



ISSUE 02
BREAKING THE SKIN

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EDI

Issue 2 of RUNT came about when I realized I couldn't stop thinking about "insatiability". I found excuses to say the word in conversations and even aloud to myself. I was obsessed with how the word hit the roof of my mouth and rolled off the tip of my tongue. This subconscious interest in a word developed into a conscious obsession.

Perhaps it had something to do with spouting the word out like a mantra or a positive morning affirmation (albeit, a really fucked up one), but I was starting to realize how deeply displeased I was with the world. It felt pointless to *try* in a place like this. I worried that I was turning into a nihilist, however, when I looked at the feeling, apathy didn't look back at me. It was anger.

Turns out, I *am* insatiable. Not for love or food or drugs, but for more anger. I'd bleed for anger if it continued to protect me.

BREAKING THE SKIN is about being angry, but it's more so about the vulnerability it takes to admit it. Under the layers of spitting out your words and flared nostrils, there is a sadness that runs deep. This issue is a reclamation, it is an acknowledgment, it is a deconstruction.

It is a constant fight for things I've always wanted, but have perhaps never even existed. A body that doesn't betray me, a softer relationship with the men in my family, a country that doesn't pray on the demise of my friends. It is to hear the call of a cicada desire and desire and desire until it dies; just like the women before me and the salt before them.

Welcome back to RUNT.

Sincerely,

Chloe May (she/her)

Founder and Editor-in-Chief

TOR'S NOTE

A special thanks to Victoria & John Dale, Bridgett England,
Joe Hasselberger, and Zoë Rivers.



DREAMING



THE SKIN



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"This visual work explores the tension between hunger and surrender, power and vulnerability. Inspired by predatory intimacy and mythic femininity, it reflects the consuming nature of desire and the violence often buried within it. The imagery evokes transformation through devouring—both as victim and predator—revealing what festers beneath the surface."



I WANT TO GO

A child is an icon on a pedestal
and nothing else matters
and nothing else should matter
but I still can't find purpose.

A river is a metaphor
my god, it's so vapid.
Nobody reflects
more than I do.

The Buffalo used to roam
and it used to make me feel free
to watch the frontier
from the page of a history book.

And the wolves used to taunt me
when I tried to move freely
but they howled with delight when I wore lipstick!

I was a dancing monkey,
a parrot, a clown.

WOLVES EXTINCT

And I was the best in the business.
And I was adorned with flowers.
And I wore the crown of thorns.
And the pope kissed my feet.
And the Beatles said I was more popular than Jesus.
And Black Flag made an image of me naked and tied up and
put it on an album cover to prove something to someone,
but I never knew what was being proved to who.

I saw my image on the t-shirts of teenage boys and on the lips of teenage girls.
The hatred bound them together,
sexism died because of me
and love bloomed from my corpse.

I was Jesus and Courtney Love and Charles Manson tied up with a neat little bow.
But my friends, the wolves,
(Aristotle would call this a friendship of pleasure)
forgot that I used to be
a child
on a pedestal
who understood rivers.

Alana Leia Johnson
she/her
<https://linktr.ee/slayerleia>



Painting as Performance

interview with artist **Sophie Pearson**

Sophie Pearson is a painter whose pieces strike those with a fondness for nostalgia, self-reflection, and honesty. Her vulnerability as an artist enrages some, but comforts many. RUNT Magazine was lucky enough to talk to them about their experiences as a creator, on and off the Internet.

RUNT Magazine: In your artist statement you wrote “I aim to make people feel both uncomfortable and understood.” Do you experience any controversy with those who let their emotions be led by their discomfort?

Sophie Pearson: Definitely! There are many people in my comments and DMs who purely reach out to criticize my work. Many of these people, one can assume, let their anger rule their lives, using it as a tool to cope and project onto other folks. To many, including myself at some points, discomfort IS comfort, because it is familiar and easy to reach. To sit and revel in that, to push it on other people via hateful comments, is to feed it. In feeding it, they’re further enmeshing themselves within a life that hurts but feels safe. Though it’s incredibly hard to receive mean comments, especially when many are coming at once, it is reaching a goal of mine. My art isn’t just for the people who have experienced what I’ve experienced. My art is also for the people who need to reflect on their pasts, their decisions, and their biases. Even if it ends in them hating me, I at least made them think for a moment.

RM: You’ve been an artist your whole life, do you think there was a conscious moment when you realized this was something that would last into adulthood?

SP: Absolutely. I went to art school with full intention to change my major from Fine Art to something more “practical”. I didn’t think being a full-time artist was possible, I had never met someone who did it up until that point. After I met the chairman of my department and went into his office a few weeks into school, I knew it was all I wanted, and that I would make it happen. Matthew Cherry is very cool, a very tall man with a long white beard and tattoos. In his office, at the time, he had a huge portrait of his child on his back wall. When I saw it I was so taken aback- I had never seen a painting so large and colorful before- and I knew that I had to make art.

RM: Did you find any difficulty in making art post-art school?

SP: I actually thrived after school finished. I graduated in 2021. About half of my junior year and my full senior year were online due to the pandemic. So, for a while, I was already introduced to the idea of working alone, in my small apartment, on my own schedule, etc. When school ended, and I was free to explore my own ideas, with no restriction or critique, I dove headfirst into painting. This is when I made “Belted”. That painting was a result of me feeling very liberated to explore color and narrative. I still struggle with schedule and lack of feedback at times, but as a whole I thrive working in solitude, sitting with my own ideas. I know a lot of folks who felt like their creativity died after school and I feel incredibly fortunate that my experience was the opposite.

RM: At what point did you turn to self-portrait?


SP: The self-portraits started while I was in school, as assignments. I’m fat, my face is round, I don’t have a defined jawline. Most of my classmates were quite thin, their portraits were more structured and less soft. Eventually, while working on a self-portrait in class, my professor came up to me and told me I forgot the jawline. When she realized I hadn’t painted it because I don’t have one, she was visibly uncomfortable. It started a fixation in me to explore my body in paint. For a while, I pushed a “body positive” narrative as I felt I had to, but realized quickly that it felt disingenuous, and so I started doing the work on body image.

The childhood self-portraits started my junior year of college, with a one off painting of me as a kid running through a field of sunflowers. I explored the idea again a few years later, which started the red and blue paintings. My number one rule for myself is to always make work for me, first and foremost. If it doesn’t feel emotionally charged in my body, in


some capacity, then I won't make it. For me, self portraits are just the easiest and most profound way to explore those emotions.

