



The Vanguard Youth Arts Collective Presents:

SPOT ON!



Photograph by Mason Soleski, edited by Ashley, 2021

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Interview with Ashley Cline-Paré

Edited by Meaghan Sweeney

The Vanguard Youth Arts Collective are a group of creatively driven youth who act as a voice for an emerging generation of the arts within the Windsor Essex region.

'Spot On!' is Vanguard's new artist interview series edited by members Meaghan Sweeney and Alexei Ungurenaşu. These interviews offer a spotlight for emerging and established local artists who work in various media to discuss and promote their past and current art projects.

Ashley (she/her) is a Windsor-based portrait, lifestyle, product, and fashion/editorial photographer. She works with analog and digital photography and derives inspiration from the beauty within the people she photographs. In this issue, we are grateful to present some of the work Ashley has shared with us and some insights into her experience as a creator in Windsor.

What media do you use?

I do digital and analog photography as of right now, but I am looking to get into mixed media art to combine my photography with some collage. I want to create collage backdrops with old magazine clippings in similar ways that I have been trying to do in Photoshop. I want to print my photos and then put them in scenes, and have fun with combining the realism of my portraits with more abstract collage work.

How did you get started in photography?

I have always been interested in photography. I started photographing family and friends when I was very young, but on random digital point-and-shoot cameras that my parents had. I bought my first DSLR when I was about 16, and then I shot with that for a long time. Even after purchasing a DSLR, I did not think of myself as a photographer yet, as I was just taking photos of friends. When I started university, my best friend and I bonded over our love of photography. We started doing little model photoshoots together. We would make a shooting plan, get clothes from Value Village, and we would go photograph each other for the whole day. It was fun. I still did not recognize that I loved photography and that I was a photographer at that point until she ended up going abroad for a year at school. After that, I started shooting with an acquaintance from high school who asked me



Savaughn Riley photographed by Incline Photography, 2020



Majok Deng photographed by Incline Photography, 2020

to shoot because she needed some portfolio content for her modelling work in Toronto. I was surprised she asked me. I did not realize she knew I took photos. While taking those photographs, I realized my love of photography was not only based on my friendships. It was a love of creation and a love of collaboration. I knew that it was something I wanted to pursue. After practicing for years with my crop-sensor lens camera, I then bought my full-frame camera which has been a game-changer. As I got more confident with my skill-level and ability I started advertising myself as a professional photographer. In those four years of university, I realized that it was more than just fun, more than just a passion; it was something that I wanted to do for the rest of my life.



Justin Han photographed by Incline Photography, 2021

Did you ever encounter imposter syndrome in your journey as a photographer ?

I have never really consciously attributed it to that. I thought that I have a lot to learn and I am not where I want to be multiple times throughout my creative experience. Early on, I was comparing myself a lot to other photographers who had been doing it for years. I remember following good photographers from Windsor on social media, and I admired their work. When I would take my photos, I would always compare my work to other photographers I looked up to. After I recognized that, instead of comparing myself, I started asking myself how they did it, rather than saying I could not do it. So, I would specifically look things up online, learn, and just keep practicing. I think somewhere in that process of applying those concepts, I stopped comparing my work as much. I started getting better after that: at editing, knowing where I wanted to take my photos, knowing where I wanted to do the shoot. I started being able to tell more of my own story, which is brilliant. At that point, I recognized that I was the photographer I wanted to be rather than something I thought I should be. And I think I am still growing. A big part of being an artist

is that you are continuously learning, growing, and changing. At some point, I may feel I am not good enough because I am not always going to be where I think I should be. If I remind myself that I am growing and challenging myself, then it helps me get over that feeling of imposter syndrome.

How does your process change when you do a variety of work: 90's Inspired Self Portraits, TinFoil Editorial, Actor Headshots with Alison, and Olive & Fern Branding Session, for example?

I think it is interesting because they are all very different, but my methodology was for the most part the same. I put these different kinds of projects on my website to show that I am versatile and that I can create an array of things. I can bring my taste and ideas, using the same methodology that I would use in personal projects to a client shoot. The only real difference is that when I am doing a personal project it is my idea/concept that I am bringing to life, whereas when I am working with a client it is theirs.

