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Summer 2022

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WHO WE ARE • MEET THE TEAM

DIG MAG is the insider's guide to Long Beach for the CSULB community, inspiring readers to immerse themselves in the Long Beach lifestyle through in-the-know stories about the latest in food, arts, entertainment and culture; in-depth features about people and trends on the campus and in the city; poetry, fiction and literary journalism written by students; and beautiful photography and design. Published by the Department of Journalism and Public Relations at CSULB, it is produced entirely by students.

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DEAR READER,

I used to be so insecure about my lack of imagination. I perceived my affinity for lists and organization as a vice and disqualified myself from dreaming big because it was easy to surrender to a life of predictability.

It takes more courage to let yourself imagine than it ever took to settle for comfort.

Becoming a journalist was the first time I let myself have a taste of the spirit of imagination. And that, dear reader, is the theme of our summer issue.

I attribute a lot of my scary firsts to DIG. My first time being published. My first editorial job. The first time I took a chance. But now, it's time for a last.

The last issue of the school year and my last issue as editor-in-chief. It's been scary, it's been challenging and it's seemed impossible at times, but it's been worth it.

As this journey ends, I feel tempted to mourn what was the most rewarding experience of my life, but I can't help but smile. I will never be able to put into words the gratitude and love I have for every single person on the DIG team, past, present and future. I can't wait to see where the next team, led by my successor, Vittina Ibañez, takes this beautiful magazine.

I hope that you enjoy these stories full of color, imagination and spirit. And when it comes time for you to make the decision between playing it safe and following the spirit of imagination, you take the leap to let yourself dream.

-Bella Arnold
(EDITOR-IN-CHIEF)

FEELING INSPIRED? MAKE A ZINE

STORY BY
LAUREN GALVAN

PHOTOS
COURTESY OF
BRE UPTON

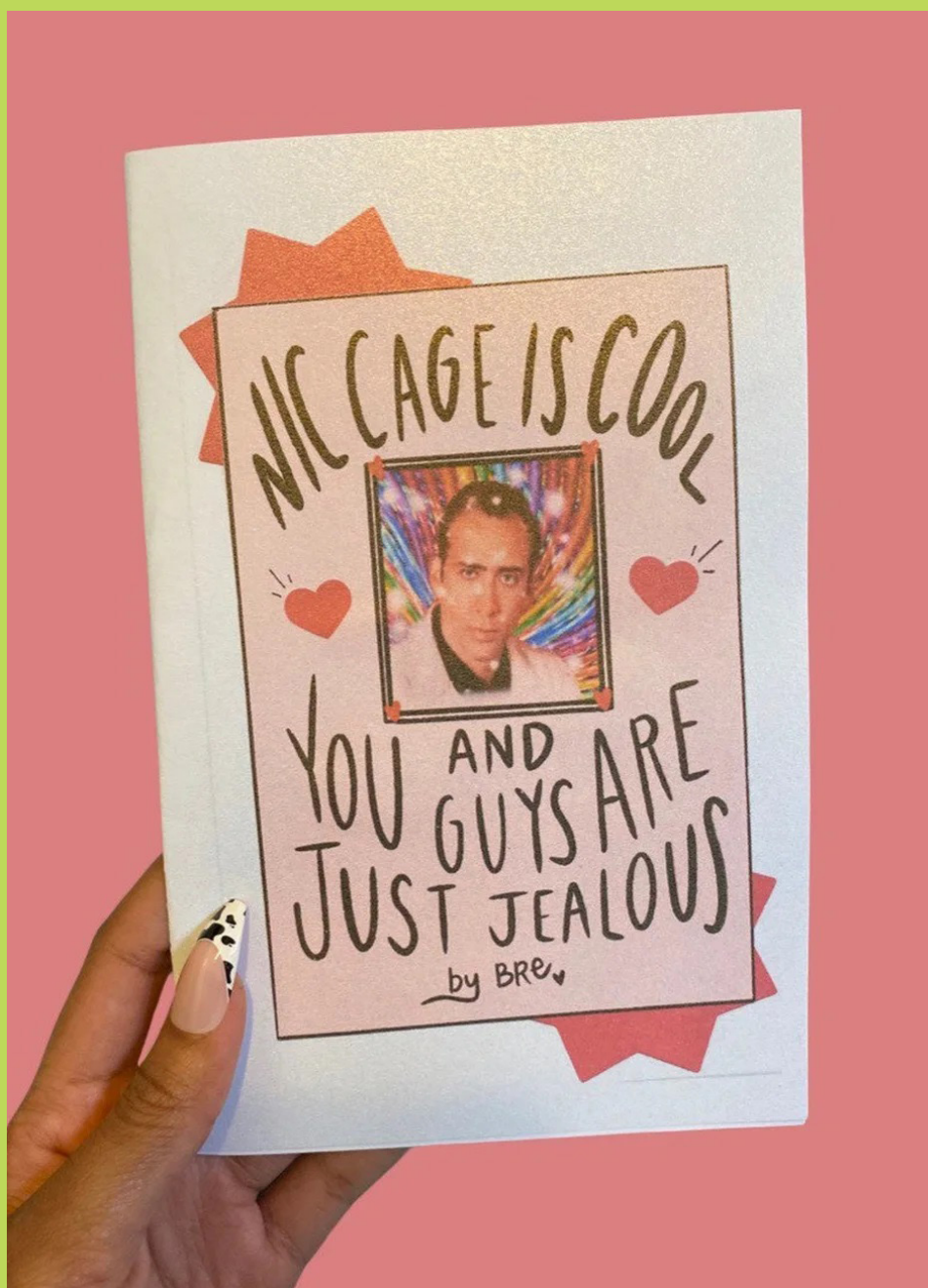
Making zines is the artistic outlet of choice for Bre Upton, a zinester who is dedicated to helping others get inspired and get into the craft.

