

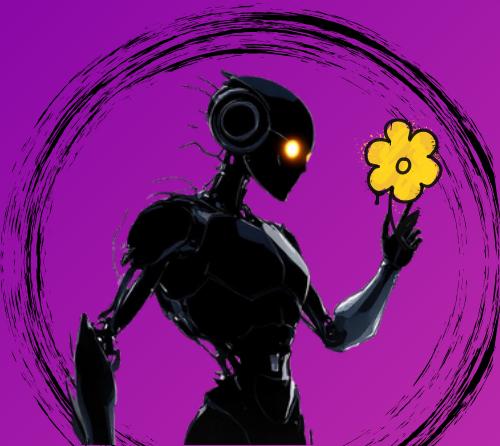
OCTOBER 2025

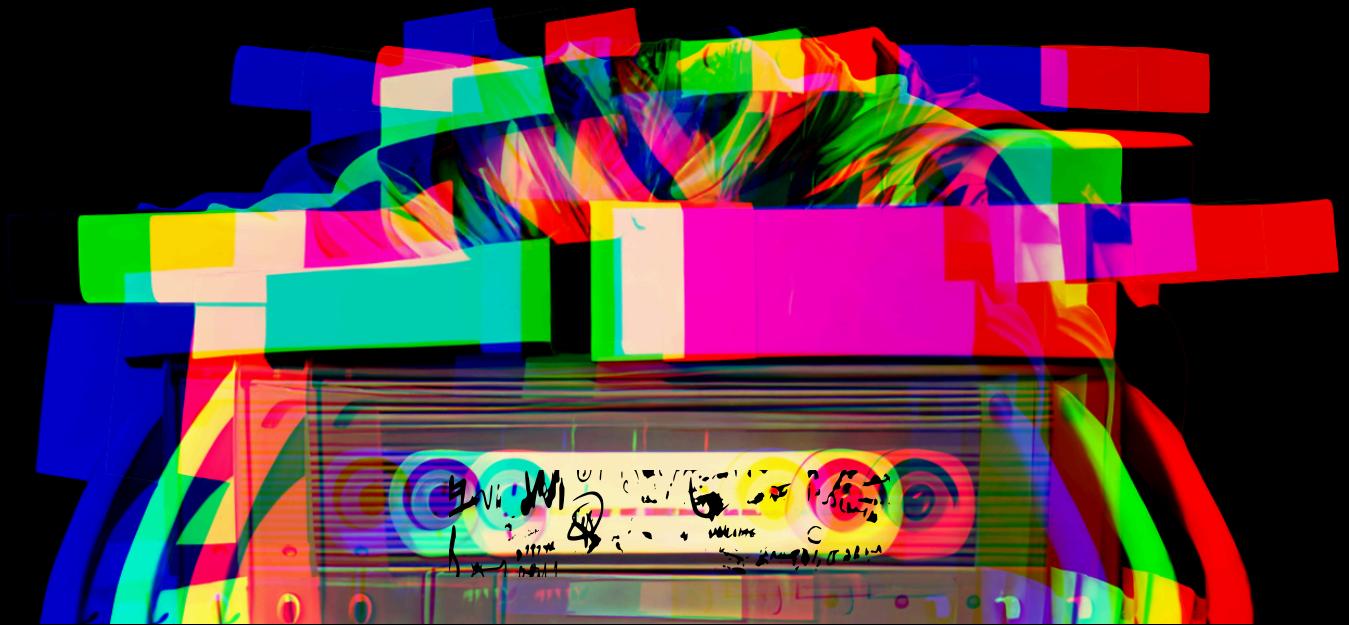


# THE ART ADJACENT



ISSUE #02





# THE ART ADJACENT



EYES GET  
CLOUDED  
THOUGHTS  
GET  
CROWDED

# TABLE OF CONTENTS



**BEYOND THE LAUNCH: FRANKIE GARIBAY** PG 3

**FEATURED ARTIST: EIJANA SAUCEDO** PG 4

**WHAT'S YOUR PICTURE SAYING?: VICTORIA CORTEZ** PG 7

**OVERLOOKED BEAUTY: NATHAN DOOLEY** PG 9

**ART AT THE EDGE OF THE ALGORITHM: ALEX GUTIERREZ** PG 11

**UPS (FLORAL) BY EIJANA SAUCEDO** FOLLOW-UP POSTER

**TICKET FOR ONE, PLEASE: ANGELICA CANO** PG 15

**TAKING DOWN ART TO HANG MORE FLAGS: MICHAEL MAJOR** PG 16

**THE 11-MILE DRIVE: KEVIN CLIFTON** PG 19

**THE SUNDERED QUIRE - PART 1: MEGAN SCHOLL** PG 21

**THE REMAINS OF THE DAY: ALEXANDRA LAUBER** PG 23

**TO BE CONTINUED...**

# BEYOND The Launch

## Building Fresno's Next Creative Legacy

By: Frankie Garibay

The 2025 Summer Art Experience was more than a beginning, it was a spark. For The B-Side Collective, the program proved that a bold idea can grow into a living, breathing movement when it is rooted in culture and community. With its first year behind us and the 2026 Summer Art Experience already on the horizon, the question isn't whether the vision works, it's how far it can go.

### Impact That Resonates

What set the inaugural Summer Art Experience apart wasn't just the range of skills taught by proven, local artists – although participants dove into sneaker design, digital illustration, spray painting, sewing, and animation with their own creative minds, which defy most of our thoughts and everyday processes. It was the way those skills were tied to bigger conversations: identity, culture, and creative possibility.

This wasn't just about learning how to create. It was about seeing yourself as a creator. Students left not only with new techniques, but with a sense of agency—a belief that their voice, their background, and their perspective matter in the world of art.

Support isn't always easy to find, but whatever piece of the puzzle a young artist might need, we hope to provide. That kind of affirmation is what turns classrooms into catalysts. Our ultimate goal for the participants is for the Summer Art Experience to not just be another program, but a turning point. We've all reached a new fork in the road as we continue to grow. In my experience, as long as I know where I want to go, either path will get me there... It all connects.

### Legacy in Motion

The momentum of the program didn't end when summer did. Its energy continues through The Art Adjacent, The B-Side Collective's quarterly magazine.

Part creative archive, part launchpad, the publication features student work alongside contributions from local writers, designers, and photographers. Each issue includes a limited-edition signed print from a featured artist—an art collectible that doubles as an investment in Fresno's creative future.

