

Editors-in-Chief

Ariella Frommer Raghav Poddar

Layout Design

Raghav Poddar

Editors

Aman Desai Mira Bansal

Writers

Alex Ben-Yishai Eliana Son Lily Sussman Olivia Coward Story Sossen

Artists

Eliana Son Heidi Li Isabelle Kim Olivia Coward Raghav Poddar

Faculty Adviser

Dr. Anna Hetherington

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The WALLS Project by Olivia Coward Painting Like a Child by Eliana Son Henry Taylor: B Side by Lily Sussman The Saatchi Gallery in London: Civilization by Alex Ben-Yishai My Favorite Pieces from The Guggenheim Through Color by Story Sossen Artist Features Heidi Li, Isabelle Kim, Olivia Coward, Eliana Son, Raghav Poddar

Olivia Coward

couple weeks ago, my family and I drove up to Massachusetts to tour Williams college. After the guided tour, I daydreamed about life as a Williams student and meandered around the campus. Along the path I saw a tent which seemed to be inhabited by someone... right next door was the Williams College Museum of Art. There was no other choice but to investigate. I walked through the front door and asked the lady at the desk what the tent was for. With a knowing chuckle, she replied, "the WALLS project."

She explained to me that the WALLS project, started in 2012 at the Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA), is a project that loans a collection of two dimensional pieces to Williams College students. The pieces are exhibited in the WCMA at the beginning of each semester, given to

students to display in their rooms, and returned by the end of the semester. The eager student had camped outside because they were set on a piece that they needed to have, and were waiting to get first dibs.

The image of the tent and the project associated with it didn't just stick with me because it was a great subject of my "Why us?" essay for Williams

Christina Olsen, the former director of WCMA and the starter of WALLS, articulates that "the experience you have with a work of art can be deeply intellectual, but it can also be profoundly personal, emotional, and social." She reveals a key goal of the project: to make the personal, emotional, and social experience of art more accessible among Williams students.

think you are thinking deeply. And while you juggle these incompatible tasks, security guards and cameras watch your every move. The WALLS project wholly subverts this often artificial and distant way of experiencing art. Instead, art that's loaned by the WCMA is hung in students' own homes: the places that their belongings inhabit, the places where friends come over, and the



Students picking up art

but because of how absurd the idea sounded. How much blind trust must Williams have to loan such expensive art to college students, a group of people known for rash behavior and drunk partying? But after learning more about the WALLS project, I came to realize that their trust is not ill advised, because WCMA risks the safety of their artwork in pursuit of a greater mission.

On talking about the project,

The common experience of art isn't always this way. First you get your tickets scanned and bag checked by intimidating security guards blocking your entrance to the museum. Once you get inside, you try to enjoy the art, but you also try to not cross the invisible but glaringly present line between you and the art, and you also try sure to stare at each piece long enough so that the people around you

places where they sleep each night.

One of the images that I feel exemplifies the revolutionary nature of WALLS is a picture of two students holding their borrowed pieces on the day that students pick up the art and bring it back to their rooms. If you touched anything in museums like the MoMA or the MET, you would be dragged out immediately, but in the photo, students grasp their

the WALLS project deconstructs the intimidation, unreachability, and distance that characterizes the traditional experience of art in a museum.

pieces with their own bare hands. Furthermore, in the background of the photo, art lays sprawled on the floor, juxtaposing the overly protective treatment of art in traditional museums. The photo illuminates the ways in which the WALLS project deconstructs the intimidation, unreachability, and distance that characterizes the traditional experience of art in a museum.

Another facet of WALLS that exemplifies its progressive aims are the shared journals in which students write about the art that they borrow. This practice resonates with the social and personal experience of art that Oneal articulates. Students can bond through sharing their own experiences and reading about others' experiences. In the left entry, the student writes about the piece they borrowed: Pat Steir's *Mountain in Rain*, pictured on the left. They "elected to turn the piece on its side, transforming the piece from Mountain in Rain into Cliff in Rain." If you turned art in a museum on its side, you would be dragged out and blacklisted. But nobody stopped this person from configuring this piece, turning it however they deemed fitting, and so they were able to forge a personal relationship with the art by making it their own.

