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 Postcard by Justin Chen / Comic by Ines Alto / Insert Illustrations by Etta Lund

Letter From the Editor

On the evening of the last Friday in March, I received a notification—then a flurry of notifications. The news was both monumental and unsurprising: Katrina Armstrong, interim president of Columbia, had resigned, and Claire Shipman was to “act” in her place.

My first reaction was worry. I recognized Shipman’s name as a prominent member of the Board of Trustees, the body that is perceived to be pushing repressive, anti-Palestinian measures at Columbia.

My second reaction was to google her. The title attached to her name was not “trustee,” or anything similarly bureaucratic or menacing. It was a title many of us at *The Blue and White* might claim, or at least aspire to: journalist.

Shipman’s appointment has been described as a “coup” that subverted our university’s established lines of governance. But the move makes sense: Between the mishandled protest response, ICE targeting international students for detention and deportation, and the university yielding to Trump’s anti-democratic demands, our school’s brand image is undoubtedly in shambles. Shipman, with her background in media, was an obvious choice. Still, I’m concerned that opting for a journalist over an academic signals that our new president will choose not to cater to the Columbia where research, learning, and community is fostered; but to the sensationalized media version of our campus twisted to serve political ends.

Shipman’s audience is the Trump administration, the donors, and those who write the headlines. Editing this issue, I’ve been thinking about who our audience is. Ostensibly, the answer is each other—all of us students, faculty, and affiliates who have a stake in Columbia’s future. As Claire Shipman steps into the top role, she too becomes a part of that audience, whether or not she literally picks up and reads *The Blue and White*. But some absurd part of me hopes she does.

If Claire Shipman flipped through this issue, she would find what I believe is a faithful account of our college community; and with it, a compelling case for its defense. Jorja Garcia paints a picture of the senior art studios. Lily Ouellet explores Columbia’s vibrant yet under-resourced musical theater scene. Nnema Epee-Bounya finds home in Little Senegal, while Zoe Gallis forges connection through nostalgia for 90’s music. Our writers visit Christian Marclay’s 24-hour film, *The Clock*, at the MoMA, sharing personal meditations on art and time.

These individual moments of expression and creativity are not divorced from the political—like everything our magazine covers, they are woven into the collective fabric of our university. Natalie Buttner explores this idea as the looming threat of funding cuts follows her on a Columbia-sponsored trip to Death Valley. Sara Omer seeks wisdom from medieval Islamic scholars as she grapples with the political weight inherited by the freshman class. Michael Onwutalu captures the radicalizing potential of postcolonial film, offering a humanizing vision of activism as inspired by the arts.

Rather than obfuscating dissent to put up a sanitized front for the media, I would ask Claire Shipman to seek solidarity with her fellow journalists at *The Blue and White*. I would hope for her to engage with the politics of her students—to read them in their own words. Most crucially, I would want her to see, through the microcosm of student journalism, that we built this campus community with thought, care, and passion; that we are proud of all its facets; and that it is worthy of protection.

Maya Lerman

Read the full issue online at
theblueandwhite.org

THE BLUE AND WHITE

Bwecommendations

Media we think you would enjoy—but likely not as much as *The Blue and White Magazine*.

Maya Lerman, Editor-in-Chief: Cindy Milstein, *There is Nothing So Whole as a Broken Heart*. CJ The X, (Youtube). Mahmoud Khalil, “A Letter to Columbia.”

Chris Brown, Managing Editor: Bad Brains, *Bad Brains*. Cornelius, *Fantasma*. *Salón México* (1949).

George Murphy, Deputy Editor: Bush, “Glycerine.” Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*. E. M. Forster, “What I Believe.”

Eli Baum, Publisher: SSOL.

Selin Ho, Layout Editor: Tommy february6, “daNcin’ bABY.” UNHHhh (Youtube).

Isabelle Oh, Co-Illustrations Editor: Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts*. Handmade dumplings.

Em Bennett, Co-Illustrations Editor: NICO Touches the Walls, “Diver.” Summoning Salt. Shirley Temples.

Derin Ogutcu, Web Editor: Susumu Yokota, 1998. FUTURA 2000 paintings.

Stephen Dames, Senior Editor: Roberto Bolaño, *Entre Paréntesis*. Jeffrey Lewis, “DCB & ARS.” *Mary Jane’s Not a Virgin Anymore* (1996).

Josh Kazali, Senior Editor: Chad Harbach, “MFA vs. NYC.” The Sundays, “Summertime.”

Gabriela McBride, Senior Editor: The Shaggs, *Philosophy of the World*. A visit to The Interference Archive.

Anna Patchefsky, Senior Editor: Tamales outside of the bank.

Jazmyn Wang, Senior Editor: Friedrich Hölderlin, “Remembrance” (translated by Richard Sieburth). The Rolling Stones, “Wild Horses.” George Jones, “He Stopped Loving Her Today.”

Sona Wink, Senior Editor: Erykah Badu, “Penitentiary Philosophy.” Feeling genuinely surprised by the arrival of springtime.

Justin Chen, Staff Illustrator: The Marias, “Back To Me.” Ocean Vuong, “Thanksgiving 2006.”

Lulu Fleming-Benite, Staff Illustrator: Sneaking into parties you were not invited to. Sally Shapiro, *Disco Romance*. Zaid’s restaurant.

Jorja Garcia, Staff Illustrator: Neil Young, *Harvest*. (Yes, I am an old man). *Death of a Unicorn* (2025). Djo, *The Cruel*.

Ines Alto, Staff Illustrator: *Common Side Effects* (Max, Hulu). HYUKOH, 落日飛車 Sunset Rollercoaster, AAA. “Fishes,” The Bear, (Hulu).

Cecilia Zuniga, Senior Editor: Jenny Fran Davis, “High Femme Camp Antics.” Sonido La Changa Boiler Room - CDMX (Youtube). *Chocó* (2012).

Natalie Buttner, Staff Writer: Lindsey Hilsum, *In Extremis*. Big Thief, “Heavy Bend.” Columbia Docuseek.

Marvin Cho, Staff Writer: PSY & MC Hammer, “Gangnam Style / 2 Legit 2 Quit Mashup.”

