

GARLAND COURT

REVIEW

2025



2025

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Harrison Crain

Ash Cross

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Ebele

Tori Engle

Maegan Fahy

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Canyon Forrest

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Marfee

Katherine Martinez

Clarence McMillan

Daria Mescheriakova

Edna Morales

Andrew Narvaez-Rodriguez

Nicteha

Raina Ozarowski

Haby Palma

Cristos Papadopoulos Castrillón

Mariana Perez

Gabriel Piemonte

Michael Rios

Karla Rivera

Jenelle Rodriguez

Michelle Santana

Sunny Serres

Johmel Sock

Cloey Stewart

Jittaun Taylor

Zoe Troi

Nathan Trujillo

Jordan Vaccaro

Valley Valentine

Paris Ward

Annemarie Weinert

Montrell Wells



Garland Court Review

HAROLD WASHINGTON COLLEGE

2025

A curated assembly

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Inner Front Cover: **Valley Valentine** *Waited so long* (digital photo)

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All of the amazing artists and writers who submitted work for consideration in this issue!

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Garland Court Review

HAROLD WASHINGTON COLLEGE

2025

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Bradley Bowman

June Gudukoglu

Milton Hernandez

Yevgeniya Lapik

Haby Palma

Cloey Stewart

Paris Ward

Letter

from the
editors

Greetings!

Welcome to The Garland Court Review's 2025 edition. We know that people say, "You can't judge a book by its cover." However, we continue to create some pretty awesome covers. So, we don't blame you if you picked this up because it looked cool, and you won't be disappointed by what is beyond the cover. This edition will take readers through many different moments of contemplation: thoughts while walking through willow trees, while launching paper boats, while smithing in a forge, while riding a bike, or while watching faeries do what they do best. Beyond these moments of contemplation, readers will experience voices conveying longing, loss, belonging, the connections that hold us together and the disconnections that keep us apart. All of these may seem familiar, like a sampling of a song getting repurposed, but we hope readers will find these moments relatable and understand how similar experiences are all different when coming from a new perspective. Then again, there are pieces that will surprise you, leave you in awe, and even make you laugh. As the cover shows, the future is here, and we aren't sure what we are going to get.

The artwork may answer some of this for us. First and foremost, it seems that it doesn't matter what year we are in; Chicago is a beautiful and unapologetic city to photograph, from the temple of the EL to the poetics of parks, pools, parties and back alleys.

We invite you on a visual journey across the multitude of expressions: from the ancient media of ceramics, etching, and painting leaping into the digital graphics, 3d visualizations and generative ai processes; rendering human and post -human dreams, aspirations and musings.

The ability to convey these thoughts and many others in such crafty and interesting ways is what makes the students and staff at Harold Washington College brave. Sharing art with people is a personal yet communal act, and we thank all our writers and artists for being willing to share with us.

Enjoy!

Ever Yours,

Ukaisha Al-Amin

Bradley Bowman

J-L Deher-Lesaint

June Gudukoglu

Milton Hernandez

Yevgeniya Lapik

Haby Palma

Megan Ritt Broenneke

Galina Shevchenko

Cloey Stewart

Paris Ward

Zuri Washington

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Literary Works

Heena Aslam

W

illow trees

When I walk through the willow trees
Through the bends I've known my whole life
And I would meet someone along the way
And they would hold my hands
And whisper some profound truth I'm never expecting
And they'd walk along with a confusing indifference
Over and over again
I'd stumble over the roots
And find myself anew
Mud or flowers or flowers in mud
I don't mind though
I'd much rather tend to bruises
Than stand tall under leaves
When I walk through the willow trees

Ash Cross

In Delay

The hole in the desolated ground shifts

Aching like the void in the window

Just a reflection of a lake I won't see

Another day in delay

Aching like the void in the window

While running down the road

Another day in delay

The trees are more alive than me

While running down the road

I linger in the end

The trees are more alive than me

And starting never waited

I linger in the end

Just a reflection of a lake I won't see

And starting never waited

The hole in the desolated ground shifts

Heena Aslam

A fter my grievances

Sometimes I cry

When I meet a bird at its end

After my grievances

I cry as if it was denied its life

Like he had never been cozied warm under his moms wing

Like he had never let the wind gently sneak under him

Like he had never seen the tops of mountains

Or felt the skys dawn rest atop his head

So which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

David Dominguez

S seeking Into the Vastness

"Mijo, que tanto haces afuera." Mother would say.

I often sat in a chair in my backyard at night looking up
at the sky, while the
bonfire warmth surrounded me.

With so much unknown vastness where do we really belong?
Each day I would have a different mystery
to lay my searching eyes at.

"Te vas a enfermar! Get inside hijo." Mother said.

"Soon enough mama." I replied.

Hopefully soon enough I would find all the answers
to my mysteries.

I would lift my head up to the starry night,
and notice Mars in the distance.

So far out, but yet so visible to the naked eye.

The moon shined so bright as it illuminated the night.

Our kind was born on earth, but it doesn't mean
we have to settle here,
right?

The unknown works as a magnet attracting humans
to uncover it and study
it.

How much more time until we settle into the vastness
of space?

Our kind was made to discover, and touch where
we're outcasted.

"Time to head inside." I whispered into the night.

The questions will be answered soon.

Hopefully soon enough.

Darling

Ebele

I'd kiss you until your lips turn pale and gray
If you'd let me, darling
Love you until your skin lost its youth
And our years of happiness painted gentle strokes
into your face, arms, legs, chest
If you'd let me, darling
Wake up under this cotton ball sky
And we'd watch the endless movie as
the sun swallows us whole and
It'd light your face in the most flattering way
and in that moment,
My heart would swell and I'd think
I want to spend forever with you
If you'd let me, darling

If you give me the chance to be your everything
Your ups and downs and those grays in between
We could survive the months, the years and
The decades would give way to brittle bones,
but not us
Even in those ages
Would you kiss the color back into my pale lips?
Love me though my youth has slipped me by?
Because I'd let you, darling
I always, always will

Tori Engle

Ode to My Bed

My bed;
a cradle,
a vehicle
to other worlds,
to my mind,
to sleep,
to comfort,
to rest,
or to nothing at all.
What privilege I have
to be completely,
with no restraint,
enveloped by you;
layers of you,
of wool, cotton, or silk
entombing me.

Canyon Forrest

t here it goes again

The aching receded enough for me to forget
how I got hurt, and look what
happened

For whatever unidentifiable reason
I either managed to forget or
subconsciously tricked myself into thinking
the cycle doesn't keep going
forever

Get comfortable, hurt someone or get hurt, deny it,
regret, accept it,
move on; but never change

Over and over and over
My eternal damnation is to burn every bridge
I forge while still feeling
compelled to do something with my hands,
and somehow always having just enough brick
and mortar left to do it
again

Maegan Fahy

Older woman

Roberta! I had wanted Roberta since— since forever;
she— the cigarette smoking coworker ten years
my senior,
now my senior, ha-ha!
Well, she is twenty six...

and she asked me to drive her home, to her own house!
Because, she said, the bus hadn't come,
though I had seen a flash of tax-form yellow
cut through the night around her body,
a hole in the song of compressed air brakes
opening the shop door with its magical bell.

I said yes! Roberta! I have a car!
Do you live nearby? No? The Heights? That's fine!
Your hair shines like dung beetles, Vanta-blackened
by a convention of witches in a Lockheed-Martin
fighter jet.

Dark stuff, she said,
Light clattered off one silver thread
in her inky braid, a crack—
she guided my hand down the convoluted distance
of the splintered plait.

Then I opened her door for her—
skin wrinkled up neat around still eyes,
(when the moon hits your eye, like a big pizza pie...)

joints popped as she sunk into the civic,
playing staticky dust on the record.

