

Dear All,

Please Stop Telling Me I'm
Getting A Barista Degree

Bri Covert

What I Am Doing With My Art Degree



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About Me

A letter from the writer

Vanilla Cold Brew:



Pour two shots of toddy cold brew concentrate into a 16oz glass with a shot of vanilla syrup for a delicious and refreshing iced Toddy latte. Adjust shots for desired flavor and enjoy :)



Dear All,

Here's what everyone wants to know when they find out you're an artist: How long have you been making art? Well, since I was a baby, and I mean that quite literally. My first drawing —a rainbow of marker scribbles—is dated in the bottom right-hand corner of the page in my mom's tight handwriting, "9 Months Old." I remember winning drawing contests in elementary and selling big colored-pencil pieces to the local bank. I even created "The Imagination Bag," where you could buy birthday or holiday cards, paper puppets and doodles, all for just 50¢ apiece.

My best business was sitting in the show room of my Dad's mechanic shop. He was almost always working in the back, so I could greet the customers first, either with a "I'll get my dad" or "Here I made this drawing for you." Of course, there are regulars with small local businesses, so there would be demand for my work. Cedar wanted a dragon to hang on his fridge and Scotty (my Dad and I called him Snotty) wanted something "really rad." Whatever I could come up with.

Later on, I would sit at the dining room table in the corner by the window when I drew. I had a small easel I'd set up and prop open a magazine onto, flipped to the smiling face of a celebrity. I'd sit there for two to three hours with my pencil set and paper stump drawing their portraits.





In high school, I was introduced to watercolors. I tried them and instantly I hated them. It was this beautiful tool, but I didn't feel like I could access it. My experiences beforehand (with Crayola and printer paper) told me I could never. But of course, when you're taking high school art classes, you're not allowed to say no to assignments. Eventually, I worked through this project and made a tiny little portrait of woman slumped over her coffee — and I loved it?? I was so impressed with the detail I was able to get with this seemingly uncontrollable paint. Afterwards, I took every opportunity I could to use and experiment with watercolor.

My family — like they always have before — invested in quality paints and brushes and paper. I spent a lot of time learning to use my materials and really fell in love with the process. Now, four years later, I'm making a business out of my favorite hobby!

A sophomore at Gonzaga University, studying English and Art full time, I'll walk you through what it's like to be an art student, my experience with selling and displaying work, and tips and tricks for how to watercolor!

Bri Covert

A watercolor landscape painting featuring a river flowing from the background towards the foreground. The banks of the river are lined with dense green trees and foliage. In the distance, there are rolling hills covered in green vegetation. The sky is a soft, hazy blue-grey.

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Life As an Art Student

How I Chose This Path

Go-To Starbucks Order:



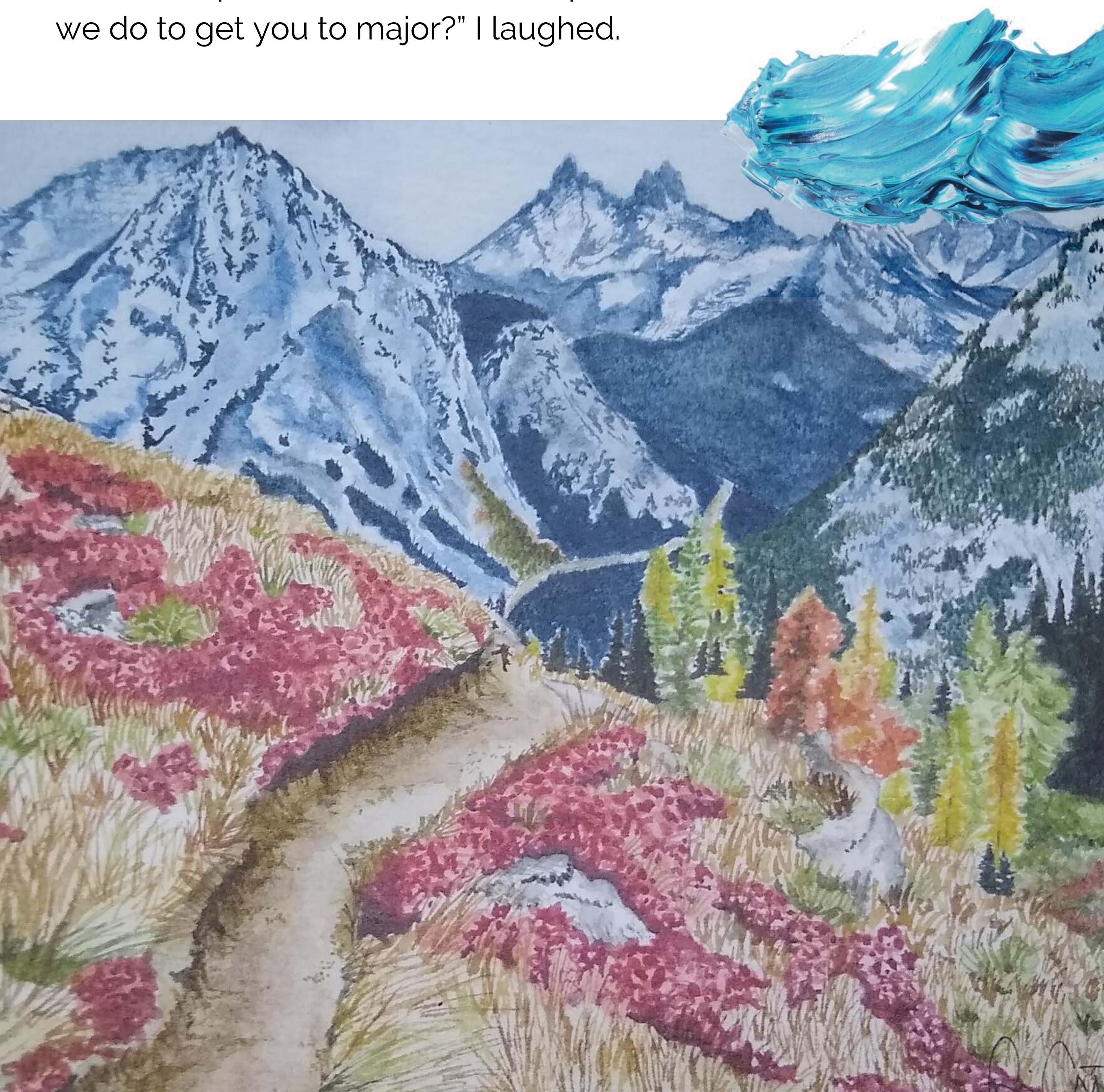
Grande Chai Tea Latte with
two shots of espresso.



I decided after graduating high school that I wouldn't study art in college. I had just completed a year of AP Studio Art, and frankly, I was burnt out. But making art was something I still loved to do, so I told myself I'd take the time for art on my own. That lasted for about the first three weeks of college.

After completing my first year at Gonzaga University, I realized how much I really missed making art and taking classes. So, I added an art minor and signed up for my first studio class: Oil Painting. Monday nights from 5pm-8pm, I'd find myself on the second floor of Jundt in the painting studio. Typically, you could find myself there on any given night of the week and most definitely on the weekends. The studio became my home away from home away from home.

During this time, I started to also involve myself with the department. During a meeting with the head of the art department, I was encouraged to present a Pecha Kucha presentation for the department. I thought, why not? So, I designed a presentation detailing my journey to being an art minor at Gonzaga, and at the end of the presentation, the same professor asked me, "What can we do to get you to major?" I laughed.

