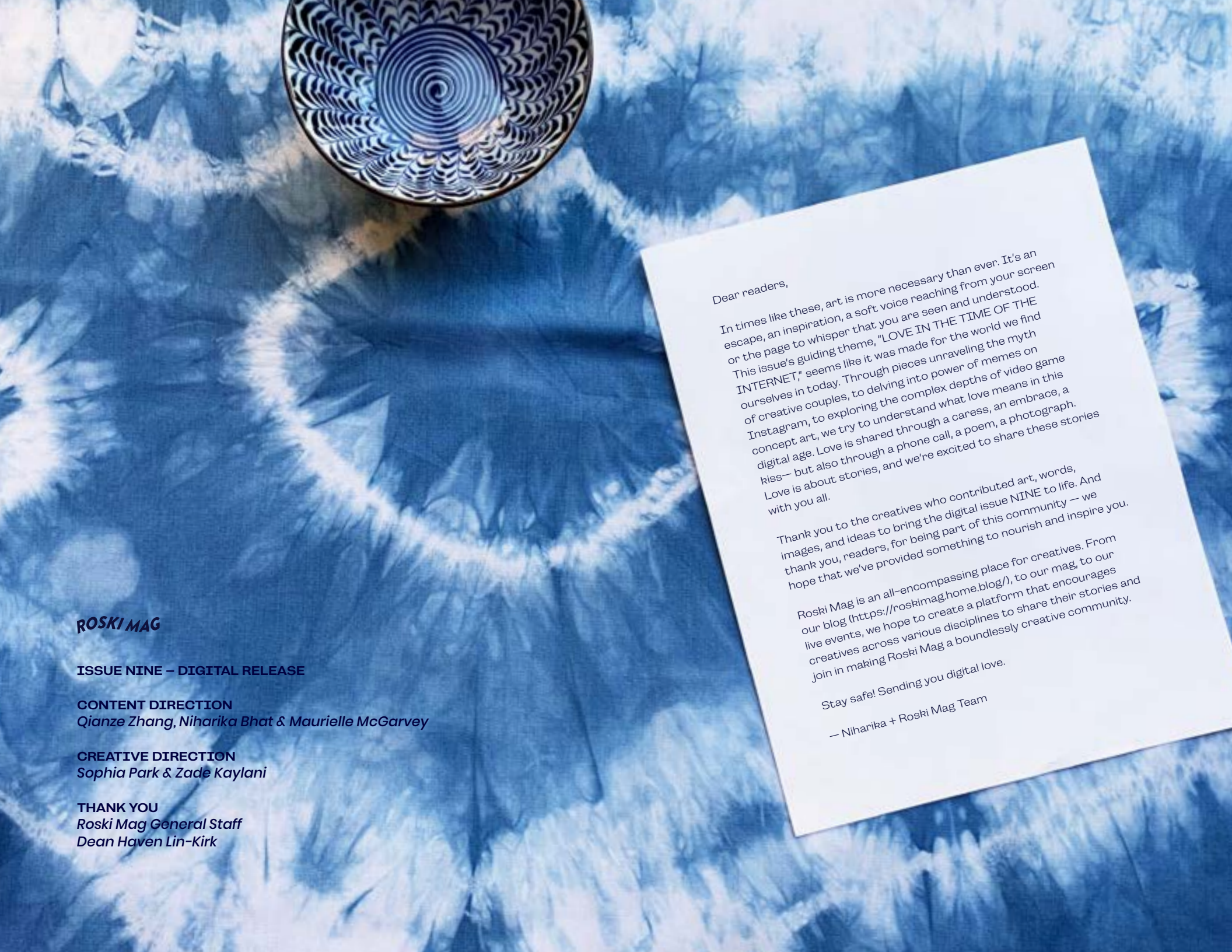
nine



Dear readers,

In times like these, art is more necessary than ever. It's an escape, an inspiration, a soft voice reaching from your screen or the page to whisper that you are seen and understood. This issue's guiding theme, "LOVE IN THE TIME OF THE INTERNET," seems like it was made for the world we find ourselves in today. Through pieces unraveling the myth of creative couples, to delving into power of memes on Instagram, to exploring the complex depths of video game concept art, we try to understand what love means in this digital age. Love is shared through a caress, an embrace, a kiss— but also through a phone call, a poem, a photograph. Love is about stories, and we're excited to share these stories with you all.

Thank you to the creatives who contributed art, words, images, and ideas to bring the digital issue NINE to life. And thank you, readers, for being part of this community — we hope that we've provided something to nourish and inspire you.

Roski Mag is an all-encompassing place for creatives. From our blog (https://roskimag.home.blog/), to our mag, to our live events, we hope to create a platform that encourages creatives across various disciplines to share their stories and join in making Roski Mag a boundlessly creative community.

Stay safe! Sending you digital love.

— Niharika + Roski Mag Team

ROSKI MAG

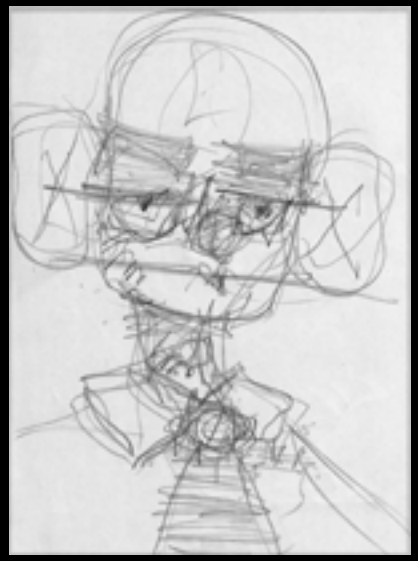
ISSUE NINE – DIGITAL RELEASE

CONTENT DIRECTION
Qianze Zhang, Niharika Bhat & Maurielle McGarvey

CREATIVE DIRECTION
Sophia Park & Zade Kaylani

THANK YOU
Roski Mag General Staff
Dean Haven Lin-Kirk

ALEJANDRO RICO-GOMEZ
From Dreams of Midwest Summers
Inkjet Prints, 2020



ALEX CARMEN
Drawing with Limits
Pencil, Spit, 2019

Analyzing the Inherited Experience with Larry Li

BY ROSKI MAG STAFF WRITER QIANZE ZHANG

"The first time I returned to China, I was in the middle of my race with adolescence. My family and I stayed with my LaoLao in a remote village in Shandong province. I came down with a fever in the hundreds within the first week. The pain was so great, I sobbed for an hour straight as gobs of snot dried on my t-shirt sleeves. Between heaving breaths I complained loudly to my mother about the pain, but as my tantrum developed, truer sentiments bubbled to the surface. I wailed that the summer air was too hot to only own one dusty electric fan and no AC, that it was too much work to get our fresh water from a manual well, and that I was sick of gagging during my bowel movements in the outhouse. After I calmed down, I could only be thankful that my Chinese wasn't good enough to voice my spoiled complaints in a language LaoLao could understand.

Eight years later, I'm editing my younger brother's college application essays. He's writing about his version of that summer at LaoLao's, when he spent nearly all of his daylight hours inventing games outside with his newfound cousin and friend, JiaJu. I read his explanation of how JiaJu, despite their language gap, taught him that he should be thankful for his life in America (including the indoor plumbing) and sighed-- This is all wrong. He's your cousin, not Mowgli from The Jungle Book. But I was one to talk."

How should we process these inherited experiences? We never ask for them, yet we feel a responsibility to own them. We're convinced we don't belong, but are never told to leave. Intermedia artist and Roski senior Larry Li explores these issues from a Chinese American perspective.

I first met Li in Painting 2 during our junior year. I remember being excited hearing his name called during attendance, and even more excited when I found out it was spelled with an "i" and not an "ee." When we met again in Edgar Arceneaux's advanced painting class our senior year, Li had returned from his trip sponsored by the MacComber travel grant with a wealth of source material-- photos, videos, interviews-- pertaining to a street market in Zheng Zhou, China. I spent the semester in awe as his large scale figurative paintings sprung up overnight in our studio. These paintings of familiar-feeling characters from the street market rummaging bejeweled piles of fruit and lush leafy greens were arranged to form "Immortalized Hustle," a staggering display the length of a gallery wall and the centerpiece of his solo exhibition "Inherited Fruits." The exhibit was immersive- not ostentatiously like a 4D IMAX movie, but disarmingly, the imagery reflecting something inside me I never expected to see displayed the way Li chose.