Roberta! A stone in my stomach grows,
leaded more each moment I don't slide
my burning hand from the shifter to your knee, find
the inside of your left thigh, soft as petals or a cheek,
and trace there the spidering lines
which have appeared in the streetlamp flashes.

We are on her street, landing at her house—
a long, flat thing with a concrete driveway
and, hung over the lawn, like a ghost or a TV,
lurks a square shadow, a window,
and she asks me in, like it is a movie.

I held her hand as she worked
through the bureaucracy of opening a door
with a rattling ring, in her hair a gray shock
uncovered itself at her dark temple,
she blushed and fumbled with the lock,

Roberta! I was blinded
by the unfamiliar geometry of a made home;
she dissolved in the black shapes on the wall,
there were bedrooms at the end of every hall,
I found her there,

Spotted, loose skin, like hounds
running out over ancient bones—
between my fingers she fell to dust,
her body made nothing by the mouths of moths,
And I could not remember lust.

Nia Hawkins

YOU poem

You fell apart at the seams
not knowing how to get back
You choked on the lies
You died over and over again
Trying to come alive in a space
You knew was killing you
You purposefully avoided the mirror
Hiding it from the fact that told the truth
You are me
And I am you
You became so much of what you hated
That no amount of love could overcome
You change your walk
The way you talk
The way you dress
The way you wore your hair
You don't recognize yourself
What have you become?
Your head silently told you
But your heart went along with the lies
Because you were afraid of the truth.

You hid from love
From those who love you
You seek life from the mistaken
You slipped through the cracks
of discomfort with yourself
You stopped believing
You stopped achieving
Tears streamed down
Laughter has covered your face
But still layers of sadness has made a home
In the only place you want peace.
And each day
You crawled to the temple of doubt
Hoping to be released from its grip
You slowly
Day by day gave away your power
Fear had told you lies
And you believe them
But at the end of the day
You're a beautiful flower
Hoping to find soil fertile enough to allow
You to grow
You died and became someone new
You are me
And I am you

Haby Palma

T he Ghost of a Father

Your ghost roams freely through the rooms that surround me, haunting every corner of this house. Footsteps are heard at midnight when everything is still, and murmurs of your prayers and hymns vibrate through the walls.

You can be seen at every moment of the day. I see your shadows in the room where you worked away, the noises of tools clashing as you create pieces of jewelry from every kind of stone.

When laughter fills the house, yours is stronger than the rest and when I have conversations, I always seem to hear you over the rest. Your catchphrases are carved on the table where we enjoyed countless meals, no need to trace my finger over them because they're carved in my arm as well.

The pictures that have you in them seem to move,
like you never left at all, I find them on the wall, in drawers
and boxes under my bed. I see you everywhere, but that
isn't really you. Just a memory of what you were.

I do everything I can to not forget your face. When
I feel you fading away, I write stories and poems to make
you stay, because having your ghost is better than not
having you at all. You haunt me every day because I get
to live while you rot away.

Karla Rivera

C onsumed ?

I want to be the shadow
looming behind your breath,
the weight that catches you mid-word,
the rush of heat that scalds your lungs
when you try to call for release.

Let me coat your insides
like honey too thick to digest,
like smoke that lingers,
stick to your ribs,
cling to the walls of you,
until I'm the ache in your chest
you can't cough away.

In a savage gulp,
take me like the last drop of water
in a parched desert—
but know that as you drink,

I flood your lungs,
turn sweetness to suffocation,
and swallow you whole.

I gasp for air that isn't yours,
choking on the space between us,
as if the atmosphere itself
is poisoned with my wanting.

Feel me expand,
like the tides you can't outrun,
become the pulse in your neck,
the tremble in your voice.

Let me suffocate you
with the enormity of my wanting,
until the only air left in your body
tastes like me.

Haby Palma

D

eceptive Freedom

Dozens of faeries are scattered around me deceiving me to join them, they appear amicable, but I know better.

They shine as if making signals to communicate, begging me to lift my feet off the ground and wander into their soothing lies.

They call to me in soft whispers claiming they can ease my troubles, and return who was lost to time.

People around me have fallen to their lies, they dance and drink in a dream-like state. They dance on tombs and sing to voids “this is being fulfilled” they chant to the earth.

They’re fooled to think they have all control, but the daze in their eyes and the laughter of faeries tells me otherwise.

Their apparent joy seems to be fulfilling, attractive to my senses and every whisper makes me reconsider the choice I made to remain at a distance...

I try to pull the people around me out of these illusions, but the faeries work has done its part, they will remain in their minds weaving their thoughts until they’ve been thoroughly amused.

Zoe Troi

The Rabbit and the Wolf

I am the rabbit, I am the wolf
Silent as she who hunts by night
I die in silence, for that is my life
When the rabbit consumes me,
I cannot fight.

I am the rabbit, I am the wolf
Silent as she who lives in fear
I wander alone, but watch and wait
For the time of my birth is drawing near.

Ash Cross

The Empty City

I had been walking the monotonous streets for years before it occurred to me to give myself a name.

There was no need for a name when the streets were so empty there wasn't even trash blowing in the wind. There were no cars, or bikes, or signs. No evidence that people had ever lived in the city except for the fact that the city existed.

There were just two types of buildings alternating one after another on both sides of the road. The red building only had five stories with window sills. If anyone lived in the buildings I had not seen them open a window. I couldn't even peek into the windows. When I tried all I saw was my own reflection which I didn't like staring at for too long that close up.

The other building was a large glass skyscraper that stretched into the blue sky itself. Neither building had any doors.

Despite it all, it took years for me to really become bored. Why would I be bored when there was so much to do? Such as taking note of how different walking on the road was compared to the sidewalk, or watching the reflection in the windows move, or staring into the blue sky for so long my vision blurred. I also learned to jump and walk on my hands. I discovered scrapes and cuts and pain.

Boredom arrived when I realized how empty the City was and how alone I really was.

It shouldn't just be me, I thought one perfectly normal day. Of course, after that revelation I had to decide who 'me' was. Something very difficult to do on one's own.

I continued my walk down the concrete sidewalk. The revelation had made me stick closer to the buildings because my reflection made me feel less alone. I could almost believe there was another person walking right alongside me, right along to a whole new group of people.

It was on another perfectly normal day when I came to a fork in the road, and right in the middle of that fork sat a man leaning against a light post. He had a glazed look on his face, which was pointed toward the sky rather than at me even when I sat down next to him. He was the first person I ever met.

It was at that moment I realized I didn't know how to communicate with this man and I didn't know if he would want to communicate with me.

I looked forward, like he did, and saw the path I had traveled. It looked rather long and difficult and boring, which I had not considered it to be before that moment. Afterwards, I very much did.

The man spoke first. He muttered gibberish about the weather and wind. Looking back, it had been a strange choice of topic because the weather never changed nor was there wind.

I had no questions at the time so I simply copied the shape his mouth made.

That's how we lived for a while. He leant against his light post muttering every now and then, while I copied the syllables and twists of his mouth.

I finally got the hang of it enough to ask him where the people had gone. It was strange to open my mouth to make my own words.

The man never wore a specific expression on his face, yet I watched it fall. He said he didn't know and turned his head away. I kept my head up facing the path I had walked.

Time passed, genuinely honestly passed for the first time in my life, and I watched the sky darken to blackness.

I was speechless, had been speechless for a while really, because of the dark sky and orange light of the light post. All I've known in that city was a blue sky with a round white light that moved in the sky. This was beautiful. This was different.

"Shame about the stars," the man said, sitting up straight for the first time.

"What are stars?" I asked, and appreciated how different my voice was from his. He looked down at me and I did not recognize expressions enough to know what he had been feeling at that moment. He did tell me what stars were.

He told me a lot of things when he could. A lot of things I already knew, but it was nice talking with him anyway. He even told me about things he didn't know like what happened to all of the stars who disappeared with the people.

“Could we find them?” I asked. I recognized his expressions enough to know that he did not think we could.

