

inside
out
2017





Lower East Side

Caroline Christianson
Photograph

Cover art:

Abstract Anatomy: The Strength Within

Jordyn Brooke Tumas
Acrylic

Inside Out

JeffArts Literary/Arts Journal

Spring 2017

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The Jefferson Arts Organization was founded primarily to offer Thomas Jefferson University students the opportunity to express themselves through art. The Jefferson Arts organization focuses on such media as art and photography, writing, and music and supports diverse activities including live readings, art exhibits and musical performances. In addition, the organization publishes *Inside Out*, an annual art and literary journal which showcases photography, paintings, sketches, short stories, poems and essays contributed by university students. All of these activities are designed to bring more diversity to the Jefferson community; to allow students, faculty and staff the chance to stop and reflect on their daily lives; and to provide a creative outlet from the rigors of school and work.

Content warning: This magazine includes some written pieces with potentially triggering subject matter, including sexual assault and disordered eating.

Foreword

The creativity and insight of our Jefferson students is here on display once again in the 2017 issue of *Inside Out*. As they train for their future crafts – whether in healing, discovering, educating – our students are enriched by exploration of their artistic spirit. To cultivate students as ‘whole people’, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities loom large at Jefferson. Engagement in the arts is critical for both. We draw upon Philadelphia’s rich arts community for this purpose, with material Jefferson ties to iconic cultural institutions such as the Curtis Institute of Music and the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts. These activities, along with initiatives such as *Inside Out*, are part of a conscious push to preserve a sense of play, amidst the intensity of curricular demands.

Mark L. Tykocinski, MD

Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Thomas Jefferson University

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Submission Information

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

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

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

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

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

Inside Out does not publish anonymous submissions or previously published works. Further submission inquiries may be addressed to JeffersonArts@jefferson.edu.

View the online version of *Inside Out* at:
jefferson.edu/university/campus-life/inside-out.html

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Untitled
Alex Rowan

If there is anything
So perfect to me
As the touch of your
Eyes against the falling
Rain then I dare not
Risk knowing the depth
Of the valleys below



Daytime Figure Study
Chen Zhou
Oil

Amyloids

Malika Madhava

A snowflake flutters through the air,
singular and slightly misshapen.
It floats to the ground;
crystals gather faster
than the sun's rays can dissolve them.
A misfolded protein, disfigured by
Parkinson's, or maybe sickle cell,
finds its home in this sticky white.
Our patient had Alzheimer's.
I tried to explain that his sun
didn't shine bright enough
to melt the snow away.
But how could he understand?
He couldn't even read time—
the very seconds that tick towards, it seemed,
fields of winter white and forgotten dreams.

Dirty Dishes

Daisy Zhang

During dinner, you
Order penne aglio e olio
With seared lobster
Slathered in butter.

I have the same
Grilled chicken salad
With extra spinach
I always have.

You exclaim over the food
I smile and nod
Pushing leaves around
Counting spinach.

You sit chewing carefully
And offer me some lobster
I take some to my plate
But I don't eat it.

When you call for the check
The waitress retrieves it
But not before raising an eyebrow
At my plate and my bones.

You open the car door
The drive home is eerily quiet
The silence beats against my eardrums
Your lips are pressed into a thin line.

Before bed, you brush
While I wash in lavender soap
I wear the pink satin gown
You bought me so long ago.

It's soft against my skin
Still not as soft as your touch
But you don't kiss me goodnight like before
You sleep with your back turned.
Closing my eyes,
I'll tuck myself into bed
Clutching the folds of my ribs
And remembering the first date.

You had tried on new cologne.
And I hadn't eaten for three days so that I could be lovely.

Topography

Prachi Priyam

We used to be indivisible through those balmy summer nights, with no air conditioning and a creaky ceiling fan circling precipitously above us. Yet we'd be a tangle of legs and curiosity.

I still don't like touch, but back then yours was okay. Your body was mine, my knowledge was yours.

But in the intervening years, our shared memories became nostalgia and not experience.

Your body became his, and my knowledge became that of the world.



Glass Wall, South Street

Sanket Pathak

Photograph

Our home is open.

Julie Christensen

Open. to welcome you to come as you will
With wounds that are life and scars that are strength,
Tonight, every word a healing fiber, every sound a confirmation of
The history, the places, the ways in which we've all been opened.

Open. to the realization that I will never know
How the sounds of my lips echo through the hallways of your ears.
Words opening doors to relationships and experiences,
Signals cascade down ridges that are uniquely yours.

Open. to erasing the line that confines
A being to a box, a human to a color. Because
I believe humans are sparkles that fluoresce
Different colors depending on the way the light hits them.

Open. to the fact that light doesn't make it to every angle
Of every sparkle. As I say these words,
A man sleeps under Lakeshore Drive, driven over
Time and again by a society that suffocated him in his darkest moments.

Open. to questioning a system that lets certain people fade
As fast as the smoke from my lips. Burdens
Carried on bodies, disease bred
Amongst those deemed less than human.

Open. to noticing the structures that our words command,
To the realization that with every breath out, we are filling
Balloons that are twisted by our actions and identities and wounds,
Bound to those around us with a shriek.

Open. to having you as you are. Please,
Share what you will, what you know to be true.
For your truth is bound up in mine. Your opening, my salve.
Spread your humanity across my heart and, please, know that

Our home is always open.



Opposite page:
Hands
Katie Shen
Colored pencil

Balance

Anna Melnick

Pen and pencil



Consequence

Anitha Ahmed

his hot face inches from mine,
i hesitate. what are you thinking? he asks.

—age twelve, Grandmother,
finger to my new bosom

guard that, lower, save it,
again and again, or else—

consequences, i say, i'm thinking
about consequence.

we kiss, lock limbs till Fajr
sleep in its red light.

he leaves this time
for good.

but—consequence in my heels
scraping concrete, over and

over; in my leaden legs, loitering
mid oil-mirage streets, midday

i sleep wet-faced, crooked,
dreaming of fire, for months

smelling smoke, feeling singed
splinters in my palms.

Grandmother—

how could I know?
how could I know?

the embers are in my heart already
and burn slow, and yearn



Woman with White Carnation

Katie Sommers
Oil

pocketbooks

Anthony K. Vu

when madeline was seven
she kept stacks of pocketbooks
jotting her wishes
sketching her daydreams
with jet-black ink and nothing less because
she yearned for permanence
in this transient life

on page eighteen in volume nine
she wrote a contract to the skies
asking for apollo to shine a light
through the fogged windowpane in her
makeshift altar
so that she can get a taste
of fire

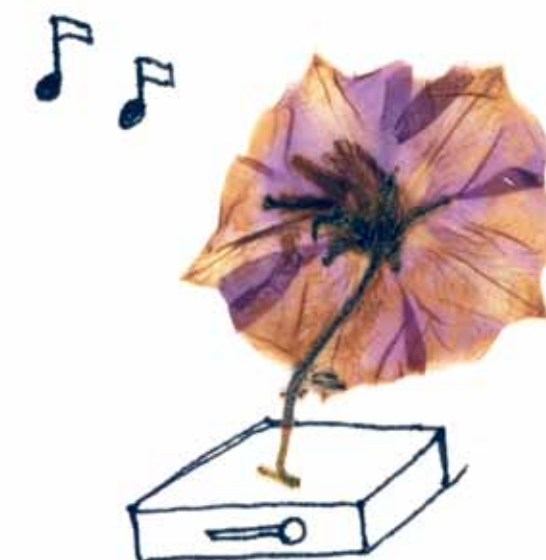
on page forty-five in volume twelve
she saved two locks of hair
one blonde
one red
from a time her mother first dyed it
to the same color of her hands when
she slayed her own nightmares

on page twenty in volume sixteen
she drew a tree
with ten long branches
nine withering
but one ascending
through the virginian air and to
a castle in the sky
where one day she hopes
her ink bleeds on



Miniatures (continued on page 13)

Holly Rankin
Mixed media



Savory Poem

Anya Platt

With this pen I write
memos, not memories
whims taste good
but mold grows quickly

to scarf down the moment
I, a desperate poet,
season my words with salted logic
So indulgent.
my mouth can't help but water at verse after bloated verse

this one is terse.
must be the thirst...



