PACIFIC PORTRAITS

The People Behind the Scenes at Pacific University

VOLUME THREE
Our treasure lies in the beehive of our knowledge. We are perpetually on the way thither, being by nature [...] honey gatherers of the mind.

Friedrich Nietzsche

The “Bee Tree”, an iconic ivy-covered tree that stood on the Pacific University campus for many years, was already old and hollow when pioneer Tabitha Brown arrived in Oregon in 1846. Mrs. Brown started a home for orphans that would grow into Pacific University. According to the Forest Grove News-Times, the tree was “said to have housed a swarm of bees who furnished the little old lady with honey which she sold to buy provisions for her orphan children.”
On entering Rebecca Allen’s office in the second floor of Warner Hall, I notice she has rearranged her furniture. I have visited her office many times before. She tells me she wants her desk to face the walkway through her office because she doesn’t like when people sit across the desk from her. She would rather people sit next to her, which feels less stuffy and allows her to show them what she’s working on. When I come to see her, she’s working on a mock-up of the poster for the Fall Theatre show, Hide. It’s the beginnings of what will eventually become a scene of a destroyed cafe, but so far it only has a table on its side.

Since Rebecca started working as the Production Assistant for the Theatre Department in the fall of 2015, she has designed the posters for every main stage show that the theatre department has produced. It was in the fall of 2015 when the theatre was putting on SMASH! when I first met Rebecca, and that was also the first show she worked on for the department. We have worked together during Dance Slow Decades, The Good Woman of Setzuan, and several other productions. Lately, the posters she has been making for those shows have become more graphically inclined, moving away from her photography background.

When she started at Pacific University, Rebecca didn’t have any graphic design experience. “I actually learned how to use Photoshop about two weeks before I started my job here.” Even though she works for the Theatre department now, she studied English while she was in school. She reflects on her time at Portland Community College as well as going to school at Pacific. “Originally I thought I was going to be a writer, but now I’m hoping to eventually be Liz Tavares (an English professor here at Pacific); I want to teach Shakespeare, and maybe a creative writing class or two.”

Her stapler matches the color of the wall exactly, the same seafoam green, with paper clips and baskets in that color as well. “I actually bought these things before I saw
the office and didn’t realize it was matching so perfectly.” To combat that matchy-matchy aesthetic, she bought some darker teal and purple things, creating a more complete color-scape. There is a pot of faux-purple flowers to complete her desk. I ask her if the flowers are fake, she laughs and explains to me that she doesn’t want to be responsible for taking care of real flowers. As the Production Assistant for the Theatre Department, the Manager of MAPS, the Media Arts Production Services, and the person in charge of renting Media equipment out, she doesn’t have time to water real flowers.

When I ask her how on Earth she balances her time with all her jobs, she giggles and tells me that the students help her out a lot. They’re her favorite part of her Media Arts work. Her eyes glimmer when she discusses how she loves to work with them. “It’s just amazing to watch them grow, I knew them when they were sophomores and they had these little nuggets of creativity, and now they’ve just grown so much. It’s wonderful to see what they can do.” She loves her job in the theatre because it’s her creative outlet. Having a balance between a job in which she gets to be the

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creative source and a job in which she gets to help students realize their own creative potential is great for Rebecca. She tells me that she’s always been an artistically driven person, especially in writing.

Reflecting on her own creative work, she tells me, “There’s a lot of very angst-filled writings from my Middle School years.” She has a binder full of old poems, and the fonts are color-coded. Different fonts for different themes, different colors for emotions, so she definitely can keep track of which poem is which. While her angst did not follow her to her college writing, her commitment to emotional truth and pushing the boundaries of conventional storytelling did. She describes a piece she wrote while studying at Pacific, “My story in Advanced (Creative Fiction) was about a woman who found out she had terminal Cervical Cancer, and she decided to go through her, what she called her ‘fuck-it list’, it’s like a bucket list. And the last thing that she was going to do was become a porn star. She felt weird about a company making money off of her so she became a cam-model. And her schtick was doing her show while reading classic literature.”

While Rebecca likes to push the boundaries with her writing, her real passion comes from helping others discover their creative potential. As she moves forward, Rebecca is applying to several Graduate level programs so she can continue on her own learning path, and eventually become a teacher. Getting the chance to watch her students grow and come into their own is what Rebecca loves about her work now, and it is what makes her want to become a teacher.