



TRIPLE A TRIBUNE

Academy for Advanced Academics

(Ernest R. Graham Center, FIU)

THIRD EDITION

January 2024

Ignacio Arnaiz
Adrian Gonzalez
Grace Duty
Abigail Elesppe
Iris Mogul

Head Editors/
Graphic Design:
Mariana Medina
Lulu Perez

“Orquídeas”

Album by Kali Uchis

Diego Tanaka

Released on January 12th, 2024, Kali Uchis’ Orquídeas album jumps from genre to genre exploring the complexity of feminine power and self-love. This album’s namesake simply stems from Uchis’ admiration for the national flower of Colombia, her native country. Moreover, as fate would have it, this flower is also known as a symbol for fertility; prior to the album’s release, Kali Uchis announced her pregnancy with fellow artist Don Toliver.

Two of her most enchanting compositions in this album are *Te Mata*, a modern take on bolero, and *Dame Beso/Muévete*, a classic Merengue. *Te Mata* falls under the bolero genre. Originating from 19th century Cuban culture, boleros are a stoic form of song that often uses very serious lyrics that commonly relate to love in some form or other. Uchis’ compositional skill does not fail to surprise in *Te Mata* with its major “Novela energy” that calls back to her past album opener from *Sin Miedo*, *La Luna Enamorada*.

Te Mata tells the story of a woman who is viewed as “la diabla” (the devil) of her past lover’s life. She has been mistreated by her ex-partner and begins a journey of self-realization post-split.

As the woman begins to find self love and happiness, she is once again pulled down by her ex-lover who has returned scorned that she could ever be happy without him. In maturing, this woman is portrayed as a selfish, evil person for leaving her past lover in the dumps with nothing. *Te Mata* demonstrates the importance of protecting your peace and that which is dear to you even as the world demonizes you for choosing yourself.

**“Tienes que aceptar
que, ahora soy un
recuerdo—
Si buscas un culpable,
pues mira en el espejo”**

(Lyrics from “Te Mata”)



Dame Beso/Muévete is a combination of two merengues that are transitioned through a change of tempo into a Perico Ripiao, otherwise known as a merengue típico. Calling back to 90's merengue, Uchi's take on "señora" music breathes fresh air into the latin scene.



Kali Uchis, nuestra reina, nuestra diosa

Dame Beso compares a woman's romantic relationship to a flower. In order for her to blossom, she wants her lover to "darle besos" (give her kisses) as a form of reassurance and security. The song tends to linger on the beauty of small acts of love in a relationship and how they really do make all the difference to each person. Accompanied by the rhythm of the pianos and repeating horns, Uchi's perspective on merengue pays homage to its traditional roots while still creating a timeless, yet current masterpiece.

Transitioning into a faster, more upbeat tempo, *Muévete* establishes a "four on the floor beat" that compels you to sway and dance. Sampling and inspired by "*El Dueño del Swing*," by Los Hermanos Rosario, this classic merengue beat and rhythm takes on the beauty of moving your body to the beat of the music. While maintaining the accompaniment of the conga and tambora, the addition of the accordion replacing the piano further establishes an additional traditional take on merengue. The simple repetition of "muévete" reinforces the beauty of freeing yourself and dancing to your heart's content. These explosive, fast moving beats and lyrics are reminiscent to the concept of "Hora Loca" (crazy hour) in order to bring this album to a satisfying, gorgeous close.

***"Sin amor soy una flor que esta a punto de morir
Es una vista triste, no me dejas así"***

(Lyrics from "Dame Beso//Muévete")

***"Nunca vas a poder cortar mis alas—
Y eso es lo que te mata"***

(Lyrics from "Te Mata")



Public Transportation:

Where Autonomy Rides Alongside Community

“We all hate traffic. Let that be something we can share.”

Iris Mogul

Miami is known for its scenic beaches, thrilling nightlife, and excruciating traffic. It's no secret that the city's pitiful public transit system does not alleviate the latter. Most advocates for public transit expansion, in Miami and elsewhere, focus on the potential environmental and economic benefits. Often times, they do not place enough emphasis on the freedom that easily-accessible and cheap public transit provides. By taking public transit, we can both gain a sense of independence and a sense of community.

