

Shelley Peterson
Student Art Exhibition
2021

Art
Museum

Works by

Veronica Spiljak, Ujwal Mantha,
Freia de Waal, Sitong Guo, Laura Alcazar
Prada, Robin Boehlen, Wing Lam Leung,
Christeen Salik, Rika Nakane, Sojeong
(Jacqueline) Kim-Fujita, Matthew Kieffer,
Vi Thao Nguyen, James Legaspi, Hanyue
(Noah) Qin, Zi (Gabriella) Yan Bai, Jamie
Katrina Harris, Christiana Ceesay, Anita
Gairns, Sylvie Stojanovski, Natalie Chiovitti

Curated by Jaime Meier, Erika Serodio,
and Delaney Sweep



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Shelley Peterson Student Art Exhibition

Cover: Zi Yan (Gabriella)
Bai, *School of the Orient*
(detail), 2020. 19 x 30
inches. Photograph.

Right: Christiana Ceesay,
Wild Garden, 2021. 1920 x
1080 pixels. Composted
image, animation.



Veronica Spiljak
Ujwal Mantha
Freia de Waal
Sitong Guo
Laura Alcazar Prada
Robin Boehlen
Wing Lam Leung
Christeen Salik
Rika Nakane
Sojeong (Jacqueline) Kim-Fujita
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Jamie Katrina Harris
Christiana Ceesay
Anita Gairns
Sylvie Stojanovski
Natalie Chiovitti

Foreword

The Shelley Peterson Student Art Exhibition was first initiated in 2006, when University of Toronto students were invited to exhibit their artwork in the office of then Chancellor the Honourable David Peterson. Named in honour of his wife, the actress and writer Shelley Peterson, the initiative has expanded over the years in its format. The 2021 edition takes a digital format in order to celebrate the artistic excellence of undergraduates in the university's tri-campus visual arts programs.

The initiative exemplifies the spirit of collaboration of our university community, and involves the joint participation of the Art Museum, the Master of Museum Studies at the Faculty of Information, the Visual Studies program at St. George campus, the Studio Art program at UTSC, and the Art & Art History program jointly offered by the UTM and Sheridan College.

This year's curators from the Museum Studies program—Jaime Meier, Erika Serodio, and Delaney Sweep—worked under the mentorship of alumnus Dr. Liora Belford to conduct virtual portfolio reviews, solicit submissions, and write the individual entries on the artworks gathered here. The research process presents an important opportunity for peer-to-peer engagement and professional development for the emergent artists and museum professionals. In order to connect and engage with student artists across three campuses, the project benefits from the generous collaboration of faculty members

John Armstrong, Jay Wilson, Sue Lloyd, and Alexander Irving.

We congratulate the award winners Ujwal Mantha, Robin Boehlen, and James Legaspi and all of the artists who were selected this year for their enriching artistic contributions, curiosity, and social relevance. Above all, we commend them for the spirit of resilience and adaptability they have demonstrated during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. The three cash prizes were adjudicated by our distinguished colleague Adelina Vlas, Associate Curator of Contemporary Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

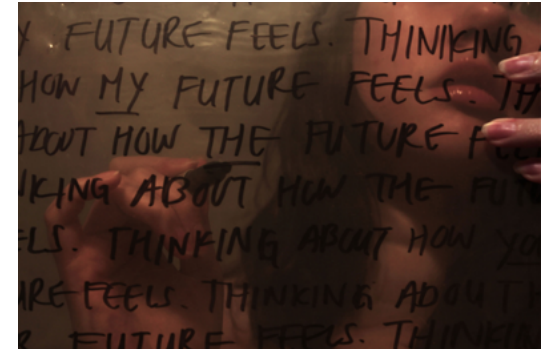
We thank our colleagues in the Office of the Vice Provost, Students, who administer the awards and recognize the University of Toronto Affinity Partner, Manulife, for their generous support of this publication. We especially thank for their continued patronage the Honourable David Peterson, chancellor emeritus, and Shelley Peterson.

Barbara Fischer
Executive Director/Chief Curator
Art Museum at the University of Toronto

Showcasing the artistic excellence of University of Toronto's undergraduate students in visual studies programs across three campuses

The *Shelley Peterson Student Art Exhibition* is an annual exhibition celebrating the artistic excellence of University of Toronto's undergraduate students in visual studies programs across three campuses.

The exhibition is curated by Jaime Meier, Erika Serodio, and Delaney Sweep as part of their Master of Museum Studies Exhibition Project at the Faculty of Information, University of Toronto.



Left: Sitong Guo, *Untitled (WTF?!)*, 2020. 11.2 x 13.9 inches. Acrylic on canvas.

Middle: Zi Yan (Gabriella) Bai, *School of the Orient*, 2020. 19 x 30 inches. Photograph.

Right: Veronica Spiljak, *Thinking About How the Future Feels*, 2020. 6 x 9 inches. Digital photography.