More than pages, it's proof that Fresno's emerging talent belongs on coffee tables, gallery walls, and in art collections everywhere.

### What's Next

If 2025 was about proof of concept, 2026 is about expansion. The B-Side Collective is already preparing to scale the Summer Art Experience, building on the intimacy and cultural relevance that made year one so powerful.

Plans are underway to introduce new disciplines, invite additional guest artists, and strengthen pathways into creative careers. The goal: to deepen the impact without losing the community-centered spark that defines the program.

The next chapter won't simply repeat what's been done. It will grow bolder, broader, and even more connected to the city it serves.

### A Vision That Grows

At its core, The B-Side Collective believes art is more than self-expression. It is community expression, cultural storytelling, and a catalyst for change.

In just one summer, Fresno witnessed how a new program could elevate young voices and shift the region's creative possibilities. With the launch of The Art Adjacent and another Summer Art Experience on the horizon, that momentum is only building.

The B-Side Collective isn't just building a program—it's building a legacy. One that dares to reimagine arts education, one that paints strategically outside the lines, and one that plants seeds for a creative future rooted in Fresno.

The launch was only the beginning. The next chapter is already being written.



# Featured Artist

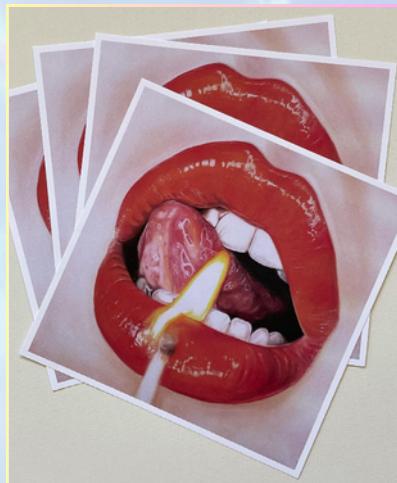
**How did your upbringing or personal history lead you to realize that creating art wasn't just something you do, but an essential part of who you are and how you approach your work today?**

From the very start, art has been at the center of my life. During my undergraduate studies, I immersed myself in art programs, exploring different mediums and learning how to shape my creativity into a practice. What once began as a hobby soon evolved into something much deeper—an essential part of my daily routine and, ultimately, my identity.

There is a special kind of fulfillment that comes from transforming your passion into your work. For me, the connection between art, life, and career has never felt separate—they flow into one another seamlessly. I have been teaching art classes since I graduated with my master's degree, and I've spent much of my time in the studio with my students, guiding them through the fundamentals of art.

**When you start a new piece, how do ideas usually unfold for you, from that first spark to the final details? When do you know "it's done?"**

When I begin a new painting, I always consider both my audience and my own personal connection to the composition. My



*Eliana  
Garcia*



first ideas usually grow out of what I want to express—what story, feeling, or idea I hope the piece will communicate. Color plays a central role in this process. I love working with vibrant palettes, and that passion is something viewers can see in much of my work.

As an artist, I've come to realize that a painting never truly feels "finished." There's always the temptation to keep adding, adjusting, or refining. For me, that's part of the beauty of painting—the constant possibility of transformation.

**“Art... it’s for anyone willing to explore, experiment, and express, themselves creatively.”**

**Who or what continues to push you forward artistically, whether they’re mentors, movements, or personal heroes?**

I have always admired Frida Kahlo—not only for her bold and deeply personal connection to her paintings, but also for her strength and presence as a Latina female artist. While my style is different from hers, I carry her influence with me. In my current exhibition at the Fresno Art Museum, I pay homage to Kahlo by reflecting in one of my paintings on how her work has inspired my own approach to still life painting. Her ability to infuse art with identity and emotion continues to shape the way I think about my practice.

Beyond contemporary influences, I have long been fascinated by the Renaissance period of the 1400s. The depth, detail, and storytelling of that era of painting have always captured my imagination. I’ll never forget the moment I had the opportunity to travel to Rome and see in person the works I had studied in my art history classes. Standing before those masterpieces was transformative—it reinforced my passion for painting and gave me the push to pursue my career with even greater commitment.

**Can you share a moment or milestone that felt especially rewarding or affirming in your journey so far?**

I have always been deeply involved in exhibiting my artwork and seeking opportunities to share it with a wider audience. Over the years, I’ve shown my pieces in nearly all of the major galleries in downtown Fresno, which has allowed me to connect with diverse communities and viewers. A recent milestone in my career was being invited to create an exhibition for the Fresno Art Museum.

The exhibition, titled *The Fruit of Life*, reflects my cultural connection to fruit and my lived experiences in the Central Valley. Growing up surrounded by orchards and farmland, fruit became more than just a subject—it became a symbol of heritage, memory, and the cycles of life. This show is especially meaningful to me because it weaves together personal history and regional identity in a way that feels both intimate and universal.

*The Fruit of Life* will be on display at the Fresno Art Museum until January 11, 2026. I invite you to visit and experience my most recent work in person.

**Do you have go-to tracks, albums, or artists that help set the tone when you’re in the studio creating?**

Music is an important part of my creative process. What I listen to often depends on my mood or the piece I’m working on. My playlists range widely—from country to alternative to indie—and each genre brings a different energy into the studio. I also enjoy asking other artists about the music they play while they work; it inspires me to explore sounds I might not have discovered on my own. Having music in the background while I paint helps create an atmosphere that feels both grounding and inspiring.

**What advice would you give to someone who isn’t an artist but wants to connect with or appreciate art?”**

I believe every human being has the potential to create artwork. I always tell this to my students on the first day of class: if you dedicate time and effort, you’re capable of producing amazing things. Art isn’t just for professional artists—it’s for anyone willing to explore, experiment, and express themselves creatively.

**What do you do when you hit a wall creatively, or when inspiration feels out of reach?**

When I encounter an artist’s block, I turn to the work of others for inspiration. Sometimes that means scrolling through my Instagram feed, where I can discover artists from all over the world and see the incredible diversity of styles and approaches. Other times, I find myself drawn to the creativity of local artists, whose work feels especially meaningful because it grows out of the same communities and spaces I’m part of.

I also love traveling to museums, immersing myself in the history of art and the stories behind the pieces on display. Experiencing art in person—whether centuries old or contemporary—always sparks new ideas and reminds me why I create. I believe that having a muse, in whatever form it takes, is essential for an artist. It shapes our perspectives, pushes us to grow, and helps guide the direction of our own work.

