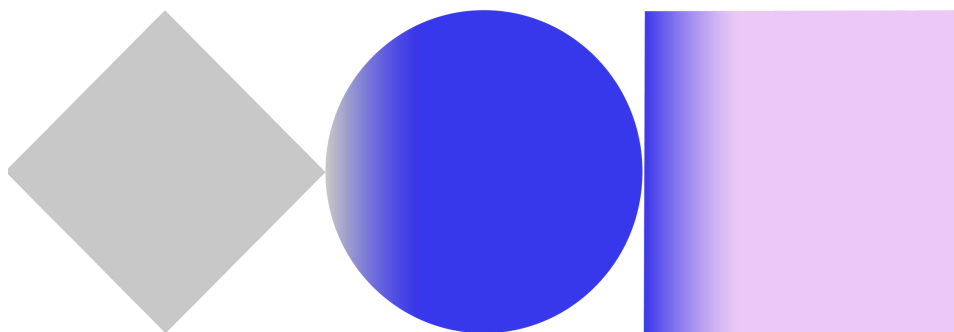


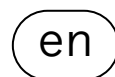
Alliance: a student perspective on unity and heritage



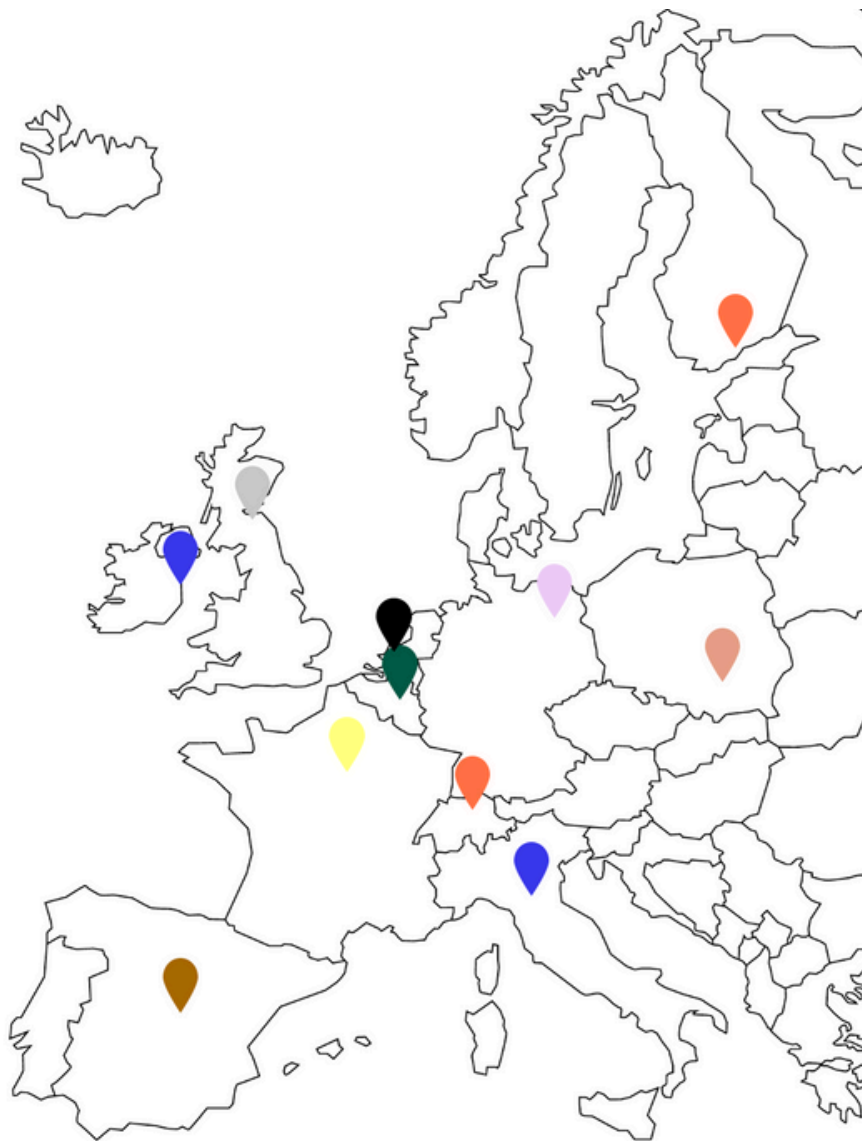
Una Europa Student Visual Art
Contest 2025



Co-funded by
the European Union



Eleven leading European research universities have come together to create a unique alliance – Una Europa. Our universities have been educating Europe for over 1,000 years. Together, we teach over 500,000 students and count almost 100,000 university staff among our network, with digital learners numbering in the millions. Una Europa aims to draw on our collective strengths to create a truly European inter-university environment, a University of the Future.



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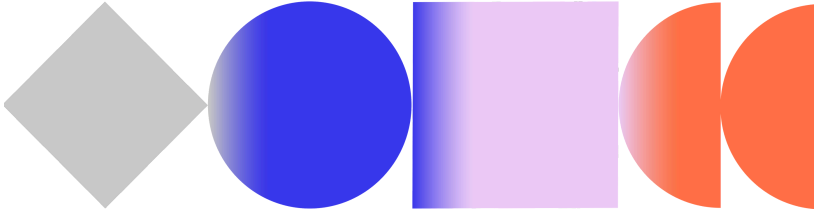
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About the contest...

How does one's own university path relate to one's heritage?

What shared heritage unites our universities?

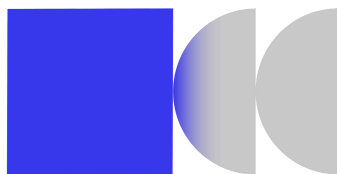
How do students perceive heritage and unity in the context of universities? How does it affect their own experiences?

Such are some of the interrogations that underlie the artworks presented in the *Una Europa Student Visual Art Contest 2025*, whose open theme, "*Alliance: a student perspective on unity and heritage*," brought various interpretations from students across diverse parts of Europe and beyond.

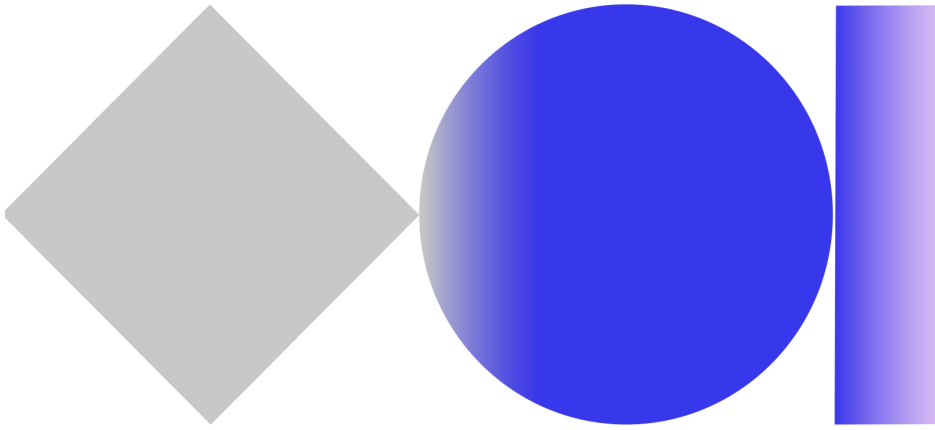
Some of the selected artworks have taken the words *alliance* and *unity* to the letter, covering the connection between our universities, through historical links or in their own experiences of mobility and collaboration. Others have taken yet different perspectives, more introspective, interrogating the university at its core and putting forward the role of our personal heritage, our personal roots and feelings of belonging within the university environment, in shaping our university paths.