RM: Is there a level of performance in your work?

SP: All of my pieces are made with deep intention, especially my more recent works.



Just about every
brushstroke that I
put down comes with
a thought, some more
intuitive than others.



Having some sort of audience on social media means that I know there's a good chance my art will be seen by many, and therefore, interpreted by many. When I'm painting, there are often thoughts of "How will this be seen? How will people read into this mark or color?" I think that turns a lot of my paintings into a performance of sorts. I'm constantly assessing how the story of a painting will be read, by me and others. If a symbol I want to include is an important part of that story, or if it should be left off. What I should include because I want to, and it's important to my processing of my trauma, or if I should leave it out because it's too personal and I'm not ready to reveal it yet.

There's also the aspect of performance on social media, or at openings. It's definitely performative to sit and explain my deeply personal paintings to a crowd, whether that be in person or on the Internet.

RM: Do you think all art inherently has an aspect of "performance"?

SP: I think you could say that. A lot of artists are thinking about how others will view their art while they're creating it. I think that, at its core, is a level of performance. Though I do think there are artists who truly only make their work for themselves, in which case you could argue that they're still performing, only for an audience of one.

RM: Who do you paint for?

SP: The vast majority of the time, I am painting for me. It is so important to me that my art holds true emotions and authenticity. If I didn't paint for me, I don't think my work would be as strong or meaningful. My biggest goal is to tell my story in a way that feels healing for me. It is so wonderful and powerful that it reaches so many other people, but that was never my ultimate goal. That was a very welcome bonus, and I don't think it would have happened if I didn't stay true to myself.

RM: Who are you when you're not painting?

SP: When I'm not painting, I'm still thinking of my paintings! I am a homebody, a wife, an animal lover. I'm on social media too much. I love to read but I don't do it enough. I am constantly seeking new inspiration for works. I view all of my life as a possible painting waiting to happen! ★

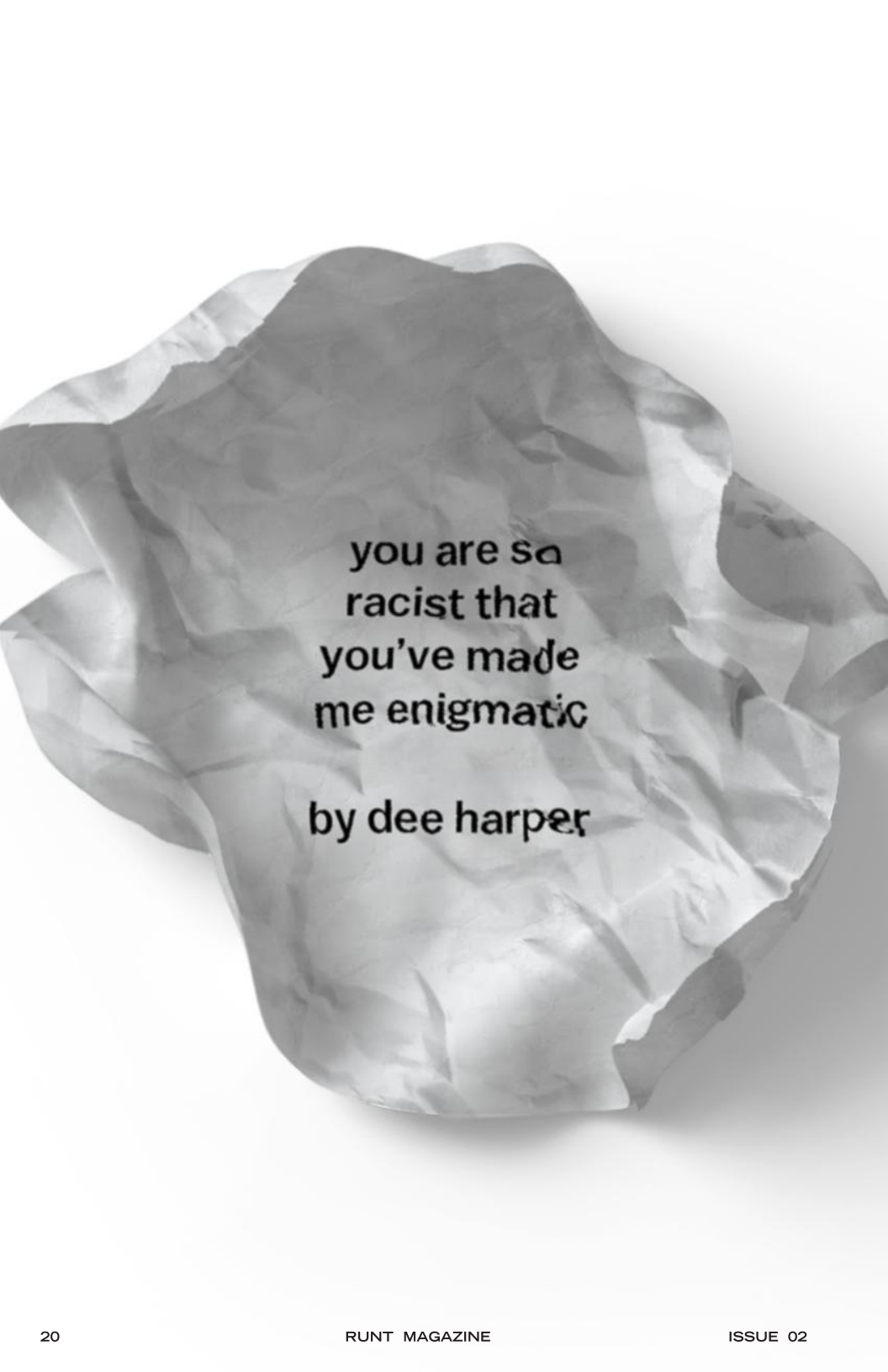
ba\erinas



inb\ue



C. V. Tibbett
they/them
@xo_cvt

A piece of crumpled, light-colored paper is centered on a white background. The paper is wrinkled and folded, giving it a textured appearance. Printed in the center of the paper is a short poem in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The text is arranged in four lines, with the first three lines forming the poem and the fourth line indicating the author.

**you are so
racist that
you've made
me enigmatic**

by dee harper

Out of all of the weapons drawn against the Black woman, indecisiveness will be the one to kill me.