Remembrance

Anya Platt

In rosy retrospection, I allow myself to reflect,
my peace of mind wrought with distracted distance, a bit of dissonance

How did
I handle it?

Hand, hand pressed on the handle of
this scalpel
I wanted to retain the pain of cutting in, transposed, so as not to lose
the weight of the giving and the given,
the giving in.

When curious minds, well-meaning,
ask me, incredulous, Was it real, a real human body, that you cut?
I don't laugh and say, You get used to it,
Like I once did,
I say Yes, it's perhaps the realest gift I've ever been given,
the most whole and the most fragmented
At once.

When I cut in, I wanted to believe that I was making something more whole by making her less so.
Where did that energy go?
Did I create or only dismantle?
How can I know...
On the brink of a breakdown, I remind myself that
I am a work in progress and (im)perfectly complete,
and I supposed she is, too

In mere days we took a woman apart, reduced her to her parts, and then, not even all of those. In mere days our
conception of being human was resown and from those germinated seeds bloomed something stripped, simple,
decorated with the smell of formaldehyde and the bewilderment of our gestures. Did the unease of our first few
days yield to the breeze of repetition? Should we have let it?

I would like to carry the realization of humanness, drawn in the creases of the hand that bore the scalpel, with me,
that sturdy seed, and recycle the knowledge and tear away the weeds
To plant a plea
that life is throughout death,
without death there is no life.
This life, it doesn't end where apparent humanness does,
but trails on further than we can know, from our scalpels
to their bedsides to the crevices of histories and futures.
So, I plant my seed in the distress of ligaments torn and muscles shorn.
Its roots will reconnect and mesh the damage we've done,
damage so temporary in the face of spanned wings, of age, of the lives they lived.



Paper Doll

Daisy Zhang

My eyes are paper rounds that shred when the morning light hits
And flap easily in the wind
They blink against milk in china cups that curve to meet my paper nose
That dips into my magazine mouth
When I smile there are only creases
And when I frown they are still there

My jugular is one swift streamer that swivels into a crystal heartache
I am made of poster child veins and hopes ripped out of journals
The ink in my glass heart spills out to print on a paper chest
Just to pool into paper legs
With arteries that wither

I had wanted to lap you up with my confetti tongue
And touch you with my feather fingers
Let me type words into your skin

I had hoped that you could kiss my paper lips and not get cut
That my glass heart could beat and not break
The shards draw too much ink and pierce through paper skin too easily

I had wanted you to write poetry and whisper songs onto my pages
So that I could tuck you away in scraps in my mind
But before I could turn any page
You had already ripped through mine with your eyes
Ready to glisten against glass
Sharp as knives

I realized too late that you weren't the one who needed to worry about paper cuts
And the creases are still there.



Cardioversion

Jordyn Brooke Tumas

The disquietude of the night rustles the leafless trees,
Skeletons of distant memories,
Disturbed from their slumber.
Agitated, their eyes fall on me,
Their stares unforgiving.
Wailing with a wonton whipping wind,
Their barren branches shake
In disappointment.
Failed promises hang in the air
Like icicles,
Made glassy and hard by the incessant howls.
“I’m trying,” I whisper,
“I’m turning...”
But the rough winds keep flipping the leaves over each time,
Undoing my unsuccessful attempts,
Rejuvenation, resuscitation always just out of reach.
And yet,
Each new endeavor is momentous,
As fresh and inviting as newly fallen snow
Eclipsing the missteps of the past
Embodying only optimism
Singing with the confidence of success
And without the stench of doubt
Or defeat.
Oh, to live in these moments forever,
Emblazoned with the zeal of hope and infallibility.
My hand quivers defiantly
And I reach forward again.

the finest fixes

Anthony K. Vu

your daring dreams give you the illusion
that your mind is boundless
but your small body in this galaxy
says otherwise
so start simple and believe
in the process of elimination
by looking around you:
clean your desk
make your bed
iron your clothes
straighten your posture
take a bath
for the finest fixes
bring out your brightest lights
because your outer space is worth
as much as the one
inside your veins



Stream in Summer

Katie Sommers

Acrylic

Where the Heart Is

Anitha Ahmed

My last morning in Morocco, my host-brother Sufian leads me to the beach before dawn.

“Pray one last time with me,” he had said minutes ago while shaking me awake, his hair curly from sleep, his white keftan crumpled.

As we pad barefoot on the sand, the muezzins call athan from the top of golden minarets to our back. It is too dark for me to see the waves, but Sufian guides me to where the cool water laps our toes, delivers stroking kelp to our ankles. I close my eyes as the muezzins call the last commands—*Go to pray! Go to pray! Prayer is better than sleep!*—and the long-voweled music of the Arabic fills my gut. My fingertips tingle with more than cold flecks of sea-spray. This last time, I realize, I will hear those words and believe them. I know no peace greater than where I am now, sinking in sand, watching strands of plum materialize in the horizon, above the racing water.

The athan ceases and leaves stillness, save the roar of the waves, the ends of my scarf dancing.

Sufian motions for me to stand beside him, and begins the dawn prayer. He sings the opening of the

Qur’an. “Amin,” I answer. Then, he chooses a long chapter to recite, one I never memorized in my youth but have come to recognize over the past few months. I wonder if I will recite it myself in America, if I will hear it in the resounding tenor, the undulating melody Sufian has practiced since infancy. Together, we bring our hands to our knees, and then our bare foreheads to the coarse North-African sand. I savor the scour, the burning brine in my nostrils, and wonder if I will ever pray the dawn prayer in the open air of America; if in America, I will pray the dawn prayer at all.

“Assalamu-alaikum,” we say while kneeling, turning our heads to our right shoulders. “Assalamu alaikum,” we say to the left. It is over. We rise, dripping with seawater. Now, the sky just above the water is sanguine—soon, it will erupt with the sun’s white warmth. Sufian does not meet my gaze. His eyelashes glisten with moisture.

In an hour, he will take me to the airport, and I will follow the sun westward across this water and arrive on the other side of the Atlantic. At home, a stranger again, I will wrap my scarf in secret, and pray alone.



Copper

David Chou

Melt me down and sell me
for what it's worth. I am stationary;
you won't get a penny.
And what is stationery
if it's not meant to be sent?
Kept in dressers
behind pressed dresses
or (folded neatly), in the faintest
shade,
just above the crease
in your neck. Even a statue gets tired
of stillness, arms quivering
at the mere thought of motion.
A shiver would be liberation—
the ocean at dawn, ripples
against the current.
Instead, faces reflect off my
polished shoes.

The early rain tells my reflex to *run*.

Collection

Sam Schoer

She cried
Over the 30 week child in her womb
Whose brain will not form
Yet ending her life is no longer legal
I was not meant to be her comfort
In a white coat
In a sterile room
But I collected her tears
In my swabs of pain
And took them to the lab.

She cried
Over her 4th pregnancy
Unintended
As she asks for time without her kids
She needs peace
She needs a piece of the day
That is hers
In the middle of a crowded shelter
I was not meant to be her comfort
On a stage
In a makeshift room
In a room of hundreds.
But I collected her tears
In my ungloved hands
And touched them to my face

How many tears can I gather in a day
To drown; a wave
So large
That we are all washed away

Opposite page:

2017

Caroline Christianson

Photograph

A Start to Detangling

Sam Schoer

Wrapped up in strangled limbs
I find myself unable to break free
From expectations.

She's "difficult."
Both a clamming up
And a platter of righteousness
Served cold and fierce
Leaving me aching.

My fists are balled
Screaming mantras in the air
Cutting the insides of my palms
Til the child inside me dies down.

How is that I still hide in my shell
30 years after my heart learned
To let the world hear I am loud?



