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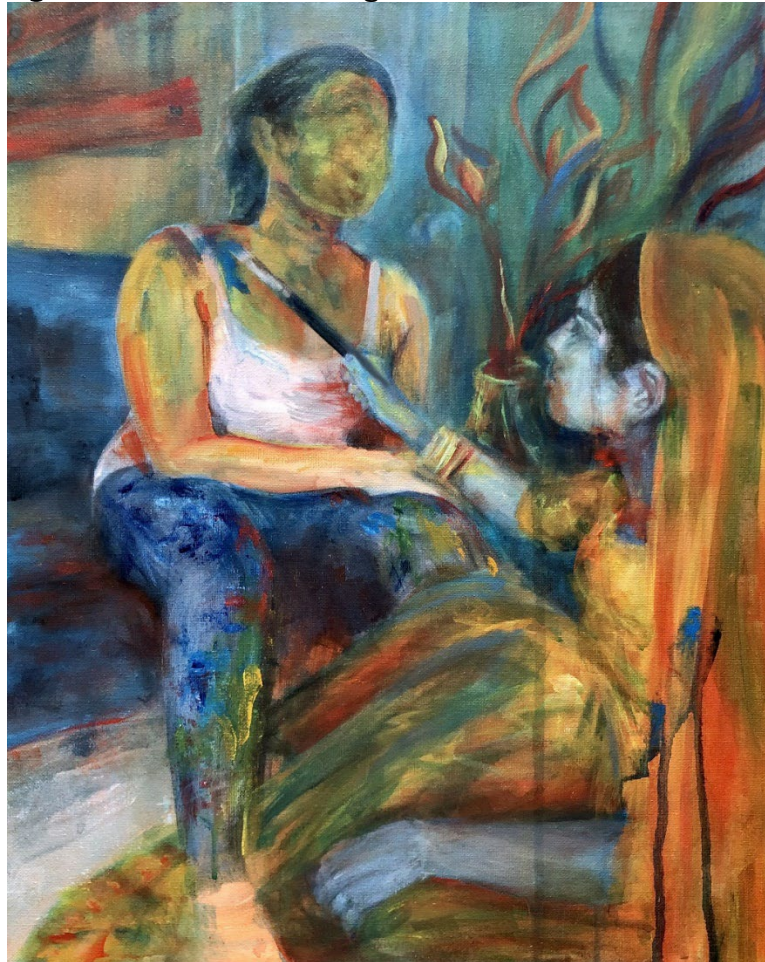
Loneliness and Cultural Hyphenation

Julia Bhuiyan

Abstract

Forever a Work in Progress is a painting that explores complexities of isolation as one consequence of navigating a culturally hyphenated identity.

Figure. *Forever a Work in Progress*



Media

Acrylic paint on canvas, 16" x 20".

This acrylic self-portrait considers the artist's experience of cultural hyphenation as a Bengali-American teenager. Among young adults with hyphenated cultural identity labels, feelings of loneliness can be exacerbated by frustrations of striving to maintain a delicate, convoluted balance among values, beliefs, and expectations stemming from multiple, often conflicting, cultural demands. Discovering and exploring one's cultural hyphenation identity processes and experiences tends to be messy and lonely.

Emerging **cultural identity**, suggested in the painting by homogenous blue tones, is not free from assimilation's indignities, suggested by red tones. New norms of selfhood acceptable in American culture are simultaneously transformative and demand ongoing transformation, signified here by movement of a paintbrush wielded by the hand of the figure in the lower right. Given oscillating native and adopted cultural influences, it is unclear how the blank-faced figure will experience being painted, colored, transformed.

Julia Bhuiyan is an undergraduate student at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is studying chemistry and history of science, and her interests include adolescent medicine, reproductive health, and intersections of art and science.

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