

Garland Court

Review 2022



2022

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Eric Bremer

Angel Brito

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Maria Cortez

Michelle Crawhorn

Mayra Cruz-Mendoza

Maryann Dimas

Riley Donaldson

Dina Dwyer

Jaylene Flores

Johnathan Ford

Carlos Garcia

Diana Gomez-Olivares

Daniel Gordon

Zach Grand

Ana Raquel Jimenez

Brandon Jones

Ann Keidel

Mariia Khalapsina

Mark Kruekenpet

Jennifer Lara

Evelyn Leon

Janet Leu

Shaun Levine

Austin Lopez

Alexander Limardo/Toaster

Andrea Malone

Jaquara Marshal

Martine Martinezl

Marcos Meza

Devona Middleton

Hector Morales

Lasone Nathan

Alyssa Owens

Benjamin Perez

Jesus Perez

Liudmila Putyatova

Jazmine Quinones

Jimmy Quinto

Ana-Maria Radu

Michael Repel

Jocelyn Romero

Mia Thompson

Hazael Torres

Daniel Salgados

Patrianna Scales

Manuela Scolaro Coonce

Emonnie Scott

Alex Sepulveda

Maya Sixto

Evelyn Spear

Dana Stalewski

Kevin Vargas

Jade Villalobos

Greta Waterkotte

Katrina Weiland

Treasure Whyte

Rachel Williams



Garland Court Review

HAROLD WASHINGTON COLLEGE

2022

A curated assembly

of

Literature

& Art

Garland Court Review Est. 1962 by Prof. Carolyn Rodgers.

The Garland Court Review is published in the Spring Semester of each year by the English and Art departments of Harold Washington College, 30 E. Lake St., Chicago, IL 60601.

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Garland Court Review

HAROLD WASHINGTON COLLEGE

2022

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Faculty Members:

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Barbara Egel

David Scheier

Student Members:

Zipporah Auta

Cameron Butler

Maria Cortez

Zach Grand

Ana-Maria Radu

Jocelyn Romero

Evelyn Spear

Letter

from the
Editors

This is the third issue of the Garland Court Review since the English and Art Departments joined forces three years ago to showcase the breadth of literary and visual talents that thrive within the Harold Washington College community.

The academic year 2021-2022 marked a global attempt to rejoin active life after 2020 forced us all into isolation in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. As many have noted, this was a time of imposed stillness. As stillness is often a conductor of thoughts, its cousin may just be reflection.

What do artists do, if not reflect?

A number of luminaries have affirmed that it is in times of crisis that artists bear the charge to create art which examines the chaos brewing around them—and that they must do so in an attempt to make sense of it all with whatever means of expression constitute their talents and create language that fits the occasion.

Language that comforts.

Language that elucidates commonly-experienced confusion.

Language that crystalizes pain into something immediately recognizable by readers and viewers alike, through words or visuals.

Or sound.

It is fair to say that the artists featured in this issue attempted to do this on the heels of a time when so many are trying to reinvent ways to operate in the world—and are fledgling. There’s talk of a “new normal,” but what does it look like?

The literary selections appear to be bound together by the question of “how to love” and how to handle the success or failure of that inquiry. The visual arts appear to ponder the same question, while entertaining the anxiety caused by the climate crisis, another war, the consequences of new leadership and the ever-present yearning for order.

All of the artists in this issue are asking the same questions but are responding differently.

If we are all asking the same questions, regardless of the answers, then perhaps we are indeed more linked than separated

From us
to
YOU,

Ukaisha Al-Amin
Zipporah Auta
Cameron Butler
Maria Cortez
J-L Deher-Lesaint
Barbara Egel
Zach Grand
Ana-Maria Radu
Jocelyn Romero
David Scheier
Galina Shevchenko
Evelyn Spear.

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Literary

Works

R *Am*aris Castillo *Refuse to be Replaced*

I refuse to be replaced.

I want to be missed.

I want to be loved,

Even when I don't hand any in return.

I want to be the sadness that emerges when you're having moments of contentment.

I want to be the scent of your coffee each morning so you can start your days thinking about me.

When you're caressing another woman, I want to be who you ponder about while you do it.

When your lips hug hers, you'll think of mine and you'll smell my scent on her skin her skin will never be as tender as mine had been.

On cold arid nights, my warmth will come back to your bed sheets and haunt you until you cry yourself to sleep.

When you stumble upon the streets of Wicker, you'll recall that late night where we had stepped out of my favorite restaurant and went on a night drive. A night drive where I played my favorite song, and you caressed my skin with your eyes. You'll replay the same songs, and you'll replay the same 20 seconds that remind you most of me.

When you look into her eyes, you'll see mine. When you see mine, you'll recall every sense of love you had felt from the first time you laid eyes on me. Your love grew more each day because of my genuineness and that's what you admired most.

You'll miss me.

But I'll never think of you.

...

Maria Cortez

The Perils of Womanhood

As I exit the bus, the sky's darkened state immediately catches my gaze
The crescent moon a shining jewel against a black slate
I head towards the familiar comforts of home,
As a slight breeze brings a chill to my bones
And multicolored leaves crunch beneath my feet.
My surroundings remain shrouded in a curtain of darkness
The earbuds within my ears transmitting a woman's tense voice
Recounting the courage of Rhonda Stapley,
Who escaped the clutches of one Ted Bundy
As Stapley sprints from Bundy's tan Beetle—
My ears perk up as the sound of shuffling hits them
The mysterious sound coming from behind me

Instantly, my heart beats wildly,
A caged animal attempting to flee
The drum of my heartbeat drowning out the sound of Stapley's tale
My breath stuck in an inhale
The muscles throughout my body growing tense
And a frenzy of endless possibilities rushes through my head
Images of a large, muscular man charging toward me
Armed with a pistol, blade, or simply with his superior strength
In anticipation of this faceless attacker,

I ruffle through my bag until I retrieve it—my pink bottled defense
With it in hand, I quickly pivot toward the source of the sound

Surprised to find that in my line of vision,
Sits a chestnut-colored squirrel
Absentmindedly gazing into the distance
Its miniature paws held up to its chest

My breath finally free to exhale,
Allowing my muscles to relax
My heart begins to slow
And my shoulders subsequently slump
Yet I find myself
Unable to release the pepper spray that is now glued to my sweaty palm
I hurry home with it in hand
Unaware of a single word the podcast host utters
My chest remaining tense until I reach the wooden door

Michelle Crowhorn

*E*vergreen

I would like to remember you this way
Evergreen
Only if you'd like to be
Like the trees by your house
I made it my home too

I claimed your cassettes
Before I knew what the words meant
And how they shaped yours into mine
We speak with the same tongue
I hope you don't mind

I picture you picturing us
Ever so pleased that
You and I are one in the same
I should probably frame that
If I find it, trust that I will

You ran a river through me
I carry you down
The hall in the house that I outgrew
I knew better so I left
That space for you to consume

I'm a lighthouse
Forever doomed to search for you
I dreamt up a storm and
You harnessed the wind
Did you know it then?

A jaded grey moon
Gazes distantly back at me and
I see the tides roll in
A familiarity that hasn't been seen since
I can't remember when

I figure I should either thank you or
Curse our name like they did
Acceptance wasn't written in its history
A lifelong plight is slightly preferable
As hard as I try, I can't understand

I would like to remember you this way
Evergreen
Only if you'd like to be
Like the grass on the other side
I walked along it too

,

Dina Dwyer

A

night in The City

Abandoned places
Empty faces
Surrounded by people
I am alone
Walking fast
Time moving slow
Quick breaths
Shaking hands
Shoved into pants pockets
Head tilted down
Towards the ground
I don't need to look to know
It's all the same as before
I walk aimlessly
Bent against the howling wind
Outside me
Inside me
Nowhere to go
I stop for a red light
Only then, I lift my head
The city is bright against the dark night
I admire the skyline until the light turns
Then I put my head down and walk more
Memories flow
Tears Sting
I pick up my pace as my thoughts race
Images flash
I want to be okay
I want to be safe
I want to be...wanted
The voice in my head snickers
"Yeah, right"

Zach Grand
Sun beats

Brown boy. Black boy.

Don't be confused

Don't think that the world isn't filled with you

Don't be ashamed.

The color of your skin might make people afraid

You are the sun that radiates within

Don't stop shining

Just be you.

Brown boy Black boy the sun beats for you.

Coco Bean

A Woman's Prayer

When I prayed for man, I mentioned matching energy too.
Poof like a fairy here came you—
Reminding that my scars are just testimony of what I had been through.
Coaching me through my anxiety
Embracing my flaws so effortlessly
I am so nervous to tell the world how I feel about you.
When I see the future all I see is you.
I'm trying to tell them so graciously
I found a piece of me I didn't know exists
Peace and joy—
I have found you my friend.
Bound forever, I hope we would never end.
A lover at the core
A partner for sure
Trust me when I say "I tried to lock that door."
Conversation about the truth
Prone to bring out attitudes
With a sprinkle of rolling eyes too
But it never lasts long,
Especially when you pull me closer.
Even when you think I am wrong
You respect my opinions
Supporting me in my fierceness.
This led me to believe that you're my guy,
You're the guy I prayed about.
I just knew you existed.
You listen close and make my voice heard
I never feel small even when I fail to use my words
You complete my thoughts when I stumble
Gripping my hips before I tumble.

Coco Bean

Observations of a Mother

Broken hearts

Tears afar

Sweet crying melodies

Still in prison but no felonies

Overview of love, but not from a balcony

The overview from the seat that observed abuse and neglect

The sweet and sour love that made it seem like a pick and then select

The love of two lost souls—

Of two people who forgot to love each other back

Love that cried alone and stayed in the back

Private tears with the bottle of liquor

She had a mighty roar which made her seem bigger

Mighty in my eyes, but I can only imagine she drowned in her own pride

Too proud to say

“I am stronger because I cried”

Too proud to say

“I am this because of you”

Too proud to say

“I sat and watched my dreams float away”

Too proud to say

“It was just a little too late”

Fast forward, look up

Damn, you’re just like her

Another woman who goes through some of the same motions

While there’s a little girl standing in another doorway

Ann Keidel

A *Fat Girl*

Food was something I took shelter in,
I buried myself in it like a child sitting in a sandbox filled with their favorite toys,
the kind of toys kids refuse to put down,
until anger colors their parents' faces like freshly painted walls in a dark hall,
I was only seven the first time I fell in love,
my tastebuds repeatedly mistaked crumbs for a hand holding mine,
mommy's bed became a suitcase that I could not pack,
the pantry replicated her voice so well,
I spent hours listening,
her laughter disguised as plates,
silverware that curved into her smile,
while mine became a language,
I did not feel worthy enough to speak,
I was thirteen,
when I learned that her love was not sitting in a cabinet,
for me to reach,
I was thirteen,
when I learned that a grocery bag,
does not have the strength, nor size,
to carry a love like hers.