When it comes to zines, the sky's the limit. You can make them based on anything, from your obsession with the buffalo cheese dip at Trader Joe's, to your hatred of school parking lots.

Zines are handmade mini magazines that you create, print, bind, and publish on your own, according to Bre Upton, a California State University, Long Beach alumna.

**"I'M SUPER
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NEVER IMAGINED
IT COULD BE A
WHOLE SHOP. I
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PEOPLE WOULD
BUY MY STUFF."**

- BRE UPTON







ABOVE:
Bre Upton can be found on Instagram at @brattyxbre_ and on TikTok at @brattyxbre.

"I ALWAYS PUSH PEOPLE TO FIGHT THROUGH THE FEAR. I USED TO BE AFRAID TO PUT MY ZINES OUT THERE, AND THEN PEOPLE SAW THEM, AND I GOT JOBS FROM IT, OR PEOPLE WANTED TO SELL THEM SOMEWHERE."

- BRE UPTON

Since graduating, Upton has created her own business through zines and art. She got her start in 2017 after trying her hand at stand-up comedy. Her first zine was called "Your Dyslexia is Showing," which she filled with all kinds of poems.

"I'm super grateful, and I never imagined

it could be a whole shop. I never really thought people would buy my stuff," Upton said. "I got a little overwhelmed at first, but then I changed my perspective."

Upton now has over 100,000 followers on her TikTok account, @brattyxbre, and her sales have started to skyrocket. She posts a lot of zine content on TikTok in hopes of helping people get inspired. One of her most popular videos is titled "Let's Make A Zine!" in which she goes through the step-by-step process of creating a zine.

For those who are looking to start making zines, Upton recommends just going for it. If you are having trouble getting inspired, put some words in a beanie, pick two, and get started, she says.

"This is going to sound super cliché, but my advice for people who feel doubtful of their skills is to just put it out there anyway," Upton said. "You would be surprised, and

you never know who is going to see it and who is going to relate to it."

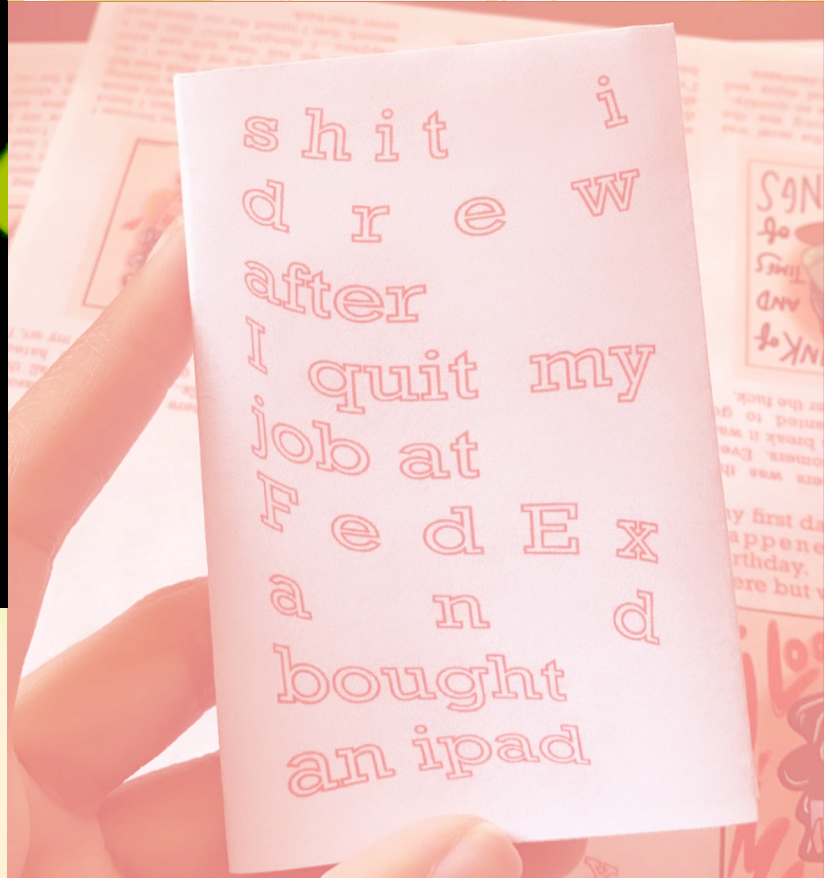
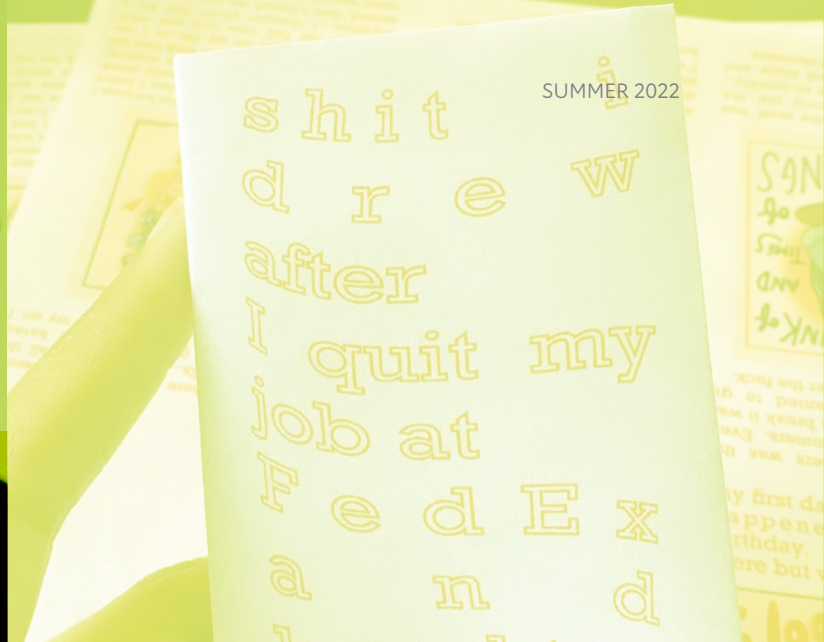
Now, with that advice in mind, how in the world do you make a zine? All you really need is glue, paper, pens, and motivation.

