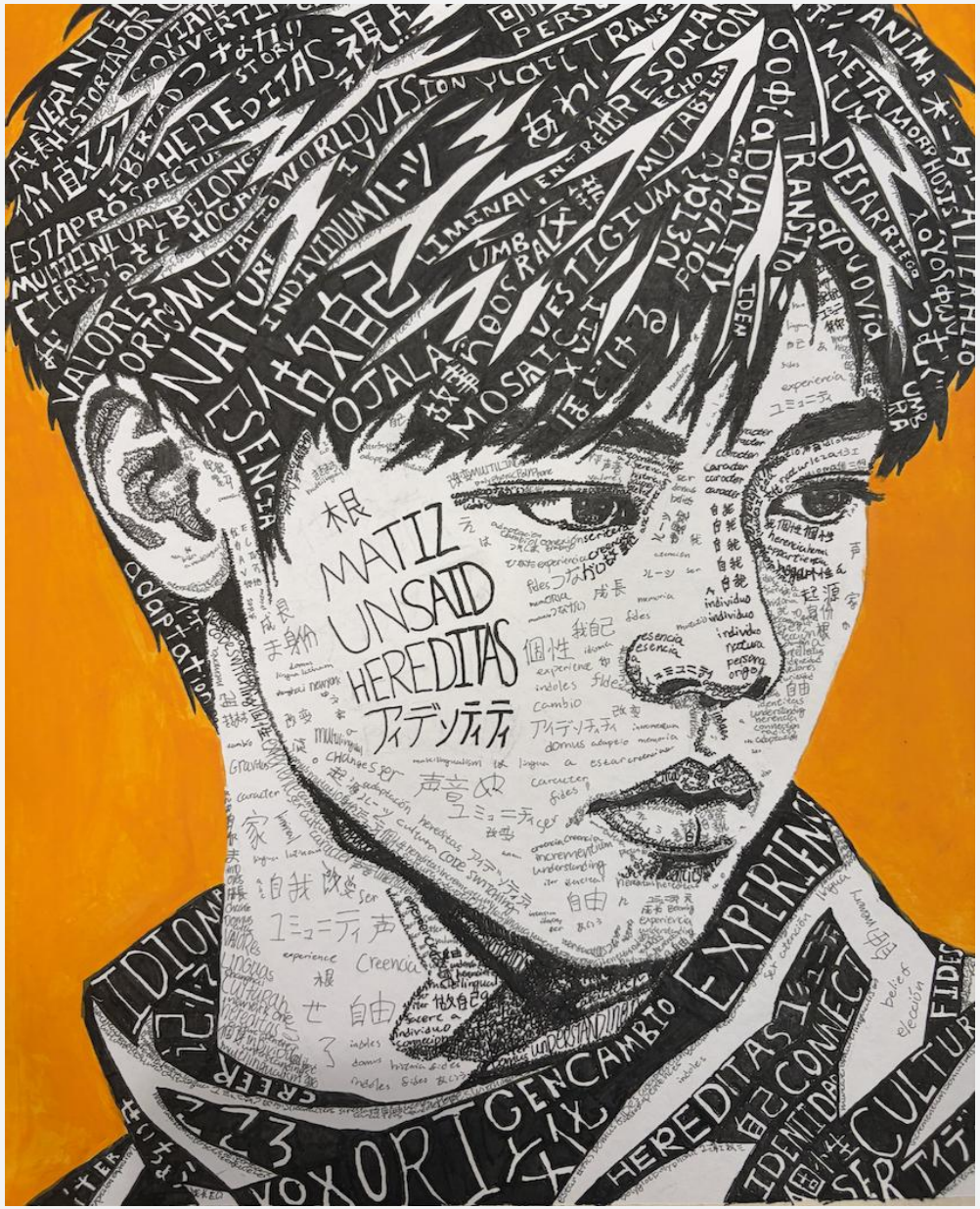
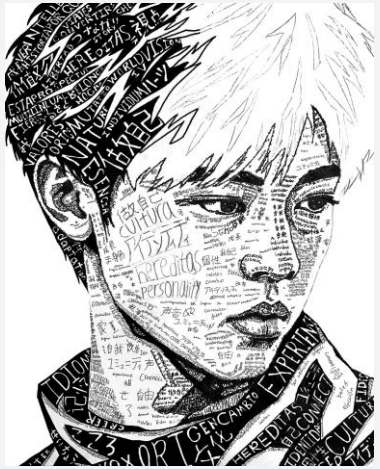
# FELIX MAO

## ART PORTFOLIO

Rye Country Day School

Class of 2027



In-progress stage

# What Gets Lost

**DATE:** 2026

**SIZE:** 18 x 12 in

**MATERIAL:** ink pen, gouache

This self-portrait is built from fragmented multilingual text in English, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Greek, and Latin. Hundreds of words and phrases form the outlines, shadows, and features of my face. By piecing together words from the languages I have learned, I explore how each has shaped my identity and the way I see the world, though none of them captures all of who I am. What Gets Lost reflects on my experience with languages, the meanings words cannot carry on their own, and the care and understanding needed to bridge cultures and generations.