**Do you have habits, spaces, or practices that help you drop into a flow state?**

I love working in the mornings, when my mind feels rested, reset, and fully open to creative focus. The quiet of the early hours allows me to connect more deeply with my work, free from distractions. I prefer to paint alone, with music playing softly in the background and natural light streaming into my space.

Natural light is especially important to me because it influences how I see and mix colors. The subtle shifts in daylight bring out the richness of different hues in a way artificial light never can.

**When people encounter your art, is there a feeling, thought, or conversation you hope to spark?**

I hope viewers can feel a personal connection to my artwork. Often, I depict figures without faces, because I want each viewer to bring their own experience and interpretation to the piece. By leaving out facial features, the work becomes more open and inviting, allowing the audience to engage on a deeper, more personal level. My intention is that people walk away not only appreciating the technical skill of the painting, but also carrying an emotional or personal connection to the imagery.

**Who or what continues to push you forward artistically, whether they're mentors, movements, or personal heroes?**

My biggest support system has always been my parents. When I first told them I wanted to pursue a career in art, they didn't hesitate for a moment—they supported my decision wholeheartedly. Their encouragement has been a constant throughout my journey, and I am deeply grateful for everything they've done to help me reach this point. I would like to dedicate all my art achievements to them.

At home, I'm lucky enough to have my toughest (and most brutally honest) critic—my 9-year-old daughter, Elise. She never holds back when giving me feedback on my paintings, and let's face it, kids don't lie. I'm glad she gets to witness me painting in the studio, and I hope it's something she never forgets—that image of me as an artist at work.

**“My intention is that people walk away not only appreciating the technical skill of the painting, but also carrying an emotional or personal connection to the imagery.”**

---

# Creatives TO WATCH FOR

**Wes Pauls**



**Cruz Casio**



**Steven Camacho  
Nunez**



# What's Your Playlist Saying?



I'll tell you a secret. When I want to feel pretty or romanticize a moment, I listen to the theme score from the 1995 film *Sabrina*—not the teenage witch show, but the movie starring a young Harrison Ford and Julia Ormond. Some days it comforts me when I'm sad. Other days it makes me feel thoughtful or hopeful. That's the magic of music. It lets us feel without having to explain why.

As a licensed therapist and musician, I love when music comes up in the therapy room. Sometimes I ask clients, "Which song could you listen to on repeat?" or "What's on your playlist right now?" Those simple questions often open doors to self-reflection. Music can hold grief we haven't voiced, joy we struggle to express, or anger we've tucked away.

I've been keeping monthly playlists for years, and they have become little time capsules. Every song carries a season and a memory. Sometimes, I look back and realize the words I needed were there all along, waiting for me to give myself permission to feel. The music cradled me until I was ready, then gave me the language I needed to start exploring further.

The playlists we create can mirror our inner world. When you're alone and feel like no one else understands, isn't it the best feeling when a song just gets you? You know, the moment when you think, "It's like they took the words from my freshly broken heart." (Just me? Okay...)

Eldest children around the world finally found words for the "drip, drip, drip" of invisible expectations in Luisa's song *Surface Pressure* from Disney's *Encanto*. Entire stadiums of Swifties cry-scream the line "you called me up again just to break me like a promise" during Taylor Swift's *All Too Well*. Play Rocío Dúrcal's *Amor Eterno* at a Latino party and notice a couple people stop mid-conversation, suddenly pensive. Maybe it's the lyrics. Maybe it's the melody. Maybe it's simply the minor fall and the major lift. Even when it's just about the beat, music gives us permission to feel.

In my own life, music has been both a refuge and a revelation. There was a time when my playlists were full of raw, emotive tracks that expressed feelings I didn't fully understand or have words for yet. Looking back, those songs were an unspoken conversation with myself. Over time, as I did the inner work, my music evolved. Different genres, artists, and lyrics began to reflect growth, emotional shifts, and new chapters. Now, as life has gotten busier, it's interesting to notice which songs still nourish me and which ones take me somewhere I don't have the energy to revisit.

Here's a little experiment. Pay attention to the songs you turn to when you're sad, anxious, or happy. Notice the lyrics, the rhythms, and the emotions they bring up. There's no right or wrong here. Just curiosity. Music is a form of emotional literacy. It can help us name and understand feelings we might otherwise ignore.

(And let's be honest. Sometimes a bop is just a bop. It doesn't have to mean anything.)

So here's my challenge. Make a playlist this month that reflects how you're feeling right now. Then come back to it in a few weeks. Notice what has shifted, what still resonates, and what no longer fits. You might find that your playlist is quietly telling the story of your own growth.

---

**Victoria Cortez** is a first-gen Latina licensed mental health therapist, wellness speaker, and proud daughter of Mexican immigrants. She's the founder of First Gen Feeler, helping first-gen professionals, people pleasers, and overachievers slow down, honor their



inner child, and build lives rooted in self-trust. Victoria is also co-founder of Lah Dah Dah Collective (est. 2018), a collaborative music project. Follow her on Instagram @firstgenfeeler or check out [www.firstgenfeeler.com](http://www.firstgenfeeler.com)



UNLEASH YOUR IMAGINATION IN THE 2026

# FRESNO COUNTY ART CONTEST

**Calling all creative types! This is your moment.**

We're highlighting the raw talent and passion that runs through Fresno County's art community. Whether you paint, draw, write, shoot or make music — we want to see it, hear it, and feel it!

