

Inside

Ithaca's

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UNCONVENTIONAL

Art

Scene



The Ithacan

Arts Edition

SPRING

2025

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Physical media: From local stationery to Ithaca College's very own bookbinding



Collage of a box of handwritten letters and a display table of unique candles, flower bouquets, quills and inkwells, sold at the Mockingbird Paperie on The Commons. ARTHUR WAWRZYNIAK/THE ITHACAN

BY EVA LEON
STAFF WRITER

Handwritten letters, stationery and books are used to communicate thoughts, ideas and information with others. While they may seem to belong in a desk drawer or a library, these mediums are deeply personal and artistic to those who keep the practice alive in an age of digital media.

Situated at the heart of The Commons, Mockingbird Paperie draws customers in with intricate window displays, including a collection of vintage typewriters, each containing a poem related to the time of year.

Customers walk in to find a colorful paper sanctuary lined with Japanese and Italian stationery, sticker books, greeting cards for any occasion and ladders decked with decorative paper.

Suzanne Loesch has been the owner of Mockingbird Paperie for the past 15 years since she bought it from the previous owner whom she had befriended.

Loesch and her husband, Timothy Horner, were living far away from each other for a period of time. On the store's website, Loesch writes about how her and her husband's correspondence during that time "embodies a tangible and permanent remembrance of our truest feelings about each other." Loesch's collection of letters between her and Horner are what influenced her to buy the store, previously called Ithacards. She keeps a chest of these letters in the store that she occasionally puts on display.

Loesch has a vast inventory of locally made products and imported products from around the world, from greeting cards featuring local photographers' art to Nepalese paper made solely by women on the Tibetan Plateau. She said she tries to stay in the vein of paper but the store has expanded to also sell art supplies and other gifts. In a digital age, when letters can be replaced by a quick email or text message, Loesch said physical media is still important.



"Over the last, you know, 13, 14, years, I've seen dips, highs and lows, of where people are really excited about some really amazing paper and fountain pens," Loesch said. "They want to write to people and have it have their own special touch and also, their own sentiment, they want to write what they feel, not what the card says."

She said she believes her letters to her husband are a form of art. Besides being a large part of Loesch's inspiration for promoting snail mail and handwritten works, Horner also helps out at the store when he is not working as an attorney. He recalled two memorable customer stories when he was overseeing the store, one where a woman came into the store and picked up a lavish and expensive journal.

"Paper really seems to affect people," Horner said. "She brought it up, and she said, 'I think this is going to change my life.'" Horner said there was another instance where a woman brought some very expensive paper up to the counter to buy and he told her how he is afraid to handle such significant paper because nothing he could write would be worthy enough for it.

"She said she writes on the



Suzanne Loesch, owner of the Mockingbird Paperie, stations several displays of her store's paper stock proudly. The material comes from imports of Japanese and Italian stationery. ARTHUR WAWRZYNIAK/THE ITHACAN

best paper she can find, and then burns it and that's like giving it away somehow, making it worthy," Horner said.

Loesch also has paper-related hobbies of her own, including making and repurposing books. She is working on repurposing old book covers that she finds at the Friends of the Library second-hand book sale, into journals.

Patricia Hunsinger, lecturer in the Department of Art, Art History, and Architecture teaches a class on book arts. Hunsinger said her students are assigned to find a book and respond to its content by somehow repurposing it. She showed a copy of "Ramayana" where a student had cut a

section of paper on the inside to create a scene of a deer in the woods.

Hunsinger said that book arts are simply just turning books into visual art. She said it is a form of unconventional art because it defies the traditional structure of a book. The class has experimented with folding and forms of stitching to create nontraditional books. They started out with easy folds and then moved to more complex styles of stitching from different cultures including Japanese stitching and Israeli stitching, to where they are working on making hardcover books.

Literary artists across Ithaca, like Loesch and Horner, are keeping the art form alive through education and entrepreneurship as digital media continues to dominate more and more every year.

"I think that [it's art] because you're using your hands and manipulating the papers with your hands," Hunsinger said. "That's the most important thing. ... It's handmade, it's tangible."



Puppetry in Ithaca: A traveling theater of dreams

BY LIAM MCDERMOTT
STAFF WRITER

Ithaca has always been known to be a haven for the performing arts, with music and theater performances constantly going on around the city. One such performing art is puppetry, a style getting more recognition by the day through local organizations.

The Lilypad Puppet Theatre is a local non profit that performs live puppet shows across the greater Ithaca area. The company was started in Ithaca by Lily Gershon, along with her partner, Matthew Ocone, in 2018. Gershon herself has been involved with puppetry since 2013 with the founding of LilySilly Puppet Theater. She said the idea for the puppet theater came from puppet performances she used to put on during gatherings at her house.

"We eventually decided that this could be a profession," Gershon said. "I called up the [Trumansburg Montessori] school and asked if they needed a puppet show and they said they did ... and then we started doing shows for kids, for schools and libraries and festivals."

Before starting the puppet theater, Ocone and Gershon were a music duo, performing jazz music across the Ithaca area. The two found a connection between their music and Gershon's passion for puppet theater and began doing shows around town. Their joint projects began at the farmers market, where customers could walk by and get a glimpse of their shows.

"I think it would really surprise people, because it seemed [to be] something unexpected," Ocone said. "You know, they expected to see somebody playing guitar and singing classic rock songs at the farmers market, but they didn't expect a really wacky, silly puppet show."



