

CONSCIOUSLY, UNCONSCIOUS

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INTRODUCTION

TAKE YOUR HEARTBREAK AND MAKE IT INTO ART – Carrie Fisher

The idea of turning my personal life and my environment into art has always stuck with me throughout college. ***Consciously, Unconscious*** is a multimedia installation comprised of documentary photography, film, and a book. I play with the juxtaposition of chaotic and serious imagery which depicts the taboo subjects of college students engaging in sex, drugs, and alcohol, and how they deal with mental health and numbing pain. The installation visually represents the environment and culture I immersed myself in both physically and emotionally throughout college. My romantic relationships and friendships were affected by my peers' mental health and substance use. Unable to understand my peers' actions, I became curious about why some felt the need to numb themselves and distract themselves from reality while others didn't. I voluntarily surrounded myself in this environment in order to investigate the root of my peers' problems. By using the appellation "artist" I was able to interview, observe and document them. My project brought forth a certain honesty and intimacy under the guise of "interviewer" and "interviewee" and "participant" and "documenter."

PAST EXPERIENCE MAKES YOU STRONGER

I created a short film called *Pre-Med* about ways in which students access and abuse prescription drugs. It's also about the rise and fall of a man possessed to better the world, through the drugs that consume him. The film focusses on a specific aspect of the substance abuse culture at college. During my junior year I created *Day in the life*, a documentary photography series of a fraternity boy over a period of two weeks. This was where I was able to observe the actions and mentality of fraternity guys and substances, which I found fascinating but also a bit disgusting. The objective was to break assumptions and judgements people form on Greek life and I feel I created a visual story that did just that. After those two projects which represented substance culture, I wanted to continue, but with the special inquiry-does it help students to numb the pain?

OBJECTIVE

As a documenter and observer of the student environment I realized that people do not really reflect on their habits. I think this is because they are constantly consumed by what is going on around them and are taking substances and are not self-aware. People don't talk with their peers about their problems unless necessary. My objective is to create this awareness of what realities people actually face. I felt it

was important to take the time and discuss these topics with individuals because no one else does. Everything is about self- reflection, to think about the actions people take and how they could impact others like myself. I'm just the one who is sober all the time so these issues really resonate with me when I'm around my peers.

Consciously, Unconscious is about self- reflection.

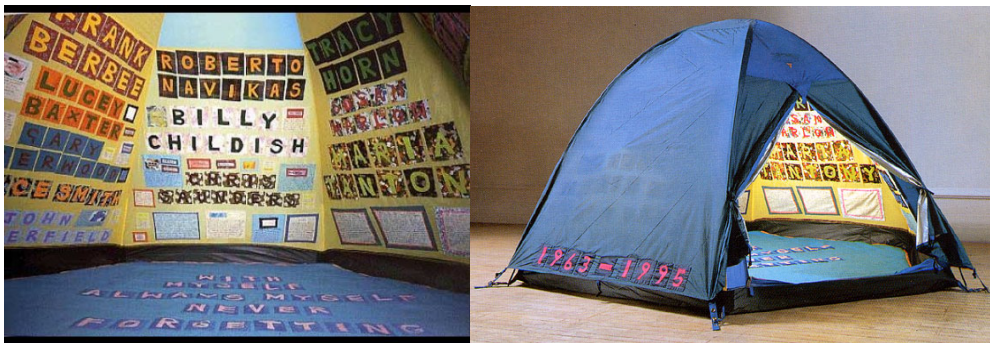
INFLUENCES

When thinking of how I wanted to tell this story I immediately thought of capturing it through what I know best - a lens. I knew from experience that I could capture external realistic moments through documentary photography but that medium could not reveal any internal psychological insights. Therefore, I knew that I had to turn to video to show more intimate moments and really tell individual stories. The idea of self- reflection comes through the interview process that I've created. However, in order to display both of these mediums, plus a book of the photographs, I know that there has to be a space for people to enter. This is why I built an installation that has a closed off viewing room. People need to remove themselves from this chaotic environment in order for them to see it, understand it, and react to it. I've been looking at artists who work in all of these media.

TRACEY EMIN

Tracey Emin is a multimedia artist who creates drawings, paintings, sculptures, films, photography, neon text, and interactive installations. Her trademark is creating work based on her intimate life. She reveals her hopes, humiliations, failures, and success. She represents her expressions, emotions, vulnerability, and past relationships throughout different styles and themes. Her intention is to create an intimacy with her viewer. One recurring theme is communicating with past lovers through some form of written communication. I really enjoy her handwritten neon word sculptures. She writes out her feelings in a few simple yet powerful words. People can relate to sentences like "I listen to the ocean and all I hear is you," "never again," and "my heart is with you always." For my project I chose to do something with simple text to reveal my personal feelings. I incorporated both handwritten and typed text in my book.