**STAY TUNED FOR OUR PRIZE ANNOUNCEMENT IN DECEMBER**

**Contest Date:**

**DEC. 1, 2025**

**JAN. 31, 2026**

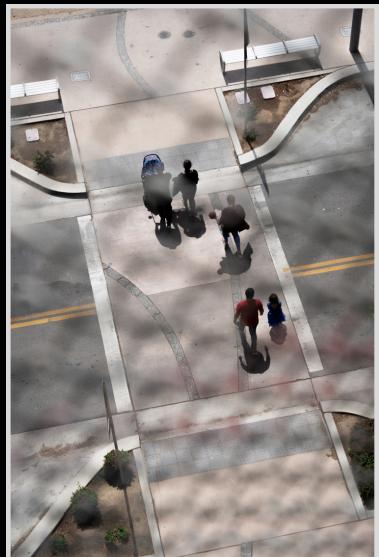


**register here**



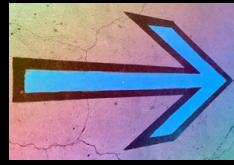
Got questions? Reach us here:  
[info@fresnocvb.org](mailto:info@fresnocvb.org)  
559-981-5500

# OVERLOOKED BEAUTY



**O**VERLOOKED BEAUTY IS A VISUAL LOVE LETTER TO FRESNO – A CITY OFTEN DISMISSED SIMPLY BECAUSE IT ISN'T SAN FRANCISCO OR LOS ANGELES. **I**NSPIRED BY A QUOTE FROM THE FILM, **SOUL**, THIS PHOTO ESSAY CHALLENGES THE IDEA THAT BEAUTY IS ALWAYS SOMEWHERE ELSE, IN SOME BIGGER CITY, SOME DISTANT COAST, OR SOME IMAGINED FUTURE.

AS THE FILM SAYS:



"I HEARD THIS STORY ABOUT A FISH. HE SWIMS UP TO AN OLDER FISH AND SAYS, 'I'M TRYING TO FIND THIS THING THEY CALL THE OCEAN.' 'THE OCEAN?' SAYS THE OLDER FISH, 'THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE IN RIGHT NOW.' 'THIS?' SAYS THE YOUNG FISH, 'THIS IS WATER. WHAT I WANT IS THE OCEAN.'"

LIKE THAT YOUNG FISH, WE OFTEN OVERLOOK WHAT SURROUNDS US. FRESNO IS KNOWN ACROSS THE WORLD FOR ITS AGRICULTURE – THE HEART OF CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL VALLEY, THE SO-CALLED BREADBASKET OF THE WORLD. FIELDS OF GRAPES, CITRUS, AND ALMONDS SHAPE ITS IDENTITY, BUT BEYOND THAT, THE CITY HOLDS OVERLOOKED CORNERS OF CULTURE AND CREATIVITY.

THIS PHOTO ESSAY IS ABOUT SEEING FRESNO DIFFERENTLY. IT'S ABOUT SLOWING DOWN, LOOKING CLOSER, AND REALIZING THAT THE WATER WE SWIM IN EVERY DAY IS ITS OWN KIND OF OCEAN.

# Art at the Edge of the Algorithm

By Alex Gutierrez

## A New Age is Upon Us

We are standing at the edge of a new world. The rise of artificial intelligence is reshaping the way we work, communicate, create, and even remember. Entire systems are being questioned and rebuilt in real time. Every industry from government, health, education, banking, art, music and entertainment is in maintenance mode preparing to launch v2.0. There's a real sense that history itself is up for negotiation, that narratives will be rewritten at the speed of an algorithm.

And in this storm of change, one thing remains constant: our human experience.

Our stories, our emotions, our lived realities are more important than ever. They are the raw material of the future.

## Erasure by Design

AI, for all its brilliance, is built on bias. It learns from imperfect data created by imperfect systems. It cannot feel. It cannot weep. It cannot love. And without those things, it cannot tell the full story of what it means to be human.

Beneath it all, AI runs on algorithms designed to filter, rank, and prioritize information. These systems decide which voices are amplified, which stories are buried, and which truths are quietly erased. Because they're trained on data shaped by power, privilege, and exclusion, they inherit those same imbalances. And when these filtered results are fed back into society,

they don't just reflect bias, they reinforce it, reshaping what we see, what we value, and ultimately, what we believe.

At the same time, our governments and institutions are re-examining history itself. Books are being banned. Curriculums rewritten. Truth blurred. The past is being reshaped, and if we remain silent, the future will be, too.

The risk is simple and profound: if we do not tell our own stories, someone, or something, else will.

## Create! Create! Create!

This is the moment.

Now is not the time for apathy. Now is the time for rebellion. Not the kind carried out with weapons, but the kind carved into canvas, pressed into film, poured into song.

You are the tool. You are the vessel. Every experience you've lived, every scar, every joy is the paint, the melody, the words the world needs.

Make your music. Take the pictures. Write the poem that refuses to be polite. Create the sculpture that defies erasure. Paint the portrait that screams, I was here. *We were here.*

Throughout history, artists have risen in moments like this. Picasso painted Guernica in response to the horrors of war. Nina Simone turned pain into anthems that demanded justice. Diego Rivera immortalized the

working class in murals larger than life. James Baldwin wrote truth into existence when the world wasn't ready to hear it.

They didn't wait for permission. Neither should we.

## The Future Belongs to the Artist

This moment is bigger than us.

The art you create today will be the stories of

tomorrow. If history has proven one thing it's that the artist's work has always outlived the storms of its age.

Poems, songs, films and paintings will become the record of what it felt like to live through this chaos, this change, this rebirth.

So create. Loudly. Fiercely. Without permission. Because history doesn't belong to the ones who wait. It belongs to the ones who dare to write it.

**"This is precisely the time when artists go to work. \*There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilizations heal."**

- Toni Morrison

## About the Author

Alex Gutierrez is a software engineer and storyteller at heart, blending over a decade of experience in technology with a background in public service. With a Master's in Public Administration and a Bachelor's in History, Alex brings a unique perspective to the intersection of technology, humanity, and narrative.

**EARTH PEOPLE  
NEW YORK TO  
CALIFORNIA...**



**EARTH PEOPLE  
I WAS BORN  
IN JUPITER.**



# TICKET FOR ONE, PLEASE

By: Angelica Cano

The first time I went to the movies by myself, I saw "Jennifer's Body." TBH, I don't really remember if I liked the movie or not. I do remember I had to hype myself up to go into the theatre on my own.

At the time, I was an Arts & Entertainment writer for the college paper. I took the (non-paying) job seriously as I scribbled notes in a lil notebook, using the light of Megan Fox on-screen to guide me. The details of the movie have faded and I don't even remember what I wrote in the review. But, I do remember sitting there by myself – kinda nervous, kinda proud, kinda loving it.

Still, for many years, if I didn't have someone to sit alongside in the theatre, I didn't go. It didn't even matter if it was something I really wanted to see. What's up with that?

I guess I felt like the cinematic outing should be shared? I guess I didn't want to seem like I was all alone?

I would venture to say that movies have been sold to us as a social activity: family movie night, Netflix and chill, girls night out with a rom-com. It seems the beauty of a ticket for one gets left out.

