

*The 11th
Art
Writer
Award
for High School
Students*

第11回高校生アトライター大賞
英語部門優秀作品集

Award-winning Essays in English Category

School of Art and Design, University of Tsukuba

Claude Monet. Water Lilies, 1906. The Art Institute of Chicago. (Partially processed image)

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2026年8月16日
高校生アトライター大賞選考委員会
筑波大学芸術専門学群

August 16, 2026
Selection Committee of the Art Writer Award for High School Students
School of Art and Design, University of Tsukuba

The 11th Art Writer Award for High School Students

Essays in English

Write your thoughts on art in English within 1000 words.

Topic Themes

Japanese Art

Write about Japanese art.

Creative Experience

Write about your experience of creating art work.

Art and Life 2024

Write about art and life in contemporary worldwide situations.

You may write an essay that spans more than one topic.

Application deadline: Monday, Sept 30, 2024

Announcement of Results: March, 2025 (online)

Awards

(Number of awards may change according to the volume of submissions.)

Grand Prize – 1 to 3 entries / Award for Excellence – 5 to 10 entries / Winning Entries – 10 to 20 entries

Rules

Applicants must be high school students or students attending a public institution equivalent to an upper secondary school (in Japan, mostly ages ranging from 15 to 18 years old) at the time of the application.

The essay must be written by the individual within 1000 words in English.

Please give each essay a title.

You may think and write logically about the topic like a short thesis.

You may talk about your personal feelings as you might when reminiscing.

You may also focus on reporting a topic as would a journalist.

Although “Art” will be assumed to describe visual arts focused on art and design, the essay writer is free to define art according to his or her own view.

Organizations

Hosted by the School of Art and Design, University of Tsukuba

Endorsed by InSEA (International Society for Education Through Art)

Cooperated by Turner Color Inc.

Directed by the Art Environment Support in the University of Tsukuba

Contact

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Award Winners in the 11th Art Writer Award for High School Students, Essays in English

March, 2025. Selection Committee of the Art Writer Award for High School Students, School of Art and Design, University of Tsukuba

Tokihisa Higo, Yoshihiko Iida, Hiroshi Ito, Fumiya Kawashima, Shinichi Koyama, Gary McLeod, Satomi Mitsui, Shinji Miyasaka, Fumiaki Murakami, Toshio Naoe, Sakai Rodriguez Oscar Eduardo, Bao Suomiya, Tomomi Suwa, Kazuhumi Takeda, Sari Yamamoto, Nahoko Yoshida, Mima Yuzawa
University of Tsukuba Student Selection Committee

A total of 130 entries from 14 countries: 2 Grand Prizes, 7 Award for Excellence, and 23 Winning Entries

In alphabetical order of the writers' last names

Award	FirstName	LastName	Title	Country	HighSchool
Grand Prize	Naomi	Gan	Sparks	Singapore	School of the Arts, Singapore
Grand Prize	Lovelie Yuriko	Zahida	Art as an Escape and Solace	Indonesia	MAU Amanatul Ummah - Islamic Senior High School Surabaya, Indonesia
Award for Excellence University of Tsukuba Student Award	Camryn	Haag	Thinking in Deadlines: My Creative Experience or Lack Thereof	United States	Eastern High School
Award for Excellence	Fuka	Hayashida	How to enjoy art	Japan	Kwansei Gakuin Senior High School
Award for Excellence	Yuu	Kikuchi	She speaks to me	Japan	Kwansei Gakuin Senior High School
Award for Excellence	Moa	Maeda	Looking into a blank canvas is like-	Japan	Makuhari Junior And Senior High School
Award for Excellence	Karen	Mizoue	Nude model	Japan	Shoyo High School
Award for Excellence	Nanya	Nishant	Measuring art through life	India	Christ Nagar International School
Award for Excellence	Manaka	Ogura	The Power Of Art	Japan	Tokyo Metropolitan Senior High School of the Arts
Winning Entries	Anastasia	Adeishvili	The Familiar Moon - An Everlasting Companion: Definition of art and how it helps shape a human being	Georgia	Tbilisi Classical Gymnasium
Winning Entries	Ruka	Adomi	Looking at them beneath the bridge	Japan	Kwansei Gakuin Senior High School
Winning Entries	Sheila Fatima	Ali	Crafting Reality: A Journey Through Art, Science, and Self	Indonesia	SMA Pesantren Unggul Al Bayan Putri Sukabumi
Winning Entries	Leen	Bin Mahfooz	Mental Brushstrokes	Saudi Arabia	Kingdom International Schools
Winning Entries	Ni Wayan Utari Sathi	Dewi	The Art of Finding Myself	Indonesia	CHIS High School
Winning Entries	Sakura	Hamamura	The art of embodying desire	Japan	Kwansei Gakuin Senior High School
Winning Entries	Nayu	Henmi	Connecting Different Cultures Across Time and Space Through Art	Japan	Saitama Municipal Omiya International Secondary School
Winning Entries	Mikoto	Hiyama	Background of my painting life.	Japan	Wayo Kudan Girls High School
Winning Entries	Ray	Johnson Jr	The Art of Doubt	United States	Lakeview High School
Winning Entries	Yuu	Kikuchi	Fascinated by the color	Japan	Kwansei Gakuin Senior High School
Winning Entries	Angel	Mireil	Rediscovering Art	Indonesia	CHIS School
Winning Entries	Yudai	Murashima	Painting Beyond Self	Japan	Suijo High School
Winning Entries	Niamh	Murphy	Art Block and Overexposure	Ireland	St Angela's College
Winning Entries	Yoshino	Naka	Seeing The Pillow Book in Works of Monet	Japan	Utsunomiya Higashi Senior High School
Winning Entries	Taiyo	Nakagawa	Philosophy of Photography and Perception: Dialogue Beyond the Moment	Japan	Shiba High School
Winning Entries	Hisato	Okamoto	"An Artistic Journey Through Interconnectedness"	Japan	Okayama Joto High School
Winning Entries	Riho	Otsu	Embrace our "Difference" as "Uniqueness"	Japan	Gunma Kokusai Academy Secondary School
Winning Entries	Maya	Shivaji	How Art can Break the Cycle	Japan	Tokyo Inter-High School
Winning Entries	Nanako	Takahashi	Life and death at your fingertips	Japan	International Christian University High School
Winning Entries	Thu	Vu	Art and Life or Art is Life	Vietnam	Tran Phu Gifted Highschool
Winning Entries	Patricia Isabel	Wibisono	Creating Art Like a Child	Indonesia	CHIS School Bali
Winning Entries	Yui	Yamaoka	What is original?	Japan	Kwansei Gakuin Senior High School
Winning Entries	Mikayla	Young	A Change in Medium	New Zealand	Rolleston College

