

REDBEAT

ISSUE 2

SEPTEMBER 2025



Delve into the arts,
the Labubu craze,
and Kpop Demon Hunters.
Here's your summer
debrief!

CLICK!

imlits
Creative & Design
Cutting Mat

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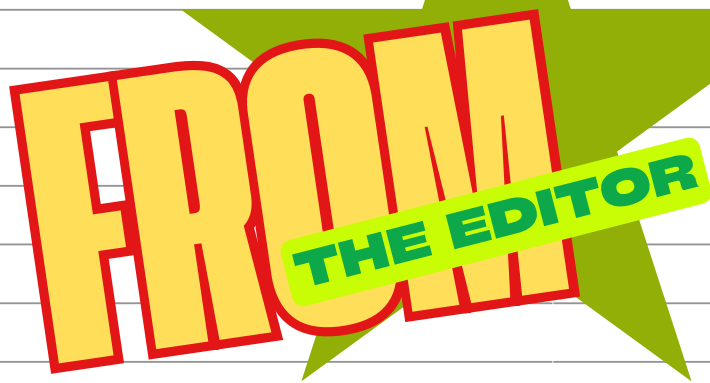
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FROM THE EDITOR

To write is a wonderful gift - one that comes from a passion to create. We've tried to imbue this very passion in every issue that we've brought to the student body. To ensure that every story we craft, every feature and article we write is carefully constructed.

This is what we strive to achieve at *RedBeat* Magazine.

This issue is an amalgamation of our collective summer experiences - from poems about dead corporate internships (the kind that we've all done to "strengthen" our portfolio), to articles about fandom culture and overconsumption. And, if you've been feeling lost, *Red* the pigeon is back with his witty advice.

With this, we mark the start of a new academic year, and *my* final year at Middlesex University. A wise man once said "I want to create propaganda about the things that I love" - and the "things" that I love are the bonds that we've formed. The experiences we've had. The stories we've created, *and* the community that we've formed.

This is what *RedBeat Magazine* is all about - writing about the unconventional, creating a space for young creatives to truly flourish and expand their horizons.

Sincerely,
Sabeen Maryem
Editor-in-Chief

From the Faculty Advisor's Desk

Murder, Mystery, Thrillers and a Summer well-spent

When summer settles over Dubai, the heat turns the city into a shimmering mirage. For most, it's the signal to flee toward cooler European shores, misty mountain getaways, or simply anywhere the air feels less like opening an oven. Everyone looks for an escape.

I chose a different kind of escape this summer which was measured in page numbers and plot twists. While many chased itineraries across continents, I followed detectives through shadowy alleys, unreliable narrators through tangled lies, and rogues hiding in plain sight. By the end, close to 40 books had carried me as far as any journey could into worlds stitched together with suspense, secrets, and the irresistible pull of just one more chapter. Bookshelves are neat, but my Kindle is basically a portable crime library in disguise that kept me company all summer.

What made this summer's binge so electrifying wasn't the mountain of pages I tore through, but the storytellers who kept me hooked. Dandy Smith and Stacy Green turned every chapter into a hidden trapdoor. While Nicola Sanders and Freida McFadden toyed with my trust through unreliable narrators and finales.

Thrillers have a way of pulling you in - the pulse of suspense, the thrill of a perfectly timed reveal. In a strange way, it mirrors journalism. Both thrive on curiosity, precision, and timing. Both are built to keep audiences gripped until the truth, or at least a version of it finally surfaces. And in both, what lingers between the lines can be just as powerful as what makes the headline.

Somewhere between midnight plot twists and tea-fuelled mornings, I realized these novels were secretly training my writer's instincts. Studying how authors build tension, pace their reveals, and balance character with story turned every page into a masterclass in storytelling. For anyone studying creative writing or journalism, thrillers aren't just a guilty pleasure, they're exercises in narrative architecture, showing exactly how to craft stories that make readers impossible to put down.

After 40 odd narratives of betrayal, intrigue, and psychological chess games swirling in my mind, I emerged not just with a renewed love for reading, but with a sharper understanding of storytelling, the same instincts that make for compelling journalism. Following twists and uncovering hidden motives reminded me that whether you're writing a thriller or a news story; curiosity, timing, and the art of keeping your audience hooked are everything.

Signing off,
Dr Ruta Vaidya
Senior Lecturer, Media
Faculty Advisor



MEET THE

Sabeen Maryem



Editor-in-Chief

Creative Writing and Journalism
3rd Year

SABEEN LIKES TO THINK OF HERSELF AS AN ANALYTICAL PERSON, ALTHOUGH IN RETROSPECT, SHE MAY APPEAR TO COME OFF AS TOO CRITICAL TOWARDS PEOPLE WHO AREN'T FAMILIAR WITH HER.

WHEN SHE'S NOT FOILING HER RABBIT'S ATTEMPTS AT CHEWING ON THE CURTAINS, SABEEN'S LISTENING TO HER EIGHT HOUR LONG SPOTIFY PLAYLIST. A CROCHET HOBBYIST WHO HASN'T FINISHED THE CARDIGAN SHE STARTED LAST YEAR, SABEEN IS A PERSON WHO AVOIDS SPONTANEITY, ALTHOUGH BEING IN REDBEAT HAS PROVED THAT TO BE DIFFICULT. SHE'S RECENTLY STARTED TO ENJOY READING MORE LITERARY FICTION, AND HAS THE HABIT OF LISTENING TO A SONG UNTIL SHE'S SICK OF IT.

SAHER LIKES WATCHING FILMS PEOPLE HAVE NEVER HEARD OF AND RELIGIOUSLY LOGS THEM ON LETTERBOXD WITH ONE-LINER REVIEWS. A WISE SOUL WITH MANY STORIES, HER INNATE SENSE OF STORYTELLING THAT GUIDES HER IN EVERYTHING SHE CREATES.

DON'T ASK HER TO WRITE A STRAIGHTFORWARD PIECE BECAUSE SHE WILL TRY TO SQUEEZE IN SOME POETRY. SHE ADMIRES THE POETRY OF RICHARD SIKEN AND FILMMAKERS SUCH AS DAVID LYNCH AND AGNÈS Varda, LETTING THEIR WORK SEEP INTO HOW SHE PROCESSES EVERYDAY LIFE. SHE IS GENERALLY A HAPPY PERSON- AS SAPPY AS IT SOUNDS, IT'S THE SMALL THINGS.

IT'S A HOT CUP OF ROSE KARAK, A GENTLE BREEZE, AND LAUGHING WITH FRIENDS.

Saher Azmi



Content Director

Creative Writing and Journalism
3rd Year

SAIF LIKES TO TELL HIMSELF, "I'LL FIGURE IT OUT" WITH EVERY CHALLENGE. AND, TO BE FAIR HE USUALLY DOES. LIKE THAT TIME HE LEARNED HOW A CAMERA WORKS MINUTES BEFORE SHOOTING A FILM SCENE. OR TAKING A COMMISSION AND CONVINCING THE CLIENT TO DO THE WORK THEMSELVES CALLING IT A "LEARNING EXPERIENCE".

IT'S EITHER A COVER FOR IMPOSTER SYNDROME OR THE WORKINGS OF A GENIUS. THE JURY'S STILL OUT. HIS PHONE IS OUT OF STORAGE BECAUSE THE SKY IS ALWAYS PHOTOGENIC AND EVERY SONG DESERVES A HOME. WHEN HE'S NOT BUSY WITH HIS HOBBIES, HE'S OFFERING THERAPY TO HIS FRIENDS. HE IS NEITHER LICENSED NOR PARTICULARLY WISE BUT CLAIMS IT STILL HELPS. SAIF AVOIDS LABELS. HE'S A CREATIVE, DRAWN TO VISUAL STORYTELLING AND MAKING IDEAS FEEL REAL.

