

# The Lighter

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Article 1

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**Fall 2020**

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Volume 67

Issue 1







# Editor's Note

I'd like to think *The Lighter* has never been conventional.

Standard definitions of “conventional” reference acting in accordance with what is generally done, following the norm, or conforming to what is considered acceptable. Some definitions even suggest a lack of originality. I can confidently say that *The Lighter*, in all its issues, has never lacked originality. Rather, those who've contributed to it have taken their own ideas and influences and molded those into the unconventional.

In this issue especially, I've seen many different kinds of art, both visual and written, all saying something new, bringing new ideas forward. “Overwhelm” reinvents Hokusai's “The Great Wave off Kanagawa” in detailed ink while “The Creation of the Fingertrap” refreshes “The Creation of Adam” by Michelangelo on a digital platform. “how did the sky look?” fashions conversation and experience into poetry while its stunning page partner “indiana luminism” demonstrates the painterly, Michelangelo-esque beauty in everyday life. The stippling of “self-support” casts the self in a new light while the breathtaking imagery of “All My Friends Are Underwater” and its purposeful title invite another layer of introspection. Even the shape of our book is unique, having transitioned into a square shape which I never would have thought to prefer.

There has never been a better time than now, in the backdrop of a very nontraditional semester, to embrace the unconventional. I wasn't entirely sure we'd have a full magazine or that we'd even be able to meet in person, as a Selection Committee or as an Executive Board. My mind was racing, even before classes started developing back-up plan upon back-up plan to ensure this book would be possible, in whatever form it needed to come in. However, we were incredibly fortunate, though the production of this issue did not come without its own unconventionality. And while this magazine specifically isn't revolutionary, what we represent absolutely is: art and the power of self-expression.

And with that, I am very proud to introduce “Isaiah”. While Biblical in nature, this book, the art within it, and what it represents are far from traditional. Rather, Isaiah is meant to embody the unconventional and the possibilities it invites. I hope that anyone who picks up this issue will recognize the originality, power, emotion, and effort which exist within these pages. Furthermore, I can only hope “Isaiah” and *The Lighter* will continue to inspire the unconventional.



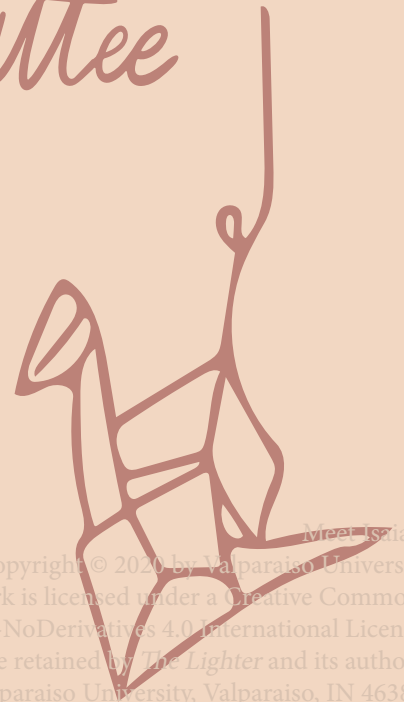
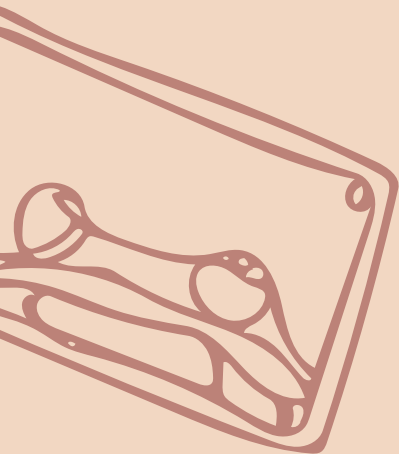


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Meet Isaiah.  
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KAYLA SMITH | DIGITAL ART

## The Creation of the Finger Trap





ART | SOPHIE BURNS

# Overwhelm



# Homebody

Perhaps I'll view this body as a house,

soft tissue insulation encompassing calcium  
thin beams, overlaid by a map of rusted pipes.  
Blue-tinted window eyes allow intruding

sunlight to warm the dust and cobwebs,  
though walls soon grow cold with unpaid bills  
and a jammed front door. They stopped trying

to get in ages ago. In their place stomach acid  
wallpaper finds its way upstairs, shaking  
hands with the grey matter rainwater

that leaks from the locked attic door. Lost  
shingles pull free like loose strands, left  
behind, while paint gives way to endless

weathering. Exterior redecorating only  
does so much to disguise the inevitable  
interior decay of an unsteady foundation;

built intentionally but not to last.

PHOTOGRAPHY | GINA SYLVESTER

# Green Campaign in Black & White





## Mudboy

For me, the wide, jagged holes in my Champion sneakers were not signs of my mother's inability to buy a new pair; they were well-placed breathing holes so that my feet could be cooled after a run or dried after a swim in the lake. Truthfully, I had grown to prefer the holes. I liked the feeling of the sharp grass underneath my feet, and I hardly ever even wore the shoes outside of school. Having the bottoms of my feet touch the cool tile floor of Memorial Elementary was relaxing, so even on the off chance that my mother bought me a new pair, I would quickly begin the process of freeing my toes. I'd start by scraping the bottom of the shoe on a pit of gravel near the lake, just under where the big toe would rest. I would do this until a small hole would show itself, allowing air into the shoes. Eventually, the hole would widen with wear, so much that the soles would be completely gone after only a couple of weeks. My calloused feet were more than adept at stepping on any branch or jagged rock hiding within the tall grass, so wearing the near sole-less shoes in public was never an issue for me.

Living in a relatively rural area at the time, I was savvy to the curious glares of the white children who had never spent time around nappy-headed brown boys like myself. When they inevitably asked, I always said that it was the well-placed holes in my shoes that made me the fastest kid in class, assuring them that it was the shoes' aerodynamic attributes that gave me an edge and not the melanin.

As winter was fast approaching, the holes in my shoes began to draw more and more attention. Unanswered phone calls to home sparked outrage in my school teacher, who eventually pulled me aside

after dismissal to offer me a ride home. I agreed, delighted that she was finally paying attention to me.

She took a detour, stopping at Payless. She insisted, against my wishes, that I pick a pair of shoes to wear to replace the ones I wore with holes. As it turned out, Payless did not feature shoes with toe holes, or any type of aerodynamic enhancements that would allow my worked feet a cool breath. I settled on a pair of white tennis shoes, and thanked my teacher sincerely. It was an act of moral charity that, at the time, I was not yet used to. I did not know the real reason she bought them back then. On the ride home, I even cried and told her that she was my very best friend in the whole world.

As all preferred, favored children do, I bragged to my classmates the next day, who were rightfully jealous of the great friendship I shared with our teacher. They, too, wanted a pair of shoes and a personal ride home, and throughout that morning I could hear child after child asking her why they had not received similar gifts.

This made me happy in a selfish sort of way. For just those brief couple of hours between recess and dismissal, they were looking at me how I usually looked at them; with wet, envious eyes, and that was not right – no, it was backwards and wrong, and everyone knew it. So, after gathering the children for the daily story time, the teacher sat in her rocking chair, this time with no book in her hand.

“Okay, everybody! 1, 2, 3... shhhh...” It was a routine she would do to pacify the masses. We all shushed with her until she felt that enough of us were paying attention.

Somehow, I knew right then that I had been betrayed. I'm sure it would have made for a better

story, to describe my shock in the moment as she said what she said, but it really didn't happen like that. Really, before she even said anything, I had dug my head into my knees, pressing my shoulders into my ears in order to muffle the sound. Unfortunately, I could still hear.

"Mrs. Coyle, how come Anthony got a present from you and I didn't?" Some child, a girl who I remember was named Rachel, asked before the teacher had a chance to start her awkward introduction. This was better for the teacher. Now, she was only answering a question.

"Well," she paused, rolling her eyes back as if to think, "Anthony needs a little bit more help than the rest of us, that's all. The shoes were something that he needed."

There was a brief silence.

"Like, he needs help, how Billy needs help?" asked some child, who I remember as a boy named Matthew. His question brought about hushed snickering from some of the more crude boys in the class.

Billy was autistic, and was in the developmental class across the hall for half of the day every week. At that moment, though, Billy sat across the room from me, his head dug into his knees, covering his ears just like I was.

"No, not like, um... Anthony's family just, they don't have all the things that the rest of us do. Anthony is -"

"He's poor!" yelled some child, who for the life of me I cannot remember -- their voice forever hidden in the roar of laughter which immediately followed.

"1, 2, 3! 1, 2, 3! Class! Shhh, 1, 2, 3!!!" She tried, but her voice fell to the cackling, raging beast, summoned by the cruelty of third graders: shame. Shame for my lifestyle, my poverty; shame for the large, blackened holes in my shoes and the hoof-like calluses on my feet, shame for my mother and brother and sister, for the father I didn't know, and most of all, for the bastard child he left behind to suffer, to soak in the glares and stares, to live up to their wicked expectations because he had no others to live up to in this world.

That afternoon, my mother picked me up in the baby blue Jimmy, the front bumper only inches from dragging on the concrete. I was going to jump into her arms, tell her all about it as she patted my head tenderly, but that desire vanished as soon as I saw the green, transparent squeeze-bottle, filled halfway with a violet red liquid. The hooch Kool-Aid, an alcoholic's hoodwink; it was as if I had somehow forgotten.