# Trapped

**DATE:** 2023

**SIZE:** 12 x 10 x 2 in

**MATERIAL:** watercolor, color pencil, printed video game covers

**AWARD:** Scholastic Art National Gold Medal (2023)

A child sits in a messy room surrounded by piles of clothes and trash, glued to the screen's glow while being sucked into the TV by a flood of video games. I used one-point perspective and layered game covers on the walls and ceiling to create a narrow, claustrophobic space that draws the viewer’s eye to the TV, seemingly closing in around the child. This mixed-media painting illustrates how easily children my age can become absorbed in technology and cut off from the world around them.



# Hold the Hands That Once Held You

**DATE:** 2024

**SIZE:** 18 x 12 in

**MATERIAL:** watercolor, color pencils, gouache

**PUBLICATION:** *Pandora's Ink* (2025) — Editor's Top Picks

An hourglass stands in a grassy field. In the top chamber, a grandfather teaches his grandson to ride a bike, rendered in black and white as a memory. In the bottom chamber, the same grandson, now grown, pushes his grandfather in a wheelchair. As the sand falls, the roles reverse, and the one who was held becomes the one who holds. I created it to remember my grandfather, thinking of everything he taught me and how I hoped to care for him as he had once cared for me.









# Puppets

**DATE:** 2024

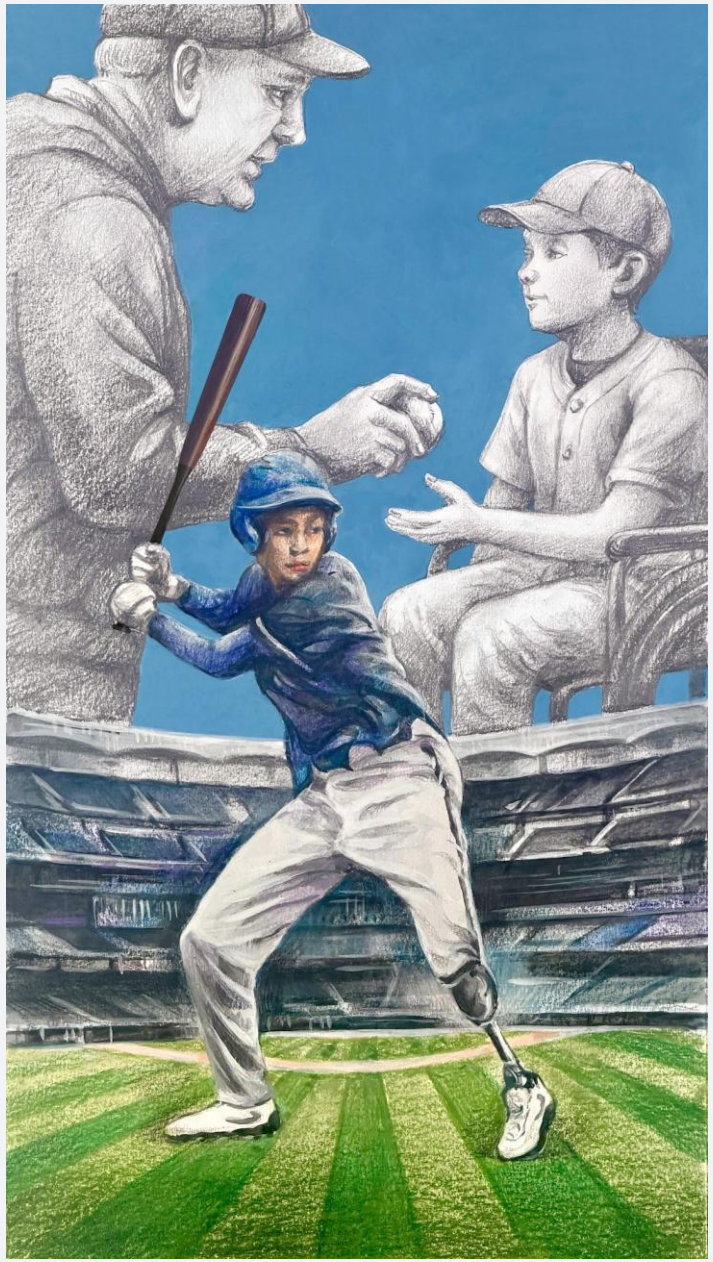
**SIZE:** 18 x 12 x 4 in

**MATERIAL:** watercolor, color pencils, gouache, wood, clay

**AWARD:** Scholastic Art Regional Gold Key (2025)

**PUBLICATION:** *Pandora's Ink* (2025)

A looming AI figure manipulates a teenager, using strings to control his every action. I spent a