Editorial
by Mitchell Terpstra and Rachelle Wunderink

Another school year, another opportunity to ask ourselves the most constructive question:

What are we doing here, anyway?

As the name implies, Dialogue exists as a forum for conversation, and it is our hope that the additions to this ongoing conversation—whether poems or paintings, ceramics or short stories, or any other medium that moves humans—will be filled with pivotal questions (like the one above) and possible answers.

This year's first issue is coming out just as ArtPrize is ending. We participated in ArtPrize, as volunteers and spectators, and our experience was enjoyable though challenging. For the past three years we have been taught to approach art with with intensity and intentionality, but ArtPrize's barrage of glitzy, spectacular "artwork" often appeared to lack that same approach. Lost in all the hustle-bustle and hullabaloo about the quarter-million-dollar grand prize, we were disappointed, wondering where had all the good art gone, and why wasn't it being recognized?

After many conversations, we decided it best to enjoy ArtPrize for what it was on its own terms: the world's largest art competition. Where and when else had people from across the world come to such a small and previously unheard-of town to showcase their artwork and see that of others? Sure, the artwork may have been compromised by the desire for the cash prize and thus the need to be attention-grabbing. Still, it pulled people to art, and got them thinking, questioning, what delineates good art from bad?

We are not saying we know all the answers or have art completely understood. In fact, we've often found that, at times when we felt dead-certain, we later realized we were dead-wrong. Certainty itself is a sort of death, a stagnation, a staticism. In that respect, questioning serves us better. We appreciate that ArtPrize at least got us asking questions.

We hope this issue can at least do the same.
Visual Art

Cover  Hannah Piedt Plugging In Graphic Design
1  Meredith Donnelly Untitled Collage
6  Karl Sparrman Paper Thin Photography
7  Nola Nielson Diptych Collage
10  Liesje Brouwer Untitled Ceramics, Brett Beasley Untitled Oil on Canvas
11-12  Leighanne Evelyn Sturgis Homeless at Revere Beach Photography
14  Scott Genzink Untitled Photography, Ashleigh Vandekopple Grand Rapids in all colors of light Photography
16  Sean VandenBrink Bottles Ceramics
17  Heather Bartlam Brooklyn Bridge Photography
18  Karl Sparrman Peek Photography
20  Tia Wierenga Friendship Mixed Media
21-22  Rebecca Hiemstra Untitled Watercolor
23-24  Jackson Hall The Softer Side of Death Graphic Design
25-26  Silas Wolff Untitled Photography
27  Sean VandenBrink Alice and Wonderland Rabbit Ceramics
28  Norm Zylstra Editor and Chief Pen and Ink
29-30  Rachelle Wunderink Drink Ultra Lounge Acrylic on Canvas

Literature

4  Erica Jensen Over There, Gabe Gunnink Happiness
5  Kathleen O Bannon The Opposite of Chaos, Jacob Eizenga On Creation
8  Jake Schepers Corner Market, Cashier #12
9  Justin Majetich A Civilian Manifesto
11  Kimberly Randle Technological Wall
13  Alexander Watt Think Vasectomy: Taking the Cake in Effectively
15-17  ‘Going Green’
19  Jacob Eizenga Eve, Mitchell Terpstra the unknowledge of our antecedents
22  Julia A. Garvelink Empty
23  Kathleen O Bannon Perfect Liberty
24  Jessica Miller Vase
25  Kimberly Randle Untitled
27  J.J. Mannschreck Walk on Snow
28  Sara Botbyl Parallel Lines
30  Kevin Morales Untitled
I try and I try, and all I can say is,
Sunlight spangles through the window,
Warming the tile floor
And igniting the dust specks that hover
Over the green couches.
Tea would be lovely, thank you.
The canaries sing their trills;
After all, they are not dead yet.
Did you hear?
Shhh – the children are listening.
The heat stagnates in the air
Someone ought to open a window
It feels like a prison compound in here.
Did you hear about
The incident yesterday?
Yes, yes, something must be done –
But ah, it is too hot; we must have a
draft.
Someone opens the window
And distant noises filter in,
Riding on the breeze.
Outside a small boy walks,
Swinging a plastic bag
In which a small yellow chick
Flutters and struggles against
The shifting relentless walls.