I got into the truck, piled in the back with Ryan (he could see that something was wrong, he always could), Madison, and Joshua. I said nothing on the way home, ignoring my mother's slurred, yet genuine, concern. I blamed her back then more than anybody. I still do sometimes, but now I can see that she was a victim, too, and victims are notorious victimizers.

As soon as I got home, I sat down with my brother and did my homework. I put my new shoes back on and went outside soon after, walking towards the lake. I stopped at the gravel piled in front of the gate, and began to free my feet. Holes began to form on each foot as I stomped and dragged the front of them along the jagged little rocks, tearing away at the white fabric which was blackened by the work of the ever-corrupting mud.

LEE SANCHEZ | PHOTOGRAPHY

## To Witness Creation, decaying



## winding

i have been here and i  
will be here: you will not  
be rid of me. i will wait  
as the winds want more,  
whining off windowpanes.

i would like to wake up  
to rain that leaves the day  
dark, that burnt-out  
streetlight flashing  
imagined morse-code.

i wander waters dropped  
by willow trees—i think  
of myself as a witness,  
a watcher, a withered set  
of hands that shiver in the air

of the witch's hour, damp  
with dew. lights flicker every  
time i blink. the whirl of the  
will-o'-the-wisps lifts fog  
that whispers about winter's

arrival, but the warmth  
has not went out yet.



CHRISTOPHER MALON | PHOTOGRAPHY

aliens around us



PHOTOGRAPHY | EMILY GUSTIN

## 36 Hours in Ireland





SOPHIE BURNS | PAINTING

## A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night



## Boxing

It is hard to describe the beauty  
in blood lost by bolstered egos  
and wrapped, well-trained fists

fury sculpting welted abrasions  
into each twisted glare;  
we do not hate one another.

It is art in the same way  
those large hooks  
snag the extra skin

on a masochist's back, swaying  
them effortlessly above the currents  
of pain they once nearly drowned in.

Instead, we fight to wield it.  
It is as the jabbing pen  
which births poetry,

that sweet dance  
of unrelenting violence  
can make the worst of pain

into a booming roar of applause.



## RECLAIM

Commemorate the happiness I once had,  
for my perpetrator has drained life  
from our newly warped worlds.

My smile demonstrates a phony assertion  
and mimics a seemingly docile heart.

He extinguished my flames with guilt  
reviving yet another wilted lie.

No matter how hard I try, scraping  
away at tainted skin, I can still see  
the blemishes his hands painted.

How could I allow him to intoxicate  
my cries in exchange for false  
comfort: a trustworthy friendship?

Lying in my bed, engulfed  
by nocturnal darkness; resembling  
nights when I would awaken

from fetishized movements,  
overtaken by a friend who only  
wanted to control us all.

My friends, I wish I'd held your  
hands, guided you away from  
the one who sought to pray on  
your hearts and gut your trust.  
I say this with utmost certainty:  
that today is finally our day.

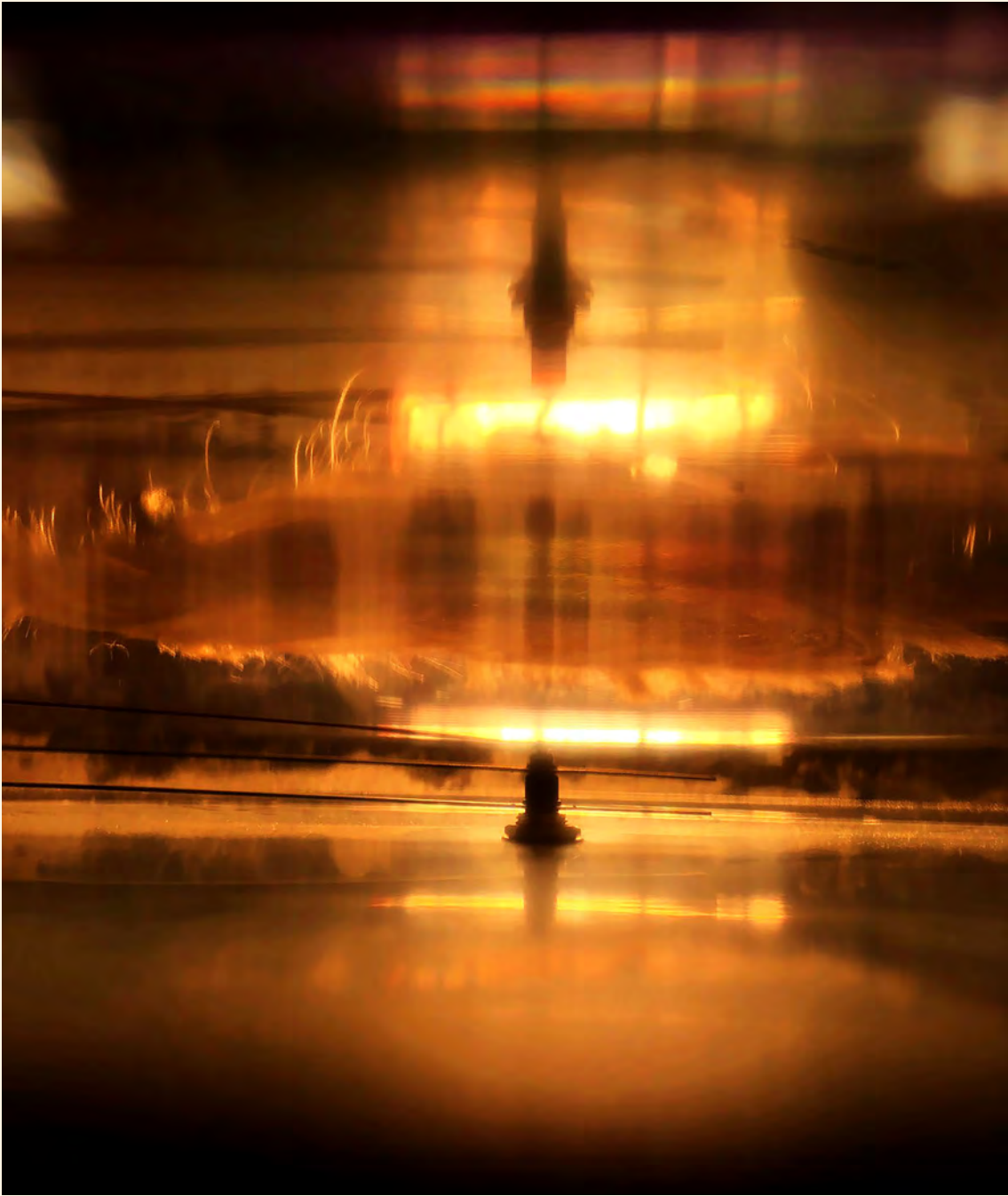
To regain our dignity, to forgive  
ourselves, and become heroes -  
Themis forever as our witness.

Remember not our traumatic events  
but instead that we fought against  
our past. We now control our future.  
Our offender sought to destroy, but  
his temptation submits to equity  
brought forth by our stories.

Testify against the fears we once had.  
We will reclaim our voices and sober  
our minds. We all sunk beneath pools  
of tears, unknown of our shared  
common fears, but our numbers will  
dismantle waves of uncertainty. Justice  
will quake courtrooms nationwide  
and convince the jury to trust us.

ART | MAIAH DEOGRACIAS

# Twisting Turning Time



LEAH GATCHEL | PHOTOGRAPHY

## nature's hardest hue to hold



PHOTOGRAPHY | HANNAH BHAKTA

# All My Friends are Underwater





EMILY GRAVES | PAINTING

# Mountains in the Morning



## odyssey

i let my eyes adjust  
to the hovering man

in the sky, far, floating  
among the stars. the night

sky is still blue, even behind  
a full moon. these hills

and valleys are mine. someday  
the pale green leaves glowing

against moonlight will be mine,  
too. even with the torches

on, these silhouettes are mine.  
i still count the seconds between

lightning strike and thunderclap;  
the shadow of a rabbit dances past

at the flash—it's a fire hydrant  
hidden in the haze of raindrops

bouncing on pavement. the hip,  
the swollen knee: traumas happen

and then never leave. they dwell  
and are dealt with as they layer over

one another (venn diagram of agony).  
but, look, there's odysseus' ship,

circling back, finally, coming home  
again in pained gasps between clouds.

## A Memorial Service

What will you remember?  
When you are twice the age that you are now,  
when you look back and think of this day,  
think of her,  
what will you remember?

Will you have those wonderful terrible  
perfectly crystallized memories  
of the whole day, that long drag of hours  
through solemn faces  
and tears that can come at any moment?  
Or will you only have impressions:  
the great gray space of the sanctuary,  
the look on your father's face,  
the beautiful blue of the early spring sky,  
the hymns you sang (if you sang at all).

Will you remember that your Redeemer lives?

Why is it that I am drawn to you,  
to the small girl with the long blonde hair,  
who might be wearing all the black clothes she owns?  
I see the twist of your face,  
and feel the same twist of grief in mine.  
I feel I have no right to be here: I barely knew her.  
I barely remember her.

I wish I remember your grandmother better;  
I wish I had printed on my memory  
whatever it was she said,  
when she touched my shoulder  
and really looked at me  
and told me that everything would work out,  
that it would all turn out right.  
But I remember her crooked hands,  
and her smile,  
and maybe this is enough.