Upton usually starts her process by getting inspired by her emotions, or an experience that sticks out in her mind. She then writes what each page will contain on a separate sticky note. Finally, she folds the paper into eight pages and numbers them. Once that is done, she gets to work.

"I'm more of a traditional artist in the sense that I do everything by hand," Upton said. "So, I'll go in and sketch something that pertains to the Post-it note or my emotion. I will do collages, I'll cut from magazines, or from old newspapers."

After she finishes decorating, she waits for it to dry and starts on the copies. Once she has the zine, how does she get people to see it? According to Upton, it can be as easy as leaving some at the local library, a coffee shop, or a music store.

"Without a doubt, someone will respond that it resonated with them," Upton said. "I always push people to fight through the fear. I used to be afraid to put my zines out there, and then people saw them, and I got jobs from it, or people wanted to sell them somewhere. It's always worth it to just put your art out there."





THE LADIES OF THE RENAISSANCE

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
AMY GALLAGHER

A couple re-creates their Renaissance Faire meet-cute and shows their love for the faire — and each other.

Angelique Rockwood and Kiri Callaghan began their love story in a magical and fantastical place, surrounded by people in costumes. Five years ago, they met at The Original Renaissance Pleasure Faire. But it was no ordinary meeting.

Callaghan attended the faire dressed as an elf and was saying hello to a group of people when one person asked to kiss everyone, and they all said why not. After recovering from this dramatic kiss, Callaghan said that a pirate lady came up to her group.

"She was backlit and appeared very movie-esque," Callaghan said. Rockwood walked up to her and asked, "May I also kiss the fae?"

At that moment, Rockwood and Callaghan had their first kiss, and a kiss with a dip at that.

It was Callaghan's first time at a Renaissance Faire. Rockwood, a seasoned faire-goer, was there working the Renaissance Faire as an entertainer for pirate's weekend, performing a combination of Highland, Irish and Morris dances with a guild.

They got married in 2020 and have shared many dip kisses since then. Rockwood said they plan to have their "faux reception" this year at the Renaissance Faire, where they hope to get the queen's blessing for their marriage.

"Neither of us had fallen that fast," Rockwood said. "I didn't know that you could love this deeply. She's the first person I felt like spoke the same language as me. I didn't know someone could understand you on that level."



Ever since that day at the Renaissance Faire, they have participated in many different costumed events, including Pirate Invasion Long Beach, steampunk festivals and the Labyrinth Masquerade Ball.

"You're covered in glitter for weeks after the ball, but that's the fun of it," Callaghan said.

Both Callaghan and Rockwood are now entertainers at the faire, where they dance, sing and create an interactive environment with patrons for their guild, the Celts.

According to Callaghan, the costumes are "oddly liberating."

"I grew up wanting to be a knight or a dragon," Rockwood said. "What's great about this area is you have every option under the sun and have access to everything. So why not dress up?"

ABOVE:

At their first meeting at the Faire, Angelique Rockwood and Kiri Callaghan shared a dip kiss. They later got married in 2020.

TOP:

Rockwood and Callaghan are now entertainers at the faire where they first met.

MIDDLE

Rockwood dresses as a pirate and performs a variety of dances with a guild.

BOTTOM:

Callaghan, who dresses as an elf, calls her costume "oddly liberating."



**“SHE’S THE FIRST
PERSON I FELT LIKE
SPOKE THE SAME
LANGUAGE AS ME.
I DIDN’T KNOW
SOMEONE COULD
UNDERSTAND YOU
ON THAT LEVEL.”**

- ANGELIQUE ROCKWOOD





FROM A LONELY WRITER, **WITH LOVE**

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
REYN OU



I FOUND MYSELF IN THE MIDDLE OF A PEN PALLING RENAISSANCE.

It just looked like fun. That's why I just spent \$50 of my savings on washi tape and floral stickers from Aliexpress and visited the post office for the first time in 10 years. I had just turned 19 and no one had wished me a happy birthday. So, writing letters to strangers I met online looked like fun.

I found myself in the middle of a pen palling renaissance. The trend gained traction at the beginning of 2020, with users all over social media taking part in the activity. I was shown videos of teens pulling out stacks of vintage notepads, kraft paper envelopes and acrylic stamps as they began writing their letters to send to people across the globe. They showed off the gifts they received in return: envelopes filled with foreign candy, confetti and of course, stationery. I didn't even know washi tape could have gold embroidery on it. I wanted in.

I sent a request to find someone to write to through @penpals._wanted, one of the many "find a pen pal" accounts on

Instagram. I didn't write anything too special, just an intro saying that I was a Chinese film student working at a broadcast news station in Los Angeles who liked to read about self-help and "the human condition." I would have understood if no one reached out to me.

But someone did.

And then another. And another. Suddenly, I had 10 people from across the world messaging me to coordinate a pen pal exchange. I realized that these were real people who I would have real interactions with. I would have to introduce myself 10 times and give my home address to 10 people. My stomach dropped.

In early March 2020, I received my first letter, sent in a modest white envelope from an 18-year-old German computer science student named Merit. The borders of the letter were lined with white and dark blue strips of washi tape with patterns of planets and stars on them. My name was painstakingly stamped letter by letter in black ink at the top.



