

Justice Burnes

Design Arts Thesis

Spring 2020

Artist statement:

Justice Apollo Burnes is a trans-masculine illustrator with an eye for design. Using shape, color, and type he creates bold graphics centered around food and mental health. Justice often works with a variety of mediums, but most of his polished work lives digitally. He creates work to describe his own experiences with mental health as both a coping mechanism and a way to reach out to others with similar struggles while building community. With his thesis project, Justice has started to build the foundation for his brand Crooked Yolk, a project that is intended to continue after graduation.

Creative brief:

I. Project Vision

The vision of this project is to create a line of apparel to express the normalization of change in mental health and identity. Through imagery centered around eggs and cooking, I explore my thoughts brought on by depression and anxiety in an easily digestible way to connect with my audience. Eggs are seen as fragile and quick to crack under pressure, but are surprisingly resilient when given the right circumstances; these qualities are easy to associate with depression. Cooking has been an important tool in taking care of my mental and physical health. It serves as a great outlet and metaphor for taking care of oneself; it's a chance to slow down and be mindful of the nutrients you're putting in your body, and can take your mind away from negative thoughts. One of the goals of this project is to repurpose thoughts, feelings, and energy in a way that builds a future for myself and others. Using a mix of new and recycled clothing, I am creating a unique collection of wearables to communicate that change is inevitable, but healthy. The end goal of this project is to create a brand that exists to build community and engage with my audience through a collection of wearables and installation pop up shops, amplifying voices that may not be heard.

II. Audience

My demographic is comprised of people aged 16 to 32 that have identities that fall outside of the “norm”. These people seek out clothing that helps convey their identity in one way or another through imagery, color, and style. My audience is one that enjoys both alternative fashion and anime-inspired imagery, attends anime conventions, shops online, and likely has a fashion instagram or frequently shares their wardrobe on social media.

III. Methods & Materials

This project started with a visual journal, a place where I began drawing my intrusive thoughts and anxieties. From the visual journal, I've been selecting and refining my images into designs that are rendered digitally. I am finding blank t-shirts from thrift stores and online vendors, all of which are cotton or cotton blends for best dye absorption and print application. A number of these shirts will be tie dyed using a fiber reactive dye for a brilliant and permanent color. Not every shirt will be dyed, some designs will exist better on unaltered shirts, but the dyed shirts are an opportunity for play and marketability as the trend is coming back into style. The final step in creating the apparel is screen printing.

The presentation of this project during focus week would have included an installation pop up shop, where the audience could have purchased pieces from this collection. The pop up shop would have included four custom shelving cases to display the shirts for sale and an “instagrammable” photo area for audience members to take pictures in. The 511 gallery would have been decorated using vinyl decals and a variety of thrifted knick knacks to transform the space. This would have been a fully curated experience, from visuals, lighting, sound, and scent.

IV. Comparative Media

Comparative brands are Drop Dead, Wasted Paris, Anime Bae, and Toshiki Girl. All of these apparel brands hit a certain market for stylish anime inspired graphics or grunge style. Drop Dead and Wasted Paris both have a store located in England and Paris respectively, both Anime Bae and Toshiki Girl exhibit in the vendors hall at anime and comic conventions.

V. Marketplace Application

This project, and by extension my brand, Crooked Yolk has a specific demographic that seeks out alternative apparel with a pop culture influence. By creating apparel centered on repurposing thoughts, feelings, energy, and clothing I am creating space to engage and bond with my audience over mental health, identity, and the struggle to better oneself. This apparel line taps into the marketability of alternative fashion, food imagery, anime inspired graphics, and the desire to blend these styles together to create something unique.

Impact from covid:

Unfortunately, due to the covid-19 crisis, I was unable to complete this project in its original intention. The PNCA 511 building closed the week before I had planned on doing the bulk of my screen printing, and I was left with nowhere to print. The part of this project I was most excited about was building a pop up shop for my audience to interact with, but this was unable to happen as a result of covid and social distancing. To say I'm disappointed that this project couldn't be carried out in the way I planned is an understatement. Thesis at PNCA is hyped up to be a sort of magnum opus project that makes or breaks your career after graduation, and I've certainly been feeling the repercussions of such pressure. The final deliverables are not how I intended them to be, they are just a reminder of what I wanted to do. While I do plan on creating more designs for apparel in the future, I'm relieved to be ending the project so I can focus on taking better care of myself in these strange and struggling times.