



# TOWARDS TOMORROW

ISSUE 2



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# CONTENTS

# NO.2

## PAGE 5

### THE BADGE OF LONELINESS

Nina He, California

---

## PAGE 9

### A LITTLE MAGICAL BUBBLE WORLD

Emma, New Zealand

---

## PAGE 10

### THIS FASCINATING WORLD

Meimei Zhang, Maine

---

## PAGE 11

### POLLUTION IS A MASSIVE PROBLEM

victor Chen

---

## **PAGE 12**

### **RABBIT**

Chengxuan Guo, China

---

## **PAGE 13**

### **SNACK**

Rishi Gupta, California

---

## **PAGE 14**

### **SMOKING PROBLEMS**

Kong Kong

---

## **PAGE 15**

### **FLYING TOWARD THE FUTURE**

Dia Wang, Maine

---

## **PAGE 16**

### **LONELY SOLE**

Jiage Wang, China

### **HALLOWEEN DOG**

Frank Jiang, Texas

---

## **PAGE 17**

### **A FUSION OF CHINESE CULTURAL SPLENDOR**

Ella Meng, China

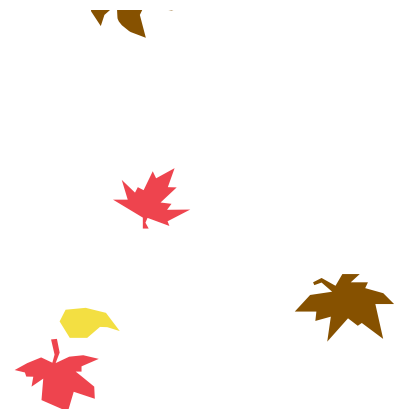
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## **PAGE 18**

### **FUTURISTIC PERSPECTIVE**

Andrew Sun-Zhuang, Washington

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the second issue of *Towards Tomorrow Journal*! It is with great excitement and pride that we bring you this edition, following the incredible success of our inaugural issue last year. Your enthusiasm, creativity, and passion have fueled our mission to empower teens to engage with their communities and advocate for themselves.

In the past year, we have witnessed remarkable stories of young individuals stepping up and making a difference. From tackling smoking problems to the art works of the future world, your actions have shown the true power and potential of our generation. This journal is a testament to your efforts and a platform to amplify your voices.

Our goal remains steadfast: to inspire and equip teens to be proactive members of their communities. In this issue, you will find a diverse array of articles, personal stories, and creative works that highlight the importance of community involvement and self-advocacy. Please see our website [www.journaltowardstomorrow.org](http://www.journaltowardstomorrow.org) for resources and tips to help you take actionable steps towards making a positive impact.

As you navigate through the pages of this journal, we encourage you to reflect on the stories and ideas shared by your peers. Let their experiences inspire you to think about the ways you can contribute to your own community. Remember, no action is too small, and every effort counts.

We are incredibly grateful for your continued support and contributions. Your dedication to making the world a better place is what drives us to keep going. We look forward to seeing the incredible things you will accomplish in the coming year and beyond.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us. Together, we can create a future where every teen feels empowered to make a difference.

With gratitude and hope,

Atticus Wei, Editor in Chief



# THE BADGE OF LONELINESS

NINA HE

My life was boring. No one bothered about me. No one cared. I think it would be a miracle if someone knew I existed.

I'm the son of Leo and Mary Charman. My name is Liam Williams Charman. I go to Fountwater Elementary. My life was...fine. But I didn't make any friends.

I would love to, but I was just...shy, I guess. Very shy. I'm like a turtle hiding in its shell.

Except I never came out.

This particular day, I was feeling sad. That was typical. I always feel sad and lonely and rarely anything else at all.

I rode the school bus to school in my own row.

No one sat next to me.

Their friends had already "saved" spots for them. I don't have any friends to save spots for me, and no friends to save spots for. So I didn't save anything and just sat there, looking out the window.

When we arrived, I trailed after the others.

In books, people always go greet the lonely kid and BOOM! suddenly they're best friends.





Not for me. No. No one ever bothered about me. Well, maybe except my Mom and Dad, because they have to take care of me, and my teachers, because they have to grade my tests and homework, but nothing else.

I walked to Mrs. Barlina's classroom and listened to her ramble on and on about the Civil War. We had a test on the book *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, and then it was recess.

I sat on the benches and ate my banana very, very slowly so that by the time I finished it, recess would be over. It wasn't, though, by the time I finished. Then I saw something, glimmering on the ground.

