

Artist Statement

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This acrylic painting, titled *Smiling Through It*, is based on an old photograph of me, my two brothers, and my dad when we were toddlers. In this piece, I've cut out the faces of all the figures, leaving empty spaces that cast shadows on the wall when the painting is displayed. These empty spaces represent the loss of innocence and the complex process of growing up—where identities shift and childhood bliss fades into the struggles of adult life. The absence of faces reflects how, over time, we lose the clarity of our childhood selves and the simplicity that comes with it.

The missing faces symbolize not only the personal transformations we experience as we grow older but also the internal struggle of finding ourselves after the social innocence and ignorance of childhood. I've also chosen to cut out my father's face, even though he's an adult in the original photo, to express the loss of innocence that also comes with parenthood. As children grow and challenge their parents, I believe parents also undergo a transformation, developing new identities as they navigate the complexities of raising children.

This piece is meant to offer a somewhat darker view of growing up, highlighting the internal conflicts and shifts that shape our journey into adulthood.