



BSU Innocence Project
p.3



Imposter Syndrome
p.5



Movie Review: 'Cocaine Bear'
p.7

Weekly Weather

Monday 50/31 
 Tuesday 50/31
 Wednesday 49/33
 Thursday 50/36
 Friday 48/39
 Saturday 52/39
 Sunday 51/39

Upcoming Events

March 3 - 26
 Rock of Ages at Tacoma Little UWT23 for discount Tacoma Little Theatre

March 10
 IIGE Study Abroad Awards Application Deadline

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Immerse yourself in neon at She Bends: Redefining Neon Legacy

A new exhibit people can now see at the Museum of Glass.

By DESTINY VALENCIA
 NEWS EDITOR

Come and visit She Bends: Redefining Neon Legacy, an exhibit at Museum of Glass that explores how neon is an emerging artform by female artists.

This exhibit features vibrant and interactive elements of the neon works that explore a variety of topics in relation to the artists and their backgrounds such as climate change, resistance and perseverance, commercialism, as well as setting personal boundaries for oneself.

She Bends, founded by artist Meryl Pataky, started off as a survey exhibition in 2017 at the Museum of Neon Art. Pataky felt a need to create the organization as a means of support for female artists after seeing a similar showcase appear in the UK.

"A majority of the roster (at the UK show) were people who didn't bend the glass themselves, and I was like, man there are so many amazing artists who are experimenting with this medium with their own two hands. They are the women in neon, and we really should be highlighting them," Pataky said.

What soon followed created a community of glass benders that has led to demonstrations for people



MERYL PATAKY (AMERICAN, BORN 1983) WITH TEXTILE COLLABORATION BY ALLIE FELTON. A MODERN GUILT (INSTALLATION VIEW), 2020. NEON AND MIXED MEDIA; DIMENSIONS VARIABLE. COURTESY OF ARTIST. PHOTO BY DEB LEAL.

interested in working with neon, along with other exhibitions and shows. The "Womxn in Neon" was an exhibition at The Loveland Museum in Colorado that caught the attention of Tacoma's own Museum of Glass.

"We were intrigued by the concept and were interested in exhibiting neon a little more extensively than maybe we have in the past. Museum of Glass always seeks opportunities to represent our entire community through the stories told in our galleries. The more we in the glass community have experiences with adjacent art forms like neon, the more we can present an

immersive and compelling narrative to our visitors," said Marketing and Communications Director for Museum of Glass, Tim Butler.

Pataky and her co-founder of She Bends, Kelsey Issel, after being contacted by Museum of Glass, began an 8-to-9-month long process that allowed Issel and Pataky to custom curate the presentations and the artwork that would be showcased. This allowed more freedom for art installations to be hidden behind walls, platformed or interactive for the visitors.

Pataky has a couple pieces in the exhibit. One that may stand out to visitors is "A Modern Guilt," a yellow and orange-hued room that features two plastic lawn chairs covered in pictures, plastic and flowers. Behind the chairs is a wall covered in flowers with a brilliant neon sign that gives the room its color. The message on the sign reads "REPENT."

"It's a very domestic scene with this jarring message. Most people are accosted by it because how it is rooted in Christianity... but really what the word repent stems from is just an existential change, just making a change for yourself," Pataky said.

The piece is a collaboration with Allie Felton, a textile artist who helped make the pillows, lawn chairs and planters

all out of recycled materials. The piece itself is about the climate crisis, but also explores motherhood and the anxieties that come with raising a child in an ever-changing world. Additionally, trying to be responsible and sustainable under these pressures.

This art piece was created at an interesting time for Pataky, who had started making it back in 2020 and was designed for a solo exhibition in April of that year. Due to the pandemic, this exhibit was postponed until the fall of 2020. When Pataky was finally able to install the piece, the meaning of it became ever clearer.

"The fall of 2020, we had an enormous amount of wildfires; the sky turned orange. We had an entire day where we did not see the sun, the whole sky and everything was dark all day long... It was the day that I installed that work at the gallery was the day that happened, and it was the exact same color (as A Modern Guilt)," Pataky said.



JUDE ABU ZAINEH (PALESTINIAN-CANADIAN, BORN 1990). TEND TO GROW (WATERMELONS), DETAIL, 2022. VARYING GLASS TUBES AND GASES, ELECTRODES; DIMENSIONS VARIABLE. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST.

Article Continued
 on PAGE 2 ►

Article Continued from COVER

Pataky has other featured works such as “Ru’ach” which is now a part of Museum of Glass’ permanent collection and visitors will see it moved throughout the museum once the exhibit closes.

Another artist featured at the exhibition is Canadian-Palestinian artist Jude Abu Zaineh, whose piece “tend to grow (watermelons)” has been featured at the Institute of Contemporary Art in San Francisco. One can spot the piece immediately as it has been featured in highlights and advertises for the exhibition.

The installation features a wall of neon watermelons, some in different shades and colors, but all share the same meaning of representing the colors of the Palestinian flag, which is illegal in occupied lands of Palestine. Watermelons are a staple fruit for

Palestinians and the fruit symbolizes resistance and perseverance, as Zaineh has shared in artist statements.

