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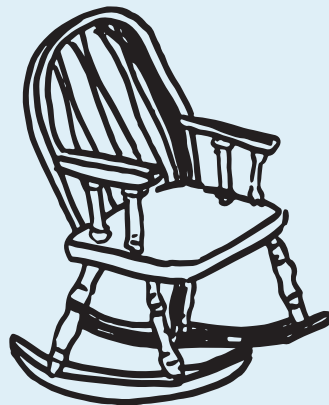
THE AUBURN CIRCLE



POETRY - PROSE - VISUAL ARTS - FASHION - ARCHITECTURE - DESIGN - FILM

“My art is grounded in the belief of one universal energy which runs through everything: from insect to man, from man to specter, from specter to plant, from plant to galaxy. My works are the irrigation veins of this universal fluid. Through them ascend the ancestral sap, the original beliefs, the primordial accumulations, the unconscious thoughts that animate the world.”

-Ana Mendieta



Agoraphobia

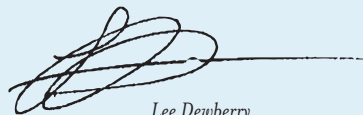
I am the pretty thing that haunts this place, moving in and out of the walls and the vents like the tendrils of kudzu. In an all consuming fashion, I wonder how it feels to step out of here. The shutters are white. The trim is chipped and rain-damaged. The walls are blue. You repainted before you left.

The ceiling is leaking, the walls are mummified with asbestos. I have suffocated myself with loneliness. Way back when you wore your hair long, brushing the tops of your shoulders, you guided my hands forward and out of the front door. I still remember how the sun felt, still anxiously chew the inside of my cheek to taste blood. The word hermit rolled over in your mouth until it was molded and mildewed.

How does it feel to squish your toes between dirt for so long that worms wriggle in and out of them? What do my bloodshot eyes look like when I don't glance past them in the mirror? Do you still wear your father's old Levi's button-up? When I stepped past the porch stairs you offered me your keys. You told me that most of the world is lit up in neon and suffocating in plastic wrap. There's something sinister about it.

For you, I would have given the moon, only prettier. How do you love without it becoming all consuming? I remember the sound of fabric sliding down your skin like I know my own voice, which has become scratchy and unforgivable in my own silence. Back when the floors were still swept and the T.V. was still turned to cable news. I wore Chuck Taylors and your pants were torn on the back. It was hard to care.

If it was possible for me to leave this skeleton of a home, I would track your prints like Grylls. I would sacrifice my body to be the wind that flows around you. If the sun still touches you, I would set myself on fire to be light. If you could forgive me, I could close my eyes. So dance then, loaded gun of a home: shoot me forward, forgive my naivety, and send me packing. Unroot me from these floors and tell me the directions to the nearest bus station. *I will track the stars back to you.*



Lee Dewberry

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



All I can say is I love you



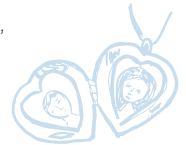


In a 2018 *Smithsonian Magazine* article author Richard Grant wrote about his time walking through Germany's Eifel Mountains. He noticed how large and expansive the trees were and said, "To reach enormoussness, they depend on a complicated web of relationships, alliances, and kinship networks." This idea is based on research by scientist Peter Wohlleben and many others who have found that rather than competing for water, nutrients, and other necessities from the soil, trees actually create bonds with their root systems. Through these connections they form a collective consciousness and share one another's accomplishments and pain.

Growing up in my North Alabama community, I was no stranger to being surrounded by such trees—the type that extend toward the sky as if connecting with the divine. For me, these wooden giants still carry the reverence of that relationship. I spent countless days running through the woods, wild-eyed and bare-footed. I told the trees the plots of my made-up stories, sang my poetry to the wind, and whispered my secrets along with the gurgling streams—hoping they had hands big enough to hold my child-like wonder. In some ways, nature was my first audience for artistsic endeavors. In turn, I became its audience and student. I learned the lyrics of pine cones rustling in branches, the hum of bees in a summer garden, and the calls of animals in the wind. I especially loved listening to the trees outside of my grandparents porch. These tree songs take me back to young days listening to relatives spinning wild stories from porch rocking chairs while their hands were snapping beans. I carry my southern Appalachian raising in my heart and my voice. I weave strong folk traditions, the smell of pine, and mountain colloquialisms into everything I create now. I am no more than my roots.

I say that to point out how the following pages—the Spring 2023 edition of the Circle—are the overwhelming product of a similar community. We often don't think of ourselves as having a lot in

common with the woods that surround us; however we are no more than a forest of trees. Each tree has roots planted in different place, and these connections influence every decision up to this point. Every piece of this community—the hands that so diligently created this magazine, the people who contributed their art, and now you, the reader—is connected. We see one another's roots in the pieces of work that we create. Like the pines, we are a culmination of generations before us, a beautiful collection of all the people who have touched our lives and whose lives we have touched in turn. In finding these connections and seeing each other's roots, we are also able to find bits of ourselves in them and create lasting bonds. We are individuals, but we must never forget we are smaller parts of a much larger community.



This being my last semester, I was fixating on the perfect words to sum up my experience at the Circle. I can never effectively express my deep adoration for this community and the individuals in it. So instead, I want to leave you with vulnerability. The type of love that doesn't believe in locked doors but rather invites you in to see where the spirit meets the bone. I extend this preface in hopes that it honors the artists who have practiced the same bold openness—who have given us a small part of themselves to hold, refelct on, and protect. I encourage you, the reader, to think about your roots and how they connect you to the surrounding community. I encourage you to make art like the birds in those big old pines make song—to communicate your sorrow, your joy, your love, your pain. In doing so, I believe that it becomes our sorrow, our joy, our love, our pain. We hope you enjoy this edition of the Circle and, like the wise old pines, observe the works with reverence and use your art to connect you to the creative community around you.



Kmc

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visual arts



poetry



public relations



prose

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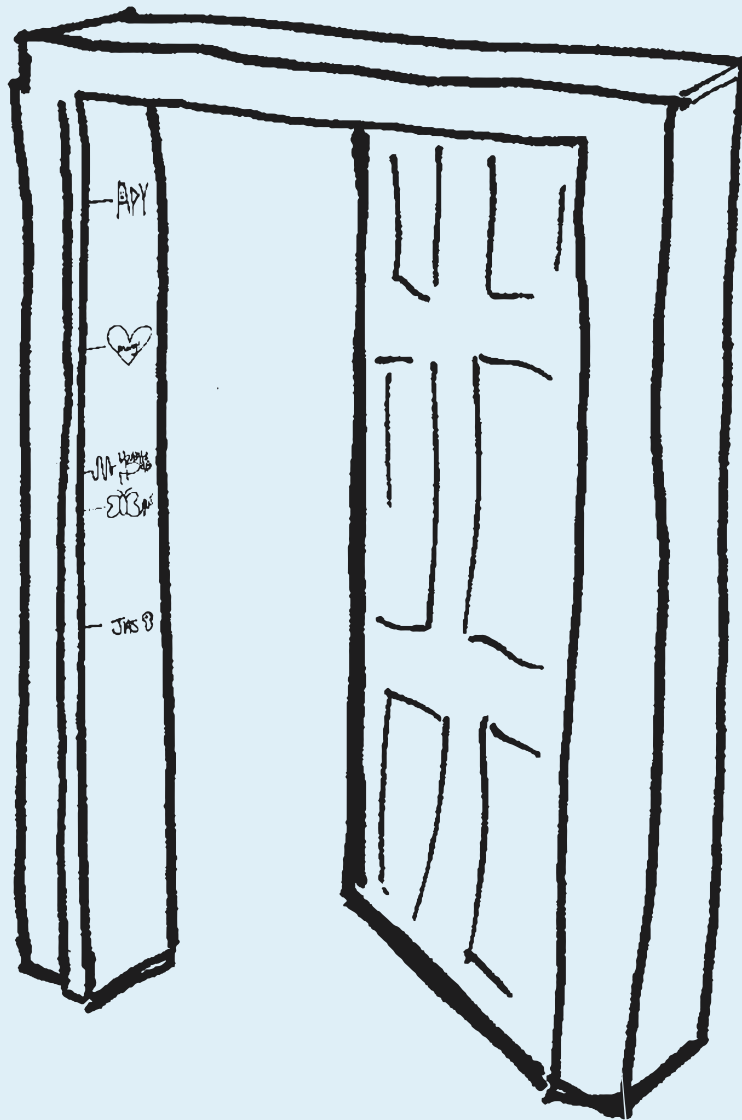
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keeping the porch light on

glancing through the peephole

welcoming strangers

stomping off the mud

shaking off the rain

taking off your coat

hanging up your keys

escaping the cold

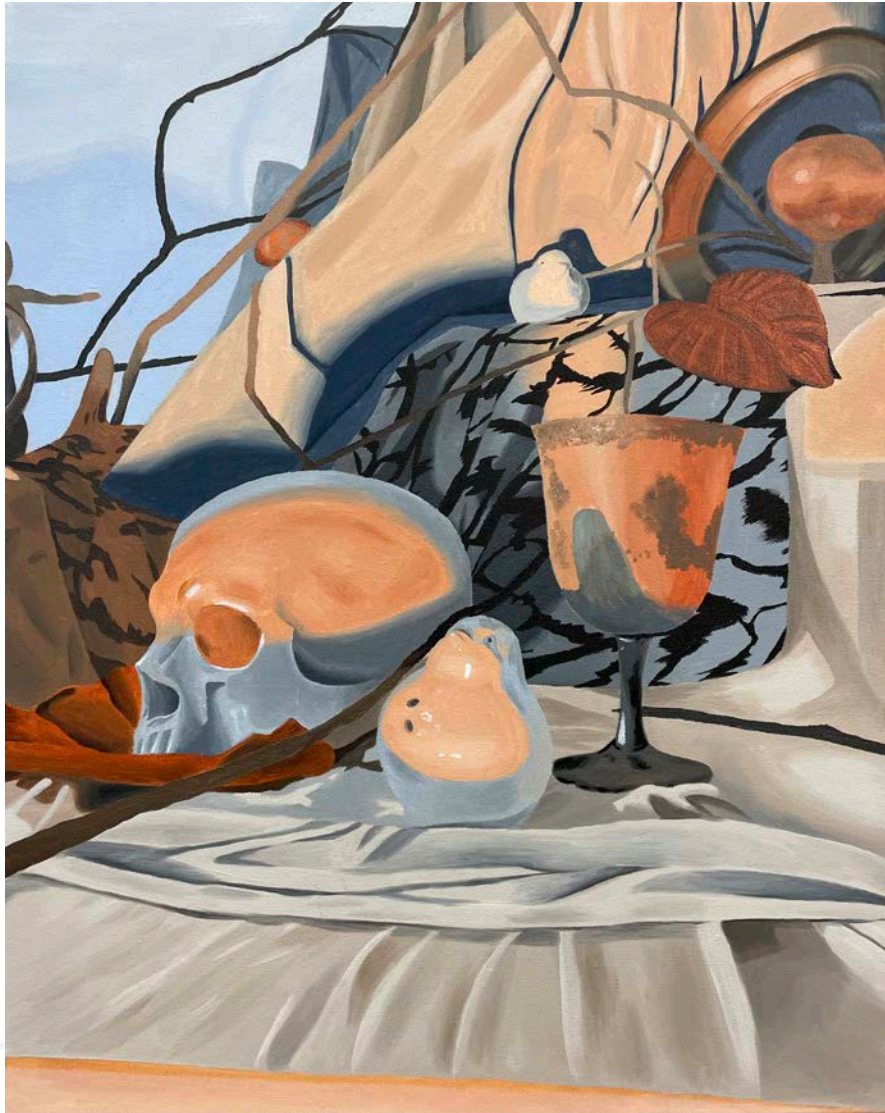
greeting with a kiss

stepping

across the threshold

I Am...

Jillian Cate



auburn memories | Coraline Guida | Oil-Based Paint

a creature:

a brain and a spinal cord.

a sack of organs,
a vessel to pass on DNA.

a former embryo,
a future corpse.

hominidae—
a simple-minded primate
disguised as an animal of intellect.

Mother Nature's attempt at a flawless organism—
millions of Her other fruitless endeavors for perfection
melted into one, entirely new entity.

the product of both good and evil people.

a testament to my ancestors,
who drained the pigment from my features
as they moved north, and their
need for melanin slowly ebbed away.

(shaking my fist at them
for dropping me under that searing Alabama sun,
when they spent so long designing me for
the low-light and cold.)

folding my hands, looking to the sky,
and thanking the people
who bestowed upon me so many blessings—

but also cursing them
for the blessings they withheld.



not immune to the unique greed and hatred of human nature.
two X-chromosomes thrashing about,
designing their sui-generes dance
to the song of womanhood.

made of starstuff,
just like everything else.

wondering, pondering, calculating—
earnest in my quest for understanding the world.

wondering what you are thinking as you read this.

(trying not to sound condescending.)

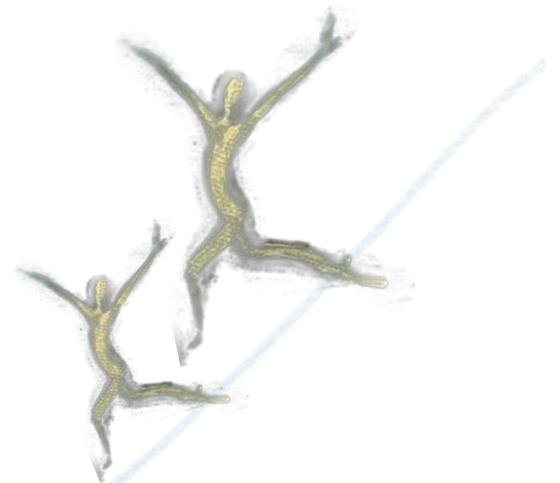
done seeking the answer to that dead-end question:
what is the meaning of life?

making my own purpose.
making my own meaning.

quietly loving others,
in the beautiful web of human connection
because loving is harder than hating
but it's just better for some reason.

transcending my biological design.

trying to become a better creature.