Lily Gershon shows off one of her puppets, standing in front of her massive closet collection. These puppets have featured in all of her projects across Ithaca over the years, from LilySilly Puppets up until Lilypad Puppet Theatre's productions today.

ASA JELLEY/THE ITHACAN

Gershon said puppets can be made out of pretty much anything as long as it is an inanimate object or character coming to life on the stage.

The puppetry Gershon and Ocone practice in Ithaca draws on world art history from over the course of the millennia. Seth Soulstein, professor in Theatre Production and Management at Ithaca College, teaches the History of Theatre course at the college. Soulstein said puppet theater has been a part of many cultures across the globe for

thousands of years.

"As long as there have been humans, there have been puppets in different forms," Soulstein said. "In some places, it started up as like marionettes, and in other places, it started as just taking two objects and making them pretend to talk to each other. It's a bunch of different cultures all figuring out how to make performances that aren't themselves."

Gershon said puppet theater can be more creative than people think. She said she feels most people see puppets as a sock with googly eyes or puppets such as "The Muppets," a creation of famous puppeteer Jim Henson. She said it is much more than that.

"You can literally make puppet theater out of anything," Gershon said. "Anything that's inanimate that comes alive becomes potentially puppet theater."

Gershon said the company performs several different types of puppet theater shows. Presentation styles are limitless, from a variety show called "Puppet Slam Jamboree," where poetry is told through puppetry, to "Puppet Runway," which mixes puppetry and fashion together into a mini runway-style event. They even have a puppet parade that started out as a safe way for the company to continue doing puppet theater during the pandemic. The company hosts the showcase at the Ithaca Festival Parade every May.

Despite puppetry's strong ties to child entertainment, Ocone said that he and Gershon want people of all ages to enjoy the shows they put on. This includes keeping both the parents and kids engaged in the show in different ways.

"There's certain types of entertainment for children that kids like, and it's kind of awful to watch as an adult," Ocone said. "The classic example from when I was a kid was Barney. Adults universally hated it and children loved it, and we try not to do that. We try to take ideas that we think are interesting to us and present them in a way where they're going to appeal to a wide age range."

One of the ways Gershon and Ocone try to keep the adults in the audience engaged is a scene in which the puppet gets freaked out when it sees that it is

being controlled by a human. Breaking free from illusion as a puppet presents a unique concept that keeps adults invested in their art.

Puppetry's long global history speaks to the idea that the art form is open to all, if the artist is passionate enough. Gershon said that if you have the love for it, anyone can do puppet theater. She said that neither she nor Ocone had any degree or background in theater, but

"You can literally make puppet theater out of anything."

were able to create a successful company in the Lilypad Puppet Theatre.

"If you are someone who is an artist or you want to do something creative, puppetry is a wonderful jumping board," Gershon said. "It's so accessible and its community is so welcoming. It's just very open to all kinds of people with different skill levels and different interests to get into it."

Ocone said he and Gershon's skill levels were not a factor in diving into their newfound passion. He said his background as a musician and Gershon's background as an English teacher influenced their craft, drawing ideas from different disciplines into their shows. The art of puppetry has been open to independent artists like Gershon and Ocone all along.

"I think that's one of the beautiful things about it," Ocone said. "We just started making puppet shows and in the process of doing it, and performing, we learned about it. We slowly learned more about the world of theater, until now we feel [like] we belong here."



One of Gershon's stars poses in despair. The Lilypad Puppet Theatre touches on complex themes throughout their productions, prompting strong facial expressions.

ASA JELLEY/THE ITHACAN

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Artificial intelligence: Thoughts from the classroom

BY SADIE EVANS

CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The use of artificial intelligence is a controversial topic, and with advancements made in the world of digital and physical art, the conversation on AI's role in the art world has spread to classrooms at Ithaca College.

Generative AI is a type of artificial intelligence with the purpose of creating content — whether it be images, video, text or art — by using existing data and recognizing patterns.

According to Ithaca College's official website, for the 2024-25 academic year, Ithaca College was granted AI Mini-Grants for Course Integration in order to integrate AI into classrooms across campus. A main goal of the college with these grants was to enhance student AI literacy, which is how to understand and evaluate artificial intelligence.

Michael Lewis, assistant professor in the Department of Media Arts, Sciences, and Studies, recently assigned his Advanced Digital Photography class a project on digital manipulation. Lewis said that although he has done this project since Fall 2024, this semester is the first time he assigned one of the images to be generated fully by AI.

"I think [AI] can be used as a powerful tool for certain re-touchings or certain shiftings of composition and things of that nature," Lewis said. "I've spent more time on some of these AI images than it takes me to actually ... just [take] a photograph. So I found that hours can melt away and there's definitely a craft element to it."

Lewis said via email that the students are using AI tools in Adobe Photoshop to create their images.

Cameron Howard, a sophomore cinema and photography major in the class, said he thinks AI should be used more as a tool than as a way of replacing the process of making art by hand.

"[AI is] something you can use to enhance your art," Howard said. "I think that devoting the entire piece of art to complete AI control is not really your art at that point. It's more computer generated and takes away from the idea of art itself."

Though some of the student's final products were still in the early stages of production, Howard had already started generating his final piece.

"I decided to do [an] AI image of a lighthouse with people around it," Howard said. "I just kind of did something that I thought would look nice, and just because [Lewis] wanted [it] to



Sophomore CJ Owen used Generative AI for their photography assignment to create an image of three deer in a misty clearing atop a mountain. They prioritized creating a realistic looking image, using an AI tool in Adobe Photoshop, called Image Generation.

