

CREAN LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL PRESENTS



THE MIRROR

A L I T E R A T U R E & A R T S M A G A Z I N E

INAUGURAL ISSUE

2020

THE MIRROR

*For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part;
then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.*

1 Corinthians 13:12

FROM THE EDITOR

by Glen Worthington
English and Social Science Teacher

It is a joy and privilege to present the inaugural edition of *The Mirror*, Crean Lutheran High School's Literature & Arts Magazine. 1 Corinthians 13:12 serves as the magazine's theme verse and title inspiration. In this life, through Scripture, prayer, worship, and other spiritual disciplines, we perhaps see glimpses of God's heavenly glory — but only “in a mirror dimly,” only “in part.” As Christians we long for the day when we will see God “face to face,” when we shall “know fully” as we are already “fully known” by God. We understand in part but we long for more.

Writers and artists help us to understand more: sometimes about God, sometimes about ourselves, sometimes about the world around us. In essence, they hold a mirror to our world so that we may understand, appreciate, learn, know, recognize something new. They polish our dim sight; they help us to know more fully.

I believe our student writers and artists have accomplished just that. Among the many exceptional pieces contained herein, we learn about the value of family and friends (*Small Moments*, *Left Behind*, *Flick*). We learn about the importance of heritage (*I Am Chicana*, *America*). We learn to run life's race with joy and celebrate all that is new and exciting in the world

(*Ebullient*, *Adventure*, *Sights of Grandmother About New Technology*). We learn to laugh at ourselves (*Warehouse Wonderland*, *New Art Exhibit Astounds Experts*). But we also learn to appreciate others' struggles (*Planted*, *Fall Asleep Again*, *The Summer Surprise*, *Kintsugi*). We learn to calm *The Loudness in the Silence of My Head* in order to listen to God (*Time to Fight*). Ultimately, we learn that as we grow up we take life's wisdom and experience with us (*In That Room*). Crean Lutheran's prayer is that such wisdom and experience leads us to a deeper faith in Jesus Christ.

May the literature and art contained in this magazine bring glory and praise to God! We hope you enjoy.

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FRONT & BACK COVER PHOTOS:

BILL TIAN (CLASS OF 2020)

THE MIRROR

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LIFE AND DEATH
Gabriella Wells, Class of 2019
2019
MIXED MEDIA



TIME TO FIGHT

by Danielle Benson, Class of 2017

I am going to vent a little to you.
Sometimes you just have to.
Where do I begin?
Today is streaked with both joy and sorrow within.
I feel dumbfounded by the wickedness that is raging around;
How difficult it is for love and grace to be found.
Why is it that some religions call people to hate and kill?
Surely this is not God's perfect will.
Innocent blood is being spilled across the world.
It makes me want to hide in a hole and hurl.
God never wanted His people to harm one another.
He wanted us to all love our neighbors.
But do we even think everyone has value?
We torture those who are different and threatening to our own power.
Why do we let Satan control our souls some dark, hopeless hours?
I can picture the devil laughing and dancing when men's hearts turn ice cold.
When frozen hearts are nurtured with pain,
There will be heavy rain... then hail... then snow.
What happened to the rule, "A man reaps what he sows?"
The world is turning more and more into a cruel talk show.
The announcer (Satan) wants the audience to laugh and crow,
While contestants are beaten head to toe.
But after the victims are nurtured with hate and brought low,
They will be the audience soon to crow.
Why do we turn away from God's helping hand?
Did Jesus not heal and show us miracles back then?
If only we could sharpen our faith as invincible daggers,
The enemy could no longer be a threat in every matter.
So dress in the armor and fight with God's angels.
We will surely win the fight.
The battles we fight are not fought with our own might.
There is One who has already defeated the enemy: His name is Christ.



EBULLIENT
Jeremiah Koo, Class of 2020
2019
PHOTOGRAPHY, 8X12



ADVENTURE
Eric Kim, Class of 2019
2019
ACRYLIC, 18X24

THE SWAN LAKE

by Danielle Liu, Class of 2018



A gentle murmur fills the atmosphere,
Of reeds which rustle quietly in the breeze.
A silver swan swoops down, yet ne'er draws near,
And flies and glides with poise between the trees.

The morning is still young and rays of light
Just barely stretch to make the sky turn gray.
The swan, it is alone to greet the sight,
As waning night gives way to greater day.

At last, the creatures stir to hail the morn'.
The dewdrops fall and plop upon the ground.
More swans awake and grace the sky, airborne.
Their beauty is surreal; the world, spellbound.

Bright beams of light reflect off their white wings.
The gray sky now is gone and is azure.
The sun doth rise, commanding it is king;
Its crown of swans spin skyward in a blur.

Illustrious sun, it kills the envious moon!
All varmints of the night can't help but cower.
Like Satan's demons, they must flee to gloom.
The sun points upwards to the Creator's power.

The birds, like angel ballerinas, plunge
Straight through the air with sounds of victory.
They dance and celebrate the night expunged.
The triumphant sunlight shines in jubilee.

The dark is vanquished; animals arise.
Creation bustles, humming day's routine.
A river flows o'er grassy hills, then lies:
A lake, where swans and all of nature clean.

A wind then stirs, foreshadowing some doom.
Leaves furl, and creatures run for fear of harm.
The gales blow, angered, joined by thunder's boom.
The poor swans duck and hide in great alarm.

The shrieking gusts blot out all other sounds.
Great creaking trees surrender to the winds.
Huge drops of rain attack the sloshy ground,
Yet still the storm refuses to rescind.

The heavy rains pour out upon the earth.
The roaring clouds are dark and ominous.
The great deluge to which the sky gave birth
Then gives a cry and dies, mysterious.

A gentle murmur fills the atmosphere,
Of reeds which rustle quietly in earth's wake.
A silver swan swoops down, yet ne'er draws near.
It is a Scene: Tchaikovsky's great Swan Lake.

THE PRESENTATION

by Daelyn Johnson, Class of 2021

“EVERYBODY QUIET!” Mrs. Yeet exclaimed. “BE QUIET...RIGHT...NOW!”

Everybody turned and stared. The laughter stopped. Nobody dared say another word.

“What is wrong with you guys?” Mrs. Yeet questioned.

Small giggles filled the room.

“How dare you disrespect your peers like that. NOBODY, and I mean NOBODY should be laughing. You all should be ashamed of yourselves. Seriously ashamed.”

Mrs. Yeet paced the room, shaking her head violently.

“You just— You—,” Mrs. Yeet interrupted herself trying to find the right words to explain to the class how upset she was. “I just can’t, I really can’t,” Mrs. Yeet said, sitting down in her blue spinning chair next to her desk.

All the students looked at each other, tense, waiting for their punishment. Nobody knew what was going to happen next. They were just joking, teasing maybe, they didn’t mean to make a huge scene. Mrs. Yeet didn’t care.

“Dylan!” Mrs. Yeet yelled, without even looking up from her phone. “Get up.”

Dylan looked around and stood up, shaking next to his desk.

“Yes, uh, yes... yes Mrs. Yeet?” Dylan questioned, scared he was about to be embarrassed in front of everyone in his class.

“Get. Out. Of. My class... Now,” Mrs. Yeet said confidently. “Oh... and apologize to Charlie. Now!”