Saif Ayaz



Head Designer

Digital Media and Communications
3rd Year

THE TEAM

ZAINAB IS A SELF-INDULGENT NERD WHO PRIORITISES WATCHING HOUSE MD INSTEAD OF MORE IMPORTANT TASKS, BUT SHE SOMEHOW MANAGES TO GET THE JOB DONE. ASIDE FROM HAVING AN INTEREST IN DABBLING IN MULTIMEDIA CONTENT, SHE ALSO ENJOYS WRITING AND PAINTING USING OIL PASTELS (SHE BELIEVES THEY ARE A PAINFULLY UNDERRATED MEDIUM).

ENGAGING IN DIFFERENT FORMS OF ART HAS SHAPED ZAINAB'S CREATIVE APPROACH INTO THE MULTIFACETED ONE THAT IT IS TODAY. SHE BELIEVES THAT CREATIVITY CAN EXIST ANYWHERE, EVEN IN THE DEEP GALLOWS OF SAHER'S TOTE BAG.

AN INTROVERT AT HEART, ZAINAB HAS STARTED MAKING THE EFFORT TO BRANCH OUT TO PEOPLE TO ACHIEVE THE LIFE THAT SHE WANTS TO LIVE. A LITTLE WHIMSICAL, A LITTLE SILLY, ZAINAB BRINGS A VERY SPECIFIC ENERGY TO THE FUNCTION.

Zainab Shaikh



Social Media Manager

Creative Writing and Journalism
2nd Year

Poojal Hurrychurn



Art Director

Creative Writing and Journalism
3rd Year

POOJAL IS AN ARTIST, A WORKAHOLIC AND THE CREATOR OF RED, A WITTY PIGEON WHO HAS BECOME THE FACE OF REDBEAT. WHEN SHE'S NOT CHASING AFTER HER DOG, MOCHI, TO GET HER SOCKS BACK, SHE'S EITHER CREATING OR WATCHING SOMETHING. POOJAL CONSTANTLY PICKS UP NEW HOBBIES WHICH SHE CAN NEVER DEDICATE ENOUGH TIME TO. SHE REFUSES TO COMPLETE HER PAINTING, COLLECTING DUST FOR THE PAST YEAR, BUT HAS FILLED UP AN ENTIRE SKETCHBOOK DURING THAT TIME.

POOJAL SECRETLY WISHES SHE COULD BE A ROCKSTAR. SHE'S AN AVID FAN OF THE BANDS STRAY KIDS AND NOTHING BUT THIEVES. SHE TRIES TO BE SUBTLE ABOUT IT, BUT SHE IS VERY PASSIONATE ABOUT PAST LIVES AND ARCANIE (EVIDENCED BY HER WALLPAPERS AND TOP 10 MOST PLAYED ALBUMS).

Dr. Ruta Vaidya



Faculty Advisor

Senior Lecturer, Media

Red



Philosopher

Column Writer and Ask Red Pigeon

MEET RED!

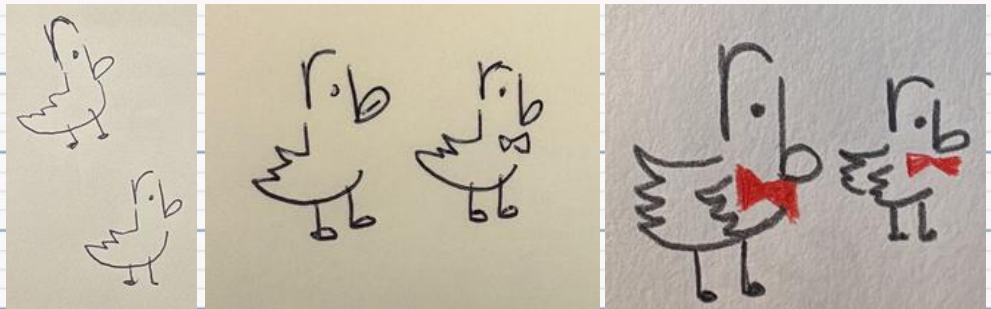
HERE IS AN INSIDE LOOK INTO THE DESIGN OF YOUR FAVOURITE PIGEON, RED, BROUGHT TO YOU BY POOJAL HURRYCHURN

WHY A PIGEON?

In the past, pigeons played a crucial role as military messengers during the World Wars. Unfortunately, over the passage of time, they have been abandoned and left to fend for themselves. We wanted to subvert the image and stereotype of a pigeon by creating a wise and well-versed character to be our mascot.

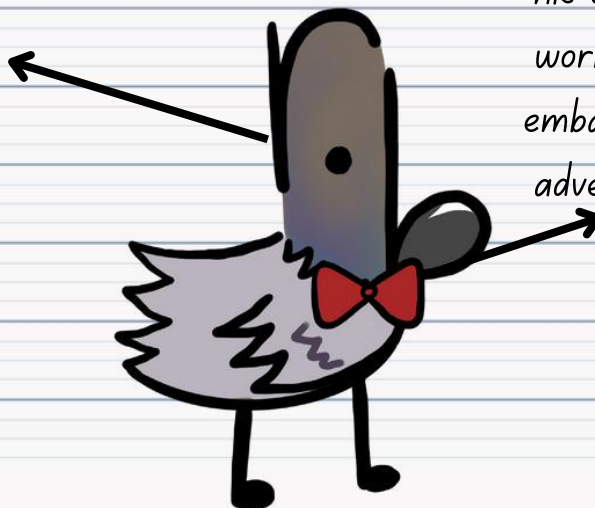
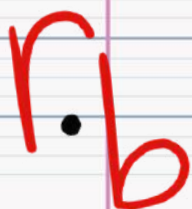


INITIAL SKETCHES FOR RED



BREAKING DOWN THE DESIGN

Easter egg: The pigeon incorporates the letters "R" & "B" corresponding to RedBeat



Red is usually seen adorning his classy red bow tie when working, but he occasionally embarks on out-of-the-world adventures in his astronaut suit.



A *narcoleptic* dread surrounds these places.
I am *bound* by my screen, *itching* for *hydration*.
Echoes yell from foreign faces.
Brightness sizzles my *retinas*.
Beyond that, the *cork wall stands*.

The *cork wall* is a *towering sonde*.
It *not* only *stands* but *sees*.
Molding pupils from cracks *and beyond*.

The *hour* hits twelve, *ghosts* usher in white.
A *malodour spreads* following *their* trail.
I *shield* my nose from *olfactory* plight.
The *moldy* keyboard stretches skin and flesh,
Seeping into the *fabric* of the walls.

I keep my bowels frozen, no *remission* on hand.
except for a *smoke* under the *dying* sun.
The *cork* separates me from Adam's land.

The *cork wall*, *everseeing*, greets me with a smile.
Cheeks *edging* too close to *malicious* eyes.
It *acknowledges* my pain with a grunt, *senile*.
I *sense* my caged *being* start to erode.
Unable to *feel* the resolve to struggle.

There *is* cork in my *throat*, in *everyone's* voice.
They *are* beige and *implicit*— fused *with* the walls
My *limbs mold* to the seat in bitter rejoice

At 6:30, I see the *man* behind the *wall*.
A *lifesuckedbeing* at the *doorstep* of death.
It was *finally* the curtain call.
But the *corkboard* eagerly waits to *consume* me,
Bit by bit, every hour of the day.



The Cork
Consumes All

- Zainab
Shaikh

When Women Are Sidelined in Their Own Stories

By Raabiya Khan

Last month, the fictional K-pop group HUNTR/X became the first girl group to get a #1 single on the U.S. Billboard Hot 100 with their song, “Golden.”

