

# THE CANNON

Est. 1978

VOL XLVI ♦ Summer 2T3

The image shows a pink background with a repeating pattern of the words "PAGE SPACES". The words are written in a bold, rounded font where each letter is outlined in yellow and filled with a bright magenta color. The pattern is organized into several rows and columns, creating a textured, tiled effect across the entire surface.

# THE CANNON

---

## MANAGING EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Navin Vanderwert

## CREATIVE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Rauha Ahmed

## EXECUTIVE TEAM

### layout manager

Tobin Zheng

### editors

Nathanael Kusanda

Johnny McRae

### graphics director

Raida Fardous

### social media manager

Emaan Fatima

## CONTRIBUTORS

### writing

Kaija Mikes

Liliane Kreuder

### art + graphics

Zack Fine

Amelia Marlowe

Mila Markovski

Gabrielle Jean Pierre

Jenn Xu

## SPECIAL THANKS

Renee Slen

ASP Printing

---

**The Cannon is the official magazine of the  
University of Toronto Engineering Society**

The views expressed herein are those of their authors,  
and do not necessarily reflect those of the Engineering  
Society.

Contact us at [cannon@skule.ca](mailto:cannon@skule.ca) to contribute

# *Madness and Mayhem*

Rauha Ahmed  
Image: Zack Fine

## IN THE TAPESTRY OF HUMAN EXISTENCE,

**spaces** bear witness to the ebb and flow of time, silently holding the echoes of past experiences and shaping the narratives of the present. Each brick laid, each room furnished, carries within it the weight of history, both luminous and dark. From grand cathedrals to humble dwellings, from bustling marketplaces to secluded asylums, every space possesses a tale to tell, a history that intertwines with the lives that have inhabited it.

In the realm of mental institutions, spaces envisioned as sanctuaries of healing and progress, a disconcerting dichotomy emerges. While designed to provide solace and treatment for the afflicted, these institutions hold within their walls a haunting history, particularly evident during the Victorian era. A period marked by societal transformations and shifting gender dynamics, the Victorian era also witnessed the misuse of psychiatry as a tool of oppression against women.

The societal norms of the time often confined women to prescribed roles, emphasizing female purity and supporting the ideal of the “true woman” as wife, mother, and keeper of the home (because of course a woman could not be a “true” whole person unless seen in relation to somebody else). In Victorian society, the home was the basis of morality and a sanctuary free from the corruption of the city. As guardians of the home and family, women were believed to be more emotional, dependent, and gentle by nature. This perception of femininity led to the popular conclusion that women were more susceptible to disease and illness and was a basis for the diagnosis of insanity in many female patients during the 19th century.

On the basis of Victorian gender distinctions, it was common for patients to be diagnosed as suffering from “hysteria” – a condition predominantly attributed to women and characterized by a range of vague symptoms. Hysteria became a catch-all diagnosis for women who dared to challenge conventional roles or exhibit behaviour deemed socially unacceptable. These women were subjected to institutionalization, often against their will, and treatments that ranged from dubious to outright harmful. The asylums, intended as sanctuaries of recovery, became spaces of isolation and persecution for those who dared to deviate from societal norms.

Although there were hysterical males, attributing the condition to the female nature fit the social model of women, and validated the “medical integrity” of psychiatry by providing a suitable diagnosis (ah yes, let’s create fake science to justify the unfair notions we’ve concocted about women). For hysterical women and their families, the asylum offered a convenient and socially acceptable excuse for inappropriate, and potentially scandalous behaviour. Rather than being viewed as a bad and immoral woman, honour and reputation could be maintained by the diagnosis of a medical condition and commitment to an asylum.

As public institutions, asylums faced intense public scrutiny. This made superintendents very aware of the need to be progressive and innovative in the treatments used in asylums. Employing the latest technologies, trends, and theories of treatment was necessary for the success of the asylum in public opinion, and benefited the professional prominence of the superintendent. At the London Asylum, Dr. R. Maurice Bucke used controversial surgical procedures on patients to establish himself as a leader in Canadian gynecology. Bucke adopted the popular Victorian idea that the female reproductive organs were connected to emotional and physical well-being, and were thus the most likely cause of mental illness. Combined with the ac-

cepted theory that curing the body would cure the mind, treatments for female insanity at the London Asylum were grounded in the belief that removal or correction of the afflicted organ would restore sanity. Gynecological surgeries, such as hysterectomies, became a regular procedure until the end of the nineteenth century, when advances in mental health care began to turn against it. Despite criticism that referred to his procedures as “meddlesome” and the “mutilation of helpless lunatics,” Dr. Bucke continued the practice at the London Asylum until his death in 1902. Women were also the main recipients of almost all of the most dangerous and fatal psychiatric treatments, including electroconvulsive therapy, frontal lobotomies and insulin therapies. When challenged, doctors would state that patients in psychiatric hospitals were so delusional and disordered that they could not make informed decisions about their care, and therefore, their consent was not required.

Ambitious aspirations, outspokenness, sexual curiosity, and even grieving too intensely were all grounds for institutionalization. Women seeking educational or professional advancement, displaying signs of independence, or expressing desires beyond marriage and motherhood were deemed “unfit” and subjected to confinement. Moreover, those grappling with postpartum depression or other mental health challenges were

*“Rather than being viewed as a bad and immoral woman, honour and reputation could be maintained by the diagnosis of a medical condition and commitment to an asylum.”*

*“For the vast majority of Victorian women who found themselves institutionalized and labelled as lunatics, mystery continues to surround their circumstances, as well as the crimes they may or may not have committed.”*

frequently cast aside as “unstable” and removed from society.

Elizabeth Packard, for example, was a teacher living in Jacksonville, Illinois. She was the mother of six children and was expected to be gentle, caring, and obedient, the ideal Victorian woman. At some point in her marriage, however, she started disagreeing with the radical religious beliefs of her husband, Theophilus Packard, a strict Calvinist pastor.

One morning at church, Packard reached her breaking point. She stood up in the middle of her husband’s sermon and announced she was going to the Methodist church across the street. “To the more conservative members of Reverend Packard’s church, who held firm to the Calvinist bedrock of human depravity and ignorance, her beliefs were literal evidence of insanity,” Hendrik Hartog wrote in his 1989 article in the Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities, “Mrs. Packard on Dependency.”

For Theophilus, the solution was clear: Elizabeth had to be institutionalized.

He arranged for a doctor to visit his wife while pretending to be a

sewing machine salesman. Packard confided in the doctor-salesman. She told him about her husband’s extreme religious ideas and his belief that she was a lunatic. But the doctor sided with her husband, diagnosing her as insane and sending her to the Illinois State Hospital for the Insane in Jacksonville. His reasons included her refusal to shake his hand and the fact that she was above the age of 40. (At the time, Illinois law did not require proof of mental illness for a husband to put his wife away.)

Packard was locked up for three years. When her son turned 21, he was able to secure her release. But her confinement didn’t end right away: once she returned home, Theophilus locked her in the house and nailed the windows shut. In 1864, she stood trial in Packard v. Packard to prove her sanity and regain the right to leave her home. She won the case (it took just seven minutes for a jury to see that Packard was sane).

After separating from her husband, Packard founded the Anti-Insane Asylum Society and campaigned for divorced women to retain custody of their children. She also went on to author several books.

