

journal of the arts
and literature

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> Artwork: Canals of Venice Sterling DeSantis

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Editor's Note

Erato 2015

"The youth gets together his materials to build a bridge to the moon, or, perchance, a palace or temple on the earth, and, at length, the middle-aged man concludes to build a woodshed with them."

Henry David Thoreau

During my previous two years as editor, I formatted the journal into a gallery, partially due to a lack of submissions and partially because it was easier that way. This year, I wanted to do something different. I found myself tired of building woodsheds, and yearning to build a bridge to the moon instead.

This year's theme, Bridges, was inspired by this year's cover art, "The Last Sky Bridge". I have always felt that building bridges is about making connections—and so I connected. Poems and short stories and pictures and paintings. I continued making connections, no matter how small, in the hopes that they would lead to more and more connections until they built the foundation for one big connection. That's what this year's journal is, a bridge from me to you.

As you peruse this journal, maybe you will see the same bridges I did, make the same connections, or maybe you won't see the same bridges at all. You might see blue skies and bluer ocean where I see green pastures and rolling hills, and instead of being brick your bridge is made of stone or clouds or marshmallows or even chocolate, and when you think of your first love you smell flowers while I hear mixtapes—

Whatever connections you make, both in the context of this journal and in life, never be content with building woodsheds. Build to the moon and beyond, to whatever palace or temple you see fit, fill your world with sky bridges, and may they never be your last.



I Am Kyle Denis

I.Am

I am a pariah, the 1%, the one who is shunned; the one who is given no respect, yet gives it where it is not deserved. I am a sore thumb, the untouchables the one whom odd looks are given, Yet all looks are embraced with a smile, I am an outcast, the weird kid, The one who is admonished; the one who is scolded yet knowing keeps a secret. I am a soft voice, the whisper, the less often listened to; The Voice of reason when there is no reason at all, I am the tormented soul, the forgotten, The one who is left in the dusts The phoenix who overcomes the flames And rises from the ashes. I am a guide, the angel, the one who leads you; The one who tells you to travel the unbeaten path When it is so easy to follow the ones before you. I am strong-willed, the passionate, the one who is tenacious; The one who keeps hope when all others have lost it. I am the other, the 99%, the one who is weaks The one who persuades you to choose The decision you have already ruled out. I am everything. I am nothing.

I am you.

Artwork: Repression Sungtae Kim

The Journey Abi Luwal

Location: Sokoto State, Northern Nigeria

A decrepit looking car humped nosily along the lonely road as the driver tried without success to avoid the many bumps in the unpaved dusty road, creating dust clouds in its wake. The conditions of the road coupled with the limited visibility due to the dust clouds would have made any sensible driver slow down to sixty-four kilometers per hour but for some reason the driver seemed to think the 1980 sedan he was driving was an indestructible steel tank. Dr. Akube sat in the back seat of the car, trying not to panic, clinging on for dear life, as the driver sped along at a hundred and twelve kilometers per hour, making an already miserable trip a harrowing bumpy journey.

The windows of the car were rolled down as the car had no air conditioning, a fact that the driver had conveniently neglected to mention to him until Dr. Akube asked about it, but by then, they were well on their way and it had been too late to turn back. So an hour into the trip, Dr. Akube was already covered with dust despite being wrapped up like a mummy. A moist rag was over his mouth to avoid inhaling the dust particles swirling up from the road, however the rag was doing very little to keep the dust completely out of his mouth and he kept coughing and gagging. He glanced over in wonder at his driver, who seemed impervious to the dusty conditions of the road, almost as if he had developed lungs that could filter out dust particles. He was wearing eye goggles, so that part of him, as far as Dr. Akube knew, was not inwedestructible since he seemed careless about everything else. The dust didn't seem to bother him at all. But then again, Akube thought, the driver was an old man so he didn't have very long to live so maybe it was all the same to him. He was a wiry man, remarkably agile and alert for a man of his age although it was hard to guess his exact age.

"He must be about sixty," Akube thought, but he knew he could easily have been wrong, because it was usually hard to tell the age of most people in this part of the country. People in these parts always seemed to look ten to fifteen years younger than they actually were. Akube's age was hard to guess as well. He was in his mid-thirties but most people thought he was in his early twenties. His dark complexion, thick eyebrows and low cropped hair cut made him look younger than he actually was, and that suited him just fine.

"How long before we make it?" he asked in Hausa, daring to remove the cloth from his mouth for a mere five seconds, afraid of getting the dust into his mouth and starting another coughing spasm.

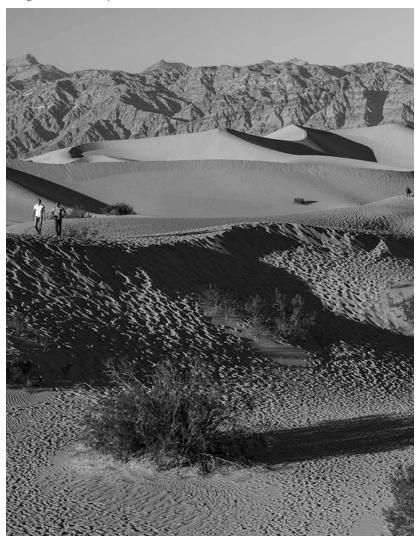
"Karfe ashirin," the driver responded back cheerily, hardly glancing back at him, his eyes glued to the road, a wide toothy grin on his face.

"Mandala" Dr. Akube responded, acknowledging the news through muf-



Luwal

fled undertones with the rag over his mouth, not daring to remove it again not even for a second as he had been reduced to a severe fit of coughing a couple minutes earlier. He was relieved, based on the drivers answer that the miserable trip was coming to an end fairly soon. All he needed to do for the remainder of the time was



to find something to keep himself busy for the next twenty minutes or so to help take his mind off the horrible conditions he was traveling under. Unfortunately, there wasn't much he could do. He couldn't use any of his electronic devices which were safely tucked away in his luggage in the truck of the car to protect them from the dust cloud, so the only thing he could do was to look out of the car window to

take in the sparse and arid but beautiful northern plains of Sokoto.

It was towards the end of the Harmattan season and temperatures each day were starting to rise, signaling the start of the dry season, which was normally accompanied by hotter temperatures that last from February to June. The weather during this time of the year from November to the middle of February in the northern states of Nigeria despite it being called the "cold season" was still usually very hot especially in Sokoto, the northwestern most state of Nigeria that shared a border with the neighboring country of Niger. Temperatures well over thirty degrees Celsius were typically common on a daily basis during this time of the year in Sokoto, and the people who lived there were used to it. However lately for some reason, even though it was still Harmattan, the weather seemed to be unusually unbearably hotter than normal, with temperatures exceeding well over thirty-five degrees Celsius. Not even the dry cool breeze of the Harmattan winds from the Sahara Desert that blew all the way from northern Africa to the coast of Guinea across the northern and southern plains of Nigeria provided enough convective cooling air.







Luwal

It also didn't help that the Harmattan season had lasted at least two weeks longer than normal, which meant that there would be a delay in the start of the rainy season. The lack of rain coupled with the higher temperatures and persistent Harmattan winds was a perfect combination for the formation of frequent dust clouds, powerful enough to dim the effect of the sun and cause visibility limitations, forcing most people to postpone their daytime activities to night time when temperatures were cooler and visibility was better. Dust clouds were a common occurrence in these parts of the country especially during the Harmattan season where the weather was dry and the topography which consisted mainly of sandy Savannah plains, with hardly any mountains or vegetation to block the force of the Sahara winds did not help matters. The frequency of dust clouds was especially bad in Sokoto where it hardly ever rained except for those few months in the year, so the land was always very dry and badly in need of moisture, as evidenced by how readily small dust clouds easily formed with the slightest movement by man or beast. At times the level of dust clouds, due to the force of the Harmattan winds was so high that it created large dust cyclones, forcing people to cover their faces to prevent dust particles from entering their mouths, noses and eyes. Those dust clouds were quite frequent in Sokoto and today was no exception.

To pass the time, Dr. Akube continued to look out from his window while trying at the same time not to inhale any more dust. He could tell from the few buildings and small towns to the bands of nomads walking their cattle along the side of the road that they passed along the way, that they were heading towards the rural areas of the state where over half of the population of four million people lived. Dr. Akube had flown in from the Lagos international airport just a few hours earlier and had commissioned this driver, one of the first to approach him at the airport to take him to his destination, a small remote village called Mumba, about three hours away from Sokoto city, the state capital.

Sokoto city had a long history dating back over centuries. Founded in the early nineteenth century by the famous Muslim general Usman Dan Fodio, Sokoto city was the center of the Northern caliphate. Sokoto city itself is divided into two parts, inner and outer. The outer part of the city was somewhat modernized with concrete buildings while the inner city where the *caliphs* resided consisted of mud thatched buildings that had been built over three hundred years ago, during the time of Usman Dan Fodio. Sokoto state, like the rest of the other northern states of Nigeria was very different from the southern part of the country. The differences were vast, ranging from culture and customs, to language and religion. There were over one hundred and fifty ethnic groups in the country, each with its own culture, language, and customs; of these groups, three were considered major; these are the Hausa, the Yoruba, and the Igbo. These three major groups were equally divided geographically across Nigeria. The Hausa resided mainly in the north, the Yorubas in the southwest while the Igbos resided in the southeast. The Hausa were mainly Muslims, the Igbos largely Christians while the Yorubas

were a split of fifty-fifty between Islam and Christianity. Each group spoke different languages and so they had to find a common language to communicate with each other, and therefore English became the official language of the country. The vast differences between all these groups was a constant source of turmoil in the country as all were constantly divided over tribal, ethnic, religious, political, or territorial issues that led to constant strife and tension among these groups which should never have been lumped together as one country in the first place, a lasting legacy of twentieth century British colonialism.