Grand Prize

Naomi Gan (School of the Arts, Singapore)

Sparks

I'm currently attending an art school for literary arts. This means that outside of the fundamental academic subjects, my school life consists of additional art lessons that I'm graded on at the end of every term; and that at the end of every term I'm left to stare at that mediocre grade again.

My life is a series of sparks. I have an uncountable number of things I love, and many more I've abandoned in search of the one, my purpose. Perhaps my life could be seen as the night sky, filled with so many stars in that backdrop of darkness. Writing was one of those stars, something I felt so strongly about at first, like a tug then a pull — an undeniable attraction towards this art that possessed my fingertips to type before the cold from the real world washed over and left me stranded in this vast space, lost again.

the tortured artist

Ballad

from arles with a half broken mind
and a cut off left ear,
he came to saint-rémy to house
his fervent hopes and fears.

there, he worked facing window light,
each stroke made in dim dark
was blessed by apollo yet stayed
mournfully unremarked.

emotions set in the *night sky*
swirls of luminous hope,
yellow against sorrowed dark blue
he sought a way to cope.

the allure of van gogh's canvas
lay deeply in his soul:
his work, tormented and tragic
prized for the joy they stole.

beauty teased his now tired eyes
that healed and hurt by art,
perfectionism and self hate
took his entire heart.

he gave so much of himself that
there was none left for him
anxiety clouded his mind,
money tight, his future grim.

manic episodes, confused days
hundred paintings produced
in wild search for a masterpiece,
exhaustion induced.

the allure of van gogh's canvas
lay deeply in his soul:
his work, tormented and tragic
prized for the joy they stole.

eleven works of *sunflowers*,
did none remind him why
rain was necessary to bloom?
he wished to say goodbye

to the torrent plaguing his mind
so he held hands with death;
like trees *uprooted* by harsh storm,
struggled, and took last breath.

the allure of van gogh's canvas
lay deeply in his soul:
his work, tormented and tragic
prized for the joy they stole.

in a golden *wheatfield with crows*
where sun shines eternal
may he rest under *cypress* trees
with the flowers vernal.

Being judged by grades was suffocating, and very naturally, I began questioning my reason for creating art. "Why?" I asked myself every time I stepped into the classroom. There exists a question for people at this intersection of love and hate, after the initial passion has simmered down and reality grounds them. They ask themselves: "Do you live to create art or create art to live?"

The question of producing art meaningfully with a passion or as a means to an end consumed me. I felt like I leaned towards the latter, I hadn't been scoring well for arts after all. Indeed, even the word "passion," a core value that my school upholds, feels foreign to me. Surely, I had loved this style of expression under the name of "art" once, but creating on demand has doused out that spark.

While pondering that question, I was learning to write poetry in class. We were asked to write ballads — a narrative poem to be sung — and I wrote mine on Van Gogh as I felt like his tale suited the tragic nature of the form.

In some ways, his life serves as a perfect illustration for the question I posed earlier. He was mentally-ill and considered many of his paintings to be failures, only ever selling one in his lifetime. Yet, he translated that pain onto canvas and turned it into beauty, producing the widely known "The Starry Night." Van Gogh critiqued it as a failure, even if the rest of the world thought otherwise, too late.

Alone under that night sky, through that asylum window, he brushed a whirlwind of emotions upon the blank canvas. "Hope is in the stars," he said, and drew a sky full of them. I felt akin to him, having wanted to keep capturing the sparks, and the stars, the brightness in my life in blue-ish surroundings, but as I navigated the bizarre mix of emotions brought by my ever-changing relationship with art, I became unsure.

I wondered how he could love art despite all these setbacks. Perhaps art hurt and healed him at the same time. But what if it was art itself that tormented me?

When I applied for art school, I hadn't known what I wanted to put out there, but I believed that, just like everyone else, there was something in me worth expressing. After just passing my first graded assessment, the spark wavered. My thoughts went from "I'm not talented" to "I don't deserve to be here" to a fear of failing and eventually a fear of writing itself.

As much as my outstretched hand reaches for the sparkling stars up above, I will never touch it. Likewise, the hypocrisy of my situation taunted me: I'll never like art because I'm not good at it, but I'll never be good at art because I don't like it.

In this absurdity exists a great sense of loss in my writing. My passion was a spark, a flash that burnt as bright as I could before effectively

Figure 1. the tortured artist, *ballad*

dying out. I have gone through multiple stages of denial, hatred and eventually stopped caring. I gave up. I neither lived to write nor wrote to live, and that loss of purpose in my now meaningless pursuit of arts stifled me.

I am not an artist. I have always refrained from thinking so. My school produces uniforms like club jackets with a logo at the back stating your art form, and in my case, it would have written “literary arts.” However, I’ve avoided it for three years now because if I were to wear it, then I would be a walking lie of false fervor. There is no desire in me to create, and hence, I did not think I deserved to sport that shirt.

I hate writing I hate writing I hate writing and somehow at the end of the day I find myself typing out what the things I find hope in and need to tell. If so, then I must be a paradox, a flickering star that keeps going because life always provides me with more fuel and motivation to keep burning: those feelings I need to express, etc.