COURTESY OF CJ OWEN

look like a real photo taken by someone."

CJ Owen, a sophomore film major in the class, said the line of ownership seems to get blurry because AI uses authorship of other artists' work to generate its images. Owen said their main principle is that AI cannot fully be one's own work due to the way the program is trained.

"I think that all of [the

images are] being taken from other people's work," Owen said. "[Yet] it's not easy to get a really realistic looking AI image. So I understand there is work being put into [using AI] if you're trying to make it look super real. ... [But it's] like there wasn't a creative intent behind it."

Owen said AI can be useful to get you to a finished product but that the technology

might be doing more harm than good.

"I think we're in a ... gray area where AI is making things easier for people, but it's also making things harder for the people who are being affected by the fields that AI is taking away from," Owen said.

According to an article on SIAM.org, AI systems are also not fully powered by

renewable energy and contribute to fossil fuel emissions.

Megan McNeil, a sophomore film, photography and visual arts major in the class, said that although AI serves as a gateway of opportunity for creation and workshopping, the threats to environmental sustainability is something that must be taken into account more often.

"[There are] people who are not fortunate enough to have clean water and access to it," McNeil said. "Yet it's being used so that people can generate a prompt for their homework assignment. ... I feel like it's a little ridiculous ... generating things for the sake of [art]work."

Despite the sustainability issues surrounding the use of AI, Lewis said that its future is unclear and he is undecided on his opinion of AI use in art.

"I think when Photoshop first came around, the impact that everybody thought it was going to have on photography was correct, but it certainly didn't go anywhere," Lewis said. "And I think the same thing is going to happen with AI."

McNeil said that instead of creating artwork, AI has the potential to serve purposes better suited to people's needs.

"I just feel like we should use AI to do the more mundane things in life that take away from us creating art and expressing ourselves, and engaging with other people," McNeil said. "AI could be doing so much to help us live more, because what's the point of living if we're just going to create AI art and then do all the boring stuff."



Sophomore Megan McNeil's AI image submission includes a warped view of New York City billboards, displaying imaginary advertisements to replicate Times Square. She used Google Gemini.

