

LEGACY

XIX 2022

Emboldened



Emboldened

Legacy XIX 2022

Reading Area Community College
10 South Second Street,
Reading, PA, 19602
www.racc.edu

Staff XIX 2022

Editor-in-Chief/Layout & Design Editor

Dylan Sokolovich

Editorial Staff

Alekzander Rodriguez

Cailey Bergan

Christopher Barrera

Jake Weaver

Kristina Hartz

Sebastian Barreto

Shianne Ayala-Lind

William Allen

Faculty Adviser

Dr. Bahar Diken

Contents

Table of

Prose

- 2** **Losing Yourself to Find Yourself**
Zachary Myers
Personal Essay
- 8** **Three Vignettes**
Austin Graczyk
Fiction
- 14** **All Else is Optional**
Krista Morrison
Personal Essay
- 28** **Willow and the Elm**
Naomi Ermold
Fiction
- 50** **A Constant Craving**
Elena Moyer
Fiction
- 60** **Pretty Girl**
Shianne Ayala-Lind
Fiction
- 68** **Sustainable Consumption: Environmentalism
Commodified by ExxonMobile**
Annadore Himmelberger
Researched Essay
- 84** **A Conversation With My Dad**
Rachel Dodson
Personal Essay
- 92** **Medical Anomaly**
Catherine Shuff
Personal Essay
- 102** **The Silence of the Bugle**
Jake Weaver
Fiction
- 128** **In Stitches**
Sarah Belles
Fiction

Poetry

- 1** **By Who?**
Shianne Ayala-Lind
- 7** **Alpha**
Nicholas Fulwood
- 13** **Where Does She Go?**
Kristina Hartz
- 25** **A Woman's Shape**
Isis Cruz
- 34** **Rhymes for Tots: Happy Planting**
Sarah Belles
- 35** **Midnight Drain**
Kevin Ciresa
- 40** **Not to Worry, Dear**
Mallory Staub
- 47** **Picked a Smile**
Kristina Hartz
- 49** **The Whales Grew Feet**
Kristina Hartz
- 55** **Lights Out**
Dylan Sokolovich
- 58** **Overstimulated**
Nicholas Fulwood
- 65** **Home**
Mallory Staub
- 67** **Alleycats**
Dylan Sokolovich
- 76** **Unconscious Detachment**
Shianne Ayala-Lind
- 83** **Adulthood**
Dylan Sokolovich
- 88** **The Last Chess Match**
Nicholas Fulwood
- 89** **Divine in Drought**
Kevin Ciresa
- 98** **Heartstrings**
Hope Olshefski
- 99** **Grandma is Lost**
Dylan Sokolovich
- 112** **Implode**
Nicholas Fulwood
- 114** **Gone Fishin'**
Dylan Sokolovich
- 115** **The Empty**
Kevin Ciresa
- 123** **Daydream**
Selena Notobartolo
- 125** **Bathroom**
Nicholas Fulwood
- 137** **A Weary Woman**
Dylan Sokolovich
- 138** **Oasis**
Nicholas Fulwood

Portfolios



Art & Photography

- 6** **Winter's Journey**
Dylan Sokolovich
Photography
- 10** **Search for Identity**
Jennifer Jewell Kramer
Photography
- 12** **Summer's Heat**
Cheyenne Getz
Acrylic
- 18** **Light in the Dark**
Kelly Bunch
Charcoal
- 19** **Aux Champignon**
Olivia Biancone
Gouache
- 21** **Sunflower Sunset**
Olivia Biancone
Gouache
- 22** **The Watcher**
Olivia Biancone
Acrylic
- 23** **Milo**
Olivia Biancone
Charcoal
- 24** **She Lies Down**
Olivia Biancone
Mixed Media
- 26** **Martha**
Rachel Dodson
Pencil
- 27** **Solitude**
Joseph Fioravanti
Photography
- 31** **Color Maze of Life**
Jennifer Jewell Kramer
Photography
- 33** **Exploring Abstraction**
Dylan Sokolovich
Digital
- 36** **Vortex**
Jennifer Jewell Kramer
Photography
- 37** **Oil**
Kylee Moyer
Photography
- 38** **Profile**
Nicholas Fulwood
Ink
- 39** **Shagofah**
Halema Bobby
Ink
- 41** **Technology, Art, and Visual Culture**
Sebastian Barreto
Digital
- 48** **Psychedelic**
Ysabel Feliciano
Ink & Acrylic
- 54** **Can You Hear Them, Too?**
Joseph Fioravanti
Photography

Art & Photography

- 56** I See . . .
Shianne Ayala-Lind
Photography
- 57** To The Sky
Jennifer Carpinteyo
Digital
- 59** My Pointe Shoes
McKenna Barker
Pastel
- 64** Inside Out
Christopher Barrera
Mixed Media
- 66** Spirit
Michael George
Digital
- 73** Microscape
Dylan Sokolovich
Photography
- 75** Evergreen
Robert Bara-Popa
Photography
- 77** Bath
Mia Davis
Ink
- 79** Stare
Mia Davis
Ink
- 80** Wanderer
Mia Davis
Charcoal
- 81** Mixed Flavors
Mia Davis
Charcoal
- 81** Playful Popcorn
Mia Davis
Charcoal
- 82** Gilded
Mia Davis
Charcoal
- 83** Blue Spots
Gabriella Wertheim
Watercolor
- 87** Night At The Circus
Zoe Rhodes
Photography
- 90** Eastern Lights
Allyson Finney
Photography
- 91** Reflection
McKenna Barker
Pencil
- 95** Floating
Nicholas Fulwood
Ink
- 97** Wings Spread Wide
Kelly Bunch
Charcoal
- 100** Primary
Christopher Barrera
Pencil

Art & Photography

101 **Feeling Green**
Morgan Herb
Pencil

105 **Creature**
Zachary Kutz
Charcoal

108 **To the Future**
Jeremy Back
Acrylic & Ink

111 **Fog Over Antietam Lake**
Joseph Fioravanti
Photography

113 **Midnight Snack**
Alexa Buck
Acrylic

114 **Bass**
Cheyenne Getz
Cardboard Sculpture

116 **Shell Still Life**
McKenna Barker
Pencil

117 **Black Tears**
Miguel Santiago
Acrylic

119 **Hey!**
Miguel Santiago
Crayon

120 **Ghost Boy**
Miguel Santiago
Acrylic

120 **Tribal**
Miguel Santiago
Acrylic

121 **Kaleidoscope**
Miguel Santiago
Acrylic & Tempera

122 **Pansexual Mind**
Miguel Santiago
Acrylic & Ink

124 **Complementary**
Christopher Barrera
Acrylic

125 **Que**
Rafael Nunez
Ink

126 **Moonrise**
Sophia Vojtasek
Pastel

127 **Butterfly Habitat**
McKenna Barker
Pencil

130 **Oil Can**
Kylee Moyer
Photography

133 **Rainy Day**
Cheyenne Getz
Acrylic

136 **Blue Heron**
McKenna Barker
Pastel

Art, Photography, & Music

138 Aurora
Gustavo Galicia
Photography

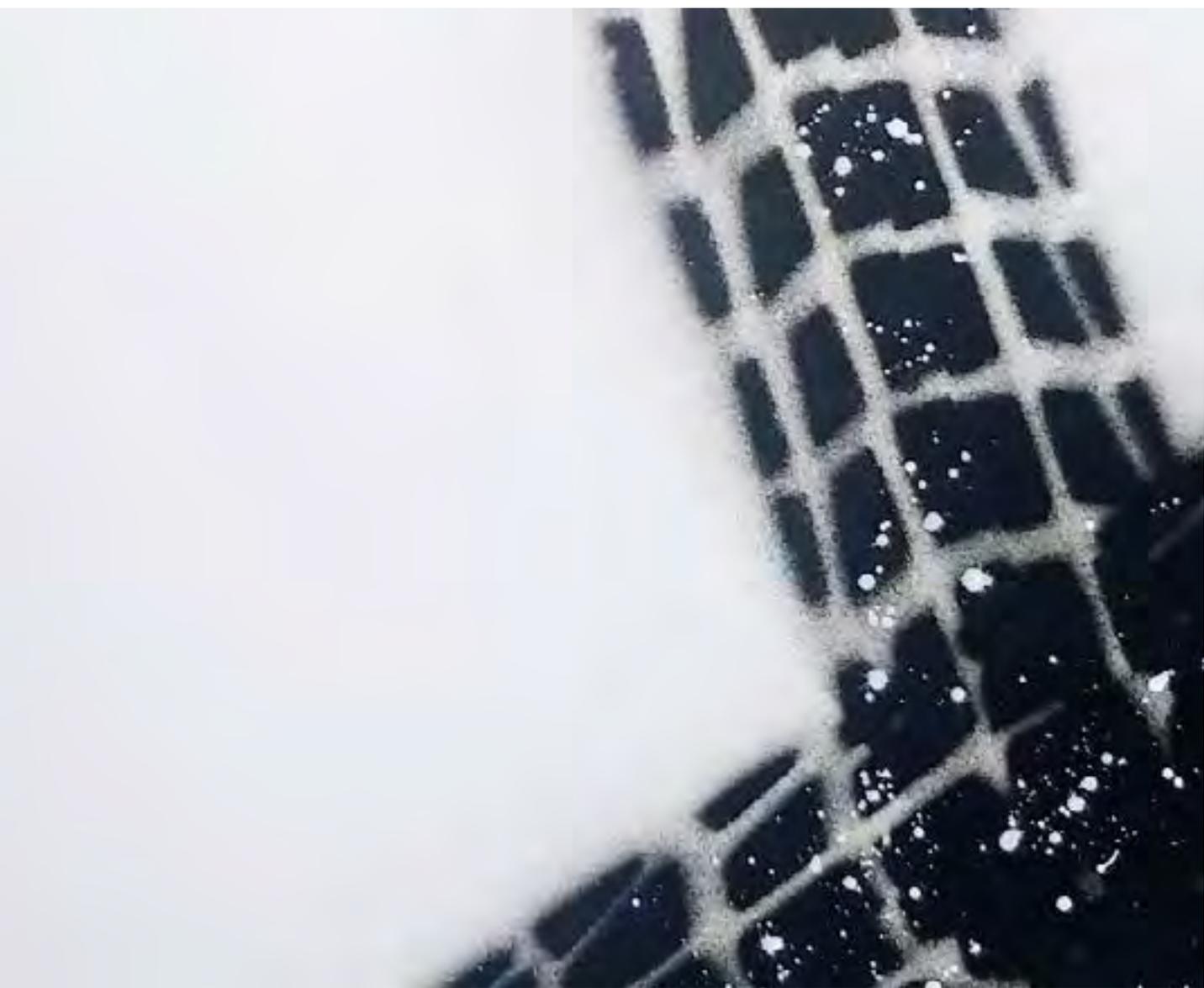
139 Frustration
Miguel Santiago
Acrylic

140 Alice
Rachel Dodson
Music

IX-X Passed Through
Cheyenne Getz
Stencil & Spray Paint

Passed Through
Cheyenne Getz
Stencil & Spray Paint





Acknowledgments

What becomes immediately clear with a project like *Legacy* is the absolute necessity of diverse input. Every individual artist, photographer, writer, and poet provide a unique perspective in the pages of this volume. Their contributions have made it possible for us to put together a journal that we are all proud of, and our heartfelt gratitude goes to each and every one of those who contributed their work and shared their voices.

Compiling a publication such as *Legacy* would not be possible without the creative environment that RACC fosters. Through the efforts of the diligent, *Legacy's* pages are filled with work that was encouraged, guided, and supported by RACC faculty. We, in particular, wish to extend our appreciation to RACC's Art and Creative Writing faculty. Their support is unparalleled. We also would like to express our gratitude to Jamica R. Andrews, RACC's Director of Student Activities, for her assistance.

So much of the work in bringing a publication to fruition depends on the trust we have in one another. As a team, we look to each other for upliftment and reassurance. However, in the face of what we have accomplished, we each possess a sense of triumph and humility. We want to express our earnest appreciation to each other and those that have bolstered our journey toward this point. Of these supporters, a most special *thank you* is owed to Dr. Bahar Diken. As our faculty adviser, her fervor of dedication to the success of *Legacy* is incomparable. Without her, *Legacy* is a ship with no lighthouse.

We are also deeply grateful to Dylan Sokolovich, who served as our Editor-in-Chief throughout the assembling of this volume. With his commitment and enthusiasm, we now have much around which to rally. We also acknowledge and thank the former members and contributors who worked on *Legacy* in the past. This volume of *Legacy* finds many of us in a different place than we ever could have anticipated. Their examples were crucial to our understanding and collaboration. Lastly, we dedicate this volume to all RACC students: It does not contain their work; it *is* their work. With our limited efforts, we hope that all might see the excellence of their work as a reflection of their own excellence.

To The Reader

In the process of creativity, we may find ourselves at a loss of how to respond to the concept of “should”: Art *should* be this; literature *should* be that. In *Legacy 2022*, our contributors, through their poetry, prose, artwork, and photography, negotiate the competing pressures to give in (—do what they are supposed or expected to do) and to resist (—do what they want to do). And the outcome is anything but meek and soft-spoken. Instead, this volume of featured works demonstrates a plethora of vigorous stances, unapologetic characters, and intriguing images.

Throughout the compilation of *Legacy XIX*, we have found that doing something different, daring, or even controversial—or predictable only in generating surprises—calls for power to be bold and, uplifted by our student contributions, we have set out to explore what it means to be *emboldened*.

The pieces included in this volume have been selected carefully, not only for their literary and artistic value, but also in an attempt to inspire others. Our contributors were unknowing of this year’s theme beforehand, yet their pieces prove that they have the volition to become *emboldened* within *Legacy* and beyond. We are elated with the featured work—work that dares to be different, sometimes vulnerable, yet often significant.

We hope that 2022’s *Legacy* emphasizes this definition of *emboldened*, providing engaging prose and poetry, and unique artistic styles—creating a stylistic difference between realism and abstraction—all coming together to produce one cohesive and bold journal.

Emboldened

em·bold·en /əm'böldən/

verb past tense: emboldened; past participle: emboldened

1. give (someone) the courage or confidence to do something or to behave in a certain way.

(Definition from Oxford Languages)

Similar: encourage, inspire, hearten, strengthen

By Who?
Shianne Ayala-Lind

By the sun,
The moon,
And the winds in the sky.

The ifs,
The haves,
The have nots,
And whys?
The dreams,
The pain.
And mother time.

Here?
So taxing to find.

We are the women of mystery.
They are the men of pride.

So sometimes we find,
Denied,
And Defied.

Expected not to lose our sight.

“Riiiiight.”

You see,
What I see

What I see is a lack of dignity.
Here.

Everywhere.

We all fear the collective
“*Them.*”

Not to come,

Just now,

And some then.

But—if I am also a they,
Just, on a different day.

What game is *really* played?

Truly, am I the paladin or the Mage?
Truly, the master or a campaign page?

Look up,

You will see me.
Just there behind the clouds.

An artifact found.

A rainbow,
I am.

Painted,
in six shades of Blue.
Six shades,
Made of me.

But who am I really?
To you.

Losing Yourself to Find Yourself

Zachary Myers

Personal Essay



The word “wilderness” suggests the past and the unknown, the womb of earth from which we all emerged. It means something lost and something still present, something remote and at the same time intimate, something buried in our blood and nerves, something beyond us and without limit.

-Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*

Losing Yourself to
Find Yourself
Personal Essay

Zachary Myers

“Let’s get lost.” I have a sticker on my computer that bears these words along with a picture of mountains and sunshine. “Lost” for me is not a destination; it is a state of mind.

When we think of being lost, we often associate it with panic and anxiety. Not knowing where we are going or where we come from is an understandably frustrating feeling. When we go for a walk, we anticipate arriving safely back at our homes at the end of the journey. How do we know we will find our way back? Retracing our steps? Our understanding of geography and topography? Most of us are not experts in either. How do we then understand that we will arrive at our destination before we arrive? Some plan, making a map before beginning; some trust intuition.

As a small child I never imagined I would live by the sea. I had no concept of how vast the oceans were or how big America was. Wanderlust escaped me for most of my juvenile life. I had family and people I cared about to keep me grounded and was happy where I was.

I fondly remember Sunday mornings with my dad’s side of the family, gathered around my grandmother’s table. After lunch, all the kids would go outside and play together for hours while the adults spent time together. None of it felt forced as social interactions often do. Uncles, aunts, and grandparents – they all asked questions out of genuine interest in the answer. Everyone got along. Unfortunately, after the passing of my grandmother, these gatherings ceased. We spent Sundays doing things in solidarity, which created an uncomfortable feeling, coming from such a warm family environment. I felt the first tines of wanderlust and began to take up mountain biking, riding by myself for miles. I would ride and ride and explore new trails. I began to plan trips around

“Being alone in a new state was a whole new level of solitude. There was no finding your way home, no retracing your steps. I was in an entirely new environment.”

biking, traveling to new places to explore.

Being by myself in the woods is a very therapeutic experience for me. There is a sense of serenity I feel when I am surrounded by nothingness. I feel the energy of nature. I can unplug from society, recharge myself, and emerge from the trees, feeling refreshed with a better understanding of myself and the world around me.

To some, this would mean *being lost*. To me, it was exactly where I was supposed to be. On a trail I had never been with no idea where it was going, I had no logical reason to believe that I would return to where I had started, but I always did.

As I got older, I found myself chasing that feeling of clarity that I would get in the wilderness. I began taking up hobbies that would get me outside – fishing, golfing, hunting, anything I could

do to find solidarity in nature.

My grandfather and I spent countless hours practicing my golf swing. He did his best to impart his many years of experience and knowledge on me so that I might enjoy the game as much as he did. I worked long hours to afford all the different tools of the trade. I spent countless hours with him working on different techniques, trying to learn as much as I could.

Golf, although a fun hobby which I still enjoy, never really fulfilled the sense of serenity I got from being alone in the wilderness. “We need the possibility of escape,” Edward Abbey writes, “as surely as we need hope.” By the time I was twenty-two, I had lost the sense of being outside “the boundaries of asphalt, powerlines, and right-angled surfaces” and my need to “escape” had gotten so bad that I ended up packing all my things and moving six hours away to a different state (162).

Being alone in a new state was a whole new level of solitude. There was no finding your way home, no retracing your steps. I was in an entirely new environment. And, to my surprise, it created a feeling of unease. What was the difference? Was this new adventure not the same concept as being lost in the woods?

I spent my days working and my nights on the beach. I realized quickly who the locals were. Most people in the area on any given day were transitory. I too felt somewhat transitory myself, being transplanted here. I attempted to unveil myself to the locals. Yet I quickly learned that the locals had little to no interest in outsiders, whom they seemed to think of as a plague on their home.

So, what does someone do in a new state with no friends and no sense of direction? Wouldn't this be the exact definition of lost?

While theoretically this was what I had been looking for, I felt no more serene or in tune with

my subconscious. I attempted to recreate the feeling of serenity I had been chasing, mimicking things that had given it to me in the past. Nothing seemed to work.

The weather was perfect, 75 degrees and sunny. Not a cloud in the sky. The light ocean breeze kept the bugs away and dried the sweat off my brow. Not a bad place to be, but why wasn't I happy?

I eventually returned home after my rumspringa, ready to start over. I began to rebuild connections I had since abandoned. I filled my schedule once again with things I thought would add meaning to my life. My social calendar quickly filled. My time for reflection and isolation diminished. I once again was feeling disconnected from the calm I had experienced in my youth. I began to investigate what I was missing.

I had become so obsessed with finding myself that I had lost what I had to begin with. Being part of the unbounded world and experiencing serenity was meaningful, because it would balance my life out. On the other end of the spectrum, I still had meaningful social connections in the life of the city – though full of distractions and clutter. I had a road map to keeping myself on the right path.

I have come to realize that there is a difference between being organically lost in nature and passively lost in life—and that I cannot see the whole picture without seeing both sides. With no meaningful social connections, I had no purpose and my spiritual health waned. Without time for reflection and introspection, my sense of calm vanished. Today I have faith that no matter where I am, I am following a path laid for me. I could remove myself from society momentarily but still have enough connection to find purpose.