In my opinion, Van Gogh lived to create art. It was not just his way of making a living but rather his way of living. As I’m writing and reflecting on this, I’ve come to realize that, comparably, I am the same. I don’t like writing, I simply do it. I’ve concluded that I am alive because I create art. That is why I would like to slowly believe I am an artist, and perhaps one day buy that shirt, because just like how I sleep and I eat and I breathe, I write. I cannot live without it. I think of it as what makes me human.

The practice of thoughts recorded on paper has assimilated itself into an irreplaceable part of my existence, and my identity as a writer will forever be ingrained in me as a person: the habits, the mindsets, the behaviors, the spark.

List of References

<https://medium.com/@jackneath2/killing-the-tortured-artist-trope-924b38e24b6c#:~:text=The%20tortured%20artist%20is%20a,to%20create%20the%20ultimate%20masterpieces.>

Grand Prize

Lovelia Yuriko Zahida (MAU Amanatul Ummah - Islamic Senior High School Surabaya, Indonesia)

Art as an Escape and Solace

When I was 6, my parents took me to Japan for work. On the first day of daycare, my mom told me, "If you want to go to the toilet, tell sensei 'oshikko!'" 'Oshikko' became the first Japanese word I learned. I often wonder how a child who knows nothing can survive in a foreign country without speaking the language. Art saved me!

Drawing was the most enjoyable activity for me when I didn't understand Japanese at the daycare. I spent my days silently observing my friends at the daycare. However, when it was time to draw, I felt fulfilled because I could express everything I felt. One day, my drawing was chosen to be displayed in the schoolyard at a daycare festival. I felt very happy and valued at that moment. I'm not saying that I was bullied by my friends, but I remember that some of them said my pronunciation was weird. There were many things that I couldn't do perfectly at that time because of the language barrier. However, the free drawing session, which I considered an escape, brought me appreciation.

Unlike at daycare, when I entered elementary school, I could speak Japanese and follow the lessons given by the teacher. As a foreigner studying in a Japanese public school, I had to memorize an incredible amount of hiragana, katakana, and kanji. Fortunately, writing kanji is like painting a beautiful picture, which I love. Although I wasn't very good at calligraphy, the teacher praised my writing as nice and neat several times. The most enjoyable thing about elementary school in Japan was the annual poster painting competition. The 3Rs (Reduce Reuse Recycle) poster competition during summer vacation was the activity I looked forward to the most.

Elementary school in Japan was the happiest time of my life. I made many friends, had caring teachers, and could understand the lessons well without any language barrier. I often visited museums and attended art exhibitions. Notably, elementary schools in Japan actively participated in every important festival in the city. Paintings made by elementary school children would be displayed at the city hall or the city station notice board for certain events, which is a great example of art education. Although my drawings weren't displayed at the city hall or station, one of my drawings was chosen as a favorite design for the packaging of an elementary school children's milk box in one of the prefectures in Japan. My drawing for the milk box design was my last work in elementary school because my parents had to leave Japan and return to Indonesia.

Like *Deja Vu*, I experienced what I felt when I first set foot in Japan at daycare age. In Indonesia, I experienced reverse culture shock. My schoolmates said my Indonesian accent was weird, and I struggled to follow the formal language used by the teacher,

contrasting everyday communication. Not to mention that during breaks, my friends would joke around in Javanese, a local language I didn't understand at all. Oh God, why do I have to experience this hell again?!

Once again, drawing became my escape. I often drew anime during school breaks, and that's how I made a close friend. I also participated in poster competitions several times, but unfortunately never won. Perhaps I lacked the skill to interpret the themes of the posters being contested, or didn't fully understand the Indonesian public's taste in good posters. Despite repeatedly failing to win, I continued to participate in drawing competitions because I loved drawing. This seemed to be misunderstood by my friends at school, who thought I was too ambitious, even though I did it out of love for drawing.

I couldn't boast about my achievements at school, especially as many of my friends were also proficient in foreign languages such as English and Arabic. My Japanese language skills didn't set me apart. Although my parents weren't demanding and often advised me not to push myself, I was sometimes annoyed with myself for not having any skills to be proud of at school. While I enjoyed math and biology, I couldn't excel in them, which made me feel inferior.

The only thing that saved me from feeling inferior was my drawing skills. One day, a teacher who rarely complimented me said, "You might be talented as an illustrator". In various group work opportunities, I was often assigned to make illustrations. One of them was an illustration of blood circulation in Biology. This illustration brought praise when our group presented it to our classmates. That moment made my heart feel warm, wow it turns out I can also do something useful!

So if someone says, art is for art's sake, my opinion is different. Because art is more than that. In my life experience, art is a way to save our psychology when we are not okay. Art is not only a medium of expression or communication, art is also a healing medium for me. Of course, the function of art can be various, it can be different for each human being. However, it is not an exaggeration to say that art can also be a medium of therapy for mental health.



Figure 1. Illustration of Thank You Milk Box Design (2019) by writer

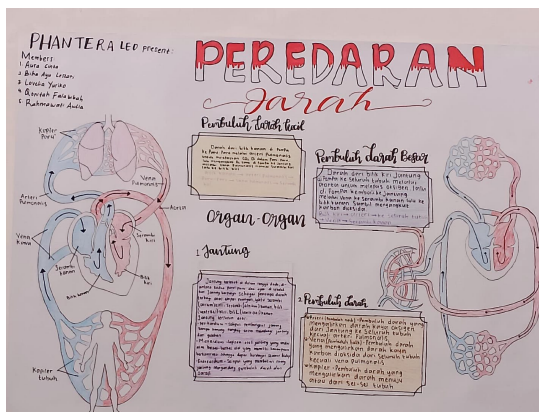


Figure 2. Illustration of Blood Circulation (2023) by writer

Award for Excellence

Camryn Haag (Eastern High School, United States)

Thinking in Deadlines: My Creative Experience or Lack Thereof

Art has existed since the dawn of humanity; before math and science, people turned to art. Art is an intrinsic human experience, and we turn to it because it is a fundamental part of our nature. Despite the passage of time, our connection to art remains unchanged. We can look at a piece of art from centuries ago and feel the same emotions and passions artists once felt. Unfortunately, this profound artistic experience is in decline.

