


An abstract painting of a face, rendered in a highly textured, expressive style. The face is composed of various colors including dark brown, green, purple, and yellow, with visible brushstrokes and layered colors. The eyes are dark and prominent, and the overall composition is dynamic and colorful.

Tell Your Story Walking

A collection of creative work by the
Syracuse University Honors community

2022



Tell Your Story Walking is a collection of creative work by Syracuse University honors students and alumni, curated by current honors students. We connect our community by providing a platform for creative nonfiction and multimedia to give a voice to individual experiences and perspectives.



Special thanks

Special thanks to Dr. Danielle Taana Smith, Karen Hall, and all the Renée Crown Honors Program staff for supporting this project.



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Dear Reader,

It's sometime in February, the sky overcast with gloom, and I'm following the backpacks ahead of me through campus after my biology lecture. The walkway seems to jostle, dense with bodies in winter coats. I'm aware that every single Syracuse student is between classes. But I'm composed, really. My face says, "I'm deep in thought—don't spoil it." I'm in front of Bird Library, trying to look mysterious and cool, when I slip. My right foot skids forward, my upper body surges backward. A shock of panic in my abdomen. By the time I untangle my hands from my pockets to steady myself, I'm stable again. Play it off play it off play it off. I keep walking, tuck my hands back in. I even look behind me, as if to say, "Who put that ice there?" Though I'm embarrassed, I'm suppressing a smile: I now have a story my roommate and I can laugh about later.

This memory, like so many others, is special because it has its own set of quirks. Its own shade of overcast, its own sense of panic and embarrassment, its own black ice splotch. Though I can return to this spot before Bird Library now, it wouldn't be the same—only within my head does that exact place, with those exact physical and emotional quirks, exist. Once the moment passes, only our memories can take us back; our memories become the places that no longer exist. And from these come stories.

We're all made of different memories, different places, different stories. But, we have one commonality:

Syracuse. When we converge on this campus as Syracuse students, we bring with us all our differences. Between us, there are places only we can (re)call into existence.

In the third edition of Tell Your Story Walking, the Honors community reconstructs and explores the memory-places that differentiate us. Memories of external places—like the Safire Room in Bird Library—and of internal places—like how the Safire Room's view of campus makes me feel both young and old. Through multiple forms of nonfiction storytelling, we once more bring these memory-places into existence for you, our readers. A living room whose decor is embedded with a family's generational hopes and legacies on page 25. An accepting home that transforms a stifled identity to an authentic one on page 20. How loss is part of the self-growth process on page 11. How adopting the audience's perspective can help an artist resolve creative blocks on page 49.

Like our artist on page 49, it's up to you, our audience, to look at things from a different angle—to question and challenge conventions. Are our memory-places, deep within our heads, as different as they seem? Are we as different as we seem?

We think you've come to the right place to decide.



Grace Ripperger, Editor, Fall 2022



Finding Home in Fruit

Ash Murray

Small enough to rest comfortably in the palm of my hand, a little orange feels like the only piece of home I have left.

The mesh bag is ripped open before it is placed in the fridge, my eager fingers wriggling in and pulling out the first piece of fruit they come across—triumphant. In the palm of my hand: a tiny orange, its perfect skin unmarred by age nor rot nor dirt. I dig my thumbnail in, not a second wasted. As the sweet smell of citrus sprays up at me, I am five years old.

In front of me, stand three pillars of majesty—orange, grapefruit, and tangerine. The three trees tower over my tiny frame, and, though they undoubtedly hold much more power than I, my little hands clutch the fruits of their labor. I have become something of an expert at plucking fruits from their branches. I pop a slice, cut by my father, into my mouth. My tongue bursts with the sour-sweet juice. I close my eyes and smile, rind

covering my teeth as orange drips from my chin. It is my first day at a new school, and I am eleven years old. Two oranges rest in my lunchbox—the only familiarity I have. I eat them first, my fingers sticky with citrus, and hope that they'll give me the strength to make it through the day. They do, but only just.

When I graduate from high school—after I've walked across the stage and shaken endless hands, after I've given my speech and hugged my parents—I find my way to my best friend's house,

to the bowl of fruit tucked in amongst so many other snacks. People swarm around me, laughing and crying and chattering away. I tuck a section of mandarin into my cheek and smile.

On the coldest day of winter, as snow pours onto the already-covered ground, I sit curled into myself on the couch, a mound of peels growing in a bowl next to me. I don't know how to live through the winter. One dreary day blurring into the next, cold air leaking through creaky windows. Small enough to rest comfortably in the palm of my hand, a little orange feels like the only piece of home I have left.

I close my eyes and smile, rind covering my teeth as orange drips from my chin.

In the spring, we sit together in a field, on a blanket not meant for outside use. We tell ourselves we'll buy a picnic blanket knowing that we won't. I peel an orange for us, handing it to you section by section by section. You, with your long nails, should

be better at this than I am. But I have years of practice, and I want to share this piece of myself with you. Together, we go through a whole bag. I peel each one so carefully. Pull off the stringy bits. Place each section between your lips. You laugh and kiss my fingers, yellow and sticky. I smile at you, squinting against the afternoon sunlight. When you kiss me, you taste like oranges. Something about it feels like coming home.

Seeing Rainbows

Bailee Roberts

No matter how dark things may seem right now, there is always a brighter future waiting just around the corner. Those who know me well frequently comment on my positive, upbeat demeanor, so I attempted to convey this aspect of my personality in this work of art. I want the viewer to feel connected to what the girl is hoping for and to see that there is always a reason to hope for a bright future.



Just Reach Out

Maureen Ferguson



The end of high school, beginning of college, new home, COVID pandemic, relationships starting and ending and starting again—all at once. There was this futile, frustrating need for comfort in such an uncomfortable time of transition and change. The idea of home was changing so rapidly that it felt as if I was grasping for something constant in a world speeding past me. Grasping for something that was barely there.

I Had No Idea I Liked September

Nina Piazza

It was one morning, before my mouth could be gagged with the muddy shame of unemployment, that I sucked in a waking breath and tasted sweet smoke.

I had left both my windows open—or rather, I had opened them sometime in May and never bothered to close them again—and chilly air had seeped into my west-facing room. I tucked my comforter around my shoulders and for once relished in my post-graduate ennui.

I like the spring because it is the end of winter, and I like the fall because it is the end of summer. There is usually about a week, lost somewhere in the spinning cycles of the planet, that resides at a sublime 55 degrees, which I have never experienced before since it unfailingly occurs during midterms or a research showcase.

September, which has been clogged by orientation, marching band, football games, textbook acquisition, and RA training for the past 16 years, is now a sprawling, gaping, horrifying stretch of wasted potential. I have discovered it's quite pleasant.

Letting Go of Who I Wanted You to Be

MJ Gray

"I know this is weird, but would you tell your parents goodbye and thank you for me?" I brush your cheek with my hand.

My leg is resting on yours and it feels so natural, so inappropriate, so devastatingly unreal. Our bodies drape over one another effortlessly, following a road map we've drawn for a year now. I am too aware of your touch on every inch of my skin. My body recognizes it's the same touch, but nothing is the same anymore. I watched our relationship fall apart within the confines of this apartment bedroom. We're sitting on your beat-up couch. In this moment, I hate you. I'm in love with you. I glance at the posters on your walls that I spent hours choosing for you this summer. Yet another unrequited anniversary gift. The sting in my heart reminds me you would never do something like that for me. I don't miss you, because I know it's the right decision to stop letting you slash my self-worth.

No, I miss you even though you're right here.

A surprised laugh overtakes you at my question.

"God," you scoff, "you really are the nicest girl I have ever met in my life..."

I blink back the hot tears forming at those words.

"Will you promise me something?"

An ache radiates from my heart and out through my limbs. Tears race down my face. I'm finally unashamed of my pain for the first time. I've held it in around you for too long. Your blue eyes are glittering with your own tears, and I can't help but stare at them like they will disappear forever when I look away. I feel them fixate on me with a pained smile, and I can tell you are studying my face for the last time.

"Never let anyone take advantage of how sweet you are."

"Again. Never again," I correct.

The Worst Thing to Happen to Me is the Passing of Time

Grace Ripperger

When I die, bury me in my childhood. Perhaps
in the eternity of one hour;
perhaps in a blanket fort whose secret interior feels like a forever weekend;
perhaps in the rage, the disbelief of a DVD scratched into no-more-movie past eleven minutes even;
perhaps in caterpillar fuzz on my fingerprints, its body an animated eyebrow on my hand skin;
perhaps in the car, singing along, alone, with the radio, commercial break (Mom, what's for dinner?);
in water slide spine ridges against mine, my back now splotched pink; in how cool rain refreshed me,
swimming, in the warm lake, that's how deep summer was; in a bug swarm above the uncut grass,
their bodies visible only when sliced by the sun, maybe a circuit of neurons (who needs a developed
prefrontal cortex, anyway?) or maybe a cloud or maybe an exhale; in the smell, stale and junk food and
Toyota Camry and not-quite-goodbye, of my dad's old car; in Sunny: silk fur petal ears (but watch out!
buzzcut prickles if rubbed the wrong way!); in bare feet on bicycle pedals, and the spiky texture hurts in
a good way, in an I-have-all-the-time-in-the-world way because everyone is still my friend,
because I am only one person—just me, me, me.
Yes, that—that will do.



Art by Makenna John

Mother and Daughter

Anonymous

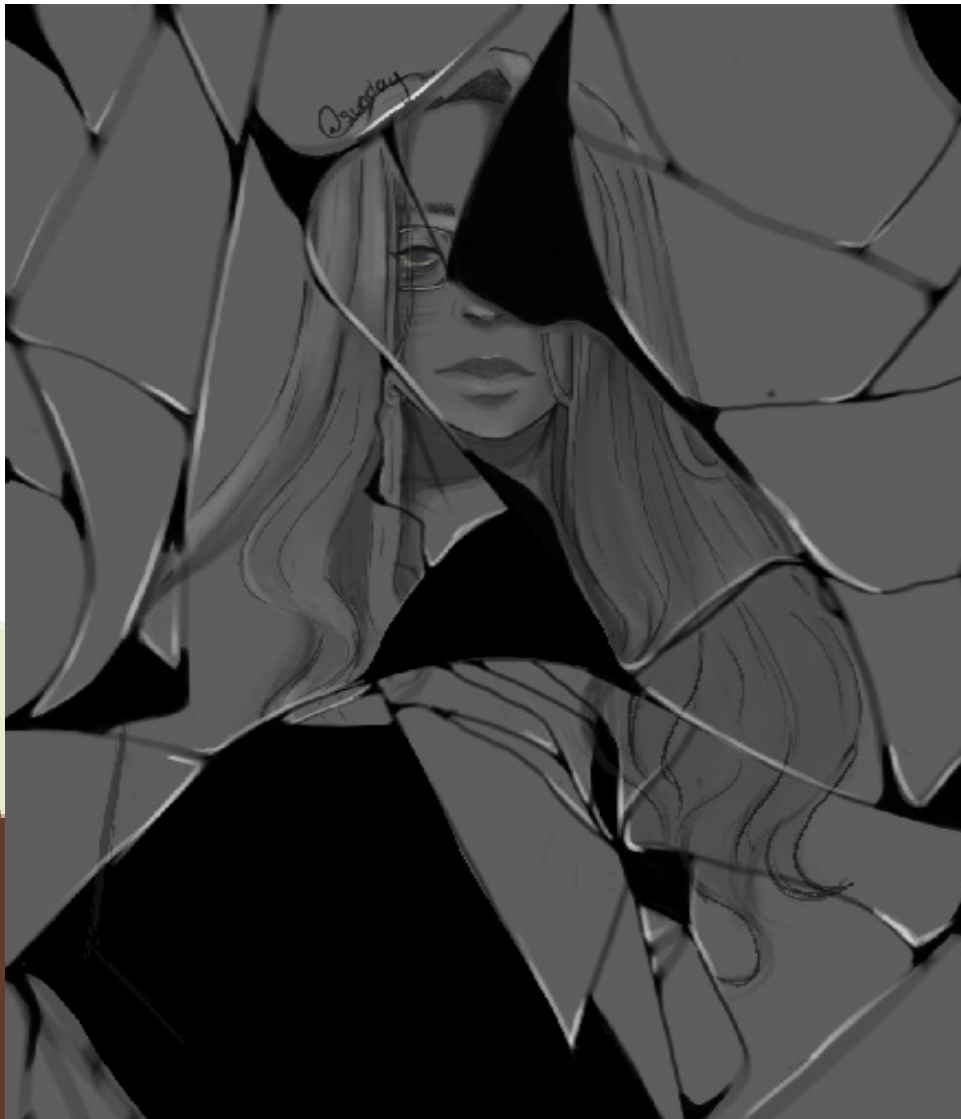
I thought the motel was quaint,
cobblestone and yellow-painted plaster wall
fit nice against the mountain backdrop,
paired with the greens and grays of spindly trees and sporadic brush,
the blues and pinks and oranges of the late afternoon sky. Sat alone
yet cozy at the end of the road,
"Sorry, I didn't think this would be creepy,"
her pessimism clung, cigarette stench in motel sheets.

From atop a hill, underneath a branch,
I take a moment
from hiking a rocky trail
donned with cacti, foxes, pebbles, and grasshoppers,
relishing in relief from the berating sun,
and looked down on the world beneath me.
I thought the highway looked fake,
unreal, plastic trucks and cars
like a model set in someone's basement.
I asked her if she agreed,
"...not really
...I guess I could see it."
I look away to ground reality, myself.

I sit stiff, feeling foreign in her car.
Returning to the house, stranger
pain sunk into my chest.
"You know, I feel like you and I are the same for a lot of things,"
her referring to some vague, mundane habit
I can't even remember.
I truly don't feel this way at all,
Mother
and Daughter.

Breaks

Akosua Danso



The piece "Breaks" is a play on words, focused on the concept of needing to take a break because you are breaking mentally, or needing to take a break even before you reach that breaking point. I chose to represent this using a gray scheme, and I chose to represent the breaks in the name by framing this scene in a mirror.