Inheritance
Ink on Rice Paper, 2019

Immortalized Hustle
Acrylic on Canvas Mounted on Cardboard, 2020

Qianze: I want to start with a general question about "Inherited Fruits." What was your impetus for making these artworks?

Larry: Obviously, most of my works are influenced by my upbringing as a Chinese American. In this way, they're personal, but there had always been a distance between me and the subject-- I was making art about a general Chinese American experience. Going into this new body of work, a goal of mine was to make it about my own particular experience. So I went back to China, specifically to my dad's hometown, a city called Zheng Zhou. It's somewhere I visited a lot as a kid. When I think of China, or of where my family is from, that's where I think of. I felt that my work had been building up to the act or idea of "going back to where I'm from."

Q: Can you talk me through the title, "Inherited Fruits?"

L: When you apply for the grant, you have to provide a title. This can obviously be kind of difficult because you don't know exactly where the work is going to go. But the original title was actually "Fruits and Metal." This was because, in addition to the street market, I also wanted to explore the space of a construction site in Zheng Zhou, because my childhood memories included so much noise from the new developments I felt were constantly being built there. You know, "China is always building things."

But once I got there, my focus shifted towards the people in the street market. The concept was also helped by a critique in Edgar's class. We were discussing my piece "Remnants," in which I cut out large portions of photo prints of the street market, but left the images of my dad and my grandma. Edgar suggested that this pointed to the idea of the street market as an inherited experience, and that stuck.

I remember someone asking me, "Why the street market?" It was hard to explain, because it does seem like a genre painting, depicting these people who are struggling, who aren't the wealthiest. And genre painting is critiqued for fetishizing that kind of person. It was nice having you in a lot of my classes because there are a lot of Chinese kids in Roski, but there are not too many Chinese American kids. That distinction is important because when you return to China after living your whole life in America, there's a culture shock, which makes those memories stick with you more.

Q: The presence of reflexive fetishization is so real and definitely something I grapple with when I'm making art about China, specifically about the return, because I'm talking about it from a distance. But I don't think that distance is the same distance felt or talked about by someone who isn't even Chinese.

I have this tendency when I make art to consciously try not to accomodate a white audience. Especially with art about being Chinese, I imagine I'm talking yellow body to yellow body, and leave everyone else to take away whatever they manage to get from it. But, I think in doing that, I paradoxically make it about white people anyway. I make it about evading white people, confusing white people, and I forget about Chinese people in my process sometimes, and that's kind of disappointing.

Remnants
Oil Paint, Acrylic, Collaged Photos, 2019

Zheng Zhou Portal 1
Collaged Photos, Foam Board on Wood, 2019

Zheng Zhou Portal 2
Collaged Photos, Foam Board on Wood, 2019

Zheng Zhou Portal 3
Collaged Photos, Foam Board on Wood, 2019

L: I definitely find it awkward to explain my art to white viewers. Regarding the distance, I think it's okay, and that we should recognize it, our specific Chinese-Americanness, our being part of the Chinese diaspora.

Q: Let's be predictable and talk about your new piece, "Corona Warfare," and about your general feelings these days as a Chinese American. I really responded to this piece when I first saw it on social media. I thought everything from the color palette, to the brushstrokes, to the scale felt really distinct from your past works. It reminded me of Hung Liu's "My Secret Freedom" series, with the obvious difference in subject matter.

L: When you finish a huge body of work like "Inherited Fruits," sometimes you don't know what to do with yourself. But this time, my life got turned upside down with this pandemic. So it felt natural for me to respond with, "I have to talk about this." "Corona Warfare" dealt with my frustration about how governments have handled the situation. I referenced a famous old photograph of a couple hiding under a bridge during the TianAnMen massacre. I gave them masks and wrote "CV-19" on the tank; it was parodying the image to draw attention to the Chinese government's poor response to the situation. I did another piece, a portrait of Doctor Li, who was the whistleblower of the pandemic who was censored by the government. As you may know, he ended up dying from the virus.

Q: Let's return to "Inherited Fruits" and the topic of returning to your dad's hometown. What role did your dad play in your process? In your video piece, "I've been doing this my whole life," was that him interviewing the vendors at the market?

L: Yes, he was interviewing the vendors. I don't have the best relationship with my dad. He was always in China when I was a kid, and when he'd come back, we'd always fight and butt heads. But when I was doing this project, I hadn't been back in seven years, so I had to rely on him to take me places and interview people because the dialect was different. He would even give me advice on what content I should include in my pieces, and a lot of the times I was like "Okay dad, whatever (laughs)," but it was really fun to see how invested and interested he was. It's a very stereotypical Asian thing, but we don't show a lot of familial love to each other. In making these pieces in his hometown, it was almost an expression of love or a gift to him.

Q: I need to put that on my art to-do list. I haven't done the Eugene Lee Yang-esque interview where I unlock all the secrets of my parents' past. Not only is there probably a lot of good content there, I don't think they've had the healthiest habits for processing their experiences. They didn't grow up with the same wealth of headspace to make art and express themselves.

L: Yeah, Asian parents don't tell you a lot. I'm always asking my parents for old family photos. I've become obsessed with going through my family history. I don't think I'll be able to make art about anything else for a while.

MEGAN ONG
Love
Acrylic on Canvas, 2020

CLEMENT THOMAS
A Black Death
Mixed Media, 2019

OLIVIA EDWARDS
2 Note Hudson Packaging Design
Corrugated Cardboard, Recycled Paper, 2019

On Myself

BY ROSKI MAG WRITER NIHARIKA BHAT

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as
good belongs to you (1).
Walt Whitman, Song of Myself
***

In her essay *On Keeping a Journal*, Joan Didion writes:

"We are brought up in the ethic that others, any others, all others, are by definition more interesting than ourselves; taught to be diffident, just this side of self-effacing...And so we do. But our notebooks give us away, for however dutifully we record what we see around us, the common denominator of all we see is always, transparently, shamelessly, the implacable "I."... we are talking about something private, about bits of the mind's string too short to use, an indiscriminate and erratic assemblage with meaning only for its maker" (4).

The act of personal writing takes me outside of myself; it holds me still and pushes me forward just a little until I can turn around and take a peek at the statue of myself. I become a character in a story, and like with any character, I can only guess at my motives. Why didn't I say anything when the waiter at the café handed me a sandwich with cheese when I had asked him for no cheese? I think I didn't want to make a scene, since I'm not lactose intolerant and it's really just a preference—besides, the waiter looked young and tired and god knows service workers make so little and work so hard.

He had a Band-Aid on his right thumb; maybe he helps prep food in the kitchens and works as a waiter? Everything begins to depart from reality very quickly after that. The waiter is an actor who was born in the Midwest (maybe Iowa, maybe Wisconsin) but just moved to LA to start his career; the café is not in Echo Park, it's in Silverlake; I have a tattoo of a thin sword on my left wrist and I'm wearing a blue sundress instead of a holey t-shirt and jeans. I am too far removed from the truth and myself, from the truth of myself.
Every time I have tried to write in a diary, I become a shameless liar. Emotions become all-encompassing and I am possessed by them like a round-nosed dog, jerking this way and that, slave to the storm inside me. I am not sad, I am drowning in misery; I am not angry, I am a red giant of rage; I am not happy, I am climbing a staircase made of stars. I am the shyest extrovert I have ever met. I use Didion's words here because she captures that feeling—the "implacable I"— better than I ever could. I know no one will ever read my 2am scribbles of wet ballpoint pen, but I still write for an invisible audience. I don't know myself, and I am worried I never will—or worse yet, that I'll meet myself when I'm not prepared. I will say something at a party in a room full of people and shock myself.
***

There is that in me—I do not know what it is—but I know it is in me (50).

***

I am not inclined to secrecy, which I think is part of the ritual privacy of diary-keeping. I share my fears and joys easily. My most private thoughts are unuttered to myself, because once they are born and fully formed, I have to speak them aloud to make them real. To say them only to myself is to confuse myself and cloud the truth in more embellishments and more metaphors. More lies.