*making my
own purpose*



Further Up, Further In | Molly Werk | Oil on Canvas

*making my
own
meaning*



Ophelia Hair Care | Danielle Ravelo | Graphic Design



Alabama Symphony Orchestra | Reagan Towers | Graphic Design

Oil in Surf

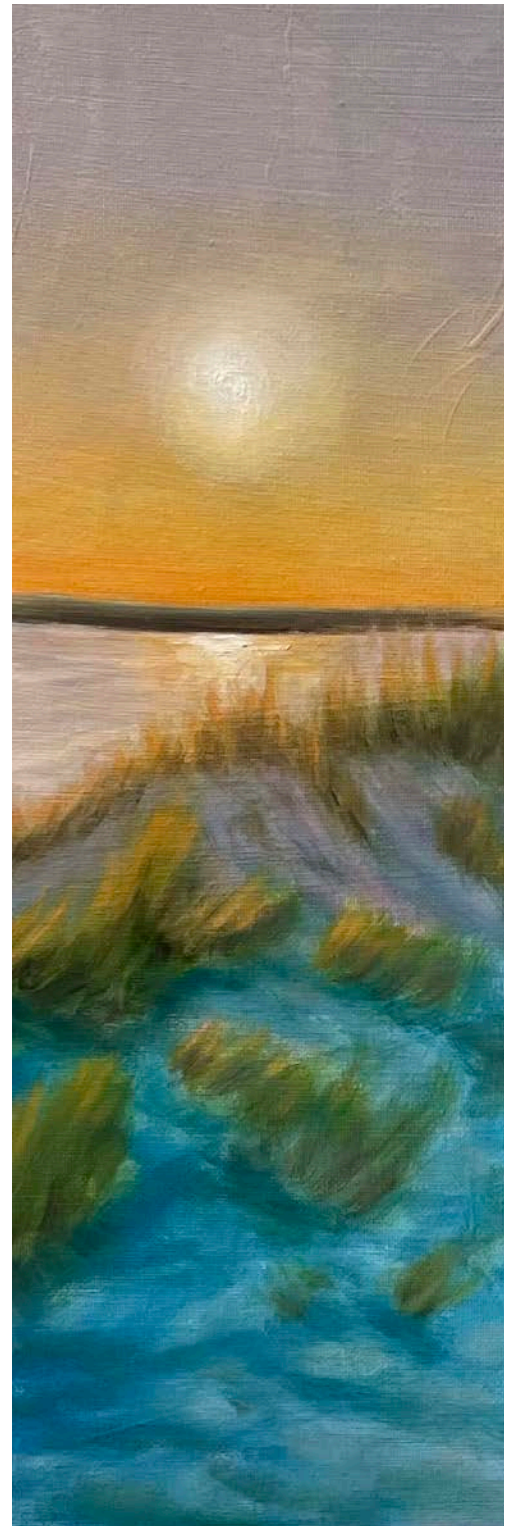
Reid Selby

As oil in surf should disappear,
And weathered bell off cliffside dive,
The Dutchman's pipe bloomed twice this year,
They've fallen here, and here they thrive.

A sunken mast, decay to sand,
Arise the brine on moonlit shore,
A face the mist makes faint and bland,
With seaweed rot, sick petrichor.

Pray, grasp the last gold swirls of light,
Doubloons of hope won't catch your head,
There is no sleep for us tonight,
Until the Captain catch us dead.

For sea reclaims what land would hide,
As it claims those who ne'er return,
Above the surf, we toil and strive,
A shipwreck's peace, our souls have earned.





Beckoning Wind

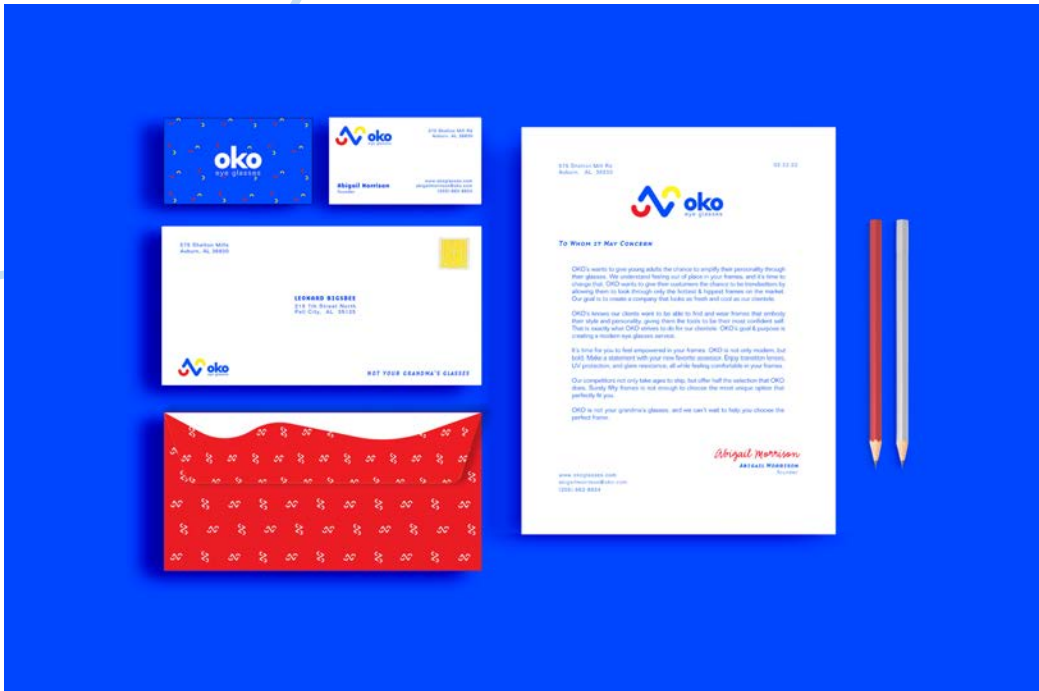


Megan D | Music

This is Beckoning Wind, in my opinion it tends to fall under fantasy instrumental in terms of genre. My artist name is Xenruyumi or Yumi Yam, depending on what I am releasing and to whom I am releasing.



Ganesha in style | McKenzie Bennett | Cardboard Sculpture



OKO Eye Glasses | Lee Dewberry | Graphic Design



Dalí Museum Ad Campaign | Juliet Nell | Graphic Design





The Park
Jimmy Fincher
Canon 80D



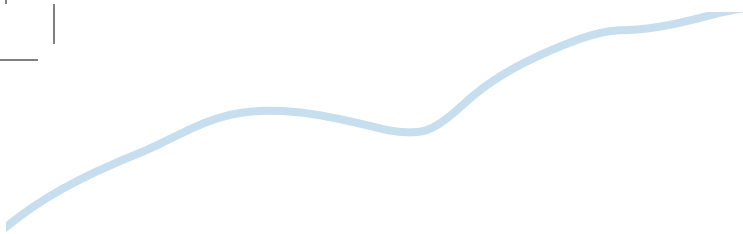
Viewfinder

Carson Barnes

*When I was nine years old, I saw a boy
get hit by a car.*

Though, as I write it, I realize that is not actually true.

I did not see a boy get hit by a car. I saw a boy land in the middle of the road, two lanes over from where he had just been hit.



The boy was one of my classmate's brothers, we found out later. He was fourteen. I was in third grade, coming back from a field trip at the end of the school day. We were within sight of my elementary school, about to turn into the car loop where our parents waited to take us home.

The road we were on had four lanes total, two moving in either direction. Our bus was on the left, right next to the center line. The boy was riding his bike and attempting to cross the road. He was struck by a car in the right lane; my teacher screamed. He flew off his bike, passed in front of our bus, crossed the center line, and landed in the first lane of oncoming traffic. I was seated on the left side of the bus; I saw him land.

A blue pickup truck was fast approaching in the lane where he landed, and there was a split-second I remember where I thought he was going to be run over. But the truck slammed on its brakes. The driver got out.

To the best of my recollection, the boy was not wearing a helmet. But maybe he was. If he hadn't been, I don't know how he would have survived, and they told us he did survive.

When you are nine, fourteen seems very old

*

My father introduced my sisters and I to the *Star Wars* movies so young that my little sister cannot recall a time before them. I have a vague memory of going with him to rent the first one from the video store, but it seems like, for as long as I can remember, *Star Wars* movie nights have been a family tradition in my home.

Which is to say, I don't really remember the first time I watched *A New Hope*. Or the second, or fourth, or fifth. I just know I watched it, over and over, until I knew the movie back to front, and the knowledge of it had suffused my brain like it had always been there in the first place.

I remember the scene where Luke hurries back to his aunt and uncle's house after realizing they're in danger. He's too late—the house has been burned, and his aunt and uncle with it; their bodies lie as two cracked, smoking skeletons by the front steps, which the camera cuts to briefly in close-up.

As a toddler, I'd seen this shot of their charred, skeletal remains and registered it only as a shot of a smoking pile of debris. I hadn't known enough to identify a human body that looked this way.

I don't remember the first time I watched *A New Hope*, but I remember the first time I watched it and saw the skeletons. It was jarring—shocking—to be anticipating only an image of debris and suddenly be confronted with a clear shot of human remains instead. It was so obviously their skeletons—I couldn't understand how I had never seen before.

*

The feeling I most associate with my memories of the boy's accident isn't horror, or fear, or panic—it's boredom. And a little bit of irritation, that it was going to take me so long to get home. The impact happened in an instant, and then traffic was stopped for what felt like an eternity while the aftermath unfolded.

A group of adults converged around the boy on





6 AM | Mackenzie Boden | Oil-Based Paint

the ground outside my window, circling him in such a way that I couldn't see what they were doing to him. I don't remember there being any blood on the road, or any other physical signs of trauma. I think someone may have removed the boy's shirt at some point, but I can't say for certain. I also don't remember an ambulance, which seems wrong. Surely someone called for an ambulance.

I do remember that one of the third-grade teachers moved to stand at the back of the bus across the aisle from me and raised her hand in the air.

"Everyone, look at me," she said, her voice just as gentle as when she read stories aloud in class. "Keep your eyes back here on me, please."

But staring at my teacher was boring, and all

the while the knowledge that something much more important was happening right outside my window made my shoulder blades itch. I wanted to turn around and watch. The teachers hadn't given us something new to focus on instead; they just told us to turn our backs and ignore it. At the time, I remember wondering why they thought such a tactic would work.


It didn't occur to me until much later that my teachers were more panicked than I was. They were surely thinking we were all about to watch a child die.

*

They told us the boy lived. There's a part of me that doubts it, and I don't know why. Maybe because I



How can you
see someone die and not
know you've just seen
someone die?



don't remember a helmet. Maybe because I can't recall anyone ever speaking of it again. Maybe because his brother didn't go to school with us the next year.

But I also can't shake the feeling that if he didn't survive, I would know. I would've known. How can you see someone die and not know you've just seen someone die?

*

The moment where you go from viewing your past self as a part of you to viewing it as a separate entity is strangely hard to latch onto. You won't notice until you hit on a memory wherein you find your thoughts are narrating rather than reliving.

You've become your own little sister. She has her own little home in your chest—content, removed, protected from the world you now walk through.

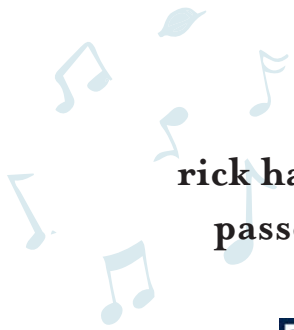
But you don't realize you've made this home and moved your past self into it until you play back a memory and discover that the confusing parts now make sense, that you no longer relate to the little girl on the bus, although she is you. You can no longer see anything but the charred skeletons. You can only remember that once upon a time, you saw something else.

The truth is, I don't know what was there and what wasn't. At nine years old, I wasn't necessarily looking for the right things.





The Spot | Anderson Olexa | Canon AE-1

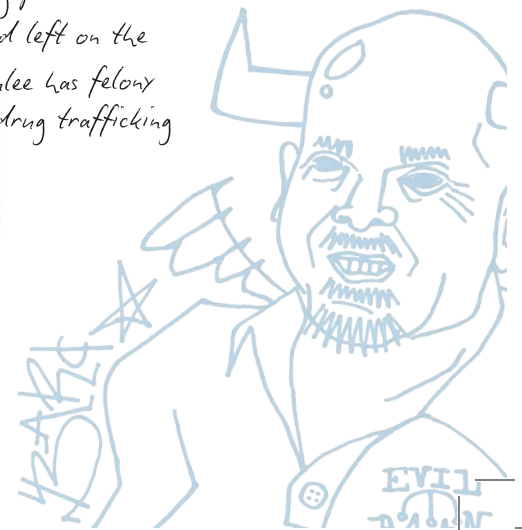


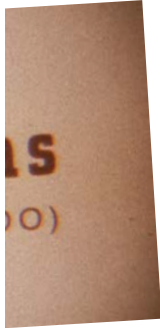
rick harrison's pawn stars freakout (chumlee has passed) (the old man has claimed oklahoma)



The Official Bard of
Baldwin County |
Music

*i wrote this in the bullpen of the
radio station while watching pawn stars
highlights that someone had left on the
tv !!! did you know chumlee has felony
charges for drug trafficking*



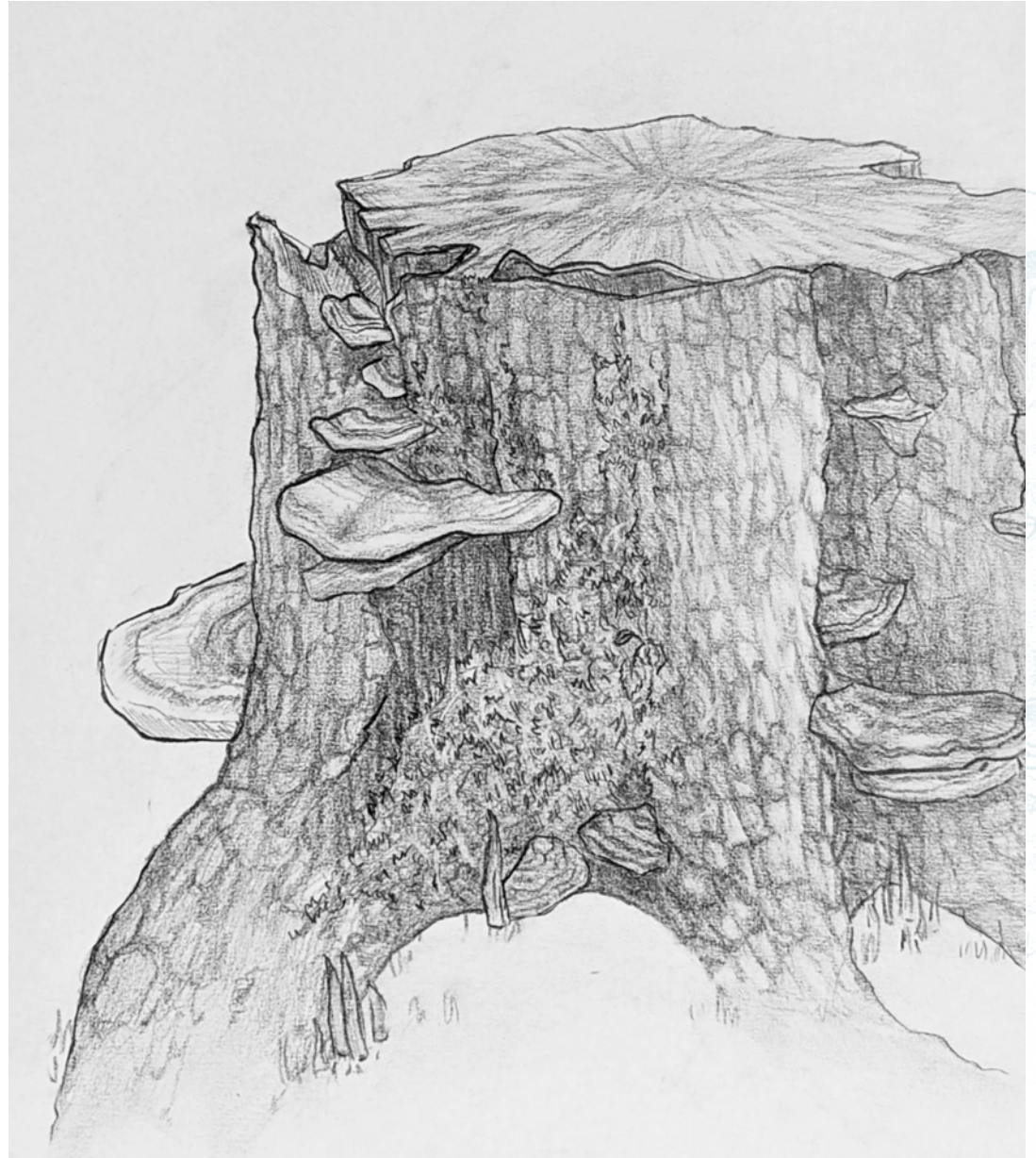


cinema (revelado) by the marias
 Danielle Ravelo
 Adobe AfterEffects, Kodak Carousel 4200 Slide
 Projector, Apollo Overhead Projector, Nikon d5600