Nnema Epee-Bounya, Staff Writer: Fiona Apple, “The First Taste.” Beanie Man, “Feel It Boy.” Chima-manda Ngozi Adichie, *Dream Count*.

Praharsha Gurram, Staff Writer: *The History of the Minnesota Vikings* (YouTube). Uncle Tupelo, “Sandusky.”

Marianna Jocas, Staff Writer: O Terno, “Atrás / Além.” Amadou & Mariam, “M’Bife.” Akofa Akousah, “Dandou Kodjo.” Having Breakfast.

Elika Khosravani, Staff Writer: *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (2014). Mecano, *Entre el Cielo y el Suelo*.

Duda Kovarsky Rotta, Staff Writer: Paul Klee, *Angelus Novus* (1920). Milton Nascimento, “Maria Maria.” The renovated A train.

Hannah Lui, Staff Writer: *Ride the Cyclone* (CMTS, April 25-26). *Fleabag* (Amazon Prime Video). Children’s self-portraits. Pink tulips.

Lucy Mason, Staff Writer: Ann Peebles, “I Feel Like Breaking Up Somebody’s Home Tonight.” Headbands.

Caroline Nieto, Staff Writer: Free Range, “Concept.” Caetano Veloso, Transa. Ted Berrigan, “String of Pearls.” Maple oat cold brew from Oren’s.

Sara Omer, Staff Writer: R. F. Kuang, *The Poppy War*. bbno\$, “edamame.”

Michael Onwutalu, Staff Writer: *On Becoming a Guinean Fowl* (2024). *I May Destroy You* (HBO). Maurice Blanchot, *Lautréamont et Sade*. Beyoncé, “Formation (Homecoming Live).” Fiona Apple, *Fetch the Bolt Cutters*. Allison P. Davis, “The End of Kimye’s Wild Ride.” “North of the Border” (18:10). Atlanta (FX). Clifford Prince King, *Malcolm*.

Lily Ouellet, Staff Writer: Yebba, “The Age of Worry - Live at Electric Lady.” Yebba, *Dawn*.

Rocky Rub, Staff Writer: Easter Brunch Gluttony. Catholic Guilt. *The Studio* (AppleTV). Eve Babitz, *Black Swans*.

Iris Pope Staff Illustrator: The American Analog Set, *Know By Heart*.

APRIL 2025



A Trip to Little Senegal

Notes on Africa, home, and fleeting moments.

BY NNEMA ÉPÉE-BOUNYA

Since coming to college, I have developed a codependent relationship with Fally Ipupa and Asake. My Afrobeats playlist, which is just under four hours, has become an attempt at replacing the nostalgic feeling of lazily sitting on my grandparents' porch in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. It is when I am listening and dancing that I feel at Home—not home as in Cambridge, but Home as in on the continent. In Africa, in the sweaty embrace of unknown family friends, hearing the attitude that laces people's mix of French and Nouchi, everything feels simpler. The knowledge that soon I will be tearfully driving back to

Houphouët
airport

makes these moments as sweet as the *bissap* that stains my lips.

Growing up in an African household, one quickly learns that Home is not simply when you are back in Africa. That vibrance and rhythm can be found in the hiss of plantains frying, in the outrageous Whatsapp forwarded videos, or in the concentration of learning the newest dance that has gripped the streets of Abidjan. Still, these are just fleeting glimpses of what it is like to be on the continent—life as an American African is one of impermanence.

When I arrived in Morningside Heights this fall, these moments felt all the more fleeting. Hewitt does not cook *aloco* and *poulet braisé*, and no one says “yako” when I have a headache. Yet, when Tomisin Fasosin, BC '25, introduced me to Harlem's Little Senegal, the West African enclave between Malcolm X Boulevard and Frederick Douglass Boulevard, I finally felt close to Home again. As we spoke about parallels in our diasporic upbringing and a shared homesickness, Tomisin told me about her first visit to Little Senegal, specifically to the Malcolm Shabazz Harlem market, where she “was instantly enamored with how the space visually looks African and is bustling with African people and culture.” Her experience went on to inspire her thesis, which traces the history of Senegalese and West African immigration to Harlem, and in particular, how Little Senegal became a sustained home for the Senegalese migrants.



Illustration by Kathleen Halley-Segal

THE BLUE AND WHITE

I wanted to see it for myself. I decided to go to Des Ambassades, a Senegalese bakery and restaurant, with my friend Jessica Sarr, BC '28, who is Senegalese and who I knew would appreciate a day where the noises, smells, and tastes were familiar.

...

Des Ambassades is relatively quiet. In the back of the restaurant, three women gossip in a hushed tone, switching between Parisian French and a sweet English spoken in French inflections. Their effortlessly cool mannerisms and their accents remind me of my cousin who lives in Versailles. They continually ask the waitress to come back later, as they deliberate on what to order and warn each other about the spiciness of the food. Two tables down from the women, a man in a white boubou grasps a *tasbeih* and salutes an older man who has been writing in a large book for half an hour. The older man's soulful eyes briefly look up from his book to warmly acknowledge the man in the white boubou. I wonder if they are family and what exactly the older man is writing. It feels as if most of the people in the restaurant know each other, and an air of comfortability and familiarity fills the room. Something about this makes me feel that by being in the space, it was mine, too.

Over an impeccable plate of *poulet yassa* and plantains, Jessica and I speak about our families, school, and anything else that comes up. A steady hum of French fills any silence in the restaurant, and my heart swells. Leaving Des Ambassades and walking down Frederick Douglass, Africa and its influence feel unbounded by geography. As I walk by groups of young men and their bikes waiting for Uber Eats orders, I am reminded of the men and women selling any and everything at stop lights in Abidjan. Hearing the bass of a Bob Marley song, I am transported back to the stories my father tells me of listening to Marley's entire discography in his childhood. Heading back across Amsterdam, I promise myself that not only will I come back to Little Senegal, but I will return to live on the continent at some point in my life—this feeling can not be fleeting forever.

Smoking Thrills

Columbia Health's collaboration with the Truth Initiative campaigning against nicotine use.