I exist in the moment of my body, and experiences pass through me like water through mesh. My body isn't strong or dense enough to trap and contain these experiences into any cohesive mass, and so they flow in little bursts and eddies into the well of my being. I lie when I write so that I can cup this water in my palm and turn it into a pebble—to make solid what is liquid, mutable, ever-changing. The lie adds substance, and behind it is the truth.

Here are some pebbles, made smooth by the surf: I eat mangoes with wet hands, I worry my hair is falling out too much when I pull it from the shower drain, I waste Sundays watching Gilmore Girls in bed, I don't like Hitchcock movies, I kissed someone with my eyes open and felt nothing at all, I felt nauseous on the plane back from Hong Kong and wondered if you could die from being too nauseous, I get anxious when my roommates leave the kitchen lights on in the night and have dreams our apartment is catching on fire and I can't get out, I cried when they didn't have my shade of concealer at the overwhelming Sephora near the Duomo, I pronounced salmon as *sah-mon* for 10 years of my life because I didn't know how to say it.

Here is the truth:

I am still figuring that part out. I don't know who I am, but I would like to meet myself one day—properly, with grace.

I know I cannot keep a diary, but I can still write about myself. I am not a documentarian, and I don't think I have to be. If I write enough, I can become an archeologist—white hatted and bespectacled, digging at sediment until I uncover truth. If I write and write and write, there will be enough little bits of truth in every lie to string together into a shape I can look at and point to. *By Jove, I think I've got it*, I can say, mopping sweat from my brow. *I have found the implacable I.*

***

One world is aware and by far the largest to me,
and that is myself,
And whether I come to my own to-day or in ten thousand
or ten million years, I can cheerfully take it now, or with
equal cheerfulness I can wait (20).
Walt Whitman, Song of Myself

ANTONIO OKUN
Bear Fruit
Metal, Plaster, Fabric, Polyfil, Paint, Shopping Carts, 2019

#shadowbanned

BY ROSKI MAG STAFF WRITER JAMIE CHANG

Characterized by glitzy, pink, over-the-top, satirical iPhone collages, Casey Kauffmann uses found imagery to criticize harmful media representations.

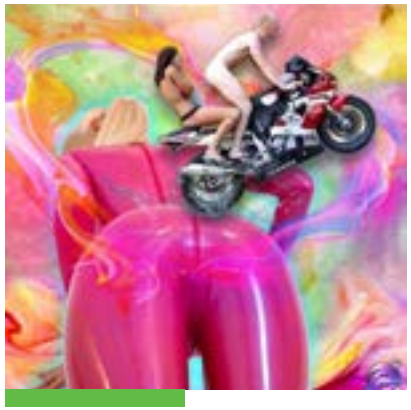
Student at USC Roski's Master of Fine Arts program, artist Casey Kauffmann uses social media not only to display her work, but also as part of her practice. By combining icons and imagery from pop culture, her work is truly a testament to the social media technology era we live in. She uses this digital language to criticize overly sexualized female representation in media and comment on validation seeking and meme communication. Kauffmann started her social media practice on her Instagram account @uncannysfvalley. Her work is characterized by glitzy, pink, over-the-top satirical iPhone collages that utilize a do-it-yourself meme aesthetic. By using the language of social media culture, she criticizes and comments on it in a humorous way.

Kauffmann is not the only artist to incorporate social media into their process; artists like Tom Galle and Cindy Sherman also use social media to discuss technology and pop culture. Galle uses pop culture iconography and branding, like the Nike swoosh, Tide Pods and McDonald's "M," to comment on social media trends and culture, while Sherman uses social media apps like face tune to create personas and comment on female representation in media. However, Kauffmann's process differs in her use of appropriated images and satire. Kauffmann states that her practice stems from a self proclaimed "bad habit" that most of us living in the digital age fall victim to: hoarding images.

"I've broken many iPhones, not by dropping them but by having too much shit on them. My phone has like 6000 images right now. it's kind of a problem, it's more of an addiction than a practice. I'm turning my bad habits into practice," jokes Kauffmann.

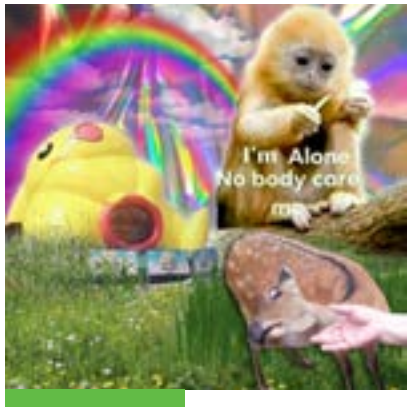
#empathy
iPhone Collage, 2018

#impostersyndrome
iPhone Collage, 2018

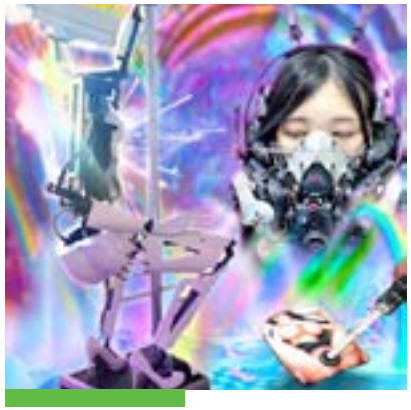


#internetexplorer
iPhone Collage, 2019

#fansscreaming
iPhone Collage, 2019



#nobodycareme
iPhone Collage, 2019



#fillherup
iPhone Collage, 2019

Knowing Others and Wanting to be Known Excerpt
iPhone Collage, 2019

From there, Kauffmann's practice goes in either one of two ways; she would draw inspiration from experience in her daily life, or, while consuming media, she would find an image or meme that catches her attention. Yet both result in the utilization of her extensive pop culture archive.

"Either something happens in my life and I want to talk about it online, like a dude will piss me off and I will make a collage in this really sophomoric way to be like 'fuck you!'" Kauffmann said.

Alternatively, while scrolling through social media or watching TV, both integral parts of Kauffmann's practice, she may come across an image or meme that catches her eye and sparks inspiration for a new collage. This image may have already been circulated, accumulating some cultural traction. She notes that the image's iconography gives it strength.

"I'll find one image and it'll be like a meme image, it'll be something that's been transferred to many hands already so it gains strength through its shares and likes and follows, and then I'll cut it out on my phone."

Working from her phone, Kauffmann constructs her collage with these cut-out images and adds supporting imagery that allude to the topic. For example, on the topic of pornography she might, Kauffman states, "add a bunch of waterfalls and stuff that aren't exactly the thing that I'm talking about, but have like a sort of abstract reference to it."

This can be seen in her piece #shamelessvalidationseeker, where Kauffmann cobbles together gaudy imagery of a waterfall and a rainbow with memes of dogs and cats. She uses these elements and brings them together to make them greater than they are. By using humor, she comments on the hidden vulnerability of validation seeking in the language of social media it is presented in.

#shamelessvalidationseeker
iPhone Collage, 2019

Overall, Kauffmann states that the most important part of her work is how she uses the imagery to construct a message rather than simply appropriating it.

"More than anything, it's about using found imagery and the decontextualization of images that happens on the internet."

Being mindful of her craft, Kauffmann takes care to not perpetuate the harmful media representation that her work criticizes, especially as she appropriates the imagery. She values the acknowledgement of the issue– in her case, the issue being the media's hypersexualized and idealized representation of women.

"I don't think that ignoring that the thing (sexualized female representation) exists will stop it from happening. I think that the only way to subvert those realities is by making them your own, so you have to activate the content. You can't just show me a million pictures of the same kinds of naked girls and expect that that's going to be a subversive act. It's the way you recontextualize it from its original source."

As Kauffmann makes art within and about social media culture, it is in a constant state of change and risk of disappearance, which is the reality of pop-culture. As new parental guidelines and algorithms are enforced on both Instagram and Tumblr, Kauffmann's work is perpetually getting censored, adding more to the temporality of her work. Her experience with censorship and algorithms has destroyed her idealized view of the perceived democratized platform that Instagram and Tumblr once were, and this experience is reflected in her

#shadowbanned
iPhone Collage, 2019

piece #shadowbanned.

