

My research was mostly inspired by my life. The disconnect between fantasy and reality is an alluring thing to me and tends to be the guiding force in a lot of my work. Such as the differences in perceived reality from me to you. For this specific piece, my main focus was on the difference between the world of a child and an adult. That change that occurs as we age where our fundamentals change, and for the most part dim our worldly outlook.

In this sculpture, I have used minimal materials and minimal color palettes, in order to keep a vibrant childlike look. Like a new toy or nursery mural. I decided to use an old and unfinished piece on identity as my base. From there the sculpture evolved into lighter subjects and simpler visuals. My goal was to showcase the evolution of the self with the many faces, resting at eye level. And towards the ground, the foundations of those many selves. A vibrant wonderland, safe and peaceful. A contrast to the chaos and vulnerability that comes with time and responsibility.

This piece acts as a microcosm for my experience at oxbow, it is a representation of stability and fragility. I experienced many changes while at oxbow, changes that have influenced how I look at my art. However not necessarily in a positive or negative way, simply a minute shift sideways. That shift is the change I seek to bring by all my art, to shift the viewer's world a little to the left. To allow for curiosity and for questioning. It is easy to miss childhood. To wish for simplicity in life. Life was just as complicated when you were young. You just couldn't see it. That ignorance is gone, yes. But that doesn't mean we are trapped as we are. Perceiving as we are. I intended to misguide those I interviewed, I asked what they lost once they grew up. But not why they think it lost. I wanted to see if they could get there alone. And they didn't. Most people don't. And so that is my drive, in this work, and in this life. To help people to see the world anew, and finally look in the right places, for that which was lost within the past.

Aeri A.

Earth, universe 21B

San Francisco, California

The Lost Place

Aeri A.



This, in essence, is an overview of my research process for my paper. To best answer my question, "What do we lose once we are no longer children?" I decided to anonymously interview my peers via online form. I wanted to get the perspective of my peers, as most of my art is based on my experiences and it would be most relevant to my age demographic. The responses were varied but similar in essence. In my art, I've used a series of abstract vignettes to show how it feels inside my mind in those moments of sorrow, nostalgia, and longing.

Dimly lit places. Cold and metallic, icy and Sole in time, The night of a memorable specter,

Small and weak.

Faded, with time.

Abandoned,

left behind.

For the pleasure of painless time

Of meaningless lights. The worthless gold. Dulled without the green-blue hue of it all.

Those times where the gold outshines all else. A beauty but not a constant. The expectation we run to, chase. Because who wants to stop only to drown in the emerald envy of regret.

Hours spent chasing the blues and greens, chasing fleeting shadows

That cold empty cathedral of glass endowed in gold light. Oh how it burns me.

I wish nothing more than to cut it all away.

To cut out the gold and the glamour. Allow me to rest among the depths of lost places.

The empty forests and homes. Trapped beneath that great green ocean.
And I am carried away again and again. By the gold in her eyes, by the light in his smile.

And I weep. For the regret can be overlooked, grown out of. But to long to drown is eternal.

The fear that you will never walk again amongst the tide. And so I pace along the waves,
waiting for my chance to drown. Into comfort. Into knowing faces and arms.

Into the depths that I grew from within, And selfishly left behind. Shunned, and mourned.

Because I cannot. Not yet swim to them. And raise them again from the depths.

This overcoming ocean. Some days I long for gold and glamour,
others for those great depths.

For they can both bring me to my heart. That monstrous star. a glittering evil.

Resting on the ocean floor. Guarded by his loyalty and her compassion.

I am truly mad to dream of drowning. Solely for the chance to see them.

To know them, and feel complete. To breathe again, Under those rolling green waves.

This place, this infinite emerald hall. Frozen to the touch a thin ceiling above miles of emotion.

Frozen beneath the surface.

If you stare down into it long enough the gold shines through, and so does the warmth.
The sunlight, the life.
And you breathe.
finally.
at ease.

Where the emerald glass meets the sandy skies,

Oh that choking bright,

that burns my eyes and parches my tongue. Where life seems distant and yet so full.

Things seem to thrive within this desert.

Amongst the choking heat. And scorching sunlight. There is life, here.

Floating amongst the gentle breeze, cool and calm and bright.

