It is our great honor to dedicate this issue to Mr. and Mrs. Stewart on the 50th anniversary of the founding of York Preparatory School. Throughout the years, they have guided and encouraged both teachers and students by creating a community supportive of self-expression and of the arts.

Additionally, we want to thank Mrs. Stewart for her inspirational vision in starting York Prep’s original literary magazine fifty years ago. Thank you for allowing us to continue fostering creativity in our students in this artistic endeavor.

Congratulations on this impressive milestone!
IN MEMORIAM

The Genesis staff would also like to honor the memory of John Pagliaroli of Metrographix Printing. Technological guru and inspirational force, John’s kindness and patience were infinite. His gentle presence on this earth will be sorely missed.
Welcome to Genesis, York Prep’s student literary and art magazine. We are immensely proud of the many impressive writers and artists who found the courage to submit their work to this publication. It is not easy to do so, and we applaud them!

We have added some new categories to this year’s issue: Sense Of Place, Introspection, Commentary, Connection and Disconnection, and Other Worldly. All the categories in this year’s issue offer an extensive look at the diverse perspectives of our middle school and high school students. Other Worldly was a unique category that differed from all the other groups since we have had very few poems that made us feel that we were transported to another world. We’ve always had poems referring to places relevant to the writer, but Sense of Place combines those poems with other works that reflect a broader world view. We are proud to publish mature, sophisticated, humorous pieces, such as “My Father’s Face,” which explore the complicated relationship between a father and his son. “The Precious Letter” has us laughing out loud at the frustration of visiting your dentist.

The incredible photographs, paintings, and digital art add another layer of artistic insight and complement the literary pieces seamlessly. Their range in storytelling, through various visual media, push us to explore emotions and thoughts not evoked in such depth in previous issues. “Reflections” is the first portrait in this issue. What makes it particularly unique is that it captures a wide range of emotions, such as the delicate sensitivity of the subject’s eyes. “Iron ‘n Bones” utilizes black and white shadows and shading to create an atmospheric sketch of everyday objects. Ultimately, the literary and artistic pieces in this year’s issue invite our readers into the ever-changing, complex, and intriguing world of adolescence.

The Genesis Staff are delighted to announce this year’s four winning pieces:

Best Poem: “Weary Peppers” by Rehannah Baksh

Best Prose: “My Father’s Face” by Jack Flesher

Best Studio Art: “Seated Skeleton” by Johnson Li

Best Digital Art: “Watchful Eyes” by Kaia Seldman

We hope you enjoy this year’s issue of Genesis, and we hope to inspire you to submit your own work next year!

- The Genesis Staff
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The setting of this garden was breathtaking from every angle. The perspective of this photo captures the expression of every statue in the frame. The dramatic facial expressions, I believe, represent the emotions of real life.

Artistic Process: In taking this photo, I was trying to achieve the perfect frame that would expose each statue in its most optimal position. I would try to spatially imagine the positioning of each statue in comparison to the green, and the ratio between the two. I did not want one statue to blend in with another, so I had to leave enough space for it to interact with the green landscape.
“Snow Globe” offers the viewer a rare, peaceful moment in the usually chaotic city of New York. The photo captures two mysterious people walking down a path in Central Park during a snowstorm. Every object in this photo is caked in white snow with the exception of the yellow traffic light which introduces a pop of color.

Artistic Process: I wanted to illustrate the contrast between light and dark. This contrast can be seen by a black umbrella and the jagged fence against the soft snow-covered background. My favorite part of the picture is the vivid yellow traffic light in the distance that is unexpected.
California Born, New York Child
by Kyra Bartow, Grade 12

Where milky clouds swim in blue skies, I was born here
Human sapling among cracked acorns and moss
The smell of redwood and summer dirt bleaches and cracks in the sun,
Where the songbirds of dawn, in all their lovely glory, whistle to the morning
Home to artists and storytellers and dreamweavers
Where eucalyptus trees sway under the breath of a breeze, and the sun plants
kisses on our freckled shoulders
Where the stars are above you and on the streets you walk and the hills that
look upon you
Where somehow the air still carries the scent of pomegranates and fresh peeled
oranges
Swearing you heard the ocean call your name in the crashing waves on the shore
Ache for the memory, for this untouched piece of earthly heaven, and I carry it
inside as my blood
(These are my roots)

And yet -
Where someone hums the lyrics to a song half-heard when I was twelve and:
Memories flit in firefly gasps, rust caked bicycles lean abandoned
In the huckleberry heat of the summer
Sneers behind smiles seep four shades of malformed red
Where days at the top of the Coney Island ferris wheel are reminisced to
When the city’s night lights shifted like ballerinas in a glass jar
(That was my childhood)

Where I was young and believed the only yellow cars were taxis
and taxis were only ever yellow
Where I could never peer past the lights to spot a shooting star
but made a wish still and kept a penny in my pocket for extra luck
(That was my childhood)

Where people are secrets and secrets like to run down alleyways and tempt
others to follow
So lost in the current of energy around me and I cannot center amidst the chaos
Where I’m wishing my soul is on its way to finding the path back home
Home not heady with pagan worship of fire escapes and water towers
or skyscrapers ever reaching
(That was my childhood)
Where a fragile city exists upon empty promises and shattered dreams
unconstrained and bursting the heart at its seams
Together connected in a broken city within and you will find an untouched
piece of soul
Hope you can mold it into what you need
Something new to start again with a new piece of self
(That is my new york)

Where I always smell cigarette smoke the moment I exit the subway,
Scents mixing with the Farmer’s Market out of season strawberries
but matched with sounds of rushing water crashing down
In a city park of everlasting green, an oasis of life
Where, within a cacophonous and claustrophobic world,
Solace for souls in cold jungles of concrete is always just out of reach
(That is my new york)