"Before I came to grad school I had this really utopian idea of Instagram that it was very democratizing and it gave people agency. I sort of recognize now it's disempowering with the censorship and the new algorithm. It's not the time based timeline that everyone had access to."

Yet, because of the ephemerality of her medium and topic, Kauffmann finds her work to be even more important because of its relevance to the time period.

"In retrospect I realise how important this work is now because Instagram is dying before our eyes...it feels like my work is very culturally and time specific. It can be only made in the timeframe that it was made and by somebody who grew up around these things."

Because of this censorship, Kauffmann's work is now being shown in more galleries, transitioning from existing in the social media sphere to the scene of high art and having a physical and tangible existence. However, the social media platform is not to be seen in direct dichotomy with the perceived high art of galleries, Kauffmann notes. Despite this struggle, Kauffmann is grateful for the opportunity to create art on multiple platforms, both digital and physical.

"[With this opportunity I can] make work that can live multiple lives, it can live online, it can live in the world, and if the internet won't accept it, it'll find another way into physical reality." This is the beauty of Kauffmann's work— she takes advantage of the dynamics and the language of social media culture to criticize society.

#whatthefuckamidoing
iPhone Collage, 2019

#thisisfine
iPhone Collage, 2020

#vroomvroombish
iPhone Collage, 2020

#thiscouldbeusebutyou
iPhone Collage, 2020

#notalkmeimangy
iPhone Collage, 2020

#imissoutside
iPhone Collage, 2020

BRIAN XU
Body and Soul
Black and White Film Photography, 2020

Love Clothes

BY ROSKI MAG STAFF WRITER RACHEL LEE

I was undoubtedly the sexiest high-schooler to have ever existed, but no one wanted to date me. For some reason, the braces, awkwardness, and greasiness were a concoction that did not perfume me with sexual allure. When I was 16, I dated my first guy for three months and we went on a single date. We went to the movies and sat with both our hands very open and available to be held, but both our hands too cowardly to hold the other's. We watched Passengers and he commented on how sexy Jennifer Lawrence was in this slinky swimsuit, and I felt bad that I couldn't be sexy like Jennifer Lawrence for him.

Jennifer Lawrence, to me, was the eptimony of the Cool Girl trope. She was funny, sexy, and hot hot oh-so hot. Even when the public shifted its attention away from her after one too many "oops I'm so clumsy and boyish and down-to-earth" moments, I internalized how she, as the Cool Girl, captured everyone's heart for a brief yet glorious second. Unconsciously, I modeled myself after her and others.

When I got sick of being the Cool Girl, I changed to become the Manic Pixie Dream Girl, or MPDG for short. While the Cool Girl was constrained to perfection within the male gaze, the MPDG had more freedom to be flawed. It was a part that was fun to play. I could also don the costume of Adorkable. It's one that's more of a solo character study—it has less projection than the Cool Girl or the MPDG because there's less pressure to impress. (When I was Adorkable, I needn't attract a love interest because I felt like my clumsiness would get laughs out of my Truman Show-esque audience, or maybe there'd be some cosmic appreciation of my slapstick.) I also saw my potential love interests through this (admittedly heteronormative) lens—would they be a Prince Charming? Badass? Bastard? Soft Boy? a Jerk with a Heart of Gold? I racked up personalities from the media I consumed and hung them like outfits in a wardrobe.

Models in different outfits populated my conception of love, or more specifically, its participants. Love itself remained in the abstract—a billowy haze ruffling the fluttery tops of beautiful lovers.

When I fell in love for the first time, all I had to guide me were those clothes. I found myself falling into these various archetypes because they were familiar to me. I shrugged on the cardigan of a Cool Girl one day, and the other I would belt my MPDG corduroy pants. Initially, it was fun—there was a reason why these types were so celebrated in the media and glorified by men. I impressed [REDACTED] with a cool gaze and wowed him with my flamboyant flippancy. But the honeymoon wore away—he eventually got to know the person within those Love Clothes. I constantly questioned myself if he liked me or just liked my fire fits, and vice versa. But no—one breezy evening I found out that he loved the person within my Love Clothes. Love finally became tangible to me, from a billowy haze to a living, breathing person. And, oh boy, did I love him back.

Love Clothes don't have to be constricting. They serve the same purpose of regular articles of clothing—fabric meant first to clothe you, yet also function as a mode of self-expression. Without the archetypes of Love Clothes, love would be so much harder to define on the ground. Already an enigma, the archetypes are undeniably helpful in clarifying what it can look like in people—in a sense, they keep you clothed. Secondly, they can give you a basis on which to express how you feel. These archetypes existing within the larger social script of How Relationships Go are helpful as no one knows how the hell to act with all these feelings. More importantly, it is vital to realize that the patterns on the fabric aren't all there is to love, they're just a point of reference—Love Clothes can be made by anyone with a heart and some scissors. It's what's inside those Clothes that matters the most, anyway.

TATUM VAN DAM
Southbank Skater
35mm Film, 2020

JACK STOLROW
Riders at Palais de Tokyo
35mm Film, 2020

Drinking Is Very Galmorous

Smoking Is Very Sophisticated

Lust Is Very Dobonair

PATRICK O'REILLY
Bad Habits
Acrylic Marker on Paper, 2020

Role Model
Film Photography, 2019

Small Kid Big World

BY ROSKI MAG STAFF WRITER PHOEBE ZHENG

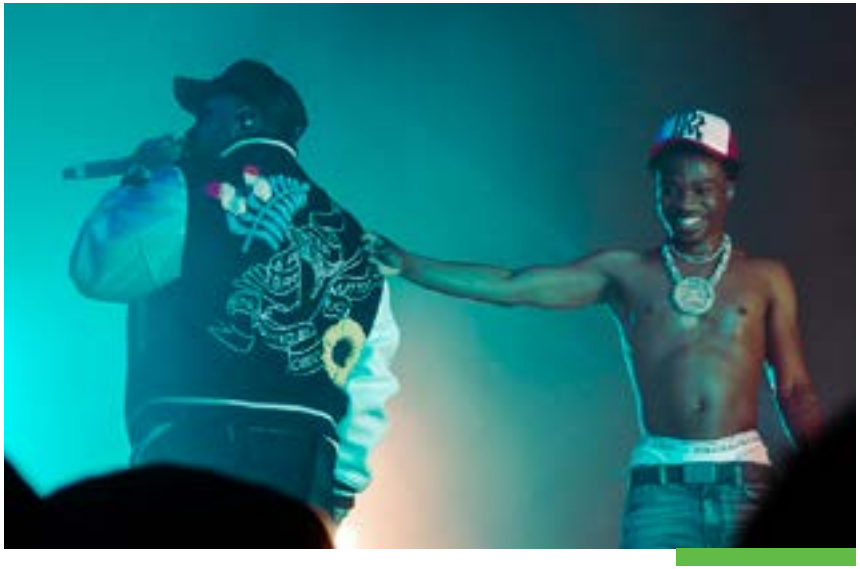
Calvin La is a photographer from the Bay Area who specializes in shooting artists, concerts, and portraits. He captures both the grand exuberance of a stage presence and the nostalgic aura of youth in suburbia.

Phoebe: What got you into photography? Anyone who inspired you?

Calvin: I started photography near the end of my junior year in high school. I got started because my mom gave me her super old $100 camera. I just messed around with it just to get a feel for it. I had time so I was open to trying something new. I went out one weekend to shoot with some close friends. Ever since then it has turned into what I do now. The journey has been weird. I started doing portrait stuff just for fun with my friends. Also, music and concerts have always been a big part of my life, so I transitioned from portraits into more concert stuff. One reason for that was because I wanted a way to get into concerts for free. I ain't tryna pay that much money. I would get tickets, sneak into the pit and then figure out how to shoot.

P: What was your first big gig?

