Editors Column

Where Fashion Meets Coffee



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In Los Angeles, a shopping trip can easily turn into a coffee run. These days, the two are becoming harder to separate, as more fashion brands open cafes inside of their stores. Instead of stopping in to browse a rack of clothes and heading out, customers can grab a drink, meet up with friends, or spend an afternoon in a space that feels more like a neighborhood hangout than a traditional boutique.

One place where this comes together is Aime Leon Dore's first West Coast flagship on Melrose Avenue, which opened this past spring. The New York-based brand is known for its mix of streetwear, vintage sportswear, and Mediterranean influences, and its café follows the same aesthetic. Cafe Leon Dore serves Greek coffee, freddo espresso, cappuccinos, pastries, and yogurt. With antique rugs, dark wood interiors, and an outdoor courtyard, it's easy to see why someone might come for a coffee before even looking at the clothes.

A few blocks away, Madhappy has been taking a similar approach with Pantry, the café inside its West Hollywood flagship. Open since 2023, the café serves coffee, tea, pastries, and more, working with local food businesses such as Courage Bagels, Jon & Vinny's, and Beverly Hills Juice. The concept has become a bigger part of the brand's identity, with a newer location in Malibu also featuring a café.



Drinks from the Pantry inside Madhappy West Hollywood help mix fashion and coffee, a perfect spot to relax and shop. [Source: Author, Sora Ju]

Similarly, Sporty & Rich in West Hollywood offers coffee, matcha, and soft serve in a space inspired by country clubs and retro ice cream parlors. Founded by Emily Oberg, the brand started as an Instagram mood board before growing into a lifestyle label. This spot feels like a natural extension of that identity, while a neighboring studio offering Pilates and yoga classes adds to the laid-back, wellness-focused atmosphere.

Meanwhile in Beverly Hills, denim label Mother recently opened its first flagship, complete with a counter serving matcha, coffee, and light bites. At Palisades Village, Buck Mason introduced its Fast Times coffee concept to its new women's store in September as the shopping center reopened following the Palisades fire. Along with clothing and coffee, the space has a vintage bookstore stocked with art, architecture, and design books.

Kith has been mixing fashion and food for years. When its West Hollywood flagship opened in 2018, it already had Kith Treats, a counter serving cereal-inspired ice cream. The brand has since added Ronnie's Pronto, offering New York-style grab-and-go food, coffee, and matcha.

For shoppers, having a cafe inside a clothing store is a nice convenience. There's somewhere to sit after walking around, a place to meet a friend who isn't interested in shopping, and often something new to try. For brands, it gives people a reason to visit even when they aren't looking to buy anything.

In a city where finding a good coffee spot can be an outing in itself, combining cafés with boutiques feels like a natural fit. Sometimes, a new outfit is the goal. Other times, it's just a good cup of coffee, but the clothes also happen to be right there.

Student Reporter

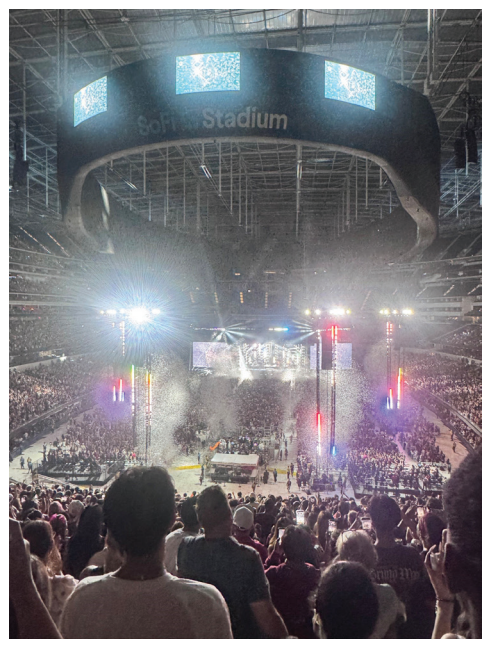
The Romantic: The Soundtrack of Youth



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In February 2026, Bruno Mars released his new album titled "The Romantic," earning 26.44 million streams on Spotify within the first 24 hours of its release. Among those millions of listeners were the youth of La Cañada Flintridge. Not only was the album release an exciting milestone for them, but the chance to attend his concert during the Romantic Tour became a coveted opportunity. Thus, the Ticketmaster war began, and those who became the victors of this battle gained precious memories that would last them a lifetime.

"It was so amazing. The music was so loud but in a good way; it was an experience I will remember forever, and it was such a good time with my friends," said a La Cañada High School student who was able to attend Bruno Mars' concert. "I remember jumping for the confetti because I just wanted to remember the moment forever." To her, the concert was not merely about listening to her favorite artist, but it was also a memory gained that she will never forget. The fact that she was able to attend with her friends and bond over the concert was a meaningful moment that she remembers with such euphoria.



The moment when confetti exploded into the air during the Bruno Mars concert was a highlight for many La Cañada Flintridge students. [Source: Author, Alexandra Kim]

This perspective was shared by many fellow students in the La Cañada community who were also able to share the thrilling experience with their friends. Bruno Mars' performance was not only a chance for them to listen to his new album live, but also to see him perform classics such as "Grenade" and "When I Was Your Man," which were throwbacks to the journey that sparked his fame.

