



# PRP PULSE

THE LITERARY MAGAZINE OF PLEASURE RIDGE PARK HIGH SCHOOL

ISSUE 9 / SPRING 2023



Artwork by Mia Langford



Artwork by Reese Hill



Artwork by Ross Cannon

# PRP PULSE

Issue 9 / Spring 2023

CREATIVE WRITING, POETRY &  
ARTWORK BY STUDENTS OF  
PLEASURE RIDGE PARK HS

Project direction by  
Judy Scott-Berger  
& Denise Webb

Editorial  
assistance  
provided by  
PRP's  
Creative  
Writing Class

Designed  
by PRP  
Visual Art  
+ Design



panther  
press



Artwork by Jamaal McClain

# PRP PULSE

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Published by:  
Pleasure Ridge Park High School  
5901 Greenwood Road  
Louisville, KY 40258

(502) 485-8311

PRP PULSE / Issue 9 / Spring 2023

Cover Art by Caroline Sanders

Design Director: Mia Langford

Pleasure Ridge Park High School,  
Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, Kentucky  
Sheri Duff, Principal

Printed by JCPS Materials Production Dept.



The PRP Pulse has been recognized by  
NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English)  
for Excellence in Student Literary Magazines.



Artwork by Kayden Anderson



Artwork by Lana Brown

## introduction

The *PRP Pulse Literary Magazine* is a result of continued collaboration between the Creative Writing and Visual Art classes at Pleasure Ridge Park High School. Our purpose is to showcase student work by uniting our Visual and Performing Arts program with our English core content curriculum.

Students continue to be the major players in the *Pulse*, participating in multiple roles throughout the project: as writers, editors, photographers, painters, sculptors, designers, and more. Our mission is for this literary magazine to provide a cross-curricular, authentic learning experience for the students at PRP.

Students are charged with the layout and design of the magazine, while the PRP English Department has joined forces to solicit written pieces and encourage students who have shown interest and/or potential in creative writing throughout the year. Creative Writing students have taken on the editing and selection process for the submitted written pieces. The hard work and collaboration between departments and students has made this project possible at PRP.



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Artwork by Ryan Dallum

# Just in Case

By Katelynn Johnson

I always envied Gardeners.  
Or maybe I envied their plants.  
Careful, violent vines and Pristine fragile flowers.  
My neighbor was a gardener, I watched him often.  
I had never seen such love, to something so simple.

He cared little for each leaf, and did not mourn losses.  
He sometimes would sit, ripping his plants apart.  
'Pruning.'

He would judge each leaf with precision.  
Debating their worth, or color,  
And they would be better for their loss.

But the empathy in his eyes,  
When he knew they were dead, but watered them anyway,  
'Just in Case.'

I would walk back outside, months later  
To see a in a dry, hollow twig, a spot of green.  
They came back sometimes,  
'Rarely, If the roots were still good.'  
And he can spare some water.

I may have envied the gardeners,  
The way they love what is meant to die.  
I may envy plants,  
The way love means it doesn't always stick.

Artwork by Lana Elder



# FREEDOM OF THE BIRDS

By E.N.G.

I think it would be nice to have wings. I could fly, see the world and my friends, and i wouldnt have to worry about a drivers license. I would probably be digitigrade, which would be cool. and i could have another level of trust & intimacy you just cant achieve in this form. i could hold people, shield them, and show them a love we cannot have like this. there's a certain softness to putting the care of the biggest part of yourself in someone's hands. as if im saying "here is my heart. Please hold it gently, comb it out to a level i cannot reach on my own, carefully pick off the pieces that no longer fit."



Artwork by Rayna Randers

My means of  
expression is in your  
hold, my mode of  
transportation--of  
escape--is in your care,  
my heart is in  
your hands.

There is a certain  
softness, a trust,  
a fondness, to  
having wings and  
bearing them to  
those you Love.



Artwork by Reese Hill



Artwork by  
Kayden Anderson

Artwork by  
Brooklyn Smothers  
(Below)







# Greyed Out

by April Mercer

ONE LOOK AT HIS MOTHER, AND HE FEELS LIKE CRYING. Instead, he bites the bottom of his lip as he walks into the hospital room, the sound of the machines beeping making him flinch. Then comes his heartbeat; the way it palpates so much faster the second he walks into any of the rooms she's stayed in. He takes a deep breath and drops the bag beside the chair near the window. It's filled with necessities. Not like that'll matter. It won't suddenly heal her, so maybe it's not so necessary. But she asked, and so he had no chance but to bring them. He had no chance but to come to see her—once again—motionless, unmoving body.

He sighs and rubs his eyes, the dark circles under them a reminder of how little sleep he's gotten. When the hospital called to tell him at three in the morning, when he was just about to go to sleep, he hung up, groggily got out of bed and drove straight here. No breaks, except for red lights and stop signs. A whole three hours. Just for this, to see her potentially dying in the flesh, instead of just the pretense of knowing—like he hasn't seen it all his life. He only has to look in her eyes to see it. Everyday he does worry about her; he worries that she won't be able to do everyday things, like not being able to get up to eat. It doesn't have to be healthy, but that would be better. Meals only cooked in the microwave won't cut it forever. Not paying the bills won't last forever. Relying on family won't work out forever. But that's how it's going to need to be until he gets everything sorted out.

There's just one thing that gnaws at his heartstrings: the fact that, even though a part of him knows he needs to, he can't help her. He can't move in with her. He's too weak. He's too tired. Tired of seeing her like this, and too tired of being the only one she can count on. He's not up to that.

"She's dying, and look at you. You're doing nothing," his father's voice comes to mind immediately, and suddenly he's trying to keep his composure, slumping onto the chair. Then he's cradling himself, and he feels six again, in his mother's warm hold. The mother was nothing but happy; she had a pep in her step when she woke him up in the morning like she was excited for another day with him.

He's not sure how many more days they're going to get until the disease catches up with her.

He's rocking in the chair for a while, until his thoughts are nothing but of mother, mother, mother. Nonstop thinking about the mother that was safe, the mother that read her stories to him; the ones that she came up with on the spot. And without that mother, home is just an empty, dull house, where he doesn't belong.

And if he just reaches a little to the right, he'll be able to read those stories again.

But he doesn't.

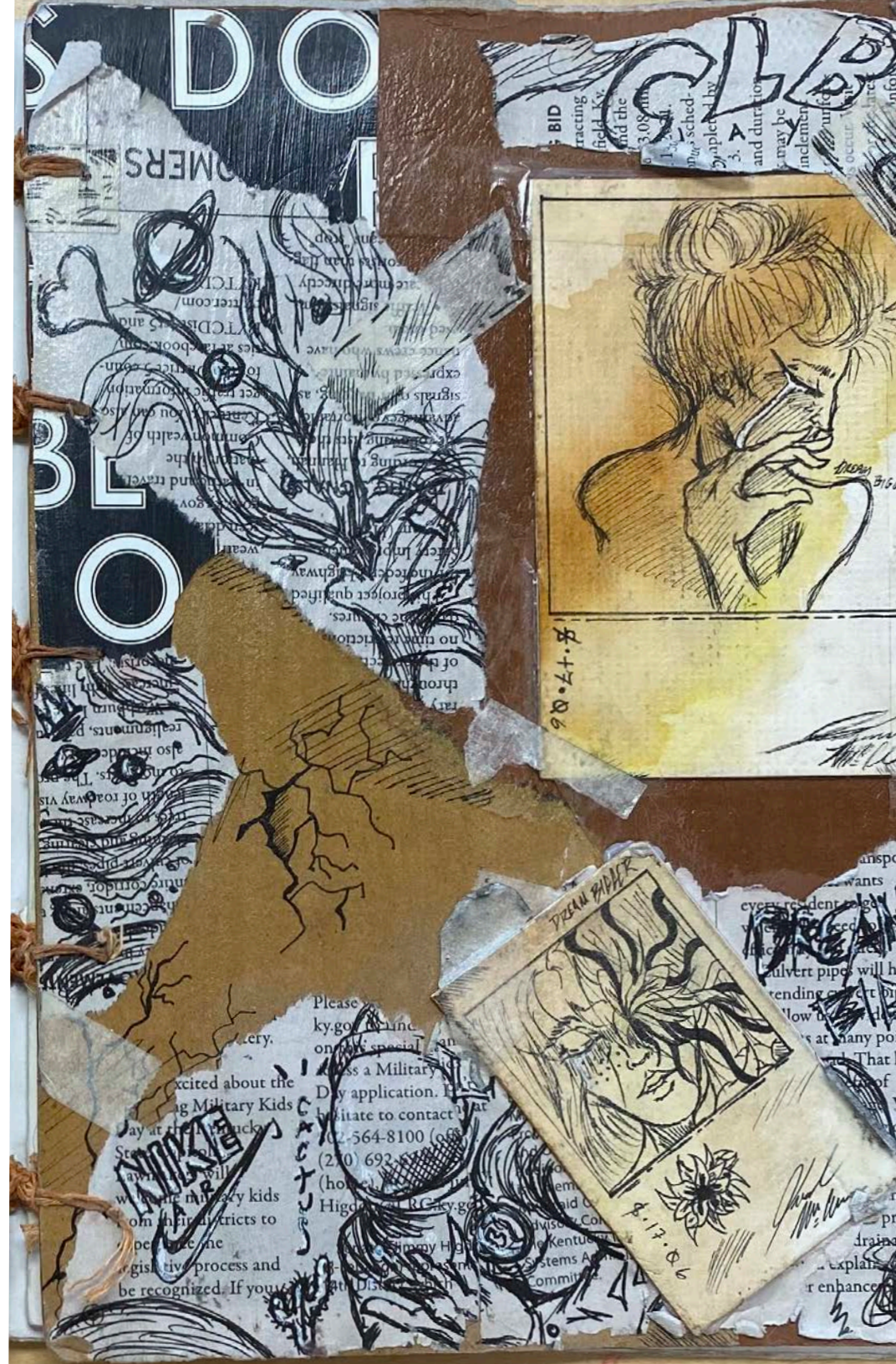
Instead he scratches at his legs with his sharp, uncut nails, and in one swift movement, his thoughts are settled. He's counting the number of the tiles in his head, over and over, over and over—she wakes up, a harsh cry erupting from her mouth. Immediately, he is beside her, no hesitation. He knows exactly what to do in these moments, but he's not very smart about it, asking her what's wrong instead as the panic rises.

"Nurse," she manages to get out; her voice is strained, scratchy, like she hasn't talked in days, maybe weeks.

AGONY, AGONY, AGO—the room is drenched in white, but he's drenched in blue as he's trying to stop himself from drowning. He's drenched in red as he coughs up blood. He's drenched in grey as he dissociates from the world around him; only to be reminded of the cruel reality in the matter of seconds.

One look at his mother, and he feels like crying, only he's not crying—he's just sobbing, and sobbing, and he's drenched in agony, because he knows. He knows she's gone. He just does, and it is the worst of feelings.

Artwork by Jamaal McClain





(ABOVE) Artwork by Samantha Vega

(OPPOSITE) Artwork by  
Sierra Slaughtert

(RIGHT) Artwork by  
Stephen Lady



# Summer Falls

By James Oddit Milburn

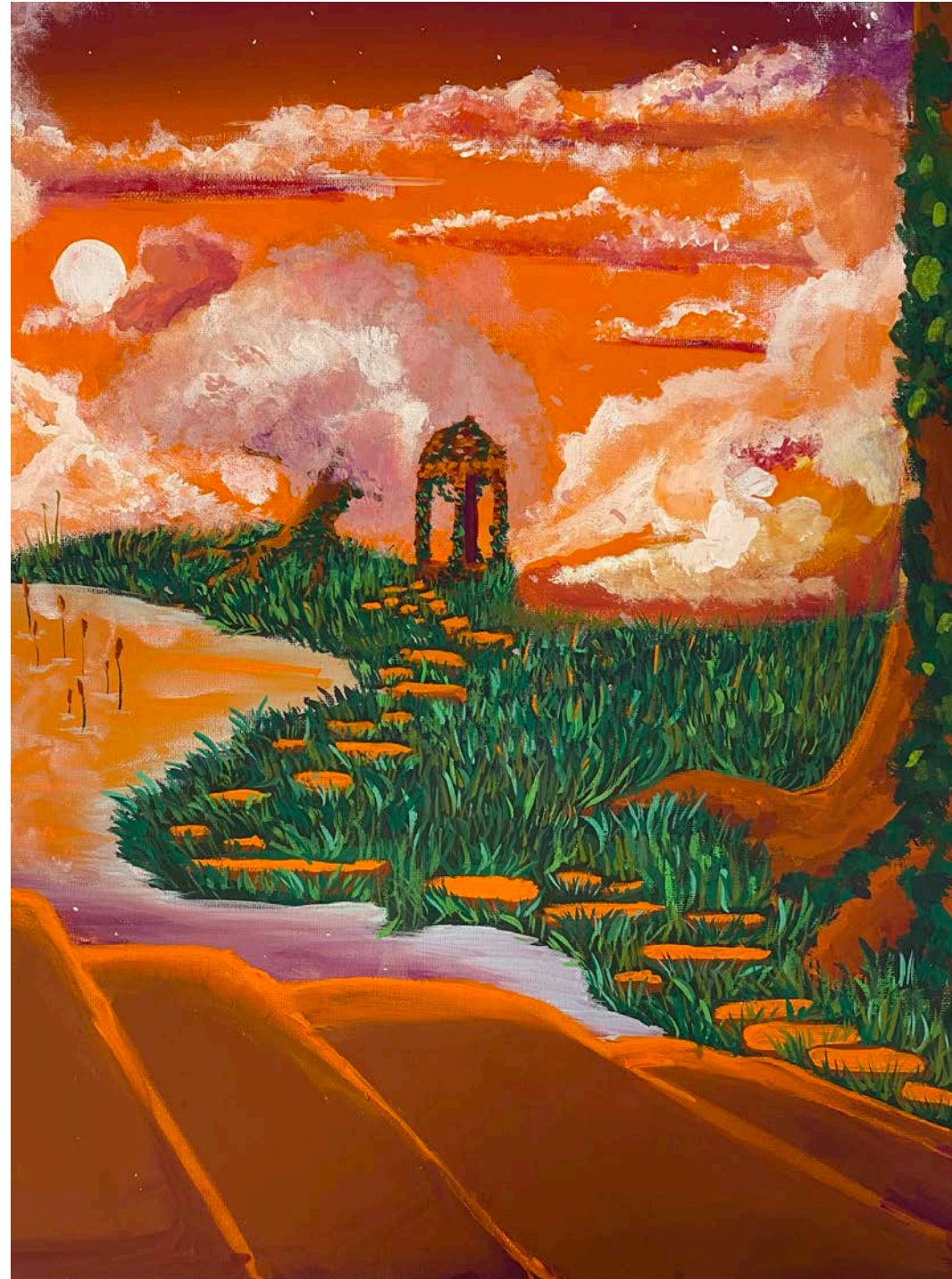
The trees turned the sky orange and red,  
the color seemed to fall from the sky one bit at a time.

but where the warm colors didn't take over,  
cool colors festered with fright.