This booklet is the result of this diversity of works, celebrating these points of view. Organised by the *Una Europa Student Local Task Forces*, within the framework of the *Una Europa Student Award*, the Student Visual Art Contest involved a multitude of actors in our different universities. In this booklet are compiled winning and runner-up artworks that were selected by local juries composed of faculty, staff members and students in each of our universities during the second part of the academic year 2024-2025, and whose artists accepted to be showcased. The winning artworks will also travel further, being presented in exhibitions throughout our Alliance in 2025-2026.

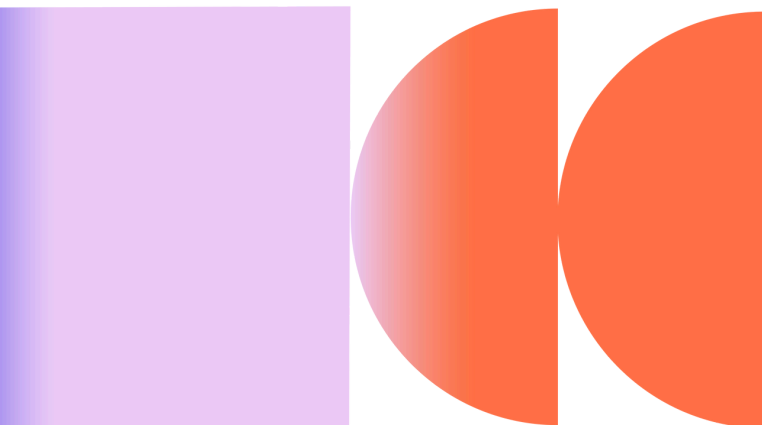
We invite you to browse through this booklet, stroll through our exhibitions, and get inspired by Una Europa students' stories, perspectives, and talent, reflecting on how their diverse messages resonate with your own life and experiences.



Read the [call of the contest](#) ↗



1st place



The Writing's On The Wall

Digital photographic artwork

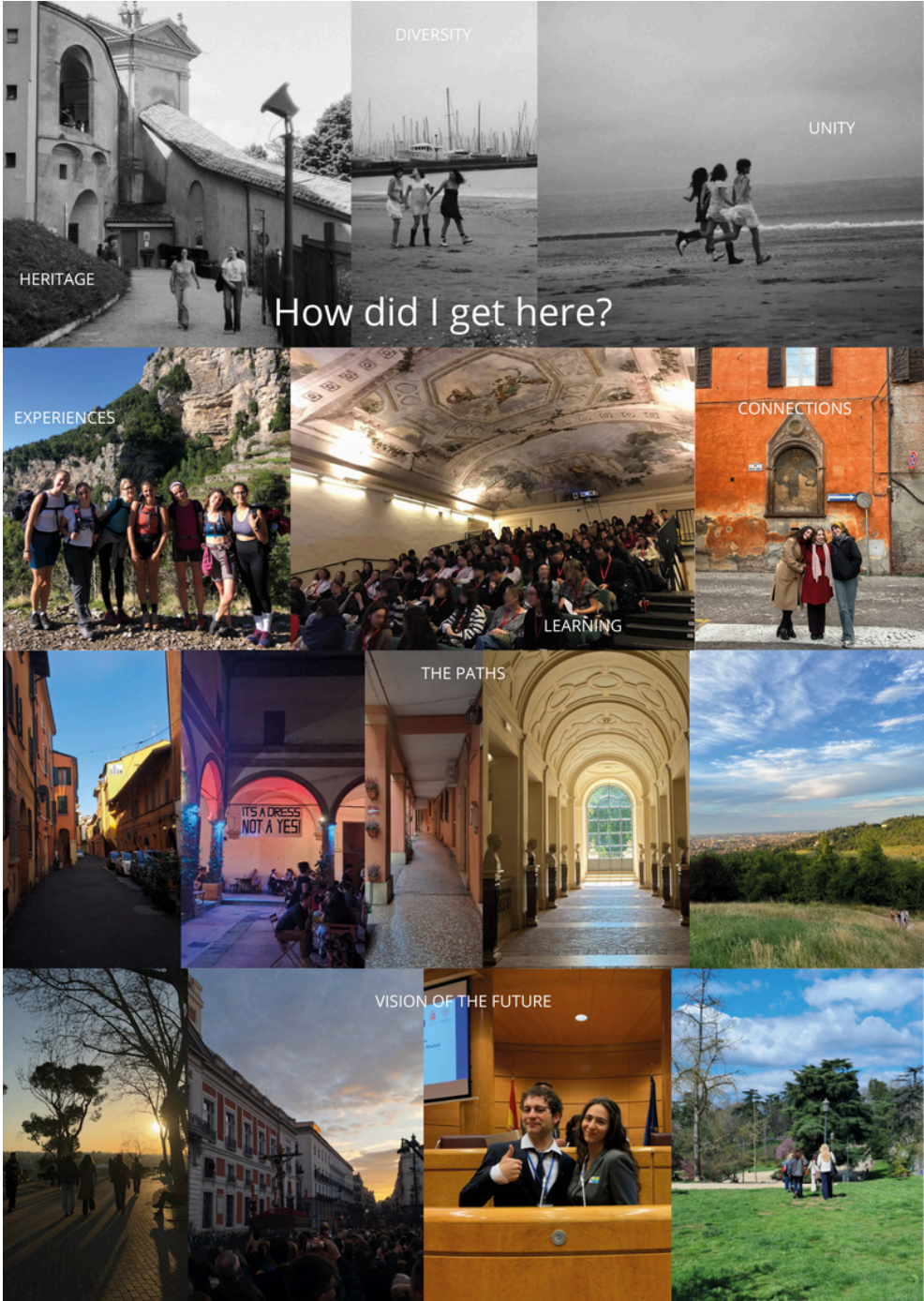
Aoife Joy Keogh | UCD 1st place

PhD Candidate in Education and Lifelong Learning at University College Dublin (UCD)

This piece explores the complex interplay between the narratives of institutional histories and our personal cultural identities and heritages, and ultimately how these can inform one another through unity and alliance. The photograph depicts a group of women on a college campus, at ease in their surroundings as they celebrate a graduation. A young girl runs boisterously with a legal wig on her head; a symbol of status and power. It appears that the graduate has qualified in law. The ease and joy with which the subjects comport themselves completely juxtaposes with the sentiment of the text providing the backdrop of this piece. This text originates from the [Statement of the Board of Trinity College Dublin in 1895 on Women's Education](#)⁷. The statement outlines potential 'scandals', 'abuses' and 'temptations' which may arise from allowing female students to inhabit the university space. Through united advocacy and protest, the path has been paved for women today to thrive in the university space.

This image was taken on my mother's graduation day over 20 years ago when I was a young child. I was raised in the north Dublin inner-city by a single mother of four children. To be in the position to study at doctoral level is something I never imagined possible as a child from my area, which is rife with social issues such as addiction, unemployment, and low rates of school completion. I witnessed my mother return to education as a mature student through a university access program for individuals experiencing significant socio-economic disadvantage. She went on to study law and became a qualified barrister. Observing my parent access higher education in the face of significant social and financial challenges enabled me to believe this was also a possibility for me.

This piece illustrates how the university space can be a powerful tool for individuals to realise their potential, and affronts those perceiving it with the reality that some groups have historically been excluded from this space and provides us with the opportunity to consider: who is allowed to occupy the university space in today's world? What groups continue to be systemically excluded? My personal heritage and diverse lived experience of education illustrates the ways in which the university space has changed over the course of the academy's history. It is clear that only through embracing unique cultural heritages and uniting with those whose lived experiences are different from our own, can we create space for true alliances of identities in the university space.



