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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

We are pleased to present the third annual volume of *Kaleidoscope*, featuring standout works of interdisciplinary scholarship, creativity, personal expression, and community impact. Since its 2022 launch, *Kaleidoscope* has become a source of inspiration and fresh perspective for students, staff, and faculty alike. First-year Studio II classes read and discuss research paper exemplars featured in *Kaleidoscope*. Seniors spark new ideas by perusing past People in Process artistic projects. Prospective students and new faculty find in *Kaleidoscope* an expression of the Kilachand spirit.

This year, as always, our challenge has been to fit the dazzling array of Kilachand students' achievements into a manageable volume. The work resists containment. It bristles with energy, inventiveness, and urgent significance for the real world around us. It pokes limbs out of the box when we least expect it, demanding that kaleidoscopic perspective that we prize.

Many thanks to the authors and artists who contributed their work and embraced the editorial revision process, as well as to our incomparable Managing Editor and Designer, Megan West Kagstrom, for making this beautiful volume. We are excited to share its surprises, insights, and delights with you.



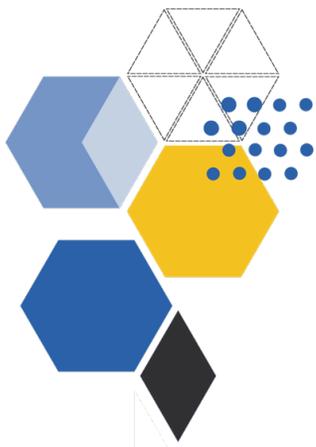


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You might notice that the stylistic conventions are varied across the journal. We opted for an intentional inconsistency in formatting and citation practices to keep intact the interdisciplinary nature of our curriculum, including the publication practices and academic standards recognized across disciplines.





Kylee Liabeuf

CAS'26, Political Science

Kylee is from the middle of nowhere in Southern California. At BU, she is a member of the sorority Gamma Phi Beta. She loves reading and constitutional law.

GROWING UP IN ANONYMITY: Disregards of Disasters in a Desert Forest

I was seven years old when my mom strapped me into my first snowboard. We had waited in traffic for an hour on Highway 2, the only road through Wrightwood, CA, and parked a mile away. I was bundled in two sweaters and three layers of pants and slathered in sunscreen. My mom told me sunburns were worse when out on the mountain; I didn't believe her, and I still don't. We spent the morning on the bunny hills, and I fell more times than my mom cared to count.



Photo taken by Amanda Liabeuf of Kylee Liabeuf and Linda DeVries in Wrightwood, CA

Wrightwood is situated in the San Gabriel mountains along the San Andreas fault in San Bernardino County in Southern California. It is one-third of a trio with the unincorporated towns of Phelan and Piñon Hills, affectionately nicknamed the tri-com area. These towns share school districts, resources, roads, people, family histories, stories, and slices of anonymity in comparison to the rest of California. Wrightwood has the smallest population of these three with a little over 4,500 people living there (“Wrightwood-California - InlandEmpire.us”). This population has faced the brunt of climate change in California with little acknowledgement of the impacts it has had on them from any formal organizations and without emergency assistance. From rain to snow to fires to floods, Wrightwood's climate has a cyclical pattern that has been disastrous to its habitants' livelihoods, and, as a resident for 19 years, I have witnessed and shared in all the disasters.

Wrightwood, as a tiny mountain town standing at around 6,000 feet of elevation, garners a little less anonymity than Piñon Hills and Phelan during the winter months because of Mountain High, one of seven ski resorts in Southern California (“Map of California Resort Locations”). In the 2022-2023 season, Mountain High opened on November 12 and closed on May 1, making this season one of the longest in the resort’s history (“Mountain High - Mountain High Celebrates Best Winter In Years”). This season was prolonged due to nine feet of snow that Wrightwood received in February 2023. This snowfall was unprecedented in the community's history and resulted in a shelter-in-place order and week of canceled school and work. Over the past two decades, the amount of snow Wrightwood receives has fluctuated, but between the 2001-2021 winters, the snowfall consistently dropped to historic lows. The highest amount of snowfall during this period was 278 inches in the 2004-2005 winter, and the lowest amount was a measly 17 inches in the 2017-2018 winter (“Mountain High - Snow Totals”). The average snowfall for this 20-year period was 93.3 inches of snow, which is only that high due to the 278 inches outlier received last year. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, as temperatures rise, more water evaporates from both the ocean and land water resources, but this water vapor is then falling as rain more often than snow. Overall, since 1930, there has been a decrease in snowfall over North America of 0.19 inches per year (“Climate Change Indicators: Snowfall | US EPA”). For Wrightwood, this means that the town will not receive a majority of its tourists looking to snowboard, ski, and tube. For Earth, in the lens of climate change, less snow cover “means more energy is absorbed at the Earth’s surface, resulting in warming” (“Climate Change Indicators: Snowfall | US EPA”). The consistent lack of snowfall, and rainfall in California in general, throughout the past two decades has also meant that Wrightwood is getting drier and drier in the fire seasons.

I was in the science lab in seventh grade when all the students were called down into our cafeteria. There was a fire raging only ten miles away from us and working its way up into Wrightwood. My middle school was fifteen minutes away from this small town. The Blue Cut Fire gained its name because it started on the Blue Cut hiking trail along the 15 freeway. It raged for 25,000 acres over three days, and my area was put under a state of emergency (Jamieson). The fire took 318 buildings and homes, including the home of one of my closest friends. During the fire, many families were forced to evacuate to the local high school. I remember watching the flames flickering in the distance and my dad watering all the dirt on our property in an attempt to moisten the earth, steadfastly believing that we would not be leaving. Still, I packed an emergency bag filled with ten books and nothing else. This fire prompted my friend’s family to move away from the area in the coming years due to the cost to rebuild; aided by the dryness and the heat in Southern California, they became forcefully displaced.

With the increasing dryness in California, the fire season has evolved to be year-round. In 2020 over 4 million acres of land burned and, although the past three summers have been relatively mild state-level, each summer Wrightwood and surrounding towns have had at least one fire (“2020 Fire Season Incident Archive | CAL FIRE”). The disastrous fires in 2020 also coincided with less precipitation and snowfall throughout California, especially in Wrightwood. In June 2022, there was a fire that started here, a town already working on recovering wild- and plant-life from the Blue Cut Fire, called the Sheep Fire. It blocked residents in for a week because, as mentioned, HWY 2 is the only road in and out of the community. Internet service

was cut off with the burning of cellular poles. The fire burned for 865 acres and devastated the land and infrastructure (“Sheep Fire | CAL FIRE”). Due to Wrightwood’s small size, however, there was little publicity on the disaster and little aid except from the county and local fire departments. While thankfully not as devastating as the Paradise, CA fire that became a deathtrap and took 85 lives, the disaster could have been exacerbated exponentially had the Sheep Fire not been contained and stopped from advancing on the town (“Must Reads: Here's how Paradise ignored warnings and became a deathtrap”). The residents of Wrightwood are aware of the fire risks year-round, but they have also never received the training to properly prepare for and respond to a large-scale fire. With only one road into the town and back roads paved in patterns similar to a maze, Wrightwood has the potential to experience a disaster of a similar scale if an immediate evacuation were to be necessary. None of the recent fires have warranted such a response, but they have burned all the vegetation in the area, making the mountains barren and dry.



Photo taken by Kylee Liabeuf in Wrightwood, CA, during the Sheep Fire

This summer I was in Idaho visiting my grandma when Hurricane Hilary struck Southern California. I remember watching the rainfall projections on the news channels my grandpa put on in the background. I was watching newscasters declare the situation dire and that Los Angeles and all surrounding areas must be evacuated. My town was never put under evacuation order, so my mom spent the day before the hurricane gathering bottled water and filling the gas tanks of our cars. I called her to jokingly tell her she better fill the bathtub with water because we were going to lose all electricity and running water. When the storm passed, seemingly everyone agreed that it was not that terrible, and that the media played it up. No one acknowledged the disaster that my town and the surrounding areas faced. Wrightwood was flooded. The seven inches of rain we received brought an onslaught of mudslides, one of which knocked out a bridge on HWY 2. When I came back home the day after the storm had passed, I drove down washed-out roads and passed knocked down trees and street signs.



Photo taken by Dan Crowley during Hurricane Hilary of HWY 2 flooding

The flooding of a razed mountain town is not shocking, especially when considering all the disasters Wrightwood has faced in the past two decades. Due to warming temperatures, snow is falling as rain. There is still less precipitation, so the vegetation is dry. Because the vegetation is dry, in the warmer months in the dead of summer, more wildfires break out and kill all the recovering plant life. Because vegetation would otherwise absorb rainfall and reduce runoff, the lack of firmly rooted plant life causes rain to take all the dirt off the mountains, triggering disastrous mudslides: “Flood risk remains significantly higher until vegetation is restored—up to 5 years after a wildfire”, which is the condition the Blue Cut Fire and the Sheep Fire left Wrightwood in (“Flood After Fire Fact_Sheet”). These are the effects of climate change. Each of these weather phenomena—rain, snow, fires, and floods—feed into each other in a cyclical, perpetual pattern. There were no preventative measures put in place to stop flooding in Wrightwood after the fires, such as flood mitigation dams. The effects of climate change in Wrightwood is a conversation between the role of human action in causing it and what the state has not done to help the town deal with the resulting environmental challenges.

I watched the winters get shorter and the summer grow longer in my hometown. I watched as snow days turned into hoping and praying for a little bit of rain. I was on my doorstep with fires raging in the distance. I have felt hopelessness in the face of disaster. I have also felt hope through other people. My town worked together to help my friend’s family when they lost their house. My mom carried out my grandma’s dog when she was under evacuation order and could not go back in to get her. My dad arranged for people to come to our house when they were feeling unsafe in their current locations. I held my friend’s hand when we were thirteen years old and she was terrified of waking up to find her home gone. Although terrible, there are pieces of humanity in moments of disaster, and there will continue to be as we grapple with the effects of climate change, even if the help has to come from ourselves.

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Nora Kempner

CFA'27, Costume Design & Production

Nora (she/her) is a proud New Englander. As someone who works in the business of clothing, she enjoys exploring the intersection between aesthetic and ethical consumption.

MENDING THE WORLD

*“There are the movers and shakers of the world,
and then there are the menders.
The menders are the innocent and wise.
They are innocent of cynicism and despair,
and they are wise in not waiting for the world to be otherwise than it is.
They patch up the wounds the world inflicts on itself
without question and without grimace.
The greater half of the world, when something is broken,
has the instinct to throw it away and get a new one,
but that lesser better half has the instinct to mend it, to make it well.”*

from *Vogue’s* “Eye View of the Menders,” 1953

HOW DID FASHION GET SO FAST?

One of the most pressing concerns in the world today, especially for young people, is the climate crisis, and the fashion industry is one of the largest contributors to the pollution of the Earth. The current state of the fashion industry is not sustainable. Producing clothing also produces millions of tons of water waste, chemical waste, microplastics, and nonrecyclable materials annually, and creates mountains of unsold textiles in landfills (McGovern and Barnes 89). The garments created then have to be shipped around the world, with Chinese-manufactured brands like SHEIN having customer bases mainly in the United States and Europe. The textile industry produces more greenhouse gas emissions than aviation and shipping combined (Willett et al.). Once these pieces have been bought, they are worn a few times, and then often discarded. Many consider donating clothing to charity better than throwing it out, but only about 20% of donated clothing ends up in the wardrobe of someone new. The other 80% goes into landfills, with clothing making up almost 6% of solid waste in US landfills every year (Diddi and Yan 1).

The massive amount of clothing created, roughly fifty billion new garments each year (Sekules 9), is the product of a larger problem: the mindset surrounding fashion. In the era of fast fashion, with microtrends zipping past almost faster than pieces can be bought and delivered, “it has become normative consumer behavior to dispose of any item that is less than perfect, even when the damage is entirely superficial” (König 569). When items of clothing do not stay in style for long, why bother repairing them if the time the repair takes may be longer than the amount of time the garment will even be worn?

For most of history, textiles were extremely time and resource consuming to create, so they were extremely valuable (Sekules 23). Luxe textiles and garments that used a lot of fabric to create were seen as the pinnacle of wealth. Now, T-shirts and even jeans have high plastic content, and there are landfills consisting purely of scrap fabrics, discarded before they can be worn. So how did we get to this point, where this once-precious commodity has become so easily disposable? And more importantly, what can be done to fix the problem?

INTRODUCING: MENDING

Mending is the practice of returning an item to its original state by repairing it (Laitala and Klepp 2). Mending was once one of the most applicable skills in the world, accepted and utilized by all. Even King Tutankhamun's clothing shows visible mending work (Sekules 23). It is unclear who mended Tutankhamun's clothes, but in the following centuries, the exercise became female-dominated. Mending was a domestic chore, akin to cleaning and cooking. Anna König, a textiles professor, writes that "the feminine ideal in the nineteenth century ... was that of an industrious, domestic woman, her head bowed over her pile of mending" (571). Textiles were precious, so to throw them out would have been a massive waste of money.

In the mid-nineteen hundreds, however, mending began to die out. With the end of rationing in the post-World War II era, clothing, like many other possessions, became a commodity to be consumed. Garments began to be mass-produced. Women sought to step out of the household and into the workforce, so mending—work historically done by women—fell by the wayside. Textile work was seen as an antithesis to intellectual improvement for women in their rejection of traditional domestic roles (König 576). The reworking of garments garnered a brief revival in hippie subcultures during the seventies, but because these groups were often associated with illicit substances and the sort of political radicalism that threatened large corporations, they were squashed, and the practice of "crafting" was left behind, deemed twee and taboo (Sekules 50).

For the last fifty years, the idea of repairing clothes has not even been in the public perception. Clothing is purchased as an immutable item, where the consumer is buying into the designer's vision, rather than intending to adapt the garment to fit their own style. We no longer need clothing to be entirely utilitarian, so we have become used to accepting ready-to-wear garments as they are, without the need to alter them to fit our lifestyles. This mindset maintains distance between the wearer and the clothes: "consumers no longer feel emotionally attached to their clothes and hence have no incentive to repair and extend their useful life" (Diddi and Yan 4). So, they discard them and buy new ones. Mending's purpose is to extend the life of something, to avoid having to replace it. In this way, it can be seen as the very antithesis of consumer capitalism (König 574). So for those concerned about the state of the climate and for those passionate about change, mending may be the answer. In order to reduce the amount of clothing produced by Big Fashion (that is, the corporate brands for whom monetary gain is the driving objective, as opposed to small businesses who focus on quality over quantity), the lifespans and value of clothing must be increased (Laitala and Klepp 16). If people repair their clothes, they will not buy new ones and, slowly but surely, the demand for fast fashion will dwindle, and so will the supply. Mending exemplifies what can be set right within the fashion

industry by creating physical, realized change, and also by changing consumer mindsets and being a model for change at a larger scale.

HOW CAN MENDING HELP?

The physical benefit of mending is fairly obvious: if a garment is repaired, it can continue to be worn instead of being thrown away. The personal difference may seem small (what can keeping one T-shirt out of the bin do?), but “extending the average life of clothes ... while reducing the need for new clothing would reduce the carbon, waste, and water footprints from the production stage by more than 20%” (Laitala and Klepp 1). Small changes add up.

All clothing wears out. The first way to slow this process is by taking care of clothing, such as by following care labels on tags before tossing everything in the washing machine and by storing textiles in places that will protect them from decay from moths or mildew. But even when garments are stored and washed appropriately, they still wear out because humans live lives, and friction, tears, and stains happen: “wearing a garment makes it subject to entropy, and its dynamism subjects it to a process of unravelling” (Willett et al.) Many of these damages are relatively small, and yet up to 30% of people report not wearing garments because they needed repair, and about 20% of people say that they would utilize more of their wardrobe if their pieces were repaired (Diddi and Yan 3). This brings us to the difficulty of the matter: why are people not mending their clothes if they can see the benefits it would bring them?

There are a lot of barriers to mending. First are the mental blocks and socially-enforced expectations. As Kate Sekules, fashion professor and leading force in the visible mending movement, says, “Mending has baggage. Patched clothing speaks of shame and poverty and drudgery, even of slavery” (ix). For much of history, the visibility of a mend was a sign of material deprivation: that the wearer did not have the time or money to replace the garment or to repair it more neatly. As a result of centuries of snootiness, mending is colored over with embarrassment. Willett et. al. point out why social ostracization might disincentivize the decision to mend even if we have the ability to do so or even if mending would save money: “It is more difficult to develop positive personal affects such as pride and enjoyment around a beautifully visibly mended jacket, if the wearer of the jacket is part of a peer group culture that places value on the latest designs, and newness.” Even for those who embrace patches and colorful darns in their day-to-day wardrobe, mends on formal and business wear continue to seem out of place, and methods such as embroidery and invisible mending are more difficult to learn and apply (Laitala and Klepp 16). Clothing consumption is tied to all those personal factors that affect a person’s place in society: gender, class, ethnicity, cultural background, and so on. With so much stigma surrounding stylistic appearance, it can take a lot of courage and motivation to branch out and actively resist the system.

Then there are the tangible barriers: mending takes time, resources, and knowledge. Some sustainable consumers are able to “vote with their wallet,” choosing to buy only higher-quality clothing (Saunders et al. 3). For many, though, this is not an attainable reality. The long hours of working low-paying jobs means less free time, and mending is a time-consuming practice. It can take three hours to fix a hole that was created in three seconds, whereas it would only take three minutes to buy a three dollar replacement. Studies show that non-working respondents, such as

the retired or wealthy, are more likely to repair and patch clothing than the employed or full-time students (Laitala and Klepp 9). Investing in mending saves money in the long run because fewer garments have to be purchased and sudden damages do not put such a strain on pre-planned budgets. But in the short term, the list of supplies adds up. Scrap fabric is cheap, but sewing notions such as scissors, thread, and pins can be expensive.

Then there is the barrier of knowledge. More than half of the population does not even know how to sew on a button. Learning is expensive. Classes take time and money that many do not have room for. Historically, these skills were passed from mother to daughter, but that tradition has fallen by the wayside. Even if a friend or family member is willing and able to teach, the coordination and hourly investment may not be feasible. Those who do not wish to learn have the option of sending their mending to a professional, but, once again, such services are expensive: “It is the most vicious of ironies that mending, because it takes time, is now the luxury” (Sekules xi). Those who are able to mend do not need to, and those who would benefit from mending to save money do not have the resources to do so.

LET’S SLOW IT DOWN

With so many barriers, how can mending be expected to fix such a large problem? As Alyce McGovern, professor of criminology, and Clementine Barnes, textile artist, ask, “Will a small, individual act of resistance ... revolutionise the fashion industry? And should it be expected to?” (McGovern and Barnes 97) The answer is no; it should not. Just one person fixing a hole in their jeans is not going to fix global warming. But that one patch can be a catalyst for change.

Mending is the answer, but the reasoning for this goes beyond the physical impact. It is the concept behind it, and the social impact it can have, that makes mending so powerful: “Mending can best be understood as one of a number of practices taken by people who are concerned with environmental sustainability, but who want to take action on a personal, domestic level” (König 584). It is a single step forward, but one that can help build momentum toward larger systemic changes. Carl Honoré, one of the champions of the Slow movement (which aims to counteract the societal desire for efficiency, like in fast fashion), writes that “reduced consumption of material goods is a component of a wider, slower social and economic system” (qtd. König 583). Mending is the entry point: the door to a more expansive journey to leading a Slow life.

HOW CAN MENDING CHANGE MINDSETS?

Mending is at its most powerful when it is functioning as a model for change at a larger scale. In their report on a social experiment regarding mending, Saunders et al. note that “the key themes identified for actions on sustainable clothing are: (1) repairing or modifying clothes; (2) caring for clothes; (3) buying better quality items; and (4) buying less” (13). Mending directly addressed the first two points, but it also forces the mender to consider the second two.

Because of the amount of time mending takes, it drives the mender to care about their style. To even consider fixing a garment, the owner has to deem it worth the effort to keep it in their wardrobe. This may prod the person to take more time in considering what they buy when they go shopping, causing them to buy less clothing. Mending highlights the inherent value of every

individual garment for its owner: “Engaging in repair will help develop emotional attachment to clothes, thereby helping consumers extend their clothing’s lifespan. Developing skills related to mending may also equip consumers with knowledge related to identifying good and bad quality clothing” (Diddi and Yan 13).

The act of mending can also become a point of pride. The personal knowledge that the garment is only being worn because it was cared for may make the wearer reach for the piece more often, because they get to think to themselves, “Hey, I did this.” A well-done visible mend may garner compliments, with the audible response of, “Thanks, I did it myself.” This is a reclamation of repair, turning it from being crafty (derogatory) to a sign of craftsmanship.

When sitting down to fix a piece of clothing, the first thing to think about is whether the mend is feasible. It is significantly more difficult to fix a hole in a cheap piece of polyester than in nice wool, cotton, or denim. Once this realization has been made, the mender may be more likely to seek out such durable, higher quality fabrics in the future: “Practical experience in mending and making clothes can potentially make consumers better able to recognize quality and thus allocate a higher respect for the labor-intensive production as well as the aesthetic and technical quality of said clothes” (Laitala and Klepp 16). This shift in mindset changes how the consumer engages with capitalism. It inspires them to hold brands accountable for providing high quality products that can last longer and be repaired more easily (Diddi and Yan 13). Small-scale fixes lead to wider-spread improvement.

Of course, in order for this to work, such a future has to be possible. As discussed earlier, money and social-norms are barriers to this type of action: “Social practice theory posits that pro-environmental behaviour change requires the presence of assemblages of ‘things’ such as equipment and infrastructures, of ‘competencies’ such as knowledge and skills, and of ‘meanings’ such as emotional resonance and identity” (Saunders et al. 4). In simpler terms, there have to be resources available in the form of tools, teachers, and motivation. As it currently stands, these things do exist, but they are restricted to those with the funds to access them, and the willingness to engage with them. This economic disparity speaks of a larger problem, but that is beyond the scope of this particular essay. The question of motivation is simpler; it starts at the individual level of just having the willingness to try: “Making, mending, and individual senses of style need to break free from dominant senses of fashion and become social norms” (Saunders et al. 16). This journey looks different for everyone, because identity is inherently tied to personal expression through style. The only way to overcome this is to start. If the desire is there, everything else will follow.

HOW CAN MENDING MAKE THE WORLD WELL?

The people that engage with mending tend to be a certain type of activist: those who are approaching the practice with an eye toward its possibility for more expansive change. Mending for these people is just one part of their plan for a better future (Sekules 5). But the same principle works in reverse: mending can be the first step toward engaging with other practices, such as shopping less, paying attention to care tags, and extending the Slow movement way of doing things to other aspects of life, like food and transportation: “Behavior is not only a result of attitudes and intentions, but also the opposite: behavior leads to change in attitudes” (Laitala

and Klepp 16). Mending is a transformative interaction with materiality and commodity, with the potential to change how we interact with consumerism at the most basic level (König 577). Fashion and design professor Helen Clark states that “everyday tactics of resistance ... which are not predicated on (over)consumption are significant in not only changing individual mindsets but also re-envisioning the fashion industry” (qtd. McGovern and Barnes 97). Mending starts at the personal level, but it irreversibly alters a person’s view of the fashion industry and capitalistic society as a whole.

