

MAY 2023

POETRY.FIC  
TION.NONFI  
CTION.INTE  
RVIEW.EXP  
ERIMENTAL.  
ART.COLLA  
GE.PHOTOG  
RAPHY

SEEN/UNSEEN

Laine Derr  
LindaAnn LoSchiavo  
Lillian Lippold  
Cat Dixon  
Kathy Bruce  
Lisa Piazza  
Ners Neonlumberjack  
Ruby Marguerite  
Donald Patten  
Sandra Kolankiewicz  
Elizabeth Rose Wilson  
Janina Aza Karpinska

featuring work from  
writer and activist  
Sharmila Seyyid

HYMN & HOWL MAGAZINE

# HYMN & HOWL MAGAZINE

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MAY 2023

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*Hymn & Howl* is a publication of The Howler Project. The Howler is a creative collective and outreach organization making space for human connection through storytelling.

THEHOWLERPROJECT.ORG



## dear reader,

I asked issue cover artist, Kathy Bruce, to talk a bit about her evocative collage, *Were They Painted & Veiled?* Kathy shared a quote from painter Francis Bacon. Bacon said an artist's job is to "deepen the mystery." Deepen the mystery. I love this. (And to an extra dose of magic, I will always say yes, plz.)

For me—and maybe Francis Bacon as well, given his distinctive aesthetic—there is no more exciting mystery than an existential exploration, one that considers the curiousness of the human condition. Kurt Vonnegut observed that all great literature is about what "a bummer" it is to be human. Aldous Huxley called it unavoidable sorrow, which inherently comes with being alive and aware. Kevin Clouter, The Howler Project's first Storyteller Spotlight, referenced a favorite poet, Larry Levis, and Levis's more specific articulation: the meaning of life is that it stops.

Indeed, one appeal of stories is that they do not stop. The especially human ones linger, holding infinite possibilities for new mysteries. Perhaps that is one thing these 15 pieces have in common—they're like living windows, continuously shifting what's seen and unseen:

The way Ruby Marguerite somehow makes the heartbreak inescapable without mentioning it in "The Ritual of Killing the Crab," or how we're left bereft after an encounter we didn't witness in Laine Derr's "Buttons I Keep." Similarly, we become invested in the subject of Sandra Kolankiewicz's ode, "She Wolfs," without ever meeting her. Lisa Piazza's main character in "Trickle Back, Sad Sack" says her "half-here, half-there heart" can disappear at any moment yet embraces multiple lives. Ners Neonlumberjack celebrates more literal rebirth by painting on bones of unknown origin in *Whose Bones Are These?*

None of the people captured in Elizabeth Rose Wilson's photography face each other but are clearly linked by their *Waiting* for the elusive *Her*. LindaAnn LoSchiavo's descriptive writing in "Boardwalk Soda Fountain Shop" creates worlds within worlds, all dripping with waiting and longing. Donald Patten relies on the imagination as a "way to cope" in *Master Paintings in Covid Times*. The tiny, separated arms reaching out in *Almost Smothered* by Janina Aza Karpinska are almost missed, seemingly both a plea and a resignation.

And the way a small refrain can tell its own story: Cat Dixon's cry, "Let me fly! Let me fly!" to Lillian Lippold's masterful repetition of "Oxnard," at once a lament and a hope, and Favorite Storyteller Sharmila Seyyid's unflinching "I will live."

Yes, "Till the last millisecond, I will live."

Dear reader, it is my absolute pleasure to introduce the second issue of *Hymn & Howl, Seen/Unseen*. May you discover your own beautiful mysteries along the way.

Love,

Michelle



# KATHY. BRUCE

## **COLLAGE**

Were They  
Painted and Veiled?



## **MUSIC FOR HUMANS**

"Hold on"- Tom Waits

"Yesterday is Here" - Vicki Kristina Barcelona Band

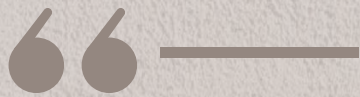
"Always on My Mind" - Willie Nelson





# KATHY. BRUCE

Kathy Bruce is a visual artist based in Argyll & Bute Scotland whose collages explore archetypal female and mythological forms within the context of poetry, literature, and the natural environment.



"Meaning to me is intrinsic, complex, multi-layered. I don't expect everyone to interpret the meaning in the same way as I do and that is ok. I am happy for people to interpret what they bring to the images. I don't have any conclusions to draw regarding my work...I would agree with Francis Bacon who once said, 'The job of the artist is always to deepen the mystery.'"



# were they painted and veiled?

KATHY BRUCE





# SHARMILA. SEYYID

FAVORITE  
STORYTELLER  
SPOTLIGHT



Sharmila Seyyid is a writer, social activist, and fearless critic of the injustices in society. Sharmila is from Eravur, in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province. She has been working as a journalist and a writer since 2001, and as an activist for women in the Batticaloa District since 2006. In 2009, she founded the Organization for Social Development, a community-based organization in Eravur. She has been working closely with the minority women in Sri Lanka for the last several years, following the war.

Sharmila Seyyid has received international recognition for her dedication to addressing the socioeconomic vulnerability of women in Sri Lankan society through writing and activism. Her works center on the multiple burdens that Tamil-speaking Muslim women in Sri Lanka face, especially in the wake of the long Sri Lankan civil war. She also established Mantra Life, an organization seeking to lessen the gender gap in Sri Lanka's economic, political, and social spheres by helping women become financially independent.



# SHARMILA. SEYYID

In 2014, Seyyid was awarded the "Inspirational Women" by Women in Management in Sri Lanka and was recognized for her ongoing literary achievements when "Siragu Mulaitha Pen" (poetry collection) won the Tamiliyal Award from the Writers Motivation Center in 2013 and Tamil Progressive Writers and Artists Association, Tamil Nadu, India in 2014.

Seyyid has published 9 books; fiction (1), nonfiction (2), poetry (2), stories (1), and volumes of articles (3), and her work has received awards including "Best Novel of the Year" for *Ummath* by the Tamil Progressive Writers and Artists Association in India 2014. *Ummath* is available in English from HarperCollins. Two of her latest works will soon be published in English as well.

