

UCLA Dashew Center



envelope

DASHEW'S ART & WRITING MAGAZINE | 2022-2023 ISSUE

About Envelope

Dear Readers,

This is our fifth edition of Envelope, Dashew's Art & Writing Magazine. When you open Envelope, you find poems, creative fiction, digital art, drawings, paintings, and photography. The hope for this magazine is that it provides a platform for international students, scholars, and staff, both at UCLA and UCLA Extension to share their unique perspectives with the extended campus community and beyond.

We hope you enjoy taking in the creative work from this talented community.

An enthusiastic thank you to all of our artists and authors who submitted to this 2022-2023 edition of Envelope. We are so inspired by your creativity!

This magazine was assembled by Hillary Thomas with promotion and editing help by Caroline Thrailkill, Jenna Bustamante, and Natalie Sin.

Thank you to the Dashew Center for continuing to support an outlet for the international student, staff, and scholar voice.

Check out the past issues on Dashew's website.

Want to get involved in the next issue of Envelope? Look for announcements on Dashew Center's website (internationalcenter.ucla.edu) and in our newsletter.

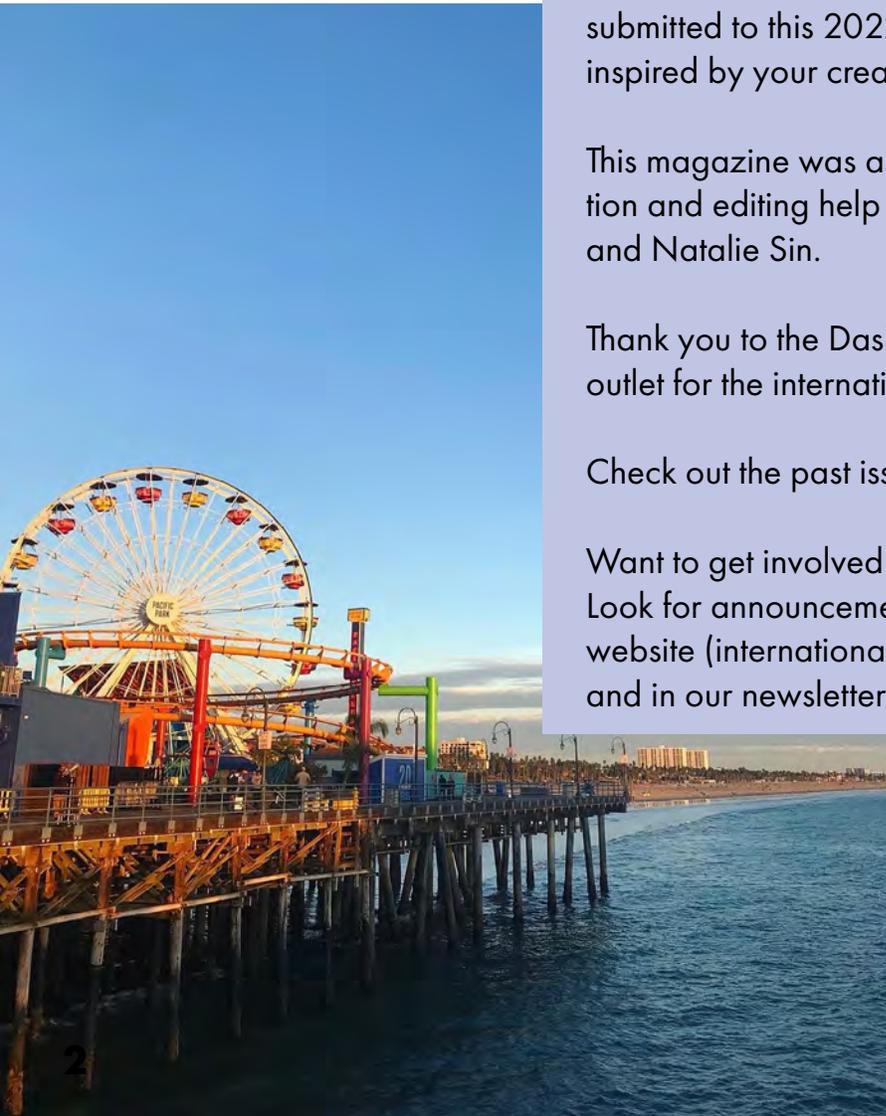


Photo by Caroline Thrailkill

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Hill of the Mountain Bruin

by: Mustafa Alelg



About the Piece:

Small moments are all a person needs to appreciate to enjoy life. We owe it to ourselves in this hectic life to find enjoyment in such moments no matter how trivial they may seem.

Fuse

by: Carole Wood

I said, "You'll know me by the ribbon in my hair: red, white and blue,"
Like the flag that you once promised to pledge allegiance to
I followed you from grave to grail, like some deranged breadcrumb trail
Yet it was you who stalked my heart and mind and hid when pay came due.

It's been a while since we were last in the same familiar room
And I don't know what to say — was it me who changed, or you?
They say you can't go home again — is that why I feel so out of true?
An angle pulled askew.

O brother, the shame, the pain, the light you gave and took away
Now I can't let you in again.

He said, "You'll know me by the way I see through your excuse,"
He was taut and troubled, my beloved
A lit match to a fuse
Still, I had no idea then what was to be in store
A dream, a song, a fight, a pulse
What was I asking for?
Who could ask for more?

O brother, the shame, the pain, the light you gave and took away
Now I can't let you in again, but I can go from grail to grave all in your name
All in the name of war.

About the Piece:

Fuse was inspired by Kamila Shamsie's novel, *Home Fire*.

Ms. Bruin KungFu Mommy

by: Max Loy



MS. BRUIN
KUNGFU 媽咪

Mr. Bruin Architect



MR. BRUIN ARCHITECT

About the Piece:

Celebrating my graduation for the architecture degree, as well as Asians' first Oscar big win with the movie, "Everything Everywhere All At Once". I had a little bit of fun combining those elements with the spirits of being a Bruin.

Absence!

by: Vartika Sharma

Red is Red
Like Blood
Like Roses
Red absorbs all wavelengths of visible light
Except for Red
That's the wavelength it reflects
as they say in the Quantum world
So, in essence,
Red is not Red
Neither Rose
Nor Blood
We perceive them as Red
But
That's how we perceive colors
By their absence
Isn't it poetic?

About the Piece:

Absence is a small piece of poetry I wrote during my Ph.D. days. It sums up the essence of life where we long for things that are not present. Our perceptions are always subject to interpretation.



Santa Monica

by: Rodolfo Augusto Melo Ward de Oliveira

About the Piece:

My name is Rodolfo Ward from Brazil. I'm in my last year of my PhD in World Arts and Cultures at UCLA. In my free time, I enjoy hiking, going to the beach and staying close to nature.

Negative Space Art

by: Vartika Sharma



About the Piece:

What is not included is sometimes more important than what is.
That is the art of negative space.

So I Think of Her

by: Yuyin Yang

Pages 11 - 16

Some people run towards their wants, and others shy away from their needs.

I strive to be the latter.

So I think of her, unexpectedly, while eying at those sweaty, perfectly-sculptured muscles of young men contracting and relaxing and repeating. Sunshine pierced through the French window of my fancy gym, offering the illusion that my life could be as sunny and beautiful. I felt dizzy, so I lay down on a mat.

Hey, I spotted cute guys at the gym. I thought of texting her that but didn't.

I went to the gym today. I deleted those words as well.

Despite knowing she would respond promptly with humor to whatever I write, I hesitated and feared sending the messages behind my messages.

That is, so I think of her.

