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The Matthew (2022 Sep-Oct)

Item Type	Other
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Download date	2026-03-06 05:42:57
Link to Item	https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14490/626



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JOHN CABOT UNIVERSITY



▲ Soroush Sanaeinezhad standing in a performance in Prague, Wenceslas Square, holding his painting that represents the struggle of women in Iran. /PHOTO BY TREY ALIOTO

Expatriate Artist from Iran Solidarizes With Iranian Women Struggle

NEWS INTERVIEW

BY THESAR ABAZI

Soroush Sanaeinezhad, a Sborn-Iranian artist, expatriate living in Prague for the past three years, speaks out on the recent murder of Mahsa Amini. Sanaeinezhad's reaction is similar to many Iranians and people around the world after hearing about the tragic and unjust murder of Mahsa Amini. "After the death of Mahsa Amini, I was deeply affected by her innocence and how arbitrary her death was," said Sanaeinezhad. "She could have been any of the

girls that I knew in Iran." On Sept. 16, Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman, passed away after facing a beating from Iran's morality police (known as Guidance Patrols), which has been enforced in the country to maintain morality laws, such as the mandatory hijab law enforced since the establishment of the Islamic Clergy on April of 1983. This death and torture under the hands of police struck a chord in the hearts of all Iranians, causing a strong reaction in protest alongside the international community. Having lived under Iran's Islamic Republic from 1996 to 2019, Sanaeinezhad was privy to the suffering of women under the

Iranian Islamic regime, and the latest news from Iran is only a testament to what he has been seeing and hearing for so long, he said. "As an Iranian, a Middle Eastern, a human, and a feminist, I have always had deep compassion for the women's situation in Iran," said Sanaeinezhad.

Sanaeinezhad said he witnessed women treated cruelly and violently at the hands of the Islamic Republic's police. "I would hear terrifying stories of aggression from my sister, my mother, and my friends done by an organization that is not only above the law but is

the law itself." In 1979, the Islamic clergy under the leadership of Ayatollah Khamenei, overthrew the Shah's government claiming the need to restore Islamic heritage and discontinue Western hegemony. With the establishment of the Islamic Republic came new laws, one of which has been a point of contention, enforcing Iranian women to cover their hair with the hijab. Not doing so results in punishments like being lashed 74 times and/or being heavily fined. This law was not well accepted by the people of Iran. As an expat, the anger bubbled up in Sanaeinezhad as the years went by, while the immoral acts of injustice continued.

"This made me angry, sad, but most of all motivated to utilize whatever I have as an artist to bring attention to these inhumane crimes against women, which usually seem to be brushed off in Western media and politics,"

said Sanaeinezhad. Demonstrating his solidarity with the Iranian people, Sanaeinezhad attempts to provide a sense of support whilst simultaneously spreading awareness through his art and performances, attempting to upkeep the voices of the silenced Iranian women.

On Oct. 1, Sanaeinezhad curated a performance called, "Women, Life, Freedom" that took place in the center of Prague, Wenceslas Square. The performance consisted of gathering women among students, supporters and friends of Sanaeinezhad. The plan was for one of these women to rip off a piece of fabric from their clothing and to cut a lock of her hair "in mourning of our sisters in Iran," said Sanaeinezhad. But the more that people joined, the more solidarity was shown and other women who participated in the performance also chose to cut a lock of their hair. Other women spoke about the events surrounding the death of Mahsa Amini; there was also a re-enactment of violence between women and police. Sanaeinezhad said he meant to show how the Islamic Republic has been "futile in their efforts to oppress women's right to their bodies and censor them by bringing down the

hammer of oppression and nailing more cover on them every time they yearn for their freedom to silence their expression." The name of this performance comes from the Kurdish slogan, *Jin, Jiyan, Azadi* (Women, Life, Freedom). As the Kurds struggle for their independence, they try to emphasize the importance of women in the struggle. This slogan has been translated into Persian, *Zan, Zendegi, Azadi*, as it is being used by activists within Iran and outside. As nationwide protests continue, we witness the strong reaction from the Iranian youth, seeing men and women risk their lives just by showing solidarity with their fellow Iranian sisters who have been prosecuted by the government for so long. We see women take off their hijabs and cut off their hair as a way to show solidarity with Mahsa Amini and other women who have been victims of the Islamic regime for so long. Like many migrants, leaving their country for another in the hopes of a better future and opportunity is the dream. However, this also comes with the realization that all the people left behind could not afford such privileges. Sanaeinezhad acknowledges this by saying that after leaving Iran he has been "privileged enough to have the freedom of expression." He found meaning in his art and decided to focus it on women in Iran, and women in general. The more news would break out, the more Sanaeinezhad said he felt inclined to react through art.

We at JCU live in a university with a diverse group of students coming from around 74 different countries, all moving here for a better education, a better life and a better future. But we also realize that we must leave behind our family, friends, and loved ones in a country we had to steer away from. Whilst enjoying the comforts of good living, good education and a possible prosperous future, we sometimes also have to deal with the guilt of seeing our homeland fall apart. As expatriates, it becomes our duty and responsibility to share such privileges and not be frugal; this can be achieved through art, performance, sports or even writing. ■

Edited by Ilenia Reale

COMMENTARY ►



▲ /PHOTO BY SIMA GHAFARZADEH

Iran - Which Kind of Democracy Are We Trying to Build in the Middle East?

NEWS COMMENTARY

BY NICOLE DI MARIA

Iran's regime is threatened by violent strikes and protests that are slowly becoming an actual civil war. The roots for this situation to break out can be found within the history of neocolonialism. But the most important thing to highlight is this phenomenon's consequences are rooted in many countries' society and politics.

On Sept. 16, Iran's morality police detained Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman, for letting a few hair pieces escape her hijab. Her behavior violates regulations deemed necessary by Iranian officials based on traditional Islamic beliefs. Mahsa was then placed in

a re-education center. These latter function as detention facilities, where women — and occasionally males — are detained for not adhering to the state's modesty regulations. After her detention, Mahsa was transferred to the hospital “without any vital signs and brain-dead,” according to Time Magazine.

Protests are threatening to topple Iran's Islamic Republic. They extended to more than one hundred cities. More than one hundred universities participated in the strikes; even professors took a position, as some resigned from their job, others physically joined the strikes, and others openly declared to support the cause. As the regime's existence is threatened, it is trying to control the protests by

blocking internet connections and closing several universities. Moreover, physical repressions get more violent every time with the use of firearms and teargas. However, these responses from the government were only helpful in strengthening people's rage and revolutionary beliefs. Foreign Policy Magazine highlighted how these protests differ from those concerning the citizens' discontent over economic issues and concerns about election rigging. These protests are indeed challenging the theocratic social rules that govern Iranian society.

The British news agency Reuters informed about Iran's Foreign Ministry declaration saying that “Washington is always trying to weaken Iran's stability and security

although it has been unsuccessful.” This declaration is fundamental to understanding what is truly going on in Iran and how neocolonialism is affecting the current policies of the middle east. Iran's Foreign Ministry's statement is not based on mere beliefs. According to the New Yorker Magazine, Masih Alinejad, a 46-years-old Iranian dissident journalist working from an FBI safe house, has coordinated a social media campaign that has helped incentivize the protests. However, these statements must also be addressed to less recent events. Going back to 1953, the USA and UK governments, respectively under the name TPAJAX Project and “Operation Boot”, orchestrated a coup d'état to replace the democratically elected Prime Minister

Mohammad Mosaddegh in favor of the monarchical rule of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi — commonly named as “the Shah” — according to Theodore L. Leonhardt analysis. The Shah immediately suppressed political dissenters such as the liberal and nationalist opposition and the (Communist) Tudeh party. This coup was supposedly arranged to let the U.S.-U.K. coalition regain control over Iran's high-revenue resources. Anti-Shah discontent concludes through the Iranian Revolution of 1979. This latter signed the end of Pahlavi's rule and the beginning of an Islamic republic under the rule of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Nevertheless, some problems persist today and are rooted in the events mentioned above. The Iranian political and religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini, who served as the first supreme leader of the Islamic republic, asserted that Islamic jurists must guide the country to prevent “the influence of foreign powers.” This way of thinking is rooted in the government's mindset. Although today's leader of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi, seems to be more open to confrontation with hegemonic powers like the US, it will be pretty unlikely to reach trustful cooperation between countries. The government is trying to protect its autocratic rule imbedded in religious legacies and the country from foreign influences. It is now easy to give meaning to the establishment of moral police and the outgrowth of the incredible violence that women and protestors are now living in Iran. ■

Edited by Jacopo Menichincheri

GLSEN Research Institute Director Joe Kosciw Speaks on the Importance of Effective Resources for LGBTQ+ Students

NEWS

BY GIULIA LEO

On Monday Sept. 26, the Public Affairs Office and the Rome Youth Council of the Embassy of the United States of America hosted the event “#SafeSpace: Letting Diversity Flourish in Schools.” The event took place at Circolo di cultura Omosessuale Mario Mieli, and it featured guest speaker Joe Kosciw, Director of GLSEN Research Institute. GLSEN is an education organization founded in 1990 aimed at the development of positive learning environments for LGBTQ+ youth. In order to achieve their goal, they conduct research and come up with evidence-

based solutions, create resources for educators, and advocate for policies that protect and support marginalized students. One of the organization's most important achievements is the creation of the GLSEN National School Climate Survey, a 2019 report on the experience of LGBTQ+ students in terms of their well-being, the challenges they encounter, and the availability and usefulness of school resources.

