



Quartz Rocks



About the

 @quartz.cluster



Cluster

The QuArtz Cluster is a grassroots and youth-led arts-based organization created by a group of creatively gifted friends who met at Queer and Trans Asian youth (QTAY)'s Art Extravaganza program in 2022. Our mission is to be the destination of choice for young Queer and Trans Asian artists in Toronto to grow their artistic practice, and find community, artistic opportunities and resources. Coached by our beloved organisational mentor Dany, and with the guidance of our very organised, amazing, and committed peer leaders Margarita and Jia Yi, we are a team of 15 who brought you a curated collection of exciting programming this past year!

Over the course of our 8-month flagship program, the Rainbow Lunisolar Project, we organised 3 successful virtual workshops about artistic identity, comic-making 101, as well as food and connection to community! Our monthly art jams have been popular spaces for folks to destress, and try their hand at new art mediums or continue working on ongoing projects. Earlier this year we also hosted visits to the Textile Museum, the MOCA (Museum of Contemporary Art), and the ArQuives building meaningful connections with new people and learning about queer history. In our work, we've prioritised reconnecting with and feeling empowered by our intersectional identities and centering historical and cultural teachings. To honour this, our team put together a photo walk tour with the Long Time No See Collective and QTAY around our very own Chinatown for young Queer & Trans Asian artists to learn more about the histories of Chinatown.

Our most recent event, a weekend-long residency at SKETCH Working Arts gave artists an opportunity to collaborate and make the banner above and work on their own projects. In fact, take this opportunity to appreciate the fruits (teehee) of our labour and talent by admiring the front and back cover of this zine where we, the QuArtz staff and community, present ourselves to you in our rocksonas created at the residency!

Land Acknowledgment

This zine is a labour of love to honour our beautiful Queer & Trans Asian youth community here in Tkaronto where we are able to live, come together, and create wonders on the stolen land of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnaabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat Peoples amongst other peoples whose identities were erased entirely. At QuArtz, we have aimed to navigate our programming with special respects to all those who have come before us and whose bravery and resilience has allowed us to operate with the freedoms we hold today.

Thank you!

Our ambitious and highly successful programming would not have been possible without the City of Toronto's Identify 'N' Impact Grant dedicated to supporting youth led initiatives, and strengthen youth capacity in networking and community building. A special thank you to our trustee organisation ACAS and our mentor Dany.

THANK YOU to all 23 of the phenomenal Queer and Trans Asian artists who submitted their art to this zine, you give QuArtz its reason to be!! We are so grateful and excited to be able to share your art! Thank you from the bottom of our rocky hearts for sharing a bit of yourself with us, this is for you <3

And last but not least, thank you to the amazing, vibrant, dedicated and hardworking QuArtz staff who have put in the blood, sweat, and tears to bring you QuArtz Rocks: Marcus, Margarita, and Ziyani!!

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Chris or Nana ***they/them***



Chris (aka. Nana) is an art adventurer who hopes their work makes them and someone else laugh. Their work centers exploring and sharing their joy with clay, zines, block prints, collage, or combining mediums. Chris hopes to share, find, and grow belonging and community through their art. They like to help create opportunities for other artists to be engaged with each other and to support each other.



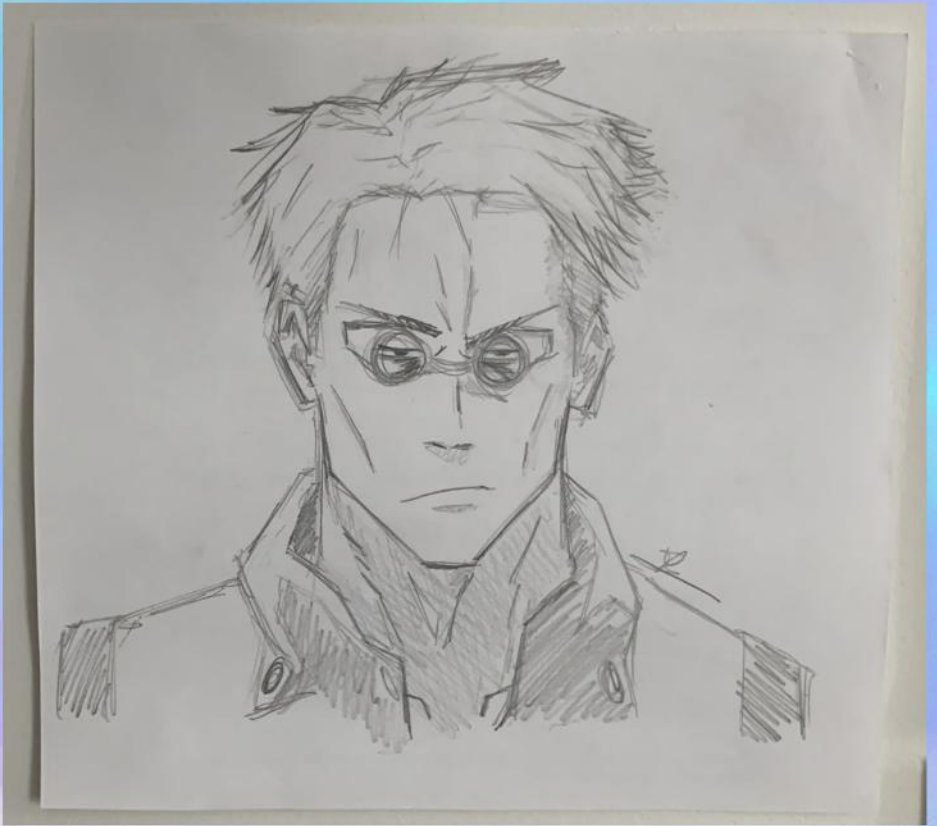
Yoyo

he/him

My name is Yoyo and I like using art as a creative outlet in life :) I like sketching and playing the piano but I am looking to get more into digital art in the future!