Emin created a tent called *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With. 1965*

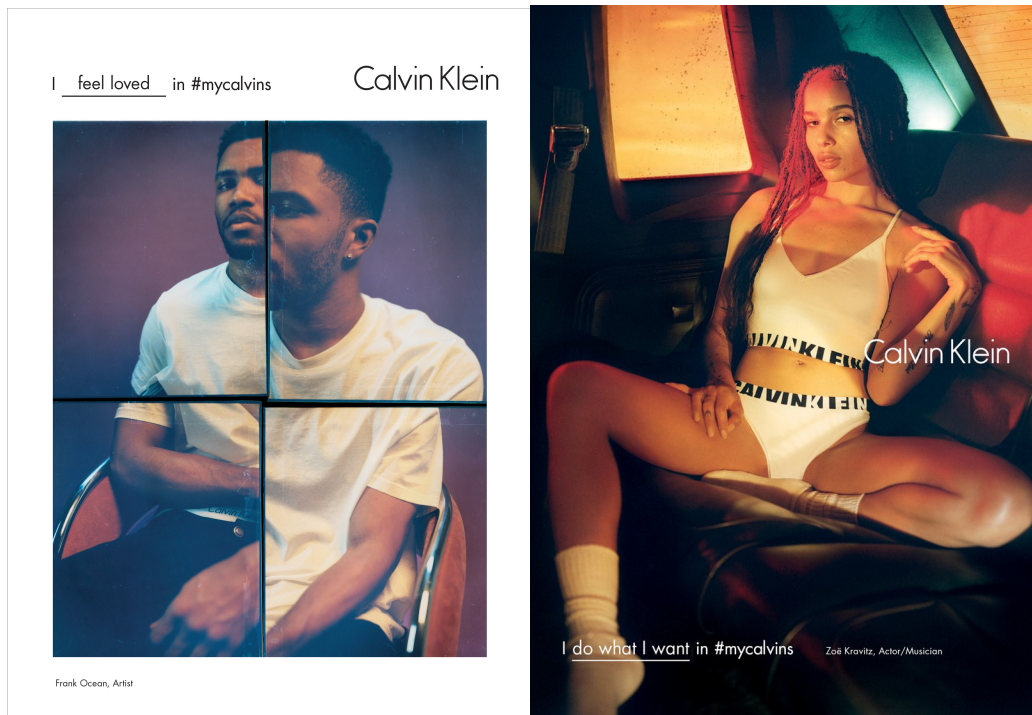


Inside of this tent hung the names of all the men she had ever slept with. It was a way of exposing former lovers and perhaps getting back at them, or just acknowledging

them. She expressed her emotions about them and created a space for people to enter so that they could see who she had experienced. I created a personal space for my project as well. Some of my work is intended to "get back" at people, though not necessarily for the same reasons. Sometimes the most successful projects emerge when you put your emotions on display. I hope to emulate Emin's bravery through my installation.

TYRONE LEBONE/CALVIN KLEIN

I find inspiration from the Fall 2016 Calvin Klein campaign which was shot by the photographer Tyrone Lebone. In this campaign multiple celebrities are shown wearing Calvin Klein underwear. Each celebrity is staged differently and each person says how they wear their Calvins, for example "I _____ in my Calvins."



The idea is that people can relate to the model; anyone can have their experiences in their Calvins. Though Lebone created an amazing commercial ad and branding campaign, I'm more interested in the aesthetic and overall approach. There is a video and photo portion of the campaign. I find the videos more compelling because each celebrity is asked personal questions. There is one main video where they compile all the individual interviews into one. I would like to implement this into my own work- the approach of telling personal stories and then compiling them in a chaotic and provocative manner. I appreciate the aesthetic of the overall campaign- the colors, editing, and film format. I hope to create a similar aesthetic for my project and have adopted the LED/color light look from this.

LAUREN GREENFIELD

Lauren Greenfield is a documentary photographer and filmmaker. Specifically, she creates work depicting youth culture, gender, and consumerism. Her work has more of an anthropological viewpoint, it seems she really studies her subjects. She exposes reality and tells a story in a truthful manner. But the work is also open to interpretation. I'm specifically interested in the way she depicts youth culture, as I'm also trying to portray this. I found her project *Fast Forward* most relatable to my project.



Fast, Forward is about kids in Los Angeles growing up too fast, as if life is fast-forwarding. She is playing with the idea of image, especially in a young Hollywood. However, she depicts both sides of LA, rich and poor. I find the comparisons very

interesting. She could have just done one or the other. She is a product of this environment; she was born and raised in LA and still lives there. Her projects are typically based on this environment. Her projects seem intended to amuse or engage the insider and inform the eye of the outsider. I relate to Lauren because I also capture my environment, create work on youth culture, and propose to tell the whole story, not just one side.

ED TEMPLETON

Ed Templeton is a documentary photographer who captures youth and skate culture. However, I'm more interested in the way he uses his pictures to tell a story through print and exhibitions. I was really drawn to his use of layouts and spreads and tried to implement that design throughout my book as well when designing the spreads.