A well-to-do, middle-aged man on the tail end of male-pattered baldness and its processes studies a display case. The person behind the counter describes the goods. One that the man is considering is fluffy and light on the tongue, not too hard to digest, unremarkable. The other is dense, iced in a spectrum of colors, and could be a bit overwhelming in flavor without a palate intricate enough to appreciate it.

I am meant to be as many people as I have fingers and toes, yet none of them are the kind of clientele that would make for a good pick-me-up.

The man thinks hard—prays on it in his mind—and even God wishes that he would just hurry the fuck up because why was it easier for him to trust a being that would (and has!) cursed His own creations with the safekeeping of his soul than it is for him to decide how he wants his own victims of subjugation to taste for him?

The most immediate reason is fear, but he is also afraid of me, too, so what really is so difficult about this decision?

Despite being the one to put the knife in me, to you, I am still the one to fear, which makes the knife feel like a thousand more.

My boss approaches me to tell me that I am unapproachable.

I sit at my front desk and make sure that every time I hear the door open, whoever is walking through it can see all 30 of my teeth. They never look, perhaps because I am dark, and what is the point of looking through the dark when you can't comprehend what it is that you're looking at?

I am not that difficult to comprehend.

The worker offers him samples of both, but he declines, afraid of what he might taste, afraid of having no control over something external and unfamiliar. Every night he lets his wife that he hates feed him duck food peas teased with water, unbuttered bread, and fish so fresh and raw that it's still swimming on his plate. The food he hates almost as much as her, but he denies neither, because they are what his eyes and tummy and dick are used to. He has no idea that his fits of agitation and his struggles with movement are not signals of cerebral palsy, but are actually symptoms of mercury poisoning. If he knew he likely would not care, because there are no consequences for his symptoms either way.

"Because dessert is supposed to pack a punch, is supposed to be earthy and primitive, should have a little twang, a little spice," the man tells the worker, who gently tells him that what he has described is something he'd be better off finding at the deli and not at the bakery. The man, in common character, does not care, and barrels through the automatic doors and out in front of a white SUV accelerating out of the parking lot, leaving a trail of curses and blood spatters on the building's exterior that the worker will more than likely have to mop up later.

He looks at Megan Pete and Maya Angelou and cannot tell the difference. He claims to prefer Maya, but got bored a quarter of the way through *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. When he heard "Captain Hook" booming and bouncing out of his daughter's bedroom, his rage could've burned the whole three-story house down to cinders.

My softness alludes him because he refuses to even touch, and even if he did, it would only confuse him.

Imagine being so racist that you make the subject of your hatred enigmatic. If you'd bothered to gobble down something other than essentialism or water-peas or stale bread, you'd realize that it truly is not that fucking deep.

I am not that difficult to comprehend.

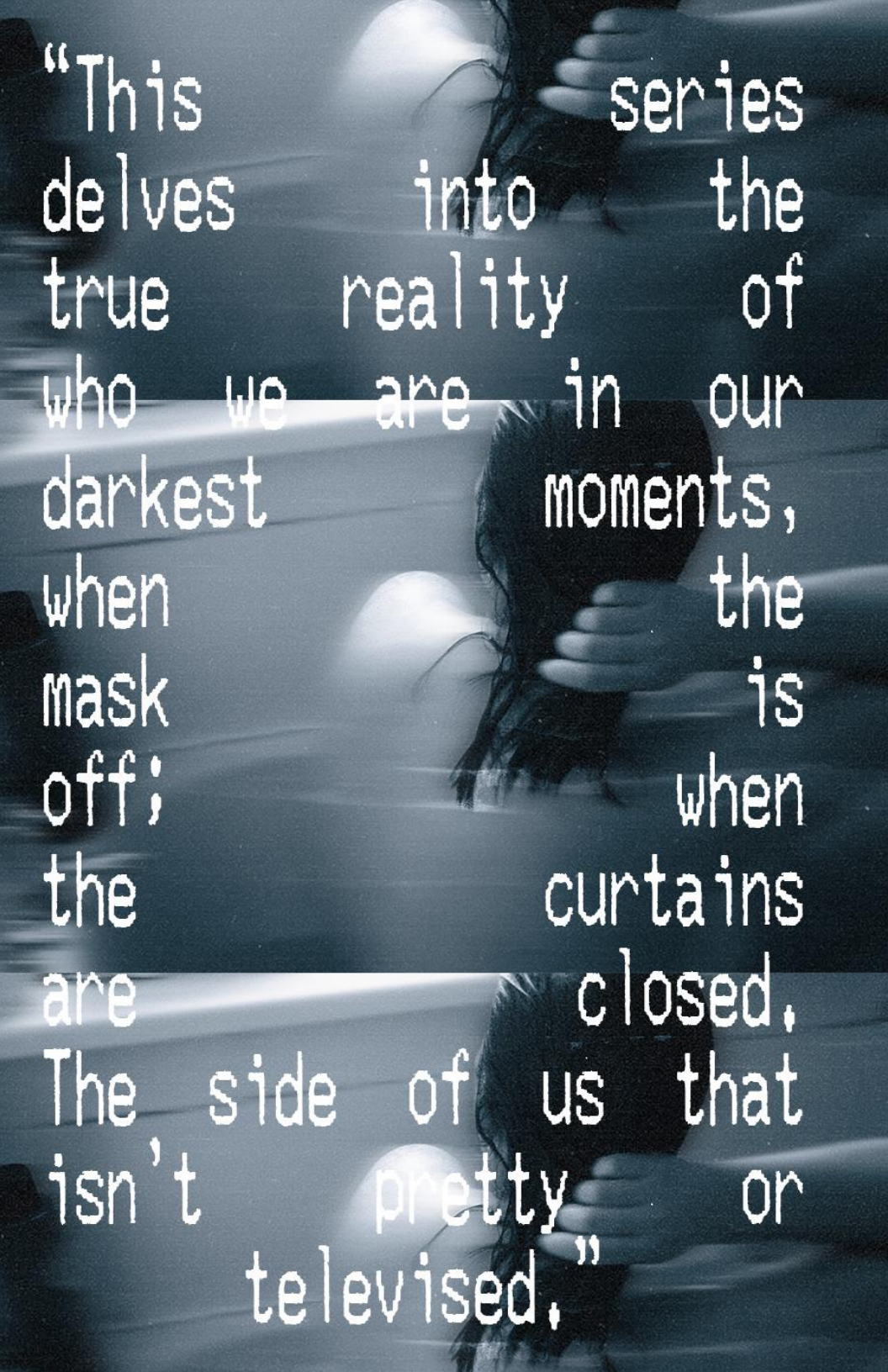
I am a Black girl with few words to be spoken and an innumerable amount to be read. I like my weather sunny and warm but not too warm. I enjoy a nice bubble bath. I appreciate my alone time but after a while, I get squirmy. I also have a sweet tooth.

