ARTIST OF THE YEAR 2022 | COMPUTER-ASSISTED VISUAL ARTS

MEENA SENAPATHI

By Theresa Walker
Correspondent

Meena Senapathi could hardly contain her excitement. Asked if she was familiar with the work of photographer and artist Cindy Sherman, known for self-portraiture that explores identity, gender and consumerism, the 17-year-old threw her hands up and smiled the biggest smile.

"Yeah! I love her."

The question came from Andrew Shalat, professor of graphic design at Chapman University.

Senapathi, a junior at Arnold O. Beckman High School in Irvine, ended up being named artist of the year in computer-assisted visual arts.

Her own photography included an after-hours snapshot of a doughnut shop meant to evoke the investment often made by Asian American families in that business, and a blue-toned portrait of a teenager called "After the Party is Over," as the euphoria of escape, drug-enhanced for many young people, is wearing off.

"I feel like I am a very deep observer," Senapathi said.

"I'm getting that sense," Shalat responded.

There was also the deliciously pink-hued image of a young woman's hand, sporting fingernails painted black, hovering over cosmetics, flowers and other feminine images, including an iconic Princess telephone from decades ago.

Titled "Pretty in Pink," that photo, Senapathi said, intends to show that "liking feminine things does not make you emptyheaded, does not make you inferior to anyone else."

And she used to hate the color pink.

Senapathi wants to study photography in college. She'd love to teach high school photography, calling it "my absolute dream."

Often, she said, "Kids don't have a strong support system to pursue the arts. Their talent in art is taken for granted."

Senapathi said she struggles with not having support at home for her hoped-for path in life.

"My parents don't support my love for this art. It's hard to talk about."

But on campus, her work is appreciated. She's a photographer for the Beckman Chronicle, a student-run publication at her school.

"She adapts to challenges and is

LEONARD ORTIZ — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Meena Senapathi, a junior at Arnold O. Beckman High School, is the 2022 artist of the year in computer-assisted visual arts.

not afraid to ask questions and think critically through the given situation," her photography teacher, Lauren Tipping, wrote in submitting Senapathi for consideration as artist of the year.

About Senapathi's photography, Tipping added, "Her images portray a unique aesthetic quality enhancing mood and color and you can see it when she brings in a new project to work on."

Another photo by Senapathi depicts her subject, a young woman, along the coastline, poised between water and land. It's titled "Caught Between."

Senapathi described it this way: "She's unsure whether to keep moving forward or return to where she once was. At the same time, she knows that she won't be the same person after she makes this decision."

Computer-assisted visual arts finalists

Computer-assisted visual art is divided into three specialties: computer drawing and painting, graphic design and digital illustration, and photography. In addition to artist of the year, the judges selected finalists in each category.

COMPUTER DRAWING AND PAINTING » Juliana Jarvis, 17, senior at Orange County School of the Arts. The conceptual design behind characters in movies and games fascinates her. Shows like "Adventure Time" and "My Little Pony" inspired her to create her own characters and the worlds they inhabit. Her Portuguese heritage and her love of nature also factor in the messages expressed by her work. Protecting the environment is one issue she'd like to tackle through a video game.

Juliana Jarvis

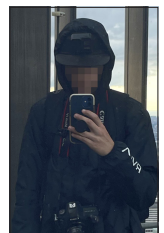**GRAPHIC DESIGN AND DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION »** Camden Ho, 17, senior at Beckman High. It took awhile before anyone noticed. But the long, deconstructed cotton skirt she wore incorporated the same original font, "Alphabet Soup," that a plastic handle on a mirror inspired her to create. It was Ho's first time wearing the skirt. A multimedia artist, Ho can design, illustrate, silk-screen and sew. She's already got a client paying her to create their brand image and plans to continue studying design in college.

Camden Ho

PHOTOGRAPHY » Ryan James McGarrity, 18, senior at Beckman High. His dad gave him a camera for Christmas four years ago. He used it on a trip to Mammoth and came away captivated by a shot he took of a waterfall. "Ever since that day, I've been taking photos seriously and showing the world my perspective." Self-taught, his perspective often involves taking risks, such as a view looking down from the roof of the Wilshire Grand Hotel in Los Angeles, where he sneaked into before dawn. Another shot from inside an abandoned, and infested, movie theater came at the cost of hundreds of flea bites.

Ryan James McGarrity