Last summer, I cracked the code. Tuesday discounts at my local theater. So I took myself on a date with Ryan Gosling. And, as you can imagine ... It was life changing. Not because of his dreamy blue eyes (not mad at 'em) or the film's quick wit, but because of the rush that came with picking a movie I wanted to see and actually making it happen.

Nowadays, I prefer taking myself to the movies by my lonesome. I look forward to Tuesdays all week long, even when I don't go to the movies. Just knowing I can is a little secret I have with myself. I have my go-to theatre because I have experienced cinema via recliner and I don't wanna go back. I don't care if I'm bougie.

Do I love sharing theories and opinions about movies with others? Hell yea. But, deciding what movie I want to see, at the time I want to see it, while getting there as early or as late as I want? UNMATCHED. I let myself get fully immersed without worrying if my guest is enjoying it. No small talk, just me and the movie.

It's like a little dose of self-care, escapism, and freedom all rolled into one with good AC and a soundtrack. I've come to the conclusion that going to the movies alone is fun. But choosing to go solo? That's some major main character energy. A ticket for one isn't lonely – it's freedom with extra butter on top.



# TEARING DOWN ART TO HANG MORE FLAGS

## THE UNFORTUNATE REDESIGN OF AMERICAN EXPRESSIONISM

The arts have sat at the center of every golden age of civilization. From the frescoed halls of Florence to the jazz clubs of Harlem, societies advertise their enlightenment by how boldly they support and argue with their artists. When power listens to poetry as seriously as it listens to profits, progress follows. When it doesn't, you get symmetry sans soul.

We're living through one of those latter moments now. The role of art in the United States is not just being neglected—it's being deliberately reshaped. And nowhere is that clearer than at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, long a symbol of national creativity, now a stage for partisan preference.

### Art as Civilization's Compass

Art isn't decoration. It is, however, direction.

It's how a society orients itself morally and emotionally. In times of peace, art refines the spirit. In war, it becomes protest. Picasso's *Guernica* didn't whisper about the 1937 bombing of a Basque town; it screamed—eleven feet high, twenty-five feet wide—forcing the world to look at state violence without anesthetic. That's the moral work art does: it demands reckoning where power prefers silence.

Art is also empathy's engine. Dance turns bodies into language. Fiction lets us borrow the lives of others. Photography can alter the political weather. To imagine a better society, one must first be capable of imagining at all—and art is that imagination made tangible.

### The Trump Takeover

In February, President Donald Trump forced through a leadership overhaul at the Kennedy Center: the board elected him chair and dismissed longtime president Deborah Rutter, with Trump ally Richard "Ric" Grenell installed in her place. The move—unprecedented in the Center's history—quickly bled into programming and staffing.

It wasn't a case of art being reprioritized; it's art being deliberately reshaped under ideological pressure. The institution once seen as a beacon of artistic diversity is now a curated echo of partisan preference.

### The Cultural Rubble (2025)

Here are fragments from the wreckage—concrete examples of how the Center's artistic soul has been methodically stripped away:

Category	Concrete Example
Dance Programming	Entire dance programming team cut on <b>Aug. 21, 2025</b> ; Director <b>Jane Raleigh</b> and Assistant Manager <b>Mallory Miller</b> among those terminated.
DEI / Social Impact	The Social Impact initiative dismantled; multiple equity-focused staffers laid off; internal communications deriding "DEI" circulated widely.
LGBTQ+ / Inclusive	<b>Gay Men's Chorus of Washington</b> concert canceled; the children's musical <b><i>Finn</i></b> canceled—officially "financial," plainly ideological in impact.
Performers' Response	<b><i>Hamilton</i></b> canceled its Kennedy Center run; <b><i>Eureka Day</i></b> withdrew; members of a touring <b><i>Les Misérables</i></b> cast refused to perform during a Trump-attended show.
Artist Pushback	Musician <b>Yasmin Williams</b> publicly shared dismissive correspondence from leadership after seeking clarity on cuts, fueling staff and public backlash.

## Follow the Money

In July, Congress passed—and Trump signed—the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. Tucked inside was \$257 million for the Kennedy Center, explicitly for capital repair, restoration, maintenance backlog, and security—money that fixes seats and scaffolding, not cancellations and programming independence. Capital funds are up; artistic autonomy is down.

Capital vs. culture. Because those dollars are legally fenced for buildings and security, they don't (and can't) reverse program cuts or restore axed teams. The accounting stays clean while the politics get dirtier: the lobby gleams as the repertoire thins.

**Renaming pressure.** Around the same time, House allies floated proposals to rename parts—or all—of the Center for the Trumps. The Kennedy Center, however, is established by statute as the sole national memorial to John F. Kennedy in Washington, which makes renaming a heavy legal lift. Quixotic or not, the push pairs splashy federal investment with branding pressure. What they wanted to look like largesse was actually an attempt to gain leverage.

**Sequence matters.** The outsized capital windfall lands after the board takeover and leadership swap—conveniently pairing public investment with ongoing ideological pruning. Meanwhile, the artistic balance sheet tells the real story: subscription softness and artist departures even as one-off galas post healthy hauls. A shiny lobby cannot program itself.

## The Anatomy of Suppression

Authoritarian cultural management rarely starts with blunt bans; it starts with budgets, boards, and buzzwords. First come “efficiency reviews,” zero-based budgeting that mysteriously zeroes out contemporary work, and board expansions that dilute independent trustees. Then arrive program “realignments,” brand-risk committees, and new security or insurance policies that make contested productions prohibitively expensive. The vocabulary is antiseptic—neutrality, balance, fiscal responsibility—but the outcomes aren’t. Replace independent curators with loyalists; recast diversity as “duplicative”; move commissioning to “heritage programming”; route proposals through content-vetting workflows that never quite say no—they just delay, downscope, and defund. Discomfort is relabeled “anti-American,” and artists are nudged toward self-censorship by the quiet threat of lost slots, lost grants, or hostile headlines. The form is softer than chiseled-out murals or smashed violins, but the spirit rhymes.

