



ARBOR ROOM magazine

ISSUE 1 - WINTER 2021

Presented by the *HART HOUSE STUDENT ART COMMITTEE*
In collaboration with the *HART HOUSE STUDENT LITERARY AND LIBRARY COMMITTEE*

ARBOR ROOM magazine

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about

Arbor Room is a digital art magazine run by the Hart House Student Art Committee's Arbor Room & Student Projects subcommittee at the University of Toronto (U of T). The magazine's aim is to showcase the talent of U of T's student artists. For this issue, the Hart House Student Art Committee is collaborating with the Hart House Student Literary and Library Committee. The themes are: 'Home' and 'Escape'.

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Katie Smith, *Afternoon at Elbow Falls*. Acrylic paint.

Megan Horsthuis,
stories that you must forget. Poem.

a summer spent under apple trees
drinking iced tea in the vineyard
as sunlight welded a crown to my brow.
drowning under layers of smoke and basil,
we gave up our minds at the beach by the graveyard,
we forgot how to spell as we skidded over the lake.
numbers became wisps of clouds
words caught fire and settled in the hearth
i chose to lose myself between the sunflowers and honeybees
spread my wings flat under the night sky
escaped the ground for just a few months.
this was a summer of sweat and wine,
where we left scars on our fingertips
just to remember how alive we were.

but seasons passed, as they used to do.
august, september, october,
time has forgotten to tell itself.
now the sun is cold, and burns to the touch,
i have left behind the orchard and summer winds,
trapped in a stone castle with no memories of the past.
i miss the long grasses reaching for the road,
the one-sided wrinkle in time.
cracks in my palms,
lifeline splits into two, then three,
too many lives for me to count.
i want them, but i fear
i do not have enough breath
for even just one.

surrounded by libraries and robes,
between walls of copper and stone,
i am freezing with the blades of grass
falling from the sky with the autumn leaves,
disappearing into the margins,
the ghost of summer romance.
i should like to find my way back home,
leave this bitter room behind,
find warmth between the vineyard and the stars,
too many for me to not believe in god.



Danielle Vincent, *Glimmer*. Colour pencil.



Kornelia Drianovski, *Separation Anxiety*. Pen, watercolour.

Allison Zhao,
Things That Fit in Tea Boxes. Poem.

All the wrong teas, for starters, because who knows when the box was first emptied – also, herbs for staving off colds – buttons from clothes that are long gone, but maybe they’ll match with something someday – wishes of good luck for a lifetime – two oblong pearls from *Nǎinai*, inexpensive and dyed pink – cheap earbuds from some red-eye, thirteen-hour Air Canada flight – blue Advil capsules – well-used needles carried over from Beijing thirty years ago – thread purchased at Dollarama – worn-out goodbyes – a whole stack of business cards, well-thumbed, especially the taxi service and the barber’s – jade charms with tangled red tassels – *pinyin* spelled wrong on shopping lists in two and a half languages – leftover screws from IKEA furniture – individually wrapped red bean cakes that the local T&T stopped carrying last year – spare keys hooked to a string of chunky wooden beads from summer camp – expired Asia One phone cards – faded wallet photos of you in elementary school, lace collar, bowl cut and all – road maps from when your parents first moved to America – the smell of yellow chives and spring rolls on Super Bowl night – a lifetime of cut-off conversations and slammed cupboards, counted in twelves, only to be reopened when you decide to relearn coming home.



Sierra Peca, *Everywhere in One Place*. Oil painting.



Sierra Peca, *Ponder*. Acrylic paint.

Jeanne Polochansky,
Seven Minutes. Poem.

there's no hurt
no cardboard walls
no threat

loss hurts but not like friendships breaking

i was told it takes me seven minutes to fall asleep
i guess i screamed during those seven minutes
take me far
far
far
far away
away
from here

i didn't know i was trapped
'til i escaped the realms
of feeling
sounds like something i would've said then

and i guess i was taken
because there's no water anymore

Hanna Derouin,
Studio Apartment in Outerspace. Poem.

