



portal

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portal

a literary and artistic magazine

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An excerpt from "Impossible Extrications," Aurora Chernis

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To Michael Richard Jordin (1953-2021),
a passionate musician and loving teacher who radiated
warmth, kindness, and patience.

May your joy for life, music, and performance
carry us forward.

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Sunset

Grace Lipson
color pencil



Untitled

Leila Rodriguez

pastel and color pencil

Poems

Ella Wade

The words danced over my tongue,
Melting like sugar, and then spun
in the air, like a bird in flight.
Softly they fell through the encroaching night.
Finally they stopped in a far away place,
Beneath the mystical light of the smiling moon's face,
And softly they dispersed into the soft falling rain,
And met with tears, of those crying in pain.
Still the words carried hope, of days yet to come,
And I will never forget how they passed over my tongue.



Untitled

Sarah Van Brakel
mixed medium

Something Is Not Quite Right

Amiya Das

The skies above are blue,
Yet there lingers a sense of illness in the air.
The sun is warm and the birds twitter in the trees,
But it feels like something is not right.

The longer you are confined,
The smaller everything seems.
Where once there was a sense of spaciousness,
There is now claustrophobia.

Smoke lingers in the stale air,
The sun brings light and warmth.
The cold breezes of autumn blow,
But there is not a single drop of rain.

Sometimes the air is foggy or damp,
But it feels dry, sick, and tired.
It is hard to sleep at night,
And it is difficult to stay awake during the day.

Annoyance replaces companionship,
Adventure becomes longing,
Energy turns to exhaustion.

The air feels dry, yet it is not,
The weather seems unpleasant yet it is perfect,
Free time is a dreaded boredom,
Only the rain can wash away this headache.



Refugees

Issy Robins
acrylic

Untitled

Sadie Ashourizadegan

When the dust covers us,
When we no longer are,
What will they find?
Will their shovels hit the tip of the Empire State Building?
Will they uncover the Liberty Lady?
Will they see our accomplishments,
Translate our bibles,
Preserve our paper money on their walls?

Will they only scratch the surface,
Or will they dive in deep?
Find our libraries,
Our paintings,
Our poems.
See the beauty, the deception, the pain.

Will they read *The New Jim Crow*?
Will they uncover our atrocities and our sins?
Will the candy coating that is crusted on our nation
Break away and expose our rotten apple insides?

Will the ruse finally be over?
Will they disband our lies?
I wonder to myself,
If America will stand the test of time.



Tiger

Kai Langen-Wong

ink

A Home in the Ground

Jackson Pruett

When I make eye contact with an animal, we immediately make a non-verbal agreement to not engage each other. Whether it's a crow, a mallard, a duck, or a weasel, I try to appear kind and weak, but the agreement tends to get lost in translation when they inevitably scamper off to some unknown woodland home. A wild creature makes me remember a time and place without our modern conveniences. I live my life with peace and plenty, assuming that we are the sole occupants of the world but an interaction with a wild creature sends ripples through my consciousness with the realization of other life.

In my everyday life, I forget wilderness and the very essence of being wild. Of course, I am aware that animals live and breathe, but through the wind and the storms of city life, I grab hold of my twenty-first century world view, blocking out anything which does not bend to the confines of my daily life. It's a breath of fresh air to see a wild animal, to feel their warm body gently pulse and sway, each vibration having some special meaning to them.

I've seen a handful of bears, a few coyotes, and once actually touched a deer, and each time I can picture myself living as one of them. I would drink from a creek, and nibble at berries strewn about me. I would lie in the warm sun and watch the world run in circles around me and when the sun would fall from its perch, I would saunter back to my home in the ground and sleep. I would have no attachment to others, no judgment, and no obligations. Still, it may be that our world is worth holding onto, I would miss my connection and my relationships. Maybe I will go make a home in the ground and split my time between the woods and the city.



The Yellow Flower

Ariel Ratsep

digital photograph

The Place Where I First Met You

Asher Belsky

Where the street names turn from numbered to "Dr."
Where the neighborhood seems to come back alive
Where bustling bus stops shout "Hey, how are you?"
Where the hole in the fence lets the flowers grow through
Where rivals and enemies may start over again
Where mothers and fathers settle to raise their kin
Where the stairs always lead to that breath-taking view
This is the place where I first met you.



The Sunrise

Jade Duncan-Gould

pastel and color pencil

Morning is Wiser Than Evening

Sophia Sculley

Morning knows, and looks joyfully ahead
Never looking back, of slow, steady tread
Morning smiles upon the waking world
How I love the birds, and mists that swirled
On the shoulders of hills, the warbling song
That flush in my cheeks, the river long
Outstretched before me, in the trees
Winding and dipping, amid the mystic haze
The morning is still, and yet tremulous with life
It stretches and grows, with thoughts it is rife
As peaceful and contemplative as a monk
How I smiled, though, when the sun brightly sunk



The Cat

Evelyn Tran Emery

ink

Opening

Vivian Molesworth

Opening

1. I walk down the quiet streets. Rain begins to fall, softly.
Neon lights streak my vision,
The dark chocolate light is beginning to fall, night.
Down the street there is music playing,
Soulful jazz, a tear slips from my eye.
2. Wind whips my hair back,
Music pounds through my whole body.
We sail along the coast – *fast*
Like we are flying.
There are no words for the feeling we had that day
Windows down, music loud, flying fast up the coast.
3. My tongue is burnt,
Hot chocolate warms my cold hands.
The backstreets of foreign countries are silent after the rain.
A stray jumps from a garbage bin,
Deserted playgrounds wet from winter's first rain
I hold hands with a forever friend.
4. We open the roof,
My head pops out the top of the car as we move fast
Through the tunnel,
Our voices echo, singing along to the blasting music
We emerge into the setting sun,
Golden like honey.
5. The neon lights change from red to green.
They tell me to go,
Go and make more of those memories.



Marsha P. Johnson

Avalon Brevik

acrylic

The Sound Of Poetry

Asher Belsky

Young voices amplify the cry of a nation.
They question injustice and call out inequality.
Mature anger, defiance of hate
Not conforming to the so-called imperative social slate
Their faces show their passion
Proud and united, they stand,
One nation, under God, but oh so divisible
Divisible on the very topic of a life matters
Can we at least admit that it exists?
Young voices amplified to show what is right and what is wrong
They scream, eloquently, the sound of poetry.



In Bloom

Anaya Jolivette
digital photograph

A World of Poetry

Griffin Engels

A poem, it should be
a river
flowing into a land of magic.
Open the sails
of your small boat
and let it carry you.
Let the soft breeze push you
and the swirling pools of words
engulf you.

A poem is in the constellations
placed above you.
In the soft petals
on your river's banks, in
the birdsong that surrounds you.
When you look up,
you can feel it find you,
catch you,
latch on.

Don't stop reading.
In the spring the flowers bloom;
they feed off poetry.



The Woman

Sarah Van Brakel

ink

欧紫晴 (Ou Chicheng)

Jeannie Ou

In 1925, a period of war and chaos, in a poor southern village of China, a man was packing up with his eight-year-old nephew preparing to move to Canton, a province east of where they were then living, to seek a better life. A kind family named Ou gave them shelter and adopted the young boy, who then changed his name, became a part of the family, and began his new life there. The young boy is Ou Chicheng's great-grandfather and that is the story of her family name. Her father told her that her name would have been Jiang if her great-grandfather had not changed it to honor his new life. When she tried to pronounce her given name with that last name, it sounded weird and she didn't like it. Her name is Chicheng, quite a popular name in China. Even though few people write it with the same character, there are many who pronounce Chicheng exactly the same way she does. Only because of this rare last name, Ou, she feels that she is special, different from other Chichengs.

People's names usually have special meanings or contain expectations from their parents and so she asks her mum for the meaning of hers. But the answer is disappointing: Chi is a family name shared by the girls in her generations and because her older cousin has it for the second character in her name, she gets the same. And the reason why her mum gives her the last character Cheng is just because she thinks it sounds good in the combination. What a random and boring name! She is really upset about her name because other families in China would have hired a fortune teller to formulate a name calculated to bring good luck to their child.

