



# THE PRAIRIE REVIEW

ISSUE No 9 WINTER 2024

GRASSROOTS MAGAZINE OF POETRY, PROSE, ART AND CRITICISM

## NEW POETRY

JESSICA GAVRILOVSKI

KINGA LIPINSKA

MARGO CHRISTIE

ANDREA GASPAR

TODD EVANS

ALLEN NGUYEN

JANG LIM & JI CHOE

DOMINIQUE GALLIANO

AYMAN REFAAT

CINDY LANDAETA

KALPANA MARKANDEY

## ART PORTFOLIO & COVER ART

MARY CATHERINE

WALTER

## MUSIC & VIDEO CRITICISM

STEPHEN GLADWIN

## FLASH FICTION

BENJAMIN K. HERRINGTON

## PHOTOGRAPHY

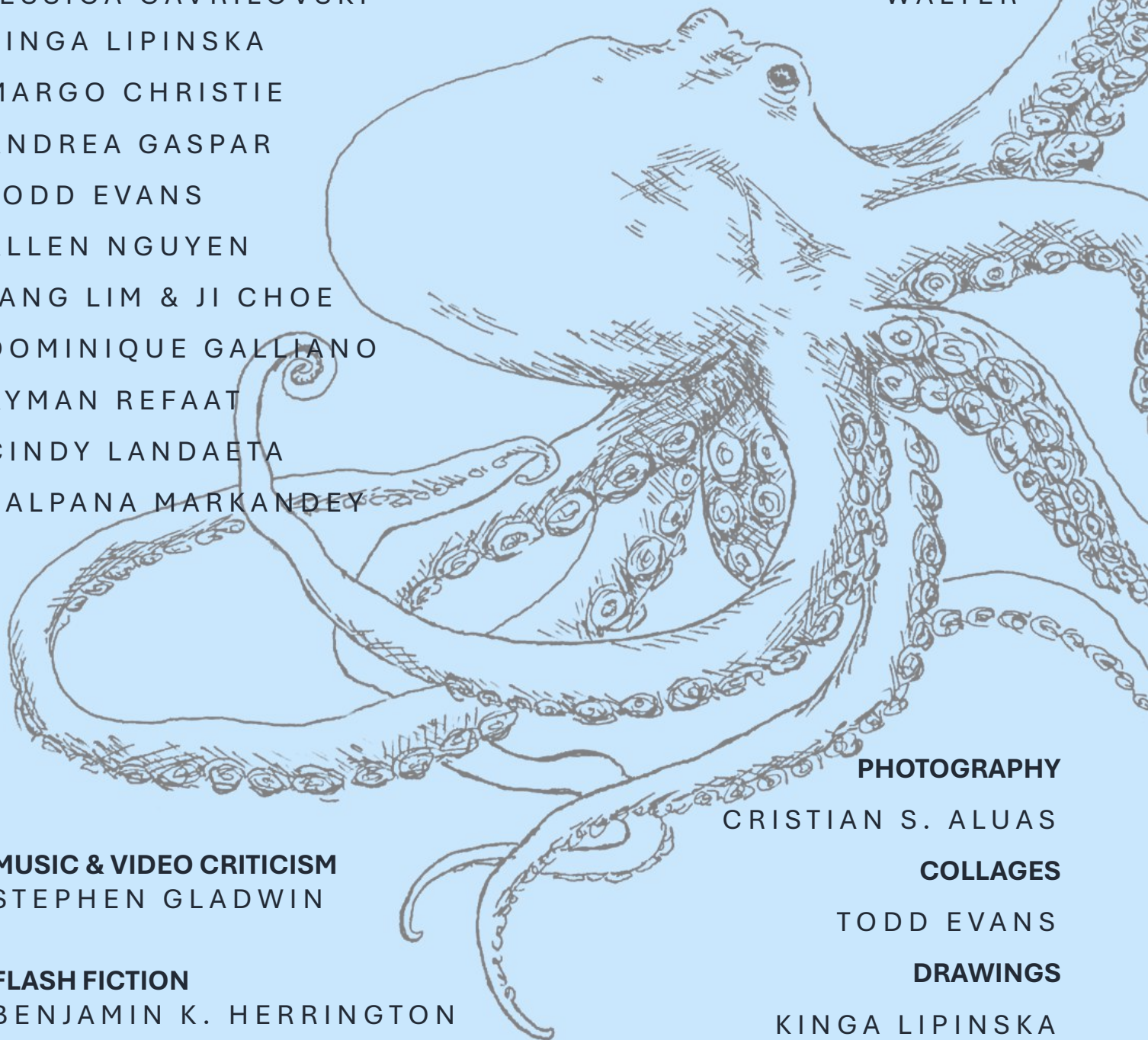
CRISTIAN S. ALUAS

## COLLAGES

TODD EVANS

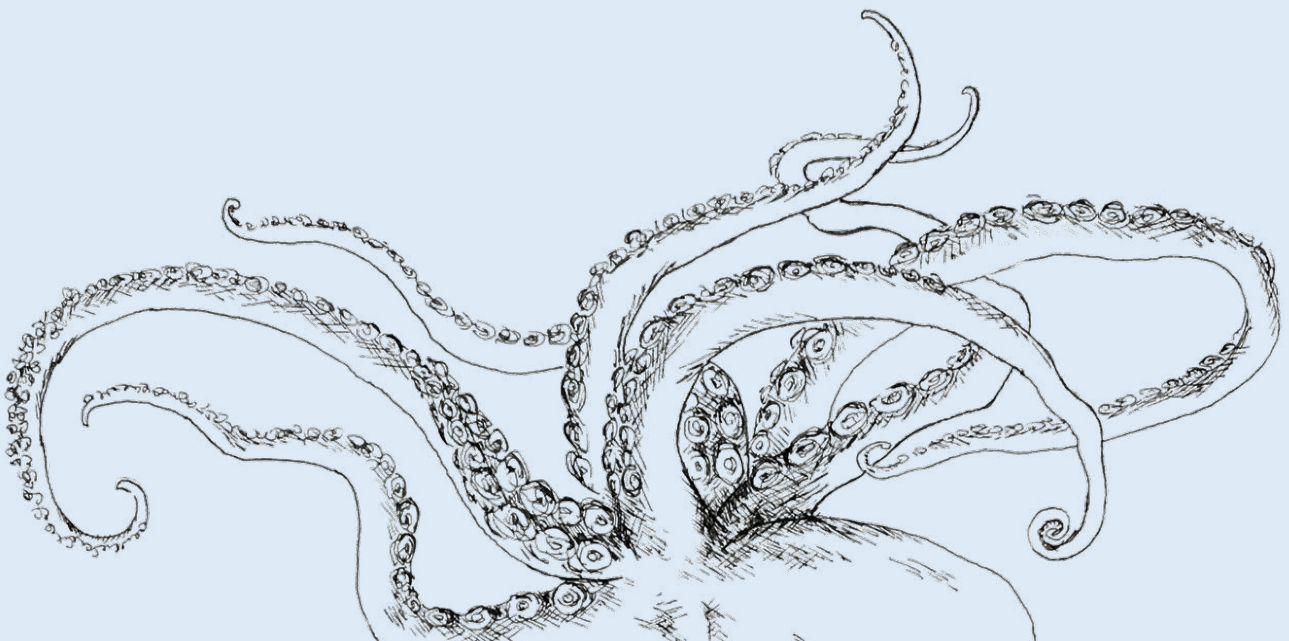
## DRAWINGS

KINGA LIPINSKA



**“O, wind, if winter  
comes, can spring be  
far behind?”**

- Excerpt from *Ode to the West Wind* by  
Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)





## **POETS, WRITERS, ARTISTS, FRIENDS –**

Happy 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary everyone – and welcome to the 9<sup>th</sup> issue of The Prairie Review!

The magazine continues to showcase the intriguing work of grassroots artists and poets. I started the magazine, because I want to encourage creativity as a way of life as well as fellowship and constructive collaboration among broad and varied outlooks. We are, of course, an entirely self funded, entirely indy publication.

In this issue, please spend time with the poems of Jessica Gavriolvski, Margo Christie, and others, as well as photography of Cristian Aluas, drawings of Mary Catherine Walter and reviews of Stephen Gladwin.

This year, I want to deepen TPR's community art practice. Frequent performances and monthly open mic meetings will become a staple of group's activities.

On a final note, read the bios of the contributors at the end. They are fun, inspiring, and so encouraging.

Keep Art Going! Keep Making!

Kinga Lipinska  
Editor



## **CALL FOR PERFORMERS / POETS**

If you are a performance poet, actor, and / or a musician, consider joining the core group of our writers and creatives in working on performance-oriented events focusing on poetry, spoken word, and acoustic music.

If you want to be one or all of these ... this is also a call for you. I am not necessarily looking for people with experience but for people with vision, voice, and a desire to immerse in this kind of experience.

Starting in April, we are going to take on a series of bi-monthly shows at the Rhine Hall Distillery. I intend to try and organize this without needless rehearsals or unnecessary hassles. But it does not mean it will not be curated ... hey, we still want to do this well.

If you would like to talk to me about performing, please write me at [editor@theprairiereview.com](mailto:editor@theprairiereview.com) If you have never been to one of our readings but are interested in the idea of poetry & performance, please stop by for our next monthly in-person poetry session at City News Cafe. Dates and location are listed on The Poetry Meetup page.