I picked it up and on it said: LONER'S BADGE. It was perfect. Shiny, and I think it was made of gold. I sat back on the bench and stuffed it in my pocket.

A girl approached me and said, "Hey, you."

I pointed to myself.

She nodded. "Yeah, you. My heart soared; maybe she wanted me to play with her!" "Can you hand us our ball? It's at your feet."

I looked down and saw a small, purple ball wedged tightly in between my feet. I looked at the girl.

Short brown hair, black eyes, red jacket.

And then I did the dumbest thing in the world. I stood up, and...ran. I ran all the way back home. Whew.

I don't know why. I think my shyness got to me, or something else. But I ran. I ran upstairs, into my room, and laid face-first in my bed.

My parents weren't home. At least I thought so.

Someone opened the door and said, "Hey... Liam." Mom.

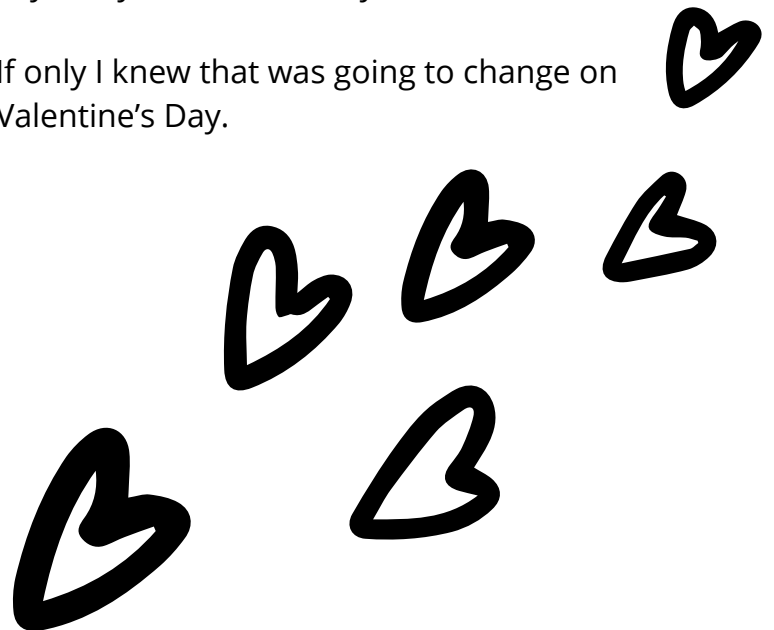
I fought the urge to groan. "What?" I asked instead, into my pillow. "Don't ask me why I ran home. I have no idea either. Anyway, I don't want to go back."

"You're not going to if you don't want to," Mom said. "I'll call the school." She hesitated for a fraction of a fraction of a fraction of a second before closing the door.

I took the badge out of my pocket and pinned it to my shirt. Might as well wear it, since I am a loner. A very lonely loner.

"Why am I so dumb?" I mumbled. "Why am I so shy? Why don't I have any friends?"

If only I knew that was going to change on Valentine's Day.



The next day at school, I didn't raise my head and listened with my ears. And when we had to look somewhere, I raised my head ever so slightly, just enough to look.

Then, when I did that, the girl I met yesterday snickered and whispered something to her friend, pointing at me. I felt like I was about to cry.

"Mrs. Barlina?" I asked weakly. "May I use the restroom?"

"Sure," she replied. "Just make sure to come back before recess—"

Before she could finish, I was already in the boy's bathroom, sitting in a locked stall.

The rest of the days were pretty much the same. Until the day I made my very first friend.

I walked out of the school bus as usual, and the girl who asked me for the ball said, "Hey, you."

I was feeling quite bold today, so instead of shrinking back and pointing to myself, I said, "What?"

She snickered. She pointed to the badge, and said, "Matches you. By the way, I didn't know you could talk."

"And I didn't think anyone could be so ugly," I shot back as I grasped my badge for luck. Very untrue, but then again, it was only fair.

The girl looked surprised, and I shoved past her and walked off. But then she caught up to me and, putting a hand on my shoulder, said, "You'll regret that—"

I slapped her hand away. "Shut up." Wow. I was surprised by how bold a shy guy like me could get.

Then, instead of running away like I did last time, I kept my pace and walked steadily toward my classroom. When I arrived, many people were talking about me and my strange behavior. They didn't see me as I entered, and I said, "Hey, I can be bold too."

The talking stopped immediately. Then another girl sitting next to me extended her hand and said, "Hi, I'm Amy. Thanks for standing up to Geneviève. She always bullied us, but I never was brave enough to stand up to her."