**I REALIZED THAT THIS
HOBBY WAS GIVING
ME A PRESENCE
THAT I DIDN'T
KNOW I HAD.**

Merit was extremely polite and exceptionally fluent in English. They liked to practice the trombone for their choir, read about politics and pop science and explore the woods that surrounded the city they lived in. I immediately cleared my desk and pulled out something to write with. None of my fancy stationery had come in the mail yet, so I ripped out a sheet of blank notebook paper I got from the dollar store and began answering the questions Merit had for me.

"Where do you live? Do you like living there?" I live in Cerritos; and no, I don't.

"What do you enjoy doing in your free time?" I don't have much free time, as I'm either studying or working.

"Do you have a favorite place in the area you live in?" There is a little park by my high school that I like to visit sometimes. Just kidding, there's nothing to like about Cerritos.

My favorite person to write to was Nilla, a Swedish girl who was about to study architecture in college. Nilla loved to inadvertently torture me about my life as an American.

"You are allowed to drive at 16, buy a gun at around 18, but drinking is at 21," she said to me in an Instagram message. She then sent me a picture of the lime mojito she drank for her 18th birthday.

In most of her letters, she would slip me pieces of Marabou milk chocolate.

"I can't bear to leave you with American chocolate. Hershey's tastes like the one-dollar chocolate we get in Christmas calendars."

It wasn't until I had received my second letter from Rosa, an 18-year-old fashion influencer from Germany, that I realized that this hobby was giving me a presence that I didn't know I had.



In the envelope I had received from Rosa, she inserted a Polaroid of her playing poker with martinis on the floor and a piece of sketchbook paper with bones she had drawn in it. "Sometimes I like to sketch/draw stuff like this (bones for example)," she explained.

But what struck me more was the letter itself, decorated with pink washi tape and cherry blossom stickers.

Rosa was about to enter college and was torn over studying film in the U.S. or Germany, where the art scene was more traditional and rigid. At the time, I was studying film in California, so naturally, I shared my insight from my experiences. It should be noted that I'm studying journalism now.

"I'm always so excited when I see your letter in the mail!" Rosa wrote. "It's kinda like an older sibling that is keeping you to grow in the right direction."

Why did that validate me more than having a younger sister did? I continued to read.

"You wrote about America and how you visited your first BLM protest. I know that this subject isn't new or something that hasn't been an important topic in history, but I've always dreamed of moving or living in the U.S. I always knew that from a political state of view, America isn't something to look up to. But I've always thought in America, everything is possible. Maybe I was just a victim of American propaganda."

Holding her letter in my hands, I didn't know what to say. Was I the one who made her decide to continue living in Germany? Not only that, did I convince her to not study film as well? This woman, who lived countries away from me, who thought of me enough to take selfies with her Polaroid and draw sketches of bones for me, had her American dream crushed after hearing about my life.

I've read that letter several times over, and I still read it now. Today, it sits in my stationery drawer, untouched and unanswered. One day, I'll write back to her, but not today. I haven't found a way to apologize yet.





MODEL:
AALIYAH FAVROTH
PHOTO BY:
EMILY CHEN
EDITED BY:
JUSTIN CASTILLO



THE ART OF SUSTAINABILITY

STORY BY
BELLA ARNOLD

PHOTOS BY
ABEL REYES

To some people, a cardboard box's destiny is the trash can. At the reDiscover center, a cardboard box is a vehicle for infinite possibilities.

The reDiscover Center, located in Culver City, was founded in 2003 with the goal of instilling a creative spirit as well as mind for sustainability in school-aged children.

The center's walls are plastered with materials that were given a second life. Cardboard boxes, paper towel rolls, corks and bottle caps are seen as blank canvases and the basis of art to be created.

Hanabee Cartagena joined reDiscover Center as an intern in 2018, when she was a student at Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles. She is currently the distance-learning programs manager and facilitator for diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism, also known as DEIA.

"Our mission is to talk about hands-on creativity in a way that's sustainable," Cartagena said. "All you really have to do is teach kids a lot of the stuff you can make art out of comes out of your house."

The center is doing its part to reduce its carbon footprint by solely relying on household and commercial donations as materials.

**"OUR MISSION IS TO
TALK ABOUT HANDS-ON
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THAT'S SUSTAINABLE."**

- HANABEE CARTAGENA

The main attraction for students are the spring and summer camps, but the center also visits schools and welcomes private events and weekend family crafting. During camps and classes at the center, children have the agency to choose from any of the recycled materials available to them to create art with. Program facilitators, like Emma Ramey, help make sure children are safely using their materials and tools and will aid students in a creative rut, but the future of these former household items is up to the children.

However, the pandemic posed a challenge to the reDiscover center. Before the pandemic, children had access to the creative reuse warehouse and could create their art pieces in-house. During lockdown, instruction was done over Zoom.



ABOVE:
reDiscover Center instills a creative spirit into students, as well as a mind for sustainability.

Still, most students were able to find materials. “All you had to do was look in the trash and, maybe, in the recycling bin, there was a box of cereal,” Cartagena said. “See it as something you could use creatively rather than just something that goes in the trash.”

The hardest part of remote instruction was teaching tool safety, she says.

Once the center got used to hosting classes over Zoom, the staff found that classes were more accessible. Since most of the materials could be found at home, the only thing students had to do was log onto Zoom. Though most reDiscover activities are back in-person, Cartagena says that hybrid classes are still an option.

The pandemic also gave the team time to reflect on how they could increase accessibility for low-income students.

After the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter protests that followed, Cartagena says that staff members started to reflect on what the center could do to dismantle systemic racism and increase accessibility for students. The DEIA committee was formed in October 2020.

“We realized there are a lot of issues with accessibility, and we weren’t doing enough to help,” Cartagena said. “[We] pride ourselves on sustainability and accessibility but we weren’t doing a very good job with providing accessibility.”