In the city
You can be whomever you chose

Lately,
I don't know if that's a good thing

Sometimes borders
Are a necessity
They keep you grounded

That town felt small
But it let me be big

Everyone knew each other's limitations
That they weren't permanent
We just hadn't left the nest yet
Needing some more practice at flying

Here I forget
That I am just a girl
And not a spaceship

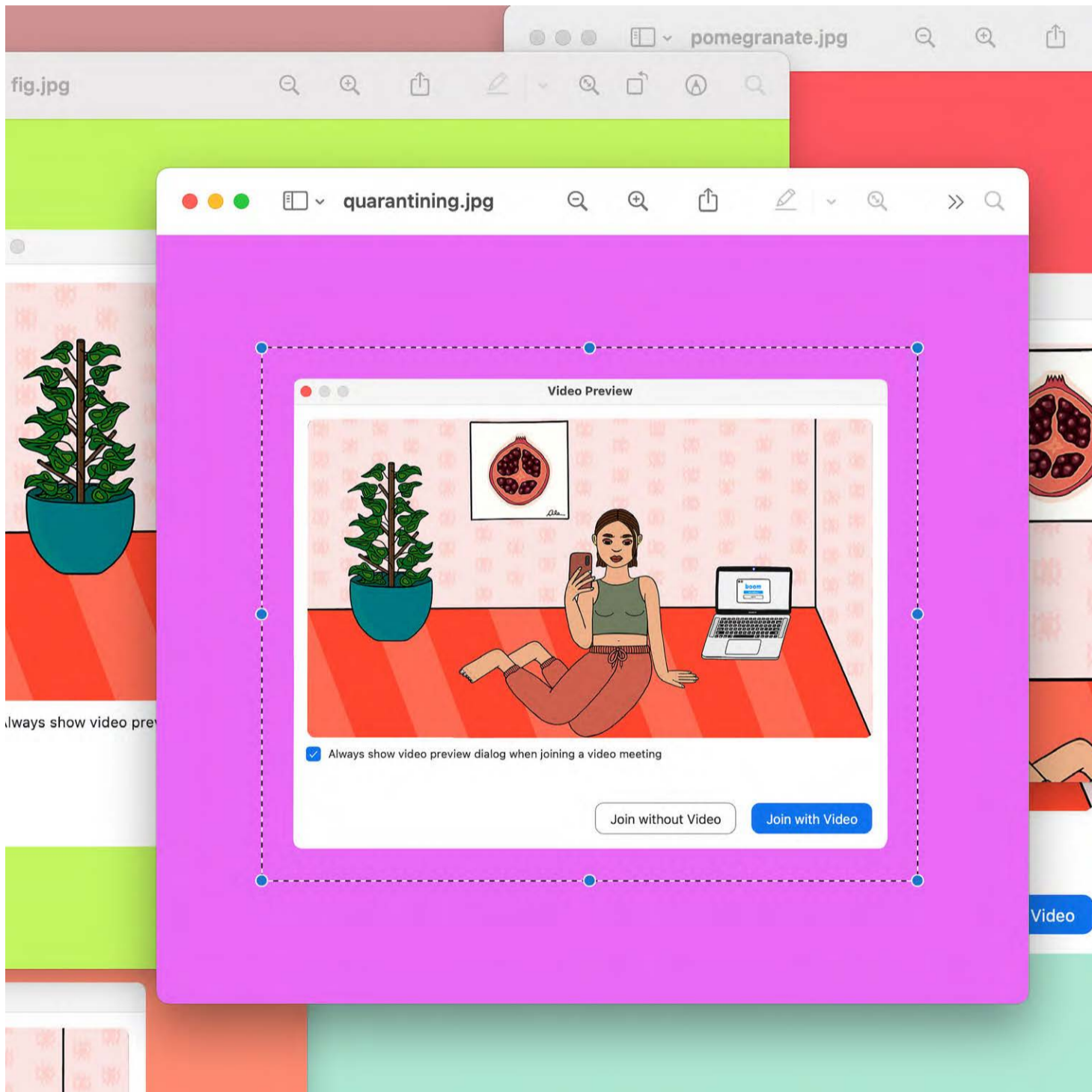
Nobody reminds me
That I don't have to be
Something bigger than I am
That it's okay to love the ground
And fear falling

