



HAPPINESS REFLECTED: A COMMUNITY CREATIVE PROJECT VOLUME 2

Collected by the University of Alberta Days of Action International Day of Happiness Committee Published by the University of Alberta Days of Action International Day of Happiness Working Group

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Preface and Acknowledgments

Welcome to the second volume of Happiness Reflected, a collective community creation in observation of International Day of Happiness. We offer it to our University of Alberta community to remind us how powerful happiness is, and to encourage each of us to seek it out--particularly as we strive to be present with ourselves during the ordinary moments in life.

We are grateful to the many hearts, minds, and voices that contributed to this year's collection, which we are excited to note includes images and music, in addition to poetry!

To our contributors: thank you for your courage in sharing your creativity with us.

To our readers, we hope that you find what you need in these pages, be it refreshment, inspiration, consolation or solidarity. We hope the ensuing creative works may contribute to happiness and hope in your life, but also that they might be a resource to reflect on how you understand happiness in your own life.

Please note that *the right amount of honey* speaks about grieving death by suicide. Should that be a sensitive topic for you, we have included the Distress Line's contact information with that submission.

We also gratefully acknowledge our partners, the Digital Scholarship Centre, Sound Studies Institute, and University of Alberta Library, who have made this project possible.

This digital chapbook is part of a larger initiative for International Day of Happiness. For more information and to learn about other ways to engage with this year's collection go to uab.ca/happy. The first volume of <u>Happiness Reflected</u> was produced in 2023.

"Happiness is not something ready made. It comes from your own actions." —Dalai Lama

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People Watching

they talk about the apartment they'll share someday about the colour of their lamps and a space for their cat a page of math questions remains unanswered

there's an old man eating a cake by himself he taps a pen against the wrinkled newspaper the answer to the crossword puzzle on the tip of his tongue

a boy pretends to like the coffee in front of the girl he likes it's sweet, it's savoury, he claims it'll do nothing to him the girl laughs while catching him in his most obvious of lies

the marriage ceremony is in a couple of weeks her daughter wonders if the dress will arrive on time mother assures her the world and their future

the imperfection of humanity and all of its glory and beauty, who would have thought you'd find it in a cafe?



Danielle Ignacio Undergraduate student Faculty of Arts, English and Psychology

Artist's statement: In this poem, I want to convey happiness in the beauty of the mundanity in everyday life. Each stanza is a peek into the life of a stranger, simply existing in their own story. I feel that happiness is sometimes glorified and trivialized and that we tend to overlook the simplest of things. I believe happiness can be found anywhere, in your back pocket, in the most minute corners, or maybe it just could be found in a little cafe.

Reflection question: When you think of it, take a moment and observe the world around you. What mundane moments of happiness surround you?

Strays

I found the animal huddled up on my front stoop. It wanted to come inside from the cold; the landscape was frigid and barren, the sky gray and drooping like an ancient eye. Nothing out here can survive for long, but this particular species is quite resilient. They hibernate deep underground in the winter, snuggled up to the Earth's geothermal heart; they don't emerge often in this hellscape, so I had only seen glimpses of them. They exist on the periphery, if you aren't intentional with your gaze.

I shred up some ham with my fingers and put it outside. I watched It gobble the ham up with my hands on my neck, feeling a similar hunger.

It returned most days for the next few weeks. I would come home from work, mind swarming with outstanding tasks and logistical details, to find It curled tight in a ball under the spot of light from my window. These things always find their way back to you when you feed them, when you show them a basic kindness. They will come back with more hungry mouths upturned. They will come inside your home and make more work. I was wary of this at first, despite my vague identification with It. Individualistic thinking and the logic of the hustle plagued me. To take It into my house would be an administrative nightmare, an entire project. But I am a merciful person.

It immediately found its way to the hearth when It followed me inside. I took off my tie and fed It some more ham and some pet food. There was nothing commercially available for it, obviously; Its entire existence seemed antithetical to the silhouette of the petstore mounted in my mind, dignified like a capital building, or a bank or an office. I had just bought some dog food and hoped It wouldn't vomit on my rug.

