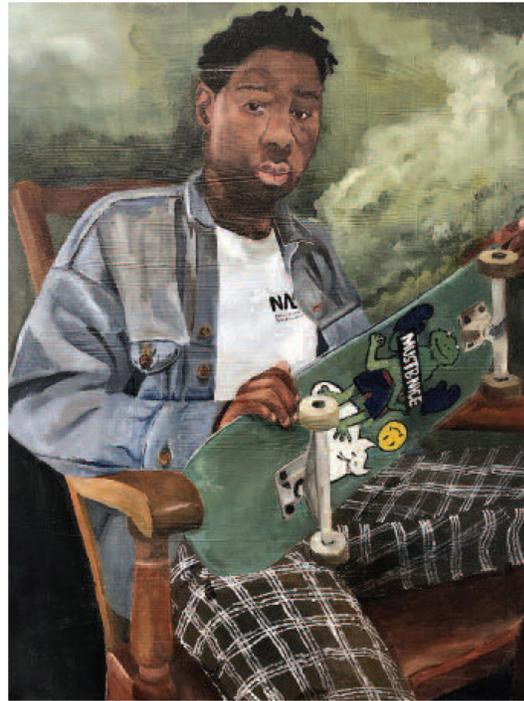




# CRITICAL JOY

FALL 2020 AT THE LAMONT GALLERY



 **Lamont Gallery**  
Phillips Exeter Academy

**EXHIBITION GUIDE**

## **CRITICAL JOY**

Fall 2020 at the Lamont Gallery

### ***Rewriting the Narrative: Student Voices***

September 15 - November 21, 2020

### ***The Unity in Color Project by Elizabeth Kostina '20***

September 15 - November 21, 2020

### ***Rewriting the Narrative: Student Voices***

For these Exeter students and alumni, the arts offer tools for critical and joyful engagement with the world.

Identity, community, and the power of representation are brought to the forefront by the pieces in *Rewriting the Narrative: Student Voices*. This exhibition highlights the views and visions of current students and recent alumni, while also celebrating the strength in our diversity.

So far 2020 has been a challenging year for many of us due to the global pandemic and the continued brutal acts of violence against people of color. We have all had to make so many changes in such a short amount of time; we have had to rethink how we teach, learn and how we interact and connect with each other. Times of change such as these force us to think about who we are and who we want to be. Now is a time for reflection and reevaluation of ourselves and our communities. So far, this year has taught us that we are adaptable; we can change and still be true to ourselves. We can stand up for what we believe in and we still find ways to share and connect with our communities.

We would like to whole-heartedly thank the students and recent Exeter graduates who have agreed to share their works and voices with us for this exhibition. Like everyone, we in the gallery had to make some changes while we rethink and reimagine how to create and share exhibitions during this time. This fall we postponed our scheduled exhibition in order to create a place with student voices at the forefront. We have had the opportunity to work with some talented and brave Exeter students and alumni who shared their work and words to help us create this exhibition. We realize that these are not the voices of everyone in our community but feel it is a start to the conversation and we hope that it will help generate new discussions.

***What is your story? What is the narrative that you would like to share?***

*Lamont Gallery programs are supported in part by the Michael C. Rockefeller '56 Visiting Artists Fund*

[www.exeter.edu/lamontgallery](http://www.exeter.edu/lamontgallery)



Dolapo Adedokun '18  
*COLORED SEEDS*, 2018  
Photographs

"*Colored Seeds* is a project to inspire and empower students of color on this campus through vibrant, striking, and positive images. I believe showing portraits of people that students of color on this campus can identify with is incredibly powerful, moving, and motivational, and furthers the sense of representation and solidarity."

