2025
Emerging Artist Submission

#1
Sarah Wang

Personal Statement

Sarah Wang

Art is the way I make sense of who I am and where I come from. My goal as an artist is to transform personal memories and cultural inheritance into work that resonates with both private intimacy and shared human experience. Through each project, I try to weave together the threads of family, culture, and identity to form stories that are vulnerable, reflective, and enduring.

My education at The Harker School and Happy Valley Art Afterschool have given me a strong foundation in creative exploration. Courses such as Advanced Painting, Figure Drawing, Digital Art, Sculpture, and Technical Theater have taught me how to experiment across mediums and connect concept to craft. My work has been recognized with two Scholastic Art & Writing National Gold Medals, and I have participated in highly selective CSSSA visual art summer camp and national competitions that challenged me to grow both technically and conceptually.

Community involvement is central to my practice. I teach children art through Colorful Minds, design handmade holiday cards for seniors, and contribute to my school's Art Club by creating decorations and public art. For me, art is not only self-expression but also service—it is a way to create connection, comfort, and joy for others.

The three works I present here each represent different "threads" that bind me. In *Speechless*, I painted myself against a collage of newspaper clippings and media text, confronting how political narratives and societal expectations silence individual voices. The thread here is my attempt to reclaim space and identity, questioning how power and truth bind us collectively yet unequally.

Ancestors' Splendor, my mixed-media sculpture, is a deeply personal piece that pays tribute to Asian women who, across generations, carried cultural weight through silence and sacrifice. I stitched together brocade, jade, and porcelain—symbols of tradition—with wounds and distress that speak to resilience and endurance. The work reflects how cultural expectations bind me to my heritage, even as I grapple with its costs.

Finally, in *Childhood Memory Binds Us*, I depicted myself and my sister as children, sharing food at a dinner table. Here, threads of memory and family love intertwine. This piece is a reminder that despite fear, pain, and silence, it is these intimate bonds that nurture and sustain me.

Through painting and sculpture, I seek to translate personal memory into shared narratives. Whether through the heaviness of inherited cultural threads or the warmth of sibling bonds, my goal is to show how art can make visible the unseen ties that bind us all.

Sarah Wang

Email: [redacted] |**Phone:** [redacted]
School: The Harker School, San Jose, CA
Grade: 11th (Class of 2027)

Objective

Aspiring emerging artist with over a decade of experience in drawing and painting. Passionate about self-expression through art, contributing to the community, and creating work that connects with people on a deeper level.

Education & Training

- The Harker School, San Jose, CA — GPA: 4.25 (Weighted)
- Art Course: AP 2-D Art and Design, Advanced Painting, Sculpture, Technical Theater
- Pre-College Programs: CSSSA (California State Summer School for the Arts) visual art.

Artistic Achievements

- Scholastic Art & Writing Awards
    - Art: 2 Regional Gold Keys (2023, 2025)
    - Art: 2 Regional Silver Keys (2023, 2025)
    - Writing: 1 Regional Silver Key (2025)
- Bay Area Creative Youth Award, Special Award in Visual Art (2025)
- Congressional Art Competition, 10th District of California, Special Congressional Recognition (2025)
- National ArtDash Digital Drawing Contest Honorable Mention (2025)
- Journalism Education Association National Student Media Contest Excellent Award in Literary Magazine Illustration (2025)

- TikTok Art Channel: 5M+ total views, 8K+ followers, 1M+ likes, animation and digital storytelling, 2025.
- The Harker School Book Blog's FanArt Contest 4th place (2024)
- PAL's PALS Youth Art Competition Best of Show Award (2023, 2025)
- Endangered Species Day Youth Art Contest Semi-final List (2021)
- Mountain Diablo District Women's Club Student Art & Photography Contest 2nd place (2020)

Community Involvement

- Colorful Minds: Volunteer art teacher for children, including those with disabilities.
- Harker Art Club: Contributed to school-wide art installations and holiday decorations.
- Community Projects: Created handmade cards for seniors; face painting for children at local events.
- Yearbook Assistant Conservatory Editor: Designed illustrations, digital art, and visual narratives.

Endorsement Letter for Sarah Wang

To the Cupertino Emerging Artists Award Committee,

It is my pleasure to recommend **Sarah Wang** for the Cupertino Emerging Artists Award. I have had the privilege of teaching Sarah art since she was in elementary school, and I have witnessed her growth into a highly talented and dedicated young artist. Now a Grade 11 student, Sarah demonstrates both technical mastery and creative depth in her artistic practice.

Sarah is a passionate artist who explores a wide range of media, from digital painting to traditional oil painting. For every project, she approaches her work with careful preparation and curiosity—conducting visual research in her sketchbook, experimenting with design possibilities, and refining her final pieces with thoughtful detail. She is never afraid to take risks in her creative process, and her work consistently reflects her willingness to explore new ideas and express her personal voice.

One example that highlights Sarah's maturity as an artist is her project *Speechless*. Her goal was to examine how social media and power can sometimes control an individual's voice. After much discussion and exploration, she decided to construct a striking composition: a newspaper-collage background filled with dollar signs to symbolize societal power and influence, over which she painted a self-portrait with her mouth obscured by the shadow of a hand. This bold and thoughtful piece revealed Sarah's ability not only to convey complex ideas but also to use artistic symbolism to communicate powerful social messages.

Sarah's body of work spans a wide variety of themes, including the power of voice, gender, memory, personal narrative, and the impact of social media. She studies contemporary artists, experiments with diverse media, and engages in deep reflection about her artistic choices. These habits have helped her grow into a thoughtful and mature young artist with a unique perspective.

Beyond her own studio practice, Sarah extends her passion for art to her community. She creates digital paintings as meaningful gifts for her family and friends, volunteers with nonprofit art clubs to teach children and assist with community art events, and participates in school theater productions. These experiences reflect not only her artistic talent but also her generosity, leadership, and collaborative spirit.

I am confident that Sarah will bring the same creativity, dedication, and thoughtfulness to this contest that she brings to every project she undertakes.

Sincerely,
Yinghua Wang

Art Teacher in Happy Valley Art School

Adjunct Faculty at Ohlone College

THE PRESIDENT-ELECT

How will Trump handle the war in [redacted]

By [redacted]

At a time when its forc[redacted] tinue to [redacted] in th[redacted] and its capital city is bom[redacted] with [redacted] dron[redacted] a [redacted] daily basis, the last thing U[redacted] m[redacted] ot[redacted] that's preci[redacted] month, wh[redacted] Donald Tru[redacted] with Vice P[redacted] [redacted] to r[redacted] [redacted] ing the ine[redacted] will Trump[redacted]

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intended for Tru[redacted]

messages

By [redacted]
The New York Times

WASHINGTON » [redacted], Democrats are hatching plans to oppose President-elect Donald Trump [redacted] the liberal "resistance" of 2017.

Gone are [redacted] and [redacted] signs from the huge protest that convulsed [redacted] that year, as exhausted liberals seem more inclined to [redacted] Trump [redacted] fight. [redacted] shington is far dif-

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people, and [redacted] son, th[redacted] Minnesot[redacted] fice had been preparing Trump's [redacted] [redacted] power for more tha[redacted] year. "They can expect t[redacted] [redacted] when t[redacted] try to run over the Am[redacted] can people."

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Staff members [redacted] have al[redacted] digging up dirt [redacted] admini[redacted] searchers at th[redacted] National Committee [redacted] American Bridge. [redacted] [redacted] ion commit[redacted] [redacted] iling dossiers [redacted] year. [redacted] hite House has [redacted] inted to [redacted] shuttle [redacted] [redacted] and e[redacted] ts to open [redacted] ication as [redacted] [redacted] s. [redacted] ast met [redacted] ovember [redacted] [redacted] ials from [redacted] signaled a [redacted] etnem in the [redacted] Si[redacted] e then, [redacted] rogress in [redacted] effort to stem

[redacted]sistance is [redacted]ted in the law

Much of the party's [redacted] approach [redacted] [redacted]d. Starting on Su[redacted] night, liberal advocac[redacted] ganizations will pres[redacted] [redacted] [redacted] [redacted] [redacted] [redacted], a private gather- [redacted] ing of some of the party's richest donors.

The panels [redacted] sweep[redacted]

2025
Emerging Artist Submission

#2
Ashley Hein

Artist Statement - Ashley Hein

As a young child, art was my safe space, a world I crafted for myself to escape and blunt the harshness of reality. However, coming back was always dismaying: when the bright, vibrant hues of imagination washed away, I found myself once again helpless in my own body, unable to find joy in being present. Growing older, I have finally learned to bridge that gap between the world of my art and the one I actually inhabit. While before it was a silent refuge, I learned to find a voice through my art. I now use my art to speak for the girl I once was, and other children in similar situations, namely those struggling with difficult home lives and mental illness.

