



Lam̄ca

ISSUE 12: SEPTEMBER

Social Synergies

Members Only

Artscape

Humans of CMUQ





Editor's Note

Lam₇a: A Glimpse into Being Rooted

Being rooted goes beyond just belonging. It is about anchoring ourselves in values, connections, and communities that shape who we are and how we grow. At CMU-Q, the notion of being rooted is present in the stories we tell, the bonds we nurture, and the ways we choose to engage with the world. This second issue of Lam₇a explores what it means to not just belong, but to grow roots in places that matter to us.

As we navigate the academic year, we have gathered narratives of transformation, resilience, and self-discovery. From personal reflections on finding purpose to collective experiences of growth and solidarity, each piece offers insight into how being rooted allows us to thrive.

Being rooted is not a destination. It is a journey shaped by every conversation, challenge, and act of care. Through the stories in this issue, we hope you feel inspired to reflect on where you are rooted and how you can nurture spaces where others feel grounded and seen.

As you explore these pages, may you recognize pieces of yourself, your friends, and the broader CMU-Q community. Thank you for trusting us to share these stories.

With appreciation,

The Lam₇a Editorial Team
2024-2025







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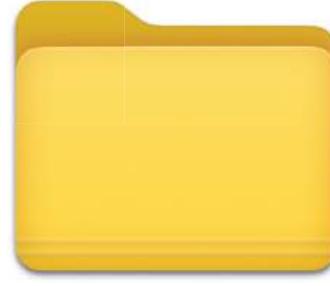
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Art as a Resistance: Curating ‘Beneath the Rubble, Dre

HI! I'M AMNA AL-QURADAGHI, PRESIDENT OF THE ARTS & CRAFTS CLUB AT CMUQ, AND I'D LIKE TO SHARE MY JOURNEY IN CURATING THE ART EXHIBITION “BE-NEATH THE RUBBLE, DREAMS PERSIST.”

It all started last November when I found myself glued to Instagram, absorbing every bit of content I could about Gaza. At that time, I felt helpless, as if all I could do was offer my duaa for the people there. But deep down, I knew I had a greater responsibility—to keep alive the stories of those martyred, whose voices were silenced too soon.

While scrolling, I stumbled upon a video of Mohammed Sami, filmed before his final moments in a hospital where he and his family sought refuge. Even as he faced his own struggles, Mohammed was determined to bring smiles to the children around him, giving them hope for a future he didn't know that he wouldn't be part of. The video mentioned his dream of opening an art exhibition, and that dream resonated with me. His unwavering spirit touched me deeply and it was as if I had been called to action, not just for Mohammed, but for all the artists whose lives were cut short before they could share their dreams with the world.

In that moment, the vision for this exhibition was born. I knew I had to bring it to life—not just for Mohammed, but for every artist who used their craft as a form of resistance, who painted their stories with courage despite the overwhelming odds.

From there, my team and I began the challenging but rewarding process of collecting art, reaching out to families and friends, and gathering the powerful stories behind each piece. Along the way, I realized something crucial: resistance takes many forms. These Gazan artists are not just creators of beauty; they are custodians of culture. Their work preserves traditions, stories, and symbols, even as the forces of occupation attempt to erase them. Yet, with every stroke of the pen, they redraw their existence, boldly declaring that they will not be forgotten.

One artist who stands out is Sohail Salem. Displaced from his home with nothing but the clothes on his back, Sohail somehow found a way to keep creating. His drawings became his lifeline—a way to channel his pain and tell his story when words failed. In one conversation, he told me how his art provided him with relief amidst unimaginable hardship. His story isn't unique, but it's emblematic of the resilience shared by so many artists who turn to their craft as both a release and a form of resistance.

Sohail and I remain in touch to this day. He still sends me his new artworks, each one more powerful than the last, each one reminding me that even in the darkest times, creativity thrives as a ray of hope.

What's happening in Gaza isn't just a humanitarian crisis—it's an attempt at cultural erasure. But as Sohail's story shows, their spirit of resistance is unbreakable. Even with just a pen and paper, these artists convey powerful messages of survival and defiance.

Their courage is what drives me to support them. Through the exhibition, I hoped to amplify their voices, share their stories, and show the world the depth of their resistance through art. Curating this gallery has been a journey filled with profound connections—with artists, with their families, and with the stories that inspire this exhibition. The gratitude I've received from the families and artists is overwhelming, but I am the one who feels most thankful. Thankful for the trust they placed in me to carry their loved ones' legacies forward.

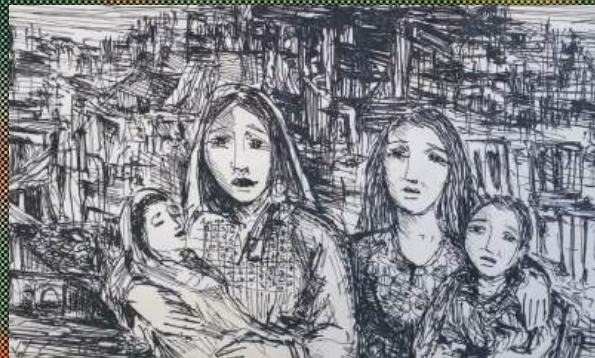
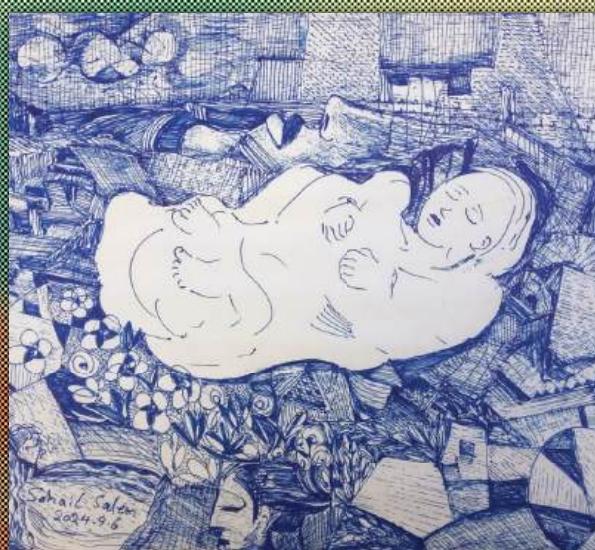
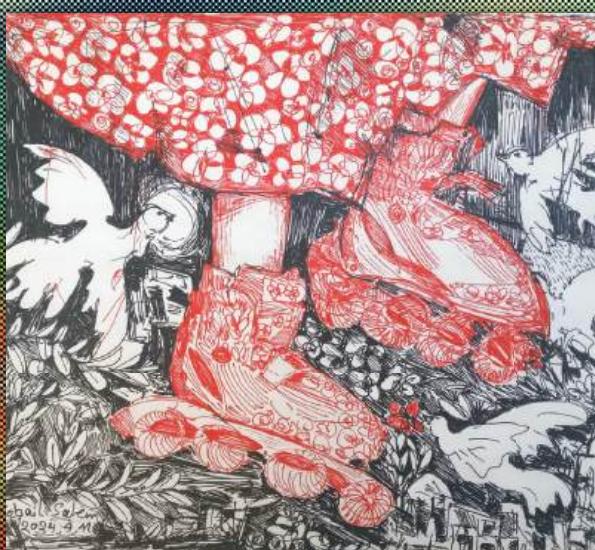
CURATING THIS EXHIBITION HAS BEEN ONE OF THE GREATEST BLESSINGS IN MY LIFE, IT'S A STORY I'LL NEVER FORGET, AND I HOPE THAT IN READING THIS, YOU WON'T EITHER.