How did I get here?

Photo collage

Caterina Bagioni | UNIBO 1st place

Student of Una Europa's Joint Bachelor of Art in European Studies at Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna (UNIBO)

My work explains my whole university path through pictures that represent the most important values and moments of my university life. Bologna gave me so many important lessons and the streets that it opened me and that I have been walking through got me where I am right now. Bologna showed me how heritage, unity and diversity shape visions and perspectives.

The first three pictures, taken by my friend Wiktoria Najgebauer in January and May 2024, represent to me how learning about the history of the place we live in is essential to understand today's story. The girls in the pictures are me, my Finnish friend Karin and my Polish friend Maria. We met in the classroom of my Alma Mater, and we have shared memories since then. Our cultures make us rich in knowledge and interests that we share with the people we love. The first picture is the classic symbol of Bologna, San Luca. The pictures in the sea are from my native city, Ravenna, that represent my roots and how I share them with my closest ones. Thanks to Alma Mater, I had the opportunity to meet amazing people and to have creative experiences, build connections and learn about the world around me. My friends in the pictures are Wiktoria, Karin, Maddalena, Jean, Martyna and Maria.

Now, I am currently in the University of Complutense and here I am building my future, creating new connections and exploring new cultures and places. I show in the pictures my experience at the simulation of the European Parliament at UCM, the Spanish culture that I am discovering every day and the streets I am walking through every day, which represent the path for my career and my personal growth. Sometimes it is really important to think about how we get where we are right now, because our path is not only finalized in reaching the goal, but is teaching us important lessons every day. We should give more importance to the path, the everyday little moments and the little steps towards the future. My work emphasises friendship, culture and experience.



A Living Heritage

Photograph of fiber art on a tree branch

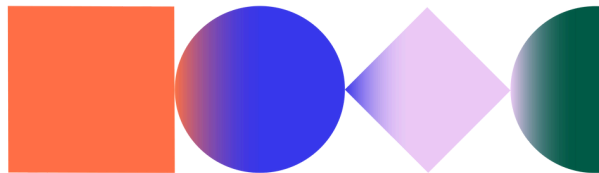
Cristina García Arranz | UoE 1st place

Master Student in East Asian Studies with Chinese Studies at the University of Edinburgh (UoE)

The inspiration behind my artwork comes from my view of the university as a place with a rich cultural heritage in continuous evolution. To illustrate this, I decided to create a tree and give a symbolic meaning to each of its constitutive parts.

First, the roots (bottom left) symbolise the deep historical roots of the University of Edinburgh, established in 1582. Second, the trunk (left) represents the university community, whose diversity of backgrounds, cultures, identities, and experiences gives vitality and colour to the university. Third, the branches represent the different disciplines taught and researched at the university, each growing and expanding in multiple directions. Fourth, the green leaves represent the individuals who constitute the university community. Their different shades of green symbolise the continuous renewal of the university community as individuals come and go. Fifth, the red flowers symbolise moments of blossoming potential and achievement. Sixth, the dark green fruits represent the contributions brought by the university community to the world. Lastly, the spider web woven into one of the branches (top right) represents the intricate web of connections formed within the university community and beyond.

To sum up, being part of the University of Edinburgh means being part of a living heritage.





Juureton (Unrooted)

Oil on Linen (39.9 x 37.2 inches)

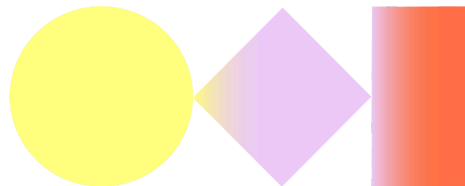
Priya Chakravartty | HY 1st place

Master Student in Contemporary Societies at Helsingin yliopisto/Helsingfors universitet (HY)

Juureton, my oil painting reflects my personal journey of identity transformation as an international student from Bengal, India, living and studying in Finland. When I arrived in Helsinki for my master's degree, I was one of the few people from my country. The shift in my surroundings brought a deep shift within myself. For months, I found myself suspended between two worlds, trying to navigate a new academic and cultural space while holding onto my roots back home.

This sense of in-betweenness of not fully belonging anywhere was both disorienting and formative. The painting is a self-portrait wherein I depict myself wearing student overalls, symbolizing my identity within Finnish university life, as I look at a reflection of myself in a *kurti*, the outfit I wore to university in Calcutta. The frame draws on the plaster motifs from the University of Helsinki's main building, embedding local heritage into my personal story.

Through this piece, I explore the idea of alliance not just between nations or institutions, but within the self. The painting becomes a bridge between cultures, identities, and emotions expressing how heritage is not static, but constantly negotiated in our everyday lives as students in an interconnected Europe.



$c = \text{const}$



Untitled

Digital collage

Yana Sheludyakova | UJ 1st place

Student of Bachelor of Arts in European Studies at Uniwersytet Jagielloński w Krakowie (UJ)

My artwork is a digital exploration of unity and heritage across the universities of Una Europa alliance. The idea behind it was to find connections between diverse and unique cultural heritages, expressed through patterns of traditional crafts, in scientific cooperation, represented by research projects, inventions and, mainly, the scientists who shaped the Europe we live in today.

Each university and its students and scholars contributed to different disciplines and fields. I began with the Jagiellonian University, where I study, and one of its most iconic figures, Nicolaus Copernicus. While at Bologna, Copernicus collaborated with Domenico Maria Novara and refined his heliocentric model of the solar system, which completely changed not only the view on physics and astronomy but also the people and the way we think about our place in the world. A century later, Carolus Clusius, a professor at the University of Leiden, transformed botany and introduced tulips to Europe. Following the model of Hortus Botanicus in Leiden, Jardin des Plantes in Paris became a centre for a taxonomic exchange. The ‘father of international law’, Hugo Grotius, built his foundational work “*De Jure Belli ac Pacis*” on the principles of Roman law and its practices by distinguished jurists like Andreas Gaill.

The correspondence between Joseph Black and Antoine Lavoisier led to the discovery of the conservation of mass, a foundational law for modern chemistry. The collaboration of Albert Einstein and Max Planck inevitably changed modern physics. A graduate of the University of Helsinki, Yrjö Väisälä, and Jan Oort, based at Leiden Observatory, were both prominent astronomers of the 20th century who developed optics, allowing future scientists to continue discoveries beyond the Earth.

In the 1960s, collaboration between researchers from Complutense University of Madrid with the University of Edinburgh contributed to genetics and embryology, while 30 years later, the best legal scholars from Leuven and Leiden were working together on EU law and the Maastricht Treaty. Today, 11 European universities are united in the Una Europa alliance by such promising projects as Future Unilab. The Una Europa alliance is not just a network of institutions, but the people and ideas, bringing individual cultural identity into the collective strength of scientific cooperation. This artwork is a reminder for students of the importance of the shared heritage and inspiration to find courage in ourselves for future valuable collaborations, just as those who did that before us.



Still Life in a Residence Hall's Common Room

Digital illustration

Laetitia Van Hecke | KUL 1st place

Student of Una Europa's Joint Bachelor of Arts in European Studies at KU Leuven (KUL)

“Still Life in a Residence Hall's Common Room” is a piece inspired by the universal experience of sharing a meal, specifically in the context of university life. The interpersonal relationship formed between students bringing food together after a long day of classes is one that unites us all in the Una Europa community.

Paying tribute to the artistic tradition of the Lower Lands, I was inspired by still lives by masters such as Pieter Claez, Jan Bruegel the Elder or Clara Peeters and their ability to freeze a moment in time, telling a story through a single image, often featuring food like in my own illustration.

