

Exhibition Description and Label Text

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Table of Contents

Exhibition Layout.....	4
Exhibit Text and Artwork Descriptions.....	6
Video Introduction.....	6
Informational Sign.....	6
“Poppy Pleasure” by Taylor Koedyker.....	8
Label Text.....	8
Description.....	9
“Magic Touch” by Taylor Koedyker.....	10
Label Text.....	10
Description.....	11
“I Have Always Been With You” by September Neill.....	12
Label Text.....	12
Description.....	13
“Grims Cleansing” by September Neill.....	15
Label Text.....	15
Description.....	16
“Dysfunctional Family Portrait” by Sky Dai.....	18
Label Text.....	18
Description.....	19
“Twenty of You” by Miranda Chao.....	21
Label Text.....	21
Description.....	22
“Untitled Sculpture” by Mike Cannata.....	26
Label Text.....	26
Description.....	27
“Double Vision” by May Ling Kopecky.....	29
Label Text.....	29
Description.....	30
“Welcome Back” by May Ling Kopecky.....	31
Label Text.....	31
Description.....	32
“Pandemic Blue 1” by James de Guzman Lee.....	33

Label Text.....	33
Description.....	34
“Trepidation” by Maiya Hartman.....	35
Label Text.....	35
Description.....	36
“Curved Enthusiasm” by MJ Cooper	37
Label Text.....	37
Description.....	38
“When I Think” by Jasina Yu	39
Label Text.....	39
Description.....	40
“Methods of Care for the Precarious Body” by Panteha Abareshi	41
Label Text.....	41
Description.....	42
“Crossing Brooklyn” by Joshua Ben-Dylan	48
Label Text.....	48
Description.....	49
“Tough Love” by Moriah Faith	51
Label Text.....	51
Description.....	52
“The Light Within” by Maya Milton.....	53
Label Text.....	53
Description.....	54
“Purple Lights of the City” by Dominic Killany	55
Label Text.....	55
Description.....	56

Exhibition Layout

MERGE is located on the west end of the Hall of Nations. The footprint of the exhibit is an elongated hexagon with panels and other displays creating the long sides, and a video and informational sign, and platform with a sculpture on the other forming the top and bottom points. The center of the exhibit has a platform with one sculpture. There are gaps between the displays to allow people to move freely through the space and access pieces on both sides of the panels and the sculpture in the center.

The artwork in the exhibit is displayed in various ways:

- large freestanding walls that are 8 feet in height, 4 feet wide, and 2 feet deep painted black on the narrower sides and white on the wider sides. Artwork is hung on both sides.
- two white platforms;
- one white pedestal;
- an iPad in a stand; and
- a black cart with a flat screen monitor.

In the center, facing the west entrance to the Hall of Nations, a poster with information about the exhibition is displayed on an easel.

From the video and informational sign, going to the right around the outside perimeter of the exhibition are:

- Taylor Koedyker's "[Poppy Pleasure](#)" and "[Magic Touch](#)" on a white pedestal.
- September Neill's "[I Have Always Been With You](#)" and "[Grims Cleansing](#)" next to each other on a single wall.
- A gap between the walls where MJ Cooper's "[Curved Enthusiasm](#)" is visible on a platform in the center of the exhibit.
- Sky Dai's "[Dysfunctional Family Portrait](#)" on two walls pushed together.
- Miranda Chao's "[Twenty of You](#)" animation on an iPad with the label on a white stand adjacent to it.

Marking the far point of the exhibit is Mike Cannata's ["Untitled Sculpture"](#) on a platform that is about 8 inches in height.

Turning and going back through the center of the exhibit:

- On the right, May Ling Kopecky's ["Double Vision"](#) and ["Welcome Back"](#) adjacent to each other on one wall.
- On the double wall on the left is ["Pandemic Blue 1"](#) by James de Guzman Lee.
- Going farther up the hall on the panel on the right is ["Trepidation"](#) by Maiya Hartman.
- In the center on a platform that is about 2 feet high is MJ Cooper's ["Curved Enthusiasm"](#).
- Continuing up the hall on the left is Jasina Yu's ["When I Think"](#) on a wall.
- On the right is ["Methods of Care for the Precarious Body"](#) by Panteha Abareshi playing on a monitor on a black media cart.
- Continuing up the hall on the final wall on the right is ["Crossing Brooklyn"](#) by Joshua Ben-Dylan.
- On the left, you return to another side of the pedestal with Taylor Koedyker's ["Poppy Pleasure"](#) and ["Magic Touch"](#)

Continuing to the right and around to the north outer perimeter are:

- Moriah Faith's "Tough Love" on a wall.
- Continuing down the hall, you pass the back of the monitor playing ["Methods of Care for the Precarious Body"](#) and then space where ["Curved Enthusiasm"](#) in the center of the exhibit.
- On the next wall on the right is Maya Milton's ["The Light Within"](#)
- On the final wall is ["Purple Lights of the City"](#) by Dominic Killany
- Finally, ["Untitled Sculpture"](#) on its platform is on the end of the exhibit

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Exhibit Text and Artwork Descriptions

Video Introduction

A 36" flat screen monitor hangs centered on a black stand as you approach the exhibit from the entrance to the Hall of Nations. A short video, featuring Scott Keogh, President and CEO of Volkswagen Group of America, plays on a loop. Mr. Keogh is centered on the screen and is visible from his shoulders up. He has fair skin and his mostly white hair is styled in a slicked back pompadour. He is wearing a blue suit with a white and pale blue pinstriped button-down shirt. A small black microphone is clipped to his left lapel.

Informational Sign

A 36" by 24" foam cord sign sits beneath the video monitor. The MERGE logo is at the top of the sign: The word MERGE overlays brushstrokes in a rainbow of bright pink, red, yellow, green and blue.

The 2021 VSA Emerging Young Artists Competition, a Jean Kennedy Smith Arts and Disability Program of the Kennedy Center, drew submissions from talented young artists with disabilities, ages 16-25, from around the United States. This year's theme, MERGE, explores uniting paths and asks what we can learn when it all comes together. The call invited artists to consider the intersections and combinations of their creative process and disability identity. In art, the juxtaposition of ideas can blur distinctions or reveal something new.

Since 2002, the Kennedy Center and Volkswagen Group of America have teamed up for the VSA Emerging Young Artists Program, a Jean Kennedy Smith Arts and Disability Program, to recognize and showcase the work of emerging young artists living with disabilities in the United States. This collaboration creates opportunities for these artists at a critical time when many are making the life-defining choice to pursue arts-based careers. The Kennedy Center and Volkswagen are committed to investing in the future of young artists living with disabilities

After an extended delay due to the pandemic, we are thrilled to debut the exhibition in Washington, D.C. Listed ages of artists are as of June 1, 2022

Access/VSA
The Kennedy Center
A Jean Kennedy Smith Arts and Disability Program

Presenting Sponsor
Volkswagen Group of America

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

“Poppy Pleasure” by Taylor Koedyker

La Verne, California, Age 28

Award of Excellence



Label Text

Poppy Pleasures

Bronze and copper with cubic zirconia stones

(8" x 6.5" x 6.5")

Taylor Koedyker's works aim to promote an appreciation for our natural world, highlighting our physical connections to the earth while acknowledging humanity's growing disconnect to it. Using our relationship with our bodies as a parallel to our treatment of the planet, she sees her disability as a way to connect with our universal afflictions and provides great strength and empathy.

The stones used in Koedyker's art are practical and symbolic, grown of the earth but each unique, and strong and beautiful despite fractures.

Poppy Pleasures was inspired by a poem Koedyker wrote about people crushing natural poppy fields in California for photo opts. koedykercrafted.com

Description

Taylor Koedyker, age 26, uses copper, bronze and cubic zirconia stones in her piece entitled "Poppy Pleasure", which is listed as measuring 8" X 6.5" X 6.5".

The artist has crafted a piece resembling a roman crown of laurel in a curved form with foliage and flowers facing the front, about the right size to fit on an average-size head.

Bronze strands serve as the stems for the foliage and form the curve at the back. The curve is bare and then branches on either side into stems of small turkey foot like foliage.

