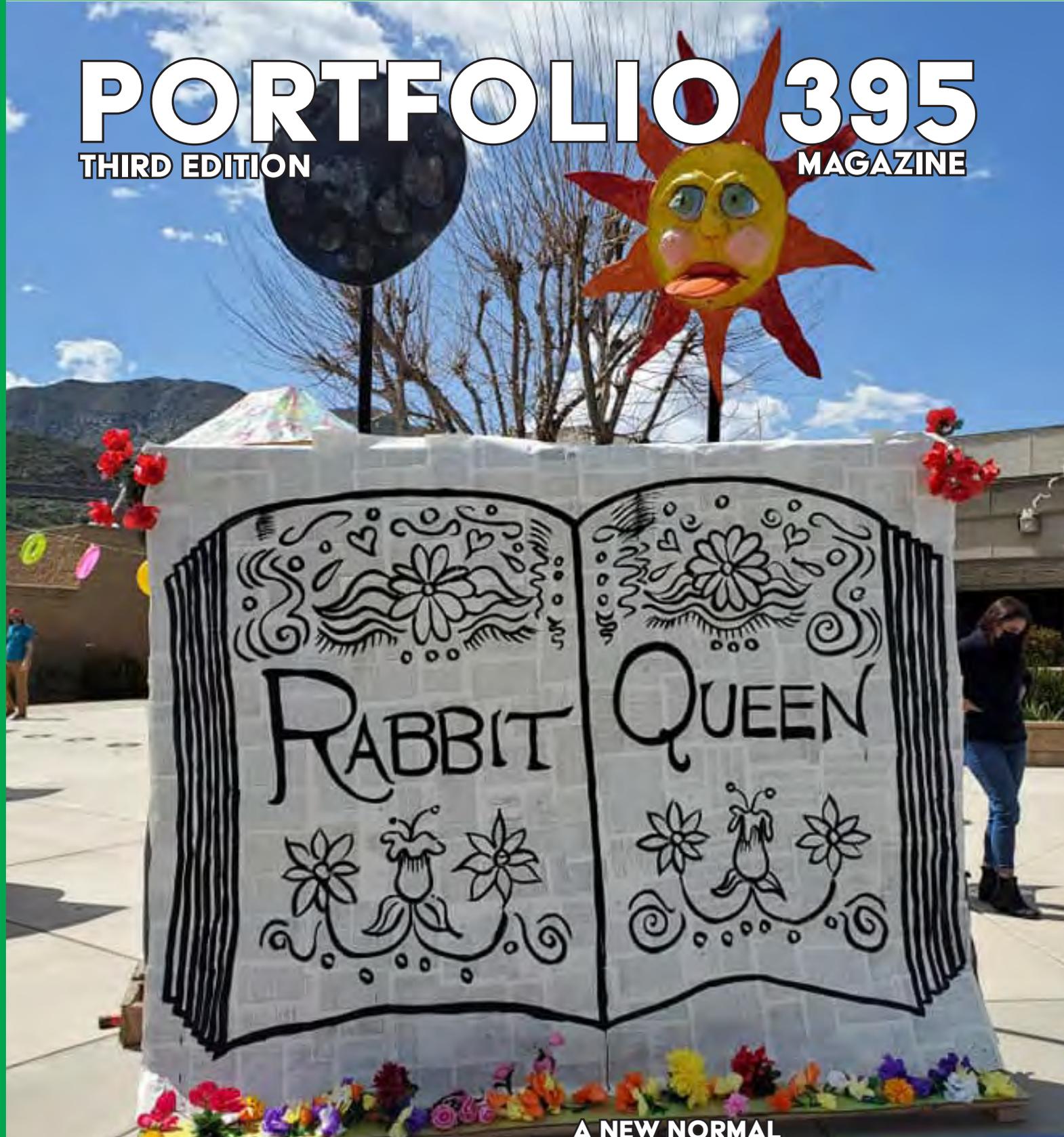


# PORTFOLIO 395

THIRD EDITION

MAGAZINE



## **MIND YOUR ART**

See how Art can make you a more focused individual!

## **HER MAJESTY, THE RABBIT QUEEN**

Check out STUDIO 395's latest drive-thru art exhibition!

