

A black and white photograph of a woman with dark hair, wearing a dark top, holding a vintage camera. She is standing in a dimly lit room with a window to her left, through which some light is visible. The overall mood is artistic and contemplative.

Dora

Featured Artist

*Pang expresses her life through
photography, film and poetry*

Pang

It was the summer before seventh grade when junior Dora Pang discovered her dad's DSLR camera in their guest bedroom. Out of boredom, curiosity or a combination of both, she took it out and started snapping pictures of herself in the mirror.

"It sounds really stupid," Pang said, laughing. "And it was, but it was fun."

For Pang, who describes herself as a creative person, this moment kindled a love for photography that she would pursue throughout her high school career. Her interests in video production, poetry and painting would also emerge as a result.

"Being able to do anything where I am creatively in control is fun, whether it be just painting on the weekend or making a short film with a lot of planning," Pang said.

After her mirror selfie stint, Pang started experimenting with shutter speed, moving the camera around in the dark to get light trails to appear. She was drawn to Instagram photographer Brandon Woelfel's bokeh-dotted portraits of social media celebrities when she was in middle school. Soon, Pang began photographing her friends in their backyards or staging photo shoots with a projector.


"That's how I got into portrait photography for two years, up until my



Pang's portrait photos of her friend.



"At Half Moon"



freshman year,” Pang said. “I really enjoyed taking photos of my friends and asked my friends to model in my photos [as] I gradually got better.”

Pang has since graduated from using her dad’s DSLR to shooting with a Nikon FM, a 35 millimeter camera from her grandfather, or her Lubitel 166. After she shoots, she sends her film to Mike’s Camera in Menlo Park or The DarkRoom in San Clemente for development.

Gradually, Pang started experimenting with short films as both mediums involve using the camera, which she has always enjoyed. “I don’t know how I switched to video, but I think it was just natural,” Pang said. “As I started watching more movies, I began appreciating taking videos compared to photos.”

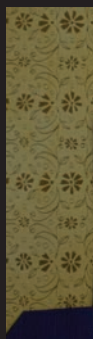
Pang saw “La La Land” at a time when she had been enchanted with the spirit of Los Angeles. The film’s quintes-

entially L.A. romance made it her favorite movie to date, though many others have inspired her as well.

“I had a Criterion subscription—think HBO or Turner Classic Movies,” Pang said. The Criterion Collection is a home-video distribution com-

pany focused on preserving A-list classic and contemporary films. “I wanted to pay for only one month, so I put a bunch of movies into my list that I wanted to watch,” Pang said. “And then I would watch like, three a day.”

Pang would keep track of





From Pang's film, "Projections."



Pang used patterned paper and animation in her latest film, "Orange Was the Color of Blue." See the full film on cmagazine.org.

each title on her phone's notes app or in IMDB while she watched. She paid close attention to the way each movie was shot—the beautiful visuals in the French murder drama "Breathless" (1960), for example, made it one of her favorites.

"But then [the subscription] renewed... so I did that for two months!" Pang said, laughing. "I was looking at the list [on my phone] and I was like, 'I can't remember watching half of these movies.'"

Filmmakers aren't Pang's only influences. Recently, she has admired artists like abstract painter Faye Wei Wei, folk musicians Joni Mitchell and Joanna Newsom, photographer Vivian Maier and performance artist Marina Abramović.

"A lot of my ideas just come to me, sometimes at night, laying in bed," Pang said. "I write them on my phone...then maybe I'll go back to them someday, like 'Oh, I like this idea.' I'll create a moodboard for it, I'll create a shotlist." Pang's moodboards help her establish an aesthetic for each film while her shotlists keep track of how events in her story flow.

Beyond the planning stage, Pang's filming process changes based on the story she is telling. Her latest film, "Orange Was the Color of Blue," follows an orange as it rolls off a kitchen shelf, through a house and ends up in the garden. Pang challenged herself to use different mediums for each scene, including a book excerpt, digital animation, real flowers and her favorite: cut paper.

"I got a pack of different patterned papers [with] gold designs on them," Pang

said. She cut and folded the paper into "mini-sets" resembling a small kitchen or blooming flower, for example, then animated over them with stop motion. Scenes where Pang digitally animated the orange posed a greater challenge. "I had never done animations before that point," she said. "So it was cool figuring that out. It was really hard, but it was fun."

Though it only started as a hobby, Pang sees herself working in the film industry in the future. But Pang has also started writing poetry, which she likes to keep more to herself. "I think a lot of the time, films and photos are less personal because it is some-

one acting or you are portraying something in a fictional setting," she said.

But being an introspective person, Pang's poetry centers more on her own thoughts, feelings and experiences.

"I went on a walk—I think it was in November," Pang said. "I was taking in [the atmosphere]...it was fall, so [the trees] were really beautiful."

When she got home, Pang felt like she had to write about the experience. She turned the thoughts and autumn scene that engulfed her during her walk into words.

Be it photography, film or poetry, Pang tries to capture in her artwork the everyday sights and feelings of her life for others to reflect on and, she hopes, relate to. Whether positive or negative, she loves seeing the reactions people have to her artwork.

"I really like telling stories," Pang said. "Being able to share your vision and what you see and what you interpret...it's a beautiful thing."

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