

Taking Up Space: A Group Mural Capstone Project

Process in creating the mural

Our mural idea changed and grew in multiple ways throughout our time in planning the mural. However, from the beginning as a group we found it important to find a way to give back to future students just starting their journey. We had symbols that we found important from our time at Southwestern that we wanted to incorporate. The idea of having a layering process was also important to our group to incorporate, as to each of us our time at Southwestern was a process, layer after layer. Our mural started off with having more art that was 3-dimensional, we had plans of chicken wire, weaving, and plant hangers. We wanted to incorporate all our group members' artistic style, as the majority of the group were not painters. We discovered however that we didn't have the knowledge or skill of how to attach things to the wall. As a group we did well at adjusting our ideas. At our next meeting we talked about how important somatic experiences were in our time at Southwestern. We developed the idea of using paint balloons and throwing them at the wall. We found a way to still have the plants and decided on them being at the bottom of the mural. The plants we chose to do were mint and rosemary, plants that future students can take from and use. We decided on the idea of having painted off sections that each member could put their symbols in. However, at one of our last meetings we discussed how our idea of the mural seemed really disconnected from one another, which was the opposite of what we wanted our mural to represent. We then talked about the importance of feminine energy and how Lizzie's symbol could represent that energy and each one of us. It then evolved into how we could incorporate all our other symbols to interact with the woman. We kept the layering process of using paint balloons first and handprints and then having the woman and our individual symbols interacting in the middle of the mural.

Experience as a "Distance Group"

Working from a distance presented its challenges, we were the only group who had members that lived outside of New Mexico. As a group we were unable to all fully meet on zoom and on the day of the art process. This resulted in some disconnection in the group. However, we all did our best to stay connected and make everyone feel included. Due to Sam being unable to make it on the day of the art process, she was still brought into the space spiritually. Sam, on her own time to feel connected to the art process and the group, made artwork of everyone's symbols and wrote individual messages on the back for each group member and mailed them out. It was hard not having everyone be present and hard not being able to be present, but we as a group did our best to make everyone feel included and part of the process. This taught us the importance of connection even from a distance.

What Symbols are Represented and their meanings

There are many symbols present in our mural. Most prominently is the earth figure woman with one monarch wing and one luna moth wing. The monarch is a symbol that is important to Maddie. It speaks to transformation (the stillness of a chrysalis) trust in the process (caterpillars have no idea what they are in for) and the care of the earth (my experience of caring for these caterpillars all the way through their process). The luna moth wing was incorporated through Beth. It first appeared in archetypal and still continues to be present. It represents following our own truth. Moths who follow man made lights lose their way and can even die running into the lights over and over. Luna moths who follow their true path, the light of the moon, thrive. Being at Southwestern, and becoming an art therapist, feels like following the moon.

The snail in the lower right corner is a wisdom creature that appeared to Roo in a guided visualization meditation in class. The snail reminded her to “slow down” and she has carried this message with her throughout her days at Southwestern and her daily life. The significance of the shell is connected to transformation. As we come to the end of practicum we are able to look back and see the shell that we grew from. It was once a form of protection and now a memory of how we lived in the world. What was once comfortable may no longer serve the being that has transformed. Now in the search for the next place of habitation or next journey to discover and grow.

The fox in the right corner appeared to Sam during her first experience with guided meditation from a beginning course at Southwestern and has continued to show up. The fox reminded Sam of her inner child and represents how it's okay to be playful and mischievous. The fox continues to remind her of the importance of having a balance between work and play. The fox is also a reminder to Sam to “trust the process” as on that day she didn't expect to get much out of the meditation but in the end got way more than she imagined.

The earth woman is held within a circle of plants and vines. This image was taken from another guided meditation Roo experienced in hermeneutics. The guided meditation to the heart cave by Robert Waterman helped her arrive in a amethyst crystal cave completely held and adorned by vines and plants. The importance of knowing the earth holds each of us is something we wanted to relay on multiple levels in the mural.

The female figure has been a meaningful symbol which has been incorporated into Lizzy's artwork since beginning at Southwestern College. It represents the true struggle and beauty of being human. The form is a reminder that regardless of the trauma that a body may carry, there will always be an innate strength and ability to heal and transform.

The bottom of the mural contains the plants, the intention of the plants was to create a living wall/ space that provides and gives, the herbs are something that students can interact with for years to come, a gift that keeps on giving.

Finally, the hand prints frame the mural this was to represent how the school has impacted each and everyone of us and how we will take that impact and pass it on to others. The handprints were a way to leave our mark on the school as it left our mark on us.

The Group's hope on how the art is received by SWC Community

Our hope is that this mural is received with a felt sense of joy and a reminder of the inner child within each of us. Our mural expresses the experience of playfulness, the deep healing that comes from being surrounded by the presence of others, integrated with the earth and the immense transformation that each of us went through, personally and together, throughout our time at Southwestern College. Our mural creatively and energetically serves as a reminder of the struggles and problem solving skills we've learned to harness, an immense trust in the process of our own creative endeavors, and the cycle of giving and receiving that we experience as healers.

Paint balloons: somatic experience, release, creating memories from the creative process AND the product

Luna Moth: Symbol of recovery from archetypal. "to free yourself from addiction you have to live the way the moth did before man made lights." They followed the moon. Moths will kill themselves running into the man made lights because they've lost their way. Just like in active addiction.

Sun and Moon:

The sun and moon provide vibrant and healing energy. Night and day are a symbol of balance and reminder of time. New Mexico skies are unique and mighty. The sunrises, sunsets, and night skies have provided joy, awe, color, inspiration, and will remain a highlight of living in the Land of Enchantment.