Not every story ended as happily as Packard’s. Some women remained locked up for decades, while others were never heard from again. For the vast majority of Victorian women who found themselves institutionalized and labelled as lunatics, mystery continues to surround their circumstances, as well as the crimes they may or may not have committed. Because of the lack of historical records, their stories are largely lost to history. But the stories we do have are worth remembering—and retelling—as best we can. They continue to echo from the notes of the doctors and citizens who knew these women, and from the gated asylums in which they were held. The unsettling legacy of Victorian-era mental institutions underscores the profound interplay between spaces and societal norms. These institutions, designed as sanctuaries of healing, darkly manifested as tools of female oppression, revealing the extent to which spaces can be harnessed to enforce and perpetuate biases. ♦

# I Never Needed a Simile

Nathanael Kusanda



Restaurant owners Jeanne Chai and David Burga  
Photographer: Amelia Marlowe

**Moving to Toronto elucidated an obscure yet obvious truth to me**, which is that every nationalized dish you have is one immigrant's version of home. The Singaporean Hong Kong roasted pork over rice (烧肉饭) is different than the Torontonian version: the immigrant that was so kind as to bring it with them to Singapore thought the pork belly ought to be crispier, fattier, lathered in a dark, sweet sauce; the immigrant to Toronto preferred it to be leaner, saltier, understated in its flavor profile but arguably heartier. But those distinctions that materialize in the present day were not arbitrary decisions by the chef: they contain an unwritten epicurean history of their revolving communities; parents who passed the recipe down in the oral traditions, neighbors who made passing remarks of "it's too salty" or "it's too sweet". The unfamiliar neighborhood of a new country tasting the dish for the first time, for whom contorting the flavors to their tastes may afford a second, third, and fourth visit which – for as deeply as tradition matters – is rather important for an immigrant hoping to make a living.

If nations are projects, I think Singapore is an endeavor in taking this truth to an extreme, and yet to have that specificity feel undeniably local. To merge a version of home into an original home of its own. A cause for equal amusement and frustration in Toronto is to observe the item "Singaporean Noodles" on the menu of a Chinese restaurant, because what could that possibly mean? Is it Bak Chor Mee, flat yellow noodles tossed in chili oil and served with minced pork, lard and sometimes pork liver? Is it Char Kway Teow, wide rice noodles stir fried with prawns, lap cheong and cockles to a godly, smoky, wok hei? Or is it Hokkien Mee, thin egg noodles and rice noodles fried in a heavenly white broth with pork belly, prawns, squid, served with sambal and lime and plated on a folded Opeh leaf?

Tracing any of these dishes to their origin finds that genesis anywhere but

in Singapore, and also finds a plate immediately distinguishable from its present form; it has evolved along so specific

and meaningful an immigrant journey, a distinct

amalgamation of personal histories forged only in Singapore's version of a cultural mosaic, and thus earning the descriptor Singaporean. I think this idea resonates with me, and Singapore feels like home, even though I am not actually Singaporean.

Jeanne and her partner David bear the heavy responsibility of running Kiss My Pans, the only

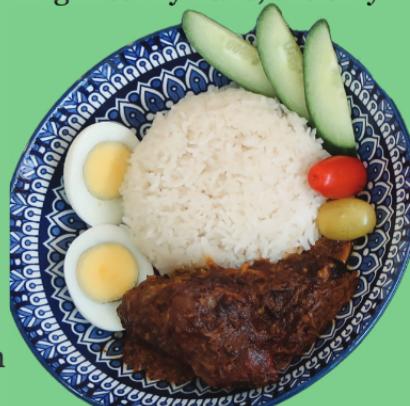
Singaporean coffee shop, or kopitiam, in Toronto.

Jeanne never needed a simile to describe these dishes, and she still doesn't need one now, because the food she wakes up at 5am to prepare doesn't just evoke home:

it recreates it within a plate, transporting its recipient to Singapore with such full-bodied, unapologetic flavor that one imagines the country in vivid color, regardless of whether or not they've actually been there.

An outspoken element of the immigrant narrative is the homeward journey, a reclamation of cultural identity and a reconnection with a vast history blurred by one's migration both in flesh and in spirit. After a childhood and coming of age that oscillated between Canada and Singapore, the economic crisis of 2008 loosened the ties Jeanne had to the Toronto she had settled in as a young adult.

Fueled further by a sense of adventure and curiosity for what Asia had to offer, it motivated her own homeward journey, this time with her



partner David, who had never lived anywhere outside of Canada. They moved with the full awareness that they would not be moving for good, and the vision of a future diametrically opposed journey lingered in the back of their minds.

Any immigrant will tell you that home is a complicated idea, for there is as much reason behind its being the object of one's longing as there is in the obvious fact of one's displacement. Jeanne uses the same words that outsiders to Singapore would use to describe the city-state: "efficient" and "innovative". However, among

a plethora of things a vacation will not tell you is that working in Singapore is not easy. There is little sense of work-life balance; the two notions are so intertwined that a hyphen is too strong a divider. Jeanne had never worked in Singapore, but she appeared Singaporean, and thus was expected to work as a Singaporean would. And even though locals saw David as obviously Canadian, the lower expectations this may have afforded still entailed 16-18 hour work days at their worst.



This homeward journey spanned twelve years, and was bookended dramatically by the twin upheavals of a financial crisis and a global pandemic. Within this extensive but temporary duration, a complicated yet beautiful conception of home was forged, along with Jeanne's sense of self both within Singaporean society and outside of it. She felt like an outcast amidst young Singaporeans, their need to treat life as a ceaseless upward scramble over one's neighbor to a bigger house, a faster car, a higher-paying job. It's part of the reason that Jeanne's eventual return to Toronto could also be described as a homeward journey: "Toronto is home," she affirms to me in the present day, "I feel like I can be myself here." But the sense of adventure that is so intrinsic to her identity, driving her deviation from the

linear life path defined for many Singaporeans, was also reconciled to her vast heritage during this journey, and rekindled by the reaffirmation of her love for Singaporean food.

It wasn't tradition that enabled this: even though her grandmother had sold Yu Char Kway<sup>1</sup> at a hawker center, cousins sold Otak<sup>2</sup> and Rojak<sup>3</sup>, and her own parents used to sell Kopi and Chinese desserts like Ice Kacang<sup>4</sup>, it was not a tradition that was passed down directly to her. Remarks of "you're in my way" and "go study" characterized her isolation from her family kitchen. She remembers watching her grandmother cook, but she received no words, no family recipes, no guidance. In fact, her mentor was the mother of a friend who had left Singapore, a Malay woman who

was kind enough to invite Jeanne into her own home and relay her vast, unwritten epicurean history. Jeanne remembers being frustrated by the lack of precision in these lessons, the remark, “a little bit of this, a little bit of that” ascribed all too often to crucial ingredients. “I need a recipe!” Jeanne remembers demanding. But in its place, she gained something else: intuition. She learned to use her tongue to interpret what the arbitrary units of a teaspoon or a tablespoon could not. Even now, as she trains new chefs at Kiss My Pans, she is sure to articulate the importance of this wordless understanding of flavor. “Someone may follow a recipe to a tee,” she posits, “but never get that taste.”

After being laid off from her marketing and partnerships job at a Singaporean dating company in 2018, she did what anyone else would do: start a completely original home dining experience, which she describes as “AirBnB for foodies.” It was within this experience that a microcosm of David’s own homeward journey was given new life: the Peruvian recipes his mother had ingrained in him as he stood at the pot and stirred provided a jumping pad from which his creativity could soar, as he and Jeanne curated expansive, multi-course menus that captured the decades and continents that sprawled under the surface of their own home. Eventually, their second global upheaval in two decades brought this adventure to a screeching halt, and they saw it as a sign that it was finally time for their second homeward journey.

My grandparents’ generation existed in China, inheriting a history that was undoubtedly vast, but obliterated before the chaos of their present day. They saw in that chaos a hopelessness so potent that a village exploded into a diaspora, unconscious of the degree of flux this entailed and the inter-generational trauma they set in motion, but which they collectively resolved was necessary to plunge into headfirst. And thus, granduncles and grandaunts migrated to Thailand, suffered, and took on names like Boonmee; grandmothers and

<sup>1</sup>Yu Char Kway: a deep fried dough stick enjoyed with porridge, Ba Kut Teh or on its own

<sup>2</sup>Otak: a fish cake grilled in a bamboo leaf often found in Nasi Lemak

<sup>3</sup>Rojak: a spicy, sugary salad of pineapple, cucumbers, turnips, tempe, fried tofu, beansprouts, etc.