He was green from sickness,  
eyes blue like he had fallen to the ground himself.

He was afraid of autumn, the frantic fall of summer  
can obscure a man who will make an agreement with death.

Artwork by Anna Estabrook





# Mother Nature

By Madelyn Staub

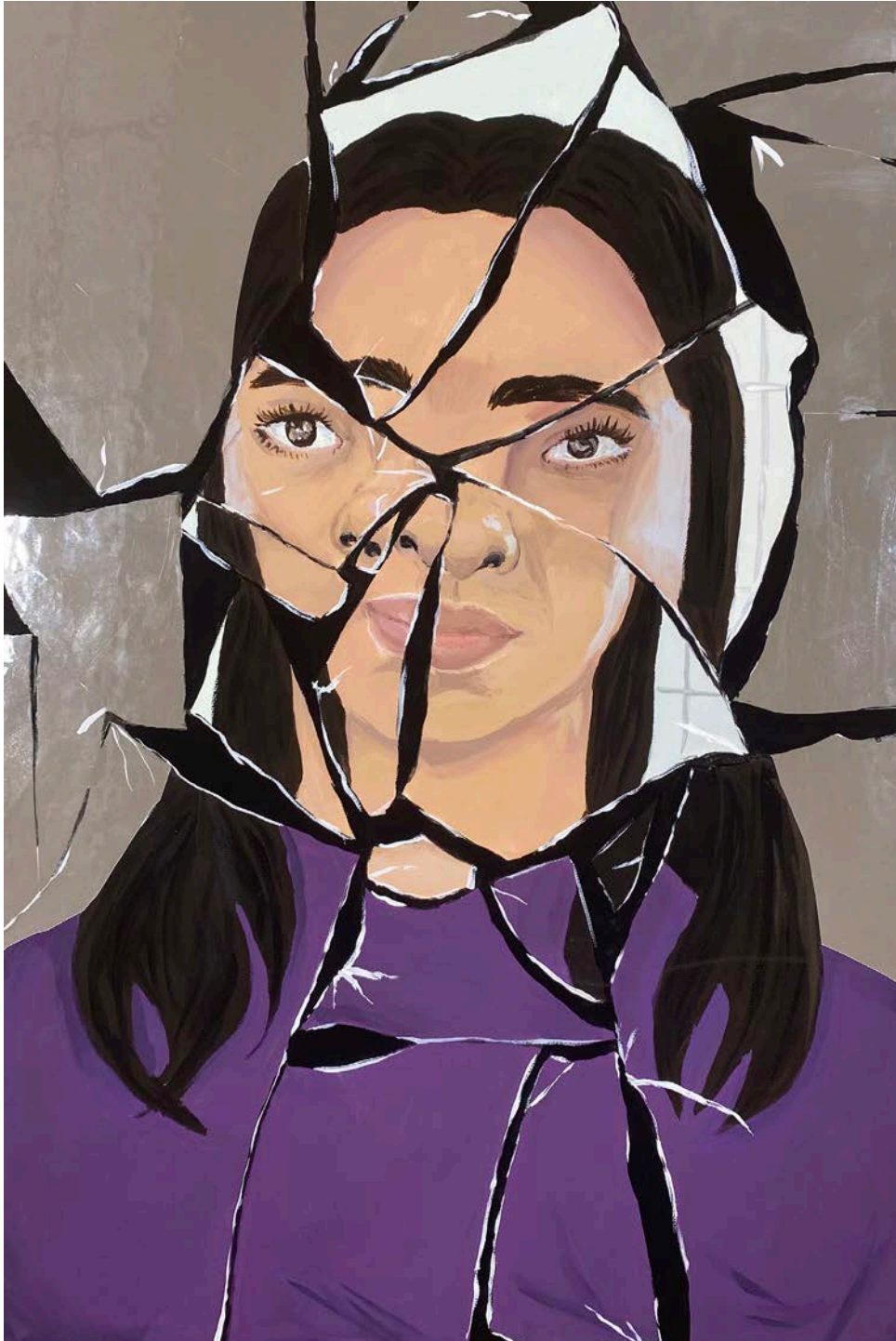
When my body lies on the  
grassy dirt floor and weeds have  
enveloped my bones,  
the bugs will feast and flowers will grow,  
I will become one with the earth.

A nest for birds my ribs will be,  
My hands a shelter from the wind,  
My eyes a bowl for seeds and grain,  
My hips are rooms as my spine a hallway,  
I am here for them just as they are for me,  
For I am one with the earth.

Artwork by Reese Hill

Artwork by Meliza Moran





# my body

By Desiree Robear

Foreign but familiar  
An ever changing being  
Legs that have carried  
Eyes that have sought  
Hands that have held  
Hair that has blown  
And whipped  
And tangled  
A masterpiece  
Bathing in its glory  
But covered  
For fear of imperfection



Artwork by Samantha Vega



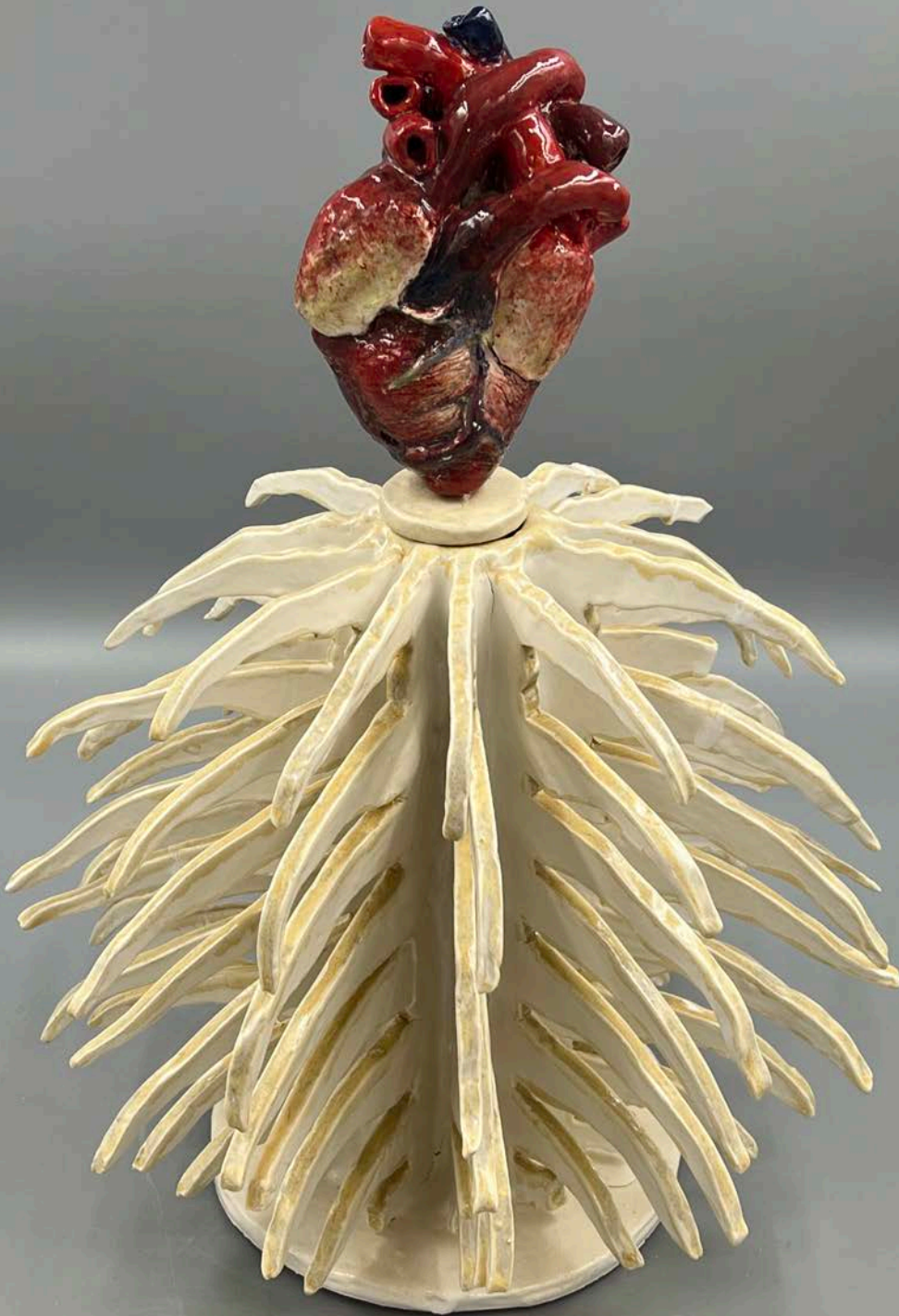
Artwork by Lana Brown



Artwork by Spencer Turman



Artwork by Terrence Smith



# It Never Ends

By Zachary Missildine

A heart comes with many challenges  
Ones that are foes and some that are friends  
A sword is what battles  
But what does that matter till the end

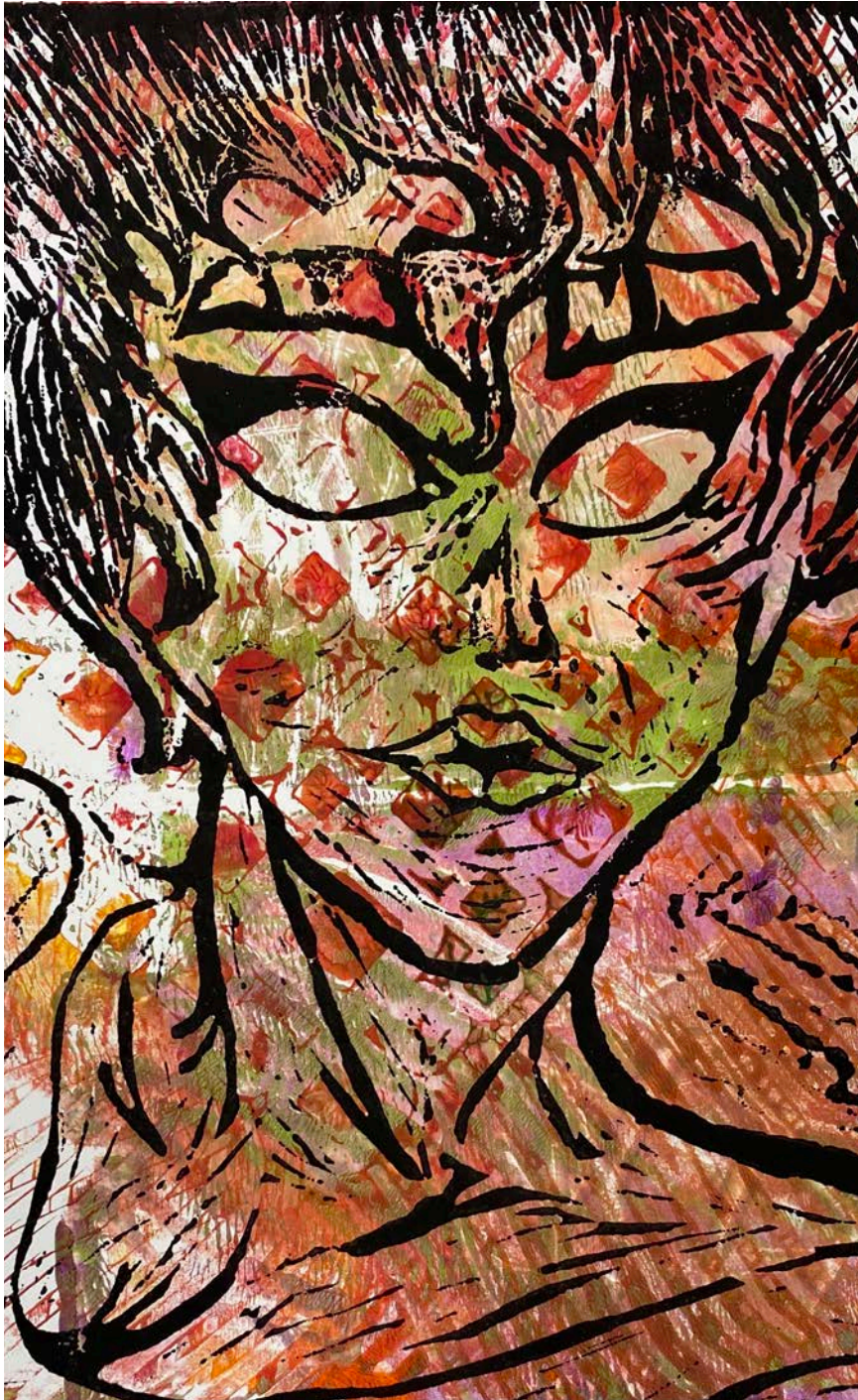
Through the eye of the one who matters  
He may see the challenges that we face again  
Stronger and stronger our feet will stand  
But what will that matter if it's then or when

To when the dagger is pulled  
Or when the sword is swung  
A crowd so far but yet so loud  
The hollowing whispers of what has been strung

The beginning is what had end  
But what has ended if the beginning has just begun  
To show what has been done  
May we show what has been shun

The tears and the cries  
The emotion behind the hidden battles  
There is no end to what has begun  
So it will end with the snake's rattle

Artwork by Mia Langford



Artwork by Jamaal McClain

# Good vs. Evil

By Jaline Del Toro

This world is a complicated battle of black & white  
of dark & light  
Whether it is wrong or right

So what's the right thing to do  
How do I know my way out of the loop  
When our lives feel like a swoosh

We pay for your actions that are brute  
Stop giving us debuts  
Stop covering the truth  
When we know it's you  
We trusted you  
But all you do is rob the colors of their hues  
Rob the children of their youth

How do we bind  
When our society is one great divide  
Subtracting their love & going online  
Adding algorithms to take over their lives

So tell me how do we bind  
When we're dimming our own light  
I don't know about you but I'm tired of this fight  
It's not right  
Dull colors that once were bright  
Are losing their shine  
I wonder what will become of this life



Artwork by Riley Pollard

# BLOODS

Kara Smith

My pupils constricted as a blinding light shot back and forth between my eyes. My brows furrowed and my head pounded as if there was someone on the inside demanding to get out. Trying to regain my focus, I leaned up and squinted my eyes, my hand instinctively grabbed the side of my head as everything spun.

