

PALETTE

Issue IV. January 2021.



MEET OUR TEAM



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FROM THE EDITORS

Dear readers,

Change has come and swept us off our feet faster than we know to respond. In the face of a seemingly endless string of challenges, we have tasked ourselves to not only adapt, but to adapt quickly, push boundaries and thrive. But thriving is a strange concept. It is not a race that can be won with optimism, determination and endurance. Rather, it is a strategic state we reach by knowing ourselves – and when to pause, breathe and feel. When our minds are screaming at us to keep stumbling forward, self-compassion allows us to cut through the noise and transform it into solace with words, art and passions. Community gives us added strength through solidarity. In a time where the physical distance between us seems infinite, may we find solace and solidarity through the shared words, art and passions of our U of T medical community.

For our new readers, *Palette* is a student-led arts and culture publication founded in 2019 by two medical students, Annie Yu and Sarah Ge, with the aim to promote self-expression and creative dialogue among medical learners at U of T. Since then, *Palette* has successfully published three issues displaying the varied and astounding talents of our medical students, faculty and alumni. Despite being entirely online, the engagement and support we have received for Issue IV has been remarkable! To continue highlighting the artistic talents of our medical community while also evolving to showcase creativity beyond the conventional arts, Issue IV has been divided into three sections: visual arts, creative writing and lifestyle. In visual arts, we have featured over 20 exhibits of pencil, ink, paint, digital, photography and stitched artwork, each uniquely enriching our perspectives and making us restless with our urge to travel. The creative writing section is filled with poetry and prose that have touched our hearts with sorrow, hope and humour. And lastly, lifestyle – our new section replacing the earlier performance arts and lifestyle design categories – is truly all-encompassing, featuring stories from travel diaries, reminiscent playlists, strenuous workouts and a continuation of our StayAtHome recommendations. In addition, we could not be more excited to share the stories and wisdom gathered from our interviews with classmates Tao, Koren, Sinthu and Leah, and two of our role models, Drs. John Semple and Chika Oriuwa.

As we say goodbye to 2020 and look towards a fresh beginning, we would like to take this opportunity to thank the U of T Medical Society and Student Initiative Fund for challenging us to become greater and for the monetary support to do so. To Sarah and Annie, you have left us with massive shoes to fill. Thank you for bringing this little light [*Palette*] to the U of T medical community. And thank you for trusting in us and continuously guiding and inspiring us to be a little more like you. We are so grateful to our team this year. Cindy, Zahra, Shamir, Fatimah, Rachel and Nancy – each of you have dazzled us with your exceptional talents, creativity and enthusiasm and have made *Palette* an endless source of positivity. We can't believe we put together an entire magazine over Zoom! Of course, Issue IV would not be what it is today without our contributors. Thank you for trusting us to share your candidness and words of wisdom – they have been a compass amongst difficult and uncertain times. Now, may it guide others.

As always, we hope every issue of *Palette* finds itself in safe and welcoming hands.

Warmest regards,

Two handwritten signatures in black ink, one for Jessica Trac and one for Sheila Yu.

Jessica Trac & Sheila Yu
Editors-in-Chief

Cover Photo: Desert Dunes
Alissa Liu, 2T3 MAM



Description:
This photo was taken in
Huacachina, Peru, a tiny village home to the
largest sand dunes in South America.

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Visual Arts

Creativity takes courage.
- Henri Matisse

01

Mount Rainier

Cindy Cui

2T4 WB



“Of all the fire mountains which like beacons, once blazed along the Pacific Coast, Mount Rainier is the noblest.”
-John Muir

@cindycuiphotography

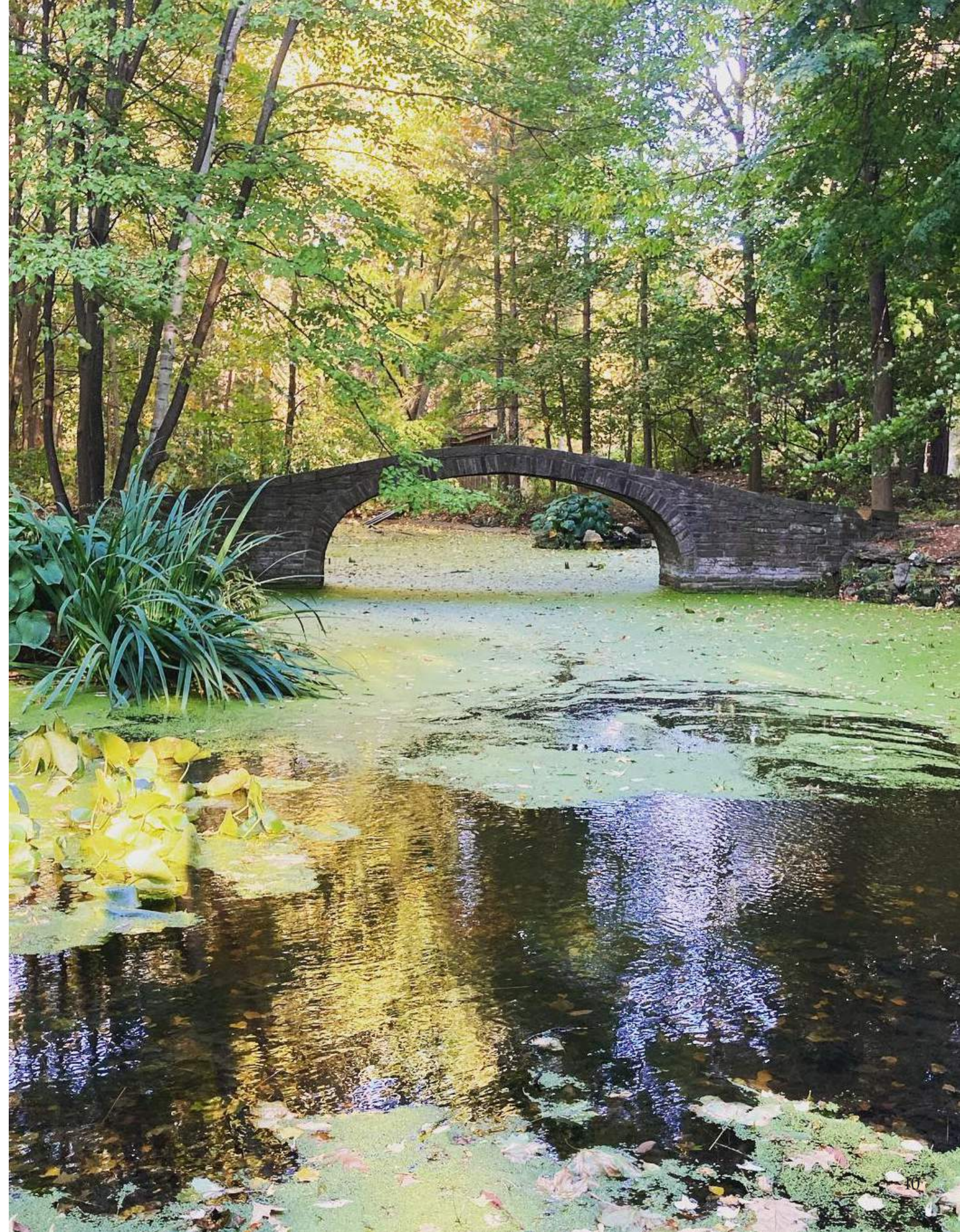


Nature as Medicine: Healing Tonics

Ammar Hafeez
2T3 MAM

With prolonged physical/social distancing and Zoom fatigue, it is difficult to rejuvenate yourself by staying home all the time. During times like these, nature can be an unexpected and effective healing tonic for your mind, body and soul. This is what I discovered and tried to capture in my photography while on my biking adventures. An unexpected but pleasant find!

@ammar_hafeez502





Taking inspiration from UofT's slogan 'Boundless', this piece is a reflection of my turbulent experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and my rediscovery of art along the way.

As I advanced my educational training from high school to undergrad and now into medical school, it was extremely rare for me to gravitate back to the artistic hobbies I loved so much as a child. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has uprooted our status quo, a small silver lining was being able to experience the nature around me to a fuller extent and to draw inspiration from places and scenes that I wouldn't normally pause to look at.

'Boundless' is a piece that reminds me to enjoy the present moment despite the challenges and to look forward to brighter days ahead.

Medium: Gouache on paper

Boundless

Christie Tan
2T3 PB

The Face Behind the Mask

Sabrina Wang
2T4 WB

I spent some time recently getting back to digital art and I decided to draw something that inspires me.

For me, that is the frontline workers such as the physicians and nurses that have made an incredible impact in helping patients during this pandemic.

Here I drew an image of nurse anesthetist Federico from a hospital in Italy. Taking the time to draw in all of the details on his face such as the marks from his mask, the sweat, the bags under his eyes, his flushed skin, and his visible exhaustion reminded me of his strength and resilience in the face of the challenges of a pandemic. It reminds me that as a medical student, I also have a duty to be responsible and do my part to lessen the spread and to help my community while advocating for safety.





Cause of Death: Born Tamil

Sinthu Senthilmohan
2T3 WB

‘Karthigai Poo’ is the Tamil name given for the *Gloriosa superba*, also known as the flame lily, pictured here. This flower is a national symbol for ‘Maaveerar Naal’ (“Hero’s Day”), a day of remembrance for those who lost their lives fighting for liberation during the recent Tamil genocide in Sri Lanka.

In early 2020, The Telegraph released a report stating that the Sri Lankan government admitted to its complicity in the genocide, which spanned from 1983-2009. An estimated 100,000 lives were lost, and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that “government troops carried out unlawful killings, enforced disappearances, and gender-based violence en masse against Tamils.” This unjust treatment continues to this day, as the Sri Lankan president sought to provide immunity to those who carried out these atrocities.

This news was the inspiration for the drawing. Over the course of many hours, I was able to grasp onto a sort of meditative peace; some healing in the process of writing out “100,000” over and over again in this piece. It felt right to create this flower – a symbol for the heroes lost – with the number of innocent lives taken too soon.

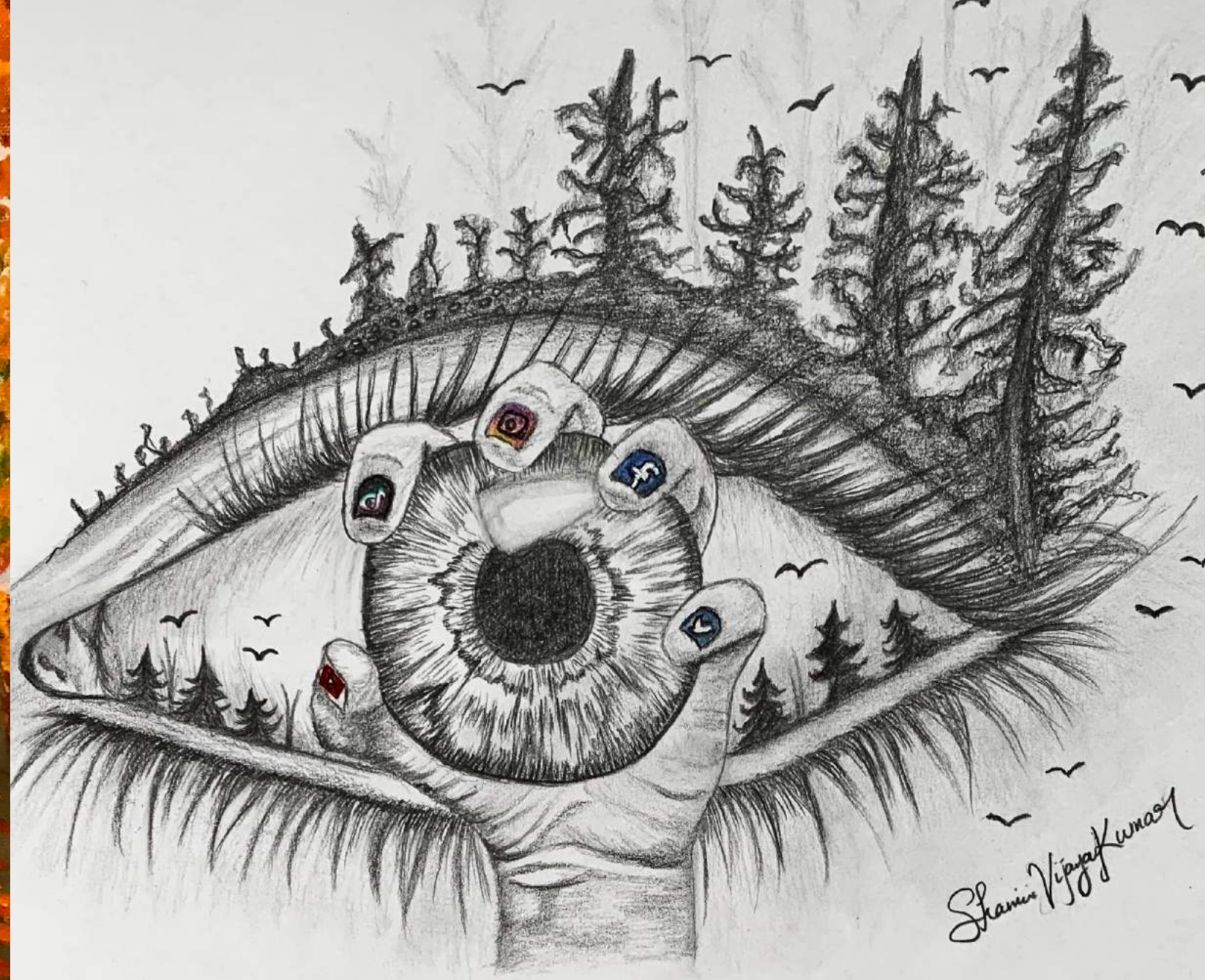
Instagram: @meddlinginmed



Medium: Acrylic paint on canvas

Autumn Scene

Grace Huang
2T3 MAM



Stolen Vision

Shamini Vijaya Kumar
2T3 MAM

I was inspired to draw this piece because I feel it can often be easy for social media to steal our vision away from us. Taking away from experiencing the beauty of the natural world around us. Clouding the lens through which we see the world, making us to think or act in ways which might not reflect our true values and beliefs.



1



2



3



4

Inktober

Catherine Meng
2T3 MAM

Inktober is a challenge to create an ink drawing every day during the month of October, with the option of following a series of prompts for each day. For the first time ever I was able to complete all 31 drawings (yay, thanks to my artist buddies), and have decided to include my top 6 favorite drawings here along with their associated prompt. Inspiration is heavily drawn from Halloween (with the exception of the compiled baked goods).



5



6

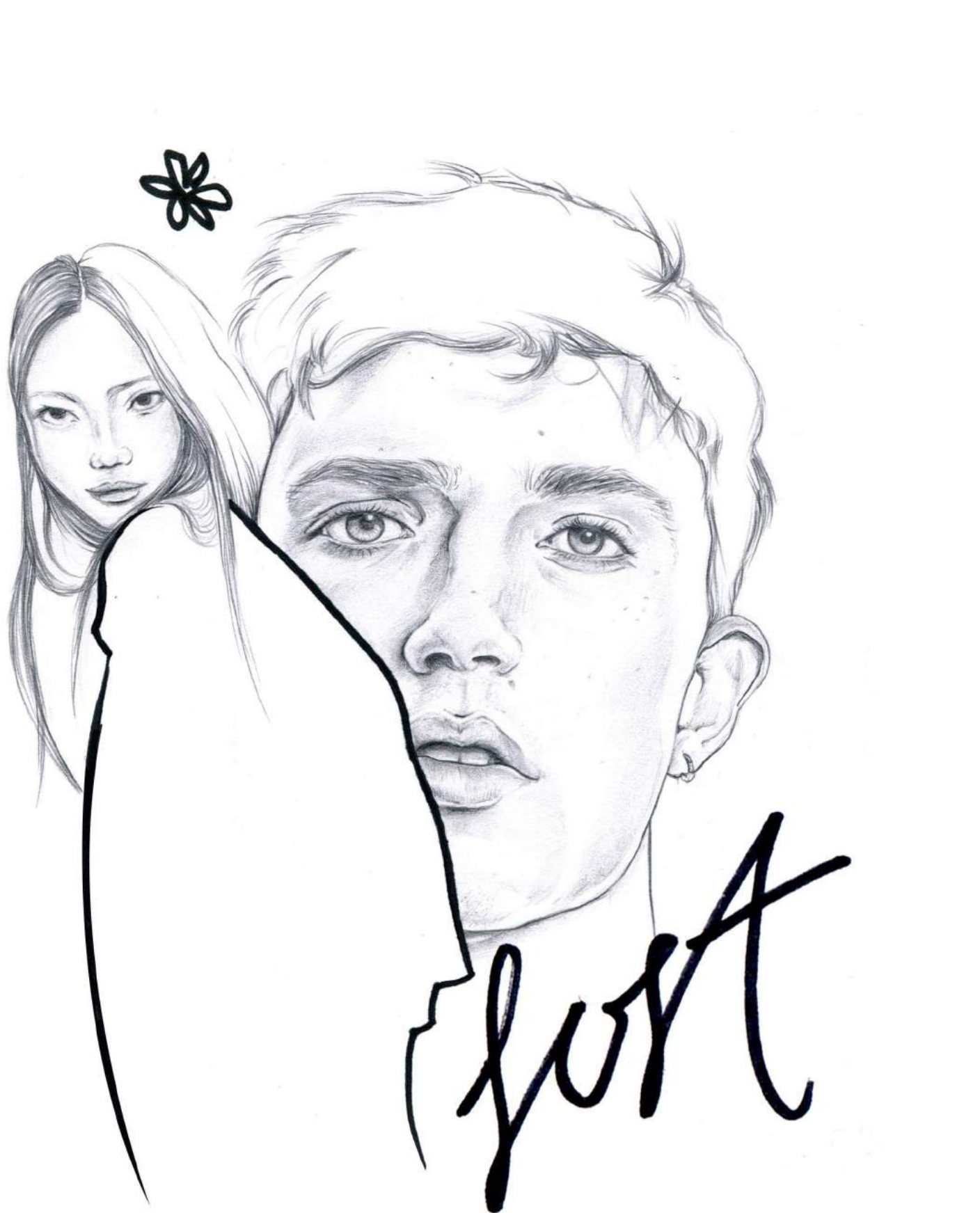
(1) Radio (2) Chef (3) Disgusting (4) Crawl (5) Teeth (6) R.I.P.



