Artist Statement

"Modern Vices" is the stark reality for a majority of teenage students today; through all hours of the night, they find themselves trapped under piles of work and not an inkling of where to start. The student stares at a blank page, pencil discarded, stuck with only the jumbled thoughts in his head and no concrete ideas. To the right sits his phone, which he eyes desperately, knowing the solution and the root of his problems lie behind the screen. He can never truly escape from the omnipresent loom of technology. The digital clock, resembling the childhood bedside alarm clocks of those born in the late 2000s and early 2010s, quietly announces the cruel hour of night and the steady tick of time towards the submission deadline. His hands grip his head, desperate for reprieve from his blatant inability to produce quality work from the confines of his own mind. Rope binds his hands, highlighting his immobility and hindering his ability to write with a pencil on paper; the only thing his hands can do while bound is type on a cellphone, which he obviously spends most of his time doing. The knots around his wrists allude to the icon of the very iconic ChatGPT, hinting at the true problem in this situation. He likely started out by just trying it out for fun, just to make the long nights a little shorter. Slowly, once became once a week, then once a day, then once every class, until finally he was unable to separate himself from his very capable but also very addictive companion. The more he relied on AI, the less he was able to do, until finally he succumbed as another helpless victim to the AI epidemic. The ropes tighten around his wrists until he bleeds, displaying the internal agony of being mentally imprisoned by AI. This portrait takes the invisible chains that the large majority of students wear and unveils them, showing just how susceptible teenagers are to their modern vices.

This painting corresponds to question one; it displays how easily students can become lured into becoming dependent on it. It lays bare the dichotomy of the promise of technology

pitted against the dark spiral of loss of thought agency. Using AI to learn often causes it to replace learning itself. When students use AI in an attempt to lighten their workload, they are actually falling into a vicious cycle; the more they choose to disengage in the learning process, the less they will be able to engage further down the road when they are missing basic critical thinking skills. To learn in this generation is to be behind without AI, because how can you compare to a student that has the entirety of the internet behind them. To work hard is to struggle while you watch your peers succeed effortlessly. To have integrity is to fight the temptation of being good enough, smart enough, successful enough. Teenagers have always been quick to find shortcuts to alleviate their insecurities, but now instead of fad diets to fix their bodies it is AI to fix their grades. Losing control of your own mind is scary, and too many teenagers have gone beyond the point of no return. Now, teachers need to help students get back on track so they can actually have a chance by just using their brains alone. I created this work after watching my peers get better grades than me when they used AI and I did not. I made it to represent the feeling I know so well of being up late with mountains of work and wanting to do anything to go to sleep. I painted it for my friends who were shocked when they found out I did something with my own brain power. The lighting and setting in the painting are the same as the desk in my bedroom where I created it; my reference photos were pictures of myself up late at night in front of my desk lamp. My reasoning for this was because the issue of AI is not foreign but instead, all around me, all the time: in my school, with my friends, and even in my own bedroom. While it is not a self portrait, the painting represents what other people I know would do in my situation, and how difficult it really is to say no to the siren call of AI.