

issue no. 8

LA VIE EN ROSE



at the core

VULNERABILITY + DESIGN PUBLICATION

## editor's letter /

The concept for **La Vie En Rose** has been an idea marinating for over four years. I wanted the process and delivery of this issue to feel intimate, and to extend past the detachment of typed words.

I've always been fond of writing, especially the feeling of pen hitting paper. There's something deeply personal about handwriting that I'll never be able to replicate in At The Core; but this issue, I strive to get close:

*This year, I sent out handwritten Valentine's cards to those who trusted me blindly with their address. Thank you to my participants for unknowingly being a part of this issue, and for making it as special as I had hoped. Although the words written remain secret, the underlying theme is gratitude for all of you- for coloring my world in pink.*

I've spent hours wondering how we recover from a pandemic that has made us impatient and unkind. There is hatred brewing under the surface that has trickled out in the most extreme and tragic ways. And to address this, I believe the solution lies in rebuilding trust and kindness.

I encourage you to abandon convenience. To actively engage with others with more empathy, intention, and patience. The world cannot heal when we become complacent in isolation. Know that love always triumphs.

Ibby Day  
*Editor in Chief*

special thanks to: Anna Grace Cook  
*Copyeditor*

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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Hammermill 60lb Color Copy Digital Cover



# LAURIE OKAMOTO

## *What do you love about art?*

I love that I can quiet my mind with it. I struggle with a lot of anxiety, to the point that it feels as though there's a cage around my chest preventing me from taking a deep inhale and expanding my lungs... Personally, I can't get onboard with the idea of putting antidepressants or anti-anxiety meds in my body. On a daily basis, we deal with so many stimuli that have an impact on our body chemistry that for me, adding drugs to the mix feels more like slapping a bandaid on an infected wound that needs cleaning. Art helps my mind stop running so that I can breathe. In the wound analogy, art both disinfects the area, and gives it time to heal.

In the context of art as jewelry — I love that I can try to take a very ephemeral moment and make it permanent. “Nothing Gold Can Stay,” a poem by Robert Frost, has always resonated with me and I think about it fairly often. Because, “Her early leaf's a flower; But only so an hour” I started to pause more during the day to just appreciate the way a moment looks and feels. Even more so with flowers and lush greenery (I live in a desert), they have an almost otherworldly beauty when you stop and really take the time to look at them. If you think about how they grow, why they've developed, how they produce color, etc... It becomes clearer that that delicate moment in time is extremely fragile. I try to translate the feelings and thoughts I have in those moments to the jewelry, so that something, “gold can stay.”

## *Name someone that you love and describe them.*

Not one person, per say, but I love my parents. They have supported me through all of my doctor appointments (I have some ongoing health and immune problems), all of my meltdowns, career choices, bad relationships, etc... I'm really blessed to have them. They make it possible for me to deal with the physical, emotional, and psychological pain of existing.

