

Artist Statement

Genuine love and admiration for art skips generations in my family; I was blessed to have inherited it from my great grandfather. Throughout my journey of discovering my photographic niche, my parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles all told me the same thing when they saw my work. *Art is supposed to be pretty*. Striving to seek the familial validation I craved, I did just that. Piece after piece, my production of inoffensive motel art made me more and more unfulfilled. When the pandemic struck, I tired of the wad of growing anxiety that I had become and diverged from creating to please others. Though I did not know it at the time, I started using photography as a way to process the pressures that crippled me. It started with the surface level struggle of the predictability of living in a lockdown. As time progressed, my work began uncovering my deeper social and identity stresses. The more I created, the more I learned about myself and, in sequence, the more content I became. My self-discovery forced me to see how nuanced art could be beyond its *prettiness*. Art isn't "supposed" to be pretty. It can be, but *my art* is supposed to be expressive. My art broke down the locked door that hindered me. I create to further tear apart the emotional and mental barriers that prohibit my growth.

Through these visualizations of the constancy of feelings of grief, familial and community surveillance, masking authenticity, among other things, my portfolio selections each represent struggles I was experiencing during the time of their creation. In like personal-fashion, I became my own muse; indeed, the only constant tying each of the pieces together.