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# BSU Showcase Provides Powerful Performances for New Scholarship

George Burquest, Staff Reporter

The Seattle University Black Student Union's (BSU) annual showcase was focused on highlighting Black art and excellence in an effort to raise money for the organization's endowed scholarship. Taking place the evening of Friday, Feb. 25, several performances took place, ranging from energetic dancing to insightful poetry. Artists were displayed on stage and among tables around the space, where they could discuss and sell their work.

BSU's co-presidents Ruth Zekariase, a fourth-year biology major and Maddy Massinga, a fourth-year public affairs major, organized the event. Both have loosely been a part of the BSU for 3-4 years, but it was just this past year that the roommates decided to lead this organization after its former presidents reached out to them. Massinga spoke to the time commitment and payoff from coordinating this special event.

"So much work and effort went into organizing this event, but at the same time, it felt effortless when it all came together," Massinga said. "I can think back to every single day being filled with emailing all of these random administrators, and random room setup people. It was really a month's worth of work."

Attendance at the event exceeded Massinga's expectations, and the crowd was energized and engaged by every performance. The event even included a surprise singing performance by Massinga, who for the majority of the event was emceeding alongside her co-president Zekariase. Massinga had been working to find partners and dealing with cancellations in the days leading up to the showcase.

"I was really, really nervous," Massinga said. "I thought it was just going to be awkward and weird. But for a student event on campus which—let's get real—nobody really wants to go to campus on a Friday night, I was really really, really happy with how things turned out."



Andrew Mori

BSU co-presidents Maddy Massinga (left) and Ruth Zekariase (right).

Al Robinson, a second-year student majoring in forensic psychology and psychology was the first performer of the night. Joining BSU recently, Robinson touched the crowd with a poem exploring her identity. She explained how her poetry writing journey began.

"I first started writing poetry in the eighth grade. At first, it was for a Black History Month assignment, and then I ended up writing 300 poems by the end of that year," Robinson said. "I feel like if I struggle too much [on one poem], it must be best to leave it for another time."

The BSU showcase was the perfect opportunity to write again. Spoken confidently and methodically, Robinson's poem told the unique and powerful importance of her identity, Black and disabled most prominently.

"I feel like everything's centered around that," Robinson said. "It's the first thing people see about me. If I'm not using mobility aids, people don't even know I'm disabled. But they know that I'm Black—and that's this core part of who I am. It's influenced everything from what I enjoy, who I hang out with—everything."

There was a wide array of Seattle U community members there to support, yet Robinson's poem set the tone that this showcase was about Black identity, and therefore, Black excellence.

"I think it's the community," Robinson said. "Even if I don't really know people, if we're both Black, [then] there's this form of solidarity, regardless of how well we know each other."

There were several artists who had small shops set up around the edges of the room. For instance, Second-year Psychology major Andrea Okoloko offered beautiful, striking nose cuffs.

"These are very big in African culture, we wear lots of nose jewelry, so I'm glad to be able to have them on display," Okoloko said.

Other art on display included drawings and prints, as well as wigs and braids. Wrapping around the circumference of the space, Black art was everything and everywhere, providing a perfect environment for the performances at the front of the room.

In addition to the BSU being able to put on a phenomenally entertaining performance, they provided a space in which support and funds could be raised for their endowed scholarship. This showcase displayed a Black pride that should not be limited to the BSU, but rather should be a standard for our entire campus community.

The claps and cheers for Robinson as well as all of the other performers were raucous. While it's impossible to limit or define Black identity, the performers and artists at the BSU showcase certainly encapsulated some of the most amazing parts of it.