



issue no. 2

A SEASON  
FOR BLOOM



*“the true test of one’s  
character is what they do  
when no one is watching”*

*-John Wooden*



at the core



VULNERABILITY + DESIGN PUBLICATION

## Editor's Letter:

At The Core hones in on influential life experiences and advice in ***A Season for Bloom***. Part of what makes human nature incredible is that no life is lived identically or twice. No matter our background, we each interact with the same world differently, learning from it and those who inhabit it. After the last issue, which concentrated on the imperfections of our world, I wanted to focus on how experiences change us as individuals for the better with gratitude in mind.

Despite promoting living in the present, I think it's important to be able to reflect and analyze our past and continuously strive for growth. There is no end to cultivating a personality, and I think much of how we develop is through the ability to critically reflect on our past. It is vital to understand that many of our past grievances are a result of both others' actions, but more importantly our own. We cannot change others, we can only blame and hope others change. What matters more is that you can change your own behaviors. It is never too late to develop self-love, self-awareness, and self-accountability. To recognize your faults, responsibilities, and feelings around your life experiences will help prepare you for life's journey. To be diligent in your pursuit of happiness, while recognizing that others may be on different paths towards the same goal.

The most essential lessons I learned are humility and gratitude. These core values have propelled me to chase what I love fearlessly, but humbly. To learn from those around me, and be reliable. To show up and put in work, with no intentions other than self-growth and the desire to learn from others. After all, it's always a season for bloom.

Ibby Day  
*Editor in Chief*

AT  
THE  
CORE

ATC is an independent, not-for-profit publication driven by passion and a goal of sharing stories and artwork that remind us that we're all human at the core. If you'd like to be in our next issue, please email [ibbyday@gmail.com](mailto:ibbyday@gmail.com).

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# natasha minskoff

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## THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is one of the basic fundamentals of human relationships we begin to learn at an early age - this includes what it means to forgive or alternatively, what it means to be forgiven. In elementary school, we learn the impact of the words "I'm sorry," as we both said them and accepted them. In middle school, we were taught that instead of saying "it's okay," when someone apologized to you, we should say "I accept your apology" so that we don't diminish their attempt to make amends but still remind them that the actions taken or words said were not acceptable. In high school, we learn to forgive but never forget, and although that phrase served me through the time I navigated the last years of being a teenager, that phrase can only carry you so long. I felt like every time I forgave someone, I was the person caving and displaying weakness, so I usually didn't. If I ended a friendship or a relationship, I didn't pay any mind towards the person or persons, I wouldn't ignore them but I wouldn't acknowledge them either. Truthfully, I only handled it the way that I did because I struggled to find a balance between letting go of my disappointment and the anger I held, but also not setting a precedent that what the individual did was okay in any way.

In most recent years, I have learned that to genuinely forgive someone is not a weak action, it is a move of power. What I had to learn was the power that forgiving someone holds and the outcomes you can face when doing so. The first being this person genuinely wants your forgiveness and so you give it to them and from there you either part ways or try to salvage the relationship you lost, but both parties end up in a better place than where they started. The second being the opposite, this person wants your forgiveness but only to absolve themselves of the guilt they are carrying and to aid in convincing themselves what they did was okay - or worse, justifiable. Here lies the risk of allowing yourself to enter that conversation and grant the request for forgiveness. For a long time, the chance that it was more likely going to be the second outcome over the first made me fall back into my habits of neither forgiving nor forgetting.

However, as I continue to navigate these adult relationships and come face to face with these individuals, I realize that when you forgive someone, you are in the

position of power. Now, this is only if they are genuine about their attempt at redemption, but if they are, you now hold the relationship in your hands. It's up to you whether to build on it, destroy or it or leave it as is, but this dynamic no longer holds the emotional power that it once held over you. Forgiveness can allow you to both grow and move on, but it can also allow you to control relationships, that at a time, once held entire emotional control over you.

Now, I am by no means saying that you should forgive everyone in your life for their wrongdoings. I believe in second chances, but there are people who I will never let back into my life in any manner. It's important to have those boundaries and recognize who deserves your forgiveness and who does not. What I can say is that most of the people in my life who I can't imagine living without, I had to forgive at one point or another. I don't regret the second chance I gave any of them and every day, I'm reminded how grateful I am that person is in my life. As I get older, meet new people and try to keep relationships constant despite time and distance, I continue to be reminded of the important roles we play in the relationships we hold in our lives, and I wouldn't have half of the ones I do today or half of the people I love beyond words in my life had I not forgiven them at one point in time.