BY ROCKY RUB

We open at dusk. Fog rolls over two rectangular fields of green marsh like a scene right out of a film noir. A young man with a mahogany messenger bag walks through the haze, his matching walnut dress shoes clicking on the granite walkway beneath him. He's mysterious. He's contemplative. The hairs on the nape of his neck raise. He turns his head. *Is anyone there?* No. Now is his chance. A soft glow contours the tired, tortured look on his face. He steps into the light and he ... hits his vape?

Such is a common occurrence outside Butler Library. The building bookends the southern half of the University's superblock with Low Library in its direct view; outside its glittering facade sits the most popular of thirteen designated smoking areas on the campus. The studious silhouettes of academics young and old propagate along this transient station, lips pursed delicately—or anxiously, depending on the season—to the slender dopamine inducer, the cigarette (or, sometimes, the vape).

But Columbia Health has been hit with an intense case of self-righteousness! Big Anti-Tobacco, the Truth Initiative, allocated grant money to Columbia in spring 2024 to make the campus 100% tobacco and nicotine free. Universities across the nation can apply to the program with a tobacco/vape cessation plan and be awarded up to \$20,000 to support their initiative. Since receiving the grant, Columbia Health has gathered and evaluated testimonials from students who resent the smoky and smelly wrath of our nicotine inclined peers, including those we've come to know and love that decorate the northern perimeter of Butler



Library. In summer or fall of 2025, the University Senate will vote on a new policy that would abolish the designated smoking areas on campus. If the bill passes, we will be forced to say goodbye to that secondhand hit of tobacco or Cherry Bomb Blitz greeting students before their study sessions.

What would a smoke-free campus look like? Where will the smokers go?

In a Town Hall on March 4, 2025, a Columbia Health representative said that "We are fortunate to have two parks on either side of the campus, so folks can either go there or to the [crosswalk] medians." The horror! Imagine the indignity of smoking on the Broadway median! What is this, some sort of sick revamp of Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" campaign? Though, the smoke break trips could restore intra-campus foot traffic—a needed stimulus after plummeting Barnard/Columbia walks-of-shame caused by the Nov. 5 presidential election. Still, campus will never feel the same.

It is hard to picture Butler's entrance without smoking academics ornamenting the walkway. It is a focal point between four freshmen dormitories, three dining halls (plus a food truck), the South Lawns which hosts Undergraduate Student Life events, and the occasional Larty (lawn party). The walkway is where your Italian campus crush lives, puffing longingly to Alma Mater across the field; it is the place where you wonder whether your infatuation is a fated soul tie or just second-hand addiction. It is where one gets all their passing, inconsequential gossip about how your influencer classmate cheated on her fiancé and is now voyaging through Europe while having a sapphic love affair. The display of chic outfits from smokers past will be greatly

missed. Many a TikTok edit will mourn their loss. How on earth could we condemn smoking when it means banishing the strongest of our leather-clad, yapping soldiers?

But, "Goodbye to all that," I say, over my tears for the dark academia aesthetic that ultimately carried my decision to attend Columbia over Penn's already established no-nicotine campus. Alas, since Columbia has yet again failed to breach an overall top ten National Universities ranking by the U.S. News and World Report, the University has decided that we should at least be in the top ten *healthiest* National Universities. While we at *The Blue and White* can appreciate the benefit to our shriveled lungs—even though we DID NOT ASK FOR IT—we cannot and will not be in support of such wellness reform! I can say with my full chest, scar tissue and all: "I dissent!"

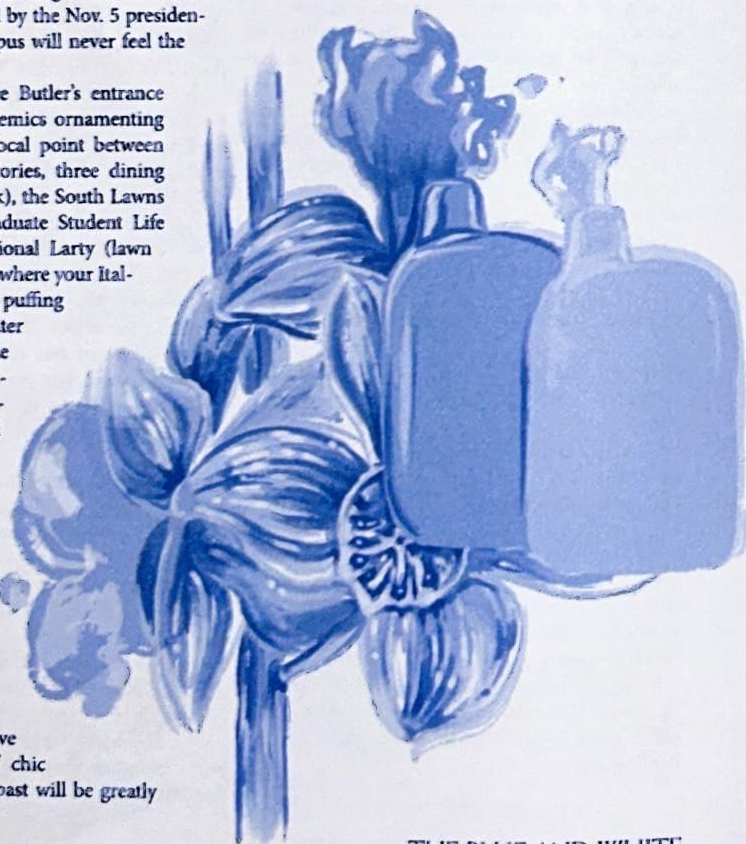


Illustration by Jacqueline Subkhianberdina

You Are the Music

What watching concert videos from the '90's taught me about holding onto the past.

BY ZOE GALLIS

Over winter break I became a collector. The restless insomnia of jet lag led me down various YouTube rabbit holes, one of which revealed what was, to me, long-buried treasure: *Depeche Mode Live 1998 Cologne Singles Tour '86-'98*. Eyes wide, I clicked the thumbnail and was immediately transported to the middle of a lively crowd—hands in the air, cheering amid the grain and crackle. I tilted my head as though it would give me a better view of the stage and was hit with a sharp and sudden pang of what could only be described as nostalgia. I was painfully aware that these nights of sound and movement had come and gone—crowds had long dispersed, venues had closed their shutters or changed names, and setlists had been replaced for whole new audiences. I had uncovered remnants of something electrifying, only a little too late—I had connected myself to a vanishing scene.