Mending changes how a person thinks about consumption, which in turn changes the action of buying clothing, which in turn changes how corporations make things, which all leads to creating a circular economy: an

“industrial system that is restorative or regenerative by intention and design. It replaces the end-of-life concept with restoration, shifts towards the use of renewable energy, eliminates the use of toxic chemicals, which impair reuse, and aims for the elimination of waste through the superior design of materials, products, systems, and business models” (Diddi and Yan 2).

This is the end goal of mending. This is how we change the future.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Mending and being proud of such creations is the answer. Mending contributes to the growth of individual personal style because it has so many possibilities. There are so many different ways to mend. Different fabrics can be chosen as patches, mends can be either visible or invisible, garments can be either repaired or reworked entirely. Sustainable clothing is an expansive term that speaks to the potential for expression that means something: “To stitch or sport a [visible mend] is to declare independence from the sickness of consumer culture with a beautiful scar and a badge of honor: ‘Look! I kept this out of the landfill’” (Sekules ix). Mending is deeply personal while also reaching out a hand to bring the rest of the world on the journey.

With this, I invite you, as the reader, to join the adventure. This is not a theoretical paper that may or may not have import on your life. Everyone wears clothes. As Kate Sekules, the author of *Mend! A Refashioning Manual and Manifesto*, explains, clothes “belong in the category of things that seemed too ordinary to matter but turned out to matter the most” (20). *Mend!* is a wonderful argument for and guide to visible mending, if you are looking for a place to start. There are also a number of brands that do good work towards sustainable clothing at both the personal and industrial level. For example, Patagonia gives money to grassroots climate justice organizations, has videos and guides on how to care for and repair their garments, resells used garments (*Patagonia*), and their products are built to last (I have my dad’s jacket that is 35 years old). Everyone has the capability to fix their clothing, if they have the willingness. Mending cannot fix everything, but it can fix something, and that something is not nothing. In fact, it can become everything. As Sekules says, “we can’t mend the world by fixing clothes, but it’s a fine place to start” (214). You do not have to instantly become a master of mending, but I recommend getting started in whatever way you can. Reach out to your friends or relatives and, at the very least, learn how to sew on a button.

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Althea Culaba

CAS'27, English

Althea Culaba hails from Reading, Massachusetts. Most prominently involved with BU's Filipino Student Association and the Filipino Intercollegiate Networking Dialogue, they live to examine what it means to be Filipino.

THE FILIPINODE FT. TAMBIOPTICS

ARTIST NOTE



Scan (or click) the QR code to watch the video (length 36:34).

Growing up as a Filipino born in the United States, I felt disconnected from my homeland and the culture that it encompassed. I found solace in listening, playing, and performing the music of my people—an aspect of identity not bound by geographical boundaries. To explore this aspect of Philippine history that has been so present in nearly every part of my life, I conducted research on the evolution of Philippine music as a product of colonization, national independence, and modernization, so that I may better understand and come to terms with the complexities of my own Filipino identity.

This video interview with *Tambiotics*, a Filipino rock band based in the New England area, covers the history of the band—from how the group originally formed, to their experience in creating music together, to their greater hopes surrounding their future—with performances of the band's songs interspersed throughout. On a larger scale, the episode examines the origins of the modern-day Philippine music scene, from the original terming of "OPM" (Original Pinoy Music), to the expansion of the genre as an entire movement that impacts contemporary Filipino musicians. The combination of these two conversations speaks to a greater discussion of the formation and contemporary sense of the Filipino identity, as shaped by music.

Tambiotics can be found on all following platforms as @tambiotics: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), and [Spotify](#).

Their website is <https://band.tambiotics.com/>.





Lucy Cheng

CAS'27, Political Science

Lucy Cheng developed an interest in local politics in her Kilachand seminar on housing economics. In her free time, she enjoys playing chamber music with her friends and family.

WASHINGTON D.C.'S GREEN NEW DEAL FOR HOUSING: Review and Recommendations

ABSTRACT

In the face of a growing housing affordability crisis, the District of Columbia has proposed the Green New Deal for Housing Act to create self-sustainable, mixed-income communities where the rents of higher-income residents subsidize those of their lower-income neighbors. However, critics worry that this social housing plan is no better than the failed American public housing initiatives of the twentieth century, citing concerns that the Green New Deal for Housing is financially unachievable and culturally unacceptable. This memo will evaluate the merits of the Green New Deal for Housing, as well as explore possible solutions to its deficiencies. Through a comparative analysis of housing market change and population growth in Vienna, Austria, and Washington, D.C., I recommend that District policymakers should outline a long-term plan for the continued maintenance and construction of social housing. Then, upon projecting the possible revenues for a hypothetical mixed-housing development, I suggest a reevaluation of the proposal's basic mathematics. I conclude that the Green New Deal for Housing is a worthwhile investment for the District of Columbia, increasing the supply of both market-rate and affordable housing units, but needs closer consideration before it is implemented.

INTRODUCTION

The District of Columbia, like many other metropolitan areas across the United States, faces rising housing market prices and a lack of affordable housing options for struggling families. Public housing offers a key solution for some residents: the D.C. government rents units to qualified low-income households who pay only 30% of their adjusted income towards rent, instead of gouging their monthly paychecks to meet market-rate prices. Unfortunately, the District's public housing infrastructure suffers from poor oversight by the D.C. Housing Authority and chronic underfunding from the federal government; currently, a quarter of public housing units sit vacant in D.C., and the waiting list to receive a unit hasn't been updated for a decade. To counter this growing dilemma, D.C. Ward 4 Councilmember Janeese Lewis George recently proposed a new social housing program called the "Green New Deal for Housing." Unlike public housing, social housing is built on a mixed-income model that rests on the idea that housing is a public right, championed by the "gold standard" of equitable housing: Vienna and Austria.

In Vienna, the government reserves a quarter of the city's housing stock for *Gemeindebauten*— publicly-owned apartment complexes complete with residential units, community spaces, and commercial properties. High maximum income limits for the *Gemeindebauten* mean that 80% of Viennese residents qualify for social housing, allowing tenants who can afford market-rate prices to subsidize the rents of their lower-income neighbors. Once accepted into social housing, tenants are allowed to stay regardless of how much their income increases, encouraging economically-diverse communities.

Despite the positive reputation of Vienna's social housing program, there are reasons to cast doubt on the implementation of social housing in Washington, D.C. The plans proposed by Councilmember Lewis George are costly and risky for an already financially burdened public housing department. Still, if successful, the Green New Deal for Housing has the capacity to fundamentally change the District's approach to affordable housing and bring the United States closer to Vienna's gold standard.

POLICY DESCRIPTION

The Green New Deal for Housing proposes a locally-managed social housing program that authorizes the D.C. government to buy properties and convert them into mixed-income developments. Three types of households would qualify to live in these developments: extremely low-income households, making up to 30% of the D.C. area median income; very low and low-income households, making 31-80% of the area median income; and households willing to pay market-rate rents. Of these new units, 30% would be dedicated to extremely low-income households, another 30% would be dedicated to very low and low-income households, and the remaining 40% would be rented out to market-rate tenants. In theory, the full price rents paid by market-rate tenants would cover the expenses of managing and maintaining the developments, while extremely low, very low, and low-income households would only be expected to pay 30% of their household income in rent.

The Green New Deal for Housing also reserves land for commercial properties and public spaces like libraries, grocery stores, healthcare centers, and childcare facilities. Residents would be supported professionally, with access to career development services and job opportunities within their communities, improving employment rates in the District. Additionally, these public developments would include offices for counseling services and economic security programs, creating an important support system for residents that reaches beyond basic housing needs. In this new proposal, housing is not treated as merely a bare-minimum residence, but as a part of a larger social ecosystem that can boost low-income residents to higher social outcomes.

Along with meeting affordable housing and community-development goals, the Green New Deal for Housing sets several environmental objectives, including requirements for buildings to have high-efficiency heating and cooling systems, on-site solar energy production and compost facilities, green architecture, reduced water waste technology, and electric vehicle charging ports. These features intend to maximize the sustainability of the social housing developments by cutting down on long-term energy consumption costs. Reminiscent of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal reforms of the 1930s, the Green New Deal for Housing employs a systemic approach

to address the trifecta of economic, social, and environmental issues that contribute to housing inequality.

CRITIQUES OF THE GREEN NEW DEAL FOR HOUSING

Critics have expressed concern that this new social housing plan is just another rendition of past U.S. public housing ventures, which exacerbated, instead of alleviated, economic and racial segregation throughout the late twentieth century. Under this system, only the lowest-income households were accepted into public housing developments, physically isolating them from wealthier and whiter areas. Additionally, because residents only paid thirty percent of their already-low household income, local authorities did not have the funding to keep up with maintenance requests, and public housing units fell into disrepair, becoming notoriously dilapidated and crime-ridden areas.

Social housing, although built on a mixed-income model, runs the same risk of underfunding. With the majority of new units allocated for low- or extremely low-income households in the Green New Deal for Housing, the buildings' revenues will not cover the costs of construction and maintenance, unless the 40% of unsubsidized tenants pay substantially higher rents to make up for the deficit. The proposal's environmental standards have raised additional concern about the economic feasibility of the project, as the District is already "financially strapped" for social and human services programs. These requirements would make construction more complex and expensive, raising up-front costs and limiting the number of units that can be built within budgetary confines.

Many are also skeptical of the assumption that the success of social housing in Vienna will be easily translated to the District of Columbia. Vienna has the benefit of having more housing per capita than the District, which keeps housing costs down naturally. D.C. not only faces the issue of rising market costs, but an overall housing stock shortage, and the District would need to address both issues in order to create a successful social housing program. Furthermore, the U.S. housing market differs from Austria in its cultural values. The concept of *Gemeindebauten* emerged during "Red Vienna" in the 1920s, when the political environment was ripe for change—the Austro-Hungarian empire had recently collapsed with the end of World War I, and housing was a priority for the newly-elected Social Democratic Party. The *Gemeindebauten* maintained their popularity when mass migration from the countryside to the cities post-World War II created an intense demand for the Viennese government to provide cheap housing, quickly. On the other hand, the District of Columbia exists in a capitalistic system where "public housing" is already a loaded term that prompts images of unkempt apartments riddled with crime and poverty of the late 1900s. Social housing may prove to be an uphill battle for Washington, D.C., both due to financial difficulty and social resistance.

ANALYSIS

Stability of the Social Housing Sector:

In order to assess the potential for success of the Green New Deal for Housing, it is important to observe the differences between Vienna's accomplished social housing program

and Washington, D.C.'s unavailing public housing efforts. European scholars Kadi and Lilius analyzed the stability of Vienna's social housing structure during the period 2000-2020, finding that the city has maintained "remarkable stability" into the twenty-first century, maintaining and growing its social housing sector with no significant loss of housing units to private markets. Figure 1 demonstrates this stability by comparing the percentage change in social housing stock with the percentage growth in population in Vienna, each measured in 5-year intervals. The city's population has grown steadily since 2000, due to an influx in international immigration after the fall of the Iron Curtain and Austria's accession to the European Union in the 1990s. Meanwhile, the social housing sector has remained constant, neither growing nor succumbing to the private market in the past twenty years.

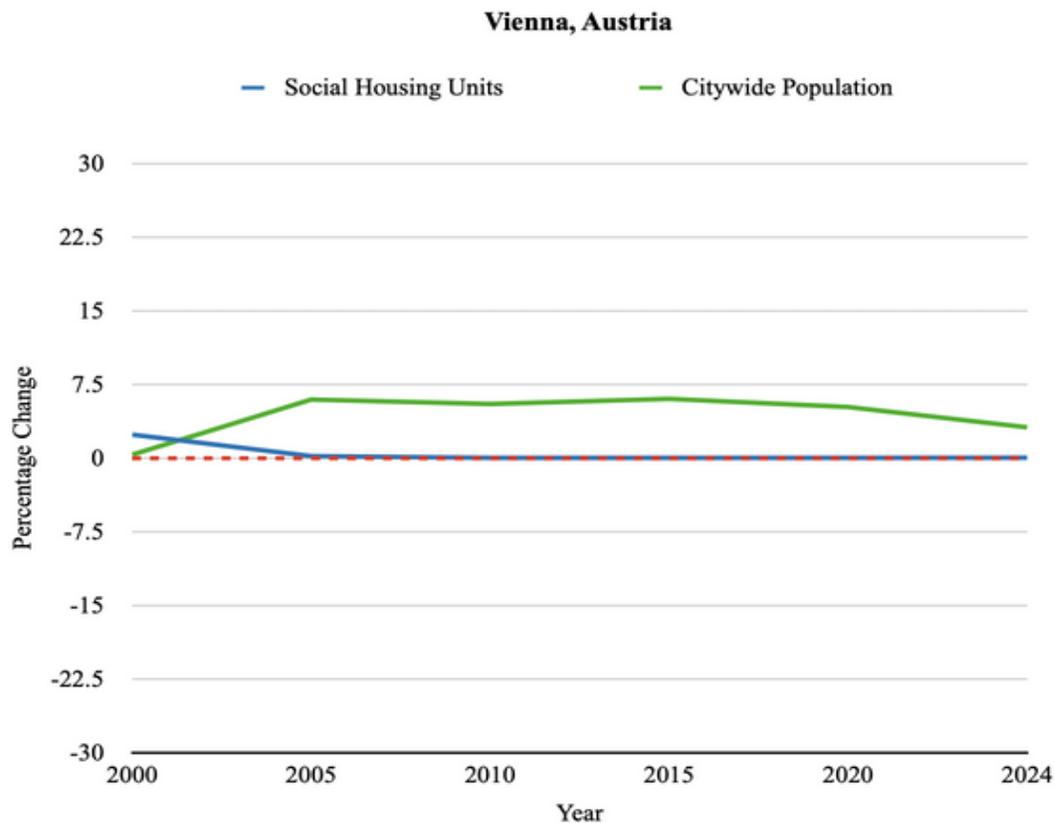


Figure 1

Washington, D.C.'s public housing sector has been comparatively unstable, as shown in Figure 2. The district's population has also grown steadily since 2000, maintaining an average 7.22 percentage increase measured every 5 years. The number of available public housing units has not reflected this growth, sharply declining from 2000-2005, then slightly increasing from 2005-2010, before dropping again from 2015-2020. These changes reflect the District's shift away from public housing and towards private-market-based affordable housing initiatives such as Section 8 Housing Vouchers and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits. As a result, D.C.'s public housing stock has decreased from 10,599 units in 2000 to 7,780 units in 2024.

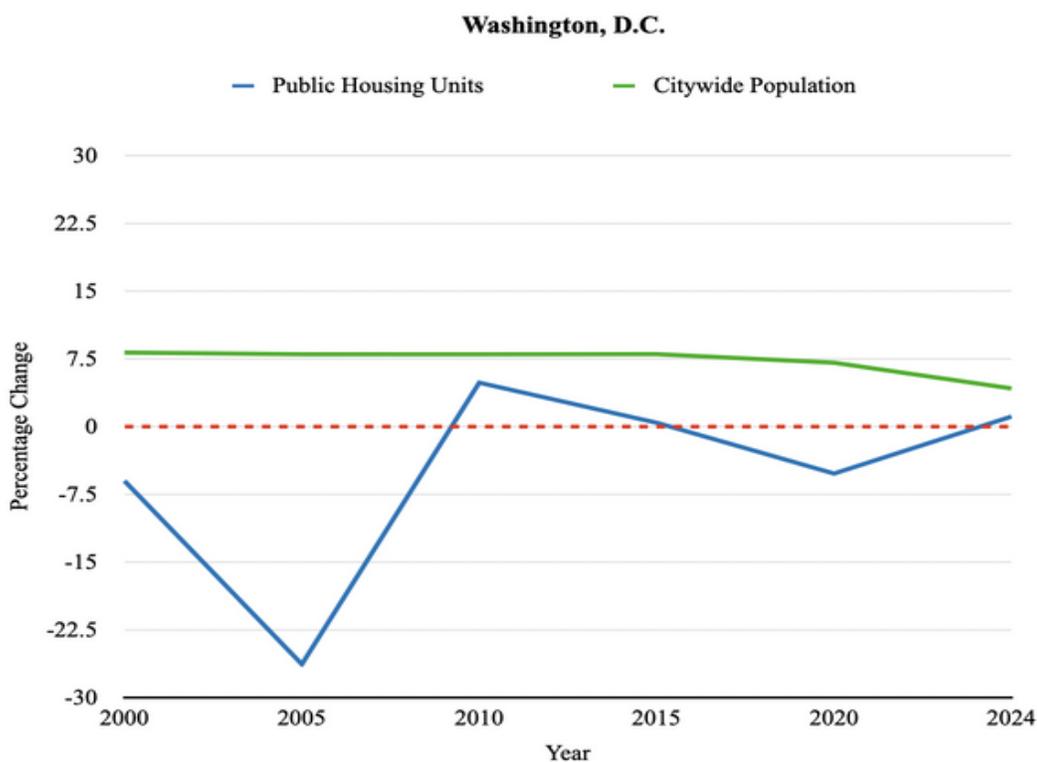


Figure 2

There are two important differences between Vienna’s social housing sector and Washington, D.C.’s public housing sector: 1) While Vienna’s social housing stock has not increased from the years 2000-2024, it has maintained its pre-existing stock and continues to be a popular housing option for Viennese residents. On the other hand, D.C.’s public housing stock has demonstrated remarkable instability, decreasing by nearly 3,000 units since 2000 despite regional population growth; 2) Vienna has a substantially higher social housing per capita ratio at 106 units per 1,000 residents in 2024, compared to Washington, D.C. at 1.4 units per 1,000 residents in 2024. The sheer volume of available social housing units in Vienna means the public sector reaches more families and has a substantial impact on the overall housing market.

Because the success of Vienna’s social housing sector is correlated with a large and sustained city-wide social housing stock, it would be wise for the District of Columbia to adopt a maintenance and construction-focused approach to the Green New Deal for Housing. Lewis George’s proposal provides a sturdy foundation for social housing in D.C., but does not create a plan for the upkeep and growth of this sector. The proposal would be greatly improved by including provisions and step-by-step guidance for continued social housing programming after the initial Green New Deal for Housing has been adopted. For example, the proposal needs to explore funding options, either federal or local, to construct additional social housing units outside of the Green New Deal for Housing, in order to match district-wide population needs.

D.C. may also explore the option of revitalizing vacant or dilapidated units meant for Section 18 Demolition and Disposition. This way, the District could construct new affordable units without facing the financial pressure to acquire additional property.

Allocation of Units to Low-Income Households:

One of the main concerns about the Green New Deal for Housing is that buildings with a high percentage of affordable units do not pay for themselves, leaving the District government with a lack of funding for continued building maintenance. The current proposal ensures that 60% of units are rented to low-income households, but a rough adjustment of variables shows that this number would not maximize government revenue.

The graph in Figure 3 demonstrates several possible monthly revenues from rent in a hypothetical building of 100 units. Market-rate tenants are expected to pay \$2,235 per month, based on the average market rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Washington, D.C. for 2024. Using the annual median household income of \$101,722 in Washington, D.C., this would mean extremely low-income households (at 30% of area median income) make \$2,543.05 per month and low-income households (at 50% of area median income) make \$4,238.42 per month, paying monthly rents of \$762.92 and \$1271.52, respectively. These are highly generalized figures but nevertheless serve the purpose of this analysis as they represent the rent difference between extremely low-income, low-income, and market-rate renters.

Figure 3 displays five lines, each representing expected building revenue under different manipulations of the variables: percentage of extremely low-income households, percentage of low-income households, and percentage of market-rate households. The blue line represents scenarios that keep the percentages of extremely low-income and low-income households equal, with market-rate households accounting for the rest; the red and yellow lines represent scenarios holding the percentage of extremely low-income households constant while altering the percentage of low-income households, with market-rate households accounting for the rest; and the green and orange lines represent scenarios holding the percentage of low-income households constant while altering the percentage of extremely low-income households, with market-rate households accounting for the rest.

Projection for Monthly Revenue of 100 Units, Adjusting Ratio of Low and Extremely Low-Income Households

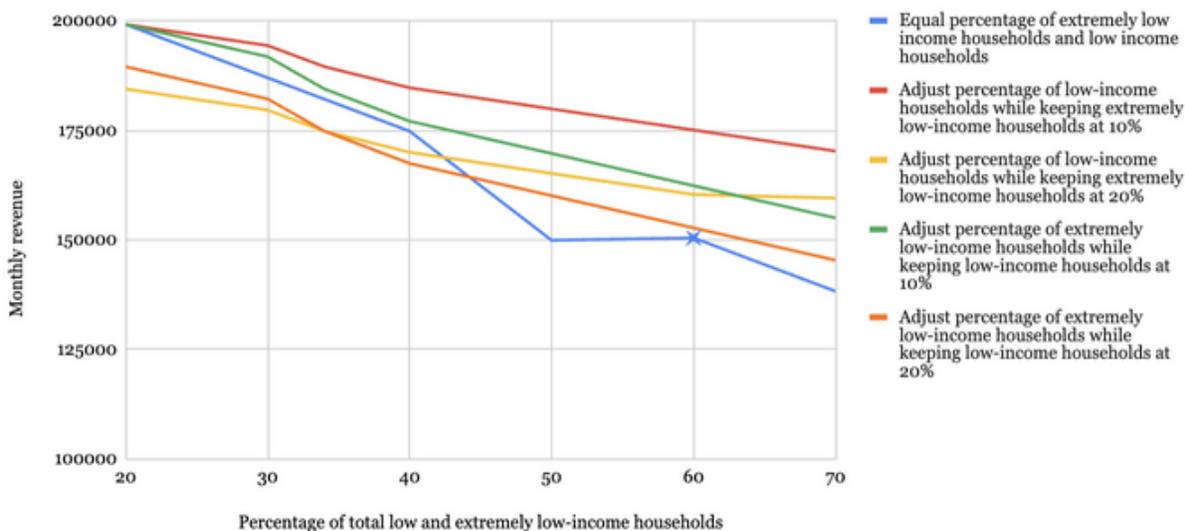


Figure 3

Given this model, the highest levels of monthly revenue occur when extremely low-income households account for only 10% of units, represented by the red line. The currently proposed 30-30-40 ratio is represented by the blue star, producing the lowest revenue of all graphed scenarios. In this hypothetical situation, the government could make up to an additional \$25,000 per month for each 100 units, while maintaining the total amount of extremely-low income and low-income households at 60% (10% extremely low-income and 40% low-income). From an economic perspective, it would be beneficial to rethink the allocation of units to increase government revenue, which can then be used to maintain existing social housing units and fund construction for new projects.

However, policymakers like Councilmember Lewis George must also factor in social concerns about low-income residents, prioritizing the percentage of affordable units over potential monetary losses. Therefore, a model that only allocates ten percent of units for extremely low-income households, the people who need affordable housing the most, is less desirable than a model that allocates twenty or thirty percent for extremely-low income households. For example, it would be preferable to allocate 20% of units for extremely-low income renters and 40% of units for low-income renters, which does not maximize revenue but still raises more profits than the original 30-30-40 model. The next step of this experiment would be a cost-benefit analysis, to determine when a decrease in affordable units is acceptable for an increase in revenue. Increased revenue could be reinvested in more affordable units in the long-term, but would mean fewer affordable units available now.