This is a piece that I made at the Quartz event at SKETCH during June. I went on a trip to Banff earlier this year and I felt inspired by the scenery over there!



This is a sketch that I made at the Quartz Formations workshop last November (The Making of an Artist with Kelly). I was getting a lot of JJK fan edits on my TikTok FYP at the time so I decided to draw my glorious king during the sketch break :)

Alena

she, they

Alena is an in/organic lifeform living on Mother Earth. her poetry explores the complexities of life as a Mad queer diasporic asian femme, including themes such as intergenerational trauma, fetishization and what it means to be alive and well under empire. when the writing gets too heavy, she dances and tells jokes to confuse and titillate under the alias china virus (they/them).

depression sweats

(Content warning: mentions of suicidality, fetishization)

when it feels like four degrees celsius in may

ur sweating in ur winter jacket

chrysalis—when u gunna emerge?

pasty clammy fiveskin

remember when u smelled like burgers

sweating in the pole studio

after sugar daddy took u out to lunch?

imperialist desire also gets mapped

onto asian bodies—demand for the sex trade,

massage workers, child brides

tight azn pussy yellow fever

the hadids and the fox-eye trend

azn shorty with a cute face fat ass lil sass

is this hot? do ppl still like me?

even when i'm autistic even when i leave

the party early

how many of my friends are suicidal?

the boys want nudes but i keep sending them poetry

(Content warning: mentions of suicidality, sex work)

I was going to fuck off and blow the rest of my money on Berlin, but my cat—whom I lost in Montreal over the summer—came back to me. So after being traumatized from giving two lap dances at Cafe Cleopatre I scuttled away and back to my parents' home in Toronto and I was about to disappear to Berlin to unravel a bit when I had to stay back for my cat (and to purge demons—I had been avoiding them so they were waiting for me). Now I'm not talking to my brother and I am getting breakouts all over my chin despite having just turned thirty two days ago (aquarius szn 🙌) which seems too old an age to still be getting breakouts, but who really knows how skin works. I wonder if my chin acne is hormonal or stress-related or due to the fact that I drool a shit ton in my sleep.

I am forgetting what I learned in French class the difference between the verbs devoir and pouvoir and how to socialize. I am not sad or at least I am not sad in a way that will devastate me. A healthy dose of sadness is good. Constant happiness is fascism—Anthony Bourdain said that at least once. (But perhaps I should not quote from folks who off themselves).

I do not want to off myself, I just think about it and joke about it from time to time. I wouldn't do it because sometimes I catch the warm hues of a sunset over the city I look over at my lost-and-found cat sleeping softly and soundly I remember who I am and how cool I am and what a gift I am to this fucked-up world—

and I think yea ok I can keep doing this life thing.



jun/they/korean


distant points of life



little me, chubby-cheeked and waddling across the carpet
imagining the force and the warmth of
my words, smoldering and smoking at the edges,
torches that lit up the pauses in my babbling.
that heat built in my head,
i'm iron and carbon;
my skin is steel but not stainless.
my body is not made for dancing on
these hot coals—they've made
my bed for me,
cleaned my closet and laid out tomorrow's
outfit, scales made of metal-threaded fabric
and i am rusting, pitted, and corroded
repurpose me.
watch me bend red, watch me twist orange and yellow and
skip green until i am unflinchingly blue.
melt me down to the center, the raising temperature threshold
which finally liquidates my core
the sun drinks pieces of me,
but never enough to break its
acid heat—the inverse of critical mass
a liminal breaking point.

listen,





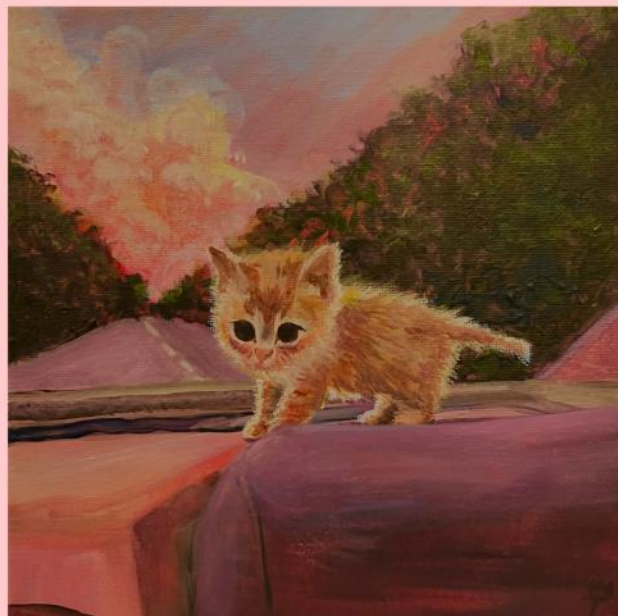
we will eventually twirl into andromeda's arms,
wrap ours around her and measure her in
lightyears and parsecs. orion's fingers will trace
her shoulders and we, nestled as we are in his elbow,
will bend around her shape and accommodate.
i always thought something about that was romantic,
not lovingly per se, but spatially. physically.
i measure you similarly, but i'm not made of stars and
dust and light. when i reach for water i realize
the circumference of the cup matches
the curve of your shoulders
as i massage out tension in those tendons.
my thumbs anchor themselves by my spacebar but
my fourth finger reaches to undo things i write
to you and there, from fingertip to fingertip, is
the length of your clavicle.
three of my fingers pressed together span
the width of your sternum.
my thumbs fit into the divots of your hips.
if i press my face against your neck, the swell of my cheek
is the same slope at which your neck descends. and
you're not a ghost, so
please don't disappear.
haunt me with your teeth hovering over my throat,
my metal and your bone, immovable object and unstoppable force.
an unholy matrimony in prehistoric and manmade elements
you're constructed from flesh and tissue,
i'm born of carbon fiber and wires.

spin your way into my arms, darling,
dance with me eternal until
the stars are no longer distant points of light, until
phantom sensations of where the sun's rays used to
warm our skin are all that's left.



