
November 2, 2022
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state press magazine



The
Affect
Issue



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Editor's letter

In psychology, media studies and critical theory, the word affect is oftentimes mutated from a verb to a noun. Affect encapsulates the visual and emotional qualities of a work. We employ affect — pronounced af-ekt — when describing how a film, a song, a photograph, a painting or another artwork makes us feel and how we relate to it as spectators. In this issue, writers explored the emotional connections we make with art — both what we produce and consume — and how this drives us forward.

Student artists at the University grapple with stereotypes of BFAs wasted in dead end jobs as they pursue their passions. Undergraduates enrolled in a new popular music program help shape not only curriculum and campus culture, but the broader music scene they inhabit. The Heard Museum has joined an ASU-LACMA fellowship aimed at diversifying museum spaces through educating the next generation of curators. DIY house shows prove to be a fountain of community, offering music lovers an escape that's both cheap and fun. Finally, amid a burgeoning national labor movement, workers and managers are faced with decisions to squash or support unionizing efforts.

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Greta Forslund

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Sam Ellefson

MANAGING EDITORS

Alexis Moulton

Camila Pedrosa

DESIGN EDITOR

Biplove Baral

ENGAGEMENT EDITOR

Sydney Huyge

WRITERS

Madeline Nguyen

Savannah Dagupion

Keetra Bippus

Sophia Balasubramanian

ILLUSTRATOR

Niko Vu

PHOTOGRAPHER

Hajin Lee

FEATURED ARTISTS

Remi Koebel

Sam Doan

Kate Arford

Bold | Risk-Taking | Provoking

You're the general manager of a large beverage chain popular among ASU students.

Recently, you've been overhearing whispers among your employees about forming a union, and your bosses are angry — they don't want to lose control of the people that make their money. They put you in charge of shutting down the operation, dangling a fancy promotion over your head if you manage the feat.

You walk into the breakroom and see a group of workers on break whom you have identified as union organizers talking to the new hire, but you can't exactly hear what they're talking about.

You decide to:

Ignore the filing and keep on trying to stop the union efforts, in hopes that your work will bring you that promotion.

Tell the workers to leave the new hire alone, otherwise they'll lose their break benefits.

The NLRB has found that your activities are illegal and is issuing a complaint against your company.

Uh oh! Your workers are angry at your illegal union-busting actions and are filing a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board. How will you respond?

SATIRE

ARE YOU A UNION BUSTER?

BY CAMILA PEDROSA
ILLUSTRATIONS BY SYDNEY HUYGE

Mind your own business and let them continue their break — you don't know if they were talking about union activities.

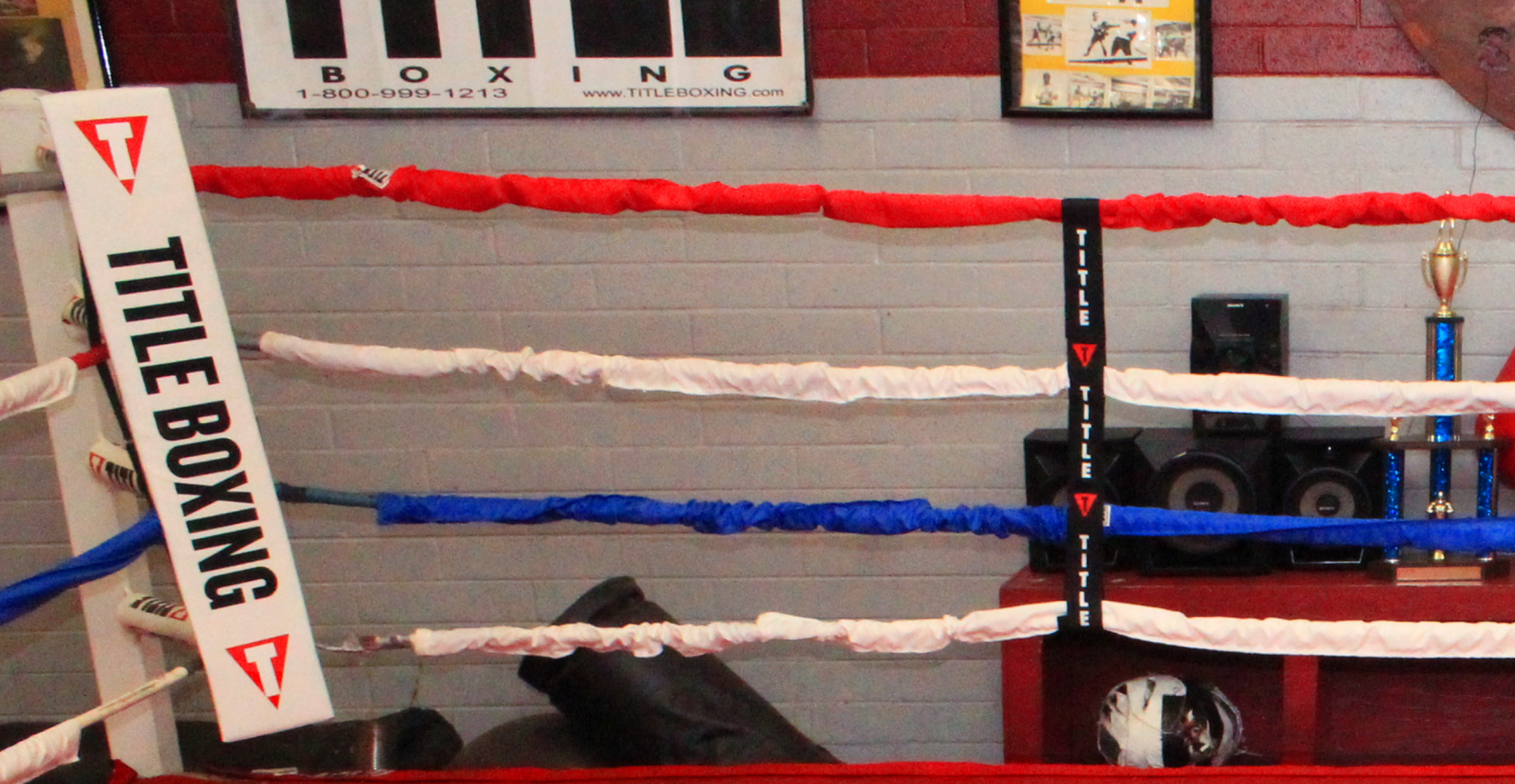
The next day, you find a flier outlining employee rights and encouraging them to join "the union fight."