Of Two Minds

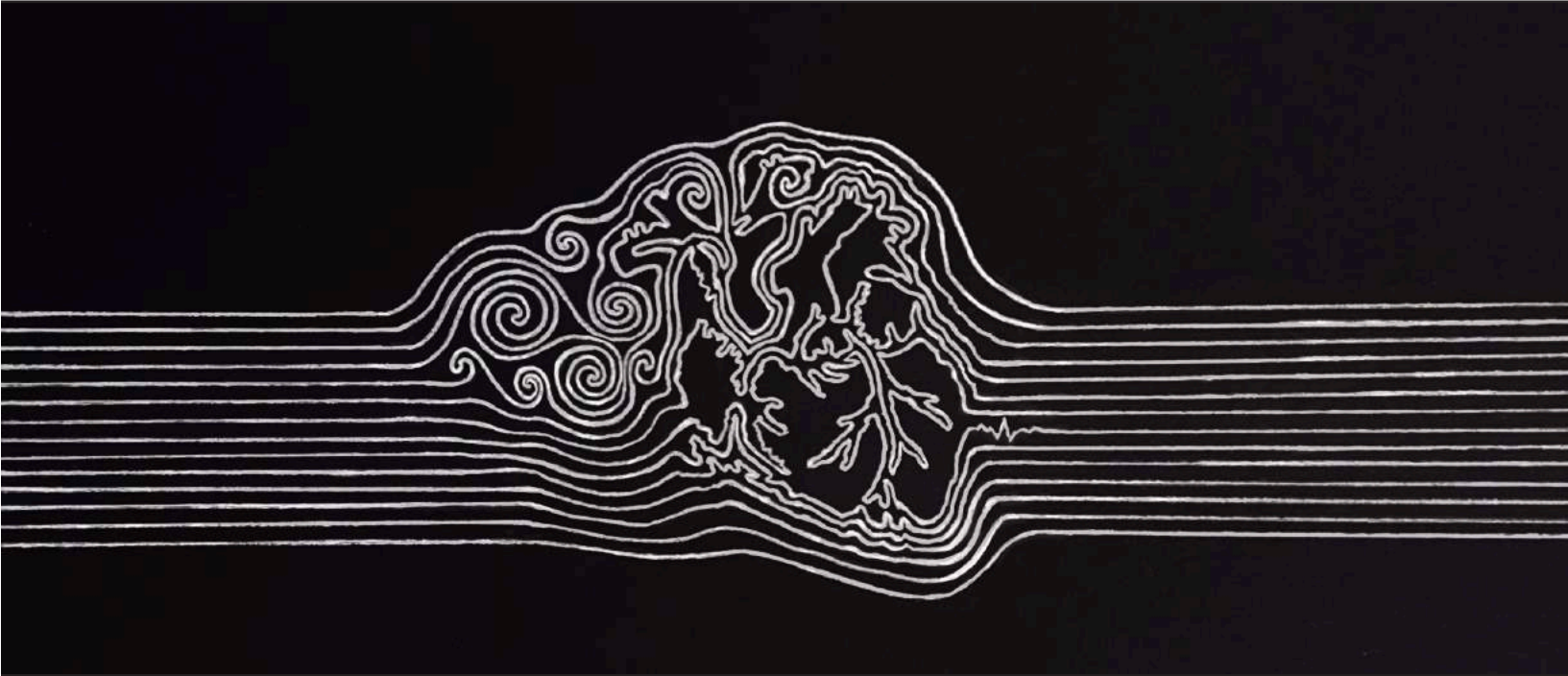
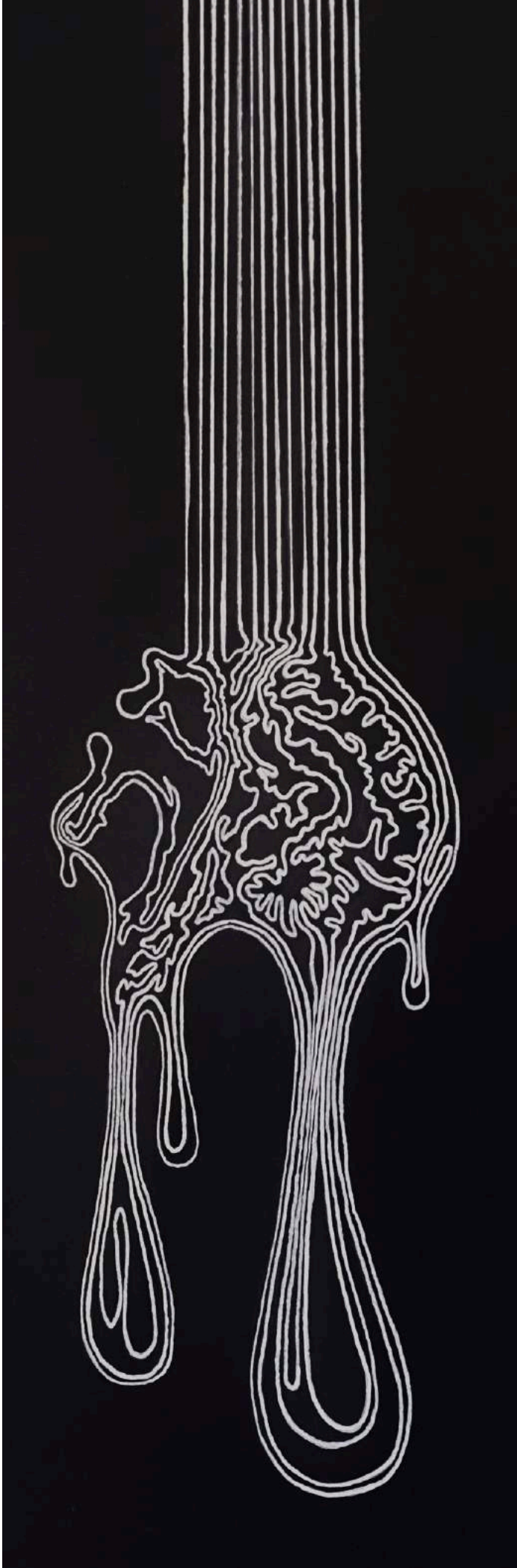
Madeleine Rudolph
2T1 WB

This piece was inspired by hours of free time and anxious hands during our time off from clerkship during the first wave of COVID-19. It is a cross-stitching piece made with embroidery floss on white Aida 18 count fabric. I learned how to cross stitch by ordering a pre-made kit off of Etsy, and from there I have been able to follow patterns of increasing complexity (such as this one) and customize my own. Adapted from a pattern by NikkiPatterns on Etsy.



Untitled
Aleksandra Uzelac
2T4 Fitz

Flow State
Z
2T4



Breath(e)
Z
2T4



Mixed Berry

Melinda Caputo

2T2 Fitz

The COVID-19 pandemic helped me rekindle my love of crafting and yarn work – with projects ranging from knit blankets to embroidered t-shirts. I was inspired by @wovthem, a friend of mine from back home, who started a small online business selling her original artwork and textile pieces. With the help of a few DIY video tutorials (@withwendy) and some trial & error, I learned the basics of tapestry weaving! I am loving the freedom that comes with this art form. Each piece starts the same way with a sort of scaffolding called a “warp”. The “weft”, or the transverse component that you weave in, opens up endless opportunities to play with colour palettes, shapes, knots, imperfections, size and movement.

Le Plateau

Anonymous

Medium: Acrylic gouache on watercolour paper





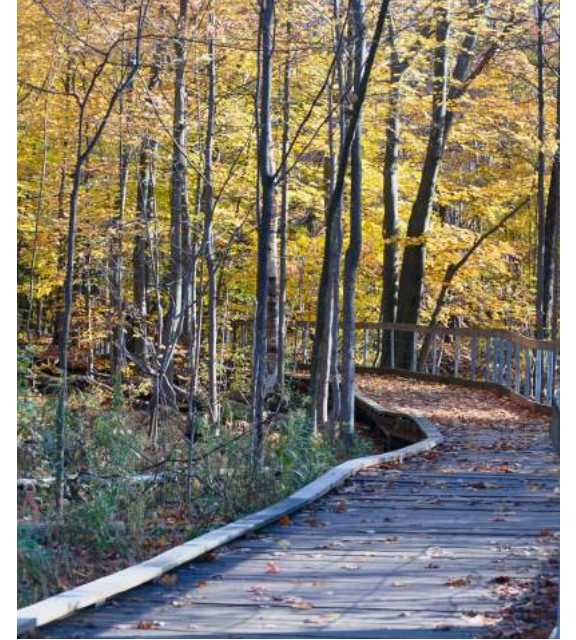
Hair

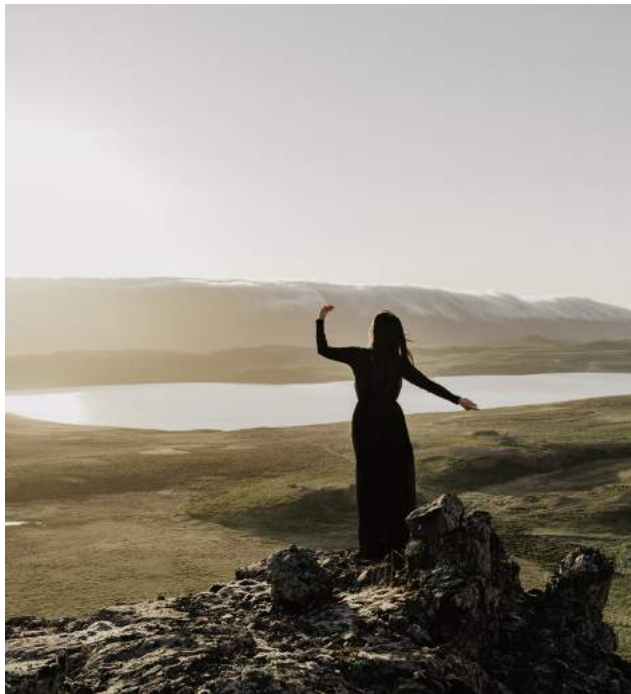
Nancy Wu
2T4 Fitz

“I had the urge to sketch fluffy hair, highlighting its lightness and comfort by having it frame a bashful face. The outer borders of her hair are not fully defined, and I did this on purpose; I think it has the effect of focusing the viewer on her expression, and also lends to the “fluffiness” of her hair! I never took art lessons so this is all by instinct, but I hope to enroll in a drawing class soon.”

Autumn in Mississauga

Amy Park
2T4 MAM





Forever Wandering

Bomi Park
2T3 Fitz

@bomatto and @bomkeeweddings

The Adventures of Ace

Grace Huang

2T3 MAM



The ADVENTURES of
ACE



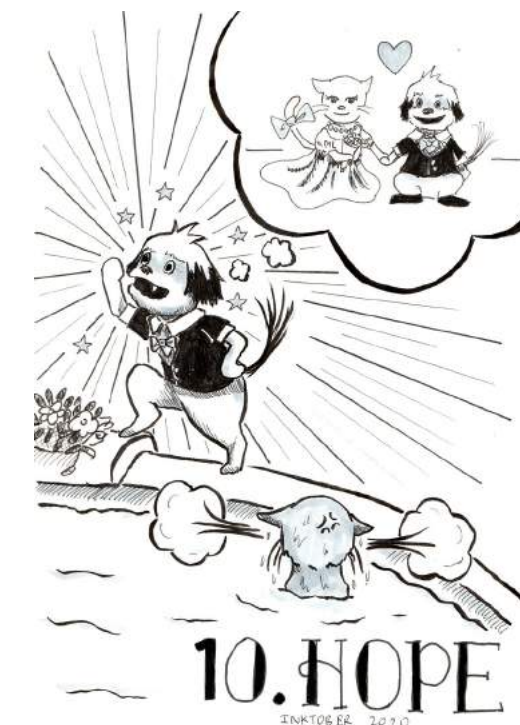
1. FISH
INKTOBER 2020



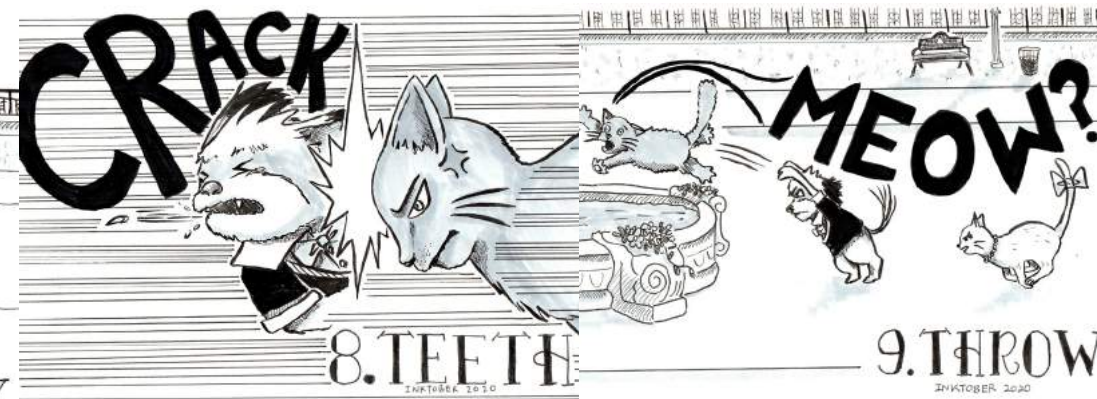
2. WISP
INKTOBER 2020



3. BULKY
INKTOBER 2020



10. HOPE
INKTOBER 2020



8. TEETH
INKTOBER 2020

9. THROW
INKTOBER 2020



11. DISGUSTING
INKTOBER 2020

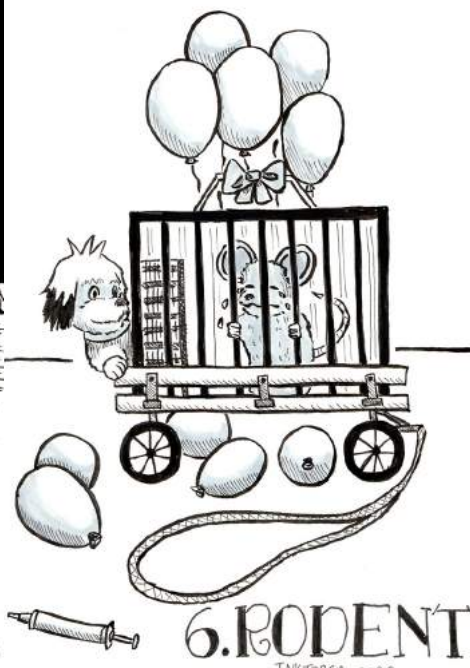
12. SLIPPERY
INKTOBER 2020



4. RADIO
INKTOBER 2020



5. BLADE
INKTOBER 2020



6. RODENT
INKTOBER 2020



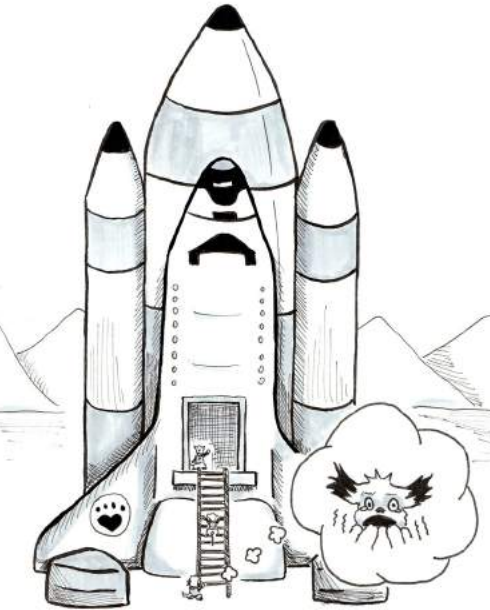
13. DUNE
INKTOBER 2020



14. ARMOR
INKTOBER 2020



15. OUTPOST
INKTOBER 2020



16. ROCKET
INKTOBER 2020



17. STORM
INKTOBER 2020



18. TRAP
INKTOBER 2020



25. BUDDY
INKTOBER 2020



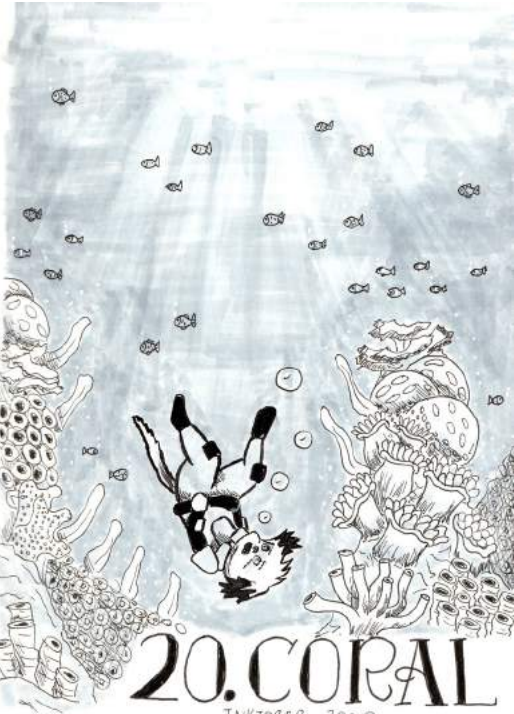
26. HIDE
INKTOBER 2020



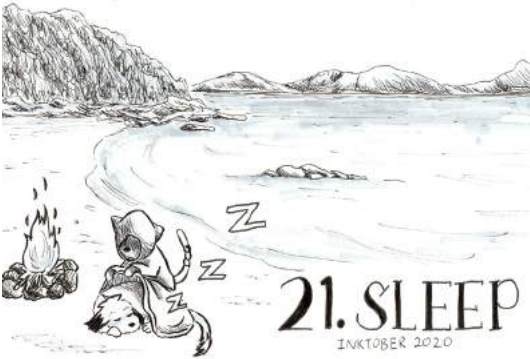
27. MUSIC
INKTOBER 2020



19. DIZZY
INKTOBER 2020



20. CORAL
INKTOBER 2020



21. SLEEP
INKTOBER 2020



28. FLOAT
INKTOBER 2020



29. SHOES
INKTOBER 2020



30. OMINOUS
INKTOBER 2020



22. CHEF
INKTOBER 2020



23. RIP
INKTOBER 2020



24. DIG
INKTOBER 2020



31. CRAWL
INKTOBER 2020

THE END



These 31 drawings were inspired by the Inktober 2020 prompts. If you are interested to see Ace's adventure in a webcomic format, please check out the QR code.

Paint Night with SHINE

Palette Magazine collaborated with SHINE (Student Health Initiatives and Education), a student wellness organization, to bring a Paint Night to students within the Faculty of Medicine.

We saw a range of mediums used: paint, pencil crayon, markers, and digital. The beautiful pieces shown here are the results of the paint night.



(1) Caroline Park (2) Grace Huang (3) Zahra Emami (4) Jessica Trac
(5) Nancy Wu (6) Mary Xie (7) Caroline Park (8) Tao Chan (9) Alissa Liu

A Trek in Sa Pa

Jessica Trac
2T3 MAM

My favourite painting to date. When I look at it, I'm taken back to my time on the rainy mountains. It was August in Vietnam. We trekked for two days in the pouring rain and heat. My friend and I were accompanied by locals, like the two young girls painted in their blue ponchos, other travellers, and leeches that made their way up our shoes and ankles from the wet grounds. An experience I never want to go through again, but a memory I wanted to keep forever with this painting.

The painting was done on an 8.5x10 inch masonite board with acrylics. You can find my other works on instagram @artbyjessicatrach. My current focus has been travel paintings- as a way of coping with this pandemic.

Creative Writing

There is no greater agony than bearing an
untold story inside of you.
-Maya Angelou

02

No.

Edem Andy Afenu
2T2 PB

Artist Statement:

I usually provide a brief insight as to what I was thinking behind every spoken word/poetical piece I write. This time, I decided to let the words speak for themselves. All I ask is that you follow the journey of one who has been searching the past and continues to search the present for a time where there has been peace.

backing music:



Blinded by the bright lights
and deep in the abyss of distractions,
I pray for a slumber that grants an escape
to a different time, another dimension.
To a state without worry,
to a place filled with harmony.

To a reality of a different time of life on our planet.
However, I'm chained with brothers —
and as we cross the Atlantic,
I find myself in a predicament.
And believe me when I say
that I can't understand it.

It's the "best of us" around a table.
Torn between conflating beliefs and fables,
but blatantly cursing what they believe to be true:
That all men are created equal.

My soul assents to this belief,
that despite being many
we are from one.
But the fact remains
that during this resistance of tyranny
the irony becomes engrained
as the resisting society fails to treat us as one.

So, with stripes on our backs
and arms in our hands
Nations were built.
With our fathers in cages,
our mothers denied due wages,
their economies prevailed.

I have been transported to an island
from which a brother is a descendant.
We grow cotton, sugar and coffee.
We mourn those lost to the sea.
And we dream for days we will be free.

A new dawn is amongst us.
And as its bright sun kisses my skin,
I find myself standing in a crowd
listening to my brother share his dream
of a time where character is society's yardstick of judgment
and not relations to one's kin.

But years have passed
and hopeful dreams have morphed into persistent nightmares.
A whip becomes a taser.
These guns kill faster than our answers.
And cages stacked on top of others
still house our fathers.

Despite living in the era of life-changing technology,
We can't run free, call neighbours for help
or sell CDs to eat.
Our sons can't be loud.
Our daughters can't be proud.
'Cause in the face of an officer,
survival, not state-mandated protection,
remains paramount.

Praying to their god for help
in our sanctuaries gets us killed.
Taking to the streets to
cry out against their injustices
makes us evil.
Kneeling gets us ridiculed and
saying that we matter
is another slogan to counter.

Deep in the continuous loop of oppression,
and still blinded by society's social distractions,
this journey has not been a lesson
on my history
but reflections on the metamorphosis of my slavery.

'Cause more than 70 by 7 years have passed
and during my time I have been an observant Pharisee,
one who's done nothing
but kept the sabbath.
Convincing myself that we have it "better"
'cause I'm on solid ground
and not crossing the water.

That a like on my profile is all I can offer.
That a hashtag or retweet will maintain order.
And while I can barely breathe on this land as I tweet,
my "contentment" still blinds me to others still dying at sea
'cause I have been encouraged
to believe in our society's idea of a negative peace.

But the cries from George won't let me sleep.
And the chants to say her name are so loud.
I'm forced to wake from this trance of observation,
to stand in line, and call others to action,
to support one another and especially our women,
to dissect these well-functioning machines of oppression and brutality
and create a society where all are really free.