Many still reminisce about the moment when he published his lead single, "I Just Might," which led to Instagram Reels and TikTok feeds being flooded with enthusiasm for the upbeat and catchy song. Another La Cañada teen recollects how she "Was very excited for his new song because he hadn't released an album in a while and [they] knew it was going to be amazing." Such enthusiasm also created a gateway for conversation between many acquaintances who were able to bond over their love of music. I personally remember striking up an engaging conversation with classmates I barely knew, but were able to relate through music.

The sensational impact of his album was not limited to the few hours of attending his concert, but rather, it has become long-lasting through the connections formed within the La Cañada community and the fusion of collective experiences blending into a shared love of his music. Even those who were not able to attend the concert were able to share excitement for those who were and interact with local online social media posts.

Student Reporter

More Than Just a Lunch



Ashley Kim
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Picture yourself walking into the school's lunchroom, where you are excited to eat the home-cooked meal your family prepared, but the only thing you are hit with is the sharp glares, pointed fingers, and being teased because of your culture. When I was in elementary school, I never once imagined that bringing my lunch to school would make me feel different. My mom would wake up early in the morning to make one of my favorite Korean foods: kimbap and dumplings. I always knew she put a lot of love and effort into it, and I enjoyed watching her make it too. My inspiration to be a good cook came from her.

I waited for lunch to begin during class time. I would practically jump up from my seat when the teacher announced that it was lunchtime. I stood in the single-file line, and we all started to walk to the door of the lunchroom. I sat down, ready to eat. However, just a few minutes after I opened my lunchbox, some classmates laughed and pointed at my table. "What did you bring? And why does it smell and look like that?" asked a classmate; the dumplings had a pungent smell that attracted people's attention. I've never felt so humiliated in my life. I wasn't hungry and excited to eat anymore either; I simply wanted lunch to be over.



A homemade Korean dumpling soup (Manduguk), often served with sliced rice cakes traditionally eaten on New Year's Day, especially for the Lunar New Year. Enjoying this dish helps me proudly share my Korean heritage. [Source: Author, Ashley Kim]

While I was waiting for the lunch period to end, I started to wonder. "What if earlier that morning I had asked my mom to make something 'normal' to eat?" But I saw a video on the internet that changed the way I saw my culture. The video explained that everyone is different in their own way, and it is completely fine to eat something different from someone else. I took inspiration from this video and told myself I wouldn't feel embarrassed anymore. Even though it still occurred, I learned not to care about other opinions and to focus on myself.

As I grew older, I realized everyone's culture is something to be proud of, including the Korean food my mom makes, since our traditions and celebrations all embrace who we are. My experience showed me that just those small words can leave a big impact. What someone thinks is "just a joke" can make someone feel like they don't belong. We should all choose kindness and respect instead of judgment. Being diverse does not mean we all look the same, nor come from the same background.

Today, I am proud of my culture, and I am not afraid of being made fun of for what ethnicity I am. I hope that to this day, no child will be afraid to open their lunchbox, speak their language, or to express their traditions.

Student Reporter

The Math Behind Digital Art



Elizabeth Kim
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Using digital art programs comes with its own unique set of benefits, learning curves, and challenges. For one, there are new electronic tools and techniques to use with every update. And sometimes, it can take much longer than a traditional paper sketch to get an idea down. Software can be frustrating to navigate, and especially difficult for beginners. On the other hand, digital art programs can allow artists to be much more efficient when sharing work online or printing. Technology can streamline creative processes and create very specific, unique effects in art that help artists express their vision fully.

As a student studying and participating in STEM subjects and activities while also being a hobbyist artist, I have been able to see how these two areas of art and science are interconnected through these tools.

One of these digital effects is called a Gaussian Blur. As the name suggests, it is based on mathematician Carl Friedrich Gauss's Gaussian function. A Gaussian function is shaped like a bell curve, and you may have seen it in statistics, where it can be used to model distribution data.

When the blur effect is applied, a convolution happens, where two functions are combined to create a third one. Here, the function of the image and the Gaussian function are combined to produce a third function of the smoothed image. So, when this effect is applied, the math acts as a filter to blur the image. The outcome is a much smoother-looking drawing with a gradient blur. It has a mathematically even result that is perfectly uniform and great for blending very cleanly in digital art.

Gauss's function is also seen in another digital effect that is visually almost the opposite: noise, which is random variations in color and brightness placed throughout an image. Noise can be an unwanted digital image processing effect. For example, if you have ever seen a very low-quality image, there are many tiny but random blotches of differing colors or brightness that do not seem purposeful. This is a form of noise that can come from errors in the capturing phase, processing, distortion, and/or file compression.

However, Gaussian Noise is, specifically, noise spread smoothly across the entire image following the same bell curve function mentioned earlier. This function makes it so that even when small pixels deviate from the actual color, most still stay very close to the middle hue. Adding a Gaussian Noise effect puts great natural color variation in digital art, which can also give the appearance of texture that can be seen in art on physical mediums. This adds a more realistic effect to digital art that could otherwise be seen as almost sterile.