Tear down the union fliers and put up information about why unionizing isn't in the employees' best interests.

Read the flier, realize that your rights are being violated by your bosses promising a promotion if you reject union activity. You decide to join your employees in their efforts to unionize.

You realize that your bosses are violating your employee rights by promising a promotion if you reject union activity and decide to join your employees in their efforts to unionize.

Congratulations, you have joined the worker solidarity movement and are helping protect the rights of workers (like yourself) all over the country!



Report

Passion over pay

As the digital age has driven society to view STEM degrees as a one-track highway to success, ASU's professional artists and rising creatives work to carve out a space for the arts

by Madeline Nguyen





Artwork by Remi Koebel

Remi Koebel's work is as loud and whimsical as the fleeting remnants of a nonsensical fever dream. As an aspiring contemporary artist, Koebel uses heavy editing and cotton-candy colors to make people feel confronted by their work.

Photo courtesy of Remi Koebel

“Every day, going to school just feels like a dream come true because it engages me. I feel like I’m at home. It feels comforting to finally do something that feels right.”

— Sam Doan

For nearly 10 years, Sarah Marie Konecki-Brazeal would jet-set around the world on paid vacations and enjoy the “big paycheck” that came with working at Microsoft. Now, she’s 39, a junior in college, and pursuing two arts degrees: sculpture and art history.

She’s never been happier.

“If I could take back those years and not have all the money but be doing something I loved, I would,” she said.

Scared of becoming a “starving artist” stereotype, Konecki-Brazeal abandoned her art school dreams when she first attended college in favor of a physics- and math-oriented career. She thought she had resigned herself to a lifetime of tech jobs, but her drive to create art went beyond a childhood dream career.

For her and many others, creating art is a lifelong calling.

“It makes us less human to ignore that part of us,” she said.

Konecki-Brazeal decided to take a leap

of faith. About six years ago, she quit her job at Microsoft, leaving the paycheck and perks in the dust.

When she planned to return to college, she made sure this time it would be on her own terms: she would study art at ASU’s Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts, and she wouldn’t squander this second chance.

The trope of the starving artist has existed for over a century. It’s led many, like Konecki-Brazeal, to believe that for every modern-day Picasso or Basquiat, there’s a trove of hobbyists whose BFAs have gone to waste while they work minimum-wage jobs.

As a societal focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics has come to dominate the digital age, the perception that an arts education is a sentence to dead-end job prospects has only intensified.

Visual and performing arts were ranked “least valuable” undergraduate majors in a 2021 study by Bankrate, a personal finance company, based on factors like median income and unemployment rates. Of the

nearly 160 degrees profiled, two other arts-related majors — miscellaneous fine arts and drama and theater arts — joined visual and performing arts in the bottom ranks.

All 25 of the degrees deemed “most valuable” by the study were in the STEM field.

In coming years, STEM fields are expected to experience a flood of new career openings. In 2021, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projected over 1 million new STEM jobs will be added within the next decade, while the arts industry is expected to experience a smaller addition of 20,500 jobs.

Last year, the BLS reported that the median annual income of STEM workers in the U.S. was nearly double that of arts and design occupations. While STEM graduates can expect to make a median income of over \$95,000 every year, art majors have significantly lower earning prospects at less than \$50,000, according to the BLS.

Artwork by Sam Doan

Growing up, Sam Doan felt compelled to infuse their art with technical skill to gain validation from others. Now, as an intermedia art major, they’re not afraid to experiment between artistic disciplines to discover new ways to express themselves.