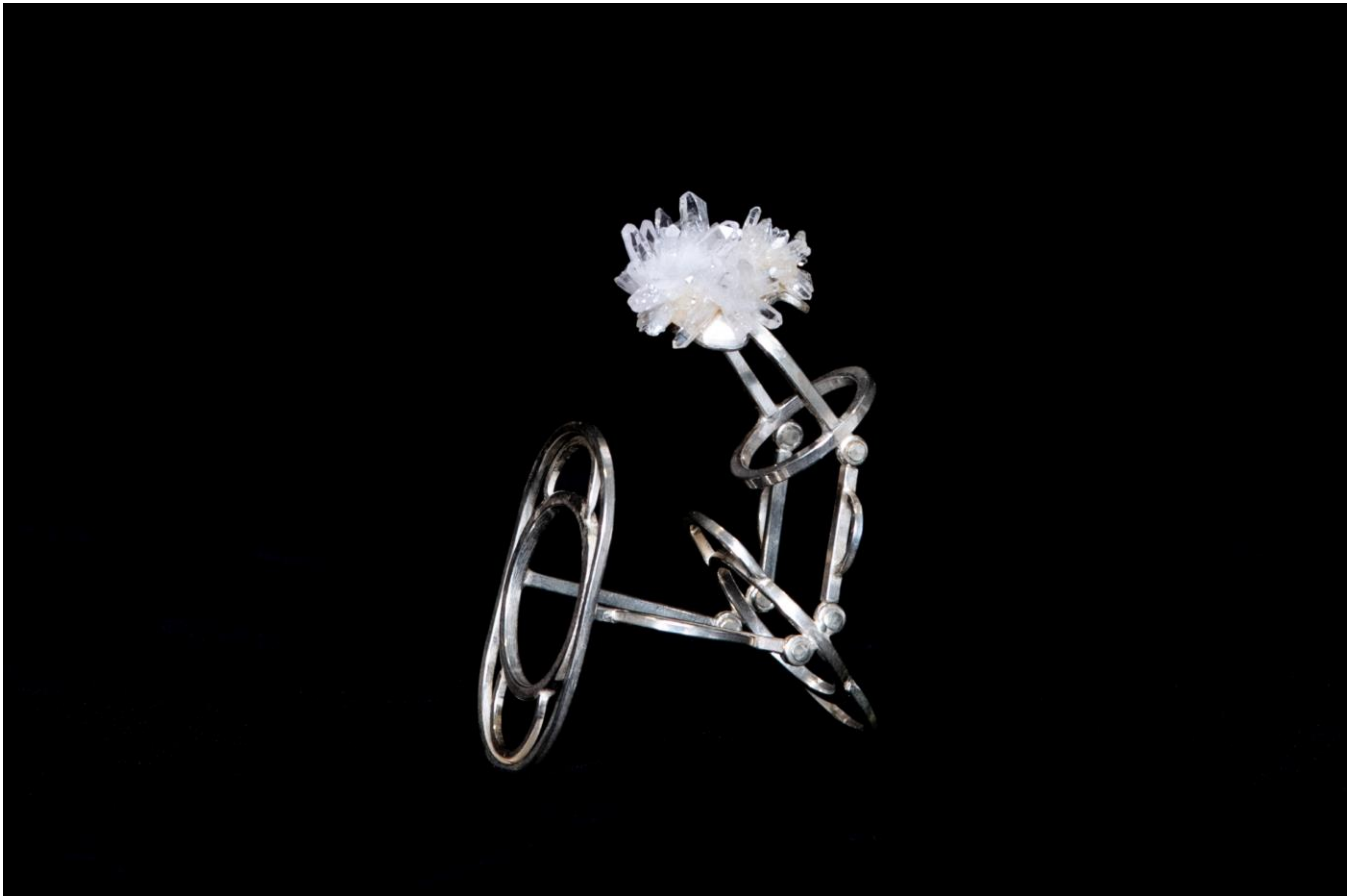
On the left side (our right) the poppy bloom presents at the end of the foliage. On the right side (our left) the bloom is set back a few inches with the foliage extending past the bloom. Thin copper sheets are used to fabricate the blooms with interlocking petals giving the blooms a shiny glow. The petals surround the stamens made of short bronze pegs topped with tiny cubic zirconia stones. A pistil is not discernible.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

“Magic Touch” by Taylor Koedyker

La Verne, California, Age 28

Award of Excellence



Label Text

Magic Touch

Sterling silver, quartz crystal

(3" x 1.5" x 0.5")

Taylor Koedyker's works aim to promote an appreciation for our natural world highlighting our physical connections to the earth while acknowledging humanity's growing disconnect to it. Using our relationship with our bodies as a parallel to our treatment of the planet, she sees her disability as a way to connect with our universal afflictions and provides great strength and empathy.

The stones used in Koedyker's art are practical and symbolic, grown of the earth but each unique, and strong and beautiful despite fractures. Magic Touch is a healing ritual tool with an apparatus contingent on the joints for its function. The creation of this piece represents a close connection between her artistic practice and the rheumatoid arthritis that affects her joints. Following her diagnosis, Koedyker recognized the potential impact on her artistic passion and career and the need to be respectful and aware of her body and health. Like her body, the tool slowly degrades with every ritual, so each use must be intentional. koedykercrafted.com

Description

For "Magic Touch" Taylor Koedyker, age 26, uses sterling silver and quartz crystals to smith a piece of jewelry which measures 3 ½" X 1 ½" X ½", and is fashioned to fit over an index finger.

The artist crafted delicate strands of sterling silver filaments in a cage like form of 3 interlocking rings connected by strands that run along the outside, one on each side of the structure. The top is adorned with a flower made of tiny quartz crystals.

Closer examination reveals intricacies of the design. The rings correspond to finger joints, with the lowest one acting as a base at the knuckle. Hinges on these rings enable the piece to bend. The lower and second joint rings are embellished with an extra silver strand half-moon loop at the top and bottom of the finger. The top ring, near the fingernail, is a simple loop.

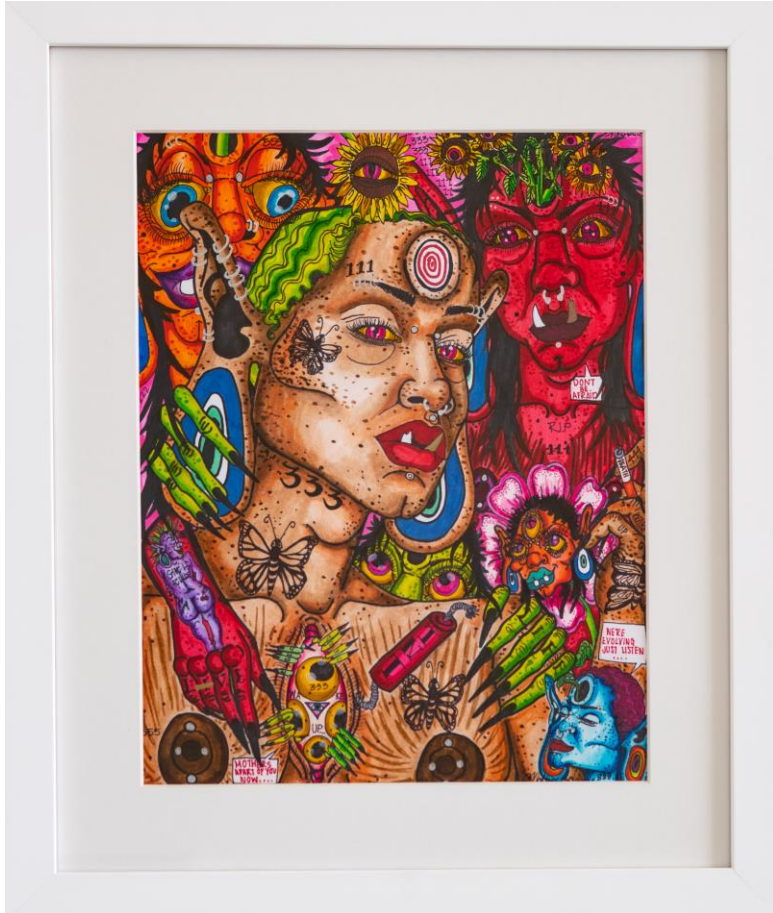
The side strands that link the rings are also embellished with smaller half-moon loops. The top of the piece is crowned with minute quartz crystals resembling a tiny carnation, which sits at the tip of the finger when the piece is worn.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

“I Have Always Been With You” by September Neill

Sandy, Utah, Age 19

Award of Excellence



Label Text

I Have Always Been Within You

Paper, pencil, Sharpie markers

(19.75" x 16.75" x 0.875")

Having experienced pain and betrayal at a young age, September Neill lived in environments where alcoholism and drug addiction were commonplace. They joined Alcoholics Anonymous at age 15, sobering up and finding belonging and meaning through their teachers and school community.

During the COVID shutdown, art served as a lifeline, offering an outlet to channel their loneliness and internal chaos. They says that, while some may see vulgarity, monsters or demons in their art, it reflects their pain, struggles and insecurities, as well as their happiness, victories and power.

With art as their outlet, Neill now shares their experiences with others and helps them know they aren't alone. They aim to show others that art is not just one thing—it is fed by who you are, what you have experienced, and how you get through each day.