<sup>4</sup>Ice Kacang: shaved ice topped with cendol (green flour jelly), red beans, corn, etc., drizzled with syrup

grandfathers migrated to Indonesia, suffered, and took on names like Widjaya. My own surname can be traced back to my grandmother who, driven by linguistic repression to abandon her Chinese name, but refusing to settle with the generic Indonesian name my grandfather had chosen, coined the name Kusanda to house her original diaspora.



And thus, my sister is born in Jakarta and Indonesian is her first language, but just as quickly as she grows into this conception of her world, we find ourselves in Thailand, and after an eventful and exciting first day, her call of “okay, let’s go home now!” is met with the sad reality that she is not a tourist but an immigrant. Upon becoming aware for the first time that the word ‘home’ for her will always be ill-defined, she cries. I, on the other hand, experience this turmoil from the comfort of my mother’s womb, and do not cry. I am born, and we leave for Singapore so quickly that I have no memory of the country of my birth.

And Singapore is the closest thing to home to me, and I know this because I often wake up in the middle of the night in this vast, treacherous continent without knowing where I am, and the first illusion I conjure is always my childhood bedroom. I know this because the uncle at the Chicken Rice stall opposite the school I went to for 14 years knows my order by my face – roasted Chicken Rice with kai lan and an extra egg. I know this because my parents – who placed my older sister and I in that deliberately transitory, delocalized fluid called an international school so that we would not feel like foreigners in whatever country we would move to



next – are still there, and my little sister goes to a local school and code switches as deftly as a chef yields a knife.

Jeanne and David arrive in Toronto as new immigrants, once again. They arrive in a country completely different from the one they had left, one that is a little less tolerant, a little more jaded, and mournfully hollowing out in the midst of a pandemic. They are starting from ground zero, and with no contacts, no suppliers, and no expectations, they begin to create something out of nothing, that something being lovingly curated cheese grazing boards that are about to blow up. As they drive through barren streets delivering their boards between loved ones and the people that love them, realizing all too literally in their charcuterie the notion that food can be a conduit between people, they observe in the barren ghost of once bustling streets cavities in the wake of shuttered businesses that were the lifeblood of vibrant neighborhoods. It's a mournful landscape, but one in which they must necessarily plant their roots and nurture a space of their own.

Kiss My Pans is a space built by the community. Jeanne remembers the wonder and gratefulness she felt when people started dropping off cans of paint at their storefront. It was a leap of faith, to build a business out of an offer to take anything off of people's hands, but in a life as storied as hers, where previous leaps of faith spanned continents, they found their most graceful landing yet in the arms of community. "I don't think I could've opened the space we have now in Singapore – the community wouldn't have rallied behind it like they did here." In their first Christmas as a physical store, they found themselves with \$20,000 worth of cheese – which Jeanne appropriately classified as a "shitload" – a dearth of customers, and all the panic one could possibly fit between those extremes. But just as quickly as she could ask, members of the community were pouring in with the question, "Tell me what you need to get rid of first". They start selling Singaporean Kopi to go along with the cheese, and this is actually David's doing. He had fallen in love with it in those twelve years: the tarik motion with which Uncles in Singapore pour their



black, butter-roasted coffee, the physics-defying arc between cup and kettle that is as technically sound as it is flamboyant. He is their unlikely but undeniably deserving protege, he even uses a sock – “You have to use the sock!” Jeanne says proudly – to filter the grounds, just as they do. As the sweet, deep brown thickness hits my tongue, it feels like a faded photograph of a street I once walked daily is regaining its color again. An invitation from Smorgasburg challenges Jeanne to learn to make Kueh, the prefix for dozens of both sweet and savory

Singaporean snacks that reflect vast ancestries in their colorful layers, and selling out at 2pm on day one signals to Jeanne that maybe there’s a Singapore-shaped hole Torontonians were incognizant of but are now itching to fill, and didn’t she learn a few dishes from that dear lady back home?

I never needed a simile to capture home, for its localized multiplicity was always surrounding me. It was always a two-minute walk to a three-dollar dish; a familiar yet far-reaching flavor promised even in an



unfamiliar neighborhood. In Singapore, the ground floor of a neighborhood is always uninhabited, it is a communal space made agape by housing laws and the nondescript term “void deck”, though often that void is filled to the brim with the boundless, four-mother tongue-encompassing flavors of a hawker center, through which it is no longer a void but a communal living room.

I never needed a simile, until it was no longer my immediate reality, but instead the recurring backdrop of fragmented memories I had no choice but to string together into a personal history. Until I struggled to relay these memories in words, an endeavor doomed from the onset by their sensorial nature, to someone for whom it had never been an immediate reality. I had never thought to know what galangal was, let alone that it was an integral spice to Rendang, or to describe Laksa as involving a shrimp broth – Rendang was Ren-

dang, Laksa was Laksa, and everyone I had ever known had an insular yet shared experience they could house within those words. I had never thought to transfer that vast palette of textures, aromas, ingredients, and emotions, into a universal vernacular.

And there is an inherent, immovable frustration in this endeavor, in the fact that regardless of the precision with which I choose my words, and regardless of the extent to which my words flourish, they could never even begin to capture both the physical and personal dimensions that compose my adoration. And there is an inherent loneliness – even two years after leaving home – in mulling over that endeavor in my mind, because how fully can the friends I have here know me if they didn’t poke their chopsticks into a communal bowl of 麻辣香锅 (mala fragrant pot) with me every Friday after school, and what else about home will I never be able to articulate?

On an auspicious Sunday in 2022, a cheese shop manifests its first dish of Singaporean Nasi Lemak. They had already begun selling Otak-otak – a spicy fish cake grilled in a bamboo leaf over charcoal – at Smorgasburg, and so all was left was to cook jasmine rice in coconut milk to establish a baseline of heartwarming fragrance, and to make sambal, which is to leap off of that baseline into a challenging, addictive, explosion of sweetness and spiciness, so full in its flavor it could constitute a meal when paired with rice alone. They begin serving this dish to loyal customers, hinting that they now have a secret menu, and unsurprisingly, they are intrigued, becoming aware for the first time of a Singapore-shaped hole in their hearts, but not even beginning to fathom the colors that could fill that hole. Over the next few weeks, their secret contorts playfully into Beef Rendang, as chunks of meat slow-cooked in a deep, earthy stew for hours are consumed in minutes. But time elongates within those minutes, as galangal and coconut shreds and chillies activate a tumultuous ancient dance that began in Indonesia centuries ago, as lemongrass and coconut milk and turmeric bares

the turmoil of waves on which ships migrated across South East Asia. A transcendent conception of history is made clear not in words, but in satisfaction that can resonate only in a perfect harmony of flavor.

There is an active decision on Jeanne's part, that dishes that have spanned generations, carried along by the cascading social fabric of South East Asia, torn in parts by colonialism and patched together with beautiful fabrics and dyes by solidarity, will not be discolored because a Canadian wants their Laksa to be vegan. And don't get her started on the prospect of merging these cherished dishes with seemingly familiar Western dishes! "I've just never had good fusion food!" she laughs. And that is the promise of Kiss My Pans: loyalty to the flavors that are close to her stomach, and a faithful revitalization of those flavors for all who seek to be transported.

Jeanne used to feel uncomfortable when Canadians would ask her where she was from. "And when Singaporeans asked me the same question, I didn't want to answer that either."

