

[M] metrosphere

arts and literary magazine

Volume 34 | Issue 1



PERFORMATIVITY

A term for the capacity of speech and communication not simply to communicate but rather to act or consummate an action, or to construct and perform an identity

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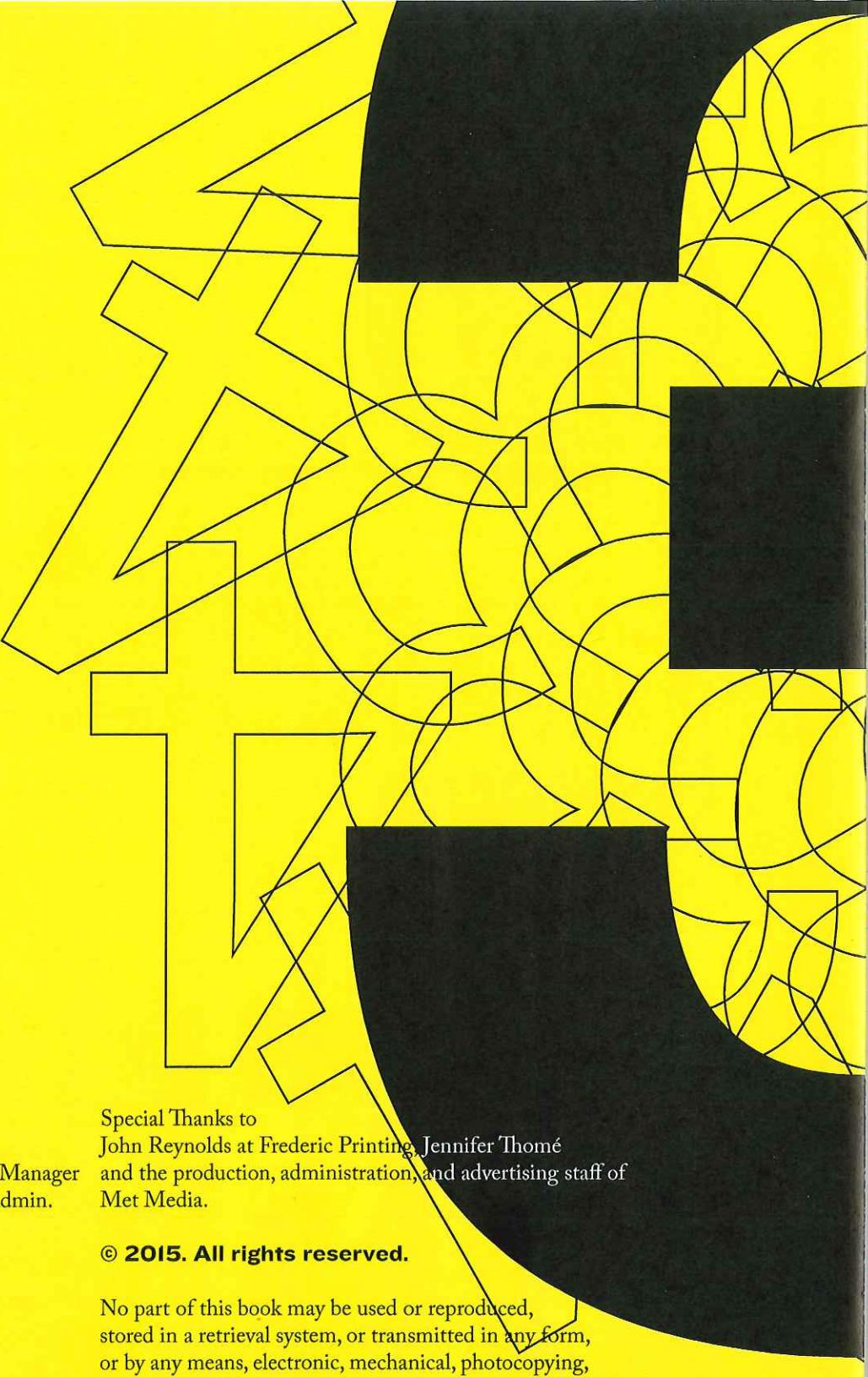
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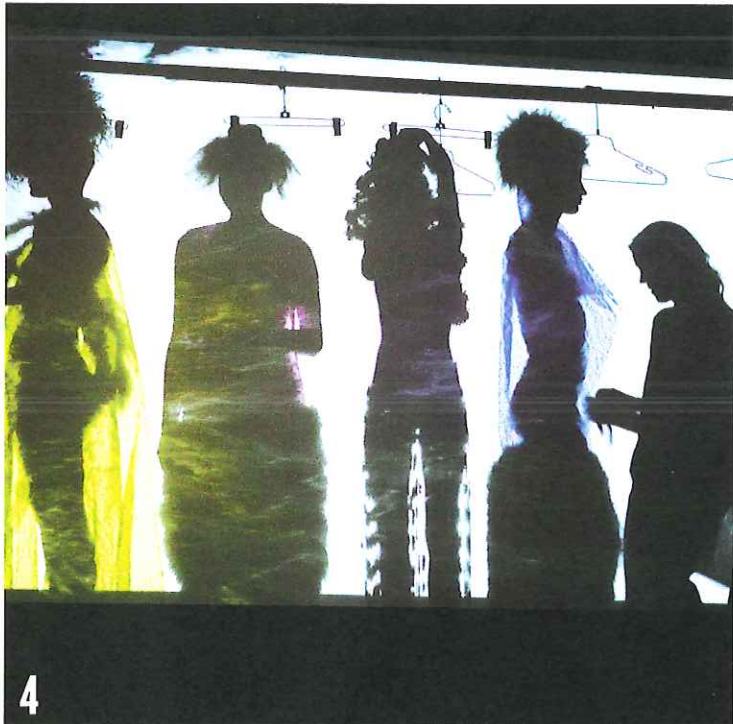
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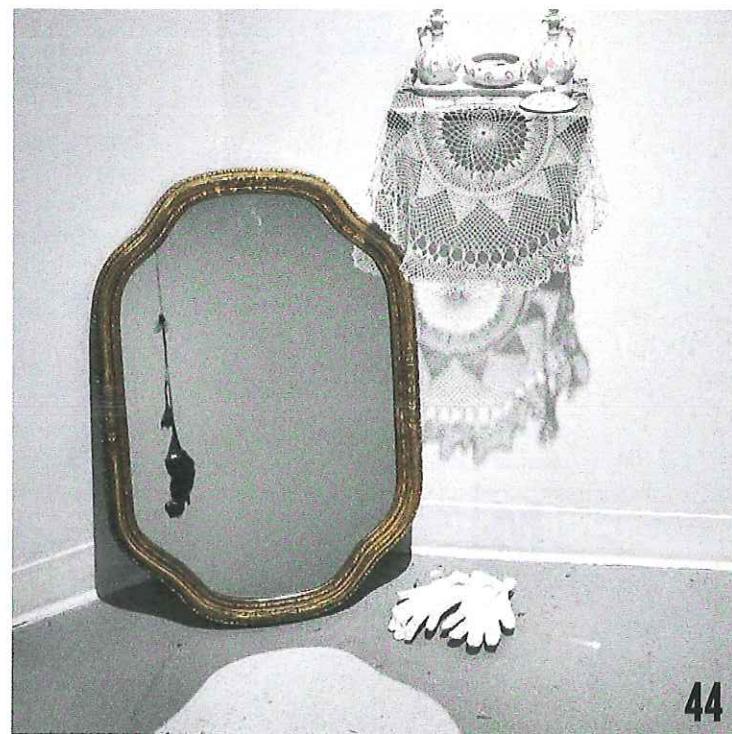


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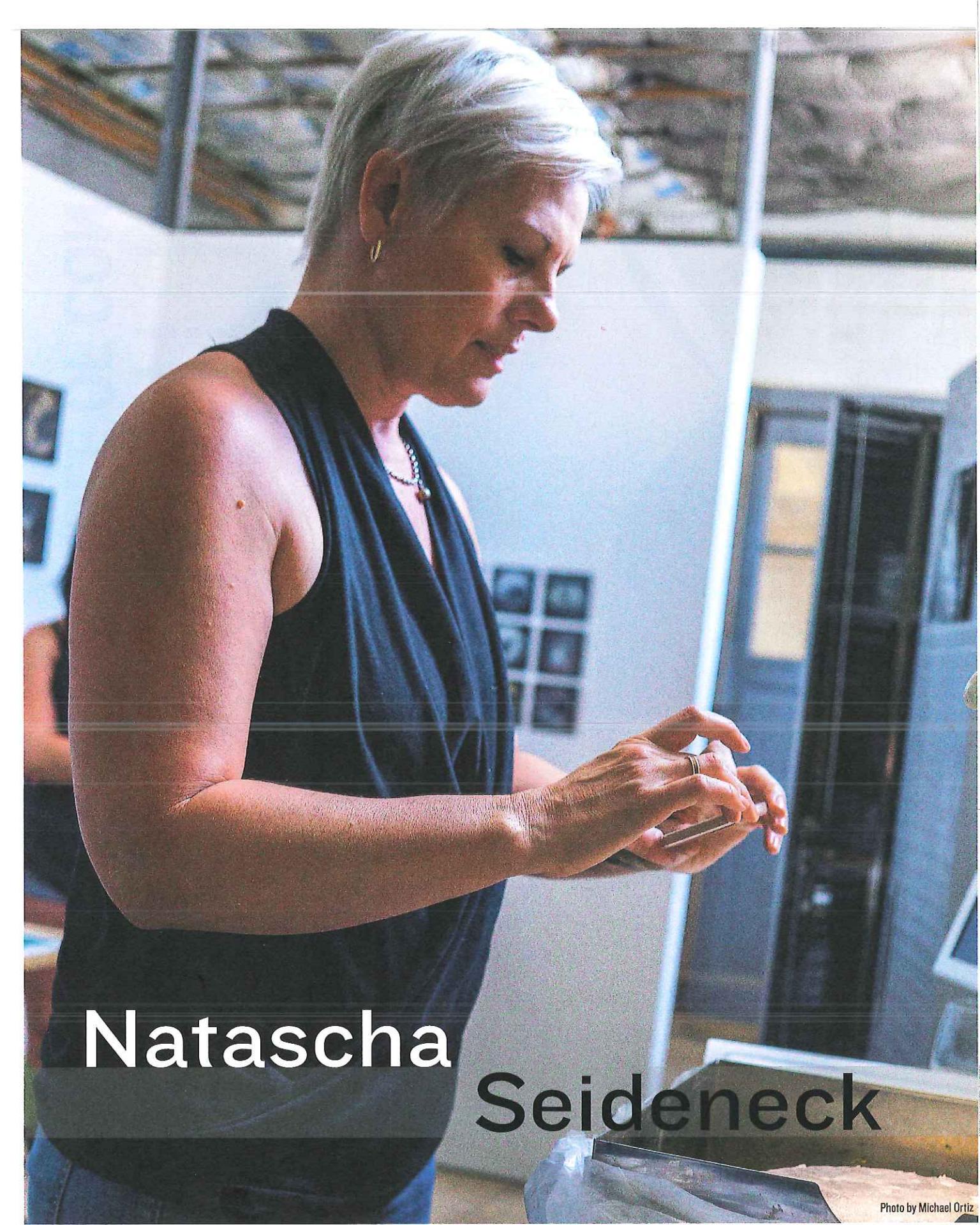
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Natascha Seideneck

By Heather Pastorius

The product of an unconventional upbringing, which included boarding school in Europe, visiting Morocco, and hitchhiking from New York to Mexico, Natascha Seideneck was destined to take the path untraveled. She would bring ripples of change to the art and photography communities she embraced, armed with her worldly ways.

"I had a hippie mother, so I've been all over the world," Seideneck said. "I went to boarding school in England, called Summerhill."

Summerhill had little structure and no grades. This is the place where her artistic vision began. Much like a butterfly passes through stages of first being worm-like, then cocooned, and finally emerging in winged grace, Seideneck developed herself and her artwork so that she could better serve a place she has called home for over a decade, MSU Denver.

"I was a student here. I got my BFA in photography here," Seideneck said. Right from the start she was roiling things, with ideas and ways of working that had not been seen previously.

"When I went to school here, I collaborated with a colleague. Both of our BFA thesis shows were collaborations between each other. At the time, people didn't know what to do with that. They told us we had to put our name up there, and we told them no, we didn't want to do that. So, we named our collaboration 'NaTom' because his name was Tom," Seideneck said. "We applied to graduate school together as a collaborative team and we got in. We never collaborated again."

It was not just the idea of collaborations they brought then, but also the mechanisms they used to create their work. While Seideneck was changing the way artists worked by showing them an alternative method, technology was changing how they created.

"We were just starting digital technology so we were going through this whole process with our work. We used a now archaic piece of machinery. We would take film and convert it to digital files or vice versa. So we were taking digital files putting them on film and then printing them," Seideneck said.

She then traveled to Boston to earn her Master of Fine Arts in digital media, but she couldn't let go of a tenuous grip on the university. After graduating with her MFA from Tufts University, Seideneck reluctantly returned to Colorado, despite feeling more at home on the East Coast — her gypsy blood selling her on that notion. Upon her arrival, Greg Watts, now the former chair of the photography department at MSU Denver, informed her she would begin teaching.

"I moved away for three years. I was still working here," Seideneck said. "I did not go to grad school to teach. I went to grad school to develop my work and to understand my work. I had not been to TA (teaching assistant) school. I told him I didn't know how to teach."

Despite a reluctant start, a decade later Seideneck is still teaching. During all this time she realized a love for teaching and the feeling of community it has brought. Still teaching and pursuing her work in a variety of ways, Seideneck has developed a huge appreciation for what she has sewn from the years invested in education and educating.

"This is my eleventh year here. I really love teaching, and it's great because it's like you keep developing and you keep learning. I like being this much in the community. It enables me to change things and build things up," Seideneck said.

A major focus for the artist is to work on developing more programs in the community to increase access to places where art can be practiced and to get high school

A Familiar Face Inspires New Visions

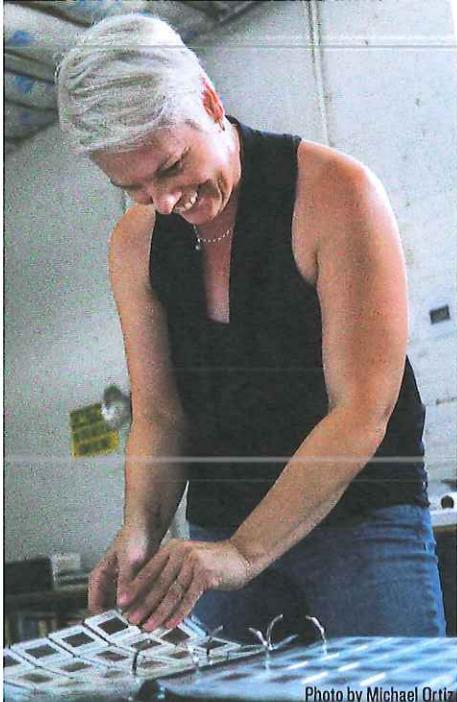


Photo by Michael Ortiz



students involved and excited.

"One of my big goals is that I'd like to do a little recruiting for the photo department. I'm going to try and do some sort of outreach program for high school students. I'd like to get some sort of a workshop going next summer. Also, we're going through a pretty big change as far as curriculum goes right now," Seideneck said.

In the meantime, though, there is no loss of focus or vigor for projects that she shares with her students. The biggest is a recently passed fundraising event for the Colorado Photographic Arts Center called Fashion Culture 2.0. It is a fashion show and silent auction that showcases student and local artistry to raise funds for sponsoring CPAC. The event has importance for Seideneck in her new role as the department manager because it includes so many of the things she is responsible for on a personal and

professional level.

"I had an epiphany about that, like, *Oh my God, I'm, like, helping these people design their lives*," Seideneck said. "Also, I got to put all my worlds together. It's a full circle for me."

Fashion Culture 2.0 combines the fashion photography, fashion design, local designers and local artists and artwork she was able to get grant money from the city to fund. This money paid to print and frame work displayed upstairs in the Tivoli Turnhalle, the night of the show, next to professionals, many of whom are current or former students at MSU Denver. The show restaged some iconic fashion photographs and had many individual segments from local fashion designers and student fashion designers in very avant-garde style.

