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wildscape. literary journal
Instagram: @wildscapelit
wildscapelit@gmail.com

Cover Art: "Summer's Last Dance" by Jennifer Wannen

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TRIGGER WARNING : Some passages within this issue may contain difficult topics, which could be triggering for some people. These topics include but are not limited to mentions of genocide, religion, sexual assault, mentions of self-harm, mentions of suicide/suicidal ideation, abandonment, addiction, and abuse. Please read with caution, and take breaks as needed. Your mental health matters.

editor's note

Lovely Readers,

Welcome to our eighth quarterly issue, and our ninth issue overall. As we close out our second full year of publications, I want to thank you for being here - whether this is your first time joining us, your third time, or maybe even your ninth time. We couldn't do this without you. I'm so glad you're here.

This issue has a special place in my heart. While we didn't have a theme going into this issue, a theme kind of evolved as pieces were accepted, and now that it's been fully curated, it's clear that there is an unofficial theme here. Moody, gothic, and emotional are all words I'd use to describe Issue 8. Not in an "emo millenial" kind of way - more so a "I'm angry and grieving at the state of the world right now" kind of way.

As you dive into this issue, you're going to feel a lot of things. Mainly grief, I think. But I hope that you take that grief and do something with it. Maybe that means you take part in mutual aid in your community, or speak out against fascism, racism, and genocide, or maybe you simply allow yourself to finally feel the heaviness of it all and then go from there. Whichever you choose to do, I hope this issue moves you and changes you. I hope that heaviness in your chest lightens a little bit, knowing that there are so many others who are hurting the way you're hurting. I hope you realize you're not alone, and there's a whole army of heartbroken people around you, who want to fight for what is right alongside you.

Regardless of what you do after taking in this issue, I'm so glad you're here. You matter. Your words and your art matter. I love you. You are enough.

With love,
Ophelia M.
Editor-in-Chief



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The Yucca Stalk

RAYA YARBROUGH

Burst breast of petals
bent back
heavy
on the thin trunk.
I hear the yucca stalk
moan
in the last of afternoon:
God yes
I am alive.



TITLE: *anatomia di lustrini 18*
ARTIST: Brian Hallas

ABOUT THE PIECE

Brian Hallas is an innovative award-winning abstract/surrealist digital photographer and collagist from New Jersey, whose artistic quest is all about transformation. An iPhone is his tool of choice to capture and craft sometimes delightful, sometimes disturbingly hallucinogenic images and collages, where familiar landscapes become extraordinary dreamscapes. Through layering and blending, each piece is a painterly convergence of vibrant colors, dynamic shapes, intense textures, and pure invention. In each new work, his desire to push boundaries celebrates the interchange between the eye and the imagination, and showcases a versatility that resonates with viewers around the world.

Black Sheep

CHANDRA PERSAUD

My foremothers believe there isn't a wound they cannot sew, masters
of braiding life’s frays between their fingers. They are

women with the same fierceness of their goddess who sprung
from earth to save it when no one else could. My foremothers,

standing up to life like golden tridents, daring
it to bend them without a good fight. I’ve feared my whole life

the resiliency bestowed to my foremothers somehow
bypassed me. I imagine they kiss their teeth and stiffen

their jaws that I crack open. If they beheld all of me, they would
be confused– the daughter who loses appetite easily

over roadkill, stays in a stained sweater some days, sits too long
in silence, cries fiercely over a ballad. I worry

my flesh is not like theirs. I can’t quickly decimate life's
metaphorical redwoods, or take three giant laps

across grief. I can’t clear a path overnight, claim
what’s mine like a menacing storm. Most days,

I’m caught between the firings of my synapses and all I can do
is wear my wounds bandaged. (I cannot sew.) I worry

my foremothers would be convinced my heart is paper mache
because most days, all I can do is rip into a patch of earth,

crawl in, send currents down my chin. Plant sunflowers
in my navel, and pray they grow.

TITLE: *Verdant Echoes*
ARTIST: Jennifer Wannen



ABOUT THE PIECE

Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky reflected, “Everything has a secret soul, which is silent more often than it speaks.” As an artist, I gravitate toward subjects that dance on the edge of two worlds—one of ordinary physical reality and one of non-ordinary mystical presence. Whether framing a nature scene or setting up a narrative self-portrait, I’m attempting to capture a current of mystery I perceive in that moment. With alternative lenses and composite editing, I’m generally taking an image further from empirical presentation and more into an imaginative space, conjuring multiple layers and realities at play. My images invite the viewer into an intimate ‘time out of time’ world, ideally making space for their own experience of the sacred in their lives.

Lemon Daze

CHRISTINE ROBERTSON

Today I need to be with Sammy.

I watch the girls ride, injecting myself with a kaleidoscope of shapes and sounds. They only trot in circles, but the magic in their movement quiets the stories in my mind. I steady in the steady drum of horse hooves, the smell of pine needles and sea salt, the musky tang of manure under the August sun.

When the bench grips me, I twist and turn. Balance an iced tea on my thigh. Circle the lemon wedge with a straw.

Sammy licks lemons like a racehorse licks salt. She digs in the monkey dish for the thickest wedge and bites her teeth into its soft flesh, squinting as the juice trickles in her mouth—relaxing her lips around the rind.

Sam's go-to joke is to look at us with that waxy yellow smile and bulge her eyes like a tree frog, bobbing her head back-and-forth, flailing her arms, charging us like some sort of Claymation creation.

Right as she's about to collide into us—right as I'm about to say *okay Sammy, that's enough, settle down*—she explodes with that contagious guffaw, dropping the shiny wedge onto the floor. The whole bit is so incredibly funny to her, I can't help but wonder if she's egging us on, goading giggles out of her sister. How can anything be that funny to anybody?

But it is.

Across the corral, a woman next to the stables glances in my direction. She closes in, crunching pinecones with her feet. I pull the corners of my lips toward my ears and redirect my focus to the girls, but she plops beside me chasing her breath.

(story continued on next page...)

“Woo-wee!” she says with a toothy grin. “Sure is hot! You got the best spot out here—your girl ride?”

After we showed Sammy the 1944 Elizabeth Taylor film *National Velvet*—my childhood favorite—she couldn’t think about anything but horses. Riding horses. Talking to horses. Horses. Horses. Horses.

I nod once, willing her to leave.

“Nice! That’s mine over there,” she says, oblivious, pinky pointing toward a girl on a white horse. “God, she loves horses… There’s nothing but horses these days.”

The girl springs in her saddle, clip clopping in circles.

“Man, they grow up fast, don’t they?” she says, shaking her head.

My jaw locks.

“Mine just turned eight,” the woman adds, bouncing her leg.

Please go, I beg.

But the silence holds us.

“How old’s yours?” she tacks on with that grin.

The question cracks me open and as hard as I fight, I can’t stop the thoughts.

She would be nine…

They bore into me with a cacophony of shapes and sounds that flood my insides with their acidic burn.

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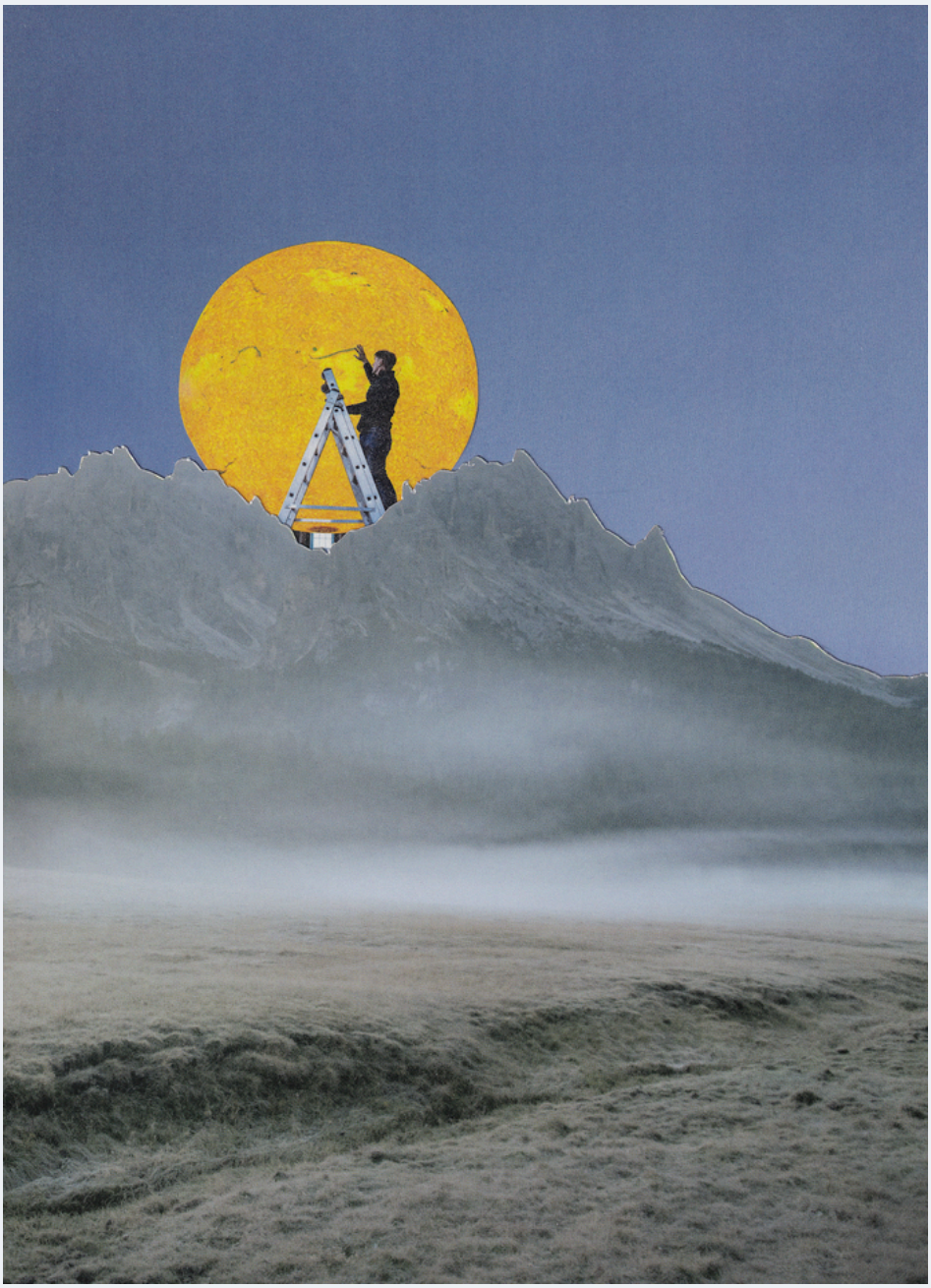
She should be nine.