*Colored Seeds* was Dolapo's senior project and you can read more about his work in this article:

[\*Capturing Color, Celebrating Exeter's diversity through the lens of Adedolapo Adedokun's Senior Project, Colored Seeds.\*](#)



Helena Chen '20  
*Made in China*, 2019  
Oil on canvas

*The East is Red, the West is...*, 2019  
Oil in canvas

*Chun-Li*, 2018  
Oil on Canvas

"In this series of work, I explored different aspects of my relationship with China. My goal as an artist is to create artwork with meaning by addressing topics important to me so I wanted to pursue this theme since it is such a large part of my identity. For this series, I experimented with different mediums and techniques. I incorporated unconventional materials like manufacturing labels, painted monochromatically, and imitated propaganda to accurately convey my messages. My work is inspired by some of my own experiences growing up such as feeling glorified yet ostracized for being more westernized and struggling to embrace my identity in the tense political climate of Hong Kong. This investigation is a very personal and important journey for me, it is a journey of self-reflection and a journey of self-acceptance. I hope that my work allows viewers to begin to understand my perspective in this complex relationship that I often struggle to explain.



*Chun-Li* is an oil painting depicting a girl wearing a traditional Chinese dress in an everyday setting. I wanted to explore how Western media portrays Asian culture through their depiction of fetishized girls in our conservative traditional attire. The media takes away from the cultural values of our traditional attire and I want to see how we can bring back the cultural significance. I hope that my piece prompts the audience to think about this effect of Western media on varying cultures and leave with thoughts on what we can do to reclaim our own various lost cultural values."





Sarah Kang '21  
*Self-portrait*, 2020  
Colored pencil on paper



*Brilliance*, 2019  
Oil and gold leaf on canvas

*Alexandra*, 2019  
Graphite on paper

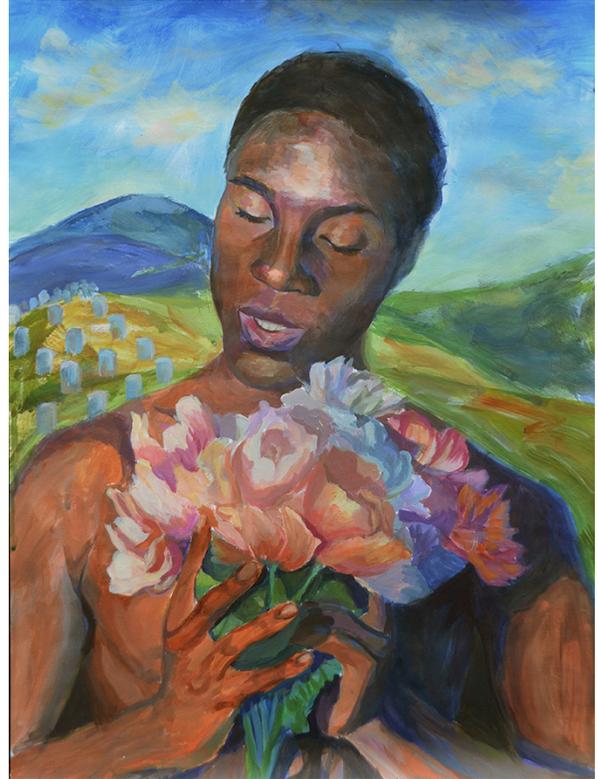


"I would say the most important thing I have learned here at Exeter is to value what makes me happy.

This is a portrait of my friend Alexandria titled *Brilliance*, portraying the way that I see her. I used gold leaf to play with light and composition. This is the first portrait that I have ever painted so it was tough to get the proportions right but drawing her before definitely helped."

Sabrina Kearney '22  
*In Remembrance*, 2020  
Oil on canvas

"*In Remembrance* is a painting that I created in memory of the many Black lives taken by police brutality. George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and many other BIPOC who have died unjustly as a result of this violence made me want to take action against racism and gun violence. I realized that I could use my art as a voice to incite change for issues that I believe in, and also to hopefully inspire others to do the same. *In Remembrance* seeks to commemorate and respect the lives that were lost, and also to inspire action."