The distrust across the ethnic groups went all the way from individual families, to communities, across local governments and into political appointments at the national level. As such, the positions of president and vice president had to be split up between Christians and Muslims. If the president was a Muslim, the vice-president had to be a Christian and vice versa, with no exceptions. This practice, although not written in the constitution was an unspoken law and considered sacrosanct and was how the country had operated since its independence from the British in 1960. Any other combination such as Christian-Christian or Muslim-Muslim could potentially bring the country to the edge of civil war. Because the religion of each candidate played such a huge role during the "so called" democratic presidential elections (as the locals liked to refer to the democratic process), every democratic election cycle in Nigeria was usually accompanied by the customary strife, violence, and complaining. If it wasn't the Muslim's crying foul during the election this time, it would be the Christians and vice versa.

However, there were bigger problems than the elections that most Nigerians had to deal with on a daily basis. For an OPEC country with a huge supply of oil, it was surprising that most of its inhabitants lived shamefully on a salary of \$2.00 a day. This had been the state of affairs in Nigeria since the 1980s and even though it was now the twenty-first century, the living conditions were still the same. As such, the travesty of Nigerian life and its contentious politics were a daily subject and source of headaches to many that occupied Africa's most populous country. Everyone talked about it, everyone knew what the problems were and the cause but nothing ever changed as everyone waited for the next person to do something about it.

A beeping sound went off suddenly. Dr. Akube looked at his wrist watch, noting that the time was twelve o'clock as he silenced the alarm — lunch time. He sighed wistfully, thinking painfully of what he would have been doing if he were back at the office at this time. He and his colleagues at the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research (NIMR) in Lagos would be discussing Nigeria's problems over a meal of jollof rice, pepper soup and dodo in Mrs. Bello's restaurant, a few blocks from his workplace. Dr. Akube always looked forward to having these lunch sessions with his colleagues, Kunle, Tayo, and Dapo and wished he could be with them now. Instead, he was out of the office on a field assignment assigned to him by the head of the NIMR, Dr. Ocheco to investigate a mysterious ailment reported in the northern city of Sokoto, Mumba, by the medical officials there. Such investigations



fell under the jurisdiction of the NIMR, the agency responsible for investigating immunological diseases in the country among other things, in essence, the equivalent to the American Center for Disease Control, (CDC). Assignments like this were part of the job but Dr. Akube was now an Associate Researcher, a promotional title earned having spent close to five years with the NIMR which meant he did a lot of theoretical research and lab experimentation and hardly any field work. Field work, especially in remote areas such as Sokoto was normally assigned to junior researchers who only had at most a year or two with the NIMR.

This is what had him in such a bad mood, and he was annoyed to no end that Dr. Ocheco had chosen to give him this assignment, even though he knew that it wasn't entirely Dr. Ocheco's fault. He suspected that this order probably came from the Minister of Health, Dr. Eze who had been gunning for him ever since he went public with his findings about the incompetence and cover up at the Minister's office. Since then, his assignments had become more mundane, and his promotion to Senior Research Fellow which should have been a shoe-in was now on hold, pending review. He remembered how Dr. Ocheco had warned him not to write it, but he could not in good conscience sit back while the government tried to cover up the fact that they had dropped the ball in sending out the wrong vaccine which had resulted in the crippling, and in many cases, the deaths of over one hundred thousand children. Such incidents were no longer common since the establishment of NAFDAC a few years later, the Nigerian equivalent of the American FDA. Upon its establishment, a great number of regulations and laws had been established and enacted to oversee the safety in manufacturing and distribution of food and drugs. It was a very effective agency which would have prevented the tragedy that occurred if it had been established back then. However it came too late; the damage was already done to the families just as it was to Dr. Akube's career.

Even though he was bitter about not getting his promotion, Dr. Akube hadn't minded at first because he knew that that was all they could do due to his father's political standing. His father passed away ten years ago but he was still revered in politics as one of the great generals of the past, and Akube would probably have ended up dead for criticizing government officials in such a public manner if not for his father's legacy. As the son of General Adekunle Akube, nobody dared touch him as that could have meant a death sentence to their political career so they simply resorted to making his life a living hell. Akube took full advantage of his father's legacy to speak out about the wrong doings of the government without fear of retaliation and while they had only retaliated by ignoring him or trying to paint him as a trouble maker, they had never dared to draw blood until now. Akube was now finding himself relegated to tasks such as this. At first he hadn't minded, but now it was starting to get on his nerves.

In actuality, there wasn't really much he could do about it. Dr. Ocheco had tried to protect him all those years but there was only so much he could do. The man after all did have seven kids and two ex-wives to support so he needed this

job, and at sixty-five, all he wanted to do was make it to retirement, so he didn't want to stick his neck out too far for a young shot like Akube who had nothing to lose. So here Akube was, on a hot February day, heading towards oblivion to investigate, what he supposed to be another bogus report.

The NIMR agency was always getting calls about sudden outbreaks. Even though ninety percent of the time, they were proven to be unfounded, they were obligated to investigate every single one. According to the dossier on this particular investigation which Akube had read on the plane, this disease he was sent to investigate had all the markings of another wild goose chase. It appeared to be confined mainly to the northern part of the country and for the moment while it did not appear to be contagious; there were some parts of the report that made Akube skeptical but slightly worried as well. For one thing, the disease seemed to appear suddenly out of nowhere, and everyone who got infected didn't know how they got infected, a typical sign of a make believe story. Also the cases seemed to be random across the town yet all had happened in a very short amount of time which, Akube had to admit, was puzzling. All the symptoms he had read about the ones infected, seemed very similar to those of typhoid and malaria, typical diseases that a good dose of antibiotics could take care of, if diagnosed correctly, which Akube suspected might be the case.

A sudden jolt in the road interrupted Akube's thoughts. He looked at his watch after wiping the dust from it. It has been three hours so far, but all through the drive, there hadn't been a major city for hundreds of kilometers. They had hardly passed or seen more than a handful of cars on the road either. All that he could see now were Fulani nomads walking alongside the road, tending their grazing herds. Occasionally, they would pass some makeshift towns with small round buildings made of mud bricks and thatched roofs. There was no mistake that Dr. Eze had sent him to no man's land, a place no one at the NIMR ever wanted to go. He was really furious at Dr. Eze and almost called him up to give him a piece of his mind if not for Dr. Awojobi another NIMR colleague specializing in microbiology who had warned him not to make such a ruckus otherwise he would find himself riding into the town on a camel, and that even though his father's legacy had left him with a coat of amour, it was best not to test the limits of its invincibility in the present political climate. So he had bit his tongue and dutifully accepted this assignment with as much grace as he could muster.

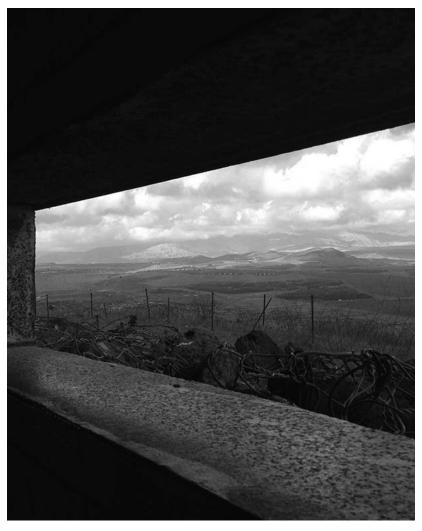
The journey appeared to be coming to an end as they passed more rural settings. The driver suddenly slowed down as they approached a building which Akube took to be the hospital, surrounded by a concrete fence. The car pulled up to the closed gate and two soldiers wearing sunglasses dressed in full military camouflage, bullet proof vests, helmets, armed with M-16 rifles stepped out of the makeshift guard shack to inspect the arrivals. Dr. Akube presented his papers and politely waited in the car while they examined them critically. He was not surprised to see army soldiers standing guard with automatic assault weapons. Nigeria



had been a military government until the early part of the twenty-first century for well over fifty years so the military presence was quite prevalent throughout the country but more so in the North where the military command had been based while the country was under the military rule.

"Sannu da zua," the solider said after he handed Akube back his credentials, and apparently being satisfied, waved him and the driver in through the now open gate.

"Yau waa," Dr. Akube replied. It had been at least ten years since he had



Photograph: An Eye Towards Revolutionary Syria... From an Israeli Bunker Nicholas Barker

spoken the language but his command of the Hausa language was still fairly good. Even though he did not want to admit it, he knew his background was partly a factor in his being assigned this task. His ability to blend in with the customs in the North and speak the language even though ethnically he was from the southern part of the country, the Yoruba speaking population, was a big advantage here. Because his father had been a military officer and all the military bases were in the north, he had grown up, as an only child in the North where he had spent most of his youth and done all his schooling including his doctorate education from Ahmadu Bello University, one of the most prominent universities in West Africa. He therefore, grew up speaking both Yoruba and Hausa fluently and he was one of the few at the NIMR who had this advantage.

