

URBAN POETRY



FOREWORD

A veritable postcard with its stunning lake landscapes, picturesque gardens, vibrant old town, and iconic international buildings, Geneva draws thousands of visitors each year. The pulse of the city has long fired the imagination of writers, echoing through countless literary works. Some authors celebrate its charm, portraying Geneva as a cultural hub – an endless source of creativity and opportunity. Others, adopting the melancholy of Dostoevsky's style, explore its darker undercurrents, revealing how urban life can foster discontent, anonymity, alienation, and loneliness. But do young locals see their city the same way tourists or Romantic writers once did? Through a series of poetry projects proposed by Chavanne Poe Magazine, students were invited to rediscover Geneva to express both their affection for and frustrations with the city they call home. The goal: to build a poetic portrait entitled

G E N E V A I N F R A G M E N T S.

One way to approach this portrait is through focused observation and sensory experience. Walking poetry workshops, inspired by the concept of “experiential travel,” offered participants a chance to tune into the city's poetic undercurrents. By slowing down, we begin to notice the small, lyrical details that often go unseen in daily life. Other poetic experiments included researching Geneva's past, encouraging students to journey into the city's rich history, legends, and myths. Through this combination of mindful observation and historical exploration, the shared threads of urban life, both present and past, can take on deeper, more meaningful dimensions.

So take a step, slow your pace, and let the city speak — one poetic fragment at a time.

Chavanne Poe

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A row of books with white daisies on top. The books are standing upright, and the daisies are placed on top of them, creating a decorative border. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue and white.

STOP AND SMELL THE FLOWERS

Claire Rousselot is in her 4th year, pursuing her maturity degree at College. She enjoys writing in her free time, a passion she has expressed through her maturity project — a novel written in French. Poetry is another genre she often turns to in order to frame her thoughts.

According to Claire, “Writing isn’t just about telling a story. It’s so much more than that. Every flower of imagination deserves to bloom, but you have to pick and choose those that will make a perfect bouquet. Mix the scents and care about the colors, the hydration, and the climate. Every flower deserves to bloom, but only some will be written and turned into art. So when I feel like walking into my garden — often sunny but sometimes dark — I pick a flower and compose my art.”

LES ROSES D'ICI

Claire Rousselot (408)

Les roses d'ici étaient fades,
Sans parfum et sans bruit,
Pas une tache de rouge, ne gâtait leur coque blanche,
Qui sous la brise, oscillait sans bruit.

Fuir, j'aurais dû je le sais,
Traverser la vallée,
Pendre l'un de mes rubans aux grillages,
Et fuir ce rivage.

Mais dans une poigne d'éteint,
Mes habits s'accrochèrent aux arbres,
Et d'une ultime union me ravirent le passage,
Où l'orée blanche s'était éteinte.

**SI
MES LARMES
ÉTAIENT
DES PERLES
DE LILAS**

Claire Rousselot (408)

Si mes larmes étaient des perles de lilas,
En été, sous un soleil de plomb,
Glisseraient sur une statue au fond,
Des glycines à côté du magnolia.

Perdue ou enchevêtrée sur un balcon,
Je serais avachit, les yeux rivés sur le violet,
La couleur du ciel qui couvre mon palais,
Et l'éloigne des ombres des ronces.

Les hautes tourelles sous la lumière de minuit.
Où la candeur des bougies chanteraient,
Pour réveiller de l'ennui, gaie,
La morte aux yeux lazuli.

Claire Rousselot (408)

Alive? You asked.
She was till you met her.

She was a sturdy morning,
brewed coffee and sunlight kiss.
Her glassy eyes and red lips,
Of too much sun exposure.

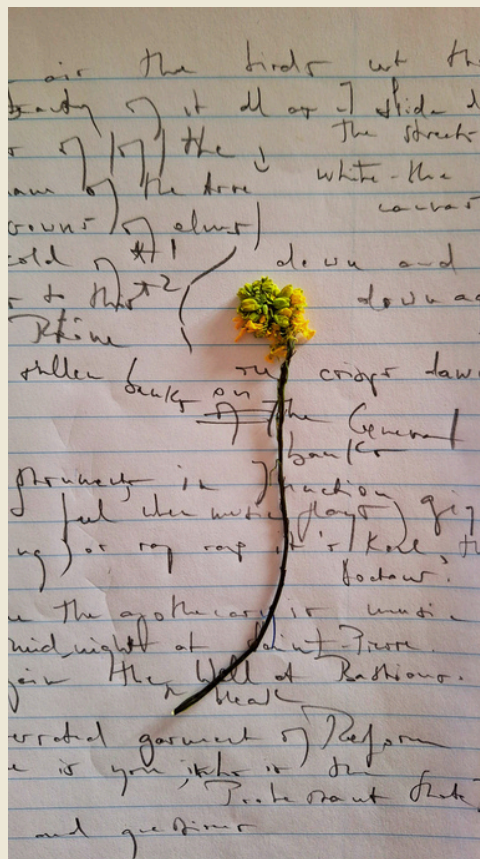
When the sun no longer shines,
she returned,
To her books, to the dust,
to the old mysteries nobody longer pursues.

She was the sun in all its forms,
sometimes sweet sometimes soft,
sometimes hard or not enough
but you, you were the darkness and you absorbed her.

She vanished and you dare ask where she's gone ?
Look around you, it's in your soul.

GENEVA FROM A TO Z

Let's discover the city where we live, work or study in a unique way through reading abecedarians. This poetic form which uses the alphabet as its spine was explored by students of the second year during their English Week. The workshop was guided by rapper Dr Koul who also took part in creative writing producing a new song. Each letter triggers a new line, idea, or image inspired by urban life of Geneva.



ABCDarian

Erton Bajrami (202bi), Chiara Zucchetto (203bi),
Xavier Grunauer (206), Jack Henley (210) & Quentin Delfosse (205)

Arve is heading its way to Junction.
Black bise blowing through the body.
Colladon was a physicist — now a bus stop.
Dining in the parks.
English garden, home to the flower clock.
Frankenstein's creature in Plainpalais.
Gargantua and its giant leaps in Geneva.
Hotels with a view on the lake.
International city.
Jean Calvin and his shadow
Kalvingrad today.
Leman IS Lake Geneva.
Mountain Salève where the time stops.
Nuclear research in CERN.
Old town and its cobblestone streets.
Punctual trains in Cornavin.
Quai Gustave–Ador and the Jet d'Eau.
Rhône and its clear water, final meeting with the Arve.
Servette FC.
TPG is always late...
United Nations, but are they?
Victoria Hall and l'Usine are factories of sound.
Watch-making and its cradle in Geneva.
Xmas market with its hot chocolate!
Yellow shuttle boats — connecting "Rives".
ZIPLO — Genève, Maison de la Paix.

ABCDarian

Dr Koul

A is aerosol that we graffiti with.
B is breaking on beats the DJ spins.
C is the shape of my hand cupping the mic
and **D** is the doubt when I ask, yo is it right?
E are the elements of Hip Hop culture.
F is the fight for our rights from the oppressor.
G is the gift of the arts that we were given by
H, the heroes that helped us along the way.
I, myself and I in relation to
J, the jail of a world that I was raised in.
K, the knowledge of self that I'm equipped with.
L, is what we go beyond: the city's limits.
M, monuments that don't represent us.
N, the notion that we should reinvent the
O, open space shared by community.
P, why do police act with impunity?
Q, questions that seem hard to answer.
R, rights that should be universal.
S, the streets are ours, that's essential.
T, the truth is is need of our protection.
U, are you with me in this mission?
V, together can we share the vision?
W, we are the ones that hold the power to
X out injustice and regain what's ours.
Y does it have to be so darn tough?
when **Z**, the end of the line is coming up.

