



Inside Out 2019



**Morning Commute - La Molina, Peru**  
*Sarah Roselli*

# Inside Out

Jefferson Literary/Arts Journal  
Spring 2019

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*Content Warning:* This magazine includes some written pieces with mature language and potentially triggering subject matter.

# Foreword

Welcome to the 2019 issue of *Inside Out*!

*Inside Out* is the literary and arts journal of the Jefferson student body. As such, it gives voice to our scholars as they migrate through their educational experience at our University. The creativity and vision of our students is featured within the pages of this book. Showcased is student work that was created in the intervals between classes and notebooks, dorm rooms and city streets.

Please enjoy this issue of *Inside Out*, as our students offer a unique view of their world using images, colors, words and light.

Charles A. Pohl, MD

*Vice Provost for Student Affairs, Thomas Jefferson University*

*Vice Dean for Student Affairs and Professor of Pediatrics, Sidney Kimmel Medical College*

# Editors' Statement

We are thrilled to share the 2019 edition of *Inside Out*: a stunning collection of visual art and literature that reflects the complexity of health and the myriad emotions tied to caregiving. Within this compilation, we see art that mirrors the ethos of the Jefferson community: one that recognizes an approach to healthcare that is deeply embedded in the humanities and in acknowledgment of all aspects of the human experience. With vivid textures and captivating language, artists in this magazine tackle questions about the lines between helping someone and harming them, coping with the loss of a patient, managing guilt related to familial relationships, how place affects our understanding of ourselves, and how identity impacts societal and personal expectations.

We are in awe of the immense contributions from our community members and are honored to share them with you. We hope that you find these beautiful pieces as meaningful as we do.

Kevin Tang & Madeleine Norris

Editors in Chief

Preeyal Patel

Art Director

Danielle Crabtree

Literary Director

Cara Mergner

Production Director

# Submission Information

*Inside Out* is a presentation of artwork, photography, short stories, poems and essays that is published annually. All full-time and part-time Jefferson students are welcome to submit work and to apply to serve on the magazine's editorial board. Submissions may be emailed to Dorissa.Bolinski@jefferson.edu. Photographic submissions should be saved as a .jpeg file using the highest resolution possible. Artwork should be photographed from a direct angle, without glare or visible background, and saved in the same manner as photographs. Artists who submit non-photographic material will be given the opportunity to have their accepted pieces professionally photographed by a Jefferson photographer in order to assure the best presentation in the printed magazine.

All submissions will be reviewed anonymously; not all submissions will be printed. Please note that entries will be judged as submitted; *Inside Out* will not crop, sharpen or otherwise adjust an improperly-saved graphic submission.

Manuscripts (prose, poetry, translations, short plays, etc.) should be submitted in a Word-compatible document, and saved under the name of the piece (or "untitled," if applicable).

All submissions must be accompanied by a separate cover letter document containing the following:

- Author's or artist's name
- Email address and local phone number
- College, department or undergraduate program and year in school
- Genre/medium and title of each submission

View the online version of *Inside Out* at:

[jefferson.edu/university/campus-life/inside-out.html](http://jefferson.edu/university/campus-life/inside-out.html)

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**Untitled Constellations**

*Kevin Tang*

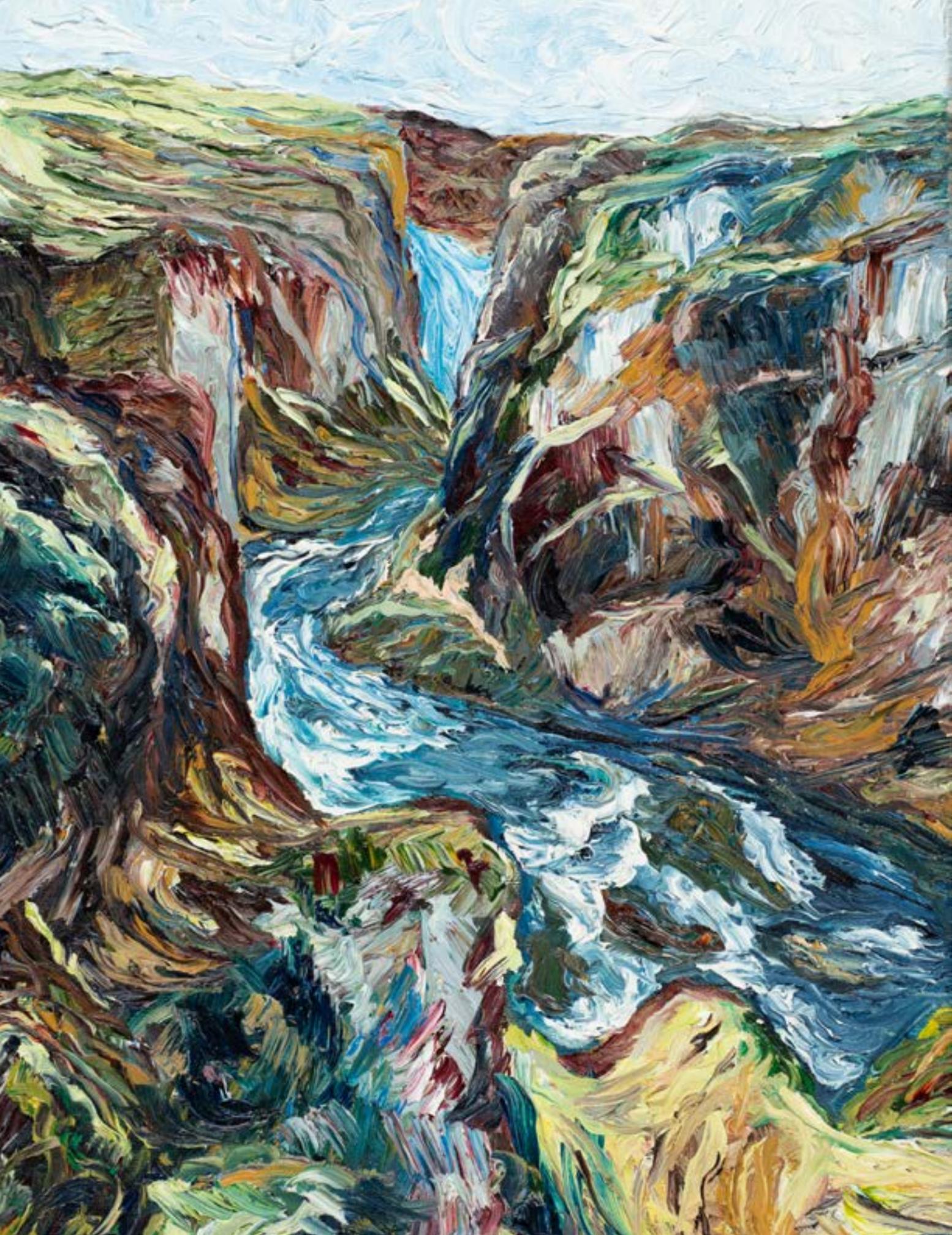
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**Desire**  
*Daisy Zhang*  
Acrylic on canvas



### Fish Tails

Sean Considine

It was the first time we went fly fishing  
where I didn't get tangled in the cattails  
and make you spend half the day  
unravelling my mistakes.

Careful not to stick myself,  
I laced the *Quasimodo Pheasant Tail*  
to the end of the line—  
you called it the "trout whisperer,"  
sure to hook a keeper.

The fly touched lips with the water like  
a first kiss with too much tongue,  
and as I clumsily lured it back  
the line tugged under the glassy stream.

10 inches, big enough to take home.

---

Back at the dock there was the cleaning station—  
water-logged wood, covered in entrails and blood.  
Here, the flies fed on the fish.

Under the cleaning station,  
a bucket was filled  
with fish heads, connected by straw-  
like spines, to fish tails

"You catch it, you clean it," you chuckled at me.

And as I slit through that cerise belly,  
up the golden-green gills  
that glistened like an oil spill,  
you were surprised at how much I liked it.

Opposite page:  
**The Cliffs**  
Kevin Tang  
Oil

**moratorium.**

*Harnoor Kaur*

"ooh, I wanna put this cric in."  
eyes flicker from computer screen  
to phone as he, slumped forward in his  
chair, suddenly jumps up and I stuff my granola  
bar remnants into my scrub pocket.  
the entire team swims swiftly through  
blank bare hushed hospital corridors.  
in a place where the time of day often cannot  
be identified amongst the guise of windowless  
walls and fluorescent lights, somehow the night  
still carries a standstill. we wade into a room with  
waves of people undulating over a static body  
suspended in some unknown position between  
life and death. A moratorium.

one wide-eyed medical student, two hands  
pushing on a chest for the first time, three surgical  
residents slicing the neck, four nurses at the feet. countless  
waves of people, in and out, thrashing at this patient's  
shore in an attempted revival.  
"those aren't real compressions."  
I look at his face and shudder at the  
lack of perfusion, the excess of vomit.  
trying not to choke on my nausea or failure,  
I shove the heels of my hands into his chest  
as his body flaps against the bathroom floor.  
the wave recedes. Defibrillation. A moratorium.

someone else dives in, thank god  
and I wade into the background, gasping for  
relief, trying to push away my embarrassment, my terror,  
as everyone else fights the impending tide.  
"he was supposed to be discharged tomorrow."  
"I thought psych said he was doing better."  
"she found a syringe in his arm."  
"he mumbled earlier that he was thankful."

they throw anchor after anchor, but the sodden shore  
would not hold. the tide's tug tightens.  
"Time of death. Two-oh-seven."  
A moratorium.



