Ultimately, everyone has a story. Though it may be vastly different from mine, or perhaps it is even similar to mine in a lot of ways. The fact of the matter is, every person has a story and every person comes from somewhere. Lineage and heritage is something that is very important to me. With this project, I want to take you through my story—I want you to think about the sacrifices of immigrants coming to this country to make a better life for themselves and the people they love. But most importantly, I want you to think of the people that you love and think about how the decisions of your ancestors have made you who you are today. I want you to think about all the memories of laughter and tears both. I thought there would be no better way to do this than to take you into a home—my grandmother’s home.

The home is the center of all life. Before you, is a living room inspired by my late maternal grandparents’ house in that very neighborhood in Chicago—a house that I spent a good part of my childhood in. My grandparents did not have much. But the love that they had for all of us in the family, my father included, was built into those walls and that is what made it so special. It was the loss of my maternal grandmother in November of 2016 that inspired me to use elements of her home to portray the warm feeling of family, togetherness and ultimately lineage. Rather than paint pictures of it, I decided to take you all there instead.

The method in which I have chosen to display my paintings is significant—my grandmother always had countless pictures of us on the walls, however she only had one wall space to display them on which was her very small living room. She used all of the wall space she could, putting pictures as high as the ceiling and as low as the head of the couch where my cousins and I used to watch Looney Toons together. They were always in mismatching picture frames of various sizes and styles. I chose to paint the portraits on panel, because many Renaissance paintings were painted using oils on panel and since I wanted to express the idea of ancestry and lineage I thought panel would be most appropriate. The rustic texture it provides also suits the purpose and overall look I wanted my work to have.

This project is about family, it is about lineage, it is about struggle, it is about the home, but more important than anything, it is about love. I took a lot of inspiration and influence from family portrait artist Stephanie Ryan who works as an art professor at a university in California as well as from Frieda Kahlo who painted to make a statement about her life as well as her place as a Latin American female like me.