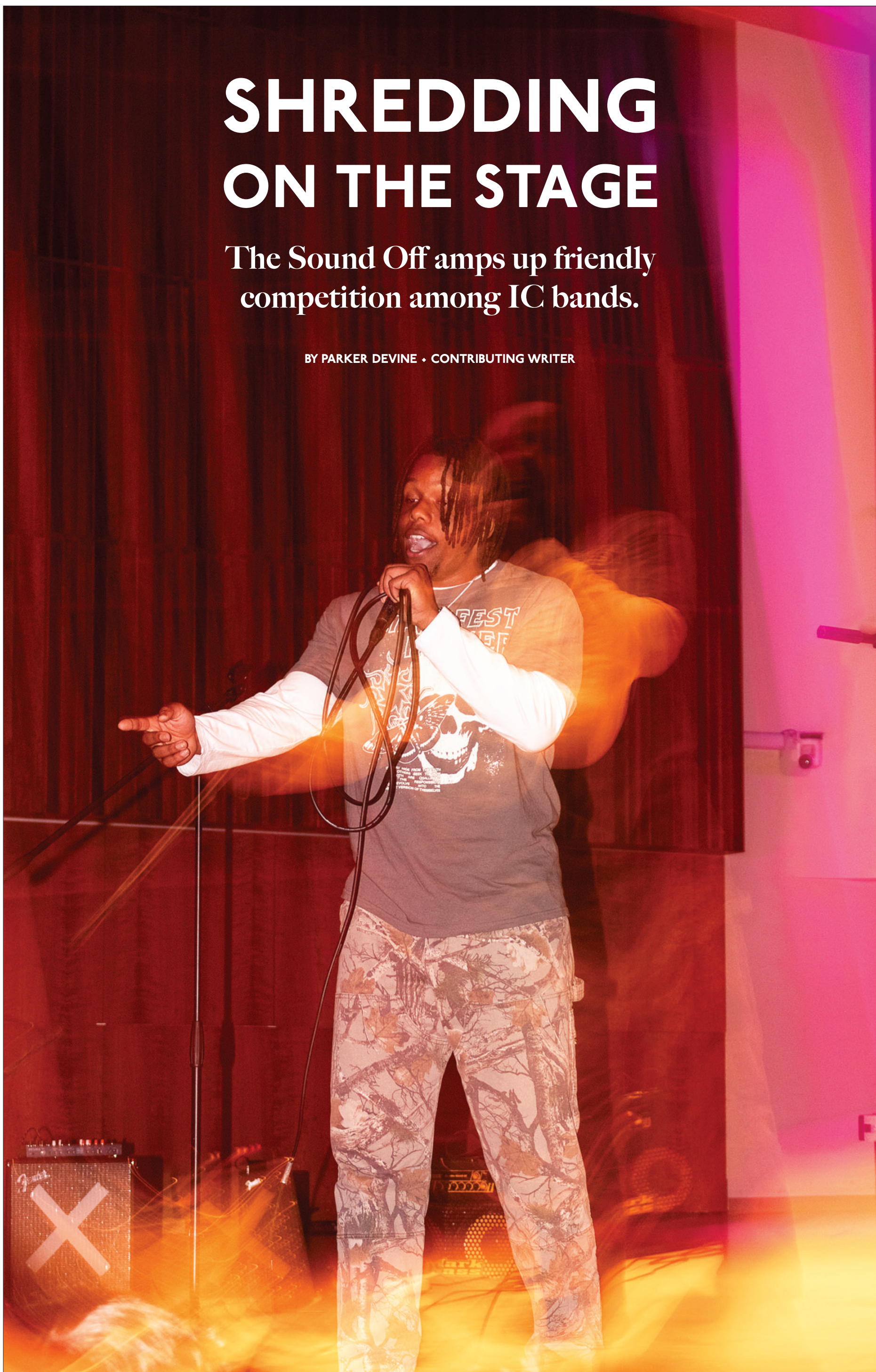
COURTESY OF MEGAN MCNEIL

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SHREDDING ON THE STAGE

The Sound Off amps up friendly
competition among IC bands.

BY PARKER DEVINE • CONTRIBUTING WRITER



The week of March 26, leading up to Ithaca College Bureau of Concert's "The Sound Off," students were buzzing with excitement. Posters began popping up on bulletin boards across campus, calling students to vote for their favorite performers at the upcoming event.

Marketed as a "battle of the bands," "The Sound Off" had an impressive lineup of new and familiar names in the IC music scene. The student bands Three Holes, delia-h, Red-40, Bisexual Lighting, All Nine Bite and Beer Cat were booked to play and the day before the show, rappers AKABURNZYY and XAYY were announced as part of the lineup. Ultimately, the three winners of "The Sound Off" were delia-h, XAYY and Beer Cat.

Sophomore Noah Robinson, lead guitarist and backing vocalist of Bisexual Lighting, said that even aside from the competition, "The Sound Off" had a great group of performers.

"Everyone there is so wonderful," Robinson said. "I'm so excited to just play a bill with them."

An Instagram post from the BOC stated that the winners of "The Sound Off," which were decided through an audience vote, would not only receive a cash prize of up to \$1,000, but also the opportunity to perform at IC KicksBack. IC KicksBack is the end-of-semester concert that last year brought Laundry Day and Ritt Momney to the stage outside of the Campus Center.

Sophomore Emily Nocella, member of the BOC's logistics team, said that having student performers at IC KicksBack is incredibly important in building community.

"Ithaca and the music community are so intertwined and it's just nice to be able to have everyone showcase their talent," Nocella said. "It's great for students to have this opportunity to perform in front of their peers."

Delia Vaisey '23, vocalist of delia-h, had a professional motivation to compete for the opening spot at IC KicksBack.

"The opportunity to perform and open for somebody with some clout in the music world is a pretty cool opportunity," Vaisey said. "I would love to be able to talk to somebody who has more experience touring and marketing themselves because that's something I'm starting to take more seriously."

Vaisey's music is lyric-driven, with support from her band members who provide the full instrumentation to achieve the combination of punk, folk and rock characteristics that make her music unique. Vaisey explained that having that instrumentation is important to her, especially because music is such a collaborative art form.

"I've been writing songs forever, like as long as I can remember," Vaisey said. "I've been performing in bands for the past four or five years. I kind of have always written songs, and it's nice to be able to realize them more fully with other people."

This is the first time that the BOC has held a competition to decide what student bands or performers will be joining the headliners at IC KicksBack. For many of the competing musicians, this was an unfamiliar challenge, especially when their competitors were friends.

Sophomore Owen Froelich, vocalist and lead guitarist of Beer Cat, said that competition against his friends brought a strange sense of excitement to his preparation for the show.

Left: Isaiah Couser, also known as XAYY, engages the crowd with his rapping.

ARTHUR WAWRZYNIAK/THE ITHACAN

"Screw the competition, let all of us play."

"It's weird to be doing a competition that's 'us vs them,'" Froelich said. "I never really want it to be 'us vs them,' but there is something nice about it."

Sophomore Alex Siegelson, bassist and occasional vocalist of Beer Cat, said the competition element of "The Sound Off" adds a unique challenge for the band.

"I think it's pushing everyone to be the best version of themselves that they can," Siegelson said.

Peter Gillen '24, drummer of Red-40, said competition is not uncommon in the music world, but something like "The Sound Off" brings in a new element.

"I think at a lot of shows, you kind of have some unspoken competition," Gillen said. "But with this it's literally in plain text. I definitely feel [like this is] a different feeling for me. It has been a bit more intense."

Red-40 also consists of juniors Dominick Petrucci on bass and Brennan Feeny on guitar. Both Petrucci and Feeny are also part of Bisexual Lighting, another band on "The Sound Off's" lineup. Petrucci said this did not feel like a conflict of interest to him, because both of the bands fulfill different needs for him creatively.

"I'm in [Bisexual Lighting] for percussion," said Petrucci. "I'm in [Bisexual Lighting] to back up my other friends, while Red-40 is kind of more just like the inner machinations of me and Brennan's minds."

In order to accommodate for the number of musicians that would be playing in "The Sound Off," the BOC limited each act to 15 minutes of music. Robinson said the process of selecting a setlist for a show like this was challenging.

"We are used to playing smaller sets, but never 'OK, choose your three best [songs]," Robinson said. "It's been really reflective to be like 'What are our strongest things? What will make people

"I think it's pushing everyone to be the best version of themselves that they can."

happiest?' Because it's all crowd-based."