I'm astounded
by the lack of dirt here

How someone can see nature
As a past time and not a parent
Anything other than always
The ability to drive away from it
Never even imaginable to me

I miss the permanence of trees
The liberation of the Ocean
Familiar with all your realities
Someone choosing you anyway

Some days I can't remember
Why I left in the first place
Tonight the lights are too bright
I can't help but see my reflection



Ala Koreitem, *Quarantining*. Digital illustration.



Cassie Wong, *Alona Lisa*. Acrylic paint.



Mia Carnevale, *Pomodoro Lady*. Digital illustration.



Callie Silverton, *Sisters*. Acrylic paint.

Mahaila Smith,

The Summer I Visited my Aunt and was Cursed. Short story.

When I was ten, my parents packed up my clothes and a few toys and sent me to live with my aunt for the summer. Her house was big and it was easy to lose yourself there. I spent the first week exploring the basement, the attic, and the rooms of cardboard boxes and dusty beds. I coughed, breathing in the dust bunnies behind the curtains and under claw-footed chairs. My aunt was very old and kept to herself, reading astronomy books by the fireplace or taking naps in the garden. As I continued to explore, I found special artifacts from her and my mother's childhood, souvenirs from her school days and career as an astrophysicist. There were photo albums, magnetic tiny animals, a set of glasses with the family coat of arms chiselled into the bottom, pearl-handled cutlery, odd astronomical globes, telescopes, and barometers. A few days after my arrival, I was walking down a narrow staircase (that used to be used by servants carrying breakfast-in-bed to their employer) and I found a tiny door cut into the wall. I felt around the edges and found a little doorknob. I turned it and pulled.

Inside was a small, wrinkled woman. She sneezed and said, "Aha! You have found me and fallen under my house goblin's curse. Now you must do my bidding."

It turned out most of her "bidding" entailed me stealing my aunt's things that were too high for her to reach. After breakfast I sneaked the sugar bowl off the table. Later I unhooked watercolour pictures from the hall walls. In the evening I dug out the pearl-handled cutlery from the attic. She stuffed more and more things into her tiny apartment. I had to work around my aunt's schedule, doing my snatching when she was napping or listening to loud Bach.

