The artists
Banana - Finn☆ - Honey - Kaiku - Karolina - Kawa - LingLator - Mackerel - Maja - Simplypurple - Thalius

language cafe zine #5

connection

cover by Kawa

Editor's Note

Welcome to Zine #5.

Connection is not a single thread but a constellation between many facets of our lives: the people we love, the cultures we inherit, and the quieter, stranger parts of ourselves we rarely name aloud. It resists a tidy definition because it is never one thing at a time: it is chosen and it is stumbled upon, built deliberately and left as residue by everything that touches us.

What this issue gathers is not a single vision of connection but a plurality of them, each one partial, each one true. Some found it in ceremony, others in inheritance, others in the act of observation. Taken together, they suggest that connection is less a state we arrive at than a practice we maintain.

We hope these pages invite you to do the same: to observe, a little more closely, your own constellation of connection.

See you in the next issue,

Kawa
Co-founder & Editor

Along with
Joon | Language Cafe Co-founder
Jam | Zine Coordinator

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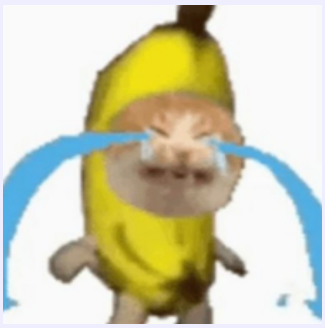


Banana

Banana is a digital artist, an animator, and an instructional designer. Banana has way too many hobbies and things she wants to do, so sometimes she starts something big and never finishes it. Don't be like Banana...

Forever After

Digital Illustration

About the work

Forever After is an imagined wedding ceremony between my partner and me on August 29, 2026. We never had a traditional ceremony because our families and friends are far away from where we are. Instead, I created this drawing to imagine what that moment might look like to share it with the people we love.

Although we haven't had the ceremony part (yet), this piece represents our commitment, our connection, and the life we are building together. In a way, it is a celebration of a moment we hope to experience someday!

Medium: Digital art, primarily using cell shading, with some blending and layer effects.

Q&A

Q: How did you feel while creating your artwork?
A: To be honest, "inadequate." I feel like there is this vibrant, golden feeling that I want to convey, but I cannot properly show it through this piece. I was trying out many different techniques to get the lighting right, but since I am new to this kind of lighting work, it is far from the best it could be.

I am planning to redraw this once again once we have another ceremony with our families! By that time, I better get good at this technique. >:3

Q: What are you hoping to communicate through your artwork?
A: I hope you can see two humans happily married to each other, despite circumstances!

Banana on X

@banana_omm

Finn☆

I love cats 🐈‍⬛

About the work

It's my connection to the darkness in my dreams which is represented by an ever misty figure. No title, honestly. Just had fun.

Medium: Digital drawing app, used the blend tool to create the misty effect into the background using what is called 'my finger'.