The journal entry and the photo of pick up day convey a barrier being broken down between the students and the art. Once this barrier is overcome, students not only bond with each other over art, but they can also forge personal and emotional bonds with works that they can call their own, even if for only a semester. This is not to say that such bonds cannot be formed elsewhere, but having a piece of art reside in your home and being close to it day after day opens up a unique opportunity to nurture an authentic connection with art.

The WALLS project isn't a perfect denunciation of our traditional relationship with art. Art in the WALLS collection and art in a museum is still art in the hands of an exclusive institution, and the art isn't exactly loaned for free...there is the \$64,540 yearly tuition of the college. Nevertheless, the WALLS project is pioneering change concerning our relationship to art. In the future, I hope that art is not only accessible to all, but that relationships to art are more authentic and personal than those today.



I wish I had discovered WHLLS

earlied Muntain in Rain was a

large, contemplative presence in

my room. It helped finish my

room in a co-op, making it feel

even less a dorm. In the end,

I erected to twn the piece on

its side, making it Cliff in Rain.

Whether vertical or horizontal,

Pat Steir's work will make great

company for a semester. Enjoy!

It made me feel at home, and it looked at home. However minor, it was still a moted constant through a somewheat turnultances sophomore fall.

The rain fell - asleep with me every night and dewed on the mountains when I woke. It was so great at for soothing, at least somewhat, some stress when I sat in my room doing work. It was there whenever I looked up and I really suppreciated it. I was even inspired to paint some inspired to pa

Response to Pat Steir, Mountain Rain



It took me four years to paint like Raphael, but a lifetime to paint like a child. Pablo Picasso ³

of color, and scribbles, works of artists like Karel Appel, Basquiat, and Yoshitomo Nara bear a resemblance to the chaotic and playful drawings of a young child, often bringing people to wonder what about them is genuinely worth celebrating. While these works, at first glance, may seem meaningless, they are in fact an impressive feat, drawing upon child-like creativity to enhance and shape a message.

Over the course of their careers, artists hone their skills and learn how to use tools like line, color, shape, and composition. This expertise helps them to express and portray their subject matter as effectively as possible. Not only does this concept apply to naturalistic depiction but it also extends to all types of art, including abstract. Thus, although these artists may emulate childrens' art with their messy and loose qualities, their paintings are far from random. They play with texture, layers, and degrees of complexity, maintaining a harmony with each element, while also alluding to larger themes, to create a visually compelling and symbolic piece.

Karel Appel stands out as a multimedia artist who pioneered an avant-garde approach to painting during the post-WWII period. Appel rejected the academic formalism and overly-learned approach to art perpetuated by Dutch

modernism and avant-garde movements at the time, believing them to erase emotion and prevent larger social engagement. In 1948, he and two other artists formed the CoBrA movement. As a direct affront to such formalization, these artists turned to the art of untrained adult artists, patients in asylums, and especially young children for inspiration.

Appel painted with the unbridled crudeness and clumsiness of children's art and employed the physical properties of the material he used in his application. He often used an impasto technique, which he accomplished by mixing his own heavy paint, and incorporated what he called "objets poubelles", or everyday items and unconventional materials. One of his most famous works, called *Questioning Children* (1949), incorporates discarded wood and a window-shutter. By depicting begging children, and including broken material, he references the destruction and poverty WWII left in its wake.

Likewise, Basquiat also combines the child-like influences of his art style with complex themes. Known for his bold graffiti-like artwork, featuring stark linework, abstract faces, and scrawled text, Basquiat became an icon in the art world during the 80s.

The value of his artworks goes even beyond his unique style. Basquiat's works seem reminiscent of children's drawings with their flat picture planes and stick-like figures—a stylistic choice that juxtaposes and nuances their heavy content. In A Panel of Experts (1982), Basquiat draws attention to a number of themes. On the right, a gun fires a bullet past a figure's head, which could allude to the violence in New York City. The copyright signs following the words "Madonna," "Saturday Morning Cartoon," "Sugar," and "Sugar Coated Corn puffs" could suggest their correlation to consumerism, which raises further questions about the connotation of Madonna. Basquiat invites viewers to experience the world and view the subject matter through his perspective as an artist.