So what exactly is it that you are so afraid of, again?

Dee Harper
she/her
@goopfriend







"This series delves into the true reality of who we are in our darkest moments, when the mask is off; when the curtains are closed. The side of us that isn't pretty or televised."



Bee Jones
they/them
@motionmoth

Sia *of the*

RUNT
MAG



ture
Home

SUFFOCATED BY MY FUTURE. BY WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME. BY WHAT IS TO COME. I CAN'T BREATHE. I AM
MY FUTURE. BY WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME. BY WHAT IS TO COME. I CAN'T BREATHE. I AM SUFFOCATED
BY WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME. BY WHAT IS TO COME. I CAN'T BREATHE. I AM SUFFOCATED BY MY FUTURE
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I CAN'T BREATHE. I AM SUFFOCATED BY MY FUTURE. BY WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME. BY WHAT IS TO COME



BY WHAT IS TO COME I BREATHE. I AM SUFFOCATED BY MY FUTURE. BY WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME I BREATHE. I AM SUFFOCATED BY MY ELITE. BY WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME



I CAN'T BREATHE. I AM SUFFOCATED BY MY PAST. I CAN'T BREATHE. I AM SUFFOCATED BY MY PRESENT. I CAN'T BREATHE. I AM SUFFOCATED BY MY FUTURE. BY WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME. BY WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME. BY WHAT IS TO COME.





Something Borrowed



Something Blue

by Kate Ann Joy





Kate Ann Joy
she/her
@kateannjoy





DICEY'S GARDEN

Fern Creson

she/they

@we.like.birdland @birdland.photo

WAN

ING

yours, AJS.

last july the whole of the moon devoured
the half of your face that was crying and left the half that couldn't bring itself
to pretend. i've been speechless ever since. like the terrible, fucked up person that i am,
i dropped you off at your house, smoked a blunt and got productive,
killed everything in my backyard that smelled of you. dug tiny, perfect graves for every
petal i crushed underfoot. drove myself mad with the mindfulness you didn't deserve.
hearkened after that pure flame anger, and never found it. the trick is
to destroy more things behind closed doors than he does in public.
the face of it will begin to darken in upon itself, and you will have achieved
the inevitable and the unbearable. who am i when i am not hurting.
a few months later i came home from walking in a new circle
and found my mother and father sitting on the couch, crying but not touching,
and it occurred to me that we've all been feeding the wrong things our whole lives.
scraping crumbs off the side of the plate into the mouth of the most greedy
and troublesome of dogs, just because they bark loudest.

i just wanted you alive.

i wanted you to desire more things.

anyways, i haven't been feeding the part of me
that loves you lately. it clings to life, but maybe not tomorrow.



COVER
COVER
COVER





elene mcmillian madelene mcmillian madelene mcmillian madelene mcmi



lian madelene mcmillan madelene mcmillan madelene mcmillan made









Madelene McMillian
she/her
[@bluelaloon](#)



"I often feel consumed—by the world around me and by the world within me. There's a constant tension, like I'm caught in a storm of noise, expectation, and internal chaos. At times, it's hard to tell where the pressure from outside ends and where my own thoughts begin. A few photos capture fragments of this experience—visual echoes of the paranoia that creeps in quietly and the religious trauma that still clings to parts of me. I'm left trying to piece together a self that feels scattered across time."

DOG FROM HELL

BY H.R. THORN



Now you can say whatever you want about those three November weeks
about the hands shaking the bitten fingernails
how nervousness had been a second language
and I a beast licking my own wounds tongue in each slit with saliva a
salvation but the only thing I truly had for my own was picking up
my own pieces slurping at punctured paws like lovemaking
I think Charles Bukowski was right but before that, I licked
your knife, too, like I could fix it aswell or maybe the fact you
wielded it at all

How about the number of times I ran my tongue down my own body because
something held you back

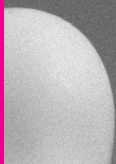
unwillingness heavy in your mouth
salivating at the sensation of thought or rather the thought
of sensation me too polite to ask for remedy or rather too
proud to verbalize dainty fingers in cloth rubbing at red
tissue pinkening like sweet flowers in your mouth
petals puckering between teeth soaked in blood, I
waited for it turn to your favorite color maybe then the instinct to save
me would come forth the splitting headache split me in two

A fraction better than nothing, I think I died the Wednesday I finally said it
your sweet nothings a punch to the gut
glistening cavities seeking more, gluttonous
my presence in your mind grown allusive
compulsion to remain a mystery pretty enough to
unwrap the last gift lipstick piercing your napkins
soda can rims the lip of mugs bloodwork everywhere
more aftermath to scrub

H.R. Thorn
she/her

hrthorncontinued.com @hrthorn

i
am
erotic



in
a
way

that
sits
just





under
your
skin



and
waits.



