

EXAMPLES OF VISUAL ARTS ENTRIES FOR STARS

NAME XXXX- (DRAWING ENTRY)

Invisible Men: A visual response to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*

Description

I have created a visual response to the novel *Invisible Man*, by Ralph Ellison, using charcoal and oil pastel on packing paper. The composition and scale of the piece are inspired by renaissance narrative paintings which illustrate multiple points of a story in the same massive painting. My use of the same narrative and compositional technique is poignant because the stories told in the *Invisible Man* are as familiar to African Americans and White America alike as mythology and histories might have been to people of the renaissance. To exhibit the hyper-characterization of the people in the story, I have drawn both Mary and the old lady who is seen getting evicted in the same dress. The overlapping timeframes represent the interchangeability of the characters and the namelessness this implies. Stylistically, I am inspired by African and African Americans artists of the 20th century, and I use a pallet of bold colors which are brilliant, eye-catching, and carry a sense of vitality which is also felt in the novel. Despite Ellison's criticism of trying too hard to blend white and black in the book (explicitly in the paint factory), I am emphasizing the use of these European and African influences in my piece to reference the many descriptions of jazz throughout the novel. Jazz originated as a blending of the two musical traditions, an artistic form which is a result of African diaspora and which takes harmonic forms from western music and rhythm from African music.

Artist Statement

As an avid painter and reader, I strive to blend the visual and literary arts and draw inspiration for my work in one from my studies in the other. I am particularly interested in the representations of Epic literature in visual art. For example, *The Odyssey*, *The Iliad*, and *The Aeneid* all served to inspire generations upon generations of visual artists. By broadening the definition of Epic Literature, I find that the through line of literature and art is that both strive to represent the human condition and define what it means to be human often through the use of allegory. In my visual art, I take up allegorical figures and represent them in ways which I hope promote both the original text and to make their concepts accessible.



NAME XXX (PAINTING ENTRY)
Seeing Red: A Synesthetic Experience

Description and Artist Statement

Seeing Red is a series of paintings that aim to raise awareness about synesthesia and help the layperson get a better sense of the experience for themselves. Synesthesia is a neurological condition in which the senses are cross-wired in the brain, causing whoever has the condition to experience more than one sensation at a time. For example, tasting raspberries may also feel like holding something heavy and rough, or black and white text may appear in a myriad dazzle of colors. For hundreds of years, those with this condition were disbelieved, and the invention of the MRI was the catalyst in helping to prove that those claiming to have this type of experience were telling the truth. However, research still has trouble quantifying synesthesia's many forms, and it has often been deemed "ineffable" impossible to describe to others. Furthermore, those who live with this condition are often not believed in their personal lives and can experience emotional injury and personal shame. They might live life scared they are unraveling at the seams, unable to confide in the people closest to them. This project aimed to address concerns about legitimacy within the synesthetic experience, using art as a means to convey the seemingly "ineffable" with a visual representation of what the subjects experience. There are five paintings of different words that are faithful representations of the subjects' synesthetic responses.

A year ago and half ago, I never imagined this project was actually going to get funded. Synesthesia was about as foreign to me as anyone else at that point. I met someone who lived in my dorm who had it, and after he made it his "fun fact" during floor introductions, I was intrigued. He told me the color of my name, and before I knew it, we had borrowed markers from the RA and were sitting down for the next two hours drawing my name and precisely what he saw. It was just about the coolest pet project I'd ever done. Imagine my joy when I found out that it could become a funded research project! After getting funded, I spent the summer painting my friend's reactions to different words, and suddenly people left and right came out of the woodwork, thanking me, excited that I was doing something related to an experience they'd always had but never opened up about. I have always approached my art with the intent to aid in the struggle of liberating others. I find myself humbled and grateful to be able to give this art to those who need it most. It is my hope that those who see it will remember that we all move through the world with different experiences. A condition like synesthesia, and the way it has been historically ignored, can remind us all that sometimes the most important thing is to simply be supported and believed. In the social atmosphere we find ourselves in, it can be easy to forget this. I hope this work inspires you to see your world, and most importantly the people around you, a little differently, and a little more kindly.

NAME XXX- (DRAWING ENTRY)
The Cute One and "Peaceful Reflections"

Description

My motivation for these pieces was to showcase how art can make you smile, engage with the peace transmitted through the image and make you reflect on how the work relates to your own experience. The approach with both pieces was to create detailed works with graphite. I can conclude that the use of shading and tone highlight the focal points in the pieces, drawing the viewer into a different world. Both of these pieces represent important moments in my life and how art has been my freedom and liberation from hardship.

Artist Statement

My name is Valerie Gruet, and I was born in Guatemala. I am a Chicago based artist majoring in both Communication Studies and Art Theory & Practice at Northwestern University. I have had a passion for art since I was little and have always wanted to put into my work what the world looks like through my eyes. My path as an artist took a detour as I was a swimmer and competed at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. Now, I am able to fulfill my one true dream, being an artist in all of its forms. Life doesn't come around every time we need it, but we can have pieces of art that bring everything back together.



