



# Heritage

## MAGNUM OPUS

Art and Writing Magazine

HOUSTON CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

2023



| *Courageous Warrior* – Blake Dickson '25 |

# heritage

*noun*  
[ her-i-tij ]  
something that is handed down from the past, as a tradition

## Letter from the Editors

The unveiling of the most recent iteration of Magnum Opus, a distinguished publication that highlights the exceptional artistic and literary abilities of our esteemed student body, is with joyful hearts. This edition is particularly special as it commemorates the 25th anniversary of Houston Christian High School. The theme of Heritage has been chosen for this milestone edition, and it features a remarkable collection of pieces that pay tribute to the rich cultural history of our community.

Our students have dedicated themselves to creating pieces that reflect not only their own heritage but also that of their peers. The magazine showcases an array of captivating narratives on topics close to our students, as well as breathtaking artwork that exudes the richness of cultural emblems and motifs. This issue is a true celebration of the varied perspectives and experiences that make our school stand out from the rest.

We encourage our readers to take a moment to reflect and express gratitude for the incredible community that we all have built together over the past 25 years. Our students have captured the essence of this gratitude in their work, and it is an absolute honor to share this issue of the Magnum Opus with our community.

| Front Cover: *Ripple Effect* – Miller Martin '26 |

| Back Cover: *Trapped in Heaven* – Elizabeth Longwell '24 |

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| Primary Pop – Isabella Diaz '26 |



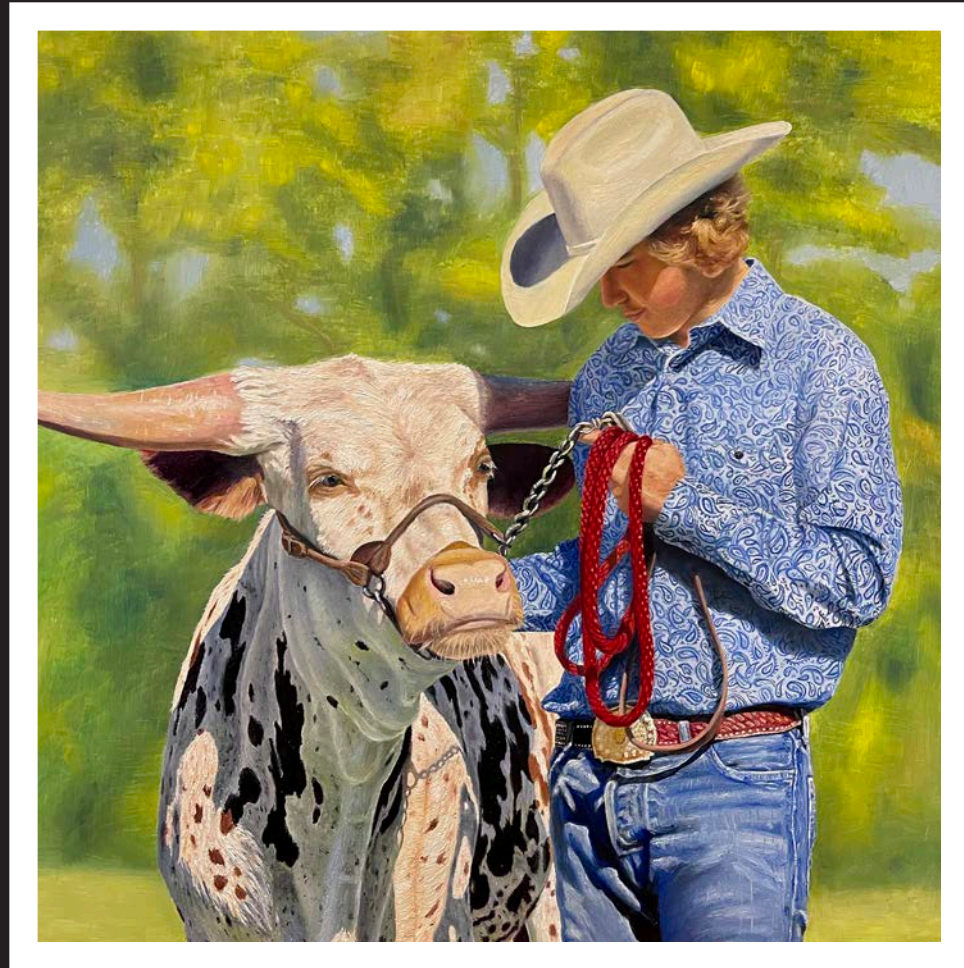
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| To Go – Collaborative Advanced Class Project |  
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| *You Can Cow-nt on Me* – Karli Kapche '24 |

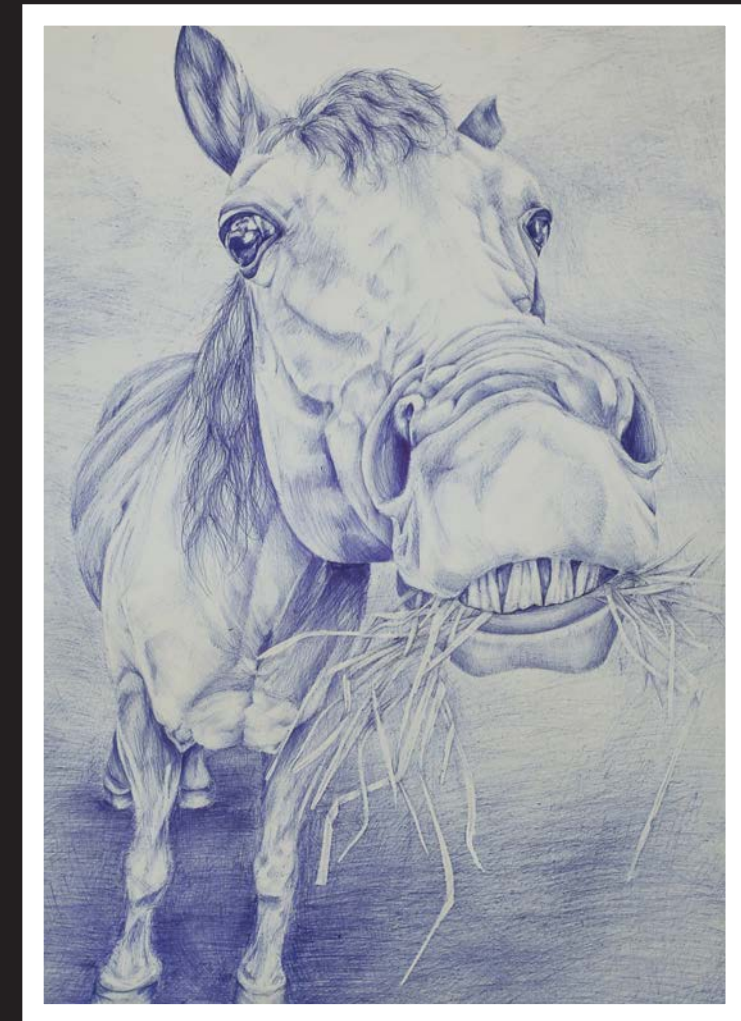
The 2023 Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo School Art Program showcased a stunning collection of over 3,000 art pieces in competition. Houston Christian High School was a standout with four exceptional masterpieces displayed at the NRG Stadium. Notably, Karli Kapche was awarded the coveted Best of Show in the Junior Division for her oil painting titled "You Can Cow-nt on Me," which was also selected as one of the 72 featured lots in the Grand Prix Auction. Additionally, Brynn Sitta received the Best of Show award in the Freshmen division for her pastel drawing titled "Cheetah Chicken," while Maddie Carmichael's ballpoint pen drawing titled "Scoobert says, 'Hi'" earned her the Gold Medal. Cat Sanders was recognized with the Special Merit award for her charcoal drawing titled "Barnyard Comedy." These impressive works of art showcased the incredible talent and dedication of the young artists participating in the Fine Art program of Houston Christian High School.