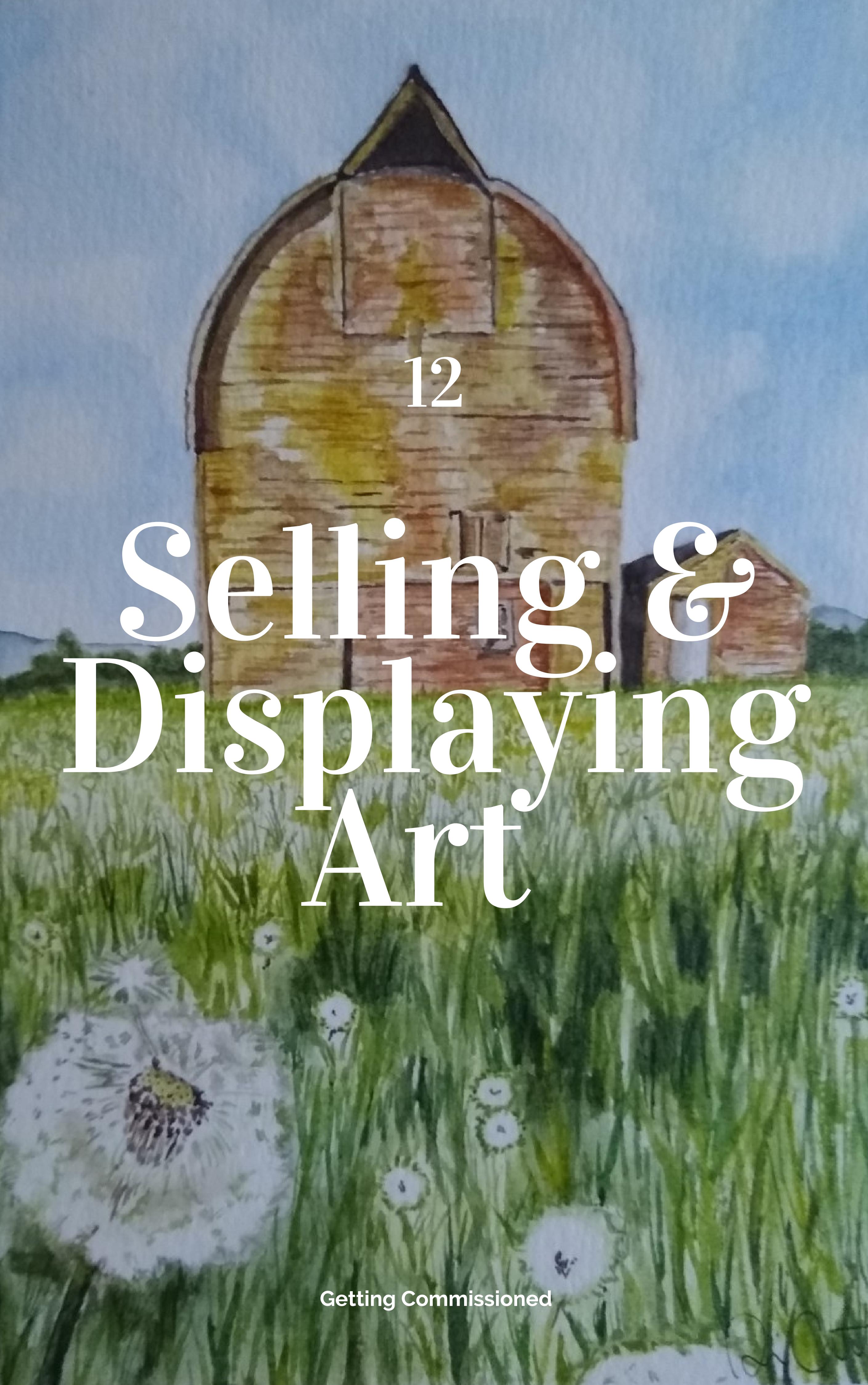


I was so happy with the minor, just a class or two a semester was all. I couldn't possibly do English and Art—and I certainly didn't want to, it would just all be too much.

The spring semester following my introduction to University art classes, I enrolled in Beginning Printmaking, where I learned to screen print. I involved myself even more in the department, attending more events, working on projects, showing up at office hours. The whole time, there was the thought in the back of my head: What if I did major? Eventually, I met with the same professor who asked me about majoring and she walked me through the possibility of studying English and Art full time. Two weeks later my paperwork was filled out.

Returning to an education in art has really highlighted my growth as an artist and I'm ready to take on any new challenges — in and out of the studio. I've been so happy with my decision since changing my educational track and course work. It's definitely a tough major with a lot of moving parts, but I'm doing what I love.



A watercolor painting of a red barn with a gambrel roof and a smaller outbuilding in a field of tall grass and flowers.