The name Chicheng gives the impression of a traditional Chinese girl, obedient and tender. She doesn't think that it fits her. And every friend who knows her would ask her why her parents gave her such names that sound totally different from her personality. She never thought of that when she was young but now she doesn't care about it; nor does she care if her name is boring. She asks herself why everybody has a name? And she gets her answer--a name is just a name. At the beginning of her life, her name Ou Chicheng defined who she was, but as she grows up, this will reverse and she will become the definition of her name.



The Candle

Ame Originwa
charcoal

Candle Light

Grace Lipson

That candle light on the window sill,
Shining—calling out to me,
It flickers over the window pane,
Golden waves on a midnight sea.

It shines bright through the darkness
And floods the world with hope;
Let it shine into your soul,
A lifeline, a golden rope.

The flickering images it paints upon
The darkened window pane,
Make me ponder, mesmerized,
Eating up my pain.

Dancing castles, spotted deer,
Golden rivers rushing by,
Dandelions wished upon,
Float into watermelon-colored skies.

Sparkling orange fluffy snow,
Seven-pointed leaves
Blinding stars and smoky rain
Buzzing golden bees.

I hear the song, a lullaby,
My eyes begin to close.
I'm washed away from present time,
To a world the color of smoke.

The fire grows stronger,
My nostrils burn, my eyes they sting,
The sound of candlelight is
A melodic crackling.

That world, that life I used to know,
Offered nothing but despair.
I wave goodbye and turn away,
As smoke blows through my hair.

The iciness inside me
Was all I used to feel,
Fire has melted it away
And replaced it, hot and fierce.

This beautiful world of chaos,
Within a candle flame;
It's unimaginably comfortable.
Not a drop of pain.

It's mysterious and furious,
Pierced with a breathtaking calm,
Here I can let my anger go—
Peace held in open palms.

It fills the cracks within me
I didn't know I had.
Serenity, tranquility—
For this feeling I am glad.

And when my mouth turns up again,
A smile playing on my lips,
I reach out to the candle flame
With longing finger tips.

And when my eyes fly open,
And pain shoots up my arm,
It's drowned out by the glorious sight—
Flickering alarm!

The candle flame has multiplied,
And joined as one, unite,
And burned away the life I knew
My house a—blazin' bright.

That candle upon my window sill
Has given me a gift.
Not hope, not light through darkened night
But eternal freedom,
A new start.
Peace.

Circle of Life

Ewan Barker-Plummer

Swimming along

Slippery, like a bar of soap in a child's bath

Continuing on her path across the earth.

Swimming along

Happily, like a puppy

Working its way upstream.

Swimming along

Until it finds a waterfall

To jump up.

BEAR!

MOUTH!

TEETH!

and she is gone.



Untitled

Ines Heiman

digital photograph

My Thoughts on a Rainy Sunday Morning

Ella Wade

The soft rain beads down the lead-paned window,
Like the sweat on the brow of a suburban accountant
as he softly mows his lawn in the middle of June,
Each drop of sweat fighting its way into his eyes.

Or maybe the rain drops are like small children,
laughing in the way that only the youthful can,
as they stumble on their own path
confounded by everything around them.

Or maybe the rain drops are like jewels,
softly they stand on the head of a king newly crowned,
glistening in the light before falling at the hands of a contender.

Or maybe the rain drops are like seagulls,
Riding on the waves, rushing to the shore on the back of a much bigger force,
Letting themselves be pulled back out to sea,
and back and forth they go with no end.

And that was how I spent my morning,
Marveling at what celestial truth the water droplets held
As my hand followed their unique paths down my lead paned window.



Woman

Aurora Chernis
pastel

The Moon and I

Anala Newton

Every night I look out the window
Up, up into the dark night sky.
The moon calls out to me.
The stars, her children, surround her
With their bright twinkling faces observing the earth below.
She passes on wisdom that only one so old can know.
She winks with our own secret language.
And in return, I blink my flashlight.
She blinks again, and says
"Hello, my friend, I see you have not yet forgotten me."
I would never forget her, my dearest friend,
The moon.



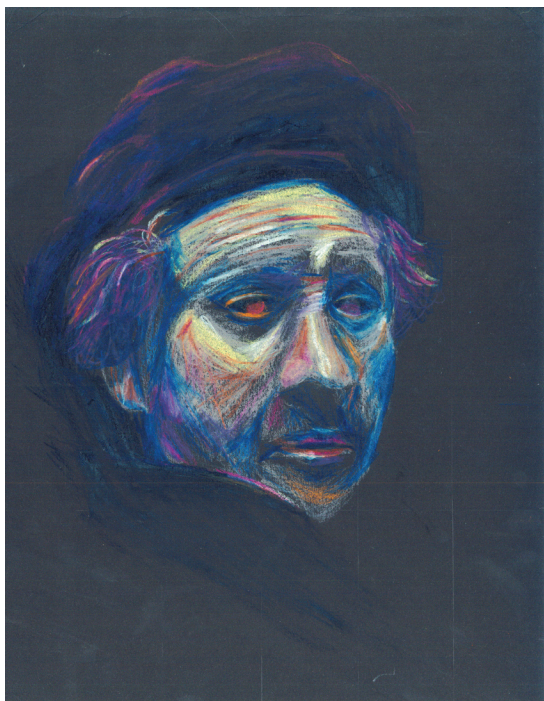
Politics vs Science

Jimmy Jiang
acrylic

That's so 2020!

Megan Spegar

Shall I sit at this computer for the rest of time?
And shall I never greet the faces of my teachers and friends?
I wash my hands at every sink, to rid the germs and all the grime
Oh all knowing God of these Covid times, please tell me when will this end?
My vocabulary has expanded with many new sayings
Ones like "Can I hug you?" or "That's so 2020!"
Sometimes I feel like my sanity is fading!
I've tried to stay hopeful, yet my hopes, there aren't many!
I guess this will end, though it's hard to imagine
Our world, our people will come out even stronger
Though the journey's been long, like the tail of a dragon,
This virus, this chaos, is something we'll conquer
We will hug, we will kiss, we will burst out in song
We will be united, grateful, thankful, and strong!



Man with Hat

Evan Lee

color pencil

Illusions of the Mind

Haven Frombgen

At the end of the shore
A figure stands,
Silhouetted alone against
The clear blue sky.
Light glimmers on all but him,
The youth so still it frightens me.
I desperately reach out my hand,
Seeking the truth of this strange man,
But as I push to move onward
I am confined to this spot,
And my memory slips,
Erased is all that I knew before.
I look out over where I stand
Isolated in my own ignorance
Unaware of the figure in the sea.



Cityscape

Aidan Sondheimer

digital photograph

Apocalypse

Jeff Zhou

In the midst of a normal day,
the Earth awakens from a long slumber,
like a bear after hibernating in the wintertime.
Without warning, the earth trembles and shakes every city;
it is merciless as countless buildings fall:
the magnificent skyscrapers and churches that took decades to build.
The telephone wires are downed everywhere and electricity runs free;
as if electricity is a hungry lion coming out of its mountain cave.
Gradually, as predicted, electricity turns into fires
that burn through the grasslands, the plants, and the forests.
The Earth cries tears of pain;
with tremendous strength, it rattles for the final time,
awakening the oceans.
The waves roar furiously as they drown
and devour every continent and island,
putting the fires to sleep.
For a brief moment, the world is finally at peace,
All is silent and undisturbed.
But just as we think all is calm,
the majestic, blazing sun has seen enough;
it responds by exploding into flames that burn
the planets and stars, the entire solar system,
erasing everything from existence,
leaving no clues for whoever might look for evidence in the future.

Just minutes before the catastrophe,
vibrance filled the open air
and life was smooth
like the pit of an avocado.
It was a normal day;
the bells rang at schools
and students happily left the classrooms,
the basketballs thumped and rang
as they bounced on the court,
the busy streets of the city center buzzed with honking horns
of cars and buses,
the engines of airplanes bellowed noisily
as the pilots prepared for takeoff,
the vibrancy of classical music filled the atmosphere
in the concert halls,
the birds joyfully flew across the sky,
singing their melodies.

It's surprising how abrupt disasters can be.
How unexpected and uninvited.
Every second since the Earth was born into the universe,
built up to the moment we all dread—its end.