Philly Drummer

Sanket Pathak
Photograph



Trump in Philadelphia

Sanket Pathak
Photograph

A Body's Parts

Sam Schoer

To use a body
To put it on the line

My Body:
A temple.
Frail
Mushy
Freckled and scarred
Place of warmth, with cold hands.

A site for questions.
A sight.
How do I walk in this world
When I don't control my body?

How do small white fingers
Penetrate my intimate parts
Unasked
And unprotected?

My Body:
war. weapon. womb.

I love this body//our Body
A barrier
I will put it in harms way
I will destroy it out of love
Rip the small seams along my fingers
Leave it on the ground
Outline it in white with the chalk of my bones
Here she lies
In protest
In shedding
Of the old ways
Her skin will grow back
Keep the wounds closed and cared for
Whittle down the delicate digits to claws.



Brooklyn
Caroline Christianson
Photograph

Echoes
Tanziyah Muqem

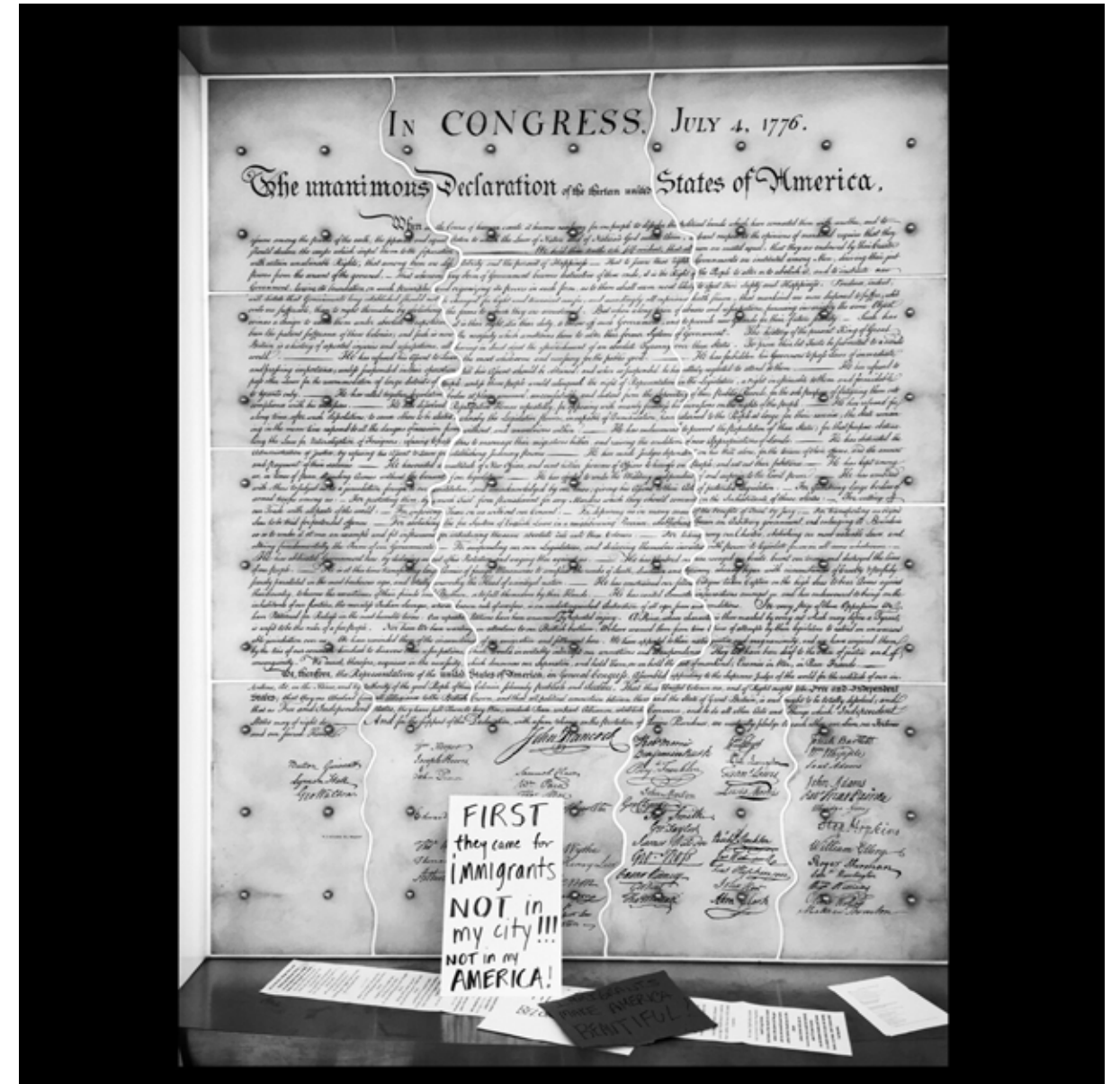
“So here you are
Too foreign for home,
Too foreign for here
Never enough for both.”
-Ijeoma Umebinyuo, *Questions for Ada*

Standing—
Here, on top of the world.
Crisp air
Weaving through branches.
Oxygenating the lifeline
Running through my veins.

The blood of the motherland
runs deep.
Warmth envelops me,
Tropical rays turn my skin
The color of mangrove roots.
The tongue of my ancestors
Rings in my ears.
Familiar and safe,
Foreign and inarticulate.
Pacific calls to me.
Beckons me to my birth,
The coast of a land

My forebears knew not.
To the smoky mountaintops,
Familiar pines and shallow lakes.
To a red and white paradise,
A sanctuary.
But my heart yearns for the mother’s song.
Echoes through the sands,
Fainter and fainter.
Until in unison,
A roaring thunder
Erupts from
Within.

Opposite page:
No Bans on Stolen Lands
Prachi Priyam
Photograph



Carving Song

Anya Platt

I'm wondering –
is my gaze so terrifically raw that you must look away?
And truth, when it is suspended in the glassy film of our corneas, so sharp that
we cannot bear the pain of reality?

Eyes are not knives.
Please, don't look at me with that sharp hate.
The planks are not sewn, you see, just stapled
For that was all I had when I began to build my vision.
Eyes are boats.
We carry them with us, and when we need to set sail,
we dislodge them from the sludge with our tears,
Stay afloat.
Eyes are boats.
Do not use my wood as your cutting board; careful not to chisel or chip—
I may sink.

Why is eye contact so terrifyingly raw?
I want to hold gazes,
cup them in my palms—makeshift raft
and deliver whispered words to the shadows between my fingers
“See, I am with you.”
I want to whittle the trees that obstruct our view
Fashion them into canoes, kayaks
Here's a dinghy, here's a junk
Set down your weapons, please.
Eyes are not knives.
Eyes are boats and we are floating down the same river.

And, when waterfalls threaten to sink our stomachs and snatch our hearts,
eyes carry us along this careening stream,
And, when hot springs erupt, we will be higher for them,
And, as the wood grows more malleable with use, there will be room for cargo, too.
Now, weathered eyes steer more adeptly—they know the waves.

