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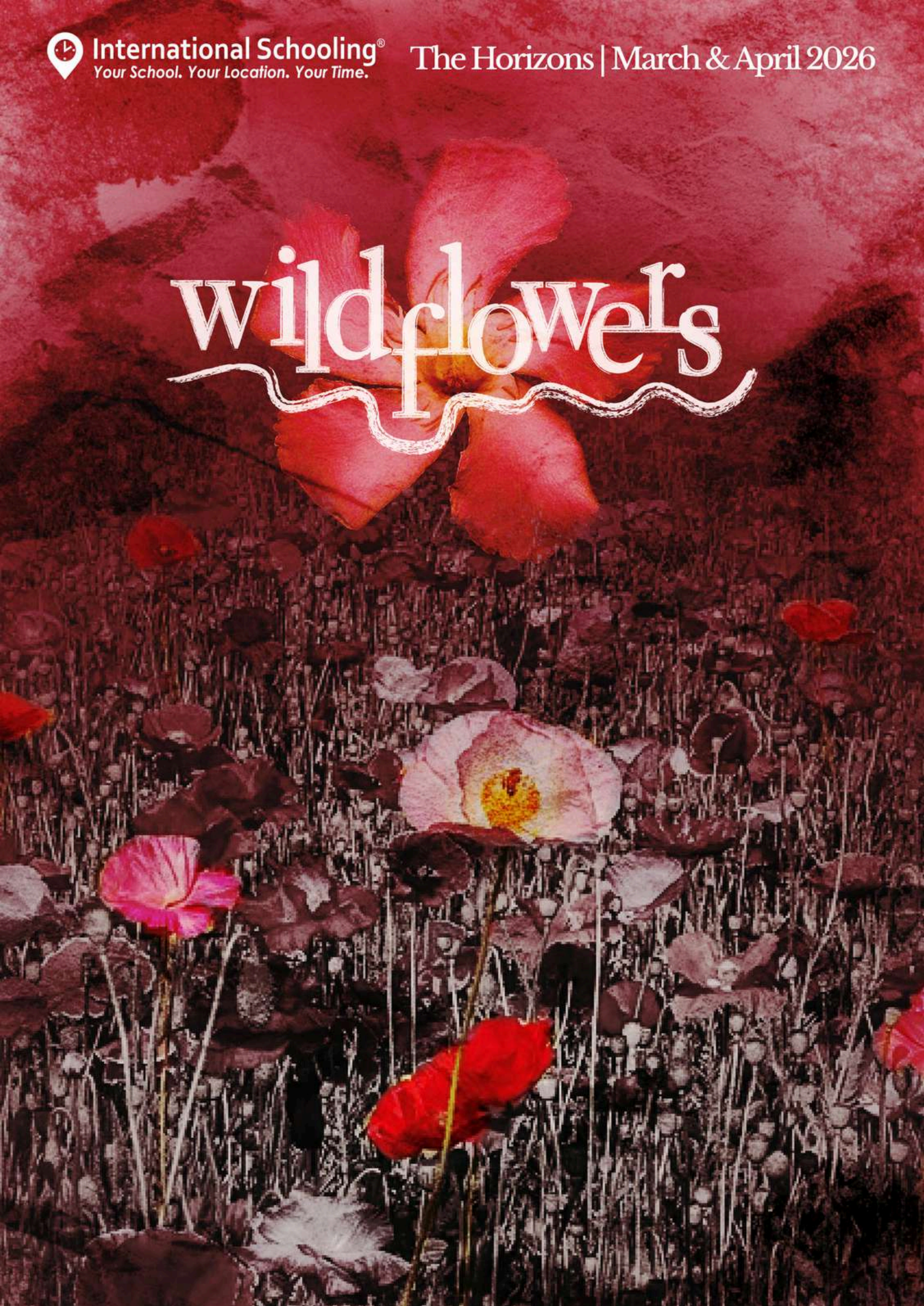
The Horizons | March & April 2026

wildflowers



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Editor's Note

"However difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at. It matters that you don't just give up." - Stephen Hawking.

I have often found that the most interesting things in the universe occur where they are least expected. There is a specific kind of flower that does not bother to ask where it can be planted. It does not wait for the soil to be soft or for the environment to be particularly welcoming. It simply grows in the cracks, in the overlooked spaces, and in the gaps that were never designed to hold anything at all.

This issue of "Wildflowers" is centered on that specific, quiet brand of persistence. We are looking at women who have entered spaces (scientific, social, or historical) that were not built with them in mind. In my own experience, I have noticed that when you exist in a space that does not quite know what to do with you yet, the act of simply continuing is a form of resistance. It is not always about a loud shift; more often, it is a gradual process of redefining the boundaries of what is possible.