However, even though he was born, grew up and was raised in the north, and had lived there for most of his life, he never really liked it and he loathed going back there for many reasons. Mainly because it irritated him to see people still living under such arcane dilapidated conditions and still adhering to old customs that he felt had no place in the modern world. Therefore, when his father died, he had wasted no time in leaving the north after graduating from Ahmadu Bello University to pursue a medical degree at the University of Lagos.

Begrudgingly, he had to admit to himself, that if anyone else had been sent, it would have been difficult because the people in these parts did not really trust outsiders. But that still did not make him feel better about the situation and he planned to make this visit a very short one.

Having passed the check point, they were allowed to proceed into the compound. The driver drove the car into a circular driveway right in front of the hospital. It was a one story building that was built from hard clay brick sand with a dull gray paint. It was a typical layout for clinics in those parts. Getting out of the car, he was immediately approached by a mai guard holding a walking stick, a tall lean wiry looking man, who almost could have passed for the brother of the taxi driver that had driven him there. In front of him was another man, tall, slender, six feet tall, about Akube's height, dressed in a white coat as was typical for doctors. He was a young man, in his late twenties, a few years younger than Akube.

"This is probably a wild goose chase. Oh well, show time," he thought bitterly to himself and then put on a wide smile. He held out his hand to the young man in the white coat.

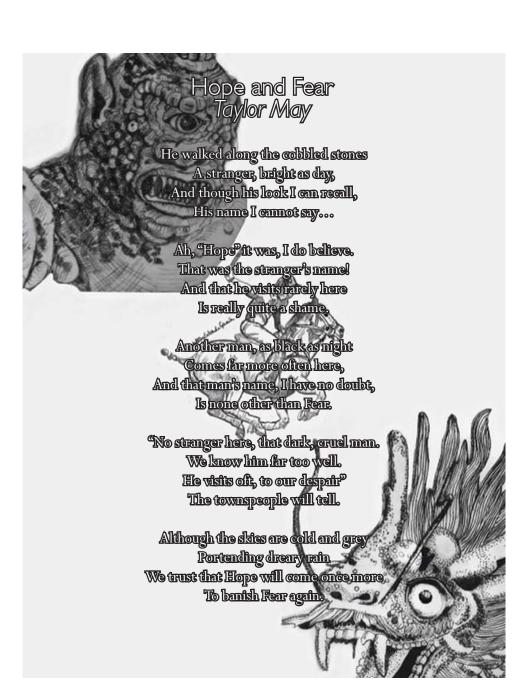
"Dr. Hamza, *Sannu*," he said as he greeted the man with an outstretched hand. "*Barka da Zua*," Dr. Akube added as he shook his hand.

Before the young man could respond, the *mai guard* tapped him on his arm with his walking stick to the point that it hurt.

"Aww, what was that for?" Dr. Akube asked bewildered. Turning to the young man he had shaken hands with moments before, he asked, "Dr. Hamza, what is with the mai guard?"

"Mai guard! You fool!" the old man bellowed, "I am Dr. Hamza!"





Artwork: Everything you've ever wanted is at the other side of fear Patricia Estrada Garcia

The Legacy of Buildings Jeremy Cooley

After all the people leave—
the raucous laughter has died down,
good-byes have been said, the lights have all gone out,
and people have left for some other party—
What happens to a building?

After all the hearts
that make a house,
a temple, a school, an office,
any place—altorne,
What happens to the building?

Sure, ft falls into derelict disrepair, and, as time passes, wood nots, glass breaks, stone crodes, wines grow or until only fragments remain, buried under ash and earth, like Troy and Pompeti, and an undertow washes away anything that chances to wade through the seas of time.

But what happens to the remnants of a people, left in the art of their architecture in the legacy of their skill? (Thus, statues dance their numbers; cherubs sing their pieces to the pews; rows of columns usher in stunning vistas staircases climb to marvelous views. Buttresses hold up their rooftop masters, aloft in their luxurious sedan chairs. and the rococo balustrades call out in polite French to the lintels, which reply in a guttural German.) As every arch, every door, every brick, every wall contains the remnants, the memories, the fingerprints of the man who dreamt it. the man who made it, the man who owned it.

Artwork: United Dots Suring Puri



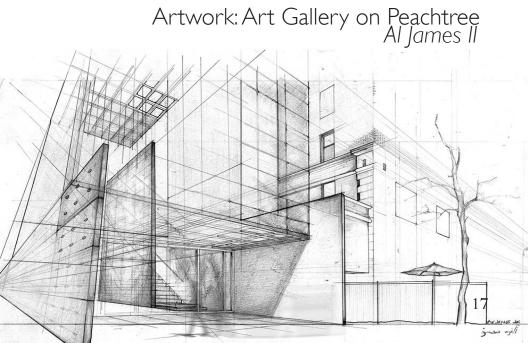
Cooley

Indeed, a time will come to pass when the future will strive to rebuild the past to recall the grandeur of those that couldn't last (all those long, long years)—

But even if they are rebuilt, these buildings, reconstructed brick-by-brick, stone-by-stone, they will never be the same.

For now, these bricks contain new memories, memories of a people concerned with preserving the past, trying to capture the radiance of the previous occupants, but only obtaining a faint glimmer of all the structure once was.

Which begs the question:
Why do we wish to preserve
our culture, our soul
if it serves no purpose
after our inevitable fall?
Or even:
Why do we need to be remembered at all?



Details of a Selfie Alexandria Davis

Small and round and black-Beauty marked its spot on her face, Staking its claim on a host unaware.

Inconsistent themes and dirty mirrors, Faded lipstick & a few fake smiles, Forced laughter-

She captures a moment that never happened.

Peering through false instances,

There is a wrinkle in her brow.

She pauses.

Intrigued now, by features previously unnoticed,

A new passion pushes her on.

Fingers graze the subtle curve of her collarbone.

In an instant, she becomes her own muse-

Drawing inspiration from each subtle shift of her own body.

Filthy reflections create fragments of a story line.

An air of awkward confidence shines through.

Almond eyes coax her.

Behind the artificial lens of a Nikon,

They seek something far beyond what's there in front of her

A new language – silent and unusual – She does not yet understand.

Her discoveries are captured forever on film,

Though they are momentarily unexplainable.

Developed and tacked on a wall.

A faded memory now;

A washed out exposure of something rugged and lovely.

Sighted: an unknown queen in rare form-

Exquisitely blemished, delicate, and true.

Genuine curiosities entice her.

Finding herself in front of herself,

Separated by a thin sheet of glass and a camera, once again

She is still her own photographer.

She is won over by her own charm-

Allowing it to seep out from within her.

Alas, there is beauty in understanding, And finally, love.

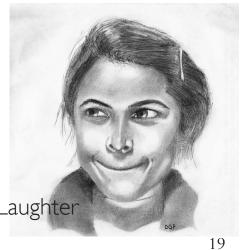


Artwork: Smile Away Darshan Pahinkar



Artwork: Light of Innocence Darshan Pahinkar





Artwork: Withholding Laughter Darshan Pahinkar

The Arcane Labyrinth Bradley Oesch

He kneeled in darkness, left hand pressed tense on his knee and the fingers of his right hand gripping the hard, metal floor. He was used to being in unfamiliar places but this mission seemed different. This felt different. He blinked slowly and felt nervous fear echo through his cold body, he couldn't remember the full details of th—

CLACK!

He froze, and although nothing happened at first, light began slowly creeping into what looked to be the five foot wide metal hallway he knelt in. Stretching across the top of the thirty foot walls were thin neon strips of light casting a gentle cerulean glow on the hallway and floor. As he gazed upward his eyes met nothing but darkness. No ceiling, but he couldn't feel a breeze or anything that would suggest he were outdoors. Still kneeling, he noticed small circles of light faintly glowing on the ground, spaced fifteen to twenty feet apart traversing down the hallway until they split both left and right into new, unknown corridors.

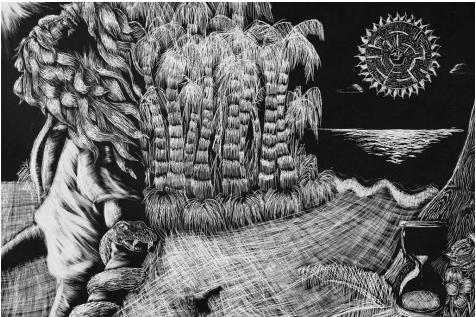
He slowly stood to his feet and took a look at himself, noticing the odd nature of his clothing. His entire outfit was a faded mustard color with deep silver cutting across the seams of the suit, lining his legs, arms, and torso. His dusty shoes looked like those of a construction worker, or possibly an astronaut, but his pants and jacket would look more familiar on a race track than in space. He wore a perfectly round helmet reminiscent of that of a fighter pilot and—most peculiar of all—he had three vertical strokes on his chest, each no longer than his index finger. One stroke seemed broken, permanently black, for the other two slowly pulsed a dim light, fading from bright to dark.

The man looked around, cautiously listening for any new noise or shadow. He found none. Taking a deep breath and allowing his curiosity get the best of him, he stepped forward. Still leery of the glowing orbs on the ground, he picked up his foot and hovered it warily over the orb, causing a light glow around the heel. Nothing happened, so he continued by, lightly placing his foot on the other side. His other foot followed suit, but the second it crossed over the orb, the light extinguished into darkness. He quickly jumped back, but the bulb remained lifeless. Off in the distance, he heard the sounds of a heavy gate creaking open, and he knew he was no longer alone. Making the risky decision that the orbs were indeed safe, he walked forward with determination down the hall.