Dylan followed Mrs. Yeet’s eyes all the way to where Charlie was sitting in his gloom with a small look on his face. Dylan had to sum up all the courage he had in his body to say these small, small words.

“I’m sorry, I guess, Yea I’m... I’m sorry Charlie,” Dylan said rolling his eyes. He looked around the room. “I’m sorry I threw the ball of paper at you. It was a joke. I, I— didn’t mean it.”

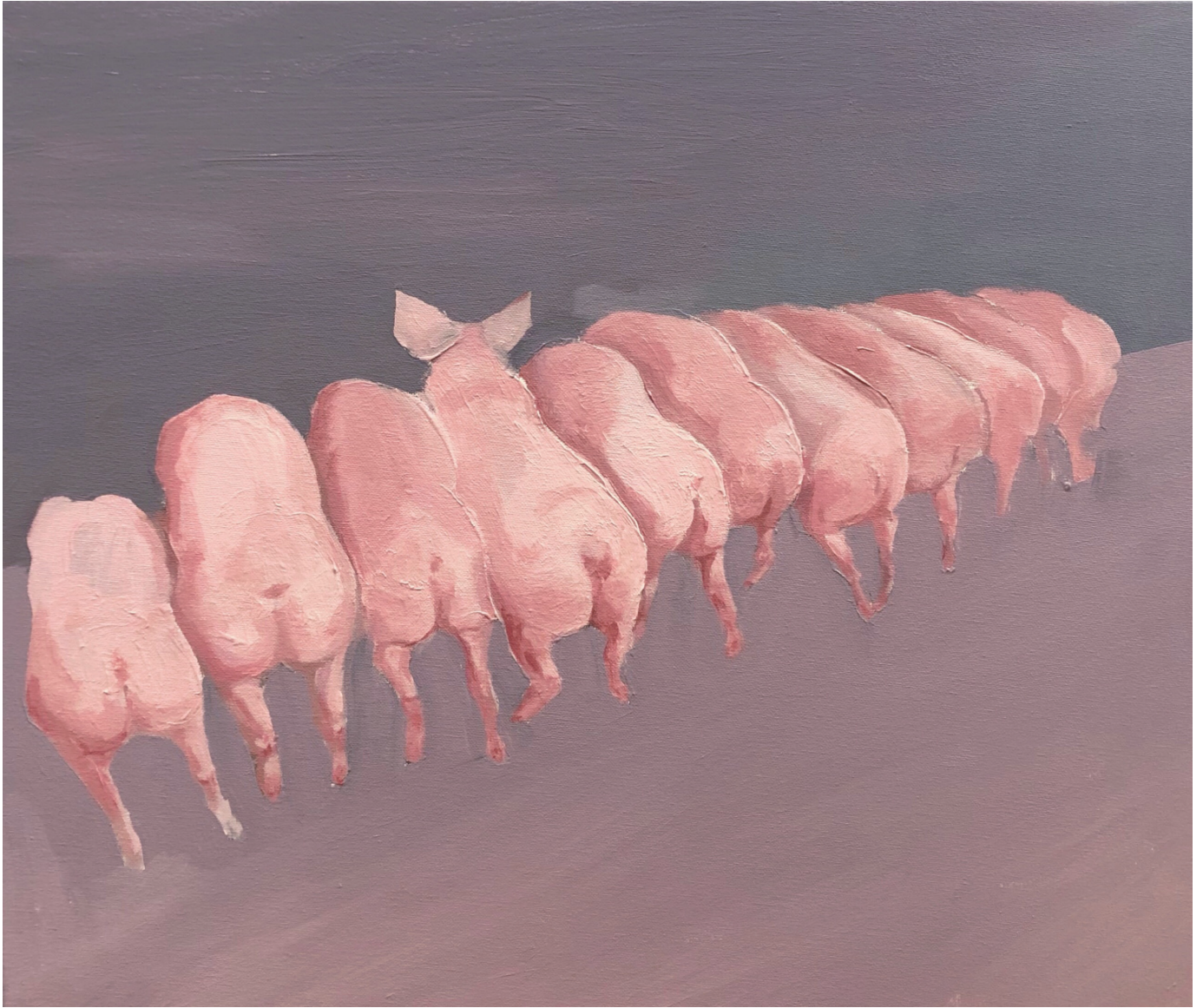
Charlie looked up at Dylan’s crooked smile and nodded. “Yep,” he replied.

Dylan looked at Mrs. Yeet then back at Charlie. He grabbed his stuff and walked out the door. Everyone applauded as Dylan walked out of the class shaking his head. Mrs. Yeet stood up and gestured Charlie to the front of the room. Charlie got up and faced his classmates.

Charlie chuckled quietly and sarcastically. “Now where was I? Oh, yea, The importance of stopping the spread of bullying.”



PLANTED
Hanna Lee, Class of 2020
2019
ACRYLIC, 18X24



FALLING ASLEEP AGAIN

by Jade Stankowski, Class of 2021

The familiar white walls bounce streams of light across the hospital room. Here I am again. The same hospital bed — adorned with fleece pillows and tucked with spotless sheets. The same tangled wires, chaotically ascending towards the heart rate monitor. The same green hospital gown clinging to my shoulders. And the same injury — a torn ACL.

The nurse snatches my arm, fastening an ID band onto my quivering wrist. “Stankowski, Jade. Age: 15. Date of surgery: 04/23/19.” The solemn words are rubies embellishing a tarnished bangle. The jewels flaunt their presence, yet the crystals’ glimmer is unsettlingly juxtaposed with its weary counterpart. A fire of déjà vu permeates my mind. Less than eight months ago my fingers clutched these same cotton sheets, my right knee set apart for reconstruction, my naive heart pulsing with anticipation. I thought every calculated incision, every bloody stitch, every tender step was the fee for a future free from pain. Yet here I am, beginning my feeble clamber up the mountain I already conquered. My mind is already fatigued from the last ascension; my heart is weeping from this sinister encore. Just let me sleep.

“Jade Stankowski?” a nurse croons I respond with a firm nod.

“We’re going to fix your left leg, correct?”

Another nod.

“Now I’m just going to give you some meds and hook you up to the IV. The anesthesiologist should be with you in a little while.”

I plop the tablets into my parched mouth and flood the barren cave with water. The pills and liquid cascade down my throat; the torrent of nutrients plummets to my stomach. The nurse seizes my arm as she reveals a long catheter. As anxiety devours my stomach, I inhale deep breaths, attempting to blow away an anxiety attack. She pulls the trigger; the silver bullet dives into my veins. As the shaft lodges into my skin, a sharp pulse shocks my arm. I wince, but a gush of fluid subsequently warms my arm, assuaging my pain. The bed cushions hug my jittery shoulders and rigid spine. The anesthesiologist will arrive any minute.

Draped with a white coat, the Sandman parks his cart of miscellaneous tools.

“Hi, Jade. I’ll be giving you your anesthesia today. This might sting a little.”