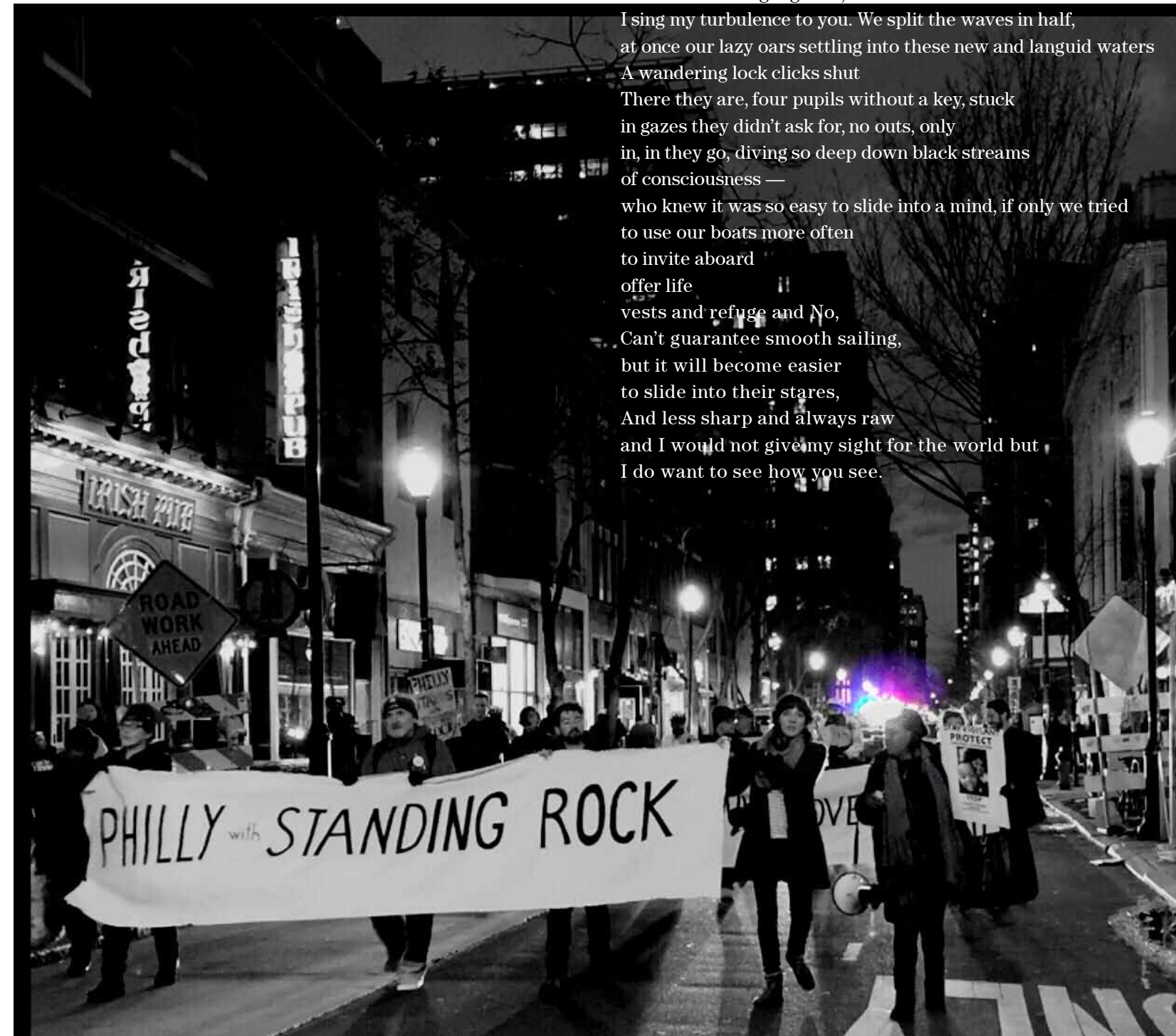
Round, soft, my boat shifts with these changing tides, changing times
Shifty gaze in a world of shifty waters, shitty fathers,
Sure, and shy, mothers and daughters.

How terrifyingly easy is it for you to ignore their pained stares?
I see that in your disgust, you've chosen simply to turn away.
You know, you did not avert the attack by averting your gaze.
So much power in not looking, not building your boat.
Are you tired, or do you not know how?
Here, take my staples
Let me teach you to steer...I'm just learning myself, but it's okay to try.

It's okay to cry. When
our tears meet, we'll form a channel for sailing.

And when we're lost, well, we've all seen stars.
We just must look
Up.
And, when we look
Out
Our
eyes might just lock
Immediate—languageless,
I sing my turbulence to you. We split the waves in half,
at once our lazy oars settling into these new and languid waters
A wandering lock clicks shut
There they are, four pupils without a key, stuck
in gazes they didn't ask for, no outs, only
in, in they go, diving so deep down black streams
of consciousness —
who knew it was so easy to slide into a mind, if only we tried
to use our boats more often
to invite aboard
offer life
vests and refuge and No,
Can't guarantee smooth sailing,
but it will become easier
to slide into their stares,
And less sharp and always raw
and I would not give my sight for the world but
I do want to see how you see.

Opposite page:
Resist
Prachi Priyam
Photograph





Rooster

Michelle Chen

Watercolor and ink

jhaar

Karishma Kodia

your sticky sap
runs, slowly sensually,
sweet mango tree,
giving life
giving glee.

shades of rose and jade
skin of leather
tough
a protection enough
for this delicate,
sweet fruit
of ours
to come;
innocent and pure
with notes of crystal sugar
and a tang to follow

sweet mango tree,
sing to me,
notes of harmony.

and to the children
gifts of sweetness
as we wait upon
the winds of seeds,
grieving life.



The Falls

Emily Sterbis

Photograph

And The Next One Will Be Named

Daisy Zhang

I'll smile to you across the dining hall
And wink as I pass
Make you breathe me till you're high
Eyelashes and soft breaths will tickle your skin
And cold hands will shock your wrist

I'll twirl strands of your hair in between crafty fingers
And make you cross the boundary of adulation
I'll pull your face close and kiss you hard
And pull back to let you rest
Just enough for you to crave more

Hands clawing, trembling torsos
We'll share our first fierce glare after we wrestle.

I'll make you love me so much
That your world will spin when I smile
And your eyes will beg for my glance

Make you love me so much
That your insides will revolt when I'm not around
And your lips will cry for mine

My impish sneer implanted in your mind
My provocative eyes boring holes into yours
My voice, rain against your windows
And my touch sending earthquakes to your core

I am the hurricane of harrowing havoc
Shooting through your veins
Yes, I make you love me so much
And then I leave

And when I do,
You will tell your friends that
I was a snowflake simpering on the curves of your cheeks
And ice on the blacktops of your heart
I was a cascade of spring petals and the showers that precede it

I was hummingbird's wings in the summer breeze
And hail hitting hurried hands
I was the calm before chaos and the wind whistling by design

You'll whisper to yourself that you should have seen it coming
When the skies in my eyes darkened
And my voice clipped thunderbolts against your eardrums
Instead of sweet nothings

As my image invades your dreams and infests your memories,
You'll wake in the middle of the night afraid not of the dark
But of me residing in it,
And you'll think about how I left

Quickly—but just slowly enough
For you to finally understand
Why storms are named after people.

Look at Me

Sh'Rae Marshall

I laid there for hours, mute and motionless. There were moments when the aesthetic of October offered brief peace. Nostalgia still had a place in my mind. No, he was not going to take *that* away from me. I had decided to remain there and become part of the background. Bright orange and dark green leaves began to cover me like a blanket. Under, I had on clothes that I wanted to strip off and set ablaze. That was not an option. I had to pull myself together.

Eventually, I will return to my dorm. My roommate will ask what happened and I will say “nothing.” I will steam my blazer from Ascot Prep and I will polish my shoes. I will shower and it will be over. As the shower ends, so will the pain.

He was never going to win. I may be damaged, but now, I am also *interesting*.

I recalled hearing classmates practicing football from afar. Their laughter traveled through the air in congruent waves, bouncing from tree to tree and producing an amplified noise that engulfed me. I closed my eyes. And like the trees watching me, I stood still and I stood tall.

A heavy hand smashed the side of my face into rough bark that wrapped around bleeding phloem. I had been a pebble clenched in his fist before, but that day, it was different. I felt the strength of his palm against my temple. “I’d fucking kill you, mate.”

I laid there for hours, breathing. I watched my chest rise and lower. I counted how long I could hold my breath. One minute and twenty-five seconds. I wanted that to be my last breath. Every breath reassured me that I will not be able to escape. Every breath reassured me that I will still see him in class. I will still see him at practice. I will still hear about his acceptances to all eight American Ivy League universities. I will still read his Facebook posts of fictitiously combatting injustice. I will still like photos of him drinking expensive liquor and wearing expensive clothes. I cannot block him because it would be suspicious. I will have to pretend like nothing happened.