GLSEN's research demonstrates that 4 out of 5 LGBTQ+ students feel unsafe in schools because of a personal characteristic, be it sexual orientation, gender, body size, or disability. The same percentage of students experience identity-based harassment and assault based on sexual orientation and gender expression. Such acts of victimization and

discrimination are both associated with poorer academic outcomes, as well as greater levels of depression, and lower levels of self-esteem.

Together with highlighting the effects of a hostile climate in schools on LGBTQ+ students, GLSEN's report also calls attention to the four most effective forms of support: educated teachers, inclusive curricula, protective school policies, and school clubs or initiatives for LGBTQ+ students. Where those resources were implemented, the percentage of negative school experiences went down, simultaneously the rate of positive mental health and educational outcomes went up.

However, most LGBTQ+ students still don't have access to those resources. To make an example, in Italy, 45.1% of the interviewed stu-

dents were disappointed with the way LGBTQ+ topics were taught, and only 19.2% agreed that 6 or more members of the school personnel were supportive of LGBTQ+ students. The urgency for the implementation of resources for LGBTQ+ students in Italy is even higher in the historical moment the country is entering, with the election of new Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni (which, ironically, was officialized on the same day as the event).

Meloni says “yes to the natural family, no to the LGBTQ+ lobby, yes to sexual identity, no to the LGBTQ+ lobby, yes to sexual identity, no to gender identity, yes to the culture of life, no to that of death.” a statement where, paradoxically, the word “death” seems to allude to abortion,

and “life” to the continuation of a woman's pregnancy regardless of the mother's impossibility to carry through with it, or of the dynamics of the conception. In a context where the (few) conquests of the LGBTQ+ community are being threatened, we need to regain faith in a brighter future. Now more than ever, we need to work on building a bigger and better support system for all marginalized people, and this process must begin in school. Now more than ever, Italy —as well as the rest of the world— needs to make schools a safer and more inclusive environment for all students, without exceptions. ■

Edited by Eleonora Prior

Rikers Island: An Indelible Stain in the Land of the Free

NEWS FEATURE

BY ALICE FINNO

NEW YORK CITY — If you have ever thought of New York City as the land of freedom and opportunities, you'll be surprised to learn about Rikers Island: 400 acres of cruelty, suffering, and inhumanity, situated in the East River, just above Queens. With a jail population of ten thousand detainees on average, Rikers Island is one of the most notorious jails in the United States for its violations of human rights and corruption. Despite the terrible living conditions and the mistreatment of incarcerated people in Rikers becoming public in recent years, not much has improved, and just when it seems it can't get worse, the devastating story of another detainee comes to light.

Anna Pastorella left Italy in the 80s to start a new life in New York City. She would have never imagined that years later, her son, Jairo Pastorella, would end up in Rikers and that she would become one of the most committed advocates for its closure. For the six years that her son was in Rikers awaiting trial, Anna visited every weekend "going through hell" just to see him. "I came here because I love New York, and then what happened to him is like the darkest thing that could have happened to anybody," says Anna. As soon as visitors get off the only bus that reaches Rikers Island, they are met by correction officers who start yelling at them the instructions to follow. Once they enter the facility, visitors must go through metal detectors, which can easily ring for less experienced visitors not aware of the dress code to follow. When this happens, they are pulled out of the line and subjected to a strip search, where abuses are much more likely to happen.

It was horrible because not only they treat the people who are incarcerated like criminals, they abuse them, they abuse them mentally, physically, and sexually, but they also abuse the visitors.

Anna recalled cases when the correctional officers squeezed her

breast or forced her to open her pants and looked at her crotch to check for drugs. This procedure is invasive and very frequent, even though it should not be happening, and only recently a class-action lawsuit for illegal strip searches in NYC jails has been settled for \$12.5 million. Among the long list of clothes not to wear are sweatsuits with zippers, hoodies, uniforms, jewelry, hats, shorts, skirts, or dresses more than three inches above the knee, and no more than one layer of clothes. Even in winter, visitors are required to remove any extra layer of clothing, including coats, jackets, overshoes, and long jeans. Anna still remembers the freezing cold that she experienced during the visits. "I used to try to hide my undershirt," she told me. She had the impression that the correctional officers left the windows open on purpose to make visitors feel uncomfortable, but all these obstacles never stopped her from visiting her son.

You don't know sometimes who the criminal is because here are the bars, here is the supposed criminal, and on the other side is the correction officer, the other criminal: it could be the other way around.

Some days the checks were worse than others, and it was clear to Anna that not all the visitors were treated the same way: she witnessed correctional officers pull some people out of the line without inspecting them, making it very easy to smuggle drugs into the jail. Jairo also told her he had personally seen correctional officers giving out drugs to some detainees who would then sell them and give part of the money back to the correctional officers. Corruption in Rikers has been a recurrent problem over the years, and cases of drug trafficking are often reported in the news. For Anna, what was even more striking was the fact that both the incarcerated people and the correctional officers in Rikers Island were mostly Black and Hispanic people coming from low-income neighborhoods. She said it wasn't rare for them to know each other, and sometimes the correctional officers even had relatives in Rikers. It was hard not



▲ Rikers Island as seen from a plane that departed from La Guardia Airport. /PHOTO BY TOMAS MANTILLA

to think about it: people who used to live near each other, perhaps go to the same school or church, were suddenly turned against one another, as correctional officers became violent and abusive towards the same people they used to hang out with.

The law says that you're innocent until proven guilty, but it doesn't work like that - here you have to prove you're innocent.

Jairo was arrested in 2010 for killing a man during a dispute. He turned himself in, claiming to have acted in self-defense, and he was locked up in Rikers while waiting for trial. The interminable wait ended when he decided to take a plea deal to be out of jail in 10 years. Anna said he could not endure any more waiting without knowing how much longer he would have had to stay in Rikers. Jairo's story is similar to that of many other detainees who end up pleading guilty only because they arrive at a point when the psychological pressure to accept the deal and the uncertainty about their future is too much to handle; a situation aggravated by the unbearable living conditions in Rikers. Anna stressed that the detainees were given scarce and unhealthy food and pills to keep them calm, which weakened their physical and mental abilities. Most of the time, she couldn't recognize her son: he was gaining weight, and when he came into the visitors' room, he was always distracted

and tired; the opposite of the lively, muscular boy she knew. Nevertheless, this was nothing compared with the extreme heat they suffered and the lack of air conditioning or air circulation. Anna claims Jairo saw some people being carried out of their cells dead because of this.

"I can't take it, it's too hot."
"I'm completely naked, I'm gonna rip my skin from how hot it is."
"I can't sleep."

These are the words Jairo told his mother, led to exasperation by the dreadful conditions he was forced to live in every single day.

It's an environmental problem, it's a human crisis, you look at it, from every side of it, it's a problem: it needs to be shut down.

Besides the heat, Rikers Island has a huge problem with water leaks. Anna saw it herself in the visitors' room, but her son told her that in their cells it is much worse, as sometimes he would wake up completely wet, with nowhere else to move, and be forced to sleep on a soaked mattress. The leaks also caused the mold to start growing in the cells, so the detainees have to breathe the harmful air and live in an environment that damages their health. The island itself is toxic as it was landfilled with garbage, so the detainees and the workers in Rikers have to endure the terrible, noxious smell and fumes emanating from the decomposing garbage. A problem that has made

the ground unsteady and compromised the very old infrastructures, making them increasingly dangerous, especially in the eventuality that a climate disaster, like Hurricane Sandy, would hit.

These hellish living conditions make life in Rikers a nightmare, and not every detainee can bear it until the end of their sentence. In the past five years, there has been an alarming increase in the number of self-harm and suicides, and a tragic record of 15 deaths among detainees in 2021, the highest since 2016. To complicate the situation, more than 40% of the people incarcerated in Rikers suffer from mental illnesses, so they would need to receive treatment in appropriate facilities, instead of witnessing their health deteriorate even more while they are locked up in Rikers. Anna said that Jairo was terrified of his own psychiatrist, and one day, he called her screaming, upset, saying that he would not go to the psychiatrist even though there would have been repercussions. Jairo didn't feel safe speaking with him, as he wanted to know all the details of his crime and seemed to enjoy listening to his trauma, she said. After this episode, Anna called the jail, worried about her son, and the answer she received was, "I'm sorry, we cannot give you any information because it's our property, your son is our property."

When they put you in soli-

CONTINUES ►

tary confinement, they don't call it solitary confinement. They give it other names, so you don't know what's going on, like Special Housing Unit.

One day, Anna couldn't reach her son, and she was informed that he couldn't make calls because he was in the Special Housing Unit (SHU). A month later, when he came out, he told her that he had been locked in solitary confinement. Alone, in a small cell, for 24 hours a day, with a clogged toilet and a sink that only had hot water during summertime, hearing the screams of all the other people in solitary confinement while suffering from the heat and hunger — as he often didn't receive any food. Anna wondered how anyone could remain sane after experiencing that.

My son is a graffiti artist. He does murals and graffiti, and he paints, so that's what he was doing in Rikers: he was painting and drawing because he needed an escape.

