

# WITHIN TENSIONS



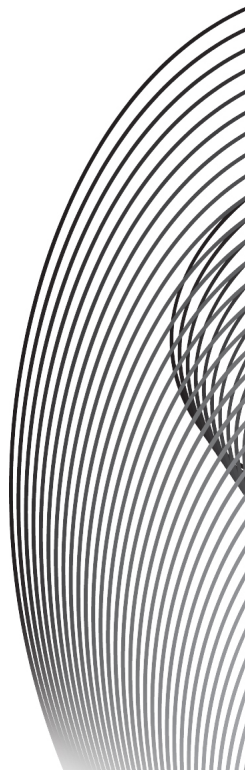
vol.3

CULTURE





WITHINTENSIONS



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March 2020

vol. 3

CULTURE



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We at Withintensions want to acknowledge that our work takes place on the unceded territories of the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), xwməθkwə́əm (Musqueam), and Səlilwətał (Tseil-Waututh) peoples. We want to recognize that these lands belong to the Indigenous peoples who have lived here far before the arrival of settlers. We also want to push beyond land acknowledgements to further encourage acts of reconciliation. Recognition is great but it is nowhere near where we need to be. Reconciliation is comprehensive and takes more than an acknowledgment for occupying land. We support the Wet'suwet'en peoples right to their lands and their right to protest.





Phoebe Huang, *Image of a Postal stamp (used in 1986)*  
(2020)

# A Poet, A Kite Maker

Phoebe Huang

<sup>1</sup> See image of a stamp (used in 1983) that I had previously lost from my grandfather's postal stamp collection but found a copy from someone else's stamp collection at a local thrift store in Vancouver

My grandfather of whom I never knew,  
A poet and a kite maker—who are you?  
What words were possibly written, what were unspoken?  
Had you ever conjured a thought of me?  
I wonder.

Was the paper red against bamboo ribs?  
How has suns appeared through it?

Your form cradled and waned against grass straws,  
I imagined the paste used to bind tapered edges,  
As paper fishes fluttered through yellow skies.

Oh, how must your hands work..  
I can see it— flipping, flexing, collecting  
pages upon pages of postal stamps.  
You cradle them close as you must have of Mom and  
aunt.

What mail had you received?  
Is it songs you sang or lines of sweet seedlings?  
Or perhaps a pocket of glue.  
What places did you imagine going to,  
Was it with me? Am I the girl with the yellow scarf?

What is it from life can I live off of yours?  
I imagined what you must have imagined.  
I stand here under the 86 gate<sup>2</sup>, perplexed.  
Buried inwards, there is no red kite.  
Not even in the rock garden<sup>3</sup>.

You mustn't have imagined  
how your girls embraced life.  
For what fantasies have I strung you to I.  
A creature burrowing for her hands.  
Where must they go in finding yours.  
For how you must have seen past the gates.

Oh how your kites must have flounder,  
As I fish to be with you,  
You are a mystery,  
Then that is where I must belong.

You mustn't have imagined that.  
For how I have never seen,  
For how I have never made a kite,  
For how I never made a poem.

You stand there with paste in your hands,  
As I stand here from the gate.  
I wonder then who are you?  
What am I?

2 86 gate refers to the gate from the China pavilion at the The 1986 World Exposition. Since then, it has been relocated to Vancouver Chinatown in front of the Chinese Cultural Centre. The China Gate was donated to the City of Vancouver by the People's Republic of China