Q&A

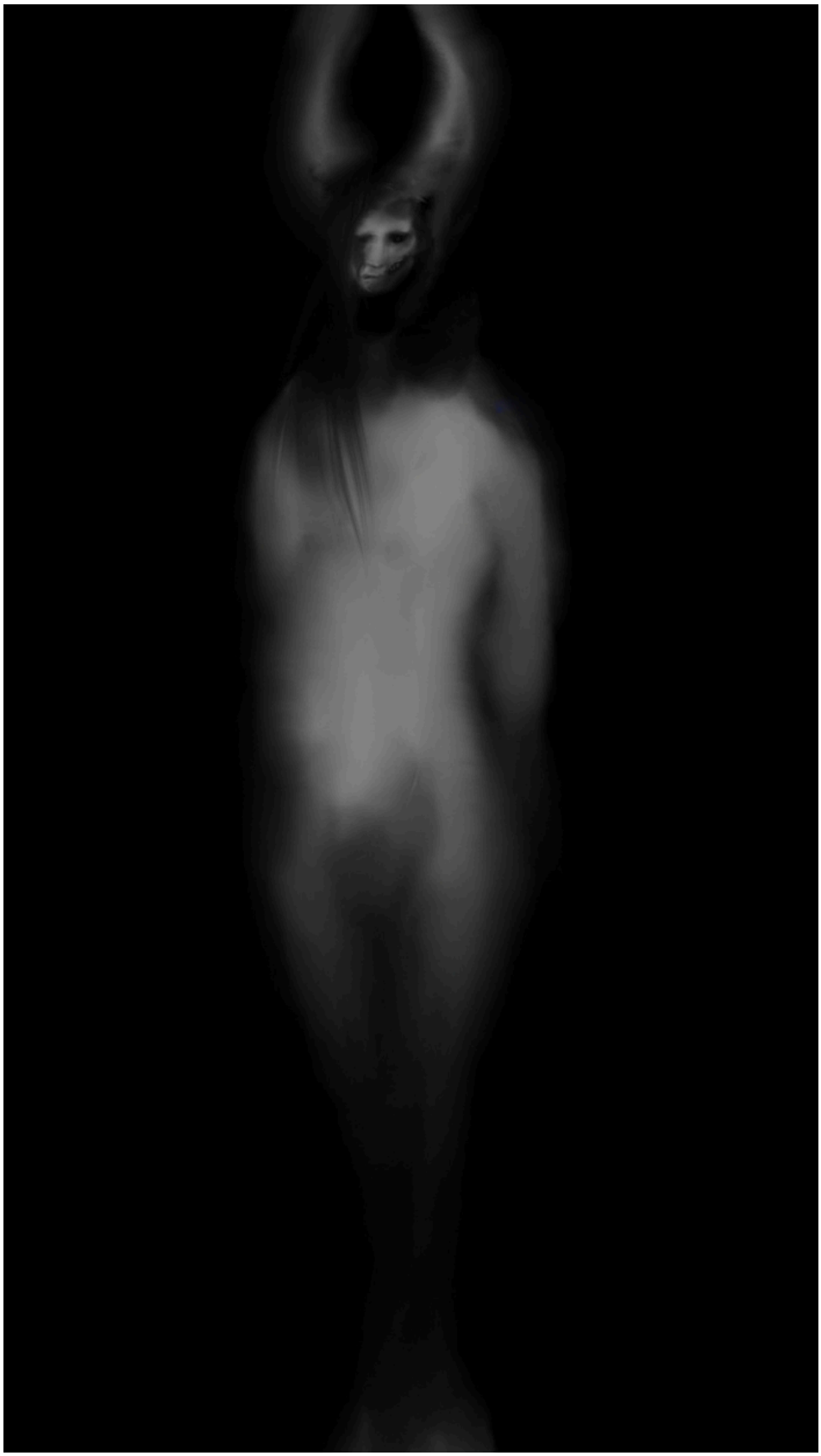
Q: How did you feel while creating your artwork?
A: I felt nostalgic and a sense of longing.

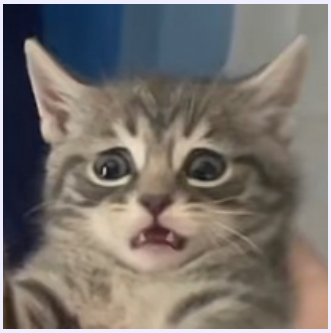
Q: What are you hoping to communicate through your artwork?
A: I'm hoping to communicate something that may resonate in some of us, hence the connection.

Q: What was a surprising moment while creating?
A: My surprising moment was how quickly it took.

Artist: Finn☆

Digital Illustration





Honey

Honey is a biology university student in Canada, but when she's not studying, she's exploring all forms of art, particularly writing.

About the work

For my first time on the Zine, I bounced around several ideas before landing on poetry to express how I truly felt regarding the theme of connection. Knowing how there's many ways to express 'connection', I wanted to demonstrate that through my own way with words.

I've always been a fan of words that were quite versatile, so that's what I'd done. However, I kept circling the idea of connection between people, and how it truly was the most beautiful definition of the word "connection".

Q&A

Q: How did you feel while creating your artwork?
A: Initially, I was a little nervous, as I haven't played around with poetry in a long time. Because of that, I was worried I couldn't do the theme or the medium itself justice. But fast forward to 2am thoughts and a visit to my own journal, it was really enjoyable to put together.

Q: What are you hoping to communicate through your artwork?
A: That the word 'connection' can be so simple and so meaningful all at once. That it takes quite a bit to notice the beauty of how it's everywhere, through every interaction or mundane task. That a word simple to one person who's spoken this language, can be so special to another who's just learned it.