This incredibly talented band emerged from *K-pop Demon Hunters*, a movie about three girls—Rumi, Mira, and Zoey—who are a famous K-pop group in public and demon hunters in private. With its original concept and spectacular animation style, this film became a global sensation and hit 33 million views on Netflix within two weeks of its release. The film revolves around Rumi being part hunter, part demon, and struggling under the emotional weight of that secret. She constantly fears that sharing this part of her identity with her best friends would deem her an outcast to them. This visually captivating film on the girl group’s friendship and their love for each other resonated with many fans and became an all-around success everywhere.

But if you hadn’t watched the movie, you would have been blissfully unaware of everything I mentioned above.

If you obtained all your information about the film from fans on TikTok, Twitter, and other social media platforms, you would not have known any of this. You wouldn’t have known that this movie was about the band’s love and friendship. Or about Rumi’s journey with self-hatred.

You probably wouldn’t have known that this movie was about a girl group.

When K-pop *Demon Hunters* was officially released in cinemas, the only thing people could talk about was the Saja Boys, a rival boy band and undercover

demons out to steal the girl group’s fans and bring them to the demon king. Their main member, Jinu, plays a pivotal part in the film, forming a bond with Rumi to help her overcome her insecurities.

However, the rest of the boys rarely make an appearance and perhaps have five lines at most throughout the film. Despite this, the launch of the movie saw a massive inflation in TikTok edits of the Saja boys, viral posts about them on many platforms, and headcanons about their two-dimensional personalities. There was immense hype for their sparse on-screen appearances, with many proclaiming them as their favourite characters. This number overtook the girl group’s popularity and completely diminished their story, even though they were the main characters.

This imbalance is not an accident. It reflects the pervasive nature of the patriarchy that seeps into every thread and speck of society, corrupting the minds of most ordinary people. And fandom culture is one of its *biggest* victims. While there is nothing wrong with fans expanding on side characters and creating headcanons for



them, it's a different thing to overshadow the women who are the focal point of the film.

The girls had relatable personalities, balancing their flamboyant idol careers with their laidback lifestyle behind the scenes. They had a genuine passion for the music they created and carried the movie with their banter and heartfelt conversations.

To ignore all that and divert your attention to the male side characters that barely appear is borderline misogynistic, and disregards the effort put into creating the multifaceted women who are the very core of the movie. Why is it that when strong female characters exist, the fandom feels the need to sideline their existence and center the discussion around men?

This was particularly clear in an [online interaction](#) on Reddit between the director of the movie, Maggie Kang, and fans of the Saja Boys. When asked whether Kang ever planned to develop the boy group's character arcs, she asserted that they were always meant to be side characters and that their depth was intentionally two-dimensional.

Korean netizens were disappointed with this statement and furiously made noise over something that was already set in stone. Though there was a perfectly capable, fully-fledged girl group available for them to cheer for, they were adamant about chasing something that had no future and never would.

Other fandoms have a similar problem of either ignoring the female characters or being hypercritical of them. In the male-dominated world of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, there are *barely* table scraps of major female characters. Even in that minuscule amount, the fandom always finds a way to berate them and take their existence for granted.

Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse has a character named Gwen Stacy, a high school girl with a rocky relationship with her dad. Amidst that chaos and other factors, she hides a huge secret from her best friend, Miles, the main character, because she believes that this will protect him. Or at least, that is what the adults around her tell her. Despite this obvious reasoning, she had half the fandom calling her a "snake" and a "traitor" for betraying Miles's trust.

Meanwhile, the main antagonist in the film, Miguel O' Hara, is seen as a morally grey character and fawned over for being cold and mysterious, even though he physically and verbally assaulted Miles in his obsession to achieve his goals.

Here's the thing: it is absolutely encouraged to humanize antagonistic characters and understand their motivations. But it's very telling how a sixteen-year-old girl who is susceptible to manipulation receives more condemnation than an adult man who basically traumatized the main lead. Is media literacy only reserved for the male characters? Are they the only ones deserving of lenience and empathy?

This hypocrisy didn't just suddenly appear with the introduction of cinema; rather, it has existed since the creation of stories. The Brothers Grimm published the most popular collection of female folklore that has now been adapted into Disney and Pixar movies. Despite being women-led stories, this folklore moulded their female characters to fit desirable feminine standards of beauty, motherhood, and subservience. These



were written during a time when patriarchal ideals ran rampant.

Women were considered biologically inferior and, therefore, weren't subject to the same autonomy as men. This shaped our adolescent mindsets and warped our perception of these tales. Cinderella was considered weak, not a woman desperate to escape her abusive household. Snow White was seen as naive, and the Little Mermaid was foolish. Women were never subject to nuance because they were considered lesser than men in *every* possible way. They were discarded in their own stories, with their audience glorifying their white saviours instead. Even after the film industry abandoned its victim plotlines, it took a while for these new stories to become popular. Pixar's first heroine in the movie *Brave* flopped during its time, with people calling Merida boring and bratty. Heroic female characters were already a rarity, and people still berated the little representation that existed.

This notion of inferiority continues to infect us and every media's fandom. Even in the big 2025, there is an internal impulse for people to marginalize the female characters and put them on a lower level than the male ones, reducing their significance. No matter how integral they are to the plot, they are shoved aside for their male counterparts. Similar to societal structures in real life, fandoms continue to enforce the social roles of the patriarchy in their consumption of media and unconsciously treat fictional women the same way they are viewed in our world: disposable and irrelevant. A heroic female character is boring, but a heroic man is brave. A flawed female character is evil, but a

flawed man becomes a thirst trap. There is no winning— simply the system of events that always play out when a woman is introduced in a cinematic universe.

And contrary to what you might believe, you are more than likely complicit in it.

As an avid consumer of entertainment media, reflect on the state of your mind when you last watched a movie or TV show. Who were your favourite characters? Were they primarily men? Who were you more critical of? Was it easier for you to dismiss the unpleasant actions of the male characters in comparison to the women? When discussing the female characters with your friends, did you mention them by themselves, or only in relation to the men? It is necessary for us to rethink the way we engage with the media we consume and recognize the underlying misogyny in our interactions. Yes, fandoms are supposed to be a safe space for you to idolize and fixate over whoever you want, away from the havoc of real life. But it's important to be aware of societal influences, of male-centered perspectives that can cloud your judgement and the way you view women. K-pop Demon Hunters serves as a perfect case study of how even female-focused narratives can be hijacked by a fanbase that only fixates on the male side characters.

Even if you consider yourself a raging feminist, you would be surprised to realize that your behaviour in fandom culture says otherwise. The smallest fragments of misogyny, if left unchecked, can build over time. And little by little, you might become the very thing you sought to destroy.



It Starts Where It Ends: How Ana Escobar Saveedra Deconstructs Identity

By Sabeen Maryem

In a world defined by social constructs, Ana Escobar Saveedra's first solo exhibition, *It Starts Where It Ends*, traverses "the nuances of identity and identification" and wanders outside the bounds of what we deem as normal. The exhibition was on display at the 421 Arts Campus in Abu Dhabi and is part of the *421 Artistic Development Program*, which supports early-career artists in the UAE. The exhibition was on view until the 7th of September.

Everything must start from somewhere, and Ana started from within herself. The origins of her work stem from something as mundane as her camera lens, describing it as "*this ubiquitous device where most of our images and information live.*"

Using this "ubiquitous" device, Ana captured what she referred to as "macro photos" of her skin, utilising the texture of her skin's veins and graininess as visual reference. From then on, the project transpired into something more tangible; something shuld feel.



"My first step was to go to the industrial area of Sharjah looking for the stone that would match my skin color, wishing to "mirror" it."

She primarily worked with marble & granite, "reshaping" them and using the materials to reflect how the human body, *skin* in particular, acts as a vessel of change. Just as the skin does, the materials she experimented on experienced "evolving textures, scars and colour".

The different installations exhibit a plethora of artifacts, all made of different materials such as marble, granite, brass, steel and copper. Many of them were painstakingly hand-carved by Ana, their physical states altered into both familiar & unfamiliar objects.