R.I.P. George Floyd, R.I.P. Breonna Taylor.

after the war

Jordynn Klein
2T2 Fitz

Artist Statement:

This was a poem I wrote in late March/early April, when many of us were gripped by fear about COVID-19 and what it meant for ourselves, our loved ones, and our communities. I comforted myself by meditating on the idea of what life would be like when this was all over. As we head into what is likely to be a long and lonely winter, I found myself revisiting this poem and those coping strategies, once again imagining a warmer and more tenderhearted future.

gone are the days of the taste of dirt in your mouth.
you will eat blackberries

and strawberries and melon, gentle on your tongue
like dew in the meadow,

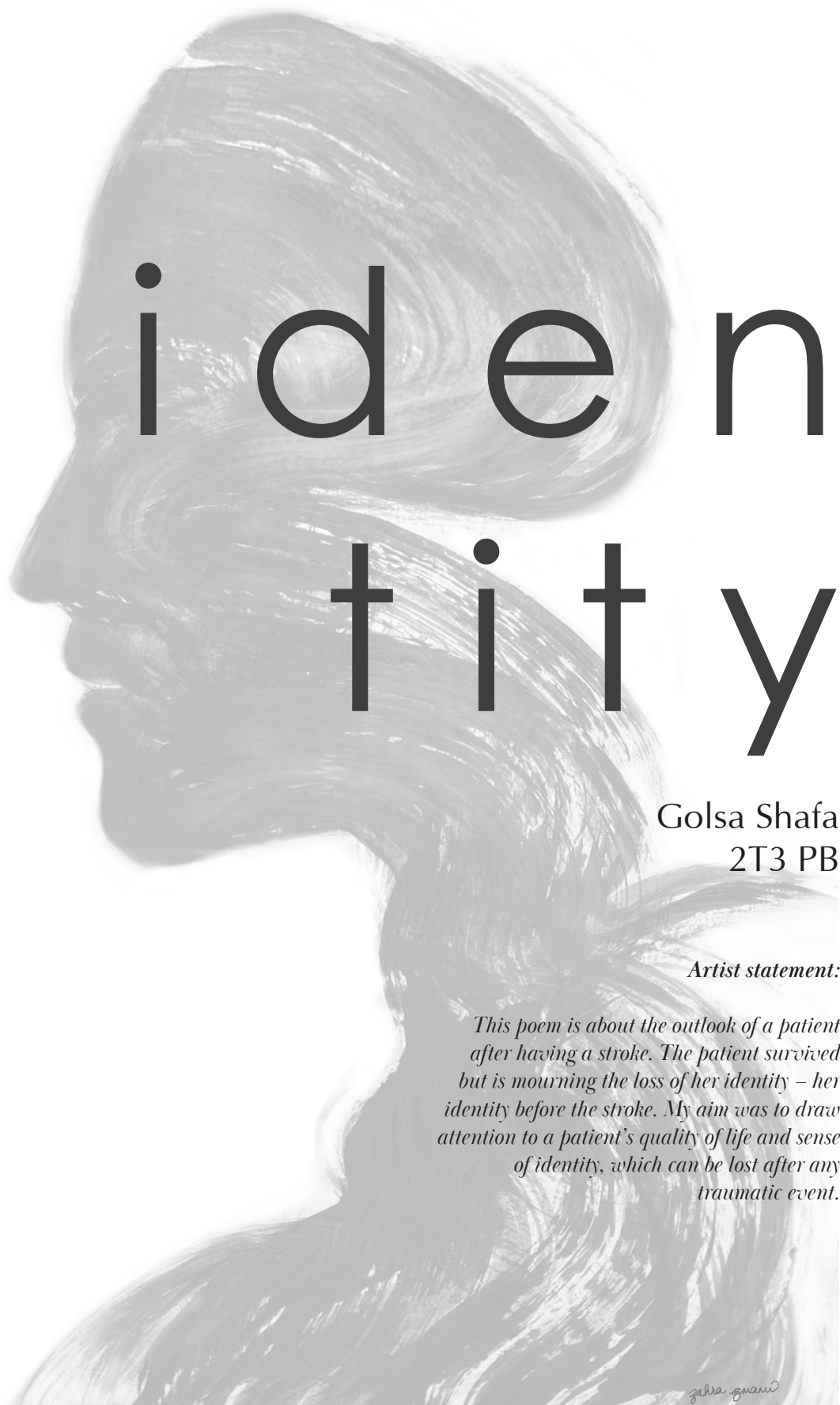
reassuring your softness. we will abstract prophecies
from cricket song,

fear no smoke rolling over the hill. despite everything,
we are flesh and blood still

swirling cream into morning coffee, relieved from
asking questions, or knowing

anything other than these incandescent hands
and how to build a home between them.





Golsa Shafa
2T3 PB

Artist statement:

This poem is about the outlook of a patient after having a stroke. The patient survived but is mourning the loss of her identity – her identity before the stroke. My aim was to draw attention to a patient’s quality of life and sense of identity, which can be lost after any traumatic event.

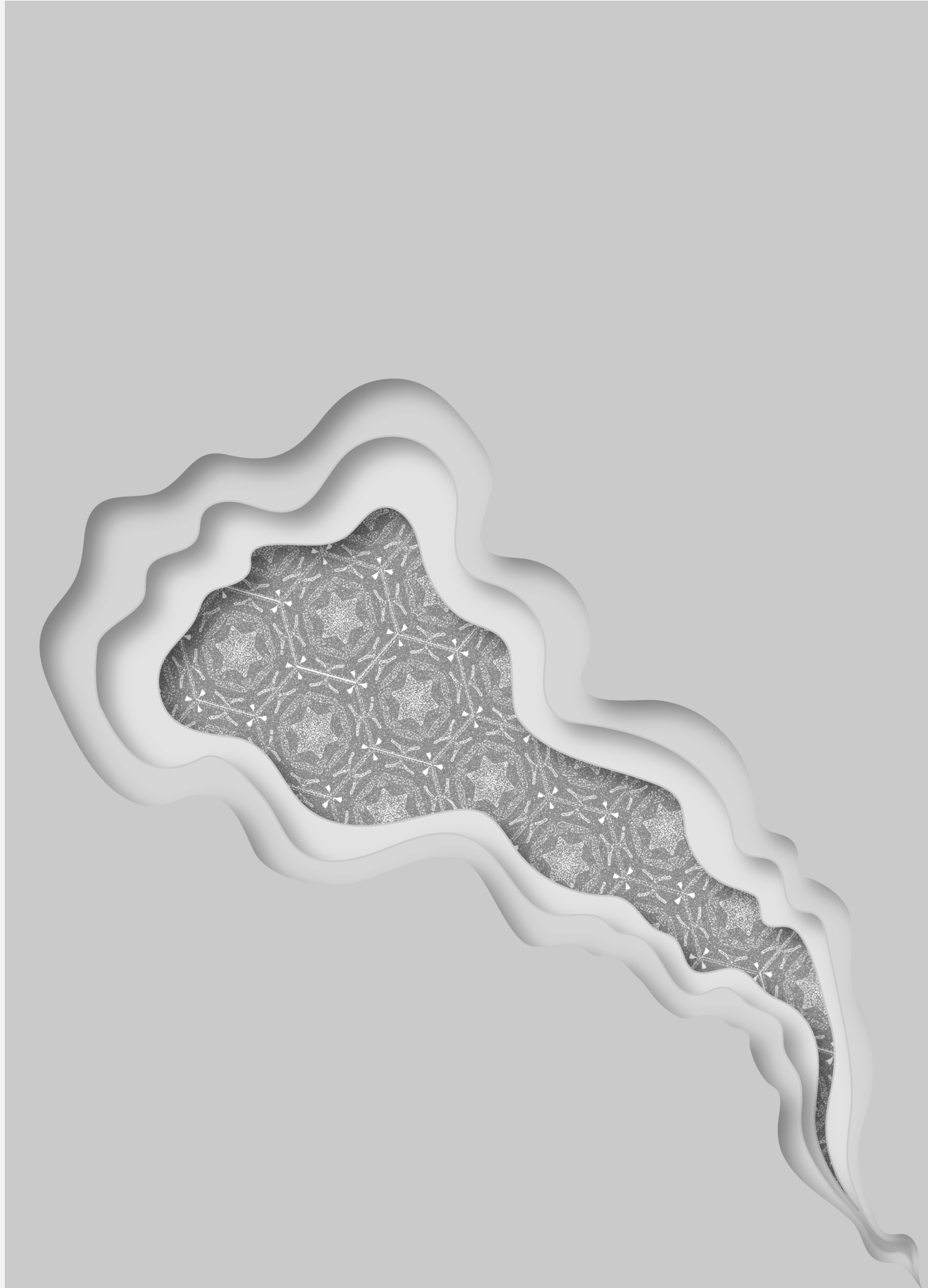
The numbness in my face in a beat of a heart.
My senses collapse, my vision turns dark.
Words get stuck at the traffic in my brain.
What I wish I had was a stroke – but of luck.

They managed my stroke, my healthcare team.
Grateful for being saved, but I wanted to scream.
Despite being given the gift of going back to life,
All I had in mind was a rather distant dream.

My identity is gone, and I mourn a loss.
The person I was before, how everything was.
Out of touch with the normal version of myself.
And a voice in my head says, “You’re a lost cause.”

The numbness in my heart, in the span of years
Has made me reflect on what used to be hers.
Strong strides, eloquent speech, and a voice
That touched the soul of her family and peers.

They managed my stroke, the heroes not in capes.
Thinking about their work is all that it takes
To bring me back to this new identity and smile.
Although, its paint is grey, and I see its flakes.



I discovered the meaning of dream in a disaster

purple hue of numbness;
red embers of fear;
blinding silver of anger;
transparent reflection of uncertainty;

woven into a
blanket of space and time,
torn
and fluttering

blanket of space and time
weighs heavy, affording
uneasy comfort
tightness of the chest

warped in its
caress,
I had visions of
cannons aimed at us

the artillery,
in a uniform line,
fires at us,
collectively

And I'm ok with it;
I'm ok with
not being ok.
I feel it.

shards of the
crystalline blanket
penetrate my skin
like shrapnel

we stand—we fall—we march,
kaleidoscopic skies
radiate our souls.
waves forming a playground

distribution of space and time
is heavy.
and now, I am also
carried by its lightness.

Austin Lam
2T2 MAM

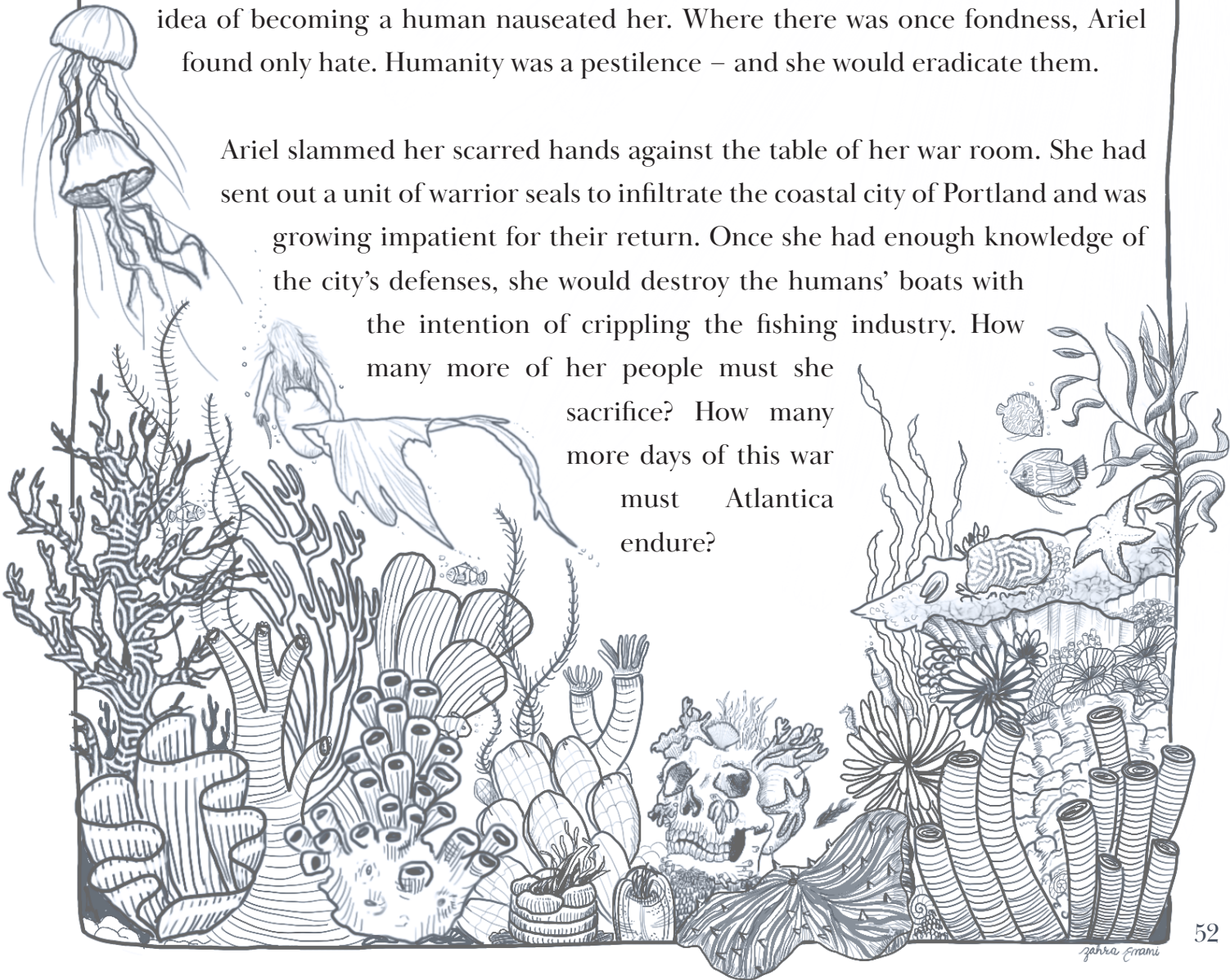
Under The Sea

Shamir Malik
2T4 PB

Ariel, the twenty-year-old mermaid princess of the kingdom of Atlantica, reminisced about the past. She reflected on her old fascination with the human world. Ariel had always been amazed at the stark difference between life over and under the water. Life in the Atlantic was complicated. Fish, crustaceans, and all manners of mythical beings dwelled under its surface and existed in perfect harmony. As the oldest princess of Atlantica, Ariel knew it would soon be her responsibility to maintain that harmony. In contrast, the world above seemed so sparse; vast sections of desert made the climate uninhabitable and the few animals that existed seemed to actively avoid each other.

Ariel once relished a life above land. She recalled her time with Senator Eric, a representative from the human world she had fallen in love with when she was only sixteen. Ariel scoffed to herself as she remembered bartering her voice away with the ancient sea witch Ursula just for the opportunity to transform into a human. Now, the idea of becoming a human nauseated her. Where there was once fondness, Ariel found only hate. Humanity was a pestilence – and she would eradicate them.

Ariel slammed her scarred hands against the table of her war room. She had sent out a unit of warrior seals to infiltrate the coastal city of Portland and was growing impatient for their return. Once she had enough knowledge of the city’s defenses, she would destroy the humans’ boats with the intention of crippling the fishing industry. How many more of her people must she sacrifice? How many more days of this war must Atlantica endure?



Senator Lute was running for re-election in the State of Maine. For four years now, the senator had championed the climate change denial movement in Maine, removing regulations on non-renewable energy sources and proper waste management. For four years, Ariel and her people had suffered the consequences of these decisions. Marine wildlife was deeply sensitive to changes in the environment and Maine was dumping several tons of waste into the ocean daily. Portland, the state's capital, was the biggest source of pollution – and Ariel's biggest target.

Sebastian, her father Triton's court composer and now chief general, barged through the war room's doors.

"Princess, we have heard back from Sergeant Club. Seal Team One is in position and has begun reconnaissance of the human armada," he spoke in his deep baritone voice.

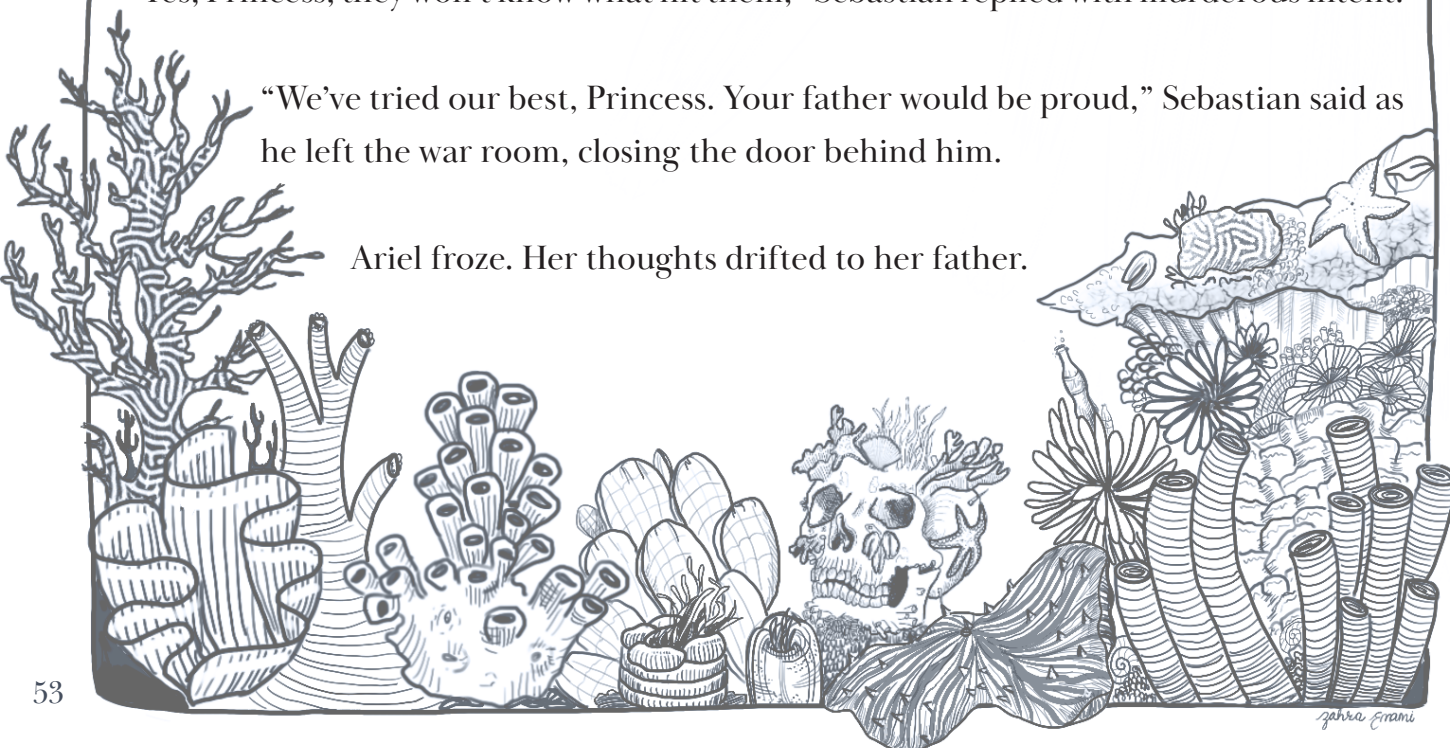
"Excellent. Human beings are a unique beast. They cloud our waters with poison, farm our people for food, and kill us for sport and yet, they seem completely oblivious to our eventual attack," Ariel replied quickly.

Ariel noticed that Sebastian's hard shell had sustained additional injury. She considered him a close friend – someone who had warned her against getting involved with the human world all her life. She wished she had taken his advice earlier.

"Yes, Princess, they won't know what hit them," Sebastian replied with murderous intent.

"We've tried our best, Princess. Your father would be proud," Sebastian said as he left the war room, closing the door behind him.

Ariel froze. Her thoughts drifted to her father.



King Triton had fought for his people admirably over the past three years, attempting to avoid all-out warfare. The benevolent king had attempted to reason with humanity repeatedly, but to no avail. At first, he believed that mankind might see the error of their ways without intervention. Then, he decided to send a couple of his most accomplished dolphin diplomats to negotiate with the state. Much to Triton's dismay, they were very quickly imprisoned in what the humans called a zoo.

Triton was heartbroken by his failed efforts. It was almost as if humanity did not understand that their actions had consequences or that the Atlantic was dying. Deeply saddened, Triton became less involved with Atlantan affairs. As pollution and sea levels continued to rise, so too did Triton's depression.