He replaces the clear IV bag with a new substance, a snake meant to entice me into an instant slumber. The venomous beast writhes through the IV tunnels, ravenous for my blood. My heart bangs at my chest, screaming for freedom from its inevitable fate. It launches waves of choppy breathes into the air as I fight the rip current of fear. The reptile’s fangs chomp into my trembling arm. Its bite sears through my finger-tips and shoulders, jolting my arm back.

What if I can’t handle surgery again? What if there’s a complication during the reconstruction? What if I can’t play soccer again? What if — ? The ocean calms. My arms soak in the streams of light bouncing off the white walls. My drowsy eyes drift into a dark rest. The world stops. I sleep.

JUST BREATHE

by Michael Vasquez, Class of 2020

Breathe. Just breathe. That's what people do right? Think happy thoughts and it will go away. At least that is what the people outside say. They don't like it much when I don't think happy thoughts. I wonder what the outside is like? Jerry has been outside, I should ask him. Wait... no... Jerry. Wait, Jerry, wait, what happened to Jerry? Jerry. Jerry. Oh, wait, I am Jerry! I smiled to myself. I forgot. Down here in the cube we have numbers. Numbers that distinguish us from the others. It makes it easier for the people in white to figure out which is which. Not that they would have any trouble remembering my name, I thought.

"M-879!" screamed the man in white. White, very peculiar. I thought, why white, I have seen the outside people work with red stuff before. That would stain. Why not red, that way it blends in. Less of a mess! I wonder what would happen if Jerry was outside again. Does the outside exist? Yes, of course it exists, Jerry has told me so.

"M-879!" He said it louder and more slowly this time. As if that was going to help, I heard him the first time. Slowly arching my head up, peering through the glass that makes up my ceiling. I take it that means that I heard him because at that moment the man started talking. Talking too fast for me to understand. I don't get many talks down here anymore besides with Jerry. Jerry has always been a good talker.

"...October 27...field testing...test subjects C-134 through...failed..." The select few words I heard before the green light on the speakers turned red, meaning the announcement was over. C-134, I scrunch my face trying to remember that number. Maybe I met him during Sunday hours...

Every morning has the same routine. 5:45 wake up. Breathe. Brush my teeth then sit and wait for breakfast that comes through the chute and comes out to the side of my bed sheets. I never figured out why I must breathe. I do it all the time, why do the people in white want me to breathe. Why think happy thoughts? What happens if I run out of happy thoughts? Most of my happy thoughts

come from Jerry. But today was different. The alarm went off early.

"M-879. Field test day 1. Date, October 27. Begin."

Breathe... just breathe. Happy thoughts, no more happy thoughts. No more happy dreams. None, it is all gone. Panic. Fear. Anger. Just then my cube moved. Upward, up towards the people in white. No, past the people in white. Past the Sunday hours room. I step backwards, almost falling over my bed, look up and see the dome-like ceiling open. BRIGHT! OUTSIDE! JERRY! JERRY! Jerry? Jerry where did you go... ? My blood is pumping, my limbs are sore. My head is swelling. I no longer feel. Breathe, I thought, this has happened before. At least I think, Jerry was always the one that remembered things. Breathe... the cube stops. My vision starts to blur. My head is on fire, growing increasingly numb. Nothing, nothing, I feel nothing. I didn't breathe...

Why is this happening? Why do I breathe? Where is Jerry? The glass ceiling parts open. A ladder pulls out of the wall farthest from me. One foot, numb, other foot numb. Everything numb. I make my way towards the ladder, one foot after the other, I peer my way out of the cube. Outside. I was outside! But why? Field testing? October 27? What was I testing? Where is Jerry? Jerry would know what to do. He always does. But Jerry is gone. I did not breathe. Breathe slowly, think happy thoughts, maybe if I am outside Jerry will come back... Nothing, I am all alone. As soon as I leave the cube, the glass ceiling closes and shoots back downward. I am truly, truly, all alone. Trying not to shake, I look around, walls, a lot of walls. No instructions to follow. I am trapped. Miss the freedom of my cube, new is scary. Distant memories of the outside flashback inside my head. Was it mine or Jerry's memories? Green. Lot's of green. Is this really Outside? Is this even real?

The people in white smiled at the hundreds of screens inside the room. All their eyes peeled to the big screen in the middle. "Test subject M-879 is successfully inside the testing zone; bring in test subject K-880 for briefing and entry."



LEFT BEHIND
Annie Li, Class of 2020
2019
ACRYLIC, 19X24



THE LOUDNESS IN THE SILENCE OF MY HEAD
Calli Cox, Class of 2019

WEIGHTLESS

by Camryn Caruthers, Class of 2021

Weightless. The life of a child, free of obligation. The grass was greener under my feet, no clouds blocking my vision of how far I could go. This day was the last of that weightlessness. That blurred line between child and adult. My parents approached me as I was playing in my room, and in their hands was a book. Mom knelt before me and put the book in my arms. I carefully opened the book, just to reveal blank pages. The weight felt new, almost exciting. I was given responsibility and handed expectations to fill. Years passed, and I became accustomed to the load in my arms. People saw this, so I was given more. A shield, to learn defensiveness, and a pair of glasses, to keep watch out for danger. These new objects didn't take much adjustment. I felt proud to carry these new things, making myself less reliant on others: more independent. The world gave me these things, so I must prove to them I am capable.

I took them everywhere: to school, to basketball practice, and even at home. Life continued like this; more and more placed in my arms as I grew older. Some helpful like shoes to run and pencils to create, but some just burdens. I was given heavy stones and dense clothing that dragged at my feet. I became sluggish and tired, with a lack of determination. Days on end where I would wake up, place everything in my arms, and drag myself through the day. This continuous suffering that I was given, it was now my decision. I wanted to be responsible for these burdens. I was no longer a child, these objects were now mine. My obligation, my expectation.

What are these weights, anyway? Do they hold such a great importance? These weights are all I have ever known. That constant worry and second guessing in the back of your mind. If I could just take these burdens off and strip them from my life. Forget about these small things that make us "mature" into adults.

I looked around myself, seeing others with those same burdens passing around me. I made up my mind. Slowly, I lowered everything toward the ground, and time stopped. Once these accessories of life hit the floor, that feeling of weightlessness seemed to return.

Yet, something was different. There was guilt. A new weight, yet there seemed to be nothing there. Eyes were like the sun beating into the back of my head. This wasn't freedom, this was an increase of obligation. Even more pressure was placed upon me as I dropped it all at my feet. Was it worth it? To try so hard to be free? I could tell I was different when I dropped my pile. Others were looking at me with shock and disgust, and maybe even fear. Their glances weighed heavy in the air around me, and one by one, they started walking towards me. Each person placed the fallen objects back into my arms. The glasses, the pencils, the blindfolds, the shoes, and even the rocks. That is when my parents approached me. They held that same book from so long ago, but now it was full of writings.

"We all must mature at some point, we cannot remain children forever," said Mom, a loving look on her face.

She handed me the book, completing the stack of all of these burdens that life has placed in my lap. I must accept it. Everyone expects it of me. It is a part of life, to chain your mind to these ideas and events. It is what makes us grow out of childhood. I look at the weight in my arms and spot something new at the top. A shell. An empty shell that has cracked and turned grey. No life inside of it any longer. What was that feeling of weightlessness like? To forget, to move forward, and to create without worry. I think I remember. What a wonderful time that was, to be weightless.



