

Joseph Lupo

Professor of Art

Hanna's work is motivated by her own experiences and traumas. Our job as faculty is to encourage our students to work from a place of personal interest or experience but challenge them to find ways in which the personal can become relatable to a larger audience. Do to this, we must understand the artist's visual language and determine if the imagery and symbolism are correct in order to successfully communicate ideas.

As a faculty mentor, it is my job to challenge our graduate students to make lots of artwork, experiment with various forms/images/compositions/colors and participate in critiques and discussions with faculty and fellow graduate students. This constant loop of making and discussing the work is one of the main ways in which we can start to understand if an artist's visual language is successful. Traditional research into contemporary artists and ideas is the other way to understand one's visual language. Faculty pass along artists who are using similar ideas, images, and other art making strategies. Understanding the work of another artist can often times lead to epiphanies about one's own work. In Hanna's case, research into contemporary artists like Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Kathryn Polk offer this kind of understanding. Faculty must also know about and inform students of current theories and ideas that may advance a more mature and nuanced understanding of their work. For Hanna, this research includes readings about our cultural understanding of the color pink and art's role in dealing with trauma.

"21st" wasn't made in a vacuum. No piece of art is a singular expression. When seeing work in a situation like this award application, the viewer never sees or understands the months of research, experimentation, and discussion that got Hanna to the point where "21st" could be made.

Jason Lee
Associate Professor

Hanna Kesty's piece 21st is representative of her interest in moving her work beyond traditional printmaking and exploring the materiality of the real. There are no illusions in 21st, what you see is what you get. The visceral combination of materials into a form that is at once instantly recognizable and draws the viewer in with its depiction of the known only to push back as they realize that there is something more disturbing under the surface. Hanna draws on her life experiences in her work that proudly wears its heart on its sleeve. Mentoring Hanna's sculptural explorations has been an eye-opening experience for the both of us.