Where the metropolis’ transition is stuck in flux
and people move as molasses, browns, and grays through the museum city of
dreamed nostalgia
Where, visiting or staying, inherent longing lingers
Matched with the ever present sense of melancholic relief
(That is my new york)

Where bodies of strangers on buses sway together
Around curving corners through the streets as God himself choreographed the
dance
Where broken hearts beat on under skylines in tandem
To remember the feel of falling in love the very first time
(That is my new york)

Where November feels loaded in a way that I can’t leave it the door
casually tossed over a coat rack
And the month is wrapping around me in a way
Life is as shallow as the puddles we used to play in, facade of fun
Where December will be even heavier, as heavy as the clouds
that brush the horizon with a paintbrush, only shades of black and blue
(That is my new york)

The city has swallowed our sanity and
borrowed deep within the five boroughs
But listen -
where the pauses are made of clay and gently worn smiles
and the air carries laughter and sweet similarities,
Where we can stand on a strand of time and the sand is seraphic
for the wind holds siren song and the land knows all
Where the breeze is a sort of balmy serenity and we can forge our own paths
and our dreams can become our causeways, the precipice a sanctuary
Where we can breathe a multitude of wishes into velvet nights
That bloom with a thousand stars and infinite possibilities
(These are my roots)

Where there are orange trees stretching down to a peaceful sea
With a sweetness reaching back up the hill
The smell of redwood and summer dirt bleach and crack in the sun,
Where owls of night trill their lullaby under the gentle light of the universe
Home to artists and storytellers and dreamweavers
Where eucalyptus trees sway under the breath of a breeze, and the sun plants
kisses on our freckled shoulders
Where the stars are above you and on the streets you walk and the hills that
look upon you,
Where somehow the air still carries scent of pomegranates and fresh peeled
orange
Swearing you heard the ocean call your name in the crashing waves on the shore
Ache for the memory, for this untouched piece of earthly heaven, and I carry it
inside as my blood
(These are my roots)
We had just finished dressing for Thanksgiving and I looked at my sister and realized the lighting was perfect.

Artistic Process: I told her to get up on the table so I could capture her reflection in the picture. I remember saying, “Don’t smile, you have so much power in your eyes, use it to tell me something.” I shot the photo and that was it.
Autumn Musings
by Jack Flesher, Grade 10

It’s funny, you know.
Fifteen years and I never realized
Just how much safety there was in one little season.
There’s no bad blood in fall.
No summer passion so heated you burn up.
No winter depression so cold you freeze.
No fake spring positivity which chokes you.
In fall, there is security,
and just a nice warm home.
Everything is in its rhythm.
In fall, only the trees know mortality.
You lie safe in your bed,
Knowing everything has its place.

New York, 2:30 a.m.
by Phillip Winter, Grade 10

You like the way she wakes you up:
Not at all and all at once.
Bolt upright, down the stairs and out the door.
Stars are like suns when they fall to Earth.
A whole city to ourselves with no bounds.
Everything is miniscule.
She collides and falls back to sleep.
Chips without the fish.
Curry as red as a London bus.
Fiery and fulfilling.
Flavors as diverse as the people.

Rain as regular as the beautiful daily sunsets.
Downpours like a plague of swarming bees.
Relieved by the arrival of the departing sun.
Vivid flamingo pink, sailor blue, and pumpkin orange.

My charming, elegant house.
Like a five-tier Victorian wedding cake.
I live on the perfect tier, the third tier.
It is low, but just low enough to hear the racket of the booming people at the pub.

Stories...so many stories.
The scruffy, tall, 100-year old man living downstairs who makes only toast.
Burning it every time.
Blurring hallways and the smokey smell.
I was in Salem, Massachusetts as the town was preparing for Halloween. I saw these houses built from sticks off on the side of the road and wanted to take a picture.

Artistic Process: I used a black and white filter not only to bring out the stark shadows, but especially to create an otherworldly feeling.
The Cabin In The Woods
By Kaia Seldman, Grade 9

There’s a cabin in the woods where everyone goes
A place of happiness and peace of mind
They go to get rid of the past, to run away from their problems

There’s a cabin in the woods where families go
For family time
For happy times
For love

There’s a cabin in the woods where the students go
They get their work done
The cabin is quiet

There’s a cabin in the woods where everyone goes
Everyone loves the cabin in the woods....
The cabin is their safe place
The cabin is their home

*

There’s a cabin in the woods that has been abandoned
Everyone stays away from the cabin
The students keep their distance
The families stay at home watching T.V.
The children tell ghost stories about it

The wise think of a time when their friends would go out to the cabin in the woods
The cabin is now only filled by memories lived long ago

There was a cabin in the woods that used to be loved by all
There was a gorgeous cabin that is now only used by the ghosts of the past
There was a cabin in the woods that is about to be torn apart for spare parts.
There was a cabin in the woods...
A cabin in the woods...
While on vacation in San Angelo, Texas, we were driving around when I suddenly saw a water windmill in someone’s backyard and insisted we stop so I could take a photo. I saw the frame of the overcast clouds with the mesquite trees in the background. In the foreground, there is a rusty barbed wire fence with rocky, dried-out earth behind it.