For now, I will keep going. I will keep chasing that feeling from my youth. I have not found out

what is wrong yet, but I realize that I do not care to know. I have found a balance that works for me today. I am only ever as lost as I want to be.

Work Cited

Abby, Edward. *Desert Solitaire*. Random House Publishing, 1968.



Winter's Journey
Dylan Sokolovich
Photography

Alpha
Nicholas Fulwood

I once had a dog.
I never liked this dog.
He painted my walls red,
We fought over food,
And I was always more of a cat person.

I once had a dog.
She was small and whimsical,
And kept me on my toes,
Remaining as fickle as the wind.

The big dog ate the small dog.
He spread her guts on the floor,
For the child to see,
Although I still think the painting was for me.

But that's not what I remember most.
I remember how
Every time I would walk by his food,
He would growl
Like thunder on the horizon.
The look in his eye shone,
As food crunched under his teeth.

I remember running and chasing and escaping.
She was always on the move,
A candle flame,
Flickering in a storm.

I remember the standoffs,
The pissing contests and staring matches,
Lines drawn in the sand,
Scraps hidden under paws.

Now,
Years later,
As my hair grows long,
I gnash on my scraps,
And piss on my territory,
Marking both people and places.
Ownership and superiority are my currency,
And I grow fat on my riches.

Three Vignettes

Austin Graczyk

Fiction

Previously published in *Legacy* 2018



Fluorescent lights are hallucinogenic, like the midnight sun.
In your head, you know you're standing in an abandoned
soda aisle, but your mind is in the void.

Three Vignettes
Fiction

Austin Graczyk

One: Secluded

The night air is so thick that you can't draw a deep enough breath. The wood railing under your palms feels like it might give way any second, but it doesn't. There's usually another yellow porch light, like yours, somewhere out through the swamp. It's either out now or it's blocked by the night blackened trees.

Or covered in a swarm even thicker than yours is.

You put a cigarette in between your teeth, but the match won't strike in the wet air. Around the house to your left is the continuous sound of electric snaps and pops from the bug zapper. None of its blue glow reaches the front yard.

A louder sizzle-pop from what was probably a moth dying.

You step off the porch onto damp gravel, pasty and hot even through the soles of your sandals. The dirt and grass is cooler, and the blades leave wet streaks on your feet. You hush away the cloud of gnats around the bug zapper and bring your face close in, just enough to get the tip of the cigarette through the thin wire grating. The hairs on your neck stand on end until you can pull away—an orange light between your fingers and the taste of vanilla smoke blown back into the air.

As quickly as you've scattered them, the gnats line back up to die.

Two: Public

The whole world tastes like salt. It's in the air, in the sand, spraying off the ocean in front of you. French fry oil vapors cling to your hair and your shirt, and if the sun were out, you'd go bare chested to feel it on your skin.

The carousel is at the far end of the boardwalk, somewhere indistinctly behind you, but you can hear it singing the same music as in every carnival and amusement park ever built.

You turn your back on the ocean just as the first drop of rain lands on your nose.

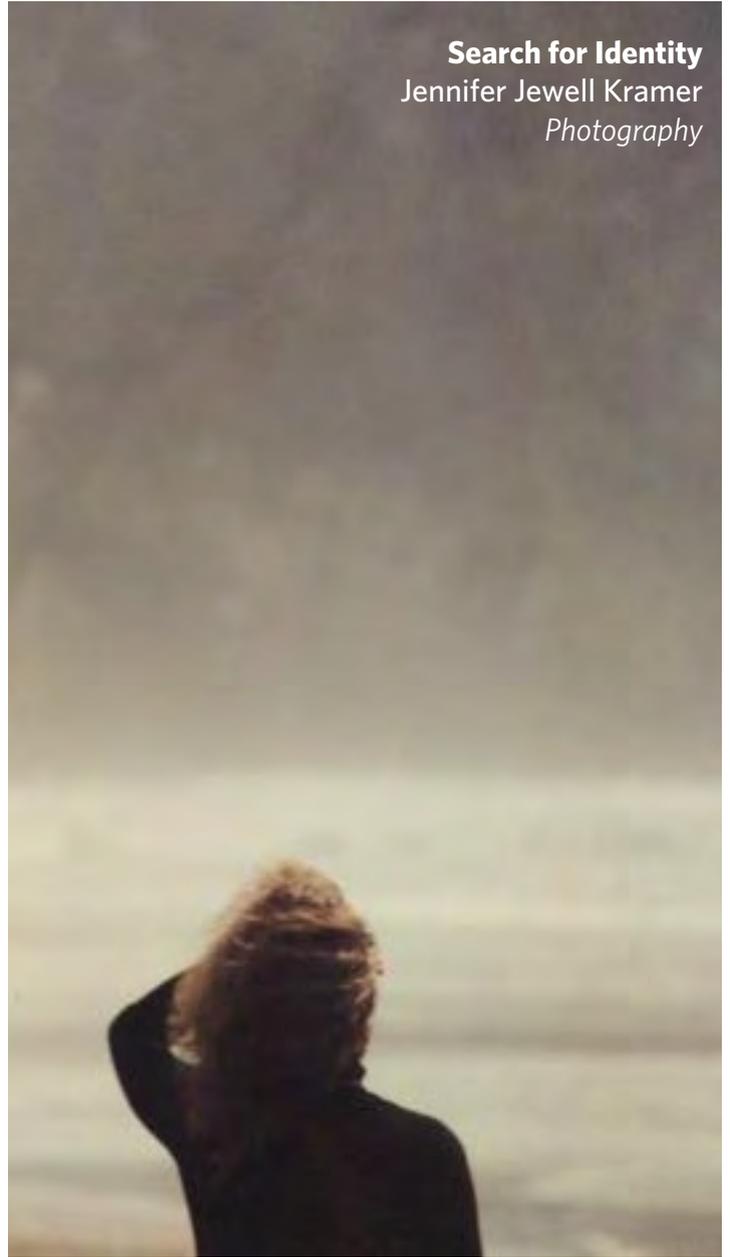
It only takes a minute for the squall to take full effect, and people at the top of the Ferris wheel scream and flap their arms, looking like the only seagulls who didn't know well enough not to show up that day.

Water runs down your head and into your mouth, and it tastes mostly clean.

The worst of the rain lets up, but the clouds stay. The screaming on the Ferris wheel stops. The roller coaster gears begin cranking back up.

There's salt in your mouth again, but for the next few seconds, you won't have to smell it. You breathe deep, and you know-you know-that somewhere, there's grass. Grass wholly untainted and full of water.

Search for Identity
Jennifer Jewell Kramer
Photography



Three: Mirage

Fluorescent lights are hallucinogenic, like the midnight sun. In your head, you know you're standing in an abandoned soda aisle, but your mind is in the void. One single wheel squeaks on the employee's cart halfway across the store as he goes to refill something.

No one else would be caught dead here at this time of night. No one else would be clutching a fist full of dimes, trying to decide between two different brands of knockoff two-liters.

Your mind wanders.

It goes to the far end of the aisle, past the yogurt, to a boy and girl wrapped into each other. You look at his torso: long, and tan, and covered with purple bruises in the shape of lips. Three long scratch marks sideways across his back, and blood under her nails.

They don't look at you. Don't look at anyone else, even when the force of them together shatters glass doors and cooks eggs inside the shells.

Your mind gives them up and moves on as best as it can.

A new mother, a new child. Fussing now, but not for long. She would grab her hair and pull it out by the roots if her arms weren't dead tired.

Mangos; she has to remember to buy mangos while they're half off. Or was it avocados? Maybe she'll just buy two of each.

You return to your head and blink at the bottles in front of you. If you were in the desert and you had to pick one, which would it be?

The sun hurts your eyes when you raise your head, but there's no heat. A soft wasteland.

Two bottles buried in the sand. A coyote

trotting over, sniffing them, deciding not to spend the energy.

"Lemon-lime or citrus?" you ask it in your head.

It sits down and scratches its ear like a dog.

The same squeaking wheel, the stock boy getting closer. You wonder what goes through his mind on a shift like this. The stock boy comes into view with a hospital gurney, sand piled high on it. He stops every few feet and throws some of it down onto the ground. He picks one handful back up, moves it to the left a few inches.

The hum from the lights breaks the façade, and you're alone again in the discount soda aisle. Probably for the best; the coyote would've eaten the baby.

The tan boy breaks away from kissing his girlfriend and shouts to you, "You're thinking of dingoes!"

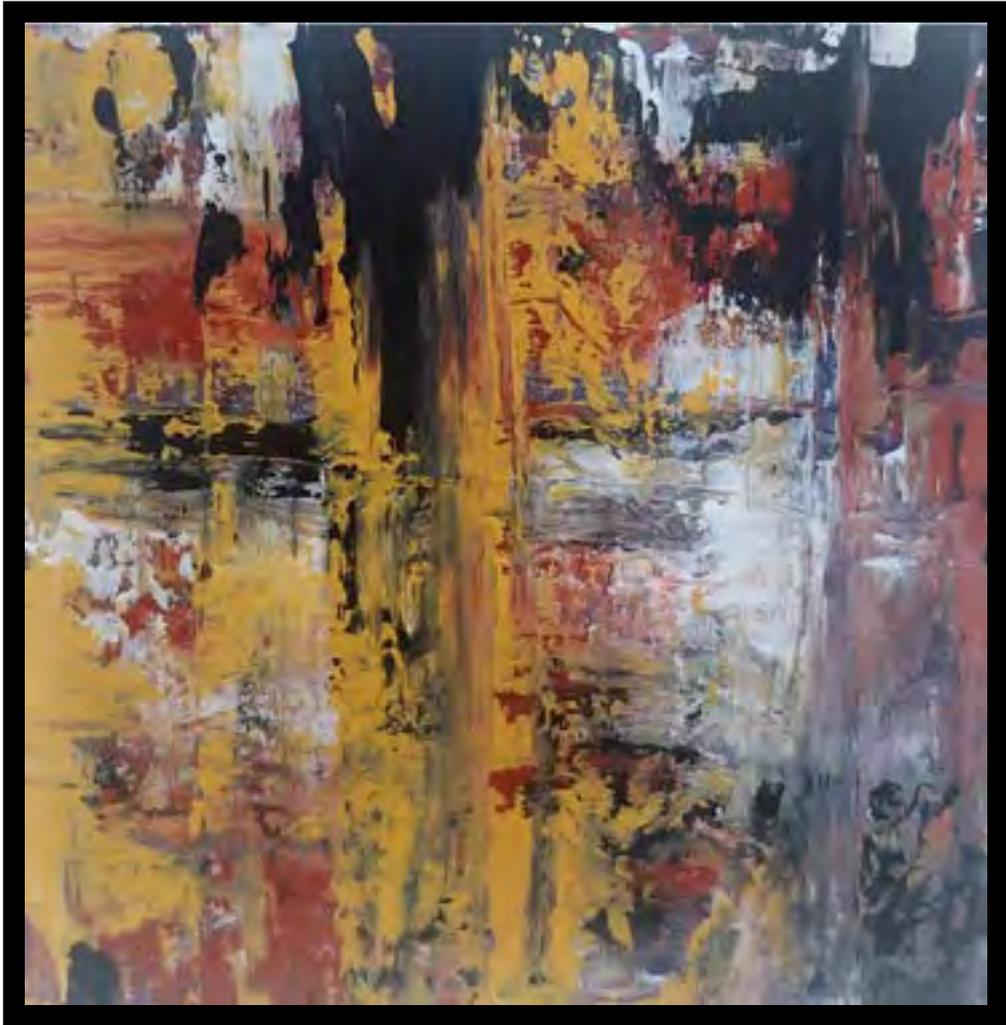
"Right," you murmur to the bottles. You open your fist and count the dimes. Just enough for one knockoff two-liter.

The mother and child come back into view. Her face looks gaunter, more bones shining through under thin skin. "Caffeine isn't good at this time of night," she says without looking away from the baby.

"Lemon-lime, then?"

The baby looks into your eyes, and the mother lets out one tear before she moves on.

"Right," you say again. You pick up the clear bottle with two fingers and carry it away from the aisle, catching glimpses of desert at the edges of your vision.



Summer's Heat
Cheyenne Getz
Acrylic

Where Does She Go?

Kristina Hartz

Where does she go when
Waves like giants
Try to throw her out to sea?
How high do they take her
Before she crashes
Underneath?

What is it like to run through a tunnel
And never see a steady light,
But only watch a small flame flicker
And hope it stays there
Through the night?

How does it feel
To not know when
The ground might fall apart?
To hear someone say they love you
But treat you like they have no heart?

Where does she go when
I don't see her
Or hear her
Or know how her life has been?

I only hope that
It's not stormy
In the waters where she swims.

I pray that she is breathing steady
And I hope that she knows
I wish that I could be there with her
In the places that she goes.

All Else is Optional

Krista Morrison

Personal Essay



The child gains her first sense of her own existence from the mother's responsive gestures and expressions. It's as if, in the mother's eyes, her smile, her stroking touch, the child first reads the message: *You are there!* And the mother, too, is discovering her own existence newly. She is connected with this other being, by the most mundane and the most invisible strands, in a way she can be connected with no one else except in the deep past of her infant connection with her own mother. And she, too, needs to struggle from that one-to-one intensity into new realization, or reaffirmation, of her being-unto-herself.

-Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*

All Else is Optional

Personal Essay

Krista Morrison

It's a lot of work: being a student, working, taking care of a home, grocery shopping, meal planning, ensuring the survival of my offspring, and finding time to take care of myself. When you add in another child, it gets more complicated. Almost daily, my three-year-old son will do something that could result in catastrophic injury. As a mom, it's my job to make sure he's safe – not to mention, cleaned, fed, and loved. A pre-teen daughter can be even more challenging. The spirit of that one is akin to a wild horse: untamed, unapproachable, and ornery. So, how do mothers do it? Sometimes, we are on our game, accomplishing all our tasks; other times, we only make it by the skin of our teeth.

I wasn't prepared for the journey into motherhood. I was truly excited to have a baby to cuddle – but too naïve to confuse my readiness with excitement. I had heard many, with a voice of authority, say being a mother was the most rewarding yet challenging job in the world. I just needed to dive in and I did – with blind confidence – unaware that it would soon become my sole identity. It's not like I had planned it that way; it just happened without me even noticing.

The day I became a mother was truly one of the happiest days of my life. I was young, only twenty-five, and lacked a lot of life experience – though I didn't think so at the time. I knew it wouldn't be easy, but, mistakenly, I thought I was ready. The first three years of being a mom were good. I was lucky enough to have a supportive family that was more than happy to help with childcare, allowing me to keep my forty-hour-a-week job. I came to appreciate the people I worked with, mainly because they gave me time for adult conversation that I was desperately craving for.

I felt like myself at work. Of course, I had responsibilities there, but they were different from

the ones I had at home. I had the perfect balance of family and career.

The scales tipped when my husband got a new job and we had to relocate. We were moving just over an hour away from it all: friends, family, and my job. The prospect of being a stay-at-home mom was exciting and what I had always wanted. I naively didn't see any negative consequences in this change – and didn't realize that it would construct a reality with very few opportunities to participate in the adult world as Kristina. With this shift, I was able to, and needed to, work a few days a week, but most of my time was spent with my daughter.

My husband's new job required long odd hours, so parental responsibilities fell on my shoulders. My long commute to work became too much and I cut my hours at work even more, becoming more immersed in my role as a mother. I became anything and everything for my daughter. Trying to raise a decent human being is not easy, and a parent is never off duty. The job of a mother is twenty-four hours a day, three-hundred and sixty-five days a year. Time-off requires advanced scheduling and arrangements that are sometimes so much work it hardly seems worth it.

All this time, I had no freedom. I was constantly tethered to a small human. Everywhere I went, she went. She was always the one of us that looked put-together in a perfectly-matched outfit with her hair done in braids or pigtails. My appearance was passable at best, usually with my unwashed hair in a bun, sporting the cleanest jeans I could find that morning. She even slept in bed with me because my husband worked graveyard shifts. That was all there was to be – and I didn't have time to even question it.

When my daughter started kindergarten, it hit me. I was presented with six child-free hours a day and found myself wondering what to do. What

was it that I liked to do again? I had no idea. That was the moment I realized just how much I had sacrificed. I had no hobbies, not much of a career, and felt as though I was now hanging out with a stranger. Without seeing it happen, I had gotten lost, and there were no maps to help me find my way back. At the time, it felt hopeless, scary, and left me depressed. Where would I even start when rediscovering myself? Were my interests the same as they had been five years prior?

“All this time, I had no freedom. I was constantly tethered to a small human.”

I spent some of my free time trying to get to know myself. Revisiting songs I used to like sparked some memories of my former self. Speaking with friends felt like asking for directions to my destination. I had to dig deep to figure out just who I was outside of the title of “mom.” I can tell you I didn't get all of it back, at least not at that time. I still had moments of doubt and felt like a lost soul years after I realized what had happened. While some of my interests and personality traits remained once I cleared the dust, there was a lot about me that had changed. Thinking about it now, this is easily the most difficult internal struggle I have faced. It was hard to know where to start and

what to do.

I still wasn't feeling completely like myself when I found out I was pregnant with my second child. As soon as my eyes had been opened to the situation I found myself in, I was determined not to let the past repeat. I made sure to do things I enjoyed at least a few times a week. My sister gave me her old jogging stroller, a sun-faded brown stroller with ripped-up padding on the handle that I taped to keep it from shredding off completely. My wardrobe of lycra pants, sports bras, and sweat-wicking tops slowly grew as I took to running with my little guy in tow. He would happily snack, juice in hand, buckled in the stroller while I listened to my favorite songs and ran my heart out. At night, when both kids were asleep, I would watch whatever show I was hooked on at the time and decompress. I also picked up listening to podcasts while washing dishes in my pajamas; Dateline had been a long-running favorite of mine. It wasn't until I was older that I heard the saying: "You can't pour from an empty cup." I was determined to keep that glass full – and willing to even settle for halfway.

This time I was older, wiser, and wouldn't let myself fall through the cracks again. The personal growth I've gained by becoming a mother has been invaluable, but that's not all that I am. It is so easy to be consumed by the most prevalent aspect of our lives and so hard to focus on ourselves when children often require the best of us. As a mother I felt pressured to do it all. I still feel that weight on my shoulders. The only person I was comfortable neglecting was myself, which is how I became so out of touch with who I was. That wasn't something I was prepared for. In the process of assuming a new role, I found myself in the vacuum of identity loss, denying myself the right to be my own person outside of motherhood. I now know that this crisis

could, in fact, be an opportunity to reexamine who one wants to be.

"The personal growth I've gained from being a mother has been invaluable, but that's not all that I am."



Light in the Dark
Kelly Bunch
Charcoal

PORT FOLIO



Aux Champignon
Olivia Biancone
Gouache

Olivia Biancone

My subject matter tends to reside within fragments of my everyday life when creating art. In these mundane spaces, we notice but often overlook the complexity of our experiences: home, friends, nature, or even social media. For instance, *The Watcher* is a small still-life that showcases objects around my home—pieces that represent who I am. Similarly, *Milo* is a portrait of the puppy my family recently adopted. I was so in awe of his personality and silliness that I just had to capture his essence. *She Lies Down* is a mixed media piece inspired by the wordly relationship between humans and nature.

Often, my work is also inspired by other works of art. Nature helps me feel the most spontaneous and truthful, so many of my paintings are done in plein air. *Sunflower Sunset* is one example of such a painting experience. I was part of a mural tour in West Reading. It had just stormed. The sun was setting very vibrantly. And I was able to incorporate natural light, color, and movement to capture the spirit of the landscape. *Ophelia* by John Everett Millais is a plein-air painting that inspired my piece, *Aux Champignon*. *Ophelia* is known for its impressive depiction of the river's flora, stressing the growth and decay that an ecosystem naturally experiences. Likewise, *Aux Champignon*, which translates to "Of Mushroom," portrays *Ophelia* after lying in the river for a considerable period of time, showing the tragedy of death and the beauty of new life. I view each piece as a part of something greater, capable of inspiring a viewer to pursue what they love.

