

# “By candlelight” an interview with Graphite Artist Niqi Crump

By: Betania Ramirez- Art History Major

I was given the privilege to interview artist Niqi Crump on April 20, 2021 throughout our interview her personality broke through and her passion for art was evident in her answers. She was a joy to interview and there wasn't a single moment where it felt like an interview. The whole process felt like reconnecting with an old friend. We started off by getting to know each other through our introductions I learned that artist Niqi Crump is a senior at Texas State University in the Department of Art and Design. She was born on May 29, 1994 and she is also a cancer survivor whose battle helped her become the kind of artist she is today. In her artwork Niqi likes to play with lines and dimension in ink and graphite. She uses a playful exploration in architecture as well. On her Instagram page Niqi shares a quote about how she strives to “create art and photography for things that tug at [our] inner being.” After breaking the ice and becoming more comfortable with each other, the interview was able to commence.

Betania Ramirez: How was your life growing up where there any peak moments to influence the path you are on now?

Niqi Crump: One of my peak moments I would say was in middle school when me and my friends attempted to create characters while trying to write little books. Another major steppingstone in my journey was a summer camp I attended. The camp was for pediatric cancer patients and with my cancer history the experience was incredibly personal. One of the things we did was that we would all come together and share our artwork and the meaning behind them. This was an immensely encouraging time for me getting to see everyone in the summer and pushing through everything we have encountered throughout the year.

BR: That is incredible since we just discussed your peak moments is there anyone who you would consider your biggest support when wanting to study art?

NC: I would say my biggest support is one of my parents' family friends. She created her own art and started giving me private art lessons when I was younger. She gave me a gift that would be the beginning of my journey, my first sketchbook. She always challenged me to do different projects on each page to help me grow and be more confident in my work. In the end once I had learned to work with each medium, I began to challenge myself and continued to do this through school and even now I still challenge myself.

BR: She seems like she was a great mentor for you. Furthermore, are there any other artists who inspired your work?

NC: I would say M.C. Escher was an inspiration for my work. He worked mainly in black and white. He is known for the way the colors contrast in the buildings of his artworks. After closer inspection they seem to overlap each other. Escher likes to play with dimensions and geometry as well. These are some of the key aspects that inspired my work.

BR: I have seen his work before, and I can see the influence in your work. Therefore, what medium do you like to use and why?

NC: I prefer to draw mainly in graphite and ink. The reason for this is because I find them easier to control. The textures and effects seem to be easier to see as well.

BR: Fascinating but if you could venture out of graphite and ink what would you like to work with and why?

NC: I would like to work with metals. I got the opportunity to work with them for two semesters in my first year at Texas State and enjoyed it immensely. I loved how you can take different pressures and heat the metal into the form you desire. I find forming the metals exciting so I would differently choose to work with metals above anything else.

BR: That is incredible metal I feel sometimes intimidates artist, but metal work is beautiful. When working on your pieces do you have a certain atmosphere or location you like to work in?

NC: I love to work in my room by candlelight, outdoors or in an open space like on a picnic table or in my backyard.

BR: What is your process like when working on your art pieces? For example, your playlist, movie choice, food, or drink of choice. Is there a ritual you like to do before you begin or something you do when you are done?

NC: I have never thought of it as a ritual, but I have always liked lighting a candle first or hopping in the shower just to get a fresh mindset. I like to watch once upon a time, really anything where characters and music are flowing together. I then pull out all the tools I am going to need such as: scissors, pens, and rulers afterwards I find the size paper I am going to need. It can take from 30 minutes to 2 hours some days depending on the material needed for the idea in my head. My drink of choice is Austin East cider in any flavor. I love its sweetness and the relaxed sensation the bubbles give me. Usually, I close my door I like to be in a secluded place. The music needs to be playing, a tv show is up and running and I am just flowing in my zone. I feel that I work longer and better if I have headphones on, they seem to get me in to the zone of inspiration so sometimes that is my default.

BR: It seems like a very relaxed environment you create. Is there any specific theme you want your artworks to convey?

NC: I want my artworks to convey joy. I feel like a lot of my artwork has a hidden emotional context, but I want people to view my artwork and be happy and be influenced to be creative. I do not want my work to be controversial. I do not want it to draw aggression I just want it convey joy and encouragement.

BR: Now if you could explain your artwork to someone other than your peers how would you describe it?

NC: A lot of my artwork comes from late night drawing inspirations. However, most of these I will plan for a few days until I get the final product. While others are more spur of the moment in class gesture drawings. The drawings I make are like a cultural mesh. I draw characters with

hidden features that people would recognize. I want people to recognize at least some parts of my works and then look at the rest of the details afterwards. I like to convey nostalgia and bring out not only my childhood memories but the viewers as well. My work can be viewed at different angles almost like a scavenger hunt. I feel like this aspect makes my work interactive in a way. I would also say my work is Impressionistic with its big gesture shapes, abstract figures, and texture. I would also say it has some of that playful dadaism as well. By playful dadaism I mean that you are feeling everything around you such as emotions and environment and, in the end, it becomes a part of my work. It may not be straight forward but dadaism was never meant to be straightforward it was meant to be a mystery that the viewer must solve.

BR: I think that was an amazing explanation. Now that you have found your style have you begun to develop your career as an artist if so, how? If not, how do you want to develop your career?

NC: I have not started developing my career yet. However, I would love to work for a nonprofit and eventually open my own art studio where people can come in whenever they need to and practice their own work or even develop their emotional art if that is what they need. Essentially it would become an art therapy program. I would not necessarily be telling them how to fix their issues but giving them a safe space to use art to face the situations they are going through.

BR: That sounds like an amazing idea not many artists like to take this route. However, I feel it is something that is needed especially during stressful times. Niqui it was an absolute privilege interviewing you and I hope you have great success in your future career as an artist. If you would like to see more of Niqui Crumps work, follow her on Instagram @passion84arting. She is also in the process of creating a website for her work so keep an eye on this rising artist who is sure to captivate us all with her talent. I hope you enjoyed "By Candlelight" an interview with Niqui Crump.