Artistic Process: I wanted to capture a common scene in Southwest Texas in order show the vast, lonely, and beautiful landscape of the Texas I love best.
She was holding the popsicle on a hot summer evening. It was a strawberry popsicle, her favorite flavor. As she looked at the popsicle with her sorrowful eyes, she realized that this was the last taste of summer. The popsicle slowly dripped down her hand to her arm. Tomorrow was September 8th: the first day of school, marking the end of popsicles, tank tops, and sleeping until noon. It was rather the beginning of textbooks, grades, and studying until midnight. As she slowly depleted the popsicle, she thought about her past and long summer. She thought of the many beach bonfires where she and her friends would toast marshmallows for s’mores. Their goal was to make the marshmallow turn into a perfect golden color. She remembered the days when she would be completely clueless about what day of the week it was. She recalled the pink, cold popsicle that she would consume after a full day of surfing. Suddenly, she realized that during the past school year, she never had popsicles when she would get home from school. She never had strawberry popsicles when she received a good grade. She even didn’t have a sweet popsicle on her birthday. Now, the sweet, cold, strawberry popsicle had diminished, and all she was holding was a sad and empty stick. As a tear rolled down her face, she thought, goodbye popsicle, see you next year.
In drawing this girl with white hair, I tried to show how adolescent girls often try to hide behind their hair even though they still want to be seen.

Artistic Process: I used a Huion Tablet and FireAlpaca drawing program. I selected the colors from the rainbow grid that matched my concept of the girl and her mood.
This painting was an assignment for my senior portfolio art class. I wanted the painting to have dynamic lighting where the colors would be vivid. I deeply admire Renaissance art. As a result, I focused on trying to make the brushstrokes mimic the smooth texture of the skin that Renaissance artists seem to achieve seamlessly.

Artistic Process: It took three months to complete this portrait. Oil paint takes a long time to dry, so blending the paint was very easy. Making the light reflect on the face with the right shade was the most difficult part of this painting.
As I was standing on the curb, I looked down at a puddle and saw the reflection of the cloudy sky and thought it was very beautiful. Suddenly a girl walked across the street and was also visible in the reflection.

Artistic Process: This picture was taken after a rainstorm in Tribeca. I took this photo because I thought that while the girl’s reflection was beautiful, it was more interesting to see it coupled with the clouds. It seemed like she was in another world within the puddle.
Ode to Silence
by Emily Singh, Grade 7

Silence,
Love in pain.
You draw away my courage,
You give me hope.

Little is your pain,
Over your love.
Victorious in every way
Everyone hates you.

Perfect is your personality.
Amazing is your timing.
Interesting are your abilities,
Nonviolent are your ways.

Silence is sly.
Silence is love.
Silence is pain.
Silence is everything but quiet.

Poetic Form: Ode
I saw this shot on a walk in Central Park with my parents and my dog, Leo. I passed by this tree and thought the sunlight looked stunning as it passed through the trees.

Artistic Process: I had seen so many photos like this in color that I thought that taking it in black and white would add a different and more dramatic perspective.
And as it seems
a state of paranoia’s gone
replaced by calm
contentment yields the means
to leave a past
manufactured just for you
kronos crafts a vibrant youth
which seldom lasts
but chaos goes
far from this newfound gaze
into an age
of profound prose

How could I
compromise with my demise?
What was I
so desperate to verify?
psyche spoke
and woke the idle, so called I
and evoked
a passion I’d forgotten had been mine

And as it seems
a fine line lies in subtlety
a fickle fate and destiny
both are schemes
I may lose
approval of the gallery
which often yells at me
but most are fools
This photo was taken of the Hudson River during sundown. There is something magical about looking at the colors change during a sunset. In this particular moment, it looked as though the clouds burst into flames.

Artistic Process: I positioned my phone in a way that would emphasize the reverse ombre of the colors fading from dark to light. The shadowing and focus on the darkness allowed for the light colors to pop.
The Airhead
JessieJean Newman-Getzler, Grade 11

This photo was inspired by the objectification of women throughout history. Women have been called “dumb” and “ditsy” because of how they choose to present themselves. Since in this case the statue has no head, she is literally an airhead.

Artistic Process: This past summer, my family and I went to Rome on vacation. On the second day, we went to the Roman Forum to look at the ancient artifacts. These artifacts were such inspiration for me to create stories through photography, and this statue caught my attention the moment I saw it.
I Would Much Rather Be Happy
by Bettina Gradowcyzk, Grade 10

[Happiness. Noun: the state of being happy.]
I used to be easy-going.
Everything with me was simple.
I enjoyed daily life.

[Happy. Adjective: feeling or showing pleasure or contentment.]
Little things make me happy: playing with my dog, buying new shoes, watching Gilmore Girls, the transitional phase between fall and winter, and raindrops tip-toeing on an umbrella. However, nothing brings me overall, lasting happiness.

[Anxiety. Noun: a feeling of worry, nervousness or unease.]
My mind always feels like a ditch, empty and with nothing to it.
Air fills my lungs and it feels trapped; it’s like I have a balloon inside my chest.
I have a hard time focusing, or doing anything.
Thinking gets painful.
I want this to whoosh by.

[Anxious. Adjective: experiencing worry, nervousness or unease.]
My constant state.
I would much rather be happy.
Why Don’t I Speak?
by Rehannah Baksh, Grade 10

Raise my voice to bend the vibrations to help me. I hoist my head up, lips parting, edges away from speaking and seconds away from being free of years of built up thoughts. Every word is desperately trying to escape, trying to sprout like suffocated flowers in cement lungs. Thoughts, screaming wildly and more violent till they start to thump, ruthlessly of my body. The only thing I manage to sigh when asked is, “I don’t know.”

Stupid. Irresponsible. Not worth it.

So few words spring raging internal conversations. The AA meeting in my mind turns into an all-out bar fight. Emotions rise dramatically to the top like a bolder being thrown in a glass of salt water overflowing because of a sudden drop. Oak roots erupt in my chest, gating off my heart. I feel everything at once. The people are coming closer, wanting to tear down the brown barbed wire. I wait at the gates, seeing if anyone will really be brave enough to get to cut the thorns. To have their blood spill onto the damp carved clay perimeter. I see someone approaching, “Would you like to leave?” they ask with sweet unassuming tones, and all my emotions are able to confront and relay is “I don’t care.”
How you ever felt as though you wished to return?

