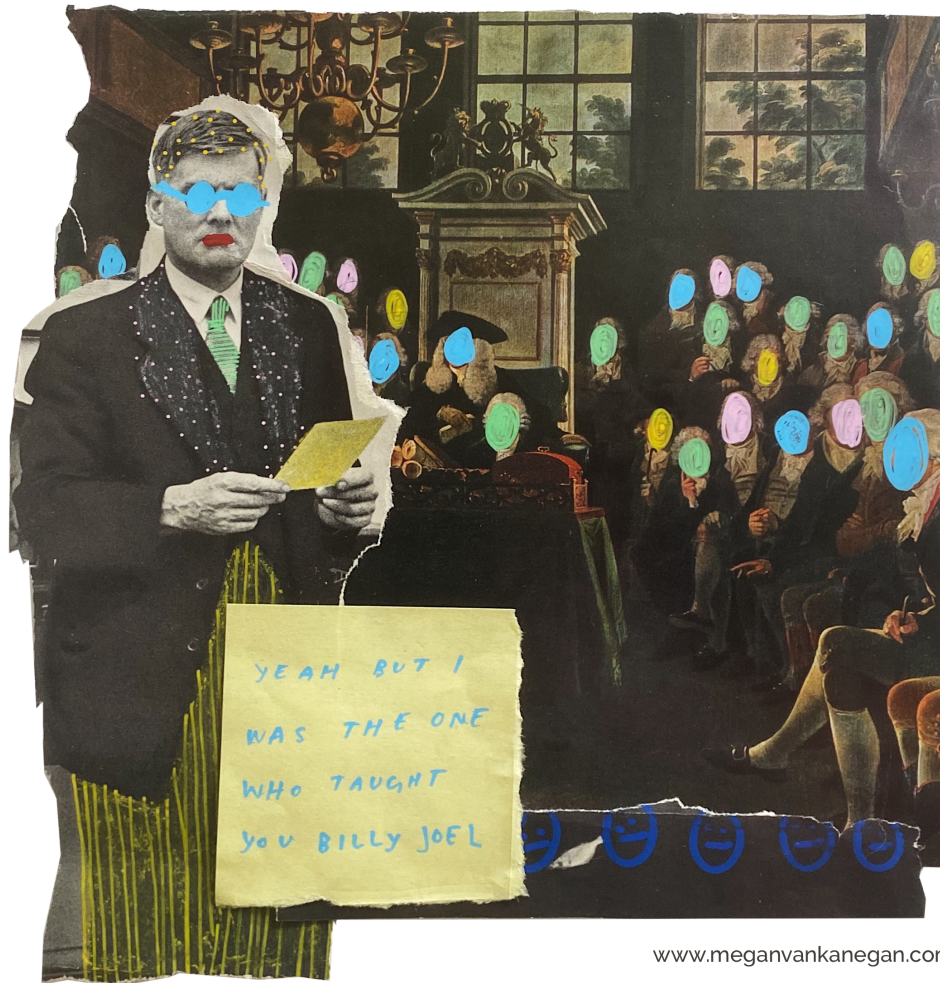


MEGAN VANKANEGAN

2022 ART & ART HISTORY
MFA THESIS EXHIBITION



www.meganvankanegan.com

DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

MAY 6-20, 2022

2022 ART & ART HISTORY MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

The *2022 Art and Art History MFA Thesis Exhibition* features the thesis works of the MFA candidates in Columbia College Chicago's Art and Art History Department. The exhibition, which includes artists' books, prints, drawings, sculptures, photography, sound, projections, and installation works, represents the culmination of two years of development on a cohesive body of work for each artist.

Participating artists:

Kelsey Bogdan

John Bolin

Caitlyn Doran

Samantha Trace Foster

Anna Lipscomb

Alexander Jose Luis Ramirez

Chris Tasiar

Megan VanKanegan

The *2022 Art and Art History MFA Thesis Exhibition* is presented in conjunction with the Department of Exhibitions, Performance and Student Spaces (DEPS), the Department of Art and Art History, and Paul Catanese, Director of Graduate Studies for Art and Art History.

MEGAN VANKANEGAN

Lifetime warranty is a site-specific installation created from the impulse to bring out what is inside you, work with what is around you, and turn towards joy. *Lifetime warranty* uses collage to confront you with a vision of the world that is literally constructed from the physical context of my own experience. Found images and objects function as signifiers of both individual and collective experience. By incorporating materials that are inextricably linked to the realities of daily life, I attempt to establish an immediate identification, both real and imagined, between you and the work. Though collage, a range of elements align to create a scene. It is a practice of synthesis and noticing small details, waiting for the right ones to be present at the same time so they can come together and sing.

Megan VanKanegan is an artist, designer, and educator living and working in Chicago, Illinois. In 2016, she received her BA in Fine Arts from Columbia College Chicago, and her AA in Interior Design in 2012 at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising in Los Angeles, California. Megan has combined these two focuses and created an interdisciplinary practice. She has participated in several solo and group exhibitions throughout the country, primarily based in Chicago and New York City.

Website: www.meganvankanegan.com

Instagram: [@mvk_arwork](https://www.instagram.com/mvk_arwork)



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Lifetime warranty (detail), 2022, paint, marker, found paper



Lifetime warranty (installation test), 2022, paint, marker, found paper



Lifetime warranty (installation test), 2022, paint, marker, found paper



Lifetime warranty (installation test), 2022, paint, marker, found paper



Lifetime warranty (detail), 2022, paint, marker, found paper

INTERVIEW WITH MEGAN VANKANEGAN

Conducted by Sierra Delamarter

Sierra Delamarter: You say that the process of making your pieces is more important than the outcome of your artwork. Could you explain some of the processes behind some of your works? How do you start? When do you know the piece is done?