How did you find your style?

It is still kind of a work in progress. I don't think of my style as being one thing. I do not like to think of myself as having a set style, because it seems very limiting. Without



the pressure of conforming to a set style, I have the freedom to manipulate my visions in different ways. That being said, I find that I like heavy contrast as well as very bold colors in my work. It came about through shooting on 35-millimeter film. I found what attracted me to that kind of photography was how bold and contrasting the tones could be in certain films without needing to edit. It is clear to me that I emulate that in my other work. When I was editing some photos recently, I realized I made it very contrasted because that is what I like. It made me step back and think that maybe I do have a style. I am gravitating to something, but without the pressure of having to make everything I create fit into that box.

Majok Deng photographed by Incline
Photography, 2020

What is your approach to process?

I usually start by putting my ideas in a vision or a mood board. Then I try to find a model or someone to help me bring the concept to life. If I already have a model in mind, then I will reach out to them. We will talk about location, props, and things like that. Some models are hands-on, and they love helping with props and scouting locations, especially those who are actively seeking out modelling in Windsor. For props, I thrift and can usually find intriguing things. For styling, I often will gather ideas on Pinterest, and thrift for the outfit with the model, or have them look for something that fits the idea on their own. Once those major elements have been talked about, we plan the shoot, and then we shoot it. After I finish taking the photos, I edit them through Lightroom and Photoshop on my computer.

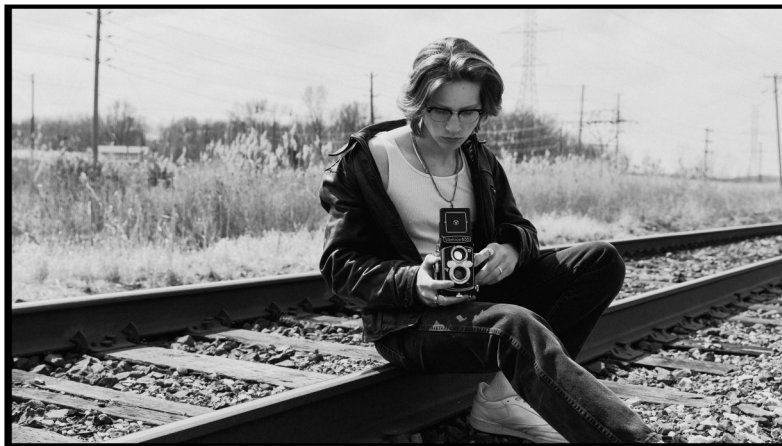
With film, the process is a little different because I prefer to do the idea in-camera rather than through editing. For example, I did a project recently with a client where I brought my film camera, and we did some double exposures on it. I took macro shots of flowers for the first exposure, and then I double-exposed the shots with portraits of the client. When I took the photos, I did it backwards, because generally speaking it is recommended to expose the portrait first and then the texture second, but I thought it would be fun and yield more unpredictable results. My point here though is that there are so many more things you have to keep in mind when shooting on film because, unlike digital photography, you cannot see the results right away. So, everything is a gamble when you experiment with your process. When I am done shooting, I send the roll off to be developed and scanned.



Yufei Qin photographed by Incline Photography, 2020

What is your favorite part of being a creator in Windsor?

My favorite thing about being a creator in this city is its inclusive creative community. The reason I love photography so much is that I have been able to create alongside other passionate, humble, and supportive creatives. I always feel comfortable going to another photographer and asking to work together. When I was still learning, comparing myself, and figuring out my own identity as a photographer, I would seek out established photographers for guidance. I was overwhelmed by how kind and how open the creative space is here in Windsor.



René Pepin photographed by Incline Photography, 2021

We thank Ashley for being our second guest in the Spot On! interview series. We cannot wait to see where she will go and what she will create next.

If you would like to keep up with Ashley's work in the Windsor arts community, you can find her on Instagram @incline.photography.

If you enjoyed this interview, follow the Vanguard Youth Arts Collective on Facebook and Instagram and stay tuned for our August interview with Jeremy Burke!