## **A NEW NORMAL**

Written by local writer Nicole Rodrique!

## **CROCHET FOR ALL AGES**

Journey through the interesting world of Crochet and how you can use it as a creative outlet!



Creative Commons Credit Sina Farhat

# A NEW NORMAL

*Written by Nicole Rodrique, Contributing Writer for Portfolio 395*

The world looks different today. It's quieter. It even seems like the animals know that things are different. I can't hear all the birds that are normally so comforting and soothing to listen to. But today, the world is different. The world doesn't feel safe anymore. I'm sitting on my bed, just staring out the window. The news came out that the virus was everywhere, and it seems like everyone just disappeared. I've always dealt with anxiety anyway, so this isn't a new feeling for me. So, I don't understand why right now the world feels like it's ending. But it just does. Overnight, things went from what was once normal, to upside down and sideways. Now the world isn't safe. So here I sit, alone, in my room. I sit and stare at the same four walls that I've been staring at for hours. And this is how the world will be now. All of us, alone, the only safe place within our own walls. The more the realization sinks in, the more dismal these walls appear.

At one point, the walls to my room were what I once described as a comforting and deep navy blue. This has always been one of my favorite colors, I've always been drawn to it. But it dawns on me with a blow, this color is go-

ing to be the primary color I see. For now, for the time being, for the foreseeable future. The only safe place is in my room, inside this navy-blue fortress. Outside is where the danger is. The place I used to go to get away from here is now dangerous, too dangerous to enjoy anymore. It feels like this space that used to be my escape has become my true safety zone. I used to sneak away and hide here, to get away from the world when it became too much.

I don't know what I'll do now. I feel afraid. I feel so unsure of what my future will look like now. Before, I would go here to hide, now I'm here because there's nowhere else to go. Where can I go now? Where is my safe place now? The panic inside me builds on itself, falling like building blocks inside my stomach, pressure feeling like I'm about to burst. What happens to me now? Where do I go from here? I feel the walls as they start to close in around me, my safety-zone quickly becoming my new prison. This is my view from now on. No one knows when this will end. No one knows what the new world will look like. So, this room, where I sit in this moment, will be where I sit for who knows how long. This realization will take

a while to sit peacefully in my heart. I let this sit in my mind as I turn it over and over, mulling it over the clothes in a dryer turn in the heat.

I know I'm not the only one feeling this way. I know I'm not alone in my fear that this new world could be the only way to stay safe. It's hard to look outside now and see anything that makes me feel anything other than the fear I'm feeling right now. The only place I can find any solace is in the knowledge that I'm not in this alone. I'm not the only one right now that feels nothing but fear and uncertainty. But I take little comfort in the knowledge that others are hurting the way that I am in this moment. I feel a burning anger inside when I realize that I'm trapped like a proverbial rat. And that thought brings to me another glance, I look over at my pet hamster and suddenly all I want is to set him free, I look as his rounds around on the sunshine bright yellow wheel, looking just as happy as can be. How can he find joy in the same surroundings, day after day, hour after countless hour. I can't fathom this life now, I don't want this life now. I feel the rage returning and I see this hamster, running, as fast as his little legs can carry him, and he has this stupid smile on his stupid face and all I can think is why? Why do you keep running knowing you'll get nowhere? Why do you smile when there is no joy?

I feel as my heart sinks in my chest, I feel my hope deflate like a popped balloon. This is life now.

Solitude, except for my hamster for my only companion, and navy-blue walls. And no birds, silence, only silence except for that stupid hamster wheel. I stare longingly in his little blue cage, the color picked to match the color of my walls, no I feel like that was selfish on my part. Now I feel like he must have always felt the way I feel now, trapped, barricaded, afraid and alone. All this time I've felt like a hero to this little hamster, felt like I saved his life from the pet store he lived in before, but now, I feel ashamed, because I am afraid I have given him the life that has just become my own. I wonder if at times this was how he felt. Did he ever look at the walls of his cage and wonder if this was all there was to the world, that there was nothing more than just four walls, did he ever feel as trapped as I do in this moment?