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Selling & Displaying Art

Getting Commissioned

Italian Soda:

You'll Need: Club Soda, Flavored Syrup, Half and Half/Unflavored Creamer



I personally love a classic Vanilla Italian Soda. I pour two shots of flavoring into a 16oz glass and a shot of creamer. I add ice to my liking and then fill the rest of my glass with club soda. Make sure to stir before drinking.



As I mentioned earlier, I've been selling my art since I was a kid, but it wasn't until high school I started to take myself more seriously. I had been taking art classes at my high school since Sophomore year with the same teacher. By Senior year I was taking Advanced Placement (AP) Studio Art. During this time, I had the choir director (another teacher of mine) reach out to me to design flyers and posters for upcoming concerts, office workers had me paint bins, and I even got administration approval to paint a small mural in the classroom of a teacher my English teacher. I was asked to paint a mailbox for a school employee (my first real paid painting) and was even invited to display my work at "The Pickle Barn Art Show," a popular attraction at the Tulip Fields in Skagit County. At this point, I was beginning to build a small reputation for myself, but of course, when I moved to Spokane for college, I had to start over.

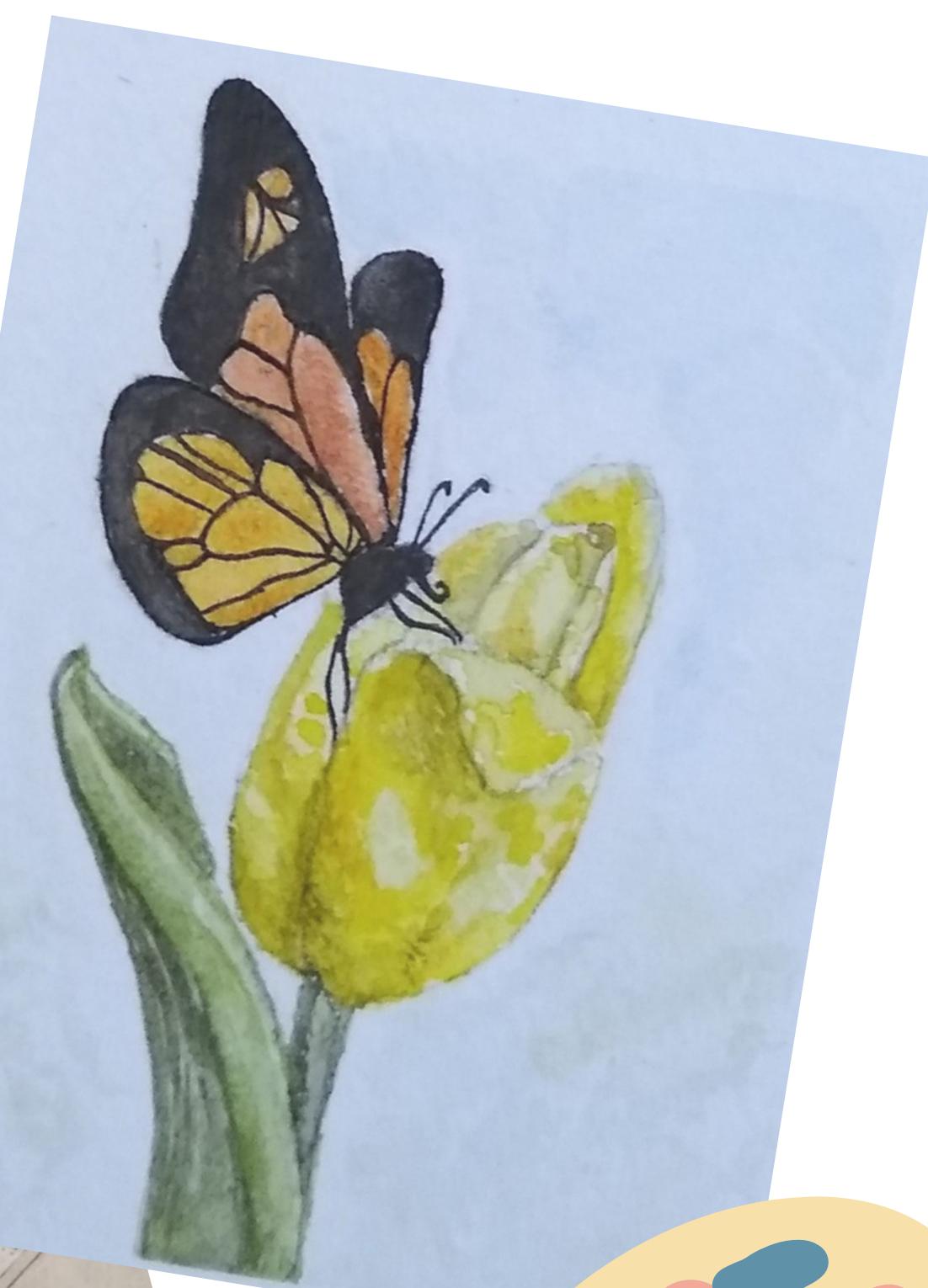
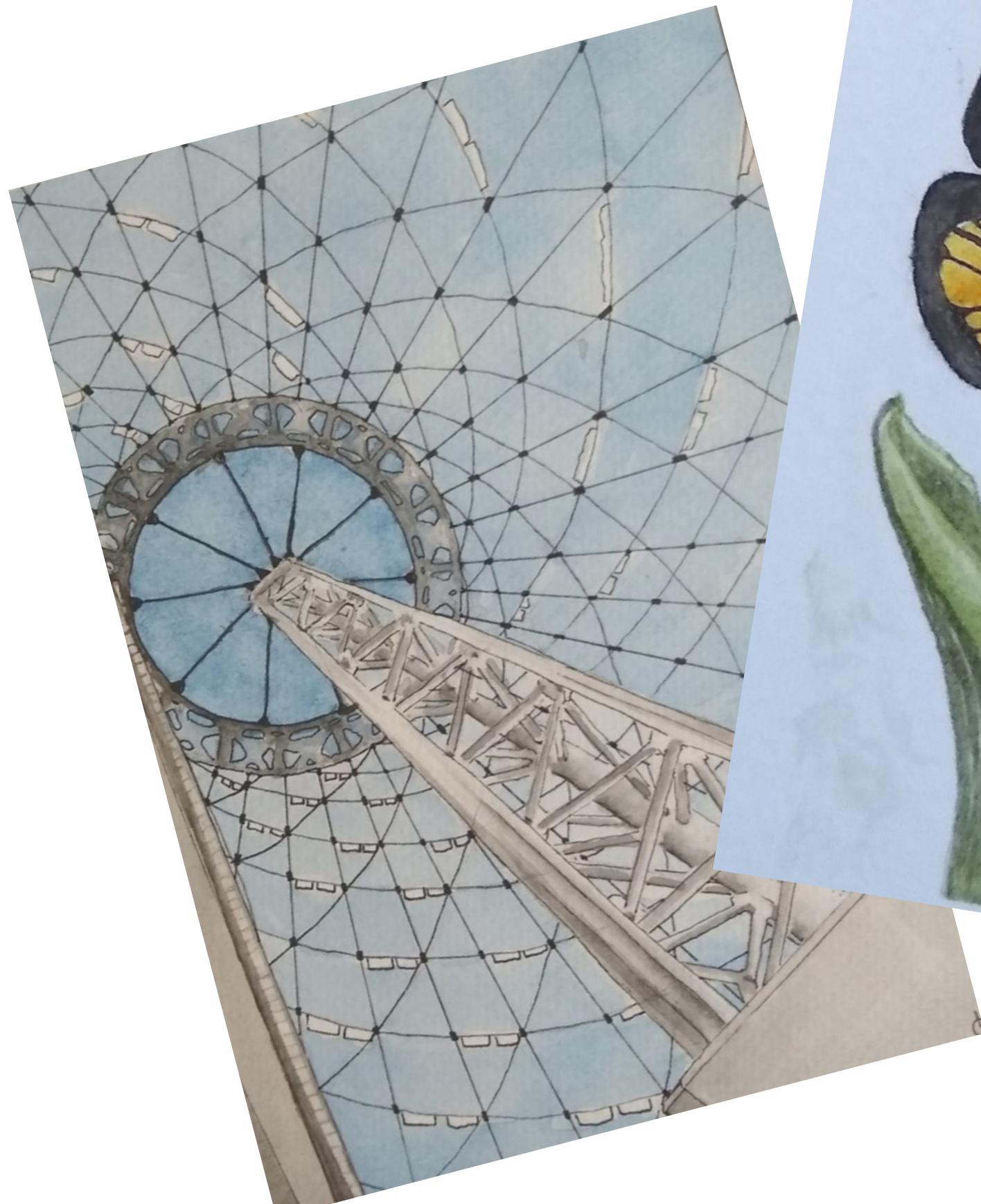
It was during quarantine (May 2020), I decided to open my work up to commissions. The requests trickled in slow at first, but within a few months, I was getting steady commissions. The whole thing was very exciting, but it was also nerve wracking! I had never marketed myself before or offered to sell work, let alone custom work. The idea was extremely intimidating, but after my first few successful commissions, the process started to get easier.