WOLFGANG TILLMANS

Wolfgang Tillmans is also a photographer. I was specifically influenced by his installation techniques. He hangs his photographs in a collage-like manner. He combines different sized prints, some framed, some not, to create really compelling compositions. I implemented this technique in my installation.



METHODOLOGY/CREATIVE WORK

In the beginning of my process I was intrigued by my surroundings. So much was happening right in front of me and I had to start capturing it immediately. From the start, I knew that I wanted to frame the subjects rather than the people. I wanted to tell a story about this environment I am a part of. I wanted to make the project anonymous. I began making questions and notes in my sketchbook as a framework for the photographs.

BINGO

RESEARCH

SURROUNDINGS

WELCOME WEEK

- EVERYONE'S BLACK OUT
- DRUGS
- RESPONSIBILITIES
- SLOPPY
- MESSY
- RANDOM FUCKS
- STRANGERS
- HOOK UPS WITH FRIENDS
- SEEING GAME PEOPLE ALL DAY + NIGHT
- NO APPEAL TO PARTICIPATE

HOSPITAL

CAN'T BELIEVE DID THIS TO MYSELF IN HOSPITAL. I WAS SO HIGH, I WASN'T MAKING UP.

- DRUGS CHANGE PERSONALITY. LEGIT CRAZY!
- TAKE OUT ANGER, SELFISH, NOT FUNNY, MEAN, RUDE. A MESS. CONTROL SELF. AGAINST I, TRYING TO HELP. UPSET. PROBLEM WITH DEPRESSION + DRUGS. GONE TOO FAR. TRIED DEAL WITH ISSUES + EX BOYFRIEND, SMOKED, DRAFFK, XANAX, COCAINE. → HOSPITAL, UNCONSCIOUS RICH. UPSETTING TO EVERYONE AROUND.
- DON'T WANT TO BE AROUND. FRUSTRATION. ACT DIFFERENT. NEEDS HELP! NEEDS THERAPY. AWARE DRUGS MAKING MENTAL + DRUGS ISSUES + UPSETTING TO PERSONALLY BE UPSETTING BEHAVIOR NOT FUNNY ANYMORE. LEGIT CRAZY. #9

RENDOS

BEGET CALL PART LOVES + RECALLS DON'T LIKE FOR SEX. GAMES ARE THE ONLY THING WITH SOME INTEREST.

WERE COSEY TRIED TO KILL SELF! TURNS TO SEX FROM RANDOM PEOPLE. NO SOCIAL CUES. ANNOYING. ODD. STRANGE. RANDOM OLDER MEN IN HOUSE. SELLING SELF + BODY. NO SELF RESPECT. SAYING INNAAPROP. THINGS NOT HEALTHY. SPEND 15 HRS WITH SOMEONE. JUST MET HIS WIFE + CREEPY. NEEDS THE ATTENTION + SEX TO COPE WITH DEPRESSION + ANXIETY.

MOM

COCAINE + ALC. FUCKED UP. UPSET. TONS WITH EMOTIONS. BREAKING DOWN. NEED HELP. REPEATED. BLAD FACING + VENTING HEALTHY. BUT DRUGS COVER FEELINGS. HAD TO FACE IN LIFE EVERYDAY. HOW TELL PEOPLE. MY MOM DIED. DRUGS. SIGNAL LAST NIGHT.

NEED TO DO DRUGS NOW

HE HEARD BY TRI-DELT GIRL ON GAMEDAY. THEY NEED TO DO IT. GOD FORBID CAN'T BE COOKED OUT. GAMEDAY. PRE-GAME WATCHED 7 PEOPLE. OFF LEAD. THOUGHT GOOD. PEOPLE WAKE UP. EVERYONE DOES. SIT ON CONCH EYES ROLLED. THOUGHT WANT BLOW. WATCHED 6 PEOPLE. GRASSMIRROR. GIRLS IN LINES FULL LENGTH MIRROR. HOW MANY LINES? THINK ONCE A WEEK. ROUTINE AT LEAST PROBLEMS GONNA STAY WITH YOU. WATCHED 5 PEOPLE. PRE-GAME AT NIGHT FOR LOW KEY PARTY. PROBS DID IT DURING DAY TOO. ALSO HEARD LETS GO CONE NOW. TRIED WHIP OUT DURING TAILGATE BUT TOO PUBLIC. COMMENTED ON LINES TOO BIG. KID WAS PSYCHO. GONNA TAKE HALF. IF THAT.

PEOPLE HAVE ISSUES AROUND ME

→ BUT NOW WHAT HOW TO DOCUMENT.

QUESTIONS

SEP 14TH

THINK

WHY AM I INTERESTED IN CULTURE DON'T NECESSARILY PARTAKE IN?