**Fisherman's Nook**  
*Boglarka Jordan*

**Cain and Abel**

*Sean Considine*

It's eight in the morning—  
on our rickety porch  
I find a half-drunk bottle of Old Grand-Dad  
and a half-full spittoon of Copenhagen—  
that's late for this.

I walk into the field  
as the sky grays,  
and find you among the flock,  
preparing to shear the ewes where they graze.

Morning dew baked with cow-pies and piss,  
a gnatty cloud encircles the sheep.  
You tell me to grab the one at my hip.  
I do.

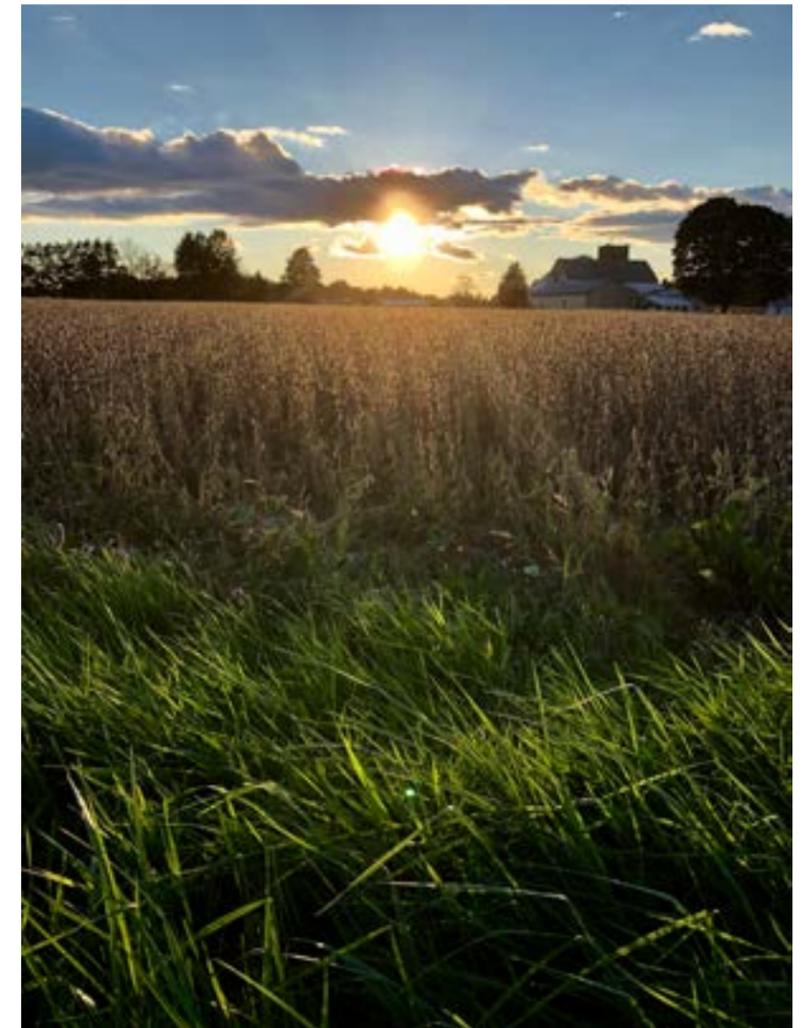
Here, alongside the cane breaks,  
my damp jeans covered in clumps of wool,  
I wonder if I would be able to kill you.

You wouldn't be heard over the bleating.  
There wouldn't be mourning.

Your eye locks with mine and  
I see that you want me to.  
But your genes are my genes  
and it takes the two of us  
to keep the helix together.

I look down and keep the shears  
to the back of the animal.

**Sunset Outside Philly**  
*Cara Mergner*





**Daughterhood**

*Danielle Crabtree*

I was made from my mother's rib:  
clay dust pressed into crisp bone.  
Her small body carried me until her sternum bent,  
and I tumbled slimy new from her chest.

Tonight, I kneel at her worn  
feet, and cup my hands as buckets  
to catch hot tears, cradle  
deep handprint bruises along the frayed cracks  
in her side.

I blow prayers and warm breath into her papery skin  
and hope blooming lungs  
will awaken her.

Tonight, I want my mother,  
I want to be her mother.  
I want to reach inside  
and pull an eggshell rib  
out through my navel  
and hand it to her as an offering—  
something to mold on the altar  
untouched.

Opposite page:

**Abstract Anatomy: Umbilical Cord**

*Jordyn Tumas*

Acrylic and modeling clay on canvas

**Al Kabsa**

*Sh'Rae Marshall*

My mother soaks  
a pinch of saffron  
in warm milk.  
She grounds  
pieces of the Earth  
into a powder.  
cardamom,  
cloves, black pepper,  
nutmeg, and turmeric.  
This is how  
we remember  
our land.

My mother  
fries chicken  
until the skin is golden brown.  
She says  
"I need the garlic"  
and I step out of my body.

I watch as fingers  
forget how to  
peel off the outer layers.

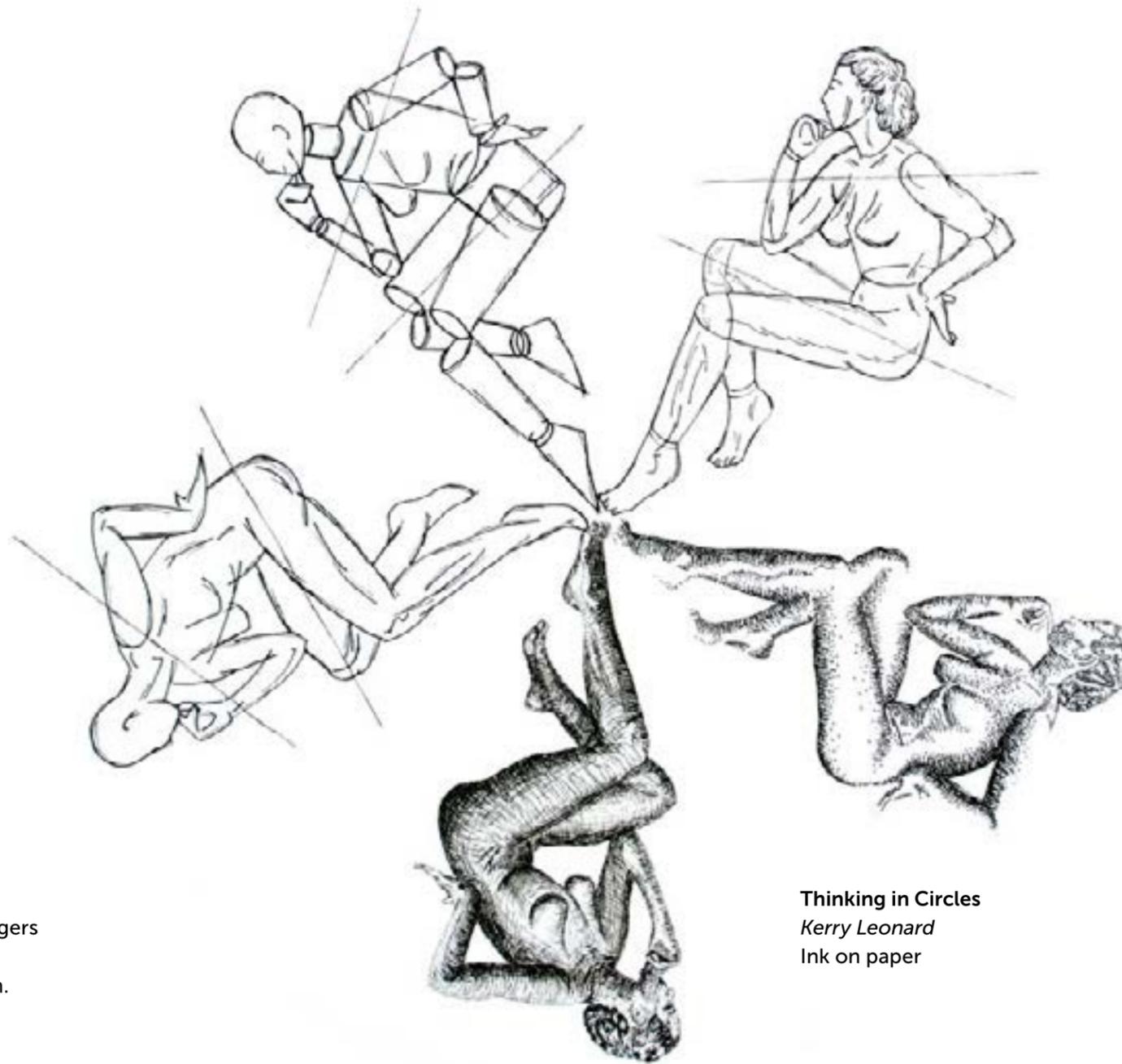
I watch a palm  
that doesn't  
press down on the garlic.