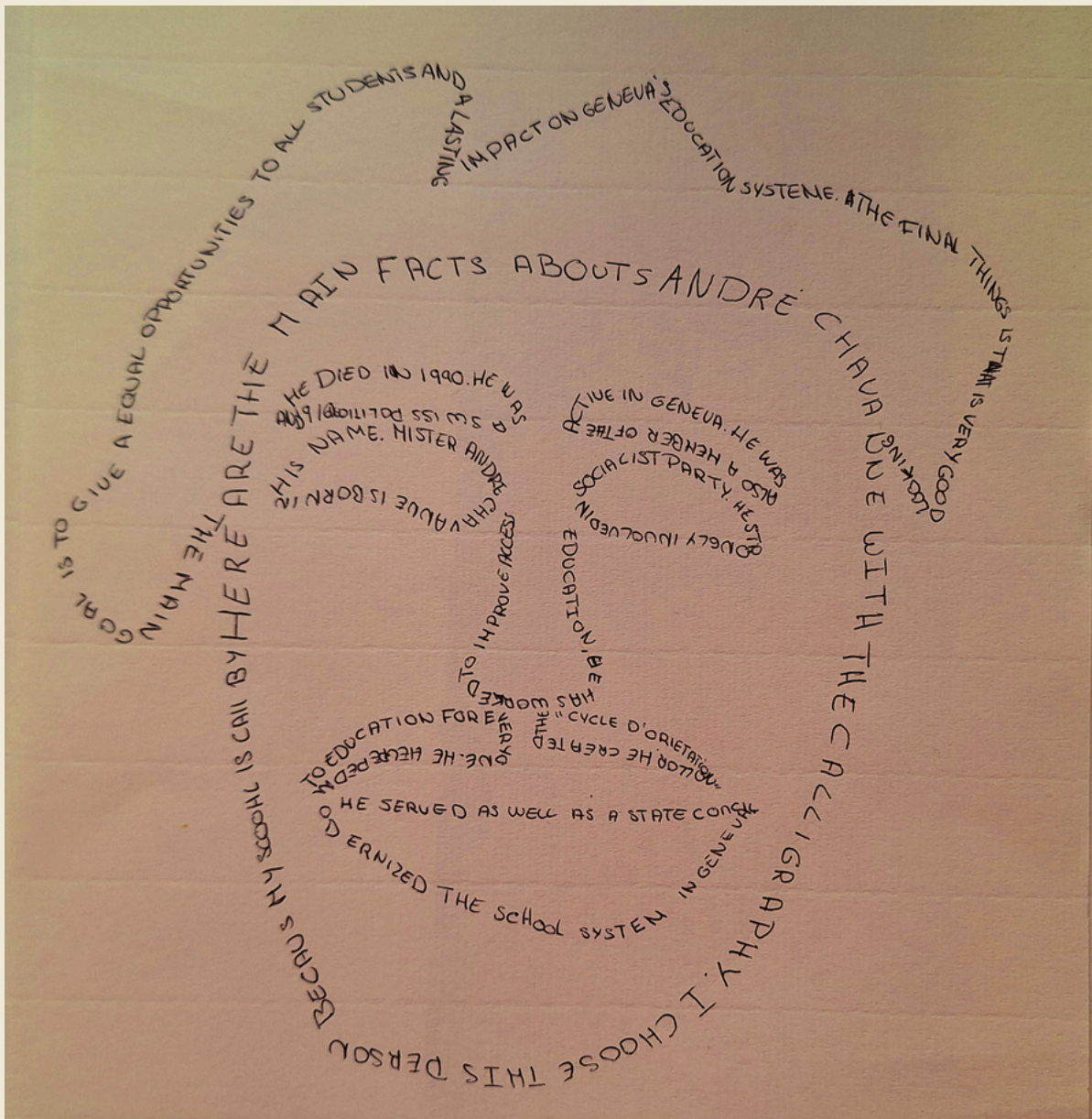
CONCRETE POETRY

Discover Geneva's legacy through visual poetry! Geneva has been home to many influential figures — writers, scientists, and human rights activists. In this section, you will read about one of these individuals through concrete poetry, where language becomes students' paint and the page their canvas. They have combined visual and verbal expression, creating a portrait where the form of a poem is as meaningful as the words themselves.



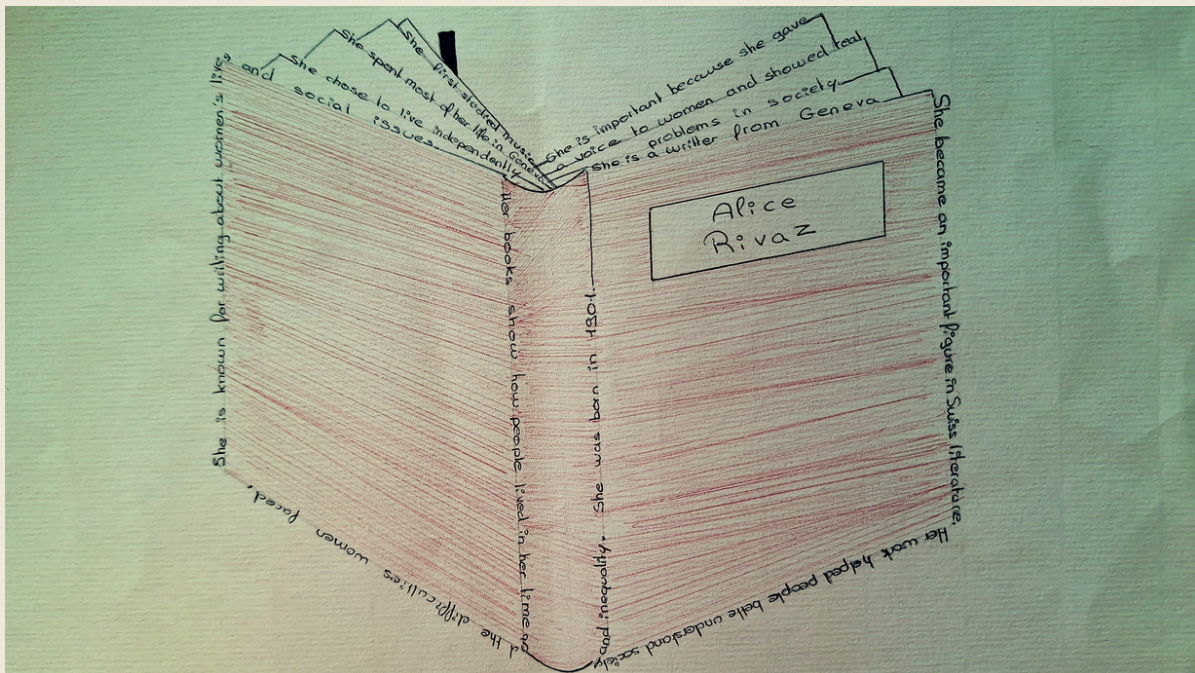
PORTRAIT IN WORDS: ANDRÉ CHAVANNE

Benjamin Christin (207)



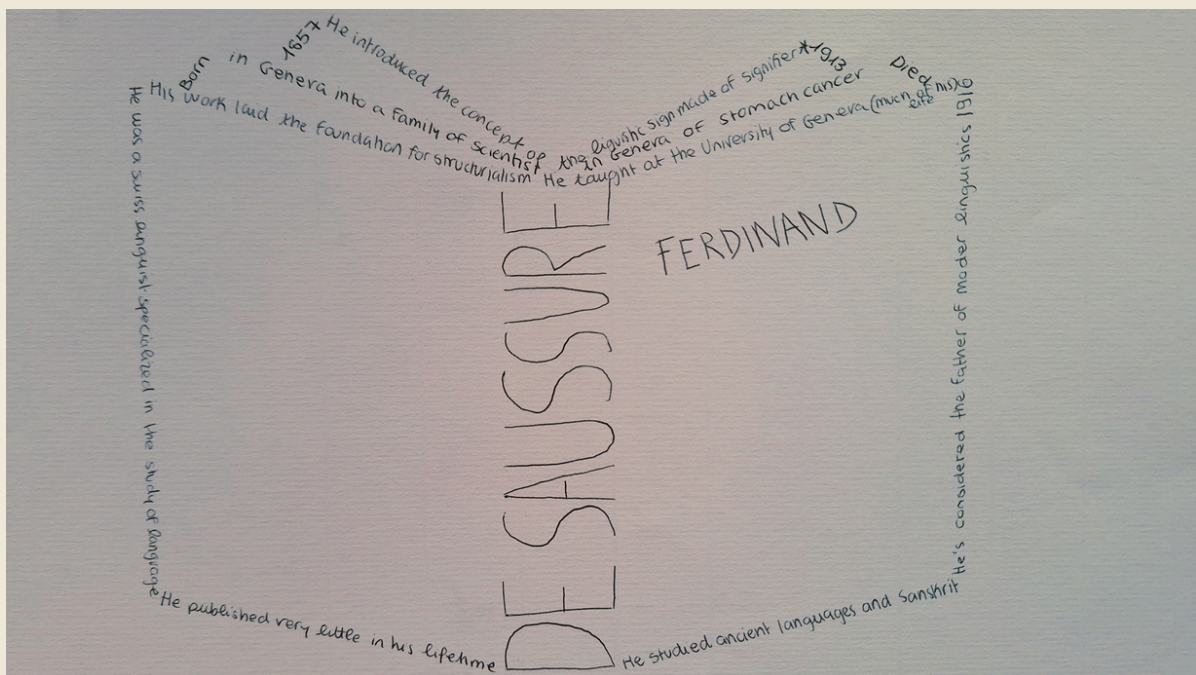
PORTRAIT IN WORDS: ALICE RIVAZ

Kelya Pippia (207)



