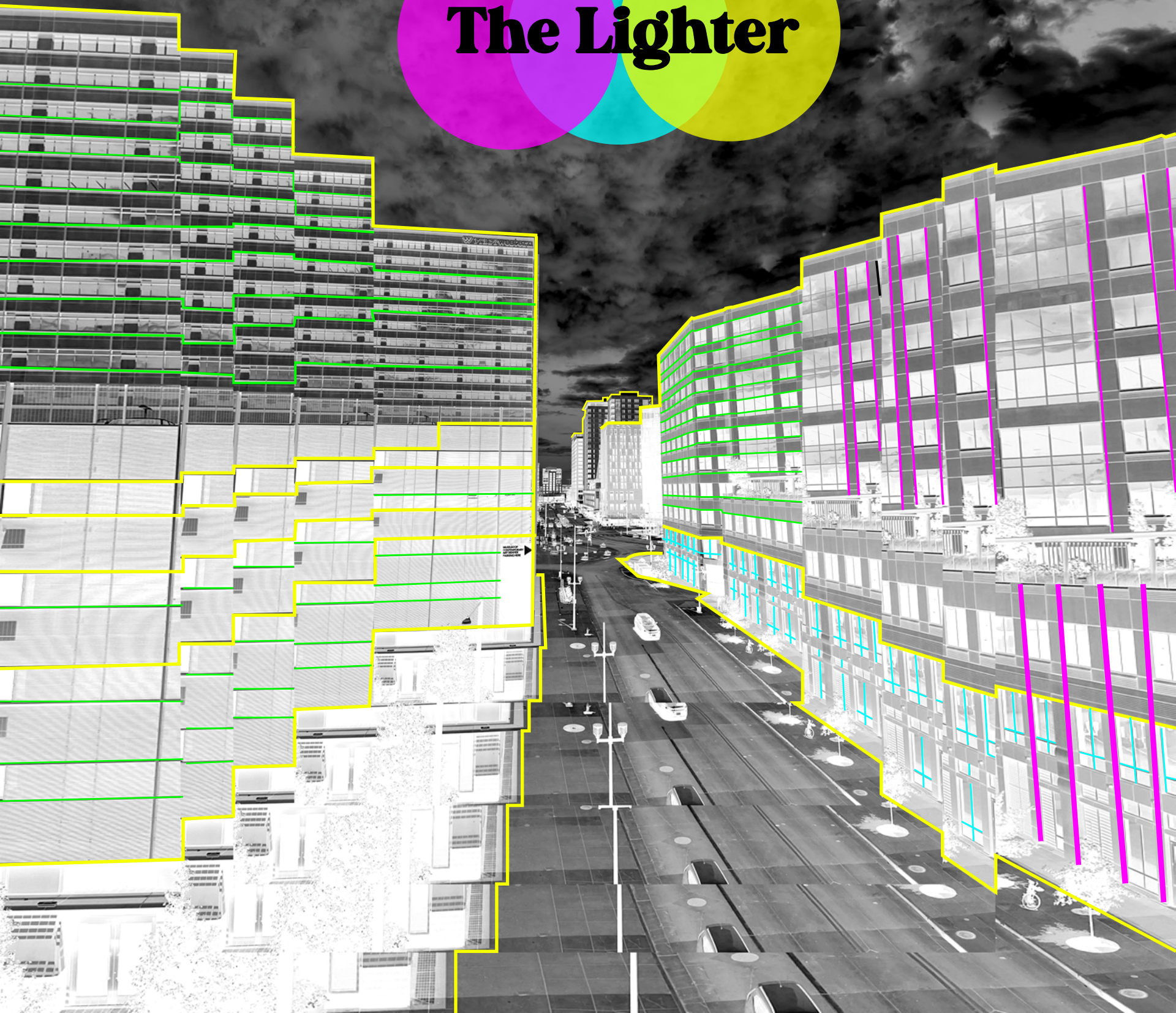


The Lighter



All submissions remain anonymous throughout the selection process. The Lighter welcomes submissions from all undergraduate, graduate, and law students of Valparaiso University, regardless of race, gender, religious creed, or sexual orientation. The Editor assumes responsibility for the contents of this publication. The views expressed in these works do not represent any official stance of Valparaiso University.

Volume 69

Issue 1

Editor's Note

It's interesting to think about what it means to be human. There are many philosophies about what humans are, and I won't speak for any of those. However, there is one thing I know for certain, a part of our humanity lies within our ability to create art. This past September, an AI was crowned the winner of an esteemed art competition, Art Prize. When I read about this I became so angry, a machine creating art and winning an award for it was seemingly unheard of. As an artist, I found myself feeling a sense of dread. However, my same sense of dread was felt by painters when cameras were invented, yet the artists still paint and the world still spins. I was sulking with a professor about this story and she told an anecdote and asked me, "would I pay to see a robot dance?" I told her 'no because there would be no life in the performance, you wouldn't get the facial expressions, the emotions, the tiny errors, the dancer making the dance their own.' I realized the humanity of art, we add parts to ourselves to our work.

A part of humanity is the creation of “things”: a dance, a food, a building, a poem, a painting, we create so many wonderful things. Within these things lies a glimpse of our humanity. Within this volume of The Lighter, gaze into the minds of our contributors of “Hot Showers” and “Younger Me”. A lot can be taken in with pieces like “Horace Mann School” and “An Lár”. I hope that you read The Lighter and find humanity from within it and yourself. You are a human who has created something, and it is as much a part of you as you let it be. I hope that even if you feel that you are not a creative person, you have created something and that thing is a part of what ties all of us together.

It is with great pride that I present to you The Lighter Volume 69 Issue 1, “Humanity”. I couldn’t have done it without my amazing team and our outstanding selection committee.

- Kayla Smith

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Cori Laatsch | Assistant Editor
Emily Graves | Assistant Editor
Maiah Deogracias | Graphic Designer

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Meet Humanity
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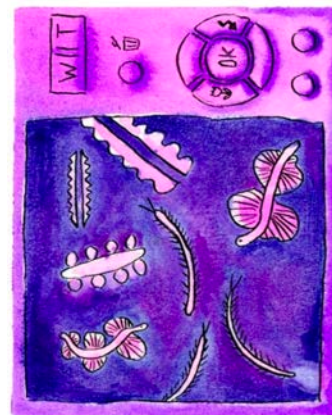
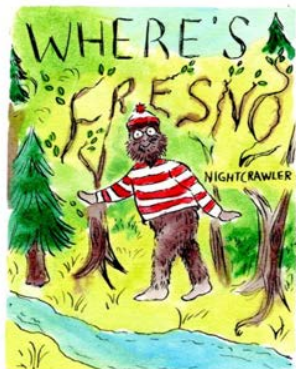
Gabrielle Unzicker | Photography

La Cueva Ventana in Arecibo, Puerto Rico



Emily Graves | Ink & Watercolor

Where's Fresno Nightcrawler?



Paige Cesnik | Acrylic & Collage You are so Loved



Ashley Vernon | Photography

How We Recognize the Spirit of Truth



Nathan Vargas | Watercolor

Mortality Salience



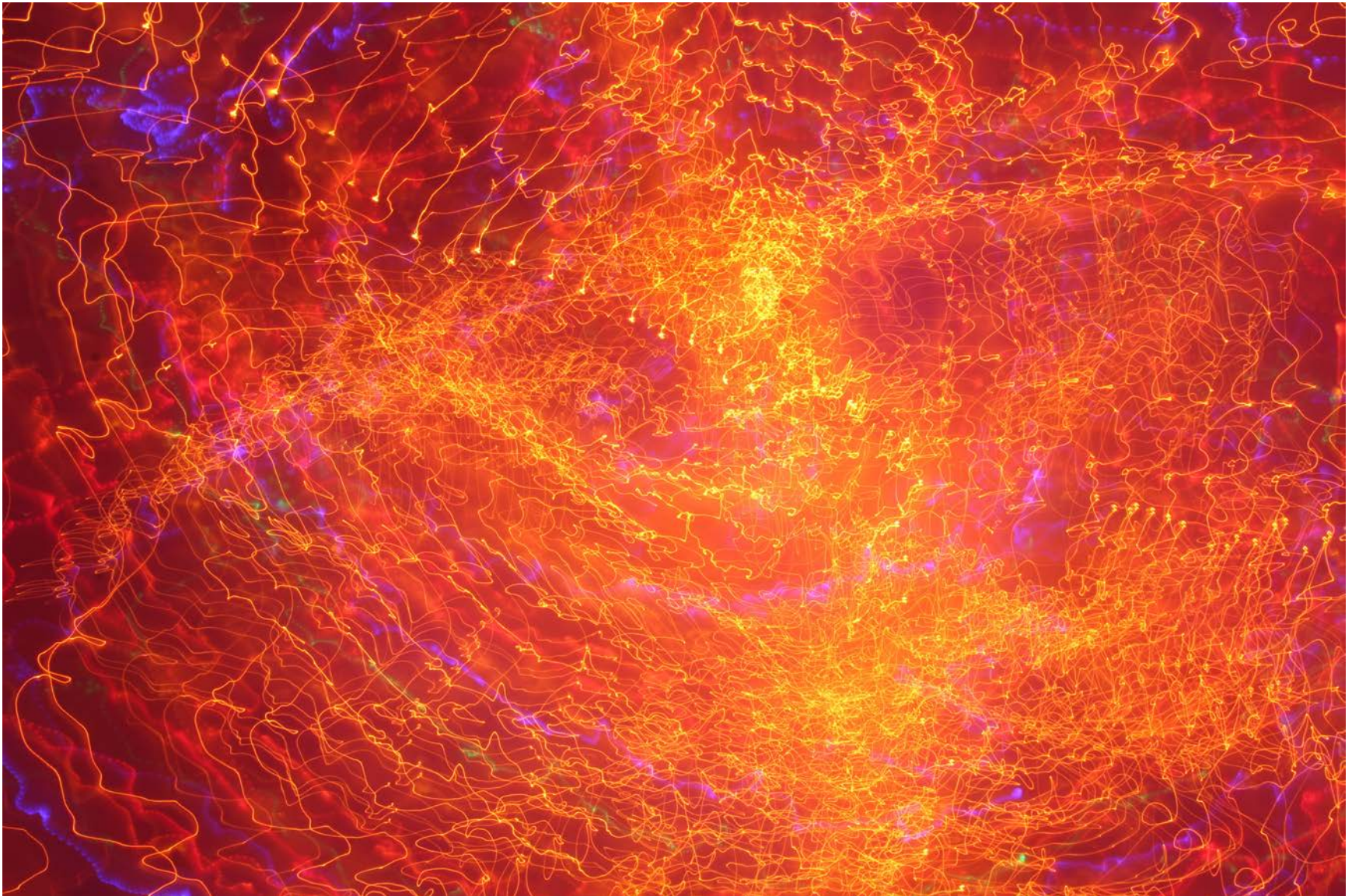
Kara VanHimbergen | Photography

Dice Hoard



Christopher Malon | Photography

Light Speed



Emily Graves | Ink

5 Brooches Under \$5

\$5
5 BROOCHES UNDER \$5



This beautiful pin features gold feathers and a deep purple stone. Buy it while out with friends.

A playful twist on the cameo captures a hummingbird in flight. Perfect as a Christmas gift from your best friend!



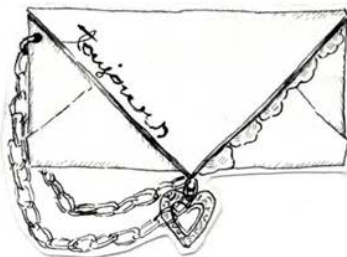
This lovely angel sits inside a pink heart. We think our grandma would love it!



A stunning Egyptian Revival pin featuring a floating teal scarab beetle. Likely from the 1930's, this antique store find will amaze your friends and family.



Fall in love with this blue and gold envelope with a gold heart. Inherited from your grandmother, this pin will "always" be a favorite in your collection.



Maiah Deogracias | Ink Spinny Chair



Malachi Smith | Photography

CRD



Philip Bolton | Photography
Radial Light

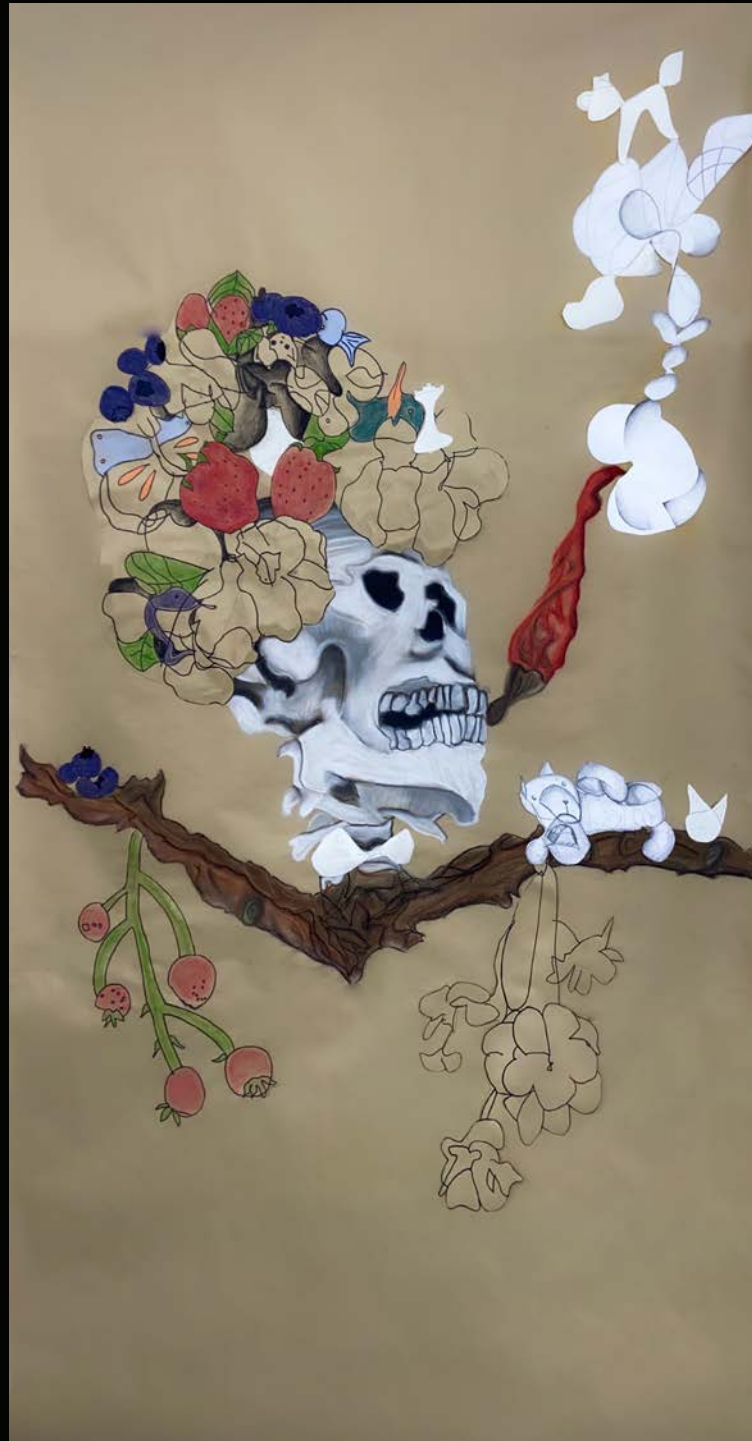


Kayla Smith | Collage

Freak



Feelin Surreal



Malachi Smith | Photography

S I D



Zion Gifford | Collage world's fair



Cassie Gortner | Poetry

Petra

All your life you have lived
On the bedrock of faith.
You are comfortable
Happy even.
Why do people assume discomfort?
You have lived
Welcomed by the bedrock
And those who build their homes there.
Now you defend your home
From those who see the bedrock
As sand or open air.
You understand.
It is hard to stand
When you cannot see
The ground beneath your feet.
Nevertheless, you are frustrated.
Why must you correct their misconceptions?
It is not your responsibility.
Oh child, you know why.
You so love the world
And wish to share the joy of your community.
Your love and empathy
Are both blessing and curse.
You remember —
All shall be well.

Emma Johnson | Poetry

rain

when the gold on the horizon
feels so small in the weight
of dark grey
hanging down over you,
look up,
look up darling
and see the rain drip
kisses on your face.
he has not abandoned you.
the sky may be dark,
but rain is sweet grace
in this desert of a place.