When I was first creating the piece, I started with a prompt. The word was "senses." I immediately thought of sensory overload. I went in that direction, which led me to the creation of another piece; however, in the middle, I had somehow stopped at a point that I didn't want to get rid of completely. So I saved that middle point and created the other piece as well. This middle point was a mirror riddle with cracks and holes, with a weary figure in the middle. You may be asking who that figure is. Another fact about this piece is that it is also a self-portrait, so that figure is me at the time of the piece. In reality, I was probably way less tired, but it is still me.

Is She Hungry?

Anna Fishburn

She was alone now. No mirror, no perfect girls.

There was a time when she was hungry. She could have answered her own question—Is she hungry?— if she were able to look at herself in the mirror. But she couldn't.

She sat up stick straight in her bed. Lights off and blinds shut at one in the afternoon. Across from her: the vanity mirror over the desk. Her and her worst enemy in a standoff. She wore the crewneck every other girl wore. Even alone she had to fit in. As she stared at herself, she felt nothing and everything. Maybe it was the physical nothingness, her empty stomach. Maybe it was watching every piece of her being swallowed up by the perfect people around her. Or, maybe, it was the pain of spending her childhood with nothing but a mirror.

She was 16. She spent 14 of those 16 years in a room with no windows, ten other seemingly perfect girls, and a mirror. She compared herself to them. Not blonde. Not white. Not flat in the places a dancer was supposed to be. She looked like she was looking at herself, but she was really looking at them. Then on those rare occasions where she would take the risk and look in her own eyes, she did not like a single thing she saw.

*Her and her worst
enemy in a
standoff.*

She was alone now. No mirror, no perfect girls. In 2020 she had to face herself. She didn't tell her mom or dad or brother or boyfriend or aunts or uncles or cousins or friends or coaches or teammates or coworkers. She was alone now, alone with her stomach. She didn't eat much. A few bites of breakfast, and a quarter full plate at dinner. No lunch. Never lunch. Lunch was an unnecessary meal. She thought that lunch makes you thirsty which makes you drink water which makes you bloated which makes you fat which makes you ugly which makes you worthless. So she skipped lunch.

She was fit. "The perfect body," boys said. But she did not see that. They all thought she didn't eat much because she was naturally small. But she knew she didn't eat because she wanted to look more like the girls in the mirror. If she couldn't be blonde or white, maybe she could be skinny.

She sat up stick straight in her bed. She felt the contents—or lack thereof—turning in her stomach. Her head became heavier and the pain grew stronger. She looked at herself in the mirror again. She was hungry. She had to eat. She couldn't do it much longer before the people she loved started to notice. So she got up. It was lunch time. To be clear, she did not eat lunch. But she had a few crackers and some purple grapes, and that was a start.

Sometimes, I still ask myself if I am hungry. At the time, I was so scared the people I loved would notice something was wrong with my eating habits that I stood up and I ate those crackers and grapes. I did not not eat those crackers and grapes because I loved myself and I wanted to save myself from the downward spiral I knew so many dancers went through. I did not love myself and I definitely did not care about a downward spiral if it meant I could be skinny. I ate because I loved the people around me and I never wanted to be an added stress to them.

She is different now. Two years later she eats three meals a day and snacks in between. She does not spend hours that turn into days and months and years in front of a mirror. Instead, she goes to the gym and works on what she wants to because she enjoys it. She still loves the people around her. But, more importantly, she loves herself. Her body, mind, and soul are beautiful. And she knows that. She doesn't eat to ensure those around her don't ask questions and worry. She eats because she wants to. She eats because she cares about what happens to her.

So, if you ask her if she's hungry around lunch time, she will reply,
"Yes."

No Romance

Anonymous

*This is my experience, and I am human.
Is that not enough?*

When I left for college, I dreamed of finding the perfect boyfriend. My future husband. My missing piece. I wanted nothing more than to escape the conservative mindset that saturated my southern hometown. None of the boys from my high school seemed suitable candidates to date, none of them inspired that spark of a true love that everyone spoke about. I was baffled at the impossibly low standards my peers seemed to have. How were they all falling in love so easily? Couldn't they see that they were going to get hurt?

My high standards were to my benefit, I decided. When my coworkers pressed me about my love life, I would force a smile and tell them that I was focusing on my education. They were bewildered that I was eighteen years old and had never dated. Maybe they were expecting the common answers—that I was waiting for marriage or that I wasn't allowed to date. The fact that I was the one keeping myself from dating seemed all the more shocking. Not God. Not my parents.

It was all me.

I was sure there wasn't anything wrong with me. It was obvious to me that the boys from my hometown were vulgar. I could find flaws in all of them. I was also certain I wasn't a lesbian. Most of my female friends were attracted to girls and I found few similarities between us. All I needed to do was find someone I was interested in and then I would hit all the milestones that everyone around me had flown past.

First crush. First date. First kiss.

When I came to college, I waited for a crush. I wasn't sure what a crush was, despite the poor explanations I'd ferreted out of my middle school friends. Maybe I was being too idle about it? Everyone seemed insistent that crushes just happened whether you wanted them or not. How could I fail at something that was supposed to be involuntary? I couldn't seem to find any of the college boys attractive, despite them being everything I convinced myself I wanted. The northern boys were just as unappealing to me

as the ones who wore camo and posted fishing photos on social media.

Maybe I was being too impatient. All the movies said true love took time and effort, except the ones that said it was instant and effortless.

(I wasn't sure if I even believed in love. It seemed everyone was faking it. Hell, my parents' marriage didn't even last after I turned ten.)


It wasn't a sudden realization, nor was it a gradual one which fell into the palm of my hands. It was something I'd known all along and yet I deceived myself, raging against the truth inside me and grasping for the heteronormative life I'd been promised.

I remember wearing toilet paper in my hair on the playground where my husband-to-be and I exchanged vows under the slide, just as we'd seen adults do. I remember watching movies where the princess was saved by the prince. None could compare to Princess Merida—my childhood idol who fought for her own hand in marriage.

I used to complain about the girls in middle school who'd go with boys to school dances. I didn't understand why one would date without intent for marriage, because that must be the only reason thirteen-year-old girls desired such unappealing partners. I called them misogynists without understanding the word, dreading my own pubescent transformation that would send me into the arms of a stupid, careless boy.

I remember the weeks before my father died, he told me with a wan expression that he wished to be there for me when I walked down the aisle. It dawned on me later that he'd known he wasn't going to make it much longer—that he would never live to see that milestone of mine. It doesn't matter now. Because if he were alive, I fear that he would be disappointed in me.

What's to stop my living family from growing disappointed when they realize ten years from now that this aversion to romance isn't just a phase; that aromanticism isn't just something I can switch off in my brain, but an integral part of my being?



I have always been aromantic and asexual, but I've been taught I have no place. That I am mistaken, that one day I will wake up normal and feel romantic feelings that come naturally to everyone else.

I don't hate love. It's something that I don't understand, I'll admit, but most people don't seem to understand romance even when they can experience it.

People who experience romantic and sexual attraction don't want to hear about people like me. When I was twelve, a friend I'd known for seven years came out to me as bisexual. We were on the school bus, and she seemed nervous. I listened, admitting I'd never heard of bisexuality, but it made sense that you could like anyone of either gender. It didn't seem like that big of a deal to me.

Last fall when I told her that I might be asexual she said it was a stupid label. That I would find someone eventually, that everyone did. It didn't seem to matter that I'd never had a childhood crush. She insisted I would become normal.

In hindsight, I don't believe her orientation is why she feels that way about me. I have other queer friends who understand me, and their acceptance means the world. I think she just didn't care to see the world through my eyes as I'd done for her. That betrayal hurt more than anything else.

I've stopped talking to her now. She seems just as keen on ignoring me—a mutual ghosting. We didn't have a big fight that ended it all, I just complacently told her that she must be right. A small part of me stills fears it's true, that I am stupid and childish and wrong.

I tore down all the pictures of her in my room. It didn't help much.

While her photos have vanished, the faces of my family still watch me from my wall. I often wonder if they'd tell me the same thing if I came out to them. That it's a stupid label, that I need to stop being a child.

I don't think I could stand that rejection. The pressure of it all.

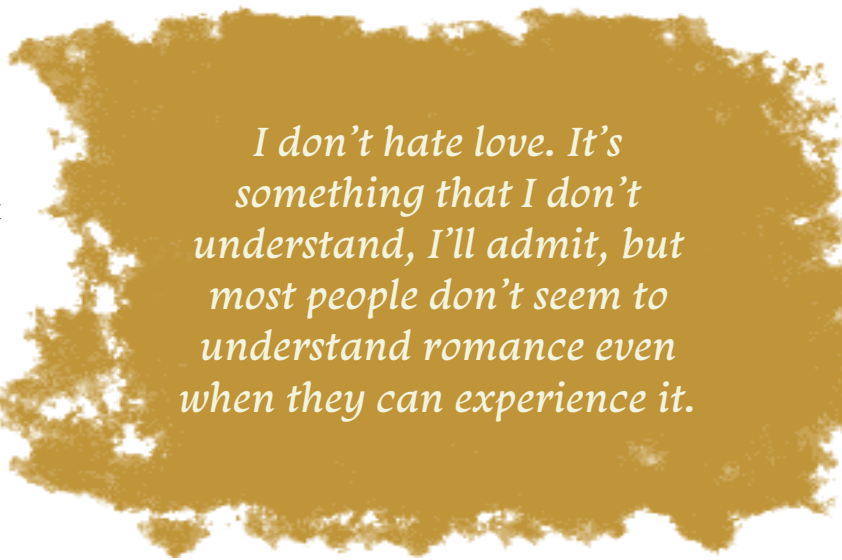
Living in a world that seems to prioritize romance over everything else is frustrating. I'm left feeling like something was taken from me and

that I will never meet the life milestones expected of me. But milestones aren't a guide to life. There is no perfect version of the human experience.

This is my experience, and I am human. Is that not enough?

I want to enjoy the company of my friends and sleep in a bed without a partner on the other side of it. I want to adopt dogs. I want to travel and oversee my finances. I want to go thrift shopping in the city and play piano late at night and I want to spend weeks reading by a large windowsill. I want to learn how to bind my own books and learn how to cook and cultivate a living space that's all my own.

That sort of life would make me happy, no romance needed. Or wanted.



I don't hate love. It's something that I don't understand, I'll admit, but most people don't seem to understand romance even when they can experience it.

El Apagón

María José Rodríguez-Rexach



This piece, created for a letterpress print project, presents a hypothetical scene, reflective of the unity and relentlessness of the Puerto Rican community. The cloth that reads "Se Fue la Luz" (The Power Is Out) is draped over a billboard with LUMA Energy's logo, reflective of a boricua's discontent with the island's electrical grid; it reflects the frustration with those who oversee these systems and continually fail to improve them. "El Apagón" is a response to the blackouts that have become a consistent part of a Puerto Rican's day-to-day life.

Since starting my studio arts collegiate career in the United States, I've felt most inclined to create work about Puerto Rico. I create work about intimate spaces and objects with the objective of understanding how and why they gain their meaning and become personal. "El Apagón", while seemingly addressing a more political and controversial topic different to my other work, features personal themes too. Having lived through Hurricane María back in 2017, it's strange and frustrating to view the island's situation from afar, to become a mere spectator of it. I think this is why I feel the responsibility and need to use art as not only my outlet, but as a way to educate and shed light on the unseen. I want to cultivate awareness and solidarity.

Late Night Snow

Carol Yang



I dragged my tired body out of Bird one late exam week night with a sinking heart, and I was shocked by this beautiful frame. I love SU, the place that has supported me for four years already. Each winter, the pure white snow surprises me with the amazing white filter it adds to our lovely campus. On that night, the trees under the snow looked just like angels with silver-white hair, standing in the dark and lighting up my mind. A voice sounded in my head, "See the trees that suffered the bitter cold? They now harvest new beauty and life. Isn't it the same for you?"

Home Away from Home

Ash Murray

In all my dreams of home and the future, I never thought it would look like this.

I once wrote that I felt most at home and at ease when I had a pile of books sitting next to me, each one waiting to whisk me away into another universe. Growing up as a queer kid in the south, it's easy to find home somewhere other than your house. I used to write about how, someday, I would have a fridge filled with fruits and veggies, in a home that I built with the woman I loved. I wrote about pride and found family, and I dreamt of sunlight pouring in through windows onto a well-loved collection of houseplants.

But the simple truth is: I keep killing my houseplants.

I keep killing my houseplants, and it doesn't matter—because home doesn't have to be what you thought it would be when you were fifteen and one wrong move away from killing yourself.

I live in an apartment in the snowiest city in America, where the radiators don't work and I spend my nights piled high with blankets. I live in an apartment where the dining room table is used as a desk; where the couch—passed down from tenant to tenant—smells slightly of piss and sort of hurts to sit on; where the floors creak and at least one neighbor is always making noise. I live in an apartment that costs way too much money for the radiators to not work and the couch to smell. But I love it. Not because it's a good apartment (it's not), but because of who I share it with.

As I write this, a cat sits curled at my feet, gently sleeping. A second one has made a bed out of our table-desk and the cardigan that I haphazardly tossed there earlier today. From the other room, Jean's snores travel through the air to my ears, a strangely comforting sound. They are what makes this place a home. I'm cold, and tired, but I know that even from the depths of sleep, their arms are always open to me. That is where I feel the most at home: in their arms. When I'm with them, it doesn't matter that the radiators don't work—they are so warm, all the time. When I'm with them, it doesn't matter that there's still dirt on the windowsill from yet

another houseplant casualty—a cat sending a basil plant tumbling to the ground. When I'm with them, it doesn't matter that we ate the last of our fruit two days ago and can't afford more until Wednesday.

Home, for me, is a person—and I know that that's cliché, but it doesn't make it untrue.

Home is picking Jean up after work on Fridays and taking them to the market downtown. It's buying them strange-flavored lattes and hunting for a table near an outlet so we can sit there with our laptops out and pretend to do homework. We both know we're just going to talk for two hours, but we keep up the pretense anyway. It's holding their hand at the farmer's market on Saturdays as we compare three different lettuce options that all look the same to me. It's dancing on the broken kitchen floor and saturating our building with the smell of cooking curry.

Home used to be such an abstract concept to me. Sure, I had a house where I lived with my parents, and a school where I saw all of my friends. And I had a beautiful city full of sunshine and beaches and art, everywhere I turned. I had a place that I called home, and a place that I believed was home. But when I met Jean, I realized that home was something new entirely—something I'd never had before. It was a brand new concept to me. When I met Jean, I felt like I had found something that I never even knew I was missing.