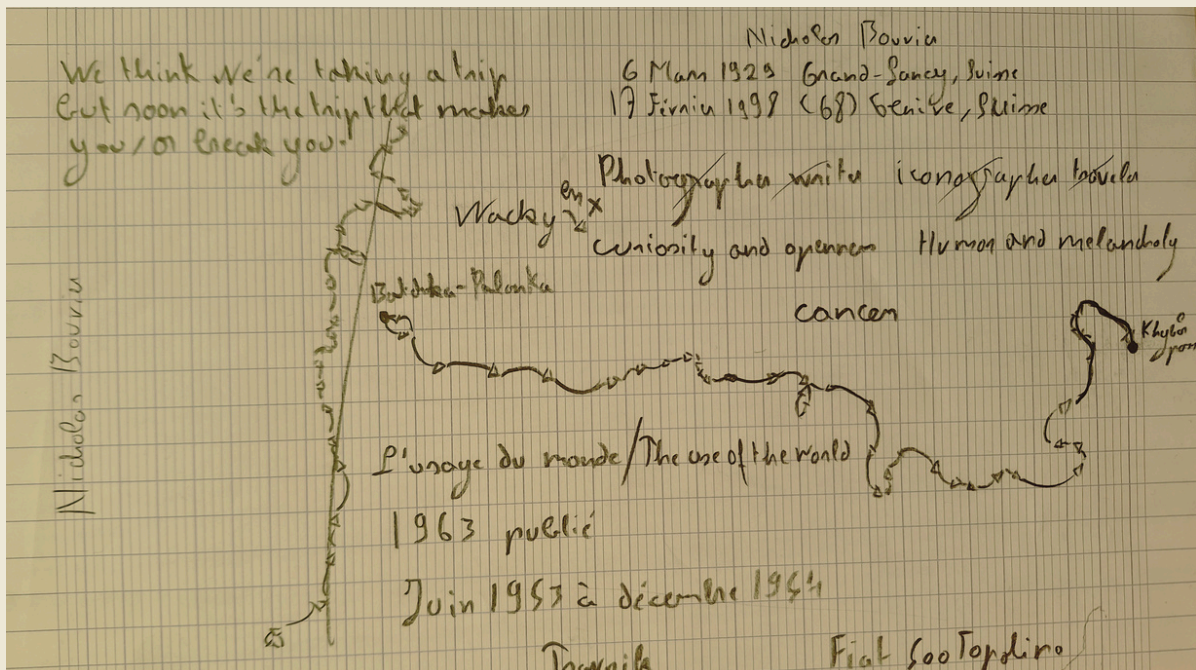
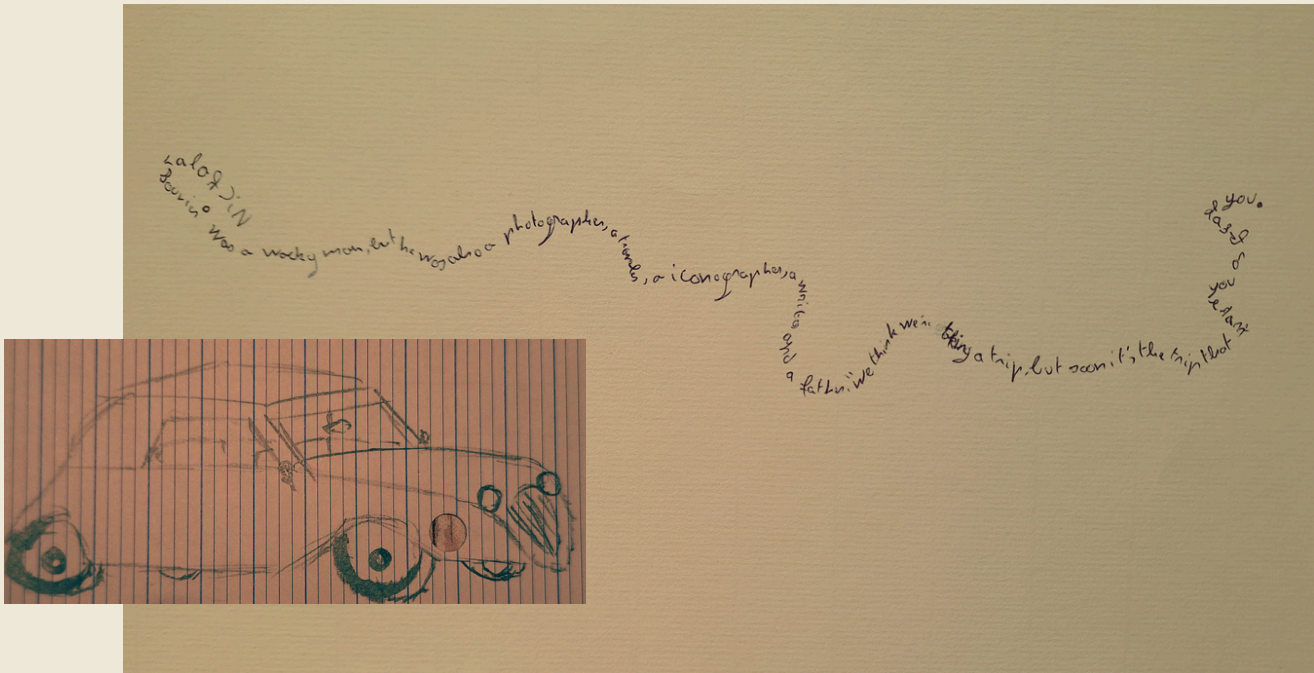
PORTRAIT IN WORDS: FERDINAND DE SAUSSURE

Alessia Alemanno (207)



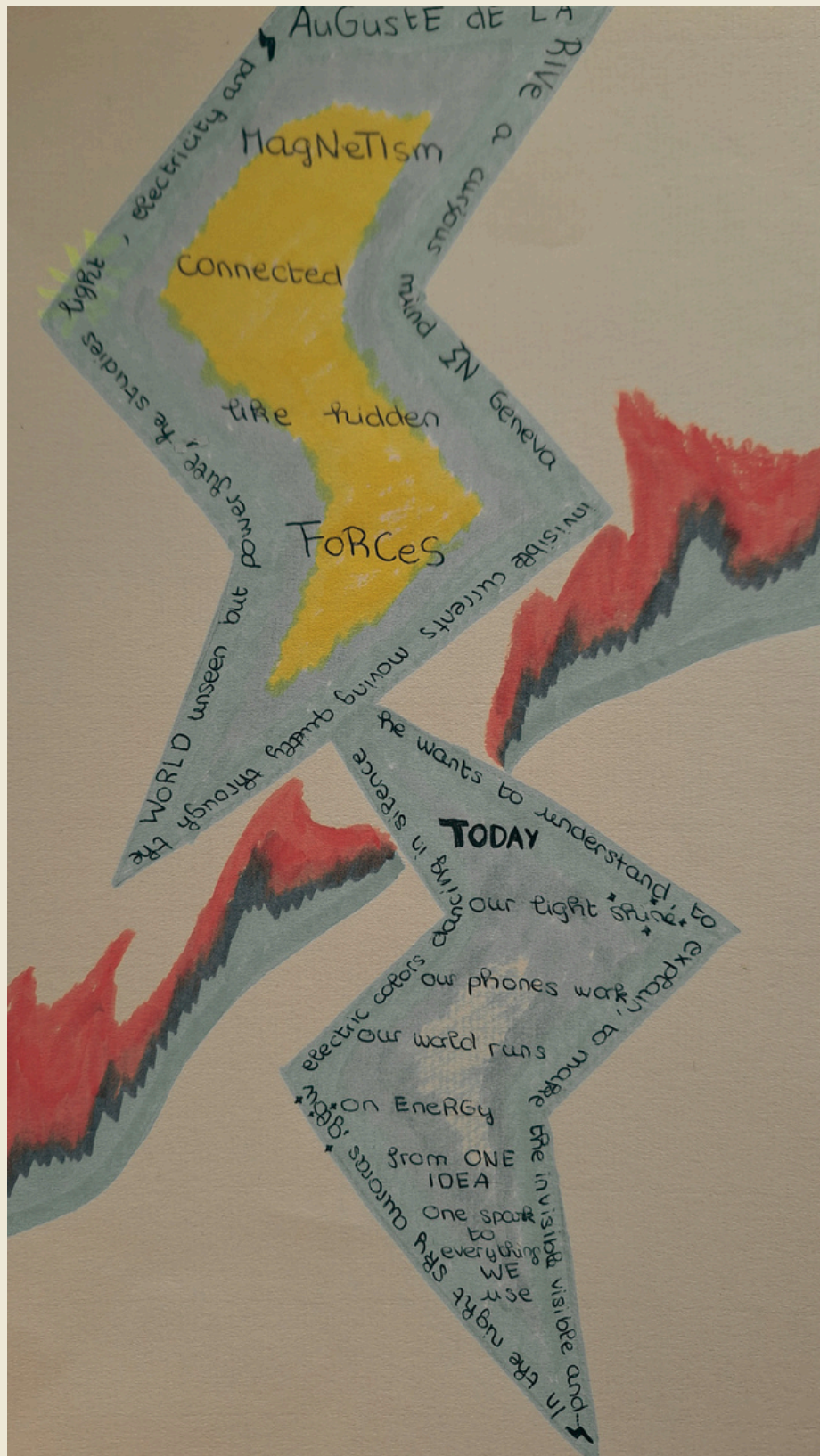
PORTRAIT IN WORDS: NICOLAS BOUVIER

Diego Silvestre (207)



PORTRAIT IN WORDS: AUGUSTE DE LA RIVE

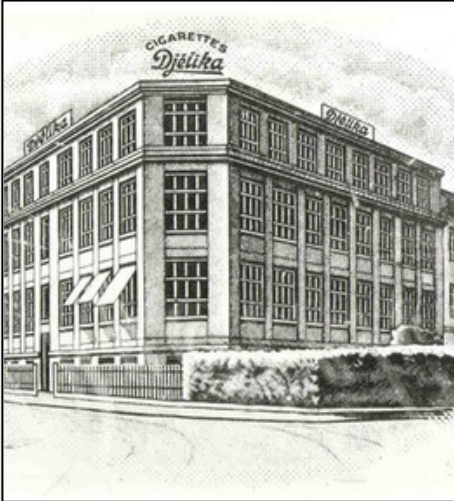
Dina Baina (207)



CITY METAMORPHOSIS: BUILDING CV POEMS

French poet Charles Baudelaire, who once wistfully wrote: “The form of a city changes faster, alas, than the human heart.” This section invites you to immerse in retrospection and discovery of Geneva’s past life, transformation of its industrial brown sites, and the change of their identities. How would a metallic voice of an ex-industrial plant evolve once converted into a concert hall? What would a ghost of a lost factory whisper in our ears when we walk around a newly transformed gallery? How would a temperament of an ancient car plant change when morphed into a quiet residence house? This reflection on the life of a building before and its second life lends itself to poetry.





L'USINE BEYELER

Bergeles du Rhône

ADDRESS

Rue des Deux-Ponts 4
1205 Genève

DATE OF BIRTH

1910

FUNCTIONS

- 1910 · Gold chains
- 1910 · Watch bracelets
- 1920 · Watch workshops
- 1920 · Measuring tools
- 1920 · Cigarette factory
- 1945 · Watch dials
- 1950 · Industrial workforce
- 1960 · Watchmaking front
- 1990 · Industrial decline
- 2010 · Residential reuse

CURRICULUM VITAE

I was born in 1910, on the banks of the Rhône, when industry was still discovering the power of natural light.