I used a Gaussian Blur effect on the background to reduce focus and create a smooth sunset, and a Gaussian Noise effect on the character to add texture and a nostalgic feel to the drawing. Digital image processing effects can help steer the viewer's focus in a digital drawing.
[Source: Author, Elizabeth Kim]

While subjects in STEM and art might seem very disconnected, the reality is that both areas build upon each other. They will continue to intersect and be very important in our lives.

Student Reporter

My First SageMUN Conference



Grace Song
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What does it take to solve a global problem? For delegates at Model United Nations (MUN), the answer begins with research, diplomacy, and the willingness to speak up. MUN is an educational simulation of the United Nations in which students represent countries, discuss international issues, and collaborate to develop solutions. For many students, it is an opportunity to strengthen public speaking and critical thinking skills. But before my mom's suggestion, it was something I had barely considered

I was encouraged to join the Korean American Coalition Model United Nations (KACMUN) program, and even though I knew very little about MUN, I decided to give it a try. What began as a spontaneous decision eventually led to SageMUN, my first conference at Pomona College, and an experience that exceeded my expectations.

Getting there took weeks of preparation. Our class met every Wednesday through Zoom, and we researched assigned countries and wrote position papers and speeches. During these meetings, we practiced speaking and learned how conference proceedings worked. Impromptu speaking was particularly challenging at first because we had to organize our thoughts quickly and respond without much preparation. However, these exercises helped build the confidence needed to participate in committee.



After weeks of preparation, students gathered at SageMUN in Pomona College to discuss global issues, share ideas, and experience the challenges and excitement of Model United Nations.
[Source: Author, Grace Song]

All those weeks of preparation finally came together at SageMUN, held at Pomona College. I remember feeling nervous before delivering my opening speech during the General Speakers' List, when delegates take turns presenting their countries' positions. I had practiced and researched, but speaking in front of an unfamiliar committee was different from rehearsing at home. Once I finished, though, I realized that public speaking was not as intimidating as I had imagined. After spending so much time preparing, I found it rewarding to share my research and contribute to the discussion.

As the conference continued, I became more willing to participate. During the unmoderated caucus, delegates moved around the room to exchange ideas, negotiate, and work together on draft resolutions. I enjoyed watching conversations turn into actual proposals and seeing how different perspectives could contribute to one common goal. By the end of the day, I had not only delivered multiple speeches but also helped present our final resolution.

Looking back, my first conference was rewarding for reasons I had not anticipated. I expected to learn how to debate and understand international issues, but I also discovered how much I genuinely enjoyed speaking up and sharing my ideas. What once made me the most nervous became the most exciting part of the experience. And though I joined KACMUN because my mom suggested it, I left SageMUN with a newfound love for public speaking.

Student Reporter

Two Weeks With North Korean Youth



Christopher Kim
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The Bishop's School

Upon the first day of a two-week program with North Korean students, I was unsure of what to expect. Although we were the same age, our backgrounds couldn't have been more different. I wondered what we could talk about and how I could relate to them. However, I quickly realized that the things that bonded us together were remarkably ordinary.

The summer program was organized by Whitestone Bridge, a nonprofit organization that aims to help young North Koreans adjust to life in normal society through cultural exchange and community-building. I was a student volunteer, working alongside other American students to help North Koreans experience everyday life in the US.

During the two weeks, students participated in several activities, shared meals (varying from traditional Korean dishes to classic American food), explored new places in California, and spent hours in each other's company. While the deep talks and emotional highs were extraordinary, the small interactions were what truly made a difference. The little conversations throughout the program, the extra effort to help someone feel welcomed, and laughing together made the unfamiliar environment feel more comfortable.



US and North Korean students spend the day together doing activities, including ice skating.
[Source: Christine Hahn]

Before Whitestone Bridge began, I had thought of the participants primarily through the circumstances that brought them here. Knowing that they had a completely different experience in life than me, I assumed that these undeniable differences would be the most noticeable part of our interactions, but I was completely wrong. I began to notice how much we had in common. We could all joke about the same things, talk about school, and enjoy the same experiences. Their lives were different than mine, but that did not prevent us from connecting one bit.

As I became more comfortable around the participants, I also began to understand that helping someone adjust to an unfamiliar environment does not require grand gestures at all. It can begin with something as simple as treating them with kindness—as a friend. These small acts may feel insignificant in the moment, but for someone who has gone through so much hardship in their life, these moments can make such a meaningful difference.

The experience of being part of this program also opened my perspective. I initially thought that I would be spending these two weeks helping other people adapt to a new environment, but I found myself adapting and growing as well; I had to reconsider assumptions I did not realize I held.

When the program came to an end, I left with a different understanding of what connection could be. The two weeks did not erase the difference between our lives; that would be impossible. Instead, it gave everyone in the program an opportunity to simply spend time together. By the end, I came to understand that the first steps to creating an impact do not start with a dramatic gesture. It can start with something as little as a conversation, an invitation, or the effort to make someone feel welcome.