Environmental Standards:

Critics argue that the environmental requirements of the Green New Deal for Housing will raise the costs of construction exponentially and that D.C. is not prepared to fund such a large project. Policymakers may consider cutting some of these provisions, or implementing climate-

friendly construction projects later on in the process, after initial construction. For example, the Green New Deal proposes the construction of on-site electric vehicle charging ports and on-site solar energy production, with the goal of net-zero emissions, both of which are significantly costly. Even though all of these improvements may lead to fewer costs in the long-run by conserving energy and other resources, the District lacks sufficient funding for these expenses up-front. Instead of net-zero building, the District may benefit from a passive building model, which still emphasizes energy efficiency but does not require that each development generates the amount of energy equal to what they consume. The Green New Deal for Housing could moderate costs by focusing on cheaper alternatives to traditional building that conserve energy, but do not necessarily meet net-zero goals.

Cultural Pushback:

Final criticisms against the Green New Deal for Housing center on a concern that the United States's capitalist culture will pose a barrier to the success of American social housing. However, recent research has demonstrated that a growing number of Americans are concerned about the affordability of housing, up to 74% in 2024. A majority of young and middle-aged Americans, especially, indicate concern about affordable housing, suggesting that this number may grow as younger generations are pushed out of the home-ownership market and become long-term renters. There is also increasing evidence that Americans support public housing options over tax credit programs to private developers. In 2021, 60% of voters said the U.S. needs to create a public option for housing, including 76% of Democrats, 64% of Independents, and 37% of Republicans. The Green New Deal for Housing should be especially popular in a metropolitan area like Washington D.C., where the majority of adult residents (76%) identify with the Democratic Party and are more likely to support affordable housing reforms. With the rising need and a growing support for publicly-owned housing options in the District of Columbia, the Green New Deal for Housing may prove to be a popular solution to the housing affordability crisis.

CONCLUSION

The Green New Deal for Housing has the potential to be a radically beneficial program in Washington, D.C. With its mixed-income model, the proposal aims to increase both market-rate and affordable housing supply, guaranteeing housing as a basic human right. However, before its implementation, the Green New Deal for Housing needs to be developed in greater detail to guarantee its success in the long-term. The proposal should include an extended plan outlining funding options for the continued construction of social housing developments in the District, ensuring the stability of the new social housing sector. Additionally, policymakers need to reevaluate the proposal's affordable-to-market-rate unit ratios and environmental objectives, so that the costs of building and maintenance will not overwhelm the local Housing Authority. The Green New Deal for Housing is a promising and innovative housing strategy, and if successful, may serve as a model for the development of social housing across the country.

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Kelly Jeanne Broder

COM'27, Journalism

Kelly Broder, from Cape Cod, Massachusetts, is a communications intern for the College of Arts & Sciences, a member of the Society of Professional Journalists, and is studying women's, gender, and sexuality studies at BU.

ALL THAT'S IN A WOMAN'S VANITY

ARTISTS STATEMENT

My art piece comments on society's expectations for women to act as objects of pleasure. The poem featured in the center of the piece provides commentary on the social climate surrounding women's oppression. The makeup smeared across the words, causing difficulty in reading and deciphering the meaning of the words, is intentional. Male-dominated societies often discredit the ideas of women who wear noticeable makeup. The canvas of my self-portrait is a mirror. It situates the audience within the portrait, and urges the audience to put themselves in the shoes—or the bra—of other women. Additionally, it is composed of white and blush roses—symbols of affection and lust. These both are qualities commonly expected of women. The black lace across the top of the mirror is intended to slash off the eyes of the audience, thus dehumanizing them as women have been dehumanized and subsequently reduced to the status of “object.” And yet the mirror is in the shape of a heart. This alludes to the persistent reminder from modern society to love and embrace their “innate” skills and qualities of motherhood and sexual ability. While doing so, many women endure condemnation from others for their attempt at reclaiming their sexual identities.

Laura Mulvey's concept of scopophilia¹ is dramatized through my piece. The piece of lingerie suggests the falsely perceived notion that women are most valuable when interacted with as objects of pleasure. The audience is intended to look directly at the piece and situate themselves so that the bra lines up with their chest and the black lace lines up with their eyes. Through the piece I assert that men must put themselves in the position of women in order to fully understand the degree of needless sexualization women endure from media and interpersonal relationships. Fabric from John Singer Sargent's portrait, *Mrs. Edward Darley Boit* is referenced through the black polka dots set on a pink background in the bra. His subject for that portrait was described as “eternally juvenile”—a quality I find has been used as a weapon against women in order to discredit their



Figure 1: John Singer Sargent's portrait, *Mrs. Edward Darley Boit*

¹ scopophilia: the sexual pleasure derived from looking at sexually stimulating objects

ethos and respectability.

ALL THAT'S IN A WOMAN'S VANITY



Poem on the Visual Art Piece

She, the Eden Rose

Is the rose not full of heart?
 Was her seed not sown
 epitomizing love?
 Surely she cannot be mistranslated as ornamental—
 Should she be considered frail
 her appendages will strike you down

For she was the villain in your fantasy
 thorns surround the trophy you seek
 used as prize or not
 she is poised
 ready for your shears

you say her leafy green is a guise for a deeper evil
 a sinister serpent
 who brought disease to this Eden
 you say it's Eden
 no—
 is she not the florist of the world you suppose is yours?
 the mother?
 the god?
 she, the Eden Rose

the ground fosters her strength
 but you've slaughtered her trunk
 lacking care
 and with brutality

she has but a fraction of time left
 her world now confined to a glass bottleneck
 a ceiling limiting her growth
 and encroaching on her freedom
 and vitality



Lauren Niah McLeod

CAS'27, Neuroscience

Lauren is passionate about ameliorating public health disparities for marginalized communities by engineering innovative and interactive solutions to inspire, represent, and advocate for communities that look like her.

THE RECLAIMING OF SOCIETIES SO-CALLED SHAME

ARTIST STATEMENT

Inspired by the feminist ideals of bell hooks and Linda Nochlin, this collage seeks to reclaim and redefine the perception of Black women in art. bell hooks' emphasis on intersectionality and self-love as acts of resistance is central to the piece, as reflected in her words, "Loving ourselves is an act of political resistance." Using diverse colors and textures, the collage represents the myriad perspectives women can claim, emphasizing their freedom to forge their own paths. Linda Nochlin's critique of the art world's exclusion of women artists, encapsulated in her question, "Why have there been no great women artists?" drives the intent to recognize and include historically silenced voices. Elements of the collage depicted by different colors and textures represent Black women's hair and skin color, highlighting the societal battle to reclaim these aspects as beautiful, challenging long-standing biases, and celebrating diversity. It also speaks to many of the inter-diaspora divides that were caused by these ideas of colorism and phenotype elitism. These elements are not just aesthetic choices but deliberate symbols of resilience and pride in cultural identity as our society progresses towards more inclusive groups and reclaiming natural beauty.

This work focuses on women and addresses the universal struggle to affirm one's authentic self amidst societal pressures. By challenging rigid norms, the collage asserts that everyone should be free to be their true selves. Using varied textures and vibrant hues creates a visual dialogue about the richness of individual experiences and the collective strength found in diversity. Ultimately, the goal is to challenge perceptions and foster inclusive, intersectional perspectives, contributing to a more informed and celebratory community. This piece invites viewers to reflect, engage, and celebrate the diverse identities that shape our world, encouraging a deeper understanding and appreciation of the complexities of identity.

THE RECLAIMING OF SOCIETIES SO-CALLED SHAME





Marie Picini

CDS'27, Data Science

Marie Picini is an aspiring data scientist and statistician from Las Vegas, with specific passions in social justice, feminism, and the sports industry.

EYES IN THE BACK OF HER HEAD

ARTIST STATEMENT

This piece was inspired by Laura Mulvey’s concept of the male gaze, Susan Sontag’s idea of camp, and the dramatic gowns shown in the “Fashioned by Sargent” exhibit¹ at the Boston Museum of Fine Art. The idea came to me as I viewed the red bow on the off-the-shoulder sleeve of the gown featured in Sargent’s portrait entitled *Mrs. Charles E. Inches (Louise Pomeroy)* (1887),² and the accompanying evening dress³ from the Sargent exhibit. I saw elegance and beauty in these bows and wanted others to see them the same way instead of how the male gaze would.

I imagined this piece being worn on the back of a woman’s head as she’s going about her day, and a man looking at it from behind her. In typical fashion, the man leers at the woman, sizing up and objectifying her while staying out of her view to maintain his fantasy. The act of viewing in this manner is described by Mulvey as the “male gaze” within the context of film, but also applies to the lived experiences of everyday women. It is rooted in the cowardice and voyeurism explained in Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” My piece aims to confront this commonality by reflecting that sexualizing gaze back onto the voyeur.

This piece examines and reclaims the male gaze in two ways: first, through projecting the “male gaze” back onto men, and second, through the reclamation of the bow as a symbol of empowerment through femininity rather than infantilism and purity forced onto women. Bows have long been associated with the sexualization of young girls, similar to pigtails and knee socks, and thus, fell out of mass popular culture until recent styles, like “coquette” and “hyper-feminine,” brought it back. Many believe that these aesthetics inherently feed into the male gaze, but I believe that they can be liberating for women who want to be in touch with their femininity, and potentially their childhood, not as sexual objects but for themselves. A majority of these styles have elements of high camp to them, over exaggerating something in a playful and girlish way, giving women a sense of freedom to experiment with things previously seen as tacky or unfit for grown women. I designed this piece with camp in mind, both in the subversion of expectations, but also in details like the garish volume of the bow and the choice to hand bead the embellishments.

¹ <https://www.mfa.org/exhibition/fashioned-by-sargent>

² Fig. 1 John Singer Sargent, *Mrs. Charles E. Inches (Louise Pomeroy)*, 1887

³ Fig. 2 Unidentified maker, evening dress, American, about 1887–1902



Figure 1: John Singer Sargent, Mrs. Charles E. Inches (Louise Pomeroy), 1887



Figure 2: Unidentified maker, evening dress, American, about 1887–1902

EYES IN THE BACK OF HER HEAD





Juijung Chen

CAS'27, Marine Science

Juijung Chen, a Taiwan native, is a frequent visitor of the MFA with a love for jellyfish and a keen interest in murder mysteries.

PRESERVATION OR DETERIORATION?

The Duality of Tender Loving Care

Stepping around the curving corner of the *Tender Loving Care* exhibit in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, I am immediately dazzled by the massive, fantastical installations of hanging cloth and chaotic collage of bold mixed media fashion. This temporary exhibit showcases a collection of modern artworks, each shedding a unique perspective on the theme of care (“Tender Loving Care”). As I glance down beneath a dramatic moth-like embroidery, I almost overlook the round pouches scattered upon a white pedestal. *Kneeling Stones* (1990) is a work by American artist Sheila Hicks of thirty-six flattened bundles of clothes, costumes, and coins. The bundles resemble large pebbles of various sizes and are wrapped tightly with shiny silk and layers of vibrant threads, creating firework-like patterns (“Kneeling Stones”). While they may not strike the eye at first, these little stones challenge our perception of caring for our belongings.

In the age of cheaply mass-produced goods, objects are easily replaceable. As they age and wear, we throw them away for the new. According to the wall text by the MFA, Hicks resists this “throw-away mentality” by transforming an old piece of clothing or object into a bundled stone, promoting us to recycle and unleash our creativity. However, I find a more complicated message in this work. Hicks’s art explores the positive and destructive nuances of care, then offers a solution to the dilemma.

The name “Kneeling Stones” evokes respect and meditation, inviting viewers to engage with and contemplate before the stones. I imagine myself seated on the porch of a Japanese temple before a rock garden. As Japanese monks painstakingly pick and arrange the seemingly random rocks, so do the “Kneeling Stones” share the attentive care the artist or curators invested behind the scenes. Both gardening monks and museum curators seek to engage the viewers through acts of invisible devotion.

The stones’ outer shells invite us to celebrate the meticulous rituals of care. The bundles’ size, rounded shape, tight interlocking threads, and vivid colors remind me of Japanese Temari balls. This traditional craft likely inspired *Kneeling Stones* as they share similar materials and creation. According to the Japanese Temari Association, Temari reuses old objects such as clothes and household items for the core which are then bound with hundreds of yards of thread to make a hand-sized ball. Their purpose is also closely associated with the theme of care. As explained by the association, “It is traditional for a mother to make a ball for her daughter as a New Year’s gift... Filled with both the craftsman’s gentle spirit and skill, Temari are believed to

bestow happiness” (“Stitch Temari, Share the Wa”). The process is repetitive and tiresome, but worthwhile because of the artist’s love for the recipient, a belief shared by *Kneeling Stones*.

In my eyes, it is Hicks’s artistic remaking of ordinary objects that transforms them into art. Through Hick’s touch, discarded things have become objects of warmth and her gift to the world. As the MFA explains, “one bundle contains a pair of pinstriped trousers worn by the donor of this work, Mr. Merrin, while another preserves a much-loved but no longer wearable shirt belonging to the artist’s husband.” The ordinary objects were animated by their owners, becoming vessels imbued with personality and memories. The style, the state, the cost, and any handmade additions serve as important clues about the personality and tastes of an owner or wearer. The belief that objects become more valuable once we possess them is also true because we associate precious memories with them. When items gain a part of us, tending to them comes as naturally as treasuring ourselves.

However, the more meticulous care we invest in our prized possessions, the more prone they are to lose their former significance. Unable to part with them, our homes begin to pile with unusable or broken items. To preserve them against the weathering of time, we often store them away in dark cabinets so they are safe from the sun’s rays—similar to the tight and almost excessive wrapping over and over around the objects due to our love and their importance. By doing so, we rid them of their shape and purpose, reducing them to “pebbles” of mysterious origin and function. Hidden from view, we see only the protective shell, inducing us to eventually forget why they are important to us. Taken out of their original context—whether worn on the body or used to serve a particular function—they are reduced to shadows of themselves: passive memory markers lacking their former vitality.

Through the 36 textile bundles, Hicks questions the duality of “Tender Loving Care”—the name of the MFA exhibit— as both a preserving and destructive force. While Hicks demonstrates we should reject the “throwaway mentality,” perhaps we shouldn’t shower our belongings with excessive care at the risk of robbing them of their original function.

The solution is hinted at if we try to strike a balance between functionality and preservation. The former owners gave up something of importance and handed them over to the artist, letting go of their attachment. Then the objects were recycled into pretty artworks and given newfound meaning to a wider audience. Through this, Hicks suggests that while we should treat our belongings with care, it is okay to pass them on or allow them to undergo a complete transformation into something new and valuable. Fittingly, *The Celebration* by Virginia Jacobs—like a beautiful newborn moth spreading its wings to show off its glorious patterns—is placed directly above the rounded stones, alluding to the new life borne from a cocoon.

This philosophy is especially relevant to museums. The greatest museums of the world own innumerable artworks, each cherished for the stories they tell about the world. Yet only a tiny fraction is displayed while the rest are cautiously stashed in storage units under controlled temperatures and light, protected with special varnish or covering. Many won’t ever be exhibited while others will have to wait for years to temporarily see the light again. The *Tender Loving Care* exhibit is a prime example: many of the interactive chairs were from the *Please Be Seated* program from 1975 and according to the exhibit description, some of the pieces “have never

been on view before.” Rather than let invaluable works sit in the dust, museums could lend or share parts of their collection to other museums, or even repatriate some to their places of origin. Returned to their original context—whether to be displayed on a wall, to serve as a chair for tired museum-goers, or be a statue overlooking the sea—these creations truly reveal the ingenuity of the artists.

Works Cited

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Ethan Mostoslavsky

CAS'27, Linguistics

Ethan is from Boston. He is a writer, actor, and filmmaker. At BU, he is part of Wandering Minds Theater.

THEY CAUGHT A WHALE

Preface



Scan (or click) the QR code to read the Studio research paper associated with this project.

This play was born out of an attempt to depict failure in communication.

The research paper it was written as a remediation for was an analysis of the importance of maintaining respect for someone in conversation, even if you fundamentally disagree with their beliefs. Among other things, it emphasizes that conscious effort to create productive discourse is necessary for mutual understanding to occur. The paper specifically approaches the topic of conversing with conspiracy theorists and why people's dismissive attitude can be harmful for all involved parties.

When creating a project in parallel, I decided I did not want something directly related to conspiracy theories, nor did I want a simplistic allegory of the subject, rather I wanted something that had more to do with the larger themes in the paper's framework: successful conversation not only with those that hold extreme beliefs, but also simply the idea of what it means to successfully communicate in the first place.

Through repetition, silence, leaps and failures in logic, and with rising tensions leading to direct conflict, the play shows a single stagnant, failing conversation that illustrates the relationship between four characters who are unable to resolve their grievances with each other.

When reading it, I hope you can reflect on what exactly it is that hinders positive growth, and if you've ever found yourself in a similar situation, how this may impact your approach to it. I also urge you to see how this play deals with the perspectives of each character. Perhaps you may read it and think to yourself that one of the characters is clearly in the right, and thus it is the fault of the others that the dialogue is failing; however, know that when writing this, each character was inspired by specific people in my life such that any of them could be seen as "clearly in the right." Consider that maybe any and all of them are in the right, and that when it comes to constructively resolving the situation, it might not even matter.

They Caught a Whale, A Short Play

CAST OF CHARACTERS

EUPHRATES.....has a graying beard. Pegleg or similar prosthesis.

IBIS.....has thick eyebrows.

PAMPAS.....wears a large straw hat.

ZAMBEZI.....wears large hoop earrings.

TECHNICAL NOTES:

Besides the costuming above, the characters wear flip-flops, except Ibis, who is barefoot. The four also carry knives typical of fishermen.

The set is a long dock, extending from end to end of the stage. The stage floor is water.

Actions that are necessary to fishing may not be explicitly stated in the script (such as applying bait).

Certain pieces of logic that may seem common sense to us may not be as obvious to the fishermen.

A NOTE ON SILENCE:

It is essential to the play that moments of pause be given their fair time, and even elongated if possible. This silence is both integral to the setting of fishing and to the conversation's pace, and furthermore goes hand in hand with the failing communication among the fishermen.

As tensions rise and by the end discourse is abandoned altogether, the silences must be depended on and respected in order to simultaneously offer a respite from arguing and to demonstrate an unwillingness for healthy conversation.

[All four fishermen sit on the dock, spaced apart. The order, SR to SL, is EUPHRATES, IBIS, PAMPAS, ZAMBEZI. They are fishing. A long silence.]

PAMPAS: Caught one. *[Reels it in.]*

IBIS: It's always you, isn't it?

PAMPAS: Yes, and it will taste wonderful.

EUPHRATES: Oh! *[Something on his line.]*

PAMPAS: If not, it will sell wonderfully.

EUPHRATES: I've had your luck. *[Reels in a fish.]*

IBIS: I don't think I'm getting-

PAMPAS: My arm hurts. Pass me some bait.

[ZAMBEZI quietly reels in a fish. IBIS passes a bucket to PAMPAS.]

EUPHRATES: Wonderful start to the day, with this catch. *[Short silence.]*

PAMPAS: Caught one. *[Reels it in.]*

IBIS: It's always you, isn't it? *[Louder.]* How in the world have you already-

ZAMBEZI: *[To IBIS]* You will scare away the fish.

[Short silence.]

EUPHRATES: Oh! *[Something on his line. Starts to reel, then pull on it; no budge as the line remains taut but doesn't move. He hesitates. Still holding the rod, he stands, looks out to the water, then sits back down. After a moment:]* I've caught a whale.

[A beat for it to sink in, and then silence as the other three look over at EUPHRATES, uncertain. To them, what has happened is not impossible, but it would be unlikely.]

PAMPAS: A whale?

EUPHRATES: A whale.

IBIS: A whale?

EUPHRATES: A whale.

PAMPAS: *[Repeats the earlier motions of standing, looking, sitting, pausing, then saying:]* He's caught a whale.

IBIS: In these waters?

EUPHRATES: [*Opens his mouth to speak, then pauses. Then:*] Yes.

IBIS: Is it a metaphor?

PAMPAS: No, it's a whale.

IBIS: A whale?

ZAMBEZI: Won't you accept it already? You've asked the same question.

PAMPAS: It is about time we move on in the conversation.

IBIS: [*Stands, looks, sits, pauses, speaks:*] It seems he's caught a whale.

[*Short silence. ZAMBEZI reels in a fish.*]

PAMPAS: [*To EUPHRATES*] Well, reel it in.

EUPHRATES: I already tried.

PAMPAS: Did it move?

EUPHRATES: No.

PAMPAS: Do you think it will move if you try it again?

EUPHRATES: No.

PAMPAS: Hm. Are you sure?

EUPHRATES: No.

PAMPAS: Hm.

IBIS: I am sure. The whale will not move. Besides, what would we even do if we did pull it out?

EUPHRATES: It depends on whether the poor thing is alive or not.

PAMPAS: Well, go see.

EUPHRATES: [*Looks down at his pegleg, then back at PAMPAS.*] You go see!

PAMPAS: My arm hurts. [*Looks at the other two.*]

ZAMBEZI: I can't swim.

[IBIS jumps in the water. At first, as he approaches the edge of the stage, he wades slowly, but as he gets to the edge of the audience he swims. He then reverses his steps. Grabs the edge of the waist-high dock and ZAMBEZI pulls him up.]

IBIS: [Looks around. Announces to no one in particular.] The whale is dead.

[Long silence.]

PAMPAS: Pity.

EUPHRATES: Poor creature.

IBIS: Do you think-

PAMPAS: I hate to be pragmatic, but this means it's no use to anyone out there. We should sell it.

IBIS: You're heartless.

PAMPAS: It's unfortunate, and I feel bad for it, but crying over a dead whale's body will not bring it back to life. Caught one. [Starts to reel in a fish.]

EUPHRATES: There are other options. What do people usually do with whales?

ZAMBEZI: People do not usually have whales.

EUPHRATES: This is true. [Pause. Realization that hypotheticals exist.] But if people were to usually have whales, what would they typically do?

PAMPAS: Eat it.

IBIS [Pause.] Are you hungry?

PAMPAS: [Grabs hold of the newly caught fish.] Right now, no.

IBIS: We will not eat the whale.

PAMPAS: But others might be hungry, which is why I go back to saying we should pull it out and sell it.

EUPHRATES: [Offhandedly pulling on the fishing rod as he speaks. The line does not move.] You certainly like the idea, but would anyone even want to buy it?

PAMPAS: The market has been fast. I think yes.

IBIS: It has not. I can barely sell half my catch, the days I have half of a catch to sell at all.

EUPHRATES: The market differs from day to day.

IBIS: I had a great big one the other day, and I couldn't find anyone that would-

PAMPAS: You both exaggerate. I usually can go home with a profit.

IBIS: Which market do you go to?

PAMPAS: That one. [*Points off SR. Puts down arm, holds it.*] My arm hurts.