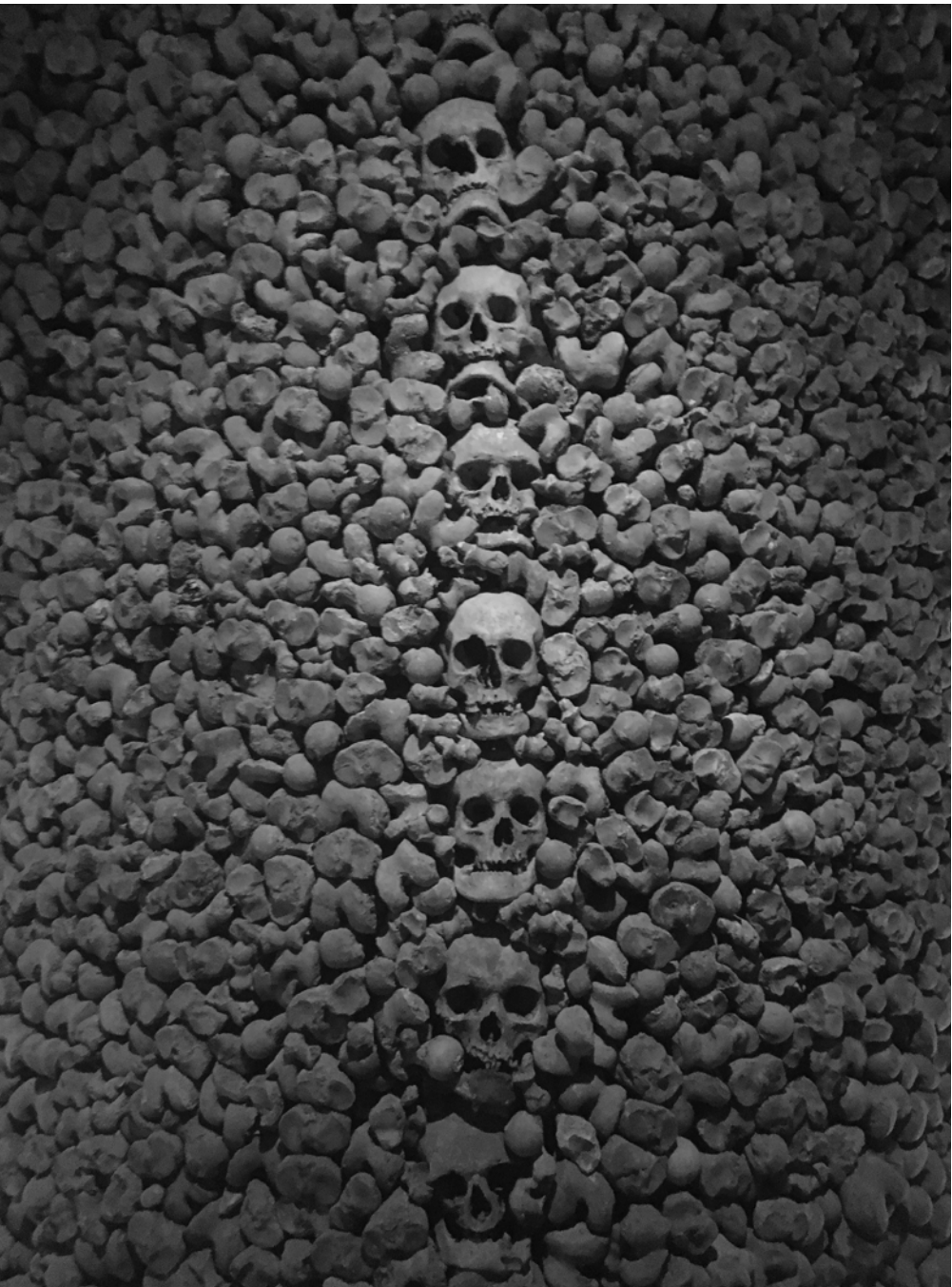
But it is not just your grandmother  
I think of today,  
with the sky so blue that it makes me think  
of another day, another sky  
(though the sky is bigger there).  
Yours is not the only grandmother  
I wish I remembered better.

Whatever it is you remember,  
small girl watching your grandmother  
being put into the earth,  
I hope you will not forget this:  
we will see them again, you and I.  
We will see our grandmothers,  
and then, there shall be no need for memory.



PHOTOGRAPHY | ASHLEY VERNON

## Skulls at the Church of Saint James





ALANA SWOPES | PAINTING

# Lotus



# English Market Hues





MICHELA TENUTA | PHOTOGRAPHY

## indiana luminism



## how did the sky look?

after i came back to life,  
the whole world “just wanted to ask me a few questions”—  
local news reporters, internet conspiracy theorists, distant  
family members (who would always cry, even though i doubt  
they ever thought of me until a week ago),  
and then you

asked me nothing at all,  
whisked me away from the crowds,  
and kissed me with lips warmer than i remembered.

some days later, we’re laying underneath our willow tree,  
barely touching hands,  
and your single question finally comes out.  
“how did the sky look up there?”

i ponder that one for a while,  
because language isn’t designed to describe the heavens,  
but then i look up past the weeping leaves—  
to the purples and pinks and oranges and blues—  
and finally back over to you—  
“it looked like this,” i say,  
and wipe my eyes.

## To Darken the Church Door

The cathedral was ours.  
Even in spite of her pre-existing  
frame; a skeleton whose front door  
you walked me through, we

made it our own. Glorious  
stained glass reflects enough  
light to fill the high ceilings  
and our empty chests; bells

birthing melodies we couldn't help  
but hum along to, fingers  
clasped in communal prayer;  
whispered adorations printed

into sacred scripture, studied beyond  
any scheduled ceremony. Until  
changing seasons exposed weak  
construction. We didn't think

to reinforce walls with time spent  
kneeling at one another's altars. Water  
crept in, bringing with it rotting  
disillusionment. The glow

of what we'd built dimmed. No  
longer sanctified, no longer safe;  
you realized we're not ready  
to admit we relied on something

outside ourselves. We've become  
characters in our home, divided.  
I, the lone worshipper. You,  
the locked door. Our halls

once hallowed, now hollowed.  
Holy only to clusters of cobwebs  
and the same bronze ringing,  
no one left to listen.

PHOTOGRAPHY | ASHLEY VERNON

## Cathedral Stairs



LEAH GATCHEL | PHOTOGRAPHY

# magpie lane





# Highlands





# Castlehopping



## rambler

i am a king traversing my country  
in the dark—this is my playground  
to celebrate with the stars above, and i  
will traipse through its halls as i please.  
the raindrops on my head fall alongside

my footsteps and the specters in stride.  
every door is an entryway—i make it  
so—no longer shoved to the right side  
of the road; the whole walkway is mine.  
the valley ahead is mine, too, and  
the cicadas, with me no matter my pace.

in the darkness, they chatter on only  
for themselves and i mirror the spirit  
of the act: to know yourself and hear  
the truth in the shadow again, again.  
just like that, the moon is full once more;

there are weeds in the yard and the garden,  
and a spiderweb is strung between tree  
branches too high to touch (tomorrow  
it will be gone). pine needles glisten  
with remnants of yesterday's rain; i hang  
my crown on the jungle gym.

## lycanthropy loops

there's a knocking at the door of my heart  
that i cannot quite get rid of. it stays until  
early dawn when our dreaded full  
waxing gibbous edges down toward  
the invisible slot in the horizon  
to disappear completely. almost as if  
the damage it creates never happened.  
these nights make me harder than i once was,  
but time can only preserve our youth for so long.

i look towards you as you open the door,  
rid of the night that harms you. fresh with visible  
wounds that will never disappear  
completely, i wonder each time how you  
manage. but such unspoken thoughts will  
never pass my lips, despite their insistence  
at the sight of you. quickly, these memories  
of ours will wane. only until our dreaded  
waxing gibbous becomes full,  
taking you away from me once again.