Curatorial Statement

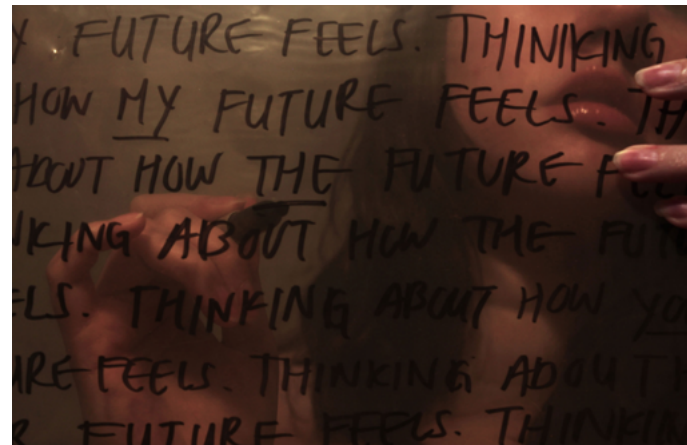
One of the great promises of art is that it will always persist—through joy, sorrow, and even unprecedented times. For emerging artists, the past year has been fraught with new challenges and changes in their education and artistic practice. Undergraduate students in visual studies programs across the University of Toronto's three campuses adjusted to the new realities of the COVID-19 pandemic with creativity and resilience. It has been the privilege of the curators to work with curatorial mentor Liora Belford, our campus contacts Alexander Irving, Sue Llyod, and John Armstrong, and Master of Museum Studies Professor Agneiszka Chalas. Through the dedication of those involved, we received over 120 artworks for this year's iteration of the exhibition. The works submitted were inspired by the necessity of adaptation and reflect the resulting changes to artistic practices, thus breaking the mold of typical exhibitions to more thoroughly explore the possibilities of online spaces.

This exhibition came together through an entirely virtual process, with the curators, professors, and artists involved only communicating through screens. Our concepts of space and time have been interrupted, with meetings and portfolio reviews taking place across multiple time zones. During the pandemic, many students were able to return to their homes outside of Toronto, but online schooling and meetings continued to run on University of Toronto time. There was a realization that digital works will linger

long after our world returns to in-person encounters, resulting in a notable shift in medium for many artists. They began to explore their available materials and environments to create artworks that better suited their online existence.

The twenty selected artworks use a variety of mediums to tell a story of a collective psyche, a cohort of students forging their way through a global pandemic. Pieces such as Veronica Spiljak's *Thinking About How the Future Feels* and Freia de Waal's *Renewal* convey the monotony and repetition of our present confinement. Others, like Rika Nakane's *Ochazuke* お茶漬, focus on the comforts and memories of home, like home-cooked meals. Matthew Kieffer's *Three Portraits of John Brown* and James Legaspi's *magnolia* make allusions to grandparents that subtly tug on our subconscious to remind us of the vulnerable people in our lives. These reflections on our relationships with others shift to reflections on ourselves, with societal norms around gender and sexuality being resisted in Gabriella Bai's *School of the Orient* and Jamie Katrina Harris's *Strawberry* to allow for more authentic versions of the self to emerge. The exhibition concludes with connections to place and the natural world, a world waiting for rediscovery once the pandemic subsides, as seen in Anita Gairns's *Grandfather (Atlin Lake 2019)* and Natalie Chiovitti's *Resilience*. It is our hope that the exhibition will be a reassuring recognition of disrupted presents and uncertain futures to allow for solidarity and hope to grow.

Veronica Spiljak
Thinking About How the Future Feels



Veronica Spiljak, *Thinking About How the Future Feels*, 2020. 6 x 9 inches. Digital photography.

Campus: Mississauga/Sheridan
Year of Study: Fifth
Program of Study: Art and Art History

Based in Mississauga, Veronica Spiljak is a multi-media and performance artist. Trauma, anxiety, depression, and other topics surrounding mental illnesses are prevalent within her art practice, in which Spiljak brings the invisibility of mental health experiences to the surface.

Thinking About How the Future Feels reflects on her inner turmoil from dealing with the collective anxieties, trauma, mourning, and school fatigue as the pandemic progresses. The image conveys the experience of coping with mental illnesses during an age where everything

is turning online. Our presence at home has become something with no deeper meaning, as if we are just floating through. Using herself as the subject of her work, Spiljak introduces an element of disruption with what is going on with text and the augmented use of coloured LED lights. Together, these components create the sensation that something is slightly off, whether it is her physical actions or within her subconscious as it is revealed in the image. The photograph interrupts and augments her surrounding environment to reflect the future of an ongoing crisis.

Ujwal Mantha *Wandering the Mindlands:* A “Photo” Essay



Ujwal Mantha, *Wandering the Mindlands: A “Photo” Essay*, 2020. 11-page PDF. Mixed media.

2021 Award Winner

Campus: Scarborough
Year of Study: Fourth
Program of Study: Studio Art, Sociology

Born in Hyderabad, India, Ujwal Mantha currently studies and works in Toronto. He is a mixed-media artist who specializes in sculpture and digital mediums. He spent much of the pandemic in India, which also marked for him a return to working with the two-dimensional mediums that he had used more frequently while growing up there. Though thematically diverse, his work focuses on narratives. His art reflects on the stories we tell ourselves as we go through life. Mantha has been working closely with faculty in the sociology department at UTSC to make a series

of illustrations to be used as teaching material for first-year sociology courses.