Mark Kruekenpet

The Ballerina

i wanna dance to your beating heart
a panicked step to each pulse
like the pitiful fucks we are
because nothing felt like home
than that desperate dance

every beat meant a plucked straw
and i knew i wasn't strong enough
not enough to keep pace
yours was the dance that made my heart race

i watched your feet flutter
you were a ballerina
and i was a baby bird who hadn't seen a
lick of life like yours

i didn't mean to be a whore
when i danced, because i tried under you
my feet against that crumbled floor
so how was i supposed to do it?

i wanna dance to your beating heart
because no art matched it
a fine-tuned renaissance
so please
let me feel that desperate dance

Janet Leu

Becoming Myrtha

I return:
my body slicing,
spinning,
deep in the forest

only at night,

free from
corporeal concerns;
I do not breathe
nor do I bleed,
shrouded in white,
crowned in blossoms,

summoning my sisters
from their graves, where
we will take pleasure in
the one thing that nourishes us.

And one sweep of my arm
will be all it takes
for a hapless man
to dance and dance
until he collapses
onto the ground,
his heart beating
no more.

Men will die because of us.

Janet Leu

I Don't Have a Daughter; It's For Me

The heavy pink jewelry box
is the shade of fresh pink tights,
but the ornate silver lock at the front
doesn't come with a key.
When I lift the lid, a plastic doll
with yellow hair greets me,
white leotard painted onto her torso,
white crinoline tutu lined in silver,
her fairy wings reflected in the lid's
mirror behind her; one spindly arm
lifted above her head, the other
extended sideways, white pointe shoes
balancing on a slim platform over
metal coils. I reach around to
wind the knob, wind it like a ritual
so she spins in a circle, frozen
in the same spot while a mechanical loop
of the Swan Lake plays,
its sad, nostalgic melody
made for the delicate dreams
of little girls with ethereal costumes
in their eyes; made for a middle-aged
woman who wanted to see
what her body is capable of,
and I began to lay my brass jewels
with dried flowers and mouse bones
into the soft beige compartments
as the plastic ballerina
continues to twirl.

Blue

Austin Lopez

Many days without the color blue,
The never ending river says.
Writing thoughts that feel like a maze,
A hidden treasure you are trying to uncover.
You know it's at your fingertips
Yet millions of miles away.
Dreamt of a tiger that doesn't sleep,
With big long nails and eyes so deep
You get lost within, only to realize its
Too late to go back.
Many days I feel tiger that doesn't sleep,
Only its not too late to go back,
Or so I believe.
If I keep searching will I find it.
What's it? No one knows, not even
The never-ending river.
Too bad it can't look for me.
Like a summer day at the beach
I let myself flow in the water.
I haven't seen blue in some time now.
Is that what I'm looking for?
I don't know what blue is.
I wish the never-ending river knew.

Jaquara Marshall

The Birth and Death of Me

April 17, 1998

I was born to a mother
who didn't exist internally.
I was born to a man,
Yes, a man not a father.
The cycle had imprinted.
It was born into another helpless soul.
Born unwillingly as we all are.
Born onto a sphere
where no blueprints or guidelines exist.
Born with death lurking inside.

January 16, 2002

Not too long
I turned blue.
With forceful shakes
I awake
To ice-cold water,
heavy hands on my chest,
I was sleeping deep.
A man found me in the nick of time.
A wall had come down.
It created a new room in a house.
Yes, a house
not a home
where many unwanted souls lie.

Jaquara Marshall

A Child

Is to Be Seen and Not Heard

No one's listening anyway.
I try to sound the alarms with whispers from clenched jaws.
To say that's hurting me,
I don't think it should be this way at all.
No one's watching anyway.
Having to wear long sleeves about five days out the week,
It's just that on Saturdays and Sundays I get to hide at home under the sheets.
I was supposed to keep my mouth shut
And eyes on the prize,
Even as a child.
But when I unfolded into that adult,
I still wasn't seen nor heard,
I couldn't speak
Because my voice had already been muted
And I had no controller.
How am I supposed to get to the prize?
When only my eyes were on it?
My mind, body, and soul were focused on trying to take back control
From a loved one before I
Could even focus on the man.
So, did you even see me
Because you would've seen
Its everlasting effect.
Yes, its effect

Hector Morales

Little Feet

Little feet walking in the snow
I follow very slow
I know you're angry at me
I don't want to get too close
Because I know what's good for me

Little feet walking in the snow
I follow: I follow
I see the footprints
They lead me to you
A gift hidden in the snow
Glazed blue skin
I pick you up in my arms
I look into your eyes
You are broken: You are broken
I'm the reason: I'm the reason

Little feet walking in the snow
I take you home
To give you warmth
To give you my love
And
Maybe
Just
Maybe
To
Receive
Absolution

P *ienso En Ti*

Hector Morales

Las gotas de la lluvia
Tocan mi Ventana
Me hacen pensar en tu mirada

Revivo en mi mente
Todos los buenos tiempos que
Me hacían tan feliz

Tus chistes me hacían reír
No quería que mi tiempo contigo
Tuviera un fin
Los relámpagos del cielo
Anuncian su presencia
Como yo declaro mi amor por ti

Y en los tiempos viejos
Cuando tus caricias y besos
Me hacían tan feliz
Son ahora una fantasma de memoria
Porque tu amor por mí se ha ido

Con el viento
Ahora nunca seré feliz
Por eso siempre
Pienso en ti

Hector Morales

think of You

The raindrops
Knock on my window
Make me think of your gaze

I relive in my mind
All those good times that
Made me so happy

Your jokes made me laugh
I did not want my time with you
To come to an end

The lightning in the sky
Announces its presence
As I declare my love for you

And in the old days
When your caresses and kisses
Made me so happy
Are now a ghost of my memory
Because your love for me has gone

With the wind
Now I will never be happy
That is why always
I think of you

Hector Morales

The Bus

Bus carrying
People
Pain
Suffering
Expectations
I can see it on their faces
Wrinkled
Jaundiced eyes
Blank stares
Memories of despair
Accumulated over time
Tattered layers of clothes
Winter in Chicago is not for the
Weak
This transitory vessel
Carries them
To their destination
Of happiness and joy
Or destruction
Nothing Left

Jazmine Quinones

The Forest of Eden

As I walk through your enchanted forest,
Your petals touch me as if I might break.
Cut the weeds therefore I am your florist.
The fairies dance, singing across your lake.

My love for you never dies; we are one.
Prayed for your love on lonely summer nights.
Your beauty glows under the sparkling sun.
I sing our songs and our love ignites.

Laying on your grass, you feel what I feel.
Stare into my eyes and see right through me.
The love that we share is stronger than steel.
Your voice like a siren in the sea.

Years pass; your beauty grows as I grow old.
Reborn, loving thou turns my petals gold

Jazmine Quinones

Spirits of a Bruja

I sit alone, so my spirit connects.
With the universe is where I belong.
My elder's spiritual connection reflects
Worshipping Yemaya in tribal songs.

My hair is like African goddesses.
I serve the Yah-Weh and other saints.
Where I leave my ancestors' promises.
Covering my body in tribal paint.

Don't push me or my magic may turn bad.
They shall fall in love with my bruja ways.
When my spirit connects, it leaves me glad.
Where my ancestors are, my spirit stays.

You will love the spirits of a bruja.
Get on our bad side; you shouldn't do that.

Jazmine Quinones

¿ Quiere Café ?

I am from the womb of Spaniard, African and Taino descent.
The ones whose elders fought to keep sacred traditions alive
Elders who practice magic, using nature's gifts with rituals that those resent.
Ancestors were forced to work in the plantations and used as experiments to survive.

I am from the Windy City where you care for streets that don't care for you.
Where my family knew violence before education.
Running to the candy lady, the change in my pocket shall do
I am the product of Chicago's foundation

I was made from the tradition of asking "¿Quiere Café " before you sit
Playing dominos in the park with a cigar in one hand.
Drinking tequila and dancing salsa shall do it.
Speaking and dreaming about going back to our motherland.

I am a product of an abusive and absent father.
The product of a nurturing and independent mother.
Product of a hardworking and tough grandfather.
The product of a loving and sweet grandmother.

If you look at my family tree, you'll see the trauma inflicted on the branches and leaves,
But look past those and you will find the love and traditions that kept us alive.
The power and strength my family receives

N Patrianna Scales *Nothing Left*

wasted my youth
trying to better myself for you
I behaved perfectly
so you would deem me as worthy
of your love and approval
had all the correct answers
but what I said never mattered
all the mistakes I've made
you threw them back in my face
telling me to be more like her
it took every part of me
to love you wholeheartedly
I convinced myself to stay
when you loved her more anyway
and that you were what I deserved

Patrianna Scales

Joy Comes in the Morning

it takes courage
to feel the sun on your face
it takes tears
to realize that you're okay
it takes vulnerability
to walk with grace
it takes failure
to succeed
it takes pain
to recognize peace
feeling complete
isn't about emotions
it's realizing your destiny
is beyond this one moment

Patrianna Scales

*L*ate Night Drive

If I never give my heart away
maybe I'll save myself from
the heartache
I can't read your mind
but I know
you don't feel the same
terrified of loving
but I can't help
smiling when I say
your name
waiting by the phone
expecting the worse
I keep my walls up
so I never get hurt

Alex Sepulveda

In the Dead of Winter

In the dead of winter, I fester
Like a cold-blooded reptile
I allow myself to metamorphose into a monochrome man mimicking
the world around me
As it unites in its white glory—
Smug and Irresistible
It comes over me

I see a crystalized cave shading the side of my house
I am encompassed by all things
Precious yet putrid – treasured yet trapping
I feel the deadpan of winter in soulless stares into unresponsive
formidable fortresses
Piled high enough to eliminate my will
To see a clear exit out of my enclosure
Piled high enough to eliminate my will
To reject
A bitter apathy – which once disguised itself as something
Attractive
An apathy which will freeze over my organs
Leaving a lingering chill that momentarily dissipates

When I hear the cacophony of children's laughter
Whirling winds and the scraping of shovels on iced pavement
Which reminds me that I will be anthologized
With the others

Yet we know tonight I will lay awake
Slipping
Deep into the burrows of a winter's night
Where a relentless reality will perish and preserve under
The sensation of the insensate ice
And in the dead of winter
The night will fall silent
As I write myself out of this script
And I will forever be
Captive in my own captivation

Mia Angelique

Whose Body Is a Temple Now?