Ice Olation

Dashiell Hall

Alone, I sit, staring, stumped
Time grows slower when isolated
Each second teetering tick in time
Boredom's cold frost sets in
Each minute a crime
Hours are like an avalanche
Each day buries me deeper and deeper
Bored under the snow I get even colder
The snow around me turns into walls of ice
Clear enough to see the people outside
They do nothing
They don't care



Red Sky

Sophia Sculley

color pencil

Goodbye Sunny Days

Dashiell Hall

Gone are the days of clear skies and heat
When I open my front door to see my orange cat lounging on the warm concrete
Now there is fog and ash
That make the air quality quite trash
All of the cars are covered in a layer of soot
And you can't go outside without getting some on your foot.
You can't bike, run, or swim
Because of the poor air in the sky so dim
One day it even turned orange:
strong winds blew flames through the forest
I can't wait for the sky to clear
and the fires to stop coming so fast and so near
Soon will be the day that the smoke is gone and so is the flame.



Untitled

Nanya Cronin
color pencil

Have Some Empathy

Samma Rehem

A poem should not mean but be-
Give poetry a rest,
Let it lie down and take a deep breath.
It's tired you know
From being full of rhymes, metaphors, and meaning.
You try
Yeah you,
You reading this
try to be filled with rhymes, metaphors, meaning, and so much more
each second of each day.
You couldn't do it could you?
Now how do you think poetry feels?
That's right: not so great.
Poetry may be able to speak volumes, but it can't speak this,
Let it be.
So next time you visit a poem
Leave your interpretation at the door,
And just listen to it - nothing more
A poem should not mean but be.

I lost

Griffin Engels

two nickels
and a piece of string in the laundry.
some old paintbrushes,
socks, an eraser.
probably that postcard.
collections (they categorized
nothing, basically); what purpose
did I used to think they served?
those eggs that went bad
in the fridge last week;
measure 35 in
Debussy's Arabesque:
that C# in the middle
I slipped from again.
a wristwatch, and my sense
of time.
the practicality of an umbrella
in a summer storm.
memory of what this poem was meant to be.
And any reason
I might have had
to shove the words up against
the left margin—

there: you're free.

Don't stray too far.
the idea that this
was going somewhere.
a croissant recipe and
a bit of joy.
No: more. the password
to an account,
escaped with
the songs I sang
and what I wished I'd had.
nothing much.
any way that this could have
made some more sense.
what I was trying to say.

the thought that I'd help by going further.



Sunset

Ella Wade
color pencil

Sonnet 1: Friends

Divi Newton

Over the mountains and through the fields
Our friendship will never cease to be strong,
And when you are deep in troubling times
I will always be there to help guide you along.
Through the past and into the present
We always will care deeply for each other,
And when our days become unpleasant,
We can trust and rely on one another.
When old friends are replaced by new
We may struggle to understand,
But when those new friends turn on you
I will be there to answer your demands.
And although our friendship has had its faults,
We have faced them together – like adequate adults.



Into the Fog

Aidan Sondheimer
digital photograph

The Present

Grace Lipson

Like a fog settling between us,
Of distrust, unsettling times.
Tape markings on the sidewalk,
Waiting for a ghostly line.

Friends reduced to tiny boxes,
Covering a tiny screen,
The once vast world we thought we knew
Dissolved before ever truly seen.

To think of all we took for granted,
The sense of true community,
Kindness, conversation, compassion,
Seeing strangers as an opportunity.

City sounds, shrill but familiar
Cracking the morning silence like a whip
Blue skies dotted with woolen clouds
Hot streets steaming with evening mist.

The rich, pungent smells of life
Smiles on the street
The glint of a forgotten coin,
Lying at a stranger's feet.

Now weariness, anxiety, fear
Suspicious glances, pure distrust;
Some only see potential danger,
Society crumbling to dust.

Fear, confusion feeds the fire
This new world of trickery
A sun setting in an orange fog,
Can we make it through this misery?

Six whole months of wasted time.
Glass eyes gleaming with lonely moods.
Let's agree to disagree.
Pining for a taste of truth.

Will we stumble through this fog,
A bump in a road leading out
To change our ways, to see our wrongs
Humanity can't know what it's about.

Will we stay present, sure on our path
Grounded, unwavering stance.
A sense of purpose filling up
The cracks and lines of weary dance.

It all comes down to mental health
This is our world, this is our life
Beyond time and future fear
Can we stay present and enjoy the ride?

Gone

Sophia Sculley

Dance on the moon-kissed shore
Sing sweetly to the end
Dance and sing for those such as you
Wish no longer to contend
Bleeding arms, and wreath of light
Both which you've been crowned
Breath fails and surrenders the fight
Despite the ill omens you still confound
Bleed into the water, give your youth
They wipe the ash back off your brow
They didn't listen despite the truth
Now they come with their scythes to mow
All the worries that used to stand
Alone amongst the dust, won't someone lend a hand?



The Blue Lady

Samma Rehem
alcohol marker

The Shy Mirror

Ally DiDomenico

The mirror sees all, but is too timid to tell anyone.
She recognizes the scared faces gazing through her,
And sheds tears of sorrow, for she cannot help them.

She knows that she is the one tearing them down,
But she is naked and trapped, and cannot move by herself.

The mirror looks right back into the people's eyes,
And tries her best to satisfy their need for validation.
She sees all their imperfections, and points them out.

Although she is shy, she loves to be looked at.



The Bird

Hugo Rutherford
color pencil

Oh What A Beautiful Day

Anala Newton

Oh what a beautiful day,
The sun shines bright in the sky,
Together in the meadow we play,
And watch the hummingbirds fly.
The babbling brook to our right,
To our left is a vast willow tree,
In the sky not a cloud in sight,
And you're lying here next to me.
Beneath us the grass is green,
There are flowers of red and gold,
It's the loveliest place I've seen,
Here you and I could grow old.

Always together, together forever,
We could stay here forever together.



The Wooded Path

Spencer Bandy
digital photograph

The Hill That Reached the Stars

Ava Stover

Rocks spill down the pathway as the worn dirt and dust grip my shoes. When I reach the top more rocks crunch under my feet, and the hum of the city fills the air. The wind rustles the trees and creates waves in the grass as I look over downtown. The bench sits empty, the wood chipping away at the edges but it is still sturdy. Imprints of other visitors from its lifetime of watching over the grassy hill are marked with light and dark specks along the seat. The night sky fills all the space above me and planes zoom by, blinking red lights. On my left, Twin Peaks sits on its mountain throne, and to the right, tall buildings reach towards the sky. Below me, tiny shafts of light spill through windows of glass. The pockets of light create a twinkling valley, which shines brighter than the stars sitting above.

Turn the clock back three years and I am sitting on the hill with school friends, trying to splatter paint on a canvas for an Art History Main Lesson. The unfinished piece is left with hardly any paint on it, because the wind swept away the bright colors before they even had a chance to touch the canvas. Any paint that did reach the blank piece is hidden under dried grass the wind has pushed on there, as if to hide any evidence of the art itself. So if you were walking by, all you would see would be three girls laughing and rolling around in the dried grass trying to keep the wind from blowing their hair in their eyes. And then if you look to the right, you would see the failed art project lying alone, paint tubes left open, and blank canvasses holding on to the bench for dear life.

Turn the clock back another five years and you see me and my sister Ayla rolling in the field. The grass is very green then because there has yet to be a drought. Our mother sits on the bench looking at the view as we play below her. My sister and I roll down the green hill getting covered in dirt, almost killing ourselves from the amount of speed our little bodies catch. Then once we reach the bottom, it is a race to see who can run back up the hill faster for another round. I could always get to the top before my sister because I am older and have longer legs, but sometimes I let her beat me so her ego won't be hurt too much.

Turn back to now and you see me, sitting on the bench quietly, sometimes early in the morning, sometimes late at night, just staring, looking out at the city.

There is no telling what else this hill has seen in its many years of existence. From watching the first settlers come to California, to seeing downtown fill with even taller and taller skyscrapers. I only know of the memories that I have created here, the ones whose homes are inside my own brain. And who knows what else this hill will see in the future? I will never know, but one thing is for certain, the hill was here long before I was and it will be here long after I am gone.

Ode to a Glass of Cold Water

Liam Santos

Ode to cold water
The soul, it soothes
Its bite makes you falter
It's better than juice.
The glass has precipitation
It runs down the sides!
And in anticipation
You let loose a sigh.