Ana's perceived value of the materials she found provided them with a completely different meaning and purpose – while wandering

around factories and waste bins located in the marble and granite industries of Sharjah, Ana collected the “purposeless” scraps that then became her “treasures”.

“I carve the discarded pieces, the by-products of the industry with the same care and patience as a treasured pebble collected by someone in nature,” Ana says when asked about her practice. *“Stone is omnipresent in the UAE, from decorated facades and floorings, intimate domestic spaces, and the majestic mountains. But most of the stones used by the industry are foreign, like a big part of the population, and like me.”*

It Starts Where It Ends hinges on the exploration of self-identification beyond a physical vessel. Ana aims to subvert and challenge the conventional notions that surround the concept of “longevity” by carving materials that are typically used for historical preservation in a manner that results in them becoming frail and delicate.

By doing this, Ana asks the viewer to truly question our permanence & *impermanence* in this world – what about you makes you, *you*? Is it your physicality? Your eyes, hands, limbs, brains? Or is it your language, religion, and culture? What about your *soul*, your thoughts and beliefs?

Much of the exhibition is deeply rooted in linguistic and philosophical roots. In Ana's mother tongue, the words *ser* and *estar* are both Spanish verbs that mean “to be.” *Ser* refers to what is inherent, while *estar* speaks to the temporary.



It Starts Where It Ends also reflects on how identity is assigned to us and how we later carry it on in life. *“We are, more than ever, surrounded by images that script our lives, sell products, denounce crimes, all mixed and remixed on an infinite scroll.”* One of the pieces on display at the exhibition, *BECOME*, is a to-scale reproduction of Ana's son's hospital birth tag. It represents how, according to Ana, *“standardised identifiers signal belonging”* and provide the basis of meaning to our lives from even before we can comprehend our own existence.

However, Ana's work isn't only philosophical in nature. It's deeply rooted in the flawed and tumultuous realities of our world: *“During the last few months, we have seen the most heartbreaking images of people proving their existence in situations of extreme violence. Endless lists of victims of bombings and displacement, entire families erased from civil records, names handwritten on bodies and shrouds.”*

Ana's work questions the boundaries and constructs that we define our realities by – she gently nudges us in the direction of inquisitive thinking, encouraging us to look at the unassuming objects that define our very being, our *existence*.



CON(SUMMER)ISM!

Written by Poojal Hurrychurn

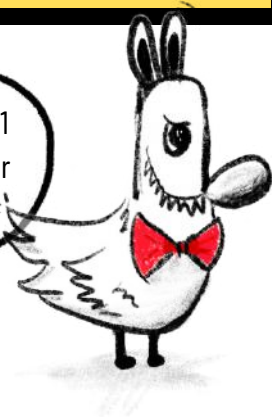
**Con(summer)ism [noun]
[coined by Poojal Hurrychurn
circa 2025]: the study of
major consumerism trends
over the summer.**

Greetings humans, consumers and con(summer)s! Gather around, grab your peers and your matchas - it is time for a debrief of the summer. This summer has been too hot to handle. Record-breaking temperatures, viral TikTok challenges, and labubus have been the talk of the season. Let's dive into the biggest and hottest trends in the last few months.

Is it a Furby? Is it a Jellycat? No, it's a Labubu.

Labubus look just as their name sounds: silly, cute (debatable), and creepy. These dolls are easily recognised by their round, fluffy bodies, rabbit-like ears, and pointed teeth adorning their cheeky smiles. The Labubu craze is pure consumerist insanity. There is not a single day that I don't see a labubu attached to someone's bag, not a single day that I go without its beady hollow eyes staring into my soul. It's infiltrated my social media feeds - from unboxing videos to customised stick-on nail sets for the dolls.

Yes, you read that right! Your 2-in-1 manicure package for you and your Labubu. An offer you can't miss!:-)



But these Labubus are more than just a trendy, 'must-have' item. Labubus were originally characters in a storybook called *The Monsters*. Kasing Lung, the creator of these characters, was inspired by the Nordic fairytales he heard during his childhood. Soon after the book's release in 2015, Lung introduced a toy line inspired by the characters of *The Monsters*, but the dolls had their big break years later in 2019 when Pop Mart collaborated with Lung to launch the Labubus. Celebrities like Lisa from BLACKPINK and Rihanna were seen carrying Labubus attached to their bags, people were queuing up at stores to get their hands on a blind box, and Labubu unboxing videos were taking over social media feeds.



The dolls recently went full glam with their newest collaboration with Moynat. The *Monsters*-inspired collection stylises the luxury brand's famous bags with the characters Labubu, Zimomo, and King Mon. Labubus have *never* been more *à la mode*. The massive popularity boom of these dolls has (predictably) led to a large surge of rip-offs or "lafufus" as some call them. Labubu had fans long before it blew up online. Going mainstream definitely made the dolls more popular, but ultimately, it has stripped them of their depth and personality.

Why do so many people rave about these tiny dolls in mystery blind boxes? Is it a genuine liking for their appearance and connection to the story behind them? Or is it the bandwagon effect? The secret remains untold.

Going nuts

Don't go just yet, we're just getting started. Everyone's gone nuts about this next trend. You've definitely seen it and heard about it. You've probably had a bite of it and posted about it on Instagram. I have too! Haven't guessed what it is yet?

It's the world-famous Dubai Chocolate! FIX Dessert Chocolatier's iconic "We Can't Get Knafeh Of It" went viral for its unique blend of pistachio and knafeh. While the famous knafeh-flavoured chocolate remains home to the U.A.E, many vendors, bakeries, and companies around the world have made their own versions of it. Every possible combination you could think of has likely already been attempted, from doughnuts to cake to dupes. I've even seen Dubai chocolate Labubus on my feed!



It's great to see so much love for something from Dubai, the place I've spent most of my life in. Dubai definitely knows how to craft unique and bold flavours. I've had online friends from around the world asking me if I've tried Dubai Chocolate or if I order it often - and even some who have asked me to bring it for them. While I personally do not like the flavour, I understand why a lot of people do. I'd love to try FIX's other flavours, but I am not paying that much for a bite to satisfy my sweet tooth - unless I happen to magically pull out a golden ticket from a chocolate bar. For now, I think I'll stick to my plain milk chocolate bar from the vending machine.

Vert à la mode

Staying green (and running out of green) seems to be à la mode. Matcha is a vibrant green powder made from ground green tea leaves. It has been a staple in Japan and China for centuries, traditionally whisked into hot water to brew a tea known for its strong flavour and multiple health benefits, including antioxidants and improving focus.

With roots stretching back to the 7th-century Tang dynasty in China, matcha was originally prized for its ability to aid meditation and deliver a host of health benefits. Today, nearly all of the biggest cafes and bakeries have their own line of matcha-flavoured beverages or food made with authentic matcha powder or over-sweetened matcha syrups. It's the boba tea craze all over again, except it's matcha.

I confess, I am quite matcha-obsessed, and I often indulge in my craving for it (my go-to order: iced matcha latte with oat milk, regular size, less ice, half sugar). However, even as a matcha enthusiast, I think we've gone a bit too far. We've taken something rich and authentic in flavour and history, and thrown it into a blender with every possible ingredient and combination we could come up with. I've seen everything from matcha lattes with different fruits, matcha croissants, and matcha tiramisu to matcha ramen. The sudden surge in matcha consumption and demand for it has resulted in supply shortages in Japan as matcha production struggles to keep up. To meet the demand, many vendors have even begun making lower-quality renditions of matcha.

How much can we consume something before it becomes too much? It seems like we'll never learn.

Poojal's Matcha Order

1x Large Matcha Latte (160z)

Iced/Oat Milk/Half Sugar





There is no harm in the occasional matcha or bite of Dubai chocolate or purchasing a slightly creepy but cute doll because you want one. We all do it - but it's the extremes of the trend that are truly questionable. Do you really need 5 labubus? Or 50 different combinations of matcha-flavoured food - or do you just have a fear of missing out?