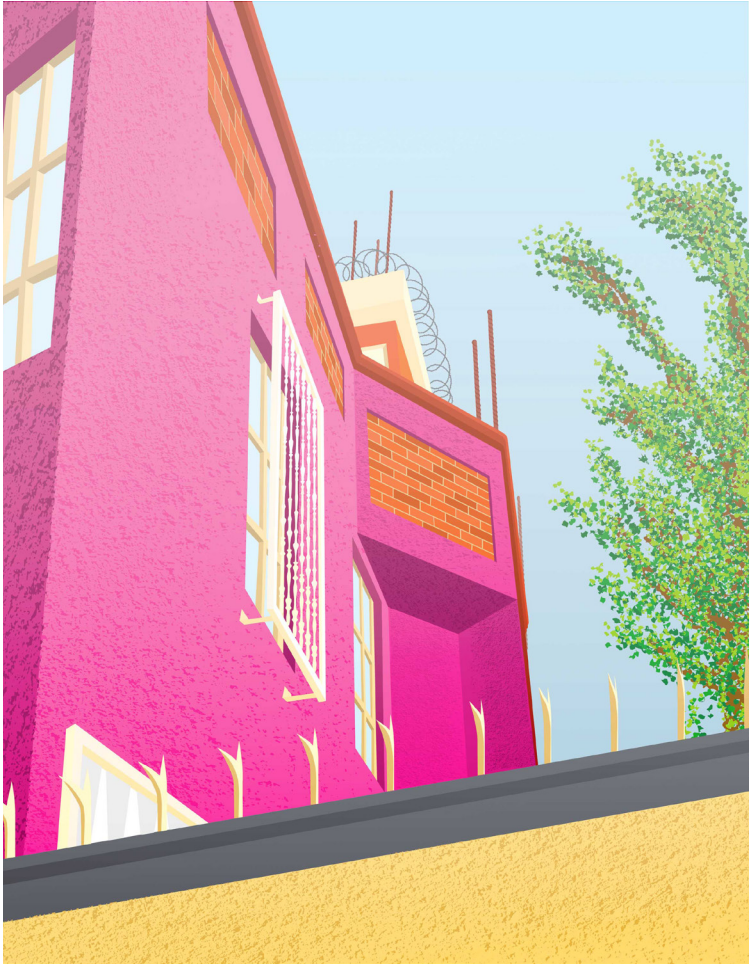
3 The Sun Yat Sen garden and park have rocks—both scholar stones and volcanic rocks that were moved from Mexico and China to replicate traditional Chinese gardens and architecture. Please note that the Sun Yat Sen garden and park was built in 1986 for the World Exposition right close to the Chinese Cultural Centre

# Just Past Where I Can See

Francisco Berlanga

Culture is difficult for me to approach; I examine it with a reluctance to speak of it. I often feel that the fact that I was not born in Mexico discredits me from a culture I still dwell in. Is it fair for me to represent an immigrant experience that I did not fully partake in? When I speak on my culture, I feel the pressure of having to accurately represent it; avoiding speaking on behalf of others and rather speaking only to me. My culture is communal but I can only express it in terms of the personal. By placing specific memories I have of Mexico in a frame that allows people to recognize their own experiences, I try to engage with culture as best I can.

In *Just Past Where I Can See* (2019), I isolate the aesthetics of the house next to my grandmother's and heighten them into the vivid colours and harsh angles I relate with Mexican houses. By doing this, I emphasize the strange almost counter-intuitive designs of Mexican homes. The bricked over windows, ornate bars, huge spiked fences, barbed wire, and exposed rebar all speak to a design based on necessity. Showing these elements in this way, I recreate how absurd they felt to me as a child when I first saw them. The elements I once considered strange now allow the Mexican house to be seen as versatile, always adapting to the needs of the families living in it.



# Myself and I: A Message to Little Me (2020)

Victoria Mulja



as a child, my family and i would go to indonesia every few years to see relatives





god, so many memories, but looking back at it now  
what was i doing, and why did i do those on that trip





so...dear 9 year old victoria,  
everything ive said in these old video clips from my  
mom's camera







are things you would probably wonder 13 years from now...



# Tea Time (2020)

Natalie Chan

I look forward to whenever I spend time with my grandparents. I see the crinkles and smile lines of my poh poh, I hear the hearty laughter of my gung gung, and there is always delicious food to be had. More than anything, though, I've learned to treasure the time we spend together after dinner. When the plates are cleared and our stomachs are full, there is always space for tea and fruit.

There is an instinctual drift towards the kitchen. I watch intently as they bring out paring knives and oranges, setting the kettle on the stove to prepare the tea. My poh poh<sup>1</sup> peels the fruit with a gentle but steady hand; my gung gung<sup>2</sup> slices them faster but with the same sense of intentionality. I note how my mother has her own way of preparing the oranges at home, too. I help where I can, separating each segment and placing them on the plate.

My Cantonese vocabulary is, at best, near the level of an elementary school kid - conversational, but unable to pick up on more complex comprehension. Still, some of my most treasured times are sitting with them at the table. There's a quiet rhythm and reason to using a Chinese tea set, and a sense of tranquility in watching the steps involved. At our home, without all the tea equipment needed for precision in traditional brewing, we make due with what we have; a French press to infuse the tea leaves, the cupboard mugs instead of delicate teacups.

The tea still radiates warmth, the sweetness of fruit lingers, and the connection between generations grows.