"Welcome, A-011," a deep, hoarse voice, close to my ear said. I quickly turned my head causing everything to spin even more. Standing beside me was a tall, silver-haired man typing on a laptop.

"Pardon?" I asked. What is A-011?

The man ignored me and smiled before shutting the laptop. He got up and walked over to my left arm where a needle sat inside my vein. Only then did I notice the bright red stream rushing under my sickly pale skin. My eyes widened and before I could say anything he opened the metal door and walked out.

My heart began beating faster as I examined my arms. I grabbed the white sheet that covered me and shoved it off. I gasped at the sight of my legs; no longer skin but metal. My hands shook and I leaned to touch what I assumed was my new legs. The shiny metal squealed as my fingers pressed down and slid across it. My head snapped to the door as a woman suddenly walked in holding a tablet in her hand.

"Hello, A-011. I'm Dr. Camile. It's very nice to finally meet you while you're awake." the woman said as she walked towards me and observed my uncovered body. She grabbed my arm with the needle and twisted and pressed down on it.

"Where am I?" I asked as she began to remove the tape that held the needle inside my bony arm. I was surprised to find that I didn't feel any ounce of pain as she ripped the tape off without warning. I sat and waited as she focused on my arm instead of answering my question.

My eyes hadn't had the chance to wander around the sterile room I was in yet. It was an empty cube with no color besides the red coursing through my arms and the light blue hospital gown hanging loosely on my malnourished body. I was sitting in a small hospital bed that sat in the middle of the room with an IV pole on the left of me and a cart with different metal tools on a tray to the right. I had no memory of how, when, or why I was in this place and I wanted answers.

"I can see you're struggling to understand the situation. Unfortunately, we've yet to figure out how to keep the subject's memories after the experiment," she apologized genuinely. Subjects, experiments. I had no idea what this woman was talking about and my face obviously showed it because she began to chuckle softly.

"What year is it?" I asked.

"Oh, you don't even remember the year? Interesting. Well, A-011, today's date is October 7th, 2467. We've been working on you and the others for about 5 years, and finally, today you're ready." she spilled out as my mouth sat open as my brain tried to comprehend what she'd just said.

She gently took my hand, "Things may seem confusing now but everything will make sense soon, don't you worry."

Before I could respond I felt a small pinch against my neck. My breathing slowed, my body relaxed and my eyes gently closed.

"Up! Everyone up!"

"Hey you, get up!"

A heavy weight hit my chest and I shot up. My eyes opened to find myself sitting in a chair surrounded by people and in front of me, bending down to my eye level, was a man with a big beard and full black uniform. Bright fluorescent lights shined down onto his bald head slicked with oil. My eyes shifted to the right and then the left to see around 20 to 30 something other people my age all sitting up straight in their chairs, looking straight ahead all in similar black uniforms.

"About damn time you've woken up!" the man shouted in my face. It should've gotten a reaction from me but I sat straight-faced as memories from the hospital room came back to me. I wondered why I hadn't been able to feel some emotions.

The man looked around at everyone before speaking, "I know you're all confused but there's no reason to be. To keep it simple, you have a



Artwork by Elijah Godfrey

duty, and if you don't fulfill it, you will be of no use t-" before the man could continue, a boy stood up and interrupted him.

He stopped and stared, annoyed, at the boy who dared to cut him off, "Okay, that's cool and everything but I think we all want to know why the hell we're here."

The man smiled sinisterly, "I'm sure you would like to know," the boy nodded, encouraging the man to continue. The man did indeed continue when he snaked his hand behind his back, and pulled out a small handgun. Before the boy or any of us could even understand what was going on, the man shot the boy right between his eyes.

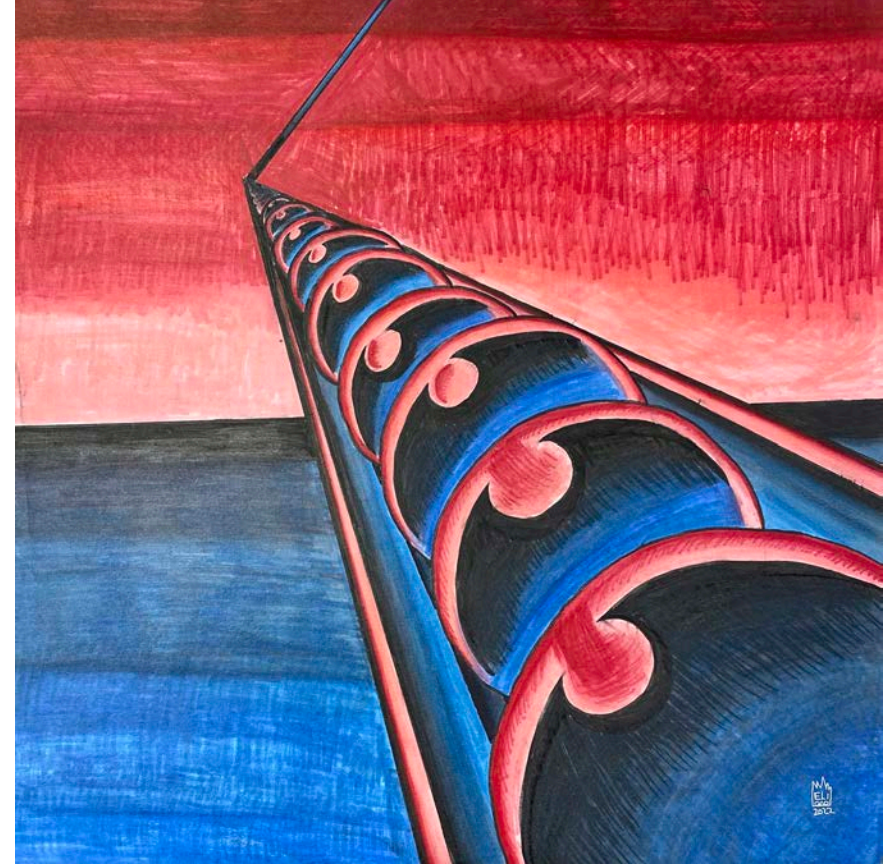
No one screamed, no one got up and no one questioned him. He carefully slid the gun back into his pants and clasped his hands together before taking a deep breath and continuing, "Does anyone else have anything to say?"

No one spoke a single word; instead we shook our heads all simultaneously. He smiled and nodded, "That's what I thought," he tilted his head down and scrunched his eyes, then slid his hand across his forehead like he was thinking, before he lifted his eyes back up to us and put his hands on his hips. He stood looking around at us before scoffing and shaking his head, smiling as if someone had told him a joke.

Suddenly, a smooth voice sounded over the intercom, "Go on and wrap it up, Nathan. You know we have things to do," the man rolled his eyes and swatted his hand at the camera in the corner of the room.

He took a deep breath in before speaking, "This is not something I want to do. I'm not a patient man, and even if I was, none of you would deserve my patience. I will say this once, so everyone better listen. Every single thing I say, you do. It's an order. If you don't do what I say, I will not hesitate to shoot you like that know-it-all bleeding out on the floor in front of you. Does everyone understand?" he looked around as everyone nodded and he smiled. "Great, let's get started."

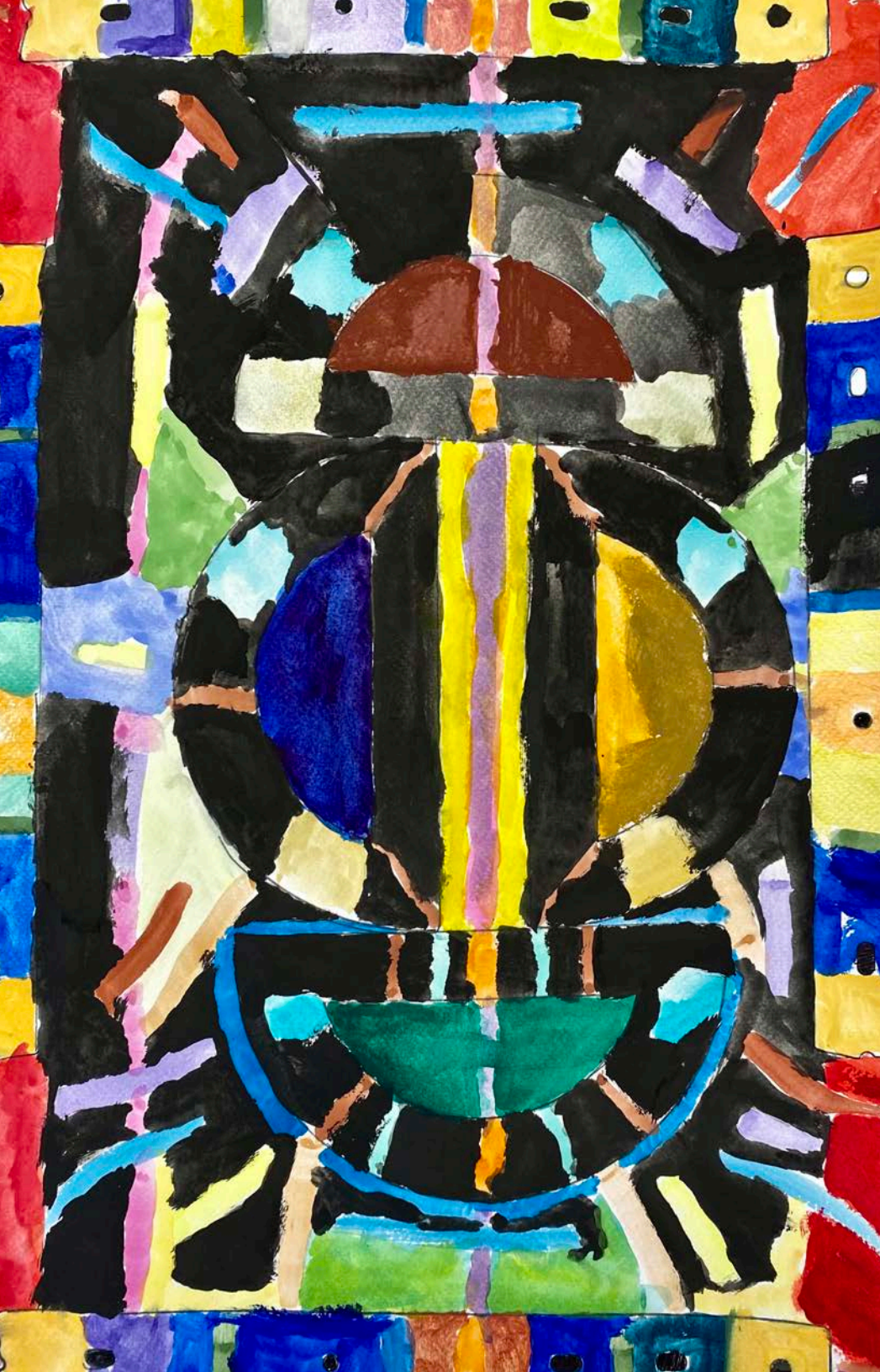
Everyone silently stood up and waited as Nathan took his time, lining us up one by one with our backs against the bland cement wall. It took me a moment to get used to my new legs. I wobbled a bit as he directed me to my spot. Once I was able to stand still I looked to the left of me to see a boy towering over me. My head tilted back to get a better look; he had dark brown hair and an ear piercing. He looked down at me as if he could feel me staring. His eyes were the most beautiful things I'd ever seen, an enchanting ruby red, more bright



Artwork by Elijah Godfrey



(Left) Artwork by Jennifer Ferguson



than the liquid running through my veins. His eyes narrowed before he snapped his head forward when our leader, Nathan stepped up to us.

He looked between us for a moment before raising his eyebrow, "A-011 and B-011. You two are partners."

I furrowed my eyebrows, a partner?

"You're lucky you're one of the more valued ones; I told you, I do not want to repeat myself," he said angrily.

I stared at him and placed my hands together in front of myself, "I'm sorry, sir."

He looked at me for a moment before nodding once, and then looked toward the rest of the group, "If one of you weren't listening when I said it, like someone here, then you better listen now. The person you're placed next to is your partner; the person you will be with for... however long you live."

As those words left his mouth I knew everyone was just as confused as I was, yet no one dared to say a word. The same voice as before came back over the intercom, "Nathan, it's time."