Q: What was a surprising moment while creating?
A: Probably the last stanza, as it ties everything together. It was surprising because I didn't know I could pull a line like that out of me.

Honey on Substack

hhoney

A Word I Can’t Find

A word I can’t find
but one that binds
the thread between people
or scraps in a scrapbook

The kind where one rings
or Internet links
Maybe airplanes
and their layovers

3 dots on a screen
or intertwined strings
Is it red or invisible?
Unspoken, unseen?

A word that brings two
and can only be,
if not for the other’s existence.

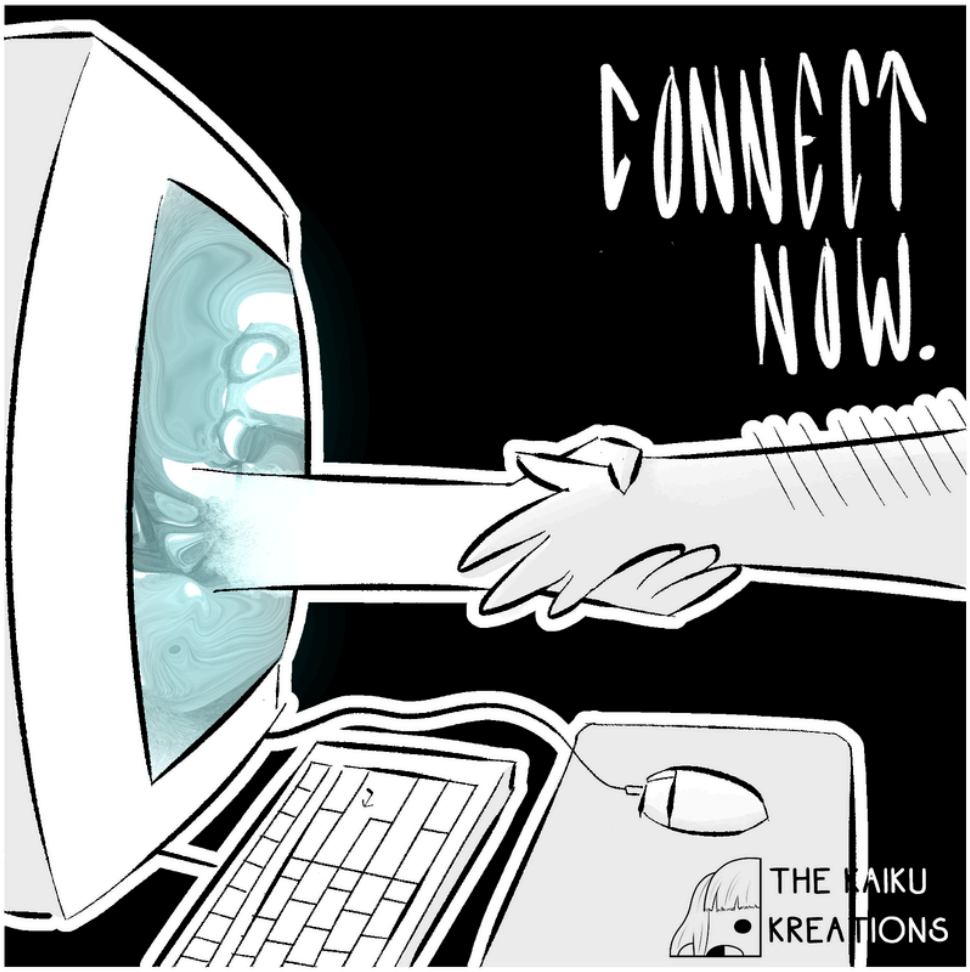
‘Connection’ they call it

Kaiku

I treat art as a balancing creative hobby alongside my office work. I love making cozy, aesthetic pieces, though I sometimes drift into other passions like game design or writing when inspiration shifts.

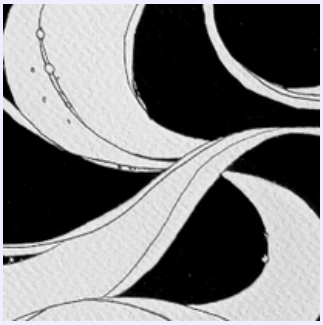
Connect Now.