A recent study performed by **our very own FIU research groups** labeled Miami as “having the 12th worst traffic congestion in the country” (Board of County Commissioners, 2022). This awful traffic is partly caused by the fact that there are few alternatives to cars. All public transport options are much less time efficient, assuming there is even a bus route or metro rail available at all. On the days that my dad has to work late, I routinely plug in my address into Google Maps. Without fail, my options are limited to either a 20 minute Uber or a 60 minute bus ride accompanied by a less-than-lovely 30 minute walk.

We can be inspired by the disgruntled group of Miami bus riders that put their minds and hearts together to push for a change in bus routes. As of November 13th of 2023, The Better Bus Plan has expanded and created new routes that reach into communities formerly not served.

Although this progress is commendable, we are far from done. Promises to expand the Metrorail further north, west, east, and south proved futile do not mean that these changes are impossible to implement. We could build a line to and from South Beach so that tourists have the opportunity to explore all the culture that Miami has to offer, not just the crowded beaches. With an easier way to get around, out-of-towners could experience the Lyric Theater in Overtown or bike alongside alligators in Shark Valley.



A much too familiar sight to any and all Miami residents just trying to get home from work.



Average Total Traffic in Peak Direction as a Percentage of Two-Way Traffic (DFCTR), by District

The Florida Department of Traffic (FDOT) annual daily traffic report of 2021 reveals that South Florida counties Miami-Dade and Monroe suffer the highest average daily traffic



Chart: Megan Pietanza • Source: The Florida Department of Traffic (FDOT) • Created with Datawrapper

Courtesy of the FIU research team conducting the study, this graphic concludes that Miami-Dade harbors some of the worst traffic in the area.



Terrible, terrible Miami traffic

I started relying on public transportation during my freshman year of high school. Speaking from my own experience, riding the metro and trolley gave me a real sense of autonomy and connected me to our city. While riding the Coral Gables trolley, I had the transformative experience of picking up a book from my backpack and committing to reading for pleasure. Two years later, and I'm still reading. Likewise, my many hours on the metrorail included the contemplative experience of listening to "Nights" by Frank Ocean while admiring the nighttime Brickell skyline. In an ideal world, we would all be able to move around Miami's geographies effortlessly and affordably. Maybe the people's priorities don't align, but, in a way, traffic unifies us (arguably) more than anything else.

Investing in public transportation infrastructure seems like such an obvious proposition, I ask myself if it's even possible. New York City's subways and buses answer my question. From the people who bus the tables on the Lower East Side, to the designers in Chelsea, all types of New Yorkers rely on the subway as part of their daily routines. In doing so, they rub elbows with one another creating a more coherent sense of community. Because of Miami's sprawling layout, the metrorail will never be comparable to the NYC subway, but there is so much room for improvement. I remain hopeful.

Squishmallows!

A Phenomenon Beyond Value?

Mariana Medina

Whether it be caused by some lofty Freudian theory or weak defenses against consumerism, I will always buy a Squishmallow as soon as I see it. Always. No questions asked, no considerations of use, absolutely nothing can prove the squishy fiend's uselessness to me in that one magical moment. As I'm writing this, the two nets on my walls overflowing with the things stare through my soul as I think: "Why?" You see, Squishmallows are perfect for exemplifying the definition of a fad collectible.

Drawn as a result of influence overlords like Tiktok, consumers easily forget the opportunity costs of spending an obscene amount of money on the plush toys. (We're totally not trying to *integrate* what we're learning at school into these articles. Sorry. That wasn't funny). Generally speaking, the world of economics defines a collectible as an item "worth more now than [it was] when..originally sold" (Forbes, 2023). One may now, sleazily reason that splurging on Squishmallows might actually be a smart investment. Of course, the previous would seem ingenious to an individual that likely doesn't know all that much about investments. I promise that reading up on financial literacy isn't as boring as it seems.



An impressive Squishmallow collection, but definitely not the biggest out there.

In fact, "fad collectibles" are probably an investor's worst nightmare. Unpredictable in value, volatile in trend, practically useless for anything other than bragging rights, Squishmallows draw out hasty value assumptions. In other words, people tend to assume that these little creatures are worth *a lot* more (financially!) than they actually are. A common mistake in judgement, such described is a case of predicting the Squishmallow's *utility*, or human satisfaction gained from owning the product. Defining a basic microeconomic concept, utility absolutely does not equate to the monetary value of a good or service. I may be simply overjoyed with a decently-sized Squishmallow that cost me 120 dollars worth of food money, but someone else may not be so happy (ask my parents and boyfriend what *they* think of Squishmallow spending). In essence, I may then become surprised to know that in ten years' time, when all my Squishmallows are tucked away in an attic, the prized \$120 "Evangolica the Cow" would no longer be worth anywhere near what it used to be.