Photo courtesy of Sam Doan

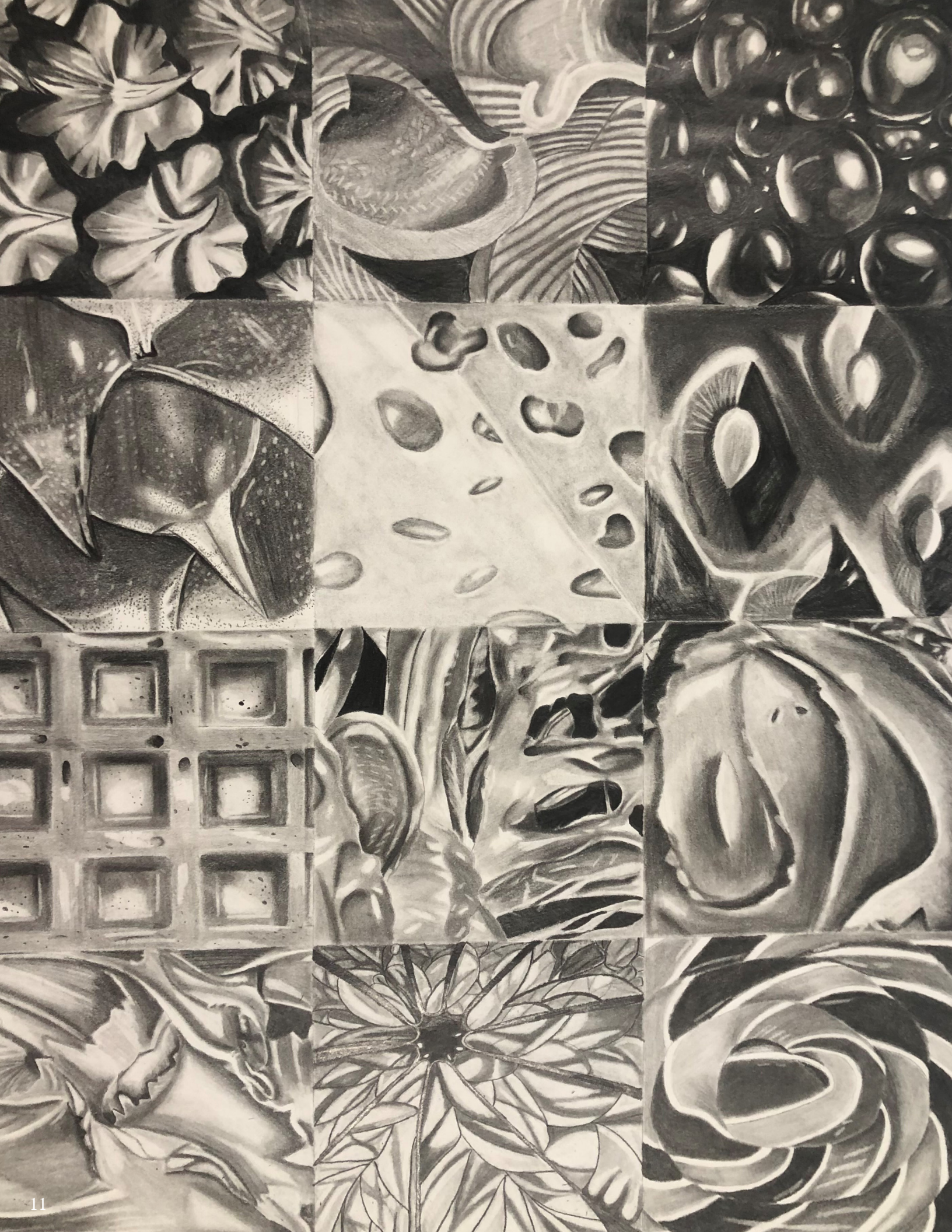


NOW

goodbye I'm getting a flip phone

Evaporated Milk
cream of Tomato Soup
Sainsbury's Strawberries
Mac Garden Peas

Lobster Soup
rice
Sainsbury's meat and liver cat food
Dougal's



Even as college enrollment declines across America and art schools continue to face bankruptcy and closures, Herberger hasn't suffered from a shortage of new students. Since 2014, Herberger's student population has actually grown by over 2,300 students across its 130 current program options.

'It's my education, right?'

Sam Doan, a transfer student studying intermedia art, knows they shouldn't feel like a disappointment for the simple decision to follow their calling. Nevertheless, the guilt persists.

Doan's path to the arts has hardly been linear — they transferred to Herberger after spending nearly three years studying biochemistry, secretly jealous of the students who were able to enroll in art school.

A first-generation American child of Vietnamese immigrants, Doan's parents steered them toward the financial stability and prestige that would come with a career in the STEM field, convinced that was the key toward the "better future" they didn't get to experience.

But Doan was miserable. Unable to continue feeling like an outcast in their own degree program, they took a semester off during the early pandemic to reflect on the unrealized dreams they'd held as the "artsy kid" back in grade school.

Even though the decision to switch to an art major felt natural, breaking the news to their parents was not.

"My parents did do a lot to bring me to where I am, and I feel like I need to fulfill that," Doan said. "I feel like I'm a disappointment."

Even though their parents initially found it difficult to accept their decision, Doan no longer feels dejected when thinking about their future.

"Every day, going to school just feels like a dream come true because it engages me," they said. "I feel like I'm at home. It feels comforting to finally do something that feels right."

For Kate Arford, a sophomore studying ceramics and sculpture, the path to becoming an artist was every bit as slow and frustrating as it is to mold delicate pottery from blobs of clay. Even among those who have decided to work in the arts, the stigma surrounding creative careers can be stifling.

"Pretty much any time I'll talk about what I'm doing, it's just, 'Well, what are you going to do?'" she said. "'How are you going to make money? You're not going to be able to survive on that.'"

Initially convinced that financial independence simply wasn't achievable in the arts, she abandoned her "first love" and applied to ASU as a molecular biosciences major pursuing a pre-med track.

Despite the job stability and comfortable salary that comes with working in the medical field, Arford could feel her desire to be an artist slowly gnawing away at her — an instinctual feeling, deep in her gut.

"It's just going to eat away at you until you follow it," she said. "I just woke up one morning, and I was like, 'This is the wrong path. I need to follow this art career and just see what happens.'" She transferred to Herberger a week before her freshman year with aspirations of opening up a ceramics studio.

Konecki-Brazeal can also pinpoint the moment she realized her lifelong dreams could become reality. At the time, she had

spent the past year moonlighting as an apprentice to a tattoo artist while working 40 hours a week at Microsoft. Despite the grueling workload, tattooing kept her artistic passions satisfied.

The night after she tattooed someone for the first time, Konecki-Brazeal walked into Microsoft and quit.

"I was like, 'No, f— this. I'm going to do what I want,'" she said. "It's my education, right? And nobody else is paying for it but me, and I want to go to art school."

Coming from a low-income background, Konecki-Brazeal was acutely aware of the importance of financial success when choosing a job. Even though she had always harbored dreams of pursuing an arts education, she feared it would become the "waste of money" everyone told her it would be.

Now, she only sees her art education as an asset. Even though she ultimately wants to excavate sites as a field archaeologist, she's confident that her artistic skills in archaeological illustration will give her a leg up when she applies to a doctorate program in a few years.

Money has also been a constant, inescapable concern for Remi Koebel. As a senior studying photography, they fear financial insecurity when thinking about their future career.

"There's always this kind of anxiousness and paranoia behind every decision I make," they said. "I'm constantly a little bit afraid."

Koebel comes from a line of artists who all ran into roadblocks before they were able to realize their full potential. Their mother's future in ballet went dark after a career-ending injury. Their grandmother's art career ended after marrying young and having a child. Koebel feels that by chasing their own potential, they're also carrying on the torch

Artwork by Kate Arford

As a ceramicist and sculptor, Kate Arford's work is by nature hands-on and three-dimensional. Even her sketches fly off the page with depth and texture.

Photo courtesy of Kate Arford

“The night after she tattooed someone for the first time, Konecki-Brazeal walked into Microsoft and quit.”

for these people.

Full STEAM ahead

Working in small California art colleges taught D.P. Leighton, the assistant director of Herberger’s creative career services, that many top art schools are ivory towers of elitism and power. Herberger aims to change that, he said.

“I was sickened by the money and the privilege,” Leighton said. “Those who had money would then get into these very expensive degrees and subsequently network with high-end people.”

Arford, Konecki-Brazeal, Koebel and Doan all chose to attend Herberger — the largest comprehensive arts and design college in the nation, according to Herberger’s website — because of its affordability compared with private art schools. Some said the scholarships offered by Herberger opened up the possibility of an art career in the first place.

When Leighton was earning his bache-

lor’s and master’s degrees in photography, he too struggled with money. After announcing his decision to pursue an arts education, his parents criticized him for selecting a career track that didn’t seem as “worthwhile” as engineering or psychology. The lack of support strained his close relationships, time and finances.

In college, Leighton wasn’t able to pick up internships because he had to work two jobs to put himself through school. Now, he works one-on-one with Herberger students to connect them with individualized resources that will help them find success in their careers.