But the simple truth is: I keep killing my houseplants.

In all my dreams of home and the future, I never thought it would look like this. I never even thought it could look like this. I used to think that home would be a picture-perfect paradise—that as soon as I got my first apartment, I'd somehow be able to afford something luxurious. The fact of the matter is, though, that I've grown to love the clang of our broken radiators. Sure, we're moving in two months and we complain about the apartment all the time, but it will always be the first home that we rented together. And sure, there are always dirty dishes in the sink and the toilet is always running and sometimes the back right burner on the stove doesn't work, but it's our place and our mess and our names together on the lease.

On sunny days, the light pours in through the windows the way I always imagined. In the evenings we curl up together on the couch—a

fuzzy blanket thrown on top of us—and watch the same show that we always watch, for what I'm sure is at least the fifth time. I wake up every morning excited for the day, because I know that it's one more day that I get to spend with them. I come home every night excited to crawl into their arms and tell them about every single detail of my day. Even the horrible, ugly, scary parts of life seem manageable when I'm with them, because at the end of it all, I'll make them coffee and they'll make me chai, and everything will be okay.

They're sitting next to me now, and we're both feeling a little sick, but all I can think about is how excited I am to take care of them and to have them take care of me. Surely no one has ever felt like this before—like their home is not a place but a person. If they have, how do they ever get anything done?

Agoraphobes Anonymous

Laman-Amel Istrabadi

Crisp air stings my skin. The walk back home is silent. Almost.

You did it again.

That nagging voice in my head is like a gnat I can't swat at, an itch I can't reach: you did it again.

My voice thunders between my ears, making me squeeze my eyes shut and beg for silence. On my tongue, though, it dries like cement. I did it again. Said nothing. Contributed nothing. Nobody looked at me, and why would they? My heart hammers when I even consider raising my hand; it shrivels when I make eye contact. No, don't look at me. But please look at me. I want to be something worth looking at. Something okay with being looked at.

Instead, I did it again. The routine that always earns me the dreaded wow, you're so quiet. I'm not quiet. I'm terrified. Stop looking at me if you're going to look at me like that. You're disappointed? I am, too. I was going to do better this time.

Home is as much a defeat as it is a relief. Alone where I'm safe. Alone where I'm not judged. Alone, where I'm starting to get the sick feeling I belong.

Alone. Again.



Art by Makenna John

Brother Understood

Maureen Ferguson





I don't know what it's like to see a sibling at home or a hospital for the first time and a newborn passed around from one beaming face to the next. I met my brother at the Newark airport when he was 5, and I was 8. Not speaking the same language made introductions challenging, but he presented us with the only thing he had brought across the world—salad-shaped gummies—and I took that as a “hello” just the same.

We didn't grow up instinctively knowing the mannerisms of the other. Instead, this was something that was learned. The way he speaks with his hands, his upper lip extends over the bottom one, his hair gets darker in the winter, what makes him smile and what doesn't—all of these are aspects of my brother's personality that became apparent to me all at once. There is beauty in the fact that we are now experts of the other who was once a stranger. I know my brother's face like I know my own. It is this unique and beautiful process of learning and building an understanding of a new family member that I wanted to capture in this photo collage series.

Home

Vivian Yang

A place that is warm.

"Is this home now?" I ask bluntly.

"Yes." She responds nonchalantly, then after a long pause says, "temporary home."

Looking around, all I see is cold furniture and empty promises. In this very moment, I begin to form a meaning around home.

The word temporary accompanies me for a very long time. That feeling of cold, plain, and empty; it sticks. However, one extraordinary afternoon, two girls begin to add warmth into what feels like a frigid life.

"Hey guys, wait up!" I scream across the street.

The girls turn around, their smiles are radiant like the sunlight.

"Hello!" The tall one cups her hands around her mouth and shouts back.

"Want to hang out this weekend?" I impulsively shoot the question.

"Yes! We live right here, come knock on the door anytime," the shorter girl points to an apartment on the second floor.

My heart is practically flapping its wings and fighting its way out of my chest.

The two girls I met at the school bus stop, Bella, and Sophia, become a beacon of light in my adjustment to American life.

Fast forward to my fourth temporary home. The upstate snowfall has no intention of melting the ice around my heart. However, everything changes in the beginning of my sophomore year as I meet Richard.

"Hey! I'm Richard, a brother of Delta Sigma Pi. Welcome to the information session," he says, bringing the warmest energy.

I reply briefly, attempting to hide my shyness.

"So, why did you want to come out for DSP?" he asks.

My guts told me to be sincere.

"To be honest, I hope to find people I can rely on and call family," I reply softly with the last bit of courage I have left.

His smile lingers; it reminds me of Bella and Sophia's. In this moment I knew this was going to be home—a place that is warm.

Reminiscing

Ivonne Millan



Through this piece, I explored the story of the hard work and sacrifice of my grandmother. My grandmother is admiring a significant childhood portrait, given to her by her father. This portrait represents the success my grandmother would one day achieve through education. Although life had a different path for her and she was unable to fulfill her aspiration of obtaining a college education, this piece reflects upon her sacrifices, which allowed her children to achieve their dreams and her grandchildren to be amongst the first in the family to obtain a college education. This piece of artwork reflects upon how our dreams can evolve over time and, although not fulfilled as we expected, through hard work and sacrifice we can live up to our dreams.

Tangled

Audrey Weisburd

we are far too tangled to turn into strangers.
if you get too close to another person,
to another soul
so close you feel cosmically intertwined
so close that you skydive into the soul,
we are far too fused to grow foreign

we are far too embedded to feel lonely
in our aloneness
I will wipe our blood on every
poem I write
in every story I craft,
find your name in the subtleties

please, tiptoe too close
tie cherry stem knots
in my heart
weave in and out
of my little life
bury yourself in my corners

profound human connection
forms new language from scratch
giving life to a new energy
that could never be destroyed
a part of us will always remain
interlocked

through our bondage
and peaceful sleeps
late night talks into
indigo skies,
in every person I love after you
you will be loving them too

your footprints
all over my bones
your tracks
run so deep in my flesh
I can still feel your air
in my lungs

To: My Past Love

From: Arya Narang

Dear *You*,

It's been over a year since our last date, since the last day you kissed me, the last day you touched me. It's been over a year since I broke up with you, I left you, I lost you. Why then do your letters, your gifts, your memories still sit in my drawer, collecting dust, recording the time that has passed since? The origami ring, slightly crumpled, the jar of "Things I Love about You," the last letter you wrote to me that talks about our forever. Why didn't they go with the trash during move-out? Why didn't I let them go? Will I ever be able to forget the feeling of excitement, insecurity and warmth when your eyes met mine? Will I ever be able to forget the feeling of your hand sitting slyly on my thigh or the feeling of my leg sitting comfortably over yours? Maybe the thought of possibly never finding love again frightens me, or maybe it makes these feelings, these memories harder to forget. Maybe deep down I hope that someday, somehow we find love in each other again. Maybe I hope that your words "yours truly," "yours and only yours," can sometime be written again. Until then, I continue revisiting the four years we shared, the mistakes I made, the guilt I have. Until then, the love we once had will stay in my drawer, stay in my head.

Forever grateful,
forever regretful,
forever yours?

Arya

Enjoy the Moonlight Instead of Closing Your Eyes

Yanqing Su

The first time I hope to not see the moon is on the day of the Mid-Autumn Festival. The faint yellow moonlight sprinkles on my face. Instead of feeling the brightness and warmth, I close my eyes and let the breeze take away my tears—it is my first Mid-Autumn Festival abroad. It is also the first time I am alone during the festival.

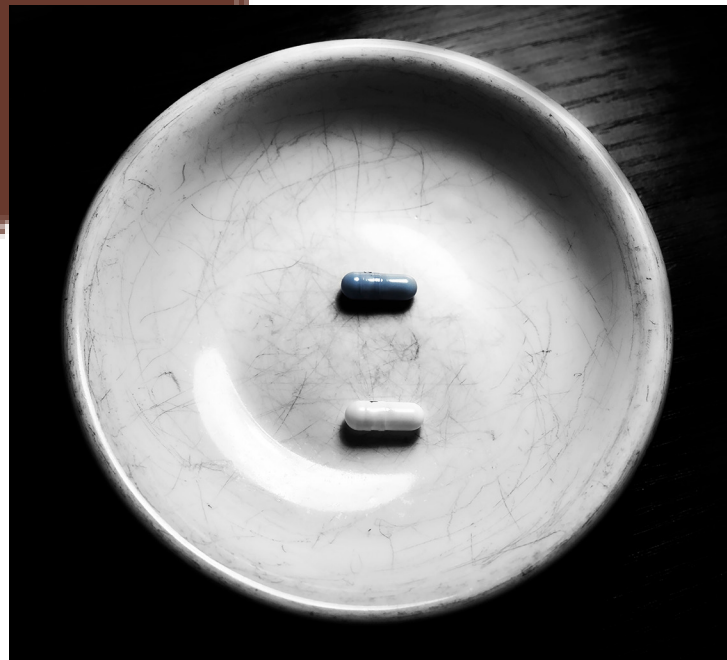
The Mid-Autumn Festival is one of the traditional Chinese festivals when families gather to see the full, round moon, which embodies reunion, and eat moon cakes. I do not want to celebrate. Without the people who should be there with me, the holiday is meaningless.

I sit there in a daze, not knowing how much time passes. I'm not sure how many trolleys drive by; my thoughts blend with the sound of their engines and the whistling wind. I hear the neighbor's house playing Bruno Mars' "Leave the Door Open." Their laughter sounds sharp. I think about my parents, my brother, and my cat.

Maybe feeling lonely is part of growing up, and people learn to face it to become stronger. I believe I will get over it and finally understand the lesson: Learn to enjoy the moonlight instead of closing your eyes.

Transparently Me

Nick Trivelpiece

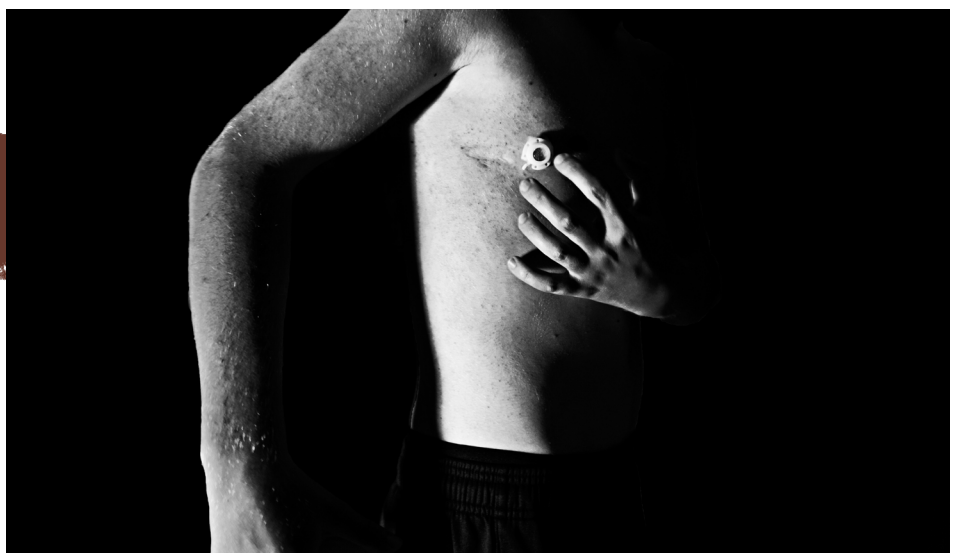




I've never known a life without cancer, I've never had normal vision, and I had to grow up living a life of difficult choices, but ultimately it made me who I am.

This collection was a challenge, as it has taken me many years to reach a point in my art and my comfortability with putting my story out there, to create what you are seeing right now. I still find it difficult to observe my work and not get emotional. Making sure each photo doesn't look staged or forced was crucial; every emotion, and every element has real meaning. Nothing fake was put into frame to invoke more significance as I inserted light with purpose, either to attract as much attention as possible in one specific part of the picture or help the eye do so in another way. My goal was to bring out the strongest narrative in each piece, and to make sure there wasn't any confusion about the way I felt, or about the significance of what the object in the frame meant to me.

This collection is my attempt to share what I have experienced, in a personal way, with everyone. I want viewers to see this and gain some understanding of my life's journey.



Phantom Limb Syndrome

Laman-Amel Istrabadi

Phantom limb syndrome says what we lose burns.

Phantom limb syndrome says presence is easy to take for granted, and absence overwhelms.

It overwhelms so much that the brain severs its ties to reality out of self-preservation. Amputees will forget they're amputees. I forget I'm a niece without her aunt. The horror of remembering makes it feel like it's happening again – the limb is being cut off again; the phone is ringing again. I knew she was dead before I answered. I knew it then but most days, I don't know it. Most days, I forget.

Because she was like a limb, something I thoughtlessly relied on. She was like air, something I needed without urgency. Air will always be there, right? Who just runs out of air?

But panic drowns you even faster, so it's a survival instinct. The forgetting. The aching. Your mind needs the limb to exist, even if its existence hurts. Even if remembering that it doesn't exist feels like dying.

Phantom limb syndrome says it doesn't last forever. The burning will stop.

Phantom limb syndrome says you will learn not to take things for granted. You just had to learn the hard way.

Bus Ride

Eleni Cooper

I drop into the corner seat in the very back, the rattling of heaters and machinery taking up every last speck of space in my brain. I tap one pocket, then the other. My headphones are at home. The clang of the heater builds, five chatty girls pile into the bus, and the driver hits a curb. My brain is filling with lead, my ears feel like they're bleeding as I curl into myself. Escaping is a futile effort. Without my shield of white noise layered under indie pop or classic rock, the world is a piercing crescendo of sight and sound and sensation, far too much. Everything is so loud. The driver hits a curb again. I rip at my cuticles until they bleed.