On the table, I have chosen to represent countries such as Belgium, my birthplace and home of KU Leuven, through the cones of fries, or Italy through the pizza. Bread, salad and fruits are relatively international, inviting all sorts of people to join this crossroad of cultures.

Another activity embodying unity and cultural heritage that happens around a table is a game of cards. I have always enjoyed playing board or card games with my friends and relatives, as it's a fun and engaging way to build relationships. A game of “President” is ongoing at this table; let's stay at the table a little longer to see who wins.

aelvee.art ↗



What is the plural of home?

Mixed-media digital artwork

Aruzhan Tagayeva | UCM 1st place

Student of Una Europa's Joint Bachelor of Arts in European Studies at Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM)

Coming from a non-European country, choosing Una Europa's BAES wasn't a romantic leap - it was a strategic decision. Studying the EU at the heart of its institutions promised a solid academic foundation. But I couldn't have predicted that, in this faraway place, I would begin to find myself anew.

My cultural heritage is complex. A girl with nomadic roots, raised by strong women and shaped by the quiet weight of postcolonial trauma. My spirit belongs to the vast steppes and the unshakable silhouettes of the Alatau Mountains in the Almaty region of Kazakhstan. And yet, through this academic path, I've realized that heritage is not frozen in time - it's something that grows. It's something I continue to collect and carry with me.

My submission is a digitally illustrated photograph I took in Leuven on October 8, 2023, during my first semester at KU Leuven. It captures the familiar curve of Bondgenotenlaan - a street I've walked a thousand times - at sunset. Turned upside down, the city skyline mirrors the Alatau Mountains: my own visual bridge between past and present. I also added the phrase "home away from home away from home" to express the layered feeling of belonging and distance. Leuven - who would have imagined - is now a second home, yet the sense of "away" keeps me grounded in who I am and open to who I'm becoming.

On my Una Europa journey, I've come to see unity and heritage as complementary concepts that enrich each other. I found parts of myself in fellow Kazakh students, in late-night talks over tea. In Azerbaijani friends from university, discovering shared Turkic roots during a Nauryz celebration in Brussels. During the study sessions, where our discussions with my Estonian friend spanned ideologies and continents. In dancing to flamenco rhythms, which I recently fell in love with, in my room in Madrid after classes. In the languages I spoke - Kazakh, Russian, Korean, English, German - not as tools, but as vessels of memory, connection, and belonging. These are the bits and pieces that now belong to me, that define me.

Academia has been the bridge. And through it, I've come to understand that this shared experience - these people, places, and perspectives - are not just shaping my worldview. They are becoming a part of my heritage.



Visage aux mille visages

(Face of a Thousand Faces)

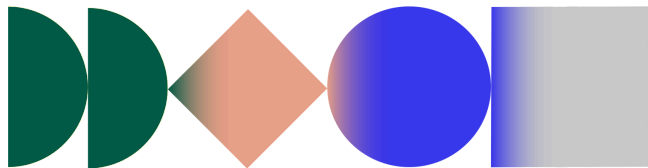
Collage on paper

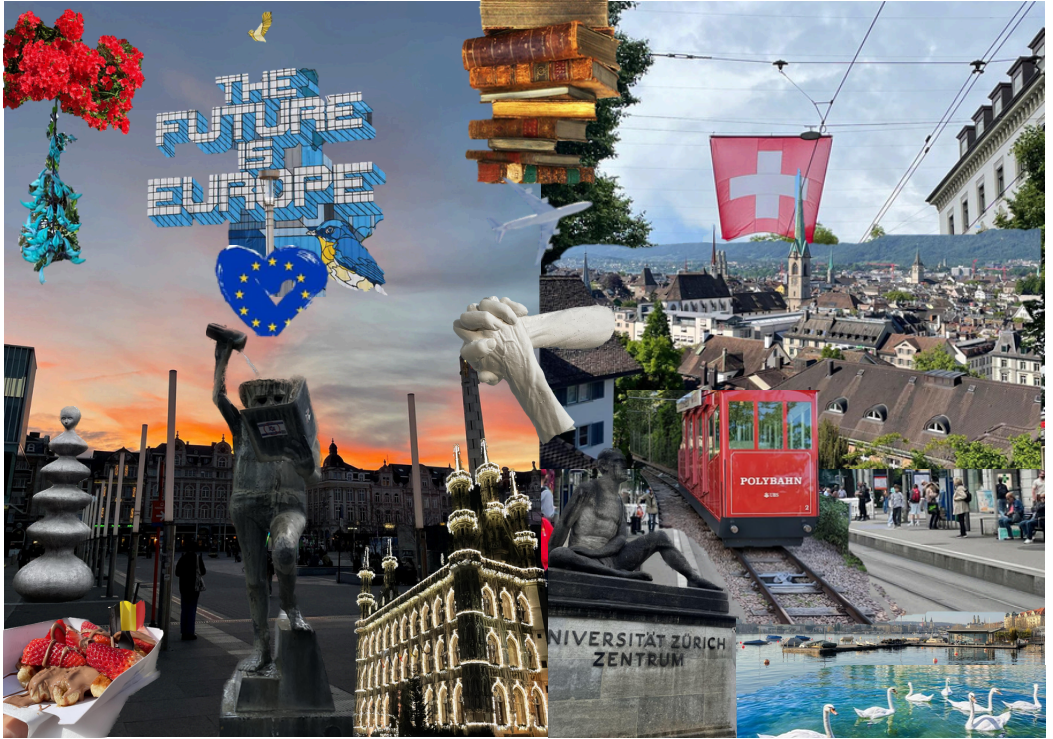
Quentin Manigler | P1PS 1st place

Undergraduate Student in Political Science at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (P1PS)

Through this “face of a thousand faces”, I wanted to question our relationship to identity—an identity that, like our culture, is never monolithic, but always the result of blending, migration, and hybridity. Fragmented, like those pieces of paper in different colours, which nevertheless come together to sketch the corner of a mouth, the line of a nose, the arch of an eyebrow. Identity defines us, and yet it is fluid, shaped over the course of our lives by our experiences, discoveries, and encounters—all the more so as we live in a globalised world, where the foreign is becoming ever more familiar.

At the centre of the collage, the eyes look directly at the viewer, as if to invite each and every one of us to reflect on our own identity, on our own journey. But they also question our relationship with the Other, for this face belongs to everyone and to no one at once. Finally, this collage can be seen as a metaphor for the Una Europa alliance. Just as the blend of colours gives this face its completeness and beauty, it is the diversity of countries, languages, and cultures gathered within Una Europa that gives it its richness. Like these simple pieces of paper, we together compose the face of a diverse yet united youth, one that aspires to dialogue and to peace.





Untitled

Digital collage

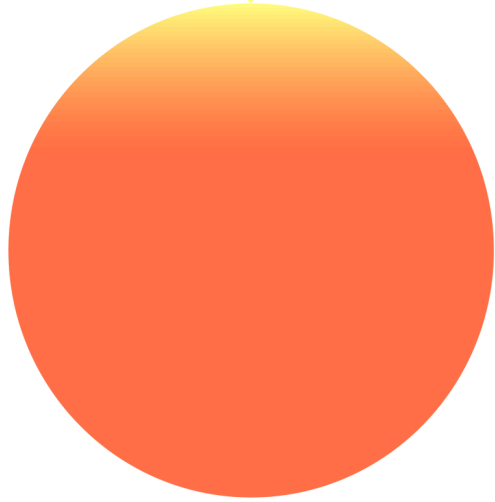
Jona Biba | UZH 1st place

Student of Una Europa's Joint Bachelor of Arts in European Studies at Universität Zürich (UZH)

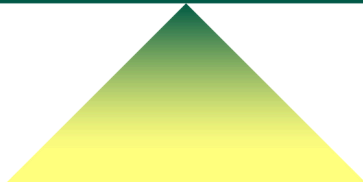
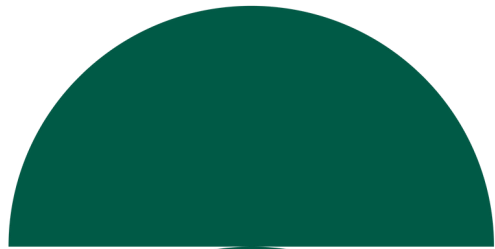
From KU Leuven to UZH. A jump from a small, peaceful city (Leuven) to one of the largest of the country (Zurich) captivated by movement. Moving from the heart of the European Union, one of the greatest achievements in history for long-lasting peace in the continent, to the heart of Europe, Switzerland, known for its neutrality. This change of systems brings up a feeling of uncertainty, but at the same time, this very experience is all about growth.