The cold hurts your hand-
While the ice is cracking,
It brings you to a land
Where the sun is lacking.
When you take a sip
The cold refreshes your taste buds,
You're going to flip
And absolutely go nuts.

It flows through history:
The dinosaurs slurped,
Leonardo Da Vinci
Drank it while he worked.
Ice water is divine-
It hydrates your system,
Forget soda and wine
You're not going to miss them.



The Man

Elizabeth Dewar-Kudsi
pastel and color pencil

King of the Coast

Evan Lee

Sunlight falls on a hotdog stand;
Salty air rises from a sandy shore,
Seasoning a greasy hand
Whose slimy food I had before.
The taste, the man did contend,
Carried flavors to confound.
For money, he barely met his ends
Wearing his battered hotdog crown
And he said with wrinkled brow,
"I half my foods like I cut half my yard,
like how a scythe would mow—
like half a scar.
Since I lost my daughter, Ann,
I've been only half a hotdog man."



The Feather

Hugo Rutherford

ink

Poetry's Invitation

Anala Newton

A poem should not mean
But be.
A poem invites you to feel,
Anger
Grief
Elation
Joy
Love
Emotions are side effects of language,
Of art,
Of poetry.
If you allow it, a poem will sweep you away
To a new reality,
Maybe not an improved reality.
A poem is not a command,
But a request.
Its words flow through fields,
Under bridges,
Swirl up the spiral staircase.
A poem can get into the bookcase,
The wardrobe,
The art supplies.
A poem is art.
Art is not clearly defined,
Neither is poetry.
It is the songs you sing in the shower,
The book next to your bed,
The poster on the wall.
A poem is art;
But it does not command,
It is an invitation.
Indulge in it as you wish.



Nefertiti

Jade Dunaway
acrylic

Ghazal

Asher Belsky

Where the fire runs low
And the room turns dark,

Where the music stops playing
And the air tastes tart,

This is where they sing my song,
This is the place where I belong.

A bustling room where whispers can be heard
A sleepless night where reality is blurred,

A home to strangers whose journeys are long:
This is the place where I belong.



Candlelight

Evan Lee

color pencil

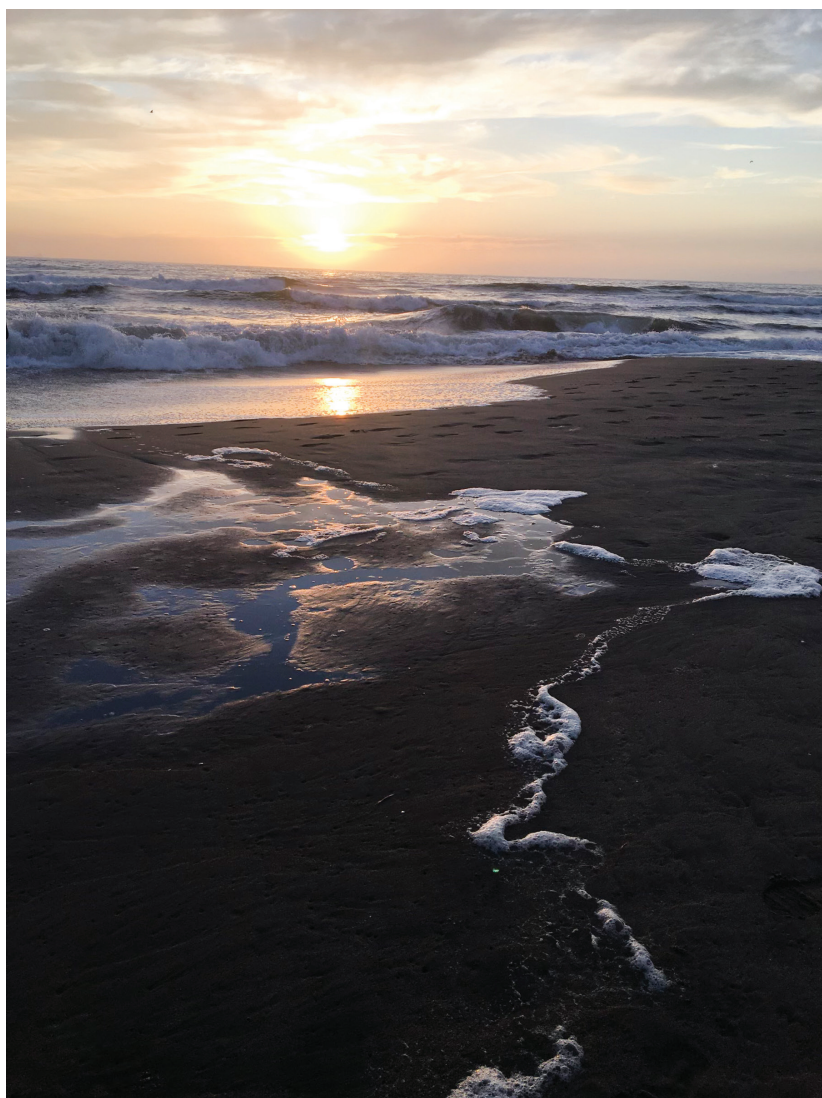
They Have To Be

Divi Newton

Determined, willful, strong,
Voiceless, underrepresented.
Power and fighting spirit are wild—
They have to be.

Yelling and screaming are not enough,
They stand in the dark, spewing emotion.
These children will be the future—
They have to be.

We hear the names, we know the lives lost,
The children share everything.
Deep emotions are visible, to get the point across—
They have to be.



End of Day

Sam Frombgen
digital photograph

Impossible Extrications

Aurora Chernis

Poetry rides on the wings of the wind,
It visits the devil and forgives the sin,
It dances on waves and flirts with the foam,
Poetry gives the homeless a home.

It sings through the storm and races the rain,
It changes a person from no one to named.
Poetry speaks with the stars and the sky
Poetry makes a broken heart smile.

Poetry melts like wax under fire
It teases a dream to fly higher and higher,
It tastes like the sea, and smells like a tear
Poetry slows the seconds to years.

It captures a moment, in pictures of words,
Poetry extricates feathers from swords,
It battles for peace, with letters as weapons
Poetry brings down the angels from heaven.



Martin Luther King Jr

Kai Langen-Wong

white and black charcoal

Powerful Heartfelt Unity

Jeff Zhou

I am no better than you,
And you are no worse than me.

There is no room for inequality,
For we are all created equally.

I was told to "Never judge a book by its cover,"
So, why judge a person by skin color?

Our culture does not decide our hearts,
Our ethnicity does not define who we are.

But some still discriminate,
Their hearts filled with hate.

They hate you for your ethnicity,
They hate you because they don't think logically.

I won't ever understand your pain,
But I'll be there when there's rain,

And I'll stand with you to fight,
And I'll be there when there's light.



Freedom in the Face of Constraint

Mari Garcia-Vandegrift

ink and marker

To Be Alive

Jeff Zhou

Lonely, I walk in the cold night,
Reminiscing in black and white,
To the times when the city was bright with light,
To the times when I felt alive.
I feel lost in the dark, searching for light,
Hoping to find answers.
I wonder why so many things are happening,
All is sudden and unpredictable,
I want to go outside and feel free,
But a mask covers my face.
Now, I realize the things I once took for granted,
Are the things I am most thankful for.
I wish to be with friends and family but they are so distant,
I look back to memories we've had, and remember why it's good to be alive:
To be happy,
To be connected,
To be empathetic,
Is to be fulfilled.

Elegy for Anne

Aurora Chernis

Who knew that one tiny purple grape
Had so much trouble within its sweet skin?
I sure didn't.

You were at the market,
The deli counter to be precise,
Waiting for those white paper parcels
Of meat.

My mom was in the seat of
The shopping cart,
Little enough to fit,
But witty enough to know
That when you suddenly became parallel
With the linoleum floor,
Something was very wrong.

"Mom!" My mom cried out,
"Grandma's taking a nap!"
My grandma, your daughter-in-law,
Knew something was amiss.
After all, napping in a grocery store?
Highly unlikely.

The men behind the deli counter rushed over
Dramatically tearing off their
Uniforms to create a sort of
Pillow for you.

You had to stay in New York
Nursing your broken hip
Before you were well enough to fly
Back to Kansas.

During that time,
My mom, each morning
Would rise, open her closet
See the Ziploc bag that held your shoes.
The shoes.
Still with the little purple grape that you had slipped on
Smooched on the sole.

