

## **Comprehensive Artist's Statement of "NYC Pizza Art"**

Created by Vic Chen, Aarush Kumar, Nathan Zheng, and Haroon Awan

For our project, we were inspired by Andy Warhol, particularly his works involving Campbell's soup and Marilyn Monroe. Inspired by his creation of art from ordinary objects, we wanted to feature pizza as the main theme of this artwork. Not only is pizza delicious, but it is also synonymous with NYC in a way that no other food can match in reputation and popularity. The general structure of our work of art takes inspiration from Warhol's work involving Marilyn Monroe, but we tweaked the premise beyond recoloring where each square is meant to represent different art styles we learned about in Seminar 1. Our artwork has six different squares, all relating to the intersection of pizza and art. The first square is simply a picture of a pepperoni pizza pie that we took ourselves.

### **Second Square: Ingredients of Pizza** (Written and created by Vic Chen)

This square is a picture of the ingredients of NYC-style pizza. Inspiration for this square was taken from artist Nobutaka Aozaki and his work titled "Groceries Portraits." His work featured a series of discarded grocery lists found in NYC and a picture of those ingredients in order to show the diversity of NYC residents through the diversity of groceries. For our project, I wanted to go in a slightly different direction. I wanted to show the simplicity of ingredients rather than their complex nature, because these relatively simple ingredients are what make up a staple of NYC food culture. It is something that is relatively easy to imitate in another region of the world, but NYC still has its own unique style of pizza. The camera angle and presentation of the ingredients was inspired by BuzzFeed recipe videos from the 2010's with their infamous top view camera orientation while cooking.

### **Third Square: Graffiti Art Pizza** (Written and created by Nathan Zheng)

The inspiration for this piece was the graffiti art that I see on storefronts in the lower East side. I tried to emulate the spray paint aesthetic by using dark ink pens and oil pastel, which allows me to create a simple, cartoon-ish design. The dark ink allows me to create the dark outlines of the pizza and paint drip that occurs when artists apply too much paint to one area. The oil pastel creates the vibrant aesthetic from the spray paint itself while also allowing me to blend colors, creating a smudged design that also resembles graffiti that has been exposed to outside elements for a while.

### **Fourth Square: AI Art Pizza** (Written and created by Vic Chen)

The purpose of this square is not solely to stick with the theme of pizza. Its focus is to highlight the efficacy of ethics of AI art. Looking at the image from a glance, it may just look like another photo of pizza, perhaps a more polished photo. However, upon closer glance, flaws of the unnatural nature of the pizza in the photo become evident. The “too perfect” nature of the pieces of pepperoni, the almost glossy look of the pizza, the orientation, the coloring, and many more become evident once a closer look is taken. Through this piece, my aim was for viewers to think about how effective AI art is and to think further about whether its place in the art world is ethical. A citation is available at the end of this document.

### **Fifth Square: Keith Haring-Style Pizza Art** (Written and created by Aarush Kumar)

For our Keith Haring-style pizza, I wanted to honor how he changed NYC art in the 1980s by making it accessible to everyone. Haring drew in subway stations where commuters, kids, and tourists could all see his work instead of limiting it to museums. He used bold black lines, vibrant contrasting colors, and motion lines that made everything feel alive. I kept the pizza intentionally messy with uneven slices and randomly scattered pepperoni because that's what real NYC pizza often looks like, as seen in the original one, but I used Haring's signature style of solid, contrasting colors, and many of them were inverted from the original pizza colors. Specifically, I made the crust blue instead of orange and pepperoni yellow instead of red. In my first iteration, I used the original colors and tried to recreate it as Haring's pop art on paper, but it didn't work. The colors weren't vibrant enough, and it felt like a recreation of the original pizza with no clear distinction. Even though choosing the original colors, like red, would have been essential to maintaining Haring's fighting stance against causes like AIDS, I decided to go with more common ones throughout his art. Ultimately, I ended up making it on Figma, where I physically put each pepperoni and each slice in the same location as the original. I believe that just like Haring made art accessible to all New Yorkers through his subway drawings, pizza is a food that's also accessible - arguably embedded - in the city. By combining his style with pizza, I tried to show how NYC culture, whether that's the food or the art, is a shared experience that belongs to everyone.

### **Sixth Square: Surrealist Pizza Art** (Written and created by Haroon Awan)

For one of the squares, I wanted to turn our pepperoni pizza into something that felt like it came out of a dream inspired by all the surrealist work we learned about in class. I kept the full circular outline of the original pizza but cut away two slices and replaced them with a deep night sky, complete with a cratered moon and bright stars. The crust then becomes a kind of rim that holds

this small universe. Around it the pizza floats above soft clouds so it is unclear if it is a piece of food, a planet, or both at the same time.

To push the image further into surrealism, I turned several pepperoni pieces into staring eyes. These eyes watch the viewer from inside the pizza while pale yellow clouds drift across both the pizza and the night sky section, linking the two worlds together. By combining a familiar New York food with cosmic imagery and unsettling eyes the piece is meant to feel playful and slightly uneasy, as if the slice you are about to eat is also silently looking back at you.

### **Works Cited**

"Image of a whole pepperoni pizza from the direct top view and make the background light grey" prompt. Gemini, Google, 3 Dec. 2025, [g.co/gemini/chat](https://g.co/gemini/chat).