by
kate ann joy
&
chloe may

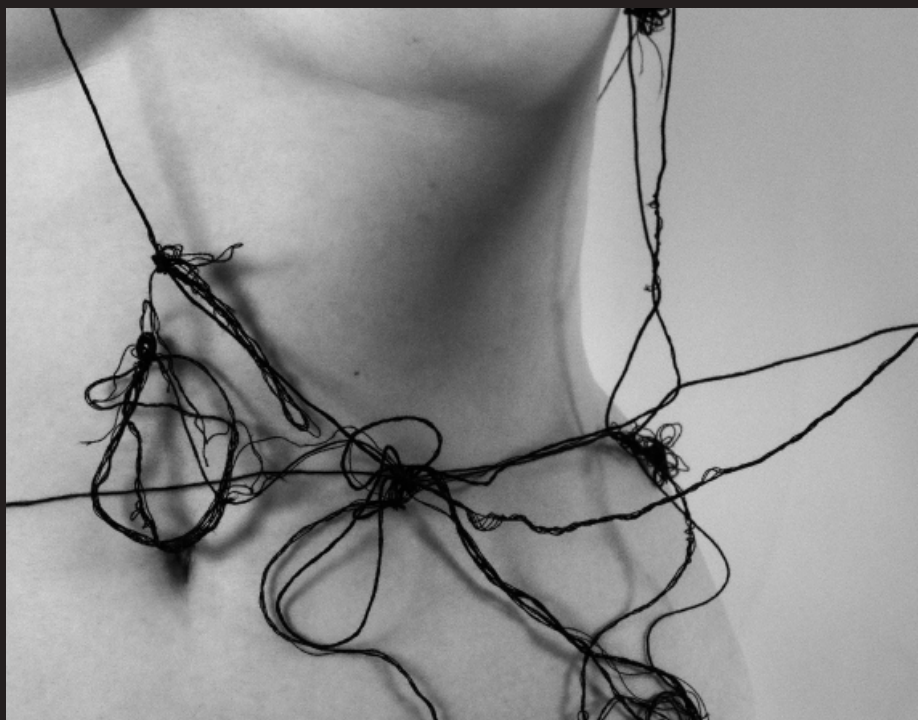














Kate Ann Joy
she/her
@kateannjoy

Chloe May
she/her
@runtpub @bagheadjpg



I feel so large So large that **I** am SMALL I have taken up all space I have Become space I have consumed all I am constantly
 looked at But never seen I simply am And somehow That is worse Than being SMALL I **feel** so large **So** large that I am
 SMALL I have taken up all space I have Become space I have consumed all I am constantly looked at But never seen I simply am
 And somehow That is worse Than being SMALL I feel so **large** So large that I am SMALL I have taken up all space I have
 Become space I have consumed all I am constantly looked at But never seen I simply am And somehow That is worse Than being
 SMALL I feel **SO** large So **large** that I am SMALL I have taken up all space I have Become space I have consumed all I am
 constantly looked at But never seen I simply am And somehow **That** is worse Than being SMALL **I** feel so large So large that
I am SMALL I have taken up all space I have Become space I have consumed all I am constantly looked at But never seen I
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 Than being SMALL I feel so large So large that I am SMALL **I have taken up all space** I have
 Become space **I** have consumed all I am constantly looked at But never seen I simply am And somehow That is worse Than being
 SMALL I feel so large So large that I am SMALL **I have** taken up all space I have **Become** space I have consumed all I
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 space **I** have Become space I have consumed all **I am** constantly looked at But never seen I simply am And somehow That is
 worse Than being SMALL I feel so large So large that I am SMALL I have taken up all space I have Become space I have consumed
 all I am **constantly** looked at But never seen I simply am And somehow That is worse Than being SMALL I feel so large

So large that I am SMALL I have taken up all space I have Become space I have consumed all I am constantly **looked** at But never seen I simply am And somehow That is worse Than being SMALL I feel so large So large that I am SMALL I have taken up all space I have Become space I have consumed all I am constantly looked **at** But never seen I simply am And somehow That is worse Than being SMALL I feel so large that I am SMALL I have taken up all space I have Become space I have consumed all I am constantly looked at **But** never seen I simply am And somehow That is worse Than being SMALL I feel so large So large that I am SMALL I have taken up all space I have Become space I have consumed all I am constantly looked at But **never** seen I simply am And somehow That is worse Than being SMALL I feel so large that I am SMALL I have taken up all space I have Become space I have consumed all I am constantly looked at But never seen I simply am **And** somehow That is worse Than being SMALL I feel so large So large that I am SMALL I have taken up all space I have Become space I have consumed all I am constantly looked at But **is** worse Than being SMALL I feel so large So large that I am SMALL I have taken up all space I have Become space I have consumed all I am constantly looked at But never seen I simply am **And somehow** That is worse Than being SMALL I feel so large So large **that** I am SMALL I have taken up all space I have Become space I have consumed all I am constantly looked at But never seen I simply am And somehow That **is** worse Than being SMALL I feel so large that I am SMALL I have taken up all space I have Become space I have consumed all I am constantly looked at But never seen I simply am **And** somehow That is worse Than being SMALL I feel so large that I am SMALL I have taken up all space I have Become space I have consumed all I am constantly looked at But never seen I simply am **Than** being SMALL I feel so large So large that I am SMALL I have taken up all space I have Become space I have consumed all I am constantly looked at But never seen I simply am **And** somehow That is worse Than being SMALL I have taken up all space I have Become space I have consumed all I am constantly looked at But never seen I simply am **SMALL** I feel so large So large that I am **SMALL** I have taken up all space I have Become space I have consumed all I am constantly looked at But never seen I simply am **And** somehow That is worse Than being SMALL I feel so large So large that I am SMALL I have taken up all space I have Become space I have consumed all I am constantly looked at But never seen I simply am **SMALL** I have taken up all space I have Become space I have consumed all I am constantly looked at But never seen I simply am

