

IMAGES

THIRTY-THREE

20

A Literary  
& Fine Arts  
Magazine

19





# IMAGES 2019

**A LITERARY AND FINE ARTS MAGAZINE**

by the Students and Staff of  
Monroe County Community College



**MONROE COUNTY  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

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enriching lives

**Front Cover:**

Ceramic Pot • Ceramics II • Melanie Klump

**Back Cover:**

Apples and Gasoline • Painting I • Cassy Fallon

*Sponsored and Published by  
The Humanities/Social Sciences Division*

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This is the thirty-third year we have compiled and published the creative efforts of our community of students.

As in the past, we have been so impressed with the level of quality, effort, and vulnerability of the work submitted for this year's edition. It is our hope that you find the paintings, drawings, sculptures, poems, narratives and stories included in this volume to be moving and inspiring examples of the creative spirit that shines throughout our college community.

We would like to thank everyone involved in making this volume a reality. To the contributors (listed on the last page): thank you for inviting us into the depths of your heads and hearts. To those who work the behind the scenes— Paul Hedeem, Rachel Eagle, and Miranda Gardner (student editor), we appreciate you, and we hope you know there would be no *Images* without your help.

We are already gathering material for our next issue. From now through next February, we will be accepting submissions from MCCC students to feature in the thirty-third volume. We collect these submissions through our magazine's email address: [images@monroeccc.edu](mailto:images@monroeccc.edu).

**Jenna Bazzell**  
*Assistant Professor of English*

**Therese O'Halloran**  
*Assistant Professor of Art*



**Untitled** • Watercolor II • Emily Reinhardt

Produced by  
Monroe County Community College

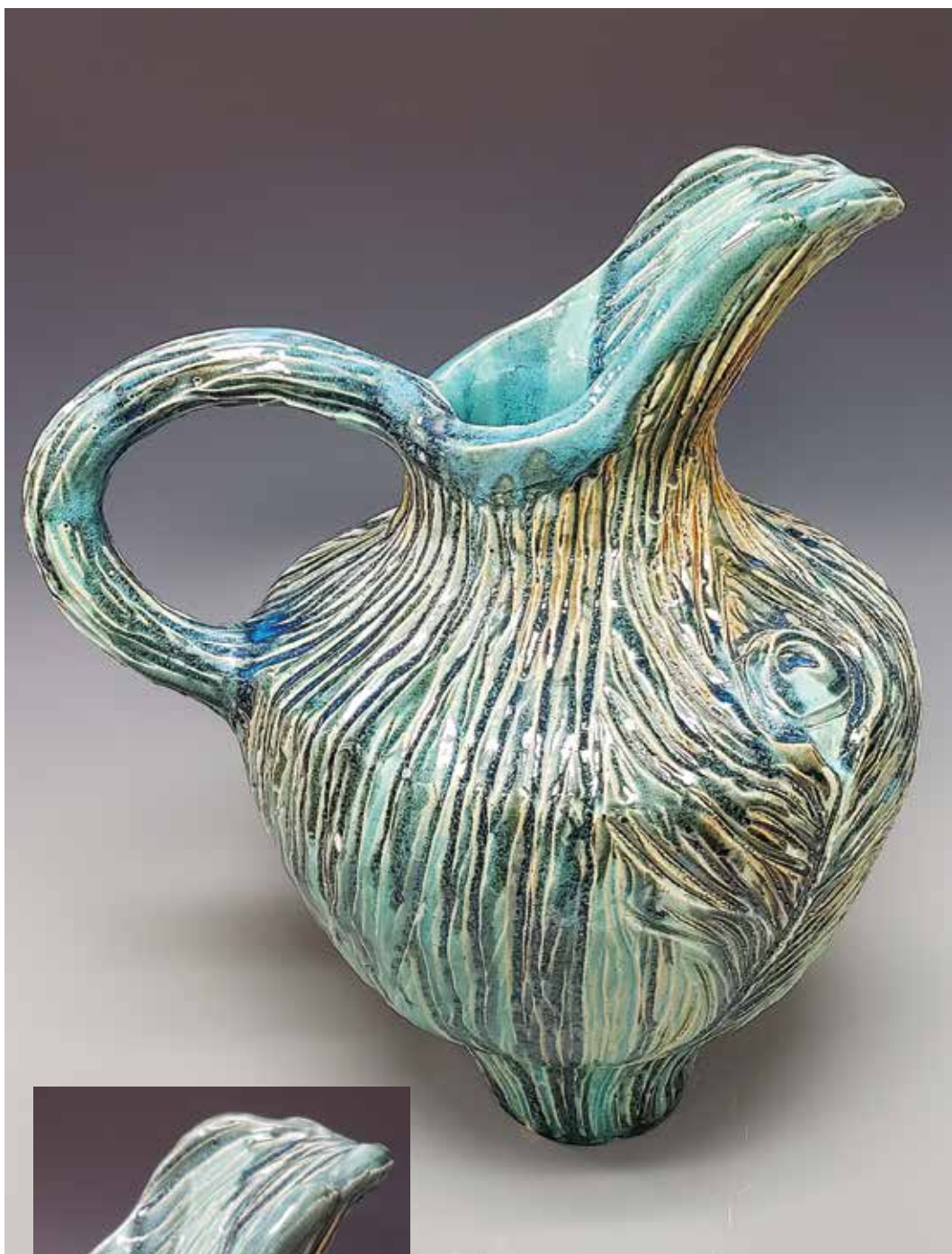
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- Daniel I
- Watercolor II
- Cassy Fallon

Daniel II • Watercolor II • Cassy Fallon



Untitled 14 in. x 24 in. • Ceramics II • Emily Gibson

# Eyes Like Ice

With the midnight stars beneath my bed  
I reach my hands out to catch them  
But they peel off the wall  
For so many seasons I felt like a grown up  
In a little world  
And now the car rides and the late night shows  
Have made me one of you  
I thought you held the answers  
But you spun them out of dust  
I thought you couldn't understand me  
But I hadn't learned to trust  
And if I could tell you that I love you  
Without you cutting your fingers on the sharpest parts of me  
I'd like to believe you'd say you it back to me  
I was once too young to understand or so I'm often told  
I can't explain the nights of practicing problems practically every night  
And I thought I was so mature you would have been so proud  
But now I'm not allowed  
And it's woven too deep beneath my skin  
I thought you held the answers  
But you spun them out of dust  
I thought you couldn't understand me  
But I hadn't learned to trust  
And if I could tell you that I love you  
Without you cutting your fingers on the sharpest parts of me  
I'd like to believe you'd say you it back to me  
And why is it every secret I bottle stays closed behind these lips  
And I'm so good at lying I pray you'll notice my intentional slips  
If I thought you would notice I'd beg you not to  
I don't know how to show you a world I'd forbidden myself to  
A clear tear drop bottle beneath my pillow  
I miss curly hair and lace if I'd just allow  
Myself to allow you to know  
Can I allow you to know  
I'd learn every language in the world  
To do justice to you  
If I was justified in doing what I do  
In holding ice hands against broken lungs  
Eyes like ice on my body  
I hold secrets so close they feel like a winter coat  
Heavy but necessary to secrets I must devote  
Myself to I oversee every breath and every word  
Oh god except for that last word  
What if they heard me  
What if they know what if they heard the words I drank the words I  
Memorized like her heartbeat against mine  
Like her heart beat against mine  
I thought you held the answers  
But you spun them out of dust  
I thought you couldn't understand me  
But I hadn't learned to trust  
And if I could tell you that I love you  
Without you cutting your fingers on the sharpest parts of me  
I have to know if you'll say you it back to me

• Rose Younglove

# 30,000 Feet Above

Veins

Scrawled across the bare naked land  
Curving, straight, wrapping around the flat hills  
They stretch until you can't see  
And even then they keep going  
The red-tinged skin of the ground  
Is peppered with pockmarks  
Like the birthmarks of a flatland  
Clouds cover the marks  
Like a mask covers a blemish  
They pass above and below me  
Icing over the windows  
With pointed cracks of frozen fingerprints  
The veins pass through the flat mountains  
Unaware or uncaring of their intrusive nature  
They pass with ancient knowledge of the land they  
carve  
They live in the deep crevasses  
Nestled comfortably where hundreds have lived and  
died  
Loved and died  
The veins carry the blood of the land  
Dried or not  
There exists more history in an ounce of them than  
exists in 10,000 people  
Those veins butt up against  
The massive chunks of earth  
Bitten earth  
As though some long-dead giant  
Stopped to feast for days  
Veins  
Earth  
Flatlands and flat mountains  
They stay the same while life passes fleetingly and  
ever-changing  
They stay  
We change  
It's simply how the world is  
It's simply how life will be

