

# Ellen Chen

Art Portfolio 2023







# Self-Portrait

Acrylic on canvas

40 x 30 inches

2023

Perfection was the standard I was expected to uphold for much of my life. When I was younger, I believed that my purpose was to complete each goal that was set before me by others. I had internalized this belief and convinced myself that I needed to be as perfect as a flower and never question why.

As I matured, I became aware of my individuality and the importance of autonomy. The flowers I hold symbolize the idealistic perfection of my childhood, with each of its petals in pristine condition. I break the stems of the flowers, just as I have broken free from the beliefs that used to confine me. My wild, overgrown room represents unrestrained freedom, and the flowers spilling out of the baskets allude to me breaking the strict confines to explore outside of the box. I am now unafraid to explore, make mistakes, take risks, and create my own goals. Life is a journey that may not be perfect. I have accepted my own imperfections to give my blossoming flowers a new meaning of freedom and growth.





# Exhibition Poster Design

Procreate  
19 x 14 inches each  
2022, 2023

In this pair of posters designed to promote “Sharron Art Charity Exhibition” events, the bright colors and sharp contrast demand the viewer's attention.

The poster on the left announces the 13th anniversary of the charity exhibition. The dynamic composition alludes to the broad spectrum of work at the event and provides a sneak preview of the displayed artworks.

In the poster on the right, the musical graphics weave together to translate the melodic sounds of a symphony into visual communication. The abstract forms of the violin, piano, and clarinet foreshadow the solos of these instruments.





# Unseen Thoughts

Acrylic on canvas  
24 x 18 inches  
2023

On the edge of this swimming pool lies a set of abandoned clothes: a white blouse, a pair of jeans, a single shoe, and a diamond necklace. This uncanny scene suggests that someone has disappeared into the depths of the pool. The void-like water reflects the bridge between the conscious and subconscious. The soft, warm light of our consciousness spills into the pool deck to contrast the cold glow of the water of our creative subconscious that beckons the viewer in. This represents the interconnectedness of all the different areas of our minds.



# Tranquil Danger

Acrylic on canvas  
22 x 28 inches  
2023

On this blissful summer day, thick strokes of greens and blues dance around the lake. A baby crocodile appears from the border of the painting, infringing on the peace of this otherwise idyllic scene.

The creeping sense of danger introduced by the baby crocodile alludes to the contrast between perception and reality. For example, many would panic when encountering a spider regardless of whether or not it poses a true threat, because we have learned to fear the mere image of a spider. In this scene, perhaps the child fears the baby reptile, but it is also possible that both creatures are simply curious about each other. This painting is a metaphor for our ingrained biases.







# Fragile

Acrylic on canvas  
24 x 18 inches  
2021

(Exhibited at Portland Museum of Art)

A trip to the United Nations inspired me to create a series of paintings on the environmental issues happening in our world. The speakers' empowering words echoed through my head, instigating me to take action: climate change, CO2, global warming. I realized that the climate crisis is a human rights crisis. Corporations and factories are sacrificing the well-being of humanity to selfishly gain profit. I thought back to the times when my family drove past New York City and saw the black smoke against the city skyline with a yellowish, brownish haze surrounding the colossal skyscrapers. My town had also begun to see the effects of pollution; an increasing number of discarded bottles and plastic bags rolling in the wind along the beach, and dead fish with foggy desolate eyes and rotting flesh falling from its bones deposited onto the banks of the murky river. But when the world was forced into lockdown, a glimmer of hope appeared. The muddy, dreary skies cleared because of the absence of cars and shut down of factories, bringing back the once-blue skies. Stopping pollution for even a few months allowed nature to regain its strength. I sat in the auditorium, filled with people who cared about such a topic. In that moment I felt powerful, discussing possible solutions to mitigate the climate crisis.