## *What does love look like?*

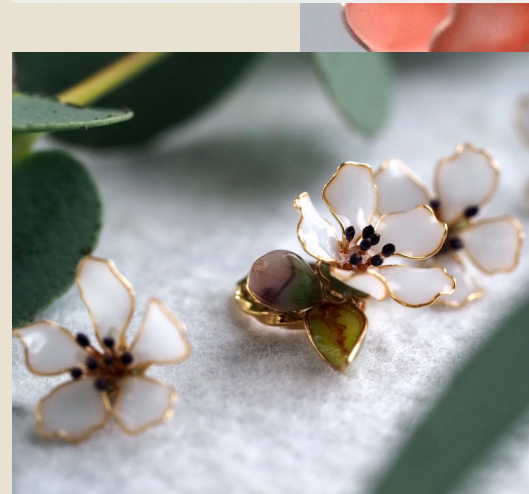
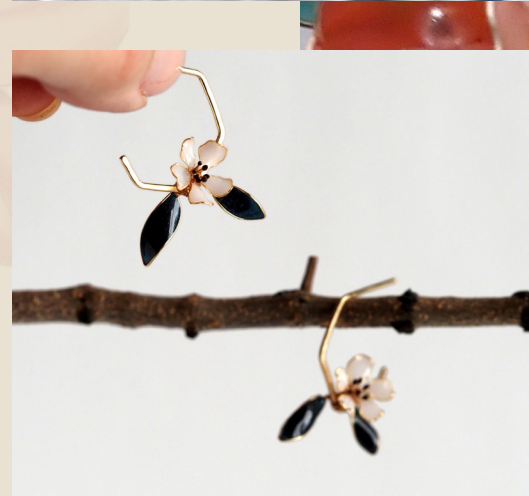
Love looks like sacrifice without resentment. Love is a willingness to make yourself uncomfortable for somebody else, then committing to doing it — for their betterment. I don't mean to say that you do so without hesitation or trepidation, but that you do so because you value the other person's wellbeing more than you do your own comfort. Mutual love, to me, looks like a willingness from both parties to sacrifice, and a desire from both that the other won't have to.

## *What's one thing you've learned about love in the last year?*

# Love is, very much so, conditional.

## *What do you love about yourself?*

I don't know if I LOVE it, but I have come to accept that I give 100% of myself into everything. Whether that's a new jewelry piece, friendship, relationship, job, etc... It has been a problem in the past, but I've tried to learn to accept it and understand that even if I give of myself, the other party might not. I used to really hate that I do that, but I'm trying to reframe that and think of it as, "at least I know I did my best. I'll never have to question if I tried my hardest and gave it everything I had to give."



# UNTITLED

STEPHANIE ADWUBI

## I've never fallen in love, and I probably never will.

At least not in the way most people would think.

I'll likely never experience the all-consuming, butterflies and sweaty palms kind of love that I've heard people talk about in movies and songs and books. To be honest, I'm not sure if I'd want to—it sounds kind of awful. Heart palpitations, rumination, and stomach-turning all sound like anxiety to me. I'm in no more need for any of that.

This never really bothered me until around high school when I realized that I was just a bit different than everyone else. Long gone were the days of group valentines and lighthearted secret admirers in elementary school. Girls no longer giggled over cooties, but actively pursued people they liked while I still gagged at the sight of on-screen kisses (still do). Soon, peers would return with stories of sex-capades and hook-ups while I used my waning religiosity as an excuse to avoid partaking. Of course, I was happy for them, but with each story, an ache in my chest began to grow. As people slowly paired off and FOMO set in, we made pacts with close friends: "if we're not married by 30, we should just get married to each other" and "wouldn't it be

great if we could just live together—just us with a bunch of friends?” What I didn’t realize at the time was that I considered this a serious and frankly preferable possibility, while for others it was a just a contingency plan.

When I did fall into romantic relationships, I found myself feeling suffocated and trapped. I just couldn’t hack it and I began to resent myself for it. Valentine’s Day became a dirge. It was a reminder of all the things I’d never have and all the people; it felt like life was slowly ripping away from me. I missed elementary school days with Valentine’s boxes and cards from your best friends. Although I didn’t want a part in it, romance, romantic relationships undoubtedly imbue status in our society and Valentine’s Day is the pinnacle: Wow, you’ve been chosen!

As I’ve gotten older and I’ve come to understand that I’m both asexual and aromantic, Valentine’s Day has slowly taken on a new meaning. Discovering my asexuality came easily, but accepting my aromanticism was a very hard pill to swallow. I had to work at disentangling my worth from romance and desirability and leaned into focusing my energy on the other loves of my life: my friends and my siblings. I learned that romantic relationships are not the only ones that matter or the ones that matter most. I’ve come to relish forms of platonic intimacy with trusted loved ones: co-napping, braiding hair, holding hands, movies and cuddles, dance parties, harmonizing, spontaneous facetimes, long conversations over ice cream or tea. Soft, lovely moments that I’ll treasure forever.