Description

September Neill, age 19, has created two companion pieces using colored pencils and sharpie markers on paper. Each image is 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ " X 16 $\frac{3}{4}$ " X $\frac{7}{8}$ ", and they are placed side by side. Similarities include focusing on a figure in the middle that dominates the work, vivid colors with intricate details, a number of cartoonish demonic-like creatures, and each features a bust of a person with a dark complexion.

"I Have Always Been Within You" on the right, depicts a bare-chested female whose tattooed face is slightly turned to her left in $\frac{3}{4}$ profile. Her wavy lime green hair is obscured on the upper left by an orange demon with protruding blue eyes and a wide-open mouth. On the upper right is a purplish red demon with red eyes, a nose ring, and Tasmanian-Devil fangs. A cartoon thought bubble below its chin reads: "Don't Be Afraid." A smaller green demon with purple eyes peeks over her left shoulder, its skeletal fingers with elongated pointy claws tightly clutches her left shoulder and its right clawed fingers rest lightly on the right side of her neck. Close to the frame's right edge is a smaller demon fairy with prominent blue lips and fangs, its head encircled in a flower halo. Above it is a thought bubble reading: "We're Evolving, Just Listen." In the lower right corner sits a red-lipped, blue-faced demon, gazing upwards. Each demon has a large hole in its forehead, from which various objects emerge: plants, an eye, or a snake.

For the main figure, working from top down, her squarish forehead is tattooed with a round circle with a bullseye above neatly trimmed eyebrows. Her deep-set red eyes look to her right, the lids are a lighter color than her light brown skin tone. Her right cheek, neck, and left breast are tattooed with butterflies. Oversized elfin ears sprout on each side of her head, the

elongated tips are pierced with multiple small white rings, and her bottom earlobes are heavily weighed down by blue geode disks. Her nasal septum is pierced by a silver ring, her lower lip by a stud. Elongated canine fangs jut up from her full red lips, her right fang is broken in half. A “333” tattoo is emblazoned below her deeply clefted chin. Her throat displays a pronounced Adam’s apple, and her neck, wide collar bones. Peeking through an oval opening in the chest is a clue to the title of the piece, “I Have Always Been Within You”: it shows a collection of eyeball-like yellow balls imprinted with symbols and numbers. Four sets of sharp-clawed fingers clasp the opening, next to A TNT stick on the right side. The upper left corner demon drapes a sharp-clawed purple and red arm over her shoulder. The bottom of the piece ends just below two large brown nipples of two concentric circles.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

“Grims Cleansing” by September Neill

Sandy, Utah, Age 19

Award of Excellence



Label Text

Grims Cleansing

Paper, pencil, Sharpie markers

(19.75" x 16.75" x 0.875")

Having experienced pain and betrayal at a young age, September Neill lived in environments where alcoholism and drug addiction were commonplace. They joined Alcoholics Anonymous at age 15, sobering up and finding belonging and meaning through their teachers and school community.

During the COVID shutdown, art served as a lifeline, offering an outlet to channel their loneliness and internal chaos. They says that, while some may see vulgarity, monsters or demons in their art, it reflects their pain, struggles and insecurities, as well as their happiness, victories and power.

With art as their outlet, Neill now shares their experiences with others and helps them know they aren't alone. They aim to show others that art is not just one thing—it is fed by who you are, what you have experienced, and how you get through each day.

Description

September Neill, age 19, has created two companion pieces using colored pencils and sharpie markers on paper. Each image is 19 ¾" X 16 ¾" X 7/8", and they are placed side by side. Similarities include focusing on a figure in the middle that dominates the work, vivid colors with intricate details, a number of cartoonish demonic-like creatures, and each features a bust of a person with a dark complexion.

"Grims Cleansing," the companion piece, is similar in colors and style. Green, fuchsia, and golden demons surround a bare-chested man with downcast eyes, half-parted lips, and calm expression as he emerges from a purple body suit, decorated with his own face. He has close cropped hair, a mustache and goatee, and faces forward. His crossed arms and sharp claw-like fingers are crossed inside the suit and push back each side. A hole in his forehead sprouts a curling sunflower stretching to the top of the frame with an eye for a bloom. Blue geode disks stretch his earlobes, without the piercings on the top of the elfin ears

The words "Wake up!" and the number 10 are stenciled in several places.

Scattered word bubbles appear in the corners or edges: "He's so pretty, mom!," and "You deserve to be chosen undoubtedly over and over again," and "You fall in love again and it will be amazing, I promise!"

The upper left corner demon is yellow-green with black hair, wide violet eyes, and black lips pierced by upturned fangs. The upper right demon is dark purple with partially obscured green

eyes. An olive-skinned demon with bulging eyes, high cheekbones, pouty pink lips and a sharp clefted chin sits directly below.

The piece ends just below the chest with the caption “Love Yourself 100%” at the bottom edge.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

“Dysfunctional Family Portrait” by Sky Dai

Nomadic, but currently in Columbus, Ohio and Asheville, North Carolina, Age 25

Award of Excellence



Label Text

Dysfunctional Family Portrait, 2018

Oil and pastel on canvas

(41" x 69" x 1.5")

Inspired by how traumatic stress causes the brain to collage fragments of memory, Sky Dai distorts perspectives and figures in their paintings to process and rewrite their past in a whimsical world where harsh memories become less distressing.

Their multi-figurative, surreal oil paintings document journeys through the astral plane, traumatic memories, queer relationships and living as a dissociative identity system. Having multiple consciousnesses (or personalities) allows Dai to observe from multiple perspectives at

once and create art as a team of identities with varying degrees of artistic skill, styles and ideas.

In *Dysfunctional Family Portrait*, Dai painted themselves leaning over their family of origin's kitchen table, pointing to an escape route map. The piece was painted a year after fleeing their family after a series of altercations and abuse left them homeless.

Dai received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in fine arts and creative writing at Columbus College of Art and Design and has attended and taught at School of the Alternative in Black Mountain, North Carolina. skydai.squarespace.com

Description

The painting is titled *Dysfunctional Family Portrait* by artist Sky Dai. The materials are oil paint and pastel on canvas and the artwork is almost 6 feet wide by almost 4 feet tall.

This is a surreal and amusing painting of an eccentric family gathered at their kitchen table, each one pausing mid-action to look at us or each other, or not at all. The kitchen walls are dusky green, and the tiled floor is white. Other items adding to the kitchen's décor, include: on the floor, a carton of 0% milk spills its contents, and in the foreground 7 (empty) Victor mouse traps, and on the table: four drinking glasses, a computer keyboard and mouse (but no computer), and an oversized sunny-side-up egg on the verge of sliding off the red-checkered tablecloth.

The cast of characters, looking from left to right are:

An outlandishly tall person, bent double at the waist, their outstretched left arm, almost as long as they are tall, reaching to their left (your right) for a piece of yellow paper lying on the table. If they stood up, they would likely be 8 feet tall. They have short straight blue hair and bangs, large wide eyes, a blue tank top and shorts, and mismatched socks with a big toe poking through the left one. Above their right knee, in magic marker, the word: **BABY**, above their left knee: **DEER**. Each leg is inked with inch-long dotted black lines and tiny drawings, including an envelope, Band-Aid, safety pin, smiley face, and the phrase **AND THE WINNER IS** penned above the left ankle. An empty window frame with 5 teardrops is inked on the right bicep. The

tall figure's expression is eager, perhaps welcoming. Their eyes are wide open, teeth visible in a slightly smiling mouth.

Next to the Tall Figure, seated, is a teenage cheerleader with pink waist-length pigtails, her right arm, extended on the table, holds a blue pompom. She wears a blue vest emblazoned with the words "Varsity Cheer." The girl leans slightly toward the blue-haired woman (to her right), and stares fixedly at her, her pink eyebrows slightly raised, but otherwise expressionless.