“Same,” I finally mouth, squinting—unable to relax my lips around the rind.

The Red Slip Says "THIS BUS HAS BEEN CHECKED FOR SLEEPING CHILDREN"

EMILY TONG

but from here half the phrase is unforgiven,
loves the fine warmth of our dead instead.
There is so much of December left
to kill, all that stolen breath
to divide into my body. Through double
panes, the moon is a figment
of the sky/stars/moon, beckoning
the beginning of a space movie from the second
seat in the back. The one where a girl clutches
a toy rocket and smiles, despite the smell. And
guess what: I was still alive
for all this. Hope was a limping
squirrel on the side of the highway, a mile away
from my house. My Ma called once,
twice, while I was dreaming of learning
how to dance. We were wild as red forest
berries, immortal on silver pavement—I woke
with half a waltz in my bones. The other
half had decided it was sick of being left
behind, sick of winter, sick *from* winter,
sick of running out of things to walk away
from and waiting for itself along with
everything else. Air had decided to pull
the miracle, floating, from memory. Sometimes,
I think I could've lived like that forever.



TITLE: *moon repair*
ARTIST: Ayçe Çelikel

ABOUT THE PIECE

"moon repair" is an analogue collage made from images found in a magazine and a book, using only scissors and glue. My collaging process is intuitive and spontaneous. I rarely sit down with a specific idea in mind. I simply start making and see where the process takes me. I enjoy the freedom of this process. Collaging allows my restless mind to slow down, wander and experiment.

"moon repair" is one of my favourite pieces, perhaps because of my lifelong fondness for the moon, especially the full moon. I have a full moon tattoo, and the first syllable of my name, "Ay," literally means "moon" in Turkish!

Buoy

DAWN MCCOMBS

I was standing knee-deep in the ocean, wearing my sunglasses and a NY baseball cap. With sunglasses and cap still on, I started swimming towards a red and white buoy. My daughters said they saw me swimming away, my cap and arms the only parts of me above the water. I heard them call out, until their voices eventually faded. When I've retold this story, I've called it immersion therapy. I wonder now if it was more like Virginia Woolf walking into the sea. I didn't have any rocks in my pockets, and I knew how to swim, but I was living in a dead woman's body. If I got caught in a riff tide or swallowed by a shark it would have been fine.

I had a phobia of swimming in the ocean that started when my parents took me to see Jaws on the big screen when I was ten. When we got home, I screamed in the bath, fearful that a gigantic shark was going to swim up from the sewer pipes and eat me whole. From that point on, a minnow brushing against my foot would send me screaming and flailing towards the shore, even in swimming holes in Ohio.

I didn't make it to the buoy in that first attempt. I had the stamina, but my mind wouldn't allow me to keep swimming. When I joined my daughters on the shore, they were dumbfounded. I'll never forget my youngest asking, "Are you trying to die?"

The next day I did it again. I didn't go far and when I joined my daughters splayed out on their beach towels slathered in sunscreen, they just shook their heads in amazed confusion at my new obsession.

The third day I convinced my daughter's boyfriend to go with me. He would climb to the top of fire towers and skateboard on tall narrow ledges, so I thought he possessed the bravery needed to accompany me to the buoy. He ended up getting winded and had to turn around. I followed quickly. It became a running joke: *Look at mama swimming to the buoy.*

(story continued on next page...)

Two years before I tried to become Diane Nyad, my husband of twenty-five years announced one morning that he would be moving out before I returned home from work that day. That night on the phone my daughter talked to him, and she reported that he was laughing, whistling even, as he set up his new home. I, in contrast, lay on the couch feeling like my chest was being crushed, struggling to breathe.

At the age of fifty-five, Kate Spade hung herself using a red scarf attached to a doorknob. After my husband left me abruptly, not long after her death, I tried to do the same thing, except my scarf was blue. I tied mine to the bedpost. I found the scarf hanging on a hook in my closet. It was a purchase I'd made thinking I would become one of those people who could pull off wearing a fancy scarf. I never wore it. I researched illustrated instructions on hanging, but even with pictures I wasn't successful. I was never good at tying knots or folding origami, and it seemed these skills were related and needed in this task. Instead, I lay there foolishly breathing with a scarf wrapped around my neck for an hour. Eventually I called my best friend. We sat on my front porch on that chilly dark evening, because it was COVID and no one was gathering indoors yet. She got me through that night, and I didn't attempt again, but thoughts of suicide remained.

On the fourth day I swam towards the buoy I wasn't carrying rocks in my pockets. Whatever had made me want to swim far out into the ocean initially had shifted into something totally different. It may have been the adrenalin of being far out in the ocean combined with the courage to remove a fear that I had carried inside of me for most of my life. I was feeling less numb. In fact, I was beginning to feel the desire to live again. Then, I froze up. My mind stopped me from swimming. Frustrated, I turned around but was completely surprised to see a woman right behind me. "Are you swimming to the buoy?" she asked. I said yes without hesitation and turned and began free styling towards the buoy like an Olympic swimmer, with her close behind.

We reached the buoy together and clung to it as it swayed, balancing our collective weight. I learned that when you are this far out, the ocean is calm, and there is less turbulence than when you are nearer to the shore. I noticed that she didn't have

(story continued on next page...)

any hair, eyebrows, or eyelashes. She then shared that she was cancer free and felt that she was getting a second chance at life. She was on this trip with her family, celebrating, and noticed me swimming every day towards the buoy. She had always been afraid of swimming in the ocean, so thought if she followed me, she could make it too. She hadn't noticed that I had been failing.

We discovered that we were both fifty-five-year-old women figuring out how to do hard things. We cried and then we talked for a long while, clinging onto that buoy before eventually swimming back. She veered left to find her family and I veered right to find mine. I ended up swimming to the buoy every day after that without any fear.

I searched each day after that for the woman who swam with me but couldn't find her. On the morning we were leaving I scanned the beach one last time and finally spotted her far away, with her family. I could see that she was laughing into the sky, her head thrown back and crowned in a red scarf.

TITLE:
The Sea Within

ARTIST:
Idil Ural



ABOUT THE PIECE

The Sea Within is about the idea that what we see on the surface is never the whole picture. There is always something else beneath it. Another layer, another form, another meaning that is not immediately visible. The drawing came from the idea of looking deeper and finding something beyond what first appears.

Latter-day Goth

EDIE MEADE

Rainbow race-around vape shop window,
I love you red velvet cake of mashed

lanternfly wings. I'm sorry. Pain-scale
smileys laugh until they cry, plot lost

forever to fever. Is love ever declared
too late? I have so many questions. Bedridden

pages of the gothic are still my favorite,
consumptive damsel with red rose kisses

I thought I wanted to be, because beauty is
pain is beauty. In the balm of night,

two synthetic rhythms sync and un-
link at a braid's end where hairs feather

frizz halo. Playground hair clasps. Hello
Kitty, our lady of the tire-shred mulch.

//

I'm on the outside now, witnessing
the bounce house struggle, derecho

(poem continued on next page...)

lifting its cards. Hit me. Corndog hunger
rumble. Electrical fire. My memory

mingling fair night pheromones
with mud-hut manure. The ruminant

animal of the magic hour, falling
in love with light on the calico port,

heavy petting between intermodal
shipping containers stacked

high orange on blue, a wash
holding shape on the line.

I'll cover for you.
Shadow rabbits bolt.

//

Epilogue, the yawning awe of a brownout,
the city's ears popped in the plunge

to canyon-drop silence. Cardinal
chitter in the gap. Nosebleed

in the red propeller plane, stranger's meet-cute
tissue packet offering, trembling courage.

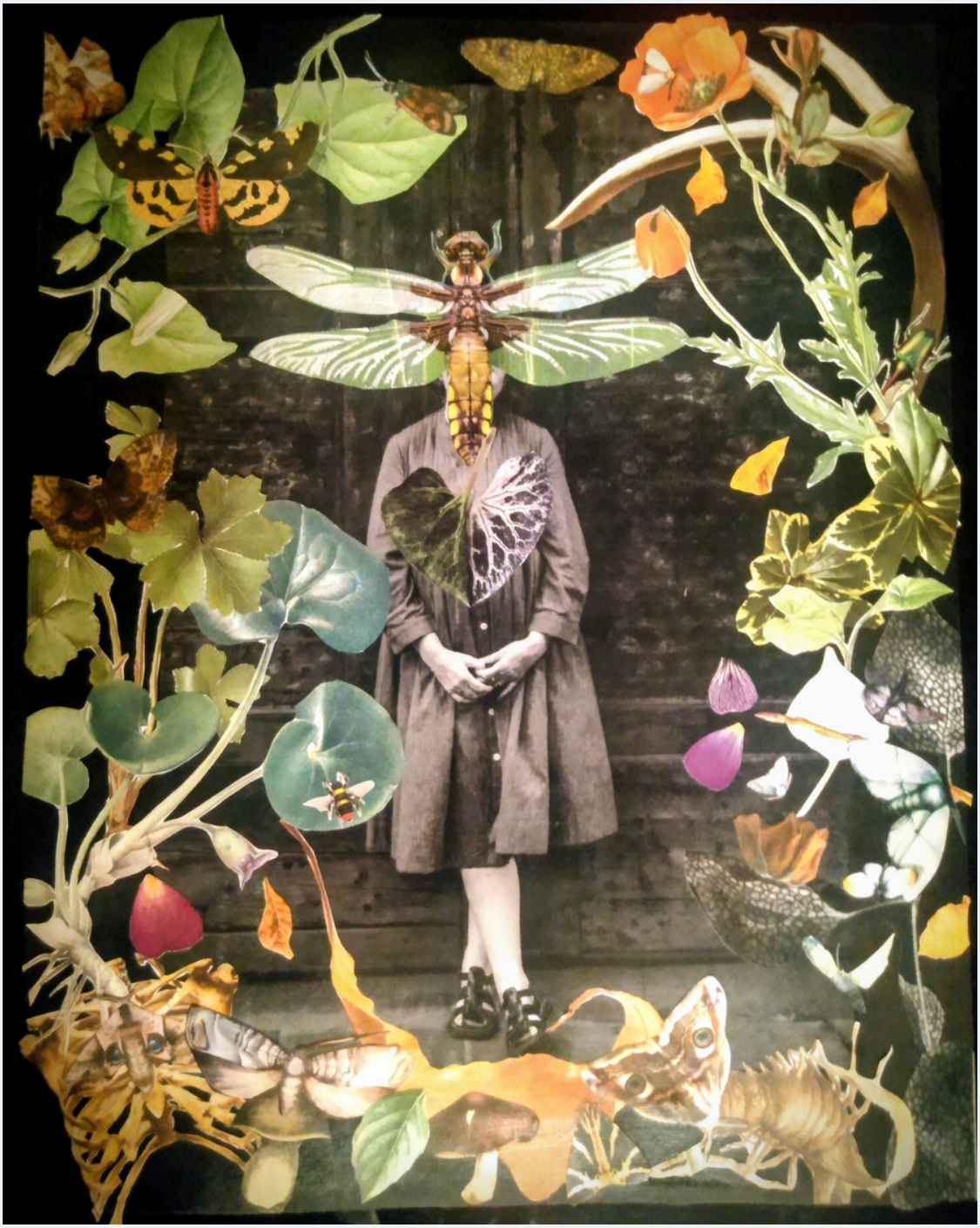
Bubblegum, turquoise, three specks of glitter
on hard-fought nails, remains of the archaic,