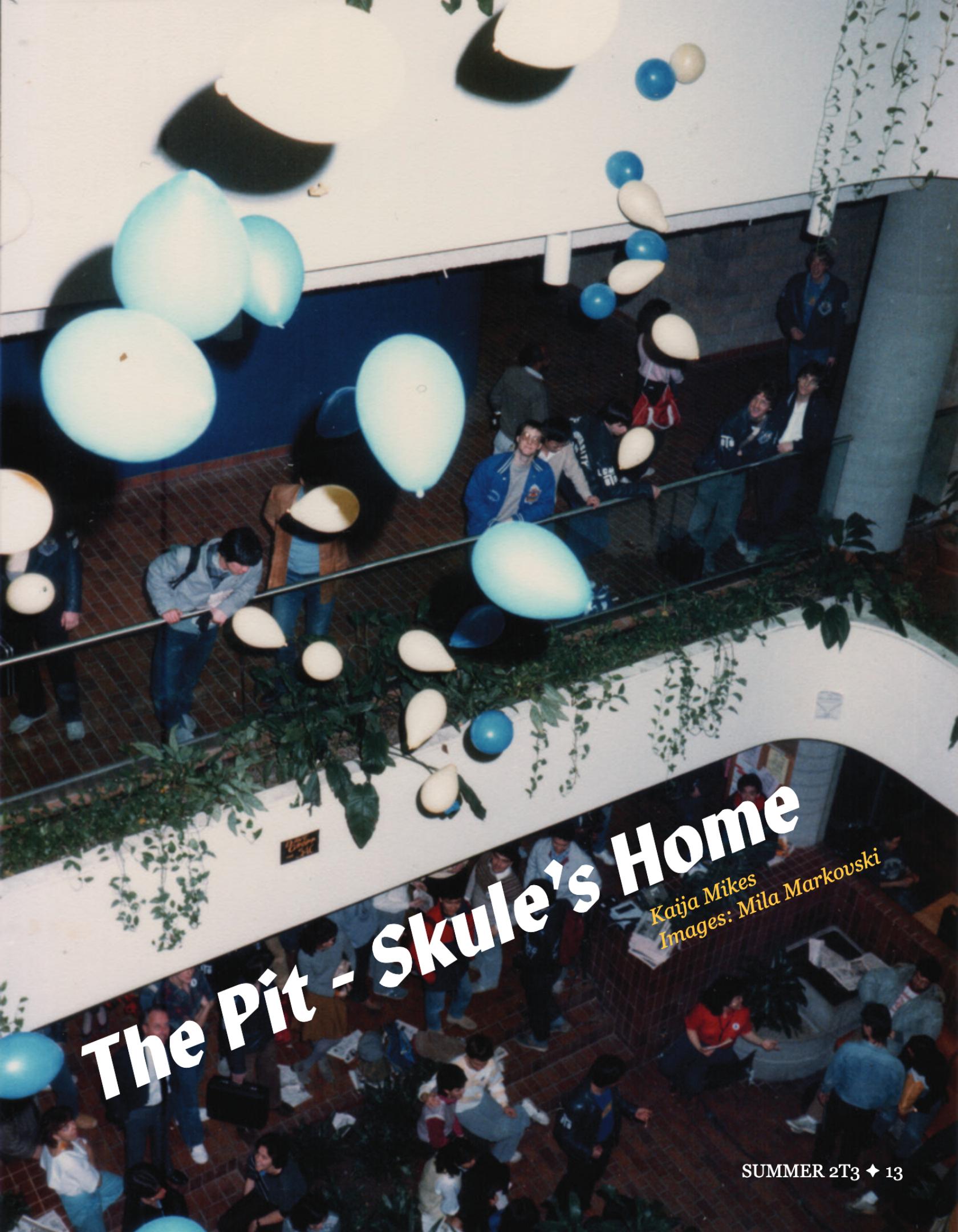


Home is still a complicated idea: today she's more than willing to answer "I am Singaporean", to share her story. In doing so, she opens up a channel for the person who asked to share their story as well. "And again, we come back to the community," she affirms, "it's only through the sharing of stories that we find common ground." In the luminous, communal living room of Jeanne's and David's kopitiam nestled in Little Italy, my friends try Laksa for the first time. And a first sip of that generous, red and yellow broth does more in milliseconds than my similes ever could.♦

Kiss My Pans is Jeanne Chai and David Burga  
567 College St, Toronto, ON  
Open Saturday - Monday 9am - 4pm

# The Pit - Skule's Home

Kaija Mikes  
Images: Mila Markouski



**The basement of the Sandford Fleming Building** officially (and stuffily) called the "Sandford Fleming Atrium" is colloquially known as "The Pit" by students.

The Pit features chairs and tables and is officially a cafeteria with Veda and the Hard Hat Cafe open during the school year to sell food to students. However, unique to other cafeterias is the sunken square section in the center of the room. The pit inside of The Pit, if you will.

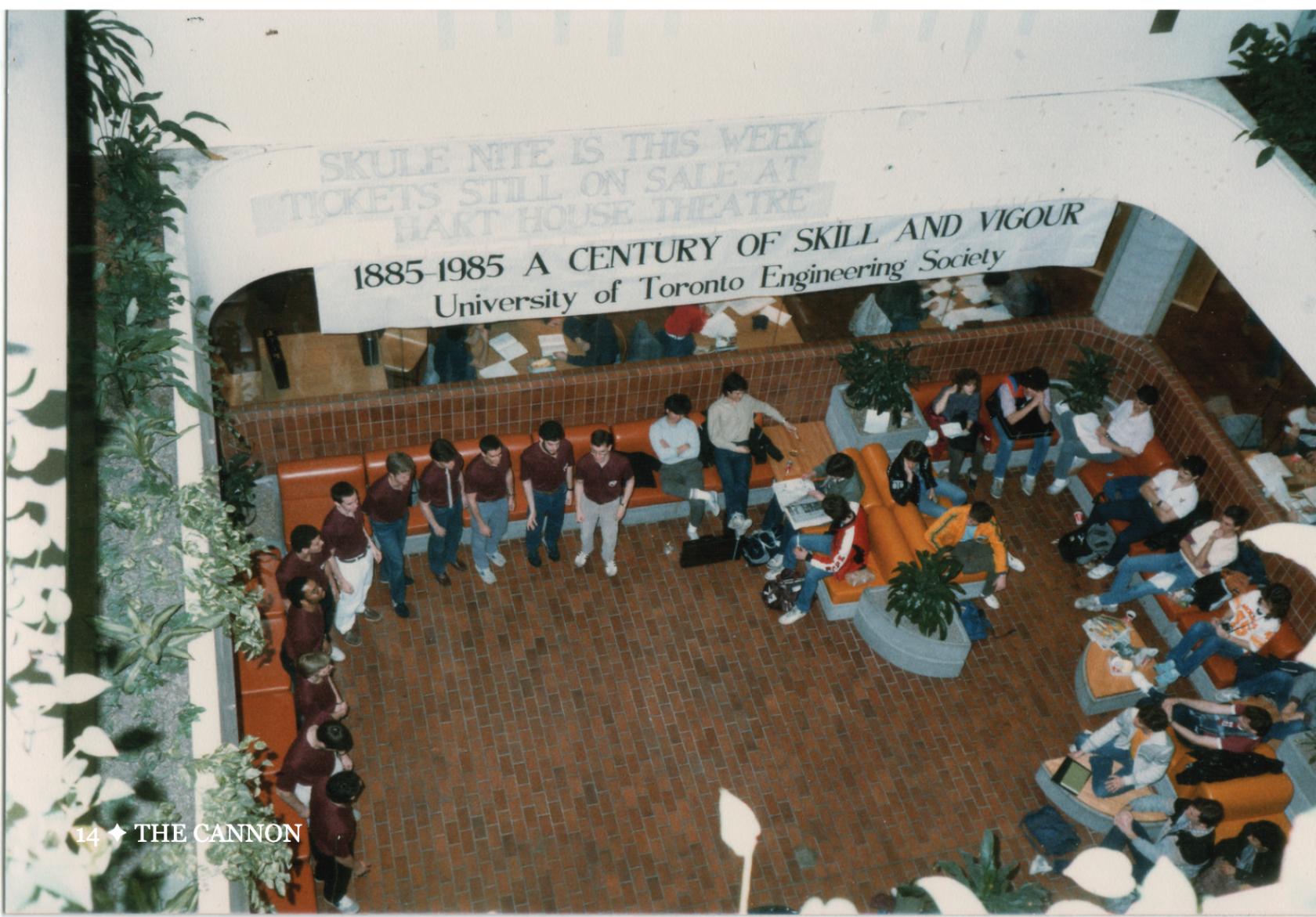
Giving this space such a casual name allows it to host a range of activities and people from selling flowers for valentines to hosting bake sales, builds and so much more. Anything can happen in The Pit.