<sup>1</sup> 婆婆, my mother's mother

<sup>2</sup> 公公, my mother's father







## The Shrimp Story

Annie Chan

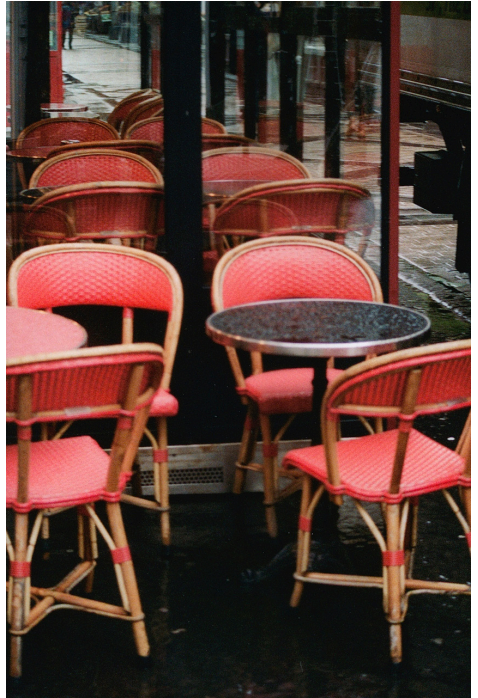
Culture is a funny thing. From birth, it begins to shape us, gives us strength, and personality. Yet culture can also be weaponized to divide and used against one another.

I remember the first time I realised my culture was considered 'bad'. I was in second grade in Toronto. I wore whatever my mom put me in and my hair was always in half-up pigtails. I carried an Asian lunchbox to school. Unlike a normal Tupperware box, Asian lunch boxes are complicated. It is an insulated tube that usually holds three layers of food, including a designated soup box on the bottom. Chopsticks and a spoon usually came in a little matching box. This was what my mom prepared for me everyday.

For lunch, we sat at long tables, facing each other. One day, I unscrewed my lunch box to find three containers of shrimp fried rice. As I began eating, a boy down the table spotted my shrimp and announced, "I love shrimp! Can I have one?" I passed one down and resumed eating. A few seconds later, the shrimp was hurled back in my direction. I looked up and the boy cried, "Your shrimp tastes bad!" I was confused, I was eating it and it was just fine. Why was it disgusting?

I don't remember what happened after or how I reacted. I think I picked up the shrimp so it wouldn't be lying there in the middle of the table. It wasn't until I grew up and reflected on this incident that I realised that it wasn't my fault and I didn't give the boy a bad shrimp – he just didn't like Chinese food.

For most of my life, I had rejected my culture. While this incident wasn't the cause, I failed to see its value only focussing on its negative expressions. I looked down upon Chinese culture, a mentality that I didn't realise was wrong until just a few years ago. I am still in the process of learning to accept my own culture, or maybe I can forge some kind of hybrid culture of my own.



## Paris Sketches (2020)

Tyler Pengelly

This mini photo essay explores some visual staples found in the city of Paris. The images reflect a common thread I found during my stay there.





Parisian culture embraces the finer things in life; things one may take for granted in another city or country. I focused my lens on some of these small details I found myself drawn to, such as walking the streets at night, French cinema, and the abundance of street-side cafes.

# Emptiness is Form

Cassandra Yu

The title “Emptiness is Form” is a condensed saying that spoke teachings of the Two Truths doctrine, a famous line of the sutra. Growing up with a Chinese background, I find traces of Buddhist teachings and symbolism that were subconsciously incorporated in my everyday life. Every morning, my grandmother practices worshipping our ancestors through sutra reciting. In the living room, there hangs a handwritten copy of scriptures by my grandfather who practices Chinese calligraphy. Bits of sayings were used regularly on Chinese TV from episodes of Buddhist programs to a punchline of a TV show that was taken out of context. However, despite my daily exposure to Buddhist wisdom, I never truly understood much of its meaning even to this day.

My fascination with Buddhist religion grew as I aged. The more I dig deeper into their philosophy, the more I learn to appreciate impermanence in life; that all changes, good or bad, are inevitable and all phenomena are only transient.

“What the Heart Sutra does is to cut through, deconstruct, and demolish all our usual conceptual frameworks, all our rigid ideas, all our belief systems, all our reference points, including any with regard to our spiritual path. It does so on a very fundamental level, not just in terms of thinking and concepts, but also in terms of

1 Karl Brunnhölzl, *The Heart Sutra Will Change You Forever* (2018) <https://www.lionsroar.com/the-heart-sutra-will-change-you-forever/>

2 Thich Nhat Hanh, *New Heart Sutra translation* (2014) <https://plumvillage.org/about/thich-nhat-hanh/letters/thich-nhat-hanh-new-heart-sutra-translation/>

our perception, how we see the world, how we hear, how we smell, taste, touch, how we regard and emotionally react to ourselves and others, and so on.”

The soundtrack is roughly 6 minutes long, with a Cantonese recitation of the first part of Heart Sutra. The complementary image is documentation of my painting “Erosion/Reconcile” that shares a similar concept with the soundtrack.