PAINTING | SARAH ENGELS

# Sapphic Eclipse





LEXI GAULT | ACRYLIC POUR

# Delta





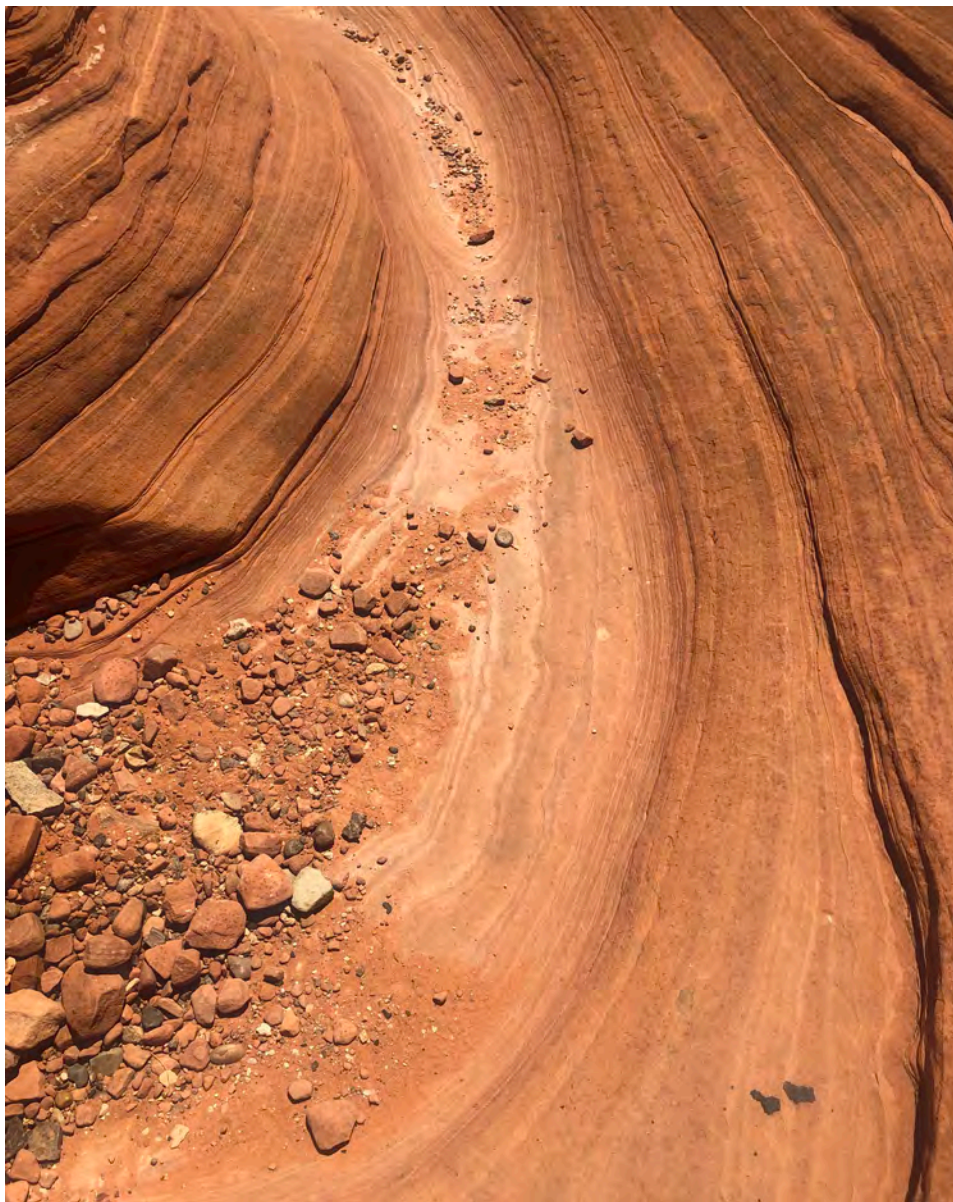
PHOTOGRAPHY | GWYNETH HOEKSEMA

## Disturbed Ripples



CECELIA SIEFER | PHOTOGRAPHY

# Seep





## Desertification

Let's pretend that  
love is water.  
So, life now  
without you  
is a desert.

Not a sandy desert,  
filled with snakes  
and spiky cacti,  
but one like Antarctica,  
all ice.

This is a desert—  
there is no water  
falling from above,  
to whisper against my cheek  
soft as an anxious kiss,  
to soak me to the skin  
with stinging drops  
that make me smile  
and turn my face to the sky.

The water is under  
my feet,  
and this is  
“take off your sandals”  
holy ground.  
This is a desert—  
the water locked away,  
hard, unyielding,  
cold.

And so are you,  
I guess.  
And maybe now  
so am I.  
Curled in on myself,  
aching with cold,  
quiet,  
easy to desert.

## kisses in crimson

The dawn today was the same color  
as my split-open heart  
I know because I saw them both,  
laying leaking onto the concrete floor  
as the first rays of sun mingled with my blood.

My blood will be dancing through my veins  
when you kiss me,  
magma-like and fixated  
on every place you touch,  
every breath you take.

Every breath you take is one more  
that I will count,  
striving to keep your lungs breathing  
patching up your gaping aches with desperation  
so that you may see another dawn.



PAINTING | KYLYNN SMITH

# The Genetic Makeup of Moral Forgiveness





GRACE BIERMANN | PHOTOGRAPHY

## New Year's Resolution



OIL PAINT | LEXI GAULT

## On My Way





# an interview with the lighter staff



How would you describe your creative process?

**Michela Tenuta:** I don't think that I have a precise creative process. I would say I am a very passionate and emotional person, so I do know that I am most creative when those qualities are shining. I feel most creative when my head is filled with gratitude or hurt and I have such an overwhelming sense to articulate it through art or writing. I would also say that I have very different styles in art than I do with writing. For me, painting or drawing is a very fluid process and I focus a lot on color palettes and textures. As for writing, a lot of my experience with articulating words comes from journaling, as I've done for years, so my voice tends to sound very personal and urgent because I'm not very used to sharing my writing with others.

**Anna Bedalov:** Certain images and scenes stand out in my head when I experience them, so I try to capture those in short phrases. Those phrases then become part of larger pieces as I develop and expand on the emotions and colors around me; sometimes I mix and match, and decide certain words and tones are better off together, even if they didn't occur from the same situation, but I think it's more fun that way. I then decide on the format. I prefer symmetrical or balanced stanzas when possible, so most of my pieces have stanzas of even lengths when I can make that happen. I usually title my pieces last with a word or phrase that describes the tone of the piece without spoiling the content too much.

**Kayla Smith:** My creative process typically starts with a feeling, a color, or a song, a flicker of inspiration to my mind going. From there it's all about capturing that

source of inspiration on-to whatever surface I can.

**Rebecca Stockham:** I'm a big fan of a singular overarching metaphor in my poetry, so my creative process usually starts with focusing on one image. Sometimes specific phrases will come to mind, some with more staying power than others, and I'll arrange and rearrange those phrases once I've settled on a more concrete idea. I start with a central image and build outward from there, just as I start with a phrase or two and continue from there. I try to prioritize strong line breaks, and equal line and stanza length, which often leads to a bit of rearranging as a piece develops. It's also helpful for me to read my pieces aloud a few times, to myself, to make sure the phrasing makes sense. Finally, getting at least another pair of eyes on my work helps me spot things that might need a bit more work which I would've otherwise missed.

**Lee Sanchez:** I don't have much of a consistent process— every piece I create is its own little beast that demands its own methods. There's a quote, though, that I feel applies to one creative style of mine: "write drunk, edit sober." The drunken state is me with fresh, raw emotions, pouring everything out onto the page. I don't hold back. I allow what I'm feeling to guide me. Then, I let it sit

by itself for a while. Sometimes it takes up to months or even years, but after all those emotions have been processed, I'll go back and edit the poem with a new perspective of reflectivity and carefulness.

**Lexi Gault:** My creative process depends on what kind of work I'm trying to do. I usually do my best work when I have a concept or idea I'm trying to communicate. It gives me a jumping off point and a challenge. Challenging myself in my creative process really pushes me to think outside typical artistic boundaries, and let's me create some pretty cool things.

**What would you say the importance of arts are in a time like this?**

**MT:** Art is so powerful and beautiful, and I can't think of a better time to be exposed to some beauty than right now. I am very happy we were fortunate enough to come back to school safely and put this book together, because each person was able to share a piece of beauty from their world. The smallest victories make a big difference, and being able to share art is always a victory.

**AB:** Honestly, without the arts, life would have next to no purpose. Think of the clothes you wear, or your favorite blanket or TV show. Those are all pieces of art. Everything



on the radio is art. Even technology and social media could be considered art – they are creations that bring people together and foster discussion. Without creations, life would be dull and bland. Art keeps us alive. Art in every form is literally the lifeblood of humanity. So considering the fact that a pandemic has isolated many people from what they would consider their normal lives and from the people around them, art is even more important as a connector and a catalyst for drawing out humanity. And images are powerful, too – think of all the different graphics that have become representative of the various social movements occurring right now, like the Black Lives Matter movement, fights for gay and transgender rights, and more. Art of all forms is necessary not only for bringing humanity to the world, but also for making the world a more humane place.

**KS:** In times like these, I feel like everyone is looking for some place to escape or a safe space to pour out their souls, and art is a vessel for that. For me personally, creating art has been a form of escapism, but for others creating art is a way to bring light to issues that plague the world we live in. And the thing about *The Lighter* is that it is a place for creatives to exhibit their work and give it a platform to speak to others.

**RS:** Art is incredibly important regardless of what's going on in the world around it. But now especially, I think art gives people an outlet. A place to vent, to organize their thoughts, to grieve or rage or celebrate. Producing my own art has helped me focus my energy, process difficult emotions, and reach points of closure. Simultaneously, art can be so much fun to make, experience, or share with others. Art can do just as much for an individual as it can do for an audience. Experiencing a piece of art and recognizing aspects of yourself in it — finding something within it that resonates with you — is very validating.

**LS:** To me, art is emotion made tangible. It helps us artists and explorers of art to process, relate to, and portray our emotions in ways we otherwise wouldn't be able to. In terms of the period we're living through - a passionate social movement and a high-stakes election on the backdrop of the Covid-19 global pandemic - I think a lot of us are feeling the same reactionary emotions. So to me, art is everything in a time like this. It enables us to find meaning amongst tragedy. It's a coping mechanism, a means of survival.

**LG:** Art communicates on such a different plane than facts, statistics, etc. There's pain, love, anger, joy all wrapped up in art that

simply cannot exist in news updates or CDC data. Art strikes us at our cores, where we feel the most at home or the most lost, and I think that's why we need to cling to art more now than ever. It gives us and the events around us humanity. Art helps us recognize how important it is to lean on others and give support to those who need it most.

### What advice would you give fellow creatives?

**MT:** My advice to others is to trust your creative instincts and to keep going even when you feel stuck. If there is an idea that pops in your head, use it! You'll never know what amazing piece of work could come out of it. As I'm sure a lot of creative people have experienced, at some point, you might feel stuck or as if there is nothing creative left. While this can be super frustrating, the best way I've dealt with this is by dedicating some time each day to either art or journaling, and this has even led to the creation of some of my favorite pieces.