My playlist slowly grew to include videos of Interpol, LCD Soundsystem, The Smashing Pumpkins, Joy Division, Velvet Underground, New Order, Pulp, The Strokes, and countless more iconic rock bands that had performed in dimly lit venues, dive bars, and festival stages over the last two decades. My curiosity expanded,

leading me to watch interviews with band members, to read old reviews, to deep-dive into the YouTube comments and witness those who had attended the concerts "way-back-when" reminisce. I even ordered a copy of Lizzy Goodman's *Meet Me in the Bathroom*, a

book of oral history that chronicles the rebirth of rock and roll in New York City in the early 2000s. It was clear that I had developed an obsession for these long-gone performances.

It's a familiar instinct to turn to the past for answers—Columbia's Core Curriculum practically requires its students to do so. We sift through old texts and are told to note the essential truths in their margins, we see how some of our annotations carry over time as we read through ancient, revolutionary, and contemporary texts. We come to understand that history survives in its retelling. On March 6th, I attended a talk in Pulitzer Hall: Emily Witt, staff writer at the *New Yorker*, was discussing her experience in the Brooklyn rave scene while reporting on gun violence and the LA fires of 2020. Her insights on the impermanence of cultural moments made me think about how we hold onto the past through fragments, through half-remembered sights and sounds. My collection of old concert videos was, after all, just this—an effort to keep within my reach a subculture, once dazzling and immediate. The undeniable pull of the grainy concerts of the past left me wondering if these videos held some essential truths in them, too, ones that might carry through time.

Music was, in a large part, what introduced me to the city before I moved for college. Through songs like LCD Soundsystem's *New York I Love You*, and Interpol's *NYC*, I started getting a sense for what life in the city might feel like. When meeting new people, the reliable question: "What music do you listen to?" helped me get through lulls in conversation and to better understand the people I was encountering. In fact, it was through small listening parties hosted in my John Jay dorm that I made some of my first friends at Columbia, friendships that I still have today.

Last week, as I settled into my twin-XL, I continued my ritual of adding to my YouTube collection and came across yet another video that seemed like treasure: *Vampire Weekend at Columbia University (Sat. 4/18/09)*. It was Bacchanal weekend. I watched the heads of unknown peers from 16 years ago bop up and down, I watched them dance and cheer, and in an instant I felt part of the history I had so desperately been trying to keep within my reach.



Illustration by Isabelle Oh

The Senior Studio Hues

Exploring enclaves of visual arts majors

BY JORJA GARCIA

Illustrations by Jorja Garcia

Behind sterile white walls are scattered art studios filled with energy drinks and magical creativity. You've probably only encountered Watson Hall if you've taken a photography class, are an MFA student, or are currently finishing up your visual arts thesis. Enrollment in any visual arts class is extremely competitive, so even as a V.A. major myself, the senior studios have remained a mys-

tery to me. Until this spring when my dear friend and artist, Watson Frank (unrelated to the building), invited me into their studio, and showed me a whole new world.

...

At the beginning of the year each studio is a *tabula rasa*: completely unfurnished, with unscathed white walls and a cold concrete floor. Watson and their studio mate, Grace, have built a colorful enclave hidden behind the bleak halls. Opening the door, I was immediately greeted by a Candy-Crush rug with seat cushions, pillows, and plushies; a mini "wall of fame" of friends' self-portrait doodles; familiar faces in mythical portraits; and plenty of ceramic creatures staring into my soul. I met eyes with a still frog lurking in the shadows who didn't give me a rabbit or riddle, so I assumed I passed the vibe check.



A sense of magic grew out of the studio and into my body. I wanted to sink into the plushies, prance around with Watson's creatures in their makeshift forestry, and enter Grace's brilliantly colored paintings as if they were portals to other dimensions.

The effervescent green and black monoprints of grandiose creatures, whom I came to know as the "divinities" of Watson's world, depict beings like octopi and alligators. In their (un)natural habitat they cover walls surrounding an altar centerpiece: a three-foot tall tree trunk taken from college walk discards, and Moss Man, a six-foot persona made of green mops. Watson's assemblage of nature melds together an enduring labor for printmaking and gathering with a perennial effort to keep our planet green, very green in his forest of otherworldly artistry.



I was pulled like Stretch Armstrong to the opposite side where Grace's colors bounced off the walls, the vibrant shade of "radiant green" straight out of the tube. Though the choice might make an intro painting professor cringe, it's an intentional decision that follows the rest of Grace's "informed anachronisms": She combines such unyielding colors with East Asian temple patterns and classically informed European-style portraiture, enveloped in tales like Orpheus and Eurydice and the Korean nine-tailed fox.

Although the small window does not allow for much natural light, their artwork embraces me into a world full of my favorite hues where I can forget entirely about the outside.

...

Later, I hopped down from the third to second floor to visit another set of shining stars: Kelsea and Macy. They generate their studio atmosphere by "blasting bops" (even accidentally during a group critique across the hall), frequently inviting friends to study, and even holding craft nights. I felt the pull of their soft navy-blue velvet saucer chair as if I was nearing

the event horizon of a black hole.

Kelsea couldn't escape the gravitational pull of early 2010 boybands: The studio is covered in her collections of old magazines and paintings of her friends who had shared her musical teen obsessions. Her works are full of wide smiles accented by buoyant, heart-warming shades of pink. (I know you probably had your own One Direction or equivalent obsession as a preteen too. Here, this picture of pregnant Harry Styles should jog your memory.)

I was instantly transported into the far away past of diary writing about cheeky love songs and staring into the sparkly eyes of a Justin Bieber poster. Just how I managed to fill in endless diary entries, Macy, on the other wall, fills the negative space of her paintings with a stream of consciousness style writing. In the foreground sit glittering pieces of her camera roll: photos from her everyday that manage to catch her eye a second time, like a sparkle of sunlight on the peak of an undulating wave.