The event took place Oct. 24. It was edgy. Beautiful models wore hair that dangled to their toes and barely kissed the

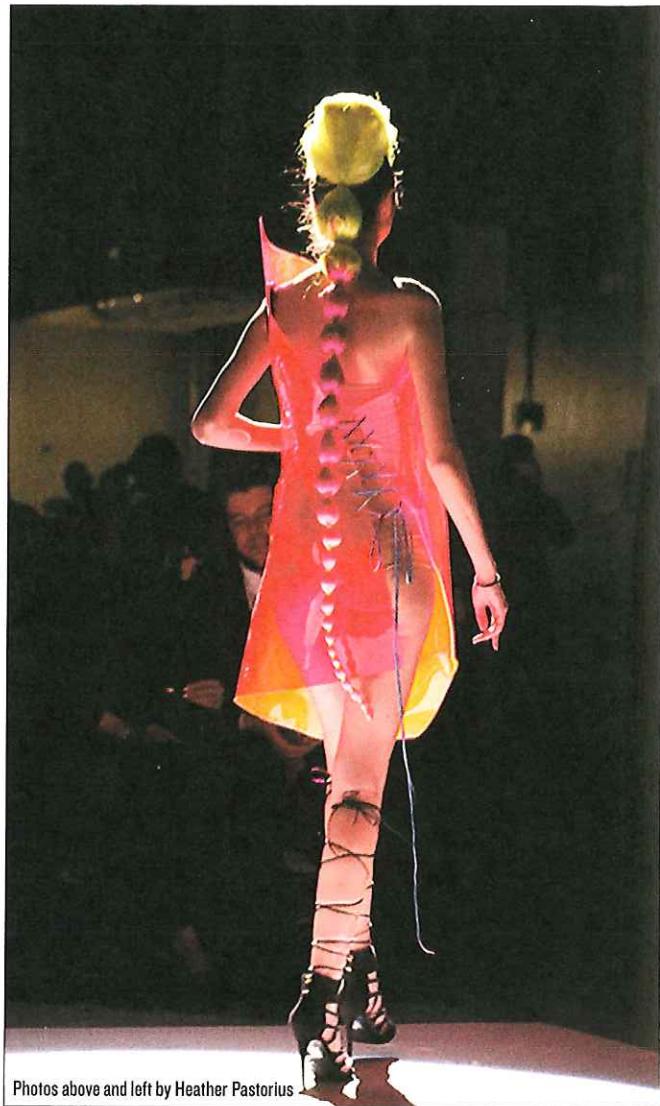
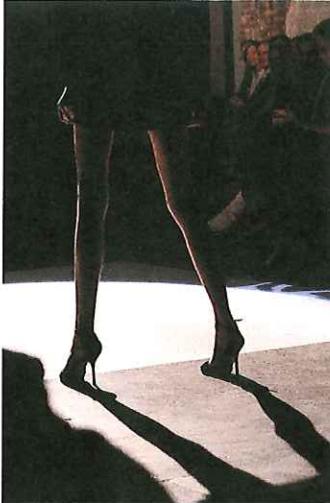
lacquered heels of stilettos, and striking designs that caught your breath. Seideneck observed enthusiastically as the hard work of all the individuals involved was unveiled, as each individual inspired to and attained new creative heights.

In the foreseeable future, Seideneck would like to redirect some of her energy to focusing more on her own work, but she doesn't have plans, *per se*. She sums up the endeavors of the past and her hopes for the future with a simple sentiment.

"I just know that I want to keep making art. I know that and that's what is great about being here. It's good not to lose sight of that," Seideneck said.

After 10 years in a place that fostered much of her own creativity, the changes she has observed and participated in have allowed her to do the same for her students.

"Now there is a lot more freedom, and people are a



Photos above and left by Heather Pastorius



Amanda Berg

The Great Oddity Behind A Great Talent

Words by Alysha Prieto
Photos by Heather Pastorius

MCU Denver graduate Amanda Berg is weird. With her aversion to technological advancements in literature, she would rather “lug around” pounds of books each time she moves than purchase an e-reader. This based upon the belief that the tangibility of a book creates a deeper connection to the words on the page.

Coupled with her knack for choosing disturbing and sometimes gruesome topics to write about, maybe she is a little odd. Odd in the sense that she is doing things differently. Whether that is taking the madness that is life and working through it in her writing, or processing her wandering thoughts into a succinct story, she is doing things her way. The English major and former executive editor of *Metrosphere* takes us inside her writing process and shows that abiding by the rules of the English language does not stifle creativity but rather gives it the opportunity and the foundation to flourish.

Metrosphere: How did you get involved with the Metrofear?

Amanda Berg: The Metrofear concept was something that Laura De La Cruz, the editor-in-chief from last year, and I kind of came up with. We had found this sort of zine-looking thing from a couple of decades ago and it was a lot of student-submitted poetry and stuff. The concept was fall or Halloween. It was through Metrosphere, but we wanted to do something really different, really oriented in the Halloween idea and making it a collection. Because we put that all together, I feel like I was just expected to submit a story.

Metrosphere: Was it weird being a part of it this time in such a small way, instead of having to get everything together?

AB: It was actually really nice. It was so much management last time. This time it was so weird because it was like the editor was bugging me about where my story was and when they could get it.

Metrosphere: Where do you get inspiration from, just because it was such a creepy piece?

AB: I read the news, and one of my weird pastimes is looking at Wikipedia articles and Internet articles and getting inspired by those. Then, researching more things and more things. It will spiral for hours. With that particular story, I was really interested in the idea of human body modification and also, the idea of man-made freaks. I did a lot of research on old sideshows and stuff. A lot of them were just really sad medical oddities, and a lot of them were things that we wouldn't think twice about today.

Metrosphere: It's so weird to see how much actually goes into it because the stories are super short.

AB: My story was maybe 850 words, but when I write I do a lot of research up front. I write about weird things or probably disturbing things or things that would require a lot of faith from my audience. If my facts are not believable or verifiable, then it all falls apart and the story doesn't mean anything anymore. I try to make sure I know exactly how this would happen.

Metrosphere: What sort of stories do you normally write?

AB: It's usually on something that I'm trying to reconcile inside my head. It's usually something where there will be a really terrible news story or some event that happens, or I'll hear about something that I just can't understand. It's my way of working out the possibilities and possibly the reasons why people do certain things. You know you'll watch the news and you'll see something happen and the first question is, why would they do that? Why would anyone do that? My stories are a way of working out why someone might want to do that or what could possibly have happened in that scenario.

Metrosphere: Are they usually more creative, a spinoff, or straightforward writing?

AB: Frankly, it starts out with one certain concept. Something that I'm just fascinated by and I can't get away from. With this it was the sideshow concept and also the human experimentation. Then, that will morph into its own thing and then I'll find other things that support it. I've done research on everything from the best kind of material for sutures for a certain kind of surgery to how those dolls that wet themselves and stuff — how they function inside them. Anything you can think of just for one little detail.

Metrosphere: What is your favorite part then? Brainstorming? Sharing it?

AB: The research is really fun depending on when my deadline is. I've never been a huge fan of sharing my work. I've done a couple of readings and those were crazy experiences. Probably just being able to come to some sort of resolution about different things. I don't know if you have ever heard of fetal abduction? It's where a pregnant woman will actually have the baby removed from her and stolen by someone who wants the baby. I wrote a story about that and people were like that's crazy. You're so weird.

Metrosphere: What advice do you have for other students and writers?

AB: A couple of key things. Stay humble about your writing. I have met many writers who think they're the next Mark Twain or the next Stephen King, and you can't be that and try to do anything creative. Accept that even the best writers still need editors. They still need feedback. They still need to realize that not every word you write down is going to be gold. In fact, most of it is going to be — pardon my language — but most of it is going to be shit. It is just going to be total shit. I'd say pay strong attention to your language and the writing in a mechanical sense and a grammatical sense. Every word matters, even if you think that you can substitute a synonym that you found in Microsoft Word. It doesn't necessarily mean the same thing. Punctuation is a necessity. It's not a decorative item. So, really paying attention to the foundations of language.

Metrosphere: This issue is about performativity. Does that mean anything to you with your own writing or with anything that you read?

AB: I would say it's the most effective form of catharsis that I have. My research supports that, but I would say with the writing there might be a moral resolution, there might not be. It's whatever I've managed to work out so people can take whatever they want from it. If they get out of one of my stories like they're just creeped out or they get out of it that I'm just weird then that's fine. What I would hope that they would get out of it is that they can work through the same processes that I did. I guess I'm trying to communicate my therapeutic process to other people. 

STRIPPED

BY AMANDA BERG

You're riding in the passenger seat of your boyfriend Nathan's 1997 Honda Accord. The clear coat is peeling in wide, jagged tracts across the hood.

On this back road, the only light comes from the dim splashback of the headlamps, making the patchy matte green look like camouflage. Your head is fuzzy from the three shots of Jameson and the many sips of peach schnapps. That effect, combined with the bass in Nathan's car, is making you feel slightly queasy. Nathan's cousins are in the backseat, Ricky and his older sister, Natalie. Ricky — he told you right off not to call him "Richard" or he'd deck you, even if you are a girl — drove four hours this morning to visit his family and enjoy himself now that high school's over.

Today is Ricky's eighteenth birthday. He's exactly two months younger than you, and four years younger than Nathan and Natalie. Next week he ships off to basic training. Earlier, while the four of you ate ice cream cake off of Styrofoam plates, you asked Ricky if he was nervous about leaving. He laughed and said, "Why the fuck would I be? Can't be worse than staying in my shithole town." He and Nathan bumped fists over this. But once you all had finished the cake and started in on the booze, his swagger began to disappear. He started pacing and yelling, "Fuck, fuck, fuck! What the fuck made me think this was a good idea?" Nathan pushed Ricky onto the couch, cracked a beer, and handed it to him, saying, "Shut up and drink this. Then we're gonna go out."



The drive takes about half an hour, but it seems longer with Ricky drunkenly howling out the window. Nathan pulls into a parking lot in front of a building with "Taboo" written in large red-lighted letters over the entrance. Inside, women in various states of dress are dancing on stages, taking drink orders, and flirting with customers. One of the dancers is on a table stage off to the side of the main floor. She looks like Jessica Rabbit, all flame and ivory and curves. She twirls and dips and writhes, curling and unfolding until you think, *THIS is seduction*.

The main room is frantic with color and motion and heavy bass, but you can't stop turning back to watch the leggy redhead dancing on her stage. Beneath her is a ring of men lounging in vinyl club chairs. Their expressions range from bored to frightened, but each pair of eyes is locked on the woman above. Natalie nudges you with her elbow and leans in close to whisper, "Look, she's got 'mommy titties.'" You squint to narrow your focus, trying to see what Natalie means. But

all you can see is an acrobat whose nakedness and graceful movement suggest a cat stalking prey.

A girl interrupts your reverie, holding out a tray with a rack of plastic test tubes. Where her eyelashes should be, she has rows of feathers. Her blinks are all teal and iridescent bronze-green. For a second, you think of the field trip your sixth-grade class took to the hummingbird garden. Your eyes were still buzzing with fast-flying color the day after, when Lucy Sharp told you at lunch that Josh Freeman had felt her up in the back of the bus on the ride home. She said it made her feel weird, but kinda good. And when you asked why she had let him do that, she just shook her head at you and called you a baby and left to go sit at the other end of the table.

The shooter girl passes the tray in front of your face to get your attention and asks you what kind you want. When she talks, the wings flap and flutter until you think her eyes might take flight. You choose the purple one. Natalie chooses orange and hands over six dollars. The girl throws the cash onto the tray and asks, "You ladies wanna shoot it out of my cleavage?" She sticks out her pushed-up, packed-in chest at you, shimmying a few times to emphasize the point. Natalie looks to you, but you shake your head. You're not sure

how to do it and you don't want to end up sticky and stained. Natalie toasts you and tips the tube into her mouth. You swirl yours around, creating a tiny violet whirlpool. You sniff it and it smells like a grape popsicle, so you pour it into your mouth. It's fizzy and tastes like candy. It burns all the way down. The shooter girl takes back the empty test tubes and moves on to the next customer.

You look back at the redhead and catch her as she's finishing up her dance. A few of the men stand up, fish out their wallets, and toss a few bills by her feet. The rest just relocate to the edge of the main stage. The redhead crouches down and picks up each bill, straightening, stacking, and tucking them into the small purse she's pulled from the steps leading up to the stage. Once her money is put away, she retrieves her costume pieces and walks down the steps. You watch her disappear through an entrance behind the main stage, then look around to find your group.

Nathan and Ricky are sitting on a curved, red velvet couch. You and Natalie sit down on stools behind them. You watch a dancer approach your boyfriend, straddle him, and grind on his crotch. He holds his hands limp at his sides and laughs every time her breasts bump against his face. After the lap dance, she

stands and holds out the hip band of her G-string for him to slide in some money. Then she moves on to Ricky and repeats the act.

One girl approaches you and asks if you're interested in a dance. Her dark blonde hair falls just past her collarbones and sits a little flat without the aid of clip-in extensions. Except for her lightly lined eyes, her face is clean and pale. Something about her reminds you of your best friend from middle school. She seems timid and sweet, and you want to reach out and hug her. But instead, you accept her offer and she leads you to another red couch.

She's twisting and bending and bouncing in front of you, but all the while she's chatting with you about how your night's going and whom you're here with. How this is her first night as an exotic dancer and how nervous she is. By the time she climbs onto your lap, you two are laughing together as if you've known each other for years. She's telling you where she bought the baby blue, polka-dotted bra and thong set she's peeling off. You're telling her that you have shoes that would match it perfectly. You give her your name, and she tells you her name is Lisa. By the end of the dance, you've told her all about how you ended up in a strip club in the middle of the night. You've pointed out Ricky and told her about Nathan's plan to

distract him with women. When she's done, she declines the tip you try to hand her. She thanks you for making her first shift so fun and easy for her, and you think, *Wow, Lisa's so nice. We could totally be friends.* But she walks away before you can suggest it.

You stand up and straighten your clothes before finding Natalie and heading to the bathroom with her. Through the stall partition, you tell her about your lap dance. You chatter on about how sweet Lisa was and how tonight is her first shift ever and how you helped her get through it. After you wash up, you head back out to the main room to find the boys. Nathan's sitting at a table alone.

Natalie asks where her brother went and Nathan snorts, jabbing his thumb over his shoulder toward a staircase. "Some stripper suckered him into buying a private dance in the VIP room." The two of them laugh, but you're not sure what this means. You ask if the stripper's going to have sex with Ricky and they both laugh harder. Nathan explains that all Ricky's going to be getting is ripped off, and by a stripper who isn't even that hot. He says she had no makeup, short hair, and this stupid polka dot underwear on that made her look like she was twelve. A stone drops from nowhere into your chest and settles in.

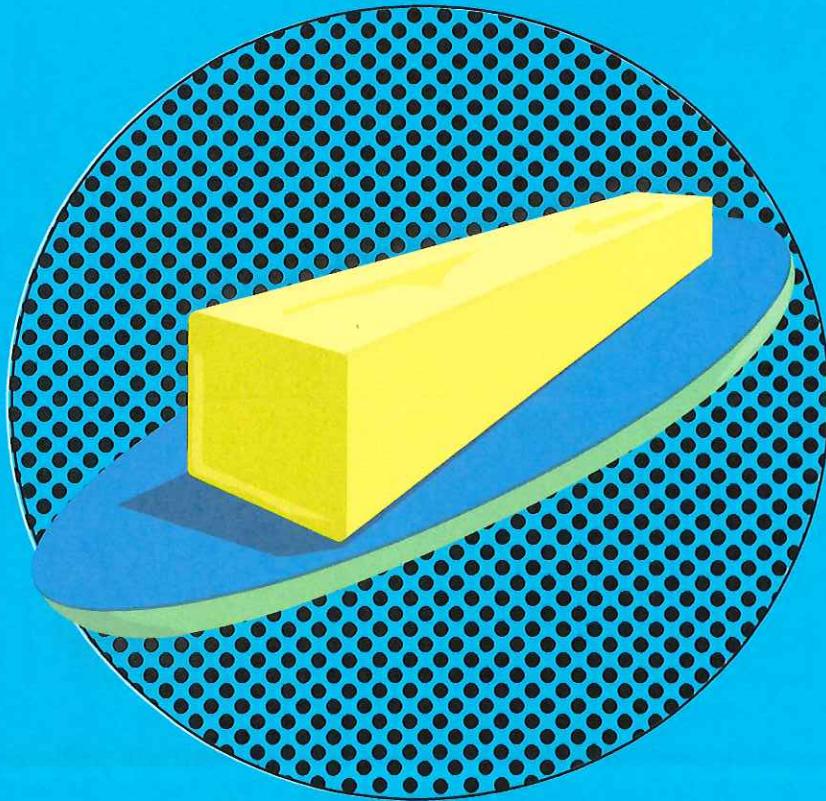
Ricky walks down the stairs an

hour later. His hair looks windswept and he's wearing this shit-eating grin on his splotchy face. He tells you all how amazing this girl Lisa is, how he's so in love with her. He says she danced for him for a few songs and then they spent the rest of the time drinking a bottle of champagne and talking about their lives. He says that he and Lisa have the most amazing connection. She told him that she's been working there for almost a year, thinking that every guy is a piece of shit, but then he came along and changed everything for her. He says she's going to go freshen up and then meet him back out in the main room so they can exchange information and talk some more. While Ricky gushes on and on; while Natalie and Nathan laugh and congratulate him; while all around you people are exposing themselves to each other; while all this is happening, the stone in your chest grows until it's crushing you from the inside out.



