

## Riley Brown's Artist Statement

My work deals with my impulse to decorate and romanticize everything in life -- an impulse that I believe is to an extent universal. I am interested in the decoration of the body, and of personal items as an extension of the body. In my more recent work I have been examining how this decorative impulse manifested itself in my childhood. I look back on photographs of myself and my peers as children, and create drawings that embellish and exaggerate the events of the photos. My goal is for my drawings to exist somewhere in the space between the photos as an “authentic” record of my subjects’ bodies, and the subjects’ perception of themselves at the time of the photos.

I believe I am drawn towards this topic because of my rather fraught relationship to my body throughout childhood and adolescence, which was certainly complicated by (if not a direct product of) the aesthetics of femininity. I believe that women are disproportionately encouraged to be decorators of our environments and bodies. I do not necessarily condemn this phenomenon. Rather, I see my work as a recontextualization of the aesthetic realm I existed in as a child. By retrospectively embellishing these images of myself, I am exercising a form of control over my self-image that I lacked at the time.

I use “lowbrow” materials in my drawings, such as highlighters, crayons, stickers, and glitter, as well as more traditional materials like watercolors and oil pastel. The diverse materials react with each other in unexpected ways, and create a visually interesting texture. I work the entire surface at once, and layer wet and dry media and collage over each other until the composition is sufficiently dense and complicated. I seldom practice restraint. My goal is a glitzy, maximalist appearance in the vein of Lisa Frank products, rave costumes, and Decoden.