The Pit allows for imperfection which fosters creativity. It's a space which gives the freedom to interact however one wishes to with their surroundings.

There's space for everything in The Pit. The EngSoc Offices are located there. The Engineering Communications Room, The Bnad Room, The B&G Room and the \*\*\*\* Office too. The Pit is a space for everyone to come together and do absolutely anything. The Pit also hosts Godiva Week, Skule's Spirit Week, and all of the events that come along with it. Godiva's Resurrection, Ultimate Frosh, Charity Auction, Mr. Blue and Gold, Godiva's Crown and Godiva's Wake all take place in The Pit during the first week of the Winter Semester.

In short, The Pit is a place for students, by students. The murals on the walls reflect this, as each graduating year has a themed mural in The Pit reflecting their experiences through their years in Skule. The back wall is also decorated by a painting of many different Skule symbols and the first few verses of Godiva's Hymn.

The Pit is also home to 4 vending machines with their own stories and histories. The two pop vending machines are managed by the LGMB (Lady Godiva Memorial Bnad) and are fantastic for getting something sweet to drink even if Veda and HHC are not open. My favorite thing to get is the cherry coke, but there are plenty of options from either of these machines.





*Left: The Pit during the Engineering Society Centennial, 1985.*

*Above: The Godiva Week stage, 2020.*

The Pit is also home to two other vending machines, lovingly named Beauty and The Beast. No one knows how long The Beast has been in The Pit, but that just makes it part of what makes the space special. You may need to be patient with The Beast but it still works to provide students with yummy snacks (I would recommend trying the popcorn!).

Beauty is the most recent addition to The Pit. It appeared this summer and is the newest vending

machine. Beauty is very high-tech and features a range of items from snacks to stickers to other bits and bobs. The vending machines embody the personality of The Pit, from the utility to the chaos that comes along with the space.

The Pit also reflects Engineering history with the last permanent grad prank. In the back section of The Pit, there is a column painted to look like a pinky finger with an iron ring on it. This was the EngSci grad prank of 9T9 (1999) and it

still exists in The Pit more than 20 years later.

Permanent prank installations are no longer done because of the potential to drastically change a space on campus, the costs of cleanup, and the labor needed to be done by custodial staff. However, pranking remains a part of engineering culture with the understanding that it is the responsibility of the prankers to clean up after themselves, leaving no trace of the prank behind.♦

# **What do you see people use the space of the Pit for?**

“EVERYTHING. We build pranks and builds, we hold meetings, we consume beverages, we hang out there idly when we don’t have anything else to do at 4 AM. Sometimes we even put a bouncy castle in there.” - Karen Ng, ECE 1Told

“The Pit is a place for all types of communities to gather. It’s amazing to see the range of communities that use it- from peacefully enjoying a meal or knitting to building a hoop for unicycle basketball or celebrating Pride.” - Tyler DelaBarre, Mech 2T5

“The Pit is one of the most free and flexible spaces on campus. You can do anything in the Pit and that’s what makes it so wonderful! I like to spend my time hanging out with my friends and working on projects and shenanigans alike” - Kaija Mikes, EngSci 2T5

“Working, relaxing, socializing, eating: it’s the space that does it all.”

“The Pit is something different for everyone, but for the people I see there most it is used as a communal space for sharing a deep love for our little culture. Almost always if you walk into The Pit you find someone there who either is using the space for projects and initiatives that are giving back to the community or is just using the space as a safe place to sit around or generally hang out. In my view this is mainly because The Pit doesn’t discriminate, whoever you are and whatever you are doing, you can always be sure that you are welcome in The Pit and that it is a safe space.” - Farbod Mohammadzadeh, EngSci 2T5

“People use The Pit for all sorts of things, it’s one of those spaces on campus that is very versatile and feels very safe for people to exist in. I use it for many different things; mainly enjoying lunch with my friends or studying for whatever course is trying to kill me at that moment. It feels like a place where both serious conversations and silly situations can exist.” - Mila Markovski EngSci 2T5

“Socializing, making new friends, hosting spirit festivals, playing good music on friday” - Bo Zhao, Civ 2T3

“Anyone there that’s not just passing through is there for a fun reason.” - Ken Hilton, ECE 2T5

“I see The Pit as a catch-all for the activities that don’t have their own space - it’s somehow perfectly suited for whatever people need the most at any given moment. I can’t say whether this speaks to the resourcefulness of the student body, or The Pit being a well designed environment, or if it’s just an example of what happens when you give a group of people (almost) full responsibility over their surroundings, but it’s a beautiful thing to see.”

- Navin Vanderwert, EngSci 2T4

“It’s one of the only places on campus where students can do anything cus its charm is how gross it is. The pit is where “student life” stems from ”  
- Joy Lai, EngSci 2T4

“The Pit means a whole lot to me. I first started hanging around The Pit in second semester of my first year when we were still emerging from Covid and no one would really be around. I could shut myself away in a corner and study for ECE159. Gradually, it has evolved into something more than just a study space. I’ve met so many newfound friends there these past two years.”

“I like to think of The Pit as a place of mischief and chaos. You can never have a boring time if you’re there (even if you’re trying to study and you’d like the mischief and chaos to leave you alone) and there are always things going on that will extend an open inviting arm out to whoever is around. For this reason, I would like to think that no matter who you are, if you walk into The Pit on a busy afternoon, you will always have at least one friend that will wave and say hello.” - Farbod Mohammadzadeh, EngSci 2T5

“The Pit means that I have an environment where I can exist with no pretense or purpose: I can pop my bike on a table and fix a flat, I can meet people for the first time, I can do some actual work, I can sit for a while and do nothing, I can share a drink with friends, I can hold a meeting I forgot to book a room for... The Pit means that I have a key to dozens of experiences and interactions that would otherwise not exist.”

- Navin Vanderwert, EngSci 2T4

# **What does the**

"A common area or forum or venue for a variety of events could be \*\*\*\* to more serious discussions to engage students" - Bo Zhao, Civ 2T3

"The Pit means more than a place to me. The Pit is something we all carry with us, a spirit that tells us to be unapologetically ourselves (ok maybe apologize for some things). Long live The Pit and those who inhabit it."