Since the crowd was deciding its future through a vote, each band put emphasis on its crowd work. However, Ford Hall was not designed with space in mind for dancing or moshing. The space is used most frequently for concerts and recitals, featuring over 600 seats for the audience to settle in and watch the show.

Sophomore Zell Kurth, guitarist and lead vocalist of Three Holes, said she was nervous about taking the stage in a venue like Ford Hall.

"If it was people moshing and

standing, they don't care if you mess up a note or whatever," Kurth said. "People sitting — that's very ominous to me."

Before the competition, Petrucci said he thought of ways to engage the crowd, despite the strange venue. His goal was to break through the metaphorical wall between the audience and the performers onstage.

"I kind of started liking music because of the idea of just breaking down traditional systems when it comes to performing," Petrucci said. "It's definitely a challenge to play in Ford Hall, but I

neath the title "BOC Sound Off" was a new subtitle: "with help from Unknown Stage, Open Mic, and Doghouse." This teamwork only increased the sense of community in Ford Hall that night. By the time Three Holes took the stage, the whole front row was standing and delia-h was the first group of the night to bring members of the audience up onto the stage to dance.

During delia-h's set, one of Rymer's guitar strings broke. From the audience, Froelich jumped up, quick to push through the crowd that had made its way



From left, sophomore Zell Kurth and first-year student Cian Connolly strum on a pair of electric guitars with their band Three Holes for "The Sound Off."

ALEXSIS ELLIOTT/THE ITHACAN

definitely think I'm up to the challenge to try and make it into an immersive, different space."

However, "The Sound Off" did not go off without a hitch. Around noon on the day of the event, all of the performing musicians received an email from senior Trevor Torres, the BOC president. The email stated that due to technical

to the stage, to give Rymer his own guitar to play for the rest of delia-h's set.

First-year student Miles Terranova of All Nine Bite said that though the group had not played any official shows before "The Sound Off," they were still familiar with the other performers.

"We know these people, we see them around," Terranova said. "I thought it would be really fun to be able to play alongside them for the first time."

The final performance of "The Sound Off" was Beer Cat. As they invited audience members up to dance during their final song, the rowdy crowd did not stay to the side. Instead, audience members and other performers stood among the band members, even leaning on them and swaying along with them. Any doubt about the community in the room was gone by the time the show was over. First-year student James Smith of All Nine Bite said he felt supported by the other performers.

"The past couple weeks after the lineup came out people from the competing bands [would] pop into rehearsals and be like, 'Hey, great job guys,'" Smith said. "It's really less competition, more community."

As the musicians wait patiently for the announcement of the winners, Gillen expressed the feeling reflected by most of the competitors.

"[Red-40] wants to be at IC Kicksback, and we hope everyone else does," Gillen said. "Screw the competition, let all of us play."

difficulties in the booking of sound equipment, the event was postponed. The email did not specify a new date or time, but promised that this was not a cancellation. Senior Ryan Vincent, drummer of delia-h, said the musicians were not ready to give up that easily.

In a group chat created by senior Ben Rymer, guitarist of delia-h, the musicians realized that collectively they had the equipment that the BOC lacked through their different organizations. A new promotional flyer was released by Doghouse Media via Instagram. Under-

