

Artist Talks - Morgan Stahl_ac

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SPEAKERS

Edith Villasenor, Morgan Stahl

E Edith Villasenor 00:01

Hello, Welcome. Today is January 10, 2020. My name is Edith Villasenor. And I'm here to interview Morgan Stahl on her art exhibit Steel Time Capsule at the Architecture, Design & Art library. Thank you, Morgan for being here.

M Morgan Stahl 00:16

Thank you for having me!

E Edith Villasenor 00:17

I like to thank the UH Libraries for sponsoring this program. Morgan Stahl is currently in her fifth and final year of the architecture program at the University of Houston. Today Morgan will talk about her work, experiences, and future plans. So to get started, could you briefly tell us about your background?

M Morgan Stahl 00:36

Well, basically, my background starts actually not in Texas. So I'm actually from Maryland, which is where I grew up from kindergarten to 12th grade. I basically traveled around a lot with my parents and my brother. So I kind of got this really close relationship with my family, which kind of helped to like drive a lot of the stuff that we'll like talk about, and that you can see behind us. And just came to Texas for architecture school and figured I'd stick around for a little while.

E Edith Villasenor 01:09

What decided you to come to study at U of H?

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Morgan Stahl 01:12

Well, Maryland didn't have the program for me that I wanted out of an architecture program. So I applied actually all over the United States. And then Houston just seemed to have like, everything that I wanted. I wanted to be in a city, I kind of wanted something that's like, I want, I want something that's like always happening, not like New York, where it's like always always happening. But just like, I can go out and go get food at 10 o'clock and there's still a decent amount of places open. Just also a good, like architecture field, as well. So that's why I came here. Out of all my other choices.

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Edith Villasenor 01:50

When did you know that you wanted to be an artist?

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Morgan Stahl 01:52

Oh, I guess probably sixth grade, I think. I was sketching for a while. I got it from my dad. And then just kind of did random things with it--people, landscapes, whatever I can do. It wasn't very good, also. And then I quickly realized that I wanted to be an artist, I think it was sixth grade, went to my parents. Hey, Mom and Dad, I would love to be an artist. And they were like, maybe not an artist, maybe something that makes a little bit more money, which I think a lot of us go through. And so then I went to my art teacher. And she was like, here's a list of things you can do. My parents were like, well, thank you, like, we think you'll like architecture or graphic design. And I went with architecture and haven't stopped since.

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Edith Villasenor 02:44

Thank you for sharing that with us. And do you pursue any themes in your work?

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Morgan Stahl 02:50

Well, a lot of the work that I have done recently, which is actually not as recent you would think. I haven't had time during architecture school to do much. I'm constantly drawing and sketching with that. I don't really have a lot of time to like, sit and make something for fun. But I think I'll get back into it when I graduate. So my most recent stuff is from the end of high school. So like four or five years ago, and a lot of them is just like people and a lot of things from observation, I noticed that I started to gravitate towards seeing something and then being able to put it on paper. I just really enjoy that. So I think that's a lot of what I go through. Like the picture behind us is, I found an image of ravens and I also found this really beautiful girl and so I kind of like morphed them together. And that's how I came up with that. It was a lot of like, just observations.

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Edith Villasenor 03:43

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Edith Villasenor 03:43

Thank you for sharing that. And from the installation, what is your favorite piece?

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Morgan Stahl 03:48

Coincidentally, this one, the one that's sitting here behind us. This one I think is the last one, the most recent one that I have in the whole exhibition. And I don't know, it's like, the girls eyes are just like so piercing. And I just really like how it came out. And it's only like color pencil. It's not even like a very intricate medium. And I just was really happy with the end result. And I just always see it and like it's been five years later. I'm like, Man, I love that. Like it's so nice. That was definitely my favorite.

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Edith Villasenor 04:22

And have you ever installed in another public space before?

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Morgan Stahl 04:28

Not to the extent that I had through the UH library. I have done like in high school, they do some little ones. We would do, the county would do an art installation in the public mall. And that was like kind of the biggest I think it probably is like the one that has had the most traction because there's thousands of people at a mall and they just walked by it and they'll stop and look, but it didn't feel as like professional or even like real. Like I would just go see it. It's kind of just at a mall, like, there's people there. But it's not like really like quiet and really nice. And like, Hey, this is on display, like only to like see, like just so much else going on. So I wouldn't really count it. So I would say this is probably the first one. But technically, there's been others.

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Edith Villasenor 05:17

Yeah. Your first solo exhibit for sure.

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Morgan Stahl 05:22

Definitely.

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Edith Villasenor 05:23

And can you tell us about your technique that you use in your work?

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Morgan Stahl 05:26

I don't really have much of a technique, I just kind of, like I said, I'll find something that I like, and then just kind of decide how I want to draw it. So sometimes it'll just be a simple like still

life that I want to do just in like graphite. Sometimes it'll be an image that I really, really like. And I'll do it like inverted colors. Like the flowers behind you, I don't know if you all can see it, but the flowers behind you are white on black paper. So sometimes I kind of like, do what I normally do, but switch it. And then other times when I feel like the color would really help to like make it nicer. I'll do like a color scheme, or just like one color. But mostly just my technique is just picking up whatever closest graphite pencils to me and just going from there.

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Edith Villasenor 06:19

Thank you. And when do you know that you're done? For example, when you're sketching,

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Morgan Stahl 06:25

Sometimes like this one, sometimes I gotta like, just tell myself like it's done and just like, put it somewhere else in the house. Because I know sometimes, sometimes it's easy. It's like I see the flower, once a flower is drawn, and it looks nice, and I think it came out how I wanted to, it's done. But then for the more complicated pieces, I'm constantly like, Can I fix this? Can I do this? Can I do more? I'm just like, No, I'm done. I don't want to do anymore. It's been like days. I'm done. We're all set now. So it changes depending on the piece.