I watch my right hand  
neglecting the knife,  
refusing to chop.

I remember his fingers  
peeling off  
my school uniform.

I remember his palm  
pressing my face  
against his desk.

I remember the fingers of his right hand  
entering my body,  
stabbing me, collecting my blood.



**Thinking in Circles**

*Kerry Leonard*

Ink on paper

"he touched me."  
I tell my mother.  
she forgets to reply.  
she forgets  
how to grow her body  
into a refuge.  
she forgets  
how to be a home.

she grabs the garlic  
and hums.

This is how she reminds me  
that it is safer  
to be silent.  
that offering my stories to a sea  
will carry them farther  
than my body ever could.

I am voiceless for 5 days.  
I read poems  
until there are no more  
to seep into.  
I cry on my bed  
until it is tired  
of hugging me.

I envelope my traumas  
and mail them to  
a version of myself  
that is capable of healing.  
I braid my hair.  
I fix my hijab.  
I politely decline the moon's invite to my funeral.

one day,  
I will declare my freedom  
by naming my ghosts.  
one day,  
I will breathe again.

**Take a Turn**

*Benjamin Barnhart*

These days tea is keeping me alive:  
Tumbler on my bike, January ice.  
Oil of bergamot to wake, mint to sleep  
Deep brown dusks, early grey skies,  
A tether to my force, a cared-for musk.  
Stairs to the hot water, peaceful drips.  
Two weeks unreel, consume and supply.  
Resume ruts awry, grips a wound,  
Rips to bleed, pinched to heal.  
Tying the bag to the lip, I'm lost again:  
The only place to be, not grounded or shy.  
Mine the power Ouroboros. The threat of stability,  
Continuity and dappled bliss. My computer screen  
Swallows me again. The best thing I pray is  
Goodbye to bad habits. Oumuamua, a blink  
And suddenly pink rabbits. Another swing and miss.

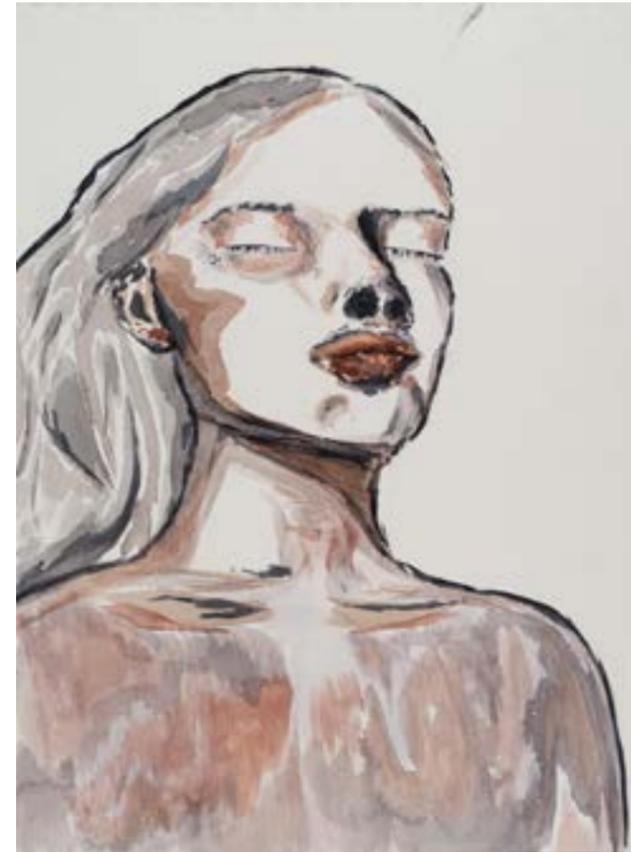


**Concussed**  
*Rachel Blair*  
Acrylic

**Consciousness**

*Daniela Fishbein*

Watercolor



**Ooze**

*Andrew Lynch*

Tiny busted blood vessels  
Overworked little windkessels  
Ooze your contents outward.

Ferment your spillage  
just beneath the surface  
until the whole thing stinks of India Ink.

Hungry flies lurk magnetically  
when the Honeycrisps slip—  
when their slick skins rip—  
when their pristine, plump whites fester  
dissolved to a mucous-y mush  
goo-ing over dark  
and deathly brown  
and syrupy sweet.



**Symmetry**  
*Erica Westlake*

**Peach**  
*Anna Melnick*

How dare you  
Split my ass  
Like it was your peach to bruise.

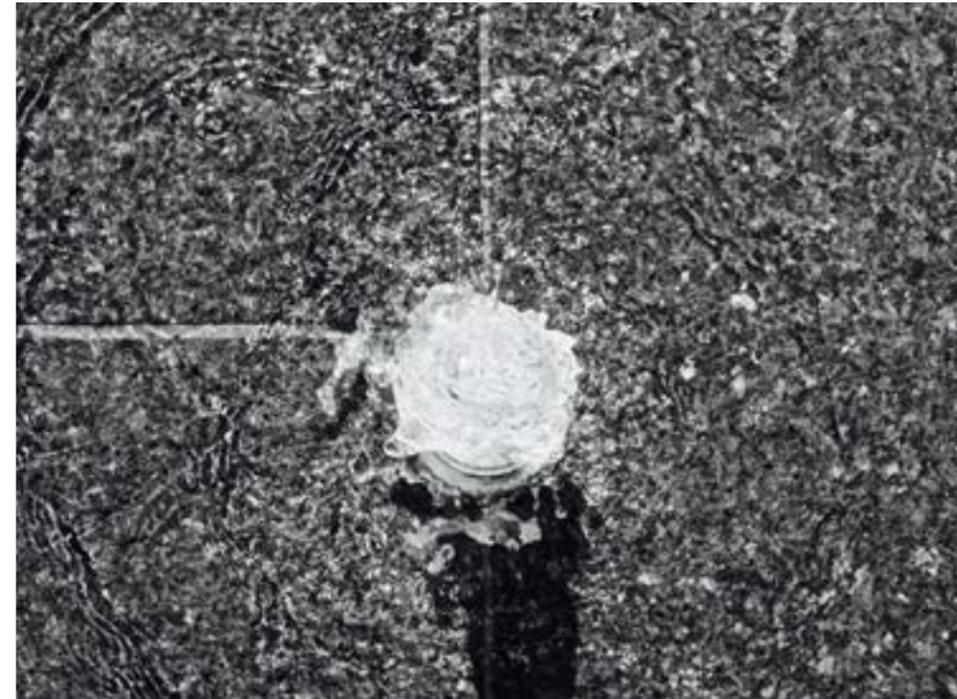
Was it my peach-colored dress  
That gave you the idea  
To turn me around up against the tree?

Like a fruit  
Returning home to her bark,  
But you can't reattach a fruit  
Once its fallen.

Instead, she rots in her  
Whiskey syrup,  
The beer biting sharp  
In your veins and on your breath.

Peach fuzz shaved smooth  
Does not mean I say yes.

