



BIENNIAL
School of Art, Design
& Creative Industries



Ulrich Museum of Art

The XXIII Faculty Biennial ***It's All Part of the Process***

Artist Statement

Megan Ewert

In undergraduate, I created a series of collages about the collision of ideas surrounding alchemy, transformation, gender, and the abject. The images themselves were evocative, but I then added text that functioned like poetry. Seeking out existing language that reflected the stories I wanted to tell, I selected text not by reading passages in context but as individual lines. The discovery process of this series remained influential in my practice in keeping a work as open as possible, for as long as possible, in order to be more present in the process of making.

The idea for the work presented in the Biennial formed during the onslaught of the pandemic in early March right after the death of my maternal grandmother. I wanted to create something that depicted a familial death in the tradition of Lucien Freud and Maggie Hambling or artists who sat in the room with death to record a personal but universal experience. This work focuses on the repetition of environment and conversation around the subject of dying, as well as the degradation of conversation due to a brain eroded by Alzheimer's. The same conversations often happened time and time again—repetition and lapses illustrate the destruction of that known entity and the scraping of the shared history of two individuals. Dante's *Divine Comedy* is an entry point into expressing a shared journey into various stages of decline.

My work focuses on the strangeness of intimacy—the voyeurism, the elation, the permission, the boundaries inherent in physical love. The work is almost always approached from the perspective of an outsider. In my drawings, I often attempt to incorporate unfamiliar materials to shake up my studio practice and value the inclusion of “intimate” materials. Working from photos taken by myself and close family in my grandmother's last days, I explored layering ephemeral materials on top of the recognizable pillow case upon which she died. The physical object becoming her proxy in presence, I liked the idea of including something that physically held her unto death. While many objects physically close to the deceased body are often thrown away due to their proximity to death, many things that pass in and out of families second-hand are often re-used without thought to their previous purpose. In this way, we are always touching death through the objects we keep.