

an annual publication



VOICES 2021

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Artist Biographies

Welcome to Voices,

VOICES has been a space where students come together to share their thoughts, beliefs, and experiences through artistic expression. Every year, the Women's Centre in collaboration with WUSA publishes the VOICES anthology in hopes that students can allow themselves to listen to the stories of their peers, and celebrate one another.

We are beyond excited to welcome you to the 2021 VOICES anthology and invite you to embark on this journey of learning and reflection through an intersectional perspective. Immerse yourself in each story with an open mind and learn something new.

The pandemic has been hard on all of us in different ways and has shifted our world perspectives. As we adjust to the 'new normal', we are also adjusting to new perspectives. We understand that events happening in today's world can feel isolating; our hope is that this year's edition can remind you that you are not alone and your feelings are common among other students. We hope that Voices 2021 can be a warm, inviting place where you can cast your worries away, rest and relax.

On behalf of the Women's Centre team, we present you with the 2021 edition of VOICES with outmost pride and honour.

With love 6ft away,

Kristy Wong, Sarah Mazen, and Jennifer Xie

Women's Centre Service Coordinators and Literature Director.

Missions of an Insomniac

Rachel Dennis

When I am asleep,
I am brought on missions,
foreign and far away.
I awake exhausted and uneasy,
with pieces of the night before.
Haunting my waking mind,
with memories,
just out of reach.

Sometimes it feels like I'm just counting moons,
and watching myself from world away.

There's something devilishly charming,
about going mad.

"What is it exactly you want out of this life?"

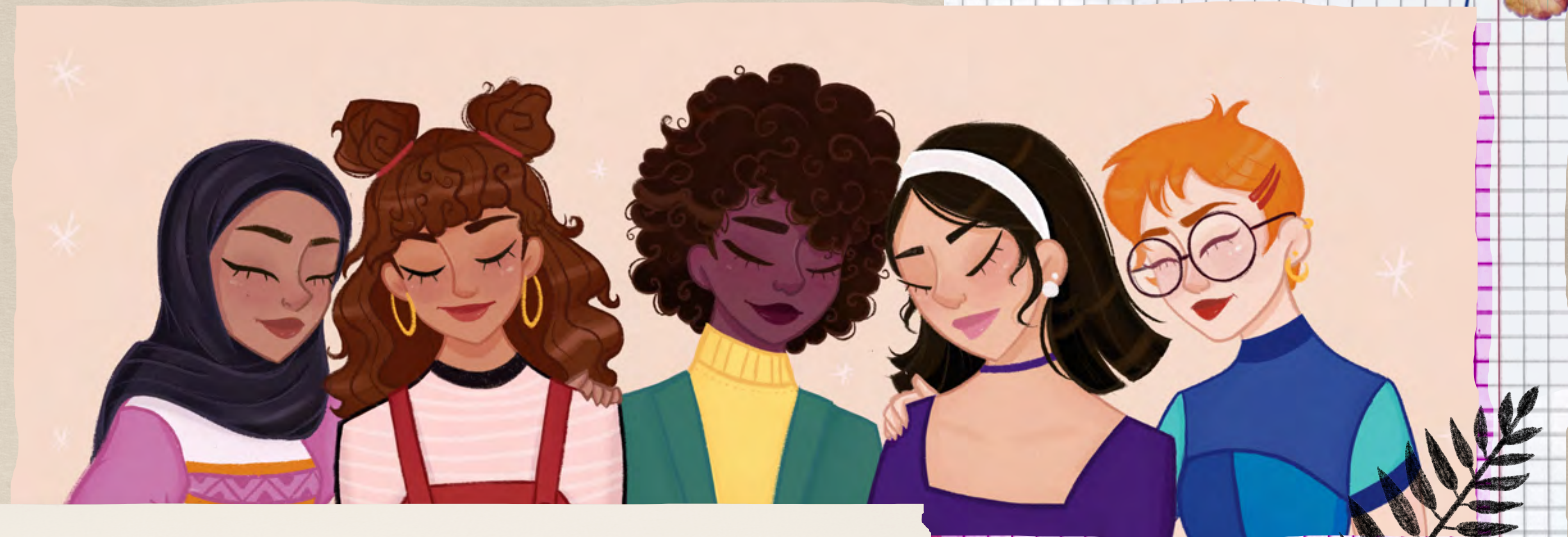
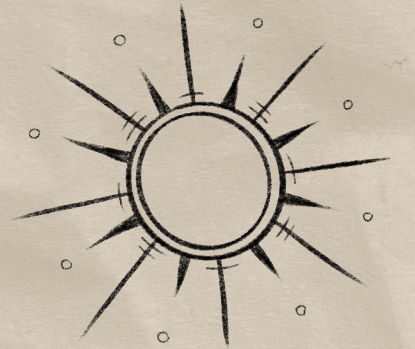
You say, to no one in particular.