Walking through the studios, I'm brought back to moments of serenity in my childhood: taking an extra moment to snap a picture of a bird, writing stories about my koala Pillow Pet, sitting with my friends and enjoying their smiles, or simply touching some grass. Each artist reminded me of the possibility to create our own worlds amidst chaos. Like Macy, Kelsea, Grace, and Watson, we all should try to fill in the negative space, the blank halls and the empty rooms, with the hues and warmth of our fondest memories and creative worlds.

Around the Clock

The Blue & White spends time at the MoMA.

BY THE BLUE & WHITE

Christian Marclay's 24-hour film *The Clock* (2010) is on view at The Museum of Modern Art until May 11. Marclay spent several years sifting through a century of films, collecting moments that each represent a specific time of day. As Ben Lerner writes in the novel *10:04*, "Time in and outside the film is synchronized."

10:04 moves through New York: its past and present, monuments and neuroses. Two hurricanes, Irene and Sandy, bookend the novel, though they remain unnamed: "The radio said the storm would make landfall around 4:00 a.m."

10:04's narrator wants to arrive at *The Clock* at 10:04 p.m. to see lightning strike the courthouse clock tower in *Back to the Future*, allowing Marty to return to 1985. Marclay's film forms a "supragenre that [makes] visible our collective, unconscious rhythms our day." The narrator hears *The Clock* described "as the ultimate collapse of fictional time into real time, a work designed to obliterate the distance between art and life, fantasy and reality."

The Blue and White sent writers to watch the clock. Our writers were unable to visit the film in its latest hours, but maybe it's for the best—sleepless nights are the hardest to film. When Lerner's narrator visits the film, "he visits and feels the utopian glimmer of fiction." Michael, too, finds time in love and lovers. Natalie looks around, seeing time passing on the audience's faces. And Rocky knows that sometimes, time ends when you leave the museum. Time, in the end, looks different for everyone.

I graduate soon, into my own storm. My world, too, may look a little different. Lerner's epigraph to the novel is a Hasidic tale about the world to come: *Everything will be as it is now, just a little different.*

— Anna Patchefsky

The Blue and White's writers on time, in their own words:

11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.:

Bip Bip Bip Bip—

I jump up startled from the blaring sound of my alarm clock three feet away, contemplating whether holding my entire future at stake is worth a few more minutes of much-needed sleep. The sound of the clock annoyingly ricochets off my dorm walls, igniting a sudden urge to yank the minute hand down and enjoy a few more minutes of peace away from the hustle of the city, just like that one iconic scene in *The Clock* where a London man dangles off the minute hand at the Palace of Westminster, not caring if his life flashes before his very eyes. Alas, we live in a digital age; rather than hearing the suspenseful tick tick tick of every second of the day, our time has been reduced to mere silent surprises in the matrix of time.

The constant notion of time slipping away at our fingertips—11:00 a.m. turned to 11:29 a.m. and swiftly to 11:59 a.m.—in what was supposedly one hour of many in the day, yet felt like the blink of an eye—does it ever take a pause? Other times, it feels like I am alone, stuck in a static white room wearing white colors with nothing to stare at except the blinding white that surrounds me. The notion that we can never get back the time we lose can be paralyzing. Does time need not rest from its ringing and singing and spinning and turning, expertly handling invisible strings over the universe like a puppet master? The old guy in a suit from *The Clock* tries to smack it back to reality, but it just refuses to stop singing.

I stare at the glowing indigo numbers until the minute zero turns into a one. I refuse to let time control me. Maybe if I keep staring the numbers down, I can slow the rapidly changing world around me and finally harness time for myself. For just a brief second, I feel like that badass punk from *The Clock* who's chained to his own home. Does he let that stop him? Absolutely not. He grabs an axe—chains and all—and whacks the hell out of those metal bad boys till he's free. I want to be like him. But the chains that bind me—us—are stronger than any metal that exists on Earth.

I don't know if I miss the days when I could hear time running in every classroom of every exam hall of every hour of every minute of every second. During those grueling never-ending school days, I feel like that rebel hottie John from *The Breakfast Club*, who nonchalantly whistles his time in Saturday detention away. But who wants to be passive? I want to hold time in the palm of my hand and drag it to where I want to spend it on my own accord.

THE BLUE AND WHITE

and that yearning was only amplified after watching Marclay's *The Clock*.

Despite the constant reminder of our looming reality with every tick, there exists a sense of eerie calm knowing that even when you are stranded alone in the middle of the sea, you can do as the youthful boy does in my favorite scene from *The Clock*, finally giving me the closure I needed from my frenzied thoughts as it approached noon:

Gently place your ear over your pocket watch, close your eyes, and let the waves oscillate your body ever so slightly. You will hear the faint ticking of misunderstood time that will never leave your side. It was never your enemy.

— Sara Omer

12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. & 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.:

Someone needs to ash their cigarette; it has burned for too long. It is just past noon and a woman learns her brother is dead. Do you hear the bells on the hour? At 1:20 p.m., a man places a clock on a tray and lets it float out into the lake. Does time know when it's lost?

I used to think nothing exciting happened in the afternoon, but here's Peter Parker, late for his pizza delivery. A few minutes later, "I'll have what she's having." Will Hunting just sits, running out the clock in his first ever therapy session. Maggie Cheung falls in love. Two men speaking French play chess. When I think I won't see them again, there they are minutes later, still playing. A man runs after his love in an airport, desperate to catch her before she leaves. River Phoenix stands on a street he can't remember, into a distance that knows more than he does. Someone watches a movie just like me. I never know what time it is when I'm in the movie theater, but I do now.

Sissy Spacek punches her time card and leaves work. It is time I head home, too. I look at my phone for the time, but I don't need to. It's 4:40 p.m. and I know because the men are still playing chess, watching the clock. My friend Eliza needs to leave soon. She doesn't have enough time. She has too much time to consider. We give it a few minutes. We give it until we realize that men have woken up, hung up the phone, crashed their cars, and we've been sitting here.

It's 4:32 p.m. and the noblemen decide not to let their citizens have clocks—"If people know the time, they'll want to know how time is spent."