## The Bird

“Be happy and be joyful,” I hear them sing  
How does the bird mask the pain of two broken wings?  
I must hush, I must shush, I must never speak a word again  
About the journey of my life that leads me to where I am  
“We are here now, it does not matter what happened before,”  
Dismissing how the bird finds its direction in memory, over and over  
And after flying countless circles, there was never a place to safely land  
So, I went my own way, and landed in the sand  
“Why are you here? Why are you there?”  
The bird is critiqued for its healing and self-care  
But the bird cannot go where it was never welcomed  
Instead, it flies with its broken wings to where the pain is seldom  
Onward and upward, to the next nest  
Rarely can the bird ever stay put to find rest  
Its soul carries far too much heartache and despair  
Wondering how on earth was this life ever fair?  
Broken wings do not mend in a day  
Or a month  
Or even a year  
When the wings have been broken and frayed  
For nearly three decades



**Just like Them**

I am just like my mother  
Angry at the cards I had been dealt  
Unsure of who I am  
Because my story was decided by generations before me  
I am just like my father  
Distant, cold, and afraid  
Unsure how to speak up for myself  
Because my voice has only ever been silenced  
Those who knew them  
Say I have my mother's hair,  
My father's eyes,  
His good looks,  
And my mother's lies  
Inheriting my father's looks was a blessing  
Because by the time I was 25, I had a body count much higher  
That helped fill the void of wanting to feel wanted  
Without the commitment of tying myself down  
Without having to be vulnerable and show myself  
Flaws, scars, and all  
Inheriting my mother's lies has saved my life  
Because I was able to live a life for myself  
And enough of the life that her parents had planned out for me  
"Married by 19, children by 21," they demanded  
Forgetting that I had no role model  
So why would I dream of marriage and children?

I am just like my mother  
Heartbroken and alone  
Watching everyone's lives move forward  
While mine has yet to begin  
I can say it is because I had no dreams for myself  
Other than death and distractions  
But I also know  
It is because I am scared of the unknown  
I am just like my father  
Lacking accountability  
For the role I play in my own suffering

And for allowing this pain to define me  
I can say it is because I had no time to figure myself out  
Because I really, truly didn't - I had to survive  
But I also know  
It is because I am looking for the easy way out  
I am just like them both  
Unable to be a parent

<거울>

나는 매일 미시시피강을 건넵니다. 증기선이 다닐 때는 분주한 항구였던 도시,  
데이븐포트는 이 강의 종류 정도되는데, 동서의 독을 건널라 치면 약 2마일(3.2Km)  
정도됩니다. 미시시피강을 경계로 하는 시카고가 있는 일리노이주와 아이오와주, 강을  
건너면 그 첫 도시가 바로 데이븐포트(Davenport)입니다. 넓고 깊은 이 강을 지나려면 난  
설레임에 매일처럼 기대가 되요. 오늘은 또 무슨 모습일까...하고. 그저께 새벽에는  
보름달이던데, 남으로 유유히 흐르는 물결을 거슬러 섬광처럼 비추는 그 달빛이 내 가슴도  
가득히 포옹하듯 넘쳐 행복함에 벅찼습니다.

늘 거기에서 흐르고  
늘 뜨는 달이건만  
매일처럼 강은 달을 실어  
남으로 흐릅니다.

그런데 한 달에 한 번은  
달이 강 위에 조각보 그림들을  
가장 نرم한 빛깔로 한가득 단장해 놓고  
왈츠를 추듯 서로를 안고 천천히 밤새도록 남으로 내닫습니다.

나는 그들의 깃털처럼 많은 날들의  
만남과 동행을 보면서,  
우리가 살며 인연을 맺는 사람들도  
이들처럼 상대를 더 빛나게 해주는 노력이 이렇게 자연스러우면 좋겠다고 생각해  
보았습니다.



강은 달의 거울이 되고  
달도 강의 거울이 되듯,  
나도, 우리도 원하든 원치않든 누군가의 거울이 됩니다.

거울을 통해서 상대하는 그의 좋은점은 잘 발현이 되고,  
약점은 오히려 아름답게 채색되는 그런 거울이 되었으면 좋겠습니다.

그렇지만 아무리 봐도 깨진 거울 같은 나.  
찬란한 빛을 품고 보여주기에는  
터무니 없이 초라하고 부끄럽지만....

한가지 소원이 있다면,  
아내의 얼굴에  
평생 웃음은 보여줄 수 없는 거울이지만  
눈물은 없었으면 좋겠습니다.

MR. JANG LIM

TRANSLATED FROM KOREAN MS. JI CHOE

I drive my truck across the Mississippi every day at Davenport, which used to be a busy port city when steam ships sailed. The old port is about midpoint of the river, and the bridge is two miles across. What will the river be like today? The daily anticipation of passing through this deep and wide river fills my heart every time I approach the bridge. One day just before dawn, the light of the full moon was flashing upon the waves flowing unctuously south. In the midst of melancholy, I felt as though I had fallen into the river and become a part of it. The river came rushing toward me and my heart overflowed with happiness. - JANG LIM

<Mississippi Mirror>

The river ever flowing

The moon ever rising

Every day the river

Carries the moon south

Then once a month

The moon paints a colorful quilt on the river

*Jogakbo* in the most dashing colors

They hold each other in a waltz all night long

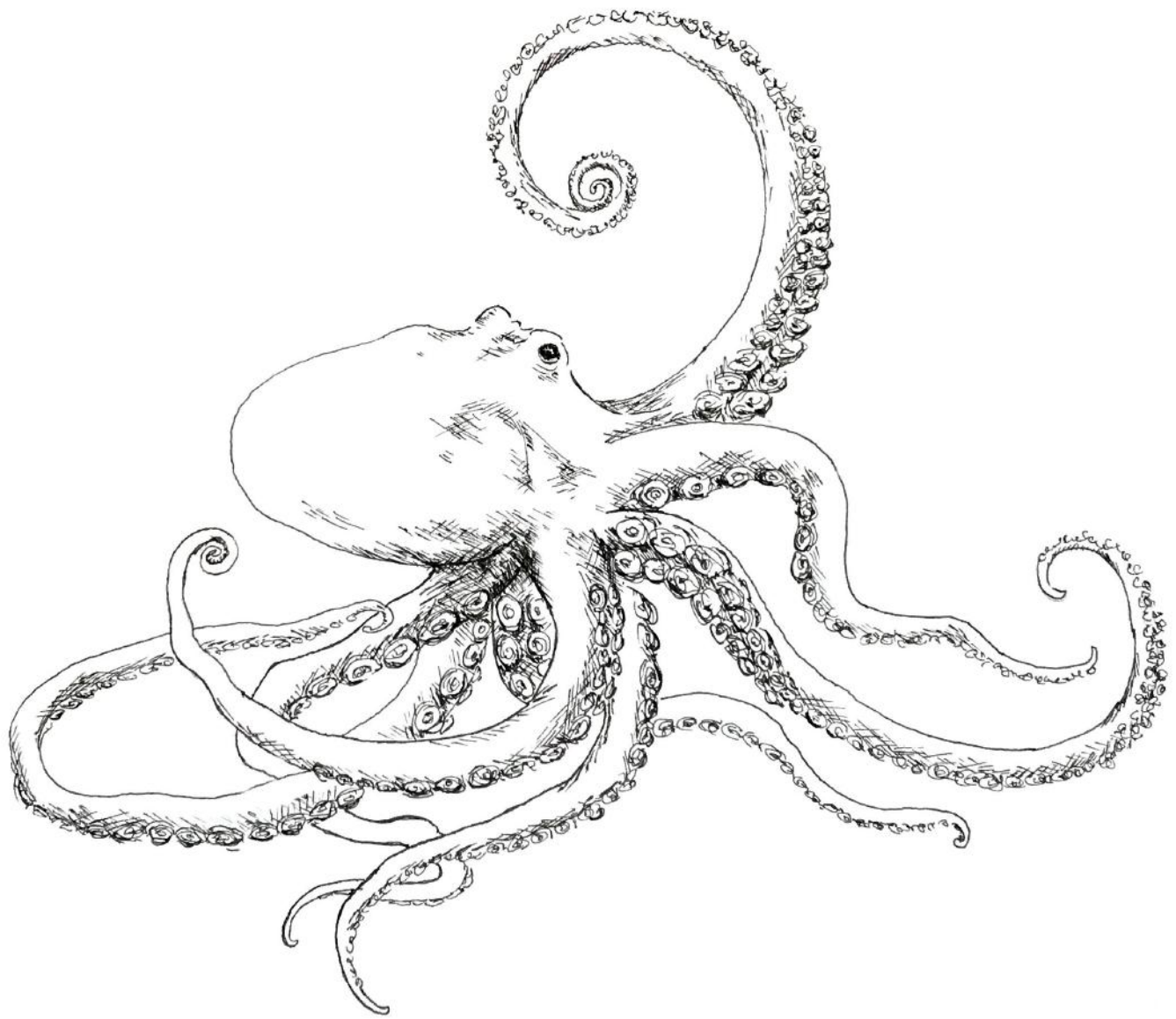
The river becomes a mirror for the moon

And the moon becomes a mirror for the river

The days approach me like innumerable waves  
We become each other's mirror whether we want to or not  
Watching our meeting and accompanying  
Those we carry and those we flow with  
Would that we could shine so clearly for each other

When a couple first meets  
They wish to show their beloved's best facets  
But *yuhboh*, no matter how much I look  
My mirror is ridiculously shabby, shallow and obscure  
I don't want to show you my mirror in bright light

If I could be granted one wish  
Though a smile may not hold for long  
When my beloved gazes upon me  
May my river flow generously  
May my river absorb her tears



Mary Catherine Walter  
**DRAWINGS**

Art helps us to see truth through beauty. If we close our eyes and envision a place we love, we remember what is beautiful about it. We see in simplicity its essence, in the same way that lines and brushstrokes bring wholeness to a drawing, reminding us of a memory or making us yearn to be someplace. Art does not simply capture, however; it directs us to action and contemplation. As the poet Rainer Maria Rilke concludes in *Archaic Torso of Apollo*, art asks us to change our life.