*Rise*, 2019  
Oil and newsprint on canvas

"Toni Cade Bambara said, 'The role of the artist is to make the revolution irresistible'. My generation has grown up surrounded by headlines of school shootings and police brutality, and I wanted to use this piece to both document our reality and also act as a call to action. I believe that art is powerful and is an invaluable tool to incite change. The recent deaths of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and many others have shown us that we must rise and take action against racism and gun violence in this country.

When I created this piece, I strived to make it as thought-provoking and memorable as I could. I used newsprint collage to convey the weight of this issue in current events, and how it spreads to the public consciousness. This piece also features an original poem that I wrote for my English class out of newspaper headlines relating to gun violence."





Elizabeth Kostina '20  
*Hairlines*, 2019  
Photographs

"It has become easier than ever to present idealized versions of ourselves to the public, but these idealized identities can become spectacles, performances for others as opposed to reflections of our true selves.

The pressure to present or pass for a mainstream identity (e.g. cisgender or heterosexual identity) is significant and prevalent. People must adhere to certain mannerisms in order to be validated by the dominant culture, perhaps by engaging with stereotypes, by speaking, dressing, or behaving in a manner so that their difference is downplayed. Throughout these code switches, the body and hair remain relatively permanent. Therefore, to change your hair is to make a conscious and curated act of presentation, one more long-lasting than makeup or a style of dress.

The photographic, film, and archival works in *Hairlines* provides an alternate and more candid view of queer identities by subverting the idealized selves we see on social media, YouTube, filters, and posts. *Hairlines* focuses on the connections between the external and mental relationship between a queer person's hair, their gender and/or sexual identity, and the blueprints that inform their current appearance.

Raw. Without makeup, product, accent, or fancy equipment, subject and photographer work together in order to present the ideal self: each unfiltered subject as they are."

These works are part of a larger exhibition that Elizabeth create in the winter of 2019 with the Lamont Gallery. View the [Hairlines Exhibition Catalog](#).

Avery Lavine '22  
*Negative Spaces*, 2019  
Graphite on paper

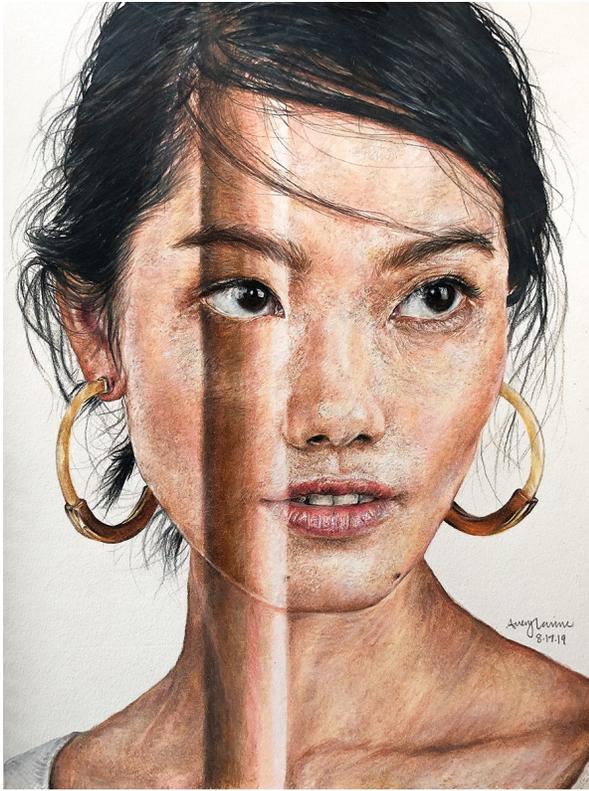
"*Negative Spaces* is a self-portrait using graphite. While creating this piece, I paid most attention to the areas I didn't fill in, a concept important to understand in realism. In the past, as a mixed-race person, I've found myself gravitating more towards my identity as a POC. However, just like in art, the negative spaces are equally important in my identity. I've learned that considering my own white privilege is necessary in order to address racial injustice."