For You

Caitlin Espiritu

"Does it hurt?" I ask the artist.
"Just think about something nice," he replies.
I lie here now, face down on the chair, arms at my sides.
The scent of the black leather infuses my brain.
My sister and best friend stand outside the open door of the little artistic
room—
Old and new tattoo sketches covering the walls,
Acoustics playing lightly on the speaker.
The buzz of the needle rings in my ear...
The tip of the needle pricks my skin.
It's for you—
Black ink punctures the special spot on my neck.
A place where I experience the most anxiety,
Soon to be comforted by your zodiac symbol:
Two coy fish that circulate each other and embody Pisces.
I know you are always with me.
I think about the "nice things" as I was instructed to before.
A pinching vibration,
Breathing in and out to help me get through the pulsating needle—
The scent of leather as I breathe in,
Relaxation as I breathe out.
A gentle tear streams down my right cheek and onto the leather head of
the chair.
Thinking about you,
I know you are here,
Watching me lie still
As the needle pokes its last marks
For you.

Daughter (Derogatory)

Eden Stratton

*Two little words—they/them—on my Instagram profile
had finally given me away.*

"So what's the deal with you?"

I sit stiffly in my chair, eyes trained on my computer screen. I feel a hand grip my heart, panic rising in my chest. My throat squeezes in on itself, trying to keep the fear from bubbling beyond my lips.

"What about me, Mom?"

"Well, this whole they/them thing," she asks curtly.

God, she had been in such a good mood today.

I don't want to fight her on this one. For once, there's no retaliation or witty quip on my tongue. No diversions or antics. Even my dog is nowhere to be found, her walnut-sized brain smart enough to recognize when there's tension in a room.

We've done this before: Yelling, hard stares, years-old grudges dug out of history and laid bare in front of our feet. They're hard to look at and much less to acknowledge. Each represents a failure from one or both of us, and we're similar enough that we'd prefer not to admit it.

My mother picks and chooses when she and I are alike. She claimed me viciously for every high school achievement, every "A." But for every moment of pride, there were always moments of disappointment. Moments where I was too brash, too stubborn. I hated her honesty, and she resented mine. We would seeth, our too-identical jaws clenching until our teeth rubbed flat – my little brothers held hostage in the warzone of our kitchen. In the midst of our fury, it was clear whose daughter I was.

An argument my sophomore year sums it up best:

"You've always been your father's daughter, Eden. You always liked him best." I bit my tongue, choking on the words she always wanted me to say.

You're right.

My mother didn't have an easy life either. She blamed herself for the divorce between her and my dad. They were too different; she was too ambitious and he was too content. Wracked with guilt for the effect it had on her children, she found solace in religion, in eternal forgiveness that would help her family get back on track. She worked days and nights, pushing her body beyond its limits to make sure that we had everything and more.

While the divorce had been amicable, my mother wasn't the kind of person to rely on a man.

But, in the end, she didn't do it out of spite.

She did it for us.

"Do you really want me to tell you?" It's a new tactic – I haven't tried to give my mother an "out" before.

It does little to quell my nerves. My voice doesn't sound quite right, as if I'm a sock puppet and someone is opening my mouth for me.

For a moment, I blame myself. I was supposed to keep things quiet, not to rock the boat as violently as I had years before. I was too careless, and my mother's questioning was a consequence of my recklessness. Two little words—they/them—on my Instagram profile had finally given me away. Suddenly I'm reliving the first time coming out to my mother all over again.

It was horrible.

I was 15, young, and very much confused. We were at a waterpark with my brothers, on a hot, sunny day where it felt like you were melting every moment you stepped out of the pool. I had thought about coming out before. I knew who I was from a young age, and my brief stint with my ex-boyfriend had done little to quell it.

My mother and I sat on the edge of the water, our feet close enough to touch.

"So what's the deal with you?" she asked.

I'd been a nervous wreck for weeks, wondering how I was going to tell her. I hadn't mentioned it to another living soul, and my mother knew something was weighing on me.

It blurted from my lips.

"I think I'm gay."

It stands as one of my worst memories. My mother didn't believe me, her face curled into something between disbelief and horror. We had argued, right there in the waterpark, before calling it quits and driving my brothers home in thick silence.

I learned later that she thought someone had either coerced me or that I was doing it simply because "a lot of people are saying they're gay nowadays." That singular argument led to the start of fiery years full of misunderstandings and hurt feelings. Sometimes they were petty, others not, but all of them were connected to one sentence that became our personal Pandora's Box.

After I went to college, my bouts with my mother almost ceased entirely. I got older, and my anger began to fade. I realized that despite the thousand-mile distance between us, I didn't want to live my life without her. We found a sense of common ground, and we focused on our similarities, our shared sense of ambition.

There was just one thing I never told her: I wasn't her daughter anymore.

I had realized I was non-binary, and it was heavenly. Finally, after years of feeling wrong and out of place, I could finally make something feel like me. I told my friends, I was open about it on campus. I added my pronouns to my Instagram, foolishly believing my family would never see them. Going home and pretending to be someone else wrecked me, but I couldn't risk the life I had built for myself.

"Finally, after years of feeling wrong and out of place, I could finally make something feel like me."

I'm sweating.

"I'd like to know, Eden. Just tell me."

I feel 15 again, my feet dangling into endless water, and I know that I'll be pushed off the edge.

But this time is different because I never told her. She figured it out herself.

It deserves some honesty.

So I tell her. I tell her how I've felt like I'm a different person all my life. Someone who wears a mask perpetually, never knowing if that's really their face. I tell her about cutting my hair—how it was the most euphoric feeling of my life. How I started to actually love myself.

She stays silent. Then says she doesn't understand.

I tell her I don't expect her to, it's different.

Repetition

Sarah Wells

No big evolution comes without a stomach full of doubt.

My stomach ached ferociously as I held back tears. There's a reason why homesickness has its name. I wanted to pet my dog, hug my mom, and lay in my bed. My bed. Not the skinny, lumpy one in the unfamiliar dorm with fluorescent lights. I looked around the quad with the bouncy houses, the crowd, and the people in the booths, trying to get me to join their organizations with free merchandise—all things that should have been thrilling. Instead, I just felt empty. I prayed for the event to be over soon, to be able to go back to my room and watch a movie, go to sleep, or do anything to lower my heart rate and the lightheadedness that messed with my thoughts and stifled my breathing.

I should've been in a good mood that night. I don't know what was wrong with me if I was burned out or simply just miserable. I didn't want to ruin the night. I didn't want to ruin this delicately crafted memory we had made, one that everyone held in their hands like a glass ball, a prophetic orb that was reflective of how amazing their college experience was going to be.

My new friends stood in a circle and chatted excitedly about everything going on. I fiddled with my metal rings and cracked a joke that no one had heard, an experience that I had gotten used to over the course of my high school career.

My brain hissed the reality that I had been absolutely terrified of.

This is going to be just like high school.

My stomach dropped, and goosebumps formed on my arms like they do when you're watching a horror movie. Except this horror movie was my real life. I felt a cold sweat form on my palms, a stomach ache forming in my midsection like a tornado brewing in a dust field. Suck it up, the voice in my head whispered. You're going to ruin this for everyone.

I went on autopilot for the rest of the

night, saying things that my brain didn't even register. I couldn't tell you a single something I said after nine o'clock. My rings wore into my fingers as I spun them around frantically, wanting my intrusive thoughts to trickle out of the side of my ear like water after a swim. I closed my eyes, opened them, and twisted a strand of my hair into a tangled knot that almost resembled the one in my stomach.

My roommate and I went back to the dorm after searching for a party I didn't want to go to and thankfully couldn't find (although I would've instead hit myself on the hand with a hammer than tell her that at the moment). Finally, sitting on my bed, I let the tears flow down my cheeks like two rivers on either side of my face, thinking about how this was supposed to be easy. College was supposed to be like two weights being lifted off my shoulders after years of slouching through a place where nobody understood, a place where I was miserable every single day. I fell asleep that night and woke up the next morning with a head full of nothing but a migraine.

A month and a half later, that night seemed like an eternity ago. I may still be familiar with the emptiness of homesickness, the burning behind my eyes when I'm exhausted, the tears, and the feeling of failure. When I'm standing in the corner of a party, anxiously awaiting a thought to slide into my head and ruin my night.

But no big evolution comes without a stomach full of doubt, a head full of anxious thoughts rattling around like marbles in a tin can, and especially a small voice telling you the opposite of what you want to hear. I guess that means I'm changing.

That's the thing about repetition. It never stops. I may have felt terrible that night, and I'm sure there will be many more terrible nights in the future. However, just a few weeks after that fateful night, I went out and laughed so hard

I felt a cold sweat form on my palms, a stomach ache forming in my midsection like a tornado brewing in a dust field.

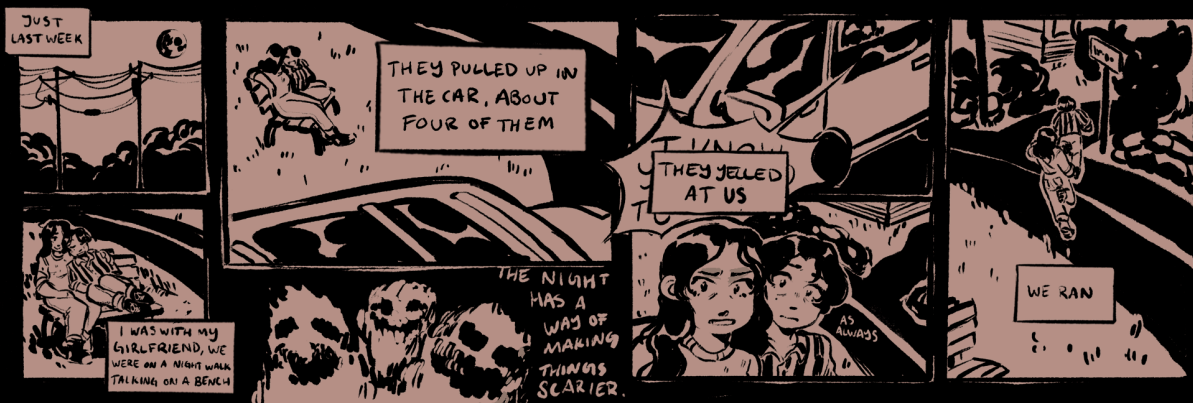
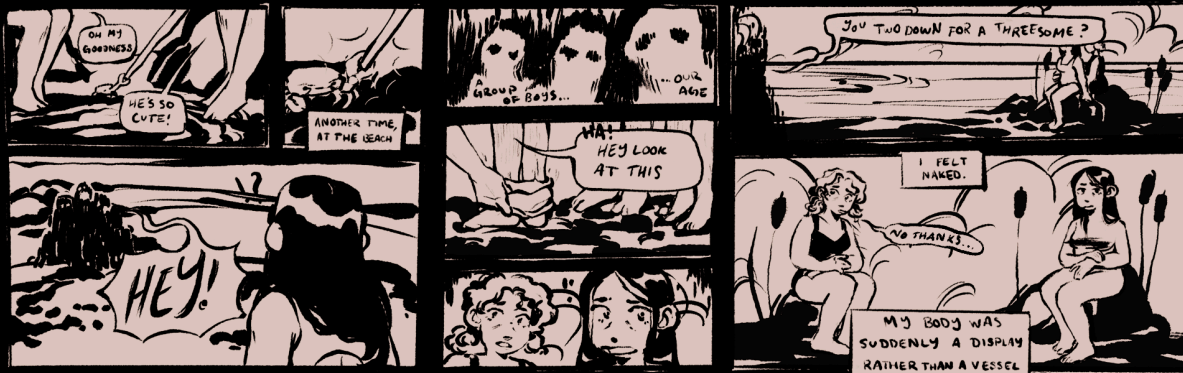
that my cheeks hurt from smiling, and my head hurt from laughing. Why don't we talk about the good nights more? The nights are full of gleeful laughter, confiding in people who care, and

listening to music that doesn't make us want to jump out the window. Perhaps if we dwelled on the nights that we actually loved more, then the awful, mind-numbing ones won't seem as drastic.

Dead Battery

Ash Murray

I don't want to be here. The whole world feels like it's crashing down. Sounds? Too loud. Smells? Too strong. My sweater feels like sandpaper against my skin. A radiator whistles next to me; the sound is drilling into the center of my brain. At the front of the room, my professor speaks, but I don't understand. Someone cracks their knuckles at the desk behind mine. Across the room, an anxious student bounces their leg. The air vent above my head rattles out an unsteady beat. My head feels like TV screen static—signals lost in translation and uncomputed. I look down at my laptop; the screen is black. I press a key, only to find the battery dead. I wonder how long it's been sitting lifeless in front of me. I stare at my reflection—empty eyes on an empty screen. I wonder if I look just as lifeless.



Catcalling

Paige Toglia

Since the creation of this comic in 2021, I have been further yelled at on the street, photographed on the train, and received whistles, honking, and comments. Talking about these experiences to reveal what this type of attention feels like on the receiving end is the goal of this piece. I created this comic to show how this kind of attention changes as you grow, how catcalling gets more aggressive once people perceive you as a “woman” rather than a child and the internal struggle it breeds.

Is This What Love Is Supposed to Feel Like?

MJ Gray

Balancing versions of you—
Which one will I get today?
Will I feel loved and supported and wanted?
No.
Today is anxiety, uncertainty, unappreciation.
I check my phone repeatedly for your response
as if my obsession will somehow make you care.
I'm begging for a sliver of your attention, and you still think I'm a
burden for it.
How are you the same person who loved me last night?

Balancing versions of you—
Did you mean it yesterday when you told me that you want to marry
me someday?
How can you mean it if you texted me today that you were dancing
with another girl?
No.
I'm not even allowed to be upset with you, you'll just laugh at me.
But I remember how you hold me when I cry, how you still manage to
make me smile.
I wonder where that person goes when you get tired of me like this,
When suddenly you treat your presence as a luxury, and I keep paying
the price.
How are you the same person who makes me feel safe?

Balancing versions of you—
How long can I take the strain of never knowing what to expect from
you?
Will my soul ever get used to this turmoil—
Wait.
My phone rings and floods my ears with your voice, your coldness
suddenly melted away.
I relish in the warmth of your attention as the pit in my stomach
dissipates.
The version of you that I fell in love with is back, that's all I can focus
on.
Your artificial sweetness blissfully races through my veins.
How are you the same person who made me throw up this morning?