- Tyler DelaBarre, Mech 2T5

It's been the source of many a joyous and wondrous laughing session, an exhausted and tense argument, a distraught sobbing session, and of course many a fun - mildly dangerous - drunken (or sometimes sober) night. After a certain point in the year I start to hang out more in The Pit than my own apartment. It just feels and always has felt like a safe place. If someone asked me where home was in Downtown Toronto, I'd probably answer my apartment first (just to keep some decorum), but the only thing that really comes to mind is the Pit. The Pit is where I make my Skule family, full of friends that I love dearly." - Mila Markovski EngSci 2T5

"It represents the inexplicable idiosyncrasies of UofT Engineering. Why is it there? Who thought it was a good idea? Anyone with a good reason to be in there is there for a fun reason, but its existence is difficult to satisfactorily explain. The same applies to many other features of UofT, FASE, and Skule." - Ken Hilton, ECE 2T5

"It's home. There are tons of times where I've spent more hours in The Pit than at my actual apartment. It's a good place, not because it's a clean and nice place but because of the community it fosters. It's also dirty enough that I don't feel bad when we make a bit of a mess (though we try to clean it the best we can)." - Karen Ng, ECE 1Told

"The Pit is ours, it's a home away from home. It's home because we have the freedom to take ownership over this space, come up with a vision for it, and execute that vision."

"Not to be dramatic but the Pit is the most important part of Skule for me. It's a place where I've been able to find myself, find friends and find passions and that's what makes it so close to my heart. The freedom that the Pit gives to anyone who comes into it, is impossible to replicate anywhere else on campus." - Kaija Mikes, EngSci 2T5

## What's your favorite memory of The Pit?

"Stringing a long ribbon diagonally across the 2nd floor open space above it, for my year's Frosh prank. I did some pretty reckless things, but I am (surprisingly) still in one piece" - Ken Hilton, ECE2T5

"[REDACTED]"

"Performing my Chinese Bowed fiddle for everyone" - Bo Zhao, Civ 2T3

"Probably the 2am shenanigans--the weirdest things happen at those hours but those are my favorites. Whether it was desperately trying to finish a build before sunrise or just sitting at the cash table and arguing about nonsense, I think those are closest to my heart." - Karen Ng, ECE 1Told

"God I have so many lovely memories that I can't even begin to say which. The one I'll have to say here is probably my first time at \*\*\*\* in first year. It was Blacklight \*\*\*\* in March 2022. I'd never been to \*\*\*\* before despite Farbod begging our entire friend group to go." - Mila Markovski, EngSci 2T5

"It's hard to pick just one but it's probably the times where I've been celebrating a friend. I remember one time we were celebrating my friend's birthday in The Pit and we brought a bunch of snacks and were just able to goof off right after exams. That's what makes me happiest when I think of the Pit." - Kaija Mikes, EngSci 2T5

"I would have to say one of the best memories I have of The Pit is from approximately one year ago when during the first days of Frosh Week after fucking around on aux for a bit I managed to gather a rather large crowd in the middle of The Pit and they were all dancing and having a great time. I had become the "\*\*\*\* DJ" and it was one of the best times I ever had in The Pit."

- Farbod Mohammadzadeh, Eng Sci 2T5

"My favorite memory from The Pit is everybody being beyond exhausted after Pride and quietly enjoying Nurture by Porter Robinson in the Brad room while we napped or rested our tired bodies"

- Tyler DelaBarre, Mech 2T5

# Pit mean to you?

# Seeing in the Dark

Navin Vanderwert

**There's a beauty in experiences that just... happen to be.** Countless minutiae forming a space in both place and time that (you're painfully aware) will never exist again. In a world of structure, consistency, and machinery, the rave is rebellious, fleeting, and self-motivated. You don't know where you're going, you don't know if it'll be good, and you don't know how it'll end—but it feels like yours, and you know it can't be taken from you.

As you walk down a foggy alley pockmarked by puddles, a light fog transforms the streetlights into a blue-tinged haze.

You enter the sheetmetal doors fronting what was, earlier that day, a coffee/bike/film store (it's a little on the nose) and someone loitering against a brick wall utters a cliche that sticks with you the rest of the night: "Welcome to the dojo." The light fades into a warm glow around a wooden podium. The person at the desk, themselves dressed to dance, asks for your name and takes a minute to find it in the (roughly) alphabetical list, jotted down as last minute tickets were bought. They hand you a small bag of gummy bears, clearly hand-sorted—and their translucent glow ushers you farther into the night.

The scene and sounds as you hang your raincoats on the

lone rack are surreal. Piles of objects shimmer under a lone skylight as soundwaves kick up the day's dust. A harsh projector cycles through "thematic" visuals: a macro of a blinking eye, a slick of red oil in a milky fluid, and the occasional flash of macOS as someone adjusts the laptop (you notice that the video file is only an hour long). Your eyes, in four-step with the beat, flick from the rows of ancient bikes lining the ceiling to the newspaper clippings on the wall, from the stacks of metallic film reels to the coffee bar tucked beneath a projectionist's booth, and you wonder how this place is possible. It feels trapped in a tense freedom, as if actively fighting for its existence.

You consider the reality of this place, and are swept up in the timelessness of it - it's too organic, too perfectly imperfect, a relic of a past you thought you'd never get to experience. And as you stand there thinking—your mind in a scramble, your stomach in a flutter, your eyes in awe—your body gains a mind of its own, and you begin to move.

Syncopating bass and an occasional kick resound as a tension builds at the back of your throat, compelling you to work for a resolution that feels like it may never come. Time passes in a trance as murky characters emerge and undulate to the pulse while dust dances around their limbs. Your knuckles become discrete:



clicking in and out of place to a frequency you can't fully discern, while music paints fleeting art on the backs of your eyelids every time you close them.

Each body you lay eyes on is more frantic than the last, every contraction and expansion giving more and more of themselves to the shared mysticism that grips the room.

You glance backwards and feel an utter kinship with 30-odd people you've never met and can barely see.

I don't know who they were a few hours ago, and I don't know who they'll be tomorrow, but right now: I am one of them and we are human.♦



There's an old documentary on the internet that tells the story of Toronto's rave scene in the 90s.

Primarily, it's the pioneers of the scene reminiscing about the way things were and the memories they created. But as they shift from their subjective experiences to the history of the scene, an undertone of loss and grief begins to set in. A laundry list of iconic venues is rattled off, each with a set of stories that form its legacy.

But these stories aren't about their iconic sound systems, the famous DJs that played there, or mind-melting special effects. They're of rebellion, ingenuity, and togetherness: speakers snuck into abandoned warehouses, invites spread by word-of-mouth, DJ booths compiled of crumbling cinderblocks found on the ground. And in these hap-hazard moments, a fight commences: a fight to exist simply for the sake of existing.

But one by one, the speakers reveal the venue's fate—demolition, development, gentrification, or some combination of the three pushing the rave out of a forged underground, culminating in a time where an organic space feels not natural, but forced. And then, as always, these ephemeral spaces exist only in the memories of those that passed through them and found themselves forever changed.♦

# LANDFILL GAS IN CANADA: AN OVERVIEW

Liliane Kreuder

Edited by Lauren Altomare and Jessica Wang

Acknowledgments: iGEM Toronto

## INTRODUCTION

Pollution is defined as the introduction of harmful substances into the environment and can be categorised as either air pollution, water pollution, or land pollution. In particular, air pollution from greenhouse gases is a major concern due to its association with global warming [1]\*. Greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane absorb sunlight reflected from the earth's surface, trapping heat in the atmosphere via the greenhouse effect. Although this is a natural process, recent human activities have been increasing the amount of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere, causing rising global temperatures. Global warming imposes devastating consequences on the environment, such as melting glaciers, rising sea levels, ocean acidification, and human health effects [1].

Not surprisingly, landfill sites where our garbage is disposed of are significant contributors to pollution: not only from garbage, but also from organic materials such as food, paper, and yard waste [2].