C: I got my first big break when I was 16. I shot for this artist, Role Model. I emailed the manager saying I wanted a press pass for the show, but it was 21+. He didn't know I was sixteen so when he found out he was like, "Oh shit!." Luckily still let me through. I shot for Role Model. He really liked the vibe I was going for so he gave me his number and told me to hit him up whenever I was down in LA. After that I shot for Jon Bellion and Marc E Bassy. That was pretty much my summer. After I arrived at USC I texted Role Model that same week. He responded at 2 in the morning telling me to meet him at this location at 8am sharp without any other info. It turned out to be for his EP cover. From there everything just skyrocketed. I attribute a lot of it to luck. I also met a lot of the right people at the right time. Being able to reach out to



Mustard and Roddy Ricch
Digital Photography, 2020

Quavo
Digital Photography, 2019

them and them reaching out to me, those connections just projected my art and career to where I am today. Compared to my mindset when I started, it's become a completely different trajectory than I thought it would be.

P: Wow, the fact that you could just shoot Role Model a quick email and get an immediate response really is quite lucky.

C: Yeah honestly! These connections have really allowed me to expand my circle. Growing up I didn't really have much. I grew up with a single mom and I always had it in my head that I would go through the traditional route: school, then work at some company or something... and I wasn't really about that. I've always wanted to do something bigger than that. I didn't want to fall into the trap of a 9-5 work schedule, so the end goal for me was to mesh together my love for art and use business to make that feasible. I would've never imagined having 862 contacts, mostly artists and their teams, that I can just hit up at any moment. It's just insane to me now. I'm just this small kid in a big world trying to figure myself out.

P: Living in the suburban Bay Area and then moving to big city LA, how has your environment affected your art?

C: I'm very much a person who needs time alone. Being in the Bay, there's a lot of nature. There's this specific spot where I will go, and just spend time and think. I'm very introspective, I think a lot, and that reflects a lot in my art in general. All of my thoughts go into my journal. It's like my source of therapy. Most of the time it's, "These are the things I want to do," and "These are the things that I'm afraid of." Nobody's perfect. I'm still trying to figure out my purpose. To be able to express these fears and be very raw with myself is what I need. In LA, I don't really have that kind of a spot. The closest nature joint is somewhere in Santa Monica or something. It's hard because I'm not able to get my thoughts out as easily. What's nice for me is that home is so close. It's just an hour flight, so I'll go back every now and then and give myself that break. My biggest problem is overworking myself. During January, the first three weeks were shooting for YBN Cordae, a private photoshoot, flying back to LA for Roddy Rich, taking a midterm, flying back to the Bay to shoot for another artist, flying back to LA for school, then back to the Bay to take a break, and lastly flying back to LA to shoot for a Grammy party, edit, and midterms. It's a lot. The good side to all of this is that I'm constantly surrounded by amazing, talented people who make me want to work harder. However I've been getting better. The past two weeks have been a break for me, and I've been taking less gigs to make sure my mental and physical health is okay. I'm not complaining, I love what I do. I understand that I have to work to this point if I want to tackle the question of how I'm getting my money and what it is I want to do after college. This is all just part of that process, which takes time.

P: So with all these introspective thoughts that you have, how do you manage to convey that within your photography? Editing? Process?

C: When I edit, I have to be in a certain vibe or comfortable environment. Music plays a big role . I have a playlist that's like 58 hours long. My current favorites are Role Model and Jeremy Zucker. There are concept photoshoots that have more of a basis. I haven't done that in a minute, but I had this concept shoot with this girl named Madeline. It was a very retro, vintage kind of style and conveyed a youthful, carefree vibe. Before I did that concept I was thinking about what I felt like I was missing in my life. I'm constantly working, so I wanted to recreate this feeling of nostalgia. I think what I was aiming for was the feeling of being a teen. It was nice to convey my thoughts and emotions through that shoot.

Lauv
Digital Photography, 2019

In terms of my editing style, being vulnerable with myself, figuring my life out, and seeing what affects me makes me a better artist. When I shoot, I think to myself, "How do I want to compose this and that?" I have this one shot that I've always wanted to do. I would have it composed in a very non-traditional manner where the rule of thirds don't apply. I picture the model in a setting with all of this negative space around them. That's exactly how I feel at this point in time. Small kid, big world.

P: How do the people you photograph specifically guide your artistic vision?

C: Usually it's nice that they trust me. Recently I photographed Khai Dreams and I asked him if he wanted to do anything specific, but he just told me to do whatever I envisioned. Another example is Cole, Role Model's manager. He trusts my creative vision completely. Whenever he invited me to the set he made sure to tell me to do my own thing. He trusts me 100%, but while I have complete control over my creativity, my subjects obviously still inspire me. Before I shoot for an artist, I listen to their music and envision them the way their music paints them. That's how I gain more ideas before I shoot. I always make sure to have a vision before I begin working. I'll uber to the meeting, put my headphones in during the ride, and zone in.

P: Do your photoshoots ever end up going in a different direction than how you initially imagined?

C: For concerts, not really, but for creative shoots, yes. I'm very down with the idea of spontaneity. I feed off of those unexpected moments. There are so many people in this world I can learn from so being able to work with these artists has really opened my eyes about their different perspectives and styles. While doing a creative shoot, the result is almost always different from the original plan. It's not an issue at all, just part of my process. Usually the work produced is ten times better than I imagined.

P: How has technology and social media played a role in your career?

C: You know what... being 18 is the greatest thing ever. I am still young, I have energy, I can survive off of 3 or 4 hours of sleep and still function to an extent, so I'm always down to go out and meet new people. Being able to do all of that would not have happened without instagram. I pretty much

built my whole brand off of it. If i didn't use the app, I could not network; people would not be able to discover and view my work. It's honestly hard to imagine my life without Instagram.

I'm not a very public person. I don't put my face on instagram because I don't want people coming up to me and trying to be friends because of that kind of image. I want people to acknowledge me for my art. I don't want to be seen as just an "Asian American artist". I want my thoughts to be a representation of who I am rather than that kind of spotlight face-value. I don't want to be constrained by these boundaries that are made by society. Social media has allowed me to create my own persona beyond those limitations.

Another thing, though, is that despite my love for the app, I'm usually never browsing around on it for too long. If I post, I post, and then I check out.

P: Yeah, I think that's a really good practice especially as an artist, because I'm like the opposite where I feel like I'm constantly checking my social media. Paying attention to all the likes and followers can be extremely detrimental towards how I view my own worth and legitimacy as an artist.

C: Yeah! I think the fact that instagram took away likes for a while was such a good idea. People were more comfortable posting shit that they liked that others may not have liked. I think that's really cool because it's important for art to be completely free of any value whatsoever. Create art for the sake of creating rather than for the sake of creating for value. Something my friend Eddie (Eddie Mandell, Instagram: @eddiemandell) said was "create shit that matters". That's one of the most important things that I've heard. I think that's really important because social media makes people want to appeal to the general audience, but you can also create shit that you just think is genuinely cool. If someone asked me what I want to do in the future, I always say that I just want to create cool art, make friendships, and create art with those friends.

P: What are the biggest aspects you value about having artistic connections, especially within USC?

C: Well, this one dude I'm friends with literally gave me his camera. Which was sick. But in all seriousness, being friends with all of these creative minds makes me more ambitious. I'm a part of a production company with a group of friends, some of whom I only met just 2 weeks ago. I just genuinely enjoy the privilege of being able to work with the homies. It isn't even about what they can do for me. I want to see what I can do for them. When I thanked my friend Eddie for hooking me up with a gig with Khai Dreams he said, "dude, don't even worry about it". It's that kind of attitude, giving with no expectations of any return, that really inspires me and it's what I strive to do for others. Also, being friends with artists at different stages in their careers at USC is cool because you can see their progression. I don't know where I'm at in my career yet, but I was talking with my friend yesterday who expressed to me how watching me do what I do inspires him to do more with his work. That was such a cool moment for me because it made me realize how I used to be in that position and I was glad to have been able to be a part of their journey in that sense. Someone asking me to do them a favor is not taking advantage of me. I want to help because they're my friend and they've been supportive of me, so that's my way of giving back. I'm still at the beginning of my career. I am not good yet, but I am slowly learning my capabilities, developing and growing. It's just crazy to see how my friends see me versus how I see myself. I'm only getting started.