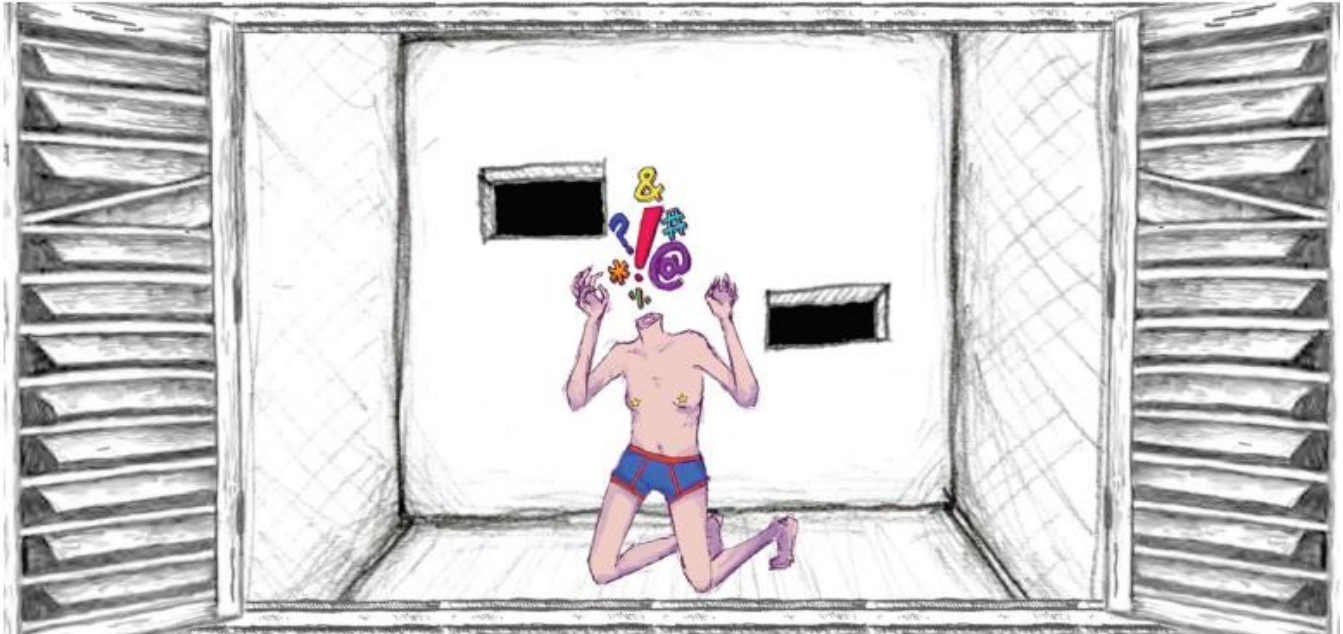
Next to The Cheerleader sits a brown-haired androgynous figure in $\frac{3}{4}$ profile, with gray rectangular eyeglasses but no eyes, and a prominent nose but no mouth. Their chin rests on a downturned palm, and they are looking to their right (your left), perhaps at the Tall Figure, but since the figure is eye-less, it's hard to know. They wear a plain black short-sleeved top. Behind their head, partially obscured, is an inexact copy of DaVinci's *The Last Supper*, with the face of Jesus eclipsed by the seated figure.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

“Twenty of You” by Miranda Chao

Seattle, Washington, Age 26

Award of Excellence



Label Text

Twenty of You, 2018

Animation and collage

Miranda Chao is fascinated by the psychological and the surreal at the intersection of cute and creepy. Through illustration and animation, they seek to express a deluge of emotions and satisfy an urge to communicate and connect with others. In *Twenty of You*, Chao explores their experience with borderline personality disorder and bipolar disorder to visualize mental states during a time of extreme fluctuation. Chao’s work cycles through 20 different depictions of these states, viewed through a window in the same way one might see themselves in a dream. It is about depression and mania, dissociation and comforts of reality, and searches for a point of resonance between the viewer and the art.

Chao graduated from Brown University with a degree in computer science and visual arts.

They are currently working on creating games and thinking about what will come next.

mirandachao.com

Description

This artwork is a video, 4 minutes, 25 seconds in length that plays in a loop on an iPad.

The video is a series of 20 individual drawings and a few simple animations, each displayed for about 4-5 seconds. Drawings are set in an empty square room showing a floor, two side walls, and a back wall with two rectangular slots in the wall, one chest-high, the other waist high. Subtly curved lines drawn on the side walls might indicate this is a padded cell. The artist uses foreshortened perspective to create the illusion of walls receding into the distance. No other decoration, adornments or light fixtures are present.

The video opens with a pen-and-ink drawing of 5 panels of slatted shutters: 2 side panels taking up 1/3 of the frame and the center panel, 2/3 of the frame. Every few seconds you will hear a creaking sound. This is the center panel rolling up to reveal a new image, then down, then up, then down, repeated 20 times, as noted in the video's title.

Many drawings feature headless bodies, or sometimes headless torsos.

Drawing # 1 is a kneeling headless body with white skin, arms upraised, elbows bent at 45 degrees, nipples covered by gold pasties, wearing blue briefs with red trim. Protruding from the headless neck is the cartoon equivalent of swear words: a jumble of question marks, exclamation points, hash tags, and the @ symbol.

Drawing #2 is a blue naked hunched-over female figure crouching on the floor. Her body faces away from us, her head and hair hang down, dripping liquid, perhaps blood, or maybe tears, into a blue puddle spreading on the floor beneath her feet.

Drawing #3 is a pale gray faceless puffy figure with a conical shaped head, no feet or hands, angled to its left (your right). The figure's right arm is motionless, its left arm is bent upwards at the elbow and pumps up and down 10 times.

Drawing #4 is a headless elongated female body with blue skin. She is hanging from a whirling ceiling fan, wearing a navy-blue t shirt and grey knee-length leggings. The toes point downwards and although the fan blades are whirring, the body does not move.

Drawing #5: The back wall's left slot is hidden by a window and maroon curtain. Through the window, on a pale blue background, we see two eyes, a pair of eyebrows, and the suggestion of a nose and mouth, drawn in white. After a few seconds, the curtains close, then open again.

Drawing #6 is of an androgynous figure's disarticulated body parts -- skeletal, except the ribs are encased in grey flesh. A round circle replaces the head and below the waist is a dotted outline suggesting underwear. The extended right arm and fingers point forward and down, the left fingers hang straight down, and the legs are crossed at the ankles. The body pulses up and down.

Drawing #7 is a lopsided avocado-shaped object of pulsing blue, green, red, purple, yellow and orange concentric circles. The pulsating rings simultaneously change color and oscillate multiple times per second.

Drawing #8 is a child's cartoon image of a ghost: a semi translucent bedsheet with holes for eyes, hovering above the floor and pulsating.

Drawing #9 is a headless body with white skin wearing a gray short-sleeve button-down shirt, with upturned collar, red tie, and black slacks. The headless body leans forward, hands hanging straight down and feet on tiptoes. A mass of black twisted and knotted lines hover above the neck. The figure pulses.

Drawing #10 is a pale green naked female figure, with an oversized head, large eyes, a small nose and mouth and blue pageboy-style haircut. Dangling from the wrist on her extended right forearm is a yellow ribbon or a bandage, at the end of which sits a black cat, standing on its hind legs, swatting at the bandage. The ribbon sways side to side.

Drawing #11 is of a white headless female figure wearing a gray tank top and black shorts kneeling on the floor. She bends slightly forward, her right arm outstretched, about to press her right forefinger into an electrical socket. Replacing the head-is a skull-sized pulsing, glowing light bulb.

Drawing #12 is of two standing female figures in profile facing each other. Both are barefoot and have tan skin. The taller figure (on your left) wears a Plague mask and a brown, empire-style, knee length dress. Her right arm hangs straight down. She looks down (to your right) at a smaller girl wearing a brown dress and a WW I gas mask. The girl's hair is shoulder length and straight. First the girl disappears and reappears, then the bigger, taller girl disappears and reappears. That pattern repeats one more time.

Drawing #13 is a headless light-blue female figure in a purple dress and black ankle socks, standing on tip toes with feet pointed in, toes touching. Her arms disappear behind her back. An opaque white wing hovers over each shoulder. Above the headless neck floats a partially opened book with a yellow half-moon drawn on the cover. The figure bounces up and down.

Drawing #14 is a female figure with purplish skin wearing a white tank top and red shorts, lying flat on her back. Her head is obscured by an oversized prescription bottle. Her knees are bent, her feet flat on the floor, arms encircling her waist. -Green and black pills roll back and forth from the uncapped prescription pill bottle.

Drawing #15 is a figure with white skin, in profile, reclining in a white clawfoot bathtub. An illuminated green-stemmed Jack O' Lantern sits atop the shoulders in place of a head. Soap bubbles glide upwards.

Drawing #16 is a headless white female figure seated on the floor, leaning back slightly to her right (your left) with her weight on her extended right arm, the palm lying flat on the floor. Her right leg is bent, her left leg extended straight on the floor. Her left arm bends upwards at a 45-degree angle, her index and middle fingers shaped into a V. Above her headless neck hangs a pair of open scissors, blades open on the right. One blade points to her hands, the other straight ahead. The scissor blades pulse open and shut.

Drawing #17 is a young girl with grey skin emerging from the chest-high wall slot and perched as if preparing to jump to the floor. She's wearing a white sailor top, pleated navy skirt, and white sneakers, and appears to have a mask on (or her face simply lacks features), and her body pulses

Drawing #18: are three large disembodied female heads, facing the viewer. The top head is dark red with bangs and disheveled hair. Her expression isn't clearly visible, but it appears fierce. This head pulses. The head below, to the left, is a female with white skin and short gray hair cut in a page-boy style. She has eyes and eyebrows, a nose and mouth, and a pointy chin. Her eyes are open and have no pupils. The head below, on the right, has blue skin and white tousled hair with a hastily drawn face. The eyes are mere suggestions of eyes, the mouth is askew, the chin isn't complete and the pen line disintegrates as it falls away from the face.