With each orb that he passed the hallway fell darker behind. Still, no other consequence seemed to stem from turning off the bulbs so he continued down the hallway and turned to the right, again greeted with the now familiar eerie blue glow and small white orbs of light on the floor. Making his way around the corridor trying to orient himself within this forsaken labyrinth, he noticed a light fog slithering on the ground toward his ankles.

He checked the orbs, then the walls, then his own feet. None seemed to hold the source of the fog. Reversing back down the hall to retrace his steps, the fog seemed to grow thinner, less dense. He slowed his steps and turned around in time to see a dusty, deep red boot emerge from behind the wall across the hallway. It rested on the ground noiselessly as the other boot and rest of the body followed, almost



gliding on top of the dusty ground.

Its outfit was identical to his, save for the brooding red color flooding the suit and tatters that carved through the musty cloth. They both stood facing each other for a brief second staring out of their black, reflective visors, fog billowing around their shins. Out of the yellow helmet he saw the red boot twitch and without a thought, he turned and darted away down the corridor. The orbs were flashing off quicker than he could blink as he sprinted down the hallway, making turns as quickly as he could, losing any sense of orientation in the maze in which he was trapped.

Even though he could not hear the red visitor, he could feel the fog lapping at his heels and out of the corner of his eye he would see a flash of dark scarlet as he turned the sharp corners. After less than a couple minutes of frantic fleeing, he

Artwork: Labyrinthine Complexity Gabriel Mesa

turned a corner to see not only small circles of light on the ground, but between two orbs lay a singular larger bulb on the ground about two feet in diameter, brightness fading in and out.

He paused, wary of this new discovery. But as he waited, the fog began creeping up his lower leg, already enshrouding his boots. His feet felt heavier now, and as he twisted his torso around, the red being smoothly rounded the corner and descended toward him. He made the snap decision and decided to cross the fading orb, but his legs felt pulled to the ground. Just yards away from the pulsing orb, he pushed forward, dragging his heavy boots across the floor. He drew closer and could feel the fog tightening around his torso, squeezing his ribcage together as it swelled toward his collarbone. With one foot across the orb he pulled with all his remaining strength to tow his left foot across. The red boots drew nearer, the fog growing stronger, his foot scratched across the last inch of the orb and—

The neon lights bordering the halls flashed white and the giant orb fell dark. The fog strangling his suit released its suffocating grasp and drifted slowly to the ground as if it were dust. His lower body no longer constrained, he scrambled to his feet, ready to face his enemy; however, the scene he turned to was not one he expected. The red being's suit had transformed to a cold, icy blue, matching the color of the neon lights, and its visor shone a brilliant white. The visitor had been knocked to the ground in the flash. It raised himself to his feet and without a word fluidly scampered down the hallway and turned out of sight.

Puzzled yet not wishing to follow, he dusted off his yellow jacket, noticing the two lit strokes on his chest were blinking quickly. However, he felt lucky and continued down the hallway with newfound confidence. He strode around the maze, attempting to reorient himself, and after several moments the two lights on his chest returned to their normal, slow pulsing state. He soon stumbled upon a hallway with all dark orbs lining the ground; he must have been

here before. It made the hallway darker, more ominous, with only the faint cerulean light from the walls casting a glow onto the dusty floor. As he walked closer to the end of the hallway, he noticed the familiar fog creeping from the left fork. Determined not to cut it so close again, he turned and dashed down the hallway to find another large glowing orb to save him.

But as he approached the turn he was met again with fog crawling around the corner. Startled, he turned around but the fog at the other side was already too thick, and now accompanied by a new visitor identical to the previous, but with a faded cyan suit instead. The same demeanor and same smooth steps creeped toward him. Yellow helmet swiveling again, he discovered another similar, burnt orange being emerging from behind the wall.

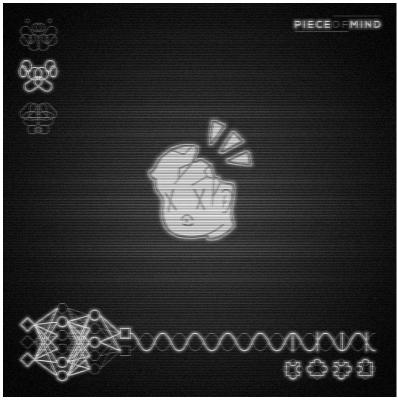
The fog crept onto his boots from both sides, intertwining with his legs as it

Oesch

crawled up his thighs. They each silently continued to step closer, and he was pulled to his knees as the fog gripped his ankles. The fog smothered his chest and wrapped around his neck, working its way up his to his helmet and obstructing his view. His breaths shrunk in length and he felt light headed, the fog now completely enveloping him. As he fell prone, he could faintly see a mix of light blue and orange break through the fog, moving listlessly toward his face and suddenly everything fell black.

The middle stroke on his chest blinked twice, and extinguished.

The group of kids surrounding the arcade game groaned in disappointment. The eight year old boy's sweaty palm gripped the joystick tightly, frustrated he let himself get cornered like that, especially in front of his friends! The round resumed with only one life remaining, and he moved his yellow character around the map with increased deliberation. While he was annoyed at his momentary lapse of focus, he didn't mind, he could play Pacman all day.



Artwork: Piece of Mind Peter Polack

Do You? Miranda Tuck

Do you ever think of me? When you're lonely or just bored Or while you sit in class distracted, Do you remember?

The way that we met,

The way that we talked and laughed for hours that first day, Or only the way you told me this wasn't what you wanted all along?

Do you ever think of me?
In your dreams,
Or in the shower.
Do you think about that night we wandered through the city?
Street by street,
Cold hand pressed in mine,
Kissing under the streetlights,
Or only the way you didn't miss me for three weeks?

Do you ever think of me?
When you hear my name
Or those songs we listened to.
Do you want to see me?
To talk about everything,
And to enjoy each others silence all at once,
Or do you have someone new to talk to now?

Do you ever think of me? I think of you.

Artwork: Reminisce Nghia Vo



Clementine Marc Papakyriakou

One of my biggest regrets was not talking to her. I'm not even sure who she was, and I don't think I ever will, for the only time I saw her was when she was walking down the sidewalk, crying. I was peeling a clementine as I slowed my pace and considered the possibility. Maybe I should give her the clementine, and maybe that would make her feel better. Maybe I could have asked her what was wrong, and if she were open to talking to a complete stranger who just offered her food, then we could sit down and talk. I would peel the clementine as I normally do, keeping the peel as a single piece that looks like an integral sign or a musical clef, something that she may have commented on. But I didn't, and she walked away, with her crying still audible once she left my plane of view. And by that point, I thought, it was too late to do anything. And once that thought crossed my mind, some regret set in.

I feel like a lot regrets are based around things that we didn't do, because then

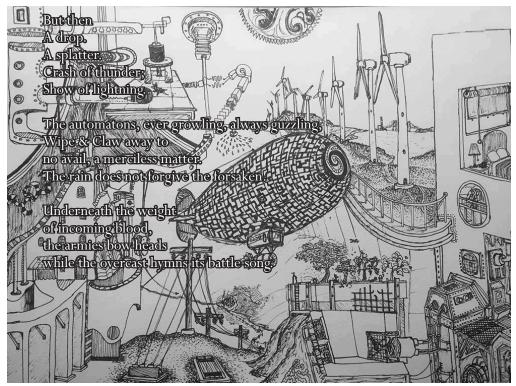
there is a mystery of what the outcome would be. And in the considerations of the possibility, a stream of highlights strikes the mind with all the lows extracted. The bad shouldn't be overlooked. Maybe I would have been ignored. Maybe she would have rejected the elementine in a humiliating way. Maybe she would have yelled at me. And I don't regret those things not happening. I regretted not experiencing the highlight that I saw. Not taking a risk where the reward could be worth it. But, I shrugged my shoulders, and continued walking and pecling the elementine. One thing I know I definitely wouldn't regret is that I still had my elementine.

Overcast Hymn Mahdi Al Husseini

The trees stoically garrison front lines, a long haul. An occasional bridge of peace; only to disappear, another toll.

Cold concrete starkness An overcast & darkness. To death do we break (bread)? Ah, but eternity apart, I do confess.

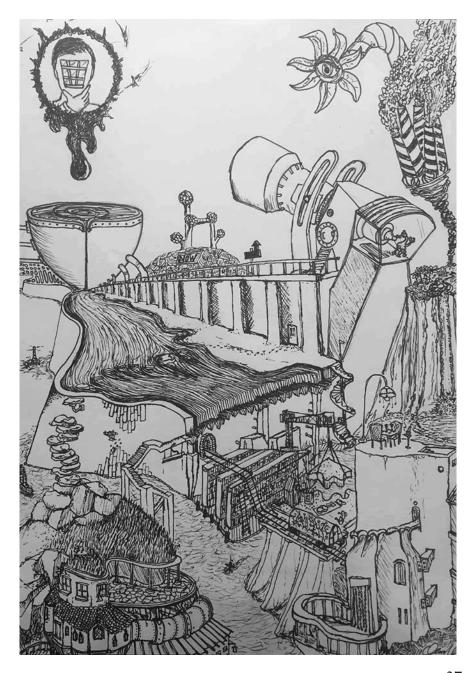
Hungry, menacing automatons pace the DMZ: enraging the armies— and fueling the fire.