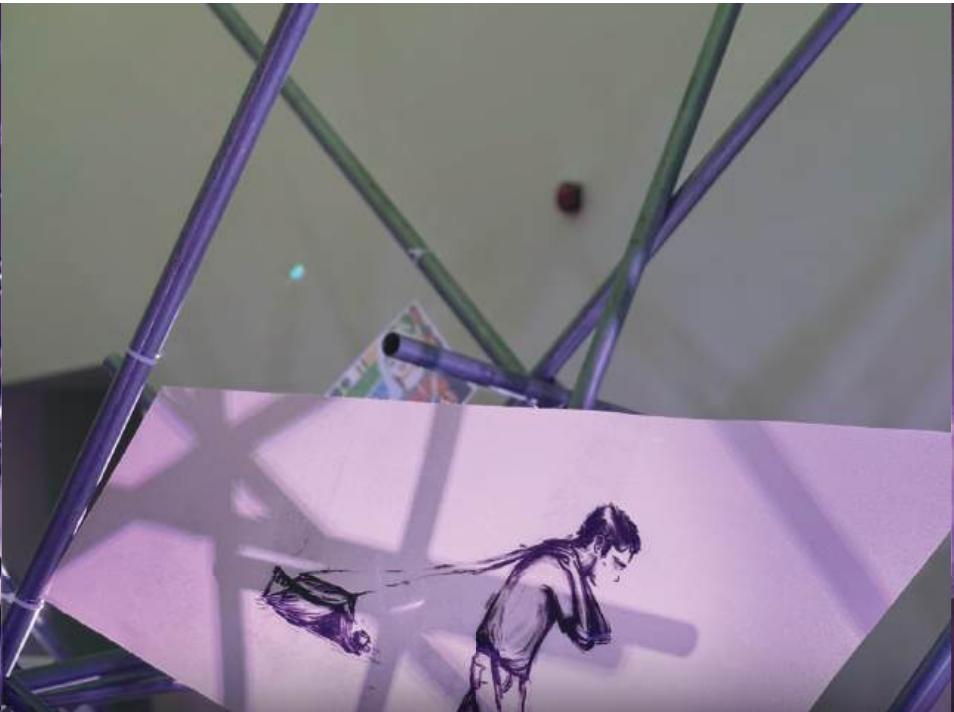
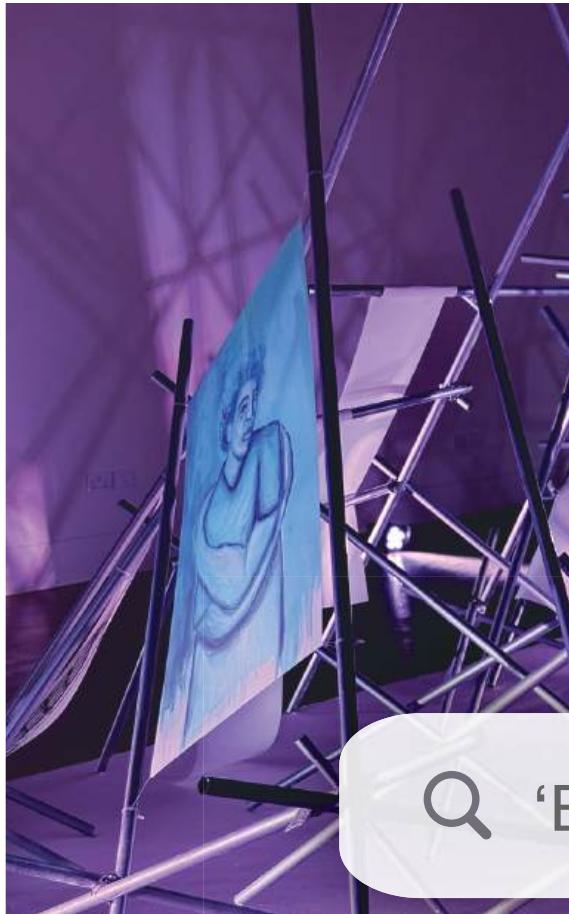
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ams Persist' Exhibition

BY AMNA AL-QURADAGHI

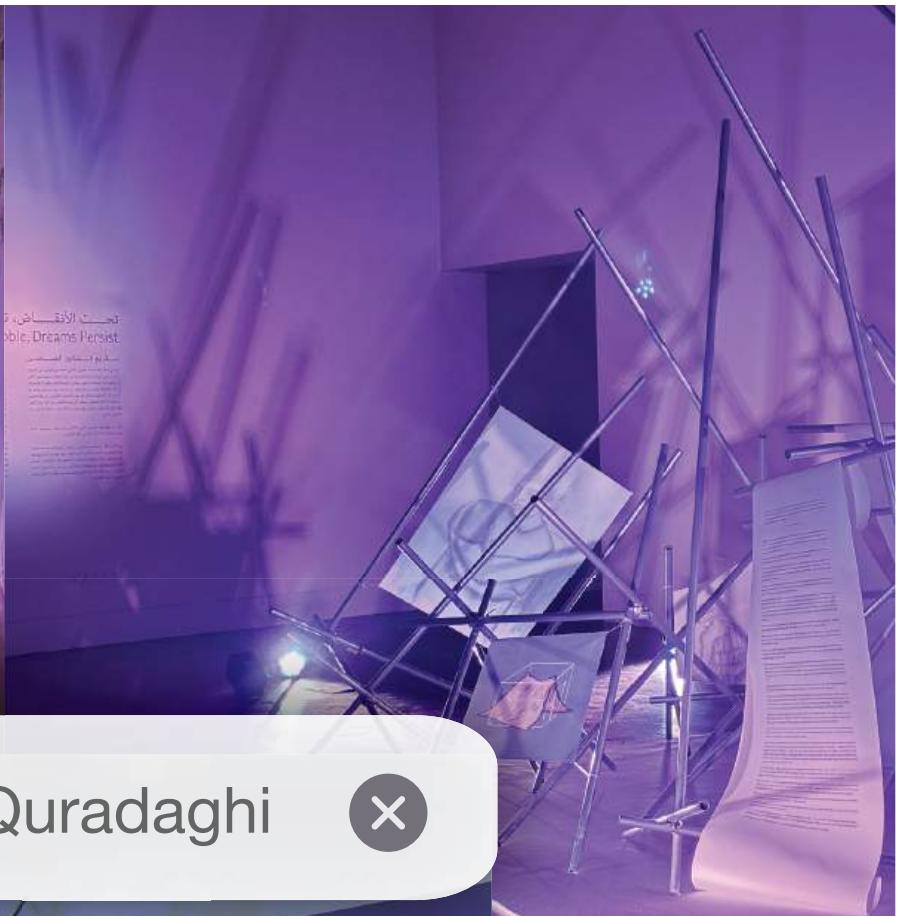


Sohail's sketches

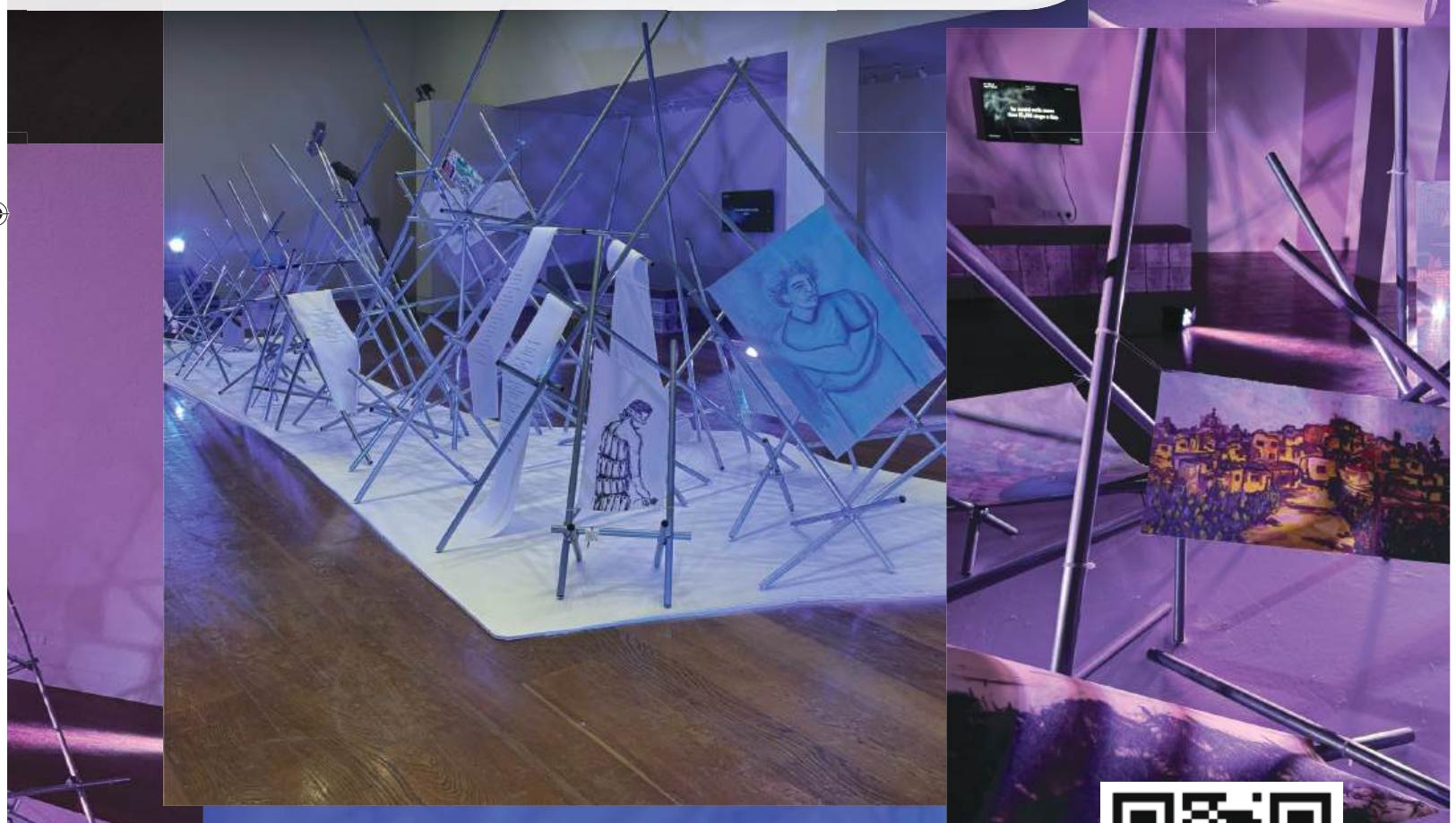


‘Beneath the Rubble, Dreams Persist’





t' Exhibition by Amna Al-Quradaghi



Curated by
Amna Al Quradaghi
Abdul Rahman Anwar



Exhibition website
QR code





When Life Fizzles

When Life Fizzles

On the 9th of September, 2023, I finally landed in Qatar after what felt like an eternity of waiting. It was the long weekend, and I was relieved that I didn't have to rush straight to university after hours of travel and transit. I felt excited—here I was, starting a new chapter, with my own room, my own life, my own...