“This piece, ‘tend to grow’ is an important marker for human rights and basic human justice... I think this piece is a testament to these unjust power dynamics that exist. Thinking about dismantling oppressive, colonial, white supremacist powers,” Zaineh said.

While this piece is a reflection on Zaineh’s own experience as a Palestinian, she believes that many different groups can relate to “tend to grow (watermelons)” through the lens of those who are denied basic human rights whether it be through race, gender inequalities, or other marginalized communities.

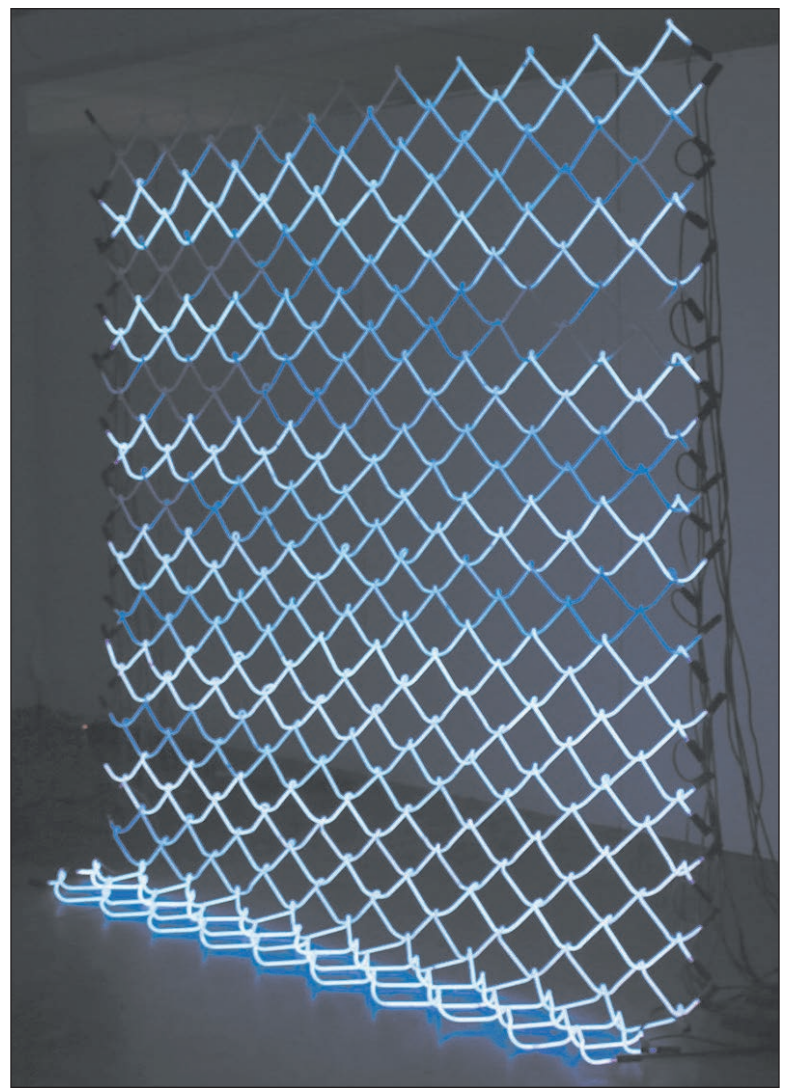
Pataky hopes that people who view the exhibit will not only see the messages that her fellow artists are showcasing but can also appreciate neon as a fine art, refreshing its history of pri-

marily functioning as signage for commercial businesses. Pataky wants people to see the artists behind the bright neon.

“More than anything, people don’t understand what goes into this at all. Hardly anybody has seen a neon sign be made. Nobody knows what we go through or what we spend. We cut, we bleed, we burn,” Pataky said.

She Bends: Redefining Neon Legacy is on view now at Museum of Glass until October, 2023.

You can find more about She Bends at <https://www.shebends.com/> or follow them on Instagram @Shebendsneon







CARISSA GRACE (AMERICAN, BORN 1997). COMFORTER, 2019. ARGON, GLASS TUBING, AND TRANSFORMERS. 108 X 96 X 24 INCHES. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST.

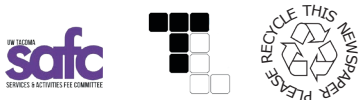


PHOTO BY NICKOLUS PATRASZEWSKI

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INNOCENCE PROJECT



PHOTO BY FUNRAISE

The Innocence Project is a national nonprofit organization working for criminal justice and legal policy reform, exoneration of wrongfully incarcerated individuals, and community education to combat racism.

UWT Black Student Union hosts fundraiser to benefit the Innocence Project

New opportunities for UWT students to volunteer their time and talents for systemic and criminal justice reform.

