



Thao Nguyen Foundation Inc. Newsletter

Volume 13, Issue #2
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TOGETHER, WE BRING LIGHT TO MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

IN THIS ISSUE

Greetings from the President

Nhung Hendy

Welcome to the 2024's year-end issue of our newsletter. As always, I hope that you are all healthy and in good mental health. As I reflect upon the season of giving, I am so grateful to all of you and feel humbled for your kindness and unwavering support for the Foundation over the past decade. I hope that you all had a good time with families and friends this Thanksgiving holiday.

In this Issue, you will find a short report of our Reflections Juried Art Show held over nearly two weeks starting on October 19th, 2024, until November 1st, 2024. Please read the report on page 2 for more details on the winners of the show, as well as how to purchase a copy of the show catalog if you have not done so.

Next, it is my pleasure to introduce Kate Kuc, a participating artist in this year's art show. Kate is a recent graduate from Towson University, who is so gracious in penning a short essay for inclusion in this newsletter. I am thankful to Kate for sharing her experience and hope that you will be inspired by it as much as I was.

Finally, you will find a summary of the latest research linking our sleep and mental health. In addition, I bring to your attention an unrecognized illness of eating disorders among boys and young men, which has not received attention in research studies until recently. In closing, Please continue to stay safe and be kind to yourself. Thank you again for your continued support and have a safe and healthy holiday season as well as a very Happy 2025!



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Reflections Juried Art Show Report



Our fourth juried art show Reflections was held on Saturday, October 19th, 2024, at the York-Penn Art Gallery in Towson, MD. There was a great turnout of people from all over Maryland and Washington, D.C. to attend the Opening Reception. Our fourth-place winner (\$100) was **Juan Rodas** (Chasm); third place winner (\$200) was **Sierra Iola** (the Puppets 2024); second place winner (\$300) was **Japhet Chukwuma** (Wade); and the first-place prize (\$400) went to **Kelly Hall** (Natural Disaster). Congratulations to all winners and artists for submitting your artwork to the show. We wish you the best of success in your future exhibits. The show's highlights were captured on video and can be viewed [here](#). Please consider purchasing a copy of the show's [catalog](#) if you have not done so. We are deeply grateful to Ms. Deirdre Aikin for her generosity in donating her studio space to us as well as donating refreshment and food for the reception. In addition, Connor Aikin volunteered his time to help with serving refreshments during the reception. It would be a remiss not to mention the countless hours put into the preparation for the show from Prof. Jenee Mateer when she was on sabbatical this past spring and for overseeing the show installation in the fall. Her students: Ariel Tugado did a great job installing and taking down the show without a hitch, and Jillian Buonsignore designed the show's catalogue. Please join us in thanking these students next time you see them. Thank you, Tonia Matthews and Lillian Hoover, for judging the show. To those who purchased the art pieces from the show, we hope they will bring you joy. To our friends and supporters,

thank you all for your unwavering support. We could not have done it without you.



First place – Natural Disaster



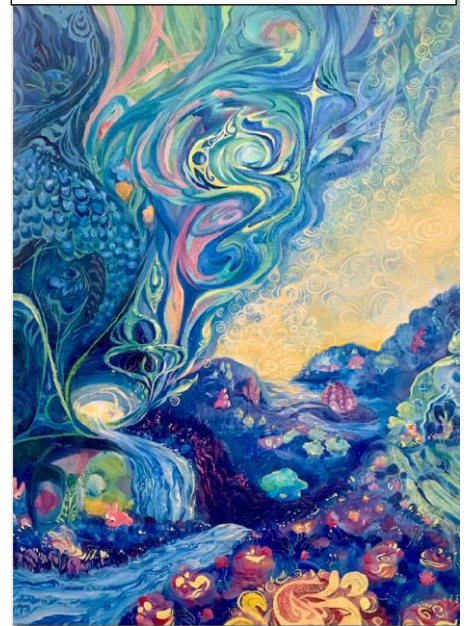
Second place – Wade



Fourth place - Chasm



Third place – Puppets 2024



Oolong Forest Portal – Kate Kuc

IF YOU WANT TO CONTRIBUTE AN ARTICLE

Contact Nhung Hendy,
 President, TN Foundation Inc.
nhung@tnscholarshipforthearts.org
 410-663-0207



Reflection – An Essay

By Kate Kuc

I spent my formative years in an evangelical Christian church that favored God's will through rejection and shame of the human experience. Early on, I realized that indulging religion made my parents happy, which made me feel more comfortable at home, but cost me a genuine sense of self and acceptance. This pattern followed me into Christian college, a choice that made me bitter, but realizing I control my life choices now as an adult, I transferred after my freshman year. Surprisingly, Christian college had many queer people, so coming out as gay wasn't a lonely experience.

