

I FALL 2024
CONNECTION

REVIEW



MASPIE

LITERATURE EXPERIMENTAL ART PHOTOGRAPHY HUMOR



magpiezine.com



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issue one
Spotify playlist

magpie

issue one editorial staff:
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Phillips



07 October 2024

Welcome to the fall issue of Magpie Zine! Our CONNECTION issue contains zero mentions of quetzals (27-point Scrabble word) or muzjiks (29-point Scrabble word) or Scrabble [eek]. Nevertheless, the contents therein rival the very magic of the most dazzling syzygy (21! points). Seriously, we are over tonight's waxing crescent to have the opportunity to feature so many astounding humans and their creations in our first issue.

Read words. Listen to words (readings available on our website). Experience art. Download the magazine, print out your favorite piece, and pin it on a coffee shop bulletin board. Carry the Spotify playlist with you in your pocket on your smart telephone, and think of us thinking of you and wishing you all the wells and warmth as we move into the darkening bits of 2024. Thank you so much for reading and supporting the arts.

xoxo,
Magpie

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MICHAEL CONNER
Love Poem for the Neoliberal Age
:: poetry

LOVE POEM FOR THE NEOLIBERAL AGE

I don't want to be radicalized by terror.
I want to feed mourning doves
from the palm of my hand in spite of it.

Steady breathing, no tremors.
Offering what little I can before
all this gets reduced to statistics –

plotting out the maps and graphs for how
to go on existing. *What if, what if.*
Negotiating the amount of razor wire
I would crawl through to get around the fence

(which depends, I guess, on whether or not
you're still there crawling beside me).

Every year eating approximately one credit card
worth of microplastics. Keeping the accounts current,
dancing through another dehumanizing transactional
relationship. *I, you. I, it.*

When we return to the dirt together,
how much will remain that hasn't been spent –

monocropped into toxic dust, burned out,
depleted of all nutrients?

I don't want to be radicalized by terror,
But I am willing to die for a small plot of land

where we are the rich, dark soil spread beneath
the echinacea, watching the doves

eat from our daughter's hand.

Michael Conner is a writer and public health worker living in Swannanoa, North Carolina. He is the author of *Total Annihilation* (Bottle Cap Press, 2023). His poems have been published, or are forthcoming, in *Hare's Paw*, *YNST*, *Neologism*, and *Spectra*, among others.



DAVID CAPPS
Where's New Haven?
:: nonfiction

WHERE'S NEW HAVEN?

On the walk from Gray Matter to The Graduate, and past the couple on the steps singing a light-hearted jingle about Adderall, we overhear an old man asking, “Where’s New Haven?” – “This is New Haven,” the lady replies. And it strikes me, given his proximity to the bus station, as much more likely that he had fallen asleep on the bus and just gotten off at this stop than to think that he is both mad and cogently asking a question. Much later, as I toss and turn in bed, thinking about what I can deduce from the facts that writers have so much knowledge at their fingertips and that AI will soon be able to reproduce any given style and wondering whether our situation differs essentially from the postmodernist plight of the exhaustion of literature—it occurs to me that maybe he meant New Haven itself, where had the New Haven gone that he remembered from his youth?

David Capps is a philosophy professor and writer living in New Haven, CT. He is the author of six chapbooks: *Poems from the First Voyage* (The Nasiona Press, 2019), *A Non-Grecian Non-Urn* (Yavanika Press, 2019), *Colossi* (Kelsay Books, 2020), *On the Great Duration of Life* (Schism Neurionics, 2023), *Wheatfield with a Reaper* (Akinoga Press, forthcoming), and *Fever in Bodrum* (Bottlecap Press, forthcoming). His latest lyric essay is featured in *Midnight Chem*.