He sighed and hesitantly walked over to the metal door, he pushed it open and a big stream of light came in, making everyone squint and shield their eyes.

Nathan swung his hand and shouted, "Everyone out and on the bus, now!"

The line of people began to quickly move out of the room. Once I reached the door, I carefully stepped out into the giant garage that held 3 black buses. A line of men and women stood on both sides of us, all in black uniforms and holding machine guns. They all looked straight ahead and didn't move a muscle. I reached the bus and stepped up, then walked to the next available seat.

As I walked past different people looked up at me curiously. I nodded to them and sat once I reached my seat. Shortly after my partner plopped down next to me. As the rest of the group stepped into the bus, I decided to make conversation.

"Do you know what we're going to do?" I asked. The boy, I think his name was B-011, looked at me for a moment then looked away. I sighed and placed my hands neatly in my lap as Nathan stepped up.

He did a quick head count then sat down in the driver's seat and started the bus. I watched out of the window as we pulled out of the

big garage onto a gravel road. The bus bounced and threw everyone around; it seemed this was Nathan's first time driving a bus. He looked up at us through the big mirror over top of his head and grimaced

It had been about 30 minutes and I was getting antsy; I could tell other people were too. I scooted around trying my best to not disturb B-011, as he had his head tilted back and his eyes closed. Suddenly, he groaned and moved around and I froze.

"Stop moving so much," he said as he lifted his head and looked over to me. I stared into his eyes for a moment before turning back towards the window. A couple moments passed before I sighed and turned back to him, surprised to see he was already looking at me.

I gulped and asked, "Did your legs get removed too?" his eyebrows shot up at that; I guess he didn't.

He shook his head, "No. Were yours removed?"

I grabbed my right leg and pulled up the black pants to show him the metal. His mouth fell open and his hand slightly reached out to touch it but quickly snatched it away before looking at me expectedly and I nodded. He reached back out and gently placed his hand on my new leg and slid his hand across it.

"I assume you don't have any feeling anymore," he said.

"No, I do. It's strange, but I can feel when you're touching it," I said and he immediately pulled his hand away.

I laughed, "It's okay," I sighed and looked out the window, "Hey do you see that red in my arm? Do you know what it is?"

He nodded, "That's the new blood," I looked at him, obviously confused so he continued, "I overheard some doctors talking. They created this new blood. It's mixed with human blood but also something else. I had no idea what they were talking about but I'm sure it has something to do with where we're going."

"It's the same color as your eyes," I said as I stared at them in amazement.

He looked away awkwardly, "Yeah, I don't know what happened to them. I guess something went wrong and changed the color."

I smiled, "Well, I think they look cool," I said, making him smile back.

I then thought of something, "Do you remember your name?"

He looked at me and opened his mouth like he was about to say something then he stopped. His brows furrowed and he was silent for

a moment before speaking, "No, I don't. Do you?"

I shook my head, "No. I guess you can just call me A."

"Then I'm B. We're partners too; whatever that means," he said.

I shrugged my shoulders, "I guess we'll have to see," I looked out the window and watched as we drove farther and farther into the middle of nowhere.

"You know, it's weird," I said.

"What's weird?"

"Well, they loaded us on this bus, we don't know where we're going, we don't know each other, yet we're not afraid. I mean, I'm not at least. Some emotions are there but others aren't."

He was silent for a moment, thinking.

"I don't feel fear either,"

Before I could say something in return the tires on the bus squealed as we came to a sudden stop, yanking me forward. I looked out of the window to see a wide field and then a full forest of the tallest trees I'd ever seen. My eyes widened as.. things started coming out of the forest. I turned around to B who was seeing the same thing I was.

A yell from the front caught both of our attention, "Everyone listen! You're going to receive two guns and once you have your weapons you're going to leave the bus with your partner! If you don't leave the bus you will die."

Nathan hurriedly walked down the aisle and handed each group of two their weapons. The groups at the front stepped out of the bus as Nathan reached B and me. As he handed each of us our guns he looked into my eyes like he wanted to say something but quickly went to the next set of partners. As B and I stood from the seat, gunshots started and we ran towards them like it was out of instinct.

We quickly stepped down the steps and held our guns up, what I saw was something I'd never seen before. Coming towards us from out of the forest was a group of eight feet tall creatures. Their skin was white as snow and red streams ran throughout their entire bodies like lava. They sped towards us at a speed I didn't know was possible. As they got closer, I could now see the sinister smile they wore from ear to ear, blood and saliva dripped from their sharp, knife-like teeth.

"Everyone shoot!" Nathan shouted and immediately bullets sprayed out onto the group of creatures running at us. I'd never even held a gun but somehow I knew how to hold it and how to shoot it without

missing a single target.

As each bullet hit, the creatures screeched a high pitch scream that penetrated my ears. Another scream sounded but it wasn't one of the creatures, it was a human. I looked over to my left to see one of the creatures grabbing a small girl. I pointed my gun straight at the creature's head and pulled the trigger. The creature fell with a groan and took the girl with it; I rushed over and pried the arms off of her and helped her up.

Suddenly, another human scream came from behind me and more shots were fired.

"Everyone up on the bus now!" Nathan screamed.

Everyone pushed each other to climb on top of the bus. More screams rang around as the creatures continued their relentless attacks. I ran toward the bus but a creature suddenly came up behind me and pinned my back to the bus. Before I could hold up my gun, it grabbed me by my throat and leaned down over me. My eyes scrunched as blood and drool fell down onto my face and my hands fought to pry the thing off of me.

Before the creature could bite me, or do whatever it planned on doing to me, someone came from the side and shot it right in the head. The creature fell and I could finally breathe. I bent over and held my hand to my chest as I panted like I'd just run 10 miles. A hand was gently placed on my shoulder and I looked up to see B.

"You're okay, just breathe," he said calmly and I nodded. I looked around to see bodies lying around.

"Would you like to tell us what just happened?" someone spoke up. B and I looked on top of the bus to see a couple people surrounding Nathan, questioning what he'd gotten us into.

More and more questions and accusations were thrown at him until he finally snapped, "Now all of you just shut the hell up!" he sighed and ran a hand down his sweat soaked face, "It wasn't my choice to bring you kids here."

Everyone remained silent before a brave soul decided to speak up, "What do you mean? Why are we here?"

Nathan was quiet as he looked toward the sky and laughed, I looked to B who looked just as lost as I was.

"Don't you all see? We're here to kill those things!" Nathan shouted, making everyone stand still and stay quiet.



Artwork by Elijah Godfrey

He decided to take the silence as a signal to continue, "You see that blood running through you. That's the blood of those creatures. You're all half bloods."

That sentence started a rampage among the group.

"Those things are inside of us?"

"Half blood?"

"Why did you do this?"

Nathan pointed his gun towards the sky and shot, making a wave of silence rush over the group.

"If you want to complain about something, complain to the government! I had nothing to do with any of this and I was forced to have the blood injected into me too! It's the only way we're going to be able to protect the planet!"

I spoke up this time, "What do you mean protect the planet? Have those things taken over?"

He looked down at me and then looked around, stalling his answer.

"Well?"

"We don't have a name for them yet but all we know is that they're not human. We don't even know where they came from. Scientists took a couple of the creatures and did experiments on them and found that by injecting their blood into a human, it could make the human stronger and change the way we function. The changes are hard to notice but they're there; for example, you've probably noticed you don't feel fear. In order to fight these things we have to function like them, think like them. That's why you're all here." Nathan finishes.

I look at B who's staring at the ground. I take his hand, making him look over at me. I give a small squeeze of reassurance. Reassurance of what? I'm not sure. Maybe that we'll be okay or maybe to let him know I'm there.

"Thank you for telling us the truth. If you had no say, we can't be mad at you." a boy with wavy blond hair said.

Nathan gave a tight lipped smile and nodded. Everyone came down from the bus and reloaded their guns, after the fight we'd just had, it was best to be ready for anything to come. I was with B and we sat in silence after situating ourselves.

"Thank you for saving me," I said.

He sighed, "You're my partner; we protect each other."

I looked down and hid my smile, before I could say something a

weird feeling rushed over my entire body. The trees began to sway and the clouds suffocated the sun rays. The sound of the cicadas died out and an eerie silence loomed over the field we were standing in and then came a low, deep rumbling.

B noticed it too because when I looked at him he was already looking at me with the same expression I had.

"Do you guys hear that?" I asked, and many nodded.

Nathan looked around warily, "Everyone get your guns out."

Everyone grabbed their guns and kept a tight hold on them as we all lined up, ready for whatever was coming.

"Keep quiet." Nathan said as he stepped forward in front of the group.

We stood as the rumbling got even louder and the ground started shaking. I stared straight ahead and over the hill came a herd of hundreds of creatures running towards us. There was one creature in particular though that was much larger than the rest, around 15 feet tall. There were about twenty-six of us; there was no way we'd make it out of this alive.

Nathan's hands dropped slightly, "Holy mother of God."

"Sir, what are we supposed to do?" someone quietly said. Nathan didn't answer, he stood shocked.

"Nathan?"

He was silent for a moment before responding, "Try your best to survive. Shoot"

As soon as those words left his mouth a storm of bullets started flying. My ears rang from the noises penetrating them along with the screeches from the creatures. A couple of them were being knocked down but at this rate there was nothing we could do. My bullets were already gone so I had to reload. I went back to shooting and the herd was getting closer.

"We should leave, Nathan!" a girl shouted over the gun fire.

"I'm sorry to break this to you, but that bus ain't going to help us go nowhere. Those things are moving faster than that bus could ever go!"

They were right up on us and we all knew there was nothing else we could do. I dropped my gun and grabbed B's hand. He looked down at me with concern but understanding. He dropped his gun and wrapped his arms around me.



Artwork by Ebreona Harper

"You won't die alone." he said

Before this, I didn't know B. I didn't have time to get close to him or even become friends but we were there together and we knew we had no one else but each other. The creatures reached and the gun fire stopped, everyone had accepted their fate. I closed my eyes and waited, a buzzing noise was heard from inside my ear. I opened my eyes and looked around; everyone was gone and I was left standing alone in the field, then everything went black.

My ears rang and my mouth felt dry. I tried to move my fingers and toes. Flashbacks of what'd just happened were playing back to back inside of my head before a voice interrupted them.

"Subject A-011, are you awake?"

I gently opened my eyes and looked around to see that I was back in the hospital room I was in before everything happened. A flash light was brought to my eyes and flashed back and forth. I noticed it was Dr. Camile standing in front of me. I tried to lean up but I didn't have the strength to so she raised the bed up.

I coughed and she handed me a small cup of water. I drank it and looked around my surroundings. I still had the IV in and my blood was still the bright red color as before.

I finished the water and asked, "What happened? I was just fighting," I stopped for a moment and took a deep breath and continued, "I died; or I was about to."

Dr. Camile smiled, "That was stage 2 of our tests; you passed."

I stopped and stared at her, "That wasn't real?"

She shook her head, "No, it wasn't. Do you think we're going to put you on the battlefield just like that?"

I sat flabbergasted and confused. None of it was real yet I felt it all.

"Am I done now then?" I asked.

Dr. Camile raised her eyebrows, "This is only the beginning, A-011."



Artwork by Mia Langford

# Pen to Paper Keyboard to Screen

By Madison Yates

There's this story about myself that I don't tell too often, because the fear of people scrunching their noses at me when they hear it scares me. However, I will tell you; I can't see you scrunch your nose when you read because I can't watch people read. It makes me anxious. Watching your eyes dart from left to right, reading the words I thought long and hard about putting on the paper. Or screen. It's either pen to paper or keyboard to screen.

This story isn't bad per say, it's just something I tend to think about. It's one of those memories you lie awake at night thinking about. Those memories that don't make you a bad or good person, but just make you a person. Actions you've done that prove no matter how hard you try, you are just as human as everyone else. You can't escape human nature, even if you tried. I do think you can define your own human nature though. Not everybody has the exact same; there are different levels to your nature.

But enough of that, I have to tell the story.

This happened last summer, before this school year. I hadn't bleached my hair yet, I wasn't dressing in suits, and I had yet to impress people with my talent. I didn't like to show off my creativity a lot last year. Held most of my writings and art to myself. I am completely different now; I love showing people my thoughts. Pen to paper; keyboard to screen.

So, it's summertime and I'm sitting in my room. I am alone. I was alone a lot that summer; I never planned things with people. I never wanted people to get caught up in me and my scheming. I would sit in my room and I would stay up just for the sake of staying up. Sometimes I would lie awake until the sun hit my face. I began to

realize that I create my best work when I'm sleep deprived. I know this is not healthy, so don't lecture me in your head. I still get sleep and I'm not staying up every night like I used to, now it's just every other other day.

The night is old and I am tired. My eyes are most definitely bloodshot and I get this sudden urge to make something. I have to create something or I will lose my mind. Bursts of creativity like this don't come to me too often, and if they do, they don't last that long. But this was a big burst; it felt like I could do anything I wanted. So, I busted out any piece of paper with a design I could find. Empty sheet music, design cards, old dictionaries, and blank paper.

I had everything set out in front of me.

And I didn't have a clue what to make of any of it.

This is how it often is, I have this big burst of energy and I never know what to do with it. I never know how to put the non-existent ideas to the test. Creating things is hard, yes, but creating the idea is the hardest part. You have a million ideas running through your mind but none of them sound good; nothing is clever enough. For me, the idea has to be clever, it has to have hidden details and references only certain people would understand. I have to make it so I look as if I'm a mastermind.

I also don't like sitting alone with thoughts. Since it was late in the night, I couldn't have music playing in the background; I didn't want to wake anybody up. I was there, in silence, having no clue what to do with the energy. So I did what every kid my age would do.

I laid in bed and opened my phone.

Honestly, I wasn't looking for anything. I almost just gave up on making something because I couldn't decide on what to make. I wasn't ready for sleep though. I just had to let the energy die down.

I opened up Google Docs.

