HIGH SCHOOL ART EXHIBITION COMMITTEE 2016

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SOCIAL MATTERS

APRIL 21 - MAY 15, 2016
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A Letter From the Director

Art saved me in high school. Literally, I am not being dramatic. I took every art class offered. I stayed after school to make art and took projects home over the weekend. In the library I was the kid who sat in the stacks and poured over art monographs while everyone else was sneaking candy and writing notes.

I was once asked to speak on a panel at the National Steinbeck Center. The topic was “Can a work of art change your life?” My answer was a resounding “Yes!” Art continues to change and shape my life.

One’s high school years are filled with transition and change: developmentally, physically and emotionally. It is a rich and exciting time for these challenging reasons. Art can articulate conflicting and complicated emotional landscapes at a visual level. Creating art can open up pathways to problem solving and conflict resolution. It can also simply be a vehicle of expression, a way to exorcise demons.

This year’s exhibition theme, Bridges: Facing Challenges offered students an opportunity to explore their own personal challenges, changes, transitions and conflicts and to express their feelings, offer up some solutions and even rant a little about their frustrations. The work juried into the exhibit is exceptional. A variety of themes surface but as I consider the work and read the artist statements I am struck by this: these kids are up for the challenges that face them. They are smart, strong and determined to not just overcome, but to soar.

Thank you to the many people who made this exhibition possible, notably our High School Exhibition Committee led by Mary Ellen Kaschub. Her hard work and the dedication of this team is what drives this exhibition. And to the kids, their families, teachers and mentors who place a high value on STEAM over STEM in California curriculum. Lastly, a special thank you to our partners at the Santa Clara County Office of Education, especially Esther Tokihiro.

Over 750 pieces were submitted to Bridges but just 68 were juried into the show. Thank you to ALL the students who took the time to think, create and submit: this tough competitive environment raises the standard of excellence each year.

Lisa Coscino
Executive Director
NUMU Los Gatos
April 2015
I've clearly shown with a red background while the other five are green, that she is what I've labeled as “cultural-appropriation”. The other paintings are of a black woman, an apprentice geisha or Maiko, an old white woman, a mixed race male, and a Hispanic girl. I wanted to convey the different types of kimono and that different races can wear them. They can all enjoy the kimono, whilst not disrespecting the culture.
We often do not realize the injustices that take place in our court system. However, the podcast *Serial* brought these issues to the country’s attention. This podcast, as well as its many-spin off podcasts, uses social media to find out more information about their cases. The information they find is being used to exonerate wrongfully convicted prisoners. This innovative and incredible use of social media to remedy a national issue is what inspired my artwork.

*Connections Shatter Cages*
Colored pencil
18 x 24 inches

Cupertino High School
Teacher, Alice Cunningham
Interactions with others through technology are becoming more of a social norm than anything else. With that, we continue to help social media grow and flourish with our contributions and creative ideas. We create the apps, build the devices, and publish the blogs. Advanced apps are being created, whilst social websites are being rejuvenated. This is us improving ourselves, making ourselves efficient. We are what we create. We are the technology that makes social media run.
Since the beginning of movies, motion pictures have not only provided entertainment, but have also sparked creativity and innovation in the world today. A 1902 silent film depicts a trip to the moon that becomes a reality 67 years later. *Past, Present, and Streaming* conveys the relationship between video media and society as it progresses. Through the Internet, massive archives of video, instantly available, provide everything from mementos of the past to glimpses of the future.
Our interactions are impacted when technology is present. We are pulled into our hand-held screens when sitting right next to a friend or family member. Technology hinders us from being truly connected to our surroundings and loved ones. We love our technology, but maybe it is time to connect with those we are with in the present.
In an extrovert society, being an introvert is challenging. Sociality is a daily struggle. The mind is powerful, capable of creativity beyond words. There is so much unsaid longing to come out. There are regrets of missed opportunities to say something, something that might have been appreciated. But, you just think too much and the opportunity passes.
Disorder
Mixed media
24 x 7.5 inches

Los Altos High School
Teacher, Christine An

Industry consuming the green world,
All for the sake of consumerism.
When will we open our eyes
To our nation’s disorder?
We hide in the dark and fake in the light.  
Everyone knows it.  
Nobody changes.
From a young age, we are influenced by the words and actions of the people around us. Whether we are aware of it or not, what we perceive shapes our future and the type of person we become. When children grow up in an environment filled with alcohol and violence, it is often difficult to break out of the cycle, as our family members tend to leave the strongest impressions in our lives.
As I progressed through school, I sacrificed originality and creativity for scores, achievements, and grades. When I was forced to take an art class as a requirement my junior year, I was completely disinterested. Project after project however, I realized that creativity is an essential part of being a human and that art supports that. This piece is far from a masterpiece, but it is a symbol of my sincere appreciation for creativity and art.
A Pedal Board For His Guitar
White chalk on black paper
14 x 19.75 inches

Saint Francis High School
Teacher, Tom Johantgen

*A Pedal Board For His Guitar* is a representation of a modernized pedal board used to change the sound of a guitar. In today’s society, communication is becoming readily easier to do with our technology.