Wandering the Mindlands is a series of two-dimensional pieces dedicated to an imaginary journey into the artist’s mind. The work spans a range of mediums such as acrylic, ink, and watercolor. The different pieces are linked by a common underlying narrative that follows a mental “traveler” as they take a vacation into a world built and inspired by the human psyche. Mantha invites his audience to board the train of thought, plunge into the wilds of the subconscious, and travel further into their own minds.

[View Photo Essay PDF](#)

Freia de Waal *Renewal*



Freia de Waal, *Renewal*, 2020. 720 x 1280 pixels. GIF.

Campus: St. George
Year of Study: Fourth
Program of Study: Visual Studies, Human Geography

Freia de Waal grew up in Calgary, Alberta, and has a deep affection for cats, oat milk lattes, and movies of all kinds. Working primarily in video, she is interested in investigating linguistic and visual connections to double meanings, the role of materiality and thingness, and our differing experiences, emotions, and realities in temporalities.

Renewal consists of seven interconnected laptops, representing the seven days of the week, rotating around a glowing central plant in space. The laptop screens bear phrases emblematic of the pandemic, quarantine, and

the digital world. While these liminal spaces have created difficult adjustments, de Waal imagines the beginning of opportunities for renewal that come with such radical changes. Our increased communication and presence on social media can be imagined as a web of circulatory systems or digital connections used to feed ideas, mobilize change, and conceptualize alternative futures. The pandemic has been accompanied by transformative opportunities for racial and environmental justice, giving us the chance to establish a new normal.

[Watch GIF on Vimeo](#)

Sitong Guo *Untitled (WTF?!)*



Sitong Guo, *Untitled (WTF?!)*, 2020. 11.2 x 13.9 inches. Acrylic on canvas.

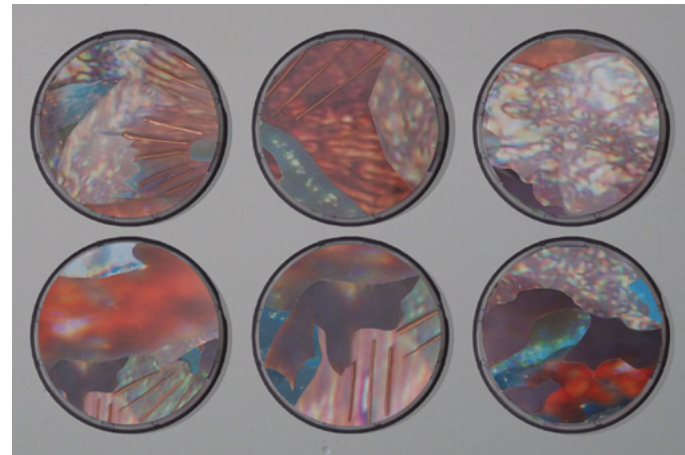
Campus: Scarborough
Year of Study: Fourth
Program of Study: Arts Management

Sitong Guo is a visual artist from Beijing who currently studies in Toronto. Her works are mostly two-dimensional, created digitally or on canvas. Having grown up influenced by Japanese comics and design, she enjoys the vividness of colours on paper as well as the stories they are able to create. As a daydreamer, Guo loves to draw inspirations from stories in her head and make them into comic series and illustrations. She also thinks that drawing and painting are the best ways to document and express her eureka moments.

Forced to stay at home during the early stages of the pandemic, Guo found herself facing a

challenge: to create a painting with limited colours of acrylic. At first, she felt stuck—how could she possibly express her complicated feelings of the pandemic using only blue, yellow, black, and red? Later that week, as she was checking the newest government policies and naturally said out loud the phrase “WTF,” she came to a realization: The complexity of human emotions can be easily summarized by some of the most impolite yet common words we use every day.

Laura Alcazar Prada *Micro-art, an experiment*



Laura Alcazar Prada, *Micro-art, an experiment*, 2020. 11 x 14 inches. Collage of photographs.

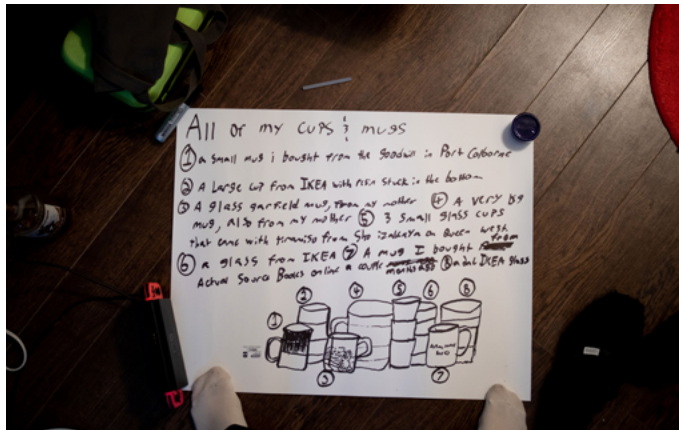
Campus: Scarborough
Year of Study: Fourth
Program of Study: Studio Art, Human Biology

Laura Alcazar Prada is a Colombia-born artist whose practice incorporates a variety of mediums. Her multi-disciplinary practice includes drawing, painting, and photography, as well as sewing and dancing. At times she incorporates her other passion—science—into her art. One day she hopes to use her creativity within the scientific world.