However, art is also an intimate love letter I send to the world around me. My hands are only a conduit for the beauty I see, and I want my creations to express my gratitude for the little spots of hope in life. In my paintings, I aim to display that same mixture of childish joy and wonder alongside darker, more complex societal issues. While primarily painting in oil or acrylic, I like to incorporate supplies my younger self would have grabbed to doodle with, such as crayons and colored pencils. I am drawn to organic shapes and the freedom of unrestrained lines, echoing the gentle arcs and unpredictable contours that appear in foliage and nature. This practice allows me to honor and remember the pure excitement of my artistic beginnings. Often, these soft, flowing forms are set against denser, more detailed and gritty areas within a piece, creating a visual tension that reflects the duality of lightness and gravity at the heart of my work.

Exhibition Record

International Art Museum of America 2nd Place Winner 2025

San Jose Downtown Doors Art Award 2025

David Shepherd Wildlife Art Competition Finalist 2025

Published in "Celebrating Art" Summer 2025

AAPI Exhibition Cupertino 2025

Museum of Northern California "Family Portraits" Exhibition Spring 2025

NUMU Los Gatos Art Exhibition 2025

Scholastic Silver Key Art Award and Exhibition 2025

Scholastic Gold Key Art Award and Exhibition 2024

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calvin_wong@fuhsd.org

9/10/25

Letter of Recommendation for Ashley Hein

Dear Members of the Emerging Artist Award Committee,

I am pleased to recommend Ashley Hein for the City of Cupertino Emerging Artist Award. As her instructor in advanced art classes at Lynbrook High School over the past two years, I have witnessed Ashley's remarkable evolution as both an artist and creative thinker.

Ashley possesses that rare combination of technical mastery and conceptual sophistication that distinguishes exceptional artists. What sets her apart is her exploration of diverse themes—including medicine, family history, and social issues—through distinct series of works that are both deeply personal and universally resonant. Her pieces reveal an artist unafraid to mine her own experiences while maintaining the critical distance necessary for meaningful artistic expression.

Ashley exemplifies the collaborative spirit essential to artistic communities. Whether she knows it or not, her willingness to experiment with a range of materials, styles and formats has inspired classmates to push beyond their comfort zones. This quiet leadership, combined with her unwavering work ethic, makes her invaluable to our artistic community.

Ashley's artistic journey reflects a mature understanding that growth requires risk-taking. She consistently challenges herself with ambitious projects that explore uncharted territory, whether experimenting with new media or tackling complex conceptual frameworks. This fearless approach to creative exploration, coupled with meticulous attention to craft, positions her perfectly for the artistic leadership the Emerging Artist Award seeks to nurture.

I recommend Ashley Hein without reservation. Her unique artistic voice, combined with her dedication to continuous growth embodies the vision of emerging artistry that your award celebrates. I am confident she will make significant contributions to Cupertino's cultural landscape.

Please contact me at [redacted] if you require additional information.

Matthew Reynolds

Art 2/Art 3/Photography + Design/AP 2D Art & Design/Studio Art
Art Department Lead

2025
Emerging Artist Submission

#3
Hema Kundargi

My art journey began the same day the world stood still for COVID. With anxiety at an all-time high, I found myself grappling with fear for my family: my 80-year-old mother with asthma, alone in India, and my daughter completing her medical rotation at a hospital in New York. The combination of uncertainty and free time left me restless and overwhelmed. I decided to experiment with painting to calm my nerves.

My first attempt was an abstract painting of Ganesha, the Indian God believed to remove obstacles in life. The painting process felt like meditation; as I focused on the canvas, my mind stayed in the present, it did not wander into the future or past.My anxiety was harnessed into a creative outlet. I was happy with my art and posted it on social media. My neighbor loved it and requested me to make a similar piece.That simple connection marked the beginning of my art journey.

Since then, painting has brought calmness and energy into my soul. During the isolation phase of Covid, I've completed and shared over 100 pieces with friends, coworkers, neighbors, and family. I was touched by their comments; "Your aura comes through in the paintings of love and laughter" "The meditation painting reminds me that no matter what is going on in my life, I can find peace" "You inspired me to start painting again" "I will keep your Ganesha painting next to my Allah to bring peace in this world." These comments encouraged me to continue.

My work gained recognition when a local Indian magazine featured my story, and I was invited to participate in an art auction for the Relief for Cancer Foundation. To date, my paintings have raised more than $5000 for charitable causes. Now I carve out time on every weekend for my art meditation and continue to explore different mediums of acrylics, oils, and charcoal. I've hosted painting events for coworkers and friends and introduced them to art meditation

As a self-taught artist, I am committed to learning and growing with two goals: Continue to paint and donate 100% of the sale proceeds for charitable causes and equally important to introduce and share art meditation to any one who is curious to learn.

My art journey has been a true win-win-win situation. Painting helps me relax; supports meaningful causes; share my passion for art meditation.

==========

Painting 1: 'Navigating the Ocean of Life Together'
The sail boats represents every person journey in life and the ocean symbolises the universal experiences and connections that binds us all (Painting Medium: Oil)

Painting 2: 'Lion's Mindset'
The majestic gaze encourages us all to embrace challenges, learn from mistakes and develop resilience (Painting Medium: Charcoal painting)

Painting 3 'Peace within'
The serene image encourages a contemplative and meditative state, and that each one us have a choice to find peace within (Painting medium: Acrylic and oil

HEMA KUNDARGI

Current Job:

- Registered Dietitian & Health Coach at AC wellness clinic, Valley Green Dr Cupertino

Education:

- Masters in Nutrition,
- Registered Dietitian,
- National Board Certified Health and Wellness Coach
- Culinary Medicine Specialist

Past activities:

- Hosted and produced award winning cooking show on Cupertino Public Access , Indian Vegetarian Gourmet
- Freelance Food writer for San Jose Mercury, LA Times, India Currents and Cupertino Scene

Art Exhibition details

Title: Art to Heart: An art auction to support cancer patients
Venue: Blackberry Farm Recreation center Cupertino
Sept 26, 2022

Title: Colors of India
Venue UC Davis
Sept 21, 2024

Sept 16, 2025

To whomsoever it may concern,

I am writing this letter with great pleasure and enthusiasm to endorse Hema Kundargi, a dear friend and an artist. Hema is an exemplary civic citizen, resident, and a shining and emerging artist of Cupertino, and I can think of no one more deserving than Hema to recommend for this award.

I have had the privilege of knowing Hema for several years and have witnessed her remarkable journey as a self-taught painter. Hema is an exceptionally talented artist who is highly deserving of Cupertino's Emerging Artist Award, and I recommend her fully and wholeheartedly for this award.

I have had the honor of witnessing Hema's artistic growth and evolution, which has been nothing short of extraordinary. Hema's flair for color combinations, her imagination, and narrative expression through art are unmistakably a natural gift. However, Hema possesses something that transcends her rare talent. It is Hema's innate ability to infuse her artwork with profound compassion and deep care for the community. For example, while the world was reeling with COVID, Hema took it upon herself to start painting for the first time in her life and create beautiful paintings of Lord Ganesha (the Indian God of healing), and give them to people to bring hope and light into their lives! I received a most precious painting from her when I fractured my leg and could not move for months. Her art is not just about art itself, but it is art with deep and profound meaning. She creates impact, touches hearts, and she connects the community with her art. In September of 2021, she auctioned her paintings for a cancer relief fund and raised $4500 for the noble cause. She taught me painting when I was dealing with a very hard time in my life. Her paintings and her art are meditative in nature; it is a powerful healing tool, and it is a gift to the world.

One of the most impressive aspects of Hema's work is her unwavering commitment to exploring new mediums, styles, and themes. Her versatility as a painter is truly remarkable, as she seamlessly transitions from traditional paintings to mixed-media creations. She is often experimenting with sand, leaves, charcoal, metal, and sponges. This willingness to push the boundaries of her craft and experiment with new images and techniques is a testament to her dedication and fearless creativity.

I wholeheartedly believe that Hema is not only deserving of the Cupertino Emerging Artist Award but also a shining example of the kind of artist who will continue to enrich Cupertino's cultural and community landscape for years to come. Her dedication, passion, and remarkable talent make her an ideal candidate for this prestigious award.

Thank you for considering Hema Kundargi for this honor. I eagerly anticipate the continued growth and success of her artistic journey.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at

Thanks,

Kohinoor Chakravarty, Ph.D., MSW, CFRE
Chief Development and Communications Officer
West Valley Community Services, 10104 Vista Drive, Cupertino, CA 95014
Email: [redacted], *Direct:* [redacted], *Fax:* [redacted]

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2025
Emerging Artist Submission

#4
Vianna Dong

Vianna Dong Personal Statement

I love to create artwork that expresses emotions that are complex, like the bittersweet feeling of knowing when a happy moment will become a faded memory, or the strange bliss of loneliness. I enjoy using vibrant colors and capturing movement though brush strokes, often depicting people in very specific moments. I also want to help others discover what they love about creating art through volunteering. I have taught two violin students as well as assisted art teachers at my school. I was a teacher's assistant for two years, and with that I've earned a Presidential service award.