LIKE TO OBSERVE. SEE OTHERS FUCK UP. THINGS I WOULDN'T DO. LIVE THROUGH OTHERS. THEIR MISTAKES. ENTERTAINED. OTHER REALITIES. WHY DO WHAT THEY DO. FASCINATED. TASTE OF LIFE DON'T WANT FOR SELF. FUN TO BE AROUND. REMIND SELF WHY LIKE TO BE IN CONTROL. SUCH A SPECIFIC REALITY. SO MANY ASPECTS OF. WANT TO EXPOSE. CURIOSITY BECAUSE I WOULDN'T DO. PEER PRESSURE.

WHAT DRAWS ME?

HOW FICED BY PEOPLE ARE. EXCITING. FICE FACED. HOW MANY MET TAKE. ENTERTAINING. RAW. SECRETITIVE. PROVOCATIVE. WHY PEOPLE DO IT. SOMETHING I DON'T DO. APPEALING BE A PART OF SOMETHING DON'T PARTAKE IN. MENTALITIES.

WHAT ROLE DO I PLAY?

DOCUMENTOR. FRIEND. OBSERVER. → KNOW SUBJECTS?

GAIN TRUST? WHO'S GONNA ALLOW ACCESS? TRUST? IDEA HIDING IDENTITY? STORY OR REALITY?

LOSE FRIENDS? ALLOW ACCESS? TRUST? IDEA HIDING IDENTITY? STORY OR REALITY?

WHERE'S LINE BETWEEN MODERATION + ABUSE? CONTEXT HIDDEN IDENT. MAYBE THINGS DON'T KNOW BOUGHT SELF. HOW TO NOT INSULT OR MAYBE INSULT. PEOPLE LOOKING TO RELATE + FIND SELF IN PROJECT.

WHAT PART OF STORY TRYING TO TELL? OWN INTEREST IN ENVIRONMENT

WHERE'S LINE BETWEEN MODERATION + ABUSE? CONTEXT HIDDEN IDENT. MAYBE THINGS DON'T KNOW BOUGHT SELF. HOW TO NOT INSULT OR MAYBE INSULT. PEOPLE LOOKING TO RELATE + FIND SELF IN PROJECT.

WHAT ROLE DO I PLAY?

RESERVOR, STORYTELLER, FRIEND, JOURNALIST, DOCUMENTAR, STRANGER, TRUST, LOSE FRIENDS, THAT'S OKAY, BEING DISCRETE, LEGITIMATE FOOTAGE.

HOW WILL RENDOS ALLOW, HOW TO GAIN, RE AWARE BUT NOT AWARE OF PROJ, NEED PERMITS, SOME OPEN WITH PRESS, TELL PEOPLE POTENT SUBJECTS, MAYBE NOT MENTAL HEALTH + DRUGS FOR CONTEXT, INTERVIEW PERSONAL NARRATIVE PART, BUT SUBJECT?, USE OF DRUGS + ALC, BUT NOT ENOUGH, BUT INTENDING, CAN'T JUST SHOOT EVERYTHING?, MIGHTY TELL SOME PEOPLE NEED TO FOLLOW, OR CAN I?, GAME DAY, SKEEPS, RICKS, PRE-GAMES, ETC.

GONNA HAVE TO GO OUT A LOT

UGH

PHOTOGRAPHY

I used what I knew best and had done throughout college-photography. Still photos could capture moments and environments I was surrounded by on a daily basis. I used an Olympus point and shoot 35mm film camera.



The camera is very small so I could take it with me anywhere. I appreciated the film quality and flash aesthetic of the pictures. Most importantly the camera was discrete, therefore I wouldn't draw much attention to myself and people wouldn't notice I was taking their picture. Also because I was using film, people couldn't ask to see a picture right away. This gave me a sense of freedom because I could shoot whatever I wanted and no one would know what I was capturing. The photos represent what's happening within the college context that I inhabit. They depict sex, drugs, party culture, and some of the aftermath. This is anonymous documentary photography, moment to moment. The purpose was to frame specific instants, actions, and topics, not to highlight certain individuals. I believe this format allows people to engage more in the subject matter.