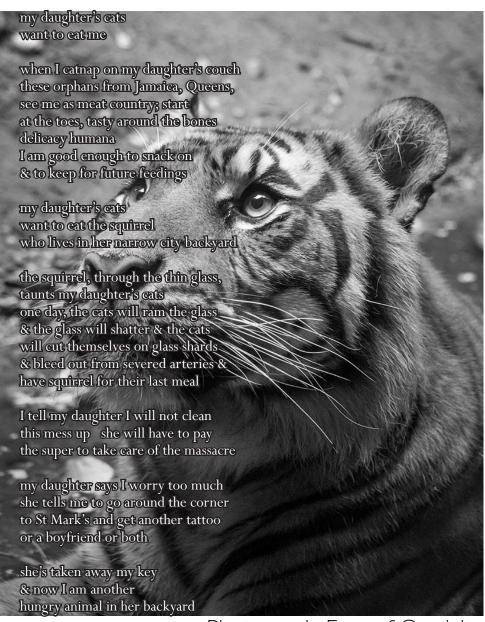
Artwork: Dream Dirigible Clark Hamilton



Artwork: Untitled Clark Hamilton



Meat Vicki Iorio



Photograph: Eyes of Captivity Tyler Meuter



The Interview Marc Papakyriakou

Mason wrung his hands. He modulated between looking down and looking up at the man, across the desk, who was scouring his résumé with a blood red pen. The man was serious and stern, and was yet to say a word to Mason. He reviewed the paper in an animated manner, sporadically chuckling as he made it bleed. Everything would be fine if the man was the only problem, but Mason doesn't like modern architecture, and this room reeked of it. The walls were a black marble adorned with some sort of chrome wainscoting, while the floor was pearl white and fashioned to mimic the look of wood paneling. All of the furniture, the chairs, the desk, the table that was behind them, and the couches around it, were made of glass. And there was an eerie pristine feeling to it all. Mason looked at the desk and thought, "there should be finger prints" when he saw that there were none.

Eventually, the man put a balled fist up to his mouth and loudly cleared his throat, grabbing Mason's attention. The Man made eye contact with Mason, and opened his mouth to speak for the first time.

"First question." He asked in a level timbre, "How do you feel about this room?"

"In what way?"

"Like the look," The man said, motioning with his hands and pointing with his gaze, "the architecture."

"Oh. I love it sir." Mason replied without a pause, "Very modern."

"Glad to hear. I designed it myself." And the man now paused for a few seconds, and then picked up Mason's résumé.

"Second question." And the Man gestured to the now red piece of paper he held casually in his left hand. "What is this?"

Mason wasn't sure how to respond. Thoughts flew through his mind during a momentary pause. "Is this a trick question? What is the tone of the Man's voice implying? Is my résumé even legible anymore? I should probably say something."

"Um... my résumé?" Mason said in a manner that lacked all conviction.

"Obviously." The Man said with a blank stare, "But, what else?"

Again not sure to say, Mason weakly responded "Um... a piece of paper?"

"It's a piece of shit, that's what it is Mr. Ricktenstein!" The Man yelled at Mason, slamming his palm down on the desk and leaving no fingerprints.

"Um... sorry to hear you feel that way sir."

"Where in your imagination did you think that you could come in here with something like this and expect to receive any consideration, let alone respect?" the Man said while intensely staring at Mason, who was currently some combination of offended and bewildered.

"I'm sorry to have to ask sir, but what exactly did I do wrong?"

"We're here to change to world Mr. Ricktenstein. Make it a better place. And you don't change the world by selecting the default options. And when I look at this piece of paper, all I see is default. Your typographic selection for instance. Times New Roman. Are you fucking kidding me?"

"So... I just want to clarify sir," Mason began, "that it wasn't what I wrote, but the font I chose? How can you really judge someone on..." But the Man interrupted Mason.

"I've interviewed many people Mr. Ricktenstein. And something I've learned is that people will always tell you what they think you want to hear. They change and mold themselves into something different, and create a persona which they present as themselves. How you've dressed is part of that, and frankly, I didn't even read what you wrote, because I can almost assure you it's aggrandizement bordering on deception. So, you see, I always need to dig a little deeper to see who you truly are. I have to see how you put things together, and that tells me how you're put together. And this here," he waves the paper in the air, "tells me everything I need to know about you."

All that Mason could do was stare at the man, mouth slightly open with a single eyebrow raised. He felt anger at his whole worth being reduced to a few, supposedly telltale signs of unoriginality. But he said nothing. And thoughts again raced through his mind. "Do I even want to work here? I hope this guy isn't right. I feel like an idiot. I probably should have chosen a different font. No. I shouldn't have to put up with this!"

And the man was set the continue.

"Third question." he said, but Mason interjected,

"Before we continue," Mason said, "I just want to admit that I you are partially right. When you asked me how I feel about this room, I lied. I told you what you wanted to hear. In reality though, I hate this room. It's a completely impractical space. No windows to the outside, despite being on the edge of the building. No power outlets. The desk has no drawers, and these seats are beyond uncomfortable. And it doesn't help that the floor

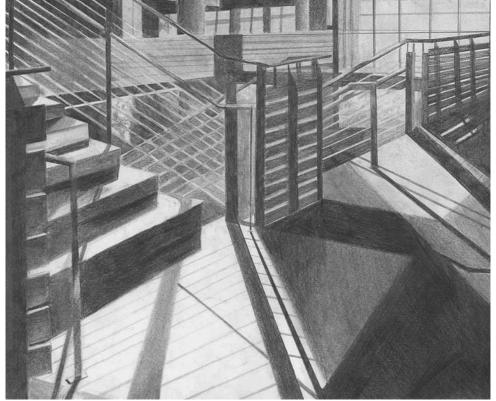


Papakyriakou

blinds you by reflecting the ceiling lights, which are far too bright by the way. What place do you have to criticize my font choice when you've made whatever the hell you would call this room?"

And then there was silence. The Man stared blankly at Mason and Mason's stomach dropped. The Man put Mason's resume back on the table, and cupped his hands together, laying them on the desk, all while maintaining eye contact. Then suddenly, he laughed and cracked a smile. "You're right Mr Ricktenstein, this room is horrendous! And that's exactly what! wanted to hear. You've passed this phase of the interview. Proceed to the office next door for phase two."

"Thank you sir." Said Mason. And more confused than he was before, he stood up, and walked out the same black marble door from which he entered.



Artwork: Third Floor South

Carmen Chee

Mundane Arkadeep Kumar

The phone stirred to wake me up after yet another grueling week. I looked at my watch, the physical one, not the mobile's phone 's time, to see the time, just sheer out of habit. Seven. Yet, it was still dark outside. It has been a week till they reset the clocks for daylight savings. The Sun does not come up early anymore. I was inclined to swipe the alarm. I didn't.

The weekend starts with listing the work to be done, spill over tasks from the week, gearing up for yet another. A call home, unrushed by the priorities and deadlines which mire the weekdays. A text to a friend from a long time ago. That buddy in undergrad who chose to walk a different path, away from the equations and technicalities. The business tracks, peddling investment schemes. Aren't we all selling things? The university is selling education, we are selling proofs of our abilities to grasp what is being taught as we turn in those homework assignments. We are selling our carefully created resume to get that internship or co-op. Wrapping ourselves in glitzy gift wrappers to make a more endearing product to the recruiter. Selling the final year project. Selling the pitch to investors for the great idea borne out of Capstone design. Selling research goals to probable sponsors and funding agencies. Isn't it all about how good you sell? Maybe, albeit unfortunately.

But I digress. Coming to those weekend calls. Another friend who sells communication solutions to companies. Marveling at how easy we were communicating over newfound methods today, backed with incredibly powerful devices in our pockets. The rant about losing touch with these would be oft quoted. But the new ways are here to stay, giving away to even newer ways. Shouldn't we try to utilize the new communication devices and try to stay in touch? The yes of the heart dies at looming face that we would forget.

There is nothing like busy-ness. Only priorities. Time management might help to get done more of the things on the list. The list might not be the scribbled notebook I am fond of, or the mobile app you use. Sometimes the list is in the mind. It is the position on the list which matters, and we say we are too busy. Busy to call home, busy to respond to that text. Busy to say hello to that classmate of years ago we see on the road, whom we might never again meet.



I wrap up the to-do list and set priorities. A bit grudgingly, cause I would really have likes to not put priority orders on some tasks enlisted. I sit down to write down the dream I had last night, one which was strange and real at the same time. And as a rule of dreams, which never made sense now that I am awake. But is not that what all dreams are for? Maybe not. I start to write the letter I have been meaning to write for a long time. Who writes letters in this age of instant messaging? Well, some letters are not meant to be sent, they are only meant to put your thoughts onto paper, to hold them, to act as a pensieve.

The letter remains unfinished, as I get ready to go to the university. Maybe I would work better being on campus, Its another sunny day, and the walk would be at least nice. I start from the apartment. Casually glancing at things I wouldnot notice on other days. I see a fuzzy white ball amidst grass. One part of me wants to stop, another walks. Its a weekend today, I tell myself. I take a turn and walk back. I stoop below to look at the dandelion seed head beside the familiar road 's nondescript pavement. One that I walk along every day. To school, and back. Yet, I have not seen it before. Or have I ever stopped to look? There is actually magic in the mundane. Just if we care enough to see it.

