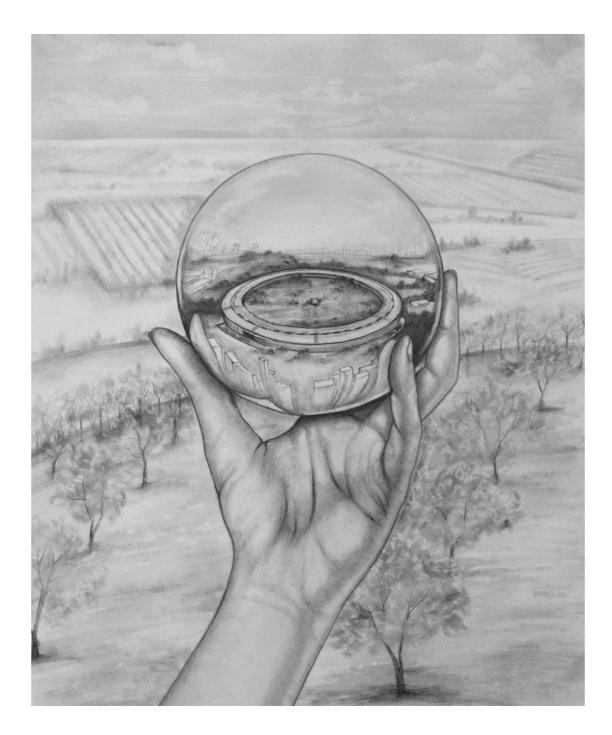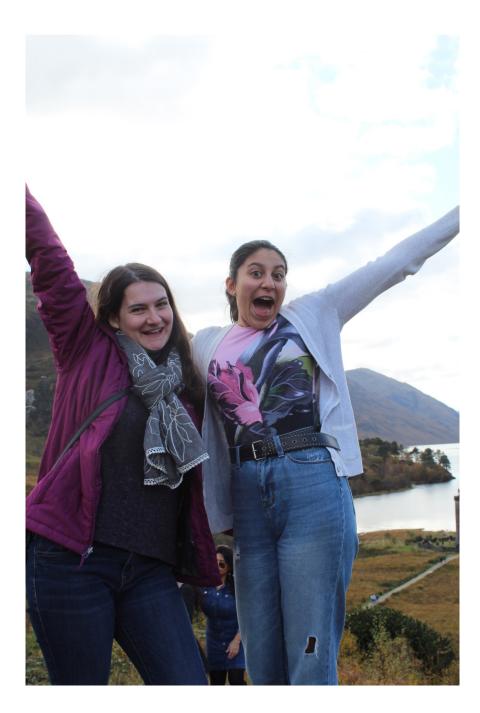When I was young, I searched for starting my next creative endeavor. My best friend and I, at the time, started our own business where I used materials that we could find to sew clothes. Each year, there was a costume competition that we had always wanted to win. We thought dressing as Miss Americas would be our best chance at winning first prize and that being patriotic was something that the judges just could not say no to. True to our creativity, we made tops with lavender string and old turquoise towels, skirts out of white bedsheets which we held up with stretchy headbands, and sashes with ugly looking red and white polka-dotted fleece. We donned our glitzy rhinestone crowns, boldly stained our lips with Barbie-pink lipstick, and excitedly wore our costumes for half the day, oblivious to all the snickering around us. Looking back on the wildest stories as a child, what I remember most is the confidence and pride we had.

In my STEM-focused high school environment in the heart of Silicon Valley, I felt pressure from people around me to conform to their rigid mindset and expectations. Other creative outlets offered me a place to just get away from my school environment where there were not many options for non-traditional approaches. Influenced by people on seemingly "safe" career paths, it was difficult to come to the realization that I was not entirely happy because my academic environment lacked creativity. Despite the challenges, growing up in Silicon Valley has given me a unique perspective. The slow process of achieving self-acceptance has been crucial to my development.

Study abroad was one of the best experiences I've had in college. My friends and I made so many memories that will last a lifetime! I thought that traveling on my own was going to be scary, but going to so many new places and explored everything I'd never done before, was liberating. I learned a lot about myself and grew as a person. It was a completely different experience than Parsons and was able to be exposed to a new type of environment. Living in another country broadened my view about design and business. Though I am excited to apply everything I learned to my studies and career in the United States, I would love to have the opportunity to live in another country again after college.