She was forced into exile when she was barely 30 years old because of her work. Seyyid was in and out of exile in countries like India, Thailand, and Nepal. She was awarded a prestigious IIE-Artist Protection Fund Fellowship (IIE-APF) and placed in residence with UNO's Leonard and Shirley Goldstein Center for Human Rights (GCHR) and UNO's Sam and Frances Fried Holocaust and Genocide Academy.

At UNO, Seyyid will be working with the Goldstein Center for Human Rights while continuing her writing and international social justice work. Sharmila Seyyid lives with her spouse and two children in Omaha.



# five questions with sharmila seyyid

WATCH VIDEO:



Play

READ TRANSCRIPT:

My name is Sharmila Seyyid. I'm a Sri Lankan writer and activist. I was at risk in my country because of my outspoken writing and activism. Artist's Protection Fund protected me from the long-lasting exile life, and I came to the United States in 2021. Currently, I'm a research fellow in the University of Nebraska Omaha, closely tied up with the Goldstein Center for Human Rights and the Fried Academy.

TELL US ABOUT ONE OF YOUR  
FAVORITE ROLES.

From 2002, I had associated myself with several social organizations and community activities and projects. The effects of my career in keeping with the changing circumstances and changes from time to time—as a journalist, writer, human rights defender, and social activist—it's hard to say one of my favorite jobs or roles. For me, writing and activism are

both like two sides of one coin. Writing is my passion, and activism is the freedom to be a writer. Activism of the social work seeks to improve the lives of others. I think that after becoming a single parent at the age of 26, there was an entirely new look to the responsibility I had to bear. My passion is the uplift of women, irrespective of their religion, social background, or ethnic identity. As a renown and recognized writer and human rights defender, I'm closely working with minorities and addressing issues that women face at the ground level through local mechanisms in north and east Sri Lanka. I was able to help people overcome some of life's most difficult challenges—poverty and discrimination, abuse, addictions, loss, divorce, education problems, disabilities, and mental illness. My major concern is empowering single mothers and war-affected women and their children by providing hope, support, and resources so that family can become,



self-sustaining and thrive. I involved community projects and activities. They are harmoniously integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of human development and can be successfully continued indefinitely into the future. I will say that activism is an important role for me that's helped me in being a writer also.

#### WHERE DO YOU FIND INSPIRATION?

Sri Lanka was in civil war for decades. Post war, I traveled to the war-affected areas as a journalist and researcher. I met women and girls who are the primary targets of violence and abuse in a conflict setting. I observed the women's resistance, tireless fighting, and leadership qualities were the inspiration, and proved to me that I must do better. For me, simply through being compassionate, I find inspiration in women and their stories of both success and tragedy. Women's meaningful representation and participation are the only hope for a better world. My greatest wish for humanity is to stop all the war happening around the world, and we will wake up to a peaceful, safe world.

#### TALK A LITTLE ABOUT CREATING AND CREATIVITY.

That's interesting. Creation... creation

opens the mind. I was born and raised in an environment where people are afraid to speak about freedom. I'm talking about women's freedom, and their independence, especially, was never a matter. I choose to write about my liberty and dreams. I was exposed to writing at an early age. I wrote my first poem at 14. Creativity nurtures ideas and supports resilience. That's my experience. Creativity played a role in my life to become independent and drove my dreams and achievement. So, creativity allows societies to grow through changes and evolve over time. This means that art is critical for the flexibility to accept change, which is crucial for society's need to adapt quickly, to survive and thrive. In my experience, ten years ago, things were... you know, very hard to speak about, and things blamed, but now it's become very flexible, and people have started slowly accepting things so that changes things. I don't think it's a natural change. There are some, you know, resistance, some work, some effort, some energy, added into that achievement of that change. So, it can be any form of creativity. It can be any type, any kind of voice. I believe creativity is, it's liberty, it gives freedom.

#### WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE WORD?

That's really hard to say, one word. I




would say, “heal.” Because I believe healing is essential to liberation. I found that with every traumatic event, I was motivated to address injustices and make sure others did not have to go through the same suffering that I had to endure. I found that I constantly, that it tuned me, tuned me into my strength. My poems, stories, fiction, and nonfiction are from my healing journey.

### WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO YOUR YOUNGER SELF?

That’s absolutely an interesting question. I would be really happy if I’m able to meet my younger self. Definitely, I would say, be proud. Be proud of how you have been handling the challenges, blame, rejections, judgment, and punishment, the silent battle you have fought, the moment you humbled yourself, wiped your own tears, and put yourself back again. Celebrate your strength, the courage you showed in every challenge, that instigated a spark to become an adventuring and pioneering woman who I am now.



View our full spotlight on Sharmila Seyyid: 



# i am composing a song

*written by* SHARMILA SEYYID

*translated by* GITA SUPRAMANIAM

I am composing a song  
I am writing these lyrics to tell the world  
Why this contrarian path I tread.  
This is my testimony.

I am a fallen woman, they say,  
A prostitute...

One can be a slave of love  
But to talk about sex is wrong  
Bearing a child is alright, they say,  
But to talk about the orifice from  
Where the child comes is wrong...

Ultimately –  
To state it unequivocally  
The death sentence has been pronounced on me.

But till the last millisecond  
Before my head is severed from my shoulders  
I will live.

This is my body  
My make-up  
My jewellery



My clothes  
My foot-wear  
My odour  
My language  
My religion  
My love  
This house where I live  
This road I walk on  
This book I read  
All these  
Will remain mine  
And will be what I want  
Only thus will I live!

Till the last millisecond  
I will live.



WATCH "I AM COMPOSING A SONG":



Play



# incompatible

*written by* SHARMILA SEYYID

*translated by* GITA SUPRAMANIAM

They were talking about my body,  
My body, that lies there  
Where I had cast it away.

They don't accept me as one of them  
Because they do not want to accept that I too  
Can have solid views and not budge from them.  
The night and the moon do not attract me, I'm not like them,  
They are angry with me because I refuse  
To be subjected to their black magic  
And dwell in caves of inky darkness,  
And become a genie - corked inside a bottle.

They do not accept  
My determination to not let their strictures  
Make me stray from my chosen path.  
I want to confront them face to face  
When they challenge me and ask,  
How will you grow without any sustenance,  
Without any help from the world outside you?