Gabrielle Pilon
she/her



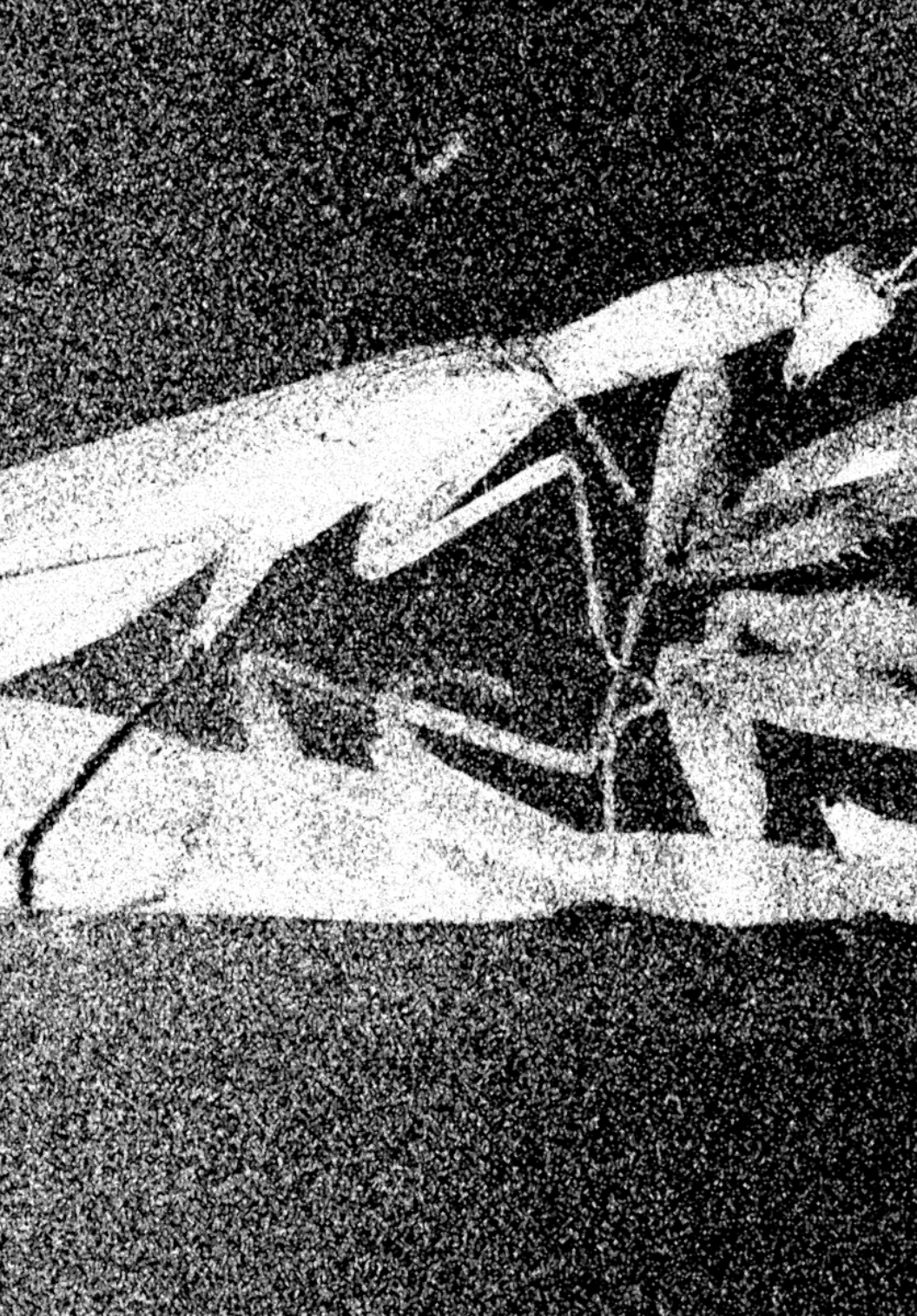
Digi
he/they
@_d.igi



Digi
he/they
@_d.igi









**geometric,
gruesome**

(on charley harper's wedding feast)

Love me geometric, gruesome,
Fragmented at joints and folds,
Mosaicked on a blooming bed.
Make it sacred and make it clean.
Love me like a ritual, a sacrifice,
Your head in my mouth
Bitten off and taken whole,
Swollen, chewed and swallowed.

Let me know amalgam,
Let me be your shelter,
Your chosen resting place
Below my heart and lungs.
Let me make a meal of you,
Let me eat though not yet starving.
Marry me in mouth and hand, lip and finger,
tongue in teeth and nose on cheek.

Lose your shame and embrace my horror,
Hold me as my teeth make needle-wounds,
Surrender to the red and hot and sticky,
The stove top melting soul and body.
Don't mind the hurt or the open air
On parts of you that never see the sun.
Lose your head and fuck me still—
Die having fed and worshiped me.

Ava O'Connor
she/they
@avaronnoco

The Serpent Woman

"The Serpent Woman depicts Eve with serpentine eyes to show that no snake led her to eat the fruit of the tree, she acted on her own accord. Rather than the serpent being the villain of the story, deceiving the woman, Eve takes on the role of the snake herself. She eats from the tree not because she was deceived, but because she wanted more from life than to exist to serve a man for the glorification of a patriarchal God. The piece has themes of insatiable hunger for more."

Em Player
she/her
@employerartist





TAIL- SPIN

please be selfish
with me in my entirety
love like humans do and
sink into my skin
land lips on dated flesh

manducare eucharistia

i'll be holy for you—
kiss me proper
love me down
you fickle
girl.
soft and stifled
unending
love-bitten, smitten
from my little, divine
pleasure in a sigh; i say
Their name.
save me
from these teachings
with limbs laced together
all eaten alive
wanton
pretty angel
in the vessel of a maiden,
selfish, too

you pretty angel
your body, soul
consecrate these teeth
let the blood trickle down
bless this mess of a mouth!

vinum rubrum bibere

save me from my creation
before i am ruined
before i fall
dilapidated
caramel-skinned
maiden of
heaven
tongues incoherent
faint gasp, then a name
her name.
my name.
devil's earth
unraveling me into mist
and miry bodies
from heads to tails.
fulfilled
and fickle monster
a bloody, hungry girl
and soon wholly enamored

Bella Francisco
they/them
@belanciisco





Les Vêtements d'Homosexuels

by Mercy G. Vigil-Shuck

"Les Vêtements d'Homosexuels is an expanding body of work that explores the performative ideals of gender and how clothing gives us the self-expression needed in that regard. It originated out of my own personal growth with gender and the uptick of conservative politics when I started this project a few years ago. I wanted to almost replicate the memories of playing dress up in the capacity that it brings joy and curiosity to the viewer, as joy and especially queer joy is one of the best forms of protest we can have in current times."

Mercy G. Vigil-Shuck
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SEX FOR

I wanted to picture myself as precious to them—everything they desired. My ego created this false vortex, this misplaced thought that I could transcend the ordinary. A realization that such was not the case burned me so. Burned the ego. Tacky, sweltering burn. Bubbly, sticky, a raging sting.

Sure, the emotions were elemental. Fire, ice, boiling, temperamental. I was dreaming of a real raging fire. That was what I wanted. Fire, fire, fire, not this salve that I applied to invisible burns. Where could I find this fire that torched me so?

So, the world tunneled through me in unexpected ways, my core opening to this unending output, a crunching here and there, expecting things to change, wishing the meaning of things *could* change. The turning of the season, the promise of a glance, the death of an app. I was just going round and round and never getting what I wanted.

I had dug myself into a hold of specificity: of haughty taste and a disinterest for most everyone. We all were that way these days. The wrong shifting of the hand, a mistaken turning of the tongue, and it was finished. So, I figured the problem was this eternal search for unreal love, a desire to place myself above myself: reaching for a chandelier of hope, that scratching climb upwards to the inaccessible. I just needed to get laid.

