

ANGELA CANNATELLI

Artist Interview



CW: What drew you towards photography initially? Have you always been interested in photography?

AC: Art has always been a huge part of my life. My dad is a musician and owns a music studio, so I was always around musicians and artists. My mom let me play with disposable cameras and our polaroid at home, and it was the only thing that would get me to leave the house for gatherings/events. I love the versatility of photography. I always found myself behind the camera whether it was for fun, photographing my friends' bands, or helping my mom with real estate photos, then I put two and two together. Around 14/15 is when being a working and /or fine art photographer became my primary goal.

CW: Briefly describe your experience as a fine art photographer - what do you feel has been your 'peak' moments? Your biggest struggles?

AC: That's a tough question. My 'peak' moments as a fine artist was selling my first pieces. That was the most validating experience. Like someone wants to pay me for a photo I took and hang it in their home? I can make people feel with images I make? It really pushed me to go to art school...which leads to my biggest struggles. Mental health has always been a struggle for me. The combination of growing up, a heavy workload, poor mental health and family issues made school really hard for me. School always pushed me to my limit, but I wish I could do it all over again. The people here have taught me so much and I am so much stronger and wiser now. I navigated through that struggle and came out the other side proud of myself.

CW: How would you describe your photographic style?

AC: Loud, vibrant, hyper-femme and clean.

CW: Who are your biggest influences?

AC: Parker Day, Alex Prager, Phebe Schmidt, Cindy Sherman, bell hooks, Sara Ahmed, Jim Henson, Tracey Emin, Jo-Ann Callis. I have images and writings from all of these artists I always refer to when I'm feeling down or unsure. Their imagery and words have all served and still serve as an atlas in my life. To continue to speak my truth and search for new truths. To keep on fighting through my work and research. I love artists who can be political and important without being too serious.



CW: Do you like working on short term projects that vary or one constant project over a long period of time? Why?

AC: I like working on multiple projects at the same time, whether they be short or long term. When I'm too focused on one thing, I start going crazy and making it worse. When I have multiple outlets, it allows my brain to take a break on one project but engage a separate part of my brain on another (if that makes any sense). Losing momentum really kills me, so I like to keep myself working on a few things at once.

CW: What feelings or emotions do you want to evoke through your work?

AC: Empowered, playful, nostalgic, curious and sometimes critical.

CW: What is your artistic process like?

AC: Lots of reading/research and lists. I feel the most creative when I have a lot to work from and when I'm fascinated or obsessed with a subject. The fabric store is also a place where a lot of ideas happen. I like to play with colors, patterns and memories. Right now, my practice is pretty solitary but I am looking to collaborate more soon.

CW: Do you ever feel 'stuck'? How do you force yourself out of that rut?

AC: I always feel stuck in between short bursts of momentum. When I'm stuck I try to step back and stop. I do something else and try to do research in the meantime. I like to experiment with makeup, collage, sculpture and writing. When I get too stuck and frustrated, I get destructive so I try to pull back when I start having those feelings. I try not to force myself, once I start forcing myself, my work gets heavy handed. My work is only as enjoyable as it was for me to make it. If I was miserable making the piece, the piece usually isn't that strong.

CW: What photographic tools have you used or do you currently use? Why did you choose this tool? (film v. digital etc)

AC: I use my digital camera out of convenience. I love the look and feel of polaroid and I hope to incorporate that into my work sooner than later. I have been starting to experiment more with digital manipulation in Photoshop as well.



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CW: What are you working on this semester? How have you approached this project?

AC: This semester I am focusing more on my childhood and memories. A lot of trauma and formative experience happen in childhood and makes people who they are. I wanted to take a look at symbols and stories from my past and bring them to life through self portraits and still lives. Writing has been really helpful to dig up weird memories that resonate with others, especially around my age.

CW: What made you want to start this project?

