

# CONVERSATION WITH SASHA H PORTER



*Sasha H Porter is a 21-year-old disabled and queer artist currently studying at the Adelaide Central School of Art (ACSA) on unceded Kurna land. A proud wheelchair user living with chronic illnesses, Sasha uses her artistic practice and online presence to advocate for accessibility, visibility, and solidarity within disabled and chronically ill communities. Her work is rooted in lived experience and aims to affirm that chronically ill youth are not alone in their struggles. Through both her art and content creation, Sasha channels vulnerability into empowerment, creating space for dialogue, connection, and change.*

## On their journey to arts

I'm a disabled/chronically ill artist from Northern Ireland, currently living and studying in Kurna land in Australia. I make a lot of social media content about how to stay confident and fashionable while using mobility aids, as well as talking about social issues with accessibility and ableism that disabled people face. I want my art career to be surrounded with as much representation as possible – some might say I talk about disability 'too much', but for so long we have had too little representation in the arts – I want to change that.

Although I can't pinpoint exactly where it came from, I've had a love for the arts since I was a child – art was always my favourite subject in school, and I went on to study it for GCSE and A-Levels when I lived in the UK. It was at this time that I began to have a lot of my chronic health problems – my art teacher in high school was one of the people who helped me through it the most, and a lot of works in my portfolio were surrounding it, I think

it was then that art really became a significant thing in my life.

For a while, I was unsure if I wanted to pursue a career in the arts or academia, but ultimately it was my grandparents who pushed for me to go the arts direction and helped me enrol in higher education for the arts, and I'm honestly relieved that I did.

For a person suffering from chronic illnesses, my future seems uncertain and the career that I once thought was achievable has become less so, but art will always remain something accessible to me, so I'm glad I was able to nurture my love for it.



## On personal education, and creative education viewed locally and globally

I'm currently still studying. I've been studying for a Bachelor of Visual Arts at Central Adelaide School of Art since 2023, and as I study part-time due to chronic illnesses, I will likely study for several more years. I've already found my experience there to be invaluable – it's a 'smaller' art school with a much more focused approach, taught by 'part-time teachers,

full-time artists' with active industry experience, who really focus on teaching us how to succeed as a practicing artist in Australia. This was especially valuable for me as a person who came here to live and work from another country, as honestly otherwise I would not have been oblivious as to how the ecology of art functions here.

## Messaging with art

Whilst I'm still very early on in my arts career and still figuring out specifics, I know for sure that I want my practice to be associated with representing and understanding people with disability and chronic illnesses. I want people to see themselves in my works, whether it's physically or metaphorically I still have to figure out. As I'm still in school, a good part of my work is still based on class assignments, but even in those, I find ways to connect them to chronic illnesses/disabilities in any way I can.

At the moment, I'm thinking of making some works based on showing the 'bad' sides of chronic illnesses – most of what I put out there online shows me on my best days which isn't a realistic reflection of who I am as both a person and artist, so I think it would be interesting to make a series of self-portraits showing myself in my worst 'flared up' days.

## On Art as a representation of reality or escape from it

I do think that art tends to be reflective of current realities. Whilst a lot of art can still remain relevant at many different times, I would say art will always reflect the

sociopolitical climate of its time, whether intentional or not, yet can still remain relevant decades later.

## Online galleries and marketing artwork online

I have to admit I don't currently have much knowledge of online art galleries or how they represent artists. I hope to learn

more about this in the coming years, both through art school and research done for the growth of my own practice.

## 5 Featured artworks



### Reflection

*Oil pastel on wheel cover, mounted on broken wheelchair wheel*

#### Artist statement:

My work is a reflection on the two biggest changes in my life that occurred within years of each other – becoming reliant on a wheelchair shortly after moving halfway across the world, I often find faded memories of my 'old' life encircling my mind.

Oil pastel on a hubcap mounted on a broken wheelchair wheel.

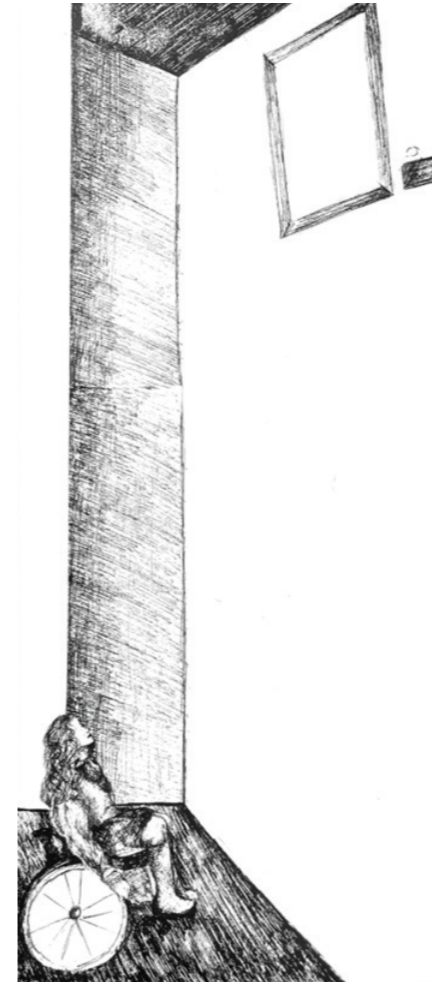
### Untitled

*Oil pastel on A3 paper*

#### Artist statement:

Spending more time in my bedroom, I found myself drawn to creating works of art out of everyday, cozy things. By gently romanticizing these mundane moments, I begin to feel less mundane and more meaningful.

My cat Cheese often becomes my companion on bed rest days, bringing warmth and comfort to my little world.



### Untitled

*Pen on paper*

#### Artist statement:

I'll never understand the galleries' habit of placing art just out of reach. Why must something made to be seen, to be felt, so often be made inaccessible?



### The Garden of Lost Dreams

*Soft pastel and charcoal on CA grain*

#### Artist statement:

A piece exploring the feelings of grief and loss that come with becoming chronically ill. Past hopes and dreams for the future become unreachable and must be let go, along with the version of yourself that once existed. What follows is learning to embrace a new self—one that cannot do as much as before, yet still seeks meaning and purpose.

### Where do we go from here

*Soft pastel and charcoal on CA grain*

#### Artist statement:

A piece representing the feeling of living in an inaccessible world. When the world is built with abled people in mind and accessibility is merely an afterthought, it often feels like a confusing, impossible maze to find your way through.

This work also reflects how often we, as disabled people, must overcome far more obstacles to achieve our dreams than our abled counterparts. When everything is catered to the abled, even finding work can seem impossible—leaving us feeling stuck, with nowhere to go.