I shook my head, still a bit shocked, and said, "It's not that hard. You just need to be brave for a few seconds."





And then suddenly everyone explained how Geneviève had bullied them too and how unfair it was and how brave I was to stand up to her. When Geneviève herself walked into the room, her face red with anger, and shouted, “Shut up! All of you!”

Amy glanced at me and whispered, “See? She’s so mean!”

Geneviève stomped to her seat and sat down, glaring at me. “And you! Why did you ruin my life!? Now my friends won’t play with me!”

“Because you’re so mean,” Amy said, and almost covered her mouth, but she continued anyway, “You always bully people and talk about them behind their backs, so maybe if you were nicer you might have more friends!”

And it was that same day I made a bunch of friends. Amy, Chole, Ethan, and Nathan! Four friends! I came back home in a happy mood and told Mom and Dad all about my day: how I made friends and stood up to a bully. My parents seemed surprised at how happy I was, but they were happy too.

Then, at school, everything changed! I had friends to play with, spots to save, and friends who saved spots for me! Geneviève now sat on the benches, alone and depressed, and somehow, I made friends with her! She isn’t mean anymore, and turns out, under all the bullying, she really is a nice person!

When one day, it rained, I thought, Finally! Rain! When before I had friends I would think, Ugh. Rain. There’s nothing good about it.

That same day, I put my loner badge in the same place I found it.

Two months later, a new girl called Lily found the badge, and I thought, it was time to make a new friend.

And that was how my boring and lonely life turned interesting and fun.

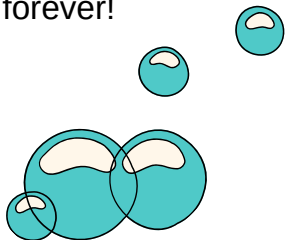


# A LITTLE MAGICAL BUBBLE WORLD

EMMA

My name is Emma. I'm 9 years old. I started taking art lessons when I was five because I want to put all the pictures in my mind onto paper. I enjoy working with watercolors and markers the most. In the future, I aspire to become an artist and have my own art exhibition.

It's like a little magical bubble world. The rabbit holds the umbrella because the bubble world is always sunny and shining. The snail is curious about the outside world, while the butterfly wants to enter the bubble world. The fairies have always guarded this little world. If you could enter this wonderful place, you would want to stay here forever!



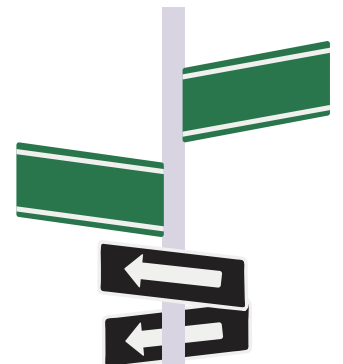


# THIS FASCINATING WORLD

MEIMEI ZHANG



In this fascinating futuristic world, there are a total of eight distinct places, each showcasing unique features from various time periods in the future. Let's explore these remarkable locations: Two tree houses: one of the tree houses is spacious, the other one is cozy and charming. Two futuristic cities: one above ground and modern and the other underwater with mysteries of the sea. Two steampunk inspired cities: one above ground and elegant and the other underwater and unique. With a few cactus/succulent themed buildings and a tree and bush themed building under the water.





# POLLUTION IS A MASSIVE PROBLEM

VICTOR CHEN

Pollution is a massive problem. 99 percent of the world suffers from pollution, and 7 million people die each year due to air pollution. This problem is too dangerous and needs to be solved.

Pollution harms crops and trees in many ways. It decreases the sunlight which is a source of food for plants and trees to grow. It can also cause acid rain and respiratory disease. Pollution causes respiratory disease because of pollution particles. Pollution harms forests and wildlife agriculture. Poor people who cannot afford to protect themselves from the negative impacts of pollution will suffer the worst.



Pollution also leads to global warming and higher chances of cancer. Pollution is now known as the most prominent environmental health threat.

The largest source of pollution is garbage. The reason why garbage is the main source of pollution is that garbage could travel around the ocean. This causes aquatic life to think garbage is "food." Garbage can also affect physical habitats in the ocean. Garbage also transports chemical pollutants, and infects rivers and is a major threat to aquatic life .

We need to solve this problem immediately, or this might cause a devastating end to life on Earth and the planet itself.