This pedal board represents the changes in the music industry allowing for changes in sound, allowing us to express our ideas and communicate in new ways.
Debates are fought on a battlefield where there is no middle ground. If we can’t bridge the divide, we will never be able to solve our problems.
Equality isn’t so equal after all.
It wasn’t until I passed the San Luis Reservoir a year ago I actually understood the magnitude of our drought, seeing a key body of water halfway depleted instead of merely a few brown lawns. We try to conserve all we can, but the truth is we all need that water to survive and can only hope for a prolonged meteorological miracle before we are forced to empty our supply completely.
Deer God, a play on the words “Dear God” pleading for help, represents deforesting and the damage it does not only to the land, but to the animals that live there as well. The tree stumps on the deer’s back represent the deforestation itself as well as the life of the deer (which is dead). The single piece of land illustrates the little land that is left for animals to inhabit.
Technology has increased its hold on the social aspects of our lives, forcing us to be bound by the need to stay online. However, in the offline world, we are losing face-to-face connections with those who we only converse with in the digital world. Consequently, humans have become trapped by technology’s influence over our lives, and are blinded by the control technology has over us.
Turtles portrays the harm caused by ocean pollution. Plastic is a common element of pollution, and is especially harmful because it doesn’t breakdown and animals mistake it for food. Pollution kills millions of sea animals every year and it is getting worse. The ocean accounts for 70% of the Earth and we are destroying our own home. I hope my art will help spread awareness so people can start trying to make a difference.

Kendal Davis

Turtles
Acrylic
16 x 20 inches

Los Gatos High School
Teacher, Thad Smith
Social media is taking over our lives. No longer do we enjoy the sight of blooming flowers, the sounds of rushing cars, or the feel of the cool air on a walk home. Our heads are focused down on our phone screens, unaware of the world around us. Perhaps we’ll even walk by the very person we are texting.
The only non-technological communication we have left is at school. School forces us to talk and speak up. School is the only place where we can make face-to-face contact with another person. But sooner or later, that will be gone because school will increase its use of technology or, should I say technology, will take over the schools.
Watching Love Grow is a progressive piece that showcases the world’s social change towards LGBTQ Rights. The depicted colors invoke a sense of both momentous social progression and societal conflicts; while also suggesting the gradual end of traditional mentality as the world progresses. Thus, this art piece is meant to showcase the hard-fought battle for multi-love and equality, and its uncertain and unforeseen aftermath.
Stephanie Gee

*Unvalued*
Digital photography
16 x 20 inches

Los Altos High School
Teacher, Christine An

It is our social responsibility to care for the elderly. However, many live ignored and uncared for. Our social structure frames the elderly as a burden. Seniors are seen as past their prime and as a drain on both younger family members and the economy. This attitude towards old age robs our grandparents and great-grandparents of humanity and value. Our society doesn’t value the reservoirs of wisdom and experience our elders have to share.
Many people live with blinders on. We see what we want to see and are blinded to the outside world. We make ourselves sad, angry, frustrated, and depressed. However, it is the people who recognize that all humans have the ability to take off their blindfolds who are the happiest with themselves.
Our world has predetermined for every woman what they “should be”. The power to choose who they will become is a right taken from women as they are molded by harsh words, crude images, and the backs of hands. We must now find a way to reclaim a woman’s right to create herself, and take that ability out of the hands of a restrictive structure.
Humans are defined by the nature of their surroundings. We are molded into individuals through the interaction of our internal attributes with those of the external world. Yet, while our environment often plays a significant role in shaping us, in certain ways we have the opportunity to shape our environment. That is, we can allow that which is intrinsically within us to leave a mark on the world around us.
The buildup of stress and pressure in our daily lives makes it seem as if we are drowning. For women, the burden of being stronger, better, braver while continuing to keep an elegant and graceful facade is suffocating. The world is like a fish bowl trap in a vast ocean of the universe.
In the time that we currently live, people are so focused on themselves they do not have the time to connect and socialize with others. Even though we as humans share so many interests, we choose to focus on ourselves instead of interacting with the people around us. We choose to live in our own world and disregard the needs and wants of others because we are too busy focusing on our own needs.
Our first impressions depend greatly on what others claim. However, under the well-acclaimed surface, layers of failures and successes exist, evidence of ways we have tried to make our lives better; the tally marks show the number of tries that these improvements, and others, may have taken. Yet we look at each other and at other societies, and see only that we are better or worse. At times, slowing our pace would be an improvement.
As humans, we have the responsibility to protect the traces of a world long gone. We must guard the remnants of a culture and time that have disappeared, so that the valuable efforts and lives of those before us are not doomed to be cast away along with their bodies in a tomb. In doing so, we can build on their legacies to create something even more beautiful.
It is not difficult to come across the disproportion of wealth in America as you wander around the streets of the American South. The symbols Black Power and The Land of the Free are captured as graffiti on the wall, symbols that are used to represent a better future for minority groups in America. All of this is juxtaposed by the reality of today as seen in the man walking away from it all.
Fetal Position
Glazed ceramic sculpture, wood stands
20 x 36 x 46 inches