The moral of the story here is: do what makes you happy. Even if that means draining your savings to bid on Ebay for a 16-inch Jack the Black Cat (rarest Squishmallow to date). Just don't expect anything other than the pure whimsy of adding yet another adorable trophy of teenage financial ruin to the collection.

ART & LITERATURE

A Look Inside:

The Metamorphosis

Beyond the Cocoon: *Unraveling Layers of The Metamorphosis*

Ignacio Arnaiz

Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, published in tumultuous 1915, is not a book one can easily settle their mind on. The German-Jewish author forces the reader to judge the reality of the small world the man-creature, Gregor Samsa, lives in. Every question the reader has only prompts more questions. Nonetheless, whether influenced by their environment or their own selves, the best authors set the direction of their works' meaning outwards, sourcing those works from within. Thus, Kafka fulfills his Modernist desires by constantly leading the reader forward and into his own realm: the Kafkaesque. This world, born out of early 20th century ideals and realities, must also bear the philosophy of its creator.

There is only one philosophy that comes to mind from most Modernist literature, generally known as Existentialism, and one philosopher who watered the roots of the externalist movement. That philosopher is Soren Kierkegaard. Though Friedrich Nietzsche was an inspiration for Modernism itself, Kafka's best friend explicitly deducted him from the equation. What points to the Danish theologian Kierkegaard, then? The threes. Three chapters, three transformations, three (other) family members, and three tenants. These, and more, of the trinities found within the book have been thought to point towards the Holy Trinity – but Kafka was Jewish. Thereby, his highest degree of exposure to the Bible would've probably been through the Torah or Kierkegaard, whom Kafka related to in his own diaries and shares a pattern of trinity with, for Kierkegaard also has his very own "Three Stages of Life" philosophy.

The symbolism in *The Metamorphosis* is double-sided and perhaps even double-edged. If there's any religious interpretation to be done in the book, however, it would have to be with the Judeo-Christian story of Isaac, where God commands Abraham, Isaac's father, to kill Isaac, which Kierkegaard often references to separate morality and religion.



Live rendition of the novella at the Royal Opera House in London

Comparatively, Grete, the most compassionate character in the story, begs her own father to get rid of Gregor at the end of the book despite their familial bond. Returning to the trinity, however, are Kierkegaard's Three Stages: the aesthetic, the ethical, and religious. The aesthetic involves the phase of life characterized by a chase of pleasure and materialistic goals, typically manifests with a self-interested personality that does not seek meaning beyond itself. The ethic is made up of the willingness to follow and live by moral and ethical values that either the self or society has created; a search for meaning begins. In the final stage, the religious, the individual decides to put faith into a higher being they see as eternal as they try to create a truth for their own existence and actions. In this last step, the individual will take a "leap of faith," irrationally putting trust in a higher being that will let them cross their logical obstacles. One example of the Three Stages is Gregor's father, who is at first directionless, lazy, and self-absorbed; then, he gets a job and essentially does nothing but work; and finally, he thanks God after letting Gregor starve and die behind a locked door. Though the other characters also undergo their own changes, their metamorphoses are indeed influenced by the absurdity their individual existences carry in the Kafkaesque manner their bestower takes inspiration from Kierkegaard for.

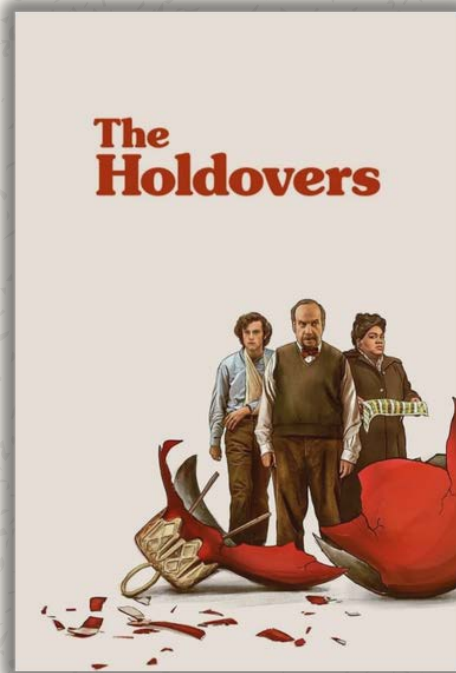
Now Showing!