Watching her father's decline made Ariel grow cold. She began to understand that the human threat could only be resolved through bloodshed. Perhaps it was time to finally remind humanity of their place on the food chain.

Over the past year, Ariel had worked tirelessly to unite the fragmented kingdom of Atlantica. Her father's weakness had given the mermaid aristocracy an opportunity to seize power – Ariel dealt with the usurpers decisively. She also brokered an uneasy alliance with the Pacific Empire, a massive underwater kingdom in the warm waters of the Pacific, to assist her military efforts. Now, Ariel finally held the authority and resources necessary to mount a full scale attack on Maine.

Exhausted, Ariel poured herself a pint of fermented seaweed brine. She had developed a taste for the liquor over the years. It was the only drink strong enough to take her mind off the endless conflict. Ariel's mind became duller with each cup. She had almost finished the bottle. Lost in thought, she swam over to a skull hidden at the corner of the war room. It belonged to Senator Eric – or at least, it once did.



“Oh Eric, how I wish things ended differently,” she said softly, breaking down into tears.

“I wish we lived in a world where we got the happily ever after we deserved. Not this hellish nightmare. Atlantica was a kingdom of wonder and magic. We had our fair share of issues, but surely no one deserves this,” Ariel pressed on, as if she expected the skull to respond. It did not.

Ariel’s rage soon subsided. She turned away from the skull and towards the canopy overlooking the whole of Atlantica. The garbage-laden walkways and polluted water currents filled her with determination. It was a reminder of the type of ruler she had to be – fierce, strong, and uncompromising. Ariel realized that she did not mind if her people grew to fear her. In fact, she was sure they already did.

“There can be no happy endings in this world,” Ariel whispered.



Zahra Farni

Artist Statement:

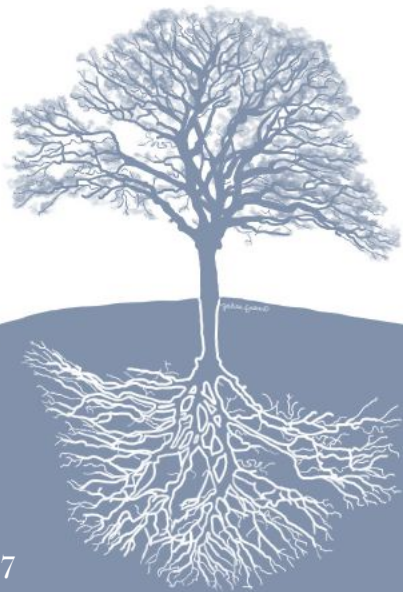
Under the Sea aims to explore the impact of climate change and pollution on aquatic ecosystems and the failure of human beings to respond to these concerns. In this short satirical story, I aim to exemplify this theme through a parody of The Little Mermaid. The juxtaposition between the light, fun-natured Disney movie and the warfare and authoritarian regime in Under the Sea shows that today, life would be very different in the fantasy city of Atlantica.

a tree for every day that i loved you from afar

Golsa Shafa
2T3 PB

Artist statement:

*COVID-19 had me longing for a sense of normality.
And with seeing loved ones go through losses due to
COVID-19, I thought about a bittersweet love story. I was
hoping I could look at how this pandemic has changed our
lives with a rosy, yet environmental lens.*



On March 12, they were planning to go on their first date. Butterflies were already flying in her stomach. She had met him a few days ago when he hastily grabbed her coffee by mistake. They exchanged numbers. She couldn't believe someone would ever be interested in her, in the most organic way, in the age of dating apps. She had never had any success with those.

On March 12, they talked on the phone instead. Mostly about the pandemic and how long the quarantine would last. They spent hours planning their first date once the quarantine was over. He suggested they go on a picnic in a picturesque park, given that she is an environmental scientist. She teasingly said, "I'm more of a hiking gal than a picnic gal. I like to go on long walks on nice trails, look at every single tree on my path and appreciate their presence." He was intrigued.

What's so special about the trees? I'm asking for the opinion of the most beautiful environmentalist in all the environments I've been in.

Well ... inhaling the oxygen they send my way, in close proximity to them reminds me I'm alive. They sort of get blurred in the city behind the high rises and the sensory pollution.

Oh, so like, a reminder of life sort of thing? You are here to breathe and forget about your urban worries. I get it.

No offence, I don't think you fully get the picture. Not just you, but everyone.

How so?

I blame not taking care of trees on us doing a virtual date right now. It's a date, right?

He laughed and said, *how did the trees get involved in this nasty pandemic?*

Trees are remnants of the past, reminders for the present and a glimpse into the future. They transcend time and space and make a show of the cycle of life. There's been studies that show the connection between humans cutting down trees resulting in diminished biodiversity and ultimately new disease outbreaks.

From March 12 to April 12, they kept talking on the phone. Both were lone wolves in their mid 50s, almost used to the comfort and uncertainty brought on by solitude. But for some reason, they wanted to be there for each other when they couldn't physically be.



On April 13, she did not pick up her phone, nor did she answer the text he had sent. The first thought that occurred to him was maybe she is ghosting him. But ... she certainly wasn't that type. She seemed different from the moment he looked into her emerald eyes.

On April 14, she texted him back. At first, he was relieved. But as he kept reading the rest of the long paragraph, his breathing got faster, subconsciously synchronizing his breaths with hers. She was suffering from shortness of breath and fever and was admitted to the hospital for COVID-19. She ended her text with:

... talking to you is the only thing I would want right now. But I just don't have the breath it takes to talk, not even to God. I will fight this virus with every ounce of strength in my body to see you again, in a place full of trees. I'm longing for the O₂ they make. And it's not fair, that I'm kissing the oxygen mask instead of your lips.

On April 15, he called his local park's department and asked them if he could volunteer to plant trees on public lands that they saw fit. He had made a promise to her:

I will plant a tree, every single day, until you come out of the hospital. On your first day out, I will take you on a date to the land I'm rejuvenating for you.

She texted back:

It's a huge promise! But I have no doubt you'll not only win Mother Earth's heart by doing this, but also mine. You couldn't have shown your affection more beautifully. You taking my coffee was the best thing that happened to me.

On April 18, after jumping a few hurdles and doing his research, he planted the first tree. He then posted a snapshot of it on his Instagram. This was out of ordinary for him after all of the professional fashion photography he did for his work.

On April 20, her breathing became more laboured, hand-in-hand with his labour, on the now not-so-barren land. Little fragments of hope were rising from the ground. This whole thing had become a huge social media campaign. Followers were pouring and retweets spiraling. They gave her hope to keep breathing with the aid of her faithful companion, the ventilator.

On April 27, she was discharged, only to find out he was brought into the same hospital a few hours ago. How cruel fate can be sometimes. What would've changed if they could've seen each other at least for one day before another potentially long hospitalization? He had called her about this, and this time, verbally confessed his love. She promised to pick up the tree planting project until the day he recovers.

On April 30, she was running out of breath digging the dirt and firmly planting the roots. She had flashbacks to her days on the COVID ward and she was out of breath. The trees weren't of any help. A tightness in her chest radiated to her whole body while his eyelids were becoming heavier than the trees he used to carry.

He had passed away from COVID complications. What was passed on was the social media campaign for planting a tree and saving lives by saving Mother Earth. She realized the touch of life's loathsome irony:

He did everything he could to help me breathe, deeper and deeper, fall in love, deeper and deeper. And I will carry his legacy, just to avoid coming to the point where nature's agony manifests in unwanted consequences. I'll let the trees you planted for me breathe for you forever and ever.



Lifestyle

Life is either a daring adventure
or nothing at all.
-Helen Keller

03

Interview with Dr. John Semple



Dr. Semple founded the Division of Plastic Surgery at Women’s College Hospital in 1988 and recently stepped down as Surgeon in Chief. He is Past President of the Canadian Society of Plastic Surgeons and Past Chair in Surgical Research at the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation. Dr. Semple is recognized nationally and internationally as a surgical clinical leader in Breast Reconstruction and was instrumental in laying the foundation for innovative models of ambulatory surgical care, telemedicine and education. He received an Honorary Doctorate from OCAD University this year as well as the Life Time Achievement Award from the Department of Surgery at the University of Toronto. He has a strong commitment in accelerating the overlap between Art and Science as converging disciplines and as a platform for innovation in areas that have been identified as a focus for improvement in healthcare and in the lives of his patients. He is also passionate about mountaineering and actively carries out research in high altitude meteorology and climate change on Mount Everest and The Himalayas.

Q: To start us off, can you tell us about yourself?

I’m currently a plastic surgeon working at Women’s College Hospital. I’ve been here most of my career since 1988. I was at Sunnybrook for eight years as Chief of Plastics and then I came back when Women’s College unraveled from Sunnybrook. They asked me to be Chief of Surgery at that time and to create an ambulatory surgical program. I was Chief of Surgery for 10 years and then Head of the Division of Plastic Surgery. From an academic point of view, I’ve been a Research Chair with the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, which I’ve stepped away from now after 10 years. I am a member of the Institute for Medical Science at UofT, and I have an adjunct appointment at OCAD in their Design Health and Drawing programs which I am very proud of. I also have an adjunct appointment at the Massachusetts General

enrolled in the medical illustration program at UofT. During that period of time, I started doing drawings for one of my surgical projects in the operating room. I remember that specific time as one of those “in the moment” experiences and found it absolutely inspirational. Coming from an arts background, I was amazed by the colours and the light and how shiny the cartilage was. I remember thinking at the time, “If I can do this for a career, it would be amazing!”

Q: Do you see similarities between your work and your art?

Everything I learned at OCAD in drawing and painting, I use every day in the operating room and when I’m painting, I use a lot of the things that I was taught as a surgeon. Medicine and art are really just a training in observation. Whether you’re holding a scalpel or paintbrush, it’s all about how accurate

“When you start with a painting, you start with concept and objectives. However, sometimes after you start, the painting can take on a life of its own. It expands and develops in front of you.”

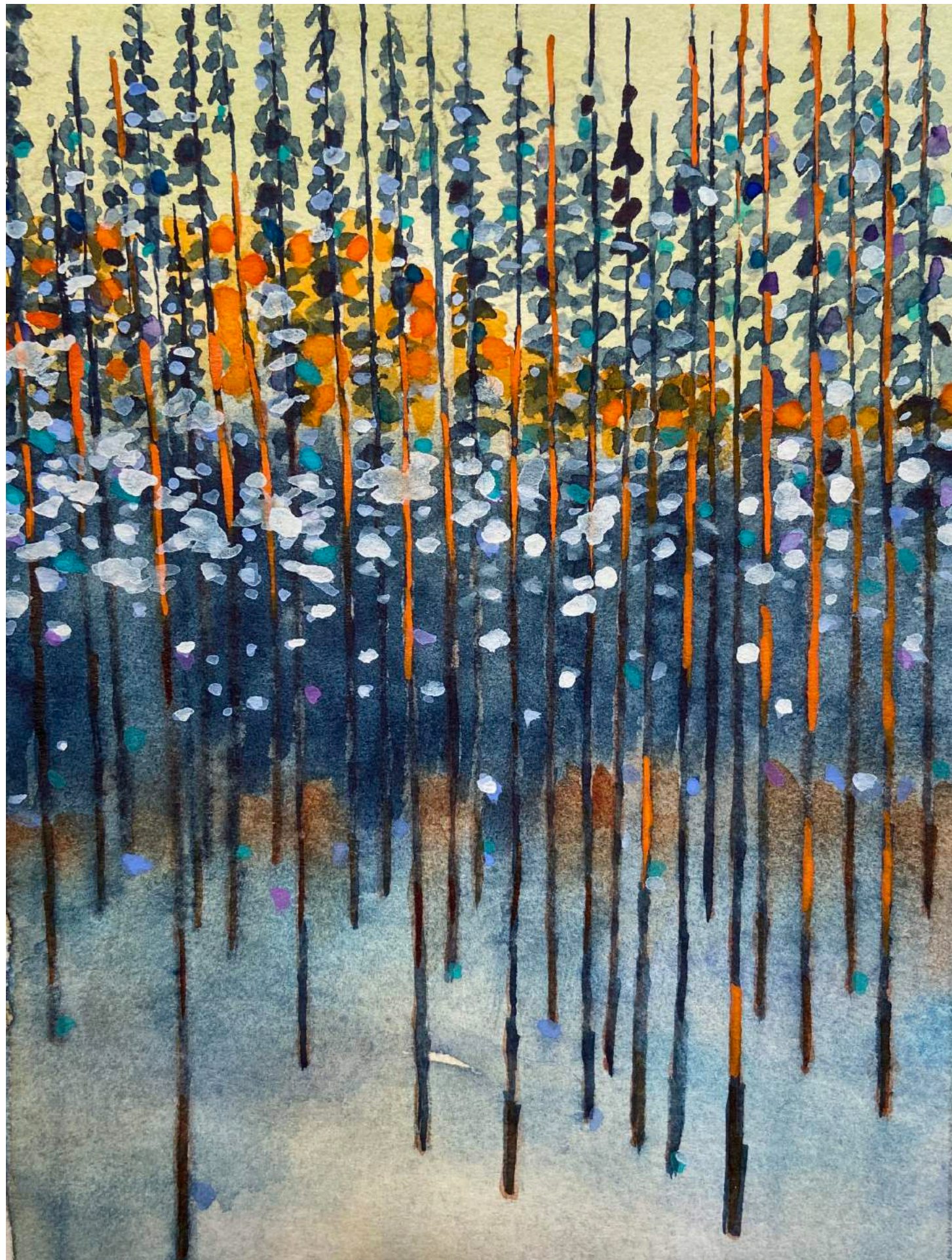
Hospital in Boston related to my work in climate change and Wilderness Medicine. I’m married with four children who have all grown up and are not really children anymore. I still enjoy operating and seeing patients in my clinical practice.

Q: From your education at OCAD to your current work with your art exhibits, your interest in art is very apparent. What sparked your decision to go into medicine?

Many people think that it’s a real shift to turn from art to surgery and medicine, but for me, it seemed like a very natural progression. When I was at OCAD, I became interested in medical illustration and I

your rendering is and how much control you have. In both art and in surgery there is always room for improvisation.

There are certain aspects of [art and medicine] that are quite distinct, but I think that creativity and improvisation definitely provide an overlap. I find that over and over again, the most interesting parts of my career are when disciplines overlap. If you can find those overlapping areas, it’s actually a very interesting space in which to spend time. That’s where you can find answers to questions or problems that you wouldn’t normally find in the core mainstream of those different disciplines. When I’m operating, I’m not thinking about art, but I’m always trying to be



creative and think of ways of improving what we are doing for patients. Creativity and improvisation are core elements to both [art and medicine].

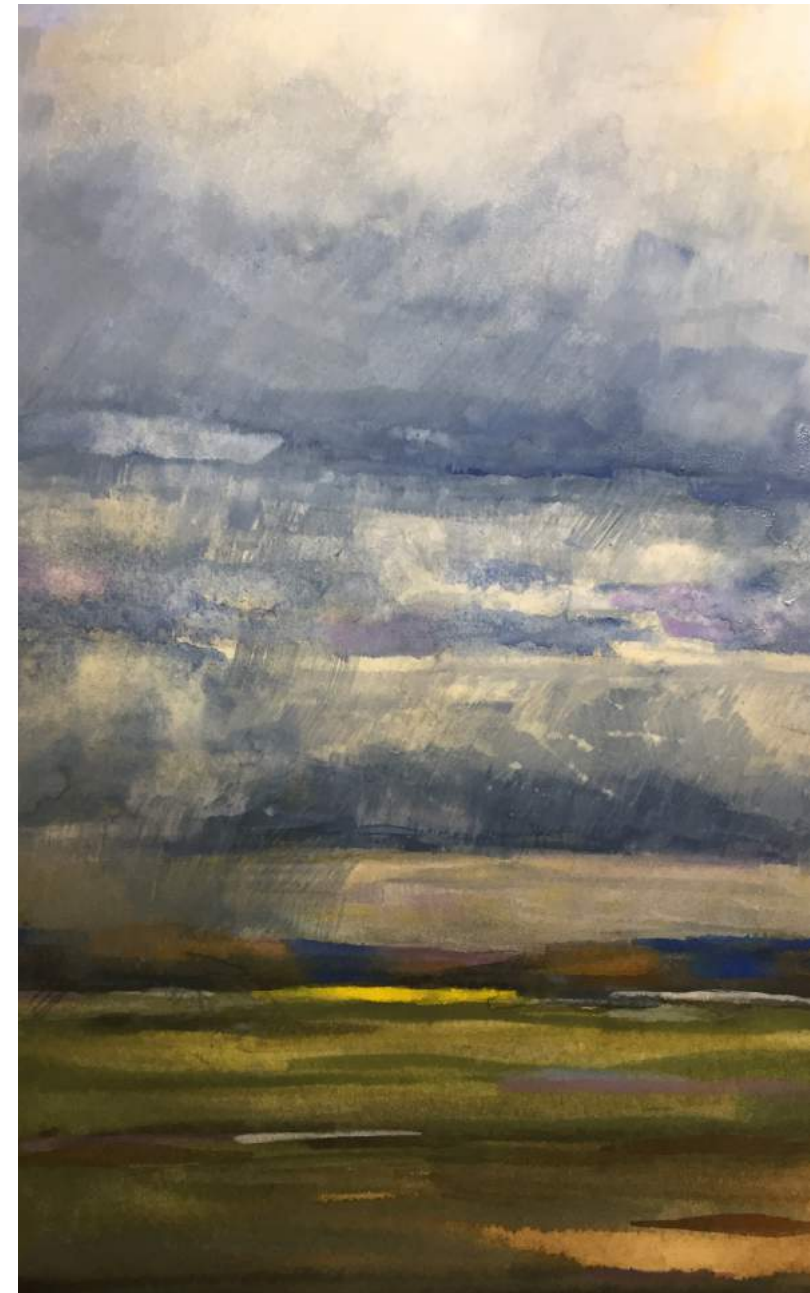
Q: Can you tell us a bit more about your latest solo art exhibit, “A Sense of Place” – how did it come to be and what was the process of creating and curating pieces for an exhibit?

It’s my second solo art show. This [exhibit] in particular was different from the last because we are in the middle of the COVID-19 Pandemic. I felt that the title, “A Sense of Place,” was very relevant to what was happening. We’re all spending much more time in our homes, which is different from our pre-COVID experience. This exhibit was recognition of where we are currently spending most of our time. There are [paintings of] houses and buildings, but also areas where I have previously traveled to. I was trying to create an atmosphere and emotional response to the light in the landscape. I was joking to the gallery that a painting is like an airline boarding pass. It can actually take you on a trip to that location. At least that was my incentive: to make somebody travel to a place and experience its atmosphere and lighting.

The light in a landscape fascinates me. If you do it correctly, it can draw the person into the painting and re-experience the same things the artist was actually thinking of at the time. So this exhibit was trying to address our dreams of traveling while recognizing the fact that we’re all spending more time in our personal space.

Q: What qualities of watercolour make it your medium of choice?

Because I travel so much and enjoy hiking, backcountry skiing, mountain climbing, and canoe tripping, I was able to throw my [watercolour] paints, brushes and sketchpad into my backpack. In terms of traveling, the one thing I will say I like about watercolour is that wherever you go in the world or wherever you sit down to paint,



part of the process is that you’re actually using the water from the location you are painting. In a sense, you’re actually incorporating the ecosystem of that place into the painting. The water from that site is mixing the pigments and being put onto the paper.

Can I just digress – when I talk to surgery residents about painting, I tell them there are elements within [surgery and painting] that are similar. Watercolour is fairly unforgiving. The washes have to be transparent and delicate, and you can’t go back over it. In watercolour, there’s something we call a “happy accident” where you don’t have total control of what’s going on because the water and the pigments mix beyond your control. In surgery, there’s really no such thing as “happy accidents.” In surgery, you have to have total control over what you’re doing. You have to be very careful at every point.

Q: You have mentioned that you are drawn to the qualities of light when you paint landscapes. How do you know when you have found the “subject” of your piece? How do

light and nature interact to draw you in and inspire you to paint?

Really, that’s the joy in painting – playing with colours and light. There’s something going on in the viewers’ perception where they’re actually exploring it more from an emotional point of view. That’s the fascinating thing about light. If it’s painted correctly, then you’re drawn right into the picture and left feeling that somehow you were actually there. Art can be experiential and lead to a deep immersive experience.

Q: If you could only paint one more piece, what would it be and why?