It grew on me quickly over the next while. I liked to stroke Its feathers and fur and skin when It curled up on my lap. It kept me warm and insulated in this eternal winter. It had a strange temperament; It could be the sweetest, most docile creature in one moment and fantastically energized the next. I resisted training It because I was fond of these little outbursts; I detested the idea of regulating Its behavior with social commands and the temporary promise of material satisfaction. I was endeared when It ripped up my curtains in Its excited mania. I laughed when It did actually vomit on my rug. I didn't mind when I was late to work picking up Its prescriptions. These natural investments are what the project demands.



Though I stopped calling it a project a long time ago. Like a project, I had to be persistent and intentional, but describing It in corporate terms misrepresented its essence. Through it all, It stayed wild. I didn't make It perform for me like a circus creature. I didn't put It in a crate or a tank or a hanging gold cage. I didn't wrap a collar around Its neck like two hands; I pride myself on seeing and revolting against these casual masochisms. It's eerie, how our culture encourages us to spiritually stifle ourselves and call it success. I am merciful to us both.

This intense undercurrent of meaning flowed beneath the habitual time we spent together. I felt it on our walks, during playtime, and cozy on the couch; my previous life felt like a deflated husk compared to this revitalized consciousness I experienced now. We had our own world apart from all of those tentacular externalities, and I cherished my kinship with It deeply. It had an odd little smile, almost human-like; It seemed to be saying, I am a part of you forever.

After a long period of cohabitation, It crawled into my chest and made a home in my lungs. Our spirits intermingled and I carried It like a worldview; life seemed infinitely sunnier once I cultivated this happiness. We were no longer strays on the periphery of an icy oneway street. Ellie Simonot (she/her) Undergraduate student Faculty of Arts, English

Artist's statement

This piece portrays happiness as a choice that is often incompatible with the conditions of our society today; when we recognize this and intentionally cultivate it outside of the confines of convention, our individual and collective well-being can start to heal.

Un moment est une réalité résonante

Même dans les amertumes de la vie. Ouelau'un m'envoie un sourire. Oui témoigne de la gentillesse. Dévoile de la délicatesse. Toi, éloigné d'une grande distance, Évoque une espérance proche et douce; Provogue en moi de la patience, Que le soleil brillera, que je ne suis encore perdue. Ton salut de la main a consolé mon coeur. A effacé l'angoisse. Ce n'est pas l'amour: Mais la sympathie que j'éprouve; Un terrain verdoyant et sûr. Parce qu'un moment sincère est un trésor Interminable, contre le temps qui s'enfuit. Une réalité brève qui s'étiole, Mais qui résonnera toujours quand j'y réfléchis.



Belinda (elle) Étudiante de premier cycle

Artist's statement:

J'ai écrit ce poème pendant les examens finaux; j'espère que cela aide les autres étudiants comme cela m'a aidé à avoir du courage et de l'espoir. Les petites choses du quotidien portent un sens profond qui nous aide à nous soutenir pendant les pires.

Sunflower days



Medium: Acrylic on canvas, 23" X 30"

Farah Rahman Omi (she/her) PhD candidate Faculty of Engineering, Mechanical Engineering

Artist's statement:

The sunflowers in the painting don't have the most 'perfect' shapes, but together they make a beautiful world of happiness. As a whole, the painting reflects the efforts made to survive each day with trials, with heartbreak and most importantly with grace.



A Weekend at Home

My mom welcomes me at the door She pulls me tightly into her arms, Tom Petty singing on the stereo Sunlight, Beaming through the window. My sister arrives home Her smile brightens the room as she walks in, I sit in the sunshine Soaking in her warmth. My dad opens the door He smells like winter and diesel when I hug him One dog sniffs out the open window The other gives me tiny puppy kisses. We sit by the window The winter breeze energizing And relaxing. A snapshot of a picturesque moment in time Enjoying all the little things life has to offer. It's finally Friday We're all together again My heart in my chest Flutters with joy. I think to myself, This must be what peace feels like Sinking into soft blankets And cozy couches Settling into a weekend filled with warmth, Love, And peace.