• Aleija Rodriguez

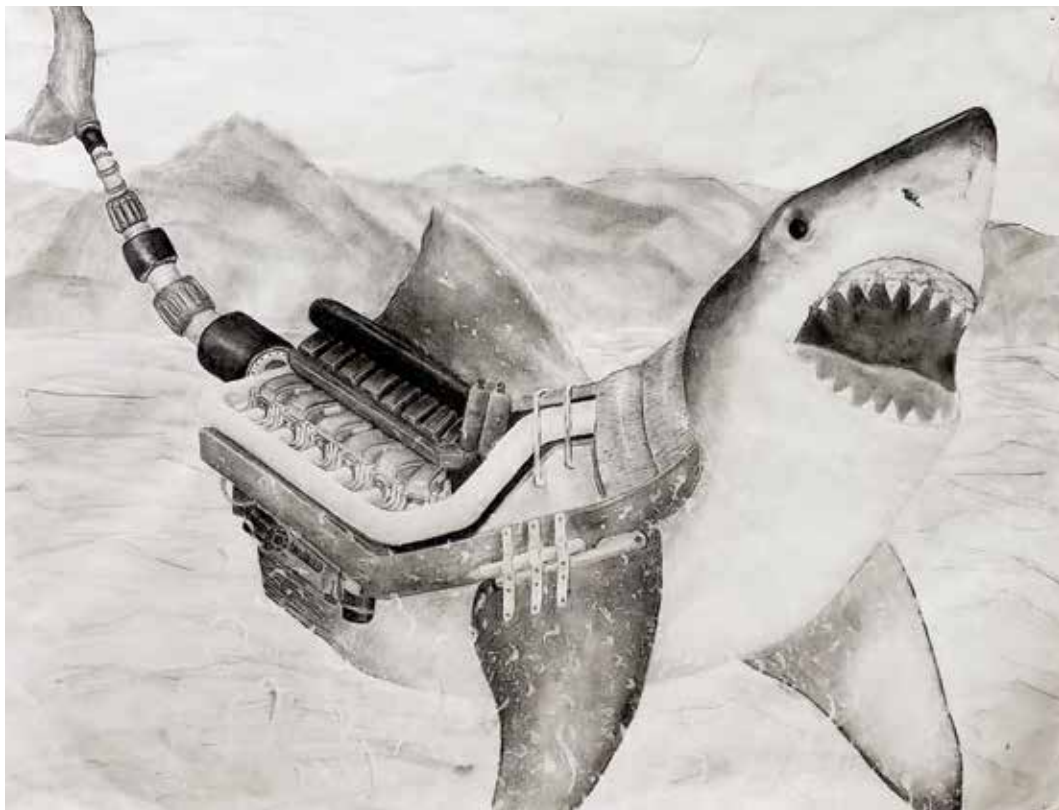




- **Untitled 1** - 17 in x 15 in.
- Ceramics II
- Brandon Szparagowski



Mechanical Grasshopper • Drawing II • Cora Talkington



Mechanical Shark • Drawing II • Karina Manghum

# But Because We Don't

And we're happy in our ending  
Not because we forgive you  
But because we don't  
Who needs to hold hands which choke  
And laugh when our throats start to croak

Jagged jewels still cut your hands even when they shine  
You can walk over water that still doesn't make you mine  
You can paint a river between your soul and the mine it fell into  
You don't have to dig for treasure where there are only bombs

And when you see the sunlight don't turn away  
Carve your name into hope and praise your union  
Don't be afraid to leave steps in the sand  
Even the dying tree can refuse water but it won't  
And neither should you

Life has a beginning and an end not so we can end  
So we can stitch the end back to the beginning and start over again  
You can start over again

• Rose Younglove



Untitled • Art Fundamentals • Melanie Klump



# The Devil's Consequence

It was the hottest day of the year, the kind that would set your feet ablaze if you dare step on the black top road with naked feet. Emily, who much preferred the comforts of air conditioner and the company of the characters in a good book, was reluctantly plopped onto a rock under an oak tree out in the field. Melty, her tomboyish best friend, was perched next to her.

"Man, I don't get why we keep getting forced to play outside when it's hot enough to sear your skin off. I wasn't even allowed to bring my book," said Emily.

Melty's freckled face flashed a sympathetic smirk, barely glancing up from her drawing pad.

"I can give you some paper and you can draw if you want," she responded to Emily.

"Oh no, I have nowhere near the talent you have, it would be pointless for me to even waste your precious paper," Emily giggled.

Suddenly, JD came flying up the devil's upside-down U on his mongoose BMX bike. He made it a few feet in the air when he rounded out the point of the hill and landed into a harsh cloud of dust.

A whirl of black and red flashed by us from the cloud of dirt and sent Emily's chocolate brown hair whooshing into a tornado around her face; Melty's remained safely in tact tucked in her baseball cap.

He skids to a stop a little further out in the field. Luckily, this July has been unreasonably dry and most of the usual mud is now crumbly areas of dirt. If it wasn't for that, he'd of face planted.

We call the hill the devil's upside-down U for a reason- it's an insanely steep hill that has slightly hollowed out sides to where it looks like the letter U turned over. It sits in the middle of the open field that's 70% dirt and 30% grass and puddles, surrounded by an oddly perfect half circle of woods.

Kids and teenagers around here all tell their own ghost stories of the mysterious hill, and they all believe its got a mind of its own. It's almost sinister in its perfect shape and placement.

"You better slow down there daredevil," Emily yells to her brother, "it's too hot to have all this dirt stirred up jerk. It's gonna stick to all of our sweat!"

Melty is coughing and dramatically waving her hands to clear the dust in front of her face.

"Yeah, I would prefer to not taste dirt for the next week," she says.

JD rolls his eyes and shakes his head, his messy tufts of sandy brown hair shifting slightly in the process.

"You guys are a bunch of babies. Just take a shower and brush your teeth when you get home. You'll need one anyways because I can smell your BO from here," he sneers, aiming it more towards his sister than Melty.

He wished his friend Andrew would have been able to hangout, it's not as fun to come out here with a couple of girls allergic to dirt and danger.

Slowly he starts riding his bike in circles. He spits out a mouthful of tobacco filled saliva. Emily always hated his obsession with tobacco, it's disgusting and makes your mouth all black. She thought he would stop when their parents found out and made him look at pictures of mouth cancer.

But JD never believes in consequences, and wouldn't care about them if he did.

He has THAT look on his face again. The one Emily knows all too well where he's contemplating the devil on his right shoulder and the angel on his left; the devil almost always wins. Her brother is always choosing the bad decision.

His face lights up with his signature look of mischief.

"I'm going to start further back and see if I can completely clear this side of the hill. I bet I can make it with room to spare even!" he yells excitedly.

He looks at Melty, pleased that she's no longer got her nose in her drawing book. He's got her attention now. If this doesn't impress her, then he doesn't know if anything he does ever will.

He rides back behind the hill and disappears into the lining of the woods. He passes the first few lines of trees. It's still a straight shot to the hill but now he can get up as much speed as he can.

Melty and Emily side glance each other.

"I can't believe he thinks this is a good idea," Melty says.

"You know he's just trying to show off for you," Emily says, "The fact that it's the worst idea ever is just an added bonus."

JD and Emily's mother, Jane, is walking down the street to get them for dinner.

She sees JD ride off to the woods, Emily and Melty are watching as he goes.

"KIDS! IT'S DINNER TIME! TIME TO COME HOME," she yells as loud as she can, with her hands cupped around her mouth as a makeshift megaphone.

She adjusts her blonde, pin straight pony tail out of frustrated habit as she waits for a reaction.

They're too far out to hear her, it's useless to keep trying. She reaches the edge of the street and continues into to field to go get them, irritated that they went out there so close to dinner time.

Back in the woods, JD takes a few deep breaths, setting his face into a statue of determination. Although he needs the adrenaline rush, there still a twinge of fear that nags at him.

The tires skid as he takes off full force. Trees are blurring past him and his legs burn after the first few second from the haste of his pedaling. Pushing through the pain, he breaks out of the trees shadows and squints against the blaring sunshine. His jawline is squared, with his bottom lip bulging out from his tobacco.

His heart is in his throat as he reaches the hill and starts up the sharp incline. It's so steep it feels as if his body is ascending and his stomach doesn't have time to catch up.

The ground beneath his tires vanishes in an instant. All he can see is the baby blue, cloudless sky before him. The seconds passing by feel like they're going in slow motion; he feels boundless and free.

Emily and Melty stare anxiously, their mouths agape and silent in disbelief.

He did it!

He actually cleared the entire other side of the devil's upside-down U, but the devil bites back.

He hits the flat ground, which feels more like a brick wall, with a sickening bounce. Both him and his bike ricochet into a somersault in the air. The mongoose slides a good 30 feet and JD lands a few yards away...right onto his left arm.

They could hear the crunch of his cracking bones- like a branch being snapped off a tree- so clear in the distance from the openness of the field.

He is still as a corpse and there's silence where snide remarks are usually present.

"OH MY GOD! JD, are you ok?" Melty screams, while her and Emily leap from the rock and go running to his aid.

When they reach him, they see an eggshell white tip of ragged bone sticking out of his torn skin. Blood is pooling and mixing with the dirt beneath him, his eyes flutter lazily.

He must have been knocked out from the impact or the shock of pain from the break.

"JD wake up! Please wake up you idiot!" Emily pleads as she's gently smacking his cheeks trying to get him to regain consciousness. She still sees the bulge of his tobacco, and wonders momentarily how he got lucky enough to avoid it going down his throat and choking him when he landed.

Jane only makes it a few feet into the clearing when she sees JD comes blazing out of the words.

Damn it, damn it, damn it.

How many times has she told them to stay clear of that dangerous mountain? JD has already ruined two bikes on that thing.

She stops in sheer terror as she realizes what is happening and watches as he clears the descending side of the hill completely. He bounces back up into the air before landing flat again like pancake in the dirt.

He isn't moving.

She starts running as fast as her motherly figure will let her towards her only son.

Emily looks around for help when she sees his eyes finally starting to move. She spots Jane running frantically through the field. What is she doing out here? JD is the luckiest daredevil ever, but man is he going to be in trouble when this is over.

"Mom help! JD broke his arm; we need to get to a hospital!" Emily yells.

Jane reaches them, huffing from breathlessness and visibly shaking.

She fights the vomit trying to surface when she sees his broken arm. It's surprisingly the first broken bone she has had to deal with but she keeps it together, the kids are already freaked out enough.

"JD, honey I need you to open your eyes right now!"

She attempts to mask how scared she is with a slim film of anger.

"How many times have I told you guys to be careful if you insist on coming out to this ridiculous hill?" she scolds as she glances at Emily.

JD is regaining consciousness and takes this opportunity to spit out the tobacco that's been hiding in his lip. He shoots Emily his famous "You say anything and you're dead" look. Jane sees it in the corner of her eye and decides that's an entirely different discussion to deal with another day.

"Mom, it hurts so much and everything's all blurry," he says groggily, cuddling his bleeding limb.

"I know Hun, just do me favor and don't look at it. It'll only make it worse," she responds calmly. "Ok, Let's get you up and to the hospital."

Luckily, even though he's a young teenager, puberty has yet to touch him and he's still a small boy. She easily lifts him to his feet, putting his good arm over her shoulder.

"Emily, grab his bike please. Melty, gather your things and c'mon. You should probably go back to your Grandma's house, I doubt she would want you to spend all evening in the hospital with us Honey," Jane commands.