| *Barnyard Comedy* – Catherine Sanders '25 |



| *Cheetah Chicken* – Brynn Sitta '26 |



| *Scoobert says, 'Hi'* – Maddie Carmichael '25 |



| Cattle's Gaze – Kayla Mosley '24 |



| Chester the Funky Chicken – Taylor Lankford '25 |



| Wilbur – Elise Farias '26 |



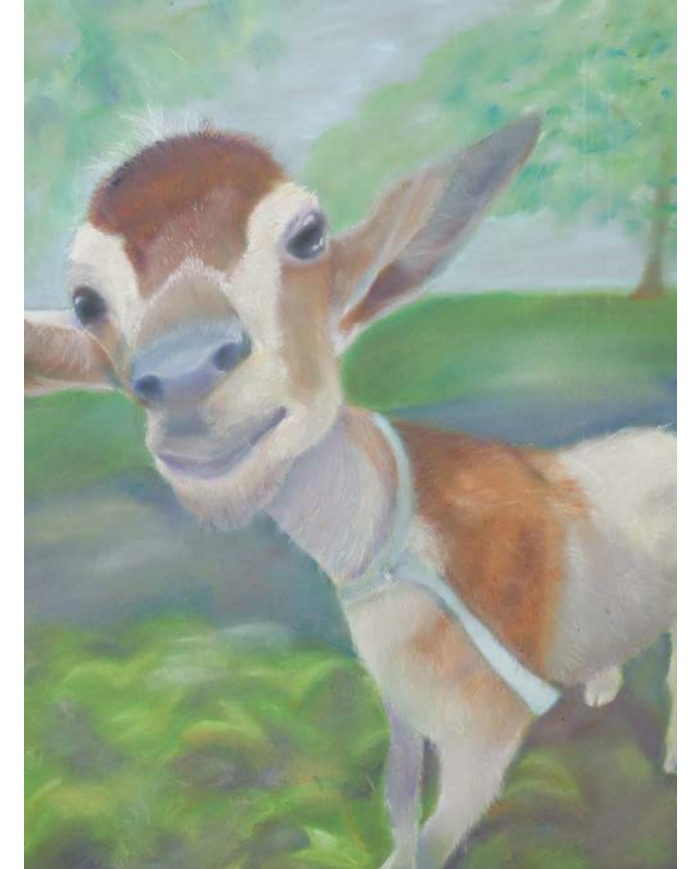
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| Wooden Sunset – Avery Elkins '24 |



| Chicken Chatter – Micah Gordon '25 |



| Hello Little Goat – Iliana Hernandez '26 |

## Grandma's Kitchen

Sophia Knobbe '23

Throughout the year, my heart longs for July. More specifically, I yearn for the long hours spent in my grandma's tiny apartment kitchen in the heart of Sofia, Bulgaria, telling stories and baking my favorite Bulgarian dishes. Every object in the room has a story behind it and I never get bored staring at the museum of memories. As I sit at the table next to the bright orange rotary phone, Baba, which is Bulgarian for Grandma, crumbles feta cheese for my favorite Bulgarian dish: banitsa. I sit and observe while eating freshly washed cherries placed at the center of the old tablecloth, the lemon print faded after decades of dinners and memories made around the table. Even though we are on the sixth floor, Baba always props the window open so we can hear the noise of the bustling city drift up into the room. Safe inside the bubble of Baba's kitchen, I listen to the thousands of lives coexisting below. But there was one life, away from the city, that struck me the most.

A few summers ago, as I spat out the last cherry pit, I eagerly rushed to the counter to help Baba make the banitsa. The thin, delicate phyllo dough was laid out on the counter next to the freshly crumbled feta cheese and bowl of olive oil. The process was tedious yet extremely rewarding: phyllo, olive oil, feta cheese, repeat. Layers upon layers, we built the pastry as we talked about her adventures hiking through the mountains of Bulgaria.

The flow between conversing and layering became almost like a dance. Soon, we were deep in a story about a cottage my Baba came across while hiking. She described walking for hours in the dense fortress of trees until she reached a small clearing, an oasis hidden from the outside world. There sat an old woman on her solitary porch. Naturally, my curious Baba struck up a conversation, learning that this woman had never left the perimeters of her forest haven. She was born, raised, and stayed in the same place her entire life.

I paused mid-layer, baffled.

"What do you mean she's never left? Doesn't she want to see the world?"

Baba continued to gently sprinkle feta cheese onto the phyllo I just placed down and smiled to herself. "Well, no," she said. "She was content with the life she had."

That sentence bowled me over like the heat from opening the oven. I just could not comprehend the fact that someone would not have a desire to learn more about the world, especially since I so heavily relied on my multi-national worldview to inspire me in my everyday life. I could never imagine not seeing the ocean, or walking in a big city, or even meeting new people that expand my cultural horizons.

As I placed the banista in the oven, the noise of the city grew, and I pondered the life of the woman hidden away from the world. While waiting for the dish to be done, I sat at the table with my Baba and looked around once again at the warm and familiar room that was her kitchen. At that moment, I realized that the simplest of places could bring the most joy. Everyone has their corner of the world that is special for them, and their experience isn't always measured by the vastness of perspective, but by its richness. Finally, the banitsa was done, and I admired the perfect roundness and crisp crust of my favorite dish. As my Baba cut me a piece, I grew content with the idea that everyone has their own slice of the world to share, and my slice is the banitsa in my Baba's kitchen.





| By Candle Light – James Celestin '24 |

# Redeemer

Mia Chieng '26

**Trust is hard to build,  
And they say it's easy to break.  
I can attest  
The pain just inflates.  
You pour your heart out  
And look for acceptance.**

**Expectations shape,  
Cloud your judgment.  
The world can seem cruel  
And you are just one part of it.  
Noise breaks and silence falls short,  
Loneliness roams;  
You hide under the covers  
Blanketed with thoughts  
Swallowed from down under  
Into this dark isolated space.**

**Reflection and time can do you wrong  
When you just need to climb  
Out of the tunnels you've dug for so long,  
Held in captivity from the one true self you are.  
You can cling for security  
But people will fail you;  
You can't control it  
Not at all.**

**It's times like these that you forget your worth  
Lose your purpose  
But you can dig out of the tunnel, unshaken.  
If you let the world consume you, you will be absorbed,  
Sucked into a place that will haunt you in times of vulnerability.**

**So this is my warning and honesty pieced into one  
Don't lose faith in the One who made you  
The One who came to save you  
Our One true God.**





| Blue Mist – Meckenzie Clapp '24 |



| Geometric Blush – Kennedy Garza '25 |



| Blue Void – Katherine Lemasters '23 |



| Blake Dickson '25 |



| The Cracked Ocean – Zachary Ramkissoon '25 |



| Honey Comb – Eloise du Vigneaud '25 |



| Pedals Galore – Rebecca Clarke '23 |



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| A Study in Color – Katherine Lemasters '23 |