THE SUMMER SURPRISE

by Noah Shapard, Class of 2021

It is summer. I am going to be in fifth grade in a couple short months and I am happy. I do not worry about much and see each summer day as a new opportunity for fun and adventure with my friends. "It is going to be the best summer ever!" I say to myself. Having two brain surgeries is not what I have in mind.

A few weeks earlier, when I am still in fourth grade, I am sitting in class trying to retrieve my English book from under my desk. This book is on the very bottom of the desk because it is the biggest, so every time I use it, my hands scrape the rough book and I use my arm strength to lift it up with all the other books resting above it. Today is different. All of a sudden, my fingers start to tingle and the sensation runs through my arms until they grow completely numb. I cannot manage to move my hands. My heart starts to beat faster. I hear my teacher's instructions: "Class turn to page 101 and we will be starting our new unit on stories based in the Bronx". My heart starts to beat even faster because I still cannot manage to lift my book up from under my desk. All of my classmates give me this puzzled look as to why I am not following Mrs. Heitmann's instructions. I start to panic and my palms start sweating. I try to calm my muscles down by taking big deep breaths. Inhale, exhale, repeat. Inhale, exhale, repeat. I am hoping that this will bring feeling back into my arms, but it did not. Eventually, the feeling of my hands and arms is restored. I let this incident go until it starts to recur every few days.

At home, my mom begins to notice I am becoming weaker than usual. I cannot perform simple tasks the way I used to. I cannot comb my hair or do jumping jacks without stumbling. When I eat dinner, I have to grasp the fork with one hand while the other dangles. I am a toddler trying to lift at the gym.

Something is wrong and I keep denying it. I take a trip to my pediatrician and I hope she comes up with a simple excuse such as dehydration. She says what I fear. I have to visit a neurologist just in case the problem is stemming from the brain. My parents and I are anxious when we hear this. Especially with my mom being the worry wart, she cannot bare hearing this. It is tough to enjoy my summer after that visit. A week later, I go to the Mission Viejo lake with my friends. It is a beautiful day, the smell of the warm clean air and the sound of water fills me with happiness. I am having so much fun that I completely forget about my situation, until my mom tells me that a doctor calls and can get me in for an appointment today. Three hours later, I find myself sitting in an MRI machine with my arm hooked up to an IV. An hour later the phone rings in the waiting room. It is the radiologist with my results. "His right side of the brain is completely blocked from blood flow and the left side is 90%, he is being diagnosed with Moya Moya." Complete silence. It is an emotional rollercoaster. All sorts of feelings are flying around; anger, confusion, worry, ignorance. I want to pass out. I start to cry when I hear this news. I go to the hospital next and the doctors there are surprised I am even walking. They are baffled that I did not suffer a stroke yet. Thank God I had not stroked.

Three days later, I am being wheeled into the operating room for brain surgery. I am shaking and my hands are grabbing on to the side of the bed railing. I say my prayers and take a deep breath. I feel the anesthesia medicine being injected through my veins, and before I can panic any more, I fall asleep.

IN THAT ROOM

by Joshua Hill, Class of 2017

In that room, the years have come and gone. Indeed, they have not just gone from one warm moment to the next, being thrown out in the process. Instead, they have been cherished and remembered, remaining close at heart from the very beginning. In that room, colorful toys and vibrant animals lined the floor. Train tracks, superhero figurines, pillow forts, and rainbow orbs from the ball pit created walkways between the traces of a child's imagination. Space aliens were defeated, dinosaurs roamed, and race cars competed in that room. Following in my footsteps, my young room acted like a toddler. He dressed himself in flashy posters and numerous baby photos. He opened his door to all my innocent friends for parties and sleep-overs. He even kept our nightlight on for us as we drifted off to sleep, protecting us from the monsters hiding under the bed.

In that room, punishments were made and lessons were learned. Running inside his door, my sneaky, childish self would hide from my parents after clearly doing something wrong. His walls, I thought, would protect me from my oncoming doom of spankings and no desserts. We would make it through together. However, those childish walls would not guard the child. I would be caught, inevitably, and my discipline would come.

In that room, a young boy became a teenager. Slowly, as the toys and books and animals and onesies left my room, a new atmosphere appeared. My room soon dressed himself in sports memorabilia and paintings of the beach and sophisticated Bible verses. Baby blues and tender yellows soon became dark blacks and amber browns. Technology moved in. TVs, video games, radios, speakers, and computers replaced the positions of teddy bears, trains, and marbles. New, more hip clothes took the place of childlike outfits in

the closet. My room, developing in its representation of myself, matured alongside me.

In that room, new thoughts and higher intellect evolved. The purpose of life itself soon became more important. Growing in knowledge through academics became more significant. Girls no longer had cooties and became more intriguing. As these new forms of logic and understanding became more apparent in my everyday thinking, my room shifted into a place for nurturing them. My thought train rode the walls of my room, whirling around in different directions as it did in my head. It became a place of complete comfort and a sanctuary for my developing mind. Whilst amongst these cerebral daydreams and mental ventures, my wisdom began to flourish.

In that room, a teenager became a young man. Car keys appeared on the desk, a wallet arrived in the drawer, and a voting card came in the mail. Eventually, my room dressed himself in less and less. His walls became more bare as my own maturity into adulthood left me with less to express. For myself, responsibility grew, alongside patience, endurance, and emotional strength—all in that room. He always observed me as life ran its course, turning ourselves upside down and through numerous changes as the years came and went. A bond, a brotherhood, and a dependence on each other grew so powerful. Time has served us well.

In that room, the years have come and gone. Indeed, they have not just gone from one warm moment to the next, being thrown out in the process. Instead, they have been cherished and remembered, remaining close at heart from the very beginning.

In that room, I grew up.



SIGHTS OF GRANDMOTHER ABOUT NEW TECHNOLOGY

Catherine Joo, Class of 2021

2019
MIXED MEDIA, 18X24



SMALL MOMENTS

by Erin Koyamatsu, Class of 2017

We walk along the leaf-strewn trail
Her tiny hand in mine
I gaze upon her upturned face
And thank God for this time

Ahead of us, another skips
Amidst the crunching leaves
She twirls around and beckons
As she points at what she sees

These little girls, my sisters,
Are joy personified
My life is all the brighter
With them walking by my side

I savor these small moments
For I know they soon will pass
The gift of being little
Is a gift that does not last

Dappled sunlight streams around us
As we wander through the woods
We are sisters, bound forever
Our God is truly good

HAIRCUT

by Bill Tian, Class of 2020

Tom thinks he needs to have a haircut. Indeed, it has been two months since his last haircut. Sideburns almost cover his ears completely. While Tom is still thinking, he finds out that he is already in a salon.

"Hello, sir. How can I help you?" says the lady at the front desk.

"Um... I need a haircut." Tom mumbles.

"Do you have an appointment?"

"No, I don't," Tom replies. "I don't even know how I got to this place," he thinks.

"Alright, have a seat. There will be a barber soon," the lady said with a smile.

"She must already do this all day," Tom thinks, and he walks towards the seat.

Soon, about 5 minutes later, a man walks to Tom.