**AB:** Give yourself time to actually create! I know things are hectic and stressful right now, but you need to schedule yourself some creative time. It's so easy to get burnt out and say "I'll do it later" when you just don't have the energy. That makes sense – I do that all the time. But the solution to that is scheduling creative time into your day.

Give yourself the space you need to actually create things. It's hard, yeah, but it's so, so necessary.

**KS:** You don't need any fancy titles or take any fancy classes to create a work of art. There is so much gatekeeping on what is and isn't a work of art. What is good is subjective and a fluid concept, the only thing that should matter is how you feel about what you create. Titles are leashes, so just do what sparks joy and take pride in all that you create.

**RS:** I cannot stress how beneficial it can be to share your art with others. Specifically, in terms of sharing it with someone you trust to not only respect your art but to give it the time and care it deserves in critiquing it. While it may be scary to share your work, especially if you're not used to it or it's something more personal, opening yourself up to any kind of audience can be incredibly rewarding. And I'm not just speaking about publication (though seeing your work in print is a special type of reward). Sharing your work with others in any context can help you grow and learn more about yourself as an individual and as an artist.

**LS:** Don't be afraid to make art that sucks. This is one I'm still learning— I've had long periods of time where I don't create at all

because I'm afraid that my art won't turn out exactly how it is in my head. But the truth is, it almost never does on the very first try. To me, making art isn't about being perfect, it's about evoking emotion. So I would say, just go for it. Let the draft be as rough as necessary, because you can clean it up later. Even if it still isn't as grand as you wanted, you gained precious experience and improved your skills.

**LG:** I think something that I did not learn until very recently is that the purpose of making art is not simply for other people to look at it. Sharing art is an important part of the community and necessary for growing as an artist, for sure, I mean you are reading *The Lighter* right now. But it's important to always make art that means something to *you*, that helps *you* process something, that serves *you* in a way that makes *you* better on the other side. Good art is art that comes from an intentional and meaningful place within the artist.





EXEC BOARD  
FALL 2020



KAYLA SMITH | DIGITAL ART

## Spring Showers



## Heartbreak

Heartbreak has been an acquaintance of mine.  
He's paid me visits, shared a cup of tea,  
But heartbreak is too small a word this time.

Love grew a winter rose on frigid vines  
And twined 'round my soul, captivated me,  
But heartbreak is an acquaintance of mine.

Blooming buds on rainbow storefront signs  
Grew big and bright, too beautiful to be.  
Heartbreak is far too small a word this time.

When evil came to cut its stems, its spines  
Dug in me more, pain-tinged melancholy.  
Heartbreak has been an acquaintance of mine.

I saw its blossoms as the plane climbed high.  
Tending them was the girl I grew to be.  
Heartbreak is far too small a word this time.

This city was my love, a love sublime,  
But some cruel god said it was not to be.  
Heartbreak has been an acquaintance of mine,  
But heartbreak is too small a word this time.



HAILEY KADOLPH | PHOTOGRAPHY

## A Few of My Favorite Things



PHOTOGRAPHY | MEGGAN AMOUR

# Find Your Focus





# Majesty



PHOTOGRAPHY | CHYNNNA VAUGHN

bearer of the cross



## The End of Wheatfield

*“They are vast stretches of wheat under troubled skies...” —Vincent Van Gogh.*

SOMETHING DARK WAS COMING.

Sky beat down a dim navy black around him,  
perhaps ready to unbuckle and burst;  
a storm of thundering tears from the heavens,  
scaring the crows and quickly overwatering  
the already healthy warm wheat. Storms usually did not scare,

so why should he be so unsettled by the air  
of this sweet field? Uncertainty  
rose inside himself. Newfound darkness was stark  
and all-consuming, eclipsing any rational thought.  
Perhaps it was not new at all, but like a forgotten  
stranger in a bar, enveloping in a tight embrace

that he couldn't escape. Something dark was coming,  
indeed. And as he stared at the two roads diverged, there lie  
a decision he simply could not make. Reaching deep inside,  
he seized cool steel of something he should not have. The stolen  
possession of the forgotten stranger weighed heavy against  
his beating heart. One last look of the gold and navy that enveloped  
him, and then a burst unbuckled. It sounded throughout the valley,  
which scared crows and left blood that overwatered  
the already healthy warm wheat.



PHOTOGRAPHY | MEGGAN AMOUR

# Intimate Nature





# Make Me Coffee





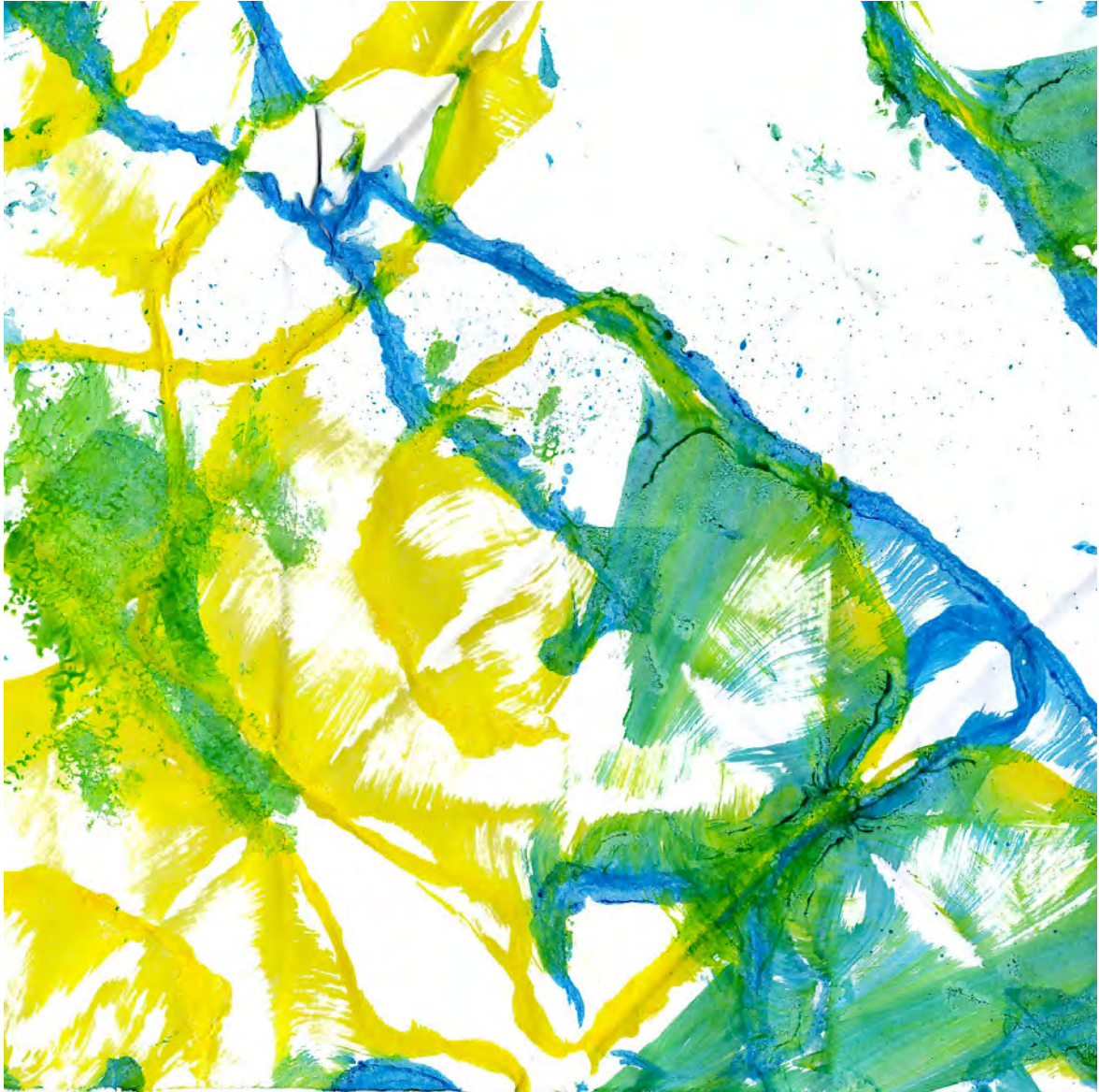
TIM BIMLER | PHOTOGRAPHY

# Fading Zen





Hazed.





## to become full

when i arrived, i had help carrying my things inside.  
my heart silently ached as we three walked through the door.

a fog filled my head. a dense pit rested in my stomach.  
i dazedly spoke and laughed anyway.

as the first days slowly passed, i remember still feeling empty.  
disappointment filled my head;  
a naive girl assumed her environment could cure a heart ripped wide open.

slowly, slowly.

he extended his hand and i took it.  
he asked me what was wrong and i spoke.  
he whispered wisdom into my ears and i listened.  
he wrapped his arms around me and i felt safe.

slowly, slowly.

i looked forward to being awake again.  
i began leaving my blinds open again.

slowly, slowly,

i let my eyes adjust to the sunshine.

slowly, slowly.

another boy and another girl walked into my heart too.  
we spoke about art, we joked about feet.  
we laughed about everything and eventually,  
my heartache turned to bellyache.

slowly, slowly.

at night, i felt most alone.  
i would reach out to him,  
and he'd already be there.  
i cried,  
and he wiped my tears.  
i pushed him away,  
but he pushed back harder.

slowly, slowly.

i began to feel full again.  
they filled my mind with stories,  
they filled my ears with song,  
they filled my heart with gratitude.

my mind thinks of sunrise, of renaissance paintings in the sky.  
i watched as their eyes reflected the sun,  
and little did they know,  
their hearts did too.

slowly, slowly.

my heartache is not completely cured. my mind is not completely peaceful.  
but, i don't mind.  
i know that my heart will always be alive. my mind will always race.  
i don't mind.  
i understand her now. i protect her now.

my heart.  
and slowly, slowly, i learn to find people who help me fill it.