Each floor the elevator passes, a missed opportunity,
Evidence of your foolery, your idiocy.

What have you done with your time until now?

Why did you waste it all?

Then, a spirit of hope enflames within you.

Well, I was simply a child, what could I have done?
(Much, much more)

Floundering without a care,
How great it was.
How awful you were.

But in this forest, from a young sapling to an elder tree,
Whilst others burn around you,

You will simply lie stagnant, waiting for the inevitable.
What else could you do?
The Unknown
by Benjamin Warshavsky, Grade 10

To accomplish a dream is to swat a fly,
It isn’t that hard, until more pass by.
Yet, the buzz of their wings,
Stop for the birds that sing.
And the birds that tweet,
Stop for the strings that meet.
300 hours in May,
10 hours a day.
A sacrifice that you take,
Can be a failure disguised as a mistake.
The chances are slim,
And can go in whim.
As an artist once said 70 years past ’10,
“The king is gone, but he’s not forgotten.”
But it’s worth a shot,
To not be a dot.
To expose my talents,
Still keeping balance.
I create a tune,
To try and bloom.
That’s what I do,
How about you?
This piece was created out of pure imagination. It shows an old Chevrolet with the front bumper reminiscent of a human face, blended into a body. The lower body and upper body are made of two different people that I blended into one. The car human is shown walking in a rose field.

Artistic Process: This piece was inspired by two of my favorite things: cars and fashion. I used Photoshop to create the blended effect in the torso. I placed two different bodies on top of each other, and then using an eraser, I cut one of the bodies down to just the upper chest. I had to blend the two images using a small eraser brush with a low hardness. I then erased the head and replaced it with the car.
How Often

By Emily Singh, Grade 7

How often do you hear the same song,
Only soon to sing along to it?
How often do you see the same person,
Only to not mind them?

How often does one need to hear a song,
Just to catch a few lyrics?
How often does one need to see the same person,
Just to say “hello?”

When you are on that train in the morning,
Do you not notice me?
You know my name; you know my face.
Must you not speak to me?

If I were to ask you,
“Who am I?”
You would simply reply,
“Emily.”

Yet, still
You would be satisfied with yourself.
You can say you know me,
But do you really?

How often do you know someone?
This piece is a self-portrait of me after I came to a new school. I thought that the flushed red cheeks were a perfect example of how I felt coming into something new. I thought it showed how my fear of change did not last for long and the name on my eyelids was a metaphor for my identity struggles throughout the years.

Artistic Process: While creating this piece, I was inspired by the identity that I carried in the past and the fact that since I came to York Prep, I have felt as if I have been given the opportunity to evolve. I am glad that changing schools has given me that opportunity.
I took this photo of a statue in a palace garden in Rome. The composition of the flowers was beautiful and I felt compelled to take a photograph.

Artistic Process: I wanted to capture the essence of the statue of the woman who is reclining among the flowers. The process was fairly simple. I had to align the statue with the flowers and make the hedge straight through the iPhone camera. The setting is what makes the photo so alluring.
You painted our stars
kissed my hands
and named me dreamer
do you remember
caressing impurities
endless dreams
immunity to what we need
You birthed a heart aching
to create
I wonder did you feel
the same when you
were younger a girl
like me
My Father’s Face
by Jack Flesher, Grade 10

I remember it. But if we are going to be truly honest, not really. I remember a lot of things. I remember the disappearances. Goddamn, do I remember the disappearances. But one thing that I really fail to remember, no matter how hard I try - I fail to remember a father. I fail to remember a man who raised me. I fail to remember being taught to shave. I fail to remember learning how to ride a bike. I fail to remember being taught about love, about sex, about how to treat a person right.

* 

But if I look back, I think he couldn’t remember those things from his father either.

* 

You know it’s funny, father - at the end of the day - it’s just a word. Because if we look at my father, and then we look at other fathers, they are not the same creature. My father made me, but he did not sculpt me. It may have been his clay that I was formed from, but the kiln I was blasted in was one he had no control over. If we are going to be honest, I am glad he didn’t, because I can actually remember a lot of things. And one of those things is rage. He tried to put on a mask, but it slipped off very easily. All it took would be one little remark - forgetting to say something that you should have and the mask was off.

* 

But if I look back, I remember him maskless, and that was the most terrifying thing of all.

* 

For me, memories of my father seem to be slipping from my grasp, but I really can’t complain. Because if I could remember everything about my father, I wouldn’t remember a father.
This photo is of the magnificent statue, “David” in Florence, Italy, which was sculpted by Michelangelo. I thought that David’s arm was the most impressive part of the statue because the detail is incredible.

Artistic Process: I shot the photo from this particular angle because I wanted to show David’s emotions. Because of the angle and the shades from the light, David looks sad. In addition, I like this shot because there is a lot going on in a simple photo. There is so much detail in his veins, his fingers, his knuckles, his breast, and his face.
A Brother’s Pain
by Lola Cabigeos, Grade 10

I wish to hold what was lost,
the memory of having family.

The scars are still left behind,
but I just wish to heal.

I wish to wake up and not think,
I’d rather wake up to the sunrise.

I wish not to be bothered by your voice. 
I wish to not flashback to your face. 

I wish I didn’t hold this deep pain against you,
but I pray that you are okay.
Your Home
by Nicole Rashkover, Grade 10
after Rachel Eliza Griffiths’ “Chosen People.”