Connecting with people from all over the world, all with different stories, who are united by a desire for a better education, is an opportunity that broadens horizons. It not only opens up your mind but also your heart. Classes are not made up of learning objectives only, but of various experiences and dimensions shared from multiple regions. This cross-collaboration provides a glimpse into each other's understanding and enhances intellectual and cultural exchanges. From the flowers of Kruidtuin Jardin Botanique of Leuven to Zurich's lake, the swans, the Alps; from Belgian waffles to Swiss cheese; from a train to the Polybahn, this alliance is not only academic. This unity thrives in our diversity because we are eager to know more, to learn new things, to explore and feel how education is conducted elsewhere, away from home.

Una Europa is a place where identity is not lost: it is a union that allows the exhibition of your local self in a global arena. Una Europa generates innovation through tradition. We are Una!



2nd place



Untitled

Watercolor, pencil and pen

Zsófia Ballér | UNIBO 2nd place

Student of Una Europa's Joint Bachelor in European Studies at Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna (UNIBO)

I have decided to use a bridge as the centrepiece of my artwork. It does not only connect the two sides of the river but also symbolises the links between the historical events of the past and rays of future hope—bringing together people from different backgrounds and cultures. In this image, the bridge represents the European Union.

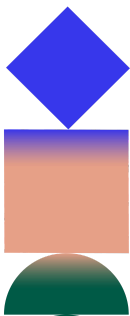
On both sides of the riverbanks and across the broken bridge, olive trees stretch their branches toward one another. These trees symbolize diplomacy and a willingness to reconcile. European countries are gradually lowering their walls, choosing cooperation over isolation, thus creating a more liveable, integrated and united community. A white dove flies above the banks, acting as a messenger of freedom. It reminds us not to take the rights and peace that previous generations fought so hard to achieve for granted. In my perspective, it is not politicians or world leaders rebuilding the bridge, but students of various nationalities. Each one uses different materials—whatever they can find— showing how diversity, creativity and collaboration can overcome obstacles and create unique solutions. Despite their different methods, they manage to reconnect the two sides.

Growing vines around the bridge's piers, represent our shared roots and cultural heritage. Their persistence and growth remind us how deeply history binds us together—even in times of change and uncertainty.

At the very centre of the image, a student is holding a flag filled with stars—a reference to the EU's motto: "*United in diversity*". Each star was inspired by designs from my international classmates, incorporating the meaning of the image right into its creation. Although the painted bridge remains broken, its reflection in the water tells a different story. In the river's surface, the bridge appears whole—unblemished, complete, and strong. This symbolizes not only hope, but also the potential of what unity could become.

This piece reflects my personal view of the European Union. Despite its flaws and many contemporary challenges, I still believe in the possibility of working together across national borders and cultural diversion. The European Union may never be as perfect as the dreamy bridge in the water's reflection, but its

legacy—built through cooperation, shared values, and resilience—will forever continue to shape future generations and inspire them towards the ideals of unity.





If all time is earthly
All time is worldly
All time is worldly

Will we who are dying die at last and
Do not see? Tell me, what is it
Your plan to do with your
We wait and have to die

Observe a ball

Quick so
Birds for
Birds for

Prayer is

Time rose
and time
before what
of best

What has been from
to are end
is always

What is yours
to be
to be

Of Dreams and Gravity

Black ink and gold pen on cartridge paper (A3)

Agatha Wren Shepherd-Jones | UoE 2nd place

Undergraduate Student in French and History of Art at the University of Edinburgh (UoE)

I created this piece in response to a university exhibition. The exhibition focussed on a conversation between mature students and undergraduate artists. The mature student I worked with told me about their beautiful story back to education, and I responded to this with the artwork. This is an artwork based in unity, transcending the taboos, and stigma around mature students in academic settings. A key symbol within the work was time, detailing a grandfather clock and an elvish quote from the 'Two Towers' (we both had a fond regard for the book!); I focussed on these personal symbols for the student. I took quotes from their favourite poems, and the lunar calendar, of which were deeply important for the student and used these here. Being able to see education through the eyes of another student's navigation and having to represent this in art made me reflect upon how the academic setting of university has shaped me too.

Through going to university, I have discovered so much more about myself and my cultural identity. The floods of experiences, and peoples from all walks of life have inspired me to carve out not only my own distinct artistic style but also helped shape the person I am today. Creating this artwork, I have realised that academic settings are never without the need for unity and community. It seems that the people really do make the place, fostering conversation, belonging, and togetherness is what university is about.

[artbyagathawren](https://www.instagram.com/artbyagathawren) ↗



Everyone learns from mistakes

Korean traditional embroidery

Sinyoung Kim | HY 2nd place

Master Student in Changing Education at Helsingin yliopisto/Helsingfors universitet (HY)

My artwork, *Everyone Learns from Mistakes*, is my first piece of traditional Korean embroidery. The imperfections are visible—but each uneven stitch reflects a process worth celebrating. With the guidance of my teacher, I completed the piece stitch by stitch. Asking for help is not a weakness but a natural part of beginning and learning something new.

That same understanding shaped my experience as a student in the Una Europa Local Task Force at the University of Helsinki. This involvement marked a turning point in my academic life. Through the Task Force, I helped organize events such as Science Night and a panel discussion on the 2024 European Elections and the paradoxes of sustainability. These were my first steps toward active engagement with European society—and I didn't take those steps alone. At first, I worried that my Asian heritage might distance me from others. Instead, sharing my background enriched our discussions and brought valuable diversity to the group. I came to understand that unity thrives on difference, and that cultural variety is a strength in building meaningful alliances.

The Local Task Force was like a gentle guide: I met supportive, inspiring people and learned how to collaborate across cultures and disciplines. We all came with different backgrounds, but we worked together with shared curiosity and care. Like embroidery, building those relationships took time and patience. Each thread—each person—mattered.

This artwork combines my cultural heritage with my present journey as a student in Europe. Speaking to the theme of Alliance, unity isn't about perfection—it's about participation, vulnerability, and connection. Heritage, to me, is not only what I carry from the past, but what I contribute to a shared future. In both art and academic life, beginnings are imperfect. But through community and openness, we grow—and together, we create something meaningful.



Untitled

Digital art

Alejandra Marcela Restrepo Urueta | UJ 2nd place

Master Student in European Studies at Uniwersytet Jagielloński w Krakowie (UJ)

Behind the artwork lies a tribute to the legacy we carry from generations past. The memories, traditions, and experiences passed down to us are the foundations of our identity. This inherited knowledge shapes how we see the world, how we understand ourselves, and how we relate to others.

When we begin to recognise this shared inheritance, we discover connections between cultures. We start to realise that beneath our differences, there is a common human story. Stories of resilience, hope, and the desire to belong. And maybe, through that, we begin to understand that we are not so different after all.