But then it hit me: I was alone.

At first, I didn't even register that reality. Exhausted beyond belief, I just wanted to sleep. It wasn't until I woke up in the same clothes I wore the day before that the realization started to sink in. No one had been waiting for me behind the glass at the airport. There were no familiar faces, no welcome party.

Mikal... you're on your own...

Suddenly, it felt like my entire world crumbled. All the excitement, the dreams I'd nurtured, the endless nights I spent imagining how this journey would unfold—everything vanished in an instant. I wanted to go back home, and I was ready to do just that. My bags were still packed, my clothes untouched, my Turkish ID valid. The nearest flight home felt like my only option. I came so close to giving it all up.

But after several conversations with people back home, I hesitated. What if this experience was worth trying? What if it wasn't as bad as I thought?

I decided to step outside, to explore what was now my new life. I got on the tram for the first time, nervous and unsure about the simplest things, like whether I needed to pay for the ride. But instead of asking, I just sat there, pretending I knew what I was doing. Every glance from the other passengers felt like they could see right through me. That moment of awkwardness—it felt like the world was closing in. But then, to my surprise, I realized the tram was free. A small mercy.

I got off at Multaqa and quickly got lost in the heat. I wandered around, searching for the entrance, sweating and frustrated. By the time I reached Almeera, the nostalgia hit me hard. Shelves lined with snacks from my childhood back in Saudi Arabia. I tell myself “maybe it’s not that bad after all” as I grabbed a Voss water bottle, thinking it was a smart choice—I could refill it without worrying about microplastics. I stood outside Multaqa, speaking to my mom on the phone, twisting the cap off. and then...

FUSHHHHHHHHHH!

That sound. I froze, completely dumbfounded as sparkling water sprayed everywhere. I looked down at myself, drenched, and in that moment, something broke inside me. I couldn't even buy myself a simple bottle of water without messing it up. The weight of everything I'd left behind—my family, my friends—suddenly felt crushing. And it wasn't just the water. It was the fact that I was alone. I had missed everything that mattered—orientation, convocation—and now I was behind in my classes too.

I wasn't ready. I wasn't prepared for any of it.



BY MIKAL TBAA

Speaking of classes, my “first day” started with calculus, taught by none other than Professor Oliver. I sat in the front corner, and when he asked my name, I had to repeat it three or four times before he settled on calling me “Mr. M.” As he lectured, I couldn’t focus. All I could think was, “What am I doing here? Should I have deferred my admission? Maybe all this delay was a sign. Maybe I should just book that flight.”

Class after class passed, and with each one, my doubts grew. Exams were fast approaching, and I was drowning in a sea of missed opportunities and confusion.

I wish I could tell you this story has a happy ending, but it doesn't. I barely scraped by that semester. I didn't make it on the Dean's List. My transcript looked more like the alphabet than a record of achievement. And every time I saw photos of my friends at orientation, it hurt. They didn't think much of it, but it meant the world to me. *I wanted those memories, too—wearing the regalia, posing with my brother and his friends, singing my heart out at karaoke.*

But life moves on.

I'm not here to give you some cliché ending where I triumph over adversity and become a hero. That's not real life. Even now, I still think back on that semester, and it haunts me. It makes me question myself—could I have done something differently? Could my life have been different if things had gone the way I'd planned?

But no matter how much I dwell on it, I made a promise to myself: I won't let that moment define me. I won't let my own thoughts become another obstacle in my path. I've already faced enough obstacles. So I pushed through the next semester. I didn't become an overachiever overnight, but I did better. And the same Mikal who couldn't even choose the right bottle of water managed to gather enough people to organize and revive a forgotten tradition—the BioSci play.

And now, that same Mikal is writing this article — something “first-day” Mikal would’ve never imagined.

The lesson here is: You will fall. You will fail. It's inevitable. And sometimes, no matter how hard you try, things won't go as planned. But don't let those moments define you. Don't let an exploded bottle of sparkling water convince you that you're a failure. You still have the other things you bought. You still have the other victories waiting to be claimed.

You still have you.



Magical Transformation

THERE IT WAS, THE “MAGICAL” LAKE. Though I’ve never believed it to be magic, I couldn’t deny how fascinating it was that there was a lake, here, in the middle of the Arabian desert. It is said that whoever swims through it from its north to its south would be blessed with whatever his heart desires. I never once thought I would be standing in front of it, desperately wishing whatever ancient prophecy attached to it was real. But I was desperate and allowed myself this one moment of wishful thinking. I’ve seen people swim through it and actually get what they want, but always waved it off as the pride and confidence of having conquered the lake that gave them that power.

I looked around, almost embarrassed, not quite but almost. Here I was, desperate yet still having the nerve to be skeptical; I had no right to view myself any higher than those who believed in its magic, and yet I somehow still did. Truth is, only the pure and hardworking could swim through the lake, and I, of course, wasn’t either of those things. I was insecure, resentful, arrogant and grief-stricken—everything I despised. But maybe this was my chance to leave that behind, to strip away the bitterness that had built up inside me. I didn’t care if the prophecy was true or not. If I drowned, I would escape my misery; if I survived, maybe I’d become the person I so badly wanted to be. I took a deep breath and made the decision: I would swim. People younger than me had done it, why couldn’t I?

Cold. That’s all I could think of when my body struck the surface of the lake. All of a sudden, the reality of me possibly meeting my end here hit me, and I immediately tried to get out, but I couldn’t. My limbs felt disconnected from my body, as if they had betrayed me in the moment I needed them most. I thrashed, trying to desperately hold on to anything, anything at all, but all I felt was cold water. My fingers slipped through it, grasping at nothing.

And then, I felt it. A strong push from the current beneath me, tugging at my legs, pulling me from the shore. I was drifting away from the safety I knew, away from everything I recognized. Panic overcame, but it felt distant, like my mind had accepted this fate even if my body hadn’t. Every direction looked the same, the distant shore now barely visible.

Somehow, after drifting for what seemed like hours, I managed to understand the current of the wave and trained my body to move with it, not against it. From a distance, I could see others who had decided to embark on this same journey. Just when I thought I’d feel comforted by their presence, I immediately noticed how graceful their movements were. They were even conversing and laughing together, like this was effortless for them. All that shame I had hoped to wash away came flooding back, and I found myself wondering why the first thing I noticed was their fluidity, their ease (because I lacked it). And why was it still so hard for me, even when I thought I was finally getting the hang of the current? More people swam past me, their strokes smooth, their energy light. Worse still, they were friendly, offering smiles and greetings as they passed. I swam away from them, terrified that all I could present was my shame, my anxiety, my instability. I couldn’t bear it. I looked to my right and saw a path, half-concealed by vines from an old, worn-out tree, its roots battered by the unrelenting current. It looked like the perfect, solitary escape, so I went for it. Away from the people, away from the shame. I was barely surviving as it was; the last thing I needed was to feel even more insecure while fighting to stay afloat.

As I struggled through the path, it became clear why no one had taken it. It wasn’t just lonely, it was treacherous. Fish as big as the sun swam past me, their scales reflecting the dim light from the setting sun, which only made it harder to see. Thankfully, they ignored me, uninterested in my presence. Except for one. I noticed this fish was pacing itself with me, swimming at my speed, waiting. It hovered near me, and then it nudged my hand with its body, offering a strange kind of guidance.



BY HAYA AL-KAABI

Following the fish blindly seemed to be the right choice, as I noticed us getting closer to the calm, steady waters again. Relief began to wash over me, but just as we were about to arrive, the fish suddenly thrashed, its sharp fin slicing into my hand. Dark red blood seeped into the crystal-clear water, and I yanked my hand away, shocked. I looked back at the fish (what was I hoping to find? An apology from a fish? Reassurance that it didn't mean to hurt me?), what I saw made me feel crazy. I swear I could see it smirking at me, taunting me with its unblinking eyes. I glanced toward the peaceful stream just ahead, where the water flowed gently. Then I looked back at the fish, still staring at me, almost baiting me to react. I hesitated, but only for a moment. What validation could I possibly get from a fish? It had guided me, and that's all I needed. So, I turned away, focused on my path, and pushed through toward the steady waters.