I lay down fully onto the mat, feeling my thighs, glutes, and face burning. I felt incredibly comfortable laying on the cold, supportless floor, much like the way I felt laying on her bed that night.

She was already asleep when I returned from that party that had too many small talks and too few drinks. So I climbed onto the bed, placed myself in the ample space she had left for me, and found the texture of disposable bed sheets surprisingly comfortable.

Three days ago, my friends invited me to a party held by their university.

Come, it's going to be fun, and we will be on a boat that tours the Thames, she said. With them sharing a dorm room and bed that barely fits two people, I was left with the option of booking an overly priced London hotel room and risking going home alone at night after the party. I could make it a day trip and risk going back to Cambridge at night--I can't tell which one is safer.

Or, I could share a bed with the girl that lived next door to them--granted, if she agreed.

It was supposed to be just a one-night thing. She was supposed to be a kind weirdo who somehow agreed to share a bed with a stranger for just thirty pounds a night. I was supposed to be a college girl living a loud and colorful life and never looking back.

Yet here I was, still thinking of her.

Perhaps it was because she said: *"It's okay, you can keep sleeping,"* with a gentle, soothing voice when I woke up at 6 am and felt compelled to check my phone despite knowing there won't be any messages.

Waking up usually announced the time of death of my sleep that night, let it be 9 hours or 3 hours. However, I felt sleepy again with the fast, light, crispy tying sound she was making. I knew she was also an international student from China who landed in this country less than 12 hours ago. Was she updating her family? Was she also looking for things to do so she wouldn't appear lonely? Somehow, her working next to me instead of getting up and out of bed made me feel secure--like how kids sleep for longer if their parents lay beside them--and it was a feeling I don't get to feel often with ongoing depression and PTSD.

So suddenly, after waking up eventually around 10 am, I decided not to hang out with my "friends" that day and instead stay home and recharge.

But you would be alone. They asked me, as being alone is the saddest thing in the world.

It's okay. I could hang out with...your roommate. I stuttered, realizing I didn't even know her name. *Right?* I turned to her, seeking confirmation.

Right. Surprisingly, she said yes.

So we went to the store, bought random stuff we didn't have on our grocery list, carrying bags way too heavy to the door. Then I watched her try all five keys and realized we were experimenting with the wrong keyhole. Then we apologized to those poor keys and holes and laughed like some idiots in a sitcom. During this, I learned that we both came from small places, that she could also speak the local dialogue of my hometown, and that we both enjoy noodles over rice.

I don't understand how some could eat rice every meal EVERY DAY! We exclaimed in sync.

Then, I sat by the table to eat my repulsively bland salad because I forgot to get dressings while she battled against an old oven with indecipherable labels. We pushed on random buttons and decided just to shove it in and see where life would take us. Then, ten minutes later, I helped her find a knife to cut that margarita pizza that was thoroughly burnt, and she gave up on having a "proper" lunch and went to get her grapes, blueberries, and plums.

She put a gigantic steel bowl in front of me, and I immediately spotted that she must have "smuggled" it from China.

Boy, that bowl was so ugly.

You take some of each. She said, instead of asking if I would like some--as a normal person would. I would probably say no if she asked.

She stated instead of asking -- the same way she put a napkin in my hand when I got tearful

and sneezed from that hot sauce I tried to use as a salad dressing. I put some grapes in my mouth--it soothed the burn.

Then we talked, laughed, shared, and laughed a bit more.

Then she said, *I'm going back to my room now.* We locked eyes, and suddenly I felt lost and alone again. The kitchen door shut behind her, and I sat there, still trying to finish my grapes.

I'm gonna take this embarrassing thing with me. She circled back, bursting to grab that plate with our burnt pizza, and raced to the door again.

This time, I followed.

None of us said anything when we returned to her bed and replicated what we had done this morning: her sitting up and typing from her computer and me lying down next to her like a domestic cat.

Voices from the London streets made me feel sleepy again. People and cars yelled, laughed, screamed, and rushed. It was as if life only happened on the outside and that this room was a safe, peaceful, isolated shelter.

I thought I would be lonely not hanging out with my friends and meeting new people, but I wasn't. I worried it would be weird and uncomfortable to lay in silence with a stranger, but it was the complete opposite. At one point, a chilly breeze disrupted my sweet dream-to-be. We both reached to grab the blanket, and I turned to look at her.

Do you think we are acting like a couple now? She asked what was on my mind.

Yeah. I said.

We laughed.

Sometimes I wonder if life would be easier if I were gay. Sleep deprivation probably cost my sanity, and I was saying what was on my mind out loud.

There was a pause. Then she said, *I wonder the same.*

Shall we try it, then? I turned to look at her, propping my head up with my left arm. We locked eyes again, and I saw her pale, almost-transparent skin and long straight hair. I remember wondering how an Asian could have such pale skin. I also noticed her teeth, which weren't white but small and neatly aligned like a baby shark.

I don't remember her eyes, but I knew I looked beautiful in them.

I was like a cat--placing myself next to a person but avoiding any actual contact. I wished someone would pet me on the head, but I would never ask for it. And I sure was ready to run away the second she said yes.

No, she said.

There was a pause again.

We both laughed.

We can't be gay, can we? She asked. After we each shared some stupid, sad, girlish stories involving boys--the other species that we would never understand. *We can't do this to each other and just, you know...between us.* She said, and I nodded in agreement.

Could I be gay? Should I be gay? Would I be gay?

I wondered the first question when going swimming with my best friend from high school and finding her naked body in the open Chinese shower extremely attractive. But then, who wouldn't appreciate some nice waist-to-hip ratio? It was the same as everyone loves some Sofia Vergara, I told myself.

Should I be gay?

"Gays are dirty and unbearable." That was what my father said after hearing my insights from a sex education class. On a day during second grade, I went home, excitedly informing my father that I learned about sexual orientation and that we learned homosexuality was a completely normal thing.

I didn't know if my dad had called the principal or filed a complaint against that young teacher with other parents; all I could remember was him asking me to repeat after him that "gays are unacceptable."

Sometimes I wonder if I would turn out differently had not that brave teacher imprinted the message that *homosexuality is normal in my brain*. Everything else in my life growing up in China screamed otherwise, but I remained certain that being gay was okay.

Being gay was okay, but should I be gay though? Should I join the force and step on a path bound to be full of obstacles? Should I put myself opposite the mainstream and fight for my "freedom?"

No, that sounded a bit too American. I had done enough in my life that was against the norm and appeared unacceptable to many. I was too dominant as a woman, too educated, and too

opinionated. I was too rebellious as a student, outspoken, curious, and negligent of teachers' faces. I was too weak as a person, fragile, submissive to, and too willing to label myself with hip, new terms such as "depression."

So this time, I should work harder, think further, and behave better, should I not?

And that led me to the third question, no, I wouldn't be gay.

I was not homophobic; I was just ho-me-phobic.

So we lay down again and talked a bit more about boys, feelings, urges, and random things.

I feel like I'm never going to be attractive. I whispered my words to her ears without turning to her. *I wanted to be skinny, soft, nice, kind, and would just make people want me or whatever shit. But I can't.*

Yeah. I could never learn that, she said.

Should we be gay? Just because we were lonely and felt unattractive and wanted some attention? Heck no, right?

Why would guys find smart women intimidating? I asked again.

Because they were idiots, she answered.

Okay, but then why would we want them?

Because we were also idiots, she responded.

Should we be gay? Just because we were already the weirdos, the outliers, and the strange ones? Still no, right?

We would probably become bigger idiots if we became gay, right? I turned to look at her.

Right.