“Some things aren’t meant to be answered,” he said. An absolutely ridiculous thing to say I thought back then and still think.

We had our first argument for hours. By the time it was over, the sun had reappeared and we were walking down the street.



The man was skittish when we walked through the empty street. He didn’t like leaving the fork. He thought it had left him to make a choice, but I was the one who made the choice when I grabbed his hand and persevered for both of us.

We walked for days. The sky changed from dark to light so continuously we could time it. We didn’t find anything. It was just the same monotonous streets I had known my whole life.

“What if we climbed?” I said, looking up at the small building we’d passed so many times before.

The man didn’t like the suggestion, but he had no reason to say no.

He wasn’t a good climber and neither was I. I found myself distracted staring at my own reflection so I had fallen off multiple times. He had less problems, but wouldn’t move farther than me. By the time we really made it to the top

I was covered with bumps and bruises and scrapes.

The roof of the red building was flat concrete. More nothing to see like the rest of the city.

It didn't feel fair. I had thought outside the box, in a way I had felt like I beat the city, but there was nothing to beat. I was so distracted, I jumped when he put his hand on my shoulder. He was pointing to the side where the building met the glass skyscraper.

A ladder rested against the skyscraper seemingly going all the way up.

We looked at each other like there was any choice in the matter.

We climbed up because we had nowhere else to go.

The climb was like an eternity. One hand raised after another on the metal ladder. I went first so I just barely caught sight of him when I looked down every now and then. The monotony was so bad I almost wished to be back on the street, when I had the choice between walking on the road or the sidewalk, on my feet or on my hands. My reflection at least had followed me. Mimicking my climb up the ladder until it was too dark to see.

I barely believed it when I made it to the top. My hand flattened against a material wider than the small steps of the ladder and I quickly pulled myself up and over onto another flat surface. The man followed just as quickly afterward; we sat by each other just like we had at the light post.

The top of the skyscraper was much the same as the other building. Flat. Gray. Empty. I peered down at the streets but the dark left nothing to be seen. Maybe there wasn't

anything to see. I looked back to the center of the roof and found a rope in the middle of the roof disappearing into the sky. In my excitement at something new, I nudged the man with my foot. He did not move.

“Haven’t we gone far enough?” he asked, staring at the ground.

I felt truly angry for the first time. We argued for hours on whether to stay or go, but when it ended the light didn’t change this time. I took hold of the rope.

Something kept me from climbing.

“What’s your name?” I asked.

“Doesn’t matter,” the man answered. “It’s never mattered.”

But I wanted it to matter. Maybe it was because I never had a name, it had never occurred to me that I needed it. Maybe I didn’t need a name, but I wanted one. I stayed frozen for a while. Possibly hours, thinking of a name I wanted, a name that would fit. I’ve since changed it, it stopped fitting, but when I told the man my old name, my first name, I felt lighter than air.

He stayed sitting there on the rooftop between the rope and the ladder.

I climbed into the sky.

Sunny Serres

Literally

I'm literally in class going over instructions for an activity.

"Literally, try to draw up some ideas for these examples:

Stonehenge, The Colosseum, The Pyramids of Giza, The Great Wall of China.

Think about what you would literally say.

Create literal main points."

I check in with my students, literally.

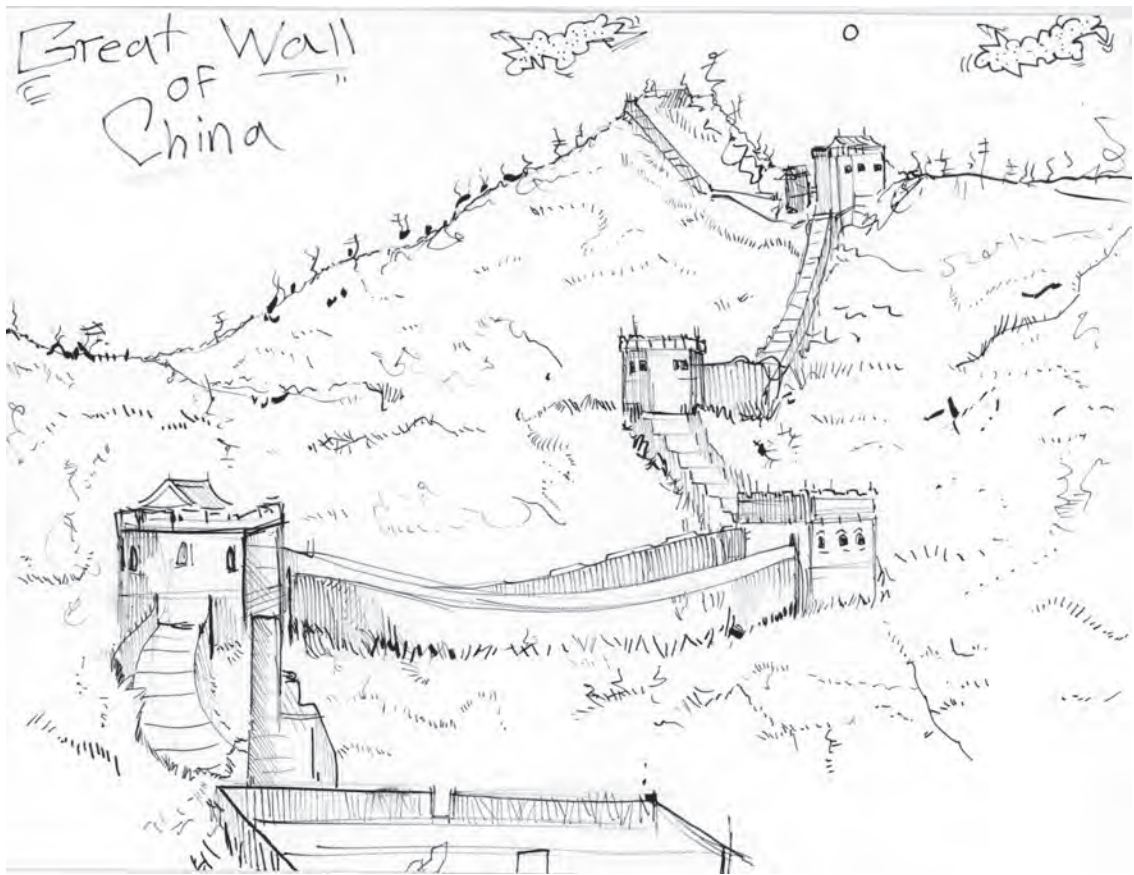
I see a literal interpretation of the assignment.

A drawing. And then another.

And I literally feel joy for the literal interpretation of the instructions.

They literally love art!

And the best surprises are literally those that you least expect!



Great Wall of China sketched by Roderick Lala



Stonehenge sketched by Arianna Gil

Karla Rivera

N ever ending Laundry

Piling up like forgotten linens,
stiff with regret,
my promises lie mismatched and unwashed.
A stench emits,
clinging to me,
leaving me,
reeking with guilt.
As a child, I was no neglected heap.
I was polished, pressed,
smoothed beneath careful hands,
a pearl nestled in a satin-lined drawer,
kept safe, gleaming, whole.
Freshly starched, I stood tall,
my surface bright, unblemished,
reflecting only light,
certain I too would shine,
untouched by time.

But now, my luster has faded.
I have turned brittle,
a pearl handled too often,
its surface thinned, rubbed raw—
no longer gleaming, just dulled,
buried beneath the weight of what I've left undone.
Once held firm in careful settings,
I have loosened,
slipped from my clasp,
rolled into forgotten corners,
scattered like unspoken confessions,
dulled by the settling of time.
No need for polishing.
I lie among the wrinkled cloth,
lost between what is worn and what is waiting,
a pearl buried beneath a heap of unfinished days,
waiting for hands that remember
how to make me shine again.