month carving the teenager from wood, so he isn't just shown as a puppet but built as one. I created Puppets out of both fascination and uncertainty about artificial intelligence. The teenager has no face, suggesting how we may gradually lose our individuality as technology becomes more powerful. I wanted the piece to leave viewers thinking about how much control we hand over to AI in exchange for its convenience.



# Just Give Me a Chance

**DATE:** 2025

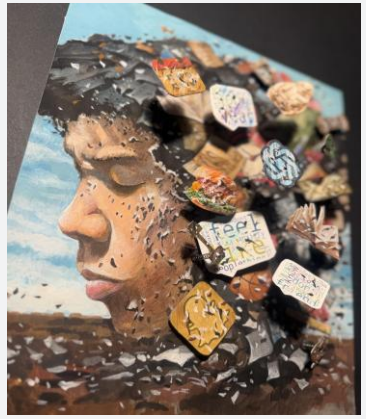
**SIZE:** 20 x 12 in

**MATERIAL:** watercolor, color pencils, gouache, pencil

**AWARD:** Scholastic Art Regional Honorable Mention (2025)

A boy with a prosthetic leg steps up to bat. Behind him, a scene from the past shows a coach giving him the opportunity to play regardless of his disability. Having played baseball since I was five, I've seen how much one coach's decision can change a player's path. This painting reflects my belief that not everyone starts from the same place, but everyone deserves a fair chance to show what they can do.





# Overloaded

**DATE:** 2025

**SIZE:** 18 x 12 in

**MATERIAL:** watercolor, color pencils, printed logos, springs

**PUBLICATION:** *The Rev* (2026)

A self-portrait bursts open from one side, expanding into a mess of app icons, sticky notes, school materials, sports gear, and scraps of everyday life. I used mixed media to build up three-dimensional layers, making the work feel physically crowded and overwhelming. I wanted to capture the invisible stress of having too many thoughts, expectations, and distractions competing for attention. The face is mine, but I suspect many teenagers would recognize the feeling.