APRIL 2025

— Caroline Nieto

4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.:

Time ended, and I didn't go with it. It was all wrong from the start: Still broken from the entanglement that preceded ours, I wasn't ready. I needed time alone, but I wanted a fix, a sign of life after an affinity condemned to silence—and there you were. The ease of our exchange; the arts, lest we quiet from time, remained a revitalizer; our shared hometown: I was excited, or anxious. I still can't tell. Over the course of the worst year of my life, any care we had, or could've had, for each other was contravened by a naïveté that demanded to be jettisoned. I'm just sorry it had to be with you. The passage of time only reinforced the desire for a deceptively ideal heyday; what emerged was lyrical exhortation and reproval, emotional entrapment, and a suffocating narcissism of anxiety. Sentimentality was a trap—nostalgia, a killer. My frustrations emerged from the joint interpretative effort of melancholia and neuroticism, both perched on catastrophe, loss, and, cruelly, death. The rending irony in how I was so determined to have you not hate me was that, in the process, my biggest fear came true, or at least in dilution. And I knew it, too—that I'd be barreling towards a nadir fate materialized with our dazed tenor of mutuality and affect, steeped in regret, with the fear that *maybe this is how things are supposed to be*. But I wasn't just afraid of losing you, I was afraid we'd fail to become anything to one another. The special terror in unrealized—a hope lost, the dream still a chimera, the encounter that went nowhere—got the best of me, and killed us. Would you believe me if I said everything done was out of a need for life, however disgruntled, confused, despairing, limerent, hopeful, indulgent, manic, ecstatic?

One of the final films to precede our split, it makes sense that seeing John Lithgow's character in *Blow Out* reminded me of you. Though, I can't say it makes sense that the malaise which accompanied me for the last four months disappeared for a spell, or left without saying goodbye.

— Michael Onwutula

4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.:

It's dark in the theater, a woman setting a table in

a dimly lit room fills the screen, and all of the plush Ikea couches are occupied. Setting my bag down, I assume my place among the less fortunate latecomers leaning against the back wall and direct my attention to the film.

It is 4:36 p.m.: City crowds, a classic western



shootout, and a professor fudging office-hour availability.

A seat opens. Scrabbling, I rush to secure the spot. I share the couch with an older couple who whisper back and forth, competing to see who can identify the movie fastest and laughing quietly when they mutter the title at the same time. I realize I have an abysmal knowledge of movies. The couple continues their competition, I have silently joined in, anticipating the moment I too will recognize a scene.

I lose every round. They haven't missed a beat.

The museum will close soon. I am running out of time.

Tick. Tick. Tick.

Ben Stiller. Owen Wilson. Christine Taylor.

"Zoolander! It's Zoolander!"

Was that out loud?

A woman turns back to give me a dirty look.

Tick. Tick. Tick.

The museum is closing.

Tick. Tick. Tick.

Recognition, knowing the movie up on the screen, is like being in on an inside joke. You know there is specific significance on a character remarking on a moment in its isolated context. You know what someone else does not. The feeling is addictive.

The couple from before is walking the same way, chatting about how much they enjoyed the film. I am slightly envious of their exchange. They were in on the joke. I was out.

I collect my bag and make my way out of MoMa, joining the evening rush on Sixth Avenue.

— Lucy Mason

5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.:

Do you remember that Friday in September, outside, going over the contents of the missive which closed the summer? I remember you referring to it as an essay, which was funny, but I also remember feeling like I could breathe again. Through all our conversations that year—from *Foundation to Industry*; *Millennium Mambo* to *Black Girl*; my distaste for J. Cole to the cravenness of Mr. Morale; and the spring of our school-wide discontent with its visions of anarchic self-agency—I felt like I could breathe again. I still wonder why we had to be denied more of these moments. Was it my greed for what gave me life, this fix, that strained our friendship, that made me believe there was something more profound that

needed to be acquired, even at our expense? When I clawed, was it asphyxiation or withdrawal that arose as the passage of time grew unbearable? We didn't meet in a time when I could be a good friend to you because I was still vainly trying to escape what the world set out for me. I wish it was an excuse. Unbeknownst to this struggle, you took on the heft of a life bucking against powers structural and self-tormenting—ones you'd never really understand, but god I wish you could. You deserved the critic, the culturatus, the teacher. Alive at the end of the world, you deserved who I am with the unexpected entrance and promise of new vitality, not who I could be. After two years, I recovered my voice because of you; I learned how to save me from myself because of you. Tell me: Do I have the right to wonder rehabilitation, reconciliation, resolution? I'll tell you: This is my first standalone breath in years, my ticket out of purgatory, and an end—or a beginning.

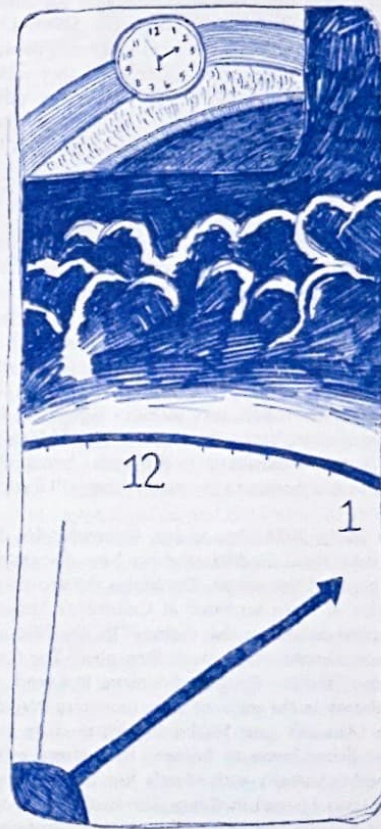
— Michael Onwutalu

6:45 p.m. to 8:25 p.m.:

Despite the satisfying grid formation of white couches in Marclay's *The Clock* cinema, I still felt queasy while sitting down in front of the big screen. The downtown 1 train had been delayed and I was coming off of a particularly dramatic crash out over a particularly distressing attention to the passage of time. If there were any eloquent way to describe a panic attack over opening and closing grad school applications, it has left me, but I departed later than I should've for the exhibit due to this unruly spike in adrenaline. The nature of *The Clock* should, in theory, upset a viewer with a disposition to existential dread. But instead, the constant display of time quieted my internal ticking with the cinematic soundscape of the scenes.