In this painting, we see the young girl has a strong will to live and unwavering selflessness, as she protects her pet pigs as well. It aims to draw attention to how we are creating human-made disasters which in turn are affecting villages that often cannot get help. Far away in distant cities, we go about our daily lives, unaware of how our lifestyle practices affect others around the planet. We need to care for our world because this is our only chance.



# Dance with Her

Acrylic on canvas  
24 x 36 inches  
2023

Reluctantly, I watched my aunt swipe through my prom pictures. I could feel her scowl deepen with every photo of my prom date and me, both girls in elegant golden and cerulean dresses with matching corsages, until she landed on a group picture. Pointing to my male classmate who stood beside me, she disdainfully asked, “Your prom date?” It sounded more like a statement than a question. “Yes,” I hesitantly answered and felt a pang of sadness in my chest.

She lingered on that picture a moment longer and, unfortunately, swiped again, revealing a frozen moment in which my date and I danced together. I closed my eyes and was back at prom, deafening music in my ears as she grabbed my hands and twirled me around on the crowded dance floor. I pulled her closer and she grinned; her deep hazel eyes glittered in the last rays of the setting sun as we screamed the lyrics to our favorite songs.







# Submerged Still-life

Acrylic on canvas  
36 x 24 inches  
2023

This still-life painting depicts typical household objects in shades of blue and purple, with unexpected marine visitors hidden among the layers of home textiles. At least, that is what this painting seems at first glance. One may perceive the creatures to be out of place in this household scene, however, the inverse is true because this painting takes place at the bottom of the ocean. It is our objects that are encroaching on this composition, and on their space. Discarded man-made detritus has descended to the ocean floor, turning what once was a majestic reef into a landfill. This collision between our terrestrial world and the aquatic world of marine life may forever be an incompatible harmony if we do not take action to stop the pollution of our oceans.



# Ethereal Immersion

Bristol paper, cardboard, clay, wire, markers, acrylic  
paint

17 x 17 x 14 inches

2022

Through this sculpture depicting a decomposing sheep-like creature, I aimed to capture the process of which decay and growth intertwine and balance in the perpetual cycle of life. The long wisps of paper strips create the bulk of the sheep's wool and flow off the sides of the sculpture, mimicking the flow of water. The hints of cyan and blue imply an ethereal presence, and fungi emerge from these flowing striations. This sculpture represents how the end of one being nourishes new life, and so on.