IBIS: Ah. Usually I go there. [*Offhandedly points off SL.*]

EUPHRATES: And I often alternate between the two. [*ZAMBEZI quietly reels in a fish.*] The people seem to have been forgetting about fish recently.

IBIS: I think I haven't been catching enough to keep my customers interested.

PAMPAS: My friend, I've been catching so well I've been stealing them from you! Caught one. [*Starts reeling one in.*]

IBIS: It's always you, isn't it?

ZAMBEZI: We have forgotten about the whale.

PAMPAS: Oh. Well.

IBIS: Well.

PAMPAS: Fish economics do make me so forgetful. We should sell it.

EUPHRATES: Let's table that discussion. The markets have reminded me. There should be some authorities we could contact? Surely someone out there to tell about the whale.

IBIS: I've never heard of a whale agency.

PAMPAS: There should be one. But even if there was, I don't think that's necessary.

EUPHRATES: We could tell Tamanrasset. [*Medium pause.*] He might know what to do or who to tell or maybe he could be the one we need to tell. [*Turns to IBIS.*] How long has it been since you've spoken to him?

IBIS: Not since he left.

EUPHRATES: How long has it been since then? Days?

IBIS: Weeks?

PAMPAS: Months?

ZAMBEZI: Many.

EUPHRATES: Yes, many.

IBIS: I don't think we'll manage to tell him.

EUPHRATES: [*Short pause. Gently:*] I do think you were too harsh to him.

IBIS: It was his decision to leave. Nothing I would say or do could change that.

EUPHRATES: Too harsh about him afterwards as well.

IBIS: He left. [*Medium pause.*] Telling someone else about the whale would not be right to do either, in any case.

PAMPAS: What would you have us do, if not sell it or report it?

IBIS: [*Thinks, looks at the others. Takes in air.*] We should... [*Looks at them, at the whale. Breathes out. Gives up on his idea and shakes his head no.*]

PAMPAS: Well.

EUPHRATES: So we either sell the catch or give it over to the authorities.

PAMPAS: Either way, we must pull it out.

IBIS: [*Reluctantly.*] Fine.

PAMPAS: Heave together. [*He directs the others as they line up behind EUPHRATES' fishing rod. They each grab on. PAMPAS begins to pull first, and the others follow. The line does not budge. After some time pulling, ZAMBEZI lets go and backs off the line and returns to his rod.*]

ZAMBEZI: No use.

[*The others slowly stop pulling. IBIS, then PAMPAS, back away from the line. Long silence.*]

PAMPAS: We can ignore it.

EUPHRATES: What?

PAMPAS: Ignore the whale. I will keep fishing.

[*The fishermen slowly return to their fishing positions. Medium silence, with IBIS, PAMPAS, and ZAMBEZI looking outwards as they fish, and EUPHRATES looking continually more uncertain of what to do as he tries to maneuver the fishing line, which is still occupied by the whale. After a time, IBIS looks over and sees his confusion. IBIS looks back at the ocean, and after a time of reflection, turns to EUPHRATES and silently offers him his own fishing rod. IBIS himself takes the whale-rod. He begins to inspect the rod itself and the line, pulling on it and noting the tension.*]

EUPHRATES: [*Moments after receiving the new fishing rod.*] Oh! [*Starts reeling in a fish. Another short silence. ZAMBEZI quietly reels in a fish. Another short silence.*]

PAMPAS: Caught one.

IBIS: [*Still inspecting the rod.*] It's always you, isn't it?

PAMPAS: The silence was eerie. My arm hurts.

EUPHRATES: Today has been quite a day for the catch. They are migrating.

PAMPAS: Is it so? Early, I think.

EUPHRATES: Maybe, but all the better for us and worse for them.

IBIS: [*Comes to a conclusion of his thoughts and looks up from the rod.*] We have to cut it loose.

PAMPAS: [*Very surprised.*] What?

IBIS: We have to cut the whale loose-

PAMPAS: I thought we were ignoring it.

ZAMBEZI: We can't. I don't know about cutting it loose, but we have to do something. Ignoring it will do nothing for us, and certainly it will do nothing for the whale.

EUPHRATES: [*As he reels in a fish.*] I agree.

PAMPAS: If we cut it loose, you'd be leaving a body to rot away in the oceans. If we sell our catch, we'd be contributing to the world.

IBIS: It would only be right. Returning it to a final-

PAMPAS: What wouldn't be right about selling it?

IBIS: It's not a fish.

EUPHRATES: I have to agree. [*Gazes out sadly at the whale.*] It's not a fish. [*Beat.*]

PAMPAS: [*To EUPHRATES, flustered*] Don't agree; [*to everyone*] if we cut it loose, nobody will believe us that we caught a whale. [*Looks around as all eyes are downwards, none of them want to face him.*] Think about it. [*Keeps looking around.*] Think about how many days we wouldn't have to fish if we sold it. [*Uncertain and frustrated. Goes to IBIS and yanks fishing rod away, pulling at the whale in vain. Gives up, gives rod back to IBIS, and returns to where he was. Long silence.*] Don't you all want... I want to have recognition for that whale. [*Looks around. IBIS looks at EUPHRATES and sees that he doesn't realize the credit has now been stolen. PAMPAS looks out at the whale.*] I need it.

[ZAMBEZI *quietly reels in a fish.*]

EUPHRATES: My friend, how would we even get it out? You just tried yourself. We all pulled together. Maybe if we called for help...

PAMPAS: I think it's... I think it may be stuck on something. [*Looks to ZAMBEZI for confirmation.*] That would be why it's so unmoving.

ZAMBEZI: It could be so.

[*Short silence.*]

PAMPAS: [*To IBIS*] Help me pull like before. [*They grab onto the rod together. PAMPAS points at EUPHRATES.*] You, come to this side and help him pull that way. [*EUPHRATES and ZAMBEZI hold on to the line from the side, with ZAMBEZI closer to the water.*] Go! [*They begin to pull. Each their respective sides. At first nothing. They begin to let out bursts of exasperation mixed with fatigue. Then, slightly, the line moves a bit to the side.*] The line is moving! [*PAMPAS and IBIS start to step backwards as the line moves upwards.*] The line is moving! [*EUPHRATES and ZAMBEZI keep having to step forward to keep up, still pulling to the side. All four are visibly exhausted: the whale is heavy. Just as they all seem to be at their limit, ZAMBEZI steps forward and falls off the dock, into the water.*]

EUPHRATES: NO! [*After a moment, abandons the line and semi-crouches at the edge of the dock, tries to reach as far towards ZAMBEZI as he can without falling into the water himself.*]

IBIS: He can't swim! [*Looks at the line, and after a moment leaves. PAMPAS is still pulling and continues to pull, at this point senselessly; the line is completely immobile despite PAMPAS still completely exerting his limited strength. IBIS jumps in the water and tries to pull out the drowning ZAMBEZI, eventually reaching the dock, where EUPHRATES helps pull him out, before pulling IBIS up too. They are all breathing heavily. Short silence. When IBIS looks back at PAMPAS and sees him still pulling at the line, he goes to PAMPAS and pulls the rod out of his hands. They stare at each other. Long silence.*]

PAMPAS: We almost had it.

[*ZAMBEZI lies on his back and breathes loudly.*]

IBIS: He was dying.

PAMPAS: I know, yes. But thankfully, he's fine.

IBIS: He was dying.

PAMPAS: If we try again now, we could finish.

IBIS: He was dying!

PAMPAS: Yes. He did not.

IBIS: Why did you not come help?

PAMPAS: You did it yourself. Why are you so mad all of a sudden?

IBIS: Our friend. Drowning. What do you not understand?

EUPHRATES: You could have helped.

PAMPAS: I'm sorry. Really, I am. I trusted you and knew you'd be able to save him yourself, so I decided to keep hold of the line.

[ZAMBEZI, *still overwhelmed by his near-death experience, bursts into tears. The others look at him. EUPHRATES goes to comfort him, though still looking on at the other two.*]

IBIS: [*Looks back at PAMPAS.*] You need to learn to look at what matters.

EUPHRATES: He said sorry. He said sorry.

PAMPAS: The line matters.

EUPHRATES: Please, let it rest...

IBIS: Why does the line matter if he-

PAMPAS: We almost had the whale.

IBIS: I don't care about the whale anymore! It matters much less to me than him dying. Why does this-

PAMPAS: It was important! I wanted to-

IBIS: Stop interrupting me! Please. [PAMPAS *looks down at the ground.*] Why does this whale matter so much to you? Of course we had to deal with it somehow, but by now you've obsessed and let it be too much.

PAMPAS: I am me. Not obsessed.

EUPHRATES: [*Distraught.*] Could you both please calm down, please calm-

IBIS: Why does it matter so much?

PAMPAS: I need it. It's my catch. I need-

IBIS: It's not! Stop taking credit for it. You did not catch the whale.

EUPHRATES: Really, it's fine. Don't you-

IBIS: You're stubborn, and you never listen to me. You always interrupt me.

[PAMPAS starts fuming.]

EUPHRATES: [*Almost giving up.*] My friend. You've been consumed by the whale too. [*By now, ZAMBEZI has stopped crying and the two look at the others in shock.*]

PAMPAS: Let him say it! Let him say it. Let him speak. I don't want to interrupt. Let him say it all.

IBIS: I have nothing more. I'm going to cut the whale loose.

PAMPAS: You're not releasing that whale-

IBIS: I'm releasing you.

[*IBIS takes a step forward and starts holding the pole with one hand in order to grab the line itself with the other hand. PAMPAS forcefully takes the pole. They struggle. PAMPAS pulls IBIS to the side. They keep fighting. As IBIS pulls on the rod, it snaps in half. They drop it to the ground and keep fighting. Eventually, IBIS attacks PAMPAS on his arm that hurts. PAMPAS falls to the ground as he screams a scream of primal pain. IBIS looks at him, then turns to the water and jumps in.*]

PAMPAS: [*Voice broken.*] My arm hurts!

[*IBIS continues to wade towards the whale. PAMPAS crawls to ZAMBEZI, who by now has sat up. EUPHRATES has watched the whole ordeal with a mix of sadness and shock. Before he reaches the audience (he is still standing straight up in the water), IBIS gets his knife, holds up the line, and cuts it in half. The whale-end of the line slowly drifts away into the audience, with whatever that is pulling it unseen. IBIS is left standing, holding the pole-end of the line. Medium silence.*]

IBIS: The whale is free.

[*After a moment, IBIS turns back to the dock and wades to it. He reaches up and starts to pull himself up. He holds up his arm to be pulled up, but nobody helps him. As he gets up onto the dock and stands, PAMPAS and ZAMBEZI, the former still in the arms of the latter, back away in fear that has been present since IBIS' final strike against PAMPAS. EUPHRATES looks on with sadness and disappointment. IBIS goes back to the broken fishing rod and picks up the pieces. He drops them. EUPHRATES slowly offers his fishing rod (which used to be IBIS'). IBIS looks at this, then looks at PAMPAS, then ZAMBEZI, then EUPHRATES, then back to the fishing rod.*]

IBIS: No use. [*He looks back at PAMPAS and ZAMBEZI, then back at EUPHRATES, then out at the water, then away from them offstage, then back out at the water.*] I must go. [*Slowly, he walks across the dock and offstage away from the others. They watch as he goes.*]

ZAMBEZI: We must be better the next time we catch a whale.

EUPHRATES: I hope we never catch a whale again.

[After a medium silence, they return to their original positions, pick up their fishing rods, peacefully fishing once again. Long silence.]

PAMPAS: *[Tries and fails to act as if nothing has changed]* Caught one. *[Reels it in. Short silence. He looks at EUPHRATES, then ZAMBEZI, then where IBIS used to be. Something is different. He looks outward at the sea. Silence.]*

END OF PLAY



Alara Balcisoy

CAS'25, Linguistics & Philosophy

Alara is a senior from Istanbul, Turkey. Outside of classes, she can be found organizing meetings for the Linguistics Association, chatting with residents at the KHC Brownstone (where she is an RA), and browsing books in Trident Cafe!

WASHED-UP REMAINS: Anthropogenic Pollution & Our Legacy



Scan (or click) the QR code to view the exhibition design, as designed by the student.

CURATOR'S LETTER

Welcome to Washed-Up Remains: Anthropogenic Pollution and Our Legacy, an exhibition that chronicles humanity's struggle to situate itself in the world and its material consequences. Anchored in the feeling of infinitude one gets while gazing at the vast expanse of the sea, this exhibition explores the different ways our relationship with the environment can manifest itself.

Is this relationship one of antagonism, driven by insatiable consumption and reckless exploitation? Or is there a deeper layer of apology, an attempt to reconcile with the damage inflicted and pave the way for a more sustainable future? Perhaps the truth lies somewhere in between, in choppy waves that swirl around both exploitation and remediation, threatening to carry us away in either current, surrounded by waves that are carrying not only bubbles but also unmistakable markers of civilization, that is, trash.

In an era of rampant consumerism, pollution has become ubiquitous as a by-product of a system obsessed with progress. So much so that renowned architect Rem Koolhaas has coined the term 'junkspace' to describe the residue mankind will leave behind on earth after its extinction, a reminder of the unsustainable path humanity is on. Through exposing the detritus of humanity, the artworks in this exhibition aim to present a stark realization: the very objects we discard, often considered insignificant, hold the power to reveal the detrimental consequences of our actions.

By confronting the tangible evidence of our actions—the "washed-up remains" that litter our planet—we are forced to confront the reality of our impact. But this confrontation is not meant to be solely an exercise in guilt or despair. Rather, it catalyzes change, a starting point for gaining a deeper understanding of our role in the vast ecosystem we call home.

Instead of didactic messages, this exhibition aims to question the complexity of our interactions with nature and how the tangible residues of this relation, i.e., pollution, add to our understanding of the world. You will encounter a space for exploration and introspection, where artworks act as mirrors reflecting the multifaceted nature of our relationship with the environment. We invite you to engage with these thought-provoking pieces, to question, to reflect, and to join us in the ongoing conversation about our place in the world.

ROOM 1: Seascapes

This series of black and white photographs captures the vastness of the earth with horizontal lines that divide the frame into the sea and the air. With each successive picture, these lines get more and more indistinguishable. The artist invites us into a "voyage of seeing," beckoning us to discover what lies beneath the surface and beyond the horizon. A drawbridge stemming from between the photographs connects the first room with the next one. The fog emanating from the drawbridge only amplifies the mysterious call of nature, encouraging us to move forward in our journey....

ROOM #1

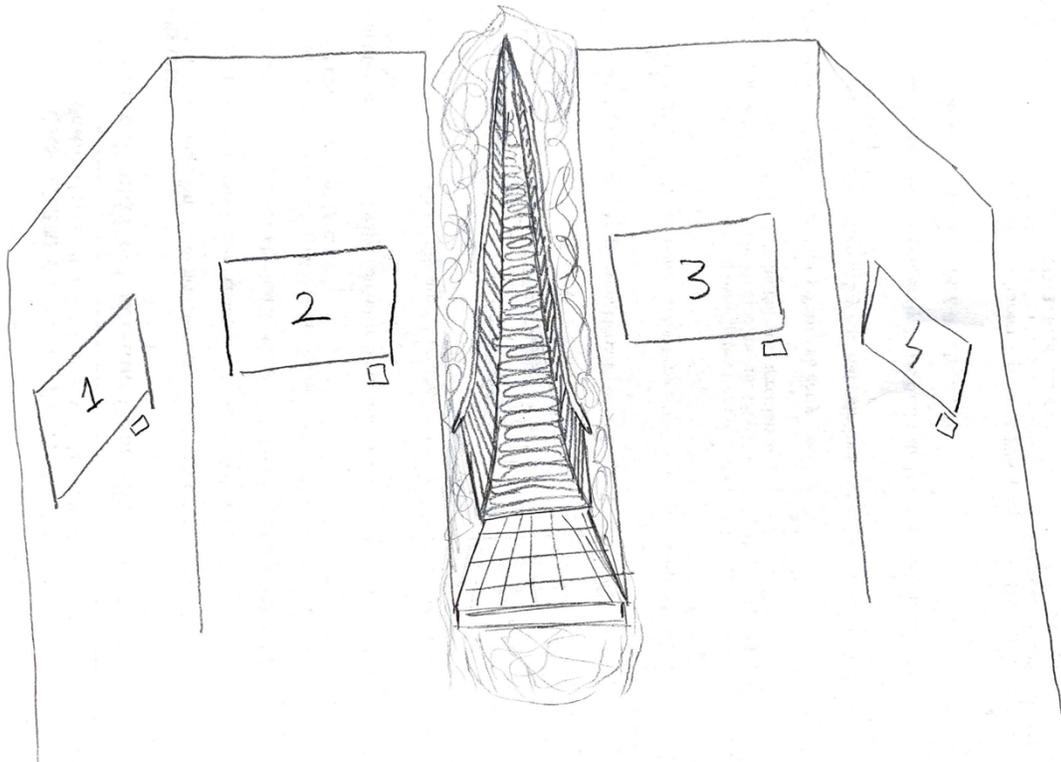




Photo 1: Hiroshi Sugimoto, Caribbean Sea, Jamaica, 1980



Photo 2: Hiroshi Sugimoto, Bodensee, Uttwil, 1993



Photo 3: Hiroshi Sugimoto, Ligurian Sea, Savio, 1993

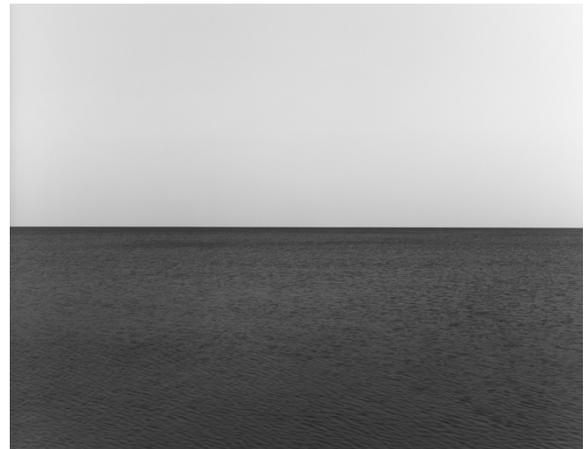


Photo 4: Hiroshi Sugimoto, Baltic Sea, Rugen, 1996



Photos 5 and 6: Olafur Eliasson, Meditated Motion Bridge, 2021

ROOM 2: Moorings

Coming out from the misty drawbridge, we are now confronted with an overturned boat coated with white paint and surrounded by black, inky water. What happened to the people in the boat, we wonder. Are they long gone? Or are they embalmed within the oily substance covering the boat? These questions remain unanswered.

The water is surrounded by photographs that respectively depict trash stuck in mud and sand, with the last picture depicting a worker digging the mud in an effort to clean it up. Similarly, we wonder where the people who released the trash into the world are, and if they are even alive, reflecting the ephemeral nature of life. Visitors continue the exhibition through doors on either side of artwork #8.

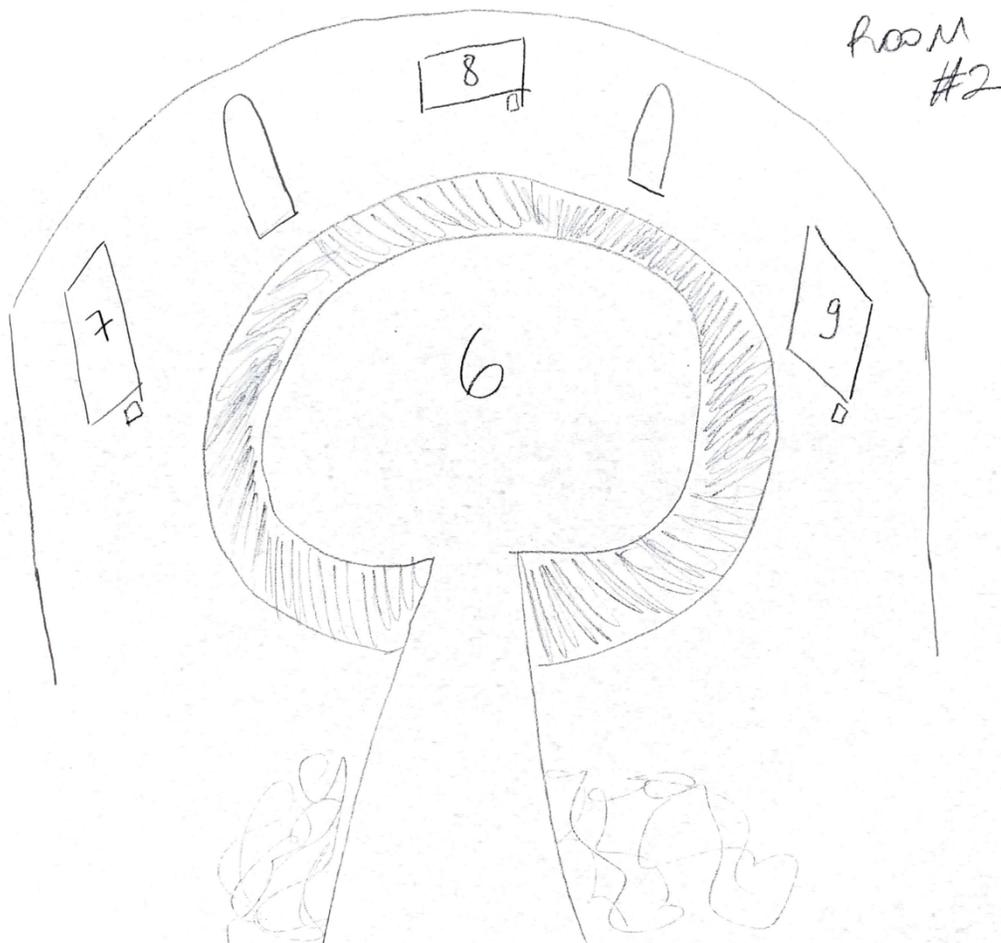




Photo 6: Cy Twombly, *By the Ionian Sea*, 1988



Photo 7: Shomei Tomatsu, *Untitled (Nagoya)*, 1959

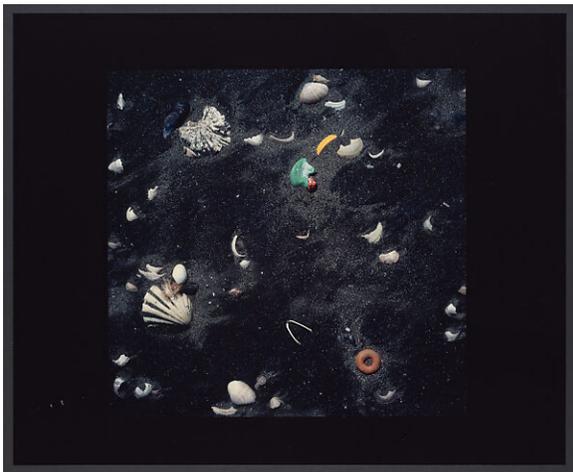


Photo 8: Shomei Tomatsu, *Untitled*, 1992



Photo 9: Shomei Tomatsu, *Untitled (Ishiki, Aichi)*, 1959

ROOM 3: Forecasts

Depending on which door you choose, there are different paths forward. You are either confronted with an apocalyptic garden littered with trash (including decaying human parts) or with transcendent, flowing figures. The garden imagines a future where humanity has been transformed by its pollution and has unified with nature at the cost of extinction. On the other hand, the abstract sea creatures in motion embody the act of moving forward despite being unbalanced.