Jairo managed to survive the harsh reality of Rikers through his art. He had to become creative and use whatever he could find around him since he didn't have access to any type of material. He ripped bed sheets and pillowcases and painted on them using coffee or Kool-Aid powder. He used to wet newspapers to get the ink from them, and then mix it with lotion to make it denser, or glue things together using toothpaste. Everything he could find around became a way to make art, a way to escape, as well as a connection with the outside world, as he started making little soap sculptures for his friends. Now that he's out of Rikers, Jairo can't even look at those artworks because they bring him right back to the moment that he made them and the demons he was fighting to survive in Rikers. However, Anna kept everything her son made in those years, posting pictures of his art on Instagram and eventually displaying his pieces in galleries and exhibitions of prison art, showing them to people and selling them.

When this parole supervision is over, I want him to go away because he can't get better here, the environment is the same.

In 2019, Jairo finished serving his sentence, and he decided to go back to college. He had tried to continue his studies after being transferred to Auburn Correctional Facility, the prison upstate, but they told him they only offered courses to get the high school diploma, and the four years he had left in pri-

son were not enough to apply for the college program, get accepted, and complete the courses. Thus, when he got out of jail, he started studying again, and after two and a half years, he graduated from college, making his mother extremely proud for being able to get back to study after everything he had been through.

Years later, there are still many obstacles Jairo has to overcome, as he is having a hard time finding a job due to his criminal record. During his five-year post-release supervision, he had to abide by very strict rules. One of them consisted of a curfew at 8 p.m., and parole officers that could ring at his door at any time and send him back to jail if he wasn't home. "My son is so paranoid that he's home by seven," Anna said. Another controversial rule concerned not having any kind of police contact. Once, Jairo got a ticket for passing at a red light on his bicycle and was terrified by the possible consequences that the encounter with the police would have. Luckily, his parole supervisor was magnanimous and pardoned the police contact because it only concerned a bicycle ticket.

Rikers left a permanent mark on Jairo. Since he got out, Anna noticed that he has had a lot of phobias. He cannot have anyone walking behind him without getting anxious, because in Rikers the corridors were the most dangerous places, with the risk of fights breaking out at any point, and doesn't feel comfortable taking public transportation, so he goes around with his bicycle and roller blades in order to be fast and have the possibility to run away if he finds himself in an unsafe situation. However, a new legislation called the Less Is More Act was recently passed by the newly elected governor of New York, Kathy Hochul. According to this bill, people on post-release supervision and parole who abide by the terms of their sentence will have their parole reduced proportionally to the days they served without any violation or incident.

The Less Is More Act meant good news for Jairo. He had already completed three of the five years of post-release supervision, and, in June, he received the news that his supervision was over. He was finally free. Anna said he couldn't wait to go back to Italy after more than 15 years of not being able to do so. His plan was to visit his grandmother who had been very ill and reconnect with his family, so he applied for his passport immediately.

I started looking around, getting involved in some or-

ganizations because I didn't know how I was going to fight this monstrosity.

Throughout the years her son was incarcerated, Anna got involved with several organizations committed to closing Rikers. It all started when Glen Martin, founder of JustLeadership USA asked Anna to speak in front of the City Hall, telling her son's story and asking for Rikers to be closed. Back then, people did not believe there was any chance Rikers would ever close, but the advocates for closing Rikers proved them wrong. It was one of the first rallies of the Close Rikers Campaign, and, in 2019, former Mayor Bill de Blasio and the City Council approved the plan to close Rikers by 2026 and build four smaller jails near the courts. A plan that has already been delayed to 2027.

The main problem that remains, according to Anna, is the creation of these borough jails because the people who live near the courts, especially in Chinatown, do not want the jails to be near their homes. However, having jails in the city would be beneficial for several reasons. To start with, the fact that Rikers is situated on an island makes it completely detached from the outside world, which increases the isolation of the detainees from their families, discourages the lawyers from meeting their clients, and perpetrates the culture of violence and inhumanity that reigns in Rikers. In addition, even though some money would have to be invested in the creation of the new jails, there would be significant savings in the future, considering the millions of

dollars spent transporting the detainees from Rikers to the courts every time they have a hearing.

Anna also became part of other groups that were brainstorming what to do with Rikers once it closed. At first, they approached LaGuardia Airport to inquire if they were interested in expanding on that territory, but they weren't. Then the groups realized that the best purpose for Rikers Island would be to produce renewable energy for New York City. The island would be perfect for the installation of solar panels and wind turbines, and since it's surrounded by water, it could also take advantage of it to produce hydroelectric power, while the infrastructures could be fixed and used for waste composting and management. A plan was proposed by the organization Renewable Rikers to turn this horrific island into a restorative land that favors a just climate transition. At the same time, people who lost their lives in Rikers and the atrocities that were committed cannot be forgotten, so Anna and Jairo also participated in the Rikers Public Memory Project giving some ideas on the creation of a memorial on Rikers Island once the jails cease to exist.

I started doing this work after he was already locked for five years, so I didn't really help him, but I need to help the others because this cannot repeat.

Anna continues to be at the forefront of the fight to close Rikers and build the borough jails. She also works at the state level, traveling to

Albany with other advocates in the attempt to change the legislation and fix the dysfunctions of the criminal justice system, beginning with the malfunctioning of speedy trials. She firmly believes that jails should aim at rehabilitating the incarcerated people in order to reinsert them into society once they have served their sentence, which is why the borough jails should not be built like Rikers. They should have large spaces, windows, air circulation, color, and programs that the detainees can join. Anna argues that, in the United States, there is a mentality of punishment that condemns people forever for a single mistake they made, and jails like Rikers perfectly embrace and propagate this mentality. Closing Rikers not only will put an end to a human rights crisis that has been perpetuated for far too long but will also be a decisive step toward changing this mentality and allowing people to have a second chance. ■

Edited by Jacopo Menichincheri



▲ Anna holds the drawing Jairo made for her. /PHOTO BY TOMAS MANTILLA

Flavia Del Prete: The Nuances of Acting

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

BY SARA SEGAT

Flavia Del Prete is a junior at JCU from Rome, Italy, majoring in Marketing and minoring in Business Administration. A flourishing acting talent, she recently starred in Prime Video's new original series, *Prisma*, directed by Ludovico Bessegato (director of *Skam Italia*) and already acclaimed among critics. *Prisma* explores the nuances that make every human being unique, with a strong focus on gender fluidity and freedom of expression and, at the same time, a certain elegance and modesty in its language. I had the pleasure of meeting Flavia to discuss her background, her experience being part of *Prisma*, and her own unique prism of colors.

First of all, congrats on such a wonderful release! Was *Prisma* a big break for you?

Thank you! It was really a great release, indeed. I'd say it was a big break because until now, I had only been studying and having small acting experiences. Of course, when they told me that the director was Ludovico, whom I knew from *Skam Italia*, I immediately knew it would be a big project. As a result, I felt a great responsibility for myself. It was strange because I did a lot of auditions for it in the beginning. Still, I was immediately treated as a cast member even during these auditions, and I was definitely not used to all this attention. In such big projects like this, there is incredible care for the actors.

How did you get into acting in the first place?

I started studying acting at the age of 11 with theater, also in English and French. Then I enrolled in a film acting school where I took a 2-year course from age 12 to 14, and then I went back to the same school at 17 for a 3-year academic course from which I actually got a film acting degree. In this school, we had courses in film history, diction, acting, stage movement, and improv. I'd say the most significant push to start working in

acting came when the acting school awarded me the outstanding student of my year, granting me priority access to artistic representation offered by the school's management. From there, I really started acting, with lots of auditions, and that was the turning point.

During high school, you were also a radio speaker. Could you tell us more about that experience and how it shaped you?

It was definitely one of the most important formative experiences of my life. In fact, I think that without radio, I would never have realized that, in a way, I was suited for the world of entertainment, art, and show business. I worked for five years as a speaker and coordinator of training activities, events, and production. The thing that shaped me the most was being sent to high schools to do PCTO (ed: skill-building training in the Italian high school system), teaching communication, proxemics, and diction in classes of third- and fourth-year high school students. My favorite part of radio was, basically, speaking: I had several programs that I hosted on my own, collaborations and sponsors that I managed, as well as lots of interviewees, even famous ones. I met a lot of people who really gave me a great deal of advice about this world.

It's fair to say you can express yourself in many ways, but what would you consider your true medium to be? Is it acting?

I have come to the conclusion that I express myself when I empathize with people. I think it can all be encapsulated in the art of communication, of sharing. I cannot define a single art as the medium by which I can express myself because, in me, there are a thousand different colors and a thousand ways in which I communicate. It's nuanced. As of right now, acting is the medium I feel most comfortable with. Still, though, I can't know what the future holds for me. However, I hope I can always find

ways to convey ideas and emotions to people.

***Prisma* is a Prime Video original. What did it mean for you to work on such a big production?**

Prisma is an important project, deep in its themes, so it could only be represented by such a cutting-edge platform as Prime Video. The presence of Amazon Studios and Prime Video was felt throughout the course of the project; we met various figures, executives from Amazon, who were always close to us during the auditions and, then, the filming. Every detail was taken care of, along with the director's vision, by Amazon. Certainly, it was Amazon that provided a lot of resources for us actors especially. As I mentioned before, the care toward us was impeccable, even during the auditions. For example, for the most difficult or demanding scenes, we were supported by a counselor who, together with the director, guided us in dealing psychologically with those shots. I fully experienced being involved in a big project also because we were hardly ever in Rome (ed: *Prisma* is set in Latina), and so we all lived for several days in an on-location hotel, and every morning they would pick us up to take us to the set, and bring us back in the evening when shooting was over. The importance of this project is also reflected in the size and professionalism of the crew and the various figures who worked alongside us; if *Prisma* turned out so well, it is definitely thanks to the teamwork.

