

Tanshi Mohan

Zenith Artist Statement

My Zenith Project uses photography and digital art to depict the obstacles college student's face in regards to today's mental health practices, as well as a depiction of the three most common mental illnesses. My editing process was inspired by surrealism photography. My three concepts are based on my research paper. The first one represents the stigmatization and fear of medicine for mental health illnesses, the second one represents the lack of support that colleges give their students during mental health rough patches, and the last one represents the way we handle mental illnesses, how most people feel as though we can only get help when the illness gets to or near a crisis stage. My last piece is a triptych that embodies the feelings of anxiety, depression, and bipolar disorder through a workplace setting.

The main applications and tools I used to create this project were Photoshop and Corel Painter. For the first diptych, titled, "Zombie", I used the Liquify tool in Photoshop on the left-hand side to create the "melting effect" on the person to make her look more like a "zombie", one of the stigmas attached to the medicine. People fear that they will lose their thoughts and personality, rendering them a zombie. I "painted" (in Corel Painter) the silhouette and the colors around my subject on the right-hand to emphasize the feelings of being a void (dark, grey silhouette) and the colors around her to represent how the outside world sees her. The vibrant colors represent happiness and normality.

For my second diptych titled, "Pull for Help", I used a velvet-black backdrop to emphasize the feeling of being in a dark place, a feeling most correlated with major depressive disorder. The rope on the right of my subject is to represent help, and how it is always there if you reach out for it. My subject does not acknowledge the rope because of the way we treat mental illnesses, only focusing on "crisis-management" rather than prevention. Even though my subject looks depressed, the symptoms of mental illnesses are not always clearly physical,

so they emphasize the distress, depressed moods, and other symptoms, I used a Hue/Saturation edit and the Liquify tool, as seen on the right side of the diptych. The rope is red to emphasize the emergency of the situation, and how my subject should reach out for help before it is too late.

My third diptych, titled, “College First”, represents the common trend of how colleges treat students with mental illnesses. They protect their reputation, status, and liability first, as we see in my research paper with the common trend of forcing students to take mandatory leaves of absence. Again, the subject who has “fallen” on the ground is “melting” to emphasize distress and a whatever rough patch the student may be going through. College is represented by the briefcase and the person in a blazer helping the subject up. This is to show how depersonalized “treatment” is for college students. On the right side of the diptych, everything is faded out except for the briefcase with the words “College INC” on them. This is to again emphasize that colleges fail to give students their full support and resources to help students with their mental health because they rather protect their profits first. I used a watercolor brush to create this effect in Photoshop.

For my triptych, I used the placement of colors to represent depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder. This was done in Photoshop through selections and Hue/Saturation layers. This first picture on the left represents anxiety, as seen with the crowded computer screen and vibrant, overwhelming colors. The second photo represents depression, as one of the main symptoms of depression is the lack of motivation and inability to leave bed due to sadness and extreme fatigue. The blue is supposed to represent a depressed state. The last photo represents the manic stage of bipolar disorder. Mania is characterized by a highly optimistic, hyperactive, and impulsive state. This is why the colors are patched on my subject. They are yellows, reds, oranges, and magentas to represent a state of hyperactivity. The green is to represent an optimistic feeling. If you look into the right lower corner of the computer screen, you can see that my subject is working at 12:30 am.