This is serenity

Spending a weekend at home.

Rylee MacLennan (she/her) Undergraduate student Augustana Campus, Science

Artist's statement:

My most peaceful moments are when I am with my family, spending time with them and my dogs is what brings me joy. Poetry is my love language, a time capsule of how I feel. I hope to inspire other young poets to write their truth and find beauty in the way of things.



Hmmm...

Dear Moon (Dear moon) Remember when I wished on stars (Remember when I wished on stars) The gravity of who we are (The gravity of who we are) Searching for my place As the sun spotted my face (As the sun spotted my face) I see time etched onto you too (I see time etched onto you too) Reminding me that true beauty (Reminding me that true beauty) Isn't perfect

Dear moon (Dear moon) I'll visit you (I'll visit you) Soon (Soon)

Dear moon (Dear moon) You watched me grow older (You watched me grow older) Life's first quarter phase (Life's first quarter phase) Some full and bright Some a waning light (Waning light) But from darkness we ignite (But from darkness we ignite) Crescent smiles glowing bright (Crescent smiles glowing bright) And we can start again Dear moon (*Dear moon*) I'll visit you (*I'll visit you*) Soon (*Soon*)

Earth is more than a radiant rock, It's more than an outstanding orb, It's home to us and those to come, It's nice to know when things don't go to plan, It's got you watching over us Dear moon (*Dear moon*) Dear moon (*Dear moon*)

Mak <3 (she/her) Undergraduate student Faculty of Engineering, Mechanical Engineering

Artist's statement:

The song was created as a metaphor to look around us and recognize what makes us happy and thankful to be alive. Much like the dark expanse of space, there are bright people in our lives lighting the way the moon does at night.

The Big Dipper: A Signifier of Summer Joys

i saw the big dipper this summer. i was sat upon gallagher hill. surrounded by ones i love, observing the candles within the crowd form a reflection of the galaxies above. i saw the big dipper this summer. it was empty so i decided to fill it. i tucked it in my pocket, and took it with me: graduation and late night conversations. winnipeg and farewell hugs. my brothers moving out date, lifting heavy crates. a boogie down in chinatown. my grandpa's 99th birthday, eating whatever he may. i saw the big dipper this summer. i knew it was capable of holding so much more. renewed friendships and letting old ones become memory trips. tent camping, lake days, and laughter always. i saw the big dipper this summer. it had become a signifier of simple summer joys: girls trip to canmore, movie nights, seeing new york city sights. weddings in toronto, droplets from niagara falls, and rosetti croissants of montreal. i saw the big dipper this summer. i was sat upon gallagher hill, surrounded by ones i love, observing the candles within the crowd form a reflection of the galaxies above. i saw the big dipper this summer. this time it was full.



Wenmin Mo (she/her) Undergraduate student

Artist's statement:

This piece was written at the end of my summer break, a time where I felt most joy, and was inspired by the Edmonton Folk Music Festival, a festival holding significance to me. At the festival I pointed out the big dipper to a friend of mine and she told me that she liked to imagine scooping her many happy memories into the big dipper and storing it there. This encouraged the creation of my poem.

Isbíltúr

"Let's go grab something" somebody says and we Pack into twin cars and Take a tour of Castle Downs because We missed the left turn into the Dairy Queen and I Couldn't think of a better way To spend an evening

¹ Icelandic; a quest for ice cream



Amy Bacon Undergraduate student Faculty of Science, Chemistry

Artist's statement:

I tend to write poetry that reflects my emotional state at the time of writing. I wrote this poem when I was happy, about an experience that made me feel joy: it is a snapshot of me interacting with happiness.

Reflection question: When has something "gone wrong" and still turned out (just) right?

Ode to Eggnog

How did I make it eleven long months? My dear, I've missed you on so many fronts. I see you, I bounce, I let out a cheer! I've waited. I've dreamed it. You're finally here!