Adrian Gonzalez

The Holdovers (2023) - Alexander Payne

Payne's most well-received film in a decade—or perhaps ever—is here. *The Holdovers*, set in the 1970's, follows an ornery professor, Mr. Hunham (Paul Giamatti), at an all-boys school who stays on campus during Christmas break. He is tasked with supervising a smart but challenging rebel, Angus (Dominic Sessa). Meanwhile, the school's head cook, Mary (Da'Vine Joy Randolph) who just lost a son in the Vietnam War, tolerates the duo's bickering. Of course, an unlikely bond forms between the three of them.

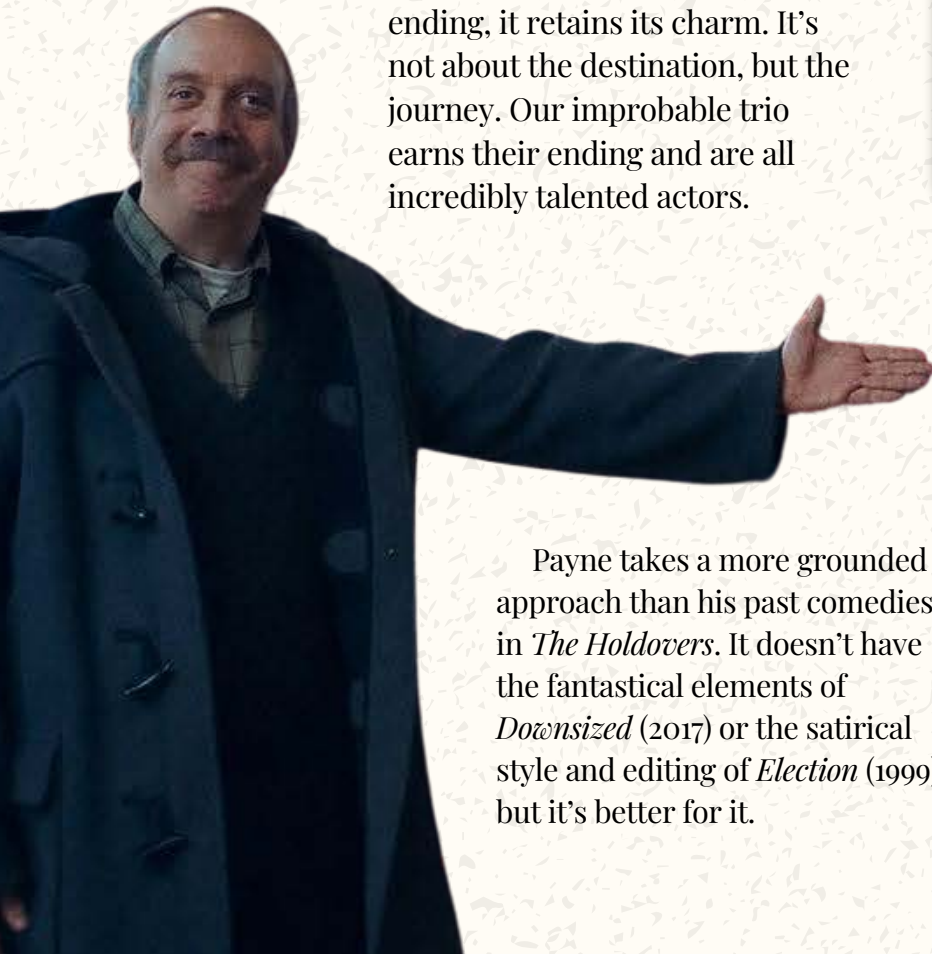
Despite the film's predictable ending, it retains its charm. It's not about the destination, but the journey. Our improbable trio earns their ending and are all incredibly talented actors.



“They're all alone in this together.”

