

Allegheny College

One Month's Supply

A Look at My Mental Health Journey Through Candy

Abbey Ripko

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Studio Art Senior Comprehensive Project

First Reader Ian Thomas

Second Reader Angela Jennings

One Month's Supply

By Abbey Ripko
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I hereby recognize and pledge to fulfill my responsibilities, as defined in the Honor Code
and to maintain the integrity of both myself and the College.

Acknowledgements

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Artist statement

One Month's Supply is a piece which aims to combine conversations around mental health issues with contemporary pop art. This piece shines a light on the ways that psychiatric medicine has become more common than in previous generations due to the epidemic of poor mental health among young adults.

I aim to entice viewers with this project by displaying the brilliant lollipops I have created in a way that pulls viewers to my piece, making them wish they could actually consume the lollipops they see. I want to make viewers ponder the meaning of the medicine bottles in combination with the candy. I am attempting to combine pop art and talks around mental health into a new niche in the contemporary art world.

This art piece is a visual representation of time. Each lollipop varies like each week in my college experience has. Each lollipop was made using the same process time and time over to produce the quantity of lollipops in the piece. Materials included clear cellophane, styrofoam spheres of multiple sizes, wooden dowels, many color beads, crushed glass pieces, colored rocks, as well as party beads, styrofoam beads and plastic tubing.

The medicine bottles are a representation of my journey finding psychiatric medication that can control symptoms of my mental illness, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, as well as help my depression. I have tried four different medications, mainly antipsychotics and antidepressants. These medications have all varied in the way they worked to control my symptoms so I am attempting to represent them in a positive way by putting faux candy in their place.

Introduction

I chose to have this project represent my college experience. The last three and a half years have been a small fraction of my life but have felt so much bigger than any other time in my life. I have gone through many ups and downs that I just had to ride out and suffer with and enjoyed many other times that were so great I wish they never ended. This project, to me, is a quantifiable measure of my college experience. I am using this piece as a commemoration of my college experience because I want to be able to look back and be reminded of the great times this project represents. I am also using this piece to represent my mental health journey that I have been going through since I started college.

I will examine the ways influential films and artists have inspired and driven my work. Artists like Yayoi Kusama, Peter Anton and Tanya Schultz have been instrumental in the way I view art. I am in conversation with these artists because their work has inspired the ideas that led me to creating this project. I will also explore the epidemic of mental health issues among young adults, which I am already familiar with through my own experience. My art piece serves as a channel through which mental health,

psychiatric medication, candy and pop art can combine to spark a completely new conversation.

Inspiration

My favorite movie as a child was *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. I have always admired Willy Wonka's prolific candy making operation. I even read *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl when I was in fifth grade. This movie is so inspiring to me because it is so intricate and well produced. Each time I watch the movie I feel immersed in the cinematic universe and in the chocolate factory itself. This project has pushed me to immerse myself in my own world of candy while also making space for the important conversation that must be had about mental health.

I aim to make my lollipops in a fashion that would be akin to producing lollipops in a factory like Willy Wonka's. I have aspired to embody the character of Willy Wonka as I dedicated my time to making "candy", as he does. The story of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, how Willy Wonka gives his chocolate factory away to Charlie, speaks for how philanthropic a candy maker can be.

Artists That Have Inspired My Works

Three artists that I am in conversation with are Peter Anton, Yayoi Kusama and Tanya Schultz. Peter Anton is an American artist whose work revolves around "larger than life" realistic sculptures of sweets, confections, and candies. I originally got my idea for the large lollipops that I made for my Junior seminar from Peter Anton's exhibition *Sweet Dreams (2020)*. This show featured his own large lollipop sculptures as well as

other delectable sculptures of different sweets. Peter Anton has been making realistic art sculptures of different confections since 2014. His most recent show during 2020 featured ginormous sculptures of boxed chocolates, pastries with bright red cherry filling and realistic half eaten cakes on pedestals. Anton inspires me because I have an appreciation for hyperrealism, which he does with ease.



Peter Anton declares that he likes to create art that can “lure, charm, tease, disarm and surprise” (Peter Anton, 2022). He creates his sculptures by immersing himself in his subject matter and paying close attention to details and proportions. I have tried to dedicate myself to this project in a similar way by creating the lollipops and accompanying medicine bottles to similar “larger than life” proportions.

[Peter Anton, *Sunshine Variety*, 2022](#), mixed media, 36 × 36 × 5 in

I draw inspiration from Yayoi Kusama, especially from her Infinity series. I am amazed by the scale of her works like *Love is Calling* and *Obliteration Room*. I admire the interactive aspect of the *Obliteration Room*, as viewers are instructed to apply colorful dot stickers all over the stark white room. As more people interact with the



room, the room becomes more colorful and vibrant. Yayoi Kusama's work explores the obliteration of the self, as the viewer becomes part of the work (Hirshhorn Museum, 2022).