Art is a bridge in this process, a way to express what words sometimes cannot, a way to invite others into our histories and emotions. When we share these expressions with others, we open the door to empathy. By exchanging stories and wisdom, we take a step toward building a more compassionate and tolerant world.

In learning from one another, we grow.

A living heritage: Justus Lipsius College

Collage

Anna Durnez | KUL 2nd place

Master Student in Multilingual communication at KU Leuven (KUL)

This artwork is my personal love letter to my student residence, Justus Lipsius College. Justus Lipsius College (JLC) is a unique student residence of KU Leuven, rich in both history and soul. Originally developed within the remains of a 19th-century convent, the building was purchased by the university in 1873 to address a pressing need for student housing and classrooms. Over the years, under the guidance of architect Joris Helleputte, the site was transformed into the striking neo-Gothic complex it remains today: a blend of architectural modesty, brick sobriety, and quiet character.

Yet what truly makes JLC special is not just its physical structure, but the way it has continuously fostered a vibrant international community. For decades, life at the college has been shaped by a social framework centered around connection, guidance and care. A resident president, regents, and sub-regents support students not only in their studies but in learning how to live together. For the last two years I had the pleasure to be one of them. Shared meals, meaningful traditions, rituals of welcome and farewell, and even playful events like student awards create a fabric of everyday life that binds residents together.

This residence, housing over 180 students, encourages bonds that go deeper than those found in most student accommodations. Many residents come from all over the world, creating a rich cultural tapestry that thrives on diversity and dialogue. JLC is more than a place to live; it is a space where students find a second home, often carrying the sense of belonging far beyond their academic years.

The materials you see here: flyers from our coordination team who organise events year-round, bike labels, Alma restaurant stickers, old postcards, student award certificates, newsletters, menus, etc., are fragments of a life I shared with many others. Each one represents a moment of joy, tradition, or belonging: a welcome flyer for new residents, a coin for drinks during events, a newsletter that connected us week after week.

It was within these walls that I met my boyfriend and my closest friends. It was here that I discovered my passion for cultural heritage, an interest that

From Roots to Resonance: A Living Alliance/ Hasta la raíz: Una alianza viva

Digital collage with photographs and multilingual typography

Catherine Jemely Yépez González | UCM 2nd place

Undergraduate Student in English Studies at Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM)

“*From Roots to Resonance: A Living Alliance*” is a visual artwork that explores the symbolic and real value of cultural diversity within the university environment. The collage is structured around a natural metaphor: a tree whose deep roots represent the various identities, languages, memories, and cultural legacies carried by each student, and whose luminous crown opens toward the sky, symbolising shared growth and collective learning.

The piece is divided into two planes: the upper part evokes Spanish cultural heritage, referencing the history and knowledge that sustain a society. The lower part is composed of images of people from various nationalities, representing the human and student diversity found in the roots. Between both, the tree trunk connects and gives life to a living alliance: the university as a space of encounter, transformation, and collective resonance.

The accompanying phrases—written in Spanish, English, French, German, Italian, Polish, Finnish, and Dutch—reinforce the message of unity through diversity. Each one expresses the idea of growth, community, and belonging in different languages, reflecting the richness of intercultural exchange.

Inspired by the song “*Hasta la raíz*” by Natalia Lafourcade, this piece pays tribute to our roots—familial, cultural, and emotional—and celebrates their power to connect in global contexts. It is an invitation to remember where we come from, to honour what brings us together, and to understand that our differences do not divide us; they nourish a shared tree: one of education, identity, and coexistence.



Journey to Unity
Journey Through Heritage

Journey to Unity: Journey through Heritage

Photo-collage, A2 size, Landscape

Zakaria Abyaa | P1PS 2nd place

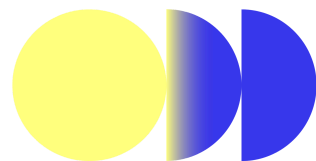
Joint PhD Candidate in Architecture & Planning at Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (P1PS) and the National School of Architecture in Rabat, Morocco.

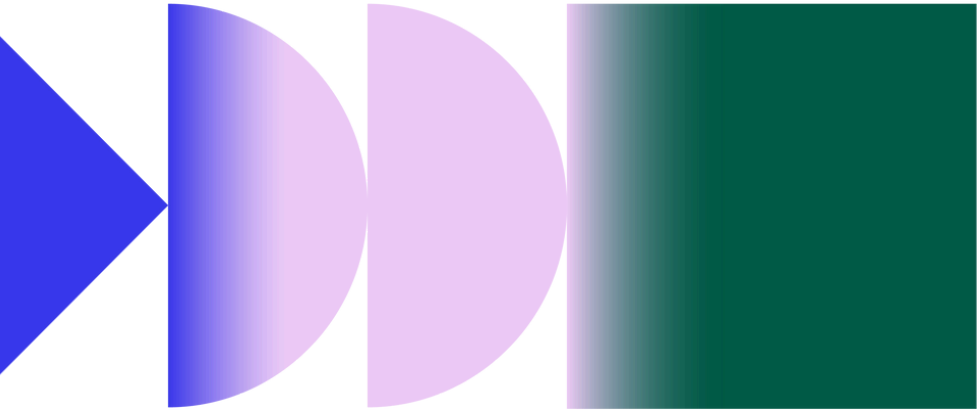
This collage is a personal visual epiphany woven from fragments of a journey that spans the golden light of Morocco and the exquisite style of France. At its heart, it is a meditation on duality: between north and south, tradition and modernity, memory and movement.

Each image, texture, and overlay in this piece is drawn from the time spent travelling through Morocco for research and study in France. Morocco offered a sensory revelation: the heat of ochre cities, the rhythmic hum of souks, the sparkling light of calligraphy carved in stone. France, by contrast, was as welcoming as its quiet museums, long afternoons of thought, and windows framing soft skies. These contrasting yet complementary landscapes became a mirror of a transformative experience.

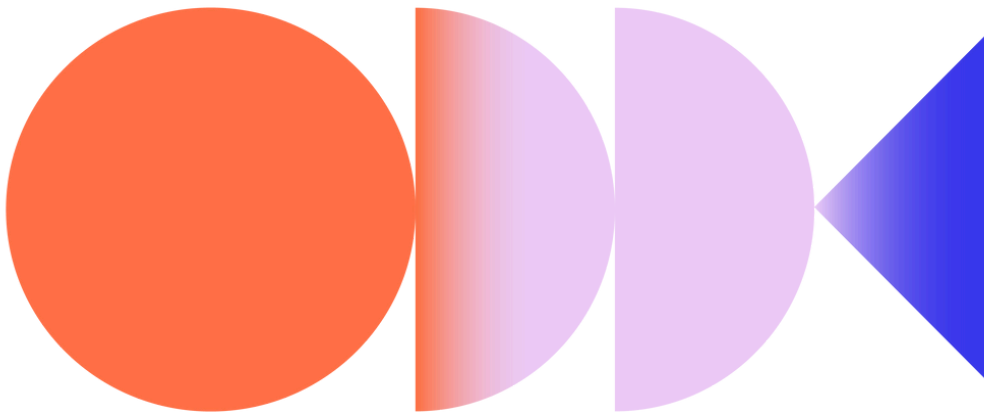
The theme of the exhibition, whether centred on unity or cultural dialogue, is echoed in the interplay between these two worlds so far from each other but yet so close to my heart. This piece does not tell a linear story, but a felt one. It captures the intimate weight of handwritten field notes, airplane and train tickets turned crumpled souvenirs, and borrowed and bought books annotated in the margins. Through layering and juxtaposition, the collage evokes the fascination and wonder of uniting multiple and diverse cultures at once.