Yoshitomo Nara's art is immediately recognizable by his signature characters of children with huge heads, big eyes and cartoonish bodies. Stylistically, he seems to have been influenced by Japanese manga—he is also a part of the postmodern Superflat



Karel Appel, *Questioning Children*, 1949. Gouache on pine wood relief, 34 3/4 × 23 1/2 × 6 1/4 in.

The Cobra group started new, and first of all we threw away all these things we had known and started afresh, like a child - fresh and new. Sometimes my works look very childish, or childlike, schizophrenic or stupid, you know. But that was the good thing for me. Because for me, the material is the paint itself. The paint expresses itself. In the mass of paint, I find my imagination and go on to paint it. Karel Appel⁴



Jean-Michel Basquiat, A Panel of Experts, 1982. Acrylic and oil paintstick and paper collage on canvas with exposed wood supports and twine, 60×60 in.

I like kids' work more than work by real artists any day. ... Every single line means something.

Basquiat⁵

movement—and he takes inspiration from the cheerful theater character of Otafuku, as well as punk rock and folk music. Despite the characters' innocent appearances, he often depicts them as rebellious youth, sometimes sinister or angry, as well as displaying emotions like paranoia and unease. Nara shows through his artwork how children have to live and experience the real, and often cruel adult world, and how they react to their place in it. Similarly, much of Nara's artwork responds to events happening in the world—for instance, he has created many drawings on the topics of peace and war.

Nara's later works become meditative and introspective, and his children are imbued with such qualities. Sorry, Couldn't Draw the Right Eye is a piece typical of this style. The child's eye is glassy and mysterious, directly regarding the viewer in a compelling display of emotion. The bandage on the right eye hints that the child has experienced violence and hurt, showing her vulnerability, and evoking empathy or pity. As are many of his later works, the colors and brushwork are more layered and complex. At the same time, the title itself is a show of humility from the artist. This, and the fact that the title says right eye rather than left, also suggests that Nara himself is symbolically the character in the painting. He is the "vulnerable innocent who can't quite measure up to perfection, and [he] encourages us to see and embrace those qualities in ourselves too."2

By tapping into child-like art, these artists draw upon a simplistic yet innate and familiar language. Each work is an exploration of imagination and a challenge to conventions and rules, with a deeper statement hanging behind every stroke. Once this is recognized, it doesn't take much for the viewer to connect with the meaning layered in a piece and identify with the artist's point of view—after all, everyone was a child at some point.

Picture books tell many stories with one picture, so this kind of system, narratives emerging from a single picture, has had a much stronger influence on my work. Yoshitomo Nara⁶



Yoshitomo Nara, *Sorry, Couldn't Draw Right Eye*, 2005. Acrylic, paper collage, and tape on paper, 53 1/2 × 49 1/4 in.

Lily Sussman

ocated on the Fifth floor of the Whitney Museum, Henry Taylor's temporary exhibit, Henry Taylor: B Side, displays the artist with his spectacular and thought-provoking compositions. Taylor utilizes different mediums to convey powerful themes within his life while creating a meaningful connection through his art.

Born in Los Angeles, Henry Taylor grew up in Ventura, California. Taylor studied art at Oxnard Community College and later the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), where he would work at the Camarillo State Mental Hospital as a psychiatric technician on the night shift. This experience is a factor that shaped the simplistic, quick style of art we know Taylor to produce today.

The exhibit, entitled Henry Taylor: B Side presents the artist's paintings with some of his sculptures, never-beforeseen early drawings, painted objects on recycled cigarette packs, and many other everyday objects. "B Side," refers to the side of a record album that will often contain the artist's lesser-known, more experimental songs. This purpose translates into the works as his works are considered "experimental" or naturalistic. As the New York Times said, "As long as artists like Henry Taylor are around, painting is in little danger of dying. That is because Taylor, like most great painters, has reinvented the medium for his purposes, reshaped it to his own particular needs."7

Henry Taylor consistently creates art that specifically portrays people from many different backgrounds and constantly explores different textures or styles. Whether that is drawing family members, friends, or politicians, Taylor represents everyone in his work in many different ways.

When walking in, the exhibit was successful. The bright florescent lighting illuminated the paintings, showing their

messiness and bold figure forms. Through the format, you were guided through a large space chock full of photographs, but just enough to not feel crowded. The easily navigable exhibition incorporated different items for everyone, whether paintings, briefcases, costumes, and more.