I had a feeling that I shouldn't be staying here with her anymore because it was getting alarmingly comfortable. I felt like a dying phone meeting its charger or a stray puppy finding its owner.

I wanted to get up and run away, but I was enticed by the irresistible danger. It was like when I couldn't stop licking an aching tooth or picking on a hangnail. I knew there would be blood

and pain, but I went for it anyway. One pinch of loneliness, two teaspoons of good conversation, and five drops of comfortable silence were enough to make my heart pump, my blood boil, and my feeling simmer.

Was I that lonely, desperate, and stupid that I wanted to turn gay just for some companionship and validation? No, right?

But here I was, still thinking of her.

You should try this restaurant. Eventually, I texted her. The restaurant I went to with friends after practically running out of her room that day. *They had some good desserts.* Or other things that I didn't remember.

I was not expecting this. She responded within a split second, despite how I ran away, hopped on a train back to Cambridge, and didn't even say goodbye to her.

Well, last night was just too nice. I said, finding myself smiling again.

Oh yeah? Are you ready to be gay now? She asked.

It sounds appealing and enticing. Another message from her arrived.

Well, perhaps I am. I said.

What's appealing? The food or being gay? I asked.

Being gay, she said.

So I think of her.

About the Piece:

This story is based on my own experience of freshly landing in the U.K. as an international student from China, sleeping over at my friend's place, and sharing a bed with her stranger roommate after a party. Though it was only one night, the feeling of being lost in a foreign country with a strange sensation of freedom, mixed with unvoiced attraction towards another woman, urged me to reflect on my sexuality as well as how homosexuality was discussed in my upbringing in China.

Courageline

by: Conrad Haberland

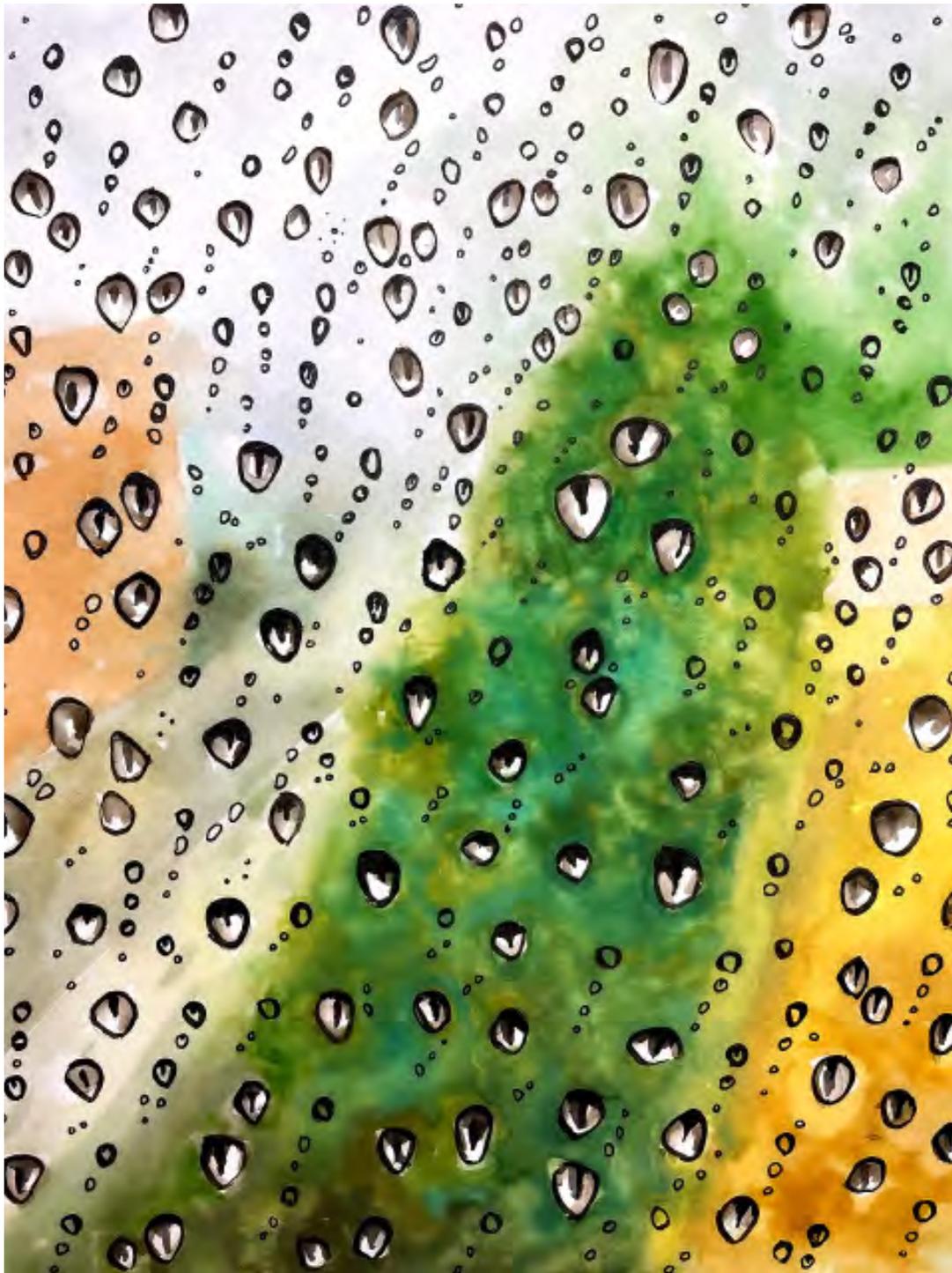


About the Piece:

Water color of people waiting in line to order.
Pink Trumpet trees are in full bloom.
This takes place in Virgil Village Los Angeles.

Raindrops on a Window

by: Sankha Subhra Das



About the Piece:

A view of campus from the window on a rainy day.

City in the Rain

by: Vy Vy Tran



About the Piece:

City in the Rain, an abstract oil work of a rainy city.

Hope

by: Xin Zhang



About the Piece (above):

Reaching out for hope in the darkest moment of life.

About the Piece (right):

This is a poem to normalize the theme of mental health issues where we tend to be caught up between voices in our head and overthink life decisions. I just wanna highlight it's okay to be overwhelmed by our thoughts at times and ask for help.

Voices in My Head

by: Sudeeksha Agrawal

Have a zillion thoughts in my head,
Why can't I simply go to bed?
Either wanna sleep in all day
and do as I may,
Or just have a lot to say.
Why aren't my emotions at bay?
There's a storm-
strong ,yet silent.
Calm, yet violent.
As to get some rest I lay,
To calm my turmoil is just what I pray.
Wanna shout, scream or maybe cry out loud.
I try, but hesitate.
Who's listening anyways ? I ask myself.
I try it again but alas!! It's an endless wait.

I'm okay! All's well! I'm fine!
Flow outta my tongue like fine wine.
Who are you? What do you wanna be?
Don't you have a reason to glee?
Of Course I do !!
The sun, the stars, the moon, the flowers,
I can watch nature for hours.
Strangers' smile, my favorite song, a fond
memory, a hearty meal
All fill me up with zeal.
Yeah, then where's the problem dude?
Why don't you enjoy it and stop your brood?
It's easier said than done,
And I am still trying to learn.
Have dreams so high,
In skies above I wanna fly.
It's not that I don't try,
But it always ends up in a sigh!

I wanna work and become.
But see how far overthinking we have come?
Wanna stop, rest, make it big.
instead mind burrows are all I dig.
Who's the culprit ? Who's to blame?
When I light and am also on flame?