# RABBIT

MEIMEI ZHANG



I Copying a Partial Section of 'Wutong Twin Rabbits' by Leng Mei ( Qing Dynasty,China)

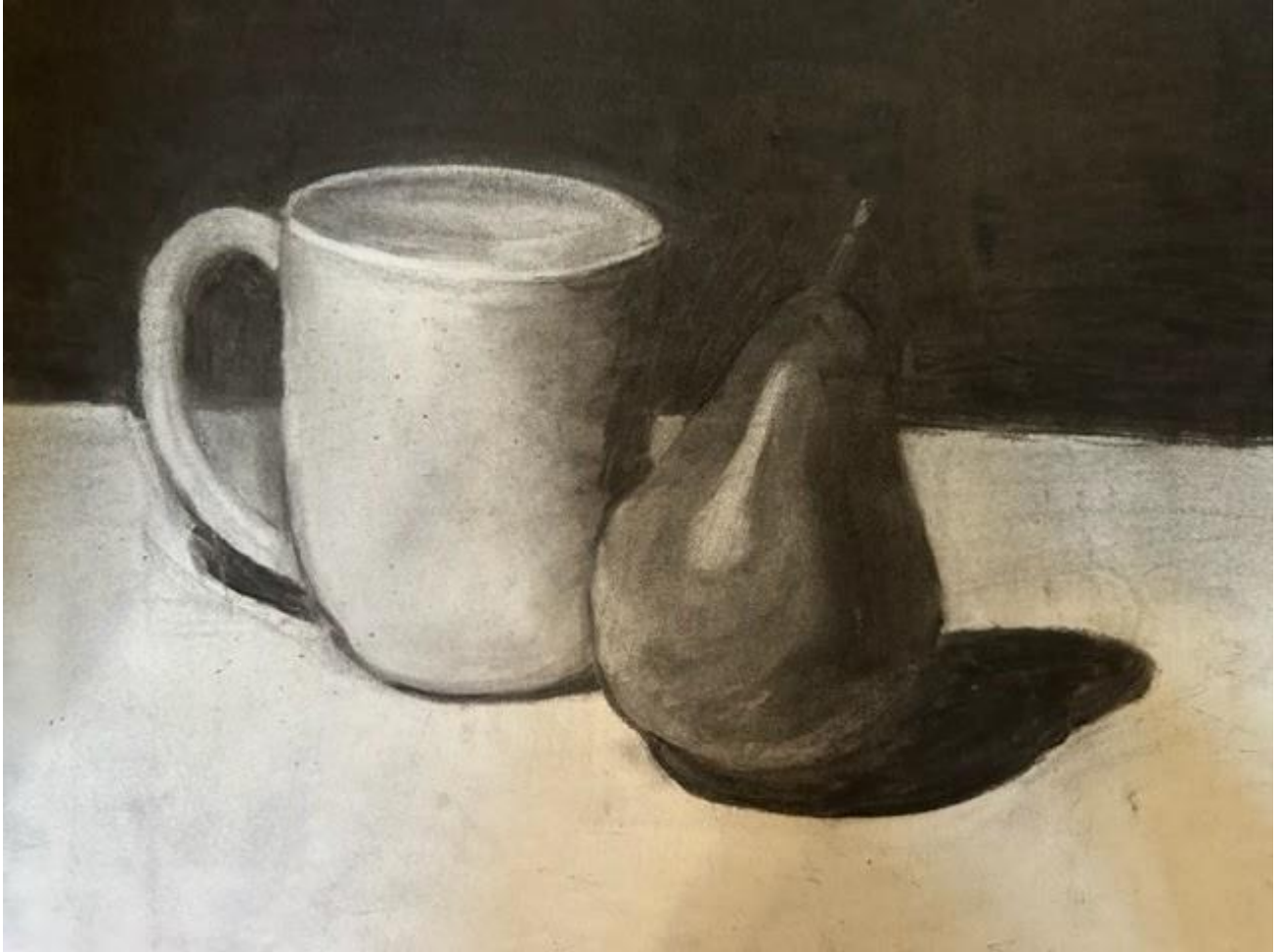
I drew this rabbit for my dad since he was born in the Year of the Rabbit. Because the rabbit's fur is short, dense, and silky, when drawing it, the fur needs to be thin—no more than one millimeter per line. But the difficult part is the orientation of the fur. The Rabbit is the fourth in the Chinese zodiac, and the orientation of the fur has several sections. Each section's fur needs to be in the same direction, depending on the body line. Unfortunately, the third fur on the eyebrow is too thick.