She would walk downstairs,
Put on your compression socks
Every
Single
Day.

This story is the story
Of my mom and you.
It shows the ups,
The downs,
The highs and the lows.
It shows my mother's love for you
The utmost devotion even the slope was slippery-
With grape juice.

Who knew that one tiny purple grape
Had so much trouble within its sweet skin?
I sure didn't,
Now I do
And you do too.



The Flower

Ariel Ratsep

digital photograph

Be My Eternity

Leila Rodriguez

Everything has changed,
The hole in my heart seemed bigger today.
My last words were see you tomorrow.
Tomorrow's today and I haven't seen you.
To be completely honest, I've known nothing lasts forever.
I learned that last October when I had to say goodbye to my dog.
A few months ago when I left my home to a new place, where I met you.
Six years ago when my grandfather turned to a memory.
All the final words were too much for me.
I turned to nature and looked at you as my family.
I've come to feel a deeper connection to you, Earth,
Than I have with most people at least.
I swear I told you not to leave, I water for you,
Care for you, and I love for you.
You have provided so much,
I wish humans would treat you with the kindness you have shown me.
I know nothing lasts forever but I hope you will be my eternity.



Woman with Feather

Samma Rehem

color pencil

I Will Be Dancing

Ella Wade

When the world ends I will be dancing,
I will be falling through the dark depths of the oceans,
I will be flying on the flickering flames of a candle.
I will be running through the mountains, stumbling over rocks.
I will be sitting with my head looking out of an open car window flying down the streets of San Francisco at midnight on a Saturday.

And I shall smile as blood collects in the toes of my stilettos,
And smile as the salt water stings my eyes,
And smile as the flames burn my skin,
And smile as the rocks embed themselves in my skin,
And smile as the wind rushes at my face, until it seems to cover my throat and threaten to drag me from this world with its cold hands.



The Heart

Griffin Engels

ink

Nature Has Won

Elizabeth Dewar-Kudsi

I step into the station without people,

Nature has won.

Vines pierce through the windows and cover the tracks.

I walk in the street with no fear of death.

Each car is like a perfect planter box.

The car alarms long ago sang their last cry,

As the flowers shattered the glass.

Nature has won.

Each street light and telephone pole: a perfect place for ivy to grow.

The city has become a garden and the buildings are the statues.

Nature has won.

I step over a fallen fence, a forgotten boundary.

The animals are back drinking from the clean lakes,

The horses are finally naked and the deer are not afraid.

The birds are loud again and the squirrels have multiplied.

Darkness settles in and the garden sleeps, undisturbed by light.

Nature has won.

The world of humans has ended, but the earth is not dead,

The earth has regained power again.



Untitled

Sam Frombgen
digital photograph

Oxymoron

Clarity Samas

Oh, look - here they come... *act natural!*

In the end, they concluded to *agree to disagree*.

Bad luck follows you into the night.

Baking raw cookies on a warm Sunday night

Never turn a *blind eye* to those you care about.

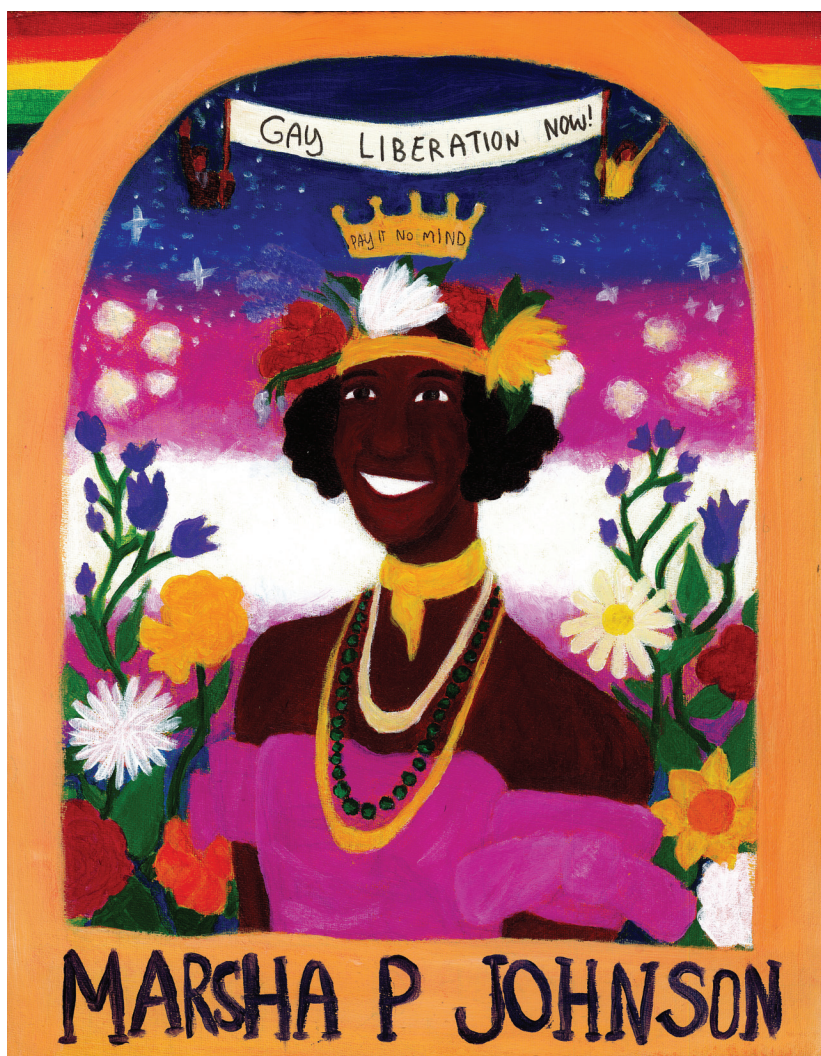
They were carried out to sea by *calm winds*.

Diet ice cream and ice cream diet... eh- **same difference!**

Politicians seemingly have a tendency to pass out *false hope*.

On a bridge, going over, *going nowhere*.

It was written in *invisible ink*. Only to be seen under black light.



Gay Liberation Now

Sofia Macdonald

acrylic

Justice

"Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public."

- Cornel West

Charlie Chalmers

What exactly is "justice"? The term has been stretched and twisted so many times by so many people that it has been robbed of a singular definition. To some, justice entails a "might makes right" mindset and self-preservation to some degree, while for others, justice consists of ostracization and steep punishment for wrongdoers; but even a single glimpse from an outside perspective will perceive the bias in those definitions. Perhaps a better question to ask would be "What is true justice?"

Simply put, justice is empathy applied to the cruel matters and conditions of the world. It is an assurance that all will receive their due whether they require penalty or reward, and that no foul or immoral act will go unpunished. Justice is what befalls those who would hurt another human being for their own selfish gain, those who abuse their power, and those who spread grievous lies; and justice is the weapon of those who have been trod on, neglected, insulted, and left to rot. Justice is something that we all want in some way or another, for it is justice that strips away the sheets of falsehood that are all too often cast upon the truth; it is justice that can fell corrupt leaders, and it is justice that draws an apology from the lips of the evil.

It should be obvious by now that the concept of justice exceeds the confines of a strict definition; it is far too broad and far too meaningful a thing to be expressed in a short description such as those that comprise a dictionary. It is my belief that justice escapes definition because justice means something different to each and every person; just as no two snowflakes are identical and no two tigers have the exact same pattern of stripes, every individual has their own definition of justice that has been formed by their experiences, their emotions, and their reasonings. So, what is justice? That is a question you must answer for yourself.