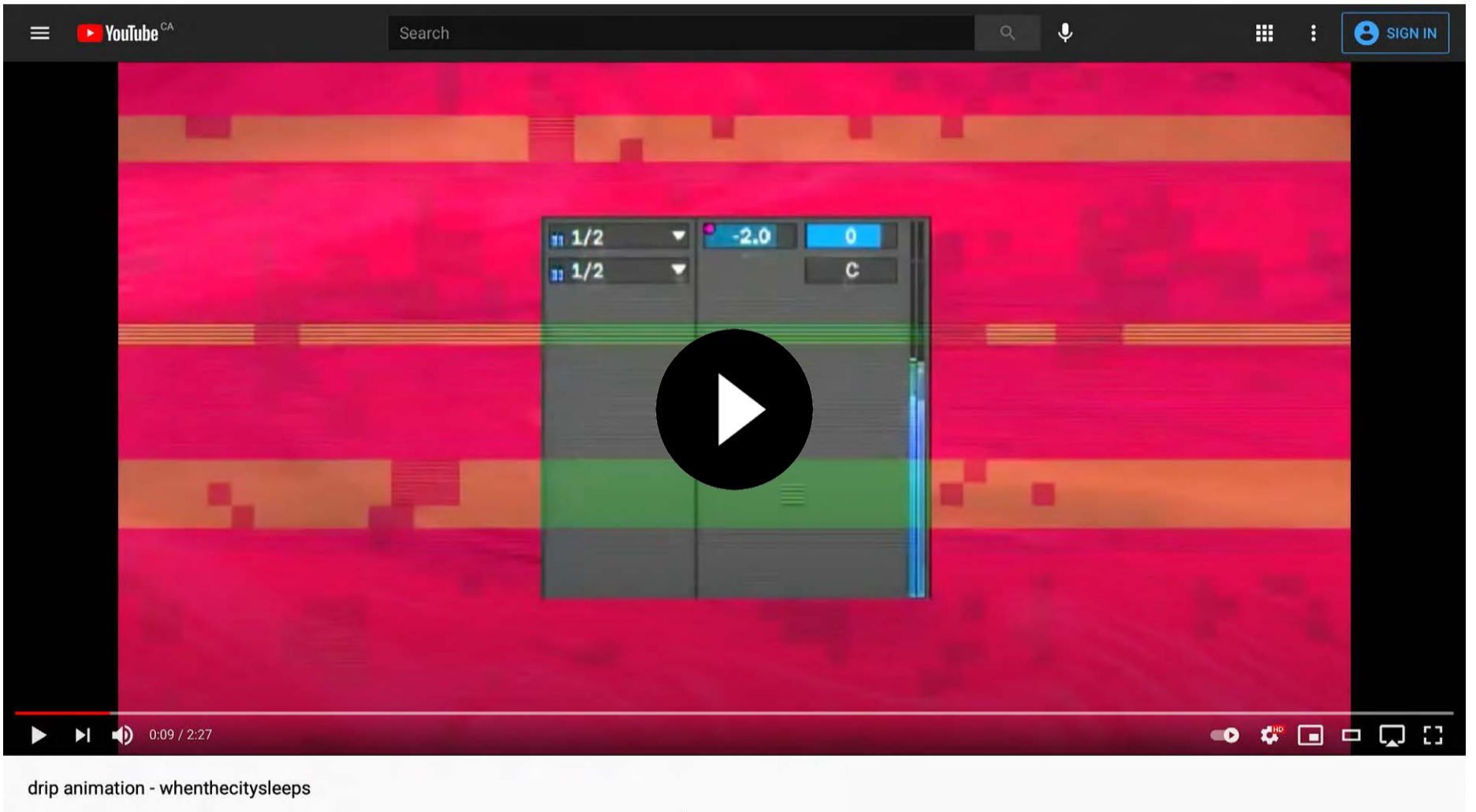
My aunt became suspicious that so many of her belongings had gone missing after my arrival. She phoned my mum to complain, and they decided I should go home early. I was excited to go home; sneaking behind my aunt's back stressed me out. As I was packing my bags the house-goblin grabbed at my ankles with her tiny hands and whimpered that I could not leave.

"Yes, I can," I told her. I said goodbye to my aunt who gave me a stern frown and a hug. I wheeled my suitcase down the gravel driveway to the taxi waiting on the street. I travelled home on the train to spend the rest of my summer with my family and friends before the new school year.



Sierra Peca, *Take Me Away*. Acrylic paint.

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Isabella Fong, *drip*. Animation, instrumental.





Angelin Thipahar, *Struggles of Grounding*. Illustration.



Isha M, *slumber*. Digital illustration.



Kristal Menguc, *Into the Unknown*. Digital painting.

contributors

Katie Smith

Katie Smith is a third-year student at the University of Toronto studying Materials Science. Growing up in Calgary, Alberta, Katie has spent years surrounded by the beauty of the Rocky Mountains and rolling foothills. She has been actively involved in sports throughout her life as well as exploring the landscape around her. Within the last year, Katie has reconnected with the outdoors and expressed this through her acrylic paintings with vibrant and earthy colours representing the natural environment around her. You can find more of Katie's artwork on Instagram @katiebmsmith_art.

Artist statement: Elbow Falls in Kananaskis provincial park is a small waterfall and day use area tucked into the hills and mountains. This spot is an hour drive from my home outside Calgary, Alberta and has been a favourite place for my family to go for walks with our two dogs over the years. This piece began as a plein air painting as my grandmother (a watercolour artist) and myself made a day trip to the mountains. The unpredictable weather Alberta is famous for abruptly ended our afternoon as it began to rain on what was supposed to be a clear day.