In addition to offering scholarships for low-income students, Cartagena says that an important effort in their pursuit of accessibility is creating a staff representative of the community it serves.

During the time of remote instruction, the center was looking for ways to increase outreach and continue to inspire the spirit of imagination while respecting COVID-19 guidelines.

The center teamed up with the city of Santa Monica, Third Street Promenade and the Herb Alpert Foundation, among other organizations, to bring Cardboard City to life.

The idea, according to Jonathan Bijur, executive director of the reDiscover Center, was for people to walk through this outdoor installation at Santa Monica’s Third Street Promenade, get struck by inspiration and make their own piece of sustainable art.

There were eight artists-in-residence per week at Cardboard City, and 25 artists overall. Each artist created their own unique sculptures and art pieces. They had one thing in common: They were made of cardboard.

“We reached out to folks who were well established and those who are up and coming who’d never think to exhibit their work,” Bijur said.

People exploring Cardboard City also had an opportunity to create their own art from recycled materials.

“Everyone is an artistic person,” Bijur said.

This summer, Cardboard City will return. Bijur hopes that it reaches more people this year.

Though the reDiscover Center’s programs are mainly meant for school-age children, Bijur emphasized the importance of instilling a creative spirit in people of all ages.

**“[WE] HELP KIDS BE
CREATIVE AND BREAK
DOWN BARRIERS THEY
HAVE IN FRONT OF
THEM THAT THEY’VE
INTERNALIZED.”**

- JONATHAN BIJUR

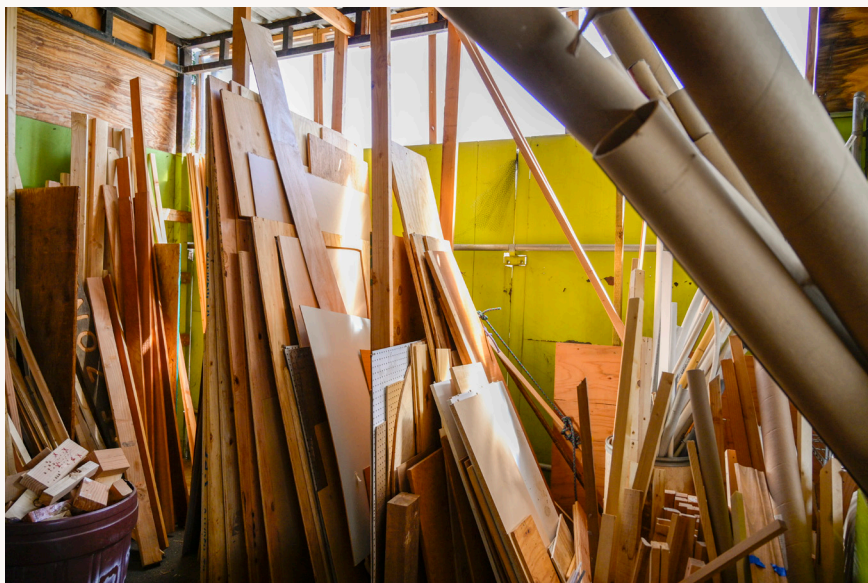


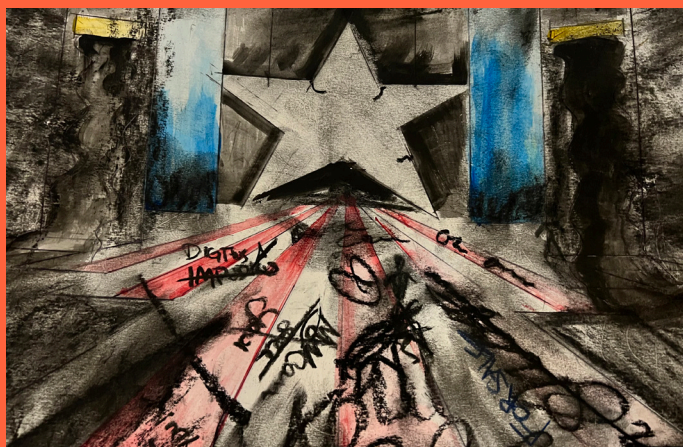
"The intention [is] primarily to help kids," Bijur said. "[We] help kids be creative and break down barriers they have in front of them that they've internalized."

Though they are creating a space for kids to explore their creativity, an important part of creating art is learning how to problem solve, Bijur says.

Bijur's hope is that people walk away from their experience at the reDiscover center thinking critically about their relationship with the environment, but also relishing in their sense of play.

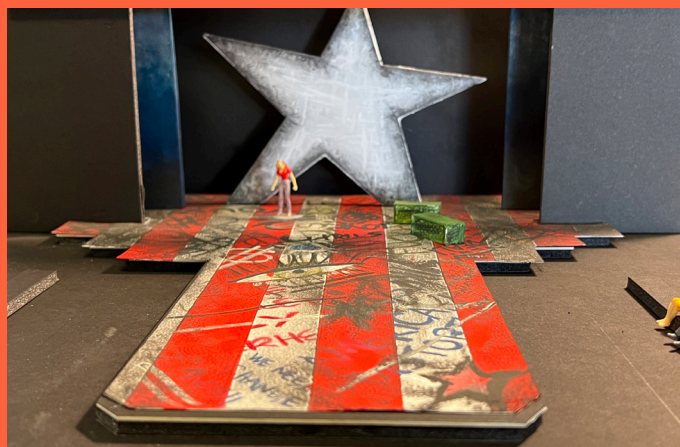
"We, as a society, need to be looking at how to live together with the earth," Bijur said. "Part of that is how to use resources efficiently and not limit ourselves or our creativity, but not need to use trees and cut down forests and knock down mountains to get resources. So, making art out of recycled materials is how to do that."