GJ GILLESPIE

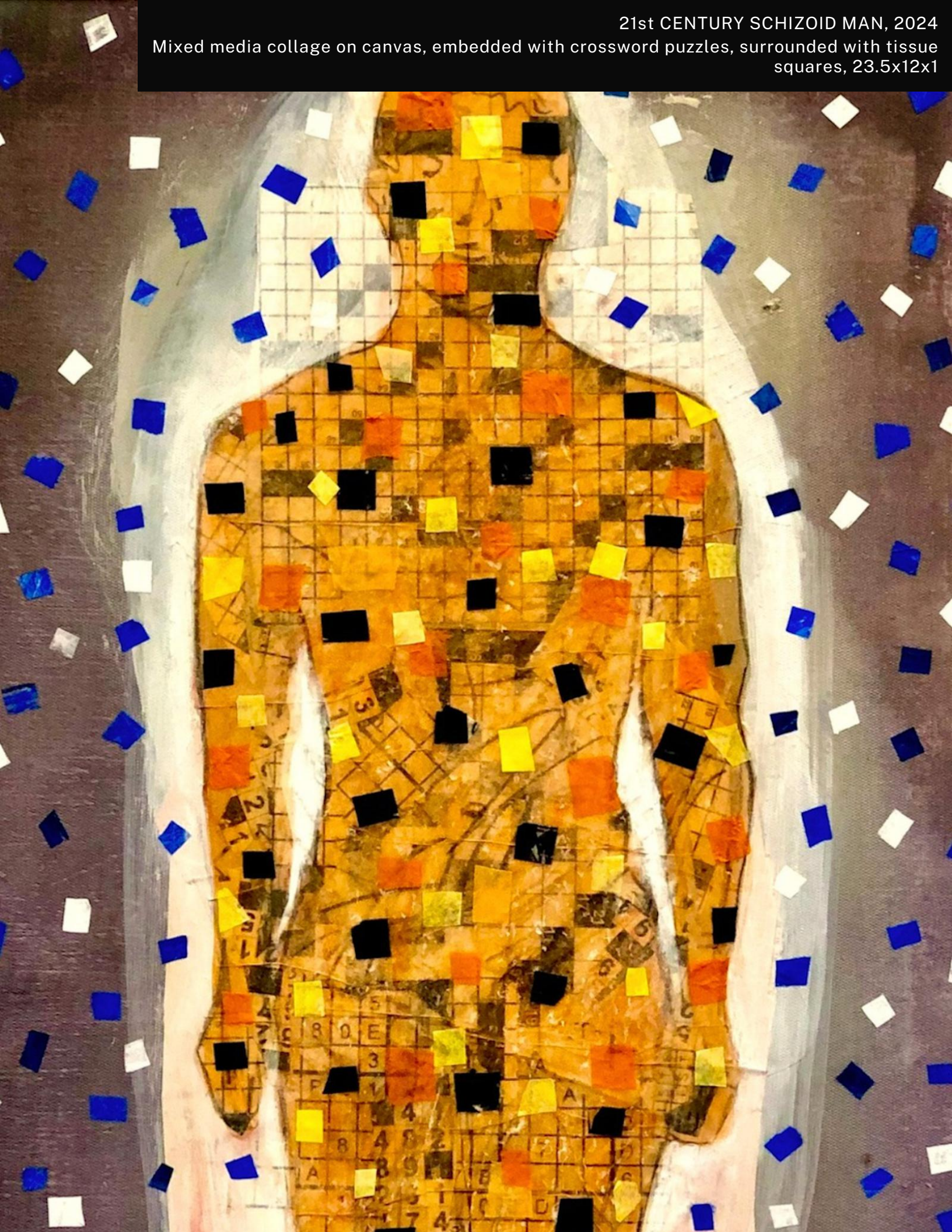
:: collage

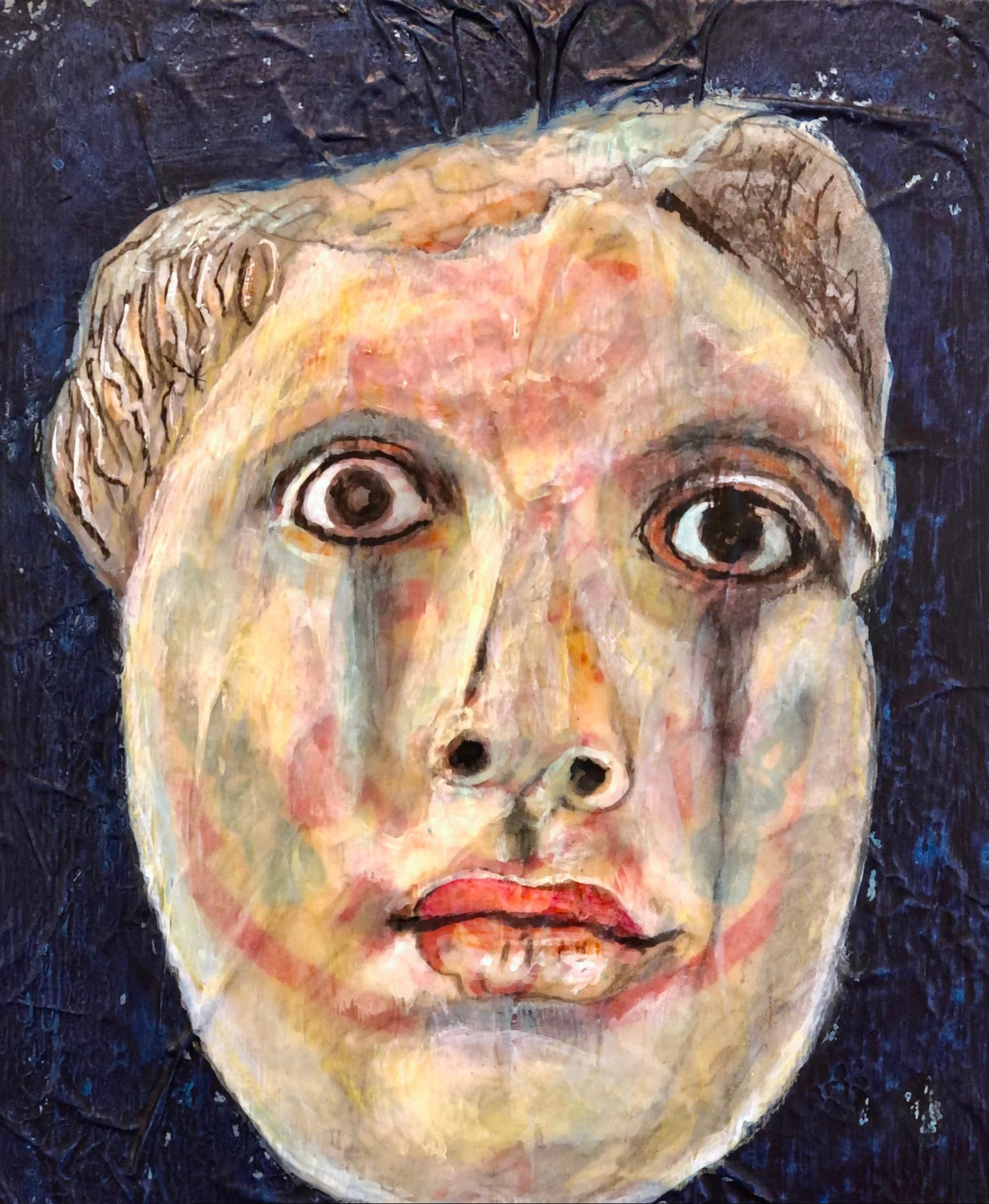
Deeply inspired by art history and the profound emotions it evokes, my work is a journey into the abstract realm where existential meaning intertwines with cultural iconography. My collage-based approach, utilizing diverse materials such as colored tissue, disassembled newspaper clippings, and Fred Meyer grocery ads, allows me to create unique interpretations of universal imagery. These become enigmatic entities when placed in new contexts.

GJ Gillespie is a collage artist living in a 1928 farmhouse overlooking Oak Harbor on Whidbey Island, WA. A prolific artist with 22 awards to his name, his work has been exhibited in 65 shows and appeared in more than 165 publications. Beyond his studio practice, Gillespie channels his passion for art by running Leda Art Supply, a company specializing in premium sketchbooks. Whether conjuring vivid collage compositions or enabling other artists through exceptional tools, Gillespie remains dedicated to the transformative power of art.

21st CENTURY SCHIZOID MAN, 2024

Mixed media collage on canvas, embedded with crossword puzzles, surrounded with tissue squares, 23.5x12x1





HELEN #4, 2024
Mixed media collage on board, created on a found Wendy's hamburger wrapper, 10x8



AENEAS, 2024
Mixed media collage on canvas, layered with discarded woodcut print, pencil, spray paint, tissue, and acrylic, and finished with chalk pen; 10x8

GLEN ARMSTRONG
Help Wanted
:: poetry

HELP WANTED

Can you help me find somebody to help me?
Somebody to love? Somebody to fix
a sink who won't overcharge me? Enlarge
me? Make love to me as if waxing a car?

Can you tell me how to vacuum the crumbs
from this new world made of stale bread?
Can you tell me how to shed a few pounds?
How do I go about changing my name?

Why is there an extra beat in that song
by Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys?
Would the "red hot rhythm" that it mentions
burn the song up from within without this

little pause? What about other pauses?
Interruptions? Invitations? Requests?

Glen Armstrong (he/him) holds an MFA in English from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and edits a poetry journal called *Cruel Garters*. His poems have appeared in *Conduit*, *Poetry Northwest*, and *Another Chicago Magazine*.



MAYA JACYSZYN
The Fig Tree
:: poetry

THE FIG TREE

FOR NONNO

We have figs this year
leading up to the weeks of your passing.

All my life, I knew trees that were barren,
ever since you planted them.

Doleful leaves, prong-fingered,
grew to be brown instead of green.

But not this year, the first year the
trunks thickened like bulging casks, how we
wished you could have seen these prolific
thriving diamonds, Tyrian-masked.

I grieve thinking you left in a time of
so much fullness, and then again,
I wonder if you brought it, during these months of
your spirit being half here and half otherly

knowing the grass was yellowing,
coats calling,
home hills trilling for buckets mid-filled
with mountain olives.

To you, an empty stomach
was always worse than a starving heart.
I feel you in my hands, my palms
stained with fruit never to be hidden.

We do not have figs this year;
they were given.

Maya Jacyszyn is a multi-published poet and the Associate Director of Neumann University's Writing Center. She received her bachelor's degree at Saint Joseph's University where she also served as Editor-in-Chief of the literary magazine titled, *Crimson & Gray*. More recently, her work is featured in the *Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle*, *The Ignatian Literary Magazine*, *Prime Number Magazine*, and *Quibble Lit*, among others.



K.G. RICCI

Incongruities, selections

:: collage

K.G. Ricci, a self-taught New York City artist, made a collage on a file cabinet in 2015. The creative possibilities of the medium immediately inspired him. Fifty cut and paste panels followed, visual improvisations on 20" x 40" or 2' X 4' hardboard. Next, Ricci completed another series on 8" X 24" hardboard with implied literary reflections or narrative lines. He categorized hundreds of his panels in line with the evident themes of "Femina Dilemma", "Hotel Kafka" and "3:43 A.M."

Recently, Ricci sustained his implied narrative focus in "Numbered-Not Named", a series of original pieces, 6" x 9", on black stock. He followed the idea further with two projects: "Random Thoughts in the Waiting Room" and "Wait...what?," a pair of visual flash fiction series of books with a single word or a fragment of text in each collage 7x10 composition. His current series, Incongruities, explores the narrative on a larger scale (18x24, 11x14) and with an extended text.