These stories are not about perfection or even success as it is traditionally defined. They are about the movement of those who refuse to accept the limits placed around them. There is a common assumption that growth requires ideal conditions, but the evidence suggests otherwise. You do not actually need permission to take up space, and you certainly do not need to resemble the structures that already exist to belong within them.

It is a curious thing to realize that the universe is governed by rational laws, yet human existence is defined by the irrational ability to thrive where one is not supposed to. We are highlighting the ongoing process of becoming, rather than a finished outcome. If the place you find yourself is a narrow crack in the ground, that is as good a place as any to begin. That is, after all, where wildflowers grow.

UNTIL NEXT MONTH,
Saanjh Balpande, Editor-In-Chief

Wildflowers in STEM

STEM has never been a perfectly even field. It is structured, logical, and precise—built on systems, formulas, and problem-solving. But behind that structure, there is something quieter and more powerful happening: change.

For a long time, many STEM spaces were not designed with women in mind. The expectations, the representation, and even the confidence to belong were often shaped by limitations rather than possibilities. Yet despite that, women continued to enter, learn, build, and innovate. Not by fitting into the system—but by expanding it.

That is where the idea of wildflowers comes in.

Wildflowers do not wait for ideal conditions. They grow in places you wouldn't expect and adapt to whatever environment they are in. Similarly, women in STEM have often had to make their own way in spaces that weren't originally made for them. By doing this, they have changed what those spaces look like for the next generation.

STEM is no longer just about machines or equations; it's about shaping the future. Technology is a big part of human life, from AI to sustainable energy to medical breakthroughs. This means that diversity in STEM is not just nice to have; it's necessary. Different points of view lead to better solutions, more creativity, and technology that works better for everyone.

As a Leader in the Aurelian STEM Club, I see STEM not just as a subject, but as a growing space—one that is still being built. And being part of it means contributing, even in small ways, to how it evolves.

Being part of STEM as a young woman means learning to exist in spaces that were not originally designed with you in mind.

It means sometimes being underestimated. Sometimes, being the only one speaking up. But it also means reshaping the space simply by being present in it.

Women in STEM are not exceptions to the system.

They are part of its growth.

Like wildflowers, they prove that progress does not always come from perfect conditions—but from persistence, curiosity, and the courage to take root wherever there is space to grow.

Written by Aysha Rafiq Ahmed

“That’s So Last Season.” What are the Environmental Costs of Fast Fashion?

The Venus flytrap is a symbol of persistence because it never gives up. It’ll find a way to allure its prey. Its beauty and flashiness attract prey, and then it strikes. The fast fashion industry is the Venus flytrap of the capitalist animal kingdom, attracting consumers with flashy trends, relatable marketing, and enticing words. Once trapped, consumers are caught in a cycle of overconsumption and ultimately environmental harm.

The fast fashion industry is a significant environmental issue we must address promptly. Fast fashion involves quickly replicating recent trends and high fashion designs, mass-producing them at a low cost to meet demand. “Fast fashion can be defined as cheap, trendy clothing that samples ideas from the catwalk or celebrity culture and turns them into garments at breakneck speed to meet consumer demand.” The fast fashion industry has experienced substantial expansion over the past twenty years, posing an increasingly significant threat to the environment. This rise has popularized phrases such as “That’s so last season” and “outfit repeating,” implying that wearing the same outfit more than once is socially unacceptable. This societal pressure leads to overconsumption as people feel compelled to constantly purchase new clothing. Ultimately, it’s a tactic to drive individuals to spend more money, effectively turning them into pawns in a much broader game. “The stigma around wearing the same outfit twice is fuelling consumerism, and pushing us to buy clothes we don’t need.” The societal pressure against repeating outfits is contributing to excessive consumerism,

“That’s So Last Season.” What are the Environmental Costs of Fast Fashion?

leading to unnecessary clothing purchases. Rather than buying out of necessity, people are often driven by the desire to conform to trends and indulge in hedonistic impulses. Rapidly changing fashion trends benefit the industry but have detrimental effects on the environment, resulting in increased water and textile waste and further pollution of the atmosphere.