Valley Valentine

The Weight of Wanting

I stand in the shadows I cannot escape,
Chasing dreams that seem to reshape.
A weight clings heavy, deep in my chest,
A voice that whispers, You should have done your best.

I see their faces, etched with care,
Lines of sacrifice, love, and despair.
They gave so much, their dreams on hold,
And I feel I owe them more than gold.

But each step I take feels like a fall,
A climb too steep, a too-distant call.
I yearn to rise, to bring them pride,
Yet fears and doubts collide inside.

To make a mark, to heal, to give,
To show the world why I should live.
But the mirror stares back, unkind, untrue,
And all I see is what I didn't do.

Still, in the cracks of this fragile frame,
Burns a spark, a flicker of flame.
A quiet hope, a whispered plea,
To make them proud, to set them free.

For even failures can find their way,
Through stormy nights and darker days.
I'll build a life from these broken parts,
With trembling hands and steadfast heart.

And maybe one day, they'll look at me,
And see the person I long to be.
A difference made, a life worthwhile,
And in their eyes, a tear... and a smile.

P

Zoe Troi

ages of a Anvil

Is this courage? Is this strength?

Must it be forged by some mysterious, untouchable blacksmith
of time and space, impassive even if intentional, eternally
internal, cloaked until the rarest dream can show a momentary
glimpse of silhouette?

I am that burning end

Tiny, perfect fireworks of each distinct strike of circumstance
rain for their full second and a half of life

I ebb to the dull throbs of resignation. And so the glow fades.

If I may at least stay cold

But once again to flames, and I am lit from end to end

Shimmering in the sharpness of that shaping, shivering in
silence and the shame of my defeat

For being bent again by forces holding me in place

Is this strength? Must I come from pain and longing?

Oh, and heartbreak

Will I be forever turned around, scrutinized for any flaw, to
bring the

Ping!

The change

More change and more - and I am young; the sound is hard,
solid and immovable

But when what (is perceived) has changed in certain ways,
that is to say, when what we call the time had passed for just
the right amount of years, familiar sounds grew gentler

The endless turning of our metals meeting, smoothing only
tiny, incompatible protrusions invisible to my human eyes, was
only repetition, was it not?

It was silken soft as tinsel draped on silent branches glitters
in the gentle breeze, and then - which may be just as well
defined as now - I knew that never was a single instant
uninvited, as far as living every day agrees to see as many
rises of the sun as is allowed if one is able to continue onward.

To answer my first question: yes

Must it be however it has been? To answer that I only need to
ask myself if I can truly train myself to trust the essence,
unexplainable in fact, extending from wherever I may be to
any point I may have gone but yet did not, brilliant, constant
and protective but so easily misunderstood

For one cannot be merely shaped when one has also done
the shaping

And that is how I finally came to understand

The plans were always mine: The Smith and I are one.

Gabriella Carrizales

P

hases of the Self

The days do wax and wane

My question:

Do I stay the same?

The moon does go through phases

While the sun shines quite bright

Omitting heat in its light

Never the same yet always changing

Adjusting with the seasons

Summer, Spring, Autumn and Winter

The days wax and wane

Going through phases

Who wants to stay the same?

The moon is ever changing

It has its phases

The moon becomes Full

The moon becomes New

I do not wish to stay the same

The moon goes through its phases

Giving way to new seasons

Giving way to new light

Who have I become?

Walking through the darkest storms that lead to new light

Refreshed by the gentleness of a fallen rain

To be kissed by the sun

I am Me

The Sun, The Moon and Everything in between

Paper Boats

Zoe Troi

Standing on this bridge between the last place and the next
Mesmerized by all the diamonds I can never catch
A thousand tiny ripples stretch to meet the sun

And I have work to do

On this bridge I've walked for years

Its smooth, resilient stone well-bathed in all my tears of grief
But I know now, underneath, I walked in faith – though
stumbled more than walked, at times – for what, besides
belief in reaching distant shores impossible to see, propels a
soul to push ahead?

And then one day relief, its tears no less a flood, poured from
my eyes instead

But in them was a taste of freedom that would otherwise have
gone to waste if I had never dared to face this gateway I had
found

It was then I saw the mists of early morning rise without a
sound, and all around me
were those clever, subtle ways that nature has to raise the
curtain on new days to come

It was time to rest and finish what I had begun

On my skin I feel a soft and silken breeze - within, the smell of
tiny dewdrops scattered
on the leaves

And countless other things that all together weaves the
unmatched sweetness of the early morning air, that makes
me want to breathe it in so deep
Perhaps it's not unfair that it's so fleeting, or I'd surely try to
find a way to always keep it with me
To put forever off that moment only visible in hindsight, when
morning starts to slip away and full-bloomed day brings
skies so much more bright
Then morning, with a twinkle in its eye, says nothing but
"Goodbye - for now."
But truly it would be a lie were I to say I never wanted day or
even night
For what besides the day can bring such clarity to sight, and
what besides the night can bring the dreams that hold us tight
and guide us secretly and softly towards the light of dawn?

So here I stand, the blank horizon gone, replaced by green
embankments up ahead
Giving me instead a long awaited glimpse of land, which only
adds another welcome thread to a tapestry of sparkling deep
blue water and the faithful grey of stone beneath my feet
And in my hand a bag of paper sheets, carried from those
past familiar streets

A desperate place I once called home, as I believed I should
Where guilt and hopelessness and shame, ever ceaseless,
anchored me as best they could

But now these papers, each with their own special creases,
can travel as they would

Never knowing rope or anchor, for though the folded pieces
all contain the same confused and sorrowed journalings of
journeys undertaken and recorded through the eyes of
self-defeating blame,

What I need, to change the name of every narrative I once so
carefully arranged, is right beneath me

It's water under the bridge

One by one I let them go.

The current flows fast now,

I watch until they disappear

And it's just water under the bridge

Just water under the bridge.

Ash Cross

2021's 4th of July

Even on my bike with the wind whipping past me, the night air was nothing but warmth. Not necessarily humid, but warm and light, like a hug. It sent me back to late nights of my childhood when my mom was awake enough to play with me and my siblings outside. We jump-roped, or played on our scooters, or simply sat on the sidewalk of our cul-de-sac together appreciating the black sky and single lamp that lit the concrete circle where we lived.

Tonight though, neither my mom nor my siblings are with me. Tonight, I bike alone.

I had recently cut my hair shorter, down to my chin when it had for so long been right below my midback. It never felt long until it was gone. The bike-ride is almost an entirely new experience. The wind is so unfamiliar, yet friendly.

I cut right onto Oglesby, an actual road unlike the pothole-filled alleyways that many of the other houses--mine included--lived on. I peddled faster and faster until I was flying. I stood on my pedals and closed my eyes only for a second to really feel the wind on my face.

An explosion to my left brought me back to reality.

I broke with my right hand, letting my right foot settle on the ground for balance and looked to my left. The tree's canopy and houses blocked out the fireworks, but the noise couldn't have been anything but fireworks on the 4th of July. I leaned my head further back and caught just the edge of another explosion. The red began falling down only to disappear into smoke. I laughed out loud. I've never lived in a neighborhood where people lit their own fireworks before. I knew my family in New York had their own fireworks, but this was different. This was home.

I got back on my bike and began my trip again. Another explosion went off on my right. This time I could see the entire firework show. I slowed to a stop to watch the second firework go off--blue and white--before continuing on.

Many more people in the neighborhood set off fireworks. I got used to the loud booms and smoke that hung in the air. I traveled all the way down to the clubhouse and stared off into the distance. The sky still had a little light in the west, though stars were creeping up on the horizon.

While taking a break, I pulled my--now wet from condensation--water bottle out of the cup holder and took a sip. Another loud boom caught my attention and I watched the fireworks sparkle down the sky: red, and blue, and white, and purple, in all sorts of shapes.

This family had an entire set that I could've stayed to watch, but the night was too beautiful to stay in one place.