I have always loved creating art using various techniques. I have cherished the fact that I and someone else could interpret the same idea in different visual ways. Recently, I drew an art piece that could have easily been done with a normal graphite pencil. Instead, I challenged myself to use only leftover graphite from a tortillion (a tool used to smudge graphite for blending). However, the creative process of making a piece has become less significant.

Creativity often stems from boredom. You cannot be as creative without first experiencing boredom; it's where ideas take form. As a little girl, my best ideas for activities would come when I was bored, sitting in my room, until I'd say, "I wonder how much glitter I could fit on a piece of paper?" Nowadays, people have fewer opportunities to be bored. We have easier access to distractions at our fingertips. It's incredibly easy to look at your phone or computer instead of sitting in boredom, and this has led to a decline in creativity. People no longer need to make creating an art piece as creative as the art piece itself.

The final product has become more important to us than the process because completing and submitting it has taken priority. One day last year, I was walking through my high school halls when I ran into my middle school art teacher. Seeing him was a surprise, but he stopped to chat with me. He asked if I had made any new pieces recently, and I replied, "No, because I'm not in an art class this year." He responded with "So?" This made me realize that even though I loved art, my desire to do it in my free time had faded, and I only completed pieces after they were assigned to me in a classroom. I had let my creative process slip away due to the pressures of daily life.

The decline in the creative process is not just a personal issue but a societal one. We are constantly bombarded with information and entertainment, leaving little room for the deep, reflective thought that art requires. It feels as though every art piece I create has been made or thought of before; like accidentally writing a song that already exists. This shift from process to product means we are losing a vital part of what makes art so powerful. The joy of experimenting with new techniques, the satisfaction of overcoming a creative challenge, and the thrill of seeing a piece come to life are all overshadowed by the need for quick results and instant gratification.

Thoughts like these have discouraged me from doing what I used to love to do so much. Finding motivation has become difficult, instead of thinking in weekdays, I now think in deadlines. I hear the phrase "It looks good on college applications" more than I hear "How are you?"

Using nothing but a Tortillion for my piece may have been a fun challenge, but I know the final piece doesn't look finished enough to be counted for a grade. So what was the point of making it? If I can't put the piece in my portfolio then why bother?

While the final product of an art piece is important, we must not forget the value of the creative process. It is in the process that we find true expression and innovation. By allowing ourselves to experience boredom and embracing the challenges of creation, we can reconnect with the intrinsic human experience of art.



Figure 1. Camryn Haag, *Tortillion Horses*, 8.5in x 11in, Graphite on paper, all shading done with tortillion, 2024, Camryn Haag

The definition of art is up to interpretation for every person. Art is always evolving and has been for centuries, but now my art has changed to be finished for marks from a teacher, and nothing is heavier than my bag of art supplies except maybe my eyelids. Even so, while I complete pieces for deadlines, every once in a while a spark will hit me and I become that little girl once again asking about glitter. Therefore I believe that art has no definition at all because a definition excludes the possibility of change.

Award for Excellence

Fuka Hayashida (Kwansei Gakuin Senior High School, Japan)

How to enjoy art

“What?” I involuntarily muttered to myself. As I gazed at the numerous works in the exhibition titled “Stories in Art,” I suddenly noticed a realistic stuffed pig. The stuffed pig, placed in a glass case, had no lower body and stood precariously with only its two front legs. I remember the shocking sight of the pig, cut off from the belly down, with a thinly sliced piece of meat hanging from the cross section, in a work entitled “Buta • pig lib ;” created by YOSHIMURA Masunobu in 1971.

At first, I was startled by the raw cross section of meat and the eyes of the lifeless pig and wanted to get away from this work as soon as possible. However, the unbalanced silhouette of the pig had a stronger impact on my mind and made me want to appreciate the work more carefully. What is the message of this work? The way a rather realistic stuffed pig is sliced like a ham in the middle of its body would probably make anyone who sees it feel pain and guilt. Is the author opposed to Japanese consumption of pigs as edible pork? Is the author himself a vegan? The title of the art is “Buta • pig lib ;” . It is an unfamiliar title. The unfamiliar word “lib” made it even more difficult to decipher the meaning behind the title. But that is why this work remained in my mind even after I went home. My desire to understand this work grew stronger and stronger.

First, I researched the artist, YOSHIMURA. YOSHIMURA was known as a postwar avant-garde artist, and in 1960 he founded an art group called “Neo Dada (Neo Dadaism Organizers)” with SHINOHARA Yoshio and others. The Neo-Dadaism Organizers was a group that shocked the art world with its radical actions and performances that shattered conventional artistic concepts, even though it was active for less than a year. The Neo-Dadaists Organizers are said to be unrelated to the “Neo-Dada” movement that emerged in New York in the same period, but Neo-Dada was a reaction against abstractionism, and in this respect the Neo-Dadaists Organizers are similar. The characteristic of radical performance that destroys the conventional concept of art certainly applies to the “Buta • pig lib ;” as well. Further research revealed that Yoshimura said that his painting began as a form of “rebellion“. Yoshimura said that the determined outlook on life instilled in him during the war years when he was in elementary school strongly repelled his postwar democratic education and the peaceful atmosphere of society. It was understandable that this rebellion against society led to the beginning of anti-artistic activities such as the Neo-Dadaist Organizers.

The caption of this work also stated that it was based on a poster advertising canned ham by Raymond Savignac, a master of poster design active in postwar France.

A pig in almost exactly the same pose. There seems to be no doubt that this poster is the reference source of the work. However, I still cannot read the true meaning of the work's name, “Buta • pig lib ;“. While puzzled, I searched the

Internet for information about the work and found that the title was an allusion to the women's lib movement that was popular at the time. Women's lib is a movement for women's liberation by women that took place from the 1960s to the 1970s. Women were against the social impositions such as “women are mothers who give free love, wives who serve their husbands references, and women who do housework and childcare as a matter of course,” and “women must be like women,” and they appealed for liberation from social trends and men. The women have been collecting the pieces to make a piece of the puzzle. I felt as if all the pieces I had gathered up to this point had clicked into place.

