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Art Critique

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*Nothing Else to Do Here*, by Amy Niell

Amy Neill is an artist who lives in New Orleans with her husband and two daughters. She grew up in Baltimore, Maryland, but later moved to Louisiana, where she graduated from Tulane University. Since then, she's continued her studies at the Maryland Institute College of Art, and is a local at New Orleans Academy of Fine Art. A few of her works are located in the Hammond Art Regional Center in Southeast Louisiana. Her style features lots of faces and floral arrangements, like bouquets and other shrubbery. However, of all the works put on display, one piece stood out like a sore thumb. Her artwork titled, *Nothing Else to Do Here* is a simple, expressionist piece on 8x11" paper, created with pastels. It depicts a small collection of flowers that look to be in the beginning stages of wilting. There is a muted, yellow tone to the paper, as if it is growing old. Purples, oranges, yellows, and reds combine with muted, earthy greens and browns to create a pleasing piece of art. The stems of the flowers appear dainty and delicate, and the budding flowers on top look too heavy to be supported.

At a first glance, the artwork seems simple and minimalistic. The colors aren't screaming at the viewer, they are simply dancing around the paper in an elegant manner. The first aspect of the piece that will catch the viewer's eye is the colorful flower buds positioned towards the top of the page. The stems, however, look grotesque compared to the beautiful buds that flourish across the page. They dangle as if there's no life left within them. The bottom right corner has two flowers that are completely dead. Their colors are faded. They are progressing through death.

This art piece can be interpreted in multiple ways. The title, *Nothing Else to Do Here* symbolizes, in my eyes, going through a loss, whether it be the ending of a relationship, or getting out of an abusive situation. It takes a long time to build a steady relationship with someone, and it's heart-breaking to watch the people that were once inseparable split apart. My point is, the main premise of this piece is letting go.

The flowers are already dead, so there's *Nothing Else to Do Here*. The only solution to a dying relationship is to completely split apart, no matter how much work someone puts into it. The flowers aren't being watered anymore. Having once cultivated a flourishing garden, the person has now uprooted what was once considered perfect. The soil isn't as rich. The flowers are pulled from the ground from which they were planted, whether it be by choice or force.

Overall, Neill's artwork is simply stunning. Her art, specifically *Nothing Else to Do Here*, is a monumental piece. While this work is similar to her colorful yet abstract bouquets of flowers, this one is most realistic. The use of fine lines can also be seen in her works depicting faces. Furthermore, her work deserves more than a designated spot above the fireplace. *Nothing Else to Do Here* acts as a representation for anyone who has witnessed a loss, whether it be in a relationship or through death. Her work reminds us that we are not alone in our suffering. In the Hammond Regional Art Center, this piece greets all its viewers by silently saying, "You are not alone." Overall, Neill successfully executed a work in which everyone can relate to. As an artist, this act is extraordinary.