I'll buy up the aisles! I'll buy up the store! You are, no longer, mythical lore. I'll savor each drop, each heavenly sip. You're my I.V., my hospital drip.

I'll drink you with gusto, greedily, so. Swigging as fast as this gullet can go. I'll down all the liters there are to be had, No chance at my house for you to go bad!

A sore tummy won't be a deterrent. I bow to you now; I am your servant. My raison d'être, my reason to be! Without you I'm nothing, just eggnog-less me.

My mouth is music, it plays in a band! It's then I'm locked in the palm of your hand. Enticing, seducing, like nothing else. One taste of you, and I instantly melt.

You pull me in, I should try to resist! Because, for you, I am but a tryst. Your last taste will smack my lips with a sigh, Knowing your exit surely is nigh. This time I'll change; I'll wear a brave face! I won't beg on my knees in utter disgrace. Despite the countless buckets I've cried, It's you, I always want by my side.

You left me last new year without any warning. I panicked and searched, that cold, wretched morning. I hunted, and scoured, and sought out some more! But alas, you had vanished from every store.

Howls, heard, strong as a banshee. I need you close like my childhood blankie. I'll stoically say it'll be different next time, 'Cause not having you, is a serious crime.

But if it's a crime, and I'm on death row, There is but one thing you'll need to know. No matter what happens at my behest, Eggnog, you'd be my last request.

Shawna Manchakowsky (she/her) Staff Rutherford Library

Artist's statement:

Happiness is... the glorious giddiness of the first glimpse of the genuinely sought-after eggnog in the grocery stores, gracing us with its gregarious, gourmet grandeur. Well, you get it.

Happiness

The pursuit of happiness is futile as happiness is something which sneaks up from behind when one is not expecting it; but not every one recognises it, which is sad.

Happiness is finding shoes that fit and don't have to be broken in. Happiness is being able to make people laugh sometimes. Happiness is being a sister, mother, grandmother, friend, photographer, carousel carver, student and fount of absolute trivia.

Happiness is lovely, but contentment is more consistent and, ultimately, more satisfying.

Happiness is fleeting and must be paired with sadness to be fully appreciated.

JAHJackson (she/her) Alumni, Faculties of Arts and Education Staff, Dean of Students, Academic Success Centre

Artist's statement:

Writing this piece made me think about what happiness is - to me and to others. It was an interesting exercise in thinking about something which is so universal but which is also unique to each individual, and something which money cannot buy.

This Old Stage

Happiness is a new scene on an old stage . . .

* * *

Scene I Rain comes in November pouring over the cold parking lot where I pack up my mother's belongings in the back of a barren trunk. The prop of a box contains a small blanket for her blistered feet, six bottles of medication, a tissue box half full and a small wooden table where I had laid my head to the waning sounds of pneumonia that final scene of ovarian cancer that came at night. That was my mom.

Scene II Time is no friend. Clouds soon come in late summer streaming over the empty sky where I hold my father's head up to see his final sunrise through the grimy window penetrated by an early red sun. Delirious, the words of a man half-lost echo with the plight of comfort: "Hello?... Hello?." "Hi dad. It's me. I'm here". — The fourth and final dialogue of pancreatic cancer. That was my dad.

Scene III

The resilient sun pierces through the autumn air, where I park again in the shadow of past rain, and enter again into that desolate hospital. No less than a month has passed. Wheezy coughs and lost ""hellos" still ring in my ear. And through the pain, suffrage, and screams of a woman who bears a voice hidden in me, comes a light distancing the rain and the clouds, laying down a new season, setting a new stage. This was my daughter.

* * *

Happiness is like that. Stages of tragedy birthing new scenes: "Hello... I'm dad. It's me. I'm here.

Stephen Cruikshank (he/him) Faculty Augustana Campus, Fine Arts & Humanities

Artist's statement:

Happiness can also be the root of pain.

This submission is written about a similar space (a hospital) occupying the transition of a past tragedy to the birth of new happiness. It is based on my real experience losing both my mom and dad, a year apart, due to different battles of cancer. My daughter was then born a month after my father passed, in the same hospital.