Drawing #19 is a figure with dark grey/blue skin lying on its side on a mattress, facing us, underneath a blanket so we see only the chest and bent left arm. Instead of a head there's an antenna TV with a screen displaying the emergency broadcasting system's color bars. A grenade-shaped object is embedded in the center of the back wall. The TV screen flashes.

Drawing #20 is a grey-green skinned female figure floating underwater, leaning or falling backwards, her legs kicking upwards. She wears a dark orange antique deep-sea diving helmet, a blue T-shirt and blue shorts. The arms extend upwards and bubbles float above the scuba mask as the body bounces up and down.

The film ends when the shutters close after this slide.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

“Untitled Sculpture” by Mike Cannata

Geneva, Illinois, Age 25

Award of Excellence



Label Text

Untitled, 2019

Ceramics, glaze, steel, enamel paint, metal hose clamps

(47" x 42" x 45")

Mike Cannata's art explores what it is like to be a physically and mentally hyperactive individual by investigating movement and stillness. Studying sensations and emotions through making, meditating, skateboarding and dancing, he experiences a sense of reprieve from the busyness of an overactive mind with attention deficit disorder. Adrenaline-inducing activities slow time and focus him, telling mind and body that what is happening in the moment is important and that he is alive. Moments of stillness in meditation supply a similar awareness of the sensations and emotions of body and mind. Cannata further explores these observations through his sculptural installations, which embody the duality of activity and quiet that inhabit

the same space. The toggling between stillness and stir activates attentional awareness, creating a serene state in which to process and think.

A multimedia artist working in metal, glass, paint, ceramics and found materials, Cannata received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the New York State School of Ceramics at Alfred University. He is currently a long-term resident at the Morean Center for Clay in St. Petersburg, Florida. mikecannata.com

Description

Mike Cannata, age 24, created an untitled sculpture made of earthenware ceramics, glaze, steel, and metal hose clamps that measures 4 feet tall by 3 and half feet wide.

The artist fabricated his structure on a tripod of steel rods, two are similar to steel channels for closet doors, and are braced together crosswise with a similar steel rod held by metal hose clamps. One closet door channel leg shows the bar code sticker from a hardware store. A third leg is a round steel rod. A fourth dark round steel rod juts out not touching the ground. Above the steel legs the collection of materials from one angle resembles a torso with abbreviated arms, and a faceless head. The torso is fabricated from lengths of thick material covered in blue glaze and woven in a crude honeycomb pattern that extends two feet slightly angled left. Through the holes in the honeycomb pattern a glob of brown clay occupies a middle spot and oozes from a large gap in the honeycomb on the opposite side.

On the left side (our right) where an arm would be if this was a torso is a yellow wooden structure resembling a tri shaped tower, pinched at the top and wedged in under the shoulder. It juts out from the torso towards us. This is held in place by brown clay that flows down from the head and neck onto this side. The right side (our left) the top rim of an earthenware pot is where an arm would be, with purple glazed loops connected to the rim of the pot and to the top left part of the honeycomb torso frame.

Above the blue honeycomb structure brown clay forms a neck and supports a head-like brown frame similar to the torso frame. Purple clay covers the top of the structure and part of the front of the "face" in a thumbprint pattern.

On what would be the back of the torso, shining bronze colored clay oozes from the base of the blue honeycombed structure.

From another angle the structure leans 30 degrees, resembling a person reclining

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

“Double Vision” by May Ling Kopecky

Plymouth, Minnesota, Age 27

Second Prize



Label Text

Double Vision, 2021

Acrylic on canvas

(14" x 11" x 1.5")

May Ling Kopecky's work is influenced by her experiences with pediatric-onset multiple sclerosis (MS). She experienced her first clear MS symptoms when she was 13 and was diagnosed at 15. Due to her young age and the "invisible" nature of MS, Kopecky was often met with skepticism while talking about her illness, prompting her to begin creating artwork about MS.

Double Vision is part of a series of paintings that visualize how she sees the world while suffering from various MS symptoms. Her goal is to spread MS awareness through her work and advocate for those with invisible illnesses.

Kopecky received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities and is currently pursuing a Master of Fine Arts at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. maylingkopecky.com

Description

The painting is titled *Double Vision* by May Ling Kopecky. The materials are acrylic on canvas and the size is 11 by 14 inches.

This is a very detailed painting of a woman's right forearm, lying flat (palm down). The background is composed of different shades of white: the arm rests on a white pillow atop a white sheet, fabric folds are suggested by pale grey shadows. The entire arm is blurred, from top to bottom, and appears doubled. The blurred hand is not drawn in a normal perspective: you can count up to eight fingers.

The arm is angled upward to the right, the fingers extending to the one o'clock position and the (unseen) elbow at the lower left, in the seven o'clock position.

The index finger is extended and the thumb and other fingers are curled under the palm. The skin near the elbow is dark brown but gradually lightens to pale white at the fingers. The arm is long and thin, with 2 IV needles inserted in a vein at the wrist, overlaid with a gauze bandage binding 2 clear curved tubes. A second gauze bandage, taped about 6 inches below the wrist, flattens the IV lines against skin. The arm is immobilized and anchored, as the medication drips.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

“Welcome Back” by May Ling Kopecky

Plymouth, Minnesota, Age 27

Second Prize



Label Text

Welcome Back, 2019

Acrylic and ink on panel

(8" x 10" x 0.75")

May Ling Kopecky's work is influenced by her experiences with pediatric-onset multiple sclerosis (MS). She experienced her first clear MS symptoms when she was 13 and was diagnosed at 15. Due to her young age and the “invisible” nature of MS, Kopecky was often met with skepticism while talking about her illness, prompting her to begin creating artwork about MS.

Paintings like *Welcome Back* document her personal relationship with medical spaces and share how places once perceived as frightening can grow to feel familiar. Her goal is to spread MS awareness through her work and advocate for those with invisible illnesses.

Kopecky received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities and is currently pursuing a Master of Fine Arts at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. maylingkopecky.com

Description

The painting is titled *Welcome Back* by May Ling Kopecky. The materials are acrylic and ink on a panel 8 inches by 10 inches.

This is a painting of a hospital room interior, as seen through an open doorway from the corridor. The right side of the painting shows the hallway wall, with a WELCOME sign affixed to it, a patient chart set in an acrylic holder, and a wall phone. The color tones are bright white (lights, sheets, ceiling), shades of brown (flooring, furniture, and window frame) or tan (walls and bed frame).

The painting's left side shows the interior of any hospital room: an empty hospital bed with tousled sheets, a mattress raised to a seated position, an IV pole on wheels, bright fluorescent lights overhead, a blood pressure machine on the wall, and generic furniture. Straight ahead, on the far wall is a wood-framed window maybe 3 feet wide by 4 feet high, through which we see a lilac, cloudless sky, and below that, a cluster of green trees and a group of 3 warehouse style buildings. The view might be dreary, but the pale sky and greenery offer a stark contrast to the room's sterility.

The "Welcome Back" of the title might invoke dread, goodwill, or sanctuary. Where is the occupant of the bed and why did she leave? Was it her choice? Will she return? What are the feelings evoked by the empty bed? There aren't any answers but the viewer can speculate and develop a relationship with the work of art.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

“Pandemic Blue 1” by James de Guzman Lee

Hillsborough, California, Age 18

Award of Excellence



Label Text

Pandemic Blue 1, 2020

Acrylic on canvas with markers

(36" x 48" x 0.875")

James de Guzman Lee expresses himself primarily through painting, drawing, and creating miniature furniture.

When COVID-19 shut down his school and forced everyone to shelter in place, de Guzman Lee turned to art, painting for hours every day. Pandemic 1 is the first in a series of more than 30 paintings executed over the first few months of the pandemic. It was selected by the de Young Museum's curatorial board in its prestigious Open Call and was exhibited at the de Young Open in 2020. The rest of the Pandemic series was auctioned in support of the Oak Hill School for children with autism.

de Guzman Lee's work reflects his mastery of color and his fascination with swimming pools and the ocean. After painting many layers of overlapping acrylic color, he will finish off his paintings with marker drawings of swimming pool lanes and circles representing boats and lifesavers. This is his personal iconography and his main channel for sharing his unique view of the world. jameseyart.com

Description

Pandemic Blue 1 is a 36" X 48" X 7/8" painting in acrylic on canvas with Sharpie markings. It depicts a swimming pool in shades of blue, green, and brown layered over each other. The background of the entire painting is a light blue. At the left of the picture, the surface is painted in a rectangular shape with streaks of brown, green, and blue layers. This area is approximately 12" wide and stretches the height of the piece.