I thought back to the beginning of my twenties: the pure happyjoy of kissing a stranger in front of my friends, the satisfaction of a one-night stand: walking home and feeling as if the world was turning around me, made beautiful through the sex.

SEX'S SAKE

by emma long

The problem remained this unending dissatisfaction. I was trapped in dreams, of those little pearls of success from years past, knowing how precious they could become. Where they laughed, I drowned in writing. And that was where the imbalance lay. I craved such control: to bend the tides of passion out of coldness. Avoiding heat altogether could bring real freedom, real power.

So I tried to form myself in their silhouettes. I placed myself at the heart of dispassion, digging out a hole in their memories: an outline around the crooked bits of their bodies, laying down, becoming them, understanding them. Trying to absorb myself in the carnal, those base desires that drew me to fall over such inconsequential men.

Picture this: candlelight, hand on your back, leaning over a barstool, someone (doesn't really matter who, does it?) looking at you in that way. The back of an Uber at four am, working off the last bits of alcohol because you can't stand the idea of waking up in someone else's bed.

It turns out the solution is bland, foreign, older. Yes, those were the types I became something to. I had done the classic thing and picked up some Australian millennial at a dive bar. His approach: sudden, close, adoring. He liked a woman with good tits, and that made me nervous.

So he misleadingly underestimated the length of the walk to his and bought us both liters of coconut water at his corner deli. I suppose the thing about men a decade older was that they lived alone in new-build apartments with lots of plants and had a penchant for healthy

things like coconut water and ultramarathons.

I had a real problem, I knew. As he fucked me, whispered to me to relax, I was existing on a different plane, in a detached, sort of self-anthropological place. With my eyes closed, I wrote, transcribing my experiences into poetic terms as they were happening to me. I was fucking just for the words, really: already forming the vowels, getting the feel for the rhythm of a sentence as I rode him.

It's like a play, I thought, as he moved above me- all the things we say to each other during sex. These rehearsed lines fed back and forth, spooning out the correctly acted response. Yes, one-night stands were like plays. I pictured the script clearly:

HIM
You like that?

HER
Oh, yeah. Fuck, that feels so good.

HIM
Yeah?

HER
You make me so wet.

HIM
God, yeah, you're so wet.

She moans.

HER
Yeah, yeah. Right there.

HIM
Your pussy is so fucking wet. So wet, so tight.

Boring, really. Recited in perpetuity. And then, after the act: always laughing at nothing actually funny, and a hollow embrace. Sharing such jagged intimacies for the sake of saying you did, knowing you did.

To him, everything stemmed from my hair: my wildness, my youth, my femininity. It signaled something beyond my control. It meant something greater to him. So he was fucking a symbol, trying to glean something immaterial from me (freedom, health, spontaneity, womanhood?). He traced the outline of my body with a finger, figuring me out through the heat of my skin— through the real meaningfulness of the structure of myself.

Building is primal. Shelter is primal, he told me, as any real carpenter would. It was one of the few things that interested me in him: his passion for the instinctual, his primeval admiration of construction. I traced the outline of a tattoo on his inner bicep, playing out that script, asking what it meant. Living in the moment. Nothing exists but the moment we're in. And that's what I like about you. That your hair is tangled. You're just so entirely natural, wild. A pure woman.

Touching parts of me, telling me what he liked. And I laughed, because what else do you do? Symbol of the natural world. Fucking me to get closer to the outdoors, maybe. And trying to understand what it meant, his fascination with my outer self, when I was always faced with such dissatisfaction, the sweltering core of indifference: the solid, breathing meaning of dispassion.

I was figuring out the depths of how far I would go for it. Did I truly circle around the outline of such a person? Was that really all I needed, all I wanted: pheromones and the joy of knowing I had sex recently? My body oozed for days after, and I bit down on the tiredness, wondering why it depleted me so. He had taken some of my youth, my spirit, sucked it out.

I love you, you're beautiful, I love you, you're beautiful, I love you, you're beautiful. And it falls on deaf ears. I thought I could wrap myself up in it: in the performance, to love and live and die within adoration, no matter the type. But no. I rode the bus back in the morning, my eyelids half-shut, dullness descending upon me. A mysterious yellow pool occupied the center of the seat next to me and I couldn't stop looking over at it, feeling disgusted by it.

So I was, disappointedly, more interested in the spark of desire than in the act itself. Sure, I already knew this. But I had believed I could transcend it, could center myself within only the passions of the body. I knew I couldn't get love, but I could at least get sex. But, ah, no, I couldn't, could I? I was untouchable, I could feel. Netted away from any true, endless love.

My lips turned blue, caught in the chill of a descending spring sun as I walked home in delayed transit, wondering how to make myself a bit more interested in that type of chase. I suppose I couldn't care for that sort of obsessive faceless man. Couldn't hear their notes of adoration if they couldn't be returned with the same fervor. Love and reality are contradictory for me, I told myself. Yes, they were contradictions of my spirit.

I was just a haircut to them. An outline, an imprint in the sand. I closed my eyes and pictured the imprint from the outside in: imagined the soil, the worms, the dirt, and dust blowing into every corner and crevice. I couldn't be fed by such things.

I envisioned unending, overtaking love. Never the soft silences of a relationship born from anything other than undying passion. They were just sparks, not flames, not fires. The elements never seemed to bend my way, but I figured it was better to live within the promise of hope than in the truth of an unremarkable man.

Emma Long
she/her
@canvasgurl



I want you to take me apart

collage

by Clare Kramer

"*I want you to take me apart*, explores the desire to be disassembled by a romantic interest and put back together in a better way. The piece explores the tension between needing to be seen, wanted, and touched the way I am now, and the competing hope that I will be fundamentally changed and reborn through surrendering myself to their desires."

Clare Kramer
she/her
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Em Player

she/her

@employerartist

Grapes Dove

they/them

@bruisedgrapesphotography



Flesh of My Flesh

2023

performance

"Within this photo series, this biblical story is subverted into a feminist narrative. Rather than being created from Adam's rib by God, she actively takes control of her body by ripping the rib from Adam herself and consuming it. Through consuming the rib, she not only asserts her own autonomy, but also takes on the life force of Adam himself. The piece also explores cannibalism as a methodology for love and sexual desire, overwhelming greed and craving leading you to consume someone and their body to become your own."