(poem continued on next page...)

mosaic chips after the volcano. I witness
the world drop through my reflection.

Beyond evacuation, kudzu monks lead
their sycamore elephants on to the river.

The forest makes like a tree. I know.
YOLO, over. Still, I’m sorry to leave.



TITLE: *Green Dragonfly*
ARTIST: Tabitha Gimbel

Alternatives to Google Search

DICK WESTHEIMER

Go to mass. Ask the priest
to confess. Tell everyone
about sin. Raise the dead.
Remind them of your kin who died
laughing. Laugh. Ask your parents what
position they preferred.
Read a poem. Write a poem.
Tell your Rabbi you met
Adam and Eve in a bar,
that both were a little drunk
and Eve told you that Adam snored
then Adam reported that Eve
didn't even like apples, just
ate one to mess with the snake.
Take two gummies instead of one.
Drink hemlock. Blaspheme God.
Inquire within. Meditate
on your navel until you realize
it is where the universe of you
first burned. Eat a jalapeño and then
rub your eye. Hire a guide
to take you to a place
unholy. You'll recognize it
from your poem. Remember:
everything is a sign. Lie down
in the grass on a late-summer evening
and count the stars. Count them again.
Contemplate the crickets singing
you to sleep. Sleep and Dream and Wake.
Skip work. Rent a time machine. Go
back to Eden and warn the serpent:
The god is the vengeful kind and Eve
knows which trees are worthy of climbing.

TITLE:
Vengeful
ARTIST:
Fable McKinley



ABOUT THE PIECE

"Vengeful" is a piece where monsters created from rage do not sulk in shadows, but instead come into the light. A confident figure smirks knowingly out from a dark forest filled with swirls of emotions. A moment caught, the moment an act of vengeance is embraced as essential.

Fire

ENAS SULEIMAN

There
are no
sirens there.
By the time
you realise
what happened
you are already
knee-deep digging
small graves for
the children you
went to fetch
water for.
Bucket in hand,
you must decide
whether to water
their graves in case
they get thirsty, or put
out the raging fire in
your chest.
And what kind of
harm can a displacement
camp shelter anyway?
A child daydreaming in crayons,
or a mother removing her own skin
to keep her babies clothed?
When I'm asked
where I'm from,
I unmute the TV,
put it on the highest
volume for the world
to hear these
goddamn sirens.

Fly, Shaparak, Fly

BAHAR ES'HAGHI & NARGES GOLEIJ



(comic continued on next page...)



(comic continued on next page...)



(comic continued on next page...)



ABOUT THE PIECE

Fly Shaparak, Fly is a comic about moths that have been set free. Children, like moths, are delicate and vulnerable, and they should never have to grow up in a brutal world, let alone have their lives, dreams, and hopes taken away from them. Through this work, we wanted to speak about the cruelty, horror, and inhumanity of war, and the devastating ways in which it destroys childhood, takes away innocent lives, and leaves behind a grief that cannot simply be undone.

The View

KELLY MURASHIGE

Eight years ago, you tried to end things.

Eight years is a long time. Almost a third of your life. You still remember how far down the ground seemed.

Do it. Just do it, you kept telling yourself. *Do something for once. It should be so easy.*

It wasn't. It scared you. You stepped back in and cried.

The next morning, you admitted you needed help. You felt so stupid, saying this when you were supposed to be an adult. What were you doing, scampering back to your parents? What was next? Sleeping between them on their too-small queen bed?

When you were young, you were convinced their lumpy mattress was one of the only safe places in the world. The other one was the lone chair on the lanai. Your father kept it there to unwind after work, but sometimes, on the bad nights, your mother took you out there.

She would sit on the chair and pull you onto her lap, your head resting on the curve of her chest. You listened to her heartbeat. The strong, steady thump. Together, you counted the stars in the sky.

At the sound of your name, you turn from the balcony. Your mother stands on the other side of the screen door, one hand pressed to the mesh like a child at the aquarium.

"What are you doing?" she calls out to you.

(story continued on next page...)

You glance back out at the horizon. The sun has already set.

"Enjoying the view" is how you reply. She does not know what you almost did. She remembers you struggled, was there for your worst, but you did not tell her what you couldn't do.

"It's beautiful," she says, her eyes on the sky. Then, dropping her gaze to you, she adds, "Just like you."

You roll your eyes. "Mom."

"What? I mean it."

You know she does. You love that she says it. Even if, most days, you still can't believe her.

You keep trying, though. It's all you can do.

For so long, you refused to even consider getting better. You hated when your mother said you seemed happier.

"Well, I'm not," you would tell her, anger choking you. "I wish every day I'd just—"

Then you'd stop. You couldn't hurt her like that.

You know you ended up hurting her anyhow. You just wanted to minimize the damage. *Your* damage. The hurt you kept causing again and again.

While everyone around you wished for you to be healed, this small part of you was afraid of what that would mean. What were you, really, if not your sadness? How could they take the darkness dwelling in your bones without realizing that was all that you were?

Turns out it's nice to show people you care. It's fun to talk about things that don't matter. There's nothing you love more than crying at something that moves you. Each day, you search for something new and

(story continued on next page...)

beautiful, filling your calendar with the things you can't wait to see. Shows with weekly releases that give you a reason to look forward to Mondays. Games that leave you frustrated until you have that great breakthrough. Albums that pop stars claim are their most personal yet, an assertion you love even when it's not true.

If you wrote an album, what would you say?

That you care. That you're happy. Not always, but enough.

That you're loved. That you're wanted. That despite everything, you're still here.

Somewhere behind you, your mother calls out for you once more. When you turn, your eyes catch on her face. She's older now, with the faintest wrinkles. You love every one because they are all hers.

"It's getting cold," she says. "Come in before you get sick."

You open your mouth to tell her you're not five. You have a degree. A job. You have stocks.

Six years ago, your mother underwent cataract surgery and emerged with eyes that, when she's in the right light, shine like stars. You always think you've gotten used to it, but every once in a while, she looks up, her eyes gleaming, and you think, *Beautiful*.

"One more minute," you say, as you did in high school, back when you and your friends couldn't stop chatting online.

She waits for a second, then grabs her slippers and steps out. She joins you by the railing. Bumps you with her hip.

"Why?" you ask, laughing.

"'Cause I can," she replies.

(story continued on next page...)

When your mother takes your hand and presses it to her chest, you feel the familiar thud of her heart.

You watch darkness fall around you, your eyes bright. You gaze up at the stars. At the moon. At the clouds. You take a breath. Hold it. Count to three. Let it out. As long as you live, you'll keep looking up.



TITLE: *Shadow and Spire*
ARTIST: Rashan Speller

ABOUT THE PIECE

This work explores the relationship between identity, perception, and the forces that shape how we understand ourselves and the world around us. Through photography and digital effects in Photoshop, I created a portrayal of a spiritual journey through life. I'm interested in the space where the personal becomes symbolic—where an image can hold memory, history, emotion, and something more difficult to name.

"Shadow and Spire" explores the individual traversing the infinite possibilities that wisdom and imagination can have on the mind and body. The work invites the viewer to sit with the tension between what is immediately visible and what exists beneath the surface, while considering how our inner landscapes shape the way we move through the world.