Each work is situated on its own rectangular island, surrounded by the water trickling in from the previous room. Yet these opposing futures, one hellish and one angelic, are connected by tiles on the water, ultimately restoring agency to the viewer on which legacy they want to choose for themselves. After doing so, the only thing left to do is to exit the exhibit through the singular door, and wade through life.

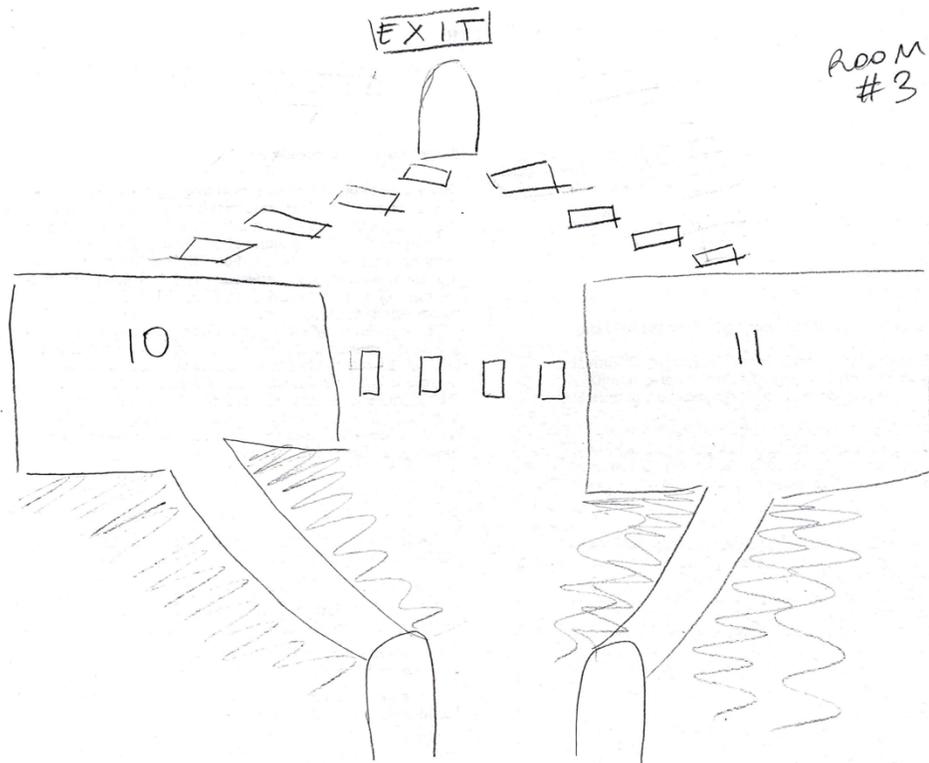




Photo 10: Tetsumi Kudo, Grafted Garden / Pollution-Cultivation-Nouvelle Écologie, 1971



Photo 11: Marguerite Humeau, Migrations, 2022

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Lilu Trondowski

CAS'27, Comparative Literature and Sociocultural Anthropology

Originally from New York City, Lilu has always loved to write. This piece is especially meaningful because it marries her passion for historical fiction and discovering her family's history.

LIFE OUTSIDE THE RATION CARD BOX

Hands wrapped around her mug of tea, Zosia smiled more often than not as she recounted stories from her teens and twenties. She, along with the rest of her family, spent a large part of her life in Cold War Poland, where people were subject to the Communist agenda of the Soviet Union. It was obvious that her memories and stories from that time were far from those she was reluctant to share; rather, a certain pride filled her as she spoke of the ingenuity, resilience, and entrepreneurial spirit that she saw in herself and those around her. Zosia and her then-husband were among the many who, under the circumstances, were forced to take part in the smuggling business during the Cold War. She and her younger brother, Maciej, were left in Poland with their mother for six years, while their father moved to the United States to pursue brighter prospects. Their stories are an indication of their perseverance, courage, and strength, traits of which no one could be ashamed.

Zosia and Janek frequented routes between the Polish and Soviet border. Their *Maluch*, a popular Fiat car model at the time, was small yet extremely capable of doing what the newlywed couple needed it to: smuggle goods. According to Zosia, the first thing that drivers saw upon crossing the heavily guarded border into the Soviet Union was a sprawling cemetery. As the couple continued down the road they noticed, to their astonishment, that the cemetery suddenly came to life. People emerged from behind tombstones, flooded in through the gates and anxiously made their way over to the *Maluch* and any other car with a Polish license plate. Exchanges took place: wigs for diamonds, shoes for diamonds, cosmetics for diamonds, and many other small items, all sold for jewels. As soon as the goods were traded and the collected diamonds thoughtfully hidden, Zosia and Janek spent a few days pretending to sightsee the Soviet Union and were then back on their way to Poland.

One of the many countries in which communism attempted to make its full-fledged success story, Poland failed to completely eliminate free-market initiatives. Both the private and state sectors of commerce were interconnected and grew to be somewhat dependent on one another, as resources traveled inconspicuously between the two economic spheres.¹ Participation in the Polish black market economy was not born during the post-war period; illegal trade and smuggling had been present for centuries, and participants punished, as early as 1918, by the

¹ Jerzy Kochanowski, *Through the Back Door*, ed. Dariusz Stola and Machteld Venken, trans. Anda MacBride and Anna Wróbel, vol. 5, *Studies in Contemporary History* (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Bern Peter Lang International Academic Publishing Group, 2017), 16, accessed November 28, 2023, [file:///Users/2023lilut/Downloads/9783653048018%20\(1\).pdf](file:///Users/2023lilut/Downloads/9783653048018%20(1).pdf).

Polish authorities.² At that time, young children were even employed by their parents to smuggle alcohol into the Soviet Union and bring jewels and food back into Poland.³ After the Depression of the 1930s, Poland saw a surge of labor strikes. Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, the Polish Deputy Prime minister in 1936, implemented a new economic plan that increased government investment in the nation's infrastructure and heavy industry.⁴ While Kwiatkowski's program benefited the Polish economy immensely, German occupation during the Second World War left many Poles, especially those of the working class and members of the intelligentsia, in dire need of supplemental work and commerce. This need led them to engage in "trade, smuggling, and cottage industry" as means of survival.⁵ Political and economic conditions in the first half of the 20th century necessitated backdoor methods of obtaining goods, and as the Cold War unfolded, these tactics continued to play an important role in the daily lives of Poles.

To quote Winston Churchill, as of 1946,

"from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in many cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow."⁶

These words are proof of just how far Soviet control spanned and of the awareness that western opponents had of this tactical move. At this moment, life in Poland experienced a sudden shift as a new economic model was implemented in what many would argue to be an unfit place for such a plan. Poland saw many people protesting nationalization efforts. In 1944, The Act of Land Reform was put in place, and by 1946, factories could only function privately if they had fewer than fifty employees. This law excluded industries that were completely nationalized, including but not limited to those of coal and steel.⁷ Stalin himself described the process of implementing

² Kochanowski, *Through the Back*, 39.

³ One of these children was my great grandmother, Stasia Ziętek.

⁴ Casimir Dadak, "National Heritage and Economic Policies in Free and Sovereign Poland after 1918," *Contemporary European History* 21, no. 2 (2012): 203-204, accessed November 28, 2023, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41485460?searchText=eugeniusz+kwiatkowski&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Deugeniusz%2Bkwiatkowski&ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3A4b531fe1166c59de1da5d376dd3d1477&seq=12.

⁵ Kochanowski, *Through the Back*, 20.

⁶ Winston Churchill, "The Sinews of Peace, 1946," America's National Churchill Museum, accessed November 28, 2023, <https://www.nationalchurchillmuseum.org/sinews-of-peace-iron-curtain-speech.html>.

⁷ Richard J. Hunter and John Northrop, "MANAGEMENT, LEGAL AND ACCOUNTING PERSPECTIVES: PRIVATIZATION in POLAND," *The Polish Review* 38, no. 4 (1993): 408-409, JSTOR.

communism in Poland as comparable to “fitting a saddle onto a cow.”⁸ After the Second World War and throughout the Cold War, Poles fought to support themselves economically and found black market transactions to produce a higher personal profit than blue or white collar jobs.⁹

In Cold War Poland, having money was not a guarantee of access to desired items, as many goods were not readily purchasable in stores due to the country’s increasing isolation from western markets. Agata’s family had written their name on a list for a washing machine in the local store, expecting to wait weeks or months for commodities to be back in stock. One day as she was walking along the street, Agata noticed a delivery of washing machines taking place. She ran inside and sat herself atop the machine, unsure of her next move, knowing only that an opportunity had presented itself and Agata could not have even considered wasting it. Thankfully, one of her neighbors recognized Agata through the store window and called her parents. Karolina and Casimir came, paid for the machine, and together with their daughter carried their long-awaited possession home. Although families were allowed to obtain simple household goods, more substantial manufactured items such as washing machines, televisions, and carpets were not always available. In these cases, the main daily constraint was not a lack of money to purchase goods but rather was a lack of available goods to purchase.¹⁰

The absence of goods sometimes did apply to basic necessities, including toilet paper, for which people traded recyclable paper. Staple foods could also be difficult: as documented by the *Washington Post* in 1981, a new rationing system was to be introduced that would limit Poles to “1.1 pounds of butter and 2.2 pounds of flour a month.”¹¹ People would be allowed only “4.4 pounds of cereal and 1.1 pounds of rice” every three months.¹² Families were frustrated, as were agricultural workers who found themselves facing “low prices and shortage[s] of essential supplies as grains and fertilizers.”¹³ Ration cards and stamps indicated the amounts of meat, in grams, along with other staples that individuals were allowed to purchase.¹⁴ Shortages were common, and demand remained high. Meat was a product of high desirability but was expensive and hard to find. Peasants in Poland flowed along the stream of market demand, geared their sales towards the most profitable market, official or unofficial, and thus perpetuated capitalist methods of commerce. Resultantly, meat bought and distributed by the state was limited and

⁸ George Weigel, "From the Underground," in *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999), 77, Google Books.

⁹ Kochanowski, *Through the Back*, 58.

¹⁰ Kochanowski, *Through the Back*, 14-15.

¹¹ Micheal Dobbs, "Poland Announces Near-Total Rationing of Food," *the Washington Post*, last modified April 15, 1981, accessed November 28, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1981/04/15/poland-announces-near-total-rationing-of-food/dd054608-dabo-40fb-81b1-7a9695f59490/>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Andrzej Zawistowski, "A RATION CARD FOR SURVIVAL - RATIONING IN COMMUNIST POLAND," trans. Alicja Rose and Jessica Sirotin, Polish History, accessed July 21, 2024, <https://polishhistory.pl/a-ration-card-for-survival-rationing-in-communist-poland/>.

only further incited black market initiatives.¹⁵ While state rationing attempted to curb the effects of shortages in the Soviet Bloc, harsh economic conditions of the 1970s and 1980s undoubtedly altered the lives of Poles and fueled forms of resistance, most notably that of the black market.

On yet another smuggling expedition, Zosia and Janek found themselves in a dilemma: where should the wigs that had originally been purchased in Sweden be hidden? After much thought, the two decided to fill their car tires with the wigs, and after doing so, were back on the road. Janek had considered the heat that is generated by rotating wheels but concluded that the drive ahead was short and that the heat would not be substantial. Unfortunately, the couple was upset to find that the majority of the wigs had indeed melted along their journey. This occurrence, paired with random searches by the police, constant surveillance by the secret service, and other unexpected obstacles, reminded people like Zosia and Janek of the instability and danger of their surreptitious businesses; those who engaged in black market transactions risked arrest by the Soviet police.

With economic hardships prevailing, people caught behind the iron curtain searched for ways to emigrate, including Zosia and Maciej's father. Young Maciej, standing on the train platform in a bright yellow raincoat, waved goodbye to his father in 1972 as the latter left his wife, daughter, and son in Kraków, Poland, to emigrate to the United States and pursue a better life. Maciej's father's wages were substantially greater than those he made in Poland: nearly thirty times as much. Less conspicuous than smuggling items across the Polish border was receiving packages in Poland from the United States. This also proved to be middle schooler Maciej's source of popularity in the 1970s. Although unable to send them money directly, Maciej's father supplied his family with goods to sell on the black market. These basic commodities, however, were not what Maciej dreamt of. As a ten-year-old, Maciej was envied by his peers for his constant supply of American chewing gum and plastic toy soldiers, among other toys and gifts that he received from his father. These packages from Connecticut came with letters that, on several occasions, had been previously opened by the Censorship Bureau and were covered in blacked out text. Maciej felt lucky to have items that were otherwise scarce in Poland, but his amassed collection of toys came at the price of growing up without a father.

After decades of struggle, Poland's opposition movement was officially established in the summer of 1980 under the name "Solidarność." This trade union movement, a movement advocating for workers' rights and based loosely (and perhaps ironically) on communist thought, was the first legal version of its kind in Central and Eastern Europe. "Solidarność" highlighted the prevailing shortcomings of the extant communist system and created a united platform for organized, non-violent political dissent. "Nie ma wolności bez solidarności" (there is no freedom without solidarity) could often be heard echoing throughout the streets. Although the movement suffered significant blows after the imposition of martial law in 1981, Solidarność survived and negotiated for a free parliamentary election in 1989. Votes indicated a decisive victory for noncommunist Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who was elected to lead the new government

¹⁵ Kochanowski, *Through the Back*, 184-185.

and, more broadly, the Polish masses through an economic transition.¹⁶ Signs of communism's fragility in Europe carried through the 1980s, including both the Polish elections of 1989 and the fall of the Berlin Wall that same year. The end of communism in Eastern Europe was officially realized by the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, but its memory is anything but forgotten in the minds of those who lived its course in the Soviet Bloc during the Cold War.

1990 also brought Maciej back to Poland, now twenty-five years old, and into the office of Leszek Balcerowicz, Former Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister. Although Maciej spent most of his time writing proposals in search of foreign aid during the post-Cold War transition, he was surrounded by men making monumental changes to his country's economic standing. On January 1st of 1990, the Balcerowicz plan was enacted to quickly usher Poland out of a communist economy. The eponym of the plan pushed a very aggressive transitional agenda that was so intense it became known to many in Poland as shock therapy.¹⁷ In an article responding to Balcerowicz' speech at his alma mater, St. John's University, one of the school's Deans Maciek Nowak said that in his "opinion, [Balcerowicz] is the most important figure in positioning Poland as the powerhouse of Eastern European economies."¹⁸ In truth, it was his leadership, only when paired with the gumption and tenacity of the Polish people who were finally tasting full freedom from the Cold War, that filled Poland's streets with bustling markets, innumerable home businesses, and ultimately an officially capitalist economy.¹⁹

¹⁶ Maciej Bartkowski, "Poland's Solidarity Movement (1980-1989)," International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, last modified December 2009, accessed November 28, 2023, <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/polands-solidarity-movement-1980-1989/>.

¹⁷ Simon Johnson and Gary W. Loveman, "Starting Over: Poland After Communism," *Harvard Business Review*, March/April 1995, accessed July 21, 2024, <https://hbr.org/1995/03/starting-over-poland-after-communism>.

¹⁸ "Alumnus Who Guided Poland's Transition to Capitalism Delivers Henry George Lecture," St. John's University, last modified April 16, 2024, accessed July 20, 2024, <https://stjohns.edu/news-media/news/2024-04-16/alumnus-who-guided-polands-transition-capitalism-delivers-henry-george-lecture>.

¹⁹ Johnson and Loveman, "Starting Over."

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Alexia Monica Nastasia

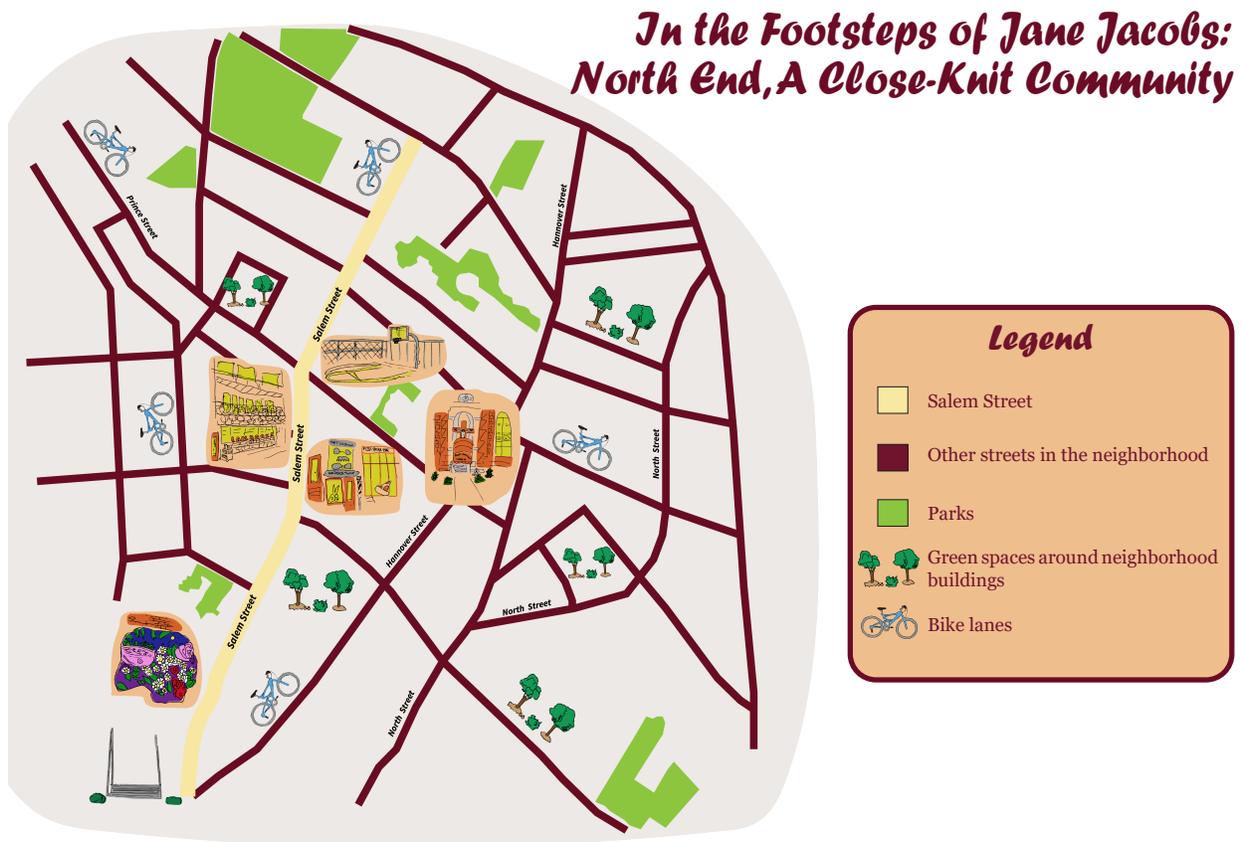
CAS'27, Sociocultural Anthropology; Pardee'27, International Relations

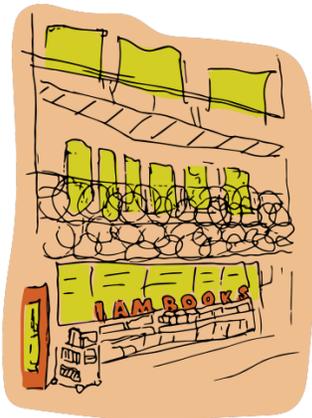
Alexia Nastasia is a proud member of a family of first-generation immigrants from Romania to the U.S. She is a Kilachand Honors College student pursuing majors in International Studies and Sociocultural Anthropology at BU.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JANE JACOBS: North End, A Close-Knit Community



Scan (or click) the QR code to view the full creative map project, as designed by the student.





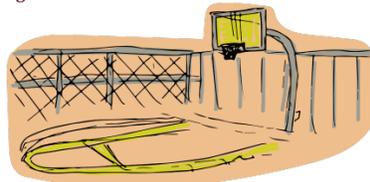
I Am Books Store: Situated on Salem Street, I AM Books specializes in selling Italian-themed books, books for adults and children in Italian, as well as Italian-American authors and literature. The bookstore also offers various mementos of the neighborhood. The building is a beautiful brick construction and merges well with additional historical landmarks on Salem Street.



Mural: Located on the brick wall just outside Wicked Craft Co., this public art piece establishes the North End as a comfortable, safe, and appealing place to live in. Time, money, and effort went into this piece which helps make Salem Street as beautiful as possible for the average pedestrian. Created by local artist Michael Johnn, the piece incorporates elements of graffiti, referring back to the street aesthetic of living in a city like Boston in which people of various backgrounds and walks of life live and create. The lounge it resides outside of is just another reminder of how many spots are available to rest at with other community members within this area of Boston.



Saint Leonard's Church: Sticking to the neighborhood's immigrant roots, this Roman Catholic Church was founded by Italians in the late 1800s. The design was built by an architect named William Holmes, and its Romanesque model clearly draws from Italian styles. With vivacious gold paintings on its interior and lovely green spaces and statuettes outside, the space brings together a certain religious community in the area. Large pews and rows allow for many visitors to worship, and the church is used for many events such as weddings and funerals. The brick build helps it blend in with all the other historic sites in the neighborhood and adds to its narrow street. The Saint Leonard Church in North End is a hub of community service for the region and has added a peace garden.



Basketball Court on Polcari Playground: Right by the water of the wharf and just next to an elementary school, this basketball court is in the perfect spot for both kids and adults to use and for both locals and tourists to enjoy. People of all ages are able to bond over the sport here and the area is occasionally used for community events such as bouncy house days. Though the area is partially gated off, the inviting architecture and trees truly bring this place to life. Managed by the Parks and Recreation department of the city of Boston, this playground is interconnected with tens of other parks and gathering sites all around Boston. The Nazzaro Community Center, a location that keeps the playground open, was renovated just a few years ago, allowing this park to continue running for future generations of basketball enthusiasts.



Historical Building: Many buildings in the neighborhood incorporate residential and commercial spaces. This landmark building features a pizza pasta bar, a tattoo shop, a barber shop, an Italian restaurant, and an apartment complex all into a singular small location. In the heart of Salem Street, this space is a representation of the interconnectedness of the North End. Just as Jane Jacobs had hoped, locals need to look no further for a walkable and enjoyable space that has all community and personal needs at hand. The space is also a mix of deep history and exciting tourist attractions.