Megan Horsthuis

Megan is currently completing her first year of studies at Trinity College, and plans on majoring in Cognitive Science and Peace, Conflict & Justice in the fall, with a minor in Computer Science. In her free time, she enjoys learning new languages, watching soccer, reading classic literature, and discovering new zines. She is a columnist for Salterae Magazine, and has always considered writing (whether it be in the form of poetry, short stories, or vignettes) to be a big part of her life, as well as her favourite outlet for releasing pent-up stress and escapism.

Artist statement: This poem tells a story of transition, loss and muddled memory. It reflects on hazy recollections of summer, where nothing seemed to be real, and changes tones with the change of seasons, becoming more cold and linear. Moving away from home is a jarring experience, particularly when you are confronted with isolation in a new city. I tried to engage with this idea by reflecting on my difficult transition to university, and to living alone in a pandemic by contrasting my saturated memories of working on a vineyard in the summer with spending my winter in the cold of Toronto.

Danielle Vincent

Danielle Vincent is an emerging artist based in the GTA. She is completing her first year of the Visual Studies program at the Daniels faculty and preparing to enter the Studio Specialist stream. Her recognition of the roles of the important people in her life manifests in her artistic practice and develops in her creative process. Inspiration for her artwork comes from her connection to and appreciation of the depiction of a subject in a shared moment of time. Her strong interest in psychology, in particular perception and sensation, influences her practice and her approach to concepts and projects. Danielle enjoys art for its diversity in content, material and ability to generate endless opportunities for expression and connection. You can find more of Danielle's artwork on Instagram @dee.vee.art.

Artist statement: In this artwork, I create a representation of "escape" through composition and colour. The young woman listens to music she once shared with friends, to remind herself of past get-togethers before COVID-19. She lies down on her bed, remembering when she once danced, laughed and sang with friends. She lies down and listens to music to escape and to bring her understanding and introspection of the changing world. Music gives her a 'glimmer' of hope. The intense, abstract colours place this scene outside the context of a familiar setting, as if located in another dimension. Vivid light shines on the figure and the light on the consoles shine against the dark blues and purples in the background. Pencil markings show the labour of this artwork, a reminder that drawing is in itself a form of escape.

Kornelia Drianovski

Kornelia Drianovski is a fourth-year student at the University of Toronto studying English and Anthropology. She has been painting, drawing, and doodling on every surface imaginable since she was a child. She loves the strange, grotesque, and surreal. You can find more of Kornelia's artwork on Instagram @buttermefly.

Artist statement: Inspired by the pandemic and its resulting unprecedented level of isolation, my piece resides at the intersection of home and escape. My human-dog hybrid subject is trapped at home in a room, and this room, in turn, is trapped in her mind. She has lost sense of time and place, dissociating to the point of losing touch with her "self" as occupying this space. The home

has become threatening, surreal, and steeped with artificial stimuli. Like a lonely dog that has been left too long in the house and desires escape, there is only one option left in weak protest. Relatable, no?

Allison Zhao

Allison Zhao studies English and Public Policy. She writes in notebooks, in the margins of receipts, on her laptop, and occasionally on the back of her hand.

Artist statement: Tea often comes in elaborate boxes of many shapes, sizes, and materials, and in my household, these boxes get repurposed into storage containers for all sorts of objects. Immigrant life involves blending aspects of different cultures together, and through tiny items, like screws that you are sure fit somewhere and don't want to throw out, a new place can be made familiar. In this piece I put together small fragments of household living that hint at the many stories that make up a family history and a home – where you came from, how you got here, what you've done since arriving where you are, and what you choose to keep and come back to.