*Expression as Reflection*, 2019  
Oil on canvas

"*Expression as Reflection* is an oil study of my friend Shantelle. Shantelle is a great inspiration to me as a woman of color. I admire her generous personality, in addition to her unapologetic recognition of injustice. Shantelle is best described as a strong and selfless advocate. Her presence lights up a room."





Avery Lavine '22  
*Extracting Palettes I*, 2019  
Colored pencil on paper

*Extracting Palettes II*, 2019  
Colored pencil on paper

"The purpose of this series is to bring to light the complexity of tones in skin. The drawings use a mixture of realism and a sort of abstract minimalism in order for both aspects of the piece to stand out. Each 'side' of the piece uses the same palette of colors, only rearranged in their respective art styles. There's a variety of colors but it's easy to understand their artistry. I hope to push people to not only see the beauty in diversity, but to simply acknowledge it. Change can't proceed without recognizing racism, which can't proceed without recognizing race."



Justin Li '20  
*Forever*, 2019  
Oil on canvas

"*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. 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?"

Justin Li '20  
*Self(?) Portrait*, 2019  
Oil on canvas

*So What?*, 2019  
Oil on canvas

*Who Cares?*, 2019  
Oil on canvas

"For the past few years, the majority of my paintings have focused on portraiture. Experiences like coming out, moving to the U.S., and accepting my ethnic heritage have shaped my work. In my art, I explore themes of identity, coming-of-age, and heritage. In terms of technique, most of my work balances realism and abstraction.

I think portraits are powerful because they can capture identity and personhood. When we look at people, we often make assumptions and let our prejudices guide how we interact with one another. Through my portraiture, I hope to tell nuanced stories about identity that we often overlook. This is also true for my self-portraits. In *Self(?) Portrait*, I investigate the complexity of intersectionality, and the multiple layers of my own identity.

Much of my own work explores LGBT identity. Other works of mine navigate the dichotomy between masculinity and femininity and the cultural expectations I encounter as a queer person of color. Works like *So What?* and *Who Cares?* comment on Western culture's tendency to stereotype Asian women as weak and submissive. These 'inaudible' portraits present Asian women in a colorful, lively light."





Chiara Perotti Correa '18  
*(Un)identified II*, 2018  
Digital Photography

*"Where are you from?  
What is your family background?  
Where were you born?"*

As a foreigner in America, we are living in a time where our differences are being highlighted more than ever. It may be the color of our skin, our accents, the passport(s) we may or may not hold, or the scars we bear inside and out. We are using countless platforms to voice our concerns and praise our differences.

Well this is mine.

When I proposed this project to my art teacher my senior year, I took the opportunity to speak up. Photography was, and is, the way I saw emotion the most. The detail in the way our bodies and faces are expressed say more than a piece of paper to me. I realized in my three years in this place that I wasn't the only one having to explain my background, where I came from, my accent, among other aspects of myself. The pride I gained from being different fought against the alienation I felt when those differences were a disadvantage."





Danielle Sung '22  
*Where I'm From*, 2019  
Oil on canvas

"I've been uncertain about my identity my whole life. I was born in New York City and grew up speaking English in an international school, yet I lived in Korea my whole life with Korean parents and friends. It wasn't until I came to America one and a half years ago for boarding school that I actually started thinking about my identity and who I wanted to represent myself as to people that did not know who I was. My identity is the main concept and motif of *Where I'm From*. The disorientation of my face — the four eyes, three noses, three mouths, and two faces that I drew all represent the confusion I have of myself. I intentionally wore Hanbok, a Korean traditional clothing, to represent my Korean identity and used the Korean traditional fabric to further reinforce my Korean aspect.

Another reason I reinforced my Korean side was that ever since I came to America, I felt like I was starting to become less of who I was in Korea — I put in a lot of effort trying to fit in the American standards of my appearance, my personality, and social life. Through this portrait, I was able to learn more about accepting both sides of my ethnicity and find materials that could show who I was. The title *Where I'm From* was chosen for two different reasons — to show Korea, the place I am from, but also to show the process of discovering the real roots of my identity."