The car is quiet on the way home. Natalie's already asleep in the back, and you can just make out the soft pattern of her snores. Ricky is curled up against his window, weeping into his balled up fist. Nathan holds his hand out to you, but you close your eyes and pretend not to see it. You doze off to tear-filled murmurs of what could have been. ☺

COMMUNICATION DESIGN



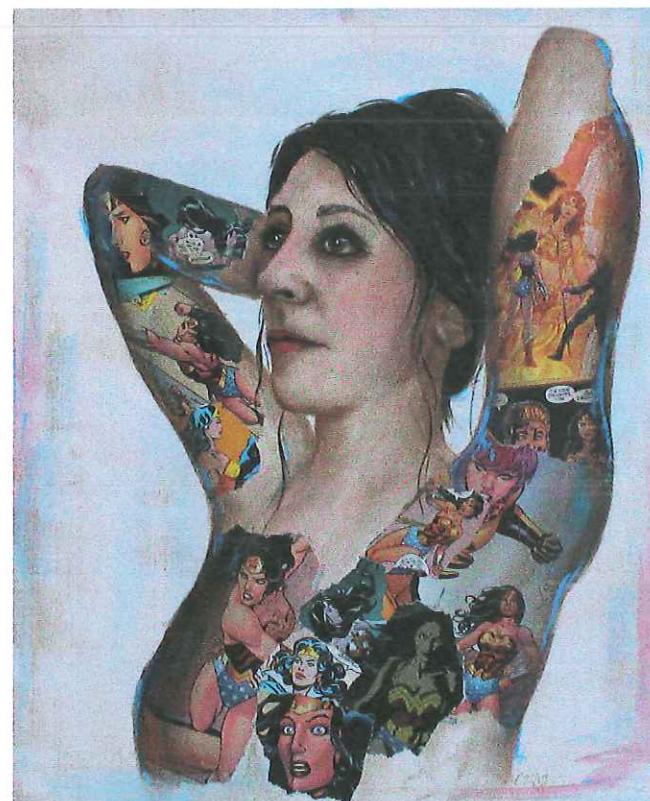
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ART



CONNIE MOBLEY MEDINA, *Portrait of a Woman Series.*

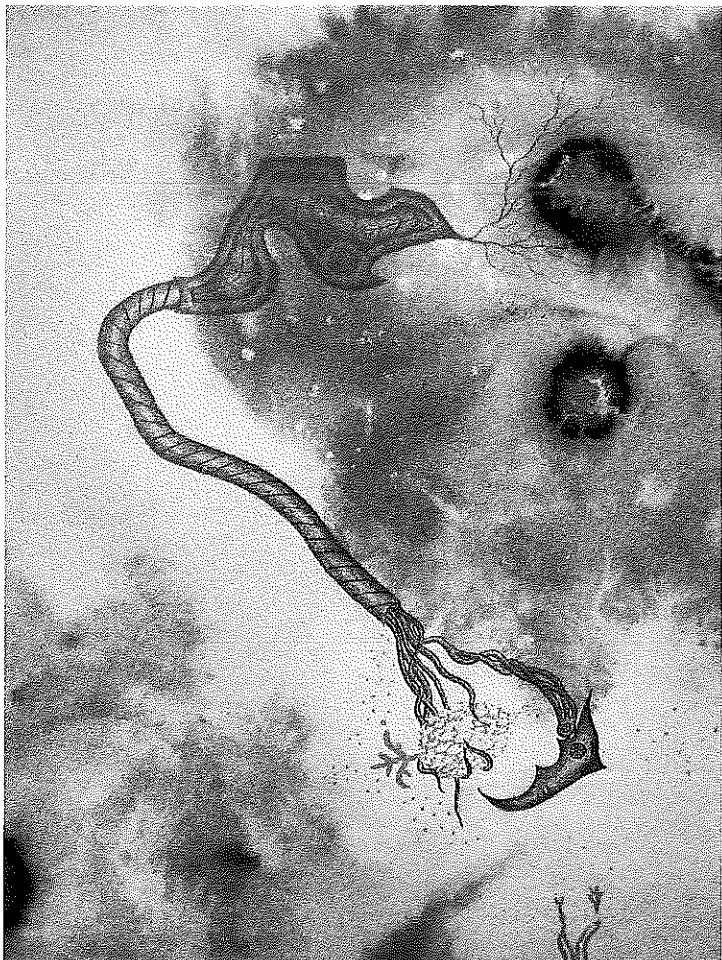
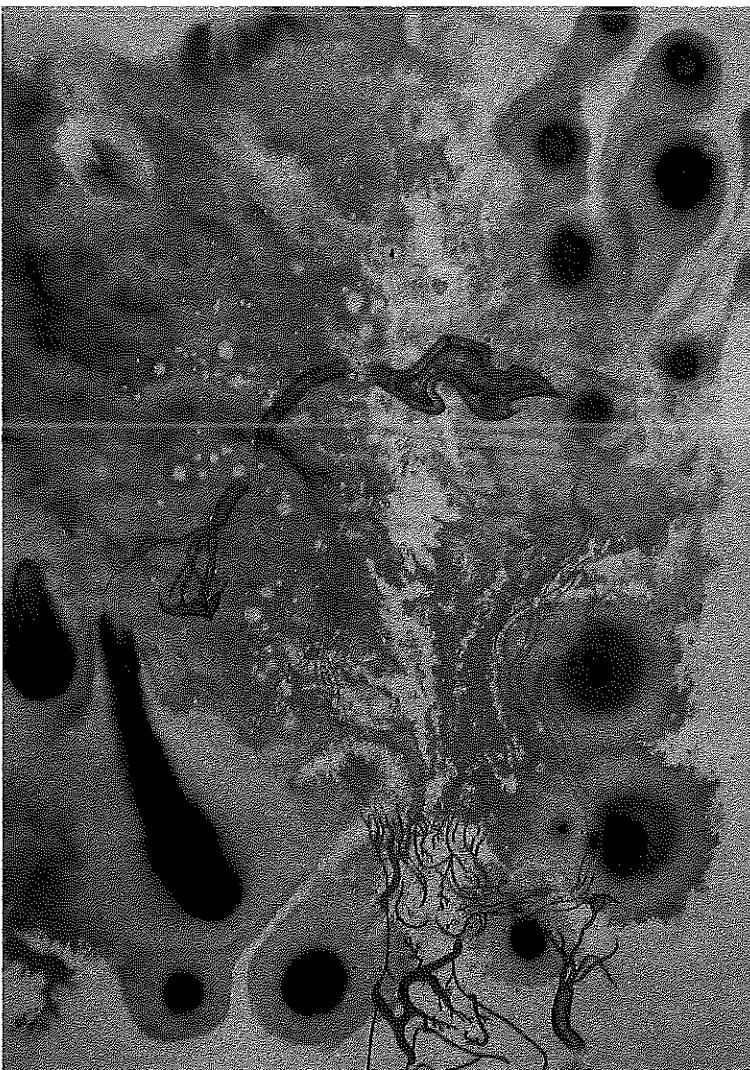
Above: *Woman #18 (Kristina)*, thumbtacks & acrylic paint on wood panel.

Right: *Woman #10 (Miranda)*, collage & acrylic paint on wood panel.

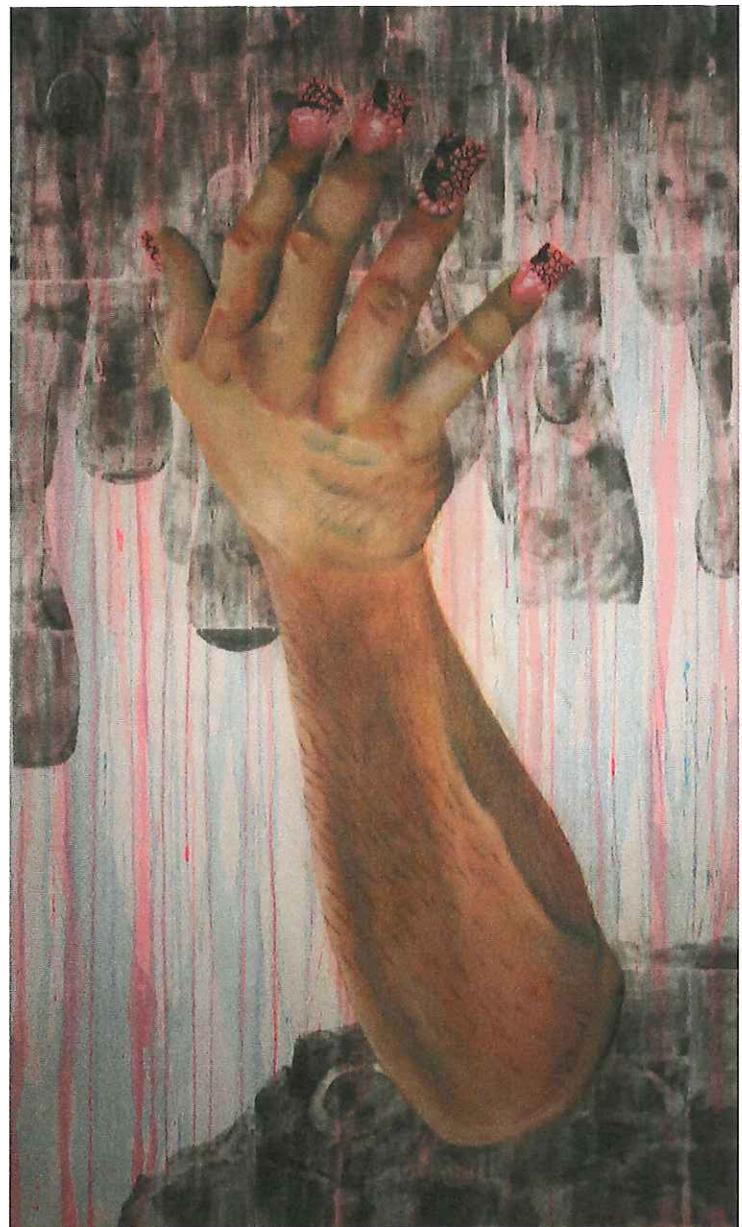




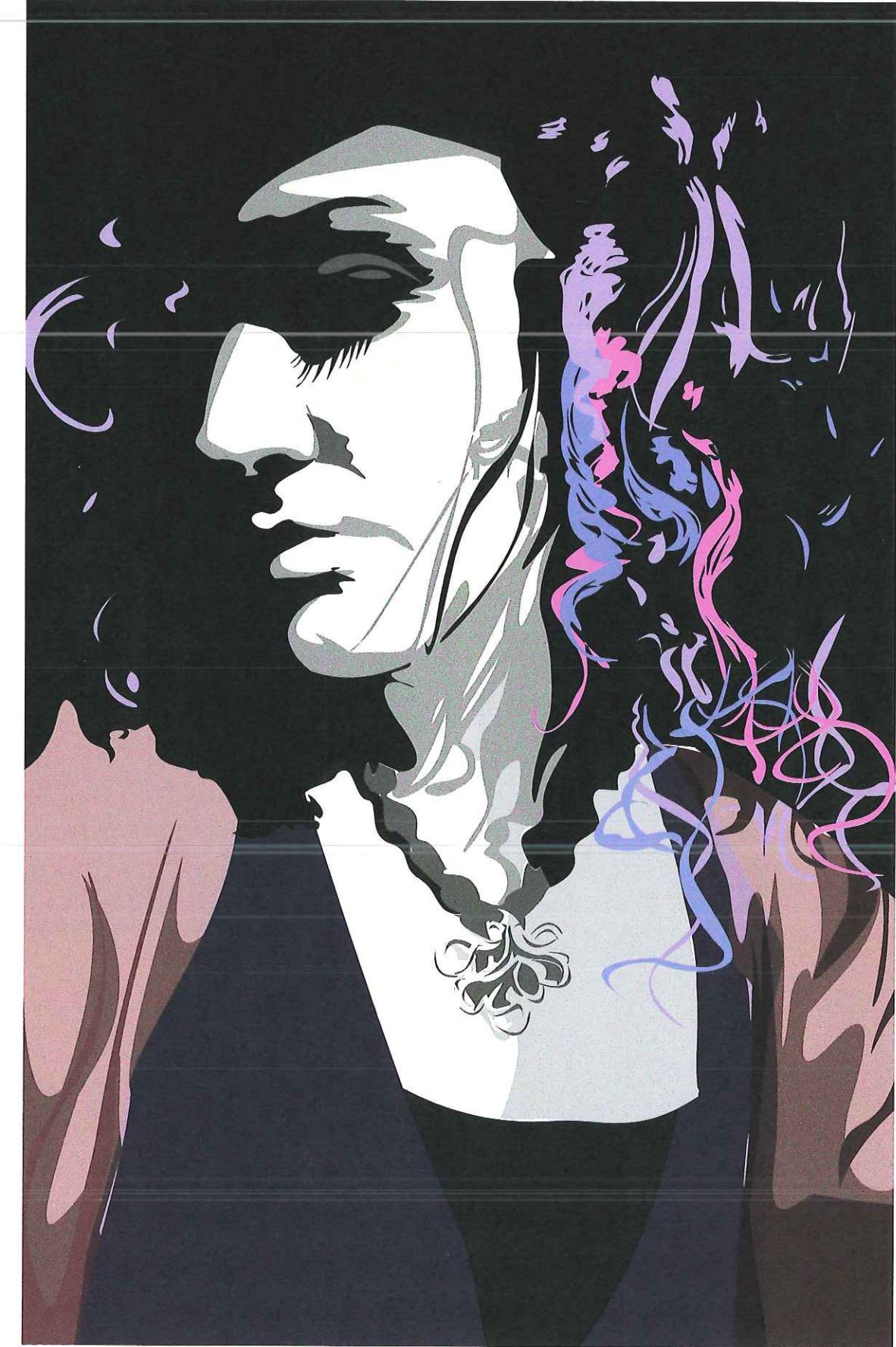
ANTHONY BEARZI, *Do You*, spray paint



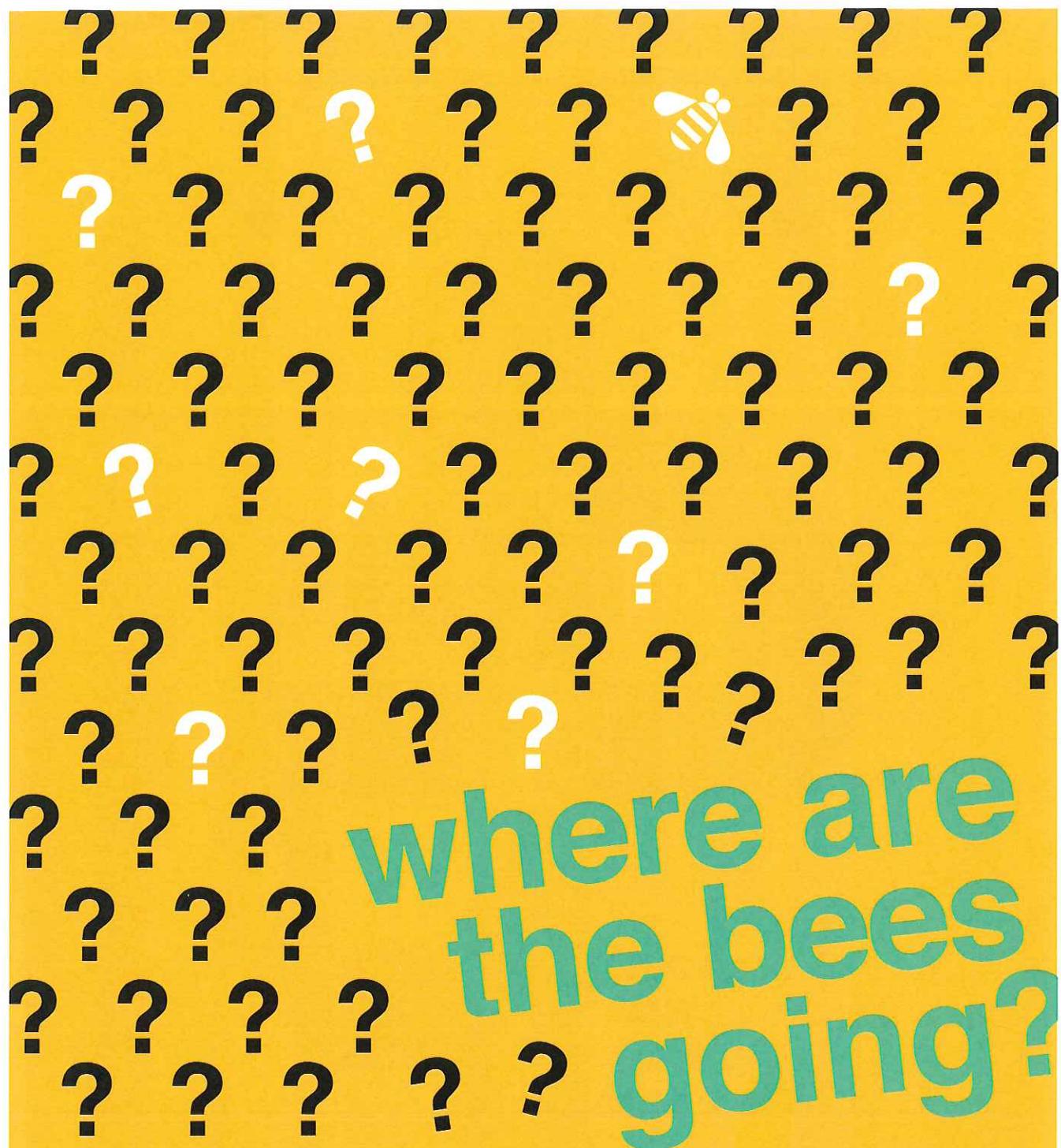
ZAYNE RUST, from the *Alixis Series*, screen printing, ink & graphite



JAMES MULLANE, *HEel* and (above) *MANicure*,
xylene transfer, water color & chalk paste on BFK
Reeves paper



NICHOLE ATWOOD, *Self-Portrait*, digital illustration



One of every three bites of food eaten worldwide depends on pollinators, for a successful harvest.