By **KATIE SCOTT**
NEWS REPORTER

The UWT Black Student Union (BSU) is fundraising to support the Innocence Project. Founded in 1992 by Barry C. Scheck and Peter J. Neufeld, the Innocence Project began as a program of the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law at Yeshiva University until it became a non-profit after obtaining 501(c)3 status in 2004.

“BSU is partnering with the Innocence Project because we believe they are making a difference in society and will continue to do so with our support. We want to see the legal system stop making grave errors that put wrongfully incarcerated people behind bars,” said Jasmine Davis, the UWT Black Student Union President.

The Washington Innocence Project, established in 1997 by Professor Jacqueline McMurtree, is Washington state’s chapter of the non-profit and was the second Innocence Project chapter to open in the United States. Now an independent

national nonprofit, the organization describes their services as being “guided by science and grounded in anti-racism.”

The Innocence Project provides legal representation to exonerate innocent individuals who have been wrongly convicted and incarcerated. They also work to achieve criminal justice and legal policy reform, pursued by the organization’s strategic litigation and policy departments.

The Innocence Project provides social services to individuals who have been exonerated, in an effort to help them rebuild their lives upon release. The organization’s science and research department spearheads research and community education to cultivate informed understanding of systemic racism and how it disproportionately impacts marginalized communities, specifically within the criminal justice system.

On the Innocence Project’s website, the organization lists some of the most common causes of wrongful conviction, which include eyewitness

misidentification, unvalidated or improper forensic science, false confessions/admissions, government misconduct, informants/snitches and poor legal representation.

Davis explains that the BSU’s Innocence Project fundraiser runs consistently throughout the school year, raising funds at multiple events in an effort to donate to the non-profit organization. Some of the 2023 fundraising events include the MLK Unity Breakfast held in January and the Black Promenade, which took place February 25.

“In support of the Innocence Project and its efforts, the BSU will also donate a portion of club fundraisings to the organization. Other ways for students to get involved include helping spread the word and by volunteering or attending other events that (the BSU holds) in dedication to the Innocence Project,” said CJ James, UWT Black Student Union Vice President.

The BSU plans to grow their fundraising efforts to extend

throughout the current school year, as well as into the 2023-2024 school year. The RSO is in the process of creating new ways for UWT students, staff and faculty to participate in the Innocence Project fundraiser. Soon, the BSU will offer opportunities for UWT students to provide input and ideas that contribute to fundraising and community building projects, specifically to benefit the Innocence Project fundraiser.

“This year we want to provide more avenues students can take to be able to support the Innocence Project in a greater way. We have some ideas for spring quarter, and we also want to hear our members’ ideas for more ways we can go about supporting them. This would provide (students) an opportunity to be more involved in the community and it provides a space for them to support a greater cause,” Davis said.

If you would like to donate to the BSU’s Innocence Project fundraiser, you can find the BSU on CashApp at \$uwtacomabsu and on Venmo at @uwtb-

su. Venmo donors can email the UWT BSU for a four-digit code to donate.

BSU general meetings are slated to resume Spring Quarter 2023. General meetings are used as a centralized way to focus club fundraising efforts, deliver information for upcoming projects and events and create community around the BSU’s mission to “offer a sense of community and unity for Black students on campus by providing an open and positive forum for students to express their views.”

If you are interested in joining the BSU’s fundraising efforts or would like to learn more about the RSO, visit one of their many social media pages, found in their Linktree at

linktr.ee/uwtbsu

or send an email to

uwtbsu@uw.edu

Massive Tacoma rabbit rescue

246 rabbits found in Puyallup property after animal cruelty investigation leads to seizure.



Rescued rabbit at Humane Society of Tacoma & Pierce County

PHOTO BY HUMANE SOCIETY OF TACOMA & PIERCE COUNTY FACEBOOK PAGE



Rescued rabbit at Humane Society of Tacoma & Pierce County

PHOTO BY HUMANE SOCIETY OF TACOMA & PIERCE COUNTY FACEBOOK PAGE

By HEIDI ORTIZ CANDELARIA
OPINION COLUMNIST

On Feb. 16 this past month, the rescuers of The Humane Society for Tacoma & Pierce County were called on-site to a property in Puyallup. There, they were met with a most heartbreaking scene. Officers guided rescuers to what was found to be a storage unit for hundreds of rabbits. Crates were stacked upon crates in every corner of an outside shed, with minimal sunlight and oxygen flow. They found a similar arrangement inside the owner's house. Rescuers were shocked to find that the total number of rabbits added up to a whopping 246, ranging from newborns and juveniles to adults.

Despite previous calls made by neighbors regarding animal abuse, Pierce County Animal Control decided to give the owner time to decide whether or not to surrender them. According to Pierce County Animal Control, the owner was combative and refused to cooperate. After a few months, officers decided to raid her property alongside the Humane Society to evaluate the extent of the abuse. Nothing could have prepared them to find that she had hundreds of animals hidden inside her home.