Melty runs to collect her stuff from the ground by the boulder. I really hope he's going to be ok, but I'm so glad I'm not him right now.

Jane starts walking and JD is moving grudgingly along with her- blood dripping from his arm, white hot pain shooting around his nerves like a ping pong ball of torture. He looks like such a wimp now and their dad is going to be pissed. Damn, I guess Melty won't be too impressed by me now.

Obediently, Emily picks up the bike to follow, realizing the front tire is mangled. Dad won't be happy that JD destroyed yet another bike with his recklessness. She starts pushing it, the tire comically squeaking and wobbling along. Melty follows with her arms wrapped around her art supplies.

Their heads hang down in shame, even though they aren't the ones who broke the rules.

Emily always ends up feeling guilty while JD just moves onto his next wild and thoughtless adventure.

Maybe one day the consequences will catch up to him... they're starting to already.

# You

I sit here.  
Pondering the bane of my existence,  
The only thoughts nesting away in my brain are the dark ones,  
Of you.

They say everything happens for a reason,  
But I can't think of one for you.  
Crushing souls in the palm of your hand.  
Drinking in the sins of the ones around you,  
Just so you can vomit them back up.  
But your words mean nothing.

You are all good things turned bad.  
You are the filth that invaded my blood,  
And you're every lie that was ever told to me.  
You're a cancer that never stops spreading,  
And its eating away at my lungs,  
Slowly,

Until finally I'm relieved,  
When I can no longer breathe.

• Autumn Oxer

A Walk in the Woods • Studio • Susan Westerdale







- **Untitled**
- **11 in. x 15 in.**
- Ceramics II •
- Levi Shepherd

## Dad

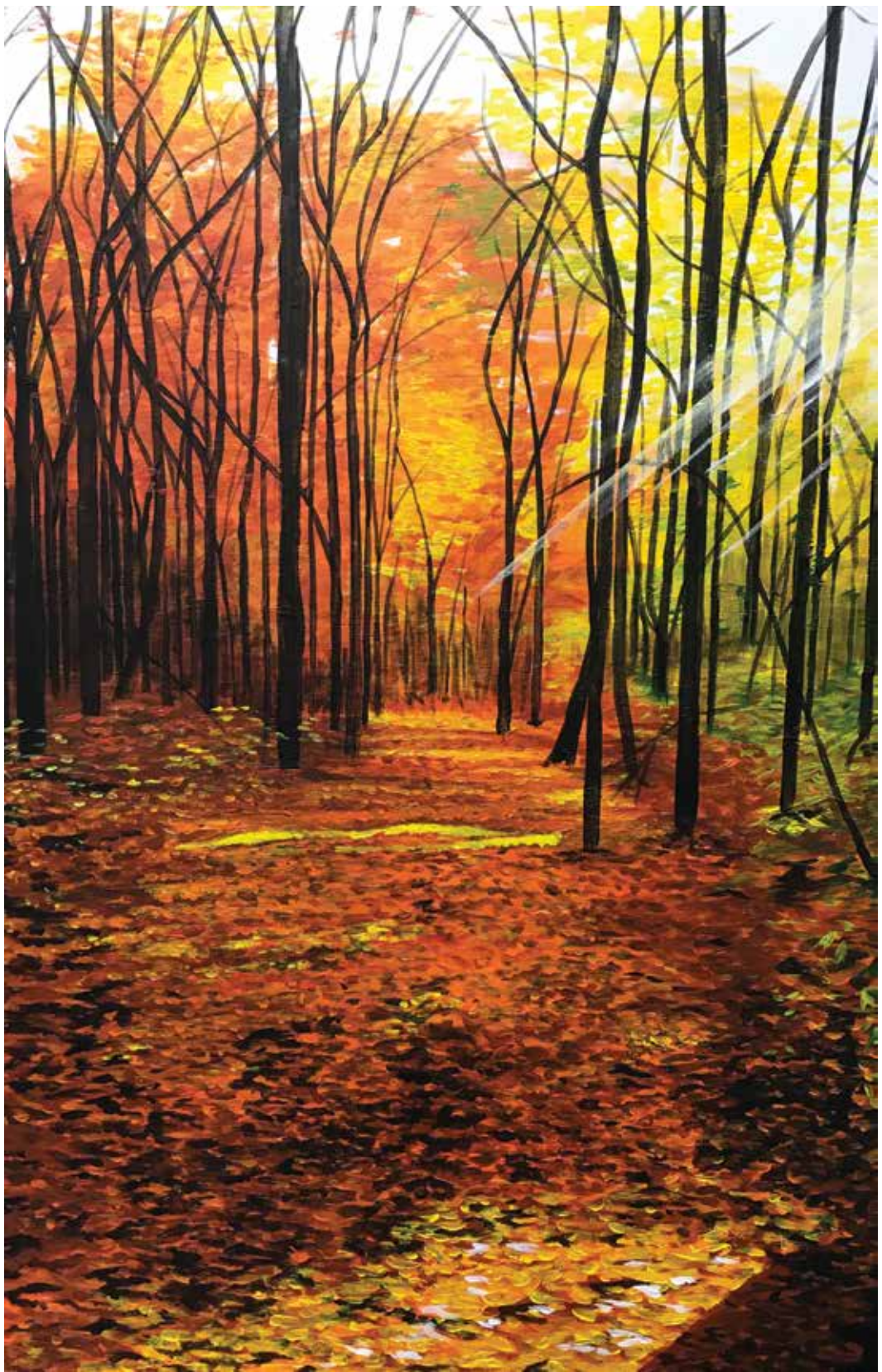
The tire is almost the size of me, as I sit next to the white Grand Am. Dad is waxing the rest of the cars while I draw circles on the rim with the rag. I always went to the car shows with Dad. I'm two, and copy Dad as he preps the car for the car show. The picture is taken by a passerby, who asks my dad how he got me to wax the car too.

I lean against the tire as it comes up to my hip. Dad's new tires were the biggest ones yet. His jeep was becoming a monster truck. I push the tire towards the truck. I'm ten, and still struggle to climb in the jeep now.

Peering in the window of my jeep, the two of us come into frame. I'm fifteen, learning how to shift my jeep in and out of four wheel drive. Dad is laughing as he tells me all of these random turns to make in the field. My jeep is the smallest in the field, it's shadow smaller than the rest.

I'm in all green, and almost as tall as Dad. I had just walked across the stage to graduate. The smile between the two of us is huge. His arm is around my shoulder, and the sun setting behind us. I'm seventeen now, and still my dad's shadow.

• Michaela Mathis



**Autum Trails** • Painting I • Cheyanne Abel



# 30,000 Colors

Miles of uninterrupted silk  
The sky blends into a deep pink  
The sunlight glances  
Off the hills and valleys of cloud  
Topography is not limited  
To the land  
Pockets of unwavering blue  
Peek out among the sea of pillow  
Carved out roads for the convenience  
Of air-based automobiles  
No lights or signs  
Just traced shapes  
Beneath me there lies a rhombus of swirls  
Tufts of cloud roll about and blend  
Together  
As the horizon bleeds  
Blends  
Objects lose their shape, their definition  
The sun, too exhausted  
Collapses  
Out where the sky meets the universe  
Colors are all that remain  
Baby blue  
Deep maroon  
Mixes of oranges and reds  
All diffuse into a light blue  
Then opaque blue  
Then black  
In front of the world colors I see powerful  
Vessels of water and air  
They move swiftly, unapologetically  
Graciously they allow us passage through  
Their home  
We exist at 30,000 feet  
Only with the gracious acceptance  
Of clouds  
Birds  
Rains  
Light

They shroud us and do their best to protect  
The curious wonder of a young boy  
Points out the similarity they resemble  
To the power and ferocity of an angry storm  
But I rest confident in knowing  
So long as we protect the earth  
So too will it do the same.  
Oceans and lakes of black merge into grey  
We are guests in the house of Aeolus  
We learn that the earth  
That life  
Is a tapestry of repetition and mirrors  
As above so below  
The sea may be calm tonight  
But it learns its example from its love  
They stare day after day at each other  
Never touching until the sun links  
Their hands  
At the peak of twilight  
For a moment of pure beauty and angelic  
Choruses  
The reason we see such beauty at dusk  
Is because dusk is one of the few  
Physical representations  
Of emotional bliss  
Dusk is not the death of the day  
It is the fleeting rebirth of what we  
All  
Live for  
Die for  
Yearn for  
To meet our sky or sea  
And for even just a moment  
Revel in a cacophony of colors

• Aleija Rodriguez



# Little Towns

Jumping between narrow lines of heaven and hell  
Is a demanding job and my lunch is only 15 minutes  
It's hard to race against the shores when the sea is acid and the sand pulls at your feet  
I've been running from who I am for so long  
I wouldn't recognize a finish line if I crossed one

Do you ever get bored of those little towns with the little minds  
Do you ever fear of crossing the lines  
When there are so many you've taken notes on your arms  
Do you ever tire of choosing between heaven and hell  
Naysayers cursing and then wishing you well  
Do you ever  
Do you ever forgive yourself  
Self love so your self can love

Running between heaven and hell isn't my choice but I'm read like it is  
And I'd take a break from being me but it only breaks me  
Trying to breathe with battery acid lungs  
I've been running from who I am for so long  
I wouldn't recognize a finish line if I crossed one

Do you ever get bored of those little towns with the little minds  
Do you ever fear of crossing the lines  
When there are so many you've taken notes on your arms  
Do you ever tire of choosing between heaven and hell  
Naysayers cursing and then wishing you well  
Do you ever  
Do you ever forgive yourself  
Self love so your self can love

• Rose Younglove



Untitled • Painting I • Gary Gudes



Ideal • Drawing II • Jessica Collins

## 6-Word Memoirs

all was well until I fell  
tell me no lies, I'll listen  
youth are ignorant; ignorance equals Bliss  
May I start this day over?  
The young; The old; The inbetween  
My life's history molds my future  
I can learn something from everyone  
I'm not perfect, but I'm unique

• Jackie Conn



Untitled • Watercolor I • Susan Grant



**Cora I** •  
Watercolor II •  
Cassy Fallon •



**Cora II** • Watercolor II • Cassy Fallon



# Sidewalks

Gravity pulls the crimson droplet from the edge of my fingertip to the grainy concrete below. Billions of other droplets follow in pursuit rushing like a plasma river down my left forearm. I dip my right forefinger into that river, separating layers upon layers of tissue, and I mindlessly swirl the warm bloody waters until I strike its bony bottom. My heart ricochets against my chest. I gasp. It is deeper than I had realized. Withdrawing my finger, I clutch tighter onto the culinary knife in my right hand. It whispers promises of liberation to me. I believe it. My soul does not.