Winsome she/they

Winsome Adelia Tse is a multi-disciplinary creative artist, illustrator, and designer working in Greater Tkaronto. Their professional work spans a variety of mediums, including traditional & digital fine art, illustration, graphic design, web design, writing, editing, communications, and digital media. Winsome's artistic calling continues to manifest as the act of sharing life, in all of its technicolour facets. Her art rejoices in the depth of human experience in vibrant colours, flowing lines, and playful scale. In their eyes, all of life carries romanticism and realism in loving balance. In this selection, her art explores the variety of emotionscapes that colours can evoke, including the warmth and comfort of liminal nostalgia, and the joy and hope of natural wonder. A selection of their visual works and both their artist and general CV are on their website, www.winsomeadeliatse.com.



"Cat Drive",
acrylic on
stretched
canvas, 2024.
The
tenderness of
sunset
envelops this
sweet kitten.
He has a lot to
think about
and I feel I am
there with
him.



"Majesty", oil pastel on pastel paper, 2023. As an exploration with a new set of materials, and a revisit of an old friend in medium. Doesn't it just bring about the trumpet and fanfare of season?

Serena Lam

they/them

Serena Lam is a queer Asian writer and filmmaker with a fervent passion for art and visual storytelling. As a non-binary racialized lesbian originally hailing from Hong Kong, their cultural heritage and positionalities deeply inform their third culture perspective in their work. Serena has written and directed short films including *Magnolia*, *Mothertongue*, and *S+R*, and they have also produced and hosted *Tangled Threads*, a podcast with Asian Community AIDS Services that spotlights the stories of queer Asian community members. Outside of film and media, Serena works with acrylics and yarn, and they also regularly post prose and poetry on their blog, @liminalheadspaces on Tumblr. Serena is very passionate about queer BIPOC stories of connection, joy and trauma, and hopes to continue weaving these themes into their future artistic endeavors.

Middle School

We will never speak again.

But I will always remember the rhythm of your heartbeat against my cheek, and your fingertips on my thighs, and your breath hovering over my lips.

You will find a respectable boy, and forget the frivolous days of girlhood, where your hands always found my body, and your gaze always lingered on my face.

I will only know you in photographs, and you me.

Or perhaps you will find a beautiful girl, and you'll remember me, and remember everything.

I hope she teaches you love.

Status



Acrylics on canvas, 2023.

content warning:
gore/depicted injury

Kiko 芯仪 (๑'w') ✧ ♡

they/them

kiko is a queer malaysian-chinese artist and a big fan of fried rice, shoujo manga, and zine fairs. they love making art for viewers to unravel & discover something new every time you look at it ✧ // find them on IG or itch.io @kylihime