Of course, it’s not all rainbows. We live in a society that prizes the romantic relationship and nuclear family above all else. As such, I do wonder what will become of this form of intimacy as I age and more and more becomes sequestered to romantic relationships. I find myself often wondering if social norms will inevitably have me left behind.

But for now, I truly cherish the friendships that make my life richer. Friendships that have saved my life on many occasions, grounded me,

and have provided me solace in hard times. I can only hope I could do the same. So, on Valentine’s Day (and on other days!), I thank the people in my life for their friendship, I send silly cards, punny valentines, and letters, I do my best to show up. And someday, I hope my dream of buying a house and living with a friend—or friends!—will also become a reality.

## *What do you love about art?*

I love art because it's so natural to me. I almost feel like art was something I was born for.

But creating art as a career has been (in my personal experience) discouraging. Being in the creative industry has made me tie something I loved so dearly to my self-worth and survival. When I was creating art before I decided to make it my job, art liberated me and gave me life. Currently, as a 26-year-old, I am on a journey to find that again. To find the childhood version of me that loved art in its purest form.

## *Name someone that you love and describe them.*

I love my mom. Her name is Yumi. I have her eyebrows, mouth shape, and smile. She's a little unhinged like me. Her strength is my inspiration and I am so proud to be her daughter. When the world breaks me apart, she is the one that builds me up again, piece by piece. Because she knows how it feels to be broken into many pieces and she had to pick those pieces up by herself. I was unfortunately separated from my mother when I was a young child by a family member through force and deceit. That moment has done damage to my life beyond forgiveness. I lost 20 years without a mother that loved me so much. But Yumi is someone that has never let go of her faith in finding me again. She is my unconditional love.

## *What does love look like?*

Love looked like a lot of things. Love was unforgiving, blind, painful, and manipulative. But I was looking at love from a broken lens. When you were given abuse disguised as love your whole life, it's very hard to understand and accept true love. I sought out the love that felt

# DAISY LEE





familiar which resulted in me being in abusive relationships. Too often I believed that enduring cruelty, being forgiving, and making myself the burning match for others was a sign of my commitment and love. Love and abuse cannot coexist. Through it all, I realized that the most loving way to respond to abuse was to put myself out of harm's way. I needed to love myself in order to receive the love that I deserved. The love that's consistent, kind, safe, honest, and hopeful in times of despair.

*What's one thing you've learned about love in the last year?*

**Love is all around us.**

I grew up thinking that romantic love was the ultimate goal to be happy. All my life, I wanted my prince charming to rescue and redeem me. And because of that, love became something I had to compromise, beg, and settle for. We often focus on the lack of love we experience from the search for what's missing while being oblivious to the love we receive from those that are around us.

*What do you love about yourself?*

I love that I'm extremely emotional, empathetic, awkward, and open. I consider myself a passion project always unfinished, picking up pieces along the way to add to myself. It is a testament that my life isn't over and there are so many possibilities for me waiting at the other end. The people that love me are also a big part of why I am so special. I know I am a lovable person because of the people that love me.



## Summer Love(rs)

Cozy adorations sipping lavish accolades,  
summer lovers breeze blissfully playing.  
Luscious licks gather giggles alongside alliterative aromas.  
A citrus cuddling cherry.  
Outlining your skin, memorizing edges, curves and bumps  
scattered pecks on the right side beneath the ear, breathing “You’re so pretty.”

Curious dusk approaching swiftly, twinkly globes encapsulate the lake  
our palms homely.  
Driving on the two, decorating your kitchen  
merging hues of blue and red, a cascade of sugar, your treasured palate.  
Browsing channels, a collection of gaming, crafts and film  
two nerds beginning a quest for companionship.  
An envelope of blankets welcoming our trans bodies,  
sweet and safe as you kiss me “Goodnight.”