I am currently exploring figurative sculpture and emotional connections. I don’t want to tell people what to think about my work. I think each person will have his or her own interpretation. The following excerpt from a poem by Ren resonates with me when thinking of this work. From Tangerine Dreams

“Alone
In a twisted state
Fetal position
The shape I take
You’d think I’d know better
At this point in life”

-Ren Dec 27, 2014
The most powerful force in our world today is the media, dictating what we think and how we act. However, its power resides in the masses. If we collectively take action and shun the pernicious effects of media, we will be able to be free-thinkers once again. All we need to do is shut off the screen.
The advent of social media and its impact on our lives is unmistakable. Beyond simply speaking face-to-face and personally getting to know one another, we build ideal versions of ourselves in the virtual world, seeking approval, envy from others, or some sort of validation. We judge and compare each other’s lives through carefully manicured profiles; like peering into fish tanks on display for the whole world to see.
Fresh Meat is about human trafficking and the objectification of women in the industry. It is gross and unsettling, especially once society begins to recognize human trafficking is not confined to third world countries. It is happening everywhere and is a huge industry here in California. Women and children are packaged and sold for their youth and bodies. This needs to end. It begins with recognizing what human trafficking really is.
Highly influenced by the *Fallout* video game series, I’ve always been intrigued by the post-nuclear war world and what it brought to those who lived in it. The world would be desolate, civilization would be devastated, but humans would live on. I feel like those who will be born into this world would face many hardships, but those who lived in the past, those who knew what it was like before, would suffer the most.
Climate change is a pressing issue in the 21st century. As more carbon is released from factories, cars, and homes into the atmosphere, animals are beginning to disappear. They cannot adapt quickly enough to the changing environment. Politicians continue to argue about the existence of climate change, while the majority of scientists agree that it’s a huge issue. Soon, even the most common species will disappear, and so will our memories of them.
Preoccupation & Ignorance presents what is now considered normal in our current society. We are constantly absorbed in our own world, distracted by various pieces of technology. The blue light from the screens of our devices casts a cool light upon us, making us look as cold as we may act. In our ignorance of the larger world, we neglect those in need; the ones with warm open, welcoming arms looking for help.
My family is affected by the mental illness of depression. I've seen it consume people who I am very close to and morph them into a completely different person. On the other end, I can also see how it is affecting me. Every now and then I find myself having negative thoughts. It's like I'm getting pulled into the rabbit hole of my family's depression, with no way out.
With the advent of today’s media, children are spoiled by the horrors of the world around them. In the form of violent video games, inappropriate ads, and increasingly scandalous kids’ shows, the media continues to destroy the innocence that is characteristic of children at a younger age than usual. Much like a rotting tree house, once pristine and wholesome, the undefiled innocence of children is deteriorating right before our very eyes.
Grey Sweater, Plaid Skirt
Acrylic, Watercolor, collage, pen, ink, gloss
12 x 18 inches