The rescue mission began around 9:00 a.m. and ended at around 1:00 a.m. the next day. Veterinarians and volunteers were called onto the scene, deeming this ordeal a true emergency. Once briefed, they began to work. Each rabbit was taken from their crate, microchipped, transferred to a clean, temporary containment unit, vaccinated, given food and examined for any illnesses. All rabbits suffered respiratory infections, most likely because of the poor ventilation and unsanitary conditions they were forced to reside in. The volunteers found over half of them to suffer from head

tilts and poor muscle control due to the cramped cages. Unfortunately, four kits were found deceased inside their cages.

Rabbits are extremely sociable yet delicate creatures. They love to free-roam, explore and catch a bit of fresh air at least once a day. Despite misconceptions, rabbits are not rodents. They are extremely intelligent and are often easier to train than dogs or cats, and can be trained to use a litter box (with hay or pellets). They also groom themselves, similar to cats, which makes them highly sanitary pets. They experience joy, happiness, love, and yes, they also get the zoomies.

This is all to say that rabbits are often overlooked to be dirty and simple. Most people think that keeping them in a cage 24/7 is how it's supposed to be. Just like any other free-roaming pet, they will get depressed and become ill if they are forced to be in a locked space for too long. That and their life expectancy will be greatly decreased. The fact that 246 of these wonderful creatures were subjected to this torment is extremely upsetting. These animals will need all the support, care, and love possible to become healthy again.

The Humane Society for Tacoma & Pierce County is asking for your help. 246 fluffy rabbits are looking for new homes and foster parents. Help give one of these animals a warm, loving home. They just might become your new best friend. Not able to adopt at this moment? That's alright! Leave a donation through the Humane Society website instead and help these amazing rescuers be able to cover the costs to keep these rabbits happy and healthy. You can also donate supplies by buying directly from their Amazon wish list. Even the smallest donation can make the biggest difference. Both links are available below.

<http://thehumanesociety.org/200-rabbits/>

https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/lz/3HZIBO-5N9WXGH?ref_=wl_share

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NARCAN: a life-saving medication coming to a library near you

Public NARCAN vending machines are a big step in de-stigmatizing opioid addictions.

By RUTH OGDEN
OPINION WRITER

The Tacoma Public Library system is working with the Tacoma Needle Exchange and the Dave Purchase Project to install a NARCAN vending machine in the Tacoma Moore Library.

NARCAN is the brand name for naloxone, a medication designed to reverse the effects of an overdose from an opioid (such as heroin, fentanyl, Vicodin, codeine or oxycodone). NARCAN is administered as a nasal spray to an opioid-affected person. NARCAN has no recreational usage and has no effect on anyone without an opioid in their system. In the case of an overdose, you should always call 911: NARCAN is designed to stabilize a person before help arrives and is not a substitution for emergency medical services or opioid addiction treatment.

The public library system has a long history of providing life-saving social services to those in need. Tacoma Public Library workers have been trained in recognizing the signs of an overdose and the usage of NARCAN since 2018. Tacoma Public Library providing a public source of NARCAN is the

next step in preventing unnecessary tragedy. Since the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically increased opioid dependency and overdose rates in Tacoma, this type of intervention is especially needed.

Drug usage is moralized - the debate surrounding addiction is centered around whether addiction is the result of poor self-control or a brain disease at which the drug user is at the mercy of an irresistible compulsion. It also matters whether you perceive this as an isolated, individual problem or a systemic issue. How one perceives addiction impacts the way the issue is addressed. If you assume that someone experiencing addiction is merely weak-willed, you are more likely to take a 'tough love' approach that puts the duty to recover solely upon the individual. In contrast, if you perceive addiction as a systemic issue due to a lack of social safety nets, you are more likely to support public harm reduction and recovery services as well as approach individuals struggling with addiction with empathy and patience.

I feel strongly that we must eliminate the moral aspect of treating addiction. Someone is

not intrinsically flawed or a bad person for experiencing addiction. Addiction is a health issue, not a moral failing, and we need to implement support services that treat it as such. We also need to prioritize harm reduction instead of demanding sobriety - for many people, getting clean may seem out of reach. Providing harm reduction tools and strategies like clean needles and NARCAN mean that people can make it through another day. You can only recover from opioid addiction if you survive it.

I love the new NARCAN vending machine at the Moore Library because it is a step towards normalizing harm reduction and breaking the taboo surrounding discussions of opioid addictions. It's a way to bring recovery and harm reduction into the public's grasp. If it is something that can be talked about, it is not something to feel ashamed of. Breaking free of shame makes it easier to seek out treatment and recovery services.

If you or someone you know is struggling with an addiction, remember that harm reduction and recovery are always possible. You are not alone.



Harm reduction saves lives.

COLLAGE BY RUTH OGDEN

Imposter Syndrome: lies about self-image

With graduation on the horizon, you are ready to take on the world, even if you don't think you are.



Imposter syndrome is a common mentality that adults suffer with.

PHOTO BY STEVIE ESTEBAN

By CELIA WILLIAMS
OPINION EDITOR

With graduation coming up this next quarter for seniors, I'm sure many are feeling what is called "imposter syndrome." You might feel as if you are a fraud and aren't actually proficient in your field or you might think that you are undeserving of the praise and awards you have been given. Personally, I have also been struggling with imposter syndrome and the many symptoms. It is exhausting to say the least. Of course you can tell yourself it isn't true, but believing and truly feeling that is another story entirely.