Sierra Peca

Sierra Peca is a third-year student at UTM. She is pursuing a double major in Art & Art History and Professional Writing & Communications. These majors allow Sierra to actively practice creating on a daily basis, whether through art or through words. Sierra has been painting since a young age and uses art as a way to recenter and refocus. It is a time when she is able to connect back to herself. For Sierra, art is more about a feeling than an image. Whether it is a realistic portrait or an abstract landscape, art allows observers to transport themselves into the eyes of the artist. As an artist, it is an opportunity to share your mind with the rest of the world. You can find more of Sierra's artwork on Instagram @sierrapeca.art.

Artist statements:

'Everywhere in One Place' - This is a painting of a section of my room that holds objects from around the world, that I bought or was given while traveling. It combines a need to escape while being confined to my bedroom during the pandemic. It is a calm area of my home that reminds me of the happy past and gives me hope for the future. This is both related to my home while also relating to the feeling of escapism.

'Ponder' - This painting is meant to show a form of mentally escaping. It represents a sense of freedom and calm that is so often neglected in daily life. The aim for this piece was to show the way I escape, which is usually

to just be; an example of meditation and thoughtfulness.

'Take Me Away' - I made this painting during quarantine as a visual dreamscape. It is quite literally my dream world and my ideal escape. The goal of this painting is to be able to look at it and be transported to this fantastical world, where a forest, waterfall and beach are just outside your door, and where your home is filled with beauty.

Jeanne Polochansky

Jeanne Polochansky is a fifteen-time published poet, writer, and first-year Life Sciences student at UTSG. Her works are featured in the Poetry Institute of Canada's Island Shores and Whispering Woods anthologies, the ROPES Literary Journal Unearthed anthology (Ireland), Adonis Designs Press Navigating the Maze (U.S.), Poetry in Voice VOICES journal, the TPL Young Voices journal, Polar Expression's Publishing Perspectives collection, the ESA Creative Writing blog, and Luna Land. She won first place in the ESA Poetry Contest and second place in the Poetry Institute of Canada's Young Writers Poetry contest. As a member of the TPL Editorial Youth Advisory Group, an editor for Acta Victoriana, The Spectatorial, and The Scribbler, and a former editor for the ESA Dance Newsletter, Jeanne has also selected and edited works for publishing. Although her life is dominated by literature, she still enjoys playing piano, dancing, and crocheting excessive amounts of amigurumi.

Artist statement: This poem openly explores the idea of escape and its stages: the motive for escaping, the process of escaping, and the future destination after the escape. I consider the subject of this poem my mental health and its various phases during the pandemic lockdown—the period of struggle, compromise, cooperation, and others. With this piece I wanted to see how I could describe escape in a different way. Rather than simply focusing on what I was escaping from and the desperation that led me to escape, I wanted to include the refuge that I was lucky enough and didn't expect to find.

Hanna Derouin

Hanna Derouin is a third-year student studying International Relations and History at the University of Toronto. Before moving to Toronto for school, Hanna lived on Vancouver Island growing up in a small city in the North Island region. Hanna spends her free time reading, writing, and watching documentaries.

Artist statement: This piece is the culmination of a combination of poems I wrote during my first summer in Toronto, and it connects to both the themes, Escape and

Home. I am originally from a small city on Vancouver Island. Though this was not my first time living away from home, I felt particularly estranged that summer as I had never lived in a 'big city'. The environment felt utterly unnatural to me, which is what inspired the poems. I combined the previous works into this new piece over quarantine as the poetry and homesickness became relevant to my life again. Throughout the pandemic, I felt myself torn between Vancouver Island, where I had unlimited access to nature and my family, and Toronto, a city I have fallen in love with and made my home over the past three years. In summary, I would say this poem is a coming of age story about trying to escape what you thought was holding you back, only to find yourself longing for what feels like home.

Ala Koreitem

Ala Koreitem is a fourth-year Health & Disease major at the University of Toronto. In her spare time, she enjoys creating multi-medium illustrations that focus on stories of women and their empowerment. You can find more of Ala's artwork on Instagram @artbyala.