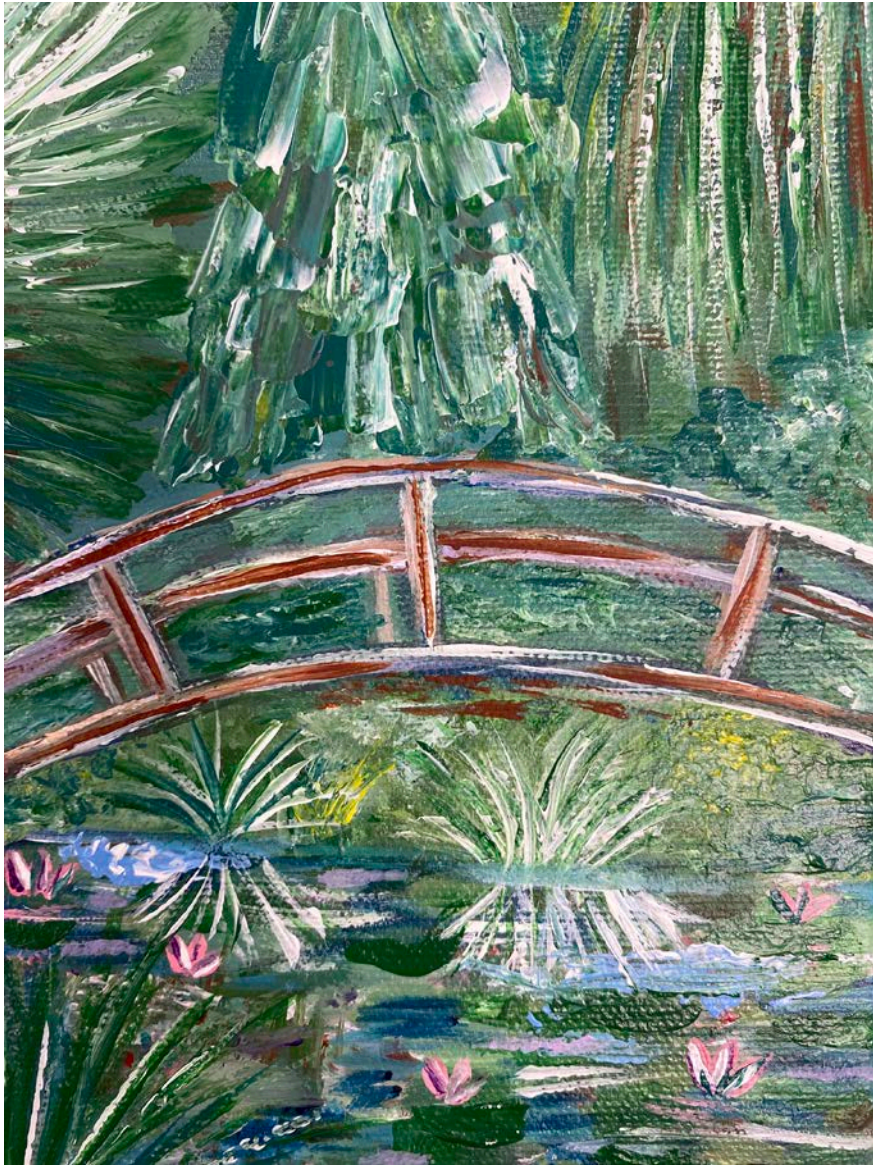
I like to re-read things I've written when I'm feeling antsy. It helps me realize that I do have good ideas and I can make great things, even when it feels like I can't. In that moment I felt hopeless, all this energy and no outlet to let it out. Sleep deprived, bloodshot, melancholic me. (It does help to mention that I was feeling sad. The summer wasn't the best so far.)



Artwork by Ryan Dallum



Artwork by Jennifer Ferguson



Artwork by Lilly Zagula

At the time, and still as of now, I was writing a book. It's called I Hate You and it's an enemies to lovers romance with a beautiful plot. We are not talking about my book though. I would write small snippets of character exploration from time to time, and I decided to read some

of those character explorations.

Reading your own words is surreal.

You think about where you were when you wrote it and you're constantly asking yourself how you came up with it. You laugh at your own jokes. You smile at the monologues you make these people of fiction say. You feel for them. This is your work, and as bad as it can be sometimes, you're proud of it. You're proud of yourself for taking the time to think about characters and explore them. We think it is so easy to just go in and write things off the bat, but that gives you a bad work of art.

Some people can do things off the cuff, but most of the time you need planning. You need to explore these people you've made and understand their role in the world you've made. You need to understand the world you've made. Sometimes it gets hard to explain, but you just have to understand.

Then I got it.

I.

Had.

Gotten.

It.

I Hate You didn't have a book cover yet. I hate the modern half-done covers with bright colors and an uninspiring feeling. I was not going to give my work a cover that made you feel like it was just another cash grab to tether to an audience. It needed to be thought provoking. It needed my flair of hidden messages, subtle subtext, and raw emotion. I have to make it so I look as if I'm a mastermind.

I jumped out of bed and looked at the pile of supplies ahead of me. Then I got to work. This time, the ideas just flowed. The hidden messages came to me like I already had them locked away in my mind. I used snake imagery, I created sheet music with Al Bowly's Heartaches, I used dictionary definitions, and I even used the Preface to Overruled. Subtext blended perfectly.

I put the pen to paper and created my favorite piece of artwork. It would accompany my favorite piece of literature created with the keyboard to screen.

I finished it in an hour. A full hour of me putting all of these ideas and thoughts onto a layered page of clues and messages. Brown and beige with a contrast of red in the middle. The eyes that look into your soul in the center. The cover to I Hate You was perfect. Funny thing, though:

I haven't continued writing the book since that night.

The issue with big bursts of energy is that they're random. Sometimes it's at three in the morning and other times it's in the middle of my Algebra class. This piece is even written at random times. I can't just be cryptic and philosophical all the time; everything comes to me at different times. And that's what this is about.

Creativity is random, nobody just creates good work at a perfectly planned time. And if it is perfectly planned, it often has a draft. This draft is created at a random time. I know a lot of people would argue and say they could just come up with an idea on the spot, but you can't. I mean, you could, but it would probably be bad. Forced creativity is often met with disappointing results.

I've learned that just letting things happen naturally is the best way to get a good product. This is why oftentimes I hate the things I write for school. It's all (mostly) forced, with a teacher giving me a prompt, an hour, and a set of rules. I don't work well with rules or time limits. Hence why I don't have the best grade in my English class, despite my love for writing. But I never base my skill on a grade in a class, especially an English class.

So, the story isn't a bad story, see? It's just something I can never get across right to people without sounding like a mad woman. But sometimes, I like being a mad woman. In the sense that my ideas and my work are so bizarre that you need to have a keen eye to find all of the hidden puzzle pieces I put in them. Simplicity is fun, and it's a good thing for when you need a break from complex stories, but I love complicated.

I love breaking things down. I love puzzles and riddles. I love motifs and easter eggs. I love when people come up with ideas you would have never thought of in a million years. I love reading the works of masterminds. And everyone can be a mastermind, they just need to put the pen to paper and the keyboard to the screen.

## special projects



*“The Memory Project gets its name from its first intention, which is to provide handmade, heartfelt portraits as special memories to children in orphanages. Now our intention has expanded to touching the lives of youth around the world facing many types of challenges while opening our hearts and minds so they can touch ours in return.” –Ben Schumaker*

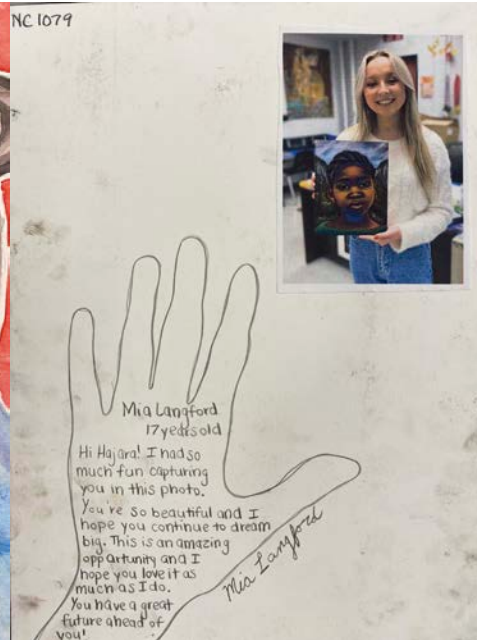
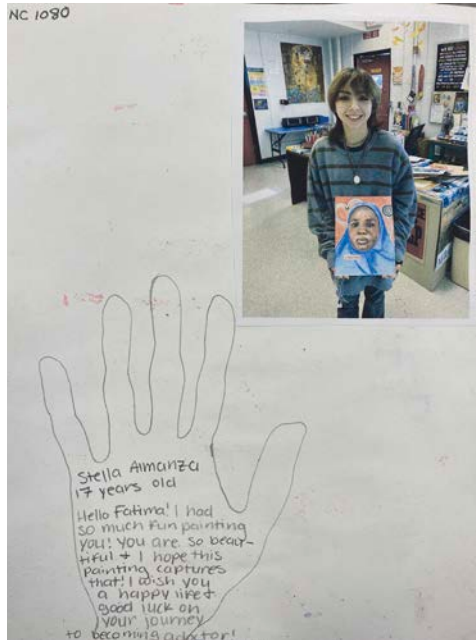
## The Memory Project

This fall, students participated in a global art initiative, known as The Memory Project. Started in 2004 by Ben Schumaker, the project’s purpose is to connect youth around the world through art. Students create portraits to help build cultural understanding through international kindness.



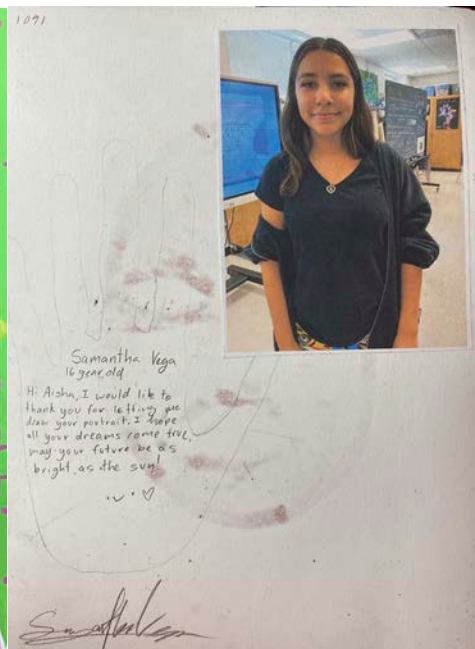
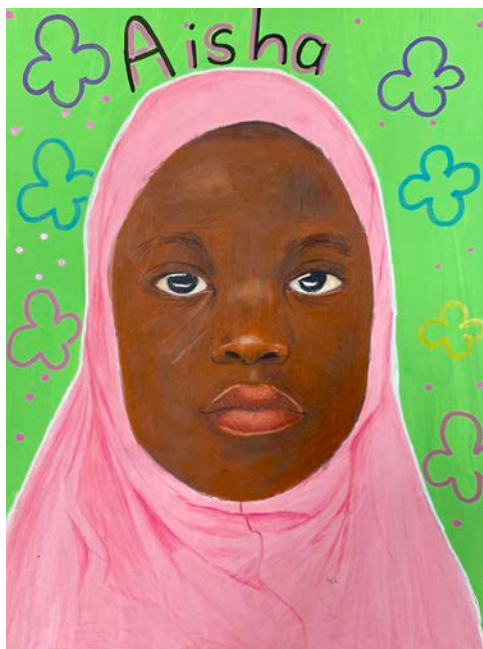
Each year, The Memory Project selects children from two countries. This year, the countries were Ukraine and Nigeria. Students received a packet of photographs for 15 children, along with their names, interests, favorite colors, personality traits, and long-term goals. The challenge for each student was to create a portrait that was a strong resemblance, while still adding their own artistic interpretation to convey their subject’s inner beauty and personality. Final portraits were mailed out in mid-January 2023.

