

Gallery Exhibit Critical Viewing

On November 11, 2021 I went to the Baum Gallery to view the BA/BFA Juried Senior Exhibition. After strolling around the rooms there was one piece in particular that caught my eye; *Abandonment* (2019), River Simmons.

The dark composition and heavy contrast from the rest of the room drew me in and I had to take a closer look. The piece shows a POV of the inside of an empty bus. When looking at this piece I felt as if I were the one sitting on the bus. The dark ceiling and rows of brown seats heavily contrast the light windows. The rectangular canvas adds to the pov effect and the slight texture in the oil paint makes the piece seem older, playing into the artist's theme.

Simmons chose the theme of decay. Simmons said the many stages of decaying can be related to their art over the years, not only showing death but also new life and skills. Of all of Simmons pieces I think *Abandonment* has the most of that poignant symbolism they talk about. For me the piece creates a trapped feeling; like someone is stuck in a time. The foggy windows make me think of a barrier keeping someone from seeing what's ahead of them and the empty bus seats make me think they're the only one staying on the same route.

I think the structure of this piece was perfect. Once again I really love the choice of the rectangular canvas. Simmons also used a lot of rectangles in the piece, playing into the pov illusion. The size of the canvas takes up the viewer's entire eye without making them look all around to take in the full piece. I think this was a good choice and it once again played into the pov illusion. Simmons pays so much attention to detail and it shows in the inclusion of the window locks and even, what I believe to be, the small fan often found on busses.

I think this piece could benefit from different lighting or a different paint choice. As you look at the piece you'll notice glares, especially on the black parts, that I think take away from

the old and lonely feeling. Less intense lighting could be a solution for this problem. My only concern is that the details will get lost if there's not enough light. The second solution could be a different paint or top coat. I don't know much about different paints but I think oil tends to be pretty shiny. I think switching to a duller paint or adding a matte top coat could also solve this issue.

Overall I really enjoyed this piece. I really love the theme Simmons chose and the way they went about showing it. The scene Simmons painted is so simple yet the attention to detail and other small decisions really brought it to life and allows the viewer to give it as deep or shallow a meaning as they'd like.