

FORESEEABLE

PERRY SHEN CHEN

INTRODUCTION

“Foreseeable” is an original digital illustration created by Perry Shen Chen for *Beyond the Data: Art and Reflections at AAIC 2026*. No AI was used in the creation of this painting.

DESCRIPTION

“Foreseeable” depicts the shape of a brain in transverse section. The left half represents a brain in normal condition, while the right half represents a brain atrophied by AD. During the process of sketching concepts, I noticed the thalamus and head of the caudate nucleus appeared vaguely like two faces staring at one another, so I drew them as such: one young, one old.

The neurons reference the work of Dr. Santiago Ramon y Cajal, Nobel Prize winner and pioneer of modern neuroscience. His detailed depictions of the tree-like shapes of neurons are still used for educational purposes today. In my work, the metaphor has been expanded by applying leaves on the dendrites to symbolize their health.

“Foreseeable” also draws inspiration from the concept of Yin and Yang: even the atrophied half contains a symbol of neural regeneration and vice versa, suggesting that while all brains have the potential for cognitive decline, there exists hope for a future in which such decline may be reliably reversed.

ARTIST BACKGROUND

I was 12 years old when my father lost his battle with cancer. In high school, I directed an animated short film to make sure his story would not be forgotten. The pain of gradually losing a parent to disease is one thing that many with a family history of AD know far too well, but my experience taught me that storytelling can be a powerful tool for healing and connection.

In 2024, the release of a groundbreaking *Nature* paper suggesting that APOE4 homozygosity is a genetic cause of AD prompted my mom and I, both carriers of this high-risk gene, to involve ourselves in Alzheimer’s clinical research and community engagement. I began to intern under Ms. Sarah Walter, program administrator for the Alzheimer’s Therapeutic Research Institute (ATRI) and Alzheimer’s Clinical Trials Consortium (ACTC) in San Diego, learning about the vital role public and participant involvement plays in research design. Over the past year, I have had the privilege of meeting and collaborating with researchers like Dr. Mike Rafii, the ACTC Down Syndrome partnership group, and the ACTC Research Partnership Alliance – the latter of which served to inspire my art submission.

As a young Asian-American professional with a background in the arts rather than medicine, I never expected to find myself involved in the AD research field. However, as a carrier of the high-risk APOE4 gene, I have a vested interest in supporting the development of safe and effective AD treatments for all through sustained education, advocacy, and involvement. I hope to inspire more members of the research community to recognize and embrace the value art and storytelling can bring to public and participant involvement in AD research.



CONTACT

Email: perryshenchen@gmail.com

Linkedin: www.linkedin.com/in/perryschen/