

Memories of Jessica McMillan

Here we can document and share all our memories with our beloved Jessica McMillan. I hope this brings comfort to all of us.

Please add any photos you can, for us all – but especially her mother, Risa – to reminisce on.

The Best Birthday

On my 21st birthday, Jessica surprised me by hanging 21 Krispy Kreme donuts from my ceiling. We went to the Pour House together that night and danced for hours and hours. I left the donuts hanging so we could just pluck them from the strings the following days, which we thought was hilarious (looking back, may have been a health hazard).

She always knew how to make me – and everyone – feel special.

-Emily Ferguson

At first I was supposed to work with her volunteering for a New Year's Eve show back in 2011, but I had I moved away and couldn't make it...we had many friends in common, and I could tell she always worked hard to bring the joy she found in music and the community to others that would appreciate it, who needed he it like we all do.

We last crossed paths at Solasta festival in 2017, I'll always remember her faun horns and pizza onesie as she painted and grooved to the music that brought us all together. It's nice to know her artwork has permeated through this physical plane, fwhether in hat form or on canvas or murals that still show the world what her soul looks like.

I'll blast some Tipper for you, Jess...Sayonara, not because of the name, because it always ends too soon.

-Charlie Leibson

EVERY and i mean literally every single time she saw a cat she reverted to her inner child and would chase it down to pet it. Nothing else mattered in those moments.



-Kelsey Sailsbery



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I'll always remember when we met Blais Bellenoit at Kinnection in 2014! I saw the brightest light in her eyes looking at his art. I'm so honored I got to witness that moment for her and for Jess and Blais to form their own special connection.

Even though I was going through a personal hellscape before Kinnection, she continued to make sure I was good and



having a good time. We had a lot of deep talks and she listened to me cry multiple times that weekend. She was so grounding, so understanding, but a straight shooter at the same time. I'm so thankful for that weekend with her, it was one of the only trips we took- just the two of us. I'm so thankful she continued to support me and love me when we got back, too ❤️ These are the only pics that exist from that weekend, enjoy the selfie of us post cry sesh lmaooo.

-Bria Faithful

I first met Jessica at her apartment on King St when we both were attending CofC. I had just started college and my friend, Dan, invited me to come hang out. That was the first time I got to experience her art and I remember fan girling so hard. There was one painting in particular, a beautiful mandala on the wall, that I couldn't take my eyes off. From there on out I considered it a privilege to experience Jess and her art. One of my favorite memories of her was in the mountains of Asheville at Kinnnection Campout. One day I was having a tough time and we decided to skinny dip. That was my first time skinny dipping. We swam out in the lake to a pirate ship called the "Jolly Rodger." A guy came up to the ship and lit a bowl with a magnifying glass. We were so in awe that he let us try it too. I've struggled with loving myself. One of the things I loved most about Jess was that she was always unapologetically herself. Seeing her confidence, inspired confidence in me. That's something that I will carry with me forever. I am going to miss Jess but I know wherever she is, she is dancing, and hiking, and skinny dipping. - Camille Bolton



Jessica and I first met in high school during a government class. At that time, I was struggling immensely, having recently been discharged from the mental hospital after a suicide attempt. I was a sad and broken individual, uncertain of how or why to continue forward. Then one day, out of the blue, Jessica asked me to prom. She didn't know it at the time, but that simple invitation gave me a purpose for one day. That one day turned into two, then a week, and eventually into years.

Jessica provided me with hope and the will to keep going, and for that, I am forever grateful. Throughout the years, no matter where I was, she was always there. Between outdoor seasons, I always knew I had a home and a safe place to rest my head. For 13 years, we would call each other when life was hard, when life was fun, or simply when we were thinking of each other. We may not have been in contact as much as either of us would have liked, but she was always there.

I can't pinpoint a singular story to illustrate how Jessica impacted me because her influence is woven into everything I have accomplished. She was always supportive, always there no matter what. We often talked about healing and helping others. It's a shame on my part that I didn't finish graduate school soon enough to fully realize our shared dreams. She is the reason I pursued counseling and, in many ways, the reason I am still here today.

Thank you, Jessica. You have lived a life we always talked about, and I am just beginning to. Your spirit, kindness, and love will continue to inspire and guide me. Rest in peace, my dear friend.

—Kelsey Willbur

I was working at Lost Lands in Ohio, my flight got canceled and I ended up having a 16 hour layover in denver. Half way through the flight I got up to use the bathroom, and our mutual friend (who I had just met) Lani introduced me to Jessica. I could tell she was upset (which I don't think she was good at hiding lol). She told me she had to move out of her house into her new spot and didn't really have the help she needed for whatever reason. I asked her if she would be okay with me helping her.

We spent the rest of the trip from the airport sharing stories and telling bad jokes and connecting. Used almost all 16 hours, and made sure she was gonna be okay and was set up. We sat there and watched the sunset go down and talked about how it's so important to be able to accept help. The environment we live in doesn't really cultivate the level of community we are naturally drawn to. We both couldn't stop giggling about how much stuff we have planned for our friends and plans for the future. It was so easy to notice how much Jessica would mention her plans for the future were centered around how she could help her friends, or how her one buddy would do this and she could do that and have some amazing creative endeavor.

Jessica came across as the kinda person that could find a genie in a bottle and would spend every wish on helping anyone and everyone around her. She holds such a special place in my heart, I don't think I've met someone with such a careful consideration of how to be present and be ready to meet anyone where they were. I told her I would always carry that with me and I've aspired to be so much myself, as she was. *"We gotta be present and use what we have to bring each other up, and I'm so grateful for what i can do for my dumb friends in the future"* -Jessica.

Thanks for letting me help you help everyone in your life and thank you for helping me, Love ya buddy. -3

It's unfair that life is so fragile. That such a beautiful, bright light can go out in the blink of an eye. Jessica and I worked together at Magnifilous Toy Emporium back in college, which feels like both forever ago and just yesterday. I will be forever grateful for that job. It brought some of the best people into my life, and Jessica was one of them. She and I were both always (fashionably) late clocking in. She would sometimes bring everyone donuts and coffee from a local donut shop just because. Those days came and went...I am horrible at staying in touch with people—even people I really like—but I had the honor of following along on Instagram as Jessica truly blossomed into the best version of herself. She was an all-around great person with a zest for life, childlike sense of wonder, and true artistic talent. As I read her many tributes, I am only just now realizing how much we had in common. We were from the same small beach town, went to the same music festivals, and probably crossed paths many times long before we knew each other. I wish I could have spent more time in her presence...but I will now see her anytime I visit the Colorado Rockies that she loved, in colorful murals, at music festivals, and, of course...in mom-and-pop toy stores. ❤️ [below: us trying on hats at the toy store ~2015, where we goofed around way too much] —Amanda Phagan



Jessica and I met at College of Charleston, we were in the same class and art majors. Her confidence always stood out to me, it was infectious. I particularly loved watching her work unfold senior year and the giant pieces she made for our senior thesis.



We also had similar interests with music, hula hooping, hippie life, and festival culture. I remember meeting at the king st. apartment and I just thought she was the coolest, already such a successful artist. With her handmade painted hats, mandala painting, and pet bearded dragon.



She always had good ideas, like when she wanted everyone to go in on a giant roll of hoop tubing so we could all make our own hoops at a cheaper cost. I wish I woulda done that with her, she was right!



Being someone who was insecure and easily influenced, her confidence and carefree attitude was so inspiring. I was struggling with self-esteem as an artist, and even when the department was giving us criticism as live festival art not being “real art”, she stood strong in who she is and what her art is. I will ALWAYS remember how much that inspired me. How I aspired to one day love myself and my creation that strongly.





After college I got the privilege to be in Living Color, a live paint troupe organized by Leslie Caneda, with Jessica McMillan and Megan Leger. We had many fun painting adventures together. My favorite memory is when we co-painted a piece for the Pigeons Playing Ping Pong. I was so inspired by her vibrant use of color, she introduced me to a color changing RGB light, and she was innovative enough to use the palm of her hand as a mixing palette.

<https://youtube.com/shorts/hVuvJsTI3mQ?si=0VcEPUoykfXU82U4>





In 2019 I got to visit her in June after she moved to Denver, she and William were living in an apartment at the time. She took me on a lovely hike to an ice cold creek with Pig. I could tell how she was just thriving in Denver, sharing about her new found love of hiking and working out. She was taking great care of herself and continuing her art career and it was absolutely inspiring.







In 2021 I got the treat to see Jess live painting at Hulaween. You could tell she was so healthy, happy, and just thriving. Every time I saw her she made me feel so welcomed and loved. It felt special to feel so close, even though I lived so far away and we didn't keep up regular communications.

https://youtube.com/shorts/CmO0BONLLSs?si=bt901Afl_5MkBzcV9

https://youtube.com/shorts/XJk3KFdZyAU?si=Mh5-h2oxH1SYH_1f









I write this while visiting in Denver, where I was hoping to see her again. We lost a special being earth side this week.

I'm so grateful to of had a warm, confident, inspiring, bold, and kind person in my life as Jessica, she was truly one of kind, my life and artwork is forever affected by her wonderful presence.

🐦 Julia Hyndman

I had the pleasure of meeting Jessica for the first time when we were both finishing high school. The first night we met, she introduced me to a band called STS9 while playing a visualizer on YouTube that completely blew my 17-year old mind away. Along with that, she had fascinating art all around her apartment ... I had never seen something so Bohemian while living in the Hilton Head/Bluffton area. I was a fan!!

Shortly after that, we both happened to attend College of Charleston where I'd continue to hang out with her along with a wonderful community of friends. My favorite memories together were at get-togethers she had in apartment across the street from the Music Farm where we'd enjoy many concerts. It was always great to be surrounded with kind, like-minded people; Jessica brought a sense of community I hadn't experienced before. I'm grateful for these memories as I grow a little older and look back on college— Jessica certainly brought the good times!

Later on, she also gave me a couch to sleep on when I was in a rough spot both financially and mentally for a few months after graduating.. Although we weren't that close, she welcomed me into her home, and I will never forget her hospitality and kindness toward me while I was going through difficult times. She saved me in many ways.

As an artist, Jessica was always inspiring to watch. After college, we both happened to move to the Denver area. Although we didn't keep in close contact, I was following her Instagram and admiring everything she was contributing to our local community and artist scene. It was such a privilege to watch Jessica continue to grow as an artist and do what she loved; I feel like I got to observe her follow her dreams... and fulfill them!

Thank you, Jessica, for your kindness, artistry, and ambition that is an inspiration to many! Your legacy will live on in South Carolina, Colorado, and most importantly, our hearts!

- Rob Hill

I was so lucky to live with Jess. I was teaching her about cooking, here and there. How chop onions, how to care for a cast iron pan... We had coffee together in the kitchen most days...and we'd talk, check in, or process something that was bugging us, before heading out for the day. She was wise beyond her years, and a masterful and kind listener. She always let me be wherever I was at. She held the most loving space... I can't tell you how lucky I feel to have been in that loving, confident, kind space, even for a little while. I wanted to be more like her. I still do.

One of my favorite things, even before she passed, was the self-portrait Jess did in the art class I facilitated last year. It's such a lovely portrait...it displayed her skill, but also captured a spark of her life, which isn't easy to do. She was a "real artist". As real as they get. ❤️ We love you Jess.

-Randal Roberts