Wynter Tracey '19  
*Self-Portrait*, 2018  
Graphite on paper



*My Mother's Son*, 2019  
Oil on canvas

"I am influenced by mostly black music artists, photographers and painters. Some painters who create work that is very similar thematically to mine include Kehinde Wiley and Kerry James, but I draw inspiration from musical artists such as Frank Ocean and Solange in creating my works.

I created *My Mother's Son* using oil paint on canvas. Oil painting is a new medium for me, so I decided to further push myself artistically by experimenting with a bigger painting, which required me to stretch a larger canvas and obviously cover more surface area with my paint.

I have always been passionate about activism, politics, and studying black people's place in world history. In a sense, creating a classical-style piece of somebody who is black is a way of controlling the narrative of black people commonly being depicted in media as criminal or less cultured than others. Through fine art and portraiture, a juxtaposition is created which provokes thought about the ways in which black people are typically represented; my goal is to elevate them to a higher level of regard through my work."



Ursie Wise '21  
*Interstellar*, 2019  
Oil on canvas

"My piece, *Interstellar*, was inspired by my interest in space and the growing industry surrounding space travel. Since I was young, I've always had a fascination with the universe around me. I was elated to have an opportunity to combine my passions into one piece. Art, particularly drawing and painting, has also been a large part of my life for a long time.

The Gucci space suit in this piece was inspired by my interest in space's growing industry. In the wake of an age of technological exploration led by privately owned corporations, the idea that other industries may overlap excited me. The prospect that, in the future, those who can afford to may pay for a trip into low-Earth orbit, left me to imagine a reality where the space industry began to overlap with others. The clothing brand Gucci, with its iconic reputation and bright red and green color scheme, seemed like no better way to present my thoughts. I imagined that if I had the financial ability to pay for space travel in the future, I'd buy a Gucci spacesuit.

I chose to paint a woman because I believe women, have been underrepresented in fields of STEM in the past. The piece was born out of my hope for a bright future for women in STEM, and women of color in particular."



Christina Xiao '21  
*Judgement*, 2019  
Colored pencil on paper

"This set of three drawings depicts how we shouldn't judge others so easily, when we don't understand their personal struggles. The drawings on the left and the right are reacting to the person in the middle, who is sliding apart. However, each face has its own strange aspects. The one on the left is cracking and the one on the right is pixelating away. These represent how everyone has their own individual issues, so it is hypocritical to criticize the one in the middle for breaking apart. Instead, we should aim to understand and empathize with each other."



Alana Yang '21  
*Beyond Black and White*, 2019  
Digital drawing

"The koi fish in this piece representative of yin and yang – while light and darkness are seemingly opposite, each half is necessary for the other to exist. Each force also contains a bit of its complement. The symbol is a reminder that, in an age where we are quick to evaluate others simply off a singular belief or an aspect of their identity, we gain more from understanding than drawing boundaries. We gain more if we do not view people as monoliths and discard the idea that everything is 'black and white,' simply good or bad."



Audrey Yin '21  
*Paper Cut, 2019*  
Photograph

“One of the most distinct faces I can make out from my otherwise cloudy childhood memories is of a wrinkled old man in a dingy Shanghai alleyway. As tourists pass him, he patiently bends over a velvety sheet of red paper, whittling away with a single pair of golden scissors clasped between his leathery fingers. I remember watching as he slowly cut a flower into my hair, little red petals fluttering into a pile of scraps by his elbow.

When the Lamont Gallery featured an exhibit solely dedicated to the art of paper cutting, I was immediately taken back to this moment. Senai Robinson '21, the subject of this portrait, and Adia Allison '21, were with me at the time.

