

ON THE COVER

Fruit by Swetha Sriramoju

This article is based on a video interview with the artist on September 14, 2024.

The artist whose work is featured on the cover of this issue of *American Psychologist* (AP), Swetha Sriramoju, is a second-year medical student at Rowan Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine in New Jersey who read articles from AP as an undergraduate at Rutgers University majoring in biological sciences and public health. She appreciates the many ways that human behavior and neuroscience inform health care and how psychology can help address social determinants of health and health equity in health care. As a busy medical student, she practices self-care and relaxation by painting. But her interest in art began in childhood. As an only child, she began drawing and painting to entertain herself. Her parents recognized her talent and encouraged her to take art classes. This formal instruction helped her learn how to bring life into her art and to think more about the meaning of each creation.

Fruit is an acrylic painting on watercolor paper of four peaches, fresh from a farmer's market and arranged by Sriramoju on a table. As a genre of art, *Fruit* is a still life with abstractions added. Sriramoju looks for ordinary objects for her art, striving to bring out deeper meaning in these common objects. Peaches are favorite (ordinary) objects for Sriramoju to paint because they allow her to work liberally with color. Peaches have multiple hues and textures, and their shades and tones change over time as the fruit ripens. There are patterns in the color and changes in the contrast and textures of the fruit. Similarly, plants, another common choice in still life,

change over time in terms of their color and structure as they grow, bloom, and ultimately wilt. Sriramoju relates her fascination with color to early memories of her culture (her parents immigrated to the United States from southern India), recalling the bright vibrancy and patterns of fabric and clothing. She likes to amplify colors, adding drama and vibrancy. In *Fruit*, for example, she exaggerates shadows, providing a dark background to emphasize the rich quality of the objects.

What can we learn from the objects in a painting like this, captured in one frame or stage of their life cycle? Although focused on the objects at hand, Sriramoju thinks about the future of the objects that she paints. When asked about how her work may represent resilience (the focus of this special issue of AP), she talked about the growth and evolution of, for example, a piece of fruit or a flower and its perseverance despite the uncertainty of its future. She links this to her personal sense of hope and optimism and how she strives to have a tangible impact on the lives of patients by providing care that helps them manage their health and improve their lives. Paintings require reworking, fresh layers, and removal or reworking of aspects that distract or lack fit with the larger gestalt. So too, there are times in life where one may need to revise or redo something repeatedly, striving for a different outcome. In the humble peaches, we may see the grit and perseverance integral to life while also appreciating the beauty of their color and form.

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Art Editor