

Overview

[The Global Health Education and Learning Incubator at Harvard University](#) (GHELI) supports interdisciplinary education about world health through the production, curation, and dissemination of educational public goods. This exemplar work was a final project for “World Health: Challenges and Opportunities,” a General Education course at Harvard College taught by GHELI Faculty Director Sue J. Goldie. For this creative assessment designed with support from GHELI, students systematically analyze a societal health challenge they care about and create a “real world” product intended to influence policy or motivate change.

Abstract

A painting depicts how images seen on social media represent only snapshots of someone’s life, leaving out both the successes and struggles behind them.

Artist


Samantha Maroshick (2020)

Caption

Almost three-quarters of all American adults use at least one form of social media, including 90 percent of adults ages 18–29. For women and teenage girls especially, social media can contribute to negative self-images by amplifying impossible standards and reinforcing the idea that what a woman can convey most easily in a post—her looks—is the most important and significant thing about her identity. Being aware of the “real” aspects of a person’s life beyond their posts can have an important impact on a woman’s self-image. This painting depicts both the successes and struggles behind the curated social media post to allow women to take a step back from the insecurity they may feel and become aware of the bigger picture.

Artist Lens

I approached this assignment with the idea that I wanted to create something that could send a clear message to women in an accessible way. When brainstorming ideas of how to tackle this, I kept finding myself thinking back to posters I’d often see in my high school, either on the walls of the hallways and counseling center, or in the bathrooms, that focused on issues facing teenage girls: bullying, abuse, smoking, addiction, etc. This tactic of having messages posted in highly visible and trafficked areas, as well as areas like bathrooms where people could look at them alone and develop their own thoughts about these issues without the influence of others, made me want to create something that mimicked this style of advertising. Thus, I created my painting with the idea in mind that it could be an image presented on a poster in this similar manner to teenage girls and young women in the U.S. By not only having a statement on the “poster” that encourages looking deeper than surface-level posts when using social media, but also having silhouettes of many aspects of a young woman’s life (weight struggles, breakdowns, and social insecurities), I hope to convey the idea that perfection on social media may not always be what it seems.



Even when we are intimidated by people’s posts, they may be dealing with challenges and issues that we know nothing about, and that they so carefully seek to hide. This cycle of perception, whether intended or not, perpetuates the negative effects of social media by controlling our perception of ourselves. This poster aims to remind young women that what they see (like the thin, glamorous woman in the painting’s post) may not be the entire story (the shadow-y background silhouettes), and that the nuances of their lives that make them “them” can never be truly captured in social media posts. Furthermore, the fact that these nuances can’t be described as easily in posts, but still make up so much of who we are inherently can help girls to understand the limitations of social media and take a step back. While social media can be entertaining and positive at times, this painting/ “poster” hopes to encourage young women to think more positively about themselves, rather than viewing themselves as only as good as the image they can project online.

Media

Painting

there's
more

to

HER

than
an

image



... there's more to **YOU**
than **ANY** image ♡