The science behind art: Diving deep into history

BY BRENDAN TOMASZEWSKI

STAFF WRITER

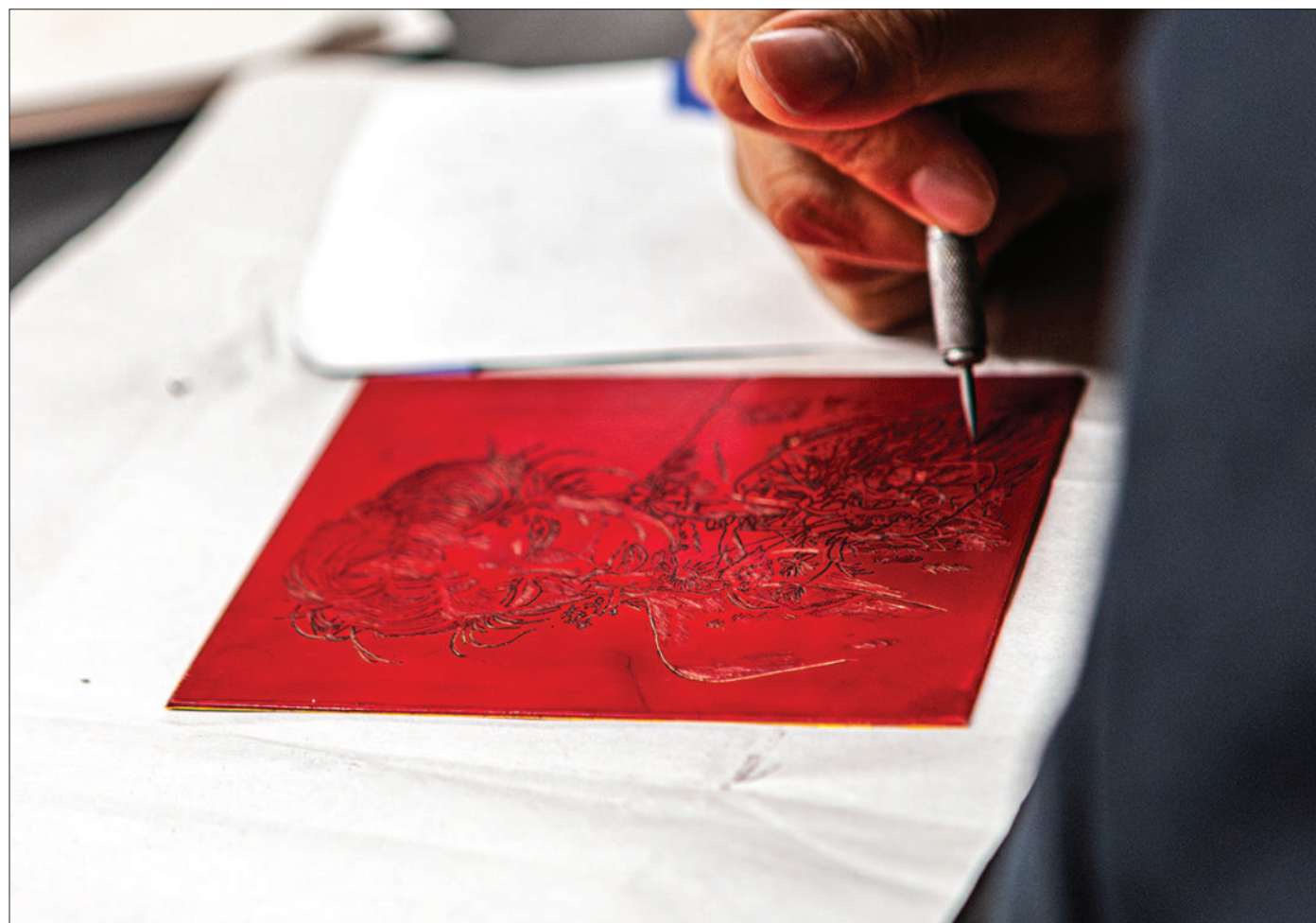
Art and science are two subjects that are commonly kept separate. They are in definition somewhat opposites: Science is the study of the physical and natural world that is rooted in logic, theories and data, while art is the expression of creative skill and imagination that is rooted in emotion and opinion. However, art and science mix in areas such as experimentation, innovation and technology.

Mike Haaf, professor in the Department of Chemistry at Ithaca College, has been teaching the course Chemistry and Art since 2009. Haaf said that although his main field is in organic chemistry, he has a passion for art history and art conservation.

“Historically, artists were among the first to use new materials,” Haaf said. “If a new material was invented, the artists were the ones that went after it first. They’re experimenters. They want to try out new things.”

Haaf said he teaches about the chemical compounds of dyes and colors, along with the materials required to create many types of art, like different paints. He said that even though it is technically a chemistry class, Chemistry and Art is not a class designed exclusively for science majors.

Haaf brought up another example of this relationship between art and science from The Metropolitan Museum of Art, which has a science and research facility in its basement that serves a critical function in preserving and validating new artwork.



Copper plates can be carefully etched into with different tools after a red ground has been rolled onto the plate and it has been baked. The plates soak in a ferric chloride bath for various intervals during the process to develop different tonal values.

SAMMIE MACARANAS/THE ITHACAN

“There’s actually extensive labs that generally people don’t go to see,” Haaf said. “If they get a new art object, they’ll often have a scientist look at it, evaluate it, look at the materials it’s made of and see if they are consistent with the time period that it claims to be, to make sure there’s

no funny business going on.”

In one of his lessons, Haaf invited Valeria Herrera, assistant professor in the Department of Art, Art History, and Architecture, who specializes in printmaking. She gave a workshop on an innovation in printmaking: copper etching at home.

The process of copper etching, as described by Herrera, used to require toxic chemicals and fumes in order for the copper plating to be properly engraved. However, because of a recently discovered technique called “electroetching,” copper etching has become not only safe, but completely reusable because of the materials it requires to operate. Voltage is applied to an etched copper plate in a saltwater solution, removing all excess materials and leaving the handmade etchings in the plate.

“It’s basically the science of water, salt and electricity,” Herrera said. “There are no fumes. The [etched copper] material displaces from one plate to the other, and it’s just the process of electricity, the voltage transferring it and removing it from this [plate] to the other plate.”

The other methods of copper etching — like chemical etching and even other traditional methods of printmaking — involve using a large desk unit with specialized tubs that cost a minimum of \$250

to set up. Then, artists need to fill the tubs with expensive, toxic chemicals.

Herrera said that electroetching, which took until the 1970’s to become popularized, costs about \$200 in total and takes up only a small part of a desk.

Herrera said all art, especially printmaking, is influenced by science because of the need for new or alternative chemicals to replace current, toxic methods of printmaking. Herrera spoke about some

areas of printmaking that are currently being researched.

“A lot of the mordants and cleaning products that are used have a lot of toxic materials in them,” Herrera said. “Oftentimes, if you’re getting into traditional printing processes for cleaning, you’re using pretty toxic materials. The materials that we’re currently using still have some questionable [toxins] in it.”

Photography is another form of art heavily impacted by advancements in science today. Rhonda Vanover, associate professor in the Department of Media Arts, Sciences and Studies, teaches two scientifically focused courses: Darkroom



When the copper plate is ready to be inked, it is bathed in SoySolv to gently remove the red ground.

SAMMIE MACARANAS/THE ITHACAN

Photography and History of Photography. Vanover said science is the reason photography exists.

“When color photography came out, they were using potato starch dye [that would] make the pigments happen,” Vanover said. “I did not like chemistry, but I find myself doing it every day.”