The Yellow Rose

Grace Lipson
color pencil

Theme for English B

Meya Redmond

I'm just like everybody else except with a few differences

I go to sleep at night and wake up in the morning

I attend school

I take showers on a regular basis

I do what I'm supposed to

Remember I said except with a few differences

I don't eat as much as I'm supposed to

I have to watch the words I say to people

And last but not least,

I have dark skin

But there are way more similarities than differences

I'm just like everybody else except with a few differences



Untitled

Jeannie Ou

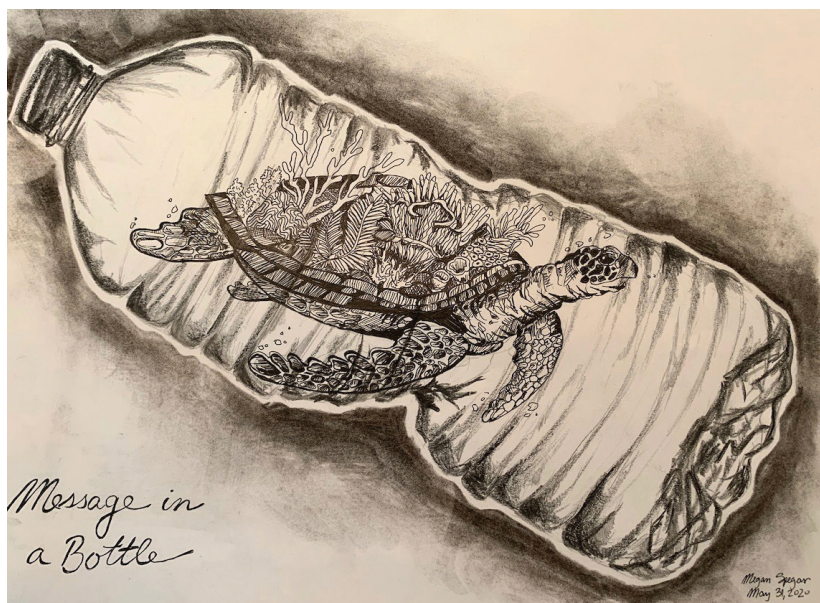
digital photograph

Care For the Friendly Clouds

Style inspired by Adam Zagajewski

Leila Rodriguez

It is hard to care for something so shattered.
Like a broken mirror, the bubble we live in is just one of many shards.
Fires blaze not only on land but in our spirits, longing for change.
It's hard to appreciate something that holds so much pain.
But if you take a moment to watch the wind whistle through the trees
Or watch the light sky transform into a starry night,
Everything disappears and the entrance to love opens.
Try and remember adolescence, how running barefoot or gathering plants made you feel.
Try to think of the shape-shifting clouds as your friends
And let the long blades of grass hold you the way the arms of a lover once did.
Look again at the world and appreciate nature's unsteady heartbeat
And protect her like you were once protected by those loving arms.



Message in a Bottle

Megan Spegar
ink and charcoal

A Shaken Snow Globe

Grace Lipson

When the world ends
And everything is swaying, drifting,
Color blending,
Until the city looks like an ocean—
An ocean of paint,
With the rainbow skyscrapers protruding from the waves,
And purple asphalt cracking like a frozen lake;
When chaos is raining,
Like stones falling from the parting clouds,
And music fills the air like smoke;
When the world ends,
And everyone is swimming, falling, or flying.
People, as one, experiencing the magic,
The chaos,
And the darkness full of blinding colored lights;
The giant dome of the clear sky, a glassy snow globe,
Encapsulating all of life in its sparkling watery depths.
It has been shaken, turned upside down!
Stars fall from the sky like snow,
Burning the ground where they land.
Clouds drift down deserted alleyways,
Searching for the shadow of the moon,
Or a grassy hill to rest on.
When the world ends,
And existence melts like snowflakes on a lake
And the earth spins faster, just a blur in the eyes of the universe,
Time stands still, and all sounds grow louder.
Now the music is deafening, like cracking bolts of red lightning.

Everything is coming apart, puzzle pieces floating through space,
Connecting and forming new realities, never seen before.

When the world ends

I'll be in the center of the chaos,

The eye of the tornado.

And I'll be sitting, peaceful and ready.

Watching the end of the world painting beautiful scenes on the canvas of the earth.

I'll be watching, experiencing, marveling.

I'll be writing a poem.

The Sun Is Very Mean

Jimmy Leonard

Outside, the sun cracks through the leaves and clouds
Its freedom mocks me though my curtain's closed.
Although I almost always keep my cool
This blatant taunt! I cannot stay composed.
Before, I would have called myself a fan
But now I know; the sun looks down on man.



Untitled

Lucca Jones
digital photograph



Untitled

Claire Nielsen-Che
digital photograph

Stronger Than Fear

Haven Frombgen

When the world ends,
I am surrounded by
Those scattered now:
The ones I love.
While the world erupts,
Its life coming to a close,
I smile.
The joyful laughs and daily banter,
The clang of forks as we eat together,
The soft swish of the cards as we play our last game.
Buzz of the TV, till all is snores,
My last song shall be that of daily life.

When the world ends,
There is no separation, no divisions.
Finally all pain disappears,
Surrounded, encircled by all those who care.
Although it's the end it is a start
We smile together
As we hold hands,
Our love for each other stronger than fear.

As the world implodes
Yells and screams fill the air,
Everything changed to a new darkened light.
Through all this I stand,
Who knows what's to come,
Or what's beyond the red flames
But still I smile
Everything comes to a close,
We are here forever
we stand together

Say our last words as we are carried away.
The red flash, black pit, yellow sparks
All say goodbye.
Into the still we step
Unknown but still unafraid --
Together we go
Not knowing if it's an end or a start.



Untitled

Kaia Garcia-Vandegrift

digital photograph

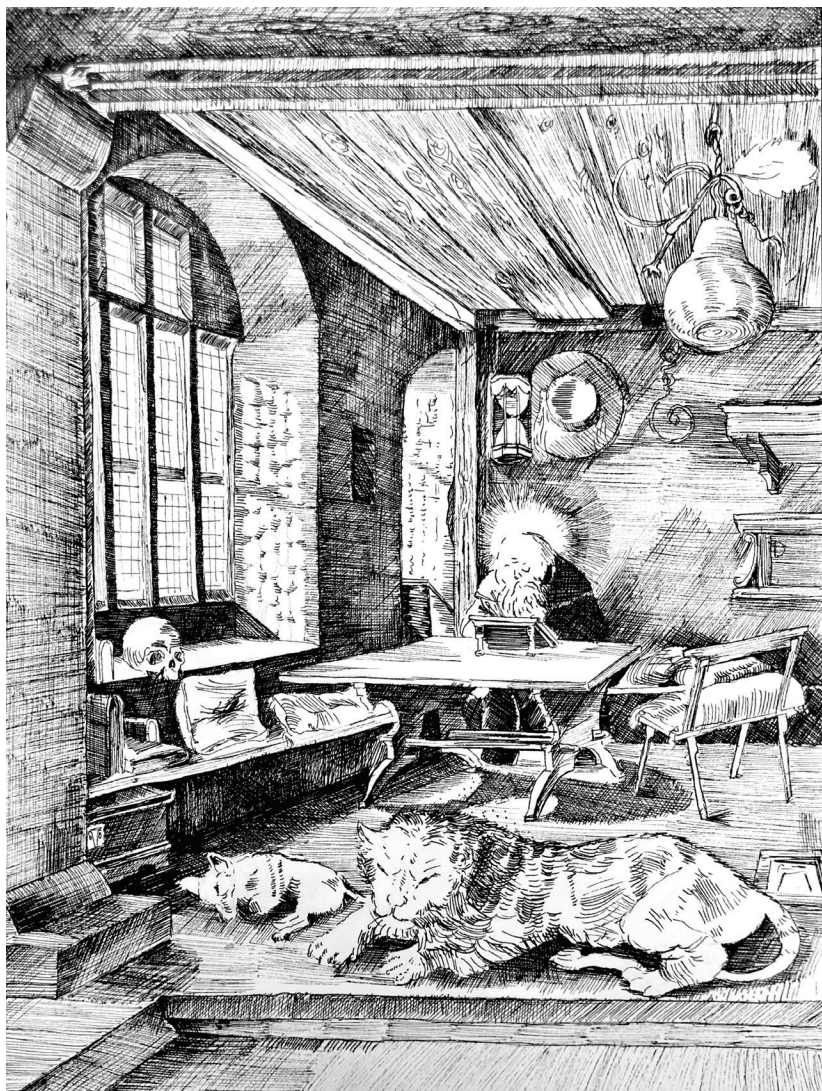
Dark Sky

Divi Newton

The sky has granted us little light today,
Outside is a desolate expanse of red, yellow, black.
Through the window, I can see colors as if a sunset were upon us,
Yet this is no sunset – it is as if the Earth is under attack.

