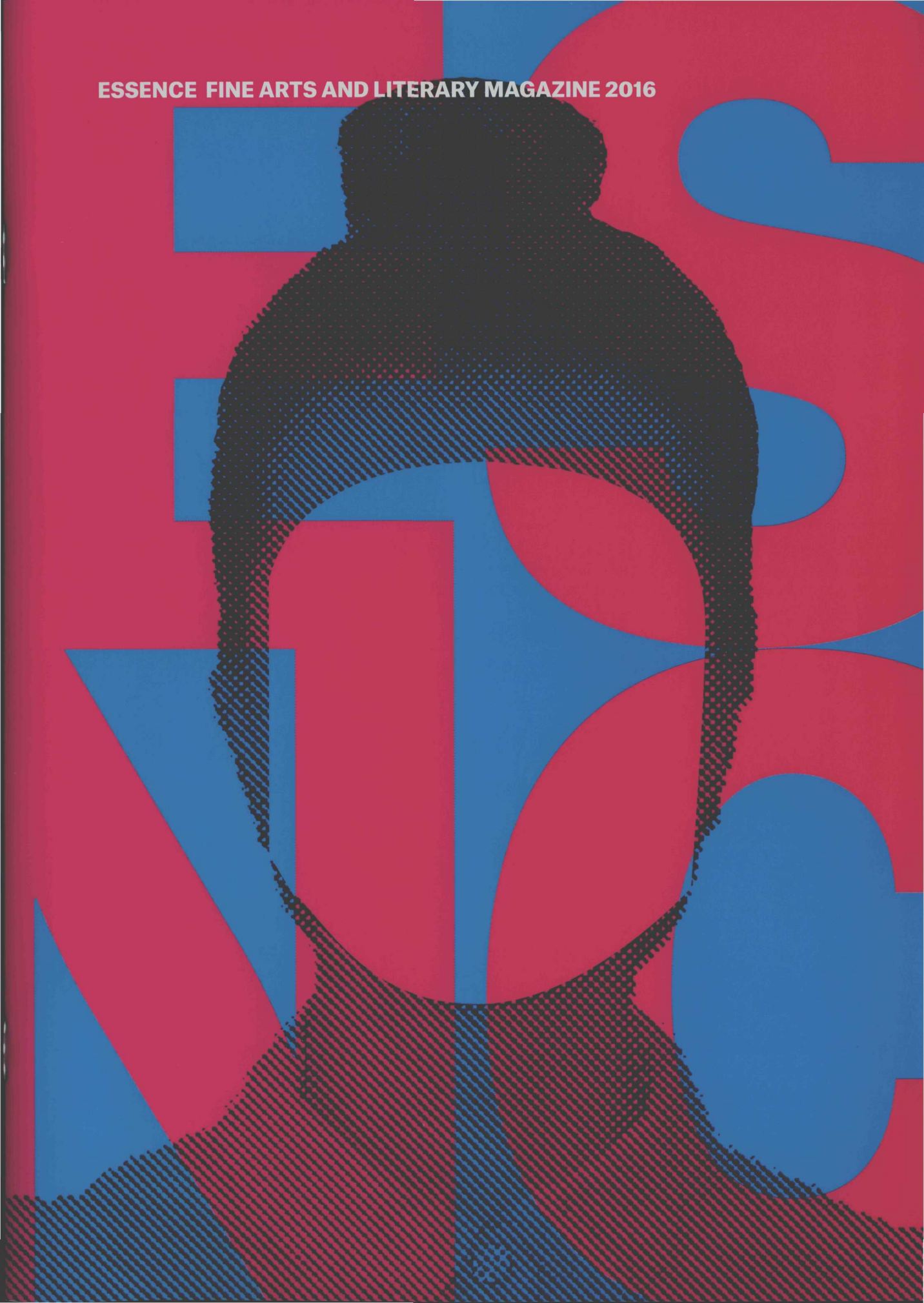


ESSENCE FINE ARTS AND LITERARY MAGAZINE 2016



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Jaimie McLaughlin | Electric Field, Photography, 11 x 17 inches

ACROSS THE POND

Tiya Mahalanobis

On the floor lay two empty, old suitcases. It is early evening in Kampala, Uganda, and the sun begins to swell and sink below the sky. My bedroom walls turn white and then orange when the sunlight, red and balmy, blankets them.

I notice particles of dust drift on a column of light coming through my window, and I think about tomorrow. I will leave on a plane to go to America. I'll go to school there, and the weather won't be the same almost every day of the year like it is here. There will be snow, and before the snow, leaves that mimic the shades of the African sunset. This change is good, but I find myself denying its goodness because I spend

the next fifteen minutes sitting on my bed, watching the light. Suddenly, eleven years seems too short to stay anywhere.

I hear my brother's footsteps down the hallway. They get louder, and I know he's walking to my room. From the corner of my eye, I see the handle turn, and the door swings open, and as it hits the wall, he mutters an apology because he knows I hate it when he doesn't knock.

I glance over at him, and he is leaning against the doorframe with his hands buried in his pockets. His dark, dense hair is disheveled and in need of a trim. His face is wistful, and his lips

are pressed together as if he needs to tell me something, but nothing audible escapes his mouth because his lips never part. At 16, he is only two years younger than me, but we aren't close when I think of other sibling relationships.

"Hi," I say.

His eyes move from the tiled floor and meet my gaze. Now his hair isn't the only disheveled element in his appearance.

"Are you excited?" he says. He keeps his voice low, as if we are here in secret. The sunlight shifts to the opposite side of the wall. >>

Essence Fine Arts and Literary Magazine is a collaborative effort of Kutztown University students who express themselves through various artistic mediums. The works contained within are considered, by Essence staff members to be some fine examples of creative and literary expression. The Essence staff expresses appreciation to all its contributors and readers for sharing in this publication.

"I think so."

"Are you going to miss it here?"

"Mhmm."

These are the only words we exchange, but the conversation feels full because for the first time in so long, we aren't arguing and our voices aren't raised. It's just the lingering sad silence and us.

Before he leaves, he sees the empty suitcases and cracks a broken smile and looks up at me.

"Well," he says. "You should probably start packing."

I sigh and nod slowly in agreement. My toes graze the floor as I gently push myself off the edge of my bed.

Before I can say anything to him, he disappears from the doorframe, and I listen to his footsteps as they dwindle in the distance.



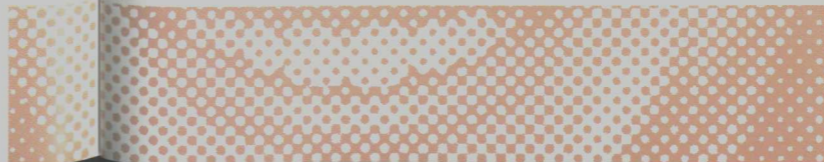
Christina Shelly | Flora and Fauna, Linocut Print, 23 x 26 inches



Alyssa Loeper | Untitled, Archival Inkjet Print with Magazine Clippings, 8 x 10 inches

**PATCHWORK GIRL
HIDES UNDER
HOSPITAL COVERS**
Kimberly Winters

The shadows dog my footsteps, grab
thin, fragile ankles, yank me down.
You call me clumsy. Mirrors hold
smooth smiles. Reflections wink, play tricks
like hiding bloodshot eyes, wild hair,
inside-out clothes. I never touch
that doll, my mother's favorite doll,
whose eyes, old marbles, languidly
roll 'round the room; I sleep and find
her tucked beneath my arm. You think
I yank my hair out? Scratch red lines
in my scarred skin or bite with child-
sized teeth? You useless doctors, blind,
still asking, "Why are you afraid?"



GOOD MORNING

Kimberly Winters

Children are born
red with fury,
weeping for the cocooned
darkness of the womb.
First forming,
now aging.

The boy's sapling legs,
spring higher with each step
and bend with the wind,
yet wood weakens with age
and cracks with thunder claps.
His third leg is a borrowed branch.