It goes without fail that every day at 7:16 p.m., Sydney Prescott will be chased with a knife by her boyfriend wearing a ghostface mask shortly after she hangs up the phone in *Scream*. Every evening at 8:05 p.m., Reese Witherspoon checks her wristwatch (which I envy) before getting in her car and the inevitable coma-inducing car accident (which I don't envy) of *Just Like Heaven*. At 7:14 p.m., I thought about how Andrew Garfield looks so much older now compared to his performance in *Lions for Lambs*, and I wonder if he ever watches this film to reflect on who he was in his twenties.

Though I only spent one evening watching *The Clock*, I was stuck on the fact that the collection of spliced scenes will, with certainty, progress in the same order, lingering on that same timeline, every day that the exhibit is shown. Marclay has controlled time for an immortal 24-hour period. A type of at-



tention to knowing with certainty life's upcoming events, and if so, professing the blessing of leaving the theater and straying from the narrative. But the whole thing must be a lot deeper, I think. At the very least, I enjoyed the break from my chaotic reality until the museum closed and the attendants kicked me out of the cinema.

— Rocky Rüb

The Show Must Go On

The overwhelming desire for a musical theater program at Columbia.

BY LILY OUELLET

A director sprawls across the floor of the Glicker-Milstein Theatre, clutching a crumpled callback list and staring at the ceiling, hoping answers might be hidden in the catwalk. A choreographer eats a dry Liz's muffin in desperation. A producer clicks furiously through a shared spreadsheet, while a caller sits slumped in the audience, phone askew, waiting on an actor who's been deliberating for 15 minutes. Someone—probably a stage manager—is keeping everyone together by sheer force of will, because it's 1 a.m., all the writers are arguing, and no one is going home soon. This ritual begins each semester of Columbia student-theatre: a single delicious night known as Actor Share.

Actor Share is the existing system by which the directors and creative teams of all upcoming student-theatre productions simultaneously assemble their casts from the available talent pool. One production securing a lead for their show means that another must relinquish that actor, unless they agree to share. Actors anxiously wait at home for a call offering them a role. It is both exciting and terribly agonizing.

This process exists because there are simply too many productions for any to host its own auditions without creating a myriad of problems for the others (*The Varsity Show* is an exception, as it is to many of the rules). This semester alone, four major musicals are taking the stage: *The 131st Annual Varsity Show*, *Alive: The Mary Shelley Musical*, *Ride the Cyclone*, and *One-Armed Bandit*. All of these are student directed and produced; three of the

four are student written.

This is an impressive feat, considering that Columbia does not offer a dedicated musical theater program. At best, students can major in theater, with concentrations available in directing, playwriting, and dramaturgy. But there is no equivalent to the conservatory-style, musical theater-specific training and pre-professional resources of other nearby institutions such as The New School and NYU.

Columbia's musical theater practitioners must navigate a growing patchwork of clubs and organizations to develop their craft. There is no singular space in which budding performers can train—instead, they assemble their own curricula by participating in multiple extracurriculars that each focus on an aspect of musical theater practice. "Theater as a concept is incredibly diverse and holistic," says Eshan Kabir, CC '27. "It requires so many different disciplines to come together into a well-functioning work—and all of those disciplines have to give everything that they have." Kabir himself exemplifies this philosophy: he is on the board of



Illustration by Etia Lund

both the Columbia University Performing Arts League, an umbrella organization of performance clubs on campus, and First Stages, a club dedicated to nurturing original musical theater composition. He is also a *Varsity Show* alumnus, an orchestrator for *Alive*, and the co-composer and lyricist of *XMAS19!*, the 19th rendition of an annual holiday-themed musical comedy.

At the same time, the absence of a musical theater program has not only shaped pressures within the student-theater landscape, but it has also fundamentally disrupted its equilibrium.

A structured pathway would regulate the number of students interested in musical theatre, optimally aligning interest with opportunity. Instead, student theater has become oversaturated, pulling in a flood of all the aspiring theater practitioners vying for the same limited opportunities. Kabir describes this as a logistical nightmare: "There are too many people in these student groups doing musical theater. There are a lot of people interested in doing art, and if people are competing for that space, it makes it much more difficult, especially for resources."

The result is an ecosystem in which creativity outpaces infrastructure. As a composer, Kabir points out that while the number of aspiring composers grows every year, without musical theater composition classes, there are only three or four opportunities to compose in any given semester. Notably, those vying for one of these slots can include music majors composing their senior thesis, a de facto requirement for any composer intent on entering the musical theater industry after graduation. "Someone who's writing a thesis shouldn't have to compete for that slot with me to do something professional," Kabir explains. This bottleneck produces similar problems for aspiring musical theatre directors, playwrights, and producers.

Daniella Sapone, BC '25, founded the club First Stages with the goal of "filling this gap in the theater community" by "creating infrastructure and support to develop original musicals." As a seasoned composer of both *The Varsity Show* and *XMAS!*, Sapone was frustrated by the fact that these clubs were the only two existing avenues for musical theater composers. Unlike these clubs, however, First Stages offers masterclasses where student lyrics, composers, and playwrights can receive immediate feedback from industry professionals. Despite

initial funding challenges from the administration, the group flourishes, with over 75 active members across the University. In just three semesters, it has staged two full productions, with a third—composed by Sapone herself—in the works.

First Stages masterclasses are led by alumni volunteers eager to support student musical theater in lieu of a departmental program. Through a serendipitous encounter after a panel and their shared connection as *Varsity Show* alumnae, Sapone won the support of two-time Tony Award winner Jeanine Tesori, BC '83 for the First Stages cause. Other alumni who have generously supported First Stages include playwright Kait Kerrigan, BC '03, producer Rita Pietropinto-Kitt, CC '93, and Pulitzer Prize and two-time Tony Award winner Tom Kitt, CC '96.

Despite the general lack of institutional support for musical theater, there is one official opportunity for musical theater on campus. It's an elusive class—one of the five semesterly Acting II sections. It's taught by professor Mana Allen, a musical theatre veteran whose 15 original Broadway credits make her class one of the most sought after in the department.

