

JACK CATLETT

My love of drawing and innovative thinking led me to naturally pursue a creative career path. Without knowing exactly what that meant, I ambivalently entered product design and architecture as an undergraduate student. Although both concentrations surrounded me with other creatives and allowed me to begin to develop an artistic identity, neither felt fully satisfactory. Academic and freelance design work came with the frustrations of being restrained by larger clientele needs. This sparked the realization that my passion for creativity derives from expressing my inner self. I began working closely with my professor, Wes Heiss, who introduced me to his own conceptual artwork. His mentorship led me to shift from traditional design and architecture into the fine art world, where I have become entranced with exploring new mediums to create uniquely expressive and experiential works.

Around the time I entered my undergraduate studies, I was also working through internal battles where my life began to feel monotonous and lonely. I overcame this phase in my life by taking up meditation and practicing gratitude daily. These routines allowed me to become a more open-minded and happier individual. I have since become passionate about encouraging others to be more mindful in their everyday lives, and this awareness has become an underlying message of my art.

Motivated to create unique, expressive work centered around mindfulness, I began documenting sporadic thoughts, ideas, and observations in a series of sketchbooks. I developed a fantastical alternate universe—one in which there is greater awareness for values such as independent thinking, environmental respect, love, and diversity. The humanoid species that roams this universe are furry, elongated-formed, bug-eyed creatures I have named “Aminals.” In my journey to project the Aminals’ universe from my notebooks into the real world, I have utilized sculpture, installation, 2D animation, and hand-painted clothing. Through storytelling that is chaotic, psychedelic, humorous, and yet Zen, I show how the Aminals experience life on “Aminal Planet” in a fashion parallel to human life on Earth. While the stories in my work are sometimes hidden and not always clear, they are always mysteriously intertwined with the underlying themes of mindfulness that occupy Aminal Planet. “Aminal” is many things right now, and it is important to me that I continue to develop the form, aesthetic, mediums, and direction in which my work is manifested so that it may provide change and growth to our own planet.