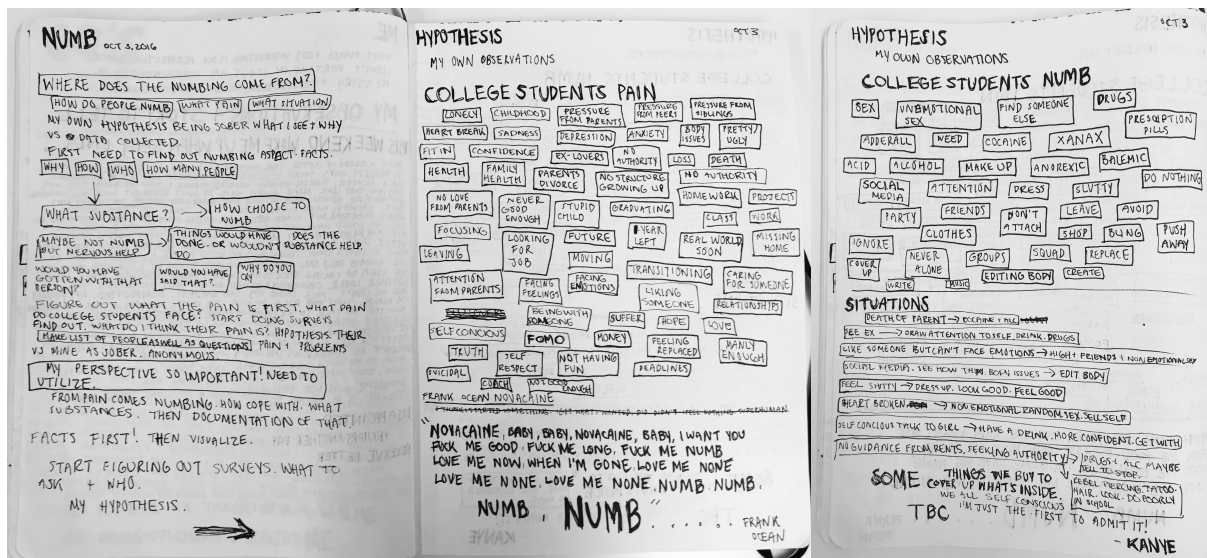


OBSERVATIONS

As I began to focus on this environment and document it through photography. I started paying attention to what people were saying. Often people talked about things that related to sex, mental health, drinking, and drugs. The quotes help define my project, and serve as a sort of proof of this drug-crazed culture. I began to keep an ongoing list of quotes that I called *Overheard Ann Arbor*. These quotes are used

FIND THE SOURCE OF NUMBNESS

I kept thinking about my original question - *does it help to numb the pain?* Yet all I was seeing up to this point was the external manifestation of numbing the pain (as documented in my photos and quotes), and I needed to focus on the internal. I wanted to learn about the internal pain people have, how they numb it, and did it relate to their use of substances. I needed to figure out how to approach this and find out the truths and realities people face, aside from the preconceived notions I already had based on observations. Therefore, I came up with my own hypothesis - I think people use substances to cope with their mental health and emotional problems. I created a list of the different kinds of pain I thought people had and a list of the coping mechanisms they used to help the pain.



SURVEY

I knew I had to test my hypothesis that was only based on personal observations. I thought the solution would be to create a survey. The survey briefly covered mental health, happiness, confidence, hookup culture, drinking, drugs, and reflection. Most of the questions were multiple-choice, so I came up with answers I thought people would have. However, this survey was way too incriminating and personal. I realized that they had to be comfortable addressing these topics. In the end I decided to have face to face conversations.

FACE TO FACE INTERVIEW

Using the survey, I created a set of interview questions.

CONSCIOUSLY, UNCONSCIOUS interview questions

DEMOGRAPHIC

- Brief 5 years?
- Parents 5 year plan for you?
- Are your parents aware of your use of substances. What is their reaction?
- Does your family have a history with substance abuse?

HAPPINESS

- Rank - in relation to your peers
- In general and right now

PAIN

- What's the biggest source of pain in your life - physical then emotional
- How do you cope with that pain
- Is there a physical manifestation of that pain? What about mental?
- Day to day life
- How do you see your college career affected by it, inhibit?

UNHAPPINESS

- Have you thought about seeking help
- Have you ever considered self-harm, if so why?
- Reflecting on your mental health experience in college would you have done anything differently?
- Do you think your mental health impacts your personal relationships?
- Do you think your personal relationships are affected by others mental health?

PERCEPTION

- Happy with physical appearance
- how others perceive you

CONFIDENCE

- Confidence - what makes you feel more confident physically and mentally
- Reflecting on your appearance and confidence in college would you have done anything differently?

HOOK UP CULTURE

- What is your definition of hookup culture
- What is your role? Active or passive?
- How often/how many people a month
 - Who do you get with and why
 - Do you hook up with people just for sex
 - Feelings?
 - Avoid people you have feelings for?

- Committed relationship?
- Reflecting on your hook up experience in college would you have done anything differently?

GOING OUT

- Describe a Thursday night
- Describe a game day
- How many nights a week do you go to a party or a bar
- Why
- Reflecting on your going out experience in college would you have done anything differently?

DRINK

- How often
- How much consumed
- How drunk
- Reasons
- Does your drinking impact your personal relationships?
- Do you think your personal relationships are affected by others drinking?
- Reflecting on your drinking experience in college would you have done anything differently?

DRUGS

- What kind
- Are you prescribed
- What take the most
- How often
- Where
- Reason
- Do you think your drug use impacts your personal relationships?
- Do you think your personal relationships are affected by others use of drugs?
- Reflecting on your drug experience in college would you have done anything differently?