Happiness
Gabe Gunnink

Laughing fills the air.
Thistles play in silver spokes.
We ride in the sun.
The Opposite of Chaos
Kathleen O Bannon

Man wonders why a thing delights his eyes-what gives it glimmer, truth, and greater price; Mechanically he ponders, classifies-and every sight's defined and made precise. He sees the scintillating cosmic light, the cunning curve of Woman's rosy lip; he marvels at the mighty mountain's height, the sharpness of the Gothic spire's tip. Mankind may say that truth and beauty bend, though still adore the smile of his wife; a man can claim that values will be spent, though timeless absolutes enrich his life-For beauty is an ordered human sense, and truth will never lack significance.

On Creation
Jacob Eizenga

In the beginning, there was nothing worth writing home about. But soon bacteria began to form. They swirled around the earth, playing games with each other as if in a gigantic petri dish. Sensing, however, that there could be something more, some of them left their best mutations for ancestors to claim. Their children became stronger by eliminating those who were weaker. Over a great expanse of time, the bacteria who were truly red in tooth and claw became fish, who then became birds, who became mammals, who became primates. The strongest of the primates then evolved into poems and began to walk upright. They put themselves on display and those who studied them marveled at their intricacy. Truly, these people said, this creation must have been penned by God.
Nola Nielson Diptych collage
Her smell of curry did little to distract
From the stain creeping over the front
Of her peacocked skirt.
The speck of red
Centered on her forehead
Had newfound competition
Only a few feet south.

She embraced that vulgar emergent
Less genteel than its purer cousin.
No doubt she had wanted others to see.
That third eye,
More vibrant even than her
Crimson face,
Peered through
The floor. She was

Shiva himself.

The great destroyer. The purifier.
The skirt ruined, a new life formed,
She nursed the red in anticipation
Of her coming motherhood.

Should she become anything at all,
Let her, at least, become a woman.
hen I was a boy,
I lived in the Balkans.
Communism
slept inches beneath the surface
of my concrete city,
and a murmur echoed
still, from the war,
off chipped and plastered buildings.
Impersonal, abstract, and cold,
they lined the city streets,
passing down that mumble
to be lost amidst the lethargic
bubble and flow
of the muddy river.

There, I read the soldier's manifesto
scribbled in the shell holes,
riddling the buildings.
It read: "Kill or be killed."

I saw the sunken eyes
of an old man.
Solemnly,
he tended to his vegetable garden,
shaded by sleepy rubble--
a brick house, bombed out.
The carnage serene
and slowly,
being repossessed
by weeds and flowers.

I saw missing,
the arms and legs
of children.
They'd lost them to land mines,
while playing in the Sava River,
near my home.

When I was a boy,
I didn't understand these things.

A Civilian Manifesto
Justin Majetich

When I was a boy,
I lived in the Balkans.
Communism
slept inches beneath the surface
of my concrete city,
and a murmur echoed
still, from the war,
off chipped and plastered buildings.
Impersonal, abstract, and cold,
they lined the city streets,
passing down that mumble
to be lost amidst the lethargic
bubble and flow
of the muddy river.

There, I read the soldier's manifesto
scribbled in the shell holes,
riddling the buildings.
It read: "Kill or be killed."

I saw the sunken eyes
of an old man.
Solemnly,
he tended to his vegetable garden,
shaded by sleepy rubble--
a brick house, bombed out.
The carnage serene
and slowly,
being repossessed
by weeds and flowers.

I saw missing,
the arms and legs
of children.
They'd lost them to land mines,
while playing in the Sava River,
near my home.

When I was a boy,
I didn't understand these things.
Technological Walls

Kimberly Randle

Total impersonality,
Thank God for technology
I can talk to you over IM about anything
And you wouldn’t even know I’m crying.
Think Vasectomy: Taking the Cake in Effectively ‘Going Green’

Alexander Watt

What environmental crisis encroaches upon modern life like none other? Most people would answer without hesitation (or, perhaps, thought), “Human-induced climate change and its countless catastrophic corollaries that now impend, of course, on the world we’ve known for some time.”