How does it ask us to change? I think by asking us to give. Beauty is inherently contagious and unitive; we are inclined to share and take part in it. A love of art and beauty was planted within me as early as I can remember by visiting museums and traveling with my family. This eventually led me to pursue studies and a career in classical architecture where I was formally taught how to draw, observe from life, and apply principles such as proportion, composition, and harmony to design.

As both an architectural designer and artist, drawing allows me to share the beauty of places, real or conceptual, with others. Although I practice in various media, including oil paint and watercolor, my architectural sketches are often simple graphite or pen and ink washes en plein air. Regardless of the medium or subject matter though, I draw so I can see.

Mary Catherine Walter  
ARTIST STATEMENT



Mary Catherine Walter  
Mount Vernon Place





Mary Catherine Walter,  
Villa Giulia

Mary Catherine Walter,  
Place des Vosges



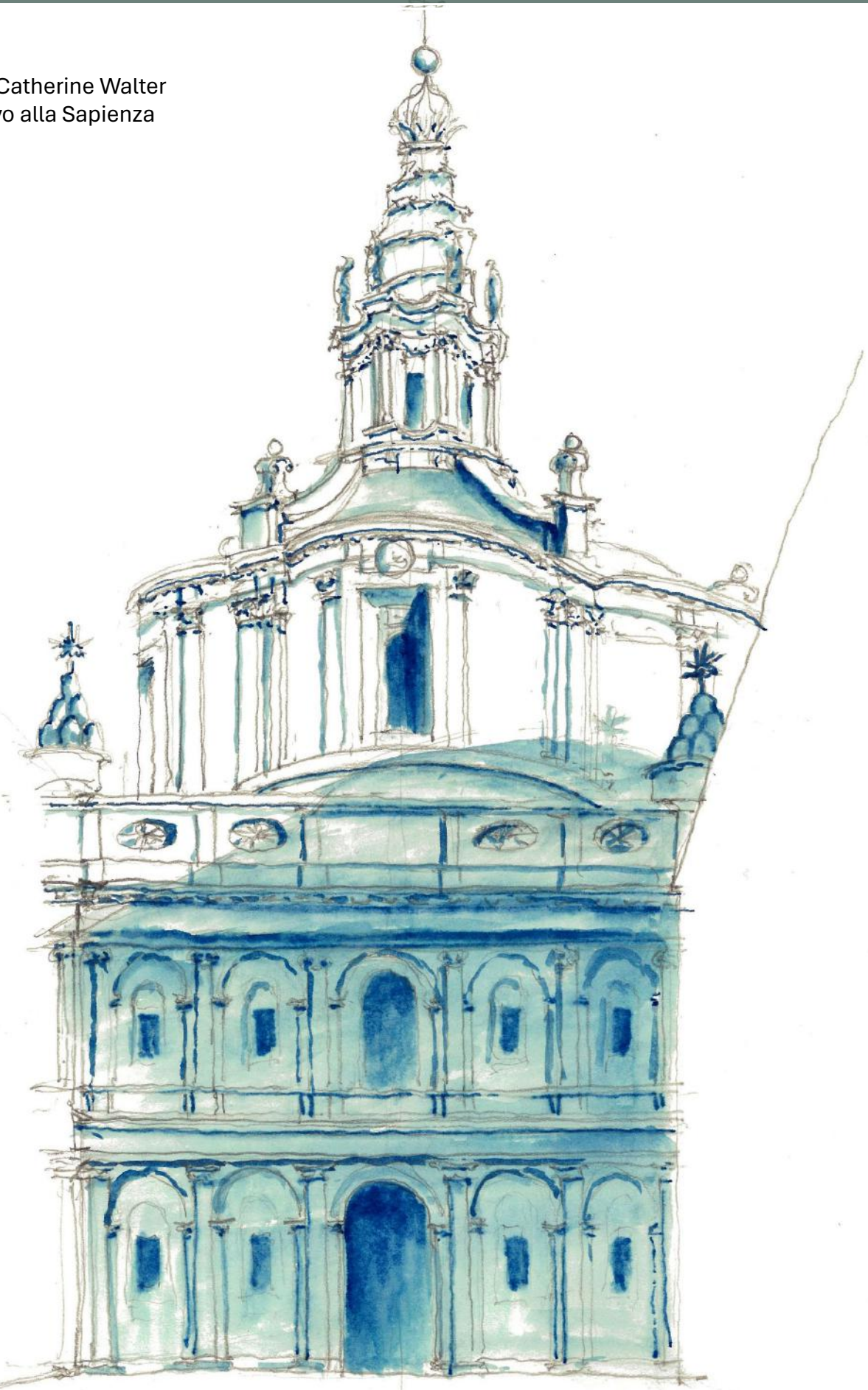




Mary Catherine Walter  
St. Etienne du Mont



Mary Catherine Walter  
Santivo alla Sapienza







Mary Catherine Walter  
Hackerman House

**Big Apple, Cherry on Top**

A night of steady drinking and we plopped down  
You and I, onto the grimy, gum-crusted walk  
In front of a bar that called itself a club  
And began to plot our escape  
From Philly's Cinderella sister city  
Too far south to be hip, this was true  
We were all east coast, but everyone knew  
That north was where it was at  
South was out of the question  
And the legacy of we Baltimoreans  
Was always to be in between  
And somewhat lesser-than

New York City loomed large  
Mythical like Gotham in the tales of our youth  
They called it Big Apple, but for us  
It was our collective broken Cherry  
Those who'd been there, done that  
Or, better yet, made that constant buzz  
A hardcore habit  
Smiled, like in memory of their first, best sex  
And who among us didn't want it like that

You were a trust fund kid  
With money set aside for you to be great  
Good at the act, you smiled, close-lipped  
Like those in the know  
While I, raw talent, sex appeal and not much else  
Was drunk on jazz and Jack Kerouac  
Everyone at the club was reading him  
Some were trying to write like him  
But I wanted to drink him up  
In endless shots of whatever it was  
That he loved so terribly much  
I wanted to rise, like steam, from the cold, wet streets  
Pounded hard  
By his New York City feet

So, the following week, we set out  
You and I, clickety-clack on the Amtrak track  
Past lesser Philadelphia  
Into the bruised lower half  
Of the one and only Apple

By day, you consulted slips of paper  
Names and numbers scribbled there  
Phones rang on walls and desks  
Addresses and directions had to be asked for  
There were taxis to hail, buses to catch  
The depths of subway tunnels to descend  
And at the other end  
Stairs and stairs and stairs, so many of them!  
The meaning of “walk-up,” unknown to me yet  
Fell effortlessly from your dropped lower lip

Then night fell, and we found ourselves again  
At street level in an East Village bar  
That didn't have to pretend  
All highballs and beers, neon and smoke  
One pool table, a good many players  
And off in a corner, a rickety chair leaned back  
And my eyes caught the dark and dreamy ones  
Of its reckless inhabitant

If you were jealous in that moment, you kept it hid  
You had a trust fund, addresses on slips of paper  
And a plan to join to ranks of those in the know  
In a Greenwich Village apartment of your own  
While I had only a smoky vision

Time passed, and once, just once  
We got together, we three  
You, my swarthy new husband and me  
In a Puerto Rican bar down in Alphabet City  
Then once, just once  
When you thought I wouldn't know  
You showed up at my husband's apartment alone



Months, maybe years, went by and once again  
I found myself back home

Back at the bar that called itself a club, and  
Wondering what became of you  
I brought the matter up  
“I’d smash her head like a rotten melon” was what was said  
By another of your one-time friends  
And that was how I learned you were the type  
To always want a bite of another woman’s fruit  
And we laughed about it, your old friend and I  
And drank  
Toasting Jack Kerouac  
And jazz  
And New York City  
And times gone by

**Petals**

How young was I?  
Not yet bloomed, when I lived in a home  
Not my own. In a room  
Without furniture, some cushions on the floor  
Which I fashioned into a bed  
I spread my meager possessions around  
Bottles of lotion and shampoo  
Bangle bracelets, earrings that dangled  
Some lifted from unsuspecting shops  
Some gifted by unsuspecting, hot-shot lovers  
I'd never again see  
This was my world, unfolded before me

Nights, I tiptoed out to disco bars  
Hitching rides, flirting  
Dancing under flashing lights  
Earrings dangling, face aglow  
Ready for whomever, whatever  
Ready to just go  
Away  
To where?  
I didn't know or care

Nowadays, home is the bed I lie in  
Sometimes peacefully, sometimes not  
I work to rid myself of things.  
Like those earrings I no longer wear  
I haven't a care  
For anything left dangling

**Like yesterday**

Remember those parties down by the river?  
Kids spilling out of cars, their first one bought  
Or borrowed, perhaps, from a dad who thought  
They were anywhere but there

Sometimes there were more than a dozen  
Parked on cutouts of creek bed sand  
Kids restless, jumpy, hungry  
For a smoke, a drink, a toke  
Kids from other neighborhoods  
Who we didn't even know  
Vying for taste of each other

Beer got spilled in horseplay once  
And a bunch of kids got mad  
Friends who just met became enemies  
Real quick over something like that  
But with us, it was teasing and ribbing  
And no one cared about those little jabs  
It was understood that Lumpy's head was lumpy, in fact  
That Stick was tall and thin  
(And some girl said that wasn't all, hint-hint)  
And you, with your cocky stance and pouting big lips,  
You thought you were Mick Jagger

Remember the night you walked me home  
How we got separated from all those cars, I don't know  
But it's in my mind like a dream that skips  
Over the stuff that isn't that important  
Me on the side of the road  
You put me there, thumb out  
And when a car stopped, you hopped  
Out of bushes  
And wedged between me and him  
And we tried hard not to laugh at that old geezer's chagrin  
Til he turned the joke on us  
And up that long hill we had to walk

There was a street-light in front of my house  
Do you recall?  
How we circled each other like cats facing off  
Til you called me by my last name  
And reached for me  
But that was all

The next day and the next and the one after that  
It seemed you just forgot that kiss  
But I'll tell you what  
Your hands on my waist formed a habit in me  
Long-lasting, heart-breaking  
And hard, if not impossible, to really shake off



TODD EVANS  
**REVERT**

MIXED MEDIA COLLAGE: WATERCOLOR, INK, MICA, AND PAPER ON CANVAS.