Mother

Audrey Weisburd

Mother,
You tenderly trace the outline of my baby face
The cupcake cheeks I contour now
Bare lashes
Unpursed pale lips
You drag your pinky down the slope of my cartoon
nose
Before the blackheads came in
Before matte powder covered me up
And shut you out

Mother,
You draw my soft cheekbones
My satin jawline
The stencil of innocence
The perimeter of purity
Your entire face squishes towards the center
A nurturing smile
Spills from your eyes
I exhale, as no harm can touch me now

Mother,
You beam at the angel in your lap
The angel you created
You drew me from scratch
You delicately draw my modest face
I shut my eyelids
Naked of ash and smoke
And drift into cartoon dreams
Oh to sleep in your steady cocoon
again

Mother,
You rest your eyes
And begin a Godless prayer
That the weeds of the world never
Tangle me dry
When you are not there,
That although I will grow
surrounded by dirt
The sweet seed of love in my soul
Remains intact

Mother,
The girls have given up now
The boys, they gawk and grab
The girls call the girls ugly
The boys turn into vultures
when the lights dim
Sobriety became a commodity
Treading through tidal waves,
I swim
I remember you,
Mother

Does Happiness Improve Physical Health?

Rachel Musman

There wasn't anything physically wrong with me after the concussions went away, yet I was still in constant agony.

My eyes scan the clock. It's been 20 minutes, time for another stupid break. My cheeks flush as I get up and walk out of the classroom.

"Hey, Mrs. Thompson, I'm going to take another break now."

"Okay," she sighs.

Her judgment weighs down on my shoulders; blood rushes to my cheeks. Everyone is staring at me.

No, for the millionth time, this is not a fun way to get out of class.

I never endured physical pain as a kid, but I distinctly remember wishing I had. Headaches seemed cool because all of the "grown ups" and teenagers in my life had them. Casts got attention at school and I always wanted to have my friends sign my arm or wrist. All of the older middle schoolers had braces with fun neon colors on them. My friends and I would spend hours playing pretend doctors and patients. My dolls experienced some pretty life-threatening injuries. And for some mind-boggling reason, part of me had a desire to be just like them.

Be careful what you wish for.

At the ripe age of 12, I got my first concussion. Six months later, the next. This cycle continued for the next five years. What does a basketball, volleyball, ski lift bar and an elbow have in common? Headaches, dizziness, nausea, neck pain, and overall misery. Days of pain turned into weeks, months, years. Getting up and sitting with my mom outside turned into my big daily activity. I would use the strands of hair surrounding my face as an eye-mask protecting me from the sunlight. Lying down, eyes shut and ear plugs in still resulted in a tsunami of dizziness. Those frustrating, embarrassing, stupid 20-minute breaks were the only thing that got me through the day. Teachers, my peers, and even the school

nurse would comment on my constant need to leave class.

No one knew why the pain wouldn't go away. There wasn't anything physically wrong with me after the concussions went away, yet I was still in constant agony. Dozens of failed doctors, acupuncture, and physical therapy appointments later; still nothing. No conclusions were being made based solely on biology.

However—when psychology got thrown in the mix—the blurriness finally became clear. I was diagnosed with Tension Myositis Syndrome, a chronic pain disorder. TMS is a condition that causes chronic pain even though there are no structural problems. My nervous system got overloaded by the physical trauma of the concussion coexisting with the emotional response to it.

"Dozens of failed doctors, acupuncture, and physical therapy appointments later; still nothing."

I wake up at 10:30 am and lay in bed for another hour. My lazy mornings are my favorite part of my days. My stomach begins to grumble and my typical smoothie bowl is calling my name.


"Good morning, Rach!" my mom says as I take my bowl to the couch.

"Hey, Mommy!" I reply warmly.

As the content of my breakfast disappears, the daily stress about school begins. I grab my laptop and begin my work at my own pace. There is no embarrassment about my need to take breaks when I am alone.

After I finish my work I go on a walk with my dog, Crosby. My body feels energized as the blood pumps through my veins. The rest of the day is spent FaceTiming friends and spending time with my family. There are no expectations I have to meet.

Happiness may literally directly improve physical health. There are many studies going



on to confirm the fact that serotonin and other “happy hormones” are commonly linked with feeling good and living longer. Happiness also indirectly improves health as happier people are more likely to eat healthier, have better sleep patterns, and engage in more physical activity—all things that improve happiness.

Tension myositis syndrome controlled my life for years. I never realized how strong the mind-body connection is until I physically felt my emotional pain.

There was no physical treatment or any changes over quarantine, other than little things I now had time for to improve my mental health. Once I relaxed and healed not just my concussion, but my soul, the tension (literally—it’s called tension myositis syndrome for a reason) started to dissolve.

Dr. John Sarno claims that “The theory of tension myositis syndrome is that your mind creates pain symptoms in order to aid in the repression of subconscious thoughts and

feelings... your subconscious mind has essentially determined that repressed thoughts, feelings or emotions would be harmful to you if you were to become consciously aware of them. Therefore, your mind creates pain syndromes (e.g. back pain) in order to distract and prevent the repressed thoughts from reaching your conscious awareness.”

It wasn’t that I needed doctors to help me, I needed to learn how to help myself. Working through my emotional distress would result in working through a whole lot more.

Sitting in class post quarantine, my eyes flutter over to their usual destination. It’s instinct at this point to look at the clock. My body is conditioned to know when 20 minutes have passed when I am in a classroom setting. I close my eyes and assess how I feel. Nothing. Finally, I feel nothing. A light throb, but nothing too abnormal for a sleep deprived teenager. I continue to take notes along with the rest of the class, blending in with the crowd.

Rachael's Lovebird

Carol Yang



My roommate last year gave me several beautiful feathers. She said they came from her favorite pet, a lovebird, but she had accidentally hurt and killed the bird due to dizziness caused by cavernoma disease. Since then, she had been struggling with deep guilt and remorse and hadn't gotten new pets. She feared she wouldn't be able to take good care of them. I wanted to do something for her, so I found a picture of her lovebird to paint for her.

On the day she moved out, I gave her the painting and told her: "Rachael, your lovebird has already forgiven you, and now she is coming back to keep you company." At that moment, I saw tears in her eyes and a huge smile on her face.

The Gift of Autumn

Carol Yang



Photo Location: Syracuse University Campus

"I hope I can be the autumn leaf, who looked at the sky and lived. And when it was time to leave, gracefully it knew life was a gift." I love this quote from Dodinsky. It frees me from anxiety because it reminds me that all suffering is temporary. One day, I would like to be a leaf, drifting to the soft grass and falling asleep forever. Until then, I would like to treasure this gift. Lying on the grass under a tree, I am fascinated. I am calm.

港式檸檬茶 (Hong Kong Style Lemon Tea)

Elizabeth Su

Losing your language feels like losing your culture. Many would say they are one and the same.

Before I moved to Syracuse, I drank lemon iced tea every morning with my grandfather (公公) and mother (媽媽) in a traditional Hong Kong-style cafe. Sipping on our tea, we would eat eggs and porridge while listening to the latest news in Cantonese. The sweet, refreshing drink (港式檸檬茶) was brought to Hong Kong when Britain colonized the island in 1841. A fusion of Eastern and Western styles of tea, it quickly became the most popular drink in all of Hong Kong. In a way, lemon iced tea represents the whole of Hong Kong—its own world between Eastern and Western ideas but not strictly belonging to either. It was in this culture-between-cultures where I grew up.

The first words I ever spoke were in Cantonese. Actually, the only words I ever spoke for the first years of my life were in Cantonese. Often termed the “most difficult language to learn” due to its sheer number of tones, expressing yourself in Cantonese is...difficult. When you're a child with an underdeveloped grasp of tongue movement and character structure, words blend into other words and tones go right over your head. For example, my name in Cantonese is “快樂健康,” meaning “Happy and Healthy.” However, “happy” and “fish” have the same pronunciation in Cantonese, differing only in tone. So, yes, there have been many times when I accidentally introduced myself as “Healthy Fish,” only to be embarrassed when my family laughed.

When I began to learn English in elementary school, I was relieved. I had no trouble differentiating between “I” and “eye” like the other first graders. When my mother saw how quickly I picked up English, she guided me toward books and libraries to expand my vocabulary. Since then,

my love for reading has only grown. I devoured Percy Jackson and Harry Potter, eventually progressing to mature fantasy and thriller novels in high school. As I read, I learned the intricacies of the English language. Game of Thrones taught me to tie completely different stories into an intricate web; The Hunger Games showed me how a single phrase ripples across an entire series.

As my English improved, my Cantonese worsened. By the time I was in high school, I only remembered colors, numbers, and common phrases. Part of this felt natural. As my family and I embraced American society, we let go of some of our Hong Kong roots. We transitioned from

speaking Cantonese at home to speaking English. We still ate at Hong Kong cafes, but I would use English words for dishes instead of Cantonese. I drank Sprite instead of lemon iced tea.

Losing your language feels like losing your culture. Many would say they are one and the same. The Cantonese community is very small. When I lived in an Asian-dominated neighborhood, the schools and tutors only

taught in Mandarin. There was no Mandarin option. Slowly losing a part of your identity, which most people don't know about, is a special kind of difficulty. It's been five years since I visited Hong Kong. Since then, my great-grandmother on my mother's side (太婆) passed away in 2018; I was unable to attend her funeral. My relatives overseas tell me I've become more American than Cantonese, a painful reminder that I'm missing half of myself.

Since moving to Syracuse, I've learned how strong my connection to my culture truly is. I was hesitant to attend Syracuse University because

In a way, lemon iced tea represents the whole of Hong Kong—its own world between Eastern and Western ideas but not strictly belonging to either.

of the low Asian student population. Living in a majority Asian neighborhood my whole life, I was afraid. Afraid of losing my food, my language, my holidays, my culture. But, since arriving, I realized I couldn't stay in my comfort zone forever. Talking to people of different backgrounds about my own culture and experiences, and listening to their stories, has broadened my perspective on the meaning of identity. Piecing together and reconciling different parts of myself is what makes me an Asian-American.

Like Hong Kong, I am between two cultures. Each language has shaped my identity and furthered my understanding of myself. However, my journey with both English and Cantonese is not complete. I know I have many more essays to write and many more people to show Hong Kong culture. While it's been an important learning experience, I still get homesick for the taste of 港式檸檬茶, a sweet and refreshing drink that tastes like home.

The Identity of a Potluck Dinner

Yasmin Paez

My diaspora is represented by each dish on the table.

A set of potluck dishes are laid out on a colorful tabletop. Each of the dishes has a complementary one beside it. Some are large bowls, some are small, rectangular plates, each decorated with a multifoliate array of different colors. The dishes I choose to put on my plate illustrate the different cultures and communities I balanced growing up.

Two large dishes are laid in the middle of the table. While others see two main food options of Aji and Caldo de Pollo, I see a partnership. The first plate, which contains a hot chili pepper sauce called Aji, is decorated with Chile's colors: red, white, and blue. As I take a bite from the dish, I see the dusty figure of a little refugee boy. In the dry heat of the desert, the boy fights his hardest to keep his legs moving after being tear bombed by military forces. This boy was my father. At the age of four, he sacrificed everything to leave his home country of Chile after the 1973 coup d'état. The dish encapsulates my Chilean culture, my father's strength, and the necessary risk my grandparents took when coming to America.

The second dish, with a traditional set of light blue and green, represents my mother's country of Guatemala. It holds a soup, Caldo de Pollo, which consists of chicken, carrots, and potatoes. The aroma of the fresh herbs in the broth reminds me of my grandmother. My grandmother taught her five daughters the

importance of women providing and caring for their families. Sexism is an unpleasant aftertaste in this dish. I'm reminded of comments made throughout my life about how I must learn to serve my husband without showing individuality. Internalized misogyny and closed-mindedness motivate me to prove these ideals wrong and be successful in being my own provider.

One of the smaller side dishes, a beef and vegetable stew, contains the most exquisite taste. In each bite of cazuela, I witness the virtues instilled in the Mapuche- indigenous people in Chile- of freedom, individuality, and hope, which I take upon in the calming hobbies of journaling and meditating in nature. Although I am still learning the mechanisms of indigenous culture, the dish inspires me to explore my ancestral roots in order to help benefit my small corner of the world.

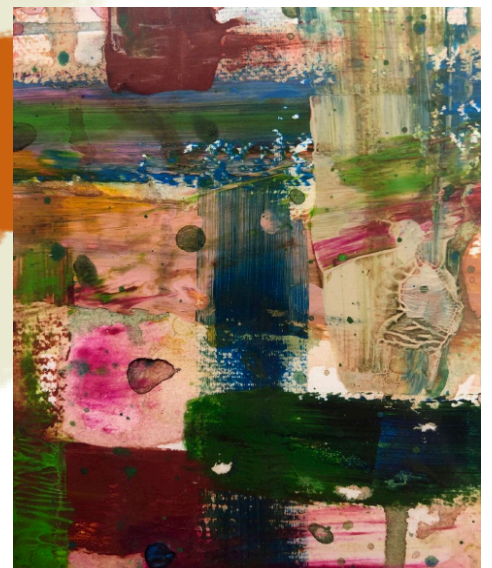
My diaspora is represented by each dish on the table. Each one of my different cultures and communities has its own voice and virtues, all interwoven within me to form my unique identity. Without them, my life would not be half as unique as it is today. My self-guided journey has led me to discover my identity as a powerful Chilean, Guatemalan, Mapuche woman who has learned the balance to continue to love every part of herself. It's just like balancing all the unique potluck dishes on the table.

