

Sofia Penny
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Following Passion

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Taylor Carrol is 22 years old and a student at Texas State University. She will receive a BFA in photography and will be graduating in december. She was born in Burnet Texas, and lived there practically her entire life.

When did art become a big part of your life?

Art has always been a big part of my life. My grandmother is the reason why I started, she always had her camera on her everywhere she went. She began to teach me a few things here and there, but didn't get into photography until my highschool years. Middle school I dabbled in yearbook but they never had me take photos. In that High school I took an art course which was mainly a painting and drawing course but the teacher allowed me to do photography because she was also very interested as well.



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So you discovered photography in highschool, did you enter college as a photography major?

Yes, that's when it started but I actually did not enter college as a photography major. I started off agricultural business at Angelo state University. I had a scholarship from showing pigs back in my hometown. Started off with that, hated it, changed to art history and hated it. I then transferred to ACC in Austin to figure out what I wanted to do, changed to early childhood education to teach second grade. Did that for a year and a half, and then transferred to Texas State. They wanted me to be a bachelor of science, and I was like no. My parents pushed me into choosing photography and I switched over, and I've loved it ever since.

So your parents and family are very supportive?

Yes, very supportive. They are the reason I changed my major because they saw how unhappy I was. My mom has a degree in outdoor recreation and her degree is out of the blue as well. Then she went back and got a minor in the medical field so she could work in a hospital. My dad has a business degree, so he's just basic.

Being an art student at a University, how has that affected your work?

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It's actually changed my work quite a bit. It's made me go outside of the box and figure out in detail how to process everything. I love photographing people. That's always been my go to thing, but for my thesis i've been getting into golf photography. Which includes people but also landscape photography. Landscape is what I ended up capturing this year because I didn't want to be around people because of Covid. For my Thesis II next semester I'll be able to incorporate people too. Throughout the process it's been an experience experimenting with all the different mediums as well. It made me realize why I chose my major for sure.

Has a certain professor really impacted you and your work?

Yes, I have actually had a lot of professors that I have enjoyed. Jessica Mallios and Laura Turner are some of my favorites. They have impacted me so much to the point where I might want to become a professor and teach photography. I've been thinking about this because of the way I was taught. I would love to be like them one day. They don't treat you like a student, they treat you like a friend and apprentice. They give you guidance when something you're doing is not working, and they show you exactly how to correct.

What other mediums have you dabbled in?

Oh my, I've done drawing, painting, sculpture, 3D design, 2D design, Ceramics, you could say i've done it all.

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Is your work more abstract or representational?

I would say it's more representational, but my thesis this semester looked more abstract especially because I chose to do black and white.

In your work, what does color mean to you, what do you look for in a photograph?

What I look for in a photograph is the detailing in everything. Say i'm photographing a tree I don't want to focus on the entire tree but rather the leaves. The leaves are the main color and focus of the tree. I enjoy having one specific thing being the focus so the audience's eyes are not bouncing all over the place.

What message do you hope people receive from your works?

I hope that they receive someone who is very passionate in their work and has always been that way. I want them to see that I am trying to make more specific work while branching out of my comfort zone. That is my weakness, I don't tend to branch out. Which is why I am thankful for the university because they have pushed me past those boundaries.

So how do you think your medium helps convey that message?

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I think it adds a different element because in painting and drawing you still get the full picture of what the artist is trying to convey. In photography it's not as much labor work, so I would say that it definitely is easier because I can immediately look at the photo and revise it quickly.

If you could be any historical figure who would you be?

I'd probably want to be Cindy Sherman, because her work is so beautiful and the way she captures people in the raw element or posing them. I also admire the way she uses black and white versus color. She also pays attention to detail.

If you could have dinner with any artist dead or alive who would it be?

I would love to have dinner with Andy Warhol, he's a very interesting human being and I have so many questions I want to ask him.

What's the best piece of advice someone has given you art or non art related?

To go for what I have always dreamt of doing. At first I didn't think my parents would support my photography career so that held me back from initially choosing it. They told me to change my major, and do what makes me happy. It's the best decision I've ever made. I am so thankful to them for pushing me to do that.

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Do you have a favorite artist?