As I reach the parking lot, I see the trees bathed in white. The flowers have come, spring has begun.



This Is the Poem I Write to Her Vicki Iorio

This is the poem that comes to me in an epiphany while grilling vegetables for my imaginary children in my Venice Beach backyard

This is the poem she sends to me from Alaska posted on her way to pick up real children

Flotsam and crap mountain on the passenger seat she dumps out her pocketbook searches for a stamp relieved to find a Forever and the purple passion lipstick she thought spilled on the not so clean sheets of the no tell motel she left in a 3pm school-panic-hurry giving her paramour with a pair of more a quickie goodbye This is the poem I write to her while preparing for my first colonoscopy Ofinal frontier -- I imagine you a green Jell-O mountain Tranquility Gatorade Sea This is the poem encrypted in enema enigmas just in case her husband opens her mail by suspicious mistake this is the poem that bestows fucking advice in terms only a sister raped by a manin a raccoon mask can decipher This is the poem I send under cover of legal briefs to a sistah who lives under snowy mountains in a snowy town who fucks same masked man. (I want to know if he removes the mask while fucking but I need to keep this professional)

This is the rebuttal poem to the award winning poem she wrote about me published in a book informed by howling gray wolves in a coppery canyon

This is the purple bathing suit I wear (see purple footnote) sealing the envelope with wet kisses that holds this poem while oil hisses waiting to receive the melanzana on the pretend BBQ

This is the poem I dedicate while I defecate to a delicate who delegates fucking manimals in Alaska where ______ is metaphor

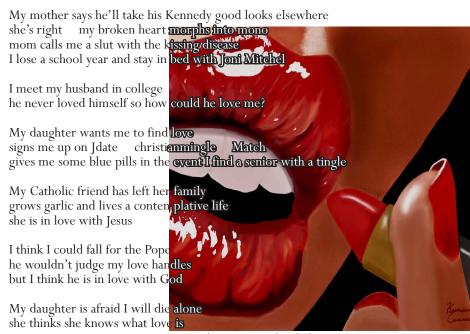


The Biography of Love Vicki Iorio I love Bambi when a hunter shoots Bambi's mother I hide under the seat until the movie ends My mother holds me whispers she'll never leave I don't know that love is my mother her cigarettes her red lips I only know her perfume are my home I am in love with Ricky Nelson's whate teeth Dion's Bronx accent Chubby Checker's twist Ponderosa's Little Joe my mother calls me Boy Crazy When the Beatles come they conquer my American heart I shut my mother out

A boy from the city moves into my neighborhood we cut high school he shows me how to roll a joint gives me my first hickey

finger- love the Fab Four in my princess bed

Artwork: Rose Kamau Cusaac



Artwork: Untitled Kamau Cusaac

Incidental Happenings Marc Papakiryakou

This is the story of incidental happenings in the lives of unacquainted people whose interactions are temporal and fading. Nothing about what they are doing will persist beyond the moments in which they occur. But, what happens in those moments is world changing.

Open to an empty elevator, fitted with office carpet flooring with plain ersatz wood paneling. The buttons have that cold steely feel to them, simultaneously soothing and frightening. The floor indicator above the door consists of small circles each inscribed with a number which cover lights that shine with a yellowish hue whenever their floor is within proximity. They still shine when the elevator is empty, as it is now. Even the elevator music, currently consisting of a blase vibraphone solo, plays when the space is unoccupied. This solo came to an "exciting" crescendo at the moment the elevator reached the bottom floor and opened with a ding to a single man in waiting. He could just never find the right person, you see.

He entered the elevator, briefcase in hand, and tiredly searched for his floor number out of the large selection available. He took so long that the door began to close, and just at that moment a beautiful woman came into view. I shouldn't say beautiful. That word is used too often. Nor should I use nice, because that implies more about whom she is as a person than how she looks. I don't know who she is, and neither do you. Nor does the man currently in the elevator. Regardless of this, she was hurrying with the clicking of heels towards the elevator, asking the man to hold it.

At first, he didn't realize her calling out, but he blinked his eyes in waking, reached out, and put a hand in the door, inciting it to reopen. She entered.

"Thank you"

He nodded in affirmation and asked, "what floor?"

"37, please."

And he said, "There," as he pressed the button.

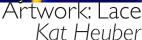
"Thanks."

And with that, she looked forward, acting in that way people always act in an elevator with strangers, attempting silently to ignore each other's existence. But the man, for some reason or another, felt an urge to talk with her, and in this silence he thought of anything to say. His focus went to the speakers and they must have given him this poor idea:

"Horrible music they play in these elevators, huh?" he said as the music had now evolved into a cacophonous vibraphone and tambourine

duet.

The woman was surprised about being spoken to, because it broke one of the foundational principles of social etiquette: you don't talk to



Papakiryakou

strangers in elevators. Once she had comprehended the question, she wasn't sure how to respond. She glanced at him, said "ulilih, yeah... I guess," and

then she looked forward again.

This had not sparked the conversation he desired, and the man mentally hit himself in frustration. But, in a moment of epiphany, he then realized that there was a less forced, but only marginally better, attempted conversation starter he could use. Disregarding the fact that now it too would be forced considering what had just transpired, the man continued:

"You looked like you were in a rush. Were you off to a meeting or

something?

She gave him another glance, looked uncomfortably to the floor indicator above the door, and then stared forward again.

"Yeah," she said.

Well that hadn't worked either! And the man too looked to the floor indicator above the door. As the seconds ticked away, the pale yellow lights flicked on and off in succession towards the number 37. He couldn't think of anything to say and a mental panic beset him. He looked around desperately trying to find anything he could use as a conversation piece, and in this efforthe noticed an unreasonably innocuous button at the bottom of array of choices that was labeled "EMERGENCY SHUT OFF" in a faded red font. I can't say for sure what went through his head in that moment, but it was probably something along the lines of "I only have a few more seconds to make a conversation, but iff I hit that button then I would at least guarantee myself a few minutes." That probably doesn't sound very reasonable, but if you could have seen him right then, you would know that "reasonable", as it is commonly understood, is not a word that could be used to describe him in that moment. "Enraptured" would be a much more appropriate.

The path of his sight began to make an odd triangle. His vision moved from the button, to the floor indicator, to the woman. To the button. To the Indicator. To the Woman. Forward for a second, then fixated on the button. Staring at it. Ready in an instant to reach out and press it. Only waiting for the impulse from the mind. He wants to do it, but to actually do

it...

DING

The elevator opened at the 37th floor, and the woman stepped out.

The End.

Artwork: Red Liza George

A Troubling Detail Marc Papakiryakou

I think my girlfriend is a Nazi. Maybe not like a "Nazi" Nazi, but like a neo-Nazi. I mean the specifics don't really matter. I don't know how Nazis are classified, but I'm confident she fits into the category somehow. What do you mean, "How can you know that?" Just listen to me. I was just over at her apartment yesterday and we were sitting on the couch together, watching TV, and I was leaning back to put my arm around her and to my complete surprise I happened to notice that pinned on the wall behind us was a giant red and white flag with a big black swastika smack in the middle. I thought this was a little strange, and I have no idea why I didn't notice it before, but I figured people have all sorts of weird stuff in their apartments, and this is hers. So I just brushed it off. But when we were making lunch and I got out the plates, I noticed that each one had a swastika on it. All of the plates were the same. She didn't have a plate without a swastika! This also struck me as strange, so I asked her where she got them. Apparently people sell things like this at garage sales and she picked them all up for cheap.

After lunch we were going to head out for the night. As she was getting ready, I decided to look around in more detail because I felt like there had been so much I had been ignoring. I quickly came upon a cabinet with glass doors just filled with swastikas. Swastikas carved out of stone. Swastikas made out of clay. There was even a metal swastika badge with an eagle perched on top of it (if that doesn't scream Nazi, I don't know what does). A few of the things in the cabinet weren't swastikas, but there were dozens of them. Dozens! And as I was aghast at this cabinet, she came into the room and smiled at me. Asked if me if I liked her collection. I told her yes. I didn't know what else to say. And we went on our date and everything seemed normal.

How long have I been with her? About six months at this point, I'd say. How the hell didn't I figure this out earlier? I have no idea. I mean I noticed some strange things, but I figured I just overlooked them. I feel that happens often when you're infatuated. Where you don't even choose to ignore things that could be glaring flaws, but you're just completely blind to them. But this just came out of nowhere. You think she might not be a Nazi? Of course she knows what it means. I mean how could she not? Nobody can be ignorant of something like that. So the only possibility left is that she's a Nazi. Is she foreign? Yeah. Is she Indian? Yeah, she moved here a year ago. Oh, that reminds me of something else that doesn't make sense to me. Like, I usually think that Nazis would be white, because it's about white supremacy and all of that. I guess stranger things have happened though. Why do you ask? Do I even know what a swastika is? Of course, it's the symbol of the Nazi party. We've gone over this. Everyone knows that. Wait, what do you mean, "Do I know where it's from?" What? It's a good luck symbol? I mean she said something like that, but I figured it was just some sort of propaganda. Why are you looking at me like that? It's a Hindu symbol of good luck? No. I don't believe you. I've never heard of that before. What are you trying to show me? Yes, that's what a lot of them looked like! What do you mean this picture was taken in India. I'm so confused right now. Do I know who the Aryans were? Yeah, the Nazi's were Aryan. Oh... Really? Well... I just need this all to sink in for a minute.