Those who have seen my magic wings are amazed.  
My simple and plain words  
Encircle them like an endless snake;  
Unable to free themselves, they struggle  
And stumble...



I again reinvent myself,  
An even sharper me I see.  
There my body still lies  
There, where I cast it off.  
Once more, I curb my intense urge  
To embrace my body again,  
Because...  
Because I do not wish to become  
A genie corked inside a bottle...



WATCH "INCOMPATIBLE":



Play



# that ancient village

*written by* SHARMILA SEYYID

*translated by* GITA SUPRAMANIAM

In those sandy lanes  
Lined dense with Portia trees,  
In those bright houses from where  
Light spills out and spreads,  
In the evenings filled with the fragrance of incense-sticks,  
In the sound of the muezzin's call  
And in the sound of the foot-steps of the early morning  
There, that ancient village still exists.

There, where I was not loved,  
Where my pleas were never given ear to,  
Where I was made to shed copious tears,  
There, that ancient village  
Still continues to exist.

Oh Eravur, my land, my soil,  
Remind me again of the evidence that I left behind.  
The palm-fronds I swung on,  
The papaya leaves I used against the drizzling skies  
The areca nut palm-spathes we pulled along as chariots  
The fragrance of the fresh ginger growing under the banana trees  
The flavour of the juicy Willard mangoes running between the fingers  
The aroma of the jackfruit pulp that pervades the entire street  
Alas! How great is my loss!



My beloved village  
I was not tired of you  
I did not move away.  
When the time for harvesting comes  
This crazy state will change  
The time will come when you will again  
Weave the cloth that's mine by right.

There is nothing more to be said  
For, my footwear I've left behind,  
There, to stay  
For eternity!



WATCH "THAT ANCIENT VILLAGE":





# ELIZABETH. ROSE.WILSON

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Waiting for Her



## MUSIC FOR HUMANS

Album: *All of This Will End* - Indigo De Souza



@ELIZABETHROSEWILSON



# ELIZABETH. ROSE.WILSON

Elizabeth Rose Wilson. Fine-Artist. Designer.  
Photographer. Instructor. A New Zealander  
based in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

"Waiting for Her" is an artwork from the current  
body of work 'In the Garden of One,' 2023

“ —

Created in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, from the boredom of sitting on the couch during quarantine, to the realization that waves of loss were sweeping the globe. My paintings, drawings, and photographs illustrate the ephemeral nature of life and all of the “stuff, guts, joy, and grief” that it’s made up of. Natural settings connect us back to that from which we come, therefore, all artworks in the series ‘In the Garden of One,’ are a reminder that we are all part of one big energy mass. All connected. Layers of symbolism and representation. Layers of paint upon paint, paint upon drawing, drawing upon gesso, gesso upon canvas, the canvas upon the frame. Until one day the layers get peeled back, pulled apart, and put back into the earth to nurture that from which they have taken.



# waiting for her

ELIZABETH ROSE WILSON





# L A I N E . D E R R

Laine Derr holds an MFA from Northern Arizona University and has published interviews with Carl Phillips, Ross Gay, Ted Kooser, and Robert Pinsky. Recent work has appeared or is forthcoming from The Phillips Collection, *ZYZZYVA*, *Portland Review*, *Chapter House*, *Prairie Schooner*, and elsewhere. Laine lives in a landscape, free and quiet.

## POETRY

Buttons I Keep



## MUSIC FOR HUMANS

"Belong in the Sun" - ¿Téo? (feat. Lido)

"Something in the Orange" - Zach Bryan

"Criminal" - Prof





# buttons i keep

LAINE DERR

I still have  
glimpses of her –  
mouth wiped  
on a soiled sleeve,  
snow falling  
on a February day,  
trees etched  
on a blouse of blue

buttons  
I keep  
like a lost  
eye – a jar  
next to a jar  
filled w/ white.





# RUBY. MARGUERITE

Ruby Marguerite is, and always has been, a lover of stories. She is a poet and nonfiction writer whose work focuses on family, heritage, and the meaning of being human.

## NONFICTION

The Ritual of  
Killing the Crab



## MUSIC FOR HUMANS

"Blue Hair" - TV Girl

"Natives of the Windy Forest" - WILLOW

"Parisian Enclave" - The Mountain Goats





# the ritual of killing the crab

RUBY MARGUERITE

I buy a crab-stuffed pretzel after therapy. A treat after an hour of crying. I don't know the name of the man who runs the pretzel store, but he remembers everything about me. He asks how the job hunt is going. I give him a noncommittal answer. This was the question I was fearing, a reminder of failure. But he doesn't know that, he wants only to make idle conversation while the pretzels cook, rolling slowly through the oven on their metal racks.

In my room, I tear open the cavity that he's filled with crab. I dig into it with the other bready limbs I've ripped off in an animalistic haze, scooping out the crab dip methodically. My ancestors ate food like this. Tearing bread, fruit, meat, open. This is the ritual, sitting in my two-bedroom apartment, fighting off the apex predator—my cat—who wants to taste the seafood. Eventually, I submit and give her a piece, and in this way too, we are both connected to our ancestors. The ritual of sharing the spoils of the hunt.

I am the creature form of ancient souls. I can taste the bloodshed of loss,

victory, and food. This is a gift, to be handed a crab dip pretzel in exchange for four pieces of green paper. It is a gift to make conversation with the man who crafts it.

Yet we are both so removed from our food, from our conversation.

I wish to cut into something. I wish to crush the crab with a heavy stone as it scuttles sideways away from me. To feel the grit and shards and juice and blood. To taste the stone and sinew.

\*\*\*

Growing up, my family was vegan. I never found it strange when I was small. I never knew the taste of meat, dairy, egg. I've heard you can't miss what you've never had.

Yet still, I loved watching my mother prepare a pomegranate. She would plunge it into our mottled stone bowl—the one with the cracks—filled with water. I watched as bubbles rose from the submerged fruit, spilling out in columns. She tore the thing apart with her fingers,



familiar and soft to me, and the cracking red skin echoed in our chipped kitchen.

When she'd finished, she'd fill little teacups with seeds so red I would've thought she named them after me. And I would take the little cups and methodically pick out one seed at a time. Tearing the juicy flesh off the hard white bone with my front teeth. Seeing myself a wolf, deep in the woods up the mountain where they used to live, finally, finally eating after a long hunt.