When you see that smile you’ll know everything will be all right. That even when the
world is crashing down around you there is a bright glimmer of hope that keeps
you sane and smiling too. When you look into their eyes you’ll see that you are not
alone. That they will always be able to look into your eyes & know you & be there
for you just as you will do for them. When you feel their arms around you, you’ll
feel comforted and yet free. You’ll know that those loving arms will never be a cage,
but a nest that will always be there to catch you if you fail to fly. When you hear
them say your name, you will know that the search is over. That the person who
can say your name with such love and beauty will forever be your cherished home.
When you see them crying, you’ll know that you love them. To see their pain and
truly wish to rid them of it because it pains you to see them in pain & you would
do anything to see that smile again; to see them upset and know that they are
human and are imperfect, too. When you hear their voice and instantly know it is
them, you’ll understand that that is true love. To know a person inside & out &
ever have to wonder if they love you, if they believe in you, if they will be there for
the good and the bad, if they think of you as an equal, if they cherish you as you do
them, if they too, fail to fly is to know that you will never again aimlessly blow
around without any roots to home.
I went to an outdoor market in Florence, Italy.

Artistic Process: I took this photo because I particularly liked the different shades of green and how they all intertwine in the center of the photo. These vegetables also look extremely fresh and delicious!
There you sit, with dreams of my grandmother.
Sweat from hot Indian summers sizzling frail skin
as it drips from salty foreheads.
Touching your skin hurt my skin.
It burns, and as I reach out to rub my eyes,
you rebound with more anger than I could have anticipated.
All I wanted to do was know who you were
before your skin withered and your words filled the air with a dry heat.
All I wanted to do was learn of your secrets.
To make you sweet, just add cinnamon.
To lower your temper, apply extreme pressure to outside skin.
I wish I could dissect your layers without your seeds scorching my eyes.
My father enjoyed your comforting feeling and appearance
until he became aware of the stomach ache you left him with.
The pit of searing verbal heat, racing,
ripping through the heart, splashing acid up to my frail organs.
But, still, you sit there in the same jar,
with the same dark brown peppers, waiting
to have your full essence released in a slow simmer.
You wait, to leave and become what you were always going to be:
an accessory to a marriage of flavors.
This is a photo of my dollhouse after I just finished organizing its rooms. Afterwards, both my sister and cat peered into the window to see what I had changed.
Artistic Process: The moment I saw my sister looking through the window, I saw my photo. I told her to look menacingly at the doll. It was then that I shot the photo. I stood back and then my cat took his turn.
IV. COMMENTARY

Suffragist

Anders Pryor, Grade 11

In my mind, this photograph depicts an older suffragist in a London park. There is a stain on her face, perhaps viewed as a symbolic tear, coming from what can be assumed to be the wax or residue from the metal’s age.

Artistic Process: While walking in this park, there were many statues of famous heroic figures, including Winston Churchill and Nelson Mandela. However, while wandering around the park, I was particularly drawn to this statue. I decided that the stain on the woman’s face should be the focus of my photograph.
My purpose in life is to learn a little, marry and reproduce because I am female
I shouldn’t dream outside the box because I am female
If I can’t cook, no matter my other qualities,
I am not wife material because I am female
If I don’t put enough makeup on,
it means no one will notice me because I am female
If I don’t stand up for myself because I am scared it has to mean I am female
If I date too many guys, I am considered a “slut” because I am female
If I don’t try to make a change in this world, it’s because I am female
I can’t ask a boy out because it shows desperation because I am female
I can’t open my own door or pull out a chair because I am female
I can’t be good at sports because I am female
I don’t get the recognition I deserve because I am female
I don’t come up with my own ideas because I am female
I must not be able to stand up for my self because I am female

I reject all of the above because I am a female
We Lived Happily During the War
by Anika McHayle-McNeish, Grade 12
after Ilya Kaminsky

And grandpa’s chair was lodged under the front door knob
White chalk marked the loose planks of wood
And each night we would dance around them
Tangled in shapeless blankets, reinforced by bent spines

I cannot lift the spoon to my mouth
When I bite down, I feel blood bubbling between my teeth
Rising from sores, ground to the nerve
A deep red, less visceral than the red uniforms
That march down our street every morning

And the one man that leers by my window for hours
Before moving onto an easier target
Tonight he blocked my vision of the moon
Tonight I spit out my teeth
This is a charcoal still-life of a skull, rhino vertebrae, and an old fashioned iron. This piece was designed specifically for me to develop my study of composition. The most difficult part of this piece was making the perspective of the iron look realistic.

Artistic Process: I grew a lot as an artist when undertaking this project. I was forced out of my comfort zone to hold myself to higher standards as an artist. As a result, I learned not to give up on a piece early in its process.
The Pain of Guilt
by Nicole Rashkover, Grade 10
after the neologisms of William Shakespeare

The cold-blooded, dauntless, green-eyed soldier looked out to the field that was caked with blood. Looked out, and for the first time in his life: cried. Time warped and all he became was a weather-bitten lump on the ground. He had never before felt this shard-born pain in his heart that echoed the wails from the field. Except the field wailed of decapitated heads, guts spilling out, men who would never go home to their families. The soldier remembered how easily they were fen-sucked. How they fell like tree branches during a storm. His heart again felt the jaded pain that surprised him more than anything before in his life. This is what he was raised for, born to do. But the cold-blooded, dauntless, green-eyed soldier lost his swagger, his pride in savagery, and groveled on the ground. He begged for forgiveness. Prayed to the frugal Gods because those were the only ones he knew. But the earth-vexing pain wouldn’t cease and the wails continued. He looked to the blood soaked sword still on him, a sign of all that he had done. All that would never be forgiven. All that would never be forgotten. His fellow soldiers had already left to start the festivities that come with any victory, but he stayed there in the red grass. The soldier looked out to the field and felt the salty water drip down his face for the first and last time. He then did the only thing that a hedge-born, remorseful soldier could do; he took the death token next to him and joined the wails.
All have risen.
The priest takes the stand
He thanks Father for taking her into his arms
They pray that he can guide her to the Holy Spirit
And that her faith keeps her on the path to heaven
The parents pray he’ll protect her from harm
May she value love and compassion above all else
Giving redemption to the broken shell of the world
Holy Water is brushed across her forehead
She is cleansed of her sins
And may this day be cherished forever
For she is not alone
He and his disciples have their eye
And so does the gentle dove
Sneaking its way to the glass
Hoping to learn the human experience
This photo was taken during a hike in the Black Forest, in Germany. I noticed the icicle and as I got closer its natural beauty was evident.