What was it like to work with Ludovico Bessegato, director of *Prisma* (and *Skam Italia*, another Italian success)?

Ludovico is incredibly professional and one of the most brilliant artists I know. He is a director who pays attention to every detail. It is essential to mention that, in addition to directing it, he also wrote *Prisma* together with Alice Urciolo. Because of this, during the filming, you could sense that he really had a 360-degree view of what he wanted the final result to be. Of course, by



▲ Flavia Del Prete. /PHOTO BY FRANCESCO GUARNIERI WITH THE CONTRIBUTION OF GIULIA SEVERONI, FANNY PALOMBINI, AND MASTERS' LAB

this, I do not mean that the series was not worked on for months and months, even through post-production, but he certainly had from the beginning a very clear idea of what *Prisma* was supposed to be and convey. In practical terms, he is a director who values improvisation and is always open to listening to the actor's suggestions; for an actor, this is a great honor because we feel like we can really contribute to the character as we feel it is most ours.

***Prisma* has a very precise, powerful message. What would you say to somebody who's debating whether to start watching it or not?**

Prisma, in my opinion, should be seen because it is not the classic teenage coming-of-age series one would expect. On the contrary, it is a complex series that should be

viewed with attention, open-mindedness, and eagerness to learn, and that, at the same time, represents all of us. The beauty of the theme is that this "us" is our nuances, without definitions, without labels, but simply us, represented for who we are. The greatness of this series lies in the effortlessness and ease with which the theme of diversity has been treated because, in fact, there is no diversity conceived as anything other than "normal"; it is simply us in our beautifully complex prism.

Still, inclusion is key. Is that why you chose JCU?

Perfectly consistent with what *Prisma* wants to be, I could only apply to JCU because it is an environment where different cultures,

CONTINUES ►

languages, nationalities, and identities converge and through which we can enrich each other more and more every day. So yes, that was definitely one of the main factors in my choice. I also chose JCU to be able to have an English education here in Rome, but more importantly, to develop my other professional skills through internships, as well as to benefit from the expertise of the professors, who really motivate you and encourage you to give your best.

You're pursuing a BA in Marketing with a minor in Business Administration. What sparked your interest in this field? Do you plan on combining it with acting?

My interest in marketing has been with me since I was a child; I was fascinated by all the commercials that ran on TV, and I wondered about the specific language behind these kinds of communications. Over time, I found that I was also interested in the psychological as-

pect behind consumers' choices, a company's approach to their customers, and their communication choices. Being a digital native, I am also very interested in the areas of digital marketing and social media marketing. This interest is mainly fueled by the fact that, as an actress, I also want to curate my personal brand and communication channels to convey the ideas and values I bring forth with my projects. So yes, I see these two worlds interconnected because, in the end, it is always about communicating uniqueness,

whether it is about a product or an emotion.

What are your plans for the future? Anything you're working on?

My plans for the future are mainly to continue studying both Marketing & Business Administration and acting. Of course, I continue auditioning, but for now, all new projects are top secret. I will graduate from JCU in December 2023 and continue my studies in

this field as well but knowing that still, life can always throw up surprises. In any case, in the future, I will continue to follow both of my paths because, in general, I am a very determined person, and the world of acting and the world of business are my two great passions. I would advise you, though, if you enjoyed *Prisma*, to keep your eyes open! ■

Edited by Ilenia Reale

Film Appreciation Club: A New Student Organization



▲ /PHOTO BY SAMUEL REGAN-ASANTE

NEWS STUDENT LIFE

BY ELLA STILLION SOUTHARD

Enter from offscreen JCU's new club, Film Appreciation Club. A community that welcomes all, from cinephiles to those who prefer casual viewings. Founded and led by JCU Senior Catharine Jacobs, alongside Vice-President Hedda Bonesmo, the Film Appreciation Club was established with the intention of creating "a space for people to come together and share ideas and create connection through movies," according to Catharine.

The club convenes on Tuesdays at 3:30 in the Club Room (on the second floor of Tiber Campus) for an hour or two of easygoing conversation about the film for the week. Club members watch the film at home prior to the meeting, leaving more time for everyone to

gather their thoughts and prepare to chat. There is no set structure for the discussion, so don't be afraid to come and share your opinions. Everything from the movie's impact to a certain genre, the actors, the soundtrack, its relation to films from a different era, the cinematography, and more is discussed. So there is plenty of surface area to contribute your thoughts to. Hedda encourages students to join simply because it's a fun time. "It just feels like hanging out with friends... only we're allowed to talk as much about movies as we want, without it annoying anyone," she said. Hedda also adds that the group jokes around a lot; sometimes the discussion gets into the philosophical implications of the film, but most times the conversations are void of pretension and "a pressure to say

something smart or profound." If students choose to join this club, President Catharine Jacobs hopes members "feel inspired to think critically of the media they consume," and Vice President Hedda wishes people can expand their taste in film and get a whole new perspective on several eras and sub-cultures of film, by listening to other people's subjective experience.

The club discusses films from 1920s silent movies to "bro-movies," as Hedda states, so there are plenty of opportunities for people to expand their understanding of cinema! Catharine and Hedda reassure club members and interested students that if there are film discussions you would prefer to skip out on, for any reason, there is no pressure to attend the meetings

every week. For our first two meetings, the club discussed two distinctly different films. To give students who are possibly interested in joining the club, here's a glimpse into one of our discussions thus far.

Spiderman Into the Spider Verse and *Donnie Darko* – what could they possibly have in common? One is a feat of the modern "stepped" animation style and mesmerizingly bold cinematography, and the other an early 2000s avant-garde, yet foundational, psychological thriller cult classic. Leave it to JCU's film appreciation club to bridge the gaps between the two in a lively discussion on a Tuesday afternoon. Despite their clear differences in genre and plot, the discussion on *Donnie Darko* begins with its parallels to *Spiderman Into the Spider Verse*. Everyone agrees that both films achieve a successful genre balance, which is not a simple task. Not only do both sustain a genre duality, but they do so with seemingly polar genres. *Spiderman* is immersed in the Marvel Universe and the comic book genesis, but centers around a young man's relatable coming-of-age story. Miles Morales, the new *Spiderman* in this world's scene, experiences the typical teenage conundrums: the relationship with parents, how to navigate a new school and academic rigor, embarrassing situations, and feeling isolated and misunderstood. Miles experiences an uphill battle when tasked with learning how to navigate the new identity of *Spiderman*, and ultimately save his fellow intergalactic friends and the entire world. Similarly, *Donnie Darko* is predisposed to its psychological thriller genre, with Donnie experiencing schizophrenia, and consequently hallucinations of a creepy bunny haunting him with

the world ending. However, the film manages to also include a plot bolstered by Donnie's coming-of-age experience; he feels alienated and alone, he's wrestling with his future, and navigating a young romantic relationship. Although our two protagonists come from drastically different cinematic contexts, one club member makes the connection in discussion that Donnie and Miles have the weight of the world on their shoulders -- not metaphorically, literally. As a result, they are forced to look within and overcome their personal difficulties, and ultimately make a moral choice on behalf of the rest of the world. The audience is continuously reminded that the respective protagonists are not ideal heroic figures, but rather antiheroes, which makes their hero arcs even more relatable.

If discussions like these compel readers at all, feel free to stop by for a meeting or two on a Tuesday afternoon. Coming up for the month of October, the club will be discussing some horror movies, like *Nosferatu*, alongside a *Young Frankenstein* screening on October 27th from 5-7 PM in the Clubs Room. The Film Appreciation Club is also collaborating with The Black and African Student Alliance club for a screening of *Shaft*, with a subsequent discussion on the Blackploitation genre.

Details on events and upcoming movies will be posted on the club's Instagram, @filmgroupjcu, so stay tuned for more there! ■

Edited by Eleonora Prior

Discover What's in the *STARS* for You This Month

ASTROLOGY

BY SARA SEGAT

Dear Readers, it's our pleasure to welcome you all to this new section. Here are your astrology predictions for the upcoming month of November.

You may check your **sun sign**, **moon sign**, and **rising** (or ascen-

dant) **sign** when reading all about what's coming your way. While the sun determines your ego and true inner persona, and the moon regulates your moods, emotions, and feelings, the ascendant acts as your façade – the outer, more physical part of your persona.

You may approach these predictions considering what each of the

big three (sun, moon, and rising) stands for. For example: if you are an Aries sun, Taurus moon, and Gemini rising, you should check the first three predictions and reflect upon them in terms of the planets those signs are in and what those planets represent in your life. ■

ARIES

March 21 – April 19 | fire

The full moon in Taurus on November 8 will bring lots of elements into your life, which in the beginning would appear to be inherently hard experiences. You should try your best to employ your optimistic side without getting caught up in the whirlwind of emotions and thoughts. You may want to focus on identifying and setting a vision for yourself, your goals, your work, your academic journey, etc. Remember to prioritize your mental health as well.

CANCER

June 21 – July 22 | water

The full moon in Taurus on November 8 will bring you more opportunities to engage and collaborate with other people – both friends and strangers. Your calendar will likely be very packed this month, so try your best to stay on top of things by scheduling and organizing everything in advance. Being so busy and having so little time for your activities this month, you need to master the art of effective communication and make every word you say count.