Brennen Kelly | Photography

Summertime Slipping Away

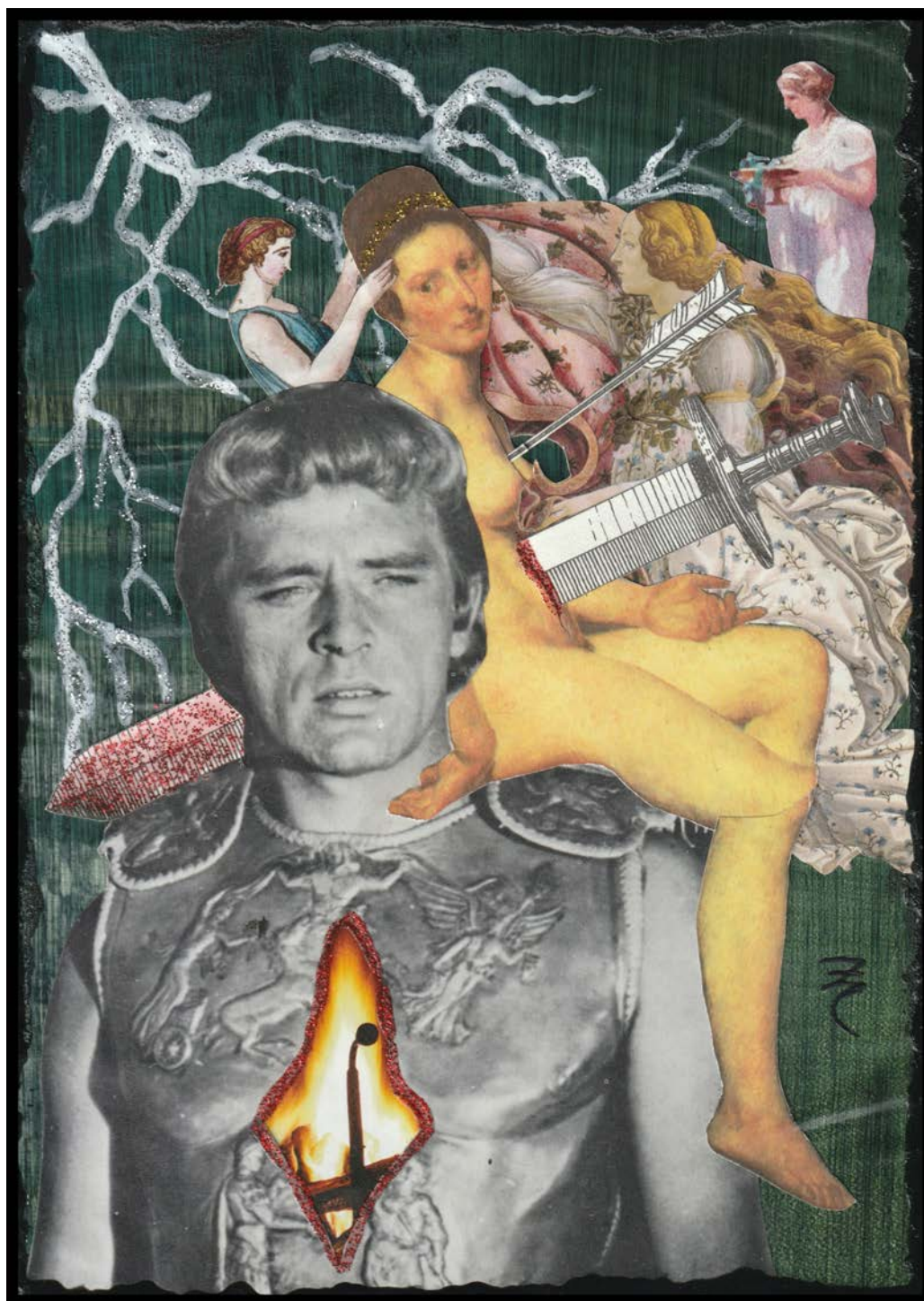


Erica Castillo | Illustration the holy area

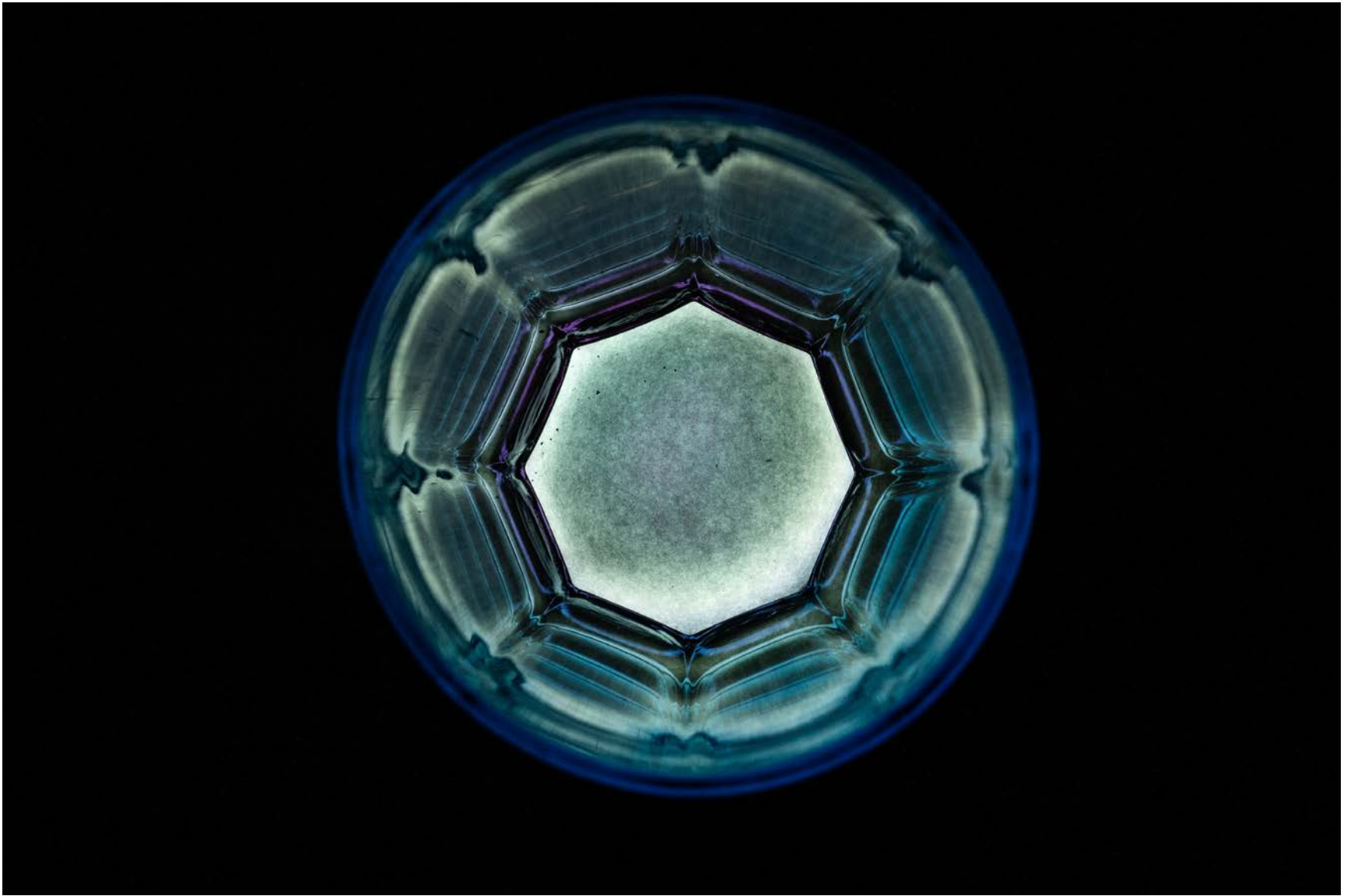


Zion Gifford | Collage

She Called It Marriage



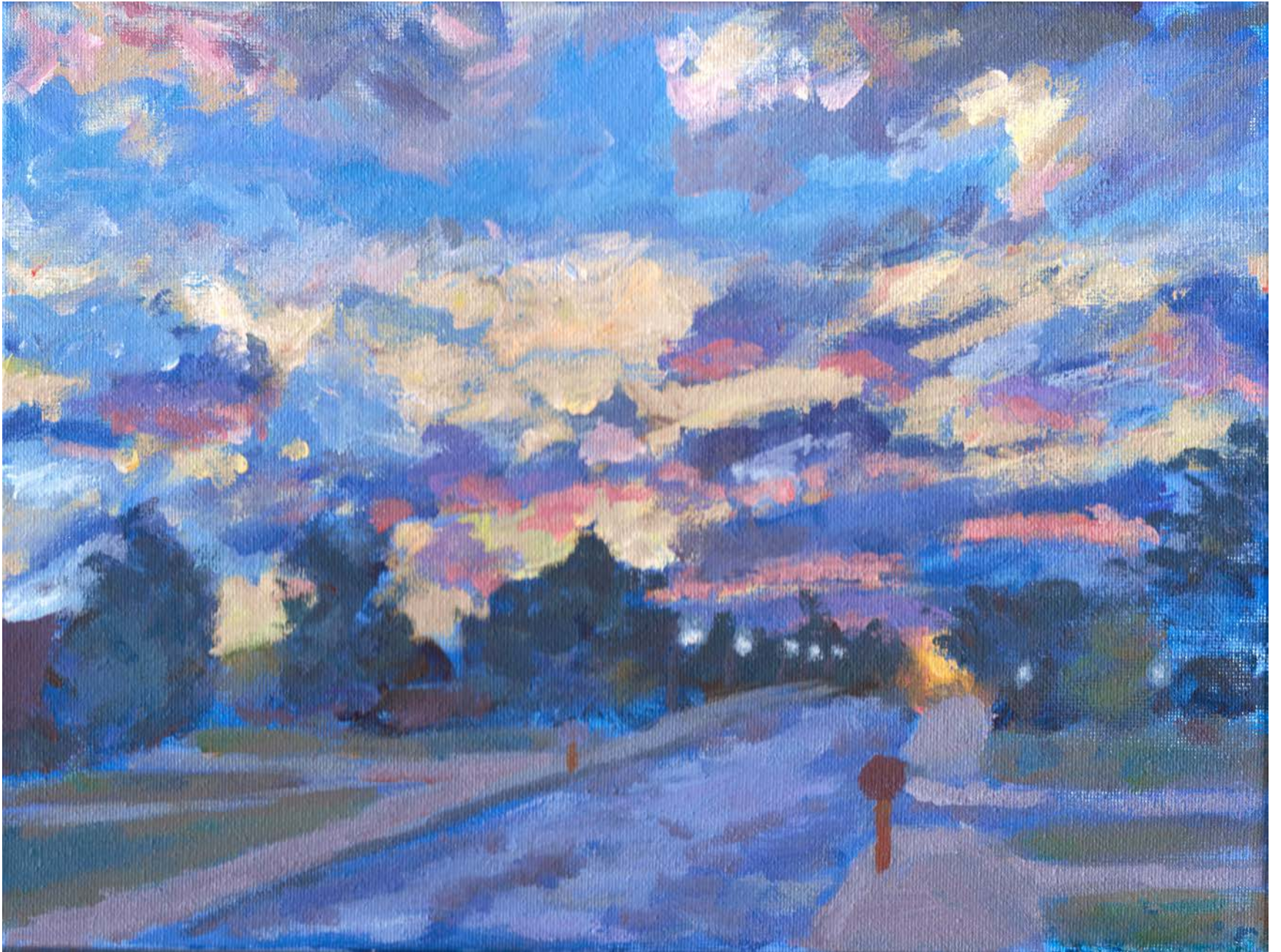
Philip Bolton | Photography
Sapphire Ripple



Paige Cesnik | Ink & Watercolor Riley



Kurt Metzger | Acrylic Painting Union St



Hannah Bhakta | Photography

An Lár



Hope Biermann | Photography Reverie



Lex Terzioski | Poetry

Vulnerability

Why are there so many love songs about the moon and the stars?
Is it because of their enticing beauty and their mysterious aura?
To pour your love to someone is the most vulnerable thing to do
To give them your all, your love and strength
To confine your time into a singular person
Just as the stars and moon do
As the moon sets, the stars begin to cry
They miss the moon as the morning sky begins to appear
The sun becoming the new person in their life
The change may be overwhelming, but this is something that occurs naturally in nature
The moon will always come back, but as different phases than the last
They will never recognize the stars the same again
The stars begin to lose that beautiful shine, they become meteors of heartbreak
As beautiful as the metaphor may seem, the stars become vulnerable to the moon
Giving their all, making sure they are the best and to the standards of what the moon longs for
Nothing will be enough for the moon, not even their twinkling shine you hear in nursery rhymes
Be the star that never loses its shine, not over the moon.

Amelia Maguire | Ink
The Abandoned Room



Micah Koppang | Poetry

You Don't Know You're Special-Not-Special

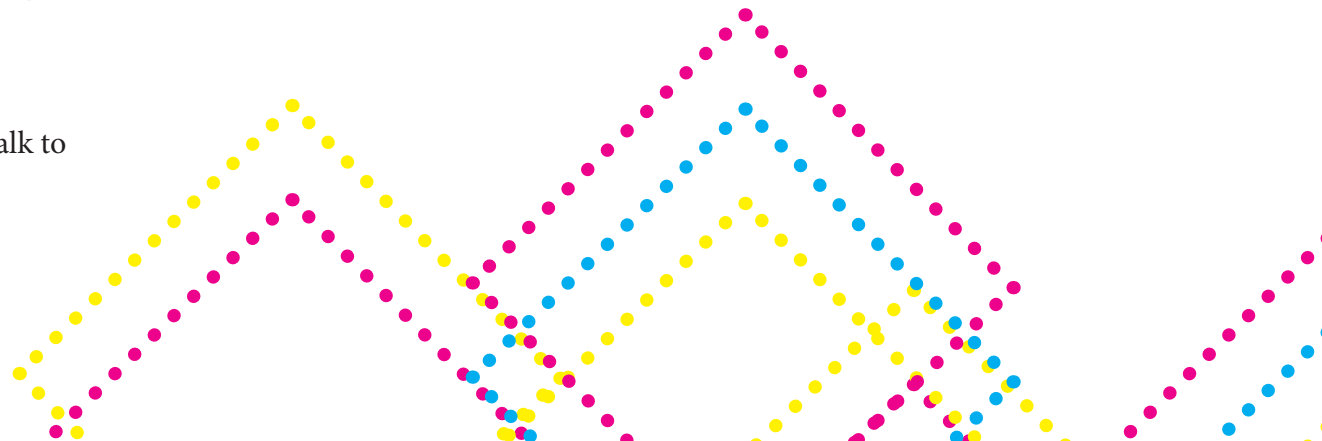
You arrive home from soccer practice
(The one your parents forced you into because you're seven)
And your mom chastises you
For forgetting to ask your friends about themselves
Back on the car ride home
You didn't mean to
You just forgot

You get lectured by your cousin
(The one you never see)
About Expanding Your Diet
Because you can't just eat pizza and pasta
And she talks to you like you're a small, stupid child
Refusing the peas your mom puts on your plate
Even though you're eleven
And she's using that baby talk voice
Reserved for puppies and the Special kids
And you nod along
Pretending you care what she says so she'll stop talking
Because it's not like you want to be a picky eater
Most foods out there
Just
Suck

You're just starting high school
And really excited that you're in a class
Filled with mostly Students Older Than You
Which is nice
Because most students your age just think
You're the Weird Kid To Avoid
And you start working on your own
Until a few Students ask to join you
And you're happy to have someone to talk to
They ask about your weekend
Smiling and nodding like an owner

Watching their puppy show them a cool stick
As you explain your joy about the Weird Fun Thing you like
And they respond happily
Using that slightly pitched up voice
Reserved for the Special students
And you don't even realize the way they acted
Was like interacting with you
Was their Good Deed of the Day
For being around the Special kid
Until you're no longer in that class
And start to wonder if you are the Special kid

You do some research
And beg your mom to get you tested
Because you think you might have Autism
She's hesitant but eventually finds a neuropsych
And after eight hours of Testing and Interviews
Across several sessions
You find out you have
Autism-Not-Autism
Because you don't meet the exact diagnostic criteria
And there's this newly-identified disorder
That fits better
That used to be Autism
But it's not



It feels weird going back to school
Your senior year
Knowing you have Autism-Not-Autism
How do you even explain that to people
When even your therapist had never heard of your diagnosis
And then you start to notice it
And feel awkward that you never knew before
That you're Special-Not-Special
Because you can't quite call yourself autistic
But you have almost the same thing
And people sometimes treat you like you're Special
Deserving of pity
But other times you're just Weird
Deserving of stares

Because you never knew proper social etiquette
You couldn't get yourself to try new foods
Even though you wanted to
You never quite fit into others' friend groups
And were just included so they didn't feel bad
That you were sitting by yourself
You went through laborious testing
Just to be told maybe
That you fit in some weird gray area
Of dealing with almost all the struggles
But not having the explanation
Of really being Special
And uncomfortably explaining yourself
And your weird diagnosis
When you didn't understand what someone meant
And finally comprehending that you
You
Were the problem in your friendships
Your stupid disorder
Was the reason they fell apart

You get ready for college
Nervous that you'll once again be
Special or Weird

But you assure yourself

I'm not stupid
I know when you talk down to me
I'm not a child complaining about peas on my plate
I have sensory issues because of the chemistry in my
brain
I'm not a puppy showing you a stick
I'm a person responding to a question
I'm not your Good Deed of the Day
I'm someone working by myself
I'm not always going to understand your social cues
I try my best anyway
I don't have Autism
I have Social Communication Disorder (you can look it
up yourself in the DSM-5)
And I'm not Special.