## serpentine

Your eyes so evergreen  
my body shakes when you surround me  
your tongue so serpentine  
I'm begging you to drown me

my body shakes when you surround me  
fingers snake around my waist  
I'm begging you to drown me  
my skin has that sweet taste

fingers snake around my waist  
my blood drips down your chin  
my skin has that sweet taste  
the last I see, a crimson grin

my blood drips down your chin  
your eyes so evergreen  
the last I see, a crimson grin  
your tongue so serpentine.

# Blooming





on the line



## Spies of the sky



MEGGAN AMOUR | PHOTOGRAPHY

## Divine Imperfection



## The Rock

We can so easily forget that it  
Happened; the water and the fear were real.  
Yes, real, too, was the boat, the mast and keel  
Drawn from real trees. The men who used to sit  
Inside looked up--one cried "It is a ghost!"  
Doubtless, we think, we would have seen the truth.  
Yet have we changed so much from that uncouth  
One who stepped out and walked and sank, almost--  
Until the One who ne'er will be a ghost  
Drags Peter up from where he sinks below.  
Our tendency's to see it for—at most—  
Use as a parable, and let it go.  
But this was real, and something more--  
This symbol, not a metaphor.





KAYLA SMITH | DIGITAL ART

## Utterly Unremarkable



ART | SOPHIE BURNS

# You've Changed





SARAH ENGELS | PAINTING

## Provence Lavender Fields



PHOTOGRAPHY | HAILEY KADOLPH

# Dead Horse Point, UT





## The Divine Battle

The whole world to his back our captor waits,  
For he now feels the fear of death we know.  
He sees us pushing on his massive gates.  
He watches as the latches strain and bow.  
White cosmic wings unfurl as he takes flight,  
In fear of our swords, spears, our will, our heart,  
But none of us feel any bit of fright.  
Now arm in arm we will not stand apart.  
And from the sky he shoots his fiery breath,  
While arrows fly towards the holy beast,  
And though the crowd is burning right and left,  
He starts to fall and we know we're released.  
Because when hell is earth we will not stand  
To love the god who will not understand.

PHOTOGRAPHY | EMILY GUSTIN

# Duomo di Milano

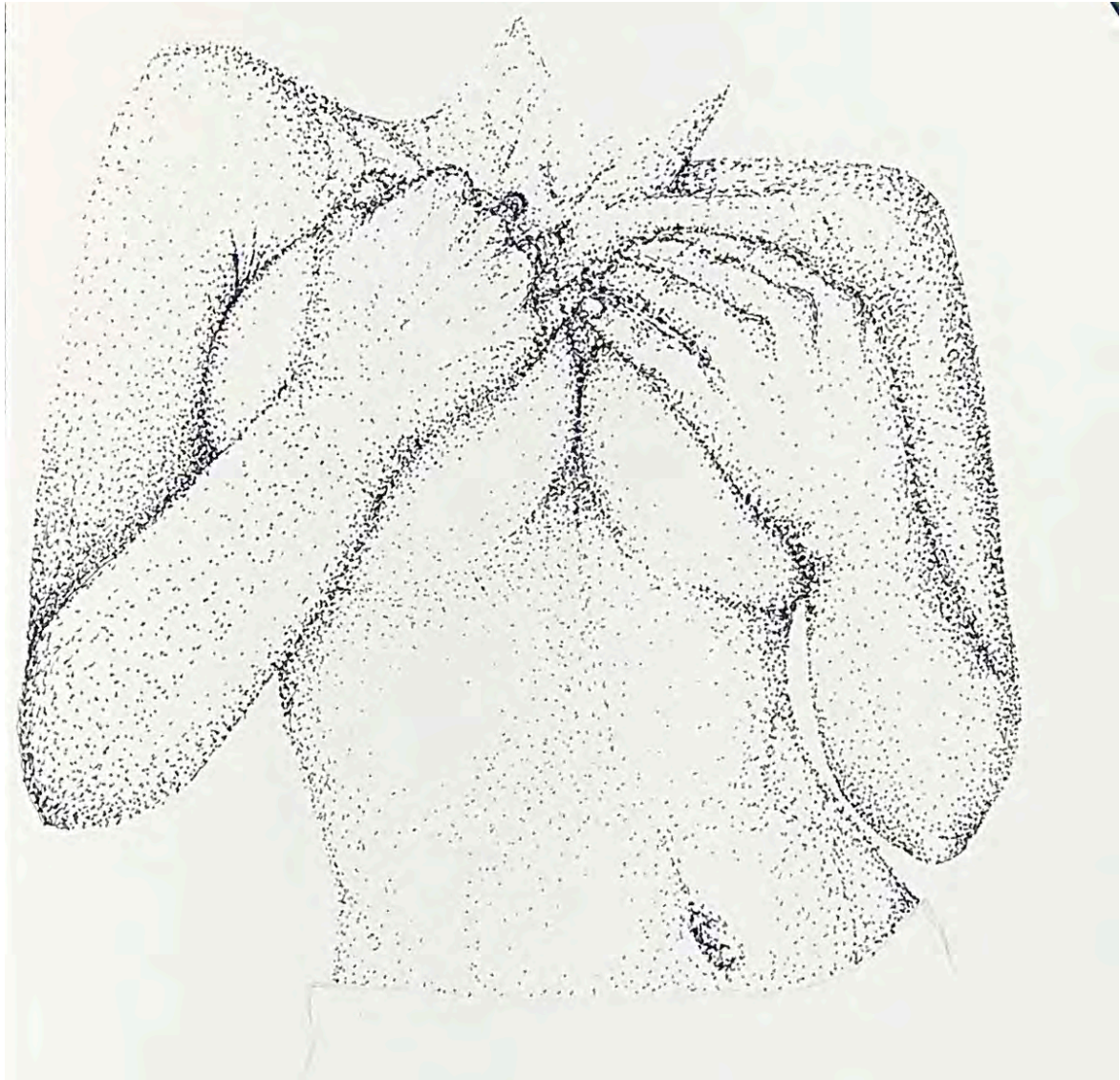


# Strength





self support





EMILY KUSEL | PHOTOGRAPHY

## Busy Bee



PHOTOGRAPHY | EMILY GUSTIN

## Unfamiliar Streets



## unforeseen reality

to live in a world where we vote for politicians who would rather see our sons rotting in jail cells or our daughters left without choice over their own bodies.

where the words of innocent black men hold no weight, resulting in cruel punishment and continuing the vicious cycle of persecution.

where ethnocentrism makes a grand appearance during holiday gatherings as it is deemed appropriate to use racial slurs or act as a race other than your own.

where if you are the majority, you are superior.

where places meant to protect us, places we call home, bind us to the control of those in power.

where it is better to build a taller wall than a longer table. where structural oppression is ubiquitous.

where hatred and ignorance are tolerated as long as there is sufficient reason.

where an entire system was built against those at the bottom, bent in the favor of the wealthy,

and yet we are too oblivious to see and too selfish to care.

where the most special of cultural celebrations and advancements are cut short, mocked, or protested.

where we discriminate to an extent that prohibits people to be who they wish, stripping them of happiness and individuality.

where what we believe supersedes any other opinion, as much to invalidate the ideologies of others.



where universally we must align with what is commonly accepted, and only then are we worthy of love.

where appearance is matched with laudability.

where a piece of paper is valued more than a human being and where in the same manner a life is equivalent to a sum of money.

where hearts are closed to the unfortunate and ears are muffled to the uneducated and the poor.

where privilege is determined by pigment of skin and features of the face.

where self interest rules over compassion.

*unforeseen reality*

where the loss of a possession is more devastating than the infestation of poverty that leaves bare rib cages and aching souls.

where the environment diminishes at the hand of our materialistic ways.

where blood flowing through the street is merely another topic on the nightly news.

where being Black or Brown is a crime and having melanin is a sin.

where speaking your native language is a nuisance.

where through judgment we put our own definition on the identity of others.

where if obtained, basic rights are denied and revoked.

where theory is composed through the understanding of solely one side.

where when redemption cannot be bought, there is often no second chance.

where the imposed debts of the colored will always be outstanding.

where patterns of injustice repeat. repeat again. then repeat once more.

where the status of society can be labeled in a single word.

blind.