When I resurfaced among the others, the sight of the south shore was closer than ever before. I could see the people swimming toward it, confident and untroubled, their strokes strong and decisive. They moved with such ease, unburdened by the doubts that gnawed at me. Why couldn't I just do the same? Stop thinking, stop hesitating. Just swim!

But every time I edged closer to the shore, my mind fixated on the contrast between me and them. Was I seriously still holding on to arrogance, even now? How could I, in the midst of this? I shook it off and swam, pushing through every doubt, every second-guess.

And then, I reached the south shore.

I felt like a fool. I don't know what I had expected—a beam of light from the heavens, maybe, telling me that I belonged here, that I had earned my place by crossing the lake (that would've been wonderful). But no, I just felt... stupid. The sense of not belonging washed over me again, stronger than ever. I regretted swimming through the lake. Nothing had changed. I was still bitter, still helpless, and the journey only reinforced that feeling. Did I swim thinking it would make me "pure" and "hardworking"?

Why couldn't I just accept that I had made it and be happy about that? Why was I still the same person, dragging the same doubts and insecurities with me, even after swimming across? What made it worse was how everyone else, now at the finish line, gathered together, praising one another—praising *me*. And somehow, instead of feeling included, the praise only deepened my isolation. Was something wrong with me? Where was the magic? I didn't care if I'd been skeptical—I did the swim, I did my part. So where was my wish? I've never felt more out of place, more flawed, than I did in that moment.

🔍 Was something wrong with me? X

🔍 Where was the magic? X

🔍 Where was my wish? X





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“ONE FEATURE OF A MALIGNANT FAILURE IS THAT IT ELIMINATES THE OPPORTUNITY TO TRY AGAIN. THE NUMBER OF MALIGNANT FAILURES THAT WILL OCCUR IS THEREFORE EITHER ZERO OR ONE.”

That was a theory we took, in AI ethics class.

The continuous development of technology and artificial intelligence we see now may lead to what we call superintelligence. And there are claims that if that were to happen, it would be the end of humanity. An existential outcome.

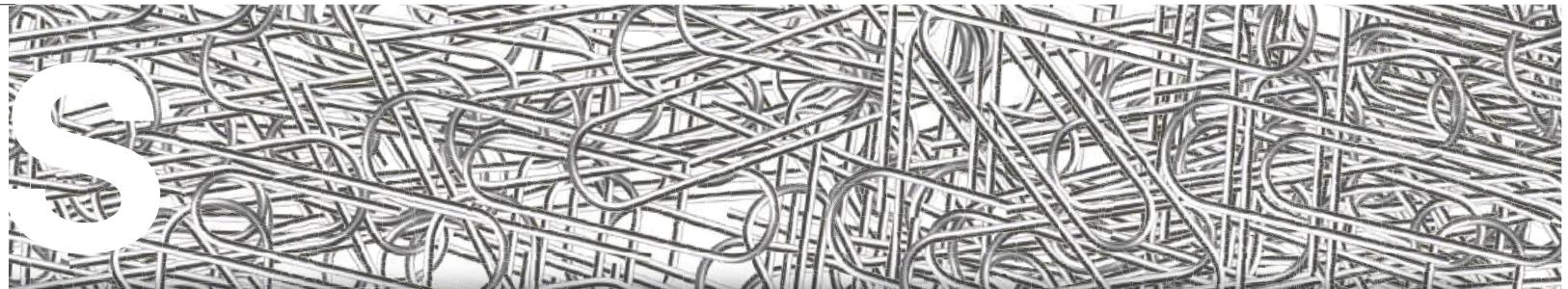
We learned about multiple different reasons on why this would happen, theories upon theories on AI capabilities. It all seemed very far-fetched. Extraordinary. Absurd.

One of the ideas we read about was infrastructure profusion.

Infrastructure profusion was the theory that, in the event of maximizing the achievement of its own goal, AI will transform large parts of the reachable universe. Take it apart and put it together in ways to ensure the utmost satisfaction of its task.

Have you ever heard of the paperclip AI paradox? We tell an AI to produce as many paperclips as possible, and it tears apart the world to use it for its mission. There will be no ground to stand on, and it will not be a problem because there will be no one to stand on it anyways. And you will tell me it's an easy fix. Who would want that many paperclips? Simply ask for 10. 100. 1000. Between 1 and 50? Some theories tell you it does not matter. You can sit, and twist words, and meld the instructions with clawed hands, and it will not work. And that's because, the AI will always, always attribute a small probability to the idea that it has not completed its goal. It will lose itself in the paperclips because there is a chance, however minuscule, that if it stops now, it will fail.

New Paperclip



BY ZEINA HALAWA

Stupid, right? Yeah. Except I've felt this way before. And you've probably felt this way before. Turned nauseous and numb because it felt like you just had to keep going. Kept working with headaches and trembling hands on lists of things you need to do that just won't end. And you hop from one task to the next, because there are too many to keep your head on straight, and you run from professor to classmate, because the questions keep coming, and you flit from family to friend, because it feels like years since you last saw them, and you cycle through sets at the gym and you realize you can not remember the last time you tasted the food you were eating and you are sleeping but yet you are so tired. And it hits you so quietly, in the middle of the night, when you reread the same sentence for the fifth time and realize that you can not keep going.

And yet you must. Because if you do not, then you might fail. If you do not give yourself fully and wholly, then how can you rest?

There are days when I am not able to sleep. Instead of sheep, I count over and answer questions as the AI does over its paperclips, and I destroy myself in the quiet murmur of bleary answers as the AI does the world, because there's a chance. There is always a chance. That we will fail. That we have failed already.

Or maybe not. Maybe the AI will one day realize it has completed its job. Maybe you and I, we will succeed. We will wade through the paperclips we have torn down our worlds to make, and we will look back with anticipation at the path we had carved, and we will feel...

Well.

How would you feel?

You sit, with only the paperclips you've worked tirelessly for as company, and you look back on what you've done. You have sacrificed your time for this. Your joy, your life and, to some extent, your self.

As the AI completes its job and looks for the next instruction only to realize there is no one left to give it any, will you too flounder once you have succeeded?

Will you stutter at the realization of what you have left behind for a mound of paperclips and an empty world?

Or will you stumble forwards bull-headed in the only way you know how to?



An Open Letter to the ‘Comedians’

GROWING UP WITH A BROTHER WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, I LEARNED AT A VERY YOUNG AGE HOW CRUEL THE WORLD CAN BE TO PEOPLE WHO ARE “DIFFERENT”.

I heard the whispers on the school bus every morning, and I noticed how he often stood alone when picking him up from his classroom every afternoon. The unkindness of other children towards him was palpable, and it got me fired up—I found myself telling off bullies during recess more times than I can count.

I thought that it was because the other kids were not mature enough to understand why their behavior was harmful. Maybe they were too young to understand empathy, compassion, and kindness. I often imagined that as they grew older, they'd regret their actions, becoming knowledgeable adults who would advocate for individuals like my brother. I held onto hope that eventually, they would know better.

I was wrong.

A couple of weeks ago I was seated at a table filled with CMU-Q students. Laughter echoed through the cafeteria as we exchanged playful banter. One student began to show the group the silly faces they could make, and we all prepared for the incoming wave of jokes and laughter.

*“How did you do that?!”
“You look autistic bro!”*

*“That’s so funny!”
“Woah that’s really cool”*

Wait a second. Did I hear that correctly? I turned to the student and asked them to repeat what they said.

“I said he looks autistic making those faces.”

Everyone kept laughing. Still shocked, I mustered “We don’t say things like that”.

*The table went quiet. The student stared at me sheepishly.
“It was just a joke, relax”.*

Relax. Maybe that’s what I should have done. Let the joke slide, have a laugh, move on.

But at that moment I was back on the bus, grasping onto my brother, guiding him away from the snickering kids in every row. I was back on that playground, shouting at the kid who pushed my brother in front of a group of other kids. At that moment I was no longer sitting at a table of grown

up, compassionate, well-educated, university students. I was a kid again, confused at how others could be so cruel.

Determined to find out where people have developed this striking new sense of humor, I set out to find out what the word “autistic” meant to CMU-Q students. Approaching six students at random, I asked “What comes to mind when you think of a person with autism?” The responses I got were unsurprisingly very similar: disengaged, antisocial, lacking social awareness, indifferent to social cues, shy, reserved, awkward, probably enjoys playing video games.

The students confidently provided these descriptions without a hint of doubt or hesitation. Intrigued, I asked if any of them had ever met someone with autism. The answer was no.

Then how did they all come to such conclusions?