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# KATHERINE CHANG

## INTERVIEW WITH KATHERINE:

Q: What is a piece of advice you've received that stuck with you?

"This is my best." What other better mentor is there besides your family. Everyone goes through tough times, and the best way to fight my way through it is by telling myself that this is the best I could've done, my best. No matter how much I think I could've done better, I put out everything I knew on the table and created things that I have been wanting to create while also creating things that I absolutely did not want to create. But despite everything else or the final result, I'm also proud of everything. As long as I try, as long as I'm considerate to others and myself

of course, and as long as I don't give up, that is what's most important in the end. The fact that you've put in all your effort is what counts.



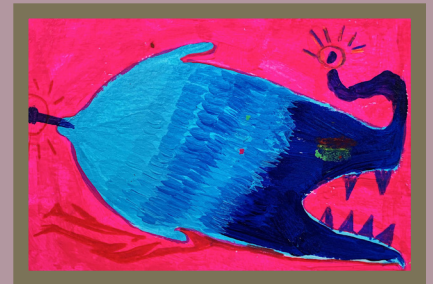
Q: What is the biggest challenge you are currently facing?

As much as family is the most important aspect of my life, it doesn't mean it's always easy. As a young adult, I'm at a period where I want to have my own privacy. Due to financial reasons, I am currently commuting to school, but I've had a taste of freedom for one year and it was hard to go back home, really hard. Coming back home from where I had already created a community around myself, it was hard for my family to understand that I wasn't choosing friends over family, but that I was just getting one step closer to being independent. And growing up as a second generation Korean American, I have many moments where I have trouble communicating with my parents simply because of tone or accidentally switching around words. This leads to miscommunication and misunderstandings which never end up pretty.

Q: How have life experiences influenced your practice?

I've always had a hard time expressing myself clearly to other people, and communicating with my family and friends sometimes brings misunderstandings. I understand my thought process, but when the time comes where I have to project my thoughts out loud, it just doesn't make sense sometimes. But through illustrations, I realized that I was able to express myself more clearly and easily. I was able to see myself through another perspective with these characters that relate to me. There is an essence when you create something, and I always take this as an advantage to create something that I can put my own voice into

and express unexplored feelings of my own.





# ibby day

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## GRATITUDE: THE FAIREST BLOSSOM

### Author's Note

*During the process of writing, editing, and selecting my final piece for the second issue, I sifted through roughly four different ideas. There are numerous lessons that shaped the course of my life and are relevant to others. However, the more I wrote, the more my writing felt tailored to my audience, which isn't what this publication is rooted in. It's about sharing personal experiences, inspiring others to do the same, with the goal to find common ground and recognize that humans are alike at the core. To empathize better, to listen more, to love unconditionally. So I scrapped the other four drafts and instead am writing a thank you note to individuals who, perhaps, didn't know how much they've meant to me or how their actions affected me deeply regardless of our relationship now. The most influential life lesson I've learned is that it's never too late to express gratitude.*

### Mery

My first art teacher, and the reason I'm pursuing the career I am. I wouldn't have chosen this path had she not believed in my third-grade self just trying to do my best. We had electives in elementary, and I found myself particularly drawn to art. I wasn't good at it, but I could do it for hours. While all my friends rushed through art assignments, I found myself trying to challenge myself to make the best, most sophisticated work I could. I found that this same mindset started applying to my daily life. Art pushed me as an individual too. Throughout the years, Mery and I developed a close relationship. She would use my work as examples for other classes and she recruited me in 5th grade to take pictures of people's work to be presented at a schoolwide assembly. She believed in me for years, pushed me, and brought out my passion for art and people. Thank you, Mery, for sparking the journey I'm on.