And yet, the moment the vise tightens, resistance art blooms in the seams. When galleries close, songs spill into the streets; when seasons are “postponed,” scripts migrate to black-box pop-ups, church basements, and living-room salons. You get porch concerts, projected guerrilla murals, QR-coded zines taped to lamp posts, and one-night micro-festivals assembled with borrowed lights. Outside the Kennedy Center, that looks like pop-up concerts on the steps, underground stagings of canceled plays, cast walkouts and curtain-speech refusals, and artists redirecting ticket links to mutual-aid funds. These aren’t side stories. They’re the story—the proof that culture is not a building, a board, or a brand. It’s a living argument that finds a stage wherever it must.

## **Beyond One Building: America's Arts Landscape Now**

Beyond the Kennedy Center drama, the broader map is telling. State arts appropriations continue to dip year over year, and marquee cuts—like Florida's statewide veto of tens of millions in grants—have rippled outward as community theaters, youth orchestras, and small museums have cancelled seasons or gone dark. School districts, facing reality after COVID-inspired Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief, have quietly pared back the on-ramps to culture: fewer band sections, pay-to-play fees for choir and theater, no buses for festivals, and “temporarily suspended” art electives in middle schools. Libraries shortened hours and cut author events; regional museums shortened exhibition calendars; union musicians reported lost work-weeks as pit orchestras were downsized or replaced with tracks.

All of this lands against the big picture reality that the arts and culture sector adds well over a trillion dollars to U.S. GDP (roughly four percent of the economy) and supports millions of jobs—while strengthening civic life in ways the balance sheet can't tally (youth engagement, neighborhood revitalization, public health, and so forth). The punchline writes itself: the arts drive growth and democratic health, yet they become an immediate culture-war piñata whenever budgets get tight, politics get loud, or some thin-skinned politician gets offended.

### **Why This Matters (and What We Can Do)**

This isn't just about a building on the Potomac. It's about deciding what kind of country we want: a canvas or a billboard; a chorus or a megaphone.

As the arts go quieter, the nation loses much more than just beauty. It loses memory, empathy, dissent, and reflection. Making America great will never involve silencing voices or stifling artistic expression—the exact freedoms the First Amendment exists to protect. The modern anti-fascist tradition coalesced in the interwar years precisely because artists, writers, and ordinary citizens recognized that culture is a battleground for truth. That conviction is baked into our founding guarantees, and it sits at the center of this democratic experiment.

Keep the marble if you must; keep the flags if you will—just keep the stages free, the art loud, and our artists unmuzzled.



# THE 17-MILE DRIVE

By: Kevin Clifton



The world feels unsteady right now, and a brief respite might be just what the doctor ordered. Fortunately for those of us who live in the Central Valley, we have a wealth of options for a quick getaway. The destination that I'm going to cover in this article is famous and steeped in golf lore. It's a perfect spot to take the family, and if you enjoy driving then this place is unforgettable. I'm talking of course about the 17-Mile Drive in Carmel, California. First, some history and basic information.

The 17-Mile Drive is a roadway located in the Del Monte Forest and was created around 1881 by a group of railroad barons with the intention of exhibiting the breathtaking scenery around this alluring region of the California coastline. Home to the rare Monterey Cypress Tree and the iconic Lone Cypress, there are golf courses, wildlife hotspots and serene coastal beaches along the route. It also happens to be the home of the following challenging, bucket-list golf courses: Pebble Beach, Spyglass, Spanish Bay and, though it's not directly on the 17-Mile Drive, Poppy Hills. These are all public courses, open to all, but require reservations months in advance due to such high demand. However, golf is not my focus here, so let's get back to the drive itself.

To get there, simply punch "17-Mile Drive" into Google Maps and you'll be given directions to the entrance, which is guarded by security and requires a small fee of \$10.50 to enter. Your first stop should be the Pebble Beach Visitor Center, which is right outside of The Lodge at Pebble Beach. Find a place to park and spend a good hour or two walking around, window shopping, taking in the scenery, learning a bit of history about Pebble Beach and grabbing a bite to eat. My recommendation is The Gallery Cafe, where the prices are reasonable, considering, and you get the added benefit of witnessing nervously excited golfers tee off on the first tee at Pebble Beach Golf Course. Make sure to save your receipt, as you'll get the \$10.50 entrance fee back if you present it to one of the guards upon exiting the 17-Mile Drive.





After you're done exploring The Lodge, hop in your car and make your way to the Lone Cypress (which you can again just Google for directions) and after taking some photos of this stark, lonely Cypress tree resting high above the crashing waves, continue down towards the ocean. You'll want to stop along the way and spend some time on either Fanshell or Seal Rock Creek beach, so pack a beach blanket if you don't want to sit directly on the sand. There are some small tidepools near both locations where children might be able to spot some colorful sea life. Beware of rip currents and strong undertow during high tide or storms. After you're done here, make a stop at the Restless Sea at Point Joe, which happens to be a particularly turbulent cove that offers some spectacular photographic opportunities. Save some time towards the end of the day to visit Carmel-by the-Sea, which is a fairytale village just up the way featuring cozy cafes and boutique stops.

While you're on your journey, you'll likely see some local wildlife, stunning oceanfront estates, gleaming cars and motorcycles speeding by, and vibrant coastal scenery. My descriptions in this brief article truly do no justice to the 17-Mile Drive, and you'll need to go there yourself to understand the magnitude of this legendary coastal route. As I mentioned earlier, you'll want to check out Carmel-by-the-Sea, which is a charming village featuring various shopping opportunities, delicious restaurants (I recommend Porta Bella), quaint cafes and bakeries, and if you have a sweet tooth like me, make sure to stop by the Cottage of Sweets for some international candy and homemade fudge. If you need a respite, then pack the car with a beach blanket, sunscreen, warm layers, and your loved ones. Then, hit the road and get ready to make some wonderful memories!



by Megan Scholl

## The Emberwake Archives

### Fragment II

# THE SUNDERED QUIRE - PART I

Orange hushes of candlelight wavered across an open tome. Shadows skirted the edges of the chamber where dancing fire in brass sconces failed to reach. Creeping darkness didn't matter. There were things Kaedin feared. Things he forgot to fear when his mind focused on priorities. But obscured cellars. Darkened corners. Black expanses of stretching nothingness. The deepest pits beneath Eldora's countries, cities, and villages. Those? They were wasted concerns.

Wasted when fire breathed from Kaedin's palms in dim corridors.

He flipped a page, the aged parchment rustling as it moved and floated to rest. One loosely folded fist supported his chin while he scanned the sketches of flames drawn in charcoal and ink. They were familiar now. Long-since memorized once the tome fell into his lap after months of searching.

