

Artist Statement: *Shaving Away my Identity* explores my cultural identity as an Indian teenager navigating American beauty standards and how these expectations have affected my mental health as well as my self-acceptance. In American culture, women are often expected to shave to be seen as attractive. For me, this expectation feels like shaving away part of my Indian heritage. As someone with thick, dark body hair which is common in Indian culture, I've often felt ashamed of something that should connect me to my roots. The pressure to conform has led to insecurity, anxiety, and a sense of alienation from both my culture and myself. This has led me to conform to the American standards, leaving my Indian heritage behind. The background features traditional Indian fabric, symbolizing my cultural roots. As I shave, the motion creates a blue color that covers the fabric and the pattern is only visible only along the edges. This represents how my heritage becomes hidden when I conform to the American beauty standards. The color blue throughout the piece expresses the sadness, regret, and emotional toll of changing myself to fit Western beauty norms. This artwork is a reflection of my journey toward understanding how cultural and racial stereotypes have shaped my self-perception. It is also a reflection on my ongoing effort to reclaim and accept all parts of who I am.