The social media frenzy, queuing up to grab the last product, sharing labubu blind box opening videos, and Dubai chocolate mukbangs; it's a cycle that never ends. We are being brainwashed by these trends, which push us to buy for the sake of buying, just because everyone else is. It all starts with one video, one like, one comment that goes viral. Then, suddenly, it's all over our feeds. It's a cycle with no end. We consume what we like, and the algorithm feeds us more of it. Big corporations and companies dig into these trends and push out products we see on our feeds. Then, once we get tired of seeing the product, they add something new to it to drag us down the rabbit hole again. Tired of traditional matcha? Try a matcha latte with espresso foam! Want something to eat? Here's a strawberry matcha croissant. An accessory? Buy a Labubu blind box (rumour has it that one of them has a 24K golden Labubu)!

Why do we continue to attach ourselves to these trends? Unknowingly - or knowingly- we engage in these trends as an act of escapism. We are sitting here, mindlessly scrolling on our feeds, adding our favourite items to the cart for the umpteenth time, liking Dubai chocolate reviews and unboxings of Labubus, or watching the 10th part of a 20-part gossip series. Our feeds are infested with it, and we are being infected by it.

Meanwhile, valuable stories and media, or news of wars, genocides, climate change and other issues are being drowned out by all of this. It is washing out the content we need to see, the products we should be investing in: content that has value, products we actually need. We have fallen into an echo chamber of consumerism, a cycle of continuous content production and consumption, and we need to snap out of it.

So, do we stop buying what we want? Stop eating fancy chocolates and green coloured drinks? Stop scrolling on our feeds? Only interact with what we need to see? No. Content consumption and consumerism are inevitable; it's how the world works. It's an exchange system, a continuous cycle. We are being subjected to an overwhelming wave of content and trends, which we naturally continue to engage with. Whether it's creators posting for viewers to like and comment, or the all-new limited-edition packaging of a toy for collectors.

It's an act of balance and moderation. We need to become more conscious of what we consume and aware of what consequences it may have. What matters most is being intentional. Try the latest combination of matcha or pistachio and knafeh flavoured chocolate if you like. But take the time to invest in things that hold value like knowledge, the news, meaningful experiences and products that genuinely serve a purpose, rather than buying for the sake of appearance or online validation. Next time you decide to hop onto the bandwagon and grab onto the next trend, take a moment to consider if it's really worth it.

As the saying goes, we are what we eat. What we consume and how we consume are ultimately in our control. Take a step back and really think about the kind of content and products you consume. Then, ask yourself, who do you wish to be?

A mindful consumer or a compulsive, trend-driven one?

flowers are blooming in antarctica

by Saher Azmi

flowers are blooming in antarctica i
listen to music about the land i
come from in my bedroom
flowers are blooming and summer
is sticking around like sand to the
back of her thighs

at the beach, the most beautiful
we've ever been flowers are
blooming in antarctica i am my own
person. i belong to me. flowers are
blooming

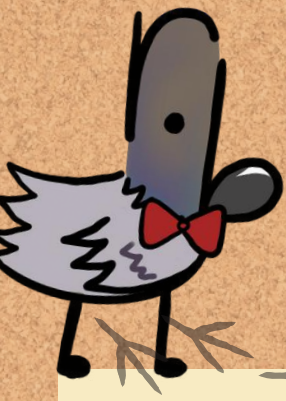
the music is a wave; it's almost dark
flowers are blooming
we will wear pink tomorrow
i will smile tomorrow
as i did today and as i did yesterday
flowers are blooming in antarctica

tarahum
the lost children
the children – they're always ours

the children are ours. tarahum. one
day. flowers are blooming in antarctica.
his smile is lovely. i love to look at his
blooming smile. flowers bloom on me.
flowers bloom in antarctica

let's go back to the way we were
let's love the children
and let the flowers bloom





ASK RED!

Life's deepest questions answered by your favourite trusted pigeon, *Red*.

Written by **Saher Azmi**, Ideation by **Maahika Banerjee**

Q: How do you write/type if you're a bird?

I must not be paying my editor enough – because how else would this distasteful and, frankly, offensive (!) question have gotten past them? I have to believe this is ... *ragebait*, a term introduced to me by a young colleague on a research paper I worked on this past summer, “From Wingbeat to Wind Tunnel: A Pigeon-Centered Paradigm in the Transdisciplinary Semiotics of Biomimetic Mobility” – ah, now if you have any questions about *that*, feel free to send them my way.

Q: How to balance academic and social life?

Do not treat your education as a means to an end. Do not obsess over it. Let it truly enrich you. Let all of life enrich you and balance will come naturally. You will find the balance is where you will truly flourish.

Q: How to look out for lies?

You don't. Look out for joy. Look out for whimsy. Look out for tasty treats.

Q: How do you know if someone's taking advantage of you?

My dear reader – in most cases, you know when someone's taking advantage of you. The issue lies in having integrity and keeping your backbone upright. Millenia of evolution means your body knows when there is danger or deception around. So, you can either wait to be taken advantage of, or you can simply ask the person you suspect of taking advantage of you – “hey, are you, by chance, taking advantage of me?” – just to really confirm your suspicions if you so wish. Trust that gut and then respect yourself enough to look out for yourself.

Q: Any recent books that you've enjoyed reading?

I have been enjoying the poetry of Mary Oliver once more (particularly *Owls and Other Fantasies*) who always grounds me, reminds me of the humble beauty to be found in nature. I've been engaging with several articles and essays online, those about the terrible, terrible things going on in the world, and I have been constantly understanding these issues and getting a deeper grasp of them. What I have learnt is – there is a war on *empathy*. The cruel powers that be want you to close your eyes and stop caring. Stop caring not only about those who don't look like you, but those that *do*. I urge you, dear reader, to do the very opposite. To do so you must read and you must enrich the mind and you must engage with your community and come to each other's aid.

Some other titles on my reading list include “We Have Never Been Modern” by Bruno Latour, a fascinating read exploring the actor-network theory; “Basti” by Intizar Husain and ‘Clear Light of Day’ by Anita Desai; and ‘H is for Hawk’ by Helen Macdonald. As you can see, my summer reading has been full of pain, pondering, and poetry – and I am all the better for it.

Q: How do you deal with career jealousy? It feels like everybody is moving forward and doing cool things. I get that everybody's journey is not the same but at the same time I don't know how to navigate these feelings as a university student - help!

You remember that this isn't a game of comparisons, dear reader. And if you feel everybody is doing 'cool things', what is stopping you from partaking in the same activities? Do you feel you have something to lose when you put yourself out there? Is it terrifying to make the first move to get what you want? To reach out to that connection, to send that cold email, to go for that open interview?

The best piece of advice I can give you here is this: do it scared. Take this example. Do you wish to be a poet, yet you have never written poetry or performed it? Tomorrow if you were to write a poem, then find a gathering of poets - don't worry, that part is easy; poets are always gathering somewhere - and read it out to them ... what difference would there be between you and any other poet? You are *doing* the thing. You are performing the creative act. You are being who you want to be. You do it for as long as it takes to get good at it. And you *remember* - this is not a game of comparisons, my dear.

Q: How not to procrastinate on assignments?

I regret to inform you I am the last bird to ask this question. My time management skills are abhorrent, and that is if we can agree I even have any to begin with. But here's a soundbite from my days in grade school. I believe it was my eighth grade English teacher, Mr. Winston Warbler, who told me "time management is like rubbing alcohol. It stings you in the now, but it saves you in the later!"