You tell me my body is a temple.
What a shame that giving it glory
Is a sin.
You tell me that it's "respect" and "modesty."
Well, if you respected me
Maybe you wouldn't lust after my skin
Or thirst for control over my purity.
I guess I'm the one who's in charge of the "respecting"
To respect myself, love myself, protect myself
But why?
You'll hurt me if I don't?
Are you so unstable that the sight of one strap
that digs ridges in my shoulders
Is permission to forget that
Your body is a "temple" too?

A body:

To some,

A temple
A tool
A shame
A chrysalis
A pain
A voice
A weapon

My body:

An art
Planted as a seedling
Sprouted to a tree
Rooted in the Earth
Set free in the wind
Constantly changing
Unchanging in my own individuality

A tool, unused but wielded by
Only me.
To love her is a challenge
Always one step forward, two steps back.
Always a loophole
A hoop engulfed in flames
For my body to taste the heat
Each time we leap through

Disabled and unpredictable
Gnawing at her own flesh
Flourished and toned
Into a mechanism for artistic expression.

My curves have grown on me
Leaving footprints in my skin.
They tell my story.
They add details to
My canvas.

My bare skin scares you
But she and I are confident when
Every possible thing you could judge is
Staring you in the face
Unafraid of the shameless daggers your eyes spit.
You're twisted to believe that your disapproval and
Your over sexualization will be enough to
Taint my body with your sin.
The stretch marks, the size, the scars, the structure -
They are the foundation of
My spirit's home
And I own them just as boldly as
The perfections.

Whose body is a temple now?

Maya Sixto

Mouthwatering Sorrow

The arrogance of thinking I have the upper hand
I can fabricate flowery sentences that sound like prestigious works of art,
while you stumble through awkward sentences and,
you still have my whole heart.
The ignorance that holds me by my waist and blinds me from your true desire
I pined for love
My selfishness in holding on was not hope
for you to change,
but desperation to feel as though I had control
when I had none
At all.

Sleep Hazael Torres

In my home, wherein I sleep,
The windows begin to beat
God's music. Mother nature's recipe.
Droplets that fall from many feet.
Here I lay, where I stay and wherein, I sleep.
I listen to that beautiful beat.
In this peace, it is time to say goodbye.
The moment has come to rest my eyes.

*B*rother

Katrina Weiland

Winter has come again for us now. The sixth year, my brother, that the snow melts with a warm drink. Time seems to have no pace but itself.

Turning back the hands, to last, we had met. I remember bitterness would wake me. With the coffee that you and everyone drank. The churning and chugging of the mornings brew would burn whoever took the first sip. Though the familiarity always drove you back in. Sugar and milk would sweeten that sting but you always had it over brewed.

With a few witty lashes between the world and against you. You were off without a word or note to where to go. Driving off to meet a new type of brew that would stop time but only for you. The clocks didn't miss a second though. Surrounded from the floor to the ceiling tolling and chiming the whole way through. A ring on that hour that screamed left all shaken and silenced from its call.

Deafening can be even a ripple though. The clocks continue, however. Exactly on time for any that carry them. Even a rabbit chased by a life looking for a place at a tea party missing a few. The hat there never did fit quite right. Maybe the rabbit just never found out your brew. But off to meet a train. Out of the station you were with a one-way ticket in hand. So, I'll make you a cup that's hot and bitter the way that you like. With sweetness and cream. To bed where you sleep. So that we may meet again in the steam.

Rachel Williams
My Skin

My brown skin.

Tinted with caramel with a dash of vanilla and honey. Gleams with the golden rays in the blue.

Silky like butter; sweet like cocoa.

My melanin shines with the galaxy above.

Runs as deep as the Black Hole

As magical as Aurora Borealis.

Inside, I hold the power of greatness and I can let you in on a couple of secrets.

My brown skin holds many stories from history to my own story; I won't even dig that deep.

You look at my skin; you see a story that's not my own.

Just something that was stigmatized.

Time and time, I have been told about myself at a young age. Told about things that society will

hammer on me. I will not fall into that trap of societal loopholes. I know what I am capable of

doing. My cerebral is more powerful than my appearance. Don't be fooled.

My brown skin is not a threat in your presence.

I am a blessing to you.

I bring radiance not dullness.

I bring love, not hate.

Come to me. Ask about me and not the stories you've heard about the color of my skin.

We are attached but we are two separate things. Eventually, you will see what I mean.

Michael Repel *Secret Societies*

The astrological prophecies
Admonish the mystic keys
To the invisible dynasty
That has been concealed since antiquity

Behind 33 degrees
and convoluted hypocrisies
We dictate the policies
That govern our enemies

No war is realized
Before our profits are analyzed
Operate on both sides
Clandestine state demise

Usurping authority
We are the hidden majority
Behind everything that you see
We are controlling your destiny

NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM
MUNDUS VULT DECIPI ERGO DECIPIATUR
NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM
AUCTORITAS NON VERITAS FACIT LEGEM

Way down in our black soul
Corporate greed and thought control
We meet beneath the night
Contriving ways to take your rights
We print more fiat currency
To undermine your Treasury
Running out of things to take
Now there's another war to make

Cloaked behind the scenes - We pull all the strings
Nothing's as it seems - We run all the schemes

We set up puppet governments
To benefit the one percent

Poisoning the food you buy
Corporate genetic genocide
Our labs engineer disease
Guinea pigs and pharmacies
We pump the streets with narcotics
Urban zombie apocalypse

Cloaked behind the scenes - We pull all the strings
Nothing's as it seems - We run all the schemes

NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM
MUNDUS VULT DECIPI ERGO DECIPIATUR
NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM
AUCTORITAS NON VERITAS FACIT LEGEM

We need some questionable laws to pass
Manufacture a news blood bath
We do what we do best
Manipulation of the oppressed
Stir up civil discontent
Nothing is by accident
Knocking over all the pawns
Preparing for the martial dawn

Cloaked behind the scenes - We pull all the strings
Nothing's as it seems - We run all the schemes

Following the protocols
Sovereign nations start to fall
Global forces occupy
The territories that won't comply
Genocide and atrocities
Are now declassified strategies
The plan has been unfurled
One king of one new world

Cloaked behind the scenes - We pull all the strings
Nothing's as it seems - We run all the schemes

NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM
MUNDUS VULT DECIPI ERGO DECIPIATUR
NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM
AUCTORITAS NON VERITAS FACIT LEGEM

Now it's the dawn of the new world order

Now it's the dawn of the new world order
Leading all of you like pigs to slaughter
Enslaving all of your sons and daughters
Placing your future on the sacrificial altar

Absolute domination
Of the global population
Through civil obfuscation

Rival elimination
through Political assassination
without reservation

Tyrannical Domineering
Global Profiteering
and social engineering

The totalitarian federation
of luciferian divination
leads society's degradation

We promote iniquity while we destroy morality
Destruction of race, religion, nation and democracy
Use all tools within our means to reconstitute society
Subjugate humanity in lieu of financial sovereignty

The ruling oligarchy
Runs extortion globally
And profits from your misery

Creating market volatility
By twisting fiscal policies
And manipulating currencies

Exploiting political stupidity
We privatize your industry
And blame it on conspiracy

Truth is now the enemy
And a new dawn of tyranny
Is expanding militarily

Where corporate rights trump human life and we collect unending debt
Global recession and gold extrapolation your countries politicians are inept
Execute a long-term plan for the subversion of mankind
To the industrial prison complex that you have been pre-assigned

GLASS BREAKS

Written By: **Nathalie Bonds** • Illustrated By: **Marcos Meza**

Just as the moment

dissoles

~~GLASS BREAKS~~ when it hits the *floor*

Shattering into *pieces*

Each on its own

Sharper than a knife

Glass crinkles along the stone

Which wasn't *soft* enough to hold it *gently*

When it *fell*

From such *heights*

Dropped from the window

As **thunder** rang out that night



Forsaken once more

Fearing death

Who shall come knocking

at the **EAST** door

Once the raven stop it's speech

And there's no never more

And there's no never

--*only* now



Every wish imagined somehow

Every thought existing purely

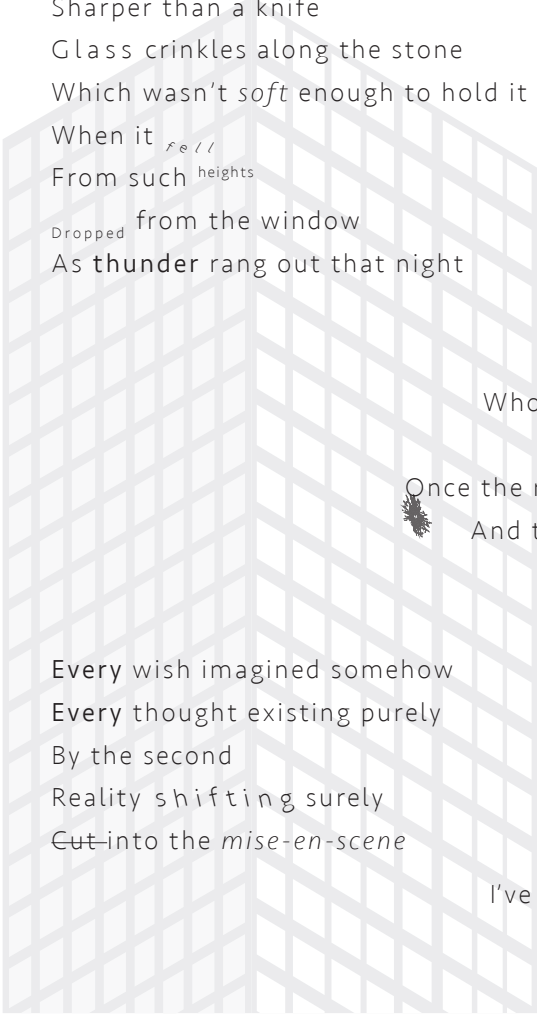
By the second

Reality *shifting* surely

~~Cut~~ into the *mise-en-scene*



I've lost control again



Entwine my *soul* in *o \ e c e s*
And delve therefore within

Lacking in mercy
And crying in waves
Whimpering *loving magic* and graves

Skeleton hands that give a
slow wave

A sweeping gesture
Come and sleep in the bed you've made
Step slowly this way
And the glass becomes powder
With each heavy step