The wisecracker, who
shouts and sings while stern
teachers shush him,
will yell to be heard
by his own ravaged ears
and laugh in heaving silence.
The little girl's watchful eyes
hide behind dark fingers of hair.
Clumsy years spill milk
across her darting pupils,
and locks wither whitely
to match.

And what of the fibber
whose summer times pass
outwitting witches and
tearing sneakers from quicksand?
Grains tug him deeper underground
with each word.

Little ones tumbling
over flapjack feet
will giggle at his wild tales.
When he rasps,
"I was a child, once,"
who would believe him?

EGGS

Bryce Johle

Dizzy, cheeks are whipped
with diamonds
When neuroses swerve
around the sidewalk cracks.

Only every other step all the
way down the stairs

With twist-tie fingers that hope for an
even number.

Rib cage of webbed glass at
the count of thirty-three,
So soften the stride and bite
the skin off your lips.

Ulcers sprout and burn ochre,
You eat the apple anyway.
Fingers leak an obsessive
ectoplasm,

A gale seals in a clammy chill. Swinging
at the air and patting thighs for heat
That coddles sinister eggs
which crack and plunder.



Curtis Weleroth | Woah!, Acrylic on Wood, 16 x 35 x 5 inches



Phil Vera | A Chameleon's Paradise, Porcelain, Spray Paint, Enamel Paints, 15 x 6 x 5 inches



Breanna Carpenter | Parallel Cows, Film Still, 11.72 x 6.5 inches

EVERYTHING IN SIGHT

Bryce Johle

Tell me how to talk
So I can break out of the fisherman's net
Hand me those binoculars,
To meet your eyes as you stand on your
pedestal.

Then run away with the other cattle.
I'd be a sheepdog that lets you flee,
Gnawing on raw hide, wondering
Whose ignorance lifted the gate latch.

Afterward I'd drift along in waves
And ripples that feel more like
raspy sand
Than revitalizing water.
Dry bubbles flower beside me, popping,
Tainting my tongue with grit and
taunting,

When they whisper their absurd advice:
"The only person you can blame is your
silent self.

To return becomes a fantasy only
imagined
As a ghost who already knows your
name,
Who spins you around and kisses you,
Whose teeth gently click against yours.

I asked you so many times to tell me,
Tell me how to talk before I'm devoured
By a lonesome plague, neglected by
the healthy.
"Eat everything in sight," you said.
"Don't even count the calories."
But I can't stand it when my
food touches,
So I think I'll take one quiet bite
at a time.



Phil Vera | Salmon Assemblage, Found Objects, Wood, Tiles, Ceramics, Spray Paint, 64 x 72 inches

STRANGERS
Megan Witt

I thought of you today, with fond memories but a lump in my throat.
For you see, you are a skilled sailor and I am the sea. Calm and gentle but even with unpredictable crashing waves, you still managed to see through the destruction into the horizon.
I slowed my waves and helped you on your course. You spoke of me as though I was majestic and dangerous, like the contradiction made me seem so lovely. And for that, I never broke your sails or drowned you, even when my waves seemed unbearable to manage.
It is unfortunate, though, that even

the most skillful sailor can get lost. I am the sea, ever-changing with a passion to save every sailor on my waters. You are a master of your trade and trusted me with consistency and commitment I could never offer you. You reached the shore line one chilly evening with torn sails and cursed me for the beautiful destruction I was and turned your back to me. You will realize that I will always be with you-- the whistle in your ear, the salt in your tears, the slight breeze through your hair.

I went days without you, and it hit me like a summer storm. Your silence shook me, and my waters grew rough and uneasy. But like all good storms, it passed, and all that was left was the darkness and calm of the moon. So now I am the sea, a blue and vast everlasting memory to you. And you, a lost sailor with no destination that I watch from afar. No longer a sailor, no longer a sea, for we are just strangers now, lost without you and lost without me.



Christina Shelly | Tubes, Copper and Sterling Silver, 23 inches

LOVE POEM
Cody Oliver

You are a bank with no teller,
keeping me at bay with velvet ropes
and crumpled paper.

I've got vaults full of potential
and withdrawal slips to prove it.

If I could
I'd slip them between the pages
of your paperback memory
and hold my place,
and in return
I'd leave room for you
in my autobiography:
punctuating,
annotating,
and crossing out my every error.

I've spent hours on end
perfecting my penmanship
and sent you many letters,
handwritten and heartfelt,
only to receive them myself
marked
"return to sender"
and paired with a note
that read:

"you're sweet,
my dear,
but I'm not myself.
I am a sheep chasing wolves
and I only read fiction."

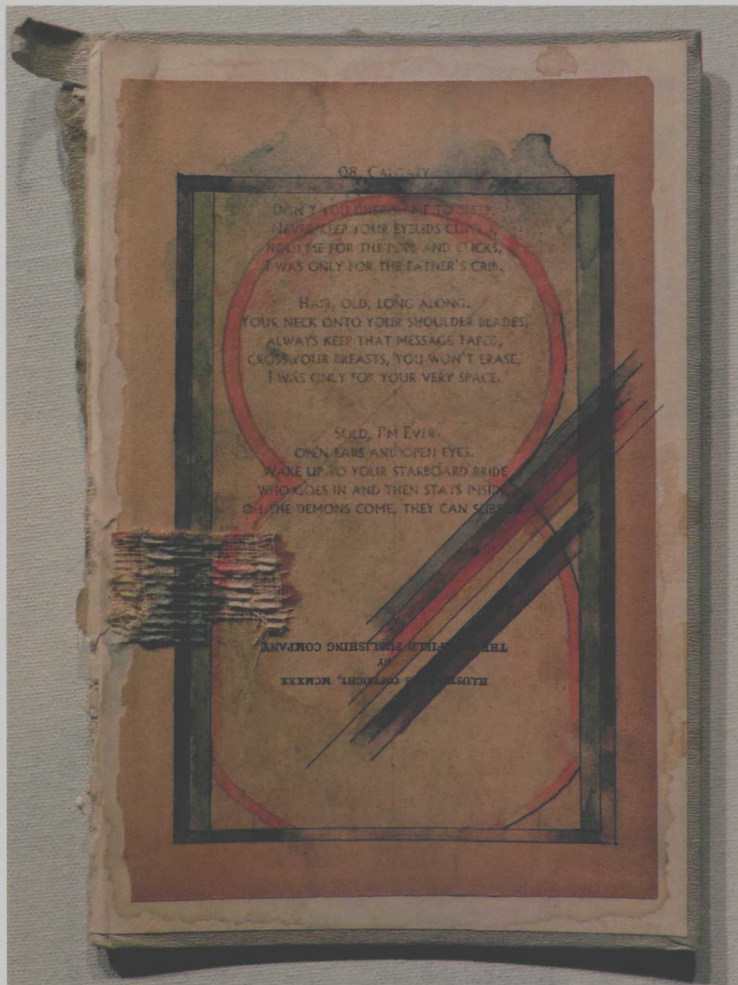
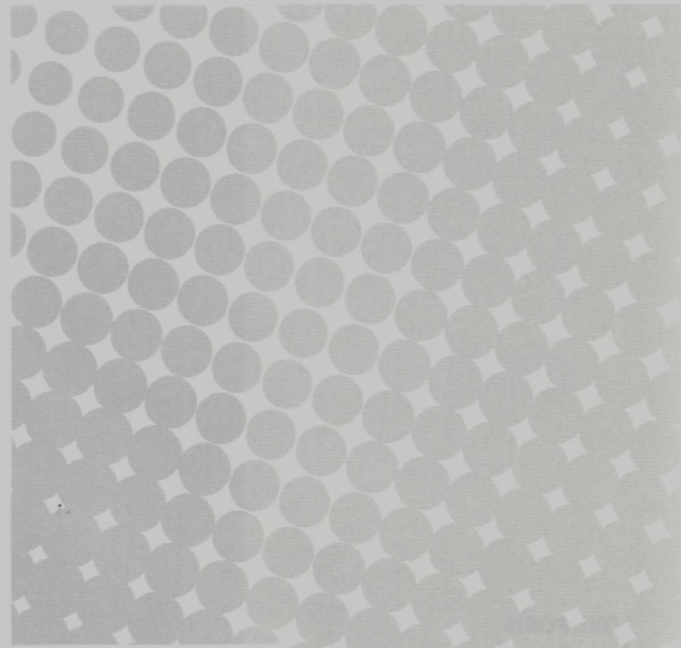


Shealene Peniston | Lovebirds, Colored Pencil on textured Paper 12.75 x 18.75 inches

FIREFLY

Kelsie Mertz

The willows lean toward the west
 While her skin tingles from the wind.
 Her eyes swollen and red,
 Can still make out the edge of the bridge.
 The cicadas harmonize with her footsteps
 But the melody is absent to her ears.
 The light illuminating the lake is lost behind the hills
 And nothing is left but stillness.
 Her cool, calloused fingers caress the metal barrel
 Which carries a flood of panic up her spine.
 The lake is alive again by little yellow lights
 Finding their way through the dark.
 On and off, on and off.
 With her palms faced up,
 A firefly plants itself in the center of her grip.
 And the light continues to spark on and off.
 On and off.