Emily Graves | Ink & Watercolor Graves Quarterly Cover



Julia Sullivan | Poetry

Younger Me

If I could revisit my younger days,
The times when the world was small,
When all that we knew was in our minds
We'd play house, and sing, and best of all,
As I'd lay down to fall asleep each night
My sister'd enchant me with tales of deceit,
Of us, the damsels in distress
And our brave prince charmings' incredible
feats,

If I could go see my childhood home,
Before it was left abandoned and waste,
I'd roll down the hills and and run to the woods,
And watch the deer wander with no hint of
haste.
I'd swing on the swings that helped me to fly,
Ride my bike down the road that taught me to
heal,
And thank the small stone in the cul de sac
For all the wonderful stories that it revealed.
I'd watch my brother and his kid best friend
Fight invisible monsters with invisible swords,
Innocent and fearless, before reality hit
And the invisible weapons became our words.

If I could advise my younger self,
I'd tell her that it is okay to let go,
To see her mistakes as mistakes, and not failures,
And to realize there's freedom in yielding con-
trol.
I'd tell her she doesn't need to prove herself
To herself or to any else.
I'd show her her value is not dependent
On all of the standards the media spells.
If I had the chance to change younger me,
I'd tell her to not let anxiety win over
I'd tell her she doesn't need to be perfect
That her parents would never judge her.

Though I've matured I still often get lost
In the lies of this broken society.
When chaos is breaking I just want to go back
To the quiet of my childhood street,
To just sit on the hill, and picture myself
In the world of younger me.

Amoreena Roll | Photography

Horace Mann School



Lex Terzioski | Poetry

Unknown

Why do the most beautiful flowers bloom in a land of deceit?

Why do bluebirds sing the most beautiful songs even though the world has turned gruesome?

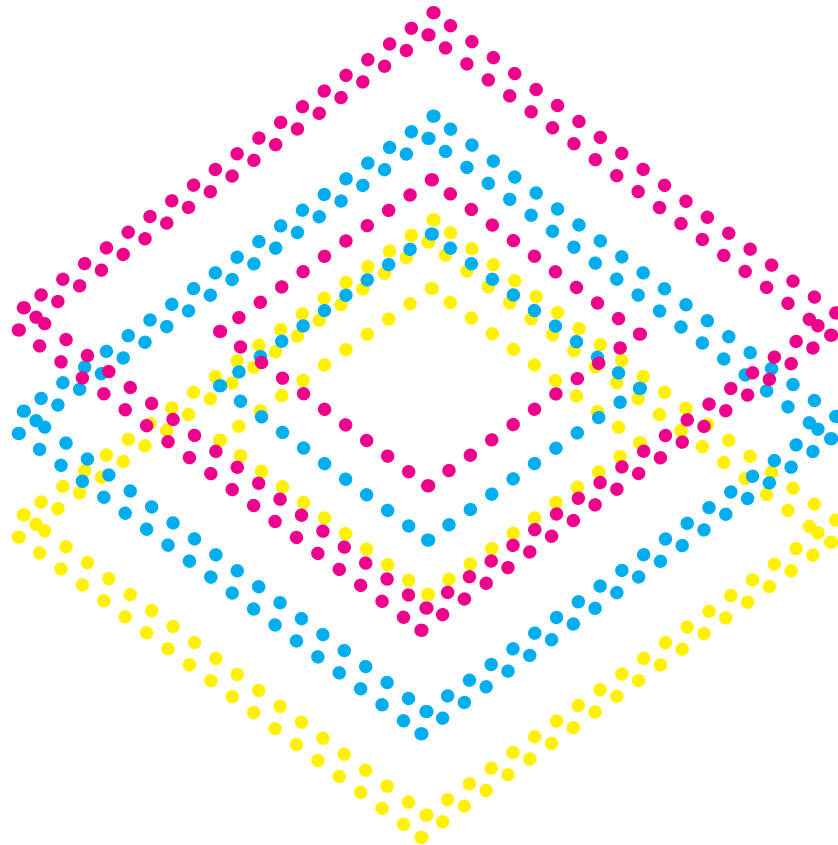
Why do we frolic in flower fields knowing the world is coming to its end from how much we've killed it?

Mother Earth cries in agony whilst we all sing a happy little tune

She is ignored and brushed aside as if nothing is wrong with her

No matter how loud her cries of pain are, her children will always ignore them

Until the unknown of her pain becomes known to earth.



INTERVIEW:

Prof. Sarah Jantzi

Kayla: So my first question for you is introduce yourself. Tell me about yourself. Who is Sarah Jantzi?

Sarah: Okay. Um, I'll start with my background. Mm-hmm. I have a Bachelor of Arts in medical illustration from Indiana University, a Master in fine Arts and MFA in painting from American University.

Sarah: So I started off, uh, being much more interested in illustration and specifically like scientific and anatomical illustration. As an undergrad I shifted away from that as soon as I graduated and realized that I didn't want to rely so heavily on computers. I really enjoy doing things by hand. So as an artist, I think that's probably one of the first most fundamental questions is like, do you like doing things on the computer or do you like doing things with your hands? And some artists, both. And I'm primarily just by hand. So my painting MFA, I kind of grew up in the school of thought of working from one's perceptions and meaning, like heavily on observation, but also in how you observe something. So a lot of my work early on was primarily from life, from figure, and landscape and still life. And, I did my thesis mostly in charcoal and stood outside with a big drawing board and did a lot of really large scale landscape drawings.

Sarah: After graduate school, I taught some classes out in Maryland and watered some plants out in Washington, DC. Basically stumbled upon the idea that I wanted to be a college professor and it kind of grew out of, I think, my love of observing the world and wanting to teach people the skills that I had, to be able to put down your vision.

Sarah: After teaching out east for a few years, I found that I was ready for a full-time job. I was teaching about four or five different places, and I wanted to settle down a little bit and have health insurance, you know. Yeah. It's always a good thing. <laugh>.

Kayla: How long has art been your thing? How long have you considered yourself an artist?

Sarah: I mean, there's small moments in my childhood that I remember really clearly being shown that moment where you like, 'Oh yeah, a tree doesn't look like a cloud, there's more to it than that.' Like, my dad was probably the first one to show me how to draw a tree and just like how to observe how the trunk is the biggest part and then it splits and then it becomes smaller and smaller as you go out. Like, just like those kinds of things really fascinated me. I think probably in junior high is when I started to take private lessons and started to pick up on a lot of things pretty fast. By the time I got to high school I kind of had outgrown my lessons and my high school teacher helped me with quite a bit.

Sarah: From there I could draw what I could see, you know, like that was my thing. As I grew older, drawing what I see became more figuring out how I see and then it became kind of about the mind's eye, and more what's inside of me rather than what I'm observing outside.

Kayla: You kind of got bored of like what you could see and try to investigate what, what we're using and why you were saying it?

Sarah: Honestly, I got tired of having to draw outside <laugh> Yeah. Or bringing still lives in you know. I just really wanted to paint and draw. So, um, I remember this moment; when I got here at Valpo I was still drawing and painting from observation for quite a few

years after that, but then I volunteered to do a mural with a few of my students over at the Alzheimer's, and of course I had to work for memory for that and I realized at that point that I actually had quite a bit in my memory. It was really enjoyable to just draw more freely. And then I also really started to absorb some of the craziness of surrealism. Chicago has got a very different art scene than the East Coast. The East Coast is more kind of abstract expressionist based and much more about form and the way that shapes, rhythms, and space can kind of interplay. It's rooted in surrealism and about taking ideas from your unconscious mind. I've been influenced by that quite a bit too.

Kayla: So what does art mean to you? And I have this question that I ponder a lot. Is art a part of you? Do you consider art to be a part of you or is art a separate entity that you do? So is it a part of you or is it something that you make?

Sarah: I don't, I don't agree that it's the thing that I make. I think art is a way of helping me find out more about me. It's kind of like, um, it's a way of thinking for me, it's a way of understanding my world and either whether that's external or internal. I think when I'm at my best as an artist, I am working on better understanding something. I don't necessarily like to assert my own ideas. I like my ideas to come to me through the process. I don't necessarily think of them as ideas more so as extensions of me.

Kayla: I feel like the term art makes people like nervous to say like, well, this is part of me. I feel like as human beings, we all kind of create things but artists decide they're artists or people decide it's art when it's meeting some standard. But I feel like there's so much art in the world that goes unrecognized.

Kayla: Moving forward: What do you think of the new generation of artists? What do you like? What do you see that's worrying? What do you think about the art that is being made now? And you work with so many young and budding artists, so you're seeing a lot of people come in and out of these doors.

Sarah: Yeah. Yeah. I feel like I need to address my students separately, because I think that I think more highly of my students sometimes, and I think of some of the stuff going on right now.

Sarah: I don't know, I'm an art snob, I probably always will be.

One of the things that I have grown with here at Valpo is just, I think my students teach me a lot about like, different ways of seeing the world. And so the more that I talk to them, the more I can kind of understand where they're coming from. I think there's a lot of exciting things going on right now in the art world. And I think that there's a lot of stuff going on in my students lives.

I tend to not like the stuff that's made to sell. And that's not to say that everything that's for sale is bad. But it's, I sort of feel like there's too much of an emphasis on gimmick, like beauty even or something; you know, like, what is beautiful? That's such a huge question. But I don't know, I just feel like the work needs to be grounded into things in order for me to kind of make a connection to it. And that is, first and foremost, it needs to be grounded in the artists way of living and the artist lives and your personal philosophy. If it's just about the way it looks on the surface it feels empty.

Sarah: And I also feel like it needs to be grounded in sort of an understanding of the visual languages that have come. And that's not to say that everybody that's naive makes bad art, but I feel like that's something that, like I can spot an artist that hasn't been looking at art. I feel like I can kind of see just that sort of lack of language being pushed or played with. I love the variety of stuff that's happening. I love that, you know, even within my tradition of painting and drawing, there's so many different materials out there right now that are solving problems that I had as a student.

Sarah: Now, when I'm talking about my students, I think that everybody has the capacity to be a good artist. I think that, but it does take some time to get to know what that looks like for each person. I think, especially in the West, we're kind of into this idea of searching for the individual through art. I really believe that everybody has sort of an interesting point of view. And it's just a matter of finding the right materials and putting in the time and making that connection to yourself.

Kayla: So I talked a lot about humanity in this book. And I feel like the first time I really saw our campus really come together was when the art psych building, unfortunately burned. It was just a horrifying experience that during the seniors like big day, they had like this, this horrifying moment happen. But I feel that even through a lot of loss, there was something gained. And there was this deep appreciation for a space that we kind of took for granted at points, like we were like, 'oh, it's old, it's not at its best,' but it was still something that was loved. And I wanted someone who spent a lot of time in that building to speak on it.

Sarah: I think they felt a lot like the students, on one level, we were off to the side of campus and kind of isolated and the building was old. But I also, and I've heard students say this too, especially after many years of making work in there, that the building had kind of a--it was scruffy, but it was also a warm place. A lot happened in those walls.

I wasn't quite sure. I think it took me a long time to realize the impact of what we were losing. Like, in some ways it felt just a building and good riddance, you know, 'gee, I wonder where they're gonna put us,' these, thoughts of like, well, it was an old building. And then there were also like these moments where memories and struggle and triumphs and conversations and artwork, these little ghosts would come and like, tapped me on the shoulder. It just felt like it had its own memories and its own personality.

Sarah: I don't want to overdramatize that. I think that it can be really easily overdramatized.

Sarah: The thing that really struck me the most was how much it affected other people. Yeah, I mean, I figured I had been working in that building for 18 years and spent a lot of time in that building. And it was my studio and it was a place where I worked and you know, it's the place where I solved all my creative problems.

It's interesting how much people supported us, the students, myself, and the other professors. And I was really amazed actually. Because I don't, you know, being on the edge of campus and being in a small department, I don't necessarily, I didn't feel that support. Not that people were neglecting me, but just, you know, you don't realize how much of a part of a community you are until something like this happens. And then it didn't, it made me feel like I was finally part of that community in a way.

Kayla: It was a moment where people kind of rally together to be like ‘we are here and we’re seeing what you’re going through and we’re acknowledging this loss with you.’ And I think that was the most heartwarming experience I’ve had on this campus. To see how we came together to be like, ‘it’s gonna be okay, we’re going to be okay, and the art lives on. Even the things burned down in this building, we are all still here, and we can all grow and create from this.’

Sarah: I feel like even, you know, even the works that were lost, that my students lost, I think about like, yeah, but you, you went through all this stuff you made all these discoveries that were really the value of the piece. The work was an artifact for, you know, the culture that happened in that work.

Kayla: I feel like as long as we are alive, we can create new pieces of history. And we don’t forget the things that we lost. But we acknowledge that they were lost, and we use those memories to make something more beautiful. And it’s really hard to think about years and years of work. But we’re still breathing and kicking today. So we’re gonna make one more day’s worth of work. Yeah, and I think kind of touching on that community aspect, and really needing to be interwoven together, is what makes us makes us human. It shows our humanity and the goodness within all people. So even when we have these tragic moments, we come back really hard and ready to go. Ready to create anew.

Kayla: I think my last thing for you is, what do you think is important for a future reader or a future artist to know or hear?

Sarah: I think when it comes to the creative process, I think you got to like--I wish that I knew when I was younger, that the work doesn’t have to be perfect. Yeah, I wish I’d have made more work with less fear. And I think that that can carry through with non-artists as well, like you said, we all create. We all are in some way or another creating, and I think that you gotta forgive yourself for being human and also just embrace the things that you feel compelled to do.