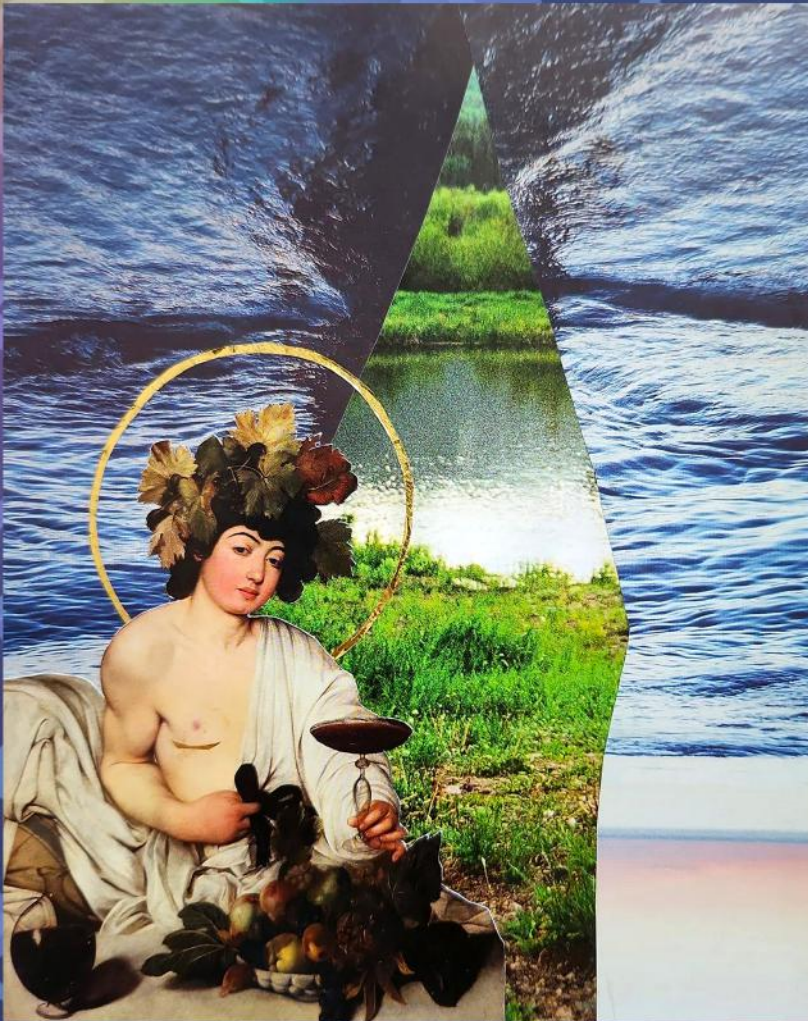
Multiplicity



from forest girl dream world #2, ink on paper, 2019

Margarita Stappas

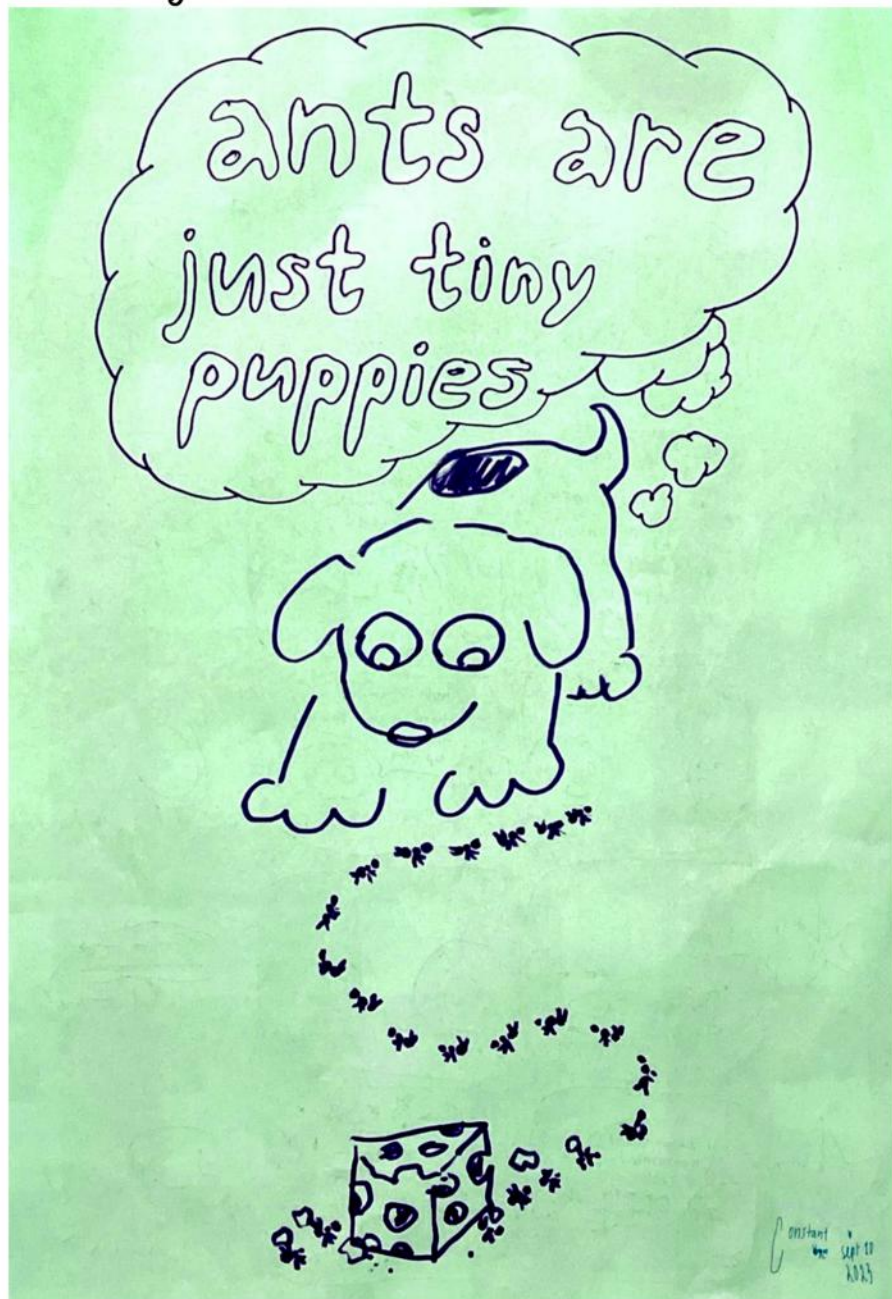
Margarita is one of the Co-Founders of the QuArtz Cluster. They're a multidisciplinary artist who is currently focusing on textile art, collage, and illustration. When they're not making art, they're watching queer tv shows, reading comics, playing tabletop, vermicomposting, and eating olives.



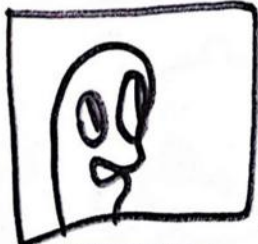
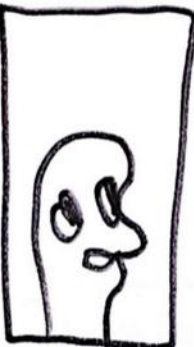
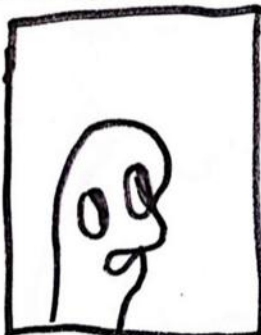
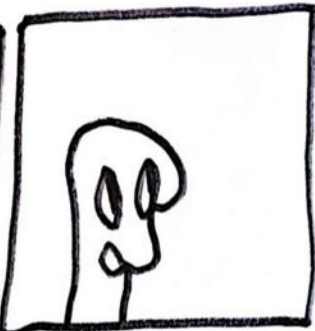
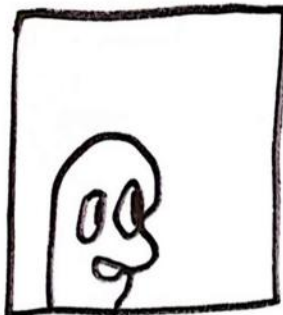
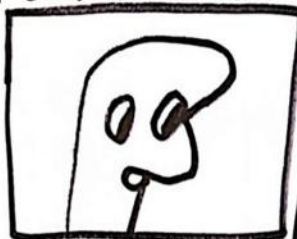
Untitled, collage, 2023

Constant

they/them



"social interaction"



end.