And lastly, I would crush the pomegranate bone between my molars. Savoring the feel of the shatter. Praising the animal inside me.





# CAT.DIXON

Cat Dixon (she/her) is a Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominee. She is a poetry editor at *The Good Life Review* and the author of six poetry collections and chapbooks.

## POETRY

After the Relapse



## MUSIC FOR HUMANS

1. "Famous Blue Raincoat" - Leonard Cohen
2. "El Musgo" - Gabriel Bruce
3. "Parade" - Kevin Morby





# after the relapse

CAT DIXON

Hopefully by the time you read this, I'll be over the state line, miles away with luggage in the backseat. My scent will linger on that carrot pillow, on the couch, on your sweater I left on the chair. You'll wonder how I escaped—by boat? By plane? By the orange hot air balloon in the distance? This car is registered to my father. He had me keep it in case I needed it. The magic of the highway—the speeders and slow drivers, the texters and wanderers—never allows a moment of rest. Each flashing headlight is a train crossing and each passed exit is a mirage. There's no interruption to the race. I wish I had music to pass the hours, but this car wasn't made for CDs or tapes—only Bluetooth, and I chucked my phone after I cracked its screen. I'll be going 90 with a cyclone in my hair—nothing to drown out the wind except hope, but that hummingbird has eaten out my chest. By this hour, you're in the shower—water or tears? The magic of the bathroom is how it's sacred with its growth of mildew, its coarse hairball clogging under the feet, out of sight, out of reach, its enticing medicine cabinet filled with bottles of remedies to ailments you've never suffered. Recovery is a long road, they say, and I wish you easy speedbumps, but I won't be there to retrace your steps, to clean up the mess, to opine about current events or how you react to stressors. Hopefully by the time you open this letter, I'll be almost to Kansas—beautiful Dorothy with her red shoes, innocent girl in blue. I wanted a dog, but never got one—my father said I had an allergy. Was it true or just an excuse? Perhaps I'll never know.

(continued)



I will never know the zaftig bosom of a mother during a fever, incessant nag, the body swap, the unconditional love. We both lacked what we both lacked—both pulled into a whirlpool, a tornado, while everyone stood by and laughed or rubbernecked. Up ahead the cars will slow down for an accident. The firetruck, coppers, tow truck will spin their lights. Perhaps help is only a call away.

Whenever a lonely addict calls for help, she ends up ambushed, pinned to a bed, silenced, guests only allowed if they called ahead. Heads turn to survey the wreckage, a blue sedan versus a white van. The airbags deploy. Unfortunately, we were born without those. Nothing to cushion the crash—our heads greeting the dash, our ribs cracked, our fists against the metal. No jaws of life, no one qualified to perform the necessary measures. The nursery zoetrope kept the gulls in endless flight—even the illusion of movement, of relationship, of time reversal trapped us, enamored us with those wings. Let me fly! We cried reaching up. Let me fly! We once whispered into the empty rooms of our youth. Maybe by the time you read this, my car will have broken down. Maybe my quest will never end. There's an untapped vein under these words, an arm unbruised, a magic not yet cursed. Take this letter, roll it up—a new kaleidoscope for you to peruse.







# JANINA.AZA. KARPINSKA

## **COLLAGE**

Almost Smothered



## **MUSIC FOR HUMANS**

"Deep Peace" - Devin Townsend

"Samba Pa Ti" - Santana

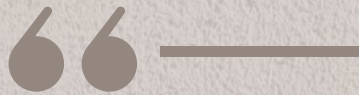
"Medicine" - Rising Appalachia





# JANINA.AZA. KARPINSKA

Janina Aza Karpinska is a multidisciplinary artist and creative storyteller.

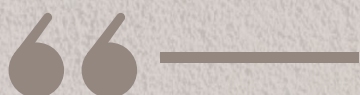


"A chance discovery of Tom Phillips's 'A Humument', which piggy-backs the pages of a published novel, not only inspired my own experimentation, but gave me the words I lacked at a time when I was painfully shy and socially mute, and became a favoured way of journal-keeping, and the subject of my dissertation. Many years later I was invited to join a 'Twisted Fairy Tale' exhibition, which led to creating The Goldilocks Files – a collection of variously published Goldilocks books, which I treated or altered in many different ways (and have kept up the practice ever after). I love how one very familiar story can yield so many interpretations. I also like how I can explore Jung's concept of the home as symbolic of one's body/psyche.

(continued)



# JANINA.AZA. KARPINSKA



The whole premise of the story is one displaced little girl in search of a home, and her place within it, which can only come by appropriation and testing things out for size. The ultimate aim is the search for a safe place to be unconscious (sleep), something that was missing previously. There's a sense of unease and oppression in these examples. it's an effective way of exploring such feelings in a contained and creative way.

There have been so many spin-offs and off-shoots from the technique, which I have used in creative writing workshops for people who insist they can't write – there's no need when the words are all provided upfront! The method also suits those in need of expression, but with little time to spare introspection – those in a caring role; new parents; those working several jobs, or struggling with the effects of long-term unemployment. I feel very fortunate to have discovered a lifelong resource, and do all I can to share it with others."