During the festival season in China, these lacy designs are hung as decorations to symbolize good fortune and happiness. As we walked around the gallery, submersed in endless displays of papercuts, I thought, how lucky am I to be surrounded by people who bring me such joy.”

## ***The Unity in Color Project by Elizabeth Kostina '20***

In 2017, Jasmine Solano founded Unity In Color, a global photography series and platform showcasing inclusive solidarity for women's equality. In 2019, Elizabeth Kostina '20 and Kelly McGahie, Assistant Director of Student Activities, brought this project to Exeter. Kostina's stunning photographs of Exeter students and employees – wearing yellow and gold as a nod to early feminist activists – represent the inclusive feminism that is found in our Exeter community. @unity\_in\_color



Lamont Gallery – *The Unity in Color Project* by Elizabeth Kostina '20, September 15 – November 21, 2020



“Often, photography is hailed as a vanguard for activism and expressionism. Sweeping landscapes and profound, melancholic portraits of people in magazines and journals like *National Geographic* and the *New York Times* capture our attention with the piercing human gaze. There’s something apologetic and steadfast that holds us, a simple insertion of existence that does not need to yield. How rare is it that one is on the direct receiving end of such a portrait? How rare is it that we are not separated by a magnitude of copies and reproductions printed with ink on cheap paper, or millions of pixels, and instead, find ourselves face to face with a photographic moment in the making? When you stare through that apparatus, warm with the recorded memories of a few minutes, into the deep gaze that contains human code of so many thoughts, emotions, and states of being, it is electrifying and profound. In those milliseconds before you hit the shutter, it’s gratifying and a privilege to witness the gaze of someone else: raw and without their masks.



As the photographer, you move between the cheering realm of on-lookers and the sly smile that the subjects allow themselves before reverting to that stoic gaze. The photographer moves between the two world of onlookers and subject, trying to remain unnoticed and invisible, fluid; to avoid influencing or stopping the electrifying atmosphere burgeoning with the overwhelming transactions of support and love. You notice their ticks, the way their hair lies, how they naturally stand, every little movement... and so, you gain the privilege of documenting their being for others to also experience. Sharing those moments, that charged atmosphere, and passing it along to you, dear reader and exhibit goer, and the others who see the reproductions, I feel that responsibility. To put you into my place, on that sunny Sunday, staring through the aperture to see extraordinary women interacting and giving moments of pause, to allow their strength to channel directly through to you."

- Elizabeth Kostina '20



"The real power of the *Unity In Color* photoshoot at Exeter was in the *process*, not the product. The photographs are fierce, but the real strength was in being present for the shoot itself. Choosing to participate, it turns out, was a subversive, subtle, and unwitting act of courage.

We were a bit unsure of what to expect when we arrived. There was a nervous group energy. Feeling self-conscious, we adjusted our collars and hemlines, and smoothed our hair. Maybe we were feeling judged. Maybe we were judging. All were thinking about homework, club meetings, grading papers, cooking dinner and so on. We were physically present, but energetically fractured.

The yellow, orange and red carpet-like wall covering on the second floor, which we had previously dismissed out of hand as a possible location, ended up juxtaposing with the sunlight and the subjects – much to our surprise and delight – to create photographic alchemy.

As one photo after another was taken the vibe began to shift. You could feel that more of the women were physically, emotionally and mindfully present. Music played on Bluetooth. Dancing definitely happened. And when women were being photographed, the others would not only offer encouraging words, but would literally come in and do 'hair and make-up!' When the outside world fell away, solidarity, belonging, and acceptance were what was left.

We came together for a photoshoot, and created a transformative experience which nourished our souls.

The heartbreak of that day was that we exited the building unified, but by the time we were crossing Court Street thinking about dinner, deadlines, grading, parents, obligations, and so on the solidarity we'd found, dissolved without our even noticing what we were losing.

The photographs are a reminder that we are each whole, and when we come together, we are powerful."

~ Kelly McGahie, Producer, *Unity In Color*  
Phillips Exeter Academy Edition