Bryan Fellenbaum | Calgary, Mixed Media, 6.5 x 8.125 inches



Johannah Lassen | Flowers, Digital Photography, Unspecified



Curtis Welteroth | Untitled (Garbage), Acrylic and ink on steel, wood and paper, H 14 x W 42 x 24 inches

SCUM OF THE EARTH Samuel Benning

It was closing in on midnight. The boss called me away from the restaurant floor and into his office. Once inside, he shut the door behind me. "Sit," he said, gesturing towards the chair sitting adjacent to his computer desk.

I sat. He swiveled his computer chair around and began the tedious process of sitting down—first bracing his hands on the armrests and then carefully lowering himself until his ass rested safely on the cushion. The chair creaked under the four-hundred-some pounds of lard hanging off his stomach. He crossed his hands on his lap.

He took a deep breath and looked down towards his crotch for a second before looking up again. "Nick," he sighed. "I just—I don't even know how to say this."

I didn't say anything. I knew what was coming—the same thing that had happened so many times before—the same thing that always happens once they find out.

He looked me in the eye, but only for a second before turning his head towards the door. Maybe he hoped someone would walk in and take over so he wouldn't have to get his hands dirty. Maybe he wanted to get up and walk out and deal with it later. Whatever the reason, I wished he would get on with it already.

"Earlier today, one of the waitresses was complaining about you. She was saying you were on—that list."

Yes, the list—the dreaded list—so horrible in its implications people

have a hard time saying it—the words so thick and heavy they catch in your throat.

"I didn't want to believe her, but I had to look into it, and by God, there you were. I just couldn't believe my eyes." He swallowed. "Christ Nick, you've been working here for what, six months? You should have disclosed this on your application."

I leaned forward in my chair. My palms began to sweat. I could feel it all bubbling to the surface—the shame, the anger, the regret. I wanted to cry, but I wouldn't let myself. "If I did that, you never would have hired me. And if you bothered to do a background check, you would have found it." I wanted the words

to sound strong and defiant. I wanted to make it seem like I didn't care—that it didn't bother me—that I was a tough guy. But that little quaver in my voice betrayed me. The words waved up and down as they came out. I must have sounded pathetic.

He turned his head towards me, but his eyes stayed fixed on the door. "I can't believe it. I just can't believe it." His voice quieted to a loud whisper. "You know there are children in here right now."

Oh, those poor children. How I hated that excuse. God, give me any reason to hate myself—give me any reason to feel ashamed, to feel like a monster, but don't give me that shit. What about the children? What a crock of shit. Those are the words of conniving politicians, the words that newscasters use to make people scared and keep paranoid mothers listening to their insipid bullshit. What about the children? My blood began to simmer and then boil over. "She was seventeen for chrissake, and it was consensual. It's not like I went around raping five-year-olds."

He made a face like he'd bitten into something nasty. "That doesn't matter, Nick. I can't have you working here anymore. You'll get your last paycheck in the mail."

I said nothing more. I got off the chair and walked out of the office without so much as glancing at him. As I left the building, I thought good riddance.

On the way home, I stopped at a bar and picked up three six-packs of beer.

I lived in a trailer park on the outskirts of town—not one of the nice ones. Some trailer parks are decent places to live. Some of the trailers they have these days might as well be houses. Not mine. Mine was a rusted, dingy little white and sky-blue piece of shit that looked like it would collapse if the wind blew the wrong way.

The next-door neighbors were standing outside their trailer as I pulled up, passing their meth pipe back and forth. I half expected them to scatter like stray cats, but they continued on as casually as if they were smoking a cigarette. As I carried my beer to the front door, one of them waved at me. Hands full, I simply nodded in return.

Inside, I drowned my sorrow with the booze. I put two of the six packs in the fridge and started drinking the other one while watching television. I killed that one in short order and started on a second. And then the third.

When I reached for the last beer, I noticed a milky light trickling in through the window above the sink. Morning was here. Beer in hand, I stood up and stumbled to the door. Outside, I sat down on the steps and cracked the can open. Staring into the misty-blue twilight of dawn, I wondered how I would afford to drink myself to death now.



Kristen DeMelfy | Hazardous Materials, Colored Pencil, 8.5 x 12 inches

A RATHER LARGE SPACE

A. R. Moses

"You're quite courageous to be out here on your own."

Her first words to him, she was in awe.

"Usually one would seek for something familiar, or even help. But you...you fascinate me."

Colonel Burlington swiveled the grains of sand out from between his teeth and spit them out through his thick mustache, the squeaking scrapes of his enamel zapping his brain. He sat beside a boulder, right foot under his left knee, stitching a bullet wound on his thigh. Salt flats, ancient woods and stone lay strewn around him. With every prick of the needle his hands shook more and more.

Her voice came from within the helmet atop his head. Or so he thought. She spoke so gently at first, as if she was putting an infant down to sleep, nearly hushed.

"Did you hear me?", she whispered. "You're too far out here."

Burlington continued his operation with no sign of acknowledgement towards her. He winced at the dirt trickling and mixing in the fresh blood of the open tear.

"Funny, funny man," she teased.

He snagged the helmet off his head and tossed it over the boulder, out of sight.

"I wonder..." her voice still just as audible.

The colonel's eyes widened as he froze in place, the point of the needle sticking up out of his stretched skin. He raised a hand to the side of his head caked in white dust.

"I wonder if you know yet. I missed your arrival. Preoccupied, rather large space."

He noticed her voice sounded bolder for a moment, almost cocky.

It unsettled him, a visible grimace etched into his face. He bit the thread of the last stitch to finish the job and stood up.

"Head down to the ravine, won't you? I admire a man who follows his own convictions, but I'm trying to make this easier for you. Go along now, I'm not going anywhere."

The tone seemed to be more in the realm of confidence, he realized. Still, the tremble of her speech vibrated the center of his mind, as if his skull were a ceramic bowl and a spoon kept sifting around inside of it.

He crept around the curve of the boulder to grab his helmet. His boots sloshed in a red mud oozing from below the cracked surface. Over towards what appeared to be north, judging by the sun's position in the cloudless sky, he could make out the break in the horizon where the ravine waited. He headed towards it.

"Watch your step, Burlington..."

The closer he got to the edge, he began to hear various guttural groans echoing further down. A few paces to his left lie a skinless body. Its eyes followed him as he walked past. It sputtered and gargled something incomprehensible.

"I'm creating something here, something for all of us. Come and be

a part of it..."

His spine wiggled in place, shaken by her voice. She was becoming unfamiliar.

He felt a small drip on his jacket collar so he rubbed his hand on the back of his neck. Sliding his fingers upwards past his hairline, he noticed he actually had no hairline, just a bloody, pulpy concave mess. He ran his fingers over a couple cracked vertebrae and stuck his middle finger into another bullet-sized hole at the base of his skull. His helmet tipped forward to rest on his brow. A string of drool ran down his chin as he pressed into his exposed brain.

"Please!" Another woman's voice called out from the ravine.

Burlington limped over as quickly as he could. His stomach turned at the sight before him.

