

Leasha Hillhouse-Bartnik / Artist Statement

Finding joy in simple things is open to interpretation as joy for one individual may not be the same for another. Does one find joy in taking a moment of stillness or do they find it by walking through the vibrant streets in a city? Finding joy in simple things, for me, is the sensation of being enveloped in immense happiness. Whether it is seeing a squirrel cross the street on a power line or even inhaling deeply on a cold, crisp day, I know this type of joy is bespoke to me. Yet, during a period of anxiety and depression, I forgot about the simple moments that brought me joy. I often overlooked, brushed over, or simply did not want to bother with anything tenuously joyous. However, one day, by coincidence, I put on a pair of sunglasses. To my wonder, I saw rainbows when I looked outside the windows. A new sensation came over me; a realization that this was the first time I truly felt pure joy that came from somewhere deep—an inner childlike source that caused a bellow of laughter. From that day forward, whenever I drove anywhere, I would put on the sunglasses that brought the rainbows and it gave me a new sense of motivation for change.

Joy Pop is a series of photographs that allowed me to further explore the colours on the visible light spectrum while also trying to evoke the emotions of peace, serenity, and joy. The colour palette incorporates the visible light spectrum (the rainbow) and calming pastels. The visible light spectrum was inspired by the colours of the chakra. Chakras, being the energy centre of the human body, are associated with emotions of happiness, creativity, love— depending on where one focuses their energy. I also chose pastels as I wanted to convey the feeling of lightness and softness with their less saturated hues. This created a sense of nostalgia and also became the catalyst for me to reflect more on joyful memories from my childhood. *Joy Pop* also encouraged me to explore composite photography and I believe this interchange allowed me to successfully portray the inner essence of joy. It was also important for me to render the images in a way that depicted surrealist yet photorealist qualities so that there was a lucid dreamlike essence when viewing the images—this can be seen through the oversized moon, colour palette and golden orb interlaced within the photographs. The final images for *Joy Pop* is the culmination of synthesizing all of the elements into a cohesive body of work.