This is not an agony cry or my pain,
This is I, me myself kinda disdain.
I don't want time to go in vain,
I wanna make my life a boon not bane.
What should I do? You tell?
Try again tomorrow - fresh and new?
Or give in this 2am random yell?

You might suggest therapy,
It's a thing these days.
I wanna try that too.
But not getting the strength to just go through..
Go through the damned door.
And lay my soul naked,
My scars bare.
It's just too much to process and share.
What if the therapist thinks it's trivial?
That I am a joke- yet another adolescent running
away from adulting?
Or even worse that I am doing it to be called
woke?

I know, I know you want to shush me now,
And ask me to leave and go.
But hey! Did you forget?
I am you, the voice in your head.
I am always alive even if you're dead.
So let's just be friends, you and me?
See we are cute, aren't we?
Stop it already and make a pact,
We won't judge each other's every act.
For the moon and stars always stay tight and it's
a fact.

Okay, okay. I promise and off I go,
Anything to see you grow.
But remember if you ever feel lonely - whether
morning or while in bed,
I am your bff, the voice in your head.

End the Stigma

by: Derica Su

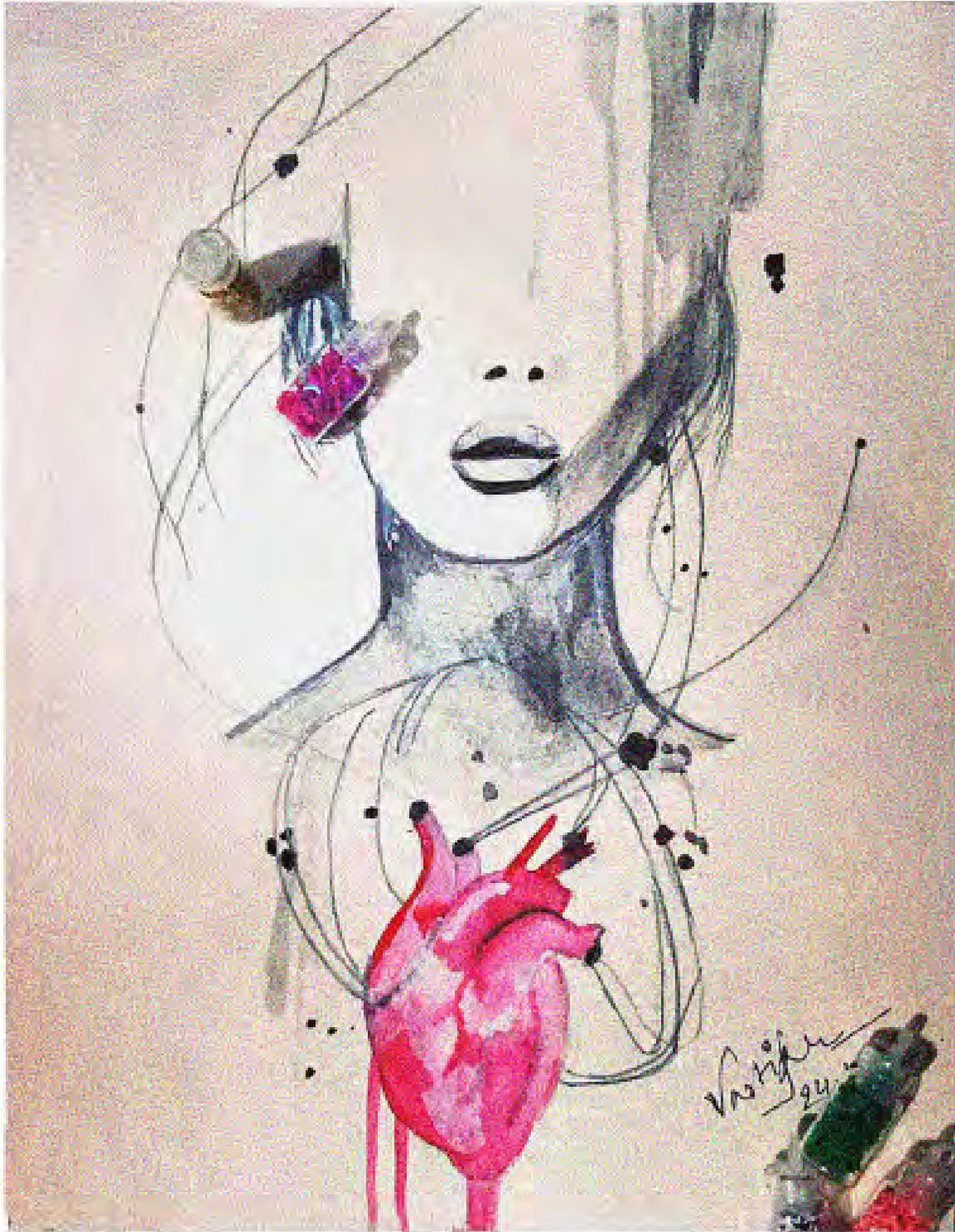


About the Piece:

This piece is about ending the stigma surrounding mental health. Society needs to be more aware of mental health problems, as people who experience these symptoms are often misunderstood. We lack sufficient awareness/education about mental health issues.

Follow Your Heart

by: Vartika Sharma



About the Piece:

Follow your own heart, the one, and only.

Positano, Italy

by: Caroline Etges Thrailkill



About the Piece:

I tried to capture my love and admiration for places I got to travel to, visit and live. In the trips I have taken around the world, I always try to take photos that will remind me of how I felt when I first experienced that moment.

My Last Will and Testament

by: Carole Wood

They call me Earth. I am drowning
In saline.
I need the land, and the icecaps.
They balance my lunar waters.
My sealife - the seeds of life - swim
In a poisoned womb.
Monsters born of plastic float
On the waves, and wait in the bellies of beasts
Promising pain.

My forests are dying from wounds,
Inflicted by short-sighted men.
There were people who tried to help
But they were swallowed up with the coastlines.
My fuel is all but spent. Soon, they will reach
Down to my core and mine that too
But that would be a mistake.
My core is fruitless; it contains only endings.
I will be undone, unmade, unbegun.

They call me Earth. But my name is
Suffering. I was born Beauty
But they christened me Ugly.
My fathers and mothers gave of
Themselves so I could be.
Now, I am unbecoming.
Will it hurt – the unbecoming?
I know not, for I have only ever been.

Hold a washcloth to my burning trees.
Lay down a towel on my spilling oceans.
Nothing can stop this. But be kind
To me, please. I was once your mother and your
father.

I brought you here, I fed you and gave you
shelter
Under my swaying eaves.
I watched as you took more than I could offer
And still I let you take. Hoping
You would learn. That the joy
Is in the giving.

There were those of you that tried. You planted
Trees. They grew, and then you cut them down
again.
I thought when you saw your own children
You would understand. But it just made you
greedier.

I feel the fish move slower now. They loll
Inside me. Soon, the monsters will rise.
Even Moon looks down on me with pity.
I feel her pale regard. She tried to tell me
But I didn't listen. She said,
"Beauty, you cannot trust them. They swarm you
like parasites; I can see it all from up here."
But what could I do?