Ecclesiastes

JENNA V. WRAY

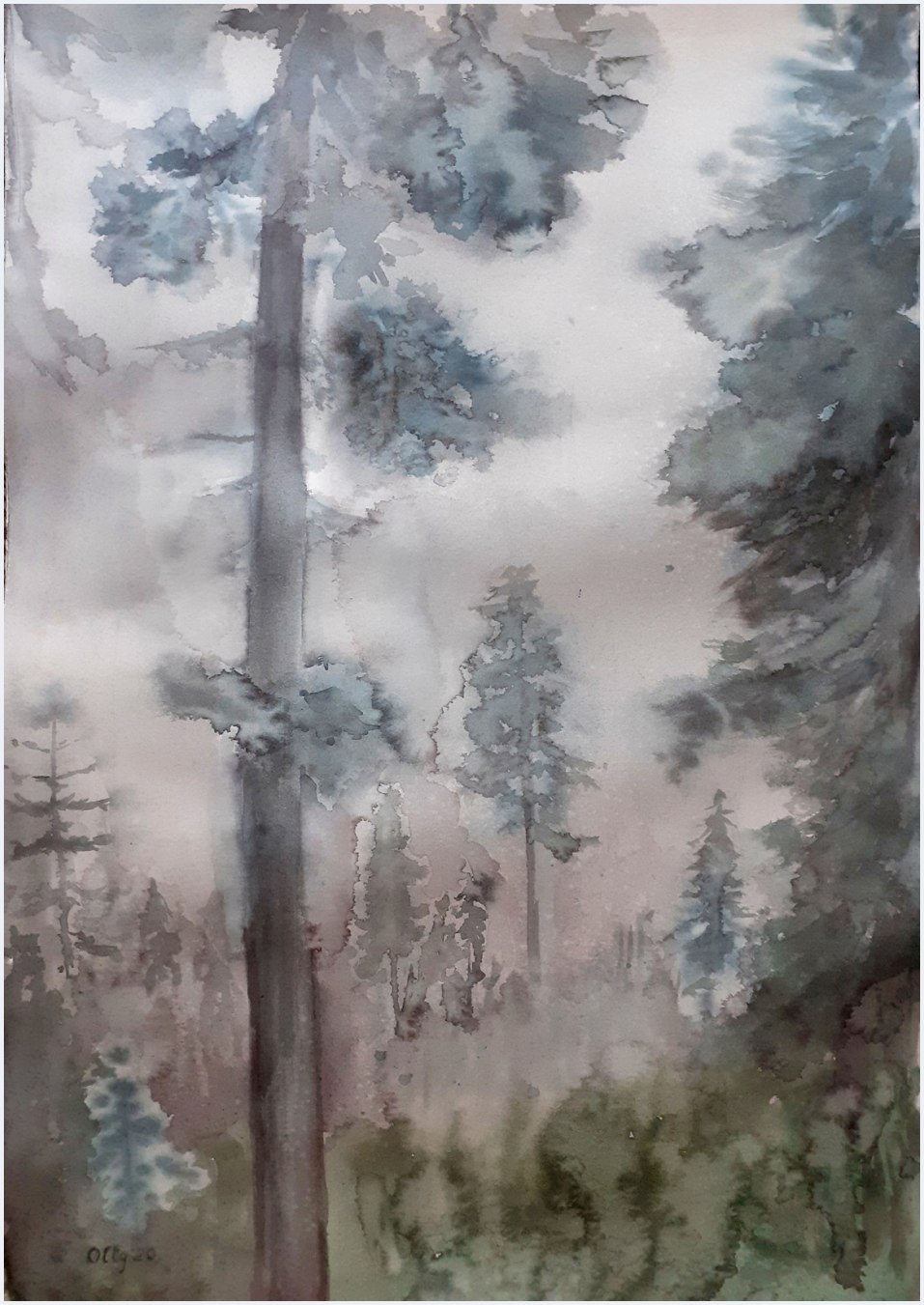
A lonely octopus
solves a Rubik's Cube
& feels no satisfaction.

Every morning, with a pill,
I ask my serotonin
not to leave so quickly.
It unmagically obliges.

New paintings are hung
for less than a week
before they turn invisible,
our eyes habituating
quickly out of wonder.

The dead could get up
as they please,
but they prefer to sleep;
they know the world
is weariness
& have no false nostalgia.

Even so, like a dying bug
trapped in phosphorescent,
my grief continues
stupidly
buzzing against the glass.



TITLE:
Misty Morning in Tyrol

ARTIST:
Olga Karpenko (Olly)

ABOUT THE PIECE

Misty Morning in Tyrol, 2020
Watercolor on paper, 56 × 38 cm
Misty Morning in Tyrol grew from a journey through the Tyrolean mountains with a friend and his young daughter. The forest seemed to appear and disappear in the fog, and I still remember its slightly melancholy atmosphere. For me, the painting has also become a small symbol of friendship expressed through simple acts: one friend invited me into the mountains, while another had given me the beautiful watercolor paper on which I painted it.

self-portrait as icarus before the water

IDIA ENOMA

boys always fall toward the thing
that kills them. I've decided
falling is the only proof we ever get
that we were airborne at all—feathers keep
turning up in myths as debt: Daedalus paid
in son the way any craftsman pays,
in the thing his hands loved best. Wax
holds no memory of failing, only
the heat was honest. Still, a father
calls a name the wind has already
taken apart, and I keep wondering
why no one asks what the boy saw
on the way down, whether the water
looked like sky long enough to forgive it.



TITLE:
A Different Direction

ARTIST:
Susan Schirl Smith

ABOUT THE PIECE

I returned to my car parked atop a hospital garage after a challenging appointment. Looking out at the horizon over the edge of the garage wall, I spotted this weather vane. Had I not taken a breath, a moment to center, it is a view I would never have seen. The photo was altered to create reflection. My moment of reflection, taking an alternate view, this “Different Direction” provided a new perspective. Finding the beauty in the mundane.

Marie Curie(s)

KARA DORRIS

A cloud is a closed curve that meets
& ends at the same place.
That has never been us. We peel
away from ourselves like shaving
skin from mozzarella sticks. Ride
Siberian trains & dive into Ankara Seas.
Like Marie Curie, we are willing to die
for our discoveries. Every
girl a scientist uncovering
the same thing & it isn't penicillin.
What else to expect when we sing
about daddies buying us diamond
rings & looking glasses. By which
I mean just gaze into sky,
how we've named constellations
Perseus & Pegasus but not Medusa
who birthed both,
one way or another.

TITLE:
The Only Way Out Is Through

ARTIST:
Kim Arthurs



ABOUT THE PIECE

This piece belongs to a collection entitled “In-Between,” an exhibition exploring memory and time. “The Only Way Out Is Through” is a mixed media Cyanotype, a historical photographic printing process that utilizes sunlight to contact print and water to develop. Using botanicals grown in the garden as well as items foraged from walks through nature, the artist preserves the memory of past blooms when the growing season concludes and winter returns, mirroring a period of self-reflection through the dark phase of the wheel.

Dining Hall Alchemy, or How to Transfigure a Fork and a Friendship in Seven Easy Steps

KELLY WHITE ARNOLD

1) After dinner in the university cafeteria the first week of classes, high on carbs and burgeoning best friendship, bohemian hearts bent toward the quirky, steal two forks from the dining hall. Feel no guilt—they're so cheap they are essentially plastic with aspirations of grandeur. Giggle with your roommate as you smuggle them back to your tapestry-filled dorm. Burn incense and light approximately forty-five candles. Conjure amateur plans for transmutation.

2) Rest said forks on your dingy dorm room windowsill, mostly untouched while you make out with a slew of lackluster man-children and your roommate smokes bowl after bowl and weaves flower crowns from weeds. Fall asleep to Tori Amos and her ethereal piano. Allow the rays of the full moon and the streetlight from the dorm parking lot to bathe your metals in glows alternately serene and synthetic.

3) Get into a pointless squabble about whose turn it is to buy groceries or wash the dishes piled in the miniature sink you share, an altar erected to slovenliness. When she refuses to give you a ride to the mall, tell her she can't borrow your body glitter out of spite. Use one of the forks to absentmindedly spoon cold ravioli straight from the can into your mouth. Not willing to concede, lick it clean.

4) Scavenge some needle-nose pliers from an art major down the hall and begin the tedious turning of transformation. Impose your will upon alloy, murmur curse words like incantations as you pinch fragile fingertips bloody and still fail to bend tines into spirals as flawless as your manic pixie dream girl roommate. Notice how her voice is starting to curdle in your ears like milk in your neglected dorm fridge. Realize two is an insufficient number for a coven that endures.

(story continued on next page...)

5) Wear your creation out to scam drinks at the Corner Bar, where your shoes squelch against the floor and all the bar stools are ripped. Leave your roommate at home—she has a paper due tomorrow anyway. Envision your bracelet providing magical protection from the unworthy, but realize that the fork tines, in practice, dig into your forearm like they once pierced your cold Chef Boyardee. Brandish it pointedly as you bum a clove cigarette from an artsy looking dude with hipster glasses that aren't cool yet. Emphasize its handmade and felonious origins. Let its cheap radiance hypnotize. You ARE Calypso in Doc Martens and black eyeliner. Enchant him, bitch. Go back to his place, but don't spend the night.

6) Lose bracelet somewhere—the apartment of your dubious situationship, a street corner downtown during a Violent Femmes concert, a cafeteria trash can on a Thursday at breakfast—your roommate won't care. She's shaved her head and announced over eggs that she's moving to London to study abroad and commune with the sarsens at Stonehenge or something. Your talisman's a twisted fork again, warped beyond usefulness. Feel something inside shift, break— glamour fading to dull color of weekday ordinary.

7) Thirty years later, sift through a Gordian knot of necklaces, gasp audibly when fork bracelet scrapes skin. Lift it from tangled pile of costume trinkets. Realize despite youthful conjurings, you are Penelope now, caught between laundry and play dates, asleep at night in a bed you built more solid than oak, his breath steady beside you, cat asleep at your feet, familiar. The glitter has long since faded, but you have woven magic more potent. A quiet, burnished luster. Remember the way your roommate's hair shone autumn auburn in the streetlight. Wonder if time has plaited garlands of gray in her tresses as well. Slip the bracelet around wrist wizened with knowing, gaze at the witch of a woman you became.



TITLE: *Methuselah*
ARTIST: J.V. Foerster

ABOUT THE PIECE

A few years back I lived on Mt Hood in Oregon. At the time I retreated to the forest and the mountain to grieve and heal from the death of my partner. It was a magical place to live. Each day a new creature would arrive and seemed unafraid of me. Then one day a large plump raven arrived. He strutted around on the deck like he owned it. Then he came everyday for weeks. One day I took out my camera and shot this photo of him. Later that day I sat on the deck only a few feet away from him and we ate walnuts together. This was my healing, in those moments me chatting about my sorrow to this ancient looking raven and he waddling around me on the deck like a visitor from a higher realm dancing my sorrow away.

The Red Panda at the Cincinnati Zoo Is Pregnant with Twins!

ASHLEY KIRKLAND

I didn't fall into motherhood
as it goes for some. I didn't float
around and land round in the abdomen.
It was more decided than that. Wasn't it?

The growth, the waddling, and, finally,
birth, however, not unlike emerging
from earth into the chaos of existence,
our own increasing future.

It seemed I was born and then I birthed,
surrounded by lights, open eyes, hands
that pick and place. Here— there. There
were two. Swirled together inside.

I ate hungrily. Ate for three.
From buckets. From trees. I ate
for the first time. Two emerged. One
still as night, still as my lungs.