Vanover said that when a photo is taken on a film camera, it needs to be processed by hand using a type of



Nico Mooney, a senior art major at IC, dries his copper plate after washing the chemicals from the ferric chloride bath off with water. A blow drier is used.

SAMMIE MACARANAS/THE ITHACAN



IC's darkroom is located in the basement of Park Hall. Negatives are placed in enlargers to expose light-sensitive paper to the image. The steps in the print developing process are, from front to back, the developing bath, the stop bath and the fixer. Only yellow and red lights are used in the darkroom to develop the photos properly.

SOFIA STERBENK/THE ITHACAN

science called sprint chemistry. This develops and fixes film after it has been properly loaded and dried — a time-consuming process that requires nearly three hours of effort.

Though the process may require an incredible amount of effort, that does not mean that darkroom photography is inaccessible to those who are interested. Vanover said darkroom photography only requires the chemicals needed to process photos and a literal darkroom to work in.

"I would take my parent's kitchen and do my processing of analog film with all of this chemistry," Vanover said. "My chemistry was at the bottom of the food cabinet, I used the bathroom to make prints and eventually I made my bedroom a portion of it. I had it curtained off with a dark shower curtain. That would be my darkroom."

The very cameras that are used to create film photographs for the everyday consumer are all a product of innovative science by the Lumière

brothers, according to Vanover, which leads to her first assignment in the darkroom course: having students create their own film cameras from scratch.

Haaf said his personal hope for students is that they understand the

science aspect of art history.

"What I'd like is students to go into art museums and look at and appreciate the art, but then also appreciate the material aspect of the art object as well," Haaf said. "Then think about how

it was made, why the artist chose the materials they chose, what might have happened to it in the hundreds of years that have passed since it was made."

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The final step in the darkroom printing process is a wash in a hypoclearing solution and water to rinse the chemicals off of the paper. Then, the print dries and is ready. Test strips and contact sheets, which determine the final print's exposure time, are not included in the final wash.

SOFIA STERBENK/THE ITHACAN

Production design: The art behind visual storytelling

BY **GIANNA IZZO**

STAFF WRITER

The world on stage or screen does not just appear; it is meticulously crafted by production designers, the unsung heroes who shape the visual narrative. At Ithaca College, a new generation of these artists are honing their skills, pushing creative boundaries and learning the power of visual storytelling.

Production design encompasses everything the audience sees, from the grand sweep of a set to the smallest detail of a prop or the transformative power of makeup. It is a field demanding creativity, problem-solving and a keen understanding of narrative.

Senior MaCaleb Earle, a theatre production and design major specializing in costume design and props fabrication, said costume design's transient nature differs from other art forms.

"It can be rewarding to be like, 'I made this thing and I just gotta let it go,' or if [I] made a mistake, I just have to let it go — this didn't turn out right, but it's gonna be gone in three weeks," Earle said. "It also can be sad because you've spent a lot of time on this thing that only a limited amount of people get to see."

Costume design's fleeting nature in theater contrasts with film, where production design remains on screen for wider audiences. Yet, Callen Golden, an instructor in the Department of Media Arts, Sciences, and Studies, said production design is often overlooked in amateur work.

"Usually production design ... isn't something that students normally think about," Golden said. "[They're] usually thinking about writer, director, producer, sort of 'lead' roles. As a PD in the industry, I'm usually the second person that's hired. ... We collaborate with almost every single department."

Golden said the art department, overseen by the production designer, is often the largest, and is involved from the initial script read-through to the final wrap. Golden advises the IC Creatives club, formed in Fall 2024, for aspiring production designers and art department professionals, which she said positively impacts student films.

"A lot of films that wouldn't have normally had a production designer ... have gotten the opportunity to, which is really important," Golden said.

First-year student Devon Masterson, a television, photography, and digital media major and IC Creatives member, said she discovered the potential for a career in makeup artistry through the reality TV show "Face Off." Entirely self-taught, Masterson said she appreciates makeup's artistic potential.

"Whenever you think of art, makeup is ... not one of the first [media] you think of," Masterson said. "Usually, people think of drawing, painting or sculpture."

Masterson said her work often delves



Senior MaCaleb Earle, a theatre production and design major specializing in costume design and props fabrication at IC, did costume design for the musical "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee." The show was put on in summer 2024.

COURTESY OF RAILROAD PRODUCTIONS

into surrealism, like a class project inspired by insect dehumanization, where she sculpted prosthetics to merge human and insect features.

Golden said IC Creatives offers workshops from special effects makeup to crafting breakaway glass, offering hands-on experience and fostering collaboration. The club also helps students to pitch their film projects.

Senior Dahye Eun, a TPD major specializing in scenic art, design and props, said the challenge for set design is bringing imaginary worlds to life on stage.

Eun most recently designed the set for the college's production of "Titanic: The Musical," where she said she focused on the human stories amid the grandeur and tragedy, crafting a multi-level set with moving stairs.

"One of the biggest conversations in the room was, how do we create something that feels bigger than life itself in one room," Eun said. "To me, it felt that this story was not so much about the ship or the disaster itself, but the people who filled the rooms."

Eun said she drew inspiration from Brutalist architecture, and that her artistic inspiration prioritized emotional impact over strict historical accuracy.