For more information on The Memory Project, visit <https://www.memoryproject.org/about>



Artwork by Stella Almanza, Portrait of Fatima, The Memory Project

Artwork by Mia Langford, Portrait of Hajara, The Memory Project

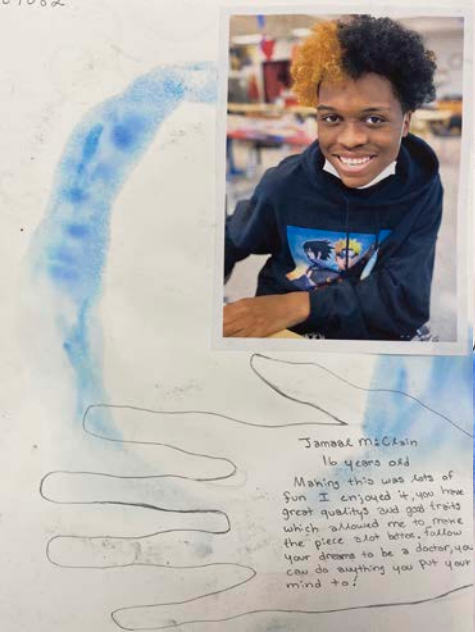
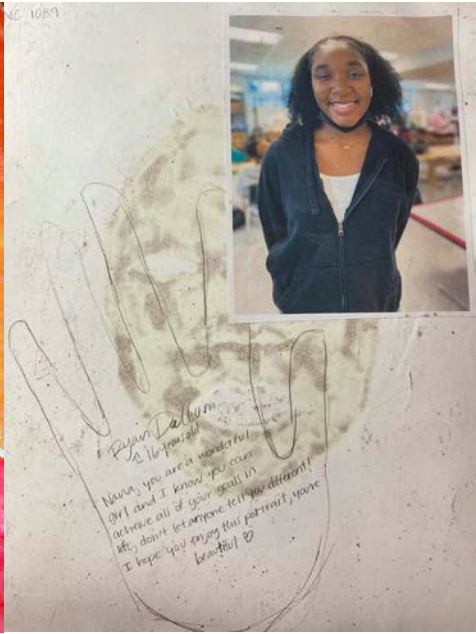


Artwork by Samantha Vega, Portrait of Aisha, The Memory Project

Artwork by Emma Price, The Memory Project



Artwork by Ryan Dallum, Portrait of Nana, The Memory Project



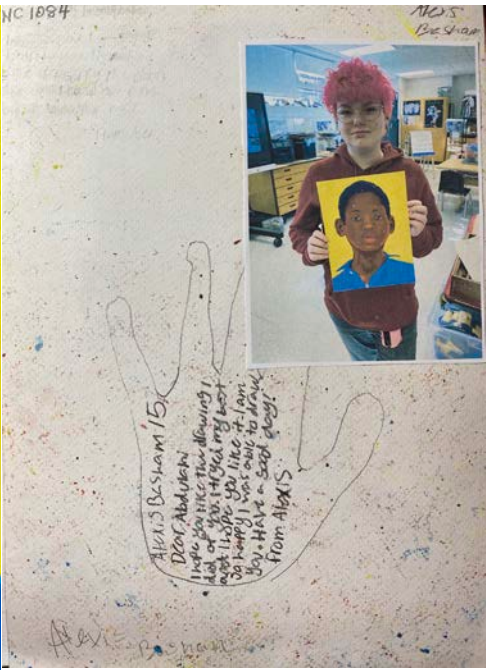
Artwork by Jamaal McClain, Portrait of Fatima, The Memory Project

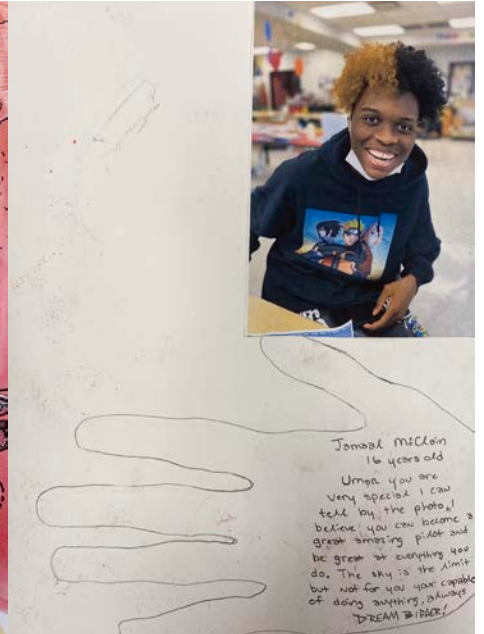


Artwork by Lana Elder, Portrait of Abubakar, The Memory Project



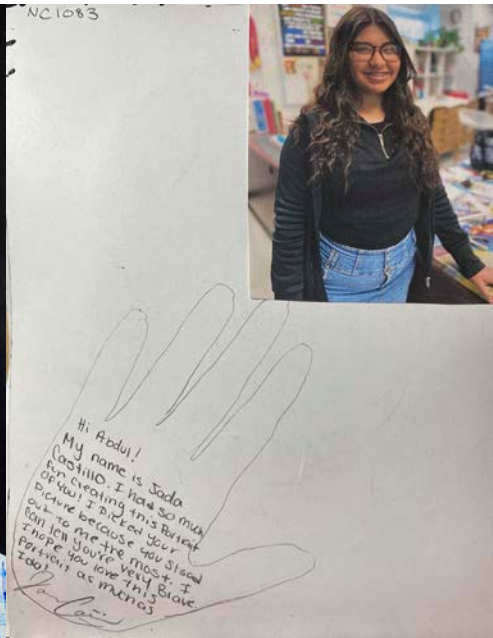
Artwork by Alexis Basham, Portrait of Abdulahi, The Memory Project



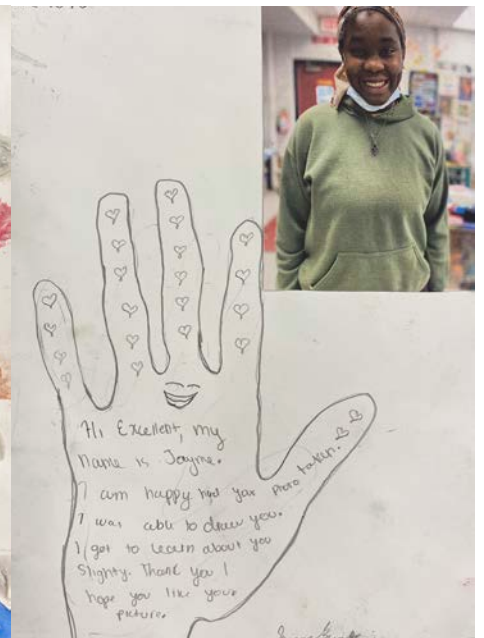


Artwork by Chandler Tinnell, Portrait of Fatima, The Memory Project

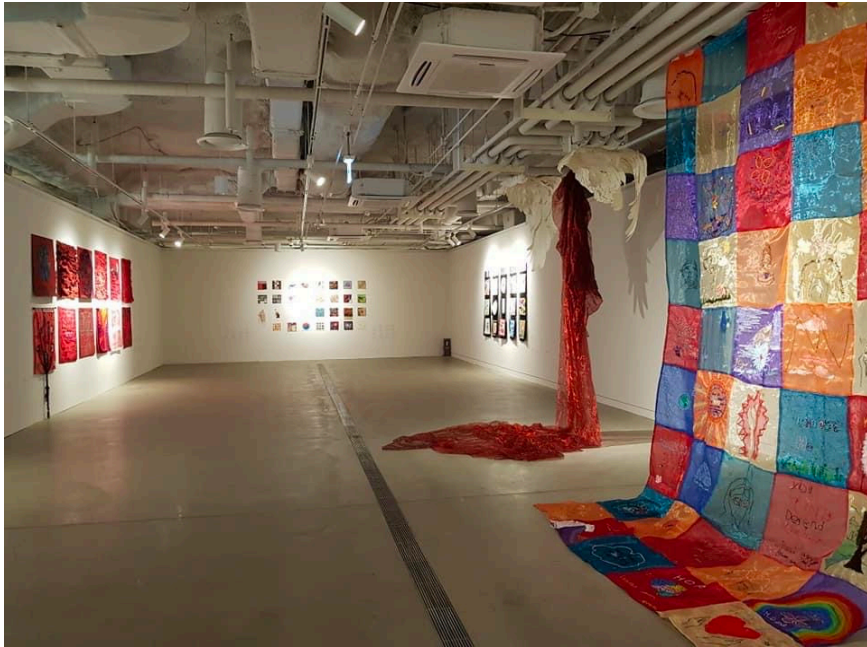
Artwork by Jamaal McClain, Portrait of Umar, The Memory Project



Artwork by Jada Castillo, Portrait of Abdul, The Memory Project



Artwork by Jayme Burks, Portrait of Excellent, The Memory Project

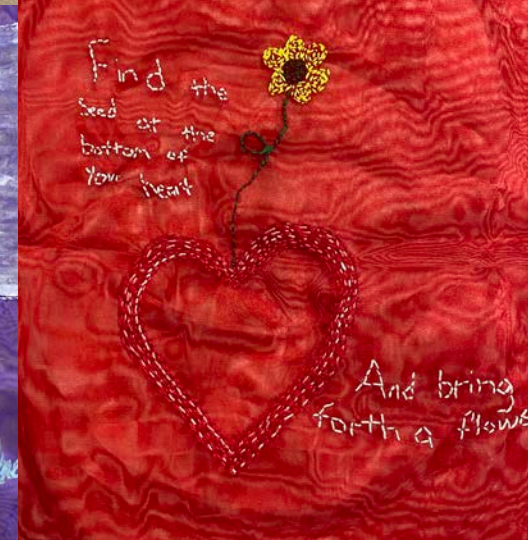
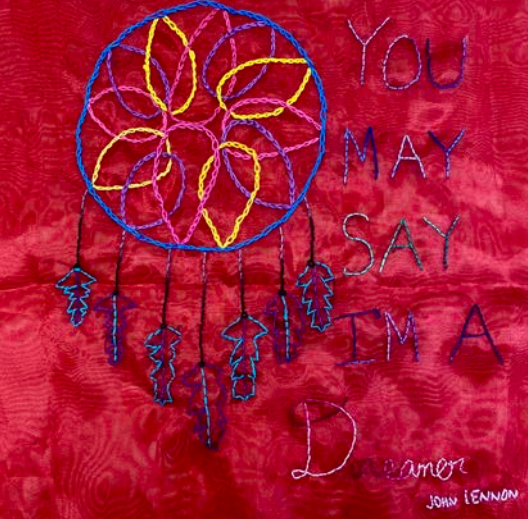


Student embroidered panels created by PRP students for last year's HOPE project traveled to Korea and were shown at the Korea Fiber Art Biennale 2022.

# Project HOPE

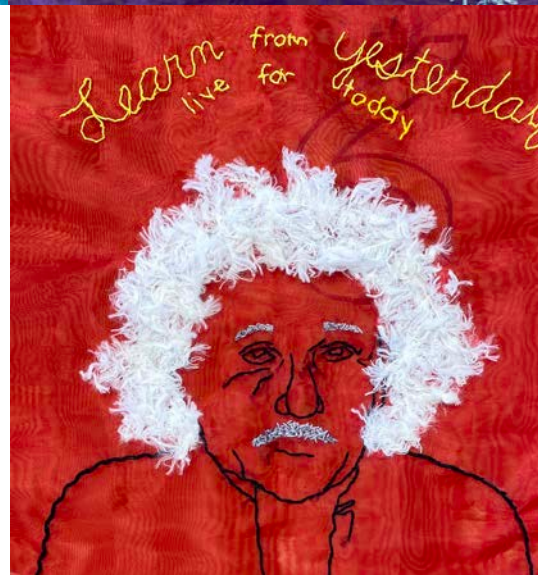
PRP was one of ten JCPS schools who collaborated on Project HOPE, a student collaboration of racial equity through an ancient art form called Bojagi. The completed panels were sewn together to bring messages of racial equity and hope to bring healing to the Louisville community. The finished panels then traveled to Seoul, South Korea, and were exhibited in the Korean Fiber Art Biennial in 2022–23. Many thanks to Moon-He Baik, Crane House, Louisville Visual Art Association and University of Louisville for making the project possible.





Students began by researching quotes about hope and discussed how art can be used as a catalyst for change. Groups of students worked together to create original designs inspired by selected quotes. Artists were required to use embroidery as their primary medium, and to design a message around themes of hope.

H O P E



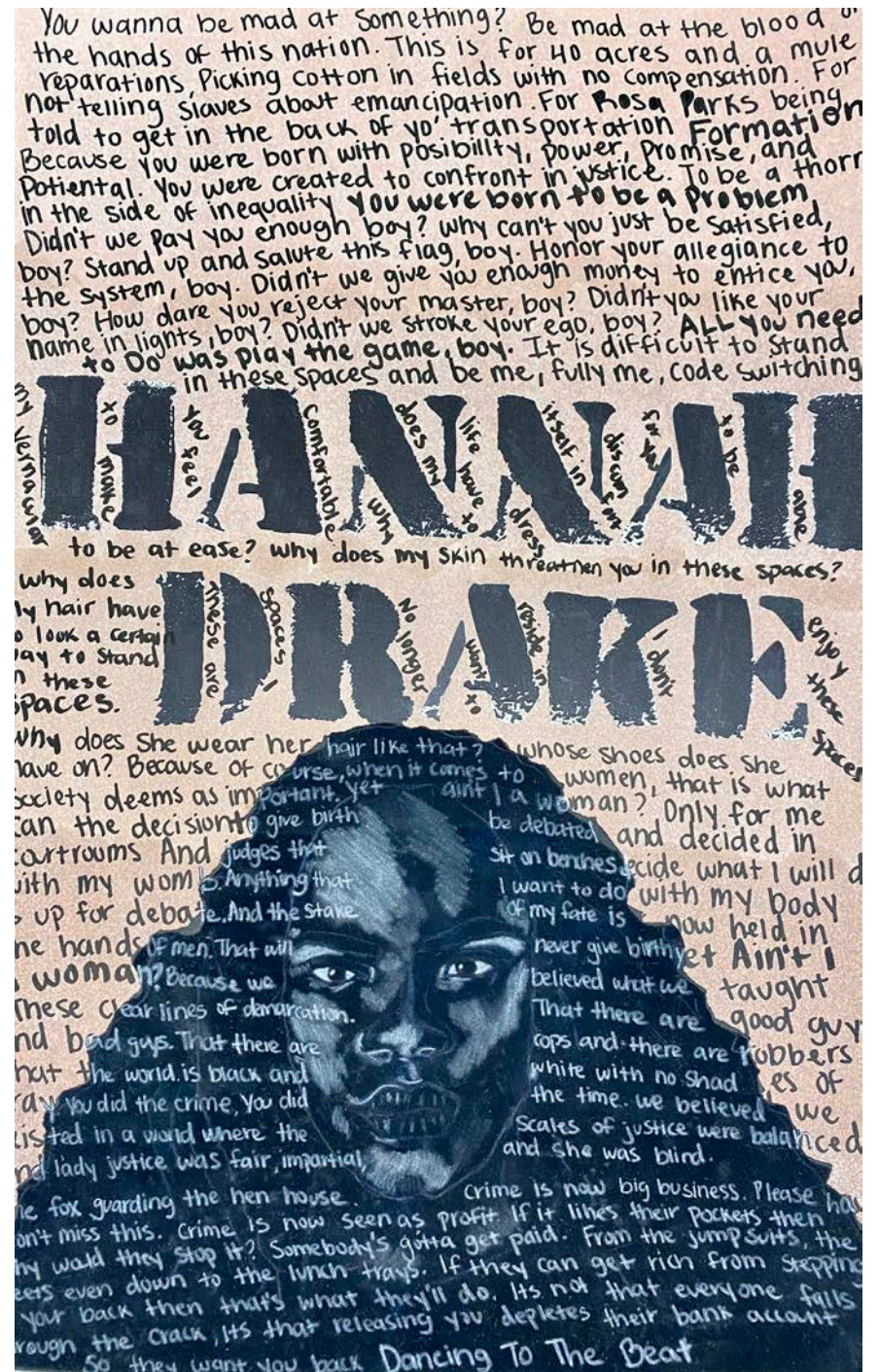
Top Row, Left to Right: Artwork by Jenna Singletary, Ahmilleon Willis, Lana Brown, Ryan Dallum. Row 2, Left to Right: Artwork by Krissa Culver, Mia Langford, Jamaal McClain and Jamari Gant. Bottom Row): Artwork by Emma Bartley