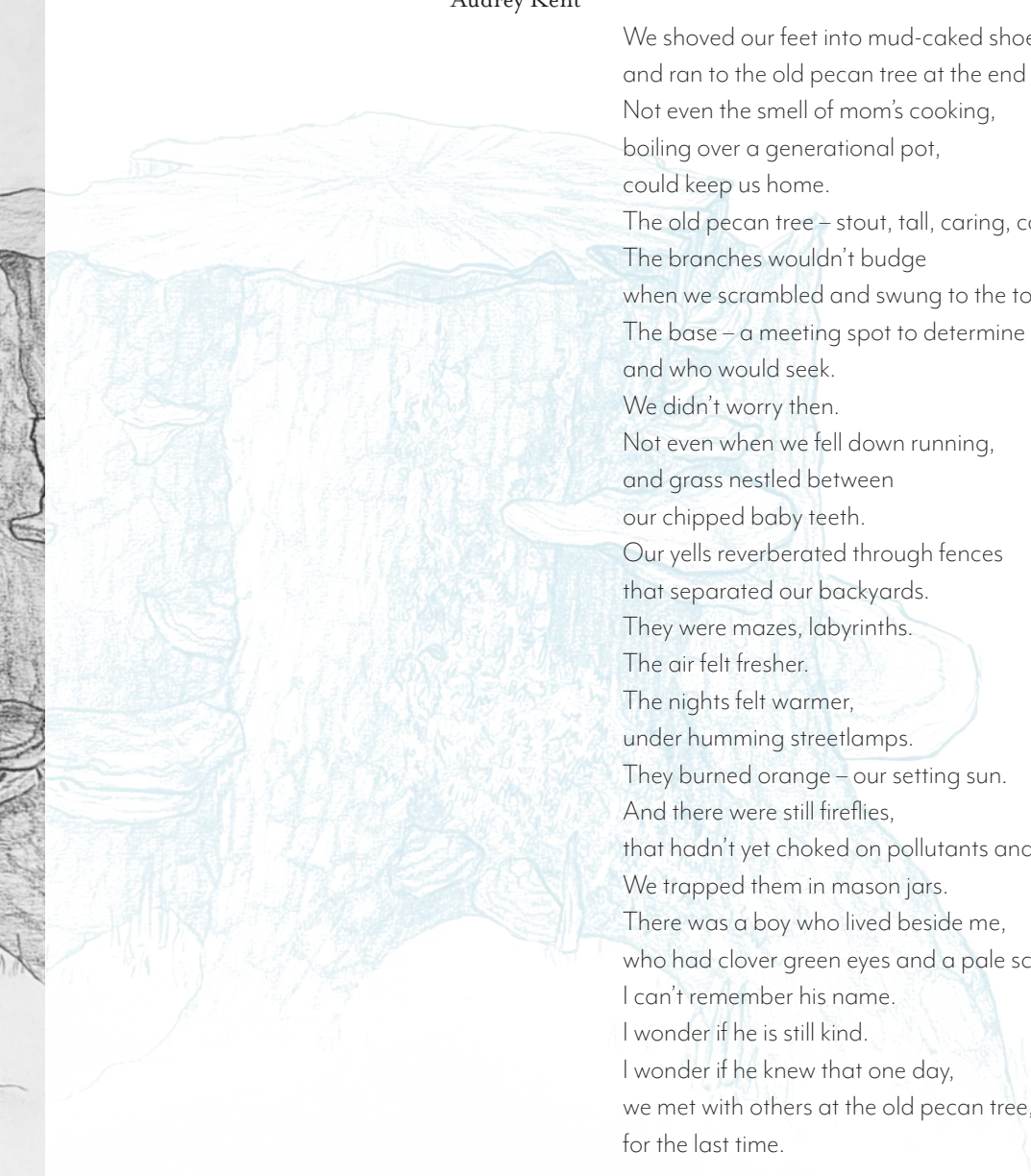
Gas Station | Caroline Webster | Graphic Design

Microcosm | Emily Moore | Graphite



Childhood

Audrey Kent



We shoved our feet into mud-caked shoes
and ran to the old pecan tree at the end of the cul-de-sac.
Not even the smell of mom's cooking,
boiling over a generational pot,
could keep us home.
The old pecan tree – stout, tall, caring, constant.
The branches wouldn't budge
when we scrambled and swung to the top.
The base – a meeting spot to determine who would hide,
and who would seek.
We didn't worry then.
Not even when we fell down running,
and grass nestled between
our chipped baby teeth.
Our yells reverberated through fences
that separated our backyards.
They were mazes, labyrinths.
The air felt fresher.
The nights felt warmer,
under humming streetlamps.
They burned orange – our setting sun.
And there were still fireflies,
that hadn't yet choked on pollutants and weaponized pesticides.
We trapped them in mason jars.
There was a boy who lived beside me,
who had clover green eyes and a pale scar above his lip.
I can't remember his name.
I wonder if he is still kind.
I wonder if he knew that one day,
we met with others at the old pecan tree,
for the last time.

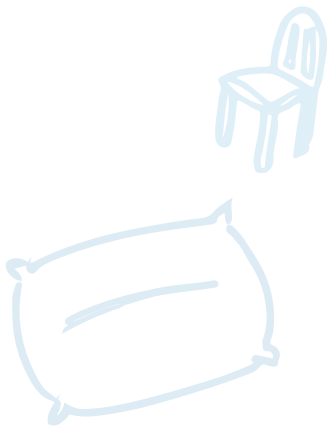
Reflex: On Being Too Far (Always)

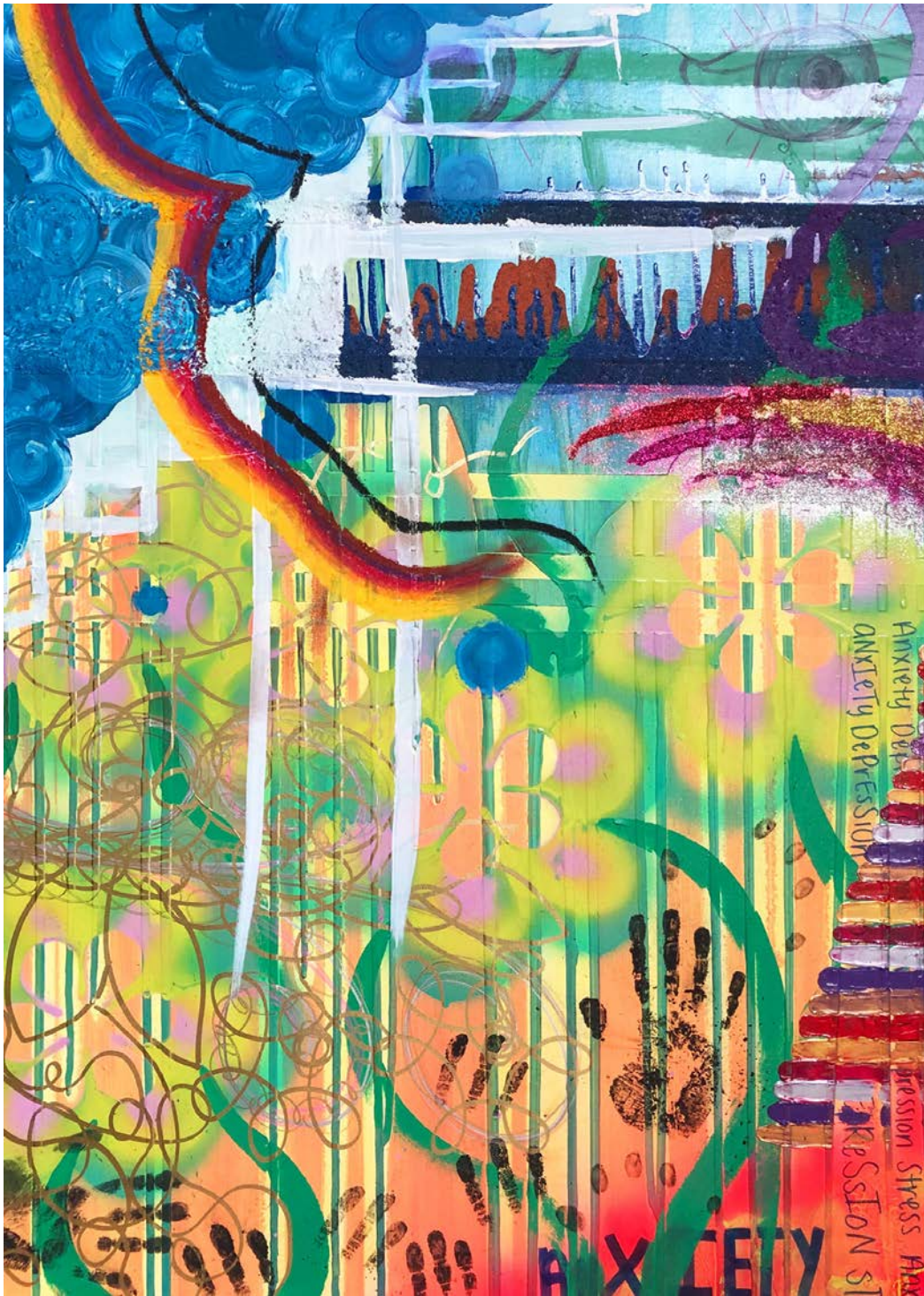
Sara Amis

My life is lived in images. Complexity
is grounded in simplicity—metaphors
and analogies and this is a tree,
or a leaf, or the sun. An object
is an action, is an intention, and you
are you. I wonder if you are
one of my “four great stories,”
if you are all my great stories.
I look for you

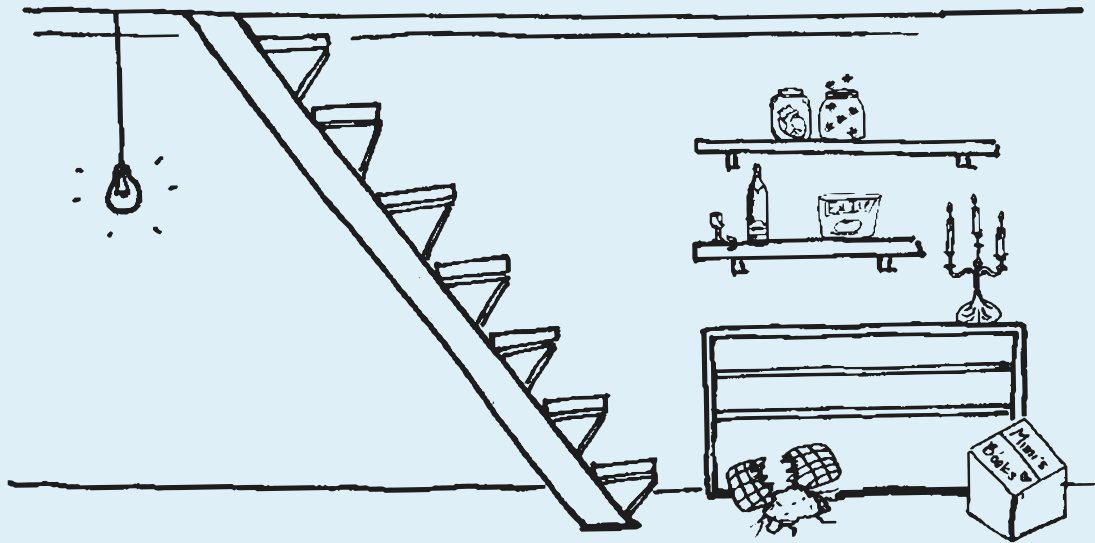
in abandoned blue
hoodies, and bouncing legs, in the half-laugh
whisper, “goodness,” in cartoons, on the hill
behind my house. I want to compress you
into a stone to skip, watching ripples play
out on the surface; grow you like a scab
I pick on my face; cram our sides
together until our ribs become complete
once more (the original design), until
I can breathe. How do I
fold you up, fit you into my palm,
into my words, into my ribosomes—
place you on top of my fridge
with half-stale cereal boxes, smooth you
into a leaf torn apart by methodical
hands—

lift you into the sky, hang you
with the sun, squint at your perplexities
as it rains, and you still beam down at me.
I want to learn you by rote, practice sheets
and brute memorization and flashcards,
and never stop or slow down or think
about how all-in-due-time is probably wise.
I want to read you, under my covers
with a flashlight, like a kid promising
“just one more chapter before I sleep.”





Anxiety | Elizabeth Preston | Acrylic, Oil Paint, and Mixed Mediums



The creakiness of the steps

The lightbulb that flickers

The stale draft of mildewed air

The cobwebs on the back of your neck

The sour taste that lingers

Where do you go to hide?

down to the cellar

Notes App Poetry

Alex Alford

I started praying again last week,
avoiding asking the question
I already know the answer to.
The Good Book says
"Be not afraid"
but it does not know
I've never been anything else.
I lost faith a long time ago.