LIBRA

September 23 – October 22 | air

The full moon in Taurus on November 8 will bring you adventures, romance, and exciting opportunities filling up your schedule throughout the month. Your innate sociality will be empowered this month, so be prepared to take big leaps in relationships, partnerships, etc., at the events you'll attend. You may also want to prioritize treating yourself to short trips and other fulfilling activities but make sure to organize your calendar so as not to miss anything.

CAPRICORN

December 22 – January 19 | earth

The moon in your sign on November 5 will give you energy and motivation to pursue anything, from small to big tasks. The full moon in Taurus on November 8 will help further, making space for new opportunities now and in the next few months. Do your best to remain optimistic despite past and current issues, focus on personal and professional development, and truly embrace change – sometimes, it's the only way to move on to better things.

TAURUS

April 20 – May 20 | earth

The full moon in your sign on November 8 will bring you much creativity, romance, and good opportunities. You'll feel empowered throughout the month, so use this energy to your advantage and create value for your future. You may also want to accept unexpected invitations and new experiences altogether: luck seems to be on your side this month, so you'll likely be on a winning strike, with your innate ability to stay grounded protecting you.

LEO

July 23 – August 22 | fire

The full moon in Taurus on November 8 will bring you substantial growth, and a heightened consciousness and sense of responsibility regarding yourself and your inner circle, who will likely admire you. Be prepared to learn a lot, even by making mistakes, and always look for new opportunities, even romantic (or spicy) ones. Go out there and explore as much as you can, whether it's through traveling, investing in your education, or trying new experiences.

SCORPIO

October 23 – November 21 | water

First of all, happy birthday to some of you, Scorpios! Try celebrating your birthday with your closest friends, knowing they fully support you. The full moon in Taurus on November 8 will bring you more career and growth opportunities throughout the month. You will need to exercise a lot of patience and gratitude; this will allow you to stay grounded, calm, and, at the same time, open and flexible. Remember, collaboration is much stronger than competition.

AQUARIUS

January 20 – Feb 18 | air

The full moon in Taurus on November 8 will bring you more consciousness and spare time to reflect on your identity and abilities, so make good use of this opportunity in preparation for next year. Your tendency to isolate will be challenged this month, with you being invited to significantly more events and gatherings; though out of your comfort zone, try seeing this opportunity as something beneficial for your future and engage in active communication.

GEMINI

May 21 – June 20 | air

The full moon in Taurus on November 8 will bring you more adventures in all areas of life but also some challenges in managing relationships with your loved ones, as well as new people. You're a good communicator by birth, but this month you'll discover that there's always room for improvement and that everything's constantly changing, so try your best to adapt and learn as much as possible. You may also want to keep an eye out for romance.

VIRGO

August 23 – September 22 | earth

The full moon in Taurus on November 8 will bring you more creativity and unexpected opportunities. Keep stress levels and anxiety under control to properly embrace this breath of fresh air. To do this, you should prioritize staying grounded and taking good care of yourself, especially mentally; you may also want to start thinking about new year's resolutions, and the previous two can be a good start. It will be a month of big growth, so make the most of it.

SAGITTARIUS

November 22 – December 21 | fire

First of all, happy birthday to some of you, Sagittariuses! November is your month, so this time the spotlight is really on you. The full moon in Taurus on November 8 will get you more attention as soon as you start exploring more professional and romantic adventures, as well as many events and gatherings that somewhat clash with your innate need for independence. Try to organize and keep track of everything this month, and you'll be able to balance it all out.

PISCES

February 19 – March 20 | water

The full moon in Taurus on November 8 will bring you more creativity, growth, and unexpected opportunities. The people you'll meet this month will somewhat determine the outcomes of this month for you, so choose carefully and consciously whom you spend time with. You may even start a personal reinvention journey which will likely last throughout next year, and you should do your best to embrace it and actively foster internal change.

Edited by Victoria Vega



▲ /PHOTO BY EKRULILA

A Life Without Veils

STUDENT COMMENTARY

BY ANNALUCIA SCOTTO DI CLEMENTE

Audrey Hepburn, a world-famous actress, often quoted a poem called “Time Tested Beauty Tips” by Sam Levenson that recited: “The beauty of a woman is not in the clothes she wears, the figure that she carries, or the way she combs her hair. The beauty of a woman is seen in her eyes, because that is the doorway to her heart, the place where love resides.”

Despite living in the 21st century, society still does not seem to have understood this concept. Media outlets often release news on women who are forced to abandon their loved ones because of domestic violence, abuse, or simply for living in a society that is too outdated and closed-minded to keep up with the times.

There are hundreds of stories to tell, but the story which currently resonates the greatest with the masses is that of Mahsa Amini. It unites us all in a common struggle for our rights, our freedoms, and why not, in a shared battle for a much better world where there is room for all religions, skin colours, nationalities, sexual orientations and passions. But let's take a small step back. Mahsa Amini was an Iranian 22-year-old woman who, while walking on the streets of Tehran, capital of Iran, was arrested by the Guidance Patrol also known as morality police, a special unit that monitors compliance with the strict dress code imposed on women. All women are required to wear a veil or hi-

jab and, according to the police officers who stopped her, Mahsa was not wearing hers properly.

Picture a girl just like us. Mahsa was first arrested and taken to the police station where she lost consciousness. She was then taken to a hospital where she died allegedly following a cardiac arrest. But are we really sure the cause of her death is too weak a heart? Are we sure that the death of so many women does not depend above all on ideas that prevail in the social context we live in?

Let me be clear, no one is here to pass judgment on this issue because no one has the power to do so. But this is a sobering story that is worth telling. Sometimes, we don't really realize how lucky we are on a daily basis. We were fortunate enough to be born and raised in a society that, with all its limitations, is still a free society.

Let us use this freedom to create something even greater. Let us concretely realize our ideas. Let us embrace and support each other. Together, we can create a supportive, united world where everyone can live according to their dreams and instincts. We can create a world where everyone lives a life without cover, a life without veils and full of love. ■

Edited by Ilenia Reale



▲ View from the Arc de Triomphe./PHOTO BY MATILDE POZZATO

A (Solo) Date in Paris

STUDENT COMMENTARY

BY MATILDE POZZATO

During my study abroad Spring semester, at the American University of Paris, my best friend Cate came to visit me from Verona. She arrived at the end of March, during the windiest days of my entire stay. I had already put away the winter jacket that I wore non-stop for almost three months, but she convinced me to bring it because it was probably cold on the top of the Eiffel Tower — good thing I listened to her because the wind of the night could have thrown us off that tower if it wasn't for the fence. When we got off to head home, we looked for the famous carousel everyone takes pictures of. While looking for it we saw what hands down the prettiest sky I had ever seen. There was a colorful sunset made up of a mixture of red, blue, and pink. Paris in the winter (I wouldn't know about summertime) is almost always cloudy and grey, but the colorful sunset I saw that evening, and the presence of my best friend whom I hadn't seen in months and with which I used to dream about living in Paris with since we were little, seemed like a gift; a sign from the universe telling me I was supposed to be there in that moment.

For her entire stay, Cate and I carried on an inside joke — we are actually still referring to it and we

most likely always will. The joke originated from what a friend of Cate told her about Paris. Cate's friend, whom I will call Carmen here, had recently gone to Paris with her boyfriend and when Cate told her she was visiting the city for the first time with me, Carmen looked at her with a bit of disgust and said that you should only go to Paris with your significant other, because Paris is the city of love. Cate and I always joke about being forever single, so we laughed it off and turned it into an inside joke.

Looking at that wonderful, colorful sky, I started thinking about how many might believe that Paris is a city for romantic couples and nothing more. I thought of how much Paris had given me even if I was there alone. I don't think I would have learned or experienced as much if I wasn't there alone. In Paris, I felt comfortable enough to beat my fear of taking public transportation alone. Walking everywhere in Paris is wonderful and makes you feel like you would win the walking gold medal at the Olympics, if something like that existed. But it is also convenient to adapt to the comfort of the 21st century and take the metro to cover a 15-minute distance that would take one hour and a half to walk when you are in a hurry. And so there I was, with the metro map in my hand, my EarPods, and one wonderful city to

discover. I could choose where to go, how long to stay there, where to eat, and when to go home. I didn't have classes on Wednesdays, so I made it a tradition to go to the cutest bookshop *Librerie Galignani* on Rue de Rivoli every Wednesday. I would stay there for hours, but never actually bought a thing, because I was trying to avoid buying material stuff and learn how to pack light. Still, visiting the bookshop always inspired me to be grateful for the books I already had. After the bookstore, I would go to the cafe next door, *Angelina Café*, for my weekly treat of macarons — I should have tried a new flavor each week but I only had chocolate every time—I'm the type of person that thinks desserts of any other flavors are pointless. I'd take the macarons to the *Jardin des Tuileries*, a beautiful garden between the Louvre and Place de la Concorde, with a lake, lots of wonderful flowers, and green chairs to sit on. Reading my book one Wednesday, I spent some time trying to avoid a pigeon from pooping on my new blue hat, meditating about life for about 15 seconds before getting distracted, and, of course, noticing people watching because who would have thought that it can take up to nine tries to set the chair exactly the way you want it?