# Trampled Ambitions

Acrylic on canvas

18 x 24 inches

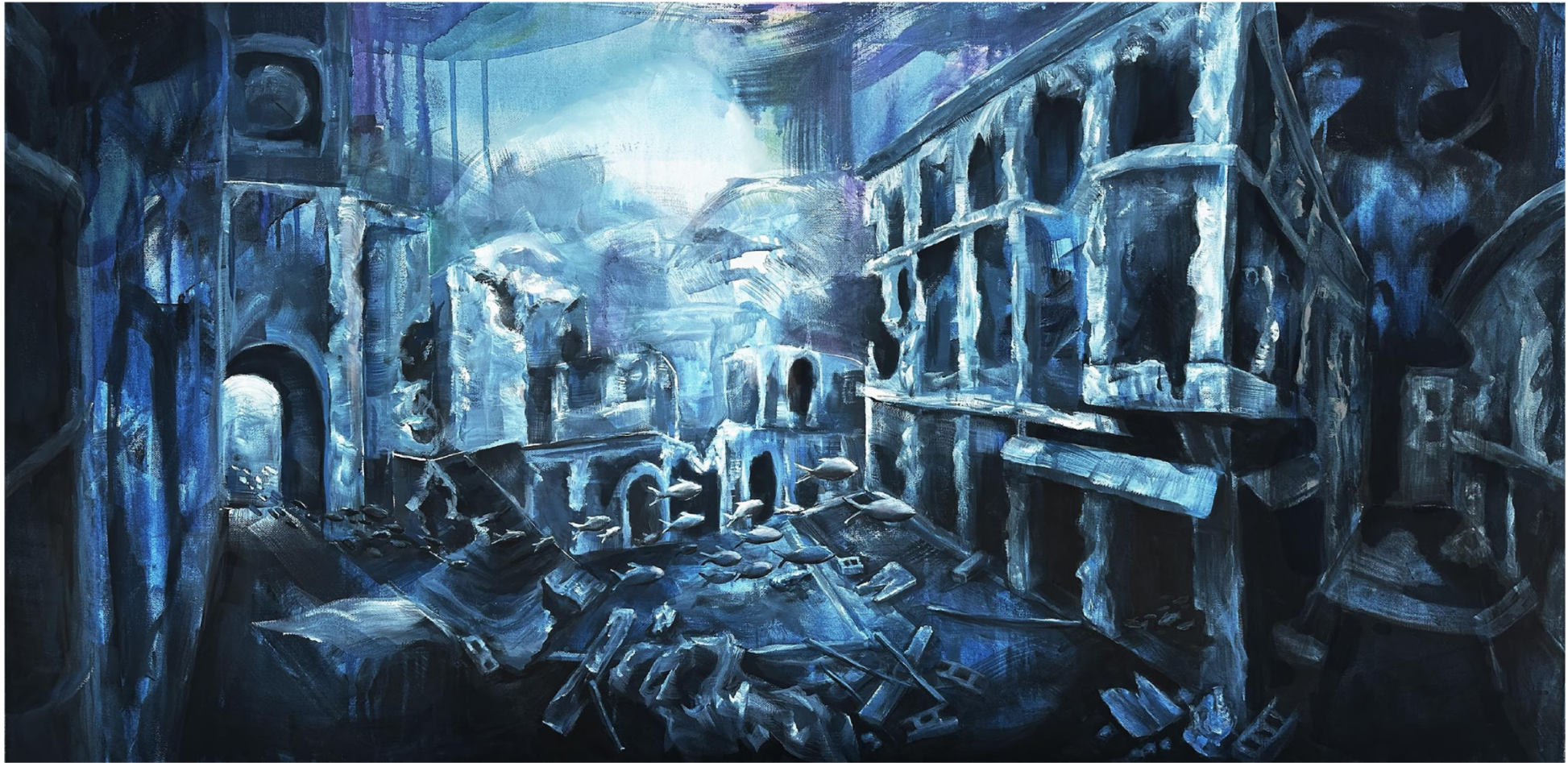
2022 (Exhibited at the Bruce Museum)



Technological inventions quickly outpace old ones and dominate the global market. We rush about our daily lives indifferently. We greedily consume ever-more advanced and modern technologies with the latest models. Our desire in this fast-paced world blinds and pushes us to mass-produce products with little regard for the consequences reflected in our deteriorating environment. As our global conditions worsen and colossal amounts of garbage fill our oceans, our world withers away. Our oceans are a forbidding graveyard of past inventions, discarded to pave the way for an endless onslaught of new innovations.

The hues of the ocean swallow the shadowy figures of the painting. As objects crash through the surface, their falls decelerate, but the people hurry onwards in the gray rush of their unending morning routine. Water slows down time and captures the monotone, grey rush of their paths. We are forever suspended in this endless loop of fatigue and indifference unless we break the cycle.





## Timeless Waters

Acrylic on canvas  
22 x 44 inches  
2023

This painting delves deeper into the scene of “Trampled Ambitions,” but the humans are eerily absent, replaced by a school of fish, which represents our inability to connect with one another. The demolished, abandoned city symbolizes our greed as we perpetually consume resources without care. Blinded by selfishness, we cannot see what we already have, only the things we do not have. As the fear of the uncertainty of our world festers, we stare into the abyss that is our ocean and are reminded that 95% of the ocean remains unexplored. Although this dread may always be present, we have the opportunity to act now to save our planet and our future.





Thank you