According to an MDPI article, the fashion industry is responsible for 20% of global wastewater, contributing about 8% of emissions. This makes it the second most polluting industry. “The fashion industry is the second most polluting industry, contributing 8% of all carbon emissions and 20% of all global wastewater, with an anticipated 50% increase in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.” The destiny of thrown-away clothes tells a story about how much we consume and waste. They tend to be dumped in developing countries such as the Atacama Desert in Chile or countries in Africa. Textile waste is usually dumped in landfills in developing nations, as it is easy to scapegoat it as aid for the people. Despite Africa not being a major clothing producer, it is burdened with the consequences of fast fashion. Developing countries in Africa and around the world have become the unofficial dumping ground for textile waste. This not only hurts the environment but also damages Africa’s textile industry. As a result, people have sent second-hand clothing as foreign aid, which is cheaper than new clothing, reducing the demand for new fabric and clothing. However, the declining quality of the clothing being sent means that most of the clothes end up being dumped in landfills.“Close to 40% of the secondhand clothes that are imported into the two East African countries of Tanzania and Kenya are of such deplorable quality that they can’t be sold anymore — those are essentially textile waste dumped there in the guise of pre-loved clothing.”

“That’s So Last Season.” What are the Environmental Costs of Fast Fashion?

The fast fashion industry doesn’t just exploit the environment; it also exploits those in developing countries that are working day and night to make sure that these clothes are being pumped out to the public. Fast fashion companies often prioritize low production costs and high profit margins over the treatment of their workers, often leading to workers in factories, particularly in developing countries, facing unsafe working conditions, low wages, and abuse.

“The fast fashion industry employs approximately 75 million factory workers worldwide. Of those workers, it is estimated that fewer than 2% earn a living wage. This leads to workers living below the poverty line, and the European Parliament has even described the conditions of factory workers in Asia as “slave labor”.Many garment workers work up to 16 hours a day, 7 days a week. The textile industry also uses child labor, particularly because it is often low-skilled, so children can be exploited at a younger age.”

Written by Elizabeth

Like Everybody Else

“I hate being different, I just want to be like everybody else.”

That was what I told my school counselor when I was 12. I never felt as if I fit in with my peers, no matter how hard I tried to fix myself. It was as if I had some part of me that set me out from everybody else that everybody could see. Except for me.

We, women, will always have something about us that society deems unacceptable. We all have that one comment made about us as a kid that we still remember after all this time. For me, it was about my mole. I’m someone who has a lot of moles on my body. I thought nobody cared about them except for me. That was until I was told,

“You’d be pretty if it weren’t for that black dot on your face.”

That was what was said to me in the second grade by a classmate of mine. The fact that I was already self-conscious about the mole on my forehead didn’t help me feel better about what was said to me at all. After that small comment, that single spot on my forehead became the sole thing that I would focus on whenever I passed by the mirror. It got so bad to the point where one time, I tried to scratch the mole off of my forehead with my nails. It bled, and I thought that my job was finished. Until it came back. Nothing could describe the disappointment that I felt when I looked at myself in the mirror again and noticed that my efforts had come to waste. That persistent black dot. I despised it. It was as if every time I saw it, it would scream at me the same words that my classmate had said to me. You’d be pretty if it weren’t for that black dot on your face.

Then I grew up. At around 12 years old, I got the mole lasered off my face. I felt relieved that it was gone. A weight that I had been carrying for years was finally released. Or so I thought. At the end of one insecurity emerges another. Next, it was my weight that would become the bane of my existence. I would see how my thighs would expand every time I sat down. I would sit down on the chair with my toes pointed, trying to minimize how big my thighs would expand. I guess you could say that whenever I sat down, my thighs went from the size of Indiana to Texas.

It wasn’t only my legs I was insecure about; I was also insecure about my stomach. Every day before showering, I would count how many rolls my stomach had while sitting down. I would try to suck my stomach in as much as possible whenever I went out in public, and I would never wear crop tops or anything of the sort that would reveal my stomach.

Like Everybody Else

Because of my insecurity regarding my weight, I tried many solutions. Starving myself, inconsistent exercising... and when those two didn't work, I would cut my thighs and calves because I felt as if I should be punished for existing as a kid who had a BMI of 23.

My weight was confusing. People would say that I had an average body, but my mind never understood the concept of average, especially when it comes to weight. Either you were fat, or you weren't. Friends would say, "How could you say you're fat?" whenever I would ask for reassurance, but would call me fat whenever we had an issue. Their kindness and cruelty were never in contradiction.

After being homeschooled for two years of middle school, I went to high school as a freshman. After my last experience taught me to conform in order to prevent scrutiny, I tried my best to fit in. I discarded any sort of individuality that I had before I joined the school, complying with the standards my peers set. I stopped listening to music I liked. I stopped watching anime, and I traded my style for whatever the algorithm said was "in style". I met a group of friends there, and we connected. At least it looked like it.

A messy breakup at 15 caused a diss track to be made about me. I was called a whale, a pig, promiscuous, and other words that had the same meaning. I had been bullied before by exclusion, but I had never been targeted in a smear campaign like this. Friends who I'd known for years left me to side with my ex-boyfriend, making sure I knew it. They tore me apart in group chats I wasn't in, sending pictures of me to be judged.