"Hi, I'm Tony. I'll be your barber." The man introduces himself, also with a smile that is similar to the front desk lady.

"Hi," Tom nodded politely.

"Okay, so let me wash your hair first," Tony says.

Tom lies down and closes his eyes.

A warm feeling flows over Tom's head. Comfort and relax, these are the only two words that exist in his mind. There is a moment he even forgets why he comes here. That is a brief moment. He wants to stay, to lie down forever, but he has to move to the next step.

Tom sits down on the seat, looking at the mirror. Tony is drying his hair.

"What kind of style you want?" asks Tony.

"Um... Just shorten sides and a little bit off the top," Tom replies shortly.

To be honest, Tom does not really know what kind of style he wants. He watches Tony's action in the mirror. "He is experienced, definitely," Tom thinks. Still looking at the mirror, Tom finds the lady sitting behind is playing with her phone. What is she playing? Tom likes to observe: people, buildings, or anything as long as he finds it is interesting. Even though he is criticized by teachers and parents because of this, he still enjoys observing. When he is thinking about his own business, Tom does not realize his haircut is done.

"Do you like it?" Tony asks.

"Yeah... I mean I'm not sure." Tom does not know. The hair seems not so different than it was before.

"I think... it is great," Tony says after he stops for a moment. He does that to prevent serious consideration. "You can also ask someone else."

They call the lady at the front desk. "I think this is wonderful, sir," says the lady.

"Alright, I guess," Tom says and pays the money.

When he walks out of the barber's, Tom knows he pays for the praise.



LONGING HOME
Catherine Joo, Class of 2021

2019
 CHALK PASTEL, 30X39

UNREQUITED LOVE

by Brian Kim, Class of 2020

[Ed. Note: This piece is an excerpt from a creative writing class project about a fictional town. The particular prompt required the author to write from a female perspective.]

"All right, good work y'all. Remember there'll be no class next week. Dismissed."

With that midterm, this class was over. I relaxed on the chair, stretched my legs, and let out a big sigh.

"Ahhh! It's finally over," Yukida yawned and turned his neck over to me, "Do you have any plans this weekend Takahashi-san?"

"Hmm, as far as I know, this weekend... I don't think so, why?" I said while putting my notes back in my bag and pushing the wooden chair in.

Simultaneously, Yukida also packed his belongings and shoved the squeaky chair in.

"Want to hang out with Takeo and bunch? We're having a party for finishing midterms this weekend," he said.

"I don't know... I didn't really fit in the last time I hung around with your friends..." I said.

"Oh come on, you'll fit in just fine, you just have to get to know them!"

It's not that...

It was true that I felt out of place when I hung around the group last time, for I am a big introvert. But above that, I did not want to be involved with them. Most of them were leeching off others and were never working hard. I personally hated them.

But the reason why I was hesitant differed. I wanted to hang around with him only and with no one else. Silence. I desperately tried to organize my thoughts.

"Is something wrong?" he reached out to my shoulder.

His kindness in his face shone through, piercing my heart. I couldn't help but feel flustered.

"Nothing's wrong. I was just thinking,"

"Aaaa, now... you have to go to attend English, am I right?"

"Yes."

"Hmm... Should I have taken English too?"

"If you're going to work as a software engineer, I don't think you need English."

"Maybe I should go to America too, like you."

My heart skipped. I couldn't ask for anything else than having Yukida staying by my side in America.

"Haha, joking, joking. Also, you never know, when I'll need English in Tokyo," he finished off.

I sighed in disappointment.

"Are you going to live in Akihabara or something?"

"Actually, yeah."

Surprised. He looked at me with eyes wide open.

"Impressive," he said.

I wanted to talk to him more, but I had to study for the test for the next class.

"Anyway. I'll text you if I'm going this weekend. I have to study for the next class midterm." Of course, with all that talk, I was never going to hang out with that thoughtless bunch.

We made our way to the door while having a conversation.

"Got it. Good luck on your exam!" Yukida cheerfully waved me off.

Man, I wanted to talk to him more...

Two and a half hours passed and I finally finished taking the test and set my course home. Fortunately for me, the college was near my house, enabling me to walk here every day from my house. As I stood in the front gate, I saw the orange flare from the sun fading away in the distance.

Already this time...

I hastened my way back home. The short bridge I always walked over on a daily basis, the water flowing by underneath that bridge, the not so busy shopping district. They all served as midway checkpoints to my house.

Looking at the window of one of a few coffee shops in the town, I coincidentally witnessed Yukida chilling inside, with a girl I didn't know.

All kinds of thoughts rushed into my head. Heart, throbbing. Instinctively I hid around the window. I couldn't help but observe the two. Every second, the pain in my heart worsened. The interaction, the gestures, and so obvious love-struck expressions of Yukida hit me. It was then clear to me,

So he had someone in mind already...

I couldn't bear to watch him anymore. I sprinted home, broken.

Heart torn in two, I stood in front of the front door, gripping the worn off door handle. The sound of my heartbeat filled my ears and drowned out the sound of the car passing by me. The overwhelming pain brought my knees to the ground.

"Are you okay, Sona?"

I heard my father's voice of panic from behind. I immediately put up a facade and smiled.

"No, everything's fine, I just tripped, that's all."

I opened the door and stepped inside.

"Come on," I held the door for him.

He took a breath of relief and walked in. I took my shoes off and gently set them aside.

"You're really early today," I said.

"A lot of stuff happened..."

The level of fatigue echoed through his voice.

Not being able to think clearly, I mindlessly crashed into my room, digging my face into the animal plushy that mom bought me when I was little. In desperate thoughts, I grabbed my plushy and headed to the side room, to mom's memorial. I lit up the incense and knelt down on the rough matt,

Mom... It hurts... what do I do in this situation? My head spins and I can't think straight.

The warmth of the incense embraced me and the smell of incense smeared into my heart. It felt as if mom herself was embracing me into her arms. Then it sparked in my head.

I'll become successful in America. I promise you I'll take care of dad. So don't worry mom.



I AM CHICANA

by Mia Villegas, Class of 2017

I am Chicana. However, this does not mean I hate Spain or its conquistadors. The proud Aztecs and Mayans who were trampled by Spanish horses and guns are not my people. The proud Aztecs and Mayans were the masters of my people, who served them as slaves. The proud Aztecs and Mayans made them toil in the outskirts of their great cities, serve as sacrifices to their pagan gods, until freedom came when the Spanish burst onto the scene. The proud Aztecs and Mayans never let my ancestors live in Tenochtitlan. The proud Spanish never graced them with gold or rank. The proud Spanish were eventually defeated, but my people were not driving the force of revolution. The proud Mexican elite ignored them and they escaped unnoticed, eking out an existence in the tiny border town of Mexicali. I am Chicana and I am a survivor.

I am Chicana. However, my parents are not illegal immigrants. My father used to tell people he came across the border in a piñata. It was easier for them to accept than the truth: that my grandmother had toiled for eight years to earn a green card while all to give her young children the opportunities she never had. It was easier for them to accept than the truth; that my father was born an American citizen to an American father and that he had been the one to flee across the country line, not the other way around [*Ed. Note: The author's grandfather abandoned his Mexican family when returning to the United States*]. It was easier for them to accept than the truth: that the day I stood at the federal building and watched my grandmother get sworn in is the proudest moment of my life. It was easier for them to accept than the truth: that I have never admired an individual as much as I did when I watched a little beggar girl from Mexicali live out the American dream. I am Chicana and I am a testament to the strength.

