

Rob Strong



A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE

SUSAN GREEN

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TO PARAPHRASE GERMAN PHILOSOPHER MARTIN HEIDEGGER, science is ill-equipped to glimpse who we are—we need a different vocabulary to express what is fundamentally human.

For Colin McLeish ’22 these are words to live by, guiding him fluently through the tapestry of human psychology in art, writing, music, and medicine.

“Art invites me to consider the lives of others, in a way that other disciplines do not,” he says. And I need a way to be able to narrow the distance between me and someone else. The scientific method does not bridge that gap; I need a different language, another perspective to do that.”

He turned to sculpture.

Fascinated by anatomy, McLeish is inspired by the work of influential 19th century French sculptor Auguste Rodin—best known for his realistic, rather than idealized, bronze depictions of the human body.

“Consider,” McLeish says, “Rodin’s most recognizable sculpture, *The Thinker* (*Le Penseur*). He shows a man who thinks with every fiber of his being: his head, his brow, his chin resting on his hand, his

posture, his feet. These details bring the man to life.”

McLeish’s medium is clay. Focusing on hands for their ability to capture motion and intention, he imbues his sculptures with life. “I try to sculpt things that could belong to someone or have a story of their own,” he says.

He considers it a “leap of genius” that artists are able to imply a range of human emotions in static three-dimensional figures. And though McLeish loves artworks that are beautiful and moving, he also enjoys works that challenge him to be uncomfortable—similar to how medicine challenges. It’s something he also seeks in music and writing.

“Medicine is a human science,” he says. “What better way to learn about ourselves, our patients, and our world than by listening, reading, and then reflecting in writing?”

Colin McLeish, a second-year student at Geisel School of Medicine.