The idea of imposter syndrome was first introduced in 1978 after being published in a psychology article. Since then, research published in Psychology Today has shown that nearly 30 percent of people feel undeserving of their awards and/or position. A recorded 70 percent of adults would feel this in some form at some point in their life. So what do we do about it?

First, I think it is important to recognize that this is a mentality. It is a mindset that you have put yourself in after being told that you are not good enough

or being repeatedly criticized. Cognitive behavioral therapy has taught me that our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are all heavily connected to one another. With that being said, when we think that we are undeserving of our success, we impact other parts of our lives without knowing it.

Cognitive behavioral therapy has additionally taught me that since these aspects of our lives are all heavily connected, by changing one we can change the others. I have used this mantra every morning to help with my mindset and thus changing every other aspect.

"I am deserving of where I am. I am worthy of my success. I am incredible."

While it might seem a bit self-centered, sometimes that is what is necessary to be our best self. The idea is to change your thoughts and then by default, change your emotions and behavior. Taking care of and being patient with ourselves is something that can change your whole perspective. Sometimes, loving yourself is all that you need to get through the hard times. After all, we are our own worst critic.

Talent in art counts for a lot less than you think

While natural ability has shown quick success, I'm here to tell you how building your skill can make it through the long haul.

By **COLE MARTIN**
A&E COLUMNIST

As someone who has recently gotten into artistic hobbies, the idea of talent being the driving force of success has been something that I battled with personally. I didn't grow up drawing, writing stories or making music. Trying to learn new skills while feeling talentless has been a harmful mental roadblock to my own creativity.

I often pointed towards this perceived lack of talent when running into artistic ruts. Whether it was scoring low grades in art classes, running into a wall when it comes to practicing or losing motivation flat out, there was a long period of time where I didn't believe I could be a good artist.

However, I didn't allow this to crush my passion and other artists shouldn't either. A person's talents may be a head start in the field, but the burden that I attributed to a lack of talent is far smaller than what I thought. Instead, we should be focusing our efforts and attention towards skill.

While talent accounts for where you start, skill is what pushes you to continue growing and improving at your craft, as you can continue to develop it with the right kind of practice.

According to a paper on music education, musicians Devin Ulibarri and Robert Flax explain "Extensive, deliberate, and deep practice supported by an ability growth mindset—and not a fixed degree of talent—is the primary predictor of future expertise."

It's clear that with a lot of



A collage by Cole Martin

PHOTO BY COLE MARTIN

time and consistent effort, you can really start to hone your skills. I asked a wide group of artists online for some advice to gain some insight on how to improve your artistic abilities.

"I think the best way is just to keep doing whatever you want to be skilled at over and over again every day for small hours, then make markers of progress... then look back at that progress to see how far you've come... you'll be able to see the difference, encouraging you to improve and showing how far you've come" said digital artist @TaffyCat36.

"The easiest way to build up

skill is to do studies, studying whatever you want to get better at. And in the same way, having a habit to study constantly will help a lot. Watching other people draw can help as well, taking a look into how other people draw, paint, pixel, can help," said pixel artist @ash_mallard.

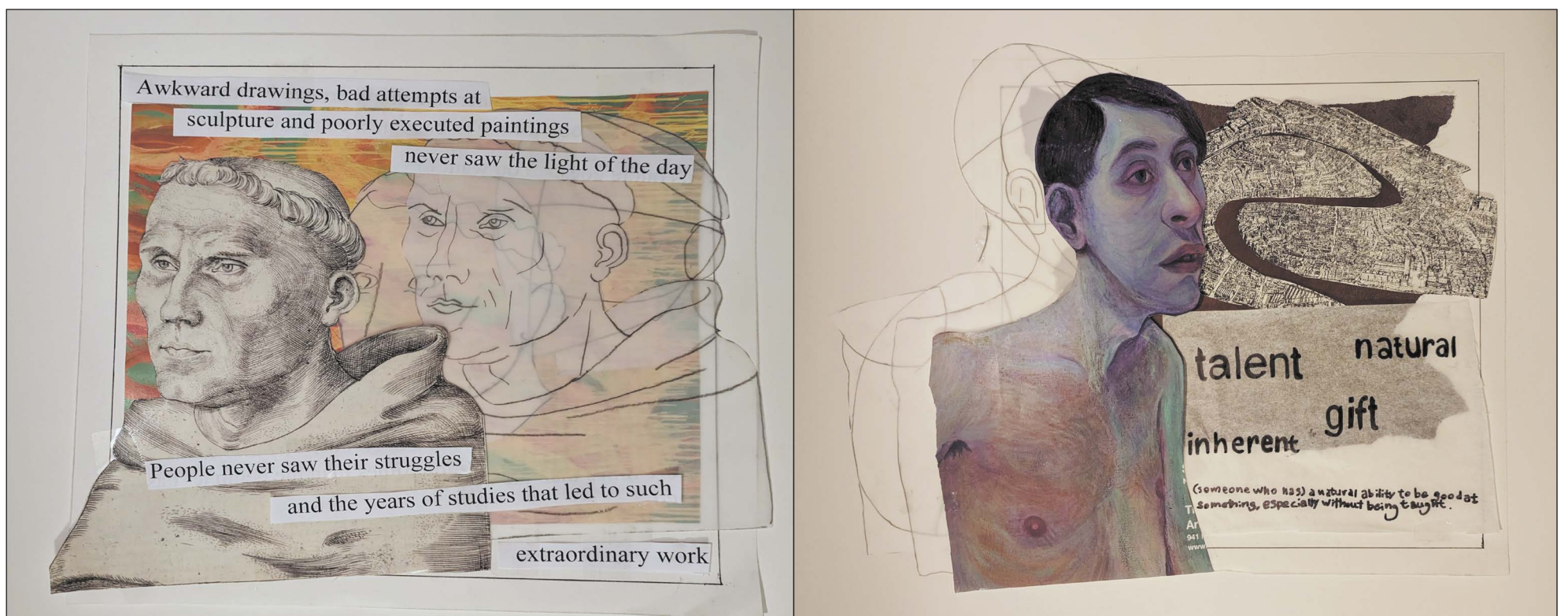
"I think in the long run skill is more important [than talent] for art, because while talent can lead to some really impressive work right out the gate, it takes practice and slow improvement to truly fully understand what you're making and how to adjust/continue making at the same quali-