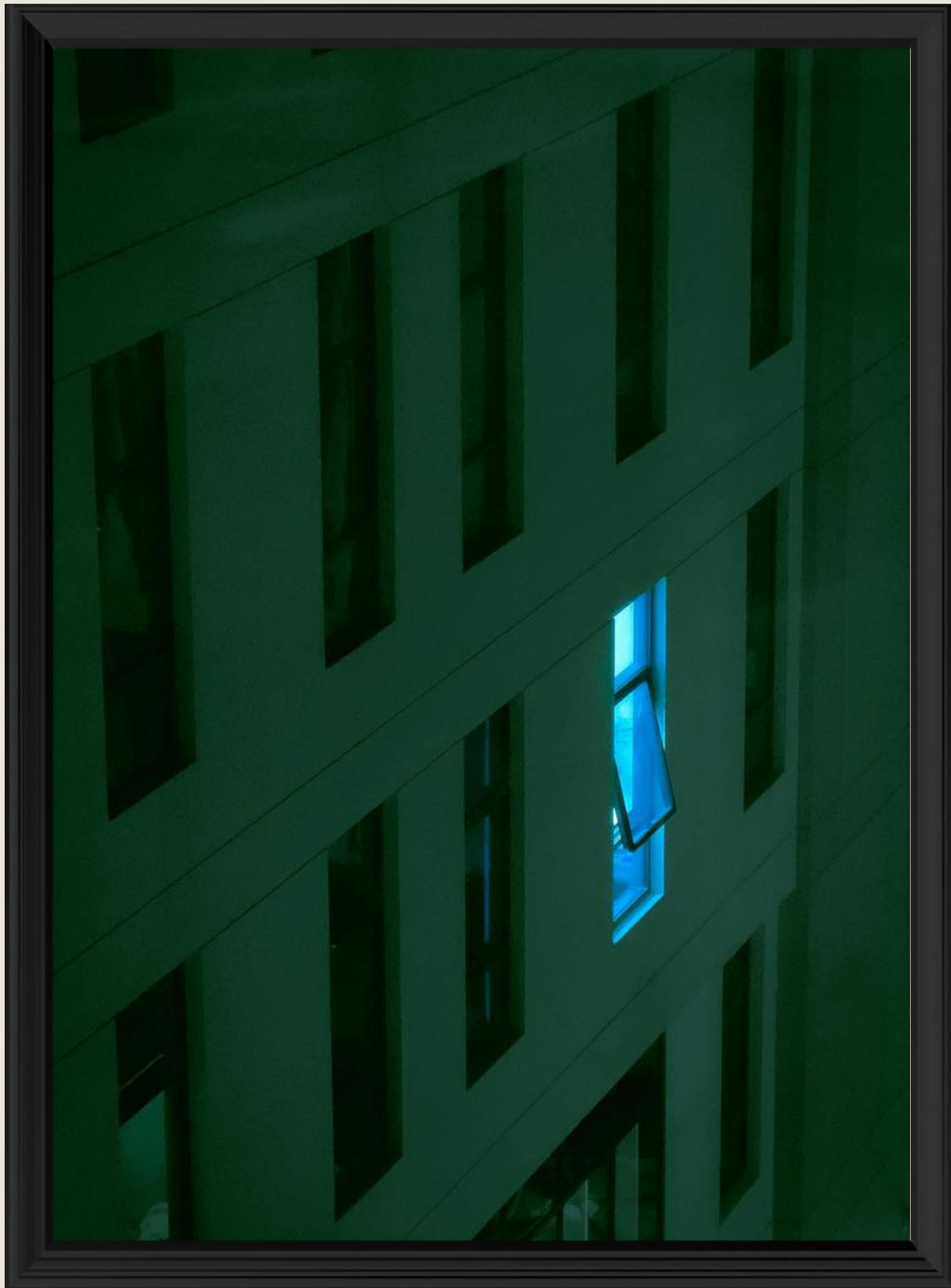
Q: How do you move on from a long-term relationship?

I have found life to be a long series of plunges and leaps. Even for a dignified scholar such as myself, there is no amount of research or dedicated studying that can prepare you for when your partner decides to randomly pack it up and go backpacking across Europe to, and I quote, *find themselves*, and consequently, never call you again, except send you a *postcard* from Ecuador to tell you what you already knew. *It's over*.

Dear reader, I applaud you for taking the leap and getting into a relationship, your efforts to build something, and I truly admire you for having the strength to separate from that relationship. I trust you will know to take the next leap when the time comes. But in the meantime, here's what you should remember:

The love you enjoyed in your relationship is a reflection of the love that exists within *you*! So don't go around thinking you're some poor, cursed fellow, destined misfortune in love, and, *please*, do not think your romantic relationship is the end-all, be-all to your happiness. I implore you to spend time with your community - your friends, your family, your pet(s), whoever! Learn who you are on your own! And if you feel you do not *have* said community, you build one. You absolutely cannot go about living life as a solitary soul. You are not a loon!

Editor's note: A loon is a solitary bird that takes to the water more often than not. Characterized by their thick necks and long black bills, their call is quite distinctive, involving wails and wolf-like howls.



Flow State

2024

Saif Ayaz

1760 x 2646

77mm f2.8

This photo is something that deeply speaks to me as it's a rare third-person perspective on an experience that I otherwise only know from my own point of view.



