Breathe

Hailing from Manila, Philippines, I am no stranger to dense, chaotic environments wrought with overpopulation and poor air quality. With little access to green spaces, I became drawn to plants. I was fascinated by their ability to purify air pollutants and their symbiotic relationship with humans. The act of creating a meaningful relationship with plants struck me as the antithesis of the worst aspects of urban lifestyles, such as stress and poor health. My senior thesis is an installation that draws influence from the natural world and incorporates chrysanthemums into its form. Its design revolves around concepts of growth, purification, and protection.

*Breathe* is an installation comprised of several white vessels, which are attached to the wall at various heights and angles. Their positions follow the flow of a branch in an otherwise blank and secluded alcove of the gallery. Each vessel is unique in size, shape, and design. Their forms are heavily influenced by the organic twists of butterfly cocoons and seashells, expressed in the angular, man-made language of paper folds. These vessels contain live chrysanthemums, which are incorporated into the installation to highlight the benefits that greenery offers us. This particular chrysanthemum (*Chrysanthemum morifolium*) was chosen for its ability to cleanse up to six different urban pollutants, making it one of the most efficient air purification plants evaluated by NASA’s clean air study. In the hostile conditions of a windowless gallery, sunlamps nourish these plants every night after the gallery has closed. They are removed during the day to avoid altering the simple, blank space in which the artwork exists.

This serene and minimalist installation works with form and space to acknowledge the benefits of greenery in our lives. Freed from visual clutter, *Breathe* invites the audience to contemplate our symbiotic relationship with plants and the essential role they fulfil in ensuring our continued existence.