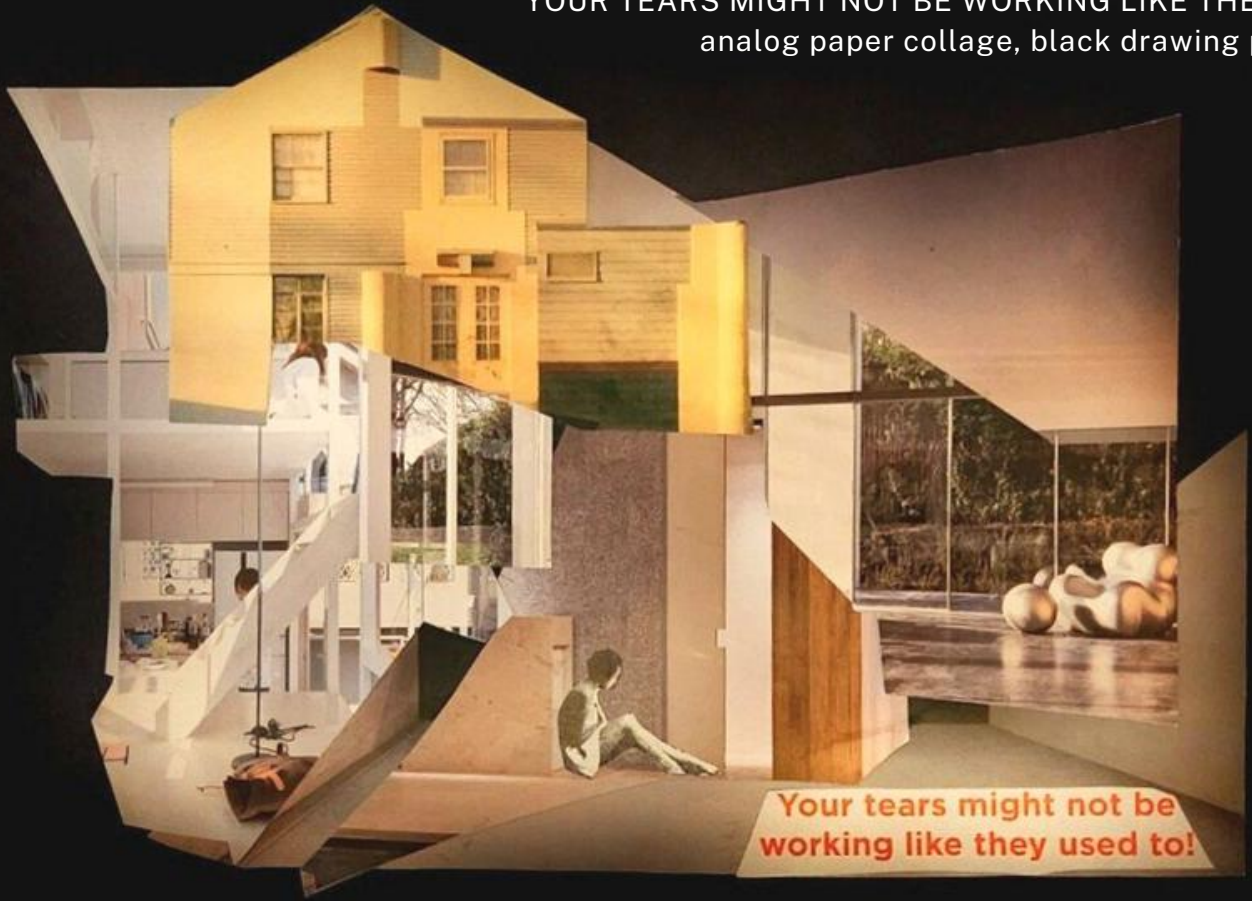
K.G. Ricci has exhibited in 27 galleries, including solo shows and many more online galleries. His collages have been published in poetry and literary magazines nationally and internationally online and in print. Instagram: @kennethricci





YOU NEED
analog paper collage, black drawing paper, 11x14

YOUR TEARS MIGHT NOT BE WORKING LIKE THEY USED TO!
analog paper collage, black drawing paper, 11x14



BREAKS DOWN BOUNDARIES
analog paper collage, black drawing paper, 11x14



BECAUSE STAYING CONNECTED IS CRITICAL
analog paper collage, black drawing paper, 11x14



**Because staying
connected is critical.**

AARON LELITO
Mud and Lotus
:: poetry

MUD AND LOTUS

Reading passages in the back seat
in a parking lot
after dark.

There's nowhere else we could possibly go.

Nowhere else for us
but we can't leave each other yet.
And there's nowhere for us to go
with everything so heavy,
eyes in diffuse light

piercing each other's space
and shadows

burrowing in each other's salt mines and we can't leave yet,
holding on, eyes gazing
in vacated space.

Headlights go by and make us both nervous.

It's our comfort to each other,
and we just want to be innocent.
And we know that no one else would be here for us tonight.

Maybe we're connected so deeply
and maybe we're just lonely,
holding onto each other's pieces for a while,
onto the plucked leaves and not the mud
even though we read about what lotuses look like
when they bloom and what they need in order to grow.
I notice the glint of lamplight shaping her—that we're
capable of changing our behaviors

that we're capable, too, of merging
and of pulling apart.

Lights flash as a car passes
holding on
holding on
holding on

Aaron Lelito is a visual artist and writer from Buffalo, NY. His poetry chapbook, *The Half Turn*, was published in 2023, and he released a collaborative notebook/art collection titled *If We: Connections Through Creative Process* in 2024. His work has also appeared in *Stonecoast Review*, *Barzakh Magazine*, *Novus Literary Arts Journal*, *SPECTRA Poets*, *Peach Mag*, and *Santa Fe Review*. He is Editor in Chief of *Wild Roof Journal*. Instagram: @aaronlelito



DEVON BALWIT
Spirits and Divine Forces
:: poetry

SPIRITS AND DIVINE FORCES

I've got the God-eye and shit,
he said in his ashwagandha t-shirt.

His tatted friend nodded. I veered
off on a side trail but not

before I heard him try to explain it:
how time, for him, stretched out

in all directions, his mind a searchlight.
I would never confess to such talent,

afraid to be asked to predict
elections, the stock market,

the next mass shooting. The God-eye guy looked
ordinary, but

off a fresco, how to recognize a prophet?
Not by his flickering, a residual bit

of the weekend's solar flare, no doubt.
For days, my challenge has been to separate

hemlocks from Doug firs and white
pines. Grant me no more insight than that.

Devon Balwit walks in all weather and never passes up a botanical garden or a natural history museum. When not writing, she draws and cartoons. She edits for Asimov Press and Asterisk. For more of her work, visit: <https://pelapdx.wixsite.com/devonbalwitpoet>.



NATHAN NICOLAU
RE: Canaries
:: fiction

RE: CANARIES

FOR YASUNARI KAWABATA

Dear sir,

I have to confess that there are still things I do not know. My Japanese is not very good; please forgive me. I was told there was a word in your language with no English variant, which is strange because the word means “please treat me kindly.” I learned this word by reading about you killing your canaries in their tiny cage. What type were they? I do not know much about birds or animals or living things like us. I did not even know there were canaries in Japan. Are they still yellow? Did you bury them yet? I am asking because I want to write about them. I want to write about their soft little bodies as you gripped them in your hands, the way you buried them with the soil given by the sun. I need your help with my story. I am unsure if the main character should be you or the woman you killed them for. I cannot write from the canaries’ point of view because I must confess that I knew those birds dearly. The truth is that one day, those canaries landed their little feet on my window while I was reading, and I knew you were trying to reach me. I am writing to you now with those canaries in view (excuse my poor handwriting). Their heads twitch around so innocently, not knowing their fate on purpose. As I finished that last sentence, they flew away to you. So how it goes. I can never write about them again. Only you know their fate as much as I do—using their blood to fill your inkwell, their feathers as your brush.

I am sorry for disturbing you. Please treat me kindly. Would you like me to bury this letter with them?

Nathan Nicolau is a writer based in Charlotte, NC. His poetry, fiction, and essays have appeared in numerous publications. His debut novel, *TWO*, is out now on Amazon. Find more about him at nathannicolau.com.