Bubbling, steaming, and gurgling, the ravine was filled with endless mounds of pulsing bodies. They squeaked as they rolled and slid on each other, like the sand still stuck in his teeth. The woman called out again. And again. Until she was quieter, and quieter. Burlington stood shaking.

In the distance, a bellowing drone shook the already quivering landscape.

He suddenly felt a sharp stabbing pain in his wounded thigh and clenched down on both his leg and his bite. As he glanced down at it, his veins began to pour out and spill onto the ground. They grew thicker and whipped around him, tying his body to strewn pieces of dead wood and stones.

The innards of a skinless torso beside him slithered over to him.

They wrapped one end of themselves around the width of his shoulders, and the other end gripped onto the edge of the ravine.

Gradually, it began to pull him in

The drone screamed louder.



Danielle Patterson | Pegasus, Oil, 36 x 48 inches

"You're sweating," the woman's voice in his head said. "That's no sun up there, darling. My darling man. That's no sky either." Burlington looked up at the faded orange sky, and the orb of light hovering in the center.

"Nothing's out there. All we have is here. Forever. Built with your sacrifices. Bone and muscle and nerve. Strong nerve, strong hearts. To be what you were, Colonel, for all of you to be what you were. What else would Hell be made of?"

Roaring in the distance, along with the drone, he was able to see the two sides of the ravine shifting closer towards one another. They smashed into each other at a furious speed, causing quakes and other tremors. Mountains formed with the sounds of cracking bones and meat splitting apart. Blood poured out from every crevice.

As the mountain range charged towards him, he tried frantically to break free, but

he sunk beneath the surface before he could even let out a scream, leaving only a crimson stain. The only remnants of his existence.

SHEEP

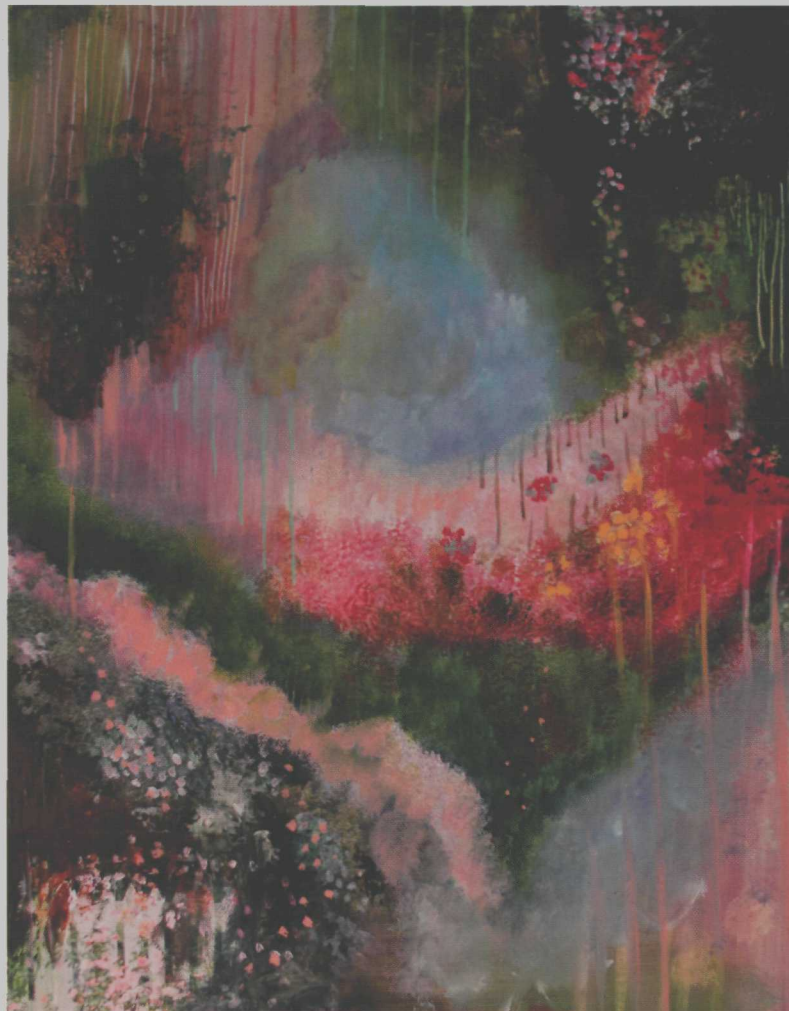
Kyle Kutz

The sheep
roam lush pasture

among streams,
vibrant and free.

The herd
consume such wonder

through a screen
6 inches by 3.



Kylie Streeter | Serenity, Acrylic, Oil and Collage on Wood, 24 x 30 inches



Rachel Hammersley | Down by the Lake, Woven Tencel, Bamboo, Nylon Yarns, 13.5 x 30 inches



Rachel Hammersly | Untitled, Watercolor & Pen, 4 x 5 Inches

CAFFEINE

Kassidy Rineer

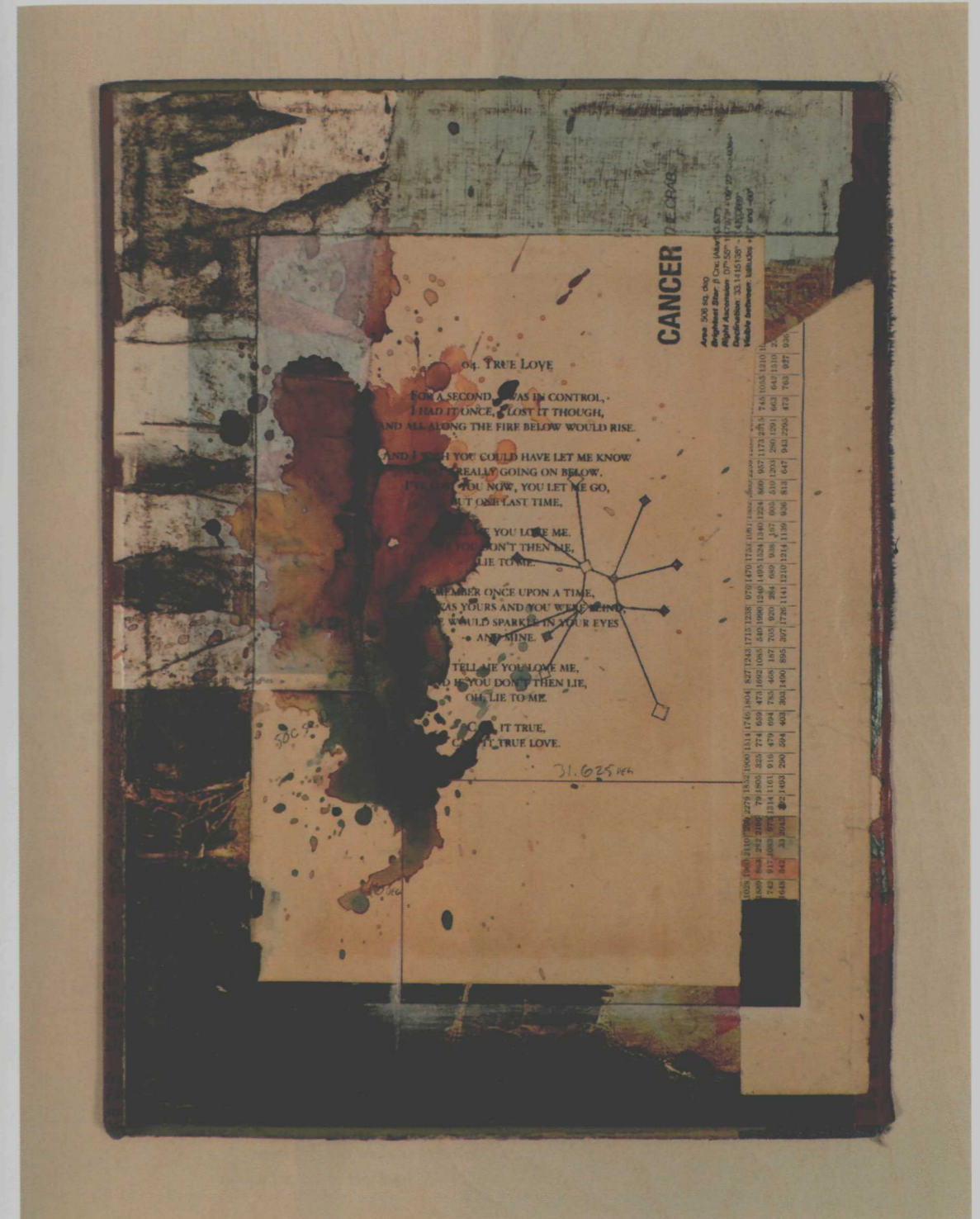
I have never drawn
 To the shade of brown before
 Yet I gaze into your eyes wanting more
 I can't help falling irrationally in love
 With the creamy, smooth, rich color of
 Mocha coffee found in your eyes
 And I hesitate in turning away
 Unsure if I can function completely
 Without the caffeine in your smile