NAME XXX (DANCE/FILM ENTRY)

Choreographing the Camera in the National Parks

Description and Artists' Statement

Caroline Spikner received an Undergraduate Research Grant (winter 2018) to create a dance film assessing the possibilities of cinematograph and specifically camera choreography in natural spaces. Through an independent study, Jacquelyn Tepper conducted aligned research, considering the dancer in relation to the space in which they create and move. The research began with a trip to Big Bend National park in Texas, where the collaborators spent a week exploring choreographic strategies to design movement inspired by landscapes and ways in which the camera can play an active role in how the dance and park is observed. After Big Bend the pair travelled to Shenandoah National Park continuing to explore the relationship between the dancer and the camera. While the dancers were drawn to Utah due to the parks recent politics in relation to redesignation of land by the current administration, Shenandoah and Big Bend were selected based on the project's musical score (the National Park Suite) which includes five distinct parks (Shenandoah, Big Bend, Yosemite, Rainier, Acadia). This score, to which the full length dance film is set, was composed by NU Alum Landon Hegedus. In the performance, the dancer (Tepper) will perform selections of choreography from the project. She will be accompanied by live musicians as well as a screendance constructed from selections of video footage from the parks visited throughout winter quarter. Though the final URG culminates in a thirty five minute dance film, this alternative performance is meant to highlight Tepper's work in site specific choreography as well as Spikner's research in camera movement.

Musician: Joseph Miller- saxophone



NAME XXXX (SHORT DOCUMENTARY ENTRY)

Out of Shadows

Description

Out of the Shadows is a documentary that follows *Quinto Imperio*, a cumbia band from Chicago's Back of the Yards neighborhood. It is a story of immigrants who are undocumented, unapologetic, and unafraid to fight for their future and for the future of youth from a community that is often misunderstood. The film follows the band as they prepare to perform at a scholarship fundraiser. In telling this story, the film recounts the history of the band and addresses the difficulties faced by undocumented students in pursuing a college education.

Artist Statement

Out of the Shadows seeks to amplify the voice of the undocumented community generally, and of Back of the Yards specifically. This documentary gives voice to the work that *Quinto Imperio* does. They are a group of family and friends who use music to advocate for immigrant rights, working closely with other community members to support undocumented students. Whereas mainstream media coverage depicts Back of the Yards as a neighborhood riddled with violence, we hope to give attention to some of the positive movements taking place in the community. Back of the Yards community members have gained increasing attention recently for their positive efforts in business and activism, with some notable examples being the establishment of a local coffee shop, clothing brand, as well as student activism surrounding issues of immigration. *Out of the Shadows* seeks to contribute to this positive representation of the community by telling the story of *Quinto Imperio*. The film was created for the Medill Documentary class, under the guidance of Brent Huffman.



NAME XXX- (DANCE ENTRY)

At Last

Description

This project began as an exploration of duets inspired by Etta James' incomparable musical talent with her song At Last. The duets explore the idea of having multiple soulmates, partners, or true loves. The whole piece is a series of five duets, each under one minute. The dance attempts to demonstrate how even though people walk in and out of your life, each unique relationship adds value. Relationships do not have to last forever in order to be meaningful, thus, the piece is defined by short encounters that represent different relationships.

Artistic Statement

The movement is inspired by the music and by the dancers' personal movement vocabularies. I wanted the piece to feel as light and lovely as James' voice, while at the same time highlighting the incredible strength each dancer has. In addition, in order for the piece to come full circle, each dancer enters and exits the space and dances with two different partners. The partner work was derived in the studio. Ultimately, the piece is meant to be both aesthetically pleasing and thought provoking, attempting to complicate the idea of one true love.



NAME XXX (FILM ENTRY)

Terima Kasih

Description

Set in present time, Singapore, *Terima Kasih* follows a single mother and her schizophrenic daughter for a day.

Artist Statement:

Funded by Studio 20Q, an NU-Q film-granting student-run organization, *Terima Kasih* is a short drama that brings light to financially-challenged family households that has a member with mental illness. Inspired by my own family, I hope to get the audience to intimately spend a day with the mother and daughter. As much as the film's topic is about mental illness, it is also about the thick and thin in family dynamics especially during tough times.



NAME XXX (WEB SERIES ENTRY)

YUP: Episode 1 “The Binge”

Description

YUP is an animated web series that I created and have been working on for over a year and a half. In Fall 2016, I received a grant from the Northwestern student film production board, NU Channel 1, to produce a pilot episode for the show. *YUP* takes the premise of the "young adults in the city" sitcom and animates it using goofy, cute, characters. Working with my producers, Dasha Gorin and Jenna Levin, we assembled a crew of animators, inbetweeners, background artists, sound-recordists, composers, and editors. Additionally, we cast a hilarious group of voice actors, who brought great energy and life to the characters. After hundreds of hours of work over the span of over a year, the pilot episode of *YUP* premiered on campus to a crowd of over 50 students and community members. It has also amassed close to 2,000 views online. We are in the midst of production on the second episode, which we hope to complete this summer.