This work invites viewers to reflect on their own journeys, both literal and internal. The piece asks: How do we carry places within us? What remains when we leave, and what do we bring back? This is not just a portrait of architecture, geography, and nature but of enlightenment stitched with care, memory, and the unspoken poetry of lived experience.



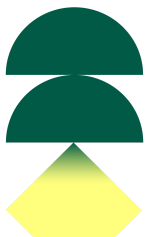


3rd place





[sofiavnukova](#) ↗



Roots of the Alliance

Digital illustration

Sofiia Vnukova | UNIBO 3rd place

Master Student in Fashion Studies at Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna (UNIBO)

My artwork, titled “*Roots of the Alliance*”, is a digital painting that reflects on the meaning of unity, identity, and cultural interconnection among the member universities of Una Europa. The composition unfolds around three key visual elements: the historic setting, the symbolic tree, and the diverse students who activate its meaning.

The background of the illustration is the courtyard of the University of Bologna, the oldest university in Europe and a powerful symbol of the origins of academic tradition. I chose this setting intentionally, as I am currently studying at the University of Bologna and deeply value the opportunity to be part of this legacy. The courtyard, with its terracotta arches and historical atmosphere, becomes the fertile ground from which something new can grow – not only for me, but for all students who carry their roots into new contexts. This setting also evokes the idea that education always emerges from place, memory, and the silent presence of knowledge passed across generations.

At the heart of the scene stands the Tree of the Alliance – a symbolic, curved pine that emerges from the soil of Bologna and grows toward a shared future. Its trunk is marked with eleven colored bands, each representing one of the universities in the Una Europa alliance. These bands spiral upward, intertwining as a metaphor for collaboration, mutual growth, and academic dialogue. The crown of the tree, although light and transparent, is filled with stylised cultural symbols – such as Petrykivka florals, Celtic knots, Japanese waves, Arab calligraphy, and Indigenous totems – which represent the diverse heritage each student brings to the academic community.

Surrounding the tree are 16 students: 11 represent the official Una Europa universities, while 5 additional students come from different global and cultural backgrounds. Their poses are expressive and intentional: some touch the trunk or the earth, others support their peers or reach upward, sharing gestures of solidarity and participation. These students vary in age, origin, and ability – including visible representations of inclusivity – to demonstrate that universities are open spaces of learning for all, not limited by geography, identity, or physical capacity.

I chose to place myself – a Ukrainian student – beside the tree, gently touching its bark, as a personal reflection of how I see myself contributing to this alliance. *Roots of the Alliance* illustrates how each student helps this symbolic tree grow and flourish – forming a living legacy of unity and diversity in European education.



An Architect's Atlas

Digital drawing created from a photo collage

Agata Koniarska | UCD 3rd place

Graduate student in Architecture at University College Dublin (UCD)

This digital drawing is based on my personal and educational journey, with a focus on architecture. I come from Poland and wanted to reflect on how my path has developed across different places, especially through my time at University College Dublin.

During my Erasmus semester in Vienna, I came across the painting 'Die große Hafenstadt' ("The Big Port") by Herbert von Reyl-Hanisch in the Albertina Museum. It reminded me of Dublin, and I used its composition as a starting point for my piece.

Architecture has always been central to how I understand the world, so I decided to represent my story through buildings. I included elements from Poland—Jasna Góra from my hometown, Częstochowa, as well as the Palace of Culture and Science from Warsaw. I have also drawn the Oodi Library in Helsinki and Karlskirche in Vienna, as both Finland and Austria have been a part of my education through the Erasmus programme. You can also see Irish buildings, as Ireland and UCD in particular have played the biggest role in my education. I drew the GPO (General Post Office), as well as The Spire and Georgian townhouses, as well as Dún Laoghaire Harbor. The whole scene is set in an Irish-inspired hilly and cliffland landscape with stone walls and sheep representing the Irish countryside.

In the foreground, you see a figure of myself and the Richview architecture building at UCD, where I spent most of my time as an architecture student at UCD. On the left, I placed the Ha'penny Bridge to represent my connection to new cultures and ideas through UCD. On the connecting island, I drew buildings from the countries of my friends that I've met through university, showing the alliance of cultures. These include the Victoria Memorial from Kolkata, Petronas Towers from Kuala Lumpur, Torii Gate from Japan, Statue of Liberty from New York, Marina Bay Sands from Singapore, and Guanque Tower from Shanxi, China. The colourful, pastel sky in the background represents hope for the future and everything that is yet to come. The islands in the background symbolise the new things I am yet to discover and the future cultural connections I am yet to make.

Cultural alliance is at the heart of my drawing, the blending of different heritages, which creates shared academic experience. This drawing shows how the university can become a place of transformation and belonging through cultural alliance.

Alien

Acrylic painting, collage and drawing on canvas (50x70 cm.)

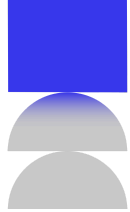
Saimi Ristimella | HY 3rd place

Undergraduate student in Social Sciences at Helsingin yliopisto/Helsingfors universitet (HY)

I approached the competition's theme through the lens of class. What kind of readiness and resources do we receive for entering the academic world and environment? How do they affect our experience of university and our sense of belonging there? How does our class background manifest as a feeling of not belonging or being the wrong kind of person? It is interesting to examine the unity and legacy mentioned in the assignment, specifically through class. The content of the work arose from my own experiences, as well as from Mari Käyhkö's articles: "Osaanko mä nyt olla tarpeeksi yliopistollinen?": työläistäustaiset yliopisto-opettajanaiset ja luokan kokemukset ↗ (Can I now be sufficiently "university-like"?: working-class women teaching at the university and experiences of class) (Käyhkö 2020), and Kelpaanko? Riitänkö? Kuulunko?: Työläistäustaiset naiset, yliopisto-opiskelu ja luokan kokemukset ↗ (Do I have the legitimacy? Am I enough? Do I belong?: working class women, university studies and experiences of class) (Käyhkö 2014). In these articles, Käyhkö explores the experiences of working-class women about class and the university environment. When I began my studies, I felt a strong sense of alienation and wrongness. I didn't feel like the right kind of university student. It seemed that others had the knowledge, skills, words, and ways of being that I lacked. It was as if a piece was missing from my map—one that everyone else had. I felt like I was the wrong kind of person. Maybe there was something wrong with me. The new environment was painful to adapt to.

The academic world was completely unfamiliar to me, and I was also in a very different life situation compared to most students. Even though I made friends and the university welcomed me into its world, I still felt lost. I suddenly didn't know how to exist. My previous ways of acting, speaking, and experiencing felt suddenly wrong. I study social sciences. As my studies progressed, I began to delve into the concept of class and how it manifests. While working with the articles I used in my project, I identified with the experiences of not belonging and being the wrong kind of person, which were also highlighted in the articles.

In my work, I combine my own experiences with those of working-class women navigating the academic world, as presented in the articles—experiences of wrongness, not belonging, and uncertainty. This feeling of alienation is expressed in my piece *Alien*. A creature lost on a foreign planet, not yet fully





Untitled

Digital Painting

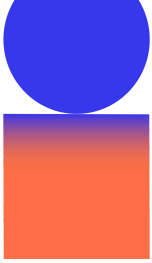
Aleksandra Dziwińska | UJ 3rd place


Master Student in Creative Writing at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków (UJ)

The image shows four women connected with the Jagiellonian University growing out of one tree, which symbolises rootedness, growth and continuity. The characters portrayed are: Queen Regnant Jadwiga of Anjou, founder of the renewal of the University in the 14th century; Helena Willman-Grabowska, first woman to hold the title of professor in the Jagiellonian University; Wisława Szymborska, poet, Nobel prize winner, who in despite of not finishing her degree, remained connected to the university for her entire life; and an unnamed student, representing all young women, who are shaping themselves and the future of the academic community today. Each of these figures faced different challenges and participated differently throughout the University's history, but we remember them all as extraordinary people.