I feel guilty now as I look at him, running so carefree in his cage, going round and round, over and over again. I reach in and feel its silky fur. He doesn't let me hold him often, but I need his companionship now, so I'm hopeful we can have a few moments together. I touch the soft fur on his back, running my fingers gently up and down, the silkiness caressing my fingertips. He scampers away at first, but he must feel my loneliness, because he runs right back and pushes up under my fingers. It's like he's telling me he's been lonely too, he's been needing a friend too. At this moment, I feel like he is the only one who understands me. At this moment, he helps me feel a little less alone

in all the chaos going on right now. I reach in the cage and scoop him up in my small hands, his little feet dig into the palm of my hand. I cradle him against me so he feels more secure, but also because I need the closeness of him. He burrows himself into the crook of my arm, he's little feet move up my arm, I feel every move he makes, and his breath through his small nose when he reaches his goal place offers me comfort. I'm not alone. I have a friend, and he understands me, and I understand him.

We go to my bedroom window and I look out once again, expecting to see nothing more yet again than the same tree that's been there for the past 14 years I've been alive and the same grass that has yet to come alive for spring yet. But I don't see what I expect to see, I don't see the same bleak sky. I see color! I see lots of colors! I see people! I hear laughter! What is this? What's going on? The neighbors are out, I recognize their faces, what I can see. They're all being careful, we've been told to wear masks outdoors, but the neighbors have made colorful bright cheerful masks! Everything is covered in color! The neighbors have all colored the sidewalks bright with rainbows and flowers and sunshine! I look and I realize it's not just the sidewalks, the windows, they've colored them too! "We are all in this together" they remind me. I'm not alone! I lift my hamster so he can see, "Look! Look at all the colors, look at all the joy!"

This is a new world. It's a different world. It's going to be scary for a while, but we can make it through this world. We can make it through this period of time that's so scary, we aren't alone, we have each other and we have hope! I put my hamster back in his cage but as I do, I do it with the promise that I will bring him something new for his home, something bright and cheerful, I will bring him a flower, he should enjoy that. I know I can't be outside, that's where the virus is, but I put on my mask, I pick up some chalk, I'm going out in to the world and I'm going to bring someone else some color, I'm going to let someone else know that I'm here, they aren't alone! Together. That's how we will make it. We will all make it through this together.

*Crocheting by Barbara Johnson*



*Purse created by Eve Gaal*



*Pillows by Eve Gaal*

# DISENTANGLE AND UNRAVEL YOUR STRESS

*Written by Eve Gaal, M.A, Portfolio 395 Contributor  
Special Thanks to Barbara Johnson for sharing her Crochet pieces*

If you've ever had high blood pressure or anxiety, caused by either a long commute, homework, or office politics; here's an idea that's sure to help calm your nerves. It's called crocheting.

This two-part article will focus on how you can use crocheting as a way to get your mind off difficult and demanding events, the news, even this annoying pandemic. Crocheting has been known to reduce stress and improve memory. Best of all, crocheted items, such as afghans, make delightful and practical gifts. All you have to do is choose the yarn, combine colors according to your own taste, and create something unlike anything from a factory.

## Express Yourself

Many crocheting artisans even make money selling their handiwork, by opening online shops or displaying wares at craft fairs. Crocheting is not only about hats and afghans. Envision something, and you can make it; vests, purses, baskets, sweaters, shawls, dog clothing, rugs.... Theoretically, if you can dream it up, it can be made with crocheting. Do you want to cover a pillow? Make a wall-hanging? Liven up a lampshade? Swing in a hammock? It's all possible, once you learn the fundamentals.

There's even a revolutionary side to crocheting. Have you ever heard of yarn bombings? Participants cover tree trunks with delicate, doily-like creations in an attempt to colorize an urban community, or simply to decorate nature. Whatever the reason, it's bound to make you smile or at least inspire you to pick up a crochet hook.

## Variety is the Spice of Life

The history of crocheting dates back to the 1700's when Chinese embroidery, Irish lace-makers, French couture, and Danish ingenuity merged. As crocheting evolved all over the world, various styles and different crochet hooks became popular. There's Amigurumi from Japan, Tunisian crochet, Bavarian crochet, tapestry, freeform crochet, just to name a few. There are innumerable patterns and ideas on the internet for creating just about anything. Once you understand the basic stitches you can experiment with colors and stitches to create an original work of textile art.