My favorite painting of the exhibition was Untitled (2022), an acrylic on canvas. The painting stuck out to me for its sheer size, center placement in the room, and the figure along the central axis. Curious to see the meaning behind the painting, I looked further into the details. There, I saw an older man with gray hair, along a central axis, standing on an apparent podium with a microphone. Behind the man, a black animal covers a large house, a tree, and various forms of agriculture. The animal appeared to me to be a cat or panther. The painting is set in a blue sky, a seamlessly calm environment. As viewers, we are drawn to this man, centered in the middle of the composition for his importance. There, the man holds a paper that reads "Dog Father: Dog food," which signifies that this is a dog food bag. This context clue makes the figure in the man's background out to be a black dog. Until I read the museum label, which said the man in the composition was Taylor's brother, a dog farmer and a former member of the Black Panther Party, a political organization with an ideology of Black nationalism, socialism, and an emphasis on self-defense, particularly against police brutality.

From this information, I could make a few conclusions from the painting. One is that the animal was almost a dog metamorphosed into a black panther. Two, the dog almost transformed the artwork from what appears to be the brother's home to a memory from when the brother would fight and protest within the Black Panther Party. This conveys the idea of yearning for memory in our past, the rejoicement of our glory days, and brings much-deserved recognition for the civil rights work a Black Panther party member did.

Overall, I greatly appreciated this exhibit for the connection I felt to the artist and the characters he painted. While not realistic, the median transformed my perception of how detailed "simple" art could be. I recommend viewing it at the Whitney while it runs; it ends January 28th, 2024.



Henry Taylor, *Untitled*, 2022. Installation of mannequins, leather jackets, and posters.



Henry Taylor, *Untitled*, 2020. Acrylic on canvas, 60 1/8 × 84 1/8 in.



Henry Taylor, *Untitled*, 2022. Acrylic on canvas, 137 1/4 × 107 3/4 in.

The Saatchi Gallery in London: Civilization

Alex Ben-Yishai

his summer, I traveled to London and was able to see the exhibit, Civilization: The Way We Live Now, at the Saatchi Gallery. This exhibition was curated by William A. Ewing and Holly Roussell. Civilization is a collection of media (mostly photographs) that serves to accomplish a theme of the complexities behind human life while considering how a 'hybrid culture' has formed in our world. It also touches on how we as a society praise individuality regardless of the civilization we all share. This show was split into eight 'chapters': Hive, Alone Together, Flow, Persuasion, Escape, Control, Rupture, and Next. Each of these components of the exhibit serves as a part of technological advancement and connection within a constantly changing world.



The first chapter, Hive, considers urban environments within civilizations. It features works like Philippe Chancel's aerial photograph *Burj Khalifa Under Construction*, which displays the obsession humanity seems to have with tall, attractive buildings. With this work, the exhibit also hints at how materialistic achievements, like building the tallest structure in the world, are fleeting.

The second chapter, Alone Together, explores how you are never truly alone. It focuses on the concept that all people view themselves as more unique than others while simultaneously touching on the pressure to conform with peers. One of the works that the curators chose to represent this idea is *Untitled*, taken by Cyril Porchet. This work represents this concept because it shows a crowd that appears to have blended together into one mob.

Flow, the third chapter of the exhibit, focuses on how movement of commodities, people, and ideas creates change and integration within cultures, featuring images of people reacting to, or utilizing, new items. Persuasion explores the power that influence has on us, whether it be from others, advertisements, or the media. This chapter houses various advertisements as well as images of celebrities in order to display how people are entranced with the digital world. Escape looks at how people relax in 'private' spaces, including photographs of crowded beaches to signify that people are never truly alone. Meanwhile, control looks at how those in power seek to maintain their impact. This is displayed with images of famous leaders and businessmen.

The penultimate stage, Rupture, considers the destructive nature of humanity. It draws upon works like Francesco Zizola's *In the Same Boat* to display that the integration of culture is not always positive; it can be accompanied by conflict and devastation. This piece displays

Philippe Chancel, *Burj Khalifa Under Construction*, 2008. Inkjet Print, 20 × 15 in.



a group of refugees, sadly forced to integrate into another culture.