Jackets and beanies mingle on sidewalks while warm breaths escape.  
A weekend debut introducing strangers to one another.  
Friends anticipating, revealing their impression of you in silver boxes.  
White glistening summits beyond your aspiring serene neighborhood.  
Guiding me beneath the bridge, concrete rumbling, you mumbling,  
how happy you are here.  
Another round of bouquets arriving at your doorstep.  
Conversations for clarity and comfort, commenting “I really care about you.”

Saturated trees greet introducing droplets of ember  
while darlings revel in gorgeous glimpses and nurturing nudges.  
Our quiet blossoming.  
Desiring slow dawns dreaming of where we could go.  
More melting into you.

# GENTLE BELOVEDS

MELISSA FERNANDEZ

## ¿Y Tus Amiges?

¿Y el novio?

Two flustering options

You've conjured an individual  
embracing the selfie from your photo album.

Inky curls atop weathered orbs that  
cast considerate trails to charming caricias.

You spark a possibility gaining access to chisme.  
A transforming thick cement, its tightening layers grant you acceptance.

The sand-like texture  
itching.

Scratching your sternum as burden builds,  
polishing where fingertips quietly trace.

Harsh cat-tongues that begin to tickle,  
giggling

Speckled light pockets shovel curiosity  
to your urge. An impulse to be asked

¿Y tus amiges?

A talented recital

You make a safe outline of their values.  
Generous

cuddles soften somber  
vibrations. Honesty and respect in playful

decisions. Compassionate acts briskly  
spreading trust. Our

holding palms  
leveling the ground stable.

Their presence  
exhaling kindness.

## You Ask if I'm in Love

I don't like that question / Usually, you ask it once I start dating / someone but I'd  
like to think / I've been in love / since I was born /

My mother raised me with love. Tios and tias, family friends and neighbors came  
over to sing Spanish lullabies while feeding me. Disney-themed pool parties with  
bounce houses and towering piñatas. Tight hugs from my dad when I was feeling  
gloomy or joyous. Abuelos that taught me my appreciation for cooking and history.  
Playing cumbias until midnight with my cousins and connecting our DS to chat  
from three feet away once the sun rises. Coming out to my sister and then her  
coming out to me in college. Both of us responded, "That's cool."

My friends taught me what it means to love. Homemade soup hand delivered  
to my doorstep when I got sick. Five-minute-long voice notes about our family  
emergencies and candid photos of our old dogs. Holding hands watching  
Alien. Driving through Mulholland Drive, blasting music and high on an edible.  
Airdropping selfies and videos of our Friday nights in the Arts District. Dinner  
parties to dress up and bake delicious food. Lending books that made us sob and  
sharing playlists to twerk to. Disclosing my situationships and being disappointed  
at the result. Midnight beach bonfires roasting marshmallows to catch up on our  
holiday travel. Analyzing our childhoods confined by Catholicism. Storing your  
dishware for a year, forgetting to bring it back. Clubbing in Berlin while connecting  
with the community.

You ask / if I'm in love / darling I am / love /

# RUTHY KIM



## *What do you love about art?*

I love how art lets me be my own biggest fan- I love the moment you feel so proud of what you just made and at the moment you are in love with your own art.

I love how art challenges me to be my unique self and to find my own voice and style. When I try to mimic other artists' styles or voices, you can tell. It's simply not as good. It feels awkward. But when I look deeper within myself and let my imagination take wings and fly, I feel limitless. And I know I'm being myself.

I love it when I love my own art and it's exciting to see where it's going...

I love it when I'm drawing and I feel good about it from the start and the closer I get to the completion the happier I feel. I love it when I just can't let go of my pen because I get so excited about finishing it. I also love it when I struggle with my work and then I suddenly make a breakthrough and make it work! I love that feeling when I "rescue" a sketch or an idea from ending up in the trash. I love the exhilarating feeling when you love what you made so much you just want to keep staring at it, from different angles and distances.