## Hermit Thoughts

(an excerpt from a longer project)

Necromancers speak  
with antiques, those left  
conceive rewind  
to who people were,  
how they've used time.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ancient Chinese court,  
bells and drums drew drawings in air,  
drew people  
to procession of the king.  
People observed shadows on stones  
that indicated when their next meal would be.  
Operated a mammoth machine  
with water buckets, pulleys, telescope similarities.  
Found meaning in movements  
above.  
With intention to trade,  
Europeans brought gifts, jewels, and clocks.  
Emperor Ch'ien Lung addressed George III,  
expressed Celestial Court's aim,  
To achieve good government  
and not attach value to strange jewels, precious objects.  
Nothing country lacks.  
Doesn't need  
George's country's manufactures.  
Economic independence, but Europeans  
wanted resources, objects from China, namely tea,  
porcelain, silk, and opium.  
Thirst for more led to War;  
then, treaty compelled China to trade,  
give large indemnity,  
opium, porcelain, silk,  
and tea.



\*\*\*\*\*

Characters contact objects.  
Objects, morph and each person, bear  
mind. Self birth  
that gives first  
creative intelligence impetus, forms  
crystalize stories and realistic human beings.  
Somewhere, a skeleton key  
to rooms  
where excessive desire is a ghost  
without power.  
But can't fit  
Frankenstein back in the coffin.

\*\*\*\*\*

Maybe hermit is a watch repair man,  
opens up, digs through them.  
Mechanisms spin,  
balance wheel teeters, mainspring uncoils.  
Eighth, twelfth centuries,  
in China, work-output per unit of time  
unknown.  
Though, unremitting diligence in tasks,  
a great virtue.  
In Europe, clocks,  
but agrarian rhythms dominated economy.  
Hermit could wake up early.  
Then, free of haste, careless of exactitude, unconcerned by productivity,  
sober and modest  
tending to field  
greens on porcelain.  
Little appetite for more.  
Court of China adopted clocks, watches;  
clerk of council observed  
some who possess these  
still forgot meetings.  
Ones who never missed meetings

didn't follow clocks.

Hermit's therapist says studies  
show students who live farther  
from school arrive to class earlier  
than those who live closer.

More time on mind,  
more attention to time  
less time one has.

Clocks run fast.

Alarms buzz intense.

Press on, convinced.

\*\*\*\*\*

Dizzy inside algorithms' technologies  
spells, hypnoses.

He searches for event's  
date, taps icon, swiping hours on webpage.

Faces, profiles, life  
not currently lived.

\*\*\*\*\*

Hermit behind hillside, watching  
a green flat under paper lamps  
where servers with plumed hats  
bring out cocktail platters.  
Cards speak to patrons  
who left electronics in overfilled desk drawers.

On stage,  
performer does a number  
that rattles folks to laugh, holler,  
Good looking young men in tight underwear  
run hands over queens' flowing dresses  
while matron reads palms.  
They've followed fate,  
concocted fluid that's taken them.

Hermit fiddles his fingers,



TODD EVANS

**SPRINGBOARD**

MIXED MEDIA COLLAGE: WATERCOLOR, INK, MICA, AND PAPER ON CANVAS.

looks at his feet he yearns for  
Social event next Friday,  
device remembers.

\*\*\*\*\*

Hermit wonders  
if he could step on yacht  
with captain's hat,  
clinking glasses with  
Bikini-clad women  
and men with muscles  
who make time for him  
in their schedules.

\*\*\*\*\*

Sailor rotates big wheel quick,  
right, left, counteracts strong wind  
Waves crash,  
lightning zig-zags  
ship off-balance; then,  
quietness.  
Daybreak, storm subsided.  
Captain in the unknown without information.  
No tool for longitude, doesn't know where, when  
Rations deplete,  
an increase  
in starving, lack of nutrients,  
they're ravenous  
Drools, eyes overtaken  
by hunger.  
When ship barrels into cliffs,  
Bones, and one heart beats  
on deck.  
If only captain was given  
chronometer.  
In circumstances, watches, clocks needed  
for life, death, ability to function.  
Air traffic controllers plan for plane



# TODD EVANS

when numbers flash on screen.  
Stoplights set on timers,  
and cars follow red, yellow, green,  
but watch  
this device of precious material.  
When does sword's edge  
sweep too close to the head?

\*\*\*\*\*

Inside a disc the size of fingertip,  
steel coil tightens around pin,  
and energy compounds release  
on sharp teeth  
slowing down  
with each  
connecting gear spinning  
to  
ultimate  
lock, tock, tick, click, days, hours, minutes,  
and seconds.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chandelier's chain hangs,  
which he pulls, but no light  
though shadows rise on walls,  
lift arms; they fly.  
Screech and cry.  
Red dots appear, their eyes,  
calls for him to float, say,  
"Meeting new people  
won't hurt him."  
Follow strict adherence  
to built-in mechanism, nature's rhythms,  
sunrises, slow moon-smiles,  
in common with animals.

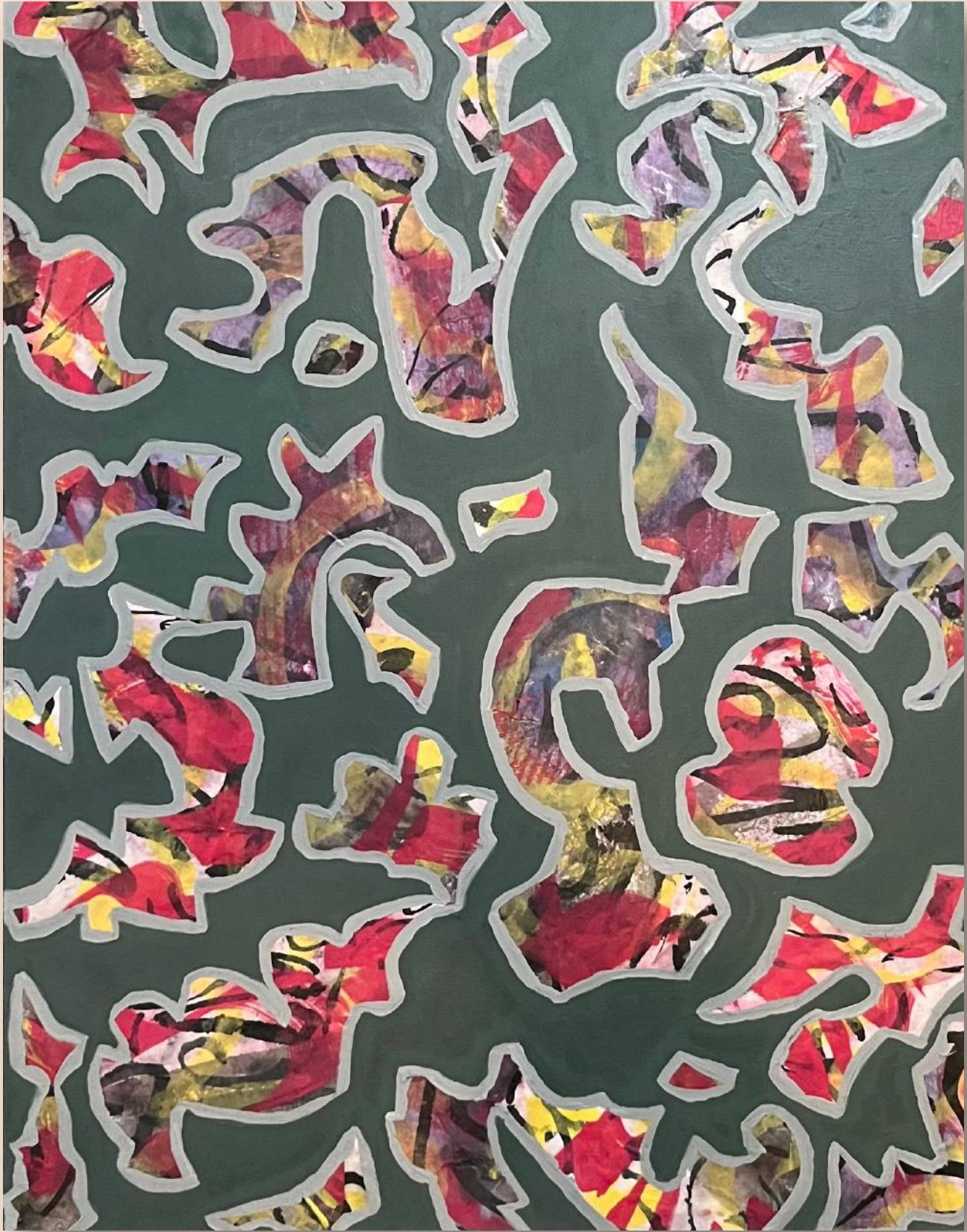
\*\*\*\*\*

Open area inside fence that reaches,

## TODD EVANS

a big cage for birds of prey.  
Two grey bald birds. Wings folded,  
both at height of doors.  
Placard reads, "Cinereous Vultures."  
Of all similar species,  
these tear flesh with most force.  
Starlings take bites from raw blood  
carcass, the vultures' leftovers.  
Other starlings perch  
on fence.  
A door slams whoosh  
With wings,  
starlings cut into cold  
February air and splash  
into sky,  
but vultures latch their eyes  
on him.  
Cinereous one  
also known as the Monk that feeds on  
human remains.  
Vultures been on this planet  
for estimated fifty million  
years.