There were no small cries from one
mouth, slack without. How do I joy
in the life that moves with the other
sprawled still at my feet?

They took him. There were two.
A litter. I felt them both slip

(poem continued on next page...)

out into air. My nose to one cub;
paw curled around a berry. A berry.

A cub. A mother. That we are singular
is not the miracle— that we could be more
than ourselves is the miracle. An empty
womb. A cub. A whole basket of berries.



TITLE: *Wicomico #7*
ARTIST: Marlowe K.

ABOUT THE PIECE

Wicomico #7 is part of a series of works on paper inspired by the Great Wicomico River, an estuary of the Chesapeake Bay. View the complete collection at marlowek.com/wicomico

Travel by Samsonite after another metaphorical death

MADELINE NEWELL-WILSON

On the burial forms, I've circled nothing,
no hardwood box, ceremonial urn,
but a written-in request for ashes to travel
by Samsonite to see the Seine,
roll along the river in a place I meant to see
in a suitcase gifted to see it, though the wheels
collected more moisture from mouse excrement
in a wet basement than the river's bank, which
I always imagined as cold, yet full, fresh
rather than my own accounts which I drained instead
on frivolities: groceries, socks lost beneath
furniture. It is nothing to have not made it.
Where I ended up has meaning. Still—
can you not take me to the Seine, wash away
what became that was not holy and see
there is a body lying, there, you see it—
just out of reach.



TITLE:
Decay

ARTIST:
Katie Hughbanks

ABOUT THE PIECE

"Decay" is an underwater macro photograph that focuses on the impact of water, air, and light – primal elements we all need, a necessity that inextricably links us all. The subject is a dead daylily bloom that, even in its decay, appears delicately beautiful. The tiny air bubbles that cling to the flower's translucent body hint that even in death, life in some way endures.

The Pizza Oven Smokes Like an Emergency

ELIZA DAY

We lift the table onto yellow grass.
I roll dough from the centre outward.
It'll want to keep its old shape
I understand. Old habits die –
back in my childhood bedroom.
My grandparents arrive
from down the road. Downsized
and bought stocks. It's the small modular reactors
skyrocketing! Data centres
spin with them. Funded lines
of my gridlocked poetry at university.
I hear a continuous hum
like a wasp. Shifting in seats.
We are all getting hungry.



TITLE: *Central Europe from 1914 until today*
ARTIST: Reiner Heidorn

ABOUT THE PIECE

Central Europe
200 x 210 cm
Oil on schoolmap 2026

I'm a German painter near Munich, and I focus on the subject of microorganisms through abstract oil painting.

I've been collecting old school maps for a while. Since everything is digital now, schools have willingly given me the maps. I own 40 maps, some of them very large, and I've painted over many of them.

Some show Hitler's Germany at various stages during the war. Painting over these maps is also a political statement against the AfD's (German shit party) denial and trivialization of history, and against the radicalization of right-wing sentiments in society. The memory is always there, even beneath the paint.

I collect nature materials, such as leaves, brushwoods and blossoms, which I use as printing templates along with the oil colors, to create an overgrown impression with weeds.

Here is a video still from a TV interview in Germany. At the link you can see the painting process:

Weilheim: Weilheim: Alte Schullandkarten als Kunstobjekt | BR.de

Statement:
"The maps have been radically painted over, so that the original content is no longer visible. Only the titles remain as a silent reminder of a dark era. Through botanical motifs, I create a contrast between life, growth, and memory: Nature grows beyond the past, yet traces of history remain visible in the choice of motifs, the structure of the image, and the color. A warning against forgetting, trivialization, and denial of history. The overpainting transforms the maps into new pictorial spaces in which criticism, memory, and responsibility become visible."

In 1914, prior to the outbreak of the First World War, Central Europe was politically shaped above all by the German Empire and the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary. World War I broke out in July/August 1914.

Letter from My Future Self, after Climate Change

ZACHARIAH CLAYPOLE WHITE

I hope this letter finds you as a forest finds the river,

that you are dancing when it opens please

will you describe for me a dogwood? It has been years

since blooming. Yes fire-season will be lullaby-thick, but

follow our grandmother's lilt down those sloped

gardens see how goldenrod flowers

through the windows of her name. I have known

that wire-twisted angel, collected subway maps, and all

the wings of polyethylene. We are winter-stubborn

as a wheelbarrow, beautiful as an oil spill or drought;

here: the feathered storm the country of hawks

the nettled fingers of boy hood.

You may not understand but today I dreamt

every refinery a church's bell, and every museum

(poem continued on next page...)

a woodpecker’s nest. Outside,

Jeeva gathered cherry blossoms in silver bowls of rain,

leg tapping to Nina Simone;

the bees too were singing.



TITLE:
Song to the Sun

ARTIST:
Olga Karpenko (Olly)

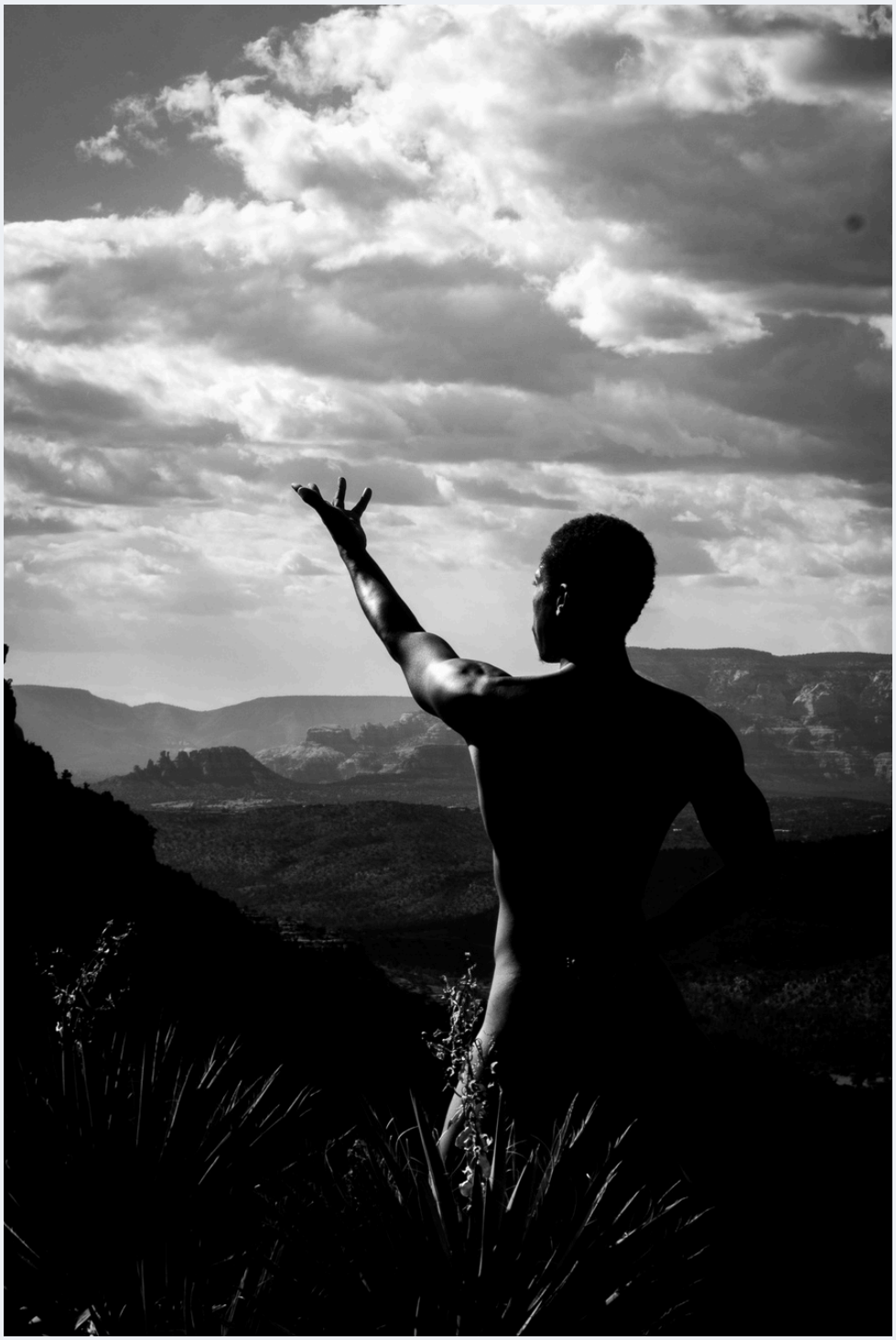
ABOUT THE PIECE

Song to the Sun, 2022
Watercolor on paper, 42 × 29 cm
Song to the Sun grew from a scene I brought back from a journey through Ukraine: a robin singing at sunset, seeing the sun off. In the morning, it will greet the returning light with the same simple song. Painted in 2022, during the first year of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the work became for me an image of hope — of the persistent impulse to turn toward the light.

Dismemberment

M. CAMPBELL

here is my femur,
Venezuela, may it allow you to
take to the mountains to
begin anew, and for Sudan my
intestines as you
filter through what is forced and what
is you, for The Congo my
ulna and radius to
push back the west and
Kurdistan, my hands are yours as you
weave a space to rest and
oh Gaza, what can I give you, the
bleeding heart of the earth and
how much I would unwind myself to
bind our wounds, to
fill our dearth.



TITLE:
Sun King

ARTIST:
Jacob Bush

ABOUT THE PIECE

This work extends from the experience in “Being of Nature”. As each Human experience, lifestyle, even the form we are – is a reflection of the very Nature around us – this photo is a direct expression of the model’s intimacy to their own Nature. This shoot was done in Sedona, AZ – at request of the model’s divulging into the aspect of ethereal divinity – and the session involved an intuitive creation in finding the photographic expression of this ‘One Being Nature’. What we are is ‘the Nature Body’ – no manner the exterior appearances; the core of every One-of-Us belongs to the Nature of our Body; hence the kinship of our World and to what creates Us.

Grief in Parentheses

KATARU YAHYA

There is a narrow one-way road that leads only to the
plumes of a cunning and insatiable grief, that is caged
in the trunk of a dead teak, that takes and takes.