**Emptiness is Form (2020)**  
[Listen Here](#)



Cassandra Yu, *Erosion/Reconcile* (2019)

# Life Lessons

Opal Mclean

When I was younger, isolation was something I knew very well. I spent my days living vicariously through media—movies and books were my connection to the outside world because there was something more satisfying about fantasy. In the presence of my own company, I felt safest because I could simply be myself. It was not long before I had to face my own life. There is a reality in growing up that forces you from your own bubble. I realized how much I thrived from social gatherings. I was living vicariously through other people as a means of avoiding isolation. There was nothing in media that compared to learning of people's lives, of their experiences, of their culture both learned and built. I had been avoiding isolation so long that I forgot how to function when no one was looking. Even if I was surrounded by people, I never felt connected. It was only when I started falling into isolation again that I found this connection. I had to take the time to sit with myself and unpack to truly be present in my own life. I was no longer running from isolation and, somehow, I felt less isolated than ever. I had learned how to balance isolation and connection in a way I felt comfortable.

Now, I find myself writing in the midst of a pandemic—speaking of social isolation from literal isolation. It is the tools I learned growing up that let me get out of bed during this time. It is the comfort in isolation that I have found that permits my sanity. Isolation has transformed into something new during this time. I find new ways of reaching for connection with a confidence I did not have before. There is no expectation of reciprocation that pushes for this connection. It is more genuine than it was before. In desperate times, the true nature of the human spirit shows itself. Isolation gives us even more reason to stay connected to others and to ourselves. One day, we can all look back on this time like I look back on my own life. There are lessons to be learned and hope to be had even in this uncertain time. It is a time like this that can push us away from the isolation inherent in modern culture. An isolation that comes from technology, from selfishness, from capitalism. An isolation that surrounds us even when we are all living together. It is this that contributes to a lack of empathy toward others.

This idea of isolation becomes so ingrained in everyday life that we forget how to connect. We forget how to be beyond a consumer or producer. We form into a mass which has no cohesive parts; only existing to squander. This is part of the reason we are here at this very moment. Maybe this period of time sheds light on our existence up until this point. We have no choice but to see the world for what it truly is. There are adjustments that must be made collectively that negate the isolation culture we all exist in. There is a communication that happens now, between the common person and the government, that did not happen before. As a mass, we move as cohesively as ever. There is a mutual understanding of how we must live together even when we must stay apart. In an optimistic sense, the forced isolation we are living through now is a shift in understanding isolation. We begin to see the isolation culture that surrounds us but, through cooperation, this highlights our collective need for connection. This highlights how much we can truly accomplish when we are all connected.



Opal Mclean, *Near Seclusion* (2017)

# Berlin Developing History (2018)

Emma Tynan



When I think of culture, I think historical sites or buildings. When I am thinking about these types of sites, I mean places that hold significance in some type of culture whether it be religion, history, heritage, someplace touched by war, or undiscovered.

I think of places like the Vatican which is important to religious culture and UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization] sites which are important to world heritage culture.



# Culture

Shelby Lu

Culture can be defined in a variety of ways - an expression that can be inspired or drawn from yours or other cultures. We live in a world where culture is vital to be united with one another; not against each other. Recently, I wrote a paper about the cultural objective of women seen in pornography being reflected upon women seen in society. The mix of the two has caused a ripple effect towards women becoming a form of commodity to men rather than being seen as a human being. We are so dependent on labels and identities that it has now caused a distinctive separation. The question remains; how do we end this push and pull of cultural script and roles?

## In Light of Recent Events

How can we continue to develop artistic culture in the midst of quarantine?

In light of recent events, countless galleries, shows, and performances have been postponed or cancelled outright. Our team at Withintensions understands the immense effort that goes into these events and knows how disheartening it is for all those affected. In the spirit of building our local art culture and community, we are going to be featuring artist's work that was not able to be shown physically. If you have had any events cancelled in the upcoming months please reach out to us to have your work featured in our next issue. If your work is not able to be expressed in a 2D piece but you still want to be featured, reach out to us and we can try to find a different way to feature you. We are always looking for collaborators so if you have an idea you want to see in our magazine then just let us know.

We hope that you all stay in good spirits and spend some of this time making art. Remember to follow local restrictions, practice social distancing, and stay safe.

This month we reached out to the students involved in the 2020 SFU BFA Third Year Exhibition: Recursion and invited them to submit their works if they wanted to have it shown in this issue. Those who wished to have their work shown have been included but you can also view the full show on @sfugalleries Instagram and at the SFU website under events.