TODD EVANS

**DINOSAUR EGG**

MIXED MEDIA COLLAGE: WATERCOLOR, INK, MICA, AND PAPER ON CANVAS.

## **Mother was a Desolate Landscape**

The wind blew me away into that desolate landscape of my dreams.  
I stood still amongst the stale cacti and caked mud, nothing but barren earth and empty sky.

I waited

wondering why I had come to this place,  
a haunted stranger in a familiar land.

I waited.

And as I waited, I realized this was the land of my mother,  
that she was the landscape I walked upon.  
A body buried in stone and dust,  
there was no space for me there and yet

it was the only space for me.

I climbed across her rock-hewn ribs,  
rivulets of long gone water lingered in dust upon the arid plain of her stomach.  
A Mother Earth that was hardened and dry,  
full of dirt and rocks and things long dead.

Brown dust swirls in the air, clogging my throat,  
separating my lungs from my mouth.  
I cannot cry out.

Juiceless and acrid, a fish on the shore of a barren ocean,  
I cannot breathe.  
My body heaves and twists from lack.  
Meanwhile, the fish rots.

Flesh and bone decay, sitting upon the earth unable to receive it.  
Immobile, unmoving mother.

I gasp  
and fall  
silent.

An eerie stillness as I curl against the wind-worn rocks  
tracing desperate cracks in the earth that once held blood long since dried,  
a silent echo of life never heard.

A gardenless Gaia, frozen by her Medusa mother  
whose snakes raged, biting her baby soft cheeks.  
The poison ran to me from my  
still  
cold  
mother,  
spoilt milk from her icy paralysis.

No warm breast to nurse upon,  
the baby withers

and dries

and births her own baby from her desolate womb,  
a baby left to the crows on this motherless landscape,  
as a single cigarette burns in the kitchen.

## The Lover

Hello-  
a voice in the smoky dark poured out,  
dripping words that sent shivers down my untraced spine.  
Are you here alone?  
the bottle asked lasciviously, with a glimmering wink.  
How about a drink?  
Yes, cried out my heart. Parched.

It had been 10 years in the desert.  
Even the cacti were dried up; all their needles had been dropped.

Defenseless.

I curled my body around the bar and delicately ran my finger around the edge of the glass set before me.  
The longing leapt through me.  
I trembled.  
Tentatively, I lifted the glass to my mouth, feeling its icy edge along my lip and tongue.  
My heart skipped a beat.  
I felt a cool embrace and a rush of heat fill my body as I swallowed it whole, tasting darkness in the empty glass left behind.

Thirst.

Inside the gleaming glass, the siren sang her song.  
I shyly avoided her unrelenting gaze  
that was eager to pull me in to some forgotten shore.

But alas  
I had no mast

and was impatient to experience more of the healing waters that flowed from her  
rigid body.

Each sip was ecstasy.

As I drank, I threw my head back and gulped her down.  
I lost myself.  
Down.

And drowned.



## MUSIC REVIEW

### Second Woman

What would you get if you crossed the whacked-out rhythms of Aphex Twin with the cerebral workouts of Autechre? You'd get Second Woman, one of the most exciting groups to turn the knobs since, well, those guys. That's a bold statement, but it's true: over four releases, they've explored rhythm and atmosphere as vigorously as those titans and even managed to best them at times.

Their 2016 debut set the formula: a scatterplot of skittering beats and shattered rhythms morphing around dark clouds of ambience. Rhythm is their plaything, and it's thrilling to hear what they do with it. The first three tracks have particularly rococo rhythms. "100407jd7"'s cord of ricocheting beats see-saws spasmodically, shifting pitch as it wraps around a rising fog of ambience. It climaxes with a jackhammering tempo that exhausts itself in a flourish of notes before evaporating into moody atmosphere.

This interplay between the atom-smashing beats and the nuclear winter of the atmosphere stages the drama of Second Woman. It all comes together on the headiest track, "200601je6." It starts with a volatile coupling of blasting beats and synth lines and then plasters on crisscrossing rhythms both regular and highly irregular, turning the whole thing into a highway interchange of unlikely grooves and near melodies (this stuff is funky!). And then there's the ambience, a cloud cover of dubbed synth spread over and around this polyrhythmic traffic flow. Then it strips to its final bones of synthesizers fighting amongst themselves before a vast storm cloud annihilates everything. This is some of the most compelling electronic music ever made.



## STEPHEN GLADWIN

The third track, “300528mj1,” is the most experimental of the three. A loose framework of beats forms a sort of rhythm that scuttles around a recurring synth lick that is metallic, dubby, and desolate. A frayed string of ambience barely flickers. This is the sound of abandoned buildings and abandoned hopes, of a society wasted by machines of its own making. And it’s utterly invigorating in its blown-out, post-apocalyptic way.

But there’s more: Second Woman has a real ear for texture, and they have range. “////^\\” has a warmth — even hope — to it, and it really soars towards the end (perhaps there’s hope even in the apocalypse). And sometimes they nearly abandon song structure, like on “////^.” It sounds more like computation than composition, like the outer reaches of Microstoria with its sounds of dying machinery and uneasy atmosphere.

So they have their influences. But just try to find that Second Woman sound in the Autechre or Aphex Twin catalogs. Let alone Microstoria’s. Sure, Autechre’s *Tre Repetae* and Aphex Twin’s drill-and-bass lunacies may come close. But while those works *are* compositional triumphs, they clearly don’t spring from the same minds as Second Woman collaborators Josh Eustis and Turk Dietrich. After all, Aphex Twin delighted in pissing on the line between the experimental and the eccentric, whereas Second Woman’s brooding approach leaves no room for shenanigans. And while Autechre took a scalpel to dance music with their way-out experiments, rarely did they exploit the elasticity of beats to construct a kind of rhythmic pointillism like Second Woman does.

What results is music that matches Aphex Twin’s gonzo approach to rhythm and Autechre’s experimentalism but keeps it relatively accessible. That’s quite a feat, and more than enough to silence any claims they’re an Autechre or Aphex clone. Easy listening it ain’t, but it will provide many points of fascination for adventurous listeners. Bring on #5!

**MUSIC & VIDEO**

**Rupaul: Supermodel (You Better Work)**

The year was 1992, and you'd think this ode to the catwalk would've sent panic through American living rooms. After all, it came with a music video that was black, proud, and highly homosexual — a lot of drag was in it. And this was the early '90s, with a missing letter in LGBTQ and a military about to futz with Don't Ask Don't Tell. But it succeeded; it was on the charts. Hell, even Kurt Cobain was a fan. Cool!

How did this happen? Turns out it's hardly about gayness and more about celebrity and being a real go-getter (you better work!). Both are feel-good obsessions for Americans — until they're worn down by them — so they can take the edge off “the other” as long as that other radiates them. Rupaul (in drag or out) must've known all this, so there's an air of calculation here. But it's calculation in the mold of Madonna: it's always secondary to the music, and it's good. It bounces freely on its beats and his surprisingly assured vocals. It's feisty yet carefree, with lyrics that are sassy little puff pastries of empowerment (“you better work it girl, do your thing on the runway!”; “I see your picture everywhere, a million dollar derrière!”).

And like Madonna's early work, this is a star-making vehicle. All throughout the video Ru is utterly himself, effulgent and flexing his *femme*. He's the drag queen everyone can agree on, whether hitting the b-ball court with the fellas on a shoot (a lovely bit) or strutting with some school girls downtown. He couldn't be more different than the grotesque subversion of Divine, John Waters's drag freak from his rough-and-ready early films.



Something told me this wasn't the one-time fluff of a Kajagoogoo or a Thomas Dolby. There was vision, and this was something new. Here was someone born to take a chomp out of life. Sure enough, we're in the midst of a sort of RuPaul, Inc: there's his Drag Race and all its spin-offs, a makeup collection and an upcoming memoir. All this sweat and brand-building put his net-worth north of \$60M. So, Americans get to say "good for him" to remind themselves the system still works. Never mind that some of those Americans still aren't so sure about gays – or what the "system" has in mind for the middle class.

STEPHEN GLADWIN



## MUSIC REVIEW

### Richie Hawtin: *Closer to the Edit*

I was never quite sold on Hawtin's *Decks EFX & 909*, his grand take on the mix album. There were moments, yes, but too often the beats plowed over the intrigue of his stripped-down masterworks like "Consume" and "Consumed." Those were immensely private noirs of paranoia and atmosphere, held in place by a picked-clean spinal column of shockingly austere beats and synth. Yet there was a fullness to them. They were isolated and unsettled, and dependent on electronics for their being — music for our times. He made them under his Plastikman guise, and they redefine "darkly fascinating." *Closer to the Edit* is a kind of compromise. It's cerebral and prone to atmosphere like the Plastikman tracks but layers more insistent rhythms and beats onto the Plastik for added funk. Moody and continually contemplative, it gradually shifts its tempos and intensities like a long rainstorm. That means you can't quite dance to it. No, it's more of a cinematic sketch, with probing beats opening the music like a swinging lightbulb scattering illumination across a warehouse. And there's a certain elegance here: the beats are hard and unbreakable ball bearings of sound but misted with brooding synth. Vocals are rarely heard, and only used for effect. Some have said it's *too simple*. That 53 minutes is too long for something so spare. But we're talking about Richie Hawtin, the mad genius of minimalism. So that means no sound is wasted, and all chosen with unerring taste. It ends up the thinking person's mix album, sensual *and* cerebral like some jazz (another thinking person's genre). Essential.