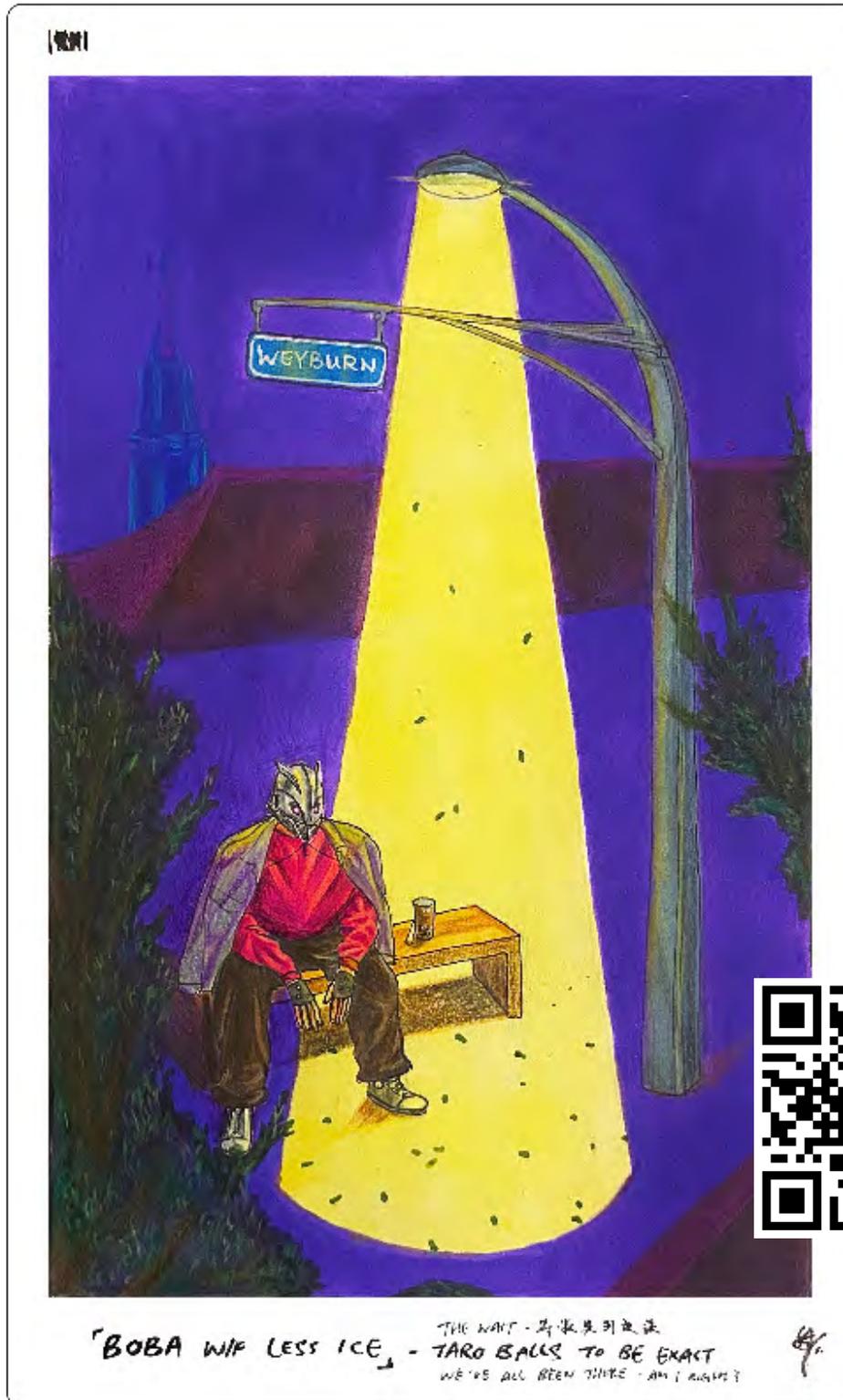
They call me Earth. But my name was Beauty.
I leave my estate to Moon, and the other planets
in my system.
Which my fragments will orbit for millennia.
I leave my essence with my fathers and mothers,
where I would like to rest.
I leave my legacy to their memory, my savage
children. May they find peace.
I am undone, unmade, unbegun, unbecome
And yet I love.

About the Piece:

This poem was inspired by some texts written about climate change in a Literature in Crisis class.

Boba with Less Ice

by: Max Loy



Scan for song!

About the Piece:

While I got stood up on this Valentine's weekend, I had this inspiration of making a drawing of myself holding the boba drink for her. The same disappointment also gave me the final inspiration to finish the song I wrote about my experience of it.

Why Wait for a Hero?

by: Xin Zhang



About the Piece:

Every princess can rescue herself!

Once in Venice

by: Nadine Holzleitner



About the Piece:

With my work I want to express the most magical day in Venice one can think of ending with a sunset at the beach, reflecting not only the power and infinity of the ocean but also the curiosity and excitement of daytime turning into the mystery of night.

Serenity

by: Vy Vy Tran



About the Piece:

This is an abstract acrylic piece painted with palette knife depicting a calm, peaceful sunrise by the shore.

Paisaje

by: Elisa Lopez Rochin



About the Piece:

Landscape of Durango, Mexico. The mediums used are oil pastels on paper.

A Beautiful Verse

by: Vinayak Shrote
Pages 31 - 35

*I have borne witness to the happiest of days,
When the poems of old friendship were sung with praise.
I have also witnessed the most difficult of times,
When those people stood by my side against those darkest of kinds.
And our journey did boast of the warmest memories,
As we sang the sweetest melodies under the evening skies,
And laughed and teased and played and grieved
As we neared the end of those happiest days.
And among the staggering tomes of lifeless runes,
Bearing verses of the strongest alliances long forgotten by time,
Among those staggering, lifeless works,
There continued to remain one living verse.
With the longest lines and endless rimes,
The memories ceaselessly scribbled along,
During every lasting moment when, together, we jived.
This poetry of our friendship, forever, had thrived.*

And those were indeed glorious days, seen from the tinted fragments of the shattered past when the poetry was alive. The days when my fingers used to scribble countless words upon countless parchments. The days when my old study possessed a life as the desk used to feel the weight of the thousands of papers and the millions of words scribbled onto them. Every morning, the parchment used to await my arrival, and the cascade of sheets would relish the touch of the nib of the pen as I'd begin to write. There were nights when the shimmering moon cast its divine light upon this pristine heart. And during those moments, the divine light would cast upon that purest heart and ooze out these innocent scribbles that would grow into powerful verses. Verses that would immortalize identities and melt the firmest heart. Even stronger verses existed that were marked with an unrelenting passion to pierce the hearts of the most artless of spirits and strike a chord in the human psyche, altering the trajectory of human life. And then, there were verses marked with a certain ferocity to stand unyielding against the sieges of society. They were indeed implements of beautiful transformations and harbingers of esoteric realizations.

The sheer strength that these verses possessed was suffused not by a single soul but by a certain miscellany of misfits. And they were beautiful people. They were the sole poets

of these powerful verses, who bore a bond of friendship sturdier than the strongest steel. We'd first met as shy fledglings until we struck a resonant chord from which these little beads of compassion nucleated, grew into an elegant thread, and intertwined ever so intricately to create a fabric of camaraderie. Despite our evolution from dissimilar backgrounds and having survived disparate experiences, our hearts beat as if they were a singular entity. Each of us was a writer of our own destiny. We had always been subtle practitioners of the literary arts as we continued to write our verses while abiding by our separate lives. It was only when we grew this friendship that our separate verses intertwined into a powerful singularity that transcended all forms of beauty. We were truly creating the poetry of our time.

These were amazing moments created during the most splendid instances in this life. Laughter and euphoria infected the air. The flowers of love and brotherhood blossomed everywhere. And while we deepened these bonds of companionship, we planted a beautiful garden. A garden where the grasses bore the greenest shade, the gigantic trees yielded the juiciest fruit, and the burgeoning blossoms spread their exotic hues.