The Sculptor Brent Hornilla

I remember the day I first laid eyes upon the goddess Aphrodite I had naught but the words on my lips None of which carried the weight that I wanted them to So when I professed my love for her The words drifted upwards Before birthing the stars that would remind me of my aspirations How could I ever hope to woo her? A meager man, I could not hope to compete for the affections of an immortal Left with maught but my craft and my tools I had the audacity to attempt perfection I chiseled slab after slab Faflure after faflure Until one day I discovered her In all of her splendor Fraternizing with Adonis She called me her muse But he was her lover How could I ever hope to compete? I, the Hephaestus of men, Stood broken and beaten With defeat wrinkled across my brows I affed aloud in desperation, "Aphrodite, love me!" As if demanding it of the heavens would make it so But alas. My words carried with them too heavy a burden So when I professed my love for her The words plummeted to the ground Planting the seeds of frustration that would remind me of my shortcomings I set out once more to refine myself through my works No longer seeking perfection I sought only to hide the hideous truth A masterpiece whose beauty surpassed that of its subject And once I was finished The world loved me for it

Artwork:The Wrong Places Christina DeLurgio

Wood and Grass Whitney Rudeseal

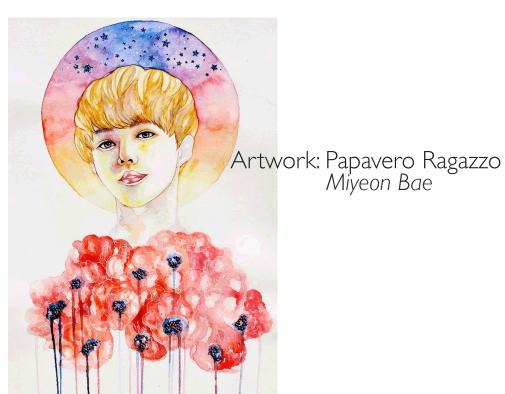
The darkness outside is heavy, but it won't last long: the sun is on its way. The aroma of nutty, sweet coffee fills my lungs. The trail is rocky but short; it is a path I have taken many times before. I reach the end and the sky starts to lose weight. Orange dots the horizon and the silence is welcome. The fog is absent for once and the evergreen trees can be seen for miles. A cool breeze goes past and I shiver, the hairs on my arm rising to greet the sun. Another sip from my mug. A black spider crawls past and today, I do not do anything. I let it enjoy another sunrise. The solar curves taunt the earth, turning its atmosphere from a tired dark blue to an effervescent aqua. Another sip. As my coffee grows colder the flavor changes, tasting like wood and grass. Our star makes its grand appearance as I finish. I put my mug down beside me and enjoy the view. I reach out as if I could touch it, absorb its energy. The forest doubles in thickness as the sun casts its shadow.

The morning has made itself known and I must do the same. I pick up my mug to go but something stops me. The spider—I've crushed it. I hope it saw the sunrise.

Artwork: Fleeting Tiffany Chu







Artwork: Unbounded Miyeon Bae

Why Sit and Wait? Jeremy Cooley

Why does the morning after tragedy Always smell like Smoke Of the bridges burnt the night before And Dew, a healing salve, A damp encouragement To be renewed, to start afresh And live?

So why should I sit and wait for Death,
Wasting my breath on the loneliness
I spend with me, myself, and I,
Trying to believe I should even try
For that day—that time when I'll be whole again;
I'll be whole again; and happy
And the remnants from this former life
Won't haunt me; they'll be forgotten.
Then, then I'll live, love, fly,
Amongst the various clouds in the sky
Of some other Earth,
Another foreign world where
Love reigns supreme
As if Life itself is only a Dream.

Because that day is today,
That time is now,
When I can start afresh
When I can live for another's
Heartbeats, if not my own,
When I cannot forget the past and its pain,
But I can heal the present and my future,
And live for Love and Friendship and Joy
The only things that transcend Death.

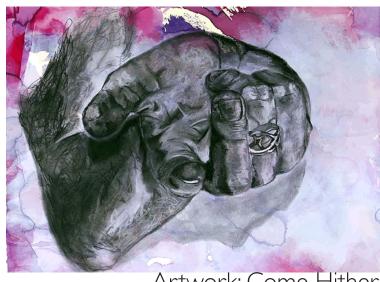








Artwork: Love Cora Wilson



Artwork: Come Hither Cora Wilson

"For sale: baby shoes, never worn."

Ernest Hemmingway



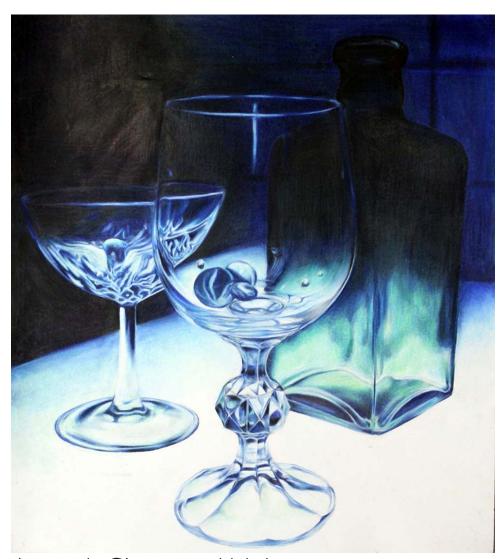
Artwork: Skates, For Sale

Andrew Dai

Artwork: Tiny Dancer Annamaria Tomaszewski







Artwork: Glasses on Lightbox Alexis Jacob



Artwork: Liberty Bell Bird Cage Gabriel Mesa





Artwork: Clean Tiffany Chu



Artwork: Island Yangxiang Zhang



Artwork: At Night on the Street Liza George



Artwork: Minerva Joshua Stephens

Artwork:Trix Joshua Stephens







Artwork: Cosmic Standoff Jack Anninos



Artwork: X Madi Juby

Shutdown Anuradha Banerjee

I've pressed that button so many times, It must have gotten ingrained in my head, But I don't shut down. I feel. I scream. I curse.

Wild hand gestures and telling looks, Letters addressed to those who drew out emotions, Sometimes spoken, sometimes written.

I can dig through the messy stack in my wooden desk And find dated messages that went unanswered, But they were still there, and that's what counts!

But all of a sudden, I can't feel anymore When I need to the most.

I clench my chest as I imagine the future, All that you'll miss due to the pull of the frayed edges of that black leather belt Hanging innocently in your closet.

My wedding day with you staring off bored in the distance in the front row. It's grand and big and beautiful,
The red and gold adorning every corner,
But you couldn't care less in your plain black suit.

Simple nights staying in at home with you calling out to me every few seconds.

You're bored as usual, ranting and telling stories and jokingly throwing attitude.

Your dark brown skin is starting to clear up, and you grew half an inch taller,

A fact you proudly showed off to everyone who walked in our door.

Our parents moving into their new house, A split-level with light yellow siding like mom always wanted. It feels like we're trapped in the 1920s with the slightly garish wallpaper And here come the scented candles and countless, literally countless, religious figurines.

We roll our eyes together.



Banerjee You paint pictures in my head of a life without you. Your body hanging limp and lifeless, tied to that plastic white fan, Tears on my wedding day as you're not there to give me away, The lack of your voice commenting on my favorite romcom echoing through my brain, A desperate sob at the thought of you never being able to gift them that split-level yourself. I force myself to understand at T. I. L. SOMETHING. These pictures could be real, you say Your story spills out of my mouth in a rehearsed 37 seconds to anyone who'll listen, Tired from being told so many times. I never shed a tear while telling, m mind just too, too st I shut down. work: Waterfall Brian Gambrell

Come Fly With Me Brent Hornilla

Fly me to the moon

Let me play among the stars

Let me see what spring is like on Jupiter and Mars

In other words, hold my hand

In other words, baby, kiss me

In other words, let's be astronauts;
In other words, let's be cosmonauts;
Let's leave behind this Big Blue World and see what the Universe has in store for us;
Let's dance among the Heavens,
The Infinity of Space,
Our stage,
The stars—
Our spotlights;

With a twinkle in each step, we will blaze a trail for others to fol-

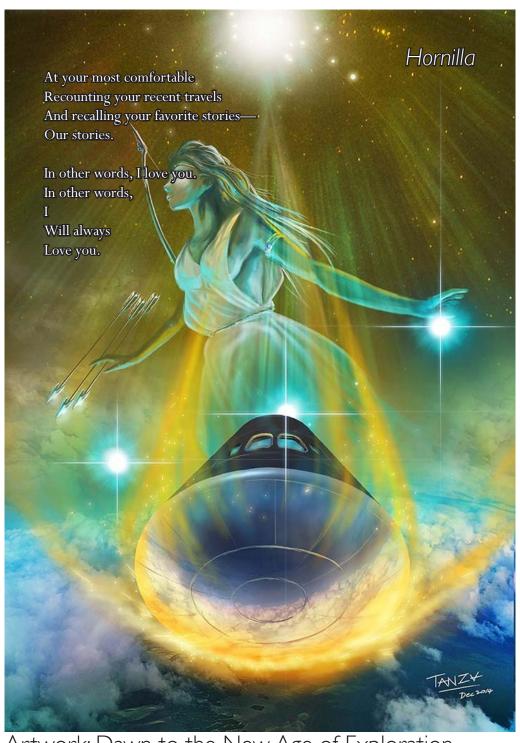
In other words, grow old with me;
In other words, stay young with me;
In other words, stay,
If only for a little while,
I would like to be your shelter,
So long as my body will endure,

low long after our bodies have grown cold.