Once again, I felt that this work represents a rebellion against the public perception of pigs as something to be consumed (eaten) by humans. The sight of the torso of a realistic-looking pig being ruthlessly sliced seemed to force us to visually recognize the equal connection between the “pork” we usually take for granted and the “pig” as a living creature. Just as the woman claimed liberation from her role as a woman, this pig also claimed liberation from its role as a pig “eaten by humans. The fact that YOSHIMURA’s own painting began as a “rebellion” or “rebellious spirit” also has something in common with the “rebellious” element of women's lib. This work asks us the question, “Like pigs, are we not unconsciously imposing our roles on something?” This is the question that this work poses to us. For me, this work made me realize that I had unconsciously imposed the role of food on pigs and took it for granted that pigs were for food. Women's lib is similarly a rebellion against the various roles that people at that time unconsciously imposed on women “because that's the way it has always been“.

Both pigs and women had their roles imposed on them, but the treatment of pigs and women would not change without first giving the public a clear perception that they were “imposed” on them. I think the work drew attention to such unconscious discrimination through the impact of the realistic pigs being sliced and made people think about it.

After thinking about this, my brain finally cleared up, and I was a little moved to realize how much fun it is to think about a work of art to my satisfaction. I think the key to enjoying a work of art is to fully investigate the background of the work. It is interesting that researching the background of a work of art not only increases one's knowledge of the work, but also creates a deeper consideration of the work than one would have thought without knowing anything about it at the beginning.

Figure 1 . YOSHIMURA Masunobu, *Buta • pig lib ;* , stuffed pig, plastic, wax and wood, 1971. Photo by the author.

(The Selection Committee omitted this image for copyright protection.)

Award for Excellence

Yuu Kikuchi (Kwansei Gakuin Senior High School, Japan)

She speaks to me

I thought that self-portraits were something to beautify.

In fact, a painted self-portrait is perhaps the most self-referential expression a painter can make. Self-portraits can help us understand who we really are, confirm our social status in society, or even serve as models. The independent self-portrait in Western painting, which began in the 15th century, has been discussed in various ways, not only from the perspective of art history, but also from the perspective of aesthetics, philosophy, psychoanalysis, and contemporary thought.

When I was in elementary school and junior high school, we had to draw a self-portrait or a friend's face during class. I hate my own face, so I drew it in a slightly more beautiful way, and I also asked my friends to draw my face in an anime-like style. This idea of self-portraits is still relevant today. As we grow up, we no longer have the opportunity to paint our own self-portraits, but we still take selfies. And it is no exaggeration to say that everyone takes a selfie and then edits it. Transform parts of your face that you dislike into the shape and size you prefer. Self-portraits allow anyone, regardless of age, to beautify their own ugly parts and customize them to their liking.

Therefore, the article "Encounter with Lorenza Bettner" published in the US edition of ART news on May 20, 2022, was quite a shock to me. Lorenza Bettner (1959-94) was born in Chile to German parents. After losing both arms in an accident, she moved to Germany and changed her official gender identity to female by the time she attended art college. As an artist she produced numerous self-portraits and died of AIDS complications in his mid-30s. Her work does not hide the loss of both arms and the change in gender identity that occurred as a result of the accident. On the contrary, I feel like I accept it as a part of myself and am proud of it. And it is this contrast between her, honest attitude and her sarcastic expressions that stimulates the imagination of the viewer. I too was deeply touched by her work, and it overturned the very foundations of my own concepts.

The article covered the retrospective "Requiem for the Norm" (2022) at the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art in New York. The retrospective included paintings, photography series, performance videos, photographs, posters and other materials spanning her 16-year career. Her paintings and self-portraits feature nude bodies and softly gradient backgrounds. She is depicted, muscular with a powerful gaze, but without arms. And herself at the center, the pale gradation becomes darker. I was impressed by this touch. Her work conveys her sense of elation in a poignant way.

There is a portrait of her holding a baby, and of course she has no arms. In the self-portrait, she is missing both arms. However, rather than that, the refined impressionist-like line drawings, the changes in color tone in response to changes in light in this space, the fluctuations in the air, and the detailed use of color all give the impression of no weakness at all, feel the strength of Mother instead. When I saw picture film, I suddenly had a strong desire to meet my mother, whom I hated, and to be enveloped in her love once again.

Her ethereal naked body and her facial expression exude serenity. This made me aware of the carefree, nostalgic feelings I had buried deep in my heart. This feeling hasn't gone away. Her work has taught me the importance of loving my inner self, even though I tend to place importance on the superficial and idealistic self.

With no arms, she accomplishes the above descriptions using only her feet and mouth. However, the self-portraits on display in "Requiem for the Norm" do not depict disabled people struggling to create art. When depicted in artwork such as paintings and engravings, or as metaphors, disabilities tend to be portrayed as mysterious and beautiful. They become something worshipped, somehow separate from humans.

In her self-portraits, she is feeding her baby with a dignified gaze from a bottle or reading a book while turning the pages on her tiptoes, standing with a confident gaze and looking back against a backdrop of rainbow-hued gradations of hope. She exudes kindness and confidence in her everyday life.

Her self-portraits do not hide her disability, nor do they embellish her or seek sympathy or admiration. It is not a god or an object of faith. There is simply a joyful and beautiful sight there.

I've always thought that self-portraits can and should embellish the appearance of one's true self. I thought of it as a kind of tool that allowed me to hide my true self. I hated myself for being so concerned about what others thought of me and not being able to accept myself as.

I almost cried when I saw her work of art in which she holds a baby, because I sensed in her work a genuine love for oneself and a warmth that embraces everyone. Our worth is not something that can be judged or worshipped by others. There are no standards, no superiority or inferiority. Don't think about your own worth, just live your life happily. I believe that loving yourself exactly as you are, without worrying about what others think of you, is the greatest happiness in life.

I would like to express my gratitude for meeting Lorenza Bettner, who taught me the importance of loving the true self through her self-portraits. Let's live our lives cherishing every moment of ourselves and cherishing our own thoughts.