Moving back home for the pandemic, I became very anxious, so my appetite disappeared, and I became extremely underweight. When I eventually came out to my parents, their acceptance was a relief. However, the fear and shame I had been taught through religion still felt more real than the external acceptance I had been receiving from loved ones. My health did not improve, so I decided to take medical leave from college to weight restore at an eating disorder partial hospitalization program for three months. I wrote and created art daily, filling up two sketchbooks. Returning to school part-time, I continued treatment through an intensive outpatient program. Painting I class was my first reintroduction to regular life after pandemic lockdown and hospitalization. I found the process of painting to be extremely calming, which helped me feel connected to my body. Creative expression became a way for me to practice building a new foundational belief system based upon

self-determination through playful acceptance and curiosity. Spontaneous abstract painting has helped me become more comfortable with uncertainty, fostering greater ease and trust within myself. By leaning into curiosity instead of fear at the start of an unplanned painting, I allow the brush strokes to build and create something unexpected. This playful exploration of form and color has strengthened my imagination, allowing me to build vibrant, abstract worlds while discovering meaning as I go. As I neared the end of my undergrad experience, my abstract paintings turned more narrative, with pink bunnies playfully inhabiting and exploring these abstract worlds through portals and paths. As I neared the end of my undergrad experience, my abstract paintings turned more narrative, with pink bunnies playfully inhabiting and exploring these abstract worlds through portals, paths, and waterways, such as the painting **Oolong Forest Portal** in the Reflections Juried Art Show.

In spring 2024, I graduated Summa Cum Laude from Towson University's Bachelor of Fine Arts program with an Illustration concentration and a large portfolio of oil paintings. During undergrad, I completed two internships, exhibited work in two solo shows, four juried shows, and earned three awards. These academic achievements are the result of my effort to care for my physical health and mind, made possible by access to healthcare resources and support from my loved ones. I am very happy to be able to live honestly and fully. I am in love with a wonderful woman, excited by my career, grateful to continue nurturing relationships with my friends and family, eager to travel and create more.

Research Summary

By Nhung Hendy

Eating Disorders in Boys and Men

Although eating disorder affects young men and women at the same rate, historically, young men and boys were excluded from research studies on eating disorder. [A study published in 2023](#) found 6% of children experienced avoiding restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID) without any significant differences in prevalence between boys and girls. Treatment for boys with eating disorders largely mirror treatment for girls, with slight differences for boys' unique considerations.

The science of nightmare

For most people, sleep provides a respite for body and mind. However, for those of us who experience nightmares, sleeping can feel like going into battle. Both children and adults can experience nightmares although nightmares are more common in childhood according to a recent [systematic review](#) published in Sleep Medicine Reviews, in which the researchers reported about 25%-35% of children reported having had nightmares in the previous month. Many nightmares follow children into their adulthood. Not only do nightmares interfere with healthy sleep, but disturbing dreams can also lead to problems with emotion regulation and overall physical and mental health. For example, **nightmares may increase anxiety and distress, impair daytime functioning, and are associated with an increased risk of suicide**. Indeed, in an [article](#) published in the Journal of Projective Psychology & Mental Health this year, researchers have established a positive linkage between nightmares and suicide risk in both adults and adolescents. In addition, both the frequency and severity of nightmares were found to be associated with higher levels of worry, depersonalization, paranoia, and hallucinatory experience. Unfortunately, most of us are not aware of the importance of having a good night's sleep undisturbed by nightmares. Even doctors and clinicians often fail to recognize the importance of treating nightmares. Next time you see your doctor for a check-up, please let your doctor know about your experienced nightmares so that they will be able to learn more about them and treat them for you.

