This drawing stemmed from a pencil sketch that was based on a Bible verse. Kirk then traced over the pencil with gel pen and gave it an ink wash to fill in the background.