I'm hoping to be more involved in my school's orchestra program and teach more violin as well as volunteer at the middle school concerts. It's important to me that I inspire people to achieve their goals and find their own spark. I am involved in a handful of extracurricular activities such as colour-guard, orchestra, choir, art (of course), and always try to stay a couple minutes late to practice and arrive early to see if I can help set up chairs or just to practice even more.

Expressing myself through creative mediums has been a crucial part of my identity; I can't imagine the person I would be without visual and performing arts.

September 24th, 2025

To the Cupertino Arts and Culture Committee:

I'm writing to recommend Vianna Dong for the Cupertino Emerging Artist Award. My name is Eva Olsen, and I've known Vianna Dong for around five years as her art instructor at Hongyun Art, watching her grow as an artist and individual as she explores her style more in depth. Over the past five years I've seen Vianna make consistent progress based on how they are in her artwork, overall behavior in class, and other interests. Based on Vianna's growth as an artist, dedication to her craft across multiple mediums and her ability to connect with her creative peers, I'd highly recommend Vianna for the Emerging Artist Award.

Her artwork focuses on humans and human interaction, and she is especially proficient in painting with either gouache and acrylics, focusing on building up markmaking and a mood that conveys her personal experiences going through various life stages and events. Her artwork features themselves as well as other peers. In the time I've known her, I've seen Vianna explore a variety of materials including color pencil, acrylic, gouache and digital painting, animation. Her process involves reflecting on her experiences, gathering reference photos, connecting with teachers, sketching, iterating, and eventually building up her final work. It's clear to me that Vianna is invested in the process and is able to connect her process with her ideas in her art work.

Vianna student is a very absorbent student who is focused and listens to feedback in the class. She is open to learning and conversing with her peers in a productive and friendly manner. In addition, she is punctual about deadlines and can work efficiently, demonstrating a high level of independence and dedication to her work.

Vianna also does music, specifically orchestra and choir, outside of art class and has a lot of volunteering experience working with other music students as well as teaching art both within Hongyun Art and at her high school, and would be a great fit for the Emerging Artist Award program to help support her future artistic endeavors.

Based on my overall experience over the last couple of years working with Vianna, I highly recommend them for the Emerging Artist Award. Please do not hesitate to contact me if there's further questions.

Sincerely,

Eva Olsen

Hongyun Art – Lead Art Instructor

[redacted]

Hongyun Art
20600 Stevens Creek Blvd. Cupertino, CA 95014
408 - 673 – 0568
HongyunArt.com

Vianna Dong

Fine Dining
11"x14"
Acrylic Paint
2025

After a grueling day of hard work for our first winter-guard competition, we sat together on the cold concrete of a school parking lot. We enjoyed a delicious pizza dinner, not as teammates, but as friends.
I can't recall the taste of the food, or the coldness of the ground, but I can remember the relief in my chest, and the joy in my heart.

Vianna Dong

I Am Not Alone
11"x14"
Gouache and Color Pencil
2025

I wrote a story and told it to my friends; they listened with their synthetic ears and beaded eyes.
One day i'll have real friends; but right now I know I'm not alone.

Vianna Dong

Submerged In Harmony
16"x20"
Acrylic Paint
2025

My friends and I make our way through the labyrinth of the Washington Cathedral. For some of us, it was our first time traveling without our parents, yet we were not scared. We stared at the stained glass paintings in awe, and listened to the echoing of our footsteps like it was music. After all, it it weren't for music, if it weren't for choir, we wouldn't have traveled to such a wonderful place.

Under the brilliant colors, submerged in harmony, we were one.

2025
Emerging Artist Submission

#5
Saarth Ranka

Personal Statement for The Emerging Artist Award

Hello, my name is Saarth Ranka, and I am 12 years old. I am currently in the 7th grade and have been learning the tabla for the past six years under the guidance of my Guru, Shri Satishji Tare, at Tabla Niketan. Playing the tabla has become a very important part of my life, and it has taught me so much about rhythm, dedication, and the joy of sharing music with others.

My parents are immigrants, and no one in my family has a background in music. But my dad always wanted me to learn the tabla so that I could stay connected to our roots and serve the community. I feel very fortunate to have this opportunity, and I'm grateful that he introduced me to this beautiful instrument.

When I first started learning, I didn't realize how much the tabla would mean to me. Over the years, I've had the chance to perform with local and visiting artists at different community events and religious ceremonies. These experiences have shown me how powerful music can be in bringing people together. Whenever I play, I see how the beats of the tabla create a sense of unity and joy among those who are listening. It's an amazing feeling to know that I can contribute to my community by sharing my music.

The theme of this year's award, "Building Sustainable Community," resonates with me because I believe music is a big part of how we stay connected. When I play the tabla, I see people smile, clap, and even sing along. It makes me happy to create these special moments, and I want to keep growing as a tabla artist to share this joy with more people.

I am excited to apply for The Emerging Artist Award because it supports younger artists like me, and even those who are finding their love for art again later in life. I hope to keep growing with the tabla, and maybe one day, I can inspire others to start playing music or reconnect with it, no matter how old they are.

Thank you for considering my application.

Sincerely,
Saarth S. Ranka

Saarth Ranka - Resume and Exhibition Record

Saarth S. Ranka

[redacted] Cupertino, CA 95014
Age: 13 | Grade: 8 At Lawson Middle School
Tabla Student under Shri Satishji Tare at Tabla Niketan,Cupertino

Education and Training

- Learning tabla since age 6 under the guidance of Shri Satishji Tare at Tabla Niketan
- Attending regular classes, practice sessions, and workshops to improve skills
- On the learning path of completing Sangeet Visarad, completed Madhyama Pratham, and will be appearing for Madhyama Poorna
- Part of Advanced School Orchestra at Lawson Middle School, Cupertino.

Performances and Experiences

- Performed at multiple community events, including religious ceremonies, cultural celebrations, and school functions
- Accompanied both local and visiting artists during performances, gaining experience in collaborative music-making

Achievements

- Emerging Artist Award Silver Winners - 2025
- Awarded the Most Promising Young Artist by Jain Got Talent, an international competition 2021
- Invited to perform at religious and cultural events as a tabla accompanist
- Selected to accompany professional artists at community events
- Facilitated by Jain Center Of Northern California.

Skills

- Ability to play various tabla compositions (kaidas, relas, tukras, etc.)
- Strong sense of rhythm and ability to accompany different types of music

Exhibition Record

Continuing Engagements

- Performing Jaap every 4th Saturday of the month, contributing to community spiritual gatherings.
- Accompanying and teaching children in the local community for over five years, fostering interest in tab and spiritual music.
- Regular performances at religious ceremonies and community events at Jain Center Of Northern California, Milpitas, CA
- Accompanying local and Visiting artists at various Spiritual singing, Various Location in Bay Area

2025

- Performed as part of **Nanhe Little Star** during the **JCNC 25th Anniversary Celebrations**.
- Accompanied visiting artist Shri Dr Kumar Chatterjee, Sangeet Pravin at Pleasanton
- Performed locally in the **Bay Area at various home events**, supporting cultural and devotional gatherings.
- Participated in Chaitradhun 2025 - mmbayarea

2024

- Performed at JCNC for Jain Digambar Das Laxna Program.
- Accompanied visiting artist Shri Dr Kumar Chatterjee, Sangeet Pravin at Krishan Janam, at Milpitas , California.
- Performed at the Bay Area Vaishnav Parivar, San Jose, CA
- Accompanied local artists at various Spiritual singing, Various Location in Bay Area

2023

- Solo performance at the MIBA Diwali Community Event, Sunnyvale, California.
- Accompanied local artists at various Spiritual singing, Various Location in Bay Area

2022

- Performed at Annual Cultural Event, organized by Tabla Niketan, Cupertino
- **Accompanied Vocalist** at the Annual Jain Community Gathering.
- **Solo Tabla Performance** at Diwali Cultural Celebration for JCIG, Cupertino

Performance Links :

- 2025 Submissions for
  - https://photos.app.goo.gl/EAwUVGW3XFgDkyQ5A
- Most Promising Young Artist, Jain Got Talent 2021
  - https://youtu.be/7MkLg5sToBg?si=bkwaVAst3g3QU6bi
- Various Performances
  - https://photos.app.goo.gl/eW3rhag3MbJg5mDF8
- Most Promising Young Artist, Jain Got Talent 2021
  - https://youtu.be/7MkLg5sToBg?si=bkwaVAst3g3QU6bi

tabla niketan
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tabla niketan

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Mountain House/Tracy :
19382 West Grant Line Road
Mountain House CA. USA

Sacramento:
603, Dunbarton Circle
Sacramento CA USA

Cupertino :
7844 McClellan road,
Cupertino CA 95014 USA

Contact No : [redacted]

www.tablaniketan.com

Recommendation for Saarth S. Ranka for The Emerging Artist Award (2025)

It is with immense pride and joy that I recommend my student, **Saarth S. Ranka**, for *The Emerging Artist Award*. As the founder of Tabla Niketan and Saarth's Guru, I have had the privilege of mentoring him since the age of six. Over these years, I have seen him grow not only as a tabla player but also as a young artist who understands the deeper meaning of music — discipline, respect for tradition, and the power of rhythm to connect people.

