



The Destruction of Adam

Kristie Chow | 2024-2025 Winter

What do you see when you stand before this piece? Is it a battle between mortal and death? A struggle where fragile life is cradled by unseen hands, or perhaps, an ode to bioethics — a sentinel protecting the vulnerable, giving them a chance to breathe? Or is it something darker, more visceral? Whatever you see, know this: Beauty lies not in answers, but in questions. It rests in the eyes of the beholder, and here, every gaze is right. For this work, much like bioethics, invites you to not just look, but to question.

The inspiration for this piece emerged from my recent rewatch of *“The Curious Case of Benjamin Button”*, it startled me on how the beginning of life and its end are more intertwined than we often care to admit. Both are thrust upon us without consent, bound by forces beyond our control. The infant you see grotesquely reminiscent of everyone’s beginning — a wrinkled face, fragile and dependent. Perhaps this resembles everyone’s end as well — wrinkled, fragile and dependent.

My intention of this art is one of End-of-Life. It is an old person who has the autonomy of an infant. Around him are disembodied hands, forces larger than any one person. Enclosed by societal norms, traditional values, and the unyielding grip of ethical frameworks that claim to act in his best interest and against his will. They pull him back, restraining him,

forbidding him the death he desires, and deciding his fate in his place. The fingertips of Adam and Death, stretching toward but never touching, an homage to Michelangelo’s “The Creation of Adam”. Yet this is not a moment of divine life-giving — this is “The Destruction of Adam”. Here, slaughter echoes. In an attempt to protect Adam, his *self* is destroyed. His death is withheld by the same structures that once denied him a choice in his birth, stripping away autonomy at both the beginning and end of life.

My art seeks to explore the dual nature of bioethics. To many, bioethics protects *life*, ensuring that the vulnerable are safeguarded and nurtured — a pursuit that celebrates the fragility and beauty of existence. But the other side lies its less acknowledged duty: to preserve a humane *life course*. Creation is always seen as beautiful, but destruction, though harder to accept, also holds ineffable beauty — the *beauty* of completion. Death, at certain stages, can be more than damnation. It may be the utmost grace. Bioethics, like life itself and this art, is a matter of perspective. Some are finding themselves. Some are living but tortured. Some only know the privilege of being present. And some people — begged to be understood.

Between life and death, between creation and destruction, where will our bodies, our choices, our endings lie? The answers are yours to find before time runs out, for beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. And remember — don’t let your *self* down.