My bones were cast in reinforced concrete, my lungs opened wide with tall windows.

I first learned precision through the gold chains, fashioned by the patient hands of Eugène Tissot.

At the time, time hung from pockets, heavy and slow, and I carried that weight with pride.

After the Great War, fashion changed and I had to adapt.

New tenants arrived, bringing thermometers, cigarettes, smaller watches, and other smells.

I grew by one floor, as if to keep up with the century.

Machines came and went, but the rhythm never really left me.

After another war, Beyeler filled my rooms with dials and precise movements.

Two hundred workers passed through my rooms every day, many of them women, focused and confident.

Together with my neighbours, I formed the watchmaking front of La Jonction.

We measured the hours while the river flowed by without asking permission.

Towards the end of the century, silence slowly replaced the hum of production.

My workshops emptied, but my walls remembered.

I was bought, absorbed, put on hold, almost forgotten.

Then came the transformation, controversial and irreversible.

I was raised up again, with new volumes and new lives added on top.

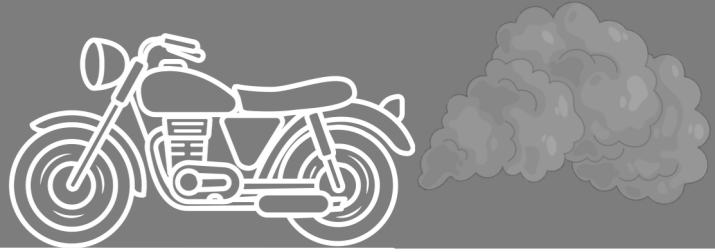
Today, I house flats instead of workshops, conversations instead of machines.

I still face the Rhône, pretending that nothing has changed.

But inside me, time continues to pass.



Motosacoche



Address

Route des Acacias 25
1227 Les Acacias



Birthday

born in the year 1899



Main activity

Production of motorcycle engines
Mechanical manufacturing



Reconversion

Industrial site transformed
New use: offices and workspaces

CV OF A BUILDING

I was born in the Acacias,
in the early twentieth century,
when Geneva was growing
with factories, engines, and ambition.

Inside my walls,
machines were loud and strong.
Workers built motorcycle engines,
giving energy and movement to the city.

But one day, the noise stopped.
My rooms became quiet,
and my industrial life came to an end.

Instead of disappearing,
I was transformed.
New people, new ideas,
a new purpose.

Today I am an office building
modern, calm, and full of activity.
I am Motosacoche:
a building with a past,
reborn for the future.



L'USINE

Full name: Usine Genevoise de Dégrossissage d'Or

Birth date: 1875

Address: Pl. des Volontaires 4, 1204 Genève

GET TO KNOW ME

DIPLOMAS

CFC in Gold Refinement
Master of Arts

LANGUAGES

- French
- English
- German

HOBBIES

- melting metal
- industrial work
- building renovation
- dancing
- singing

CONTACT

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usine@usine.ch
<https://www.usine.ch>

MY STORY

I was born in 1875,
near the Rhône,
to work with fire and gold.
My days were loud and hot.

I melted metal,
cleaned it,
and gave it a new value.
I worked for watchmakers,
for Geneva,
without asking for attention.

Fires marked my life.
Each time, I was rebuilt.
Each time, I continued.
In 1970, my machines stopped.

Silence filled my rooms.

I was left behind.
Then people came back,
not for gold,
but for music and art.

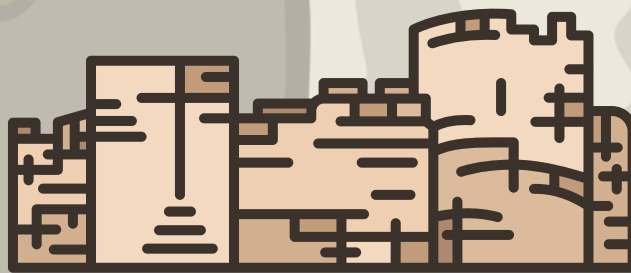
I am no longer a factory.

I am a place to live.

I changed,
but I am still here.

LOCAL LEGENDS SET TO BALLADS

Think you know all the secrets of Geneva? Think again. This land is brimming with forgotten myths, strange creatures, and legendary figures. From the White Lady of Rouelbeau Castle to the wyvern of the Rhône, from Celtic giant Gargantua to the miracle ship on the lake, Geneva's stories are waiting to be rediscovered and retold. Students have breathed new life into some of these legends by retelling it in the form of a ballad — a traditional type of narrative poem that was made to be recited or sung. Uncover Geneva's hidden myth through poetry!



THE WHITE LADY OF ROUELBEAU CASTLE

Chiara Zucchetto (203bi), Aminata Lo & Ishma Mannengal (210)

Let me tell you about my story
Of my tragic life.
I was Mr. Humbert's lady
Known as the Lady in White.

Failing to provide a male,
My husband became cruel.
He decided to abandon me,
His wife, The White Lady.

A revenge is what I wanted.
In my castle a plan I created.
Each boy that I will see,
Filled with rage I will be.

Imprisoning and eating them,
I will do that to all of them,
With that I will be powerful,
And Humbert will look like a fool.

THE WHITE LADY OF ROUELBEAU CASTLE

Anton Dmitrevski & Jobel Nwaha (207)

On Rouelbeau old crumbling tower
The moon hangs cold and high
A knight once laughed, there is no power
In a ghost to make me fly.

He lit a fire, he drew his sword,
And sat to wait the night.
When the darkness covered the road,
There appeared a woman in white.

She was bending her head,
Her eyes were sorrow's deep.
'Brave knight', she said.
'Away from me keep!'

THE WYVERN OF THE RHÔNE

Youssef Bader (207) & Erton Bajrami (202bi)

In the city of Geneva,
Near the wide Rhône River,
People tell an old story
About a strange creature.

Long ago, in the dark water,
A monster was said to live.
It moved slowly under the river
Watching the quiet town.

At night people heard the sound
Coming from the water,
The water moved, something splashed.
But no one could see the monster.

GARDENS OF GENEVA IN CASCADE POETRY

Where do you go when you are tired of the hustle and bustle of the city? Which park in Geneva is your favourite green island? Do you have a secret garden tucked away somewhere in the city? Young poets from our school have shared their secrets in the form of a cascade poem, known for its beautiful repetition and flowing structure — just like a waterfall. Under the guidance of botanical illustrator Lisa Anzellini, students have then used art to explore their relationship with nature.



Luciana

That's the garden next to my home
with the stunning view on my city.
Everything about that place brings me calm and peace,
makes me feel calm and peaceful

You can hear the cars and see people passing by.
... It's noisy but quiet at the same time.
That's the garden next to my home.

THAT'S THE GARDEN NEXT TO MY HOUSE

The statue of a pretty woman is in the middle.
At the top of the hill there are benches
With the stunning view on my city.

Luciana Grunauer (2006)

Feeling the breeze on my skin on top of the hill,
The sun is going through the branches to reach my skin.
Everything about that place brings me calm and peace,
makes me feel calm and peaceful

You can hear the cars and see people passing by.

It's noisy but quite at the same time.

That's the garden next to my home.

The statue of a pretty woman is in the middle.

At the top of the hill there are benches

With a breathtaking view on my city.

Feeling the breeze on my skin on top of the hill,

The sun is going through the branches to reach my skin.

Everything about that place makes me feel calm and peaceful.

Gardens of Geneva o Cascade Poetry

Feeling the softness of the flowers,
Looking at the birds in the sky,
While lying on the fresh grass.

Resting during a stunning day,
Watching the sun shine brightly,
Feeling the softness of the flowers.

Children plying, singing and laughing,
A baby in their mother's arms quietly
Looking at the birds in the sky.