Yiorgia Stappas she/her

i'm a 20 year old student studying at the University of Toronto and I enjoy making collages and prints using linoblocks.

horsegod



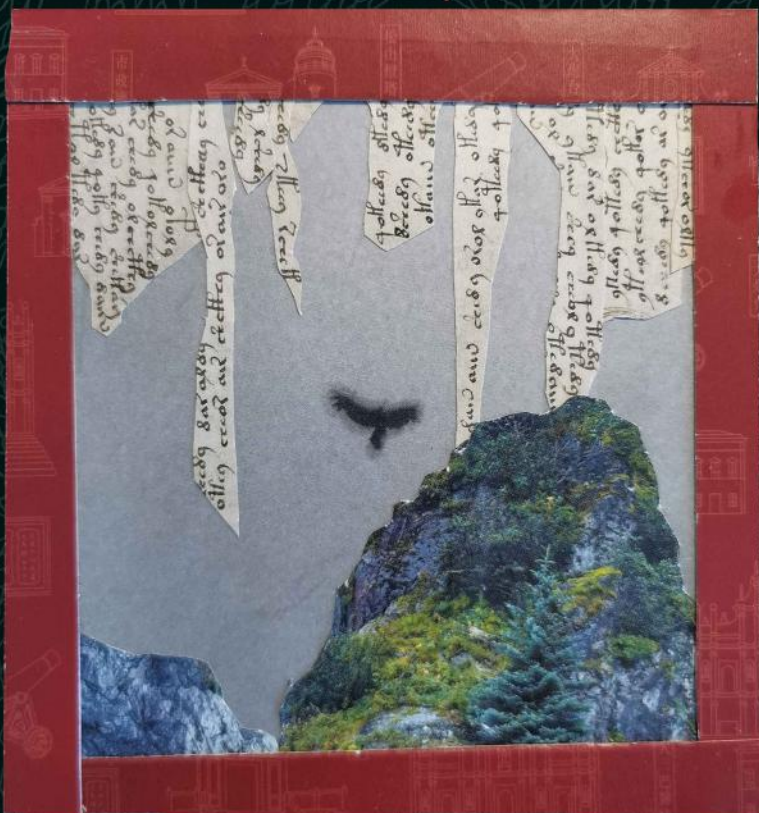
collage, acrylic, glitter on wooden board
chappell roan inspired

Liam

he/him/they

Liam is a multimedia artist who tip-toes between genres and fixations, embracing forms of performance, improvisation, and spontaneity to explore their emotions and thoughts.

Cascade | Root

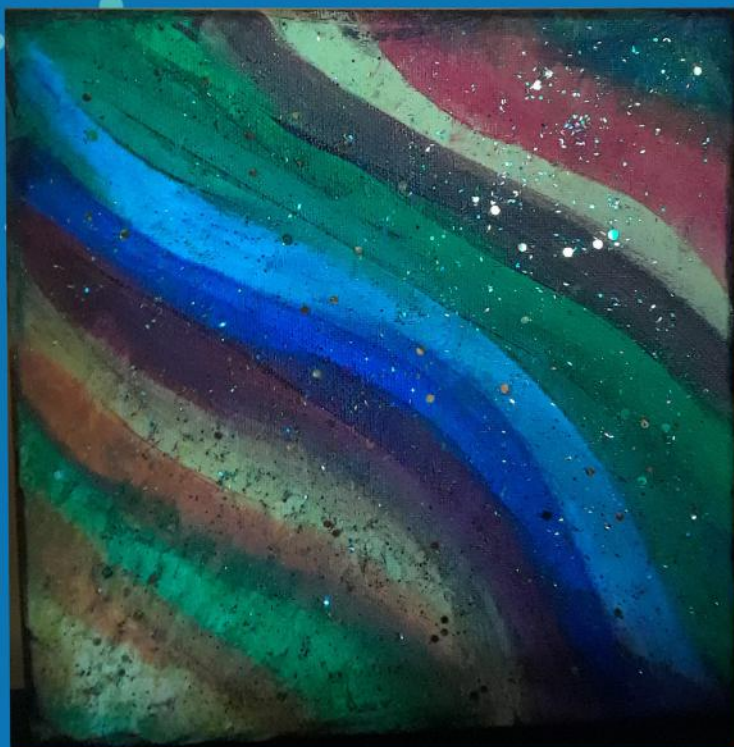


"Cascade|Root is a collage contrasting nature and text, only the text is not commonly read or spoken now. Through the layering of human speech and the natural world, the aim of this piece is to ask whether or not either are entirely from different worlds, or if they are intertwined."



Donna

As a non-binary queer artist, challenging norms comes naturally and liberatingly for me.



The rainbow painting represents my attraction to colours that blend into each other to create a marble-like visual.



she/they



The f^{ck} capitalism mural represents my disdain for the status quo, it's lack of empathy and the harm it has caused to living beings of all kinds.

Maple she/they

Maple is a lesbian Chinese artist who enjoys experimenting with different art mediums, including pencil drawings, acrylic painting, and plushie making. Despite enjoying and creating art throughout her life, she chose not to call herself an artist until recently. For Maple, art has been deeply intertwined with identity, self-discovery, and self-expression. They hope to continue to explore more of their connections with art, especially in relation to their queerness and identities.

This embroidered piece, which was also her first attempt at embroidery art, was created during the QuArtz & Crafts @ Sketch event (June 8-9, 2024) and was completed on June 20, 2024. It depicts a white and purple tulip, one of their favourite flowers, inspired by a recent trip to a tulip farm in May with a dear friend. For the artist, it brings feelings of warmth and comfort that come with good company.

This is an accompanying tanka poem to the embroidered tulip piece, written and completed on June 19, 2024.



beneath cotton skies
even after thunderstorms
vibrant tulips bloom
small bouquets, proudly ours
enjoying sweet spring with you

Mantis

they/them

I am interested in the boundaries between personhood and machinery, care and labour, invisibility and agency, and queerness/failure and professionalism. I am also very interested in LOVE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Friendship, care, hanging out, and gift giving are essential to my practice.

