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## Fabrics, artifacts and nostalgia

Annie Bielski presents her work "Joes & Anns" with Emily Owens as the curator



SHUBH JAIN and VINDHYA BURUGUPALLI | The Spectrum

Annie Bielski poses in front of her artwork at her exhibit at Buffalo Arts Studio.



SHUBH JAIN

VINDHYA BURUGUPALLI

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A fabric store.

The memory of an old roommate.

The everyday extraordinary.

UB Master of Fine Arts student Annie Bielski finds her inspiration through what she calls the “Joes & Anns” — the daily happenings of her life, no matter how mundane they might seem to the ordinary viewer.

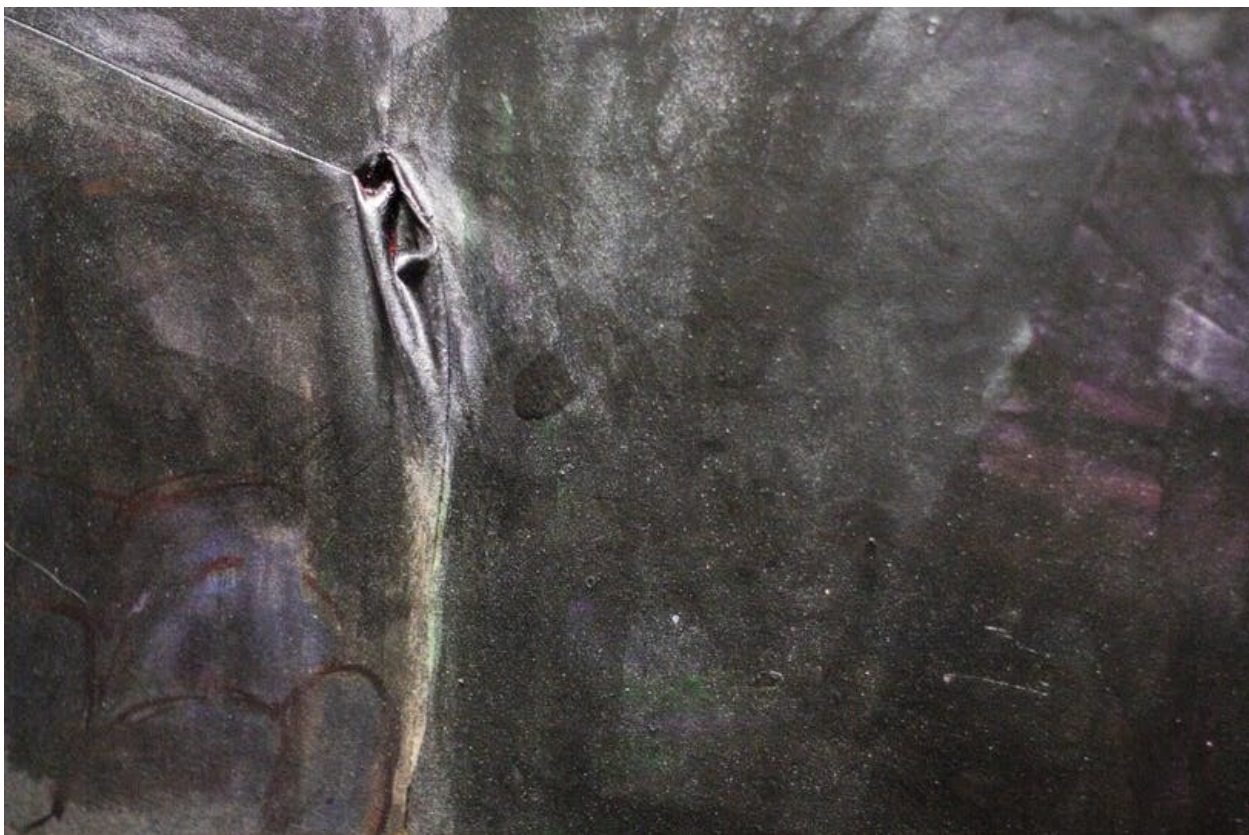
Bielski’s art is an amalgamation of painting, sewing and writing -- all of which covered the walls of her exhibit at the Buffalo Arts Studio on Friday evening. The exhibit featured the work of Bielski and Obsidian Bellis. Both “Apothecary for Sis” -- Bellis’ work -- and “Joes & Anns” were guest curated by Emily Owen, an MFA candidate at UB. Owen said both works showcase the history of the artists’ families and femininity.

Bielski said she’s been writing the “incomplete taxonomy” of the “Joes and Anns” of her life, which include her grandparents, old roommate Ann, other people’s dogs and JoAnn Fabrics, the craft store chain where she spent a lot of time and money toward creating art.

Bielski is inspired by driving, stories, people, going to JoAnn fabrics and materials. Her interest in domestic versus public spaces leads her to juxtapose domestic materials with fine art materials such as canvas and paint. The medium she likes to work with most is sewing.

“I like joining together disparate things, and I almost think of sewing as a drawing mark, like the first line in a piece,” Bielski said.

“Pocket,” a black monochromatic art piece displays Bielski’s fondness for playing with materials and mediums.



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“Pocket” by Annie Bielski

“Although, it is black, it has many colorful lives underneath it,” Bielski said. “It is also made of sewn parts. It has these seams that kind of protrude out or draw you in, that kind of references clothes and body. I painted it black

to just see the seams and sewn parts. I named it ‘Pocket’ because it looks kind of like a bodily pocket or a belly button or something like that.”

Paula Connors, an attendee at the exhibition, said she went wild over “Pocket”

“Because as you approach it, it’s not a black sculpture anymore, you see the richness of all the colors that are actually in it and the negative space, I thought it was really strange,” Connors said.

Connors also said that she loved how fellow artist Obsidian Bellis took early American cabinets and shelves and transformed them with life-changing colors and interesting artifacts, making them into sculptures.

Obsidian Bellis is a self-taught black American non-binary femme person. Bellis’ exhibit, “Apothecary for Sis,” consists of shrines, altar work, assembled pieces and is supported by a foundation of racism, colonialism and gender. Bellis said they are inspired by their “feelings, thoughts and things that connect me to the women and non-binary people who have come before” them. Bellis said they couldn’t explain what inspires them in a short answer.

Some of the common themes highlighted in Bellis’ works are nostalgia, intimacy, healing and family. Bellis said that the jars and tiny bottles in the installations represent compartmentalization of the hardships faced within families or capturing certain people and moments in time.

“The one piece, specifically ‘Nightcap,’ there is a picture of my great grandmother, what I noticed about her is she was a bomb-ass cook,” Bellis said.



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“Nightcap” by Obsidian Bellis

Owen started noticing links between the works of Bielski and Bellis, as they both use objects and are finding new ways to use them.



“So there’s a lot of history of their families, of femininity, all are kind of mingled together in there. And that was really exciting to see,” Owen said.

Things began to make better sense to Owen when she saw the shows as separate but interlinked.

What started out as a meeting between the three of them and progressed into studio visits came together in Friday’s exhibition, according to Owen, connecting the objects utilized to their past and giving them a new purpose.

*Vindhya Burugupalli and Shubh Jain are on the multimedia desk and can be reached at [photos@ubspectrum.com](mailto:photos@ubspectrum.com).*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shubh Jain

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### VINDHYA BURUGUPALLI

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Vindhya Burugupalli is a senior multimedia editor for *The Spectrum*. She loves traveling and documenting her experiences through mp4s and jpegs. In her free time, she can be found exploring cute coffee shops and food spots.

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