Jon Bellion
Photo, 2019

REMI FROGO
earth tunes
Copper Plate Etching, 2020

JULIA WHITLOW
Mirage
Oil on Canvas, 2019

The myth of the

Creative Couple

BY ROSKI MAG STAFF WRITER MAURILLE MCGARVEY

The myth of the creative couple delineates who is muse and who is artist– who accepts awards and who applauds?

One cannot disagree that talented female creatives have been buried deep in the grain of time, often within a much visited mausoleum bearing their husband's name. Yoko Ono, regardless of what may or may not be true of her moral character, is an accomplished and experimental multimedia artist in her own right, continuously trapped in the legacy of John Lennon. Greta Gerwig's road to the Oscars with her inventive adaptation of Little Women was marred with jests over her supposed competition with her partner, and fellow nominee, Noah Baumbach. Kim Gordon's radical contributions to music and art through her role in Sonic Youth and the Riot Grrrl movement is seldom separated from her marriage and public divorce with fellow band member, Thurston Moore. In the public eye, the legacy of these women is entangled with their male counterparts. History is soaked with countless Ophelias floating in tepid bath waters, the suffering Elizabeth Siddal in John Everett Millais's famed painting. It's worth mentioning that Siddal, while most famously slated as the model among the fauna, created beautiful and technically proficient sketches that received no accolades in her short lifetime.

Women are repeatedly perceived to take on a spectral form in male/female relationships; often only lucky enough to be reduced to what every ghost desires- a body. An angular body, one that moves through the glass alleys of the undead, the two way mirrored room where color and breath are absent. In the unearthed and broken film of death, a woman remains immaculate. A butterfly on a cork board, each human line washed away.

If we are to love freely and boldly, must we sacrifice our creative spirit to the glass frame? Is it required to exist separately, reject collaborative action, and forego relationships to retain one's creative agency? I fear, sometimes, that however hard I work in my artistic practice, my final resting place will be in the spouse category of someone else's wikipedia page. To reject this, in keeping with current mythology, would be to accept an invitation to solitude. I'd like to believe a woman's role within a heteronormative creative couple is not inherently doomed. Cultural persuasion is working to ameliorate the grand pattern of overshadowing that has afflicted female artists by bringing to light their forgotten work,

while introducing ramifications to sexist behavior. As long as there is a running distinction, both personally and publically, of your work, my work, and our work, the cumulative legacy of each category should stand on its own.

Myths are magnetic pieces that hold together the historical nature of human endeavor. They are traditional stories meant to explain social phenomena. The myth of the creative couple delineates who is muse and who is artist, who accepts awards and who applauds, who speaks on their work and who speaks on their relationship within a press circuit. However, the interesting thing about myths is their inherent falseness. Perseus did not kill the sea serpent to save Andromeda. Elizabeth Siddal was not a lesser artist than her male contemporaries. The most interesting element of Kathryn Bigelow's historic Oscar win was not that she beat her ex husband in the same category. Many myths lack a written record, they are handed down, ear to ear– like a game of telephone. Change a few words between players and explore what new lore can rise out of renovated cultural considerations for female artists that dare to love.

mom song

BY BRITT ALPHSON

check under the bed
off ogden
but i'm not sure what i'm looking for
a boy i used to know
buzzed his head
and my resentment's withered
i hate how we're fickle like that

so sick of oranges in the freezer

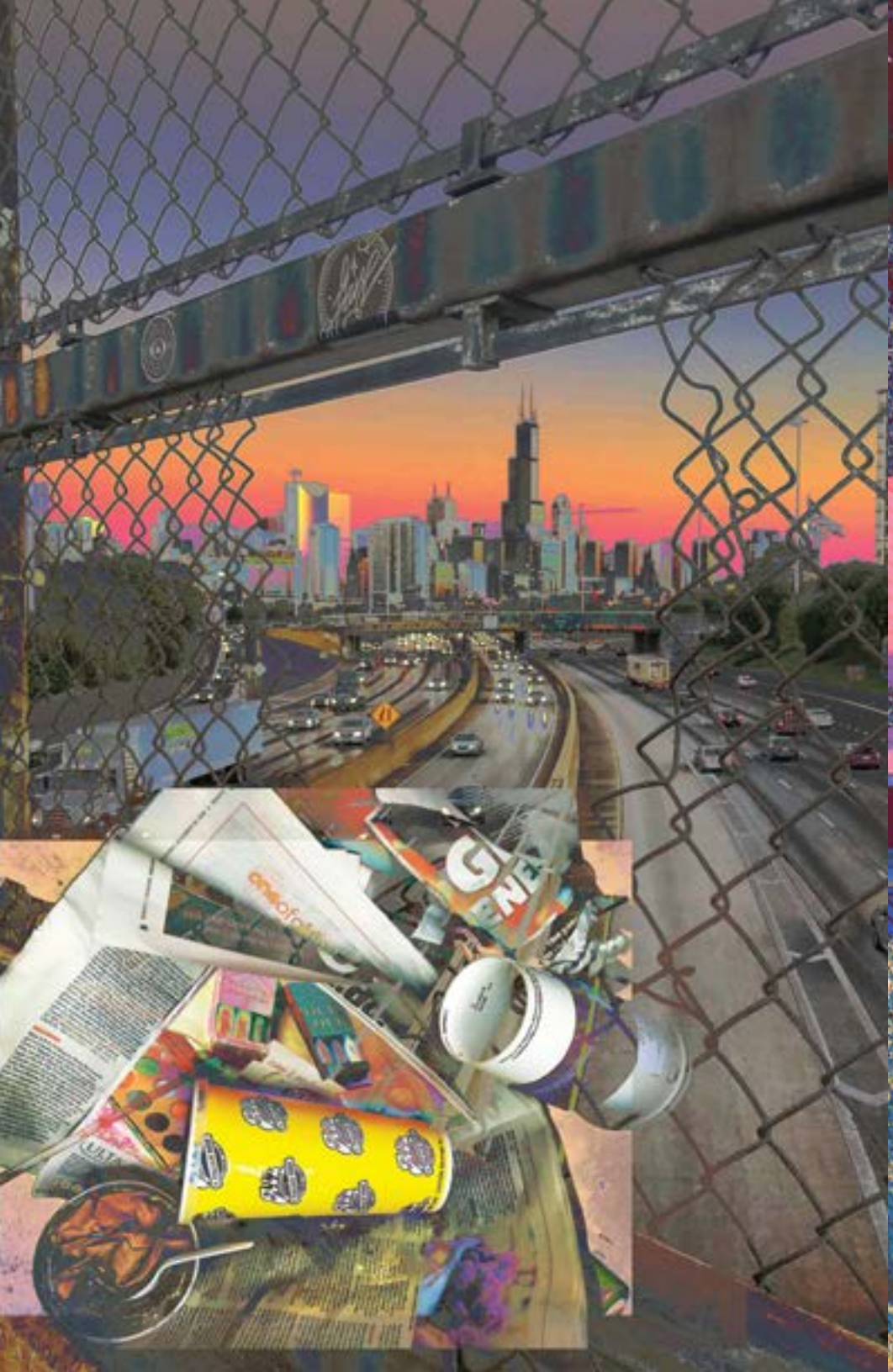
now i'm at the Tate
Hockney's pools always made me miss LA
but this polite intimacy
just doesn't feel like home

went to Majorca
maybe it was for Deborah Levy
or maybe i just needed
to sleep myself off
in a different country
but the pain isn't hermetic
in fact
she's the oldest friend I have

there's collective sighs
from seventeen year old girls
who have nothing better to do
than drive
coyote not a dog
on the side of the road

not sure what difference that makes
and i'm so reminded
tragedy doesn't pick favorites

for someone who stands tall
i sure do crumble

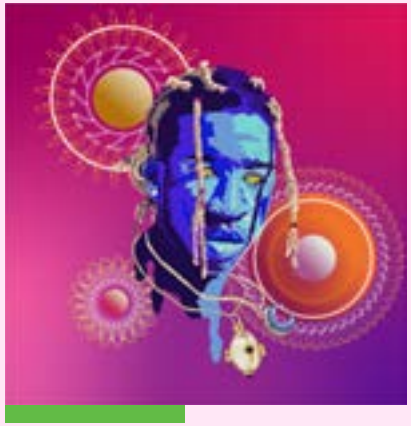


RACHEL JIANG
Animatronics In Cyberspace
3D Modelling, Riso Printing, 2019

Art for your Ears

BY ROSKI MAG STAFF WRITER KARLA TORRES

Feeling the plastic wrap graze your fingers as you push through records, pausing on one whose colors pull you in. Scrolling through Instagram you see an artist that you follow has posted their new album design work: its magnetic effect is what makes you take a listen. When your favorite band has announced a new tour, the poster itself marks the beginning of the show. These moments exemplify the significance behind the art designed for music. Music art, such as posters and album covers, have been surging as a critical element in music releases. In an era where music is made by many and accessible by all, music art has been a way to make artists stand out and define their music visually. USC students have been engaging in this imperative aspect of music, participating by creating art for musicians on campus and beyond.