When the pandemic hit, Alcazar Prada lost access to the art studios and the variety of mediums available to her on the university campus. She became resourceful, using the tools she had around her at home—like her old microscope. To make this piece, she took

photographs from under the microscope and collaged them together. The old microscope produced a grainy effect that reminded her of old film photography.

Robin Boehlen
All of my cups & mugs,
Untitled (things),
Untitled (bananas)



Robin Boehlen, *All of my cups & mugs*, 2021. 3675 x 6000 pixels. Photography, sharpie on paper.



Robin Boehlen, *Untitled (things)*, 2020. 4000 x 6000 pixels. Photography, sharpie on millboard.



Robin Boehlen, *Untitled (bananas)*, 2020. 6000 x 4000 pixels. Photography, sharpie on wood.

2021 Award Winner

Campus: St. George
 Year of Study: Fourth
 Program of Study: Visual Studies

Originally a digital artist, Robin Boehlen's practice has shifted to the convenience of physical materials around their home—whether it be the back of former projects or old bed frames. When composing the text for their works, Robin writes quickly, circumventing any inhibitions or doubt that may come with over-thinking an idea. The result is honest, witty, and perceptive textual works that reflect not only on the mundanity of daily life, but also the universal experiences that connect us, even when a pandemic keeps us apart.

In *Untitled (bananas)*, Robin creates a humorous short story surrounding the complexities of nourishment and consumption through the perpetual overripening of bananas. *All of my cups & mugs* is an archive of mismatched glassware purchased for either novelty or convenience or gifted by family members. The pieces it contains overcome uniformity in favour of a sense of home, which is further emphasized by the household objects and feet holding down the artwork. Moving out of the kitchen, *Untitled (things)* greets the viewer as the ominous pile of items lurking in the corner of rooms as the consequence of mental health obstacles or pandemic-induced melancholy.

[View artwork text](#)

Wing Lam Leung *YOU CANT LIVE WITHOUT ME*



Wing Lam Leung, *YOU CANT LIVE WITHOUT ME*, 2020. 12-second loop. GIFs, digital media, performance.

Campus: Mississauga
Year of Study: Fourth
Program of Study: Arts Management, Studio Art, Curatorial Studies

Wing Lam Leung's artistic practice questions the nuances between art and life, body and social relations; her ideas, however, are not confined by any medium, as she likes to explore a variety of forms of expression, particularly performance art. Her recent works are performed with cameras to focus on the bodily experience during the global pandemic. Through exaggeration, stimulation, and repetition, she wants her audience to reflect upon the question "Now what?" physically, mentally, and emotionally.

YOU CANT LIVE WITHOUT ME is a series of five GIFs flashing in high-contrast colours that form two sentences: "YOU CANT LIVE WITHOUT ME" (large text) and "your eyes want to(a) break" (small text). Behind the text, different versions of eye exercises play. With this work, Leung explores our relationships with screens in terms of digital reliance. Screen time has greatly increased due to the pandemic, and the GIFs recreate the experience of screen fatigue through afterimage effects and the anxious, hypnotizing looping of eye exercises. The use of text plays with a tri-digital personal relationship between the performer and the audience while simultaneously anthropomorphizing our attachment to the screen.

[Download *YOU CANT LIVE WITHOUT ME* GIFs](#)

Christeen Salik *Daily Dose of Death*



Christeen Salik, *Daily Dose of Death*, 2020. 3456 x 5184 pixels. Photography and digital illustration.

Campus: St. George
Year of Study: Fifth
Program of Study: Critical Studies in Equity and Solidarity, Visual Studies, Buddhism, Psychology and Mental Health

Christeen Salik is a queer Pakistani-Canadian Art-ivist. Her practice emphasizes the creation of decolonized and inclusive spaces for creative self-exploration more accessible to her wider community. Her artistic work focuses largely on mental health, physical health, and social relations based on her diasporic, hyphenated personality.

As explored within *Daily Dose of Death*, diabetes is an all-too-common killer within South Asian communities. The daily ritual of "chai time" encourages the regular

consumption of sugar in tea, accompanying biscuits, and cultural sweets (mithai). This image brings together the common features of chai time: the chai itself, a biscuit, a spoonful of sugar, and the daily medication of a diabetic person. In *Daily Dose of Death*, Salik contemplates the normality of sugar within daily routines and the importance of conscientious sugar consumption.

Rika Nakane Ochazuke お茶漬け



Rika Nakane, *Ochazuke*
お茶漬け, 2020. 174.73 x
131.06 cm. Digital painting.

Campus: Scarborough
Year of Study: Third
Program of Study: Neuroscience, Studio Art

Born in Osaka, Japan, Rika Nakane grew up in Tokyo and Chicago, and her work embraces her personal lived experiences and Japanese culture.

Her digital painting *Ochazuke* お茶漬け depicts a Japanese dish that is an assortment of rice and savory ingredients steeped in hot green tea. It is a comfort food that can be prepared extremely fast. Although not the most famous dish in Japanese cuisine, this painting of Ochazuke cooked by the artist's grandfather represents the emotions surrounding their culture. Due to the pandemic, Nakane returned to Japan, where she has had the time to reflect on everyday things and moments. In this work, she considers how as a student in Toronto she would often make quick meals but, now that she is back in Japan, she has learned to appreciate comfort foods and spending time with family.