I play with materials that brings the opportunity of intimacy to participants. This looks like websites, steel, simple electronics—in conversation with—fibre, flowers, dogs, handwritten letters, funerals, birthdays, and heart shaped stickers. My work is informed by Jack Halberstalm's *The Queer Art of Failure* and Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* as well as laughing with and listening to my friends.



Portrait of a Love, 2024. Acrylic Yarn, love. I love the person who keeps my room cool at night. Electric Fan, I love you.



**Untitled
Comic (birds),
2024. A comic
about birds
and love and
dads and
processing
and mistakes**

Chelsey Junting Wang

she/her

The Lovers 2022



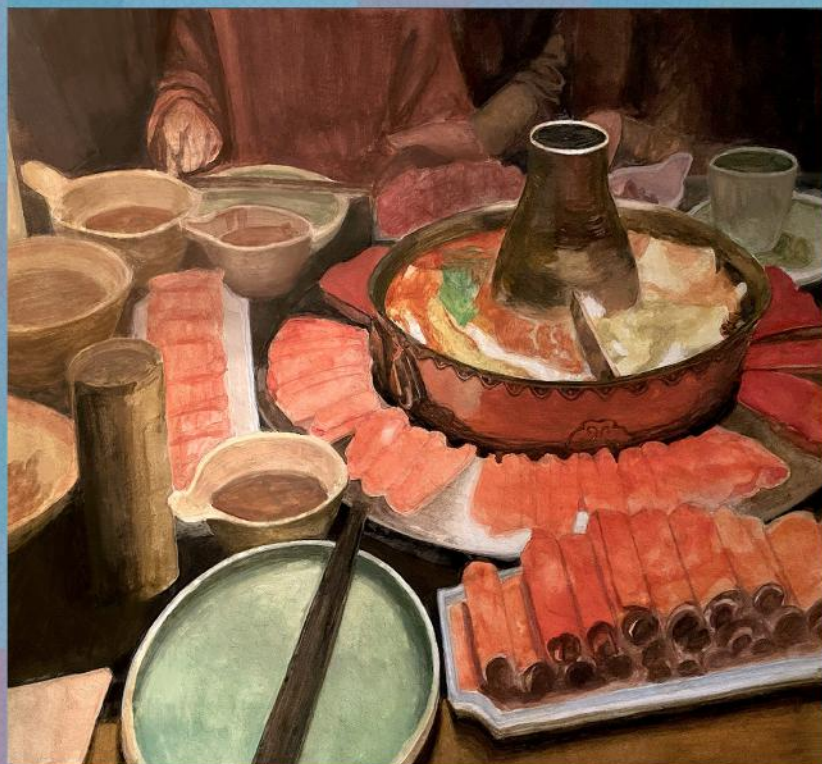
The Lovers



Supermarket fish

2019

My art is mostly inspired by my daily life. I enjoy capturing what I observe around me and presenting it in an interesting way.



Hotpot

2022



Coming Home

2024

River

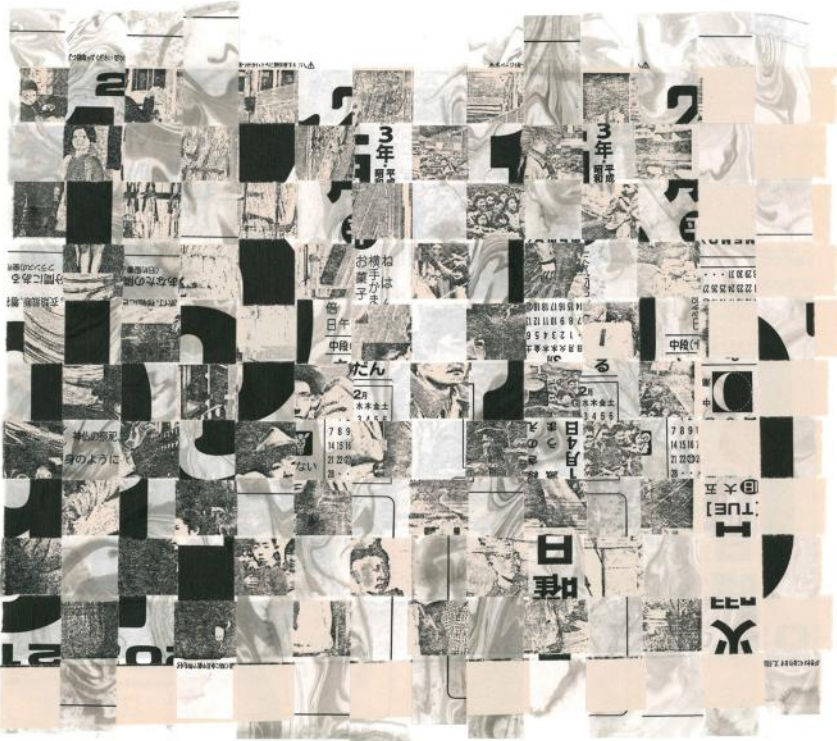
they/them

River Kenji Fujimoto is a multidisciplinary artist and printmaker of Japanese-Sicilian descent based in Tkaronto. Their practice can be interpreted as self portraiture, as they use their practice to better understand navigating spaces and systems as a mixed race, queer, trans, disabled person. Primarily using relief printmaking techniques and text and illustration through zinemaking they explore themes of connection and our relationships with others, ourselves and the body.



Traces, 2023

Traces is a CMYK screenprint inspired by the artist's growing stamp collection and dream to live abroad in both or either of their ancestral home countries of Japan and Italy. This piece is a result of imagining living in either of these countries long enough to have an address where they could receive mail. Through their practice, Fujimoto is finding ways to reconnect to their heritage as yonsei (fourth generation Japanese-Canadian) and third generation Italian-Canadian.