I would have to know a little bit more about why it would be my last painting. The first thing that came to mind was a self portrait, but I don’t think so. When you start with a painting, you start with concept and objectives. However, sometimes after you start, the painting can take on a life of its own. It expands and develops in front of you. So to answer your question, if I knew it was going to be my last painting, it would



be on a sunny afternoon where I’m not really thinking about that much and I just sit down and start painting. I’m not even sure what I’m going to paint, but I’ll start painting and I’ll start looking around – and suddenly you are lost in the process and the painting is carrying you away somewhere.

Q: You’ve taken quite an unconventional path into medicine. What is something you hope current medical learners can take away from your journey?

Medicine is a very demanding career and unfortunately many people feel that they’ve got no time to do anything else in their life. However, we all start with other interests and passions, whether it be art, music or sports. I believe that you have to somehow steal back time to pursue these other interests, and not just participate but to actively develop them throughout your life. Your extracurricular interests are not distractions. You have to be ruthless about keeping them close to you. Don’t wait to develop your skills and passions. It’s like mental yoga – it will make you a better person and a better doctor.

Q: What are you currently working on and what are your future directions?

Women’s College Hospital is now the designated Provincial centre for gender confirming surgery. I have been developing both research programs and transition related surgical techniques in top surgery for this program which is very rewarding. I will continue to be involved in post mastectomy breast reconstruction and research as well. I will develop my interests and passion for mountaineering and research in high altitude meteorology and climate change on Mount Everest and The Himalayas.

In a more philosophical direction I am committed to accelerating the overlap of Art and Science as converging disciplines and as a platform for innovation in areas that have been identified as a focus for improvement in healthcare and in the lives of my patients. The “painting” part of me, I hope, will continue to evolve.

Interview with Dr. Chika Oriuwa



“Poetry necessitates being able to stare at the raw realities, the vulnerabilities, and the fragility of life and being able to do so with an unflinching repose.”

Dr. Chika Stacy Oriuwa is a graduate of the University of Toronto, Faculty of Medicine, where she was named the valedictorian of her graduating medical class. She is a physician, professional spoken word poet, public speaker, writer and advocate for racialized and marginalized populations. Dr. Oriuwa is a psychiatry resident at the University of Toronto where she aims to go on to complete further specialist training in neuro-psychiatry. She also serves on Indigo's Board of Directors, using her expertise to influence their efforts, creating equal opportunity and curating spaces of wellness and inclusion.

Q: Can you provide a brief introduction of yourself?

Sure! I am Dr. Chika Stacy Oriuwa, a first year resident in psychiatry at UofT. I'm also a recent graduate of UofT where I did my medical degree and my Masters of Science in Systems, Leadership and Innovation.

Q: We know that you're quite well known for your spoken word poetry. Could you tell us more about how you got involved in it?

I started writing poetry when I was six or seven years old and [poetry] for me just was the most natural form of communication. It made sense to me before anything else made sense. I view poetry as the lens through which I see the world and the way that I process the environment around me. And so, from a very young age, I've been writing poetry. I started to perform my poetry at around age ten to twelve at school assemblies. At that time, it wasn't necessarily slam poetry but more so just reading my poetry out loud. With respect to slam poetry and getting into



the competitive poetry scene, that didn't happen until my university years where I had this love for public speaking and this love for poetry and decided to combine the two and do it in a more theatrical and organic way.

When I decided to [perform poetry] competitively in university, I would say that it was catalyzed through my love for advocacy and wanting to use my poetry as socio-political commentary. Being able to get out there and perform my poetry was not only something that I think was a testament to my art, but also important for self empowerment and also empowerment within my community. [Performing poetry] at that time was not only an art form, but a form of self preservation and a form of vocalizing the needs of the marginalized. So that's kind of how I was able to gain that confidence. And of course, the more that I did it, the more comfortable I became with it and realized that I just love public speaking, I love being on the stage, I love sharing my poetry and that was just a marriage of all of those things.

Q: We'd love to hear about how you find inspiration for the different pieces that you've written and performed.

Well, that's a great question. I feel it's a question that I've never actually been asked before in interviews, but I really love it. When I was younger, I drew inspiration from the entire spectrum of emotions. So when I was really happy about something, I just felt compelled to

write poetry about it because that, for me, was the most natural form of expression. And then also when I was really sad. So when my grandmother died when I was 10 years old, it was hard for me to grapple with the idea of death. In order for me to process that, I turned to poetry. I find that throughout my life, it's kind of been this iterative process of going through and trying to understand my own lived experience through poetry, and that's where I continue to draw inspiration.

Over the course of the last 10 years, I've really drawn inspiration from things that have been happening in the world, in the larger Black community, in the various ways in which I am connected to different groups and different identities. I wrote this poem called *SKIN* and it was specifically written in the context of the Mike Brown killing back in 2014. And when the George Floyd protests happened again, this year, I actually refilmed that poem for dissemination because I was able to draw inspiration from everything that was happening around me and also felt compelled to be able to share that narrative once again. But I also find that I draw inspiration from my own personal adversity and triumphs and things that speak to my authentic truth and rawness and vulnerability. *Woman, Black*, for example, I actually wrote in second year [medical school] because I wanted to be able to shed light on a narrative that was unique but was painful and also beautiful at the same time. Being able to share that through my art form was something that I felt was empowering to me.

Q: After you found your inspiration, what was your approach to writing spoken word poetry? How do you put all of these different ideas together and how do you know when you had a final product that was ready to perform?

My writing process is very interesting. Usually, I feel a “spur of the moment” – like I’m hit with a bolt of creativity and will literally sit down and write an entire poem within 14 minutes or something. I’m pretty sure that I wrote *Woman, Black* within a couple hours. I wrote another poem, *An ode to Women’s College Hospital*, I think in 30 minutes before one of my CBL sessions in second year [medical school]. And so if I’m hit with a bolt of creative energy, even if it’s in the middle of the night, I kind of have to get up and write that idea down. I’ll just have an avalanche of ideas, of metaphors, of prose, of lines, and it’ll all just kind of hit me at once. I’m definitely not the kind of person that plans out my poetry or takes days and days and days to write it. It’s kind of all or nothing for me in my writing process.

And then with respect to when I feel like it’s done, I might go through a few drafts of it after I got the bulk of the poem down. But what’s important for me is actually to be able to say my poem out loud, especially if it’s a poem that I want for performance purposes. I’ll try and see if I like the cadence, and as I’m performing it to myself, I’ll actually kind of ad lib and start to change the poem as I’m performing it at that moment. As I’m doing that, if I think, “okay, actually, that sounds better when I say this instead of what I wrote down originally,” then I’ll change it. And so as I’m rehearsing it, the poem kind of evolves and takes its own form until I reach the final product. That’s kind of when I know that it’s done and ready to go – when it feels comfortable on the paper, but also when it feels comfortable in spoken word.

Q: You’ve talked a bit about some of the pieces that you’ve written and performed. Do you have a favorite piece that you’ve written and/or performed?



I would definitely say that my favorite piece that I’ve written is my poem *SKIN*. And that would also probably be my favorite poem to perform just because when I wrote it, it was during a time that was really tumultuous and painful for the Black community. And every time I perform that poem, I feel like it transports me back to that exact moment of when I first wrote it. Because there is so much recurrent trauma within the Black community, I find that *SKIN* is the one poem that I can almost always connect to instantly. In a way, it almost transcends time – unfortunately. That poem for me is something that I think unites me with the rest of the Black community and it always has had a profound impact wherever it is that I perform it. I also performed it at my medical school interview for UofT [laughs] and so it kind of has that memory in it for me that it’s something that I’ve taken with me in

to me as what it means to be an advocate and what it means to be a role model in the community. From the very first day that I started medical school, even before I started medical school, these women reached out to me. They were aware of the fact that I was the only Black medical student and they really were a community for me when I didn’t necessarily have that inherent community in my medical school class, just because of the way that the cards kind of panned out for me. But you know, what makes these women so special is the fact that they really shouldered me throughout every bit of adversity that I faced not only as a medical student, but also as an advocate. And they were always available to me to be able to talk through some of these difficult scenarios, to be able to sit with me, help me prepare for speeches, read over everything that I’ve done. They’ve seen all the

“I find that who I am as an advocate today, as a physician today, as a public speaker today has been molded by the amazing female clinicians who have taken me under their wing and have completely spirited me, protected me, guided me, mentored me and sponsored me.”

various different aspects of my life. It’s almost always a poem that I return to when I think of who I am as a poet and a writer.

Q: You’ve done some amazing advocacy work for the medical community and for the racialized and marginalized populations. You’re also a fantastic role model for many young, aspiring doctors and members of the community. Can you comment on some of your role models that helped you become the person and the advocate that you are today?

I find that who I am as an advocate today, as a physician today, as a public speaker today has been molded by the amazing female clinicians who have taken me under their wing and have completely spirited me, protected me, guided me, mentored me and sponsored me throughout the last four, going on five years now. Namely, that would be Dr. Lisa Robinson, as well as Dr. Onye Nnorom and Dr. Pier Bryden. All of these women have stood as a testament

poems before I’ve released them to the public. It’s just been such a special relationship and bond that I’ve had with these women. Specifically for Dr. Nnorom and Dr. Robinson, as Black women in medicine, who helped prepare me for the road ahead and gave me insight into what it means to be a Black female in medicine, including navigating the adversity that this entails. These women continue to be my role models and the giants upon whose shoulders I stand. They’ve done so much incredible work for the Black community and medical community before I even stepped foot in medical school. I think that they really laid the groundwork for me to be able to do what it is that I did and what it is that I continue to do. So to them, I owe a lot.

Q: Do you have any tips of advice for how one can go about strengthening their advocacy?

I think what’s so important to realize is that advocacy can and does look very different for everybody. For some people, all of their advocacy is within their



clinical work. On a day to day basis, how it is that they interact with their patients and how it is that they collaborate with their peers is in of itself how they express their advocacy. Some people do it on a larger, more societal, or even higher than that, political level. Advocacy for me looks like educating the community, doing keynotes, sharing my art, and performing. Certainly, that isn't something that everyone would be comfortable doing nor do they need to do advocacy in that way. Some people like to protest, some people like to write journals and go through academia to do that. Some people like to spread the word through social media. I would say that any way that you decide to go about your advocacy, ensure that you are doing it in a genuine and non-performative way. Ensure that as you're doing your advocacy, you're mindful about the community that you're trying to advocate for and that you're leveraging your privilege in order to centralize the voices of that community, and to be able to empower them and enrich that community, whether you belong to [that community] or not. Find something that speaks to you, that marries your skillset with your passion, in order to unlock the potential of your advocacy.

Q: On the topic of medicine and advocacy, what was the process like for you to choose your specialty in psychiatry? How does it unite your interest in advocacy with your interest in medicine?

My road to psychiatry is different compared to a person who might have been interested in psychiatry much earlier in medical school. Psychiatry was my last rotation in clerkship. It was August of third year and I was getting ready for CaRMS. I had all of my electives set up in internal medicine and obstetrics and gynecology, because those were my two main interests throughout medical school. And then when I did psychiatry, I just fell in love with it. Psych is one of the places in medicine that I think really relies upon a strength in being able to establish a narrative for the patient, because so much of it is a patient's lived experience and their experience with mental illness. It's a lot about their story and how it is that you're able to conceptualize that and communicate that. I found that psychiatry was the one area in which I actually felt like I was tapping more into who I was as a poet and as a writer, above and beyond any other area of medicine. In my CaRMS essay, I talked about how being a poet for all of my life helped prepare me to be a good doctor, for one, but also to be a good psychiatrist. Poetry necessitates being able to stare at the raw realities, the vulnerabilities, and the fragility of life and being able to do so with an unflinching repose. I find that [in psychiatry] you really get to see the raw underbelly of life; you meet people at their most demoralized, low, often devastating places, for not only them, but also their family. Psychiatry just felt very raw and human in a way that I felt was different from other areas of medicine.

On top of that, something that I had an idea of in medical school, but it never really became super concrete until I actually started residency, was the overwhelmingly disproportionate amount of Black individuals in psychiatry. They are so desperately underserved within this area and it wasn't until I was on my emergency psychiatry rotation that I realized I had never seen so many Black patients in my life; this issue was further magnified as I rotated through forensic psychiatry. And what was jarring to me was the realization that it's because there is such poor infrastructure of the mental health system within the Black community that we see them at these intersections of crisis. We see them in the emergency department, or we see them through the forensic system, because they've been involved with some kind of legal issue before they actually were able to have their mental illness addressed. And so, for me, being able to do this work means to integrate my advocacy into my clinical work. Every single day that I'm working with my patients, either in the emerg or in the outpatient clinic, I feel like every interaction is an opportunity for advocacy. I've never felt that my impact has been stronger for this community that I care so much about. So this is why I chose psychiatry,

why I love psychiatry, why I'm so passionate about being able to talk about psychiatry. Being involved in it is very purposeful for me.

Q: Looking towards the future, how do you envision your interests in the creative space and spoken word poetry to play out in residency?

Right now, I actually have quite a few projects on the go. Spoken word and public speaking are things that I always make a priority because I find that it's something that fills my cup; it brings me purpose, it energizes me, it empowers me. As it currently stands, I'm doing about two to three keynotes a month while in residency; I do this because I love public speaking and educating. It's something that I want to continue doing throughout my career. When I'm done residency and have more control over my schedule, I'll probably make more time for it. [Public speaking] enables me to do my advocacy work, to be able to educate the community, to be able to empower the community – all these things are so important to me. I use it as a platform for my art as well. Oftentimes, people ask me to give a lecture and perform and so I



find that there's always space to be able to blend my different talents and passions into that kind of work.

Q: We also saw that you've been involved in a lot of things, one of which was your recent appointment to Indigo's Board of Directors position. Could you comment on your initial reaction when you found out and if you have started the position, what the experience has been like so far?

I was actually in the middle of preparing to write my Medical Council of Canada Qualifying Examination when I was connected to Heather Reisman, Indigo's Founder and CEO. In the midst of studying, convocating and preparing to move into my new home for residency, I had accidentally missed a couple of her emails. When I was settled in and catching up on missed emails, I was equal parts excited and horrified at keeping such an important person waiting. We were able to quickly set up a call and she pitched the offer within that first meeting. I didn't quite know what it meant to be on a Board of Directors. I had been on boards for different journals and non-profits but it's quite a different world when it's a publicly traded for-profit company. So when the weight of that finally hit me, I mean, I was quite speechless. It's definitely one of the biggest and best opportunities I've ever been given. There is so much space to be able to create a national – if not international – impact. And so that, for me, has just been such an incredible blessing. Working with Heather and the other board members, as well as getting to know more about the business aspect of everything has been really quite a fascinating journey so far. And also really understanding how it is that I can scale my advocacy, because for a long time, I've been doing it within the community. I've had opportunities to give keynotes internationally and transnationally and that kind of nature, but this is a much different ballgame and can impact the lives of millions of people. So I'm really trying to kind of let that all soak in, but also not waste the opportunity – to do good and to create real tangible impacts for the community.

Q: On that topic, do you have any book recommendations that you would like to share with us or any of our readers?

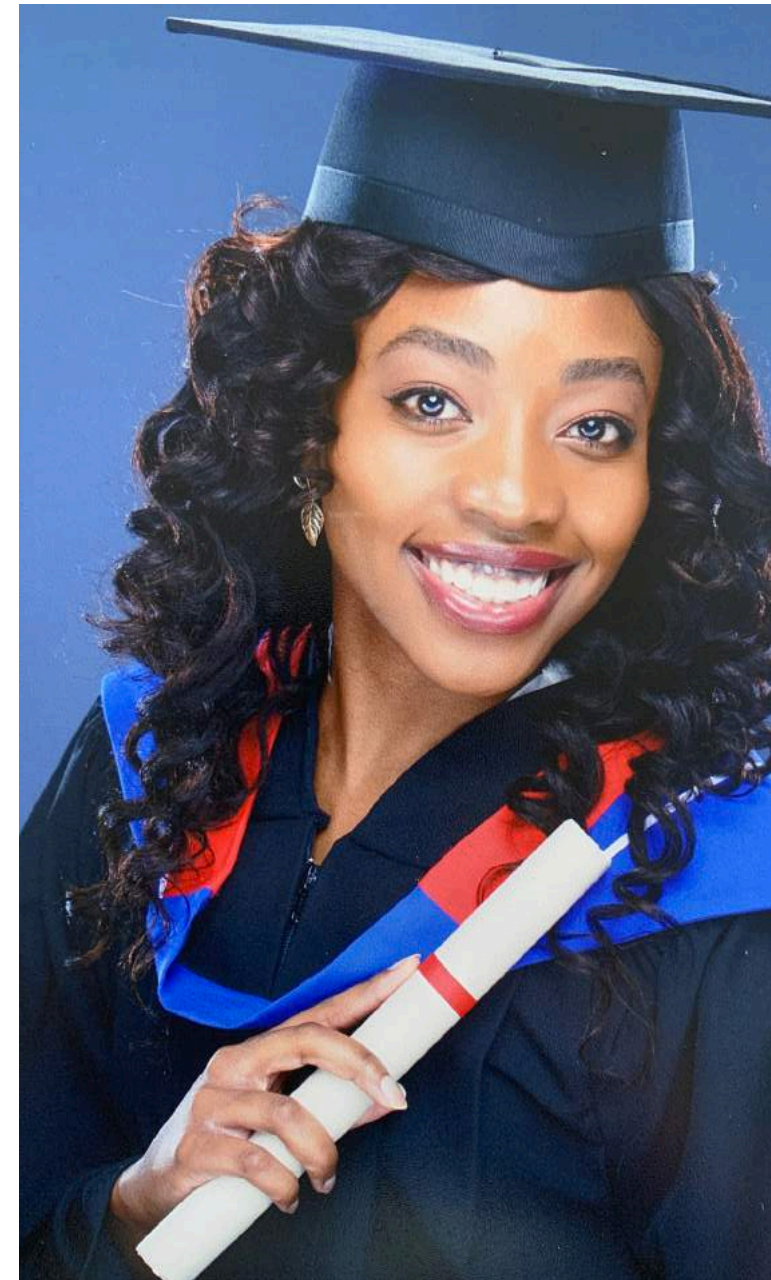
Becoming by Michelle Obama is fantastic – I love it and highly recommend it. I also read *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo and that is a phenomenal read – highly, highly, highly recommend it! And then, *Such a Fun Age* by Kiley Reid is another really excellent read. I love the books that I recommended because they paint the narrative of women of colour in a way that is refreshing and novel. They seek to empower other women of colour as opposed to typecasting them or stereotyping them, or placing them in roles and narratives in which they are inherently disenfranchised. So I think being able to see the lived experiences – both fictional and non-fictional – of women of colour in a way that is celebrated, that is inspiring, that really speaks to the boundless potential of Black women is the main reason why I would recommend these books.

Generally, what I would recommend is for people to take a stock of their bookshelves, take a stock of the various forms of media that you consume – whether it's art, books, movies, whatever it is. Try to see if there is a way that you can diversify the kind of material that you're consuming. So if you realize that you're consuming media from a relatively homogenous collection of authors, maybe consider integrating different perspectives that you might not typically be looking for. In the last 10 years or so, I've been very intentional about trying to read more books written by Black female authors, as I spent much of my formative years reading the works of mostly White, male authors with a singular perspective. Now that I feel like I've read numerous works by fantastic Black, female scholars, I'm challenging myself to take my own advice. What is the next frontier? This year, I've been very intentional about trying to integrate more Indigenous and Latina authors into my bookshelves because I think that is something that passively but also actively informs your conscience; being able to broaden your perspective is extremely important. That's what I would recommend everyone to do – take stock of the diversity in your life.

Q: If you had a message to tell medical students, what advice would you give them?

The advice that I would give medical students is the advice that I gave in my valedictory address, which is to define yourself. Set out ways to define yourself before anyone else can do that for you. That really is a paraphrase from Michelle Obama. I just think it's so profound and so meaningful, especially in our role as physicians. We start medical school as individuals, and I feel like oftentimes, when we're out at the other side of medicine, that we're all kind of fit into this perfect homogeneous box of what a doctor should do, and look and say, and speak and act, and all of these things. I feel like there's almost this sense of losing yourself in a way. So really holding true to who you are, what it is that you stand for, and allow that to guide all of the decisions that you make. Truly, that will help you to overcome any adversity that you will encounter in medical school, in residency and beyond.