Heaven Face - Heavenaboveall

Head in the Clouds - Heavenaboveall

MYA DAVIS

The process and significance of making music art

Favorite cover art: Hiatus Kaiyote's *Choose Your Weapon*

How important do you think album art is for music consumption?

"I think that adding a visual element, always takes the music to another level...I think having something to look at while listening to music will influence you and give you a much deeper experience."

Mya describes album art as being an almost synesthetic experience, explaining "You have one sensory input 'listening to music' but you have one sensory output like 'seeing color'". Mya references Trippie Redd's Life's a Trip album art as illustrative of this experience. With its cartoon characters, mosaic of colors, and collision of varying topics, it appropriately introduces you to his project and makes it memorable. Album art helps the listener to create a unique connection with the music.

What is your process when making cover art?

"So I usually start with a mood board or a bunch of sketches and then we'll narrow down concepts from there. I acknowledge, you know, I ask who's my audience? I ask, what does the artist want? Then from there, I produce a bunch of different ideas. I try not to limit myself to one. And then from there, I'll go work with them in the selection, and then execution."

Moshpit - Sumit

ALEX CARMEN

Design stemming from love for music

Favorite Designer: Reid Miles

What led you to make music related art?

"Well, my whole life I was very invested in music. I dabbled in various instruments as I grew up. But in high school I became a full jazz musician, I'd say. I would consider music my way of learning about life. I use music similarly to how people will look back on their life and remember the books that they read as anchor points of phases of their life and I definitely would use albums to be my access to that. So my love for music is one of the reasons that I like making music design work or even why my fine arts might be informed by my music tastes. I just connect with it really well."

What are some cover art trends or artists that you admire?

"There's a trend in design right now where we are starting to gravitate back towards the material and trying to make things that look like they are physically there. A lot of album art is starting to look like it has saran wrap around it similar to how a CD is wrapped before you open it. It has textures and it's faded. My favorite album cover designer is Reid Miles. He used type really well. He would turn type from an element that was meant to be read into something like an artistic tool. The thing that I love about it was that it was done without computer technology, it was all hand done, which I think is so cool."

Knights of the Clown Table Tour

Transformer - Lou Reed

Hey Slime! - Apollo

REMI FROGO

Involvement with artists on campus

Favorite Cover Art: Vampire Weekend, Cautious Clay, Benee

What led you to begin making cover art?

"I went to an arts high school in Orange County, and I became friends with a lot of music students. And so as they begin to start releasing their music, I got involved with them in that process. So I just kind of got lucky I guess. And then coming here, a few of them also came here. So like, I definitely already had that connection. And so I just kept it going here with the music kids."

Who have you made art for specifically?

Ellie Williams, Cordelia, Candid!

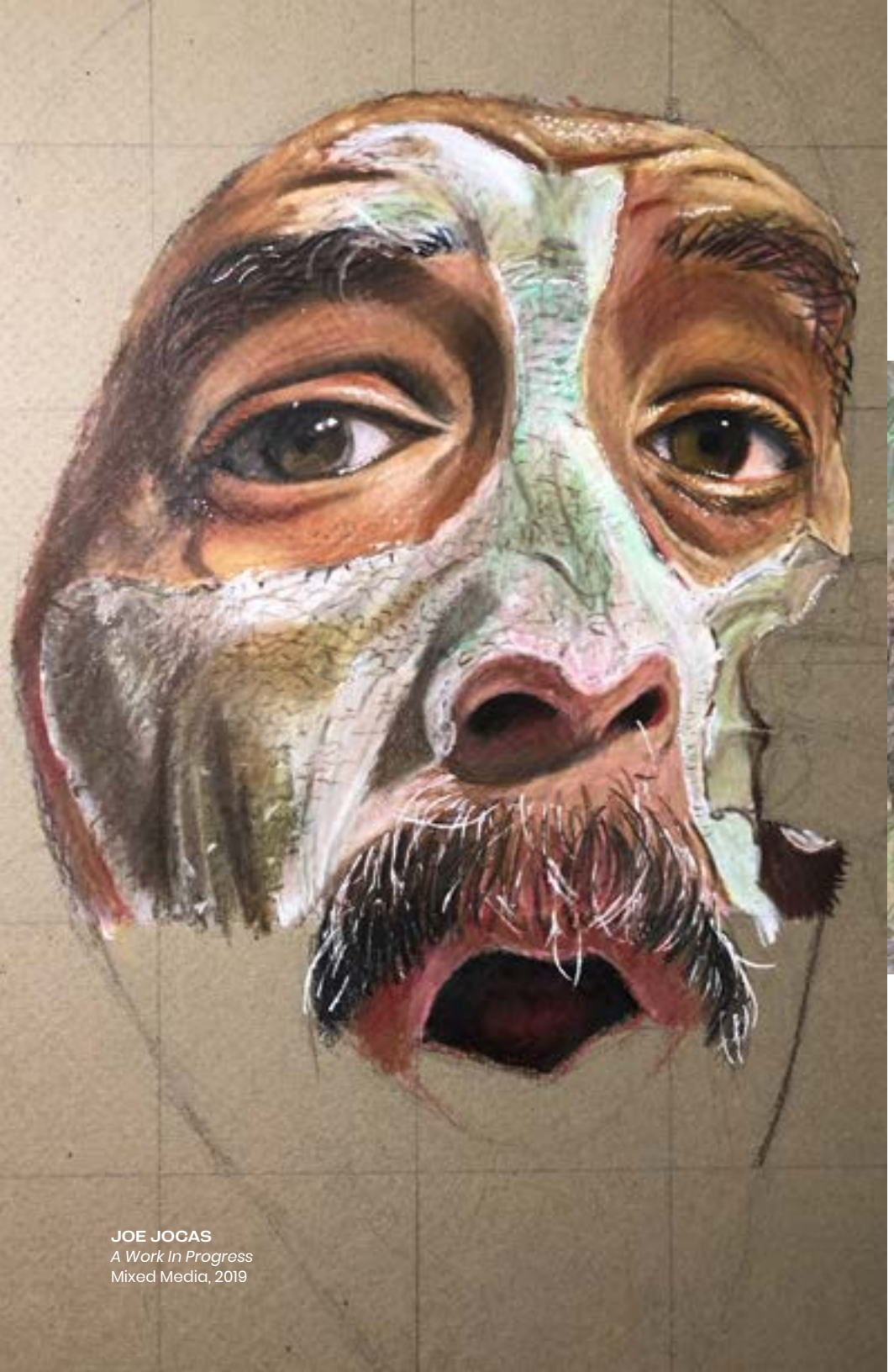
How have you gotten involved with artists on campus?

"So like, one of my friends from high school who's in the music program is my roommate." She describes her experience living in Birnkrant as instrumental to creating this connection with artists on campus since a lot of people on her floor, "specifically happen to be music majors". "So I kind of just met everyone through that, I guess. And then yeah, and then I guess kind of one led to another." Remi plans to continue making music related art alongside her traditional paint and digital art.

Hypnotize Me - Jillian Batt, Solo K

Partly - Ellie Williams

agua - c a n d i d !