Finally, the last stage, Next, brings up the question, "What is next for our world?" It features works that display technological turning points, like Michael Najjar's *Orbital Ascent*. This photograph features the "historic" launch on 17 November 2016 of the Ariane 5 Rocket at the Guiana Space Centre. Furthermore, the image features a rocket in a field, which emphasizes the contrast between earth and technology.

As a whole, *Civilizations* is a cohesive exhibit that displays the constant integration of human life worldwide. The various stages of this exhibit captured the components of humanity, and how we are developing day-by-day.



Michael Najjar, *Orbital Ascent*, 2017. Archival pigment print.



Francesco Zizola, *In the Same Boat*, 2015. Archival pigment print.

My Favorite Pieces from The Guggenheim Through Color

Story Sossen

hen I visited the Guggenheim this past month, three compositions particularly stood out to me. Each of the compositions I chose were vibrant and used color to express different ideas. Below, I will explain why I picked each piece of art.

The artist, Stephanie Syjuco, became fascinated with using objects left as scenes, upon which she happened to stumble. In *Chromakey Aftermath (Standard Bearers)*, she presents two figures turned away from the painting who appear to be enveloped in waste, such as accessories and flags. I loved how the rich, majestic shade of green used throughout the entirety of the painting contrasts with the 'waste.' Green is the color of money and, therefore, is usually tied to wealth, contradicting the waste that covers the floor in the composition.

In Day Glow (Backlash), Tomashi Jackson incorporated images printed on vinyl in half tone from the Civil Rights Movement. Since the photos were greatly enlarged, they are only partially discernable. I loved the message behind the composition: Since the images are more difficult to see up close than far away, discerning the work requires movement around the piece, which implicates the viewer in the codification and transmission of history. I also loved the color palette that Jackson chose: There is a lovely contrast between the deep blue tones and the bright shades of neon pink and red used.

Lee Hyangmi described the method she used in *Color Itself* as the "objecthood of color." Hyangmi dripped paint on her canvas in order to create her composition. I love how the cascades of paint overlap by chance, which transforms the mere colored materials into veritable objects composed of "color itself."



Stephanie Syjuco, *Chromakey Aftermath* (*Standard Bearers*), 2019. Archival pigment print, 40 × 30 in.



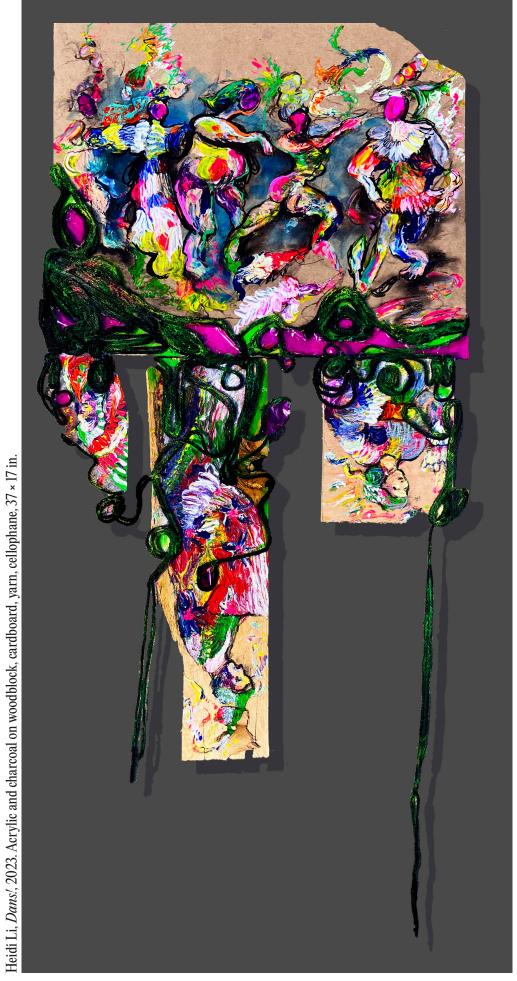
Tomashi Jackson, Day Glow (Backlash), 2022. Acrylic, Yule Quarry marble dust, and paper bags on canvas, linen, and textile with PVC marine vinyl, mounted to wood with brass hooks and grommets, 76 1/2 × 77 × 9 in.



