

In Which, I am Bound

A Reflection on Jurying the 2025 Alexander
A. Goldfarb Juried Student Exhibition



I echo the immortal words of Ana Mendieta: "My art is the way I re-establish the bonds that tie me to the universe...the obsessive act of reasserting my ties with the earth is an objectification of my existence." She speaks of connection and entanglement, autonomy and subjugation, and transcendence and anchoring. The Goldfarb Exhibition this year grapples with the same themes and expands these existential prompts through self-portraiture, and evocative, dark, brooding imagery. Many of the students reference abortion, eating disorders, abuse, and introspection that put into images ideas of what is controlled and uncontrollable, anxiety-producing, as well as a sense of calm.

Three distinctive motifs running throughout the show are **red cords/lines**—present in *In Which, I am Bound*, *What You See of Me*, *Dolor*, *Cradle*, and *Dig*—**bones** or suggestion of a bone-like structure—see *TWIZZLERS!?!?*, *control (or lack thereof)*, *The Transfiguration*, *Sulking in Grief*, *Let Them Eat Cake*, *Entangled*, and the ladder in *An Ode to Dad*—and, lastly, **mythological, folkloric, and anthropomorphic imagery** in *Chang'e*, *Where are you off to?*, *Woman with Braid and Troll*, *BAMBINO*, *The Transfiguration*, *Parasitic Seed*, and many more. All of these motifs suggest the interplay of bondage, marionette-like control, and general entanglement with ourselves, others, societal structures, and otherworldly beings. The students offer intentional moments of cacophony and reprieve that are visceral. *Parasitic Seed*, for example, gave me goosebumps and feelings of disgust and contempt for the way that the legal system makes bodily autonomy less and less of a reality for people with uteruses. Perhaps, not just this work but the entire exhibition, is a microcosm of how bleak our view is going into this monumental year.



Baby Botox by Meaghan Bucklin was lost and therefore not included in the final installation

While *Baby Botox* does not engage in these motifs, it adheres to the theme in a satirical critique of how we view beauty and our manipulation of it. When I saw this work, I felt like it could only be a 21st-century issue to think about aestheticizing babies through invasive and semi-invasive procedures. It feels like the drawing was ripped right out of *Mad Magazine* commenting on our body modification proclivities. Where does it begin and end? Or even *Let Them Eat Cake*, a reference to Marie Antoinette, depicts a head freshly sliced like the parting of a frosted red velvet cake. It reminds me of the TikTok trend of making hyper-realistic cakes for people to guess what's real and what's fake. This frightful yet ironic work, referencing Antoinette's fate at the guillotine, echoes the quips that ultimately carry no real change in our political system and day-to-day experiences.

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