What is your proudest moment in college?

They cover a wide range of topics from demographics, to happiness, unhappiness, perception, confidence, hook-up culture, going out, drinking, drugs, and proudest moments. I thought that this approach would be more comfortable and conversational, and everyone would be able to share their own story. Additionally, the idea was that this interview allowed for self-reflection because these aren't topics people typically discuss.

ACCESS

I knew that not everyone was going to be willing to answer and talk about these subjects. Therefore, I made a list of people who have impacted me in a social sense

throughout college. I consider most of them close friends. People who I knew respected me would be more willing to participate. Also, I chose people who would add the most unique perspective to my topics. I texted people and asked if I could interview them for my senior thesis project, but I wouldn't tell them what it was about. I told them I wasn't comfortable talking about it over a text, and scheduled a time to meet. After I explained it person to person, I could begin the interview and start shooting. When they sat down I told them that my project is about mental health, college students, people in my environment, sex, drugs, and alcohol. To examine and show the realities that people face. I told them that the interview was confidential, in the sense that their name would not be used, and it would only be used for my project. I created a sign and release form. I also told them that they weren't allowed to discuss the interview with anyone because I didn't want others to know about my project before the senior show. If at any time they felt uncomfortable they didn't have to respond.

My first interview was a test in the photo studio in the art school. This was more of a back and forth conversation because I wanted feedback on what questions to ask, and see how someone would respond. I realized I was unable to use the photo studio due to sound problems so I had to find alternative studio space. I ended up creating a studio in my house. This turned out to be more convenient because my subjects all lived very close to me. At first I was nervous that people would not

participate, would feel uncomfortable, or offended, but the results were quite the opposite. Out of fourteen people two people asked to not be on video, and another two did not participate at all. Some elaborated with more honesty, comfort, and reflection than others. Overall, I was extremely pleased with my results. I learned a lot from the fourteen interviews I conducted and I collected more data than I needed.

PSYCHOLOGIST

I met with a psychologist at the university. He specializes in mental health and substances. I wanted to discuss the project with him- what I've done so far, the data I've collected, and perhaps ways that these ideas could be visually communicated. There is definitely a psychological element to the project which I'm not as familiar with and I thought he would be able to provide some professional insight on the topics I'm tackling. He thought that my interview was good and covered a wide range of topics. Most importantly, he made me step back from the project to focus on the collected data, rather than just the visual or storytelling aspects. The interviews are all raw scientific data, and they will all speak for themselves. I chose not to watch or edit any of the interviews until I was totally done so that I could draw my own conclusions. He just kept saying I shouldn't try to think ahead of what I was going to do for the video because the data will speak for itself. But because I am an artist, I couldn't help thinking about the visual ways I could enhance the stories.

VIDEO TOOLS

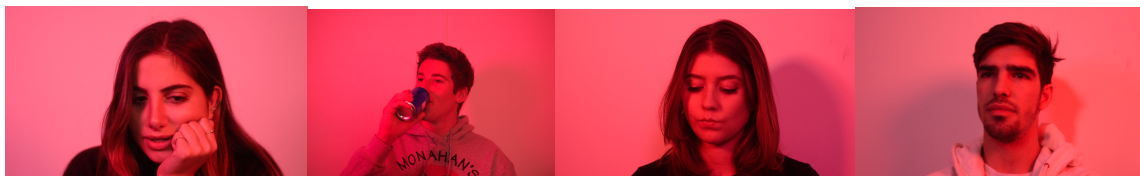
I wanted the interviews to be recorded with video and audio. I think it's interesting to see people's reactions and facial expressions when discussing these topics. Some people were not comfortable being in front of the camera, so we just did audio for them. I used my Nikon DSLR D750 camera to record and attached a microphone.

PINK

For the aesthetic of my video I wanted to use the color pink. I used an LED light kit and red gel filters on top to create this pink effect. At first I thought about using the color red for the interviews, the idea of under the red light as part of an incrimination. But I decided that this effect would be too incriminating for my peers so I chose pink to soften the sense of incrimination. Pink adds an ironic touch of playfulness to a serious topic, it kind of masks the grotesque. So at first people will have the misconception that the installation pretty and cute. Pink represents contemporary youth culture, specifically fashion, feminism, and the digital age. Pink just has an aesthetic that I like. Pink ended up being the most prominent visual aspect of the project/installation.

VIDEO CONTENT

The video combines only six of the interviews I conducted and tells a story about the different realities that my peers face. The interviewees reveal what, why, and how things happen to them on an internal level. Throughout my project I am playing with the themes of chaos and seriousness as mental health and substances embody both. I want the video to be about self- reflection with the subject matter and not about the identity of the person being interviewed. Originally, my idea was to make a chaotic four minute video but in the editing process I ended up cutting out nine interviews and making a fifteen minute video using six individuals. The six people tell their story and each story is intertwined with the others. I do not include what the questions are in the film so people infer them by their answers/responses. I think that this group of six best represents and gives a voice to this environment, covering a wide range of experiences. Also, five out of the six are the people I am closest too, which makes it more personal. The video is complemented with background music that correlates with each section of the video. The music breaks up the material, and is also used to get the viewer to relate to specific situations by hearing relatable songs. As the subject and music change, the mood varies from serious to chaotic.