“Self-actualization is all good and well — feeling good about yourself and feeling happy,” Leighton said. “But if you can’t make enough money to have housing security, to have food security, your entire community is going to crumble.”

Ted Decker, an ASU instructor who specializes in developing Herberger students’

business skills, believes STEM and art are two halves of a whole. Some institutions are pivoting to focus on STEAM, or science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics.

Decker has realized artists aren’t relegated to museums or exhibition showings anymore. With the rise of STEAM, new connections are being forged between the fields every day. With undergraduate degrees like digital culture and a media arts and sciences doctoral program, ASU offers students opportunities to try STEAM for themselves.

“Artists were once referred to as starving artists,” he said. “I think that will change as technology, society and our culture advance.”

As the arts and STEM become increasingly intertwined, perhaps the awkward dinner-table conversations that have become an unwelcome rite of passage for many arts students will become a relic of the past.

Passion may not always equate to pay, but for some, passion alone is enough.

nothing is forever, so...

ENJOY IT
WHILE IT
LASTS

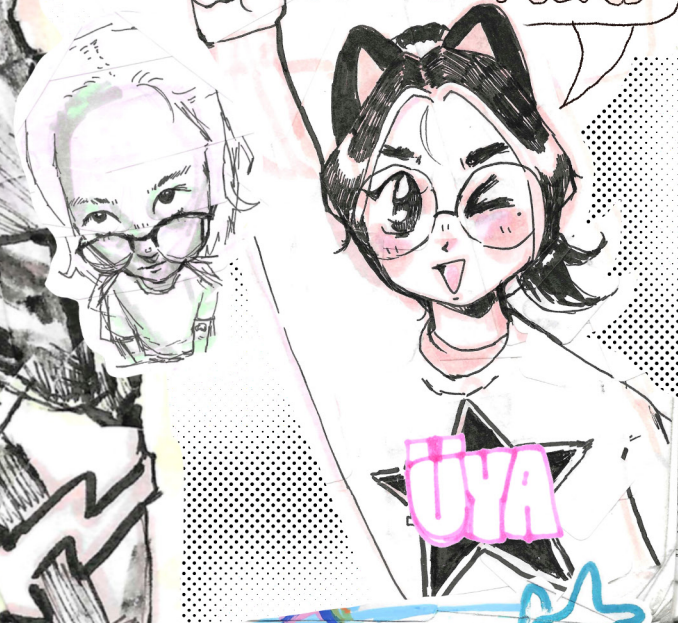
Hell

No, i will not
play league of legends
for the iphone.

EPIC
FAIL!!



I DON'T NEED
TO PROVE MYSELF,
THE NEED 4 VALIDATION
HINDERS MY PROGRESS.
I AIM 4 PROGRESS,
NOT 2 PLEASE



SHUT UP OH MY GOD!!!

don't look
@ me!!

You're a new hire earning minimum wage at a local warehouse of a major online shopping corporation.

You've been fairly content in the workplace, but are noticing yourself beginning to feel burnt out due to long hours, low pay, and poor treatment from managers. While getting to know your coworkers, you find that they've been having the same problems, and they tell you that they've been working on forming a union to fight for better working conditions. However, the company has a reputation for stifling and even firing union organizers, so you must figure out how to form a union before the corporation busts it.



During lunch, you and a few other union organizers begin planning how to reach out to coworkers and draft a petition. Your manager sees this, tells you all to stop speaking with one another and rips up your petition draft.

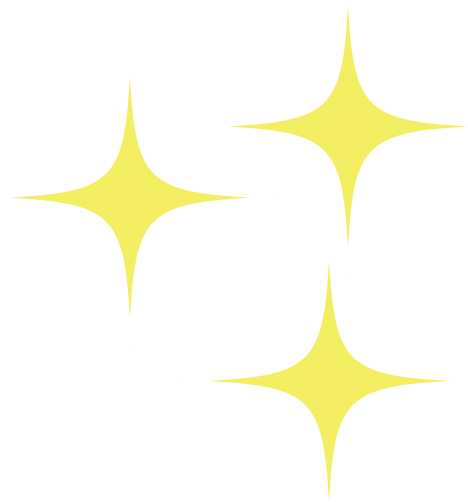
You decide to:

Continue making plans behind your manager's back because it's your right to form a union.



Confront your manager, saying they are violating worker rights and you will notify authorities if they continue.

Uh oh! Your manager fires you in response to your union-forming activities.



You file a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board, claiming your employer's actions violate the laws that protect workers' rights. Your manager is unsure what to do at this point, so your fellow organizers invite them to join the fight for a union.

SATIRE

WILL YOU UNIONIZE?

BY CAMILA PEDROSA
ILLUSTRATIONS BY SYDNEY HUYGE

The next day, you and your coworkers wear matching pins in support of your union efforts, and your manager tells you to take off the pins or you will be dismissed.

What do you do?

Offer a pin to your manager and tell them they are more than welcome to join the fight for a union.

Refuse to take off the pins and support your coworkers wearing them as well, informing your manager that it is generally your right to wear the union insignia on your work uniform.

Your manager realizes their worker rights have been violated by their supervisors for demanding that they squash the union, and they recognize that a union would support them from these forms of violations. They decide to work alongside you to create a union in the warehouse.

Congratulations, you have successfully rallied your workplace in order to demand a union!

You collected enough support cards to be voluntarily recognized as a union by your manager, and are now working on a contract with the corporation!



Feature

For the record

A new program at ASU caters to students with a passion for modern music and an entrepreneurial spirit

by Savannah Dagupion
Photography by Hajin Lee
Illustrations by Biplove Baral



The rumble of 1,700 audience members filled the warm summer air at the Pepsi Amphitheater in Flagstaff — all eagerly waiting for the show to start.

Before the touring artists took the stage, a girl and her guitar faced the spectators. Standing front and center, she looked two inches tall to the people at the back of the crowd.

“The first thing I noticed was just how huge the audience was,” said Ellie Fern, a junior studying popular music. “The crowd went back for what seemed like miles, and I could clearly see the people smiling in the front row.”

She did her typical routine before taking the stage: she took deep breaths, had a sip of water, shook out her nerves and tuned her guitar. Then, she got her cue.

But she wasn't phased by the crowd. If anything, she was more nervous to sing in front of 20 classmates from her voice class.