Digital Illustration



Kaiku on Instagram

thekaiku_



Karolina

I'm a graphic design student from Poland. I love drawing figure skaters and learning new things.

About the work

My artwork has been made in Krita, and the style is inspired by modern comic books.

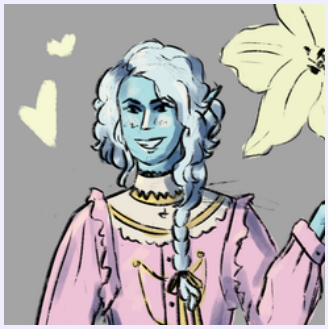
Q&A

Q: What are you hoping to communicate through your artwork?
A: I feel like the idea behind this work is a little messy.
Because I live in a small town, most of the important people in my life live somewhere else. If I want to meet with them, I need to commute to the city. Since getting a driver's license has been a losing battle for me, it's mostly trains. That means a lot of traveling, so I decided that travel represents connections to me – I thought about maps, at first. Later I changed this to trains. I've always been kind of interested in the idea that every day, without realizing, we pass people we know or have met. I thought it would be interesting if the picture was a passenger's point of view, showing someone travelling on a train in a different direction. Someone you'd see for a fraction of a second.

Q: What was a surprising moment while creating?
A: At first I had a different idea for this artwork – I wanted it to be about maps. However, I decided not to use a real one, for safety reasons, and making up my own just wasn't something I wanted to do, so I needed to find a different way to show my idea. I spent a lot of time trying to find something interesting that I would have fun drawing, so the end result is not something I planned at first.