The little that is color here is odd. For the purples and reds don't seem as such.

Only as they'd been abandoned and left to fade. So bright and yet so far from vibrancy.

It is safe and warm. And it is small and weak.

And it is worrying to wonder what might come of this little oasis.

But for now, I do the only thing there seems to be to do here.

To bask in the warmth until it is time to shelter from the coming cold.

The cold that comes, with waiting, with anticipation. The frozen pictured perfection, waiting for us.

So close we can reach it by the will of our minds.

Our hands fall short. Our legs give way to gravity and we fall to our knees.
And wish for our glory to come. To find us among the waves. As we float.
As we float, each moment less than the last. Until we sink, and inevitably fall away from it all.
Now forever locked away from the golden light.
By our own hand.

By our own heart.
Too weak to beat once more.

Here at the end of my research I still feel uneasy. I understand this question better now, but I do not know it. To know all of it would be to know all who have and will be, for it is that. The collective experience that can answer this. On a more personal level, I do truly feel at peace, only in knowing that I am unbound and I am free. To search amongst the waves through time and distance. And so I no longer feel lost. I simply feel. And that is my answer. I had lost that, the understanding of emotion, and I now can know it better. I can explore it. And I can regain what I felt to be lost. Even if I am no longer a child.

As I have spent time with things most influential to all I have gathered my own and others conclusions. As listed below.

As part of my research, I surveyed several members of my community. The questions, responses, and analysis is below. Each is in order of presentation and the entire survey can be viewed [here](#)

Question #1: [What do we lose when we are no longer children? What brings that thing back to us? Even for a moment.](#)

“We love simplicity. When you’re young everything is simple. Life is easy. The hardest choice you ever have to make is where you’ll eat for lunch. Authority is the enemy, your friends fight beside you and your passions become your source of power. When we grow up we lose that. Friends go through hard times, we battle with our brains, colleges demand choices that affect our entire future and suddenly everything isn’t so simple anymore.”

“When we grow up we are given responsibility. Suddenly there are things we must do, and real punishments if we don’t. I feel like I have forgotten what it feels like to truly live without a huge sense of pressure. Sometimes I will come to my parent’s room in the morning after my dad has gone to work, and lay in the bed with my mom and dog. We just talk about little things and giggle, I guess that makes me feel like a kid again.”

“We lose the ability to believe in something without proof. I think fiction, whether writing or tv shows or whatever it may be, allows us to step away from that and be in a different world for even a moment.”

“We lose ignorance, and something that brings it back is doing things that we truly enjoy, that we can get caught up in long enough to forget all the things we wish we never learned.”

“We lose being naive to the world. I guess things like love brings that back.”

“Innocence. Love.”

Analysis: As we age we can no longer fully trust and believe and only in fictions do we seem so pure.

Question #2: *When you were young what things did you hold dear?*

“In the freezer, my family kept a little ice pack shaped like a bunny, and I held it very dear because whenever I got a mild injury like scraping my knee or something my parents would use the ice bunny to soothe it, and aside from those times they were never really close.”

“I loved the back room in my house because that’s where all the toys were. I would always go back there to play with my cousins or alone. I held that room and all of the things in it, dear.”

“Music. I used it to define a legacy. I made a statement about who I was, who I was going to be, where I was gonna go. It was my voice, and I felt like the whole world could hear it.”

“I was extremely shy, so anything that was comfortable I latched onto.”

“I loved stuffed animals and just the most random little trinkets.”

“Trinkets and photos”

Analysis: As children, we subconsciously form; we build ourselves from what we keep close.

Question #3: *What things have followed you and still remain cherished?*

“God never left my side, as silly as it sounds to others. He was the last one standing beside me when the world fell apart around me and to this day it’s a hand I wouldn’t dream of letting go. We’re in it for the long haul.”

“I don’t have a great answer for this because I don’t have many things from my childhood. I still have my family and cousins, also photographs.”

“The only thing that’s really stuck with me from when I was younger is how much I like drawing.”

“I still collect random little things and grow an attachment to them too easily.”

“Certain friendships have never wavered since I was very very young.”

“Memories of friends.”

Analysis: as children, we believe we are gullible and stubborn, and so even if our world falls what we believe remains.