I will wave the flag that guides you home.

In other words, leave me knowing that, one day, you will return; In other words, leave me,
But write me often,
So that I may know where in the night sky to look with longing.
I will keep a warm fire for you,
Your favorite blanket folded over your favorite chair,
A warm cup of coffee,
And a box of your favorite chocolates,
So that you are always





Artwork: Dawn to the New Age of Exploration Zu Puayen Tan



Artwork: Wings Jonah Bea-Taylor



C

Artwork: Aeronautica Zu Puayen Tan



Artwork: Zephyr Megan Hamilton



Artwork:The Last Sky Bridge Zu Puayen Tan

What Is Despair? D'Miria Collins

What is despair? I have seen it.

T .. 1 1 1

Is it when a woman looks at her child

And realizes she can't feed her

Is it when a poor black girl in the ghetto of Brooklyn

Can't go to college

Is when a man puts his hands on a woman for the first time?

And swears it will be his last

What is despair?

I have heard it.

Is it when a man lives the life of a child

Out of fear and despair

Is it when a mother's sanity snaps

And the child suffers the price

Is it when you look around

And realize you are completely alone.

Is it punishing the innocent

For the crimes of the guilty.

Is it subjecting a person to execution

When no harm was done.

What is despair?

I have felt it.

Is it watching the high and esteem

Become the poor and unstable

Is it loving someone

Who will never love you back

Is it lying to the face of someone

Who you say you love

What is despair?

I have smelled it.

Is it the stench of the homeless man

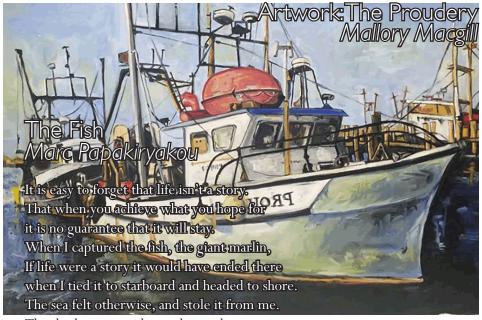
Who searches for food or water



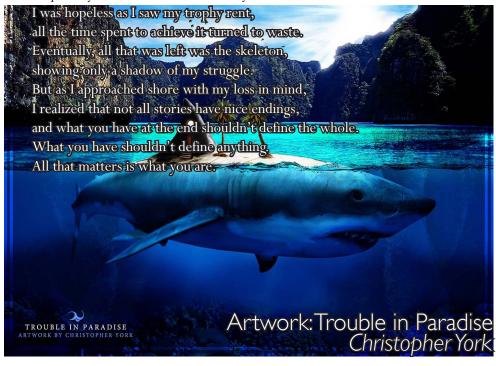
Collins



Artwork: Untitled Maya Berinhout



The sharks came and tore the marlin apart, despite my efforts to ward them away.





The Necessity of Water Brent Hornilla

You are the still water, without ripple or reflection.

The sun and the moon spoil you.

Placid and unpaintable,

Ever flowing and unobtainable,

The surface of you without flaw or imperfection.



You are the rain, forceast forchooding but tranquil in passing.
The rapping on the window that soothes my slumber,
The drizzle that keeps me company,
The downpour that begs me not to leave;
I am always left, weary and fragile and laughing.

You are the storm, a turbulence of feeling manifested as spray. Relentless and brewing with the violence of life. I stand along the shore breaking the waves as I beg to be broken—It hurts.

I need it to hurt more and more so that I feel like throwing it away.

You are the calm before and after, and the eye in-between. I envy the sky that bleeds into you,
The horizon I am not a part of,
The briefest of interludes,
The greatest of reprieves.

You are the sea, without which I dry up and cannot breathe,
But there is too much of you to breathe,
To take in, to hold—
Full of neither happiness nor sadness,
There is only the infinite darkness beneath.

You are the gathering of sea foam.

The sound of the waves that will not go away.

The color of longing.

The whiff of what could be.

The thought that takes me home.

Artwork: Beneath the Surface Constance Perkins

Vote for Better (You) Georges Eloquin

Everything you do can never be undone. Every moment is as if it never existed. Your actions impact and stamp the world.

A trail of ripples follows your path. Inside the wake is a glimpse of peace. Truth is the piece of mind; unwind. The reel of memory hidden in the brain, Understand the consequences of inaction. Mindfulness is the key to be, A balanced individual can take the opportunity. To open a door down a road. Around the bend, you won't know, Let go of ego and flee from you. Come across a person who is more you, Inspiration: Be a better person than you were. A Man or a Wo-man, shall you be ever prosperous. As a human being we can all get along with our heavenly brothers. Earthlings have a responsibility, to be responsible. Stewards of the sand, rocks, mountains; Rivers, oceans, trees, and bees are all gems. Lions, bears, dogs and even cats, Entitled, to the basic rights of a sentient. You and I, I and she, he and them, Take care of the gifts you have been given. Embrace your talents and follow your drive, Help another, make a friend,

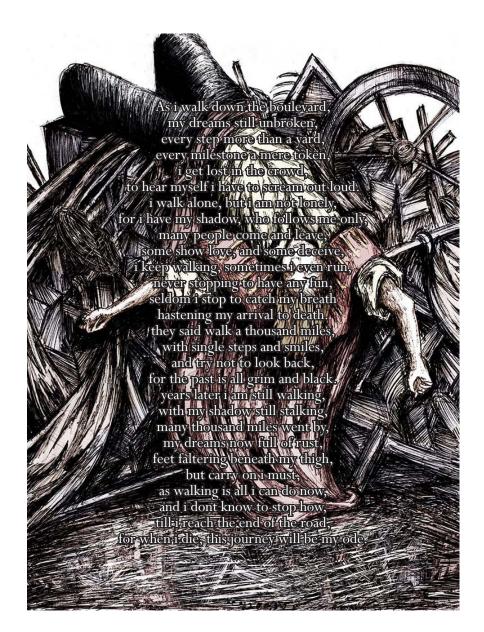
No one is a stranger, if you tell them your name.

In the beginning, and in the end,

We are all made of the same.

Artwork: Recovering Dalton Mulkey

The Journey Towards Death Dhawal Buaria



Artwork: Savage Antinous Kat Heuber

Silence Andi Schodorf

There was always something comforting about the silence. To sit in the dark, vision reduced to vague outlines, and listen to the high pitched hum of nerve impulses and ever-present thrum of heartbeats: it opened her eyes to far more than shadows and her ears to far more than physical existence. She sat on the ledge, feet swinging off the abyss, staring at thoughts and thinking of life.

She wasn't supposed to be here. If they caught her, she'd be sent home. But the world slept, and her feet played touch tag with the wall. Life seemed to pause at that time: the time between days, when the past was too fresh and the future too near. A razor edge, and between the blades was she, balanced precariously.

She thought of the home she had left behind. The walls, full with memories, The wood underfoot that she would so often skid and slide on in her haste. The big, empty spaces with room for her thoughts and her dreams. She thought now of the paths she had walked, millions of times, the buildings that had been so much a part of her life; the journeys she had taken and the one she was on now.

What exactly were her reasons for coming? She was not sure she knew herself. It had called to her, just as the city had called to her: just as the factory had called to her: a transient with no true substance, she felt like a ghost- not dead, just not yet born.

She was alone, and she fielt it. The cold winter wind nipped at her sides to remind her, and she wrapped her arms around her waist to ward fit off. Yet she felt so filled, so rich in life and light and warmth, she could hardly feel lonely. It was as if her life- those people to whom she gave her love and they, theirs- was patiently waiting on the other side of the glass panes she leaned upon. She had to but rise from the ledge, lift the hatch, and return to the light and warmth of their embrace. But — There was something comforting about the silence. It wrapped around her like a cold blanket, muffling the present and sharpening the finsubstantial. She found herself in these times. Sometimes, what she found she did not like. Sometimes, what she found, she did. The silent darkness served as a blunter for the former times and a tentative preserve for the latter.

She looked down, the ground swallowed by the ebony abyss whose fingers stretched not feet from her dangling legs. Drawing the appendages up underneath her, she rose to her full height, spine straight and shoulders back. The wind whipped her hair about her uplifted face, eyes staring at something there-butnot-there. She stretched





out her arms and tipped forward, toes leaving solidity and body plunging into the misty depths of the unknown; only to rise once more unsupported, weightless, free.

Then her eyes snapped open. She sighed. It would not be so easy as a single courageous act. The future was a series of small jumps, not a flight. She tucked her feet beneath her, rose from the ledge, and stepped inside to electric daylight and mechanical warmth, reality as sharp a contrast as the light was from the cold night she had just left. She had walked the razor edge and stepped off, living once more in time.

There was always something comfortable about the silence. But comfort was not what she sought.

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Interested in being in our next issue or becoming part of the staff?

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