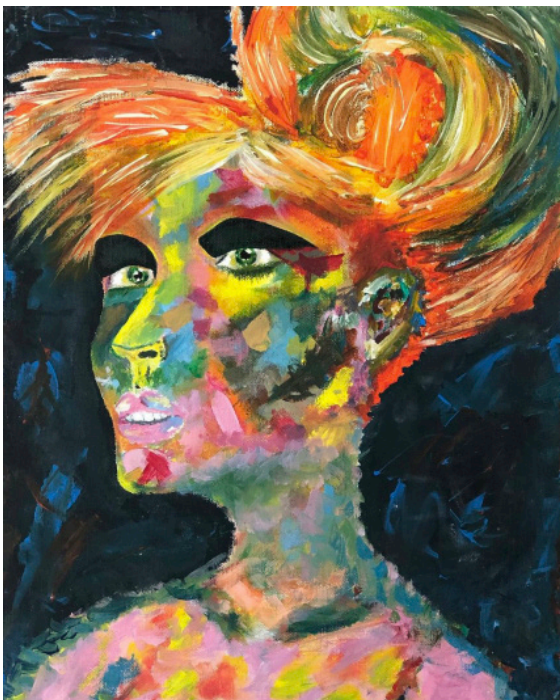
The EyEs

Marwa Abedrabbah



The art pieces all share a common theme: eyes. I've heard that the eyes are the gateway to the soul. We can access numerous emotions that can be triggered through the eyes of the pieces. Every color contributes to the atmosphere, from the eyes to the skin texture, to the many brush strokes and techniques used to demonstrate this freedom of the hand to paint without the need for words. I concentrated entirely on the eyes and how, by including different colors, I can tell a tale, a story, about how a lost person may rediscover themselves via the light.





I was born in Palestine, a land rife with violence and death, and the scenes I've witnessed have affected my upbringing and way of thinking. When you meet an eight-year-old, you don't know their tale, but you can hear their voice and see the anguish and agony in their eyes. Coming from a conflict zone, the details surrounding the eyes show how depressed that soul was. The veiled woman represents the thousands of Palestinian women who hope for a better conclusion, but their eyes tell them differently. The final piece displays the full person; instead of seeing the light, they become the light, as it radiates through their skin and hair; nonetheless, their grief is trailed in the dark background behind them.

The Question that Plagues Me

Valerie Goldstein

I wonder if you ever think of me,
Because I never go a week without
Thinking of the feel of your body,
Or the soft pink corners of your mouth.

Do you remember how you said my name?
It's never left another's lips like that.
Do you still have my gifts from your birthday?
I hope you didn't throw them out that fast.

When I reached out to see if you recalled
That time we fled from rain under the bridge,
Laughing, we scratched our names on that stone wall

It took four months for you to say you did.

Did you mean more to me than I did to you?
I think that question plagues me 'cause it's true.

No Sugar in My Tea

Simone Bellot

She dipped the tip of her nail bed into a saucer
And swirled the liquid that spilt over from the cup of shitty tea
That just kept pouring and pouring and pouring and pouring and pouring
And no one thought to say girl, stop.

To be quite frank I did it to myself
I poured the shitty tea with 1 cube and not 2 cause
I crave intelligence even if it's inaccessible,
I crave education even if it's not entertaining,
And I cannot
Will not fail 'cause I don't really need to feel fulfilled

If I'm honest
I want to marry rich and write children's books
Raise four kids and two dogs

I'm almost 20 so I fear it's got the best of me
But I hope it's not late for the next
What if I told you that education can be entertaining?
And intelligence can be accessible,
And you don't have to be a failure to feel fulfilled?
See I don't believe it just yet,
But I sincerely hope you do
So add two cubes not one

Drawing You

Bailee Roberts



This piece of art assisted me in overcoming my own artist's block. Because an artist's body of work is usually more recognizable than the artist themselves, I wanted to create something that captured what it would look like if the viewer were a work of art, and I (the artist) was creating you. I wanted to push the limits of what is considered art because it is impossible to look at this piece and not think of the person who worked hard to make it; I felt it was important to include my own artistic journey in this piece to demonstrate the difficulty of the creative process.

From: An Introvert To: Everyone and No One

Chidera Olalere

I don't try to come off as intimidating
And I'm sorry if I do
The truth is my experiences have taught me that it's better to observe before I move
It would be easy to spill my heart and tell people my stories
But how can I trust that what I say stays here, if I've heard other "confidential" details
in all their glory?
I don't think it's fair to wait for them to be introduced
I know it's my job to ask how they're feeling too
I know they're allowed to have friends that do not know me
I know they're allowed to have experiences that they do not want to show me
I know that God provides and that there are so many people I probably haven't
considered befriending
I know that when I keep to myself, it looks like I don't need companions

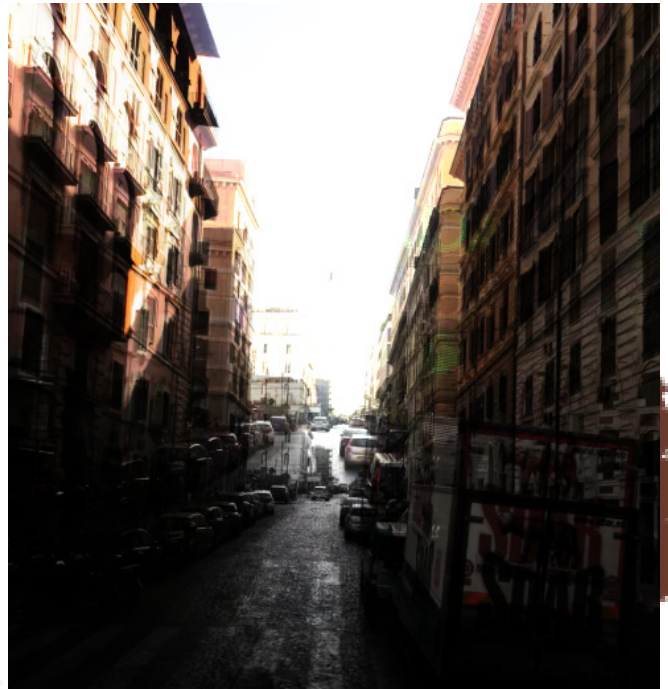
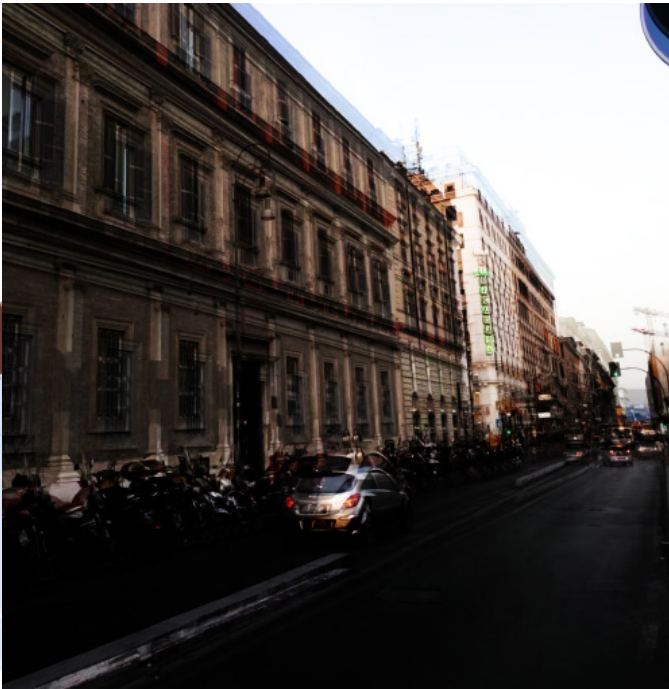
But all this knowledge doesn't change the fact
That I would like to have someone that would listen to me rant
I'm human as well and would like someone to chat with
Someone who helps hold me up but can also nudge me to the side and tell me to
get over it
A friend I can laugh with and feel just as comfortable crying with
A friend with that I would willingly have all the awkward confrontations with
Someone who I can confide in without having to worry about privacy
Someone who venting to doesn't seem like gossiping
A friend who promises and actually delivers
A person who, just like me, is working on being a better person

I don't like to impose myself on people and so I'm not a fan of imposing people
I try to keep away from the crowd because the noise makes me want to shelter
So I won't necessarily be the one who's up in your face
I don't always say what I feel because I try to mean what I say
To all the introverts out there, I understand your pain
There is so much I wish I could just do and yet I find myself more comfortable writing
away
I don't believe we're stuck in one personality and I won't use "introvert" as an excuse
But maybe it might help those on the other side understand that being quiet does
not mean that we're aloof
I'm working on this, I'm still figuring out my personality

But to all those who could never relate, I hope you can be a bit more patient with
me.

Can I Rest Now?

Hanying Wang



I'm here, in Greece, and I want to rest. But do the women here take a break from the day? From when she walked into the office until she got the kids back from school? Does she have to work again when she gets home? Wow, this guy never stopped looking at his phone since he declined his girlfriend's call. Was his keyboard on fire? Is this woman driving on the phone? Is this a cat or a black plastic bag? Should I? Maybe? Finally, I rest.

Aquamarine

Simone Bellot

The worker, the straw vendor, horse wrangler, storekeeper, beggar, and everyone in between keep the spirit of Bay Street alive.

If you were from Nassau, Bahamas, you would wake up on a Monday morning, make tea, never coffee, and begin to ponder what to make for breakfast. It wouldn't be a simple meal, it would have four elements, at least. Maybe tuna and yellow grits with sliced oranges and juice, or maybe corned beef if you feel like putting in the effort. You'd prepare for the day, not done until you reek of Irish Spring and cocoa butter—it's the only way to be presentable. Taking what should be a 7 a.m. jitney to Bay Street at 7:30 am, you'd choose to sit next to an elder. They may generate unwanted conversation but they should be getting off at the next stop; Bay Street is for workers.

If you were lucky, you would arrive on Bay Street before 8:30 when the first of the cruises begin to dock. You would depart from the peaceful bubble of "Bahamianess" that is the jitney and enter the colorful world of historic Nassau, a street that has stood the test of time, but at what cost?

Look around and see the shades of the people: Navy blue for the expatriates that worked in Swiss banks and stink of cigarettes and coffee. Purple for the politicians that bicker as parliament is being filmed but eat lunch together at the Greek restaurant on Frederick street. For the people, for the Bay Street worker, the straw vendor, horse wrangler, storekeeper, beggar and everyone in between, you would see them as vibrant aquamarine; they keep the spirit of Bay Street alive.

Take your seat in front of an obscure jewelry store that seems to have only 10 customers a year; you suspect they launder money but it is none of your business. A young boy who you believe should be in school greets you with "ma'am"; you don't question it.

"Good morning, you need a copy of the paper today? Tribune, Guardian, or Punch?"

You're offended by the implication that you would look to the Punch—a glorified gossip

column, for your daily report.

"Boy, what you meanin'? Gimme the Tribune here," you would say as you kissed your teeth.

Now, you would be able to begin your day's work. With straw in either hand, you'd begin the plait. Every detail would matter as you try a new pattern to keep up with younger straw vendors. All of the shades of Bay Street have taken their place for the day, some in offices, others under the shade of a tree; the harmony of the day can begin.

After getting heckled by the jewelry store owner, you would travel east on Bay Street hoping to find a new, more lucrative spot. As expected, there is none to be found. Reaching the end of Bay Street proper, you would set your chair and belongings down. There is no longer space on Bay Street for its original essence, its flair, its breath. You would sit, in solitude, far from where any money would be made, where vendors go to die. Where straw craft cannot compete with the Fendi store next door. Where sea glass jewelry cannot compete with Diamonds International Ltd. Where Bamboo Shack cannot compete with McDonald's. Bay Street has changed its shades and you can no longer see aquamarine in its reflection.

La tiendita que tiene mi corazón

Whitney Welbaum



I hate, like absolutely despise, being seen as a tourist. While studying abroad in Santiago, Chile, my friends always laughed when I would say, “please don’t perceive me” under my breath in public. I have tried my entire life to find somewhere where I fit in, and I was determined to make Chile my home. But here I was, last week in the city, with absolutely nothing to bring back to my family and friends. So I decided to visit Pueblito Los Dominicos for the first time, a small village-style market in the city (that had a reputation for being touristy), in a last-ditch attempt to hunt for anything that wasn’t a cheesy magnet or postcard.

This shop immediately caught my eye, but I walked past it three or four times before going in. The owner was one of the sweetest people I had ever met, and I learned that all the art being sold had been made by either her, her sister, or her mother. She had an aura about her that made me feel at ease, and it was a rare moment when I wasn’t constantly overthinking my Spanish skills. I snapped this picture of the shop before I bought a small painting made by the shopkeeper, knowing I’d want to remember this moment when I realized I would be leaving a part of my heart in Chile when I left.

Self Reflection

Manal Alghazeer





Ever since I was a little girl, art was everything to me. I grew up with a strong passion for it, and my parents were very supportive in making this passion become my future career. However, as an Arab female, it wasn't easy to choose this career path without questioning if this was the right decision for me since most Arab students get degrees in typical fields like medicine, law, business, etc. I have always asked, "Why is art not a common major choice for Arab students? Do they just view it as a talent and not a future job? What's the reason behind that?" I feel like I'm the only Arab at Syracuse in the school of VPA, making me wonder if I actually belong here or not. Looking past the insecurities, though, I have decided to pursue art and make a living out of it, and even if I am the only Arab art student, who knows, maybe I will motivate other Arab students to follow this path too.

The significance of this piece, which is a self-reflection of me, is to show that I'm still in the process of finding my true identity as an Arab female artist. I do believe that in the future, I'll look back and be proud of this decision that I have made. If art is a talent, then why not mold this talent into something bigger and make it a part of my identity? I won't have to look back in the mirror to find my identity anymore; I will by then, know who I am.

My Therapist Says Healing Isn't Linear

MJ Gray

I put pen to paper.
It's like picking a familiar scab, a wince of pain followed by a pool of blood.
It's like telling yourself that you're letting a wound breathe.
It's like telling yourself that writing about it will let you breathe.
Get the thoughts out before they ooze from your tear ducts.
But, either way, the scab never heals.
And maybe neither do I.

How many times will I do this until I realize that
No poem, no thoughts, no journal
Will fix the memories that play on repeat in my head?
I reopen these familiar wounds,
Hoping that if I just keep writing, keep breathing,
Maybe I'll understand them,
Maybe I'll understand how they make me myself.

I keep putting pen to paper.
Am I processing, or just digging into these wounds
to remember the pain?
It's like wrenching your own heart out for all to watch you bleed.
But I keep picking,
Need to breathe again.
Is this what healing feels like?