It's funny,
finally waking up.

And while I'm probably sinning,

burning my shame,
there's nothing else that seems to satiate this kind of hunger.

Women's Centre



International Women's Day

Emilia Lilek

How badly do I crave stability
 that I am willing to pull the rug out
 from under my own feet?
 For a future I don't yet know,
 And a life

I
 don't
 yet
 live.

The Check-list

Rachel Dennis

He's a shell of a man,
 Haunting the halls of childhood memories.
 He parallels fragments of who I used to know,
 And embodies who I hope never to become.
 A reflection of someone...
 I'm not sure I ever knew.

The Haunting

Rachel Dennis

Twinkling specs of gold surround me as the night grows longer,
 Colder.
 Your subtle secrets pull at the corners of my mouth.
 Sweet songs sung to lovers echo from the treetops,
 To the tune of the nearby creek.
 The sun begins to break,
 Your fingertips leaving a trail of goosebumps.
 For a moment the world was still,
 And perfect.

Spring

Rachel Dennis

Ode to my Toes

Rachel Dennis

For Elizabeth.

I wish I could write an ode to my toes,
 To express my gratitude,
 For the places I go.
 For always carrying me and propelling me on,
 Even before it is even dawn.

I want you to know,
 Oh glorious toes,
 That without you around,
 I could not venture into town.

I could not make the trek to school,
 Nor could I stand on a stool.

I appreciate the fact that I can move each digit,
 And the fact that my sister hates when you fidget.

I love the fact that you are always there,
 And I want you to know just how much I care.

Without you I could not climb,
 Which is why I thought about this rhyme.

Thank you for never letting me down.

I know I don't always notice how hard you work,
 So thank you for always wiggling and making me smirk.

Thank you toes,
 Now I am off to doze.

[*The Edge of the Sidewalk*]

Hibah Sehar

I fell off the edge of the sidewalk today
While walking, wandering, daydreaming,
Thinking of making

A left turn

Or a right

Or going back the way I came.

I wasn't sure where this path led.

But they said I'd know if I followed,

And so, I did.

Mid step I felt my foot slip

And I fell

And fell

And fell

...

SPLASH

Submerged head to toe in black,

I found myself in an inky pond.

The sky above was white, and I could no longer see
the sidewalk,

Or the clouds or the sun, or the birds,

And the pond was bare of spiders and frogs and fish,

White walls encased me, and beneath me,

The ink seeped into my shoes, staining my toes.

But in the distance, lay the edge of the pond,

The only edge, like the edge of the earth

And so to the grayscale shore I swam.

The ink painting my skin the colour of the night sky,
And the white above stretching further, ever expanding.

The grass past the shore was the colour of snow,
Spilled white onto each blade, meticulously coated.

There was no road or sidewalk, just an endless
winter-esque field.

But I had nowhere else to go

And so I set my path forward,

and forward,

and forward,

Across the shore and the field,

Wandering, daydreaming, thinking of the sidewalk

And who'd fix the edge, and who'd clean up the pond

And my clothes,

Still coated in ink,

And who'd colour the sky and put up the sun?

Until I just so happened to look back

Behind me, my shoes had left prints on the ground,

Like markings in a fairy tale forest,

And they'd started to blend into one.

I see,

So, there was a little sidewalk behind me,

A little road I was making.