I spent years trying to fix the parts of myself that made people uncomfortable. I changed how I presented, removed my mole, starved myself, and punished myself for not being what people want. And still, I was a whale and pig.

Not enough, but also too much. My existence was always wrong in some way. Then, at some point, I understood. Nobody's ever going to be happy, so I'll make myself happy. I'm done trying to be like everybody else.

Written by Marissa Bullard

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson wanted to become a doctor at a time when women in Britain were not allowed into medical schools. Most people expected her to accept the rules. She did not.

After being rejected by medical institutions, Anderson studied privately and found a way to take the medical exam through the Society of Apothecaries. In 1865, she passed and became the first woman in Britain to qualify as a doctor. Soon after, the Society changed its rules so that other women could not follow the same path. That did not stop her. It made her work even harder.

Because hospitals still refused to give her proper opportunities, Anderson opened her own practice.

In 1866, she founded St Mary's Dispensary for Women and Children. It later became the New Hospital for Women, a hospital run by women and staffed by women. This gave female patients medical care and gave women doctors a place to work.

Anderson's success was not only personal. She helped open the door for future women in medicine. She also helped found the London School of Medicine for Women, giving other women the chance to train as doctors.

Her story is inspiring because she did not wait for permission. When the system blocked her, she built another way forward. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson proved that determination can change more than one life. It can change an entire profession.

Written by Aown Al Khaladi

She Went Where No Woman Had Been

She packed herself into a capsule smaller than a room and pointed her whole life at the Moon.

Not metaphorically. Not the way we say it when someone is chasing a dream, and we want it to sound beautiful.
Literally. She strapped in. She counted down. She left.

And on April 6th, 406,000 kilometers from everything she had ever touched, Christina Koch looked back at the Earth and saw what very few humans have ever seen — our whole world at once.

Pale. Quiet. Smaller than you'd expect from something that holds everything you love.

I keep thinking about that photograph she took. The Earth is setting behind the Moon. It looks like something that could fit in your hands if you were careful enough.

I keep thinking about what it costs to be first. To spend your whole life becoming something the world doesn't have a name for yet. To train for a mission that hasn't been flown, in a spacecraft that hasn't been tested, toward a distance no woman had ever been allowed to cross.

And to go anyway.

Not because the conditions were perfect.

Not because the path was clear. But because someone has to be first. And she decided it would be her.
Wildflowers do that too.

They don't wait for the ground to say welcome.
They just bloom in the direction of whatever light they can find.
And we call it a miracle.

Written by Abdulla Kharrat

She Didn't Wait for the World to Be Ready

On April 6, 2026, Christina Koch took a photograph.
She was 406,771 kilometers from Earth — farther from home than any woman in human history — and she pressed the shutter on a camera pointed at our planet as it disappeared behind the Moon. Earthset. The whole world, small and blue and silent, going dark at the edge of something ancient.

I keep returning to that image. Not because of what it shows, but because of who was holding the camera.
Christina Koch grew up in Michigan. Oldest of four kids. Studied physics at NC State, where her professors said the least interesting thing about her was her perfect GPA. She went to the Antarctic, the Arctic, and the ISS. She spent 328 days in space

— longer than any woman before her — and when she came back, she went back to work. Became Branch Chief. Did a rotation. Trained some more.
She was not in a hurry. But she was not waiting either.
There's a difference. I've been learning that.

Waiting is passive. Waiting says: I'll begin when the conditions are right. When someone gives me the signal. When the ground softens enough.
What Christina Koch did — what she's been doing her entire career — looks different from that. It looks like someone who decided early on that the conditions would never be perfect, and that wasn't a reason to stop. It was just information.

The Artemis II mission launched on April 1st. Four astronauts: Reid Wiseman in command, Victor Glover as pilot, Jeremy Hansen as mission specialist, and Koch. In 10 days, they became the farthest-traveling

She Didn't Wait for the World to Be Ready

in history, surpassing every record set since the Apollo program ended more than 50 years ago. Glover became the first Black man to leave Earth's orbit. Hansen became the first Canadian. Koch became the first woman.
First woman.

Think about what that means in 2026. Think about how long people have been going to space — since before most of us were born — and how that particular first was still sitting there, unclaimed, waiting for the right mission and the right person to meet it.
She was the right person. She'd been the right person for a long time.
There's something I want to say carefully here, because I don't want to flatten what she did into inspiration-poster language. This wasn't about proving anything. It wasn't a statement. She didn't go to the Moon to be a symbol.