[Yayoi Kusama, Obliteration Room, 2022](#)

The Hirshhorn Museum has exhibited six of Kusama's infinity rooms together. Hirshhorn's page on Kusama's work goes on to say that "each of Kusama's kaleidoscopic environments offers the chance to step into an illusion of infinite space." I have been to her permanent installation *Repetitive Vision* (1996) at the Mattress Factory in Pittsburgh. *Repetitive Vision* features nude white mannequins with red dots in a room full of mirrors, from floor to ceiling. Yayoi Kusama's work explores the obliteration of the self, as the viewer becomes part of the work (Hirshhorn Museum, 2022).

Kusama's perspective on her art making is also inspiring to me. According to the Museum of Modern Art, she says "artwork is an expression of my life, particularly of my mental disease." She has Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) which she has been getting treatment for since 1973 (Kedmey, 2017). I also have OCD and I think this helps me to understand the darker side to her works even though we both have our own unique experience with this mental illness.

Yayoi Kusama's art intrigues me because of her use of repetition and the interactive nature of some of her exhibitions. Her newest project in collaboration with Kiki Smith are floor to ceiling mosaics in the new Grand Central Madison Terminal in New York City's subway system. Smith is a current resident of the city and Kusama lived in the city from 1958 to 1973 (Loos, 2022). They will work together to make 5 blocks of Madison Avenue into an underground art gallery in Manhattan (Loos, 2022). The upgrade is sure to attract attention, costing over \$11 billion dollars. The mosaics will cover around 2,400 square feet total, the New York Times writes. I am a proponent of public art and I think there should be more public art like this, especially from long time artists like Kusama.

Tanya Schultz is an Australian artist who I gather inspiration from. Her installations inspire me to be detail oriented. Her carefully created installations feature sugar, figurines, candy, sweets and craft materials to draw viewers into a whole new world she

has created. She works under the name Pip and Pop, which is also the name of her



most recent show from 2018. Her work embraces abundance, fleeting pleasure and utopian dreams. I would not be able to conceptualize the art that I have created without inspiration from these already established artists.

[Tanya Schultz. Pip & Pop. 2018](#)

Craft vs Art

I used craft materials like beads, glitter, sequins and ribbon to make the lollipops colorful and playful. These materials have taken on a new image in my eyes, since I have metaphorically become the candy maker myself. I now use beads, not for beaded jewelry, but for sprinkles on faux lollipops. Crushed glass pieces have become imitation rock candy. I used these materials and this project to imitate the nostalgic feeling of watching *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory*, which takes me back to a happy time in my life as a carefree kid.

The history of craft materials being viewed as lesser than fine arts materials relates to the way women's work has been historically minimized compared to men's work. Historically women have been craft makers so it makes sense that these materials have been deemed as less important or less worthy of admiration than fine

arts materials like oil paints. I decided to use craft materials to show what accessible media can produce in the context of art. The materials I use are accessible to most people because I bought them from craft stores like Joanns and Michaels and sourced other materials from Dollar Tree, and thus most people could access the materials I used. Therefore, if someone learned how to create lollipops, i.e. they learned the craft of lollipop making, they could create their own lollipops.

The main difference between craft and art has to do with emotional expression and the skills used to create crafts versus art. Art is considered to be an emotional expression of an artist whereas crafts are created by applying learned skills (Mullenix, 2021). Crafts can be recreated by people who have learned a certain skill like ceramics. Art is not able to be recreated. Art is considered completely unique in its own sense while following a certain style or aesthetic. While art and crafts are both considered creative outlets, there exists a boundary between fine arts like painting, sculpture, drawing and photography and crafts like ceramics, woodwork and glasswork (Mullenix, 2021).

As much as I want to think of this project as art, it seems to me that this should be considered a craft project. Since my subject matter is reproducible, this project should be considered an artistic craft project. Although I am expressing a personal struggle in this project, I am not intentionally expressing emotion, thus I do not think this should be considered art.

My Mental Health Journey

Mental health issues in young adults are continuing to worsen and there must be a conversation around it. A study conducted throughout June and July 2021 found that 48% of young adults ages 18-25 years old experienced mental health symptoms (Berthold, 2022). Thirty nine percent of those who reported having symptoms also used prescription medications and/or received counseling and 36% reported an unmet need for counseling (Berthold, 2022). While a study showing that nearly half of young adults experience mental health issues is alarming, this is down from a reported 63% of young adults experiencing anxiety or depression at the same time in 2020 (Czeisler et al, 2020).

My mental health journey has taken me from unmedicated and anxious to medicated and still anxious, just about less. I think anxiety is bound to follow me throughout my life. It has been a journey trying to find medications that work for me. As I trial new medications now to ease the anxiety that this semester has caused me, I reflect on how much my own thinking and outlook has changed since I started college.

I have struggled with my mental health for the past few years, regardless of if I was on medication or not. After so many years of living with unmedicated mental health problems, having a pill or two that makes the days bearable is like finding one of the golden tickets from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Living with mental illness is hard enough but being on medication that is ineffective is a whole different battle. Taking medications day after day that feel ineffective is something I have struggled with and want my art to represent. Both medications and candy are two solutions that may make one feel better temporarily, but ultimately do not solve the problem at hand. Just as candy can pacify a kid, prescription and recreational drugs pacify adults. Working

through my mental health issues requires an active approach and while medications help, they can not be the only solution.