ty... The most important traits an artist needs to improve effectively are being in the right headspace to not get thrown down by burnouts and critique, being motivated to seek information and resources for themselves, and ABOVE ALL being willing and ambitious to experiment with challenges," said digital artist @teeth_collect.

"Do the thing a lot, but do it properly. Learning the wrong stuff can mess you up. It helps to have an experienced friend, teacher or mentor as well. Both to teach you stuff and motivate you when things get tough," said digital artist @lemoncholicarts.

The key to being skilled and successful at something is not just talent but practice, consistency, a good mindset, and a good community. Free art resources are abundant, with a plethora of extensive tutorial videos on YouTube for whatever hobby you're interested in. There are also plenty of artists like the kind folks above who would be ecstatic to help guide you on your art journey.

If you're someone who has doubted themselves in their artistic ability, I encourage you to try to take another stab at it with these things in mind!



Original art by Cole Martin.

PHOTO BY COLE MARTIN

The highly-anticipated 'Die 4 Me' By Halsey has been released

The song includes references to her past relationship and new verses that are chilling and melodic.

By **KIARRA BLAKELY-RUSSELL**
A&E EDITOR

By popular demand, Halsey released a solo, re-recorded and remastered demo of Post Malone's "Die for Me" on Feb 24. The dark and twisted song allows Halsey to give her perspective on her unfaithful lover—a very high-profile relationship in 2018 with rapper G-Eazy.

Days leading up to the release, Halsey teased a snippet of the song on Instagram with a caption saying:

"It's been long known in my fanbase that there's a demo of 'Die for Me' with just me on it. I performed my verse on the tour all summer long and since so many people have asked for it, I decided to put my full version out as 'Die 4 Me'."

She also gave thanks to the original artists who took part in the song as well.

Through the years, the versions of the song are able to clearly give a before and after feeling in her tone, a cathartic response as one could say. In the original release, we hear angst and aggression. In the new release, we have a healed and haunting version of the song's full story.

Halsey begins with an echoing spoken vocal: she repeats "I always said that you lied/ but you lie, I said that you lied/ you lied." Her mumbling vocal is accompanied by a beautiful electric guitar that shows the essence of Benny

Blanco's production; '90s indie vibes. The beat then drops into a gritty repetitive angst and 808 triple-beat.

The chorus begins as Halsey sings "said you'd take a bullet, told me you would die for me/I had a really bad feeling; you've been lying to me/ We were on the low, but you were getting high with me. / Learned a lesson when you showed a different side, I see." Repeating "Said you'd die for me, die for me, die for me/ but you lied to me," multiple times, almost as a way to taunt the ex-lover.

The first verse has a sharper taste to it as she has a more pessimistic voice towards her lover; hoping he's thinking of her when he gets intimate with his next girl. However, she then begins speaking in metaphors. As with this line, we as listeners come to the realization of the realignment of the song.

"Devil's front door and I'm banging on the line/ If I said I want an answer, I'd be lyin', I'd be lying yea," she sings.

The chorus switches, becoming more calming with the original singled-out electric guitar and subtle hints of the beat returning throughout. Halsey's vocals, though delicate, managed to show some flow and build into a slight run. The second verse uses Halsey's original "Die 4 Me" lyrics. The new version sounded a bit more haunting to say the least, in contrast to her normal shouting, angry and menacing tone.