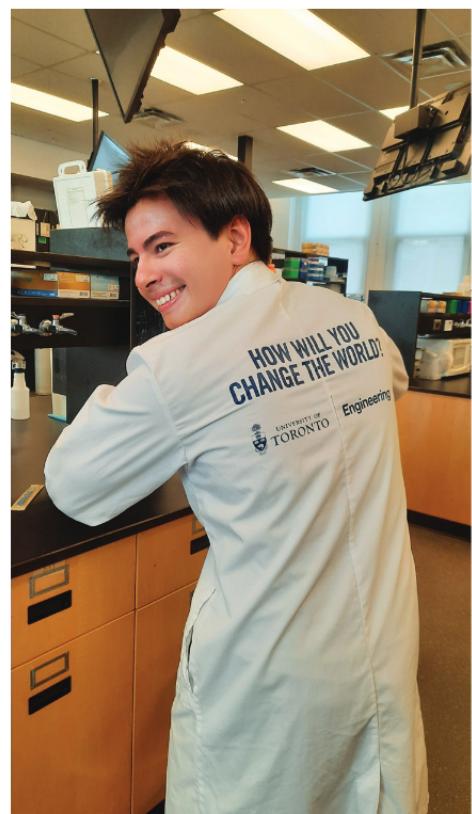


## A CLOSER LOOK: WHAT IS LANDFILL GAS?

Landfill gas occurs due to the anaerobic decomposition of organic materials such as food and paper deposited at landfill sites. Currently, these comprise an estimated 60% of waste in landfill sites across Canada [3]. Within the first 20 years after arriving at the landfill site, decomposing organic materials produce methane, a powerful greenhouse gas with an estimated 86 times greater global warming potential than carbon dioxide. As of today, solid waste landfills are responsible for a staggering 23% of Canada's total methane emissions. Therefore, it is worthwhile for landfill sites to not only monitor the amount of methane gas produced at the site, but also to reduce it [3].

## HOW IS LANDFILL GAS MONITORED?

Landfill methane monitoring is conducted using a variety of different methods. One possible way to measure methane is by using a portable methane metre near the landfill surface. The Canadian Environmental Protection Act requires landfill sites to do quarterly Surface emission monitoring (SEM) using a portable device that can measure methane emissions near the landfill's surface [3]. Another possible technique used for methane monitoring is using infrared cameras to visualise large potential methane leaks [4].



## HOW CAN THE IMPACT OF LANDFILL GAS BE REDUCED?

Instead of allowing methane to escape into the atmosphere, methane can be collected. First, methane is captured using a series of vertical and horizontal pipes buried within the landfill [5]. The methane is then collected at a central site where it can undergo treatment in a compressor to remove impurities and a cooler to remove moisture. From there, the landfill gas can be used to generate electricity or create fuel. Alternatively, the landfill gas can also be burned in a process known as “flaring” to create carbon dioxide, which has a lower impact on the greenhouse effect [5].



## WHAT EFFORTS ARE BEING DONE TO REDUCE LANDFILL GAS EMISSIONS?

In late 2021, Canada announced that it would join the Global Methane Pledge (GMP) to reduce global methane emissions by 30% by 2030. This initiative is in line with Canada's own goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 40-45% from 2005 levels by the year 2030 and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 [6]. However, Canada is not currently on track to reach its methane emissions target. Despite joining the GMP, the amount of methane emissions in the country has not changed over the last decade. Although the government and private sectors have made a significant effort to reduce landfill methane emissions, current actions are not enough [3]. A promising strategy for reducing methane emissions is to capture methane emissions from landfill sites. In Canada, there are currently over 3000 solid waste landfill sites, with approximately only half of these sites being active [3]. There are 275 large landfill sites in the country that have a waste capacity of over 100,000 tons of waste in open landfills, and over 450,000 tons in closed landfills. These large landfills are responsible for the majority of waste disposal in

Canada and received approximately almost 90% of the waste that was sent to landfills in 2019. These 275 landfills were responsible for more than 85% of Canada's landfill methane emissions in 2019 [3].



According to a survey done by the Government of Canada in 2020, approximately 1,401 kilotonnes (kt) of methane were generated from Canadian landfills [7]. Of this amount, only 418 kt, roughly a third, of it was captured. Of the captured methane, the majority (52%) was used to create low-carbon electricity, while the rest was used to produce renewable natural gas (17%) or was used directly at a nearby facility (30%) [7].

As a result of Canada falling behind on its methane emissions target, it is evident that new regulations and technologies are necessary. More landfill sites should begin to capture methane in an effort to reduce the environmental impact of our garbage. Furthermore, greener, more clean solutions for utilising methane gas should be considered in lieu of flaring, which still introduces a greenhouse gas (carbon dioxide) into the environment.

## STAY TUNED!

As a result of these concerns, iGEM Toronto's 2023 team “Methanivore” is utilising innovative synthetic biology approaches as a possible solution to reduce Canada's landfill gas emissions. Keep up to date with future articles that will discuss our team's project and progress!♦



