

A Self-Portrait :

Personal Interviews of Middle Tennessee State
University's aspiring art students.

Art and Design: Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? What degree are you pursuing?

Monika Overholt: Hello I am Monika Overholt. I am an Illustration and Printmaking Major. I work in the field commercially outside of school and personally to create my art.

Art and Design: What are some things that have changed since your first interview with the department?

Monika Overholt: A lot has changed since our first interview. It feels like a lifetime since then. I've had some job changes because of Covid. My whole career up until last summer was in retail. During the Pandemic this became unbearable. I have been struggling with mental health problems since I was nine and working in retail throughout the pandemic brought those issues to a head. It brought me to the edge and made me realize that if I worked in retail anymore, I was going to kill myself. So, I was spurred to take my career further. I started applying to screen printing shops all around town. I got a job during the summer at a local print shop which taught me a lot and gave me managerial experience. That first job and my startup of freelance printing were stepping stones to the job I currently hold. I am Print Manager at a company that is great. I feel like they really appreciate me and pay me what I'm worth.

Art and Design: It is amazing how far you have come Mo! Would you mind telling me about the works of art that you brought in today and if they connect to the Covid-19 pandemic, or you transfer of jobs?

Monika Overholt: Illustration has always been a part of my process because I'm very detailed oriented. I felt like doing a small series of illustrations to visually representing how I felt over the past year. There has been good with the new career, learning, and my personal growth, but there has also been a lot of bad as well because of Covid, my mental health issues, and working through new jobs. So, it helps to represent me during those times. I hope to look back on them every year and be able to reflect on all that has changed.

Art and Design: Before we leave today, is there any other developments or plans for your future?

Monika Overholt: A huge realm of my work that I am doing now that brings me fulfillment and success with other people is Jewish based artwork. I am Jewish and grew up dealing firsthand with Anti-Semitic views and people. At first, I did not feel like I could express this side of myself because I didn't feel Jewish enough. It took discussions with other Jewish individuals and being invited by Dr. Sonja Hedgepeth to talk to her students about a nine-piece installation I have upstairs to really make me want to represent my people. She has also reached out to me to make art for a conference that will be held on campus soon. This type of opportunity will hugely impact my career and networking. The Black Lives Matter Movement and other organizations representing their people made me want to be a part of that conversation. Jewish people have the largest number of hate crimes committed against them in the United States, and I don't see enough discussion going on about it. I want people to see good representation and education, but also learn about the dark side of antisemitism. I want to become an advocate for the Jewish Community.

Coming Soon: Monika Overholt: Nine-Piece Installation