The Moment We Shared



Medium: Painting using acrylic paint/acrylic markers on wood, 8" X 10"

Madelyn (she/her) Undergraduate student Faculty of Arts, Psychology

Artist's statement:

The character included in the piece translates to "love" in English, which is a major part of the happiness conveyed in the piece. To me, happiness never really has a clear image -- when asked what happiness looks like, there is never a clear, set representation that comes to mind. Playing into that idea, I took a memory where I was truly happy and painted a piece which includes a representation of Orange Alstroemerias, which were present in my memory.

Reflection question: Everyone's understanding of happiness is different, and changes over time. Can you think of how you might have identified happiness at different points in your life?

the right amount of honey

Sometimes he wore a bright smile As he lifted me up, spun me around, showed me off to the world, and called me his little princess In those times I knew nothing else but happiness. With his great big hand around mine, life was safe, And I was healing him, though I did not know it then.

Sometimes it was a pleasant, albeit forced smile, Joyful nonetheless, as he put aside his mind for the baseball he taught me how to catch. We shared laughs.

My first victory in chess, a new card game,

our hockey team winning big on the screen.

A shared cup of jello with whipped cream on a hospital tray. We passed the time.

Sometimes there was no smile.

And so we sat together, content in each others' presence. Shared books. Glances.

Comforting words. Memories. Sometimes tears.

I brought him a warm cup of tea to soothe his soul.

He always said it was just the right amount of honey.

And even then, especially then,

Our hearts felt great happiness.

Natascia Ciancibello (she/her) Undergraduate student Faculty of Science, Biological Sciences

Artist's statement:

With this poem, I wanted to capture the bittersweet nature of happiness in times of hardship, which for my dad was severe bipolar depression. In a card he wrote me to congratulate me on another finished semester a mere five months before he died by suicide, he expressed that his heart was full of joy to have a daughter like me. I think joy can exist with all that pain at once, and sometimes the two may seem dissonant, but sometimes one serves to help us appreciate the other.

If you or someone you know is experiencing suicidal thoughts, please reach out to the Edmonton CMHA Distress Line at 780-482-HELP (4357)

A World Alive



Medium: Acrylic on canvas, 36" x 48"
Deltra Powney (she/her) Alumni Faculty of Arts, Art & Design

Artist's statement:

This piece reflects a unique perspective of a natural space that facilitates an intimate experience of enchantment. In this work, it is my intention to create a connection between the viewer and the micro environment portrayed, reflecting an experience filled with happiness.

Brushstrokes of Emotion: A Bipolar Symphony



Medium: Drawing on paper, 8" X 11.5"

Vidya (she/her) Graduate student Faculty of Education, Library and Information Studies

Artist's statement:

I chose to submit this drawing as it symbolizes the profound journey toward finding balance and joy amidst the challenges of bipolar disorder. It speaks to the resilience and strength of individuals navigating the intricate spectrum of emotions. The juxtaposition of contrasting elements in the artwork serves as a reminder that understanding and embracing the complexities of the human experience can contribute to a more compassionate and inclusive celebration of happiness.

> **Reflection question:** How do you find balance in the ups and downs of daily life?

The tired still make it home

Beneath the falling sun, the flat tire plight On the wheel lay my brow in pensive gaze My horn echoes within the fading light On my denim lap, tear trails map the daze

I know the fix, yet in my seat, I'm bound My route was planned; these lakes weren't on the map The tire's repair seems futile, all around But to be home, I have to fill the gap

Through twisted roads, I may choose the wrong turn I mustn't let a stumble close a door Another flat tire cannot quell my yearn Home is a place I've been—I've felt before



Kyra Thompson (she/her) Staff Augustana Campus, Student Academic Services

Artist's statement:

I wrote a version of this poem when I was 15 without any specific formatting or style, just thoughts thrown on the page. This past fall, I was cleaning up my old files and found it. I felt the sentiment to still be true, nearly a decade later. I rewrote it as a sonnet. I may not know how to find happiness in every situation, but I've been happy before, and I'll find my way back. I just have to accept that the way back may be harder, more obstacle-ridden, but still so worth it.