Another piece of advice for medical students is to live in your authentic truth – whatever that means for you. I know that as a Black woman, I definitely struggled with the idea of wearing my natural hair in clinic and feeling more comfortable speaking the way that I find is most natural. I'd say that the most empowering thing that I've ever done is living in my truth, owning my Blackness, owning my femininity, and doing so unapologetically. That's something that I would try and pass on to the next generation of medical students: never be afraid to stand in your truth.



“Try to see if there is a way that you can diversify the kind of material that you're consuming. So if you realize that you're consuming media from a relatively homogenous collection of authors, maybe consider integrating different perspectives that you might not typically be looking for.”

Interview with Koren Teo



Q: Can you please give us an overview of your involvement with dance, from when you first started up until today?

I started my dance journey as a late-teen with the intention of doing it as cross-training and as a break from martial arts. I fell in love with dance – the way it felt to let the music move me and the endless space for self-expression. Fast forward a couple years, the martial arts was completely replaced by dance. I started attending structured dance classes most days of the week and trained one-on-one with a spectrum of teachers, first in Chinese dance, then ballet, then came contemporary, jazz, and modern dance. Fortunately for me, wherever I studied and worked, there were options in the local area to keep dancing. Not all had the same options as Toronto, but some dance classes were definitely available. Since moving back to Toronto, I became part of two dance bodies: Push Pull (a company of “dancing professionals, not professional dancers”) and Little Pear Garden (a Contemporary Chinese dance troupe). Amidst this pandemic, I am currently dancing with Push Pull to create a virtual dance show which fully takes advantage of the virtual format to do things that are not possible on stage, and also dancing with our awesome Daffy dance team for ‘2021 Daffydil the Movie’ – stay tuned!

Q: I realize that I sort of took advantage of the fact that I already know you! Before we really get into the dance, can you tell us who Koren is?

That is a tough question, like everyone else who’s starting a new career or chapter like medical school, I’m trying to figure out who that is, who Koren is, every single day. But I guess right now, I’m a first year med student, I am a mom to three kids, a wife, someone who’s scrambling to get things done, including getting outfits for tomorrow’s [Christmas] photoshoot! And I like to dance.

Q: What role does dance play in your life?

Definitely something for release. And I didn’t realize to what extent I needed it, and how much I enjoyed it, until I danced for an hour with people over Zoom last night! Dancing with people is something I haven’t really done much of during this pandemic. I’ve just taken advantage of pre-recorded classes which is not the same

as having people live on the other end. I guess prior to this pandemic, dance was the biggest source of my social life – actually, probably 85-90% of the friends that I see regularly are people I dance together with.

Q: I think we’re all wondering this – how have you been able to juggle medical school with dance?

I actually don’t mind this whole online platform and being at home all the time because that gives me a lot of flexibility. And now that everything is online, I can take classes with people that are halfway across the world. During lunch, I have sometimes taken classes with teachers who are streaming classes live in England, because they’re six hours ahead so that would be their normal evening class time.

Q: You mentioned that you took classes in different styles. What kind of dance do you focus on and along those lines, which one’s your favourite?

I mostly do ballet now and it is my favourite by far. A lot of people don’t gravitate towards ballet because one, it takes a few years before it becomes reasonably satisfying to look at yourself dance on video. And two, it’s very “classical” in the way that it’s taught, so it can be boring. There’s your left side, then you do a right side, because that’s the way you’re supposed to build your body – very structured. It’s good for your body to have even muscles and good coordination on both sides though. So some people find it unsatisfying to commit so much time to doing something very regimented and repetitive. Until you get to a certain point where you’re very comfortable with the technique, self-expression is harder in ballet.

But, I’ve actually found that to be less of a problem. I honestly don’t mind regimented and repetitive. After a day of work or after school, going into something where you know exactly what to expect is nice. Whatever you do on the right side you’re going to do on the left side; there’s a rhyme and rhythm. All the exercises basically follow the same order and most teachers will follow the same order. It’s kind of – how do I put it – kind of nice to not have to think. It’s a comfortable, safe space to express and allow music to move my body without having to think too hard about it.

Q: Was there a role model or someone who helped with your transition to ballet?

I think I got really lucky that I ran into a really good teacher, the teacher that I trained the most with. He’s from Shanghai, and he was actually the Head of the Ballet division at the City of Shanghai Dance School. He’s here in Toronto now, retired, living the life, and teaching because he enjoys it. But he trained really spectacular people, including a principal dancer in the San Francisco ballet. I heard about him through word of mouth and he teaches small classes that he doesn’t actually advertise – so lucky! I would definitely say he helped me the most in my transition into ballet.

Q: What does a typical training session look like?

I mostly go to open or drop-in classes now. For those, they already assume that everybody has the basic ballet techniques, so they don’t really go through how to say, point your foot, etc. We start with a warm up, then a series of exercises you do holding the barre. You start with a plié and you go to your tendu, and you move on to the bigger movements like your kicks. And you do a bit of stretching and then put the bars away. You then dance without the barre, because the whole point of the stuff done at the barre is to work all your muscles and find your center (or balance) by engaging all your core muscles and getting your proprioception all warmed up so that you can do stuff without holding the barre. And yes, that’s where the true dancing begins and you can move more freely.

Q: And where does the choreography fit in?

For a typical open class, you wouldn’t really learn choreography or a dance piece. In an open class, you would have short combinations of movements that could be from a ballet number, but we don’t learn the whole thing per se. For a drop in, you’re supposed to be able to show up to the class without any prior training with that teacher or that group and still be able to enjoy it. Hence, most combinations of dance movements are taught in short segments and taught fresh.

Q: What are your thoughts on how age affects one’s ability to learn ballet?

There are things where, say, if you start training younger, your neuroplasticity and flexibility are better, which makes the jumps and turns a lot easier to learn compared to you if you started training in your late teens. I've noticed in particular that back flexibility is harder to develop later in life. In anatomy, we just learned that the spine doesn't really bend backwards that well anyways [laughs], and especially the thoracic spine because its spinous processes point down. There can't be much bending forward or backwards! But somehow, people who started training younger seem to be able to bend it a lot!

Q: Besides age, could you comment on any other physical limitations regarding ability to do ballet?

So I got really lucky in that I have a lot of flexibility to begin with. But one of the things that my classmates and I sometimes struggle with is turning out our feet – basically, you're supposed to be rotating the top of your femur – but we can't do that as well as we would like to. But my teacher said that if you started really young, you could correct for a lot of those things by just putting more work and increasing range of motion over another decade. Another thing is pointe work. That is, standing on tippy toes with a pointe shoe was harder for me at the beginning because it's harder for the pointe shoe to support you if your foot doesn't curl or arch enough for it to do so. It's not bad now with more training. If you're not trying to do this professionally like dancing in demanding classical ballet pieces, then absolutely you can work around it and you can enjoy it. I've enjoyed dance with these limitations for years.

Q: Is there anything frustrating about dance for you?

Sometimes I take contemporary dance classes. So in a contemporary class they'll give you some counts of music to play with and express yourself. And I have a hard time creating movements in my head. I find myself looking around like, "what are people doing, what am I supposed to be doing? Am I interpreting his instructions correctly?" But deep down I do understand that he means exactly that: this is your

self-expression and these are the parameters I've given you to do it. So anything goes. But I find I'm less comfortable with that.

Q: Do you have a favourite move from your arsenal of different ballet techniques?

The move I would love to perfect is the pirouette, which I find very hard sometimes. I find jumping a lot easier than turning – I think that stems from my previous training in martial arts. But my favourite might be the grand jeté. It's a giant split jump. Everytime I travel somewhere, if there's a scene that I really like, there's probably going to be a picture taken of me doing the grand jeté. I have one in front of the Colosseum doing a grand jeté – it's one of my favourites.

Q: Do you have a favourite ballet or a favourite ballerina?

Probably Romeo and Juliet, it's one of my classical favourites. Some of the modern interpretations that people have taken are questionable. I think, one time, they set it in a modern city but they were still fighting with swords. But still, in general, that's the one that I like most.



I think my favourite Canadian ballerina would be Sonia Rodriguez, who is in the National Ballet. In any ballet show – let's say, Sleeping Beauty – they'll tell you who is dancing a principal for that show. I've noticed that I purposely pick her shows. It just makes me happy when I watch her dance.

Q: Can someone who doesn't know much about ballet still attend and appreciate a ballet?

Oh, absolutely. I've gone with friends and family who don't dance at all, but we'll read the program and do a little bit of Wikipedia ahead of time. The National Ballet also does "ballet talks" about an hour before the show where they just go through and give you a brief description of what everything is like, what the origin is, and they show you some costumes close up which is really nice. I think between all of that, ballet is absolutely there for everyone to enjoy.

Q: Which ballet would you recommend to an adult who wants to be introduced to ballet?

If it ever comes back, *Cactus* was a good one to watch. It's a modern, almost absurdist satire of the way contemporary dance or art sometimes is and how society responds to it. It's very comical and definitely worth watching.

Q: What about your kids? Do you take them on any ballet trips?

My three year old has watched a bunch of my classes back when I still had to rehearse and was taking classes. When she was younger, she happened to be really good at sitting in one spot. As long as I left her with food and something to play with, she entertained herself. So yes, she's watched a bunch. In terms of a full show, I haven't taken her to any where it wasn't run by one of my friends or somebody I knew that wouldn't care if I had to walk out five times because my child could not sit still! But I do look forward to taking them to a show when I have faith that they can sit for two hours without moving much. It'd be nice if it could become something that we do together. I've taken my daughter to some lessons before the pandemic. If anyone is wondering what lessons look like for a toddler, it looks nothing like ballet. It's basically a bunch of kids running around with some

instruction but not a whole lot of anyone knowing what's going on.

Q: What's next for you in terms of dance?

I'm kind of in a maintenance phase right now for technique and artistic development because with school and family, it's hard to find time. I also don't have the extra energy at this point to do the introspection that's required to become better at what you do. If we're allowed, this summer, I would like to go to a few more workshops, and if traveling is permitted, I'd like to go to a couple different places, like New York, to take classes with different teachers. Different geographic areas do have different styles in the way they teach; the teachers arrange the choreography differently to the music, and I find that every time I take dance in a different place, I gain a lot from that.

For example, when I took a class in London, all the exercises were with very classical music in which all the counts are very square and all the movements were done on counts within the eight count. It was very easy to predict what movement came next and everything was very even. It felt very classical and proper, whereas when I took a class in New York, there was a teacher who would like to do everything on the offbeat which gives a really interesting effect, but I had to learn to re-train and think about things on the offbeat. I think that it's also really good for your brain to be exercised in different ways.

Q: Final thoughts on ballet and getting the word out?

I think everybody should give it a try. Especially now that YouTube and Zoom ballet are options. I think a big barrier to someone picking it up is being self-conscious – before the pandemic you would be in a room full of people who you think know what they're doing and maybe secretly judging you (but really, everybody's focused on themselves, trying to figure out what's going on, trying to not fall). So right now, that is not a barrier at all – you can turn your camera off! It's definitely a good time to try it out.

Interview with Major Artery Collective



Sinthu and Leah met while preparing for medical school interviews and were coincidentally accepted to the same school, campus, and academy at UofT. They both grew up crafting and making DIY projects in their spare time and often turned to it during stressful times of the school year. Once the pandemic hit, they found themselves creating more, which sparked the idea to start an online shop. Lots of research, practise, and experimenting later, *Major Artery Collective* was born.

Q: How did Major Artery Collective start?

Sinthu: We were just winging it to be honest. Leah and I have always been very crafty; once COVID started and we weren't spending time commuting, and with all of the other stressors going on, we turned to crafting in our free time. We started joking about it – like, “We should just start an Etsy shop together!” But the joke just kept returning, so one day we decided to give the business a try. We spent a couple of months trying to perfect what we were trying to sell before starting it up.

Leah: We started the business with crafts such as polymer clay earrings, embroidery, and patches. Now

it's slowly morphing into new things, such as beaded earrings and embroidered earrings. We're also looking at what people are interested in, and what we're inspired by, as the shop continues to grow.

S: I think we also just ran out of space to hold onto our own crafts, so we thought we should just start giving it to people.

Q: What was the inspiration behind the business name?

S: From day one, we wanted to come up with a pun. Medical school takes up your entire life in a way; sometimes it feels like we're only medical students



outside of this art business. So we thought, it would be ideal if we had a medical pun. But it was a struggle. We were literally googling art puns, anatomy puns, medicine puns...

L: And cross-checking what was available on Instagram and Etsy. It felt like every name we had was taken.

S: We had just finished the cardiology unit, and we started joking about it: minor ARTery... MAJOR artery? Then we added on “collective” because it turns out there was an account made just two weeks prior for Major Artery!

L: We hope that people get the “Art” in the pun. It's a little cheesy but it's loved by us now.

Q: How do you navigate your relationship as business partners/co-founders along with your friendship?

S: [To L] Is this our ideal interview question, to talk about how we're friends?

L: It might be [laughs]. There's a funny story about how we met. When I was living in Halifax and Sinthu was in Hamilton, we found each other on Reddit and did medical school interview prep together. Imagine

our surprise when we got into the same school, campus, and academy! I feel like we're friends first before business partners because it's more important for us to maintain our friendship. What's really good is that we both understand the other person's stressors because we're in the same program too. We understand that the neurology unit right now is a focus and we know when to put crafting and business stuff on the back burner. It helps that we're both open and empathetic with each other and our mindsets. It's good practice too, to make sure that you're growing as a friend, because if you're a respectful friend, you can be a helpful business partner at the same time.

S: From early on, we were very realistic. [We knew that] there might be a time when the stressors of the business could impact our relationship. We talked about an exit strategy for the business, since we don't know what's going to happen once clerkship or residency starts. Although our friendship comes first, these are the sort of things that can impact our relationship if we're not on the same page. We're also lucky because we don't depend on this as our primary source of income.

L: Something helpful too is that when we talk about our to-do lists, we know each other's strengths and what we both enjoy. We're respectful of each other's skills and do not take things personally. We can be

super blunt and honest with each other.

S: I love you, girl.

L: I love you too!

Q: Can you tell us more about your design process in terms of brainstorming ideas, acquiring materials, and production?

it. Now I have easily over 200 ideas. I’m thinking about doing a collection inspired by my ethnic background. I am Sri Lankan Tamil ... so I started thinking about the clothes that I wear and how a Sari can inspire earrings. Likewise, our personal priorities also shine in our business, like recycling fabrics and buying my beads from local Indigenous beaders.

Q: Do you have any favourite products? Are



L: We both have our subset of crafts. I work more on embroidery and wood-work and Sinthu focuses more on clay and beaded earrings. Regarding materials, I like to avoid Mr. Bezos’ website as much as I can. Ideally, I’ll buy local. Production-wise, my inspiration comes from the materials themselves. For example, when I do woodwork, I really like to show the natural wood and the stain. And with embroidery, I like to embroider what I love. So when summer was ending, I embroidered an iced coffee because I was sad that summer was gone.

S: Similar process for me, I get inspiration from everywhere. I have an ongoing note on my phone because I’ll wake up at 3am and I’m like, “oh my gosh, I can make earrings out of this,” and blurry-eyed I’ll just type it into my notes, because otherwise I’ll forget

your favourite products in line with what is bestselling?

L: We had a giveaway with six items and both of us thought that these two [items] would go first, since we were both in love with these two in particular. But they were the last to go. It’s so interesting to see what people pick. I really like these earrings that someone called my “sexy bacon earrings” on their Instagram – they’re wooden, wavy, rectangular earrings. Also, Sinthu made me [the earrings I am wearing now] for my birthday that I love – they’re a transparent tear-drop shape.

S: Early on we realized that less is more in terms of selling. For clay and beaded earrings, the things that sell the quickest are the simplest to make – one solid

colour, a basic shape. Usually for launches, I’ll try to split it in half: things that I like to make, a complicated technique for example, and much more simple designs that will sell.

Q: Did either of you have any background in business? What was the process of starting a small business?

S: Neither of us have a background. I think we just started and then kind of winged it. When we first started, we [knew] we needed to get a website and domain and do product photography, etc. There’s always a gazillion things to do. But at one point, you just have to start. Leah and I officially registered our business just two weeks ago. In terms of what we had to get ready to run the business, social media [was one of them].

L: Yeah, I like what Sinthu said about just starting. I was really dragging my feet, and I remember Sinthu just saying that we are never going to be completely ready. Even if you have a handful of products, just drop them and see where it goes. And it’s also nice to know that if something goes haywire, it is not the end of the world.

S: And Youtube is your best friend! Truly, anything you want to get started, there are Youtube videos for... The other day we spent two hours trying to figure out how to make a TikTok. Apparently we are not Gen Z. Small businesses tend to do best when there is a bit of your personality shown on social media. But we don’t necessarily want to talk about or rely on how we’re medical students because there are a lot more aspects to what makes us who we are. We’re trying to build a brand that represents us while not focusing on all of the things outside of the art.

Q: Do you have a favourite memory or highlight so far since starting the business?

L: This may not be my very favourite memory, but it was fun. Before we even validated that we were going to start a business, we went to Michaels together, and we spent like 300 dollars and 5 hours in Michaels!

S: We lost track of time. At one point, we looked at the clock and we realized we were four hours in. And

neither of us suggested leaving!

L: We closed down the club at Michaels! [laughs]

S: I think one of my favourite memories, based on the influx of serotonin we had that day, is this one day when we both got our first sales from strangers, very very early on. I just remember both of us were so excited because we were both like, “oh my gosh, there are strangers who actually like our work!”

L: That was a good day! I remember when we first started, both of us felt like every piece that we made wasn’t good enough and that we had to give free stuff away with every order that we sold. Something I learned was knowing the value that we have. Our products, and the time and material we’re putting in, has value. Our creative input has value. We still really like to give out freebies to our supporters though. For example, [someone] in our class bought a pair of earrings and the next week she bought another pair of the same earrings but just in a bigger size. So I made her these custom fork and spoon earrings, and we posted them on Instagram. She was the only one who commented, saying, “These are so cute.” [And I was thinking], “Little does she know these are for her!”





S: Also, once in the same week, both Leah and I saw our classmates wearing our earrings and we were like, “Our things are out in the wild!”

Q: Where do you see Major Artery Collective going in the future?

S: This is something we discussed from the very beginning: having our business represent us. Both of us are into social justice. Once we break even, we will start donating 10% each month to a different cause that we care about. We’re actually starting that this week! For the launch later today, we have one collection where all of the profits will be going towards the Mi’kmaw fisherman in Nova Scotia. Although we haven’t had a sit down “where do we see ourselves in 10 years-type talk,” we have joked that if we end up in specialities with wacky hours, we can do Major Artery on the side!

L: [Working on Major Artery] is one of those things that’s nice to do because it forces us to do the things that we really like. Knowing that we have a shop drop coming up forces me to do things that I enjoy.

S: Going back to the point about how we want the business to grow with us, who we are as people influences our business decisions. One day we are going to be doing interviews for residency. We are already thinking of doing collections for professional earrings and doing a discounted rate for medical students who are interviewing for residency. And maybe for every pair of earrings we sell, giving free pairs to agencies that work with women to help them find employment.

L: We were also talking about making custom jewelry that matches with an occasion or outfit.

S: Which Amazon can’t give you, y’all!

L: Jeff Bezos doesn’t know much about clay, let me tell you that for a fact!

Q: Any words of advice for students wanting to set up a small crafts-based business?

S: First off, just do it. Once you get the basics down, once you’ve done your basic experimentation with the products you’re selling, I promise you there is someone out there who wants your project. Second piece of advice is: it might seem like common sense, but do not copy other people. Not only is it unethical, but it is also limiting your own creativity. If you’re so used to piggy-backing off of other people’s ideas, the second that influx stops coming in, you’re stuck. Also, enjoy the stuff you are making, and that comes with enjoying the ideas you come up with.

L: Something that’s tricky for beginners, something I’m still struggling with, is: don’t underprice your products. A lot of people that are starting out will have a product they’ve spent 20 hours on and will charge \$25...but that is not appropriate. It goes hand in hand with understanding your value and making sure that you are treating yourself with the same kindness that you are treating another local artist. Something we learned too – maybe Sinthu wants to talk about in terms of cultural appreciation vs cultural appropriation, and giving respect where respect is due....

S: Over the summer, one of the things I learned to create was beaded earrings. There’s two main types: one is flat-beading, and the other is fringe, which is

more universal. Flat beading involves sewing beads onto a thick material to create a design, whereas fringe beading involves hanging strings of beads onto a beaded base and is usually stitched together. I noticed that many fringe-based earrings were made by Indigenous folks, and it made me wonder if this was Indigenous-based work or if it was common to the broader community as well. So I did a deep dive over the course of many weeks, researching the topic in an effort to do my due diligence. I remember being stressed at first, calling up Leah every 3 days....