ME

This project is very personal. Therefore, I decided to interview myself as well, so that I could be put in the same situation as my peers. I knew my answers would differ vastly. Even though I didn't want to use my personal interview in the video, I wanted to include myself in the project somehow. I ended up putting personal excerpts in my book. I wrote paragraphs on self-reflection about why I created this project and what I learned. This prose is written in my own handwriting.

THESE ARE OFTEN TOPICS THAT ARE OFTEN AVOIDED SO HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN CONFRONTED BY THEM ?

I ASKED THESE QUESTIONS SILENTLY FOR FOUR YEARS AND HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE IT AS AN INQUISITIVE PERSON UNDER THE GUISE OF AN "ARTIST." ARTIST ALLOWED ME TO ACCESS A CERTAIN HONESTY NOT USUALLY RESERVED EVEN FOR GOOD FRIENDS, A SORT OF INTIMACY UNDER THE GUISE OF "INTERVIEWER" AND "INTERVIEWEE."

UNDERSTANDING

THROUGH DOCUMENTING YOU AND UNDERSTANDING WHY YOU DO WHAT YOU DO I FOUND MY OWN SENSE OF BELONGING IN THIS ENVIRONMENT I STRUGGLED TO FIT INTO.

ME - INDEPENDENT, OBSERVER, DOCUMENTER

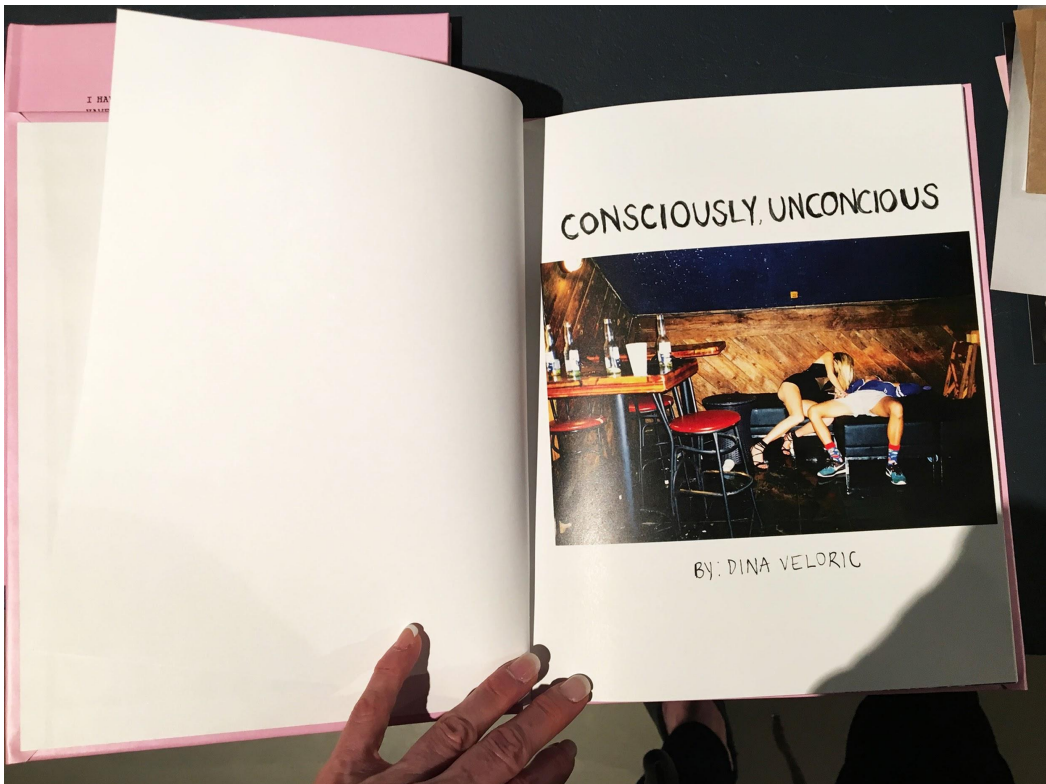
I HAVE PHYSICALLY + EMOTIONALLY IMMERSERD MYSELF IN THIS CULTURE SURROUNDED BY SUBSTANCE USE AND PRESSURES. UNWOLUNTARILY, I HAVE BEEN SURROUNDED BY YOUR ACTIONS, WHICH HAVE AFFECTED YOUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE LIKE ME, BOTH ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS. UNWITTINGLY, I HAVE SURROUNDED MYSELF THROUGH THIS PROJECT BY LOOKING INTO THE ROOT. I DO NOT TAKE THE SAME MEASURES TO BECOME CONSCIOUSLY UNCONSCIOUS. YOUR LIFESTYLE HAS THE CAPACITY AND ABILITY TO TAKE A HOLD OF YOU, WHICH WAS NOT WHAT I ENVISIONED FOR MYSELF.