There was a certain uniqueness associated with those blossoms, for they were characterized by petals bearing a myriad of such unearthly hues not found anywhere else. The flowers, the grasses, and the trees were not bound to the whims of the quarterly cycles of seasons that we constantly experience. The sturdy trees would brave the wildest gusts of the summer winds and the relentless downpours from the rainstorms. And the grasses maintained their greenest shade unperturbed by the scorches of summer, the frosts of winter, or the whimsical outbursts of the fall. And while the boundaries of this magnificent garden stretched further and further towards uncharted lands, so did the verses of our living poetry. The colossal parchment never used to end, the pen never ran out of ink, and the hands never stopped their scribbles. It was a beautiful friendship. It was a friendship worth boasting about, a friendship worth a powerful rime.

Many have argued that the deleterious implements of Time serve to bring even the most powerful of kings and the strongest of structures to collapse. And there are several tales in history to corroborate their arguments. Talk about the proud Ozymandias or the ruins of the magnificent Colosseum of Rome. And even then, we could discuss at great lengths about the valorous endeavors of mighty Caesar and then feast our eyes upon the fugacious evidence of what now lay in his 'mighty' empire. Indeed, Time ends it all.

But still, we have not failed to construct structures, empower relations, and write poems that could arrest the piercing of Time's sharpest spade. That powerful rime of Shakespeare has certainly outlived those marbles and the gilded monuments. Even the hermetic pillars of Stonehenge have braved four-and-a-half millennia of the relentless ravages from both Nature and Time. And the millions of scientific theories that those erudite scholars had proclaimed have never disobeyed Nature's laws.

The foundations of our garden were indeed sturdier than the strongest steel and impervious to the most piercing emotions. The verses of our poetry lay more powerful than Shakespeare's strongest sonnet. And thus, there was no question of our friendship falling prey to the deleterious implements of Time.

Indeed, in this world, we have constructed structures, deepened relations, and scribbled poems that could even arrest the impact of Time's sharpest spade. But at least once in their immortal lives, even those entities experience a moment when they stand beneath their greatest strength. And this is where we overlook one aspect of Time and forget that it is a clever colonizer, for the blades of Time strike not during the greatest and happiest times but during those weaker and sadder moments. And in these moments, even the mightiest of kings can bleed, and even the most towering structures can fall.

Our garden of friendship was indeed supposed to thrive eternally. But a garden stays green only as long as it has its gardener to tend to it. When destiny forced each of us to diverge from our combined paths and travel forth along our individual trails, we forged a solemn promise to retain our bonds, an ultimate attempt to cement those ties. The misfortune arrived when the burden of that promise became too onerous to bear. And this was when the gardeners forsake their noblest tasks.

As excuses and apologies aggregated over the days, the frequency of those rendezvous reduced to months. As months and years went by and schedules complexified, the meetings became further trivialized. And although the practice of resorting to texts lingered for a while, even this was doomed to pass. After decades passed, a stage arrived when the faces of our friends on those electronic platforms became buried deep underneath the more pressing profiles of the newer individuals that entered our lives.

The gates started to open less frequently during these decaying times. The railings weakened as the metal aged to rust. The grasses became coarse and dry. And a time arrived when the flowers that once used to bear those uncharacteristic hues started to lose their grace, turning into a sickly shade of yellow and brown. Without water, the petals became so parched and fragile as to rupture at the slightest touch. The succulent fruits that those supposedly everlasting trees used to bear began to turn stale from the inside. One day, the trees stopped producing fruit. All while Time's ravages patiently waited behind the gates. And when this magnificence of a utopian land arrived at the threshold of ruin, they broke open the corroded gates and raged across our neglected fields. As these blades raked across these burgeoning blossoms, they shredded every petal of the most beautiful flowers that took years to plant and nurture. The friction between Time's sharpest spade and the barren leaves sparked an insidious flame.

As this flame grew in shape and strength, it blazed ever so swiftly across these greenest grasses, turning a once captivating garden into a wasteland of burnt blossoms and ashen ground. The lands were now powerless to withstand the whims of the seasons. The fire died when the first deluge of rains arrived. But by then, everything was all but destroyed. Even those blackened blossoms were swept away during the season of winds. The ferocious gusts pillaged these destroyed lands and took away everything with them: the browned leaves, the burnt blossoms, and the smirched soil until what remained was a vast space of sheer emptiness sans any evidence of the pulchritude it once contained. The garden ceased to exist.

I now walk these empty lands alone. I cannot feel your presence. You are no longer around. And I lie away. Far, far away.

Perhaps each of us continues to exist somewhere on the desolate ruins of this blue sphere and still writes a mere verse or two. I do not know. However, the individual rimes no longer entwine.

Perhaps there could have been a way to make our verses embrace again. And in the process, a slight chance to regrow this forgotten garden. But even that is now a futile vision.

Because the day the garden died was also the day when my poetry lost its touch. The pen never runs out of fluid. But the fledglings of powerful scribbles have stopped nucleating inside my head. I speak hollow verses now, with weak dictions that have lost their essence and spirit. My poems are riddled with ludicrous words, meaningless phrases, and impotent locutions, with the imprint of ink smudged by the countless tears I shed in lament. The agony is overwhelming. And I know not for what reason I lament: the abandonment of this friendship? Or for the loss of the poetic touch? And when the emotions overpowered this heart, I stopped the process. I ceased to write. I banished my Musa away from her home.

Call me a lunatic, a saboteur, a weakling, a pariah. Call me the bitterest of names. But even those would fail to lend a deserving punishment to my crippled conscience.

With no verse to be scrawled, the parchment started to grow yellow and wrinkled with age. And in the process, our grand poetry slowly died. And the worst aspect of this tragedy is that none of us would ever discover the exact moment when our poetry died. For it happened slowly, silently, and insidiously as the onset of the winter breeze, when all of us lay far, far away, oblivious to realize this demise.

Perhaps this is the reality of life. To realize the tenuousness of being in control. To understand that it is always the sweetest and innocent of things that succumb to the most tragic and horrifying of defeats. It is liberating to succumb to the inevitability. To understand that you are indeed limited. No matter how powerful you may be, there will always arrive a time when

you will let down your guard. And at that moment, you may lose everything.

In the end, only the memories remain. Lifeless. Impregnated in dead verses. But they are memories nonetheless, remnants of proof of the experiences we once lived through.

Experiences that can be seen, heard, and felt on every sombre night when the skies bear the blackest shade and the clouds cry the heaviest tears.

The dull, somnolent elegy fills the vacuous space of my room, in the presence of the lifeless desk that can no longer feel the weight of the cascade of yellowed parchments that once used to await the touch of the pen. Perhaps, in these moments, one can only reminisce. And look back upon those happiest of days when the poetry was alive, and the garden glowed the greenest.

But this may not hold true for every individual when the wounds are still fresh. Because looking back at those memories ignites a hollow pain inside this chest that intensifies when I try to recount the happier times that once were.

Nevertheless, the pain will slowly die. And a brighter day will arrive when I can look back again and begin to cherish those experiences instead. It may not happen anytime soon. It may take years, even decades. But it will come. Because even though the poetry is dead, the verses still retain their beauty and would remain immortalized. They can still be remembered and appreciated with all the limitless love that can ooze out of this turgid heart. And as long as those verses are remembered, they would remain immortalized in the hearts of the poets and writers that own them.

And while at first the memories of these forgotten poets and writers would be reluctant to accept these dead verses over the newer, living ones, they will eventually learn to welcome them. On every sombre night when the skies bear the blackest shade and the elegy fills the vacuous space. And during those nights, when the soul begs for the warmest comfort, even they could look back fondly at those magnificent ruins, and proclaim with a melancholy smile, *'T'was a beautiful verse...'*

'Indeed, a beautiful verse.'

