



Impact Statement

Isabelle Lee, Grade 10

The Woman the World Didn't Hear, 2026

Gouache, colored pencil on paper, 15 x 10.5 inches

BC Collegiate, Gangnam-gu, Seoul, South Korea

Unsung Hero: Hedy Lamarr

My art is about Hedy Lamarr, an unsung hero whose impact is much bigger than most people know. People praised her as a glamorous Hollywood actress while she was alive, but they mostly ignored or dismissed her intellectual accomplishments. She helped create a frequency-hopping communication system during World War II to stop enemy forces from jamming torpedo signals. People didn't fully understand or use this invention at the time, but it later became a basic idea for modern wireless technologies like Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and GPS. These technologies affect how we talk to each other, learn, and connect with each other today, but not many people know that Hedy Lamarr was the one who came up with them.

The goal of my art is to show this hidden legacy and question the limited ways that society often defines success and recognition. Hedy Lamarr's story shows how easy it is to miss someone's contributions when they don't fit what you expect. People thought she wasn't smart and creative because she was beautiful and famous. This is part of a larger trend in history where women's accomplishments, especially those of famous women, have been downplayed or ignored. I chose her as the subject of a "Unsung Hero" piece because I wanted to show how important it is to recognize people for all their skills, not just one. I wanted to show in my art how different people saw Hedy Lamarr and how she really was. To show how people see her, she intentionally includes elements of glamour and classic Hollywood imagery. But these are covered with symbols of new ideas, like abstract waves, signals, or patterns that stand for frequency-hopping technology. This difference is meant to show that there was a brilliant and creative mind behind what people saw. The use of overlapping images also hints at how her fame made her identity as an inventor less important, almost hiding it in plain sight.

My piece is mostly about the idea of "invisible impact." Like the radio frequencies that inspired Lamarr's invention, many of the technologies we use every day work in ways we can't see. I wanted to show how her work still affects our lives every day without most people knowing it by using visual motifs that suggest movement, connection, and unseen forces. This idea makes people think about how many other innovators might have changed the world in important ways without getting the credit they deserve.

Working on this art also made me think about how people get recognized in today's society. People often only celebrate achievements when they are visible, well-known, or fit a certain story. Hedy Lamarr's story goes against this idea by showing that people don't always notice the effects right away. It can take years, or even decades, for people

to really understand how valuable someone's work is. This is especially important in a world where short-term gains and public attention are often more important than long-term contributions.

Ultimately, the goal of this piece is to get people to think about who they think is important or deserve recognition and to look beyond what they see on the surface. By focusing on Hedy Lamarr's work, I hope to get people to appreciate more the people whose work has quietly changed the world. Recognizing unsung heroes is not just about correcting the past; it is also about shaping a more inclusive and thoughtful future, where people are valued for their ideas, creativity, and impact, regardless of how visible or celebrated they are.