Zion Gifford | Collage Bide, lady, Bide



Kae Eberhart | Poetry "fancy" sandwich meat

Erasure of "Mystery Fish" by Aesop Rock

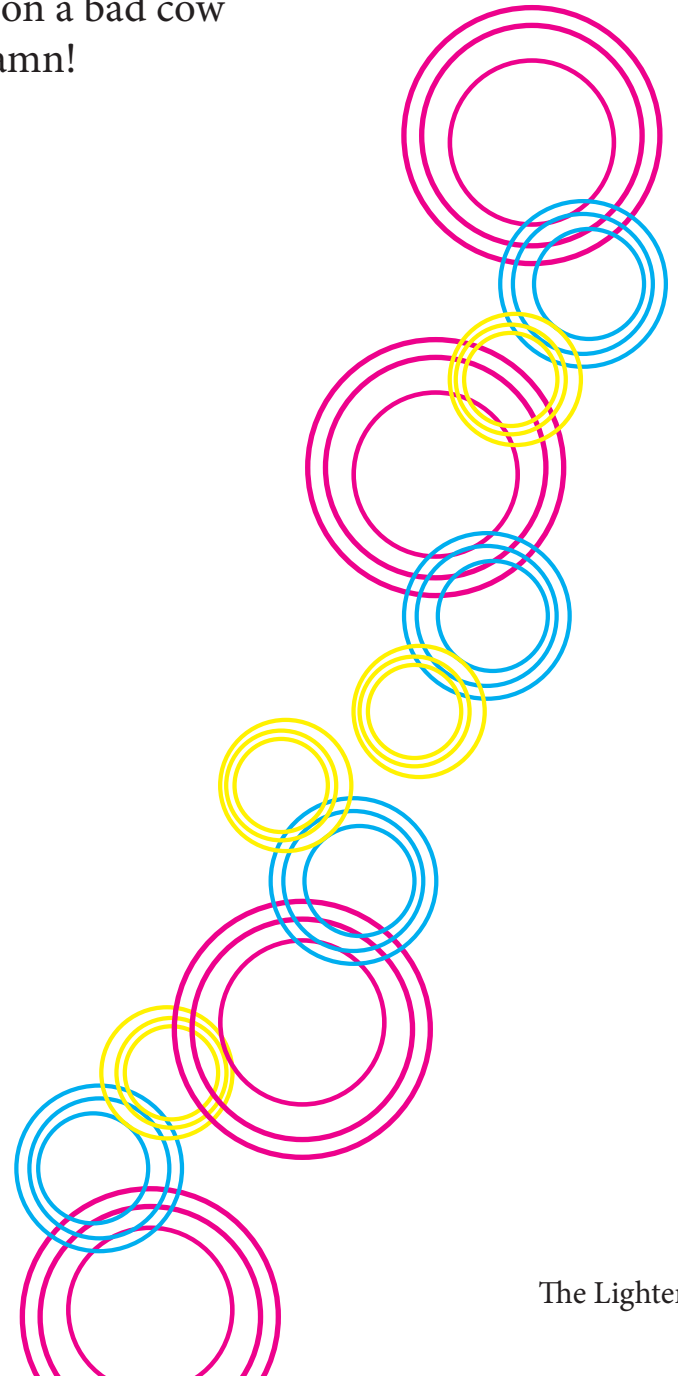
four corners get shorn
in a warehouse
dairy curdles on sale
a pale cow
chewin' his tail
losing his coat
hacking up H1N1 and then some

good knife
smells like a pipe
cellophane turns it into
some fancy sandwich meat
eat the cut, fried bacteria
try it with soft sourdough

from the crypt
a rib, don't question it
close your eyes
lick your lips
order two at the cafe,
Say "fuck the pigs!"
eat the cats and dogs

hairy dairy
gross fortune

breadcrumbs, income
two tongue soups
a cold meal of ghost animals
a deal on a bad cow
god damn!



Christopher Malon | Photography

Sky Racecar



Kae Eberhart | Poetry

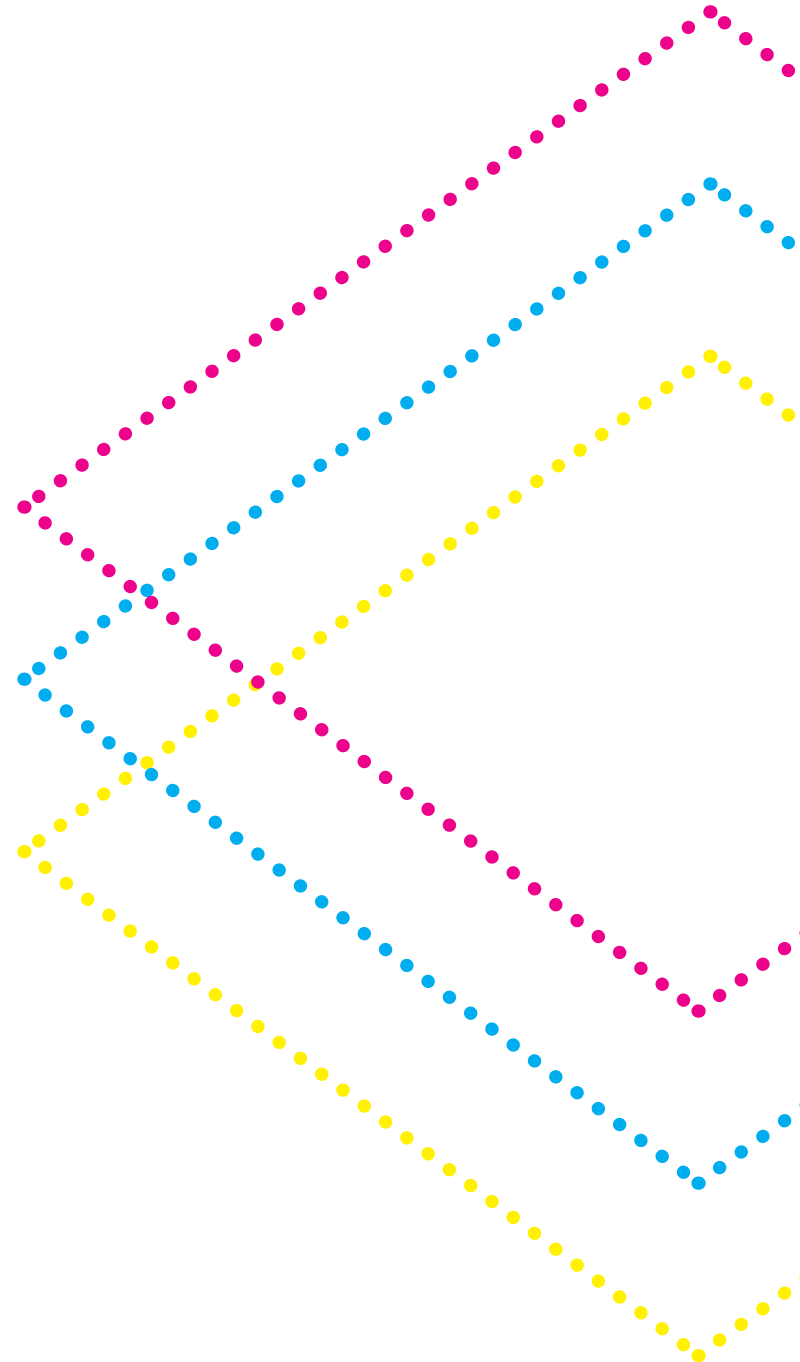
RADIOACTIVE, SOUND, SPACE

There was a man with a bass
Whose jam band often went to space,
Psychedelic jams inspired by jazz, reggae, and rock,
Their intense fuzz and feedback topped
The meters of the soundboard.

The man with the bass
Bombed the audience
With loud, low, resonant notes—
L e g a t o

Nuclear stretches across the sea of people,
Swaying and swaying, hearts beating with the sound.
Those bombs kept coming relentless and people found
Peace, joy, and happiness.

Everyone in that nuclear space
Doin' that Rag, Shakin' on Shakedown Street,
It was known throughout the place
That no one could compete in nuclear space
Better than the man with the bass.



Erica Castillo | Poetry

Hot Showers

I've always liked hot showers.
I've never really known why.

Maybe it's because hot showers are supposed to be relaxing
They are said to relieve tension.
But if all the tension is at my smile lines,
Then how am I not supposed to drown in the water from the faucet?

Maybe it's for the general reason we shower:
To get clean.
To rub the sudsy soap all over the pieces of my body
I wish I had never given away.
Yes, make them clean again.
Not that I've felt clean,
Not in a long time
Scrub.
Scrub.
Scrub a dub dub dub.
Get clean in the tub.

Maybe it has something to do with my childhood.
When my parents would argue,
I would sit the bathroom
in that hot, hot shower
For hours and hours
Until I heard the silence,
and it was safe to come out again.

Maybe it's because when I find myself in the hot water,
I am allowed to see my porcelain skin become beat red.
And I become painfully aware of every single scar on my body,
A reminder of every point I felt like giving up.
I was able to survive,
Even if it was through the only way I knew how.

Although these are all reasonable reasons to like hot showers
I don't think this is why I do.
Yet,
I seem to find myself taking them more and more lately.

I've always liked hot showers
I never really know why.

Emily Fletcher | Poetry

Lily

Your mutilated figure bleeds out on the floor as I watch on, words stifled,
subdued and succumbing to the suffocating conviction that I
am helpless.

Lethal injections pulse through my veins, but
they poison you instead. You are its captive, and I
the executioner, using my own demise to your pitiful bitter end.

His eyes are not yours, and I pity you for it. His eyes are not yours,
and you hate me for it, now that you notice our gaze, yearning intensified as we pass
the hallway where I first betrayed you.

His eyes were yours, until I plundered his heart, leaving yours

This was never meant to offend you.

But now you look at me in frigid animosity, scarred and bloodied by my hands,
hands that were unaware they ever held a weapon.

Why is love so lethal,
destructive euphoria gone amiss?

Why did I love you less than him?
forsaken.

Zion Gifford | Collage

Boast While You Can



Malachi Smith | Photography
S T U N



Maiah Deogracias | Photography

Orchard Eclipses



Nick Davis | Photography With Thyself



Daniel Owens | Poetry

The Tree

The pavement trembles
-First time in years-
Since we conquered the land
Subdued all its tears

Yet the ground keeps on shaking
And we cannot tell why
We glued plate tectonics
And encased the whole sky

We paved over forests-No more fires that way-
Even printed our food
-So it's sourced ethically-

So why's the ground shaking?
And why won't it stop?
All nature's now human
Follows our wishes, our clock
The news has an update!
But that cannot be true
No green has been seen
Since back when birds flew

Forty layers of steel
Now cover the ground
So how could a "tree"
peak its filthy head around?

The ground keeps on shaking
I see three! Maybe four!
More "trees" keep on growing
One's popped up in my floor!
The news has an update
The ocean's burst free
How dare it fight man?
Can't it see we're happy?

I don't understand
With how hard we've tried
To tie down this "nature"
Undaunted, it survives

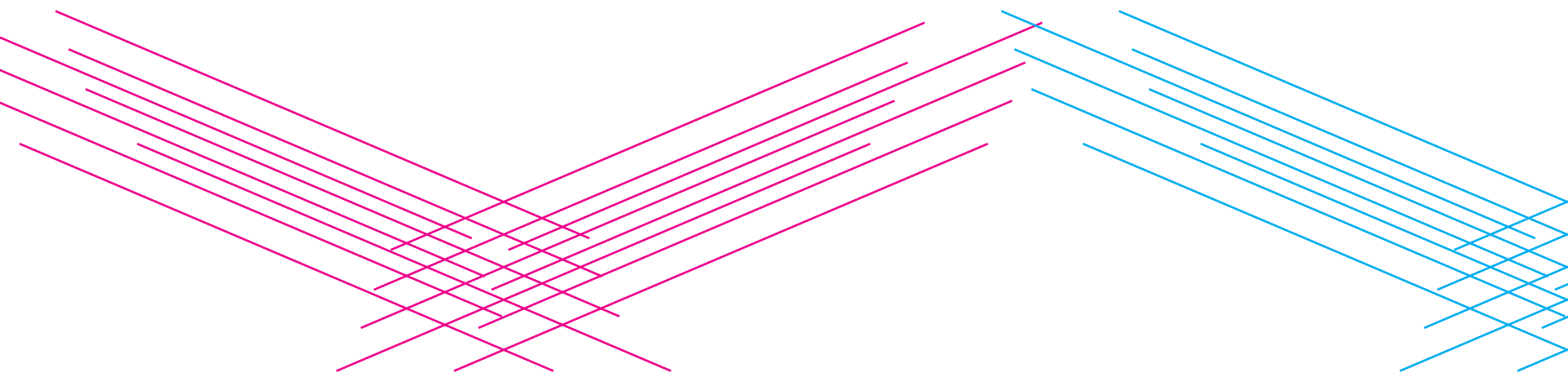
Hope Biermann | Photography
Vanishing Point



Kae Eberhart | Haiku

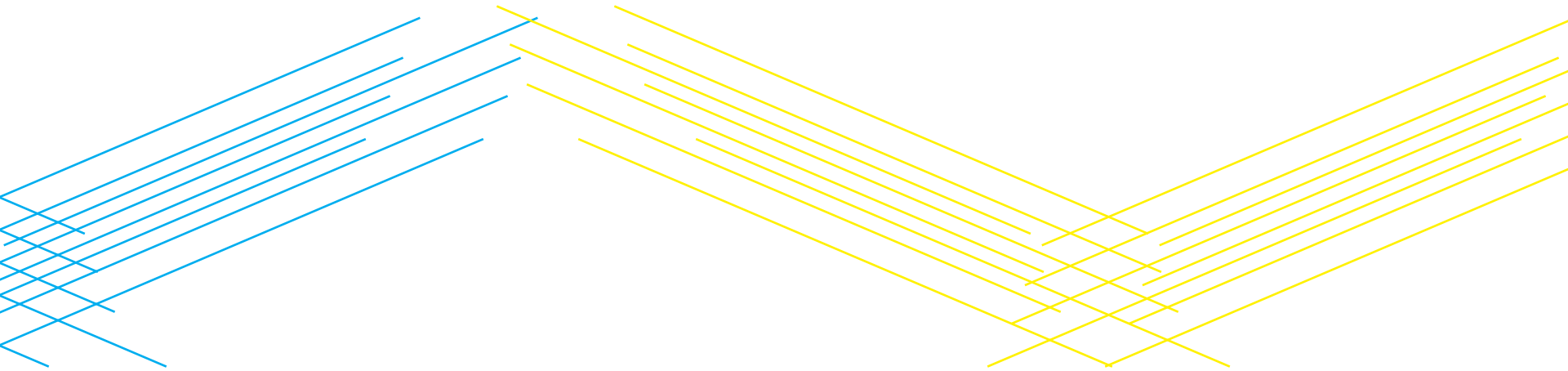
pro-life?

i love animals
when they're seasoned just right—
life is so precious



Emma Johnson | Poetry stars

the stars
so far apart,
we wouldn't know
if a star would
go dark
for perhaps
thousands of years,
so we're living
in the past,
surrounded by the past,
but look how
life goes on,
look how
it lasts