“It feels like this is where I'm meant to be, and this is what I'm supposed to be

doing,” Fern said. “I'm going to show the people my music, and I'm going to connect with this audience because this is exactly what I was put on this earth to be doing.”

The next day she went back to her normal routine. She made her way over to one of the latest additions to the Downtown Phoenix campus: Fusion on First.

Nestled between a YMCA and a Circle K, Fusion opened at the start of the Fall 2021 semester. Not only does it offer on-campus housing for up to 550 students, but it also created a home for the only undergraduate music program not based on the Tempe campus: ASU's popular music program, which started in Fall 2020, is a specific concentration within the Bachelor of Arts program in music.

After two years, the program's students and faculty have forged an environment focused on cultivating students' various interests in music and preparing them to enter today's music industry.

Composition

Because the popular music program started during the pandemic, the first cohort of 36 students was taught virtually. Fern, part of the program's first class, said she felt lucky to have been a student in that first year. Despite all her classes being on Zoom, she saw it as an opportunity to grow closer with her peers and faculty.

John Paul Rabusa, a senior studying popular music, said the program's director and professors turned to their students to create a good learning environment because the program was so small.

“I felt like a trailblazer,” he said. “We had the ability to help shape the program in the way we thought would be best for the future students that were coming in.”

But the early-pandemic funk set in. Some days, Rabusa would lay in bed and question what he was doing with his life taking music classes through a computer.

And, like anything new, there were growing pains. Looking back at his time in the



program, senior Kenji Beriau said he felt like a guinea pig testing out brand new classes and equipment.

“On the plus side, that’s how you learn best, is when things aren’t working,” Beriau said. “Nothing has been smooth, but nothing good is ever smooth.”

Abigail Parks, a junior in the program, said it’s hard to imagine all the new opportunities in the program she and her peers are going to miss out on once they graduate, but it’s fulfilling to say she was there when the program first started. Reflecting on her virtual year, she realized they didn’t have any of the physical resources they do now.

“Not having all those things readily available to us at the time made us a lot more creative and had us thinking of ways that we could get together and make the best of the situation,” Parks said.

Production

As students and faculty established the popular music program’s foundations over the next two years, it began to fuel their passions in return. The trailblazing work of the so-called guinea pigs started paying off.

Fern, a singer-songwriter, said her voice has become much stronger after taking voice lessons through the program for the first time. The program also exposed her to music styles and forms of production she wouldn’t have tried otherwise.

“I don’t think I would have grown nearly as much as I have...if I didn’t go to school for music,” she said.

The program has helped other students discover career paths they never expected to go down.

Parks attended the Burlington County Institute of Technology, a vocational high school in New Jersey, where she studied voice performance. She grew up performing in choir and musical theater, which helped her make the decision to enroll in the popular music program with a performance focus.

But the deeper she got into the program, she realized she had a greater passion for songwriting and producing music.

“I want to work with other artists ... and eventually I want to open up my own record label,” she said. “My focus would be more on [people of color], especially women.” She added that the flexibility of the program feels like a good fit for her to “experiment in these newfound passions.”

The popular music program has a unique focus on the modern music industry and entrepreneurship. ASU’s other music programs revolve around musicology, education and theory, as they classically train students in specific instruments or genres.

But in today’s music industry, “you need professionals to wear multiple hats,” said Samuel Peña, assistant director of the popular music program. Peña and other popular music instructors want to prepare students for the music business by giving them an interdisciplinary skill set and empowering them to be entrepreneurial.

The physical elements of Fusion are also fundamental to the popular music major experience. Fusion holds practice rooms that can function as mini recording studios, acoustically treated ensemble rooms with PA systems, and an equipment desk where popular music students can check out DJ tables, microphones, laptops, keyboards and other technology for use.

“I’m going to show the people my music,
and I’m going to connect with this
audience because this is exactly what I
was put on this earth to be doing.”

— Ellie Fern



These musical resources, along with classes and professors, prepare students for an individual capstone project in their senior year. There are about 15 students currently working to complete their capstones to be the first graduating class of ASU's popular music program.

Senior Sophia Bavishi is dividing hers into two sections — one each semester. For the first, she will create a digital set by live looping using an Ableton Push. Then, she'll record the set and film an entire performance. For the second part, she'll do a live performance at a local venue.

"I never saw myself as a live digital performer," she said. "This program has opened my eyes to something that I think has really now resonated with me and become a part of my performing"

Rabusa, who is also working on his capstone, saw a recurring theme throughout his time as a popular music student. Aside from building his own project, he helped build the program and the growing music scene in downtown Phoenix.

"We're really starting something new," Rabusa said. "We're shaping what the Phoenix music scene is going to look like for years to come."

Promotion

It was 2019 and, like many of his peers in popular music, Rabusa had applied to Berklee College of Music, a nationally renowned music school in Boston, Massachusetts.

Rabusa grew up in metro Phoenix as a first-generation Filipino American. His father worked for the Phoenix Office of Arts

and Culture, which Rabusa said connected him to the local art scene his entire life.

"I never had the perception growing up that Phoenix was less than a place like New York or LA or Nashville," he said. "I just always felt like it was not as developed as it could be, and I always saw the future for it."

Growing up in a musical family and attending church gave Rabusa a foundation in the arts since childhood. He attended Arizona School for the Arts, where he took a music track and was involved in choir and theater.

Rabusa always knew he wanted to get a college degree, but when he was accepted to Berklee, he had to turn down the offer because he couldn't afford it. Instead, he stayed in Arizona and enrolled at ASU as a vocal performance major.

"After [my freshman year] was done, I felt a little lost," he said. "I didn't necessarily feel like I fit in with the more operatic styles, or the more jazz styles, or the more musical theater styles."

That's when he learned ASU was developing a new degree for popular music, and the director of the program, Erin Barra-Jean, attended Berklee. He said it was "really serendipitous." When it came time for the program to break ground, his thoughts of Berklee faded away.

"We all come from very similar backgrounds where we didn't feel like we had found our community before we joined the popular music program," Rabusa said. "I think that we all [had] this desire to go out and find people who are like us. And when we did, it was the most exciting thing ever."

Distribution

Beriau was working at the equipment desk in Fusion one day when his boss, Patrick Driscoll, senior technology coordinator, told him the program was going to start doing open mics at Crescent Ballroom, a staple downtown Phoenix music venue down the block from Fusion.

Driscoll enlisted Beriau — who focuses on non-performance aspects of the program and has expertise in audio engineering and mixing — to help work the system and sound for students performing at the open mics.

