



Impact Statement

Shirley Tian, Grade 8

Eye of the Eagle, 2026

Watercolor on paper, 18 x 14.5 inches

Mona Art Studio, Vancouver, Canada

Unsung Hero: Margaret Bourke-White

Margaret Bourke-White was an American documentary photographer and photojournalist. She was known as an architectural and commercial photographer for the first half of her career, representing corporate clients and highlighting the success of industrial capitalism with black and white images of steel factories and skyscrapers. The second half of her career represents her transition from corporate photography to photojournalism, beginning with her work during the Great Depression documenting the people of the Dust Bowl. Her collaboration with novelist Erskine Caldwell in *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937) resulted in seventy-five photos depicting the lives of poor, rural sharecroppers, and was both a commercial success and one of several major documentaries works at the time to bring attention to the needs of the Southern United States. She was the first American female war photojournalist; Bourke-White was the first woman to be allowed to work in combat zones during World War II. In 1941 she traveled to the Soviet Union just as Germany broke its pact of non-aggression. She was the only foreign photographer in Moscow when German forces invaded. Taking refuge in the U.S. Embassy, she then captured the ensuing firestorms on camera. In 1949, she was one of the first Americans to bring attention to the injustices of the South African apartheid regime with her unique photographs and covered the Korean War for Life magazine in the early 1950s. The woman who had been torpedoed in the Mediterranean, strafed by the Luftwaffe, stranded on an Arctic island, bombarded in Moscow, and pulled out of the Chesapeake when her chopper crashed, was known to the Life staff as 'Maggie the Indestructible'. She is an outstanding professional photographer who has used her photographs to record important moments of the times, preserving valuable information about events and people for us. To better complete her work, she dares to take on challenges, to risk her life and to create miracles. In my images, the photographer's working state on the top floor of an iconic building is admirable. She herself is like an eagle soaring high in the sky, overlooking the world and using her keen insight to discover the truth of human world. She is also a courageous warrior; the camera is her weapon in her work and battle. With her mission, she reports from dangerous war zones, exposes the truth about the poor, and uncovers facts and problems. This courage and sense of justice embody the spirit of an extraordinary woman. In this piece, I wanted to capture the bold spirit and determination of Margaret Bourke-White, portraying her as someone who rises above limits—like an eagle.

At the center, I painted her with a confident and calm expression, showing both strength and passion. She is positioned high above the city, not just physically, but symbolically. Like an eagle

soaring in the sky, she sees the world from a higher perspective, observing what others cannot. This reflects her role as a photojournalist—someone who searches for truth and captures it from unique and sometimes dangerous viewpoints.

The industrial structure she sits on becomes her perch, much like a high cliff for an eagle. It represents both risk and power, showing that she is unafraid to place herself in challenging environments to get the story. The city below appears small, emphasizing her elevated vision and independence. Her camera is like the eagle's sharp eyes. It allows her to focus, to see clearly, and to capture moments with precision. Through it, she tells stories that might otherwise go unnoticed. The flowing fabric adds movement, almost like wings in the wind, reinforcing the idea of freedom and flight. In the upper part of the piece, I included another version of her at work, suggesting motion—like an eagle in mid-flight, constantly searching, always active.

Through this artwork, I wanted to show that she is not only a photographer, a pioneer—someone who climbed higher, looked closer, and dared to capture the world from perspectives others could not. but a symbol of vision, courage, and freedom—someone who, like an eagle, rises above and sees the world in a way that inspires others.