One thing I definitely struggled with—and still do—is figuring out how to price my work. Striking the balance between what I deserve to make, while factoring in cost of materials, time, and details, and what my audience can afford, has been especially tough while rebuilding my reputation. However, as my work gets more popular and I gain more confidence in my skills, I'm able to get closer to finding that happy medium.



Like I mentioned, I'm trying to extend my brand to the Spokane area. While I was able to participate in some galleries and showings in high school, I don't have that luxury anymore. Instead, to combat that, I've been building up a personal portfolio, and speaking to local businesses about displaying my work. I'm also hoping to expand my work from original and custom commissions, to selling prints of my paintings as well. This way, any viewers interested in my displayed art can purchase it, and I'll be able to sell my work at a more affordable price.



While it's definitely been intimidating to start, I've had a lot of fun. It's been great being able to share what I love and make others happy!

A detailed watercolor painting of a coastal scene. In the foreground, there's a paved path or road with some debris. To the left, there's a building with a red-tiled roof. In the middle ground, there's a larger building with a dark, textured facade and a balcony. A path leads towards the right, where there's a body of water with small waves. The background shows more buildings and trees under a light sky.

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Watercolor Tips & Tricks

How to Paint Like a Pro

My Everyday Coffee:



My favorite coffee brewer is Fidalgo Coffee Roasters. I drink their Sunset Blend almost every morning with my Keurig or pour-over.

1.) Practice! Practice! Practice!



I know it's cheesy, but my most sincere tip for becoming a good watercolor artist is to just practice!! Try out different techniques and styles until you develop and figure out what's right for you (and I promise, your style will occur naturally!). It's easiest to start out using reference images when you're painting—and make sure to sketch out your image first because composition is everything. Also, start doing google searches and looking through art archives and just see how other watercolor painters are approaching their work. Painting is all about confidence, once you start getting the hang of it, you'll be doing it in no time !

2.) Invest in Nice Materials



Remember: You're only as good as your materials. Once you feel like you've got the hang out of it, start researching good-quality paints, papers, and brushes. I've slowly upgraded my materials since I've started using watercolor (because who can afford to waste nice paper on bad doodles??). It's all about what level you're at, and what level you want to be. So, don't feel bad for not buying what the professionals have, you'll get there one day!

3.) Don't Be Afraid to Add Detail



Watercolor can be scary because it can be hard to control (that's where the practice comes in), but that's actually one of the coolest things about watercolor—It moves and blends well on the page! Including fine detail in my paintings is a huge aspect to my style and selling point. Remember how I said to invest in good materials? You'll definitely want to pay attention to the size of your brush. The smaller you go, the finer your brush. My tiny brushes are my pride and joy, I can't paint without them.

These are just a few of my tips and tricks on how to paint with watercolor. Make sure to stay updated with my posts to get more useful ideas and suggestions about painting. You might want to give up when you first start (I definitely did!!) but stick with it! You'll be so happy you did :)

Please tag me on Instagram @bri.covert.art with any watercolors you make! I'd be so happy to see them. Thanks for hanging around, happy painting everyone!!

Bri Covert