After a few open mics, Beriau became acquainted with the staff at Crescent Ballroom.

One night, he walked over to the production manager and said "Hey, thank you so much for having me. If you ever need someone, let me know."

Then the production manager said "actually ..."

Beriau said "that was the best word I heard that whole semester."

He was contracted to work at Crescent Ballroom shortly after. Beriau attributes his new job to the popular music program; the partnership between the program and Crescent has bridged the gap between ASU and the local music community, he said.

"I've been facilitating on behalf of Crescent now for the new interns at ASU who are trying to learn this stuff," he said. "I'm kind of setting the stepping stones for all the new Kenjis to learn how to run the sound for Crescent."

Aside from program partnerships, many popular music majors have established

“We’re really starting something new. We’re shaping what the Phoenix music scene is going to look like for years to come.”

— John Paul Rabusa



themselves as artists in every nook and cranny of the surrounding community through gigging.

Fern has been gigging since she was 16. She continues to pick up gigs almost every weekend as a form of income.

“This year, I’ve learned to compartmentalize myself; I have gigging Ellie and artist Ellie,” she said. “When you’re gigging at restaurants and hotels, you are there to entertain the guests, so I play mostly cover songs that are well known ... Artist Ellie can do whatever she wants.”

Reception

Fern said she’d much rather struggle a bit and be happy with what she’s doing than be stuck in an office job. However, learning to draw distinct lines between artistry and the industry has been a big part of being a popular music major.

“The hardest thing has been the transition of music as a hobby to now it’s my life 24/7,” she said.

Beriau enjoyed the transition from music as a hobby to music as a career. He transferred to popular music from computer science and said he is a lot happier.

“I feel like [the program] could be a

bit more rigorous,” Beriau said. “But I’m one of the fringe students to be on that perspective. That said, they are very accommodating no matter where you’re at so long as you’re willing to put in the work.”

The program has seen more students enroll this year, adding their individual flair to the community — a testament to the program’s future potential.

“Each semester I’ve been here I could see so much growth,” Bavishi said. “I can only imagine [how far it’ll go], and I’m very excited. ...

This is only the start, and I think if I come back here in five years, it’s gonna be huge.”

Not only have students built a program from the ground up, but they have also made a mark on the University and the state.

“The music scene is gonna grow with or without the program,” Beriau said. “But I think with us being an accredited University, it’s going to have more students come over here and recognize there’s more to Arizona than just my degree.”

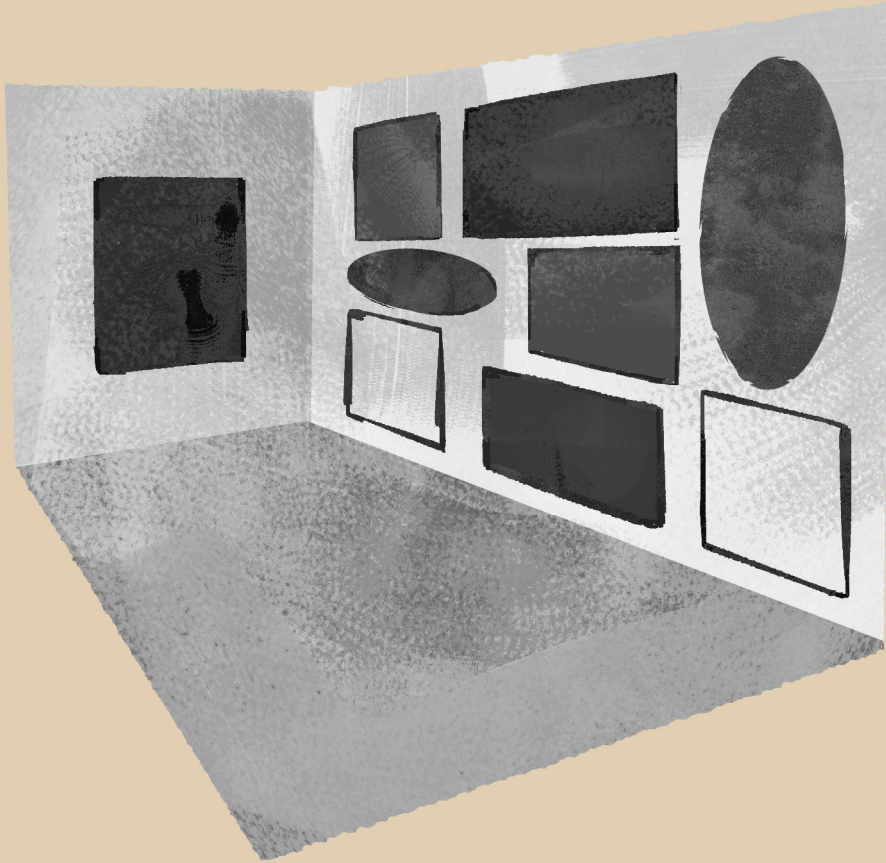


Report

Expanding the canon

Museums often require master's degrees in order for staff to advance their careers. A fellowship program affiliated with ASU aims to diversify the leadership of art institutions

by Keetra Bippus
Photography by Hajin Lee
Illustration by Niko Vu



This year, the Heard Museum in Phoenix joined the Master's Fellowship in Art History, a collaborative program between ASU and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The three-year fellowship, which started in 2018 and currently has nine fellows, is designed to give people of color working in museums the skills and degrees needed to advance their careers.

Once accepted to the program, ASU-LACMA fellows do not have to pay tuition for their master's program.

Roshii Montaña, a Diné scholar, started the fellowship this fall. She graduated from Stanford University with a BA in art history in 2020 and currently works as an assistant registrar at the Heard Museum. Founded in 1929, the Heard museum is dedicated to "the advancement of American Indian art."

Montaña said it can be difficult to find other Indigenous scholars and artists because art history is generally focused on white art and artists. Although it's only her first semester, she said the fellowship has already managed to break that pattern.

"There's actually been quite a bit of integration of Indigenous scholarship in the two classes that I've taken so far, which has been really cool to experience," Montaña said.

A 2018 survey of 332 U.S. art museums conducted by Ithaka S+R for the Mellon Foundation found that 72% of all employees in art museums were white. While representation increased in some positions compared to the Mellon Foundation's 2015 survey, conservation and museum leadership lagged behind. Only 12% of museum leadership were people of color.