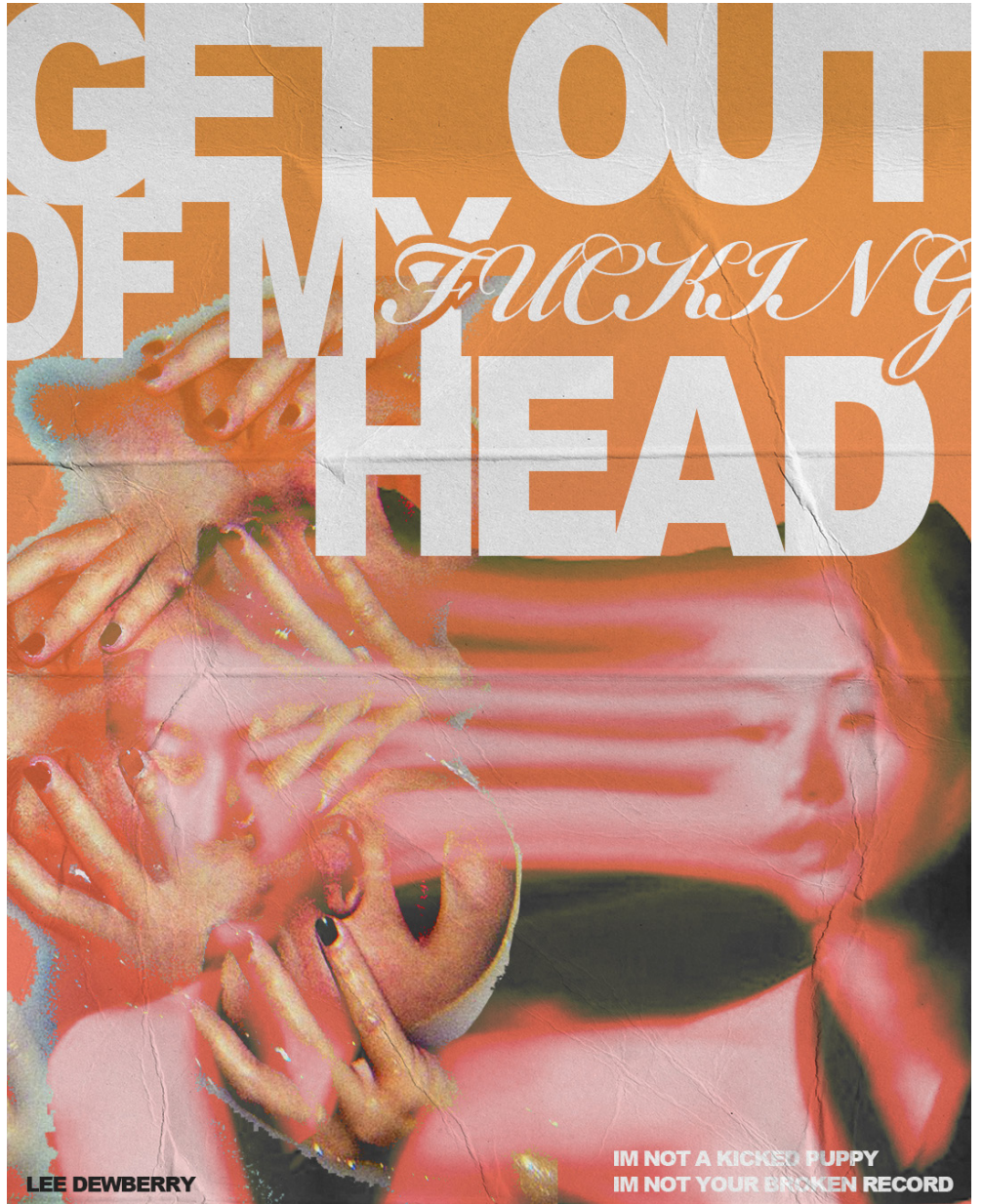
I thought I left it somewhere
in the halls of the funeral home
where they held
my grandfather's service.
If then
why cancer?

They say He is forgiving,
and I believe that. I don't know
if I am ready to be forgiven,
if I am ready for what comes
with His forgiveness. But,
I started praying again last week.

So for now, I will keep talking
to Him when I am afraid.
I will wax poetic in run-
on sentences, and speak
in declarative statements
until I understand
what I am asking for.
Until then, I will write
my prayers in the notes app
and call them poetry.



Abandoned Textures | Elizabeth Preston | Canon 70-D



Get Out of My Head | Lee Dewberry | Graphic Design





Ember Lantern Festival | Ben Farrow VI | Graphic Design

Pink Library

This song is addressed to the abusive ex-boyfriend who gave me PTSD. The campus library was both where he failed me, and, on a separate occasion, where we broke up.



Elise Pelletier | Music

David

Anonymous

It's never only been all 'Adonis' and marble.
There are moments I fucking hate Michelangelo for chiseling
every blemish away, as god intended
for you, David.
So predictable, that Goliath would fall at the hands
of such beauty.
The currency of our world is
rippling flesh and hairless sex, and I pray
daily for forgiveness for my deviance. For my
darkness, my divots.
Even Lucifer looks down at us
with boyish charm, inviting lust.
You said 'choose the unblemished lamb';
did you not make it so we strove for
perfection?
goddamn greek statues.
you will always be eternal, for
your beauty
is Goliath's downfall, solidified in stone.



Fractured David | Liv Chatta | Graphic Design



September 5th

Lee Dewberry

You're on your way home from visiting your parents, like a good kid. The type of kid that grew up in a family that went out for Sunday brunch after church, or never missed a family game night. This is all half true, like most things. You wonder why you cling to the bad memories like condensation on a can. You're sweaty. The A.C. is on, but the southern sun doesn't slow down for September. You have your seat heater on as well because you have back problems. Another bad thing you cling onto and built into your sense of self. There is a boy in the car, and you're thankful to have someone to talk to this time around. You feel like a terrible person for confiding in him, for letting him know how you really operate. You feel separation in the you that drives the car, that replies in conversations and the

person who talks in your brain. This person is constant and inconsolable. The moon is only half covered by the clouds tonight, and somewhere a werewolf is taking form on a small Alabama mountain, which you feel like is not properly appreciated by the rest of the states. If you could grab the world by its shoulders and shake it you would, just to tell them that where you're from is both continuous and ever-changing. No one would listen, you don't doubt that, but it feels nice just to say.

You and the boy are talking about you, again, because otherwise your thoughts would 8-track loop over and over in your head and you want to be able to listen attentively to what he says. You are driving exactly the speed limit in the fast lane: 65mph. You are going uphill, and





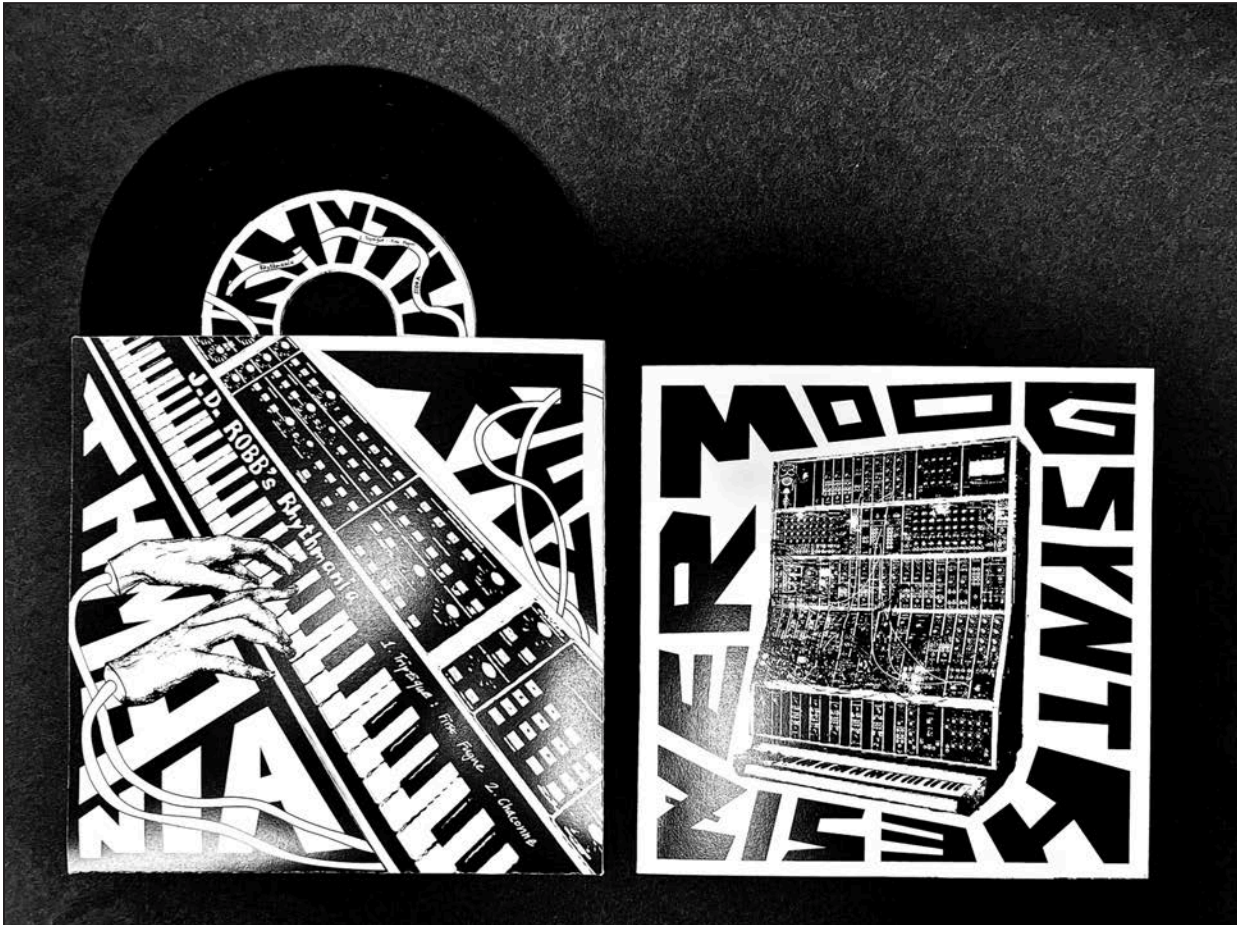
Three's A Crowd | Katelyn Zeeveld | Charcoal on paper

the world looks like it's fallen off around you. You wouldn't mind if it had, all that really seems to matter is what is in your eyeline. You are changing the song and laughing at something, which seems ridiculous as you have just been discussing your desire to in-patient yourself. Fuck medical bills, though. You have already saddled your parents with enough already. He tells you just to keep trucking. You will.

The first two seconds of the song aren't right, so you try another and another. You glance up for no reason in particular during the midst of your hunt. You see two beautiful beaming lights directly in front of you. They are a few inches above your sedan, a SUV glides gloriously straight for you. Angels are standing just above, watching this all play out. You take in all the air your lungs can hold and jerk the wheel to the right, you've always been a fast lane rider. The car skips and stutters into the left

lane as the SUV charges ahead. They are on a mission. As quickly as you pull the wheel toward the right, you are wrenching it back towards the left so as to not lose control. You have only lost control once before, back in highschool when you hydroplaned on your way to school. You remember the whole ordeal in the second you have to regain control of the car. You can feel your tires marking their territory in the road, leaving thick black marks as a kiss goodbye. And then you are straight again, panting heavily as he screams. You can feel yourself heave, quickly feeling acid climbing up your esophagus as you try to slow down and pull off the road. He is telling you it's okay now, you're okay. He is telling you that you need to call the police. It dawns on you that your dog is waiting for you back at your apartment. She needs to be taken out. You stumble out of the car as you pull into some church parking lot. You kneel over and chuck. Your dog is sitting in her crate wondering where you are. Who would have taken her out? *Who would have taken her out?*





J.D. Robb's Rhythmnia | Deborah Yeseul Choi | Graphic Design



Dead Beat Club | Morgan Taylor | Film and Animation



Music | Luke Walker | Music

siren's serenade.

Tatyana Hill

do you hear the rise and fall of it?

the echo of my heart
that beats beneath the moontide?

my voice is for no one but you.
you and the hungry thing nestled between
my ribs, snapping bone in its teeth,
this demand to stain the
rhythm of the night red.

you know it too, the lack of difference
between love and a killer's intent,
which is to say
they are both deliberate.

which is to say
i will love you
as a shark loves blood,
as a lightning strike loves flesh,
and as a wave loves to drag down
the weight
of a dying body.

i love you.
i sing.



Dunes | Mackenzie Boden | Ink Relief Print



Satchmo at the National Press - 7" Record Cover | Jordan Harmon | Graphic Design



Beyond the Curve EP: A Collection of Songs by Crying | Juliet Nell | Graphic Design



22nd Century Curiosity Cabinet | Isaac "Lenny" Haynes | Industrial Design

I am your midnight

Katherine Carroll

There is no sneaking below blinds—
Through cracks in doorways.
No trying to get in
Or soft kisses on eyelids—
Most of all no questions.

I Know.

Even if you whisper softly to her.
Pinky promise.

I never asked to be infinite—
Despite how many times you dug until you
Thought you found a frayed edge.

I am the Apple in this story.

I always knew what was evil in the garden—
Letting it draw Me on command.
Not yet rotten on the vine
But still weaponized under human touch.

It's our condition to look for pieces of ourselves in everything.

When you used to tell Me this story
I felt pity for the snake.
Misunderstood.

That's the thing about Knowing.

I no longer light My prayer candle
And wish for salvation.
Even for you—
To whom I gave a past life.
Trying to be reborn as daybreak
With hands to cradle your face
As you turn over under tan covers.

Now I just hang.
Unattached molecules
Absorbing the light.
Heavily.
Watching.

If you knew I saw all
Would you save your tiptoes?
Walk normally down the stairs
In the middle of the night.
Would you still lock the door behind you?
Would you cry?
Moan an Ave Maria?
Repent?

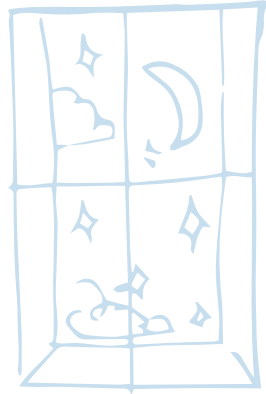
I hope you would save the air
That hangs between us.
Understanding that the snake told Me
How you smiled with calloused hands wrapped
Around My red skin—
Drew Me to your lips
And ate the core clean.
Walking sticky handed into the night.

She told Me.
Even though she didn't have to.

I Know.

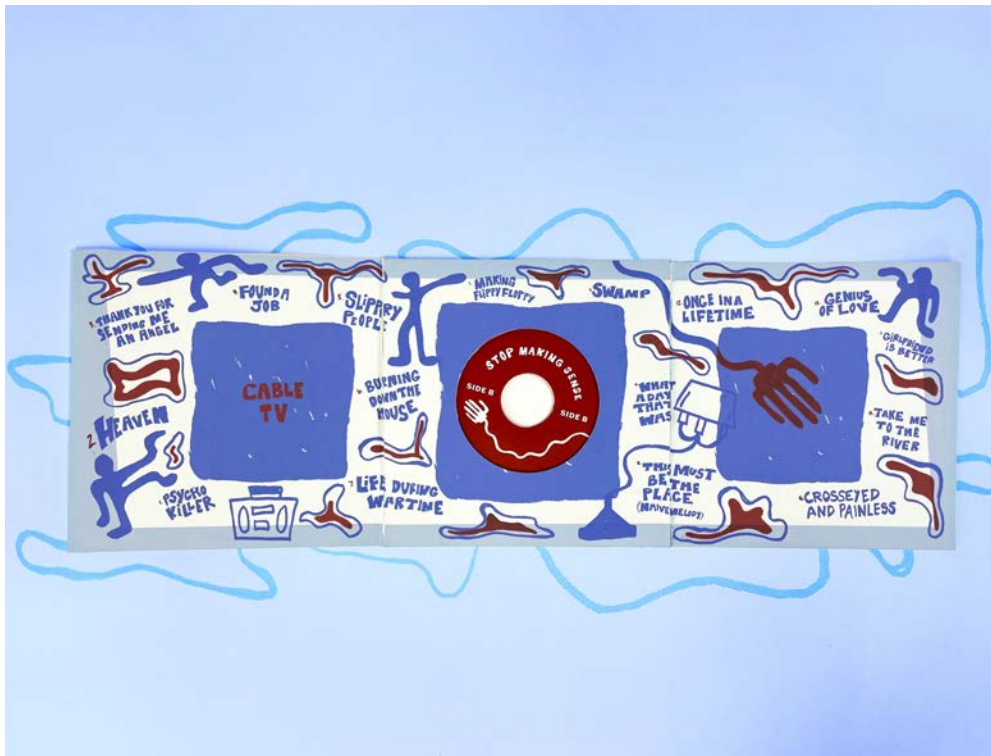
I saw from the dark.