Gabrielle Unzicker | Photography

Rosy Ring



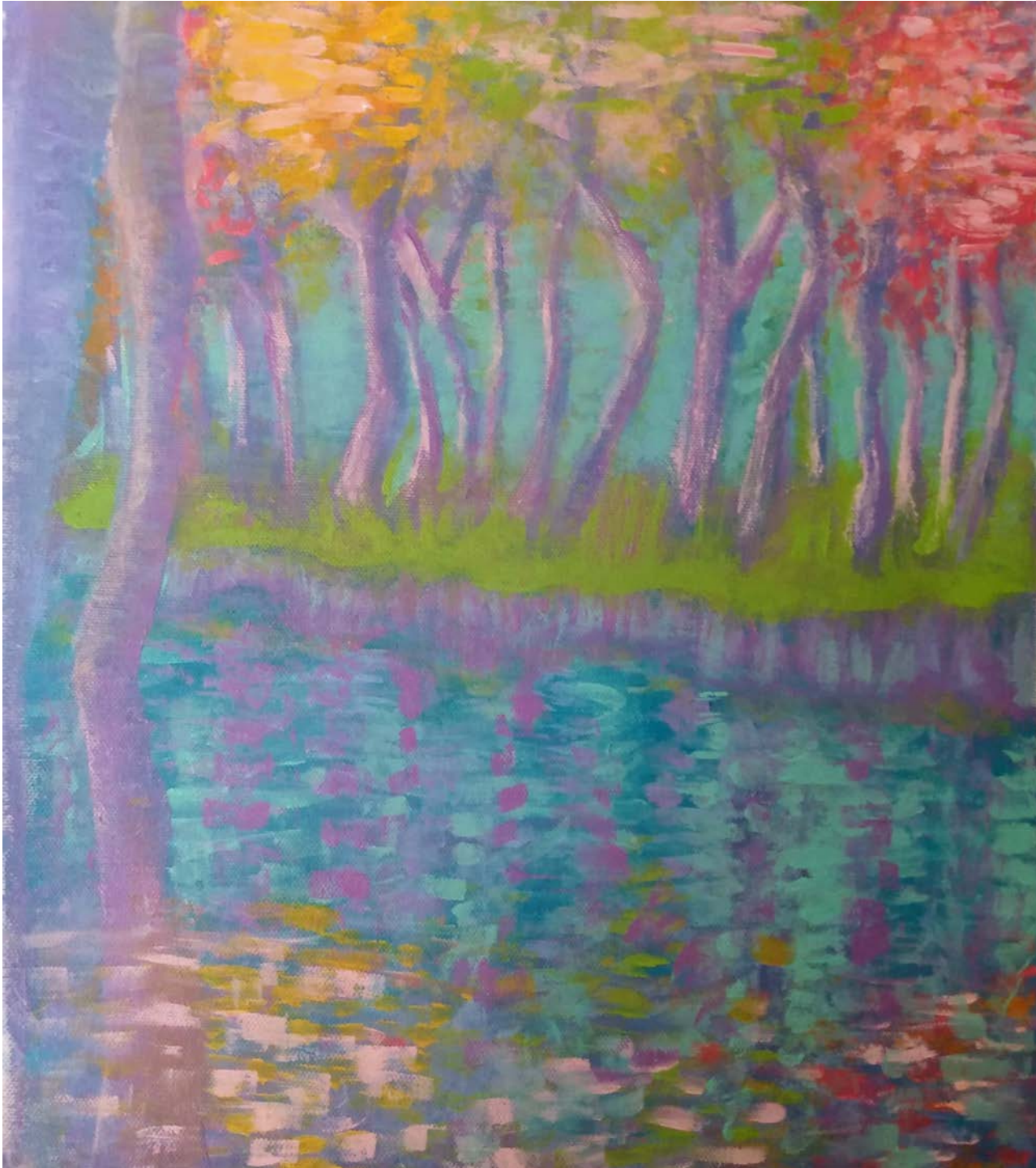
Kayla Smith | Digital Art
OUT OF TIME



Kurt Metzger | Acrylic Painting Chicago



Amelia Maguire | Acrylic Painting Wonderland



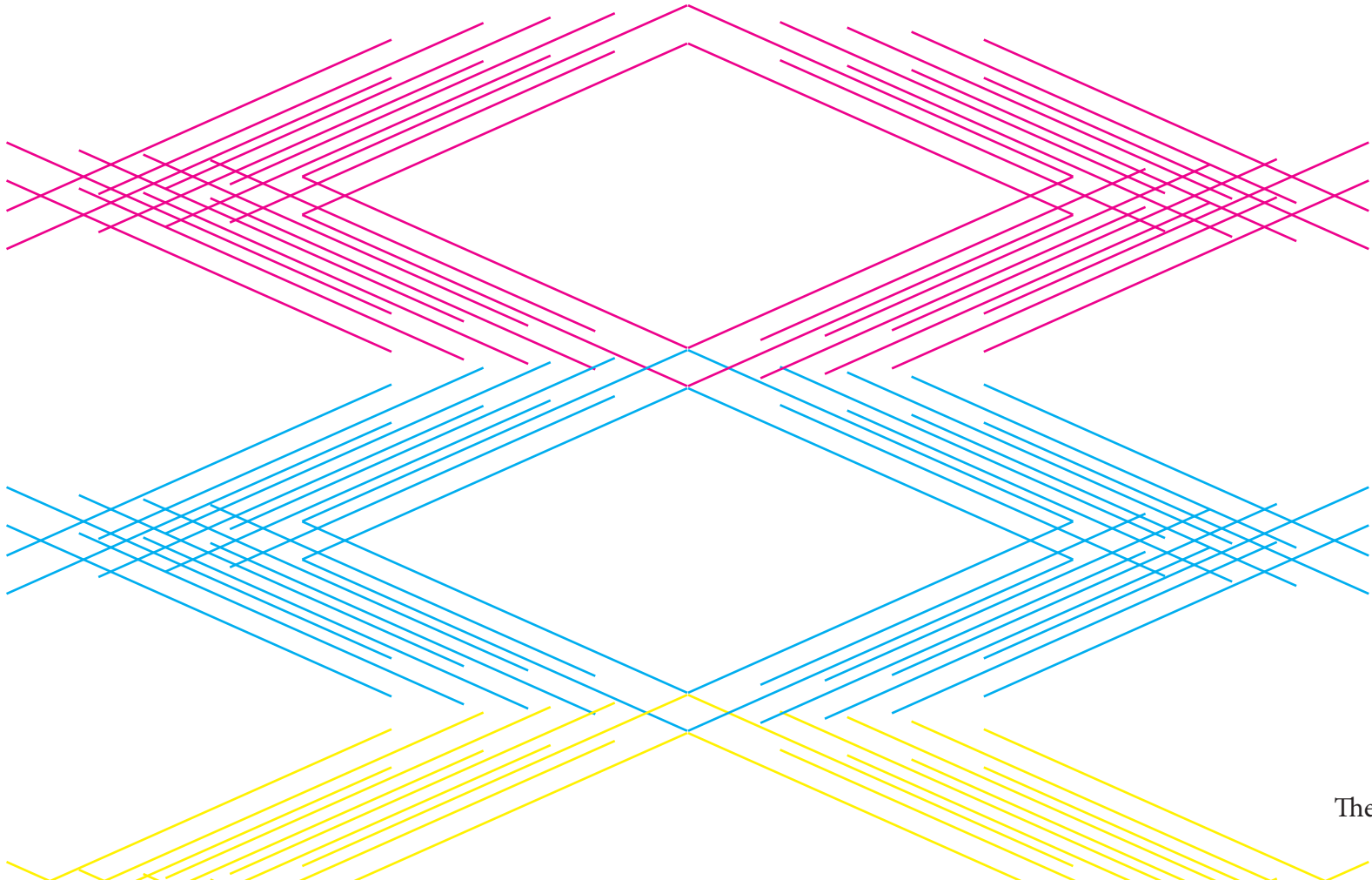
Emily Fletcher | Poetry

The Lake

So,
one day,
as if in a trance,
as if nothing else
could attempt to satisfy,
as if I even knew how to swim,
I wandered peacefully in.
The water's sparkles were alluring, sunlight's filters hinting in fragments
at the depths of the water, so very enigmatic.
My instinct was automatic,
as the waves drew me in, slowly, slowly,
I had to give in.

So,
I could not help
but make this escape.
And who told you I knew any better?
I became native to this place,
tempted by every trickling droplet of
pleasure it claimed to provide as I perused and as I pursued, some pleasure
evoked within me.
I was the princess of the water.
Doomed to drown in too many regrets.

So,
once I was far,
far away from where
I should have stayed, along the water's edge,
the trance gave away.
The water proudly displayed that
I knew not how to swim,
as its droplets conveyed with their sweet serenade how much
peril I was really in.
The waves, in all intensity, offered no relief,
and as the water consumed, so amused by my naivety,
I finally gave in.



Daniel Owens | Poetry

CELLOPHANE SKY

A rose under a cellophane sky,
Light though it drinks,
Is destined to die

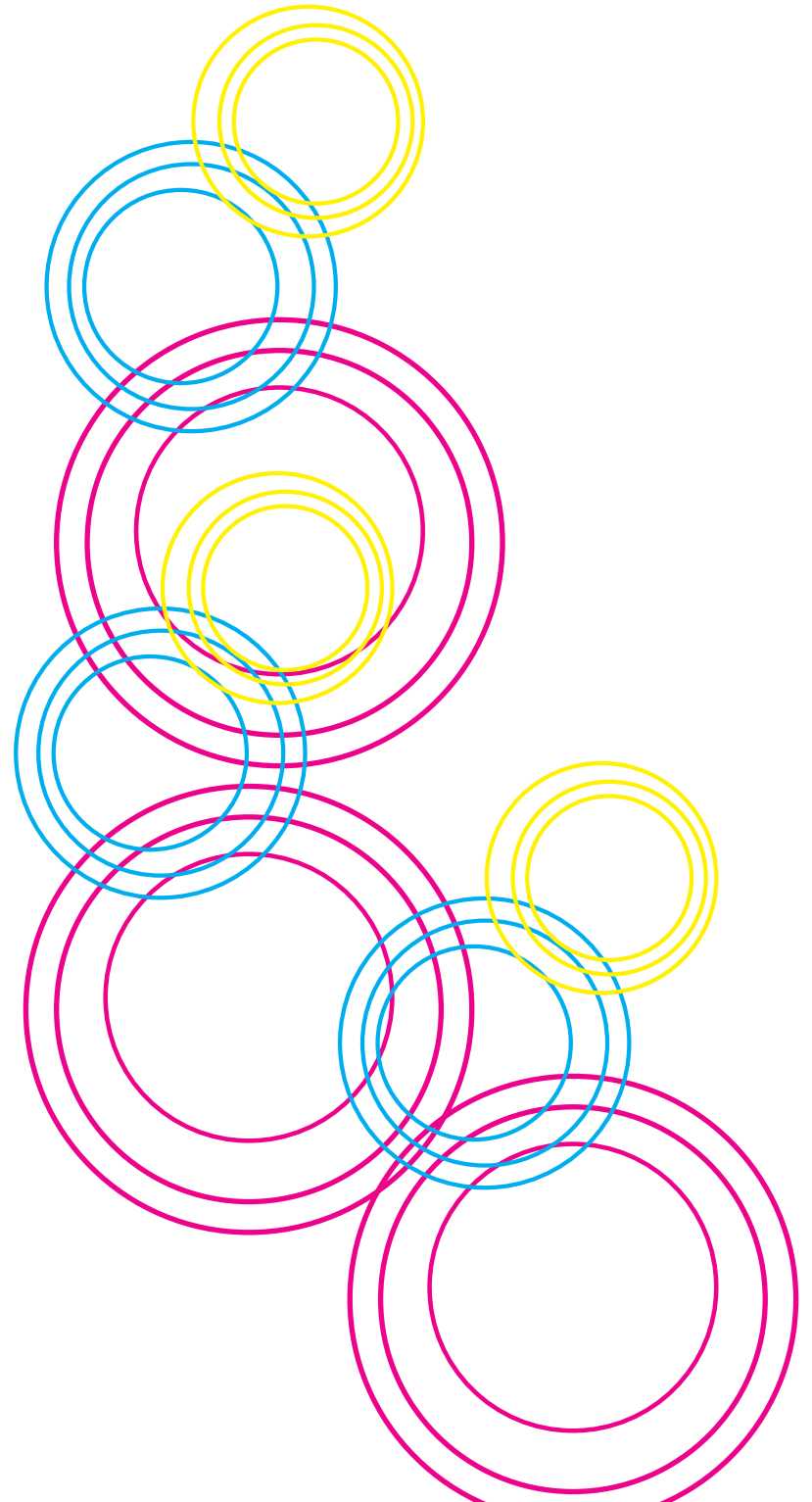
Its carbon gets trapped,
Water rarely seeps through,
Pollinators no longer quite in the mood.

A rose under a cellophane sky,
Perfection preserved
Through writhing inside.

The bugs were kept out,
Not a hazard got in,
Perfect Preservation, Glamorous Sin.

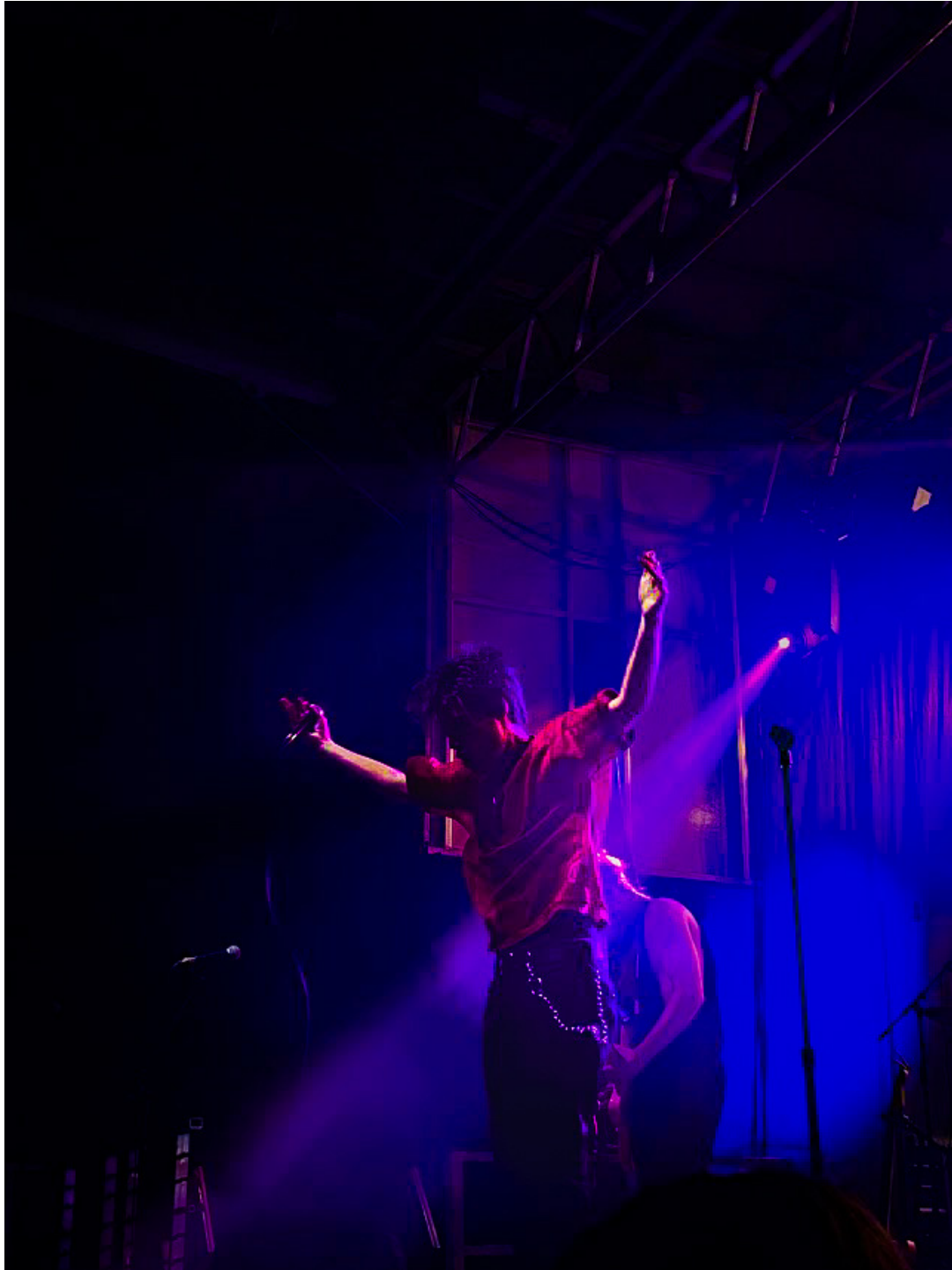
If it had hands, it might
Rip a hole through the sky.

Although hands we all have
Perhaps the plastic's too high.



Ashely Vernon | Photography

This Generation is a Wicked Generation



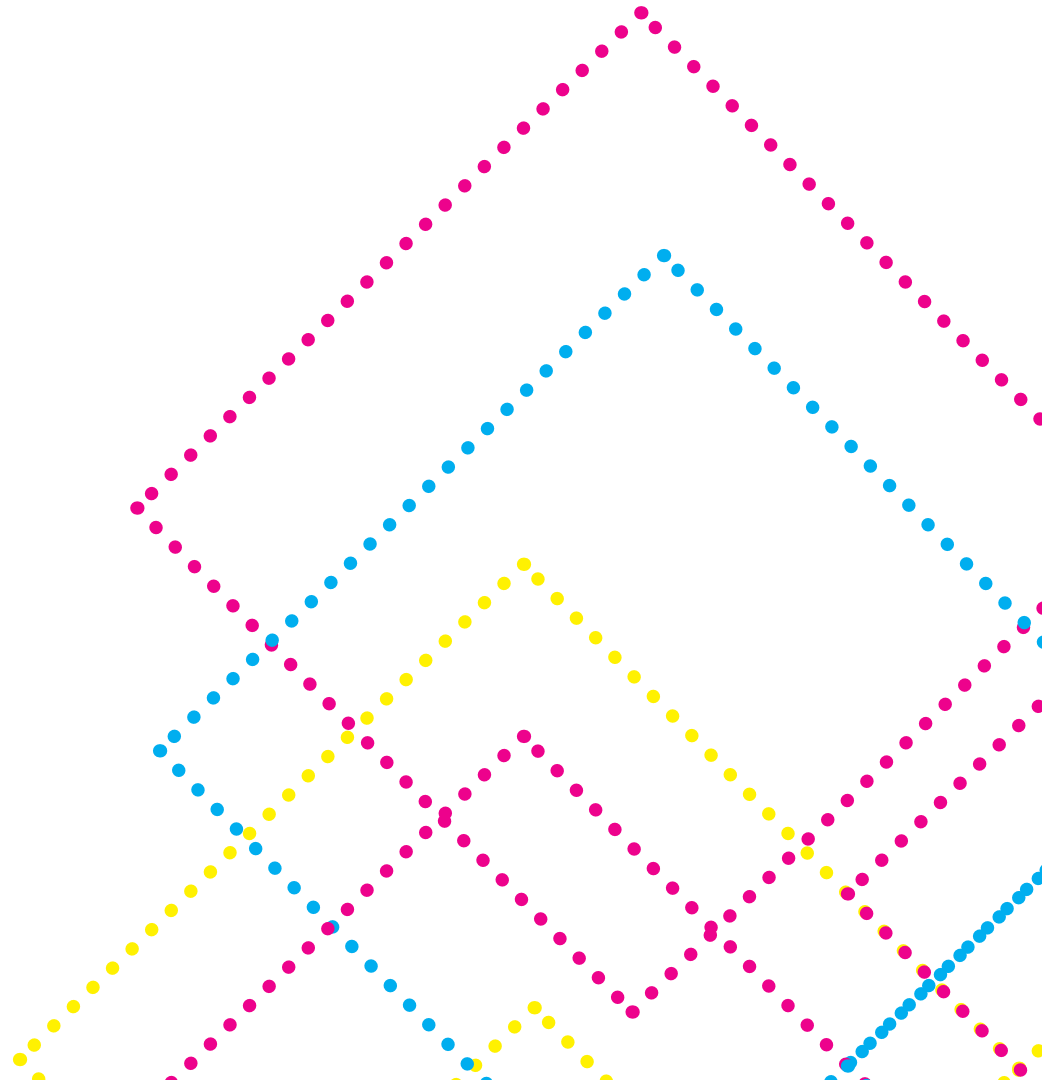
Amelia Maguire | Poetry

Strange Ends

Years ago, my mother told me:
“Go to the woods to seek your fate,
but you must stay on the path.
Careless travelers have met
strange ends in these woods—
You’d be neither the first nor the last.”