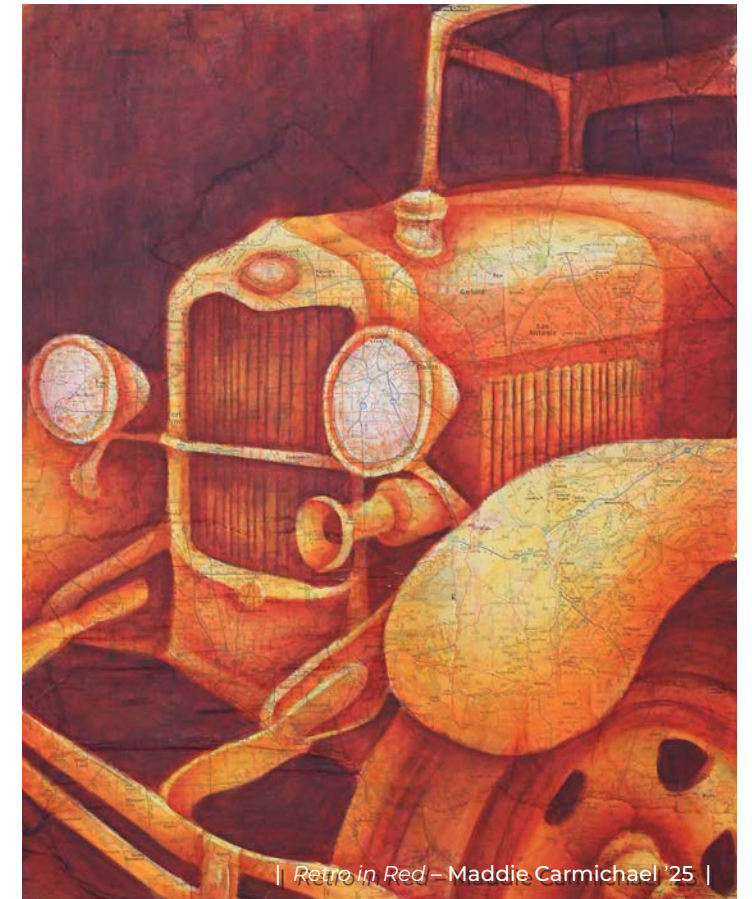
| A Hint of Blue – Ava Cox '24 |



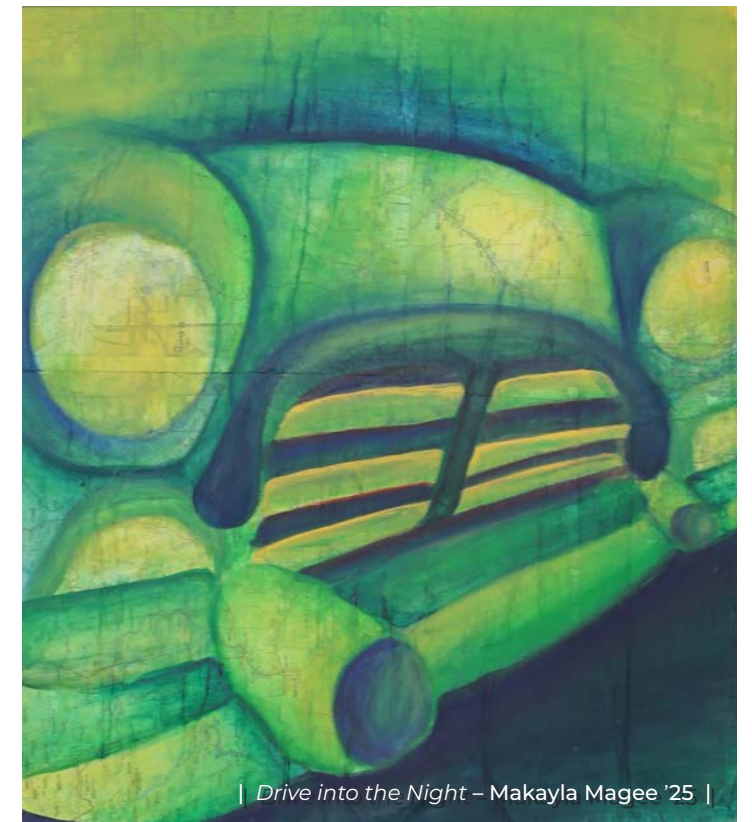
| The Blate – Derby Watson '23 |



| Cruisin – Ali Wigle '23 |



| Retro in Red – Maddie Carmichael '25 |



| Drive into the Night – Makayla Magee '25 |

## When I Read

by Ava Popovits '23

“You’re the worst, Mom!”

SLAM!

The house was quiet until my little brother, Jack, decided to lose his mind. It’s been a day of amazing, homemade meals and great college football, and everything was going just fine. Jack even admitted that he was having a good time.

“Jack, you know not to slam the doors!”

“Lisa, leave him be. He’s frustrated.”

“He knows the rules, Matthew, and we can’t let that slide. Go tell him to calm down and get back out here for dinner.”

The whole family knows exactly what will happen next, especially since this is Jack we’re talking about. My parents think I’m a drama queen, but oh boy, Jack knows how to stir up an argument.

“I DON’T WANT TO TALK TO YOU, DAD!”

“Why not? Why are you mad?”

“I can’t watch a show before BED!”

I crack a smile as I type away on my computer, trying to finish up a short answer for Texas Tech. I choose to ignore all the bickering from down the hall and focus on what I’m writing; Jack’s mood will calm down eventually, or at least I hope. Dad walks back into the living room and sinks into the couch, looking defeated.

“He threw a book at me.”

“What?”

“I said, he threw a book at me. That is why I’m back here.”

“I can go talk to him, Matt.”

“He’s mad at you for some reason, so I’m sure you’re the last one he wants to see.”

I grow irritated with all of the whispers and conversations. I can’t even focus on my essay without Jack screaming from the other room. I just slam my computer shut.

“I’ll go talk to him.”

I don’t even wait for a response from my parents; I’m already marching down the hall. I approach Jack’s birthday-decorated door, with streamers hanging from the top of it and brushing against my skin. I stare at the glitter-covered paper that says, “Happy Birthday Jack!” as I knock on the door.

“Want me to read to you?”

“What do you want?”

“I’ll read to you. You like it when I read, remember? How about . . . Diary of a Wimpy Kid?”

A moment of silence goes by.

Click.

I turn the knob and walk in, face to face with an upset 8-year-old boy slumped on his bed. He already has the book in his hands. Without a word, I walk over and grab it, taking a seat with him.

“Why are you mad?”

“Mom told me I couldn’t watch a show before bed.”

“Well, did she give you a reason why you couldn’t watch one?”

“I yelled at her.”

“Oh. Well, that seems like a good reason. Maybe a book before bed is better. It’s actually been proven that when you read, you sleep bet—”

“Can you just read it, please?”

“Whatever you say. I’m not the one in trouble.”

I smile once again, feeling Jack’s head lean on my shoulder. He grabs his beloved stuffed monkey, Beebee, and hugs it tight as I open up his favorite book. We hadn’t done this in a while.

“Start at chapter one.”

“That’s what most people do when they read books, Bud.”

“Just making sure.”

## Showing Grace

by DJ Ijaola '23

To show Grace or not to show Grace, That is the question:  
Whether it is better for my pride to suffer the blow  
Of letting go of a grudge  
Or to go against those who wronged me  
And by holding the grudge, gain a sense of “justice”

To know, to understand  
No more than just forgiving- one word that may end  
The heartache and the pain that my mind creates for my body,  
A wish that I desire to come true. To go back, to rewind,  
to forget it ever happened.

And there is where the real question lies,  
For in the comfort of my mind, lie many different viewpoints,  
Where different aspects of the event are revealed  
This, in truth, is why I struggle to let go, why I struggle to hold on.

Besides, who else would choose to wake up,  
To relive the argument, have the words echo the walls of your  
minds  
The pangs of words spoken that can’t be taken back,  
the pain that spread,

When I could just end the cycle with humility.

Who, in her right mind after an argument, prolongs the feelings  
beyond the actual event,

Unless she has a fear of something bigger than herself, the  
unknown, which she wonders about yet sticks to her rational  
logic rather than trying to see things from an emotional  
viewpoint.

The fear of being wrong makes the most righteous of us cower,  
and we weaken ourselves with overthinking.