The Butterfly Effect

I wish I were a butterfly. From nearly non-existing pupae To nearly heart-capturing butterfly They wander seeking their purpose Unknowingly spreading joy and happiness In those who "see" them... Even more... A sense of inner peace and eternal purpose To those who "appreciate" them... While they seek nectar in flowers And live a momentary life, The Universe thrives in joy Through the "Butterfly Effect". Harry-Not-Potter (he/him) PhD candidate Faculty of Engineering, Electrical & Computer Engineering

Artist's statement:

In the isolating months after arriving in Canada during the pandemic, I grappled with loneliness. Amidst my struggles, the unwavering commitment and dedication of healthcare workers became a beacon of hope. I stayed connected to the positive stories emerging from across the globe, seeing them as analogous to the transformative journey of a butterfly—spreading happiness in the face of adversity. This poem is a tribute to frontline workers and those spreading kindness—like butterflies, making the world a better place.

The Fleeting Present

On blissful shores where sunsets glow, In whispers soft, where zephyrs blow, A dance of joy, in twilight's tender hue, Happiness, a flame that brightly grew.

In laughter's cadence, sweet as song, In a Heart's melody, while love grows strong, A symphony of moments, smiles we share, Happiness, the ultimate human affair.

Oh, to know the warmth of love's embrace, To see the joy upon a face, In tender glances, and secrets shared, Happiness, caught me unprepared.

Through meadows green, where flowers rise, In nature's arms, where beauty lies, A serenade of peace, a tranquil stream, Happiness, this poet's dream.

Yet, swift as swallows in the sky, It flits and dances, a butterfly, Elusive sprite, in fleeting, flight, Happiness, a winged and wondrous sight.

So seek it not in realms unknown, But find it now, in what is shown, In simple whispers, in a lover's kiss, Happiness, a present, pure and bliss. Shyler Hendrickson (he/him) Graduate student Faculty of Arts, History, Classics, & Religion

Artist's statement:

I've always found happiness in the company of other people: friends, family, pets etc... Moving from my home community to attend school here was a shocking departure. So while this piece is a celebration of happiness, there is a bittersweet sentiment contained in this poem that speaks to how happiness can sometimes feel fleeting. it's not, however. We just need to know where to look.

Prismatic



Medium: Photographic image

Jasleen Mahindru (she/her) Undergraduate student

Artist's statement:

Why did we stop seeing the world like we used to? Why don't our eyes shine anymore at the sight of a rainbow in the sky or at the sound of birds chirping? The world around us did not change, we did — we grew up. But happiness still lies in the simplicity of it all so remember to enjoy the little things.

From this end

The snowflakes sailed gently down. She felt the cold. But it was worth it. With a feeble smile and a sigh, she could see it all from this end — the beauty of the bleak winter! She watched as people on the street struggled to get wherever. She could hear them cursing at the bone-chilling wind. But still, she smiled. There was an Unfathomable joy that could not be explained from this end. Like a bear awakening from a long winter slumber, she was finally getting out of that depressed cocoon she had become so accustomed to. She felt the longing for happiness that she had so unknowingly deprived herself of. Something she had only learned so late that it was all in her state of mind! So there she was, grinning timidly as if awaiting a command to finally burst into happiness! She had finally come to the realisation... That even in the dark, a candle burns ever so brightly! And so with the new hope. she smiled at the snowflakes as they sailed gently down, from this end!



Julia Wakoli (she/her) Graduate student Faculty of Science, Biological Sciences

Artist's statement:

This was submitted to give others my view of happiness. Sometimes we tend to look for happiness in the most complex things yet it's the simpler things in life that actually matter.

Reflection question:

Take a moment to consider the past few months and any challenges or obstacles encountered. What have you learned about yourself through these experiences that are helpful to remember?