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Edith Villasenor 07:01

Thank you. Do you have any influences?

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Morgan Stahl 07:07

Definitely my family, I noticed when I was curating the pieces for the show that a lot of it was like family influence. And I actually had never really noticed that. Sometimes they were, I did the pieces on my own time. And then sometimes it was through like the art classes I did in high school. And they would just give us a prompt and for some reason I noticed that like it would always gravitate to like a family. Like relationship, family symbolism, something to do with my family. Like even just being like, I like my grandma's garden. I drew her flowers. Like it's just somehow they like my family always kind of came back in. I just think it's because of like how, like our relationship was.

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Edith Villasenor 07:49

Very close.

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Morgan Stahl 07:50

Yeah, cuz it was just us four and then my family is from Oregon and New Jersey. So it's like I see them every now and then. But it's just constantly like, Christmas, Thanksgiving, like big holidays is just like just us four, so like I think that's why the family like theme is pretty, like

present in all of like the pieces.

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Edith Villasenor 08:15

And what would you say is your favorite medium to work with?

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Morgan Stahl 08:19

Favorite medium, ooh I don't know. I would quickly want to say like just graphite, just pencil on like, just some illustration paper. That's like the easiest to do. But I really like the white charcoal on like black because it really just makes you rethink how you're going to draw. And like how I'm going to like get to the end goal. So it's not like I can just kind of make things darker for a shadow. Now it's like, Are my shadows still dark? Are my shadows now white? It just like kind of like makes me have to stop and think a little bit more through the process. So I think that one actually would be my favorite even though it's not always my go to.

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Edith Villasenor 09:03

Thank you. And are you working on any other series?

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Morgan Stahl 09:08

Currently no. Actually, having this has made me realize that I kind of want to, maybe do one from like a maybe more architecture side. Because like I said, I'm constantly sketching there and I've kept like, my really good sketches and actually have started keeping my sketchbooks and curating them to be like the same style. So it's been three semesters now and so, like the sketchbooks, you could just like lay a mountain or like a little collection. So I have one more semester so I'll have four in the collection. So I think that's like the closest to like my next series I would be doing. I don't know what I'll do with it but maybe while I'm famous one day, it'll be in some art museum.

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Edith Villasenor 09:50

Which takes me to the next question. So what is your favorite place to see art?

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Morgan Stahl 09:54

Oh, I don't know. I think probably just like going out and just exploring like a town or like a city. I like to try and like travel a lot. I actually just recently came back from a road trip, going through Tennessee, well, starting in Virginia and then going to Tennessee, Alabama, Louisiana, and then back here. And it was wonderful. Like I went, I only stayed these places, the new cities for like a day, but like, I'm just constantly like, I just want to walk the streets. I see something else when I'm walking. I'm like, Okay, now I go there. And I'm just like, constantly seeing art and like architecture through just like exploring like cities. And I've had the pleasure of being

able to do that, moving to Houston as well. And even to this day, I'm still like, Wow, I've never seen this part of town before. And just like a really, I really just love like the landscaping. Just art in other senses, not just like sculptures and painting, but just like the art of like neighborhood relationships, and like how the buildings work and like nice little city centers and stuff like that.

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Edith Villasenor 10:59

That's great. Do you have a favorite artist?

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Morgan Stahl 11:01

I don't think so. I don't know. I'm not very big on like, like a certain person or like style or something that I like, I just have like, a bunch of random things that I like because I could like. I'll take like architecture for example, I can take something from like Zaha Hadid and all like one project, but not like another. And then I'll like Frank Lloyd Wright's like Fallingwater. But then another one of his projects I'm like, I don't know. So it's hard for me to say I have like one, but I just kind of gravitate towards like, a little bit of everything.

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Edith Villasenor 11:38

And what are your plans for the future?

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Morgan Stahl 11:40

To graduate, so I will actually graduate in May. And my, I think journey after that is to, so I'm currently working at a firm in the Heights. And I'm gonna stay with them for a little while, probably like, two, three years. We'll see how long, and then I want to slowly start going towards this like interior design, interior decorator, I want to like say interior decorator and be like air quote decorator kind of side of it. Because I really like just like the personal like one on one, like, I want you to be like this is what I like. And just like the really small like you like pink chairs, I'll make you come up with a space with some pink chairs kind of aspect of architecture. And so kind of like taking my like broad degree and kind of like narrowing it down into something where I can just quickly change people's like spaces and like help them enjoy like, a not so nice space a lot nicer.

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Edith Villasenor 12:43

And do you have like a social media account or like a website that people can follow you on?

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Morgan Stahl 12:49

Sort of, so I don't have my art stuff on there. But I have my architecture portfolio. It's, oh, it's at M studio designs. All one word lowercase. So that's where you can find my architecture

portfolio stuff. But I also have my own personal account, which is at Morgan minus colors. As you can clearly see, I don't wear a lot of colors. So I thought the name was pretty fitting. And that's where I have like my photos and things I do with my life. And just like my Instagram where I try to be just like super authentic and just like meet new people and stuff. So you can follow me on either of those two. And that's the only social media I have.



Edith Villasenor 13:31

Thank you so much, Morgan for sharing this time with us.



Morgan Stahl 13:34

Yeah, thank you again so much. I'm so glad I got to be here.