### Mr. Hall

I went through a bad break up at the end of senior year. The week after it happened I remember walking into student government. I felt stares from ASB members who must've figured it out. The relationship had been just over two years and losing someone who had been so important in my life felt like hell. I lost my drive and passion to do anything. Art felt useless, volunteering felt depressing and interacting with others felt forced. I ate lunch alone in the art room because I didn't know where to go or what to do, and there was still a month left of school. I thought I had been in a bad mental state before, but this was significantly worse. My work ethic dipped and all care was thrown out the window. Day by day it got worse. Angrier, sadder, and ultimately manifesting into someone I didn't recognize.

At Senior Awards Night, my whole world changed. I didn't expect anything going in but being recognized by Mr. Hall deeply affected me. I can't thank him enough for the timing of his speech. It grounded me at a time I felt disconnected. It reminded me who I was, what I wanted to be, and what I needed to do. It reminded me of a valuable piece of advice I learned from him: *"The true test of one's character is what they do when no one is watching"*. You need to be humble in your successes, generous to those around you, down to earth in your interactions, and motivated to work diligently, expecting nothing in return. He reminded me that I had value and saw more in me than I felt I was capable of. Thank you, Mr. Hall, for all your support.

### Nora, Katelyn, and Annalise

I had known these three for a while leading up to our senior year. On and off through classes, but not exactly the closest of friends. After my breakup, I was struggling to be alone during lunches, so I just started reaching out to classmates I felt comfortable around. I remember texting to ask if I could spend lunch with them on one day, and crying when they responded that I could any day, without hesitation. It felt natural to be a part of their group, as each one of them is funny, kind, and genuine. Truthfully, I don't know if I would've made it to graduation had I not been welcomed with their kindness. I believe a series of positive actions allowed my mental state to be stable enough to be here today, and one of those actions was the generosity of these women. So thank you Nora, Katelyn, and Annalise for being kind-hearted at a time I was drowning. I might honestly owe you my life.

### Lauren

It was my 19th birthday. I had ended a toxic friendship with my best friend of the time and I was miserable moving to college. It hit me all at once. I never had feared the unknown of college but I was trembling. I lost everyone I loved deeply. I didn't know who I was and college felt intimidating. I thought I had been doing better, but I definitely was not. I was spending my first birthday alone, or so I thought. Last-minute, I decided to fly home so at least my parents would celebrate it with me. It felt depressing and I wasn't looking forward to it. Then Lauren texted and showed up at my door with a donut and a lunch offer. I felt loved and admired Lauren's ability to go out of the way for her friends. Always selfless and making someone's day. Thank you, Lauren, for being a good friend and inspiring me to do the same.

### Amy

After changing directions in college, I found myself devoid of all the friends I had made in my first term. I was in my classes with a random assortment of students. I never could get close with any of them since I only saw each one maybe once per week. My third semester, I decided to look into leaving ArtCenter. I wasn't finding close friends who understood why I cared about society and why I was willing to sacrifice my talents for such a broken system, so I was set to make my departure. But then she came up to me and started talking. I don't really know how we got close so fast, but I loved her energy. Amy turned into my first close friend at ArtCenter. We talked about anything and everything, she was hilarious. But most importantly she understood why I loved people and was on a similar path. She reminded me to be positive and find friends and hobbies that made me happy. To work hard for them, and stay optimistic at a time I was set to throw it all away and walk away from my passion.