In the past several months, a scramble in California's almond groves has given the world a taste of what may lie in store for food production if the widespread – and still puzzling – decimation of bee colonies continues.





The ability to experience positive emotions would mean that dogs have a level of sentience comparable to that of a human child. And this ability suggests a rethinking of how we treat dogs.

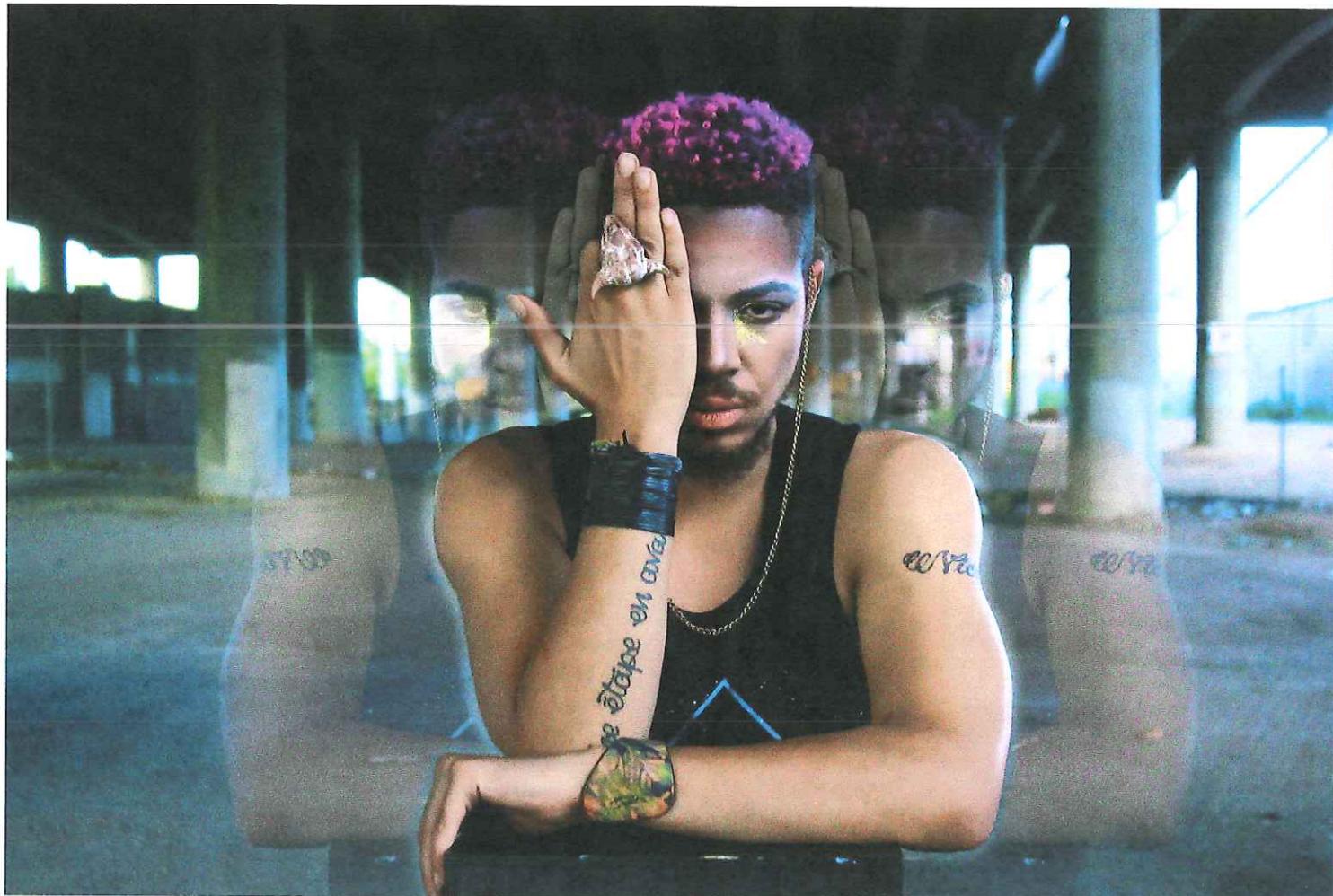
**dogs
are
people
too**

Many of the same things that activate the human caudate, which are associated with positive emotions, also activate the dog caudate. This may be an indication of canine emotions.

KRISTEN MORRISON, *Dogs Are People Too*, digital poster



DAVID ALVARADO, *Attempted pose with Maggie*, photography



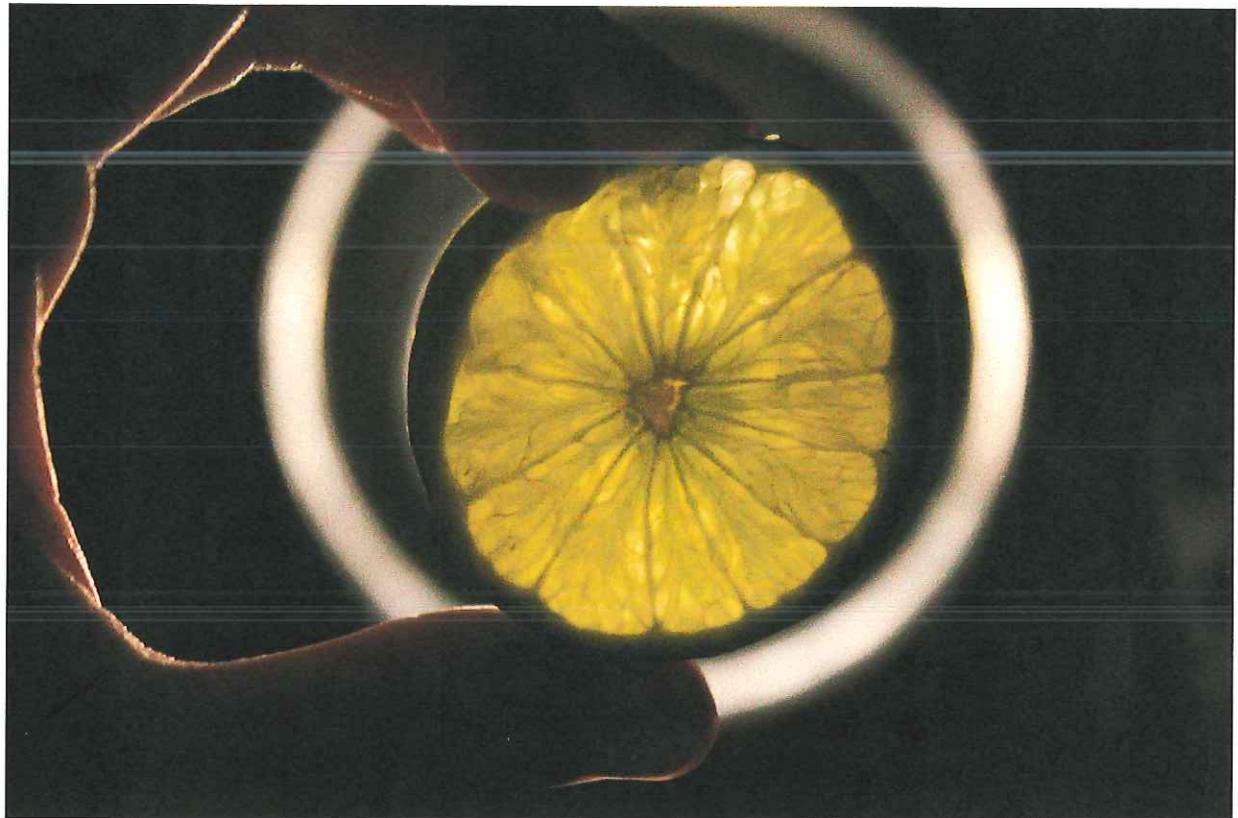
THOMAS LOPEZ, *Manifest Destiny*, fashion photography. Model: Sur Eliz



CHRIS BULLOCK, *Shanghai Wall*, digital photography

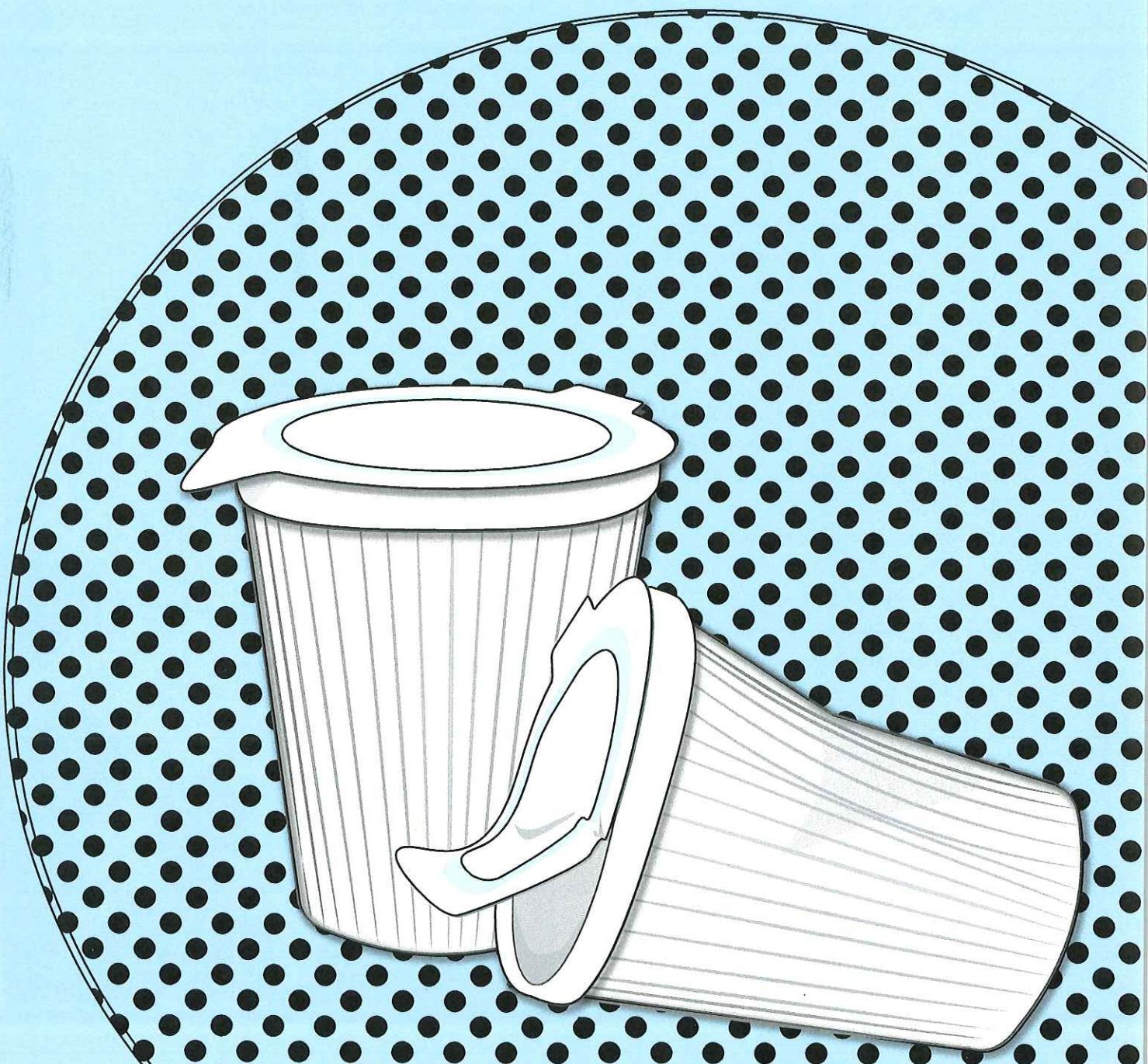


CEDRIC CHAMBERS, *Infinity*, digital photography



CEDRIC CHAMBERS, *Infamous Lemon*, photography

POETRY



CIRCUS OF RAG AND BONE

BY NATALIE McANULLA

The jugglers indigo scarves
fly up. float down.
Rhythmic, yet wild. Entrancing.
I watch from my perch aloft—
across the wire from him.
We lovers are foolish acrobats.

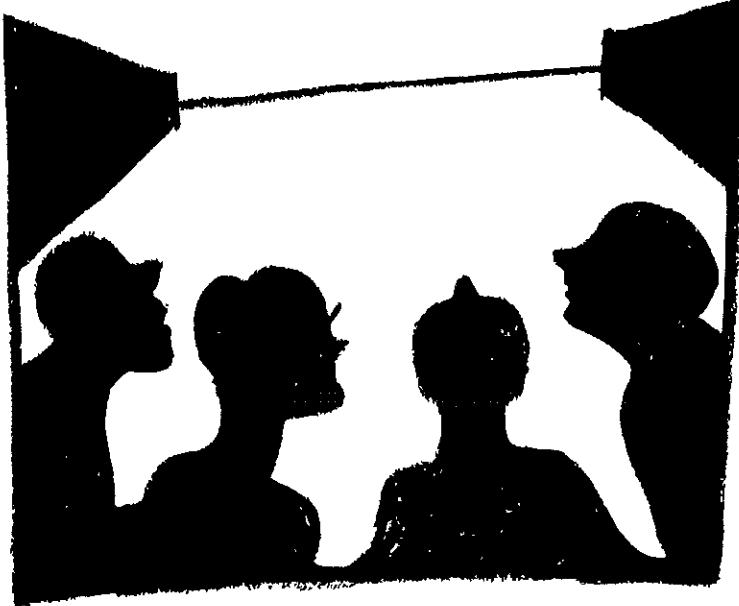
Engaged in our show, the crowd is torn
between titillation and terror. Only the scarves
capture my attention, their fluid movement.
My partner and I bow to one another,
all I can see are scarves flying across his visage.

Transformation always occurs on this high wire,
the view is glorious. We dance, in approach,
to a purple melody. But the line trembles,
he overcorrects...and the blood is just
everywhere. No one thought to use a net.

In and out of the emergency room
—a revolving door of costumed partners
who wish to share my show even though
they never appear to see *my* indigo bandages.
Consumed by their own performance and pain.
Am I a magician? Illusionist?
A cool artist of lies? Has my calculated
veneer matriculated to my viscera?
Some partners believe the show is about them—
you. Can it be all about me? Too?