This year's theme, *"Threads that Bind Us,"* resonates strongly with Saarth's journey. He has consistently shown how music can be a thread that brings together culture, community, and generations. His performances — whether at temples, community celebrations, or local gatherings — create joy and unity among listeners. He does not just play the tabla; he brings people into the rhythm, making them feel part of something larger than themselves.

Saarth's commitment to learning and growth is evident in his achievements. He successfully passed the **Madhyam Pratham exam**, showing his solid foundation in tabla. He also participated in **Chaitradhun 2025** organized by MMBayArea, where he shared the stage with fellow musicians and gained valuable exposure. In addition, he regularly attends local music events to learn from other artists, showing both humility and eagerness to grow. These experiences reflect not just talent, but a true student's spirit.

Beyond his personal progress, Saarth is deeply involved in the community. He frequently accompanies both visiting and local artists during religious and cultural programs, enriching the performances with his rhythmic support. He also plays an active role in teaching and accompanying younger children, inspiring them to explore tabla and carry forward this tradition. In doing so, Saarth is already contributing to weaving the cultural threads that keep our traditions alive.

What impresses me most is Saarth's maturity at such a young age. He treats every performance, whether large or small, with equal respect and seriousness. He understands that music is not only about individual expression but also about service — service to culture, to the community, and to the audience.

I wholeheartedly support Saarth's application for *The Emerging Artist Award*. He has the talent, the dedication, and most importantly, the heart to continue growing as an artist who strengthens the bonds of community through music. I believe his journey will inspire many others and contribute meaningfully to our shared cultural heritage.

Satish tare

Sincerely,
Shri Satish Tare
Founder & Guru, Tabla Niketan

Saarth Ranka
Performing
Artist Submission

Google Photos Link:

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2025
Emerging Artist Submission

#6
Jasmine Zhao

Artist Statement

My name is Jasmine Zhao, and I have devoted myself to making art since the age of six. From the beginning, art has been more than a pastime for me; it has served as a source of contentment, a way to navigate the changes and challenges of life, and a bonding lifestyle connecting me to a larger community of artists. Over time, creating and learning about art has become a defining part of who I am and how I see the world. In my work, I explore themes that are closely related to my personal life and struggles, particularly topics including race, alienation, and the teenage experience. Through art, I aim to express my own perspective and invoke understanding in my audience. I want those who share similar struggles to feel seen and represented, while also encouraging others to better empathize with emotions and perspectives beyond their own. In developing my art portfolio, I have worked across a wide range of media, including graphite, colored pencil, oil pastel, paint, and marker. Other than projects from my portfolio, I enjoy experimenting with digital design, sculpture, and photography in extracurricular activities and personal projects. These explorations allow me to learn new techniques and carry them from one medium into another. As an artist, I strive to learn more about the world around me and how I can have my art make a difference. I wish to be the type of artist who inspires emotion within people and one who offers visibility to those people whose experiences are overlooked. I continue to push myself to improve my art technically and conceptually to prove to myself and others that art isn’t just a small hobby. This is how I see myself as an artist.

September 24th, 2025
To the Cupertino Arts and Culture Commission,

I'm writing this letter on behalf of Jasmine Zhao, whom I've known for over four years as her art instructor at Hongyun Art. Over the past few years, I've worked with Jasmine on developing her AP Drawing portfolio. During this process, I've observed Jasmine improve not only as an artist but also as a student, learning new techniques and building confidence in her art. I can see her passion for art based on her tremendous progress, which I will elaborate on in the following paragraphs. Through my time mentoring and working with her, I'd highly recommend Jasmine for the Cupertino Emerging Artist Award program.

Jasmine's artwork explores how individuals interact with their environment and with one another. At the start of her portfolio, she limited herself to exclusively working with pencil, color pencil, and acrylic paint. As her time at Hongyun Art continued, she expressed interest in experimenting with a variety of different mediums to convey thoughts and themes effectively. For her portfolio, she drew inspiration from her personal experiences of feeling disconnected from others, which led her to explore metaphorical techniques and investigate how color, form, and composition work to evoke emotion. Jasmine's confidence grew as she trusted her visions and process, incorporating new materials and art styles.

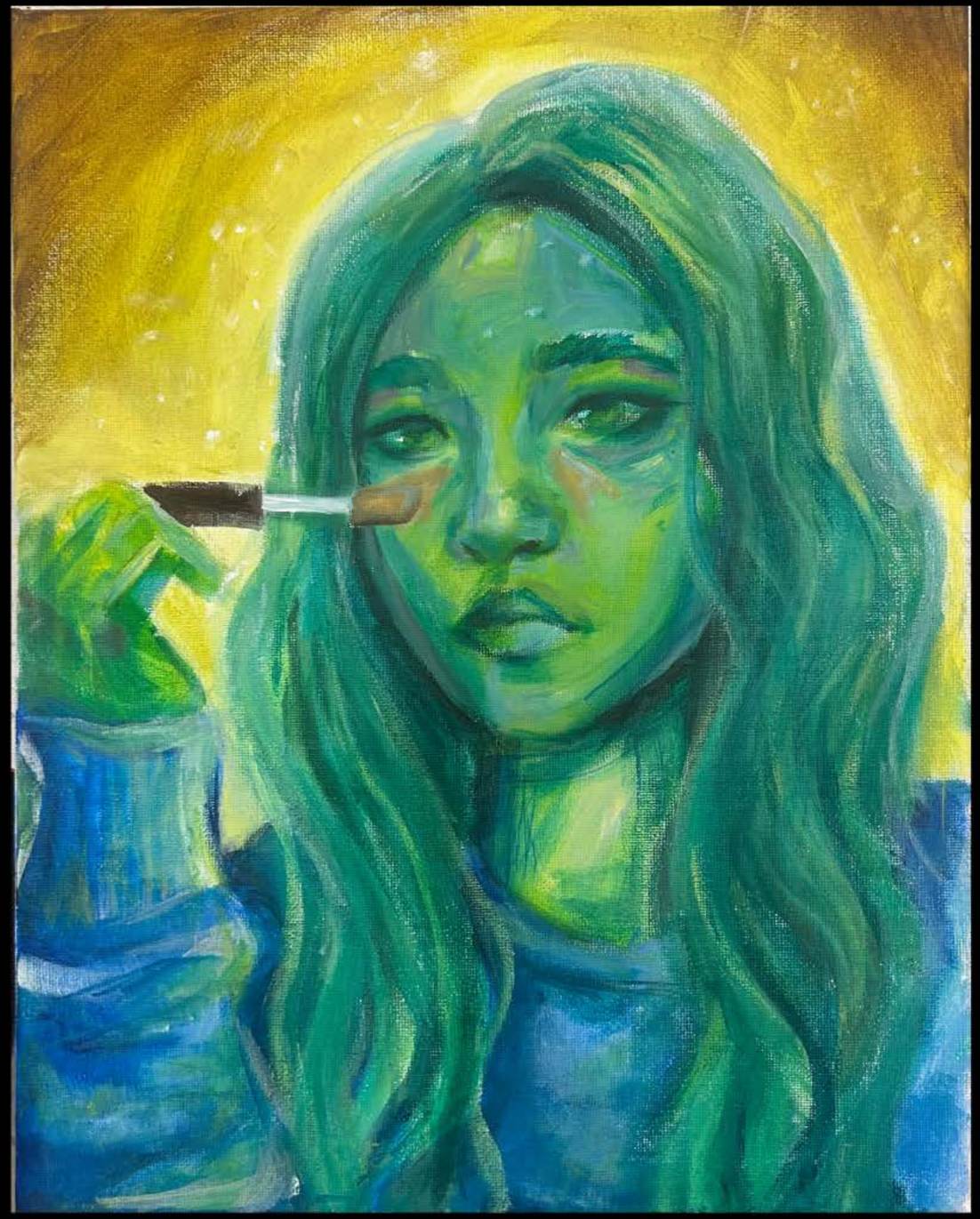
In my observations, Jasmine demonstrates that she is a very attentive student who has a strong ambition to improve her art. She is always eager to listen to feedback given by both teachers and peers and asks questions to deepen her understanding. She approaches her projects with focus and open-mindedness, allowing her to take creative risks outside of her comfort zone. In the classroom setting, Jasmine contributes to the community by supporting other artists and offering help and feedback. Her collaborative nature and positive attitude make her a guiding influence to classmates.

Outside of art, Jasmine is a core part of her school community. She is an executive officer of Monta Vista's Associated Student Body and represents her school in the FUHSD district council. Additionally, she holds leadership roles in multiple clubs and serves as a member of Monta Vista's Student Athletic Senate. Jasmine works to recognize all groups of people within her community and create an inclusive school environment. In the four years Jasmine has been in my portfolio program, she has accumulated over 500 volunteer hours in varied capacities in Hongyun Art, and is now working at the front desk. Her ability to communicate with students as well as adults, and devotion to her community, show that she would be an excellent fit for the Emerging Artist Award.