Lotus

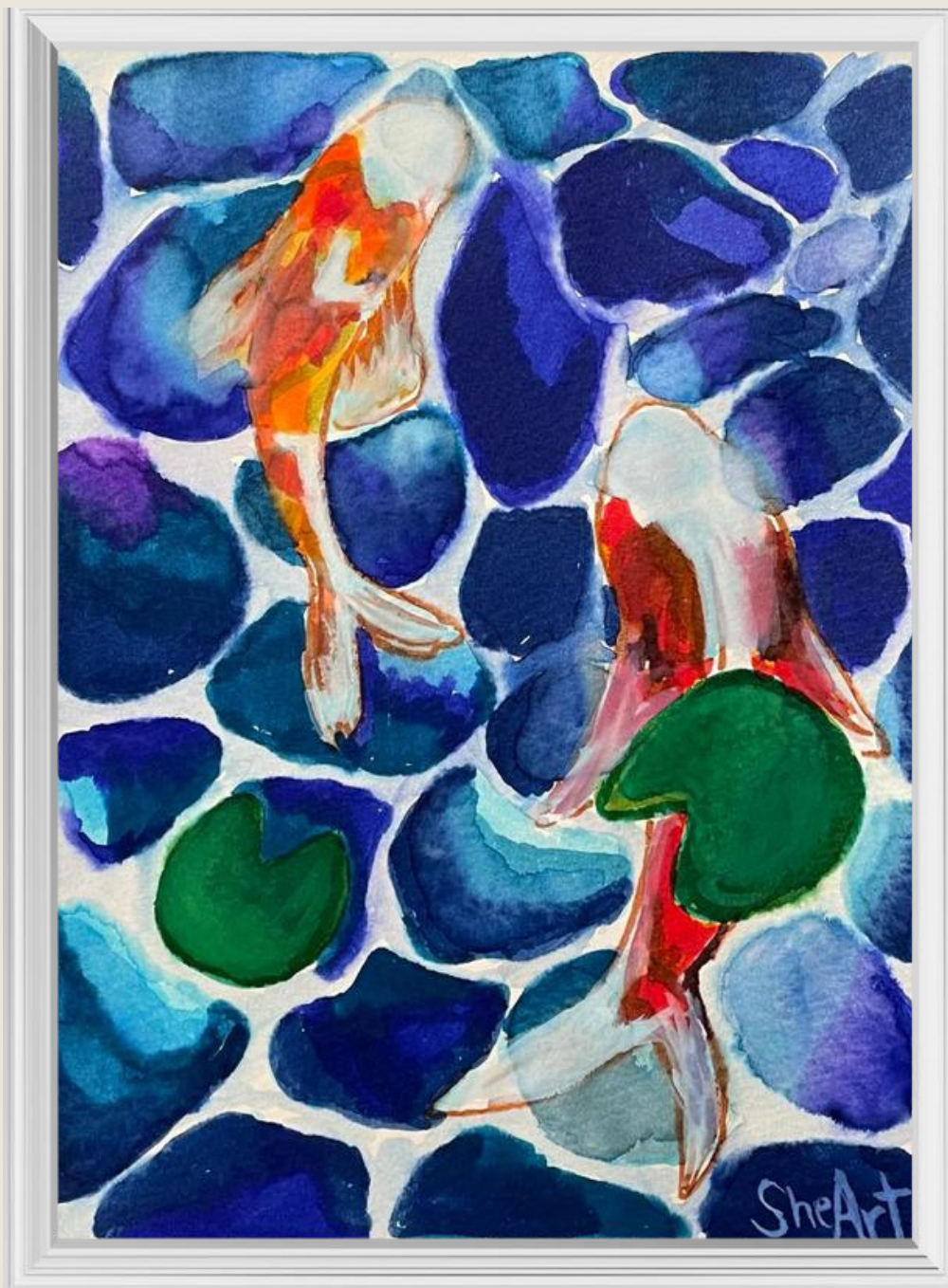
2025

Padma Harini

Modelling paste and acrylic paint on canvas

84 cm x 119 cm

This piece is a 3D textured painting of a lotus set against a radiant gold background, made using modelling paste and acrylic paint. The raised textures bring depth and tactility, allowing the lotus to stand out as both image and form. I chose the lotus because it connects to my name, but also because it represents resilience, renewal, and beauty across cultures. The gold background enhances both the texture and the symbolism, giving the work a contemporary yet traditional presence.