Floating Memories, 2022

Floating Memories is a paper weaving of strips of a photo polymer plate relief print and suminagashi (marbled ink) daily calendar pages. The piece captures moments of time and place through warped and distorted images of incarcerated Japanese Canadians and Americans during the Second World War. Sumingashi used on the calendar pages comments on the unsettling memories that many Japanese Canadian and American incarceration camp survivors aimed to forget. As a grandchild of Japanese Canadian incarceration camp survivors, Fujimoto acknowledges the importance of remembering and learning their family history on Turtle Island.

Gillian Bolivar she/her

Hi! I am Gillian and I love visual arts, poetry and photography. I would say that most of my inspiration comes from BIPOC and queer artists. James Baldwin and Audre Lorde were some of the first gay and lesbian artists from my reading repertoire that left an important mark on my mind to understand the relationship between queerness, care and creativity. Being Filipino I am inspired by many Filipino artists, especially indie artist such as Clara Benin and of course I love a good karaoke session! You may follow my instagram for the occasional poem drop: @milkfoam

Sunshine Shimmer is hopeful, wishful and encouraging. It calls for the reader to get out of a state lost in somberness to greet the beauty of the sun and the brightness of life and nature that surrounds you. Like an encouraging person that wants to witness and experience a jovial time together yet understands your stress and anxieties.

Sunshine Shimmer

Sunshine let the light shine in
You've been dreaming in the dark too long
Sunshine let the wind chimes sing
The twinkling sounds of a morning song

Open up the blinds you've been stuck
Sinking deep into reverie
The clouds will part for the sun
Who waits for you once a day patiently

Old paintings keep you company that are cracked and dry
Pulls your heartstrings from nostalgia
Though surviving it is a facade
Captured with a brush stroke not a camera

Don't let this whirlwind of feelings
Cause you to close up this chapter
I know you need happiness and healing
So open your heart to love and laughter

Though the wind whispers to your heart
You can't restart on remorse
It seems the gust of wind is the start
To direct the weathervane in the right course

Sunshine shine with delight
Let the light beam bright
Till the clouds part for the night
Sunshine shine with might

Better days are about to begin
Feel the energy on your skin
It's that warmth you need to take in
It will brighten you within

Staying inside in the comfort zone of your cool fan
You forget about Vitamin D and the warmth of a sun tan
You don't need the rain to fall to cool you down
How about a snow cone melting in your hand when the circus is in town

Don't let this summer night blur with the worst days
Let's enjoy the fireworks that spark
Bringing their bright and vivid colours to your gaze
Shimmering in the sky against the dark

Let's fill up our day with sun
It's summer time don't forget
Time is fleeting and can't be undone
Don't let this summer end with regret

E He/Him or none!

E is an artist and filmmaker currently studying Graphic Design. You can find him @citizen.li on Instagram! E also runs a small business, Silk Fang (Silkfang.Etsy.com)



Queer Sex Will Save the World is a title page for a WIP zine that addresses healing, madness, and alternative sexualities.

Although I've always been quite fond of art, I fell out of love for creativity; until these recent years. And as cliché as it may sound, I do believe that finding my identity played a major role in restoring my passion.



Cyril she/ her

I don't have a name for this piece, and I usually like the concept of letting people have their own interpretations (so go wild). The medium I used was a canvas and I made it pretty recently because I've always liked the idea of painting, but I rarely partake in the activity, and I thought this was a good way to spend an afternoon enjoying the warm weather.

Jia Yi

she/her

Jia Yi Fan is a mapping and environmental professional by day and a multidisciplinary artist by night. She co-founded The QuArtz Cluster, a Queer & Trans Asian youth artist collective based in Tkaronto/Toronto, to create safe(r) community-oriented spaces for emerging artists and to provide opportunities for collaboration, learning and leadership. Check out my portfolio: https://direct.me/jy_f/art/g2GC

Galápagos – a childhood dream

Love letter to Galápagos

Fondness

Like a soft and mellow sunray licking
a napping cat's back.

I look over my shoulder
with tenderness and gratitude
for all the serendipitous memories I've made
for the wind blowing on my face
for the clear, stary skies I saw
for being able to confide our secrets to the grassy fields and the dishevelled trees
for the hardships that strengthened me.

But not looking back will not prevent
this world from changing

The streets from radiating exhausting heat
People flocking, enticed by the promise of paradise.

The most perfect state of everything
only exists in our minds.



Beach, 2024, acrylic
and gouache on paper

Heart-shaped leaf,
2023, photograph



Starry sky, 2024,
acrylic on paper



Caitlin

she/her

"My name is Caitlin Lee and I combine photography and needle felting to bring life to the inanimate. My art is inspired by my love for video games and nature. I take all my photos at local spots to showcase all the cool places and hidden gems that Scarborough has to offer.

As a kid, I loved playing with toys and collecting them. From plastic Pokémon figurines to LEGO minifigures and mechas. My imagination could create these dramatic scenes and bring these mundane objects to life. As I grew up, I searched for an artistic medium that could reignite my childhood creativity and express myself.

I first stumbled upon toy photography. It combined my love of toys and photography that didn't need any sort of fancy equipment. I started out by snapping a few photos of my old toy collection and it eventually evolved into photographing my own needle felted toys. I love the soft, fluffy and natural-look of needle felting and how it's completely different from the plastic toys I used to photograph. By blending the two mediums, I have full creativity in what I create. With needle felting, I'm able to craft the character and story, but with photography, I'm able to capture and share it.

You can follow me on instagram @creblee where I post all my works including my process and behind the scenes."