None of my languages can reach it: Waale, Hausa, English.
They are hollow, they fail to hold my sorrow. What I can
do is carefully fold my grief into this poem,

allow it to speak for me while I stand in the corner, your
hands across my face, my tongue stuck in my throat, going
down, down, down until I only remember to speak in shudders

and fractured sobs and suppressed longing. My heart's
bleeding becomes a symbol for you and the intimate knowing
of death. I know now that in cohabiting with grief, it becomes

corporeal and wears your face. Its body takes on the likeness
of yours. It dwells perpetually in the space you once owned.
My du'as find you in the other world. This, I believe.

I envy them, silent words spoken into cupped hands in the dead
of night, for seeing you. The sky returns them, paints the clouds
red. It says, 'here I am, but not as I was before.'



TITLE: *Ground and Spirit*
ARTIST: Jennifer Lynn Andersen
(“about the piece” on next page)

ABOUT THE PIECE

This piece, like much of my work, explores the surprising moments we often find in the in-between—the magical moments that emerge when we are no longer bound strictly by one thing or another. I find that the bridge in-between these spaces allows multiple truths to exist at once: what is seen and unseen, what is grounded and what is felt beyond ourselves.

In nature, I am drawn to the moments just before dawn and just before dusk, when light reveals what may otherwise remain obscured. These transitional atmospheres invite introspection and curiosity. When we move away from distraction and busyness, we become more receptive to the subtle shifts occurring around and within us.

We experience the same place differently depending on the light, sounds, scents, our emotions, and the perspective from which we encounter it. This piece reflects that idea—that what we perceive can transform when we change our angle of viewing, both physically and spiritually.

Ground and Spirit is a reminder of our connection to the world around us, to the spaces we inhabit, and to the presence of those who continue to exist within us even after they have passed.

Instead

MARK DUNBAR

You weren't even going to have a service,
but here you are—flatstale in the pew,
a scale model of yourself beneath stained glass
and the rising hymns
and the minister going on about seasons,
no mention of the bona fide wasting one
that she stumbled into just as you
emerged to bleed her,
the skip-stop queen who skipped you clean
with her mothering, seasoned you
in wind chill—locked you out
in the drifts because you wouldn't
drink your milk, who let you bleed
as a lesson about safety and knives,
her quick fists and the flipside
you came to savor, the indifference.

So many words but not here.
So much that hibernates.
Send the grandkids up to speak
of the stranger who mocked you
with homemade Halloween costumes,
trips to the zoo and her gingerbread—
that picture instead,
that asylum,
that hull they drag over you
and put to sea.



TITLE: *Gold Splatter* // ARTIST: Beth Kephart

ABOUT THE PIECE

"Gold Splatter" is, like all the art I have been making, the result of unexpected discoveries. First, I didn't know I had an Ohio Buckeye tree growing in my backyard until one day, when I went off into the wild corner with my plant-identifying app. Well, then: a Buckeye, and will you look at those leaves! Which I decided at once should be gelliplated-printed using my beloved Golden Open acrylics. But that was just the start. I wanted the print to feel old, so I used muslin as my base. I wanted it to feel weather-stamped, and so I used a series of color layers and then droplets, and then splatters of gold paint. Layer upon layer, until the piece felt done enough for me to show my husband with the words, "What do you think?"

Kelly White Arnold is our featured writer for Issue 8. Below is a series of questions and responses between Kelly and our Interview & Feature writer, Angela Heiser.

Angela: Your title points tongue in cheek to self-help and the piece concludes with self-discovery and evolution. Where did you draw your inspiration for this witchy, jocular, bildungsromanesque story and its form?

Kelly: This piece started during a weekend retreat with writer and teacher and wise woman Mary Carroll-Hackett (@poetinthetrees) at The Porches in Virginia (a cozy little writerspace that I HIGHLY recommend). Mary led a session on the spiritual in writing—think alchemy, talismans, prayer, invocation, and this piece started as a writing exercise for that workshop. You know how you sometimes know as you're drafting that you have something worth coming back to? That's how this piece felt when it was in process: writing like an incantation, something sacred and powerful.

Angela: Step 1 hints at aspirations, being an amateur who wants to become something more. How much of yourself is in the narrator? How much of the young students whom you teach before they embark on their college pathway?

Kelly: I wanted to play with the idea of coming of age, how we all (hopefully) transform from this unsure, overly melodramatic adolescent version of ourselves into something more substantial—a skin we can wear for real. I work with young people (a lot), and once, long ago, I was a young person. I wanted to capture that vibe, delusions of grandeur, the way EVERYTHING takes on undue significance when you're young and earnest and searching. My goal is for this piece to gently poke at that absurdity of girlhood, that belief that every experience is crucial, that every connection is lifelong, when in reality, most things fade with time and age. What posers we were!
And I guess I was kind of a witchy young adult. In my mind's eye, the dorm room in the text is 100% mine from my freshman year, full of candles and tapestries and Mazzy Star. I went to classes barefoot and wore poet blouses. Lots of velvet and incense.

(interview continued on next page...)

Angela: We need to have a moment for the body glitter. This stood out to me as a hallmark of my teenage era (and blue lipstick with white eyeshadow, honestly what were we thinking?). How did that throwback make its way into this piece?

Kelly: Body glitter to me is SO 1990s. We all wanted to be these sparkly, manic pixie dream girl faeries, and to me, the synthetic shimmer of body glitter just represents all of that youthful pretense. And is there anything more petty than withholding that faux-ethereal shimmer-shine because you're cranky with your roommate? It just felt right.

Angela: You draw on myth here, with characters from the Odyssey (Calypso and Penelope) and the Gordian knot. Is this the high school English teacher revealing herself or something more? What was the impetus for these anchors?

Kelly: I'm on a mythology kick right now as a poet, a reimagining of mythic women in particular, looking at them through the lens of everyday, contemporary existence. And my husband and I kind of have a running Odyssey theme, but not one where he runs around with a bunch of nymphs and washes up battered and salty ten years later. One where being Penelope means being someone else's home in the truest sense of the word, where Odysseus always finds his way to her. And that's what happens as you get older, right? You lose some of the glitz (and body glitter) of a temptress like Calypso, but, if you're lucky, you find a deeper satisfaction in being each other's constant. When we got married, our son gave us a framed photo with a quote from The Odyssey: "There is nothing nobler or more admirable than when two people who see eye to eye keep house as man and wife, confounding their enemies and delighting their friends." It's kind of our marital North Star, if you will, so it's natural that Homer's characters make appearances in my work from time to time.

Angela: And why seven steps? What does the number seven signify?

Kelly: Why not seven? If you're gonna write something magical and witchy, you gotta

(interview continued on next page...)

divide it into a magical number of steps. There are little nods toward “magic rules” in the whole text. The fork gets bathed in moonlight and streetlight, is imbued with bodily fluids when the unnamed you licks the ravioli from the tines. I wanted to marry the magic and the mundane here.

Angela: I’m loving how you explore liminal spaces in this work, particularly in Step 5, but elsewhere as well. This tied in well for me as a reader to the self-discovery and becoming, which struck me as another hallmark of the poetic perspective you bring to this work. Tell us more about how you pictured these in between spaces (the forks not really metal or plastic, not in love, but also not out of love) and how your poetry informs your fiction and vice versa? I have highlighted so many lines that could inform a cento and I am super curious, as a poet myself, if that is a consideration you have in mind when crafting prose work. (“plastic with aspirations of grandeur,” “dingy dorm room windowsill,” “tedious turning of transformation” and I so dearly wanted to ask about “needle-nose pliers from an art major down the hall”).

Kelly: I love liminal space—in fact, Motherhood and Other Liminal Spaces was one of the titles I kicked around in the early stages of putting together my first chapbook. I feel like college, in particular, is a liminal time. You are reinventing who you are, deciding what parts of yourself you want to change, figuring out who you’d like to become.

For me, genre isn’t an initial concern as a writer. (I guess my notebook is the ultimate liminal space.) What’s important is to get the words down, the ideas and phrases. In early drafts, I thought this might be a prose-poem, but that shape didn’t end up able to sustain what I wanted to do with the piece. It became a sort of hermit-crab structure instead; the words draped themselves on the form of the list/how-to guide. So it’s not surprising that poetry has wormed its way into this text. I think working primarily as a poet informs everything I write.

The art major down the hall doesn’t actually exist, but I wanted to tap into that free-for-

(interview continued on next page...)

all, swap meet aura that is unique to college dorm living. Need something? Poke your head out into the hall and holler. The bracelet, however, is real and still lives in my jewelry box.

Angela: You probably saw this coming that I'd ask seven questions on your Seven Easy Steps piece, but here we go. Where can our readers follow and support your work? What does the rest of 2026 and 2027 have in store for you, creatively?

Kelly: You can find me sporadically online @KArnoldTeaches and at kellywhitearnold.wordpress.com.

This has been a big creative year for me. In August, Finishing Line Press published my first poetry chapbook, Decidedly Uncertain, and my second chapbook, The Automated Archive of Lost Mothers is due out from Kelsay Press in the first half of 2027.

Mostly, I'm over here trying to juggle parenting, a demanding career, my writing, an omnipresent need for a nap, and all the other components that we are all constantly negotiating. Dailiness is its own kind of magic.

Enas Suleiman is our featured poet of Issue 8. Below is a series of questions and responses between Enas and our Editor-in-Chief, Ophelia Monet.

Ophelia: Tell me about your background as a writer. What caused you to start writing? Do you tend to lean more towards writing poetry, or other forms of writing, too?

Enas: I think it was in Year 8 that we read *Z for Zachariah* by Robert O'Brien in English literature class. We were tasked to write a poem, story, or diary entry about the main character who was the sole survivor of a nuclear war. I always gravitated towards poetry for my creative assignments, perhaps it came from a place of loneliness like in the novel, I am not really sure.
This particular assignment was the first I read out shyly to an audience, so it has stayed with me over the years as motivation to write and share.

Ophelia: As poets and writers, we oftentimes are moved to write because something specific happens. Tell me about what fueled you to write "Fire".

Enas: To put it simply - the state of the world, specifically Sudan, my home country.
Three years on, Sudan is continuing to endure the ramifications of a senseless war that is causing death, disease, systematic violence against young girls and women, collapsed health and education systems and infrastructure damage.
It is unfathomable that there is little to no media coverage, and I think the silence, compacted with anger and feeling like the world has let us down, fueled this poem.