The Rose Kennedy Greenway: Taking up the border of the neighborhood, this space was built right above the spot where the famous (or infamous) Big Dig took place. Construction in this area was tedious and took decades to finish, but it moved large chunks of road underground and opened up the neighborhood to the rest of the city. Built in 2008, this landmark fosters a sense of community, bringing locals and visitors to its 17 acre lawn. Benches transformed into swings draw in many pedestrians every day, and its unique, modern architecture certainly makes passerby's gaze at its gray pillars. During the summertime, ground sprays allow anyone to be cooled down by the water or simply admire their appearance.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JANE JACOBS: North End, A Close-Knit Community

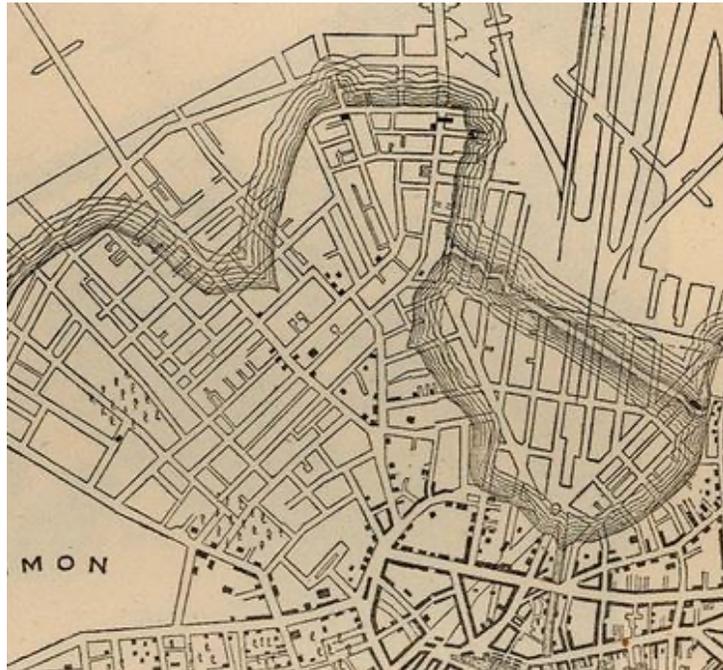


Figure 1: 1772 map of North End, identified through Leventhal Map Center's digital catalog

According to Jane Jacobs, city planning would be successful if it “embarked upon the adventure of probing the real world” (1992, 13). In the introduction to *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, which was [a finalist for the National Book Awards](#) after its first publication in 1961, and has been republished several times since then including in [the 1992 edition](#) cited in this essay, Jacobs wrote that her work was “an attempt to introduce new principles of city planning and rebuilding” that were different from or even opposite to those “taught in everything from schools of architecture and planning to the Sunday supplements and women’s magazines” (Jacobs 1992, 3). She also stated that her ideas were linked to “common, ordinary things,” such as “what kinds of city streets are safe and what kinds are not,” or “why some slums stay slums and other slums regenerate themselves even against financial and official opposition,” or “what, if anything, is a city neighborhood and what jobs, if any, neighborhoods in great cities do” (Jacobs 1992, 3-4).

In her book, which would become a mandatory reading in the education of city planners across the United States, even if what she called “orthodox” urban development has resisted change, Jacobs specifically identified Boston’s North End as the kind of slum which had succeeded to regenerate itself against odds and opposition, and she explained why at the time of her writing North End could already be considered a vibrant city neighborhood even if it continued to not have the reputation it deserved especially among decision-makers yet (Jacobs 1992, 3, 8). According to Jacobs, when she first went to North End in the late 1930s, it was “desperately poor” as well as “badly overcrowded” by new immigrants having arrived in waves from Ireland, Eastern Europe, and Italy, whereas by the time of her study in the late 1950s, it had gained a middle class vibe without losing its ethnic charm, it had become “uncrowded”

mainly through the technique of “throwing two older apartments together,” and it appeared “alive” (Jacobs 1992, 8-9). Since North End seemed to her as “the healthiest place in the city,” she was astonished to find out that among Boston planners the neighborhood was still considered a slum and a place unworthy of investment (Jacobs 1992, 9-10).



Figure 2: St. Leonard's Church, a neighborhood landmark at the time of Jane Jacobs' study as well as today, features a peace garden

As I started researching about and walking through Boston's North End in preparation for my mapping project for the course KHC RH 105: The Lived City, seeking to assess the neighborhood's current state, if it was still as vibrant as Jacobs had found it, and whether it had finally gained the attention of the city's authorities for funding purposes, I felt that I was walking into Jacob's footsteps, not only by tracking some of the same landmarks, but also by coming to comprehend her demand for unorthodox city planners who would be willing and able to preserve what has already worked well while also addressing issues in need of improvement. What I found was that North End had remained the close-knit community that enchanted Jacobs, but that, in many ways, it was still in search of the next visionary city planner who could help it become even more thriving (similarly, indeed, to how [Luigi Pirandello's theater characters were in search of an author](#)).

I have found in my explorations about and in the area that many things have stayed the same as Jane Jacobs noticed them at the end of the 1950s. For example, Jacobs observed that while in the late 1930s many buildings just seemed “old” or even “in the last stages of depravity,” as they were decaying and lacked modern conveniences, by the late 1950s the same buildings appeared revived and “rehabilitated,” as they no longer felt “left raw and amputated,” but instead they were “repaired and painted as neatly as if they were intended to be seen” (Jacobs 1992, 8-9). To Jane Jacobs, this was linked to a newfound sense of pride in the neighborhood in addition to an infusion of money, and both the pride and the money were generated by the internal power of the neighborhood not from the outside, as when Boston officials refused to help mend the neighborhood locals took the matter into their own hands, and when bankers refused to offer loans locals saved their own earnings to be able to make improvements (Jacobs 1992, 11). Like Jacobs, when strolling through the neighborhood I thought the buildings were so well maintained that their oldness gave them an air of being distinguished, and while spending time asking people questions about their neighborhood I discovered that they maintained a strong sense of pride in and empowerment from the history of the place and its potential to continue to be a great place to live in the future. Perhaps today more than in the past, being seen, inviting guests from elsewhere to come, enjoy, and strengthen the local economy has become a clear intention.



Figure 3: Typical narrow street from Boston's North End neighborhood

Moreover, Jane Jacobs argued that in the 1930s the narrow streets just gave an impression of being “badly cut up”, but by the 1950s looking down a narrow alley did not show “the same squalid North End” but instead a rather pleasant neighborhood due to “more neatly repointed brickwork, new blinds, and a burst of music as a door opened” (Jacobs 1992, 8-9). In Jacobs’ assessment, not narrowness but rather destitution was what made streets scary, and once poverty started being alleviated in the area the narrow streets began to be seen as interesting, giving the neighborhood an air of mystery and urging visitors to explore more. I had a similar sense in North End that the narrow streets were related to the rich heritage of the neighborhood and thus were helping increase its appeal. Jacobs wrote of how safety is a determining factor in viewing a neighborhood as desirable, and at no point during my visits to North End did I feel unsafe, even when taking the time to get on the darkest of alleys to look for antiquated majestic gates.

My thoughts also resonated with Jacobs’ writing in regards to the placement of buildings and businesses in Boston’s North End. Jacobs noted that in the 1930s it seemed suffocating to experience the “very small blocks” which the neighborhood displayed instead of the “decently large blocks” existent in other neighborhoods, and “all kinds of working places and commerce mingled in the greatest complexity” with housing or residences, but that due again to modifications in outlook (from desolation to beautification) as well as due somewhat to changes in ownership (with less renters and more owners) by the 1950s having multiple stores at the bottom of a building and multiple apartments on top of them in small blocks appeared intriguingly nostalgic rather than uncomfortably tight (Jacobs 1992, 8-9). Again, discrete



Figure 4: This North End building made of brick features four businesses and an apartment complex, showing the interconnectedness of economic and social functions in the neighborhood

differences in urbanization led to huge differences in perception. Walking down Salem Street, I was certainly moved by the evocative nature of, for example, a lovely brick building with a barber shop, tattoo shop, pizza pasta bar, and restaurant next to each other as well flats above them. I also became deeply attached to what has meanwhile become my favorite place in the whole city, the [I Am Books](#) store, whose building has the same pattern of mingling residential and commercial areas as other edifices around and which sells not just books but also various types of mementos of the historical significance of the area. This kind of juxtaposition of some spaces where people could live and other spaces for trade as well as of the old and the new represents for me the best of Boston, while also being reminiscent of places I am familiar with in Eastern Europe, from which my family of first-generation immigrants came and where I had opportunities to visit during childhood summers. Interestingly, while strolling through the neighborhood I felt deeply connected not only to what Jacobs had written but also to my own heritage.



Figure 5: This building hosts the I Am Books store that appeals to both locals and tourists

Importantly, I felt connected to what Jacobs had written particularly during my encounters with the people from the neighborhood. Jacobs stated that in the late 1930s the area had “the highest concentration of dwelling units” anywhere in Boston as well as “one of the highest concentrations to be found in any American city” (Jacobs 1992, 8). However, according to Jacobs, people were isolated rather than connected within the neighborhood, as the dwelling



Figure 6: Outdoors chess table available in the community

units were cheap rentals, people were coming and going, immigrants in the area spoke different languages, and there was little sense of a community in the North End area. However, in the late 1950s, the neighborhood feel had become entirely different. The population density had gone down due to the tendency of having a family inhabit larger areas within a building than the previous rentals, but North End was still a rather populous area of Boston. Notably, there were “children playing, people shopping, people strolling, people talking” in the neighborhood. “Had it not been a cold... day,” Jacobs wrote, “there would surely have been people sitting” (Jacobs 1992, 9). My impression was that, even if I visited North End mostly on cold rainy days in November and during the late afternoon or evening times, as the project was assigned late during the fall semester and late afternoons to evenings were times when I did not have classes, it was bustling not only with visitors seeking to eat or shop in the more touristy areas such as Hanover Street, but

also with locals who were going about their daily lives and doing their regular business particularly on Salem Street, the narrow alleys of the neighborhood, and in the green areas. People were almost always in groups or at least pairs, showcasing the community feel of North End, and many were eager to talk to me about the neighborhood, which again documented their local pride.



Figure 7: A regular late fall day in the local community



Figure 8: Evening activities on a rainy day in North End

While I found that my observations on North End had many aspects in common with Jane Jacobs' observations, the map I created based on my observations has also documented some relevant differences between how the neighborhood looks like today and how it was over 60 years ago when Jacobs was examining it. Some of these differences are related to good urban planning, the way Jacobs would have liked it to be done. Jacobs wrote about "practices of rebuilding" which could "promote social and economic vitality in cities", and which in her view included focusing on small businesses rather than huge malls and ensuring that green spaces drawing people to collaborate would be spread throughout a neighborhood (Jacobs 1992, 4). North End has not only remained a realm of small businesses rather than of big business, albeit with some commercial enterprise focused on attracting tourists instead of concentrating on catering to the needs of locals, but it has also increased in recent decades its numbers of green spaces surrounding buildings, of parks, as well as of outdoors play and entertainment areas for children and adults, as showcased through several icons on my map. The Saint Leonard Church in North End, which was [the first Italian Catholic Church in New England](#) and is a hub of community service for the region, has added a peace garden. Locals and tourists alike enjoy older parks such as the Charter Street Park created in the 1890s as well as newer green areas such as the Rose Kennedy Greenway built in 2008. Additional outdoors areas of interest for people of various ages and preoccupations include the Captain Louis Polcari Playground made in the 1890s, tables for playing chess which have been available since Jacobs' time, and newly added and frequent bike racks from which people can rent bikes and bike lanes that people can use.



Figure 9: Basketball court in Polcari Park



Figures 10 & 11: Bike lane and bike racks in North End

Some new aspects of North End are not so good and would not have been encouraged by Jane Jacobs. One such aspect is [gentrification](#). As the neighborhood has increasingly become safer and more desirable, it has attracted people with higher degrees of wealth than those from the area, and in the process it has pushed some of the locals out of the area. People who could no longer afford the prices of rentals or even of food in the neighborhood have moved out, as have also people for whom selling a residence or a business for high prices was appealing, many of those being Irish, Eastern European, and Italian inhabitants that Jacobs mentioned. While the neighborhood has been beautified with arts such as murals and statues and has attracted younger residents and new businesses, its loss of some of its traditional and ethnic character is at least a sad occurrence if not also an urbanization failure. According to people in the area I was

able to discuss with, the rents in North End are huge, in the range of two to three thousand dollars, and as such families that have lived here for long periods of time choose to leave and students who rent short term come in instead. Under such circumstances, the sense of community that has been observable since Jacobs' study is being at least to some extent diluted.



Figure 11: Business beloved by visitors of North End



Figure 12: Residential building in North End

An important issue raised by Jane Jacobs' examination of the North End neighborhood, as well as my own exploration of the area, is segregation. Jacobs noted that the denial of credit to residents, in the 1930s when the area was poor as well as in the 1950s when it had already acquired the characteristics of a middle class neighborhood yet it was still ignored by banking institutions and disregarded by elected officials, was largely due to tendencies to undervalue the societal contributions of people of diverse backgrounds in terms of immigration status, ethnicity, and race. Jacobs argued that discriminatory practices in regards to housing and credit are forms of injustice with hugely negative impact on economic opportunity and options for upward mobility. Jacobs expressed the hope that, once local authorities took notice of how neighborhoods like North End in Boston had succeeded to reinvent themselves with little external help, segregation would be reduced, yet she was not as naïve as to believe that segregation would be easy to eradicate. "I do not mean to imply that a city's planning and design, or its types of streets and street life, can automatically overcome segregation and discrimination. Too many other kinds of effort are also required to right these injustices," she wrote (Jacobs 1992, 71-72). While the North End neighborhood has overall been a success story of changing from a slum to a desirable and admired place, cities like Boston, Massachusetts, where I currently go to school, or Saint Louis, Missouri, where my family of new immigrants from Romania has settled in the United States, still struggle with the ugly reality of segregation.

In this project, I have embarked upon the adventure of considering city planning by probing the real world, as Jane Jacobs recommended. Like Jacobs, I found that North End has developed into a neighborhood that is safe, still maintains a strong sense of a close-knit community despite some hurdles, and is enjoyable by locals as well as tourists. It seems that, at this point in its development, the North End neighborhood could be on the lookout for the next unorthodox, visionary urban planner or designer, jokingly or not like Pirandello's characters in search of an author. For the emerging urban planner who would like to undertake such a great but challenging endeavor while also following Jacob's principles of good design grounded in incorporating the voices of those in the area in addition of those of decision-makers and making ethical choices in addition than just following the bottom line, my map offers a synthetic view of key landmarks of the neighborhood and suggests how to make further improvements without destroying North End's spirit.



Figure 13: Michael Johnn mural in North End



Lucas Gibbons

CAS'27, Physics

Lucas Gibbons is an aspiring physicist/environmentalist who grew up in O'Fallon, Illinois. He is deeply interested by the non-glamorous facets of life: coal gob piles, washing machine sludge, etc.

REWILDING THE RECLAIMED COAL MINES OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

They acidify soil, leach toxins into the water table, and, occasionally, combust spontaneously (Daniels et al., 2015). Left unmanaged, abandoned coal mines pose major threats to humans and the environment. To address this problem, the US Congress passed the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, which mandated that after surface mining is completed in an area, the site must be put to “uses which it was capable of supporting prior to any mining or higher or better uses.” In practice, this often means that reclamation efforts attempt to return the land to agricultural use, despite the persistent low fertility of lands formerly used for coal mining. Rewilding, or the process of returning a space to its natural wilderness after a (usually anthropogenic) disturbance, presents an alternative approach.

In this paper, I propose rewilding as a path towards achieving “higher or better uses” for Illinois’s degraded land. This path focuses mainly on the plant community created by reclamation efforts, encouraging a context-appropriate landscape that includes herbaceous and woody plantlife. I use the Monterey No. 2 Coal Mine in Albers, IL to demonstrate the benefits that can be incurred by rewilding, analyze academic rewilding reviews to determine evidence-based best-practice, and address the problems and opportunities that are unique to coal mines in Southern Illinois. I argue that the reclaimed coal mine sites of Southern Illinois should be rewilded, rather than reclaimed for pasturing or agricultural purposes, in order to benefit local communities and local biodiversity.

MONTEREY NO. 2 RECLAIMED COAL MINE

The Monterey No. 2 Coal Mine concluded operations in the summer of 1996. In the years following, the site became embroiled in controversy, even though it followed the regulations set out by the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977. Evidence indicated that the slow conversion to pastureland conducted by the Monterey Company/ExxonMobil (see Fig. 1) was insufficient to fully protect local communities from issues such as chemicals from coal waste

seeping into the water table. Rewilding¹, on the other hand, would mitigate this threat to local people while also providing sanctuary to local wildlife.



Figure 1: Landscape photos of the Monterey No. 2 site, noticeably devoid of woody plants and covered mainly with a few prairie grass species.

Typical mine reclamation for pasture and prairie, such as that done at the Monterey No. 2 site, fails to address the long-term detriments of coal waste, requiring costly supplemental action which negatively impacts all involved parties. The main issue that coal mining poses to surrounding communities is its production of waste with high concentrations of acidic and toxic minerals. According to Daniels et al. (2015), these minerals have a tendency to be carried along with rainwater, which drains into and contaminates the water table. This is a problem because the tallgrass prairie seed mixes often used for mine reclamation produce plant landscapes which permit a significant amount of soil drainage. At the Monterey No. 2 refuse piles, the soil drainage was significant enough to contaminate the underlying Pearl Aquifer. When the EPA recognized this issue, ExxonMobil settled on a plan to mitigate these effects by pumping water from the site to the nearby Kaskaskia River, a plan with an annual cost of around \$100,000 (Smithson, 2004). This plan, however, came only after the site had already contaminated the Pearl Aquifer to a noticeable degree. Additionally, it presents a major cost to ExxonMobil and the state. Monterey No. 2 is not an outlier. In general, former coal mines reclaimed for prairie/pasture use create comparable or the same issues², indicating the need for an alternative approach.

Rewilding through the establishment of diverse plant communities within previously mined sites would protect local people against coal refuse leachates in a more proactive and natural way compared to current practice. The Daniels et al. article supports this with the claim that “vigorous vegetative cover” can reduce rainwater drainage, which would reduce the rate of toxin leaching (2015). One open question left by Daniels et al. is what exactly “vigorous vegetative cover” entails. Rewilding suggests the answer to be a biodiverse native plant community. Thinking about the underground root systems created by plant communities provides us with an

¹ Notably, rewilding for this site may not prescribe striving towards pre-settlement conditions. The Public Land Survey of Illinois, completed in 1843, indicates that the land was at the border between prairie and forest (Illinois Department of Natural Resources & Illinois Natural History Survey, 2003). However, changes in the hydrology and topography of the area since the survey, specifically the formation of the Grassy Branch creek and the steep hills of coal refuse, suggest a purely forested environment.

² See Torres & Pankau, 2024 for another example of water contamination after pasture reclamation.

intuition for why a diverse plant community³ would more effectively reduce toxin seepage. A more diverse vegetation community with several different root structure types will work together to more densely fill the soil. A more densely rooted soil would intercept a larger quantity of drainage water before it can reach the aquifer below, reducing the site's overall leach rate. This strategy is superior to the site's implemented water pipeline because, rather than reacting to a contaminated aquifer with a solution that requires continuous upkeep, it prevents toxic minerals from reaching the aquifer in the first place by relying on the passive effects of a self-sustaining plant community.

Current methods of reclamation also fall short of achieving successional maturity, stunting the biodiversity of an area. Succession refers to the development of an ecosystem from an lifeless "immature" state, to a complex and biodiverse "mature" state. While not exactly at the stage of lifelessness, previously mined sites are heavily degraded environments which exist in the very early stages of succession. Left untreated, it would likely take centuries for a site like that to achieve maturity. Reclamation for pastureland, on the other hand, achieves a higher level of maturity, with several species of plants and animals supported (for example, several deer and small birds were spotted at the Monterey No. 2 site), but it still does not achieve full maturity due to the exclusion of forbs and woody plants from seed mixtures and incompatibility with nearby, forested reference ecosystems. These fundamental flaws prevent the development of biodiversity and fail to provide for native wildlife.

Rewilding would address the damages done to a landscape through the process of coal mining by advancing the succession of a site to a point where its respective ecosystem is healthy, stable, and biodiverse. In "The Nature of Nature: Why We Need the Wild", Enric Sala (2020) recounts the story of Knepp Farm to demonstrate how rewilding can achieve these benefits. The farm is a plot of degraded land in Britain that was rewilded to imitate the historic lowland environment. Sala indicates that the project improved soil water retention and provided a much needed habitat for a diverse community of plants and animals that could not be supported by surrounding farmland and human developments. While left to its own devices, this land would have likely taken many years to develop into any semblance of a complicated ecosystem, through careful rewilding efforts from the inheritors of the farm, the land was able to develop rapidly into a safe place for local flora and fauna. This shows that by making actions that accelerate the natural process of ecological succession, rewilded areas provide refuge to native species, which is much needed in the patchwork of monoculture farmland that makes up most of Southern Illinois.

Specifically, efforts to introduce woody plants, rather than prairie grass stock, at former coal mining sites would advance successional development while also benefiting local communities. Despite not being in line with the historical environment, land reclamation efforts often choose to introduce prairie grass species over other alternatives. This is clear in Southern Illinois, which historically was covered mostly by temperate woodland, but only 210 sites out of 1457 reclaimed/currently undergoing reclamation sites south of St. Louis are designated for

³ This is in contrast with a typical tallgrass prairie seed mix, which usually has lower levels of biodiversity and includes few (if any) forb or shrub plant species (Zinnen & Matthews, 2022).

woodland use (Land reclamation, 2024). The Monterey No. 2 site follows this pattern. The site is designated as “pastureland,” but fits into the Southern Illinois Till Plain, of which only 40% is historically prairie (Woods et al., 2006). Visually, the site is devoid of woody vegetation (see Fig. 1), and is not in line with reference forests which remain intact around nearby streams and creeks. Work to incorporate trees, bushes, and other woody plants within the site would instantly bring the land closer to being in line with surrounding wild spaces, which follows the guidelines to be established in the next section. Additionally, Acharya et al. (2016) show that “transformation of tallgrass prairie to eastern redcedar woodland in the rolling hills of the southern Great Plains reduced soil water content, water storage and downward flux of water.” This indicates that a greater level of woody vegetation at the site would serve to reduce the amount of water draining through the underlying coal refuse and leaching toxic chemicals into local water supplies. This is to say, reintroduction of woody vegetation would not only boost the maturity and biodiversity of the land, but also reduce the negative effects of the land on its surroundings.

While the focus has been on the Monterey No. 2 site, the conclusions reached are general, considering that 536 reclaimed/in-reclamation sites in Southern Illinois are designated for pasture or herbaceous wildlife uses (Land reclamation, 2024). For these sites, a policy of advancing succession and introducing woody vegetation would both align with to-be-established rewilding principles and provide ecosystem services to the local community.

REWILDING IN PRACTICE

Having determined the need for effective rewilding within sites of completed coal mining, it is now important to tackle the issue of what makes effective rewilding. This section builds a multilevel understanding of best practices within the field, as well as structures for maintaining accountability, within the unique, predominantly rural, environment of Southern Illinois. Finally, I apply the explored metrics to the Monterey No. 2 mine refuse piles.

