



# AVA JINYING SALZMAN

## FINE ARTS RÉSUMÉ

### PROFILE

Ava Jinying Salzman is a visual artist, graphic novelist, writer, and multidisciplinary artist based in Los Angeles, California and Warsaw, Poland. Her lifelong passion lies in uncovering the stories that haunt us: giving artistic form to the ghosts and monsters of our past, so that we might confront and embrace them.

All of us inside us have monsters - the uncategorizable, uncontrollable, indestructible forces that haunt us and transcend the boundaries that give our existence order. When the structures of our lives collapse: when systems of meaning dissolve, when disaster strikes, when the deluge comes, what's left in the rubble are monsters. Monsters are the signifiers of contradiction, of brokenness, of decline, decomposition, crisis, chaos, and death - and of rebirth.

Since the beginning of time, these monsters and phantoms have been a way that people have put forms and names and faces to the unspeakable; to the experiences we can't categorize; to the painful pasts we can't resolve. By giving the scariest, most intangible feelings a form, they become less scary. They can even become worthy of understanding, worthy of attention, and worthy of care, so that we might learn to communicate and coexist with them. This is the core of Ava's artistic mission.

Her latest long-term project, *Cracks*, is an original graphic novel dealing with the ghosts of a more personal history: her own family's experiences of crisis, imprisonment, dehumanization and reinvention during the era of America's Chinese Exclusion Laws. Combining oral immigration narratives with ghost and monster folklore, the script for the novel served as her senior thesis at Harvard University, receiving highest honors. She is now in the process of illustrating it by hand into a full-length book, supported in part by the Harvardwood AAPI Artist Fellowship.

### EDUCATION

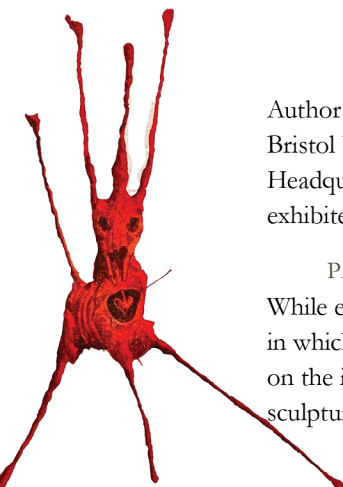
HARVARD UNIVERSITY — CLASS OF 2023

A.B. *cum laude* in Folklore and Mythology, secondary in Art, Film, and Visual Studies. Received recommendations for highest honors by the department, and senior thesis received *summa cum laude*.

### EXPERIENCE

GRAPHIC NOVELIST, "CRACKS" — 2021-PRESENT

Author and illustrator of in-progress graphic novel entitled "Cracks", an adaptation of Chinese Exclusion-era immigration stories through Chinese-American ghost folklore. I interviewed my grandmother ("Poh-Poh") for over two years to build an oral narrative collection on our family's six-generation history of exclusion, violence, and rebuilding in California Chinatowns, and wrote it into a 200-page script that reimagined those stories through ghost and monster folklore. I developed concept art for the graphic novel through an Harvard College Research Program fellowship, an independent study in the studio art department (advised by animator Young Joo Lee), and an artist residency at the Harvard Advocate. The script and oral narrative collection was my senior thesis at Harvard University, advised by graphic novelist Gene Luen Yang (*American Born Chinese, Boxers & Saints*) and received straight summa cum laude grades, highest possible honors. After winning the Harvardwood AAPI Artist Fellowship to fund the project, I am now in the process of illustrating the script into the full graphic novel (pencil, pen-and-ink, and watercolor on Bristol board, as well as digital illustration).



#### GRAPHIC NOVELIST, "OTTO" — 2016-2018

Author and illustrator of self-published graphic novel excerpt, entitled *Otto*, 2016-2018, pen-and-ink on Bristol board. My work on this graphic novel was sold in three Los Angeles bookstores (Secret Headquarters, The Pop-Hop Shop, Enlighten Books), was a 2018 YoungArts Visual Arts winner, and exhibited in Building Bridges Art Exchange LA.

#### PAINTER AND ILLUSTRATOR, "MONSTER PORTRAITURE" — 2022-PRESENT

While enrolled in Annette Lemieux's silkscreen workshop, I developed the "Monster Portraiture" project, in which I interview people about the concept of monstrosity in their lives and create an illustration based on the interviews through silkscreen, drawing, oil, watercolor and acrylic painting, and papier-mâché mask sculpture. I publish the monsters and excerpts of their stories every week on social media.

