

Valerie Clemans
Artist Statement

In my body of work I have portrayed what I consider to be “21st Century Hippies”. I describe these people as individuals who seek to display their differences rather than conform to society’s accepted image and ideals that are considered “normal”. These people embrace peace, individuality, and nature; even utilizing the mind-altering abilities of some plants and fungi, deemed “illegal” by government officials. 21st century hippies are individuals who stand by their beliefs and will collectively work to have their viewpoints seen and heard. They make the best of argumentative conflicts by using them as a method for peacefully informing and creating a basis of understanding among others. In my opinion, 21st century hippies are creating a better world by sharing the work produced by their own hands, sparking innovation, and spreading happiness.

I choose to depict the images of these 21st century hippies to show my belief that natural substances should not be banned by law or discriminated upon by society if one wishes to explore them in a safe, recreational manner. I believe that everyone can relate to the feeling of needing/wanting to escape from reality. It is this idea of an “escape,” in the form of utilizing natural, mind-altering substances I wish to portray in this body of work. I feel that the use of these organic substances increases awareness of one’s surroundings, and sparks creativity and critical thinking in individuals. In my experience, natural substances have opened previously locked doors of my mind, helping me find purpose and clarity, as well as, created a mindset for relaxation and meditation. Despite the consumption of natural mind-altering substances, these 21st century Hippies are still contributing members of society. I believe their affinity with Mother Nature calls them to pursue careers in which they can produce and cultivate items with their own hands.