She went because she's a mission specialist on a spacecraft that had a mission.
But history doesn't ask permission before it becomes history. And whether Koch wanted it or not, she carried something up there with her —

the accumulated weight of every woman who was told the distance was too far, the stakes too high, the seat not theirs.
She carried it 406,000 kilometers.
And then she took a photograph of the Earth going dark behind the Moon.
And came home.

I think about wildflowers when I think about her. Not because the comparison is tidy — it isn't — but because there's something in the way both of them operate that gets to me. They don't ask the terrain if it's ready. They find the crack. They go in. They bloom in the direction of

She Didn't Wait for the World to Be Ready

whatever light they can access, even when that light is 384,000 kilometers away, and no one has ever pointed a woman toward it before.
The ground doesn't have to be soft.
The conditions don't have to be right.
You just have to decide you're going.
And then you go.

Written by Abdulla Kharrat

UN WOMEN'S JUSTICE INITIATIVE

The UN Women's Justice initiatives focus on bridging the gender gap globally by allowing access to the justice system for women and girls, and promoting gender-responsive policing and justice systems.

Implementing legal reforms is a vital part of working towards justice for women by working to eliminate discriminatory laws and strengthen legal frameworks, particularly against violence targeted at women and girls. Gender-responsive policing is also an immensely important step towards achieving this by training police to be more survivor-centred and trauma-informed, especially in cases of specific domestic violence. The UN is also focusing on implementing initiatives that focus on legal aid, such as community-based mechanisms, in order to make it easier for women to claim their Rights.

This heavy focus is definitely reflected as the central theme of the 70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70), occurring from March 9th to the 19th in the UN headquarters in New York. The majority of the focus is on ending impunity, as in the exemption of punishment or freedom from the injurious consequences of an action, along with the previously mentioned themes as well.

In addition to all this, there is also a high-level meeting scheduled on the 12th of March to particularly address the prevailing issue of violence towards women, including strategies for combating gender-targeted violence and supporting survivors. An event of this capacity is particularly important in addressing such issues due to certain statistics. For example, women only hold 64% of the rights that men hold worldwide.

UN WOMEN'S JUSTICE INITIATIVE

In nearly 70% of the countries surveyed, women have a much harder time accessing the justice system than men, and with the speed at which progress is happening, it is estimated to take around 286 years to eliminate this gender gap, calling for immediate and urgent action.

These issues seem complex to think about or read about, but what do they actually mean in layman's terms? The unfair justice system means that a woman can be stripped of her dignity or forced into a marriage, and the legal system may not even consider it a crime, completely ignoring the fact that punishments are required. A woman can do the same amount of work, or even more, than a man and be paid inherently less. A woman can have her entire life taken away through someone's careless use of deepfake technology, which is a crime becoming increasingly common recently, and the creator almost always walks away scot-free.

Understanding the risks that women face daily, along with the unfairness that the legal system and justice frameworks give them, makes the UN's effort towards combating this injustice all the more valuable and meaningful, especially if the outcome is positive, and solutions to the problems present can be implemented. Although there is a long way towards achieving an equal world, every small step counts, and little efforts can go a long way.

Written by Vasundhara Sardana

THE VALUE OF THE ARTS

Understanding the Debate Around Timothée Chalamet's Comments on Opera and Ballet

The arts and humanities, including theatre, literature, opera, and ballet, have played a significant role in the culture of humans over time, allowing them to express their feelings, narrate stories, and investigate ideas that lead to societal development. More recently, remarks by Timothee Chalamet concerning opera and ballet have created much discussion and a certain level of controversy. Although he implied that such art forms are not as popular as they used to be, he was very quickly criticised, and some said that he was dismissive enough to draw a backlash that gained people viral exposure to the problem.

The scandal of what Chalamet said, as well as how it was reacted is controversial. The opera and ballet performance is usually perceived as classical or old-fashioned, but it is still highly expressive and culturally important. To most, these subjects are much more than entertainment, but a manifestation of history, discipline, and genius. People said that his remarks endangered the work of the performers and the emotional quality that these forms of art provide, and some artists and other audiences took

to the media publicly to defend the value of these arts. The case received added publicity on the internet, where deliberations, arguments, and even ridicule ensued, making some refer to it as a cultural mini-scandal. Meanwhile, some took his words as a change in the interests of the audience, but not as disrespect.

This controversy points to a bigger problem, namely, the fact that in the era of a busy and digital world, sometimes traditional arts may be lost in the shadow of modern media. This, however, does not lower their value. Arts and humanities are important to critical thinking, empathy, and imagination qualities, which are paramount in individual development and cognition of the world. The music and narrative of opera, combined with the elegance and accuracy of movements of ballet, portray a degree of beauty in the arts that still amazes audiences all around the world.