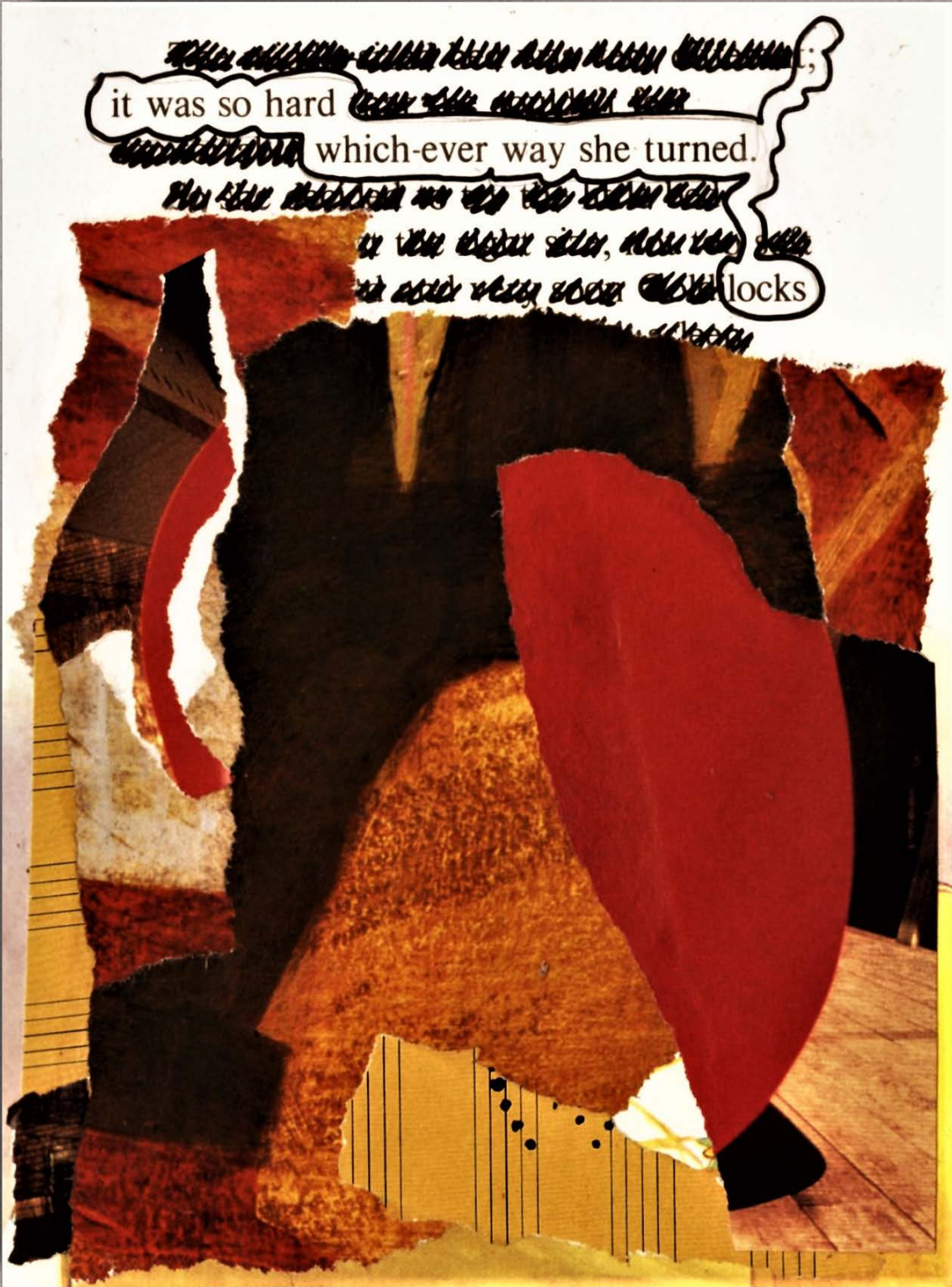


# almost smothered

JANINA AZA KARPINSKA









# SANDRA.KOL ANKIEWICZ

Sandra Kolankiewicz is the author of Even the Cracks, Turning Inside Out, Lost in Transitions, and The Way You Will Go.

## POETRY

She Wolfs



## MUSIC FOR HUMANS

"Mercy, Mercy, Mercy" - Cannonball Adderly

"Beware of Darkness" - George Harrison

"The Rite of Spring" - Stravinsky





# she wolfs

SANDRA KOLANKIEWICZ

In my sister's current job, she pours her  
love down the drain. She asks questions, is told  
lies, smiles back. She regularly distributes  
to the unappreciative who just  
expect, kinder than I who think at least  
thank you is due. In foreign countries, she  
buys cans of tuna to feed the stray cats,  
though the women bang their pot lids at her.  
She waves to them, smiles even in her sleep,  
never learned to cook, lost her hair in  
menopause, uses a cane for mushroom  
hunting even when on wet days the tip  
sinks in with the weight of her limp till she's  
bound to fall on the soft ground, lying in  
wet leaves and giggling like a girl. We had  
the same parents, but she favors neither,  
someone's crazy aunt, the one that's really  
adopted. Hand me a jar of that stuff  
you're always eating, I say, which she does,  
right away. To me it tastes bad. She wolfs.





# NEON LUMBERJACK

## ART

Whose Bones Are These?



## MUSIC FOR HUMANS

"Hands" - William Crooks

"Thief in the Night" - Kelvin Krash

"Sugar Mama" - Dua Saleh

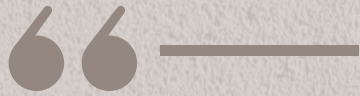


@NEONLUMBERJACK



# NERS.NEON LUMBERJACK

Ners Neonlumberjack was born in a tiny town in central Indiana in 1986, graduating from Herron School of Art and Design with degrees in Painting, Sculpture, and Art History in 2009.



"We have made great attempts to separate ourselves from the natural world. Only venturing into more wild areas when we choose. Of course, nature is still all-encompassing all the while. Dead things often frighten or disturb us. Removing our language in ways to limit our insecurities with what dead animals we eat, what dead trees we live under, and what animals we displaced or eradicated to call places home. Working on bone is one mere layer of paint away from the source. Taking our guard down to enjoy the beauty of the forms, and hopefully to start a reconnection of thought about what and why the work came to be... Whose bones ARE these?"



# whose bones are these?

NERS NEONLUMBERJACK





# LISA. PIAZZA

Lisa Piazza is a writer and educator from Oakland, California whose work has been nominated for Best Small Fictions, Best of the Net. and the Pushcart Prize.

## FICTION

Trickle Back, Sad Sack



## MUSIC FOR HUMANS

"The Way it Will Be" - Gillian Welch

"I Wish I Was the Moon" - Neko Case

"Carry the Zero" - Built to Spill





# trickle back, sad sack

LISA PIAZZA

Late December, the end of another year. Time keeps Rae going. She turns the key. Drives and drives – four freeways, and a grey bridge. She watches the ruddy ducks circle the salt marshes. Follow the western gulls to each onramp: 580 to 280 to 880 to 101. The tires turn a rhyme in her mind: *Black cat, Cadillac...Trickle back, sad sack...* The words don't matter. It isn't a real song, anyway. Just like Rae isn't headed to a real first date, a real person waiting at a trailhead for her. She has decided to keep a part of herself out of it – the main part. She will show up as a simpler version: part shadow, part shade. Unformed, an outline.