According to Montaña, sometimes the solution to increasing diversity in museum staff and leadership boils down to compensating them fairly for their work.

"Fellowships like that are really important, and paid opportunities are really important," she said. "There's a lot of museum internships, and I think a lot of those opportunities are really cool, but a lot of the time they're not paid and that can be really limiting."

Matthew Miranda graduated from the program in 2021 and currently works as a visual arts curatorial fellow at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He was already working as a freelancer, writing press releases and bios for artists, and working in guest services at the LACMA Store when he applied for the fellowship and became a part of its first cohort in 2018.

During his time in the program from 2018–2021, he worked as a curatorial fellow at the ASU Art Museum. He said the program was exceptional because it enabled fellows to work at museums and study at the same time.

"I was able to work at the same time I was going to school, which is oftentimes the proverbial fork in the road," Miranda said. "People usually pause their career path and then pursue a graduate degree, or they feel stunted because if they want a promotion or title change, they find [it] requires a higher degree to be competitive."

The ASU-LACMA fellowship program aims to begin breaking down old, systemic barriers to participation and leadership in American museums. Cecilia Fajardo-Hill, director of the fellowship program, said that won't happen if it's left to the same privileged people who didn't realize or care museums had a diversity problem in the first place.

"We need to have people with profound knowledge of the cultures that have been misrepresented and marginalized," she said. "This is an absolute must."

Museums also need to rethink how cate-

gories and cultures are displayed at museums and the ways that collections are created, Fajardo-Hill said. Repatriation and dialogue with the communities that exhibits are from are needed as well.

Historically, museum authority has had a narrow perspective on what constitutes art, which devalues and marginalizes art forms from cultures outside of the traditional canon, she said. Museums must start thinking outside of that biased perspective.

"We need to have many more dialogues, we need to engage with a diverse community and we need to stop being so authoritarian about what we think is the law of art and culture," she said.

A monopoly on knowledge and collecting is based on privilege, she said, which reproduces colonial structures and upholds white culture above other cultures.

"We need to share the knowledge, we need to share the power, we need to share the resources and diversify," Fajardo-Hill said.

Education through artwork

A bright blue barber's chair sits inside a glass box, with long black hair scattered on the floor around it. The sound of frantically snipping scissors faintly pierces the air in an otherwise silent exhibit hall.

Above the glass box, a sign reads:

"The next day the torture began. The first thing they did was cut our hair ... While we were bathing our breechclouts were taken, and we were ordered to put on trousers. We'd lost our hair and we'd lost our clothes; with the two we'd lost our identity as Indians."

This artwork is part of "Remembering Our Indian School Days: The Boarding School Experience," an exhibit at the Heard Museum. The exhibit explores how feder-

ally run Indian boarding schools separated Indigenous children from their families and forced them to conform to European-American society.

Most of the objects in the Heard Museum are sourced through donations, said Marcus Monenerkit, staff liaison for the American Indian Advisory Committee. The committee is a part of the museum's effort to engage with the Indigenous communities whose work it displays.

According to Monenerkit, who is of Comanche heritage, the museum usually gets about one or two requests from the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act every year. Established in 1990, the NAGPRA made it a crime to purchase or sell Native American human remains or cultural objects, and established procedures for returning ownership of remains or objects to lineal descendants or an associated tribe or organization.

"We want to be the best partner for this," Monenerkit said. "We got a lot of skin in the game."

The Heard Museum's American Indian Advisory Committee typically handles policy decisions regarding exhibits, events, and programs, as well as drafting the museum's land acknowledgments.

Some committee members also help select recipients of the Eagle Spirit Award, which honors Indigenous graduate students and their academic achievements from ASU.

Monenerkit is currently working in education outreach at the Heard Museum. In his role as director of community engagement for the museum, he stewards programs that focus on educating a variety of audiences about Indigenous art and culture.

"We really try to connect to local audiences," he said. "We try to introduce people to the beauty of American Indian art and culture."

"Our message is really about an openness to difference. American Indian culture is grounded in pluralism, so each person has a valid story."

Hard questions

After protests for racial justice swept the globe in summer 2020, art museums faced increased public pressure to address racial injustices and inequities in their institutions.

A May 2021 survey published by The Art Newspaper asked 22 American museums about the progress they have made toward diversifying their staff, audiences and collections since the police killing of George Floyd in May 2020. Only 13 museums replied. Exhibitions from underrepresented artists were increasing overall in the museums surveyed, and some had added new positions, such as diversity and inclusion directors.

American museums have a long and painful history of displaying art, artifacts and even human bones that were stolen during war and colonial conquests.

In a NAGPRA Notice of Intent to Repatriate from the Heard Museum in 2015, the museum identified a Hochxo Jish that was removed from the Navajo Nation and donated to the Heard Museum in 1979. Hochxo Jish is a type of medicine bundle sacred to the Navajo Nation that is still used ceremonially and requires extensive knowledge within the community to properly utilize.

The notice read that, unless a descendant or tribe not mentioned in the notice makes a claim, the item will be transferred back to the Navajo Nation.

"I think that more and more people are seeing that museums have grown out of colonial structures like imperial collecting and are oftentimes the result of affluent

financial families that have amassed personal collections," Miranda said.

In order to let go of their colonial roots, Fajardo-Hill said museums need to reexamine their own history and see how it led to the present day.

"We need to ask hard questions," she said. "How do we address this past? What can we rectify? How can we move forward? And how can we stop reproducing the same mistakes?"

Miranda has seen museums beginning to decolonize through the repatriation of looted objects, integrating more multilingual interpretation, inviting the communities where the art is derived from to interpret the works and an upward trend in hiring more people of color in administrative and executive levels.

While he doesn't have a personal solution, he said museums should "remember they are a part of a civic project, and that entails really understanding the needs and the people and the community you serve and continuing to align your programming, your collections management, staff and work culture towards those barometers."

Making meaningful changes in museums is more than just one exhibit displaying art from culture or people historically left out, Fajardo-Hill said.

"When you have so many decades of invisibility in certain areas of society and culture and art, you cannot catch up with one or two exhibitions," she said. "You need to have members in the museum at every level to be invested in this being a constant."



BERLIN
MEZZANINE
Upper Level

Dennis H.
Lyon Family
Crossroads
Gallery

Report

DIY or die

In Phoenix's underground music scene, niche and accessible house shows are making a comeback

by Sophia Balasubramanian
Illustration by Niko Vu





The Dunbar House sits along a line of suburban, cookie-cutter houses in south Tempe. It's an unassuming and humble backdrop for an emerging mecca of Phoenix's revived underground music scene.