Sojeong (Jacqueline) Kim-Fujita Memory



Sojeong (Jacqueline) Kim-Fujita, *Memory*, 2018. 18 x 24 inches. Print, woodcut, linocut, ink on rice paper.

Campus: St. George
Year of Study: Fifth
Program of Study: Architectural Studies (Design) and Specialist in Visual Studies: Studio

Born and raised in South Korea, Jacqueline Kim-Fujita expresses her feelings associated with her struggles with mental disorders and identities using multimedia. Her art examines the ambiguities of her past and present, herself and her surroundings, all influenced by the challenges that keep her tethered to her thoughts.

Memories are often manipulated, distorted, and become faded with time. Such alterations create voids within moments, leading to the modification and rearrangement of other memories. Kim-Fujita's work, *Memory*, portrays her fragmented and distant memories of her father, memories built upon their estranged relationship. The use of calligraphy and *dojang* (carved stamp blocks) in the series relates to her father's identity as a calligrapher, while phrases taken from the Heart Sutra and Diamond Sutra signify his later identity as a Buddhist monk. Through the repeated printings of *dojang* and letter blocks, Kim-Fujita creates multiple print panels with different configurations to signify a new iteration of the memories she has of her father. The scattered four-word phrases and voids between the words create a sense of fragmentation, reflecting the nature of her memory.

Matthew Kieffer

3 Portraits of John Brown



Top Left: 3 Portraits of John Brown: 2016, 2016. 11 x 14 inches. Acrylic on canvas paper.

Bottom Left: 3 Portraits of John Brown: 2018, 2018. 11 x 14 inches. Charcoal on paper.

Right: 3 Portraits of John Brown: 2021, 2021. 20 x 16 inches. Acrylic on wood.

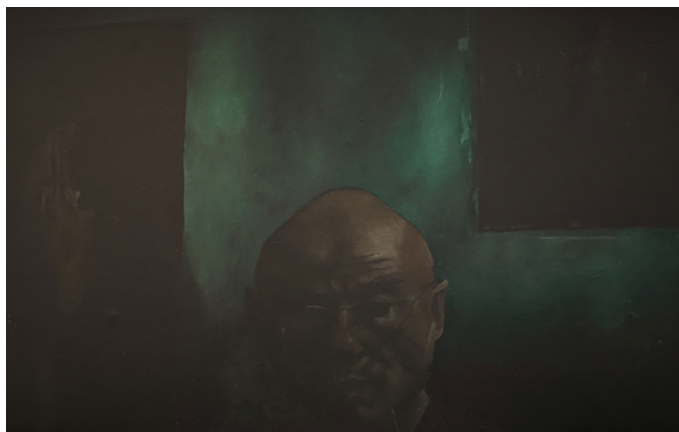


Campus: St. George
Year of Study: Second
Program of Study: International Relations, Economics, Visual Studies

Through exploring the textural capabilities of dry and wet mediums, primarily charcoal and acrylic, Matthew Kieffer's artistic practice communicates visceral emotions. His paintings and drawings document a process of deep introspection as he wrestles with themes of identity and self, bringing the relationship between the artist and the subject to the forefront. Kieffer views his work as a documentation of his emotional state, unabashedly exploring personal turmoil through his art.

Each of the portraits depict his late grandfather and idol, John Canvin Brown. Together, they tell a story of an adolescent wrestling with the slow deterioration caused by vascular dementia and the eventual passing of a crucial role model and father figure. The pieces reflect how Kieffer's image of his grandfather has developed posthumously, due to both his own maturing and stories told by family members that further revealed Brown's true character. The final 2021 portrait captures a wishful memory of a loved one who has passed after battling a difficult disease—a vision of exuberance and fulfillment.

Vi Thao Nguyen *Portrait of Grandpa*



Vi Thao Nguyen, *Portrait of Grandpa*, 2019. 14 x 20 inches. Oil on recycled wood panel.

Campus: St. George
Year of Study: Second
Program of Study: Visual Studies and Architecture

Working in traditional mediums and techniques, Toronto-based artist Vi Nguyen uses portraiture to project impressions of life around her. She relies on observations and empathy to translate the relative perceptions of herself and her subjects into realistic oil paintings. Nguyen works to recognize forms of self-identity in revealing these moments, memories, and impressions to conjure intimate connections between her work and its viewers.

Portrait of Grandpa captures the relationship that exists between Nguyen and her grandfather. Though connected by familial

and emotional bonds, a disconnect occurs due to the reality that their interaction occurs solely online, living in Canada and Vietnam respectively. Having observed the impact of physicality in the development of close relationships, this work utilizes the darkened background to highlight how online personas are simultaneously a representation and misrepresentation of an individual, ultimately asking: Can you really know someone if you have never met them in person?

James Legaspi *magnolia*



James Legaspi, *magnolia*, 2020. 18min 13sec. HD video.