In the woods, a bitter wind chased me
Till I ran from nature’s wrath,
Deep among the autumn trees,
And I wandered off the path—

...I closed my eyes and felt the world
spinning in reverse...
Fallen leaves floated upward toward the sky...
...Days rewind themselves
to stranger times...
And as I opened up my eyes...



Glittering figures sang and danced,
and I watched them, cautiously entranced
Until the dancers noticed me
and asked me if I'd like to join.

They pulled me closer into a clearing,
And sparks of magic began appearing
In a pearly swirl of mist surrounding them and
me.

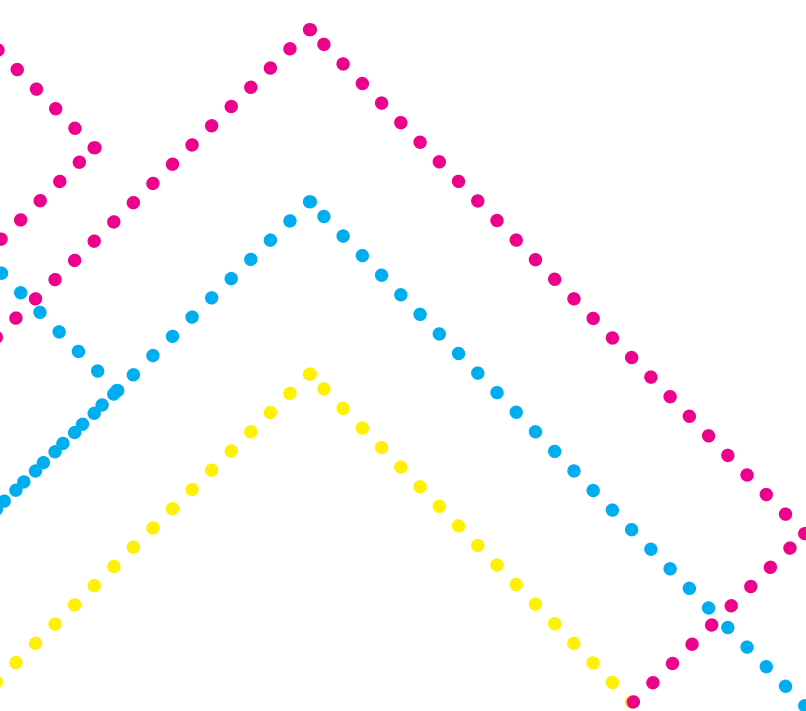
The dancers skipped and smiled freely,
And I laughed quite dreamily,
As my new companions flew and pranced
Through the grass, among the ants.

The other faeries grabbed their coats
As the evening struck a later note,
But until long after the party died
I waltzed past drowsy butterflies
And past the forest creature's sleeping eyes
As the clock approached mid-night.

There, while standing in the clearing
Dazzled by the magic in the air,
My dancing shoes froze upon the ground
And trapped forever I am there.

Amid the weeds, amid the clover,
Amid the trees, if you dare come closer—

You'll see me there,
With my slippers of stone,
Nothing more than a statue
Who dances alone.



Ashley Vernon | Ink

Study of Xu Beihong's Galloping Horse



Emma Johnson | Poetry

creating vs maintaining

some days
the will to create
will swim through your body
as if your veins
are filled with paint
and your lungs
words of poetry

and

some days
the dull drum of
a headache
or work will
keep the art
from your body
and that is okay.
that is okay
because today
is a day
entirely in itself,
where oceans tide
and waves swell,
desert dries,
and mountains rise.

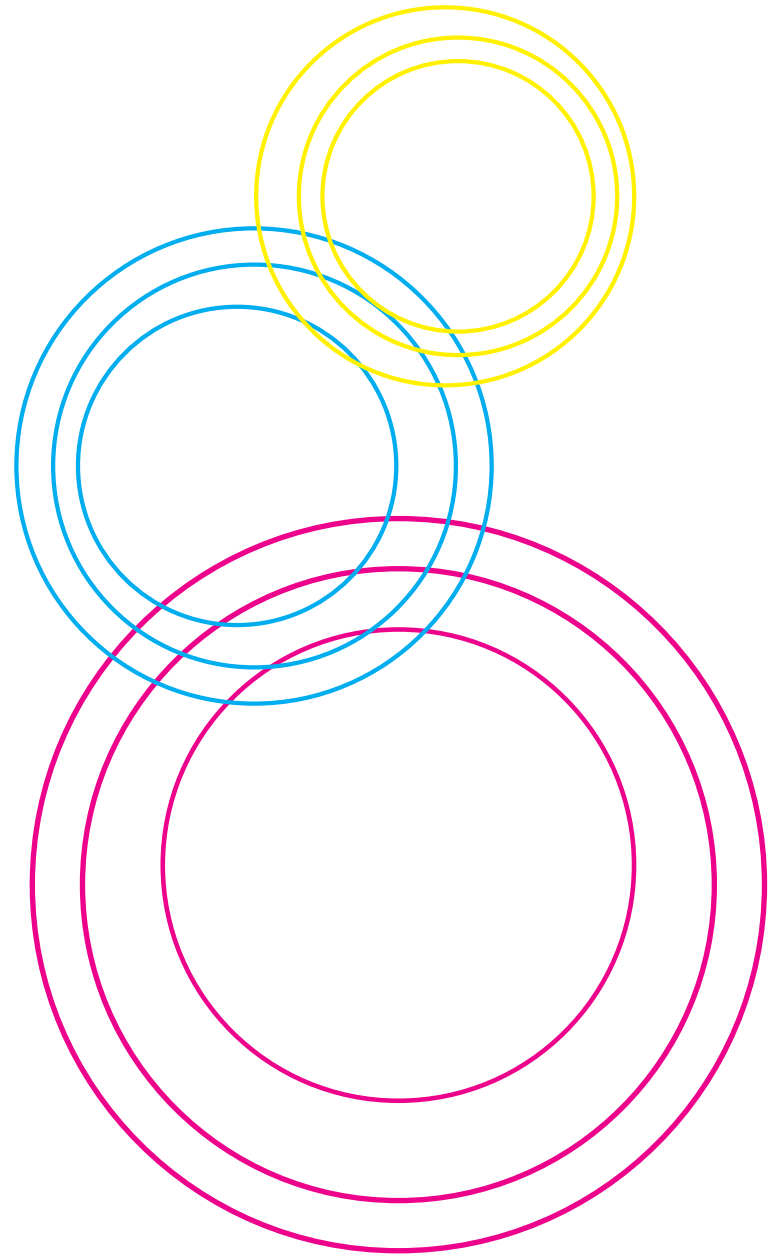
what you have today
is what you have today
and i am here for the you today.

i am here for the you today.

Emma Johnson | Poetry

jupiter

hi my friend,
i was just thinking
of you the other day
(i say like i don't think of you
everyday),
anyway,
i was just thinking about
how we should send our worries
in a rocket ship headed for
jupiter,
because then they wouldn't have
a home here
in our little
hearts.



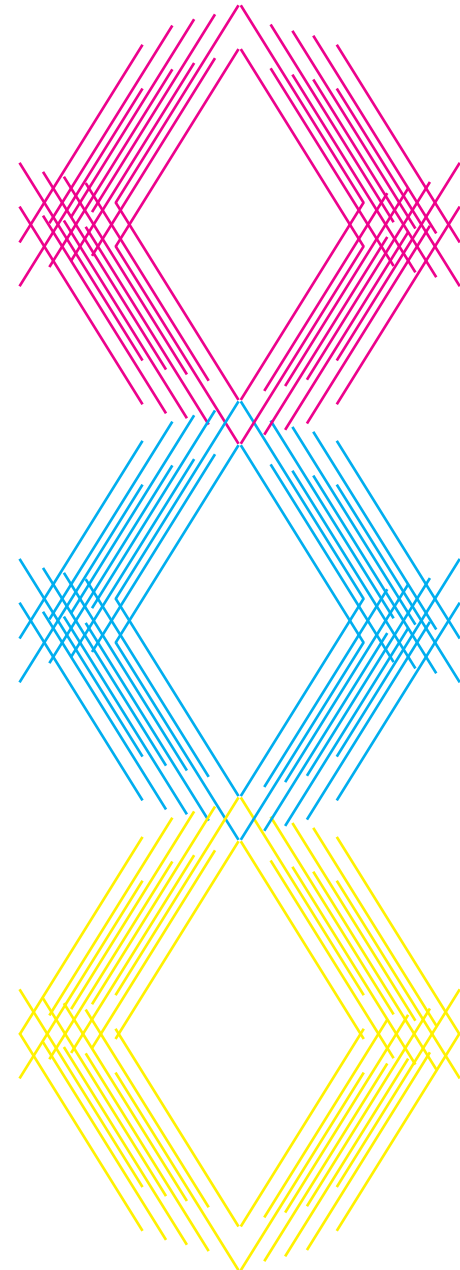
Brennen Kelly | Poetry

Echoes

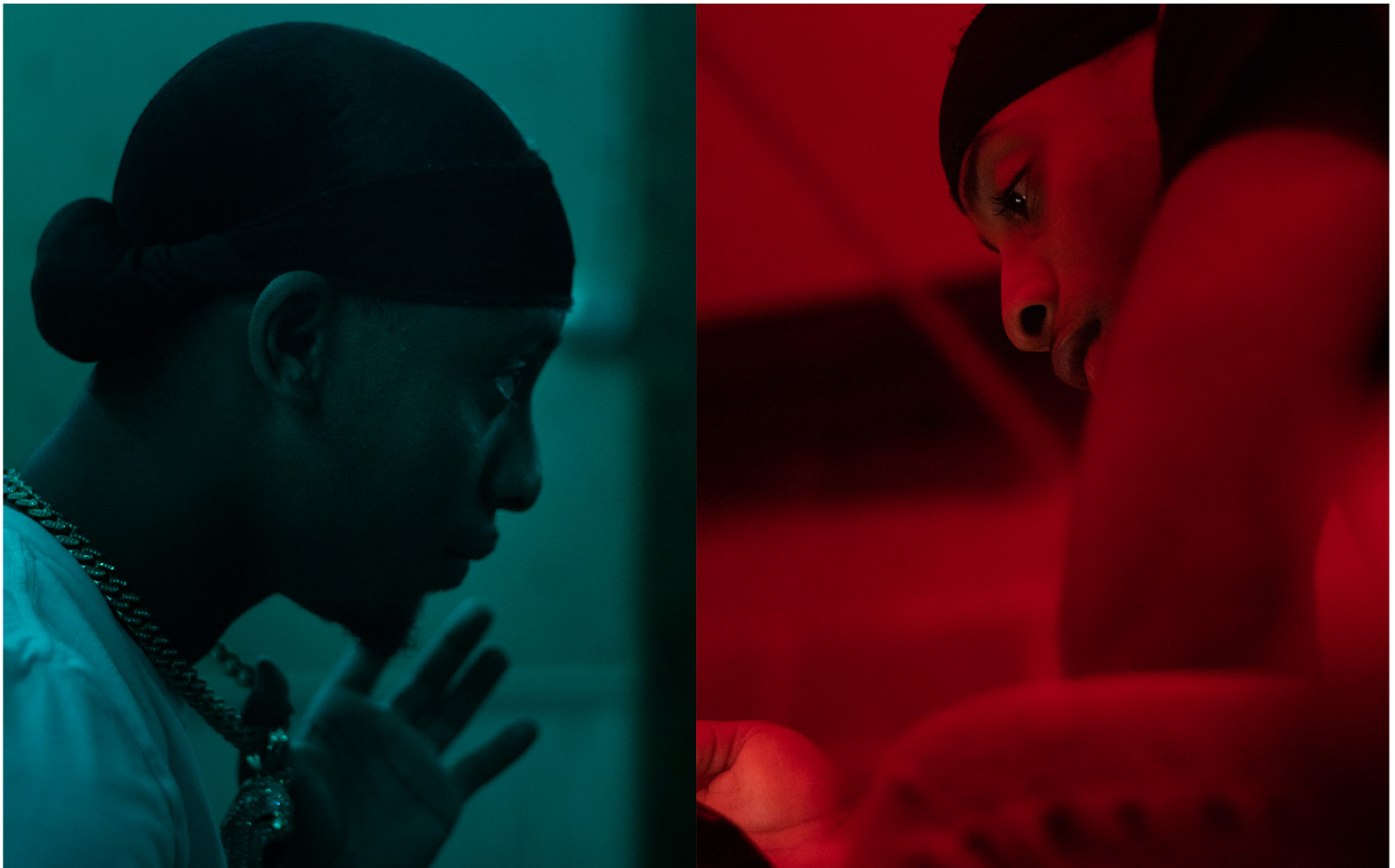
Take me back to the time
where it was just you and I,
wasting away the days.
Two kids and a bottle of wine
sitting underneath the sky,
figuring out a world that's so strange.

I remember helping you walk straight.
Wine affected you in fine ways,
made you even prettier than before.
The way it made your blue eyes shine,
underneath that midnight sky,
made me want you evermore.

Your name, I recall,
reminds me of the fall,
between oranges and yellows.
The leaves changed; so did you,
turned my bleeding heart blue.
My cries faded to echoes.



Nick Davis | Photography
If Nobody Got Me, I Got Me



Kayla Smith | Painting Remastered



Emily Fletcher | Poetry

Rose Gold, once upon a time

Glass curtains shield your withered face,
then suddenly
shatter in scattered soliloquies of what was
once said,
once worth suffering for.

They (you I mean) are Rose Gold, and
once upon a time you knew of such beauty,
glint of sunlight speckling your skin as he
told you of his
“affection.” Sweet nothings mean
nothing now.

Before, you spoke of the great depths it takes
to recognize
how the darkness,
when viewed with admiration,
is merely tears reeking in shallow breaths,
sealing your soul, precious
gatekeeper of the homeland in your heart.

But now,
now you see the darkness beneath the skin,
you recoil and
collapse without the shield of your former
lover, as if he has
anything to do with the
reason you are here, the reason
the sunlight longs for your love.

You, for whom the sunflowers reach toward
on the brightest days.

You, for whom the sky rises.

You, for whom disappointment is a bullet,
poisoning self-worth.

Yet your heart is a beacon for weary travel-
ers.

Yet your soul tenderly secures love with ev-
ery outreach.

Yet you are beauty indescribable, bound by
the Rose Gold that is your essence
in infinite measure.

Bound by the Rose Gold that is your essence
in infinite measure.

Love,
You are not broken.

Daniel Owens | Poetry

NEVER BLUE

The sky is never blue,
That's just how the air reflects light.
No color is inherent to air,
So it turns pink and red and gray.
In most lights we stay constant,
Our skin, our clothes, our hair,
But when asked to define the soul,
I think of it as air.

My soul is never holy,
Yet it is never burnt black.
Its virtue is not inherent
But a reflection of what surrounds it.
If the color of your soul concerns you,
Open your eyes and look around,
A mirror's service pointless
When the lights are all turned down.