For Kate Cummins, the process of bringing stories to life on stage through set design starts with creating designs on paper

Photo by Kate Cummins



Cummins has worked as an actor, and her background in acting helps bring shows like "American Distortion" to life through set design.

Photo by Kate Cummins

BRINGING DESIGNS TO LIFE

STORY BY
TESS KAZENOFF

Two CSULB set designers welcomed DIG MAG into the worlds they create on stage and behind the scenes.

Set designers have the unique challenge of sitting down with the script for a play and visualizing that play's reality. How to bring each scene to life, and create a world for its actors to perform in is the question every set designer must answer, and the process for transforming a script into an immersive universe varies by the play, taking anywhere from a couple weeks to months.

Set designers are tasked with many elements, beginning with evaluating the plot, tone, and style of the play. Designs should not only give a sense of time and place, but also versatility, perhaps taking audiences through various settings and realities.

The process begins by breaking down each scene, creating image boards and evaluating the plot and cast involved, as well as the capacity of the stage and budget. Then, designers create sketches and scale

models of a quarter-inch, before moving on to the real set, collaborating with the technical designer throughout.

Unlike film, theater allows for more interpretation and less realism; it has the power to create a suspension of reality for audiences and immerse viewers into the performance on a new level than what performers could do alone.

It is this balance that set designers must strike. They must bend the truth in a way that makes viewers forget that they can see a stage, curtains, and lights sprawled across the theater ceiling while still making a scene believable.

Two CSULB set designers, Kate Cummins and Brendan O'Neill, gave us a glimpse of the work that goes on behind the scenes.



Transforming symbols from the script and translating it into set design is art to Kate Cummins.

Photo by Kate Cummins

KATE CUMMINS

Before the pandemic, Kate Cummins always thought she'd be a comic actor. Cummins, 39, is a transfer student from Santa Monica City College.

Between the shutting down of live performances, wearing masks and not being able to project fully, acting was no longer resonating with Cummins the same way. Her attention started to turn toward the behind-the-scenes work.

She decided to take an online scenic design class, and suddenly a new world of opportunity opened up for her.

Cummins immersed herself in the process of translating thematic elements into live scenes, creating model boxes and paper designs, all while discovering the artistry that exists in set design.

For Cummins, set design is about reshaping art for the theater, taking symbols and themes from a script and transforming

them into shapes and set pieces.

In March, Cummins's first show, "American Distortion" with Cal Rep at CSULB, debuted. It was exciting seeing her designs develop from paper to the stage, she says.

"Designing an actual show ... with a real team, making something that was once just doodled on a piece of paper, it's really crazy," Cummins said.

Even though she decided to shift her focus from performance to behind the scenes, she doesn't feel as if she's left acting behind.

Cummins feels she could "totally do acting again," but admits that her heart is devoted to set design right now.

"It's therapeutic," Cummins said. "I just love creating and it really just tells a story, but that's not really why it does something for me inside. So that's part of my therapy."

Whether it's on stage or during the

design process, the theater is where Cummins wants to be. Converting her acting experience to set design has actually come in handy for Cummins.

"As an actor, you can think, 'oh, if I were acting this out, I totally would get up here and do my monologue there,'" Cummins said. "So you can kind of understand where the actor would have fun playing on what scenic pieces, in a sense."

This year, Cummins will earn her bachelor's degree in theater from CSULB. She hopes to continue her education and pursue graduate school at Ohio State University or Pennsylvania State University.

"I don't know exactly what it is, but drinking coffee all night and getting twisted up about some idea and getting really into it, I get ... really in the groove of things," Cummins said. "It's really cool. And it feels [like] I'm really living my best life."



ANTIGONE X

Scene 3:
Under Cover of Night

Directed by
Maggie Franckhauser

Scenic Design by
Brendan O'Neill

Costume Design by
Ashley Antonio

Brendan O'Neill's love for set design started when he was 19 years old and volunteering on a production of "Aladdin Jr."
Photo by Brendan O'Neill

BRENDAN O'NEILL

When Brendan O'Neill was 19-years-old, he volunteered for a production of "Aladdin Jr." in his Bay Area hometown. He figured it would be a good way to utilize his construction skills, while spending time with his little sister, who was cast as the Genie.

What he didn't know was that this extracurricular would send him on an entirely new career path.

O'Neill, 28, had dabbled in multiple career possibilities. He entertained careers in construction, medicine or joining the fire academy.

But all those career routes were just missing one thing for O'Neill – an element of artistry.

"I think being in theater filled that role," O'Neill said.

Even after that production of "Aladdin Jr." ended, he kept working in theaters, and soon enough, volunteering turned into a job with a community college theater.

His passion continued to grow, and after he was encouraged to continue his degree at CSULB, O'Neill transferred in the fall of 2020, with the plan to focus on the technical aspects of theater and set building.

But with school online, that was no longer possible, and instead, O'Neill used the time to allow his design skills to flourish.

"[It] has sent me down a new path," O'Neill said. "I went into this whole experience thinking it's going to be purely technical ... There's so much room for

**"GETTING TO DO THIS
NOW AND WORK
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THAT MOTIVATES ME."**

- BRENDAN O'NEILL

design, that I just really leaned into it and found a new passion in the set design process."

Set design to O'Neill is an opportunity to bring an environment to life, and it's the process of storytelling that he enjoys the most.

"I don't think there's one moment," O'Neill said. "I think it was just a culmination of continually volunteering and working in this industry, and realizing that I loved not just the work but also the people in it."

While some aspects of set design

are individual, it is truly a collaborative experience bringing a set to fruition, said O'Neill.

He loves sitting down with a play that he's never heard of and moving through the process of creating from there, he says.

"I just like that challenge of getting something completely new," O'Neill said.

O'Neill's favorite sets to work on are larger scale productions that allow for more details to be added, such as for musicals like "In the Heights" or "Chicago."