To the right, a 36" aquamarine rectangle stretches approximately two thirds across the left side width of the painting. A darker blue rectangle is painted over the middle third of this layer.

To the right of the aquamarine rectangle is a large blue-green area that is approximately 12" in height and extends across the canvas. The paint resembles ripples in water.

Two long horizontal lines span the piece, dividing the blues into three areas. A thin dark blue line runs from the top to bottom of the canvas and is situated 12" from the top of the piece. A forest green line is thicker and is placed approximately 12" from the bottom edge.

Completing the canvas are vertical and horizontal lines, sometimes in small grids, drawn with a Sharpie. Several small circles are sprinkled throughout the right side of the canvas.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

“Trepidation” by Maiya Hartman

Minneapolis, Minnesota, Age 25

Award of Excellence



Label Text

Trepidation, 2020

Acrylic and mixed media on canvas

(36.25" x 36" x 1.75")

Maiya Lea Hartman’s work draws from memories and moments that examine identity, emotional expression and the body through their lens as a queer Black person. Their experience with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder has made communication a challenge, and painting is their non-verbal channel for expressing thoughts, experiences and deep-rooted emotions. Their practice is intimate, touching on personal memories and moments through family portraits and self-portraiture, recontextualized by placing figures in undefined landscapes and allowing body language and facial expressions to communicate messages.

Trepidation, a self-portrait that highlights Hartman's feelings of anticipation and fear that something bad will happen, was completed following the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent uprising in Minneapolis. The painting also reflects the active retraumatization of Black people and the constant fear for the safety of one's family, friends and self.

Hartman has found additional expression and healing through public art, creating many murals in collaboration with the collective Creatives After Curfew, where they can reflect the stories of BIPOC communities and envision futures rooted in justice and liberation. They are a current artist-in-residence with the African American Museum and Gallery in North Minneapolis.
maiyaartista.com

Description

Trepidation is a 36" X 36" X2" square, multi-media portrait using acrylics, hair, wood, paper, and flowers on canvas. The portrait depicts the head of a person with black braided hair on a background of pastel blue and pink colors which seem to flow into each other.

As you face the portrait, the head is positioned so that only the left side is seen. It occupies about 18" - or one half - of the canvas. A narrow textured border surrounds the painting. Along the left side and partially along the bottom creating an 'L' shape, the border is made of layered streaks of white paint on top of the white canvas. The remaining border has textured brown material, almost appearing as wood, with irregular holes revealing the blank, white canvas behind it.

The face itself has a bronze/brown skin tone that looks as though a light is shining directly on it. The person has full lips, a wide nose, and a dark eyebrow over a teary brown eye. The black hair is depicted woven into cornrows. Several rows are actual hair attached to the head that fall around the ear and hang off the canvas. A tiny bouquet of cream colored flowers covers the earlobe.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

“Curved Enthusiasm” by MJ Cooper

Backlick, Ohio, Age 18

Award of Excellence



Label Text

Curved Enthusiasm, 2020

Acrylic painting on curved, double-sided canvas

(24.5” x 48” x 12”)

Many of MJ Cooper’s paintings are created after a time of meditation. Her acrylic paintings on canvas with vibrant colors and textures offer a therapeutic mechanism as she lives with chronic vestibular migraines, functional neurological disorder, cognitive impairment, photophobia, and sound sensitivity. Cooper finds inspiration in the perseverance, strength and vivid artistry of Yayoi Kusama and the colorful, abstract and textured paintings of Jackson Pollock.

The award-winning painting entitled Curved Enthusiasm is about how life can be full of promise, destiny, joy, and hopes that can be taken away in a heartbeat. With every mishap, misfortune or mistake, our enthusiasm may change course or destination.

Cooper wants to travel abroad and study art in college after a gap year. Her dream is for her paintings to be in museums, galleries and homes all around the world.

artlifting.com/collections/mj-cooper

Description

MJ Cooper, age 18, has created “Curved Enthusiasm” an acrylic paint piece on curved canvas measuring 24 X 48 X 2. It is best displayed perched on a table 2 feet above the ground.

The artist painted both sides of this large piece as well as the thick sides and top edge. They used the same application technique on both sides of random splashes of predominately blues, violet, and purple interspersed with a few bursts of sandy yellow, red and white. One impression is of flowers and clouds in a swirling chaotic dance.

Close inspection reveals short brush strokes with a thick application of the paint leaving a bumpy stucco effect. Meandering lines of paint appear in the piece as if painted on in a beginning layer and then buried under the short brush strokes of an additional layer. Perhaps the canvas was not a smooth surface when the artist started – an interesting point to ponder.

The back curvature is of the same style and painting technique with more hues of purples. The artist covered the left edge in gold splashes over blue, the upper edge in purple splotches, and the right edge in a mixture of sky and medium blue.

Creating calmness from chaos is a theme that comes to mind for this piece. The swirl of colors is mesmerizing for mind over matter.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

“When I Think” by Jasina Yu

Lexington, Massachusetts, Age 17

Award of Excellence



Label Text

When I Think

Insulation spray foam, pastel, Bristol board, LED lights, nuts
(40" x 41" x 6")

As a ninth grader, Jasina Yu was a nationally ranked ping-pong player who was struck by a drunk driver while driving home from practice in 2016. She sustained a traumatic brain injury and an injury to her right optic nerve that will never recover. Following three major brain surgeries and two weeks in a coma, she was transferred to a rehabilitation center, where she had to relearn normal functions such as eating, talking, reading and writing.

Following her accident, Yu was unable to open her right eye for months, but with the help of her occupational therapist, is now able to slowly open it again. To this day, her right eye still

does not move properly. While she is no longer able to compete as a ping-pong player due to impaired coordination, she has begun to view art as her vocation and seeks to pursue it professionally.

Description

Jasina Yu, age 16, presents us with a mixed media piece titled “ When I Think” on Bristol heavyweight artists’ paper with coloring in pastels, added items of insulation spray foam, LED lights with wires, nuts and bolts. It measures 40” X 41” X 6 “.

The drawing is a self-portrait depicting Yu with 3 different views all from the midriff up, on a light pink background. They are all connected at the back of the head by a dominating mass that has exploded above their heads. A tangled mass of dusty mauve insulation foam is sprayed in twisted clumps with jumbles of LED lights connected by wires, nuts and bolts sprinkled in.

Each image depicts a young person, with light olive skin, wearing oversized black rimmed glasses. The middle image is the largest and is facing us. The 2 smaller flanking images are angled towards the front.

The expressionless figure to the left, Yu’s right, wears a light green tank top, and holds a screwdriver in her right hand above her head embedding a screw into the mass, while looking towards us.

The largest figure in the middle wears a light blue long sleeved hoodie, gazes upward. She cups her hands over her ears, with her fingers disappearing into the mass.

The 3rd figure to the right, Yu’s left, wears a light blue tank top, smiles widely at us as she snips a long nail in the mass above her head with wire cutters held in her left hand.

A truly moving piece showing the complexities of the brain and the process of thinking, which has been a struggle for the artist recovering from her injury.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

“Methods of Care for the Precarious Body” by Panteha Abareshi

Los Angeles, California, Age 22

First Prize



Label Text

Methods of Care for the Precarious Body, 2021

Analog video, digital video, performance, Kodak carousel

Panteha Abareshi’s work is rooted in their existence as a chronically ill/disabled body with multiple medical illnesses and resulting disabilities, at the root of which is sickle zero beta thalassemia, a genetic blood disorder that causes debilitating pain and bodily deterioration that increase with age.

Abareshi’s work examines the complexities of living within a body that is highly monitored, constantly examined, and made to feel like a specimen. The radicalized abjectification of their corporeal form allows for an examination of its deterioration and its connection to universal feelings of fragility, fear, pain and mortality. Their body serves as both medium and message, and Abareshi plays with representations that are both recognizable and unrecognizable as human forms. The body is abstracted as its “meaning” is incessantly re-contextualized,

deconstructed and refabricated. Abareshi's work also speaks to the ableism that is pervasive in language, behavior and media, delving into the many representations of the sick and disabled body.

Abareshi is completing a degree in intermedia from the University of Southern California, after which they plan to pursue a Master of Fine Arts and attend the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program. panteha.com

Description

Panteha Abrareshi, age 22, has written, produced and filmed a short video entitled "Methods of Care for the Precarious Body". This film is 5 minutes and 49 seconds and is played on a flat screen TV on a black cart.

