

## Caroline Wirawan Interview Spring 2020

*Interviewed by Angela Cannatelli*

Q. How did you start photography?

A. I started around high school and just make you feel like taking photos on my phone. I used my Nokia phone to start from there in my hometown. A lot of kids my age were starting their own freelance photography business so I kind of got ideas and it started from there.

Q. Who are some of your photographic influences?

A. To be quite honest I had zero exposure to contemporary artists and fine art photographers having grown up in Indonesia. Coming to MassArt was the first time I had ever really discovered and came to understand all about contemporary photography and in some ways it's been a really difficult journey. This might sound really "digital-age" or "millennial-y" but for the longest time I've always looked to Instagram for photographers and they inspire me a lot. I looked at a lot of photographers that were local to my hometown like Kezia Adina @keziaadina on instagram and Ryan Tandya @ryantandya. They are both fashion photographers and around my age group so I guess in that sense I felt more connected and closer to the work they were making. However, that being said being at MassArt has definitely exposed me to a whole different world of photographers. Throughout my four years of being at MassArt I've been inspired by a lot of different photographers. There are some of the more obvious photographers I've loved because of my interest in fashion photography such as Richard Avedon and Irving Penn and then there are photographers like Rinko Kawauchi and Terri Weifenbach that have played a huge role in impacting the way I made work and saw other people's work here at MassArt. I'm drawn to the tenderness in both these artist's work and the different ways they've both captured the otherwise mundane reality.

Q. How has your work evolved, and why?

A. When I look back and see my work before and after coming to MassArt, I think the one way it's changed the most is that it has become a lot more personal. I've put myself in the forefront of my work a lot more (figuratively not literally lol), I've really dugged into myself a lot more over the past four years and tried really hard to make this concoction of work I'd like to make and work that means something to me which has honestly been a big struggle for me and I haven't really overcome this struggle yet! Being interested in fashion photography has definitely made it extra hard for me to think about fine art photography and how to combine the two. Being at Massart people often perceive fashion photography to be problematic because it's empty and it does not hold a deeper meaning, which I do understand this way of thinking although it has been the bane of my existence being here at MassArt. But I'm definitely appreciative of the lessons I've learned at MassArt, four years ago I never would have thought I would make work revolving around grieving and loss, and now fast forward four years I'm making work that's really emotionally difficult to make but is also a really important time in my life and I have this body of work to commemorate that.

Q. What are some core themes in your work?

- A. This is a really tough question to answer.. Over the past four years I've really been trying to figure out what to do with myself and with my work and in the struggle I'd say that I don't really see one single theme revolving around all of my work. Each semester has been really different from the other, sometimes I think that's the way my mind works, I work from a short term project to the next. I've explored themes of femininity, departure, identity and performance, grieving and loss. Each project I've worked on has been different from the other so it's hard to say that I've had a core theme that has revolved around all my work. I think when I photograph more personal things I look a lot into things that are currently happening to me, changes in my life (big or small), for some reason I'm drawn to melancholy. There is a depth to sadness that I love to translate into my photographs. I'm drawn to scrutinizing the little things around me, to photographing the tenderness in my everyday life, much like Kawauchi and Weifenbach.

Q. How would you describe your artistic process?

- A. I write down where this stuff like that I feel like I just go out and shoot but I'm coming from like this fashion background also used to like staging everything in like planning everything ahead of time and having everything like that so I feel like going into my car and dented it be still as the night like going into this project not really knowing what to photograph I'm not having any payment plan has been like a really into a little

Q. Why photography? Why did you start? Why do you continue?

- A. For me photography came pretty much out of nowhere. Nobody in my family has ever taken interest in photography and my parents found it really strange at first but fortunately they've become more supportive over time. I don't have that specific moment where I discovered or fell in love with photography but I feel like it's been a part of my life for as long as I can remember! I started around middle school and just hung onto it until high school, in the beginning of high school I started freelance photography and began taking portraits of people having close to zero knowledge about photography. I slowly taught myself how to work the manual mode lol and learned from mistake after mistake and fast forward to today and It's still what I would love to do with my life going forward. I think one of the things that's really kept me going with photography is I really cherish the experiences that happen behind the camera, the collaborative aspect of it, the new people I meet and the pleasure of creating images together!

Q. How would you define your own style?

- A. I think one word I would use to describe my style is soft but to be honest it's really hard to describe my style with a single word. I feel like in my mind I've separated my interest in fashion photography and fine art photography into two different bubbles. In my fashion photography, I enjoy staging images and exploring environmental portraiture whereas in my fine art photography, I'm drawn to everyday things and capturing them in a more poetic and soft way. Although, I am trying to find a happy gray area between these two bubbles it's been a struggle.



Q. What are your plans going forward like after graduation? Do you see yourself pursuing photography in the future? How so?

- A. I'm an international student in Boston but I'm planning to apply for this visa after work here so I am really hoping that I can like to work in photography in the fashion world or fine art photography. I definitely see myself pursuing photography, although I don't think I see myself as a contemporary artist. I've been a freelance photographer since I was in 7th grade and I think that's what I have always wanted to do. Although I'm appreciative of the ways MassArt has challenged me to make different work, I don't see myself continuing to make this work as part of my future career or life. To be honest, making the work I've been making at MassArt has been a little bit stressful for me at times. It's made me reevaluate myself over and over and over again, it's made me hate and question the work I was making and I miss the really free and open ended experience of just photographing what I want for the sake of photographing what I want. Doing what I love because I love doing it. Doing things for no reason at all lol. So yes I'd definitely love to further pursue photography just not quite in the way that I've been photographing for the past 4 years in my life.







