Bones under skin
And narrow--seeping with
Hatred—the pen
That drives across the page
Seething writhing
Kissing crying
Trying *trying*
Trying *trying*

Abstraction Practice

She looks like **HAPPINESS**

And calls out in fervor

Blood *red* nails

In what ways does one guess their own worth or--

Practice in abstraction

Out of sunlight's *timid* reach

The *smile* itself a labor of *time*

lips match the tone

She once was mine

And *red* became the color

in her eyes

Home

Shaun Levine

The radio was playing your favorite song that day, and it's playing again today. My bass-deprived Honda Accord crackles the same way now as it did then. I never realized how different New Order felt in the driver's seat. It took me until today; and until I was the one on the gas pedal becoming one with Bizarre Love Triangle, I understood why you loved this song so much. It must have reminded you of your mom too because I still think about the way you described her to me. Going out after bartending to the dance club, riding through the city in a convertible, being the embodiment of everyone's 80s fantasies. You never liked when I fantasized about her life like that, and you could never let it go. You hated that the ending to her story was in a two-story house with a guy you didn't like and a life that was too normal. It made you so upset that she was happy, and that was you in a nutshell.

I drove for what felt like an eternity today, looking for that forest. I remembered how it lay somewhere in between a diner fashioned to look like a log cabin and a billboard for a strip club 50 miles west. When I finally found it, the log cabin diner was gone, replaced with a vacant lot. Weeds grew from the outskirts of the forest through the chain-link fence cordoning off the unused space. Over the years the forest began escaping its ordained existing spot, and no one seemed to care anymore. I'm sure you would have loved seeing your favorite place consuming the ugliness that surrounded it. Maybe that's what you liked about it, though. This forest was like an oasis in a desert of asphalt and cornfields and people. I'd venture to guess that you and I were the only frequent visitors it had, and that was what you liked the most. It's not like I didn't like this place, but I didn't see what you saw in it. One day, on a trip to visit my parents, you were just starstruck by it. You pulled into the small clearing reserved for parking cars and without words, I knew everything. I saw a wonder in your eyes that was reserved for when I said, "I love you," or when you pulled a perfect soufflé out of the oven. I just followed you through the branches and bushes, and I loved every moment of it. I miss loving every moment of anything.

As I walked through the overgrown weeds that covered the forest floor, I started to feel what you felt when we first came here. I felt like the main character in my own story, discovering something new about every tree and marking them down for posterity. You wanted something more from life, and this place had that something. It's something that couldn't be found in the retail stores you bounced between like an orphaned kid. Truly unique experiences were rare in your world, but they were overflowing there. I watched you attempt to draw a map of this entire forest. I think you stopped when the cave you thought was at the eastern edge turned out to be a completely different cave, and there were a lot of caves that you thought were just the same ones. Your relentless curiosity was only rivaled by how quickly you gave up. I saw the same caves today, and I teared up a little.

I found what remained of the path that we would take to the main event. It was buried under another year's worth of branches and acorns. I followed it down its winding way, through the dense trees and past the abandoned cabin in the clearing. For a few days, you wouldn't stop talking to me about how you wanted to move into this old shack. You went on about how we could "live off the land" and escape from the city. I knew that you truly wanted to get out of the city. Every day, I could see it siphoning your energy and the weight of the crowds would crush you to the breaking point. You didn't understand how joy could be found in the glass towers and uncaring masses. I didn't really understand it either, but their normality ate away at you. I remember when you got a job downtown and your complaints would become daily. I think about how annoyed I would get, and I can't think about it anymore. I can't confront my selfishness. I realized some time today that what you said about the cabin was another one of your jokes.

The path ended. I reached the finale of this place. A cliff protruded out from a cluster of trees. It looked down upon a crystal-clear lake like the face of some resting titan. The sun wouldn't perfectly line up with the center of the lake, but it was good enough for us. My favorite time there was when we ate the picnic you made at the edge of the cliff. It was rare that you enjoyed your own food, but this was one of those times. I think there was too much to focus on for you to zero in on the nitpicks you would have had with the salmon burgers. I'm not sure if it was that day or another that you said it. We both looked at a horizon that seemed to house a world that was light years away. To us, this forest was earth, and all the forest beyond the lake might as well have been Andromeda. Out of nowhere

you said, "This is totally where I want to be buried." At the time, I thought it was one of your jokes—one of those times where you would say something just to get a reaction out of me. Sometimes I would know that there was some truth behind your façade but other times I would fall prey to getting used to you. I only realized after you were gone that I should have never gotten used to you. I don't remember where I put you but I know it's somewhere perfect. Like, if you ever decided to rise out of your confines and live again, you wouldn't have to walk very far for a great view. I wish you would do that right about now. We would embrace each other, and you would apologize for not doing the same before you left. I would be mad, but not for long. We would stare at the off-center sunset for a while, and after a while you would ask about the shack again. I would say yes, and I hope I wouldn't hesitate.

*T*wo Kinds of Love Ann Keidel

The Begged and Borrowed Kind

When I was in eleventh grade, I had the bitter-sweet pleasure of knowing a guy named Bailey Thomas. He had a coastal presence; freckled cheeks, blue-green eyes, and wavy, blonde hair. Despite not having any classes together, our groups of friends naturally intertwined at our high school football games and bonfires. I knew immediately Bailey and I were going to be as thick as thieves; we both frequented the same thrift stores, worshiped the same bands, and shamelessly enjoyed being the center of attention.

My friend Vail was well liked in our class. Besides being a gorgeous athlete with rich, inattentive parents, she was one of the only seniors with a fake I.D. With that being said, her house was the perfect place for whatever schemes and shenanigans our teenage hearts desired. One summer night, like most summer nights, we invited a long list of friends over for a backyard bash. Mid-way into the night, the usual suspects were playing beer pong and the lower-key folk were gathered around the firepit.

After consuming a number of poorly mixed drinks, I walked over to Bailey who was lying down on Vail's younger sister's trampoline. When I asked why he wasn't with his girlfriend Jenna, he told me about how she was not a fan of the sweater he was wearing, and I drunkenly encouraged him to wear it more often. We both laughed, and I suddenly wished we were the only two in Vail's big, beautiful yard. I caught him looking at me in a way that made me question to what extent he valued their relationship. Or better yet, our friendship? Was it really just that? A friendship? Did this romantic back-and-forth exist only in my head? Before my liquid courage had the chance to transform those thoughts into words, Vail's booming voice bellowed my name to join her inside. The moment, accompanied by my hope, slipped away.

While Bailey and I dated other people and kept our relationship neighborly, I started to suffer in secret; I hurt my own feelings by fighting to accept my role as

just his friend. I began tailoring my outfits, my personality, and my day to include him and the things I knew he liked. I begged and borrowed his time while I handed him mine on a golden platter. With every daydream turning into platonic misery, I became engulfed by his sea of unrequited love. Eventually, I told him the truth about my feelings for him. With shaking hands, I put myself on the line in hopes that he would catch me. As much as the lack of reciprocation bruised me, it helped me realize that love, and whether or not it truly is unrequited, is worth the investigation. If you never ask, you're never going to know, and I'm alright now.

The Endlessly Echoed Kind

The low, heated rumbles of my ex-boyfriend Josh's 1997 Jeep Wrangler would be audible by the time he turned past the entrance of my small, ordinary Ohio neighborhood. During the week, my dad's lack of spontaneity and perpetual 11:00 pm bedtime allowed for my nightly escape plans to go unscathed. My dad never missed a beat; after dinner, he would grab a Corona light from the fridge and plop down in front of the TV, eager to catch up on Fox News's crooked chatter. After consuming light beer and misinformation, he would walk up the stairs to his bedroom on the left to fall asleep. Hearing my dad's bedroom door click shut, I knew I had about 45 minutes to an hour until I could hit the road. My older brother Billy and I had mutual agreement: if one of us wanted to sneak out for the night, the other would lock the side door behind them, and that was that.

There were not many things to do or places to go in the farm town of Beaver Creek, Ohio but when I sat down in Josh's vintage jeep, I always felt like I was setting off on a grand adventure. During the warmer months, the jeep revolutionized as an oversized go-kart; the top of the jeep and all four windows were made out of this heavy-duty plastic that rolled back and clipped open. Paired with four-wheel drive, we looked like the scientists in Jurassic Park; zipping around in our buggy down gravel roads, looking for an uninhabited place to park. Not too far from Beaver Creek, there was a small hippie town called Yellow Springs. Adorned with charming flower shops, a skate park, and stretches of forest, our trailblazer fit right in. From hiking to watching kids from our school attempt kickflips down breakneck ramps, a lot of time was spent there. Just me, him, and the jeep.

Jennifer Lara

Consumed by life

I have a load of work ahead of me that is due incredibly soon. Yet here I am, writing about the struggles of trying to balance schoolwork, personal hobbies, work projects, a social life with friends, a love life, and just barely squeezing room for myself. I'm an incredibly emotional person, sometimes even just the littlest bit of frustration is bound to make me cry. I don't know when reality hit me so sudden, but I realized sometime late this year that this is my life now –having to worry about a balance of all these elements that make my life worth living and enjoying.

I've had a difficult time balancing some of these. I know a lot of people do, especially at my age where you're now all on your own, just barely adapting to the realism that is creating and planning your life. I can't begin to express how the older you get, the weight of how important it is to have people in your inner circle who understand that you're becoming a busy person.

My father was someone who noticed this first about me. He started to complain at the fact that I started to visit and call less and less. It wasn't because I didn't care for him but because I was consumed by other things and trying to adjust to all of it. As a result, hurtful words were said, back and forth, but despite a fallout we're okay now.

I could barely keep up with my own parents at times and being a first-generation student creates this overwhelming stress to succeed and never stop working. Which brings me to having a previous unsupportive partner who didn't understand that I had become a busy person. Sometimes I was (and still am) so exhausted at the end of the day from all the work I was obligated to finish.