Nobody would believe me, anyway.



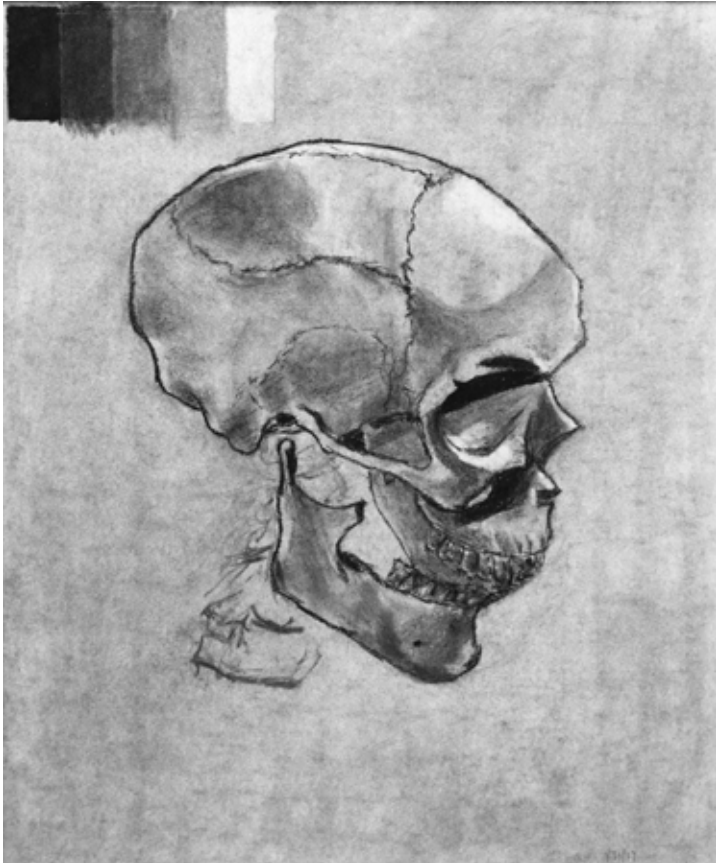
Father and Sons
Jessie Phillips
Acrylic

After one last thrust, he tossed me to the side like a toy he was done playing with. I was discarded. He zipped up his coat and disappeared into the forest. Leaving me empty and broken. He did not even look at me.

I laid there for hours. I knew not to tell anyone. No, this will be *our* secret. It will haunt him but it will bond us, so intimately and so chaotically. Every time someone moans, or scratches his neck, or gets pinned down by him...he will fucking remember me. He will no longer be able to associate love with sex. That part of him, now, belongs to me. *You did not even look at me.*



Winter Break
Naomi Newman
Oil on mirror



Contrast Study

David Chou
Charcoal

Dissection

Benji Richter

Bodies
and hearts--
they decay.
And the room is filled with them.

Brains
and minds
filled with decaying memories,
sliced open and let out
to make room for them.
One body blends into another.

Bones
of past lives
are broken and everywhere.
I begin to wonder
if these bodies are fading.

Eyes
gazing out
to the end of the world;
the dead almost look like the living.

I stare at them,
and they at me--
I no longer wonder
if these bodies have faded.

One by One

Jui Desai

The image emerges, hazy
Pixels of beige, brown, pink
coming together to form a face
Her deep brown eyes void
The thousands of miles erased
In this moment it's just me and her
and the millions of unspoken words
I take a deep breath
and choke out

Nani...

Nani...

And the lies tumble out
I'm so glad to see you
one by one
you look well
swallowed by the screen
emotions unseen
but festering deep within
I cannot do this

I cannot smile like everything is fine
and memories pound inside my head
the hours on the garden swing
the smiles the laughter the joy
the sweet aroma of lavender
replaced by antiseptic
the squeal of the tires
her limp body on the ground
the screams the pain
the searing pain

you have to be okay

her image blurs on the screen
like my vision from the tears
and I wear on my face
the bravery I've had for two years
and my watery smile hopes
today will be the day she smiles
like she did on that swing eons ago

Nani

I silently plead
please I need this
and I hear her croak my name
as I stare at my shattered heart
its scattered fragments littering my room
glittering in the sun
and slowly
her mouth remembering the motions
when she smiles
I begin to pick them up
one by one.

Gentle Hands

Megan Feick

Gentle Hands, rest easy now--
Warped, wrinkled, and wrangled,
Wipe away the worries you have worn.

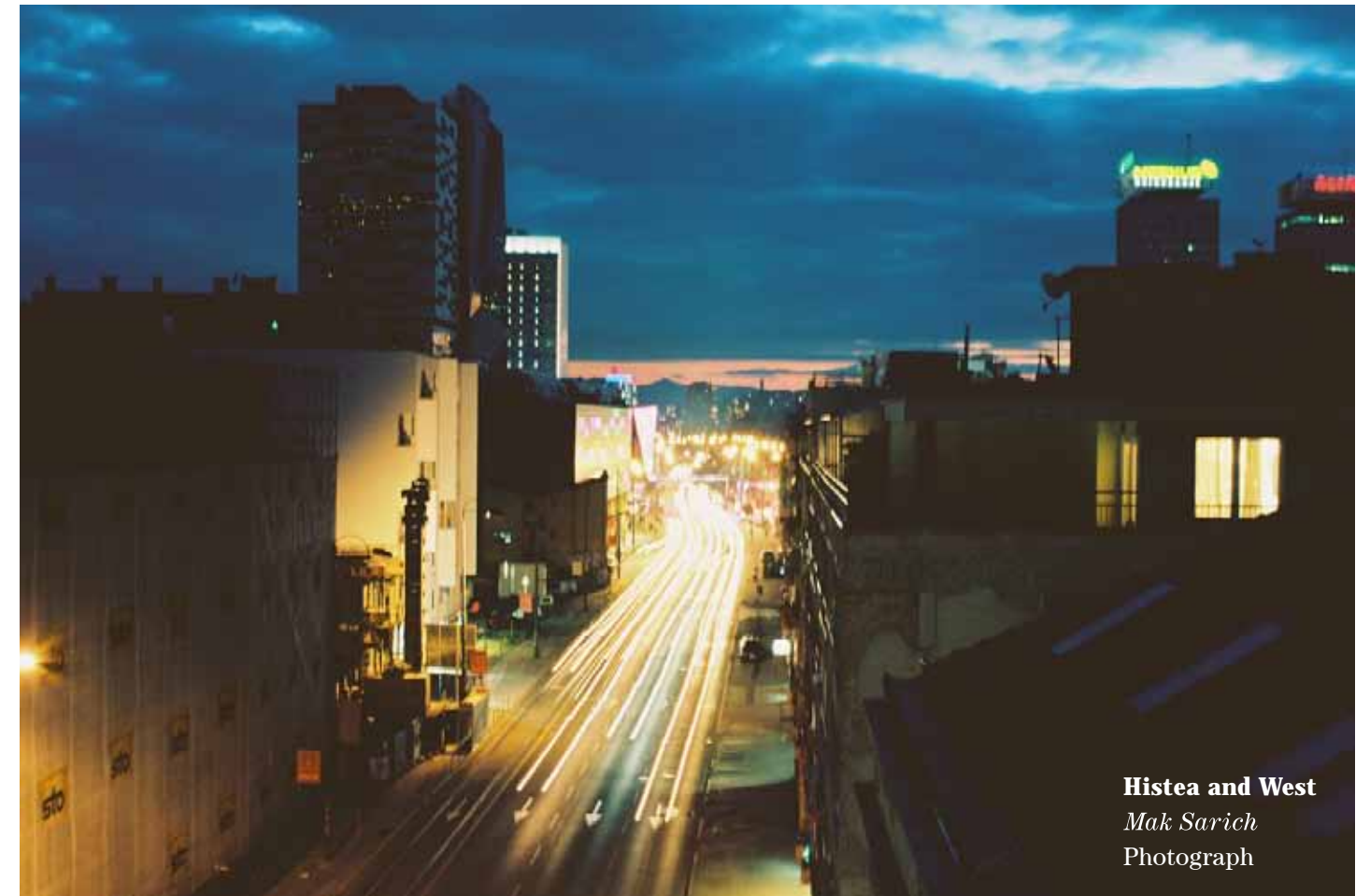
Gentle Hands, rest easy now--
Release the regrets you retain
And rightfully receive some relief.