An apology asked for becomes filled with uncertainty,  
and so I refrain from asking.



| Kacheanah the Secret Dancer – Harper Lee '25 |



| *The Glass Half Full* – Mikayla Rovall '24 |



| *Against the Clock* – Kyle Helberg '24 |



| *The Buggy* – Mikayla Rovall '24 |



| *Fiona* – Katherine Lemasters '23 |



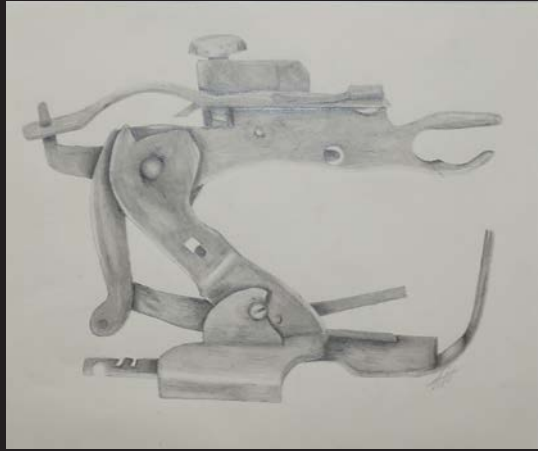
| *The Dog* – Meckenzie Clapp '24 |



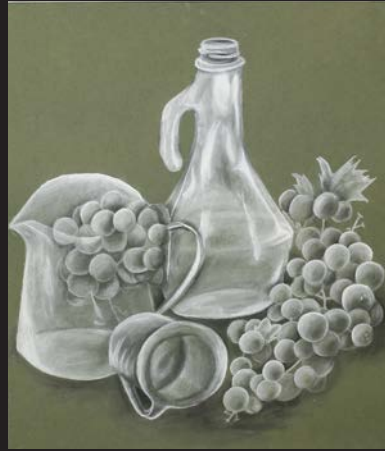
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| *Fenced In* – Cameron Talley '24 |



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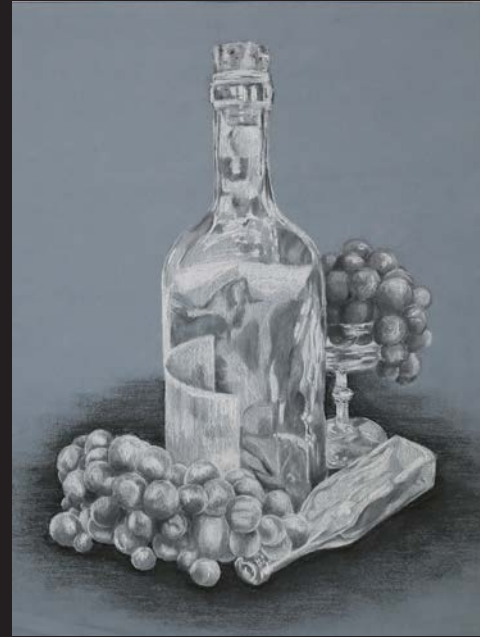
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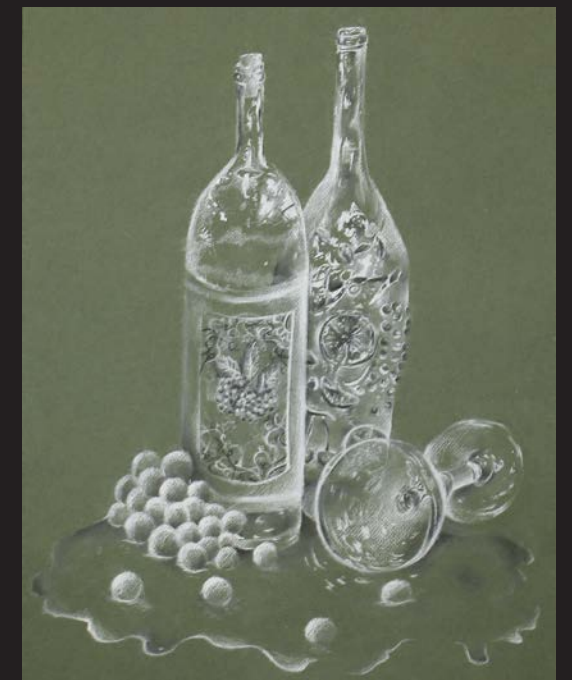
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| Grandma's House – Jessica Wang '25 |



| Metal Graphvine – Drew Alston '26 |



| Party on Main Street – Blake Dickson '25 |

# The Fog

and the

# Fire

by Bauer Burttschell '25

Each screaming soul fizzled into that terrible fog  
The fog that loomed over the dead, reaping their hopes, their memories,  
their passions, their flame.  
An endless inferno of ferocious zeal was smothered  
as the fog gripped the throats of the fallen to consume their dying breath  
And now with the full stomach of fathers and husbands, the fog hung over the  
battlefield, satisfied.

Yet a spark glimmered amongst a cold body  
The final fragment of a man's life burning with furious vigor stood alone  
against that terrible fog  
Her meek hands reached into the dust to cradle this flame  
She looked upon the spark and it illuminated her face

*"Dearest Achlys,  
Tonight I ride with my brothers into the night  
Our torches will dance in the dormant sky  
And our cries of rage will ignite our hearts  
But as I ride, you will be my undying light*

*Swords may pierce my sides  
Arrows may strike my chest  
But even shrouded in the midst of death  
to fear I will never yield*

*My fire will burn bright against the reapers haze  
Its light shall scorch a path through man and steed  
And shall guide me to your arms once again  
Tonight my love for you will set this world ablaze  
Burdened may be my soul  
Blood-stained may be my blade  
But even blinded by death's charade  
To fear I will never yield*

A tear hit the parchment and obscured the ink. The young girl lifted her  
head towards the sky as to not further deface the letter

And when we conquer death on that perilous night  
Scarred with burns our foes shall surely ask  
What wood could sustain our formidable flame  
I'll know my reply. You are my undying light

Heavy may be my head  
Weary may be my hands  
But even when lost in this dark land  
I will find my way to your arms

Out of chaos out of bloodshed when the day is finally won  
I shall return to you  
so we may kindle the fire  
IN OUR NEWBORN SON

Despair deadlocked it's grip around her throat  
Taunts of death deluded the idea of her happiness, of her love, of her son  
Every glimmer of light and passion emanating from that once luminous  
letter dissipated  
As her embrace grew tighter around her husband's body  
And now with the final spark of passion extinguished, the fog hung over the  
battlefield, Satisfied.



| Sealed in the Leaves – Donna Xue '24 |



| Seasons of HC – Karli Kapche '24 |

# Nightmarish Memories

by Sofia Conshafter '26

**Thinking about it  
Makes me feel sick  
Sweaty  
Heart beats fast  
Many hard swallows**

**I get lost in the memories  
The nightmares  
I breathe heavy  
Until I lose my breath**

**The room closing in  
Darkness intruding into my head  
Drowning  
Suffocating  
In my own mind**

**A heavy weight pressing down on my chest  
I struggle to get in a single breath  
I lose control of my thoughts  
I lose contact with the real world**

**I'm in my head  
Too far in my head  
Buried under memories from the past  
The very past that haunts me**

# A Moment

(or, Things that Compile Life, Yet are Met with Indifference)

by Andrew Knobbe '26

A mispronounced word in a poetry reading that no one else noticed.  
You think about it on your drive home.

A large festival commemorating a religious holiday you don't celebrate.  
A father-daughter baking contest taking place sometime in Spring.

An old woman in a crowd with a Beagle in her arms.  
She's thinking about something important.

The silver alert you didn't pay attention to and feel only slightly guilty for doing so.  
Your sympathy peaked when you looked up what a silver alert was.

A birdwatching bachelor party you were invited to by a minor acquaintance you have an unfunny inside joke with.

A joke met with subtle laughter. This often unanimous response gives just enough validation for one to not feel bad, but just enough awkward silence so that they know to stay quiet for the rest of the day.

Beige cubicle walls, packed with pictures of spreadsheets, saccharine posters, and employee's families.

Your boss's twelve-year-old had a birthday party last weekend.  
Good for him.

Changing your wallpaper to feel amused, even if it's just for a moment; or arguing for no reason.

A cashier who looks vaguely like your uncle whom you've only met a few times.  
You feel rude to ask so you drive home wondering if it really was your uncle.

You bring up this story to your wife who responds with certainty that the man definitely wasn't your uncle.

Your uncle lives in Africa, yet you still thought there was a chance.  
You get defensive and awkwardly leave the room.

A magnolia tree with a spiderweb on it.

Your mother's half-dead tomato plant she keeps trying to regrow.

The specks of sand you haven't cleaned out of your car after you went to the beach that you tell yourself will disappear eventually.  
They never do.

Being extra careful.  
Tripping up the stairs.

