

FINDING PEACE AMID CHAOS

The floor-to-ceiling piece of artwork on display in DWC’s Weyland Art Gallery feels caught between two worlds. The center is dark with illuminated angelic wings and a hovering halo but the edges depict sharp, ominous teeth that loom all too close to the peaceful image within.

The artist is DWC Senior Nay Kaw Sho. For him, art has always been an outlet to express his feelings. This piece was created for a multimedia art class exploring textiles in the fall. It’s a depiction of his experience growing up in a refugee camp in Thailand. Nay’s family is originally from Myanmar. They fled their village due to ethnic cleansing by the Burmese military and settled in a Thai refugee camp called “Mae La Oon.” Nay was born in the camp a year later. He’s the second youngest of seven children. When he was just five, his mother died.

Nay says life in a refugee camp was isolating. His family did not have Thai citizenship, so they couldn’t move freely throughout the country or hold jobs. They were confined to the camp,

which was made up of people from his own ethnic group called “Karen.” He attended school, played sports and did everything else within the perimeters of the camp.



Nay Kaw Sho

When he was 15, Nay was relieved to learn that his family would be moving to Texas thanks to a United Nations program that helps refugees legally relocate. He spent a year in a program called the International Newcomer Academy before advancing to a local high school. After graduation, he

attended a community college and later met a Divine Word College Vocation Director who told him about Divine Word Missionaries. As a devoted Catholic, Nay saw the religious order as a possible opportunity to reach out and help people in need, like his own community.

Now as he completes his studies and reflects on what life must have been like for his father and the other adults in the refugee camp who feared for the safety of their families, Nay says his desire to help people in need is even stronger. Standing in front of his artwork, it’s clear that Nay left a space for himself – or anyone else who views his work.

He says the teeth represent the fence that surrounded the camp where he was raised and the danger that lurked outside of it. It was the unknown that could come down at any moment and inflict pain and suffering on the people within. Still, through the eyes of a child, Nay felt safe and happy inside the camp. It was the only home he knew then and he found peace with his family and his faith.