It was always, "*You never make time for me,*" or "*All you care about is your friends,*" and even worse, "*You're always tired.*" I never felt so unconsidered and unheard. My emotions were being invalidated despite me repeatedly going over with my partner that this is who they signed up to be with. I am a person with boundaries, and I'm a work in progress when it comes to time management. When I rest, I almost feel uncomfortable because I think that there is something important

due soon. I don't know what peace feels like. Sometimes I am always thinking of the next assignment or the next work opportunity.

When I find myself resting, shortly the resting stops. An example of this is how recently I was with someone of interest. We spoke with each other one night and I just couldn't help but think: I'm finally enjoying a bit of peace for once. At that moment, I wasn't consumed by the thought of having to work the next day or even having to do an assignment. We talked about our day, the feelings we had about each other and about our personal emotions that we trusted to tell one another because well, you know, vulnerability is a beautiful thing.

I began to compliment this person, not by their looks or anything physical, but just how they are. I tell them how much I adore that they're an understanding and supportive person and how grateful I am to have them in my life because as I mentioned before, you need people who understand you. You need them to be able to understand the tired you, the overworked you, or the person you are to other people. They started blushing and became speechless which made me feel good because being uplifting is so important in my romantic and platonic friendships. Compliments don't need to be about physical appearance but rather someone's way of being.

While we had this conversation, I realized how I needed to finish overdue assignments before my professor refused to accept them.

I said, "*Shit! I have some work to do.*" The vibe was instantly killed. They probably heard my abrupt mouse and keyboard clicking. They tried to speak to me and eventually they just stopped, and I asked why.

They said, "*I feel like I'm bothering you.*"

This ended up making me feel awful because that wasn't how I wanted them to feel. I had just realized too late that I had work to do, and it was the consequence of my own poor time management. I began to reassure them that I wasn't in the least bit bothered. This person respects me as an artist and as my own individual person despite from what I am to them. I hadn't felt appreciated and understood in so long. I was happy after a while of being under pressure of all the important tasks, events, and deadlines that were approaching me sooner than I could blink. I'm still worried about next semester, which can probably hint at how much of an anxious person I am. However, growing up is realizing that anxiety is okay –more than okay– to feel. I credit this acknowledgement of accepting anxiety in my life to my therapist. I used

to believe being anxious wasn't normal. I tried to find every way I could to fix it and make it go away. Understanding anxiety has a lot to do with the fact that it helps us think and make decisions that are important to us.

So next time I feel anxious about how I feel, such as being consumed by the millions of things I need to do, I will start being gentler with myself –by understanding that at the end of the day, I'm only human and whatever anxiety I feel is only a reflection of what is important to me. Whoever is reading and scared of their anxiety I just wanna say: Learn to befriend it. You'll be together your whole life and it does not necessarily have to be your inner enemy.

Jimmy Quinto

*D*ecisions

I was born on August 7, 1996. My parents named me after a family friend who had given my father countless opportunities but had died prior to my birth. I was conceived in the Humboldt Park neighborhood. We moved to Pilsen then later to the Back of the Yards, and I asked my father about the displacements. He said it was an attempt to escape the violence but later realized “no se puede escapar.” I saw more of the same at Richard J. Daley Academy. Groups of people huddling together rocking different colors. I ignored it because I didn’t want any part of it until there was a dizzy blue on my block. I saw a man lying on the street, lifeless.

It was a new school year, and I made new friends. Our new homeroom teacher grew up in an area of Chicago more southeast of our location. He was formally known as Jason “Stone,” was raised with attitude, and had tight corn rows with a now bald head to prove it. He referred to many as “cat” and had a contagious taste for jazz. He would preach from all directions with the same message. Your actions will shape your life. I had to learn what actions were not only appropriate but “normal.” What is normal? Demona was brilliant and would have sex with high schoolers to prove she was down for her clique. Jaime was a talented skateboarder who would cut his wrists. David was genuinely a nice guy who smoked cracked when not in school. My grades were stellar, and I had an abusive alcoholic father.

After graduating elementary school, I attended Benito Juarez Community Academy. I would slide my backpack through the x-ray machines and walk through a metal detector every morning. The Chicago Police Department was present during all operational hours of the school year. Big Casper set the standard high and I felt the need to live up to my brother’s reputation. Ironically, I was accepted as an honors student; I was street smart and book smart. When I walked through the halls, a silence followed. The guys wouldn’t look at me but the ladies couldn’t look away. I had finally felt like I had some sort of control of my life. One day, a student from

Bulls College Prep transferred to my English class. I sat at the first table, furthest row from the door, and Lulu sat directly behind me. She had straight black hair, snow white skin, and a Nile River like body. She never dressed revealingly but it revealed a lot about her; she had standards and no time to waste. She was my Cleopatra. I turned around and I tried my best at igniting a conversation.

“What’s your name?”

“Lulu.”

“Where you from?”

“Little Village.”

“Do you like it here?”

“No.”

What do I do? I made her laugh and she bloomed. She later revealed she transferred because she had a suicidal moment at her old school. The teachers looked with disapproval, the security guards were puzzled, and the students whispered amongst themselves. In this crazy world, we kept one another sane. I wanted to protect her from any more harm, but I brought us danger. Baby Trigger wasn’t a fan and whatever beef he had with me, I knew I had to get it over with fast. We agreed to meet at my school after the final bell. I don’t know how but the others knew something. The teachers were concerned, security looked on edge, and the CPD on deck asked me if everything was ok. I said yes. The last bell rang, and the environment felt familiar yet different. I kissed Lulu goodbye, and I waited with my back against the school. The crowd shrank smaller and smaller. Gringo came up to me and I asked where the guy was. He laughed hysterically and said he’d have his mom drive us to him; she was known for having connections. I jumped into the car, and we drove off. His mom was silent, and he kept laughing. We pulled up at Gringo’s house. I was escorted in. There, I saw a 5’9”, thin, 18-year-old male with a ponytail. It was him and before I threw my punch, he extended his hand to introduce himself. I was confused. Gringo whispered into my ear, “He popped pills, went to the hospital, and now he doesn’t remember anything.” No way. “You should have seen him, man. He was like a baby being introduced to the world; he didn’t even know his own name.” José returned to play Uno with Kim. My adrenaline vanished. I pulled up a chair next to him. This was oddly sad. He was there but he wasn’t there. I didn’t know him before the incident but even I could

tell he was like a hollow vessel. I texted Lulu "I love you" but I should have texted, "I'm sorry."

As my high school academic career came closer to its end, I knew things had to change. I always understood that college was important, but why would anyone give me chance? I'm a Hispanic kid, with baggy clothes, who doesn't speak normal English. I hated everyone because I thought everyone judged me for it. I thought you weren't supposed to judge a book by its cover. No one judged me more than those who judged my relationship. A beautiful young lady who was accepted to Loyola with a 4.6 GPA. And then, there was me. I was failing classes, I was kicked out of the honors society, and the school was threatening to kick me out entirely. I had a little more than a year to change—and fast. I could do great at school but how would I pay for college? My dad was a janitor, and my mom was a stay-at-home mother. A good number of students earned massive scholarships and I was angry. Why them? Am I not worth it? Does anyone care? I don't want to work a minimum-wage job. I don't want to be poor. I don't want my parent's efforts to be in vain. I hate this cycle. I hate myself... I did this to myself.

In sunny San Diego, I began my military career. I learned several lessons at bootcamp. I learned that no one cares about your feelings. I learned to not feel sorry for myself. Most importantly, I learned to stop making excuses. I was the first in my family to join the military, and I didn't know what to expect other than what I'd seen in movies. I must say, it did not disappoint. As I ran past the Drill Instructor, he smacked me across the face reminding me to keep arm's length distance. As I continued my run to the head, I was greeted with more yelling. The entirety of the squad bay was getting wrecked because someone lacked discipline. We called this "fuck-fuck games," and the goal of the game was to make your life miserable. The area had been destroyed; racks were flipped over, our belongings were everywhere, and people were getting IT. The "platoon terrorist" was among those getting Incentive Training. The recruit was red, sweaty and visibly shaking. A recruit collapsed onto a puddle of his own sweat and the Drill Instructor picked him up, dropped him, and told him to keep pushing. Then, five more Drill Instructors swarmed him. The title "Marine" is earned, never given. I graduated bootcamp in December of 2014.

I visited my friends and family after graduating bootcamp. My brother

earned a new job at Grubhub. My doubtful parents were pleasantly surprised. My little sister was finishing up alternative school. And Lulu... Lulu had never replied to the letters I had sent to her throughout bootcamp. Things didn't feel the same after our mutual break up; we felt as if life was pulling us apart in different directions. I knocked on her door prepared for the worst. It opened. It was Lulu! My sense of fear faded away, but I noticed she looked sickly. She invited me in, and we had some coffee. She had another episode and was committed to a hospital. It was not only painful to know that she tried ending her life again, but she had tried noticeably harder. There was no one around this time, and she consumed an immense amount of medication. Her mother found her passed out on the floor, her head cracked open, lying in a pool of her own blood. I wanted to be the best person I could be for her, but I couldn't be there during her time of need. Knowing that Lulu's relationship with her parents was deteriorating, I convinced my parents to take her in before my departure.

Over the following years in the Marine Corps, I gained unique experiences. I endured extreme cold. War planners had thought the best time of year to display a show of force to the world was during the cold seasons. The goal of Operation Trident Juncture was for NATO to effectively deploy tens of thousands of troops in response to an invading near-peer enemy in the European theater; much of what we practiced directly related to the events occurring in Europe today. I remember having maybe 26 hours of sleep a week and sleeping on frozen ground in the wilderness. I also endured extreme heat. It was one hundred forty degrees, and this level of heat is known to create casualties in several ways. You were told to seek shade when you had the opportunity to rest because this type of environment can literally cook the brain. Your equipment had the ability to kill you too. Ammunition would explode when exposed to this type of heat for a long duration of time. A cooked off round was the reason for my first of many casualty evacuation requests. I did more than just save lives. Aboard the USS Iwo Jima, we prepared to set sail to the vicinity of the Middle East. Lieutenant Sweeney and I oversaw the Marine Air Support Squadron 1 Air Support Element detachment supporting 2d Battalion 2d Marine Division. The Marine Expeditionary Unit neared its objective, and we planned the destruction of high valued targets. Everything in the military is documented; we filled out numerous Joint Tactical Air Strike Requests. Prior to

execution, I revised the requests, and a thought floated into my mind.

