## Spring 2017 Studio Art Bachelor of Fine Arts Exhibition

Opening reception–Monday, April 3, 5–7 p.m.
April 4–13
Todd Art Gallery, Todd Hall, Room 224A

**Understanding the Immigrant Experience**

**Alena Mehić was born in Zavidovići, Bosnia & Herzegovina and immigrated to Nashville with her family in 1997. Currently, she is completing her BFA in Painting. Her immigrant background contributes greatly to her body of work, which involves literary and media research as well as interviews with family members and friends. She uses her discoveries to examine discomfort regarding cultural displacement and disconnect between nostalgia and contempt within those who lived in pre-war Yugoslavia.**

**Her paintings have been featured in exhibitions such as *Migration with Dignity* in Middle Tennessee in collaboration with the MTSU Heritage Center as well as Nashville's Cummins Station Community Arts Program.**

Q: You're about to participate in this semester's Studio Art Candidates Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.) exhibit. What has that experience been like?

**Mehić: The BFA exhibition experience has been a learning process for me and, I'm sure, most of my peers. As artists, many of us are used to making decisions individually and choosing exactly why we make our work and what it consists of. However, the development of a group exhibition requires intensive brainstorming, compromise, and cooperation. We have all had to consider what would be best for us as a group rather than ourselves as individuals, and I think that has really helped in our understanding of working through collaboration. It has also been helpful in forcing me to consider the work I have made that I feel most represents what I want to say.**

Q: Do you mainly focus on painting as your media of choice? If not, what other media have you additionally pursued?

**Mehić: In my work, I equally paint, draw, and print. In the show, I will be including two large oil paintings, numerous small marker drawings, and a number of lithographic prints.**

Q: How much does your background as an immigrant to the United States effect your work?

**Mehić: My immigrant background greatly influences my work, and has become a focal point as I more closely consider what my status means to me as well as other people. With the ongoing discussion regarding refugees, I feel that it is important to talk about the refugee and foreign experience in order to help others understand, as well as to fulfill a personal cultural**

**uncertainty. I make work about where I come from and how that relates to where I am now because I am both trying to relive that cozy, familiar environment as well as determine why I cannot ever wholly fit in there nor in the United States. I also seek to unpack the rich history of the former Yugoslavia, a country that had already disbanded at the time of my birth, and why I feel so close to it while having never experienced its existence.**

Q: Your family and people seem very important and very much an influence. Can you explain how that presents itself in what you do?

**Mehić: I am very close to my family, yet it still surprises me when I think about how much they and, more specifically, my parents and those relatives who were greatly involved in my life while living thousands of miles away experienced both the comfort of Yugoslavia as well as a civil war. I view them as strong, worldly people and I believe that they have many important, relevant stories to tell. This translates to my movie frame paintings, depictions of domestic spaces, as well as my exploration of the media. The spaces contain timeless objects that are always associated with a person or a memory or a moment, while the propaganda posters analyze a time of relative peace and unity (Yugoslavia) compared to a time of unrest (the current day Balkans), as well as the United States' attitude throughout both of those periods.**

Q: What are your plans for the foreseeable future?

**Mehić: I plan on graduating from MTSU this May with a BFA, and then eventually pursuing my Master's degree in fine art.**