2021 Award Winner

Campus: Mississauga/Sheridan
Year of Study: Fifth
Program of Study: Art and Art History

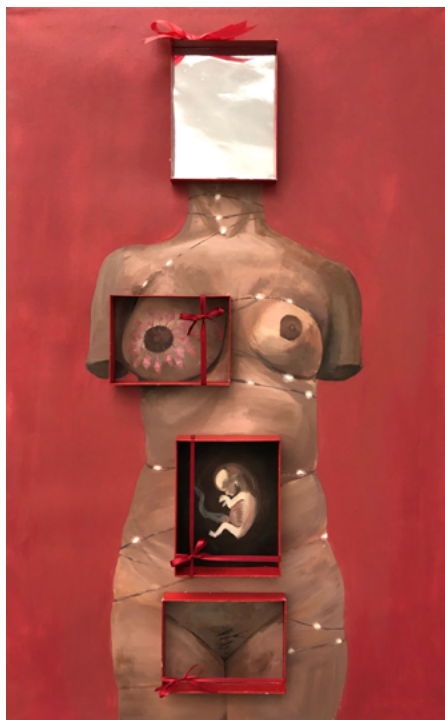
James Legaspi is a Filipino-Canadian artist currently based in Brampton, Ontario. Primarily working in video, their multimedia art crosses disciplinary and conceptual boundaries. It often addresses race relations in historical and current contexts, especially those regarding the Asian diaspora in North America.

magnolia is a musing following the loss of Legaspi's lola, their grandmother, linking the long, drawn-out process of grieving over a

loved one to grieving over lived racial trauma and deeper research into historical atrocities. The work reflects on the Japanese occupation of the Philippines in World War II, American intervention, and how Legaspi's lola witnessed these events as a child. Balancing these three pillars of trauma, each informs the other as petals form a magnolia flower, then a magnolia tree—the tree indicative of Legaspi's lola's house, which nourished her family from their arrival in Canada until her passing.

[Watch the video on Vimeo](#)

Hanyue (Noah) Qin *Gift*



Hanyue (Noah) Qin, *Gift*,
2020. 48 x 30 inches.
Mixed media.

Campus: Scarborough
Year of Study: Fourth
Program of Study: Studio Art and Mental Health Studies

Noah Qin's background as a feminist Chinese international student and member of the LGBTQ+ community is the inspirational foundation for her painting, drawing, and video production. She is interested in creating new meanings through altering different popular culture tropes, and her personal experiences with cultural differences and mental health have inspired her to focus on topics of self-identification, gender equality, mental health issues, and sexuality.

Gift is a mixed-media painting of an armless female nude tied up by string lights with four gift boxes pasted over certain features. The work explores the concept that female bodies are both gifted and often treated as gifts. The gift boxes located on the breast, belly, and genital area highlight the different ways of objectifying women: as machines to give birth and to feed babies, or whose virginity is seen as a virtue that will bring sexual pleasure to their partner. Presented on a wall at eye level, viewers can look inside the top box to see a blurry image of themselves reflected on the foil paper surface: anyone can be a victim of objectification.

Zi Yan (Gabriella) Bai *School of the Orient*



Zi Yan (Gabriella) Bai, *School of the Orient*, 2020. 19 x 30 inches. Photograph.

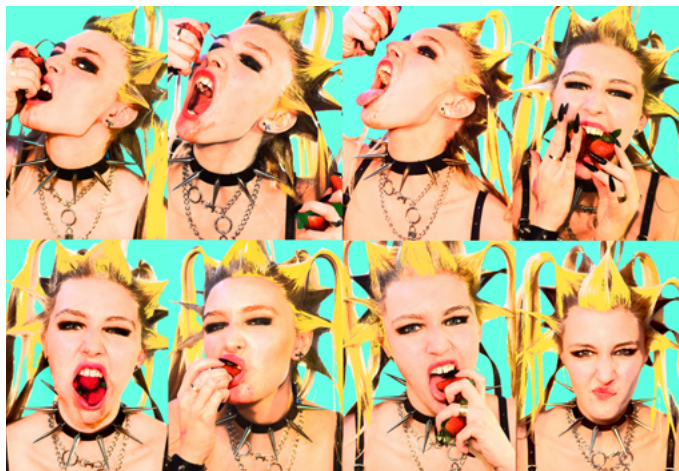
Campus: Scarborough
Year of Study: Fourth
Program of Study: Studio Art and Media Studies

Gabriella Bai is an interdisciplinary artist who uses art to interrogate the construction of culture and identity. She experiments with a variety of mediums, while inviting the viewer to engage with their perception and awareness of visual representations. Bai's work intends to initiate a dialogue not only with the viewer but also within the artwork itself.

School of the Orient references the renaissance painting *School of Athens* in its sarcastic re-depiction of intellectual "cannons." The work critiques the thinkers whose work became the touchstones of intellectual development,

spreading throughout the world, deeming other systems of thought inferior. Women were pushed to the peripheries, where their activities were perceived as lacking intellect. Bai superimposes images of herself doing those things that "lack intellect," such as gossiping, daydreaming, and exploring the fantasy worlds of fiction in romances like *The World of Suzie Wong*. The artwork reinvestigates the dominant historical construction of knowledge that characterizes non-western culture.

