

TIA SHEKELLE

BIO

Tia Shekelle (b. 1999) is a multimedia artist, focusing primarily on oil paintings and textiles. Drawing on her experiences of transitioning from growing up in Indonesia to coming of age in the Pacific Northwest, Tia's practice focuses on healing through intimacy, identity, and cultural practices. She explores the process of reconciling a fragmented identity.

Tia has shown her work twice at Bellingham Arts and Music Festival. She has received SubPop Records' Loser Scholarship, and at Cornish she was awarded the Art Merit Scholarship, the Studio Excellence Award, the Kreielsheimer Foundation Scholarship, the Stephen Hannock Endowed Scholarship, the Sherry Raisbeck Scholarship, and was named the Shirley Foundation scholar. She is currently based in Seattle, WA where she earned her BFA from Cornish College of the Arts in 2021.

STATEMENT

My pieces are altered realities. They are moments of tenderness, longing, and power. I portray my experience as an Indonesian American struggling to form a single identity from two halves of myself. Forging a cultural identity isn't just about heritage and ancestry, it's about searching for a home. With a lack of a physical space where I am not othered, I create those spaces in my art and in the relationships I build. By depicting versions of me that are going through, or have gone through, the processes of healing, I am more able to visualize that path for myself. Artmaking is my access to power. It is where I can process emotions, articulate thoughts, and define myself as whoever I want to be. I define myself how I want without being talked over. People can choose to look at my work or not, but no one can stop me from having created it in the first place.

My process usually starts with writing. I recall past emotions from my “journal” (a collection of half-filled notebooks, random notes on my phone, or the margins of whatever papers are close by) and sometimes I find a seed of inspiration for a painting. Painting is my default when I have an idea I want to visualize. I have the most control over my materials; I know how to make the paint glow when I need it to and I know how to create a stark line when I need to. However, I find that textiles lend themselves more to ideas surrounding labor, domesticity, and home. The personal and cultural histories surrounding textiles as a medium are imbued into every piece. Each textile piece feels like a part of my soul made physical; so much of my love and labor goes into each one. When I make prints, I think about the multiple, and how a connection is formed when multiple people have the same piece of art in their homes. It’s a form of intimacy I treasure deeply.

I find power in softness. There is a great deal of strength that comes from vulnerability and allowing your heart to be open. I often depict this intimacy using a surreal, warm light that emanates from within the figure or object. I love capturing the human form, whether through realism or simplifying it to its most basic shapes, manipulating body language, color, and scale to create emotion.