"Settle down, I'll spell it out,

it's simple enough/ I came around I figured out, I should follow my gut," sings Halsey, "I don't play anymore, I went through your phone and called the girls in your DMS and took all them home/ I know it's been a while since the last time you heard from me/ Grew into a savage, you can hear it in this verse honey."

Her most famous verse from the original song came from the line "I sold 15-million copies of a break-up note," which was immediately post-breakup. Now that Halsey has healed, we hear the current verse as she casually says "I sold 40-million copies of our

break-up note." Some fans have stated that this evolution is a power move.

Fans have also speculated that the bridge reads as a clear reply to a few of G-Eazy's songs—a clear "who's got the last laugh?" vibe as she shares that this is the last time he'll ever get an ounce of thought from her.

"This is the lesson to take, hold someone tight and they break/ Then you say it's a mistake, but you meant it anyway," she sings with small laughs, "Now you can blame me, tell them you made me/ Ignore the shit that you did on the daily/ Think that you played me but you can save me/ All of that

shit 'bout how I'm fuckin' crazy."

The final verse feels like an ending to the chapter; the soft and clear electric guitar returns with a slow beat fading in as she repeats "Die for me, but you lied to me."—with ad-libs until the abrupt cut-off. The listener and fans get to hear this long-awaited song with their favorite chaotic Halsey vibes and excellent production.

You can listen to "Die 4 Me" on streaming platforms such as Spotify, YouTube Music, Pandora, Apple Music and watch the visuals on YouTube.



Halsey "Die 4 Me" album art.

PHOTO BY HALSEY VIA TWITTER

'Cocaine Bear' snorts its way to a solid high

This cocaine-fueled ludicrous thriller is a sloppy crowd-pleaser and commits hard to its premise.

By **EMILIA BELL**
FILM CRITIC

"The bear, it f*cking did cocaine! A bear did cocaine!" a character cries in disbelief part-way through the film, which effectively sums up the entire thing.

The theater for the 9:35 pm showing of "Cocaine Bear" was packed nearly to capacity with abundant chatter. The boisterous Friday-night crowd was reveling in the over-the-top mayhem, caused by a murderous bear that is addicted to cocaine. Claps and cheers rose gleefully from the crowd as the title card for the film flashed across the screen over a freeze-frame of the titular character.

The beginning of the film sets the tone: an '80s tune blasts from the speakers as a man (high on cocaine) begins tossing red duffel bags out of an airplane. High out

of his mind, he leaps dramatically from the plane, but unfortunately does not make it safely to the ground. The cocaine, now littered across the Chattahoochee, Georgia national park, attracts a bear. After ingesting it, the bear brutally (and comedically) attacks a pair of foreign hikers.

Shortly after, Dee Dee (Brooklyn Prince), a 13-year-old living nearby, skips school with her friend Henry (Christian Convery), while her mother Sari (Keri Russell) is at work. They venture into the national park to paint a waterfall, but on the way, they happen upon some of the bags of cocaine. Unbeknownst to them, the bear has arrived to gobble up more of that sweet nose candy.

When Sari discovers her daughter is gone, she enlists the help of the reluctant ranger Liz, and Liz's dorky crush Peter (Jesse Tyler Ferguson), to find Dee Dee and Henry—a choice that will ul-

timately come back to bite them.

While this is occurring, Eddie (Alden Eirenreich) and Daveed (O'Shea Jackson Jr.) are sent by Eddie's father Syd (Ray Liotta), who the cocaine belonged to, to get his cocaine back. Along the way, they run into a group of dimwitted delinquent teens. Due to the illegal nature of the situation, a no-nonsense detective, Bob (Isaiah Whitlock Jr), also arrives in the forest with plans to catch Eddie and Daveed. All the while, the cocaine bear kills and wreaks havoc on the unsuspecting groups.

Only Tony Montana rivals the "Cocaine Bear" in violence and sheer amount of cocaine consumption; the bear is an unstoppable, high-out-of-its-mind, deranged creature that delights in tearing people limb from limb.

An explanation of how black bears aren't dangerous serves as a precursor to the film, before hi-

lariously revealing the source to be Wikipedia. This is accompanied by the phrase "based on true events," which is a loose statement used for comedy; a bear really did get into a large amount of cocaine that had been dumped in a forest in 1985, but it sadly died from an overdose rather than terrorizing a group of people.

The performances are purposefully over the top. Keri Russell acts as more of a straight man while everyone else is varying degrees of ridiculous. In response to witnessing a brutal murder at the paws of the bear, Henry (the young boy) remarks matter-of-factly,

"I'd love to not remember this. But it kind of seems like the thing that stays with a man forever."

His line delivery was spot-on for the feeling of the film—dark, silly, and exaggerated.

When I learned this was one of the late great Ray Liotta's last per-

formances, I feared it was going to be a bad movie that tarnished his legacy—but the film, while of course unserious, is not a terrible last film to have (but it is odd), and it appeared as though everyone had a good time making it. This is evident from ample social media posts by Scott Seiss (a comedian who plays a paramedic in the film) detailing the behind-the-scenes process.