I am Chicana. However, I never spoke Spanish until middle school. The Spanish language was never

spoken, only heard in my household. The Spanish language was reserved for my father's personal phone calls to siblings and his mothers. The Spanish language was curtailed to telenovelas, soccer games, and road trip music. The Spanish language was a reminder of the only time my father felt truly helpless, unable to show his genius in the midst of a school where ESL was never a reality and the population was less than understanding. The Spanish language was longed for by a girl with white skin and speech that didn't match the culture she loved. The Spanish language was mastered by a young woman who had found her own identity not in speech but in shared values and experiences. I am Chicana and I am biracial.

I am Chicana. However, I cannot tolerate spicy food. The heat of salsa burns my throat and makes me cough and cry in ways my heritage should not allow. The heat of salsa is always avoided at restaurants, and therefore is the source of constant embarrassment when I order in Spanish yet say, "no salsa por favor." The heat of salsa is not my favorite part of Mexican food; I enjoy the traditional onions and cilantro atop a homemade taco more than I do anything else in the world. The heat of salsa is taken out of my favorite authentic dishes as my father conforms to my odd palate, an act of pure grace in the face of centuries of tradition. I am Chicana and I am a foodie.

I am Chicana. However, I am not simply the entry in the dictionary that identifies me as the daughter of a Mexican immigrant. I am Chicana and I am an actor. I am Chicana and I am a singer. I am Chicana and I am a dancer. I am Chicana and I am a reader. I am Chicana and I am an Ashkenazi Jew. I am Chicana and I am a Christian. I am Chicana and I am a daughter. I am Chicana and, like all of the other labels, that explains but does not define who I am.

The shriek of the opening door announced the presence of the adolescent as he entered the room. The elderly man didn't acknowledge him and continued to stare out of the window. The young man wheeled the cart into the dark, well-furnished room. When he came to a desk, the boy began the daily routine. "Good afternoon sir," he said in a dull tone of voice as he placed a lunch tray on the table. "Are you in need of any assistance today sir?" the boy asked. The elder didn't respond, only looking lost in his own thoughts.

Taking the silence as his answer, the boy took hold of the cart and wheeled it out. "Have a good day sir," the boy said like it was a script he recited day in and day out. He pulled the door open headed into the hall.

"Hideki." The young man stopped in his tracks, still as a deer caught in the headlights. He broke out of his trance when the older man spoke again. "I would like your help with something today," Hideki turned to face the man, who almost never spoke aloud much less called him by his name. "Can you go into the closet and bring out the projector?" the elder gestured to a nearly hidden doorway on the right wall.

Hideki started to slowly walk to the closet, peering into the pitch black space. He fumbled around for a moment trying to find the light switch. He located it at last, flipped on the switch, and saw the large old fashioned projector on a cart. Carefully, Hideki pulled the cart out of the closet. "Can you put it over here?" the man pointed to the corner of the room. Hideki noticed a white screen on the opposite side of the room. He adjusted the projector and positioned it where the old man requested.

He looked under the cart to find a box of old film reels with various titles. "Which one would you like to watch sir?" Hideki asked. The elder thought for a moment then said, "How about you pick one out?" Hideki stared into the box. None of the films were ones he recognized. After a moment of hesitation, he picked out a reel titled: "Troublesome Trolley".

Looking at the protector, Hideki tried to find where the film lead was supposed to go. Once the film was ready, the elderly man pulled up two chairs. Hideki started the projector and walked over to dim the lights. A sudden mechanical screech alerted Hideki, who turned back to see the film being spat out by the projector, landing in a pile on the floor.

He rushed to the reel and assessed the damage. He flinched, worried about how the elderly man would react. The man stood up, walked over and picked up the film. With a few swift motions, the film looked as good as new. "It's alright, the film's intact, here," the man motioned Hideki to watch him. Hideki peered over the man as the master made swift moves.

"You need to put it in this way," he placed the reel in the other direction. The old man pressed the button and the projector flickered to life.

The two sat down and watched a 6 minute cartoon of a racoon and eagle working as mechanics. They watched a variety of hijinks while the characters fumbled around trying to fix a trolley. Throughout the film, the old man looked to see how Hideki reacted. The young boy found himself entertained and even laughed at several of the gags. The cartoon came to an end, and Hideki got up to turn the lights back on.

"Well, did you enjoy that?" the man asked him. "Yes sir, that was a really good one," Hideki responded excitedly. The old man smiled, "I'm glad you enjoyed my work." "You made this sir?" Hideki asked. "Yes, and Hideki?" the old man said, "Call me Roger."



GRASP ON REALITY
Tasha Neumann, Class of 2020

2019
MIXED MEDIA, 10X11



PHOTOGRAPHING THE PHOTOGRAPHER
Audrey Chung, Class of 2020

2019
DIGITAL DRAWING, 15X12

THE CLIMB

by Jackson Ebner, Class of 2020

Nathan woke up ready for his day. It was Saturday and he had been waiting all week to have time to himself to go exploring again. He didn't have many friends, but he didn't need them when he made so many friends with nature's little creatures.

Today he wanted to climb the big tree. He couldn't take his mind off of it. It was like, to him, nothing else mattered in the world. He rushed downstairs and ate his morning meal of Cheerios and a glass of orange juice and set out. He set out, of course, for the local park that had all of the biggest trees around, as big as Nathan had ever seen.

He rode his bike down the pothole filled street in some baggy, ripped jeans he wore almost every day, and a red and white striped shirt he had gotten for his birthday last year.

When he arrived at the park, he left his bike in a bike rack and went straight to the very center of the park, the home of the big tree. Now Nathan was not ignorant and knew he had to scout a way up the tree, looking for the best route to the highest point.

After he found the path he thought most promising, he started his climb. The first handhold is always the most difficult because of the height of the first branch off of the ground. This was especially a challenge because Nathan was not that tall yet. Luckily enough, he had seen one of the big kids climb the tree and he saw their secret technique.

The tree was set at a pretty significant angle due to the terrible storm almost 7 years back. Now the strategy was, if you could get enough speed, Nathan could essentially "run up the tree." He took a couple of steps back, and then a couple more. Then he went for it, sprinting as fast as his little legs could go. First step, good. Second step, good. Third step, good. He was in grasp of the first branch, so he lunged. At that same moment his shoe slipped and he lost his balance.

Nathan fell.

He hit the ground and heard something break. No it couldn't be! He ignored the pain for a second, but it overwhelmed him. Everything hurt, but most of all his arm.

The next week, he was back at school, with a blue cast to match his eyes. Everyone in his class wanted to sign it. Nathan felt something within him, something internally had changed. It really was the kids he knew from school that would be his friends if he would let them. He was not going to play by himself anymore and he was going to be with people who really cared for him even if he didn't realize it before.



AMERICA

by Lynn Noh, Class of 2020

Stranger, when I first met you
I was a little tot, an ignorant doll in my dollhouse world,
surrounded by faces.
Gazing, in that time that in itself
glows, Dear America, I knew you, grew to love you
as the land
of my Disney princesses ...