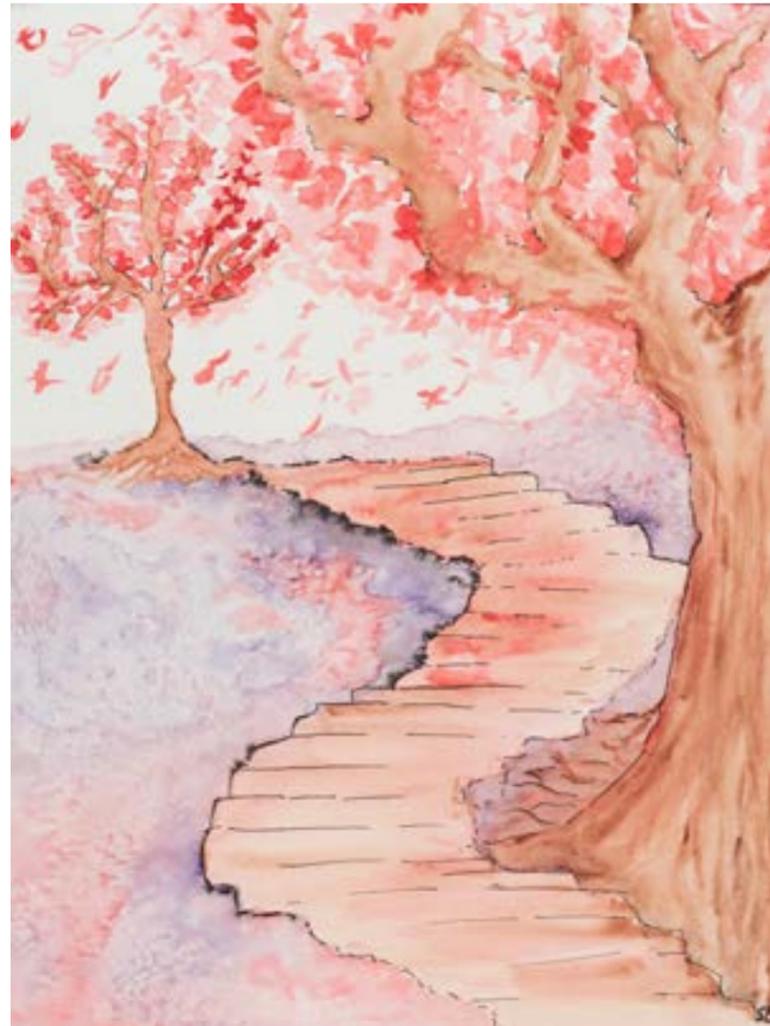
**Perpendicular**  
*Erica Westlake*



**Valentine's Day 2018**  
*Rachel Werk*

A day  
Only meant to celebrate  
Love  
And  
Peace  
Filled with obnoxiously  
Red and pink balloons  
Enough chocolate  
To turn everyone  
Into diabetics,  
Sappy posts on social media,  
The candy aisle at target  
Empty.  
As I pass on the street,  
Black smudges  
On someone's forehead  
Reminds me  
Of humility  
Respect  
And tradition.  
But also today  
A parent is living out  
An unspeakable nightmare  
A spouse is  
A child is.  
Less than ten minutes of  
A life  
Has just pierced the next ten decades  
Horrified  
Disgusted  
Outraged  
Powerless.

**Philosopher's Walk**  
*Stephanie Beldick*  
Watercolor on paper



**A Mother's Love**  
*Samantha Chong*

A mother's love was never measured by physical proximity.  
it is every cell underneath your skin  
every breath you take  
the weight that keeps your feet on the ground  
and all the beautiful things  
that have yet to happen to you in life.

–Heaven is so lucky to have you.

**Plato**  
*Roy Kim*

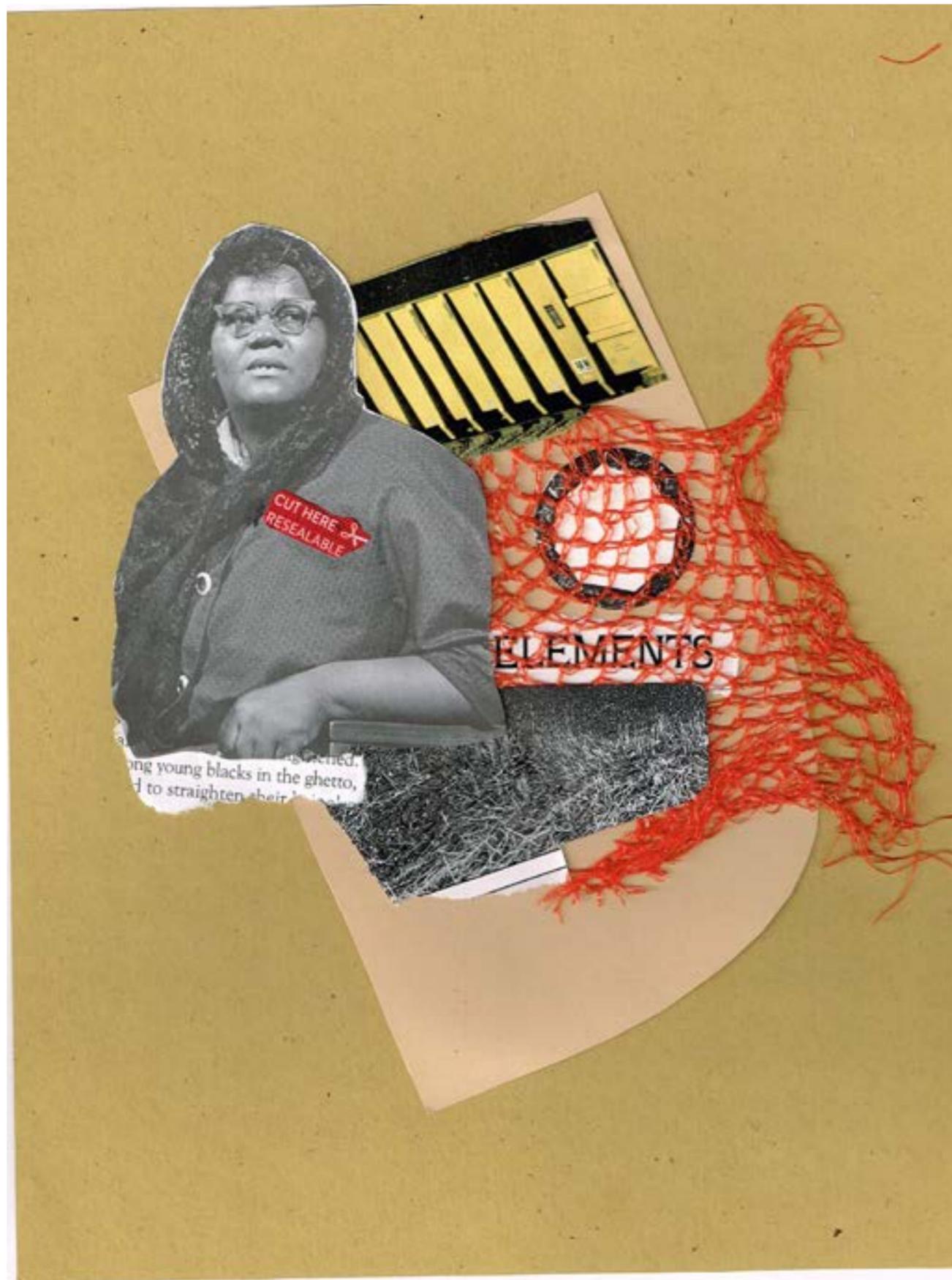
We can get out of this cave  
Follow the sounds of the waves  
Imagine how far we can sail  
And our day of return with tales  
Let us enlighten the cave we call home  
As we cherish the days we used to roam  
So that people will seek for sight  
Of the world beyond that old light

Let us dedicate our youth  
To the ardor search for truth  
But remember those left behind  
Who also tried but could not find  
The exit from this comfortable cave  
And long forgot the sounding of the waves  
They are the ones we have to teach  
In order for our sons to reach

Some better place closer to the sun  
Where justice and order can be done



**20/20**  
*Stephanie Honig*  
Charcoal



**Resilience**  
Tariro Mupaso  
Collage

**What once was water**

*Sh'Rae Marshall*

there are some days you forget to be soft  
there are some nights you choose to worship  
the transience of another  
man's skin  
on other nights,  
there is a light that refuses to flicker  
*you call this survival*

there are some days you lie under a burning tree,  
there are some nights you dance to  
the summer of  
1994  
on other nights,  
your fingers trace the bite marks of beasts who loved you  
*you call this a blessing*

there are some days you settle for fake flowers  
there are some nights you fold  
your lips into  
a coffin  
on other nights,  
your breath is enough to turn dirt into soil  
*you call this a healing*

and isn't this a healing – an elegy for those deserving of peace



**Seated Nude**  
Chen Zhou  
Oil on canvas



**To Be Invincible**  
*Danielle Crabtree*

it's morning and you,  
you are beautiful.  
you crawl out from beneath the crook of Sleep's winged elbow  
and Day hasn't yet touched your face.  
the tears from last Night's every emotion crust  
in the corners of your eyes  
and they look like crystals  
that i would set in silver  
and wear as a necklace.

lips: wet, raw with naïveté  
and the harsh question mark shapes  
of your eyebrows and ears soften.

your dark eyelashes were made to comb beaches,  
to pick up long algae and jellyfish remnants  
as you chase the waves into the ocean  
and they chase you back out—  
collecting everything you left behind.  
you carved your name into the sand  
so that a sea foam-ridden Wave would gather  
you into Her arms and take you everywhere She went.  
when those lashes flutter awake  
my heart skips a beat in anticipation of your eyes.

you lift your cheek off the pillow and it's caked  
in red designs so I can see the fragments of your dreams.  
cowlicks stick in all directions  
and it reminds me of how you must have looked when you were six.  
before your mom would've poured cold water onto your unruly hair  
and you, holding a cereal spoon in your fist,  
choking down lucky charms,  
grinning with marshmallows in your teeth  
about the crisp air from the open window  
whipping at your flannel sleeper.

and me, remembering last Night's dream,  
of sprinting down a highway,  
racing a Sunbeam to the beginning of a dirt road.