Friends are the comical clowns clothed
as doctors rushing around on unicycles
while wearing oversized stethoscopes.
They occasionally stop pedaling to listen
to the absence of a beat — my silent heart.
Red paint smiles contort into ‘aww shucks’
frowns then the crowd cackle laughs on cue.
A ‘well meaning’ heckler suggests I,
“Lighten up darlin’, there’s plenty of fish in the sea.”
I look in the direction of his face...

smile and slowly bow towards him
—but all I can see are scarves.



THE BIRD

BY STERLING WALSH

Three festive feathers are all that remain.
1,000 little feelers reaching out to be saved.
I stop. The crowd continues.
I step out for a moment
Kneel down on this warm autumn day.
A touch.
The tiny tendrils, holding on letting go.
Some ignoring my invading finger.
Some blindly hoping it is their bird returning for them.
The party bird hunted to extinction for his plumage.
Once a flock would black out the sky.
Icy thoughts run down my body as I remember
A story of a man, who got too close.
He stood frozen, mouth agape. As a deafening screech pulled his body apart.
Hot blood running from his eyes and ears.
Feathered menace they claimed
and so it began.
Bang. Bang. Bang.
One by one they fell.
Hundreds of brightly colored bodies.
Stacked in messy rainbow piles.
Newspapermen came to take photos
Laughed and smoked.
Is there sadness? Regret?
No. Not for you, bird.
Died in the name of the party, the mardi gras, the striptease.



THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

BY KAVANN TOK

My hair is like a strong current in a massive storm,
Wild and free, with no real direction,
A fearless bird flying without destination.

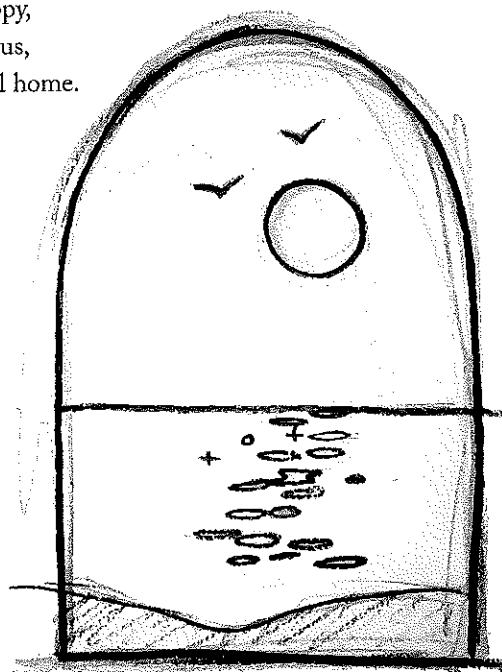
My smile is like sunlight warming your day,
Bringing a new perspective to your cloudy ways,
Where the doubts are forced to fade away.

My fresh way of thinking stemmed from tragedy,
Moving forward in response to calamity,
Mom's words still haunt, "Is this all the doctors can do for me?"

Then she was gone at the blink of an eye,
My heart tightened, my soul died,
She taught me a lesson, life will slip by.

So I packed my bags, left everything behind,
Goodbye to the palm trees, goodbye to the ocean breeze,
Replace it with the purple mountains majesty.

I am as grateful as my newly adopted puppy,
Nervous and scared yet excited and anxious,
Leaving a comfort zone for a new place to call home.



SONNET FOR MY 40TH BIRTHDAY

BY MATT PASSANT

Fever breaks and summer dies,
A sickness fades away
In fast and easy demise
As autumn soon holds sway.
Half as high the sun does hang;
Time lays siege to us all.
Year to year the watchman bangs,
Mortality his call.
But there will be no reply
As youth has not run out,
Even as the years fly by
For there can be no doubt:
The longest quick way up a hill
Leaves even longer further still.



CONCRETE

BY KYLE FRENCH

I turn my head and look out the window
and frown
as the blurs of colors,
reds, greens, golds,
go whipping by.

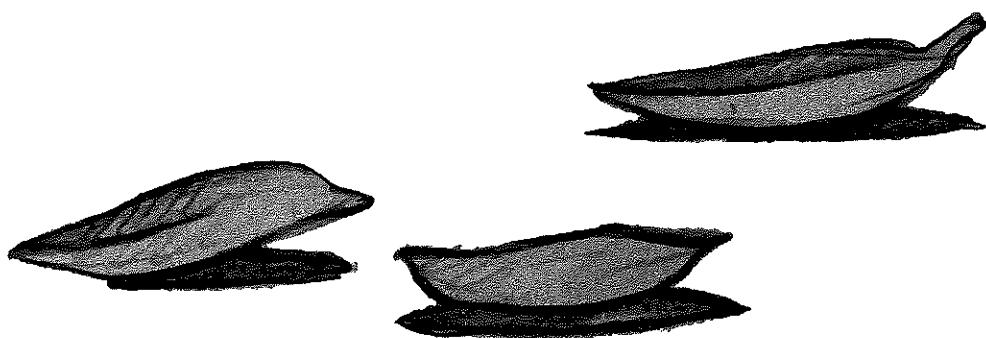
It seems unfair they grow here,
so easily,
on the side of the road
where nothing guides them except
the steady line of concrete
of the highway.

I am astoundingly good at
killing flowers.
Through too much care,
or not enough,
these faults only my own,
they die,
in plastic pots
on the porch of my apartment.

I worry about what this says of me,
that my nurturing care
leads to death
when they bloom so freely here
coexisting only with road
and pollution
and the scorch of summer sun.

Perhaps there is too much concrete
inside my mind, drowning out the
color, smothering out the life
with overbearing well intention,
a symbol I am unwilling to acknowledge.

I stop
and turn my blinker on
and turn my head
and turn the wheel,
my envy toward nature
momentarily abandoned
in a plastic pot of its own.



PROSE



WORDS

BY PAMELA GATES-TRAYSER

Writing is my secret. Writing is my strength. He cannot take that away from me. Each day I walk through life and do everything he tells me to do. Each day I cook, clean and put a smile on my face. He never knows that when he shuts his eyes, I open my laptop and write. He has no control there. The words are my own, and I can be Elizabeth Bennet chiding Mr. Darcy. I can be Judith as she slays the evil Assyrian general Holofernes. Or I can be a woman of my own creation — strong, capable, free.

During the day, he thinks I am playing games on the computer: Mahjong, Solitaire, it does not matter what I tell him, he believes me. I tap at the keyboard ever slowly, one key at a time. Each letter forms a word. Each word forms a sentence. Each sentence forms a paragraph. Each paragraph forms a story.

He would not like my words or my writing, so I keep it secret. I keep it safe. I keep it mine. I listen to the voices in my head in the dead of the

night and *tap tap tap* at the keyboard.

He found my words today, and he took my computer. Writing is not good for me, he says, and so I scream at him. I make him pry the computer from me finger by finger. You know what the writing will do to you, he says, but I just scream and scream because he has taken my freedom from me. He has stolen my only piece of happiness. If I am good, if I behave, he may give it back, so I stop screaming and smile. I wipe the tears from my eyes. I cook, clean and put a smile on my face. At the dinner table, he brings up children. I smile on the outside because I cannot tell him the truth. He would not like the truth. My words are my children. I stroke them and nurture them, until they grow into my stories, and then they fly free and I am at peace. I need my children, and he does not understand.

So I behave during the day. I cook, clean, and put on a smile. The entire time I hoard pencils and paper underneath my mattress. I cannot write during the day, but at night I am free. My handwriting is grotesque

because the moon is not shining the way I want it to. He falls asleep, and I sneak the paper out, one sheet at a time. I scribble along — a love story here, a chivalric fantasy there. I want to laugh at something I wrote, but I bite my lip until it bleeds so that I can hold it in. He must not know. He must not steal them away from me.

But tonight, as I slide my fingers past the silky smooth sheets, I find nothing and I know that he knows. I am heartbroken. Those were my greatest children. My best stories. He stole my children from me. I cry myself to sleep, hugging my pillow and pretending it is not soft down inside the silky material but shreds and shreds of paper.

I wake the next morning to the smell of brewing coffee. I walk into the kitchen to the sounds of sizzling bacon and the *bubble bubble* of percolating coffee. He turns to me as I enter and smiles. It is a killer's smile, the smirk of a man who feels no remorse for the murders he has committed, and I wonder how I could have ever married a killer.

We need to talk, he says, this cannot keep happening, cannot go on. He is right. I smile back at him and wonder what he sees in my lopsided half-grin. We eat breakfast in peace for the first time in ages. I do not scream, I do not cry over the children he has forced me to abandon. Nor do I want to weep or yell. I want to enjoy this morning: the sultry sound of his laugh, the dimples in his cheeks I had fallen in love with all those years ago. I soak in the beauty of our last meal. He has given me no choice. I cannot live without my children. But him? Yes, I am sure he can go.

Hours later, the authorities find me, drenched in his blood. Words are scrawled all over the floor, the walls and the counters. They drag me away, kicking and screaming for my babies. How could I do such a horrible thing, they ask as they slide the cold, metal handcuffs over my wrists? I do not answer, just smile, because I know my children are free at last. ☺

TALE AS OLD AS TIME

BY KRISTIN MACINTYRE

At night, after my mother would tuck me in tight under my Disney comforter, I used to contemplate mortality. She would rest her fuchsia lips on my forehead, give me an audible kiss goodnight, and switch off the lights. Her soft whisper in the kitchen, the comforting crack of light from the hallway, and my Beauty and the Beast night light, were things that let me know I was okay, that morning was promised. Just as an infant wraps her hand around her mother's finger, these small, trivial details of my childhood held me safe.

One ordinary night, after years of loving use, my night light went out. Well after my mother said her nighttime farewell, and waved a thousand little goodbyes as she closed the door, my Beauty and the Beast characters, and their miniature torch, buzzed, popped, and after a brilliant surge of yellow, went out entirely. The whole world went silent. I lay still in bed, careful not to move. Even as I tried to slow my breath, keep quiet, each exhale sounded as if it were sent through a megaphone and echoed off the walls. The room started to wane in and out, the ceiling dropped close to my nose, and in the dark, I spent a precious few moments considering the possibility that morning would not come, that there would be no more chocolate milk dawn, no more French toast before school, no more forehead

kisses from Mom.

At an age that still bore single digits, I became consciously aware of the frailty of the human condition. I remember poking my own arm — feeling how soft, doughy, vulnerable my skin was. How ridiculously delicate I was, floating through my childhood, with nothing but a lacy cotton T-shirt as my armor. Sharp objects started to catch my attention. I wasn't so much scared by them as I was mesmerized by their ability to damage. The glistening edge of the steak knife my mother would cut my dinner with, the bared teeth of the neighbor's dog through the chain-link fence, the jagged gears of my best friend's bicycle as we rode to the deli to buy purple fizzy drinks.

On a particularly rainy October morning, I caught my finger in the zipper of my pink parka. I flinched, pulled my finger from the zipper's teeth, and held it close to my face so I could see the bright red blood run freely from its precious home. I held my bleeding finger up close to my eyes and saw myself reflected in the lucid bead. *Just like when I look into the back of my cereal spoon*, I thought. Enchanted, I turned my finger upside down and I watched the little droplets fall onto my rain boot, each one shattering upon impact.

My night light never worked again. My mother bought a new bulb at the hardware store. My grandmother blew into the electrical outlet, always

figuring that dust clogged up life's wiring. My grandfather took out his toolbox, with its three levels and velvet-lined drawers, and performed a mechanized surgery. For no discernible reason, my night light died. I plugged it back in anyway, and hoped that one day a small miracle would blow through my room and I'd be lulled to sleep by its protective glow again. It stayed there, broken and collecting dust, blocking the socket for other, more useful things, until I grew too big for night lights and the silly, magical things of girlhood.

Life, I thought, was easily let loose. Seen, and then unseen, like the surge and pop of a beloved night light.



Sometime after midnight, he kills the engine in front of a crumbling motel. The vacancy sign flickers neon, high above the littered streets, on the eve of Halloween. I contemplate for a moment if the irregular buzzing comes from the sign, the urban crickets, or the snowy TV sets inside each rotten room. We don't have enough money to stay for the night. Adam opens the driver's door and lets one booted foot rest on the pavement. He tells me to wait here. I whine about it and he clenches his jaw. Muscles rip through his thin face. I hunch forward, hollow my belly, rest my forehead against

the dashboard, and tell him to hurry up. He is dressed in a lion costume. As he puts on his best smile, he takes off his faux mane and runs his fingers through his hair. He wipes his clammy hands on his khaki pants, looks in the smudged rearview mirror, and leaves to bribe the attendant for a room. He slams the door and seals me, airtight, in the silence of the car as I watch him walk toward the front office. I look down at my own costume: a gold ball gown and white gloves. Tonight, we decided, we will be classic lovers that are fated to live in a castle and dance under chandeliers. Belle and Beast.

He walks back to the car, holding the head of his lion under one arm, and dangles keys to a room so I can see them. I smile at him from the car window and shake my head in disbelief. He opens the passenger door for me and tells me not to ask. He grabs the case of beer from the trunk, gives me a wink, offers me his hand, and dips his knee in a chivalrous way to help me out of the car. He plants a kiss square on my lips and says, *Are you ready, darling?* My heels click up the asphalt, and my white glove turns the doorknob to our magical, impermanent, momentary heaven.

We walk inside and release stars of dust into the air with each footstep. Ruby-red, dark, stiff drapes hang in the window. Brass lamps with purple shades color the walls yellow. Stale smoke floats on the air. I stand in

front of the mirrors that line the entire length of the far wall and watch the dust settle on my hair.

We stick our mouths underneath the rusted bathroom faucet and swallow a few pills each before we begin. Adam comes out of the bathroom, sucks snot through his nose, and spits it into the ashtray by the bed. He takes off his tan jacket and unbuckles his pants, lets them sit in an undone fashion over his hips. He sits on the side of the bed in a hybrid state of half-lion, half-man. I keep my dress and heels on, cherishing the grandeur that comes only with an elegant Halloween costume, and sit on the stained carpet to prepare our flights. He starts talking in circles about a guy from the party whom I don't know. I pretend to listen, nodding my head and calling him *baby* once or twice, distracted with the chemicals in my lap.

I flick the tips of the needles to let him know its time to stop talking and go somewhere else. We sit side by side on the edge of the velvet bed that looks like an oversized pincushion, ready to be far away, together.

Adam slides my arm-length glove down to my wrist. The grace of Belle feels feigned already. Then he pulls his belt from his pants, wraps the leather band around my arm, and pulls tight. I slip the tip of the needle into my plush arm. I feel sticky, prickly. My

bones burn as the poison runs up my arm. I hear my heartbeat in my eardrums, and the whole world twists into kaleidoscope diamonds. I take the tip out and watch a teardrop of blood grow from the wound and buoy on my skin. Tiny lights reflect off its surface and I see the dot of blood fall open in the shape of a rose.

How fragile, the life of a girl.

I float like the dust in the dirty hotel room, dazzled by the glass rose that has sprouted from the stem of my insides. I hold it closer to my face, entranced in a thick and heavy, slow and syrupy way, and then lick my right finger, still gloved, and crush its petals. I fold my arm up and cradle it against my chest, rocking back and forth. Heaven swells larger and larger in my middle and repeatedly bursts in waves of gold.

I fall backward onto the bed next to Adam. He rolls toward me and peels my costume off. I lie still, spiraling down and down in widening rings, while he rips pieces of my gown off and tosses them behind him. White light seems to bore through his eyes, his fingertips, his toes. He licks his lips and his eyes go fiery, yet blank. I see bubbles of spit glistening on his canine teeth as he climbs on top of me. I lie stark naked, lazily captivated at my reflection in the mirror on the ceiling above the bed, and watch as he breaks the delicate strings from which I hang. ☺

CLOSET

BY BOBBY OCTAVIO

Each open and close of the closet echoed its squeaky cry of deep sadness. The doe-eyed toddler was locked inside whenever his mother pleased, and she left him with biscuits to tide his hunger.

All the other rooms in the house were grand and enormous. They held such beautiful and important things. The dining room boasted of fine meals and wonderful conversations. The kitchen bragged that it kept the manor nourished and strong. The library held countless editions of fine literature and scientific essays. The lowly closet was a fraction of the size of the other rooms in the house. It held only surplus coats and clothes along with the poorest and saddest member of the household.

On this day, the mistress of the manor locked in the boy. The closet could remain silent no longer. The closet asked, "My Lady, I know that I am the smallest of the rooms here. I don't wish to feign more importance than I'm due. Have you a better use for me than to sadden this young boy?" Surprised and delighted, the mistress replied, "Keep close watch upon him within your walls, and listen close to what happens throughout. I pray you see more than had you before."

Following her request, the closet listened and heard all manner of yelling and arguing. Doors slammed, and cursing filled the manor. A short time passed. Calm returned to the air. The mistress returned and spoke again to the closet. "You offer the only refuge my dearest one has. His father hates his unordinary manner. Within your walls he is free to play and dress however he pleases. You hold a great many costumes, and within your embrace he feels safe. However small and insignificant you think you are, you are an oasis to my Colin." ☺



Poetry, A Celebration Of Life

A Conversation with Renee Ruderman

Words and Photo by Hayes Madsen

To Renee Ruderman, poetry is something that can illuminate aspects of ourselves that we may have been neglecting before. She's been teaching poetry and literature at MSU Denver full time since 1986. During that time, she's learned and taught a great many things with the diverse student body. She notes how students from all walks of life bring their experiences to class, making the experience at Metro a kind of unique cauldron of ideas and cultures. Writing is a catalyst of creativity, and Ruderman tries to impart that to her students.

"It teaches you about how to live your life. If you truly write poetry from the heart and the gut, it will teach you so many things about yourself that you can then accept, that you might have been struggling with before." Ruderman said.

Ruderman's bright and cheerful personality comes through in everything, even in her office. Although stacks of work and a myriad of books abound, everything has a place and a reason to be there. Her door is seemingly the most decorated of the entire English Department, with snippets of poetry, cartoons, and art drawing the

eye with their decoration. Within the office one particular item stands out on the wall. Ruderman calls it her "Women Artists Board" — writers and historical figures that have made an impact on her. Although it is specifically a women artists board, Ruderman includes a few men who've made a significant impact on her as well. It's a tribute and collection to the most important people in her life.

"All the women up there are artists of some kind, not just writers. It's my celebration of various things, and various people in my life," Ruderman said.

Before coming to MSU Denver, Ruderman worked at the University of Denver, where she was also a graduate student. Ruderman had not always been set on teaching, or even writing poetry, for a career. There was a path to this point.

"It was a long and winding road, as John Lennon says," Ruderman said.

Her path started as a pre-med student, but things just didn't fit as she switched from major to major. Eventually, she wound up at New York University, in her home state. Here she finally cemented her love and passion for literature, and decided to study it.

"I've always been in love with English literature, but that's where I decided to finally study it," Ruderman said.

Of course she didn't just stumble upon a love of poetry and literature one day; rather, it was something that built up over the years. Ruderman had written poetry and stories since she was a child, following the example of family members. Her grandmother wrote children's poetry in her native language of German, while her mother wrote stories. Writing is something that's always been a part of Ruderman's life.

"I've been writing stories forever, and poetry forever. Since I was a kid," Ruderman said.

Ruderman has published two different books of poetry including, "Poems From the Rooms Below," in 1995, and a myriad of other standalone poems and stories. One of her poems was even featured in the RTDs Poetry in Motion program displayed in light rail trains and buses that run throughout Denver.

This constantly growing love for poetry and a wealth of experience is something Ruderman brings with her to MSU Denver — applying her knowledge to the many classes she has taught in the past. Her current focus is on three classes: Art and Craft of Writing, Creative Nonfiction Writing, and Subjective & Objective Poetry.

A big theme for Renee is exploring her roots, going to Germany and finding out things about her family as well as teaching workshops. She's taught workshops in both Germany and the city of Olomouc in the Czech Republic. In Olomouc, she taught a poetry workshop to the students at the University of Palaky, and she recounts the remarkable skill with which the students spoke English.

"It was a joyful experience because they speak beautiful English. Of course, I speak no Czech. It was wonderful, but when it came to writing poetry I realized how difficult it was for them. They had difficulty understanding the nuances in English and to understand some of the figurative language required, however, they did well with imagery," Ruderman said.

Ruderman tries to impress certain ideas upon her students and give them a unique way of approaching writing. She always wants her students to be open and search for the truth in both themselves and the world.

"Start with the small, don't start with the idea of love and hoping to write a big sonnet. Start with your experience of love, and allow that to somehow become the universal in your writing," Ruderman said.

She wants her students to let themselves go into the “creative space” where they can discover their passion and find things they didn’t know they had within themselves. When they are able to find this place, Ruderman believes her students will be so excited about writing that nothing in the world will be able to stop them.

“You’re the vessel through whom whatever muse you have communicates,” Ruderman said.

One tactic she uses in extracting these ideas is having students just take a moment at the beginning of class to free write about anything, no particular topic. They then go back through and highlight the pieces that stand out. They move these pieces out and form them into a poem, at least what looks like a poem to them.

Teaching is a two-way street, however, and Ruderman wants her students to participate in classes. Most of what she teaches are workshops, requiring students to actively be invested in the class as they build a cohesive environment that everyone can use to build off of each other’s ideas.

Ruderman has taught many people many things throughout her time here, but she insists that she’s learned just as much herself from students. Every day she learns something new.

“The students here are so accepting, not only of one another, but of all the idiosyncrasies of their professors,” Ruderman said.

She encourages students to bring their own experiences into the class to use, and often has them go out onto the campus to study things or write their own ideas on what they study.

As many professors here do, Ruderman recognizes that students at the university are incredibly busy. She has one piece of advice over all others to give in

this regard, and that’s recommending naps.

“Sleeping for approximately 20-30 minutes will leave you feeling refreshed and will allow you to get into a creative space, and that’s when you should write,” Ruderman said.

Ruderman has enjoyed every moment of her time at Metro, and is looking forward to more great experiences here and abroad. She wants to teach more workshops in other countries, providing opportunities for growth and learning for herself and future students. In the coming semesters Ruderman is also looking forward to teaching a new class in memoir, hopefully by the fall of 2016.

Like most people who write, Ruderman’s own work has undergone various periods and styles. Her career and experiences have taught her a lot, just as she in turn teaches others. Her interests have turned to research-based works, and looking into what happens to so many people who take part in great emigrations. She’s spent a lot of time investigating the period before World War II, as many people emigrated from Germany to avoid the Nazi regime. Ruderman’s own parents being Jewish, it’s a topic with a lot of meaning to her.

“All of these patterns of immigration interest me, and what happens to people in terms of their identity and language, when they leave the country that has essentially given them an identity,” Ruderman said.

It’s just one of the many themes that Ruderman loves to explore with her work. Writing has been an avenue for her to explore these things for many years, something she’s shared with others along the way, and something she’ll continue to do for years to come. **m**

BLACKBIRDS

(based on a drawing by Kurt Böttcher)

BY RENEE RUDERMAN

Two blackbirds caw, their beaks open to hasten the sky-bound flocks toward what's left in the wind-bitten tree. They stretch their necks to place their sound just below the cumulous cloud — under which specks of wings accumulate like dark gliders. Another bird on a lower branch spies the ground, the grass still green, flower husks holding the promise of seeds. The birds prepare to fly south, over the Alps from this park near the Bahnhof in Fürth, where no one walks the curving path into the woods. It's 1920. The Pegnitz streams under the delicate branches, and the Great War is over, the next brewing in the valley beyond the forest. The blackbirds understand about leaving. They do it every year at the first gust of impossible wind. ☺

Bahnhof means train station in German; Fürth is a town next to Nurnberg, Germany; the Pegnitz is a river.



Cherries: *What Are Little Girls Made Of?*

The Art of Kristyn Shafer

Words by Lauren Granado

Photos courtesy of artist

The abhorrent ooze of melted cherries placed in an elegant porcelain vanity set paradoxically urges one to look closer, perhaps even smell what is in front of them, despite the provocative and vile resemblance to menstruation blood.

Kristyn Shafer is a spatial media artist breaking down ideas of feminism, scopophobia, and lost identities through her sculptural work. She confronts female issues that are relevant to young women today. Her work is grounded in the concept of the female situation, which, for Shafer, is a descriptive term of her experience as an objectified woman in society. Her work is "gently macabre" as she explains because it is somewhat familiar to the viewer, but in an eerily disturbing or uncanny way.

She aims for her sculptural work to involve the viewer in more than just a visual experience. She wants to create connections between objects and notions of identity. Her work highlights taboo subjects, such as menstruation, scopophilia, and feelings of shame. In her installation *What Are Little Girls Made Of*, she uses porcelain, a lace doily, a mirror, cherries, wax, nylon and cement. This amalgamation of materials brings together seemingly disconnected objects and creates a tactile environment that reveals a narrative of womanhood.

The cherries are a deep, burgundy red that allude to menstruation blood, but are still inviting to the viewer. They are poignantly placed within a delicate porcelain vanity set that has the words "What Are Little Girls Made Of" as an inscription on the plate. The visual of the porcelain set evokes feelings of nostalgia and associations with femininity in the viewer, while juxtaposed with the gooeyness of the cherries and their indication of menstruation. This object placement is in direct dialogue with her concept of the female situation.

There are historical expectations of womanhood that are deeply rooted in our patriarchal society,

including the clandestine nature of menstruation, which is universally relatable. The work wrestles with the shame felt by the slightest allusion to menstruation, which is an essential element to womanhood. The aesthetically pleasing qualities of the porcelain vanity set atop the lace doily are appealing to the viewer, and once they are engaged, the cherries and their representation can be repulsive and may even bring about feelings of disgust for the viewer.

This is exactly where the power in Shafer's work lies. Her ability to subtly integrate the quintessential imagery of femininity with one of society's most forbidden taboos creates a multi-sensory experience, rather than just a visual participation. This connection begins to break down the boundaries between art and life.

Shafer describes how misogynistic encounters with catcallers and degrading strangers commenting on her physical appearance have fueled the creative fire that propels her work. As inspiration, she utilizes "the psychological damage that happens because of [the focus on her physical appearance] and being catcalled because people say insane things sometimes, and they're very demeaning, and you're just supposed to accept it and move on and take it as a compliment." Shafer discusses and scrutinizes the violent act against females by the male prerogative and gaze. Through the materiality of her work she is able to literally dig further to understand these constructs, and to push the corporeal realization of her theorized observations.

Shafer delves into this idea with the inclusion of the cast of her face covered in pineapple chunks on the floor of the installation. There is a sense of an abruptly violent act against the face, which is the physical embodiment of her identity.

She explains this element as a visual manifestation of the verbal assault of catcalling and the privileged male authority to view the female as an object

without repercussions in society. The pineapple also has interesting evocations with colonialism and the conquering of one's body and cultural identity. The lack of a nose is indicative of suffocation, or a being without agency.

As the viewer continues to examine the connections between the other objects, they will notice the Castration piece that is included in the series *What Are Little Girls Made Of*. The piece consists of wax, nylon, and cement. The use of industrial materials lends to the conceptual weight of the work in that it references the weight of society that is placed on young women, starting at a very young age.

The omnipresent pressure to conform one's body and physical appearance to the canonized standard of beauty is a pervasive problem for young girls. The nomenclature of castration or torture is effective in influencing the viewer's reception of the work as a reference to social issues. This title provides a precedent of severity in understanding the work and its concrete associations with issues of body shaming, sometimes resulting in body modification, or even body mutilation, along with self-loathing.

The work makes compelling connections that are current discussions within political, social, feminist, and artistic contexts. The scope is quite large, but Shafer creates an environment that discreetly addresses a multitude of issues with a unified conceptual foundation from the female perspective. Shafer explains how she has been influenced by and is art historically connected with theories of the abject: "I think for me, abject is probably the most freeing, that you could make something that is [both] gross and yourself, and talk about these issues in a way that is still true to what they are and not putting in too much fluff."

Artistically, Shafer has evolved along with her understanding of her visual and theoretical influences. She works closely with Tsehai Johnson, a sculpture professor at MSU Denver, to develop her ideas and to push her artistic practice. Her work is becoming more visually striking as the connections between her intended meanings and the physical manifestations are more closely related. She is pushing herself to understand material, color, and form, along with relationships between objects,

as tools to bind her work to a conceptual realm.

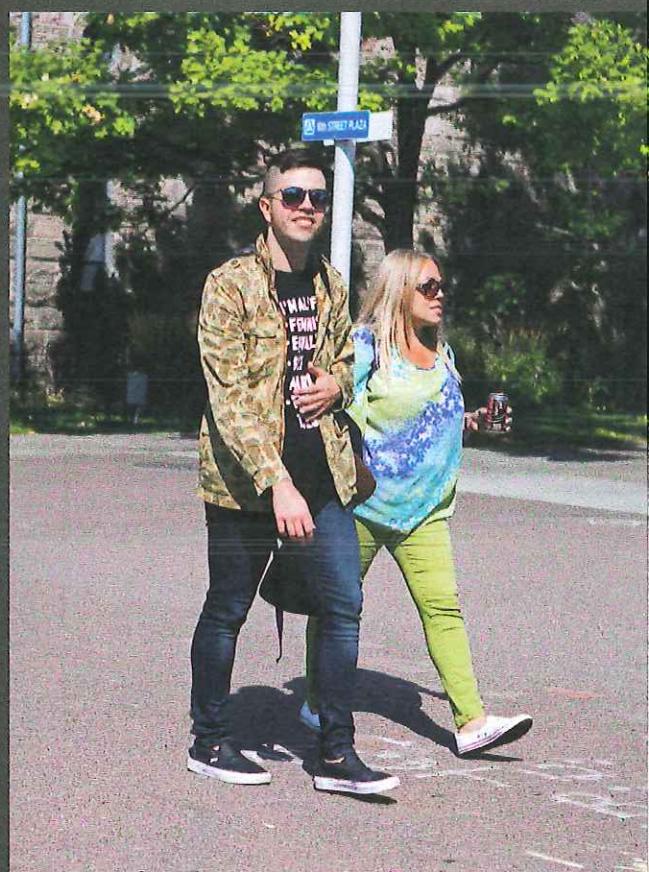
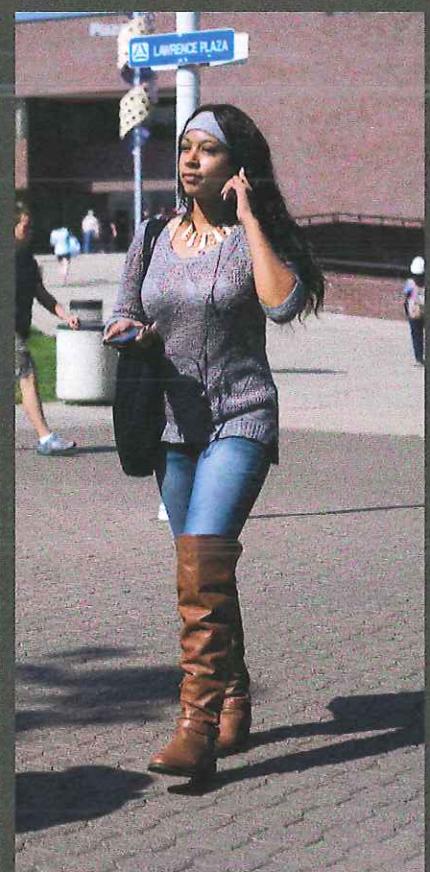
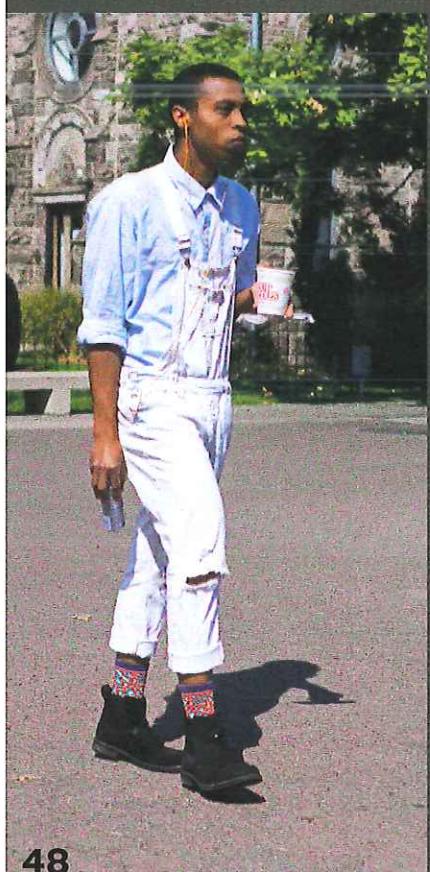
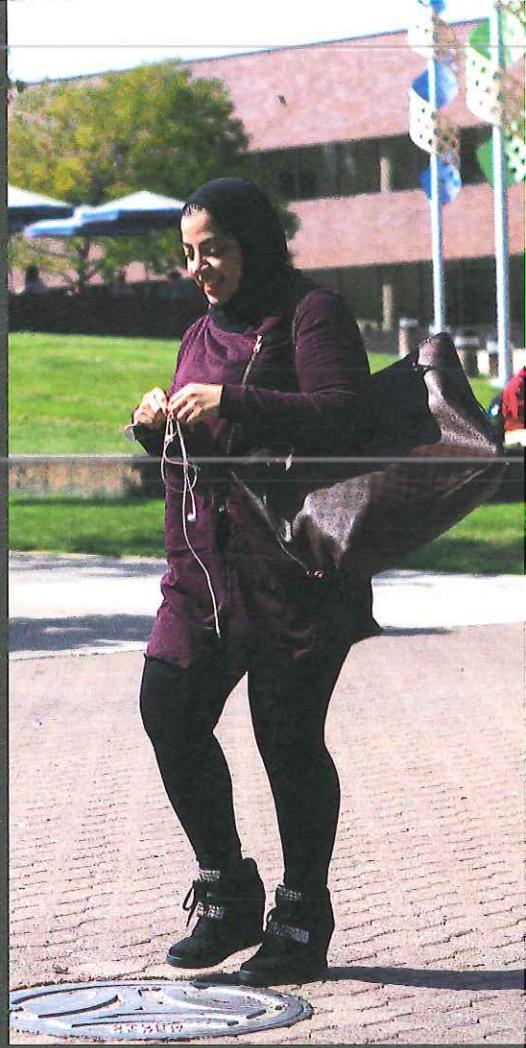
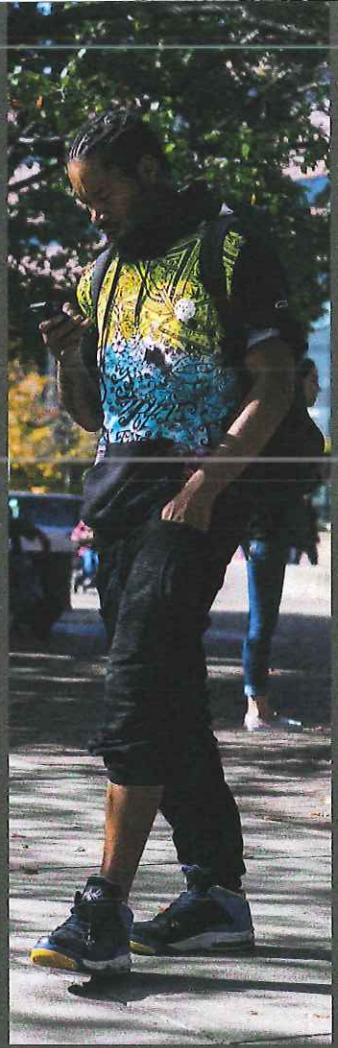
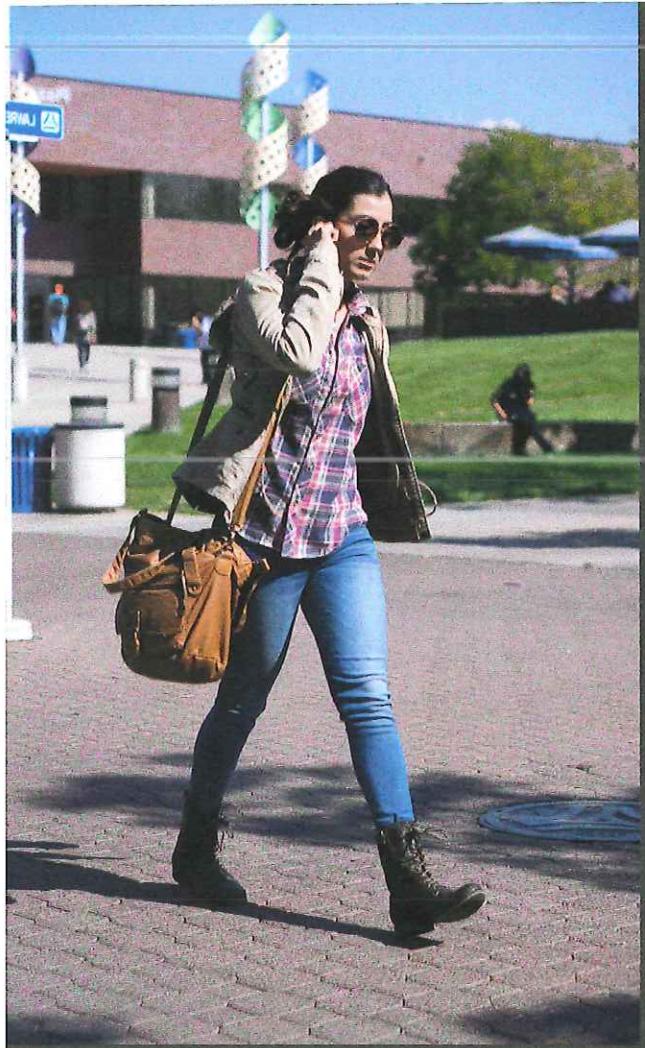
When engaging with her work, Shafer wants the viewer to take away the value of a moment of contemplation. A moment to consider what it is to be a woman, a female, a girl, and the effects of these binaristic definitions.

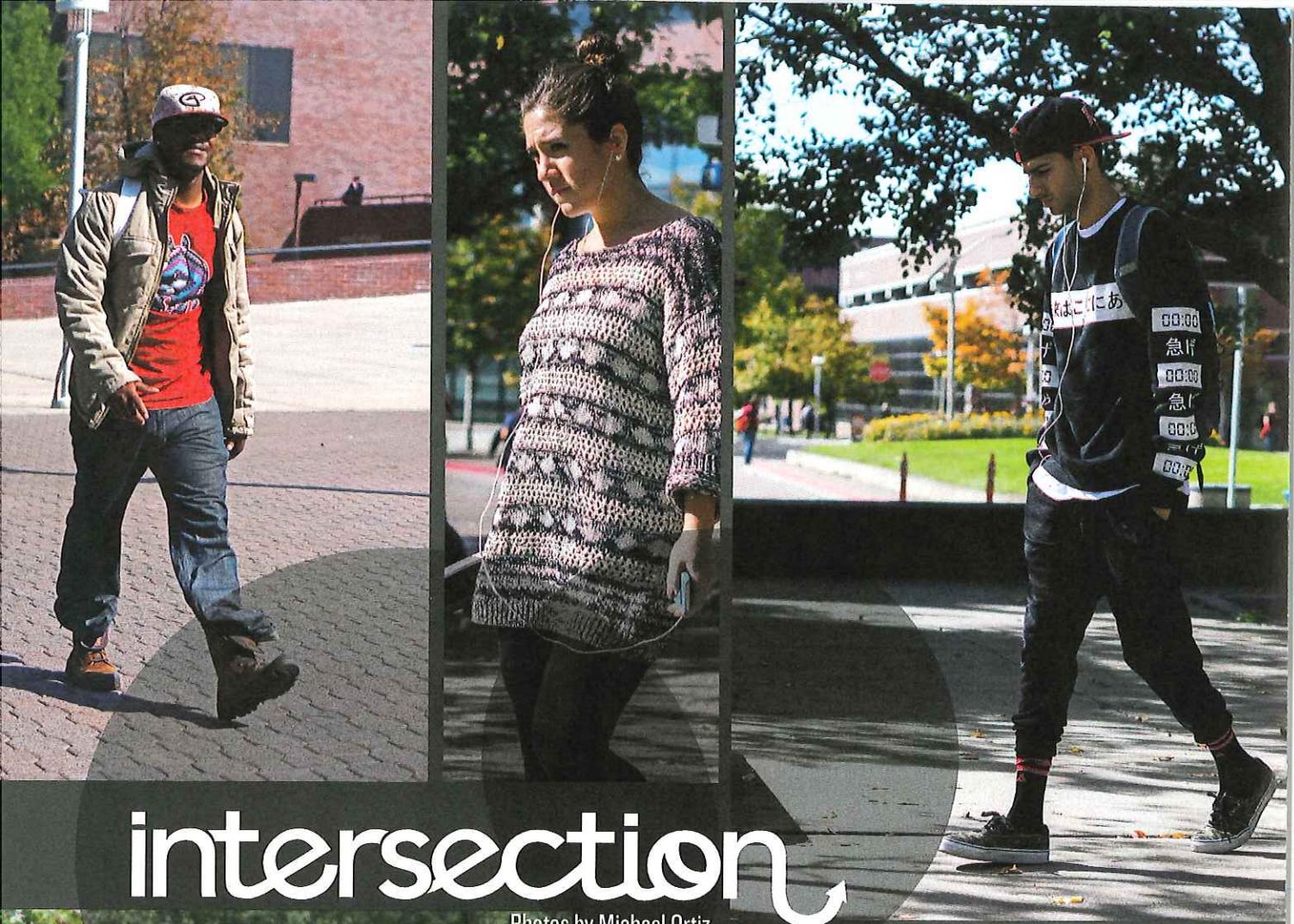
Her work is meant to be a disturbing, jarring realization that leads to a desensitizing and potentially a dialogue concerning female issues and the hidden taboos of the female body.



When speaking on the reception of her work by a viewer, Shafer states: "I want them to see my work. I want it to kind of gross them out enough. I want it to confront them enough, freak them out, make them really uncomfortable, so the next time they encounter something like seeing these nasty, melty, mucus cherries, I want that to gross you out and make you think about it enough, so the next time, maybe you're in the bathroom and you see a tampon, it's not so scary." **m**







intersection

Photos by Michael Ortiz





MARY

Words by Keenan McCall
Photos by Michael Ortiz

Those who meet Mary Kate Newton will be hard pressed not to find something impressive about her fashion sense. Attention grabbing but never gaudy, simple yet daring, her clothing is always something that appears to fit her perfectly, and her confidence certainly doesn't hurt this either.

Looking back, though, Newton remembers her sense of fashion being much more limited.

"Going to high school, I think every single day I wore jeans and a T-shirt," says Newton. "That was just my uniform, and before high school, I was in a uniform, so I really didn't have a lot of liberty to be able to dress myself."

After working in retail, however, Newton found that the exposure to fashion helped her develop her own style.

"I worked at LOFT, and just learning how to help other women take risks and how to make other women feel comfortable in what they were wearing, I kind of figured out what I liked," says Newton.

Working in retail also allowed Newton to see the rise and fall of trends, as well as notice trends on the rise. In terms of current core fashion trends, she notes that most anything can be seen as trendy.

"Some '90s stuff is coming back, like the denim on denim trend," says Newton. "Grunge in general – the plaid, the little beanies, those kind of things – are coming back... I see a lot of bohemian lately. Boho





KATE NEWTON

chic, like the statement braid kind of look. Maxi dresses, maxi skirts, that used to be those were only for the beach, but now you can wear them no matter what state you live in."

When asked where fashion could go next, Newton cites different avenues.

"Fashion could go anywhere," says Newton. "That's what's fun about it... Androgyny is a big one. I think that's going to be a big scene for a while, which I'm a fan of. I think it's kind of fun to play with proportions, where there's menswear-inspired things that women are wearing."

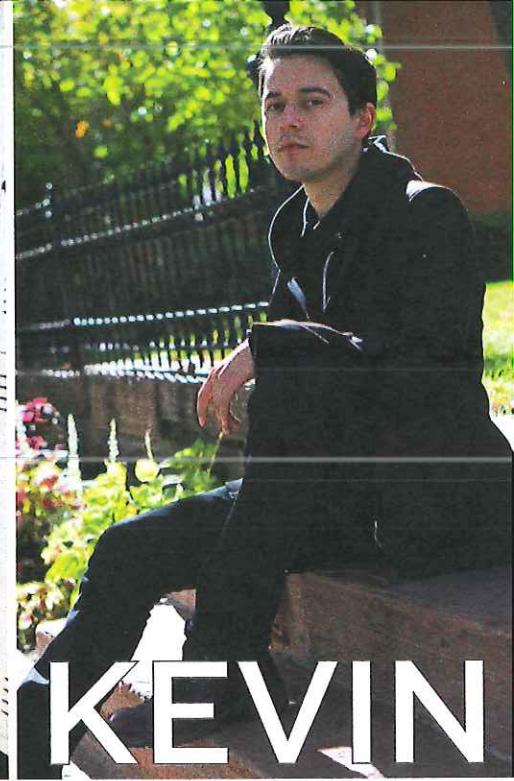
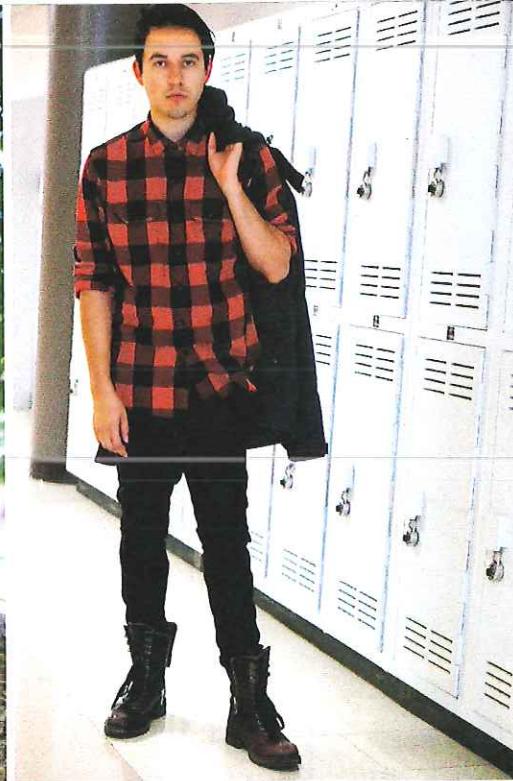
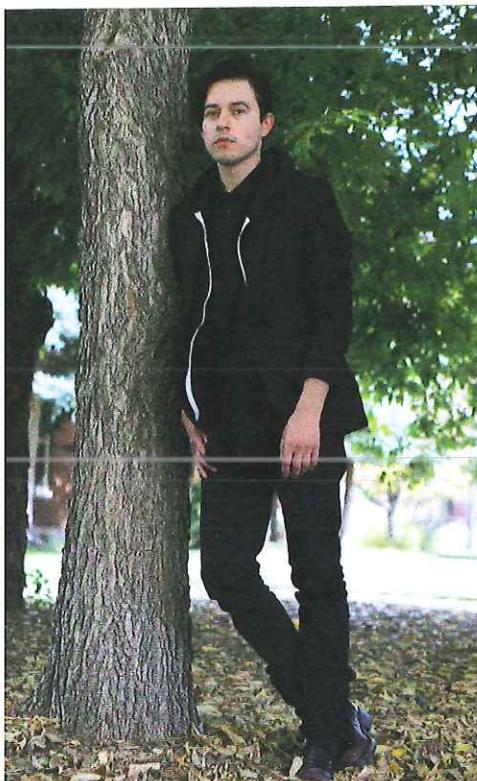
Newton is also aware of the distinct effect women's increasing status is having on fashion.

"I think that women in general – in the world – we're coming up, right?" says Newton. "We're looking for that power. I think that our styles are always going to be reflective of where we are in society, so with the rise of feminism and then the phenomenon of the feminist man, I think that part of it's the androgyny, but then part of it's the more powerful looks. Things like that are going to be coming into play."

Newton also has some advice for anyone looking to discover their own style.

"My one thing about fashion that I always say is if anybody, including yourself, has ever told you you can't pull something off, try it," says Newton. "That's how you find your own style." **m**





KEVIN

Words by Keenan McCall
Photos by Michael Ortiz

Calm, comfortable and confident, Kevin Norris wears his clothes and his style, instead of their wearing him.

An art student and a longtime fan of fashion, Norris remembers some influences to this passion coming early on.

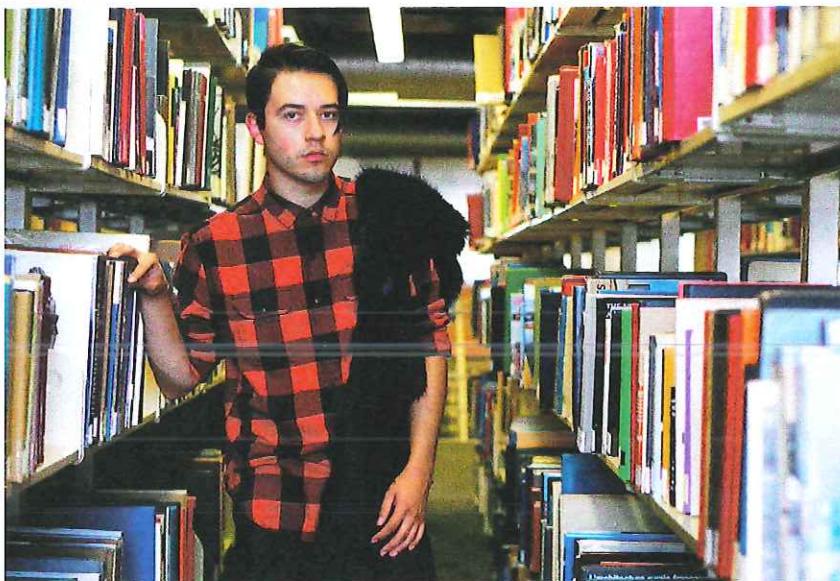
"From a really young age, I always was interested in it," says Norris. "My mom was very interested in it and was a fashionable person, so a lot of childhood memories stem from that."

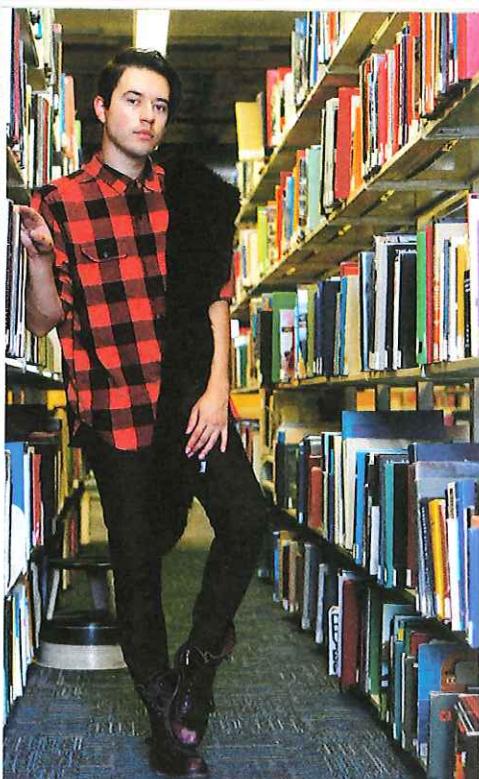
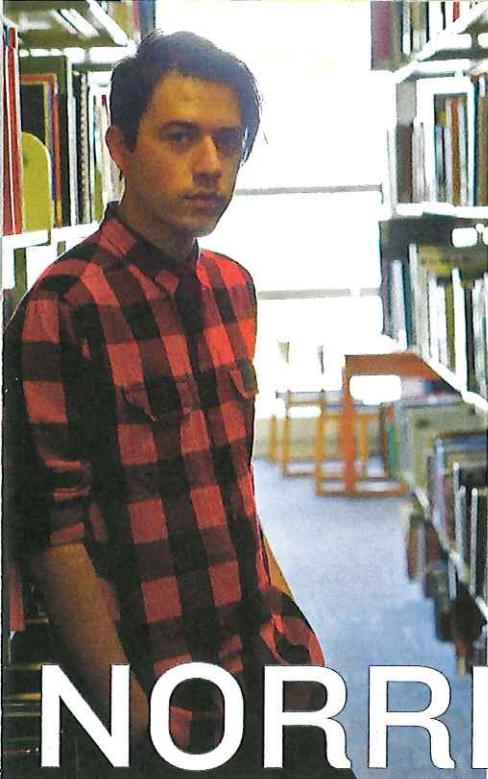
This only matured as Norris grew up, notably when he found his first job.

"When I was in high school, I was working in retail, and I still work in retail, so I've always kind of been around [fashion]. I've been in the fashion world in some capacity for a long time and my interest in it has just grown."

This constant involvement in retail has also allowed him to observe trends come and go, as well as the rise of enduring staples.

"In retail, you get to see the trends that come in based on the product you get, and it is interesting to see what stays and what goes," says Norris. "It teaches you to buy things – the things that stay – so you don't waste money on the things that are too trendy or too of the moment, and try to find pieces that are more year-round or long lasting or classic, but still feel





NORRIS

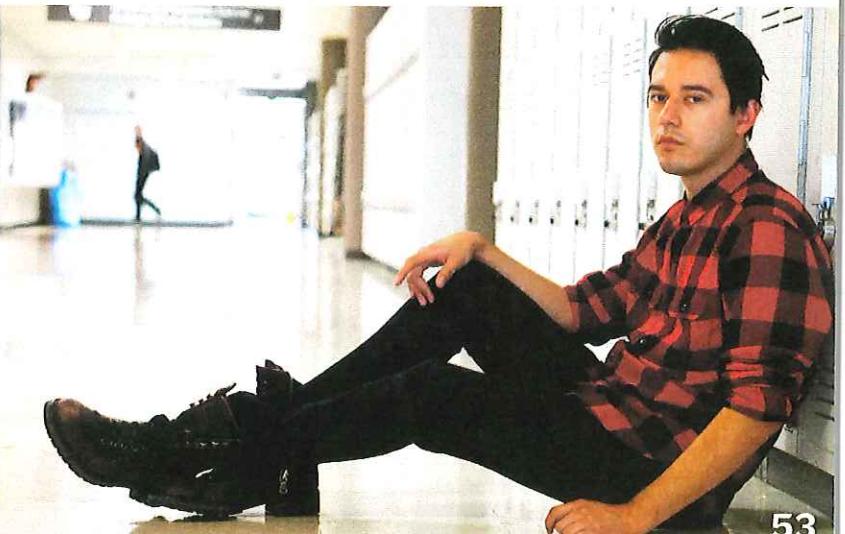
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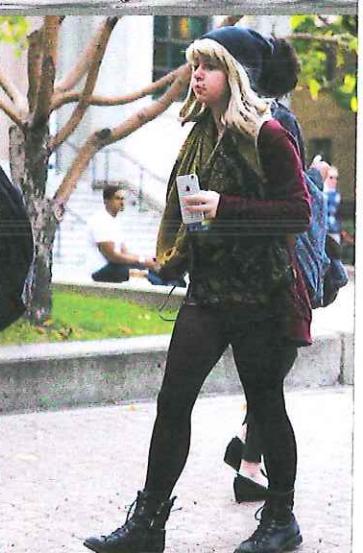
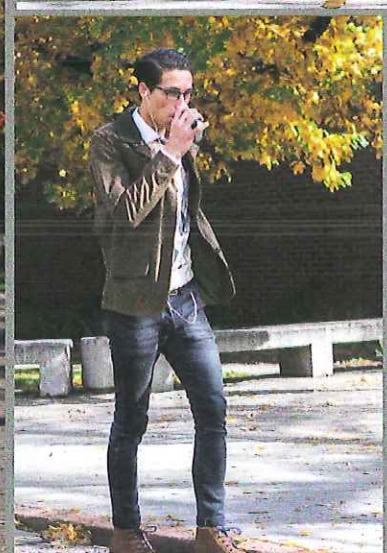
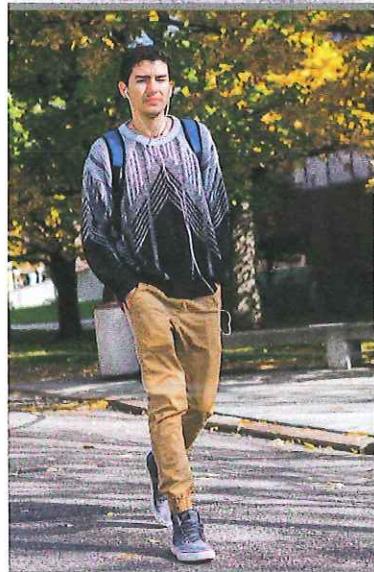
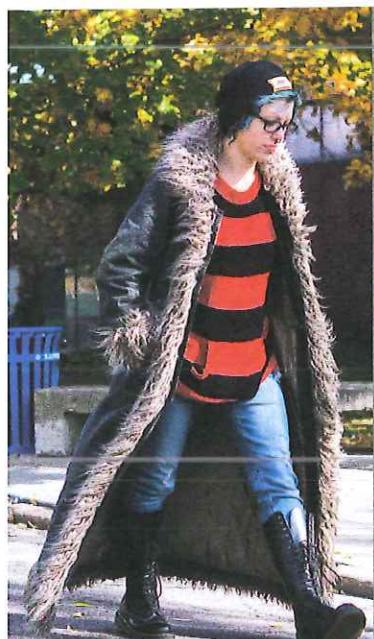
When asked about some of the current trends, Norris notes that patterns like plaid and aesthetics like fringes are big in fashion right now. He's also aware of the importance of the materials themselves.

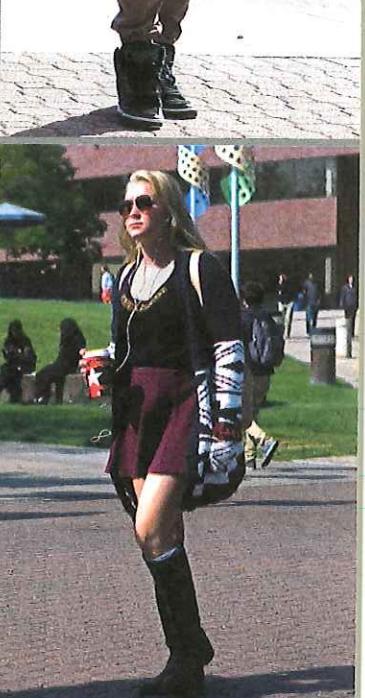
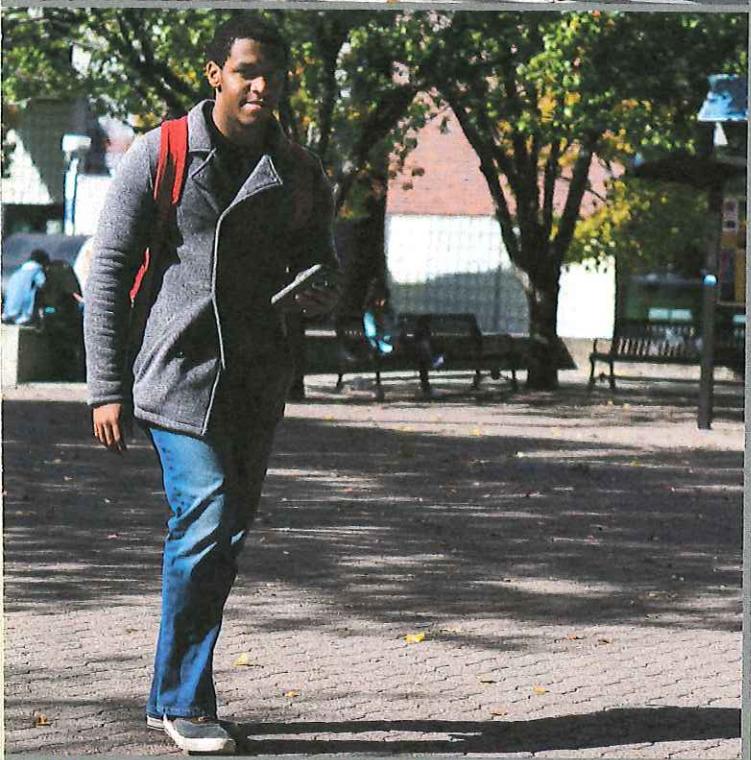
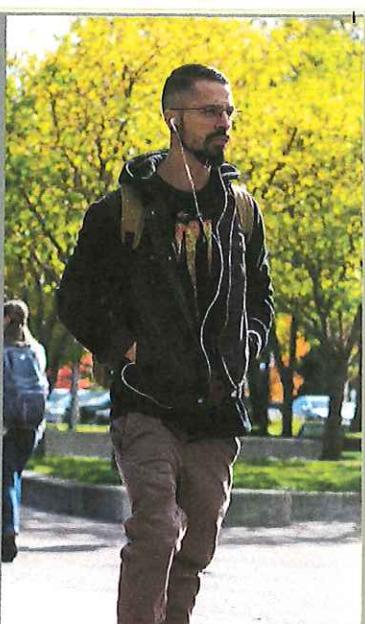
"Different textures," says Norris. "I think that a big thing to look at right now is texture, like the texture of leather, the texture of felt, the texture of different skins, the treatment of the material and the fabric, and looking at how you can mix and match those elements."

For those seeking their own style or fashion sense, Norris offers a few points of advice.

"Just kind of go from your gut, you know?" says Norris. "Don't be afraid of it. I mean, I'm not without fear, obviously, but I make certain aesthetic decisions based on 'I feel this way today.' Also, don't always buy the cheap thing. Buy one really nice staple piece to have in your closet, and let that kind of guide you through building a look. If you're trying to develop your own sense of style, I would say research it too. Like, look at designers. What I find interesting is going to be very different than what someone else does, and if you look at what they're doing and why you like what they're doing, try to find pieces that are accessible to you, that'll help you develop your own sort of look, your own sort of persona." **m**







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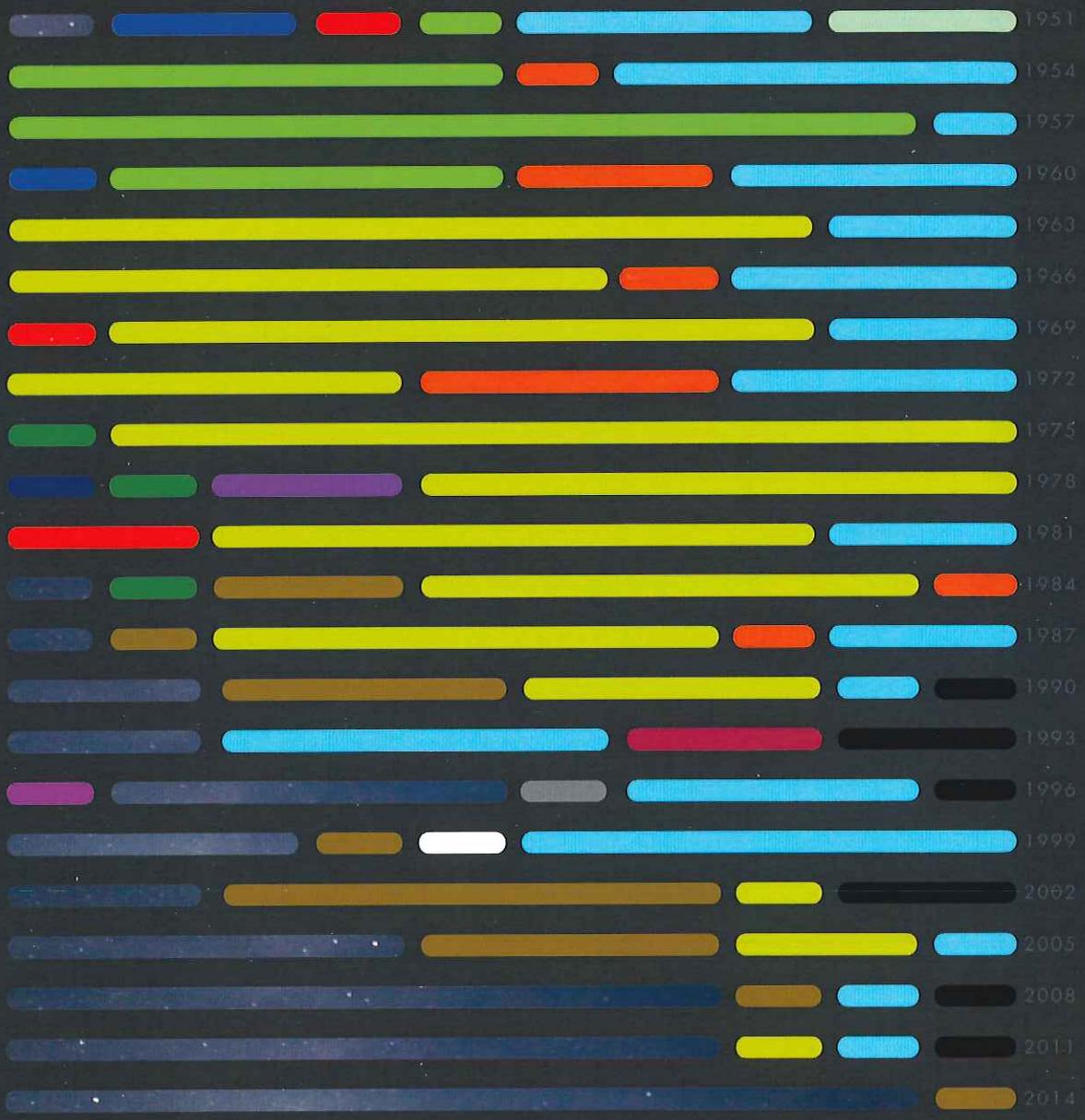
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