My family always went to the same place to witness the same fireworks show every year. I never liked the itchy grass or how boring it was to stay in the same spot for hours on end. I did enjoy the glowsticks and sparklers. My siblings and I waved the sparklers around and spelled out our names and other words in the air. The glowsticks were bracelets or necklaces, but our mom always warned us not to break it and get the chemicals on our skin.

None of those memories compared to this bike ride. This was much better.

I placed my damp water bottle back into the cup holder, and biked back up the hill. I turned left, then right, then left again, and I was in an incredibly bumpy, holey, alleyway with a concrete wall beside me. More fireworks went off, and it was at that moment I noticed that I hadn't stopped smiling since the first firework.

I circled around the neighborhood until I was right beside the typically empty grass field. Multiple families spread out on blankets and chairs to watch fireworks that were going off somewhere beyond the neighborhood.

I stayed for a minute or so, catching my breath, but, like always, the faraway fireworks bored me quickly and I set off again.

I circled the neighborhood and was starkly reminded that this would be the last time I would experience this. The move to Chicago was a year away. A year away from leaving the only town I remember ever living in. A year away from

leaving everyone I know. A year away from the unknown.

I was riding down my alleyway and I swung my right leg over to my left side as I slowed in front of my garage. I entered the garage code. The hole in my chest larger and emptier than ever.

It's funny. I discovered a Mitski song only a few days ago that I'm already associating with this night.

*And then one warm summer night
I'll hear fireworks outside
And I'll listen to the memories as they cry, cry, cry*

I locked my bike onto its bike rack, closed the garage doors, and simply sat on the bumpy concrete patio staring up at the now silent, smokey sky knowing in that moment that I was being a little overdramatic.

Still, it was one of those nights where you could feel your life vanishing into a future you can't see but you know you're looking back from now.

The rest of my family arrived soon after that from the fireworks show at the community college. I shared how exciting the fireworks in our neighborhood were that night. I didn't share the emptiness that crept in afterward. That was mine.

Nicteha

In Transit

Navigating on Earth is quite an experience.

I have possessed each grain of sand.

I called upon each piece of land to give them birth.

Navigating for being transparent with you

Coming from your quadrant's image.

Going and coming from your hand

We are weaving each other's sights.

We are rowing to the intangible.

We are looking forward to the compass in between worlds.

Searching in the deepest, where our souls mirror the roots.

Rowing and stringing together the vortex of your silhouette.

Twinkling your beam, perceiving your breath's flavor

Brought from each palpitant sun.

And it arrives with new deals at midnight.

That empowers each nanosecond of my life.

You and I, we are cultivating stars.
At the edge of the universe.
Together, are giving birth to honeysuckles,
jasmines, and sunflowers.
Hand to hand we are seeding the birches.
To express light expansion and harmony
We give birth to more eucalyptus.
To preserve happiness.

Our new castle walls with new insights.
We have decided to navigate together down the river of life.
Primary manifestation of the endless fire on the heart
Such spiral collides incantations.
Lingering the primal sound, the ancient chanting

Life comes from the caterpillar towards the butterfly.
Are we building our nest,
A castle framed by breaks of spontaneity.
Making a framework of singing cascades
To keep beauty and the strength to move forward.

We made our castle windows with clouds.
Clouds coming from Tibet and Chile
We are making floors with granite golden-green.
Granite coming from Atlantis and Lemuria

We are clothing the walls with new insights.
Insights made of Emeralds, Alexandrines, and Perls.
We are building through our hands.
Creating routes towards the Eastern light.

The balconies and doorways
Dared of mirrors filled with our first encounter.
We are weaving our new stories.
coming from the bees, hummingbirds, and fireflies

The roofs of our castle made of
our intentions, our impulse of creativity.
Filled with the Pleiades stars from Orion.
We draw every night the ectasis and peace.
I am blinking and overview our present and future.
I am in the middle of the changes, in transit onto you.

Canyon Forrest

a dying monster

Having your life flash before your eyes isn't all that harrowing
when it starts with cannibalism and fratricide

Earliest memories full of the sickly sour taste of flesh and fur
It took most of my life for it to even occur to me that eating
those born right beside me was wrong, something I should
feel remorse for

It was the only example of conduct I had. Gore and
devouring, ceaseless and all consuming.

Those that had what it took to survive did so by any means
necessary and those who didn't existed as fodder for them

That's all I was doing in the end

That's all I ever did in the end

Looking back on it all as a finite period of time I hardly did anything beyond keeping myself fed, seeing anything else as foolish and a waste of time

The closest person I ever had to a friend tried their hardest to keep me from ending up like this, bleeding out alone and fighting just to inhale

They told me about their belief in another life after this one

The idea hadn't occurred to me before, but now I hope more than anything they were right

If I get to experience this world or another from infancy again

I'd like to spend my life doing more than just living

June Gudukoglu



House That Hums

7 January 2025

"As well as being one of the worst things that can happen to a human being, schizophrenia can also be one of the richest learning and humanizing experiences life offers."

— Mark Vonnegut in his "Letter to Anita"

at the end of

"The Eden Express: A Personal Account of Schizophrenia"

Green Mondays and lovesickness. I feel a lot and I rot so beautifully. Sometimes I want to be understood so desperately it becomes wet. And I want it more than I want to be loved, than respected because respect is 15 stripes against the wall.

~~—Black and white, and black and white, and black and white, and black—
—and white, and black and white, and black and white, and white and—
—black and white.—~~

I think that people come into our lives and build houses in our heads, but I build nests in ribcages like birds and wasps and bees, out of the sticks and spit I foraged. I do it and retreat into myself, into the nest I've built of them and me and them.

A sort of broken-legged, broken angel bug, a lilac skeleton and amoeba. But this is only on Tuesdays which are terrible and terrific, immeasurable because Tuesdays are forever days. I know they don't mean to pry, but yes, I go to therapy. No, I don't hate my dad.

I don't like it when they come near me. Not in the grocery store and not in their cars on the road as we all flit down so sillily, floating like shrimp in brine down windy roads of cobalt endoplasmic reticulum. They look with their eyes, so wide and tied up on their heads like loopy shoe laces hanging over their noses. *Why are you looking at me? What about it?* It's Wednesday every week, every month, every year, forever.

LET ME SEE YOU AND BE SEEN.

This decision has been made out of love and I have love bubbling out of me like the kind that comes out of birthday cards. I am so tired of being a person that I wish for just a sliver of space to die a bit in private, in my own shell like a horseshoe crab curled around because that's how I was made. It was! And to the woman who cried in the stall next to mine, I love you and I know a few places where the wifi is really bad. One is my childhood home and I promise that I will love my girlfriend until I die because she is someone's daughter too. Have you ever thought about how whales will

never eat an apricot? Hope is out there— follow the stars and go straight, don't go home till you've made your own. Think about it on Thursday. Think about me then too.

Since the first time I spoke to her, I belonged to her completely. Have you ever felt like you could love someone with their flesh between your teeth? Have you ever felt hungry like a dog? Like the teeth of an orca? *Am I good enough?* she asks, an eight-winged fairy with no mouth. *You are!* I tell her. Did I win? I ask. She flies into my mouth and I know. *Never forget me,* she says. *I cannot, it's Friday.*

The truth is that I wish I could speak perfect French so I could say with my mouth that *les samedis sont pour s'arrêter avec toi sous la lune*. Once your body was not a body but a body in a cocoon, encased by them. And sometimes you just want something so badly you have to lie for it, fight for it, so you can catch it in your mouth for a minute. You ask me about love, but all I have to tell you is about violence. I can be obsessive like that, my mother says so— thinking till my stomach is full and my pupils are bulged. Write me a poem about the realization of identity. 10 hours, 9 Thursdays, 8 frogs in one body, 7 days of the week, 5 moths, 4 light posts, 3 dream-foraging fairies, 2 horseshoe crabs, and 1 shrimp in brine. Saturdays are sleepy, but Sundays are for staying awake and awake and awake.