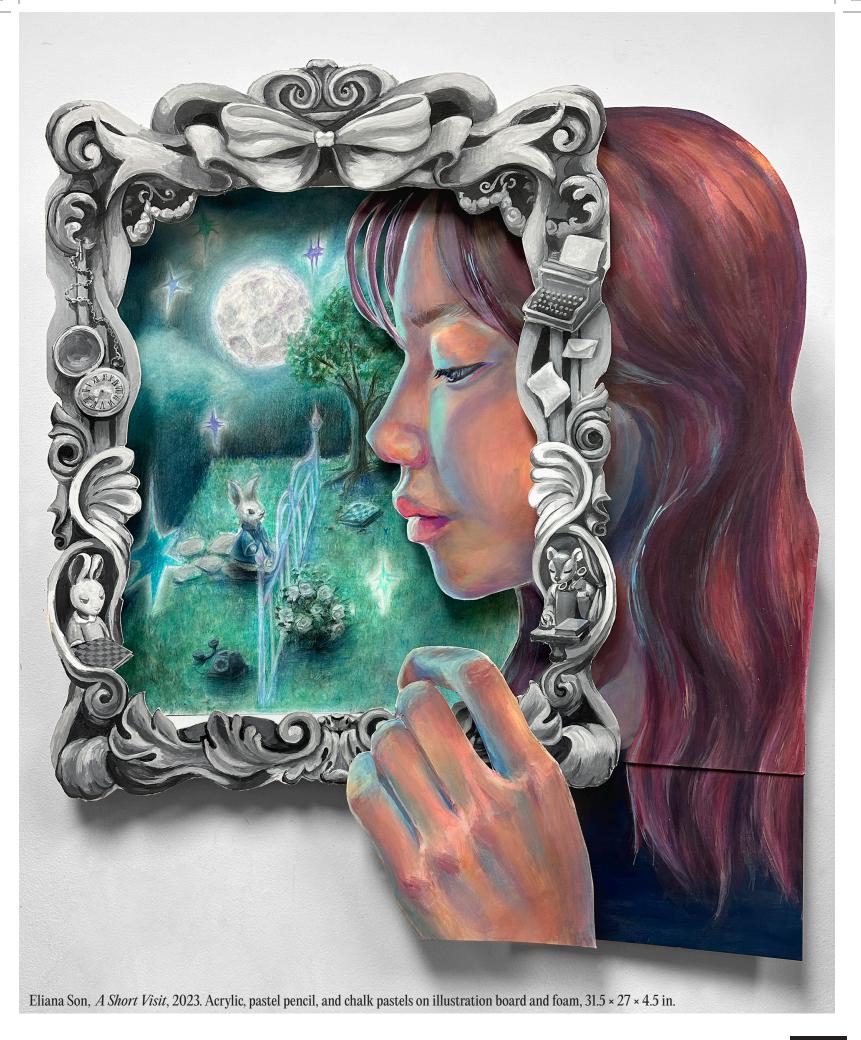
Lee Hyangmi, *Color Itself*, 1970s. Three panels of acrylic on paper, each $63\,3/4\times51\,3/16$ in.