A pained creak from the landing above the stairs slowed his motions. A deliberately quiet step, yet the complaints of old wooden boards wailed in his ears like the screeching of an untrained bard. The next footfall brushed against his senses with a whisper of one leather sole. A touch of metal scraped the third stair.

"Cassia Druvane," he called with enough cadence to resonate.

And when a grumbling string of curses joined one thudding boot, Kaedin's satisfied smile met his visitor as she stomped through the door. Cassia's travel robes were cinched tightly. Fresh mud caked the rough steel that shaped the limb replacing her left leg.

"Damn your elven hearing and damn you for spoiling my fun."

"Well," Kaedin swiveled, elbows balanced on the table, "you sound like—"

"I'm as quiet as the undead."

"I promise you aren't." Kaedin studied the pack at her hip. "Why're you here?"

"I heard a rumor on the wind."

"What rumor?"

"That Shrike's recklessness returned."

Kaedin's breathing sharpened. "Don't call me that."

"Oh, fine. You're hunting down the Sundered Choir," Cassia remarked dryly.

"Where'd you hear the rumor?"

"... On the wind."

"So"—he hefted the heavy book shut, enchanted rings catching the light—"Zev told you."

"He didn't."

"Uh huh. He send you a letter?"

Cassia's mouth twitched. "No."

"You want to know which ones I've destroyed."

"I . . ." Guilt flickered across her features. "Will you tell me?"

"Withering and Hollow."

"You have leads on the seven remaining flames?"

"Some," Kaedin answered, eyeing his uninvited friend. "Why'd he write you?"

"You need my help."

"He thinks I'll get myself killed."

"I never said that," she argued.

"You never needed to."



Truth etched itself along the lines of Cassia's face since her arrival.

The tight draw of berry-painted lips, chestnut eyes strained at their corners, shoulders held too high for comfort. The crest of Cassia's staff peered behind her right shoulder like a lurking warning. Flecks of frost swirled in a wash of crisp white against reinforced wood. Kaedin knew the choice laid well beyond his reach. That no amount of blistering fire would melt her resolve.

Cassia would anchor herself to the mission until the final flame cried its death song.

# THE REMAINS OF THE DAY, SNOBBERY, AND NAZISM

By: Alexandra Lauber

**The Remains of the Day** by Kazuo Ishiguro follows a few days in the life of a butler, Stevens, as he goes on a roadtrip to visit his former colleague, Miss Kenton, a housekeeper. Stevens is a butler in a great house to an aristocrat, Lord Darlington, primarily during the time between the two world wars. After Lord Darlington dies, Stevens serves the new owner, a rich American. Kazuo Ishiguro is Japanese born but moved to Britain when he was just five years old. This intimate yet still outsider perspective of British culture shines in this novel's incisive insight into the British aristocracy. We spend the bulk of the book inside Stevens' head as he reflects on his career and considers what it means to be a truly great butler, but it's what he carefully avoids thinking about which I find most interesting in this work.

## The Body, Labor, and Proximity to Power

What Stevens avoids thinking about and what becomes all the more obvious to the reader is how precarious Stevens' own self-concept is, especially the respect he gets from society and the self-respect he has for himself. As Stevens considers what makes a great butler, both he and his father are held up as examples of very good butlers -- maybe even great butlers. They both fulfill one important aspect of the definition: serving in a great house.

First among the ideas that Stevens carefully avoids admitting to himself is the loss of prestige in his current position serving in the household of a wealthy, titleless American, as opposed to in the household of a powerful, British aristocrat, who was politically involved and influential. The prestige that Stevens gets by association with Darlington is lost.

Second is how the precariousness of his respect and self-respect is based quite simply on the labor his body can do. At the end of the day, Stevens is in service. He works. He's part of the working class. He is at the highest status one can achieve within that class, but it is always purchased with the labor of his body. This becomes particularly clear as Stevens cannot reconcile with the fact that his father's abilities are in decline simply because he is getting old and his body cannot labor as it once did. His father's career goes from being a butler at an equally important household, to an underbutler, under his own son, to having more and more duties removed from him as his strength diminishes.

“My father could be seen standing by those four stone steps, deep in thought. A breeze was slightly disturbing his hair. Then, as we watched, he walked very slowly up the steps. At the top, he turned and came back down a little faster. Turning once more, my father became still again for several seconds, contemplating the steps before him. Eventually, he continued on across the grass until he had almost reached the summerhouse, then turned around and came walking slowly back, his manner at that moment no better than the way Miss Kenton puts it in her letter; it was indeed ‘as though he hoped to find some precious jewel he had dropped there.’”

When we first encounter those words in Miss Kenton's letter, the imagery stands out from more mundane statements. By the time Stevens recalls them here, we now know that his father struggles going up the stairs, has trouble carrying a tray, and has had duties removed from his purview. The precious jewel Stevens's father is searching for is the physical strength to continue as he once did.

We also have brief scenes of Lord Darlington in his winter years, declining in strength and power. Yet, despite all he did in his life, his position and respect never decline. For Lord Darlington, the means of respect and self-respect were born in his blood. For Stevens and his father, respect and self-respect are hard won by the labor of their bodies and their proximity to power.

Another part of Stevens' philosophy about being a great butler makes these scenes all the more tragic: Stevens believes that great butlers should fully embody the role, sacrificing his personality, his individuality, even his humanity in his excellent performance of The Butler. This combined with Stevens' unconscious unwillingness to take away the honor of the labor assigned to his father, even though he is

clearly physically struggling to do the work, gives us scenes where their relationship of strained formality, of one Butler talking to another Butler, about the requirements of the household ring loudly with all that is unsaid in their relationship. The unspoken foreground of this scene is how the tender father-son relationship has been sacrificed in pursuit of their success as butlers.

When we count up all that Stevens has sacrificed for all that Stevens has gained, how does the balance lie? On the one hand, he has temporarily achieved the highest status his working class roots can achieve. Through it he gains respect and self-respect. He is even once mistaken for being a gentleman in one of the rural towns he travels through. He has gainful employment and probably is paid well for his work. On the other hand, he has earned his way the labor of his body, which will eventually give out like his father's has. His success is tied to the success or failure of Darlington. He sacrificed his relationship with his own father.