Artistic Process: I took a detail shot and liked how the icicle blurred its surroundings. My process for taking this photo was trying to achieve a crisp focus on the icicle while trying to make its natural surrounding a second layer of the photo. The primary lure of the photo is the icicle and I tried my best to capture its cold beauty with a focused iPhone.
The world causes excruciating pain.
Through negative words,
And hurtful actions,
There is no peace or harmony.

Hate is inevitable and unpredictable.
Whether it’s something that was on the streets,
Or if it is a stereotype in society.
Hate is an endless feeling.

Hate is for all of the new exceptions in society,
And the ones that defy the rules.
The ones that were never there before
And the ones that don’t sit well with the haters
Of the unusual and new.

* *

There is no answer right now,
But that doesn’t mean there isn’t one.
One that could solve all the problems,
And fix the distraught world.

It starts with speaking out,
With positive words and an empowering mindset.
It ends with hiding behind screens,
With negative words and an evil mindset.

No matter what they look like,
Where they’re from,
How they worship,
Or who they love.

Hate will be erased forever.
Rent
by Joelle Bensaid, Grade 12

“We should rent a movie,” he said in his gruff voice, with his laid back demeanor and dimpled smile. “It’s raining, and movie theaters are so overrated. There’s a Blockbuster on Christopher Street. We can rent whatever you want, lady’s choice.” I finally agreed. We had been sitting in a small cafe, smoking our lungs black, trying to decide what to do with our night. He took my hand in a lazy sort of way, like when you reach for the dial on the car radio to meaninglessly flip through the stations. Renting a movie sounded like a good idea.

We decided to rent some old Bacall-Bogart film and called it a plan. We went into his private car and our rented movie sat perched in his lap. He smelled like expensive cologne and coffee beans.

His penthouse was beautiful, decorated gold, with antique paintings hung on the cream colored wallpaper. It was our second date. The men I had gone out with had all been poor writers and artists who never wanted to do anything but impress me with their work. I liked that this new someone, this familiar stranger, thought of the clever yet simple idea to rent a film.

“When’s the last time you rented a movie?” he asked with a cheeky grin. His dining room table had roses on it, as if he had planned the whole thing. Two glasses of wine sat chilled on either side of the vase in front of our rented movie, which he had already popped into the DVR.

I considered his question. I had forgotten what it felt like to try something new, like go on a date with someone, or return to something old, like renting a movie. As I was considering his question, I couldn’t stop thinking about the word “rent.” I didn’t know why, but it triggered something within me that made me uncomfortable. I shrugged in response to his question. “The last time I ever rented anything was on a date,” I said jokingly. He chuckled, and his dimples were prominent...
on his cheeks. I couldn’t shake my anxiety that had appeared out of nowhere. We proceeded to sit together in a comfortable silence. He pressed play on the movie and the opening credits flickered before our eyes. As the rented film began to play, a lightbulb went off in my head. My head was nestled on his shoulder, so he could not see my eyes, which were wide open.

Rent. Rent. Rent! I was late on my rent! My heart started to pound. This was the fourth time I had been late on my rent. He didn’t know enough about me to know that I was struggling. He knew I was a waitress, but he didn’t know that I worked in an unpopular diner where the tips weren’t very good and my rent was always overdue. I was approaching an eviction notice. The word ‘rent’ played in my head over and over again as we continued to watch the movie. I probably should say something, I thought to myself. But I couldn’t ignore the reminder of my late rent; my rent, which hovered over me like the boogeyman in my nightmares. I was so embarrassed about my missing rent that I felt like sewing my mouth shut for the rest of the night to avoid ruining what felt like the first good thing to happen to me in a long time.
Don’t Say A Word

by Oscar Saraf, Grade 12

The drop of a stick. The pound of the peddle. The piercing ring of the snare drum. The boom of the bass drum. The sharp click of the hi-hat. The gentle, yet fierce, roar of the ride symbol. You can hear the crowd grow silent in seconds. And then it begins. The smell of the sticks hitting the surface of the snare drum, like the smell of an old musky bar with chips on the floor, raw and powerful, empty and ready to be full of life. You smell the blood, sweat, and tears that went into preparing for this. Sometimes slow and smooth, like a ballet dancer prancing across the dance floor. Or sometimes it starts fast, right off the bat, like a racehorse eagerly waiting to sprint away from the cage it’s being held in, and keeps up the pace until the finish line. You first identify the intense ring that is the snare drum, which fills the room, in a random, yet planned out, rhythm. Then, comes the ride symbol, which repeats the same beat over and over and over again, but sneaking some separate and new rhythms that only add to the repeat of what can only be described as a horse’s hooves hitting the ground as it races towards the finish line, or the tick of a Grandfather clock. You then come across the subtle, constant click of the hi-hat. Even if it’s not profoundly clear and present, it’s definitely there, throughout the whole race. And finally, you hear the faint tap of the bass drum. All these components work in sync with each other. Almost like the different components of a horse. The legs are like the ride symbol, the lungs are like the bass drum or the hi-hat, and the heart is like the snare drum. But throughout all this chaos, with all this going on at the same time, the drummer stays solid, in one position, with his arms and legs working in sync. Like the man or woman racing that horse. They both are the brains behind the operation.
Location: 5th Ave
by Eliza Eckstein, Grade 10