After all, the debate that Chalamet has created as a result of his remarks is a reminder of how any kind of art is worth being recognised and appreciated. Although controversy or even scandal might attract short attention, it also opens new angles of reflection and a new sense of appreciation. The beauty and significance of the arts and humanities stand the test of time and have more depth and meaning than a trend or popularity. The society must preserve the traditional form of art together with the modern form of art, as this is the only way that the rich and meaningful traditions will continue to flourish, to give life to future generations.

Written by Fatma Sultanova

GLOBAL WATER BANKRUPTCY

Water. The one thing that every single living thing requires to survive, from the smallest microorganisms to the largest whales. And that's just the thing: every life depends on it. So, why is this invaluable resource not being protected as such?

As most of us know, water covers around three-quarters of our home, the "Blue Planet". Perhaps that is why we take our most precious commodity for granted. Nonetheless, water cannot be taken for granted any longer in the face of the world's current climate crisis: the Global Water Bankruptcy. After all, as Benjamin Franklin once said, "When the well is dry, we know the value of water."

This year, the United Nations has published a report ("Global Water Bankruptcy: Living Beyond Our Hydrological Means in the Post-Crisis Era") on the issue, detailing how more and more rivers and aquifers have been overexploited or destroyed.

More water has been used or taken up by society than can be replenished annually, leading to these natural water stores being unable to return to their normal, historical baselines.

"More than half the world's large lakes have declined since the early 1990s, while around 35 per cent of natural wetlands have been lost since 1970," Kaveh Madani, Director of the UN University Institute for Water, Environment and Health, says.

The subsequent frequency of droughts and shortages has been written to be the sign of a post-crisis condition called water bankruptcy. The effects

GLOBAL WATER BANKRUPTCY

of climate change further exacerbate the issue, particularly global warming, which causes Earth's glaciers to melt at an alarming rate, leading to the loss of another type of freshwater source.

This loss of water capital has already been felt by almost three-quarters of the global population who live in water-insecure areas, with four billion people worldwide having to live with severe water scarcity at least one month every year.

Furthermore, this water shortage means less water for agriculture, which uses around 70% of the freshwater that is extracted, leading to a decrease in food production. Added stress would also be put on countries in West Asia, such as Bahrain, and similar climates where there is existing water stress and relatively less agricultural production. However, we must not lose hope.

In fact, the report made by the UN was not to discourage but to urge others to take action and set measures to conserve and protect what remains. Bankruptcy management means that focus must be shifted to preventing further damage to natural water stores and producers by enforcing limits on water usage. Water-intensive industries like agriculture must also be reformed by switching to improved irrigation systems and crop shifts. Early and strategic action can reduce the imminent risks of this global catastrophe and should bring aid to those most vulnerable.

While it may be difficult and understandably disheartening, the UN report states that while the situation obviously poses risks to the global population, it is also a “strategic opportunity in a fragmented world”. The report argues that serious investment in the matter could potentially bring about significant development in sectors such as food, health, and biodiversity, and possibly even strengthen ties between societies.

Written by Saanjh Balpande

Role of AI in the Art Industry

From the invention of the World Wide Web thirty years ago to the various technological developments that have come to frame our daily lives, we have left the analog era to fully emerge in a digital modernity that has allowed us to reimagine the way we interact with each other, machines, and art. As best described by cybernetic artist and art theorist Roy Ascott, the 1 recent technological advancements are calling into question the very nature of what it is to be human, to be creative, to think and to perceive, and indeed our relationship with each other and the planet as a whole. Algorithms evolve to continuously revamped, elaborate, and mature structures, and force us to inevitably discuss subjects that were previously exclusively assigned to humans, such as agency, creativity, intentionality, and artistic expression.

AI Art in the Context of Culture Studies

In discussing an interdisciplinary topic that draws on theoretical support from computer science, sociology, psychology, and philosophy, this research focuses on subjects that should be primarily framed through key theories of Cultural Studies. One common theme between the subject of this thesis and the field is the evaluation of AI as a technological tool used expressively in contemporary culture and art.

In essence, a work of art has always been reproducible. People could always imitate man-made artifacts. Replicas were created by apprentices in the practice of their craft, by masters to spread their works, and by others for profit. However, the mechanical reproduction of a work of art represents something new. Historically, it progressed intermittently and in leaps at long intervals but with accelerated intensity.

Considering the modern historical circumstances of the information age we live in, it is undeniable that the conditions created by AI highly complicate the unique existence of artwork in a specific place at a particular time. Consequently, what Benjamin defined as the artwork's aura becomes increasingly abstract in our time and with contemporary tools, as they constantly change.