Artist statement: 'Quarantining' is a lighthearted representation of how my self-isolation experience is going as I wrap up my last year of undergrad. I started working on this piece a few weeks into quarantine last year. I became interested in how mundane aspects of everyday life have changed under the weight of virtual learning. Everything has collapsed into a bed and two screens. I started modifying my illustration gradually by introducing increasingly ubiquitous elements into the image. Like a 'zoom' window which I dubbed as 'boom'. As a Lebanese-Canadian, home is more complex than one place I can point to. It is neither here, nor there. I've come to realize that it is an amalgamation of objects, foods, sounds, textures, colors, smells and words from different cultures and languages. Adding the fig tree and pomegranate details—two things that remind me of Lebanon—to an illustration of my bedroom in Toronto was a simple way of portraying this duality.

Casslie Wong

Casslie Wong is a first-year student in Social Sciences at UTSG. Casslie runs her own business painting canvases, tote bags and apparel. By creating artwork, Casslie has been able to raise donations for her local hospital's COVID-19 relief fund. Art is a way for Casslie to destress and to express her emotions on a canvas. You can find more of Casslie's artwork on Instagram @picasslio.

Artist statement: My 'Alona Lisa' piece displays an escape from reality, especially from the restrictions of quarantine. I placed myself in a fairytale setting to allude to an alternate universe, one without masks or stay at home orders.

Mia Carnevale

Mia Carnevale is a Visual Studies major, Art History and Italian Studies minor at UofT. She is interested in patterns from folktales, Mediterranean antiquities, nature, and various mythologies. She strives to write, illustrate, and create artwork with strong narrative and fantastical motifs. In her spare time, you can find Mia working on her graphic novel, searching through various collected ephemera for reference, or making homemade pasta. You can find more of Mia's artwork on Instagram @carnemia.

Artist statement: In this work, the feeling of 'escape' is evident in the depiction of this young woman in a tomato field in the middle of the night. Inspired by the aesthetics of Italian folk traditions and tales, this piece is titled 'Pomodoro' referring to the tomato, a symbol of happiness and vitality. The lady stands between the plants, in a sense connected to them and perhaps growing with them. Above her is a bright star surrounded by smaller ones, shining light within the darkness and bringing hope and comfort to the temporarily shadowed lands.

Callie Silvertown

Callie Silvertown is a second-year Victoria College student majoring in Neuroscience and Pharmacology. When she isn't studying or spending time outside with friends (preferably in the sunshine), you can find her getting crafty in the kitchen with a new baking project or with her paints. She's a big fan of blues and pinks, and thoroughly enjoys losing herself in a painting to forget about everything else, even if only for a couple hours. You can find more of Callie's artwork on Instagram @calliyuh.

Artist statement: 'Sisters' is a painting of my sister and I standing in front of a Canadian national park as children. Even with all the change this year, some things have luckily stayed the same – home is wherever my sister is.

Mahaila Smith

Mahaila Smith is a young writer from Ottawa, studying to dig archaeological sites. Her first chapbook, *Claw Machine* was printed by Anstruther Press. Her poems can be found in the Hart House Review, the UC Review, Acta Victoriana and elsewhere.

Artist statement: This is a playful short story that responds to both prompts and describes the feeling of being a young child visiting their relative by themselves during summer vacation (their escape from school), feeling unhappy, and feeling excited to return home. This story was inspired by my recurring dreams of being in a large and complicated house and was influenced by the fantastical writing of Jordan Moffatt.

Isabella Fong

A high school trip to New York changed everything for first-year UofT student Isabella Fong, known as *whenthecitysleeps*. A songwriter, instrumentalist, composer and producer, she creates a new take on 'late night vibes', blending cinematic atmospheres and acoustics to redefine lo-fi-pop. *whenthecitysleeps* will take you to a different world, with lyrics that head straight for the heart and leave you feeling like you're in a dream.