Although he hasn't had the opportunity to work on a larger set since his time in the Bay Area, he is looking forward to working on Cal Rep's production of "Peter and the Starcatcher," set to be performed in May.

"I'm really excited for us to get that rolling," O'Neill said. "That's sort of my big project coming out of [the] pandemic."

After creating paper projects and scale models, then doing renderings in Photoshop, O'Neill is eager to make his vision a reality.

Once he graduates this spring, O'Neill is considering becoming an assistant scenic designer, with the plan to work his way up to becoming a scenic designer.

"I've done so many other jobs in the past, getting to do this now and work with all these people, and wake up every morning and go yeah, this is what I get to do, that motivates me," O'Neill said.

For Brendan O'Neill, the process of set designing starts by just "sitting down with a play."
Photos by Brendan O'Neill

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

BRENDAN O'NEILL



A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

BRENDAN O'NEILL





TODAY'S TAROT: A TRANSFORMATIVE TOOL

STORY BY
KELSEY BROWN

The deck of cards dating back centuries has become a modern tool for self-reflection.

Three to four times a day, Sutton Crawford pulls Tarot cards. From a 78-card deck, she interprets images of archetypes and moments, relating them to the human condition for clients. Despite the cards' roots dating back to the mid-15th century, Crawford says people relate to them regardless of their background, experience and identity.

"Every single time I sit down with somebody, something beautiful happens," Crawford said. "Whether it's painful, or joyous. It's this reminder that magick is real."

The newfound interest in Tarot for many seems to be linked to the rise in interest in self-healing. Though the cards' original meanings still hold true, modern interpretations relate the cards more to human psychological states rather than the occult. Some cards are simple to decipher, like the Three of Swords—three daggers in a heart, representing pain or heartbreak. Others, like the Eight of Swords, convey more complex emotions.

Crawford, who is a professional Tarot reader in New York, understands why so many people have been drawn to Tarot in such uncertain times. Tarot's ability to be in touch with something divine instills a sense of power, Crawford says.

"IT'S A THERAPEUTIC TOOL TO UNDERSTAND OUR INNER WORKINGS."

- SUTTON CRAWFORD

"It's a therapeutic tool to understand our inner workings," said Crawford, who has been reading Tarot cards for a decade. "Technically speaking, it's a system for divination. But in a more modern sense, I truly think it is a helpful tool to allow us to see things that we wouldn't necessarily have seen before, through these figures and moments."

The once esoteric, obscure practice has become extremely popular on TikTok. #WitchTok and #TarotTikTok are flooded with 30-second Tarot card pulls, promising to have messages from the divine specifically for the viewer.

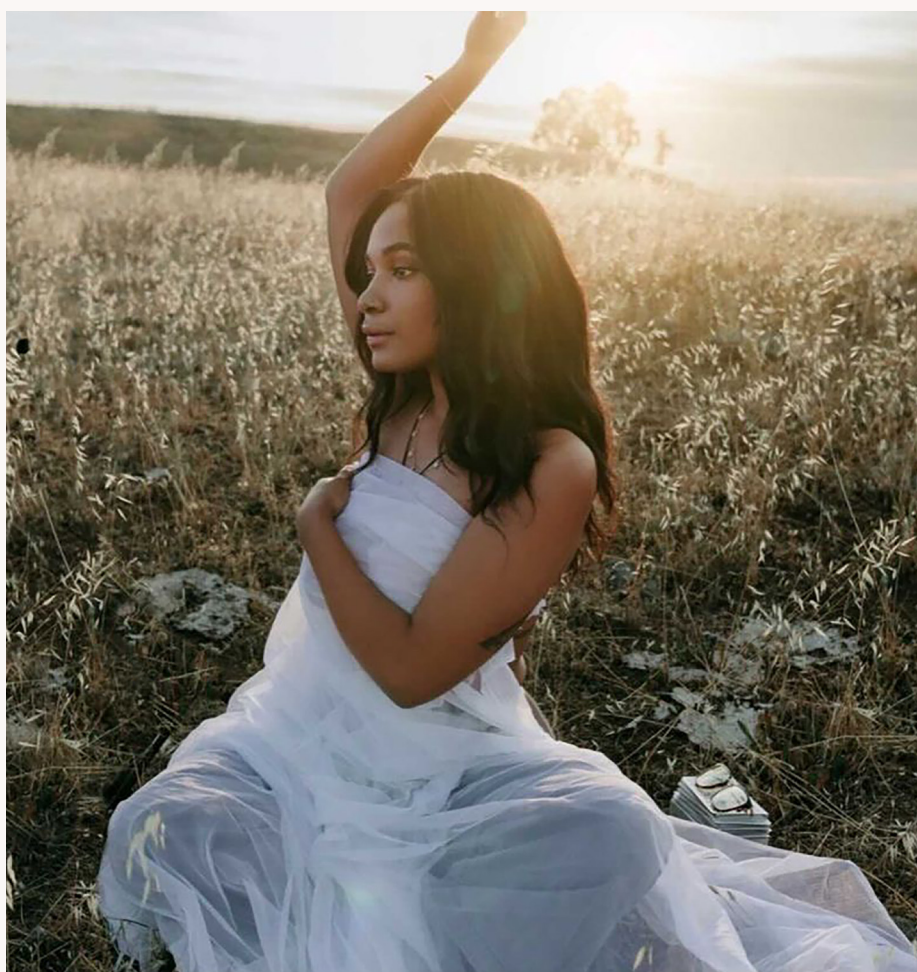
For Crawford, scrolling through the hashtags can be funny.

"Is the message: Someone from your past is going to show up?" Crawford said. "Because that's what they all say."

LEFT:

Sutton Crawford says that every time she sits down to pull Tarot cards for someone, "something beautiful happens."