Sunflower Sunset

Olivia Biancone

Gouache





The Watcher
Olivia Biancone
Acrylic



Milo
Olivia Biancone
Charcoal



She Lies Down
Olivia Biancone
Mixed Media

A Woman's Shape

Isis Cruz

It seems too easy to
Flaunt my breasts
and bat my eyes,
My body developed
Far before my mind,
My role-model,
a Prostitute that doesn't get paid,
But instead settles for Temporary Love.

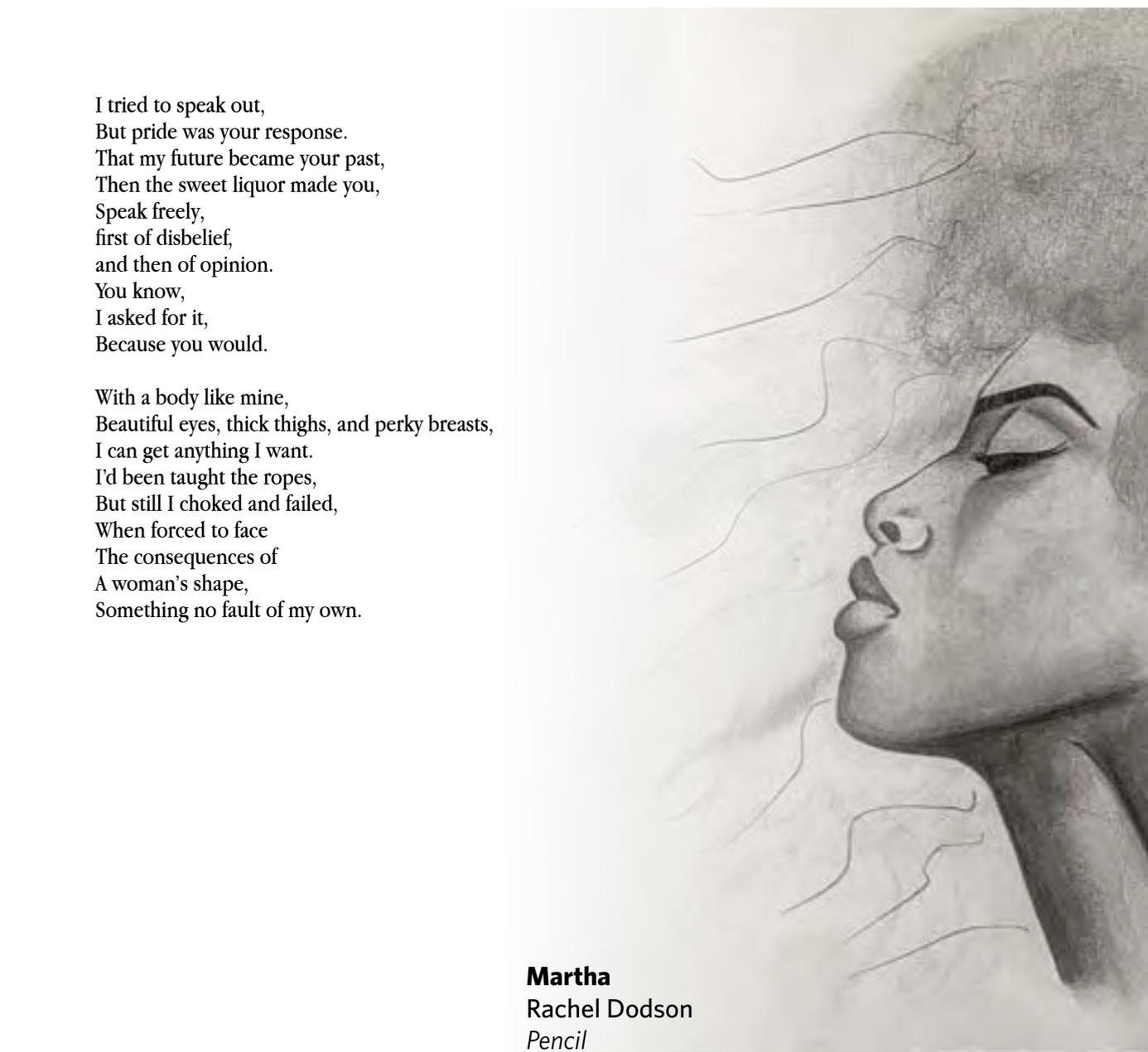
Your ideals:
Hard work gets you nowhere,
but a hard piece is key to everything.
Use what you got,
But play on your gifts and
You're asking for it

Taught that attention is
Power,
Then my time came to
Accept temporary love.
Begrudgingly, I struggled
To no avail.

For he saw my mother and thought
I was the same,
or maybe it's the difference
In my poise that caught his eye,
A challenge born from ease,
How am I this way?

I tried to speak out,
But pride was your response.
That my future became your past,
Then the sweet liquor made you,
Speak freely,
first of disbelief,
and then of opinion.
You know,
I asked for it,
Because you would.

With a body like mine,
Beautiful eyes, thick thighs, and perky breasts,
I can get anything I want.
I'd been taught the ropes,
But still I choked and failed,
When forced to face
The consequences of
A woman's shape,
Something no fault of my own.



Martha
Rachel Dodson
Pencil



Solitude
Joseph Fiorvanti
Photography

Willow and the Elm

Naomi Ermold

Fiction



The days danced on and, with a renewed strength, Willow began listening to the vibrations of their home. Her mother's song slowly returned.

Willow and the Elm *Fiction*

Naomi Ermold

The red light bounced off of each wall in her room. It danced and spun to soundless music at a dizzying pace. She sat on the edge of her bed, fixated on the seams of the intersecting walls in the corner of her room. The muffled voices in the other room were distracting, so she put on her headphones. They created a pressure on her head that she was hoping would block out any intrusive noise. Suddenly, a knock hit the door, which, if she hadn't had the headphones on, would have felt like an explosion – but she could not turn her head under the weight.

“Willow?” whispered Nadine’s quiet voice.

Nadine had been staying with them for the past year since she graduated from high school. She was her mom’s much younger half-sister and came to their home seeking safety from the recurring abuse in her life. Being an only child, Willow had welcomed Nadine with enthusiasm but, though only four years apart, found it difficult to connect with her.

Nadine had arrived battered and bruised, in body and soul, and instead of finding security in Willow, she had turned to her own sister, finding within her a kind of mother.

It took no time for Willow’s enthusiasm for Nadine’s arrival to dissolve into bitterness.

“Willow,” Nadine persisted. “Officer Owens is leaving now. Do you have any questions? He says he will be in contact with us again tomorrow.” Willow continued staring at the seam in the wall. The red light stopped spinning and slowly faded. True silence filled the room again. A new sensation of loneliness swept in.

The days and months had dredged on. The casserole dishes had long since ended and the neighbors stopped making eye contact. The small house grew large with emptiness. Their inability to connect left Nadine and Willow separately and

“Don’t be afraid. I’ve watched you grow all of these years, and I could not stand by any longer just watching your pain.”

silently in their rooms. It amazed Willow just how lonely a person could be though surrounded by others.

A forest lay behind their house. Willow hadn’t been in it in years. She and her mother used to adventure there when she was young – but, as her interests had changed, it had no longer been a space for them to explore. Today the forest seemed to be calling to her. Willow ensured she was not noticed and escaped out the back door.

She crossed the property line into the woods, and it was as though she had crossed the barrier of the moon, emerging into a new realm with no gravity. The weight lifted from her chest and the built-up watershed of tears behind her eyes burst through. She stumbled to the ground and heaved uncontrollably. When the violent convulsing ended, she finally lay in the true silence her soul had

longed for – sprawled on her back looking up at the trees. They looked like tall pillars with gentle canopies, creating an unexpected but much needed shelter.

“Do you feel better now?” A deep and gentle voice suddenly spoke into the breeze. Willow screamed and scrambled to her feet.

“Who is there?” muttered Willow. She spun trying to find the one who had interrupted her peace.

“I’m sorry. It is me,” said the voice again. The wind blew, leaves rustled, illuminating in front of her a tall, strong elm tree. “Don’t be afraid. I’ve watched you grow all of these years, and I could not stand by any longer just watching your pain.”

Willow stood still, stunned. Had she let herself go more than she realized? She ran. It took all she had not to turn around as she sped back into the kitchen, slamming the door behind her.

“Where were you?” said Nadine. Startled, Willow couldn’t help but scream a little at the sight of her. “What’s going on, Willow? Are you okay?” Ignoring Nadine, she ran straight to her room. Nadine knocked gently on the door. “Willow. Please let me in. I want to help. This is so hard. I’m struggling, too.” Silence. “I’m here, Willow. I’m trying.” Willow listened quietly as Nadine’s soft footsteps disappeared down the hall.

The next morning, Willow was waiting for the sun to rise. Due to her distracted mind, she had slept poorly. As soon as the first bits of light danced through her window, she headed for the door. Nervously, she walked across her yard to the property line. She took a deep breath and stepped over the gravity barrier. The sunlight was dazzling on the leaves this morning. The dew looked like little gems everywhere in the soft light. The lump in her throat grew and again she began to cry.

“There, there,” whispered the same deep and gentle voice. “You are not alone.”

“I don’t understand,” cried Willow. “Who are you? A tree? How are you talking to me?”

“Oh, we all talk. You just have to listen,” said Elm. The voice was melodious and, though this was certainly a strange circumstance, Willow felt safer than she had in a long time.

“We all?” Willow finally managed to ask. She looked around confused and unnerved.

“All of creation. We all have our ways of communicating; just not everyone is looking or listening.” Elm waited a bit before continuing. “You and your mother used to play beneath my leaves. I was more majestic then; time has weathered me. I have missed your imagination since you stopped coming. Your mother used to sing. Do you remember?”

“I do.” She admitted, tears rolling down her eyes.

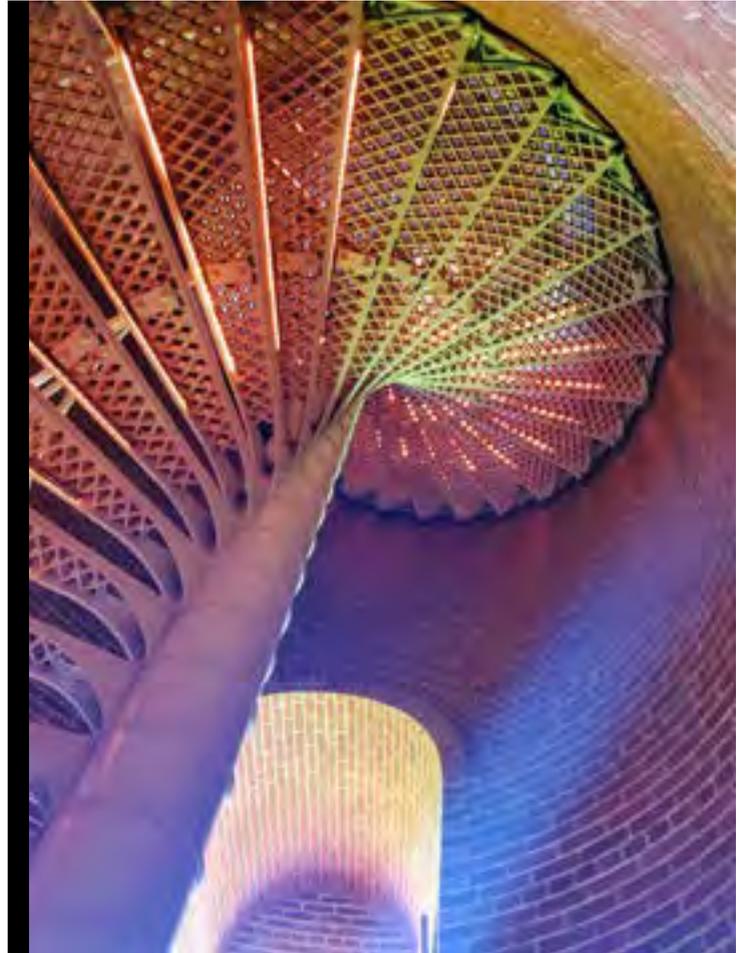
“Her song never left our grove. Her essence seeped into our chemistry, and we now sway to her vibrations. Can you feel her?” asked Elm. To Willow’s surprise, she really could feel her. Willow’s inner voice ceased her questioning and fell silent.

“Would you like to sing with us?” invited Elm. For the next two hours, Willow lay on a bed of moss under the Elm losing herself in the song of the trees.

The days danced on and, with a renewed strength, Willow began listening to the vibrations of their home. Her mother’s song slowly returned. Willow started to realize she had turned it off the night her mother died. It was hard to allow herself to listen, but she began fighting through the pain – the loss.

Weeks went by and Willow spent every day lying beneath the Elm where she was not alone, and every night Nadine would try to talk to Willow and then, dejected, walk away, alone.

“Have you heard your mother’s song



Color Maze of Life
Jennifer Jewell Kramer
Photography

elsewhere, yet?" asked Elm one afternoon.

"What do you mean?" replied Willow. She was caught off guard when Elm split through the music.

"She sings everywhere, Willow. Surely you have heard her," said Elm. "Yes. I heard her. Why?" said Willow, defensively.

"It's time, Willow. You are not alone. This healing is not for you alone. You must share your healing; you must share your vibrations with others." Elm's voice, always calm, danced through the air. "Others need healing, too."

"I'm not ready. I'm not healed. I'm not better," countered Willow.

"It's the broken that makes space for healing, Willow," concluded Elm. The gentle tree returned to the music leaving her with her thoughts.

The next morning Willow awoke before the sun. Due to her distracted mind, she had slept poorly. Willow's bitterness towards Nadine billowed within her, its roots digging deep. Nadine had taken her mother once and now Elm wanted to invite her into her mother's song? Willow wrestled, and as the sun rose, the roots slowly began to loosen. Silence fell again as she finally released the growing pain of bitterness.

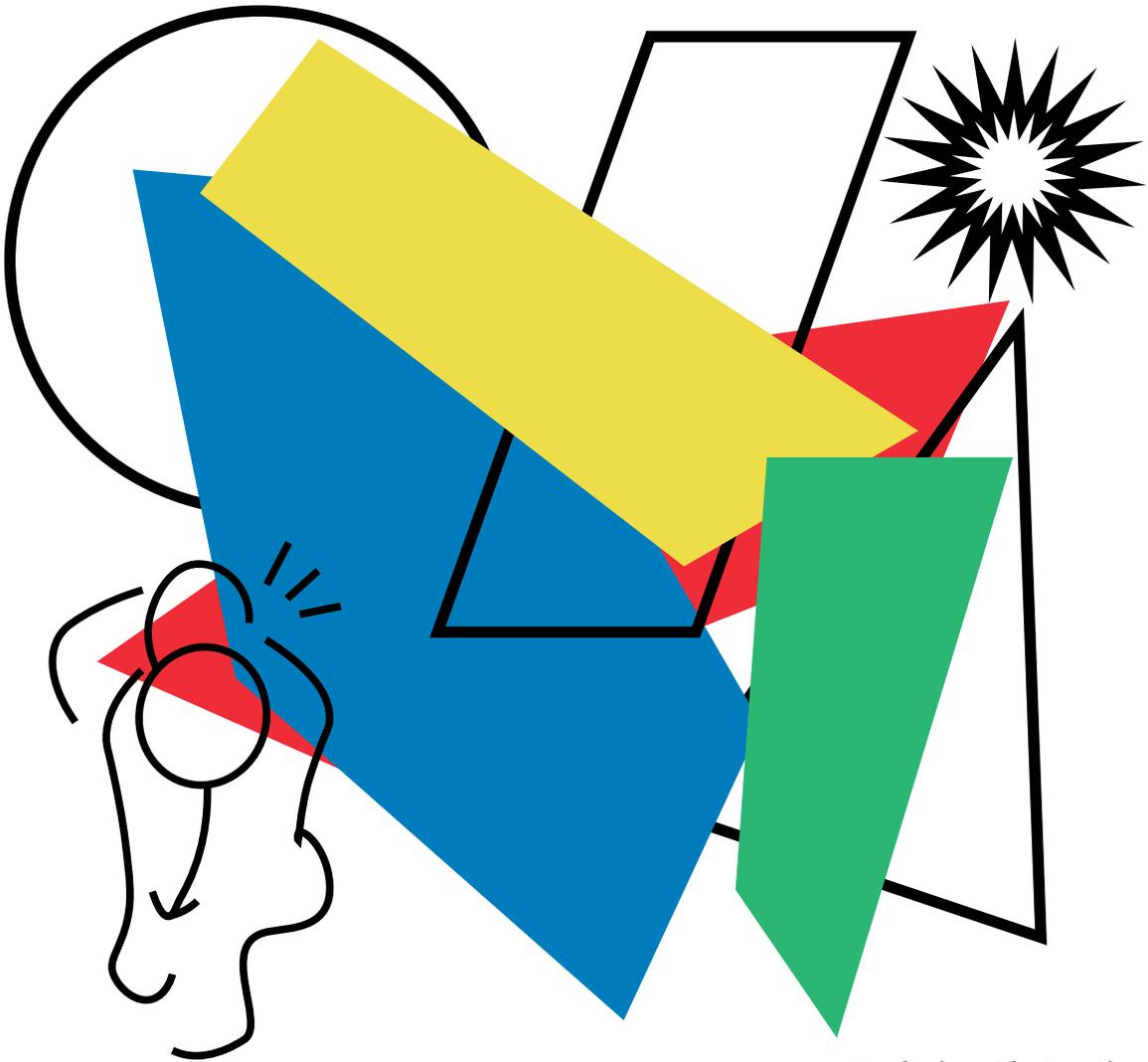
She gently walked down the hall to Nadine's door. She knocked.

"Nadine?" Willow whispered. Silence. "Nadine, I'm going to the woods. Please come."

The beads of dew dazzled in the grove again. The cool moss smooshed beneath her toes as she made her way to Elm. The music played softly, and Willow laid her head against Elm's trunk. The music began to shift, and Willow opened her eyes to see Nadine coming towards her. Nadine took a seat beside her. Willow realized the music now had other melodies and the trees had begun to vibrate differently. She rested her head back again and reached over to Nadine's hand. A tear ran down

Nadine's face. Not alone at last, they sat together beneath the trees, listening to the symphonies of their souls.

"It's the broken that makes space for healing, Willow," concluded Elm."



Exploring Abstraction
Dylan Sokolovich
Digital

Rhymes for Tots: Happy Planting

Sarah Belles

The scene was strange to say the least. They had no meat to feed the beast. No cuts to please or joints to spare, for they'd run low on every fare.

The fields were dry, the wheat had split, and they did starve for lack of it. That's why they had called out the thing: a desperate means for prospering.

In times past, the legend goes: the townsfolk solved their weary woes, by conjuring an ancient beast that gave them means by which to feast. It cured the land; it made things grow; it made them well from head to toe. A good idea, a grand affair, to save them all from their despair.

One night they gathered from their homes, to read aloud from dusty tomes, the words that might renew the land with help from gracious beastly hand. And they all watched with mouths agape to see what form the thing would take.

A thick black haze rose from the field, swirling round till it revealed the image of that ghastly thing, the product of their summoning. It stood twelve feet from horn to hoof, a cross between man, stag and wolf, with sharp teeth jutting from its jaws, a set of curved nails on its paws. It yawned and opened two red eyes, then stretched its wings across the sky.

They did not know, or had forgotten, that once it showed up on the spot, it would demand from them a price, a bit of flesh to sacrifice. They offered legs and arms to give, if only it would let them live. The beast refused and gave excuse: "If taken, what would be the use? You've yet to till and sow the crop. Who'd work among a crippled lot?"

The townsfolk talked among themselves. They offered the old and the unwell. The beast refused this much as well and gave them one last chance to quell a hunger that came straight from hell. The price to pay, they saw, was steep, and they gave what they had thought to keep.

The sound woke neighbors far and near, as in the distance they could hear fathers let out chilling cries while mothers kissed their kids goodbye.

Moral: If you're going to use the dark arts, make sure you have snacks on hand.

Midnight Drain

Kevin Ciresa

Driving into the
midnight fray,
my heartbeat
pulses into
summer nights
forever
Grey.

