

## Grounded in Still Life

Olivia Servidio

### Abstract

*This project examines the development of the still life oil paintings I completed during my time at Millersville. Both series were created using oil paint as the main medium. The first series focuses on repeated still life studies and experimenting with different artistic styles, while the second series delves into the representation of different people's personalities and lives through still life paintings. This project is an analysis of my creative process and the techniques used in creating these series. By exploring my two oil painting series, I seek to showcase the potential of still life paintings to evolve beyond mere representations of inanimate objects.*

The work I am showcasing is a culmination of major oil paintings that I have created during my time at Millersville University, where I feel I have developed as an artist by using different techniques and themes within my oil paintings. Still life paintings have been a subject I've been interested in for a long time, but with these series I was able to really focus on still life as the subject of multiple paintings. The two series that I completed showcase my exploration with this subject. My two series each focus on the material of oil paint and exploring different ways to experiment with working on still life paintings.

The first series of paintings I created during my time at Millersville focused on repeated still life studies. These paintings were created to experiment with different

artistic styles and techniques. The objective was to create several paintings of the same subjects with some rearrangement of the still life subjects. Each painting in this series explores different approaches to color, brushwork, and composition. Throughout this series, I aimed to explore how different styles and techniques could be applied to the same subject matter, and how that could impact the overall aesthetic of the artwork.

One of the most significant influences on this series was my education at Millersville. During my time there, I learned and practiced different artistic styles and techniques through my courses and interactions with other artists. These influences are reflected in the different approaches I took in this series of paintings. For example, one painting in this series

focused on a more traditional approach to still life painting, with realistic colors and lighting. Another painting in this series took on a more impressionistic approach, with looser brushstrokes and a more vibrant color palette. For the third painting in this series, I experimented with grisaille technique, and focused on more grey tones and creating a light glaze of oil paint on the canvas first. Then, with a rag, I wiped paint off of the canvas to create my still life painting. Once this was done, I added glazes of blues and oranges to add some color to my third painting.

The second series of paintings I created was focused on still life as a representation of different people's personalities and lives. In this series, I explored how still life paintings could go beyond mere representations of inanimate objects and be used to capture the character and personality of a person. This understanding is reflected in the still life paintings in this series, which depict objects that are significant to the person being represented.

Two paintings in this series feature objects my parents own and decorated my childhood home with. Many of the subjects in these paintings, like the lamp and boat, are antiques that have been in my home for many years. I wanted to contrast these two paintings and their subjects with objects that I used to decorate my college apartment. These objects include lights, flowers, and a seasonal gnome. I wanted to focus on the visual similarity with the flowers in my college apartment and the red flowers present in the painting of my mother's

decorations. These paintings are a study of how each member of my family (including myself) uses different objects to decorate our homes and how those items can be a physical representation of our personalities. These paintings can also be used to show how we are similar to each other. When creating this second series, I wanted to portray a more realistic depiction of these different still life subjects while also focusing on loose brushstrokes like in my impressionist inspired piece from my first series.

In creating both of these series, I utilized a range of techniques and approaches to oil painting. Some of the techniques I used included underpainting, glazing, and impasto. With underpainting, I would create a base painting that I would add to with other layers of color, while with glazing I would use a transparent layer of paint over another dry layer to add difference in color or texture. With impasto, paint is added to the canvas thickly to explore texture and layering in oil paintings. These techniques allowed me to create a range of textures and visual effects in my paintings, and they were chosen to enhance the overall aesthetic of each artwork.

My work at Millersville culminated in two series of still life paintings that showcase the evolution of this genre. Through these series, I was able to explore different artistic styles, techniques, and the potential of still life paintings to go beyond representations of inanimate objects.

---

### Recommended Citation

Servidio, O. (2023). Grounded in Still Life. *Made in Millersville Journal*, 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.mimjournal.com/art-2023>