

# emmalyn mueller

## BFA MANIFEST 2023 SHOW

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### DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

May 12-June 6, 2023

# OUT OF THE BASEMENT: 2023 UNDERGRADUATE FINE ARTS THESIS EXHIBITION

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*Out of the Basement: 2023 Undergraduate Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition* features the works of thirteen BFA candidates in Columbia's Fine Arts program. The exhibition, which includes paintings, drawings, sculpture, prints, books, garments, video, performance, and installation works, represents the culmination of four years of development of a cohesive body of work for each artist while earning their degrees.

**Participating artists:** Jacob Ashba, Charlotte Briskin, Daniela Castro, Michelle Goldshmidt, Amairani Martinez, Ariaunna McCloud, emmalyn mueller, Kevin Rivera, Carolina Romo, James Ross, Sofie Way, Cordelia Weatherby, Emma Wilmarth.

*Out of the Basement: 2023 Undergraduate Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition* is presented in conjunction with the Department of Exhibitions, Performance, and Student Spaces (DEPS) and the Art and Art History department, and Adam Brooks, Professor at Columbia College Chicago.

# emmalyn mueller

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**emmalyn mueller's** work explores the intricacies of the queer femme experience and expands past traditional notions of femininity. they focus on themes of identity, sexuality, and queer joy. bright colors and sparkle allow them to create vulnerable work that deals with complex issues yet is still approachable and fun. emmalyn proudly reclaims the term "fruity" and repeatedly uses the strawberry as a mode of self-portraiture.

emmalyn's practice is a balance of precision and improvisation. they experiment with unconventional materials like rhinestones, glitter, and fiber to engage in play while pushing the boundaries of art and craft. they believe that the distinction between art and craft is rooted in misogyny, and they use art as a form of resistance and a tool to appreciate the body they inhabit. it is their goal to continue traditions of feminist artists while inserting their own queer perspective into the narrative.

**emmalyn mueller** is a non-binary lesbian artist whose practice includes painting, printmaking, bookmaking, sewing, and more. they use bright colors, glittery materials, and fruity imagery to create art that centers around themes of queerness and femininity. their work is informed by their interest in art history, craft, and fashion. emmalyn will earn their BFA at Columbia College Chicago in spring 2023.

**Website:** [emmalynmueller.wixsite.com/emmalyn](http://emmalynmueller.wixsite.com/emmalyn)

**Instagram:** [@emmalyn.mueller](https://www.instagram.com/emmalyn.mueller)



*"mulberry funfetti"*, 2022, artist book with handmade mulberry and abaca papers, glitter, thread, and acrylic paint, 5.5" x 9"



*can i have a hug?*, 2021, acrylic paint, glitter, vintage doily, wood, thread, and wire, 26" x 26" x 6"



*grow a pair*, 2022, acrylic paint, glitter, and rhinestones on wood, 11" x 8"



*have your cake and eat it too*, 2021, artist book with acrylic paint, India ink, and glitter, 4.75" x 8.25"



emmalyn mueller and Mats Dahlberg, *artist garments*, 2022, canvas, acrylic paint, acrylic embellishments, glitter, rhinestones, vintage doilies, found fabric, ribbon, thread, and other materials





starberry, 2022, intaglio print with rhinestones, 11" x 9"



*strawberry shortcake*, 2022, acrylic paint, India ink, and glitter on canvas, 40" x 30"



*supple and succulent*, 2021, intaglio prints with chine collé, handmade paper elements, India ink, and embroidery, 10" x 11"



*vulva*, 2022, acrylic paint, India ink, thread, pearl, glitter, and menstrual blood on canvas, 10" x 10"



*open heart surgery (nothing gold can stay)*, 2021, acrylic paint, India ink, glitter, ribbons, and beads on canvas, 4' x 3' each

# INTERVIEW WITH emmalyn mueller

Conducted by Sierra Delamarter

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**Sierra Delamarter:** How do your choices of media lend to the expression of queer joy in your work?

**emmalyn mueller:** the bright rainbow colors and sparkly materials that i use in my work inherently radiate queer joy. i choose materials that bring me joy in an effort to spark happiness and imagination in others, and i use techniques such as rhinestoning, beading, and embroidery to honor my queer ancestors who passed down those practices.

**SD:** How is your art a form of resistance? How does this relate to your themes of craft vs. art, femininity, and queerness?

**em:** my work boldly celebrates queerness, transness, fatness, sensitivity, and femininity -- all things that i have been made to feel ashamed of throughout my life. my art is an act of resistance against the toxic ideologies that are still limiting our country today. i use my art to reject the shame that was forced upon me and confidently take up space. additionally, i use art as a form of feminist resistance to showcase historical craft practices that are unfairly devalued.

**SD:** What first inspired you to use a strawberry as a form of self-portrait? What draws you to using bright and glittery colors? How does this approach relate to your reclamation of the term 'fruity'?

**em:** a few years ago, my mom and i were discussing our similarities to strawberries (red hair, freckles, pink skin), and we decided to get matching strawberry tattoos. using the strawberry to represent myself felt fitting on so many levels, so i just kept expanding on the idea. it's really special to me that my mom has such an important connection to my art.

as i mentioned earlier, i choose materials that bring me joy. i have always been drawn to bright colors and glittery surfaces, and i really enjoy being able to take kitschy, playful materials and transform them into elevated, sincere works of art.

by using fruit symbolism, i am reclaiming the term "fruity." the fruit imagery combined with my colorful, sparkly approach shows viewers that i love my queerness and i have no shame in being "fruity."

**SD:** Who or what are your biggest inspirations as a queer feminist artist? How have you continued the legacy of activists before you, and how do you plan to continue doing so?

**em:** i am inspired by so many other artists, such as Kehinde Wiley, Anna Kunz, Claire Ashley, and Yayoi Kusama (just to name a few). also, i am influenced by the writings of Audre Lorde and bell hooks, and i am continually inspired by my artistic collaborator and best friend, Mats Dahlberg.

i am continuing the legacy of artistic activists before me by using my practice to create community, cultivate queer joy, and reject cis heteronormativity. in the future, i plan to create a multi-purpose studio space that can be used for creating art, providing tattoos, and hosting community events. art has helped me heal my inner child and celebrate my identity, and i plan to use my practice to help other people of marginalized identities do the same thing.



## 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 DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Rachel Manlubatan and Sierra Delamarter. Graphic design is also managed by DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Rachel Manlubatan. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

**Learn more at:** [colum.edu/deps](http://colum.edu/deps)

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**Glass Curtain Gallery:** 1104 S Wabash Ave, First Floor, Chicago, IL 60605

**Gallery Hours:** Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.