Karolina on Instagram

color.of.hope.42

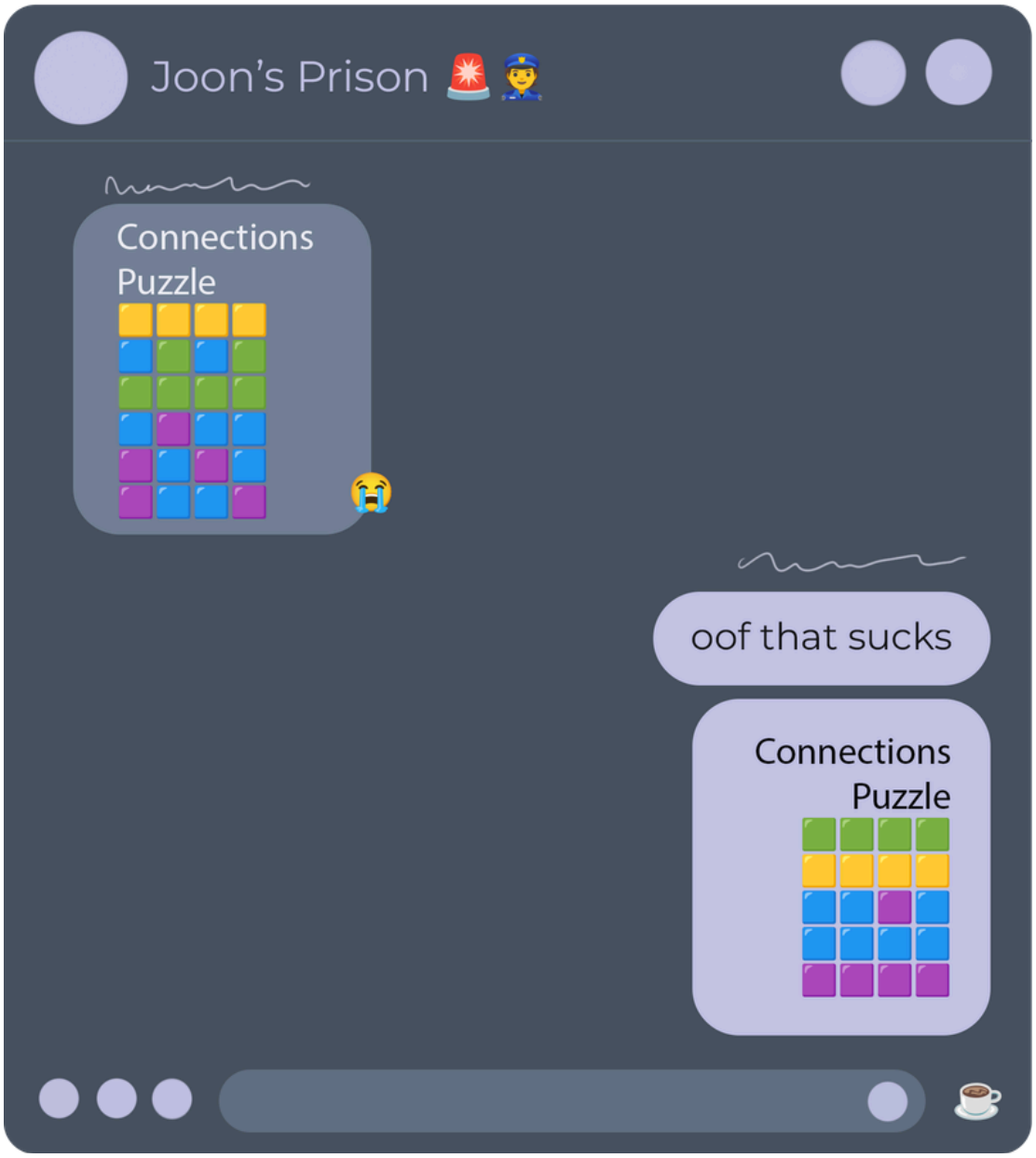


Kawa

Kawa is a self taught artist that has been drawing her whole life. Her focus while creating is either releasing and expressing emotions, or capturing beautiful moments of life.

Small Connections

Digital Illustration



About the work

Over time, one of my friend groups got into the daily ritual of doing word games, sharing the results and talking about them. In a way, this is also a way to connect with each other as we learn new things through these games.

Another facet of this is that I also have this habit with my partner. Every day, we do some word games together as we drink our coffee.

The work emulates a chat window in which we share our results from NYT's Connections game.

Q&A

Q: How did you feel while creating your artwork?
A: Grateful for this ritual we have and for the word games that keep my mind entertained.

Q: What are you hoping to communicate through your artwork?
A: Don't be afraid to start little habits among your own connections.

Q: What was a surprising moment while creating?
A: I instantly thought of this game as soon as I saw the theme. I just didn't know how to represent the connection we have through these daily word games. In the end, I decided on building this up with clear shapes. Anyone who plays word games will recognize this.

Kawa on Instagram

the_kawaa

... when languages unite.

LingLator

– The Linguistic Translator –
Language enthusiast who enjoys being creative in her spare time.

Pencil on Paper

Q&A

Q: What are you hoping to communicate through your artwork?
A: Lingua franca connects like no other.

LingLator on YouTube

@LingLator

Mackerel

A lover of (Sea, reading, knowledge & new experiences, medicine, puns/ memes/ wordplays/ poetry, handicrafts, languages, and everything blue)

kalp atışı

Collage

Q&A

Q: What are you hoping to communicate through your artwork?
A: The meaning of the title of this work is "Heartbeat." I wanted to convey how a connection is like a heartbeat: variable, thrilling, sometimes it fades, sometimes it gets stronger, etc. But, more importantly, it's vital! It's one of the main essences of life: to belong and be connected, whether to people, creatures, nature, etc. It's an innate, sweet thing in us. I truly subscribe to the idea of how everything and everyone is connected, and how everything happens for a reason. What happened at a moment was meant to touch and affect you in a way, even if it's not present anymore. Every life passing leaves a denture in each of us, shaping our minds, bodies, and souls in ways that we carry along our journey in this life. But for this zine project, I tried to work on different strings of the "connection" concept: human, life, etc.

So, however common it is, and however easily passed over or taken for granted, I still find it fascinating how we as humans still find ways to connect, even if we fight! It is still a "connection" and a bridge to the other group! Here in the zine, and especially since languages and meeting other different concepts have always been among our passions, we chose to sample some quotes from different tongues across the globe!

First of all, we have the French "On est un ange à une seule aile, on ne peut voler qu'en s'embrassant," meaning "We are each an angel with only one wing, and we can only fly by embracing one another." It's attributed to the French-associated philosophy of human interdependence, capturing how "connection" completes us and elevates our existence.