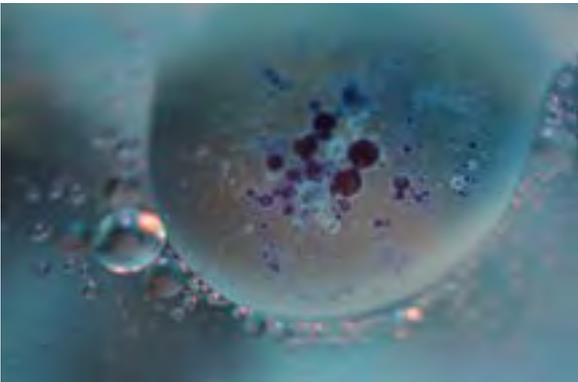
Down with no gain,
I see myself now,
and uncovered who I once was.
As I transcend beyond
the grave.
Falling in forever,
down the midnight drain.



Vortex

Jennifer Jewell Kramer

Photography



Oil
Kylee Moyer
Photography



Profile
Nicholas Fulwood
Ink



Shagofah
Halema Bobby
Ink

Not to Worry, Dear
Mallory Staub

Clouds once stitched together
part at the seam
their edges frayed with light
as shadows fall around them
an illusion of brokenness,
of something to be fixed,
but warmth pours through that growing,
gaping hole
a sky, soft blue and serene
beyond ice crystals,
torn apart,
and sent with the autumn wind.



P
O
F
O
L
L
I
O

Sebastian Barreto

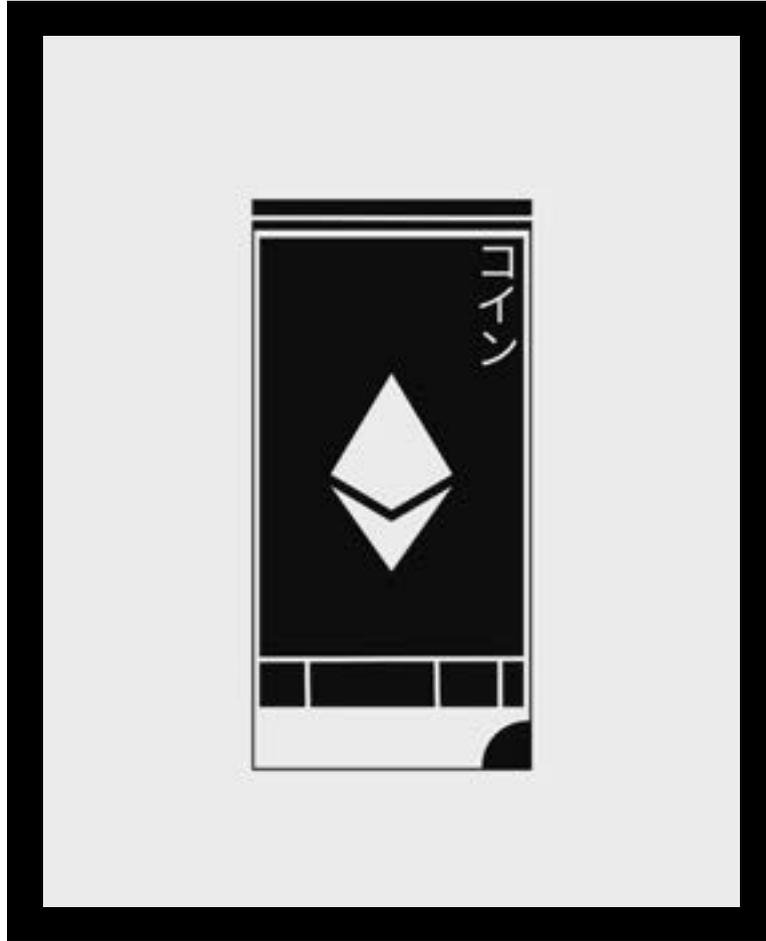
Technology, Art, and Visual Culture

The central idea of my portfolio revolves around one question: can technology and art coexist? “Technology, Art, and Visual Culture” attempts to showcase the interaction between fine art and technology and the participant’s reaction to it. The concepts of power and status (specifically the economic value assigned to art) affect how we share knowledge. I wanted to explore how such consumerism works and ingrained itself in our communities, especially how we react to art in the new digital space and the personal attachment associated with it.

To reach an audience familiar with such concepts, I decided to share my art on *Instagram*, a social media platform intended to share visual imagery. My *Instagram* feed quickly caught the public’s attention, prompting a discussion on the morality of technology and its impact on temporary society. For instance, the peach emoji developed an unrelated, sexual meaning through technological interactions. Similarly, the Japanese characters, which usually correlate to the name of the image, were used to criticize how we view language in Western society. For most, dialect often becomes meaningless symbols when a speech barrier occurs. Unfortunately, my *Instagram* was banned as the algorithm thought I was an automated bot. This ending feels somewhat symbolic, demonstrating technology’s influence on whose work is allowed to be shared.









Picked a Smile

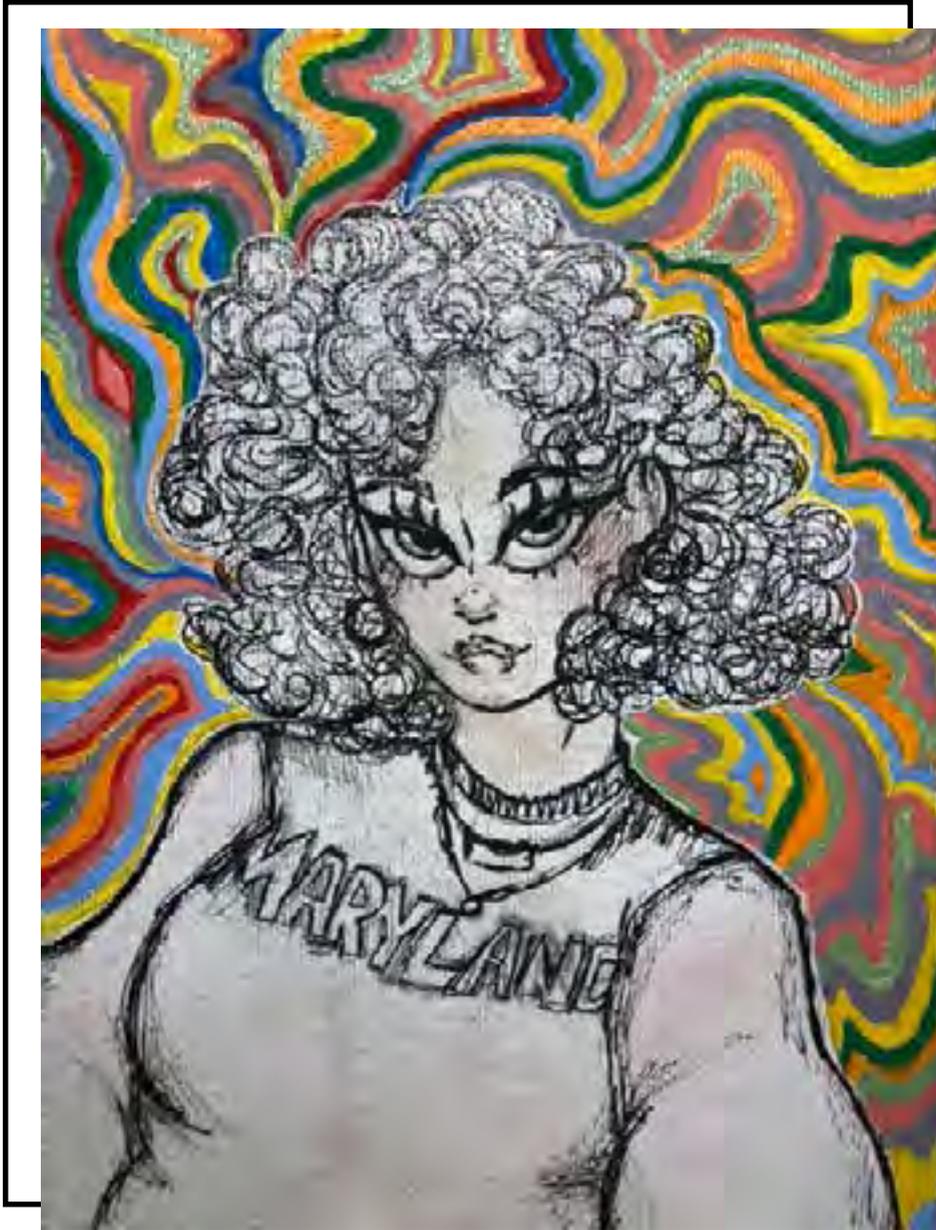
Kristina Hartz

I picked you a smile
growing by the riverbed
where it slept peacefully.

It didn't mind
I took it with me.
It just grinned,
bowed in the wind
in my bicycle basket.

I picked you a smile,
in a Mason jar.
It drank water that
covered the riverbed.

I picked you a smile
and hope
when you see it,
you will grow a smile
too.



Psychedelic
Ysabel Feliciano
Ink & Acrylic

The Whales Grew Feet

Kristina Hartz

The whales grew feet
out the bottom
of their fins,
like flowers budding in spring.

I watched pale, leathery flesh
sprout like daisies,
pushing through till toes
appeared upon malformed
wobbly feet,
solidifying each moment.

I watched them grow,
head hanging over edge
of my boat in summer,
sun behind horizon.

The whales grew feet,
spinning upside down
like unashamed ballerinas
oblivious to my audience of one.

They blew air like they were laughing -
laughing - laughing.

The whales grew feet,
but had nowhere to walk to.

A Constant Craving

Elena Moyer

Fiction



I feel the longing for you weaken as the cigarette burns,
yet when I smash the ember into the ashtray it's like I
haven't smoked anything at all.

A Constant Craving
Fiction

Elena Moyer

My body aches for a cigarette and my veins scream with need: “Do something! Anything to ease this ache!”
But what I really ache for is you.

I brush the thought aside and convince myself it’s only the nicotine I want instead of the memory of your touch, your voice, or even just the sight of you.

I feel the longing for you weaken as the cigarette burns, yet when I smash the ember into the ashtray it’s like I haven’t smoked anything at all.

I want another one already. Why do I still feel so empty? Do I want to smoke a joint? Take a shot? Or do I want to call you and tell you to come over so we can talk? I know we’ll only speak for five minutes and reserve the rest of the time for silent stares that scream what should be stated but is never said.

Or maybe we’ll fill the air with cruel conversations and false promises we don’t really mean. You’ll drive away in a rush, turning your music up before you even turn your headlights on, anger coursing through your body.

And by the time you reach the edge of your driveway, you will have already received a message from my name and number reading: “I’m sorry . . .”

I won’t realize it until the next day but you too are sorry, even though you were too stubborn to tell me that night.

I sit outside on my porch, replaying the past times I’ve given in and actually called you. My legs are extended, resting on the wooden chair my father recently remodeled. The night air is cool but welcoming – perhaps a good sign. I reach for my phone but before my fingers can grab the device, I let out a breath of frustration.

“No, you know you don’t actually want to call. You know you don’t want to put yourself through this again.”

"I watch as the gentle wind pushes the smaller branches around and around again."

I sit back on the hardwood and look out towards the stars. They are exceptionally bright tonight, not a cloud in the sky to block their beauty. I listen for the rippling sounds of the water that rushes down the small creek of my front yard. It begins to calm my racing mind. Well, it sometimes does.

"Don't call."

"Don't do it."

"Don't give in."

I remain in a relaxed position, yet I am anything but.

"Oh, fuck it." I reach for my phone again. Only this time I snag it without hesitation, barking out insults that attack my own mind.

Another glance towards the stars, another deep breath, all while my finger hovers over the call button.

"Do it. You know you're going to anyway. When have you ever really said no?"

"Don't do it. You know you'll only feel guilty later."

"Do it. Why defy yourself some happiness?"

As if to shut my own thoughts up, I press the call button. The sound of the ringer goes on and on

until a voice breaks the annoying dial.

"Hey this is—" I hang up instantly, recognizing the voicemail.

"Good, at least now you don't have to deal with the guilt." I convince myself that the unanswered call is a blessing.

I light another cancer stick, trying to appease my starving mind. I place my phone in a spot where I'll still receive service, because anywhere else is a complete dead zone except for a few hidden hotspots around the property.

With every inhale of my cigarette my craving seems to decrease. I find comfort in the outline of the dark trees that surround my house. I watch as the gentle wind pushes the smaller branches around and around again.

"Kinda like my mind right now." I laugh at my own thoughts, realizing this situation is ridiculous.

"What are you doing to yourself? This isn't healthy."

Like any other craving, a message pops up on my phone tempting me to give in: "Sorry," it reads, "didn't have my phone around me. What's up?"

"I think you should come over, so we can talk."

I eagerly wait for a response, thinking about the last time we met face to face.

"I'm leaving for Australia in literally two weeks. We can't start anything now. Who knows if I even come back when I'm scheduled to."

"Are you serious? Aren't you the one who said you missed me and wished I was in your bed and not someone else's?" I feel myself smile, not because I'm happy but because I knew this would happen. Why didn't I listen?

"And I still mean that, but right now we just can't."

I scroll through our old messages, landing on one that accompanies a photo you sent from the plane that took you miles away from me: "Maybe

right now we can't be together, but that doesn't mean we aren't meant to be in the end." You didn't want me to wait, but you didn't want me to give up hope, either.

"It's late, dear. Maybe tomorrow." My screen flashes, blinding my eyes, which have been adjusted to the darkness for quite some time now.

I don't even bother to answer. Instead, I beat myself up wondering why I make myself wait around for something that might never happen.

"I should stick to my cigarettes."

But the burning desire to keep waiting hits me in the gut, reminding me of why I do it.

"You enjoy the constant ache and, when it's finally fulfilled, you love it – but it soon leaves you with an uncomfortable tension in your mind that will slowly erode your sense of worth. And you seek to reduce that tension. Yet again, you soon work yourself into a loop of consistently finding excuses – even though you are fully aware that it only leads you to become more invested and entrenched in the chase. Well, it could be worth it after all. You're not in a place right now for anything serious, either."

The stars stare at me, daring me to do the right thing, but I refuse them like so many nights before.

Maybe one day I'll fully satisfy my craving, but until the happy ending or tragic disaster, I'll enjoy the constant round and round again, maybe until it fully takes over me.

"The stars stare at me, daring me to do the right thing, but I refuse them like so many nights before."



Can You Hear Them, Too?
Joseph Fioravanti
Photography

Lights Out
Dylan Sokolovich

Disembarking through the narrow hall,
The starburst of light glowing attracts me
I ignore portraits of mistresses, their ruffled dresses
And full-bosoms pay me no mind.

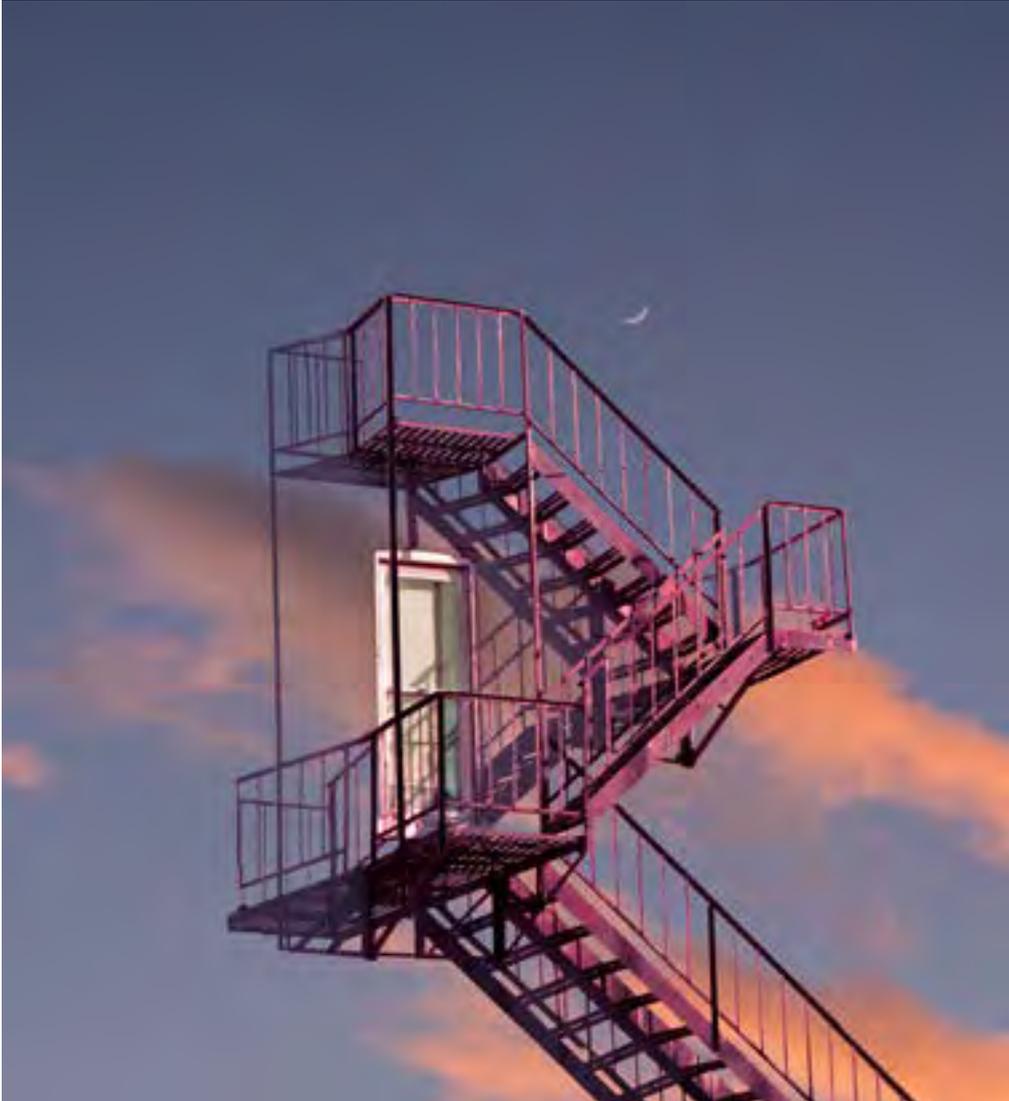
By the effeminate light, I traverse
In great high heels, I stumble and fall
Over barbie dolls and lipstick
Nails painted pink, the stench of a flowerbed radiating behind.

The heavy thumping of my heart hastens
What would my father think?
Would he judge my technique?
Or would he smash the light, dispersing shards of myself, never to be embraced?

That no longer matters
In this queer room, never to love who I love
Here, where I first discovered men in the dark
As I flip the light goodbye.



I See ...
Shianne Ayala-Lind
Photography



To The Sky
Jennifer Carpinteyo
Digital

Overstimulated
Nicholas Fulwood

Human bodies press in
on my sanity, crowding my
thoughts.
My shirt is too
small, stained, and smelly,
but my pants keep slipping
down.
The music screeches and
skitters across my
chalkboard.
Dry skin, bruised knee,
sore back and
a runny nose.

Then,
silence
blanketed over my
jittering nerves,
as the pillow
cracks through my skull
and my thoughts fall,
like birds against windows.



My Pointe Shoes
McKenna Barker
Pastel

Pretty Girl

Shianne Ayala-Lind

Fiction



Stuck in motion - in my thoughts, because I still didn't understand. 'Why shouldn't I want to be a pretty girl?'

Pretty Girl
Fiction

Shianne Ayala-Lind

“Daddy, I want to be a pretty girl.”
I let the sentence I’d practiced all day dance from my tongue across the restaurant’s teal marble table. Somehow, this cool-colored theme (*that continues to easily remind me of candy-striper designs*) would always dress our usual Saturday lunches in warmth. Saturday was Daddy’s day off. He worked seven to seven six days a week, tossin’ sand and stackin’ cinder blocks. Earnin’ strong arms, a bad back, and a good pay twice a month. It was clear to me that our two hours of eatin’ in that booth once a week had always been his favorite piece of serenity.

He loved it even more when Mama used to join us. I could already barely remember her face at the time – two years after she’d kicked the bucket. But I don’t think my Daddy could ever forget her. I know the real reason we sat at that cool-themed table by the window was because it was her favorite place in the world to enjoy a meal - aside from home, that is.