The *Jardin des Tuileries*, is not only wonderful, but it is close to

where I lived, around the corner to the bookstore and the macarons café, and right by *Musée de l'Orangerie*, where Monet's *Water Lilies* live. Visiting museums by yourself is the absolute best if you are someone like me that doesn't need to see everything at once and that is not scared to say that is not interested in every single piece of the museum. The very first time I went to the Louvre I did so for one reason and one reason only: stand in front of *Amore e Psiche* for 20 minutes and then get out of there and on to lunch. Of course I went back when Cate wanted to visit other beautiful art pieces that her mom suggested we'll see like *Le Radeau de la Méduse* and *Nike di Samotracia*. I still didn't look at everything: never stepped foot in the Egyptian art, I could do this with my best friend because we are like twins, but in any other case going to museums alone is top notch according to me.

Besides my Wednesday dates with books and macarons, every weekend I got to decide what I wanted to see. The Latin Quarter is a staple. Walking there makes you feel like an artist or a writer in the early 1900s. Every one of them had a coffee there: Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Piaf, Claudel. Many colors, scents and aromas from dozens of different cuisines fill the streets. If you walk around with no direction — like I always do because I am sure I'll remember the way I came from but then pull out Google Maps to realize I am going in the exact opposite direction every single time — you can easily end up in front of Notre Dame, which is always a majestic surprise. Until May this year you still couldn't go inside after the 2019 fire. If you are in that area, I suggest turning around again and visiting *Saint Chapelle*, the most beautiful church I have ever seen among all the ones I visited in my life. I didn't even know about it until Cate suggested we go. At first I hesitated — all the way to the Latin Quarter on a Saturday when is packed with people to see some random church. Well, luckily enough I listened to her suggestion. The chapel was built in the 1200s and its stained glass windows are breathtaking.

Everything you can do in Paris with someone, you can enjoy on your own. You can see it through a soundtrack from your EarPods as a moving street theatre. You can walk your way down the *Champs Élysées* and then turn back and admire the Arc de Triomphe. It might sound like a thing only tourists do but, I highly recommend going on the rooftop of the Arc and watching all the roads emerge from below. From up there it took

me only a few minutes to recognize the street where my apartment was. Finally I understood why the first time I went running it took me 1.5 kilometers to realize I was running in circles because the Arc is, in fact, a round-about. Going up on the Arc it's tricky to know how to get to the entrance so I thought of jaywalking the busiest roundabout I have ever seen and risk it all (sometimes I wonder how I made it 21 years in this world), but luckily again, my voice of reason, Cate, figured out there was probably a tunnel. She was right: we went through the metro entry of Charles de Gaulle.

After all those stairs, a chocolate soufflé was more than appropriate, but that area is full of tourist traps so pick your poison. If after the Arc's stairs you have any energy at all, maybe you should check-out what is probably my favorite spot in the city — and where I only went once during my entire stay which is wild and weird — namely, Montmartre. Stop at the candy shop on your way uphill because sugar being bad is clearly a folktale or I would be long gone by now. I know, trendy Montmartre might be a banal choice but there is something magical — maybe left by the great artists that lived there like Picasso or Degas — about the staircase packed with people just sitting and minding their business while you wished they could all just leave so that you can go up the stairs without risking your life on every step by hurdling among them. The cabaret quartier, with its *Moulin Rouge*, is just around the corner and it is a historical must. Cate and I tried to take nice pictures in front of it but it was too packed with people and we couldn't find a good spot, so we took a picture with our heart and went to dinner. We ended the night with a glass of wine and a plate of cheese, which you can find on the menu under the name "*caillot de sang*", which translates to "blood cloth."

Paris was a unique chapter of my life, and when I think about my time there a smile always appears on my face. I remember how free I felt every time I discovered a new place and how proud of myself I was when I did something that scared me. Paris gave me incredible memories that I will carry with me forever: all the chocolate I ate, all the fun I had with my best friend, the prettiest of sunsets, the Wednesday dates, the half-visited museums. But maybe the greatest thing that happened there is that every time I fell in love with a piece of Paris, I was falling a bit more in love with myself. ■

Edited by Marouso Pappas

Documentary Is Cinema: All the Beauty of the Story

REVIEW

BY JULISSA CASTRO-RUIZ

On Sept. 10, Laura Poitras made history with her documentary, *All the Beauty and the Bloodshed*, becoming the second documentary in the history of the 79th Venice Film Festival to win the Golden Lion for best film. In her speech, Poitras thanks the festival for understanding that documentary is cinema. This historical win has opened a debate about the role documentary plays in the filmmaking industry and the lack of acknowledgment they receive in major awards categories.

Laura Poitras takes us through an intricately arranged storyline of renowned artist and activist, Nan Goldin, as she talks about life, art, and addiction. The documentary's viewers watched a courageous and ruthless Nan going against the Sackler family, whose company, Purdue Pharma, made OxyContin which played a leading role in the Opioid Crisis. Through slideshows of Nan's outstanding photography, intimate interviews of her close circle, and footage from her legal battle against the Sackler's,

the viewers can grasp the force that drives Nan and how her art is more than just a reflection of her but the story of those who stood beside her.

All the Beauty and the Bloodshed proved to be more than a documentary but a call for action; Nan Goldin is a resilient artist who risked everything she had in order to stand up for those who are no longer able to. This documentary evokes a reaction from the viewers because of Poitras' storytelling skills. Poitras has also won the Oscar for Best Documentary in 2014 with her film, *Citizenfour*, about Edward Snowden. Both in 2014 and 2022, Poitras demonstrated her attention to detail when telling a story. Laura knows how to guide the narrative, knows where the core of a story is, and who to point the camera at, which is why her work transcends the screen and stirs debate.

In recent years, awards show like the Oscars have made history by awarding foreign films, female directors, and diverse actors. But in its 80-year history, the Academy has yet to recognize documentaries for Best Picture nominations. Yet docu-



▲ 79th Venice Film Festival award ceremony being projected to the public outside Palazzo del Cinema. /PHOTO BY JULISSA CASTRO-RUIZ

mentaries are seeing a surge in popularity. Filmmakers are releasing high-quality documentaries that serve to both educate and entertain. They have become a powerful tool of change and awareness, which reflects what the viewers are interested in as of right now. There has also been a major shift in the awards shows and festivals' panels of judges. Judges who are more diverse in both age and ethnic background are being selected for the job. This has allowed filmmaking in its many forms and languages to transform

the content we consume nowadays. The boom is also the result of the decade-long work of filmmakers, independent broadcasters, and film festivals that have positioned this category in the viewer's attention.

While documentaries have yet to make it to the Academy Awards' most high-profile nominations, such as Best Picture, there is still hope that Laura's historical win will serve as proof of the potential that documentaries have. Beyond a single category, documentaries

can take different forms, as *Flee* demonstrated in the last awards season by positioning itself in three categories: documentary, animation, and foreign film. There is a high demand for documentaries, and with a more open-minded panel of judges, the hopes of taking gold home are closer than ever. ■

Edited by Sara Segat

To Be Grown-ish

REVIEW

BY MICOL SILVERA

Teenage dramas have always been my safe harbor; a comfy shelter where I could laugh, cry, end up having a whole existential crisis, all at once. But when you turn eighteen and realize you have to say goodbye to your high school teenage daydreams, what fictional character will provide you with emotional support? When teenagers graduate high school in TV, you rarely see them stepping into college; there is always that 3 - 5 years' time jump in which a female character suddenly changes her haircut and wears a grey suit, and that should be enough to turn her into a mature adult. But what happens in the meantime? What lead that person to tell the hairdresser "I want that self-asserted-

woman bob-haircut now that I got my bachelor's degree?" So, which TV show will resonate with us when we, too, face that huge shift from the high school microcosm to a new college life full of possibilities? The millionth rewatch of the fourth season of *Gilmore Girls*. But once I realized I could easily sum up each of Lorelai's jokes at the unmissable Friday night dinner at Emily's and Richard's, I also realized I needed to look for something new, because even Rory Gilmore knows when it's time to start a new book.

Hence, during my second semester of university, I decided it was time to stop clicking "next episode" on Netflix, abandon my comfort TV show, and find something new. Although I kept postponing getting a driver's license, I wanted to prove to myself I was finally a grown-

up. So, I did what every grown-up does: I opted for a Disney plus subscription. Please, don't judge me; everyone needs to sing along to "The Start of Something New" with Gabriella and Troy and to dream of talking toys and a genie in a lamp from time to time. But one day, I unexpectedly found out they added the first two seasons of a series, *Grown-ish* (2018, directed by Kenya Barris and Larry Wilmore). The show follows a group of friends throughout their college years, going through many of the challenges that most students face during this time. I finished it in three days. Before the closing credits even ended, I was already googling: "When will the third season of *Grown-ish* be available on Disney plus?" Unfortunately, I had to wait a whole year before watching the remaining two seasons of the series. But what a wonderful feeling, being so caught up in a TV show that you are not able to do anything else but watch it 24/7! So, I wonder, why did I get so addicted to the dramas of those fictional characters?

First point: each episode lasts about 20 minutes, which is great if you only have a half an hour break before going back to studying (...less great if you end up watching three episodes in a row.)

Second point: you can't help laughing. If you are having a bad day and just need to laugh it out, that's the comedy you are looking for.

Third point: it speaks the truth. Don't take it too literally, the story is definitely fictional; what I mean by "truth" is that the struggles it displays, although in a very light mood, are true. The series explores the whole range of college hardships and taboos; from roommates-fight to anxiety issues and sociopolitical commitment, to managing money, the unstable relationship between party time and study time, and relationships; they are all there, all the issues that characterize people entering the "grown-up" area, facing the terrifying question; what does it mean to be grown? Being able to

use a washing machine? Cook spaghetti? Pay bills? What defines us as grown-ups besides that bold new haircut? I guess the title of the series gives it away; maybe we are all just a bit grown-ish. Sometimes we have that superhero-attitude and feel the weight of the world on our shoulders; other times we are childish, stubborn, and a bit irrational. Basically, we become a sort of Marvel superhero; we have the power to save the world, but we cannot help sharing a sarcastic comment about it.