Rae agreed by text to meet her date at the marshes on the peninsula side of the bay. Halfway there she regrets her new pair of jeans from the bargain rack at Target. She feels like someone else wearing them. Come summer she will cut them into shorts and hate them still, then discard them at the curb, but tonight, she drives and watches herself watch herself – an old magic – a practiced art – to be

both in the car and above it. *Birdseye. Side eye. Goodbye.*

She keeps her fingers tight on the wheel. Gray sky, gray gulls, gray road. She drives and lets the sound of the tires guide her: *Black cat, Cadillac...Trickle back, sad sack...* When Mona was little she sang her a song like this. To pass the time, to change the tone when P.'s rage took hold. Back then, she could still wrap Mona in her arms. She would whisper a made-up thing. A golden net. Always low, always smooth and conspiratorial. She made it sound like magic: an enchanted web that linked them together no matter what tried to pry them apart. It was the only form of protection Rae had as Mona climbed into P.'s black Acura three Saturdays a month as required by the court.

Rae was a gray woman then. Shadow-self. Seldom-felt. Gray night, gray sight. Out the window now she imagines the clouds forming a window. A door. She could walk through it if she believed there was anything on the



other side.

From the parking lot, Rae texts her date: *I'm here*. He is a decade younger, has three sons still in elementary school. *I'm the tall one, by the lighthouse*, he texts. *Do you see me?* She feels ridiculous walking toward him. Past due. Overdone in her Target jeans, limp brown hair. What will he notice first: the deep wrinkle between her eyes or the horizontal rows on her forehead like the empty lines on a piece of paper?

She walks the trail near the small Silicon Valley airport. As the sun sets, private jets line up. It is loud and windy, but not unpretty with a colorful sky of blinking lights. *Still up for dinner?* He asks. From a mile up, Rae sees herself nod. The night begs to unfurl into the future. It forces her forward.

*Sure.*

Rae follows his pale blue minivan from the trail to his house. When he speeds through a yellow light, she stops at a red sure he will drive on. But he pulls over on the other side of the intersection and waits. Rae considers being the one to ditch, turn left onto the onramp, and merge from 280 to 880 to 580 home.

But she doesn't. He has a pot of soup on the stove and a warm loaf of bread. He asks Rae to toss the salad. His old black lab clumps along at his side, wary. Aloof. When Rae bends down to

pet him, he cowers then growls. Emits a timid cry and her date rubs the dog's ears. Leans in. Looks up at Rae like the stranger she is.

*What? Are you some kind of witch?*

From above, Rae sees her haggard self, her half-here, half-there heart. Her chin hair is gray as bath water left too long. After a second, he laughs – a regretful chuckle. Rae laughs, too. A cackle. She almost says: *It's true, I know some magic. Watch me disappear right here*, but she is already doing that - hiding her own mind, tucking a small silence under her tongue to savor on the drive back over the black bay.

This night will fade like the others. Rae will barely be changed by it. Still, the thought gives her an opening, a space. She understands a woman is allowed multiple lives. And a witch? Well, even more.





# LINDAANN.LO SCHIAVO

## POETRY

Boardwalk Soda Fountain Shop



## MUSIC FOR HUMANS

"Girls Just Want to Have Fun" - Cyndi Lauper

"You Can't Hurry Love" - Diana Ross & The Supremes

"Under the Boardwalk" - The Drifters



*LindaAnn Lo Schiavo -- award-winning poet*

@MAE\_WESTSIDE



# LINDA ANN.LO SCHIAVO

Native New Yorker LindaAnn LoSchiavo, a four time nominee for The Pushcart Prize, has also been nominated for Best of the Net, the Rhysling Award, and Dwarf Stars. Elgin Award winner, "A Route Obscure and Lonely," "Women Who Were Warned," Firecracker Award, Quill and Ink, and IPPY Award nominee. *Messengers of the Macabre* [co-written with David Davies], *Apprenticed to the Night* [Beacon Books, 2023], and *Felones de Se: Poems about Suicide* [Ukiyoto Publishing, 2023] are her latest poetry titles. In 2023, her poetry placed as a finalist in Thirty West Publishing's "Fresh Start Contest" and in the 8th annual Stephen DiBiase contest.

LindaAnn Literary:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHm1NZIITZybLTFA44wwdfg>

<https://messengersofthemacabre.com/>



# boardwalk soda fountain shop

LINDAANN LoSCHIAVO

My bare feet warmed to burning from the sand,  
I'd wave to you, obscured by boardwalk crowds.

Did you greet everyone the same as me?

I watched as you'd extend a palm beneath  
A ripe banana, tenderly, as if  
To ask permission. Or you'd let me tuck  
Wildflowers into cleavage held aloft,  
Slick, sweaty, suntan oiled, flecked with sand crumbs.

You like it dirty — even though your hands  
Are spotless when you mix strawberry shakes.

You're wondering how sugar hits my lips,  
Eye my reflection showing that pale crack,  
Tanned flesh that's poured inside blue fitted jeans.

Now you're hunched over the cracked countertop,  
Sweeping a butterknife across burnt toast.  
"I'm just so hungry. I'll eat anything!"

(continued)



Your words and steady gaze have made me blush.  
I drop five dollars in your jar and leave  
Without my shake because I'm staying here  
Two more weeks and imagining how we  
Will taste right after, mixed in with the dark.





# LILLIAN. LIPPOLD

Lillian G Lippold (they/them) is an interdisciplinary writer obsessed with Place and queer utopia. Minnesota-born and SoCal grown, they've been published in many university pubs and other mags. They definitely love you, too.

## EXPERIMENTAL

Oxnard



## MUSIC FOR HUMANS

"The Rain That Wouldn't Save" - Kweku Collins

"Fire Escape" - Bandanna

"TV Blues" - Dijon





# oxnard

LILLIAN LIPPOLD

I'm sitting on an abandoned play structure in Oxnard. Nothing is difficult when we are together, so here, things look strange. We haven't been like this in a while. I'm obsessed with taking pictures on disposable film. You've got a new cell phone. There's a car in the parking lot, fifteen feet from me, but I'm not expecting trouble because that isn't you, Oxnard, is it? The view from here is astounding. I've got chills. The Ventura city lights on the mountain are pretty gorgeous now that I look at them.