I learned painting for three years. I initially drew trees and mountains, and the difficulty increased gradually. I learned the basics one by one, and now I've started to draw animals. Chinese paintings are divided into two kinds: the first is "freehand," which means you draw enjoyably and easily, and the other is traditional Chinese realistic painting, which means you draw carefully and with details. This rabbit is a traditional Chinese realistic painting. However, it is drawn on fabric, departing from rice paper. The fabric makes the paint dry fast.

# SNACK

RISHI GUPTA

I like to draw in my free time; it helps me relax. One day, when I was studying, I noticed a cup of milk and a pear my mom gave me for a snack. The way the smooth cup and the textured pear looked together fascinated me, so I decided to draw them to capture the simple beauty of that moment.





# SMOKING PROBLEM

## KONG KONG

In busy cities all around the world, it is easy and often to see someone smoking. Smoking might seem to be a small thing, but it is definitely not. Did you know? According to WHO's research in 2017, smoking causes many serious illnesses, such as cancer, heart attacks, and more than 8 million deaths worldwide annually.

Based on Nicorette's research, there are over 4,000 chemicals in cigarettes. Some are poisonous and used in nail polish remover, paint, batteries, etc. At least 69 of these chemicals are highly related to serious illnesses. They damage people's lungs, cells, heart, skin, teeth, and hair. Coughing, breathing and memory problems, heart attacks, and a shorter lifespan are also among the noxious effects of smoking. Remember: Although smoking can provide short-term relief from pain and stress for smokers, it creates much more long-term damage to their bodies.

Smoking not only affects smokers but also those around them. Secondhand smoke produces a bad odor and poses health risks to non-smokers, harming everyone, especially children. According to the American Lung Association, secondhand smoke is responsible for between 150,000 and 300,000 infections in approximately 1-year-old babies, resulting in about 10,000 hospitalizations each year.

In summary, smoking leads to numerous health problems for both smokers and non-smokers worldwide. More and more people are becoming aware of and concerned about these issues. In the USA, 21.5 million people attempted to quit smoking in 2018. For a healthy, clean city, should the next cigarette be lit up?



Citations  
[Smoking Cessation STOP with Ashes](#)  
[Health Problems Caused by Secondhand Smoke](#)  
[How Secondhand and Thirdhand Smoke Hurt Our Kids The Most](#)  
[Tobacco](#)  
[Health Effects of Secondhand Smoke](#)  
[Tobacco Related Mortality](#)  
[Cigarette Chemicals & The Effects of Smoking on Your Body.](#)



# FLYING TOWARD THE FUTURE

DIA WANG



Flying Toward The Future represents the change that occurs when moving towards the future. The main figure of the piece is seen clinging onto a flying fish heading towards a futuristic Atlantis of sorts, resembling an ocean wave. As the ocean nears the structure it loses its old life and changes into something more mechanical. Though the figure is aware of the change the future brings, they still can't help but see the structure as a brightly lit hope, leaving their previous life behind for the future.



# LONELY SOLE

JIAGE WANG



In my room, a single sneaker sits, its laces neatly tied in a state of abandonment. Once part of countless adventures and long walks, it now seems to long for the days when it had a matching companion and the warmth of a foot within it. This lonely sneaker holds the stories of its journeys and the memories of places it has traveled, patiently awaiting the day when it can once again fulfill its sole purpose.

# HALLOWEEN DOG

FRANK JIANG

The dog is coming out of a pumpkin, and the pumpkin represents Halloween. I made it because Halloween is coming up soon and I like dogs and cats, so I made this artwork.





