

2009/10 Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships

Mohawk Fine Papers Honorable Mention



AUTUMN TAHARA-ECKL

Illustration
Freshman
University of Kansas

For the first nine years of my education, I went to a private Christian academy, about seventeen miles from my home, where I was taught to be a well-behaved student. My world was enclosed by their red bricks and brown carpet, and I had no other friends in my neighborhood because of how far we lived. Our school was like a cocoon, everybody knew each other. Even junior high students were best friends with seniors, but who could blame us? We had a graduating class of four students; we didn't have much of a choice.



I tried to fit in. I really did, but it just would not click. I could not spend my precious recess staying in this world to play basketball or to be chased in a game of tag. No, I fell into my own world, where magic, werewolves and sibling rivalry emerged from my head. Only a few understood our game; those that annoyed us with their curiosity or gave us wrinkled noses simply identified our game as Nothing. We named it that so others would not disturb our realm when we still had time before the whistle. In the classroom, my teacher would get upset because I used all my notebooks and notebook paper to draw on. The drive of my pencil was shaped by my infatuation of



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Japanese anime and my mother's culture. Without my role model of Sailor Moon I would never have picked up a pencil. My classmates gaged and teacher disapproved of my princess warrior or magic girl drawings. At home I had similar problems. The carpet in my room was no longer visible from all the paper I used for drawings, and my mother screamed about my wasting, but I could not stop.

When my parents decided to let me go to a public school, I was heart-broken and fearful for my life. Here I was, in a four-to-five student class with the same friends my whole life, transferring to a school with over one thousand strangers per a class. The change punched me in the face and I became like stone. I had forgotten how to interact with new people and I was alone for that year. My art was heavily influenced by this change; switching from fantasy and magic to darkness and gore. That year was also the year I had a new beginning; I was free to explore. I discovered the joy of music and had my whole wardrobe changed. It was a time for my rebirth.



Being raised in a Christian environment I had been beaten down with Biblical morals. Early in the next year of high school, I finally broke free from the meaningless bigotry towards homosexuals and opened my mind. I started to soften to others and joined clubs to explore ideas and areas of interest such as Diversity Council, Art Club and Gay-Straight Alliance. I participate in events such as World's Fair and Day of Silence to spread awareness and tolerance. Again, my art changed to a more eerie, yet whimsical style based on the occurring events. For these past couple years, my work has expressed my changing life and molded all the different styles into me. With my enriched experiences, I plan to become a professional children's book illustrator after my Illustration major. I want to inspire children just as I was, and nourish their childhood. Along with being a professional illustrator, I am going to master in Illustration and become a professor at a college, again to help spread creativity and help shape this world.