# Toy Gun, Real Wounds

**DATE:** 2023

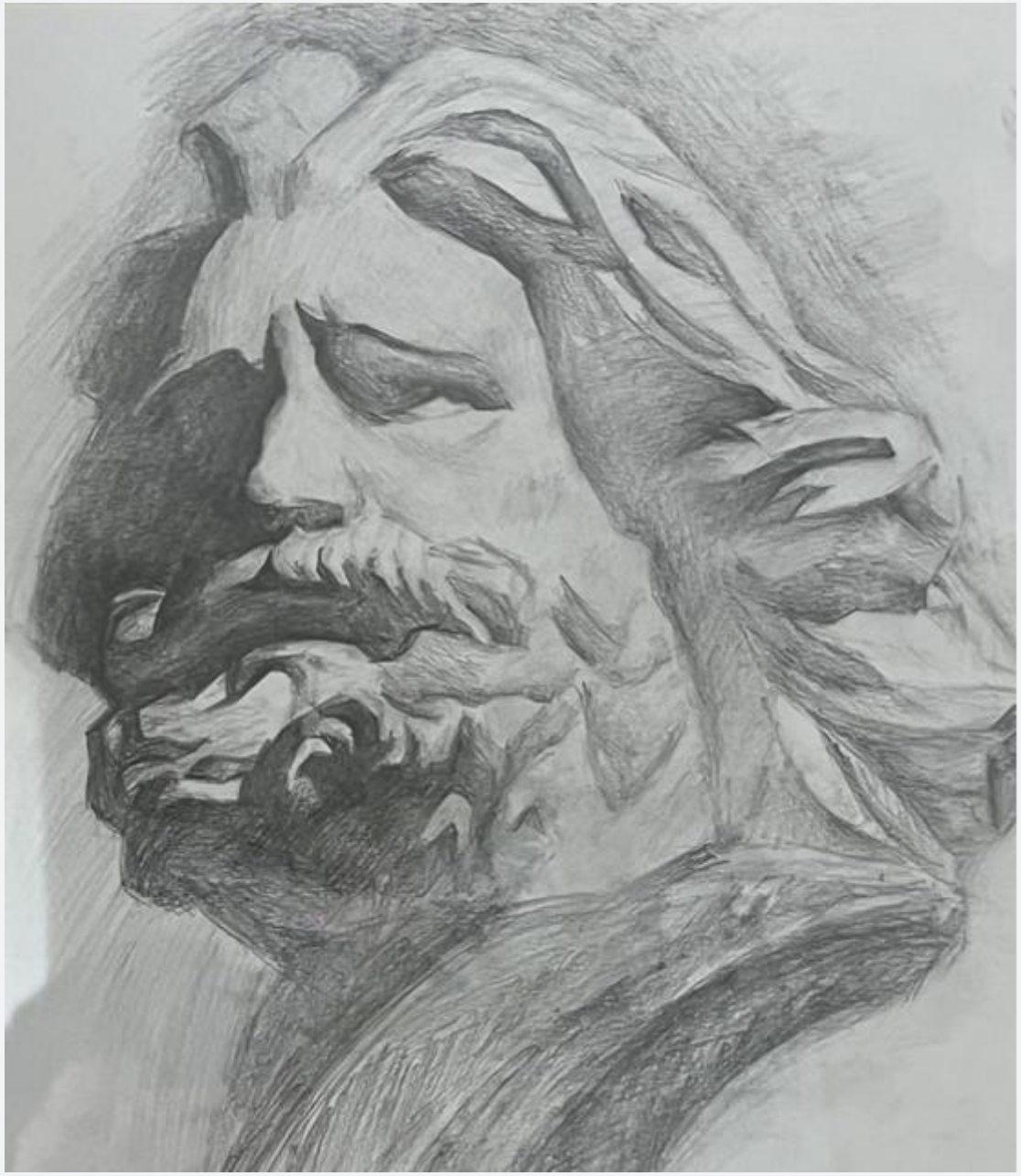
**SIZE:** 18 x 12 in

**MATERIAL:** acrylic

**AWARD:** Scholastic Art Regional Honorable Mention (2023)

**PUBLICATION:** *The Rev* (2025)

A young child reaches across a table toward a real handgun, not knowing the difference between a toy and a threat. The painting contrasts a child's innocent curiosity with the danger of an unsecured gun. By placing the gun in an everyday setting, I wanted to emphasize how easily children can encounter dangers they are too young to understand.



# Philosopher

**DATE:** 2023

**SIZE:** 12 x 18 in

**MATERIAL:** graphite pencil, charcoal

I drew this statue of a Greek philosopher from observation, with an emphasis on light, shadow, and the underlying structure of the face. Viewing it from below challenged me to work with foreshortening and unfamiliar proportions. The drawing process taught me to pay attention to every detail, from how each plane of the face caught the light to how dark each curl of the beard should be.