“I’m going to kill people.” My five-year contract ended in September of 2019. I was only 23 years old.

Immediately after my service, I earned the opportunity to be a business manager. The sole proprietor, AJ, had just financed a freight business but retention, productivity, and morale were at a low. His vision was to install a veteran to lead the business toward expansion. I would not disclose my purpose to anyone until I had completed my on-the-job training. This would provide me with the opportunity to hear unfiltered concerns about the firm. I noticed two consistent complaints, the employees felt they were overworked and underpaid. I knew AJ wasn’t a fan of spending money, so I made my case. An electric forklift would be most useful in the daily routines of the business. The employees would be able to work efficiently while utilizing the technology of the future. Moreover, this would also eliminate the cost of labor in expansion. Monthly revenue increased by the thousands so, I fought for a small raise for the workers. Personnel seemed happier except one, Rafael. He was about my age, had long hair, wore baggy shirts, had tattoos, enjoyed a good meal and he too was from the southside. Rafael thought what I had done was great but was not enough for him. He sought opportunity and felt like there was a lack of it in the business. We created a promotion road map in response. Unfortunately, he didn’t hear our concerns. He wasn’t a good instructor, he didn’t lead by example, and he didn’t listen to management’s constructive criticism. He became more bitter, and I pulled him aside. I asked why he stopped caring about the promotion opportunity. He said he was not going to care about a business that didn’t care about him—especially one that didn’t understand his circumstances. He said, “You don’t know what it is like to struggle.” Rafael didn’t know AJ had escaped Middle East extremism as a child by coming to the United States. He had also earned his Master’s in Business Administration and worked alongside Microsoft management prior to becoming a business owner. He wasn’t familiar with my past either other than me being a “stupid Marine”. He never returned to work after our talk and after a year, I did the same; the business expanded but I did not receive a higher wage. I enrolled in school to seek better opportunities.

After enrolling in school, I reconnected with Lulu; while I was away, she had moved out and gradually, we lost touch. I was excited to share all sorts of

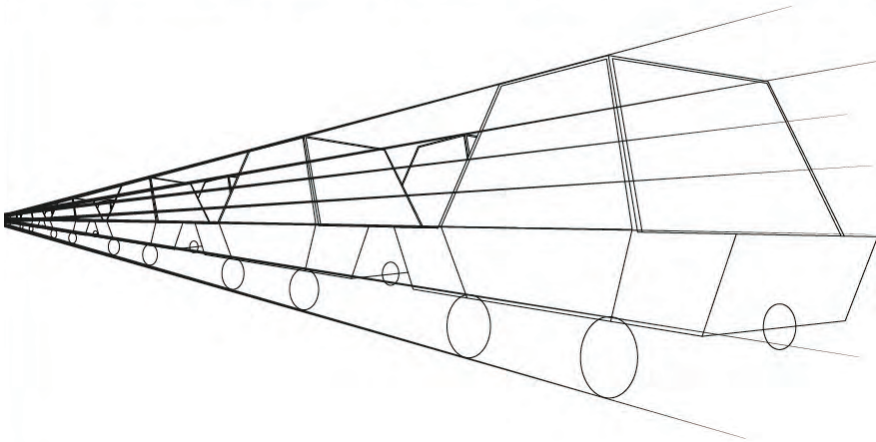
news: my brother was promoted to customer service manager, my sister was a happy mother of two, and my father was no longer an alcoholic. I explained to her that my plan was to attend public schools because all public institution tuition is covered by the GI bill. This also meant I would receive a living allowance for every month I was enrolled as a full-time student. I would later utilize my Illinois Veterans Grant for a graduate degree. She was happy for me. She told me her life was looking hopeful. She underwent a divorce after about four years of marriage, she accumulated massive debt over those years, and she didn't feel ok with herself. Regardless, she made a plan. First, she would eliminate her debt; Lulu had only about \$2,000 left by working two jobs for a couple of years. Second, she would save at least \$1000 for emergencies. Lastly, she would reenroll in school. Exhaustion was emphasized but she was happy with her decision. I wasn't the only one she reignited a flame with. Lulu took the time to better establish a supportive foundation with her friends and family. She was no longer dependent on her medication. I had I have never seen her this open.

Tragically, many will read this piece and brush it off as some fairytale, but I can assure you these experiences are real. Although the integrity of this essay may be accepted, it may be tossed aside, and we will be labeled as others with a sense of disownment. For those who do not want to follow the example, what is it that you want? If you believe we had a birthright, I challenge you to prove it. If there is an oppressor, I want you to show me. You are guaranteed nothing but an opportunity. When you feel there are none, seek one. Life in Chicago is not easy. On the contrary, it is difficult. Even now, I type away although sickly. I have come too far to be stopped by an autoimmune disease. I, along with the people around me, could have stopped trying a long time ago. Unfortunately, some did. As successors, we have done many things in our lives but we did not shift the blame. It seemed as if we were destined for failure but we have molded our destiny. We understand that our choices not only affect us, but those around us. These hard truths were communicated to me by a man with a simple message: "Your actions will shape your life."

Learn from us— all of us. Make good decisions.

Gallery





Riley Donaldson Ella on the Moon (medium format film photograph, plastic)



Daniel Gordon Light in the fog (b&w photo)





Denisha Barbary-Green Experiences (b&w photo)





Riley Donaldson Akot (medium format film photograph)

Mia Thompson Fractured (watercolor & ink on canvas)





Diana Gomez-Olivares Mountains at Dusk (digital)

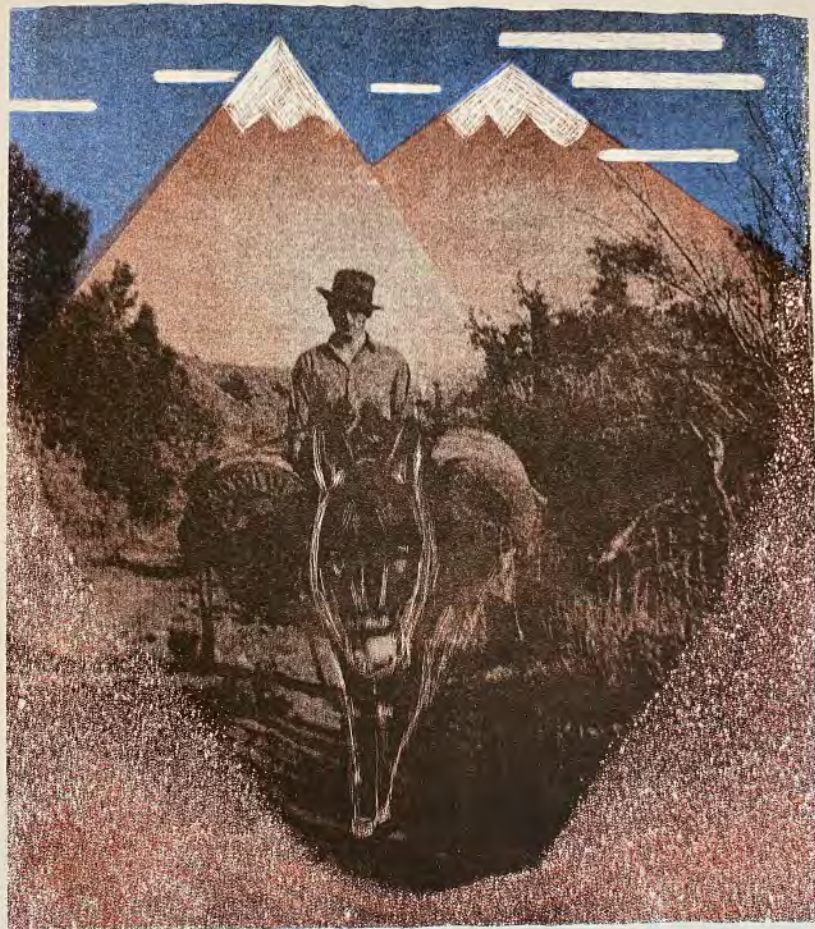


Mariia Khalapsina Nantucket (digital)





Treasure Whyte Epitome (oil on canvas)





Jesus Perez Look Around (photography)



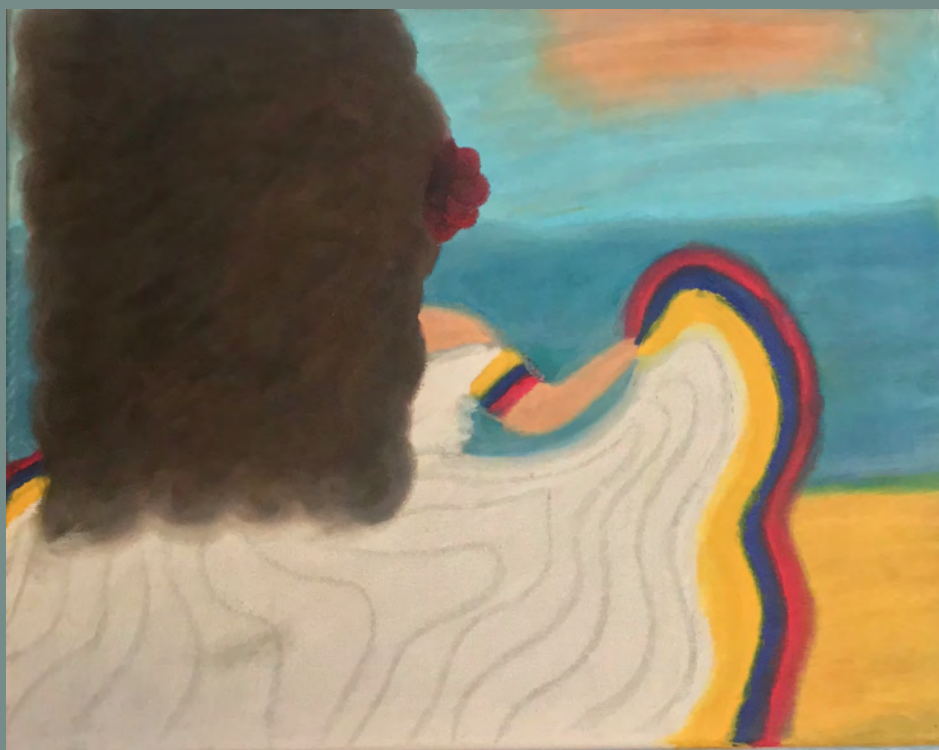


Kevin Vargas Spirit Of America (photography)