Secondly, there is the Korean "옷깃만 스쳐도 인연이다," which means "Even a mere brushing of coat sleeves is Inyeon (destiny/connection)." It's a concept we absolutely admire, a famous, deeply philosophical Korean proverb meaning that no human encounter is accidental. Even passing a stranger in the street signifies a connection woven by destiny over lifetimes.

Third is the Arabic "وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا." It's a verse from the Quran that I truly find fascinating, and honestly the first thing that came to our minds upon hearing the zine theme. It translates to "And We made you nations and tribes so that you may know one another" (Quran 49:13). Differences are not only inevitable but also one of nature's essential pillars, so we connect, discover, and build upon shared knowledge, emotions, philosophy, and discoveries, to be refined. But also, what we find curious in it is the verb used in that verse (Arabic version). It's a proactive verb/form, not just "so you know" but a call to take initiative, to participate, to connect, to go out and get to know other differences. It's a call for curiosity in general, not just towards others. However, that verb is used in the form "get to know," as in being open and getting to "see" the differences, but not a call to be affected by whatever passes. An open soul is needed, but also a filtering mind.

Fourth is my beloved Turkish quote: "Kalpten kalbe bir yol vardır, gözle görülmez, sırdır," which translates to "There is a road from heart to heart; it cannot be seen with eyes, as it is a secret." Speaking of the concept, it was written by the famous Turkish folk poet Neşet Ertaş, rooted in Sufi mysticism (I don't subscribe to Sufism, but it's poetically interesting). It describes connection as an invisible, sacred highway existing between souls, not just in the usual romantic way but in general: between your soul and everything in nature. Just like how a prayer in Islam is called Salat, translating to "connection," between us and our Creator. It's a vital line to get life energy on.

Fifth is the Spanish "Al final del camino de la vida, no te preguntarán qué tienes, sino a quién amaste," translating to "At the end of life's journey, they will not ask you what you have, but who you loved." It's inspired by the mystical poetry of St. John of the Cross, emphasising that the human bonds and connections we forge are the ultimate measure of a lived life. You are who you choose to love. You are who you choose to spend time with, who you think about, and share ideas and thoughts with. You are who is around you.

Lastly, the English quote: "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." It means that no person is completely isolated; we are all interconnected parts of a greater whole. The concept is from the famous 17th-century poem by John Donne. It perfectly mirrors the sentiment of "connection" by using geography and nature to illustrate human interconnections.

Q: What was a surprising moment while creating?
A: How much we love making art, how much we value the relationships we have, and how we try not to take them for granted.

Maja

I love writing with pen and paper. Although, I don't consider myself a good writer. Mostly, I write about the things that I feel, especially those feelings that linger a little longer than usual.

Baybayin

I woke up too late
To see those buried in the past

The freedom of those
with their own identity, their own language, their own culture
Gone too fast

Even writings of their own
On bamboo they carved their feelings
Like whispers in the wind, it was not to make them last
The bamboo would rot, but what they carved would not

A romanticized rendering, but still I could not help
To compare those from before with the hand I am now dealt

To be dragged along by waves
The progression of the times
To the prevalence of the foreign
All the thoughts this invites

Return, to the unfolding of the history of the world
Return, from my ascendants all the way until my birth
A world that for me will never be shown
A community braving their existence, even though

It's frustrating
The only thing that I can carry on
From them is this old script
For all else is gone

Every day And every night
In a diary filled with reflections
Every curve and every line
Had been drawn with the intention

That only here inside
My feelings will remain
That only here inside
My wishes will remain

This I save as a window
For all to look upon my life
In the future, as a memory
For those who would like to take a dive

Into a memoir of the past
Of papers old and faded
But what is written within?
That script of old,

About the work

When I was trying to write, I was exploring different kinds of connection: social connection, digital connection, connection to art and music, and yearning for connection. For the one I eventually settled with, I explored my connection with my culture and heritage. Specifically, my connection with the lives of my ancestors as well as to confront my own notions of the past.

The title, Baybayin, was the ancient script widely used in the Luzon region of the Philippines during the 16th and 17th century. This script is my main point of connection with my nation's pre-colonial period. It is also the script that I use whenever I'm writing in my diary. This might be a surprise, but I started writing this prose poem in my native language, which I then translated to English.