I swear I'm with you though, Oxnard, my vantage point, growing up, falling down, metaphor. It has been difficult getting by without your emptiness to companion me. This is the set for enough horror movies, me and the car and the undeveloped camera to protect me, so I face the parking lot, never avoiding the fact that I could be killed if someone tried. I'm hoping the New Year will be kind enough for me to survive it, but then again, I haven't been sleeping, so how good has it been really? You tell me I look for omens far too

often, and I do.

The car has a headlight out, and I'm raising my eyes to check on it every few seconds while listening to the same song again about a river I've never seen. No US state looks the same as the next of them. Would someone know to look for me if I left right now for Alabama, told no one, just caught a Greyhound with the 200 dollars I've got and no phone charger? There's a couple, emerging from the car watching me, who's had some deep conversation. Obviously, it's not the first because during that, their right headlight went out.

My coffee's getting colder, and my dad only eats meat and blueberries these days. Oxnard. Sour blueberries, a taste like the lake water from the little pond in the house where I grew up second. I'm getting better at fueling my body, not good enough, but this city-town is beautiful, beautiful and distracting. I'm trying to be more in the where that I am in. No one knows truly how much I love being in an associated place, my body in my body in my shoes.



Anyway, Ventura is beautiful, and Oxnard is probably much more than a metaphor if I ever took the time to know it correctly or learn to drive. The drought-resistant trees are still green despite the desert, and I find myself surprised that so many people own raincoats here. It is uncharacteristically cold for the season.

My hands are freezing. The people in the car have climbed together into the backseat. I just felt a patch of warm in the air, drifting through me, but I'm not sure where it's come from. They're having sex, that couple in their car with the missing headlight. I know what car sex looks like. The last time someone fucked me in a car, she parked outside the fire-station-turned-speakeasy across two streets from my too-crowded, wealth-infested college dorm, and I fingered her below me until 3 in the morning. I'm nearly positive she faked it. She must've been at least a foot too tall for the backseat. Then, when we found ourselves watching *Rent* in her New Jersey basement bedroom weeks later, she didn't want it anymore. Oxnard, the queers have a problem accepting lovers when they're easy, when you're not ducking down below the cop-lit windows, pressed together, cheeks and sweat, blending into each other like this, this, this is what our elders fought for, our bad behavior and worse sex in the

back of a car and then our silence when we finally find ourselves alone, in bed together with a safely locked door.

I've lost the story here. I tend to when sex is involved. There aren't swings on this playset, which child-me would've thought stupid. I write with a wrecking ball and a wide lens nowadays, in three different notebooks for two stupid hours because I can't say what I mean. I write the way my elders taught me, deathful without absence, opening beyond and beyond still, a wit that crackles into the Pacific.

The car is pulling away now, rocking up and over the speed bump, and I am wishing I gave a little witnessing wave for the sake of good neighborship, a proof that sex doesn't just tumble off into the abyss once you've finished him off. The writer keeps the score. My bluntness is no mistake. It's been bred into me like a racehorse who's always willing to say a bit more than that which should be properly allowed.

Attention is difficult for me because I see well and without a quiet enough place to pick the important things and live with them. I miss my own warm body next to yours, you who holds my hips gentle like the violin bows they've become. The drought-resistant tree next to me looks like an angel if I glance up too quickly.



The car is gone, thank god, because a mother and a son have just walked by me, and I already didn't know what to say to them.







# DONALD. PATTEN

## ART

Master Paintings in Covid Times



## MUSIC FOR HUMANS

From Antonio Vivaldi: "Winter I. Allegro non molto," "Summer III. Presto," and "La follia"

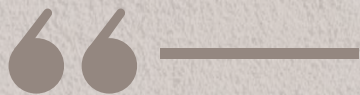




# DONALD. PATTEN

Donald Patten is an oil painter, illustrator, and graphic novelist from Belfast, Maine. He is currently a senior in the BFA program at the University of Maine.

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[donaldpatten.newgrounds.com/art](http://donaldpatten.newgrounds.com/art)