EMILY KUSEL | PHOTOGRAPHY

## Iris Dew



PAINTING | KYLYNN SMITH

# The Fountain



## Blonde

Poor golden-haired child, birthed  
from a store bought bottle, defined  
by synthetic confidence. Irresponsible  
of you to build yourself on an unsteady

foundation, falling victim to dark-rooted  
insecurity after only a handful of weeks.  
You find no solace in the ever-darkening,  
natural pigment gifted to you. The assigned

descriptions of dishwater and dirty  
leave you unsettled, seeking colorant.  
Familiar chemicals return to seep deep  
into your brain, meant to convince you

that a tangled cat's cradle of dead cells  
can indeed be a defense, can distract  
from stained pink cheeks and weighed  
down eyes. But after the water strips

away the dye, there is panic. The color  
isn't quite right, the texture too brittle.  
Maybe you've finally undone the thing  
proven to keep you safe. Coming days

and showers allow for an acceptance  
of sorts. Now begins the unconscious  
navigation of a sea of inevitable knots,  
as if nothing has changed. Never

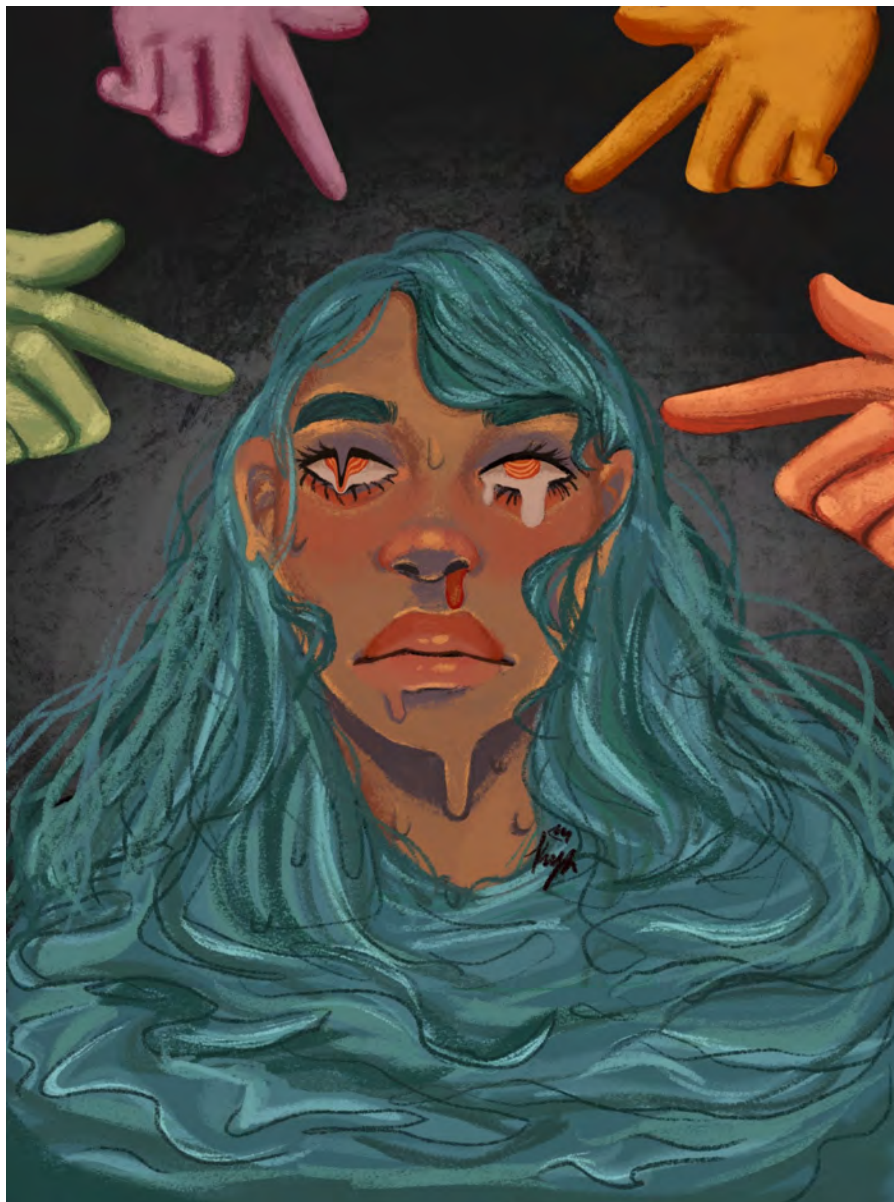
happy with how it sits, forever  
readjusting. Tying it up for the sake  
of focus lifts the weight of security off  
your shoulders and leaves you to revel

in the new discomfort of a forsaken  
barrier. You've begun to leave pieces  
of yourself behind, unintentionally.  
Abandoned strands left strung on sofa

cushions, lost to carpet, and collected  
in discarded sweaters. Perhaps beloved,  
bottled camouflage and always unceasing  
fingers are to blame for the steady decay.



# Shame



G SANDMIRE | MIXED MEDIA

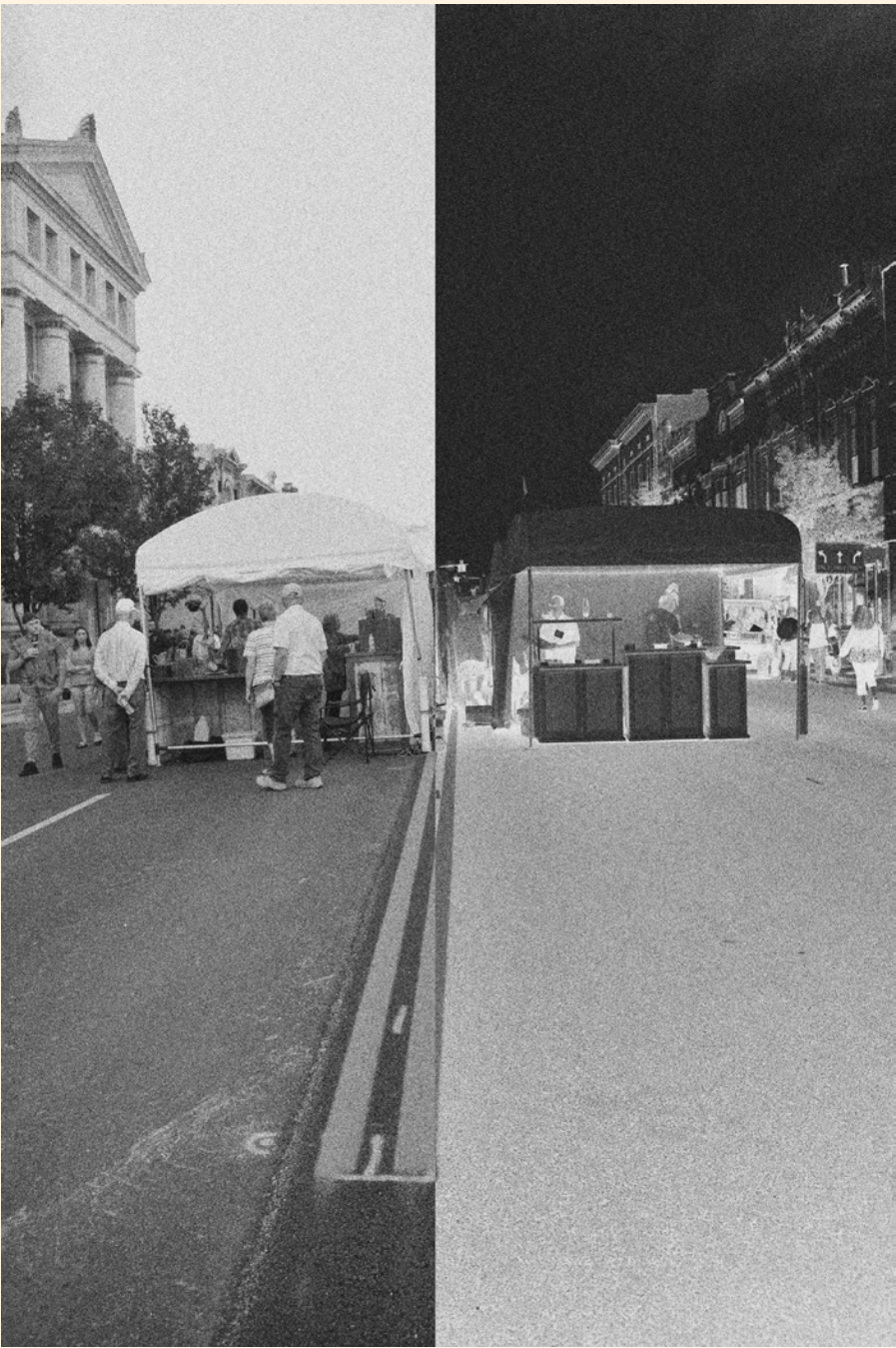
## Two Sided





ART | MAIAH DEOGRACIAS

# The Streets We Used to Roam



# contributor bios

MEGGAN AMOUR is a senior Psychology major who enjoys hiking and engaging with nature. Meggan's passion of photography is highlighted through the concept of stillness. Meggan enjoys capturing the intentional moments and experiences that the typical passerby would miss out on.

ANNA BEDALOV is a senior Creative Writing and Humanities double major, minoring in Journalism, looking to create an oasis in the middle of the forest.

HANNAH BHAKTA is a freshman biochemistry major from Knoxville, Tennessee. In her free time, she loves to create art, figure skate, and practice yoga. One day, she hopes to earn a PhD and research cancer treatments.

GRACE BIERMANN is a senior (!) English and Humanities double major, hopefully with a Classics minor, from Valparaiso, Indiana. When she isn't drowning in homework (seriously, send help), she enjoys reading, writing, watching movies and "Parks and Recreation," cooking, drinking tea, and playing with her dog. She would like to take this opportunity to thank her family and friends, especially her amazing sister, Hope, for everything they do for her, and also to remind all of you to stay home as much as you can and wear a mask when you can't. Soli Deo Gloria.

HOPE BIERMANN is a freshman history major from many places, but mostly Valpo. She enjoys books, music, movies, spending time with her family and friends, and being in the Chapel of the Resurrection.

TIM BIMLER is an astronomy and secondary education student. He enjoys hiking, disc golf, and photography. His focus is inciting a feeling of Zen through photography.