Getting into Allen's class takes years of effort, according to Wren Pfletcher, BC '27. A current cast member of *The 131st Annual Varsity Show*, Pfletcher has performed in departmental productions, serves on the board of the King's Crown Shakespeare Troupe, and sings as a Tenor 1 in the campus a capella group SHARP. Despite being advertised as available to all undergraduates, entry is so competitive that Allen must maintain a "priority list," effectively barring students who don't meet its criteria from even submitting materials. As a result, the only avenue for formal musical theater instruction is, in practice, offered solely to senior actors.

With the only musical theater class perpetually overfilled and its waitlist spilling over into student productions and clubs, it's evident that the absence of musical theater support doesn't stem from lack of demand. The theater department tantalizingly teases musical theater opportunities but fails to allow most to come to fruition.

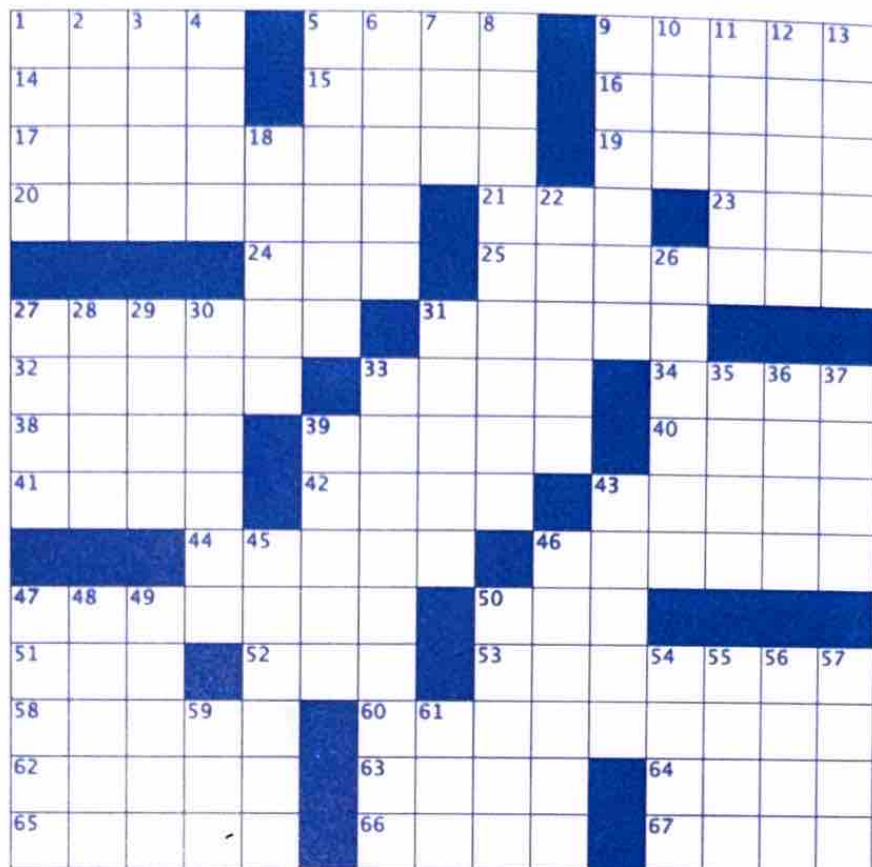
When I ask Sapone what departmental support for musical theater could look like, her eyes flick momentarily to her bag. Within moments, she's scrolling through a meticulously organized 13-

Down Along the Hudson

BY LUCIA DEC-PRAT

ACROSS

1. Injure
5. Sporty sandals brand
9. Step
14. ____ Karenina
15. To fence off or put aside
16. Opposite of discord, for short
17. Purgative
19. Baking attire
20. Invisible Man author Ralph with dedicated monument on 150th street
21. British equivalent of bachelorette party
23. Hi, in Portuguese
24. Streaming platform for The White Lotus
25. Resident of Canada's capital
27. Small circular currents
31. Organ that contains the hypothalamus and pituitary gland
32. Mammals clearing invasive plants on 120th street
33. Car brand founded in Turin
34. 1815 Jane Austen novel featuring the Woodhouses
38. Pretty, in cutesy English slang
39. Monkey bar alternatives on 106th street
40. Chairman Tse tung, and others
41. Prefix meaning "all"
42. Strong desire
43. Animal-themed playground on 91st street
44. "Thus with a kiss I die" speaker
46. Taunted
47. Gulp
50. Letter before chi
51. ____ Lingus
52. Mehmet chosen to head Medicare and Medicaid, for short?
53. Extended a subscription
58. Opposite of everybody
60. First Lady Eleanor with dedicated monument on 72nd street
62. Count of Monte Cristo author Alexandre
63. Hairy green fruit
64. Declare openly
65. Begin
66. "Do the Right Thing" pizzeria
67. Former "Tonight Show" host Jay



DOWN

1. Pepper spray brand
2. Uptight, informally
3. Global, abbr.
4. When doubled, a Hawaiian fish
5. Pulsates painfully
6. "Jack Sprat could ____ fat"
7. Seven in roman numerals
8. Capital of Alaska
9. Peace, in Sanskrit
10. Free water at restaurants, sometimes
11. Direction indicator
12. City near Bologna
13. 2021 Taylor Swift song with lyrics "we're gonna fly away from here"
18. Fireplace residue
22. French states
26. Iron deficiency
27. Favorite waffle brand of Tyler the Creator
28. MF ____, British-American rapper
29. "Shoot!"
30. Female influencer, maybe
31. Numbers game featuring boards and a cage
33. Independence Day display
35. Navigator's tools
36. Sulk

37. A section of turf, in England
39. Gossip
43. Young Germany's Heinrich
45. First-born
46. Written project of many seniors
47. Hourglass contents
48. "Let's go," informally
49. Scent
50. Roam
54. Emergency room dept. for further testing
55. "I don't believe ____ met"
56. Musk in recent headlines
57. Less prestigious than D-one?
59. No, in Australia
61. Most visited village in Santorini

Solution to March's puzzle:

