

UW-River Falls: BFA graduate creates sweatshirts, inspired by pop artist Andy Warhol

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May 18, 2022 — In her University of Wisconsin-River Falls senior Bachelor of Fine Arts exhibit, Maggie Hermersmann has a picture of herself as a young child drawing on an easel.

It is a reminder of how she discovered her love of art at an early age.

“I have always been an artist,” Hermersmann said. “Since the time I could walk, I was creating things.”

The graphic design major graduated on May 7.

Hermersmann, of Woodbury, Minn., creates her graphic designs and apparel under the name Maggie Winters.

“I wanted a name that everyone could spell,” Hermersmann explained. “I like that the M is an upside-down W and vice versa and how it looks graphically.”

Hermersmann chose graphic design as a major because she was interested in having an online presence for her artwork as well as having the option to create websites and logos and help companies with branding.

In her artwork and designs, Hermersmann likes to incorporate bright colors and is inspired by pop and post-modern artists.

“When I was a little kid, I went to a museum in Milwaukee and saw work from Andy Warhol,” Hermersmann said. “I saw his work and I was just intrigued by it,

particularly the Campbell's Soup Cans, which still has a hold on me. I've always been inspired by Andy Warhol. He used bright colors. What even interested me more was the Campbell's Soup Cans artwork was so simple and yet it was so different. He could find beauty in something we look at all the time and probably have cans of it in our cupboard."

Bright colors help attract people to Hermersmann work and then slowly she wants them to discover the details she includes in her graphic designs, she said.

Her latest collection is titled "518." It is based on her birthday, May 18.

"This is a number that resonates with me a lot," Hermersmann said. "I consider it my angel number. I see it everywhere. It's a number that points me in the right direction."

The Gallery 101 exhibit included two chairs which Hermersmann used to invite viewers to come into the space and stay awhile.

"I didn't want people to feel they had to stand eight feet away. I wanted to welcome them into the space," Hermersmann said. "I wanted people to feel invited into the work I created. I wanted them to get up close and see what's going on in the posters and the longboards."

As part of the exhibit, Hermersmann painted two long skateboards with images of an octopus suffering from toxic waste in the ocean and a jellyfish unable to breathe with plastic wrapped around it.

Some of Hermersmann's apparel designs include vinyl cutouts of the UWRF map, a symbol of where she earned her degree. She hand creates each one of the apparel items. The vinyl cutout is designed to move with the wearer and is durable.

Other articles of clothing include a smiling face logo with the words "I'm Happy You're Here." She created the design to promote suicide awareness.

"It is subtle enough people can wear it," she noted. "Yet it sends an important message."

The sweatshirts also carry designs on them that are important to her, including a mushroom, which is her favorite food, a butterfly that represents transformation and 518, her favorite number.

Bella Osterbauer, a junior graphic design and art education major, has one of Winter's hoodies and believes the suicide prevention one is meaningful and designed well.

"What I like most about Maggie's art is that she inspires me to create," Osterbauer, of Osceola, said. "I know I have a bias towards Maggie's art because she is my friend as well as an artist, but even before we were close, I always could tell it was her work because it was always my favorite during critiques. Her approach and style when designing is always beyond anything that I imagine. Maggie's artistic style has always seemed to come naturally to her in a way I both envy and admire."

UWRF art Professor Dan Paulus said Hermersmann's work is embedded with personal meaning and articulates her experiences and the world around her.

"Something unique about her work is that it's highly conceptual but also open to interpretation," Paulus said. "Her style is contemporary retro, and her work is sensitive to art history but merges it with current styles and trends. Maggie's work utilizes bright hues that catch the eye mixed with high contrast imagery to tell the viewer a specific story. The nature of her work makes it well adaptable to many different kinds of formats from posters to sweatshirts.

"She has a passion for the wearables," he added. "Her style and meticulous attention to detail are a perfect combination for the creation of meaningful clothing items. There's a ton of potential with wearables and the artwork she has already created. On top of the current line she's created, I could see her poster work translated or modified to fit the wearable format and believe she would be successful in creating clothing items that people would want to wear."

In the future, Hermersmann plans to create more collections and expects to release her next one in mid-to late-summer. Many of these collections will touch on social movements and environmental issues. To learn more about Maggie Winters and upcoming collections, go to her website www.maggiewinters.design.

As she looked at her two-year-old picture of her drawing in the exhibit, Hermersmann added, "I think it really represents 518 and being about me and my life," she said. "It's about my dreams as a little kid coming true. It almost makes me cry. I did it. I became an artist."