Ash Cross



Retroactive recognition roams refracted recollections

Reality reflects reels replaying

Rarely recalling reflections reliable roles

Remembering reopens rotating roads

Radiant rays reorganizes recognized rights

Radiant rays reopen recognized rights

Remembering moments reorganizes aching rotating roads

Rarely if ever recalling flat reflections reliable roles

Reality reflects skewed broken shards replaying

Gabriela Carrizales

P eaceful

To lay in a field of lavender

To swim in a sea of honey

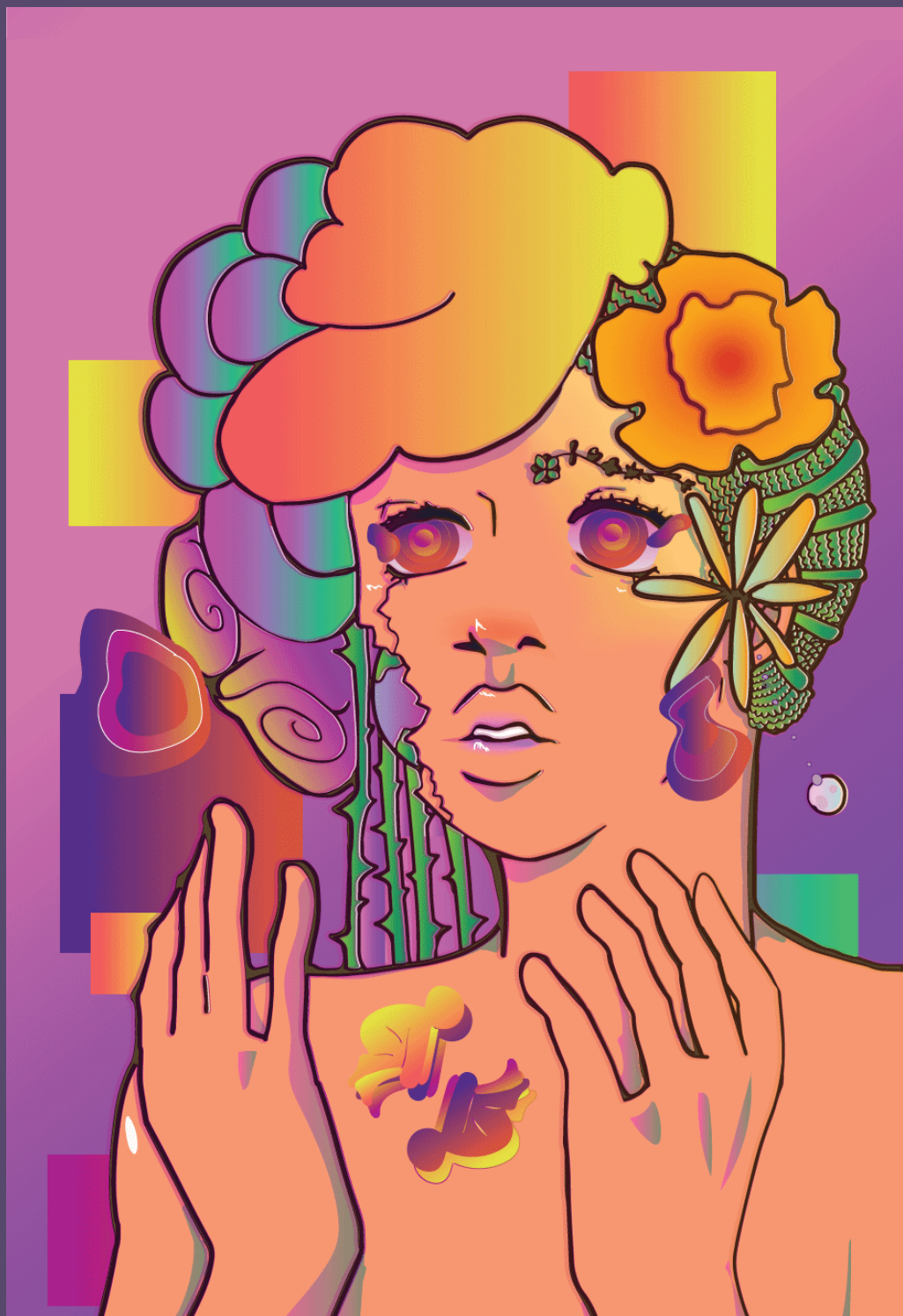
Perhaps,

This is Peace

Gallery



Yevgeniya Lapik *Peonies* (digital painting)



Michelle Santana *And We Wept* (digital illustration)



Rebecca Bowlin *MossNess Monster* (digital painting)



Paris Ward *GLow* (digital photo)





AJ Johnson *Orchid* (digital photo)



Edna Morales *Bad Joke* (acrylic on canvas)



Kevin Dominguez *Fog* (oil pastel on paper)



Marfee *Professor Infector* (stone lithography)



Gabriel Piemonte *Harvest* (mixed media)



Marfee *The Creature* (ceramic coil pot)



Clarence McMillan *The Guitarist* (watercolor & pencil on paper)



Kevin Dominguez *Room 1* (watercolor on paper)

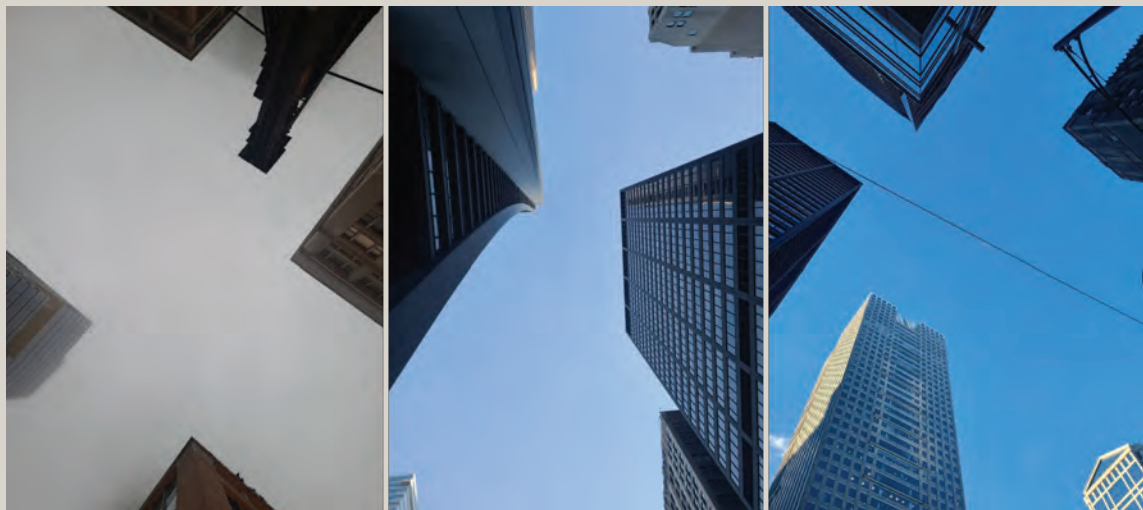


Nathan Trujillo *Mexico City Card* (digital illustration)



Yaqing Chen *Red Mao Mao* (ceramics)

Jittaun Taylor *Real Pisces of Rudd Resources* (digital illustration)



Tori Engle *Up* (digital photo)



Katherine Martinez *Queen of the City* (Digital Photo)



AJ Johnson *Cult* (digital photo)





Valley Valentine *Choices* (digital photo)



Alfred Jackson *Family on Train* (silver gelatin print)



Harrison Crain *Pickwick* (silver gelatin print)



Raina Ozarowski *The Woman in White* (Silver Gelatin Print)



Brandon Jones *Inconcievable* (digital illustration)



Yaqing Chen *Cowie Bowie* (ceramics)