That Terrible Couch

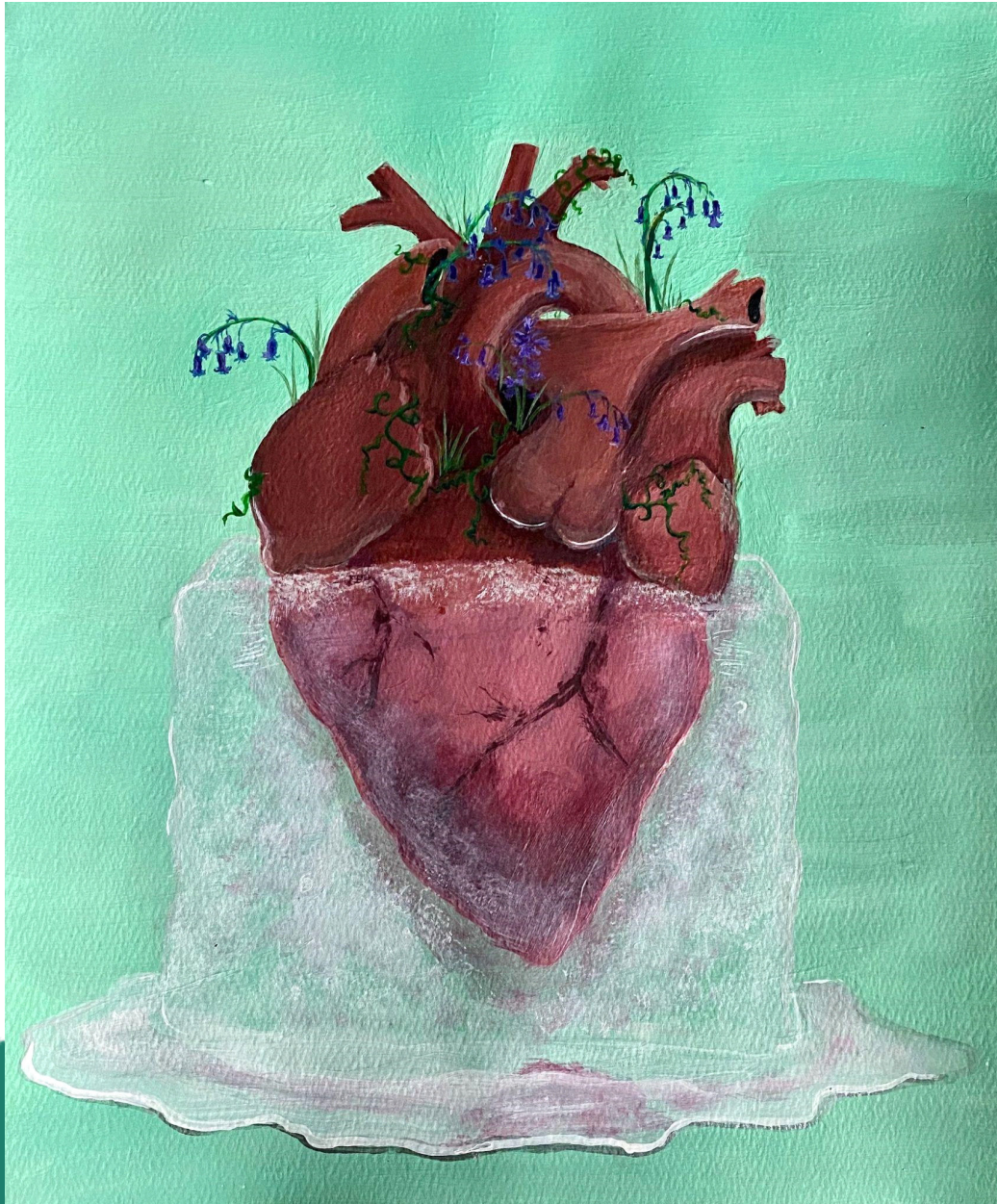
Grace Ripperger

I'm sitting in my grandmother's office on a couch that still smells like the store she bought it from. There is a window behind me, but the blinds are scrunched shut. It's the middle of the day, the middle of July. I'm 19 years old, and I work at four. I'm supposed to read in this dull light, but the wall opposite me is covered in framed photographs.

I'm supposed to be reading, but I'm looking at those photographs, those moments dead in the past. My eyes keep making the mistake of looking at ours. In it, we're happy, long-haired 16. Best friends. What happened to us that summer before we left for college? Because now here we are, split, and I can't remember our last conversation. Where are you? Because I'm on this terrible couch, and I still need you. (Even though I tell myself I don't.) There are so many things I want to say to you. But, if I had to pick, I would say: since then—since our split—I have rarely enjoyed myself as I did with you.

Melting Heart

Heleina Cicero



This piece is about being open to new connections and friendships. The walls we place around ourselves do not allow growth, so opening up has a warming effect that welcomes new life. Bluebells represent gratitude, and as shown in the painting, they grow when acts of kindness melt the walls of ice. I like to have an outlook on new friendships in the same way. There is so much to learn from others, so it's important to approach them and their new perspectives with an open mind. I am always grateful and warmed by the kindness of others, and therefore I am inspired to reach out more.

Spitting Image

Eleni Cooper

"Caro was really scared I would fall in this one," I say. "Dyiamond was working out a plan to save me if the boulder gave out."

After staring at the photo for a moment, my dad abruptly leaps up from the couch, sprinting across the living room. Maybe he's mad at me for visiting the Grand Canyon for the first time with friends instead of family? Maybe he's preparing a lecture about sticking to designated viewing areas and staying behind guard rails?

But then he rushes back to me, gleefully rifling through an album from his youth. Eventually he presents himself, 19 years old like I am now, posing proudly at the canyon's edge.

I look at the photo book, holding my phone up to it. I've always been told I'm the spitting image of my mom but comparing ink to pixels, I've never looked more like him. We're the same. Same smile, same wonder, same need to love and be loved, both daring to go just a little too close to the edge.

There's nothing I used to fear more than turning into my dad when I grew up. Maybe that's not the worst thing that could happen.



Portrait From Memory

Heleina Cicero



Creating art on an Etch a Sketch is unique as compared to other art form processes due to the lack of ability to erase small portions to revise—you must either erase all or accept what is there. Though concentration and coordination are both important, flexibility in understanding what the final image will be is critical to being happy with the outcome. As a major perfectionist, I have come to enjoy working on an Etch a Sketch because it challenges me to let go of my expectations and embrace mistakes.

I worked on this picture without using a reference photo but simply having a friend of mine in mind. I knew that if I used a picture, I would get caught up in the minor details and imperfections in my recreation. Working from only my mind allowed me to embrace the journey and not the outcome. While still recognizable, it came together in a way that was not exact or perfect. This reflects our friendship. It is because I worried about how attending different universities would alter our relationship, and I know that when we have reunited again, the changes in our lives make a new picture in the end.

Happy Birthday

Maryn Ascher

Answer me, comfort me, love me.

*Today is my birthday.
Today is my 18th birthday, and you're not here to
celebrate it with me.*

As I sit here on my birthday, pen in hand, my tiny notebook in my lap, an unusual cloud of confusion fills my mind. The words Dear Mommy take up a small corner of the page, my birth date on the other. The rest of the page is a vast, blank void. I usually have so much to say, so many words to spill out onto the pages, yet today the pen slips through my trembling fingertips and onto my bed. I have such an urge to fill these pages, and an equally strong feeling to throw my notebook across the room. Taking a shaky breath, I think about the words I so desperately wish to share...

Today is my 18th birthday and I should be happy, but how can I be happy when you're not here? How can I celebrate such a huge milestone in my life, my transition to adulthood, when you can't even see it?

Why do I write these stupid letters when I can't even send them to you?

It has currently been about a year and a half without my mother. I've experienced two Mother's Days, Hanukkah, and even my 17th birthday was manageable. But today... today the air is filled with an emptiness that I haven't felt in a long time.

I am not a child anymore, and I want my mom to see that. I want to see her smile and hear the words "I'm so proud of you." I want to give her the biggest hug in the whole entire world. But this urge, this yearning, this desperation won't get me anywhere. There is nothing I can do about the fact that she has passed, and this creates a deep, forever-aching gash in my heart. Even when time passes and that gash begins to heal, my mind goes back to those moments I shared with my mother and the wound opens up all over again.

My mom was almost always home, even before she got sick. I could always go into her room and share the newest gossip, or cry about silly things. Her words were a safety net I could

reliably fall into. Even if she was mad at me, I would think back on it later and realize how right she was, how I was getting so upset over something so stupid. Her words would wipe those tears right off of my face and make me hold my head up high. I didn't have to go around telling everyone about everything in my life; I had my mom. She was my rock, my safe haven, she was my home.

Now, I feel like I've been searching so hard to find this kind of person - someone who I can love so unconditionally that it would fill all the nooks and crannies that have formed in my heart after losing her. There is a part of me that is pulling towards a person that is only a figment of my imagination, disappearing by the second. I have spent endless nights sobbing in my bed, leaving me calling every person I know and wishing someone would answer me, comfort me, love me the way that she did. But many times my calls go unanswered, and many other times those I call don't even know what to say. My words and my cries fall upon deaf ears, and all I'm left with is that same heavy, despairing feeling that I've had ever since I heard the words "She didn't make it".

Every single day my heart aches with loss. I want my person back. Everywhere I go and everyone I see is a flash of my mother. I wish I wasn't this lonely, that I wasn't this desperate for a bond as strong as her and I's, maybe even stronger. But here we are, and what can I do about it?

*I want
my person back.*

However, at times like these, I recall that my mom always told me that everything happens for a reason. I'll find someone soon, at the right time and the right place. Not a replacement, for no one could ever replace the bond my mom and I had. I'll find a new person who is special in their own way. Even if it takes a little longer than I would like. Because I know that once I find that, it will be amazing and wonderful and my heart will burst with joy because love is beautiful.

After letting all of these words flow onto the pages of my tiny notebook, word after word after word until my hand cramps, I take a moment to sit and just breathe. I just breathe as the tears flow down my cheeks and silent sobs form in my chest.

I miss you so much, and I love you more than you will ever know. But I'll be okay. Everything will be okay. I know you'll always be with me.

I feel like I've been searching so hard to find this kind of person - someone who I can love so unconditionally that it would fill all the nooks and crannies that have formed in my heart after losing her.

Hope?

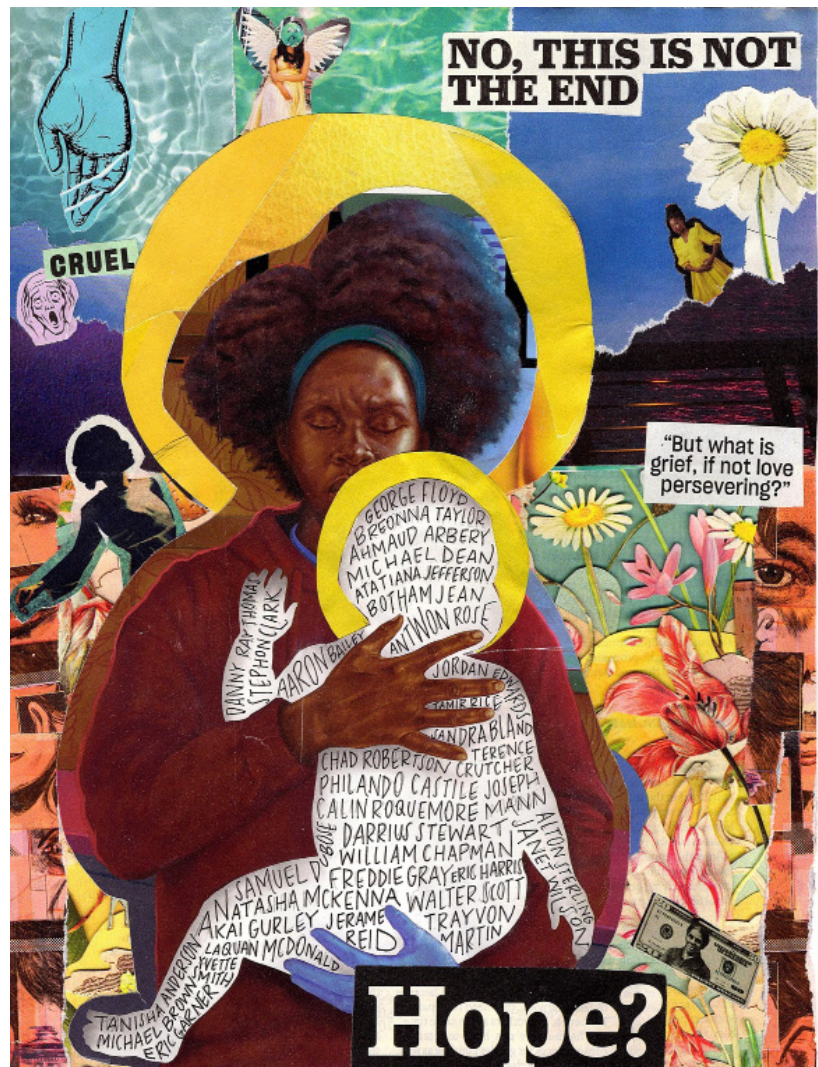
Kaitlin Bo long

The Lamentation is a renowned fresco painted by Italian artist Giotto in 1306. The piece depicts the Virgin Mary—mourning and devastated—holding Jesus, who has just come off from the cross. It is a staple piece in art history. In the spring of 2021, I was tasked with creating a reinterpretation of any iconic artwork. Searching for inspiration, I stumbled upon a Time magazine cover with a powerful painting by Titus Kaphar titled Analogous Colors. It depicted a black mother holding a blank silhouette of a child—a reference to George Floyd and his calls to his deceased mother during the eight minutes and forty-six seconds a Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck. While having a completely different context, Kaphar's artwork paralleled the devastating mother-and-son relationship in the Lamentation. Thus, I found the basis of my reinterpretation. I have always felt passionate about the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Because I am not black myself, I will never experience the unjust hardships that black people face in the United States.

I recognize my privilege, and I want to use it to speak out against the injustices in this country. It is frustrating to see a country that has based itself on the foundation of equality be quite the opposite: a nation with perpetual inequality.

At the heart of my final collage is Kaphar's heart-wrenching painting. The black mother grasps her baby; filled in the child's blank silhouette are the names of black people who have been killed in the United States due to police brutality. I added a halo to both the child and the mother in direct reference to the Lamentation—it suggests their importance and power in this world. The background is filled with several images and quotes that relate to BLM.