Robert Adams, I studied him for my thesis because his work is similar to mine. He focuses on landscape and the American West and photographs them in black and white to show what humans have brought to nature. How it's been changing over time. Of course I also love David Hillard's work because he photographs in a panoramic style and I have always wanted to attempt to do that. Jessica Backhaus goes around the world and does these projects that most people would not think they could capture through a lens. She has a series of her shoots through water reflections and it is very interesting and pretty.

Is there a specific work of your own that is your favorite or is extra special to you?

Probably my most recent work for my thesis. My thesis is based on my hometown golf course because I have been playing golf since I was five. In that piece there is a man named Gib, and he is this cute little old man who has seen me grow up. He is always my go-to person when I need help or something isn't working out.

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What is your process in starting an art work?

Writing out ideas and then developing those ideas into more ideas. So for my thesis, over the summer I am going to start shooting more in order for me to have multiple art works for my senior show. So my idea at the moment is to go back to my hometown, go back to the golf course and photograph me and people in scenery. Right now it has that play that my hometown is a ghost town because I never go home since I actually hate

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my hometown. Although for this project it is such a near and dear thing to my heart especially golf. I'm going back to photograph myself and my friends and random people. I might go a different route and photograph the little things in my home town instead. For example my highschool, football field, state golf flag. I want to go back and capture all the memories and pieces that I love from that town. It is a slow process overall, but faster than other mediums.

Whenever you said making your town appear as a ghost town, while still highlighting your memories it takes out the part of the town that you don't like while emphasizing the good parts

Exactly, I grew up on that golf course. That's why it's always been my go to for projects, to be honest I waited up until this point so I could make it a big staple piece. My theme that I made for thesis I is all golf. I most likely will capture the golf course idea and things like the football field and see which my professor likes more. I am also considering working in color rather than black and white.

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What would the difference in color mean to you?

I feel like it would show that I'm still doing these things, and that my life is more in color because golf is no longer a stress ridden sport for me. It was always pushed onto me, I never had a typical summer because I was always golfing. Now it's more I go out and I do it for fun and no longer play competitively. I don't want to brag but I could go pro if I wanted too

Wow! That is very cool

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It was a big dream, but no, I didn't want my life to be just centered about that. You have to practice day in and day out, and that's what I was doing. I didn't want to do that in college, I wanted to have a normal college life.

Where do you find your inspiration?

All around me, people inspire me day in and day out especially my friends. I love photographing people, I have always loved being a portrait photographer. Having my friends around me always being like “ yeah you can take photos of me”, and going with my crazy ideas, I love that about them. My parents of course inspire me as well. I have also been following this guy for several years and his name is Patrick Koeing and he's a professional golf photographer, where he plays the sport but also photographs different golf courses. I would love to do that one day. He is an inspiration within another inspiration. Will I be photographing golf courses from here on out? You bet I will be.



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Where do you work on your art ?

In my apartment on my computer or I'm at my boyfriend's apartment. My computer can go anywhere with me, and I can also edit on my phone because my camera can easily hook up to it. Then I take it to print elsewhere so I can look at it on a larger scale.

Do you work from memory or observation?

I feel like a little bit of both, definitely both. My thesis again, it's making memories from my past but also using it in a more present standpoint. Studying over Patrick Kownig work at the moment, using his style but making it my own form.

If you ever feel blocked when creating, what do you do to get back into the flow of things?

I call my mom, bestfriend, or I talk to my boyfriend. I'm the type of person that if I'm blocked I have to not put it on paper. I have to speak it out and get feedback.

Would you consider yourself an extrovert or an introvert?

I am an extrovert, I am very talkative and sometimes people have to get me to stop talking.

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What advice would you give to young artists?

To follow their dreams and not let people talk them out of it. So many people have tried to do that with me and i'm still here. Forget everybody and do what you want.

After you graduate with your bachelors, what's next for you?

I just got a job offer with a hospital to take photos of new born babies, I will be starting that soon. I never thought I would do this type of photography, but I like the challenge and to learn new things. After graduation I would like to continue on my work and dabble in everything else too. I would love to go into wedding photography. Down the line I can have my own company and make a studio where I can do all of those things. That's the dream.