For him, her warmth lived there in that booth.

But, on that particular day, I stole the elevated temperature – droppin’ the whole room to sweater worthy as I let my line crawl up into his ears.

He raised his eyes from his coffee and looked at me as if my head was spinnin’ round on an axle. A sigh of breath painted in Hades ice escaped his mouth. You see, Daddy was never much one for talkin’. He’d express his emotions generally with one or two words, and maybe even the occasional upturned facial feature – but was never much for real conversation.

He always said, “A good man ain’t need no words to prove heart. And a good woman is born with a smile.”

That’s what I grew up hearin’, anyway.

So, I was always the talkative one of us. And I’d

say many strange things, ask a million questions, sing, whisper, and scream. In fact, he'd even caught me cussin' and ran my mouth with borax and hot water (*But it wasn't for long, and I got juice afterwards*).

My point being that he wasn't even really angry then, because Daddy would never get angry. He'd scowl, maybe get mad, or step away to cool off when I'd done som'n bad, but he never got angry at me.

Except . . . when I told him what I'd rehearsed all that day. I wanted Daddy to know I had chosen my goal in life, even though I was only seven then.

He sucked his teeth and pulled his coffee cup between both palms, shifting it back and forth and twitching his cheek stubble.

I was deeply confused by his stern silence. "Daddy, did you hear what I'd said?"

He grumbled: "I heard you, baby cakes. And that is 'bout the most ridiculous thing you've ever said. Ain't never heard nun' so silly. Now hush up 'bout that. You don' know what you want." His face wrinkled into a frown that reminded me much of our squealin' pigs. He cracked his big furry knuckles and began to lay my silverware carefully before handing me the cloth napkin I was raised to place on my lap at the table.

He squinted fiercely at me for a long moment and then returned to his usual composure. That was all the discourse he allowed. To anyone else, it'd seem to be barely irritation. But I know my Daddy, and that was pretty mad. Pretty . . . angry.

Nonetheless, I wasn't finished. I had a goal and I craved his approval.

"It's not silly, Daddy. I see pretty girls every day. I get to see the things they have. And I want those things more than my things."

He raised an eyebrow, an invitation to make my case.

"I see Ms. Lisa walkin' to school. Oh, Ms. Lisa's so pretty, Daddy. She wears the nicest dresses and has lots of nice friends that give her lots of money. They pick her up in cars or stay over at her house because they like her that much." He listened. "I ain't got no friends that like to come to our house."

He shook his head. "That ain't what it look like, baby doll."

I'd always been a baby in some way to Daddy. All of my nicknames came paired with the reminder of my youth compared to him. But I loved the comfort, even when it was all he could say while sipping his burning bitter coffee through his thick mustache.

Okay, maybe there was som'n about Ms. Lisa that I didn't know. But it made no difference to me. I wanted to convince him. So, I thought through all the examples and tried again.

"Well, I see Mrs. Crimsith, I see her every week in the library for the class reading hour. She has a nice big ring and a nice red car, and she says she's so lucky that her Mister comes home once a month to say 'hello.'"

He choked on a sip and exasperated a chuckle of air, a reaction I didn't understand. "Sarcasm ain't what it sounds like, baby doll," he told me.

I didn't know what sarcasm was, but I still wanted to convince him.

"Okay then, there's Patty Lynn, the quiet girl two grades ahead'a me. She has the nicest skirts and the grandest shoes. She says her daddy loves her very, very much. They tell each other secrets and he gives her nice things. I want to be pretty and get nice things, too."

He lowered his head, rested his mouth on folded hands, elbows propped on the table, gettin' more sad than mad. He then straightened his bulky frame, reminding me how very big he was and how very not, I was. "That's not real. It seems like it, but

a lot ain't what it seems like, baby doll."

I just didn't understand. "But Daddy, they're all pretty girls. They get pretty things, and everyone loves them, so they're happy. I want to be like that. I want to be a pretty girl, too."

He seemed confused by my shift. "Why? Ain't you happy, baby doll?"

I was somewhat confused, too. I liked me, but I wanted more than myself.

"Not sometimes. I got plain clothes and messy hair. I ain't proper or have a nice smile. How do plain girls get nice friends, lots of money, red cars, and Misters? Only pretty girls get pretty things. Right, Daddy?"

Posing all the heart he could collect, my Daddy reached across the table gently. With his big calloused fingers, he brushed the curls from my small face and formed a light smile on his plump underused lips.

"Pretty girls don't exist, baby doll." He patted the top of my head. "Real women do. And that's what you're gonna be. You'll see."

He smiled and nodded, a sign that he was done with our discussion. It was clear that I wasn't to convince him that day as he called the waitress over to put in our order.

I kept sittin' there, starin' at him across the table while fiddlin' with the cloth napkin, still positioned on my lap under the candy-striped tablecloth. The environment's warmth had begun to refill the space, yet remained at a stalemate above my head.

Stuck in motion - in my thoughts, because I still didn't understand.

"Why shouldn't I want to be a pretty girl?"

*"Pretty girls don't exist, baby doll."
He patted the top of my head. "Real women do. And that's what you're gonna be. You'll see."*



Inside Out
Christopher Barrera
Mixed Media

Home
Mallory Staub

Empty chest
hollow but a heavy heart
pumps out hot tears
streaming sideways
onto mother's lap
she strokes hair
that I've tried to wash clean
of this sadness
but it begs for more soap
after only a day
of moving through this muddy place
I'm supposed to call home.

Spirit
Michael George
Digital



Alleycats

Dylan Sokolovich

Didn't you know
that cats live on the corner of
Gordon and Blair?
American Cats,
 Irish,
 English,
 Swiss German,
 Ashkenazi Jew,
 Bohemian and Polish.

They are apt to materialize
on this crook,
the lowest grades of
Feline Society.
Discredited, Despised, Dependent Tramps:
Angular Cats,
 Fat Cats,
 Black Cats,
 White Cats,
 Filthy Cats,
 Very Filthy Cats.

They gather
as Grandma bellows
down the alley,
vessels of food in hand.

If they fail to be lucky
a greedy Tom or Tabby
will come to take it away.

Sustainable Consumption: Mainstream Environmentalism Commodified by Exxon Mobile

Annadore Himmelberger
Researched Essay



The pillage and indifference that characterize America's treatment of its natural resources have caused incalculable, perhaps irreparable damage not only to our land, water, and air, but also to the health and stability of human society. . . . There is in fact no distinction between the fate of [nature] and the fate of the people. When one is abused, the other suffers.
-Wendell Berry, an American essayist, poet, and farmer

Sustainable Consumption *Researched Essay*

Annadore
Himmelberger

I cannot think of anything more heartbreaking than the impending destruction of life on Earth. Four billion years of cosmic expertise aligning the planet into complete harmony, *wasted*. The majesty of human innovation and cultural development, *gone* with plenty warning.

To say that nature is retaliating feels like some new age philosophical bullshit to me. It is well known that modern humans are responsible for the deterioration of our environment. Take, for instance, the 1968 American Petroleum Institution's (API) report on climate change that prophesied the effects the fossil fuel industry has on the ecosystem.¹ The API fully understood the consequences, yet did everything in their power to discredit environmental concern and further develop the oil and gas empire. Then come fossil fuel corporations such as ExxonMobil that have absolved themselves from sustainable action by shifting responsibility to the consumer with the use of greenwashing, in turn, reiterating the culture of consumerism and commodifying the efforts of the mainstream environmentalist movement. The degree of action required to save our planet from the largest mass extinction is impossible within the framework of such capitalist ideology. What we need is a complete economic reconfiguration in order to implement real strategies for preservation.

To first understand how greenwashing is implemented by the fossil fuel industry today, let's examine how denialism has been used over the last few decades. As mentioned above, in 1968, the API projected that the atmospheric CO₂ produced by oil and gas industries would reach a concentration of 370 ppm by the year 2000.² Knowing this would cause catastrophic environmental damage on a global scale, oil companies, most notably ExxonMobil, have poured millions into protecting

1 "Time to Wake Up: Friends of the Court," Sheldon Whitehouse, March 5, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.senate.gov/news/speeches/time-to-wake-up-friends-of-the-court>.

2 "Time to Wake Up."

their public image and assets. Over one hundred organizations have been found to receive money from ExxonMobil in exchange for corrupted science and public studies that report climate change to be scam and environmentalists to be frauds.³ ExxonMobil has made tremendous effort to foster public trust by privately sponsoring well known lobbying groups such as Tech Central Station and The Alliance for Climate Strategies that cite scientists from varying fields of study across the globe. Among the numerous logical fallacies used in the company's propaganda is the argument that climate change has happened naturally in the past, so it must not be attributed to humans today – and that the presence of CO₂ in the atmosphere causes plant life to thrive, in turn cleaning the atmosphere.⁴ When thousands of “experts” sign in agreement with these studies, they are fabricating a reputation of credibility – and the vast amount of propaganda published by these organizations is entrancing America in the narrative that climate change is a hoax.

Following the Paris Agreement of 2016, the company's denialism had lost its grip on the American public. Climate change had entered the mainstream forcing previous strategies to evolve into greenwashing under the same agenda of

preserving public image and assets. Greenwashing is defined as “the process of conveying a false impression or providing misleading information about how a company's products are more environmentally sound.”⁵ The company's recent biofuel campaign is one of the most misleading examples of greenwashing to date. ExxonMobil claims they are “turning agricultural leftovers into low-emission biofuel. That is, “[they are] taking plant parts like inedible cornstalks and fueling our cars, trucks, boats and planes.”⁶ The majority of Americans have received this message through the 56-million-dollar investment in advertising, 9.6 million of which has been spent on Facebook alone.⁷ The brightly colored photos of smiling scientists surrounded by green slime and blue skies look like scenes from a futuristic utopia. Optimistic language about a cleaner future, including sustainability buzzwords, creates the illusion of advancement, subsequently exploiting the ethos of science.

The purpose of these advertisements is to convince the public that ExxonMobil is not the enemy. The reality is that they are the leading producer of toxic emissions and have never been on the right side of climate change. ExxonMobil claims they are reaching their goal of producing

³ “Organizations in Exxon Secrets Database,” Exxon Secrets, Accessed April 30, 2020, <https://exxonsecrets.org/html/listorganizations.php>

⁴ John Cook et al. “Exxon Has Mised Americans on Climate Change for Decades. Here's How to Fight Back,” The Guardian, Accessed April 30, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/exxon/commentisfree/2019/oct/23/exxon-climate-change-fossil-fuels-disinformation>

⁵ Kenton, Will. “Greenwashing,” January 30, 2020, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/greenwashing.asp>

⁶ “Advanced Biofuels,” ExxonMobil, Accessed May 1, 2020, https://corporate.exxonmobil.com/News/Newsroom/News-releases/2019/0123_ExxonMobil-and-Renewable-Energy-Group-Partner-w-Clariant-Advance-Cellulosic-Biofuel-Research

⁷ “Big Oil's Real Agenda on Climate Change,” InfluenceMap, March 2019, <https://influencemap.org/report/How-Big-Oil-Continues-to-Oppose-the-Paris-Agreement-38212275958aa21196dae3b76220bddc>

“97% of climate scientists agree we have until 2030 to cut carbon emissions by 45% to have a chance at preserving the ecosystem.”

ten-thousand barrels of biofuel a day by 2025. When put into perspective, ten-thousand barrels would equate to only 0.2 percent of their current capacity. What the company fails to disclose about their future projects is an expansion of oil and gas drilling in New Mexico and Texas. The anticipated one million barrels of oil a day by the year 2024 would be five times greater than what is produced by ExxonMobil today.⁸ Keep in mind, 97% of climate scientists agree we have until 2030 to cut carbon emissions by 45% to have a chance at preserving the ecosystem.⁹

ExxonMobil masterfully ties its environmental propaganda into other social issues such as improving the standard of living and reducing food waste to present themselves and their technology as the almighty solution to some of the earth's enduring problems.¹⁰ The irony is that most of the earth's social issues are a result of corporate greed and capitalist ideology. Recognizing the public's mistrust in large corporations, the company has sought to rebrand itself with total transparency. The 250 million dollars invested in biofuel research, as well as their production partners, are clearly laid out on their website for all to see. Additionally, ExxonMobil has started an education initiative to inform the public of how biofuel is grown and harvested to further diminish any mistrust among the public. The School of ExxonMobil campaign on *YouTube* uses children to both explain the science behind biofuel and interview some of the company's top executives.¹¹ These videos are working on multiple levels to align the brand with honesty, compassion, and innocence, all characteristics synonymous with children. Both the science of biofuel and the personnel are inflected with the child's honesty and innocence, bringing them down to a level everyone can comprehend, subsequently, casting away the veil of corruption. The executives are humanized as compassionate beings for preserving the planet for future generations such as the children interviewing them.

ExxonMobil responds to the public's distrust in technological solutions by utilizing the whimsical perspective of the child to encapsulate biofuel with the divine expertise already working in

⁸ “Big Oil's Real Agenda on Climate Change,” InfluenceMap, March 2019

⁹ “Time to Wake Up: Friends of the Court,” Sheldon Whitehouse, March 5, 2019.

¹⁰ “Advanced Biofuels,” ExxonMobil, Accessed May 1, 2020.

¹¹ ExxonMobil, “School of ExxonMobil: Auto Efficiency | ExxonMobil,” *YouTube*. August 13, 2019, Video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6SQpGzaX-ow&feature=emb_rel_pause

the natural world. The goal is to create an image of biofuel technology as magical and wholesome, the complete opposite of the industrialized and rigid technology associated with oil and gas: the pools of bright green algae that seem to work with nature rather than towering oil extraction machinery that appears to control nature. For ExxonMobil to master biofuel would be to harness that divine knowledge and return to nature – a regression from the industrialized and technological world. The company is, in fact, not only exploiting the ethos of science but also the ethos of nature by attempting to glorify their biofuel technology as a divine extension of the natural world with the capacity to fix the earth’s problems when they are in truth a conniving company that can only function within the framework of capitalism.

The leading misconception within environmental discourse today is that progress is underway. ExxonMobil’s strategic campaigns have created the illusion that they are an ultimate example of an honest and progressive company with a set of core values that stretches well beyond the corporate shell. By appearing to have done their part, they aim to shift the weight of accountability to the consumer. All people have participated in the deterioration of the environment and therefore share the responsibility of living more sustainably, yet the fault is not evenly distributed when accounting for emissions. It is estimated that just 20 corporations are responsible for 35 percent of all human-caused carbon dioxide and methane emissions.¹² The responsibility the public faces is to choose which overtly harmful corporation to give

their money in exchange for toxic products. ExxonMobil’s technological developments are nowhere close to producing biofuel in a meaningful way, and there is currently no low-emission product on the market available to consumers.¹³ Still, biofuel propaganda creates a narrative of sustainability: To choose ExxonMobil is to choose a better future. The consumer is mistaking insignificant choices between equally evil corporations as progressive steps towards preservation.

As ExxonMobil shifts environmental responsibility onto the consumer, the mainstream environmental movement is commodified as a selling point for companies. Karl Marx defines the commodity as “in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another.”¹⁴ ExxonMobil recognizes people’s desire to live more sustainably and branded themselves and the act of purchasing their products as a contribution to the environmental movement. Consumers are persuaded to buy responsibly by supporting eco-conscious companies and, in turn, the act of consumption is twisted into protesting the very market they are financially validating.

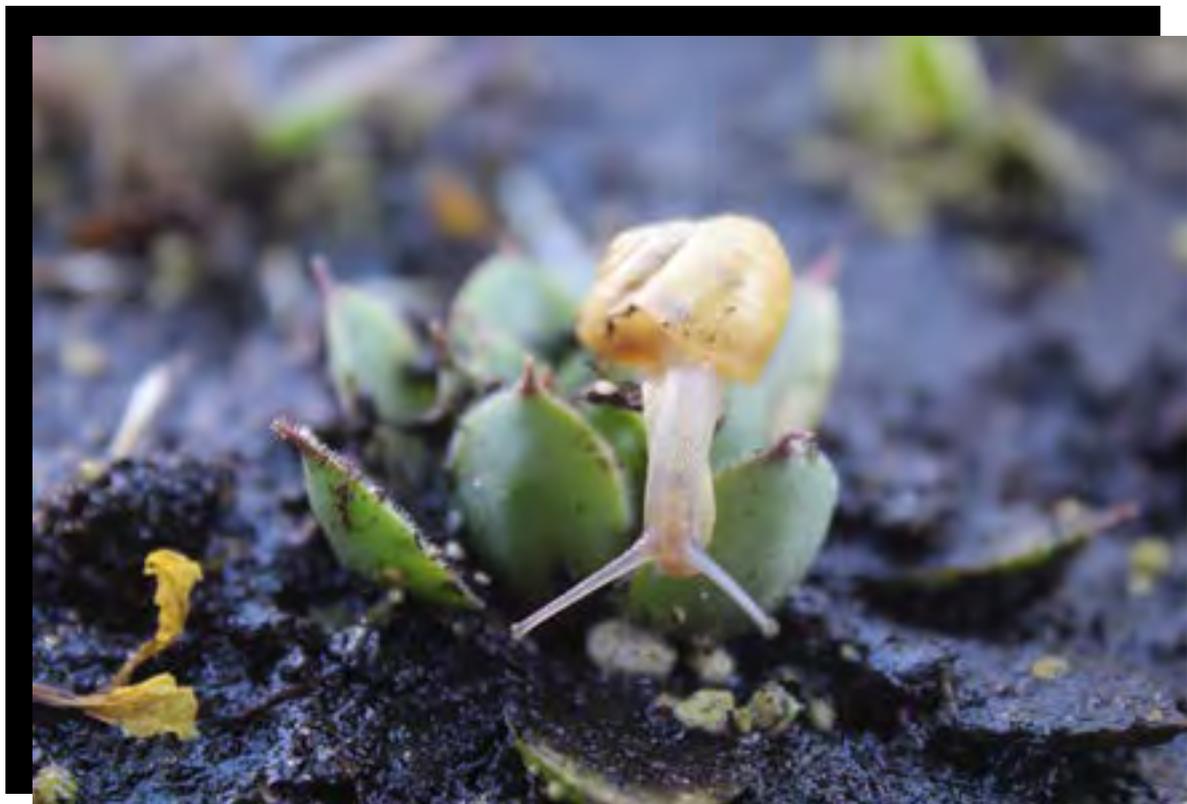
A consumer society cannot aid the environmental movement when it is the very ideal that would lead to the depletion of the earth’s resources and pollution of our ecosystem. If everyone on Earth practiced disposable consumerism to the same degree as the average American, we would need the resources of five planet Earths to sustain those habits.¹⁵ A social

12 “Big Oil’s Real Agenda on Climate Change,” InfluenceMap, March 2019.

13 “Big Oil’s Real Agenda on Climate Change.”

14 Albert Dragstedt, “Value: Studies by Karl Marx,” Marx 1867 (Capital), New Park Publications, Accessed April 30, 2020, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/commodity.htm>

15 “Number of Consumers,” The World Counts, Accessed April 15, 2020, <https://www.theworldcounts.com/challenges/planet-earth/state-of-the-planet/number-of-consumers>



Microscape
Dylan Sokolovich
Photography

movement being foregrounded by a corporation ingrained in capitalism inherently turns public action into consumerism and activists into consumers. As a result, the mainstream environmentalist movement and the public's outrage towards environmental degradation is turned into a commodity, and dangerous consumption habits are encouraged in the name of sustainability. The degree of action required to save the planet from catastrophic climate collapse is impossible within the framework of such consumer ideology. An entire economic and moral reconfiguration that eliminates corporate greed and frees the public from static consumerism is the only way to make room for true progress.

“The degree of action required to save the planet from catastrophic climate collapse is impossible within the framework of such consumer ideology.”



Evergreen

Robert Bara-Popa

Photography

Unconscious Detachment

Shianne Ayala-Lind

Underrated,
Unvalidated,
Unconcentrated,
And unreliably miscommunicated evaluations of my wonder.

Thoughts, as they are, constitute my dreams.

Dreams where I exist,
In every inch of space.

But yet, I have vacated,
Every ounce of place.