I have been on a challenging mental health journey since I started college. It has been extremely difficult wanting to be done with college while mourning the times I lost out on because of my mental health issues. This art piece is meant to pay tribute to the struggle I have been going through while also bringing awareness to the fact that people who are really struggling can often appear to be just fine.

College has also revealed to me that certain people just have it easier. So many circumstances and factors outside of a person's control contribute to how well a person can cope with life. Some people are just born with more supportive parents or are able to seek mental health therapy and even medication. I am lucky to have such a supportive mom who will go to any lengths to help me get through my hard times. My mom has been known to say phrases like "I need a crazy pill" in a joking tone. That is where I came up with the idea to put "Crazy Pills 25 mg" and "Happy Pills 60 mg" as the prescribed medications in my piece *One Month's Supply*. I am on antipsychotics for my depression which is why I named one of the prescriptions "Crazy Pills". The other medication, the "Happy Pills", are meant to symbolize the anti-anxiety/antidepressants that I take daily as well. I named this piece "One Month's Supply" because I feel like it pulls together the ideas that the lollipops are my medication and that I am supplied with enough of them to get through one month.

This Project



I like to be able to have proof of the things I do so I feel like I have filled my time with good experiences. Since this entire project is a representative piece of my college experience and mental health journey, I wanted to portray all of it at once to make it feel grand and full of variety. I chose to represent the positive times I have had at college by making the lollipops fun, bright colors. I chose to refine this project to just lollipops, as my first project also featured gum balls, jeweled gum

drops, twisted lollipops, large wrapped candies, large pink Starburst candies and large lollipops painted and wrapped in cellophane. Refining this project to just lollipops allowed me to focus on the process of making the quantity of lollipops I envisioned.

My current work relates to my previous work because each project is made from craft media and incorporates candy. I went about this project in a different way than my previous one. Before, I aimed to make most of the candies individual and unique. For this project, I made a variety of different lollipops with repeated color combinations so that I could create a quantity of lollipops that felt significant.

I am using similar techniques and methods to create these lollipops as I employed for the precursor to this project last fall, *Pink Pleasures* (2021). Although this project is more refined than my first project, I employed both new and old techniques to make these lollipops. This is important because it shows how I have grown as an artist since my previous work. I want this work to feel significant and more intriguing than my previous project. It is important that these projects are connected in method and execution because the two projects are similar in style yet very different in meaning.

The time to make each of these lollipops varied by how large each lollipop was and by what media I used. To be expected, the smaller lollipops took less time, around 10 minutes to make and 5 minutes to package. The larger lollipops took up to thirty minutes each to make. The different craft media that I used, like beads, small colored rocks and crushed glass, each varied in how well it stuck to the hot glue, so there was variation in how long it took to make lollipops with these materials.

I think of this project as process art for which I am romanticizing the process of making each lollipop to inspire myself to keep going. Each lollipop made and packaged represents a window of time spent making a delectable little sculpture for viewers to want to consume. In totality, all of these lollipops represent time spent commemorating my college experience.

As this is process art, each lollipop gets about the same time and attention to detail. Each lollipop was made using the same technique which is different from my

previous project. I used a lot more different (pink) materials for my first project, and nearly all of the pieces are unique. For this project, I refined the focus a lot more and stuck only to the beaded lollipops, which were my favorite part of my previous project. While each lollipop is not unique in this project, the quantity, rather than individuality, is what I focused on.

My process for making the lollipops consisted of skewering a styrofoam ball with a wooden dowel, then adding a blob of hot glue to the surface. Then, I carefully added a palm full of beads or glass pieces or little rocks to the surface to decorate it. I repeated this process until the whole surface was covered. Once all the lollipops were made, the packaging was added to them. I wrapped a plastic bag around the lollipop and twisted it around the stick. With help from my mom, I added a ribbon around the plastic and curled it using the edge of my scissors. I finished off by cutting the plastic down so it flares past the ribbon.. It was a test of patience making each of these lollipops with the same technique each time. I could have gone about it in other ways but sticking to this method of production allowed me to be concerned more about the quantity of pieces I was creating.

It took some creative thinking to create the pill containers that I displayed with the lollipops. I sourced two plastic holiday ornament containers which are very proportional to a typical prescription medication bottle. I used multiple layers of amber film to make the plastic containers the typical transparent orange. I wanted the lollipops (medication) to be seen in the bottle since some of the lollipops remain in the container with the lid

off. I used scrapbooking paper to make the labels and attached them using double sided tape. I displayed the lollipops inside and outside of the pill containers, without the lids on, to represent medication that is being taken daily. I aimed to have the lollipops spread across the platform and floor like medication that has been spilled out its bottle.

One Month's Supply is a representational piece that has deep meaning and importance to myself. I hope that viewers will walk away from this piece with a glimpse at my own personal struggle, intrigued by the combination of candy and medication.

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