Figure 1 レスリー・ローマン美術館のロレンツァ・ベットナー回顧展「Requiem for the Norm（標準的なものへのレクイエム）」（2022）の展示風景 Photo Kristine Eudey/Courtesy the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art
(The Selection Committee omitted this image for copyright protection.)

Figure 2 ロレンツァ・ベットナー、《Untitled（無題）》、約130 × 160 cm、紙にパステル、（1985）、Courtesy Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, New York
(The Selection Committee omitted this image for copyright protection.)

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Award for Excellence

Moa Maeda (Makuhari Junior And Senior High School, Japan)

Looking into a blank canvas is like-

Every revisit to a blank canvas is like the biannual visit to a divorced parent's house.

There, as I prepare to work on a new piece, I seem to find everything: good memories, bad memories, my flaws, my charm, nostalgia, regret, and more.

I face all of it, trying to brainstorm ideas to create meaning and beauty out of this nothingness.

I am not a good artist, but at the same time, I like to think I could be. However, in the long process of making art, self-doubt and perfectionism become my true enemies.

Am I good enough? I ask myself with every brush stroke.

Maybe. I seem to have miraculously blended the colors seamlessly for once.

Am I good enough? I ask myself, with every nervous knead into gooey clay.

Um, no—is that supposed to be Oscar Wilde brooding mysteriously over a book, or an uncle sitting on the toilet while reading the daily news? Massive disaster.

"Am I good enough?" I then turn to ask the teacher every passing hour.

"Your use of colors is wonderful! Is that a parrot?" She points at my colorful fish, an abstract take on Leo Leoni's Swimmy.

"Am I good enough?" I ask my phone, sighing, which I use for reference photos.

Apparently not, because face recognition blocks me off saying they can't identify success in my facial features.

Every choice I make on canvas seems life-threatening, each mistake feels like a scolding. Every brainstorming moment before making art fills me with confusion and bitterness as I try to create deep meaningfulness that forces me to reevaluate my values and everything I thought I knew.

But when I feel like giving up, I look into a blank canvas and think, I'm doing this for 5-year-old me, who drew black suns and orange grass fields and was sharply told off by the teacher for lacking reality; for 7-year-old me, who drew Picasso-inspired doodles only to be teased for the "weird scribbles"; for 10-year-old me, who witnessed their sand masterpiece being taken and crushed in art therapy; for 13-year-old me, who was told art was meaningless in life.

When I look into a blank canvas, I also imagine the faces of all the people who see my art, and the possibility of so many messages I can convey.

When I draw the colorful and crowded streets in Bangkok's market, I resonate with those who yearn for the same liveliness and freedom in their lives; when I draw unflattering self-portraits closing up on my stretch marks and acne, I empathize with those who struggle with toxic beauty standards; when I draw the first time I impulsively cut my hair off, I hurt for those who deal with self-hate; when I draw myself isolated in chest-high water, I plead for people to wake up to the cries of those suffering from climate change.

I draw for myself, and for those who almost gave up.

But I continue, because as Picasso once said, "Every child is an artist[...]the problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up."

I know, I'm still not fooling anyone. I stand out as a self-taught noob trying to act like I know my game when I still can't find out what white gouache does. It's fine. I may be a self-proclaimed delusional artist and I'm content with it. My art, for me, means rejection and honesty and reflection and happiness and representation.

So when I see a blank canvas, I see a clear mirror, beckoning me to the dangerous art of laying myself bare.

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Award for Excellence

Karen Mizoue (Shoyo High School, Japan)

Nude model

A man is standing on a table. He looks over and I see that he is not wearing anything. He poses naked and faces us. When I was in this room, I felt a very strange sensation. In winter, I joined the drawing club for nude drawing with my friend. I belong to the art course, and I draw a plaster statue and motif on the desk every day. But I had never drawn a living person. Much less naked. Perhaps, observing and painting a person naked is something that no one but an artist would ever experience. Until I attended this drawing club, I had no idea what it meant to do nude drawing. It was a vague, ungraspable sensation.

Being a woman myself, I was familiar with the female body. Throughout the long history of painting, the female body has been depicted in many different ways. Since the Renaissance, emphasis has been placed on the naturalness of the female body, and smooth skin has been depicted sensually, but in modern times women have begun to be depicted more realistically. The female body, once idealized in painting, became realistic and obscene. That's why I compared him to the naked woman who has been treated as a sexual object. I suddenly became interested in what a naked man looked like.

However, I was seeing a man's body for the first time, and only shame rolled around in my mind. But why do I feel embarrassed? This is because men and women's bodies are built very differently. Women's bodies are curvaceous. The shoulders and the lines of the body from the chest to the waist are so soft that they can be drawn with a single stroke. In contrast, men are more linear. The neck and back are shaped by many short muscles. We, as painters, follow it up with a line and draw it out. His skin was like thin rubber and wrinkled. In that moment, I felt that men were more powerful than women and I did not feel he was a sexual object like the way women are.

First, I easily sketched multiple poses in five minutes. He spread his arms, lay down, twisted his waist, and squatted. I carefully observed and drew. For example, the way the body leans and supports the centre of gravity on the hips, with the legs, head orientation, and neck twisting. Then gradually, I sped up and practiced capturing the shape quickly and accurately.

The next step is to sketch the pose that the model takes while moving. This means that the model can move freely around the room and continue to assume a variety of poses. Typically, as painters, we paint only the lines that move us. The muscles of the outstretched arm are raised lines, the line where the foot is walking. Such things appear and disappear like a stream of clouds. It seemed very strange that I see only my line breathing in a space that keeps moving. The shame in my heart vanished when I realized that I could express my unique emotions. I only wanted to draw what was in front of me. Only I can see these beautiful lines, and I cannot see lines that someone else finds beautiful. It is unbearably fun to follow the lines flowing before your eyes! It was refreshing, like standing in a gentle breeze. I want to see those lines again, but it won't happen. I was happy and frustrated at the same time. It was an experience that could not be gained from an inorganic object without heat on a desk. There was humidity on the skin. Looking again at the drawing paper, it seems to me that there are just lines stretching in all directions at will. But this is my own world and there are no traitors. By painting nudes, I learnt to put my own inner heat into the picture.

