

As I go into my junior year of high school, I've been forced to immerse myself in understanding who I am and what ambitions I have for my future. This has left me struggling to answer the existential question: "Who am I?" So when final project rolled around, I knew I wanted to answer this question in the form of a painting while continuing to explore my identity in the process.

When it came to developing the composition of my painting, I wanted to accurately illustrate my feelings about my future. So, inspired by Rene Magritte's *Man In a Bowler Hat*, I chose to do a self portrait where birds would obscure my face from view. I decided to include bluebirds because they symbolize hope and awakening, which reflects my aspirations for my future. Yet I also feel overwhelmed about who I will become and what path I will take, so I chose to paint multiple birds to portray the duality of my anticipation regarding my future.

I chose to paint a hyper realistic oil painting, which required a very detailed and precise process. I find it ironic how the painting's process juxtaposes its content about the loss of control I feel when I think about my future.

This work is meant to engage its audience's curiosity and leave them with a more conscious understanding of their identity. I hope that this piece does just that and you feel encouraged to question and explore who you are.

GIRL IN AN ORANGE SHIRT

Nicole C.