TRANSFER
Rose Hogan

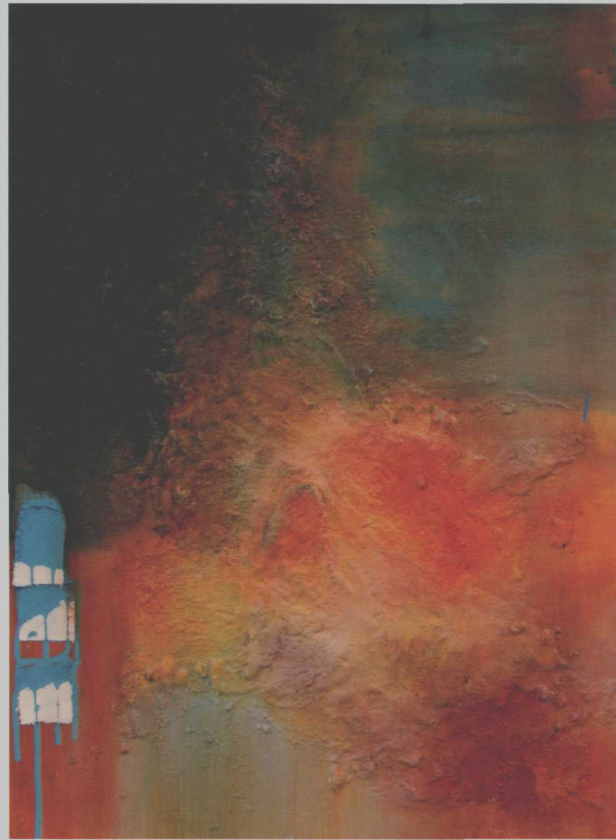
What moves you?
 Is it the sight of a glimmer
 or the lightest touch?
 Is it contrasting color
 or a sweeping blood rush?
 Maybe it's something that I do not know.
 A foreign experience
 that makes you delirious.

Do you think of it often?
 Do you remember it's name
 or the way it smells?
 Do you remember the texture
 or the secrets it tells?
 Maybe it's like sweeping wet paint
 across thick empty paper
 slowly, with all your focus.

I don't know what it is and
 I don't know how it moves you
 But I'm sure of it.



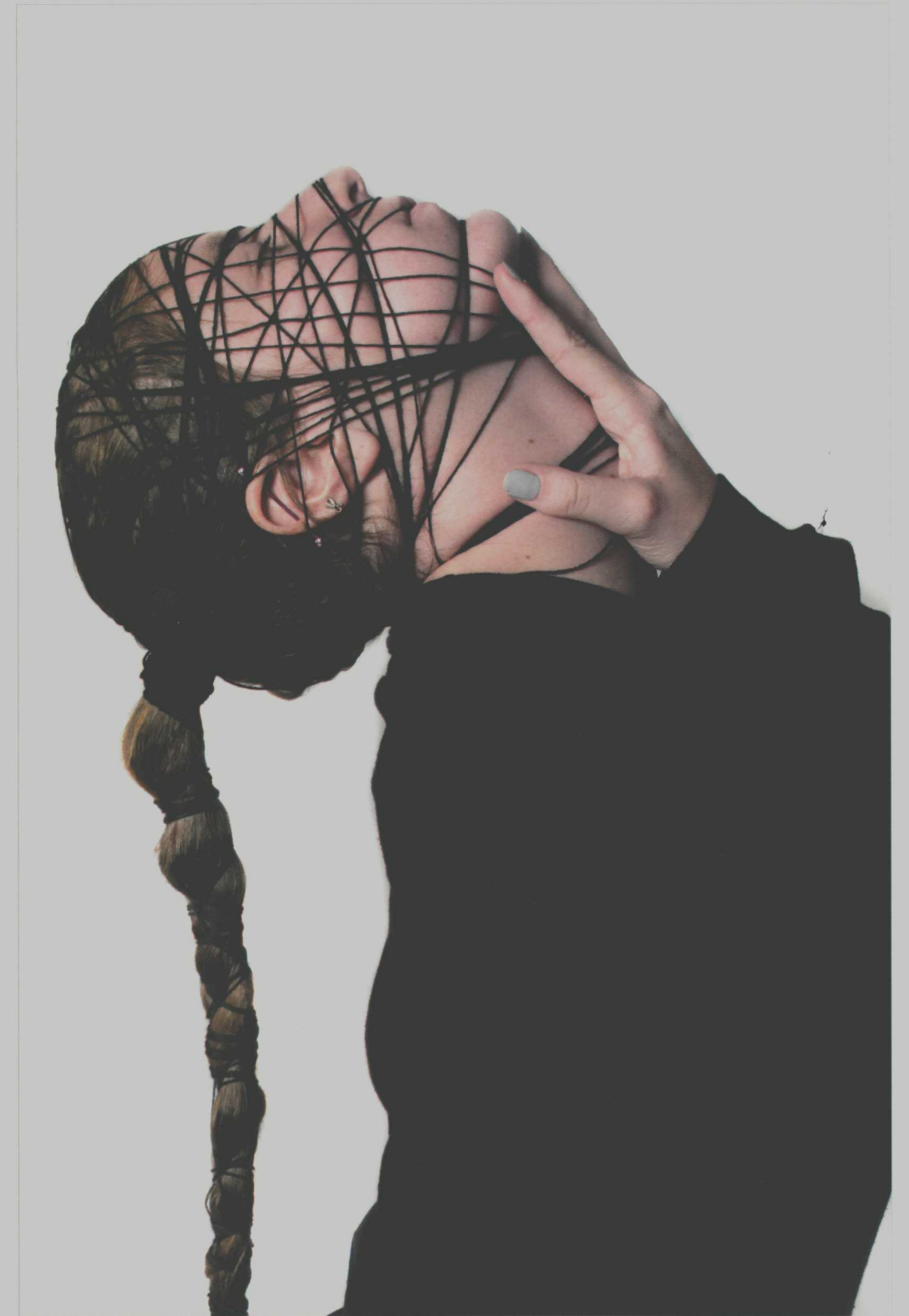
Bryan Fellenbaum | True Love, Mixed Media, 8.5 X 11.125 Inches



Dani Kristich | Mountains, Acrylic on Canvas, 12 x 24 inches

**A HAUNTED HOUSE
IS NOT A HOME**
Delaney Seltzer

There is a girl inside of me, a girl
the color of icicles. She hangs from
my light fixtures, over the family.
She breathes in their passive aggressive
mumblings and exhales sarcastic
undertones. They do not notice her.
She calls for them in the night
but all they hear is the creaking
of my floorboards. She reaches
out for them but all they feel
is the breeze seeping through
my cracked windows and brushing
its fingertips against their cheeks.
She sticks glassy fingers into
my sockets because maybe the shock
will jumpstart her heart again; resurrect
her soul so she can be one of them.
She lays in my brain, tears sinking
through the floor begging to be
noticed. The family plants pots to catch
them. Grief is the echo that resonates
after every unfulfilled wish lands hard
against the tin.



Emily Rogers | Contortion, Digital Photograph, 10 x 15 inches

"CHAMPAGNE."

