

Miller Arts Scholars Minigrant Proposal

Todd Benson

Exploring Memory in Figurative Oil Painting

I am applying for funding for oil paints and other painting materials so I can continue experimenting with themes of memory in figurative oil painting.

Last semester I took Introduction to Oil Painting with Professor Marlatt. I really enjoyed the class and wanted to continue exploring oil painting, so I applied for and ultimately received a minigrant for oil painting supplies. I created two paintings based on photos I took of a friend (both pictured below). My intent in creating these paintings was to capture the emotional and incomplete aspects of memory.

The painting on the left, “She Was Wearing a Red Dress,” includes regions of low and high contrast---the dress and the woman’s face, respectively---to depict the conscious process of remembering someone, as some details may be more memorable than others. The painting on the right, “...And She Was Laughing,” uses bright color to show how we often remember the



emotions attached to memory over other details. I want to continue exploring themes of memory in oil painting, and a minigrant would fund the supplies needed to do so.

I am very interested in the biology and psychology of memory. Last semester I learned about the formation of memories via neurotransmitters and reinforcement in both my neurobiology and introductory psychology courses. Through my independent research in the Hirsh biology lab, I learned about how certain neurotransmitters are used to clean out our memory storage so that we have space for other memories. I want to adapt my scientific interests to an artistic context through visually depicting in oil the conscious process of remembering someone.

For this project I want to create another portrait but push the painting further in the direction of abstraction than the paintings pictured above. This includes using looser and more suggestive brush strokes to suggest motion or lack of clarity; simplifying or leaving out key facial features; and using moody, vibrant, or unnatural colors to suggest emotion. These techniques will make the portrait more unclear and emotionally charged and will get at the idea of seeing someone through the mind’s eye. In other words, I want to paint what I believe visual memory looks like.

I plan to buy supplies in March after receiving funding, then paint late March or early April (depending on when I receive funding and obtain supplies), and finish in May. I plan to make at least one painting, and more if time allows. The process of making the painting is as

follows: taking pictures of a person in my life, stretching canvas over stretcher bars, and then applying oil paint to the prepared canvas while using my photos as reference.

This minigrant will allow me to further develop my painting skills. This project combines aspects of abstraction with realism. I am familiar with realism but less comfortable with abstraction. Therefore, this project is a great way to push me a little out of my comfort zone and help me grow as an artist. In terms of my future plans, I am in the process of declaring a Studio Art major. Next year I plan to take Intermediate Painting and Advanced Painting. I hope to continue experimenting with the theme of memory in oil and I aspire to be a painter after I graduate.

Budget:

Category	Cost (\$)
<u>Paint</u>	
Gamblin 150 mL Cerulean Blue	-58.80
Gamblin 150 mL Titanium White	-17.40
Gamblin 150mL Cadmium Red Light	-50.40
<u>Painting Materials</u>	
Brushes	-39.44
Silicoil Brush Cleaner Tank	-9.98
White Gesso	-35.02
Linseed Oil	-15.60
<u>Canvas Materials</u>	
72" x 6 yd, #12 Cotton Duck	-233.00
Extra Deep Stretcher Bars (4)	-40.36
TOTAL:	-500