The setting is a darkened room illuminated by a slide projector's single beam of light against a plain back wall. On the left holding a remote control Panteha kneels, with their back to us. They are of medium height and slim build. They wear their long bleached hair in braids, some piled on top in a bun, a row of thick bangs and others trailing. They wear a white sports camisole top and white bottoms similar to gymnastics workout briefs. On their bare torso, they wear a beige back brace covering their shoulders, secured by a wide elastic Velcro band around the waist.

When the film begins they enter, with their back to us, and kneel beside the projector. Throughout the film, their only movement is clicking the remote control. Images fill the screen, while they kneel on the left side of a round slide projector on a low table in the center foreground. Picture slides are interspersed with title cards on a magenta background that contain information or instructions. The slides sequence is as follows:

The title is superimposed on a large global lined sphere. Placed at the lower left edge is a caduceus (medical snake symbol) with the words "certified medical". A small bar code sits on the lower right. The white title card reads: "Methods of Care for the Precarious Body".

Slide – a magenta background with a front and back diagram of the lower most vertebrae and tail bone. The words above it: “STERILE PREPARATION: PROTECT BOTH THE BODY AND YOURSELF”

Slide – a still photo of a pair of hands, presumably of Panteha, putting on green surgical gloves, above a large sheet of white paper. The wrists show a hospital ID band. An arrow points to the glove being pulled up towards the wrist with the words: “Do not touch glove exterior”.

Slide – Two gloved hands, crossed at the wrists, palms down on the paper, with an arrow and the word “Safe” pointing to the left-hand.

Slide – a title card with the outline drawing of a torso’s back view. The words are: “First: Identify the “Body.” Then: “Correct and Reinforce”.

Slide – a frontal view of Panteha’s torso, arms out, hands, and head not in the frame. They wear cropped white knit sports bra and partially obscured white bottoms, midriff exposed. A dotted line is drawn from the word “BODY” on the lower left to a spot between their breasts.

Slide – Their back to us, a gloved Panteha puts on the back brace, pulling it over their shoulders.

Slide – They extend the waist strap’s two ends,

Slide – a title card with an overhead view of a cross section skull diagram. The title reads: “Ensuring Safety:” Words to the side of the diagram: “ The body need not be at risk from itself”.

Slide – gloved hands hold up a large piece of stretchy beige bandaging material with Velcro fasteners and oval holes cut from the center of each side.

Slide –Side-by-side photos of Panteha (one head on, the other in profile) with the bandage wrapped and half-masking their face. In the frontal view the bandage covers everything below

their nose, their chin resting on 2 steepled fingers. In the profile view, the bandage, Velcro'd at the top, covers everything except their right ear, their first 2 fingers of their right hand placed on their neck below the ear. A caption between the two photos reads, "Securely in place".

Slide – The same photos, taken a moment later. Panteha's eyes are open in the profile photo on the left. In the right photo their (still covered) face is slightly angled and they are looking directly at us.

Slide – a title card illustrated with a diagram of a vertebrae reads: "PREVENTATIVE MEASURES: Stop the body from damaging itself further".

Slide – the gloved hands hold up a beige hard plastic neck brace with pink foam padding with a 2-inch hole in the center reinforced with hard plastic.

Slide – Panteha, wearing the neck brace, stands in profile, viewed from the shoulders up, looking towards our right, the foam padding extends up the back of their head. A red dotted line runs from the side of the collar and reads, "ensure that preventative restraint is tight and secure."

Slide – a close up of Panteha, chin lifted. The hole in the collar is positioned over the middle of their neck. They insert two gloved fingers into the hole, stretching it.

Slide – a title card with skeletal diagrams of 2 feet, one from the top side, and the other from the bottom. The heading reads, "PRACTICING AND IMPLEMENTING RESTRAINT: Doing What is Necessary".

Slide – a pair of photos of gloved hands rolling out a length of gauze. In the left photo, their bare right foot steps onto the gauze bandage, in the right photo, the ball of the foot is wrapped. The left gloved hand, palm up, gestures to the foot as if presenting it; the right gloved hand holds the gauze roll, ready to continue wrapping.

Slide – the right gloved hand points to a pair of U-shaped steel brackets about 10 inches long. A flat metal piece connects the two sides. The caption reads "lower extremity restraint".

Slide – a photo of Panteha’s bandaged feet with gauze, each encircled around the ankle with a steel restraint. Gloved hands secure the manacle to the left foot held a few inches off the floor.

Slide – a pair of photos of Panteha’s shackled feet standing. The manacles are locked together. The feet in the left photo are flat on the floor; the feet in the right photo are on their toes.

Slide – a title card: “Optional:” “Taking Steps for comfort” and “Relief from potential hurt caused by care.”

Slide – gloved hands hold up a pair of pale green hospital socks sized XXL.

Slide – a pair of photos of socked feet facing to our left. In the left photo the feet are flat on the ground from a sitting position, with manacles around the ankles. In the right photo gloved hands tug the sock either putting it on or taking it off.

Slide – a gloved right hand, pointing down, arm extended straight, holds a pair of manacles. The caption reads, “upper extremity restraint.”

Slide – a pair of photos, one above the other. In the top photo, the left arm and gloved hand are extended straight out, palm towards us. In the lower photo the left hand snaps the restraint manacle onto the right wrist.

Slide – a pair of photos, one above the other. In the top photo, the right hand slips a manacle over the left hand’s fingers. In the lower photo the manacles are hooked together on the two wrists.

Slide – a title card with a diagram of a cross section of a vertebrae. The title reads, “FULL IMMOBILIZATION: The vital alleviation of control.”

Slide – a pair of photos side by side of a Panteha’s feet in socks and manacles as they sit on the floor facing to the right. The left photo is of the feet. The right photo shows their manacled wrists hovering over their feet.

Slide – a pair of side by side photos of Panteha’s manacled hands reaching across their feet, perhaps trying to free themselves from the restraints.

Slide – This photo reveals what they were doing in the previous slide as they turns their hands slightly away, revealing a metal carabiner clip coupling their left manacled wrist to their left manacled ankle.

Slide - this photo is similar to the previous one. Panteha’s gloved and manacled hands are lifting their socked and manacled feet off the floor.

Slide – Sitting on their buttocks on the floor in full body profile, Panteha pulling their feet up and away from the floor and rocking back onto their buttocks wearing the head and neck braces seen earlier.

Slide – They lean back further, with straight legs in a V-position high off the floor, arms straight, still connected at the wrists to the ankles. They look at their feet which are slightly above their head.

Slide - a title card reads “Optional: TEMPORARY RELIEF FOR THE BODY WHEN FURTHER DISTRESSED BY CARE”. Below this, in smaller text: “DO NOT over extend these measures: Doing so will counteract previous steps.”

Slide – Outstretched arms and gloved hands display an Instant Hot Pack (activated by chemicals when the seal is broken, releasing heat). A red dotted line and arrow points to the caption, “Squeeze here”.

Slide – Panteha, in full body profile sitting on the floor with manacled wrists and ankles holding the hot pack in their left hand gazing down. A dotted red line points to the top of the packet with the caption, “Apply to Affected Areas”.

Slide – a pair of photos of socked feet and gloved hands. In the left photo they hold the Hot Pack flat between their wrists, squeezing it with balled fists. In the right photo they apply the hot pack to the top of their ankles.

Slide – With a gloved right hand, Panteha's straight right arm holds an Ambulation device. (An Ambulation device, or bag valve mask is a hand-held tool used to deliver positive pressure ventilation to someone with ineffective or insufficient breaths. The mask fits over the subject's mouth and air is administered by compressing the self-inflating air bag.) The device has clear plastic tubing, a suction mask and an oval-shaped royal blue rubber bag in the middle. A red dotted line and caption indicate it is an Ambulation Bag.

Slide - Seated on the floor with their wrists and ankles manacle, knees drawn up to their chest, Panteha's back is pressed against the back wall, their eyes closed. The Ambulation Bag lays at their feet.

Slide –Panteha lifts the Ambulation bag in front of their knees and leans closer with the face mask part facing them.

Slide – Panteha sits on the floor, knees pulled to their chest, facing our right side. They bring the mask to their face, and raises their feet so their hands can bring the device close enough. The face mask covers their mouth.

Back in the projection room the screen goes black and Panteha fades away leaving the slide projector in dim light.

Their name appears as the only final credit. Screen goes black.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

“Crossing Brooklyn” by Joshua Ben-Dylan

New York, New York, Age 24

Award of Excellence



Label Text

Crossing Brooklyn, 2020

35mm film photograph

(26.5" x 35" x 0.875")

Joshua “Shuah” Ben-Dylan is an artist exploring emotions and moments that are seldom communicated. Working within the mediums of photography, visual art, poetry, film and music, their art reflects the hyperculture nature of society with a constant inundation of information that distorts and warps the senses. They draw heavily from transcendentalism, mythology and pioneers in the field of color, seeking to push art to the extreme and hoping to uncover something new. Crossing Brooklyn is a meditation on the 21st-century man, splicing the old world of religious practice with today’s metropolitan landscape. Ben-Dylan’s artistic practice

derives from an acute sensitivity to the world due to bipolar disorder; everything around them is heightened to extremes. Using hypercolor, an artistic style they developed, to blend their vision of the world with a fantasy of what it could be, they hope to share something previously unseen.