Megan VanKanegan: A lot of my work is made from a need to engage even remotely with the world. There is one area of bipolar disorder not often talked about, excessive thoughts and behavior. Getting something stuck in your head – the catchy chorus of a song or a gruesome image from the news – can be annoying for anyone. But annoying turns to alarming when intrusive thoughts, worries, or even enthusiasms turn debilitating. In my experience, racing thoughts can take over my mind and sometimes life. It's not just thoughts that you can't keep up with, it's a burden of images and worrisome sentences that can make you feel like you're going to explode. It's beyond devastating. It doesn't have to be the bigger things in life. Often, I worry about literally nothing. It starts with concern, then turns to anxiety, then depression, and I struggle with a cycle of ridiculous or irrelevant things overcoming me. You must get these thoughts out in some way or another. I don't write. I don't speak in a serious manner much. My way is to draw on the crumpled-up face mask I just used laying on my nightstand or literally complete a large oil painting in my bed to allow myself to stop these thoughts the only way I know how. (Note to self to stop buying expensive sheets...) I have been known as an obsessive documentarian. I have spent most of my life and have been homing in grad school the impulse to allow others to understand the struggle I encounter nonstop. Blankness makes us uneasy. Confronted with silence or an empty sheet of paper, we feel the urge to fill it. For a few, this is a defining

compulsion, frighteningly known in Latin as horror vacui and usually associated with messy drawings by the mentally ill. I would not go as far to say I am an Edmund Monsiel, but if his work were to be described – obsessive repetition, multiplication of the same, and not a millimeter of each sheet that would not contain a face – I can see the relation. Will I leave over five hundred drawings with unknown dates from decades to be found in my bedroom after my death? Probably, yes. Or in the unfortunate case that I die sooner than I expect: they are in my kitchen cabinet currently. Drawings or paintings I thought documented a moment in time, that I don't think are good enough to be seen by anyone, have been a part of my life since I adopted the ability to hold a crayon. Thirty two years later, I still criticize my skills and experiences so often that most of the time, my work never sees the light of day. I don't ever think any work is "done." I tend to repaint canvases and rework things after I have had time away from them. I have grown and have learned so I believe work can always be improved. A bitter curse for me, at times, but also saves me money and is sustainable. I suppose the only time I haven't gone back to a piece and continued working on it is if it is sold to somebody. I do know when to stop working on something, however, and take that break from it; when I am no longer enjoying it and it starts to feel like actual work, I am done.

SD: You have a wide range of materials used to create your works. Do you have any preferred methods to express your concepts?

MV: When inspiration hits, there are many roadblocks to being able to create traditional artworks. Most of the time, the blockade is that I am in a bipolar depression episode. I am so exhausted and the bare minimum of what I am physically able to do is exist. If I

INTERVIEW WITH MEGAN VANKANEGAN continued

Conducted by Sierra Delamarter

want to purge this feeling, I better have materials very close to me. Most of the time, that means a paper towel or a receipt on my nightstand with some markers or pencils I have in the drawer. The inspiration is fleeting. The materials I end up using are just as discarded by me as my emotions I would like to document. I wake up every day and have no idea where the day will go. I may feel invincible, or I may in all honesty, not wake up at all. My materials are chosen on my physical and emotional energy I am able to give. When I hit truly tragic is when I have created my favorite works, but those materials require more physical labor – oil paints, plaster, nylon stockings, etc – and the task of creating at that time is most likely the only thing keeping me going/keeping me alive.

SD: Many of your pieces consist of exaggerated self-portraits. How does self-image affect your work and process?

MV: I love this question. I hate myself, but I draw myself constantly since I am the main character in my life. I've always used self-portraiture as an opportunity to play and experiment with new techniques in my work. My way of storytelling if you will. If you draw yourself enough times, it becomes second nature, therefore you are very comfortable in the idea of change. On one hand, I have created so many self-portraits at different times and ages in my life that I've cataloged the march of time and maturity of my skills. On the other hand, I form my self-portraits in such a way that my experience—my past, present, and future all blend together. There is a consistency in the inconsistency. The most difficult part of creating a self-portrait is to be objective and reveal sides of yourself that may be well-hidden. The most rewarding part is to succeed in doing it.



THE DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

The DEPS Artist Profile Series presented by Columbia College Chicago's Department of Exhibitions, Performance and Student Spaces (DEPS), is a virtual publication on select artists involved with the DEPS Galleries and the Columbia College Chicago community. Our goal with this series is to connect artist and viewer on a deeper level, and to highlight the amazing works and thoughts of our featured artists through interviews, artist biographies, and catalogs of work. Art has always been a way to connect with others, no matter where one may physically be. We hope by presenting the creativity and insights of the people involved in the DEPS Artist Profile Series that viewers may have one more way to stay in touch with, and support the arts community. The DEPS Artist Profile Series is managed by Fine Arts major and DEPS Exhibitions Assistants Kaylee Fowler and Sierra Delamarter. Graphic design is managed by DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Gray Beyer. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

Learn more at: colum.edu/deps

Contact information: Mark Porter, mporter@colum.edu / 312.369.6643

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