L: But then she reached out to people more involved in these communities in an effort to learn from them, to ensure that we weren’t overstepping into traditional cultural practises and being disrespectful. PSA: neither Sinthu nor I are Indigenous.

S: I reached out on discussion forums online, read papers on beading in North America, its roots and history, which helped me come to the conclusion that you have to be careful; some designs are Indigenous



and very specific to certain tribes (certain colours, patterns, materials) but some are much more broad and have universal origins. I spent a lot of time trying to figure out what that boundary is; when am I crossing over into territory that isn’t mine versus what basics can I learn from other beaders and apply my own twist to?

L: It’s nice to know that we can appreciate the art and learn from each other while also making sure that we’re still respectful.

Q: Any other words of advice?

S: Join other creative groups – collaboration, not competition. I’ve gained so much information and support from other people who just “get it.”

L: Imposter syndrome exists in the small business world too! If you start to create something, it [and you] have worth and you deserve to be a part of the community.



Interview with Tao Chan



Q: Tell us about yourself. How did you become involved with Orbital Groove?

I'm a Toronto native. I used to live in Kensington, then moved around. I actually spent about 3 years in Barbados because of my dad's business. One funny story is that my dad used to trade Chinese vegetables with Rihanna's dad – so that's my connection to fame! My family lives in the Scarborough/Markham area.

In terms of music, I started early on. When I was seven or eight, my parents took me to piano lessons which I took up to Grade 6 level piano. I was moving around a lot so I didn't continue. That was a bit unfortunate, but my parents ended up continuing music education for my two younger brothers. They're both super

talented now. I took music throughout high school and played alto saxophone.

I got into playing guitar in Grade 9. I was going through family storage and found a Yamaha guitar that was essentially untouched. My dad had bought it for mom before I was born because she wanted to learn how to play, but she never ended up having the time to learn after she had me. I started playing it and took a few classes here and there. Later, I just grabbed a foothold and started learning on my own online. You can learn pretty quickly if you find the right resources, so I'd recommend it to anyone who'd like to pick up something new during quarantine. I developed skills from watching videos of artists playing and of acoustic guitar videos, learning the style.

I'm the lead singer for Orbital Groove, but in terms of singing, I didn't sing in high school. I used to commute a lot and on my way home, I would blast music and sing to myself while walking on the dark roads. I also consider myself a shower singer. Singing in the shower and while walking home helped me to find my tone. I did that through undergrad and my Masters until now.

In terms of my involvement with Orbital Groove, I was inspired by Melinda, Sam, Paolo, and Ben when they were playing the first show last year at *The Ballroom*. They were so amazing. Then I saw them perform at Clubs Fair and I was excited to hear that they were recruiting members. I really wanted to join as a guitarist because I wasn't very confident in my singing back then. When it came time for auditions, I prepared a song called "Slow Dancing in a Burning Room" by John Mayer. I was applying as a guitarist, but I also wanted to add vocals to complete the gestalt of the song. At the audition, I was super nervous because everyone was super talented and I was just self-taught. I was hoping to get the guitarist position. I knew that my friends Seth and Monish were applying for the position as well. A week or two after the audition, Melinda reached out to me saying that they really liked my audition. They were wondering if I wanted to be their lead vocalist, which was completely not what I was expecting! I told them straight up, "Are you sure? I don't have a lick of formal singing experience." And they were fine with that. Seth ended up being the guitarist for the band. It's really nice to jam out and chill with people you know. So that's how it started.

Q: How do you think your singing evolved from before you auditioned for Orbital Groove to how it is today?

Melinda and Sam are very experienced in singing and were really helpful. They gave me useful tips and tricks that you probably learn in choir like breath control, where you make sure you have an adequate amount of air in your lungs before you sing. Otherwise, it would be difficult to hit the notes. I found it quite difficult sometimes to hit higher notes and I would end up switching between chest and head voice which wasn't that great. So definitely, I had to adjust.

The band also made many accommodations for me

when I asked them to change the key [of a song]. For instance, if I couldn't hit certain notes, then I'd be like, "Guys, guys, guys, I think we have to go down like one or two," and Sam, Monish, and Paolo would transpose up and down. Everyone was super supportive. So I think that's how my singing evolved. I definitely considered getting a vocal coach too, but that didn't end up happening. And I guess, just have fun with it. In the beginning, I was really worried about how I was going to perform. But after spending more time with them, I realized they're all super chill. In the end, it's all just a performance. If you're having fun up on stage, that's what people are gonna see. That's what's important.

Q: So you've had experience with both formal technical training and informal musical training. How do you think those two types of training compare? Do you think musicians should have a mix of both types of training?

I would say having formal training does really help because you end up having a background to build upon. I remember very early on when I was learning new chords, like diminished and augmented chords, I was like, "Whoa, this is so huge!" and it blew my mind. But if you talk to any classically trained musician, they'd be like, "Oh, yeah, that's like a one, a third and a sharp fifth for augmented?" I think, don't quote me on that!

So I would say it really does speed up the process of learning different styles, especially for jazz. Jazz is a very technical style, so it's kind of difficult to just learn if you don't have the training in it. On the other hand, I also feel that not having that training almost makes it feel like I'm not constrained by all the rules. I'm more free to explore and venture into different styles without being constricted to just one thing. That's my perspective.

Q: Do you have any tips for people who are trying to self-teach?

I would definitely say a lot of practice is involved if you want to become self-taught. I think that's the same even if you're getting taught by a teacher. When you're self-taught, there's a myriad of resources online, and sometimes, it's hard to tease out which ones are useful. Some could be too easy for you or



too technically difficult. Having some sort of guide to your training is really important.

What ended up happening for me was that I hit a plateau sometime in undergrad. I had learned all the basic chords and was able to do barre chords pretty simply. But after getting to that point, there wasn't a lot of information online that could teach you more advanced chord types for the guitar. Serendipitously, I ended up finding some really nice acoustic covers on YouTube, and they had really, really interesting chord shapes. So I started learning those and that's sort of how I found my way into that section of learning guitar. Finding the right resources is really important if you're trying to learn. That's the only thing I can say for guitar.

I also self-taught piano. I had a basis for it, so I just picked up the different RCM [Royal Conservatory of Music] level books and learned songs from them. I think that really helped in developing my skills.

Q: The process of learning an instrument can be frustrating and takes perseverance. How did you persist and persevere despite the challenges or obstacles that you may have faced on your journey to learn piano, guitar, or singing?

A lot of my motivation came from listening to classic

songs like “Clair de Lune” or the Nocturnes by Chopin. I really wanted to play those because they're popular songs. So just having pieces in mind that you want to play and learning how to play via YouTube or whatnot can really help to develop your motivation. I remember I was trying to learn “Nocturne” for a while and ended up playing hours per day just trying to perfect it. It was just out of my own motivation, just because it sounded really nice. The same is with guitar. Just trying to perfect certain songs really gives you that motivation to keep going. I have two younger brothers who also play, so it was sort of a way to show off to them. [Laughs] I think I gave a lot of motivation to my brothers, too, because they were considering quitting piano. But I was showing them cool things you could do with it, and they ended up going to RCM and now they're so much better than me.

Q: Performing on stage can be very nerve-racking, and it often takes a lot of confidence to perform on a stage in front of a big crowd. Would you say you are someone with natural confidence? What are your thoughts on building the self-esteem it takes to perform?

Confidence is something you really do have to build up. In Grade 9, I performed for Battle of the Bands and that was the first time I was performing music in a small group with me being in the center. I was so scared. I was playing the notes, but my legs were

shaking and my mind was just somewhere else. I ended up performing again in Grade 10 with the same band. Giving yourself these new experiences that you wouldn't have otherwise done, it really shapes your confidence. After doing it a few times, I realized that even if I screwed up, it didn't matter too much. And it's actually not too bad.

I do think I was quite shy in high school and undergrad, but I put myself in a lot of different positions that required me to publicly speak. For instance, I was the social rep when I was doing my Masters, and then I ended up becoming the co-president of my graduate student association which involved a lot of public speaking and interacting with faculty and PIs. I also ended up performing in a Christmas event for all faculty during grad school, so that required a lot of confidence. [Laughs] That's what I would suggest to people who are trying to develop that self-esteem: just putting yourself out there. And practice!

Q: On the topic of performance, how does performing solo compare with performing in a group?

I'd say performing in a group is a lot more fun. When everyone knows what they are doing, you can create really amazing music. And it's just so much talent coming together to produce something so great. Performing solo, you have more of a say in what you can do and what style you want to drive, whereas when we performed in groups it was a more democratic process. We would vote on what songs we wanted to do. But [performing in a group] was also a really nice way for me to exit my comfort zone in terms of exploring new music. Monish has very different tastes from me, who has different tastes from Seth, who has different tastes from Melinda and Sam. I would say that's a huge benefit of playing with a group, just having that diversity of tastes and music.

Q: What are some of your favourite pieces of music that you would like to share with others? Have you ever performed them and if so, what was that experience like?

I'm a very top-40s pop, rock, and hip hop lover. Recently, I got into *Panic! at the Disco* and a lot of throwbacks. I had a phase where I really liked K-pop, so that might have influenced my style as well. There are a lot of nice, acoustic K-pop styles which influence how I play guitar. There's this one musician, Sam Kim. He's an amazing guitarist who plays acoustic guitar beats so I've been trying to replicate how he plays. Sometimes I do make covers on my Instagram at the behest of many of my followers.

Q: We were wondering because you mentioned earlier that you were very much a shower singer. What is your favorite song to sing in the shower?

I've been really into Harry Styles recently, so usually I enjoy “Falling” by Harry Styles. I think I might have sung that in the shower yesterday. Yeah, it probably does disturb my roommate sometimes. [Laughs] It's all right. He understands.

Q: Are you a karaoke singer? What is your go-to song, and why?

Oh, I love karaoke! It's been so long. [The songs] used to come at a snap, but I don't even remember now. I really love doing throwbacks. I guess a lot of Jason Mraz like “Lucky” and “I'm Yours” – that sort of stuff. A really popular one that a lot of my Chinese friends like is “Tong Hua.”

Q: We had a question about your experiences in composition. Have you written or composed your own song? If so, what is your process?

I think one of these is embarrassing. One of the first songs I wrote was a breakup song. What ended up happening was that I ended up being in this huge friend-zone moment and I wrote a song. Its lyrics were like... oh, shoot. I don't remember it. Let me try to think of it. [Takes out guitar] Oh, I just remembered. It's kind of sad. It was a huge friend zone moment. I only made the chorus. I was like...

[Begins to sing and finishes]

Q: We actually got goosebumps! You’re being really humble about your singing. Do you mind if we ask what the process is like in terms of writing this piece?

I guess the first thing would be seeing what emotions you want to bring up and then using that to guide what chords you want to put with it. You can look at any popular song, and there are usually good chord progressions that you can take, then just write words to it that fit. [Songwriting] really is a creative medium. And it’s really nice that you can do pretty much anything with it. You’re not really constrained by rules.

Q: How do you find balance as a med student and lead singer of Orbital Groove? How have music and musical performance influenced your experiences as a medical student and the 2T3 Class Co-President of the Medical Society?

I was really fortunate in that I was able to allocate priorities differently to each event throughout medical school. For example, we just had that MSK Neuro block. That was the highlight of having to focus your priority on school. And during that time, Orbital Groove wasn’t really performing, so we didn’t have to focus too much on that. Also, Jennifer Kao, my Co-President, is doing her MD-PhD, so she’s not following the same schedule as we are. She ended up taking more of the work during that time. When the time comes when she’s defending her thesis or doing huge lab days, I would jump in and take over those responsibilities. So having that support and teamwork between us really helps.

I would say music really is an adjunct to the whole med school experience because it really helps with my wellness. Sometimes when I’m Zoom-fatigued, I like to just turn off my mic and video and strum a few chords, chill out while CBL is going on. [Music] has been a very enriching experience and has made my med school experience much more fun. So I would really recommend getting involved with any musical opportunities that are offered. And there are a lot,

like NoteWorthy, Healing Tonics, and Daffy. Yeah, I would say to get involved, to all your readers.

Q: Just to add onto that, do you have a message to send to our readers in addition to what was said before?

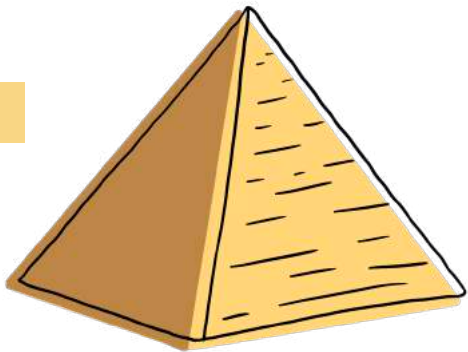
I guess it’s more difficult nowadays, but I would definitely say to get involved with things that interest you in med school, because, really, you do end up having a lot of time in pre-clerkship. That is sort of what compelled me to audition for Daffy this year, because I was like, “Yo, I’m not going to have time to do this in clerkship. And this is probably the last time that I will ever be free to do something this intense.” So definitely get involved and just apply for everything that interests you. [Jenn and I] really motivate each other and help each other come out of our comfort zones. If I was too worried about what I thought other people thought about me, then I would probably not have applied for so many things. Just putting myself out there has made my [med school experience] a lot more enjoyable.

Q: We have one last question for you. With performances, unexpected changes can take place last-minute. Can you tell us about the most last-minute thing that has happened to you and how you responded? Do you have a favourite memory?

Every year, Orbital Groove performs at a Movember event, MoStock, except for this year. It’s an annual fundraising event where they host a huge pub-night-slash-social at this bar called *Radio* in Toronto. The unique thing about this place is that it has a huge stage that allows for live music, so, oftentimes, you have live bands playing there. [At MoStock], it’s like a med student band playing for med students. We were able to perform there and it was one of the funnest experiences that we’ve had. Something that was really unexpected was that Seth’s parents came to *Radio*. It was a loud club, everyone was drinking, and you just have Seth’s parents. They were just standing there filming and watching, being proud of their boy. So I think that was a really funny and endearing experience for all of us. Just having our friends being really supportive, jamming with us.

Kenneth’s Pyramid of Death

Kenneth Williams
2T3 PB



Instructions: 4-5 rounds, 2 minute rest (after each round).

Exercise	Reps	Points	Cumulative Points
Split squats	50	1	50
Burpees	10	2	20
Bicycles	40	1	40
Burpees	10	2	20
Jump squats	30	1	30
Burpees	10	2	20
Dips	20	1	20
Burpees	10	2	20
Pull ups	10	1	20

30 second rest

Burpees	10	2	20
Dips	20	1	20
Burpees	10	2	20
Jump squats	30	1	30
Burpees	10	2	20
Bicycles	40	1	40
Burpees	10	2	20
Split squats	50	1	50

2 minute rest

ONE ROUND

Total points per round

460

Points for 4 rounds

1840

Points for 5 rounds

2300



Mountains and Marmots

Irtaza Tahir
2T2 WB

Backpacking in the Icefields Parkway, I was anticipating seeing a lot of wildlife and was particularly excited to see Caribou and Moose.....maybe even a Bear if I was (un)lucky. Instead, I saw many Hoary Marmots. These shaggy rodents – easily the size of a cat – had no fear of the human invading their land as they sunbathed and grazed in alpine meadows. Really, they had little to fear. By my second day backpacking alone, it was a source of joy to see them or to hear their whistling, knowing that at least some living thing was nearby in what sometimes seemed like an otherwise desolate and lifeless landscape.

In some Indigenous world views, the Hoary Marmot is associated with preternatural beings whose whistling might beguile a lone human, calling him ever on until finally, he loses all track of time, space, and identity.¹ While I can’t say their whistling beguiled me per-se, there were certainly periods where I lost track of space-time as I followed the sometimes-well-trodden and sometimes-unclear paths over several days.

1. Hunn E, Selam J. Nch’i-Wána, “*The Big River*”: *Mid-Columbia Indians And Their Land*. 1st ed. Seattle: University of Washington Press; 1990:142.



How long has it been since I started walking?

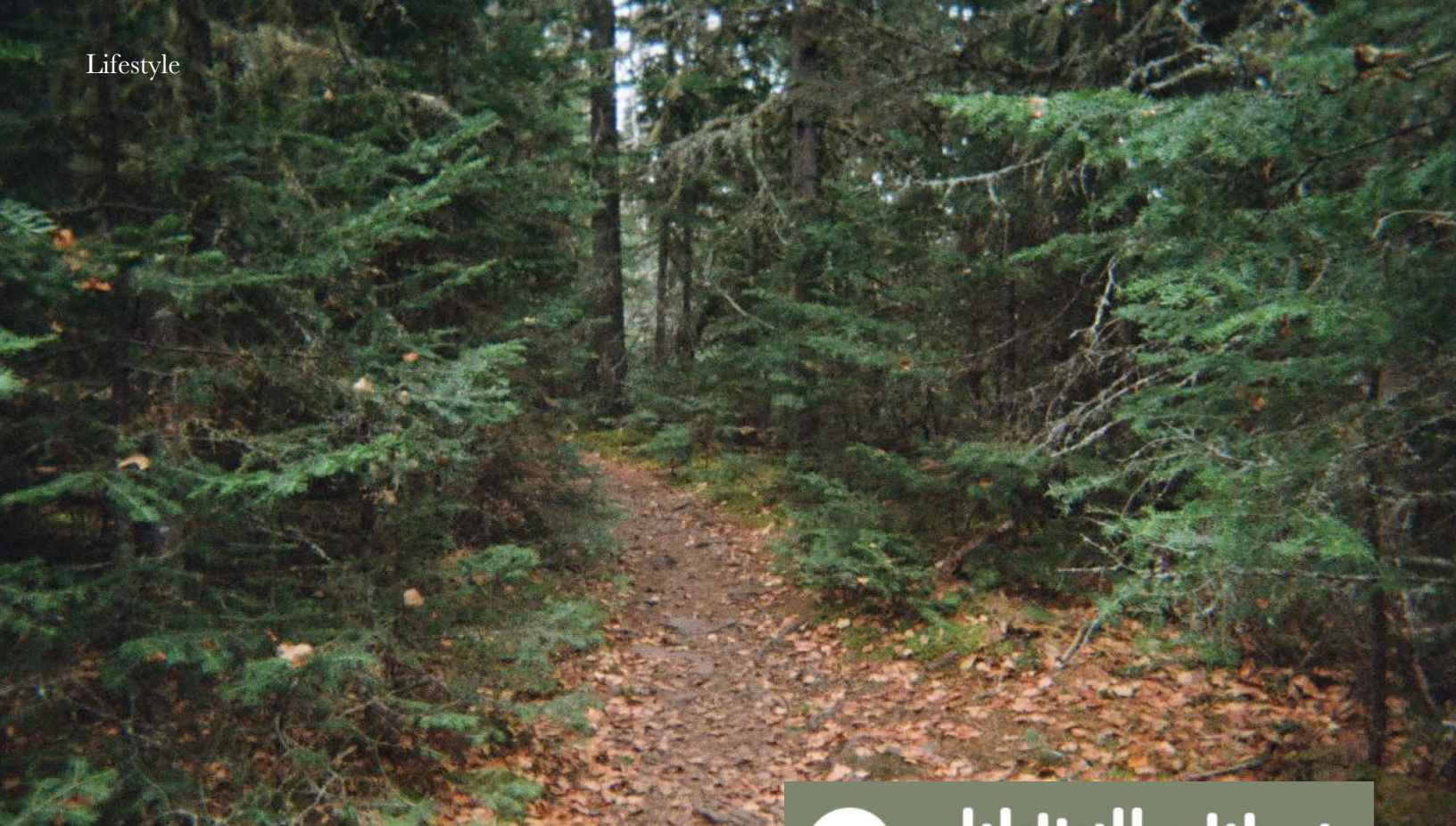
Is that peak getting any closer? It looks equally as small and far away as an hour ago... Was it an hour ago?

Oh look, another Marmot.

Finally! I’m at the summit...wait, no, it’s a sub-peak...sigh...

Along with the Marmots, I saw Ground Squirrels (which drew undeniable comparisons to the meerkats from *Lion King*, standing attentively as if I were a predator about to hunt them...eww) and Pikas, the smallest (and cutest) member of the rabbit family, who make what can only be described as an “Eeep” sound, and who I am *convinced* are the inspiration for Pikachu.