## It's Easier than you Think

Currently, there are two, (normally three) easy ways to learn to crochet. The first one involves a book or pamphlet about the different crochet stitches. Typically, these books will teach you to make something simple, such as a washcloth or scarf before heading into challenging territory, such as how to make a sweater. Books on crocheting are available at craft stores, book shops, Amazon, and even the library.

The second way, is to log onto YouTube videos where you can replay the same video over and over again if necessary. There are also wonderful social media opportunities to discuss your work in progress with talented folks willing to answer questions. Join a few Facebook crochet clubs, where members chat about projects and share advice. Try Crocheting for Beginners in the search bar.

Of course, the best way to learn, is always from a patient friend, or as a member of a live, in-person crochet group. Though the hands-on approach is great, nowadays, with everyone in isolation, it might be better to use a book, or the YouTube videos. [Here's a short video showing how to chain stitch.](#)

*Visit Portfolio 395 next month, when we'll take a look at the fundamentals of written crochet directions and begin a basic project.*

# ART AND MINDFULNESS

Written by Alicia Pearson, Portfolio 395 Contributor



Vani Shiroor, Mindfulness Coach and founder of DotUrMinds in Southern California

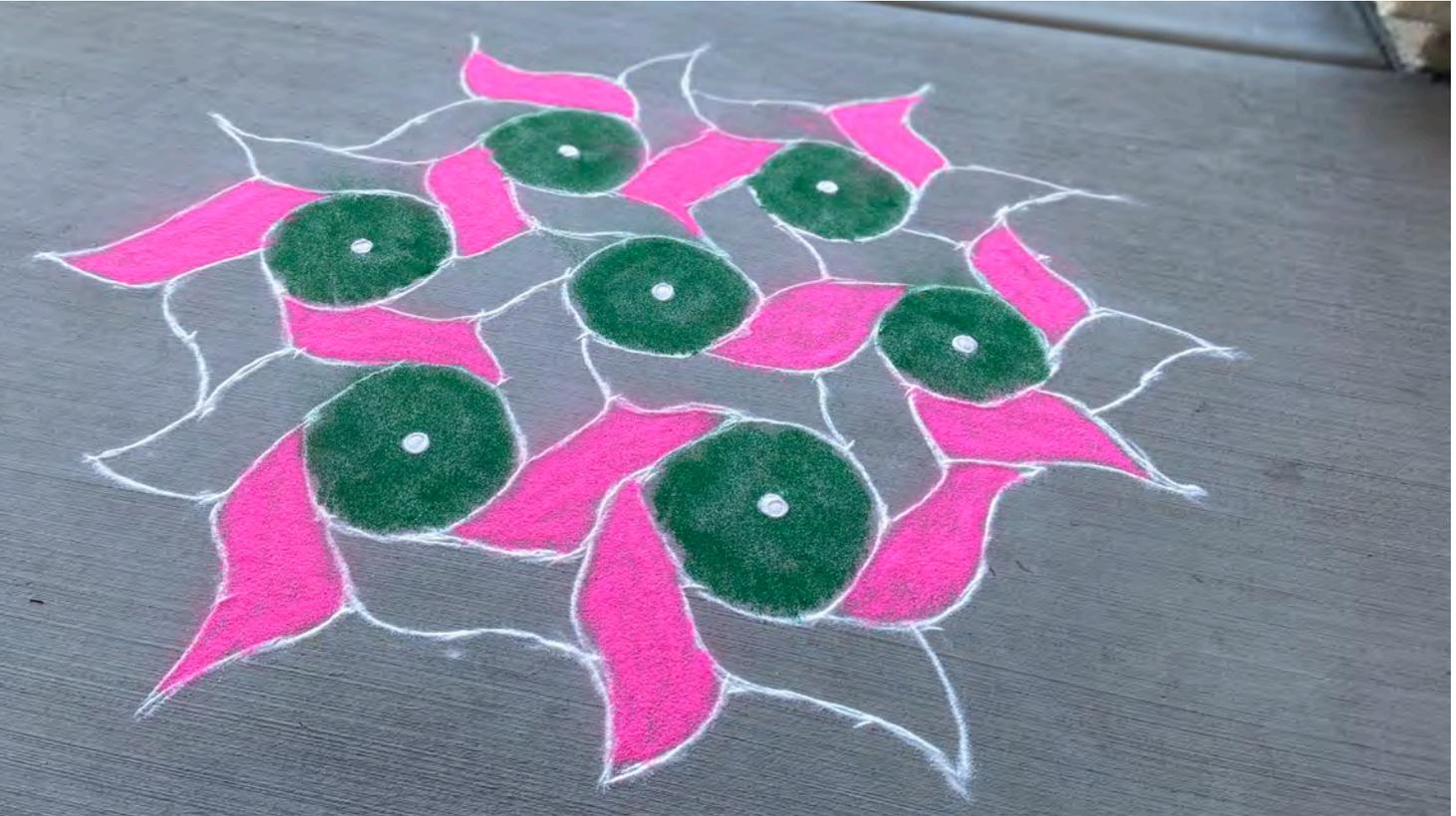
One of my favorite sayings is that multi-tasking is the art of messing up several things at once. Even knowing that, even understanding that allowing my focus to bounce between multiple things at a time will increase the likelihood of mistakes and could actually result in each task taking longer, I still find myself trying to double-book every moment of my life.