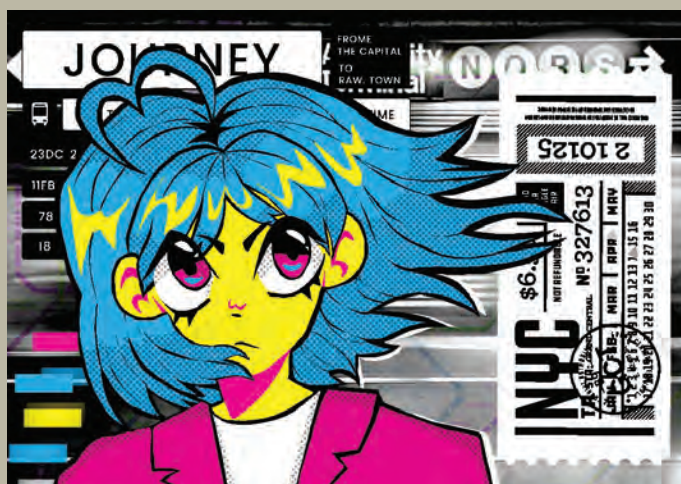
Nia Avila *Me* (digital painting)



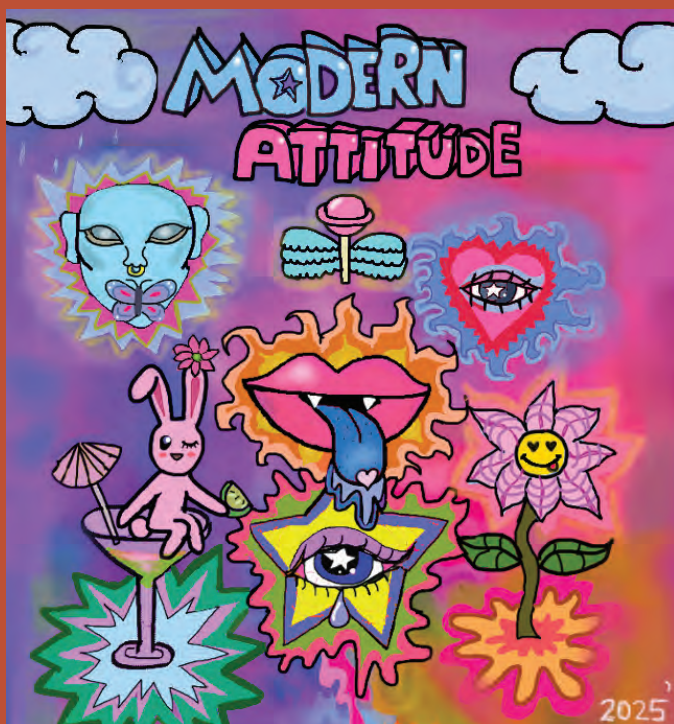
Nictaha *Vortex* (digital painting)



Nathan Trujillo *Animal Icons* (digital illustration)



Adamari Flores *PLATFORM GIRL* (digital illustration)



Guillermo Hernandez *Modern Attitude* (digital illustration)



Edna Morales *Fire Frog* (acrylic on canvas)

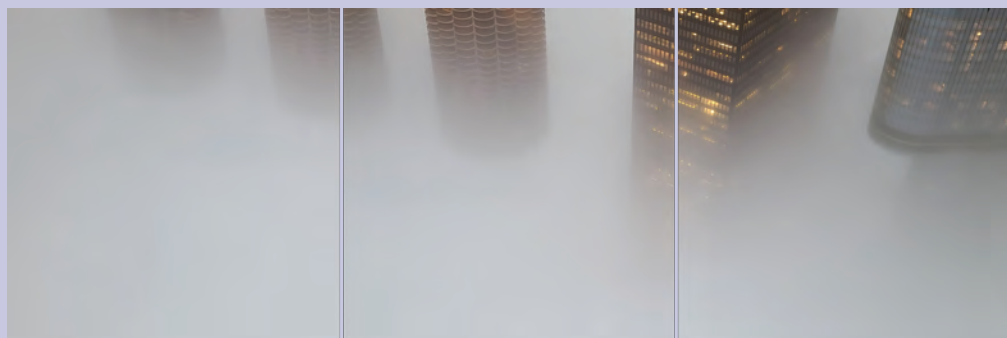
Guillermo
Hernandez



Guillermo Hernandez Glamour Zombi (digital illustration)



j. grimmy *Shakti* (3D modeling software)



Tori Engle *Foggy Chicago* (digital photo)



Milton Hernandez *Luxury Toy Soldiers* (Ai Toy soldier-inspired fashion show/Leonardo.Ai/ runway AI)



Pablo Barron Jolly (digital painting)

B



Nictcha *Lattice* (digital painting)



Michelle Santana *The Medical Pipeline* (digital illustration)



Valley Valentine *Take me to the river* (digital photo)



Tori Engle *Streetlight* (digital photo)



Jordan Vaccaro *Ask Him* (digital photo)

Yana Hlushchenko *Dancer* (digital photo)





Paris Ward *Paper Facade* (digital photo)



Believe

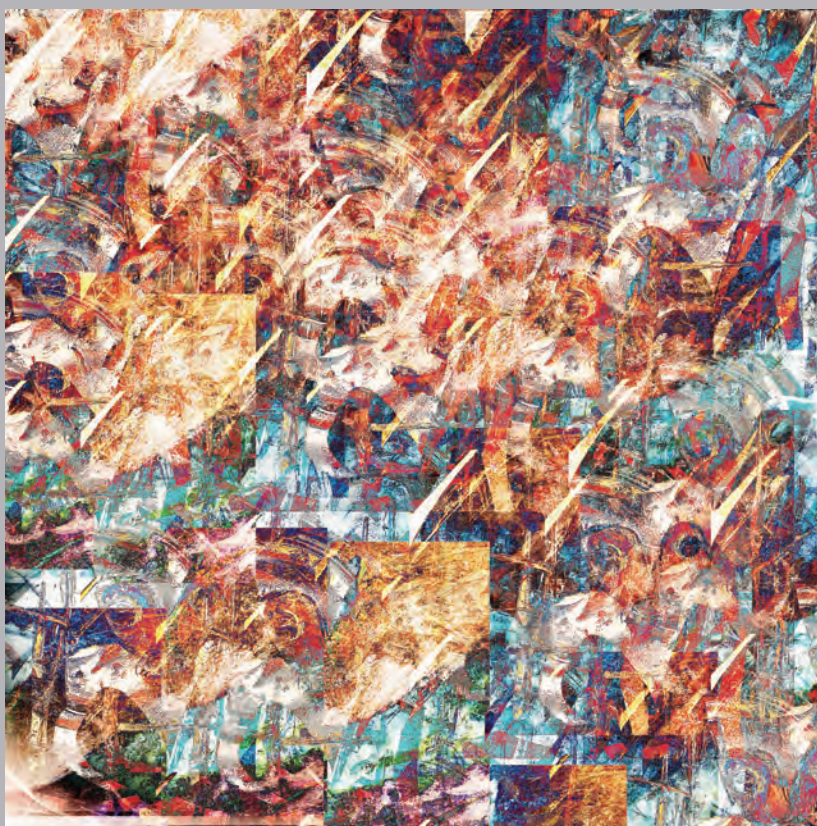


Michael Rios *Believe* (Digital Painting)

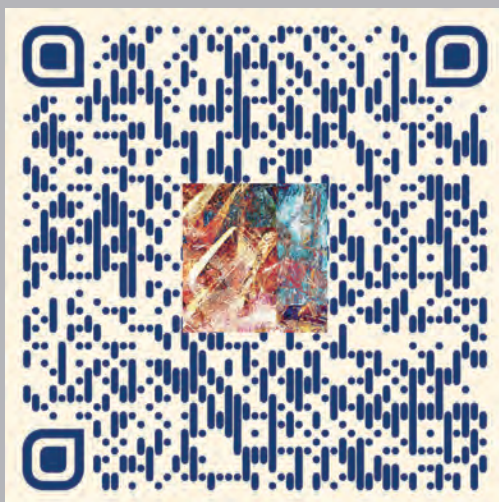








Johmel Sock *Awake* (Multimedia Experience/ Scan QR code below)



