

Q. Can you introduce yourself and tell us a little about who you are?

A. My name is Claire Hong, and I am currently in 9th grade. Art has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. It has helped me better understand who I am and has given me a way to express my thoughts and emotions through painting, sketching, and other forms of creative work. I began taking art classes at around nine years old, and I have continued to pursue it ever since.

Q. Can you tell us the idea behind your work?

A. For this painting, I explore the theme of roots and resonance by imagining my ancestors as the unseen hands that support and sustain me. The porcelain vessel is very fragile and intricately patterned, which represents cultural inheritance. As time passes, it begins to crack, symbolizing the fractures and transformations that come with generational change, migration, and memories. From within, roots extend outward, connecting past to present, grounding identity in something deeper and enduring. Yet despite this tension, a small sprout emerges at the top, embodying resilience and the possibility of new beginnings.

Q. What was your creative process like?

A. For most of my pieces, I always start with a couple of concept sketches to get my ideas down. I play around with the placement of objects and perspective to see what will look best on the canvas. Once I have my idea ready, I lightly sketch it on the canvas, and use burnt sienna to color in my values. After, I start blocking in my colors with a bigger brush, and then finally use a smaller brush for the smaller details.

Q. What are you most proud of in your piece?

A. In my piece, I am most proud of the hands because I put a lot of effort into capturing their colors, textures, and details accurately. I focused on the subtle variations in skin tone, the shadows, and the lines to make them feel more realistic and expressive. The hands are an important part of this painting as they represent strength and support, so I wanted them to feel both lifelike and meaningful.

Q. Was the piece you submitted a good example of your usual art, or did you try something new for the competition?

A. I would say this piece is pretty similar to what I usually do in terms of my technique and medium, as I usually use acrylic paint for most of my paintings. But, something I would say I did

differently is the subject matter. It was pretty new to me, because usually I focus on painting people or landscapes in a more realistic setting, but this was more symbolic, and I wanted to portray the theme of roots and resonance.