Question #4: What was lost? Is it gone forever? Why?

“I like feeling I could hold the world together back then. I liked telling myself that by helping people to extreme lengths would make people love me. But now I’ve to some extent let that go because I know that’s not how the world works and I don’t need to earn love.”

“I lost my innocence. It is gone forever no matter how much I wish I could get it back. Once you learn something, you can’t forget it.”

“The past. It is a moment gone by and eventually, it will fade with time, but no matter what it can never be recreated or returned to.”

“My naive sense that my parents were practically perfect and couldn’t do anything wrong as most kids think, is definitely gone.”

“I am no longer blissfully unaware of everything bad. I am hyper-aware now actually. that will never go away.”

“So much is lost, and I hope it’s gone forever because I was a little bitch as a kid lmao”

Analysis: With everything we endure in life we all inevitably become aware of hardships and that is a permanent change.

Question #5: Do you wish you could regain the fervor of your childhood? Why?

“Yes. I had more confidence in my future. I knew exactly where I was going without ever needed to know how I was going to get there. I was a dreamer and it gave life its sparkle. I still have a bit of that but not to that level.”

“Yes, sometimes. I felt much more excited when I was younger, like on Christmas Eve or Easter morning. I do have to remind myself that we romanticize the past, it wasn’t all perfect.”

“This is kind of a leading question? I don’t remember having that much fervor as a child - I mainly just enjoyed whatever other people told me I should enjoy.”

“Yes. I was so fearless then, didn’t think twice and jumped headfirst. Not to mention that I loved without fear, I miss that.”

“Yes. I want to be able to get completely lost in something that isn't real.”

“Yes, because I didn't have to deal with what I do now. It's harder now.”

Analysis: As we grow, we lose the unyielding confidence of our ability, we lose faith in ourselves.

Question #6: *Do you feel that the changes you see now were out of your control? do you regret these changes? why?*

“Well, the changes that came are just the byproduct of growing up. The changes were out of my control, but that doesn't mean I didn't want them. When I was younger, all I could think about was how amazing my teenage years would be. I really did want to grow up. I regret that I didn't cherish my childhood, but I don't regret changing.”

“I don't think I have a lot of control over anything, I don't know if I even believe in free will. I don't regret changing as a person, though. I have a lot of things that I fucked up on that I really wish I could go back in time and redo, but on the other hand, I guess I'm glad they happened because I learned and I grew.”

“Yes. I regret them in the sense that everything is so crushingly real now. the news, for instance, is awful and relentless. It's like learning to read before you could read a sign was just a sign, but now your brain immediately decodes what you're seeing. you can't' NOT read anymore.”

“I know that my life is something that will happen and the events that take place against me are often out of my control. I wouldn't ever take back any second of my life. It has made me the person I am and I am very much proud of her.”

“It depends on the changes. Depends whether I had a choice in the matter or not. I do regret some things, but I'm trying not to dwell on them anymore. I can't change them.”

“Yes, like my parent's divorce was out of my control, things like that. I regret why it happened, not that it did happen.”

Analysis: As we grow, we lose the value. Now we take time given for granted in order to look to the future.

As I have researched children's media I find contrasting worlds, in movies and tv it seems so easy to get someone to change to come to the good side and abandon their hate or harm. This is a sense instills this hope in us as we grow, that the world is good. And we can make it better. A stark contrast to my perceptions now. The world is not good or bad, the people in it are both. And so the world simply is. If the world is to be good so must we. But as we fall we become tempted by fear and power to turn against others. And we shun the world built for us by the youth within our hearts.

In all honesty, we all lose the simplicity that comes with childhood. The world no longer is black and white. People aren't always good, but that doesn't make them bad. And although we may wish for simpler times, I can say that such wishes true would hurt. It is within the grey areas that we find those vibrant colors, once again a new beauty complex and unique. We may stand to lose simplicity but we all have the capacity for hope. So while I may not know what we all lose once we grow, I know that we all still, can hope. And we can build new worlds complex and changing, as we change and grow. The beauty of childhood is a gift. But to move on is to use such a gift. So when we grow up we lose the anticipation that comes with gifts. But we stand to gain the world, and only if we chose so, is this world less than our memories of times past.