As a teacher, I identify myself as a nurturer of both the learning process and the development of young people’s self-identities. In my classroom I create a safe environment for students to grow and explore, contemplate and question, and to be introspective and communicative. I think of my students as my little birds that I help train, support, and care for on their journey to independence and self-reliance. In my artist/ educator/ research image, I created a self-portrait embodying this nurturer I identify as myself. In the foreground I am holding a little bird that represents the relationships I create and maintain with my students as they develop in my classes and throughout high-school. In the background, a group of birds fly out of the tree representing students as they “leave the nest.” Upon close inspection, the nest remains in the tree to nurture new birds every season, and the tree with its many branches remains stable and strong to support those birds that wish to come back to the warmth and security of this safe haven.

I chose to depict this self-identity narrative using materials and techniques that are traditionally associated as *woman’s crafts* and as *low art*. As I have matured and gained more experience as an artist, I have moved away from using traditional media such as oil paint, graphite, charcoal, and black and white photography, and have used my love of craft and fibers as the mediums of choice for my fine art creations. I used to think that knitting and sewing were just hobbies for making utilitarian items, but I now think of fabrics and yarns as paint mediums that can be rich and expressive. I am interested in how traditional female craft materials create commentary of gender roles and biases in our national and global societies, and what it means for me to identify myself as a female artist exploring and communicating with these materials.