Photo by Mike Fiske



**“LISTEN TO WHAT
YOUR INTUITION IS
TELLING YOU, WHAT
YOUR EYES ARE
TELLING YOU. NOT
WHAT THIS PICK-A-
CARD [READING] IS.”**

- AVORY GRAYS

ABOVE:

Avory Grays does not want to contribute to how TikTok has oversimplified the spiritual practice of Tarot.

Photo by Naomi Grace

Avory Grays, a 24-year-old Tarot reader from Sacramento, describes much of the spiritual side of social media as toxic. She warns of the oversimplification of spiritual practices, urging people to look beyond a brief snippet before taking up their own practices.

Though people have told Grays that she'd be successful on TikTok, she says she doesn't want to contribute to it, noting that it's not always safe for people's mental health, as people can become overly dependent on the cards.

"This Tarot reader in Wisconsin, reading for thousands and thousands of people, is not going to exactly know your situation," Grays said. "Listen to what your intuition is telling you, what your eyes are telling you. Not what this pick-a-card [reading] is."

Though Crawford does pull cards on TikTok and says there are good readers on TikTok, she also warns of the danger of everyone being able to do it. People assume because a person has a large following, that they're knowledgeable and responsible with the cards, which Crawford says isn't always the case.

The deck of cards has been mystified and misused throughout history. Crawford mentioned that many people's hesitancy towards Tarot comes from a history of deceitful money-hungry mediums with false messages preying on fear.

But Crawford also notes that there are people who "take advantage of beautiful things throughout everything." In media, Tarot has been painted as a dark force, or related to satanism. People fear hearing bad news about their future. There is a Devil card, but it represents oppression and entrapment. You have free will, Crawford says, it's not a crystal ball.

"You have to be tender with these tools because they work," Crawford said. "If you are not taking it as seriously as you should be, it's a dangerous game. You can be manipulative, or you can be taking advantage of people."

For Aaliyah Favroth, a second-year psychology major at Cal State Long Beach, the TikTok trend is what inspired her to get her own deck. Though her friend had previously exposed her to Tarot, Favroth said she "didn't start practicing [herself] until [she] saw everybody else was doing it too."

Favroth sees the sudden interest in Tarot as part of the aesthetic of the "It Girl." Favroth says the aesthetic allows people to fit into a spiritual stereotype without actually holding any of their own practices or having a real understanding of it.

Favroth, who has been reading cards for about nine months, says reading Tarot cards helps her anxiety. She can be unsure of how she's feeling, and pulling cards helps her understand her emotions.

"It always feels nice, even if it doesn't come out with the cards that I wanted," Favroth said. "It comes out with what I needed, and it's very helpful."

Both Grays and Crawford began their professional Tarot reading businesses during the pandemic, seeing the need for it after witnessing the toll the pandemic was taking on people. Crawford calls the pandemic a global 'Hanged Man,' referring to the 12th card of the Major Arcana featuring a person hung upside down by their foot.

By hanging upside down, Crawford says, they're forced to stop and look at things from a different perspective, even though it may be an uncomfortable position. The Hanged Man symbolizes the enlightenment we're all trying to gain from going through unprecedented times.

In such uncertain times, Tarot brings space for self reflection.

"A lot of us are much more divinely special that we realize," Grays said. "Our magic is needed now more than ever."



Seeing Tarot videos all over TikTok inspired Aaliyah Favroth to start practicing with her own deck.
Photo by Emily Chen

BEST CRYSTAL SHOPS IN LONG BEACH

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
VITTINA IBAÑEZ

Historically, crystals have been used for healing and magic. Today, they have gained popularity as people look to them for light, love or protection. Here are three places in Long Beach where you can find crystals for all your needs.

A+

RECIRCLE HOME



The first thing you see stepping into ReCircle Home is the massive selection of crystals. Every surface is covered with bowls of them organized by type and labeled with their respective purposes, and their wide price range works for anyone no matter their budget. They have a great selection of palm stones, but they also have an impressive gallery of raw crystals, towers, points, and tumblers to choose from. At checkout, they give you a pamphlet highlighting all the crystals you've just bought so you can remember what they are for. This welcoming downtown Long Beach shop is perfect for people who are new to crystals or those who are looking for something new to add to their altars.

ADDRESS:

501 E. Broadway,
Long Beach

HOURS:

Wednesday to Friday,
noon to 7 p.m.
Saturday, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Sunday, noon to 5 p.m.

A-

HOUSE OF INTUITION



The crystal selection at House of Intuition is more limited. If you don't find what you're looking for in-store, House of Intuition also has an online market where crystals start at \$4, and the employees are incredibly attentive in helping you find what you need. The only downside is that while they tell you in-store what purposes their crystals have, they do not send you home with something to remind you, so you may forget what your crystal is or the purpose it fills. Still, House of Intuition is hypnotizing. The vibe is modern and completely unique. It could be the scent or the decorated storefront, but, for some reason, the store draws you. As goes their logo... "Your intuition led you here."

ADDRESS:

5018 Second St.,
Long Beach

HOURS:

Daily, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

B

EYE OF THE CAT



The homiest of the three, Eye of the Cat is incredibly humble and unassuming. It's the type of store that you could easily pass without knowing it was a store at all. The selection at this shop is the smallest, but the crystals are also the least expensive; most go for around \$2. Eye of the Cat keeps smaller palm stones and spheres placed in bags with little cards that say what they are and what they do. They also have a selection of bigger, raw stones that top off at \$5 each. Their selection of crystals is not as impressive as other metaphysical shops in the area – the shop definitely specializes more in selling herbs and books – but you will still be able to find some reliable, basic stones like rose quartz or amethyst.

ADDRESS:

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Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Tuesday, 1 p.m. to 7 p.m.

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