Even if I didn't exactly know where I was going.

Lebanese Ibriq (Water Jug)

Sundus Salamé

2020 | Ceramic Stoneware

This piece is a homage to the unique shape of the ibriq, featuring an unconventional use of a multitude of glaze pigments that create a dynamic constellation of colours. The ibriq is a traditional Lebanese water jug shape consisting of a bulbous base, small spout, and a long neck and loop for easy grip. It is most often made of glass, but older models are made of terra cotta clay. It is the centrepiece of the family table - it hears the conversations every morning over qahwe (coffee), the petty arguments of the after-work supper, and the loud rompous laughs of late-night visitors drinking shai (tea). Even miles away from the homeland, across the Atlantic Ocean, you will find the ibriq in the Lebanese emigrant's kitchen. The visual and aural combinations combination of those experiences translates into a physical form.



The Body. I am.

Dea Nair

As I sit hunched at my desk,
Eyes squinting, hands trembling -
Typing blurry words on the blank screen,
I can't help but think.

Will it always be this way?
Will I always ache for the past?
For the days when I sat in the warm sun,
waddled in a blanket of friends,
Laughing at jokes I no longer remember.

Will I always feel this disconnect?
Stumbling in a haze through the empty world,
Shocked at the sight of another,
Wondering if they are smiling behind the mask.

Will I always worry for the future?
Brows furrowing as I think of the planet,
A mountain of problems too tall to climb,
With this pandemic being but one.

A bird calls from beyond the window,
Pulling my focus from the screen before me.
The sharp reminder soothes my weary mind -
Breathe in, breathe out.
You can't solve everything in a day.



Perceptions

Caitlyn

The Broken Facade

Mahati Sivaramakrishnan

Sometimes I wonder, who am I?
The one who lost herself to diffidence.
The one who concealed her true self for appearance.
Sometimes I ask myself, why am I lost?
To please patriarchy's eyes,
While I weep inside for my valour's demise.
Sometimes I think, why do few?
Judge me for my looks at a glance.
But don't give my emotions a chance.
Sometimes I'm confused, what am I?
A human or society's clay?
Who play with me anyway,
Who are blind about my numbed feelings,
Who see me as an object not knowing,
About What I'm dealing.
What I'm fighting everyday.
I often stumble upon this inner debate,
But always have a glimmer of faith.
Crumbling my self hate,
With words of respect.
For my valour to resurrect.

"The Broken Facade" was written by me a few months ago when I felt insecure about my own body and how I sometimes change my appearance just to appeal some people. I feel like this resonated with me a lot as I felt emotional when I was writing this and had a low that day on how I looked. I hope this submission is voice for me and other women to showcase our feelings and that it's ok to stay the way we are even when we hit an all time low.'