I continue to shuffle in a stupor along the sidewalks of the sleeping neighborhood. Chipped cement pieces cling onto the soles of my bare feet then flake off leaving dents. A relentless earthquake rumbles from my feet to my teeth, rattling my bones, and sobs stack like crumbled bricks within my throat. Carbon dioxide expels in increments from my stale lungs, entangling with the oxygen in the stilled summer air. Saline streams trickle down my cheeks, leaving salty trails which strip my skin of its moisture. A bloody trail closely pursues, following my footsteps. It may be left in the morning, but I—I would not. I shuffle on.

Halfway through the neighborhood, my attention is yanked into reality. A low growl resounds in close proximity to me. I stop, and the saline streams halt. My eyes skim my surroundings. Then, they set right upon his, which are floating like searing fireballs. With my mind distracted, I curiously reach out to attain them. My hand smacks the wire fence, sending vibrations down it. Wolf! Wolf! Wolf! His deep barks echo into the night.

A light pops on in the neighboring window. Oh no! Imitating a drunk, I attempt to blunder my way past the house. Creeeaaak. The front door opens. A thread of light extends to the outer edge of the lawn. I shield my body behind the trunk of a tree bordering the sidewalk. Air attempts to squeeze in and out of my throat. I dare not let it. I try to grasp onto the knife, but the slick handle slips out of my hand. Clank! The blade clamors against the pavement until it altogether ceases. Shit!

“Who’s there?!” A man booms in a groggy gruff voice. Only silence speaks.

“Them damn teenagers,” he mutters angrily to himself. “I ain’t messin’ around no more. Can’t get no fuckin’ sleep. They need’ah lesson.”

Several moments of silence pass. Is he gone? I slowly peek around the tree. He’s not there. But why did he leave the door ajar? After a moment, I withdraw my gaze. Collapsing onto my hands and knees, I reach out my hands in search for the knife. Where is it?! Finally, I find it, pressing the blade against my cheek and closing my eyes. Thank goodness! What would I do without it? Soon after, I stand up, the earth swaying up and down beneath my feet.

Suddenly, the thread of light quickly expands across the grass in my direction. I retreat back into the shelter of the tree. When I peek around a second time, I see a tall big-boned figure outlined in the doorway, a flashlight in his left hand and a pistol in his right. I gasp. Is he crazy?! Then I cover my lips with the blade. I close my eyes. I kiss it. A warm red and black crust colors my lips. It is not by lead I shall go but steel. So, I remain silent. I remain still.

Footsteps near as an extra light springs from wish flowers to dandelions and dandelions to wish flowers. I am reminded of a younger me. A time when Caroline, my ex-best friend,

and I used to run through a field of dandelions and wish flowers that danced in tune with our laughs. We used to pick them and arrange them into bouquets, innocently believing that they were indeed flowers. But as we grew older, our innocence was stripped away, and flowers became weeds. Wish flowers that had once carried parts of our innocent hearts into the breeze now carried broken parts of my heart and unheard screams. If I could make a wish...

“Aha!” He cries out. The light springs to the tree. The pistol raises.

“Hmphf!” He grunts. The pistol lowers. The light springs downward. The man stands there stupefied, his figure a boulder in the dark.

I had slithered to the opposite side of the tree trunk. Now facing the doorway of the house, the light paves a pathway toward my feet, stopping at my toes. It mocks me. I know. I know. I know. Let me expose. But as the man walks back to the house, I slither back around to the other side of the tree, where I had previously been. Wrapping the blanket of darkness around me, I tiptoe away from the mockery. Then, I continue on my way, shuffling on through the neighborhood.

I had almost winded my way through the entire neighborhood when a strange scene in front of a house captivates my attention. By this time, a plump moon had appeared, hanging in hazy sky. Thin wisps of ghostly clouds wrap around it like a noose, its face downcast onto the front lawn. DO NOT CROSS tape encloses around the edge of the yard. Resting in the middle of the grass is a culinary knife encased in dark clotted material. Around the knife, the grass is stained and matted down. A strong metallic odor evaporates into the air, seeking a way into my congested nasal cavities. It frees my airways but distills my nerves. Iron thickly settles on my tongue. My mind suspends in white silence as I stare, unblinking.

I stare until I become aware that my right hand is lighter. I glance down. The knife is no longer there! Neither is the plasma river though its steep empty bank is permanently engraved in my flesh. I glance back up. The knife in the middle of the grass is dissolving into the atmosphere. Is it my briny eyes? I blink. But no, it completely disappears. Suddenly, my right hand is heavy again, and my fingers clench around the handle. Then—within a millisecond—I behold my breathless body lying facedown upon the blood-soaked lawn. I blink, and it’s gone.

“No,” I whisper hoarsely as I begin to understand what I had just envisioned. How could I have done this?

Abruptly, sirens lament loudly. They near. My heart tumults inside my chest. A whirlwind sweeps across my brain. What should I do? The murder weapon is in my hand. Should I dispose it? But where? No, my fingerprints already stained the band. So, I run. And I run and I run. Run from the crime scene. Run from the police. Run from myself. The decision I had made.

Eventually, my head swivels behind me. My eyeballs are vacuumed out of their sockets and swept into the black hole of existence. I open my mouth to wail but the air is vacuumed from my lungs before any sound escapes. Then I start to fade away, and everything else fades away with me.

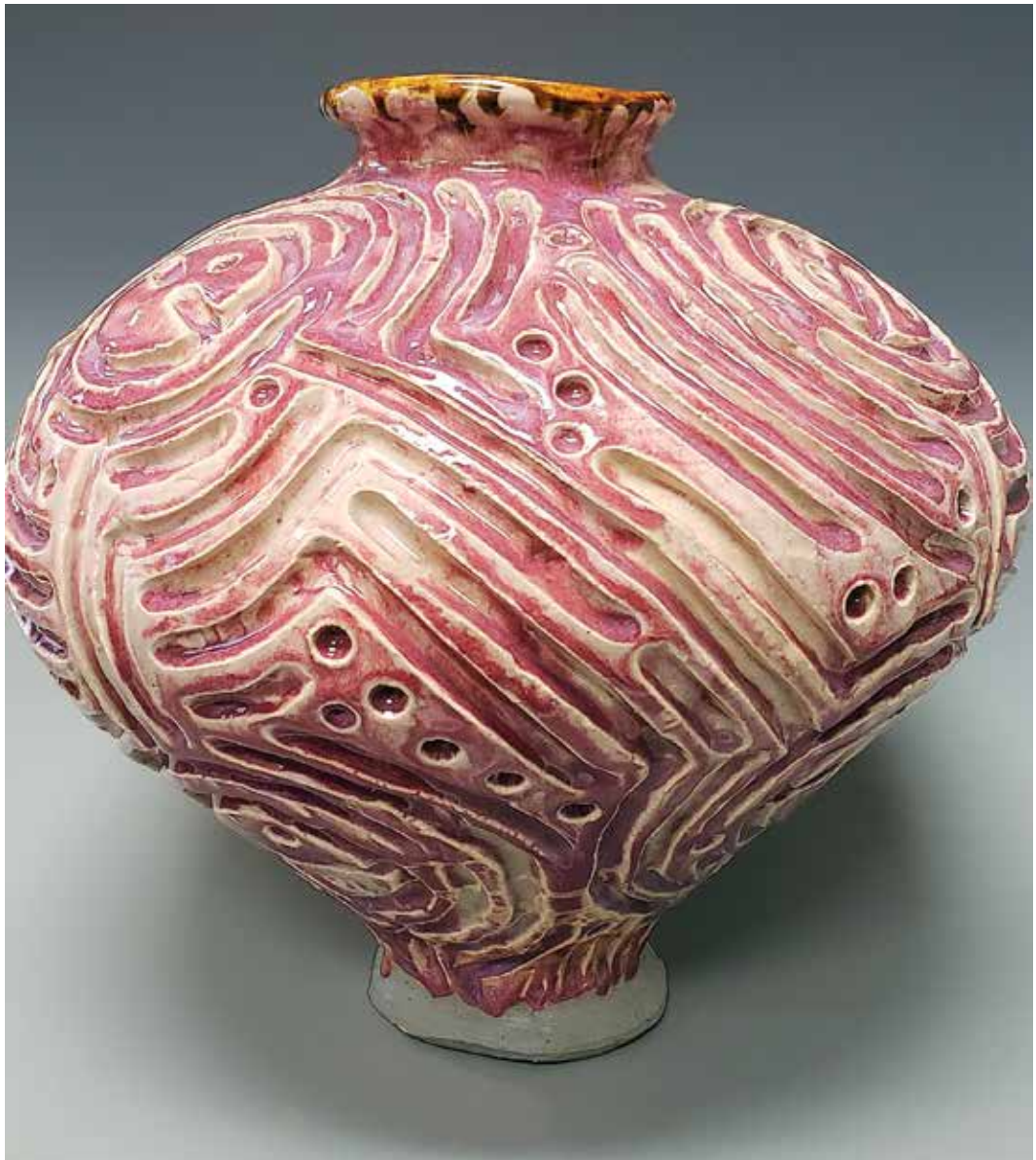


Self Portrait • Drawing II • Jessica Collins









- **Untitled - 14 in x 18 in.** •
- Ceramics II •
- Brandon Szparagowski

# The Consequence of Good Intentions

Cold water brushed her feet  
While the sun circled round her head  
A falsified saint who wasn't even dead  
Slowly she drew her breaths  
Like glass on a church window  
Would they praise her  
If they knew she'd made him a widow