Tabitha Rea

If someone would have told me what I know,
Destructive words that I will now ignore;
Listen, listen to us, they go.

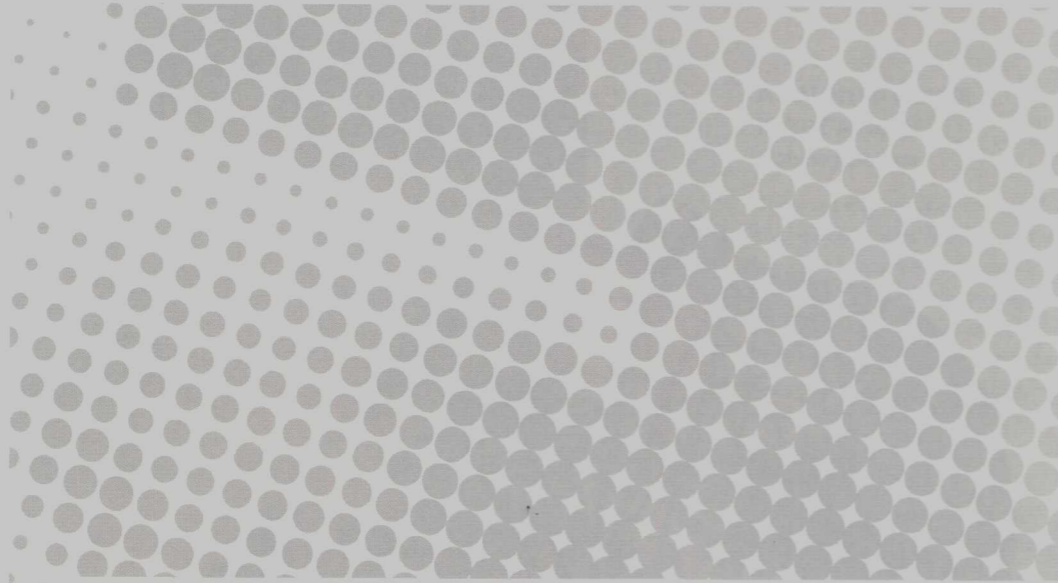
They believe I can't set his heart aglow,
He always intrigues me to my very core;
If someone would have told me what I know.

A villain, just a man without a soul,
Then I still would be crying out for more;
Listen, listen to us, they go.

He begged for me to come to his chateau
In New Orleans and show up at his door;
If someone would have told me what I know.

Everyone of them thinks I should tell him no,
When he gives me champagne on the dance floor,
Listen, listen to us they go.

He whispers plans of taking me to Rome,
With hopes of going places I've never been before,
If someone would have told me what I know.
Listen, listen to us, please go.

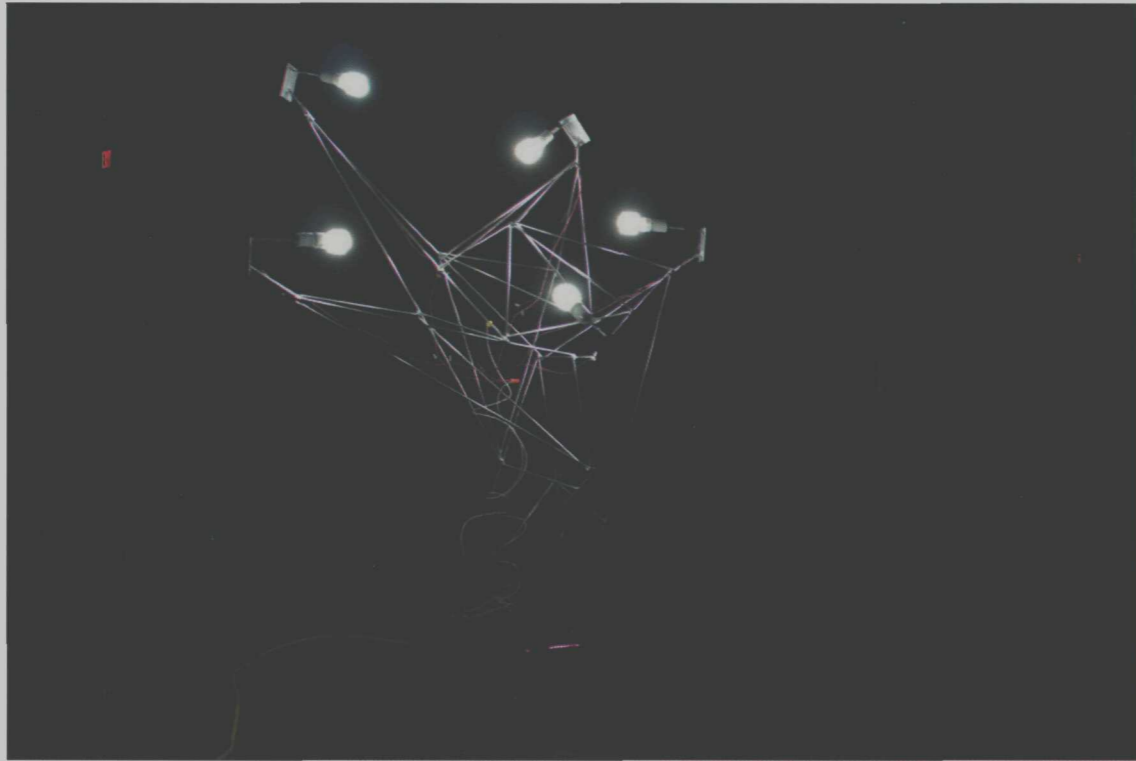


Samantha Dillman | I Will Follow You Into the Dark, Acrylic & Paint Marker on Board, 14 x 36 Inches



Miranda Hughes | titled, Archival Ink Jet Print, 12 x 18 Inches





Joseph Painter | Selfie, Steel, Light, 72 x 48 inches

PLANTED

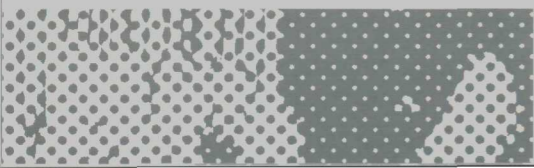
Natalie Risser

A lanky boy in a long lavender coat stood along the shore of Lake Michigan with his father, eating one sunflower seed then tossing the next into the unwavering water. His lavender coat reflected a lavender personality and if you asked the father to describe his least favorite thing about the son, he would ramble about 'his stupid lavender sexuality'. Even in winter, his father would carry on about marigold girls and how they could make any type of boy happy. But as the boy observed, the sand never shifted with seeds that land on top of the water. Even in summer, the father would say "Look, these carnation girls are so funny!" But as any lavender

boy knew, a bird would catch the seed before it would sink to the bottom. Since it was the father's turn to have the seeds, the boy passed the bag and walked towards the parking lot, where a long line of porta-potties stood. After the father put several seeds into his mouth, he threw the next. But before thinking of chewing, and with a jolt of his arm going forward, the seeds thrust to the back of his throat. The boy could hear his father gagging and coughing, for he wasn't too far away. But as he felt his lavender bowels acting up, he decided to take his time and finish. After a few more minutes in the bathroom, the boy walked back to the shore where his father lay collapsed, turning a shade of purple. If you asked the father then what his favorite thing about the son was, he would ramble about nothing.



Kathleen Barrett | Kissing, Lithograph, 22 x 15 inches



ROOTS INTERTWINED WILL NOT DIMINISH

Samantha Holmes

After replenishing the ladies' glasses with house sangria at table eleven, she made her way to the break-room.

The pitcher was still in hand, perspiration washing over her fingers. Her ponytail swayed with the flesh of the apples floating on top, both the same golden hue.

She was not pleased, for the gentlewomen's presence at brunch cut our conversation short. "Like I was saying," she continued. She was relieved thinking about the near release from the bistro, only to be left worrying about the upcoming season. Branching off to meet her new roommate that August did not excite her. I understood, I could relate, I thought.

I grew used to our volleying stories and grins at work, all the while unaware she was planning to spike.

