



The Vanguard Youth Arts Collective Presents:

# SPOT ON!

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Interview with Inès Mastellotto-Lesny

Edited by Alexei Ungurenașu

*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 Ungurenașu. 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.*



Polaroid photograph by Inès, 2020

Inès (she/her) is a Windsor-based artist studying Media Arts and Culture at the University of Windsor. Her work often combines elements from collage, fashion, calligraphy, drawing, and photography to produce complex and stimulating pieces. She derives inspiration from direct experience – the things and places she sees and interacts with – as well as from her interest in sustainable artistic practices. In this issue, we are grateful to present some of the work that Inès has shared with us along with some insights into her experiences as an artist and student in Windsor and abroad.

## **When and how did you get started in the arts?**

Growing up, I was constantly enrolled in art classes at community centers or at the Art Gallery of Windsor, from Design Week summer camps to Sundays in the Studio drop-ins. At 4 years old, I made my first trip to Europe, where I was taken to museums and stayed at an architect's home in Italy. I remember being filled with a sense of wonder and awe while abroad. That experience proved to be a catalyst for my appreciation of art and wanderlust.



Fragments from 'Mon carnet de poche': print containing both analog and digital images, 2020

The above are pages from my self-published photo book, 'Mon carnet de poche,' where I compiled my experiences from studying abroad in France for a partial semester. I created a *trompe l'œil* collage documenting food wrappers, misdemeanours, and beautiful memories. I also scanned in handwritten notes that gave some context to the images.

**Besides including objects and photographs from France, how did location influence your stylistic choices in the making of the picture book?**

Being in a new setting and being there on my own, I was able to explore and do things for myself. And in that way, I realized that all decisions were my own, so I could be the creative director and put the book together however I wanted. But I also had a mindset of the *joie de vivre*, so I wanted it to translate over and bear the essence of that exuberant state of mind.

**You've talked a bit about France and Italy, so what other places do you hope to visit and draw inspiration from?**

I'm currently reading *Anthony Bourdain's World Travel: An Irreverent Guide*, and in the way he describes each country, he does so with admiration – so I'd go anywhere that he has described. I'd also go to Croatia, where I could learn some of my family history, or to Japan, to take some design notes. At this point, after the pandemic, I'd go anywhere in the world.



'Untitled (beauty and decay)': paper, dried flora, coffee, 2021

Playing with the concepts of beauty and decay, or beauty in decay, I sought to demonstrate notions of ephemerality. I installed the diptych to doors, which are transitory places, and I painted on the shadows of the flowers and stems with coffee, depicting a time and angle that once was.

**What are some themes you have yet to explore through your work but would like to?**

The idea of permanence. I've noticed that my work has to do with evanescence and the fleeting nature of time, so permanence would be its antithesis.

**Through what media would you like to explore this concept of permanence?**

With something synthetic or man-made, so something like plastic – something that would stay on this Earth forever and won't biodegrade, and in that sense it's permanent. But also maybe approaching photography with different intentions, so instead of thinking "I'll take a snapshot indicative of this fleeting moment in time," I can approach it as "this image immortalizes a frame which I found necessary to capture."

**What does your approach to the process of creating entail?**

I'll be struck with inspiration by things I see or have read; the antecedents to my work are often times very random. For example, I was researching Berghain, a techno club in Berlin; I was hit with inspiration, and the creation of the door installation 'Untitled (beauty and decay)' ensued. Following the initial idea, I write out my stream of consciousness with all associated words/concepts/ideas that come to mind. That allows me to visualize possible production methods and synthesize my intentions. After brainstorming, I typically have a strong vision and the act of creation comes naturally.

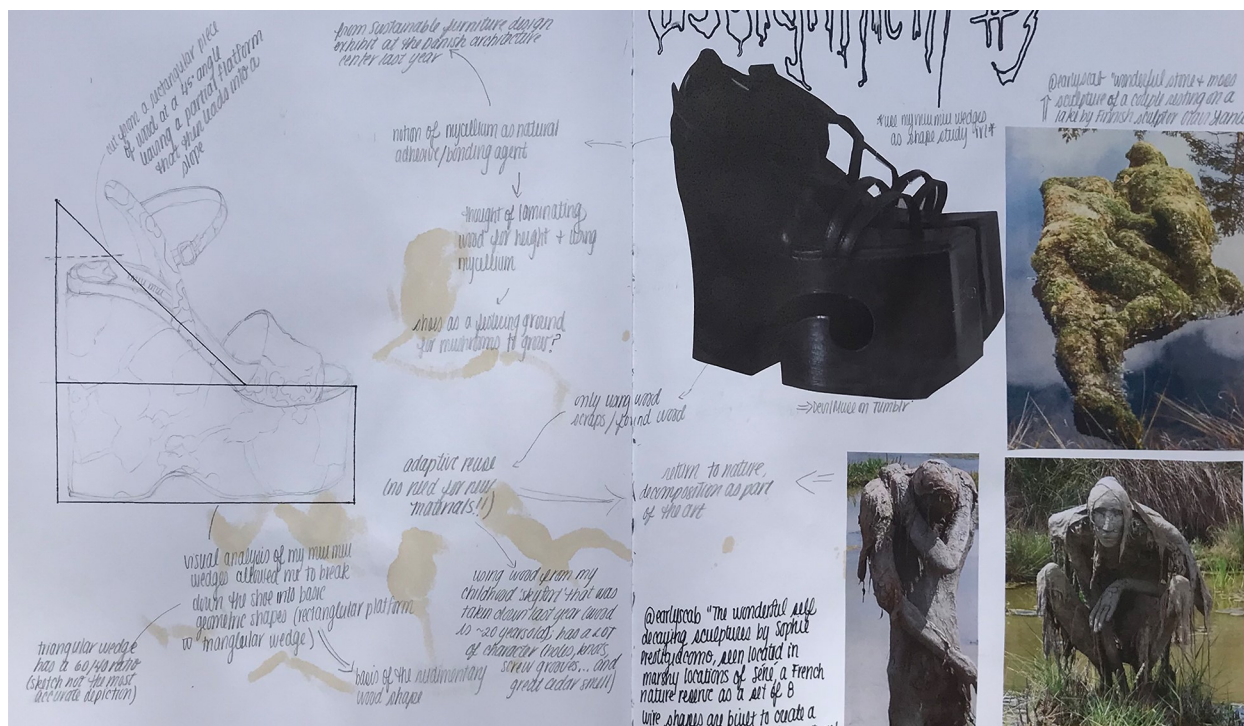


Close-up of 'Untitled (beauty and decay)'



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

I love the sense of community that Windsor offers, that everyone is ready to support each other and their creative practices. I feel fortunate to attend SoCA and see the works and the growth of my peers, and (when classes were in person) feel the creative energy that filled the studios. But the sense of community is very inclusive and extends beyond the school into the larger body of Windsor artists.



'Untitled': sketchbook pages from recent art project, 2021

This summer, Inès is doing an internship at the Art Gallery of Windsor, where she is putting together the Open Studio Summer Learning Series – a series of bi-weekly workshops that explores different works in the collection and explains the techniques of various forms of art.

We thank Inès for being our first guest in the *Spot On!* interview series, and we can't wait to see where she will go next and what she will create from her worldly observations. If you would like to keep up with Inès's work in the Windsor arts community, you can find her on Instagram @i.mastellotto\_lesny.

If you enjoyed this interview, follow the Vanguard Youth Arts Collective on Facebook and Instagram, and stay tuned for our July interview with Ashley Cline!