**Greasy**

Grief spatters across my face, leaves hot red welts. Wax paper handkerchief gives way.

Salty translucence. i can no longer remember who i was.

Decades ago, my father told me a story about growing up in rural Indiana. About my grandpa's old Ford. About my father & his two younger sisters in the backseat. Waiting to go to the show.

My grandparents weren't much for showing up on time for the show. Much less sitting through previews. My father said he saw more second halves of films than he'd care to remember. Tickets were cheaper after the show started.

My father & his two younger sisters. In the backseat. Waiting. Grandma waiting shotgun. Grandpa arrived lately, cigarette dangling from lip. He turned the key. The old Ford just whinnied, whinged.

*Goddamn car* (he said under his breath).

If i had to guess, the cat had crawled up under the hood to stay warm. If i had to guess, my father did not scream or cry like his mother & two younger sisters when the cat sprayed out the shiny chrome grill. The garage wall suddenly painted furry, splotchy, red.

If i had to guess, my reaction to my father's story was probably similar to his reaction, to my grandpa's reaction, to the whole mis-en-scene: cat guts, screams, tears.

*Goddamnit* (we said under our breath).

Distaste lingering in our mouths.

Our tear ducts long since cauterized by existential grease.



CRISTIAN S. ALUAS

**PHOTOGRAPHY**





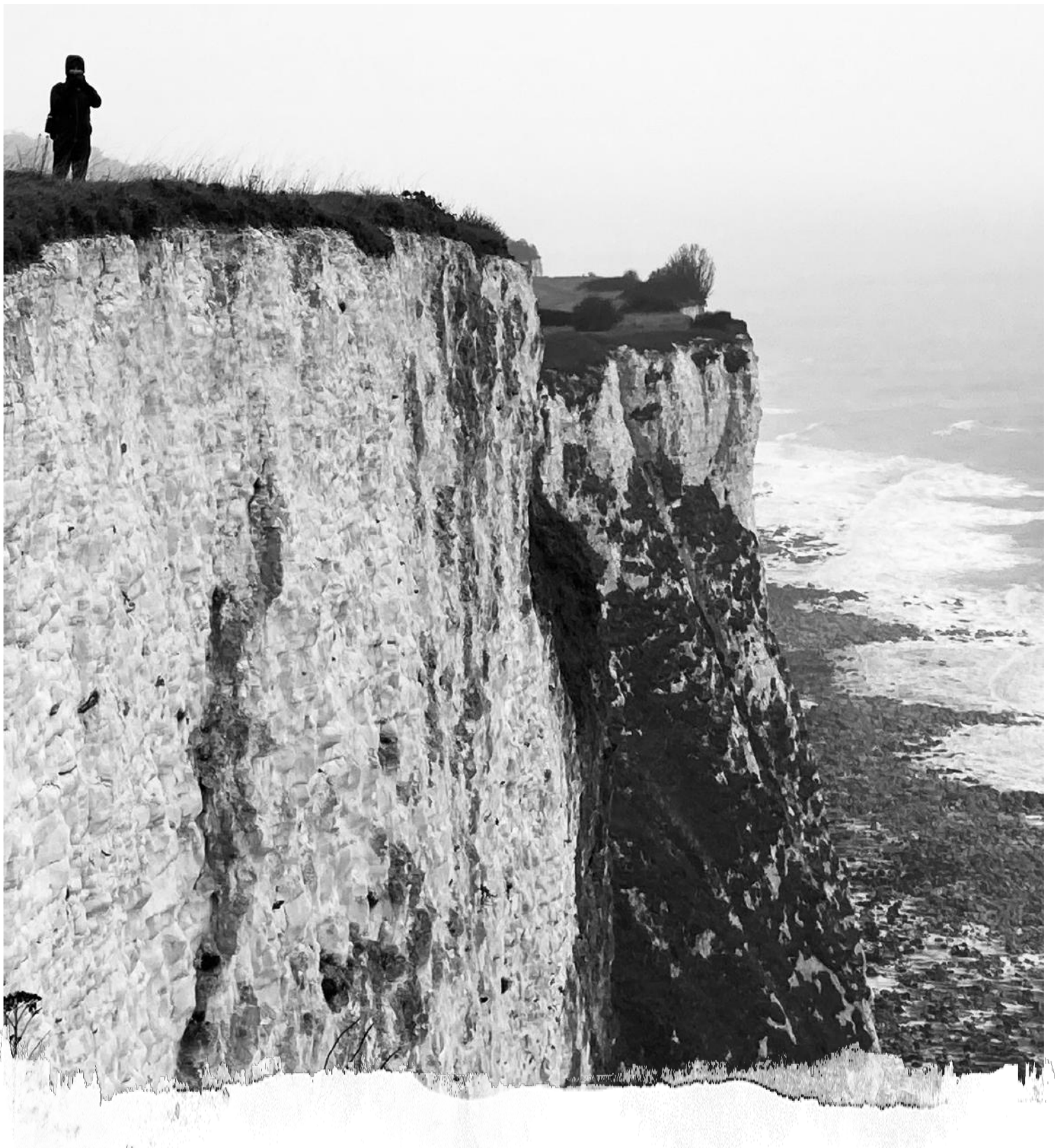






















# CRISTIAN S. ALUAS

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Cristian S. Aluas is a professional artist with twenty years of experience. He is the author of *IT'S A LIVING: Surviving as a Freelancer in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* and *Easy and Fun CARTOONING TECHNIQUES for Drawing Comics and Manga*. More info at [www.MasterpieceArtSchool.com](http://www.MasterpieceArtSchool.com)





**dumb dog**

they say

we don't deserve dogs,

but what did I do

to deserve this idiot?

I never could train that dog right,

could never make her do

or don't anything,

only to know her name when I called it.

she was a beautiful golden lab,

gifted but empty inside;

I suppose I always did like dumb blondes,

maybe that's why I took her in.

and it was comfortable with her.

I never felt that around trained dogs.

trained dogs had cold eyes

like they'd lost something,

a fire about them

I knew that feeling all too well.

but not her.

she had eyes I'd imagine  
God would have,  
as if her freedom was something  
I couldn't attain.  
I began sharing my griefs with her then,  
kneeling, flopping an ear up,  
emptying a mind  
peppered with clots of  
regrets, problems, and fears —  
past, present, future.  
I don't know what I expected.  
her eyes just looked like an answer  
but she just looked at me  
confused...  
then she licked me and ran off!  
she kept moving forward,  
half body straight, half peeking back to see  
if I'd keep moving too  
like some preschool line leader  
ignoring what I confided in her  
as if they were never problems at all...  
  
I guess she was brilliant  
sometimes.

**silhouette**

the silhouette of you  
stretching, against the morning blinds,  
your thin arms  
like branches  
cross at the elbow  
until met again  
at the tips.

I can't see your face  
but that trace of you,  
surely this is the one I love.

and your shadow  
slithering across the floor  
up the wall  
as if plastered

I wish it would burn there  
so every morning  
our shadows would meet  
as if  
our bodies spilled together.  
me spilling into you.

I thought it was funny,  
the sun  
has never once saved me  
until you stood in front of it.

**sometimes the ones who hurt you**

go on to live beautiful lives.  
when you can't rationalize them into hell  
you'll stop hoping for fairness in heaven  
and the thin string of karma  
that dragged your pretty life around  
will snap  
and you'll shoulder the incredible responsibility  
of chasing happiness  
to create it for yourself.  
even after all this,  
still always do good.  
don't become someone to be afraid of.  
don't be the darkness inside the tunnel  
you were chasing the light at the end of.  
don't trip up others running the same path;  
we're all just moths chasing any light  
hoping it's not a fire.



## Love in the Time of Corona

When we shook hands for the first time,  
My heart removed his mask,  
Rolled over your hand,  
Like an anchor.  
I leaned down,  
Like a ship that never docked.  
I wished all days are pandemic,  
And we quarantine together.  
Forever.

....

I did not love you because you are perfect.  
I know you struggle, like everyone who cares.  
Like everyone who chooses to open both eyes.  
And tries to connect both sides.  
Body and spirit.  
Physical and metaphysical.  
Outside and inside.  
Ambition and contentment.

...

I jump and clap when you are able to connect both.  
And hug you when you fail.  
Do not whip your spirit,  
If it could not be free from the burdens of your body.

This struggle strengthens you.

Beautifies you.

Keeps you alive,

Makes you human.

...

I wish

I am happy, not a poet.

You are my wife, not my muse,

And we have a baby, not a poem.

But I did not love you in exchange for loving me

I do not love you - a selfish love;

I do not want to pluck your rose.

I just want to come to the park,

Kneel down

And water it.

Seeing this rose growing washes my soul.

...

Look!

Here, you are,

At the gates of death,

You kiss the entrants,

And advise them to forget you.

....

Oh, merciful virus!

Without love,

Life is worth losing.

....

When you came, I did not pull you.

When you left, I did not hold you.

You took your berth,

And ran away,

With my anchor.

....

Because my love is unconditional; I forgive you.

Even I do not see anything needs to be forgiven.

Rather, I see everything deserves to be loved.

...

I am not Samson.

Take my hair off my head.