Payne's filmography is hit or miss (in my opinion), but this film feels like his strongest yet. As any filmmaker worth their salt knows, it can take decades to properly master the techniques necessary to utilize cinematic language while making a film entertaining. I'm of the belief that Payne has accomplished this communication with *The Holdovers*. Not to mention, it's become one of my favorite, if not my sole favorite, Christmas movies. Sorry, *Die Hard* (1988)... yippee-ki-yay... **9.3/10**

Payne takes a more grounded approach than his past comedies in *The Holdovers*. It doesn't have the fantastical elements of *Downsized* (2017) or the satirical style and editing of *Election* (1999), but it's better for it.



Recommendations

From Us!

(From Adrian. Only Adrian. If you don't like it, anyone can join newsletter!)



“Warsaw” (1978) in An Ideal for Living - Joy Division

As implied by its name—as is common with punk music—the song critiques fascist ideology and the members of the Nazi party, particularly Rudolf Hess, one of Adolf Hitler’s closest confidantes. Hess took a liking to the “new” ideas of Hitler and joined the party early on. By his side, Hess attempted to overthrow the German government with a coup named the Munich Putsch, in which a coalition failed to launch an insurrection. As a result, Hitler and Hess were sentenced to five years in prison.

The song focuses on Hess’s time in prison, in which Hitler dictated his infamous novel *Mein Kampf* to Hess. Despite the song being based on Hess, it likely reflects the larger population of Germany who were disillusioned with Hitler’s ideas and methods. Hess would eventually be arrested again when attempting to negotiate peace with the United Kingdom during WWII:

“I just see contradiction—Had to give up the fight—Just to live in the past tense”

In essence, Warsaw is a multifaceted piece that combines historical storytelling with musical prowess which mirrors the themes and talents present in punk music.

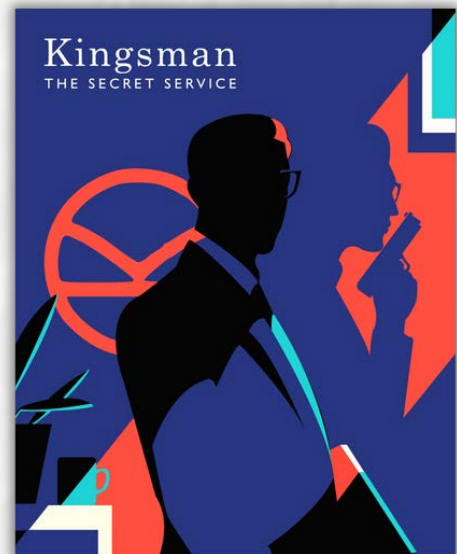
Kingsman: The Secret Service (2014)

Dir. by Matthew Vaughn

Based on a comic book series, the movie’s plot follows Eggsy (Taron Egerton), whose father, unbeknownst to him, worked for a spy organization called Kingsman. A troubled and sly youth, Eggsy is taken under the wing of the gentlemanly Harry Hart (Colin Firth), who recruits him into the rigorous training program. Concurrently, billionaire and eco-terrorist Richmond Valentine (Samuel L. Jackson) constructs a plan to end climate change with a radical solution: genocide. It is up to Kingsman to stop him.

Apart from the characters being well-written and charming, the movie is simply so much fun to watch.

The jokes always land, the weight of the stakes are felt, and the action scenes are stunning. Vaughn’s dynamic direction during these scenes reflects his past in superhero films such as *X-Men: First Class* (2011), as he displays the action as dexterously as possible. For this reason, *Kingsman* contains an element of “rewatchability” not common in spy films, which are so reliant on fooling the viewer rather than amazing or exciting them. *Kingsman* presents the wonderful clichés of the spy genre, but with a twist. There’s betrayal, the world at stake, and of course the dandy gadgets and weapons (I want one of those umbrellas terribly), but *Kingsman*, after decades of spy films, takes these expectations and flips them on their head. Really, talking about it now makes me want to watch it again.





Busch GARDENS

12/21/23



Winter Trip!



Writer Bios!