# Leaking The Days That Were Washed out (2020)

Keting Dong

Material: Ink, Ice, Steamed Cloth, Strings, Xuan Paper, Fishing wires

It is a multi-media installation which has video projected on the wall as a background. The hanging ink-ice-cubes in 20 steamed cloths are hung up under two spotlights, with inky droplets dripping down on 9ft Xuan paper that is already set on the floor. This work is a process of transforming. There are three steps of transforming within this work. The artist quoted and rewrote 20 banned poems that derived from a half century ago in China, which were banned because of their strong political allusion back to history. All poems were written in Chinese in order to respect originality. She then soaked the paper with the words in water and the black ink was washed out afterwards. The idea of washing paper was influenced by artist Huang Yongping from his work *The History of Chinese Painting and the History of Modern Western Art Washed in the Washing Machine for Two Minutes*, (1987/1993). In this work, *Leaking The Days That Were Erased* (2020), the artist transformed texts into ink as well as solid into liquid. This is her first step of transforming. To achieve the second transformation, the artist froze the ink and made it solid again. She then put frozen ink into steamed cloths and hung them up in the air. As time goes by, the inky ice would melt and gradually leak through small holes in the steamed cloth.

It was the duration of melting along with the process of transforming messages. For the last step, the artist worked with a specific paper material called Xuan paper (also known as Rice paper). Xuan paper is widely used in traditional Chinese painting. It has a strong water absorption which helps painters dye pigments on paper. Therefore, the artist put many sheets of Xuan paper on the floor, in order to allow inky droplets to drop from the steamed cloth onto the surface of Xuan paper. When the ink drips on Xuan paper, the ink would be smudged around the paper. With marks eventually left on Xuan paper, the last step of transformation is finished, from texts to ink ending with ink paintings.

This work addresses the transformation of messages and the revelation of a suppressed truth in Chinese history, the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The artist aims to recall this specific, unspeakable period, and to expose the government for concealing facts from society. Dong's personal inspiration is derived from her grandparents, as they are the generation that experienced the Chinese Cultural Revolution firsthand. The revolution had a lifelong impact on them, it was like a scar to them and to others who lived through this period. "Whenever I asked my grandmother about her past during the Cultural Revolution, I always feel her fear and uneasiness even nowadays (an indication of [Post Traumatic Stress

Disorder]). She never actively talks about the hidden truth of that history, unless we ask her. Her silence aroused my curiosity, and I wanted to find out what the social environment was like at that time, how a decade of revolution can destroy the faith of a generation”, said by the artist. Dong extracted 20 works of banned Chinese poetry, which captured people’s life and death during the Cultural Revolution within political allusions. Through these forbidden pieces of text, she aims to evoke the feeling behind them within the audiences. After processing the Chinese text through washing then freezing the ink, the artist hangs up the ink-ice-cubes in steamed cloth. The materiality of the steamed cloth allows for the ice to melt through the tiny holes along the surface of the steamed cloth; the inky droplets go through the holes and finally drip onto the floor covered with Xuan paper. This step alludes to the secrets concealed by the government from the public, the leaking of erased history. As the ink drips onto the Xuan paper, the ink smudges around the paper. The truth is eventually revealed, and the secret is given room to leak out and spread.

Leaking The Days That  
Were Washed out (2020)  
[Watch Here](#)











“这里<sup>是</sup>监狱。  
是<sup>在</sup>荒<sup>的</sup>  
阴<sup>的</sup>谋<sup>的</sup>特<sup>的</sup>办<sup>的</sup>法<sup>的</sup>  
活<sup>的</sup>的<sup>的</sup>思<sup>的</sup>想<sup>的</sup>。监  
你<sup>在</sup>哪<sup>儿</sup>？  
一<sup>个</sup>监<sup>狱</sup>。  
在<sup>哪</sup>街<sup>道</sup>”

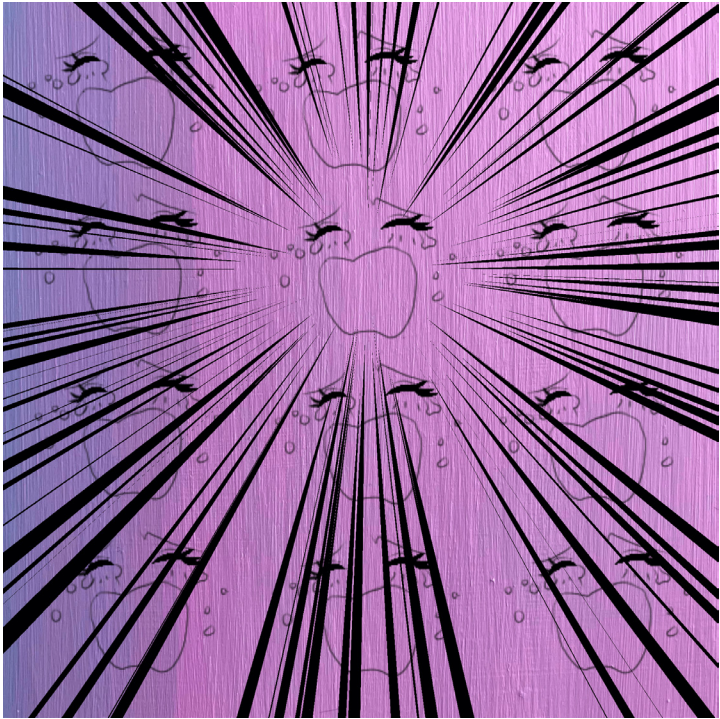
## Shoujo Collab (2020)