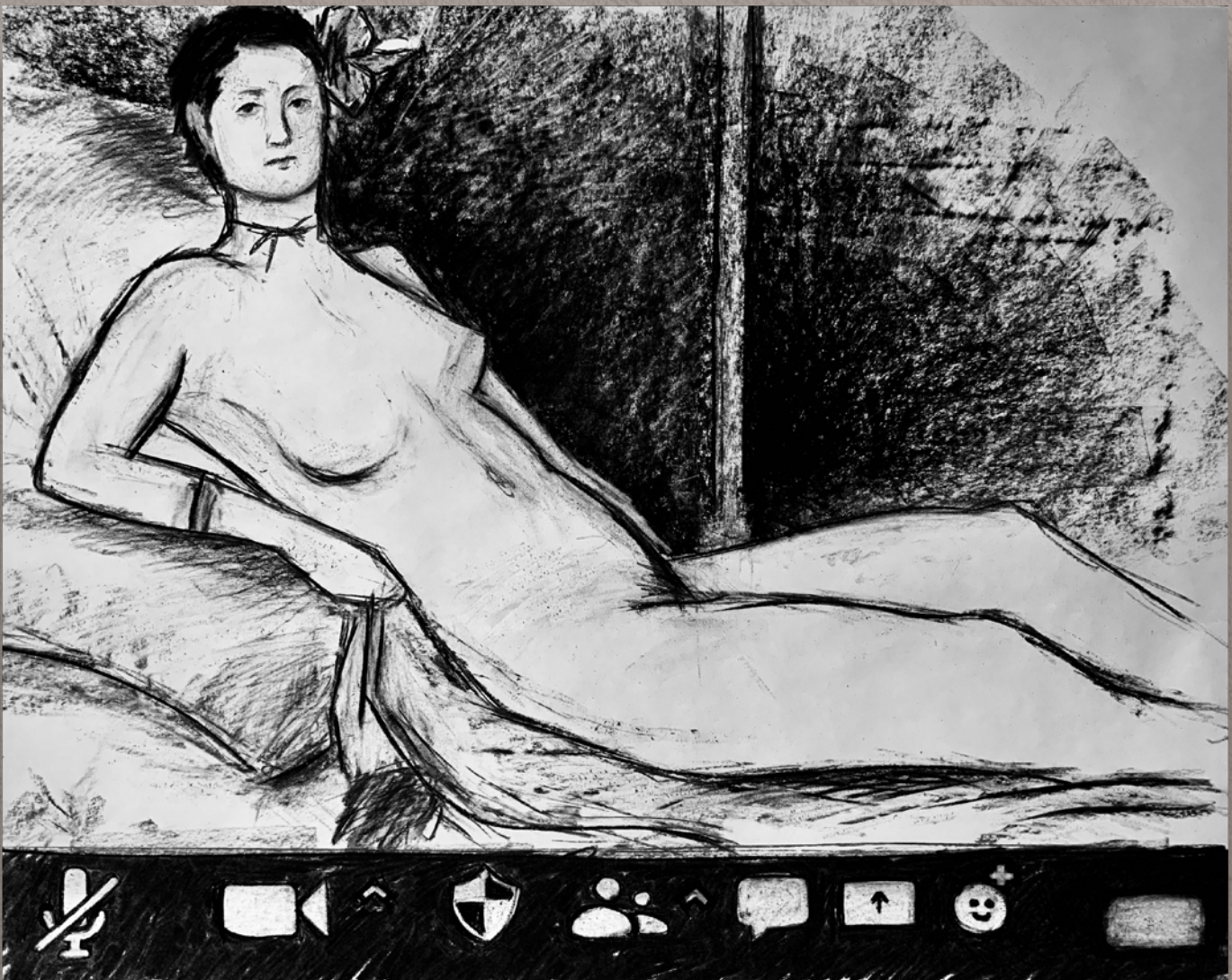


"Almost overnight, COVID-19 has changed the way people interact with each other and with our own bodies. In the past, significant painters, the old masters, would depict historically significant disasters that happened to them as a way to cope."



# master paintings in covid times

DONALD PATTEN



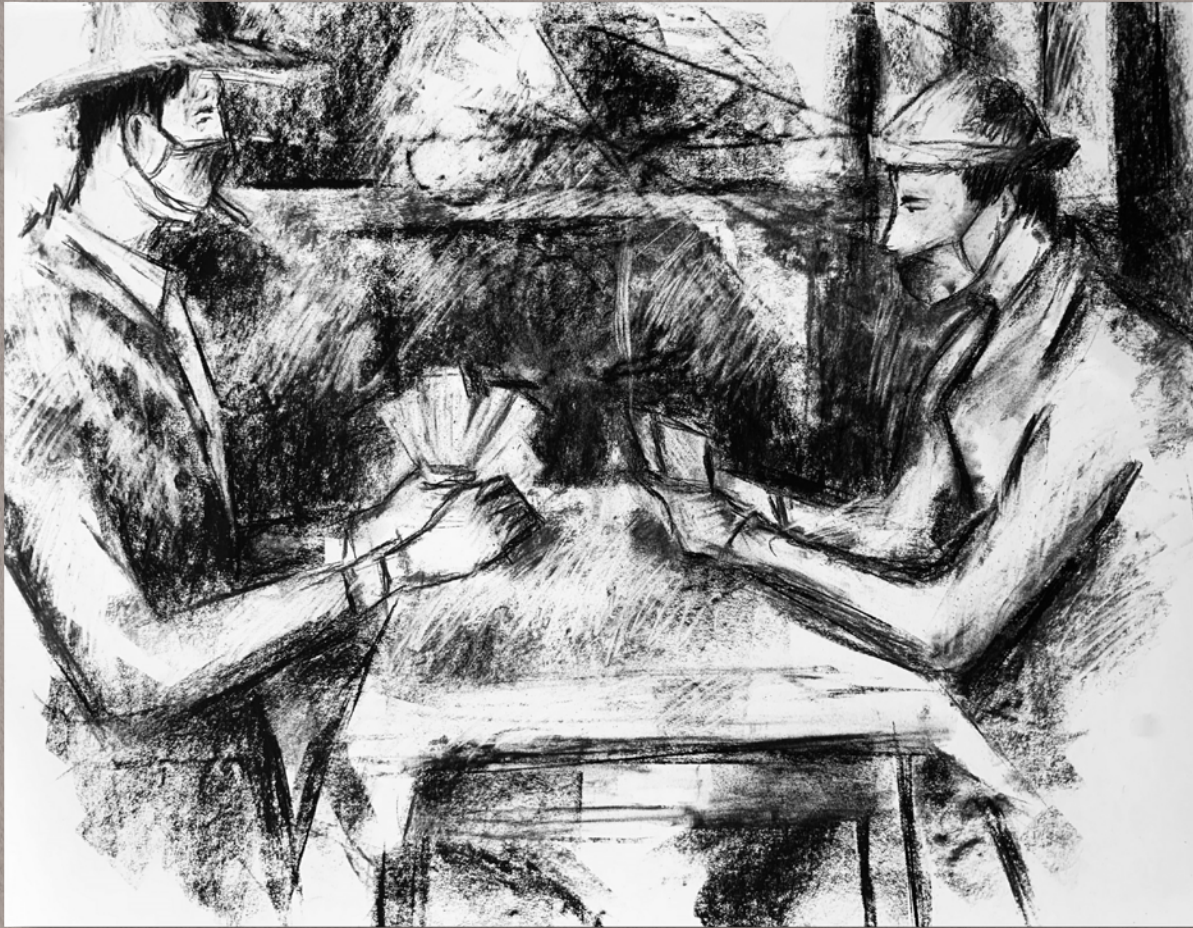
*Olympia on a Zoom Call* (2022) references  
*Olympia* by Édouard Manet from 1863.





*Café Terrace at COVID Capacity* (2022) references  
*Café Terrace at Night* by Vincent van Gogh from 1888.





*The COVID Card Players (2022)*  
references *The Card Players* by Paul Cézanne from around 1894 or 1895.



*The COVID Nightmare (2022)* references *The Nightmare* by Henry Fuseli from 1781.





*Mask Gleaners (2022)* references *Gleaners* by Jean-François Millet from 1857.





# HOWLER

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