Experiencing nude drawing helped me to appreciate the beauty of human beings. Human skin had a temperature and humidity not found in any other living organism. And I was deeply convinced that a person's history is engraved on their skin. No matter how old we get, our skin always enhances our beauty and holds a lot of charm. I was amazed by the human body, which also shows an inner purity. At first, I felt ashamed or guilty about facing the nakedness of people. Because when we are naked, we cannot deceive ourselves. It takes a lot of courage to show your true self to others. I felt guilty that I was clothed while the model was naked.

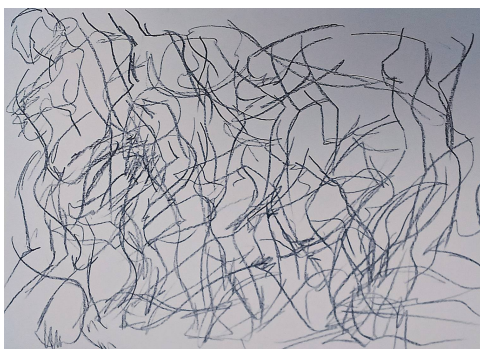


Figure 1. moving sketch

However, my embarrassment was outweighed by the joy of discovering the beauty of the human body. For me, this was a big step forward. It gave me the opportunity to get to know the essence of people.

After the drawing session was over, we looked back at the drawings we had made. I found that they were full of joyful lines here and there, as if they were about to jump out and start dancing! What's more, I used up an entire sketchbook, which had over 50 pages. I worked on it for six hours straight. It was unimaginably freeing for me, who had never known joy. Art is created by humans, but we ourselves are more beautiful than the art. The human body contains prayer. Nude drawings made me appreciate the beauty of humans.

Award for Excellence

Nanya Nishant (Christ Nagar International School, India)

Measuring art through life

"I prefer drawing to talking. Drawing is faster, and leaves less room for lies." quoted Le Corbusier. He means that art expresses what words struggle to; its raw, true form, leaving no pretenses to hide behind. In this way, art showcases life itself, in a way that says exactly what one feels, in a language that everyone knows.

'Art' has many interpretations. I don't think any two people have the same interpretation of what art is, but whatever image their mind conjures, it will show a facet of life. Whether it be a trivial moment that would have been long forgotten or a war won after the culmination of the efforts of generations, art can encapsulate it. Life is a journey where individuals navigate paths that intertwine with others but are ultimately their own. Art reflects this journey, in ways that words cannot: maybe in the form of an hour long symphony or through a sketch of a single frame.

One of my earliest memories of how art and life made me think deeply was when my sister asked my grandpa for help on her drawing. She wanted to draw a cat, which I knew my grandpa had drawn many times for fun when she was a baby. When she asked him to help her correct the face of the cat, my grandpa replied that she should ask me, as he was not good at drawing. This confused me, as up until that second, I thought he was an expert at art. I asked him to confirm: 'You're not good at drawing?'. When he replied, 'No,' my brain was rewiring to critique his every drawing I could remember under this new information I had learned. I noticed how the faces of the cats he drew had a mouse-like appearance to them, and the tails were far too long. Looking back at this, it makes me realize how my impression of someone or something can change based on an opinion. All that changed was the mindset that I was looking through. The art remained the same.

Later, when I came across the painting "Cat" by Picasso, I was struck by how much it resembled the cat I remembered from years ago. The memory that I didn't even realize was still with me came flooding back. The Picasso painting I would have dismissed without much thought, and the cat my grandfather sketched long ago had both taken on new significance in my mind. While I was not able to appreciate Picasso's art style, the memory that the painting encased gave it meaning and value to me.

This made me question what counts as 'good' art. Is it technique, emotional resonance, or the ability to capture a moment in time? Why was one cat considered strange while the other became world-famous? More importantly, the reason I found Picasso's painting valuable was due to the memory that I had assigned to it. What does this mean about the quality of the painting on its own?

This takes me back to the thought that art captures life. Art mirrors our journey through life, and it involves selecting what resonates and refining it over time. The artists we reference can be seen as guiding influences, like how parents shape our decisions. In the end, art tries to showcase life in a way that turns it into more than it was. It can turn a few fleeting seconds of our lives into something far more meaningful.

My perspective of the Picasso painting changed as I learned to appreciate emotional depth in art. Perspectives often change when we come across new information, and our view of life is constantly evolving. A piece of art that has no meaning to me right now may be pivotal to my life in a few years. Art can shape our thoughts and experiences; and our experiences in life can shape how we view art.

However, this effect of opinions on how we see creative topics that are all about personal taste and opinion made me reconsider how this affected my own art. All the people who have casually remarked that they liked the drawings or paintings that I had made - could I really use that as validation for the quality of my work? And if that counts, could the good personal opinion of someone about their own art qualify it as valuable? This not only applies to art but also multiple situations in everyday life. For example, if a person has a large number of people following them, our tendency is to follow the others. Our actual opinion of the person is clouded or even completely ignored because of the crowd. It is difficult to trust your own judgement especially if it goes against the crowd, but that is what makes a person stand out as talented. When one displays their own skills which they have worked hard for with no doubt, it tends to get recognised. Sometimes, true value lies beyond technical skill and societal approval, but without practice to perfect the skills needed to express such ideas the work falls short.

I feel that if you have put your whole heart into practicing and perfecting a skill that you chose, display it without doubt. If one doesn't believe in their own work, why should others? The best ideal seems to be to work hard on our own skills in all aspects of life, including art.

Our perspectives often change when we encounter new information and opinions. Just as I appreciated the emotional depth in Picasso's work, life teaches us that our understanding is constantly evolving. Both art and life are shaped by our experiences and the perspectives we adopt, reminding us that true value often lies beyond technical skill and societal approval.