Artwork by Jamaal McClain

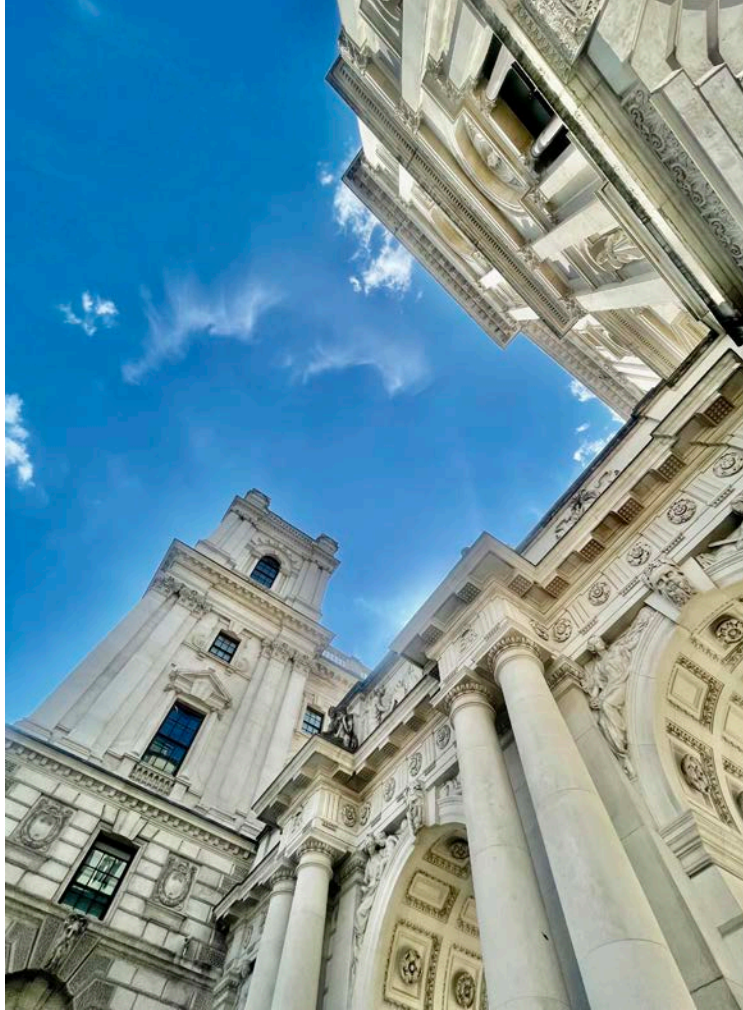


Artwork by CaMiyah Martin

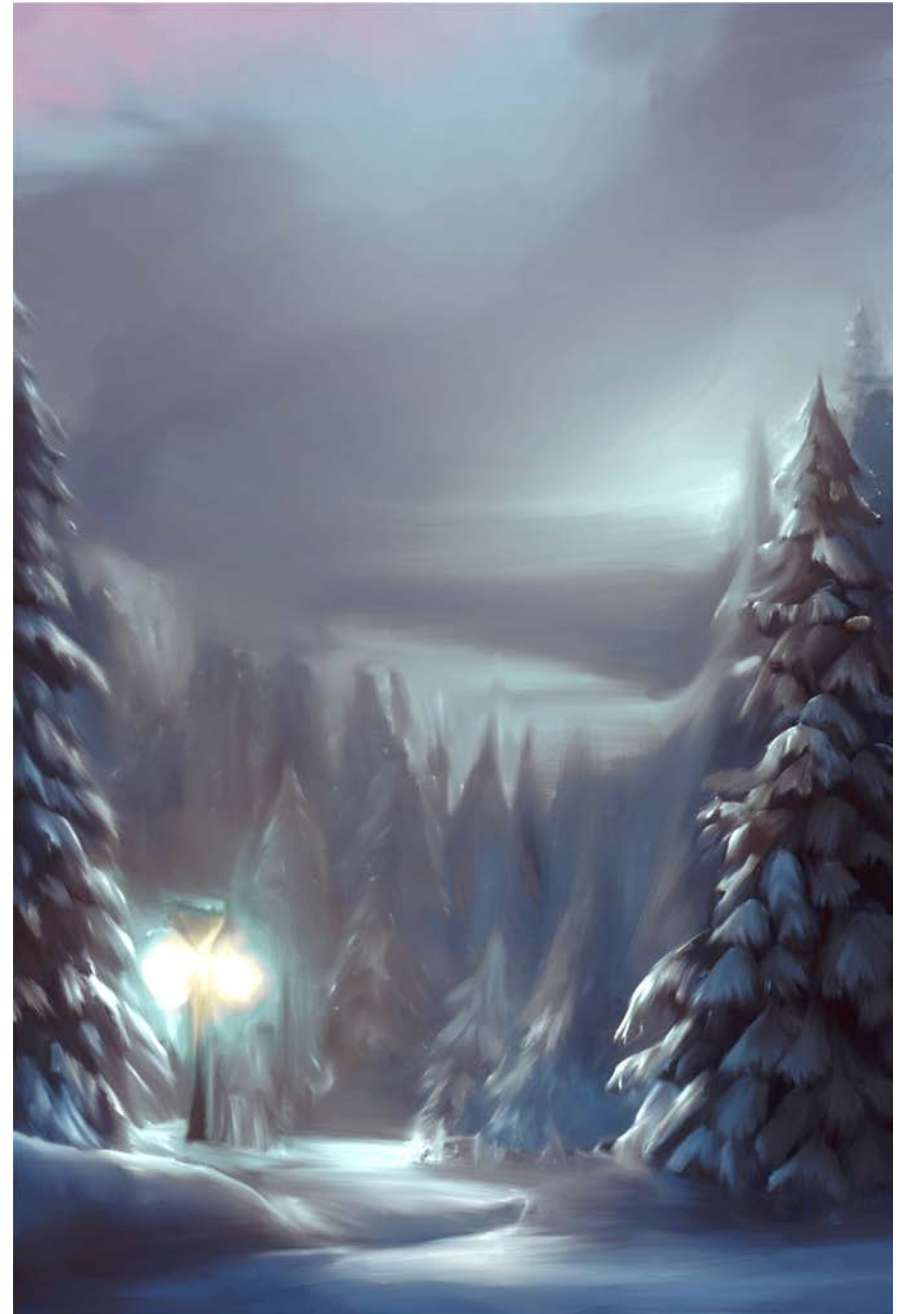


Artwork by Jolie Armand

Photograph  
by Lana  
Brown



Artwork by  
Samantha Vega



Artwork by Anna Estabrook



Artwork by Mia Langford



Artwork by Mia Langford



Artwork by Shania Lee

# The Wizard's Storm

By Caroline Sanders

Olivia and Gabriel have been friends since their freshman year. On their summer break, after their junior year, they decided to go to an amusement park. They used to go there all the time with their families when they were kids.

On a sunny day, Olivia and Gabriel were both dropped off by their parents in a parking lot where they met at the entrance.

Later in the afternoon, they were both wandering along the walkway with the crowd of families and friends. Gabriel was finishing up with the drink he'd bought along with his meal earlier. He was slow at drinking something that is iced cold, concerned he'll get brain freeze if he drinks real fast.

"So, what's your plan after school starts?" Olivia asked. Gabriel shrugs.

"I don't know," he answered, "Maybe continue on with football."

"I thought you're not doing that this year."

"I changed my mind. Sometimes I have no other choices. I'm still planning to become an engineer but I'm not sure about football."

"We're still young and have plenty of time, so..." She turned to her friend with a smirk. He looked back at her confusingly.

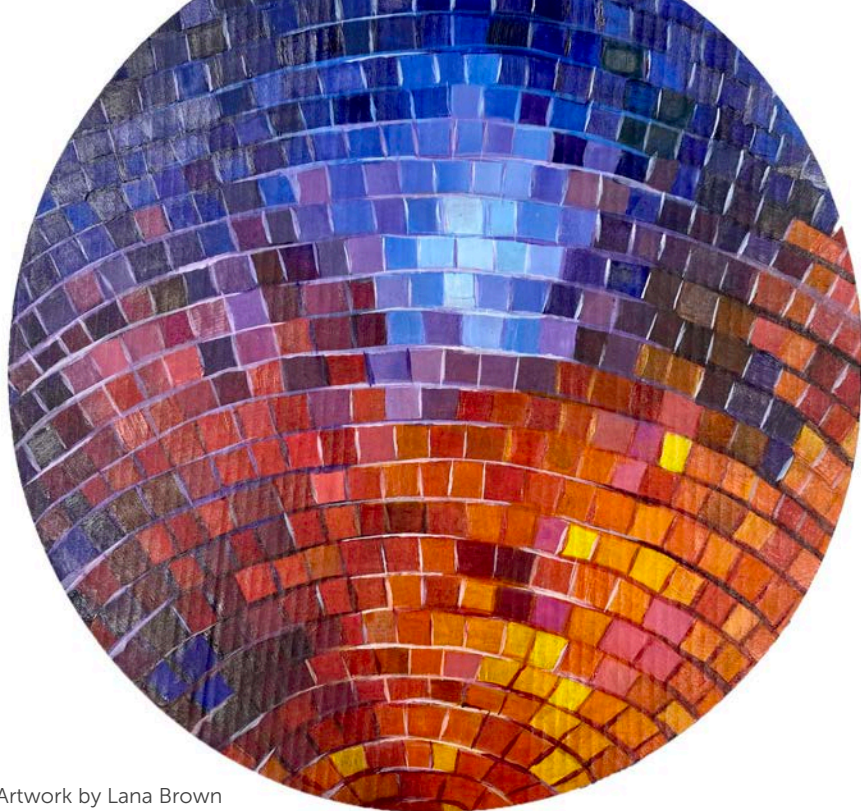
"So what?" He asked her. Olivia giggles and Gabriel joins with a chuckle.

"What I'm trying to say is," she then said, "I'm pretty sure you'll still have time to make plans before graduation. Before we get out of school for good."

"Yeah," Gabriel replies, "Nowadays I just wanna get out of this mess. It's too much for me now that I'm older. Now that we're older." They both laughed as they continued along the walkway, agreeing with each other about school. After a brief pause, Gabriel asked Olivia, "So, you're still thinking about becoming a nurse?"

"Yeah," She answered, "I'm still gonna continue studying the health pathway. Plus, I would get some advice from my aunt."

"She's a nurse too?" Olivia nodded.



Artwork by Lana Brown



Artwork by Cheyenne Hypes

Gabriel went silent for another brief moment. He then noticed he'd already finished his drink.

"Alright," he said, "Enough with some career talk." He tossed his empty cup in the trash can nearby as if it were a basketball goal.

Olivia watched as the cup flew into the trash. She then asked Gabriel, "You still play basketball?"

"No," he said, "I quit in fifth grade, remember?"

"Oh," she just said and went silent.

"Anyway, let's just do more fun stuff here. I don't wanna waste time walking around in the crowd like this."

"Well, true."

"Maybe we can ride on those tea cups over there," Pointing at the ride across from their left. Olivia looked.

"No, that's for kids," she said.

"Oh, come on! We're kids too!"

"I wanna ride on the big rides."

Gabriel stopped wherever he was with his eyes locked on his friend. She stopped too and stared back at him.

"Big rides?" He asked.

"Yeah," Olivia said, "I wanna ride on attractions everyone rides on."

"You mean bigger rides?"

"Yeah."

Gabriel pauses to think. His brain suddenly clicks after a brief silence and grows a smile on his face.

"I think I know a perfect ride you'll like," he said.

"What?" Olivia asked.

"I rather not tell you until we get there." As he grabs her hand and pulls her along. Olivia was starting to feel anxious.

"You can tell me, Gabriel," she said. "I won't run away like I would when I was five."

"Why's that?" He asked, turning to her.

"My dad once wanted me to ride on a rollercoaster just to tease me, but the joke went too far when I started running away. I was so scared to go."

Gabriel laughs and says, "Here, how about this," he then wraps his arm around his friend's, "Just to make sure you don't run away from me either." He then runs out of the crowd and Olivia starts kicking her feet up from being dragged along.

Finally reaching the area for large rides that are also filled with



Artwork by Mia Langford



Artwork by Jamaal McClain

families and friends, the two friends slowed down as they looked around at the roller coasters and other thrilling rides they would see.

"Alright," Gabriel said, "We're here, but we're almost close to our ride."

"Where are we going?" Olivia asked.

"You'll see."

"Just tell me, I don't know where we're going!" Gabriel starts laughing more. "Gabriel, I'm serious!"

"We're going to the big one," he finally said.

"What big one?"

"The Wizard's Storm."

Olivia looked up and saw the sign of the ride that reveals the name, "The Wizard's Storm," in front of them. It's the biggest structure out of every roller coaster in the amusement park.. The sign has the wizard below the name of the ride who was raising his wand with lightning bolts coming out of it. The dark clouds surrounded the wizard as if he were performing a big, powerful spell. The structure behind the sign was a black-colored attraction of the roller coaster with lots of bumps and loops the carts would be flying to with riders screaming.