**Elephant**  
*Zoe McWatters*  
Pen and ink

### Looking for Your Face

*Emily Bucher*

At first I saw you  
in the eyes of strangers  
Anyone, really  
Eyes big enough, brown enough  
Then your smile broke through  
on the lips of others  
Those daring enough to smile at me

Soon enough your whole face  
Was on the bodies of strangers  
Every block  
Every corner  
Every street

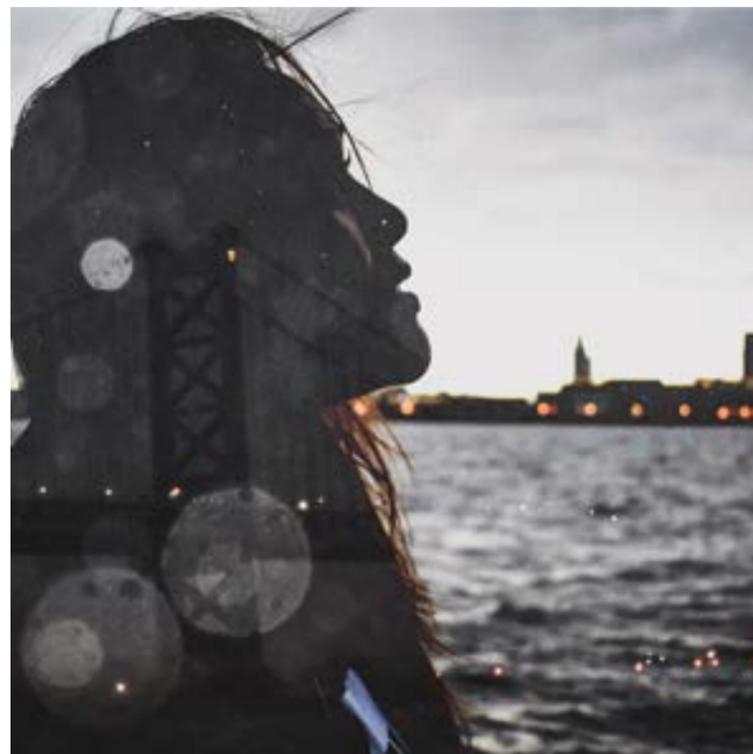
Eventually i was making your nose  
Out of grooves on the trees in the park  
Your feet sprung up  
Out of cracks in the sidewalk  
The telephone wires  
tangled to become your hands  
Whose touch i knew all too well

Then one day the city became man  
A man who looked like you  
As if god had sculpted you  
From dirt and skyscraper and the sleeping bags of the homeless  
And bathed you in his exhale to give you life

The city stood and got up  
And It left a cleft in the earth  
It shook itself of the dirt  
It wrung out its spine  
It had your hair  
Your dimples  
The freckle on your neck

The city stood up  
And it trudged away.

**She lives in the city, but the city also lives in her**  
*My Nguyen*



**Layover in Zürich Lake**  
*Rechal Siteng Lou*

### Sun-slug

*Andrew Lynch*

You,  
you're a sunbeam.

If I could, I'd have you scorch me--  
all red and blisters.  
Chaise lounge on white concrete.  
Aluminum reflectors and coconut oil.

Clouds in the forecast, fine, but come on.  
Who trusts a weatherman?

Well here I am: slimy and shivering, slug-like.  
The homey glow calls me in,  
but my eyes  
won't stop scanning the underbelly  
for cracks.



**Monochrome**  
*Daisy Zhang*  
Acrylic on canvas

**Falling Water**  
*Emily Bucher*

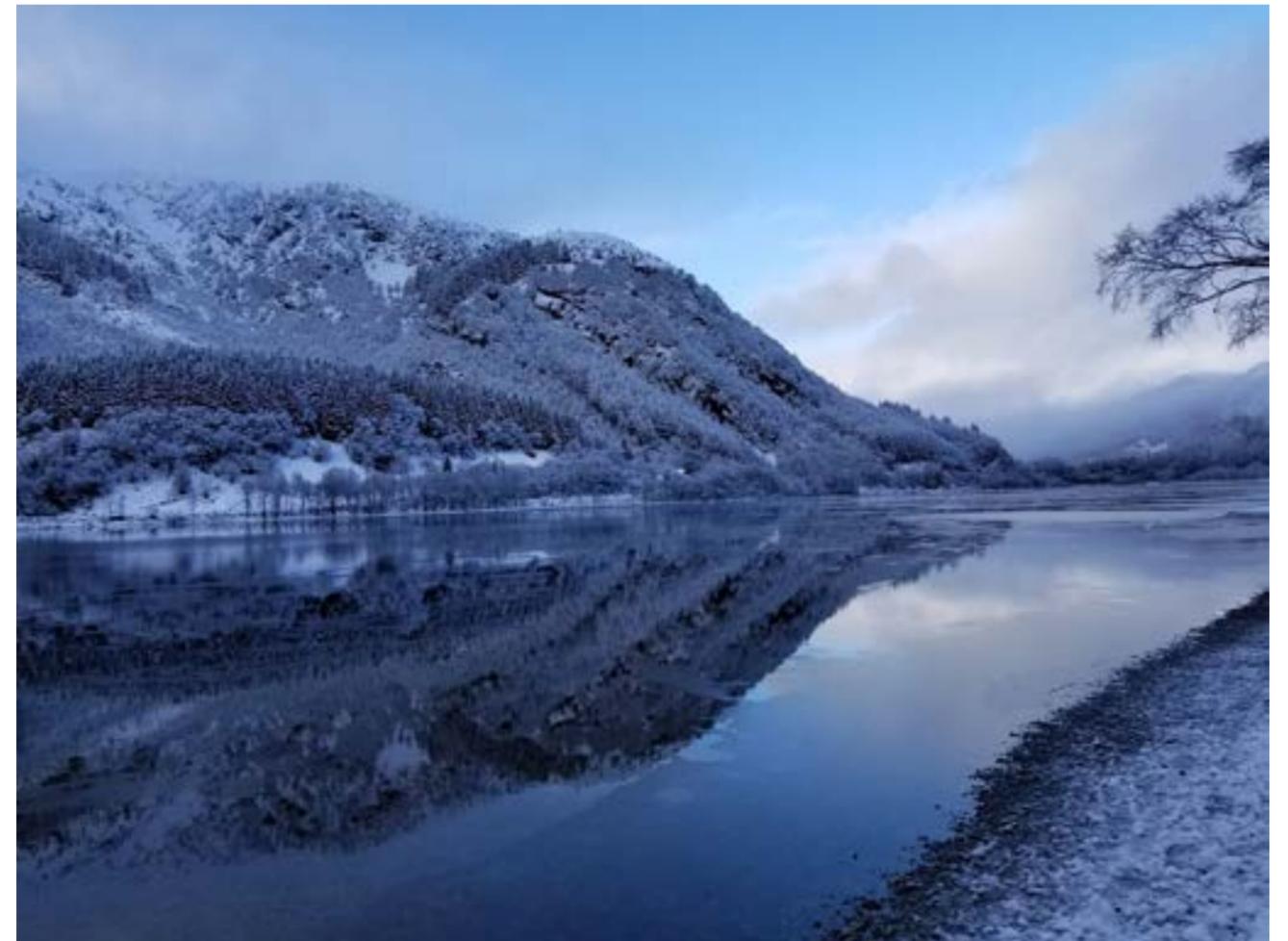
We had walked thirteen miles to the edge of a cliff where the breeze met the hurtling, falling water. Not to jump, not to photograph it, but to let the mist land on our skin and stand there with a film of the river on us for a few moments. It was one of those evenings in July where the night takes its time, the moon sharing the sky with the sun for a few hours—both a mistress to the stars but not at all minding one another's presence. We made our way to the very end of the rock, beneath our feet a drop to nothingness until a shallow pool of certain death punctuated the air. We hesitated—not because we wished to die—but because right there, at the border between existence and nonexistence we felt we had all the possibility in the world. So we stood there and turned our faces downward as we spat laughter down the walls of the the cliff until it splashed on the surface of the water.

Hours later we found ourselves in a juice bar off the highway, drinking sugared ice out of thick straws, tongues so cold we couldn't speak of the intimacy of our day at the mouth of the river.

**I wait.**  
*Kanika Ramchandani*

Measure the length of the sun's shadow  
The height of the tide  
The phases of the moon  
How long until the ice melts?  
Will the flowers bloom?  
The birds sing early morning songs  
Become day songs  
Night songs  
How long before her hair makes braids  
Thick, rose smelling  
Coconut oil slicked braids  
Count the hours it takes  
By foot, by sea, by sky  
Until you return home  
Or until home returns to you

**Nordic Heights**  
*Boglarka Jordan*



**Wolverine Skull**  
Zoe McWatters  
Charcoal



**Cowtown, New Jersey**  
*Sean Considine*

The flea market still pitches up on Tuesdays,  
rising slowly with the smell of wet grass,  
and sun-baked cow-pies.