Ophelia: This poem is already powerful in its own right. The formatting of this poem adds more power to the punch. What caused you to format "Fire" the way you did? What is the meaning behind it?

Enas: I did not initially plan to shape the poem as fire but each time I re-read it I felt the anger carried was getting too big to hold, like a ravenous fire eating everything in its path in rage.

(interview continued on next page...)

Ophelia: I really love the way you incorporated sound into this piece, as well as the strong imagery you used throughout. Specifically, how you both started and ended the poem with sirens, which are the background noise to the imagery and story-telling of this poem, until the end, when the sirens are no longer in the background, but instead at the forefront. Without telling us that the sirens are muted, the reader automatically places them in the background, until you "unmute" them at the end. I thought this was extremely well-done. Was this your intention - to instill those sensory aspects into the subconscious mind of the reader? Do you typically use both imagery and sound in your work?

Enas: I wanted readers to plug into what is happening around us and turn the volume all the way up. The world has become accustomed to muting whatever conflict it chooses, as though suffering was an item on a shelf - something we can pass by or put in our trolley. To have empathy, we must put ourselves in the place of others. When we don't, the heart hardens, and everything outside ourselves will not matter.
This poem was my attempt to bring the images and sounds to the reader, to make them audible and worthy. I hope it landed.

Ophelia: Tell me about your first poetry collection, as well as the second collection you're currently working on.

Enas: My first collection, *Tidal Waves*, was published in 2019. My father had passed away a few years prior, and this book gathers some of his memories in short poems. I like the idea of having a place to return to, to still converse with him about nothing over my own cup of tea:

Tea

An infusion of mint
in your clear tea cup,

(interview continued on next page...)

I remove the floating leaves
and stir in two spoons of sugar.
Oh, how wonderful it would be
if we could share a cup and talk about nothing.

Or when I am looking for peace:

Beads

I count your prayer beads 99 times
between my fingers,
to hear your encrypted murmurs to God
when I can’t find peace.

The second collection explores the grief in love, loss, and identity, and the water that flows between them towards hope.

Ophelia: What's next for you? What are your goals for your future as a writer?

Enas: I am currently in the process of finding the right publisher for my second book. A goal would be to keep on navigating the sails and writing on this boat I’m on. If even one person connects with my work, then I am the happiest sailor.

[contributors]



Ashley Kirkland // Genre: Poetry

Ashley Kirkland writes in Ohio where she lives with her husband and sons. Her work can be found in *Cordella Press*, *Boats Against the Current*, *The Citron Review*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *ONE ART*, *HAD*, *Major7thMagazine*, among others, and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Her chapbook, *BRUISED MOTHER*, is available from Boats Against the Current. She is a poetry editor for *3Elements Literary Review*.
Instagram: @lashleykirklandwriter



Ayçe Çelikel // Genre: Art

Ayçe Çelikel is a self-taught analogue collage artist from Turkiye, currently based in London. She creates minimal, surreal compositions using found imagery from books and magazines. Guided by an intuitive process, her work often explores the relationship between humans and nature.
Instagram: @gathering.pieces



Bahar Es'haghi // Genre: Art/Hybrid

Bahar, an Iranian comic artist, is a student of Graphic Arts. She is passionate about showing her culture and mythology through her work, she wants to create something unique that reflects her own perspective on the world.
Instagram: @baharcomics



Beth Kephart // Genre: Art

Beth Kephart (she/her) is a writer, teacher, and book artist whose paper arts have been shown in galleries and featured in magazines such as PRINT (online) and WHAT WOMEN CREATE. Her new books are My *Life in Paper: Adventures in Ephemera* and *You Are Not Vanished Here: Essays*. More at bethkephartbooks.com and bind-arts.com
Instagram: @bethkephartnow
Bluesky: Beth Kephart



Brian Hallas // Genre: Art

Brian Hallas is an innovative award-winning abstract/surrealist digital photographer and collagist from New Jersey, whose artistic quest is all about transformation. An iPhone is his tool of choice to capture and craft sometimes delightful, sometimes disturbingly hallucinogenic images and collages, where familiar landscapes become extraordinary dreamscapes. Through layering and blending, each piece is a painterly convergence of vibrant colors, dynamic shapes, intense textures, and pure invention. In each new work, his desire to push boundaries celebrates the interchange between the eye and the imagination, and showcases a versatility that resonates with viewers around the world.
Instagram: @bhallas0909
Website // Archive



Chandra Persaud // Genre: Poetry

Chandra Persaud writes on topics such as grief, mental health, identity, and the immigrant experience. Her work has been published in *Pictura Journal*, *Epistemic Literary*, *Defunkt Magazine*, *PHIL LIT Journal*, *Mouthful of Salt*, *Rogue Agent Journal*, and elsewhere.
Instagram: @pieces_of_acp



Christine Robertson // **Genre:** Fiction

Christine lives in Los Angeles. Her recent work has been featured in *Maudlin House*, *Bottle Rocket*, *Bright Flash Literary Review*, *Club Plum*, and *Eunoia Review*. She holds a BA in English and French from UCLA and has studied creative writing as part of the UCLA Extension Writers' Program.
Instagram: @christinemrobertson
Website



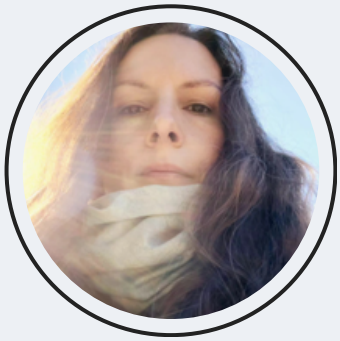
Dawn McCombs // **Genre:** Creative Nonfiction

Dawn McCombs is an essayist living in Columbus, Ohio. Her work has been published in *The Audacity*, *Khora*, *Vernacular*, *MUTHA*, *Chicago Story Press* and she was shortlisted in Fractured and Fused 2026 Prize in *Fractured Lit*. She dreams of living in a van and freeing herself.
Instagram: @dawn_mccombs
Substack



Dick Westheimer // **Genre:** Poetry

Dick Westheimer lives in rural southwest Ohio with his wife and writing companion, Debbie. He is winner of the 2026 Third Wednesday Poetry Prize, the 2026 Poetry in Defense of Science Poetry Prize, the 2023 Joy Harjo Poetry Prize and a Rattle Poetry Prize finalist. His poems have appeared in *ONLY POEMS*, *Whale Road Review*, *Rattle*, *Amsterdam Quarterly*, *One Art*, *Minyan*, and *Vox Populi*. His chapbook, *A Sword in Both Hands, Poems Responding to Russia's War on Ukraine*, is published by SheilaNaGig.
Instagram: @rlwesty_poet
Facebook: "Dick Westheimer"



Edie Meade // **Genre:** Poetry

Edie Meade is a writer and musician in Petersburg, Virginia. Recent work appears in *Chestnut Review*, *Pithead Chapel*, *Louisiana Literature Journal*, *Gone Lawn*, *Room Magazine*, and *The Harvard Advocate*.
Instagram & Threads: @edie_thee_meade
Bluesky: @ediemeade.bsky.social
Twitter: @ediemeade



Eliza Day // **Genre:** Poetry

Eliza Day recently graduated from the University of Leeds, where she studied English Literature with Creative Writing. Her short story 'Bodies of Water' is published by Stand. Her poems appear in *Tenter Hook* and *The Hope Collective*.



Emily Tong // **Genre:** Poetry

Emily Tong is an Asian-American poet from New Jersey. An alumnus of the Iowa Young Writers' Studio, her work has been recognized by or is forthcoming in *Fugue*, *Palette Poetry*, *BRAWL*, *Augur Magazine*, *Sho Poetry Journal*, and more.
Instagram: @emily_zt_
Website



Enas Suleiman // Genre: Poetry

Enas Suleiman is a Sudanese poet and author of *Tidal Waves* (2019). Growing up in Sudan and the United Arab Emirates, her writing often explores themes of identity, migration, social injustice and the complexities of grief. Residing in Dubai, she is currently editing her second poetry collection.
Instagram: @enas.poems



Fable McKinley // Genre: Art

Fable McKinley is a digital collage artist whose work explores feminine power through a Victorian gothic lens. She combines layered imagery, rich color, and romantic shadow to create figures that feel both dreamlike and resolute. Influenced by fantasy and art history, McKinley transforms fragments into visual narratives rooted in strength and transformation. A mother of three daughters, she is motivated by the desire to see women portrayed as sovereign and enduring. She studied art history and continues to develop her practice independently in digital collage.
Instagram: @fablemckinleypapergoblin
Website



Idia Enoma // Genre: Poetry

Idia Enoma is a confessional poet, writer, and photographer from the Hudson Valley. Her work has appeared in *Blue Marble Review*, *Yīn Literary*, *Eunoia Review*, and *Polyphony Lit*, and is forthcoming in *Citron Lit*. Recognized by the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers and an alumna of the Kelly Writers House Summer Workshop, she is currently a first-year student at the University of Pennsylvania.
Instagram: @idiaenoma



Idil Ural // Genre: Art

Idil Ural is a Berlin-based artist working primarily with graphite and charcoal. Her surreal drawings bring human figures and natural forms together, often blurring the line between the two. Inspired by nature, dreams and symbolism, her work explores strange, quiet worlds where trees, water, other natural elements and bodies seem to belong to the same landscape.
Instagram: @idikit.art
Website



J.V. Foerster // Genre: Art

J.V. Foerster is a painter, poet and photographer from Portland, Oregon painting abstract and impressionist pieces. J.V.'s work has shown in gallery shows at Milepost 5 in Portland, Oregon. Also a painting "12 Voices" at The Oregon Art Center. She was featured artist, poet and photographer in The *Field Guide Poetry Magazine*. Two of her paintings were published in the *Outsider Art Magazine*. Currently she has three paintings at Artistic Portland Gallery. She has forthcoming her painting *The Bloom* as the cover of Carol Louise Munn's book "Spirits or Gnats".
Instagram & Facebook: @jvfoerster
Website



Jacob Bush // Genre: Art

Born and raised in Mesa, AZ, Jacob explores his Body's limitations in The World, participating in community as a healing justice practitioner, writer, photographer, and facilitator. Weaving Nature and Myth through Creative Storytelling, Jacob emphasizes living within the mythos of Chronic Illness as the transformational experience that is Human Nature.



