



When a GIRL is Born

by Helen Yau

Despite a long history of fighting for physical and spiritual freedom, women worldwide still face profound inequality. Rooted in my feminist upbringing and global travels, my art advocates for the belief that every woman deserves to be free, independent, and educated. This series explores the ongoing plights of women across different cultures and serves as a call to empower their rights.

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The Last Embrace

In modern warfare, women are increasingly targeted as strategic victims, enduring violence and the profound loss of their families. This illustration captures that agonizing heart-break: a mother cradling her lifeless daughter. The child's hair merges into a skeletal tree—the cold reach of Death—while a falling teddy bear marks the abrupt end of her childhood. Against a backdrop of skulls and weaponry, red poppies and roses bloom in remembrance of the blood shed. Yet, amidst the ruins, a white dove rises with an olive branch—a solitary, soaring plea for peace and hope.



I Have a Dream

Today, many girls in developing nations still lack access to education. Like the girl in this image, they are kept at home to perform household chores, taking refuge in silence as prisoners of their own cultures. Nevertheless, they hold onto a dream: to be educated, so they may use pens and rulers to fight for their freedom. They long for the agency to paint their own lives, rather than being overshadowed by a male-dominated world.



Woman in a Burqa

In many Islamic societies, women are forced to wear the burqa and are forbidden from seeking an education. This garment conceals not only a woman's physical appearance but also her vibrant inner world. Beneath the heavy black fabric lies a rich, colorful soul—just like our own—longing for the nourishment of knowledge. These women fight for the right to attend school, and their sacrifices water the seeds of freedom, ensuring future generations of girls gain access to education.



The Power to Rise

The cactus in this piece represents endurance and inner strength, while the steps—constructed from books—symbolize the journey of education and knowledge. Candles serve as a primary symbol of light in the darkness, offering a sense of hope. At the summit of her climb, the girl opens a window to witness the phoenix, a powerful symbol of rebirth and renewal. This work illustrates how education provides girls with the strength and hope necessary to pursue a new life and rise above their circumstances.