Portfolio



Bath
Mia Davis
Ink

Mia Davis

I wish to celebrate our world and the individual marks we create to impact our surroundings with my art. My pieces attempt to show realism in technique while also allowing my subject to take on its own identity in its own unique imperfections. Art is not confined to what is created from a crafting medium, but rather it represents the complexities of our everyday lives and our desire to find the beauty within them.

I prefer the simplistic palette of charcoal and ink. I'm not interested in the complexity of color and the relationship between certain shades. Instead, I come into a piece hoping to invigorate it with the sharp contrast of black, shades of gray, and white. Both *Bath* and *Stare* alike showcase the process of stippling, a drawing technique using numerous small dots or specks to create a palpable image. *Gilded*, *Mixed Flavors*, *Playful Popcorn*, and *Wanderer* are more traditional pieces; however, they still showcase the simple aspects of life that tend to be unappreciated.



Stare
Mia Davis
Ink



Wanderer
Mia Davis
Charcoal



Mixed Flavors

Mia Davis

Charcoal



Playful Popcorn

Mia Davis

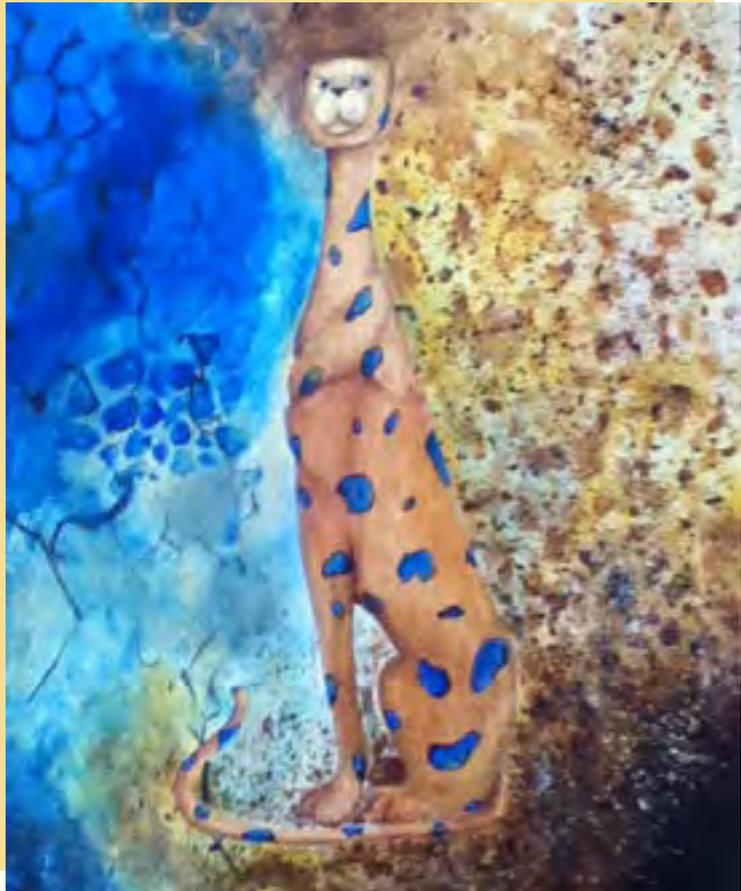
Charcoal



Gilded
Mia Davis
Charcoal

Adulthood
Dylan Sokolovich

Dirty boys stomp on ants,
Pretty girls still refuse to wear pants.
But now, we just dance.



Blue Spots
Gabriella Wertheim
Watercolor
Previously published in *Legacy* 2012

A Conversation With My Dad

Rachel Dodson

Personal Essay



His full head of hair is starting to gray now, and the black polo he's wearing is beginning to get loose on him. I'm happy he's losing weight because I know he feels better. But he'll always be my round, warm papa.

A Conversation With
My Dad
Personal Essay

Rachel Dodson

There is always such a strange look on my father's face when I cry. His expression reflects a kind of empathy mingled with regret, as if it were his fault that I'm experiencing anything distressful. Half-eaten dishes of dinner sit on the table. My mom gives me her motherly words of advice. But my dad? He just sits quietly, which is an unusual behavior for him. As the moments pass on, my father tries to gently guide our way out of the painful conversation. My mother, like every night at dinner, gets onto her computer and effectively leaves our presence even though she occupies the same table as we do.

I ask my dad about the poetry he used to write, and I tell him that I'll offer him prompts so that he can have some inspiration to start writing again. "Hemingway Home," I say. "That's your prompt for the poem you should write this week."

He chuckles. I know not to expect any kind of straightforward response from him. His full head of hair is starting to gray now, and the black polo he's wearing is beginning to get loose on him. I'm happy he's losing weight because I know he feels better. But he'll always be my round, warm papa. Suddenly, with no warning, he dives into a colorful story about his childhood cat, Baby.

"I was always risking killing the cat. You'd think, because it's in the way, you have to push it, and you keep thinking, 'That cat's going to get stuck under the door. I'm going to have to break its legs, kill it, put it out of its misery. Ugh. Why can't the cat just get out of the way?'"

I sit and stare with a smile on my face, elbows perched on the cream-colored cloth draped over the kitchen table – chin in my hands.

My father continues: "And then you'd get inside, and the cat would come up and start to talk to you. *Meow, meow, meow*. And I would say, 'What's the matter, Baby, you hungry?' And

inevitably, every day, the cat was hungry. So, every day, when I got back from work, I'd have to open a can of food for the cat and put it in the little dish. Oh, but I couldn't just put it in there. No!" He got exasperated. "I have to smash it. I wanted to make sure the chunks were broken down around the edges for the cat." I audibly laugh. He doesn't take a breath. "But I smash it down just a little bit, because you don't want to flatten it out, because it looks nasty then. You need to make it look appetizing, but a can of tuna fish rarely looks inviting."

My mother, at the other end of the table, adds nothing to the conversation other than the sound of keys clacking against a keyboard, and a skeptical look on her face as she half-listens to what my dad says.

For a quick moment, he pauses. He runs his hands through his long, graying beard, and then goes on. "It has the consistency of corn beef hash. Uncooked. And you would smash it, and the cat would start to eat. Then I would go upstairs, and as I'm walking up, the cat would start again: *meow*,

"He thinks I'm as amused by his storytelling at twenty-four as I was when I was ten. I am."

meow. And I'd say, 'Oh, right, I forgot again to give you more water.' So, I give the cat more water. Then I'd remember, 'No, no, when you feed the cat, you give her a little bit of milk instead of water.'"

Another pause. I am totally amazed that he continues telling the story. He looks at me with a twinkle in his eyes, as though I'm still just a kid – amused by his story.

"The cat loved milk. It would eat, and drink the milk, and then come creeping up the steps. It didn't matter which room you were in; the cat would open the door. I don't know how. It would come in and jump up into the chair or bed, wherever you were, and it would want to lick your face." As a grimace sweeps across his face, I begin laughing out loud again. "With this kitty breath that smells like tuna fish."

Now my mom makes a gagging noise, "Ugh!"

"And it had a milky, wet mouth. It was so nasty!" He gets louder.

I'm still laughing, and my dad, with his elbows on the table, takes off his glasses. He exaggeratedly rubs his face, using both hands to rub from the sides of his mouth up to his eyes. "That was when I decided I didn't like cats." Another long pause, while I stare at him with a grin. "That was the cat looking for a mate so it would have kittens with six toes."

"What?"

"Hemingway cats have six toes."

He connects the dots. This is his diatribe of an answer to the poem prompt. He smiles at me like he's just done something fantastic. I don't even remember that I was crying. He thinks I'm as amused by his storytelling at twenty-four as I was when I was ten. I am.



Night At The Circus

Zoe Rhodes
Photography

The Last Chess Match

Nicholas Fulwood

The earth has been holding its breath.
A few martians are watching from low orbits.
God's trying not to blink.

Sweat trickles onto each man's brow,
stinging the corners of their eyes.
Nerves jitter a hangman's jig between his lungs.
A hand moves, then retreats,
like a snake thinking better of its prey.

The tall man, his beard freshly shaven,
revealing his boyish features,
has been practicing for decades.
He meditated in monasteries,
eating a grain of rice a day.
He can calculate the strategic trajectories of a
raindrop,
in a god damn hurricane.

The short man, his beard bushy and wild,
eyes hidden behind glasses,
is a natural prodigy.
He lets his mind sink backwards,
and listens to the pieces whisper.
He doesn't plan beyond the next move,
constantly ready to react.

The crowd gasps,
sucking all of the distraction from the world.
A knight slides into place,
the maverick hot shot of the chess set,
and is met by the rook,
a powerful and orderly opponent.

The men grin at each other.
A cold breeze, from the clattering fan, ruffles their
hair.
This should be over by now,
the killing blow should have been decided,
the war of monochromatic proportions should be
history.
But yet,
the two champions snicker beneath their sweat.
They're having too much fun,
to let the world in on their secret.

Divine in Drought

Kevin Ciresa

Pushing myself to the end,
or maybe
Falling to my knees
uncontrollably.

Trembling with no conviction,
no end is near.
Striving for light,
but
Condensed by darkness.

Devoid of thought
deprived of love
you taught me everything.

Lying on a beach
staring at the stars
I hear the waves crash,
but
when I open my eyes,
I am in a barren
wasteland.

Stripped of feeling,
divine and in drought.



Eastern Lights
Allyson Finney
Photography



Medical Anomaly

Catherine Shuff

Personal Essay



This may sound morbid, but when I die, it wouldn't be too bad to go because of my condition. To slip peacefully into unconsciousness, to view those black and white movies once more before the end.

Medical Anomaly

Personal Essay

Catherine Shuff

I'd like to say I'm an observant person. I take in my surroundings, observe the people around me, gauge their expressions, creating a mental image in my head of the world around me. It's never fun to be told something later that I'd failed to notice.

Losing consciousness is a sure-fire way for me to miss what happens. One minute I'm fine; the next a sense of disorientation, a funny feeling in my stomach, and out I go. It has happened and continues to happen.

Each episode started with the same feeling. It would come out of nowhere – always during the most innocuous of moments. I would experience *deja-vu*, my mind beginning to slow, and wonder if I was dreaming or awake. After the initial moment of disorientation came the feeling of nausea, waves of queasiness that would overtake my already muddled brain. Along with the nausea came panic, a fear that I would hit the ground too hard, a fervent need to find a solid surface that I could take shelter against. In a matter of seconds, I would begin to fall, everything around me fading away.

I would come to only moments later, my brow laden with sweat, always with the same questions on my lips: "Where am I? What happened?"

I was a sophomore in high school and a mediocre viola player. Our winter performance was coming up. Orchestra practice took place on the auditorium room stage. We didn't have our own classroom unlike the band and chorus. That suited us fine, as we got to practice where we would perform.

There were more people on stage than usual as more band instruments were included in our concert. The increase in players wasn't a hard feat to accomplish; there were only about twenty of us to begin with. Compared to the groups of forty

and fifty people in chorus and band respectively, ours was a small crowd, where attention was often shifted towards those in the first section. I was chair five, a comfortable middle with little expected of me and even less recognition.

The stage lights were on, the house lights were down, and we were drilling the music. Running through it, over and over and over again. We were stressed, and the lights were hot. I couldn't have been the only one that felt light-headed.

I was an altar server at church one Sunday, who in the world of Catholicism was the one that prepared the readings and communion for the priest. It was as mundane as it may sound, but I found a sense of fulfillment in lighting the candles and preparing the altar. Twelve-year-old me felt party to something bigger.

As the priest started his homily, my body suddenly dropped to the ground. Someone told me afterwards that I had hit the bells, filling the air with a noisy peal.

"You know," my mother informed me as she wiped the sweat from my brow, "your siblings have all passed out while altar serving." That made me feel a little better – that I wasn't alone in this rite of passage.

I was still undoubtedly embarrassed. Of all the places to be the center of attention, a catholic church was one of the worst. Silent judging eyes peered over hymn books and parish newsletters as I was brought upright and shuffled out of the hall.

For one Halloween, I wanted to be Cleopatra. I had the costume, the fun gold painted accessories, and even a terrible black bob wig. My older sister Sarah said she'd help me with my makeup. I'd never worn makeup before, but what kind of a Cleopatra costume would it be without it? I was thirteen and

ready to feel beautiful.

"My eyes feel heavy." A now infamous line in my family.

Suddenly, I was too hot and the blue eyeliner was too much to handle. My vision swam, black dots dancing every time I blinked. A feeling of nausea hit me like a truck. My head cracked against the faux granite countertop, my body crumpling in a child-size toga.

"My eyes feel heavy.' A now infamous line in my family."

By my sophomore year, I knew the drill. The funny feeling that always preceded an episode was now an alarm, a to-do list flashing through my mind.

"Minimize damage. Protect the head. Say it out loud, so others don't think you've dropped dead."

I'd begun to perfect the art of sliding to the floor just moments before losing consciousness, knowing that the closer I was to the ground, the less damage I'd take and less time I'd have to spend at the hospital afterwards.

My priority list was different this time. My viola was beautiful, older than me, and definitely more expensive. I remember setting my viola down, laying it under my chair so I wouldn't land on it. I mumbled to my stand partner, slumped back in my seat, and then I was out.

It always felt like I'd been out for years. I'd

see little black and white movies in my head with white lined figures on black backdrop, always silent, always moving forward. It may sound weird, but there was no other proper way to describe it. And I stopped trying to – after the looks the doctors had given me in the past.

Afterwards, once the ambulance had been called, and I sat surrounded by my terrified peers whose practice I had ruined, I was told my face was as green as the nurse's mint colored blouse.

Hospitals always smell like insulin to me. Strangely enough, that's a comforting smell. My sister Sarah is a type one diabetic, so the smell of insulin always surrounds her.

She used to torment me when we were younger. She'd chase me around with the retractable punch needle she'd use to get blood samples. I hated it. The sound of the needle startled me every time it popped out, and I couldn't stand the stinging pain it would leave in my finger. Needles were a no go, mostly because of the pain.

Getting checked into the emergency room meant needles, blood tests, and IVs. The first time I saw a butterfly IV in my arm, I wanted to gag.

Unfortunately, hospitals became my new normal. We had no idea why I kept passing out, why my body would stiffen like a board and seize while I was out. I'd gone through too many tests to count: CAT scans, echocardiograms, MRI's, EEG's. EKG's.

The doctors weren't sure what was wrong. The incidences weren't severe enough to be counted as seizures, but not so innocent that we could ignore them. I spent my high school career bouncing from doctor to doctor, searching for an answer.



Floating
Nicholas Fulwood
Ink

It felt like I was lagging behind in life. While my friends sat joking in the cafeteria, I was being sent to the nurse. When everyone else started to get their licenses, I was with a doctor who was informing me that I wasn't allowed to drive and probably wouldn't be for a long time.

I felt like a freak. I was now a liability who had to be watched for fear of harm – a strange medical anomaly with a spotlight on set by my peers. I could've gone mostly unnoticed, if not for that day in orchestra. Too many eyes were there, too many people who scattered through the school once rehearsal was through. The story spread like fire, and the insistence by the nurse that I go to the hospital in the ambulance added fuel. Pure gasoline.

“Mom, dad, nice to meet you,” the doctor said, shaking my parents' hands. “Catherine, nice to meet you.” Hershey Medical was one of the first places we had sought answers. That's where we were when we learned the first concrete information about what was wrong with me.

“Well, we reviewed the information gathered from the holter monitor, and it seems her heart paused. Multiple times, for 12 seconds at the most.” The doctor delivered this sentence in a deadpan tone. I'm sure it didn't seem that outlandish to him as he'd probably heard and dealt with worse in his career.

He might've continued to relay information, but I couldn't be sure. I'd mentally checked out, wondering what my heart pausing meant for my life.

He left the room, a heavy wooden door clicking shut behind him. I sagged, tears surging from my eyes.

“Am I going to die?” I asked my mother, who had cocooned me in her arms while my father watched on.

It wasn't until my senior year of high school that we found a name for it.

Cardioinhibitory Syncope is fairly common among children and young adults, but I'm on the extreme end of the spectrum; My pauses are much longer than that of the average CS patient.

Here's the explanation I give to people when they ask: When I'm at low levels of activity, like sitting or sleeping, the vagus nerve will stop pumping blood through the heart. This causes my heart to pause, and then I pass out.

There's a difference between pausing and fully stopping, and why I describe my heart as paused. A pause is fine – if a little worrying. A pause indicates it'll start again, resume normal function. A stop, a full stop of the heart, is not good. If my heart was to fully stop, then I'd be dead. It was hard to wrap my brain around this at first, though in retrospect it's fairly simple.

Occasionally, I allow myself to wonder about my mortality. Everyone dies eventually; this I know. I don't think I'm afraid of death. I fear and dread the deaths of my friends and family, certainly. But I don't fear my own.

This may sound morbid, but when I die, it wouldn't be too bad to go because of my condition. It would mean slipping peacefully into unconsciousness and viewing those black and white movies once more before the end.

I don't wish for death – far from it. But we all have to die sometime. There are worse ways to go; I'm sure of it.



Wings Spread Wide
Kelly Bunch
Charcoal

Heartstrings

Hope Olshefski

Don't you feel that tug in your chest?
You take my heartstrings and knit them with
yours.
Yet,
you don't feel each tug I create.
A poor attempt to bring you closer to me,
I pull, pull, pull,
but you push and rip.
This terrible game of back and forth
friends, friendlier, strangers,
and you say it's for the best.
If it's for the best, please remove my strings.
Because the more you push,
Inevitably, I pull.

Grandma is Lost

Dylan Sokolovich

June-bearing strawberries grew in our yard.
They ripened into July;
Red, green, a mixture of soft and hard,
Wrapped in weeds, the way we despise

By which I mean, I'm sorry, grandmother, you really are
So far gone. Unlike the strawberries we pick
Every summer, your mind continued to scar
After each harvest, as if Dementia will somehow

Disappear, and you will return.
I watched you slice strawberries
Slowing in pace each year, and you
Continue to forget to take your Donepezil.

I grab the knife and cut them for you,
You tell me something about how
Fast they grew
And ask me for the tenth time

What is your name?



Primary
Christopher Barrera
Pencil



Feeling Green
Morgan Herb
Pencil

The Silence of the Bugle

Jake Weaver

Fiction



With every passing moment, Merry could almost feel as though the Bugler was directly connected to his body. Like a parasite, the Bugler drained the thoughts from Merry's mind and the light from his eyes.

The Silence
of the Bugle
Fiction

Jake Weaver

Four men were huddled together on the platform of a watchtower on the side of a hill. Two of them sat with their legs crossed and backs leaned limply against the tower walls. Their peering eyes were illuminated by the moonlight daring enough to creep inside the tower's small enclosure. The other two, vigilant and immobile, were lying across the center of the platform, perched with their elbows padded and chins planted. Both pairs of men were members of a highly decorated sniper team and were trusted, without question, to successfully cover the departure of three officers and a hundred and five men from the hillside area with two artillery pieces.

The first sniper was Sam Higgins and his spotter Frederick Lancaster. The second spotter, Matt Ledoux, was paired with Richard Meredith, a sniper known for his high levels of experience and fortitude. Those who knew Richard would call him Merry, combining his last name with an ironic acknowledgment of his tendency to remain placid and stoic on duty and jovial during non-active duty. Merry knew why he needed to be in the watchtower, but he seemed to care more than the others about their claustrophobic perch. With every deep breath and sigh, Merry tried to stretch out against the walls of his enclosure, anxious to descend the tower and join the retreat over the hill.

"There he is. He's filling a canteen, just outside the western limits." Merry tracked the Bugler as he began walking toward a large group of men gathering around a campfire on the village's main thoroughfare. "He's right there. You see him, Sam?"

The watchtower was positioned at the top of a nine-hundred-foot hill amidst trees that partially hid the tower from crossfire. Below the tower, at the base of the hill, were several fields, tilled so that a man could be seen through the foliage even if crawling along on his stomach. On the other side

of the fields was a small village, once a desirable location, made up of two dozen stone buildings.

Merry and his fellow soldiers had been preparing to move into the village from their position on the hill when the orders to retreat had been received. Confrontations near major cities were drawing in large numbers of men to fight in the highly contested and open areas surrounding population centers. The quiet village would be forgone as Merry's company relocated to the mud and stench of the trenches.