Her back pocket buzzed. Table eleven's salads were waiting.

She returned with a handful of leaves, gesturing for me to pass the pepper grinder and said, "If we don't get along, I'll be stuck with her. And I hate girls...all the drama." She whipped her head at me when I didn't answer, "Not you, you're not like most girls." I tasted the water her roots drank from. At an early blossom, her close buddies were only boys. She opened up to me only to expose a rough, crackled-grey exterior.

Golden fruit started to fall. The bitter pool under her feet made the orchard diminish and die.

She liked the notion of not being like other girls. She wasn't.

Her roots spread poison.

I SEE YOU NOW AND THEN

Elizabeth Leavens

I see you in my hands.
I can see your reflection In the folds
at my knuckles And sometimes in my
nail beds.

I don't see you in my lips,
But my eyes match in color,
Where they differ in shape.

I feel you when I grimace
At mom's embarrassing mom-ness.
A snide, hidden smirk
Was your favorite way to smile.

There's a lot I would give
To trip on your shoes,
Wake to your frustration,
Patch up your wounds

Or say goodbye.

I miss you, Always.

Kyle LePera | Exterior 1, Acrylic on Board, 12 x 24 inches



**HEY HONEY,
HOW'S THE WRITING?**

Elizabeth Leavens

"Hey honey, how's the writing?"

Well, Mom, I see you still don't

Have a single clue about the nature of

Anxiety.

Even though you had two kids

Who battled mental illness

Everyday from 2004 through 2013

And 2001 through present.

But anxiety is not something

I can put on my resume,

And nobody cares how it started

When we lived close to an airport and

9/11 and weapons of mass destruction

And that's an airplane, how low is it?

And meteors hurling toward us

And terrorists with nuclear warfare

And dissolving into dust

And death

And death

And death

And what the fuck comes after?

What the fuck IS God?

Infinity seemed pretty improbable

Even though I was ten.

It took me three or four years



Kathleen Barrett | Unattainable, Mixed Media Drawing on Toned Paper, 24 x 18 inches



Taylor Davis | Nocnista, Digital Photography, 13 x 19 inches

To stop worrying about that one at night.

I got so good at ignoring those questions

That I started worrying about

Being a burden

Just like Dad said.

Being a fuck up

Just like Dad said.

Doing everything half assed and not going anywhere

Just like Dad said.

I'm sorry, Daddy, but those are symptoms of depression.

And then my brother died.

So if you, who I hid so well from, or I

Thought that it was a battle before, well . . .

I couldn't hide those death questions

As well as I had for the last eight years.

Too upset to think

Too blank to write

So I can drown anxiety with

Internet

Distractions

Video games

Distractions

Pretty pictures

Distractions

Insomnia.

Too anxious about not writing to draft

And all in all it just means I'm going to fail.

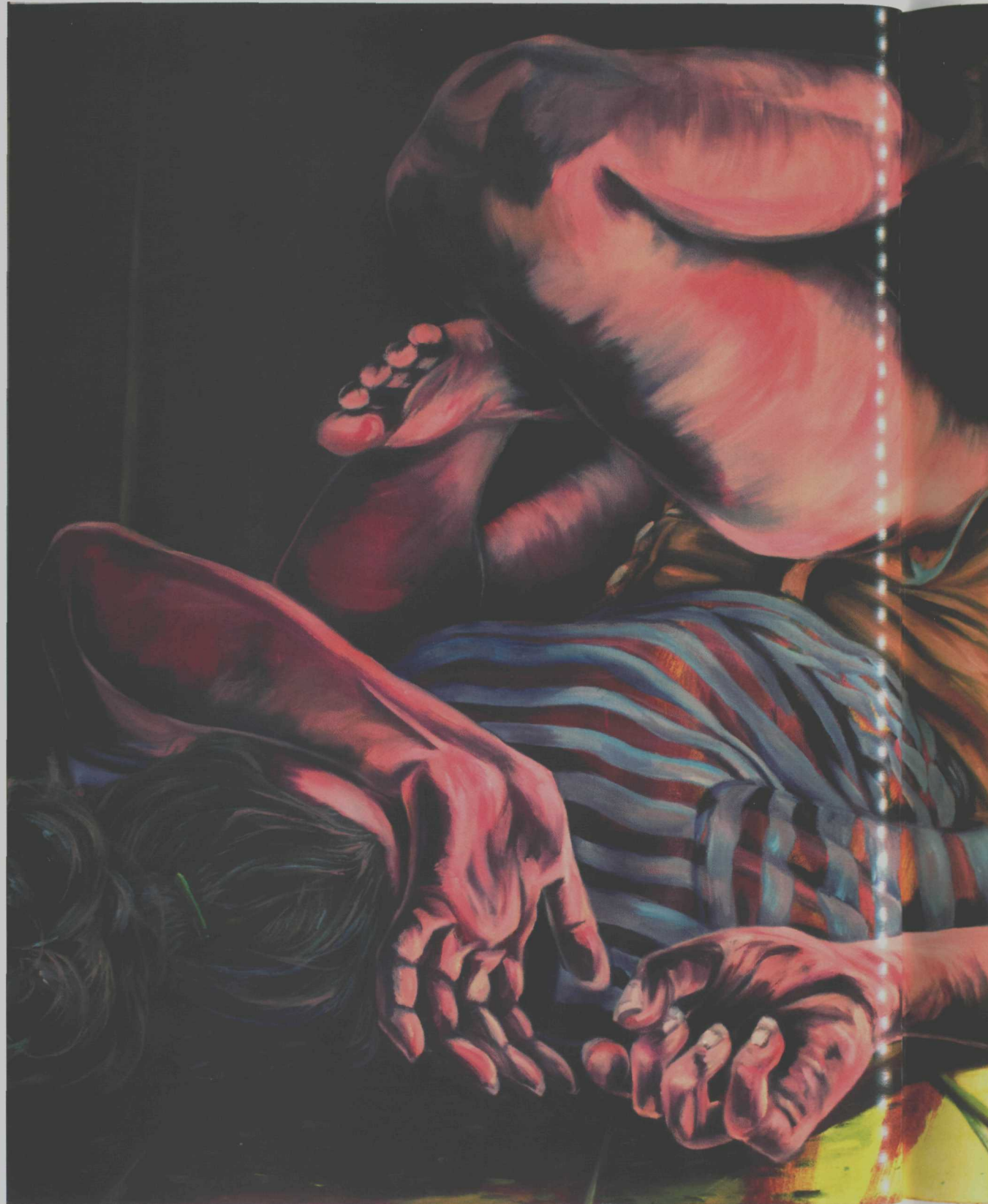
Just like Dad said.

5am and I still haven't slept because you asked,

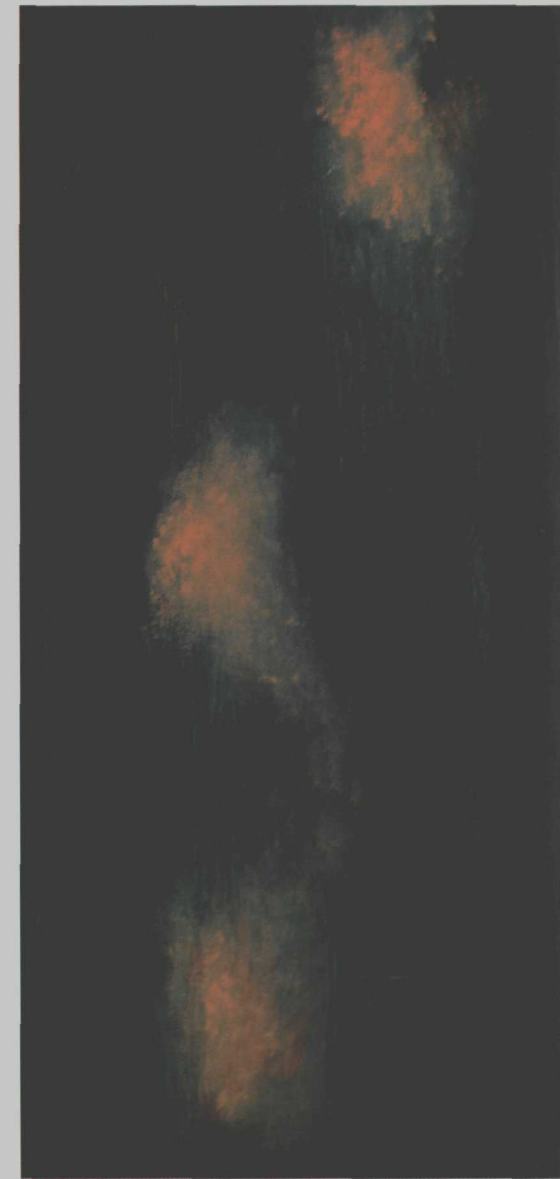
"How's the writing going?"