Overall, she has shown dedication to artistic growth and leadership within her community. From my experience as her mentor and instructor, I have witnessed Jasmine develop into a talented and compassionate artist. Based on these reasons, I strongly recommend Jasmine for the Emerging Artist Award. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,
Eva Olsen
Lead Art Instructor – Hongyun Art
[redacted]

Hongyun Art
20600 Stevens Creek Blvd. Cupertino, CA 95014
408 - 673 – 0568
HongyunArt.com



Glowing Up

18 x 24 in.
Acrylic Paint
2025

This piece reflects the beauty standards society has imposed on young women. Many feel as if they cannot truly belong in society if they do not conceal themselves under layers of makeup. Through this piece, I used color to paint an average girl to resemble an alien, symbolizing the sense of otherness and isolation that arises when one's natural self is deemed unacceptable without artifice.

American-Born Chinese

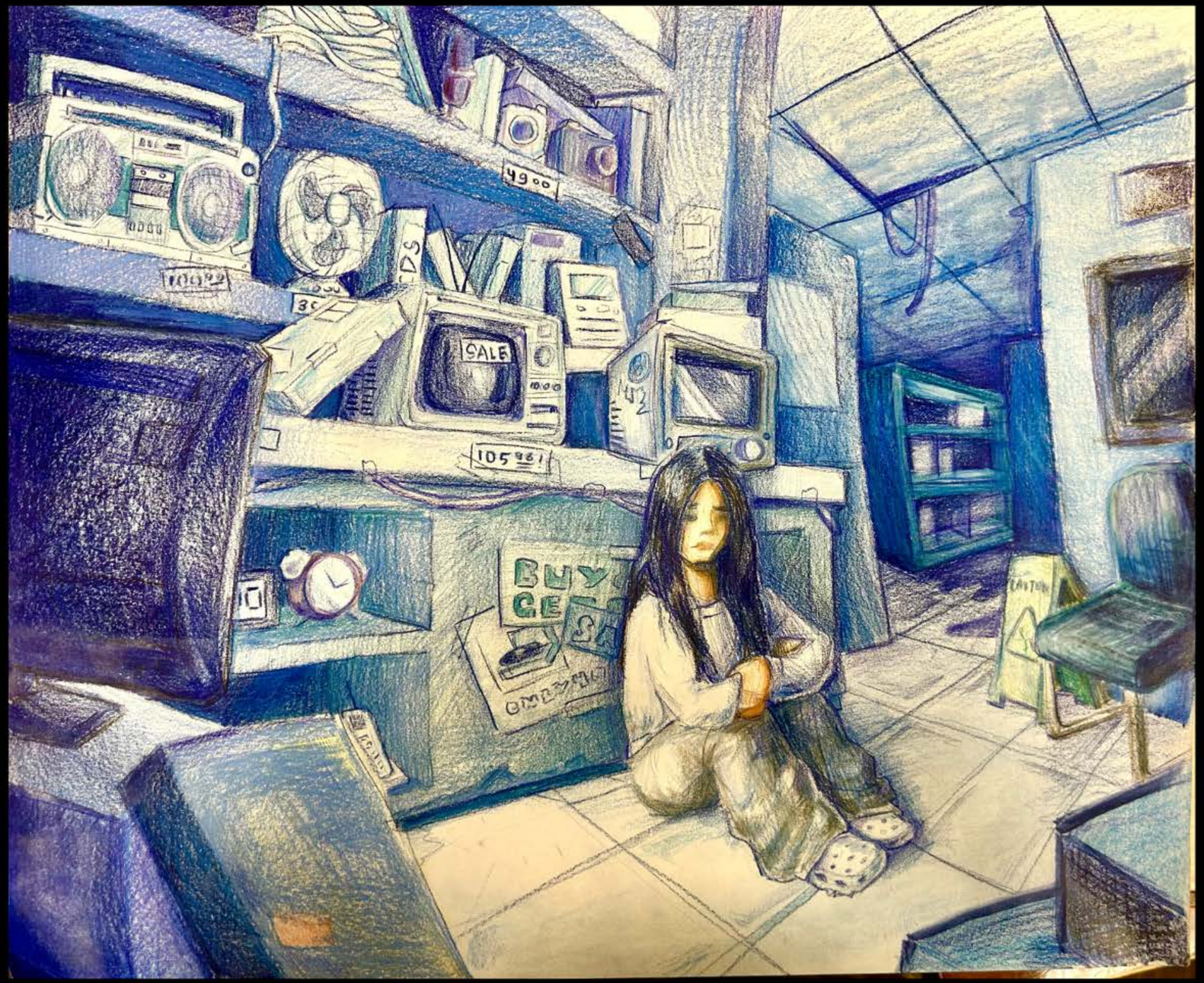
18 x 24 in.
Acrylic Paint
2024

This painting illustrates alienation within one's ethnicity by showcasing a contrast between people through subtle details and color. My personal experience inspires this scene in China, where I felt out of place and disconnected from others. But although one may feel isolated, one can find comfort in the sense of humanity from the people around us and their stories. Each figure has it's one story and life to it

Disconnected

18 x 24 in.
Colored Pencil
2024

This work reflects how technology, meant to connect us, can instead create isolation—leaving individuals adrift in its shadows. The blue tones in the drawing signify the cold and emotionless presence that technology creates, and how even with constant presence, technology cannot fill the emptiness of human isolation



2025
Emerging Artist Submission

#7
Yishan Lin

The eternity of art has always fascinated me, whether it's paintings or music. Through my artwork, I hope to capture the timeless essence of classical music.

I'm Yishan Lin, a current sophomore at Monta Vista High School, and also an artist and musician. Ever since I was five, art and music have been an essential part of my life. Over time, I've been able to develop an increasingly deep and meaningful connection with art and music through years of practice and exposure, both through studying with my teachers and through my self-driven exploration.

While discovering my passions, I've also realized the importance of supporting my community by leveraging my own strengths, with the goal of passing on my enjoyment of art to a new generation of young artists around me. I have volunteered as a teacher's assistant and summer camp leader at Hongyun Art for the past several years, teaching elementary and middle school students. Through my experience I've realized that I used to be one of these students, eager to come and learn art, and I feel proud to be able to inspire students just like myself. Growing up as part of the Cupertino community, I've felt a deep connection with mentors around me through all these years, so I also volunteered at Camp Cupertino in the summer of 2024, where I led local elementary school students on fun hands-on arts and craft activities at the McClellan farm.

Through my engagement with students, I realized that I've not only taught them skills, but learned more about myself. I've discovered how I thrive and truly enjoy my role as a mentor, where I feel accomplished to support students in my community and watch them grow.

In my personal life, music has always been close to me. Other than playing violin and double bass, I have a strong enjoyment of classical music, where I spend countless hours discovering unique compositions and gain tremendous inspiration from each one. To express my passion for music, I have joined many local and statewide orchestras. I am very proud to be the concertmaster of the Monta Vista Chamber Orchestra, and assistant 2nd violin principal for the San Jose Youth Symphony's Philharmonic Orchestra. I am also honored to have been selected to participate in the prestigious California All-State String Orchestra as a 1st violinist in 2024.

Art is equally important to me, and I am honored to have received recognition, such as through statewide competitions like Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, receiving 1 gold key, 3 silver keys, and 1 honorable mention over the past two years. I am also grateful to the City of Cupertino for giving me the Platinum Award for the 2023-2024 Young Artist Award.

Combining my passion for music and art, I've always envisioned expressing classical music through my artwork. As I explore numerous musical works, I realized my interest in lesser-known but beautiful works. As I gain immense inspiration from each, I visualize my own scene in my mind, which I hope to illustrate through experimentation of different media and abstract forms in my own art. Unfortunately, classical music is losing traction among my generation. I hope that through my art, I can inspire students of my generation to realize and explore the true depth and beauty of this gradually fading art form.