Blossom Lane | Robert Gleason | Canon EOS R





Stop Making Sense Album Redesign | Morgan Taylor | Graphic Design

Made for The Circle by a group of three friends from very different musical backgrounds. Samples Eraserhead, Holy Mountain, and Led Zeppelin. Drums and samples by Thomas A, Guitar by Elijah H, and Vocals by Jimmy F.



Ten Thousand Volt Ghost | Music

Nothing

Time



Time is the first song I've written in which I have been vulnerable and discussed my feelings in my music. Often, I've just made up situations or maybe written about random things. With this song, I really allowed myself to talk about a relationship I'd recently been a part of. It is also one of the first songs I've released that I composed 100%. I did the production, mixing, mastering and singing! It is some of my best work and I hope you enjoy it!

Walter Lloyd | Music



Tenth Grade Science Class Frog Dissection

Lee Dewberry

Fear cradles me in its arms for the last time and begs me to be soft, squishy and white like the underbelly of a frog. Malleable and forgiving, as a knife slices open its skin. In this dissection, we are learning that memories fall out of me like vomit. *She is sick.* Researchers are puzzled with this one.

She is contaminated by her thoughts. I stuff them away like a girl stuffs her bra before a dance. In this mixture of blood, flesh, and memories inside of me I realize I am still the girl I thought I outgrew. Small and too forgiving, a promise to be quiet and pretty. We are cutting up pictures from when I was young. We are exacto-knifing me out of the center and leaving a great white hole to be filled with a collage of me now. I am stuck being the same as I always was. Weak & naive begging for attention. My body is still as soft as it always has been, still bruises just as easily. I am trapped in my cerebellum, bouncing between humid Alabama nights and days lounged on the couch, mindlessly flipping through channels on the tv. I can hear my parents yelling, hear my sister's baby crying. Memories wrapped in a grainy orange gauze that had been folded up and stacked neatly in my brain. In other memories, I am pretending to be tougher than I am. Laughing too loudly, drinking some disgusting mix of Four Loko and a Sonic slush. In these, I am the villain and the victim of my own story. *Be softer. Be quieter.* No one gets the story because I don't tell it right. Because I tell it with self-pity and regret.

Because I won't shut up and get over it. Because I am stuck.

My hands are pinned out like I am on the cross. I suffer because I climbed out on the wooden crucifix myself, acting older and wiser than I was. I am being dissected—don't forget that—I am a specimen worth studying.

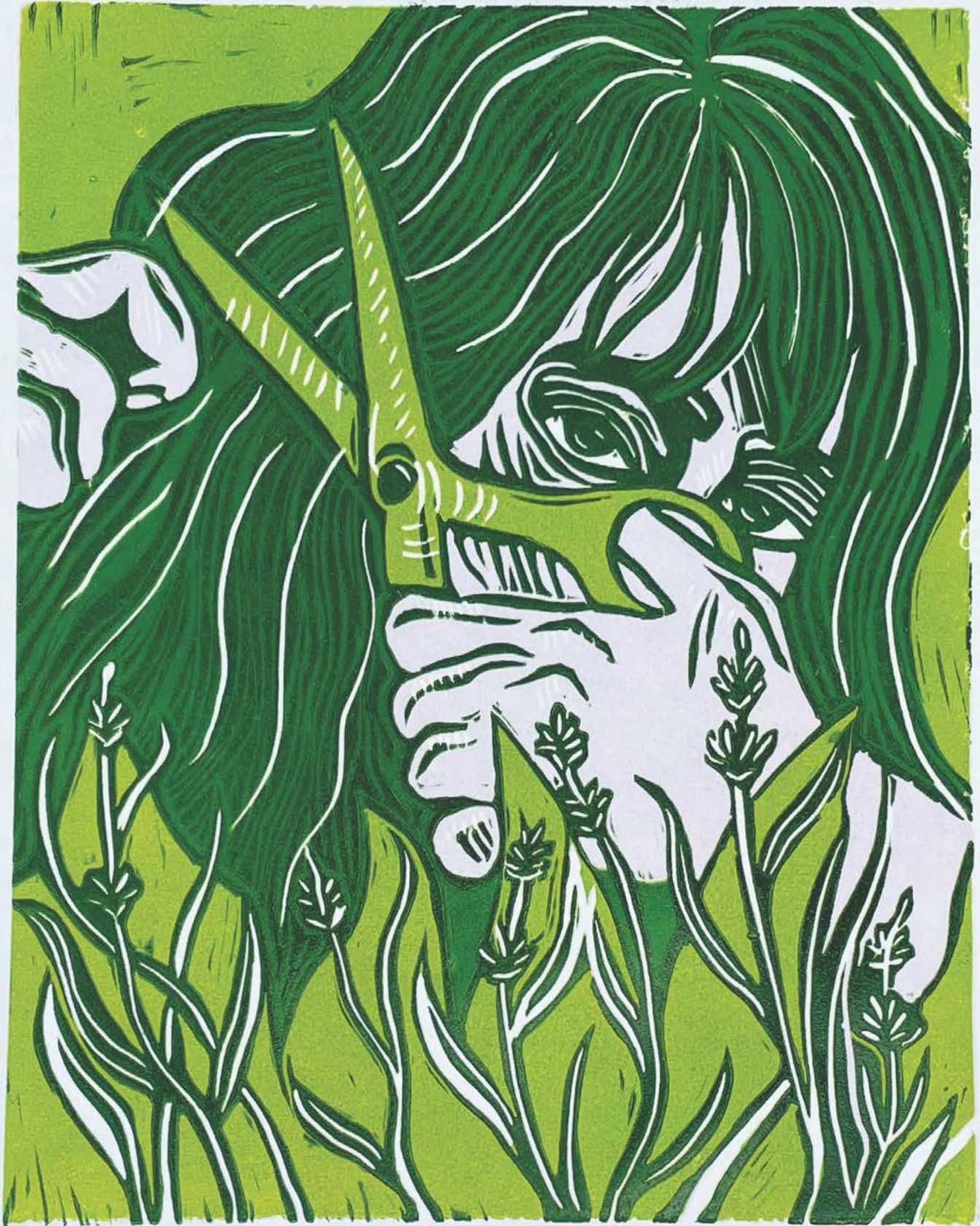
Female pain could be bottled and sold like a drug.

Boys get drunk off of smelling it in the air. We could make a fortune perfecting it!

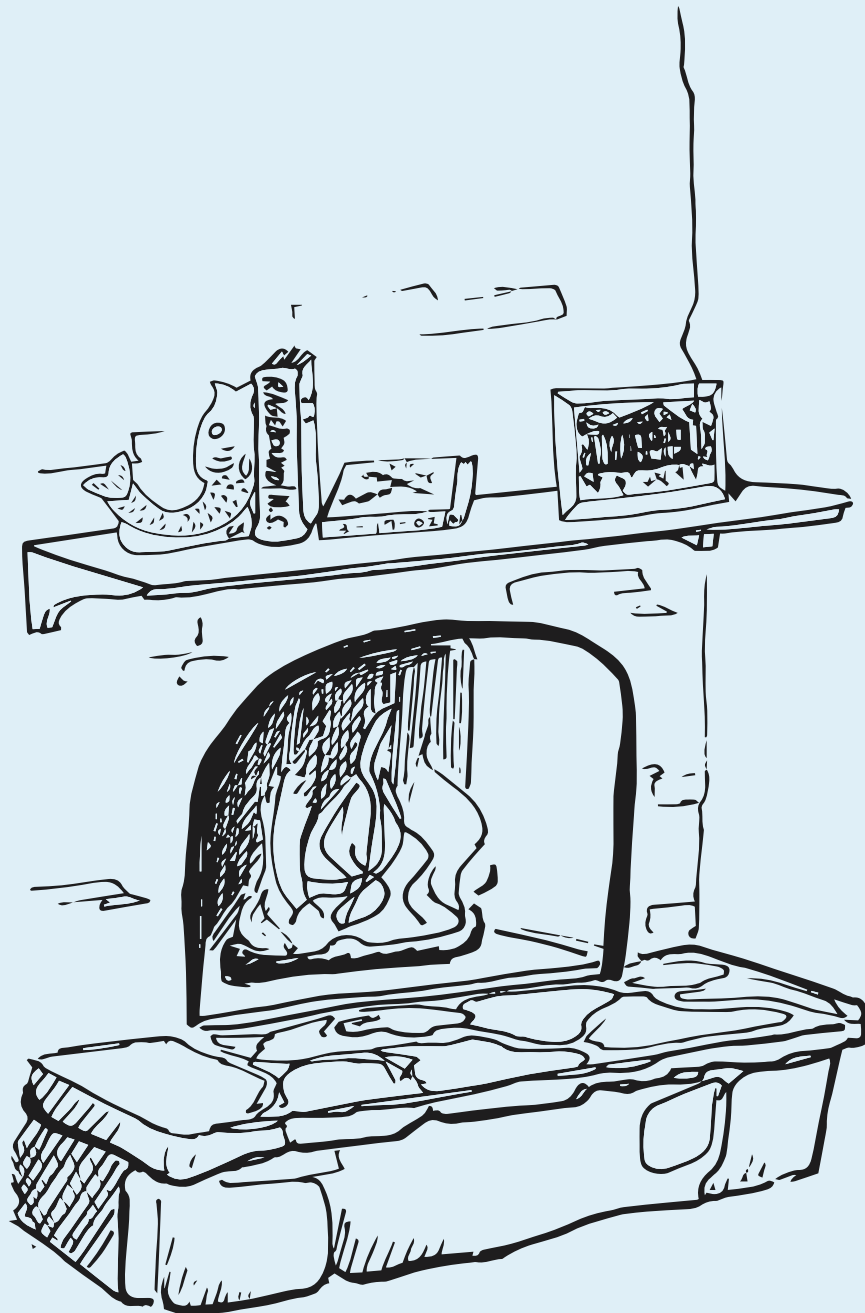
Selling it, FDA approved, injected in their veins like an IV. So drain it out of me, add some sugar or salt and make it digestible. No one likes hearing the nitty gritty details.

Make it poetic—make this pain poetic! Make it art to be this hurt, To be sliced open and bleeding out on the table. Make it a nice story of empowerment, Add it to #MeToo! And I will lie and say I am a survivor.

I will lie and say I am stronger now— I will smile and laugh as my hands drip with blood, as the scalpel slices me limb to limb, pinned up on this cross— as pain falls out of me in piles on the floor.



immaterial | Morgan Taylor | Relief Printmaking



filtering into the ether

in crisp winter air

prodigal children

find the space to breathe

drowning in the smoke

at the hearth

where voices recognize despair

and embers collide in a frenzy

tall tales being told

memories that fade into ash



but you always overwatered it
you always gave the things you
love a little too much
until you were left staring
at what you had drowned

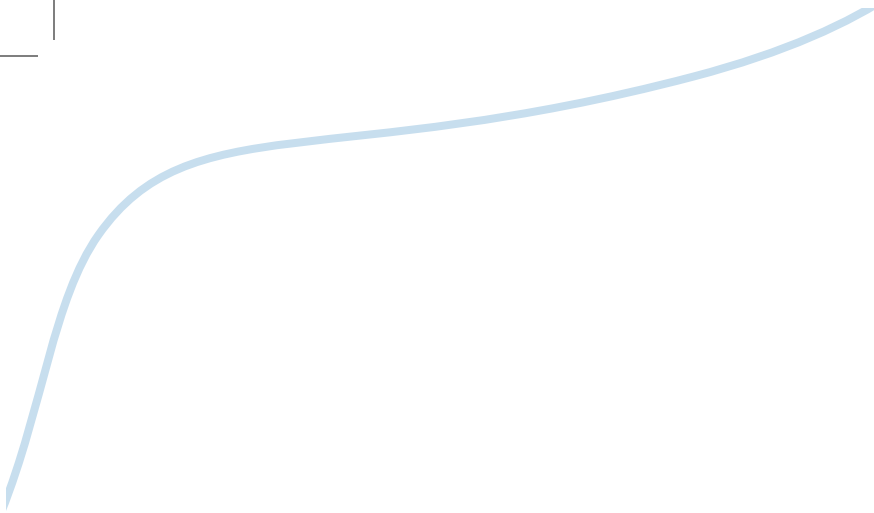
maiden in the moon | Faith Cassas | Photoshop Collage

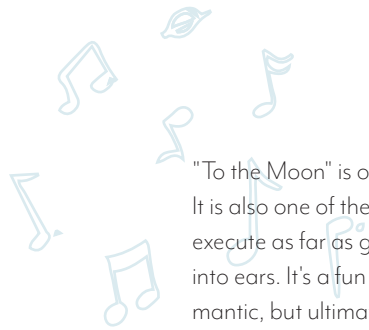
flower fall.

Tatyana Hill

through the haze of june,
we were side by side on your back porch, sun - beaten,
 & dirtied from the garden that you couldn't stop killing.
you wanted a paradise, your own eden,
 but you always overwatered it,
you always gave the things you love a little too much,
until you were left staring at what you had drowned,
& it was the dying daffodils that caused you to give up.
 the emissaries of new beginnings
 that brought you to a disappointing end —
 i watched the revelation before you even spoke it,
 your eyes reflecting the emptiness of the sky
 as you spoke around a mouth full of honeydew,
 "i'm tired of myself. i'm tired of the world."
i smell the sweetness on your breath & almost turn reckless & kamikaze.
i imagine our fingers intertwined.
 i imagine myself brave when i kiss
 you & say, then *let's go make another.*
i'll create a world in full bloom,
 & tell you i love you through the sky raining roses.
when the storm breaks, in its aftermath, i'll gather
 a bouquet of carnation - colored clouds, a gift
 for when we marry beneath the eye of the primrose moon,
 and sail away in our gowns of bougainvillea.
 we'll drink tea & feed each other wedding cake,
 find land & build ourselves a kingdom, our declaration
 woven in a flag of lilac & monkshood, for all to know
 of this first love, this beautiful floral monsoon.







"To the Moon" is one of my favorite songs I've created. It is also one of the few that I was able to perfectly execute as far as getting the idea out of my mind and into ears. It's a fun little ballad. It's kinda silly, kinda romantic, but ultimately feels good to listen to, and that is something I strive to do when I make music.



Walter Lloyd

To the Moon



Dear Wormwood | Maggie Miller | Graphic Design

Babe Rainbow Album Design | Bailey Carr | Graphic Design



On



Childhood Pets

Sara Amis

My cat is dying. I can feel each vertebra of her knobby spine as I run my hand down her back. We—the family, *her* family—used to snort at her fat underbelly pouch swaying as she ambled toward our clicking tongues and beckoning fingers.