Merry wanted to protest the retreat. He had been anticipating the taking of the village with a cautious longing. The stone structures of the village resembled nothing like the warm, sun-bathed wood buildings of his town back home, but Merry had looked toward the village with the same feeling he remembered when he and his brother would play in the attic of their home. Something about the structure of the four stone walls hiding a cool and shady room rekindled a desire for true and unrestricted rest deep within his being.

Merry stared straight ahead with eyes that had not rested in months and realized that the village might be the only place where he could lie down without having to be watchful for anything. After eighteen hours in the tower, however, guarding the retreat and hoping that the exposed front of the tower would not be spotted through the protruding branches, his desire for comfort had been reduced to the hope for rest of any kind without his rifle in his hands.

"He's walking with a slight limp, but he stands naturally." The Bugler was now in a circle of men all laughing heartily. "He laughs like he doesn't know where he is."

Sam grunted calmly, "I just don't see him, Merry."

Merry floated his crosshairs from side to side, tracing the Bugler's pushed back helmet. "Am I the only one who sees him?"

Typically, any enemy with a noise-producing instrument would be the focus of every soldier's concern. Merry had first spotted the bugle just as it had briefly reflected into his scope, causing a flash like a wink of sunlight. Merry's company had nearly all carefully filtered up the hillside using the cover of the trees, quietly trekking to the rendezvous point on the other side of the hill. Each sniper's attention needed to be directed at the village below and the enemy troops within. If the enemy noticed any movement – if a guard waved to an officer from his vantage point or an enemy soldier on patrol began studying the hillside – then the retreat would have to be warned.

As the day turned to night, Merry watched the Bugler, dreading the moment that the soldier might take the instrument from his chest and reveal the retreat. What bothered Merry even more, surprising him with a revolting feeling he hadn't seen coming, was the way the Bugler appeared to handle himself as he strode between the stone buildings and across the village square. The village offered plenty of rooms, all strongholds worthy of the deepest sleep; yet, the Bugler was wandering aimlessly as if he had no desire to seek shelter anywhere.

"They've brought out the rations. Someone must have found wine in one of the buildings. The bottles are getting passed 'round now."

Night had almost abated, its darkest hours making the campfires of the village appear larger than reality could possibly allow. Merry carefully kept from looking directly at any of the fires not to lose his night-vision just yet. His sight returned to the Bugler once again.



Merry sighted the enemy supply tent just beside one of the village's taller stone structures. Peeking out just a few inches past the tent flaps was a wooden crate. Merry saw no writing on the box's side, but he could see ammunition for a grenade rifle lying inside. He adjusted his rifle lower and could once again see the Bugler, sitting now, by a smaller campfire, just a dozen meters from the supply tent.

The last group of retreating men were ascending the hill and signaling to Matt that the hillside was nearly empty. Merry kept the Bugler in sight at least once every few minutes. None of the other enemies seemed to be particularly interested in surveying the hillside beyond a casual scan by a guard patrol that circled the village a few times an hour. The Bugler still worried Merry, as the enemy soldier continued to observe his surroundings, refusing to lie down or enter a building. The constant presence of this one enemy in his sight was keeping Merry on edge.

During the hours of the retreat's final ascent, the Bugler had not moved much from his position near the smaller campfire. Merry thought the Bugler was reading a book while leaning against a broken wall segment, but it was difficult to discern exactly what the Bugler was holding. To Merry, the Bugler seemed too relaxed. If the warfare surrounding them bothered him in any way, it did not show on the Bugler's face at all. He had what some might call a carefree spirit, but Merry thought differently. The peace that this enemy soldier seemed to possess, if it were even possible, should allow the Bugler any amount of rest, and yet he wandered about like an apparition that needed never to sleep.

Just as the last of his company signaled their arrival at the top of the hill, Merry lost sight of the Bugler. Wishing his eyes were faster, he began

scanning every face in view to spot the bugler, but to no avail. Merry could not explain, but there was a creeping feeling at the base of his spine now that the Bugler had disappeared. The feeling reminded him of something, but he could not quite remember what.

The Bugler was still a concern, especially as the heavy moonlight beat down on the hilltop retreat, giving any number of chances for something to be spotted. There was something stewing in Merry's stomach that made his muscles tense and his mind race. If the Bugler had finally gone inside and taken refuge in one of the buildings, he may be sleeping as Merry searched for him. With every passing moment, Merry could almost feel as though the Bugler was directly connected to his body. Like a parasite, the Bugler drained the thoughts from Merry's mind and the light from his eyes.

"Merry!" Sam was uncharacteristically loud. "Focus man; they're almost over the top. I've laid up here long enough."

Merry tried to shake the pull of the Bugler and refocus. "Just watch the patrol, Sam. The rest of us need to watch the buildings."

Sam's voice hastened: "The patrol rounded the village five minutes ago. They shouldn't be back 'round for another few minutes."

Merry's eyes were scanning quickly now, darting from building to building. "Keep tabs on anyone who we knew was outside. Matt, are you watching the windows?"

Matt had retaken his position to Merry's right on the platform floor. "We have a couple dozen windows facing this way. There's none open, but it's impossible to see through them from here, Merry."

Distracted, Merry barely heard Matt. The taste of bile had returned to his mouth and throat. His scope hovered carefully, framing an enemy officer

“Sam’s first shot might as well have been a lightning strike.”

and two cadets that had emerged from the village thoroughfare.

“You see them, Sam?”

“I see them. The officer has to be checking on the patrols.”

Matt’s voice raised: “He’s got binocs’, Merry. He’s already looking out over the fields.”

Merry’s crosshairs drifted, tracing the officer’s head as the binoculars turned from west to east and then upward, toward the hillside.

“Merry, I’ve got him. Just say it and I have him.” Sam cocked his rifle.

“We can’t take the shot, Sam. If they see our position here, they’ll see the retreat anyway.”

“Merry, there’s only three. I’ll take the officer. We’ll then take a cadet each and buy us a few minutes of confusion. If the retreat is spotted, at least we’ll have enough time to get down this fucking tower!”

Merry was breathing heavily. His choices seemed impossibly directionless. His head swam and he tried to swallow.

“He’s fixating, Merry. The officer sees something.” Matt’s voice cut shrilly.

Merry swallowed. “You can’t take the shot, Sam. Our fronts are exposed.”

“Merry, the officer’s giving instructions. If that cadet turns ‘round, I’m taking what I can get.”

Merry was about to say something as the cadet

turned to run.

Sam’s first shot might as well have been a lightning strike. Merry could see the officer’s binoculars split into two as his head exploded backward. The cadet that had turned away was barely a step forward when the back of his neck burst into pieces, his head cocking sideways as he began to sink to the ground. Merry’s crosshairs found the second cadet just as his face twisted into shock. Merry aimed higher, squeezed, and watched as the right side of the man’s forehead contracted and yanked the rest of his body backwards, his feet leaving the ground for a moment as he twisted midair, then landed in a heap.

For those few moments, the incredible noise of the shots permeated Merry’s mind, collapsing his awareness and burning a mark on his memory. Then there was silence, as loud as the shots, as each sniper team checked for a response. For half of a minute, no one in the village below seemed to see what had happened. Merry tried to relax for just a moment.

“The patrol . . .” Matt’s voice was quiet again, but this time deeper in tone. “The patrol came ‘round again.” He sounded more relaxed than possible.

Merry was trying to focus on the eastern edge of the village when he spotted them. The patrol squad had rounded the easternmost building and were now crouched behind the cover of a dirt mound, their eyes unmistakably fixed. A fog came over Merry’s mind and remained with him for a very long time.

Merry left his scope centered on the reemerged Bugler and his campfire as he leaned away from his rifle to rub his eyes. Looking back, he saw the Bugler produce what he had previously assumed was a book. As the Bugler flipped the

pages over and under one another, Merry saw the outline of letters as the campfire light shone through the pages, highlighting the tightly packed words on them. The Bugler looked at one, then continued to the next, touching the tops of each page and feeling with his thumb, as if to confirm the letters' existence. Merry swallowed as his crosshairs danced across the Bugler's chest and the shiny instrument strapped there.

Merry had not seen any instrument since his brother's guitar made an appearance at the family send-off before his second deployment. Merry recalled the tune that was played but not the words. He could never read music or sing well, but pleasant melodies had always intrigued him, especially in their way of stirring the mind with adrenaline, kicking thoughts into action like a holy and joyful drill sergeant. Merry focused on the Bugler's face and wondered what kind of melody the man could produce. He pictured his brother and the Bugler, sitting next to one another, playing some piece of music no one had ever heard before. Matt and, his brother, Percy had been at that family gathering, too.

When the patrol had opened fire, there was little Merry could say that would be heard over the sounds of splintering wood, whirring air, and flesh parting for an invasion of slugs. Merry heard Sam's helmet crack and then the thud of his head as it fell against the platform. Frederick shouted something before his mouth made a sound like a tire deflating. Out of the corner of his eye, Merry saw Frederick's throat agape. Frederick twisted himself against the tower wall, trying to keep upright and cover his neck with his hands. Matt had turned his back to the wall, his eyes searching for Merry's. When Merry was finally able to look, Matt still stared, unblinking, his head resting against the corner of the enclosure at a queer angle. The blood that

To the Future

Jeremy Back

Acrylic & Ink

Previously Published in *Legacy 2015*



flowed from the hole in his forehead filled his eyes like tears, and then trailed downward, drawing lines toward Matt's limp hands and chest.

Merry simply laid there, his thoughts, the faces he knew and the ones he did not, all draining from him like water through a dam break. He felt each wall of the tower corralling him at a random spot in the sky. He felt the wooden platform poised to drop him into the thicket below. He could feel the trees of the hillside waiting to swallow him with the eagerness of the whale that swallowed Jonah. Just as his consciousness bucked and his mind began to shut his eyes, the firing ceased.

Silence closed in on the enclosure again, roaring this time, piercing Merry's ears with a sound he could never explain. He didn't dare move – and for an hour he barely breathed or blinked. The sound of silence slowly died down until Merry could manage his thoughts again. Then he slowly raised his head, cleared his eyes, and once again looked down upon the village.

The village had shifted itself inward. Supplies and tents had been repositioned inside the village and away from the side exposed to the hill on which Merry was lying. The guard patrol Merry had seen before was still watching his position, though from a safer spot behind a stone barrier. The men at the watchtower did not appear to see anything, and Merry assumed that, from their vantage point, his body must have remained hidden.

For the rest of the night, Merry lay and watched. He felt cold and exposed, the front wall of his enclosure dotted with a hundred little eyes, peering through the wood. He tried to keep from looking at his fellow soldiers – or at anyone in particular, the fog surrounding his mind holding its position. And then, the Bugler wandered back into his sight, his feet seeming to traverse the horizontal line of Merry's crosshairs as if it were a trapeze built

for amusement. The bugle shone in the moonlight.

As the Bugler carefully refolded his letters and tucked them under his uniform's jacket, Merry readjusted his scope to peer again at the supply tent. The box of explosive ammunition seemed to be in its place. Merry looked through the scope again moving back and forth between the Bugler and the explosives, charting a path for his future use. He looked again at the Bugler's face and tried to find a sign of contentment there. Merry clenched his teeth as a thought crossed his mind: The shots that killed his friends might have been what awakened the Bugler.

Merry couldn't begin to guess whether or not a rising sun would betray his position or his life. He glanced away from his scope toward Matt and could see his eyes, but Matt wasn't looking at anything. Below, the Bugler stretched and rebuttoned his jacket. Merry traced the line between him and the explosives once more, but when he returned to the Bugler, he saw the man standing. Merry tasted bile once more as he began to sweat. There might only be a single opportunity. Merry tried to read the Bugler's face, to see with the Bugler's eyes and intentions. The Bugler turned and took a step toward the east.

“He felt the wooden platform poised to drop him into the thicket below .”

“He’s going to walk inside. He’s going to rest inside again.”

Merry adjusted upward, following the line he had traced, narrowing his vision on the explosive ordinance. He began to squeeze and waited for the break in his heartbeat.

Merry was home, lying stationary against the grassy incline behind his parents’ house. He was clutching a high-powered air rifle, the one he had bought covertly and snuck back home. The rifle was loaded and the scope was focused on a small brown rabbit, who sniffed at the ground just under a large pine tree a dozen meter away. Merry’s eyes tried to center the crosshairs over the rabbit’s face and its little nose, but he was having trouble keeping his eyes clear of tears. Merry’s dog had fallen ill some months before and finally succumbed near daybreak. Merry had found the dog and tried to console it, petting it as gently as he possibly could, but the dog simply would not look at him.

That afternoon, Merry had retrieved his rifle and gone out back, careful to remain out of sight of where his mother was preparing dinner behind the kitchen windows. As the rabbit lifted its head, Merry focused himself, centered the crosshairs, and squeezed as gently as he possibly could. The rifle made virtually no sound, but Merry tensed like he had fired a real rifle. The rabbit was lifted off the ground, rolled end-over-end, and now dragged itself forward. Merry stood and ran to get a better look, but he could feel a part of himself trying to walk in the other direction. Unable to move his head, Merry thought he had heard someone crying out, telling him that it was just a memory, but he couldn’t turn away.

As Merry neared the rabbit, it continued to kick and drag itself, its head pressed against the grass. Merry leaned down, slowly looking the rabbit

over. There was a bloody nick in the middle of the rabbit’s back and its two hind legs were limply trailing behind its body. Its strength waning fast, the rabbit tried to drag itself further, but the weight of its useless legs only allowed it to slightly spin itself in a small circle. Somehow, the rabbit must know that it was running out of time. Merry couldn’t speak and couldn’t think. He looked down, as his heart clenched, and peered into the rabbit’s wet pleading eye.

Merry knew that he would never forget that rabbit. He wanted to – but something would always bring the memory back to the caves of his mind. The stillness of the eye seemed to have a hold on him.

This time it was a real struggle. The memory tried to swallow him, exuding a force that licked at the edges of his eyes and threatened to envelope his mind completely. Merry tried to run away, but the eye remained fixed on him, holding him there. With what strength he had, Merry gritted, pushed forward, and dived straight into the eye of the rabbit. For a moment, the rabbit’s eye surrounded him, pulling him into the black wetness that he had never forgotten and would never forget. Merry dove down, his eyes leading the rest of his mind like a chariot team. But, somehow, Merry could feel a guttural spec of control over his darkening sight. The blackness seemed to dim for a moment and then Merry saw a window of light some distance away, illuminating wet tunnel walls, pushing the blackness past him further, until his eyes suddenly freed themselves.

The barest of beams shot over the distance and through the village like golden artillery fire. Merry looked through his scope, sighting the box of ammo, then slowly adjusted downward. His crosshairs found the Bugler, turned now, as he

peered through two buildings toward the sunrise. The sunlight shone on the Bugler's face and instrument, as he stretched again. Merry felt the approaching silence come for him. He trained his eyes on the Bugler's head, his crosshairs dividing the man's helmet into equal portions. Just then, the Bugler turned away from the sunlight, facing himself toward Merry and his tower. Merry saw the Bugler's face light up as he gazed across the fields and up toward the hill as it met the sunlight like a wave. The sun lit half of the Bugler's face in brilliant gold, one of his eyes catching the reflection and gleaming like the glass windows of the village. Merry saw the eye, then looked at the other, and squeezed. The silence instantly retreated.



Implode

Nicholas Fulwood

Caffeine and death metal
curb-stomping your neurons.
Force-fed energy drinks,
nauseating your bile.

Gale force air-conditioning,
scalding your skin.
Excessively explosive extroversion,
Extending your punchlines.

It's rough on your nerves,
and feels like meth before bedtime.
Life is lived in second person,
a feeding tube of stimulation.

You get cut off in traffic,
cut off in conversation,
cut off of caffeine,
cut off from music,
cut off at the knees.

The caffeine support beams snapped,
caving in the neural pathways,
trapping the echoing gangster rap in caverns,
caverns soon to collapse on the void,
formed in the absence of action.

Yawning pits of inky black night,
stretching beneath your frantic headbanging.
Lie down,
stretching limbs into open space,
then breathe in placid air.



Midnight Snack

Alexa Buck

Acrylic

Gone Fishin'
Dylan Sokolovich

Gone is grandad, gritty and gloatin'
grateful for golf, beers, and boatin'
to be gone with the fish
was his only wish,
but away his coffin keeps floatin'.



Bass
Cheyenne Getz
Cardboard Sculpture

The Empty
Kevin Ciresa

Ten months of self-improvement
to still be stuck in tar.
Walking the line of
beauty and suffering
feeling left behind.

Blurred into the grey
for all to overlook.

Overwhelming myself to the point of
constraint.
Hiding hurt from
myself.

After leaps and bounds
starting to feel
the aura of old me
still resides in this hollow shell.



Shell Still Life

McKenna Barker

Pencil

PORTFOLIO



Black Tears
Miguel Santiago
Cover Image
Acrylic

Miguel Santiago

My portfolio focuses on abstraction, an artistic technique that uses the visual language of color, value, shape, form, and line to create a unique image compared to its real-world reference. To accomplish this, I use any medium at my disposal: acrylic and tempera paint, crayon, marker, charcoal, oil and chalk pastels, or simply just a pencil. Having worked in mixed media, I have come to enjoy using acrylic paint the most. Allowing my brush to flow freely, my art is largely influenced by the emotions I am experiencing at the time.

I started to become passionate about the creation of art around two to three years ago. As a child, I would suppress my anger until I would erupt, hurting myself and others in the process. My focus on abstraction is an attempt to reclaim my childhood, returning to the imagination and creativity that defined my younger self. If a viewer stops for just a moment and experiences a sense of hope from a piece I have created, then I have succeeded.



Hey!
Miguel Santiago
Crayon



Ghost Boy
Miguel Santiago
Acrylic

Tribal
Miguel Santiago
Acrylic





Kaleidoscope
Miguel Santiago
Acrylic & Tempera

Pansexual Mind
Miguel Santiago
Acrylic & Ink



Daydream
Selena Notobartolo

Woke up late this morning
The time buzzed
Ten twenty two
I smoothed my hair
And dabbed my lips
A tint of red should do
I'll meet you on the corner
You know
6th and Franklin, right?
Line of oaks off to the left
Your old apartment on the right
A drift into a daydream
You appear
From what seems, thin air
Don't question
With no seconds left to spare
Joy brightens up the day
Your face lights up my eyes
Our conversations
Endless
So much luggage to unpack
You always get me going and
I can't control my laughs
I wish so badly for this to go
On and on forever
But I'm no fool and this is life
I'll take what I can get here
My daydream fades
Into the night
I know
You must go, too
Despite the fact
That I so badly
Want to stay with you.



Complementary
Christopher Barrera
Acrylic

Bathroom
Nicholas Fulwood

The door is locked,
so quiet and so lonely,
but safe and secure.



Que

Rafael Nunez

Ink

Previously Published in *Legacy* 2014



Moonrise

Sophia Vojtasek

Pastel



In Stitches

Sarah Belles

Fiction

Previously published in *Legacy* 2015



With every individual stitch there came pain, a sense of relief, and above all else, closure. Things were becoming as they should be—how they never were on their own.

In Stitches
Fiction

Sarah Belles

The needle and thread were waiting for her on the vanity, put close together as couples usually are. Her fingers ached to pick them up, to begin working, but she knew that now was not the time. Still, out of habit it seems, this girl of mid-twenties opened the top left drawer of her vanity and pulled out a pair of large polished scissors. They weighed heavy in her hand. And as she parted the blades, the impression of a smile came to her porcelain face. She took a strange enjoyment out of the long, clean snip they made as she closed them again. Passing them into her right hand, she caught a glimpse of her reflection on their surface: a warped portrait of brown eyes, short brown hair, and a pair of rosy lips which were no longer smiling. Turning the image away, she methodically set the scissors down in front of the needle and thread. An act which turned the duo into a holy trinity.