### Lily

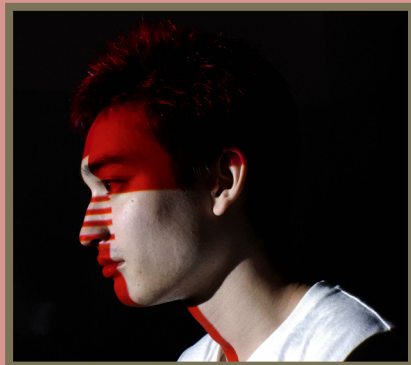
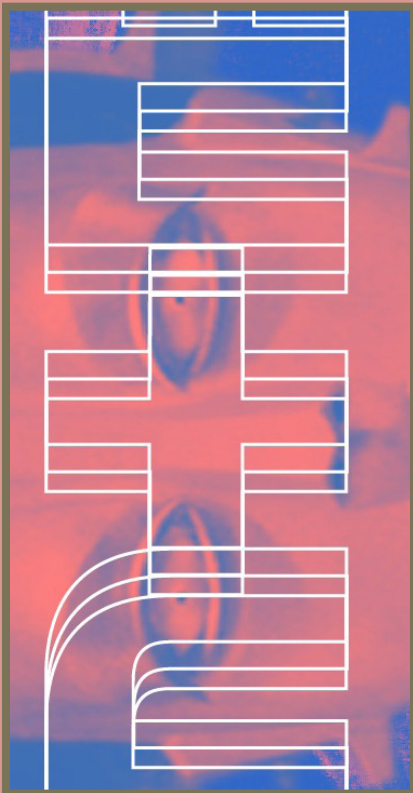
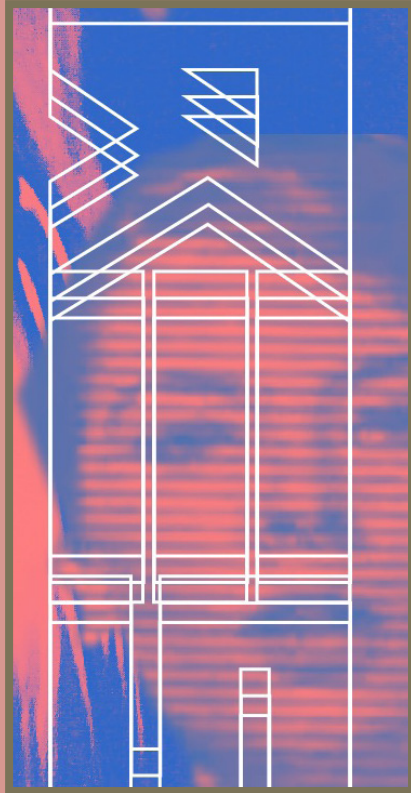
Aside from ArtCenter classwork, I pursued my passion for people in student government. Lily and I met through a mutual friend who asked us to take on TEDx and introduced me to ArtCenter Student Government. We joke all the time since neither of us thought we'd be friends when we met, but now we're coworkers, roommates and she's family to me. This summer, I was as equally a school rat as her (as I jokingly call her). Despite not having classes, I was constantly in meetings or working on projects. But that's because I have someone like Lily around me. Hardworking, committed and fearless in outlook. The type that goes above and beyond expectations and does it with flair but more importantly, humility. Showing up when it's needed most, she's reliable and easy to talk to. She's always at school, but that's because she's passionate. I'm grateful to be around her because she works harder than anyone I've met and produces the best work I've seen in a while. She challenges the way I think, my habits, and is the type of friend who makes you stop and consider how to be better, all while doing it herself. Thank you, Lily, for reminding me every day to put 100% into what I do.

## INTERVIEW WITH CASEY:

Q: Why is it important to reflect personal experiences or ideology in your work?

I think getting to art and design was a process of finding my voice a bit, as corny as that sounds. So, to be anything less than authentic always seemed preposterous to me and a betrayal of the effort it took to get to this point. Maybe that's an issue of privilege, and maybe I won't find it as easy to bring the personal into my work when I'm out in the world WORKING for clients, but in school it's been a guiding post. I find myself pushing to take in teacher feedback and feedback from my friends and other

creatives and then bringing it all in and remembering: oh yeah, duh, I'm a faggot from Eastern Montana and I really love video games and PBR. A give and take! I like the combo of feeling inspired and then humbling it all back down.



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**CASEY KNAPP**



Q: What advice would you give your past self?

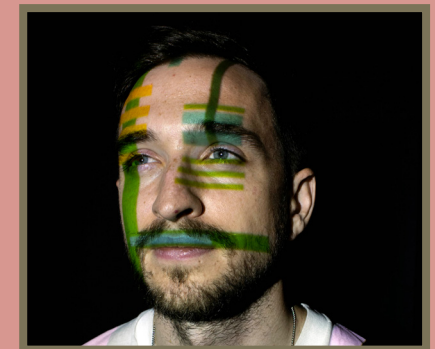
I think I'd tell myself to relax. Even now. Almost at every stage when I think about moments of crisis I've had, relaxing would have been very helpful. Just relaxxxxxxxx and let things go.

Q: What is the best way to grow as an individual?