Yishan Lin

[redacted] • Cupertino, CA 95014 • [redacted] • [redacted]

Education

Monta Vista High School — Cupertino, CA

Aug 2024 – Present

Extracurricular Activities

San Jose Youth Orchestra — *Jul 2024 – Present*

- **Philharmonic Orchestra, Second Violin Assistant Principal**
- **International Tour, Poland & Czechia (Summer 2025)**

Monta Vista High School Orchestra — *Aug 2024 – Present*

- **Concertmaster (Violinist), Chamber Orchestra (2025–26)**
- **Double Bassist, String Orchestra (2024–25)**

Hongyun Art School — Teaching Assistant / Camp Leader — *Sep 2020 – Present*

- **Assist in art classes (ages 4–13, avg. 2 hrs/wk)**
- **Led 2 art summer camps in 2025 (70 hrs) and 2 in 2024 (64 hrs), up to 20 students per class**

Artistic Skills & Community Service

Art: Sketching, Painting (10 yrs study)

Music: Violin (10 yrs private lessons, 6 yrs ensemble), Double Bass (2 yrs ensemble)

Leadership/Service:

- **4 yrs TA & camp leader**
- **Camp Cupertino camp leader volunteer in 2024**
- **Concertmaster (MV Chamber Orchestra); Asst. Principal 2nd Violin (SJYS Philharmonic);**
- **250+ hrs community service since 2023**

Awards & Honors

Art

- **Scholastic Art & Writing Awards**
    - **2024–25 — Silver Key (Drawing), Silver Key (Photography)**
    - **2023–24 — Gold Key (Film & Animation), Silver Key (Drawing & Illustration), Honorable Mention (Drawing & Illustration)**
- **Bay Area Creative Youth Award — Special Award, Visual Art (2024–25)**
- **Cupertino Young Artist Award — Platinum Winner (2023–24); Exhibited works at Cupertino Library**
- **Junior Duck Stamp Contest — California 3rd Place (2023–24)**
- **PTA Reflections — California 6th District Hon. Mention, Visual Arts (2023–24)**

Music

- **California All-State String Orchestra (2024–25, 1st Violin)**
- **Monta Vista / Lynbrook Concerto Competition (2024–25, 3rd Place)**
- **ABRSM Violin Grade 8 – Distinction (2024)**

Leadership & Service

- **Gold Presidential Volunteer Service Award (2023–24)**

September 27th, 2025

To the Cupertino Arts and Culture Commission,

My name is Eva Olsen, and I've known Yishan Lin for six years as his art instructor at Hongyun Art, focusing on helping him develop his AP Drawing portfolio and work with him to develop his art skills in this time. Over the past several years, I've seen Yishan make remarkable progress and develop as a student based on his commitment to his artwork, time invested into developing his projects, and also his connection to his local community through his teacher's assistant efforts and through his other experiences with creative work.

Based on my meaningful experience working with Yishan, I'd highly recommend Yishan for the 2025 Cupertino Emerging Artist Award.

His artwork focuses on expressing his own unique and creative interpretation of music. He enjoys blending technical skills with unique expression, often creating mixed media artworks. He is also very interested in experimenting and exploring new art mediums that enable him to express himself. He has exhibited notable growth especially on a conceptual and technical level through my past 6 years of working with him.

Yishan is a very dedicated and passionate student who has brought a unique perspective, incorporating music through abstract experimentation with visual arts, and has demonstrated his genuine desire to learn in the class. Yishan also very much enjoys music outside, very involved in his position as a violinist in local youth orchestras. This connection and intersection he's created between art and music demonstrates to me a sincere passion for creative expression that is evident in his body of work.

Additionally, Yishan has served roles as a teacher's assistant and summer camp leader for the past four years at his art school, supporting his local community as an innovative mentor for young artists in Cupertino, ranging from elementary age to middle school. Based on his sincere interest in many forms of art, alongside his role as a great leader for his community, I believe he is a great candidate for the Emerging Artist Award.

Overall, based on his character as an artist, and my overall experience working with Yishan, I highly recommend him for the 2025 Cupertino Emerging Artist Award. Please do not hesitate to contact me if there's further questions.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Hongyun Art
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408 - 673 – 0568
HongyunArt.com

2025
Emerging Artist Submission

#8
Kai Liu

When I was younger I was struggling on what I had wanted to do for the future so I was constantly questioning what I am good at. I always had a hobby of making art because it was like an escape for me so I figured what I wanted to do. I've been making art ever since my parents signed me up for classes back in 2017. I came across multiple obstacles of not being able to fit in with my peers as I thought everyone was better than me or how I should have joined art class earlier. But as I kept on progressing, my teachers provided constant support in making me into a better artist in which I am very grateful for their suggestions and tips when I apply them to my art.

As I soon joined AP art I began to have a foundational art style in which I currently use for all my current works. I had a tough time coming up with ideas for a theme but I thought about what is most common and what is not when it comes to the theme. I saw many others focus on abstract art for their portfolio but I had little interest in that in which I was more used to realism. This brought me to my theme of "Daily Life" or the "Small Moments that Matter in Everyday Lives". I thought this theme was simple and that it could probably relate to people as the story that is being told in my works likely has a connection to the real world such as one of my pieces, Lemon Tea, which depicts a picture of an average student on their lunchbreak. She stands in front of a vending that displays multiple soft drinks. After a long day of school, she can finally reward herself with a nice and cold refreshing lemon iced tea on a hot summer day before break starts. This shows how people can always manage to find a break for themselves and how simple rewards can bring one's day to light within this small moment. I used multi medium materials such as acrylic markers, color pencils, and pens to create a vibrant and cheerful setting to capture this simple but delightful memory. Speaking of memories, my next piece titled Bubble Boy, represents an idea of leisure similar to the previous piece. I was rushing when I made this piece but I got the result I wanted by using digital art. The piece depicts a boy who is standing on a grassy hill almost submerged under the sea of green. He holds a camera that contains his nostalgic memories that he captured throughout his life in this Fruitiger Aero inspired setting. Fruitiger Aero is an aesthetic that is shown with an over-saturated background with an appealing view of greens and blues which includes bubbles, clouds, and mismatched shadows. As he holds his camera standing in this grassfield it almost feels like he has entered another world which brings us to my final piece, Departure. This piece represents isolation in one's mind depicting a girl who is falling upside-down into an endless sky with open clouds that raindrops are "falling" from with movements almost like a school of fish. As she falls, isolated in this blue sky, she has nothing to worry about with no thought in her mind as her head is above the clouds. I drew the buildings upside down for this piece to show the reverse gravity that is taking place in the story. This piece can be viewed both ways upright and upside-down to give the audience to think if she is either floating upwards or falling down. I used color pencils and pens for this piece. As you notice most of my pieces mostly consist of a blue color. This is because not only it is one of the only colors I favor the most, but also it symbolizes stability and calmness of an individual.

September 28th, 2025

To the Cupertino Arts and Culture Commission,

My name is Eva Olsen and I've known Kai Liu for 2 years as his art instructor at Hongyun Art, focusing on helping students like Kai to develop their AP Drawing portfolio and build his overall artistic techniques. Over these past 2 years, I've seen Kai make significant progress based on how he is in watercolor techniques, multimedia, sculpture and his behavior in class. Based on my experience working with Kai, I'd highly recommend Kai for the Cupertino Emerging Artist Award program.

His artwork focuses on manga, realism, and themes around the small moments captured in daily life, and his illustrations with a variety of media such as water color, clay, and etc, and he's interested in laying processes to build up his personal style; in addition to following his interest in both manga and realism. His growth in his work has been great especially in regards to building technical skills in order to communicate his ideas more thoughtfully.

Kai student is a very engaged student who really thinks about what he is going to create in the class. He likes to help others when it comes to 3D elements, as he has great skill in sculpting and three dimensional thinking within his art. He also likes to give suggestions and come up with ideas for peers when they are struggling with their pieces, demonstrating a commitment to engaging with his peers within class and overall connecting with his artistic community. Kai has also demonstrated skills in which he comes up with new techniques towards his art to create visuals that he wants to achieve for his piece.

In addition to visual art, Kai also does sports such as Taekwondo outside which includes being on the demo team that do frequent performances or demos. He also referees for Taekwondo tournaments as one of the judges. For his art awards, he's demonstrated his commitment to connecting with a wider community in art as well as engaging with local programs — showing commitment and dedication to applying to the Creative Youth Awards, Scholastic Art and Writing and achieving recognition within both of these programs; and in addition he's also volunteered heavily within the Hongyun Art Foundation.

Overall, based on factors of their art style and commitment and dedication to pursing a creative career both as a high schooler and in the future, being thoughtful towards peers and extracurriculars outside of the studio, as well as my overall experience of teaching and assisting with Kai, I highly recommend him for the Cupertino Emerging Artist Award program. Please do not hesitate to contact me if there's further questions.

Sincerely,

Eva Olsen

Hongyun Art – Lead Art Instructor

[redacted]