I keep your temple for my prayer.

Take your clothes off my closet.

I keep your space in my heart.

Take your body off my hands.

I keep your spirit in my soul.

Take your pictures off my phone.

I keep your image in my mind.

Take your books off my shelves.

I keep your voice in my ears.

...

Take whatever you want

You cannot take my love off my heart.

It is my love, not yours.

I will keep it.

I will protect it from your attempts to ruin everything.

Where do you get all this cruelty?

...

I need history to back up my present moment.

I need a memory to sweeten my bitter days.

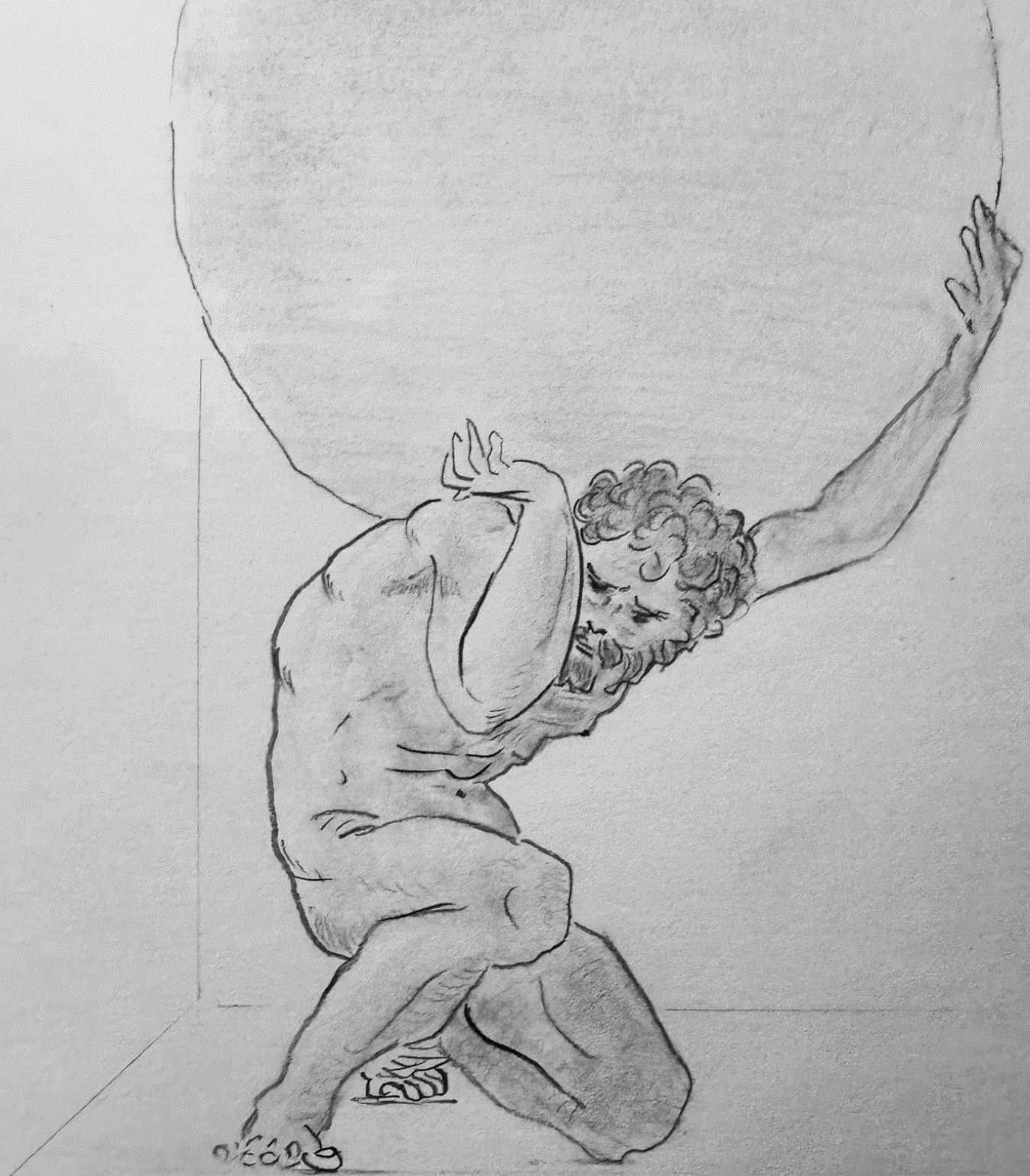
I need to prove to myself.

Love is possible!





KINGA LIPINSKA  
**PORTRAIT OF ARTHUR RIMBAUD**  
PENCIL AND CHALK ON PAPER, JANUARY 2024

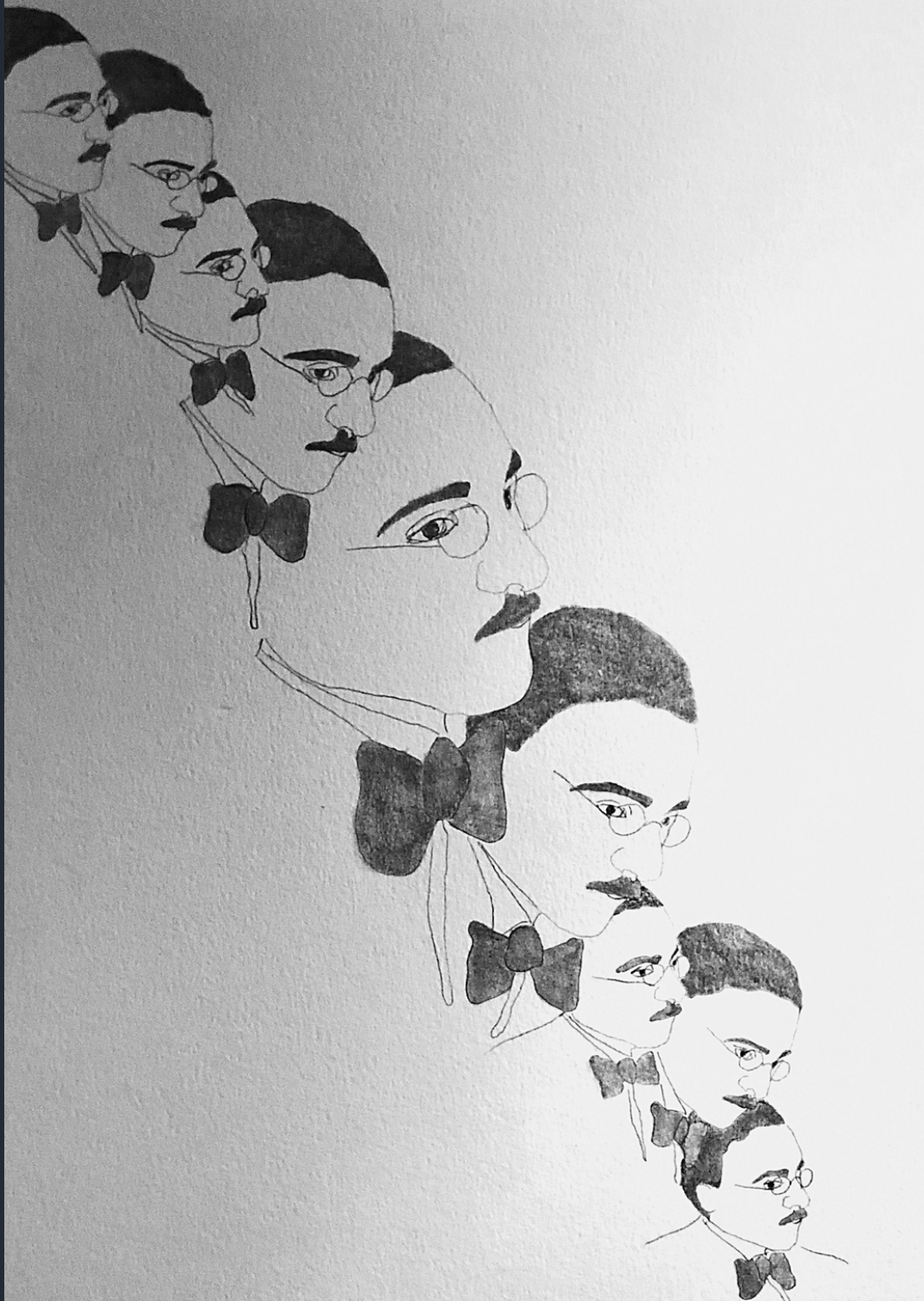


KINGA LIPINSKA  
**ATLAS, COPY AFTER PERUZZI**  
PENCIL ON PAPER, JANUARY 2024





KINGA LIPINSKA  
**ST. SEBASTIAN, COPY AFTER MARTIN SCHONGAUER**  
PENCIL ON PAPER, JANUARY 2024



KINGA LIPINSKA  
**I HAVE MORE SOULS THAN ONE**  
**PORTRAIT OF FERNANDO PESSOA**  
PENCIL AND CHALK ON PAPER, JANUARY 2024

TO BE SEEN

Still hardly definable movement  
across the stirring broad waters

across the waters that separate  
delicate bridge sways between

our two shores

our two bodies

distant and foreign

water flows

to a place we call forward

forward it goes to an unknown

ocean, where it brings

everything and everything becomes

pure and primal once more



# KINGA LIPINSKA

hope

down and far

look at the river where I stand

I have a deep desire to

walk through the water

to swim across if I must, to

find an islet

on that river

a place where we can

stand still

look at each other

water flowing under

**If Only**

If only you had come into my life  
earlier  
perhaps my mind would be at ease.  
Or my thoughts  
a warm summer breeze.  
Perhaps doubts would be passing trains  
like those we watch but never catch.  
And I'd go dancing in the dancing nights  
And swimming in the raining nights

Perhaps it would all be different,  
had I met you earlier.