Jamie Katrina Harris *Strawberry*



Jamie Katrina Harris,
Strawberry, 2020. 26 x 38
inches. Digital photography.

Campus: St. George
Year of Study: Fourth
Program of Study: Critical Practices in
Visual Studies

Jamie Katrina Harris is a multidisciplinary artist who experiments with the hybridity of performance art, film, photography, and fashion design. Her practice is inspired by research into queer culture, sexuality, and cinematic interpretations of auto-fiction and auto-theory. These forms of exploration play a critical role in self-reflection and analysis while also constructing narratives. Harris creates artwork through the redirection of memories to overcome the tribulations of creative oppression by social normality and embrace her present desires, whether through self-discovery or shameless honesty that can be shared with the audience.

Strawberry documents a personal exploration of an alter-ego that conveys the unique drama of the neo-punk era. Modern punk is about just being who you are without worrying about appearing digestible, and the strawberry is a reference to free sexuality. The pandemic has similarly brought down barriers in regards to self-expression, with people asserting their style and personal beliefs based on their choice of facial masks (or lack thereof). This has allowed for an exploration into the truest version of ourselves, revealing, for Harris, a part of herself that she aspires to boldly expose.

Christiana Ceesay *Wild Garden*



Christiana Ceesay, *Wild
Garden*, 2021. 1920 x 1080
pixels. Composted image,
animation.

Campus: Scarborough
Year of Study: Third
Program of Study: Media Studies and
Studio Art

Christiana Ceesay is a digital artist based in Toronto. There is an overall playful tone in her work that feels like stepping into a pocket dimension: it's surreal and adventurous. Her practice incorporates rich, vibrant colours, a palette that takes inspiration from anime, cartoons, and African wax-print fabrics. Common themes in her work are escapism, fantasy, the healing properties of nature, and especially placing Black bodies in nature and space.

During the pandemic, Ceesay has found herself stuck in her own head with more time to imagine the world. *Wild Garden* is an homage to when she was able to go outside and explore. The piece is an exploration of being out in nature and being one with nature. The figure is in ballet poses, an artform that Ceesay appreciates because it combines strength with beauty. Ballet is about working with the elements and what the body can do, pushing yourself to the limit. With these themes of pushing limits and defining human nature, Ceesay's work encourages the viewer to escape and slip into their own alternate worlds.

[Watch the animation on Vimeo](#)

Anita Gairns *Grandfather (Atlin Lake 2019)*



Anita Gairns, *Grandfather (Atlin Lake 2019)*, 2019. 3 x 5 ft. Digital photography.

Campus: St. George
Year of Study: Fourth
Program of Study: Architectural Studies, Design and History

Anita Gairns is a Toronto-based feminist photographer. Her queer, trans, BIPOC, and sex-work-positive studio aims to promote visual representations of beauty outside of the traditionally established societal framework. Her portrait work focuses primarily on mental health awareness and personal expression, while her landscapes and streetscapes explore ideas of community and belonging.

Grandfather (Atlin Lake 2019) transports the viewer to the northernmost corner of B.C., to a small town of no more than 500 people. Originally founded during the gold rush era of

the 1890s, Atlin (from Tlingit: *Áa Tlein*, “large body of water”) has no municipal government, and services are run by volunteers. Gairns’s family has a history with the town, and the photo explores her experiences of grief and solace within the context of an unfamiliar, yet comforting environment that further appeals to communal feelings of homesickness and restlessness brought on by the pandemic.

Sylvie Stojanovski *Impressions of Place*



Sylvie Stojanovski, 43°45'51.1"N, 79°15'56.5"W (*Impressions of Place*), 2020.

43°45'36.9"N, 79°14'47.5"W (*Impressions of Place*), 2020.

43°42'56.9"N, 79°13'29.2"W (*Impressions of Place*), 2020.

8 inches in diameter. Found natural objects, watercolour, ink, acetate, vellum, and rice paper.

Campus: Scarborough
Year of Study: Fifth
Program of Study: Arts Management with a minor in Studio Art

Sylvie Stojanovski is a multidisciplinary artist and creative facilitator based in Scarborough. Her work explores the myriad relationships we have with the contemporary natural world, from the transience of reflections on water to the complexity of memories of the land we hold from childhood. She is interested in working alongside nature as an active participant in the genesis of her work.

Impressions of Place is a series of three multi-layered, mixed-media works incorporating found natural objects to capture the essence of the places Stojanovski began traversing during

her daily walking practice as a result of current quarantine measures. In this work she explores how places can imprint themselves into our memory, how the mind captures the “feeling” of a place. *Impressions of Place* is therefore an invitation to reconnect with places through their hidden memories and contemplate their relationship to the natural world.

Natalie Chiovitti *Resilience*



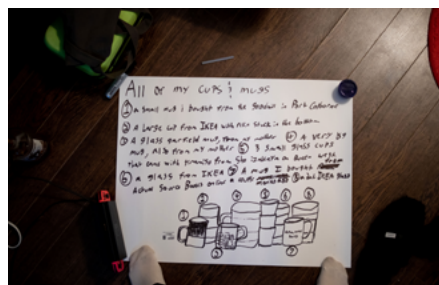
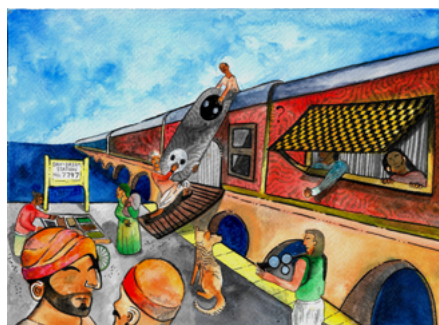
Natalie Chiovitti, *Resilience*, 2020. 36 x 36 inches. Ink on canvas.