In short, how did *Grown-ish* impact my life? I guess it made me realize that, even when we feel like those tormented superheroes, we must remember that we can allow ourselves to laugh it out, sometimes. We can have fun, enjoy the jokes and the joy of that child within us, and still be our own story's superhero. That to be grown means to know how to be grown-ish. ■

Edited by Giulia Leo

Songs of Revolution: A New Generation

REVIEW

BY JULISSA CASTRO-RUIZ

Songs for social change have taken center stage in Latin America as some of its most influential artists, Residente and Bad Bunny, are using their craft to denounce the socio-economic and political issues in the region. From Bob Marley to John Lennon to Michael Jackson, songs that inspire social change have long existed in the music industry. In recent years, Latin American artists have used which genre to denounce neocolonialism in the region. Most notably, Residente and Bad Bunny.

Residente, a well-respected Puerto Rican artist, released “This is not America.” 2022 in response to Childish Gambino’s “This Is America” (2018). Bad Bunny, the most streamed artist in 2021, released a 20-minute music video and documentary of the social crisis in Puerto Rico. These two artists have made headlines for denouncing the corruption, colonialism, genocide, and displacement that occurs in the region at the hand of local and foreign investors, and the involvement of the United States government in the region. Residente and Bad Bunny spread these messages through their music, a form that transcends language barriers.

Residente collaborated with a Yale University team of scientists to compose his most recent album. With the help of a Yale research team, he was able to study his own



▲ /PHOTO BY LAWRENCE EATON

brain pattern, which was then translated into music notes. The objective was to track and map the brain patterns of the musician at the time he composed the album. In his song, “This is not America,” he transforms social injustices into art. Beyond making music that speaks to the soul, he said he wanted to evoke change through his lyrics and be able to express himself with honesty and without fear.

“American” is a term used to describe those born and raised in the United States, excluding those that were born on the American continent. Residente is aware of the language evolution that is currently happening and wants to support language inclusivity by correcting a term that has been used to describe a country instead of a continent. Throughout his music video and lyrics, Residente revises Latin American history, highlighting some

of the social injustice events that have occurred in the region. Some of the many notable references in the video are The Liampia botas Revolution in Bolivia; the 43 of Ayotzinapa in Mexico; Bolsonaro’s Amazonian deforestation, and Victor Jara and Tupac Amaru executions in Chile. some of the many notable references in the video.

The first frame of the video is an excerpt of Alfredo Jaar’s “A logo for America,” where “This Is Not America” is written over the United States map. In 1987, the native Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar was invited by the Public Art Fund to participate in the Message to the Public exhibition, in which artists like Keith Haring were previously displayed. Alfredo felt that the American term was employed incorrectly, so through a 45-second animation that was displayed in Times Square, under the eyes of the thousands

of tourists and locals that frequent the area, he addressed the issue. The importance of this art as the opening sequence for Residente’s music video is to set his message loud and clear, and the mention of Childish Gambino is not to mock the artist but to expand on his art. Residente is known for being a master of words, his use of dialect and historical and political reference demonstrates the time and dedication he puts into his craft. “This is not America” is proof of Residente’s character and talents. His video was awarded the Grand Prix award at the Cannes film festival.

Bad Bunny’s music video “El Apagón,” an expression that translates into “the blackout,” was released days before Hurricane Fiona hit the island, leaving thousands without electricity. The video starts with the song “El Apagón” and transitions into an 18-minute do-

cumentary by local investigative journalist Bianca Graulu. The documentary vividly shows the reality thousands of Puerto Ricans are facing. Many of them are forced to evacuate their homes with only thirty days’ notice; the private resorts and gated communities have restricted access to public beaches. Bad Bunny is known for being a vocal supporter of minority groups, and, in his song, he tells the colonizer to go back to their land. In the music- video /documentary, we see footage from Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico has a law called Act 22 that allows a foreign investor to be exempt from certain taxes. This caused an influx of predominantly U.S investors moving to the island. With this comes the displacement of low-income Puerto Ricans and the privatization of the island’s natural resources. Journalist Graulu also provides detailed infographics that help guide the viewer.

Both Residente and Bad Bunny have made statements through their music. They aim to create a clear message for Latinoamérica. They are inciting cultural change through their music. Their audiences, which cover a wide range of ages, ethnicities, and genders, are now aware of these topics and have become more vocal about them. Music is an important aspect of a revolution. From drums to choirs, repeatedly, music has given a microphone to fighters. ■

Edited by Giulia Leo

Recipe: Panzerotti della Nonna

BY GIULIA LEO

Apulian panzerotti—not to be confused with Neapolitan calzoni, are small half-moon-shaped bits of fried dough, traditionally filled with tomato sauce and ricotta forte. Today, mozzarella cheese is often preferred to ricotta forte, because it holds a more neutral taste. For my Apulian nonna, filling panzerotti with mozzarella rather than ricotta forte is a sin. For my mom, who cannot even stand the smell of parmigiano, it’s a necessity. The history of panzerotti dates to the thirteenth century. In the court of Federico II, the dish was known as De Raviolis, and it was made with meat and milk (ventrescam

porci et ovi, case lacte), and fried with abundant grease (coque in patella cum magna pinguedine). The authentic panzerotto, however, was born in Apulia, and it was the emblem of “poor cuisine.” Like ricotta forte, panzerotti are the result of “recovery economies.” They were made using the leftover bread dough and filled with tomatoes and cheese that would go bad if not consumed soon. Then, they were fried until they became of their distinctive golden color, and eaten while they were still boiling hot, drops of ambrosia-colored oil still pouring from the side. Pizzeria Di Cosimo, in the heart of Bari Vecchia, is well-known for its long tradition of panzerotti-making. Although their panzerotti resemble the Neapoli-

tan calzoni in shape, their dough and filling are impregnated with the Apulian tradition. I still remember when, on Saturday nights, my high school friends and I would go out, grab a ticket to Cosimo’s fried heaven, and sit in the Piazzetta Bianca, eating panzerotti bigger than our own faces. My friends politely ate behind a tissue, careful not to drip the sauce on their clothes. I bit into my panzerotto, usually burned my tongue, and stained my jeans with tomato sauce and mozzarella. Today, many are the restaurants that offer reinterpretations of the traditional dish. Some sell panzerotti filled with mortadella and pistachios, others offer sweet variations of the dish, filled with sugared ricotta and Nutella. Panzerotti seem to have

existed since the beginning of times, constantly reinventing themselves, their dough like threads in the hands of the Greek Moirai. ■

RECIPE ▶



▲ /PHOTO BY GIULIA LEO

Ingredients:

- 500g of semolina flour
- 500g of “00” flour
- Half a cube of brewer’s yeast (about 15 grams)
- 6 tablespoons of olive oil
- 300g of warm water
- Groundnut oil (for frying)
- Sugar “a sentimento” (literally, “a sentimento” means according to your own feeling, or intuition. In other words, add as much sugar as your heart commands)
- Salt “a sentimento”
- Tomato sauce (rigorously homemade)
- Ricotta forte

Instructions:

1. **Mix** the two types of flour and prepare the so-called corona or fontana: pour the flour on the working surface and create a little mountain. Then, use your fingers to make a hole on top. Sprinkle some salt on the corona.
2. **Crumble** the yeast at the center of the corona, add the olive oil, a pinch of sugar and as much water as needed for the yeast and sugar to melt.
3. **Pour** the rest of the water in the hole. Slowly start to incorporate the flour on the side of the corona into the mix of yeast, sugar, salt, oil and water.
4. **Knead** into the dough for 10-15 minutes, until it becomes elastic and uniform.
5. **Oil** a large bowl and place the dough inside. Cover with cling film and place everything in the fridge for 24 hours.
6. After 24 hours, **position** the dough on the working surface and knead into it once again.
7. **Create** small balls of dough of about 40g each and position them on a towel that’s already been sprinkled with some flour.
8. **Cover** the dough balls with another towel and let them rise for about an hour.
9. Afterwards, **use** a rolling pin to transform the balls into flat circles.
10. **Work** with one circle at a time. Place the ricotta forte and tomato sauce filling on one half of the circle. Then, dip a finger in warm water and wet the edges of the dough circles.
11. **Close** each of the panzerotti creating a half-moon shape and use a fork to seal the edges of each of the panzerotti.
12. **Fry** in groundnut oil, until the panzerotti become of a golden color.
13. **Place** the panzerotti on absorbing paper to get rid of the oil in excess.

14.
Eat while
still hot &
crunchy!

Edited by Jacopo Menichincheri

How Would You Like Your Eggs?

REVIEW

BY ILENIA REALE

I often find myself zoning out, thinking of hypothetical life-challenging situations. A recurring scenario I rack my brains on is: if I could only eat one food for the rest of my life what would it be? I am still debating on this one. Potatoes are usually my first answer, but I recently realized that eggs are incredibly versatile as well.

There are infinite ways to eat eggs. Raw, scrambled, hard-boiled, soft-boiled, fried, sunny side up, over easy, poached, and, to my surprise, one can even bake them. That’s just by itself, but eggs are also at the core of recipes like fresh pasta or pancakes. I can barely crack an egg without making the shell explode all over the pan like an active mine, so I am very impressed when other people can turn such a simple ingredient into a tastebuds-awakening dish.