And I wonder  
If only you had come into my life  
later  
perhaps my thoughts would be firm  
sturdy, precise  
my words concise.  
Perhaps I would be the lady on the train  
looking out the window,  
confident about her destination.

Had I met you later,  
perhaps it would all be different.

But I've met you now.  
No trains, no vows.  
I met you for the sake  
of destiny's game.

I met you with no time to ponder.  
No time to sit and wonder about  
the state of affairs,  
    or the battle plan,  
        or the final destination.

Perhaps this is how it was meant to be all along.  
Slow, upbeat, enticing, revealing, shocking, unnerving, appealing, enlightening.

If only you had come into my life  
some other time  
perhaps I would've never known  
the value of your mind.

**Eternal**

Seducing

Inviting

Your spirit dancing.

Your body lurking—

Inducing.

You're

Introducing;

your vice confusing,

those feathers singing

Your soul—

attempting.

Fearing, fighting, flirting

You're soaring

and navigating.

Your pupils searching

Your mind—

eternal.

**Boulder over the Vilaine**

It's all the bruit in the waves

Repeating patterns

all over.

Faster

and slower.

Tending to reds, yellows, and blues.

The trees politely breathing

In the same rhythm as I.

And the birds, melodious, grace us with their song.

Oh, how it all coordinates

The bikes, the ducks, the old man with his cigar,

and me,

tripping on acid on the boulder.

How would this painting exist without us?

I'm glad I won't have to find out.

This very boulder gifted me the moon,

the Vilaine, and

the stars.

And we all get to share it

and give it our love.



We've all got the right  
to exist for mere pleasure.  
To breathe without leisure,  
to fear without measure.  
So let us all guard  
this one hidden treasure.

## Hidden Spots

I wish to love everything;  
even those corners  
that I choose to ignore.

The places I glance at,  
the spaces I miss.  
The pieces of skin  
that don't feel so akin.

All of it,  
the good, the bad and the ugly.  
the scars, the stains and the oddly;  
to kiss them and praise them,  
to talk about them.

To stop resisting their right to exist.

I want them to want me,  
to call me their home;  
they fit right beside  
the freckles and moles.

And show them some care,  
and show them some love,  
and reach with my fingers  
between every fold.  
Ask me about them,  
they have a story.  
The falls, the parties,  
they had their glory!

Today I guard them,  
as my little treasures.  
And I wish to like them  
without filters or pressures.

To meet them again,  
as me from today.  
To tell them I see them,  
I hear them,  
I feel them.

To tell them they're valid  
they've always been valid.

We've had such a journey,  
we've had such a life;  
we've been down to hell  
yet made it alive.

I want them to know  
that somebody cares;  
that somebody's watching  
and they understand.

I want them to want me,  
oh my little pearls.  
Igniting my skin  
outside and within.

## **A fighter to the core**

A born fighter,

Fought the fears and phobias as a teenager during the partition days.

Raised her voice against social customs,

Against wolves in sheep's clothes,

Not one to be cowed down, always held her chin up,

Had her own way to tend to the needy and the downtrodden,

She fought with her pen, deeds and grit,

Powerful weapons in her arsenal,

Fought circumstances, familial, financial,

Even death several times,

'Fear' was not in her dictionary,

Even till the end gave a tooth and nail fight,

But when the call comes,

Even the mightiest lay down their arms and bow,

She went down fighting incessantly for 42 days,

A fighter in life and unto death.

That was my mom, a star in the faraway Heaven now,

Looking down upon her children,

Happy in the realization that they are settled,

And her every fight was a prize-winning victory



Maa,

You were the pivot of my life,

With you, the days were never ending and the nights so short,

Now the nights are never ending and the day begins but for what?

Your smile, your charm could take away all the worries,

Your words would soothe like no other balm,

Your counsel would set aside the Chanakyas,

Your gaze could melt the demons,

Perhaps this world was not for you,

You were too divine to dwell here anymore.

**Mum**

She was no empress, but a queen of hearts,

Everyone held in thralldom by a magical wand,

Nothing that crossed her path uninfluenced,

From being a youth leader at 15!

To the ultimate icon in the community and neighborhood,

The influence she wielded was enviable,

But envy is the shadow horse of success,

When a teacher, just a teacher, all emotions left behind,

A perfect counsellor to peers, youngsters and even the old,

While tending to the sick, she was Florence Nightingale personified,

As a cook, she could beat the 5-star chefs....

Love was an essential ingredient of every dish,

Nothing that she had not tried, tilling the soil, sewing, knitting, sports, cooking,  
teaching, counselling, writing, you name it.....

All done with passion and to perfection.

Do such people deserve rewards- yes,

Do they seek rewards - no.

That was selflessness and charisma personified in my mom.

**Girl Knows**

So you come around here lookin'  
sniffin'  
smilin' and  
BS-in'  
cool and smooth  
has always been your rule

Crisp, creased  
navy blue Gucci linen slacks  
two steppin in your handmade alligator kicks  
walkin ' the runway  
up my driveway

dazzling the sun with your  
hot  
top grade  
over paid  
VS1's triggering smoke alarms  
and expecting romance

Your sweet lies don't work anymore though I love to hear your rhyme  
I know your sugar is poison and your words can  
be unkind

You think your swagger fools me  
flatter, dupes and deludes me  
well, I got news for your  
tomfoolery  
I am no stooge

Your high school ways won't grow up  
and I can't wait for you to show up  
lustful detours always hold up  
MY path,  
to the universal flow

Your tricks, your games, your childish ways  
I lowered my guard  
no longer can you bend my will or coerce my heart

Strong and wise  
no disguise  
and I will NOT apologize  
for I am alive,  
and I have survived  
your TRAP  
has been capsized

You're in my dust  
and I ONLY trust  
myself what's right for me  
so now today, forever and  
all ways  
I set myself free

**Haiku**

wings dip

slow motion

through the rearview mirror



## BIOGRAPHIES OF CONTRIBUTORS TO WINTER 2024 ISSUE

(please note, some contributors preferred not to include biographical note)

**Cristian S. Aluas** is a professional artist with twenty years of experience. He is the author of *IT'S A LIVING: Surviving as a Freelancer in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* and *Easy and Fun CARTOONING TECHNIQUES for Drawing Comics and Manga*. More info at [www.MasterpieceArtSchool.com](http://www.MasterpieceArtSchool.com)

**Margo Christie** is a poet and author originally from Baltimore. Her debut novel, “These Days, a Tale of Nostalgia on a Burlesque Strip,” was a semi-finalist in Amazon’s Breakthrough Novel Award. Her work has appeared in *The Baltimore Sun*, *Voice of Baltimore* and *Loch Raven Review*. She is working on a collection of poems about growing up in the pre-digital age.

**Todd Evans** lives in Chicago, IL. He likes to write and read fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. He is appreciating birds, animals, and the natural world while at the same time, building friendly and loving relationships. His writing has appeared in several publications, and he’s grateful for it being included in *The Prairie Review*. Feel free to visit <https://linktr.ee/toddevanslinktree> to learn more about his writing and other creative work.

**Dominique Galiano** was born and raised in Chicago. Music, art and words inspire her. Her poetry has been published online as well as several printed anthologies.

**Stephen Gladwin.** For as long as he can remember, Steve’s been following art of all forms: experimental techno, Madonna, philosophy, metal, noir, the suave surrealism of Magritte — it’s all good. He likes to cook (mostly Chinese), he writes when he feels like it (writing is hard), and he never met a mozzarella stick he didn’t like. Right now, he’s making lurching progress on an autobiography by way of art criticism, philosophy, and cultural criticism.

# THE PRAIRIE REVIEW

## BIOGRAPHIES OF CONTRIBUTORS TO WINTER 2024 ISSUE

(please note, some contributors preferred not to include biographical note)

**Benjamin K Herrington (bkh)** / wears many masks & speaks in many voices / looks for hidden messages \_v e r \_w h e r \_ / feels incredibly grateful to have had his poetry & prose published by La Piccioletta Barca / B O D Y Literature / Granfalloon / Apocalypse Confidential / sculpts stories / paginates poems / runs Lake Michigan shorelines / is working on a novel & seeking gn0s1s.

**Cindy Landaeta** is a Venezuelan poet currently finishing her major in Philosophy at Lake Forest College. She has enjoyed writing and storytelling from a very young age, and wishes to continue doing so for the rest of her days.

**Kinga Lipinska** is a poet, translator, art critic, magazine editor and founder of The Prairie Review. Her photography has been featured in juried exhibitions in galleries in Chicago and Vermont. In addition to writing and photography, she likes to draw, dance, travel solo or with friends, and discover new things, places, and experiences.

**Kalpana Markandey** lives in India and this is her first poetry publication. She writes on a variety of topics.

**Allen Nguyen** is a writer and creative from North Georgia whose work revolves around depression, purpose, and the natural world. He hopes to relate with others on navigating unique and complex feelings. You can find him on Instagram [@allentnguyen](https://www.instagram.com/allentnguyen).

**Ayman Refaat** is from Egypt but resides in Kansas City, MO. He has held various positions, including adjunct instructor of Arabic at University of Missouri - Kansas City, William Jewell College and Metropolitan Community College, Kansas City. He has also served as a spiritual guide at the USP Leavenworth, USDB and MJRCF at Fort Leavenworth.

We Publish People Who  
Love to Write and Make Art.

To submit work for  
consideration, contact:  
**[editor@theprairiereview.com](mailto:editor@theprairiereview.com)**



Kinga Lipinska, Editor

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