#### ILLUSTRATOR AND FINE ARTIST, FREELANCE — 2015-PRESENT

I have 20 years of experience in fine arts media spanning pen-and-ink, pencil and colored pencil, watercolor, oil and acrylic painting, charcoal, woodcuts and linoleum cuts, silkscreen, hand-drawn animation, engraving, and digital artwork, my independent illustrations and works of fine art exhibited at galleries such as Building Bridges Art Exchange, the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Medalist show in Washington DC, Minty Boi Collective, the Signet Society and Carpenter Center gallery at Harvard, and more. In addition, I have done freelance illustration work for 8 years, for clients including Alex Walker, an independent children's book author; Luke Herzog, a fantasy and sci-fi author; Kythe Heller and Matthew Blumberg, scholars adapting the Sufi Conference of the Birds myth into a graphic novel; Soman Chainani (author, *School for Good and Evil*); and Dumebi Malaika Menakaya Adigwe, photographer.

#### GRAPHIC DESIGNER, FREELANCE — 2011-PRESENT

I have worked paid graphic design projects over the course of twelve years, working in roles encompassing poster design, notebook design, mural design, tattoo design, apparel design, and more. Clients include Skullastic, Global Conservation, 13 Reasons Why Season 2, the Harvard-Radcliffe Dramatic Club, the Harvard Freshman Arts Program, Quiz Lady (Hulu and Disney Plus), private clients.

#### PRODUCTION DESIGNER AND ART DIRECTOR, FREELANCE — 2019-PRESENT

I worked as an art director, set designer and builder, projection designer, and sound designer for Shirley Chen's *Chinatown, My Chinatown*, a play put on at Harvard University through the Theater, Dance & Media department, in 2022. A retrospective of my pen-and-ink artwork was used as the theme for the Harvard Ballet Company's spring show in 2022. Worked as a projection designer for the Harvard-Radcliffe Dramatic Club's *Fun Home* in 2019. Worked as a set designer and paint charge for the HRDC's *The More You Know* (2022) and *Something Rotten* (2022).

#### INTERN, MOCA LOS ANGELES — 2018-2019

Created public, community-based art events, curated student exhibitions, organized Teen Art Night, and learned about the process of curation at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles's Art District.

#### INTERN, VELASLAVASAY PANORAMA — 2018-2019

Designed and constructed panoramic 3-D dioramas for the Shengjing Panorama painting exhibit. Worked with lots of foam, glue, plywood, paint, and miscellaneous found materials to create a realistic terrain of turn-of-the-century Shengjing, China.

#### RESEARCH ASSISTANT AND MURALIST, GORONGOSA NATIONAL PARK — 2015-2018

Worked as a research assistant for entomologists and mammalogists in the EO Wilson biodiversity lab in Gorongosa National Park, Mozambique, for three summers from 2015-2018. Painted 2 educational murals at the park headquarters and entomology lab, acrylic on stone and plaster.

#### RESEARCH ASSISTANT, RADCLIFFE INSTITUTE AND JAMES STURM — 2020-2021

Radcliffe Institute research assistant and concept artist for James Sturm, head of the Center for Cartoon Studies, for a graphic novel about the US healthcare system. Along with a team of four undergraduates and artists at the CCS, we created a comprehensive graphic novel that was sent to each individual member of US Congress and provided for free in public libraries and bookstores across the US.



GRAPHIC NOVELIST, EARTH LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL — 2019-2020

Graphic novelist for Earth League International, an agency fighting organized environmental crime; wrote and illustrated 5 short-form comics and 1 long-form graphic novel short on their investigations against wildlife trafficking. Published on their website and shared on Drawing The Times, the work was also profiled in the Washington Post in 2022.

COMIC ARTIST, FREELANCE — 2016-PRESENT

In addition to long-form graphic novel work, I have had short-term comics work published, including a weekly comic strip called *A Click in the Dark* in the Harvard Independent (2019-2020), now shared independently, and a short-form comic published for Stop Asian Hate. My comics work has also been published in the Harvard Advocate and The Wave magazine (2020).

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT, FREELANCE — 2019-2020

Film production assistant on music video shoot (“Days of Insanity” by Ondara, 2019) and Netflix documentary series *Reopen*, on restaurants during the pandemic (production ceased, 2020).

FILMMAKER AND ANIMATOR, FREELANCE — 2021-2023

In the course Community-Based Film with Musa Syeed, I made a documentary short entitled *Fire on Market Street*, combining footage and hand-drawn stop-motion animation about my grandmother and I reckoning with and writing city council resolutions for the 1887 San Jose Chinatown arson fire (2021). In the course Intermediate Animation with Ruth Lingford, I created a short animated music video for my song “Welcome”, creating hand-drawn animations using TVPaint and Dragonframe (2022).

TREASURER AND BOARD MEMBER OF THE SIGNET SOCIETY — 2022-2023

As a treasurer and board member, I managed the finances, organized weekly arts events (including music shows and festivals, art exhibits, social gatherings, immersive theater shows, and art markets), created merchandise campaigns for fundraising, and was an active resident artist and performer at the Signet Society, a physical home for the arts and letters on Harvard’s campus.