The desire to never feel sad. Logic is unfond of this dream.  
A content shade of grey.



# It's okay.

by Phoebe Hadaway '24

Most of the days breeze by,  
 Like the wind blowing the leaves.  
 The weekends breeze by when I'm alone,  
 Because I want them to.  
 Because I have no energy to spend it with others.  
 My social battery is drained,  
 Spent.  
 By people,  
 Or school,  
 Or my phone.  
 But I tell myself,  
 "It's okay,  
 It's normal to not want to talk to people."  
 But is it?  
 We spend all day on our phones,  
 With adults telling us to get off of them,  
 But they are on their phones as they scold us.  
 "It's okay,  
 Other people are out having fun,  
 But if you need a mental health day,  
 That's okay to take."

But is it okay to want them every day?  
 I lose motivation quickly,  
 Because I'm drawn to my phone,  
 Itching to open snapchat or tiktok,  
 To see if anyone wants to talk to me.

When anyone asks how you are,  
 You say,  
 "I'm doing pretty well,  
 What about you?"  
 They all respond with,  
 "Great, thanks!"  
 And that's okay to do right?  
 Since no one really cares to stop their day  
 To hear all of the baggage you have,  
 Right?  
 But you want to tell someone,  
 Anyone!  
 Yet, you just look to your phone,  
 Looking for it to make you feel  
 Okay.



| Reflection – James Celestin '24 |



| Maryland in the Morning – Madie Barrow '23 |

# The Message in a Bottle

by Donna Xue '24

Softly, gently, on the sea,  
 I float, and float, and float.  
 My surroundings smell of  
 Salt, of wind, of the dazzling sun.

Thrown from land into the sea,  
 I float, and float, and float,  
 To a place with no limits.

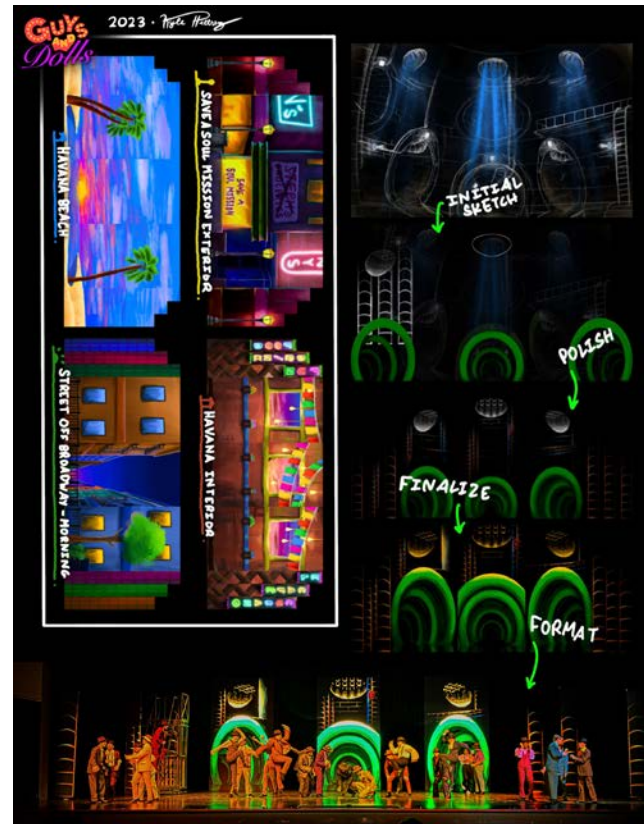
In my journey I have seen  
 Seagulls pecking, sharks swimming,  
 And coral reefs dancing, and dancing, and dancing.

What do I carry? Where will I be?  
 When is the future? How can I see?  
 I cannot answer. The seagulls cannot answer.  
 The sharks can not answer. The reefs cannot answer.

Alone, I float, and float, and float.  
 I tried, and tried, and tried,  
 To know what I bear inside.  
 But neither can I open, or see, or know.

Until the day where I know what I bear,  
 And the message inside reveals itself,  
 I can only float, and float, and float.

# accolades



| Guys and Dolls Digital Backdrops – Kyle Helberg '24 |



| Scenes from *Guys and Dolls* |

The Scenic Department of Houston Christian High School won the prestigious 2023 Tommy Tune Most Outstanding Technical Achievement Award for their exceptional work on this year's musical production of *Guys and Dolls*. Dr. Linhart, Brian Brown, and students Kyle Helberg, Davis Miller, Taylor Lankford, and William Malin demonstrated impressive technical talent, navigating complex coding languages and troubleshooting any issues with ease. Their meticulous attention to detail and collaborative approach were commendable, and their dedication paid off with remarkable results. Kyle Helberg's countless hours spent hand-drawing designs in the program ProCreate resulted in vibrant and detailed backgrounds that enhanced every scene of the production. Overall, their outstanding technical achievement showcased their innovative capabilities and was truly deserving of recognition.



| Medusa – Avery Elkins '24 |



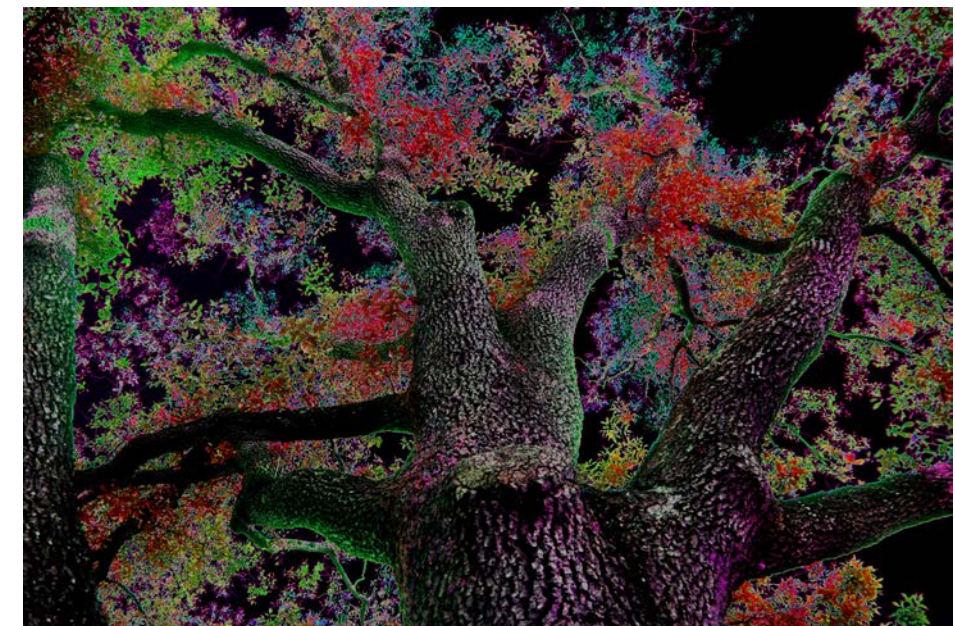
| Digital Art-Seagull – Josiah Wu '25 |



| Digital Art-Elephant – Josiah Wu '25 |



| Jack – Matthew Varjas '24 |



| Solar Oak – Ayden Koerner '26 |

# Anywhere

by Riley Warnica '24

Meet me where the formless sands touch the calloused waters.

Where the brittle and scorched meadows adjoin the lush and brawny timberline.

Where the winding structured road melts away into the crude dirt trail that leads to the tranquil chalet at the apex of the eminence.

Meet me in the revered establishment that derailed our lives in an optimum fashion.

In the propitious locale where we vowed to never forsake one another.