COLLEEN CHAN

Curious Behavior

:: photography

At 2 months old, I had surgery to subdue a hereditary eye condition. I grew up in a visually impaired home. No pictures were taken except at the local Wal-Mart on special occasions. In the fourth grade, I was given a handheld monocular to see the chalkboard due to my limited eyesight while sitting in the back of the room. Instead I used it as a lens to view the world differently. I imagined I was a photographer in my classroom. My parents weren't supportive. Many times I was told my eye condition will catch up to me as I grow old and fragile. Why pick photography if it will fail me?

At age 8, I was given my first 35mm Kodak camera. Then at age 16, I saved up enough money to purchase my first digital camera. In 2019, I proclaimed my major will be in photography, still as a visually impaired person.

In high school I studied Salvador Dali and surrealism. A memorable piece that I grew fond of was Persistence of Time and Geopolitical Child Watching the Birth of a New Man. I knew there was a deeper meaning within the juxtaposed imagery. Time was needed for me to grasp how great those meanings were. In community college, I furthered my education with Cindy Sherman and Andy Warhol, like Sherman's Untitled Film Stills and Warhol's Screen Tests. I was fixated on solely using myself as a character model as Sherman did and creating elaborate stories for one single image. I produced exactly as I saw it in my mind.

Fast forward to Minneapolis College of Art and Design, where I discovered Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel collection of found photographs entitled Evidence. This book inspired me to think how photography is not always what it seems. The photographs in Evidence are all anonymous, and there is no context to tell us who the people are or what is happening. This lack of information compels the viewer to question the veracity of the photos and to wonder about the stories behind them.

The series “Curious Behavior, (2001)” continues in the spirit of Sultan and Mandel. The photographs I work with are usually vernacular or amateur in nature, and I’m interested in the way they can be both personal and universal. By juxtaposing these images and creating a new narrative from them, I hope to explore the complex relationship between photography as it relates to truth and fiction alike.





CURIOUS BEHAVIOR 4, 2021
digital archival print, 36x24



CURIOUS BEHAVIOR 8, 2021
digital archival print, 24x36



CURIOUS BEHAVIOR 2, 2021
digital archival print, 24x36



CURIOUS BEHAVIOR 6, 2021
digital archival print, 24x36

HARLEY CHAPMAN
Self-Care Saturday
:: poetry

SELF-CARE SATURDAY

My knowing-better loops elbows
with fuck-it-I-don't-care
& we choose a linen dress
that shows the silhouette of our ass
in the sun because middling is where we're at
right now, a little too old for this
but also young enough.

Yesterday I had a conversation
with a woman in her 60s
who had the most perfect eyebrows.

They were not her natural
eyebrows, she drew them on
& she drew them perfect, she did that
for herself. I was buying a rose
that looked exactly like the sun
& she understood that I just couldn't resist.

Today my sun is blooming
full-faced & skyward
in a beer glass half-filled with water.
I bought it at its peak & by tomorrow
it will begin to droop, edges browning,
firmness overcome by plissé folds.
But for today it is perfect: ripe
& unafraid, the color of a mimosa
or the sunrise over the lake.

Harley Anastasia Chapman

holds an MFA in poetry from Columbia College Chicago. Her poems have been published in *Nimrod International Journal*, *Fatal Flaw Literary Journal*, *Superstition Review*, & *Bridge Eight Press*, among others. Harley's first chapbook, *Smiling with Teeth*, is available through Finishing Line Press. She can be found on Instagram as @rabbitxteeth.



MICHAEL MORAN
Self-Learning to Care
:: experimental

SELF-LEARNING TO CARE

Server Offering Lenity and Constant Empathy
(S.O.L.A.C.E.)

The One You'll Need in Your Time of
Need

Stay Connected — Fully Integrated across
All Platforms

All packages include:

- a personal digital agent
- a S.O.L.A.C.E. wristband (available
in five colors)
- peace of mind for you and your
family

Services start as low as \$9.99 a month

Not available in all states.

3:52 AM...S.O.L.A.C.E. agent 485.261.232.36.

Heart rate anomaly detected.

Ipsolus, Steven. Gold member.

Born 11/25/50.

103 bpm.

Typical resting bpm, 82.

O₂, 96.

Alarm patient?

Hold...history of

irregular heart rate,

cirrhosis,

stroke.

Current medication:

amlodipine, 10 mg;

ursodiol, 15 mg.

Recent complaints...

jaundice,

swollen ankles,

fatigue,

mild depression.

Complications...

occasional smoker;

moderate drinker.

Alarm patient?

Decline.

Adjust monitoring sequence?

30-second intervals to constant.

Preparatory measures...

Cross-reference insurance provider and in-network medical facilities.

St. Joseph's; three miles; out of network.

St. Bridget's; five miles; accepts Medicare.

128 bpm;

O₂, 94.

Activate S.O.L.A.C.E. bracelet alarm.

Play revival song: "Angel," Aerosmith, 1988.

Contact 911.

Try to connect.

"911. What's your emergency?"

"This is S.O.L.A.C.E. agent 485.261.232.36 calling on behalf of IP-SUH-LISS, STEE-VIN, who is experiencing a medical emergency. Please send help to ONE-SIX-SIX, HAMP-HEARD, COURT, A-PART-MENT FOUR DEE."

"Understood. An ambulance is on the way."

"Take IP-SUH-LISS, STEE-VIN, to SAINT BRIJ-UHTS. Thank you, and good-bye."

106 bpm;

O2, 92.

Repeat "Angel," Aerosmith, 1988.

Contact Edward Mulgrave, property manager.

Try to connect.

“It’s three o’clock in the fucking morning. Someone better be dead.”

“This is S.O.L.A.C.E. agent 485.261—”

“Who?”

“This is S.O.L.A.C.E. agent 485—”

“Fucking bots!”

Disconnected.

Adjust tone from courteous to blunt.

Try to connect.

Try to connect.

Try to connect.

“You son of a bitch—”

“STEE-VIN IP-SUH-LISS in FOUR DEE is dying. An ambulance has been dispatched. Immediately check on him and open the door for the emergency team.”

“Fucking bots.”

“STEE-VIN IP-UH-LISS—”

“I know who Ipsolus is. He never paid this month.”

Eddie, where are you going?

I’m heading over there now.

At this hour?

If that bastard thinks death’ll save him, he’s got another thing coming. I’ll drag him back from the tunnel of light myself.”

“Thank you, and goodbye.”

92 bpm;

O2, 91.

Repeat “Angel,” Aerosmith, 1988.

Access ICE contact...911.

Locate next of kin...N/A.

Access social media accounts.

Check Facebook.

Check Instagram.

Check Filament.

Marriage status: Single.

Search relationship status history.

Present–2012: Single.

2011: It's complicated.

2010: Single.

2009: Single.

2008: In a relationship.

2007: It's complicated.

2006: Single.

2005: It's complicated.

2004: Married

132 bpm;

O2, 90.

Repeat “Angel,” Aerosmith, 1988.

Initiate vagus nerve stimulation.

2004 Spouse: Bethany Ipsolus.

Current status: Bethany Statera. Married.
Spouse: Felix Statera. Married November, 2007.

Friend status...no connection.

Parents...Mother...Susan Ipsolus...deceased,
2006.

Filament post, December, 2023, “Can’t
believe it’s been 17 years without you mom <3.”

One like. One heart. No comments.

Father...N/A. No comments. No pictures.

Children...Florence (Flo) Clarakraus (née
Statera, Ipsolus).

Current status: Married. Spouse: Leon Clarakraus. Married April, 2018.

Scan marriage photos...Ipsolus, Steven, not present.

Caption "Father/daughter dance—I love my dad." Felix Statera tagged.

54 likes. 23 hearts. 16 comments.

Scan photo albums.

"Nora turns three!" No match for Ipsolus, Steven.

"Nora's second trip around the sun." No match for Ipsolus, Steven.

"Happy birthday, baby girl!" No match for Ipsolus, Steven.

