

GCSU student places third in annual Peach Belt Conference Art Exhibition
Lily Mahaffey, Staff Writer

Georgia College & State University student Holly Cade is gaining recognition for her photography after placing third in the annual Peach Belt Conference Art Exhibition, winners were announced on 3/6/2026 at 2:00 p.m.

Cade, a junior art major, said she was surprised when she learned her work had been selected.

“I had honestly forgotten I applied because I didn’t think I would place in the Exhibition,” Cade said.

The Peach Belt Conference Art Exhibition highlights students' artwork, with different forms of pieces selected based on creativity, skill and overall impact. It’s a juried showcase featuring student artists from different universities across the state of Georgia. This exhibition has become a platform for student artists to emerge and present their work in a competitive, regional setting.

Cade’s submission came from a larger photography series, which she narrowed down with the help from photography lecturer, Seth Cook. In collaboration, they both made sure to choose her strongest piece to put up for evaluation.

“Professor Cook has been so supportive of me and my journey of photography,” she said. “I am very grateful for his help.”

Cade’s work focuses on mainly portrait and documentary style photography, often exploring themes of identity and nationality. Her submission this year is titled “Around the World.”

“There are so many cultures out in the world that people are uneducated on,” she said. “My series gives them a chance to be heard and seen.”

Her interest in art began early. Cade said her mother introduced her to different crafts and projects while being homeschooled. This would then lay the foundation for her artwork that people see today.

“Preschool is when I started discovering all different types of art,” she said. “It wasn’t until middle school when I felt more serious about my work and knew what I was doing.”

The piece that recently won her third place reflects her broader themes of culture and curiosity. It also highlights her interest in telling stories through visual perspectives and capturing the experiences of others.

“I wanted to make people eager to learn about other countries and different cultures,” she said. “By photographing students here on campus, we get to hear about their lives and stories.”

Although the final submission process was short and swift, Cade emphasized the importance of feedback from peers and mentors.

“I made sure to consult with my professor to get an outside opinion,” she said. “He helped me pick out my strongest image.”

Cade’s biggest challenge when creating this series was stepping out of her comfort zone, especially when interacting with new subjects.

“When I do meet new people, I tend to be more quiet but I’m glad this job pushes me to be confident,” she said. “Most of my subjects are close friends, I appreciate their contribution to helping me convey the photographs’ message.”

Despite the recognition, Cade is still considering her long-term career paths and keeping her options open and she continues to grow as an artist. She said the experiences so far have given her more confidence in pursuing photography.

“I haven’t thought too much about my plans for after graduation but I know I want to work in photography,” she said. “I want to travel the world and capture other countries.”

Looking forward to the future, she still has dreams of continuing her passion for photography. Hoping to travel and spread awareness of her work and message she conveys through it.

“My dream would be having my art in different galleries and exhibitions,” Cade said.

Cade’s placement in the exhibition marks an early but important milestone in what she hopes will be a growing career behind the camera. Capturing moments and individuals with stories that invite viewers to look beyond their personal lives.