So turn her to ashes  
And bury the secrets you hold  
Like a mirror in your hand  
Replace her with trinkets  
And a touch to the ironed  
Dress she never wore  
She'll look exactly like you remember her  
Or how you try to forget her  
Oh how you try to forget her

Wind nipped her hair  
While the moon kissed her face  
Reminding her of the one she'd try to replace  
Quickly she bleached the table cloth  
Like her stained white set of teeth  
Would they praise her  
If they knew she was an unholy sheath

So turn her to ashes  
And bury the secrets you hold  
Like a mirror in your hand  
Replace her with trinkets  
And a touch to the ironed  
Dress she never wore  
She'll look exactly like you remember her  
Or how you try to forget her  
Oh how you try to forget her

Hazy memories spun too quick  
The Calvary brings a candlestick  
She wanted to swim with the damned  
Too young to know you can't map out the unplanned

So turn her to ashes  
And bury the secrets you hold  
Like a mirror in your hand  
Replace her with trinkets  
And a touch to the ironed  
Dress she never wore  
She'll look exactly like you remember her  
Or how you try to forget her  
Oh how you try to forget her

• Rose Younglove

# Rain

Drip,  
Drop,  
Drip,  
Drop,

Goes the rain all the way down on the side of my umbrella.  
The sound of cars go by with the addition of a splash of the tires  
going through a puddle on the side of the road.  
The water flies upward and fans outward in a spray.

A couple runs by soaked, seeking shelter like in a romance movie.  
A little girl is crying because the rain is making her sad and she cannot play.  
How?  
How can the rain make people sad?

The rain is a paint and the world it's canvas.  
It adds color and takes away the ones that were already there as well.  
It washes away the pain of yesterday and makes things better.  
It takes a dark and dull shade and makes it brighter, it gives is a shiny coat of light that  
can reflect the sky.  
It brings down an array of spectacular blues, purples, grays, whites, blacks, and  
enriches the others.

How can anyone ever be sad when the rain washes it all away?  
I'm a hypocrite as I cry in the rain as well, remembering my sadness.  
The good thing is that the rain hides my tears, along with the tears of people like me, the  
ones who go out in the rain so that they cry and are not alone. That the world is crying  
with them.

Drip,  
Drop  
Drip,  
Drop

Goes the rain all the way down.

• Natalie DeCarlo

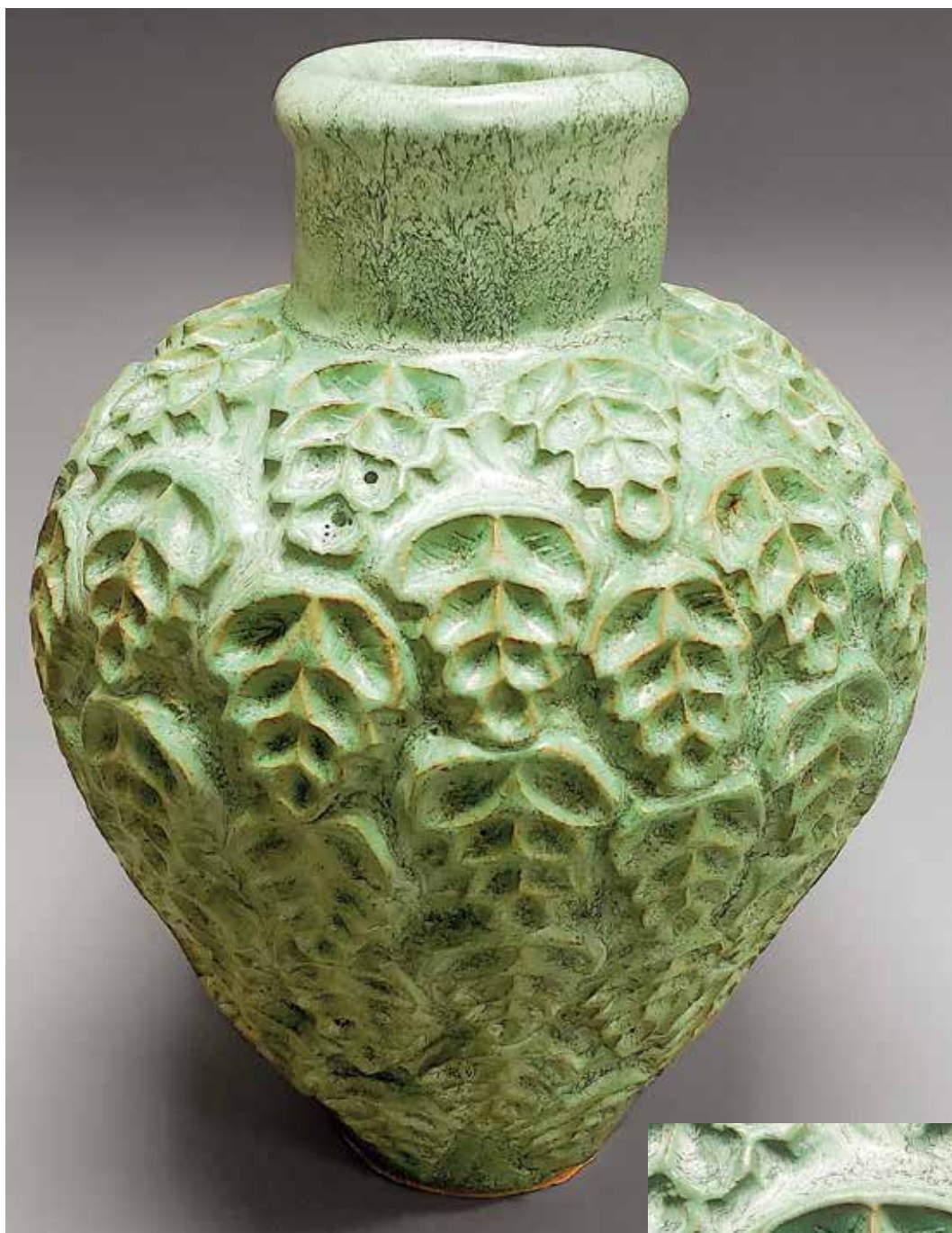


Untitled • Art Fundamentals • Jaqueline Foshag



Untitled • Art Fundamentals • Brandon Szparagowski





Untitled - 10 in. x 17 in. •  
Ceramics II •  
Melanie Klump •



# The Benefits of Being a Secret

Autumn leaves and the sweater you like  
I'm wearing it for you but I hope you don't notice  
People around here always remember what you don't want them to see  
But I'm hoping the only one you remember is me

Flash forward now and we're talking till ten  
Saying we should get some sleep when we know we'll do it again  
And your brother jumped around getting ready for his dance  
And I watched you love him and I saw my chance

As summer ran cold and my blood ran colder  
I knew we could be us if only I grew bolder  
And you dyed your hair and made me feel alive  
Laughing in the grass and pointing at the skies  
Your hand tangled in mine chipped nail polish scattered over skin  
I told you life was hard but you said I could win  
We're laughing in your car as you list off all your pins  
Tell me where you want to go and where you have been  
Somehow sitting in that tattered car seat was my favorite thing to do  
It wasn't a stress how could it be with you

I saw dark curly hair and I was stuck in the past  
Maybe I said too much and I shouldn't have asked  
And my friends told me I'm a hopeless romantic  
I know everything about you and I just can't unpack it  
Shredded memories and a what could have been  
If I'm burning in hell why'd my sins  
Taste like heaven

I gave you a rose but like my gaze you couldn't keep it  
All this time I told myself the benefits of being a secret  
I said I'd call reassured you'd never be alone  
Guess I mistook my place at your side for a home  
And when my falsities faded to nothing I blamed no one but me  
If I'm leading the blind then I don't want to see  
Could've been more

Did I ruin you or did I ruin myself  
I'm an old paper novel just sitting on your shelf  
I guess you tried to read me and it was just too much  
Marked your page but decided to give it up  
Could have been more  
Could have been more

And I bargained for you like a drop of rain in the desert  
Only reminder I have is your hand print on my T-shirt  
Ever faint ever light then gone without a word  
Like a flicker of a candle a song I swore I had heard  
And my secret smiles and laughter turned to cries  
Left by someone I knew I could never despise

You were there when it all was too much  
Should I apologize because I looked for your touch  
Clinging to pictures we never took  
The smile in your eyes  
If you didn't care for me you had one hell of a disguise

I know I made you laugh and I know you care  
So why do I feel like I lost a game of truth or dare  
A grown girl shrunk into her old shoes after a risk too big  
Well look what's happened now look what I did  
Could've been more  
We could've been more

In a twisted sense I made you the crook  
You're a writer and I'm the goddamn book  
You'll move on to someone new  
And I'll owe what I am to you  
Even in a moment of pride  
You're stuck in my head in the back of my mind  
And countless arguments about it with my sister  
Because despite it all I know I still miss her  
I wanted them to like you but then you never met  
So you sit in my mind a memory I cannot forget  
And I'm standing referee  
Defending myself and asking you not to leave  
But the fight is over and it never really existed  
Just a quiet truth I wish I never had whispered  
I might be stuck in a cage but you're running wild free  
And if your answer was to run why did you walk to me  
Could have been more  
Could have been more

In the hall I see your face  
And I hear the sound  
A moment I can never wrap myself around  
A crucial, colorful eternal click  
If this is healing  
Why do I feel so goddamn sick  
And all these stupid tears  
When I know you've long forgotten  
I was supposed to grow but now all I am is rotten