Youthful ambiance and innovation set this Toronto-based artist apart. *whenthecitysleeps* is growing her sound on major streaming sites and has collaborated with Canadian music icons. Her internationally acclaimed productions have been described as "candid and thoughtful"- "verging on the edge of poetry". *whenthecitysleeps* is the epitome of the new decade of indie artists whatever your story, whoever you are, her music invites you to enjoy the moment. *whenthecitysleeps* is everything but traditional, constantly challenging who and what music can be. You can find more of Isabella's work on instagram [@whenthecitysleepsmusic](#) and music platforms [@whenthecitysleeps](#).

Artist statement: 'drip' was the second song I created for my EP. I wanted to write something lighthearted and fun that could be used as an escape from hardships. As an artist, I find myself using music and sound design to express hidden emotions. My goal is that others will be able to do the same through my productions. The beauty of music is that from one song, there will be 7.6 billion different interpretations of what it means to truly escape. In this song in particular, I leave the meaning and title completely in the audience's hands – a contrast from typical 21st century music. 'drip' is the only word used in the track because I want people to focus on the music. Too often, people are criticized for enjoying the music but not the lyrics. 'drip' and my EP challenge this concept because we are drawing peoples' attention to the music and using words as the backdrop. This simple change in perspective forces us to be in touch with how we feel. We can evaluate how we use music as an escape when there are few words, or how we use it to tell our stories.

Angelin Thipahar

Angelin Thipahar is a second-year undergraduate student at the University of Toronto studying Human Biology and Bioethics. She has always been passionate about art from a young age. Much of her artistic inspiration in her early life can be accredited to her mother. "My mom is one of the reasons why I kept up with art past my childhood because I saw how she always made it a point to be creative in her life."

For Angelin, expressing creativity is therapeutic as well. "Art truly is my way of communicating my emotions. Not every piece I create is done with a complex theme in mind but, looking back on old works, I always remember the feeling that I was trying to express." Angelin is determined to continue nurturing her skills in visual art and hopes to create pieces that will resonate with people just as she hopes this one does. You can find more of Angelin's artwork on Instagram [@art_by_angel18](#).

Artist statement: Escapism is beautiful and dangerous. I find that I am often in a position where I seek to ground myself, to experience all that I can in the present, but there is sometimes a piece of me that drifts away seeking a different reality. This feeling is what I wished to encapsulate into this piece. The abstract lines in the background symbolize motion and the varied circumstances that might cause one to choose to escape, to avoid all the business of the everyday life they lead. The lines have an order to them, representing our brains' tendency to find order amid disordered thoughts. I wanted the woman in the picture to simultaneously have the countenance of someone who is meditating and dreaming, someone in the midst of deciding whether they should ground themselves or escape. The woman's face is portrayed as being cracked yet it appears to be held together by flowers to symbolize the danger of withdrawing into oneself. The world in your mind might be preferable—as lovely as the image of a rose—but, by residing within it, you lose a piece of all you can do in the present, chasing after whispers of possibility.

Isha M

Isha M is a visual artist and a first-year Civil Engineering student based in Tkarón:to (Toronto). Her work celebrates the multifaceted identities of femmes of colour, featuring a dreamy and playful palette. She is currently using her art as a way to retrace her South Asian roots and history. You can find more of Isha's artwork on Instagram [@ishauchiha](#).

Artist statement: This piece attempts to depict escapism as a coping mechanism. Refusing to trade

comfort for personal growth, the figure below is avoiding reality and laying dormant. The figure above represents her inner potential waiting to be reached, while the crow symbolizes an ongoing stage of transformation.

Kristal Menguc

Kristal is a second-year undergraduate student from Turkey, currently majoring in Neuroscience and Cognitive Science with a minor in Economics. Kristal uses art to de-stress and paint out the emotions she cannot express with words. She enjoys doing digital art and painting cardboard boxes she finds on the street with acrylics. Most of her art pieces consist of doodles on worksheets produced during finals week. You can find more of Kristal's artwork on Instagram [@krisdo.art](#).

Artist statement: 'Into the Unknown' dives the girl carrying her home in her heart like a turtle carrying its shell as it wanders in the dark ocean. She goes through the journey of becoming an adult and creating a new life for herself alone in the cold ocean while relying on the warmth of the memories from back home.



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