I think this circles back to the first question a bit. Pushing yourself is key but also remembering where you're



from and to go do stupid shit with your friends and have fun. I tend to do (probably) too much of the latter, but then I have good friends who tell me I'm being lazy, irresponsible, dumb, etc. But I think living your life is key. I'm slightly introverted but I want a loud life, and I think that goes into my work as well. For me, work and life shouldn't be separate. I want to combine worlds as much as possible.



# zack gibson

**\*\* TRIGGER WARNING \*\***

The following content addresses themes of violence which may be triggering to some.

## SCARLET

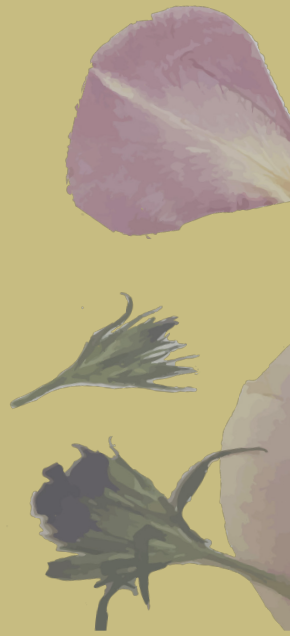
Opens with a gunshot, slow motion bullet  
Our hero falls through the air slowly  
His wife, cries  
A smile grins and sneers  
Blood drizzles and runs  
The woman on her knees, screaming  
Smoke flowing from the gun  
Scarred lips emerge to blow it out  
A figure holsters the revolver  
Wet long hair covers half of their face  
Tipping her hat, she makes her leave  
The hero's eyes fade to grey  
The rain falls  
Lightning crashes  
Thunderstorms wash away the blood  
Chalk washes away, concealing the perfect crime  
The woman stands before the feeble man; holding the gun  
Police arrive and take her away  
The man takes in his final breath  
Then evaporates into thin air  
The night carries on, crickets chirp  
End

## CONSISTENCY

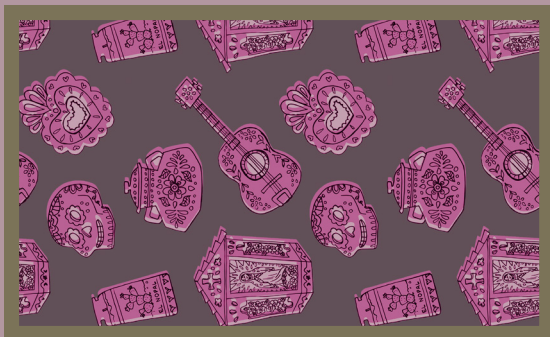
Repetition meets the eyes of the many and acts as if we can't break it  
Habits are like leeches we allow to stay attached  
They steal our blood and drain our energy  
But no more, it's time to take them off  
Stop letting depression drive  
Stop letting her control you  
Don't let him hit you  
Don't take their shit anymore  
Prevent the pain with love  
Prevent the love from fading  
Act with ferocious compassion  
Act with control with your fury  
Do make sure to turn off the lights  
Turn all of their heads  
I will not rest until there is peace  
I will not rest until I find my consistency

## PROS, CONS

The lonely heart always breaks in two  
Such as corroded craters on a blue moon  
I watch the spring twilight for signs of hope  
But all my heart imitates is somber vibrations  
A kick drum represents my pump, my frequency  
Though I cannot play my drums  
I can only sit and repeat my vicious cycle  
Falling in love, head over heels and unconditionally  
I told myself I wouldn't allow this  
Right now in my hardship an overflowing heart isn't what you need  
My air isn't what you need to breath  
Static TV lines fill my eyes with tears  
As everything builds off of my fears  
Why can't I tell you how I feel?  
I cannot express what is real  
Why did I let this happen?  
Why am I sitting under the stars being starstruck by you?  
What I have done to myself, I can't comprehend the question  
Did I make the correct choice?  
Or was it just ripped from my control







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CHEYANNE ZAVALA

## INTERVIEW WITH CHEYANNE:

Q: What is the hardest lesson you've learned and how did you grow from it?

The most difficult lesson I've ever had to learn was how to live with and accept loss. Although loss is unfortunately an inevitable part of life, I don't think anyone is ever truly prepared for the first time they experience the loss of someone significant to them. Loss is a deeply nuanced experience that everyone goes through differently, and even if you think you might know how you'll handle the situation, you can never truly predict how trauma affects you.