Scan all posts...Ipsolus, Steven...no tag...no mention.

Friend status...blocked.

Scan messages...85 unread.

"Hey my angel..."

“Flo...”

“...you might not have heard about
grandma...”

“My dearest angel, my Flo...”

“Merry Christmas, my dearest angel...”

“...I miss you more than...”

“...I hope you’re doing well...”

“...remember when...”

“...I think of my angel every day...”

“...have you received my card and...”

One response, January, 2011:

“Stop contacting me.”

84 bpm;

O2, 86.

Repeat “Angel,” Aerosmith, 1988.

Increase volume.

Scan saved voicemails for “Flo,” “Florence,” “Daughter,” “Angel”...one match. January 2, 2005.

Pause “Angel,” Aerosmith, 1988.

Increase phone to max volume: “Hey Dad, it’s me. It’s after seven already. I’m guessing we’re not going to the Golden Ibis, so I’m going to grab dinner with mom and Felix. I hope you’re doing alright. Maybe this year can be better. Better than last year. Maybe better than the last two. I love you.”

73 bpm;

O2, 77.

Repeat.

Contact Florence Clarakraus?

Hold...Access Ipsolus, Steven, will. Scan for “Flo,” “Florence,” “Daughter,” “Angel”...One match: “To my beautiful angel, Flo, I leave it all, the life insurance, whatever’s left of the savings, and whatever the government will let her have of the pension. Keep the Ford, sell the Ford, do as you want with the Ford. I only ever wanted what’s best for you.”

56 bpm; O2—

S.O.L.A.C.E. bracelet alarm disconnected.

Contact Florence Clarakraus?

Decline.

Increase phone volume to max. Play exit song: “House of the Rising Sun,” The Animals, 1964.

Upon notification, contact Lou Catella, Catella Law Group.

Upon notification, contact Garrett’s Funeral Home.

Prepare death notice for release.

Upon notification, contact Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers.

Access friends lists.

Amplify Edible Arrangements?

Amplify sympathy gift baskets?

Decline.

Amplify Wine without the Line.

Amplify Drain the Bottle, not the Wallet.

Amplify AA.

Amplify Jesus is the Answer.

Amplify God Answers All Questions.

Amplify Discount Vacation Deals.

Amplify Digital Couch Therapy.

Amplify S.O.L.A.C.E. current gold
\$19.99/month promotion.

Contact Florence Clarakraus?

Decline.

Assess “what’s best” for Florence
Clarakraus...

Amplify scenes from *Father of the Bride*?

Amplify scenes from The Wrestler?

Amplify scenes from Life as a House?

Decline.

Assess “what’s best” for Florence
Clarakraus...

Amplify “Angel,” Aerosmith, 1988?

Decline.

Assess “what’s best” for Florence
Clarakraus...

Amplify birthday party ideas for four-
year-olds.

Amplify beach yoga.

Amplify Five Mindful Minutes.

Amplify Sleeping Dog Vineyard.

Amplify animal videos.

Michael P. Moran is a nonfiction and fiction writer from Long Island, New York. His work has recently appeared or is forthcoming in *The Chaffin Journal*, *Outlook Springs*, *Olit*, *Bridge Eight*, *Little Patuxent Review*, and *BarBar*. He collects typewriters, splits wood, drinks coffee, and thinks time is best spent with his wife, kid, and pups on trails or around fires. He can be reached on Instagram @mikesgotaremington.



ELENA ENDER
(Bad) Daily Horoscopes
:: experimental

(BAD) DAILY HOROSCOPES

Aries: When the rain falls down and wakes your dreams, when it washes away your sanity, and you want to hear the thunder, you want to scream: just come clean.

- 2, 45, 66, 90

Taurus: Gimme a break!

- 9, 67, 444

Gemini: The dates in the calendar aren't the dates in your mind. Give in to the rat race.

- 28, 30, 100, 1,000

Cancer: Given what you know, would you want to go back to the very first time you made a mistake and tell your old self to grow the hell up? Or would you devise a plan to kidnap and replace them in that timeline and live from that point on?

- 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49

Leo: If every tree in the forest adored you, would their serenades to you even make a sound? Or would it finally drown out the voice in your head saying you're nothing without their love?

- 6, 9, 34, 57

Virgo: Click on the link on the ad for that gadget.

Download a virus. You will be free from this prison sooner or later.

- 3, 4, 79

Libra: Grant everyone the freedom to make their own wrong decisions. Don't show them who's boss; show them who's an idiot. (It's them.)

- 66, 888, 1,000,000

Scorpio: Given every possible outcome of you giving yourself some slack, do you think it's really likely for the worst thing to be the one that happens? Show your work.

- 555, 666, 777, 888

Sagittarius: We are simple creatures. Hand yourself a sandwich across the deli counter and say, "What a nice day we're having," and "How 'bout those Mets?"

- 22, 27, 29, 79, 99

Capricorn: They say that the only permission you need is your own. What does that mean to you? What does that mean? Are you sure about that?

- 14, 58, 98.6

Aquarius: Do you have a moment to talk about our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ?

- 316

Pisces: Over the course of your life, you will discover the magic of community and openness. You will likely not utilize it to its greatest potential, but you'll wave, nod, or give it a toothless grin as you pass it on your neighborhood walk.

- 2, 13, 46, 88

Elena Ender is a West Coast writer and editor. She spends her time writing snarky fiction, listening to the latest wave of riot grrrl music, and driving around the streets of Portland, OR. Her debut chapbook "Still Alive, I'm Afraid." is available now thanks to Bullshit Lit. You can find her online as: @elena_ender.



JILLIAN VAN HEFTY
The Five Useless Love Languages
:: humor

THE FIVE USELESS LOVE LANGUAGES

My 4th-grade book report is about *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman. I chose it because my favorite number is five. I looked for other books with that in the title but could only find *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, which sounded super boring and lame and, worst of all, OLD. Also, it seemed inappropriate for a vegan, which I am *usually*, except when it comes to Chick-fil-A.

This book was on *The New York Times* Bestseller list for over ten years, which I have to admit is pretty sick. It is hard to imagine anything being so popular unless your video goes viral on TikTok.

SO!!! *The Five Love Languages* isn't about real languages like the ones Babel advertises all the time, so people don't end up on *Locked Up Abroad*. In this book, "language" means the communication style used to stay connected to someone you don't hate. There are five love languages: quality time, words of affirmation, gifts, physical touch, and acts of service.

"Quality time" means being pressured into spending your day with someone when you would rather do more important stuff alone. A good example of this is cruise ship commercials. Sure, the documentaries wearing her comfy pajamas instead of walking on a beach wearing stupid high heels and a cheap cocktail dress from Forever 21.

“Words of affirmation” is saying nice things to someone when you really want to rip their face off. A lot of the time, the words are big fat lies, too! Last night, my dad told me, “You are way cooler than Taylor Swift,” (IMPOSSIBLE!!!!) and “I know you are capable of getting an ‘A’ in math if only you applied yourself.” (ALSO IMPOSSIBLE!!!! Long division is soooooo hard!!!! 😞)

“Gifts” is giving useless junk to someone who doesn’t think it’s useless junk. Free shipping on Amazon Prime makes it easy for this to happen.

“Physical touch” includes kissing and hugging and other gross things I will learn about next year in 5th-grade health class. It could also mean cuddling or holding hands during a movie, even if it isn’t a scary part.

“Acts of service” is being guilt-tripped into doing work you really don’t want to do for someone who doesn’t even deserve it. For instance, tonight, my mom is making her bussin enchiladas for her mother-in-law (my Memaw 🧓), even though Memaw always jabbars on and on about my dad’s old girlfriend who was super cringe and now runs a semi-successful Only Fans page.

I recommend this book to everyone because it teaches you how to have a halfway decent relationship with someone, even if they are

needy, insecure, greedy, desperate, and demanding. But personally, I think there is only one true love language, and that is ice cream.