As she sits by the fire, I panic and watch her fragile frame expand and deflate (slowly now; strained effort) until I am convinced we are breathing; until I stop breathing again.

She crawls into my lap (her little heart: so hollow in her chest, so dull against my hands). She does not look me in the eye anymore; the challenge proves too demanding. I say:

“I was a lonely child, and yes, I know, everyone was a lonely child; but you were a lonely cat, huh? And, when we stood, contemplating each other in the hallway, ignoring my impending tardy slip, I think you saw me. I think you knew me.” She does not respond.

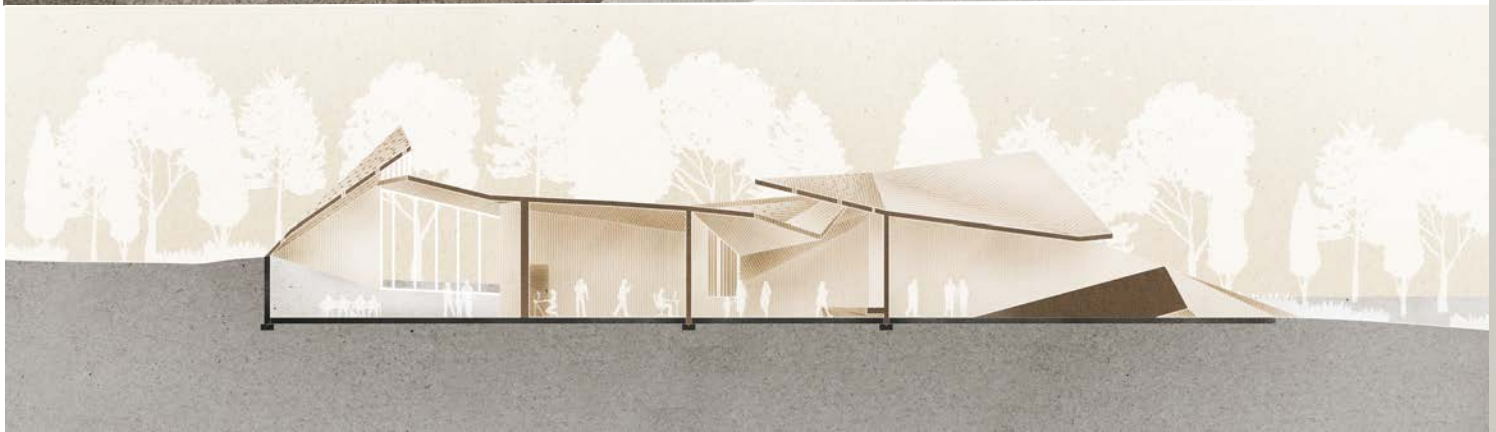
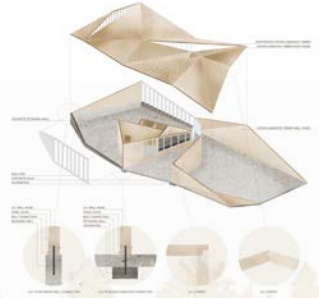
I’ve got allergies: a terrible stopped up nose, a cough, and a split lip from sleeping with my mouth open, but I kiss her head every time I run away,

and the guilt of leaving lingers in the clumps of fur drifting across my parents’ hardwood floors.



Saturday in Birmingham
Alexander Hooks
35mm Film





Forest Ecology Center at Auburn's Kreher Preserve and Nature Center - 57th Alabama Forestry Student Design Competition | Sophie Harward | Architecture



Milla | Maggie Miller | Graphic Design





10

My Hands, My Hands, My Hands

Joanna Walden

My hands are cold. The circulation short ends around the knuckles like frayed wires, and ice erupts from my fingertips. I spread frost along my path like a twisted Midas, so I keep my hands to my sides and press frozen fingerprints into my jeans. The blood vessels are too narrow, too stressed, too shaky. I crack my knuckles, break the ice, and push him away, frozen fingerprints on his shirt. He grabs the frost and melts the ice sculpture I embody, hands holding hands until I am flesh again—a melted pool at his feet. My hands become warm.

My hands hurt. They open and close and open and close with the creaking sound of cracked cartilage and bones scratching together early in the morning. The appendages are sore, but still, I

grip the steering wheel too tightly because they have their own, anxious minds that rival mine. They don't tap or put two fingers up in a silent hello, unwavering at ten and two, white-knuckled and stiff. He reaches over and places a hand over one of mine on the wheel (he doesn't mind the sharp hangnails that probably hurt *him*). A thumb eases down the angry veins climbing up my hand, and I lower one, allowing it to be maneuvered to the passenger side of the car to rest. My hands become healed.

My hands are holy. They rise above my head and soak up the rainbow light shining through stained glass, covered by a once-in-a-lifetime combination of colors. They are proof of life, proof of miracles as they join together; here's the church, here's the steeple. Divinity enters through my palms, past

Divinity enters through my palms past the skin and the cartilage



Untitled | Katelyn Zeeveld | 35mm Film

and the muscles and follows down the lines of my skeleton



the skin and the cartilage and the muscles, and follows down the lines of my skeleton until my entire body is touched by God. I know He says to be of the Spirit and not the flesh, but my gold pendant leaves imprints on his shoulder, and I trace the crosses into his skin with bare fingers. My hands become sacrilegious.

My hands, my hands, my hands. Oh, I have known them my entire life. I know every scar and ridge and crookedness of my fingers. I know how they shake when I am angry. I know they hold on to something to feel at ease. I know what they need—and they are very needy.

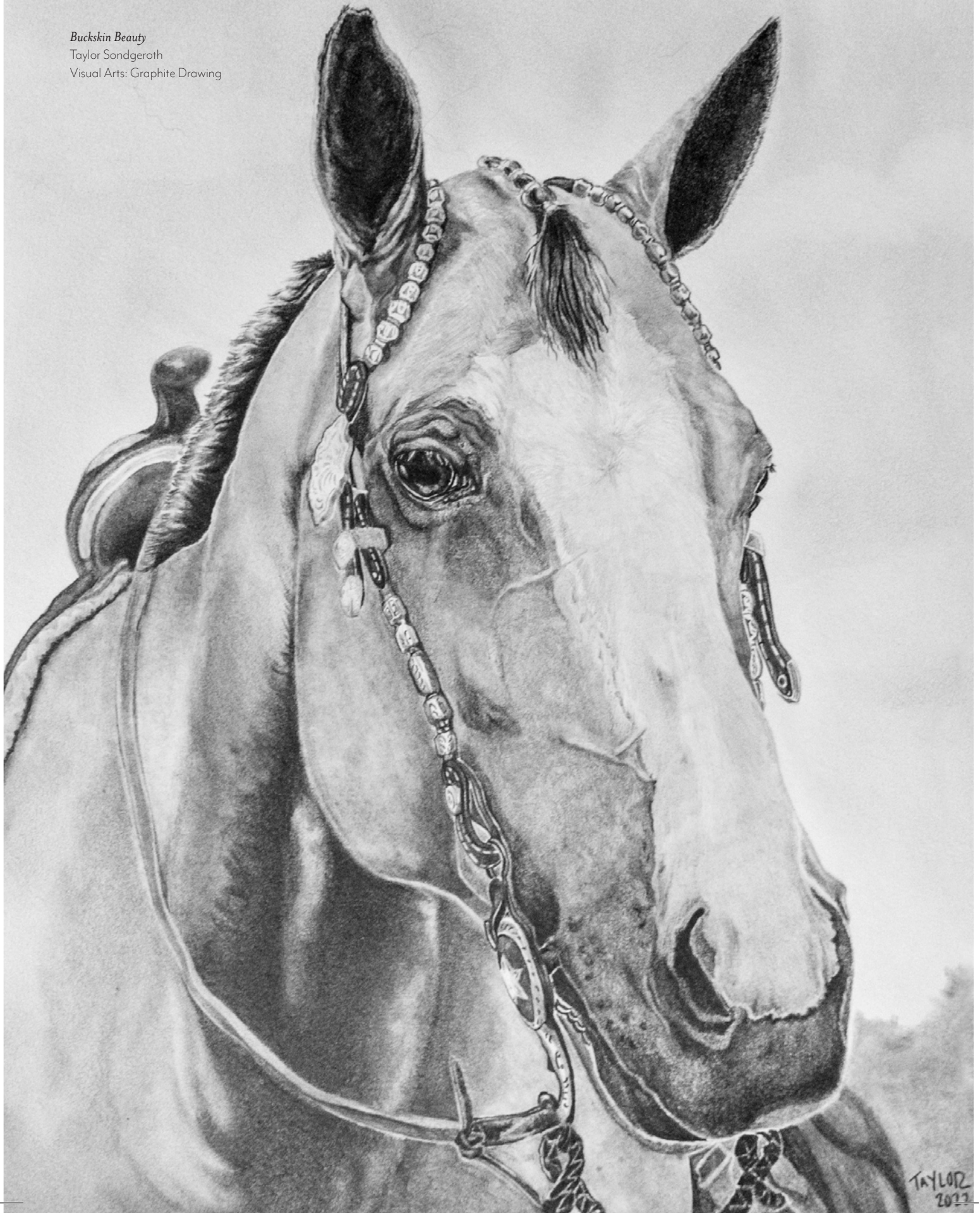
I know they need his hands. I need our heartlines to press together and our nervous systems to sync as ten fingers lean against ten fingers. I need to feel every scar and evidence of wear on his hands. I need to be held down by his hands for my soul to be lifted up. I need to hold on to let go.

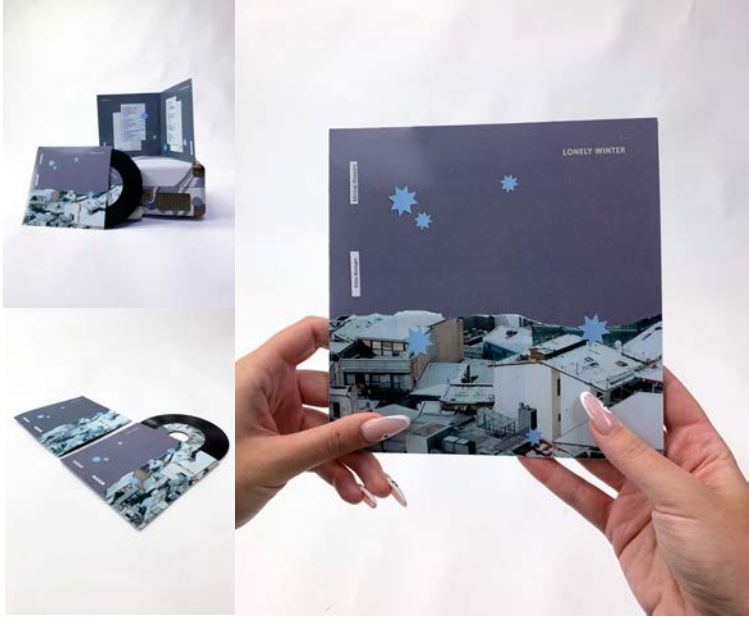
If I could, I would cut off one of mine to give to him in exchange for one of his. I would sacrifice my right hand so he could keep his left, and I could always reach over and lace our fingers together.

My hands, my hands, my hands: pry open my mean fingers and find where my love is stored.



Buckskin Beauty
Taylor Sondgeroth
Visual Arts: Graphite Drawing





Lonely Winter | Kacey Bridgman | Graphic Design



Hummingbird Clothing Inc | Ethan Nguyen | Graphic Design

Peanuts & Granola

Kailie Stanichowsky

There's something so sweet about the dew in the morning
That covers the grass with the glow of renewal, fresh starts,
And the bits of frost that merely poked our noses
Even after we buried the bodies and broke each other's hearts.

It was in the way she spoke to me after everything,
Like before, how delicate she swore the most bitter chocolate tasted—
I rarely think this sinking world deserves forgiveness,
But somehow, she always did.

In fact, we will never appreciate our shining sun enough
For when it leaves, it always comes back for us,
Giving out warm hugs like butterscotch candies
And loving unconditionally, fearlessly believing in purpose.

She knew all along what she was meant to do.
Hell, she knew as I giggled after school at a meaningless rerun,
“Try this!” She yelled from the kitchen, and to her I ran—
They were peanuts & granola, and I cherished every crumb.

I had never paused for the wind
Before August, no regard for this ruthless gust
Splitting every memory that would tumble with it,
Her strewn debris stabbing me with a thrust.

The Pacific never looked so grim in waste,
Murky gray for weeks, hurricanes ripping apart and consuming me—
I was seven, and I knew it as it landed,
Who I was and where my corpse was destined to be.

But even as she crossed the river, winds and all,
Did she sparkle! Stretching her arms wide, at last
Embracing the same shimmer of stars
I've had to convince myself to grasp at.

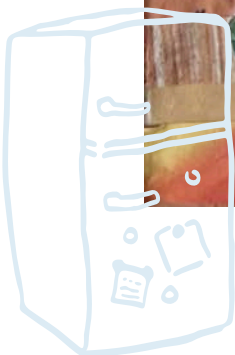
Oh, how lucky we are to be here
And how lucky we are to have one another.
A funeral was never quite as lovely
Though our giggles would never cool the dead of summer.

And the world will never be as forgiving as it was
Around the holidays or after school on a regular old Thursday,
And never as calm as the coziest homes we took refuge in,
Eating peanuts & granola after a long, hard day.