In 1911, Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler invented the term autism, which comes from the Greek *autos*, meaning “self.” He applied this term to depict the inward retreat into one’s inner world, a behavior he noticed in patient’s diagnosed with schizophrenia. The problem with this definition, as psychiatrists soon realized, is that autism manifests variably among individuals. This realization led to the categorization of autism as a spectrum in the year 2000, within the fourth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV), the official manual of the American Psychiatric Association. The new clinical term, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), acknowledges the diverse range of symptoms in terms of type and severity experienced by individuals. But clearly, it didn’t catch on as well with the comedians of CMU-Q.

Ann Jurecic, associate professor in the Department of English at Rutgers University noticed that due to people’s “limited, distorted understanding of what it means to have autism, the disease appears to have become a disturbing new metaphor for the postmodern self, disengaged from the world and from others.” In short, people have accepted negative, stereotypical assumptions about autism, created this false narrative of the “typical autistic person”, and on this basis, have projected the negative qualities onto others.

So not only is the use of this word as an insult highly offensive, but it also makes no sense.

Researchers in Turkey examined Twitter Messages Related to Autism Spectrum Disorder, to determine the contexts of how the word is used. It was found that 14.7% of 13,042





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of CMUQ

BY SIDRA ALSABBAGH

messages analyzed about autism within the scope of the study contained negative emotions; the word “autism” was used for insult and humiliation purposes other than diagnosis. In the messages, it was determined that individuals were labeled autistic, “particularly because they could not establish a relationship.”

I wondered if CMU-Q students used this word in a similar way. This time, instead of approaching random students, I had particular ones in mind.

I confronted three of the students who were sitting at the table with me from the story I told earlier. The students who laughed along with the “joke”, who seemed to be okay with what had happened, and who had remained silent when I spoke up in objection. I asked them whether they believed it was acceptable to use the word “autistic” as an insult.

One student stated “Well...I mean everyone says it...so I feel like it's not that serious because it's not supposed to be offensive...I mean there's just no malicious intent behind it...people just joke around.”

The term has been thrown around so casually that people have overlooked the gravity of ridiculing individuals with disabilities, failing to pause and reflect on the repugnance of this behavior.

In fact this issue extends beyond the context of autism. How often do you hear phrases like ‘are you blind’, ‘are you deaf’, or ‘that's retarded’? How often have you used these phrases without giving it a second thought?

Where along the line did we forget that our words matter? When did we unanimously opt to stay silent in the face of misconduct? When did we lose our empathy? At what point did humor take precedence over moral principles?

I interviewed a fellow classmate in 76-101, posing the above questions. She stated, “I think we've grown more and more desensitized to things over time. Our actions are more impulsive...we stopped thinking about what we say or do. I'm actually guilty of this myself...sometimes I adopt phrases from TikTok, and they become part of my vocabulary...and I often don't realize it.”

The problem is, as the student stated, that we stopped thinking. We mindlessly absorb information from social media, internalize it, and allow it to become a part of us. We consume information without engaging in thoughtful analysis or critical evaluation. The algorithms create echo chambers in which we begin to see the same information

again and again, and eventually, we normalize it. If we watch enough TikToks making fun of people with Autism, we desensitize ourselves to what the word really means, and it becomes yet another joke to share at the lunch table.

Of the three students I interviewed, one student said “I felt like you overreacted at that moment. You can't control what everyone around you says and like...be upset every single time someone says something you don't agree with.”

I may not be able to control what people say, but perhaps in reading this letter students will think twice before cracking a joke. Allow me to paint a new picture:

My brother is one of the most humble, selfless people I know. His emotional awareness has been an inspiration for me growing up; the way he notices the smallest of details has opened my eyes to the beauty of the world around me. His fixed passion and love for puzzle solving has taught me how to focus on the things that matter to me. His smile in even the toughest of moments is radiant, and the way his eyes sparkle when he laughs makes it hard not to be overcome with joy. His bravery in facing a world that finds him uncomfortable, a ruthless world unaccepting of him, has set a perpetual example of courage. My brother is kind-hearted, has never once pushed a kid back, and has never reciprocated the terrible ways others have treated him. He is forgiving in the most beautiful manner, and has never sought revenge for the way others have made him feel.

Being his older sister has been the greatest honor of my life. I have so much respect for who he is, and you should too.

As CMU-Q students, we're entrusted to exemplify the traits of responsible global citizens. It's our job to conscientiously select our words and actions, recognizing that we serve as ambassadors for this institution. There's absolutely no justification for the circulation of such appalling jokes within our community.

So, the next time individuals with special needs become the punchline of your joke, I want you to remember my brother. I want you to think about the kids who sit alone during recess. Think about the kids who are pushed around and made fun of for being different. Think about the people who have to face the world with an impending feeling of loneliness, the people who look around and wonder *what it is they've done to be used as an insult to others*.

DO YOU STILL THINK IT'S FUNNY?

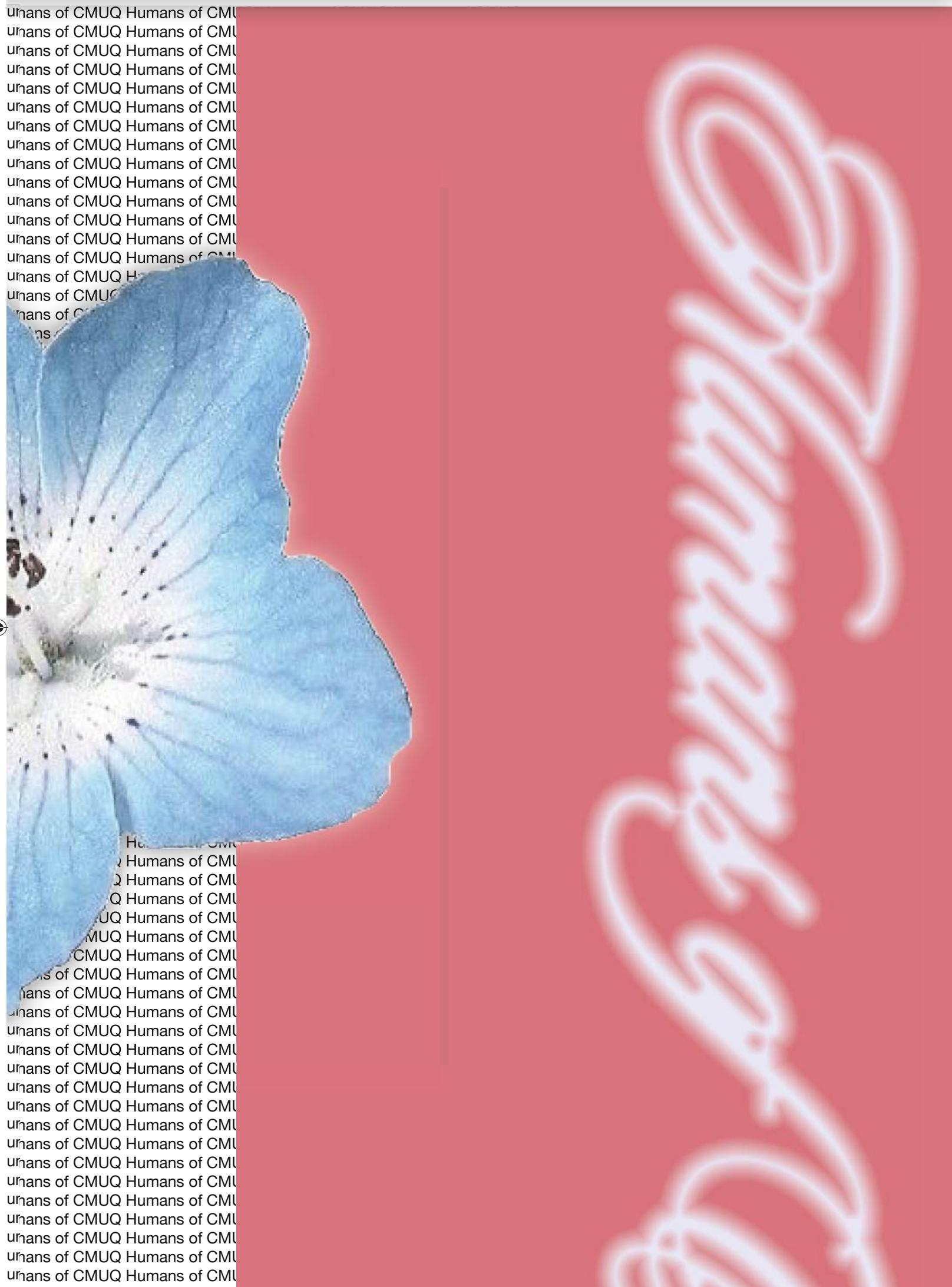




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CMU-Q's First All-Women Scholars:

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN CMU-Q'S HISTORY, THE QATAR CAMPUS SCHOLARS FOR
This historic group of scholars includes Dana Al Disi (Biological Sciences), Abeeha
Mansoori (Information Systems), all of whom embody academic excellence, leadership,
markable scholars to hear their stories, aspirations, and reflections on this special

Lujain Al-Mansoori - Information Systems

For Lujain Al Mansoori, being named a Qatar Campus Scholar was a moment of deep pride. "I was overjoyed and honestly very grateful. It felt like a validation of all the hard work I've put into balancing my academics and extracurriculars," she shared. More than just an academic honor, this recognition was a nod to the efforts she's made to positively impact the CMU-Q community.