Ben-Dylan holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in film from Purchase College. They are currently creating a fourth poetry book and an experimental feature film, as well as their next photo series. joshuabendylan.com

Description

Crossing Brooklyn is a photo shot on 35mm film with filter and Photoshop coloring manipulation. The artist is Joshua Ben-Dylan. The photo is about 2½ feet tall by 4 feet wide and is set in a black frame with a white mat. The piece uses a reverse solarization technique (which reverses colors) in some places, and overlaid color in others.

The photo shows a Hasidic man in profile, head lowered, striding purposefully from the left side of the frame to the right along a gritty urban street. He is seen from across the street.

The man wears a shtreimel fur hat (worn on Shabbat, Jewish holidays and festive occasions), black loafers, and a calf-length long sleeved overcoat. The coat is a washed-out white, except the right sleeve (facing us) appears navy blue. His legs are bare. The man is shown in reverse monochrome and his fur hat is shown in complete whiteout.

The man walks in front of a black and gray brick building, which takes up 2/3 of the photo. (The artist used reverse solarization here, so red brick displays as black, and shadows display as white. This technique was applied at the base of the building up to the man's calves). Three grates, an air conditioning unit and a window with tattered Venetian blinds break up the brick wall's uniformity. A block of white color positioned to the left of and below the air conditioner is a reverse monochrome shadow, as is the white shadow from the fire escape balcony (in the center of the large brick wall).

The golden-hued sidewalk is uneven and crumbling, with litter and debris scattered at the building's edge. A fire hydrant sits in the lower left of the frame, a streetlight and Walk sign stand on the far right.

Vertical objects throw long black shadows (the fire hydrant, the streetlamp, the man). Otherwise, the color scheme is black and grey (the building), gold (the sidewalk, lamps, and window), and white (the man's coat and hat, building trim, signs, and solarized shadows). The solarization technique reverses colors, so the red brick shows black, and the black hat and shadows show up white.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

“Tough Love” by Moriah Faith

Black Forest, Colorado, Age 23

Grand Prize



Label Text

Tough Love, 2020

Oil on canvas

(30" x 24" x 1.5")

Moriah Faith's painting process is deeply intertwined with her life experience as a young disabled woman. She found relief and solace in painting as a child when she began experiencing chronic pancreatitis and chronic pain syndrome. The solitude of chronic illness led to severe mental health issues and feelings of defectiveness and worthlessness. Following physical deterioration and numerous operations, Faith recalls no longer recognizing the person looking back at her in the mirror.

That mirror became the inspiration for *Tough Love*. Reducing her form to nothing but color and value forced Faith to stop criticizing her body for the things that it wasn't while coming to terms with its strength. By shifting her energy from destruction to creation, she fell in love with life again.

Faith is currently working on a series of large-scale paintings depicting figures in interior spaces and works as an art facilitator for fellow disabled artist Jessica Vohs, with whom she led a community-based mural project aiming to reconnect people with disabilities after the COVID-19 pandemic. Faith plans to pursue solo exhibitions and graduate school in the future. moriahfaith.com

Description

Tough Love by Moriah Faith is an oil painting on canvas about 2½ feet wide by 2 feet tall.

This portrait of a young woman with a bisected face – one half composed, the other half assaulted-- creates a strong emotional and visual impact from the moment you set eyes on it. It's almost a slap in the face. Or a punch, really, since that seems to be the implication.

Set against a mottled grey, wine, and teal background, the painting depicts the head and bare shoulders of a young woman, perhaps in her mid-20s, gazing directly at us with half-lowered lids and uplifted chin. Her expression is neutral with perhaps a hint of defiance in her eyes. The right side of her face has a high forehead, deep-set brown eyes, a slightly upturned nose, full red lips and no visible hair. A small red divot above her left eyebrow might be an abrasion or injury. A delicate white light grazes the middle of her forehead and bridge of her nose. Her skin is mostly beige with rosy overtones, but her face is partially obscured by dark shadows.

The ghastly left side of her face is obliterated by thick brush strokes of blood red paint, erupting in deep red swirls circling her swollen left eye. The woman's left ear is erased, and a deep, dark red gash gouges her left eye, perhaps the aftermath of a violent confrontation. A squall of tan, red, and white blotches cascade off the cheek and chin into a thicket of colors that fade into the background. The extremely sharp contrast between the sides of her face is the composition's shocking result.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

“The Light Within” by Maya Milton

Seattle, Washington, Age 27

Award of Excellence



Label Text

The Light Within

Mixed media

(24" x 19")

Maya Milton creates art that largely focuses on self-love after feeling like an outsider for most of her life. Her disability motivates her to create artwork that focuses on building bridges between different kinds of people. She is currently a multimedia artist who focuses on empowering women of color, especially Black women, to be comfortable and confident in their own skin.

The Light Within speaks directly to connections to self and to self-love. The woman in the piece holds her own light as she recognizes and realizes her own power. She draws energy from herself and holds her inner light in her hand.

Milton's artwork helps her feel connected to people who are like and unlike her. Her artwork has been exhibited at the M. Rosetta Hunter Art Gallery, Nepantla Cultural Arts Gallery, Center on Contemporary Art, and others. Her work is on display at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Discovery Center, and she was nominated by the Foundation as a "Changemaker." She is a grantee of the Jordan Schnitzer Black Lives Matter Artist Grant and is a Neddy at Cornish Finalist. 21entities.com

Description

"The Light Within" is a mixed media painting and the size is 24 inches by 9 inches. The artist is Maya Milton. This is the portrait of a young-adult Black woman, her head is bowed and her eyes are gazing downward. Held at chest height, a ball of white light bursts between curled fingers and her upturned palms. She is intensely focused on the light, and with a slightly upturned mouth, she appears relaxed and tranquil.

The woman wears a plain golden brown long-sleeved top. Her plaited hair is parted into tidy segments showing the scalp between the segments. The plaits hang in front of her, extending at least to her waist. Her eyebrows are neatly trimmed, her eyelashes long, and she wears a tiny blue nose ring. Her face is dappled in shades of brown, with flecks of white, her skin paler on the forehead and darker on the chin.

In a style reminiscent of an African Kente cloth design, rows of large white geometric shapes (bars, crosses, chevrons, and triangles) decorate the saffron-colored background, filling the entire frame. The mood is quiet, the setting harmonious.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

“Purple Lights of the City” by Dominic Killiany

Watertown, Massachusetts, Age 24

Award of Excellence



Label Text

Purple Lights of the City

Acrylic on canvas

(36” x 12” x 0.75”)

Dominic Killiany’s work reflects his view of and means of connecting with the world as a person with autism. While structured schedules create definition and security for Killiany, sketching and painting provide an outlet for relaxation and creativity, particularly in applying paint to a canvas. He describes his sketches as puzzle pieces, unique in shape, pattern and color that create a complete, beautiful whole when assembled. Color reflects emotion, and Killiany’s bold, bright, colorful work reflects his happiest state—when he is painting.

Killiany had his first exhibition in 2014 at the Watertown Public Library. In 2017, he had a solo exhibition at the Landau Gallery in Belmont, Massachusetts, was invited to exhibit at the Open Door Gallery at the Worcester Art Museum in 2018, and has been published in Studio Visit Magazine. In 2019, his art was selected for a new, state-of-the-art playground in Cambridge. He is a graduate of Boston Higashi, a private learning center in Randolph, Massachusetts, for young adults with autism. dominiccreations.com

Description

Dominic Killiany, age 23, creates a piece titled “Purple Lights of the City” using acrylic paints on canvas measuring 36”X 12” X 1. The colors blue, purple, and violet on a black background dominate the painting. Starting at the bottom, thick lines of varying blues, purples, greys, and fuchsia curve left two thirds of the way up the canvas, reminiscent of a road. The black background peers between the lines as the dark night peers through slats. A double strand of violet stands out on the far left side of the curve. The upper curve gives the impression of the road traversing up a hill.

The top third of the piece depicts city skyscrapers with the same broad lines as the road, and black background. Some hollow buildings are tall and narrow, with curved tops, while others are shorter and wider. In the narrow space above the buildings the sky is a greyish blue with a purple border indicating the horizon.

The artist’s memory of trips in the car as a child leads us into his world of vivid color and fun adventures.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)