Gentle Hands, rest easy now--
Fearful, frozen, and fractured,
Free the phantoms that follow you.

Gentle Hands, rest easy now--
Place your pained palm in mine
And pass into perpetual peace.



Miljacka East
Mak Sarich
 Photograph



Histeia and West
Mak Sarich
 Photograph

1

Harnoor Kaur

hearts blink
 eyes sigh
 fingers nibble
 ears cry
 feet stare
 arbitrary lines
 between
 hips and thighs
 characterizations
 hair, knuckle, frown lines
 dining room
 living room
 kitchen
 how we separate
 our homes
 but every part of me
 is born, breathes,
 and dies
 as one.

the streets of 2 am

Karishma Kodia

the streets of 2am
 are not the same
 as the streets of 2pm.
 filled with coffee, gripped tightly
 teeth clenched,
 shoulders hunched,
 as they scurry along.

No, the streets of 2am
 are rich with mice scurrying into gutters
 speeding cars
 winds of change.

The streets of 2am
 are not safe for a young woman
 Yet they are familiar,
 they are, that is,
 home.

inspiration

Harnoor Kaur

Naked, nest of eyelashes unfurling, gasping truth—
 experiencing direct oxygen for the first time
 unshielded, indestructible, alive.
 We are slowly fed noxious intentions
 as we mold nests with thorny intimidations,
 rotting as we try to reverse supposed mutations—
 bricks forcefully bulldozed into frontal lobes
 strip us of our naked as perfection shatters us.
 Strongest at our most defenseless
 stable when we once wobbled
 with age we calcify, steeling ourselves as they steal us.
 As if our shame, embarrassment, has
 caused our diaphragms to freeze—
 wishing we could breathe back in lives.
 Many surmise that only the organ
 of the eyes have a twenty-twenty hindsight.
 Gasp—
 not as if it was your last breath
 but your first.

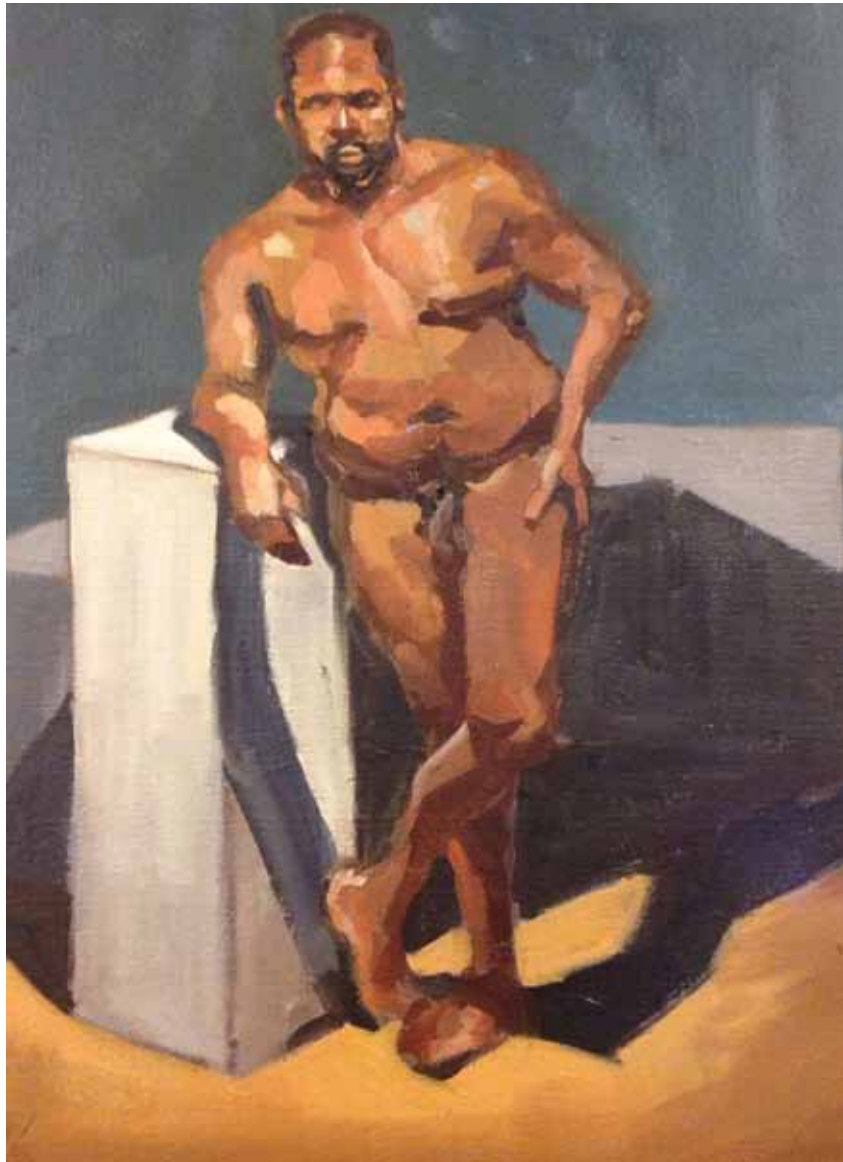


Seated Study
Chen Zhou
Oil

1 A.M.

Daisy Zhang

The dots dance around your eyes
And the street lights flicker with your lashes.
Tear drops trickle from crinkled corners
And half-moon lids.
Your throat read raw,
You licked lips dry,
You talk about how his tongue was sandpaper
Against a brilliant beautiful wasteland,
How his lips spilled silk but curved over wolf canines,
His hands that seemingly fit the world
Curled around neck and wrists
In a chainsaw grip.
When he looked at you, he shot shivers down your spine
Lightning and knives,
But his whispered sweet sounds
Hid a poison organ
And a pointed façade.
You talked about how there were so many red flags,
But you shrouded yourself in white
And toted a vulnerable surrender.
How his arms were always around another girl's waist,
How his cheekbones contoured a line of lies,
How he only held your hands under covers
And warmed them against a cold beat.
When you turn to stare at blank walls
Or look at your own face in passing windows,
Wondering what went wrong
And why you expected so much
When you fell so hard with so little to carry,
Remember that you should never have to beg
To be loved.



Home

David Chou

Home is a sepia tone still without a frame
 Pinned to the cork, hanging alone
 In the mane of Chicago—
 Imperfect corners, stained by salts, dripping
 With undeveloped color,
 Leaving a pool of barren ink
 On the faces of kids and girls and coins,
 The cold contrast of decrepit rails
 Seeping like snails into the unforgiving sky,
 Clouds barely discerning
 The border in the horizon, the order
 In the sunlight reflecting their eyes
 And leaving it up to interpretation
 The truth behind their patience.

Standing Nude

Chen Zhou

Oil

Back Alleyway

Julie Christensen

Alleyways are honesty. Beautiful
 In their imperfection; each vein
 A pathway to a worn staircase,
 A rickety door made of truth.

Chicago alleyways live lined with
 brick. Sturdy yet crumbling, each
 Cell reluctantly succumbs to
 The weight of its own reality.

A mysterious violence binds these
 Back roads. Where raw
 Spontaneity lets histories untold
 Collide with futures unknown.

Sun-streaked skies, structured
 Silhouettes, tree-shaped skeletons.
 Each figure another tragic story.
 How is it all so stunning?