Campus: Mississauga/Sheridan
Year of Study: Third
Program of Study: Art and Art History and Communication, Culture, Information and Technology

Natalie Chiovitti is an interdisciplinary artist engaged in a combination of traditional and contemporary approaches through a variety of art forms. She explores notions associated with pop-culture, technology, nature, and their influence on human experiences and relationships.

Resilience is an exploration of the term through the strength and vulnerability of plants that become a metaphor for people adapting and transforming to their environment in different ways specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic. To create this work, Chiovitti used fifteen photographs of her garden taken in lockdown from April to September of 2020. These served as inspiration, and she digitally compiled elements from each to create a small-scale version of this image before projecting it for reference onto the final canvas. Chiovitti found it interesting to observe how some plants would adapt or change in relation to their environment, such as by clinging to a lattice or contorting in different ways. Like plants, people are practicing resilience in their own ways to both survive and thrive, inviting hope through adaptation or transformation.

2021 Award Winners and Juror's Remarks Adelina Vlas



Top: Ujwal Mantha, *Wandering the Mindlands: A "Photo" Essay*, 2020. Middle: Robin Boehlen, *All of my cups & mugs*, 2021. Bottom: James Legaspi, *magnolia*, 2020.

A year ago, when life as we knew it changed for all of us, one of the thoughts that kept me going was the hope that this unexpected experience would shape artistic practices in meaningful and profound ways. Reviewing the artwork selected for the 2021 Shelley Peterson Student Art Exhibition fulfilled that hope. I was impressed by the introspective quality of the work and by the resourcefulness of the students in the face of a challenging reality.

The three works that stood out for me did so through the strength of their conceptual framework and the effective use of the medium chosen by the artists.

Ujwal Mantha's *Wandering the Mindlands: A "Photo" Essay* offers a humorous yet unsettling inward journey into the depths of the pandemic psyche. The three works by Robin Boehlen, *All of my cups & mugs*, *Untitled (things)*, and *Untitled (bananas)*, are inspired by the intense intimacy created by the pandemic with domestic surroundings and the rituals of survival. In *magnolia*, James Legaspi creates a self-reflexive video essay that honours their family history and particularly their relationship with their grandmother.

It has been a real pleasure to engage with these emergent practices and I look forward to encountering them again in person in the future. Congratulations to the curators and all the participating artists!

Adelina Vlas
Associate Curator, Contemporary Art,
Art Gallery of Ontario


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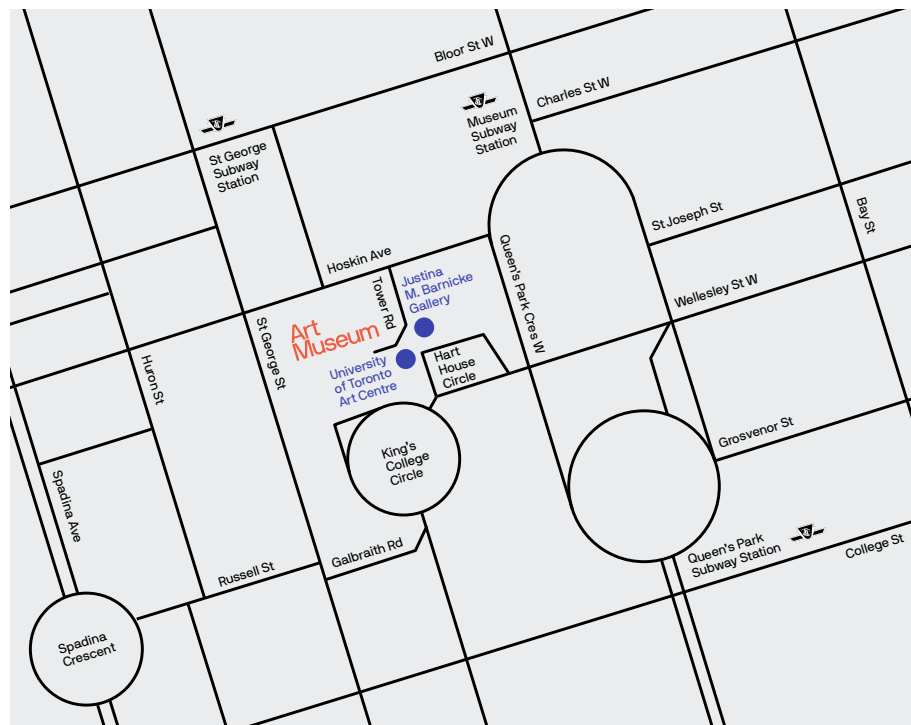
Visiting the Art Museum

Please note that the Art Museum's gallery spaces are temporarily closed due to COVID-19.

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