BRIANNA BORIK is a junior English major with minors in Chinese and creative writing. Throughout her life, Bri has been passionate about writing and drawing because of its therapeutic benefits. She believes that expressing emotions can be rather difficult, but the improvements she has made in her craft has helped her feel empowered and confident in her voice.



SOPHIE BURNS is a junior studio art major who enjoys making art and writing creative fiction. Many of her pieces are visual representations of mental states. She currently experiments with many different mediums such as graphite, acrylic, ink, photography, and oils. Find more of her work @brink\_of\_reality on Instagram.

MAIAH DEOGRACIAS is a freshman art and communication double major. She enjoys playing music, going on hikes, and traveling.

SARAH ENGELS is a junior psychology major who enjoys movies and hiking. Over quarantine she began painting and has really enjoyed learning more about it!

MIRANDA ENGHOLM believes that getting lost is the best way to find something. She is passionate about cultivating empathy, asking questions, baking bread, capturing memories, and dancing-- especially in the rain.

LEAH GATCHEL is a junior creative writing major with a tesol and professional writing double minor at Valpo. Run to the rescue with love and peace will follow.

LEXI GAULT is a senior astronomy and math double major who feels most alive when it's 55 degrees outside and she just spent \$5 on an iced mocha.

EMILY GRAVES is a freshman history major who enjoys drawing and painting. Her greatest achievement as an artist was displaying her art in a solo exhibition located inside her parents' bathroom.

TYLA GROSS is a sophomore political science major and sociology minor who enjoys writing and dancing. An aspiration of hers is to use her voice (whether through writing, occupation, etc.) to advocate and represent others who may not be able to do so themselves.

EMILY GUSTIN is a senior digital media arts major with a communications minor, and she has been a part of The Lighter Selection Committee since 2017. She loves documenting her life through photography and sharing these experiences with others. She hopes that you enjoy this issue of The Lighter!

# contributor bios

GWYNETH HOEKSEMA is a senior English and Political Science double major who is on a constant quest to watch the featured film Kill Bill. She has seen the first fifteen minutes of the movie five times but always seems to get interrupted before she can watch the rest of the film.

ANTHONY HORN is a senior creative writing major, focusing on poetry and fiction.

HAILEY KADOLPH is a junior studio art major. She loves to use her art, singing and clothing to express herself. The inner machinations of her mind are an enigma.

EMILY KUSEL is a sophomore art major who enjoys the outdoors.

CHRISTOPHER MALON is a junior mechanical engineering major who enjoys taking photos as a hobby and is always looking to practice, learn new techniques and improve.

KATIE RIETHMEIER is a senior actuarial science major with a creative writing minor. She loves to write both poetry and prose in her free time, and hopes to one day become a screenwriter. She is from Rochester, NY, and has two dogs whom she adores.

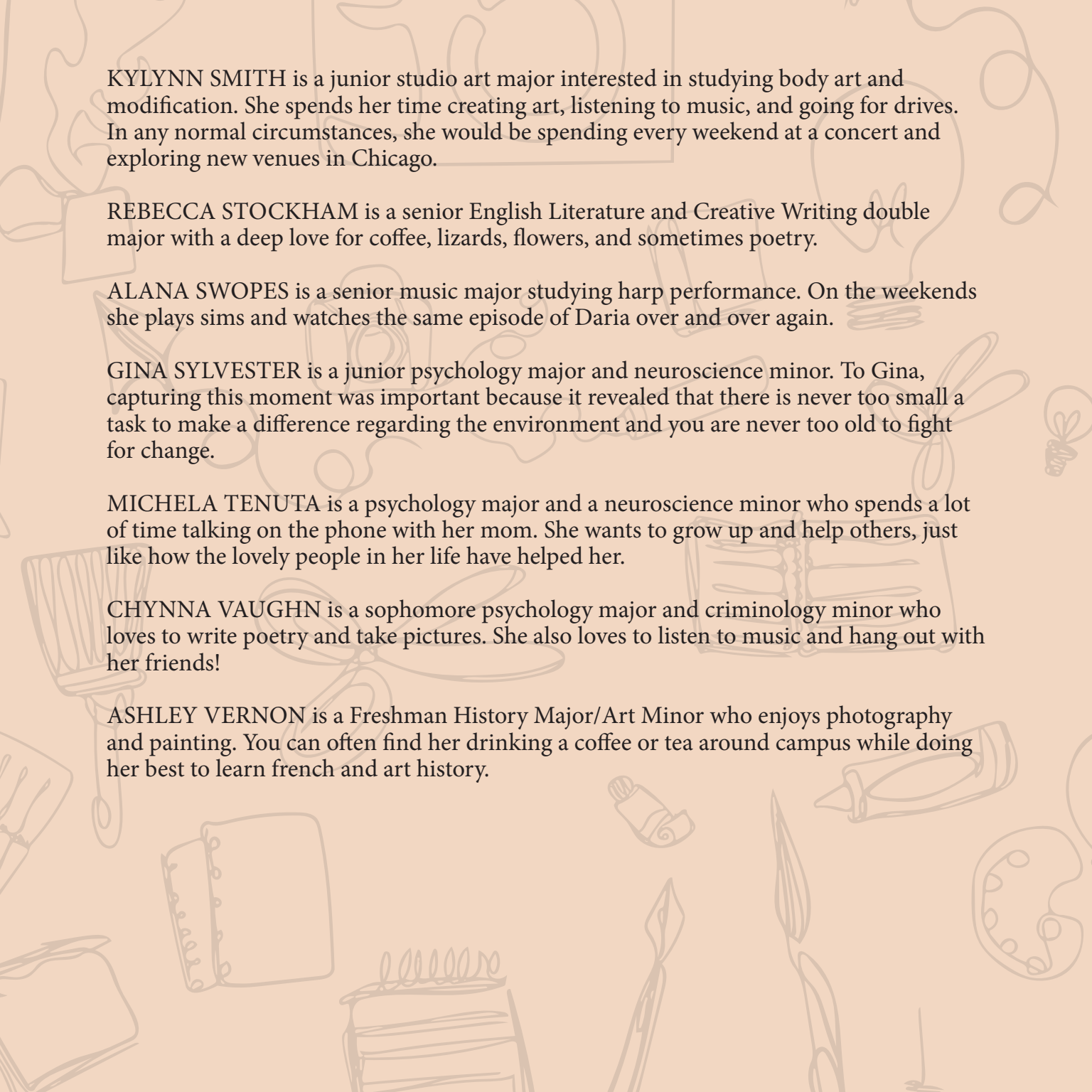
LEE SANCHEZ is a junior psychology and professional writing major. They are also one of the assistant editors of The Lighter.

G SANDMIRE is a junior computer science major who enjoys photography, embroidery, and spending time at the beach looking at rocks and swimming.

SABRINA SEARCY is a junior biology and art double major who likes to write, draw, and spend time outdoors. She is from Westfield, Indiana.

CECELIA SIEFER is a new Art major that just wants national parks, a bus, and art.

KAYLA SMITH is a sophomore art major. In her free time, she tries to manifest breaking the simulation.



KYLYNN SMITH is a junior studio art major interested in studying body art and modification. She spends her time creating art, listening to music, and going for drives. In any normal circumstances, she would be spending every weekend at a concert and exploring new venues in Chicago.

REBECCA STOCKHAM is a senior English Literature and Creative Writing double major with a deep love for coffee, lizards, flowers, and sometimes poetry.

ALANA SWOPES is a senior music major studying harp performance. On the weekends she plays sims and watches the same episode of Daria over and over again.

GINA SYLVESTER is a junior psychology major and neuroscience minor. To Gina, capturing this moment was important because it revealed that there is never too small a task to make a difference regarding the environment and you are never too old to fight for change.

MICHELA TENUTA is a psychology major and a neuroscience minor who spends a lot of time talking on the phone with her mom. She wants to grow up and help others, just like how the lovely people in her life have helped her.

CHYNNA VAUGHN is a sophomore psychology major and criminology minor who loves to write poetry and take pictures. She also loves to listen to music and hang out with her friends!

ASHLEY VERNON is a Freshman History Major/Art Minor who enjoys photography and painting. You can often find her drinking a coffee or tea around campus while doing her best to learn french and art history.



# acknowledgements

Never before have I quite understood the phrase “it takes a village to raise a child” until thinking about all of the amazing individuals who made this book possible. Without their help, I surely wouldn’t have been able to create this issue or even keep my own head on straight. So, for this issue and my sanity, I thank them all.

I’d like to start by thanking *The Lighter’s* executive board: Lee, Michela, Anna, Lexi, and Kayla. I knew from the moment this team was assembled that we would do great things. I cannot thank you all enough for sticking with me as I attempted to figure out how to run this magazine and for going above and beyond in all the work you’ve done.

Thank you to our Selection Committee for creating great and respectful discussion around all of these pieces and for powering through some very long meetings towards the end of the submission period.

Thank you to Brandon Aude and our printer, Gilson Graphics, for helping us bring our ideas to life and for working with this untraditional semester’s timeline.

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Thank you to Haley Brewer, *The Lighter's* previous EIC, who did a wonderful job preparing me for this role and who was more than happy to answer any questions I had.

Thank you to everyone who submitted to *The Lighter* this semester. It's because of all of you that making a full book was even possible, so thank you for sharing your art.

And finally, thank you to our wonderful audience! Anyone who picks up a copy, submits their work, flips through an issue in their free time, or follows us on social media (@valpolighter, shameless plug) — we're so grateful to share all of this amazing work with you and we hope you'll continue to support *The Lighter*!

# THE LIGHTER