MUSIC COMPOSITION AND PERFORMING - 2007-PRESENT

Thirteen years’ experience of guitar playing and composition (blues, rock, jazz, flamenco, folk, punk, funk, pop, classical), original singer-songwriter and producer with seven years’ experience playing shows and recording on Logic Pro X. Headliner at festivals: Sun Valley Writers’ Conference (2x) Tuesday Night Cafe (2x), Cabot Coffeehouse, Nisei Week in Little Tokyo; solo shows at: Troubadour (2x), Roxy (opening for DeVotchKa), Whisky-a-Go-Go, Lyric Hyperion, and Bootleg Theater, Los Angeles. Regular performer at music shows put on by the Signet Society, the hub for live performing at Harvard. Profiled for my music in the Harvard Crimson.

PROJECT LEADER, HARVARD UNDERGRADS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE —  
2019-2020

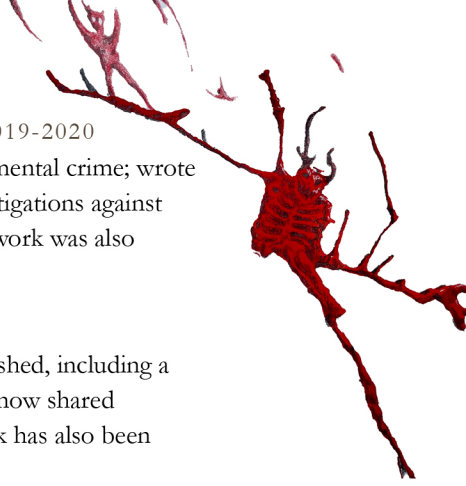
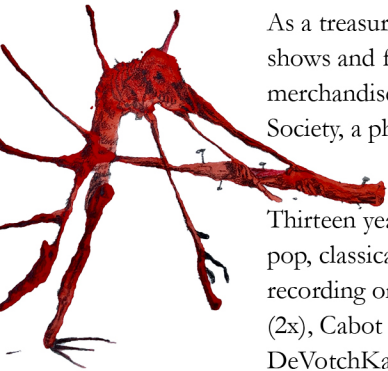
Founder of The Levee Has Broken, a music collective organized through Harvard Undergraduates for Environmental Justice. We collaborated with musicians and local community environmental activists to write songs raising awareness for environmental justice situations in greater Boston and around the world.

MUSIC PRODUCING AND RELEASING — 2021-PRESENT

Released my debut single, "Guai," on all platforms. Self-produced on Logic Pro X, self-written, and featuring my own compositions for cello performed by Camden Archambeau (H'23). Shortly afterwards, released my second single, “Welcome”, also self-produced alongside Nick Urata (DeVotchKa, Little Miss Sunshine, Paddington 2), and was released with my self-animated music video short. My third single, Snakeskin, was also produced by myself and Nick Urata, with original cello compositions performed by my dad. Currently self-producing an EP of guitar songs.

ASIAN-AMERICAN DANCE TROUPE CHOREOGRAPHER - 2022

Original choreographer for the Asian American Dance Troupe. I made an original dance inspired by Chinese *taijiquan* and *baguazhang* martial arts to my own music (Guai), taught it to a group of dancers, and performed it with them in the Eastbound spring showcase. I designed my own lighting and costumes, and made them as one-of-a-kind pieces for each dancer.



## RECOGNITIONS

**2018-2019:** YoungArts winner for Visual Arts (2x winner) and Popular Voice.

**2014-2019:** Scholastic Gold and Silver Medalist for Sculpture, Painting, and Comic Art, seven-time Gold Key winner.

**2019:** Principal's Award for Academic Excellence, awarded to one graduating senior.

**2020:** Harvard College Dean's Creativity Award, awarded to one undergraduate.

**2021:** Harvard College Research Program Fellowship winner.

**2023:** Eliot House Award for Community Engagement. 2023: Summa cum laude grades for senior thesis.

**2023:** Recipient of the Ruth Mulan Chu Chao AAPI Artist Fellowship from Harvardwood.

## SKILLS

2-D and 3-D visual media: pencil, pen-and-ink, painting (oil, watercolor, acrylic, gouache), printmaking (silkscreen and linoleum/woodcut prints), charcoal, engraving, sculpture. 20 years' experience drawing and painting, 12 years' experience with all others. Self-taught with coursework in high school and intensive studio coursework in college (painting, silkscreen, animation, drawing, theory, art history). 2 years' experience with TVPaint and Dragonframe animation softwares. 10 years' experience with Photoshop and Illustrator. 5 years' experience with Adobe Premiere. 4 years experience with sound engineering and production on Logic Pro X. 18 years of experience in composition, improvisation, songwriting and performing on the guitar. 8 years of experience in leadership positions, coordinating teams, and working as a member of organized creative work.