Q&A

Q: How did you feel while creating your artwork?
A: I felt that during writing, I had developed a clearer idea of where I stood today in relation with cultures of the past. It also brought home how my conceptions of my past heritage may have been in part shaped by how people in my community today regard it, as something to be admired. However, it may very well just be an existence that does not need admiration or pity or any other extra judgment. It just was.

Q: What are you hoping to communicate through your artwork?
A: I wanted to communicate my frustration with the busyness of today and my yearning for the past, to connect even more with the identities that were, even though I may well be romanticizing. I also brought in my own twist, that maybe, as I would like to connect with those of the distant past there may well be someone of the distant future looking to connect with people like me.

Q: What was a surprising moment while creating?
A: I guess it's surprising how fast it took to complete this as I usually write only in small fragments at a time.

Simplypurple

I love learning and I love art. I'm a watercolour enthusiast and got into it out of curiosity because it seemed like a relaxing activity. I highly recommend it though it can be quite an expensive hobby.

Change

Watercolor on Paper

About the work

In life, we meet different kinds of people and form various kinds of connections either through family, studies, work, hobbies, travel, etc. Every connection leaves an impact on each of us. Whether positive or negative, some having a bigger impact than others. These watercolour hearts also represent the result of such interactions. Some are overwhelmed by certain colours with the colours even travelling down to other hearts and changing their hues. While others are only slightly impacted. Unlike these hearts, the effect people have on us is not always apparent but they occur nonetheless and as time passed, we've all changed and grown into our present selves.

Process and medium: This is a very popular watercolour exercise to understand how watercolours work and how adding more or less water helps colours move. Also some colours disperse faster than others. I thought it worked well to depict the theme I was working on.

Q&A

Q: How did you feel while creating your artwork?
A: It was quite fun. Did test it first to see what the colours looked like together. Also tried recreating it on 3 different papers and opted to really saturate a lot of the colours so that the art pops. Had to edit slightly since they looked duller on screen than on paper.

Q: What are you hoping to communicate through your artwork?
A: Hopefully my art resonates with others and makes them think about how people in their lives have impacted them over the years as well as how they may have changed others. As a bonus, I hope my art makes them feel happy and they give watercolours a try.

Q: What was a surprising moment while creating?
A: Originally my idea was slightly different and a bit more complicated but suddenly I realised that this was the easiest and most obvious way of getting my message across.

Thalius

I am an amateur doodler who loves drawing but barely makes time for it... I like to draw and paint alongside my group of friends on rainy Sunday afternoons.

About the work

When I thought about connection in the context of language learning, I first thought about connecting to a culture through its literature and legends. I have always been an avid reader and there is nothing that I like more than a good story. And that's how the idea for this piece was born: a little girl so engrossed in a book that she does not even notice the dragon behind her. I chose to represent a Chinese dragon because Chinese is one of my target languages (and the one that is giving me the most headaches lol... though I love learning it). I used black fineliners and watercolours.

Q&A

Q: How did you feel while creating your artwork?
A: Calm. Drawing always makes me feel that way. It's so relaxing.

Q: What are you hoping to communicate through your artwork?
A: I hope people would get a sense of joy seeing this work :)

Q: What was a surprising moment while creating?
A: I spent at least an hour on colouring the dragon. I think I did too much with it. I feel the more simple parts of this work, that I painted in a few minutes, actually work better. Less is really more.

Artist: Thalius

Change

Watercolor on Paper

Outro

Thank you for checking out our zine!

If something here lingered with you, a thought, a feeling, or an idea, explore it in your own way.

When you're ready, bring it to the Language Cafe server. You'll find the #creative-corner channel that's always open for conversation (make sure you have the @Creative role). Share a work-in-progress or a finished piece, ask for eyes on a draft, or simply sit in and create.

We welcome all mediums and experience levels. All you need is a wish to create and explore. The next issue will grow from the hands and hearts of artists like you and we'd love to create it together.

Stay open and curious.

Join our community

There are countless ways we can connect.

Connection, as these pages show, is something we keep choosing, again and again. It is something we can foster, or something we just observe. Every person has their own constellation of connections, and we hope that this issue encourages readers to mindfully notice their own constellation a little bit closer.