In May of 2017, I lost my dad. While he hadn't been a significant part of my life in over ten years, dealing with his death was the most difficult thing I've ever experienced. My dad and I were not close. He made a lot of selfish decisions and had an extremely unstable lifestyle that prevented him from truly being present for the people who really loved him. For a very long time, I harbored a lot of anger toward him for hurting the people I loved most, and for not loving me enough to get it together. However, what I didn't understand at

the time was that my dad was desperately trying to escape his own demons. My dad spent most of his life running away from his trauma, resulting in an addiction that made him act recklessly and kept him from being present and really living. While these aspects of his life don't completely excuse his behavior, they explained a lot to me.

When my dad eventually passed, I experienced some of the most emotionally exhausting weeks of my life. I cried almost every single day for about two weeks. I listened to the same two Rolling Stones songs over and over, and slept a lot. Processing the death of someone very significant to you takes time. In the beginning it feels like a never-ending uphill battle, but as time passes, the pain slowly begins to dull. Unfortunately, I don't think it ever goes away. You don't magically overcome your trauma and then never think of it again. It is more of an experience that you work really hard to understand and live with. I still think about my dad every single day, I still have bad days and small moments where I'm overcome with guilt and sadness, but I've also learned how to manage those feelings. When I'm having a bad day, it helps to call my family and listen to their stories about him. Hearing people reflect on my dad is not only incredibly comforting, but also feels as though I'm

receiving small pieces of him that help me better understand who he was.

Something I will always say, is that losing a parent is an experience you will never understand until it happens to you. The best way I can think to describe it, is that it feels like losing half of yourself; Half of your identity, and half of what makes you who you are. Physically, I am the spitting image of my dad, and while for a long time after he passed it was hard to look in the mirror, now I am so grateful to have another piece of him staring back at me. I would be lying if I said that this experience isn't alienating to a certain degree. It's hard for people who have never experienced a loss this deep (let alone with my very specific situation) to understand, and it can lead to a lot of frustration on both ends. However, I am lucky enough to know a handful of people who did understand what I was going through, and I still am able to find a great deal of comfort in knowing they're out there, even if we're not necessarily close friends. Having a community that will support you, even from afar, was/is so beneficial to my healing process.

This experience was life-changing for me. Dealing with the harsh realities of my dad's situation made me a more compassionate person. In losing him, I learned how to accept my grief and understand it, as well as how to manage it. In the past, I had always thought I was a resilient person for being able to deal with everything he put me through. I think the real test of my resilience was losing him and being left to confront all these feelings on my own. It's definitely an on-going journey, but I will always be grateful to my dad for all the ways he unknowingly helped me grow.

Q: Who are you grateful for and why?

In spite of every obstacle I've encountered in life, I have always had an insanely strong support system that I am so grateful for. I have amazing friends, old and new, that have stuck by my side, challenged me, and constantly lifted me up. My family is relatively small and spread apart, but their love and support is unwavering. I



am fortunate enough to have two older siblings who both had hands in helping raise me, and that I continue to look to as role models.

The person I am most grateful for is my mother. Every ounce of resilience and strength I have I learned through watching her. My mom has lived a life that at times was very difficult and unfair to her, but ultimately made her the incredibly hard-working and humble woman she is today. She raised my siblings and I as both parents with enough love to make up for both parents. My mom is a beautiful person inside and out, and I would not be the person I am today without her.

Q: How does your choice of colors in your work reflect you?

A significant portion of my work is dedicated to celebrating, exploring, and connecting with my culture. Often times I choose colors that are reminiscent of authentic Mexican culture, but also play on what I find aesthetically pleasing or an emotion I'm feeling. I have a series of work, both photography and illustration, dedicated to Olvera Street in LA. Olvera Street is has always been a deeply nostalgic experience for me. Whenever I visit, I'm always taken back to visiting as a young child, and seeing the church is very reminiscent of the time I spent in Catholic school. The colors you find in this small stretch of street are incredibly vivid that they've stuck with me for a very long time. However when I decided to recreate them, I wanted filter them with a feeling that was relevant to me presently, whether that be a soft, nostalgic interpretation or a more quiet, somber one.

I am to have the colors in my work and the work itself reflect a culture that I am so proud of, and believe should be uplifted and celebrated unapologetically in times like these.