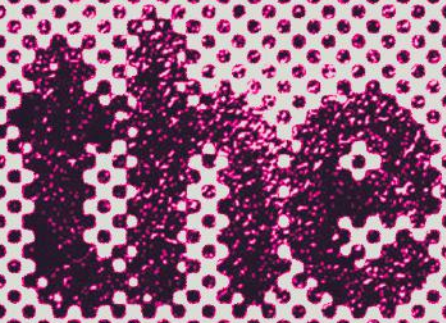




FLESHOP

WYFLESH





end.

**Jaina
Cipriano**
(she/her)

Jaina Cipriano is an experiential designer, filmmaker, and photographer exploring emotional transformation through immersive environments. Her work, rooted in her upbringing in a fundamentalist cult, blends cinematic storytelling with handcrafted sets to evoke healing, wonder, and connection. She is the founder of Finding Bright Studios and director of Arlington International Film Festival.

Fern Creson
(she/they)

Fern is a third-year photography and creative writing student at Seattle University. Her work is multi-media, ranging from long form poetry to documentary portraiture. Fern has an affinity towards testament; that which was here was meaningful, beautiful, real, sometimes terrible but mostly bittersweet and fleeting. Memory, and lack thereof, drives her work.

Digi
(he/they)

Digi is a queer trans Latine photographer and artist based in Ramaytush-Ohlone land, (Bay Area). His work is based on the power of storytelling, centering the lived experiences and nuanced realities of QTBIPOC (Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous, People of Color) communities. With a focus on creating imagery that is both intimate and intentional, his work is deeply rooted in values of representation, care, and collective resilience.

Grapes Dove
(they/them)

Grapes Dove, "Bruised Grapes," is a Boone, NC based photographer specializing in music photography out of their love for the punk & hardcore scenes.

**Bella
Francisco**
(they/them)

Bella is an artist, dancer, and writer from the Bay Area. Aside from being a lover of psychological horror media and R&B music, they are someone who pens stories involving the monstrosity in the mundane, how grief and warmth last, and girls in love with the void.

Dee Harper
(she/her)

Dee is a writer of short fiction and poetry; her work exists within the sphere of the nostalgic and the macabre and the intersections of queerness and black womanhood. Her work has been published in Feminist Spaces, The Malu Zine, Same Faces Collective, and The Troubadour.

**Alana Leia
Johnson**
(she/her)

Alana Leia Johnson is a musician, philosopher, and poet. Her writing means nothing, or something, or everything depending on whose eyes come across it. She was recently published in Beaver Magazine.

Bee Jones
(they/them)

Bee Jones is a visual artist and photographer specialising in the dark and decrepit. Their work explores the intimate, but occasionally vile realities of human nature.

Clare Kramer
(she/her)

Clare Kramer is an interdisciplinary artist currently working in alternative materials, collage, bookmaking, and sculpture.

Emma Long is a writer and multimedia artist based in New York City, with a practice centered on interiority, the body, and connection with the natural world. Her work has been published in Antlers Zine, Vernacular Journal, Marcescent Zine, Antithesis Magazine, and Morningstar Literary, to name a few. She has exhibited work in group shows around Brooklyn and the Treasure Valley, and at Flaten Art Museum.

Emma Long
(she/her)

Madelene McMillian is a Kentucky Artist currently based in Lexington, KY. She received her Bachelors of Science in 2025 in NeuroPsychology at the University of Kentucky. Currently, Madelene has been working as a photographer for TITLE Magazine, based in Cincinnati and KRNL, based in Lexington.

Madelene McMillian
(she/her)

Ava O'Connor is an undergraduate literature student at UC Santa Cruz and a signer for Chinquapin Literary Magazine. Her work has been published in Matchbox Magazine, Chinquapin Literary Magazine, Rust & Moth, and Nightcap Zine.

Ava O'Connor
(she/they)

Gabrielle Pilon is a lover of stars and cute things. The cool thing about her is that she's memorized the code to the emdash. Her work explores what it means to be human, and what people mean to each other.

Gabrielle Pilon
(she/her)

Em Player is a Brooklyn-based multidisciplinary artist. Through painting, makeup, sculpture, metalworking, and performance, Em uses gore and the macabre to challenge cultural norms and sacred narratives.

Em Player
(she/her)

Aanji Sin is one of those up-and-coming poets. She has a BA in English from Scripps College and lives in Los Angeles. In her spare time, Aanji enjoys exploring new restaurants and coffee shops, going to the movie theatre, and reads much less than she would like to.

Aanji Sin
(she/her)

Heather Thorn is a poet, editor, and current student at Emerson College pursuing a B.F.A. in creative writing in pursuit of her life passion of poetry. She seeks to unravel all of the raw edges of the human experience through her writing. Other works of hers can be read in Dreamworldgirl zine, Dollheart zine, Flowermouth Press, and Dulcet Literary Magazine.

H.R. Thorn
(she/her)

C. V. Tibbett is a writer, editor, and artist living in Dogtown, Arkansas. A lover of horror, nature, and folk tales, their wide range of curiosities keeps them hungry to create. C. V. is focused fiercely on a radical reframing of modern society, pushing a new and revived return to our primal roots. Co-founder of The Circus, creator of Arkansas zine LYME ZEST, + general nuisance at Radon Journal.

C.V. Tibbett
(they/them)

Mercy is a London-based assistant director and production designer who has a background in visual arts specializing in painting, photography, and cosmetics. They connected through this prompt as most of their art, especially painting, focuses on confessional pieces from their personal life such as with this body of work.

Mercy G. Vigil-Shuck
(they/them)



Chloe May (she/her)

Chloe May is a visual artist and the founder of RUNT Magazine. She is just like other girls (anemic + loves Sylvia Plath). If she's not working on RUNT, she's probably rereading *The Post-Office Girl* by Stefan Zweig, chugging a RedBull, or trying to pick a movie to watch, but getting so overwhelmed that she gives up.

@runtpub @bagheadjpg



Kate Ann Joy (she/her)

Jaina Cipriano is an experiential designer, filmmaker, and photographer exploring emotional transformation through immersive environments. Her work, rooted in her upbringing in a fundamentalist cult, blends cinematic storytelling with handcrafted sets to evoke healing, wonder, and connection. She is the founder of Finding Bright Studios and director of Arlington International Film Festival.



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