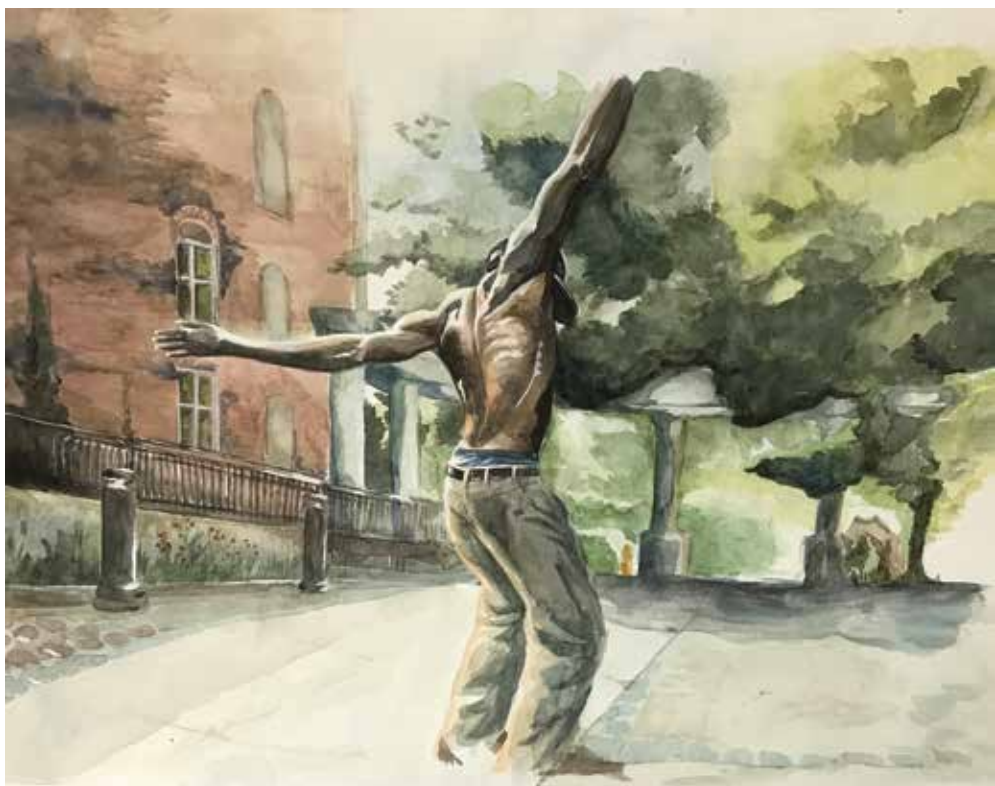
Could have been more  
We could have been so much more

• Rose Younglove



• **Salvation**  
• Painting I  
• Cheyanne Abel





- Sean I
- Watercolor II
- Cassy Fallon



Sean II • Watercolor II • Cassy Fallon



**Untitled** • Painting I • Lola Hernandez



**Sunrise Teatons** • Painting I • Tommy Gerwick

# Flight

I felt each step I took throughout my entire body as my heart rate began to synchronize. I had been used to drowning out the loud noises of the airport, it was all just part of the job, but today it was so loud I couldn't hear myself think. Or maybe all of the screaming voices I was hearing were just coming from my panicking brain. I never meant for it to have gone this far..

I have never been a poor man, all my life I have had nearly everything I could ever dream of having. That was up until mother decided to cut me out of my share of the will before she hung herself from the staircase of our childhood home two summers ago...

Charming woman she was.

I never would have dreamed of ending up here, white knuckling a briefcase with God knows what inside because I dug myself into a hole too deep to climb out of. But God dammit I had to just suck it up and think, take it one step at a time. Whoever these people were they knew me. They knew everything about me, where I lived, how I grew up, intimate details about my time in the United States Air Force, hell they even knew about Cindy and the kids.

Think Todd who could these people be? My first instinct four months ago had been drugs, someone bribes you to smuggle a mystery package aboard a plane it's usually drugs. But these guys have proven over the past four months to be way too organized to be criminals.

God help me I don't know why I ever agreed to any of this, I knew it could be trouble, I knew I could lose my job. But ten grand is a lot of money when you have five kids at home and a wife who can't work because of it. You'd think being a first officer for American Airlines would pay, it doesn't.

My next instinct had been government. In the beginning I was under the impression all of this was a one time thing, but ever since that first time I have been receiving a different package, from a different stranger, every other Tuesday down to the minute. Not many circles of people are programmed to be that efficient. It wasn't until today that I ruled out the government.

The money had been more than life saving the past couple of months but I have always considered myself an honest man, I came to the conclusion after last time that all of this wasn't worth it. Not when you have to start lying about where the extra money is coming from to your wife. Not when you don't know whose lives you are affecting by doing the things you do, and no amount of money was going to change my mind. Besides, with all of the money that began piling up on my private savings account I can't say I wasn't getting nervous.

This morning when I was approached I told the casually dressed stranger that the deal was off, I was done, permanently. The stranger had smiled his perfectly white teeth and asked me kindly to reconsider, I politely declined and turned to walk away. Before I could get two steps away I felt something hard press up against the small of my back. I didn't need four years serving in our country's military to tell me what it was. I took the briefcase from the stranger's hands.

Seeing that action he smiled and put one hand on my shoulder as he casually told me to walk with him. He apologized for any inconvenience to me and explained how it was dire that the package be delivered in Denver Colorado which just happened to be the landing destination of my next flight. He spoke calmly and collectively whilst my thoughts were screaming questions as to how he snuck a gun past security.

The last thing he said to me was that "they" (whoever the hell that was) needed me and appreciated all of the help I had been giving them, and that I was a smart man and that



I would make the right decisions in life as long as they got me home to Cindy, Mason, Markus, Sam, Emmy and Anna. After that he gave me a hard shove freeing me of his clutches. I turned around to yell for security to tell them about the crazy man with a gun loose in the airport but before I could even get a word out the man was gone.

My blood was still running cold from the way the slimy son of a bitch let my children's names pass his lips. I knew then I wasn't dealing with anyone from our government. They would never pull something as ballsy as threaten a civilian with a firearm in the middle of a crowded airport. I know there are many unpatriotic conspiracy nuts that would debate with me on this but I just couldn't believe the government Cindy and I fought to protect would do anything like this.

That left me out of ideas. No one gave me a passing glance as I walked to what I liked to call the loading dock, or the way all crewman boarded the planes. The flight was scheduled to take off in fifteen minutes. I walked looking downwards, my heart still fluttering from the experience I had earlier. Gwen, Henry's favorite flight attendant, called my name bringing me out of my trance like state. I turned around

"What?" I snapped.

Gwen tugged on the bottom of her shirt her face appeared hurt by my rudeness but that was nothing new. "Nothing you're just really pale is all, like you've seen a ghost."

I turned back around feeling like I was going to be sick, "Believe me I wish I had." I then walked straight back to the captains quarters where I threw down the briefcase and joined Henry, my least favorite pilot to fly with.

"You should've been on board at least ten minutes ago," he said,. Henry was about 65 maybe older, how in Gods name the man still had 20/20 vision and is the best performing pilot in the company was a mystery to all of us.

"Yeah and I should've been promoted to captain two years ago with all the talent I have from my experience in the Air Force but do you hear me yapping about it?" I said without emotion unable to peel my eyes away from the briefcase sitting on the ground.

Henry sighed, "All the time."

I didn't say anything to that, I was back to my thoughts. I remembered my explicit instructions to never look inside the cases I was given. I never cared to know, I didn't want it to be bad so I always tried to wipe it from my thoughts. But things were different now, I was being forced to do something against my will fearing some random person will come and hurt me or my family. I guess you could say now I really didn't have anything to lose by knowing just what I've been delivering across the country for the past few months in exchange for thousands of dollars.

While Henry was getting the plane ready for take off I excused myself to the bathroom taking the case with me. My hands shook when I opened it, you would have expected it to be one of those locked fancy briefcases but it wasn't. When I got it open I peered inside expecting drugs or weapons or some kind of top secret documents. What I saw wasn't any of those things.

I saw a single blue butterfly trapped in one of those bottles people like to build tiny ships in. I took a rather confused but very relieved sigh.

"You must be pretty rare for someone to go to all the trouble for you little guy." I said holding the bottle up close my face. The butterfly flitted it wings in response. I set the bottle down on the edge of the sink and started to splash my face with some cold water. A minute went by and someone knocked on the door.

*continued on next page*

I flinched, "Just a second!" I called. I flushed the empty toilet and quickly grabbed the glass bottle and shoved it back into the briefcase not really bothering to shut it entirely before exiting the tiny plane bathroom. A short blonde flight attendant I did not recognize rolled her eyes at me when I clumsily slide past her waiting form on the way back to the captains quarters. I set my briefcase on the only table and I walked toward the front of the plane to the flying compartment where Henry was waiting.

We got the plane up in the air not long after that, I made some remark about how it was a gorgeous day and the flight to Denver would probably only take about four hours give or take.

Even though the mystery of "what's in my briefcase" had been solved I was still on edge from everything that happened this morning, I snapped over the phone each time a flight attendant called up here as usual. Henry would always talk over me if it was Gwen, I really don't know what it is that makes him like her so much all I know is it's disgusting. Even more disgusting that nine times outta ten she will play along with all the gross things he says.

Henry did the usual amount of insulting me but after he ran out of things to make fun of me for we sat in silence. Quite frankly I was relieved, my brain kept frantically searching for outs and it was hard to do that with Henrys nagging voice drowning everything else out.

About half way through the flight I decided the best way out was to quit, I had enough money for cindy the kids and I to be taken care of for at least two years so I had time to figure out another job. We would have to move immediately and maybe even change our names who knows. But after two hours it was the best idea I had. I figured if I wasn't a pilot anymore I wouldn't be valuable to these rare butterfly hoarding freaks. Why pay someone ten grand for a single butterfly? Nothing made sense about that.

"Dammit! Todd you jinxed us with your good weather comment earlier" Henry suddenly screamed as storm clouds seemed to engulf us out of nowhere. I suddenly became focused with nothing other than flying as I alerted the passengers to put on there seatbelts, the turbulence was coming.

Henry messed furiously with the controls as he tried to figure out the best possible solution for the safety of the passengers. I did everything I could to help but there were some violent jerks, so violent I heard glass shatter in the next room. Suddenly I wasn't so focused on flying anymore. My heart flew up to my throat as I leaped out of my seat and followed the sound of the crash. Henry started to curse violently at me for getting up and leaving him alone in the middle of the storm.