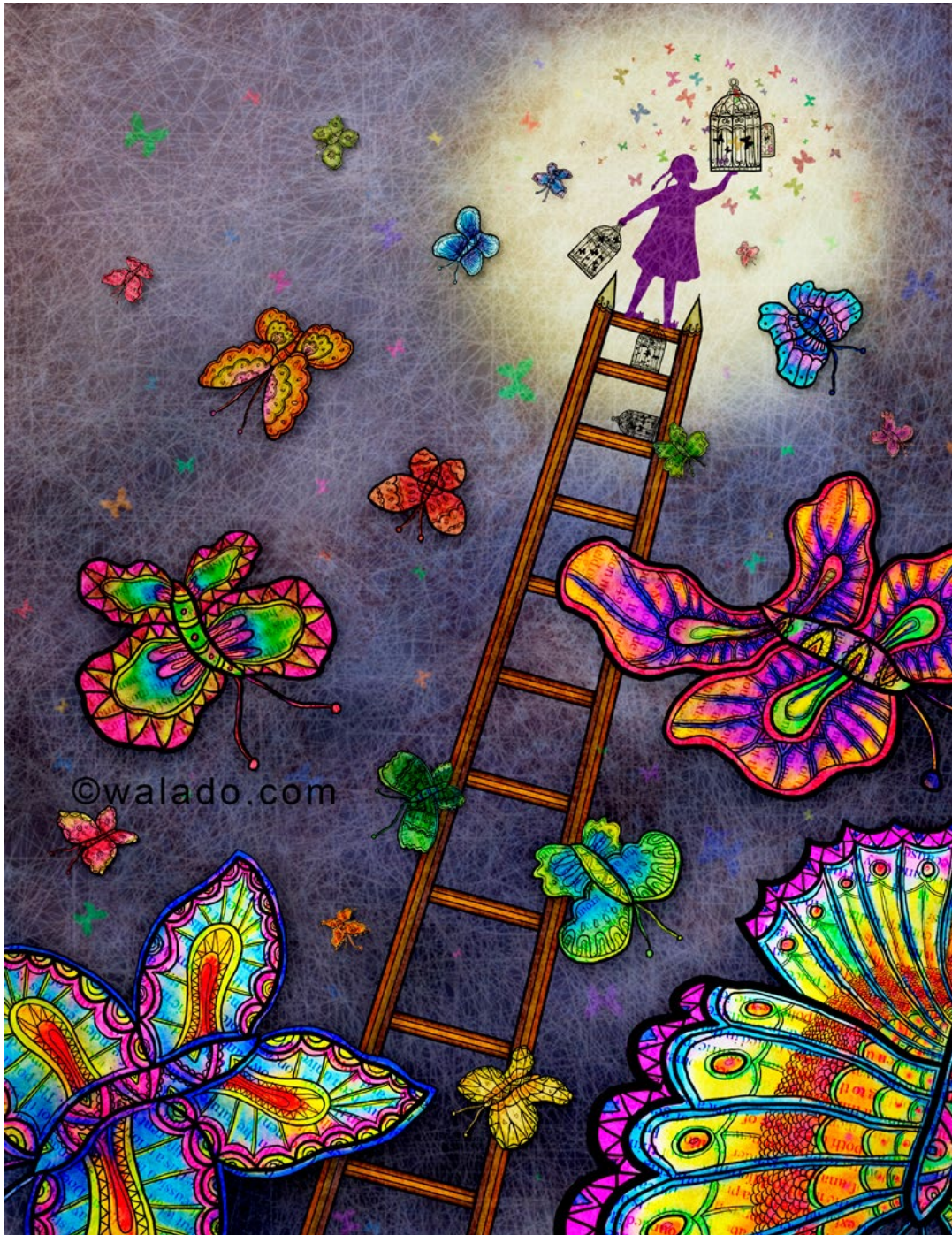
Doors of Opportunity

Each door represents a different path in life. Holding a ring of vibrant, multicolored keys, the girl possesses the power to choose her own future. In this image, she uses the key of education to unlock the door to her school. I believe every girl deserves the absolute freedom to access education and the autonomy to be the master of her own life.



Reborn

In a chaotic and oppressive environment, a girl tightly embraces a building shaped like a school—a vessel for her future. The surrounding hands represent the forces of control and abuse that seek to restrain her. The broken egg symbolizes transformation and new beginning. This piece illustrates her determination to cling to education as her only means of escape. By holding fast to knowledge, she finds the strength to shed her past and be reborn, growing beyond the reach of a harsh and complicated reality.



Ladder of Education

Constructed from pencils, the ladder symbolizes the power of learning. As the girl climbs to the peak to release caged butterflies, she illustrates the vital role education plays in liberating others. Once freed, the butterflies transform from solid black into vivid colors, representing how freedom allows every soul to shine.



A Fresh Horizon

In an oppressive world, a girl sails across an ocean of knowledge atop a boat and a cake. While the boat represents her inner strength and rebirth, the cake signifies the opportunity for a fresh start. Overhead, birds soar as symbols of hope and freedom. This work illustrates how education grants us the courage to navigate out of darkness, seeking the liberation and strength needed to stand for our deepest convictions.

About Helen Yau

Helen Yau (aka Walado) is an award-winning illustrator and designer. She earned her degree in Illustration with honors from Sheridan College in Canada and has since gained international acclaim. Her work has been recognized and featured by different global organizations, including the BBC, the Swedish Fashion Council, Branding & Design (UK), and TV France Japon.

Awards & Exhibitions (selected):

- International Poster Exhibition - "Women's Rights", Gallery BKI & National Technical Library, Prague, Czech, 2024
- "Colorful Childhood" Solo Exhibitions (co-organised with HK Mass Transit Railway), Hong Kong, 2023
- 11th International Footwear Design Competition, Winner of Children's Shoes (Enterprise), 2019
- Young Artist Awards of Merit, Hong Kong, 2019
- Hong Kong Good Design Exhibition, Guangzhou, China 2019
- 10th International Footwear Design Competition, 1st Runner-up of Lady's Shoes (Enterprise), 2018
- Hong Kong Smart Design Awards, Merit - Personal Accessories (Corporate), 2018
- "Embracing Our Differences" Annual International Outdoor Juried Art Exhibit, Honorable Mention, USA, 2017
- "Art, Color & Power" Solo Roving Exhibition (co-organised with HK Mass Transit Railway), Hong Kong, 2016
- "Parallax" group show (organized by Restless Development Org.), England, 2015
- BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) "Freedom 2014: Your Art and Paintings", England, 2014
- Creative Quarterly 36th International Juried Competition, Illustration, Runner-up, USA, 2014



**THANK
YOU SO
MUCH!**

Always happy
to hear from
you!

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