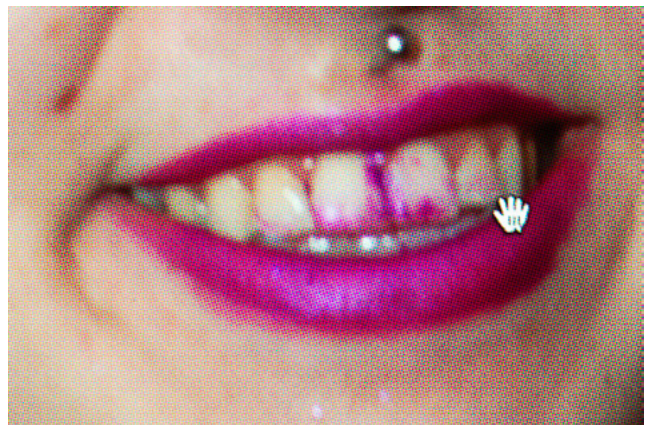
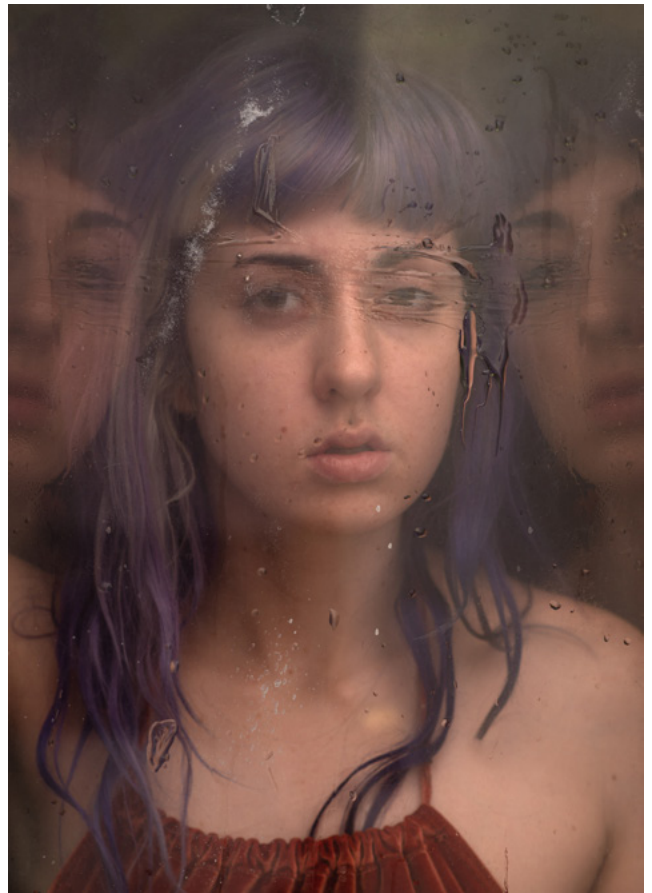
AC: My own trauma. I believe a lot of my mental health issues were formed from repeated trauma and fear I had growing up. Sharing my experiences makes me feel validated and has been really helpful in my healing process. My image "Recess" resonated with more people than I originally thought. My classmates' response to the "Cootie Catcher" and hearing all of their own stories attached to it made me realize I was on to something.

CW: What themes do you explore through your photography? Do you find your intentions more personal to you or do they address something wider?

AC: Childhood and Womanhood and the transition in between. My intentions always start off personal then ends up addressing something wider, I always believed the personal is political.

CW: How do you think your work has evolved over time?

AC: My work used to be much more vague and formal. I liked taking pictures of buildings, light shadow and traditional portraits. I think I was still fascinated with the mechanics of the camera. Now my work is much more focused and research based.



CW: What is your biggest takeaway from your time at MassArt?

AC: Another big question. MassArt pushed me to my limit. As students, we are constantly pushed to produce an abundance of high quality work on a consistent basis. Staying organized has been key to finding success here. Another takeaway is the value of community and my peers. I have always isolated myself and made myself somewhat of a loner. I wish I included myself more and was more involved in our little community. The feedback I have received from everyone, teachers and peers alike, has helped focus my vision and point of view.

CW: What are your plans going forward/post graduation?

I will hopefully continue my work in Boston. I am currently taking photos for: The Boston Childrens' Hospital, local event photographer, Carla Osberg, as well as doing some freelance work taking primarily product photos and headshots. I hope to improve my social media/ online presence and keep submitting my current body of work for grants or exhibitions ect.,

AC: My goal is to save up money so I will be able to invest into my practice, studio space and future as a professional photographer. I want my camera to be able to keep me fed while keeping me creative.

Interview by: Caroline Wirawan