Then I saw it, the little insect fluttering around in the captain's quarters. I held back a scream as I tried to go after it with my hands. The little bug just kept flying around in little circles as if it knew it was teasing me. After a while I finally caught it in my hands, I sighed in relief and tried to awkwardly shove it back into the briefcase.

I was alarmed when it didn't try and fly away. I opened my hands and there the little butterfly laid, motionless, I had a heart attack trying to decipher if it was dead or not. I slid it into the briefcase and silently prayed that the little guy was just in shock from me grabbing it and that it hadn't died on me. I had no idea how the crazy people would react to discover there ten thousand dollar bug dead.

I slid back into the flying compartment with Henry and he proceeded to yell at me more going on and on about how we were wildly off course now. It must have been a very localized storm because it seemed after not to long we had (Henry had) maneuvered a way around it. We probably wouldn't land in Denver for a while though because of the new course we had to follow. I informed the passengers. After awhile it was odd I hadn't gotten any responses from the flight attendants so I called back for one.

No answer.

"Maybe you should go check on Gwen," Henry suggested, "You know, because you leave the compartment whenever you want now."

I glared at him in response but I did get up and retreated to the staff room, what I saw there was more horrifying than I could ever imagine.

Gwens throat had been cut and her body lay disjointed and broken in the corner of the room, her eyes wide and afraid. I screamed.

I rushed into the seating area of the plane to check on passengers and possibly to find the psycho knife wielding murderer who killed Henry's work girlfriend. I was confused to find every passenger appeared to be asleep, asleep or dead at this point I really wasn't sure. I stifled another scream and I felt woozy on my feet, I began to fall but two small arms caught me from behind. I saw her out of the corner of my eye, the new flight attendant.

"Thank god you're okay there's a psycho on the plane," I said slurring my words and still in her arms, "we have to do something to help these people." She laughed.

Then it occurred to me, I had at least a foot on this little girl and easily 100 pounds and she was holding me upright like I was nothing at all. I pulled myself to my feet and away from her grip. I turned around to face her. She was smiling fiercely and her eyes were no longer human eyes with an iris and pupils, the space was just completely occupied by the color blue, the same blue the small butterfly had been.

"Thank you, thank you my savior." she said, "You don't know how long its been since I've been free." With that I ran. Started running as fast as I could down the isles trying to get as much space between me and that thing as I could.

It did no good because she flew after me, and I don't mean she chased me down, I mean she flew at me. I grabbed all the over head bags I could to throw at her, she quickly became disinterested with me because of it and turned her attention to the closest sleeping passenger. She placed her hand on their hand and instantly the human form faded into nothingness and the aura of power around the young possessed flight attendant grew even stronger.

"Like Hell!" I shouted as I dove under seat 45 and pulled out a long hunting knife I had hidden there over a year ago, post traumatic stress paranoia finally coming in handy.

The small young women just laughed. "As much as I appreciate the help small human, I'm afraid I'm far too hungry for play time." She pulled down a hanging phone to contact the captain. "Sir there has been an accident I'm afraid we must make an emergency landing."

I stared at this thing in awe as the flight attendants body it was in slowly began to glow blue. A moment later we both heard Henry's scruff voice over the phone "No can do my dear it's still a little too risky up here."

I gathered myself and everything I had and began to charge forward with the knife in hand. The small flight attendants expression flashed amusement my way as she responded to Henry, "Im afraid Im going to have to insist." She hung up the phone and snapped her fingers together.

A second later we were falling, whatever this thing was, it had cut the engine.

• Autumn Oxer





Untitled • Art Fundamentals • Emily Reinhardt



Untitled • Art Fundamentals • Shayna Montri

# Keep Running

The line lays out  
A horizon  
A ruler  
A will

The whistle blows  
A call  
A command  
A kill

Keep running  
Everybody keep running  
Eyes up ahead  
Though we're all scared  
If you keep running if you breathe it in instead

Keep running  
Everybody keep running  
Eyes up ahead  
Though we're all scared  
If you keep running just breathe it in instead

The feet push forward  
A stampede  
A sentence  
A race

The ground crumbles for centuries  
A tradition  
A chore  
A waste

Keep running  
Everybody keep running  
Eyes up ahead  
Though we're all scared  
If you keep running if you breathe it in instead

Keep running  
Everybody keep running  
Eyes up ahead  
Though we're all scared  
If you keep running just breathe it in instead



**Untitled** • Painting I • Brandon Szparagowski

## Untitled

A squirrel hops elegantly.  
 In a quaint,  
 Abandoned  
 Suburb. Where the only human that  
 Inhabits this ghost town  
 Sits comfortably in front of his fortress  
 On a cheaply manufactured  
 White throne.  
 Holding a cigarette in his hand  
 As he watches the empty landscape before him  
 Become full of life  
 And of wonder.  
 Of an innocent passerby;  
 I.  
 An ordinary man  
 In an ordinary neighborhood.  
 With an ordinary house.  
 My mind,  
 Wandering freely.  
 Turning the world upside down  
 Transforming perceptions;  
 Revealing a world  
 Where things like fire hydrants are now  
 Bright and yellow;  
 Beacons of hope and joy.  
 Where red stop signs provide guidance;  
 A path to home.  
 Leading to a world  
 Familiar and comfortable.  
 Acting as a simple reminder,  
 To stop and to breathe.

• Richard Brown



**1996 Baby** • Painting I • Cassy Fallon





**Abstract in Motion** • Painting I • Emily Gibson



**Untitled** • Painting I • Cheyanne Abel

# Ruthie

The nurse came into little Ruthie's room, it was breakfast time which meant morning group therapy. The staff was getting worried because Ruthie had been refusing to talk, she hadn't said anything since she came to them a week or so prior. She was only ten years old and the reason she was brought to the 8th floor pediatric psych unit was because less than a month ago she stabbed a classmate seven times in broad daylight during recess, the student died. The only reason Ruthie wasn't sent to a juvenile detention facility was because the mental and physical evaluation on Ruthie when she had been taken into custody had revealed some rather shocking results.

Ruthie seemed to be suffering from a variety of mental delusions. She also had some strange scars that you could tell were inflicted when she was very young. According to her father the delusions had started when the two of them lost her brother and mother a year or so back. He denied any knowledge of the physical scars on his daughter even though the most visible scars were the ones in plain sight that wrapped around her ankles.

They had seen lots of shackle scars in there days working on the psych floor of a hospital in the pediatric wing. They tended to find most kids aren't born crazy and violent, it's usually beaten into them at one point or another, and the mind of child is so fragile that trauma like that could significantly stunt normal emotional development. That raised some serious questions about little Ruthie's homelife. However, the background check on her dad had cleared and the police had found nothing wrong with their current residency. That didn't stop the staff from wondering..

"Ruthie," the young nurse said. "It's time for breakfast."

For the other children's safety Ruthie was given her own room without a roommate. No one knew when and if she would ever react, she just tended to lay on her bed with her hands folded behind her head staring at the ceiling. They started to let her attend group therapy sessions after the fourth day of her silence in hopes it would get her to say something.

The maximum amount patients were aloud to stay on the psych floor was 15 days, after that if the staff agreed if more help was necessary a doctor referred you to a more permanent facility. Ruthie had already blown through half of her stay with no progress.

"I know you heard me," the nurse said, "It's time for group and its time to eat." Ruthie sat up without a word and with very minimal eye contact she followed the nurse down the hall. The nurse shivered, something about those piercing green eyes made her blood run cold. She lead the girl to the common area where a plate of food was waiting with her along with the lead psychiatrist and a group of five other girls.

The nurse practically sighed a breath of relief as she hurried down the hall. Ruthie began twisting her extremely long red hair between her fingers as she watched the other girls eat and Dr. Wensworth smile that obnoxiously white smile at all of them. They were an interesting bunch of girls for sure.

There was Emily, the annoyingly vocal twelve year old who starved herself.

Charlotte, the thirteen year old with cuts that travelled all the way up her arms and all over the rest of her body.

Katelyn, the fifteen year old who got drunk at some college party and ended up getting date raped by half a frat and knocked up by a mystery daddy. She later took a coat hanger and gave herself an abortion and had the nervous breakdown of the century.

Lily, the eleven year old baby schizo saw things every once in awhile that weren't there, she had burned down her family's house nearly killing herself trying to "kill the cockroaches"

And then Vanessa, the sixteen year old that was so bipolar that during a manic session she stole 100 grand from her rich parents safe and entered into one of the most prestigious poker competitions in the country, all because she believed “the universe could not shine bad luck upon her that night.” She lost it all of course.

Then there was Dr. Wensworth, she was a middle aged woman with a continuous smile plastered onto her face and bags under her eyes from a lifetime of work related stress. The seven of them were practically the brady bunch.

“Now that we’re all here why don’t we start with how were feeling this morning.” Dr Wensworth said. There was a silence and someone’s spoon clanged against their cereal bowl. “Charlotte, why don’t you start us off?”

Immediately all eyes turned to the dark haired girl sitting with her arms folded in her lap under the table. It was her failed attempt to hide all of the carnage that showed on her bare arms. She looked down. “I don’t know, I guess I’m not feeling much of anything at all.” There was a short pause before someone else interjected.

“Well I’m angry.” Vanessa said. She was the newest addition to the group, only came in yesterday.

“Why’s that?” Dr Wensworth asked.

“Because I’m stuck in here with a bunch of psychos when I don’t even have anything wrong with me!” she said as she slammed her fist down hard on the table. Immediately after that all hell broke loose as Katelyn and Lily started to yell about how they weren’t psychos and how they did not have anything wrong with them either. Ruthie, Emily, and Charlotte just watched as the scene unfolded.

Ruthie covered her ears, but it wasn’t because of the fighting, the voices started again. She willed her brain to silence it. She was sick of all of the yelling. After a few seconds her head started to pound and she gave up on forcing it out and sat there listening to her mother’s voice scream inside of her head.

Just look at them Ruthie! Look at their filth and they way they are so affected by satan and the ways of the world. Sin is their only master, they have the mark, each and everyone of them! You must cleanse them child, you must! It’s their only chance.