MAYBE THAT IS WHY I SPENT MOST OF MY COLLEGE CAREER SOBER AND IN CONTROL.

BOOK

Additionally, I created a book. The objective was to produce something as a "take away" from the installation. You are supposed to experience something mental and emotional from the installation, but you can also take something physical away

with you. The book will display my documentary photos and personal reflection excerpts about the process of my project - what I was investigating, what I learned, and how I felt. These excerpts are expressed in my own handwriting in the center of the photo book.





INSTALLATION

For the bigger part of my installation I wanted to create a three-dimensional space for people to enter. I think it's important to be fully immersed in this environment, so I closed it off with a curtain. This semi-private space is necessary to engage all the senses and make the exhibit a more personal experience. In this space, viewers can be confronted with the chaos of the party photographs and the seriousness of the video. Then they can make their own assumptions based on the content in front of them.



At the entrance of the installation is a pedestal that has my book on it with a lava lamp. The idea is to look at the book first for context, as well as my artist statement. Above the pedestal along a wall is a long horizontal mirror; the idea is to add a literal prop of self- reflection as people enter and exit the space. Next to the mirror, hanging on the wall, is my own Michigan logo jacket and camera, with my dirty Converse on the floor under them. This display is to create the feeling of a dorm room but also to leave my own presence in the space. These are items I wear or use when I am in this environment, so people can picture me there. At the entrance of my cube I placed a pink bubble wrap curtain. The bubble wrap allows you to partially see what is happening on the inside, but also creates some kind of comfort and cushioning of this

transparent content.



The viewer then enters the cube with three walls. I printed out my pictures in four different sizes. Then I created a collage with the photos scattered across two of the side walls. These show what the external environment looks like, and creates the opportunity for people to analyze these party situations, as well as feel like they are in them. Additionally, to create the juxtaposition of chaos and serious purpose, I am framing photos of frenzied party moments and presenting them as one would in a gallery or fine art setting. My video is projected onto the third wall in the front center

of the space.



I purposely made the space small 8ftx8ftx8ft because I didn't want a lot of people to enter at once. People typically pay more attention and reflect more if they are alone. I also added a shaggy pink carpet and shaggy white pillows to make the room more comfortable and people can sit in it. I hope and believe that the installation creates awareness, breaks stigmas, and promotes self- reflection.

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

The interviews went much better than expected. I think they were extremely successful. The interviews ranged anywhere from twenty minutes to over an hour per person. Some took it more conversationally and told stories, while others just gave very surface level answers or yes and nos. Some students were more verbal about why

they do what they do, while others discussed what they do and not so much why. Being recorded on video is very intimidating and I could tell some people were more uncomfortable than others. People were worried about who would be watching which impacted their responses. I knew that some of them had mental health problems and were self-destructive. They did not really discuss their issues or their behaviors which I found surprising. The variety of answers weren't exactly what I expected. Some people wouldn't discuss their issues, but others surprised me and really reflected, taking it seriously. The importance is that we actually discussed these difficult topics, whether or not they cared to share everything with me. The interview forced them to think and reflect on issues that are not usually discussed among peer groups. Some of the people are just not as self-aware as others and not everyone numbs their pain with substances. I reacted to each interview differently. Some impacted me more than others but nothing really surprised me because I already had preconceived notions about these individuals. It allowed me to really understand why a lot of students do what they do, and I learned a lot from my peers. Now my job is to take these stories and to tell them.

CONCLUSION

I was able to be more inquisitive with my peers under the guise of an "artist." College is filled with different kinds of pressures- deadlines, self-appearance, career

searches, and relationships. There are not enough hours in the day so this counter culture emerges to serve as a distraction or an escape. But it can go too far. However, not all my peers have substance issues or use substances to numb their emotional pain. Not all my peers have mental health issues. I learned that when they choose to do the thing that makes them feel better it causes them to not act like themselves - smoking weed to chill, taking xanax to "fuck around", taking cocaine to get riled up. When they are in this different state, my relationships with them were impacted.

In the midst of the chaos, and in an environment I struggled to fit into, I was finally able to find my own sense of belonging. I felt most comfortable as an independent observer and documentarian. My daily rituals of recording enabled me to understand my peers' behaviors in relation to mental health and substance use.

After investigating the root of their behaviors I have learned that I do not take the same measures as them to cope and become "consciously, unconscious." Their lifestyle has the capacity and ability to take a hold of them, which was not what I envisioned for myself. Consciously, Unconscious has helped me find my role in my environment, understand my peers' actions, and come to terms with my choice of spending most of my college career sober.