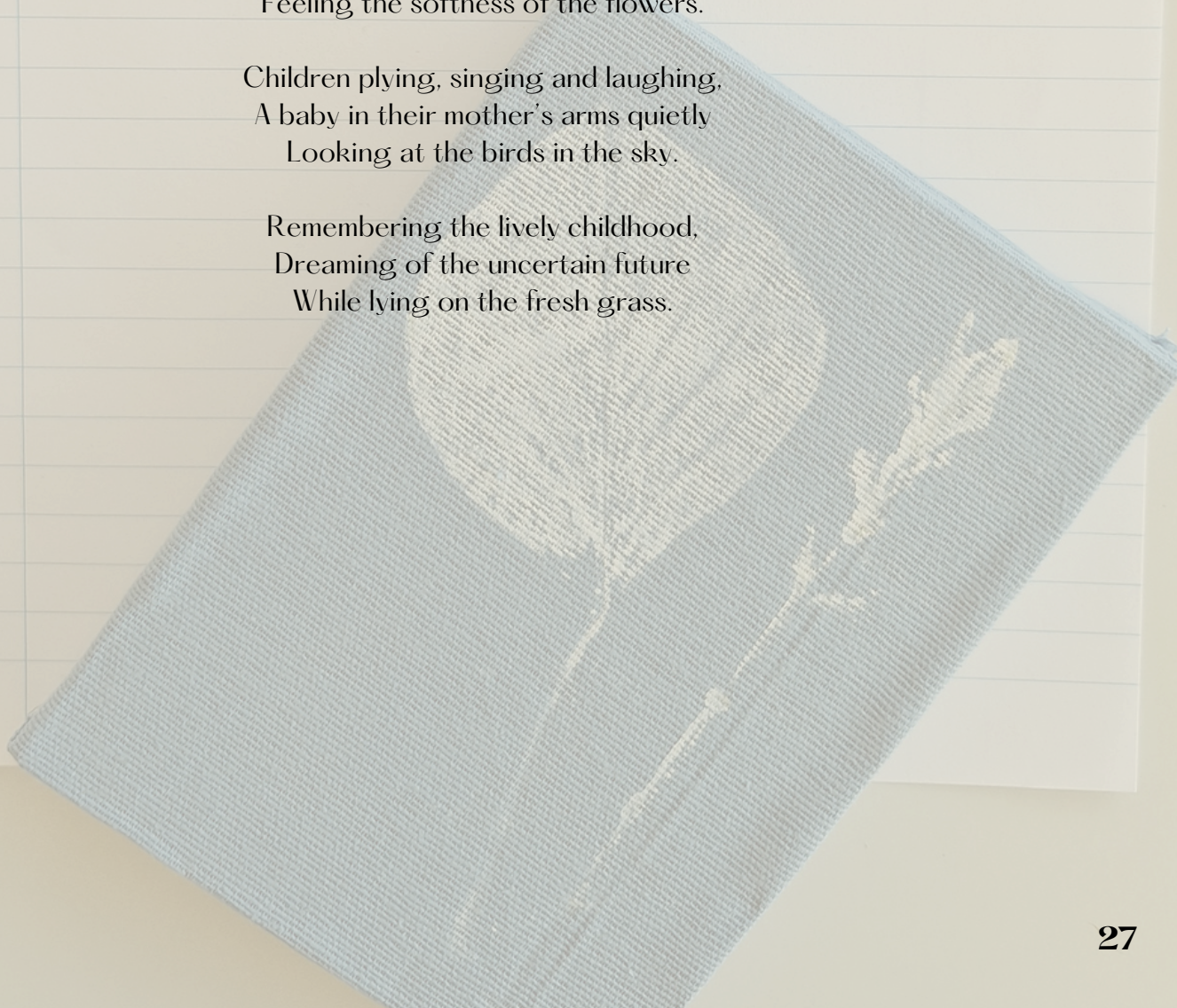
Chiara Zucchetto (203bi)

Remembering the lively childhood,
Feeling the softness of the flowers,
Looking at the birds in the sky,
While lying on the fresh grass.

Resting during a stunning day,
Watching the sun shine brightly,
Feeling the softness of the flowers.

Children plying, singing and laughing,
A baby in their mother's arms quietly
Looking at the birds in the sky.

Remembering the lively childhood,
Dreaming of the uncertain future
While lying on the fresh grass.



THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE I RESIDE

Bao Nguen (205)

This is the place where I reside,
When sadness and sorrows take over.
The view on the city relieves my pain.

The plants surrounding me are astonishing.
They add exotic colours to the parc and great smell.
This is the place where I reside.

The birds flying around and singing make my mind clear.
Once a time, the sky becomes grey and windy,
When sadness and sorrows take over.

The bench gives an extremely immaculate view.
I cannot take my eyes off, once I laid my eyes on it.
The view on the city relieves my pain.

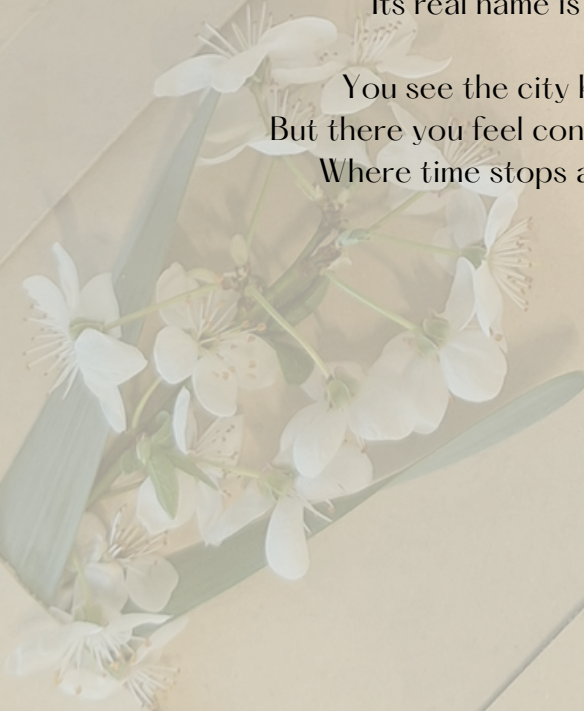
TOP OF GENEVA

Erton Bajrami (202bi)

Top of Geneva is the name of my safe place.
Its real name is Le Salève,
Where time stops and birds sing.

It is far away from the city,
You see all Geneva from it.
Top of Geneva is the name of my safe place.
People there are friendly and calm.
They have affection for it and call it differently.
Its real name is Le Salève.

You see the city keep moving
But there you feel connected to nature,
Where time stops and birds sing.



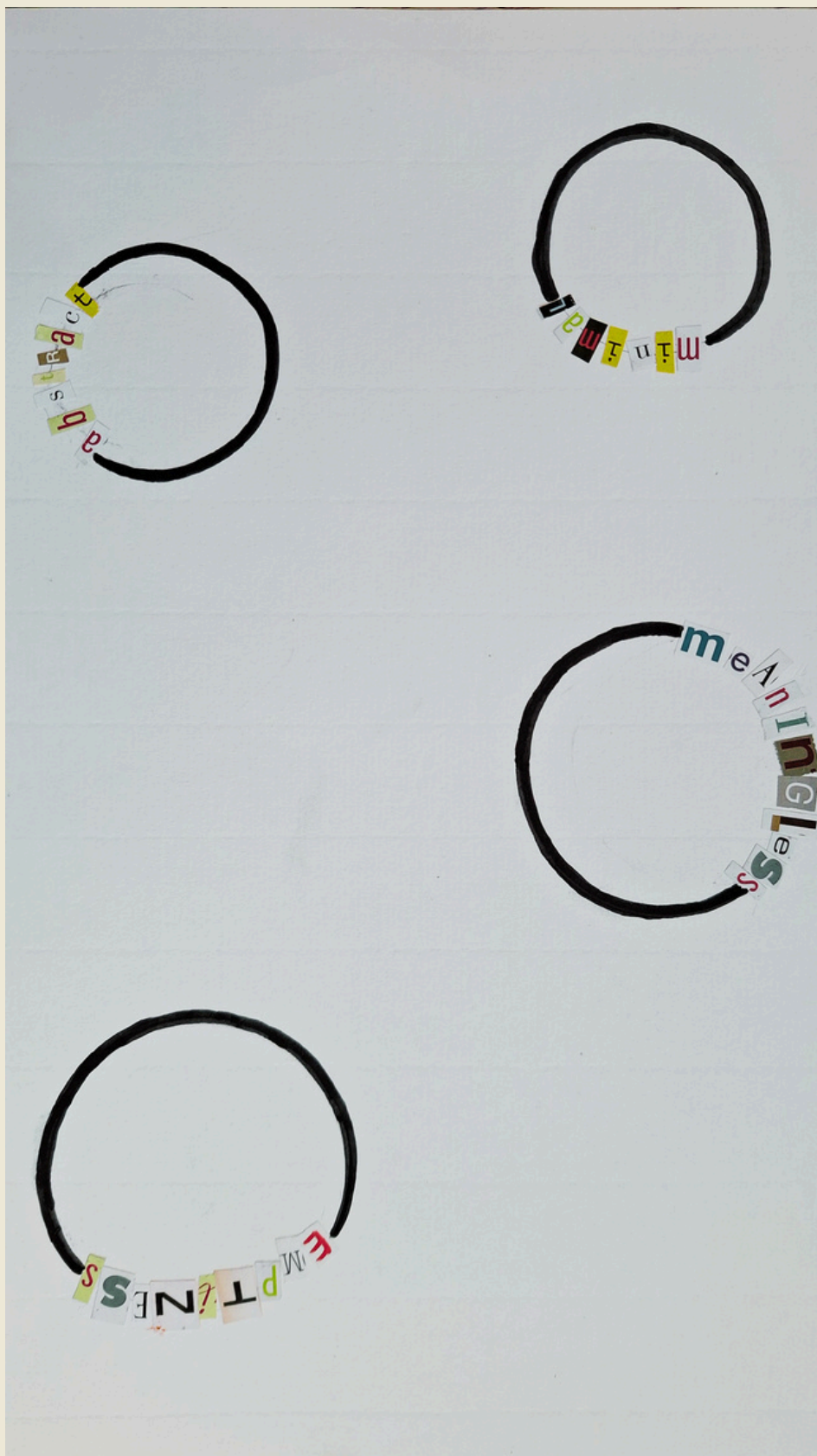
DIALOGUE WITH ARMLEDER'S OBSERVATORIES

The internationally renowned artist, born in Geneva in 1948, John Armleder, has been invited by the Museum of Art and History (MAH) as an ideal curator to forge a dialogue between heritage and contemporary art. His exhibition Observatories is a thematic journey where each room explores a different universe — from animals to abstract paintings, musical instruments to light fixtures. Bringing the monumental architecture of the MAH into conversation with its vast collection, Armleder has created a uniquely personal show. Through ephemeral structures and layered compositions, ordinary objects weave links that constantly generates new possibilities.

This event has been an invitation for a class of André-Chavanne to wander and for each student to compose their own repertoire of ideas and associations. According to the artist, pictures belong to people who are looking at them. They exist in that instant. In this journey to Observatories students have revived numerous works of art through a dialogue between objects of art, their arrangement proposed by Armleder and their own points of view resulted in experimental poetry.

