Whitney Panetta
Artist Statement

In the last few years my artwork has had a drastic shift in medium, style, and content. While experimenting with mixed media, I discovered encaustic art. I immediately fell in love with the process of melting and reheating the wax to fuse the layers beneath. It brought my many artistic interests together, with the ability to collage, paint, and carve the material.

As I began working with encaustic, I primarily focused on black and white paintings of singular objects on top of collaged layers and encaustic medium. A water tower from my years living in Athens, ginkgo leaves from the tree at my Atlanta home, and images of chickens, among many other things, began finding their way into my works of art. I realized each of these objects represented a different piece of my past and present. They were self-portraits through objects, small snippets of the memories that make me up.

As I began exploring the concept of self-portraits and representing memories further, I realized specific objects would immediately come to mind as I reminisced on certain events and moments in my past. Likewise, when I saw certain objects, memories would begin flooding back. These fleeting images in my mind became the basis for my newest works of art, objects carved out of colored wax, revealing the collaged layers in the background.

The lines and shapes of the objects are mimicked in the background, making them feel like one. The carving out of the objects, creating a negative space, represents the fleeting images that come to mind as memories are processed. I want the objects to almost feel temporary as the viewer looks at them.

Perhaps my favorite part of my recent artistic journey, is hearing how my images have also brought memories back to the viewers who see them. As they take in the lines, shapes, and colors, they tell me how their grandfather used to have a camera like that, or how they used to live on a farm. Their stories intertwine with my own, and continue to inspire my encaustic works of art.