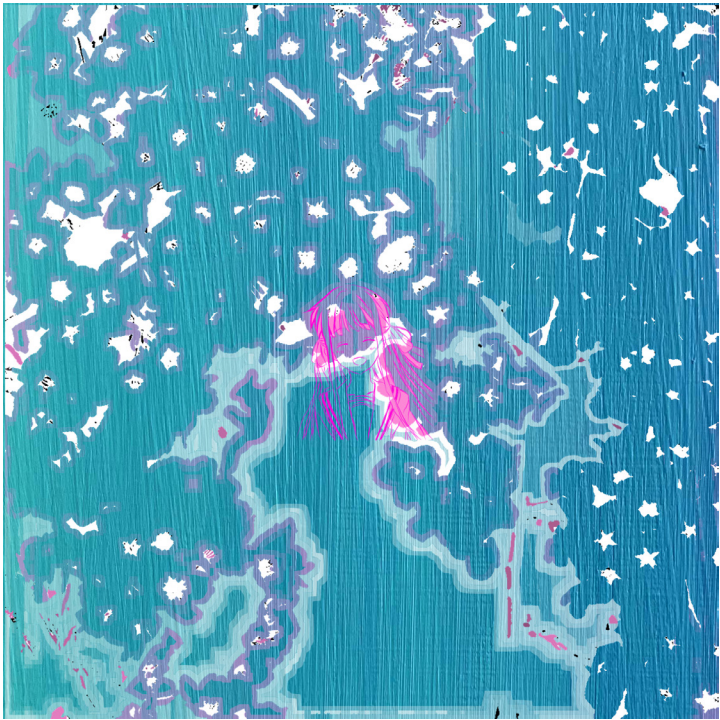
Olivia Lou

Shoujo Collab is about reconnecting my ideas of coming of age, adolescence, romance, translation from subtitles, nostalgia, and humor with a hint of cynicism in my personal experience with Japanese culture and how that affects my practice as a visual artist. Shoujo Collab is inspired by the Superflat movement created by Takashi Murakami and several artists involved in Japanese culture such as Junko Mizuno, Aya Takano, Natsuki Takaya and others.

Shoujo Collab started because of my love for anime and manga since childhood. A huge part of my work in visual representation is commercial marketing activities in Japan. Signs, billboards, media, internet, social places, advertisement, and anything to do with mass media in Japan are all things I think about in my work. This work communicates the relationship between real and rendered textures, the recreation with colors from retro 1980-90s shoujo anime and manga from Japan, along with contextual exploration of the old in the new.