Nobel laureates Al Gore and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) could only feign surprise upon hearing such a response from any laywoman or man. For intensifying tropical tempests and retreating glaciers in these latter days have gifted climatologists enough barrels of black powder evidence to raise a maelstrom of public outcry and secure for themselves suitcases overflowing with research funding. It only follows that with their impressive PR scheme and the greenbacks to bolster popularization, climatology’s Top Ten Misfortunes-waiting-to-happen has escaped obscurity, and more people than ever are now familiar with ‘carbon footprints’ and other related terminologies.

The speed with which the global community has recently accepted the IPCC’s reports of the planet’s shifting climate is startling given that, not fifty years ago, climatology was popularly forecasting global cooling, not warming. Equally as startling is the exclusion of numerous other fields of pertinent scientific research from public attention. The sixth mass extinction on planet Earth is happening right now, after all! Unfortunately, voices representing other scientific fields have been muffled to a great degree. This pillow-over-the-mouth has limited alternative perspectives on the status of the global environment and greatly aided Gore and the IPCC to narrow the scope of widely-publicized environmental problems to accommodate climate change alone (though this may not have been their aim).

Though increasing concentration of greenhouse gases contributes to declining quality of the global commons, many factors -- most of which have nothing to do with the make and model of car you drive or whether your electricity comes from coal or solar power -- contribute to environmental degradation at the present. Of these, I would like to redirect deserved attention to human reproductive choices in particular.

According to a 2007 Agriculture Department estimate, raising a single American child costs parents between $148,320 and $298,680, depending on the level of affluence. However, the impact of your reproductive choices cannot be limited to the fiscal realm alone. The requirements of children also affect the aesthetic quality and utility of good old Earth.

How can a cherubic little humanoid do all this? It all comes down to what we’re made of. Surprisingly enough, *Homo sapiens* aren’t made of magic powder or even the breath of the gods. We’re comprised of food. Food transformed the embryo in your mother’s uterus into a 9-pound, 11-ounce pork sandwich covered in amniotic fluid and then into a gesticulating, upright-ambling 140-pound terrestrial: you.
Scott Genzink Untitled Photography

Ashleigh Vandekopple Grand Rapids in all colours of light photography
So, where does your food come from, in the most general sense?

There is a farm somewhere far, far away (most likely) that hosts the rawer materials of the more complex nosh obtained during your "Meijer-run": wheat, sorghum, corn, etc. Predating that farm and its owner was prairie, swamp or rainforest that held energy, nutrients, and myriad organisms within, below, and above its soils. In our age, we witness a noisome and unprecedented conversion of wildernesses into feeding fields for bovine fellow-Earthlings and into ‘lebensraum’ for the foliage that even vegetarian and vegan diets demand.

In the month of August 2008 alone, 760 square kilometers of Brazilian rainforest (roughly the size of metropolitan New York City) were converted into board-feet for McMansions, wood pulp for cardboard, and swidden for subsequent agricultural production, eliminating natural habitats and extracting resources that many non-human organisms rely on.

The human animal, intelligent and resourceful, is now effectively master of these lands and their energies. That energy is heaped up in the hoard of our common collective and secured from every other living species. What follows is not altogether surprising, given the aforementioned.

“In just a geological instant in time, the world has gone from being ‘wild’ to one in which humans are consuming or diverting an estimated 45 percent of the total net biological productivity of the land,” wrote Rosina Bierbaum in an article for the Ecological Society of America Online Journal.

*Homo sapiens* account for only 0.0000033% of estimated biological diversity, yet consume almost half of all terrestrial biological production. Given the declining state of global fisheries, humans also use a considerable portion of sea-based energies. What implications does that figure have for virtually every other land- and sea-dwelling organism -- besides those we grow or harvest or simply attract -- like rats, chickens, broccoli and farm-raised salmon?

