

KATERYNA VOVCHENKO

My name is Kateryna Vovchenko, and I was born in Kyiv, Ukraine. When a full-scale invasion of Ukraine started on February 24, 2022, we had to leave our whole life behind. As a soon-to-be teenager, I was forced to mentally grow up overnight. Today, I am a sixteen-year-old girl in the United States and am going to become a junior in high school.

Throughout my journey here, it was crucial to stay connected with my culture and to preserve my Ukrainian identity. When my family told me that John Cox invited us to become a part of the Photovoice project, I saw it as the perfect opportunity to represent ourselves. Seeing the wall of my family's pictures in the Delaware Art Museum for the first time, I was full of pride and gratitude.

My parents played a big part in my journey with art; they ensured that my siblings and I had all the opportunities to be involved with it. In Ukrainian schools, studying art was never optional. It was treated as essential to becoming a complete person, as learning a quadratic formula is to algebra. Moving here, I found that, currently, art is treated as less of a fundamental pillar of society. This makes being able to share my experience through this discussion even more valuable, and I am incredibly honored to be one of the speakers.