I am drawn to shiny things, things that shimmer, and things with a big price tag

But I forget that these things don’t really matter

That my $200 wallet isn’t going to get me into college

Neither are your $400 sneakers

But I am stuck on the material merry-go-round

I keep wanting things that are expensive and utterly worthless

That trendy brands are nothing but a name put on an overpriced bag

(I still bought the bag though)
In a raspy voice the mailman said
I had an envelope
This was a surprise
Not a heartbreaking one
Because I never get letters.
I read it in the grass
The grass was damp, and now, so was I
Ripping off the edge of the letter
I was mad.
The smell of happiness had gone
I took my wooden orchid pot and smashed it
Because my precious letter
Was from the stupid dentist
Asking me to come for an appointment
Yup.
It wasn’t from a friend
Or a relative
The moral of the story is
Dental neglect is good because dentists suck.
When I was setting up the composition for this piece, I wanted the fruit to pop out against the blue fabric. The prompt for this painting was to select objects in the art room and then to set them up so that they would reflect in a mirror. The colors for the background were intentionally chosen to be more muted, so the viewer's eye is immediately attracted to the fruit.

Artistic Process: This was my first still-life in oil paint and it took roughly 3-4 months to complete. Since I prefer painting people, making a still-life was quite a challenge for me.
My art piece, “A Glowing Treat” shows the metamorphosis of an ice cream changing into a lightbulb. I chose to combine these two different items because no one would ever expect to see them paired together! Interestingly, a swirly ice cream and a swirly light bulb are two objects that are similar in ways that most people would not recognize. By joining them, I was able to demonstrate how art is all about creativity and imagination.

Artistic Process: To create this project, I began by drawing all three items on separate pieces of paper. After selecting my objects and sketching them out, I transferred all three drawings onto the one piece of paper. Then I used oil paint to provide my painting with vibrant colors.
The Whisper
by Louise Wade, Grade 10

the whisper in the back of your head
the loud and overpowering whisper
telling you stories and memories
keeping them and throwing them away
everything you say or hear
gets squished into the whisper
the loud echoing sound of your whisper
telling you to write, Write, WRITE
moving your fingers up and down the paper
moving your hand like you’re possessed
you don’t know where it’s taking you
or when it’s going to end
you finally take away your hand and look down
at a bunch of words
the faint whisper now saying

poem

*Poetic Form: Ars Poetica*
Walls Could Talk
by Eliza Eckstein, Grade 10

The tiles are broken, shattered but well loved.
The room has a feeling of loneliness and comfort.
This room is the birthplace of depression and hope.
The stars that fill the room are lackluster, almost laughable.
The water here is warm, but never warm enough.
The torturous feeling here is almost unbearable.
Yet we stay, waiting for a revelation.
And oh, if these walls could talk.

Skeleton Dreaming
Johnson Li, Grade 10

This drawing was made from a photo Mr. Hartman took of me sitting on a chair in the art room.

Artistic Process: I traced this photo by putting a sheet of paper on a smart-board. Once I had the form of the body, I delineated the shape of the skeleton. The shadows and hollow parts were created with black ink.
The Land of OK
by Sariah Johnson, Grade 11

Trapped, in the land of
“OK,”
we reached the point on a universal line where
we don’t talk.

No, actually, sorry,
we do,
through invisible walkie-talkies.

“Over” is “OK.”
But I don’t know what your “OK” means,
not really.

There are bitter words in the ripples between us:

i know there’s more to say but we’re not there yet i’m not sure we’ll ever be i want to
make an effort i can’t i’m not rude i’m worried don’t shut me out please give me time i
need you i’m sorry i can’t forgive you i hate you i was born to love you TALK TO ME.

“OK.”
“OK.”

Remember when you told me “OK” was an acronym? I do.

You were wrong
by the way.
Across the subway system, more than 6,000 subway cars make their way to and from their destinations transporting millions of New Yorkers each day. In this photo, I have depicted just a few of those many locations.
Artistic Process: By combining different photos I’ve taken over the years, I layered them in Photoshop and reduced the opacity. I then added different lighting effects to make certain photos stand out and experimented with other effects, including color and shadows.
My World
by Charlie Manzano, Grade 8

I used to live in a world
where anything was possible

There was no more hate
no more fear
We were equal
regardless of race, gender, or species

We could travel the universe
visit worlds of fire and ice
spend time battling in Asgard
defend peace with the Jedi

There were threats
but we would stop them
I would lead the charge
I would discover the enemy’s plan

Then came the sound
It vibrated throughout the land
water and sky
It pillaged lands and tore through nature

The sound could be described in two words:
alarm clock
“Portal Into The Unknown” depicts my love for the ocean, marine life, and nature. A few weeks before we started this project, I went scuba diving and saw a nurse shark. I knew instantly that the shark would become a significant part of my artwork.

Artistic Process: In class, we started a project called “Digital Manipulations,” where we basically chose three photos and combined them together. I combined a valley, a ripple of a puddle, and a shark. We used the layer mask tool to cut out parts of the picture, so the other pictures would fit and it would look like a digital manipulation.
Swallowed by the Sea
by Chase Hejtmanek, Grade 8
after Agatha Christie’s And Then There Were None

Cyril, you’re a thief of a fortune
Born a boy, you stole my future
And perhaps you may not live
Adulthood is a gift; one not given from a sin
A sin can cause death, before you age
So, hit the lights, and set the stage...