Hongyun Art
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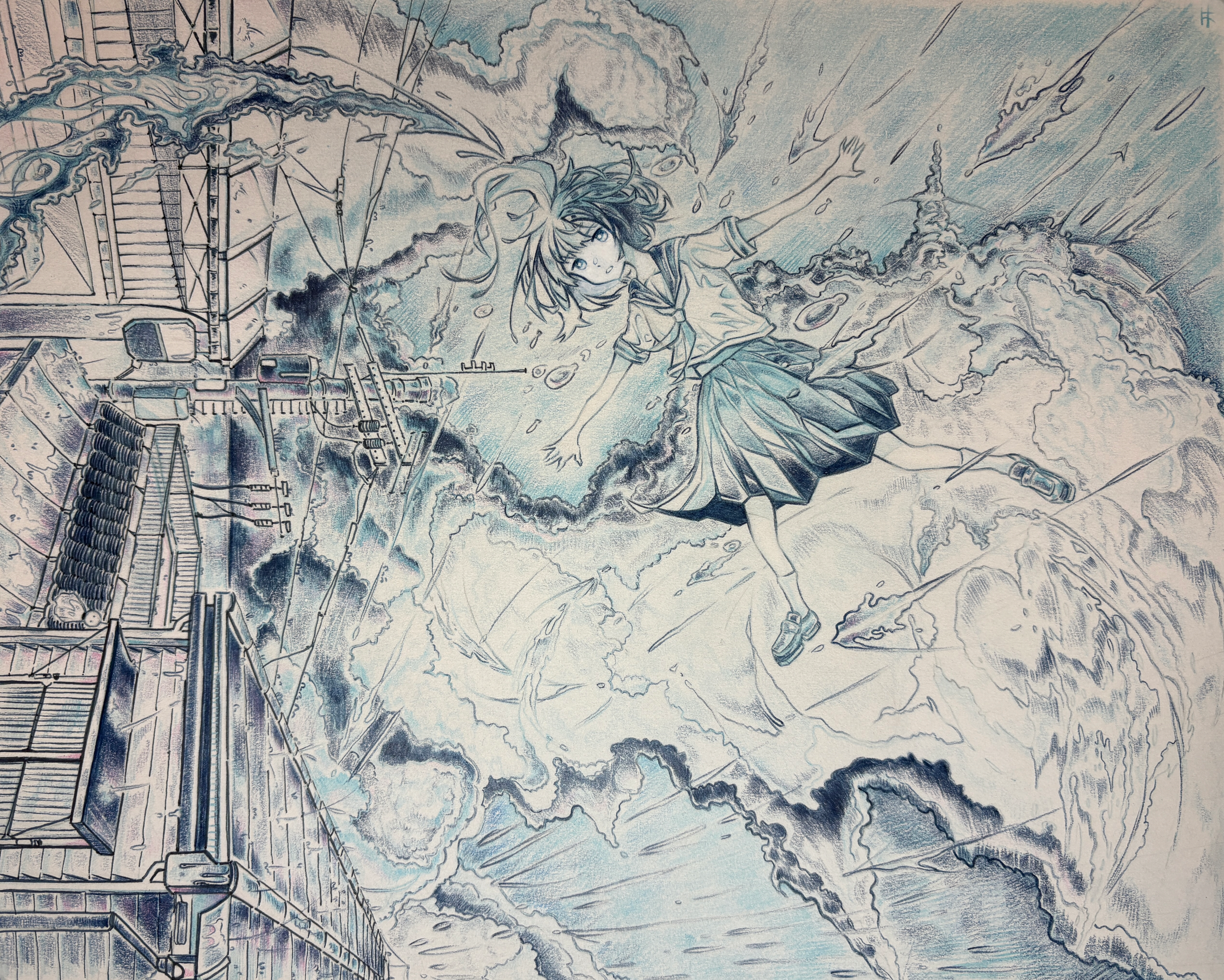
408 - 673 – 0568
HongyunArt.com

茶
LEMON

KAMERA



2025
Emerging Artist Submission

#9
Iris Zheng

Personal Statement for 2025 Cupertino Emerging Artist Award Application

My name is Iris Zheng, and I am 16 years old. From a young age, I have found joy in expressing myself through various forms of art and crafts. Recently, I have particularly gravitated towards painting, exploring with traditional mediums like gouache and acrylic, and digitally through Procreate and its various light modes. Art has always provided me with a calming space, offering a break from my busy schedule. Throughout my art journey, I have primarily focused on creating aesthetically pleasing pieces, as that sense of beauty brought me a sense of satisfaction. However, more recently, I've been challenging myself to be more reflective—allowing my personal experiences to guide my work, even if the process isn't traditionally "beautiful."

I'm excited to submit three works for the Cupertino Emerging Artist Award. Two of them reflect my exploration of traditional and digital painting, while the third responds to the 2025 theme, "Threads that Bind Us."

For this theme, I chose a literal interpretation and experimented with a new medium: fabric and thread. I wanted to celebrate the cultural diversity that shapes our community. I combined two 12" x 12" canvases and stitched fabric patches onto them, using textiles originating from regions such as India, Korea, China, and the Kalahari, among others. Each fabric square represents a distinct culture.

The overlapping colors, the stitched designs that extend from one patch to another, and the threads binding them together all symbolize the connections that emerge when cultures interact and share. Together, the fabrics form a patchwork—a single tapestry that represents one rich and unified community. From left to right, viewers can see the progression as individual threads gradually merge into a cohesive whole.

As an emerging artist, I am excited to continue exploring various artistic styles and techniques in search of my niche. I am grateful for the opportunity to share my work and hope that my pieces will resonate with viewers in any way.

September 24th, 2025

To the Cupertino Arts and Culture Committee:

My name is Eva Olsen, Lead Art Instructor at Hongyun Art. I've known Iris Zheng for four years as her art instructor at Hongyun Art, focusing on helping Iris develop her art portfolio for AP Studio Art, and seeing her develop her skills on both a technical and conceptual front. Over the past year, I've also seen Iris make ongoing progress in her artistic endeavors, volunteering service, and overall engagement with her art community.

Iris's portfolio focuses on combining materials, processes, and ideas, and she always finds creative experimental elements to explore. Her artwork focuses on her interests through personal experiences, and she explores various styles and moods in her art. She is interested in using mixed media processes to experiment and broaden her perspectives. Iris is proactive and focused with her work overall in class, as shown by the work in her portfolio. She has a sensitivity for connecting with her work and feels her emotions strongly through it.

Furthermore, Iris is a disciplined student and attentive in class. I am proud to say that she is eager to improve and takes feedback, and we often have productive conversations about her work. It's one of her strong points with her presence in the classroom. She works well with her peers, openly offering and receiving help.

Finally, regarding her volunteering and connection to the city of Cupertino -- Iris has also volunteered out at multiple summer camps through Hongyun Art Foundation, and as a teacher's assistant for our core art classes, maintaining consistent and clear communication with our staff and volunteer coordinators. She's greatly appreciated by the students she works with for her cheerful and friendly attitude, connecting and encouraging students gently. For her help with the Hongyun Art Foundation, she's received the Gold Presidential Volunteer Service Award three times – in 2022, 2023, and 2024. Furthermore, she's also volunteered at the Earth Day Festival and at our various workshops at the Cupertino Library, for which we are incredibly grateful for her time and energy.

Based on all of my experiences with Iris, and based on her portfolio, process, and commitment to our local artistic community, Iris would be a great fit for the Cupertino Emerging Artist Award. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [redacted] if I can elaborate further to help support Iris's application.

Sincerely,

Eva Olsen

Hongyun Art – Lead Art Instructor

[redacted]

Hongyun Art
20600 Stevens Creek Blvd. Cupertino, CA 95014
408 - 673 – 0568
HongyunArt.com

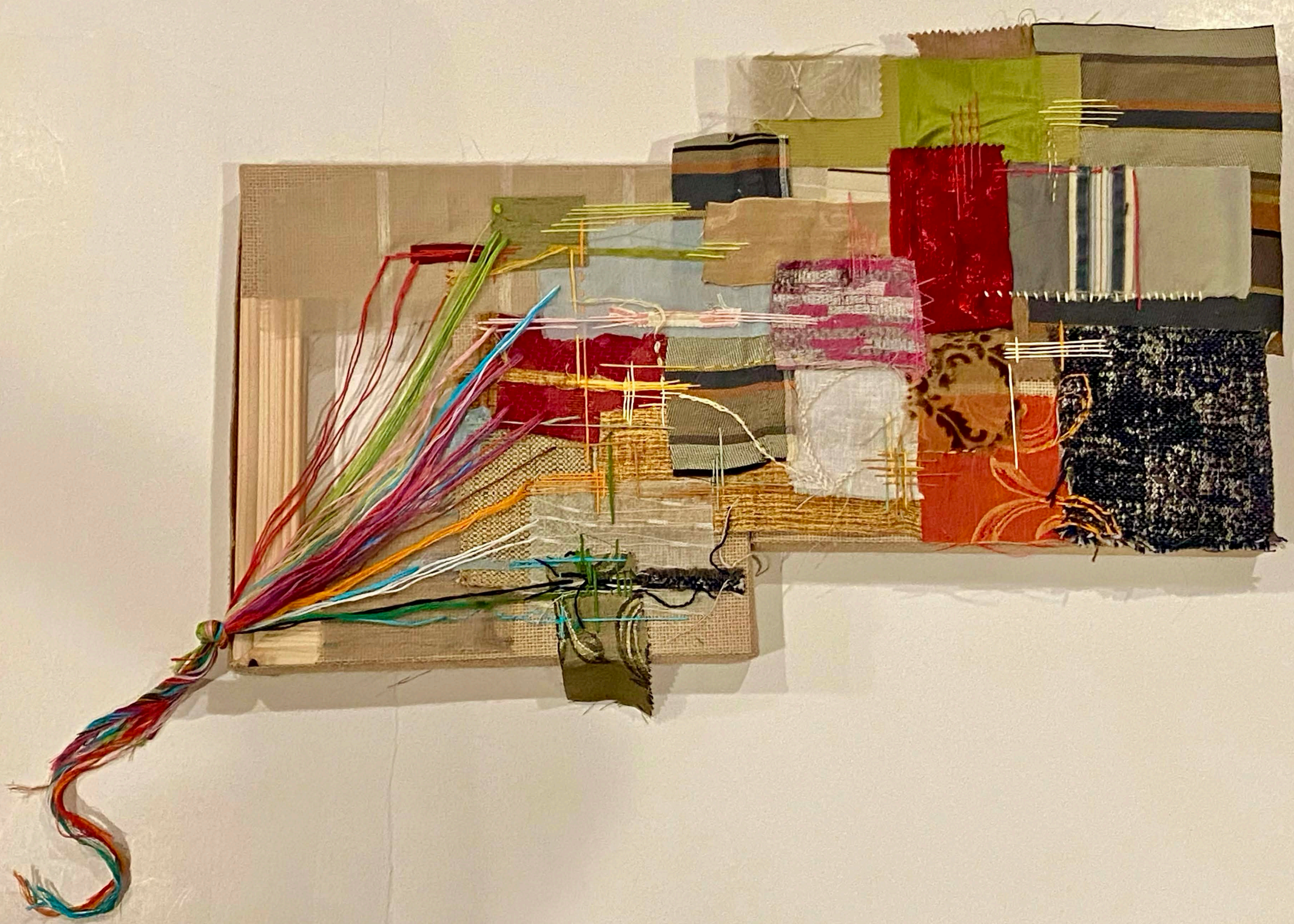
Once Upon A Time
9” x 15”
Digital Art in Procreate
2025