“Run for cover!” “Hide yourselves with haste!” they should be saying,
For nothing about this burning hell is natural in any way.
The fires continue to burn as if they have no intention of stopping,
And although it is hauntingly dark, I understand this sign we are receiving.

The sky has decided to warn us of what will happen to us
If we continue to destroy the Earth.
It is screaming out for all to hear:
“Stop this destruction, this is our last chance to survive.”



Untitled

Lilianna Roman

ink

From The Fog of Youth

Hugo Rutherford

As I sit and contemplate I gaze upon my hand
And think of that which has come and gone,
I wonder if I'll stand.
As the chatter of my mind quits on the shore
I think of her,
The only one I've ever loved before.
All those times I thought to fight
I know now was the fog of youth,
I know now to strive for light
To love all and speak the truth.
Now a lonely bead of sweat trickles from my brow,
The once proud head so often crown'd
Has learned to set pride aside and bow,
And in response to humility, many people I did confound
But as for that the most important lesson of my life
In all trials, do not only contend,
No matter the odds, challenges, and strife:
To stay to the last and bitter end.



Untitled

Leila Rodriguez
color pencil

Utopia of Endless Seas

Leila Rodriguez

When the world ends,
I'll shed a tear or two,
But I'll enjoy the freedom of knowing nothing lasts forever.
I'll be on a boat in the deep abyss
I will be dancing until the blisters on my feet reopen.
I will be rolling through mud or jumping in leaves.

When the world ends,
I'll make sure to tell everyone I love them
And that I'll see them soon, in a utopia of endless seas.

I'll find peace under a lonely tree,
I'll say goodbye to the still spot of my childhood
I'll enter a new area, a utopia of endless seas.
When the world ends, I'll find peace in knowing nothing lasts forever.



Untitled

Piper Aweeka
veil painting

The Universal Entity

Evan Lee

Phrases sculpted with judicious intention,
The intricacies of their architecture reveal
Images and colors and moods and tones
Form with no need for correction.

Paint a painting which the blind can see
And satisfy a hunger of soul
Write music for which the deaf can hear
And satisfy a thirst to be whole.

Bring forth your words, old poem
Give us all your time and perspective.

Allow us fear and allow us confidence
Allow us structure and allow us deviance
Only give the word, and we shall follow
The words of which you'll never swallow.



Reflection

Jimmy Jiang
digital

Coronavirus

Kira Rapp

I lie on my back staring up at the wall,
On top of me, boredom seems to fall,
I go outside and see faces of fear,
The threat of COVID seems to jeer
At people trying to keep a distance.
Masks have become a political stance,
Why must we all be so divided?
In times like this humanity should be united.
So can't we all just stand together?
And make these hard times easier to weather.



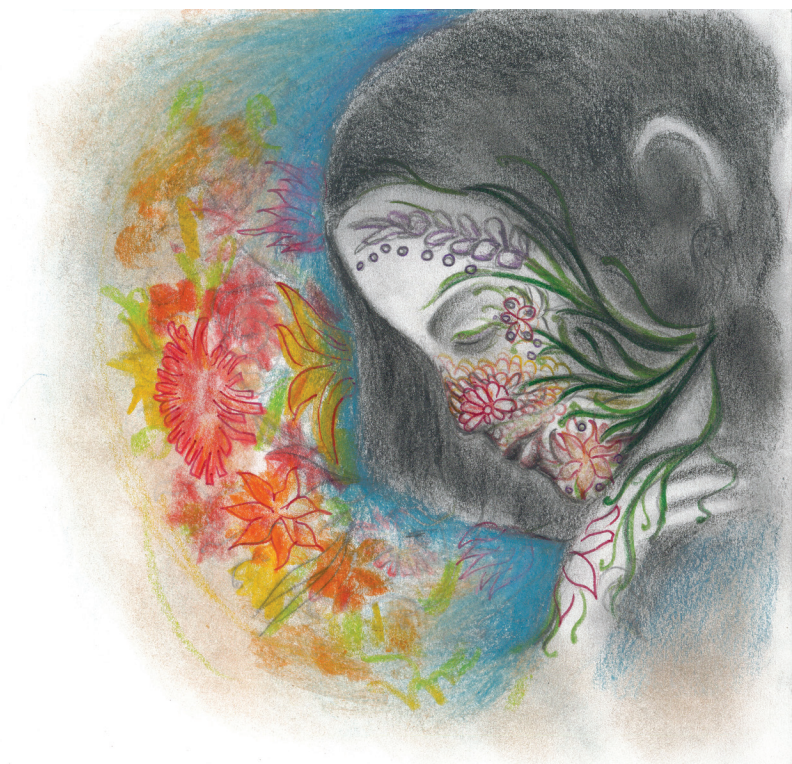
Untitled

Pita Elhauge-Roniger
torn paper

End

Sophia Sculley

When the sun sets and the world ends
You can forget all of your fine-feathered friends
And turn your back on the ocean blue
On your curiosity, on what's false and true
And escape into the clean, cold abyss
You won't feel a thing, won't be able to miss
The touch of a hand, or a firm command
The comfort of toes sunk into the land
Numb and cauterized, and dead
Your soul will roam empty space and tread
On stars, faraway and from humanity ascended
And, oh, will you praise the day the world ended.



Girl with Flowers

Haven Frombgen

pastel

The Red Bow

Jade Duncan-Gould

She watches the raindrops as they splash around her feet.

She tries to catch them in her little rosy hand,

But her fingers curl around nothing.

She watches the rain with a sharp and determined focus.

Tears begin to pool in her eyes until they overflow, cascading down her puffy cheeks. The girl is covered in water now. Her bright yellow raincoat is the only thing that makes her stand out in the downpour. Her glossy purple boots now covered in mud, are planted in the growing puddle beneath her.

A red bow gleams in her wet brown hair,

She looks at the sky above her.

And she cries,

A tiny piercing wail.

Unfair.

She has lost so much,

So much has been taken from her,

A little girl, a dot on the vast ever-widening earth.

A street light shines, winking at her with mock sincerity.

And she cries,

She sobs and wails,

She has lost much more than the rain has, more than the mud on her boots, more than the street light.

Memories engulf her,

They threaten to capture her,

She remembers and she will never forget.

And she cries,

She aches inside.

There is so much pain etched on her young face.

She longs to be loved again,

She longs to belong,

And she cries.

She knows she can never get back what she has lost.

She thinks of the grave in the woods, where her mother sleeps,

And thinks of the layers of earth that have closed around her.

She is young and yet she must take on more than her years permit.

So she cries.

All at once, she can no longer stand.

Her bright red bow falls from her hair and floats in the puddle. She begins to run.

All she can do is try to escape the pain in her chest.

Her little legs move so fast that she stumbles,

She falls to her knees and when she stands again

Her yellow coat is tinged with red,

But her blood is washed away in the rain and she keeps moving

Until she becomes a tiny yellow dot on the horizon.

And her cries are no longer heard.

The only thing remaining behind her is the red bow lying in the churning water,

Slowly sinking.

The Attitude of an Optimist

Megan Spegar

When the world ends, she said,
Fire will rage through the collapsing cities,
Children will scream, the animals will cry,
Flowers will wilt and the plants will weep.

When the world ends, she said,
Oceans will rise, overflow,
The sun will burst, like a popped balloon,
The moon will shrivel and drip glowing ooze,
The stars will plummet down--
Fireballs of doom.

When the world ends, I said,
I will breathe in the air of a new life.



The Tiger

Sarah Van Brakel

white ink

Change Others Refuse

Ewan Barker-Plummer

When does it end?

The heat, the smoke –

The environment fighting us.

Change others refuse Will come,

No matter their feelings.

Look at our future!