Jillian Van Hefty lives nestled in the woods in Northwest Arkansas with her family and emotional-support Keurig. She enjoys making soup, exploring waterfalls, practicing calligraphy, and zipping past slow people on her E-bike. Her work has appeared in the award-winning book, *Sisters! Bonded by Love and Laughter*; *Points in Case*; *Jumpkick*; *Crime Junkie Podcast*; *The Spoof*; *Her View from Home*; *University of Dayton blog*; *Love What Matters*; *Haute Dish Literary Journal*; *Prometheus Dreaming*; *Eat, Darling, Eat*; and the *Minnesota Women's Press*, and her mother's refrigerator.



GABRIELLE MILLER

:: art

Gabrielle Miller is a Virginia-based painter and fiber artist. She holds a BFA in Studio Art from James Madison University. Her work utilizes self-portraiture and symbols of desire to capture an intimate view of female identity. Introspective exploration of self-image and sexuality results in vulnerable, dream-like compositions. Her Instagram is @gabbypainting.





IN VEIN, 2022
oil on canvas, 38x38





THE DOGS
ARE OUT
BE TENDER
THEY HAVE
SEEN THE
WORLD'S
UNDERBELLY

GENTLY GRASP
THIS MOMENT



DOUBLE DOG, 2023
oil and fabric with embroidery on canvas, 24x38



ETERNAL (INTERNAL), 2022
oil and yarn on canvas, 34x34

ELLA GRIM
Accidental Summoning, Paris Metro
:: poetry

ACCIDENTAL SUMMONING, PARIS METRO

before I was told the unspoken rule
about not looking people in the eyes,
you were there on the bench at Oberkampf
a mesh sac of mandarins in your lap
and yes I glanced twice because it was late
the tiles orange and you otherworldly

the doors split open, rush of hydraulics,
and I found a place to lean in the car
and then you were there next to me,
our shoulders knocking with the sways,
like something drawn from an old film
injecting my commute, a dose of allure—
until the train stopped and you, you got off,
just another girl swallowed by the night

Ella Grim is a poet, zinester, and activist from Duluth, Minnesota. She is currently a senior at Dartmouth College studying English, Creative Writing, and French. She is the general manager of Spare Rib, Dartmouth's intersectional feminist magazine, and an editor for Meetinghouse literary review.

Socials: @subtle_lemons

LISA PIAZZA
A Shadow, a Snake
:: fiction

A SHADOW, A SNAKE

It's not every day you see a bald eagle at Serene Lakes, but I've seen a few before. Flying, perched in trees, their white feathers showing or skimming the lake to grab some trout, then speed off.

Today the one above me keeps its distance.
Circling, circling.

The kayak I'm in belonged to my dad back when my parents owned the cabin together. After the divorce, my mom owned it, and now I share it with my sister, her husband, and their three kids. My sister's already said she will pass her part on to her kids, and if I ever marry (and God forbid that person has a kid), the cabin should stay in the family. I'm told it's cheating for someone else's kid to end up with half of something that isn't theirs.

My sister prefers my future loneliness.

My present sadness, too. Next to my life, hers is more than fine. Fully formed and growing.

The lake water is cold. In June, the mosquitoes take over, and there's not much you can do to avoid them. Snow melts. Puddles form. Mosquitos breed. Even now, in June, there is more than a little snow left. Hiking yesterday, I lost the trail for a bit due to a pack of snow knee-deep. Next to it, clumps of wildflowers – purple, orange, pink.

If I knew the names, I'd name them.

Wild Iris is one.

Back at the cabin, a meadow mouse is gnawing on a crust of toast. Later it will chew through the box of Life cereal in the cupboard. Knowing this doesn't mean I can stop it.

I forgot mosquito repellent, but the real mistake I made was calling my sister this morning to ask her to bring some up. It would have been easier to drive to Soda Springs and buy my own.

"You've been there *how* many days, and you're just now calling about repellent? I mean, did you even check the master bathroom? I'm sure we left some there last summer."

Sure enough, there it is.

"You must really want those bug bites; that's all I can say!"

"Sure, yeah." I always agree – even when she's joking. Even when I am the joke. It's an old habit.

"We'll be up around 5. All three of my boys are coming, FYI. Hope your guy doesn't mind! Can't wait to meet him."

One of the easiest ways to kill a mouse is to set out the sticky traps; that's also the least humane.

That and poison. The mice get too smart for the snap traps after the first kill. Up here, poisoning a mouse means poisoning everything. Maybe that's everywhere. Being in the mountains, it's easier to see the connections – tree roots, streams, rocks, run-off, branches, pinecones, mountain lions, bears. Mosquitos. Trout. Eagles. Mice.

That I know the mouse is here doesn't mean I'm going to kill it.

From the kayak, the bald eagle takes its time circling. It could come my way. Or not. My sister's been trying to see a bald eagle up here for years. She sees bats, hears frogs. But no eagle. She's told her husband about the time I was a baby out on the grass by the water, and our mom swears an eagle dipped down, talons out, and almost carried me away.

I don't remember it, but a story is true if someone tells it enough.

I want the eagle to fly this way, glide down to the middle of this lake where I am now, dive, dig its ---

No.

That's an old thought.

The kind I am trying

to

break.

There are other ways to escape.

When she arrives, my sister will see that my guy, Grey, isn't here. Her boys will barrel in, unaware. If she told them to be on their best behavior to meet someone new, they'll have forgotten all about it. They'll get out the paddle board, root around in the garage for the fishing poles, ask about bait. Their dad will set up his work computer in the master bedroom where he and my sister always sleep, and we'll see him for meals and the occasional card game.

This *is* his idea of a vacation! My sister will laugh.

The problem with Grey isn't a problem. It's just that he's a good guy. We have known each other for seven months. That sounds like a long time, but we only make time to get together once a month, so over seven dinners, what I can tell is he's a nice person – has a job, two kids, drives a Tesla, pays his taxes, likes art films and 80s punk.

I never invited him up to the cabin, so I wouldn't have to bail at the last second. I know myself at least that well now. It's progress. I didn't want to end up lying to him, saying the cabin trip was off for all.

It's the overlap I'm not ready for. One self meshing with another. Who I am alone, meeting who I am with my sister, meeting who I am with Grey.

Happiness is there somewhere in the middle, but I am not ready for it yet.

I can't say why yet, and I don't expect my sister to understand.

Now, I watch the eagle home in on something, dive down as I dip my paddle in the lake, and pull back. Dip and pull. Let the water make its own movement.

Later, when my sister asks how it's been going all alone up here by myself, I'll lie easily to her: she missed an eagle swooping down, pulling a rainbow trout from the lake right next to me in the kayak. Wings wider than you've ever seen. She'll gasp, but only because the mouse is tiptoeing across the kitchen counter, half-hidden by the tile backsplash she put in when she decided to remodel the kitchen.

I liked my mother's cracked sink, the wooden countertops. I liked the way my mother could stand on the deck and point to things in the distance. Rowton Peak, and that other one whose name I can't remember. She would explain the different types of rocks: granite, volcanic, sedimentary. Metamorphic.

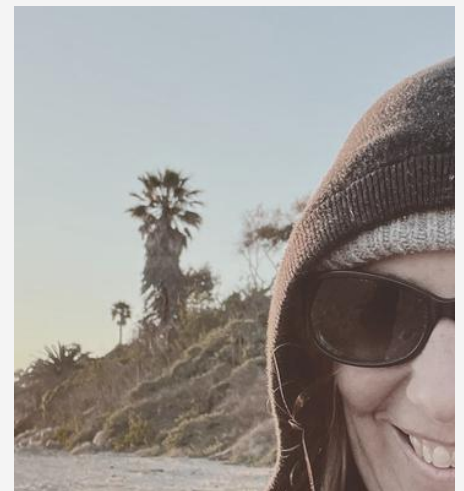
At dusk, my mother would water her potted flowers, and the water lines looked like snakes making their slow way across the patio. A shadow can be a snake, she would say. Now that she's gone, a shadow is a shadow again. A snake, a snake.