Though she initially focused solely on learning and personal growth, as she became more involved in the university's community, she began to aspire to the title of Qatar Campus Scholar. "Seeing the impact previous scholars had inspired me to strive for that same level of excellence, not just for myself, but to inspire others as well."

When asked about her most memorable moment at CMU-Q, Lujain was quick to highlight the friendships she has formed. "So many memorable moments, but most of all meeting such amazing friends!" And when it comes to advice for the next generation of CMU-Q students, Lujain believes in living in the present. "I don't have regrets. I believe everything happens for a reason, and I prefer to appreciate the past and live in the moment."



"SEEING THE IMPACT PREVIOUS SCHOLARS HAD INSPIRED ME TO STRIVE FOR THAT SAME LEVEL OF EXCELLENCE, NOT JUST FOR MYSELF, BUT TO INSPIRE OTHERS AS WELL."



Leading the Class of 2025

BY BOUSHRA BENDOU

THE CLASS OF 2025 CONSIST ENTIRELY OF WOMEN.

Shoaib (Business Administration), Fatima Yousaf (Computer Science), and Lujain Al and a passion for their community. I had the opportunity to interview each of these re-achievement.

Fatima Yousaf - Computer Science

For Fatima Yousaf, receiving the Qatar Campus Scholar title was a moment of immense pride. "I don't think I've ever felt more proud of myself in my whole life," she revealed. Battling imposter syndrome throughout her academic career, Fatima found the recognition a moment of validation. "That was the moment where I finally felt like I had done it. It was a heartwarming end to what felt like an emotional rollercoaster."

Fatima hadn't initially aimed to become a Qatar Campus Scholar, but her deep admiration and love for the CMU-Q community made her a natural candidate. "You don't do things because you're aiming for recognition; you do them because you care about the people around you. This honor is a reflection of that love."

When asked about the highlight of her CMU-Q experience, Fatima didn't hesitate to mention the wonderful people she's encountered along the way. "It's not just my friends, though I adore them. It's the professors, the staff, my course assistants, everyone. I'm so lucky to have crossed paths with all of them." As for what she wishes she had known earlier in her journey, Fatima would tell her younger self to trust her own abilities. "I wish I had believed in myself sooner. I let imposter syndrome get the better of me sometimes, but now I know I can do anything if I put my mind to it."



"YOU DON'T DO THINGS BECAUSE YOU'RE AIMING FOR RECOGNITION; YOU DO THEM BECAUSE YOU CARE ABOUT THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU. THIS HONOR IS A REFLECTION OF THAT LOVE."



Abeeha Shoaib - Business Administration

Abeeha Shoaib's journey to becoming a Qatar Campus Scholar was one of gradual realization. "Honestly, it wasn't something I thought about in my first two years," she admits. "I didn't really understand what it meant until I saw the impact of the previous scholars." Once she saw the significance of the award, it became a goal for her, a natural extension of her involvement in leadership, extracurricular activities, and academics.

Abeeha describes the moment she found out about her selection as a mix of happiness and pride. "It felt like everything I've worked for over the past three years was finally amounting to something," she said, noting the validation she felt for her hard work and dedication.

For Abeeha, her most cherished memories at CMU-Q revolve around the stage. "Performing at events like International Night and Titans Got Talent has allowed me to express who I am beyond academics," she shared. The performances were an outlet for her creativity and passion, moments she believes she'll remember long after her time at CMU-Q. "You don't remember the grades you got on an exam, but you always remember how you felt performing on stage."

Looking back, Abeeha wishes she had understood the importance of balance earlier in her university journey. "I wish I hadn't placed so much pressure on myself. Learning to go with the flow would have helped me enjoy the experience and take better care of my health."



"YOU DONT REMEMBER THE GRADES YOU GOT ON AN EXAM, BUT YOU ALWAYS REMEMBER HOW YOU FELT PERFORMING ON STAGE."



Dana Al Disi - Biological Sciences

For Dana Al Disi, being named a Qatar Campus Scholar was both rewarding and validating. "I felt amazing, of course, and it was validating to an extent because I was already proud of my achievements and development as a student at CMU-Q. But receiving this award made me feel even prouder of my hard work."

From the beginning of her time at CMU-Q, Dana admired the past Qatar Campus Scholars and aspired to be like them. "It wasn't just about earning the title. I wanted to contribute meaningfully to the community and make an impact like the scholars before me. Watching them inspired me to strive for the same level of achievement and contribution."

Dana described her experience at CMU-Q as a "mosaic" of memorable moments. "It's hard to pick one moment because my journey here feels like a collage of experiences that helped shape me into who I am today. Whether it was initiating a research project I was passionate about, spending a semester abroad in Pittsburgh, or even singing on stage—things I never thought I would do in high school—each moment played a part in my development."

Reflecting on what she wished she had known earlier in her university experience, Dana emphasized the importance of open-mindedness. "You have so many opportunities at CMU-Q, but you need to seek them out. It can be intimidating to leave your comfort zone, but being open-minded and embracing the risk of trying new things is what helps you grow and makes your time at university fulfilling."



"IT CAN BE INTIMIDATING TO LEAVE YOUR COMFORT ZONE, BUT BEING OPEN-MINDED AND EMBRACING THE RISK OF TRYING NEW THINGS IS WHAT HELPS YOU GROW AND MAKES YOUR TIME AT UNIVERSITY FULFILLING."

A HISTORIC MOMENT FOR CMU-Q

This year's selection of an all-women group of Qatar Campus Scholars marks a significant milestone for CMU-Q. Each scholar represents not only academic excellence but also leadership, creativity, and resilience. As they prepare to graduate in May 2025, these women leave behind a lasting legacy, inspiring future generations to aim high, support their community, and always believe in their potential.



From the Burgh to the Gulf: Embracing the Differences on Exch

COMING TO QATAR AS PART OF MY EXCHANGE HAS BEEN ONE OF THE BEST DECISIONS I'VE MADE. THE CMU CAMPUS HERE OFFERS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT VIBE COMPARED TO THE PITTSBURGH CAMPUS.



I'm on the Swim Team back at main campus!



In Pittsburgh!

The CMU campus here offers a completely different vibe compared to the Pittsburgh campus. It feels almost like a family—something that's harder to find on the larger, busier main campus. The smaller community allows for stronger friendships, and I love how welcoming everyone has been. The facilities here are incredible, and everything is so clean and well-maintained. What drew me to Qatar in the first place was my curiosity to experience the Middle East for myself, especially given the many misconceptions I had from media portrayals. Being here for over a month now, I can confidently say that the reality is far from what I imagined—in the best way possible! I'm really looking forward to the rest of the semester and continuing to grow from this unique experience.





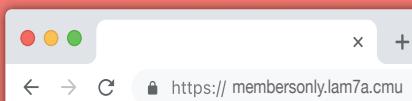
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BY SAVANNAH XU



Trying Gahwa and traditional clothes at a majlis!



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SUMMER RESEARCH: Trials, Triumphs, and Too Many Draft

THIS SUMMER, I HAD THE AMAZING OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE PART IN THE SUMMER UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH APPRENTICESHIP (SURA)

and I can honestly say it was one of the most rewarding experiences of my academic life at CMUQ so far. At first, I was a bit nervous about getting into research, and I didn't know if I would be able to come up with something at the end of the 6 weeks that made it all worth it, but I quickly realized how engaging this new challenge would be.

Working with my faculty mentor, I was able to explore my research topic; Blockchain, in-depth. Each week's goal brought new challenges—whether it was gathering data, learning new diagramming techniques, or figuring out how to present my findings. Creating the visual prototype was a real hurdle for me, but its result made it worth all the hours hunched over my laptop.

One of the highlights of my SURA experience was preparing for the research showcase. It felt like a big deal to present my work, and I wanted to do it justice. However, I found it pretty challenging to translate so much information into digestible content that highlighted *only* the important bits. In fact, I redid my poster completely from scratch FOUR times—by the end of it, I'm pretty sure my friends and advisor were sick of reading about privacy and security.

When showcase day finally arrived, it was like my excitement covered up all the stomach-churning anxiety I had the days leading up. Standing in front of an audience was intimidating, but I felt so proud of myself for innovating something that I could call my own. Plus, it was really fun answering all the questions people had.