Only a few of the original venders are left—  
with their army surplus, hardware,  
and canvas coveralls  
taken over by knockoff watches and purses  
sold to wannabe cowboys,  
whose boots haven't seen hard work,  
haven't scuffed from a square-dance.

Dad still talks about it with a smile—  
about getting on tip-toes to see the livestock  
brought for auction from the old Italian farmers.  
It almost makes you forget  
the garbage it's become.

A mile down the road a billboard shouts,  
"The Oldest Weekly Rodeo in the USA!"  
Every Saturday in the summer, rain or shine.  
Steers, and beers and bucking broncs,  
"Daisy Dukes" and cowboy boots  
all move to the sound of that faux-country twang.

A boy died there two years back—  
his horse kicked him off and crushed his skull.  
The sound was the worst part, they said,  
like a watermelon hitting concrete.

But the tents are still pitched,  
the music still plays,  
the brave and reckless still grip tightly  
to the back of the beasts,  
because Cowtown,  
like my father's nostalgic grin,  
or the piss-drunk rodeo clown  
taunting a flailing animal,  
looks best when you just don't think about it.

**Pike Place**  
*Matthew Beucherie*



**Donne Quixote**  
*Anonymous*

Donne said no man is an island, but he knew not  
Of the Pearl-Qatar or the Palm Dubai,  
For now man can make his own island,  
And an island of his own.

This island raised with ease,  
Isolated and distant from continents that are  
More friend than foe but that matters not,  
For the island is afeared.

Not for itself but for others,  
An island birthed from a volcano is only dormant so long,  
It shan't risk accosting the continents and its residents,  
As Vesuvius did Pompei.

So let a clod be washed away, then another,  
Let the island be diminished,  
Apart from Mankind,  
Where they be protected.

For if the bell must toll,  
Let it toll but for me.



**Food for Thought**  
*Alison DePew*  
Colored pencil

**the easy sport**  
*Cara Mergner*

jumping, leaping through the air,  
adrenaline pumping without a care.  
flipping, soaring, twisting high,  
never asking how or why.

like how i make it back to earth  
sliding through the watery turf,  
and why my head can slam so hard  
to initiate a glass-like shard.

in my head i know i should stop  
or take a break when i flop.

my body aches and begs me no,  
this can't be safe you have to go.  
when athletes are warriors i can't show

i'm weak.  
wounded.  
feeling slow.

so i'll shuffle to class because i must,  
not sure i'll remember what the professor discussed,  
i fear once again i've been concussed.



**Let Someone Else**  
*Benjamin Barnhart*

Open 3rd floor windows drown  
out NBA on muted television.  
There's a concert venue nearby,  
Not as harmonic as the bells from  
The cathedral down the street,  
Nor as jubilant as yelps from  
Prodigal bar patrons come home.  
If I had a dog to leash on Sunday  
more faces would be familiar.  
I wish this town and I weren't so  
Scared of each other, or alone.  
Let's fix the hydrant on our block  
That's been leaking for three weeks,  
Clean the curbside trash river  
On some north philly blocks this fall.

Tomorrow morning, I'll daydream spending  
All day on the bus. Miss my stop,  
Take a nap and wake up forgotten.  
Maybe where that orthodox nun was going.  
Or enlisted in the methadone commute.  
Tugging the wire, momentum takes over,  
as the river rushes its debris.  
I keep my seat and silence, blindly  
Filling gaps in overheard conversations.

## A Missed Date

*Timothy Kuchera*

Mary's admission was abrupt and unexpected. She was 69 years old and had been otherwise healthy until she presented with two weeks of fevers and fatigue. On admission, she was found to be pancytopenic, and a bone marrow biopsy was performed. Shortly thereafter, Mary was diagnosed with Hemophagocytic Lymphohistiocytosis, also known as HLH, in addition to a very rare T-cell lymphoma. HLH is an aggressive and life-threatening syndrome of excessive immune activation. A diagnosis with HLH can drastically cut life expectancy. Mary's dual diagnoses of HLH with T-cell Lymphoma reduced her life expectancy to one to two months. Despite the overwhelming odds, like any family struck with this sudden news, Mary and her family were hopeful that prompt treatment would alter the course of her illness and reach a cure.

In spite of her grave prognosis, I was struck by the life and energy that Mary exuded. Even at the age of 69 with multiple organ failure, she would greet me every morning with an energetic, "GOOD MORNING, BABY!" She constantly joked with the nurses, residents, and attending physicians. She was a favorite patient among staff. Everyone was pulling for her. One morning out of the blue, Mary asked me where I was taking her on our first date. Completely caught off guard I sputtered, "Well, where do you want to go?" "I don't know!" She shot back, "But if it ain't somewhere nice, you and me are through!" When my attending heard about this, she stated that Mary had the worst case of steroid-induced psychosis she had ever seen.



It seemed Mary's spirit could not be extinguished. Diagnosed with HLH? Bring it on. Lymphoma? Whatever. GI bleed? Flirt with the GI fellow. One morning, a rapid response was called for syncope. By the time I arrived, she recovered and was cracking jokes with the residents and nursing staff. In even the most desperate of times, she maintained her enthusiasm and lightheartedness.

Unfortunately, this story ends the way you probably expected. One morning, Mary was transferred to the ICU for emergent dialysis. From there on, her clinical course took a precipitous turn. The HLH, lymphoma, GI bleed, UTI, pneumonia, liver failure, and kidney failure compounded, and Mary and her family decided that they had enough. For four weeks, Mary was poked, prodded, biopsied, imaged, dialyzed, and filled with cytotoxic chemicals. A mutual decision was made to pursue comfort measures and have Mary spend her final days in the company of her family. Coincidentally, this decision came on the final day of my oncology rotation. I had not seen Mary since her transfer to the ICU and when I stepped into her room I barely recognized her. The previously raucous, animated, jubilant Mary now lay cachectic and motionless in her hospital bed. I stumbled over my words as I filled the silence with superficial conversation. I began to experience overwhelming feelings of loss and despair as I realized our time was short. I missed the energetic person I had come to know and care for one month prior. If I could just see her laugh, I thought, maybe everything would be okay. I asked, "Mary, where are we going on our date?" What I hoped for was a quip. What I hoped was for Mary to spring back to life. Instead, I got something much different. She slowly shifted her gaze to mine, pointed at the sky and whispered, "In Heaven." I attempted to collect myself and managed to choke out, "Well you better pick somewhere good!" "Don't worry," she said. "I'll have plenty of time."

**Castle**

*My Nguyen*

## Remedy

Rhianna Hibbler

I come into your room  
From that Halloween morning  
While you're contracting  
And I place my cold hand  
On the back of your neck  
And you sigh *thank you*  
So we wait, talk, and breathe  
Hours later the doctor is called  
When he cuts you sound like cardboard  
But the baby is born  
Salad tongs around skull  
During our postpartum visit  
You say this healing  
Hurts more than your C-section  
And I don't know how to help

I come into your room  
After we learn you are dying  
Your brother is visiting  
He tells me your stories  
Over the next five days  
As we wait  
For the rest of your body to fail  
I know who you were  
Before you were racking gasps  
Dry maw and moans  
So I breathe with you  
As I have with mothers  
And it may be chance  
But it seems to help

I come into your room  
With nylon strings  
And ask if you like Neil Young  
My youth feels insulting  
As I sing about wanting to live  
And getting old  
Because what can I know  
About those matters  
While your cells pay no mind  
To your will  
Your young daughter leans closer  
Poisons and potions pumping  
Monitors like metronomes  
I hear you sing along  
And you say it helps

I wonder if there is room  
A quiet space to reside  
As a person  
With a person  
Minute moments  
Helping us both just be

## Figure Study

Chen Zhou

Oil on canvas



**Caput Medusae**

*Sean Conside*

I shuffle through the portal,  
my eye's cling  
-ing to iodine-stained linoleum,  
trying not to look up  
but knowing I will eventually have to.

*No need to see if the myth is true.*

A woman sits by the bed.  
His ex-wife I imagine  
because any attempt at sympathy  
has yielded itself to indifference  
and her stone-cold glare.  
That, and no wedding ring.

Except for the brown-filled catheter bag,  
everything is yellow—  
yellow floor  
yellow shirt-stains  
yellow eyes  
yellow teeth  
yellow belly.

A potpourri  
of his last cigarette  
mixed with bile and booze  
climb the hairs in my nose  
as I place an IV.

Together, the woman and I watch  
the serpents slither around his navel  
and up his neck,  
trying to find their way out.