However, heritage is a living organism. Queen Regnant Jadwiga of Anjou, Helena Willman-Grabowska, and Wisława Szymborska are not just figures from the past; their ideas, knowledge and work continue to resonate, inspiring future generations. These are our roots, our academic and creative family tree. At the same time, these women provide us with oxygen—energy for action, inspiration. The modern student grows from the same tree—inheriting strength, receiving a legacy of thought and experience, from which she shapes her own career.

The connection between the women portrayed is a timeless one—and an intergenerational and interdisciplinary alliance. Every single person connected to the university has a place within it. Every story, every discovery, and every decision contributes to the growth of our tree—a legacy we co-create with those who have been, are, or will be part of this academic community.





A Home for All Seasons

Pencil and watercolour on paper. 24x30cm.

Mathilde Turner | KUL 3rd place

Master Student in European Studies at KU Leuven (KUL)

I drew the KU Leuven library as a tree. This building was twice burned down by German forces and twice rebuilt thanks to international coordination and fundraising. It thus seemed to me a fantastic symbol both of resilience through intercultural unity, and of academia's role in fostering and supporting cultural diversity through research. The tree plays with several themes. From the bottom, the roots represent being rooted in one's own culture while interacting with others, which is a source of strength that fosters multicultural collaboration, shown in the hands within the arches' trunks. The roots also allude to the intangible aspects of universities as places of human connection and learning which go far beyond their walls. Even as universities change and adapt to different times, this intangible aspect remains, as is also represented by the foliage replacing the tiles, which passes through the seasons, representing the stability of change along the lines of Heraclitus' maxim: 'You cannot step into the same river twice'.

The eyes in the windows peeking through the foliage represent the collective watching and awareness of academia, which can cover so many angles through a multicultural body. Underneath, fruit hangs in a formation inspired by the Leuven botanical gardens, as fruits of knowledge grown together from the tree's multicultural roots. The charred centre piece of the library alludes to the library's history, but also to the importance of critiques and challenges to current systems for academia; from the burnt branches, new leaves grow. Finally, flying out of the chimneys are beetles, echoing Jan Fabre's artwork in front of the Leuven library. They represent the students going far afield across the world, carrying with them the pollen of KU Leuven, and thus keeping the university alive, aware, and culturally present.



Unseen

Charcoal on paper

Oriana Viloría | UCM 3rd place

Master Student in Research in Arts and Creation at Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM)

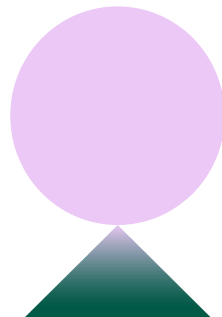
This artwork is a charcoal drawing that originates from a macro photograph of a human iris. The image is magnified to reveal the complex and unique patterns that form this small yet profoundly expressive part of the body. The eye, often referred to as the "window to the soul," becomes here a window to identity.

The work reflects on the uniqueness of every human being, emphasizing that no two irises are alike, just like fingerprints, they are biological markers of individuality. The choice to render the iris in charcoal, a medium that allows for rich contrasts and subtle textures, adds a sense of depth and introspection. The drawing invites viewers to observe closely, to see beyond the surface, and to consider how our identities are shaped by details that often go unnoticed.

Through this piece, I aim to raise questions about how we perceive identity and diversity in contemporary society. The eye becomes a symbol of both recognition and mystery, a place where our shared humanity and our differences coexist. It also suggests that identity is not always immediately visible, but embedded in structures, layers, and patterns that require attention to be truly understood.

By enlarging and isolating the iris, the work encourages a contemplative look into the ways in which each person carries a singular visual code, an internal landscape that resists standardization. It is a visual meditation on difference, uniqueness, and the quiet yet powerful presence of individual identity.

[orianaviloria](#) ↗



Credits

The ‘Una Europa Student Visual Art Contest 2025’ is a student-initiated initiative, designed and implemented by students from the *Student Local Task Forces* of 7 universities of our alliance from September 2024 to January 2026, with the support of staff members from all partner universities as well as Una Europa’s central office.

It has been coordinated by *Jules Geoffroy* alongside the rest of the *Student Local Task Force* of the *Universidad Complutense de Madrid*, with the highly valuable support from the Local Una Europa office.

This booklet has been designed by *Lucía Fuertes Vázquez* with the support of the coordinating team of the contest at the *Universidad Complutense de Madrid*, and notably *Jules Geoffroy*. The translation of the descriptions in foreign languages to English has been carried out by *Romane Deseez*, *Valeria Quintana Solís* and *Saana Laaksonen*.

The Student Local Task Forces from the following universities were involved in the project

- + Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM)
- + Universität Zürich (UZH)
- + Uniwersytet Jagielloński w Krakowie (UJ)
- + Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna (UNIBO)
- + Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne (PIPS)
- + KU Leuven (KUL)
- + Helsingin Yliopisto / Helsingfors Universitet (HY)

The Central Organising Team of the Student Visual Art Contest 2025 was composed of

- + Jules Geoffroy, UCM & UJ, general coordinator
- + Lucía Fuertes Vázquez, UCM
- + Daniel Soler Castilla, UCM, local coordinator
- + Celia Yun Pérez García, KUL & UCM, local coordinator
- + Raúl Gómez Hernández, UCM & UoE
- + Jacobo Serret Sanz, UCM

The organisation of the contest was made possible thanks to the invaluable work of

- + Chiara Wooldridge, UZH, local coordinator
- + Romane Deseez, PIPS, local coordinator
- + Valeria Quintana Solís, UJ, local coordinator
- + Saana Laaksonen, HY, local coordinator
- + Angelica Porcheddu, UNIBO, local coordinator
- + Lea Crosnier Leconte, PIPS
- + Ardennes Ornat, UZH
- + Ayşe Gülfem Sabırlı, UNIBO
- + Camilla Alberani, KUL
- + Angelica Mattevi, KUL & UNIBO
- + Venla Kaisla Maria Ailasmäki, HY
- + Brandon Tim Sebastian, PIPS
- + Ladina Bischof, UZH
- + Luisa Zaccherini, UNIBO
- + Marcelina Stękała, UJ
- + Kristiāna Bruce, KUL

as well as the continuous support of

- + Stinne Vognaes, Una.Futura WP8 (Student Engagement) Lead, HY
- + Heather McComb, Digital Communications Manager, Una Europa vzw
- + Julián Muñoz Montes, Una.Futura Senior Local Lead, UCM
- + Cristina Saura, Communications Lead, UCM
- + María del Rosario Cristóbal Roncero, Vicerrectora de Relaciones Internacionales, UCM
- + Carmen Otero García-Castrillón, Adjunta de la Vicerrectora de Relaciones Internacionales, UCM
- + Tajana Mohnacki, Global Networks and Projects Assistant, UCD

We thank equally all staff members, jury members, participants, visitors, friends and family for their continuous support and help in developing this project until the end.

You want to hear more or give feedback? Contact us at art-contest@ucm.es



Building a University of the Future

The Student Visual Art Contest was designed and implemented by a group of dedicated students from the Una Europa Local Student Task Forces. The Contest was developed in the framework of the Una Europa Student Award, part of our work to empower students across our alliance, initiated under the Una.Futura project.



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