Well, Mom.

It's not.



Brittany Kurtincez | Pressure Point, Oil on Stretched Canvas, 36 x 39 inches



Kylie Streeter | Ghost, Oil on Wood, 24 x 30 inches

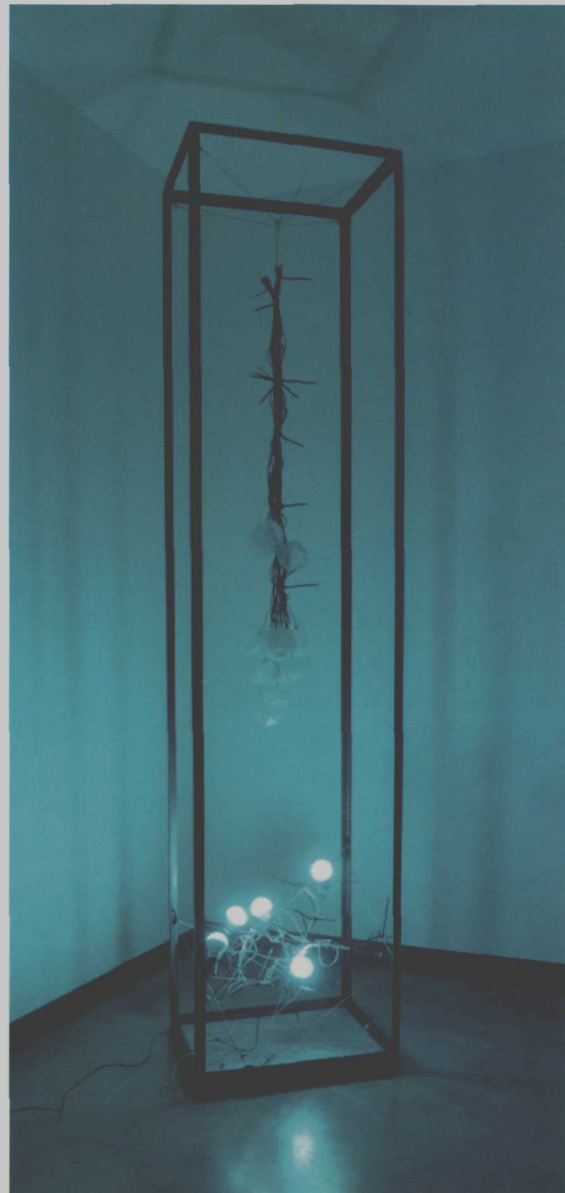
RAH RAH RAH - 3/29/14
Brittany Woo

There are flies in my head
They are all in comas
My eyes strain into mashed, ripe fruit
My ears pinch into folded dough
Today could not have been any better

Another One Gone
Christopher Kril

A lonely soul with a mind outside of his head
Drank his liquor like water before he went to bed
Stacks of paper lined up on the floor
Another lady sneaking out the back door
He was broken in two the day darkness came
From that day on nothing would be the same
The wind blew in a different direction
A poor man lost with good intentions
The people spat in his face

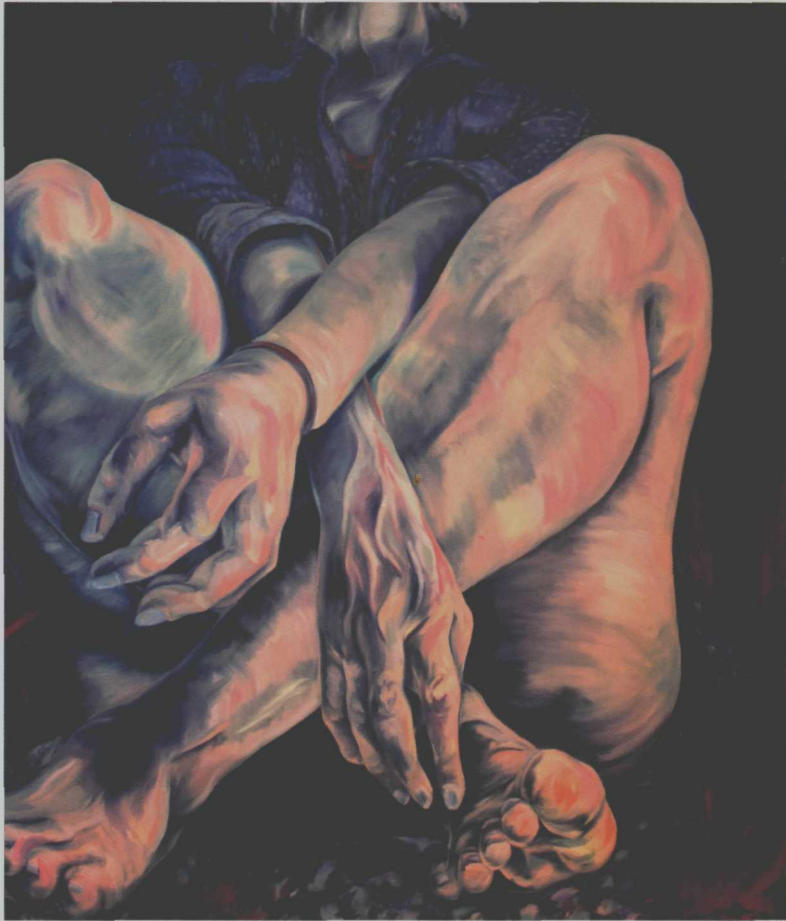
“Get him out of this place”
Smoked up, rolled up like a sick dog
An old man humming an old song
Laughter and madness all intertwined
If only you could press a button and rewind
Go back to the past, to the days of old
When the sun was yellow and money stood for gold
The story of the man that stepped on the moon
Creation of another silly cartoon
We live on a stage of revolving regret
We treat them like kings, though they are our pets
The disgrace and the epic loss
Settled with a quarter and a toss
You're lost and weak and don't know where to go
Your song has already been sung long ago
Pathetic, a letter of lies
The numbers were picked, but you won no prize
Call the police; they'll help with your crime
Why write a poem if it doesn't rhyme?
The answer does not exist
Although you might insist that you are weak
There are no chances to repeat
My love, my wisdom, and my heart
It is hard to start when you know it's dead
Harder to begin when you caused the loss
of your only friend



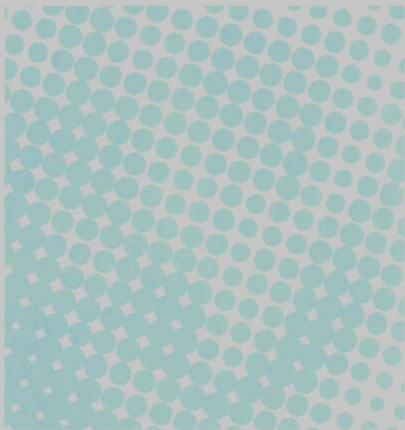
Joseph Painter | Phishing, Steel, Plastic Casted Fruit, Electronic Wiring, Light, 102 x 30 inches



Miranda Hughes | Untitled, Archival Inkjet Print, 12 x 18 inches



Brittany Kurtincez | Butterfly Effect, Oil on Stretched Canvas, 40 x 48 inches



I FEEL

Megan Luckenbaugh

I feel everything
And I feel nothing
So deeply and all at once
Rushing over me the tides of sorrow
Drowning the victims and blinding the sun