It won't be long now.  
She knows it,  
and her relief is palpable.  
She's the Perseus of Room 17,  
having conquered the gorgon  
that will eventually turn this poor bastard  
to stone.



**Unknown**  
*Kaitlyn Dykes*  
Acrylic



**Chilly**  
*Kerry Leonard*  
Charcoal and white pastel on toned paper

**CXR: Solitary Fibrous Tumor**  
*David Ney*

Don't just stand there,  
Do something.  
Better is good,  
Is better  
than nothing.

The pattern  
is; there is no pattern.

The pieces  
that were him  
in stark contrast.

Now only in lights  
Racing apart never  
To be put  
Back together.

## How finding a therapist is like trying to keep a succulent alive

*Anya Platt*

Step 1: come to terms with the fact that you need some color in your life.

You're gifted a little green guy, or you feel fancy one day and buy a potted fella at the farmer's market. Maybe an aunt gives one to you, or a coworker has extras. You can't resist that little ceramic tub, just bigger than a thimble.

It takes you a while to realize you're sad. You tell your friends they should see therapists, make the "you don't have to be sick to get help" plug, but the hurdle for you is high. You stay in your discomfort zone a while longer. Then, it gets to be too much, and the scale tips. It suddenly feels urgent, like your friends' advice, once sage, is dried up soil and you need a good watering.

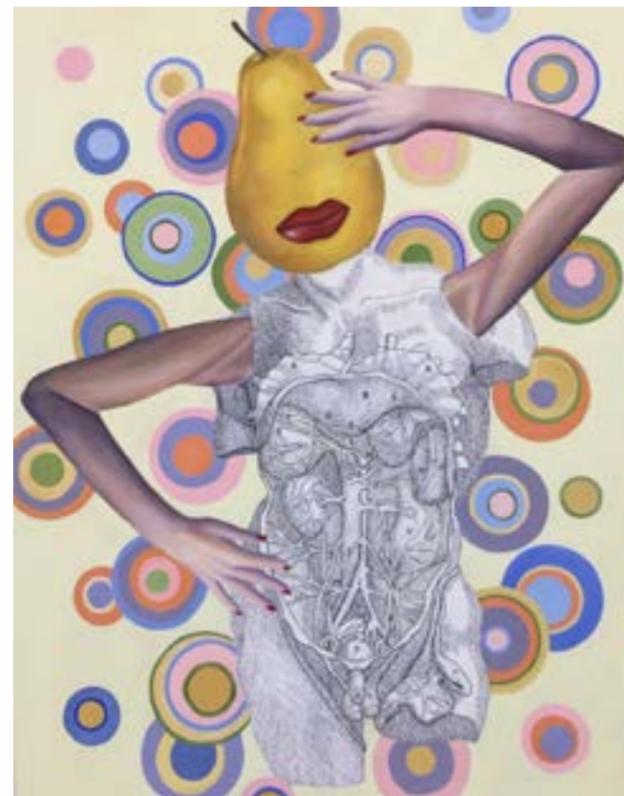
Step 2: plant the idea and stare at it for a good long time.

There it is, this fresh budding babe on your windowsill. You stare at it all the time. You feed it water, just a few drops, reciting "not too much" in your virgin plant-brain. You feel compelled to take a close-up photograph of the little globe of dew that stays suspended on the leaf, jiggling, intense, serene. You think about your plant often, how it takes your bedroom to the next level. It looks good next to the woman on your wall, her legs spread.

The weight on your chest lessens when you remind yourself that there are steps forward, then your breath catches and drags a bit as you take those first steps. Your mind shuts off when you start planning. It tends to shut off. And still, you can't stop thinking about needing someone to talk to, someone who might solve the problems that clutter you like the silvery moths that just won't leave your closet.



**Day at the Sketch Club**  
*Chen Zhou*  
Oil on canvas



## Appearance

*Kerry Leonard*

Oil on canvas, collage

Step 3: the sun is gone.

The leaves are screaming for sun, wishing they could grow limbs and part the fog, crawl closer to the warmth.

You are screaming, for sun, for sun.

Step 4: you learn that succulents live hard, and you try to believe it.

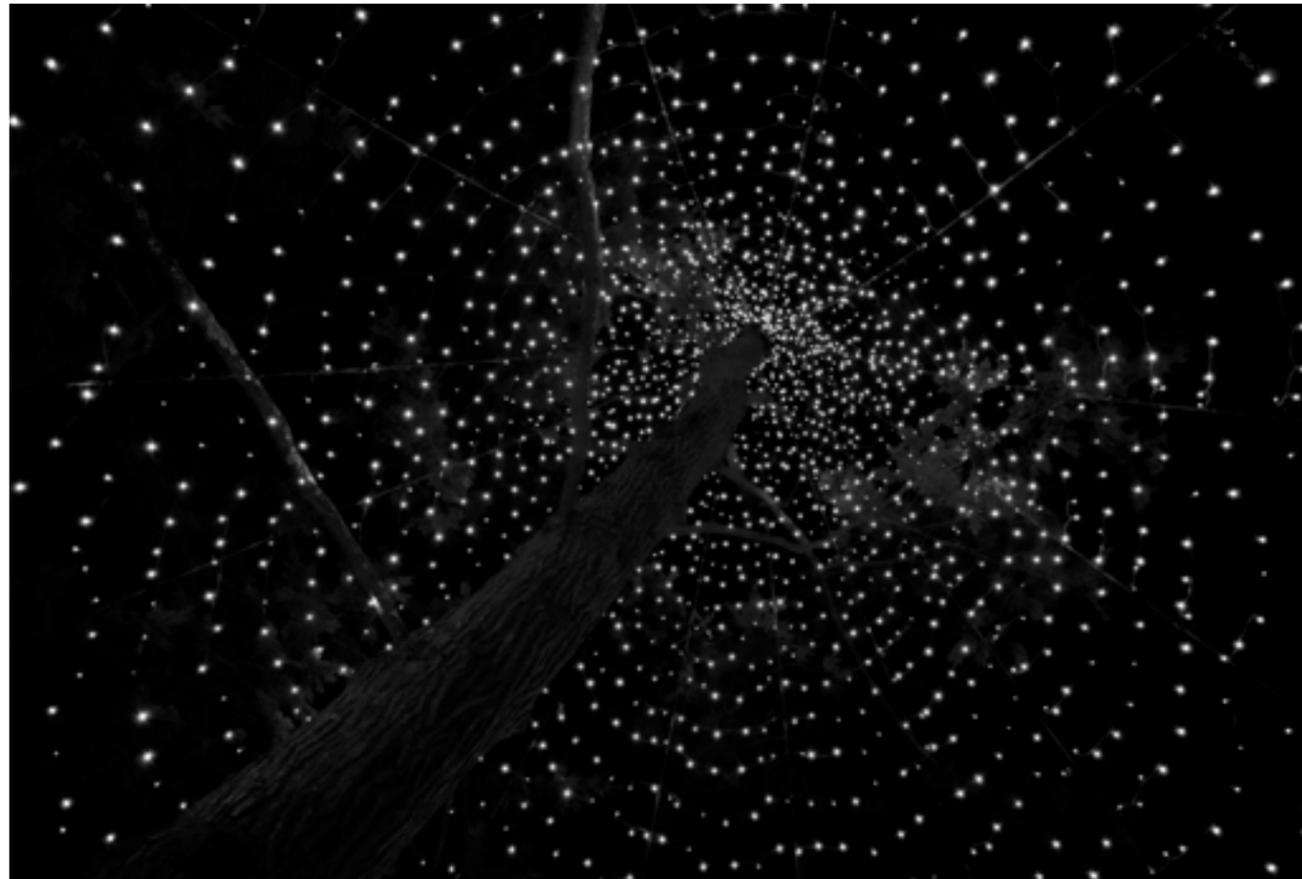
The routine comes easier than you thought it would. Sometimes, you're eager to water even though it's not quite time, like that urge to chew another gummy vitamin when you've already had your two for the day. Your little buddy forgives the weeks you forget, and you read online that crumpled leaves are part of its lifecycle.

You march into her cozy, highly decorated office space, spot the airplant in the corner. She sits cross-legged; you can't help but notice that her skirt doesn't fully cover her thighs; you grow embarrassed as her underwear peeks through. Breath after shaky breath, you begin your story from nowhere and everywhere, somehow intensely distracted by not knowing where to put your hands. You grab a pillow, squeeze it.

You sit there, trying not to cry, that shifty, weighty feeling crowding your chest. Of course, you're weary that too much water will kill the plant.

Next steps:

Looks like your little guy is on his last legs. You email the therapist because you can tell she isn't quite right for you. The shifty-weighty feeling shouldn't be there still. You consider the freeness of some future day, where you might pay the farmer's market a visit or complete another intake form. You find comfort in the crisp dryness of the now dead leaves.



