

Brookline artist Eleanor Reyelt is holding on to the things we're told to outgrow

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Brookline artist Eleanor Reyelt, 22, says her work reflects "girlhood, joy, visual excess, pride." Photo by Sofia Torres

Eleanor Reyelt makes art out of things that most people grow out of: glitter, sequins, over-saturated colors, extravagant layers and visual excess.

At 22, she has built her craft around refusing to let those things go, and around asking why we were ever taught to do so.

A Brookline native and a rising senior at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), **Reyelt's work** [↗](https://www.eleanorreyelt.com/) [<https://www.eleanorreyelt.com/>](https://www.eleanorreyelt.com/) has appeared in exhibitions across Massachusetts and Georgia, including the recent **Art Off The Wall** [↗](https://brooklineartscenter.org/aotw) [<https://brooklineartscenter.org/aotw>](https://brooklineartscenter.org/aotw) exhibition at the Brookline Arts Center, where she first discovered the freedom that making art could offer.

She describes her work simply. “I make art about girlhood, joy, visual excess, pride,” she said.

In Reyelt's work, neon pinks, oranges and electric blues spill across layered surfaces. Sequins glimmer against colorful backgrounds. Family photographs are transformed into dreamlike compositions that feel both playful and strangely familiar. Drawing from childhood imagery, textiles and the aesthetics of girlhood, her work celebrates the forms of self-expression that often are dismissed as frivolous, decorative or excessive.

Her work draws from early memories of joy, but far from evoking nostalgia for what once was, it relives those emotions and expressive instincts to insist they are still there, waiting to be reclaimed.

“It's not really nostalgia,” she said. “I'm unearthing something that they forgot about—that they're able to experience again and hang on to.”



ITTY BITTY, by Eleanor Reyelt.

One of her paintings, *ITTY BITTY*, recently on display at the Cambridge Art Association's **Glimmer** [↗](https://www.cambridgeart.org/glimmer) [<https://www.cambridgeart.org/glimmer/>](https://www.cambridgeart.org/glimmer) exhibition, comes from the memory of owning her first bikini, a moment she recalls as a balance between pride and awkwardness. It reflects a sentiment that many people experience as they step into something they've been looking forward to for the first time: uncertainty overtaken by excitement.

Reyelt is interested in those traits that often disappear with age: enthusiasm, curiosity and the unrestricted freedom to imagine who you want to become. The thesis of her artwork, and her plan for standing out as an artist, is that those qualities never truly vanish; they simply become harder to access.

The direction of her work started when she began questioning why a little girl’s vibrant personality and confidence is deemed charming, yet is often punished when it lingers into adulthood.

“As soon as we hit early womanhood—even early teenage years—why do those things that were once endearing suddenly get frowned upon?” she said.

That question reshaped her artistic practice.

Whereas her high school work once used dazzling materials primarily as embellishment, those same elements now function as both the medium and the message.

Before, she says, the rhinestones, sequins and layered textiles that covered her paintings and installations were “just decoration.”

“Now it’s much more about the material itself,” she said.

Working across disciplines such as clothing pieces, video projections, and moving installations at SCAD has also pushed Reyelt toward thinking about how work exists in space, not just on a canvas: how light passes through plastic, how colors are cast across walls, and how she can make her artwork’s presence in a room more pronounced.

“It’s sort of this idea of both literally taking up space, but also emotionally,” she said. “I want it to feel alive. It moves when you move.”

Reyelt is graduating next year, and though she has found recent success in booking numerous exhibitions, working as a studio assistant and growing a social media audience, she recognizes that pursuing a career as an artist will not be easy. Her parents, especially her mother, a Brookline public school art teacher, have always been realistic yet encouraging.

As she moves into the next stage of her life, she is striving for audacity and momentum rather than perfection.

“It’s really easy to get paralyzed in fear and just shut down entirely,” Reyelt said. “This fear of rejection from job applications, galleries, whatever. I use those moments where I’m feeling stressed to double down.”

Reyelt’s work ultimately returns to a question that runs through everything she makes: what we are taught to outgrow, and why?