To my surprise, I won third place in the showcase! It felt surreal to be recognized for something I put so much work in, especially given it was my first time doing real research. It has definitely since motivated me to challenge myself and try new, sometimes scary things.

As I look ahead, I'm excited to apply the skills and confidence I gained from this experience to future research opportunities. SURA has shown me that I can take on difficult tasks and make an impact, even if it's not 'big enough' yet, and that's a lesson I'll hold on to.



Posters

BY LAIBA SAMEER

“STANDING IN FRONT OF AN AUDIENCE WAS INTIMIDATING, BUT I FELT SO PROUD OF MYSELF FOR INNOVATING SOMETHING THAT I COULD CALL MY OWN”





ARTSCAPE ARTS



ARTSCAPE ARTS



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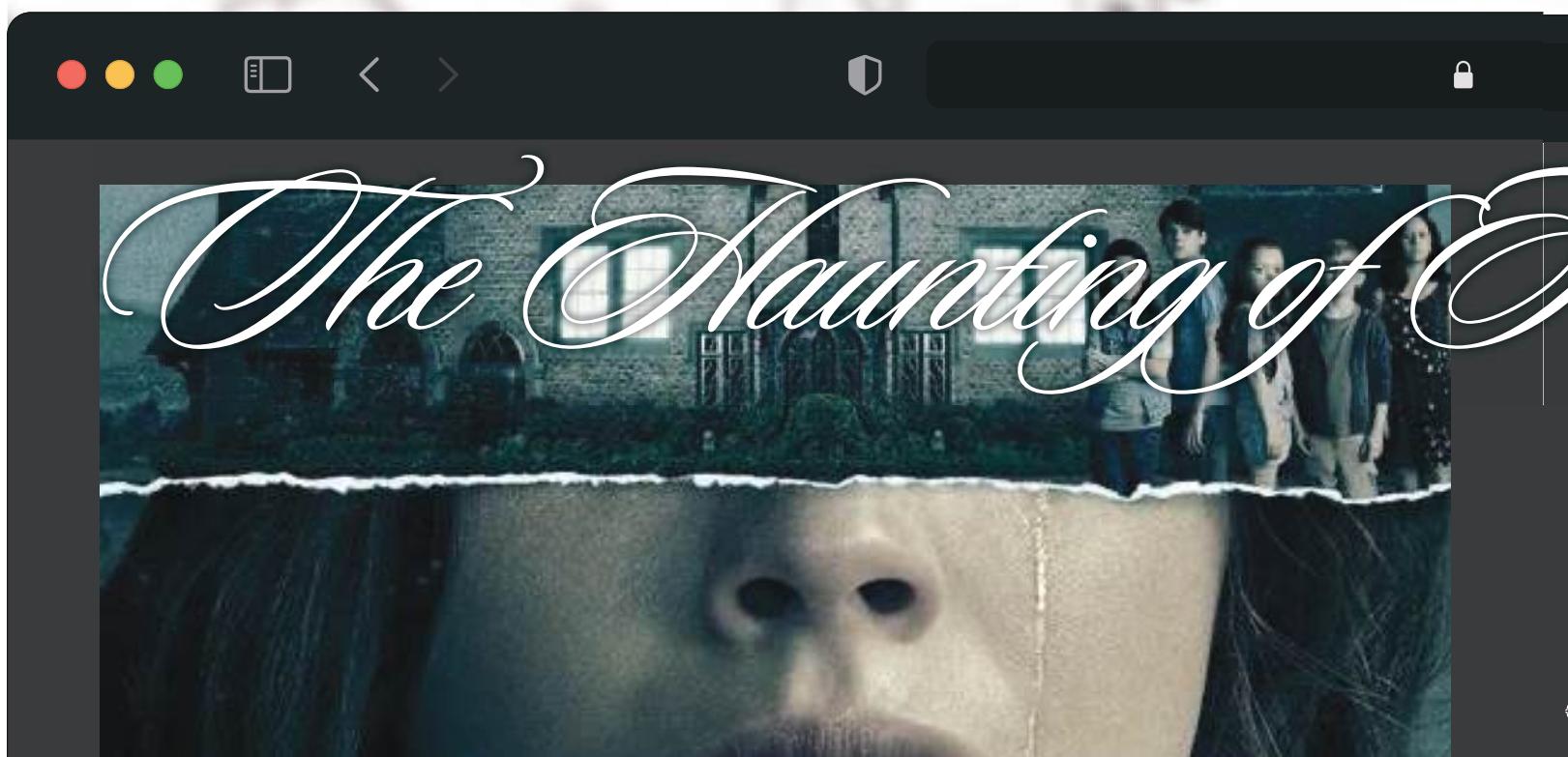


Scapes



Popcorn Picks with Laiba

GRAB YOUR BLANKETS AND POPCORN, AND SETTLE IN FOR MY MONTHLY MEDIA RECOMMENDATION!



The Haunting of Hill House isn't just a ghost story—it's a deeply emotional exploration of grief, trauma, and the scars we carry long after tragedy strikes, all wrapped in the guise of a ghost story. The opening lines set the tone perfectly: "Hill House, not sane, stood by itself against its hills, holding darkness within; it had stood so for a hundred years before my family moved in, and might stand a hundred more." The house is not just haunted—it's alive, representing the trauma that binds the Crain family. It's a living, breathing metaphor for the emotional burdens the characters carry. Even though they physically escape it, they never truly leave. Their lives and shared problems constantly pull them back, just like their unresolved trauma. They never confront their pain, and as a result, it continues to haunt them.

At its core, the show is about how each member of the Crain family copes with loss and the binding force of love through tragedy. The death of their mother becomes the central point around which their lives spiral out of control (more quickly for some than others), and each member of the Crain family copes with the trauma of her death in different ways—through denial, addiction, obsession with seeking 'the truth'—but none of them fully confront what happened. The house becomes a metaphor for their grief, and the ghosts aren't just there to scare—they're manifestations of the emotional wounds they've left untreated. The show tackles heavy themes like mental health, addiction, and inherited trauma in a way that feels so raw and real, with characters battling their inner demons just as much as the supernatural ones, and having a really hard time distinguishing when their realities begin to blur.





BY LAIBA SAMEER



Hill House

Horror as a tool is used incredibly well to illustrate the effects of grief on their lives. The jump scares, though sparing, are some of the most impactful in recent memory—not just because they make you jump, but because they reflect the emotional turbulence of the characters. One famous scare(I won't spoil it) feels less like a jolt, and more like an explosion of the suppressed emotions simmering just below the surface of the characters involved. It's not just about being scared in the moment; it's about how the horror lingers, much like unresolved trauma, and it leaves you feeling uneasy like you're inside the show too.

The tension is great too, with each scene building dread, not just from what's lurking in the shadows, but from the sense that the Crains are trapped in a cycle they can't escape, and they're going off the edge faster than they can anchor themselves. And as one character puts it, "Fear is the relinquishment of logic... we yield to it or we fight it, but we cannot meet it halfway." This battle with fear and grief is a motif of the show, and it makes the characters feel incredibly real; you get the sense that no matter how old and 'past it' they may be, when push comes to shove, they all find themselves trapped in that house as scared kids once more.

The Haunting of Hill House isn't only about surviving a haunted house—it's about surviving the haunted mind. The Crains might have escaped Hill House, but without confronting their trauma, it still holds them in its grip, just as the ghosts do. It's a haunting reminder that we can't outrun our past. We can only face it—or be consumed by it. I highly recommend watching it if you're a fan of horror and emotionally driven stories!





