

Cultivating Art On Campus

by Kelsie Choy

Between capturing the perfect moment through photographs, analyzing Wes Anderson films, and rollerblading across campus in style to class, Ryan Kuk is senior at U of I studying Graphic Design. He hopes to someday design for companies in the music industry, and to also specialize in more work behind the lens of a camera.

“I was raised on movies,” Kuk said. “My dad would just let me watch stuff that I probably wasn’t supposed to be seeing, and I didn’t start taking art seriously until my junior year of high school. I always knew that I could draw, but it wasn’t until later where I geared my trajectory towards graphic design.”

With these multitudes of passions, Kuk said that he enjoys creating his own personalized logos and graphics pertaining to fashion and music. Starting with disposable cameras allowed Kuk to ease his way into the art of photography and even getting recognized by The Collective.

“What started off as something just for laughs and giggles, blossomed into another way for me to sort of express myself,” Kuk explained.

At a place like the University of Illinois, where life involving school work can tend to be repetitive and at times even dull, Kuk believes that this is another reason as to why he values his passions. Kuk said he enjoys seeing the appeal in what others determine as ordinary and letting his art speak for itself.

“Oftentimes, a lot of people wait for big or exciting things to happen, but I like capturing the mundane in a beautiful way,” Kuk said. “There is beauty in everything, even in the things that people may find ugly. Beauty is all subjective and fluid.”

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is widely recognized for its STEM and Business programs. Many students come from out of state and overseas to enroll in [The Grainger College of Engineering](#). As written by U.S.News.com, “The Grainger College of Engineering is ranked No. 9 out of 97 in Best Online Master's in Engineering Programs.”

Some of the most [popular majors](#) amongst students at U of I include: Engineering, Business, Psychology, and Biological Sciences. In addition, the university website states that they have over sixty engineering societies and organizations offered to students interested in the field on campus.

With so many ways to be academically involved and active on campus, how can students express themselves creatively? How can students find ways in which they can showcase not only artwork, but their own voice?

[The Collective Magazine](#) is a non-profit student-run art magazine based in Urbana-Champaign, Illinois that started in the summer of 2017. The magazine features free form work such as poetry, photography, and art from individuals on campus.

Like many artists, Kuk uses the app Instagram to showcase his work involving photography. He believes that social media and the internet is a beneficial tool to be used as an 'online portfolio'.

Kuk got involved with The Collective Magazine through taking photos for Valerie Morrice, the Assistant Graphic Lead and Treasurer Executive for the most recent and upcoming issue.

From their official website definition, "We are a free-form arts and humanities magazine and a platform for UIUC artists to collaborate and showcase their work."

As a non-profit magazine, all of the revenue generated from issue and merchandise purchases goes back into the organization.

The magazine calls for all kinds of artists to submit their contributions and work such as fine art, photography, illustrations, fashion designs, textile art, and graphic design. The club is made up of dedicated writers, designers and event assistants and coordinators who apply every semester.

Social media can be used to engage with other individuals with similar creative endeavors. In terms of making connections with other artists, and providing a safe space for ideas to formulate and grow, The Collective Magazine strives to achieve just that.

"Social media is a vessel to display work in a quick way," said Elle Terrado. "Our social media is basically a platform to easily showcase these artists in hopes of gaining attraction which allows access into cultivating the community itself."

Elle Terrado, the official Event Planner and President Executive of The Collective, said that the magazine has a lot to offer for not only aspiring artists, but for all kinds of students.

Terrado says that she considers herself as not only an artist, but a jack of all trades. When she's not organizing events, writing poetry with animated doodles, or renting out spaces for exhibitions, Terrado contributes her time and dedication to The Collective Magazine.

Now a senior, Terrado has been an active member of the club since her Freshman year in 2018.

"I joined event planning," Terrado said. "Since then, I've networked a bit by befriending the previous executive board-or the original creators of the magazine, and found myself in my current position as president since Fall 2020."

Terrado says that The Collective is a magazine that puts emphasis on people's individual character and potential. She does not want the organization to modify or subject anyone's work into a specific category or type of art, but instead, let the work speak for itself and to simply exist for audiences to relate to.

"An artist creates through their own experiences, and people can interpret it through their personal experiences as well," said the magazine's president.

The magazine's president explained how The Collective takes hundreds of submissions each semester from artists who concentrate in all forms of mediums. For the executive board, there is not a singular look or image that the club is trying to uphold. The only thing that the magazine and community wishes to be known for, is for its different styles of art. With so many diverse artists and identities, come diverse pieces of work.

"When you have a colorful past, you'll have work that speaks and comes from you. The magazine shows all of these people coming from different places." said Terrado.

The Collective Magazine is a creative outlet for U of I students to make their work and talents known to the public eye. From art galleries, vendor fests and issue releases, the magazine organization has cultivated its very own community filled with diverse artists of various backgrounds and identities.

The organization redefines the means of art as something that is not to be simply created, but also shared with others in a space that is safe and welcoming to all. The Collective uplifts the voices of those who seek to showcase creative expression and value to the Urbana-Champaign community. In an environment where academics are rigorous and challenging, comes the desire to connect through artistic endeavors and passions.

"I think people produce work based on either their experiences or emotions," Terrado began. "So, the more diverse your background is, the more diverse your work will be. Because we accept all kinds of people, they have all sorts of stories to tell."

The Collective is just one of the many ways in which students and artists can choose to present their work. Terrado, like Kuk, recognizes that although campus may seem strictly centered around academics and college culture, art and artists can be discovered everywhere.

"An artist can be anyone," said Terrado. "An artist is just someone who isn't afraid to take risks and has a creative imagination and drive."

The name 'The Collective' corresponds with its main goal of bringing together the minds of innovative, original, and visionary individuals in order to encourage those and each other to never stop challenging themselves through creation and giving life to endless possibilities. The organization assists artists in not only cultivating their work, but as well as their idealistic form of self expression.

"We encourage people of all different walks of life to contribute to the magazine," said Terrado. "The name itself means collaboration from everyone and anyone."

The Collective's president hopes to motivate students to find their place and sense of community at U of I through creative exploration.

“To all of the artists, if you have yet to find your voice, you will definitely find one on campus and the world. Continue to put your artwork out there through all forms of mediums in order to grow for yourself.”

Many students from out of state additionally come to U of I for programs in the arts. Stephanie Jin, a sophomore from California, came to the midwest campus to pursue a major in Industrial Design. Jin also identifies herself as an artist, and recognizes how challenging finding creative inspiration at a university where STEM is heavily emphasized to the public.

“It’s important to stay creative as an artist, but many of the aspects in art are connected,” said Jin. “It’s important to take notice of other people’s designs to learn something for yourself.”

Jin noted that art can be found everywhere, even at a school like U of I, because of the well known diversity on campus.

“An artist has to do their best to immerse themselves in all of the different cultures, history and backgrounds, which comes easily at a university like ours. This will only improve what you have to bring to the table as an artist.”

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