I saw the flush of red, white, blue, and
red —
only to learn,
blue — I will be traveling over the Pacific Ocean
to live with my mother, in you ...

Dear America,
in the crowd of arrivals
that bustle, in the middle of that sudden sea
of something like expectation,
I was clad
in my big red velvet coat, clutching a small violin
on my back, still with resolve
to enter.
But you, towering, standing too tall
for the first time in my flowering but forlorn youth ...
what was I to walk
into you — to enter you?

Open the eyes of a new generation, open my eyes
to see
if I can ever see you as you are ...

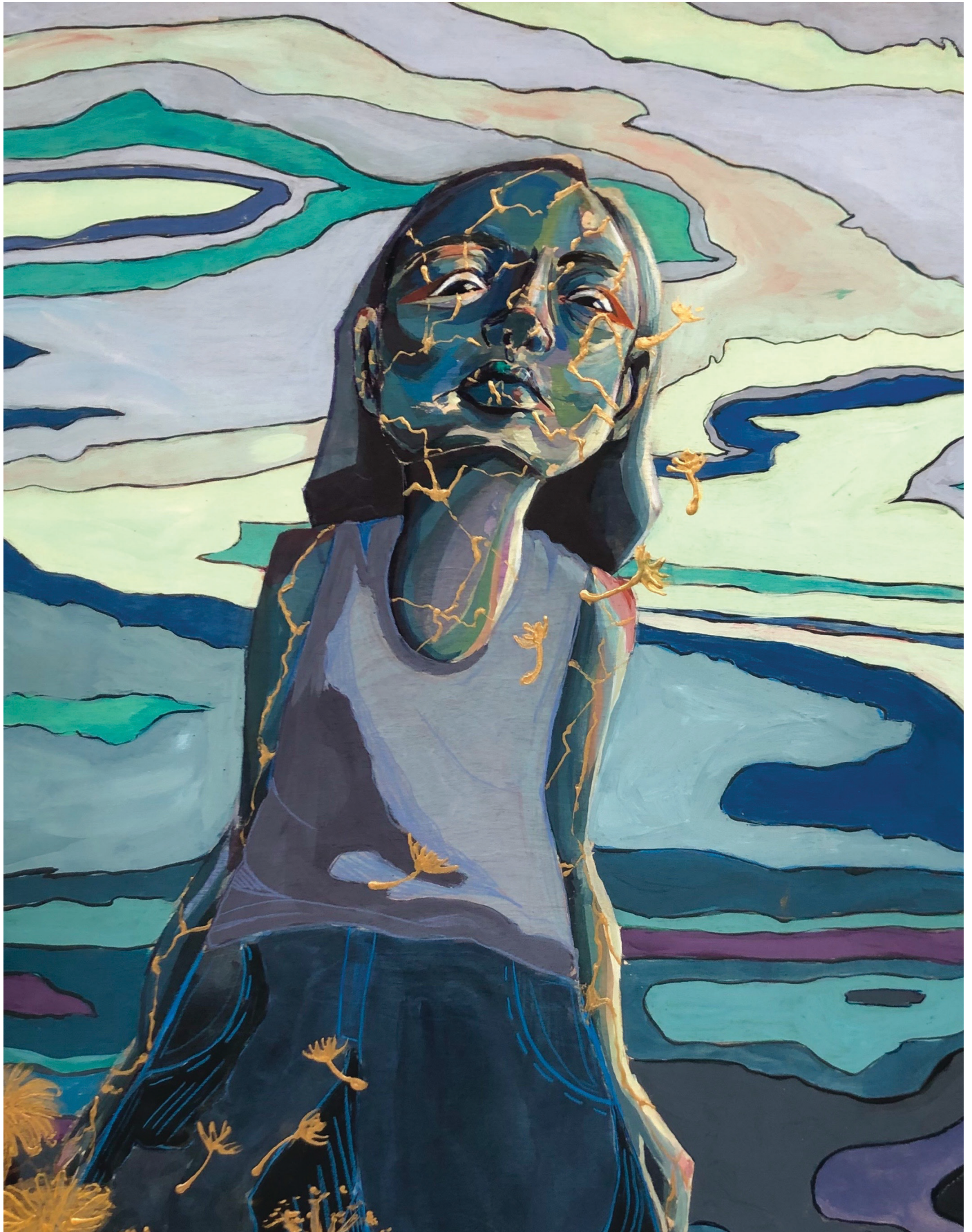
Your door opened.

I entered —

(I ran)

unaltered and un-alienated
as if I was falling from one of your fifty stars,

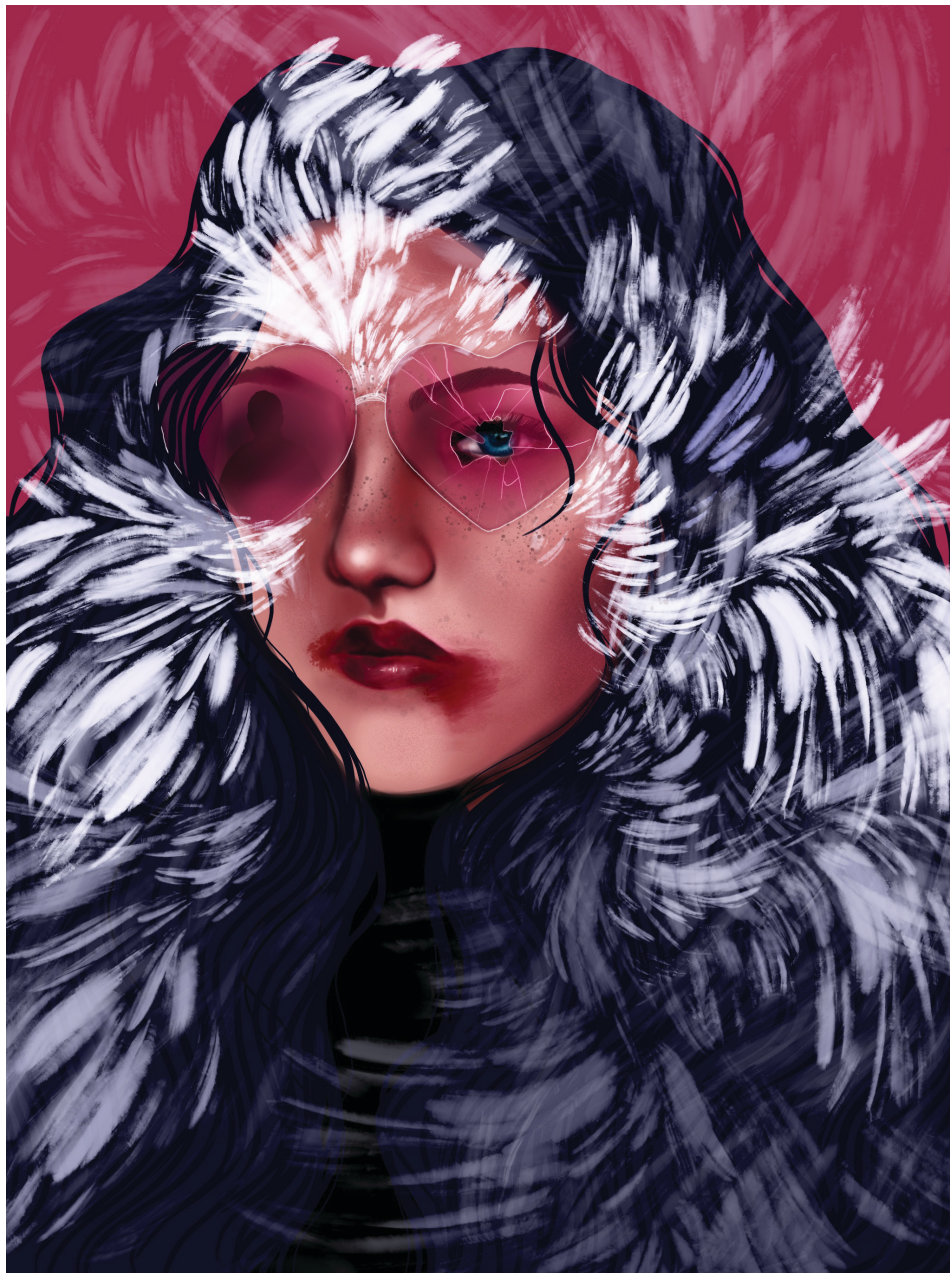
meeting you, here — now, as if I was born for this moment.