The practicalities of production design often require creative solutions. Senior TPD student Cady Loeb, recently tackled props for the Kitchen Theatre Company's production of "The Brobot Adventure," involving a giant plant alien. Loeb said she took an innovative approach to creating the plant's vines, purchasing a heat gun and pool noodles.

"People don't always expect the design of a show to be so artistic," Loeb said.

Golden shared some of how she teaches students to achieve visual effects on a tight budget. She said she teaches her students to find DIY solutions, suggesting tea bags and coffee for aging paper, cinnamon for rust and hot glue with Mentos to mimic metal rivets.

"[It is] a lot of ... food," Golden said. "It's cheaper and easier to use,

said. "Theater allows you to experiment with your artistic side and understand ... what you're able to accomplish without the magic of a camera."

Along with the attention to design detail, Earle said costume design requires attention to actors' feelings.

"We're dealing with a lot of emotions," Earle said. "We're dealing with bodies,



Senior MaCaleb Earle was one of the two prop supervisors on "Urinetown," a show performed at IC. Each character prop is pitched in the script read-through.

COURTESY OF SIMON WHEELER

as opposed to the higher grade, more expensive materials."

Junior Sam Smith, a cinema and photography major, said she discovered a passion for production design through directing her own films and desiring specific visuals.

"These subtle details of props or set design in a film ... reflect what the character is going through in the moment, or the theme of the film," Smith said. "That's how I've approached it."

Loeb has also worked on student films and said film demands differ from those of stage design due to the camera's proximity.

"The devil is in the details for film, way more than in a stage production," Loeb

we're dealing with people, we're dealing with their insecurities ... all these things that can make the job draining but also really rewarding."

Across both theater and film programs at the college, students are exploring resourceful uses of materials in set construction and makeup design techniques, approaching visual design with unconventional methods.

Eun said great production design goes beyond aesthetics and she stressed theater's power to spark conversation.

"Good art is beautiful, but great art inspires," Eun said. "Theater is about humans, by humans, for humans."

"People don't always expect the design of a show to be so artistic."

BLOOD, SCARS and LIPSTICK

Inside the toolbox of an IC movie makeup artist: Reina Fritz '27.

"I've loved makeup since I was a little kid — I've always been interested in it," Fritz said. "I didn't know I would have so much fun doing gore, the first gore thing I did was just a scar on someone's face and I was awakened."

1. Rigid Collodion and spirit gum: Fritz uses spirit gum as an alternative adhesive to liquid latex and Rigid Collodion for creating scar effects. Fritz said Rigid Collodion is great for tightening your skin to look like a dent, as a scar would.

2. Liquid latex and scar wax: Fritz has used liquid latex to age people up, emphasizing or creating wrinkles on their face by curving a thin sheet of latex lays into folds. She uses scar wax if someone needs a cut or gash or to build up their face in certain areas.

3. Fritz's favorite makeup bloods: Spray blood is the tool of choice for explosions of blood while Dripping blood is for if it's a fresh cut. Fritz said coagulated blood is her favorite because it is thicker and darker than the others. "Obviously makeup is fun and people want natural makeup but I'm like, 'No can I just tear off someone's face,'" Fritz said.

4. Lip products: Besides the obvious glam-makeup uses, Fritz said her berry-toned lip products are great for the underparts of cuts. Without the added depth of color, fake blood can look like ketchup on skin; it needs some extra shading underneath.

5. Silver Grey hair color: To make an actor look older, Fritz will sometimes use this silver spray in her subject's hair to accentuate their age.

6. Shimmers and setting powder: Aside from SFX makeup, Fritz has a collection of glittery eye shimmers that are best suited for her full-glam looks, as well as more fantastical uses such as mermaid scales.

7. Eye shadow palette: Fritz said she likes to read the script and get a sense of who the character is and what type of makeup they might normally wear. If she is not using her eye shadow palette for natural makeup, there are certain shades that are perfect for bruises.

8. Brushes and blush: Fritz said she prefers working with her fingers, but sometimes brushes can be more useful for applying blush or powder. To clean her brushes, Fritz uses micellar water to rub them in a circle against her palm before rinsing them with warm water.

9. Sponges: Sponges can be a useful household item for adding texture to makeup, specifically gore texture.



Ithaca College Student Lookbook



WESTLAND MOORE '27
ENGLISH / PHILOSOPHY



JOSHUA GUEST '28
WRITING FOR FILM, TV, AND EMERGING MEDIA

BELLA HUG

Aesthetic is a mix of '70s and early 2000's inspired by Pinterest and Stevie Nicks. Hug is excited for summer to get back to rocking tiny tops and jorts.



BELLA HUG '27
TV, PHOTOGRAPHY, VISUAL ART



SALEM SZALAY '27
THEATRE STUDIES / WOMEN'S, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY

GEREK TUPY

Aesthetic is "Trad Punk," a traditional punk movement from the early '70s to late '80s. Tupy is also inspired by Dave Vanian from the band "The Damned."



GEREK TUPY '28
FILM



KATE QUIRUS '28 (AND DORY)
EDUCATION STUDIES / ART



RORY GOULD '25
WRITING / CREATIVE WRITING CONCENTRATION



PADDY EAGAN '28
TV, PHOTOGRAPHY, AND DIGITAL MEDIA

PADDY EAGAN

Aesthetic is a mix between grunge and metal, and inspired by his sister. As the weather gets warmer, Eagan is most excited to be able to bring the jorts back out.



MARLEY MIGDAL '28
PARK PATHWAYS