# Practice Makes Perfect

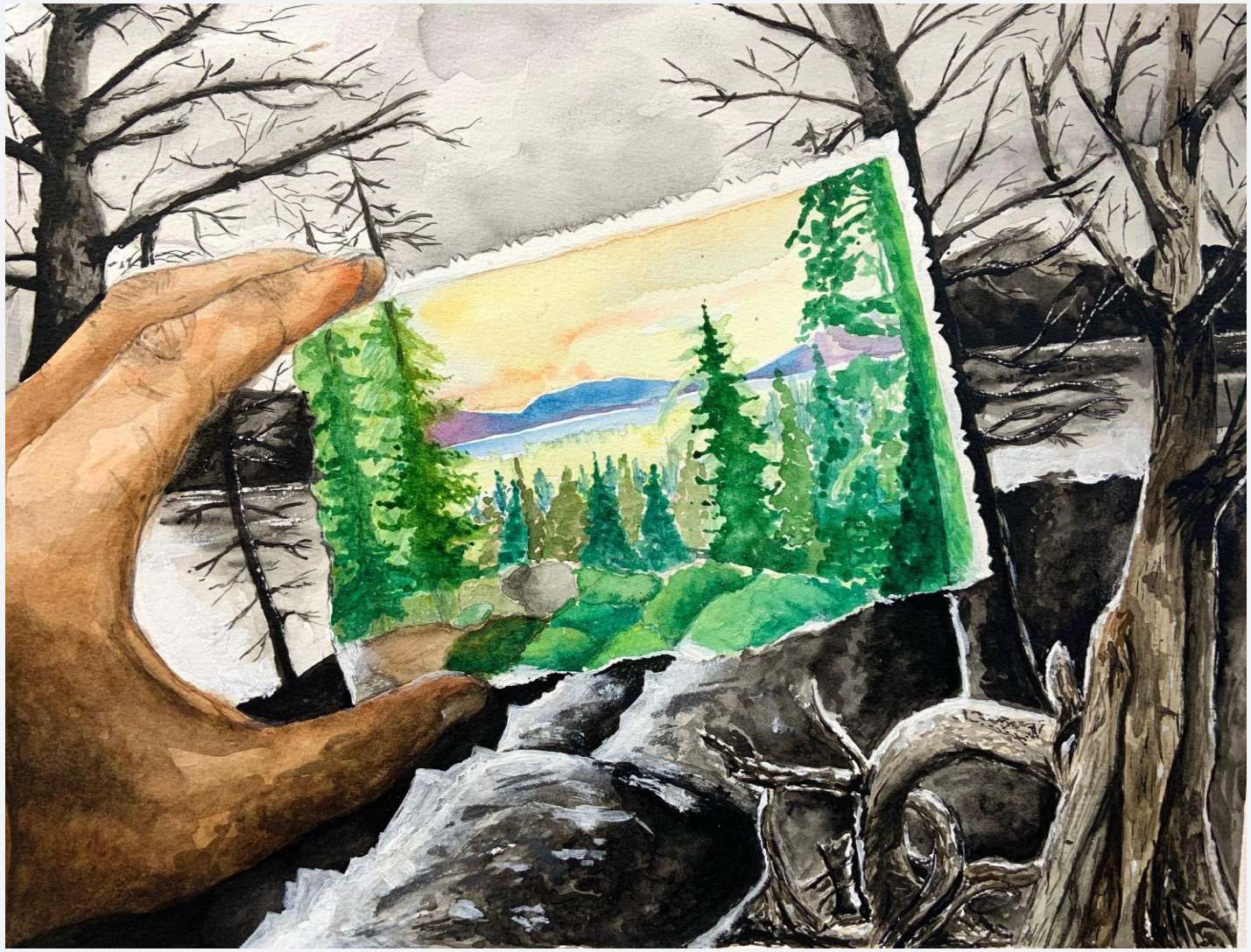
**DATE:** 2022

**SIZE:** 12 x 10 in

**MATERIAL:** watercolor, ink pen

**AWARD:** Scholastic Art Regional Gold Key (2022)

A boy practices basketball alone, shooting into a plastic basket on a dusty street. With so little to work with, he keeps shooting anyway, determined to improve. Through this painting, I wanted to show that hard work doesn’t require good conditions, and that it can sometimes outweigh natural talent. I was inspired by one of my favorite baseball players, Derek Jeter, who said, “There may be people who have more talent than you, but there's no excuse for anyone to work harder than you do.”



# A Glimpse of the Past

**DATE:** 2022

**SIZE:** 36 x 24 in

**MATERIAL:** watercolor

**AWARD:** Scholastic Art Regional Honorable Mention (2022)

A hand holds up a vivid photograph of a lush forest against the backdrop of the same forest, now burned and bare from climate change. Only the photograph still holds color. Everything around it has faded to gray. I painted the photograph as a symbol of memory, a reminder that the natural world we know today may be something we can only remember tomorrow.




# Wanna Play Another Match?

**DATE:** 2023

**SIZE:** 8.5 x 11 in

**MATERIAL:** Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop

**AWARD:** Scholastic Art Regional Gold Key (2023)

A glowing game controller covers a teenager's face, framed by neon recycling arrows looping through EAT, SLEEP, GAME. This piece explores how gaming can gradually blur the line between entertainment and real life. I wanted the controller to become almost inseparable from the person behind it, suggesting how easily a hobby can become part of someone's identity and eventually take over their life.



# Time Flies

**DATE:** 2024

**SIZE:** 32 x 24 in

**MATERIAL:** watercolor, color pencils, pencil

A boy plays chess against a black-and-white, sketched version of his grandfather, with colors fading at the edges. The boy, in full color, is living the moment; the grandfather exists only in memory. I created this piece two months after my grandfather passed away, hoping to preserve the time we spent playing chess together. Instead of dwelling on the loss, I wanted to express how grateful I am that we shared those moments.