Sunrise Seekers (2023), Wool & Various Textiles

These are two characters from the very popular video game, Baldur's Gate 3 (Shadowheart and Corinna the squirrel). Sunrises are magical to watch and I wanted to capture the awe, joy and beautiful solitude of watching a sunset with someone dear to you. I got the inspiration to needle felt these two from watching Shadowheart's voice actor and director stream the game on Youtube and Twitch. They are a lovely couple and are very entertaining to watch.



Fire Fairy (2022), Wool

This is a monster from the Rune Factory video game franchise. It's the largest and most challenging needle felt piece I created and it was an entry for a Rune Factory 5 art contest. It's also one of the most flexible characters I've made with the legs, body and arm/wings being fully poseable. I ended up choosing the fire fairy over the other elements because the design was the cutest and least complicated. 😊

Anonymous

Hello! I am a Central Asian queer immigrant who came from Kazakhstan in 2019. I had a long way and a long journey accepting and celebrating my queerness, and I am grateful for all the support I was able to receive to feel more secure in my identity and the invaluable connections I developed to the communities that I am now a part of. I have always been into art, and I use art as a way to express, self-reflect, and celebrate my identity. There's no greater joy for me than to meet other queer Asian artists!

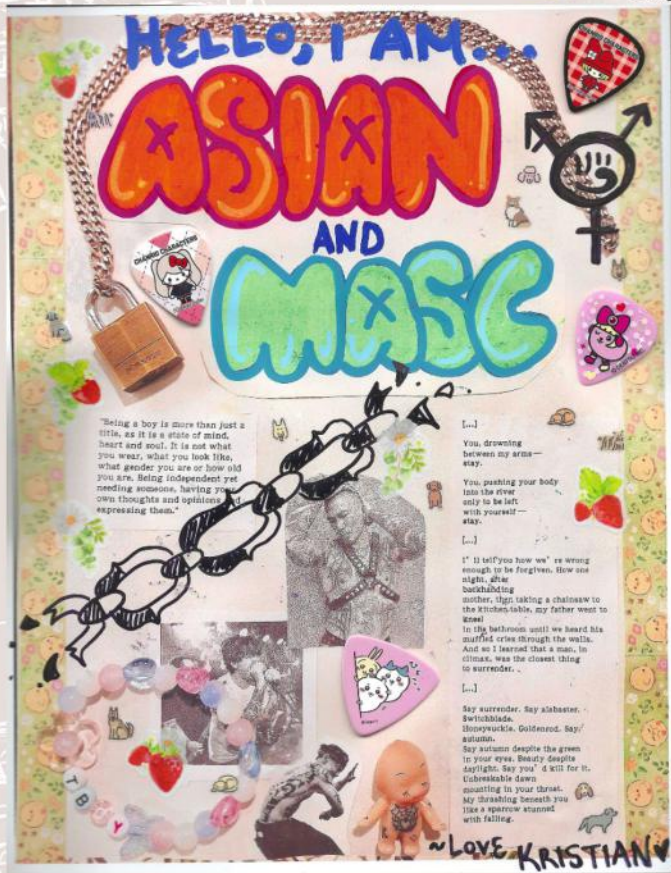


I don't have a title for this piece, but I wanted to use the colors of a lesbian flag and just have some fun working with colors. I used oil pastels, black pencil, and glitter. I was inspired by seeing works of people using colors of the pride flag or flags such as transgender flag/bisexual flag/etc flags to paint a scenery.

Kristian he/they

a transmasculine non-binary person that
dabbles in printing stickers and zine making.

"Being a boy is more than just a title, as it is a state of mind, heart and soul. It is not what you wear, what you look like, what gender you are or how old you are. Being independent yet needing someone, having your own thoughts and opinions and expressing them."



"Being a boy is more than just a title, as it is a state of mind, heart and soul. It is not what you wear, what you look like, what gender you are or how old you are. Being independent yet needing someone, having your own thoughts and opinions and expressing them."

[...]

You, drowning
between my arms—
stay.

You, pushing your body
into the river
only to be left
with yourself—
stay.

[...]

I'll tell you how we're wrong
enough to be forgiven. How one
night, after
backhanding
mother, then taking a chainsaw to
the kitchen-table, my father went to
kneel
in the bathroom until we heard his
muffled cries through the walls.
And so I learned that a man, in
climax, was the closest thing
to surrender.

[...]

Say surrender. Say alabaster.
Switchblade.
Honeysuckle. Goldenrod. Say/
autumn.

Say autumn despite the green
in your eyes. Beauty despite
daylight. Say you'd kill for it.
Unbreakable dawn
mounting in your throat.
My thrashing beneath you
like a sparrow stunned
with falling.

~LOVE KRISTIAN~

[...]

You, drowning
between my arms—
stay.

You, pushing your body
into the river
only to be left
with yourself—
stay.

[...]

I'll tell you how we're wrong
enough to be forgiven. How one
night, after
backhanding
mother, then taking a chainsaw to
the kitchen-table, my father went to
kneel

in the bathroom until we heard his
muffled cries through the walls.
And so I learned that a man, in
climax, was the closest thing
to surrender.

[...]

Say surrender. Say alabaster.
Switchblade.
Honeysuckle. Goldenrod. Say/
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LOVE KRISTIAN

"Love, Kristian" is the result of wanting to make a collage visually exploring the different ways I conceive and express my masculinity as a queer transmasculine Asian person. The text used include a quote I found on Instagram (@_leatherarchives_) and a few verses from On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous (the poem) - by leatherboy MightyPup/Boy Jarret and Vietnamese-American poet Ocean Vuong, respectively. The imagery I used pulls from hardcore music and kink, as well as using literal heavy metal things like chains and locks, but I blend this with cute, soft imagery like flowers, kewpies, and dogs. Similar to "Love, Kristian", I feel like my own sense of masculinity as a non-binary tboy takes on forms that, to some, may seem contradictory and confusing.