JOE JOCAS
A Work In Progress
Mixed Media, 2019

JOE JOCAS
Spa Day
Mixed Media, 2019

CHRISTIAN FUSCOE
Untitled #1
Steel, 2020

Conceptualizing Interactive Fantasy Worlds with Quiana Dang

BY ROSKI MAG STAFF WRITER QIANZE ZHANG

I don't feel the need to apply algorithms to image-making; my analogue imagination and faithful phalanges are more than enough. Circuitry baffles me; I have no desire to untangle several meters worth of copper wire to sculpturally string together lights and motors. I've never laid a cursor on software like Maya or Sketch, their intimidating interfaces paralyze me. The closest I've gotten to the idea of "combining" engineering and art is taking digital photographs. As a computer science major and 2D art minor, I staunchly keep them separate. It's not a matter of right brain versus left brain, feminine versus masculine, or passion versus practicality. Those binaries all feel like oversimplifications. But they do serve different intellectual purposes such that combining them in my practice feels clumsy, like an unnecessary fuss.

All that being said, I can't deny video games. The video game as an art form was a huge part of my coming-of-age-- I can't deny the influence they have had on my creativity. Video game concept art is the foundation of the visual identity of a game, of the characters that we identify with and fear, of the fantasy worlds we find refuge in. Concept art requires a holistic understanding of the function a design or illustration will play in a greater system. (Which sounds like engineering.) This system relies heavily on its visuals to stir emotion, communicate histories, and evoke atmospheres. (Which sounds like art.) It's this kind of synthesis that makes me doubt my position of keeping the two separate, and question whether that's even possible. I had the wonderful opportunity to sit down for a conversation with Quiana Dang, a junior Interactive Media and Game Design major with an extraordinary talent for concept art that transcends genre. After leaving her illustration class, Dang met me in a venue of her choice, the Ronald Tutor Hall Cafe, which was in the same building where she's rumored to attend her USC eSports meetings. (Don't quote me on that.)

Environmental Lighting Concept for Project Gingko
Clip Studio Paint, 2019

QIANZE: You've worked on all sorts of games, from a tabletop dating sim to a puzzle horror game with Asian-inspired aesthetics. How do you choose the games projects you want to work on?

QUIANA: I took a lot of business classes in high school. So I think about "business-marketing-success" and all that. The games that I choose to work on are games that I think I can help bring to success. I wouldn't spend my time on a game I don't like or a game I don't think could do well. It's a form of self-cultivation. I think a problem that a lot of games majors have is that they pick or make the game they'd like to work on "ideally." Like, their dream game. The problem is, in the industry, companies need to make money. They can't always make money off of what's important to you. It's stressful, and it's really sad to say it out loud. But games you make for yourself? Those are amazing games. You can absolutely choose not to make money off of games. If I made an indie game and poured my heart and soul into it, I would want to release it for free so it could reach as many people as possible. But at the end of the day, the story that I want to tell might not always be the story that people want to hear.

QIANZE: How did you get into concept art for games?

QUIANA: I've been drawing all my life. That's the one thing I've been doing consistently since I was a

Mock Game Key Art Done for an Illustration Class
Clip Studio & Adobe Photoshop, 2020

child. When I was in high school, I did computer security. I really enjoyed it and then, in my senior year, I was like, "I hate this shit so much. This is the worst thing ever." I still do it, which is stupid; it's my minor. But, and this is the answer I give to every personal essay question, since I was in so deep with computers, I was thinking about how I could move from computers to art, because art is what I love. So I thought, what if I just made a video game, right? So I made one, and I was like, this is kinda lit.

QIANZE: What was the game?

QUIANA: Have you heard of RPG Maker? It was an RPG maker game. Well, there were a few. They're buried very deeply in my past. If you search really hard you can find them, but I'm not gonna give them to you... Anyway, it wasn't really until college when I realized that games was a possible career path. When I came to USC, I decided I was going to do game design. I enjoyed designing games with my cohort and friends. But then I realized that, no matter what I was doing, I was still drawing. At the end of the day, I was always still focusing on the visual aspect of the game. That was how I would tell stories and convey certain feelings and experiences. And I realized I should just be a game artist. Why didn't I just do that?

So, I tried concept art because I like to do nice fat, well-rendered out illustrations. Concept art isn't exactly that, but that's one of the skill sets you can have, and that's what I was used to. So I started with some little baby concept art my freshman year, and signed up for an AGP at USC; it was called Project Icarus at the time. It's my love, I love that project so much. From there, I built a portfolio.

QIANZE: I know this is mean to ask, but what are your post-grad plans? Do they relate to concept art?

QUIANA: To be honest, that's what I want to do. I'm not sure if that's what I'm going to do for the rest of my life because, it's hard. I don't go to art school. I don't truly go to art art school. I go to game design school. So a lot of this, I'm learning by myself, which is hard.

QIANZE: That's cool, but honestly I think self teaching is the wave. Not everyone can afford art school or formal art classes. I'm kind of in that category and, obviously, I'm somewhat insecure, but it's not the kind of "insecure" that makes me want to stop trying, or anything like that.

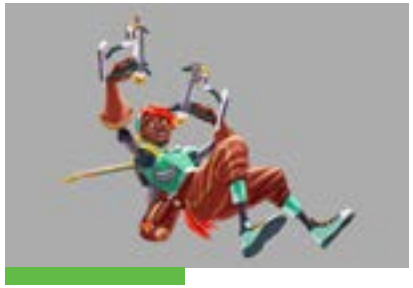
QUIANA: That insecurity part. That hits real hard. I'm taking my first art class ever this semester. Like, ever ever. It's an illustration class, I just got out of it actually. I really love it. It feels so good to be around a bunch of other people doing art. I've never felt that feeling before, and that breeds imposter syndrome, you know? "Am I really supposed to be here if I don't know all these terms that other people know?" I've been thinking about this a lot. We work with some students from ArtCenter for our AGPs, and they are jacked. They are so buff at art. And I'm just sitting here like, "I draw because it's fun."

Mock Game Key Art Done for an Illustration Class
Clip Studio & Adobe Photoshop, 2020

Color Key Art for the USC Advanced Games Project Ascend
Adobe Photoshop & Autodesk Maya, 2018

Earlier Concepts for Mufid
Adobe Photoshop, 2018

Turnarounds for Mufid
Adobe Photoshop, 2018



Rendered Character Art for Mufid
Adobe Photoshop, 2019

I don't feel great about not going to art school. I had a big problem with that last year; it really sucks, and I'm trying to get over it. But also, my brain doesn't think I can be as good at them, so I'm transitioning to UI art and graphic design.

QIANZE: Shifting gears a little. Do you think you could walk me through your process for creating concept art?

QUIANA: My big thing when I make concept art is accuracy. Like, historical accuracy, narrative accuracy, I love that stuff. I love the little stories behind everything. So when I get a task, for example, let's say I'm tasked to create a table lamp. A Roman table lamp. I would research it, find the relevant types of architecture, the materials, shapes, forms and all the hidden meanings behind those.

I'll do a bunch of sketches based on research and present them to the director and art director. I don't have much of a say there. Then, depending on what they want, I'll render out a full color painting, which is basically me slapping paint down in whatever ways work. From there, it goes to the 3D modeller. Those big paintings that you see, those are really cool, but that's not most of concept art. I do a lot of little pieces and props. .

QIANZE: On the topic of Project Gingko, how was the shift to drawing horror art? I feel like it's a genre of its own. Was this your first time?

QUIANA: I had never done horror before. When I started work on Project Gingko, and I was asked to create monsters, I was super excited. I wanted to evoke all those fears people have in the backs of their heads that they don't really talk about, much less visualize. I'm talking about dripping saliva, teeth, blood, exposed flesh, all the grotesque things you can think about, everything nasty. Concepting and rendering these things is the most fun thing on Earth, because I get to think about the materials. Good creature design is really fun to do. I don't know if I've hit it, but it's really fun.

QIANZE: To what extent is your work reflect your own life? Is it autobiographical or intentionally politicized?

QUIANA: A lot of my art is about stories. For a while, that meant fan art-- making art depicting stories that weren't necessarily about me. From there, I did move on to original stories. When it comes to personal narratives, I think I only make art about that in my extremely emotional moments. Sophomore year detail? Yes.

After drawing that, I felt like a burden was lifted off my shoulders, except not really, because everything that happened still happened. Slapping my trauma on a canvas and "look at this shit" doesn't solve everything.

CHANDLER BJORK
Moral // Faith
Charcoal on Paper with Paper Blinders, 2019