### **Snobbery, Hierarchies, and Nazism.**

Throughout Stevens's reminiscences we learn that Lord Darlington becomes friends with Herr Karl-Heinz Bremann, a German aristocrat who in the aftermath of WWI has lost his position, his wealth, and even becomes homeless. His plight inspires Lord Darlington to become more involved in politics. No doubt in the back of his mind are fears around losing his own position, but outwardly he, like other British aristocrats, began to feel that the Treaty of Versailles was too harsh in its condemnation of the German state after the war. Unfortunately, the attitudes of the fictional Lord Darlington were all too real among the British aristocracy. Even the future king of England at this time, Edward the VIII, visited Germany, while he was still Duke, in this inter-war period, became a Nazi sympathizer, and met with Hitler.

As Lord Darlington becomes increasingly influenced, he moves from taking a sympathetic view of a fellow aristocrat who happens to be German, to sympathizing with the German state, to acting on increasing anti-semetic ideas. Then he asks Stevens to fire any Jews on his staff. Stevens does so. Stevens cannot or will not allow himself to truly reckon with the evil beliefs Lord Darlington has adopted.

While anti-semetism was a common belief held in England and throughout Europe, starting in the middle ages, and while the Nazis were certainly happy to gather the support of those who might share their antipathies to the Jew, it is important to emphasize that someone like Darlington would not have followed their line of thought all the way to Aryan supremacy. Someone like Lord Darlington, having aristocratic blood, would have believed in his own supremacy. It is easy to see how the blood, the inherited titles and powers of aristocratic thinking, combined with antisemitic animus are easy bedfellows with the race-thinking and antisemitism of Nazism.

Hannah Arendt observes this, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, "While the seeds of German race-thinking were planted during the Napoleonic wars, the beginnings of the later English development appeared during the French Revolution [...] The fact, however, must be stressed because of resemblances between German and English race-thinking as contrasted with the French brand. These resemblances stem from the fact that both countries had defeated the Tricolor and therefore showed a certain tendency to discriminate against the ideas of *Liberte-Egalite-Fraternite* as foreign inventions."

I want to highlight particularly egalite – equality – as the premier antidote to snobbery, the belief that one type of person, possessing whatever qualities or qualifications you might name, is better than some other type of person. These hierarchies are the toe-hold through which discrimination, discriminatory violence, then genocides gain purchase.

### **American Snobbery**

The *Remains of the Day* subtly raises the alarm. It shows how someone like Lord Darlington could be recruited to Nazi efforts through a fundamental belief that some people are better than others. It shows how someone like Stevens, dependent on Lord Darlington for his position, his income, and his self-respect, will turn a blind eye to the harm committed, and even follow the leadership and commands of such a person. Where in our culture, in our times, do we see these same forces at play?

I first became alarmed about an increase in Nazi dog-whistles, propaganda, and blatant endorsement of their philosophies during the January 6th insurrection. I saw people wearing Nazi symbols. I saw people waving flags with Nazi symbols.



Since then we have seen Elon Musk stand on stage during our most recent presidential inauguration giving two full seig heils.

### **What was the toe-hold for this strengthening of the Nazi voice?**

The sort of snobbery that Lord Darlington exhibits is easy to see from a mile away, especially as an American. I can imagine the posh accent. I can imagine the expensive boarding school. I can imagine the inherited wealth. I can imagine a house like Downton Abbey.

Even in America, our first instinct when imagining a snob, is also someone of inherited wealth, a Harvard grad, an East Coast elite. We imagine Ralph Lauren ads, JFK Jr., Martha's Vineyard, boating and polo. And no doubt, there are snobs among this crowd too, but this is not where we see this resurgence of Nazism gaining purchase.

There is a subtler snobbery in American culture. It reminds me of the Ancient Romans. The Romans despised the Greeks for being too luxurious, too intellectual, too interested in the arts, in philosophy. The Roman ideal was the

Soldier-Farmer. He fought on the front, defended their republic or empire, depending on when he lived; he returned to the outskirts of Rome or some backwoods territory. He was humble, lived close to the earth; he tilled the soil; he fed the Roman people. The Romans believed their ruggedness, their toughness, their ability to fight and farm, were better than the Greeks' pursuit of math, medicine, art, and philosophy.

American snobbery resembles the disdain the Romans had for the Greeks. It is the snobbery of the farmer, the rancher, the blue-collar worker, who presumes the coastal elites are effete, self-indulgent, ignorant of the real things in life. This identity is the inheritor of the tradition of the American Cowboy, the first and only true American Hero. Ironically it is the seemingly humble person who has been nursing an interior belief in their superiority, who has aligned themselves with a political movement that brings Nazi flags to the Capitol building and throws seig heils at the inauguration.

### **An Insistence on Egalite**

It seems obtuse that I need to reiterate that the philosophy of Nazism is one of evil. And what are the consequences? The holocaust. The 11 million slaughtered. The untold number of dead soldiers of World War 2. The bombardment of London, of Paris, of Hiroshima. The atomic bomb. These consequences exist from the world-shocking headlines down to the tiny, discrete moments of everyday lives for everyday people.

What were the consequences even in our fictional world of *The Remains of the Day* for Darlington and Stevens? While Darlington never loses his aristocratic status, he does die alone, weak, regretful, wrong. He loses his estate, his heritage, his influence. The only person left that he can confess his wrongs to is his butler, the one who executed his hateful commands with exactitude. Stevens loses the esteem of Miss Kenton, who upon hearing the order fire the Jewish servants, begins her plans to get married and leave the life of service. She is rightfully angry and appalled by Stevens' willingness to gloss over Darlington's antisemitism. He loses their friendship, and perhaps even a romantic future with her. Stevens is trotted out as entertainment for American visitors, as a real British Butler. The very ideal he devoted himself to becomes a spectacle to the representatives of the new superpower. Stevens loses his whole self: his integrity, his relationship with his father, the opportunity to be a full human.

To succeed against such evil philosophies we must take up the cry of Equality. We must continue to defend this simple truth: that all people are created equal. We must continue to hold dear to the idea that the seed of the human soul is the same in me and in you and in your neighbor and in mine. We must insist that despite creed, faith, culture, ethnicity, skin color, sexuality, gender, status, wealth (or not), health (or not), beauty (or not) -- despite all these superficial or intrinsic differences -- we together share our humanity, and, in that, share our equality.



WORD

THE  
B-SIDE  
COLLECTIVE