KINTSUGI

Leia Laughlin, Class of 2019

2019
GOUACHE AND COLORED PENCIL ON WOOD, 18X24



NEW ART EXHIBIT ASTOUNDS EXPERTS

by Trevor Kirkby, Class of 2017

This last Saturday, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art hosted a surprise exhibition. The exhibit featured an entirely new collection of modern art pieces; not a single work from LACMA's usual collection was on display. Despite this bold risk, the new art proved to be a stunning success. "These works ... combine design and profound meaning in a way that is unprecedented," commented an art expert.

Perhaps one of the most striking art pieces in the exhibit was the graphic displayed at the entrance. It was a canvas with the words "closed for renovation" displayed on the front, clearly an ironic commentary on the exhibit. Other notable masterpieces included the grey wall series, the blue wall series (which ended poignantly with a wall only half painted blue), and the "caution: wet floor" sculpture. The grey wall series was able to abstractly depict a series of different emotions, capturing the nature of anger, sadness, and joy. The blue wall series provided commentary on numerous social justice issues. The "caution: wet floor" sculpture (and the surrounding wet floor) described humanity's struggle to remain on our feet even in adverse circumstance. Critics have applauded these works as "massively innovative" and vastly better than the museum's typical collection of art pieces. The unveiling of this collection may possibly spark an entire new movement in modern art.

Unfortunately, the exhibit was only on display for a very short time. Admirers of the artwork were asked to leave at the end of the day, and since then the wing of the museum containing the exhibit has been locked and inaccessible to viewers. The only people who have been allowed into the exhibit are a group of construction workers, who have been allowed into the exhibit routinely every week day. Art fans suggest that "perhaps they're just trying to build interest." If LACMA leaves the exhibit open for only a day at a time, this may attract more viewers.

There are some mysteries surrounding the exhibit. Not only was it not announced in advance and closed quickly, but the origin of the masterpieces displayed therein remains a mystery. The creator of this modern artwork has not stepped forward or claimed credit for the art in any way. Experts have been puzzling over who this hidden genius might be and are calling for a forensic analysis to ascertain the author of the new exhibit. This fascinating mystery has left art enthusiasts across the world enthralled.

Regardless of the source, the art has been universally acknowledged to be a bold step forward in the evolution of artistic style. LACMA has as of yet refused to comment on their surprise exhibition, but all true lovers of modern art are waiting with anticipation for more news.

WAREHOUSE WONDERLAND

by Kelsea An, Class of 2020

There are many others who try to imitate it, even those who have the audacity to try and surpass it. Take Sam, for example. But he and his club will never, and can never, come close to its level of finesse. It is untouchable, indomitable, unmatched; it is Costco.

The warehouse club's striking crimson letters mean something different to everyone. For me, they serve as a welcome mat, inviting me into my second home. Costco truly is a home, but it is definitely not a house. The warehouses are far too spacious and densely populated; in fact, Costco is like a whole country of its own, where membership cards are passports and friendly employees at the entrance are custom agents.

Costco's traditional cuisine consists of saccharine, cinnamon-coated churros and pizzas glazed over with an almost suspicious amount of iridescent grease. For just a dollar and fifty cents, you could have an all beef hot dog that can only be outshined by the one your middle-aged and unmarried uncle makes at every family barbeque. Now, it is a personal struggle of mine, and surely many other citizens of Costco, to head straight for the exit without being magnetized by the massive menu plastered on the walls. I have recently learned that the trick is to keep your eyes straight and to not, under any conditions, be tempted to use your peripheral vision.

But the crowning jewel of Costco is not the food you eat after shopping, but the food you eat during. Yes, I am referring to the world renowned samples. The kryptonite of all shoppers, those samples are the very reason I follow my mother to Costco every week despite knowing it entails Olympic-level weightlifting of water bottles and a 5-minute simulation of the Ice Age in the dairy product section. Occasionally, I wonder if this complimentary food somehow indicates that Costco is a sneak peek of heaven. What if the voices soothingly calling out to me "Grab a sample" are actually from God? What if the employees handing out these deliciously free bites of food in their holy, all-white apparel are actually angels? Okay, so maybe it's the Kirkland Signature

Colombian Coffee sample speaking, but there is just something so perfect about Costco that convinces me of divine intervention. It's almost too good to be true: why is everything so cheap? This question occupies the entirety of my mind during the whole two hours-long spree. Genuine intrigue, rather than suspicion, consumes me as I curiously examine the labels above each product indicating the member-exclusive prices. My eyes squint and filter their sight to find only the color neon yellow, as my brain knows that in Costco, this shade is an indication of a particularly sensational sale. Perhaps this is a clever tactic to gain customers at the prestigious Costco eye clinic, but once again, it might just be that coffee.

Very few changes in my shopping routine have been made throughout my years with Costco, the most significant of these being my favorite section of the warehouse. There was a period of infatuation with the toy section until middle school, the video gaming section until high school, and now the electronic aisles. There was also a brief transition period between middle and high school during which I spent most of my time in the muffin shelves. We don't like to speak of this period, but I will say that the consequences of this phase may be found in my yearbook photos, which I have heard are extremely reminiscent of the Pillsbury Doughboy.

I have shared a grand total of sixteen years with Costco, yet my fascination and intense curiosity for the corporation has remained, if not intensified. A countless number of observations have been made from inside the red-rimmed metal cart to behind its handle. I've come to realize that some part of my childhood will always remain within those never-ending concrete walls, a part that has bred my wild imagination and inquisitiveness.

As I step out of the exit, I am overcome with a nameless feeling that I imagine Cinderella may have felt as she returned home at the stroke of midnight. Back to the regular world, back to reality, I suppose.

Till next Sunday, that is.



ALL SEEING EYES
David Kelly, Class of 2021

2019
COPIC MARKERS, 14X20



*For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part;
then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.*

1 Corinthians 13:12



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