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Award for Excellence

Manaka Ogura (Tokyo Metropolitan Senior High School of the Arts, Japan)

The Power of Art

The compass of life, and a bridge of understanding.

For me, that is what art is. Art transcends being merely a hobby or career. It embodies a way of life that shapes how I perceive and engage with the world around me. Currently, I attend an arts high school that offers diverse majors in visual art, dance, theater, and music. My participation in the dance program has deepened my appreciation for the myriad ways artistic expression can enrich our lives. From my formative years in an international school in China to my travels to ballet schools in the United States, Canada, and Hungary, I have been captivated by the beauty and connections that art promotes.

My cross-cultural upbringing grants me a unique perspective on art as a universal language. At school in China, I played the violin, learning the beauty of music. Everyone went wild when someone performed Bollywood dance at a school festival. I was mesmerized by the quick change in expressions in the Peking Opera. Through these experiences, Art became clear to me as a universal medium that unites individuals from diverse backgrounds, allowing us to express emotions, thoughts, and societal issues.

The ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia has illuminated art's role in times of chaos. While in Hungary, a classmate from Ukraine shared with me the heartbreak of her family's situation, split apart by war, not knowing when she can ever see her father again. Hearing her story filled me with a deep sense of empathy; it was even more devastating than what I had seen on the news. However, she also spoke of the resilience shown by Ukrainian artists, who have emerged as vital voices using their talents to convey their experiences of war and loss. They have created powerful works that illustrate both their personal narratives and the wider social impacts of the conflict.

One of the artworks that has been unforgettable for me is a painting of the wheat fields in Ukraine. It reminds me of when I was on a train in Hungary, which was bound for Kyiv. I could see the bright yellow of the wheat fields. The contrast of the golden color and the clear blue sky was utterly beautiful, just like the country's flag.

The response to the Ukrainian crisis has extended beyond its borders, with artists worldwide creating works that reflect upon the situation and show solidarity with the Ukrainian people. I have witnessed exhibitions, performances, and collaborative art projects worldwide, where artists utilize murals, installations, and multimedia to illustrate the urgency of the conflict. In Hungary, I observed "artivism" movements, where art institutions such as museums used exhibitions as a vehicle to raise funds for those affected by the war.

This global artistic movement illustrates how art transcends geographical boundaries, showing that creativity can mobilize communities and evoke empathy, regardless of location. Furthermore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many turned to artistic

expression to cope with the challenges of isolation and uncertainty. I saw friends exploring painting, writing, and dancing in their living rooms, finding strength in creative outlets. These acts of resilience showcased the power of art to connect people, even from afar, reinforcing that creativity can unite us in difficult times.

For me, ballet is more than just a form of art; it is a way of life that cultivates self-expression, and connection. Each time I step onto the stage, I am overwhelmed by emotions that words cannot express. The constructive collaboration of movement, music, and storytelling transcends language, allowing us to communicate feelings and ideas that can be challenging to articulate. This transformation of abstract emotions into tangible performances resonates deeply with both the performer and the audience.

My artistic journey has also allowed me to appreciate the role of technology in creative expression. One project that stands out is my participation in a program called Technovation Girls, where I developed an app to promote intestinal health. This fusion of technology and artistic vision reinforced my commitment to using art to tackle social challenges, particularly for vulnerable populations, such as the elderly or communities affected by conflict.

Art sparks meaningful conversations and inspires action, bridging gaps between generations and cultures. Through community art projects and performances, we can raise awareness about important issues, fostering understanding and empathy among diverse groups. In an increasingly divided world, art reminds us of our shared humanity and the common threads that bind us.

As I move forward into 2024, my commitment to using art as a vehicle for



Figure 1. Esmeralda
A photo of myself at a ballet competition in the United States. I danced a solo from a ballet called Esmeralda.



Figure 2. La Bayadere
A photo of myself at the same competition as the previous photo. I danced a solo from a ballet called La Bayadere.

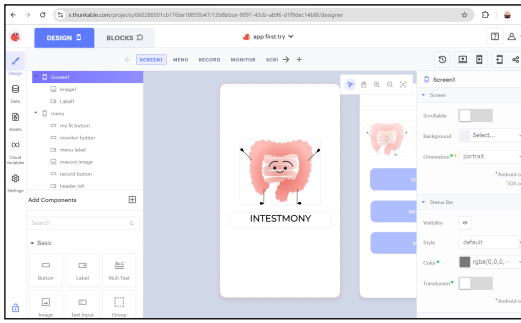


Figure 3. Top Screen
This is a photo of the top screen of the intestinal environment app that I developed.

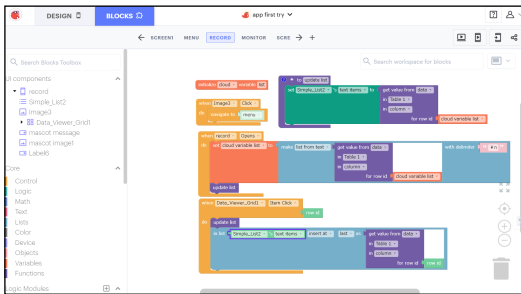


Figure 4. Coding Screen
This is a small part of the coding I did to develop the app for maintaining good intestinal balance.



Figure 5. Hungarian National Museum
This is a photo of the entrance where people raised funds to support Ukraine. This was only one of the places where I witnessed "Artivism" movements.

social change is stronger than ever. I plan to participate in community events, youth workshops, and online platforms to share my voice and collaborate with others who share my passion. I envision creating movement pieces that challenge perceptions of health and wellness or visual art that reflects diverse cultural narratives, sparking conversations and fostering empathy within our communities.

Ultimately, art is a powerful force that inspires us to look beyond the mundane and recognize the inherent beauty and what connection in our everyday lives. It fosters empathy by presenting a wide range of experiences—not only my own but also those of others around us. This collective experience is vital, especially given the impact of global conflicts such as the war in Ukraine. In times of crisis, art fosters understanding, igniting discussions that resonate across cultures and highlighting the universal nature of human suffering.