Still Life | Caroline Chesnut | Mixed Media



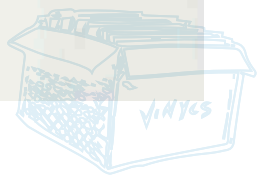


*laika, you four-legged
saint. the dogstar ghost.*

The Official Bard of Baldwin County

i wrote this song about laika the space dog, who
played fetch with the moon and got to sleep in the
stars. it made me sad to write it and i hope it's sad
to listen to. >:)





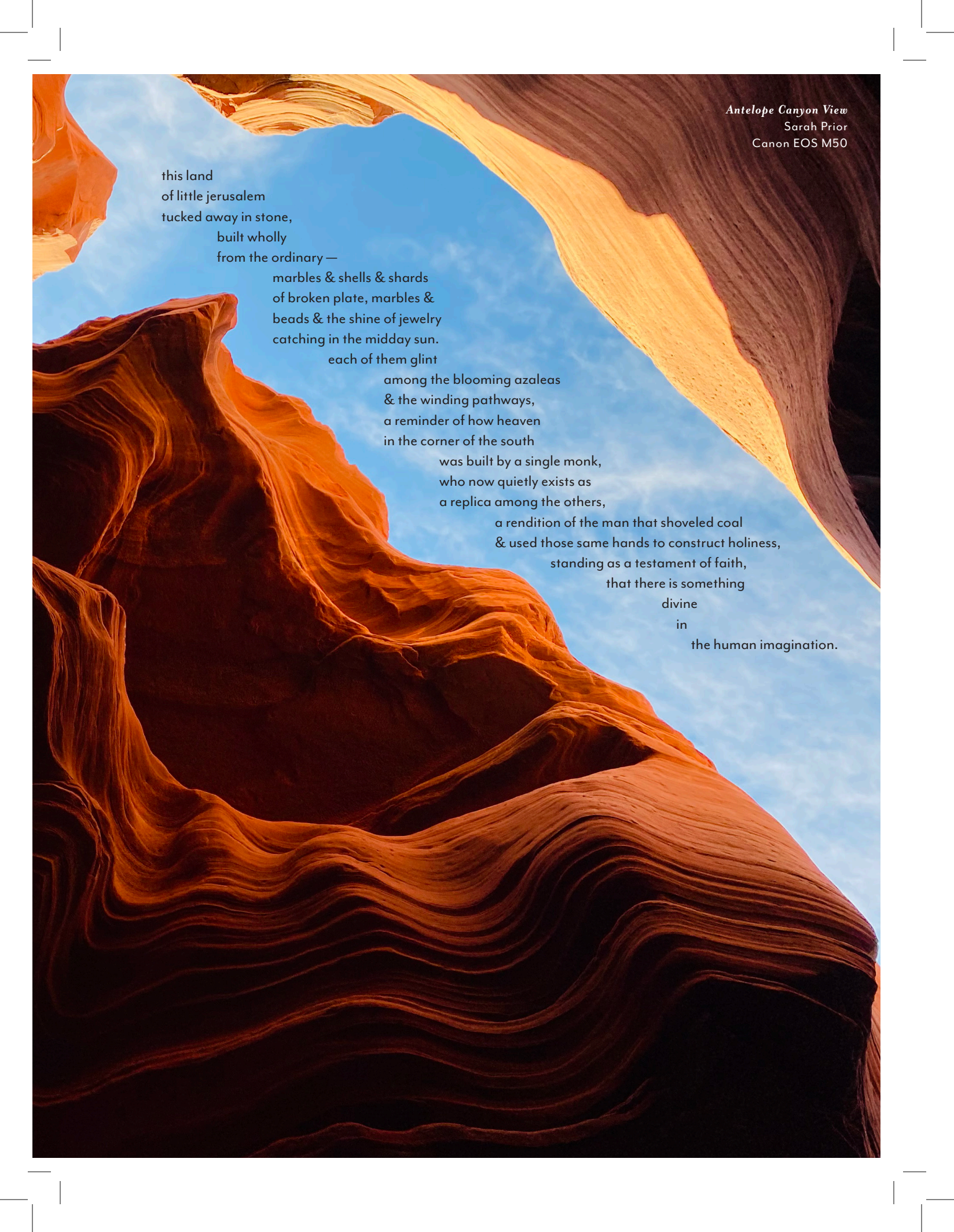
Lament for the American Cowboy | Hannah Duff | Graphic Design



god's grotto

*inspired
by the ave
maria grotto
in cullman,
alabama.*

Tatyana Hill

A photograph of the interior of Antelope Canyon, showing the smooth, undulating, and layered walls of the slot canyon. The walls are illuminated from above, creating a warm, golden-orange glow. The sky is visible through the opening at the top, showing a clear blue color. The overall atmosphere is serene and majestic.

Antelope Canyon View
Sarah Prior
Canon EOS M50

this land
of little jerusalem
tucked away in stone,
built wholly
from the ordinary —

marbles & shells & shards
of broken plate, marbles &
beads & the shine of jewelry
catching in the midday sun.

each of them glint

among the blooming azaleas
& the winding pathways,
a reminder of how heaven
in the corner of the south

was built by a single monk,
who now quietly exists as
a replica among the others,

a rendition of the man that shoveled coal
& used those same hands to construct holiness,

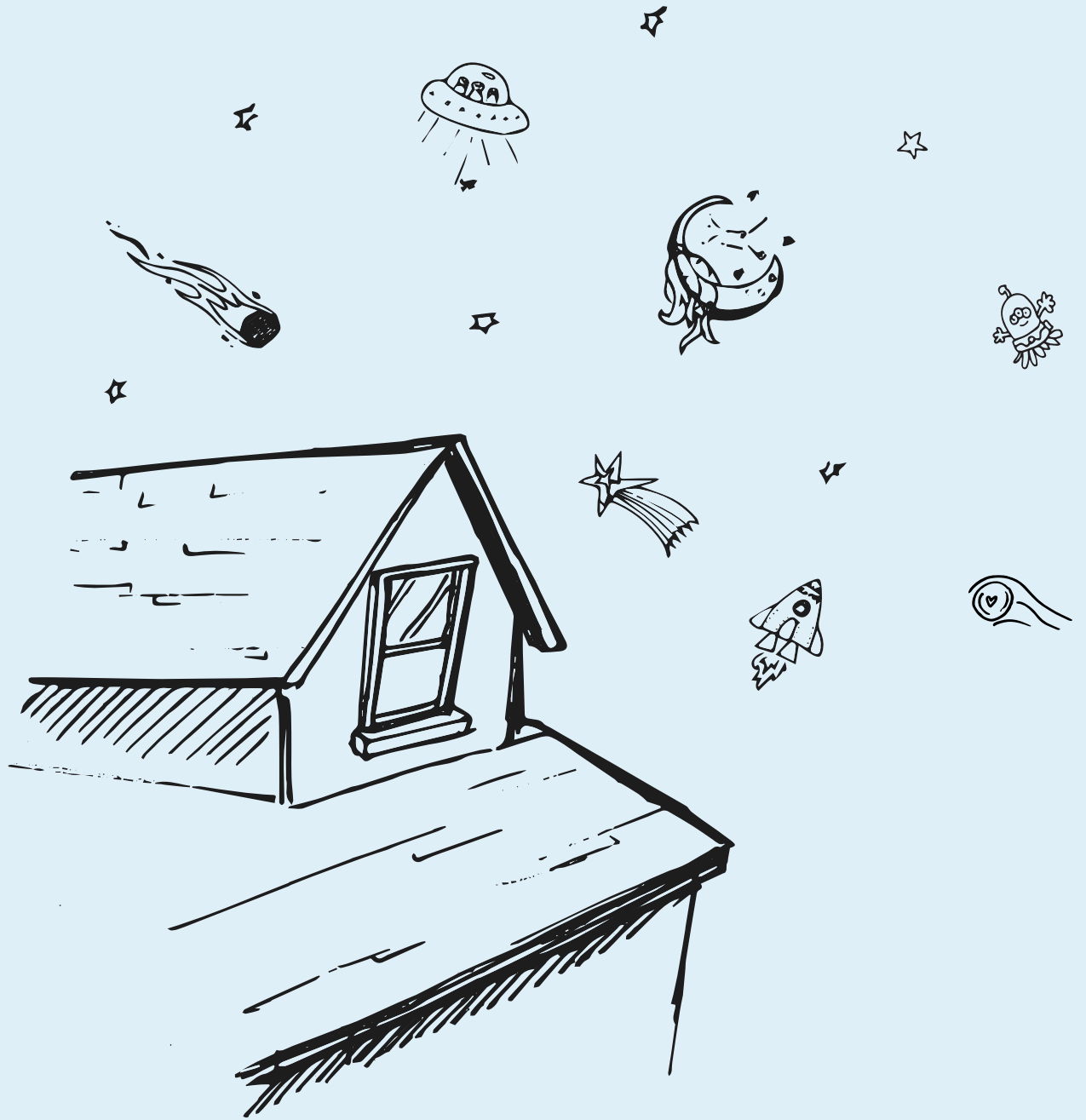
standing as a testament of faith,

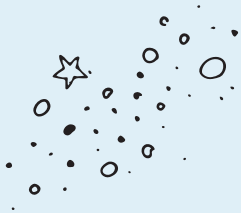
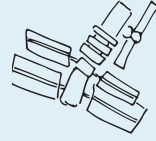
that there is something

divine

in

the human imagination.





Crawling through my open window

up to the roof



Bare feet against sun-warmed shingles

The liminal space between sky and soil

Bird's-eye-view coming into focus

Everything looks so small from up here



kissing the ashes

Kailie Stanichowsky

so, there we all were,
all talking over each other,
begging to feel alive in the dead of night

and the two people that make up my life
were trying earrings on and untangling necklaces—
we wouldn't do a thing for ourselves
but for each other, we'd conquer universes.

belly laughs and hard, gutting truths
thrown up from our stomachs
and spewed on the wooden floor.
we patch each other's hearts
with the shattered pieces of our own mosaics.

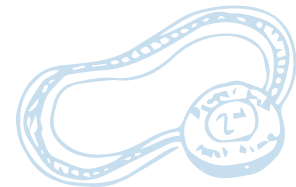
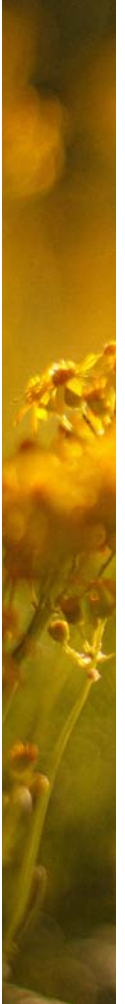
wincing from strained back muscles
reminders of trying so hard for so many years
to win over the love of an army
and returning to land with much less.

but, hell, if nothing else
this is all i've ever wanted, isn't it?
being able to burn in the sun and be cooled by a breeze;
bearing the earthquake but having a firm tree to grip onto;
sitting stranded in the middle of chaos and holding a hand;
having somewhere, anywhere to put myself in the middle of this heartache.

nothing will ever cease the fire in my chest,
but water gets pretty damn close.

it takes a little while of getting licked by flames
before you notice the couple gallons of water laying around you,
chattering and sampling stolen lip gloss—
so few of them, sure, but you're just so grateful you've got the two.
and it takes a little while of crumbling under your own weight
before you squint, just enough,
to finally behold the fruits of your labor.

this is what you've worked for;
this is what you've won.





honey honey | Danielle Byrne | Canon t7i



these days | Elizabeth Hobbs | Canon AE-1 35mm

Don't End Up Like Florence Lacoste

Cole Anderson



***TW: domestic abuse**

It's a strange sensation, my dear, numbness.

I'm not talking the sparks of false electricity that shoot through your arteries when you sit on a limb for too long, either. This is the real shit: feeling nothing at all, your mind simply a vast void closed off from any form of cognitive schemes, your body simply an empty bag of flesh where your tiny soul hides from the horrors around it.

When you stop feeling, you know you're in deep shit. Now you're young, still.

Take my advice here; I've lived a long, long life, love.

No, you're not listening to me. Listen right now because I'm not

repeating it and you obviously don't get it: the numbness. It's like I'm a small ball of energy sitting in the back of my brain, staring out the windows that are my eyes. I see you trying to tell me something, but baby I can't comprehend it, you hear? Better to stop babbling and just listen to old Florence, dear.

You're so beautiful. Look at you, in that top. You have so much to do, so much left to accomplish. God, how I used to be just like you.

Yes, baby, I see the blood on me. I can see that much.

I guess that's why I'm happy that you're with me now, darlin'. It's like some sort of trick of fate, or the universe, or God, or whoever you believe is out there. It's like I'm supposed to be your warning. *Don't end up like Florence Lacoste.*



Here, I know what to do. While we sit here on this gorgeous night, as I lay dying, I'll tell you my story. You need to hear what not to do.

The sunlight filtered through the flowing strands of her hair, blonde and long, as the wind rippled it like a raft on the open sea. Legs extended, the small hints of muscle in the little girl's calves stretching with the effort, she glided through the air in a perfect arc. The branch of the tree groaned under the weight, stooping low as she reached her peak under its luminescent canopy.

From the stump of the tree's old neighbor, I sat and spectated this act of marvelous theatricality. The rays of pure gold that illuminated the girl's skin and bounced off her pale pink skirt. The *swish* as the tire on which she sat barely caressed the ground, sharing a longing, sensual touch with the fallen leaves beneath it. Her face sculpted in a soft smile, eyes closed, cheeks rosy with the chill that still lingers in the humid spring air.

As my fists supported my face from my knees, my raggedy leather loafers bouncing on the dirt, I watched this scene. It's the first time I remember feeling happy because someone else was happy. It's the first time, though I didn't understand at my age, that I felt love.

Seeing the girl on the swing so happy made me happy. Sitting next to her in our class, giggling as the teacher went on and on about long division, made me happy. It was a feeling I'd never felt before.

Yeah, yeah, I know I'm supposed to say my parents, but they hated me, especially Father. His son, obsessed with Mother's porcelain dolls and their dresses, feigning over the magazines Mother would leave on the coffee table. He used to hit me, sitting in his rocking chair surrounded by a fog of his pipe smoke, used to grab me by the arm and yank me into his fist when I would hear a song I liked on the radio and dance along in the family room.

Mother wasn't much better. She never did anything to me, but she also never opposed her dear and loving husband. She let me go to school with the bruises, let me cry on the floor when my jagged nose poured blood.

And yet, here I was, on a stump at her house, feeling this

benevolent ache for her, as my most dear friend. The bond between us was almost tangible, a thread of twine loosening and pulling taut as the swing rocked back and forth. The first person who cared for me, as a person and not a loss of dignity, who asked me every day what happened to my nose, my mouth, my eye, and who pretended to believe my brittle excuses to shield me from the pain for a little while. She was extremely empathetic for a fourth grader in the 50s: most little shits back then wouldn't have given a fuck. But she cared, let me into her world of cul-de-sacs and garden parties to yank me out of mine.

Her name was Betty LaRue, and she passed away of polio when she was twelve.



It was about my fifteenth birthday when I started drag. It was about my sixteenth birthday when my father almost killed me.

Mother finally defended me then, when I coughed up crimson into the sink, choking on the coppery tinge on my tongue. She locked us in my room and set me on the bed with a cloth. Through my swollen eyes and the burst blood vessels in my retinas, I could see her chunking clothes into the small suitcase that I used for family vacations, shoving anything and everything into it. She took off the heels I had on, being careful where my toes were broken and swollen from his kicks, and she unzipped her ruined dress from my bloody back.

I gargled to her, trying to apologize, and she held me while I sobbed. We waited until the shattering of vases and drunken shouts of slurs halted, and she kissed my head, pulled some cash from his wallet, and watched me as I walked down the street toward the station.

Her name was Dorothy Wilson, and she was beat to death by Robert Wilson for protecting her queer son Michael.



I wasn't able to finish high school, so I dropped out and started flipping burgers at the local diner downtown. Now I didn't have many friends, but I had a few that would come and sit on those vinyl barstools and order a milkshake.

However, there was one reason my head snapped up at the

sound of the bell hanging above the front door.



He was one of my regulars, though I had gone to school with him before I left. Played on the football team, member of the mock trial club, and in the running for prom king. And I was completely and utterly in love with him. He would come in, order a cheeseburger and fries, pay the bill, and leave without much conversation. That didn't stop my feelings from blooming in my chest like a rose in springtime.

It didn't stop me from squinting against the fluorescents and the neon reflecting off the puddles outside the windows. It didn't stop me from carefully crafting the burger, hoping for a compliment on it, at least to start a conversation.

