

Justin Li '20  
*From my Eyes*

ART 500

"One late night, you are wandering the streets of New York City. You are all alone, afraid, and feeling terrible from the chaotic evening. You tell yourself you are okay, but you know that nothing is ever certain. When you are waiting for the test results, you ask yourself: will I die? The color red consumes you.

*Your Blood + Mine* explores the terror that surrounds HIV. Waiting for test results can be a very traumatic experience. As the virus is taboo, many ignore or ostracize those suffering with HIV. In this piece, I wanted to explore my personal connection to HIV/AIDS. As an openly gay male, the virus is something that I am constantly reminded about; I am at a much higher-risk of contracting it compared to the heterosexual population. I wanted to capture my fear and trauma associated with HIV through bold imagery and iconography. The screaming face, morbid red lines, and uncomfortable placement of paint evokes sentiments of disgust and terror, emotions encountered by the gay population on a daily basis.

*Forever* is a piece of my good friend, Alisha Simmons. She is a queer woman here at Phillips Exeter Academy. Queer women often are troubled by the dichotomy between masculinity and femininity. They are shamed for being too masculine, or questioned for being too feminine.



*Forever*, 2019, Oil on canvas

This piece attempts to break down these cultural and social expectations and instead focus on the fierceness and beauty of this woman. While her shaved head and provocative pose are reminiscent of masculinity, her surroundings and extravagant dress suggest the opposite. Why can't she be both? Why can't she just be herself?

*Painting Perfect* is a photography and print project. It comments on the beauty ideals within the gay male population. When you imagine a gay man, what do you think of?"

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*Painting Perfect*, 2019, Paint on fabric



*Your Blood + Mine*, 2019, Oil on canvas