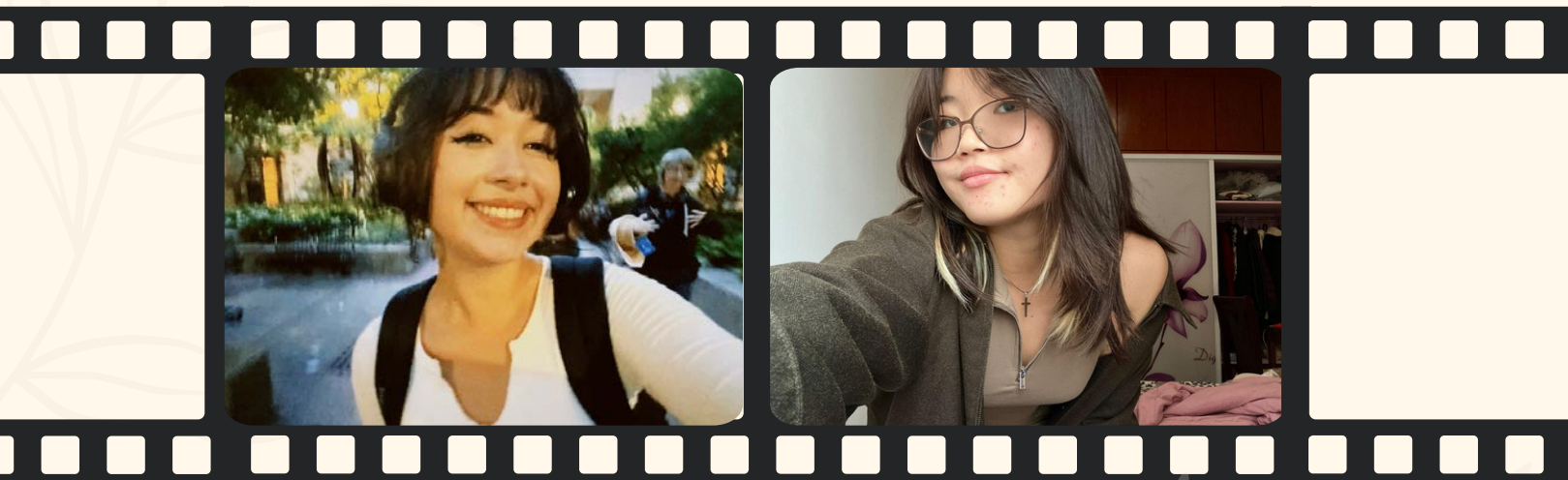
Abigail Elespe is currently a junior representative in SGA and one of the lovely writers for the 2023-2024 Triple A Tribune! Abigail loves to draw and play video games on the Nintendo Switch and 3DS.

Ignacio Arnaiz is a senior pursuing a forensic science major with interests in philosophy and music. His favorite genres are shoegaze and hyperpop. Ignacio's favorite book is *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* by Friedrich Nietzsche.

Iris Mogul is an ambitious junior who is passionate about community engagement, reading, writing, and music. She aspires to be an investigative journalist committed to storytelling for social change. Iris also leads her own Banned Books Club, a group dedicated to discussing literature dampened by society's blinding demands. Her favorite authors include Octavia Butler, James Baldwin, and Toni Morrison.

Grace Duty is a junior writer for the 2023-2024 Triple A Tribune. She has a particular interest in photography, most notably for capturing modern subjects with vintage cameras. In her downtime, Grace also enjoys reading, writing, and generally all forms of literature. As per Grace herself, she loves "finding unique stories within the busy everyday of taking [way] too many classes and cracking too many jokes about it."

Adrian Gonzalez is a senior at AAA hoping to earn a BFA. An unofficial but avid film critic, Adrian's passion lies within making and appreciating a large array of visual arts. He may also be considered Chet Baker's biggest fan ever. One of Adrian's favorite books is *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley.



Mariana Medina is a junior majoring in political science and dedicates the better part of her time to causes for educational equity. She works with a number of non-profit organizations, and hopes to earn a JD, further pursuing a career in academia. Her favorite books include *The Waves* by Virginia Woolf, *Cien Años de Soledad* by Gabriel Garcia Márquez (*she loves to share that Márquez and her grandfather were on a first-name basis*), and *Lighthouse* by Terrance Hayes. Mariana is a head editor, graphic designer, and founder of the 2023-2024 Triple A Tribune.

Lulu Perez is a pre-med senior by day, visual artist by night. When she's not painting, she's either experimenting on new recipes or working out. Her favorite authors are Robert Green and Bill Watterson (yes, of course comics count). Lulu is a head editor for both Radix and TAT, co-graphic designer, and took a strongly notable role in the founding of the 2023-2024 Triple A Tribune.

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