Dear Mommy

Rachel S. Werk

I love you, and over my young, little life my love has grown for you more and more. I have loved you as you gave me kisses, tickles, and hugs. I have loved you as you played endless rounds of peek-a-boo, itsy-bitsy spider, and patty cake with me. I have loved you as you gave me every toy I could possibly imagine, every doll, every brightly colored book. I have loved you as you fed me, making airplane noises with each spoonful, as you washed me, and as you provided for all my needs and desires. As you woke up at 4:00 a.m. most nights when I couldn't sleep, just to share a few special moments. As you smiled and clapped with me, oinking like a pig and mooing like a cow, just to make me giggle.

And I want you to know that I even loved you when you let them stick long, plastic tubes in me, when you allowed them to prick me with needles on what seemed like every inch of surface area of my body, when they would wake me up every hour to run tests and examine me and when they hooked me up to big, scary, monster-looking machines. I loved you when you told them they could pump rounds and rounds of poison into my body that my cheeks became puffy and I refused to eat. I even loved you as they picked me up and took me away from you to cut me open and then sew me back up. I loved you, as I lay curled up in your arms, in the middle of that sterilized room in the late hours of one warm spring night, when they could not bring me back to you.

Mommy, I want you to know that I forgive you and I loved you through it all.

A Quiet Sunday Morning

Emily Ott

Photograph

Standard Deviations

Erik Blomain

“Bill, you don’t understand. She could die.”

“Bullshit, Frank. Don’t be dramatic.”

Frank looked around for support, but found none. Bill, the exasperated hospital administrator turned to the android, “Tell him, PRAM.”

“It is exceedingly unlikely that this patient’s condition will prove fatal,” said the Patient Recovery Assistance Module. “Two standard deviations from the mean, at least—nearly 99% probability that Dr. Dugan is incorrect.”

“There, you see?” said Bill triumphantly. “Two standard deviations! C’mon Frank, give me a break here.”

“Standard deviations don’t change my clinical opinion,” said Frank, “Nor does a bucket of bolts.”

“Maybe we should listen to the doctor,” said the nurse meekly.

“Maggy, could you please excuse us for a minute?” said Bill, clearly not pleased with the interruption.

Maggy flushed and slinked from the room.

Bill motioned to a set of chairs in the corner, “Frank, have a seat. We need to talk this out.”

“Look, Frank,” Bill began as they sat, “I’m trying to be diplomatic here, but we both know why you work here—what your true job at the hospital is.”

“Sure we do,” said Frank. “I’m just the old fossil that you keep around because the Bedside Manner Act requires you to.”

“Right,” Bill said. “So we are required by law to have you here—one human doctor per hospital. You’re here as a legal disclaimer, or maybe even a historical fascination, but we don’t expect you to actually TREAT the patients. We have dozens of PRAMs for that. And they do a damned good job.”

He was not wrong. Though it stung Frank’s pride to admit the truth, the PRAMs actually did a good job. What they lacked in human intuition and compassion they seemed to make up for with diligence, efficiency and consistency. Still, he was not ready to give up the fight in this case. “I know, they do a good job. But this patient is about to have a very serious reaction. Call it an old doctor’s intuition.”



Gandhi and the Brain

Mak Sarich

Photograph

“Well you’ll have to excuse the rest of us if we don’t set aside PRAM’s millions of calculations per second and combined knowledge of thousands of medical textbooks based on your intuition,” said Bill. “But hey, I’ll tell you what I can do; I’ll get on the horn with central, and put in an appeal for you. They have that advanced patient outcomes simulator. If there’s something to this hunch, they’ll find it.”

It was better than nothing. Frank nodded his approval and Bill excused himself from the room to make his calls, leaving Frank alone in silence. He glanced into the mirror on the far side of the room. He barely recognized his own reflection anymore. His hair had gone from salt-and-pepper to stark gray, and he had crows’

feet around his eyes. It seemed like only yesterday that he had been a wide-eyed young doctor in awe of treating his first patient. Days long gone.

The door opened behind him. Frank turned, anxious to hear Bill’s reply, but instead of Bill’s portly frame it was the shapely frame of the nurse, Maggy, that greeted him as he turned.

“Hey, doc,” she said warmly, “Mind if I have a seat?”

“Go ahead,” he offered. He felt like he could use some company.

She sat down and crossed her legs demurely, careful not to expose any thigh behind the regulation nurse’s uniform skirt. Frank was attracted to her, but she was young enough to be his daughter. She was not

even old enough to remember what life was like before the health care acts and before PRAMs.

“I really admire what you did back there,” she offered. “So much happens around here, it’s refreshing to see someone actually care about sick people.”

“Before you were born,” said Frank, “that was considered to be the highest form of medicine.”

“What was that like?” she asked, genuinely curious.

“It’s funny,” he responded. “We were actually criticized by our predecessors for being too dependent on technology, but our hearts were always in the right place. I never dreamed of the irony—that technology would eventually think it was too dependent on us and cut us out of the equation.”

No sooner had he spoken then the door opened. Bill returned with the PRAM close behind. “Well, Frank, I’ve got some good news and some bad news. The good news is that you were right. The simulator confirmed an acceptable likelihood that your patient will suffer a cytokine storm, as you predicted, in response to her immunotherapy. The bad news is that they have not allocated us any resources to treat her condition.”

“You can’t be serious,” said Frank, thunderstruck.

“There’s apparently no value added to the system by treating cytokine storms. You only save one patient for every 15 you treat,” said Bill.

“How is that our call? What about the patient herself—wouldn’t she want that chance at life?”

“You know as well as I do that the system exists for the whole, not the parts.”

Frank sat in stunned silence.

“Don’t worry, though,” said Bill. “The PRAM will break the news to the family.” Bill left the room, taking the PRAM with him.

Frank was struck by a sudden moment of clarity. He stood and gave Maggy a knowing look. Together, they walked down the hallway, into the patient’s room, and began to wheel the gurney down the hall toward the hospital’s main entrance.

Too late, Bill saw what was happening, and called out after them. “Wait, where do you think you are going?!”

Frank smiled at Maggy, and as they both called back in unison:

“Back in time.”

Knighthood

Alicia Jiang

In an olden gale, many years ago,
In a queendom ruled by Her.
There lived a mouse whose greatest
Wish, was to roam and go as Sir.

He traveled the road of Delphinium
Onward to castle blue.
A needle held aside his tail
A beetle on his crew.

He walked past the polished armored
Guards, and polished furry dogs.
But had to duel and test his mettle
On that scoffing frog.

Now, he traveled further in and further out,
Till he saw old Her.
Then bowed until his whiskers touched
His toes and trilled through his fur:

My lovely, my sweet, my queen,
How have I traveled,
How I have endured,
To come to bid at your castle,
So please, stay and hear my words.

My life, my paws, and my ever loyal needle,
Have come to claim knighthood,
Then go out past that thundering gale
To fawn and serve for all good.

And the queen whose frilly frock was
Spattered with jewels and trinkets,
And silly gold-embroidered veil hid
Her dying hued ringlets

Tilted her head and
Crushed the needle-held mouse
Beneath her frowning shoe.



Ireland

Chen Zhou

Oil

The Process

Alex Acosta

There's a sense of security that can be found walking down a street, hands in pockets, staring at the ground. Your feet beat the ground at a pace you get to determine. You can count the cracks in the ground or just watch them fall behind you over and over again. Most people imagine meditation as sitting cross legged on the floor, but clearing my mind meant moving through the streets without a clear thought, winding left and right and left again. I had my headphones in, but I wasn't listening to anything. The album I was listening to had ended some time earlier, but that didn't really seem to matter.

The cracks in the sidewalk had become much more difficult to distinguish. It was evening now and the sun had set not just behind the buildings, but deep behind the horizon. I took my phone out of my pocket to check the time, but it was dead. I looked up from the ground and I felt like I had just entered a scene in some movie I had never seen before. Where was I? The street names didn't look familiar and I was never very good at using the grid system in big cities. It was only my second month living in Queens and I didn't know much of the city beyond my apartment and my route to school. I wanted to get out and explore the city. I had heard such great things about New York and was eager to give it a proper vetting, but since moving here it felt more like a whirlwind of lectures, meetings, outlines and coffee. I looked back down the block I had been walking. There were tenements on my left and on the other side of the street a small park with some dilapidated playground equipment and a smattering of benches. It was that time between day and night where everything was more of a silhouette with a hazy gray glow, edges blending like an aponeurosis.