Manuela Scolaro Memories (oil painting on paper)

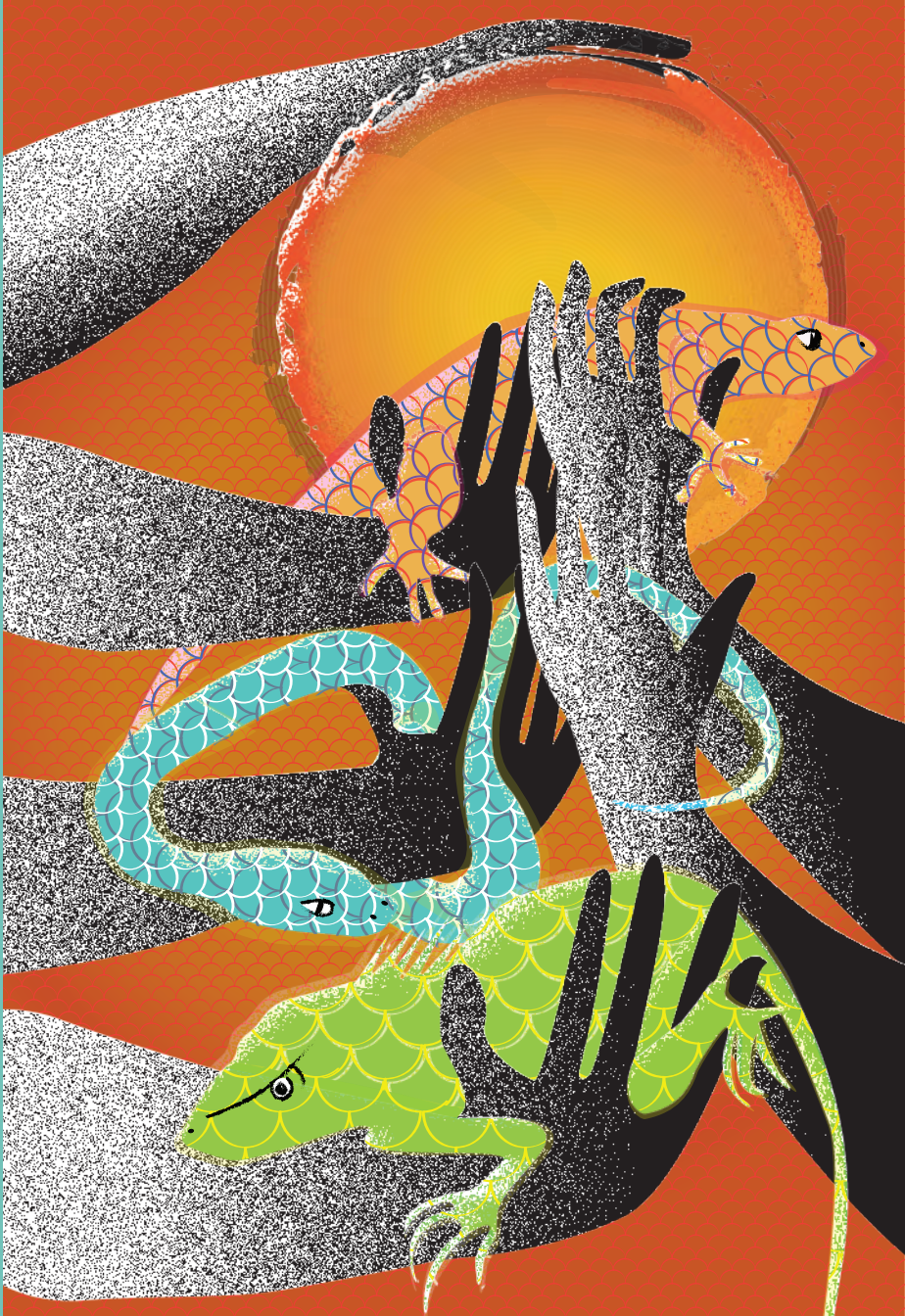


Ana Raquel Jimenez Costa y Cumbia (oil pastel on canvas)





Daniel Salgado Electric (marker on paper)





Zach Grand Something Familiar (digital)





Jaylene Flores Parents Memory (acrylic on canvas)

Evelyn Leon_Jersey's Joy (watercolor on paper)



Jaylene Flores Zubi Land (acrylic on canvas)





Austin Alexander Lopez Untitled (acrylic on paper)

PIGS



“We Are What We Eat”



Mayra Cruz-Mendoza Summer (digital)



Austin Alexander Lopez I can't remember last Thursday (acrylic on paper)

Eric Bremer Polar Bear (soap stone sculpture)



Lasone Nathan Princess Lulu (digital)





Benjamin Perez Fatman (digital)

Ana-Maria Redu Chicken Dinner (digital)



Jade Villalobos This is Me (watercolor on paper)

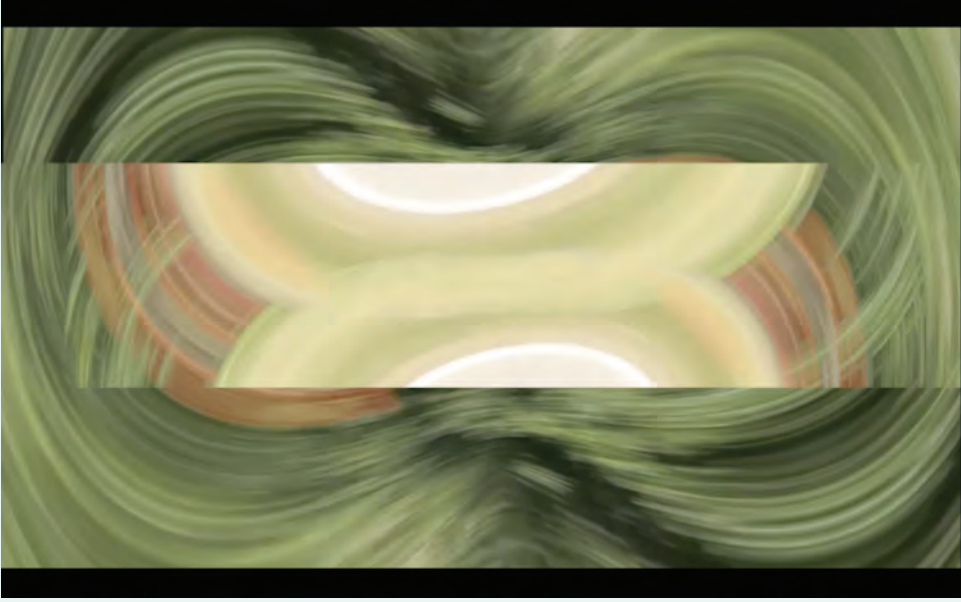








Dana Stalewski Vessel #1 (ceramic)



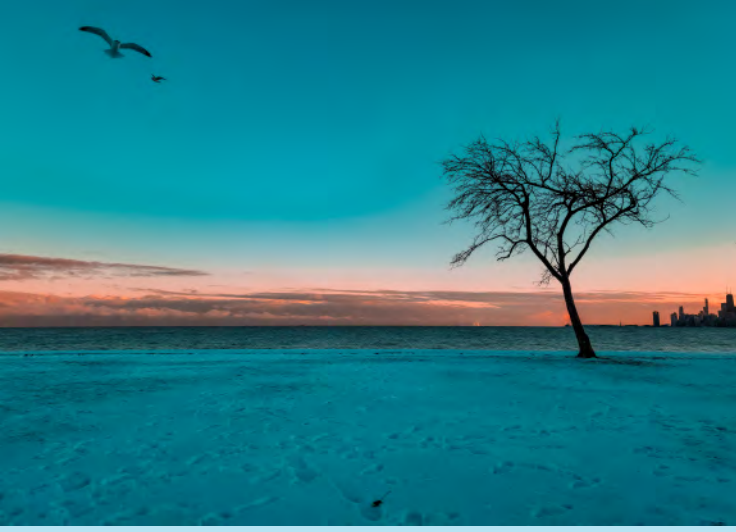
Martine Martinez Untitled (Meditation #2) (video still)

Maryann Dimas Colbi Explores the City (glazed clay)



Maryann Dimas Change or Drown (acrylic resin, leaves, print)





Jesus Perez Unreachable (photography)



Nefertiti Abdulmalik Peace In Waters (acrylic on paper)





Alexander Limardo/Toaster BORNY (digital)

Alyssa Owens Old Lace (mixed media on canvas)

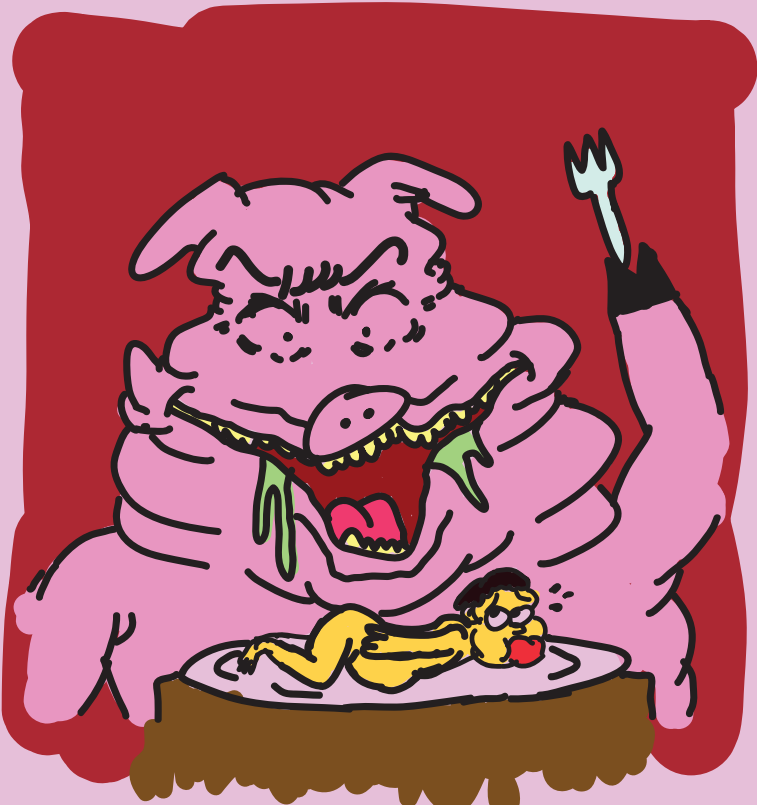


Alyssa Owens Miles Morales (mixed media on canvas)