Guided by the moon and the occasional streetlight, I walked up to the driveway on an early Saturday night. The stench of weed wafted through a sea of mullets, liberty spikes and neon hair under the gaze of blue LED lights.

Around 30 people crammed into the house's modestly sized dining room, already buzzing for live music and a night of partying.

Paul Quiñones, the drummer for the local bands *A Continent Named Coma* and *Malaise*, established the Tempe-based DIY venue at the beginning of 2022. He started going to underground shows over a decade ago when he was a freshman in high school, and playing in bands inspired him to open up his home on select weekends throughout the month for shows.

"I started with my roommate Matt," he said. "We both have bands and we wanted a place — because we practice here anyway — a place to also throw shows when there's not stuff happening."

Taking the stage

For a band that's just starting out, getting booked at the Rebel Lounge or the Nile Underground — ideal venues for local Phoenix bands — is a lofty goal, Quiñones said.

Venues like these can offer local bands a larger platform, but they also have high

barriers to entry, like requiring significant experience, having the right gear or having enough money to book a show.

This is when DIY venues come into play. If a band can't get started playing at an established venue, they need to make a space for themselves. All that's required is some basic musical equipment, a flier and a location.

Locations like the Trunk Space, a local nonprofit arts organization, have been helping to fill that gap for young artists for years, and it's not uncommon for a band to host a show at their own house every now and again.

"There isn't as much red tape to cut through doing a house show compared to trying to get a show at a venue," said Bryan Vouga, the bassist for the three-piece indie-rock band Alibi.

An ASU alumnus who graduated with a degree in mathematics in 2019, Vouga runs the Alibi House, another popular location for house shows.

When it comes to house shows, there's no need to go through the trouble of reaching out to promoters trying to get a spot on the bill. For a band, the process is usually as quick and easy as simply reaching out to a house and asking to play.

No matter the state of the economy, the standard cover charge for a house show rarely exceeds \$10. Since there are no tickets, and the only payment is at the door, there's no need for excessive Ticketmaster fees.

For Vouga, his pricing is a point of pride.

"I always charged \$5," he said. "That's kind of my philosophy."

The affordability of these shows is a selling point. It doesn't matter if you're a high schooler who is just getting into the scene or a broke college student; if you've got at least \$5, you can come party with the hottest local bands in the Phoenix area.

Vouga uses the funds to pay the bands after their set and come home with a little bit of a profit himself.

"We're not really thinking about the money," he said. "The money's mainly so I'm making just a little bit so I'm not resentful at the end of the night, just cleaning up and everything."

Worth the trouble

Vouga wasn't performing with his band the Saturday night I dropped by the Alibi House. Instead, he was busy preparing his living room for three other bands and around 60 people to pack into his tiny East Mesa home.

By day, Vouga works for an insurance company. By night, he runs the DIY venue out of his rental home for veteran bands and up-and-coming artists looking for their start.

A lot of preparation goes into throwing a house show — booking the bands, promoting the show, and clearing the space for dozens of people to party in your house. Running a live venue out of your home, with up to 60 people in it at a time, can get unpredictable.

He's just hoping he can get through the night without too much damage.

"We're setting up for a show. It's in July and we get an email from them [the landlord] saying they're gonna come for an inspection," he said, recalling the story with a laugh.

"It was one of those shows where like a bunch of people showed up, and then there was a giant hole in the wall after," he said. "It was like, really bad."

That Sunday, Vouga and his roommates spent the entire day cleaning and becoming drywall experts, anxiously awaiting the inspection company's arrival the following day.

When the time came, all the inspector needed was a picture of their sinks.

"The carpet was glowing, and she didn't even comment on how clean the place was," he said.

Giving out your address can also be a little anxiety-inducing, Quiñones said, but it's still rewarding to give new bands the opportunity to get started.

"There's a show that A Continent Named Coma played with a few other bands ... It was a killer show, a lot of people showed up. We jumped off the roof afterwards and everything," he said. "I just had such a good time at that show, that I was like, 'Oh yeah, this is something I want to keep doing,' you know it's worth the trouble that you go through."

What I learned after a night at the Dunbar House was that, at a house show, it's about more than the music coursing

“The stench of weed wafted through a sea of mullets, liberty spikes and neon hair under the gaze of blue LED lights.”

through your veins — it’s about the community found at these shows.

“There’s a community that has grown around the house and it definitely has its life of its own, apart from our band,” Vouga said.

In the moment

After watching the first band’s set, I decided to survey the scene in the backyard, where a small crowd was beginning to form.

The warm night and the smell of cigarettes lay thick in the air. A steady crowd continued to roll in while pockets of people formed around the wooden half-pipe and pool that occupied the yard.

“You missed the best band,” someone said to me after the second set ended. Dripping with sweat and exhilarated from listening to the prior band, he echoed the phrase to anyone and everyone within earshot for the next few minutes.

“It was an environment that I just hadn’t seen before, you know, so it was really, really

cool,” said Dean Cheney, a freshman studying popular music. “And it’s an environment that I felt was just awesome being a part of.”

Cheney, who plays in venues around the Valley with his band The Joeys, finds something special and freeing in DIY venues.

“We just usually play a little looser at those places, have a little more fun,” he said. “I think that’s kind of where we feel the most comfortable.”

For audiences, part of the charm of a house show is how up-close and personal the experience can be.

“You get to stand right in front of the band. You get to be almost inches away from the mic,” said Alton Chaney, a sophomore studying popular music.

But when the music is blasting and people are pushing each other around inside the house, the scene outdoors is surprisingly low-key. Some people are testing out the half pipe, while others are making new friends. The music from inside bleeds outdoors, adding to the house’s casual and enveloping ambience.

Jaden Jones, singer and guitarist for the band Bethany Home, as well as Chaney’s bandmate, also finds there are more opportunities to interact with the crowd during and after sets.

“With venues, like a lot of the time bands will be walking around, but also a lot of the time you see them just kind of go into the back and disappear,” Jones said. “House shows are just a lot more social.”

“I feel so lucky to be in a place where there’s such a prominent scene for so many different genres.”

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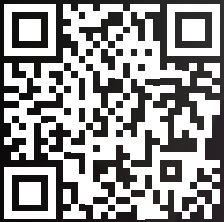
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