The State of the Union, 2020
Tian Brown
13"x19"

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ARS 325 Project 3

Artist Statement

For this assignment, I decided to take the idea of 'postcards' literally, and incorporate some of the styles and imagery of vintage American postcards into my work. While looking through different types of postcards, in particular ones from the mid-20th century, that were made for each state in the USA, I was struck by how different the idealistic imagery and sceneries depicted in the cards was, compared to the reality that we live in. In particular, I felt that there was a sharp contrast between the picturesque drawings in the postcards, and the many disasters and tragedies that we have faced over the course of this year. So, I decided to base my project around these postcards, but with an important twist - I was going to keep the bright, colorful borders and font styles from the original postcards and contrast them with dark, depressing imagery from some of the many disasters that have occurred across the country this year.

In order to do this, I spent quite a bit of time browsing through online fonts, looking for something that gave me the same sort of vibe that I got from looking at those vintage postcards. I wasn't able to exactly replicate the font, because most of the postcards had small pictures inside the letters, and I figured that since I was using photos and other realistic images, it wouldn't look very good. Eventually, I settled on a font and a set of various effects that I applied to the main text in each postcard. While doing this, I did some research into the many tragic events that have shook our country this year. Some of them were easy to remember, such as the wildfires in California, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the numerous riots and protests across the country, however I also found myself remembering other disasters that I had forgotten about, such as earthquakes in Puerto Rico that left thousands without homes, power, and/or water. If anything, it spoke to the scale of these tragedies this year, that we were all able to collectively forget about a humanitarian crisis as large as this. After picking out my fonts and my six locations, it was only a matter of finding the right images to convey the feeling that I desired. It took quite a while to find images that I was happy with, since some events (such as COVID-19) are hard to represent by a large, landscape-style image, which is what I was looking to use as the main backgrounds. However, I was eventually able to find a good background image for each postcard, and in some cases I blended multiple images together to create a collage of sorts.