Hope Biermann | Poetry

Growth

 You will know fear,
They said.
I laughed.
I knew what fear was—
It lurked in closets
And the darkness in the hall at night.
It always went away.

And then fear came,
Slunk up behind me,
Walked beside me,
Crept into my mind
And stole my breath
And crushed my heart
With the weight of its sitting there.
And I knew fear—
How it twists and twines
Deep and deeper
If you let it.

One day, I said,
I've had enough.
It is hard work to pry dry roots
Out of barren earth.
But, gone, they leave the soil below
Black and broken,
Ready for new seed.

Fear still comes to visit.
I show it the door
(It tried to tell me there was no way out)
And it never stays for long.

Kurt Metzger | Acrylic Painting Chapel of the Resurrection



Korbin Opfer | Prose

Oil Slick

The Truth, oh God; when I understood the Truth, I could never go back. It's a pleasantly ringing bell, a drink sweeter than Splenda. It's like a sunset on the planet Venus floating in its endless mediterranean sea. A dome of rose and gold arcing over the wonderful planet Perelandra. All the things in this world are torn off; swept away like smoke in the wind. Worries and anxieties are like tissue paper in a tornado. All my ignorant vain traits, my sins, my nothingness, my excess, and my deficiencies are nothing but a mote in God's eye. After all these things are removed, I remain anchored in Truth. The Truth, his terrifying implications make me nothing and everything; a bed bug and a king, a cell and an organism, and an everlasting monolith standing in the changing world. Without God's Truth, the world is vain and selfish. It loses its luster and becomes a distorted reflection. The world's truth is a cheating spouse; it's a greasy car salesman trying to convince you a clod of dirt is a corvette.

Sometimes I find myself seeing the world without the Truth. The world's truth might see a fallen leaf, nothing more, and nothing less. The leaf is a simple brown; pathetic photons reflecting off an indifferent object. Ragged and curled at its sides, a reminder of nothingness. Then, out of the corner of my eye, the Truth comes like a roaring river. It fills the empty world, swelling, boiling, spinning the leaf into a universe of meaning. A dead leaf it is, but also a heartbreakingly beautiful piece of Truth within the grand design.

I need the Truth like a man in the desert needs water. Stumbling weakly I see the well of life in the distance. The Truth, oh God, when I saw what had been done to the Truth. A nauseous twisting in the gut, cancerous chemicals hatefully burn like miniature suns. It's like the dead of night on lonely Europa, freezing in its alien winter. It's like wrath's hand moving down my spine; a stench of death dripping from the air. Sickly Oil thinly spread over the well of life.

The Truth, oh God; when I saw what I had done to the Truth. In the reflection, something seeping from my skin. My own glands squeeze out vile sludge like a million tiny packets of spoiled mayonnaise; the residue of a rotting soul. Perspiring that awful stuff, I pollute the well like a steel mill near a pristine lake. Like an insidious gas leak, poisoning the inhabitants of a perfect home. What a crime. I am an escaped convict, approaching a peaceful town. Flowing out from me, that stuff coming off my arms and legs, dripping off my forehead and into the well. The Truth, just by looking, I pollute it; but still, I need it.

Thirsty, I am so terribly thirsty for the Truth; my trembling hands reach towards my salvation coated in cancer. Seeking hands pass agonizing Oil and touch cool comforting salvation. There it comes, rolling out of the west as a great storm front; roiling clouds march like a grand army. On a hilltop I stand watching its lightning cleave the sky, thunderous purpose fills my chest, washing over me. Assured and strengthened, I ignore the burning Oil and lift a handful to my mouth, so that I might drink and never be thirsty again. Instead of indescribable relief, the pain of the world slides down my throat. It's like hot gasoline wreaking havoc on its way down. The Oil, I forgot about the Oil, oh, Truth, I forgot about the Oil. The Oil is like every nasty thing that has leaked from my heart: wicked sharp pride, ugly ignorance, fiery hatred, and zealous arrogance. A dart frog killed by his own poison. In my eyes; it got in my eyes. Wretched pain and panic grip me. fear wrapping his terrible hands around my throat, suffocating me. Desperate fear wells up as I cry for help, but the only thing that escapes is strained and breathy yelp of a kicked dog. A wad of phlegm that clogs and sticks, vision quickly fleeing, queasy thirst still screaming its dogged request, itching pain still worms its way from now useless eyes into an already throbbing skull, still painfully aware of the Oil flowing from me.

The Truth, oh God; when I remembered the Truth. It called me like a father calling his child. I knew then; I knew what I needed to do. First my head, followed by shoulders and chest; belly and legs, then suddenly I was free.

Revelations 21:6

Adrian Elliott | Poetry

The Monster King

I'm two feet tall when both my feet
Are planted firmly on the peat.
I have no crown atop my head,
Two white horns grow there instead.
I need no coat in Wintertime,
My black fur keeps warm my hide.
When the men come out to hunt,
Into a tree I climb inside.

I have no claws, nor poison sac,
Nor pointed teeth, nor half-shelled back.
I live in peace among the beasts,
Why should I need means to attack?

Because I lack most everything
A beast would need to fight,
I have become The Monster King
Friend to all that's right.

Jackie O'Hara | Poetry

Blow, it's hot

I always drink my coffee cold, my tea too.
It's perfect for the summer, but even during the winter, I was gripping that freezing plastic cup
on the way back to my dorm, switching hands because of a burning numbness.

When someone would ask me why I prefer cold drinks,
“oh, it just tastes better with ice,” I'd say.
I remember when I enjoyed warm drinks,
sitting by the windowsill feeling the chill of autumn,
sipping tea and sighing as the warmth flowed through my fingertips.
It made me happy.

Now if I dare drink something warm, I feel as if the world will break beneath me.
The coffee is a warmth that reminds me only of when I did not know how life could be.
A warmth I'd long to feel in my chest again after countless heart breaks and nights spent staring
into nothingness.

A warmth from my golden age, taken from me too soon.
My mom always told me to blow on hot food, it'll burn if you don't.
I long to feel that familiar burn that sets a passionate blaze through my body.
But I know I would drink it too quickly, and sear my stomach,
So for now, I'll stick to the familiar coldness.

Cassie Gortner | Poetry

Earthshine

All around the flash burned
Into retinas as we tried to
Run or hide but what can we do
In the face of our self-made devastation?
In that terrible flash
Our world is remade
Alongside us.
Something bursts
Flooding the world
With a terrible light.
Shining from creatures not made with bioluminescence
From rocks aglow with a toxic green.
Irradiation gives terrible meaning to earthshine.

Paige Cesnik | Multimedia Discovery



Ronan Cassidy | Poetry

Oak Tree

There is an oak tree, winding and hulking and massive, its leaves are pine green in the blanketing sun.

I walk towards it, my feet leaden but my head light

Sweet music floats in and out of my ears, like a record player in the distance.

I sat at the base of the trunk, the rough bark digging into my sore back.

I'm surrounded by a field, wheat and corn growing in their rows,

I remember a fight with my uncle:

He told me I was his one true son and I told him I wished he would leave me alone;

I'm alone now.

There's a barn in the distance, a warm auburn color with cows in the yard.

I remember the stinging regret of knowing I wasted my years,

Knowing I cut away every rope holding me to shore until there was no one left except my uncle staring back at me from his lake house, tears in his

old blue eyes

As I floated off.

The bark digs into my back

I don't mind

Clouds rush in overhead and a drizzle picks up,

I remember my mother's cold hand as I held it on that hospital bed,

She was dead as the wheatgrass soon would be.

It once made me cry, thinking of her that way—
As something disposable, weak.

I remember snowflakes falling on my expired debit cards in winter, back when I used to live in the suburbs.

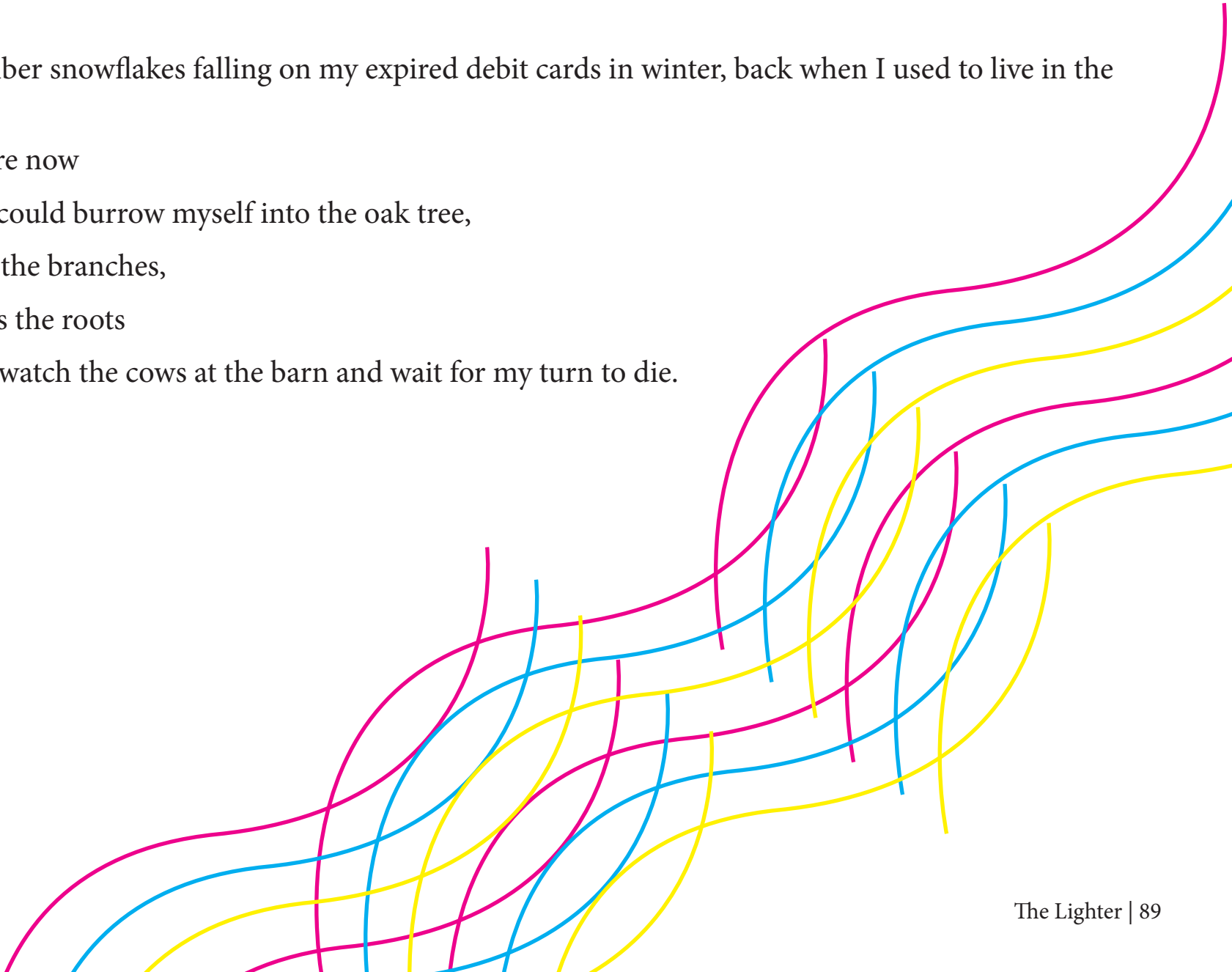
I live here now

I wish I could burrow myself into the oak tree,

My hair the branches,

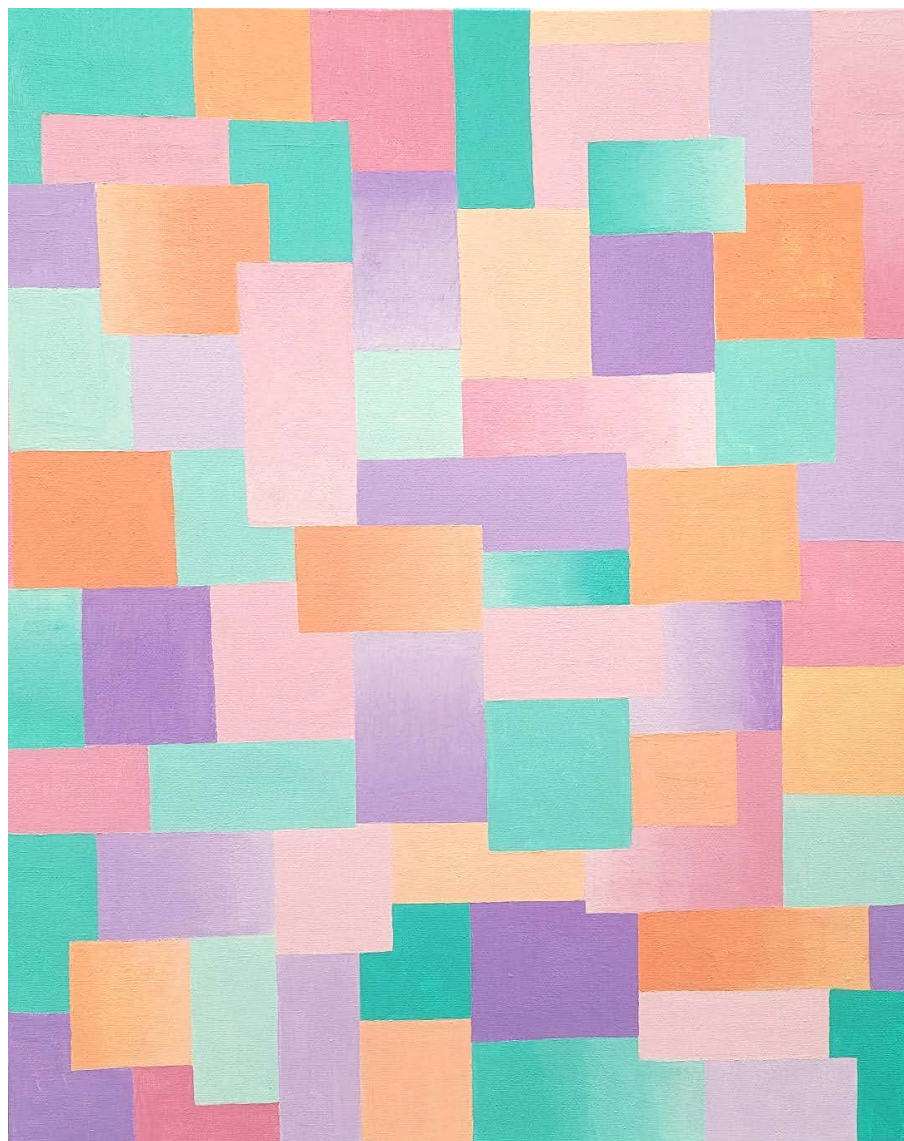
My veins the roots

I would watch the cows at the barn and wait for my turn to die.



Anna Beres | Acrylic Painting

Pastel Building Blocks



**Kurt Metzger | Acrylic Painting
Mueller Hall**



Adrian Elliott | Short Story

Monument Valley

“Let’s hear the story again, in your own words, Mr. Smith.”

“It was late February. Me and my wife, Lurna, had just purchased a house in Bishop. It’s not too far from where we are now, actually. Over the next few months, we settled into our new lives. Things were good for a while. Then, one night in July, I got back from a walk around the neighborhood, but before I opened my front door, something shiny caught my attention. There was a camera peaking ever so slightly out of one of Lurna’s rose bushes. I grabbed it, and took it inside. Me and my wife were very afraid that someone was watching us.”

The man shifted awkwardly in his chair. Instead of looking the woman across from him in the eyes as he spoke, his attention was taken by a nearby pair of framed medical degrees hanging on the wall. One was hanging lower than the other. He caught himself becoming distracted, and then continued with his story.

“A few weeks passed without incident, but then one night, a strange sound woke me up. I rushed over to the window, only to find that someone outside was going through our garbage. They were making a lot of noise, and I’m not quite sure what they were looking for, but they must have found it because by the time I ran out of my house to catch him, he was gone. Lurna called the police, and they did a check of the area, but nothing ever came of it. As the weeks continued to fly by, these strange events kept happening, and me and my wife were getting more paranoid. One night, when I was getting back from one of my routine walks, I heard my neighbor talking with somebody over the phone on his back porch. Normally, I don’t stick my nose into other people’s business, but then he... he mentioned my wife’s name. Laura Smith. He spoke in a thick Russian accent. He told his friend that he planned to kill me and assume my identity. The rest is a bit of a blur. I confronted him, and he reached for what looked like a gun, so I pinned him to the ground and strangled him to death.”