Getting up from the lace-covered stool, the girl forced herself to break from her vanity in order to finish getting ready for the outside world. Not daring to turn on the overhead light, she dressed herself in the yellow glow of a single lamp. Its bulb had already been burning away for hours—all the while she was performing her morning ritual of beauty creams and hair removal. Slipping into her dress and stockings, she turned her eyes to the wall where a long grey shadow had been cast. She watched it move in sync with herself, bedazzled by how smooth and perfect its lines were. Transxed with her shadow, she began placing her limbs in various positions, posing and studying the way they looked displayed against the wall. It went without saying that she liked what she saw, and in that moment, she thought of that shadow as more like *her self* than she actually was. A thought which she suppressed in order to get herself moving again.

A mini dress on, heels on, and a small

matching white purse slung over one shoulder, she finished her ensemble with a large pair of white rimmed sunglasses, which hid a good half of her face. Only with this last piece of armor on, did she make for the door of her tiny apartment and escape out into the concrete wilderness.

Outside, the summer sky over the city had lost the orange tinge of dawn, adopting a cooler blue instead. However, even in the brilliance of the morning light, the tall buildings that surrounded her on every side still afforded some shadow. The girl took this opportunity to hide herself away, keeping her body as close to the immensity of these steel and cement giants. This way, she was able to avoid the gazes of the people, who, like her, were out on early morning agendas—normal folk who were required to be about because their jobs demanded it. Unlike her, however, their trivial

labors consisted of untying stacks of newspapers, unlocking gates, or setting up stands baring cheap trinkets for sale. Her goal was much nobler; the treasure she would obtain at day's end held greater value than basic monetary gain. Now, though, still in the beginning stages, she was as common and as base as anyone else around her—maybe even more so. This early, it was better to keep oneself in shadow. She had to abandon caution, however, once she entered the corner pharmacy. Inside, there was no escaping the onslaught of the overhead lights. They hummed and they buzzed without consideration; they created unrelenting vibrations that rumbled against her eardrums, allowing her to count the minutes she spent beneath them.



Oil Can
Kylee Moyer
Photography

Her purchases were quick, as there was only one thing she had come for and no other temptation to pull her toward the aisles. She passed them all by without so much as a glance, all the pills, lotions, toys, cards, and food, with her only interest lying in the magazine rack. Tucked away in the far right corner of the white-walled pharmacy, it stood before her like some glorious behemoth. Tantalizing in its immensity, it shined forth with the glossy pages of trendy, or not so trendy, modern interests. Then the frenzy began. She took every fashion magazine on display, eventually filling her basket with covers that displayed the ideal. They advertised faces and figures, quick fixes, and at-home-how-to's, all in unrepentant, radiating letters. It was a brightly colored ecstasy and the salvation of girls who only had themselves to rely on, if and when a change was necessary.

Standing at the checkout, the girl tried to keep her gaze directed at the speckled tiles on the floor as a line of people slowly moved in front of her. When it was her turn, she took her basket and heaved it onto the counter. Then she set about making a neat pile out of its cargo, matching edges together in order to make the perfect presentation. The aging cashier, with his red vest and thinning white hair, looked down at the pile in mild surprise. A look that was just identifiable beneath the lines of his weathered face.

"Some kind of sweepstakes going on?" he asked in an effort to be funny.

The girl cracked a little smile but did not say anything to confirm or deny; she just shook her head and tried to avoid looking directly at him.

"I know that women are into these sorts of things," he continued, picking up the rest of the magazines and running it across the scanner. "But so many of them and at the same time?"

The girl smiled again. It was not his world after all. She could not expect him to understand. These were not just cans of soup or packs of gum; they were body manuals.

"I like to mix and match," she finally said. Her voice was soft and subdued but far from inaudible. The aging cashier looked back at her with furrowed, overgrown eyebrows, a deep grimace forming in his sagging features. "You can do that?" he asked, with the magazines in his hands going *Blip, Blip, Blip* as they passed over the scanner. "I thought these were supposed to be like instructions, things you shouldn't really stray from."

Her smile, as small as it had been, faded and was replaced by a straight and unamused line. She had not expected him to unwittingly repeat the disclaimer that was printed at the bottom of every center fold.

"I know what I'm doing," she said flatly.

"Oh no, no, I didn't mean to say . . .," the cashier replied, stumbling over his words.

"Obviously, you know what you're doing. It's just a little out of my depth, you see."

"I understand," she said, pretending not to care. "Don't worry yourself about it." Reaching into her purse, she pulled out a fifty dollar bill, knowing preemptively how much her items would tally. Placing the bill on the counter, she slid it towards him and waited to be handed her bag. "Don't bother with change, please," she said, this time making eye contact with the cashier from behind tinted lenses. "I'm in too much of a hurry, thanks." Then taking the bag in hand, she smiled at him once more just to show how genial she could be, and was on her way.

She returned home sometime around noon, laboring through the door with even more bags hanging from her arms. It had been a busy day. Moving to a corner, she set them all down on a

small yellow table, built into the wall, which she had fooled herself into calling her dining area. She took out her magazines. Hugging them to her chest, she walked the few feet over to her bed and laid them out in a semicircle. Starting from the left, she opened each one to its centerfold, quickly transforming her floral duvet into a gallery of nude, smiling women being displayed from different angles, front, back and side. She studied them all, at times tracing her finger over an area of particular interest such as a calf or a waist.

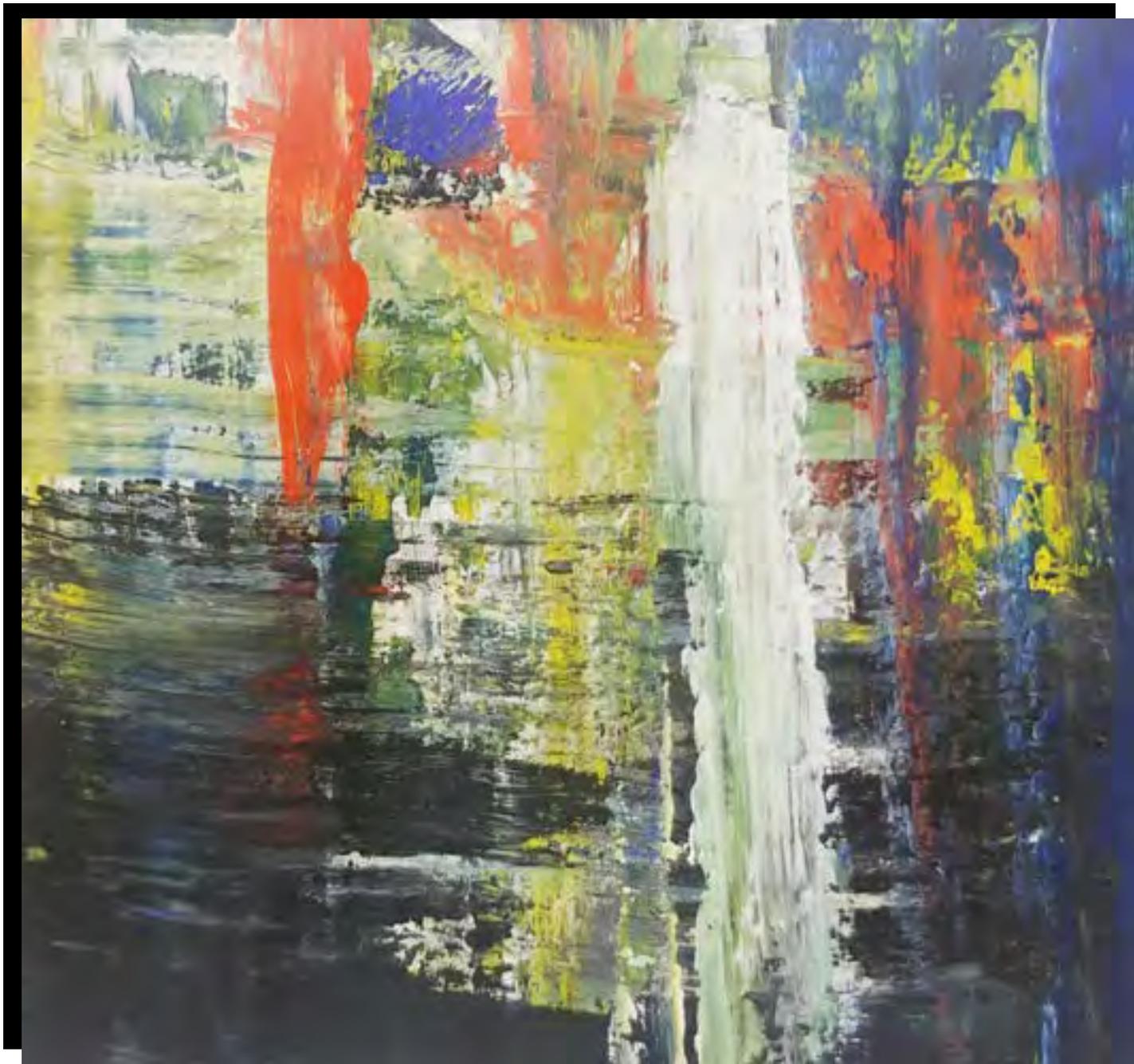
From the pages of these centerfolds stuck out a wide folded piece of brown paper. The girl took the papers from each magazine and opened them up like a road map, unveiling a series of strange shapes marked out in dotted lines, the makings of a pattern one might find at any fabric store. Taking the scissors from her vanity, the girl set herself to cutting out what she wanted from each one, bothering to fold the rest back up when she was done. Then, taking her scraps and her scissors, she placed them both at her vanity.

“She studied them all, at times tracing her finger over an area of particular interest such as a calf or waist.”

The trinity was now a quartet.

Leaving them with the promise of being back soon, the girl returned to the small yellow table and began the last of her preparations. From a bag marked “Bill’s Hardware,” she took out some rolled up bundles of blue plastic tarp. These she laid out over the floor and over the cushion of her vanity stool. She did this with caution, flattening out the plastic and holding down its corners with old books or cans, anything heavy enough to keep the edges from rolling up. Once laid out, the slick blue plastic led from its origin in the bedroom, all the way to the bathroom, and ended just at the door frame. Once satished with her work, the girl took a large bottle of bleach, the final item she had purchased that day, and went into the bathroom.

Here she made no hesitation and flipped the light switch on, allowing herself to be fully illuminated. She did not have to fear it for too much longer. After a blink or two, the fluorescent bulb came to life and brightened the corrugated, claustrophobic space. Placing the bottle of bleach in the sink, she stood over the bathtub and began checking the release of nozzle on a home-made funnel. Cut from an old detergent bottle, it hung upturned on the short curtain rod and was kept in place by a generous amount of duct tape. The nozzle itself, which had once belonged to a pressure hose, had a long plastic tube which led from its end into the bath. Once clear, it was now discolored and cloudy from the passing of various liquids. Taking a cup from atop the toilet tank, she filled it with water via the tub, and let it run through this device of hers. Reassured that there were no gaps anywhere, no means for leakage, she closed the nozzle, took the bleach, and began to fill up the funnel again. Finally, everything was ready. Starting with her glasses, the girl began to strip down until she was as nude as the women in



her magazines. Now there was no dress to improve her lines, no stockings to shape her legs, or no shoes to make her look taller. She was as bare and incomplete as nature had made her. The next stage began the moment she set foot in the tub. Within the protection of the fiberglass womb, the girl took the tubing and plugged up its open end with her thumb, while with the other she reached over and opened the valve. Sitting down with her knees pressed against her breasts, she took in a deep breath, and at last took her thumb away.

In a gush, the bleach came pouring out over the top of her head and sluiced down the rest of her body, stealing all her color away in a tide of stinging whiteness. She let the chlorine soak into her pores for a while, wanting the final product to be free of any indication of what she used to look like. In a way, this was like a baptism, something to go through in order to come out clean on the other end. After twenty minutes or so, she ran the shower, rinsing away the slippery film which the bleach had left behind. Then, drying herself with a towel spotted from use, she went into her bedroom and stood before her vanity.

Sitting against the mirror was a coffee mug stuffed full of pens and pencils. Shuffling through them, she took out a single black marker that had been stuck somewhere in between. Taking one of the shapes she had cut out earlier, she pressed the four-cornered, diamond piece of paper against the right side of her stomach just below her ribs. Uncapping the marker with her mouth, she traced the shape onto her skin, tossing the used up pattern away right after. She did this again on the other side of her body, then the backs of her arms, her thighs, and finally on her lower stomach.

Next came the scissors. Pulling at the flesh of her arm, which stretched too much like elastic,

she began to snip away at the lines on her skin, not stopping until they were all connected in red, painful lines. *It only hurts for a minute.* She reasoned in her mind in an effort to deal with the pain. And she gasped almost in a whisper. *It's worth it—when you're done, it'll be worth it.*

The blood that flowed thereafter trickled down her arms and legs like little streams of life. They ran together and collected at her feet, creating a small puddle that eventually grew to cover a third of the floor around her. When she was done removing the unwanted pieces of herself, she at last took the needle and thread in her hands in order to begin working on those red, barren parts which begged attention.

With every individual stitch there came pain, a sense of relief, and, above all else, closure. Things were becoming as they should be—how they never were on their own.

It took so long to do, but, being a labor of love, it was time well spent. At seven o' clock she finally finished: those threads of white-turned-pink silk were all aligned and perfect. Stepping back so that her whole body was reflected in the mirror, the girl took a minute to examine herself head to toe. She turned from side to side, lifted her arms and legs to see if there were any puckering areas of skin that needed to be gone over again. But there was nothing. Everything was stitched up as neatly as could be. But why did it feel like something was missing?

Drawing closer to the vanity mirror, the girl started considering the other parts of her body which she might have overlooked. She pulled the skin of her neck back, but was not convinced that that was necessarily it, nor the skin on her hands, or her buttocks, back, anything. Sitting down, she turned her attention towards her face, her own milky, rinsed out eyes scrutinizing the reflection

they took in. Thinking back to the magazines, she came to the realization that what she lacked was very simple. Threading the needle again, she hooked a finger in the corner of her mouth and began to lead a strand through her cheek.

The needle came out cleanly on the other side, just short of her ear. She repeated this three times and did the same to the other side of her face. Done. She gathered the tied off ends which hung by her ears and began to pull slowly. Her lips spread apart as she did so, exposing a set of pearly veneer caps which previously had been kept hidden from the world. Now that she was smiling, the girl secured the strings and snipped away the excess ends. Leaning forward on her stool, she examined her face again to see if she finally liked herself. And had the strings not been there, she would have smiled on her own.

Another shower, some mopping, and a garbage bag full of blue plastic later, the girl finally walked out into the waning daylight hours. As she passed under the streetlights, she held her head high for the people she walked amongst. Nearly all were above average people, out there getting ready to celebrate the night just as she was. Of course, there were others walking the street who were exactly like her, ones that had just finished with their own needles in preparation for the night. At times they would spy one another, acknowledging each other with a smile or a subtle nod of the head. They served as a reminder that she was not alone in her pursuit for something more than what she was. They truly understood the necessity of change, and that it was ridiculous to settle for what they had been given. In time the stitches would heal and the skin would fill out again, but a little pain every couple of years was well worth the result.

Not completely to her surprise, every now and

again she would catch an average someone out on the street. Much like a bad smell or an irritating song, they had a habit of sticking around when you just wanted them gone. Why they were out at all, she didn't know, but as she passed each by, she could see them openly staring at her. This filled her with a certain kind of pride. It did not matter if those looks were from a man or a woman; it did not matter if those looks were out of desire, fear, or jealousy, just as long as they were for her.

“Threading the needle again, she hooked a finger in the corner of her mouth and began to lead a strand through her cheek.”



Blue Heron

McKenna Barker

Pastel

A Weary Woman

Dylan Sokolovich

My mother,
Her poor hands,
Bruised on our butts,
As if
80 hours a week
Wasn't enough to
Wear down tissue,
Forcing bones
To scrape
Down to nothing.

Then,
As if our bruised bosoms
Wasn't enough,
We'd be forced
To pull,
Tear,
Rip,
At her
Locked fingers.

Truth is, my mother
Is as brave as a bison,
Who leads
Her pack of calves
Down dusty cattle trails,
Stampeding through
Corrals and camps,
To water holes
Where only we
Would drink.

No,
my mother is as brilliant as a dove,
Who wades through
weaponed crowds,
Worthy of living
wherever there is food,
Tears at dollar bills,
And checks,
Her crippled hands
lacing into a nest.

Actually,
My mother is a worker,
Living off the
barely livable,
Who still finds time to
cook dinner,
At five,
Every night,
And whoop her kids
Into shape.

Oasis
Nicholas Fulwood

The wind whispered lies,
scattering rain from the truth,
but the pond is full.



Aurora
Gustavo Galicia
Photography



Frustration
Miguel Santiago
Acrylic



Alice
Rachel Dodson
Music

Shouldn't I be bored
Of things that aren't new?
But I lose sleep
Daydreaming about you
And I've got friends
They fill this whole room

And the night was dazzling
And the music is loud
But it's always rough
And there's always crying
On the come down

Oh, Alice
Oh, Alice
Looking through the looking-glass
That's what it feels like

And fantasies and nightmares
Are the same thing,
Aren't they?
That's what it feels like

Thought you were everything I wanted

Editorial Policy

Legacy is an award-winning journal produced by students of Reading Area Community College. Since it was founded in 2001, *Legacy's* goal has been to serve as the college's creative outlet and provide a showcase for the excellence achieved by RACC students. Through prose, poetry, art, and photography, *Legacy* reflects the diversity and richness within the campus. As it is a student-run publication, *Legacy* also provides an excellent opportunity for students who choose to serve on its team to gain hands-on experience.

Legacy is published once a year and available free to all members of the college community. Submissions to *Legacy* are accepted year-round from current RACC students and recent graduates (alums no more than five years out). *Legacy* welcomes all genres of writing—poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, personal and researched essays, screenplays—artwork, and photography. We also welcome hybrid texts, excerpts from longer prose pieces if self-contained, mixed-media art, three-dimensional works of art such as sculptures, and original musical compositions.

All work must be submitted with the proper submission form. A separate form must be submitted for each piece. All rights, including e-rights, are reserved by the college and *Legacy* has the right to use any work in whole or in part in promotional materials including posters and online postings. Copyright for individual works reverts to authors and artists upon publication. Any reprint of prose, poetry, artworks, or photography in a new edition of *Legacy* must receive permission from the student authors and/or artists. Opinions expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the editors, the general staff, or the college.

Every piece submitted to *Legacy* is reviewed and discussed by the staff—members of the club and the students enrolled in *Publishing Practicum COM 125* and *COM 126*. The staff discusses each submission extensively and debates its merits before putting it to a final vote. The final vote determines which works will be edited and published. Student identities remain anonymous throughout the selection process in order for the staff to remain unbiased. The *Legacy* staff reserves the right to edit any submission to ensure clarity and accuracy of language, develop its effectiveness, and enhance its artistic appeal. After the final vote, the staff discusses possible edits and sometimes works with student authors and artists with the goal of helping each piece reach its highest potential. The edited pieces make up the content of the journal. Only those authors and artists whose works are chosen for publication are contacted.

Colophone

The nineteenth annual volume of *Legacy* was designed using Windows-based personal computers. The software used in this production included Adobe InDesign CC, Adobe Photoshop CC, and Adobe Illustrator CC. Volume Nineteen was printed by Prestige Color. The cover was printed on 100# Sterling Premium Matte cover stock using a 4/1 color process in an 8x8 inch format. The body of the journal was printed in black and color ink on Accent Opaque Smooth 70# Text paper. The font for body copy was Apple Garamond. The font for the titles and authors/artists of submitted work was Whitney. This volume was designed and laid out by Dylan Sokolovich.

Legacy and its contributors have been nationally recognized by the Community College Humanities Association, Associated Collegiate Press, and Columbia Scholastic Press Association.

The logo for the Community College Humanities Association (CCHA) consists of the letters 'CCHA' in a large, blue, serif font. The 'C' and 'H' are significantly larger than the 'C' and 'A', and they are all connected together.The logo for Associated Collegiate Press (acp) features the lowercase letters 'acp' in a teal, sans-serif font. Below the letters, the words 'Associated Collegiate Press' are written in a smaller, teal, sans-serif font.



Legacy XIX 2022 Emboldened
10 South Second Street,
Reading, PA 19602
www.racc.edu