I just love it when I know what I made looks GOOD, and it's not even about what other people say about it because you are already so much in love with it (even though a few hours or days later you might wonder why you liked the piece so much anyway).

I love that I can just keep creating... even if someone stole all my old art I would be able to just start again and keep making new art. I get excited about the art I haven't made yet.

I also love that for art, you don't have to try to explain yourself too hard. You can see it. You know what type of a person I am when you look at my art. You know what internal world I'm living in. You know there's heaven in me.

## *Name someone that you love and describe them.*

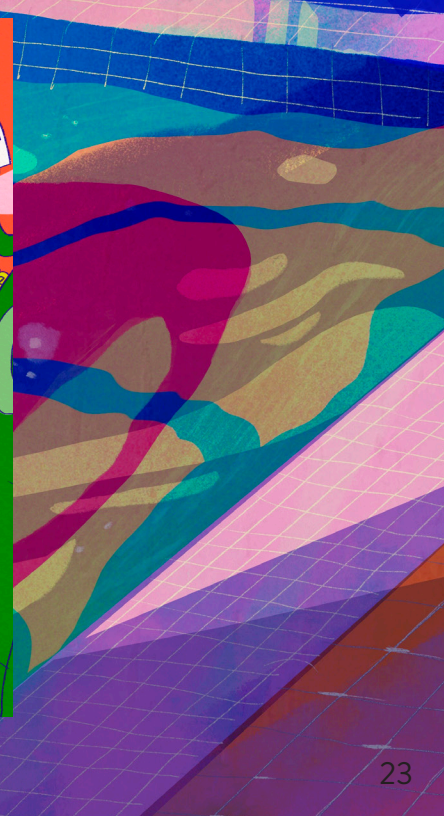
There's a man I really love.

And he loves me so much more than I can imagine. I love him because he loved me first. He literally means the world to me. He is the meaning and purpose of my life. Because I know he loves me, every day is precious but I'd die happy even if today was my last day. He's the reason why I breathe and make art and live life. Even if I lose everyone I love and everything I possess, I would still have hope in life because of him. If I lost everything and had him, I wouldn't be lacking a thing. But if I gained the whole world and lost him, I would be losing everything. I betrayed him tens of thousands of times, and he still loves me, and He has completely won my heart.

I love Jesus. He means everything to me.

Since I was little, I felt like He listened to all my prayers and answered them. I would go to church early in the morning with my mom, and sitting in the sanctuary, I knew he was alive. Even for the smallest things, I would pray, and watch God answer- one time I didn't do my homework so I prayed and the teacher missed the class that day.

Later I prayed bigger prayers... God, if you are calling me to art, and if you are indeed calling me to ArtCenter, then pay for my entire tuition. And he did. My tuition was completely paid for without my





parents paying for it, without me working. Not all at once. Each term, when tuition was due, just in time, God paid for it. And it's not just the tuition. In every aspect of my life, I saw God working. When my mom was diagnosed with cancer in the middle of my busiest term, my family and I experienced so much peace that it didn't make sense. And it's really not about what He can do for me. And it's not about what I can do for him. He has already given me and done everything for me, and there's not a thing in the world I can do or not do to lose his love.

I'm just enjoying his love for me every day, and I'm completely in love with him. He's just so good to me. Every day is a fresh new gift from him, and I know I'm fully loved, fully known, fully understood, and acknowledged by Him.

## What does love look like?

Love looks like 1.13 Corinthians in the bible where it says, "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends."

I love the last sentence so much-

**“Love bears all things,  
believes all things, hopes all  
things, endures all things.  
Love never ends.”**

This love blows me away. It sounds almost foolish to love, but I believe love isn't about being smart. I don't think I have ever loved someone else with this kind of love. But I really want to. I have been loved by this love, but I'm still learning to love like this.