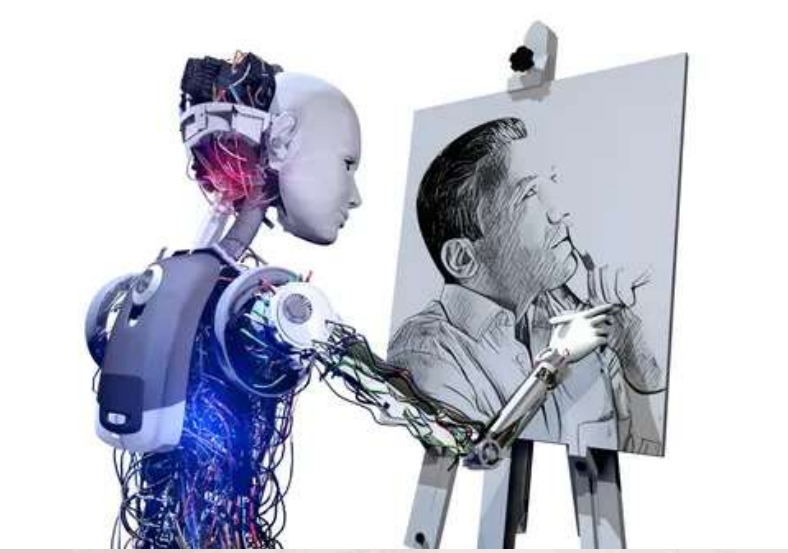
Role of AI in the Art Industry

This lightness of the modern era allows for a somewhat perfect fit metaphor with the nature of software and artificial culture. For both, speed often becomes the absolute prerequisite to signify technological excellence. The very idea of speed (even more conspicuously, that of acceleration), when referring to the relationship between time and space, assumes its variability, and it would hardly have any meaning at all were it not that relation truly changeable, were it an attribute of inhuman and pre-human reality rather than a matter of human inventiveness and resolve. Once the distance passed in a unit of time came to be dependent on technology, on artificial means of transportation, all extant, inherited limits to the speed of movement could be, in principle, transgressed".

The impact of artificial means of production on the concepts of time and space, as well as on the unique existence and originality of artwork, is a critical consideration. Bauman's idea of instantaneity and liquidity in modern conditions can be applied to artificially produced artworks, allowing us to examine the influence of AI data content and processing speed under the constantly changing nature of algorithm functions.

When AI is used as an artistic tool, data becomes the source of reproduction. Technology has made personal belongings intangible and has also made data more flexible. According to Guy Debord's "Society of the Spectacle," modern production conditions have caused life to be viewed as a collection of representations rather than direct experiences. These representations of our lives, such as pictures, data, conversations, and transactions, serve as the basis for AI systems to enhance their capabilities and understanding. But how is this information categorized and labeled for use as visual references in the AI's learning process?

We must inevitably explore the semiotics of data tagging and categorization to understand the technical process of AI. This exploration raises issues linked to individual prejudices and perceptions that are immortalized in databases shared and repetitively used to "train" machine learning models.



Role of AI in the Art Industry

While exploring art production, it's crucial to examine how individuals influence data labeling. This research should address the potential risks related to gender and racial diversity. Judith Butler's examination of gender and language within power structures highlights the significant connection between hidden stereotypes in databases and the gendered classification of subjects. These stereotypes often go unnoticed due to the absence of an author, creating an artificial shadow. Eventually, cultural discourses will allow us to look into the new profile of artists working with code in a digital and globalized world. As artworks created through AI methods of production inevitably go beyond mere reproductions and instead rely on machine speed, data, and algorithmic structure to produce visual results, the makers' role is also evolving.

Computational art in diverse applications

Algorithms are not independent of the people who design and refine them. Therefore, in recent years, we have witnessed an increase in various artistic experiments testing the latest developments in AI towards creative and cultural outcomes, including the production of music, visual arts, and performing arts.

Likely the most rapidly known application of AI in a cultural context was the algorithm "Deep Dream," published by Google as open-source in 2015. An open-source program is software for which the original code is published and can therefore be altered or used for free by anyone for any purpose. The algorithm in question was designed by Google engineers to first recognize visual patterns in pictures and then create an image loop that would repeat these patterns, as shown in the compilation of images below.

Role of AI in the Art Industry

If one were to take a closer look at the images produced using the original DeepDream, one would notice a recurring pattern of dogs, particularly dog eyes. The unconventional occurrence can be attributed to the dataset utilized for training the model. As per reports from Fast Company, the data was sourced from ImageNet, a database developed by researchers at Stanford and Princeton, housing a compilation of 14 million human-labeled images.