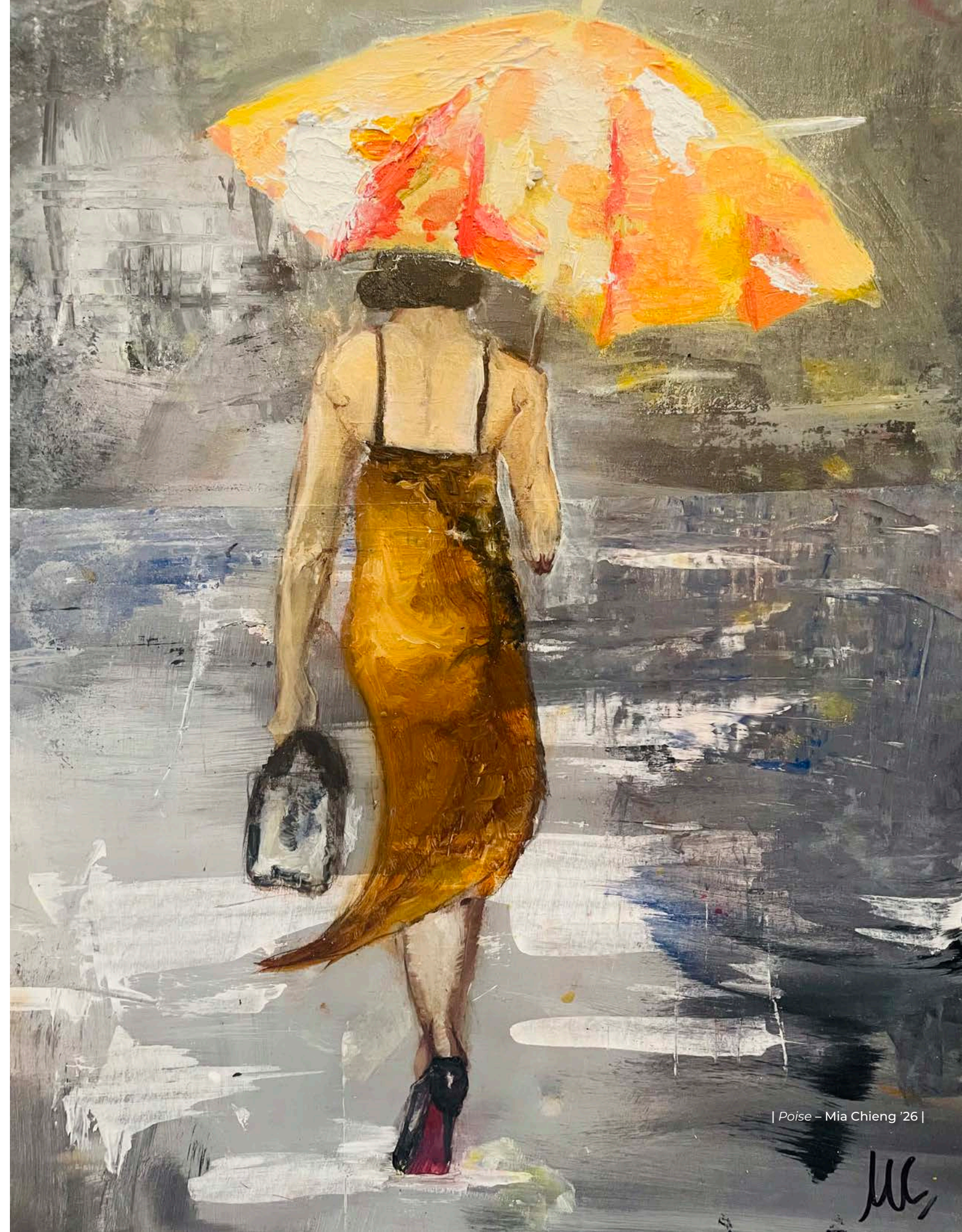
In the warm embrace of my arms as they encircle your form and shelter your soul from the harsh realities of the world encompassing us.

Meet me under the burning incandescent sun, or the glacial light of the moon.

Under the serene junctures and the frenetic bedlam.

Under the sheet of grass and rubble that is to be placed unselfishly over our forms as we determine our final resting place and slumber for eternity.

For I remain here; standing, watching, waiting, to meet you, anywhere.



MC

## FBI, Furtive Beyond Imagination

by Reagan Wooley Hayes '25

“Why do you have a jewelry box that doesn’t have any jewelry in it?” the FBI Agent asked me. She was of medium height with black hair tied in a bun. She held a glass whatchamacallit in her hand to see all the tiny details of my jewelry box.

“Why do you wear sunglasses when you are indoors?” I shot back.  
“Ma’am, I need you to cooperate with me or you will become a prime suspect.”

I snorted. “If I wasn’t already a suspect, you wouldn’t be going through my room!”

She replied by moving me out of the way and walking to my closet. “Small,” she said to no one since I gave up listening to her. She tossed my clothes this way and that and I was clenching my fists trying not to say the words that were just screaming to be let out.

After a few more minutes she went to my dresser and opened up all the drawers revealing my rather embarrassing mickey nightgown, my flamingo nightgown, my Elsa PJs, and my Rudolph the reindeer PJs. She raised an eyebrow in my direction and I narrowed my eyes daring her to comment.

Luckily, for her sake and mine, she turned back to the dresser. She moved her hand over the top edge and slowly down to where there was a small handhold you wouldn’t have noticed at first glance. She tapped the wood a few times then with a deep breath she pulled the handhold outward. I took a deep breath myself.

What I have been dreading since she showed up was now upon me.

She turned away from the small secret compartment and faced me with her mouth in a thin, straight line. I glanced at her then at the secret compartment and back again over and over. This was it. My secret was about to be revealed. My mother, expecting to discover contraband, would soon be privy to precisely two, extremely sappy love notes I received from the neighbor in first grade and kept, and I’m still not sure why.

She looked from the notes back to me. “What?” I challenged. “I have a soft spot for the tall guys.”

Definitely not what she was expecting!

## What Once Was

by Elizabeth Longwell '24

2022,  
How you tore me in two.  
12 whole months,  
Now just a haze.

I spent this year climbing mountains  
And stumbling through valleys.  
I look back with an ache in my heart  
For all I had to leave behind.

So long,  
A life I’ll never live again,  
A chapter I’ll never read again,  
And the person I’ll never be again.

It's very hard to see you leave,  
A brief moment has passed,  
leaving me devastated  
For some of the worst days I’ve ever known.

It’s funny the way the mind yearns for what  
once was,  
Even if what was has now been destroyed  
And forgotten  
One day you will too,  
2022.

After all,  
You are only 365 days,  
One small blip,  
Hardly making a dent  
In the end of my story.

## Writer’s Block

by Jack Ratliff '23

I don’t feel like writing today.  
The words simply aren’t coming  
Into my head today.  
I stayed up late last night  
And I don’t wanna work today.

If it weren’t today,  
Perhaps I would be writing  
A beautiful story about tomorrow,  
A triumphant ode to love  
Or a terse interpretation of sorrow.  
Oh, I long for tomorrow.

It is now tomorrow  
And I don’t feel like writing today  
Or tomorrow. I should’ve written  
Yesterday, but yesterday was today  
And I don’t feel like writing today.  
I said I would write tomorrow  
But today is tomorrow  
And I still don’t feel like writing today.  
Let’s try again in two days.

Two days have passed  
And I should’ve written yesterday  
Because I don’t feel like writing today.  
Writer’s block stinks.  
I give up.



| *Falling Chess Piece* – Lily Smith '24 |

## Love is Ruthless

by Izzie Davis '24

Love is ruthless.  
It will slow dance with you across moonbeams  
and carry you gently in the door  
It will leave you wide awake wondering  
if it's something more  
It will rip apart your heart and then put the  
pieces back together differently than they were before,  
Making you wonder if it's really worth the trouble  
and if it's better or worse to be held and to be hurt  
than to be left like dirt  
being cupped and wrung by calloused hands  
and then thrown back into the land  
like nothing happened.

Love is ruthless.  
It makes you wonder if it is better to rip the bandaid  
off and wince or just stay on the fence for a while  
but eventually fall into the endless abyss  
of spinning and screaming and lying and dreaming  
and wondering why love wants to be the way it is?