Jenna V. Wray // Genre: Poetry

Jenna V. Wray (née Sumpter) edits for Kelsay Books and *The Orchards Poetry Journal*. Her work appears in *Caesura*, *New Welsh Review*, and elsewhere. A member of the WAY Writing Group in central Arkansas, she's received multiple 2025 awards from White County Creative Writers, a BFA from the University of Evansville and Harlaxton College, and a much-belated OCD diagnosis. Find her on Instagram/Threads/Substack/X @JVSReads.



Jennifer Lynn Andersen // Genre: Art

Jennifer is a self-taught artist with a deep interest in nature and the experiences gathered through exploration. She paints an accumulated experience of being in nature rather than a single moment, exploring a multiplanar experience of time where memory, presence, and possibility exist as simultaneous layers. Her work invites viewers to listen for what has been quietly present all along, revealing connections between landscape, perception, and the unseen threads of experience.
Instagram: @jandersenatelier



Jennifer Wannen // Genre: Art

Jennifer Wannen is a photographer, writer, and interfaith spiritual director in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She explores themes of imagination, animism, and mysticism. Her work has appeared in the PhotoPlace Exhibition Gallery in Middlebury, Vermont, the Southeast Center For Photography in Greenville, South Carolina, A Smith Gallery in Johnson City, Texas, and the Photos de Femmes 2020 seeingWOMEN exhibitions. You can view her work at SoulChapters.com or Instagram/jennifer.wannen.
Instagram: @jennifer.wannen
Website



Kara Dorris // Genre: Poetry

Kara Dorris is the author of three poetry collections. Her poetry has appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Redivider*, and *DIAGRAM*, as well as the anthology Beauty is a Verb. Recently, she edited the anthology Writing the Self-Elegy: the Past is Not Disappearing Ink (SIU Press). For more information, please visit karadorris.com.

Instagram: @a_poet_named_kara_dorris

Website



Kataru Yahya // Genre: Poetry

Kataru Yahya is a Ghanaian writer and medical sonographer. She is the author of the novel *Home Is a Silhouette*. Her work can be found or is forthcoming in *Ta Adesa*, *Eunoia Review*, *The Disappointed Housewife*, *Mouthful of Salt*, *The Hemlock Journal*, *20.35 Africa*, *Scribbled* and elsewhere. You can find her on social media at @kforkataru or read her work at kataru.co.

Instagram: @kforkataru

Website



Katie Hughbanks // Genre: Art

Katie Hughbanks (she/her) is a photographer who loves to photograph natural objects under water. She is also the author of two chapbooks—*Blackbird Songs* (Prolific Press, 2019) and *It's Time* (Finishing Line Press, 2024). Katie teaches English and Creative Writing in Louisville, Kentucky.

Instagram: @katiehughbankspics

Facebook - Katie Sullivan Caswell Hughbanks

X - KHughbanks1021



Kelly Murashige // **Genre:** Fiction

Born and raised in Hawai'i, Kelly Murashige is the author of the award-winning YA novels *THE LOST SOULS OF BENZAITEN* and *THE YOMIGAERI TUNNEL*, as well as the upcoming adult novel *MILKIVERSE* (2027). Her work has been nominated for Best Small Fictions. Though she can be shy, she loves obsessing over books, video games, and strange animals.
Website



Kelly White Arnold // **Genre:** Fiction

Kelly White Arnold (she/her) is a mom, writer, teacher, and lover of yoga. Her work has recently appeared in *Anti-Heroin Chic*, *As the Crow Flies*, and *Reedy Branch Review*. She lives in the North Carolina Piedmont with her two favorite humans and one unhinged cat but dreams of mountains beneath her feet. Her first chapbook, *Decidedly Uncertain*, is available from Finishing Line Press. Online sporadically @KArnoldTeaches.
Instagram/Bluesky/X: @KArnoldTeaches
Facebook // Website



Kim Arthurs // **Genre:** Art

Kim Arthurs / KA is a Pisces, artist, and writer, from Providence, RI. They create art in their garden and write with moonlight. Kim received their BFA in Creative Writing & English from University Maine Farmington in 2016, focusing on visual art and storytelling. They blend creative writing rooted in memory and mystical realism with cyanotypes, a historical blueprint process that prints in sunlight, film, music, and performance. Explore Kim's portfolio, publications, exhibitions: www.moonersmakes.com @moonersmakes



M. Campbell // Genre: Poetry

M. Campbell is a Jamaican-American poet. M. was a 2025 Brooklyn Poets fellow, a finalist for the 2026 Tusculum Review Chapbook Prize, and has placed in a handful of contests, including first place in the 2026 Frank O'Hara Prize Contest. You can find published and forthcoming poems in *Amistad*, *The Ana*, *Three Decker*, *Variety Pack*, *The Worcester Review*, and elsewhere.
Instagram: @mcampbellwrites
Website



Madeline Newell-Wilson // Genre: Poetry

Madeline Newell-Wilson is a writer and speech-language pathologist from Vermont. She studied English at Wilson College and has an M.S. in Communication Sciences and Disorders from the University of Vermont. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in the *McNeese Review*, *SLAB*, *Portrait of New England*, *The Tiger Moth Review*, *Zig Zag Lit Mag*, and the *Onion River Review*.
Instagram: @madelinenewellwilson
Website



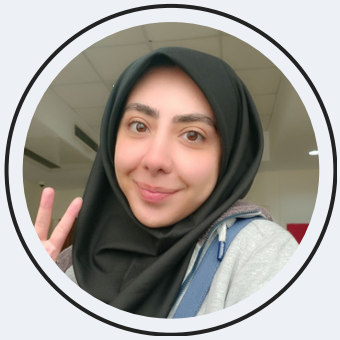
Mark Dunbar // Genre: Poetry

Mark Dunbar lives in Brookfield, IL. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Red Rock Review*, *Spellbinder*, *Neologism Poetry Review* and the *Ekphrastic Review*, among others.
Instagram: @mdunbar001
Facebook: mdunbar007



Marlowe K. // **Genre:** Art

Marlowe K is a mixed media artist whose work explores patterns and cycles in nature and the wisdom they reveal. Gathering and combining imagery in a variety of media, she creates layers of meaning and personal narrative that speak to our symbiotic relationship with the natural world. Her work invites viewers into a deeper attention to nature, where we might recognize ourselves as an integral part of the web of life.
Instagram: @marlowe__k
Website



Narges Goleij // **Genre:** Art/Hybrid

Narges (Goli) is an Iranian writer. She is passionate about expressing her own world through comics and exploring Iranian culture, history, and mythology.
Instagram: @narges.writes



Olga Karpenko (Olly) // **Genre:** Art

Olga Karpenko (Olly) is a Ukrainian visual artist working primarily in watercolor, monotype, and drawing. Her practice grows from direct observation of nature, urban environments, and everyday life, often developing into series through changes of viewpoint, material, and simplification. She has presented several solo exhibitions, including “Helsinki–Kyiv” in 2026, and has been a member of the National Union of Artists of Ukraine since 2024.
Instagram: @olly_k2
Website



Rashan Speller // Genre: Art

Rashan Speller is a Philadelphia-based multidisciplinary artist working across graphic design, photography, painting, and writing. His work explores the intersections of metaphysics, identity, and urban life, often blending abstraction with emotional depth. Drawing inspiration from his environment, he creates pieces that reflect both personal introspection and collective experience. Speller's work has been exhibited throughout Philadelphia and featured in various publications, offering a thoughtful and layered perspective on contemporary culture.
Instagram: @artistphilly



Raya Yarbrough // Genre: Poetry

Raya Yarbrough is an award-winning singer, songwriter, composer, recording artist, and writer born in Los Angeles. She has been recognized for her narrative lyric style, drawing on the tradition of jazz vocalese, honest storytelling, and free verse poetry. While she's best known for her vocal work on the hit series Outlander and Battlestar Galactica, she has been captivating audiences with her original music for years.
Instagram: @RayazYarbrough
Website



Reiner Heidorn // Genre: Art

Reiner Heidorn is a German painter with a focus on freshwater microorganisms, plants, and chlorophyll. Using his own technique, he translates the pointillism of microscope photographs into abstract expressionism. He also collects natural materials and uses leaves, twigs, and blossoms as print templates for his abstract, botanical pictorial spaces. Reiner Heidorn has collected old school maps and paints them over, including maps from the Nazi regime. In doing so, he aims to keep historical memory alive and take a stand against denial.
Instagram: @reinerheidorn
Website



Susan Schirl Smith // Genre: Art

Susan Schirl Smith is a writer, photographer and holistic nurse living on the Seacoast of New Hampshire. Her essays have been published in *SugarSugarSaltLit*, *Porterhouse Review*, *WBUR's Cognoscenti*, *Pangyrus*, *Silver Birch Press* and the *Journal of Holistic Nursing*. She is a staff writer for *Wind and Root* at *Reckon Review*, and is a regular contributor to *Kind Over Matter*. Her photography has been featured in *Barren Magazine*, *L'Ephemere Review* and local newspapers.
Instagram: @susanschirlsmith
BlueSky: @sschirlsmith.bsky.social
Website



Tabitha Gimbel // Genre: Art

Tabitha Gimbel is a mixed media collage artist and self published poet. Both her art and writing have been published in numerous digital and print magazines including *Remington Review*, *Page Gallery Journal*, *Suburban Witchcraft*, *Belladonna's Garden*, *Gilded Gazette* and *Infinite Blues Review*. You can find her art and links to her books on her website (linked below) and follow her on Instagram.
Instagram: @tabscreativecollages & @authortgimbel
Website



Zachariah Claypole White // Genre: Poetry

Zachariah Claypole White was born and raised in North Carolina and currently resides in Philadelphia, where he teaches at the city's community's college. His work has appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Southeast Review*, and *The Rumpus*, amongst others. A former Jane Cooper Poetry Fellow, Zachariah has received awards from *Palette Poetry*, *Flying South*, and *The Fifth Corner*. His poetry and prose have also been nominated for the Pushcart Prize, the Best of the Net, the O. Henry Prize, the Orison Spiritual Prize, and the Best American Short Stories.
Instagram: @zachariahcw
Bluesky: @zachariahcw.bsky.social
Website



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