Of course he, nor anyone at my school, knew that I was doing drag at night at the gay bar twenty minutes away, the Villa. Every night, I would doll up in cheap makeup provided by the bar, dress up in my hand-sewn outfits made from the scraps that I found in the dumpsters behind the fabric store, and perform for a handful of scraggly, underwhelming contenders who occasionally slipped a dollar bill into my bra.

They didn't know, of course, until the night Danny and his friends wandered into the Villa thinking it was a normal pub.

I was off stage, just finished performing a number and talking to one of the disappointing revelers, when I noticed them walk in. They stuck out like sore thumbs here, but they were too drunk to care or notice. My heart started banging against my ribcage, but I couldn't leave the stage without losing my job at the bar. The next cut came, so I was forced to perform.

At some point through the course of my performance, they realized who I was. I tried to sneak out the back alley after my shift, but they were waiting for me.

His name was Danny Crestmont, and he was never charged for assault after breaking my nose and giving me a concussion.

After a decade or two, you learn a good bit about life. But we're all stupid as hell in the end, and we make stupid as hell decisions.

See, I learned my lesson after Danny. But I ignored all that when I met the man who killed me slowly for years.

I met him at a show when I was in my late twenties, sometime after the riots in New York. It was the 70s, all drugs and disco, sex and empowerment. We were all high on it, constantly, the feeling of freedom and defiance. I finally felt happy in my place in this world, and I felt like I was doing good things for those around me.

When he walked in the club in downtown Boston, I thought I was ready to receive him.

We hit it off immediately, talking all night between my songs and the drinks from the bar. He offered me a place in his bed for the night. A quaint little apartment uptown was our haven, the place where our souls intertwined like a rat king. And everything was harmony for three months.

Three months is all you need to fall in love with a person. Three months is all you need to know every vacant corner of their psyche, every dust-covered thought in their head. Three months is all you need to find out how they act, how they react, and how they lash out. How they act when they're mad.

Money was smoother then, more people coming to the bars than ever, so though still rough, I used most of my excess tips for concealer from Macy's for the bruises. No one noticed; I guess I smothered the discoloration enough. But my sisters at work read me like the Sunday news. I relented no information, but they knew.

I didn't leave him, of course, because there's the stupidity I told you about earlier. It's a weird thing, that Stockholm Syndrome, that piercing need to merge souls with him, that makes you overlook the horrendous things you're going through. It makes you yearn to see him smile, to do anything and everything to make that happen, to see those lips turned skyward instead of towards hell in those snarls.



Crystalline Ceiling | Robert Gleason | Canon EOS R

So no, I didn't leave him. I stayed, every day, reading his letters and sleeping in his bed when he was in town, and I performed. Not only on stage, but off stage and at home too. The performances never stopped. At work, I was a happy lover, a person so utterly in love that nothing else mattered. At home, I was a circus performer, flipping and spinning on a suspended rope, vying desperately for his love.

I was exhausted, but I did what I had to. For a year, I did the same thing, the same dips and swirls of the choreography again and again until my grace turned to vertigo. But sometimes, when in love, nausea feels like euphoria. I was content living this life for eternity, because who else would ever love me like he did?

Until one day when he used two months' worth of my tips to keep his lights on.

My sisters at the Villa grew angry and restless. Twelve months of seeing your friend abused and mistreated will do that for you. They wanted me to stand up for myself, and somehow, they convinced me to show up at the firm, demanding my money back. They dragged me from my vanity stool, all dolled up for my show that afternoon, and off we went.

I remember the discoloration of his face as I walked in that office, makeup plastered on. I remember thinking it was a terrible color, one even I hadn't seen in his usual rages. It was a deep red, almost purplish in tone. It didn't change until the firm security escorted us out of the building.

Later that night, he didn't swing. And that was the scariest bit, love. Calm is the worst type of angry. He simply sat on the edge of the bed while I packed my be-

longings from around the room. He never even mentioned how fucked he was, now that I opened the closet door, just watched me go.

His name was Dominic Fabray, and he was my accused double-crossed lover until the very end.



I was on fire tonight, as I always have been, on that stage. I loved drag more than anything, and nothing brought me more joy. She walked in, mid-number, inconspicuous. I never batted a carefully placed eyelash, never looked up from my art. She sat in the third row of tables, a low light corner of the bar where she wouldn't be noticed.

I finally looked over, at just the right moment, as the shattered light from the mirror ball reflected the karats in the diamond on her finger. Time seemed to slow, and my vision tunneled to only that ring. I would've known it blind, the amount of times my finger has lazily traced over it on his hand. It was a perfect twin, the pattern engraved in the iron matching without a mistake, only this one with a juicy rock right on top.

I spun for the choreography, one last graceful spin where I felt free, despite the thrusts of my heart drumming against my ribs. One last spin, gown sprawling across the stage, rustling the few bills thrown onto the linoleum. One last spin, in tune with the reflected lights from the suspended ball, and once again, just like last time, I glanced at just the right time.

Just in time to see the metal of the revolver glimmer under the lights, and just in time to hear the music take a beat's silence, filled with the ear-piercing sound of the trigger.



Grass Withers | Molly Werk | Oil on Canvas

Her name was Victoria Fabray, and she slipped out of the bar unnoticed in the chaos following my fall from grace.



So, baby, that's my story. Please hear, and know.

Please don't end up like me, my life leaking onto the very tiles of my home. This was my home all along, and I hope it's the same for you. One thing I praised myself for was not letting anyone take away my passion, though they took everything else.

Now, love, I know you're waiting for the ambulance, and I see your tears. I only ask you two things. One: please let me go, let me pass on under the spotlights, under the mirror ball, like I always was destined to. Let me die like a star, on my own terms, in a dramatic ass finale.

Two: you're my legacy now. I never had kids, never could've, but you girls were like my daughters, and I never want you to end up like me. Pass my life's work on, let not my message to you go to waste. Live lavishly, love, and let me go.

My name has been Florence Lacoste, and it's my final bow.

My name has
been Florence
Lacoste, and it's
my final bow.





House of Cards | Michaela Spencer | Graphic Design



Facile | Reagan Towers | Graphic Design



The Man Out Back | Jimmy Fincher | Film and Animation

Lockjaw and
loose baby teeth
scattered on
I-85 North

Katherine Carroll



All blights consume the root first.
Mine was no different.
In the base of my throat—
lingual frenulum.

The webs that connected us
and fought against its escape—
beating against my stomach lining to crawl out.

"Hush, child."

"Don't speak."

"They can't know."

"A whisper will give you away."

It's been 10 years
and 868 miles to the source.
I can't help but think the air feels different here.
The molecules pull apart as if fighting for space to breathe
through the haze
that covers the stars most nights.
I quit fighting to breathe—

like I use to bat away hands
trying to wash out my mouth with soap.

"I've been quiet."

"I've been careful."

"They don't know."

"I promise."

I spent young hours, days, weeks—
preparing
in front of my mirror.
Reshaping my "ers" into "ahs"
and molding my "aght" into "ight" with precision.
Protesting when my vowels would roll out
loooong
like pine-covered foothills.

Sewing threads in the back of my lips.
Using teeth to wrestle down my tongue
when it protested—
restless.

Sucking air into my lungs
to the point of imploding
on the mountain mist
rising in my jaws.

"You'll learn the hard way."

"They can't understand how—"

"You were born from dirt."

"Here, they deny their return."

*breaking the
webs that bind*



Untitled | Isaac "Lenny" Haynes | Digital Collage

*and buried
my voice*

I ignore the ringing in my chest
that longs for holy hymnals—
notes shaped with reverence
for the unmoving earth.
In passing tones they call “ignorant.”

I have spoken
words like rain
and let them fall
over the last decade.

“But you haven’t tawked.”
“Messed or gummed”
“Clucked and pecked”
“Shot the shit”

It’s cold over half the year here
and even when the weather warms
my toes feel numb and turn purple.
No hope for a dogwood winter—
watching them bloom in April
and stand boldly against a rare cold snap.

I pull on a beanie before leaving my apartment
and remember distant days
fighting with friends.

“It’s called a bogan.”
“I swear it exists.”
“No, I won’t ever change.”

I chose.
Many years ago—
breaking the webs that bind
and buried my voice
three feet down
in a box of Alabama pine.

My jaw rolls in damp clay soil
with the earth worms
and my ancestors right beside.
On their mountain—
safe.

My tongue grows healthy
from the root—
rid of disease
And blooming along with the blackberries.

“I was a bird back then.”
“Needing to survive the journey north.”
“One of us had to die.”
“But it’s funny how I always got what I didn’t choose.”

The bones I kept decay—
begging
to crawl back to warmer weather
before callousing.
Teeth rot at the base
turning black
waiting to fall out.

“This world is not our home.”
“Go home wayfaring stranger.”
“Head south. Head south. Head south.”

I pop another ibuprofen
to quiet my protesting ligaments
and wash it down with Tennessee whiskey.
Ignoring the fact
that I don’t know how to tell them.

“I’m too afraid.”
“Because when I speak the mountains won’t recognize me.”
“I am no longer their kin.”

forgive me seventy times seven



this is a song that i wrote because i apologize too much ! sometimes the people that you care about (or want to stay in the good graces of) don't really care about you all that much ! you don't have to apologize for stepping on their toes ! put on a steel toed boot and break their whole foot !

The Official Bard of Baldwin County | Music

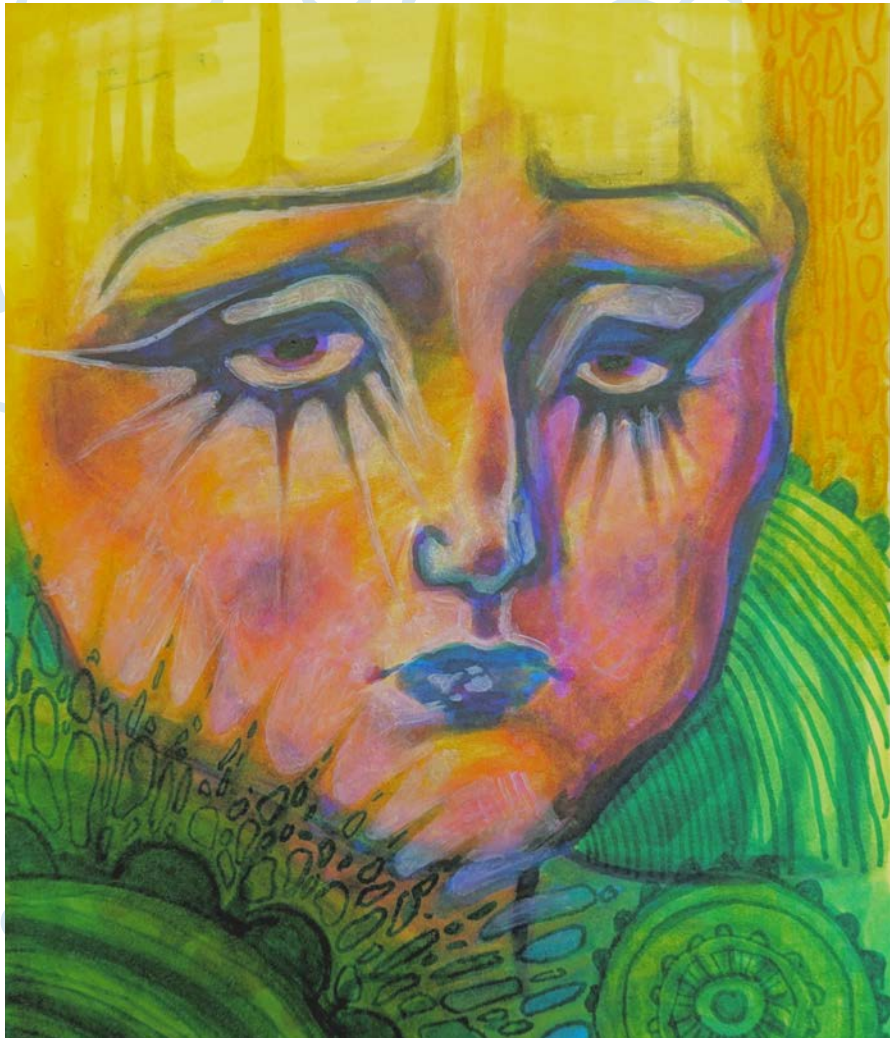


Cinema (Revelado) by *The Marias* | Danielle Ravelo | Graphic Design



Mobile Alabama Pride | Ethan Nguyen | Graphic Design





Diatoms | Emily Moore | Mixed Media

a poem about a set piece from close
encounters of the third kind (1977)

Bard

let me get decapitated by the bankhead tunnel
let me be unable to reign in the ambition of trying to cross
that threshold

and let me face the consequences as my body continues
onward and my face collides with the decades-old
concrete (covering the sickly, slightly confusing teal paint
with my grey matter and other viscera)

there goes another one they'll say
another one for the total, another update for the facebook
group !!! set the counter back to zero days since accident

here it feels like everyone smiles at you too much

there's something behind those oakley eyes and jimmy
buffet teeth that make me feel like i'm a comically small
rodent about to nibble on a comically large piece of
cheese (that is, of course, attached to a comically cruel
contraption that will result in my imminent demise)

that being said, my severed head lies face down on the
hot, radiant asphalt of highway 98 and it is subsequently
squashed like a rotten pumpkin (a tahoe with a carolina
squat would be unable to see such a small object on
the road)

my permanent retainer becomes embedded into the road;
very permanent, it seems.

this is the future, and i know it to be true
yet, i am still going to run face-first into as many large
pieces of municipal architecture as is possible

it's a free country, damnit !!!

i love you.



COLOPHON

The Auburn Circle Vol. 49 Iss. 2, Spring 2023 edition was produced by The Circle staff at Auburn University in Auburn, AL, and was printed by Shelby Printing in Pelham, AL. The Circle is advised by William Ferris. The cover art was designed by Issac "Lenny" Haynes and is a collage of composite materials. The blue color from this piece was echoed throughout the magazine with doodled elements drawn by the Auburn Circle staff. The magazine is composed of 100 pages in full color, including the front and back cover. All body copy was set in Mr Eaves Mod OT Light pt 11, and author tags were set in Mr Eaves Mod Ot Light pt 9 and Mrs Eaves OT Italic pt 9. Headline fonts included Mrs Eaves OT Bold, Heina's Hurry, Brush Tangse Regular, and Biro Script Reduced. This edition of The Auburn Circle was produced using Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign, as well as AutoDesk Sketchbook and HP Scanning Software. All written and visual content was contributed by students enrolled in Auburn University in the spring semester of 2023. All contributions and added elements were designed and placed by the graphic design team: Danielle Byrne, Danielle Ravelo, and Lauren Jernigan.



LETTER FROM THE DESIGNERS

Danielle Byrne, Danielle Ravelo, Lauren Jernigan

HOW TO *submit*

At the beginning of each semester, The Auburn Circle takes submissions for that semester's publication. Categories include fine art, interior design, fashion design, graphic design, industrial design, poetry, prose, photography, architecture, music, or any other documentable form of art or literature.

Please visit auburncircle.submittable.com or our website auburncircle.com for more information.



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