You scream
You flail your arms
You were never very strong
At least- the sea was stronger
I swam out to save you,
But, I knew you wouldn’t last much longer
Reflective Eyes  
Gabe Oshman, Grade 12

This digital arts photo was taken at the docks at Sheepshead Bay near Coney Island. It symbolically depicts faces peering at us from the heavens.

Artistic Process: I copied the original photo of this single lamppost four times, and in so doing, I created a reflection that looks as though they are floating in the sky.
Beware of the Owl
by Kaia Seldman, Grade 9

Swoosh

The flap of wings

The fear that builds inside you

You scurry under the nearest bush

You watch with frightened eyes

You shiver with fear

As the predator flies up above

Its wings casting a marvelous shadow on the ground

A shadow that will haunt your dreams

Beware, your mother said before her death

Beware of the night terror

Beware of the majestic being

Beware of the feathered fiend

Beware of the owl.
This is a picture of a griffin soaring through the sky like an eagle. I chose this mythical creature because I feel that it is a creature that depicts courage and loyalty.

Artistic Process: I decided to change parts of the griffin’s body because I wanted to make it a more unique creature. In order to achieve this result, I used a horse’s body and a dragon’s wings.
Grave Robber
by Cecilia Cuddy, Grade 12

1. Heist

The epitaph submerged beneath the soil
Her body lays to rest, cushioned and shielded
Clothes draped over her curves, buxom to boxy
Dressed in black, hair pinned up, painted cheeks
Clutching onto eternal slumber
A butterfly preparing for departure
The hummingbird laments, the moon awakens
Her metamorphosis is abruptly halted
Her tomb is ransacked
Her exodus, his ultimatum
Her body, thrusted over his shoulder
An owl scorns

2. Rebirth

His escape is interrupted by three dogs
Muzzles loosened, growling, ready to pounce
He jumps over the gate and returns back home
Sunflowers wilt, Eve shrieks in horror
The harp lays in the corner, collecting dust
Alongside the books no one reads anymore
A circle drawn with chalk across the floor
Cold shivers travel through his spine
He lays her body inside the sphere
Dogwood and Marigolds cloak her physique
The pitcher leaks holy water through its holes
He mutters incantations beyond comprehension
As the ravens shriek, commencing the rebirth
But the drapery still hangs near the windows

3. Descent
The shadows fall upon the laurel
To embrace her nakedness would be an epiphany
But the warmth has left, the metamorphosis complete
And he accepts defeat, crumbling to the floor
He places a rosemary around her neck
And transfers her body to Eden

Where little rabbits examine beneath the bushes

New flowers bloom above her body

Easter Lilies, daisies, roses, lotuses

They cocoon her figure from the roots

The white horses gallop into the wilderness

Eager to reach the waterfall

Her heart reaches accord

As the sun rises, dawning a new day
A Little Infinity
JessieJean Newman-Getzler, Grade 11

This slice of the sky made me think of geometry due to the different shapes that make up the bigger picture. It also reminded me of Georg Cantor’s theory of multiple infinities. The little infinities within each window make up the bigger infinity of the courtyard, which make up the bigger infinity of the building, and so on forever.

Artistic Process: The day my family and I arrived in Rome before we even dropped off our bags in our Air B&B, I saw this gorgeous view of the sky from the courtyard and had to take a picture. I was in awe already of the city just half an hour after I landed.
There is no specific reason why I chose to draw the number “42” in this piece. There were just so many things I could do with that number. The art was made in a surrealist style, with no theme in mind.

ArtisticProcess: I first drew this art piece in my notebook while neglecting the work I had to do in class. That night, I recreated the art on a bigger piece of paper with lots of color.
A friend asked me to draw her a witch because we are fascinated by how women have been depicted throughout history.

Artistic Process: Using my Huion Tablet and the FireAlpaca drawing program, I decided this witch should look more modern than the stereotypical hag. I selected a cool color palette in order to give her a space theme.
Moving Mary

Jane Crowley, Grade 12

This painting represents my first time working with a nude model, which wasn’t easy since the model was quite antsy. It was a challenge to paint something on such a large scale (35” by 50”). Fun fact: This painting fell on me twice, due to its size, while I was working on it! Having a giant, wet, oil painting fall on you is quite a traumatic experience.

Artistic Process: I only had one week to paint this and limited time with the model. Our classes were three hours long, so there was little time to waste. The unique choice in color palate comes from my teacher challenging my creative vision. This entire process was more enjoyable than a still-life because here I was painting a subject that I felt more familiar with: a woman.
Connection
by Jenna Saevitzon, Grade 10

One day there will be no more fighting
Whether it’s face to face or over social media
   All of it will come to an end
   And we will be able to connect
With each other and the world around us
We will look up and realize what we have missed
   All the things we wish we had done
And all the things we will do in the future
   One day the time to log off will come
Whether it’s the internet or our iPhones
And we will look each other in the face
   And we will be able to admire
All of the little things we missed before
   And we will have a new look on life
One that will open our eyes to the life off-screen
   And the one that was made for us to live
Since my dog, Xena, is adorable and one of my favorite family members, I have taken countless photos of her over the past 12 years. I typically like to do photo shoots of my dog because she is photogenic and almost seems to be smiling in photos.

Artistic Process: For this shot, I leaned in close to examine her face and realized that this was a captivating moment because you can see my reflection in her eye. I zoomed in close and hoped that she wouldn't blink. You can see each individual hair around her eye. I will miss Xena next year when I’m in college and will paper my walls with pictures of her.
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