“Mr. Smith, I’m sorry to say, but we’re getting a little impatient. Your story keeps changing. Sometimes when you tell it, it takes place in Watkinsville, not Bishop. Sometimes it takes place in December, not February. Even this time around, you referred to your wife as both Laura and Lurna. We have to look at the facts. You were never married. You did live in Bishop,

but you lived in an apartment. You strangled an old man who lived in the apartment next to you and forgot to lock his door one day. We've tried eleven different types of medication on you, Mr. Smith, but nothing seems to be working."

Mr. Smith was silent for a while.

"I'm sorry, Regina. I don't mean to sound ungrateful, I'm only trying to tell you what I believe is the truth."

"It's okay. There's one more kind of medication I'd like to try, if you're up for it. Unfortunately, because my company operates outside of the law, we do not have government funding. After this treatment, we cannot afford to care for you any longer."

"I understand. I'm willing to try whatever the last treatment is."

The two were sitting in a sizable office. On the desk in front of Mr. Smith was a nameplate which spelled out *Regina* in fancy gold letters. Displayed in a showcase to the left of Mr. Smith was a pair of crutches. In an awkward situation like this one, Mr. Smith did what he did best, which was to make small talk.

"Why do you have a pair of crutches on display in your office, Regina?"

"Oh, those? I guess I keep them around for sentimental value. Did I ever tell you the story of how I became a doctor?"

"No."

"Well, it's sort of interesting. You see, I was born with a condition known as Fibrodysplasia. It's a horrible disease which causes skin tissue to not grow back the way it should. Instead, torn skin regrows as bone, causing every scrape I had as a child to become a painful reminder for the rest of my life. Eventually, my legs locked up from the amount of bone that had grown on them. I had to walk around using those crutches. In my teenage years, I decided to dedicate the rest of my life to medicine. I went to college at the University of Georgia, which presented me with a unique opportunity. While doing research, I discovered that reptiles have a natural immunity to Fibrodysplasia. Using the cells from a Puff Adder, I managed to make a vaccine for my condition. I still kept my crutches, though, to remind me of the struggles of my early life. For the rest

of my life, I will continue my research into medicine. It's gotten me this far, after all. I wouldn't call Monument Valley Mental Health Clinic very profitable, but it makes me feel at ease knowing my research has helped people. I've even had a hand in creating some of the medicines that we've used with you. So, I take a little bit of personal responsibility for their inefficiency. Still, I hope that you've had a relaxing time while in our care."

"I have. I think I'll head back to my room now. I'll see you in the morning."

"Our final treatment will be ready by then. Rest well, Mr. Smith."

Mr. Smith liked to take the long way around when walking back to his room. He admired the beautiful architecture of the building, and the way the grass was cut so evenly. The building was, as far as Mr. Smith could tell, perfectly symmetrical. His room was located on the far left end of the property. Conveniently, there was a path through the grass that weaved through a lush green garden, and ended right at his door. He enjoyed this path, aside from one small detail. There were eleven statues along the path; five on his left and six on his right. He hated the unevenness. Regina had told him that this might be a sign of OCD, but he shrugged her suggestion off. At last, Mr. Smith had arrived at his room. With the sun setting in the distance, Mr. Smith knew that he would soon be asleep.

The next morning, Mr. Smith made his way to Regina's office.

"Are you ready to begin treatment, Mr. Smith?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Take these pills."

She handed him a few oval-shaped pills and a glass of water. Mr. Smith swallowed both pills with half the amount of water in the glass.

"You may feel a bit drowsy. It's okay if you fall unconscious."

Despite having just woken up, Mr. Smith found himself unable to keep his eyes open. When he did finally manage, a man in a white lab coat was standing next to him.

“...Regina? What’s going on?”

“You fell asleep. You were just about to tell me the story of how you came here.”

“...Oh. Okay.”

“Let’s hear the story again, in your own words, Mr. Smith.”

“It was late February. Me and my wife-”

“It didn’t work. Give it to him.”

The man in the lab coat pricked Mr. Smith’s arm with a silver needle. Suddenly, his whole body became numb. His skin was starting to rot away, and was being replaced with bone. He was unable to move, but found he was still able to speak.

“Regina! What’s happening to me?”

She spoke in a flat, monotone voice.

“In the event we are not able to cure a patient in the allotted amount of time, we find it best to put them in a state of hibernation, to sort of ease the mind of tension for the time being. Don’t worry, Mr. Smith, this isn’t permanent. I have the cure, remember?”

“Please, Regina, I can change!”

“There’s no doubt in my mind that you can. Rest well, Mr. Smith. See you next year.”

Mr. Smith’s face had completely frozen into a look of abject horror. The man in the lab coat wheeled Mr. Smith into the garden using a dolly to transport him. He placed him on the left side so that the garden was perfectly symmetrical, a fact that would have pleased Mr. Smith had he been conscious.

Cassie Gortner | Poetry

Written Records

Knowledge and stories make us who we are,
They teach us of culture and history.
Knowledge breaks through darkness, bright as a star,
It burns away secrets and mystery.

Manuscripts, carvings, and great works of art
Hold so much more than just what meets the eye;
They show the growth of humanity's heart
And moments when our ideals nearly die.

But manuscripts burn when conquerors come,
When one culture wants to kill another.
History's song is reduced to a hum
As humans fight and destroy their brothers.

Our songs may die out, our records may burn
But we know there is always more to learn.

Anna Beres | Poetry

Next Spring

Next Spring,
my garden will be thriving.
I'll be aiding in the growing and sowing
of various vegetables, flavorful fruits,
and flower sprouts that will stretch,
quickly climbing onto the trellis
of my new home's siding.

Tulip bulbs and raspberry bushes
will begin their regrowing;
Their return is something
I look forward to knowing.

The dragonflies and bees will too emerge,
beginning their buzzing
as I tend to my garden,
pulling out weeds and picking things overgrowing.

The bees,
unknowingly aid me in this process of growing,
as they gently pollinate the sprouts
that have begun opening.

Next Spring,
I'll be picking from trees that bear fruit.
Imagine them sprouting sour yellow lemons,
perfectly picked cherries,
and ripe red apples.

The fruit will be growing freely,
sometimes whipped off by the wind.
Quickly and quietly,

occasionally dropping to the ground,
and landing almost silently,
falling and ripening
before my time of harvesting
from its vines and that of its brothering branches.

Next Spring,
I'll have fresh fruit flowering,
growing, and sprouting,
spreading out onto the fence line
that's surrounding the property.

Organically grown grapes
that are picked fresh off the vine,
can be used to make pickled fruit,
pie, jam, or even wine.

Oh, the many fruits and vegetables
that I can imagine growing:
sensationally sweet strawberries,
red and yellow onions,
big red juicy tomatoes,
and the little round ones too.

Next Summer's harvest
is bound to be plentiful,
I know this now, it's true.
Next Spring's growth will bring
Summer's great harvesting.
I know it, it will be, I do.

Adrian Elliott | Short Story

The Spider and the Butterfly

“It would seem,” said the butterfly, “that I’ve reached the end of my line.”

“It would seem so,” said the spider.

A spider was hanging upside down in its web, with all eight legs fastened to one of the connecting threads. Beneath the spider was a butterfly. Its wings were vibrant hues of black and cobalt, and they were plastered tightly to the web. Struggling would not have freed the butterfly, although it did not struggle. The two could not see each other’s faces given their positions on the web.

“Right. You have trapped me. Do what you must. Although, I will say, this is excellent placement for your web.”

It was indeed. The web was hidden in between two boughs of a tree, in an area that the spider had observed intercepted the path that the local moths flew each night. It had been a useful area thus far for catching moths, but this was the first time a butterfly had been ensnared.

“Glad you think so. You are the first creature I’ve caught in this web that wasn’t a moth.”

“Hm. Getting tired of moths?”

“Undoubtedly so! They are gamey and have not much meat on them.”

“Nectar is much the same way. Sweet, but never filling.”

Moonlight glittered off the sleek back of the spider. There was a perfect symmetry present within it: four legs on each side, four eyes on each side. The symmetry extended to the butterfly, with a black spot plastered on its left wing, mirroring an identical spot on its right.

“Not that I expect this kind of treatment,” said the butterfly, “but do you ever let anything you’ve caught go free?”

“No,” came the reply. “If I let one go free, I’d have to let them all go.”

“I understand.”

A long stillness came over them. From a nearby pond, the pair could hear the billowing of a population of bullfrogs. This sound was answered by the cooing of an owl from somewhere above them. Fireflies danced in the open air above the pond, not fearing frog nor owl.

“I think it’s time,” said the butterfly.

“Right. Shall I wrap you first, or shall I kill you?”

“Wrap me first. I want to feel what it’s like to be inside a cocoon again.”

“Understood.”

The spider set about the methodical process of wrapping its prey in silk. Neither spoke a word while this was happening, they simply allowed the symphony of life in the forest to fill their ears. Soon, the silk was bound around the eyes and ears of the butterfly, so all it could hear were the sounds of the spider moving around it. Once the job was finished, the spider maneuvered itself above the butterfly’s head.

“Goodnight, butterfly,” said the spider.

The spider plunged its fangs into the silken cocoon, piercing the head of the butterfly and killing it instantly.

Ten thousand miles away, on a faraway continent, in a faraway town, a man left his house to retrieve the Sunday paper from his mailbox. While standing on his lawn, he could hear the loud bickering of the young couple who lived next door. Once he had his paper, he settled down in his living room with a cup of coffee to review its contents. He thumbed past the headlines--something about the recent break-in at the local pawn shop--until he got to the classifieds section. Next Sunday, the man thought, would bring similar news, and the Sunday after that, and on, and on, ad nauseam. The man’s eyes drifted for a moment, then two, until he found himself mindlessly staring out of his window. A butterfly had landed on one of the tulips in his flower box. The butterfly, he thought, was lucky. It knew nothing of taxes, of long weeknights at the office, of budget cuts or layoffs, of crushed dreams or unfulfilled ambitions. It knew nothing of tyranny, of greed or fear, of callousness or any other such emotion. No such evil lived in its heart; how could it? The butterfly lived in the moment. And although it lived for only a short while in the grand scheme of time, it brought with it such an indescribable beauty. Undoubtedly, the world is better off for the short moment while the butterfly still exists. We should all be so lucky, the man thought, as to live like the butterfly. For although short, the life of the butterfly is genuine.

Contributor Bios

Lex Terzioski is a freshman creative writing major who enjoys writing poetry and short stories. She hopes one day to be in the literary field, such as an author or any career that deals with writing.

Jackie O'Hara is a sophomore english major who enjoys writing poetry and personal essays. She hopes to move to Washington to start her writing career.

Brennen Kelly is a junior communications major and cinema and media studies minor who enjoys writing songs and poems as well as taking pictures. Kelly also writes for The Torch in the A&E section, covering music and films.

Micah Koppang is a freshman Political Science and Spanish double major who has been writing poetry and experimenting with art since seventh grade. They use poetry as a means of exploration and catharsis for their own mental health (from diagnoses to medications to side effects) and even competed in Poetry Reading for speech team in high school. Micah hopes that all their readers either learn something new about experiences with mental health or feel some sort of catharsis with them.

Malachi Jeremy Smith is a senior English Major who enjoys making portrait photography. Malachi has worked on crafting portraits since 2016, but during his time here at valpo he's leveled up alot and wants to make more artistic works that convey unique expressions and feelings.

Paige Cesnik is a Freshman Nursing major with an art minor. She enjoys performing and visual arts, her media of choice is painting and drawing. She loves working with big canvases and creating artworks based on personal experiences.

Philip Bolton is a senior Literature major and a Digital Media and Humanities double minor. He enjoys reading, playing the drums, and still life photography.

Zion Gifford is a studio arts major who enjoys creating works about horror, nature, folklore, and love. He was present for the fall of Troy, the execution of Marie Antoinette, and the invention of the computer. You can find more of his art on his web page, www.lignincollective.com/zeihhan.

Kae Eberhart is a senior history major with minors in music and music history & culture. She loves not just performing and listening to music, but also reading and writing about its impact on society and culture. Although she is more likely to write a non-fiction research paper, she has recently found a satisfying creative outlet in poetry.

Julia Sullivan is a freshman communications and digital media arts double major. She enjoys playing piano, ukulele, and guitar, singing, painting, drawing, writing, and dancing.

Hannah Bhakta is a third-year studying biochemistry and Spanish. This semester she is studying abroad in Limerick, Ireland and enjoys hiking and nature photography. At the University of Limerick she spends time being creative with the Crafts Society or traveling with the Outdoor Pursuits Club. At Valpo, she can be found in the organic chemistry lab or in the UPC office contemplating whether or not to get another cup of tea instead of doing her work.

Hope Biermann is a junior history major who loves sitting in sunshine, looking up at leaves rustling in the wind, and several other more substantial pursuits as well. She thinks a lot about words and music and stories and the kinds of things we can do with them all. Soli Deo Gloria.

Emily Graves is a junior history and art double major.

Adrian Elliott's favorite color is green. His favorite animal is called an axolotl. He greatly enjoys the works of Dire Straits and Tom Waits.

Erica Castillo is a junior social work major. Erica believes in breaking down the stigma of mental health. She loves to write poetry, draw, and crotchet.

Amoreena L. Roll, senior Psychology and Studio Arts double major. Soon to be attending graduate school for Funeral Services and the Mortuary Sciences.

Maiah Deogracias is a Communications and Digital Media Arts Double Major with a minor in Humanities. She loves creating music, traveling, visiting art museums and drinking coffee.

Ronan Cassidy is a freshman creative writing major who enjoys writing and reading.

Nathan Vargas is a Senior Digital Media Arts major and Computer Science minor who aspires to have a healthy sleep schedule one day.

Cassie Gortner (she/her) is a freshman exploratory major. She likes worldbuilding, catapults, and tea. She enjoys writing poetry and plays.

Ashely Vernon is a Junior Digital Media Arts Major from Lacrosse Indiana. She is the current president of the University Programming Council, and works in the University Archives as well as the Brauer Museum of Art. In her free time, Ashley enjoys drawing, taking photos, watching comfort shows/movie with friends, and eating ice-cream with her roommates.

Emily Fletcher is a junior psychology and environmental science major. She loves reading and writing creative pieces, especially poems and short stories. She also enjoys iconic rom-coms, nature, and late night drives with Taylor Swift music.

Amelia Maguire is a freshman psychology major who likes writing poetry and doing art in her spare time. She is passionate about sketching, painting, and sculpture.

Nick Davis is a senior Digital Media student who wants to inspire through creativity. His company, Nick Designs, provides photography, videography, graphic design, and web design services. His favorite pastimes are playing sports/games, watching TV and collecting Funko Pop figures. He has over 80 Funko Pops.

Kayla Smith is a senior studio art major. A lover of money and dreamer of being gifted a million dollars. Until then she wants to freelance and maybe be in a museum one day.

Emma Johnson is a freshman and currently an exploratory major who loves to write and read poetry. She is interested in both astronomy because she loves space and creative writing because writing is a powerful form of expression. Emma loves to be out in nature, whether on a hike or a walk with her dog, and she also loves to make art :)

Anna Beres is a senior studio art major who enjoys exploring various types of art as well as reading and writing poetry. She recently has decided to combine her love for poetry and art throughout her discovery and creation of concrete poetry. Anna also runs a small business called Stargirl Crafts and is excited to pursue her business and artistic goals after her graduation in 2023.

Benjamin Fields is a sophomore english major who writes poetry and nonfiction. Benjamin enjoys writing about nature. He also is interested in journalism and likes to write newspaper articles.

Christopher Malon is a senior mechanical engineering major who enjoys vehicles, nature and trying to photograph these things.

Kurt Metzger is a Senior Music Education student. He enjoys painting landscapes of places he has been to appreciate them on a deeper level.

Gabrielle Unzicker is a sophomore double majoring in biology and environmental science with art and Spanish minors. She enjoys singing, gardening, photographing wildlife and swimming.

Kara VanHimbergen is a senior psychology major with minors in creative writing and digital media. They've been previously published in The Lighter, and they're sad this will be their last publication before graduating in December.

Daniel Owens is a senior environmental engineering major in Christ College. Daniel works in the campus writing center and has always had a special love for reading and writing inherited from his English teacher (and former VU employee) mom. His affinity for poetry comes from a fixation with song lyrics since a young age. He finds that while creating songs is a uniquely rewarding experience that can bring words to life, poetry has greater freedoms with expression, time, format, and lyrical focus.

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