campus

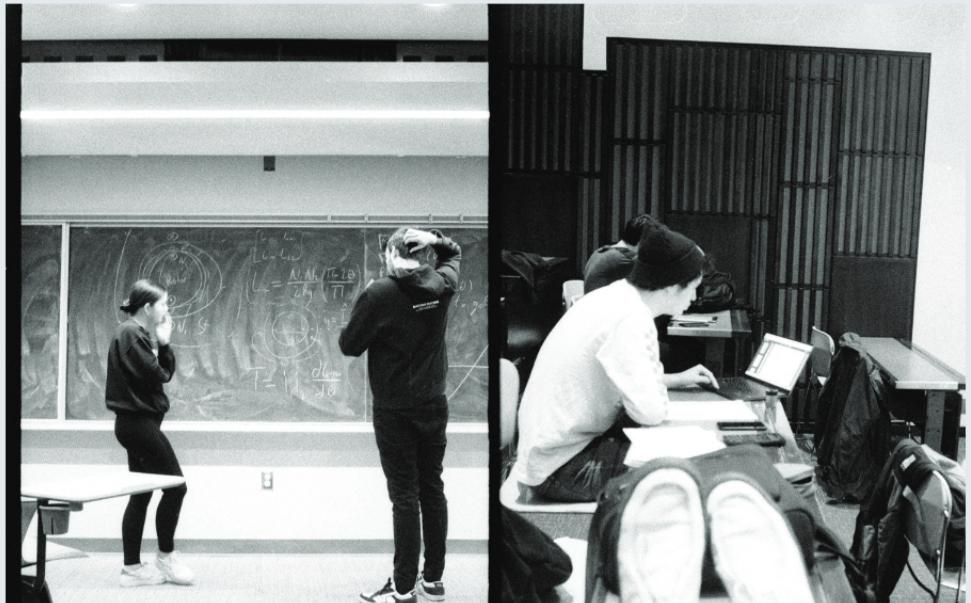
on



gold

by zack fine

# Bahen



at

night

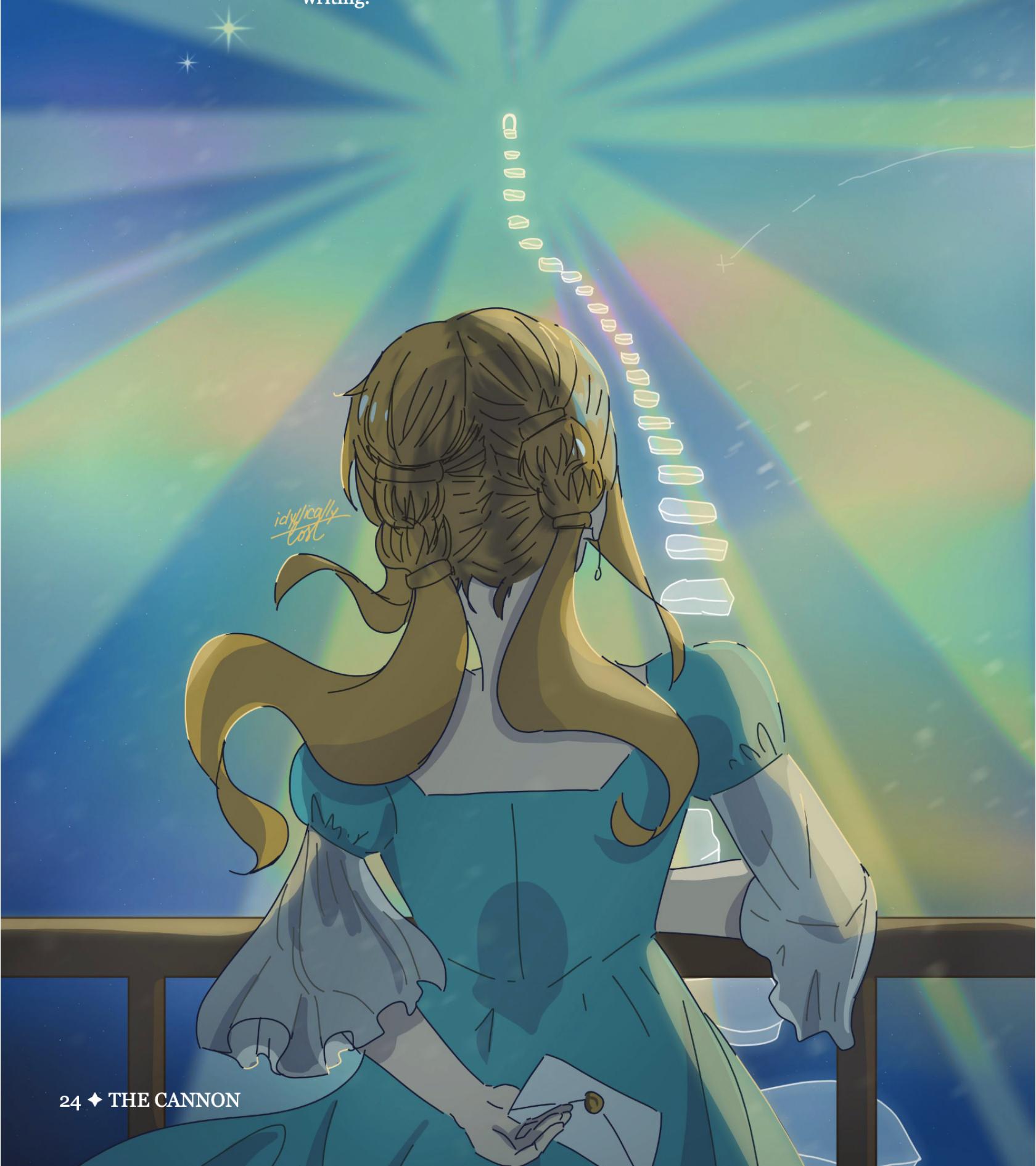
by navin vanderwert



# Galaxy Girl

by Jenn Xu

"Art is a form of escape for me, even if I'm not the best at it. Especially being an engineer, I seem to have no time for it. This piece was the only finished piece I've had time to draw all year. I just wanted to draw something really pretty and play with the colours and lighting to be honest, but I think it represents the freedom of the other world I chose not to pursue, which is my passion for art, music, and writing."



Contribute to

# THE CANNON

The Cannon is Skule's one and only magazine, aiming to be a platform where students can reflect their personalities, hopes, dreams, interests, activities, thoughts, and opinions in whatever form they prefer.

This is a relatively new project for our community, and we want you to shape its future. Submissions are open to anyone who's interested, regardless of skill level, and we'll help you with every step of the process: from brainstorming to editing and peer review, we want to give you the opportunity to share your story.

Email us at [cannon@skule.ca](mailto:cannon@skule.ca) to get involved, and we'll inform you of upcoming meetings and brainstorming sessions.

# Spaces to be Vulnerable with Yourself

*Johnny McRae*



Being vulnerable with yourself can be one of the most important parts of self-acceptance. The trials of your life can be overwhelming and seem unmanageable but the simple recognition of personal imperfection and the act of supporting yourself through downfalls is a mandatory stride towards empowerment.

Having a space where you are vulnerable with yourself is the key. Having a time where you feel safe to approach your own reality with resolve and equally importantly, with honesty. Are you proud of your own efforts? Are you proud of who you are? Only you can answer these things and the answers only matter if they matter to you.

It is different for everybody. It can be going for a walk by yourself with no music, sitting in your room in the dark with headphones on, looking at yourself in the mirror, or just writing down your thoughts. Find a space where you feel safe to ask yourself questions and give yourself the time to answer them. Find a space where you can be vulnerable with yourself.

### *My Dark*

I'm not scared of the dark  
The dark is where i hide  
Closing every door  
Shutting every blind

Thinking of my thoughts  
Holding myself tight  
Nothing can go wrong  
If nothing can go right

### *Over and Over*

I missed the bus  
I missed the train  
I missed the boat  
I missed the plane

I miss when things  
Were only things  
I miss when only  
Bee stings sting

### *Mirrors*

Look and see  
The life you face  
Go and be  
Pace by pace

Pave your way  
Is so cliché  
With some luck  
You'll find the way

You yourself  
Is all you know  
Reap the days  
You used to sow

I miss the nice  
I miss the good  
I miss enough  
I wish I could

Again, Again  
I'll try again  
Just once I'm right  
Remember then

I'll have to try again

# IN THIS ISSUE

03 Madness and Mayhem Rauha Ahmed

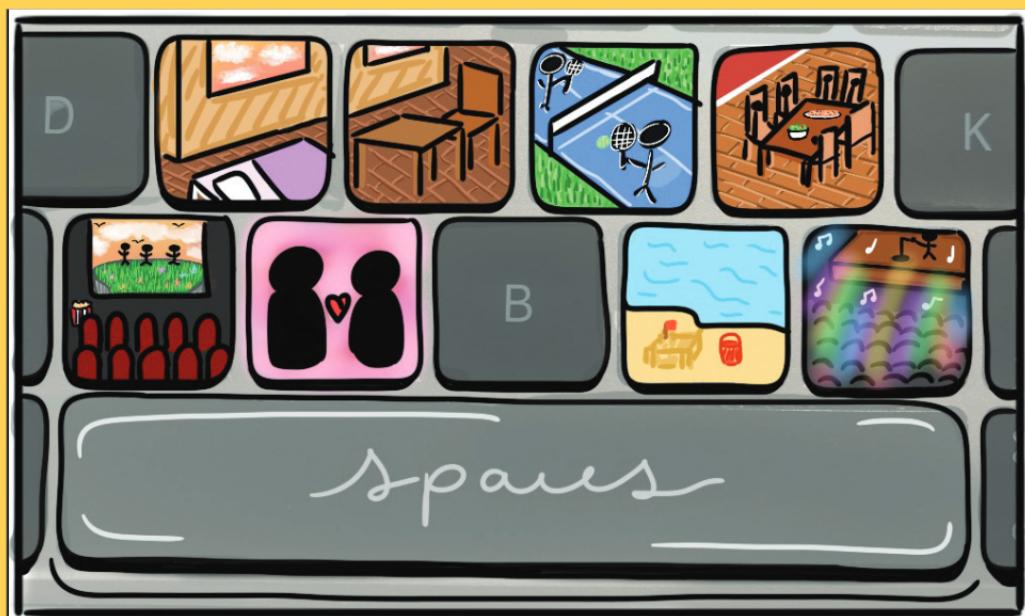
06 I Never Needed A Simile Nathanael Kusanda

13 The Pit - Skule's Home Kaija Mikes

18 Seeing in the Dark Navin Vanderwert

20 Landfill Gas in Canada: An Overview Liliane Kreuder

26 Spaces to be Vulnerable with Yourself Johnny McRae



by Gabrielle Jean Pierre