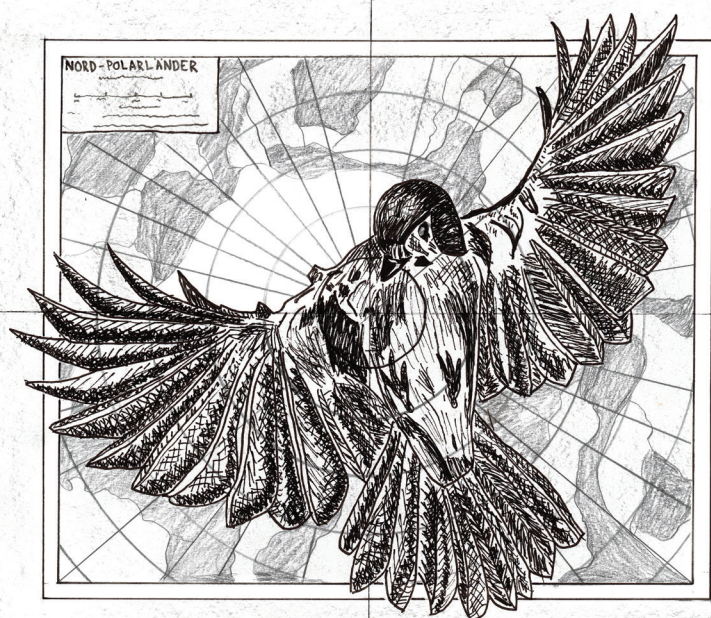
It is so bleak

More days like today,

Today, multiplied. What can be done? How to convince The un-convincible?

How to change Weather,

On the small scale? Of our lowly lives.



Bird in Flight

Kai Langen-Wong
ink and pencil

Unraveled

Haven Frombgen

I am one with the web.

Once a delicate tapestry

slowly pulled away

dissolved into these thin lines, invisible

to the eye.

My body is being broken,

torn to bits. I am lost

in the midst of an avalanche

the edges unraveling inward.

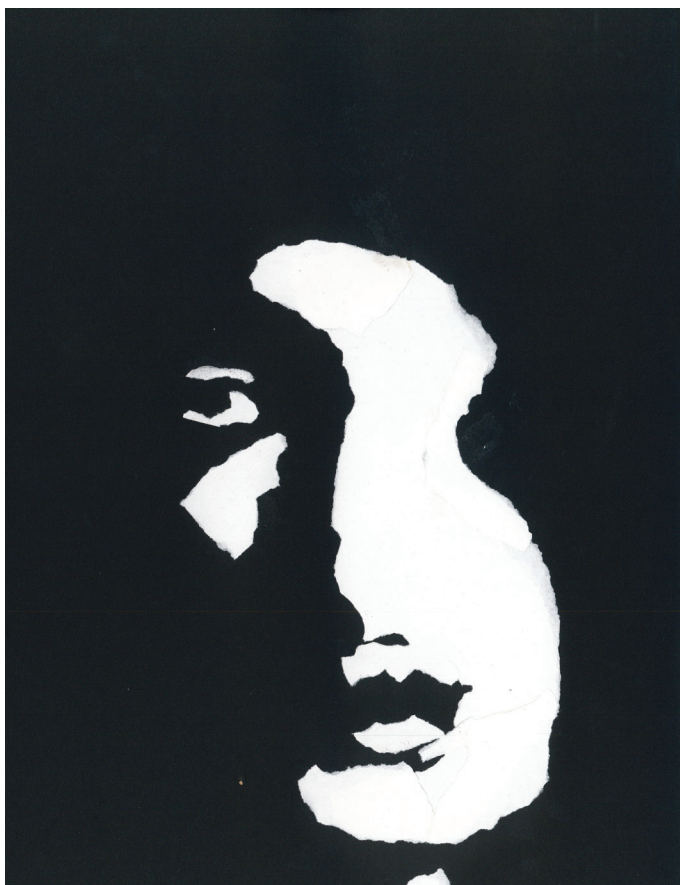
My head plunged into a still fog

I can no longer move, think.

All I was is sucked out of my being

And from the beautiful scene

Come dozens of broken beautiful threads.



The Face

Jasper Stewart
torn paper

Social Distancing

Ally DiDomenico

The space between people is suffocating.
It is crowded, but my lonely bubble saddens as other people move away.
Suppressing a cough, a sneeze, a drop of sweat,
Angry, confused and upset.

Is this the new Normal?
Emotionless beings scared of contact,
Scared for their elders, scared for their own,
Terrified of a disease they'll bring home.

Smiling eyes with a hidden scowl,
Desperate shoppers in need of supplies
Our city is battling more than a virus,
Our lack of sacrifice could be our demise.



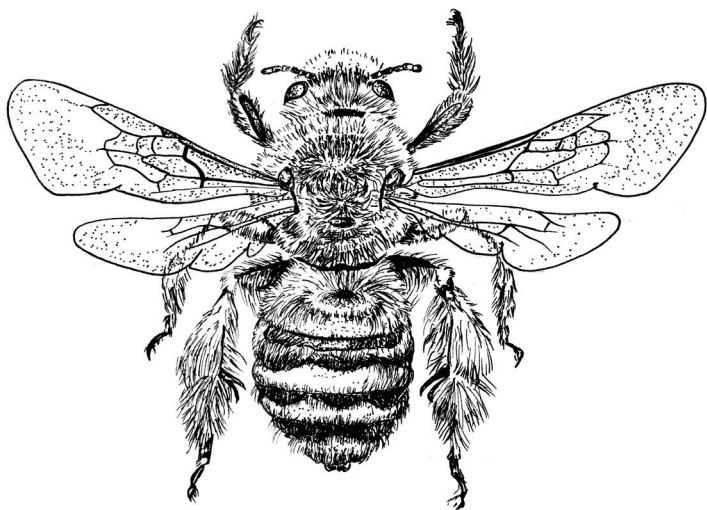
Untitled

Logan Weening
torn paper

Anger and Guilt

Elizabeth Dewar-Kudsi

I feel anger and guilt,
For the people who are hurt.
The land that we walk on is where slavery was built.
I feel anger and guilt,
For the blood that was spilt
At the hand of the master. Whip left in the dirt.
I feel anger and guilt,
For the people who are hurt.



The Bee

Evelyn Tran Emery

ink

Spring Rebirth

Clarity Samas

The poppy fields will bloom in spring anew,
They rise with sun, and set again at night.
With yarrow and with dandelion fluff,
My petal bones will rest with butterflies.
As from the chrysalis, I will be born
A skeleton with flesh of marigolds.



Untitled

Megan Spegar

color pencil and pastel

Losing

Amiya Das

What is hardest to accept?
That it is not temporary
That it will never return
That it exists only in memory
No more physical than an imaginary friend

Memories fall victim to the ravages of time
Eaten away by forgetfulness
Yet it is not quite replaced
Leaving behind a sense of emptiness

The most painful part of losing
Is the knowledge that the pain will inevitably fade
Until the loss is so far gone
That nobody will care

How depressing to lose
How awful to forget
But what can one do
More than a fading regret

Only now and then does the vividity come back
And the memory is triggered
The fleeting scent of spring flowers
The evaporating dew on the grass
It lasts less than a second
But can bring a locomotive to a screeching halt

How long until we are reunited?
If at all in any way?
Better not to wait and forget
Than to arrive late and unwelcome
Unaware of who to see or where to go
Unfamiliar and uncomfortable where one belongs.



Girl with Butterflies

Ame Origunwa
ink and charcoal

Sepia Toned Fantasy

Aurora Chernis

Sweetest dreams to you my restless darling,
Close those tired eyes and sleep till morning.
Fantasize in sepia, brush in hand-
Paint o'er the nightmares, dream sweet while
you can
Let every stress and worry of the day,
Fade like mist in the morning, falling rain.
When yellow turns to silver in the sky,
Let worry become wonder in your mind.

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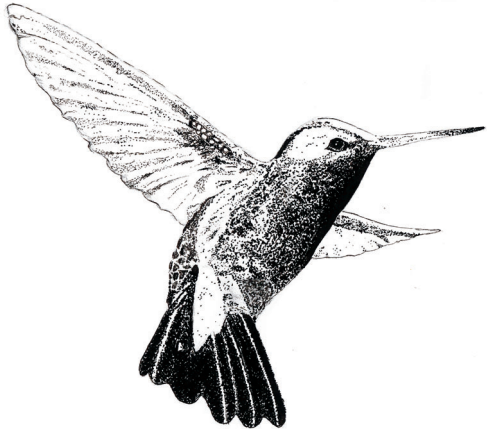
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Poetry melts like wax under fire
It teases a dream to fly higher and higher,
It tastes like the sea, and smells like a tear
Poetry slows the seconds to years.

It captures a moment, in pictures of words,
Poetry extricates feathers from swords,
It battles for peace, with letters as weapons
Poetry brings down the angels from heaven.

~ Aurora Chernis, "Impossible Extrications"



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