Raina Ozarowski *The Woman in White I* (silver gelatin print)





Gabriel Piemonte *Remains (Soapstone)*

Jenelle Rodriguez *Untitled* (digital photo)



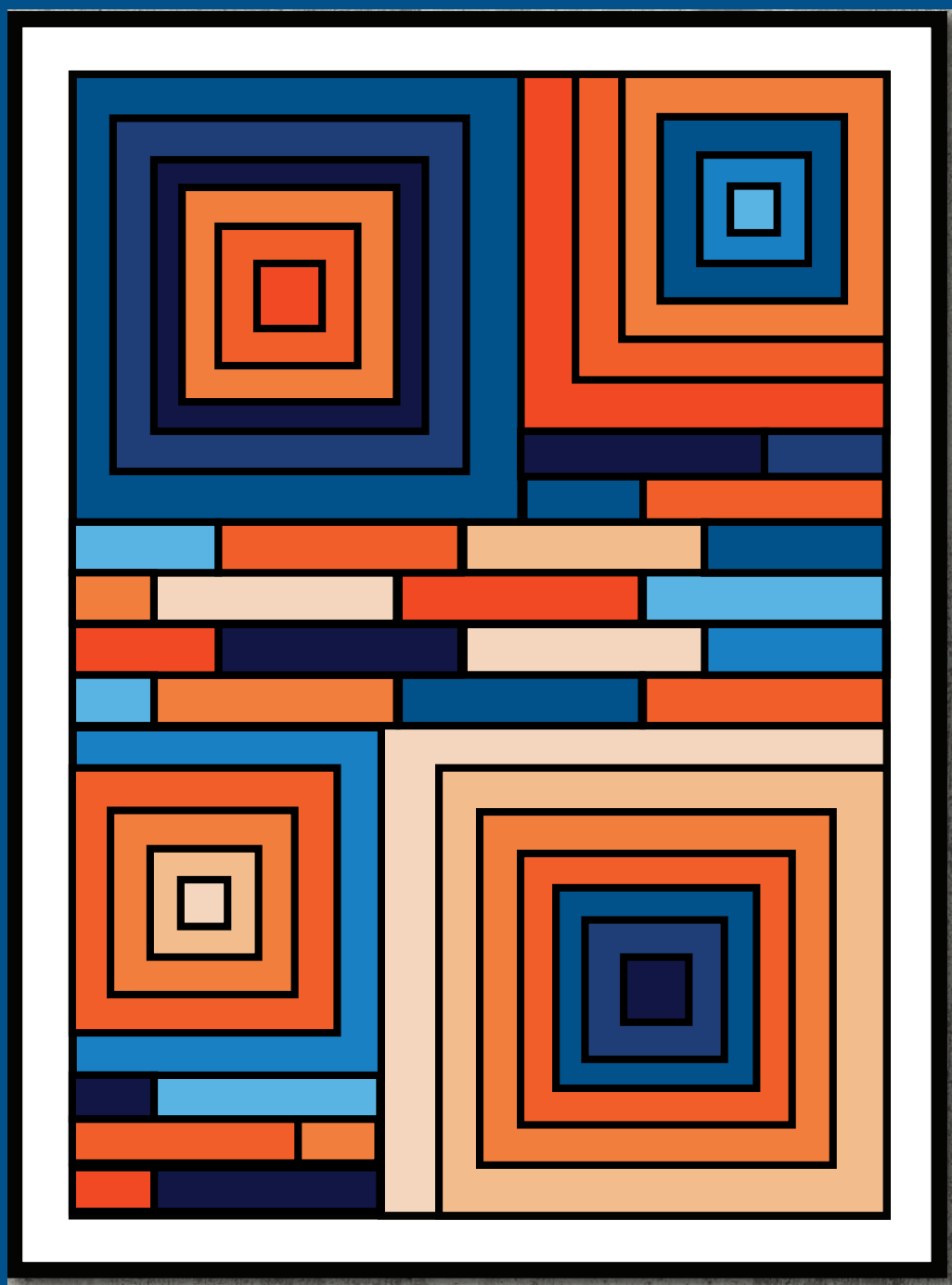
Nikhil Chandran *CTA Train in the Dawn* (digital photo)



Mariana Perez *Crowded Seclusion* (photography)



Arianna Gil *Nature's Spotlight* (digital photo)



Cristos Papadopoulos Castrillón *Retro Grid* (digital composition)



Edna Morales *Festive Kitty* (acrylic on canvas)



Marfee *Seasonal Depression* (acrylic painting)



Cristos Papadopoulos Castrillón *Eugenia* (digital composition)



Alaiya Johnson *Fruit Salad* (digital photo)



Gabriel Piemonte *Discursion No. 1* (oil on canvas)



Mariana Perez *Growing On Your Head* (photography)



Ashley Garcia *Koi Like Stars* (digital photo)

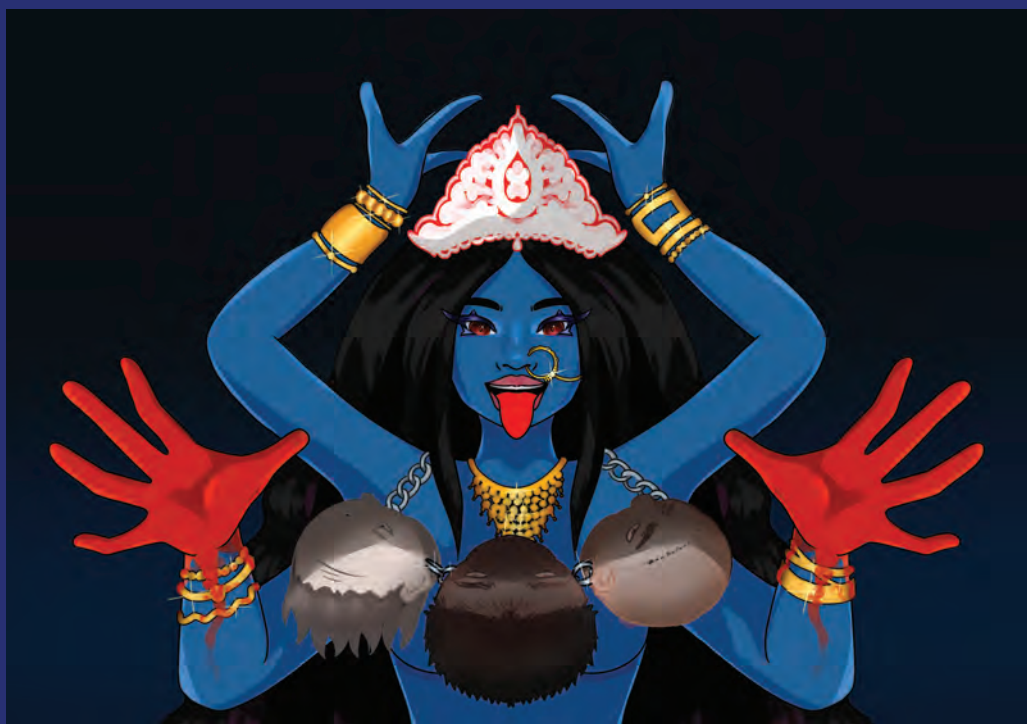


Alfred Jackson *Kids in water* (silver gelatin print)



AJ Johnson *Reaching Up* (digital photo)

Brandon Jones *Everchanging* (digital illustration)



Tori Engle *Maakali* (digital painting)





Guillermo Hernandez *Save The Ocean* (digital illustration)



Brandon Jones Unimaginable (digital illustration)