Pioneer High School
Teacher, Laurie Kirk

Grey Sweater, Plaid Skirt depicts the harm that sexual harassment causes to young people.
Modern suburbia is a place of irony. As technology takes over the age, our face-to-face social contact with others diminishes, and our relationships with our neighbors change. Meanwhile, we work harder and harder to look the same in order to conform to the rest of our neighbors. What was once a community is now a set of mindless, identical houses. We are socially unconnected, standing in our stilted, yet identical worlds.
In the stressful world we live in, everyone has times when they feel utterly defeated and vulnerable, whether it is because of school, family, or personal crisis. During times like these, we often dream of escaping and flying away from ourselves. In that dream state we feel exposed and anxious. We wish to escape from ourselves and fly away.
A major social issue facing our increasingly digital society is the exploitation of women in the media. A deep-rooted patriarchal mentality has manifested itself today in the media; women’s bodies are put on display as objects rather than strong, independent beings. Although some women rightfully embrace and control their sexuality, many magazines and websites choose to scrutinize females based solely on their appearance and not their contributions to society.
Jack Sechler

*Freedom of Expression*
Digital photography
1000 x 770px (Diptych)

Saint Francis High School
Teacher, Thomas Johantgen

My artwork displays a push for equality for homosexuals in the teenage community. Although laws have been passed and change has been accepted, some people still discriminate against the gay community. This couple represents an expression of individuality, which sets an example for other couples that are scared about societal prejudices. This social matter is even lived out on our campus and I really think it’s important for people to be accepting of each other.
The technological advances that are constantly arising are said to be moving society forward, however new technology like social media and phones are halting humans from interacting with the world. We are so focused on virtually “connecting” with others that we sacrifice making memories and enjoying life. People no longer live in the moment without uploading it to Instagram first, showing the world that they’re having a good time instead of living in the moment.
Living together in communities, interacting with others, and nurturing relationships requires a very basic set of human emotions. Martin Shkreli, the man behind the Daraprim pill price spike, apparently lacks these basic values of empathy, compassion, and human understanding. By depicting him as a religious icon in the style of the Byzantine era, I attempted to convey his feeling of superiority and the godlike regard in which he views himself.
Fire Love
Colored pencils, chalk, sharpie
9 x 11 inches

Saint Francis High School
Teacher, Salvador Gaeta

*Fire Love* represents burning love that is then blown out by all of the challenges one must overcome.
Deforestation, fashion, and immigration are terms we hear in the news all the time. Capitalist loggers are destroying 73 million hectares of forest per year, affecting many animals such as the Giant Panda. When I hear about all the latest fashion trends, I can't help but think of all the colorful animals and how they try to attract a mate. The xenophobia that many countries experience towards immigrants make them use their military against them.
One of the best nights of my life I saw a favorite band live for the first time. Concerts are the best thing about music. It doesn’t matter you don’t like school or you have to gather strength to get up in the morning, important for de-stressing teenagers who feel pressured and alienated. What matters is shouting as loud as you can to your favorite lyrics. You feel honest-to-god-happy. For a few hours you feel infinite.
Sharing the Music shows children coming together through music. I chose a xylophone because many people can play it simultaneously. I was originally going to have the children play in an orchestra; I wanted to do something more collaborative. I intended for the picture to be simple while conveying my message about the importance of having social connections in one’s life. Therefore, I had the children wear informal clothes in an outdoor setting.
In today’s technologic world, families have lost that part of the day for talking about their lives outside of the house. Instead, they’re constantly in contact with people far away, not spending quality time with the people who are already at their side. We’re so tied up with our electronics that soon we’ll be “at a loss for words,” not because we’re surprised, because we’ll have forgotten how to talk to someone right next to us.
Nick Ybarra

Elapsed
Video
1:25 minutes
Homestead Highschool
Teacher, Carolyn Daily

Elapsed is about the relentless pressure to achieve that is placed upon today’s students. It also portrays the exaggerated effects of pressure, like depression burnouts, and other stress related ailments. This issue is especially relevant to students in the Silicon Valley. Schools like Palo Alto High School have a 10-year suicide rate, 4-5 times higher than the national average. With Elapsed I hope to spark discussion to make changes to our educational system.
In today’s world, we interact and communicate in a cyber world that has been created by internet social media. However, because of the anonymity of the social media, one can easily conceal his or her emotions and true identity. This art piece portrays the increasing problem of today’s society, a problem of hiding our real emotions and identities behind the screen.
Wendie Zhang

The Little Museum
Acrylics on canvas
12 x 16 inches
Homestead Highschool
Teacher, Carolyn Daily

We have murdered, tortured, experimented on, eaten, worn, and used them for our fun. We have sentenced them to death, for which their crime is existence. We have stuffed their children to hang in museums, for all to stare unaware as we walk through this museum of horrors, oblivious. Life is life. Yet behold the forgotten, within the flimsy, decaying walls of our so-called society. Do we truly know what we have done?
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