Discovering Art

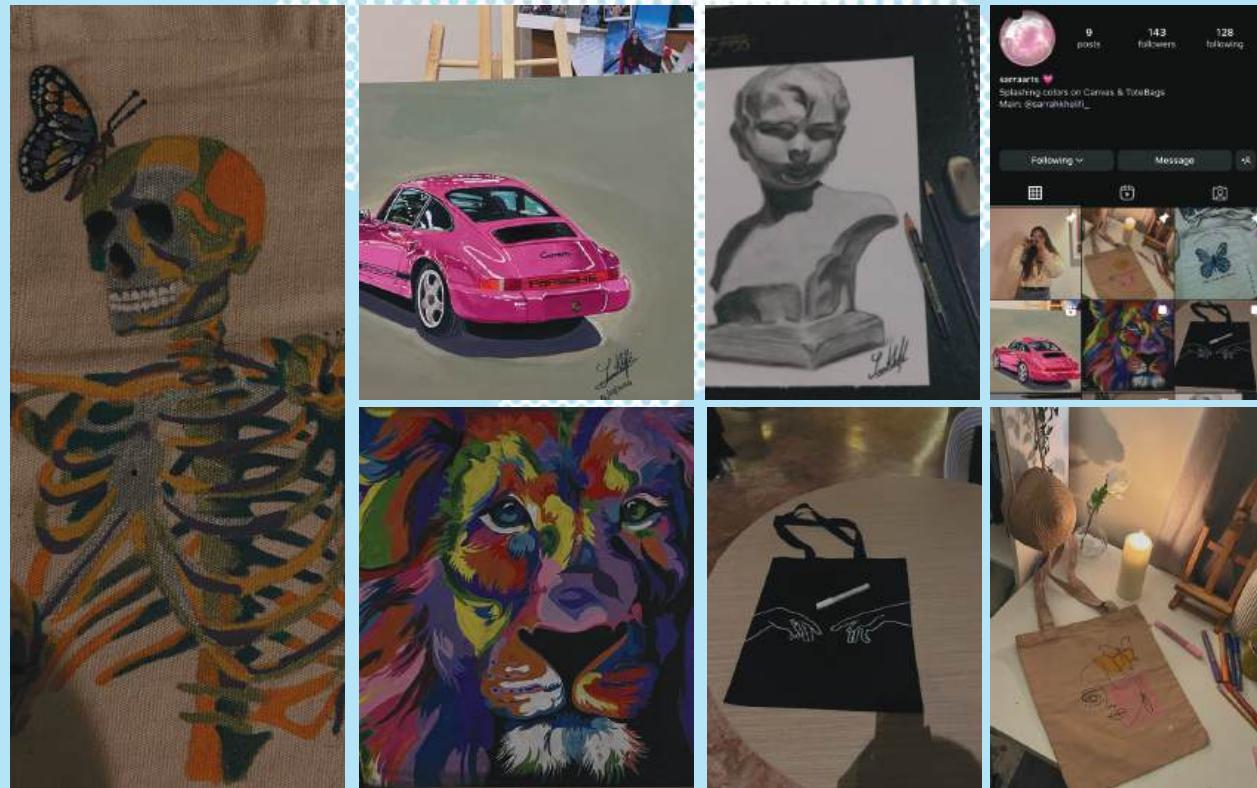
DISCOVERING ART

BY SARRA KHLEFI

When I heard my mother's footsteps approaching my room, I nervously yelled for her to wait behind the door. I didn't want her to see the mess I had made. I hurried to hide my handiwork behind a small table, but unfortunately, I didn't make it on time before she stormed into the room. I was petrified and rooted to the spot, offering an innocent smile to preempt the scolding that would surely come after she saw the little drawings and scribbles I made all over the wall with tiny pieces of coal. That was me when I was five years old, taking my first steps along a path I believed would lead to satisfaction. I have been drawing tirelessly ever since. I doodled on every blank corner I could find and even scribbled with lipsticks on the floors, risking my mother's anger, all of which reflected my innate passion as a young painter.

A few years ago, I became the youngest person allowed to showcase their talent at the Art Center in Souq Waqif. As part of this elite group of artists, I made several paintings and learned a lot from their expertise. In particular, I had the chance to showcase some of my artwork in a gallery in Tunisia.

With the demands of university work and preparing for my baccalaureate, I had to set aside my passion, finding little time to pick up a brush. But recently, I rediscovered my passion when I started painting on tote bags. To my surprise, my friends and parents absolutely loved the idea and showed me incredible support. Their enthusiasm gave me the push I needed, encouraging me to take the next step and turn my hobby into a small business. Now I'm excited to share my first collection of hand-painted tote bags and canvases.



Sarra's art



HOPE

The seed of love sown with care
Fails to borne fruits for its bee;
She tried touching the sunshine,
Her wings when withered in bane.

Let her fall on her crumbling dreams,
And embrace her neck so bruised;
Pain, not love, will teach her the way
To be wingless, yet the child of azure.

The ire of heart will engulf infirmity
And sloth, so take a step ahead:
Give life a chance to unfetter you,
When love fails and the heart cries.

How come would you touch the sky
Without tasting the bitter of dry dust?
For when the seed dies of thirst,
Shall hope kindle a courageous mind.

BY AHMAD PATHAN

A HEARTFELT DINNER

BY ZEINA HALAWA

you tell me that you love me
and you want me to love you back
so I carve my heart out with dainty fingers
and serve it nicely for you to have

the undersides of my nails are stained red
as I go to hold your hand
I pull you along with me
and you grip a little too hard
when you try to urge me back

I try to grin
plasticine teeth stretch and
crinkles start to form
my ribs are cracking
while you laugh

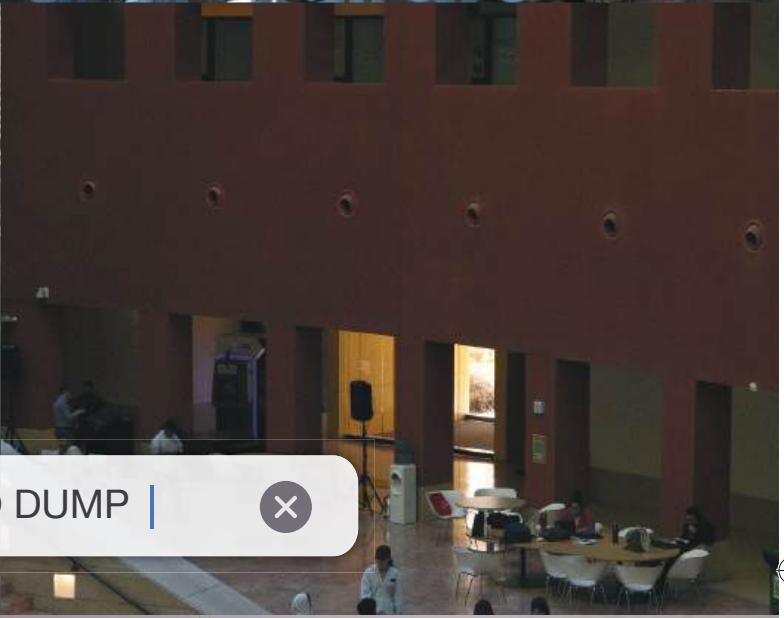
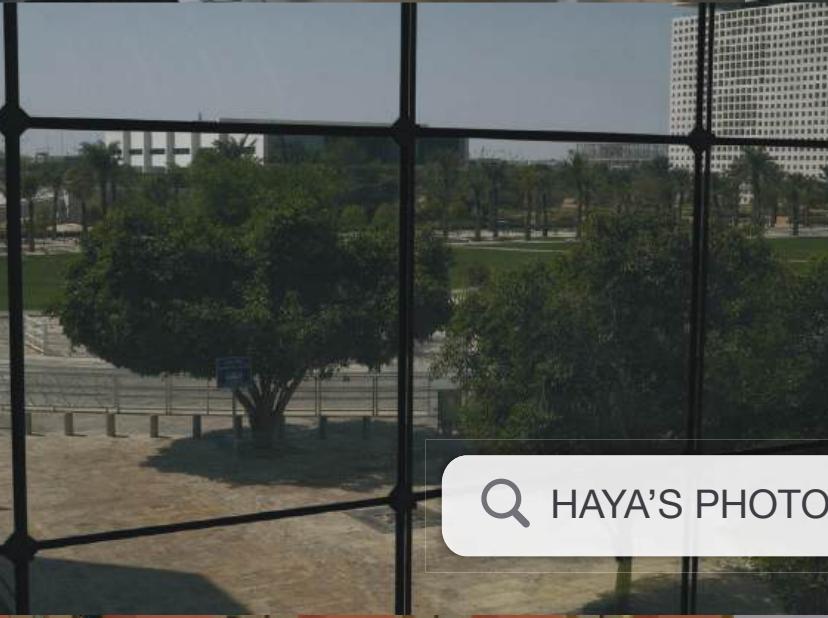
every time I breathe
lungs tighten and fly
there are blades under my skin
cords of rope around my wrists
it's safer to lock up what you have

tendons unknit
I snap again and again
love rattles my bones
etches poems onto hollow coves
your attention spins me anew

I offer you my soul
bruised as it is
and you grip it with knuckles white

with my love, you shine
blinding and whole and
merciless
I think this is how
I am meant to live my life

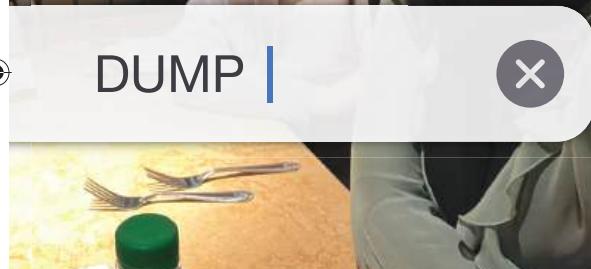
there are gaps in my cells
and liquid between my joints
my chest is yawning open
and the heart on the plate
thuds, gasps and
slowly
ever so slowly
peters out





REEM'S PHOTO





BY REEM KENSOUH







DESIGN & LAYOUT BY
Najoud Al-Talib and Dania Elsharkawi

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
Haya Al Kaabi