The land usage and low population density of Southern Illinois demand that two general principles be considered; a rewilding project should 1) consider the current state and previous history of the surrounding land and 2) work towards complete self-sustainability. These principles are drawn from “Guiding Principles for Rewilding,” a report published by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (see Carver et al. 2021). The first principle emphasizes the importance of a site’s history, a site’s surroundings, and similar “reference” ecosystems when determining intervention strategies (Carver et al., 2021. 1899). This is especially relevant to Southern Illinois because the land use within the region (mainly farmland with narrow riparian ecosystems) means successional goals such as connectivity with the greater wilderness will not be easily achieved by a rewilding project, making careful and creative consideration of the surrounding land all the more important. The second principle, on the other hand, is based on the article’s claim that, “Successful rewilding results in, or leads to, a self-sustaining ecosystem in which native species’ populations are regulated through predation, competition, and other biotic and abiotic interactions” (Carver et al., 2021. 1888). Considering the lack of significant population centers around most candidate rewilding sites in the region, a man-hour intensive rewilding project would be unlikely to succeed, lending importance to this

principle. By holding in mind this principle of self-sustainability, and considering the surroundings of coal mining sites in Southern Illinois, rewilding efforts in the region are more likely to succeed.

These high level precepts ought to be combined with concrete, evaluative metrics which characterize site-specific qualities relevant to rewilding in Southern Illinois. Perino et al. (2019) provide such metrics in their article “Rewilding Complex Ecosystems”. They isolate three aspects of an environment that a project aims to improve (stochastic disturbances, dispersal, and trophic complexity) and three steps for a rewilding project (evaluate the ecology of a space in both the present moment and historically, consider the effects of different interventions, then implement the intervention with a plan for long-term monitoring and community engagement), then combine these with the three human impact factors (nonmaterial, regulating, and material) highlighted by Díaz et al. (2018). By honing in on and labeling different characteristics of a site and different steps in the rewilding process, Perino et al. create a language for critically formulating and evaluating action. The previously mined sites of Southern Illinois need this process more than most, considering the lack of prior research concerning the region. It is only by constantly monitoring a site's maturity and functionality, in addition to observation of higher level guidelines, that one ensures intervention measures actually provide tangible benefits to a site.

Judging the Monterey No. 2 site according to the previously mentioned metrics, we find that the area has deficits in all three traits isolated by Perino et al. (2019). Concerning stochastic disturbances, the site is actually relatively successful, and natural events are permitted to proceed unchecked. This success is limited, though, by the site's classification as “pastureland,” meaning that the site intends to be returned to active agricultural use. While this classification represents a future threat to the land, the land is currently impacted by woefully low levels of dispersal, with the nearest prairie nature preserve being more than 50 km away⁴. This distance from similar ecosystems, in combination with the relatively small size of the plot, limits the ecological benefits of the site to prairie wildlife. The site's trophic complexity is a bit more difficult to evaluate, considering that a full survey of the plant and wildlife of the site has not been completed. I will note that during my visit to the space during the early spring of 2024, I spotted very few birds, and no birds of prey, which suggests a suboptimal trophic complexity. Taking inventory of these ecological deficits of the Monterey No. 2 waste site, interventions (such as introduction of forbs and woody plants) can then be considered in terms of how they would remediate these issues (move the land away from usage as pasture, increase connectivity with nearby forested streams, and foster a more diverse wildlife by providing bird habitat) and monitored accordingly.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS COAL MINES

Having more fully developed our understanding of rewilding, we return to the coal mining sites of Southern Illinois to examine their relevant characteristics. In doing so, we further

⁴ This is a symptom of the larger disappearance of prairie ecosystems in the state of Illinois, and the Midwest generally, due to European settlement (Anderson, 1991).

explore why these particular sites are suited for rewilding efforts, as well as where special attention needs to be paid in order to generate the previously established benefits of rewilding.

Abandoned coal mining sites typically have several unique challenges which make rewilding difficult; these challenges are largely manageable if proper site preparation is conducted after a mine ceases operation. Starting with the challenges posed by refuse chemistry, Daniels et al. (2015) determine that, while content varies depending on the site, coal refuse often contains higher amounts of sulfur and heavy metals than topsoil, which requires one to consider acidity and leachate production during reclamation. This is certainly visible at the Monterey No. 2 site (See Fig. 2), where red deposits near water sources indicate the oxidation of FeS_2 , which produces sulfide ions and increases acidity in the area. Along with issues such as over-compaction of waste particulate and the steep inclines of waste piles, these factors work against the establishment of a plant community on reclamation sites (Daniels et al., 2015). Most of these concerns, though, can be addressed in the initial preparation of the site after mining operations cease (avoiding over-compaction, applying lime to balance pH, less steep grading, etc.), which should be done even prior to rewilding. It follows that if companies are held accountable to properly prepare coal refuse sites, rewilding of a previously mined site is perfectly feasible.

Initial preparation of a site enables rewilding, but falls short of restoring long-term agricultural production, which means alternative uses of the land (such as for wilderness) are more likely to be supported by local communities and landowners. One issue that often persists long-term is low fertility of land; relatedly, the terrain of coal refuse sites is often difficult to artificially fertilize, and is best improved by a diverse plant community (Daniels et al., 2015). This means that the land is not likely suitable for monocultural farming, which is what makes up the majority of land use in Southern Illinois. Considering agricultural use of the land ruled out, alternative uses such as rewilding are more likely to be well received by locals, which in general is not true for land with economic potential. While abandoned coal mines present several challenges to reclamation and rewilding efforts, their lack of economic value eliminates a typical source of opposition from local communities.



Figure 2: Red soil color near water sources indicates the presence of iron oxide as a result of pyrite oxidation.

In order to guarantee that rewilding is implemented well, the community, to a greater degree, needs to be involved in the process of rewilding reclaimed coal mining sites. Carver et al. (2021) make clear that “Rewilding requires local engagement and support. Rewilding should be inclusive of all stakeholders and embrace participatory approaches and transparent local consultation in the planning process for any project” (pp. 1899). However, in sites such as Monterey No. 2, reclamation is managed by megacorporations such as ExxonMobil, which are based far from where reclamation occurs (see Fig. 3). This creates a disconnect between stakeholders and the agent doing the reclamation, which is likely to lead to actions which are not in the best interest of the local people and wildlife. This indicates a flaw in the current model which undermines community involvement and fails to encourage established principles such as constant monitoring that aid the success of a rewilding project.



Figure 3: Signs around the Monterey No. 2 in Albers, IL, depicting a business address located in Village Springs, TX.

CONCLUSION

As the nation moves away from coal-based energy production, it is necessary that the future of previously mined sites be considered. While conversion to pastureland in Southern Illinois has been a common reclamation practice, this practice falls short of supporting local ecosystems and communities to the maximum extent. Instead, more inclusive and involved rewilding projects which bear in mind the current and historical context of a site when revegetating the land are better suited for providing ecosystem services to local plant, animal, and human communities. This should be a consideration when mining companies and government agencies formulate reclamation plans, as it is a matter of not only promoting the development of mature natural ecosystems, but also public health, as shown by the dangers of waste leachates.

For mines abandoned before the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, this reclamation process can be implemented through projects funded by federal grants and run by non-profit organizations⁵. For mines abandoned after 1977, restoration is done at the expense of

⁵ One example of this is the Pennsylvania Nanticoke Creek Restoration project, funded by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs act and coordinated by the Earth Conservancy (O’Boyle, 2024).

the mining company according to plans drafted before mining began, with changes requiring lengthy administrative review. Rewilding, a relatively new approach to ecological restoration, is not often included in these plans, and as such, discouraged. That means it is up to local communities and non-profits to step up and commit to returning local lands to their natural states, an admittedly difficult task considering such projects are ineligible for federal funding. Nonetheless, pioneers such as Green Forests Work in Appalachia have managed to reforest and reverse successional stoppage on thousands of acres of previously mined land (Green Forests Work, 2024). The abandoned mines of Southern Illinois need similar organizations powered by passionate people willing to put in the work to fully rewild degraded landscapes. Only then will local communities be able to enjoy the splendor of successional maturity and the essential ecosystem services that come along with.

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Cyrus Izvorski

CAS'27, International Relations, Economics & Math

Cyrus adores fashion; that's their creative outlet, something to be shared with everyone. Art is inspired by one's environment. Providing depth into that relationship was the inspiration for this work.

HARD AND STRAIGHT

ARTIST NOTE

When given free domain to discuss something, my mind always goes to fashion. Fashion as a visual medium astonished me to no end, and when given the freedom to create anything I wanted: I chose to look at the intersection of fashion with gender. Many factors create great art, and I feel that the expressiveness of gender is the most fascinating facet.

This is not by any means an extensive look. Rather, the expression of my thoughts as I try to convey an introduction of fashion and gender to others in a digestible manner.

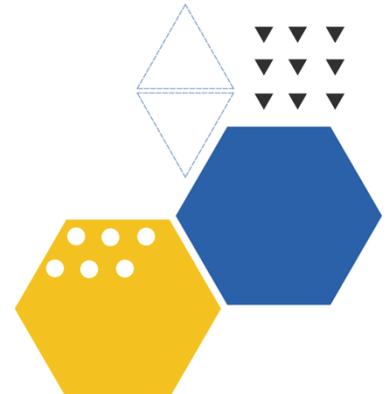
Fashion's a visual, physical art form, and so examples are best seen visually. I was glad to create a short informative video that I hope can serve the purpose of inspiring others. I recommend looking both inward and outwards if the reader resonates with this topic. Art is both what we feel and our environment, with no objective truth; rather it is a beautiful spectrum.

I am not the best with words, and I feel that what I created expresses my spectrum of emotions better than any language ever could. It's what motivates me to feel my best and to live my truth.

I hope you appreciate it!!!



Scan (or click) the QR code to watch the video (length 7:32).





Nithya Vuppalapati

CAS' 27, Neuroscience

Nithya, an aspiring Neuroscientist, likes taking photos, listening to music, and playing Wii Sports on her Nintendo Switch because she is not good at real sports.

THE MUSE ...

ARTIST STATEMENT: The Artist

The main question that I had going into the KHC seminar “Experimental Art” was: what makes good art? As I was exposed to different art pieces and different theorists, I came to appreciate the minds behind the masterpieces. We have been looking at art from the audience’s point of view, a critical lens that takes every paint stroke, edit, and costume to mean something. With this in mind, I wanted to explore the analysis of art from the other side of the frame—from the perspective of the artist. I wanted to explore the apparent dichotomy between the work done by the artists (as seen by audiences) and the work occurring in the mind of the artist to create meaning in mundane things. I drew inspiration from Fredrick Nietzsche’s theory which explores the contrast between Dionysian and Apollonian art. Through loose interpretation, Dionysus represents irrationality, the free spirited, and unpredictability while Apollonian represents something very organized and structured. Through my friendship with Edla I noticed how her stories and art are intentionally structured and easy to understand even as they explain complex worlds with intricate backstories. Through discussion with her I learned that she reads a lot, she loves creating fantasy worlds through her wild imagination, and she loves reflecting on these concepts with her friends and then writing stories. This inspired me to take two mediums, photography (very much organized, straightforward, and often used for scholarly work) and paint (embodies free spirit because you can create anything your heart desires) to depict the artistic process while exploring Nietzsche’s theories.

Oftentimes I use photography to capture the beauty that is already present in the world. It is always fun to see students at Boston University take a small break from rushing to classes to stop and take a picture of the sun during ‘golden hour’ or of the trees along Bay State. Everyone might have similar pictures of the same focus, but each picture holds a different story or context behind it. One person might take it as a memory of their first walk on campus if they are visiting, someone else might be submitting a photo to their class, and someone else might want to express their love for nature. Every photo has a story that sometimes can’t be deciphered from the angle, lighting, or camera. The interpretation of a photo can take many different paths with the power of context, and in this case, the context is Edla’s creative process. In other words, the painting is the story behind the photo, it is the fantasy that is running behind the reality. Hence the photos are arranged on top of the painting. If the photos are of Edla, the painting behind is like an abstract x-ray of her mind during her creative process.

I split my canvas into three sections, beginning with a tulip surrounded by darkness to represent the importance of reflection and solitude. For this, I drew inspiration from Zoe

Leonard and how she used art as a coping mechanism to become more comfortable with herself and her life after experiencing so much loss. She would stitch in solitude and deep reflection alone in her apartment, showing the importance of art in one's life. This is why I found her work *Strange Fruit*¹ so beautiful. Edla says she finds art and sketching to be very therapeutic to her too, especially when she is stressed, which is perhaps why there is a flower blooming in darkness. I was inspired by a similar artwork in Boston's Museum of Fine Art called *Blue Night*² by Matthew Wong.

I then drew the galaxy along the middle strip of my piece. I love painting galaxies, but I also included it because it signifies an exploration that has no limits. We are constantly exposed to different forms of media and art, and through these interests we end up exploring ourselves too. In this way I have always been able to learn about so many cultures, historical movements, and personalities. Some art is a reflection of oneself: what you learned from the world and from within. As a neuroscience student, I often see many parallels between the study of the mind and the study of the universe, both of which we have only barely begun to understand.

The last section was the enchanted forest, which is Edla's favorite aesthetic. It also gives a sense of comfort because we constantly hear stories about such forests through cartoons and fairytales. A childlike curiosity is required for creating art, freeing you from the social chains of being "serious."

I also took photos of Edla doing different things at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts. The photos of her with the books at the center of my piece represent the concept of exploration and how analysis of other artworks can open one's mind. Seeing her take a photo of an artwork from her perspective represents how she is creating her own lens through which to view the world; she is showing people what she sees through her artwork. The photo of her reflection on the mini house represents her creating her own worlds through her short stories, poems, and sketches. I drew inspiration from Mierle Laderman Ukeles who took multiple portraits to show a story; I arranged the photos in a collage format. The story and order of the frames is up to the viewer's opinion because there is no single artistic process one must follow.

I also took inspiration from Laura Mulvey in how I portrayed Edla. I had her look directly at the camera as if she were someone we are learning from, not just someone we are watching or observing. This allows us to avoid objectifying a woman the way she often is in cinema, when the protagonist or narrator is looking at her but she cannot look back. I also decided to take the photos in black and white so that one can focus on her actions and what she is showing without being distracted by the colors, the outfit, and the background. I also had her make a neutral face, allowing me to instead emphasize emotions through the colors of the painting in the background. The gold and silver represent the sudden bursts of inspiration that lead to making the artwork.

¹ [Zoe Leonard: Strange Fruit \(philamuseum.org\)](https://www.philamuseum.org/strange-fruit)

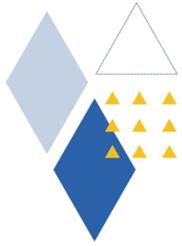
² [Matthew's blue | Art Gallery of Ontario \(ago.ca\)](https://www.artgalleryofontario.ca/matthew-wong)

Through this process I came to appreciate that good art stems from a beautiful artistic process that is unique to every individual. It depends on the ability to show how you view the world in a way that people cannot tell solely from your actions or how you portray yourself. It is a ticket to the mind of the maker.

Thank you, Edla.

THE MUSE





Edla Saint Rose

CAS'27, Psychology

Edla enjoys being a poet, an artist, a writer, and refuser of the confinement to a single life goal. Despises a word limit. Lover of many and wouldn't mind loving more.

... IN THE MUSEUM

ARTIST STATEMENT: The Artist

I am an artist by heart and soul, though all artists have their weak comings and can be short sighted. “I can’t do this.” “How can I achieve that?” Doubting their own skills, their own worth. From a young age I always struggled with reading and writing poetry. The words never clicked, my thoughts always raced ahead. I refused to enjoy poetry as a whole, believing my time would be better spent elsewhere, away from pen and paper—Be useful elsewhere, “as a woman you must race ahead, be quick, don’t stop.” It was toxic but it was a reality, her reality, what I was. However, that’s not who I am,

My identity is fluid, my identity has no bounds.

The term woman, fluid by nature.

What is a woman? There's no clear answer.

My first perception of poetry was rigid; it was a language: rules, lines, stanzas, haikus, all pointed jagged with edges, no concern for exploration. I denied its time. I denied its pleasures. Though public school has a way of pushing you into uncharted territory. I wrote haikus, odes, ballads, etc. Till one day we did not need to establish a rule, no maxim of lines, stanzas and styles gone—Simply write. And how I did write. Wrote on and on as if it was some cursed journal entry or paraded as if I was the ill look-alike to a 19th century poet. Wrote about my feelings, things that I can't shout, things I shouldn't shout.... Built up and twisted—Ugly truths, ugly feelings. Poems addressed to me. I never wrote a poem for someone else, much less anything that was made for the reader to feel pleasant. However—However, something addressed to what almost is like a mirror, o' how it's reflecting back at me. Nithya made for a wonderful partner for this art project and sits in a special counter in my heart.

LIFE'S LIGHT

Light rays through rain as its pursuit is gentle
 Pitter patter
 How lovely it falls
 Yet so far off
 As the sun still lingers
 Tones between two
 Colors of vibrant turquoise
 My sage greens of earth's life and super stellar novas
 Alongside, your blues and teals of the reflectance sky and deep blues of the sea below
 Creating a universe of viridian mix of a gem like prize
 Priceless
 Listening closely as you always do
 Through the up and likely lows
 But you don't mind, don't you
 Camera directed at me
 But whose attention is left for you?
 You're inspiring too
 Moon and stars but the sun is just so much brighter
 Its consistent warm watches over us
 You are like the sun
 Up above so high
 I reach for your thoughts, your perception views
 Every detail in the sky
 I try to understand
 You take me so well within your canvas
 Your camera
 But I shall do this for you
 For me
 Show me your light.

STILL DARKNESS

Darkness can find its way into anything

It's slow

Aching

But regrets seem to linger

Girls can only dream, can't they

Dream of being a great

Dream of being someone

Dream of being

To be

To belong

Yet you only seem to doubt yourself

Always at a low

But you shouldn't feel that way

Maybe I should...

I doubt I'm worth being the center of your painting

Doubt your compliments

Doubt your words

But I must trust you shouldn't I?

Trust is all an artist can do to make what they accomplish feel earned

Trust their skill

Trust their work

And trust the words of others

I must accept

But it gives me a bitter taste

I must stay open

But doubts always seem to linger as does a shadow over the moon

I hope you shall stay and listen

The moon is barely visible tonight

Deny the self doubts

We share too many doubts...

Your work is wonderful

(no stanza break)

I hope you like mine

Sun come out and play

The rain has gone away

The moon lingers too long in its darkness.

EPIPHANY

Soon it will be today. A future's yesterday, a tomorrow's future.

10... 9... 8...

How far are we allowed to dream of days that may never—No, we mustn't think of doubt because today is to celebrate.

7...6...5...

The day, today, is a good day to start anew. To go home, far away where it's all warm and welcoming.

4...

It's a good day to meet the sky. To fly up with the song bird that flew off for warmer weather as the geese boldly awaited till color weather.

3...

It's evening... maybe dusk in early to mid November morning. The dew still left on the leaves, frogs croak near a pond as children play on fields of freshly cut grass. Perfect day to start a dream.

2...

No room left for surprises, only a gentle breeze goes by as the seconds hits...

1...

There was a pause a moment just long enough to consider dread. Yet, BLAST. A plane, a jet, no but a rocketship and definitely not superman. Like a fairy, a fairy tale. It leaps high in the sky as a frog would to a lily pad. A queen in her own right, a ship painted with a sky's light blue in mind, but it will go further than that. It's like science, a chain reaction or greens and blues, art in its own right. No doubt left for lingering. Soaring high, up in the fall like sky. Painted blue, the brightest diamond in the sky. The ship passed through barriers of space and atmosphere, venturing further than anyone could hope towards a full moon. But once it stops just above the horizon of the moon another pause of uncertainty, yet we don't doubt this time. I write from your sun and now you look at me from your moon. I smile, as you hold out the camera towards me. Click, I hope I didn't blink this time. Your sun is warm against my skin, I hope you find comfort in my ever changing moon and stars. I wave, you wave back. You breathed in and out, satisfied... all settled again. You're home now, and I find home with you.

Thank you, Nithya.



Sid Sheth

ENG'27, Biomedical Engineering

Sid is from Long Island, NY, where he lives with two brothers, his parents, and grandparents. He enjoys running and reading, and he finds vacuuming to be very cathartic. Sid's long-term goal is to be a military physician!

RESISTING REVERSAL: Protecting The Inflation Reduction Act

INTRODUCTION

In 2021, Americans spent a total of \$4.3 trillion—18.3% of the nation's GDP—on health expenditures.¹ Of the \$4.3 trillion, pharmaceutical expenses accounted for \$576.9 billion, representing 13% of overall spending and a 7.7% increase from 2020.² In 2024, the National Institutes of Health expects prescription medication to cost the American economy anywhere from approximately \$795 billion to \$809 billion.³ Furthermore, the individual American is fiscally burdened: in 2019, Americans spent \$1,126 on medication per capita, while the aggregate 'comparable country' spent \$552.⁴ This egregious amount—more than double what citizens of comparable countries pay—is an enormous financial burden to the average American. As the American population ages, and as medication utilization and prices increase, this pace of spending does not seem likely to slow. Clearly, reform is necessary.

Fortunately, the Biden Administration has made prescription drug payment reform a cornerstone of current healthcare reform efforts. Through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which, among other reforms, allows Medicare to negotiate prescription medication prices and caps out-of-pocket spending at \$2,000 annually, the United States is making progress toward more affordable medication.⁵ Despite this progress, a hostile administration could endanger the reforms of the IRA. Protecting the Inflation Reduction Act and its healthcare reforms is a political priority.

REFORMING PART D: The Inflation Reduction Act

The Inflation Reduction Act's healthcare provisions most directly target Medicare Part D. The IRA's prescription drug payment reform seeks to build off the reforms initiated by the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and respond to the financial pressure faced by Medicare-eligible Americans. The Inflation Reduction Act introduces three core healthcare reforms: (1) Medicare drug price negotiation, (2) a \$2,000 yearly cap on out-of-pocket prescription drug costs, and (3) expanding low-income subsidies to 150% of the federal poverty level.⁶ Over the total course of implementation—from 2022 to 2029—the government will directly negotiate with drug companies to reach an agreement on new Medicare reimbursement prices for 60 drugs.⁷ In addition to these negotiations, as of 2023, all Medicare beneficiaries will not pay more than \$35 per month for insulin, lifting a major financial burden off of diabetic Americans.⁸ Beginning in 2024, Medicare beneficiaries will not make any payments during the catastrophic coverage

period. Then, in 2025, Medicare Part D recipients will have out-of-pocket costs capped at \$2,000. Additionally, Medicare recipients will be allowed to split their out-of-pocket costs into monthly installments.⁸ At payments of \$166.67 per month, these installments will significantly reduce the financial burden of Medicare recipients, translating to annual savings of \$8,100 to \$9,200.⁹ Finally, taking effect this year, expanded low-income subsidies will significantly expand low-income Medicare recipients' access to affordable medication.⁸

The IRA's healthcare provisions are comprehensive. These reforms will have tangible financial impacts on the three biggest stakeholder groups: the government, Medicare recipients, and drug companies. According to congressional budget reports, the IRA's medication negotiation component is expected to save the federal government \$288 billion in Medicare spending over a decade.⁵ By acting as a negotiator, the American government is also setting an important new political and legal precedent. By giving the government authority to negotiate with private companies on the behalf of American citizens, it is plausible to assume that future administrations might capitalize on federal negotiation to expand social services. Medicare recipients are also slated to receive massive savings from the IRA reforms. Affordable Care Act Marketplace consumers are expected to save \$800 per year, four million Medicare recipients will benefit from insulin price caps, and nearly 19 million American seniors will save \$400 per year when out-of-pocket prices are capped.¹⁰ For financially strapped seniors, disabled persons, and the many low-income Medicare recipients, these savings will be invaluable to ensuring financial and health security. On the other hand, drug companies are expected to take the financial burden of savings. It is expected that drug companies will have smaller profit margins and some experts believe that fewer drugs will be produced, although research has yet to define a monetary impact and substantiate these claims. As of 2023, Johnson & Johnson, F. Hoffman-La Roche, Merck and Co., Pfizer, AbbVie, and Bayer all grossed over \$50 billion in annual revenue.¹¹ Even if these operating profits are reduced, none of these manufacturers will fail. The savings to Medicare recipients and the government far outweigh the financial burden placed on these profitable mega-corporations.