ROOM N°1 ABSTRACT PAINTING

Carte Blanche to Thelma Battistini (2006) & Alyssa Carlos (202bi)



ROOM N°2 FLOWERS

Carte Blanche to Fanny Von Bueren & Melisa Husejinovic (202bi)



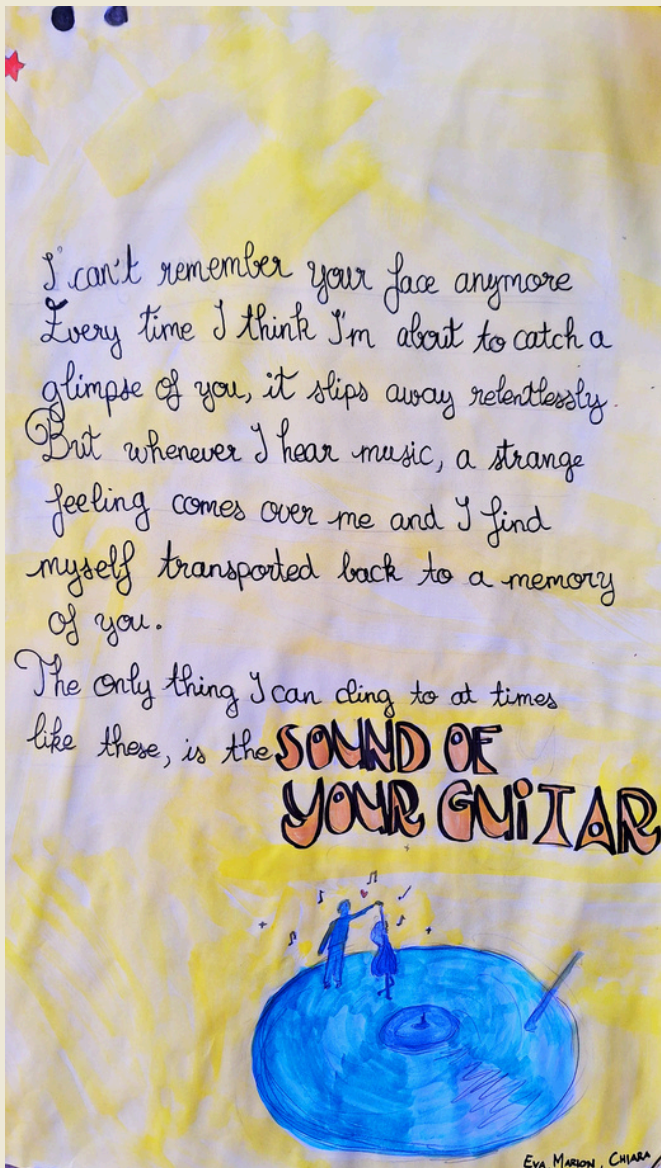
ROOM N°2 FLOWERS

Carte Blanche to Fanny Von Bueren & Melisa Husejinovic (202bi)



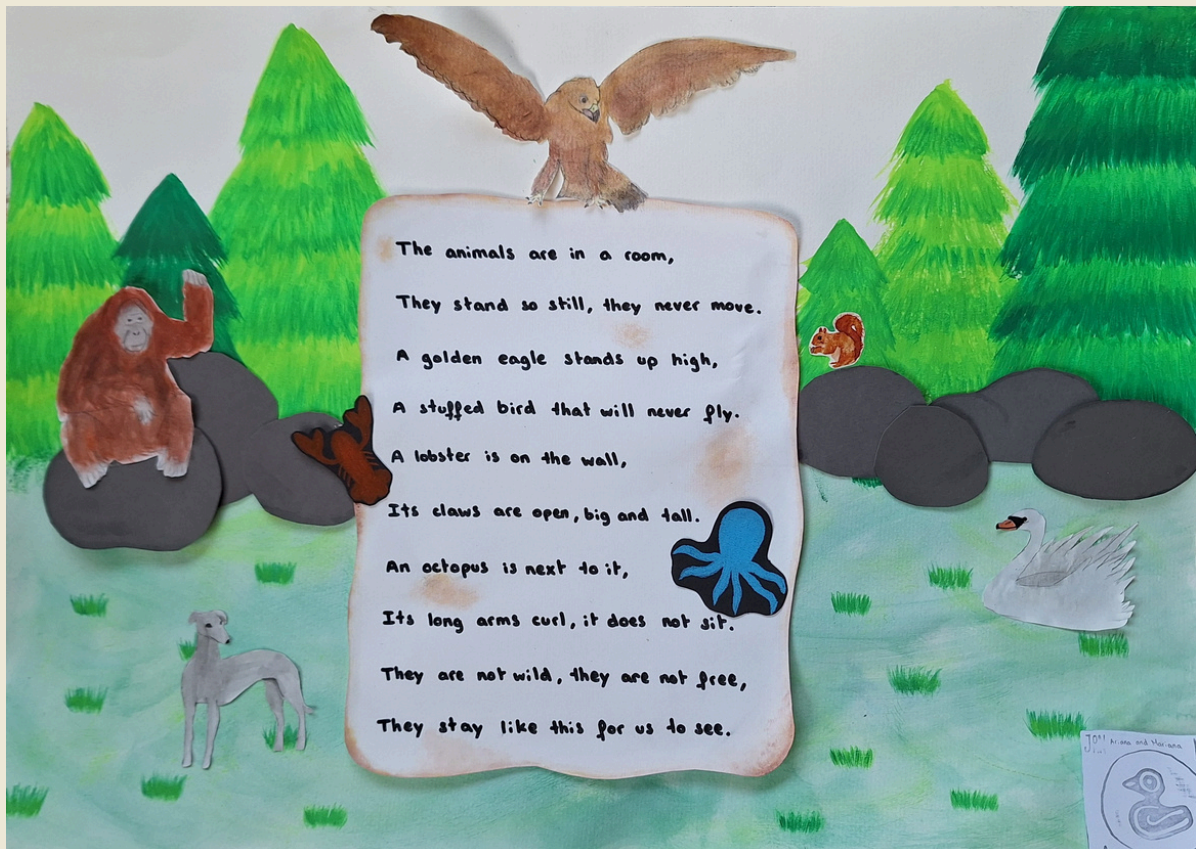
ROOM N°4 MUSIC

Carte Blanche to Chiara De Luca, Eva Guisolan & Marion Martinez (202bi)



ROOM N°11 ANIMALS

Carte Blanche to Ariana Pereira, & Mariana Rodrigues (202bi)



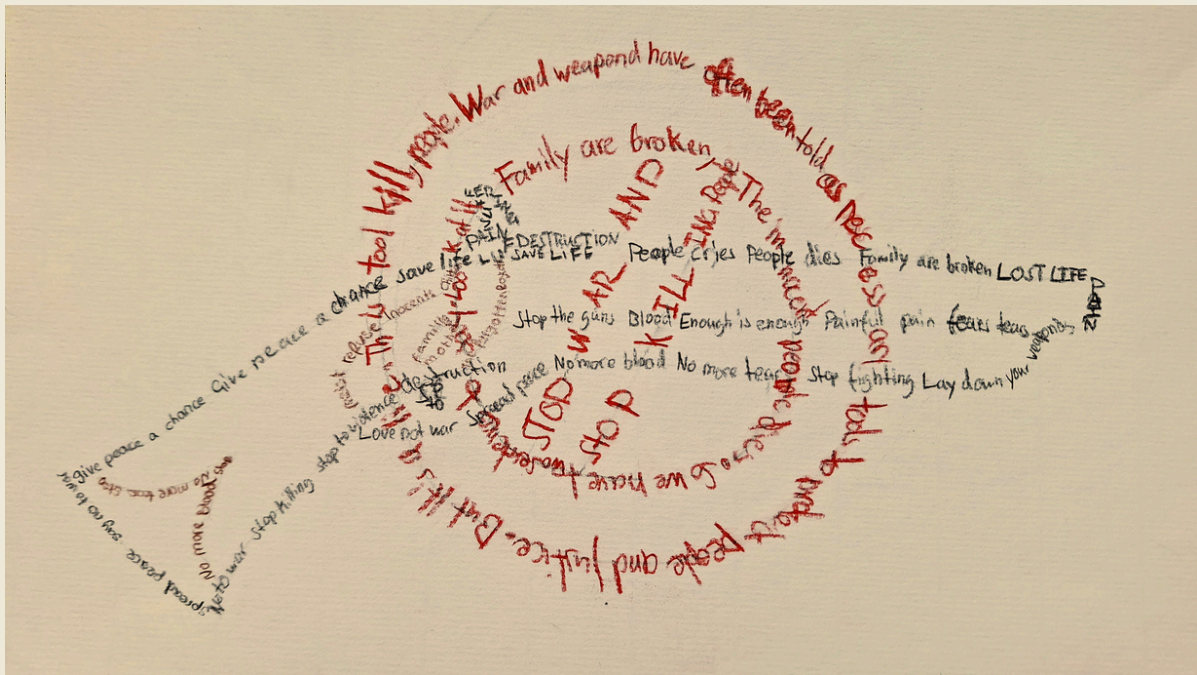
ROOM N°12 SELF-PORTRAITS

Carte Blanche to Warda Ahmed & Aulona Ajvazi (2016)



