Mikaela Fortune, a senior studio art major, had planned to be a children's book illustrator when she first came to DU. Since then, her interests have grown from drawing to printmaking and even photography. Fortune credits the program in the School of Art and Art History for opening her eyes to other artistic outlets.

"We are required to take many studio classes in many different mediums," said Fortune. "I have had to use materials that I probably never would have touched otherwise, and I think this has made me a much better artist."

Growing up in the small town of Falcon, Colorado, Fortune was considered the class artist, often taking on the creative aspects of group projects. Her high school art teacher encouraged her artistic talent, and in 2009 Fortune won the Congressional Art District Exhibition Grand Prize and a $4,000 scholarship. The winning piece, nine greyscale portraits of members of her high school jazz band, was on display in the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, D.C., for one year.

Her most recent exhibition, "Greyscale," was on display in the Student Gallery in the DU Shwayder Art Building in October. It consisted of 173 stipple drawings, each 2" x 2", depicting various facial expressions, specifically of the eyes and mouth.

"I pulled the images from screenshots of films and television serials in order to create engaging and dynamic drawings. Pausing a film or the television yielded much more interesting expressions than copying them directly from a catalogue of facial expressions or from static images on the internet," she said.

Fortune prefers to use illustration markers and screen printing in her figure or portrait based works, often pulling imagery from pop culture sources.

"As a child of the digital age, I have been heavily influenced by the media, pop culture, and the dynamics of virtual community," she said. "In many ways, my fascinations with these sources and the specific forms of media that absorb me most reflect my personal interests, opinions, and philosophies. I'm often compelled to make multifaceted ink drawings and prints concerned with multiples, connectivity, and the sociological and philosophical implications of communities that exist across time and space."
Catherine Chauvin, associate professor in printmaking, has worked with Fortune since having her in a foundation drawing class her freshman year.

“I remember trying to keep this bright student challenged because her drawing skills were so solid. I think she looked up to the advanced figure drawing students who sat in our sessions and modeled her projects to keep up with theirs,” Chauvin said. “Since then, Mikaela has grown from a quiet, conscientious student to a confident leader. Her passion for reading, observing media and making artwork with a thread of the multiple is still as apparent as her first quarter at DU.”

Fortune will be building her portfolio over the next few months in anticipation of the annual Bachelor of Fine Arts Exhibition in May.

“A lot of winter and spring quarter will be devoted to making work for the BFA exhibition,” she said. “Lately I’ve been inspired by the idea of looking, of surveying someone or something in order to create identity. I am also interested in pop culture and its socio-cultural impact, especially with the growth of the internet. This winter I hope to make work that explores these ideas further, and I intend to take these inspirations and make them into something worthy of exhibition.”

To see some of Fortune's work, visit her webpage.