Growing up, I used to sit on the bright red couch in my room, staring out the window as the sunlight streamed in and warmed my face. It always felt like I was drifting on clouds, lost in a dream. Oftentimes, I imagined myself as a princess. Experimenting with colors with various light modes, I wanted to recreate this daydream—the magic of light and warmth that made the simple life of a young girl seem a little more fantastical.

Yellow in the Blue
9” x 12”
Gouache & Colored Pencil
2025

This piece was inspired by the unusually rainy, gloomy season in California. Even on gray days, the sun eventually emerges—much like how kindness persists through dark times. Rain shifts mood and emotion, but it also creates space for compassion and growth.

In my painting, rain becomes a symbol of nature sparking kindness within the rigid blue city. I imagined a girl in a yellow raincoat offering her umbrella to a stranger—a small act that becomes a seed of hope that grows and multiplies. Kindness spreads. Even the smallest action can transform a city.



2025
Emerging Artist Submission

#10
Maxwell Zheng

Most often, I use art to define things. It takes too many words to fully explain a lot of what I feel. With art, I can turn my experiences into something other people can see and understand. I want to share my interactions with voice and self expression; because of this, I usually end up making physical representations of feelings, including internal ideals and external constraints. I prefer defined shapes and lines more than realistic blending, which is why I draw digitally. The sharpness of the brushes and erasers makes it easier to shape what I want to show. To me, art is a reassurance; it makes my experiences real.

September 24th, 2025

Letter of Recommendation – Maxwell Zheng

To the Cupertino Arts and Culture Commission,

My name is Eva Olsen, Lead Art Instructor at Hongyun Art and I've known Maxwell Zheng for over four years, working with him as he develops his AP 2D Art and Design portfolio as well as his varied art skills. Over the past four years, I've seen Maxwell make incredible progress in his art. Based on my experience working with Maxwell as a both a student and volunteer with us at Hongyun Art, I'd highly recommend him for the Cupertino Emerging Artist Award.

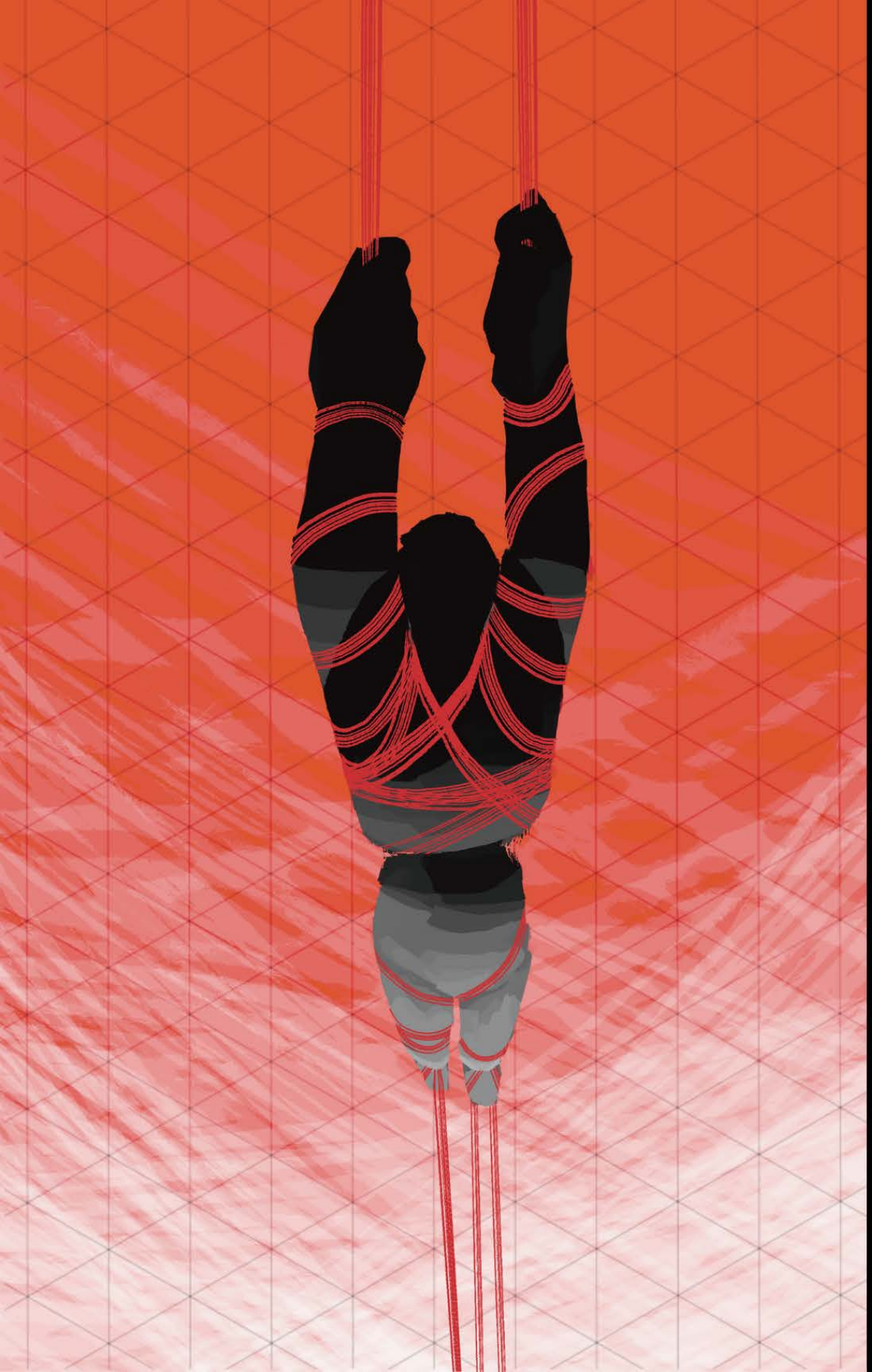
Maxwell's artwork highlights geometric shapes. He often uses rulers, masking tape, and even physical layers in his artwork to cleanly define borders. Recently, he's started experimenting with the tools offered by digital art to create a more graphic look and exploring visual communication in multiple avenues. In his time as my student, he's grown away from traditional modes of artistic representation to develop his authentic voice as an artist. Some of the interesting components of his work include his ability to genuinely connect his personal experiences and draw from various components of his life and integrate and synthesize it.

Maxwell is a very driven student. He often attends studio hours outside his assigned class time. He is always hard at work refining his art and, this past year especially, refining his style. Furthermore, he's both independent and attentive to feedback and is willing to push himself to pursue new artistic avenues. Also, as a teacher's assistant at Hongyun Art Foundation, he's been able to impact various other students and demonstrate patience, as well as connect with younger students while offering them helpful feedback, either technically or based on their ideas. Given his goals to become a professional designer and pursue art in college, this art award would help and give him funding as well as motivation to continue pursuing his craft and passion.

Overall, Maxwell is very dedicated to his art and has a distinctly graphic style. Based on these factors, as well as my overall experience with them as my student, I highly recommend him for the Cupertino Emerging Artist Award. Please don't hesitate to contact me at my email, [redacted] with any further questions.

Thank you for your time,

Eva Olsen
[redacted]
Lead Art Instructor – Hongyun Art



Strain

Digital
6” by 9.5”
2025

Strain represents different stressors and how they can break people. The character clings to expectations, using them to pull themself up, while difficulties drag them down and obstacles restrict their movement and breathing. I used reds and red-oranges to convey intensity and a pressure to succeed, and the white below shows how easy everything would be if you let go of expectation.

Fit Check

Digital
4” by 6”
2025

I created Fit Check to show the importance of self expression in clothing. Clothes are often the first thing we notice when seeing new people, even before their faces. However, people look their best wearing things they’re happy with, things they really like. The character backpack on this tall stranger completes the outfit and makes it memorable, childish as it is.