More than a Materials Girl

Sabrina Owens of Murfreesboro, TN came to MTSU at the age of 23 after having attended a semester at Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD). With no scholarship options to remain there and unable to afford SCAD she revisited her personal goals for discovery of other options to move her life forward. MTSU ultimately rose to the top of her list.

Q: Tell us about yourself?

Owens: I’m 26, I’ve been in the MTSU art program for a few years now. I’m a painting major, I work on the weekends, and I’m pretty independent. I also dance. I don’t know, I’m kind of a well-rounded eclectic person.

Q; Ok, let’s discuss when you started MTSU. You said you were 23? Were you at another school or doing something else?

Owens: Previously, I went to Motlow (Community College) to get my general education studies out of the way. Prior to that I attended SCAD, the Savannah College of Art and Design. It was really interesting as I had never been down there, in that culture, or that kind of thing. It was really interesting. It was a good experience for me.

I didn’t have any scholarships to continue so I figured it would be the smarter choice to go to a community college as a low income student and transfer to MTSU. I also had family here and I grew up here. In middle Tennessee, we have a really good art community, very alive, I think that’s what we’re all working towards.

Q: Have you participated in the Boro Art Crawl?

Owens: I have …a couple of times. Once over the summer of 2016 and once this past December.

Q: Do you have any work on display currently …in Murfreesboro, Nashville, or elsewhere?

Owens: I don’t have any work up now. I’m working on my Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.) portfolio and senior show production. I do have some work at the Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce currently. That’s been up for a little bit.

Q: Let’s return to the B.F.A. you mentioned Sabrina. How’s that coming along?

Owens: So far so good. I’m a painting major. …a studio major with concentrations in painting and sculpture.

So, I’ve been trying to fuse the boundaries between materialism, collage and painting and then kind of utilizing the idea of assemblage mixed with collage through the process of laying down material and through the process of more intuitive gesture marks with paint and then maybe have a conversation with the color and the material that the color sits on. So that’s kind of where I’m at right now. This kind of push-pull dynamic between two-dimensional painting and collage with a little bit of materialism and some sculptural elements as well.
Q: I can see from the cast on your arm that you’ve had a recent mishap. Can you describe for me what effect that’s had on your work? Mentally and physically?

Owens: Yeah, mentally and physically ...physically, I’ve been struggling as far as being precise, instead of precision in cutting paper or laying down things precisely, I’ve been doing a mod podge or assemblage composition that kind of intuitively lays down. At the same time, mentally, my work is kind of frustrating. So, I’ve been putting that frustrated element in my work which has compositionally been successful so far I feel like. There’s still some refining that I feel currently needs to happen. I’m just trying to work on multiple pieces that I can go back and work on once I get this cast off when I can be more precise and refined with each piece.

Q: What will you then strive for in your work?

Owens: I guess just experimenting honestly with materialism. I’d like to go back to some of my collage pieces where I do a kind of hyper-surrealism aspect, but I feel like even taking a break from that. I really love still doing the figure in an almost Dada absurd manner. You know on the other spectrum of not just being abstract and using material as my work. I really like the figure and the form and I like those technical skills to practice also. I thought about fusing the boundaries between those, like the hyper-realism or hyper-surrealism because it’s set in a surreal kind of scenario. You know, ripped up parts of people that’s painted and also collaged and maybe with texture is kind of what I think for the future. I think I’m also going to strive for something like this by the end of the semester. Maybe that same idea of collaging parts of the form and figure and then adding Rauschenberg like elements and parts of material and pieces and then going back in with gesture and paint with fused elements of sculpture and imagery.

Q: Do you see yourself going to graduate school?

Owens: I do actually! I looked at a couple of schools. I looked at Scottsdale (Arizona State University), but I’ve only briefly looked as I’ll be back here next fall before I graduate. I’ve really, really considered the University of New Orleans. I know Ms. (Kym) Dummons (MTSU Assistant Professor of Art) went there and she really enjoyed it. I think it’s a three year program and I really enjoy the art down there, the art scene. I like the architecture, and the old quality to the architecture and the torn-up kind of decayed buildings, buildings that are an inspiration to my work. A lot of my sculpture and textured stuff is almost like a deterioration of society or the human experience and still captured in a beautiful manner.

One of my goals before the end of the year is to have one solo exhibit. I’ve been to a couple of the Nashville Art Crawls and have talked to some of the gallery owners and artists and have kind of figured out how that stuff works, you know which is really interesting ...proposals, you pay so much amount of money if they like your work, sure go for it – blah, blah, blah. Really it’s just building that consistent body of work that’s refined enough to have in a gallery and to appease my audience that I’m trying to reach out too.