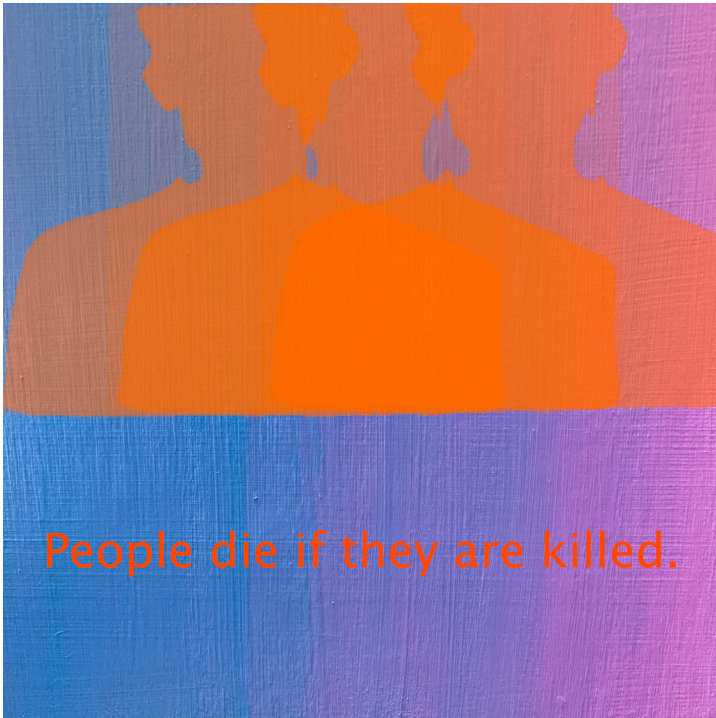












## Mottle (墨錠) (2020)

Janice Ma

The five divided scenes show the documentation of the artist's merge and fuse with the material ink. Each interaction distinguishes her containment as ink becomes part of her. In part 1, showing the intake of ink; drinking a large portion of the liquid into her body signifies as ink is what she consumes. Part 2, with ink dripping out from her nostrils (which usually only export mucous or blood) explains that ink is blending in with her bodily fluids. Part 3 continued, with ink pouring from her mouth, it has migrated to her digestive system and verbal abilities. She speaks in ink, talks in darkness, and expresses in monotony. Part 4 draws focus to the eyes, ink seeps and glides down her cheeks, it could be tears of joy or sorrow. Part 5 consists of the insertion of a syringe into the wrist, drawing ink out from the veins and returning to the same bowl she used to consume her ink. It's repetitive, self consuming, and will be continuously occurring. Since the video has been divided into 5 parts, it is not a looped video but shown in various sections. Part 1 is 19 seconds, part 2 is 18 seconds, part 3 is 27

seconds, part 4 is 22 seconds and part 5 is 24 seconds. The ideal mode in displaying this is to allow all five documentations to be visibly relatable to the audience, and allowing the viewer to instantly link these series to one project.

The title Mottle, indicates that ink is marking each part of the body and slowly consuming the artist. The chinese characters 墨锭 (pronounced as Mo Ding), is a representative term rather than a translation of the title. 墨锭 (Mo Ding) is a term for solid ink blocks that are used in calligraphy or paintings in chinese culture, it takes slow and gentle gestures of rubbing combined to an adjusted amount of water to create the desirable texture of ink. The addition of this term is to signify that the artist takes a slow long process to merge in becoming the optimal state.

**Mottle (墨锭) (2020)**  
[Watch Here](#)

1. Ingest, Digest.  
Devour, Absorb.

2. Inhale, Exhale.  
Inspiration, Aspiration.

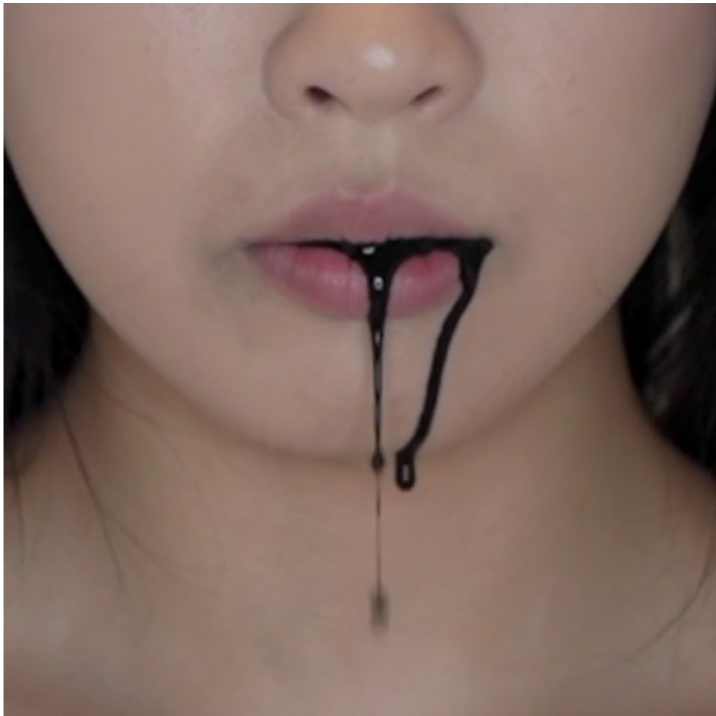
3. Spoken Words,  
Talk Text.

4. Oculus, Viewless.  
Tear, Clear

5. Inject, Extract  
Contained, Obtained













## Your Land (2020)

Aynaz Parkas

Oil on canvas  
42 X 30 inches

Aynaz Parkas is an emerging visual artist whose work includes a variety of mediums such as painting, installation, sculpture, and performance. She is inspired by Iranian and Middle Eastern culture, and makes work that addresses the architecture and landscape, as well as the conflicts and tensions of the region. Through her work, Parkas examines her identity, by digging into memories of her life in Iran while simultaneously exploring her ongoing adaptation to the new culture she now finds herself in. Parkas was born in Tehran, Iran in 1999. She grew up there until the age of eighteen, when she moved to Vancouver. She is currently studying at the School for the Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University.