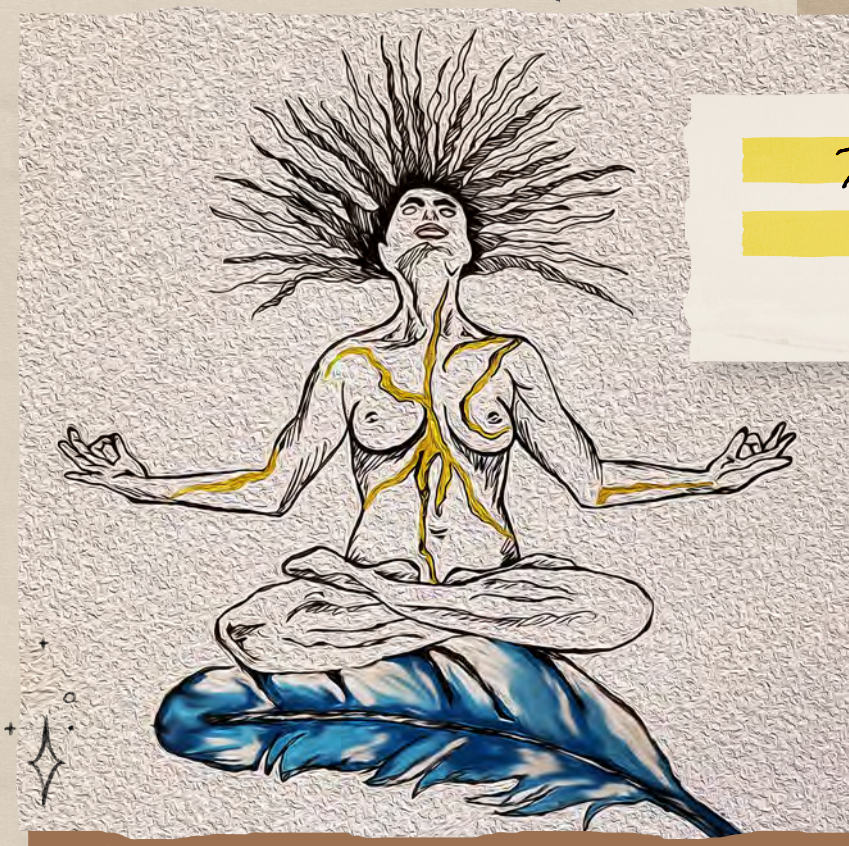


علا Ola
Sundus Salamé

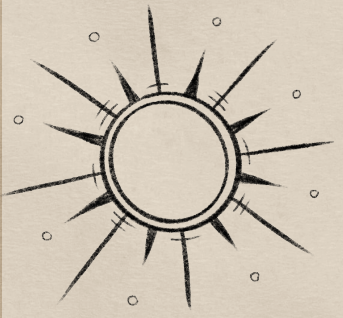
2018 | Oil on Canvas

This is a monochromatic portrait of Ola Idris Ali, a young Sudanese woman raised in Kampala, Uganda. She is an activist, student, and writer for Trad Magazine, an online publication for African ideas and collective memories. She has spoken for several events, including TEDxUJW 2020 in which she discussed the Sudanese revolution's impact on Africa. Aside from her many accomplishments, she is a loving human being emanating joy.

This portrait uses value and movement to capture her radiance without the interference of saturated colour. Her excitement is embodied in her thick, textured curls, striped blouse, and highlighted facial features. It is an honour to be able to visually represent such a positive role model, especially as it immortalizes her beauty.



*The wound is where
the light enters you*
Dea Nair



Quarantine Daydreams

Emma Schuster

i wanna go dancing with someone and
 think i'm falling in love
 but it's just the alcohol
 making me smile
 i wanna go see the stars and sights
 i wanna spend all my lonely nights
 with someone that looks
 just like you
 it's been so long since i've been kissed
 every time i aim it seems i miss
 i forgot to love the light
 of your morning laugh

none of that is real
 i don't know if i can make myself feel
 enough to be alive

they kept appearing in the night
 wake up to bodies on my duvet
 so now i wonder
 if they're coming from me

all alone in my room
 i imagine the things we'd do
 if i could step into fresher air

i wanna go dancing with someone and
 think i'm falling in love
 but it's just the alcohol
 making me smile



Children of Shame

We are birthed of selflessness and sacrifice,
 Connected by more than just our dinner tables.
 We are light keepers,
 Waiting for the perfect storm,
 To rewrite the narrative.