Any ecologist (and economist Kenneth Boulding, were he still living) could tell you that the limiting factor of "Spaceship Earth" is resources in the form of energy and nutrients. When one species usurps a disproportionate percentage of the total terrestrial resources of that system (as our species does), something “necessarily occurs” to the other species that struggle to share that ecosystem. According to Brian A. Maurer of the Zoology Department at Brigham Young University, that necessity occurrence is widespread extinction. Without a guillotine blade or sickle we deliver the ‘coup de grâce’ to an estimated 30,000 species per year, according to E.O. Wilson. That’s an average of 82 species per day, one every 18 minutes.

Prospective or contemporary children have ‘everything’ to do with the reality of current species loss. According to a 2003 study by the Global Footprint Network, the average American requires a total 1.03 acres of combined crop and grazing land, woodland for timber and fuel, and aquatic area for fish production. By having a child in the United States, parents require an additional 1.03 acres of our "Spaceship" to be converted for 77.8 years, the U.S. life expectancy, into ceaseless agricultural, maricultural, and silvicultural production. Little of that crop satiates anything besides that single human and a few unavoidable agricultural 'pests', which could potentially mean — simply because there is not enough energy to go around — the eternal termination of an endangered arthropod, legume or crustacean.

In the age of the planet’s direst needs, the human collective has adopted Stalin’s defense for an apathetic body: “A single death is a tragedy; a million deaths is a statistic." Our emotional detachment from the legions of species that annually exit our planet forever rivals that of the Man of Steel. When did this number — 30,000 newly extinct species every year — cease to incite pangs of remorse and become nothing but a mathematical figure?
The “more is better” culture applied to family size in the United States and abroad can end within our lifetime if we disavow it now. We, my good people, are capable of responsible freedom.

Whether or not humans participate in retarding the global population explosion is up to every world citizen. Slowing humanity’s descent toward the nadir of biological destitution can be accomplished by every fertile human inhabitant committing to quit at two children. Therefore, condoms will have to do for the hematophobes; vasectomies shall suffice for the others.
Modern man seems to have embraced a new reproductive creed. From 1750 to 1950, the human population exploded from 700 million to 2.55 billion. As of 11:43 p.m. on October 4, 2009, the population reached its newest zenith: 6,788,446,929. Since the Agricultural Revolution, humans have been hopping about like rabbits in search of mates and producing gaggles of children.

Two systems explain the creed — evolution and culture. Human evolution explains why the compulsion to produce many viable and fertile offspring when ample food supply is present is hardwired into you and me. That compulsion predates our species and most of our ancestral lineage and is observed in millions of other contemporary species.

Cultural norms standardize the second half of the creed. In a culture that measures the success of an operation by how large it is or by how much it's growing, it isn't surprising that our economists advocate ceaseless expansion. Of course any continual growth in a closed system with limited resources is unsustainable folly (extrapolate far enough down the line and you'll reach something ludicrous). Though the late Edward Abbey was neither economist nor ecologist, he knew enough to quip “perpetual growth is the creed of the cancer cell.” While avoiding likening our race to a malignant tumor on the body of our host, Mother Earth, we can still recognize that, with unmatched celerity, our species has multiplied with little deterrent for the last quarter millennium.

Patterns of human reproduction are a reflection of both evolution and cultural norms. The latter of the two is more malleable in the short term. Thus we need not wave the white flag to overpopulation.
Eve
*Jacob Eizenga*

Split
like an atom
launching from its branch
into the muddy autumn.

The fruit divulges:

her hips ripen
with sin.

Earth worries his grass skirt
dirt working deep
into citrus flesh; it cannot be
rubbed clean and so it must be
forgiven.

---

the unknowledge of our antecedents
*Mitchell Terpstra*

how little we know of the catapults
we are launched from! i spent nine months
swimming inside a woman i hardly know.
(was i in the dark of her then or now?)
birth was the beginning of distance, the
beginning of two rivers running contrariwise
down the Continental Divide, the beginning
of a running away before my haunches
even had the strength to uplift my wobbly
little body. now I sit mystified by a
yellowing Polaroid of a beautiful woman
my own age with too much makeup who I
know as MOM which is made up of
three letters that stand for one of two of the
most proximate mysteries in my life.
Tia Wierenga *Friendship* Mixed Media
Empty
Julia A. Garvelink

Bzzz Bzzz Beep Beep

Uhh . . . I struggle to find my alarm clock and hammer it into silence.
I gingerly place my feet on the smooth cold floor.
The Ache begins,
Throbbing in my temples and grit in my raw eyes.
Clenching my jaw, I stand.
Eyes shut against the searing light my feet follow the wood floor.
When I reach the tile floor I feel blindly to my right and open the cupboard.
Gripping the bottle by its neck I pour into my travel mug.
I gulp it down.
Warmth spreads through me and the pain recedes.