Love is dangerous.  
It's a tightrope. If you go too far you wonder if inside  
the star they see there's something hidden and  
when they see it they'll scream and run away  
but then you want to stay  
because every person has flaws and that's what  
makes there a need for laws  
and rules because all is NOT fair in love and war.  
Everyone has the need to be loved  
and held and loving hurts but rings like bells  
and lifts you up above the swells  
and then drops you from the highest heights  
to the lowest lows, and makes you curl your toes  
and then rips your heart from your chest  
and you have to pretend everything's fine  
and pay it no mind  
and go on with this stupid life  
because it won't stop for you.

Love is like fire, dangerous if left alone  
but warm and cozy when sparked at home  
in the right place at the right time with the  
right peace and the right minds,  
ready to bask in its soft light. It takes you  
on a journey to find yourself  
and right when you think you've done it you see a summit  
and realize you're too small to make a difference,  
so you laugh at the idea you could change the world  
and so you sit and watch it twirl  
until you realize it made a difference to one person  
and maybe that was all they needed to keep going,  
not slowing even if anyone's knowing  
what's going on inside their head, what they may dread  
about what life would look like if there were no love.

Love holds us together.  
It's a baby crying for her mother and her brother  
asking, how she can handle all of the stress?  
and asking to carry the baby to give her a rest  
and holding her and sitting there like the whole world  
is in his hands and he has to protect it.  
It's a husband looking at his wife like there is not a single thing  
that could ruin his life and take her away from him.  
It's a young couple brushing hands and blaming everything  
unplanned for bringing them together.  
It's a love full of sin and hurt but in the end,  
it works and joy begins to bloom.  
It's people under the moon in a world full of doom  
sitting there and taking in the room left in their  
broken hearts to reach out and dance on the edge  
between love and its trance  
and its ability to make you take a stance  
and then, only then, it gently, carefully rips you apart,  
making you wonder if it was there from the start,  
making you fall apart.

Love is obsessive.



| At Home on the Range – Lillian Lemasters '25 |



| Lazy Days – Karli Kapche '24 |

## Gone to Texas

by Mia Franco '23

Often, I refer to my childhood as a “golden childhood.” Growing up in the scorching hot desert of Arizona, specifically Phoenix, the sun was always shining. The sky was always a certain kind of bright blue with hardly any clouds. When I reflect on my time there, I only remember a golden light cast all around me and the brilliant, colorful sunsets that would sometimes turn the whole landscape into a beautiful light pink color. I was devastated the day I found out I had to leave this glorious place, and a piece of my heart was forever ripped away. I knew this piece of my heart would never be restored until the day that I would return to this land with the knowledge that I would never have to part from it again.

There was never a dull moment during this period of my life as a young child. There was always something happening around me, and we always had people over and always visited with others. My family would host carne asada and the average American barbeque with our entire family and close family friends in attendance during the summers in our backyard. Our pool was the prominent spot for all children while the adults talked and ate. We spent Thanksgiving at my aunt’s house, and Christmas was at our house. My cousins and the entire family would spend the night on Christmas Eve after watching “The Polar Express” and opening presents. The following day we would all wake up and run to open our gifts from Santa, which consisted mainly of Hannah Montana merchandise. Every Sunday, our entire family would go to our family’s church, which our uncle pastored in Spanish. Afterward, we headed to our favorite Mexican food restaurant to talk and eat together. Even during the school week, I still managed to be around family. My cousin, who was my age, was always with me whenever I was picked up from school. As a Mexican family, we were a large and tight-knit group. When we weren’t in Arizona, we often traveled to San Diego, Anaheim, and Disneyland since it was only a six-hour drive.

Although I had many fond memories in Phoenix, my family struggled financially, partly due to the Recession in the 2000s. That is when life slowed down for us, and our days mainly consisted of going to school and coming home to play computer games or watch the latest episodes of “Hannah Montana.” My dad was often away because, at this point, his job required him to pay frequent visits to the mysterious place called Texas. I remember him being gone almost every day during this time. Of course, this was challenging for us and weighed heavily on my mom. I figured that my dad’s boss must have sensed something because one day, he offered my dad a promotion, which was terrific for our family when it

came to my dad being away all of the time and our finances. Still, it was not so great for us in other ways, including my parents’ marriage.

Nevertheless, my father ended up accepting the promotion. Like the pioneers heading west in search of a better life, we all packed up and headed to Texas. As we landed in Houston, I saw a real, live tree for the first time. I had never seen one growing up in the desert of Arizona. My sister and I nearly screamed when we saw this beautiful thing as we touched the ground, while the others around us thought we were crazy and had lost our minds. That was indeed a big deal to us, though - that one real, bright green tree - the first thing I saw of Texas.

Life here was lonely. It was hard. My family never quite fit in with the others here, and it took what seemed to be years before we discovered and made new friends. I remember my little sister’s third birthday being thrown in our tiny apartment kitchen with a grocery store cake and a doll as her gift. The only people there to celebrate were my two parents and me. That experience was very different from what we were used to. Had we been in Phoenix then, her birthday would have been celebrated amongst many family and friends. I spent some of my days thinking about my old friends and what I had left behind. When I said goodbye to them, did I even know that was the last time I would ever see them again? Did they know this? On top of our other problems, the moving boxes came in late, so we did not have anything except for the clothes on our backs and whatever random luggage we had brought. Life was rough at this time, but my family remained strong and managed to make it through somehow.

Moving from Phoenix to Houston is the most challenging thing I have ever had to do; leaving behind everything my family and I had ever known, and starting completely over in a foreign land. When we left, we were torn away from that. Even though my family today is okay with Texas and does not despise it, every time we return to Arizona we often find ourselves saying the same thing, which is always, “this is where we really belong” and “this is where we would be happy.” Now, as a senior in high school, I know my happy ending and that is I can finally return to my true home of Arizona, as I will be attending the University of Arizona for the next four years. Through all of this, I have learned a valuable skill, to trust Him no matter what because He only wants what is best for us at the end of the day.

# Nona's Food

by Olivia Wilson '25

When Nona was a little girl, her mother always told her the only way she was ever going to marry well was if she learned to cook good food for her future husband. For years, Nona spent all her free time with her mother in the kitchen. All the years of practice made her immune to the oven burns, the weepy feeling she got when she cut onions, and the loud shouts from her mother telling her to try harder. Eventually, Nona got very good at cooking and some even said she was the best cook in all of Italy. When Nona was of age to marry, her mother would always tell Nona to leave the windows open so the streets of Italy would be filled with the scents of spaghetti and the spiced meatballs she placed on top. Everyone in town liked all the food she cooked, but spaghetti and meatballs was the dish that was favored and loved by all. For many years, Nona would do the same ritual of leaving the windows open and hope that a man would smell the aroma and ask for her hand in marriage. One day in late fall, she was cooking by the window, like she always did, when all of a sudden, she got a knock on the door. When she opened the door, a tall Italian boy stood on the other side. He said he could smell the food from across town and he had spent weeks trying to find the woman who made the food. Nona was beyond happy that someone had noticed. Not that long after their first encounter they were married. Nona and the boy lived in a small house on the outskirts of Sicily. Nona would cook for her husband morning and every night and they were happy. She was overjoyed that she was married to a man that loved her food just as much as he loved her. Unfortunately, Nona's husband died, and she was left with the house and no children. Nona was devastated that she could no longer share her food with her husband anymore, but she soon realized that she didn't have to cook for herself only. She could cook for all of Italy, so that's what she did. Nona opened a small restaurant on the outskirts of Sicily and she shared her gift with everyone and was satisfied up until her last breath.