The question we must pose to ourselves, which has been asked by this reinterpretation, is: is there hope for the future? That is, will there ever be an improvement in social justice for black people in the United States? We have to stop ignoring both the outward and underlying racism in our society. We have to fight. We have to make a change. Because, ultimately, there is hope.



I Swear

Caitlin Espiritu

Walking up my front lawn,
Every step with confusion and curiosity.
I open the door with the same key from middle school
And my life changes instantly...
My mom, dad, and sister sitting in the living room.
Dad never cries,
I know.
I know you are gone in this moment.
Not in shock about the news—
In shock to hear it is you.
Your sister was the one struggling with addiction,
Not you anymore.
Or I thought not you.
A secret you held in,
Catching up to you.
It is not your fault,
I just thought you got better, I thought you were taking care.
You were back in school, full time job, brand new car.
My eyes blank and emotionless,
Feeling nothing but the thing that beats so loudly in my chest.
Nothing.
I am not surprised,
But there is just no way.
You were to walk through our door anytime, I swear.
You will be there next Christmas, I swear.
You will text me about this and that, I swear.
You will pick me up from school to go on a drive, ranting about our lives...
I swear.

Yia Yia and Papou

Film by Alexandra Siambekos



Through my Documentary Production course, I had the opportunity to revisit Yia Yia and Papou: A Story of Perseverance (my submission to last year's anthology).

Yia Yia and Papou coincided with the significant personal decision to legally change my last name to Siambekos. I now realize this was part of my journey. This filmmaking experience also allowed me to further connect with my ethnic identity and express the deep appreciation I have for my grandparents. For that, I am so grateful.

Conversar

Music by Brandon Porter



I often don't go into the creative process with a theme or particular intention; instead, I let the music guide me and my decisions. With this song—which samples the song "Conversar" by Orchestra Kool—I wanted to keep the percussion simple and give the artist enough room to shine while still letting the track stand on its own.

The piece's cover was a collaborative process executed by a long-time friend and fellow SU student Matthew Brodsky, a senior graphic design major in Newhouse.

Something Good

Music by Katarina Kelly

I wrote this song after catching myself filling in the blanks about people in my life that I didn't know that well. I realized I was giving them qualities in my own mind just so I could feel less like a stranger when I really knew very little about them. This thought became the lyric "painting faces to call this place my own" and from there I started to write. The song ended up being about existing in some kind of transitional period.



Liuyang River

Guzheng played by Viola Wai



When the wind blows, the water surface of the Liuyang River is cut by stones. People singing happily along the river...

Each time I walk into the light, I can feel epinephrine flowing in my veins. My guzheng is sitting in the middle of the stage, waiting patiently and elegantly for me to perform with. Guzheng, a traditional Chinese musical instrument, is close to my heart. "Liuyang River", is a Chinese folk song that has helped me to build my lifelong relationship with the guzheng.

Spring

Music and Choreography by Yuxuan Li

The chirps of the birds awaken the quiet morning. Gurgling streams meander through the valley. Suddenly, a clap of thunder breaks the silence of the forest. The waves splash against the rocks. The rain comes to an end, and only the faint sound of water droplets falling on the water is left. Everything returns to its original tranquility. Spring is here.



A Friendly Encounter

Lacey Kenworthy



I took the photo at a farm back in Indiana, where I'm from. It was a completely random situation. A cow—a Highland, I believe—came up to the fence I was standing by, interested in my camera. So, I photographed the cow's progression toward the camera. This one is my absolute favorite. It was curious about what I was doing, and I loved capturing that curiosity.

Contributors

Marwa Abedrabbah is a junior majoring in psychology and minoring in biology on the pre-dental track. She thoroughly enjoys volunteering at dental clinics that assist patients from low socioeconomic backgrounds in order to better acknowledge the part of the spectrum that is usually overlooked. In her leisure moments, she paints portraits and employs her hand-eye coordination to bring her concept to life with acrylic and a simple white canvas. Her passion tends to revolve around the artistic attribute of dentistry, which she finds enthralling.

Manal Algazeer is a freshman illustration major. In her free time, she does digital art commissions on Etsy, and enjoys baking chocolate chip cookies and listening to music.

Maryn Ascher is a freshman majoring in forensic science from Long Beach, New York. In addition to writing, she also has much interest in the performing arts and is involved with DanceWorks and the Ballet Club on campus. She is very grateful to be able to share her story with her fellow Syracuse students.

Simone Bellot is a senior, double majoring in neuroscience and communication sciences and disorders. She enjoys writing poetry, personal essays and children's fiction. In her free time, Simone enjoys shopping, acting, and planning outfits.

Kaitlin Bo Iong is a freshman finance student from New Jersey. While she enjoys working with numbers, she also has a passion for creating art. In her free time, she likes practicing calligraphy, playing tennis, and going on road trips

Heleina Cicero is a freshman environment, sustainability, and policy major on the pre-law track. Combining a love for earth sciences and law, she plans to be an environmental lawyer. In her free time, Heleina enjoys running, cooking, reading, and going on trips with the Syracuse University Outing Club.

Eleni Cooper is a sophomore communications design student minoring in information management & technology. Eleni has been a dancer since age five and enjoys exploring new methods of creative expression from drawing to photography to bullet journaling. They design for The Outcrowd (SU's only LGBTQ+ magazine), and can often be found on the third floor of the warehouse working on projects or attending AIGA events with fellow comm designers.

Akosua Danso is from Kansas, and is a first-year Computer Science student. She enjoys drawing, listening to music, and looking at art in her free time!

Caitlin Espiritu is a sophomore advertising major on the creative track from Long Island. She is in the fashion & beauty communications milestone and is a makeup artist for campus photo shoots and runway shows. Throughout her life, she has developed a passion for dance, as well as art, travel, and mental health awareness.

Maureen Ferguson is a junior in architecture from Buffalo, NY. She is currently a design intern for an architecture firm, and is excited to continue developing her skills in design. In her free time, Maureen loves listening to music, practicing photography, and spending as much time as she can with her friends and her dog.

Anna Fishburn is a freshman policy studies student from Sacramento, California. She enjoys writing, traveling, and listening to SZA's Ctrl (Deluxe) on repeat. Although her main focus is policy, she hopes to continue publishing creative work during her time at SU.

Valerie Goldstein is a sophomore policy studies major and applied data analytics minor from Newton, Massachusetts who wants to be Leslie Knope when she grows up. She enjoys writing poetry, songs, and sketch comedy in addition to acting and singing.

MJ Gray is a junior triple-major studying environment, sustainability, & policy, geography, and policy studies. MJ is captain of the Mock Trial Team and wants to study environmental law after graduation. She relies on her writing as her creative outlet and means of expressing herself, and she loves writing poetry, personal essays, or anything prose.

Laman-Amel Istrabadi is a senior anthropology and forensic science major, an SULC tutor, UpSkill volunteer, and FYS101 Peer Leader. She is a lover of Edgar Allan Poe, animals, and all things horror.

Makenna John is a senior from Washington State. She is majoring in television, radio and film, and entrepreneurship and emerging enterprises. In her free time, she enjoys creating art, writing, and hiking.

María José Rodríguez-Rexach is a junior studio arts B.S. major and museum studies minor from Puerto Rico. In her free time, she enjoys reading, traveling, capturing sweet memories through pictures, and spending quality time with friends. She is also tremendously passionate about art; her artwork explores personal spaces, specifically how and why they gain value.

Katarina Kelly is a senior musical theatre major. She is also a cat lover and a Fiona Apple and Ben Folds enthusiast.

Lacey Kenworthy is a second-year political science student from Indiana. She enjoys photography and sharing happy moments through her photos. Most of her work is comprised of moments from her hometown and places she grew up around.

Yuxuan Li

Yuxuan Li is a sophomore computer science major. She is also a ballerina and choreographer. She wants to seek opportunities and possibilities to combine art and computer science.

Ivonne Millan is a sophomore from Colombia majoring in psychology. Currently, she works as the Resident Advisor for the upper-class Multicultural Living Learning Community at Watson Hall and as a SOURCE Undergraduate Research Assistant for Falk College Social Work Division. In Ivonne's free time, she enjoys photography. She also likes to explore different art mediums to tell her family's story and to convey how such stories have shaped her into the person she is today.

Ash Murray (they/them) is a senior studying English, psychology, and LGBTQ studies. A fairy tale fanatic, Ash is deep in the process of composing their thesis in the genre. In their free time, Ash enjoys reading, watching TV with their fiancé, and cuddling with their two cats.

Rachel Musman is a sophomore psychology major from Westchester, NY. She loves creative writing, and is the Sex and Relationships editor of University Girl Magazine and a writer for Moody Magazine. Rachel is the insignia chair of the Phi Sigma Sigma sorority on campus, and outside of school she also enjoys social media, makeup, mental health awareness, and consuming hours upon hours of Netflix.

Arya Narang is a sophomore architecture student from Bangalore, India. She enjoys dancing, playing the piano, designing, and writing occasionally. She is a member of the Alpha Rho Chi Skopas Chapter (the professional fraternity for design students) and is also involved in clubs inside the School of Architecture.

Chidera Olalere is a freshman biochemistry major on a pre-med track and is an SULC tutor. She is a music lover, a soccer enthusiast, and an avid reader.

Yasmin Paez is a freshman forensic science and psychology student from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She enjoys meditating, journaling and trying new things. During her free time, she likes to play soccer with her friends, listen to true crime podcasts and find new shows to watch.

Nina Piazza graduated in May of 2022 with a B.A. in linguistics. She has been writing fiction for ten years and hopes to one day publish her work professionally, but for now is looking forward to her employment in the TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) field this coming winter. In her free time, she enjoys cooking new recipes, losing at mahjong, and finding new hobbies to be bad at.

Brandon Porter is a junior communications and rhetorical studies major, music industry minor, Historian for the Black Student Union, and a 2022-2023 Our Time Has Come Leader. He enjoys listening to and creating music, spending time with friends, and watching TV shows.

Grace Ripperger is a sophomore studying creative writing and psychology. She enjoys writing poetry and short stories; currently, she is outlining a novel. In her free time, Grace listens to music, thinks about her novel, reads, and then thinks about her novel some more.

Bailee Roberts is currently a senior sociology student with minors in psychology and painting. She enjoys figurative or portrait art, such as painting, drawing, and sculpture. She has had her work shown at Walt Disney Concert Hall, published in Applied Art Magazine, won multiple awards at different shows, and is currently a contributor to Perception magazine on campus. Bailee is a voracious reader who enjoys thrillers and murder mysteries in her spare time.

Alexandra Siambekos is a television, radio, and film student, compelled to make a difference through storytelling. As a senior, she is most excited about her honors thesis documentary Keepers of Manaris and the opportunities ahead to advance her career and impact as a filmmaker.

Eden Stratton is a junior political science and magazine, news, and digital journalism student. While they enjoy writing freeform pieces, they find satisfaction in reporting the stories of others. In their free time, Eden can be found driving down a backroad or making a nice cup of coffee.

Elizabeth Su is a junior biomedical engineering and neuroscience student. In her free time, she enjoys creative writing and poetry. She also enjoys playing video games and cooking.

Yanqing Su is a sophomore applied data analytics student minoring in computer engineering. Yanqing enjoys visiting museums, watching movies, and playing badminton in her free time. Her favorite art styles are Surrealism and Impressionism.

Paige Toglia is a freshman illustration student from Connecticut. They enjoy visual storytelling through art and plan to become a graphic novelist post-college. They pull from their life experiences growing up in the woods as well as the experiences of those around them to create their art. When not drawing you can find them collecting old radios, lava lamps, and clocks or scavenging for more 70s clothes to wear.

The anonymous author of the piece "Mother and Daughter" is a sophomore political science and CCE major. In their free time, they like to write poetry, read books, draw, and listen to music. Outside of those things, they are passionate about their hometown politics, particularly in shifting voting patterns and the dynamics of race and class.

Nick Trivelpiece is a freshman art photography student in VPA. He enjoys going on walks, spending time with family and friends, and playing golf, but his true passion lies with his photography. Nick is also eager to volunteer whenever he can, and help those who need it most within his community.

Viola Wai is a public relations and communication and rhetorical studies major. She is an international culture promoter. She and her guzheng received first place in competitions like Youth Olympic Music Festival and Global Youth Talent Expo.

Hanying Wang is a sophomore studying communication and rhetorical studies from China. She enjoyed learning at home and watching TV shows with her friends. All she wants for her college is to get an excellent academic performance and fun new experiences.

Audrey Weisburd is a sophomore majoring in television, radio, and film with a creative writing minor. Storytelling is her greatest passion, through films, songs, poetry, and conversations. She loves cats, dancing, music, and trying to capture the most honest beauty of the world. She is from Austin, Texas and has career goals in screenwriting and journalism, but she plans to continue her poetry for her entire life.

Whitney Welbaum is a senior studying public relations, originally from Blacksburg, Virginia. She has a passion for traveling, food, and learning about different cultures/languages. Her goal is to travel anywhere and everywhere in the world.

Sarah Wells is a freshman creative writing student. She enjoys writing comedic and narrative short stories. In her free time, you can find her at meetings for Syracuse's undergraduate creative writing club, Write Out, or writing and acting in sketches for student-run comedy show Live From Studio B. She enjoys television and books more than the average person and will discuss the two topics extensively if you let her.

Junhui (Carol) Yang comes from China and is a senior dual-major in nutrition science and psychology. She is an undergraduate researcher and research assistant for obesity and omega-3 fatty acid related study. She likes playing tennis, swimming, and writing calligraphy. She enjoys being a volunteer at the Food Pantry Program and SUNY Upstate Hospital in her extracurricular time.

Vivian Yang is a junior dual-majoring in advertising and finance while also completing a fashion and beauty communications milestone. She spent ten years in Chengdu, China, and now lives in Charlotte, North Carolina. She spent this past summer interning in NYC as a copywriter. She hopes to one day pursue a creative career at an advertising agency. Some of her interests include curating Spotify playlists, reading self-help books, indulging in retail therapy, and writing about everything.

An abstract collage artwork featuring a variety of textures and colors. It includes torn paper, paint splatters, and layered images. A prominent dark red shape is at the top, a green field is in the middle, and a blue textured area is on the right. A pinkish-red shape is on the left, and a dark green shape is at the bottom. The overall composition is complex and layered.

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