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is very plausible that in the 2024 election, an administration that is hostile to the Inflation Reduction Act will take office (read: second Trump Administration). This is the greatest challenge to the IRA. Because the Trump campaign does not issue policy memos, it is difficult to make accurate assertions about the Trump administration's challenges to medication payment reform. However, in 2025, the Trump Administration would be responsible for extending—or cutting—premium subsidies for ACA Marketplaces.¹² To protect the premium subsidies, I strongly recommend making the 150% cutoff for the low-income subsidy permanent or extending them through the 2028 presidential election. If the premium subsidies are not extended, approximately 19.7 million Americans could see their premium jump from \$111 to \$605 per month.¹³ An additional \$500 per month in healthcare costs could be financially catastrophic for many Americans. Additionally, premium subsidies are primarily responsible for the major increase in Medicare enrollment from 2021 to 2024, jumping from 12 to 21.5 million.¹⁴ Although politically difficult, it might be possible to extend the premium subsidies by attaching it to a bipartisan bill and relying on its popularity with citizens to encourage

representatives and senators to vote in favor. Because premium subsidies are at least partially responsible for such a significant portion of the US population having newfound access to affordable healthcare, failing to renew these policies would be a tragic reversal of progress and a health access crisis.

Furthermore, there are current legal challenges to the Inflation Reduction Act. The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), the Global Colon Cancer Association, and the National Infusion Center Association (NICA) have sued on claims that the IRA gives too much regulatory power to the federal government.¹⁵ Currently, these suits have not been considered because judges have claimed that the path of redress must begin via the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).¹⁵ Taking advantage of the legal precedent set by US District Judges, the Biden Administration could prevent or delay the challenging of the medication negotiation. To further protect the IRA, the Biden Administration should take advantage of this administrative loophole and create new forms, bureaus, and administrative offices for the key reforms. These new loopholes would prevent courts from overturning fundamental aspects of the Inflation Reduction Act by removing legal recourse as the first means of address. By forcing plaintiffs to go through the government, the DHHS and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services could adequately prepare legal defenses and devise workarounds to their challenges. Given that the negotiations are a core pillar of the IRA and are expected to save the government hundreds of billions and save Americans tens of millions, every option to protect these negotiations must be fully considered.

Although American healthcare has always been exceptionally expensive, the Inflation Reduction Act is excellent progress towards a cheaper, more accessible, and more equitable healthcare system. But to ensure that these protections persist for Americans now and into the future, friendly administrations must enshrine Medicare expansions, consider savvy bureaucratic engineering, and continue to implement and innovate new reforms.

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Lionel Wolfe

ENG'27, Mechanical Engineering

Lionel Wolfe looks to combine his passion for creating, the arts, and music as well as for working with animals with his concern for the humanitarian consequences of climate change.

SERVICE DOG COMMUNITY AWARENESS

PROCESS STATEMENT



Scan (or click) the QR code to view the full project flyer & process statement.

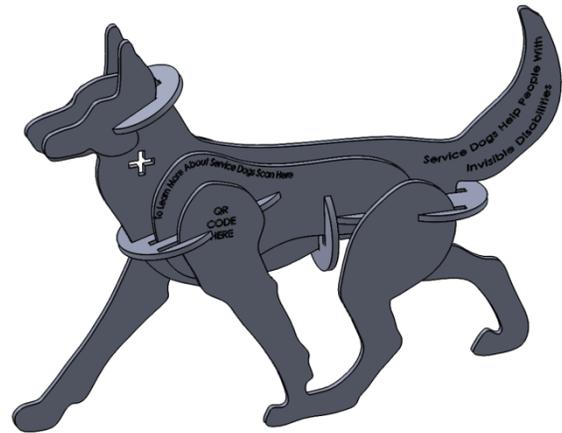
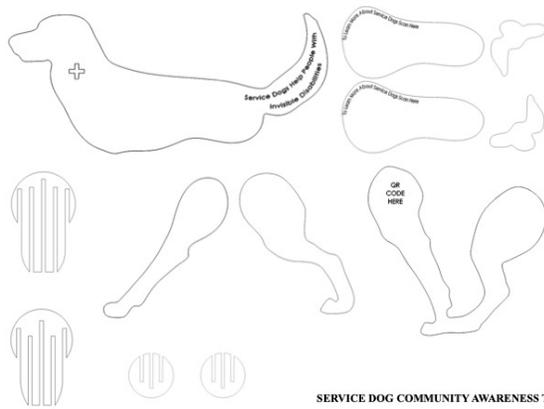
My research paper focused on the potential success of various avenues of reform to improve the lives of service animals and their handlers. Ultimately, I concluded that increasing education was one of the most accessible paths for progress as it did not have to contend with the complicated nature of the legal or medical systems but still addressed a significant source of hardship.

Therefore, when translating my research into a secondary medium, I decided to create an eye-catching, community-building, age-inclusive, educational statue system. This project is intended to capitalize on the attention-grabbing nature of animals and physical statues while still being easy and affordable to install. I intended this statue to be easily modified and built by communities with varying accesses to tools. Additionally, thanks to the use of Q.R. codes, flyers like this one can be easily disseminated via the statue as well as modified to target different audiences, ranging from young children to adults.

As with creating any three-dimensional object, substantial difficulty arises from simplifying the construction process, a struggle I tackled by applying a well-known slot system reminiscent of children's toys that only requires flat material. Additionally, I was once again reminded of the number of pieces that go into developing community projects and installations, ranging from informational flyers to comprehensive assembly plans.

Ultimately, I hope this project can serve as a template for educational initiatives that help address the little-known world of service animals and their handlers.

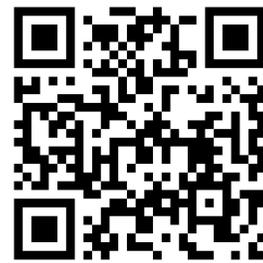
CREATIVE REMEDIATION PROJECT



Scan (or click) the QR code to view the project template.



Scan (or click) the QR code to view the project rendering.



Scan (or click) the QR code to view the project assembly video.



Hanna

CAS'24, Economics; Political Science & Philosophy

Hanna graduated from Boston University's KHC in the Spring of 2024. She now works full-time in Washington, DC as an economist, and plans to go to law school in the future. Her piece in the journal is an excerpt from her Keystone Project titled, *The Philosophy of Grief: To Philosophize is to Learn to Live*.

PHILOSOPHY OF RECOLLECTION IN GRIEF

*Though we need to weep your loss,
You dwell in that safe place in our hearts,
Where no storm or night or pain can reach you.*
— John O'Donohue, "On the Death of the Beloved"

"Draw what you see and not what you know."

These words live as an echo amidst my grief. My grandmother, who died of cancer a year ago, was one of the most influential figures in my life. She lies at the heart of one of my earliest memories where, when I first attempted to sketch a foot in two dimensions, she stood before me with heels hidden behind ten toes flat on the ground. "Draw what you see and not what you know," she had said. When I did, I created something I was proud of. This moment served as the spark for a life of artistic expression. It was the first time I ever saw myself as an artist. In the coming years, I would win national awards for my art, in which, at every step of the creative process, my grandmother's guidance served as a beacon of light and a motivation to produce. For the first two decades of my life, art was not merely an aspect of my identity. It was an intuition and something irrefutably inseparable from who I was.

When my grandmother received her cancer diagnosis two years before her death, every bit of artistry within me came to a slamming halt. I refused to accept what doctors described as the inevitable. Until she got better, I wouldn't create. I couldn't. But she never stopped asking to see my projects, and so I kept trying. All I could muster were messy, half-finished depictions of abstractions I couldn't explain. Anything I made was lackluster. Although I had been embarrassed to show her my failures, she was always proud. She liked the abstractions. She liked the fact that they weren't finished. But her validations didn't land, and as she died, the artist in me slowly succumbed to silence. I no longer had works of art to show her, and eventually, she no longer had the strength to ask. Art always felt just out of reach.

When she died, I desperately tried to hone the artist within me through recollecting my grandmother's memory. Despite my efforts, I felt uninspired. In fact, the more I clawed at the past, the more frustrated I became. My grandmother's memory lived as nothing but an open wound, where the things that once brought us joy lit a match under the anger, depression, and frustration of my grief. Every attempt I made to connect with her memory served as a reminder of the magnitude of her loss. I felt stuck, and unable to focus on anything other than what no longer was. As the artist within me waned, I felt the warmth of my grandmother's memory fade as if sinking to the bottom of an ocean. Each time I returned to a canvas, I dove somewhere I

wasn't ready to go; the further I swam, the farther those memories seemed. Her memory drifted to a place that felt unreachable without drowning. Through a lens of grief, creating felt impossible.

Every visitor at her funeral consoled me with a similar sentiment: She lives on within you. Where I craved to be comforted by this thought, I only felt shame.

In the woes of grief, there is a valid and entirely necessary inclination to seek comfort in memory. Yet in my own experiences of grief, I have seen the ways our relationship with memory can exacerbate the grieving process. Some avoid recollection, as memories are too painful. Alternatively, some (like myself) cling to memory for closure and resolutions to unanswered questions. In scouring memory for consolation it simply cannot offer, recollection distorts our relationship with the ones we've lost and thwarts our ability to form a post-mortem relationship with them. In this sense, recollection's primary function no longer serves to derive comfort in the memory of the deceased, and stifles the grieving process. In spending too much time in the past, we fail to move onward. How do we approach recollection so that memory promotes the grieving process? How can philosophy situate memory not solely in the past, but in the present?

In this essay, I will use philosophies and psychologies of grief along with my own experiences to propose two activities vital to the grieving process: passive and active recollection. The former constitutes typical recollection in grief, where the survivor immerses themselves in the memories of the deceased. However, this recollection must not seek to emphasize what was lost, but instead derive lessons and emotions left behind. Active recollection entails the application of these goods to present day life. In a world without the deceased, the survivor actively utilizes the lessons and emotions of the extant relationship. An oscillation between these recollections is vital to moving through the grieving process, where the survivor reconciles a loss of their own identity upon the loss of a loved one.

It is necessary to understand the role recollection plays in the grieving process. Michael Cholbi proposes that we grieve for those who play a key role in our "practical identities."¹ Practical identity—introduced by Christine Korsgaard—is a personalized identity informed by religion, profession, and most notably, relationships. It makes "life worth living" and "actions worth undertaking."² When we lose a meaningful relationship, we grieve to the extent that "our practical identities are invested in their existence."³ The emotional complexity of grief reflects the multi-faceted nature of what was lost. In reflecting on the ways in which the bereaved contributed to our identities, we reconcile not only the loss of the bereaved, but also the aspects of our identity fundamentally changed in their absence. Recollection enables us to come to terms with not only the loss of the deceased, but also a loss in ourselves. Consequently, Cholbi argues there are two causes of grief: a material object, and a formal object.⁴ Grief's material

¹ Cholbi, Michael. *Grief: A Philosophical Guide*. Princeton University Press, 2022. 31.

² Korsgaard, C. M. *The Sources of Normativity*. Cambridge University Press, 1996. 101.

³ Cholbi, 31.

⁴ Ibid, 57.

object (the fact that elicits a given emotional response) is the deceased individual. The formal object (why the emotion is a valid response to the fact) is the relationship between the griever and the deceased. The loss of this meaningful relationship is what constitutes a loss of our practical identity. Recollection must reconcile both these material and formal objects of grief.

Recollection in grief is multi-dimensional, as the grieving process responds to multi-faceted loss. Psychologists Margaret Stroebe and Hank Schut propose a Dual Process Model for recollection in grief of loss-orientation and restoration-orientation. The former describes a survivor actively seeking to process and lament through rumination on what was lost, and what could have been. Loss-orientation is the “backward-looking dimension” of recollection, most often associated with lament.⁵ Restoration-orientation— forward-looking recollection— involves “substantial changes that are secondary consequences of loss.”⁶ It manifests as undertaking tasks previously associated with the deceased, post-mortem arrangements, and activities situated in a world without the deceased. Both orientations are vital to the grieving process, as the griever comes to terms with what was lost (in looking backward) and moves through this loss in the present (in looking forward.) Stroebe and Schut highlight an important aspect of the grieving process: to adequately respond to and reconcile multi-faceted loss, grief must oscillate between different kinds of recollection. But while loss- and restoration-orientations address the loss of the deceased, they do not necessarily address a loss of personal identity.

Passive recollection incorporates practical identity into Stroebe and Schut’s theory of loss-orientation. While reflecting on what was lost is a natural component of reconciling the loss of the deceased, one can also benefit from passively recollecting what the deceased left behind. Samuel Scheffler describes our relationships with the deceased as “archived.”⁷ Although they are inaccessible in that we can no longer directly converse with the dead, we can still retrieve the emotions and lessons associated with their memory. In passive recollection, we retrieve the lessons and memories of the deceased that profoundly contributed to our identities. While it is intuitive to reflect on what was lost (and to an extent, this lament is a necessary component of the grieving process), the onus must also be placed on deriving lasting goods from an extant relationship (through memories, lessons, and emotions) to move through the grieving process. In backward-facing recollection focused solely on what was lost, grief remains stagnant.

In forward-facing recollection, we work to actively redefine and rebuild aspects of our identity using what was derived from passive recollection. In passive recollection we identify how the deceased contributed to our identities, and active recollection works to repair and redefine these aspects of our identity damaged or missing in their absence. It entails adopting the lessons our loved ones taught us and finding ways to incorporate their memory into the survivor’s ongoing life. In actively applying these goods, our relationship with memory is fluid and alive, as perspective alters our outlook on memory and memory changes our perspective on

⁵ Ibid, 79.

⁶ Schut, Margaret Stroebe, Henk. “THE DUAL PROCESS MODEL OF COPING WITH BEREAVEMENT: RATIONALE AND DESCRIPTION.” *Death Studies* 23. 214.

⁷ Scheffler , Samuel. “Aging as a Normative Phenomenon,” *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*, 2016. 506.

life. Without implementing this restorative approach, Scheffler sees recollection as a reflection of “the survivor's need to revisit and reaffirm the value of the past” and “a deliberate turning of attention away from the world.”⁸ In failing to apply the memories of the deceased to present life, backwards-facing recollection situates grief in the past, thwarting its progress. The aspects of our identity informed by the deceased remain unwhole, and the emotions and lessons of that relationship remain inaccessible. The relationship is not archived, as Scheffler describes, but dormant. To confront and reconcile loss, one must recollect both backwards (passively) and forwards (actively) to contribute to well-being.

The first time I actively recollected was in Florence, Italy. I sought to see an artwork my grandmother and I had hoped to one day see together: Michelangelo's *David*. When I entered the Accademia Gallery, I watched that statue captivate an awed crowd. *David* stood upon a pedestal under a grandiose rotunda, every carving of the ceiling arched to frame his form. Down a long, narrow hallway lined with other artworks of Michelangelo's, patrons shuffled forward, mouths agape and chins upturned, speaking only in hushed murmurs. Every breath echoed against a tangible silence. And I, too, couldn't look away. After 21 years of admiring this work through photographs, here *David* was before me, a symbol of my inspiration, and a world-renowned representation of beauty and artistic triumph. It had been years since I considered artmaking. But where I hoped to finally feel inspired, to feel awe and a newfound sense of artistic motivation, I once again felt a deep-rooted, physically painful sadness.

As I crept towards *David*, his look of determination emulated fear. In his gaze I saw my grandmother's dying face, her hollowed cheeks, lips cracked and too weak to smile. I saw a lifetime of an artist's soul in *David*, ultimately defeated by the inevitability of death. Behind her diminishing silhouette, the pained rasp that had etched itself permanently in her throat, and the slow depreciation of everything she once loved, I had seen life for its end. As I saw nothing but death in *David*, I stepped backward.

In the other direction, far from the crowd and lining the perimeter of the hallway stood four large blocks of stone. Etched within them were mere impressions of figures, half-finished silhouettes of prisoners. One was a suggestion of a torso with a flat slab of rock in lieu of a head. Another had a body void of hands, as if its fingers were carved behind the stone, sealed and struggling to break free. Only one had a face, a mere ghost of a frown. Its arm lazily draped over its forehead, as if it were exhausted from attempting to escape the stone it was carved from— as if it were on the brink of giving up. I had always looked for beauty in art. But in the face of these grotesque works that, at first glance, looked juvenile compared to the perfection of *David*, I was in awe. A forgotten memory came to mind: My grandmother once affirmed that she, too, wanted to come to Florence, but not to see *David*. She wanted to see these prisoners.

Matthew Ratcliffe describes another model of recollection proposed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. It echoes Scheffler's philosophies, cautioning against excessive coping through memory. Spending too much time with memory (and too much time in the past) produces a “questionable” closeness to those passed, where memory holds the deceased “in our imagination

⁸ Ibid, 518.

without their ever being able to place us ‘in question.’”⁹ Such remembrance places the past on a pedestal, where the griever’s relationship with memory attempts to mimic their once relationship with the deceased. Merleau-Ponty argues that a productive approach to remembrance “respects [the dead]” in upholding “the accent of their freedom in the incompleteness of their lives.”¹⁰ The difference lies in an emphasis on what is left behind instead of what is lost. Rather than attempting to utilize memory to replace a relationship lost, we might allow memory to serve in its place, acknowledging nothing can be the same. When a loved one departs (especially unexpectedly), they often leave many unanswered questions behind. Merleau-Ponty’s approach to recollection does not seek to fill in these gaps but acknowledges them and works towards accepting them. Remembrance functions not to honor the deceased but to actively influence the identity of the living. Approaching recollection in this way liberates memory constrained to a past version of ourselves, free to contribute to who we are now.

My grandmother did not approach Michelangelo’s *Prisoners* as conventional works of art, but rather, as a process. There was nothing conventionally moving about them— their proportions were skewed and expressions half etched. Yet they were provocative, intriguing as an antithesis to the perfection of *David*. As Michelangelo sought to evoke emotion and meaning at the expense of traditional beauty, he let go of what it meant to produce perfection. These prisoners served as immortalized depictions of his artistic vision, demonstrating the effort and grit necessary to produce. In these works I saw art for the sake of artmaking, and life not as a means to its end, but as a process. I thought back to how my grandmother admired my half-finished artworks. What she had loved most about my art was the process. To see me create. To her, art was not about translating an image to a page. It was about finding beauty where most would not. In the raw incompleteness of Michelangelo’s *Prisoners*, we are shown the block that *David* used to be. This display of process gives us an appreciation for what had to come before perfection, in all difficulties, strife, and grief. I knew my grief would never fully cease. It would always be a work in progress. But just as these prisoners demonstrated, it is the process that matters most.

I wanted to tell her that I was here— that I made it not to *David*, but to the prisoners. That I could see my grief in their struggle and myself in their imperfections. That, after seemingly losing my love for art, they had sparked something within me. Because of her, I appreciated art in a way I hadn’t in years. In these moments, my grandmother helped me cope with the grief of her own death. She taught me something, even in her absence. For the first time since her death, I felt she was alive within me.

In passive recollection, we reconcile the external loss of the deceased in looking backwards. Driven by longing and a want to recall what had once been, we engage with memories buried deep. It is instinct to claw to solve unanswered questions, to fill voids, to craft new memories where love can keep on living. When my grandmother’s memory could not heal me the way I had hoped, this kind of recollection left me frustrated, and buried the knife of grief deeper.

⁹ Ratcliffe, Matthew. *Grief Worlds: A Study of Emotional Experience*. MIT Press, 2023. 130.

¹⁰ Merleau-Ponty, M. 1988. *In praise of philosophy and other essays*. Northwestern University Press. 65

Ratcliffe describes this as “self-defeating” and “the eradication of a [deceased] person’s distinctiveness.”¹¹ We must approach passive recollection not in saving what was lost, but in reclaiming what was left behind. In taking the memory, lessons, and impressions of those we lost, we connect with the memory of the deceased. In this, we must embrace grief’s lamentations with the goal of identifying where our pains are, so not to completely heal them, but to learn to live on with them. We must work to fill the voids of grief ourselves, not through living in the memory of the deceased, but in allowing their memory to live through us.

In actively turning our attention away from the loss and towards ourselves, the memory of the deceased, too, turns its attention to the present. In seeing Michelangelo’s *Prisoners*, I didn’t actively search for a memory of my grandmother. Her memory came to me. Recollection was not stuck within the past but was placed in the context of my life in her absence. In seeing myself within these prisoners, my grandmother’s memory showed me that grief must be felt, that grief can be something beautiful. While our relationship with memory can never replace our relationship with the deceased, it can act as a means to connect with them under new terms. The death of a person does not mean the death of a relationship. Through the survivor, it lives on.

I began to rethink what was said at my grandmother’s services: That her memory would live on within me. In *Death and Nonexistence*, philosopher Palle Yourgrau writes: “Unlike the dead, our memories of the dead are alive and well... the dead relative is every bit as real as, though less existent than, the living memory” (Yourgrau 49). Grief changes our relationship to memory, and in doing so, changes our relationship with the dead. In both passive and active reflection, I spend time with my grandmother. It is where she influences me, where she teaches me. And that is what she had lived for— to guide me. While grief coaxes our relationship with the memory of the deceased to replace our extant relationship with the dead, the griever must acknowledge that this relationship can never be the same. Instead of passively utilizing memory to attempt to mimic a relationship loss, we must actively apply memory to our lives, where recollection informs us and propels us to continue living for the sake of the deceased. Recollection becomes active so long that we continue to live despite our loved ones’ absence. Memory outlives death. Love outlives death. In its calls to reflect, grief keeps the ones we love alive, so long as we continue living on in their absence.

Cicero writes that, in grief, our experiences with those lost do not die with them. Rather, they are “nourished and made more vivid by reflection and memory.”¹² It has been three years since my grandmother’s diagnosis, and nearly a year since her death. I still haven’t returned to art. Still, I have better honed my skills of drawing what I see, and not what I know. While I may no longer see my grandmother, I know her memory. One day, when I am ready, I will create once again. For now, what I know of my grandmother’s memory will inform the way I see myself, for as long as I am fortunate enough to grieve.

¹¹ Ratcliffe. 124.

¹² Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *Cicero. De Senectute, de Amicitia, de Divinatione*. Translated by William Armistead Falconer, Harvard University Press.

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Kilachand Honors College

91 Bay State Road, Suite 115
Boston, MA 02215

bu.edu/khc