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Interview with Hannah Glaser

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Hannah Glaser: Featured Artist

This volume of *Gandy Dancer* includes Hannah Glaser as the featured artist. Hannah is a junior at SUNY Geneseo, creating personal and realistic works of art in multiple mediums.

GANDY DANCER: While we reviewed your artwork, we were blown away by your use of realism and personal touch. Your experience and passion really spoke to us. Could you tell us how long you've been creating art, and if there is a medium that you prefer to work with?

HANNAH GLASER: I've been making art ever since I can remember. When I was little I was drawing constantly with markers, pencils, pens, anything I could find. I also went to an art camp in the summers for about five years in a row, and entered paintings and drawings in the county fair. But I never actually got to take an art class until the end of high school. It's pretty hard to choose a favorite medium because I haven't really mastered any of them yet, but if I were to pick two, they would be watercolor and oil painting.

GD: It seems like a lot of your artwork has a personal touch to it. Could you talk us through the process of making your art and the personal experiences and emotions behind it?

HG: My artwork usually starts with a photograph that I or a family member has taken. The photo is usually one that I find myself looking at repeatedly, one that I have an emotional connection to. I'm a very quiet person, so a lot of what I understand about people I have learned from observation. Sometimes, in my photos, I find a sort of magical moment, where the image

actually captures the person and not just their likeness. My goal in creating art, especially portraits, is to convey a usually unseen part of a person in visual form. Not just part of their personality, but some deeper truth of their character. I think the painting of Michael with his cat Tucker is the one piece of my work that comes closest to achieving this.

GD: In your artist biography, we noticed that you study English at SUNY Geneseo. Do any of your paintings have a written counterpart?

HG: My writing and my artwork tend to focus on similar themes, such as identity and relationships; but I've only done a few works that include both written and visual components. The first was a painting I did for a contest in high school, in which I focused on the transition between childhood and adulthood. I painted poems in ink into the dark blue background of the painting, so they were subtle and hard to read. The other piece is actually this painting of Michael and Tucker. I took creative writing the year before I started the painting, and wrote a poem about the original photograph. I was somewhat happy with the poem, but I felt that the image was necessary to understand the full meaning of the poem.

GD: You paint a lot of animals. Could you tell us the backstory of that? Is there a story about *Danny's Lamb*, which you submitted?

HG: I've loved animals since I was very little, and I've been constantly surrounded by animals. I very often feel that I connect better with animals than people, so being at college without any pets is kind of like living without oxygen for me. Sometimes I actually talk to my dog Bear on the phone, and he gets all excited and starts running around the house. Every summer we visit the farm where my mom grew up in upstate/Milford, New York, (I'm from Maryland). The painting of Danny was taken outside my Grampa's dairy barn on that farm, and the farm now belongs to Danny. When I was little, we used to help Danny herd or feed the cows, and we spent a lot of time with the other animals, such as horses, ducks, goats, and sheep. My whole family is kind of animal-crazy. Christmas parties for us usually have as many pets as people. I have three aunts and uncles who are vets, an aunt who's a dog trainer, uncles who are farmers, and many animal-raising cousins. I like to think that I take after my Gramma a bit, who unconditionally loved all animals, including her pet deer and opossum she fed every day.

Danny actually told me that he can't stand sheep and he wishes I could turn it into a calf, but I think he was probably fond of them at one time. The picture was taken by my Grampa, Fred Powers, who loved photography and was very talented.

GD: We've heard that you have work hanging in galleries. How has that experience been?

HG: The painting of Michael and Tucker is currently at the SUNY Student Show in Albany, but it should be on its way back soon. It's been really nice to get to show my work, and it encourages me to keep creating more artwork.

GD: What projects are you currently working on?

HG: Currently, I'm focusing all my attention on my Thesis Exhibition, which will feature several watercolor paintings. I'm designing the paintings to be pages in a children's book, which I hope to publish in the next year or so. The paintings are winter scenes of a girl and her dog, and the book is meant to be a Christmas story. I'm really enjoying working on it, but the amount of time it requires has been rather overwhelming on top of all my other classwork.

GD: Do plan to continue making art after Geneseo? What does your artistic future hold?

HG: I definitely plan to keep making art, probably for the rest of my life. Next year I'll be applying to MFA programs to study studio art, and I hope to write and illustrate children's books, which will undoubtedly be filled with animals.



Danny's Lamb, Hannah Glaser