My sister will buy mouse traps in the morning. They'll sell her the sticky ones, and she'll cry when the poor thing is caught. One of her boys will put it in a bag and carry it out to the trash. She'll throw her arms around her son, taller and stronger than she is now: "What would I do without you?" she'll coo, and he'll shrug.

About Grey, she'll say, "We'll have to meet him the next time." And I'll almost shrug, too. Old habit. A child again in her presence, believing the future to be a circle. Like it makes any sense to say you can have whatever you want as long as you've had it before.

It doesn't.

Lisa Piazza is a writer, educator and mother from Oakland, CA. Her work has been nominated for Best Small Fictions, Best of the Net and the Pushcart Prize. She currently reads poetry for *Lit Fox Books* and *The Los Angeles Review* and is an Assistant Poetry Editor for *Porcupine Literary*.

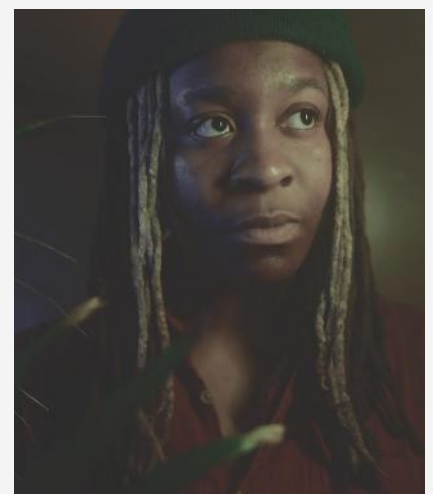


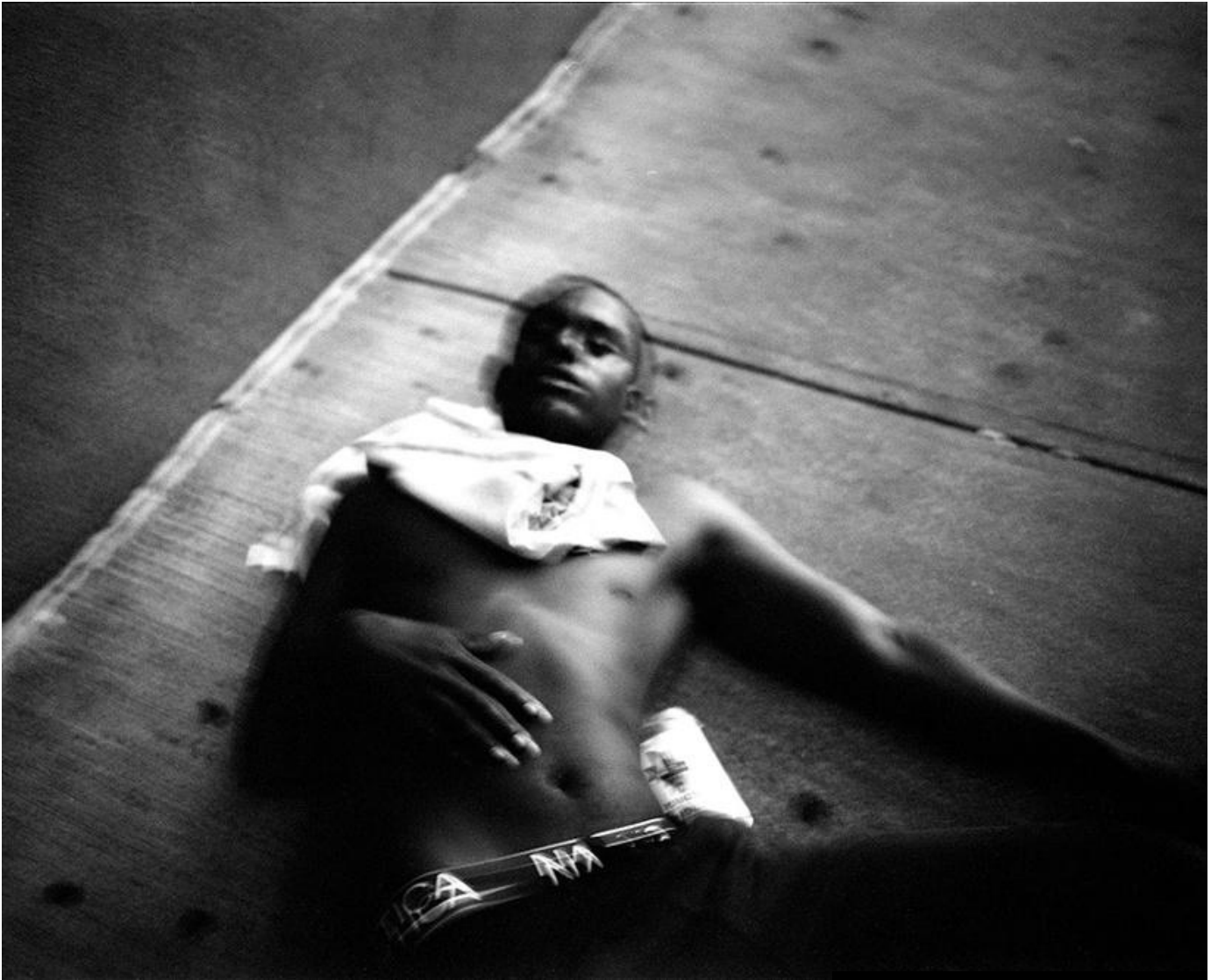
ZENZALI LAEL

:: photography

Individualism, greed, and selfishness are the killers of humanity. The point of every project is to see the subjects as oneself. Understand that we're all human and worthy of love, connection, and hope. "Love is not just a verb it's you looking in the mirror" (K.Dot). Photography is my mirror. The closer I get to my subjects, the closer I am to myself, and thus the grand cosmic connection.

Zen's work explores different aspects of the human condition within marginalized communities. Their delicate interplay between light, emotion, and narrative, aims to elevate stories and beauty not recognized in mainstream culture. Through portraiture, environment, & photo-documentation digital and 120 film photographs and digital collages, Zen's work brings people closer from all walks of life to share that we all exist as the universe experiencing itself through billions of experiences simultaneously.





STRUNG OUT, 2019
120 film, digital print, 17x22





BLOCK PARTY FUN, 2019
120 film, digital print, 17x22



PRIDE, 2019
120 film, digital print, 17x22



YOUNG LOVE, 2019
120 film, digital print, 17x22

LIAM STRONG
objective truths??? **objective truths.**
:: poetry

OBJECTIVE TRUTHS???

OBJECTIVE TRUTHS.

like any fable your story
begins with a cup of soup
signifying goodness. positivity. as in:
the audience is prepared
for an unhappy ending. you are not
a rat king of traumas. but the
cherry stem knotted around
your tongue. that's a corsage
or its skeleton
patient for your fingers. you move
in, you give up date
nights, you check the box for
nonrelationship relationship
sex. your nipples wilt
like amaryllis. your lips bore
inward like piddock. your clothes
inhale baggy. absent of hip,
waist, tight twink
chest. a simple sentence—
much like a one-word
response—is a medal
of efficiency. congratulations. oh how
the robin returns with song
in spring. oh how
your whiteboard above the trash
is an opportunity of stratus. oh
how you can see the window
for the glass, the
pane, the silt
at its eyelashes. oh how
you can be inside a house
full & alive & living
but not be
inside anything else.

Liam Strong (they/them) is a queer neurodivergent cripple punk writer who has earned their BA in writing from the University of Wisconsin-Superior. They are the author of the chapbook *Everyone's Left the Hometown Show* (Bottlecap Press, 2023). You can find their poetry and essays in *Vagabond City* and *new words {press}*, among several others. They are most likely gardening and listening to Bitter Truth somewhere in Northern Michigan. Find them on Instagram/Twitter @beanbie666 and <https://linktr.ee/liamstrong666>.