## Meet the Team



Francisco  
Berlanga

Francisco Berlanga is a contemporary artist who studied at Simon Fraser University. He obtained his BFA in Visual Arts with a minor in Interactive Arts and Technology. His practice is based on questioning identity, particularly his connection with his own Mexican culture and how one can inhabit a culture while being partially absent from it. He engages in discourses with his own identity through the creation of traditional Mexican “manualidades” or crafts, his work makes connections between traditional Mexican aesthetics and contemporary visual language. His practice engages with concepts of inaccessibility and the role memory and language can play when someone is distanced from their own culture. He attempts to bridge the gaps between his personal and cultural identities by forcing connections between them and by trying to understand the limitations that these identities impose upon each other



Annie  
Chan

Annie Chan was born in Hong Kong and immigrated to Toronto as a child. She returned to China for her teenage years, before moving to Vancouver for university. Annie is a recent graduate of SFU and currently works to promote arts-related events in Vancouver.

Unable to establish herself as either Cantonese or Canadian, she examines how identities are constructed regardless of such titles through situational means. Her work questions the possibility of existing without these titles. In her current practice, she aims to piece together a hybrid identity based on her lived experiences in Asia and Canada.



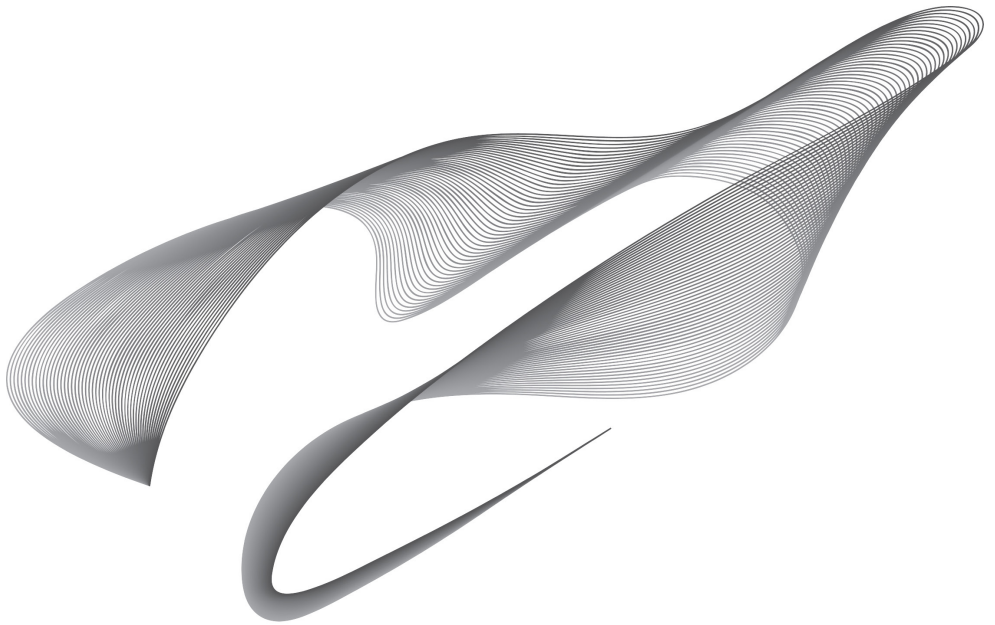
Natalie  
Chan

Natalie Chan recently completed her BFA in Visual Arts at Simon Fraser University. Her practice often focuses on the relational aspects of people & places, as well as the inner turmoils & complexities of the human condition. In the creation of her works, she aims to highlight the ideas of reflection, healing, and reconciliation as tangible possibilities in each encounter. Her latest interests include learning how to tattoo, in understanding both the technical skills & intimate relation between artist and the livelihood of their canvas.



Opal  
Mclean

Mclean is best described as the “selfish artist” meaning her practice entirely revolves around herself. Her work often relates back to a mental psyche that cannot be described by words alone. Instead, it can be described by an action. A reference to a state of being or a performance that lends to the way her brain functions. This manifestation and documentation of different processes becomes her tool to relate to the outside world. Her own existence comes into question in a way that so many experience in their own daily life. This experience becomes a social, cultural, and political connection to her projects. Her work becomes both alienating but connecting in a shared experience that translates through different media.





We put out new issues every month with a different topic.

We are always looking for submissions and opportunities to collaborate so check out our social medias.

on instagram:  
@withintensions

or email us at:  
within.tensions@gmail.com

If you want more information feel free to contact us.

Our next issue will be on the topic of “Aesthetics“ and submissions are now open.

See you next month!

## Acknowledgements

Withintensions would not have been possible without the works of Francisco Berlanga, Annie Chan, Natalie Chan, Keting Dong, Phoebe Huang, Shelby Lu, Olivia Luo, Janice Ma , Opal Mclean, Victoria Mulja, Aynaz Parkas, Tyler Pengelly, Emma Tynan, Cassandra Yu

We would also like to thank Francisco Berlanga for his design and social media contributions, Natalie Chan for her assistance in coordinating and Opal Mclean for her editorial work.

We are excited to share our future works with you and we hope to provide more opportunities for artists alike.