Artist Statement

In the past, producing animated content at Northwestern was especially difficult. Few students have experience in the field, as Northwestern’s only animation classes are small and difficult to enroll in. Additionally, the film community at Northwestern is heavily focused on live-action projects. Yet in the production of *YUP*, Dasha and I were able to tap into the incredibly talented creative community at Northwestern, and create the groundwork for a sustained animation presence on campus. In recruiting for this project, Dasha and I were exceptionally surprised by the amount of students interested in animation, as we recruited students from a variety of disciplines, including computer science, art theory & practice, film, and theater. Collaborating with background artists, student animators, and using a myriad of spreadsheets to track our progress, this project was completed in a little bit over a year following its conception. Around the time that *YUP* premiered, Dasha and I also decided it was time to create a more permanent animation presence on campus. Accordingly, we co-founded CatToonz, Northwestern’s first animation production group. We assembled an executive board of nine students, and a general membership of close to twenty. Now, we are using the knowledge and expertise that we have developed while working on *YUP* to help support other students’ animated projects on campus.

NAME XXX (STAGED READING SUBMISSION)

Ties

Description

Despite her husband's departure, the trials of her third trimester, and the weight of a family curse, Clara leaves home to visit her favorite place: the ocean. When a stranger arrives, Clara finds herself on an adventure that just might change fate. In Shara Feit's lyrical play *Ties*, men dance on the ocean floor, women wander for eternity, and mothers and daughters decide how much to sacrifice for those they love.

Artist Statement

Ties was written over the course of Northwestern University's 2016-2017 Advanced Playwriting Sequence, developed in the 2017 Agnes Nixon Masterclass, and given a staged reading in Northwestern's 2017 Agnes Nixon Playwriting Festival. *Ties* is a magical, feminist adventure and contemporary myth. It is a love letter to mothers and daughters and to those who love boldly despite love's inevitable consequences. *Ties* is an attempt to honor the epic significance and earthshaking magic of mothers, daughters, and adventures.



NAME XXX (VIRTUAL REALITY 360-DEGREE SHORT FILM ENTRY)

Seventy-One

Description and Artists' Statement

While many students have used their time at Northwestern to make short films, we decided to take filmmaking in a different direction and tell a story in virtual reality. As RTVF majors, we love movies, storytelling, and creating, and we have always had a passion for working together to make entertaining content. However, we wanted to be ambitious and try something new - something we weren't sure if we could accomplish originally. So we set out to tackle virtual reality. We had both previously been intrigued by the medium, but we had never had the chance to experiment with its capabilities. We decided this project would be the perfect chance for us to combine two of our interests - filmmaking and virtual reality - and answer a question we had both been considering: Is it possible to create a live-action narrative film in 360-video virtual reality? We had almost no experience with virtual reality going into the summer, but we were determined and motivated. By researching equipment, workshopping script ideas, experimenting with technology, and often using trial and error, we were able to discover that, while difficult, it is possible to create film in this medium. We are now excited by the future of virtual reality filmmaking. Even though this project took us the entire summer, we created it by learning on the fly. We believe that in the future this technology can be used to create beautiful work and can change the way we think about entertainment.



NAME XXX (DANCE ENTRY)

Station

Description and Artists' Statement

A contemporary dance duet choreographed and performed by Katherine Ippolito and Calvin Ticknor-Swanson, originally created for Graffiti Dancers' *A Formal Affair* in April 2018. This piece aims to depict two lovers split up by some fateful circumstances. Years later, they cross paths on a city street and relive the heartbreaking memory of their separation. The composition was based on the rhythm of the music, gesture work, prop study, partnering, improvisation, and original contemporary choreography. The choreographers challenged themselves to find intention behind each movement in order to shape the narrative, drawing from personal experience. The work attempts to highlight the struggle between love and circumstance and how unresolved love leaves a lasting imprint on those involved.



NAME XXX (SHORT DOCUMENTARY ENTRY)

Kiln

Description and Artists' Statement

Kiln is a documentary that explores the issue of bonded labor in Pakistan from the perspectives of key people involved in the issue: the bonded labor and the bonder. It is one of few, if not only, works that explores the issue from the bonder's perspective in its aim of shedding light to the situation in its entirety. The documentary follows Bashir who takes a loan of \$600 from a brick-kiln owner and, to pay it back, begins working at the brick kiln. After a year of suffering through physical, verbal and mental abuse, though, he decides to leave. To his disbelief, he finds out that his debt has been added to. He now owes the owner \$5,500 and cannot leave unless he pays it all back. The brick-kiln owner, knowing that Bashir cannot settle the debt on his minimal wages, makes him an offer: If Bashir wants his freedom, he can either pay back the money or divorce his wife and hand his children over to the brick-kiln owner. Ultimately, the documentary aims to shed light on an issue that many know about but do not entirely understand and, so, fail to take action against. It aims to humanize the suffering and rights' violations that minority groups face.