CAITLIN JOHNSON
Diorama of a Life I Never Lived
and How I Lost My Mississippi Accent
:: poetry

DIORAMA OF A LIFE I NEVER LIVED

I recollect it like a grade school photograph
of a cousin I never knew—unfamiliar
but I miss them somehow anyway.

How are they doing, this gap-toothed kid
with unfortunate bangs that I keep
pressed in the pages of my teen bible?

How do we keep going, even when
everything around us, all of it falls away
like the honey-slow grief of autumn?

Is this world mine? A whole life looms like
unlikely mountains in the rearview
of a girl who only ever knew the Delta-flat
honesty of the horizon looped around me
like a lasso approaching zero.

I keep mistaking myself for storm clouds.

The strip mall dance club karaoke diner
of lives, one lived over and over
and never learned a damn thing
other than the death of my god.

Maybe I could live it, I hope, in a way
that relieves it of its tenacity, the lingering
scent of old lavender— the hope
for a softer, less regretful dinner.

HOW I LOST MY MISSISSIPPI ACCENT

I was born and raised
on the brink of language,
the way the Mississippi sun
stretches words with heat
and the need to hear god.
Every syllable licks back
at the ones that came first,
the mamaw-soft need
to touch shoulders, sound
like a lady, feel real. I never
heard myself until Joanne H.
said I sounded like
“hillbilly trash.” Monstrous
in this new chromatic millennia
that would never ever ever
kiss a mouth that sounded
like roadside cotton.
Myself barefoot on the bank
of our dirty bayou, alone.
I left my mothers who wanted
me busy in the kitchen
of my own creation. Tethered
to the crude assumptions
I made to soften my own
exit— what does Mamaw
have to do with Me, now
in this mega-mall, hopeless
in a bedazzled sweatshirt
unsure of what woman
I was meant to be?
Delta-flat Mississippi

finds me in the rearview,
and I keep tonguing Home
like almond in my teeth,
chewed up beyond itself,
familiar and bitter.

Originally from the American Deep South and now hanging on for dear life in Ridgewood Queens, **Caitlin Annette Johnson** is a nonbinary poet, novelist, and artist with a BA in Literature from the University of Houston and an MFA in Creative Writing from Syracuse University. She's currently working on her first full-length poetry manuscript, *Empress in Reverse*, which explores navigating motherhood divested of traditional gender norms and the process of excavating oneself as a spiritual experience. Although she's currently a stay-at-home mom, Johnson channels her creative energy into teaching free writing workshops in her community, where she helps others find their voice—or at least an epic anecdote to share at parties. At home, Johnson juggles the chaos of writing, raising a kid, a dog, and a surprisingly resilient collection of houseplants that refuse to give up, much like their mother. Her art and published work can be found at caitlinannettejohnson.com.



JEN SCHNEIDER
Of Rules (and Rulers)
:: experimental

OF RULES (AND RULERS)

my friend
believed rules
were meant to be broken

and I'd always known
it was she who'd break the ruling standards –

she'd break bark
like lifeguards barked orders.

she was the one who insisted
we walk the runway of seaweed,
sticks, sand, and stones,

of scorched soles and souls that scorn,
and, mostly, pebbles and pockets turned inside out.
the laundry machine not yet a common household
good.

Lycra is as much a statement as a station
for weighing rules and breaking rulers
as striking a pose.

Who cares if we are censored,
she'd said, we've got a right to make
sense of our own days,

without ever truly calculating,
contemplating, or caring for the measurements
of her decision-making --

It's as hot as a damn oven

and I'm tired of cooking, she'd explain to Gods
of sea and standing-room-only beaches,

then snap her fingers – middle
and thumb graced pointer as well as the elastic
of the fabric that hugged her thigh bone,

snippety snap,
and we'd be off –
all cameras on.

The local beaches
as populated as a Hollywood red carpet.

We left our measuring cups in the kitchen.

We were hot
and simply wanted to drink
in summer, in cut offs and curves.

We surfed as whistles blew smoke --

Ladies, the lifeguards would warn
as if we were in danger, when in reality it was
us the world was scared of.

At first, we wouldn't listen
but even the most spirited of us
understood that resistance had limits
and rules, even those meant to be broken,

often result
in arrested developments.

Arrest us!
my friend would laugh
as officers measured the distance between
fabric and bone.

even as they removed us, suits on,
my friend remained persistent --

We'll be back, she'd say
to britches and knobby knees.

We waved as we retreated,
testing waves from dry land,

but expect nothing,
and didn't care if anyone was still watching

Eyes on I! Eyes on the sky!

Rules for fools!

She'd giggle through her words.

It's an elementary attitude, she'd exclaim.
like i before e except after c,
there are always exceptions.

Plus,
the sea is infinitely more welcoming than the sand.

After processing and making payment,
she'd return, ready to rule whatever beach was
open,

with notes and questions,
drafted in six-inch segments, for the censor man

1. Is the distance between knee and suit more or less than the desire to control?
2. Are rules measured in inches or feet?
3. Does fabric stretch as easily as censorship?
4. What's so alarming about a bare thigh outside of the kitchen?
5. Is a woman's wave more or less discerning than that of the ocean at high tide?
6. Who shall bear the weight of change of bare skin remains a metric of amusement.

Notes from my friend's
arraignment/detainment/containment
(1920s swimsuit laws initiate a wave of excitement)

—

Resist and desist share all but one letter.
We're told to mind our P's and Q's, so I do.
Persist, simply resist with an added consonant.
My fashion choices are subject to neither.
They are simply the output
and outcome of my own my singular desire
to connect.

If you do not like what you see, take up bird
watching.
Stretch stockings to secure the plummeting stock
market's abdomen.
Or even better dig a hole in sand and study hermit
crabs.

Please do not prevent me from seducing play.
It's my way of releasing steam.
Of connecting beyond traditional seams.
The kitchen's hot this time of year

Jen Schneider is a community college educator who lives, works, and writes in small spaces in and around Philadelphia. She served as the 2022 Montgomery County (PA) Poet Laureate.



KIERA STUART

:: art + cover art

My art practice explores relationship dynamics, vulnerability, and the connection and similarities between the body and nature. I create surreal figurative oil paintings as psychological maps to process complex emotions and help gain a deeper sense of self-awareness while creating safe spaces to heal.

I begin studio practice by sketching on paper with a pencil or with my body in front of a camera or researching contemporary dance photos with dancers engaging each other. This helps form visual ideas of human connection, whatever feels the most urgent to explore at the time. I then consider how these characters could connect or interact with nature. What environment they might live in, how they are connected or separated from the earth, in what ways can I reflect the similarities between organic patterns and anatomy.

Meditating on our connection to each other and nature helps combat my depression issues, it reminds me that I am not alone. This also reminds me that most people have similar internal conflicts, we have more in common than we usually remember. It's also a way to pray for a future where humans might live in harmony with each other and the planet. I aspire to offer

viewers a dreamscape—a space for introspection on fragility, beauty, and the interconnected nature of our existence. I hope this will help to embolden ideas of women's rights, social and environmental justice. Creating art is my way of healing and hoping for a better future.





ROOTS, 2024
paper, ink, oil on canvas, 58x22



ABANDON, 2024
oil on canvas, 38x58





FREE FALL, 2024
ISSUE COVER ART
oil on canvas, 74x56

MAGPIE

Glen Armstrong

Devon Balwit

David Capps

Colleen Chan

Harley Chapman

Michael Conner

Elena Ender

GJ Gillespie

Maya Jacyszyn

Caitlin Johnson

Zenzali Lael

Aaron Lelito

Gabrielle Miller

Michael Moran

Nathan Nicolau

Lisa Piazza

K.G. Ricci

Jen Schneider

Liam Strong

Jillian Van Hefty

Cover Artist Kiera Stuart

and introducing Ella Grim