Koi

2024

Poojal Hurrychurn

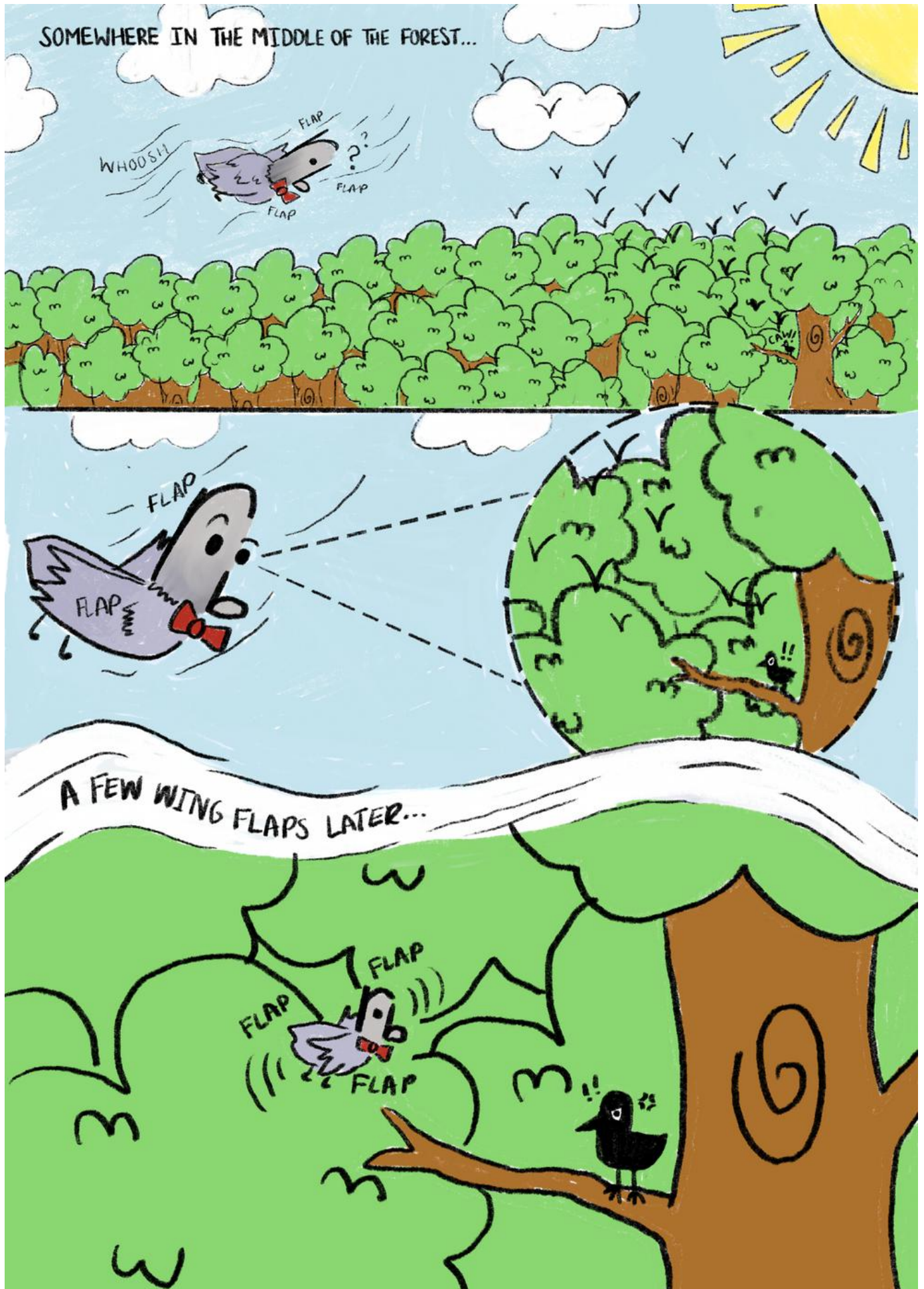
Watercolour pens and gouache on paper

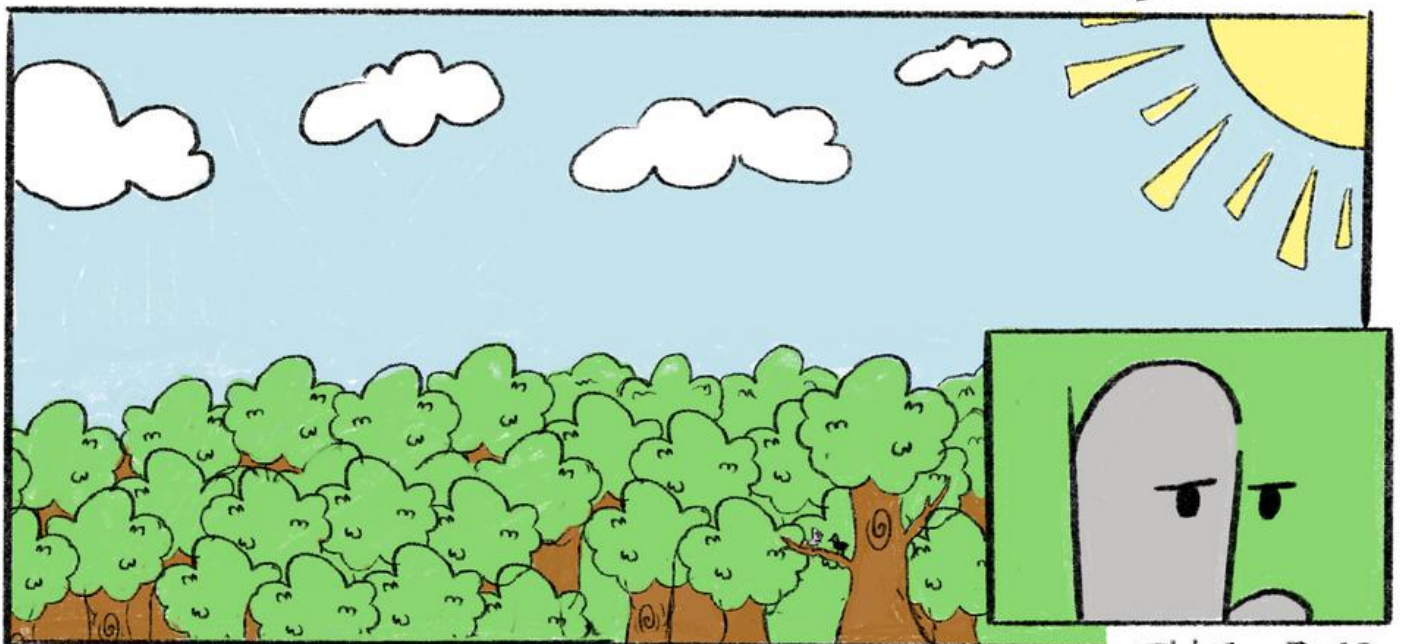
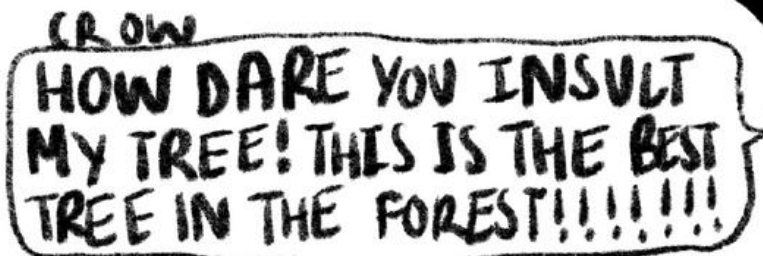
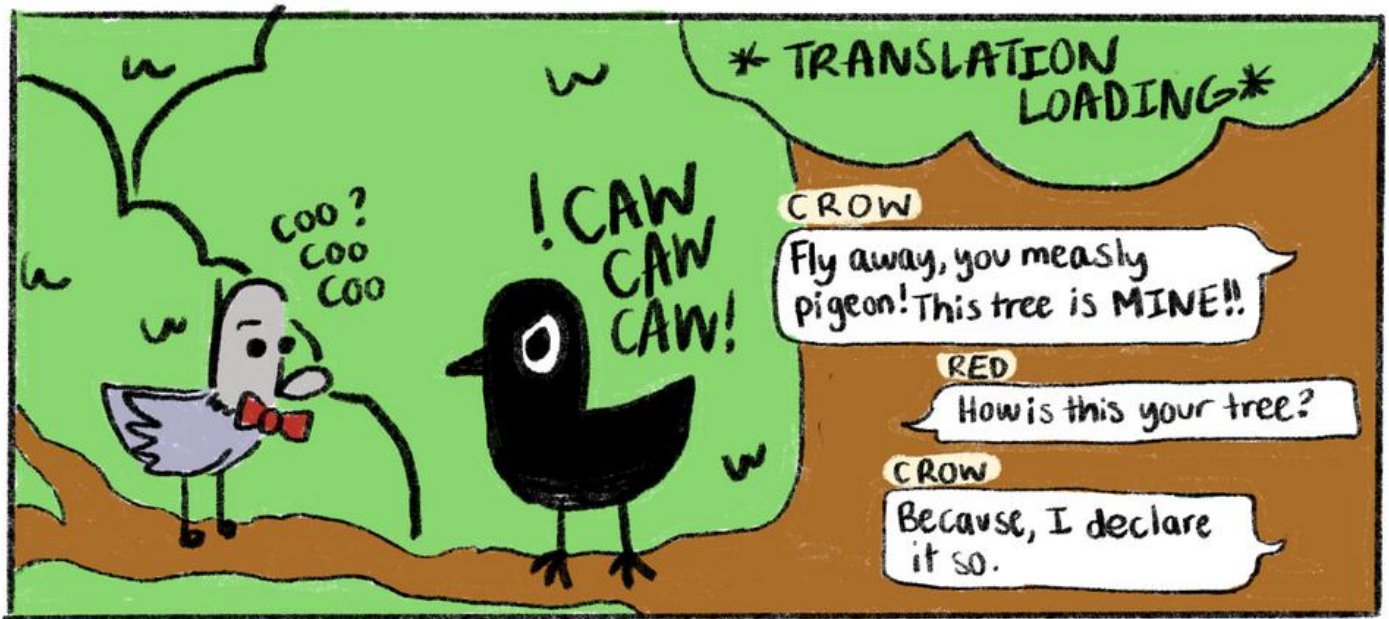
12.3 cm x 16.7 cm

Koi is an experimental watercolour and gouache piece which captures a serene moment of two koi fish swimming in a pond.

The Crow's Tree

Written and illustrated by Poojal Hurrychurn





CONTRIBUTORS



KERENZA PERERA

Designer
Graphic Design
[3rd Year]

Kerenza cannot be described in just a paragraph alone. Yet, one thing's for sure, she has been a very passionate artist since she was little, with a love for watercolour and colour pencils as much as any little child would love watching Winnie the Pooh.

Actually, Winnie the Pooh and basically anything to do with Disney is her forte. Yes, she still loves to binge watch Pooh Bear, when she gets the time to of course. She'd love to indulge in the comfort of crochet and let her creativity run wild, that too obviously when time permits. She absolutely loves creating what she calls 'beautiful messes' - from her room, to her art, to even her music taste. What kind of artist isn't, right?

She's an avid reader, so much that her TBR list is as long as the Mahaweli Ganga, or even longer perhaps. If you were to ask her about her favourite book so far, she'd scream the ACOTAR series. But it doesn't stop there. Asking her about her books is like telling her to choose her absolute all time fav song - way too chaotic. She loves creating art and reading her books, but that's only when she isn't bombarded with her design projects. She's often mistaken for other nationalities than her own, which she proudly loves to flaunt... being Sri Lankan.



**AAYUSHI
RAMAKRISHNAN**

Designer
Advertising, PR and Branding
[2nd Year]

To Aayushi, there's nothing greater than committing to the bit. Maybe that's why she develops hobbies at the snap of a finger, everything seems like a bit that she must give her full and complete attention to. Aayushi is a powerhouse of energy with a fun-loving attitude and a curious mind. If it looks interesting, just know that she will be trying it out, learning and taking inspiration from everyone and everything. She's an extrovert, so if you see her around she probably will be talking to you — whether it's about the weather or her extensive knowledge on recent pop culture trends :P

CONTRIBUTORS



MARYAM IMTIAZ

Designer

Advertising, PR and Branding
[3rd Year]

Stepping into her 20s soon, Maryam's got a fear of the future, but she combats that by being extraneously sassy and giving in to all her impulse-purchase fancies.

Never been one for rules, she has been described as headstrong and blunt. She says what's on her mind and isn't afraid to ruffle as many feathers as it takes. Friends will fondly hark back to the day she ordered fries and went back thrice because they kept messing up her order.

Maryam adores her cat, named Duke after Duke Simon from *Bridgerton*, whom she co-parents with her 6 sisters.

She can't remember if she has any hobbies but she enjoys watching weird and trendy shows in her free time - shows she almost *never enjoys*, but she will gladly talk about how much she *doesn't* enjoy them, and maybe that's what life is all about.

She loves a good book, but only toe-curling thrillers and engrossing murder mysteries. Pass on the romance, please.



RAABIYA KHAN

Writer

Creative Writing and Journalism
[2nd Year]

Raabiya is what you get when you combine knock-off academia and unfinished manuscripts: a creative and messy writer with a deluded sense of confidence.

She likes to critically dissect the media she consumes and write essays about them, even when it's really not that deep (her article on *Phineas and Ferb* claims otherwise). Her knack for writing poetry was what made her name and also led to her eventual burnout. Despite this, she pushes through the fog when an idea hits her head and will not stop until she's executed it.

Don't recommend a new show to her— she still hasn't moved on from the one she watched months ago. And please don't ask her to describe her favourite characters unless you want a dissertation on feminism.

Here are some safe topics that you can approach her about: board games, matcha, her terrible sweet tooth, and her weird dislike for ankle boots. She likes to believe she's a vibe.

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