

THE YOUTH WILL NOT BE SILENCED

ALIYA FARZAN

As the rest of the world watches the unrest going on in the United States of America, one does begin to wonder—will these protests finally precipitate change this time? We've seen the youth revolt before, we've seen the uproar in our own streets demanding change, demanding safety. But with most riots and protests, the young are branded reckless, lawless, immature and sometimes just too young to know much about actual politics.

But, are youth uprisings really that pointless?

When the youth raise their voices against matters of the state, their collective angst and passion make it increasingly difficult to tone down the very legitimate problems they bring to light. As people watch their children struggle and fight for justice, the state is pushed to take action—any action. And oftentimes, it results in objectively mediocre consolations to pacify the public. Take, for example, the road safety laws. A year has passed but the due implementation is yet to be seen.

Youth uprisings are portrayed to be violent, deemed unnecessary and pointless, and attempted to be silenced. This silencing is often achieved through the use of brutal force and elevated

violence—images of rubber bullets and tear gas from the USA reaching us through social media only go on to show the stark reality of what the reaction to the “voices of the future” is all across the world.



Throughout history, change has been made by students that risked all they had to give. Young people are instrumental in civil rights and safety movements, as evident from our very own Language Movement and Liberation War to Tiananmen Square and the Civil Rights Movement, young protestors amass to fight for their futures.

To some, protests are inconvenient. However, Martin Luther King Jr. remarked, “A riot is the voice of the unheard.” Women vote freely now but the suffragettes were ridiculed for even suggesting that voting must be equal; an independent nation is something we take for granted today but our ancestors had to fight a war to achieve it. Youth uprisings happen for legitimate reasons and until the change they crave truly arrives, they will continue to sprout.

Discouraging this generation's need for change discourages their concerns and hopes for the future. The protests have broken out all over because the younger generation believe things can change. Amidst a worldwide pandemic, protestors are willing to risk their health to have their voices heard. If they can mobilise themselves with such urgency, why do the adults continue to undermine and silence youth uprisings?

Interpreting art as a noob

SARAH WASIFA

“This is art,” I remember telling myself as I stared at a stack of inflated aluminium cubes. To me, they were just that: much like a barrier, pretty on the eyes. I remember it was called *Mirror Barricade*. I took a few pictures. That's it.

To me, its significance lay only in its face value. A brochure informed me that the exhibition was meant to revisit examples of the use of inflatables as devices of disruption in art and politics (hence the barricade). There was a giant pink bunny, a white one and a few Ghiblian creatures. I saw them, I liked them. But the same cannot be said about the people with me that day. One of them, Person A, said, “We have helium balloons at home.”

Maybe their interpretations had been different, maybe it was a generational gap, but a number of rooms with nothing but giant pneumatic creations certainly wasn't their cup of tea. It wasn't until we reached the giant moon that they finally smiled. A giant moon. Projected onto a spherical screen, with lounge chairs, not unlike a space deck. This made me ask myself, was it personal significance that they were looking for in art?

Perhaps more to their taste would be a certain piece named *Comedian*. Media: Banana and duct tape. Made to be a true critique of the strangeness of capitalism and art, yet, inadvertently became part of the problem. Person B, when faced with the question, however, was not impressed.

I decided to skip out the money part.

Art is an extremely fluid notion. Keeping in

mind that everyone's mind is a vessel of a different shape, the big picture once the colours coalesce is also different to each set of eyes. Nobody gets to define what isn't art, even though contemporary art ventures far beyond what

most people would accept to be priceless. Take that eyeglasses incident, for example, there is nothing

people won't accept as art.

So when making plans for a visit to a very recent exhibition, I decided on a small experiment. I would 'drop' a piece of glass with beads embedded, and a small card with the name and a few lines of

text, and stand at a reasonable distance to see the reaction. We didn't eventually carry it out, but let's speculate. This social-turned-thought experiment could have gone either of two ways: I would be apprehended on vandalism grounds, or I could get my point proven and end the experiment with a phone call that went like, “Nah Ammu, the traffic is insane today. I didn't get lost at the museum.”

The truth is, regardless of what this experiment would prove, there's an incredible richness to the world of visual art, regardless of how you interpret it. I believe it is because a lot of modern art does not have easily recognisable subject matter, or the subject matter is more symbolic than literal, making it harder for us to compartmentalise. With this in mind, you can approach each work of art like a scientific discovery: what does this work do that nobody has done before, and how does its form reveal the motivations of its creator(s)? Or maybe, don't approach art with expectations. Modern art doesn't work well that way. It needs purely to be observed. Look at it. Think about what you like and what you don't like about it. Pay attention to the strokes and shades.

Truth is, it still may do nothing for you. And that's okay.

Sarah Wasifa sees life as a math equation: problematic, perhaps with a solution, and maybe sometimes with a sign to tear off a page and start over again. Help her find 'y' at sarah-wf77@gmail.com



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