| Looking Up – Madie Barrow '23 |



| Ponte Vecchio – Madie Barrow '23 |



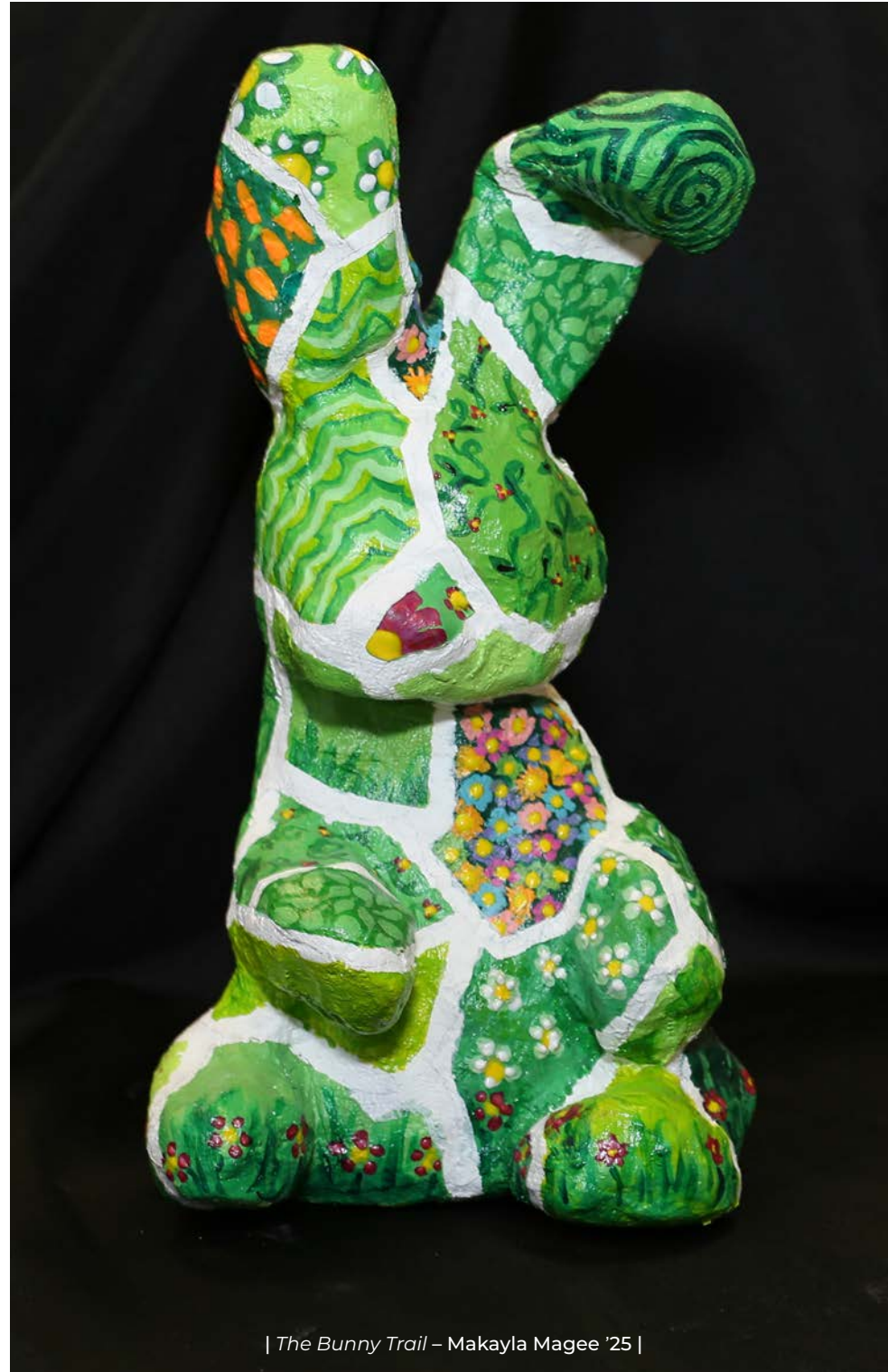
| Streets of Shanghai – Donna Xue '24 |



| Lolthal – Avery Elkins '24 |

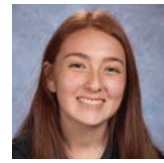


| Landrau – Elena Grillo '26 |





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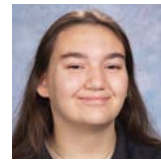
Drew Alston '26



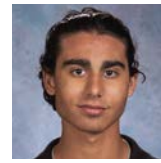
Madie Barrow '23



Bauer Burttschell '25



Maddie Carmichael '25



James Celestin '24



Mia Chieng '26



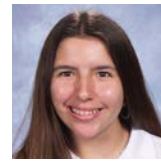
Meckenzie Clapp '24



Rebecca Clarke '23



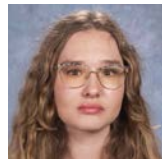
Annabelle Cody '26



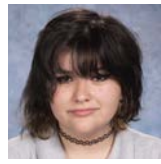
Sofia Conshafter '26



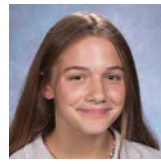
Ava Cox '24



Izzie Davis '24



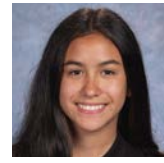
Blake Dickson '25



Eloise du Vigneaud '25



Avery Elkins '24



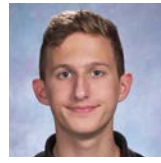
Elise Farias '26



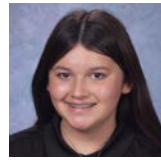
Mia Franco '23



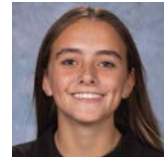
Kennedy Garza '25



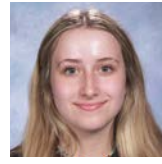
Micah Gordon '25



Elena Grillo '26



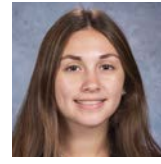
Meygan Haas '25



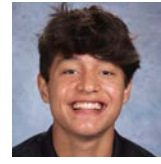
Phoebe Hadaway '24



Kyle Helberg '24



Iliana Hernandez '26



Linus Holt '26

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DJ Ijaola '23



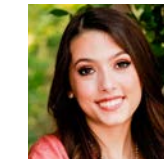
Jalayah Ingram '23



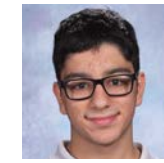
Jaycee Ingram '25



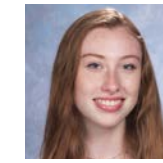
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Anastasia Jones '23



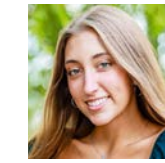
Josh Jou '25



Karli Kapche '24



Andrew Knobbe '26



Sophia Knobbe '23



Ayden Koerner '26



Taylor Lankford '25



Harper Lee '25



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Lillian Lemasters '25



Elizabeth Longwell '24



Makayla Magee '25



Miller Martin '26



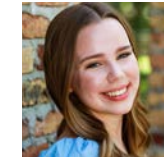
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Kayla Mosley '24



Ellarie Newman '23



Ava Popovits '23



Zachary Ramkissoon '25



Jack Ratliff '23



Tyler Rawls '25

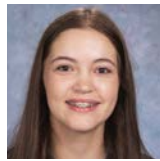


Mikayla Rovall '24

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Catherine Sanders '25



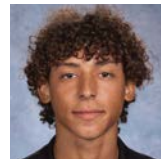
Moriah Schisler '24



Chethan Shultz '23



Brynn Sitta '26



Ewan Highbery Smith '24



Lily Smith '24



Lizzie Spears '24



Cameron Talley '24



Matthew Varjas '24



Jessica Wang '25



Riley Warnica '24



Derby Watson '23



Ali Wigle '23



Olivia Wilson '25



Reagan Wooley Hayes '25



Josiah Wu '25



Donna Xue '24

# thanks

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all the talented individuals who submitted their incredible work for Magnum Opus this year. It was truly an honor to receive such a diverse array of submissions, and we deeply appreciate the time and effort that each and every one of you put into your contributions. We would also like to extend a special thank you to the teachers who went above and beyond to inspire their students to participate and create such amazing works of art. It is truly a testament to the creativity and talent that exists within our community, and we feel incredibly fortunate to be a part of Houston Christian.

Sponsors: Charlotte Stuart (Art); Lori Reese (Art); Jill Read (English)  
Kirk Hawkins (Graphic Design) and Katie Gassett (Communications/Marketing)





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HIGH SCHOOL