About the Piece:

The work is a narrative about how even greatest friendships can succumb to the ravages of time. It does this by comparing a friendship to that of a powerful verse and its immortalization. The content is flush with elements of belletristic literature.

Crossing the Intertidal

by: Hayley Spina



About the Piece:

A field researcher crossing the intertidal zone between Kent and Hay Islands, NB, Canada. In a few hours time, the tides of the Bay of Fundy completely cover this crossing.

Golden Wings

by: Sankha Subhra Das



About the Piece:

Golden wings at golden hour.

Addressing Barriers to Access: One Student-Run Clinic at a Time

by: Linda Huang

Pages 38 - 40

Expensive, fragmented, and complicated, the U.S. healthcare system is a multibillion-dollar affair. Despite the combined efforts of Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and the Affordable Care Act, barriers still exist for insured children to access healthcare - 13.1 million children of the low-income youth population cited their main barrier being their inability to afford deductibles and copays, as reported by the Children's Health Fund.

Getting insured is only half the battle. How can we support the most vulnerable with access to quality care without sacrificing their financial security to get it?

A simple solution might alleviate such pressing issues - expand the infrastructure of free Student-Run Clinics (SRC) at top-tier medical universities, where high-quality medical care and professionals are made accessible to children without coverage and the ability to afford deductibles. In addition to making care accessible, SRCs also enhance health education for undergraduate and graduate students and possibly address the shortage of primary care providers in the US.

As an alumnus leader of one of the 40 medical SRC at UCLA, we have serviced over 1600 patients annually. The 40 clinics' coverage of care includes urgent care, preventative care, screening physical exams, chronic disease management, immunization, behavioral health, and wound and foot care; covering women, men, and children. Every clinic has an average of 60 undergraduate and medical student volunteers, all serving under the supervision of licensed UCLA faculty and community physicians. The funding of such SRCs primarily comes from Contingency Programming Fund for community service at UCLA.

Taking the idea a step further, we could broaden the infrastructure of an SRC with more funding and beyond the parameters of a top-tier medical university. There are currently 111 student-run clinics registered nationwide at 49 Association of American Medical Colleges. These universities are often based in cities and suburbs; so extending the operational structure to all universities and catering to rural communities would expand access. The mobility and lack of cost structure of SRCs can form an alliance of support across the nation to address the status quo of healthcare disparities. In doing so, SRCs can serve as a healthcare safety net for the most vulnerable populations.

One of the most acute public health challenges is STDs amongst low-income and homeless youth - with barriers to access due to financial affordability and information asymmetry. A multidimensional strategy can be propagated through the operation of an SRC for screening and access to care, health education, and outreach. Social media should be used to address the gap in knowledge and expand the reach of SRCs. Tiktok or Instagram stories can be made to reach youth on social media to educate them on screening, inform youth on where to receive free healthcare resources, and encourage them to receive care. For example, a sequence of Instagram posts and reels made with clips from the infamous ER episode where one of the school girls was infected with HPV that quickly transformed into cervical cancer, could raise awareness on how HPV is spread and cancerous. As a booster, a TikTok reaction campaign with Tiktokers reacting to the clips can then echo the importance of getting tested and vaccinated, and provide solutions to viewers on where one can get access to the screening and diagnosis provided by the free clinics around the nation. The entire campaign will be organized with the hashtags: #getvaxxed #talktesttreat and #stophpvforlove. Beyond the social media campaigns to promote individual clinics, we can use social media to promote awareness of these free clinic venues nationwide. SRCs can have social media accounts managed by undergraduate students to regularly post health information about marginalized groups' challenges. Instagram's checkpoints can also be utilized so patients can map out where each of the clinics is; narrowing down which clinics are closest to them and which clinics have the correct specialist to attend to them. Involving celebrities and fun social media challenges can also help health knowledge and resources go viral, lifting barriers to access and empowering inspired actions from vulnerable populations to take charge of their health with quality resources.

The US is expected to face a shortage of primary care physicians, with estimates ranging from 21,000 to 55,000, by 2033. A study published in the Journal of Educational Evaluation for Health Professions studied the pre-health student volunteers at the Einstein Community Health Outreach Clinic in New York and discovered that students developed favorable attitudes toward primary care medicine and an increased level of interest in pursuing careers in primary care. Another independently conducted study at Chicago Medical School also concluded that students were more likely to match into primary care residencies after volunteering at SRC. More investigation needs to be done, but this could potentially address the shortage of primary care physicians in U.S. healthcare. Furthermore, medical students and undergrad students have more hands-on opportunities to learn about the challenges of caring for low-income patients through the SRCs and obtain an enhanced understanding of the healthcare process and issues relevant to uninsured patients. This educational leverage should be considered an institutional priority for medical schools to look into expanding and allocating more funding and facilities as it is proven to aid students' development. This can complement the organization's interest in servicing communities, and quite possibly benefit the collective healthcare community in funneling more physicians who are aware of the health struggles of low-income communities and encourage aspiring physicians to pursue primary care.

A lot of good things are possible. While the rate of uninsured children has fallen from 5.5% to 4.1% in 2021, as reported by National Health Interview Survey, SRCs can be a means to provide high-quality care to the low-income and uninsured, reaching the most vulnerable populations who fall through the cracks of a patchwork of the American healthcare system. With the COVID-19 pandemic that has perpetuated existing inequities in the U.S. health insurance and medical care delivery and its disproportionate impact on our youth, expanding the existing infrastructure of SRCs can possibly be the most efficient call-to-action. This would have efficacy in both the financial barrier to accessing healthcare and the education barrier to developing our medical talents, particularly in primary care, in the United States.

About the Piece:

I have written an op-ed to showcase one of the student-run homeless clinics at UCLA. During my studies at UCLA, I have learned much about public health and podiatry with the unique opportunity of volunteering and leading a student-run clinic.

Down to the City of Angels

by: Mustafa Alelg



About the Piece:

Small moments are all a person needs to appreciate to enjoy life. We owe it to ourselves in this hectic life to find enjoyment in such moments, no matter how trivial they may seem.

Art Opening

by: Conrad Haberland

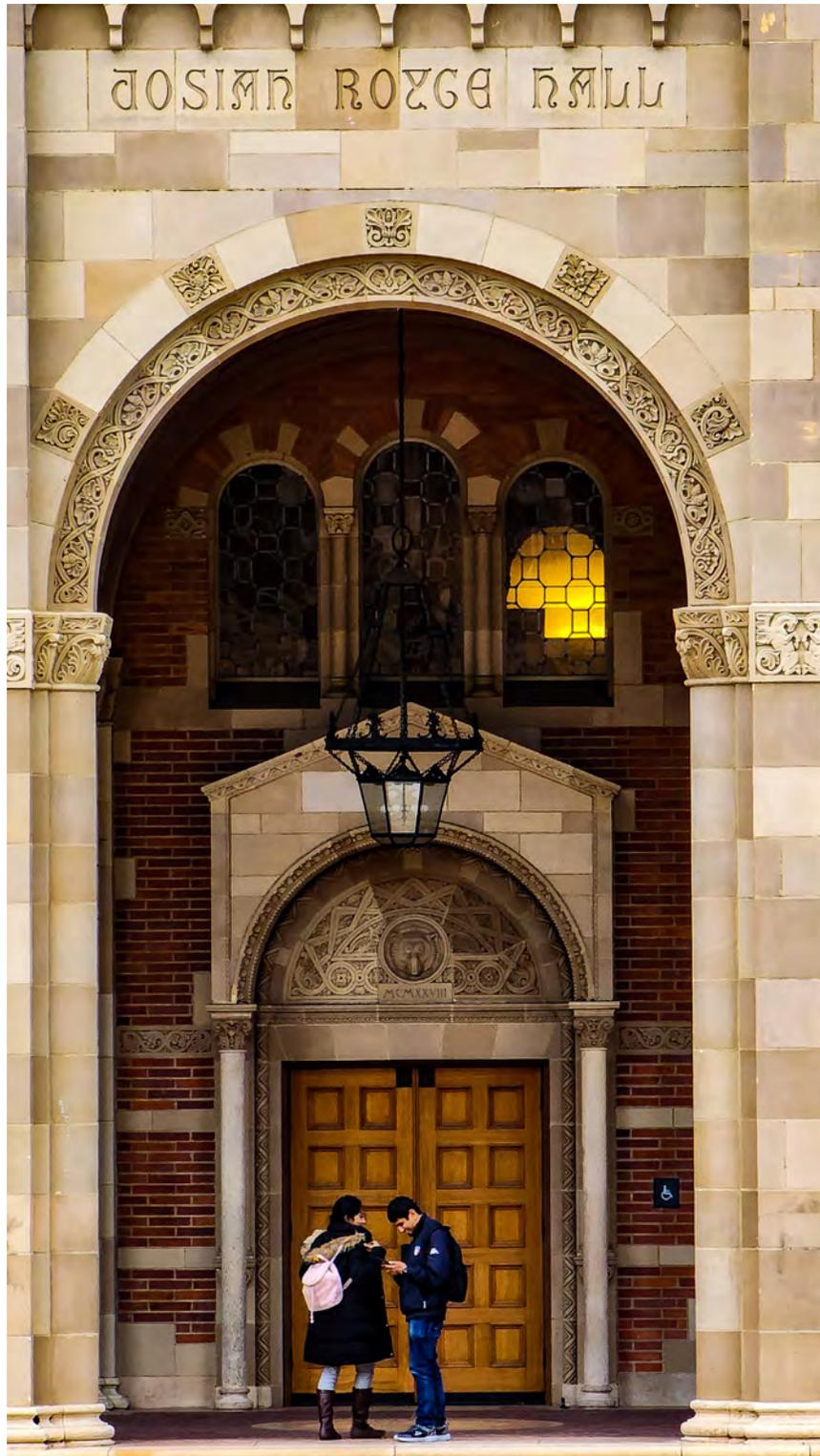


About the Piece:

Scene of an art opening at Chung King Road Los Angeles. I like to capture the excitement of an art opening and all the different people attending the event. The painting is watercolor on paper.

UCLA Love

by: Rodolfo Augusto Melo Ward de Oliveira



About the Piece:

UCLA Love is a photo in a spontaneous moment.

Hotel at Night

by: Shahad Shirwani



About the Piece:

This piece explores the transience of human journey by highlighting the universality of solitude. The black figures illustrate the sense of anonymity between individuals, stressing the fleeting nature of human connections and experiences. Oil on canvas.

Lost Girls

by: Carole Wood

This is a psalm for lost girls
An ode to a world
Where sisters and lovers
Enter and leave
Through a hole in the heart
Through a tear on a sleeve

A brother is crying, his sister a wraith
Lost like the girls
At the centre of faith.
Mothers misjudging, misleading the eldest
The youngest performs
Like a bow-missing cellist.

Do we believe
What we hear, what we see?
Saving the leaves of a dying tree.
Her head rests on
A pillow of stone.
The mother, the maiden,
The girl now outgrown.

This is a psalm for lost girls
An ode to a world
Where sisters and daughters
Bow out like the actors
On stages of pages
Each to their own captor.

About the Piece:

Lost Girls is about a grieving family's faith, following a teen's murder.

Bodily Treasure

by: Shahad Shirwani



About the Piece:

The fleeting nature of life. The pairing of the beads with the body accentuates the irony of how a seemingly trivial object can outlast us, bringing to mind our mortality. The tulle represents vestiges of heaven, reminding us that our souls persevere.

Biographies

Carole Wood

I am a third-year English with Creative Writing undergraduate at University College Dublin. I secured a place on the UCEAP Exchange Program at UCLA in 2022. In 2020 I was awarded the 1916 Bursary to study at UCD. My hobbies include reading, songwriting, traveling, and hiking.

Caroline Thrailkill

My name is Caroline Etges Thrailkill, I am part of the UCLA team as a Communications & Marketing Coordinator. I enjoy traveling and experiencing new cultures! My artistic passion surrounds photography and capturing scenery and the ocean for most of the time.

Conrad Haberland

My name is Conrad Haberland. I work at the Luskin Conference Center. I create oil paintings, watercolor and digital artworks. I'm Dutch Indonesian. Los Angeles is my home.

Derica Su

My name is Derica Su. I am a third year psychology major, and in my free time, I enjoy trying out new coffee shops and watching true crime documentaries

Elisa Lopez Rochin

I am a first year art major from Mexico.

Hayley Spina

I'm Hayley Spina. I'm a PhD candidate from Canada studying the ecophysiology of an island population of Savannah sparrows. I'm a visiting graduate researcher at UCLA, and founder of the conservation group Bird Safe Guelph.

Linda Huang

My name is Linda Huang. I am a Biology major. My home country is Taiwan. I enjoy yoga, meditation, and horseback riding.

Max Loy

Just an average asian who never gets bored.

Mustafa Alelg

I am a Computer Science student, amateur photographer, and a fan of abstract geometrical art.

Nadine Holzleitner

I am a Visiting Graduate Researcher coming from Munich to UCLA.. I enjoy long walks at the beach and exploring the magic new places have to offer.

Rodolfo Augusto Melo Ward de Oliveira

My name is Rodolfo Ward from Brazil. I'm in my Last year of my PhD in World Arts and Cultures at UCLA. In my free time, I enjoy hiking, go to the beach and stay close of nature.

Sankha Subhra Das

My name is Sankha Subhra Das. I am a Post-doctoral Scholar at UCLA. My home country is India. In my free time, I enjoy watercolor painting, photography, and traveling.

Shahad Shirwani

My name is Shahad. I am an incoming first-yr Design/Production student at TFT. I'm Kurdish but was raised in Germany and Dubai. In my free time, I enjoy designing garments, painting, and playing field hockey.

Sudeeksha Agrawal

My name is Sudeeksha Agrawal. I am a Data Science engineering graduate student from India. I enjoy writing, colouring ,traveling and listening to music in my free time.

Vartika Sharma

I am a post-doctoral researcher at UCLA. I am from India. In my free time I enjoy reading, sketching and blogging.

Vinayak Shrote

I am a second-year Masters' student in Materials Science and Engineering. I grew up in India. I love writing poetry, musings, and stories. I also enjoy foraying into new hike trails.

Vy Vy Tran

My name is Vy Vy Tran. I am a first-year Psychology and Neuroscience major. My home country is Vietnam. In my free time, I enjoy drawing, taking little walks, reading, and spending time with my family and friends.

Xin Zhang

I love to do things with my hands. I want to show the pretty world in my heart to everyone.

Yuyin Yang

Yuyin studied Psychology and Linguistic Anthropology at the UCLA, and is currently reading an MPhil in Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge. She's interested in facilitating conversation surrounding social and gender inequalities. Her interest in reproductive care and policies originates from her experience growing up in China under the One-Child Policy and witnessing her parents pay fines in exchange for having her younger sister and brother.



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