Listening intently to my instructor, the pain begins again.
My chest Thump Thumps.
I breathe deeply and begin sipping slowly from my mug.
Every class is the same so I
Sip . . . Sip . . . my day away.

Flickering blue light across my face,
Pictures, sounds, flashing images,
Reporters with tears in their eyes.
It hurts too much!
Just a few more sips . . .

Stumbling back up the stairs to bed
My bedside mug is empty!
I slowly make my way to the kitchen.
I open the cupboard.
I pull out my beautiful bottle of Apathy and pour.
Clutching my mug to my chest I return to my room.
I gulp my Apathy down gratefully.
It soothes me into a dreamless sleep.
Perfect Liberty
Kathleen O Bannon

The frequent cry of children, clowns, and fools
Is for a lawless, whimsy way of life--
The Granite Tablets broken with the rules
The back of Moses driven through by knife.
And quickly comes the answer to this call--
A battle roar to rape this World of Blood
Is thundered 'cross the plains of selfish gall
And righteous throats are silenced, even cut.
The orphaned child seeks a music man
To sing and bless his mangled mother's tomb--
But Music misses notes and skillful hand
For Music's dually made of rules and tune.
Draconic Man, in all his flaws--
See now that perfect freedom lies in laws!
Vase

Jessica Anne Miller

i slit the stems of five flowers.
i cut them from the soil
from the decay of all that grew before them
from the death that was their life
and replaced it with
sterility—flower’s worst fear.

two open to the kitchen lamp, three refuse
to hope.
Have you ever walked on snow?  
Have you ever slipped on ice?  
I would encourage you to do so.  
Your footing is uncertain, each step a question rises  
Ego stripped away, fallen pride – it surmises  
Have you ever walked on snow?  
I would encourage you to do so.
Parallel Lines
*Sara Botbyl*

Swinging precariously from a wire,
gently moving with each sigh.
Carefully sorted; lined in rows.
Invisible bodies condemned to hang.
Ballooning, blooming; shirts, towels, a sock.
Fluttering softly.

My heart too.
**Untitled**  
*Kimberly Randle*

Kiss the side of my mouth so that it doesn’t seep in  
Hug with your hand so I can’t receive it at all  
Speak with a whisper so I can barely hear when you call

Will with an uncertain intent so I don’t know what you want  
Reveal with a sheer scarf to continue my games of blindness  
Prevaricate with hate so that I refuse to see kindness

And love halfheartedly,  
Because that’s what I expect  
When one never receives fullness,  
They become satisfied with attempts

And love with your hands behind your back  
Affect surrender and delight and care  
So you can remind me of your love  
While forgetting your hands are bare...
I keep remembering my dreams. When the sun rises there it is. A trembling cupful of experiences from another life still purely my own. If I hesitate or over think, I'll spill the dream on the hot pavement of an undergraduate schedule and forget everything but its color. I have to slurp it up, slack-jawed and bed-tossed. It sinks to my belly where it can rest coolly against pink stomach lining and an ulcer brought on by academic aspirations. I just keep remembering my dreams. In Beijing I had a dream about a roiling storm, a thundering of meteorological squalor. In the dream, I find myself lying in bed while the weather rages at my windowsill. The peculiar darkness at the foot of my bed becomes solid and the room is packed shoulder to shoulder with Chinese elderly. Dressed in the old uniform of Mao's communism, they look at each other's faces with distraction and regret. One at the front stares intently and I ask him if they want to stay here until the sky cleared. He apologizes for refusing hospitality, but they must keep going. They leave. A small note in my journal says: "I'm not sure if this was a dream or if they were a legitimate caravan of souls in penance looking for a place to inhabit." I just keep remembering my dreams.
Thanks to all those who submitted their work, and thanks to our readers.