# A FUSION OF CHINESE CULTURAL SPLENDOR

ELLA MENG

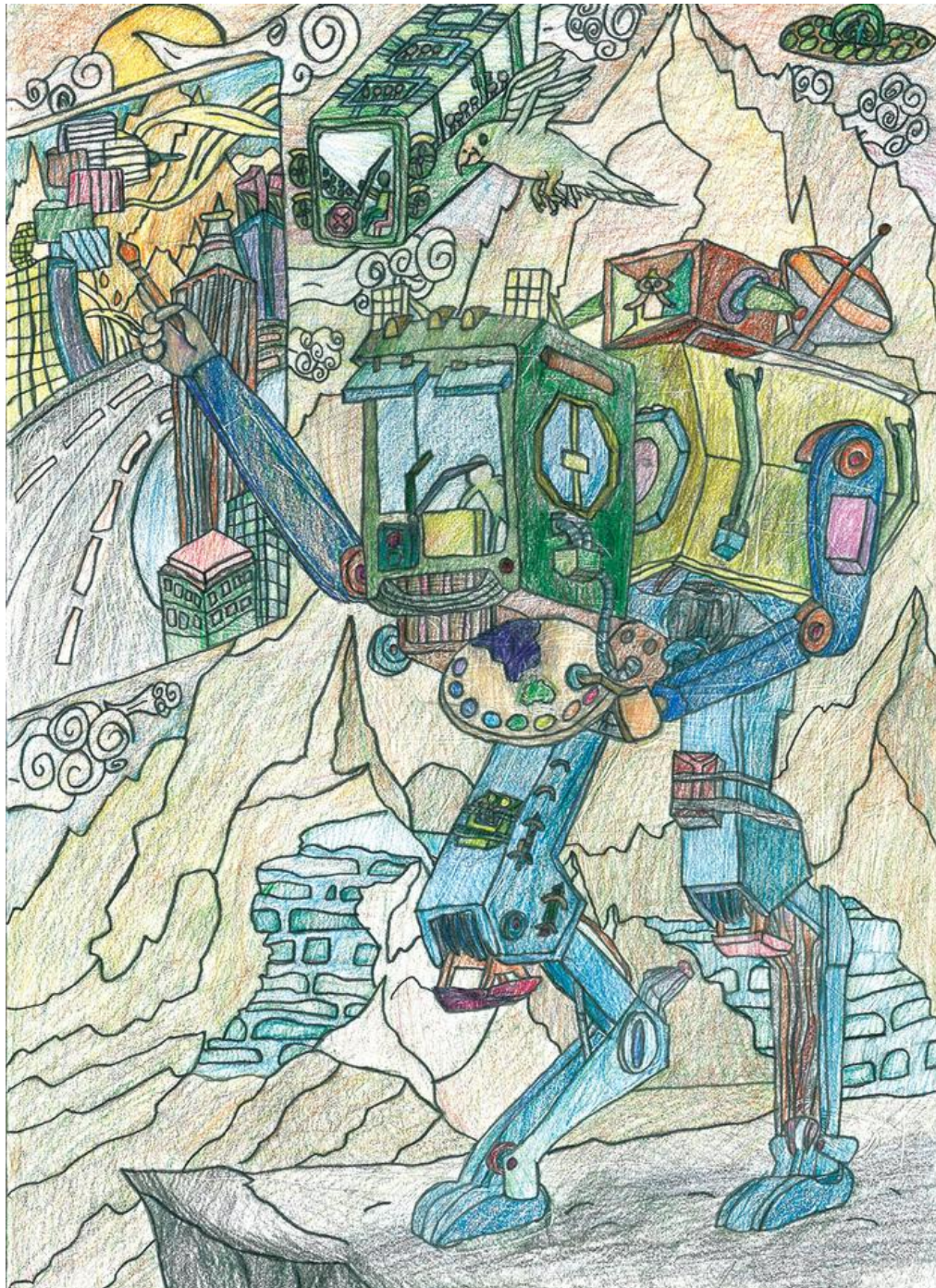
Step into a world of vibrant colors, intricate costumes, and timeless traditions as we embark on a visual journey celebrating the rich tapestry of Chinese culture and the mesmerizing allure of Beijing Opera. This captivating drawing seamlessly weaves together iconic elements from Chinese heritage, capturing the essence of a performance art that has entranced audiences for centuries. I invite you to explore the harmony of history and artistry in this unique artistic creation.





# FUTURISTIC PERSPECTIVES

ANDREW SUN-ZHUANG



I always think about our future world. It probably will involve lots of AI into our life. People would be benefited due to different high technologies. My art is about a futuristic robot who is standing on a cliff. It is being controlled by a human, and they are drawing a piece of art that is suspended in the air at dusk, in which there is a sunset. The artwork is picturing the future in their perspectives, so the artwork that the robot is drawing is the future of the world in the robot's perspective. A flying bus is taking a group of happy children home from school. There is a parrot watching the robot draw the picture because he likes the robot's drawing. In the top right corner, there is a space saucer, which is what I think futuristic travel will be like.

Towards Tomorrow's submission window is always open. We also publish selected submissions on our website. At the end of May each year, our editorial board will also select outstanding works from the online publication pool to be included in the yearly journal issue.

We welcome all types of writing, art and more. Diversity in your works is very important to us. We also encourage all types of art submissions, like painting, essays, stories, multimedia, etc. We also ask that artwork is submitted as a digital file.

Submit your art on [our website](#). We accept submissions from students all over the world. Please limit text submissions to under 1500 words.

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