On the 16th of every month, my boyfriend Jacopo and I break our piggy banks to invest in something to do together to celebrate our monthiversary. Being proper Italians, we always end up eating out. For this special fourth month together, I thought we could try a new restaurant called *Eggs*. *Eggs* was founded in 2017 and gradually broadened, gaining respect in Trastevere. It eventually moved to a bigger site on Via Natale del Grande 52, to allow more clients to taste their refined cuisine. As you can guess from the name, *Eggs* is renowned for basing their recipes off all sorts of eggs cooked and presented in original ways. I was immediately left in awe looking at the restaurant’s website. An art gallery curated by competent chefs displaying a colorful palette of dishes, ranging from starters to desserts. The menu is varied without becoming overwhelming,

even offering alternative options for vegetarians and vegans. It’s also unexpected; not the typical Italian restaurant without a doubt. Do not expect to already know what to get, like a cheese platter or a smoking plate of pasta alla gricia, unless it has eggs in it.



▲ *Ovo Sodo*./PHOTO BY ILENIA REALE

I love to scroll down a menu and be surprised based on two factors. First, I am a foodie, so I appreciate it when a restaurant proposes unprecedented combinations. It makes me feel like the rat Remi in my favorite Disney movie *Ratatouille*, when he pairs a piece of cheese and a grape creating a mix deserving to be savored with great satisfaction. I also attribute many points to a thought-out presentation of food. I can’t help but wiggle

when a waiter brings me a plate so beautiful it shouldn’t be eaten, even though I always end up eating it anyway. In fact, I was at once drawn to a dish on the website called *Il Gioco delle Ova*, or the eggs’ game. The dish is supposed to be a starter served in an egg carton with six eggs in it. However, they are not simple eggs, but rather empty eggshells filled with the weirdest ingredients. For example, there is one with crodino jelly (an Italian bitter fizzy drink), orange gel and nuts and another one with salty eggnog and black truffle. It seems impossible to guess what’s in every eggshell and that makes approaching this unusual dish even more thrilling.

I was very excited to try the eggs’ game, but it is far too expensive (22 euros), just like the other fanciful dishes that were whispering my name. I had to repeat in my head “you are broke” at least 20 times before finally giving up on the idea of getting the 49 euros tasting menu. Good thing Jacopo always brings me back to planet earth when it comes to spending money.

Eventually, we decided to give their specialty, carbonara, a try. There’s a whole page on the menu reserved for the sacred Roman recipe. Someone very traditional might have been offended, but I truly appreciated the chance to try alternative carbonara. There is one with truffle, one with zucchini flowers and even one with caramelized onion. In the end, I decided to order carbonara with egg, provolone cheese and roasted duck, while Jacopo went for the classic egg, pecorino cheese and bacon. We waited over half an hour for our pasta, but it was worth it. Our carbonaras came in glass jars used to preserve the heat and avoid the egg getting cooked. In fact, the texture was on point, not too slimy and not too dense, just perfect to go with the rigatoni al dente. The duck was a very

pleasing surprise. I don’t know how, but it works wonders as a more flavorful substitute for bacon. I had to constantly remind myself to chew more slowly because I was choking on the big bites, but I couldn’t find the strength to limit my pleasure. After devouring the pasta, a lot of delicious sauce was left at the bottom of the jar. I really wanted to do *scarpetta*, pick it up with some bread, but I didn’t want to pay 4 euros for some bland bread.

I don’t see the point of going to a restaurant without getting dessert and I certainly couldn’t miss out on the ones offered by *Eggs*. Tiramisù was the obvious choice, but I wanted to try something different. So, Jacopo ordered eggnog with biscuits, while I asked for their *Ovo Sodo*, which literally means boiled egg, but has nothing to do with one if not its appearance. In fact, the dessert consists of an egg with a white chocolate shell that, once cut in half, shows off the egg white made of yogurt mousse and the yolk made of mango sauce. The flavors melt in the mouth like soft snow and the whole isn’t sickly sweet because the egg is laid on a salty chocolate crumble that balances everything out.

We weren’t too happy about the bill: over 30 euros each. Even though the quality of the raw material is certainly admirable, and the dishes are unique, I doubt they are worth this much. The carbonara was delicious, but nothing out of this world; one could find a traditional carbonara at a much lower price. However, the dessert I tried is truly remarkable. I would give up on nine coffees to eat *Ovo Sodo* again at *Eggs*. ■

Edited by Amber Alexander

The Preciousness of *Time*



▲ "My sister Luisa and I holding hands promising never to split up". /PHOTO BY ANNALUCIA SCOTTO DI CLEMENTE

CREATIVE VOICES

BY ANNALUCIA SCOTTO DI CLEMENTE

It often happens that our hectic daily lives leave us little time to give importance and space to the precious things that surround us. It often happens that we are overwhelmed by our commitments, our adolescent anxieties, or fears about the future that we are building.

Sometimes we do things so quickly that we forget to eat, to go to the bathroom or to reply to that friend who sent us a good morning message. We always try to keep up with

everything, to make sure that things go well and let time flow without interruptions.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, I still can't define it, particular occurrences have put a brake on my hectic life and forced me to listen to a lesson that I will never forget but that I will always try to pass on: the preciousness of time.

Have you ever thought about time? I haven't.

I have always lived my life in a simple and repetitive way: school, study, sports and a few weekends with friends.

Almost four years ago, however, my everyday life was turned upside down. On Oct. 23, 2018, my mother gave me the most precious gift ever, giving birth to my little sister. That day was supposed to be the most exciting and lovely of all, not only for me but also for my family, but it wasn't. Just a few seconds after feeling joy at the birth of the new little girl in our home, fear, anger, and sadness took the place of that beautiful feeling because of the news that my mom was seriously ill.

In a split second everything changed. I had to take the reins of

my family and represent for them a safe port to land without fear.

And this was my new routine: in the morning I went to school, after that, I went to the hospital to visit my mom and then I ran home to be with the baby until the next day. Between a diaper change, a lullaby and one feeding and the other, I was studying for school, or I was tidying up the house that is always untidy when there is a child at home.

This has been my routine for over a year. I was constantly thinking about how true the phrase "life gives to you and takes away from you" was because at that moment it was nurturing half of my heart, but it was ripping out the other half. I regretted all the times I said to my mom "no I have to study", "I cannot because", "no mom I do not want to"; I regretted all the times I did not listen, I treated her badly but especially all the time when, out of embarrassment, I didn't say, "I love you."

Believe me, if I tell you that from that moment on, I hardly say no to her. I immediately tried to use every moment I had to spend time with her. I still remember studying Manzoni's Betrothed sitting in the corridors of the hospital or writing my essays while checking the flow of the drips. I never regretted giving up my adolescence to be with my family especially because I didn't know how much time I still had.

To this day, I tell you that everything has taken a turn for the best, but I will tell you something even more important. We have just

one life and limited time. Don't be stubborn, don't be shy, don't be afraid to dare, to be yourself and to love. Be foolish when living, learning, traveling. Don't be ashamed to express your feelings or emotions because they are the most beautiful part of us. I learned to live every moment and then keep it in my heart with care and dedication. I have learned to have priorities, objectives, and above all I have learned that nothing is eternal.

"Seize the rose when it is time, that time, you know, flies and the same flower that blooms today, tomorrow will wither."

Thank you. ■

Edited by Marouso Pappas

Want.

CREATIVE VOICES

BY ISABELLA SEVILLA

With a body too feeble and weak to impose my will,

I wanna drill into my bones and see what I'm made of.

I want to see what I'm made of.

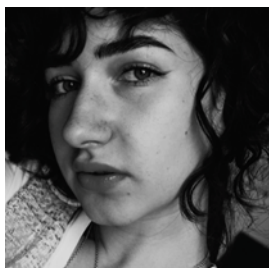
The other day I ate away at my tips, just to consume you.

Chugging the dead air and chalk, I found not a single piece of your visage.

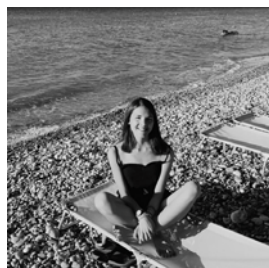
But empty hands, grasping. ■

Edited by Amber Alexander

Meet Our Board



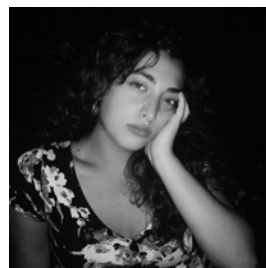
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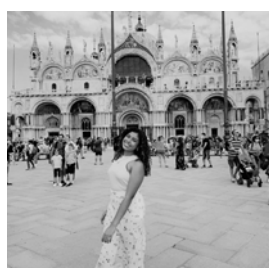
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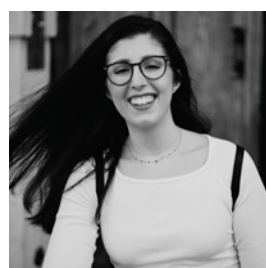
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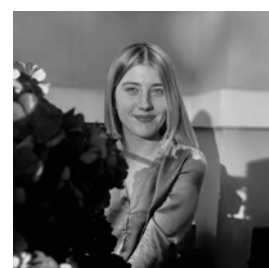
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