ABCs and Forest Greens

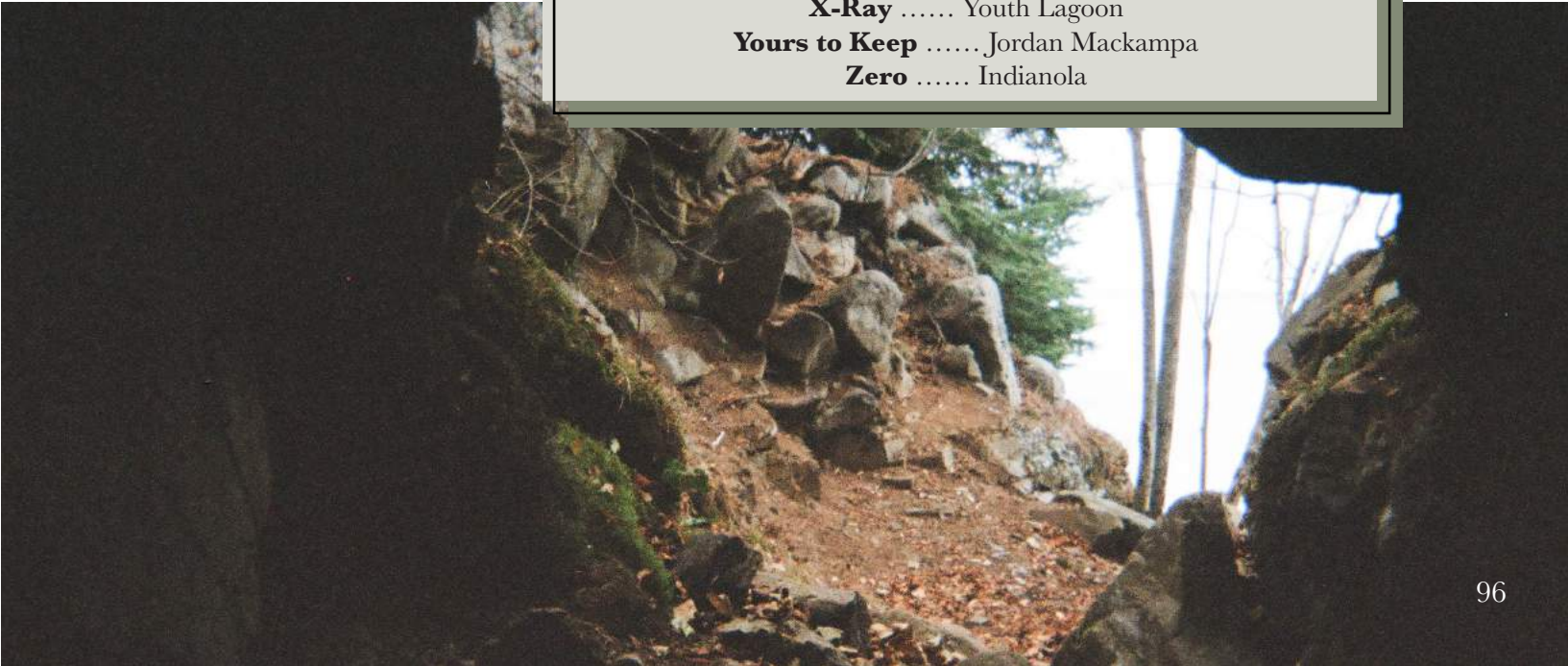
Calandra Li
2T3 MAM

When I hear this playlist, I see the colours of the forest – dark greens and browns.
I imagine you by the fire, a cup of hot chocolate overflowing with marshmallows
in your hand – stars above like a crown
I see you reading in the morning light, bundled in thick blankets.
I picture you on a long drive – through the fog and the mountains.



- All the Pretty Girls KALEO
- Big Black Car Gregory Alan Isakov
- Coastline Hollow Coves
- Decimal Novo Amor
- Ether Garden Henry Jamison
- Fear of Fear Passenger
- Girl in Calico Tow'rs
- Hello My Old Heart The Oh Hellos
- In a Black Out Hamilton Leithauser + Rostam
- June & Johnny Jon Foreman
- Keep 'Em on They Toes Brent Cobb
- Lebanon Ondara
- More Than Life Whitley

- Naked as We Came Iron & Wine
- Old Pine Ben Howard
- Paint The Paper Kites
- Quitting You Arkells
- Roll Like Thunder Jake Wells
- Strawberries Caamp
- Tiger Striped Sky Roo Panes
- Us James Bay
- Vissel Jose Gonzalz
- Walt Grace's Submarine Test, January 1967 John Mayer
- X-Ray Youth Lagoon
- Yours to Keep Jordan Mackampa
- Zero Indianola





Biking Adventures

Ammar Hafeez

2T3 MAM

The pandemic forces us to stay indoors for the majority of our work, school, socialization and leisure time.

As life changes to this new “normal” (with much uncertainty to its end), it becomes much more important now than it has ever been to engage in physical activity. Exercise not only keeps you physically healthy but improves your mental health as well!

If you love adventure, going outside and socializing with friends like me, then consider biking (if you aren’t already physically active). It is a great, safe and responsible outdoor activity during the pandemic!



Biking Adventures Vlog – Series 1: Huron Park to Centennial (30km ride)

Here is what I learned from my very first biking trip.

Biking Pro Tips:

1. Bring WATER!
2. Bring WATER!!!
3. Bring WATER!!!!
4. Yes, those weren’t typos.
5. Food that doesn’t melt! Now you can enjoy the scenery.

Disclaimer: I don’t take responsibility for the fun and amazing time you will definitely have when you bike to these scenic locations!



Biking Adventures Vlog – Series 2: Huron Park to and from Danville Park (30km ride)

I had plans to travel to different countries over the summer before the COVID-19 pandemic. I was really looking forward to interacting with people from different cultures, trying new foods, and joining in on the local festivities!

Although being unable to travel was disheartening at first, my first biking trip made me realize that there was much more to explore locally. With a renewed sense of optimism and enthusiasm, here I am dragging my friends to go outside on cool adventures with me!

So, like a plane – take off! Hidden gems tend to be found in the most unexpected places.



Biking Adventures Vlog – Series 8: Principal’s Road

It’s very important to balance your academic responsibilities with self-care to avoid burnout. This became very clear to me during the MSK and neurology anatomy bell ringer madness. What was worse was that I punctured one of my bike tires – I couldn’t go out on biking trips even though I really wanted to.



I didn’t want to get the tire replaced at a bike store. I felt that I should learn how to replace the tire myself if I planned on biking long term. After weeks of watching YouTube tutorials and getting bike parts, I finally fixed my bike!

Although I had to make time for biking, it made me enjoy and endure the academically intense first two months of my second year of medical school!

Happy October!



Biking Adventures Vlog – Series 9: Woodington Green

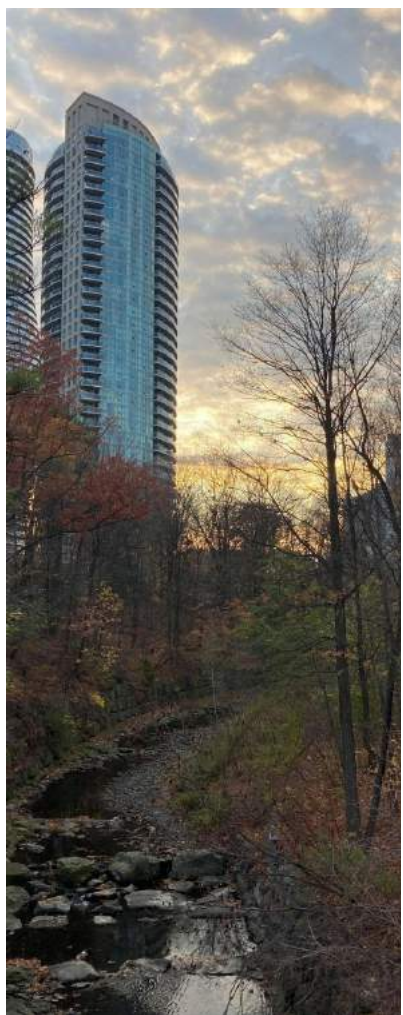
When worlds and seasons collide.

If you haven’t taken advantage of the surprisingly pleasant warm weather, do so now before it’s too late!

As the picture shows, summer is hanging on before fall and winter colour the skies.

But with ZOOM fatigue and COVID-19 cases at an all time high, it becomes essential to incorporate physical activity in your daily life in a safe and responsible manner.

Please remember to physically distance when leaving your home!



a collection of recommendations from UofT med students on baking, Netflix-ing, reading, and exploring new hobbies during the COVID-19 quarantine

Stay at home

Stay At Home





INGREDIENTS

1lb of lean ground beef
 2 onions, diced
 1 green pepper, diced
 1 can diced/crushed tomatoes (14oz or ~420mL)
 2 cans tomato sauce (2 x 8oz or ~235mL)
 1 can kidney beans (14oz or ~420mL)
 1 can black beans (14oz or ~420mL)
 ½ cup water or beef/vegetable stock
 1 tbsp cumin
 2 tbsp chili powder
 1 tsp salt
 ½ tsp cayenne
 ½ tsp paprika

Optional items to spice up your chili game

Substitute smoked paprika for paprika
 Add a diced jalapeno

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large pot and on medium heat, lightly brown beef and drain fat
2. Add onions, pepper, diced tomatoes, tomato sauce, black beans, kidney beans, spices, and stock
3. Bring to a boil and simmer for 1-2 hours until chili is thickened to your liking!

Recipe

Hearty One Pot Chili, the Ultimate Student Meal Prep

Ming Li and Evan Tang
2T3 MAM





INGREDIENTS

Mascarpone layer

3 large egg yolks
1/3 cup whole milk
1/4 cup sugar
8 oz mascarpone cheese

Cream layer

1 cup whipping cream
3 tsp vanilla extract

Ladyfinger layer

1 cup + 2 tbsp warm milk tea
2 tbsp dark rum
12-24 ladyfingers

Topping

cocoa powder

Equipment

2 medium bowls
1 flat container/dish
1 tray
1 small saucepan
1 electric hand mixer

Recipe
Milk Tea Tiramisu
Ming Li and Jane Zhu
2T3 MAM

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Whisk together egg yolks, milk and sugar until smooth. Heat over low-medium in a small saucepan, whisking constantly until thickened, about 10 minutes. Transfer custard to a container. Cover and refrigerate until chilled, about 1-2 hours.
2. In a medium bowl, beat the mascarpone with the chilled egg custard on medium-high speed until mixture is fluffy, 3-5 minutes. Set aside.
3. In another bowl, beat the cream and vanilla extract on high speed until soft peaks form, about 2 minutes.
4. In a flat container or dish, stir together the milk tea and dark rum.
5. Dip each ladyfinger in the liquid and lay them on the tray.
6. Assemble even layers in the tray as follows: cocoa powder, ladyfingers, mascarpone custard, ladyfingers, cream mixture, cocoa powder. More layers may be added if desired.
7. Chill for at least 4 hours or overnight before serving.



INGREDIENTS

Wet

1 cup unsalted butter, melted
2 eggs
3 tsp vanilla extract

Dry

1 cup brown sugar, packed
1 cup white sugar
1 tsp baking soda (not baking powder)
1/2 tsp salt
3 cups all purpose flour
3 tbsp instant coffee (or to taste)
1 cup dark chocolate chips



Recipe
Mocha cookies with dark chocolate filling

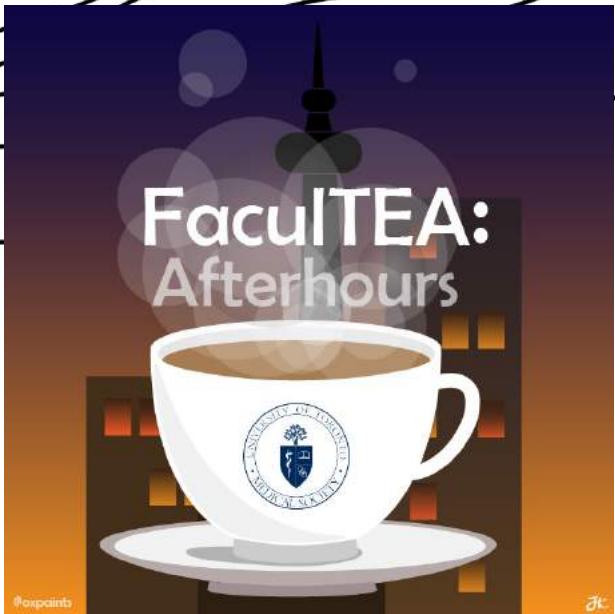
Tiffany Ni
2T4 PB

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. In a large bowl, cream together the butter, white sugar, and brown sugar until smooth.
3. Beat in the eggs one at a time with a whisk, then stir in vanilla extract.
4. Add baking soda, salt, and instant coffee.
5. Mix in flour one cup at a time until well combined.
6. Using a spoon, scoop out a small ball of cookie dough (4 cm in diameter) and flatten until the dough is 0.75 cm thick.
7. Add dark chocolate chips and fold the dough back into a ball shape.
8. Place the cookies on an ungreased baking sheet and gently flatten with the back of a spoon.
9. Bake for 10 minutes or until the edges are golden brown.
10. Let cookies cool for 5 minutes, then enjoy!

Note

Store in an airtight container – good for up to 1 week. They also taste great with a cup of coffee in the mornings!

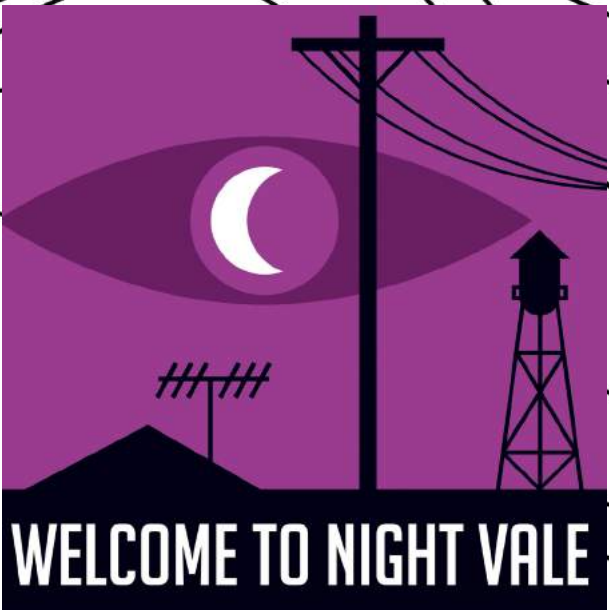


UofT Medicine FaculTEA: Afterhours

Kenneth Williams
2T3 PB

Why would you recommend this podcast? What do you like about it?

It is student run and is focused on showing the UofT Med Faculty in a new light!
We talk life in and outside of Med as well as life & relationship advice.



Welcome to Nightvale

Victoria
2T4 PB

Why would you recommend this podcast? What do you like about it?

Mysterious and oddly charming, WTNV broadcasts radio news from the fictional desert community of Nightvale, where supernatural conspiracy theories are real and government agents from a “vague, yet menacing” agency attempt to control their citizens. Each episode is a standalone narrative (with several overarching storylines) recounting paranormal horrors through an absurdly calm voice, allowing listeners to temporarily escape their own reality for a bizarre alternative. Featuring dark comedy and the occasional pearl of wisdom, the podcast is a refreshingly far-fetched parody of the United States in a style that’s vaguely comparable to Stephen King or Hannibal.

Anything else you’d like us to know?

To quote directly from the podcast: There is a monster under your bed. A monster at your window. A monster any place you imagine one. You project your monsters on the world.



The Expanse Book Series

Kenneth Williams

2T3 PB

Why would you recommend this book? What did you like about it?

It is a great book series with an amazing TV adaption!

It gets into some crazy deep SciFi themes that are excellently developed so it is approachable for readers that are new to SciFi concepts and SciFi vets alike!

What's your favourite quote?

"The way I see it, there's only three kinds of people in this world. Bad ones, ones you follow, and ones you need to protect."

Amos Burton: "You and I have very different life experiences Chrissy."

Chrisjen Avasarala: "Do not call me that. I am a member of Parliament, not your favorite stripper."

Amos Burton: "You could be both."

Whatever Happened to Interracial Love?

Grace Xu

2T3 MAM

Why would you recommend this book? What did you like about it?

Honestly, probably one of the most beautifully written pieces I have ever read. Kathleen Collins has such a distinct style of writing - simple and rhythmic. Though she is ferociously adventurous with the form of her short stories, her tone consistently grounds this group together as a collection. In that sweet spot between prose and poetry, Collins is able to swing wildly between mundane details of reality and abstract tensions of life. Some of her pieces are deliciously short, near unfinished, humming with a sort of raw energy that would have been erased with polishing. This fearlessness rings true in the content and characters of her stories too (often only formed as vignettes, but fully complete in their own right). She never shies away from explicit subject matter; her stories are full of a sensuality that is surprisingly delicate yet almost audibly buzzing with electricity. She not only explores the complex nuances of race (as promised in the title), but also deftly weaves in commentary on culture, ritual, and class. My favourite stories: Exteriors, Only Once, and of course, the namesake itself.

What is your favourite quote?

"His white face floats in a sea of black protest. It is a time that calls forth the most picturesque of metaphors, for we are swimming along in the mythical underbelly of America... there where it is soft and prickly, where you may rub your nose against the grainy sands of illusion and come up bleeding."



Anything else you'd like us to know?

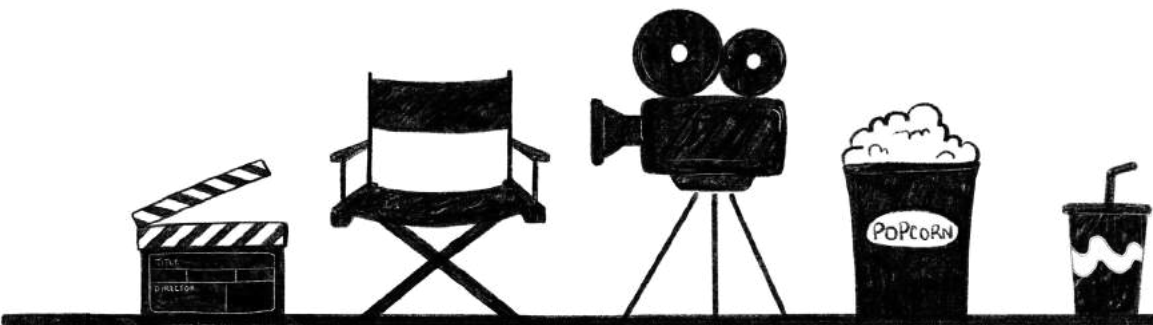
bell hooks is another amazing black female author whose writing pairs well with the book I recommended!!

EMILY IN PARIS



Emily in Paris

Anonymous



You know that feeling when you get stressed thinking about all the different things you have to do? Whether it's studying for the bellringer, for the mastery exam, working on an extracurricular project, or just freaking out about life? Instead of doing the smart thing of working through the tasks, we open our laptop and log onto Netflix. We tell ourselves we deserve a break and browse through the recommendations to find a show, one that is the perfect escape from our own reality -- one that is mind-numbingly stupid and far removed from our own lives.

Well, I decided to watch Emily in Paris to shake off my own 'Stressed in Mississauga' situation, and it was just what I needed!

The show follows the life of a beret-wearing 20-something-year-old American from Chicago named Emily. She moves to Paris to work at a French marketing firm, bringing an American perspective to the company. Right from the start, the show is very clear about tone - it is not to be taken seriously. Every trope and stereotype

about the French - from flirtatious men and mean people, to the love for wine - is covered within the first few episodes. Emily somehow manages to thrive in France without speaking any French, magically making friends at every corner, and is successful in everything she does in her professional life. It is truly a fantasy.

And while the show made me cringe and pull out my hair every other second, I can't deny that it also made me laugh. Compared to our current pandemic situation, Paris is a distant dream - Paris aside, even dressing up in nice clothes, going to a cafe, meeting up with friends, and sharing a meal are distant dreams. So Emily and her obnoxious outfits, stupid relationship troubles, and ridiculous work situations made it very easy to laugh, and to momentarily forget my troubles and the realities of COVID. The show is definitely not winning an Emmy anytime soon, nor does it feature Oscar-worthy acting, but it's a good watch if you just want to turn your brain off for a little while.

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- Tao Chan
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- Dr. John Semple
- Dr. Chika Oriuwa

we stand – we fall – we march,
kaleidoscopic skies
radiate our souls.
waves forming a playground

distribution of space and time
is heavy.
and now, I am also
carried by its lightness.