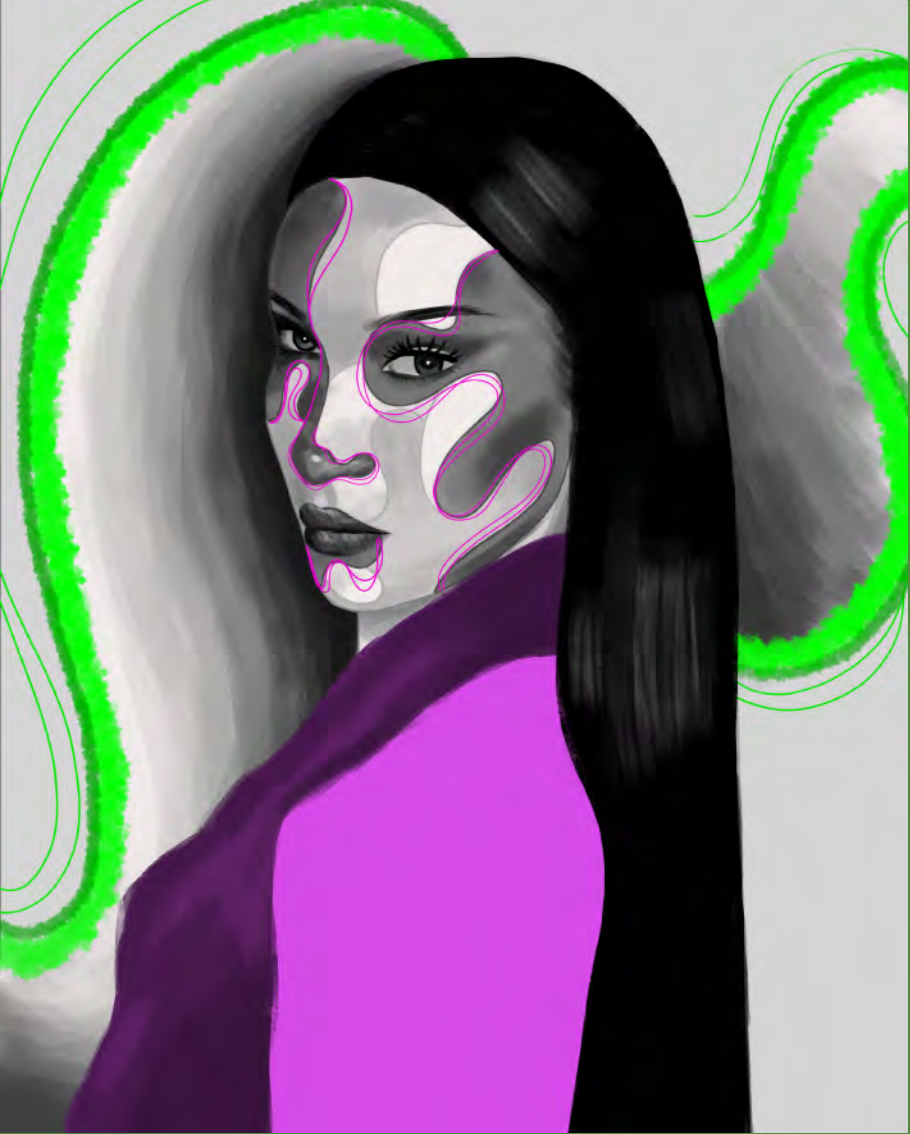


Emonnie Scott Simpsons vibe pattern (digital)



Angel Brito Pigmeat (digital)





Daniel Salgado Untitled (digital)

Guadalajara



Jalisco
La Ciudad de las Rosas

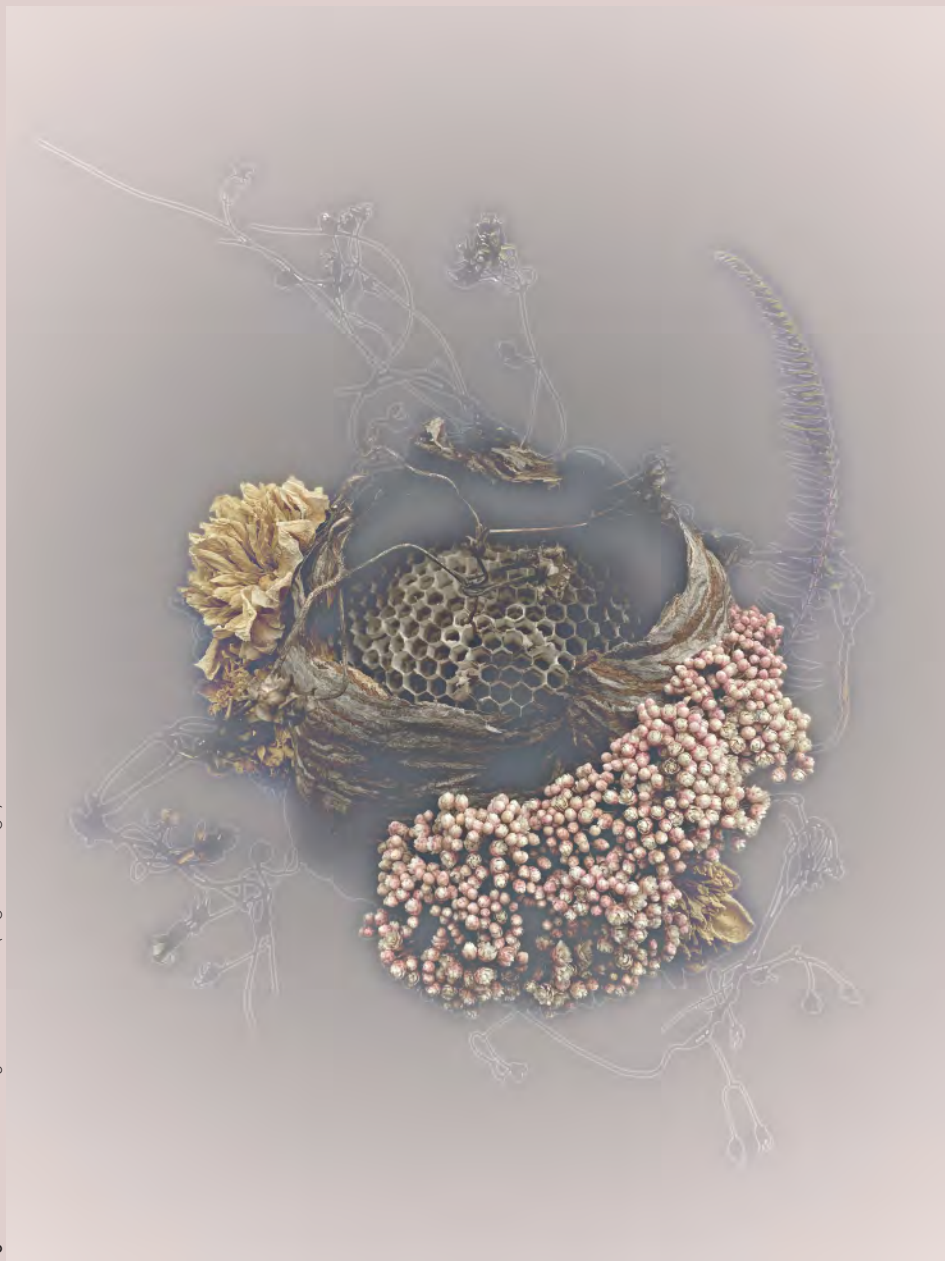


Rosario Aragon Too Different (digital)





Eric Bremer - American Goldfinch (relief print)





Greta Waterkottea Heart Chain Link (sculpture)





Manuela Scolaro Fade Away (charcoal & oil pigment on paper)





Peter K. Bone Woman with Cosmic Hair (charcoal & pastel)





Rosario Aragon Broken Glass (graphite on paper)





Evelyn Spear Pattern 3 (digital)



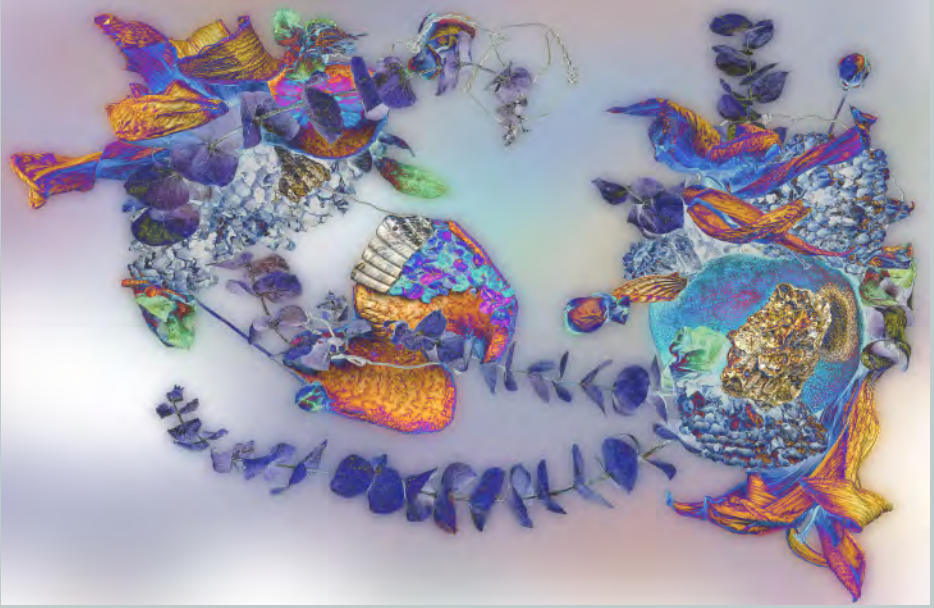
Jade Villalobos A way back home (acrylic on canvas)

Evelyn Spear Pattern 4 (digital)



Esther Bayever Sunrise on an Unnamed Lake (digital)





Liudmila Putyatova Juicy Bass (digital collage)



Jaylene Flores Tranquility (acrylic on canvas)



HWC

Johnathan Ford / Memories 2018 -2021 (digital)



Jesus Perez - Second Walk (photography)