The film is not worried about being realistic—its energy is put into the outrageous action sequences and enjoyable banter between the characters. A lot of the technical aspects—such as editing—are thrown to the wayside and the film is a bit slapdash in its construction. This isn't especially surprising given the film's subject, but it didn't impact the audience's enjoyment in the slightest. The look of the film is bright and sunny, which was actually a welcomed switch-up from other

Cocaine Bear, continued



PHOTO BY UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Keri Russell and Pablo Escobear in 'Cocaine Bear'

similar films of the genre— and the '80s setting was utilized well for humor and style.

It is abundantly gory and violent, and doesn't hold back with cartoonishly graphic images. Legs are thrown, blood is spurting, faces are eaten and heads and

hands are torn off; it got so grisly at some points that I found my stomach turning. However, the audience was experiencing pure

joy for the majority of the film, as the theater was often filled with uproarious laughter and amused curses as each character was disemboweled or beheaded.

Elizabeth Banks seemed an odd choice for director — her other directorial work includes "Pitch Perfect 2" and "Charlie's Angels" which seem a far cry from a horror comedy — but her sense of humor worked well with the silly concept.

The marketing of this film has proven to be quite successful — I myself wanted to see it because I wanted to know if it could live up to the hype. The movie's website features a mobile game where you can play as the bear. Scott Seiss utilized his popular comedy video formats to talk about the film— Elizabeth Banks even had a fantastic photoshoot for Variety magazine with a bear (not a real one, I'm sure).

Banks stated in the interview for Variety that "This could be a career ender for me."

It seems, however, that Banks doesn't have anything to worry about— "Cocaine Bear" has had a successful opening weekend, and is likely to make back its budget and more. The word-of-mouth alone has bolstered the movie's accomplishments.

The best moments were character interactions and when the bear was being goofy rather than intimidating. Fans of the genre should enjoy it, but those who are sensitive to gore may not. The movie is not deep or particularly artful, and the violence was a bit nausea-inducing, but the audience was extremely engaged the whole time and it seems fair to say that the film could end up as a comedy horror classic.

"Cocaine Bear" is currently in theaters.

3.5 / 5 kilos

The Ledger Coloring Corner

Every week the Ledger will release coloring pages for YOU to color. Send in your fully colored works of coloring page art and have a chance to see them in print in the next issue along with all submitted images being placed on our website! Completed coloring pages can be scanned or photographed and then submitted to ledger@uw.edu or through the Contact Us form on thetacomaledger.com.

Please include: First and Last Name, Email, and your Major. We can't wait to see your artwork and hope you have a fun time coloring!



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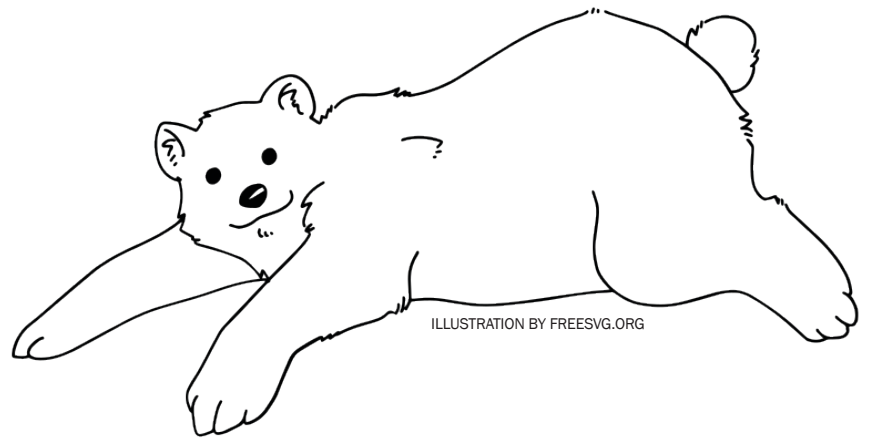


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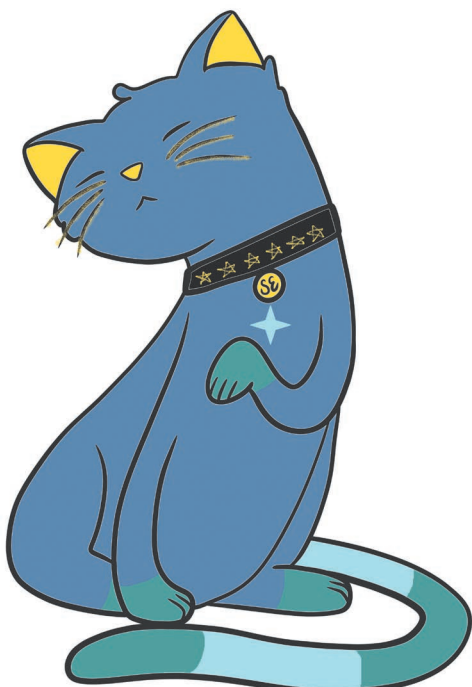


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Alternative & Vaguely Unclassifiable

This Week's Playlist



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