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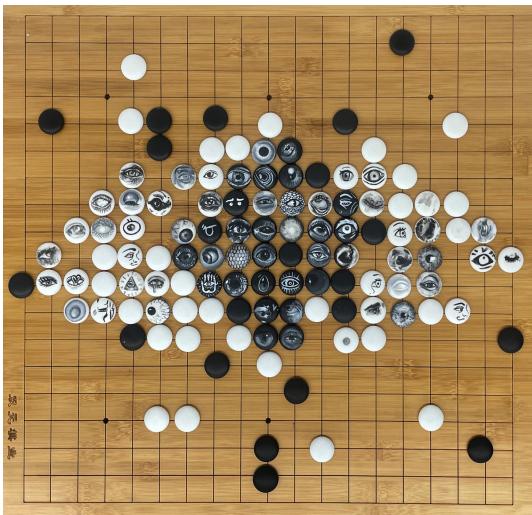
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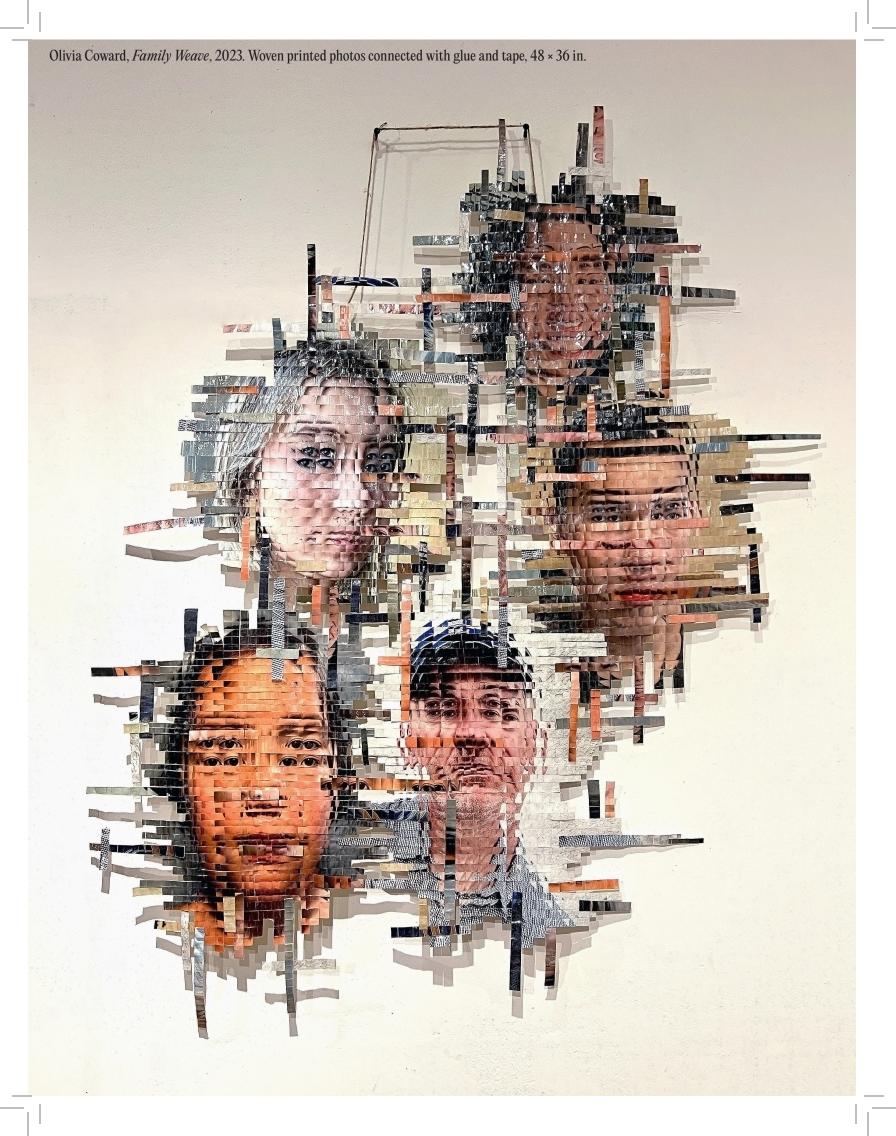


Isabelle Kim, Game against Humanity, 2023. Acrylic on board, 24 × 18 in.





Isabelle Kim, *Hwatu*, 2023. Paint on leather goods. (top) Isabelle Kim, *Go*, 2023. Acrylic on go pieces. (bottom)



Olivia Coward, *Pentagon*, 2023. Charcoal on paper, 12 × 12 in. (top) Olivia Coward, *Origami*, 2023. Color pencil on paper, 12 × 12 in. (bottom)

Olivia Coward, *Marriage*, 2023. Charcoal, white charcoal, chalk, 20×30 in.



Raghav Poddar, *Bent out of Shape*, 2022. Wooden spoon, plunger, corn broom, wire, foil, epoxy repair putty, epoxy glue, adhesive fiberglass wrap, gorilla tape and glue, acrylic. Broom: $49 \times 19 \times 10$ in; Plunger: $21 \times 6 \times 6$ in; Spoon: $6 \times 13 \times 5$ in.



Raghav Poddar, *Mother's Red Ratio*, 2023. Oil on canvas, 72×60 in.



Raghav Poddar, *Impossible Steak*, 2023. Steak: insulation foam, oven-bake clay, acrylic on plastic wrap; Container: foam board, plastic wrap; Label: acrylic and marker on mylar, $41 \times 36 \times 4$ in.

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