## What's one thing you've learned about love in the last year?

I have been dating my boyfriend for the past 5 years now, and my relationship with him taught me so much about what it's like to love someone else. Even though it has been a while since we started dating, we still face many challenges and conflicts in our relationship. Right before Christmas last year, we decided to break up. At that point, I was losing hope in our relationship.

But in reality, I was just losing the sense of control I had over him.

While reflecting back on our relationship, it hit me that I wasn't really loving him, but rather I was loving myself. I loved what he could do for me. I loved the sense of stability and security he offered me. I loved the future he and I could build together. I loved the love he gave me. I loved the power I had over him. I loved how he made me feel beautiful and worthy. Even his appearance and personality that I adored - It was all for my satisfaction and pride. In other words, I realized I was being extremely selfish in our relationship. I was making it all about me! Then I learned... that love is to see the person, and to lay down my selfishness and desires and control and to accept that person and embrace the person as they are... not with the purpose of changing the person for my own liking, but to just embrace them and to believe the best in them and to have faith. I learned that it's not about trying to manipulate the person so you can get what you want out of them.

When I decided not to make it all about me, everything changed. I wondered about what I can do to love him. How could I help him? How could I encourage him? What does he need in life right now?



It enabled me to give him space and support his journey in life with all my heart. I'm still figuring this out (and probably for the rest of my life), but I'm glad I learned this before it's too late. So I drove to his place and apologized, and asked him to give me one more chance. Ever since, our relationship never felt more solid, more amazing.

## *What do you love about yourself?*

There are a lot of things I love about myself, but something I especially adore is that I'm somebody who shows up. I'm good at showing up. I show up, and that's the bare minimum, and it doesn't matter what I do after I show up. I may not perform well, and I may not be the best. I may still struggle and feel lazy and all that. But to me, the important thing is to show up and face it, whether I feel prepared or not.

I don't run away from my problems and fears, but I face them. And when I do, I make breakthroughs.

A time in my life when I really had to do that is when I felt called to go to Japan for one year for missions while I was studying at UCSD. I felt a bit traumatized from when I immigrated from Korea to the U.S. when I was 11 and to move again from everything I love and transition again to a new culture and language was the last thing in the world I wanted to do. I was terrified.

Another thing was that I was to live with American teammates in a shared house for a year. Back then I almost exclusively hung out with Asian American friends, and I still felt incredibly shy and insecure about my Korean background. I also had to fundraise \$55,000 in three months, when my schedule was already jam-packed. I was afraid. But I found my strength in God, and I faced it. I raised \$55,000 in two months. I ended up thriving in Japan. It was the happiest year of my life. My teammates and I became a family. They encouraged me to pursue art again, and I started drawing again in Japan after giving up on it for years. I learned to love my identity as a Korean American (Japanese people love both Korean and American cultures and I

had the best of both worlds!). I became fearless in speaking up and spending time with non-Asians. I became extremely confident in my cultural identity.

The same applied to my ArtCenter experience. Oh, I was beyond terrified. I felt older than other kids, while feeling extremely unqualified. Everything was so new and difficult but again, I just showed up. I never missed a class at ArtCenter. I never dropped a class, because when I kept showing up, I somehow made it work. And I ended up thriving in the school. I kept taking classes I was really uncomfortable with because I knew no matter how challenging it seemed I'll be okay.

So I know whatever the situation and season of life may be, I'll be just fine because I know I'll face whatever I have to face and move on and grow from it.

# YOURS TRULY,

IBBY DAY

Ibby!

Happy Valentine's Day ♥ I just want you to know that I admire your naive love for people. Although it makes you foolish in the face of unkindness, stay true to who you are.

*Your heart is tender.*

I know how hard things have been lately, and I know how much that has triggered your insecurities, but please trust the process of growth. There's no need to reinvent yourself, you will never be anyone but the person you've always been- the person with the soft heart. And deep down, I know that's what you want for yourself. Accept your softness as a strength. Reality has a way of poisoning the heart, but compassion is what stops it from infiltrating yours.

*Rooting for you always,  
Ibby*