I heard a bell ring from the other end of the block. I turned around and saw a woman coming out of a bodega at the corner of the block. I walked up the block and stepped through the doorway. It had been misting most of the afternoon, but it didn't seem apparent until I saw how damp I looked under the florescent lights of the deli. My eyes lingered towards the deli menu. I had a special spot in my heart for hot deli sandwiches. It was funny how the city was so big and diverse, but certain things were consistent no matter where you went. I pondered my order, listening to the attendant converse with another customer in some melodic language I was unfamiliar with. I ordered, paid, and stepped back out onto the street, sandwich in hand.

Boy Contemplating

Sanket Pathak

Photograph



I crossed the street and headed back towards the park I had seen earlier. The misting had stopped and everything was covered in a slick layer of water, reflecting the lights from the bodega and crosswalk. Stopped at the intersection, waiting for the walk sign, I watched the water rippling along the curb and into the drain just below my feet. Finding my way to the park, I used my hand to wipe water from one of the benches and took a seat. I unwrapped my sandwich and bit into my sandwich, but there seemed to be no taste, like I was chewing and swallowing as some part of ritual, going through the motions. I sat back and started to think about the last couple months. It all seemed so surreal, like one really long, foggy day. Wake up, coffee, lecture, study, meeting, study, sleep, repeat. I knew medical school wouldn't be easy, but I never expected this. It was as if all the other students glorified the sleepless nights, the tireless studying and the one track mind.

I had just finished the practical on our second anatomy exam. It was brutal. I tried to remember certain questions, but there was a hole in my memory as if I had blacked out. All I remember was the nervous chatter amongst the students waiting for it to begin, and then the dull buzz of uncertainty afterwards in the locker room. "Did you get this answer? Well I put this because it couldn't be that. What was the answer to that imaging question?" I pushed my way out of the locker room trying to avoid eye contact with anyone I knew. The exam was the last thing I wanted to talk about. I left the exam building and just kept walking, trying my best to think of nothing at all.

I suddenly felt very full and wrapped up my sandwich to save it for later. I had no idea where I was, but it was the most secure I had felt in the last few months. I walked a few blocks up towards a busy intersection, again walking with a certain intention in my step, breathing deeply. I found a metro station and was able to reorient myself. I had wandered about 38 blocks away from my apartment. I stood at the platform gazing at the mosaic wall just beyond the tracks. Abstracting patterns in the tiles, I listlessly waited for the subway, swaying slightly side to side. I could feel the transient change in pressure as the subway roared into the station, the tracks screeching as they met the metal wheels of the train. I was lucky enough to find a fairly empty cart and rode the train home. The walls of the tunnel whizzed by, speckled with flashes of white from the service lights throughout the length of the subway. I looked passed my reflection through the window, happy to enjoy this time to myself, even if it would be just for one evening.

The Interpreter

Jarett Beaudoin

While waiting for the next call, the interpreter placed a dish of chicken and vegetables in the oven and set the kitchen timer for 20 minutes.

Her cell phone rang. She picked up the phone and introduced herself, then asked the caller if he would like to dial out.

“No thank you, I’m here with my patient now. You can introduce yourself.”

She paused, then began to explain to the silent line that she would interpret everything the patient said. “Yes, thank you,” said a young girl’s voice.

“Go ahead doctor; the patient is ready,” the interpreter said.

The doctor introduced himself and began to ask the girl what had brought her mother in today.

“My mother has been having terrible pain in her stomach and chest and she cannot move. Yesterday, she had the pain and it was very bad. She cannot eat and her face itches all over and she can barely sleep or — The doctor cut her off, “Ma’am, you have to speak in short sentences or the interpreter won’t be able to interpret.” She was thankful he said this. New arrivals always spoke in long monologs, an artifact of the medicine practiced back home, where a doctor’s pity meant better tests and medications. Here in the US it seemed the opposite; long stories made physicians annoyed or suspicious.

She told the patient to speak in shorter sentences, then paraphrased what the girl had said.

The doctor continued to ask the normal round of questions. How long have you been in pain? What kind of pain? How did the pain feel? She knew these questions were important but didn’t quite understand why. When asked, the girl rarely referred to her mother for answers. The mother never spoke.

When she asked the girl for the location of her mother’s pain, there was a silence. The interpreter tried to imagine the mother pulling up her shirt and pointing to the spot with the pain, but was distracted by the neighbor’s dog barking at a passing car.

The doctor has decided on a diagnosis. “I think you have a case of GERD.”

The interpreter considered whether to repeat what the doctor had said or to try a better phrase. She knew the patient and her daughter probably had never heard of GERD.

“I think you have GERD,” the interpreter said. “...Ok,” the girl said.

The interpreter waited. She wanted the daughter to ask more questions, to understand the diagnosis; but she knew they would not press. The doctor was the authority and patients did not ask questions.

“I’m going to give you some medication and that should make it better in about a week.” “Ok,” the girl said.

“Ok great. If that’s all then I’m going to hang up the phone with the interpreter.” “I need a note for school,” she said.

“Ok, just ask the front desk on the way out,” he said. “Ok, thank you doctor,” she said.

“Thank you doctor,” the interpreter translated. “Thanks,” the doctor said.

The girl started to thank the interpreter, but the line was cut. The dog outside was still barking. She looked at the timer on the oven. There were still 10 minutes left.



Abstract Anatomy: The Strength Within

Jordyn Brooke Tumas

Acrylic

Snake Honey Thaw

Sam Schoer

A snake in the grass
Honey sweet, your tears
I mistook for knowledge
Instead of raw pain.
You are burning ice
A blistered palm
To thaw is to unravel the strings you sewed here.

Water

Malika Madhava

I ask her to close her eyes.
Her ballerina posture cuts slack
under the weight of awareness of
what we know but can’t see,
like when a silvered fish asks
“What is water?” and we can’t
explain how it is the way we close
our eyes and touch finger to nose.



Circus

David Chou

It took me time to figure out
that swords weren't food,
And the elephants were sad,
And the hoops were hammered oval
like the rings I tossed at ten.

Eleven was no different since
the lockers were too small
to fit anything of import
but busywork and loose leaf
pages covered in sketch.

They're piled up at mother's house.
*You could be a pilot
if you wanted to be.*
I'm afraid of heights.
Doctor then.

The veil was lifted during dissections
and again on the children's ward,
where innocent eyes wait to play
and innocence eyes its great escape.
So in the day room we drew the circus.

Bavarian Bubble Boy

Mak Sarich

Photograph

Notes on Loss

Gianna Girone

The secret to mourning is to
wear it like a fine hair coating.
Wear it present,
but not insulating.
Covet your warmth like an ochre evening.

To carry your loss,
you must make home with it.
Bargain with it on holidays, ask to shed it loose
just for dinner, just until mass is over.
Relatives will encourage a heartier hallelujah,
more hope,
more bread,
more wine,

But the trick is to prism yourself,
without becoming a lighthouse.
*Be the light, be the light,
not the beacon.*

I will tell you, when it is too much
I dog-ear the memories I cannot separate from,
shuck out their seawater with my teeth,
slurp out the sludge,
leave it sterile,

I cannot always be perfect and cold in my healing;
when November wanes in,
I wax out of reason.

People ask,
Where do you put such a mountain?
I will tell you, you flip their caps inward, acidify
the charcoal fire, and
burp up the volcano.
Some mornings you will reflect and realize
it is still there,
it is still burning.

Loss is an act of violence in that way,
a surgical prowess.
A honeycomb stasis,
then an ether-less dissection...

Still we admire how great the burden is,
swallowed and metabolized.

Contributors

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