The Digital Metamorphosis of Art: Fluidity, Reproduction, and AI

In our fast-evolving digital era, the essence of artwork is undergoing a significant transformation. Walter Benjamin's concept of an artwork's "aura" — its distinct presence in time and space — becomes increasingly abstract as artificial intelligence revolutionizes creative processes. Zygmunt Bauman's theory of "liquid modernity" serves as a fitting metaphor for this change, reflecting the fluidity of software and artificial culture. Just as Bauman describes the fluidity of time and space in contemporary conditions, AI-generated art surpasses traditional boundaries of originality and reproduction. The instantaneous and fluid nature of data in AI systems resonates with Bauman's observations on the acceleration of modern life. This new paradigm challenges our perception of artistic authenticity and raises intricate questions about the nature of creativity in an era where artificial methods of production blur the lines between human and machine-made art.

The Labyrinth of Data: AI's Semiotic Quandary in Art

As we continue to advance in the digital age, the complex interaction between artificial intelligence and artistic expression raises significant questions about the essence of creativity and human ingenuity. The process of labeling and categorizing data in AI systems has become a contentious issue, as it brings to light concerns about individual biases and perspectives that are perpetuated within the extensive databases utilized to train machine learning models. This seemingly routine digital labeling process carries the weight of societal prejudices, particularly in terms of gender and racial diversity. Drawing parallels to Judith Butler's influential analysis of gender and language within power structures, we are forced to confront the uncomfortable truth that these underlying biases in AI databases may reinforce and exacerbate existing inequalities, all while camouflaged within the facade of an ostensibly impartial, authorless system.

Role of AI in the Art Industry

The Artist's Evolution: Navigating Creativity in the AI Era

As we stand on the brink of a new era in art, the role of the artist is experiencing a significant transformation. Computational art has made its mark in various creative fields, from the evocative melodies of AI-generated symphonies to the striking visuals of machine-produced paintings. It's important to bear in mind that these algorithms, no matter how advanced, are ultimately crafted by human intellect. This fusion of human creativity and artificial intelligence is reshaping the landscape of artistic expression. Consider the groundbreaking "Portrait of Edmond de Belamy," an AI-generated artwork that fetched a remarkable $432,500, challenging our notions of authorship and value in art. Also, look at AIVA, an AI music composer creating evocative symphonies that can rival human-made compositions. These instances shed light on the intricate interplay between human innovation and machine capability, compelling us to reevaluate the boundaries of creativity and the very essence of being an artist in this bold new world.

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Written by an Anonymous Student

The Impossible Dream
-Human Flight Explained-

For as long as humans have looked up at the sky, we have imagined leaving the ground. The idea is simple, almost instinctive: to rise, to move through air as easily as we walk through space. Birds do it without effort. We do not. The reason is not a lack of imagination, but the quiet, stubborn laws of physics.

Flight depends on a balance of four forces: lift, weight, thrust, and drag. When these are in equilibrium, an object can remain in the air. Birds achieve this balance through wings that generate lift and muscles that provide thrust. Aircraft do the same, though by mechanical means. Humans, however, are not built for such a balance. Our bodies produce too little lift and carry too much weight. Even if we were to flap our arms with all possible force, the air would yield very little in return.

Human Flight Explained

The problem deepens when we consider anatomy. Birds are structured for flight in ways that humans are not. Their bones are hollow, reducing weight without sacrificing strength. Their chest muscles are disproportionately large, sometimes accounting for nearly a third of their body mass, allowing them to power each wingbeat. In humans, this figure is closer to six percent. Our bones are denser, our muscles arranged for endurance on land rather than motion through air.
To compensate, a human would require wings of enormous size. A person of average weight would need a wingspan of several meters, comparable to that of a small aircraft. Such structures would not only be impractical but also impossible for our skeleton to support. The body, as it is, cannot be adapted so easily.

There is also the question of energy. Flight is not merely a matter of structure, but of constant effort. Birds expend energy at remarkable rates to remain airborne. Some small species burn fuel at levels far exceeding anything sustainable for a human. To match this, a person would need to consume and use energy at a rate equivalent to continuous, extreme exertion. The body would fail long before flight could be maintained.

Evolution offers a final explanation. Birds have had millions of years to refine the mechanisms of flight. Humans have followed a different path. Our development favored cognition, dexterity, and the ability to manipulate our environment. We did not evolve wings; we evolved tools.
And so, we do not fly in the way birds do. Yet this limitation did not end the story. It began another. By understanding the principles that keep birds in the air, we built machines that could do the same. In doing so, we extended our reach far beyond what biology alone would allow. The inability to fly did not confine us. It forced us to think—and, in time, to rise.

Written by Jad Alkareem

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