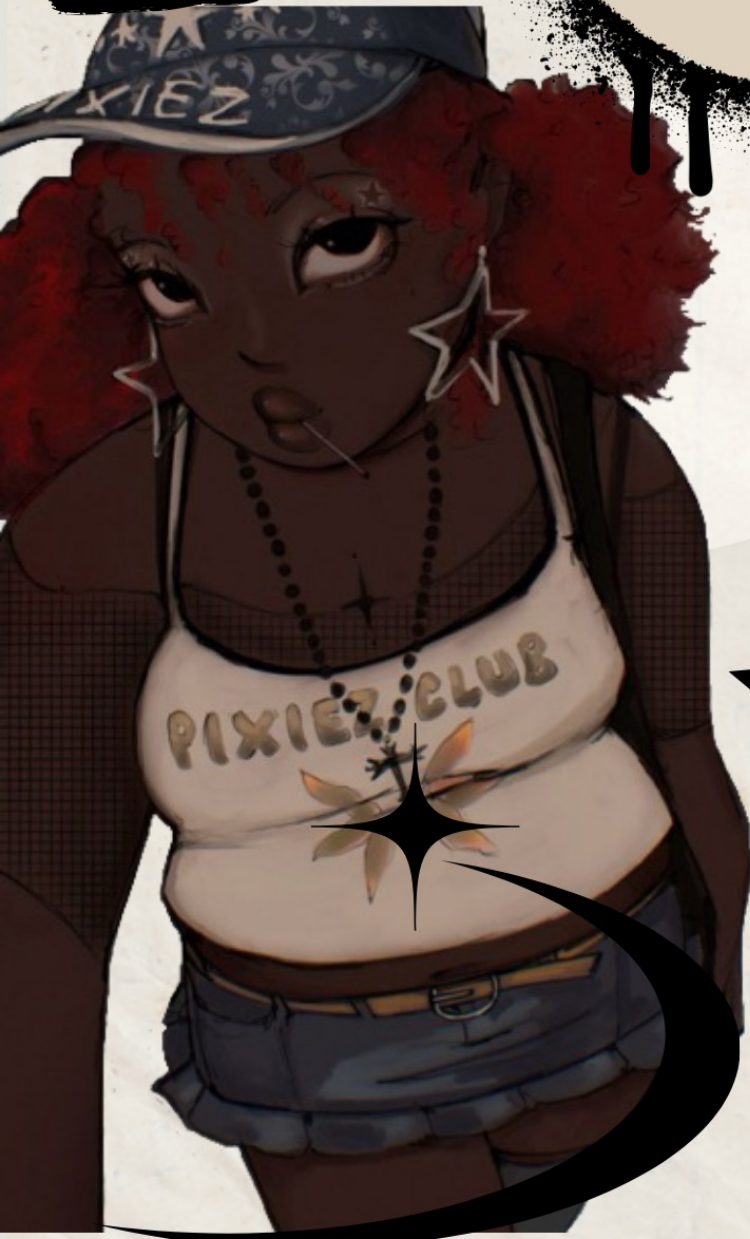


NAILS

2024

ALEXANDRA
UMEGBOH

THE POLISHED NARRATIVES: THE INTERSECTION OF CULTURES THROUGH NAIL ART



The Milky Way

This nail set was done as a practice set during week 2. I wanted to try and explore creating my own colors and engaging more in free hand line work and charm placement.



The Coraline

This nail set, like it's name was based off of the 2009 animated movie, Coraline. This set was made for my friend Sarah as this movie was a big part of her childhood. She describes the film as being "an escape from the world hidden behind bright colors and playful themes".



The 90s Hibiscus

This nail set was the first set I completed for this project. I took a lot of inspiration from the popular 90s hibiscus french tip design. This is a design I came up with myself as it is a modern take on the popular 90s trend.

The Ballet

This nail set was done for a friend back home. She says she chose this design as it “feels hyperfeminine” and classy. This set was my first attempt at the popularly known coquette aesthetic. This style encompasses all things pink and soft which these nails convey with the use of the soft pink and white color palette as well as the bows and ribbon detailing.





The American Boy

When I first asked Angie if she wanted to be a part of this project, she protested as she didn't think nails would fit into her style. I understood her completely but also kindly reminded her that nails are a catalyst of expression that can display anything you want. Angie's more into classics and her favorite song is American boy by Kanye west featuring Estelle. I drew up a mock of a nail set that consisted of lots of bold stars as this is what I thought of when I thought about the song. I had never even attempted to draw a star on a nail bed before so I know this would be a challenge, especially as it was one of my earlier sets but Angie's reaction to the finished design was all the motivation I needed to try something new.

The Riya



This set was done for one of my closest friends, Riya. Riya has a beautiful spirit that I wanted to illustrate with this nail design. The use of more earthy tones mirrors Riya's day-to-day attire. I added the delicate silver and pearl detailing to showcase the grace of Riya as both silver and pearls represent grace and I believe that is something Riya carries with her everywhere she goes.