Rachel Dennis



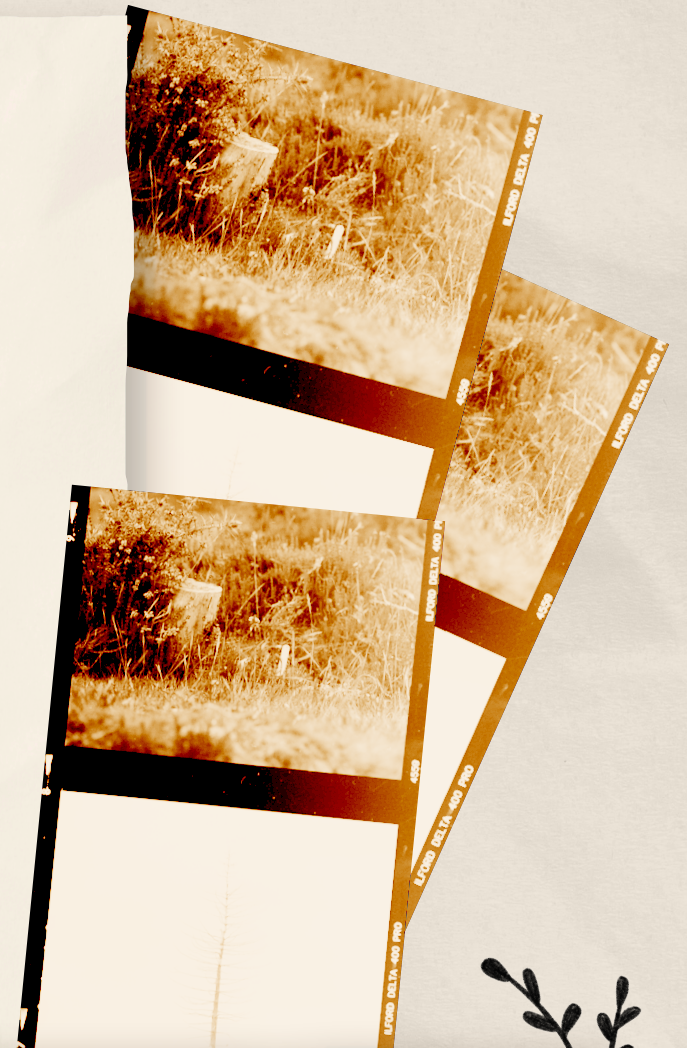
Four Seasons

Simrit Dhillon

We hold hands under sunlight.
 We picnic in the daylight.
 We stargaze in the moonlight.
 With you, everything seems bright.

Seasons change.
 I change along with them - I adapt.
 I dig my roots in the spring.
 I blossom in the summer.
 I fall apart in the autumn.
 And I mourn in the winter.

Yet, each and every season
 your scent is engulfs me,
 so I wear your scars
 like a necklace.



The Insider

Xuan Nguyen

This is my quest to a full and quality life, it is a segment of constructive thoughts that have come into fruition after reading *The Outsider* by Albert Camus and observing beings around me. This piece is a reminder to always be still and maybe stop looking for the next best thing.

Each of us goes through life everyday feeling as if we deserve more than what we currently have,
 We complain about our own unfortunates and yet, just when we got what we wanted, we find ourselves grieving for more. We lead a life from birth believing that the grass is always greener and when death bestows upon us, we suffer from regrets and one last time, complain that we do not deserve this. This is the insider.



Artist Biographies

Emily Lilek

I'm a recent GBDA graduate now doing my post grad at Sheridan College in Computer Animation. I have a passion for creating in all aspects of my life whether it be in the physical or digital world. My favourite part about creating art is seeing how it molds overtime, it gives me a chance to see the reflection of my growth.

Rachel Dennis

To me, writing is reclaiming what my younger self believed would always be out of reach. I deeplystruggled with standardized education growing up, especially English literacy. I dreaded anything to dowith education because I needed the extra help from tutors and changed institutions frequently — Itbecame a place of shame. However it was my grandfather who really pushed me to start writing. It startedwith short stories, memories, aspirations... And over time, with a little guidance from treasured mentors, Istarted to fall a little deeper into books, fantasy, and daydreams. Writing helped to make sense of it all. Asan alumna from the University of Waterloo, I am grateful for where I come from, and those that ignitedeach phase of this journey. My art is inspired by the moments that always seem to lie just out of reach. Tomy younger self and you, dear reader, "stay curious, kid".

Hibah Sehar

I'm in my third year of Health Studies, and I can't imagine a time I didn't love writing and creating. My other favour-ite things include tea and the colour pink. If I'm not writing, I'm probably binging a show or painting some kind of fanart, or both. I also have an Instagram account for my poetry @dreamsandrambles.

Emma Schuster is an Environ-ment, Resources, and Sustainability student with a Joint Honours in Biology. She first started writing when she was ten years old and hasn't stopped since. Emma also enjoys reading, running, and claiming she will write a book one day.

Simrit Dhillon is a public health and psychology student at the University of Waterloo, who delves into poetry, from time-to-time.



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