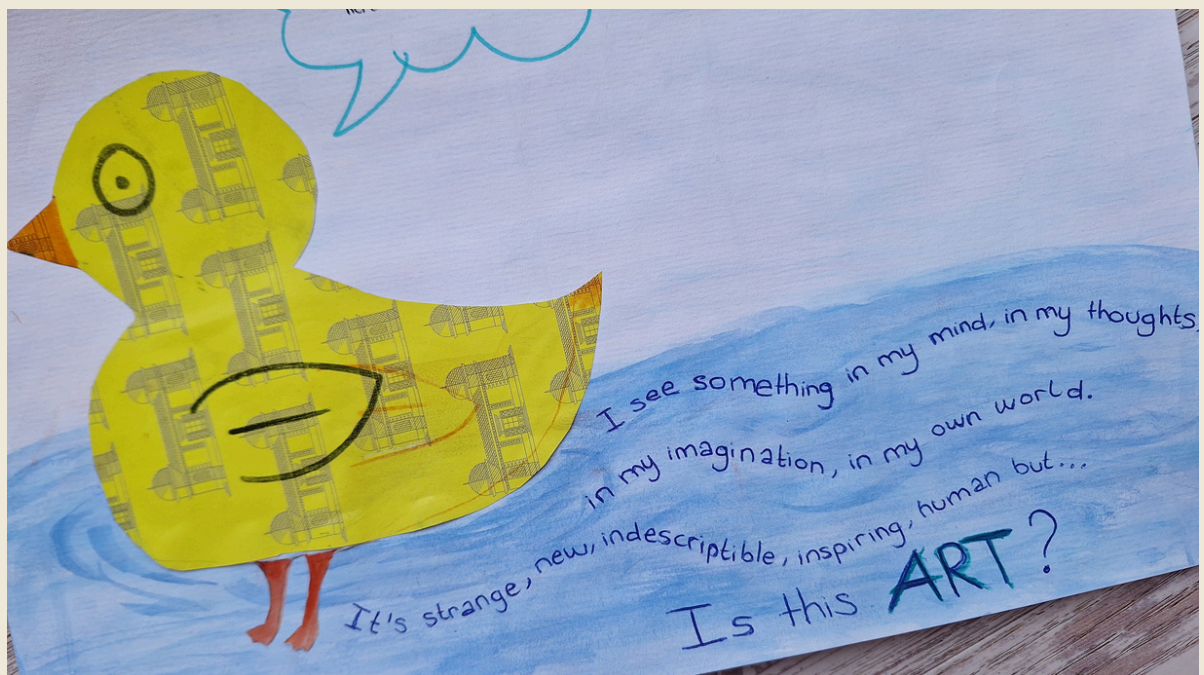
ROOM N°13 EMPTINESS

Carte Blanche to Joël Owusu & Ismael Seck (206)



ROOM N°15 BOOKS AND ARTIST STAMPS

Carte Blanche to Nora Halilovic & Matteo De Marco (2016)



IMAGINE GENEVA

Imagine you can change the world around you to make it better. John Lennon's notorious "Imagine," released in 1971, was born from the Vietnam War era and inspired by Yoko Ono's avant-garde poetry. It served as a peaceful anthem.

Inspired by the song, two groupes of students remixed couplets from this song creating a collaborative utopia. The remakes reflect their dreams about the city they live raising serious topics such as violence, crimes, ecological problems or just reflecting a playful and carefree world of a teen.

**REMAKE OF
JOHN LENNON'S
IMAGINE
BY BAND
207**

Imagine an enormous park
I wonder if you can
A place where we can feel free
Like wildflowers in the field

Imagine all the children
Dancing hand in hand **(Alessia, Sana & Dina)**

Imagine, there's no traffic
It's easy if you try
No waste around us
Above us only sky

Imagine all the people
Recycle everyday **(Diego & Rani)**

Imagine bus 64 is not delayed
It's not that hard to do
Nothing to make Joan late
And miss his classes too

Imagine all the people
Finally arrive on time **(Anton & Joan)**

Imagine there's no school
I wonder if we can
No stress and no deception
We prefer to tan

Imagine all the teenagers
Living all their dreams **(Elma & Leila)**

You may say I'm a love builder
But I'm not the only one
I hope some day you can join me
And this city will be ours **(Augustin & Matei)**

**REMAKE OF
JOHN LENNON'S
IMAGINE
BY BAND
2AN.OS**

Imagine a more colourful life
It isn't hard to do
Add more trees and flowers
And more happiness too

Imagine all the people
Living together, you **(Alyssa, Marion & Fanny)**

Imagine there's no violence
It's easy if you try
No fear to go outside
Everybody by our side **(Ismael & Joël)**

I dream of a new city
And I know I'm not the only one
I hope one day we can stop pollution
The world with parks and gardens

Imagine all the people
Sharing all this world, you **(Ariana & Mariana)**

Imagine there is no difference
It's easy to be who you want
No hate between us
Above us only love

Imagine all the people
Living together, aah **(Aulona, Warda & Matteo)**

You may say I'm a partygoer
But I'm not the only one
Maybe one day you will come
And it will be hella fun **(Melisa & Thelma)**

PEOPLE'S STORIES THROUGH EKPHRASTIC POETRY

Imagine stepping into the black-and-white world of a photograph — back in time, into the busy street of Geneva in the early 20th century. Through ekphrastic poetry, you will bring these moments and workers to life, giving them a voice, a story, and a place in our online magazine. What is an ekphrastic poem? It is a vivid and imaginative response to a piece of art or a historical photograph. It goes beyond simple description — it explores the story, emotion, and meaning behind the image. The poets may describe what they see, invent voices and backstories, or reflect on the wider human themes captured in the image.



Photo by Valentine Mallet: Butchers at the Quai des Moulins, 1906—1911

Source: <https://www.bge-geneve.ch>

THE STORY OF A BUTCHER

Emma Wagner & Loryne Costa (1Cd.01)

Every morning, I repeat the same ritual,
like a loop I never asked to play in.
Five a.m., the fog wraps the streets,
and I walk through it as if I'm not really there —
half ghost, half worker,
guided by a sun too tired to rise.

I fetch the meat, cold on my hands,
cutting it piece by piece,
trying not to think about how everything else in life
also feels sliced, portioned, divided.
I arrange the pieces like it matters,
like someone will notice the care,
like someone still pays attention.

By seven-thirty the crowd pours in,
their voices clashing with the murmur of the Rhône,
a river that keeps flowing even when we don't.
I shout just to exist in the noise.
My wife is next to me —
maybe the only person left who sees me
as more than a man behind a counter.

The sun climbs higher,
and the smell of raw meat thickens the air.
My fingers turn red, sticky, trembling,
and I wonder how many other lives depend
on what I'm carving right now.
Meals that will simmer in homes I'll never see,
families I'll never meet,
all of us surviving off each other's invisible labour.

PEOPLE'S STORIES THROUGH SONG REMIXES

Two classes of André-Chavanne had an opportunity to meet a rapper based in Geneva, Michael Azkoul known as Dr Koul. His collection of poems and aphorisms "The Prophet of Doubt" revolves around the concept of doubt and how that can be used as a tool for self-exploration.

The lyrics of his song "I'm a Stranger at Home" was a source of numerous remakes created by our students—apprentices and then voiced by the singer. Find out what it means to be a stranger at work and a stranger at school...



The original song and lyrics can be found on <https://genius.com/Dr-koul-stranger-at-home-lyrics>

I'M A STRANGER AT WORK

Nolan Sermier (2Md.04)

Have you ever felt out of place in familiar surroundings?
Felt misunderstood by those **working with** you?
Have you ever felt... like a stranger at **work**?

I'm a one man army, all on my own
I stand out in a crowd as if I'm always alone
People looking at me strange like I'm a stranger at **work**
You know what's strange?
I'm considered even stranger at **work**
I'm a one man army, all on my own
I stand out in a crowd as if I'm always alone
People looking at me strange like I'm a stranger at **work**
You know what's strange?
I'm considered even stranger at **work**

I'm trying to **get home**
But it's hard when **there's so much work**
So **many meetings, workshops**. Poverty and so **many calls**.
Simultaneously distracted by **headache** and stress
Finish this, **close** that, we're **busy** and **broke down**
We want to do good but don't know how to decide
If this is good and that's bad or that's OK
Overstimulated, **numb inside**, we waste our days
Is **the CEO just swimming in money**
Or **he works overtime**?
Our morals are broken
We don't know our roles in the game
Matter of fact, we don't even know who invented the game
Who's playing the game, who made the rules
And which rules you can break
Who's got **the requests**? Who's got the breaks?
Who's the sumo wrestling with BJJ?
And who's the cultural appropriator?
And who's **the invader**?
Who is genuine and honest, and who is just **an apprentice**?

I'M A STRANGER AT SCHOOL

Elaine De Cavalho and Delphine Brutsch (2Md.O4)

Have you ever felt out of place in familiar surroundings?
Felt misunderstood by those **studying with** you?
Have you ever felt... like a stranger at **school**?

I'm a one man army, all on my own
I stand out in a crowd as if I'm always alone
People looking at me strange like I'm a stranger at **school**
You know what's strange?
I'm considered even stranger at **school**
I'm a one man army, all on my own
I stand out in a crowd as if I'm always alone
People looking at me strange like I'm a stranger at **school**
You know what's strange?
I'm considered even stranger at **school**

I'm trying to **stay motivated**
But it's hard when **everything is noted**
So much **to study**, and so much **to prepare**
Simultaneously distracted by **screens** and stress
Memorise this, **learn** that, we're **students** and **employees**
We want to do good but don't know how to decide
If this is good and that's bad or that's OK
Overstimulated, **overwhelmed**, we waste our days
Is **putting pressure on us a good way to succeed**
Or **just bringing us down**?
Our morals are broken
We don't know our roles in the game
Matter of fact, we don't even know who invented the game
Who's playing the game, who made the rules
And which rules you can break
Who's got the **strength**? Who's got the **pain**?
Who's the sumo wrestling with BJJ?
And who's the cultural appropriator?
And who's the **leader**?
Who is genuine and honest, and who is just a **survivor**?