When she saw the attraction, Olivia immediately started pulling herself away but Gabriel kept pulling her along while laughing at her as she kept saying she doesn't want to go.

"Trust me," Gabriel said, "You'll like it."

"No!" Olivia said, starting to smile at Gabriel's response. "This looks scary!"

"No, it's not."

"Yes, it is."

"Trust me, it's not that bad."

"Ugh...Ok, fine." As she rolls her eyes. She let her friend pull her along as they went through the entrance and got in line.

It took almost an hour for them to move up and reach the ride itself. They watched the families riding the roller coaster, flying in every direction and looping as if they were inside a tornado. Olivia's stomach grew weaker every time she witnessed it and imagined herself in one of those carts. She looked at Gabriel who was smiling while watching the ride from their line on the stairs, they were almost close to the ride.

"This looks scary," she told him.

"Seems like it, yeah," Gabriel said, "But I've been on that ride before."

"You have?"

"Yeah, I was ten when I first rode it. It's not that scary. Just relax. It'll be over real quick."

Olivia looks over across on her left to get a better view of the carts, she grows a little weaker every time she stares more at it when she then was pulled away by her friend.

"Don't look at it if you're gonna be scared," Gabriel tells her.

"Stop!" She whines, lightly pushing him to let go. "You're making me more scared!"

"You're making me more scared!" He mocks her, then turns to her with a smile and says, "Ok, yeah, I'm scared too."

Olivia gets annoyed and mumbles, "Yeah, right." They both remain quiet when Gabriel starts to laugh even more as he holds it so his friend doesn't see him, but it was so strong that the sounds were coming out of him while he was biting his lips to keep them shut. He couldn't help but laugh.

Gabriel slows his laugh down to catch his breath while he says, "I'm sorry...You just...You know, this is why you're my friend? You just make me laugh."

"You're the one who's making me laugh," she replied, "Since the first time we met." She then peeks over again on her left side of the line to check if they're getting closer, but after minutes of their conversation, they're at least a foot close to the ride. The chills grew in her skin and she started to have butterflies already, it faded for a moment before they moved up for the last time until it was finally their turn.

Gabriel went first as Olivia followed from behind. She looked up to see a vest harness above her and lowered it down on her. It was almost hard for her to pull it down as Gabriel did the same thing and buckled up with the small seatbelt that straps on the harness.

He turns to Olivia and says, "Safety first!"

"Yeah, I know," she said.

While they waited, which took them a minute or so, the employee checked if everyone in the cart is ready to go as usual. After she checked with Olivia and Gabriel, the employee walked off and makes her way to the control area beside them. Olivia started to grow butterflies again in her stomach.

"Hey," Gabriel said to her. Olivia looked as he smiled, "Breathe. It'll be ok, trust me."



Artwork by Tabitha Wallace



Artwork by Stephen Lady

She paused for a second to breathe slowly and said, "So...You rode here before, right? Like how many times?"

"Five times. The last time was last year with my dad. Then the ride started.

The cart starts moving forward slowly as Olivia wipes the smile off of her face and looks to see what's going on in front of her. She gripped the handle of her vest harness.

"That scared me!" Gabriel said, laughing at his own reaction. He jumped when their cart jerked for a second before it started moving forward.

Olivia kept her head back on her seat and grew more butterflies inside of her stomach. Her legs felt frozen. She felt her heart pumping fast with her blood racing through her vessels. The cart rose up to the hill and started climbing to the top of its mountain as she started to panic.

"Olivia, look at me," Gabriel said. She looked again. "Just breathe... Relax. Close your eyes if you have to, that's what my mom used to tell me when I'm scared."

"I can't!" Olivia panicked.

"Just rest your eyes. Close them like you're going to sleep." Olivia let out a laugh while panicking as the cart then reached the top and started to roll their way down to another hill. "Just close them," Gabriel kept saying. The cart lets go of its chain and starts running down at a falling speed as Gabriel then screams, "Close...THEM!!!!" Olivia screams too as they followed along the tracks and then flew up forward.

Everything was happening so fast. Her body felt empty and her brain was screaming with her while the strong wind blew in her ears. She did close her eyes, but only for a few seconds. Her black hair flew and her face was stretched out from all the forces of the wind. Her body kept jerking around from side to side in every sharp turn, and every time there was a dip, she would bounce off of her seat and jerk back down from the harness. The loop became the worst for her suddenly, a strong jerk movement with her body dangling in the air as if she'd been thrown into mid-air. She held on the entire time she went through loops, even the final four loops all together like a spinning tornado before the ride concluded with a sudden stop.

She jerked forward when the ride slowed down. Olivia looked at Gabriel for a moment as he started laughing, she then laughed with him to release everything from inside of her. She was now filled with

relief from all the things happening on that ride. She then leaned her head back with a sigh after their moment of laughter.

Once the cart returned to its starting point, everyone unbuckled their seatbelt and raised their harness to be let out. Olivia and Gabriel follow along the line to the exit and march down the stairs. They headed around the attraction in a walkway where they went to the small table where every three TV screens showed the riders' picture from the roller coaster. When it showed Olivia and Gabriel, they laughed at it. Gabriel in the photo was hollering in excitement during the ride while Olivia was screaming for her life.

The sun was setting for the evening as Gabriel and Olivia waited in the entranceway of the amusement park for their ride home. They leaned on the wall next to each other while they stared at the view in front of them which is the parking lot.

"Well, that was fun," Olivia said after a long silence.

"I had fun too," Gabriel replied.

They went silent again as Olivia gathered her thoughts, then asked, "So...Next time here? In our Senior year?"

"Yeah, sure," he nodded.

Olivia then had second thoughts. "Well...I don't know about college. Maybe after we graduate high school, we may be packing after that but...I'm not sure." She leans more on the wall with her arms crossed. Her eyes lowered to the ground, really anxious about what was on her mind.

Gabriel realizes that and tells her, "Hey, we can still talk while we're away. Luckily, we got our phones. I don't mind coming here again, maybe for our last time together before we go away to college. Maybe afterward when we graduate there, we'll do more fun stuff together there. Just like the old days."

Olivia smiled. She really does enjoy being with Gabriel. The car rolls up and Olivia pushes herself off of the wall when she sees it.

"Guess that's mine," she said. She then turns to her friend. "Call you tonight?"

"Deal," Gabriel answered. They then hugged each other and said their goodbyes. Olivia jogs her way to the car and jumps inside the front passenger seat. She then takes her final look out at Gabriel across from her car window as if it's the final goodbye, as she waves goodbye to him, he waves back as the car drives away. He watched the car leave as he then sighed and waited for his ride.



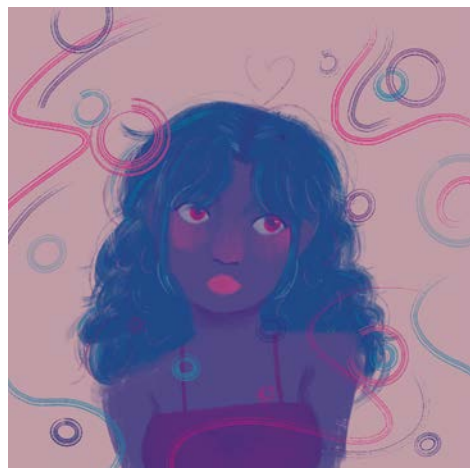
Artwork by Anna Estabrook



Artwork by Mia Langford



Artwork by Ryan Dallum



Artwork by Spencer Tuman

## project organizers

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*Creative Writing Teacher*

Denise Webb  
*Visual Art/2-D Design Teacher*

Brian Blevins  
*Visual Art/Ceramics Teacher*

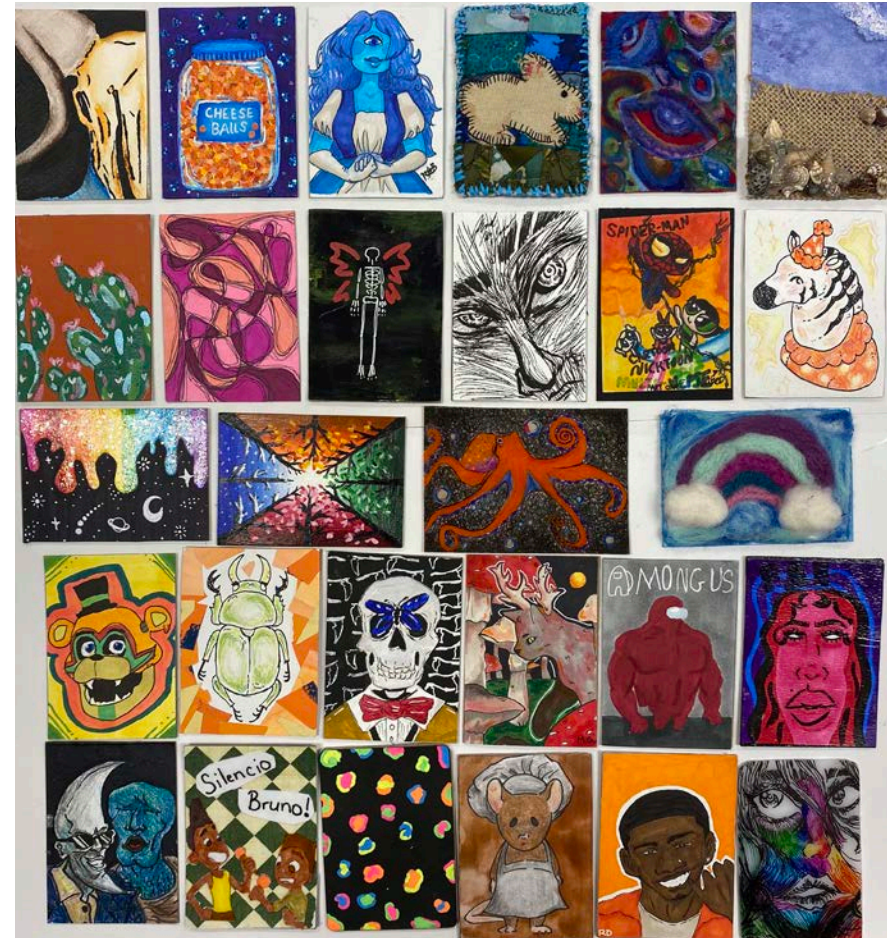
Sheri Duff  
*Principal, PRP High School*



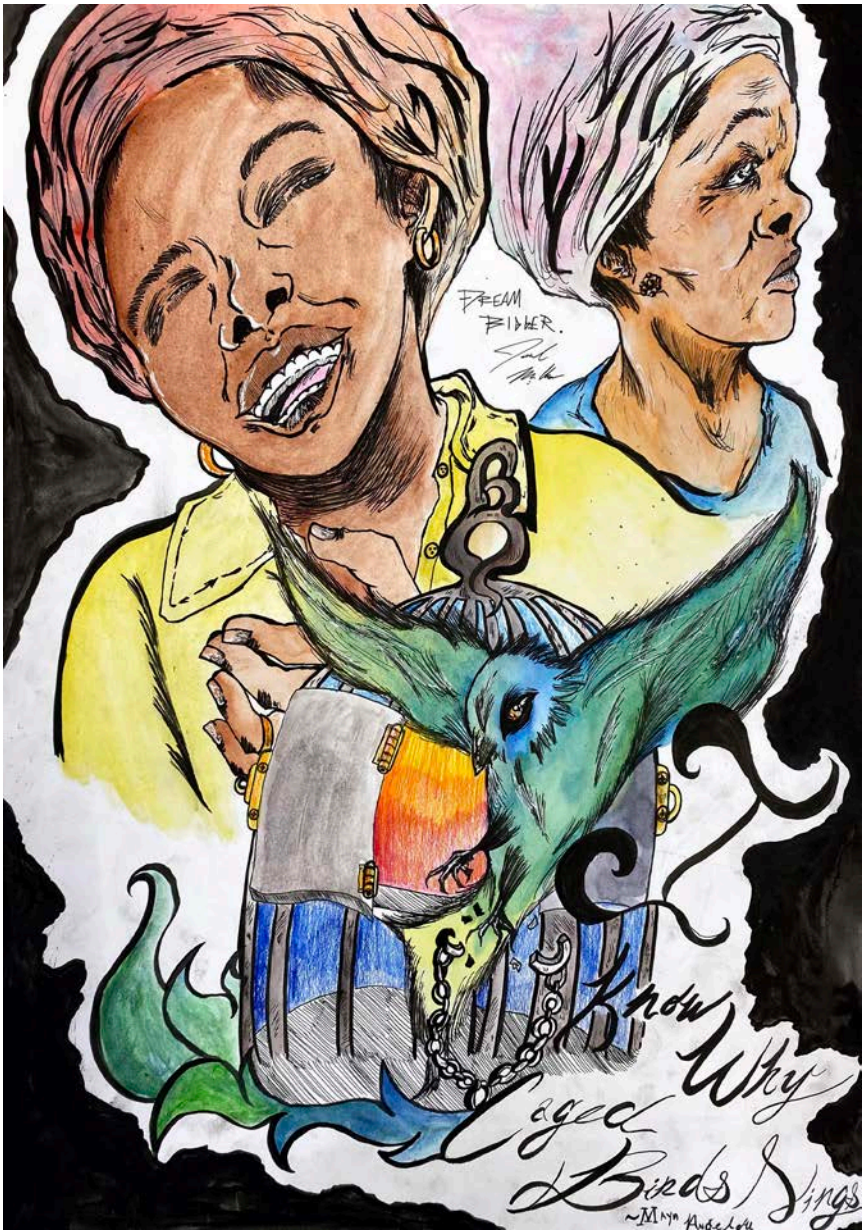
Artwork by  
Mia Langford

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Artwork created by art students for the 2022 NAHS Artist Trading Card Exchange



Artwork by Jamaal McClain