Ruthie continued covering her ears and rocking back and forth in her seat even after the voice had spoken.

Down in reality Wensworth had to raise her voice which she didn’t do very often “STOP THAT!” she paused when silence fell, “all of you just stop.” Katelyn had a gleam in her eye that suggested she was going to climb over the table and smack Vanessa across the face but she stayed still.

“Look what you’re doing to Ruthie!” The doctor said. All eyes moved to her as she uncovered her ears, but she wouldn’t lift her eyes to meet any of theirs. “Why don’t we discuss why it is we think we’re here?” Wensworth suggested.

Emily laughed. “Well, we all know why I’m here, there’s no denying my problem.” She said pointing with her skeletal arms to the feeding tube that was stuck up into her abnormally large nose.

“Same.” Charlotte said emotionlessly just loud enough for all of them to hear her.

“I’m here because I ‘see things’.” Lily said using air quotes. “I’m not crazy, there really were bugs in my bed, they covered my walls.” she shivered.

“I’m sure they did.” Vanessa said rolling her eyes.

*continued on next page*



“Vanessa, we respect and believe everyone in the circle. No one is crazy, remember that.” Dr Wensworth said.

“Fine okay, I’m here because my parents are fucking insane. I made one mistake and this is there way of punishing me. They’re loaded anyways I didn't see the harm in it. Besides I should've won, I’m amazing at poker, I've beaten my dumbass father and his friends at it for as long as I can remember.”

Ruthie's head began to hurt again, she rubbed her temples with her fingers as the voices took her over. This time it was more than just her mothers. So many different voices at once she couldn't think, they wouldn't stop. Eventually she snapped herself out of it using all of the will power she could, but not before uttering her first words in a week.

“Ephesians 6:2”

You would've thought a knife was back in her hands the look she was given by the girls.

“Did mute girl just say something?” Katelyn asked, a hint of fear in her question.

Doctor Wensworth leaned in with anticipation, an almost lustful look in her eyes. She spoke. “Exodus six two? What does that mean Ruthie?” The girl raised her eyes and looked at them for the first time since the fighting broke out. It was the cold look that made the nurses hearts stop.

Ruthie spoke, her voice sounding strong and not a bit hoarse from the lack of use. She looked at Vanessa. “Honor thy father and mother, for it is the first commitment in the promise.”

Vanessa got out of her seat and started running down the hall looking back every so often in pure terror. The little girl didn't look right, didn't sound right, something about all of it wasn't right and all of the girls could clearly see that. They all looked for a sign from Wensworth that they could be dismissed but there wasn't one. The doctor stayed focused solely on the youngest of the group.

“The ten commandments, is your family religious Ruthie?” The doctor asked. The girl didn't respond. “Do you honor your mom and dad?”

Ruthie seemed to snap out of a trance, and when she spoke it was more normally, “Most times, if not mother would punish me.” she paused, “but she's dead now.”

“What happened to her?” Emily asked.

“One of the girls she tried to purify escaped, she strangled my brother and she stabbed my mother. But it wasn't seven times, it has to be seven times or else their souls won't get to go to heaven. After she left for the police in my moms car I went back and made it seven times for both of them, but they were already dead so I think it was too late.” Ruthie said.

There was a silence, no one knew what to say to that.

“My family and I watched that on the news.” Katelyn breathed, “I thought they caught the father and there were no other children.”

“Yeah I watched it too,” Emily spoke, “they say the mother killed as many as 36 people down in that basement.”

Silence. Even Dr. Wensworth had nothing to say to that.

Before that silence could break Ruthie fell to floor and started convulsing. She did that every now and again when the voices were causing too much strain on her body. She

started to scream and the rest of the girls scattered away flocking to their rooms, most of them at a full sprint.

You ungrateful child, you deserve to burn like the rest of them if you continue to let them get away.

Sister why do you let them walk in sin, you'll never join us in the promised land.

Daughter dont listen to them, I let it go on long enough and it was too late for your brother, but I can still save you if you just resist, there is no mark your mother and I lied to you for years to keep you in line.

SHUT UP I CAN'T TAKE IT her own voice screamed inside of her head.

Then suddenly Ruthie lay still. Dr. Wensworth knelt down next to her and felt her pulse, it was faint and fluttery, she paged every doctor she could think of and before she knew it she was updating a crowd on the events that had just transpired, but before any of them had a chance to examine Ruthie she woke with a gasp and scrambled away from them wide eyed and heavily breathing, she clutched a cereal bowl in her hands for protection.

"Ruthie." Dr. Wensworth said with her hands up in surrender." I called these doctors so we can help you. You just had a nasty seizure."

Ruthie began rubbing her temple with her free hand and then she did something none of them expected, she started to cry. Hair hung in her face and she cried. She looked like nothing more than a scared little girl who skinned her knee on the playground or missed her mom. The doctors seemed to relax, all of them but Wensworth.

"Come here sweetie," one of the doctors said, "it's gonna be okay."

"You don't understand, the girl wheezed,"It won't stop. It never stops unless I listen to it."

"It'll stop," the doctor soothed, "we can make it stop."

"No you can't," Ruthie wiped her nose with the back of her hand. Then all of a sudden she willed her crying to a halt, "but maybe I can."

Before any of the doctors knew what was going on Ruthie stood and bolted down the hall into the nearest patients room, it just happened to be Lily's, she screamed bloody murder and scrambled off the bed and into the hall nearly jumping into an incoming doctors arms as soon as she saw Ruthie. But Ruthie hadn't noticed. She threw her cereal bowl as hard as she could at the small window and glass shards went everywhere, she picked up the biggest one she could find.

"Don't do this." Dr Wensworths voice spoke coming from the doorway. Ruthie spun around to face her, gripping the giant shard of glass tight. "Hurting people isn't who you are Ruthie, it's who your mother wanted you to be. She hurt you remember? Don't be like her."

A single tear rolled down the small girls freckled cheek.

"I won't ever be like her," Ruthie said. Then with the jagged piece of glass in hand, she slit her own throat.

• Autumn Oxer



- **Untitled 3 - 15 in. x 15 in.**
- Ceramics II
- Melanie Klump



- **Untitled - 10 in. x 15 in.**
- Ceramics II
- Melanie Klump



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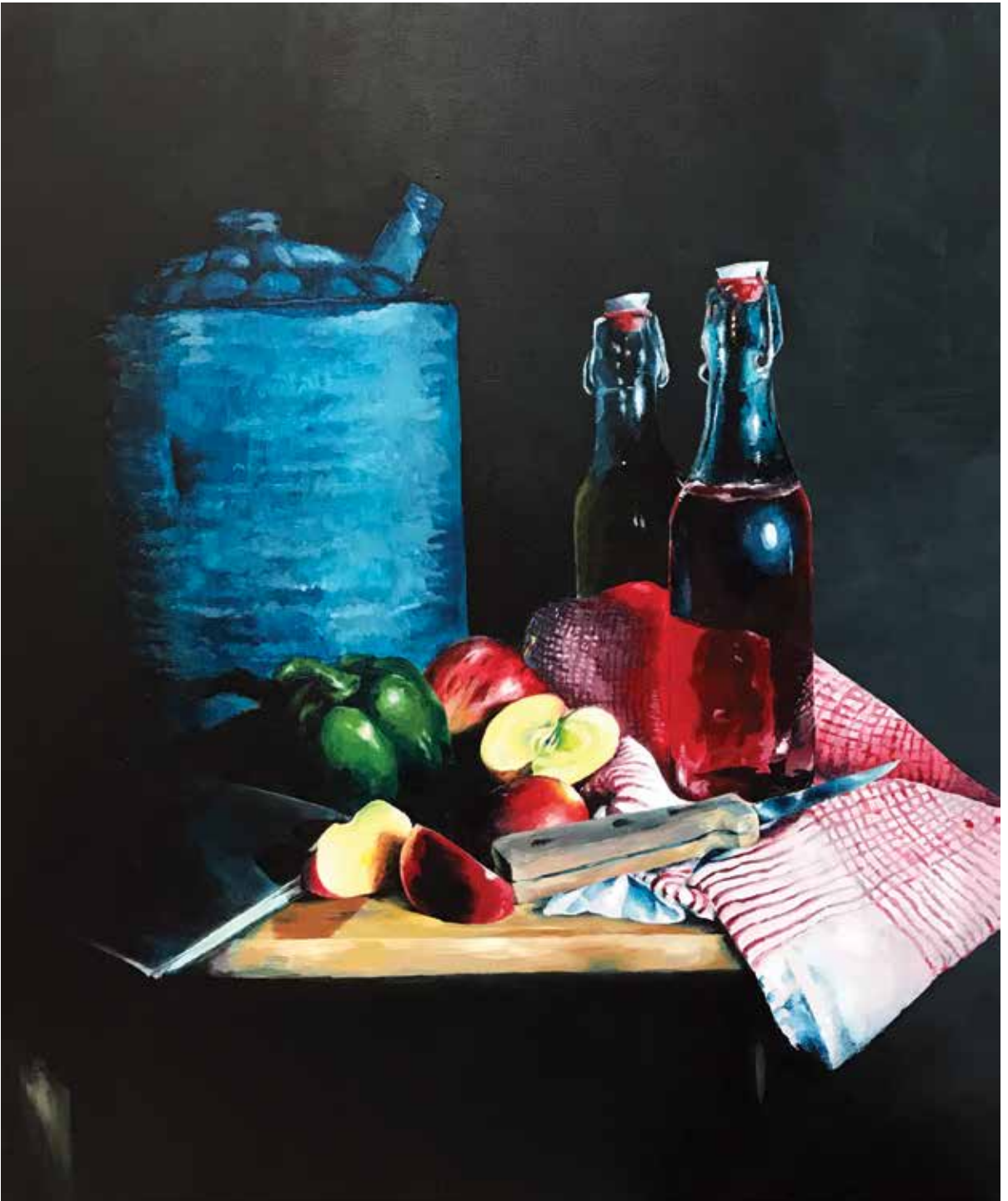
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