Driving? Have a call via Bluetooth. Eating dinner? I can check my emails

between bites.

It is as if the very idea of ultra-productivity has taken over my existence. Unfortunately, I am not alone. A large portion of the population believes they are good at multitasking. They aren't. In fact, multiple studies, including a recent one from the University of Utah, have confirmed that only around 2% of people can actually multi-task effectively. 2. Out of 100.

Mindful S  
impression



and Dot Art created with sand in bottles. We pour sand into small piles of dots, then use different tools like spoons, pencils, bottle caps, or fingertips tips to create ns and designs in the sand.

So, how can the rest of us hone our focus to make the most out of completing a single task at a time? Art, of course.

I recently spoke with the incredible owner of DOTURMINDS here in Southern California, Vani Shiroor, who teaches sand dot art through individual and team building events. She explains, "Multitasking is simply not natural, even the body cannot swallow and breathe at the same time. Instead, we must learn to calm and focus our minds so we can actually be present in the moment and the task we are completing." Vani is able to help her clients leverage this ancient Indian art-form in a way that forces them to engage their minds by creating symmetrical pat-

terns and shapes. Instead of this hyper-focus being stressful, it is actually very relaxing to the brain. In our daily lives we often don't realize how many thoughts and worries we are carrying in our minds from moment to moment. Our brains take the brunt of that heavy lifting, which can result in lack of focus, motivation, and creative solutions.

Art, in any form, helps break that cycle.

So, the next time you find yourself running in circles but never really getting anywhere, take a deep breath, grab your go-to art supplies, and give your brain a break.

# RABBIT QUEEN EGG-STRAVAGANZA

*Written by Alec Parra-Miranda, Editor-at-Large for Portfolio 395*

This past month STUDIO 395 joined together and put together a drive thru easter event called the Rabbit Queen Drive Thru Art experience. This event was in partnership with the County of Riverside, The Lake Elsinore Valley Educational Foundation, along with the Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District.

The event took place at the community center on a sunny yet windy Friday afternoon, where participants of the event were led down a rabbit hole of fascinating Alice in Wonderland themed art displays all created by a band of volunteers and community center staff. Another interesting addition to note on this event is the sheer amount of donated items used for the creation of the event. The community center since its closure has had a large amount of unused cardboard and barrels which became the basis of the art pieces.

This event which was followed by weeks of planning, coordination and organization enabled participants to see the power of public art and even if there are ongoing state-

wide mandates, the arts can still live on.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our volunteers and staff who put their hearts into creating this interactive art experience. Ricardo Lopez, Lisa Cabrera, Peter Skotnica, Janene Vlach, Tom Dolan, Paige Vlach, Sean Denton. Your work is appreciated and valued.



*Rabbit Queen Fortress created by Tom Dolan, Janene Vlach, Peter Skotnica*



Paper Doll figurines created through Facebook pet submissions



Books donated by the Lake Elsinore Valley Education Foundation



Cops for Kids passed out hundreds of toys to kids



**MAGAZINE CREATED BY  
STUDIO 395**

**“Our goal is to first gather the Artists, the rest will  
come to see what’s going on.”**