**Spiderweb of Lights**  
Erica Westlake

**MASK**  
Brittany File

Moonlit crows croon to celestial skies  
Mocking the worth of the motionless man  
Mercilessly waiting, they sneer as he cries  
Muscles melt from his bones; on boughs they plan

Averting his gaze, she struggles to see  
An actor behind the smile that shines  
Armor falls to floor as truth makes a plea  
Air escapes words as apprehension unwinds

Strangled from inside he struggles for air  
Sinister reaper awaits his last breath  
Seeing her tears almost too much to bear  
Shadows creep to his bedside smelling of death

Knuckles stiffly clenched grasping for vigor  
Kidnapped from life, ALS pulls the trigger

**For Someday**  
Ashley Foreman

Take photographs  
with an old camera.  
Smell the plastic and the burn  
as the film rolls it's chemic paint  
brush into your hands.  
Take the table for one by the window  
and drink warm coffees with extra cream  
and watch as the foreign men  
light their cigarettes and drag their silhouette  
strings behind women in dresses.  
And smile because the polarity is raw  
and beautiful when they don't feel watched,  
when they don't feel they are holding power  
but chasing it.  
Swan dive into head spins  
of amber sands and crowds  
of sweat and heartbeats.  
Taste the salts of different skins.  
Know your own. Embrace  
the curls at the back of your neck  
that the salinity and shine bring out in the afternoon.  
Dance the ribbon spectrum of your bloodied  
skin from flush to blanch. Write often.  
Postcards stamp adventure and promise  
more than anything I know. Address them to yourself  
so you remember when the bays no longer  
swallow you in blue, when the cobblestones  
and quaint crooked streets don't trick  
your sandals into grooves, when you sit  
by a window at the end of your life and  
look for times when you were not another face  
huddled around a birthday cake or an alter  
or a hospital bed. You were the principle of a famished  
woman that stood on worlds outstretched  
and catalogued faithfully. This alone will feed you.  
This will bring you home.

**Philly Love**  
Reinardus Chindian



Heat  
Emily Bucher

*So this is how we warm the air on the coldest day of winter:*

We walk to the pulse of our own heartbeats.  
Sighing,  
with length and with purpose,  
To see what will become of our breath  
When kissed by the cold.

Puffs of cigarette smoke,  
cold on the inhale,  
Sweet and hot on the exhale,  
The stale honey of its scent dancing  
With the buttery fragrance of olives that slipped from  
The cutting boards of the Mediterranean restaurant nearby,  
pushed out in a gust of hot air  
from the laundry vents where they washed the  
Linens from the night before—

The imprint of a stifled laugh in peony lipstick on a napkin,  
Red splatters of sauce from a meal shared by two,  
the spoon waltzing its way between hands, across the table,  
Into mouths all night long.

Outside we warmed the air with the heat of our complaints  
to the person on the other end of the phone  
Risking the tips of our fingers and exposed flesh to  
Shout our curses at Mother Nature  
As taxis pass by, sloshing up sleet

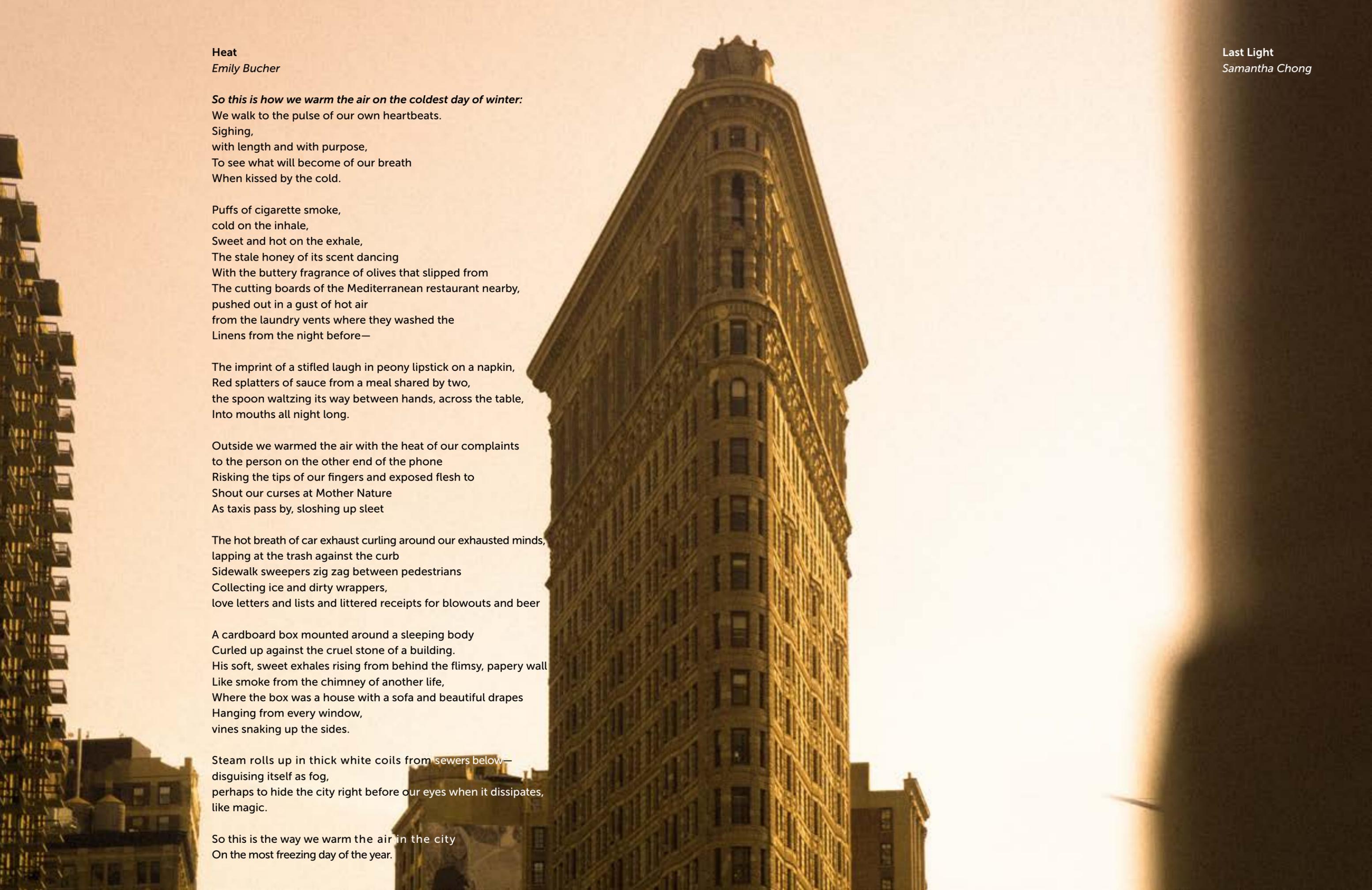
The hot breath of car exhaust curling around our exhausted minds,  
lapping at the trash against the curb  
Sidewalk sweepers zig zag between pedestrians  
Collecting ice and dirty wrappers,  
love letters and lists and littered receipts for blowouts and beer

A cardboard box mounted around a sleeping body  
Curled up against the cruel stone of a building.  
His soft, sweet exhales rising from behind the flimsy, papery wall  
Like smoke from the chimney of another life,  
Where the box was a house with a sofa and beautiful drapes  
Hanging from every window,  
vines snaking up the sides.

Steam rolls up in thick white coils from sewers below—  
disguising itself as fog,  
perhaps to hide the city right before our eyes when it dissipates,  
like magic.

So this is the way we warm the air in the city  
On the most freezing day of the year.

Last Light  
Samantha Chong





Checkmate  
Preeyal Patel  
Acrylic and ink

### Artichoke Hearts

Emily Bucher

Today we had a good day  
All smiles when he shuffled to the door  
Dark green checkered slippers  
Thick grey coils of hair, every single which way you could name  
Laugh lines of echos from a pebble into a deep lake

He played with the ceiling fan  
With the furnace in the basement  
Like they were some kind of chore  
Some kind of toy  
Some thing, anything to keep himself busy  
Some times I wonder if he knows he's slipping

He sat down to tell me a story about vegetables  
Artichokes, specifically  
Lot space- that was the deal  
Lot space for their trucks in exchange for any kind of vegetable he could get his hands on  
And that day, it was artichokes

Fourteen artichokes  
That's a lot, even for a young working boy  
But they stuffed them anyway, Aunt Connie and Aunt Dolly  
I can imagine them in the kitchen for hours  
Breadcrumbs up to their forearms  
Hair swept back, necks bent back, throats choked with laughter

"The heart's the best part you know, the core, it's the softest"  
Yeah, I know, Pop  
Sometimes I wonder if he knows he's slipping  
He must  
But on days like today it's better  
That core, that soft spot is there and its real  
And it's easier to pretend he's not

Mushrooms  
Zoe McWatters  
Pen and ink





Valuable  
Tariro Mupaso  
Collage

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