The Elijah



This set was based on my friend Elijah's love for anime. I specifically chose one piece not just for him but because I have recently taken a liking to the live action version of the show and all its intricacies. This nail set details those intricacies through the detailed drawings on each nail, especially the middle finger drawing of Luffy himself.

The Tamoy



Tamoy's set was done similarly to Elijah's: with her love for anime in mind. I also used a lot of colors with varying rippling effects to show the many layers of Tamoy. She has such a unique personality so I know I didn't want to make her anything basic or boring because that's not who she is.



The Anomaly



This set is one of my favorites because of how abstract the design is. Although I had a reference photo for this design, I added many elements of my own such as the 3D gel and the designs on the red and green nails. I am unsure of how to explain the design, but something about it makes me feel relieved.

The Chad



This set was inspired by my friend Chad. Chad is very into all things space and star related so I wanted to make a set that reminded me of him. The use of dark blues, whites, and silver elude to an intergalactic feel that reminds me of Chad.

The Hello Kitty



This nail set was done for my close friend Elizabeth. She describes her reasoning for the set as being “something [she’s] wanted for a long time because this is who I am”. Elizabeth is one of the most fashionable people I know and her aesthetic matches these nails perfectly. Her Y2K aesthetic perfectly matches the essence behind these nails as hello kitty has been a big part of her fashion journey and hello kitty has been a big inspiration for her fashion choices.

The Lynne



This set was done as a birthday gift to my best friend, Lynne. This is probably one of the most time consuming sets I've, simply because of the designs on each nail. When I asked her to comment on what the set meant to her, she described it as being "everything she hoped it would be" because she enjoyed the "magical fairy-like" aspect of them. I enjoyed making this set a lot because I knew how important they would be to her.



The Nilaja



This set was based off of my friend Nilaja. Nilaja's the kind of person whose presence has the ability to calm those around her. Her energy is so warm, so I wanted to create nails that mirrored not only her energy but how I feel when I hang out with her.

The Yohanan



For Yohanan's set, I wanted to make something funny for a funny guy. Yohanan is the kind of friend you don't meet too often but his personality will always shine through in a room. His ability to communicate with anyone is an impressive asset I wish I had. He is genuinely one of the funniest and most charismatic people I know, so I made this set for him.

The Daniel



This set was made for my friend Daniel. Daniel is the nicest person you'll meet and if you aren't smiling before you meet him, you will be after. His personality is so welcoming and happy so I made a cute little set to describe him. This set references Rex OC, his favorite artist and also elements of his home in Orange County.

The Julia



This set was made for my friend Julia. She is one of my most fashion forward friends and these nails match her completely. Although her style isn't completely coquette and pink, she still utilizes elements of the style in her daily fashions, so these nails fit her well.

The Jordan



This set was made for my friend Jordan. Since meeting Jordan, I've felt like I met family. We share so many similarities, I wouldn't be surprised if we were sisters. Because Jordan and I share the same favorite color, I wanted to make a nail set centered around the color purple. This was one of the hardest sets I did this project due to the amount of detail put into every nail and the nail length. I think these nails fully display who Jordan is.





The Kali

This nail set wins the award for the longest length and amount of time designing. This took about 5 hours to complete but in the end, it was completely worth it. This is inspired by Kali Uchis and her Red Moon in Venus. Kali has been a huge inspiration to me and this album has been a wonderful calm when times get tough.

The Jelly



This set was made for my friend Mary. Mary loves to wear neutrals and doesn't really enjoy standing out but she absolutely loves pink! She asked for a set that would be something she would never pick for herself. I accepted her challenge and created this 3D gummy pink nail set with bows and jelly detailing and she loved them. She said they made her feel “confident and important when she pointed”.



The Mike

This set was done for my tutor Mike. I've known Mike since sophomore year high school and he's been my mentor ever since. When I asked him why he got this set specifically he said, "i've always been pretty settled in my gender identity — i've never really intentionally queered my gender expression for the sake of presenting more fem but i have often wanted to do stuff like painting my nails (or having long hair) that's often SEEN by (often older or more conservative) people as feminine anyway that moment in middle school when my dad was like "you're doing a girly thing you're acting like a girl"..

was enough to shut me down for literal decades
and it's not like i was dying to paint my nails that whole time,
but it was just a small little casualty of self-expression
and now (i imagine this is also partly bc times have changed
and society is more broadly on board) i've been reaffirmed
that i can just be a dude with painted nails that look awesome
i think it's quite likely i paint my nails on a regular basis".

**A SPECIAL THANKS TO MY BELOVED SISTER
THANKS FOR BEING MY #1 SUPPORTER**

EMMA'S FIRST SET



This set holds a special place in my heart as this set was done on my little sister. My connection with my sister is one of a kind because of how much I love her. When I told her I was doing this project, she was so excited for me. Obviously, she wanted a nail set of her own but my mom was very against it as Emma is only 11. It took a lot of convincing and promising my mom I wouldn't add any extension and I would only paint her natural nails, she agreed. I am proud to say that I gave my little sister her first ever nail set and she adored it.