ONE THOUSAND AND ONE THOUGHTS ABOUT POETRY

The Poetry of Rap: Interview with Dr Koul



MEETING A RAPPER IN OUR CLASS: AN INTERVIEW

written by Loryne Costa, Angie Banewa, Emma Wagner (1Cd.01)
& Elaine De Cavalho (2Md.04)

A rapper visited our class to discuss his career, music and vision of rap as a poetic form. In this interview, he shared his experiences, doubts and passion for human creativity. The talk was followed by an experimental workshop. Before reading this interview, please take a moment to read the artist's brief biography, which will help you to appreciate the article more fully.

MEET DR KOUL

Michael Jad Azkoul known as “Dr Koul” is an emblematic and enigmatic rapper from the Geneva music scene. He began in the world of music playing classical piano at the conservatory from a young age, but he was already passionate about improvisation. As he grew up, he was influenced by artists such as Pharoahe Monch for his extremely free style, Kendrick Lamar, and Tupac because of their lyrics.

He has been deeply rooted in the hip-hop scene since 2009, when he co-founded World Wide Connects, an organization dedicated to connecting hip-hop culture activists on an international scale.



Image: <https://reprezent.ch/reprezent-dr-koul/>

A strong believer in freestyle rap (improvised rap), he has also written extensively over the years and has been part of several groups, including Captains of the Imagination, alongside Evita Koné and Imagine.

After releasing his first album, “Stranger at Home”, which explored the theme of blurred identities, he later presented “Prophet of Doubt”, both an album and a book of poetry. This project focuses on the concept of doubt, aiming to find harmony without oversimplifying through some of life’s most existential questions.



THE INTERVIEW

Can you tell us about your first successes in music?

My first successes came step by step. I started by rapping in front of people, then I recorded my first song, and later I released my first solo album. I also wrote a book of poetry and rap which sold out (100 copies). Music is a journey, not something that happens all at once.

When did you start making music?

I started writing my own music around the age of 13. At that time, I was in a band and also played the piano. Music has always been a part of my life.

What motivates you to keep going during difficult moments?

For me, music is like a diary. I use it to express my emotions, my doubts, my thoughts on politics, and how I feel inside. When things are difficult, music helps me to understand myself and to keep going.

Have you ever seriously considered giving up music?

Yes, doubt is always present. That's why my first album is called *The Prophet of Doubt*. But even when I doubt myself, music brings me back.

Do you also listen to French rap?

My favourite French rapper is Youssoupha. I've also been inspired by artists like Tupac, Akon and 'Psychiatre de la rime'. I listen to a lot of rap, in both French and English.

How do you find inspiration?

I get inspiration from my life stories, memories, and dreams I have had, because everything around us is an inspiration.

Do you rap in French or in English?

I rap a little in French, but mostly in English. I was born in Geneva, but grew up first in the United States, living in Washington, D.C., so English rap feels very natural to me.

What is the difference between rap and poetry?

The main differences are in the form and style. Both rap and poetry use verses, metaphors and rhymes, but rap is connected to music and rhythm. It's also about how you interact with the beat.

How does the music industry work behind the scenes?

Music is more than just art. There is also a business side to it, involving labels, sales, contracts, marketing and management. On the one hand, there is the artist; on the other, there is the company that wants to make money. Sometimes, these two sides don't share the same goals.

Are you working alone or in a group?

I'm in a group called Captains of the Imagination with seven other musicians.

What are your thoughts on artificial intelligence (AI) in music?

Companies invest in AI because they want to make money. Some famous rappers feel like robots today. Personally, I prefer human music and human values. I sometimes use LLMs to help me think through ideas, but it's better to interact with people. The important question is: are you using the tool, or is the tool using you?

Would you rather attend big or small concerts?

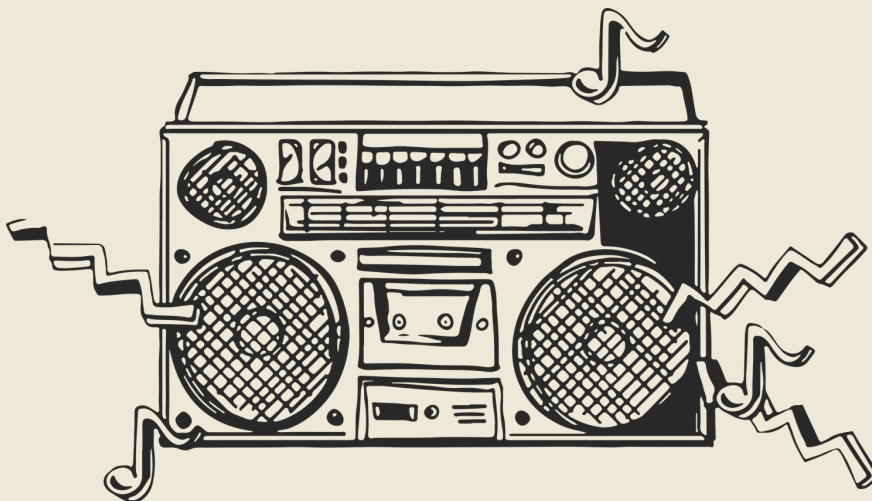
I prefer small concerts and a small fan base. For me, human connection is more important than fame. Many people think that if you're a rapper, you have to be famous, but that's not true.

EXPERIMENTAL WORKSHOP

The class did a writing exercise using a 90s instrumental track, which was a lot of fun. We had to write a rap verse inspired by the beat. Then, Dr Koul performed several of the students' verses in front of everyone. Some students (2Md.04) agreed to sing their own texts. He also explained how the rhythm and delivery of rapped words can change their meaning. The students found this activity very enjoyable, and it helped them to understand how rap can be used as a form of expression and creativity.

We recommend listening to one of the pieces of music he composed, as this reflects his artistic style and the themes he discussed during the workshop perfectly. You can watch the clip and listen to his music via the following link:

[Dr Koul – Stranger At Home \(Official Music Video\)](#)





FROM CITY STREETS TO OPEN ROADS: A POETIC ESCAPE

Students from Group 3AL.DF.06 have left the city behind and set off on a road trip alongside the characters from the novel “Tschick” by Wolfgang Herrndorf. Discover their acrostic poems, written in German, as they explore the themes of community (“Gemeinschaft”) and loneliness (“Einsamkeit”). A journey that is by turns funny, melancholic, and deeply moving.



Image: <https://www.fernsehserien.de/filme/tschick>

Gemeinschaft ist wichtig, wenn wir Abenteuer Erleben.

Maik und Tschick sind nicht mehr Einsam, wenn sie fahren.

Im Abenteuer finden sie Freundschaft
Nicht nur neue Erfahrungen.

Schule macht sie traurig.
Camping macht sie froh.
Herbst kommt und das
Abenteuer endet.

Freundschaft ist erschienen und
Tatjana ist nicht mehr so wichtig zu Maik

Eine Frau ist allein
Ich sehe sie
Nächsten Tag ist es gleich
Sie ist nicht reich
Aber sie ist allein
Manchmal fühlt sie sich sehr traurig
Keiner ist bei ihr
Einsam fühlte ich mich
Im Herzen ist es kalt
Tage sind sehr lang.

Grausam ist die Gesellschaft

Endlich werden die Leute eine

Mannschaft mitmachen

Erinnern sie sich an Tschick und Marks Beispiel

In dem Kornfeld haben sie Freiheit entdeckt

Neben dem Himmel

Sie suchen Selbstständigkeit

Circa alles macht gleich

Herrndorf gibt ein lange Nachricht

Als die Rindfleischetikettierungsüberwachungsaufgabe-
übertragungsgesetz

Fleißig sind die Menechan, die nicht wie

Tschichatschow machen

Gäste sind zu Tatjana's Hause

Es ist ein schöner Tag

Maiks Freunde sind alle hier

Ein Fest hat begonnen

Ich bin sehr glücklich

Niemand fühlt Einsamkeit

Schokolade wird gegessen

Cola wird getrunken

Hier fühlen wir Freude

Alle sind zusammen

Freunde, Familie, Tschick und ich

Tanzen zur Musik

Endlich finden sie sich wieder
Im alten Auto.

Nur sie sind ewig glücklich
Schlecht ist die Polizei
Anstatt sie in Freiheit zu lassen.

Maik ist einsam.
Kommt dann Tschick. Sie
Entfernen sich
Irgendwo, wo sie nie gefunden werden,
Teil in ihren Träumen.

Gefühle sind geteilt.

Es ist wichtig, mit heute zu leben.

Mit Freunden ist das leben schön.

Eine Freundschaft ist gebaut wie eine Gemeinschaft.

Ich liebe es, wenn ich meine Familie treffe.

Niemand kann ohne es leben.

Sie sind nicht einsam.

Circa 9 Billionen Personen leben in unserer Welt.

Heute habe ich meine Freunde der Schule getroffen.

Alle sind glücklicher, zusammen zu leben.

Firmen sind Gemeinschaften.

Tschick und Maik bauen eine Gemeinschaft.

Geschwister hättest du ? fragte sie.

Einsamkeit ist meine Antwort.

Möchtest du dich mit mir treffen? fügte sie hinzu.

Eine Antwort konnte ich nicht geben.

In meinem Herz fühlte ich mich verstanden.

Niemand hatte niemals Interesse für mich wie

Sie hatte.

Christina ist seitdem meine beste Freundin geworden.

Heute ist es ihre Hochzeit und sie hat mich gewählt

Als ihre Trauzeugin.

Fühle ich mich jetzt bereit, unsere Geschichte zu

Teilen.

