

## **Students Build Snow Sculptures on Campus in a Wave of Self-Expression**

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It began snowing late Monday night, into Tuesday morning. By mid-day Tuesday, there was a fresh coat of powdery snow covering campus. Classes were even moved to virtual learning.

Naturally, Purchase College students quickly took to doing what they do best—art.

One sculpture was a classic snowman approximately six feet tall, with shiny mineral eyes, built by Purchase student Gabby Shamah in the quad. “Her name is Schmoopy,” explained Shamah. “She protects the quad with her positive energy. That’s why her eyes are made out of rose quartz. Totally not because I’m manifesting that my man-who’s-not-my-man texts me tonight.” When asked if she feels she is exploiting Schmoopy through the use of rose quartz for self-gain, Shamah simply replied, “no comment.”

Another sculpture was a small abstract oblong, built by psychology student and Gabby Shamah’s roommate Maddie Jahaly. “It’s a dog,” she delineated. “For Schmoopy the Snowman. His name is Victor.” Jahaly explained that Victor acts as Schmoopy’s emotional support animal, a Daschund. “It’s really common to see people with emotional support animals on campus. It’s kind of lit, that we can have so many animals here. I didn’t want Schmoopy to miss out.”

Shamah and Jahaly both agreed that it’s important for students to have a free outlet of self-expression on campus. “Honestly,” Shamah said, “I was stressing out over my TV Writing script and coming outside and building Schmoopy helped me calm down a little.” Jahaly agreed, claiming, “I feel like all these people [building sculptures] are probably stressed out over something, or sad about something, and this is helping with that. It’s like therapy.”

And she might be right, as some sculptures took a more sentimental approach. Theater student and Alumni Village resident James Anderson built three tiny snowmen in the Alumni courtyard, each with distinct hairstyles made with sticks. “My suitemates all moved out for a gap year together, so I built them out of snow. Because I miss them, you know? I thought it’d be cute, but it just turned out kind of sad.”

When asked about the use of snow sculptures to express grief, Anderson explained, “Yeah, it’s just like any other outlet where you can vent about stuff. I guess it’s a little weird, like we think of kids playing with snow and stuff, in a kiddish way, but it’s actually just another way of expressing yourself. Like, I didn’t even mean to make something that was about my friends leaving but that’s what I ended up doing.”

And the benefits of the sculptures are not just for the artists. Student John Warren, who was walking across the sculpture-full quad, agrees that it's "cool to be able to use snow to make art," at Purchase, but also "cool for the people walking around to see what people have made." He claims it's like "a little gallery. We can get a glimpse into people's minds and we can get a smile when we walk by! That's why art's so great."

Unfortunately, as the snow has melted, the sculptures have faded, but their impacts will remain. Perhaps if it snows again this winter, we will see the return of these creations.