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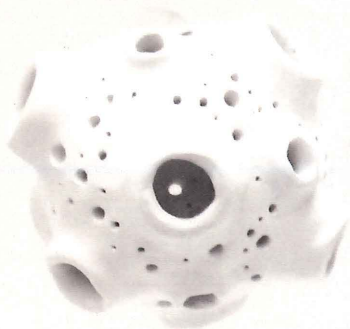
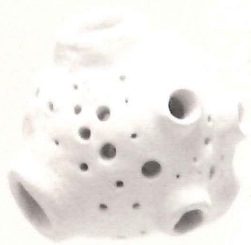
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dialogue

VISUAL ARTS SHOWCASE

December 6-16

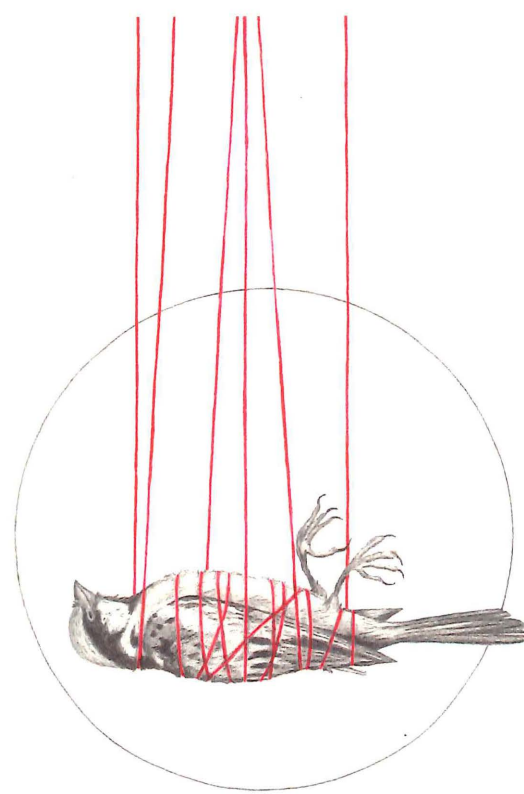
Lower Gezon Lobby

FILM SCREENING

Showtimes TBA on the Dialogue

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SC 150



Tethered II, Mark Randall

dialogue

Volume 49 Issue 1
Calvin College's Creative Journal

Editors' Notes

I'll tell you the same clichéd thing I told my staff: I literally could not have done this without you.

In the few short years I've been involved with Dialogue, I've seen immense growth and change. But even with all our success, I've still spent the last six months brainstorming all kinds of possibilities and impossibilities for what would come next. I've been thinking about how I could make something bigger, louder, and more alive—how I could bring in so many voices and do so many new things and how I could make Dialogue more than just a magazine.

It took me a lot longer than it should have to realize that it is not me or any other editor that makes Dialogue what it is or what it can be. It's you. We can only be as big and diverse and multidimensional as the people who submit their work and the people who read it. And I hope you are able to see Dialogue for what it is, for what you have made it to be: a community of talented and passionate artists and readers.

Most of all, I wanted this issue to be interactive. I hope that, as readers, you will interact with this work as we have as an editorial staff. And I hope that this community will interact within itself. I hope that you will share your voices and listen to each other because that's what Dialogue is all about.

Again with the clichés. This is why you do the writing.

Thanks for letting me be a part of this. I can't wait to see what we do next.

Jeffrey Peterson
Editor-in-Chief

The history of Dialogue is a rich and colorful one. It has been hard-covered, spiral-bound, and a cookbook, among other things. With every issue, new students join the ever-growing archive of art and writing. The issue you now hold has been 49 years in the making.

This semester, my hope is for Dialogue to be an invitation. I invite you to see what your neighbor has to say, to be impressed by the creativity in your community, to have an open mind to the thoughts of others. My work is done, and now it's up to you.

Will you accept the invitation?

Hailey Jansson
Layout Editor

Table of Contents

Visual Art

- 4 **Smoke and Mirrors** Harrison Rice
- 6 **Nesting** Miriam Kornelis
- 8 **Palmitas Park** Isaiah LaGrand
- 10 **The Pharaoh in Atlanta** Mimi Mutesa
- 13 **Medersa Bou Inania** Manato Thomas Jansen
- 14 **The Space Between Us** Mark Randall
- 16 **Upwards** Emily Annett
- 20 **Balance** Michael Hsu
- 23 **Dots 1** Jaclyn Kuyers
- 24 **Folded Vessel Series** Olivia Rozdolsky
- 26 **From Generation to Generation** Luke Sturgis
- 28 **Prince of Wales Hotel** Mark Randall
- 30 **Yield** Emily Van Staalduinen
- 32 **Girl** Mimi Mutesa
- 37 **Landscape** Brenna Mahn
- 38 **2133819** Cotter Koopman
- 42 **Tethered Series** Mark Randall
- 45 **Total Consciousness** Emma Carpenter
- 46 **Portrait** Brenna Mahn
- 48 **Suffocated** Jaclyn Kuyers
- 50 **Lost in Superior** Mark Randall
- 53 **Hollowed** Mark Randall
- 56 **hazy mornings** Hannah Van't Hof
- 58 **031016** Cotter Koopman

Film

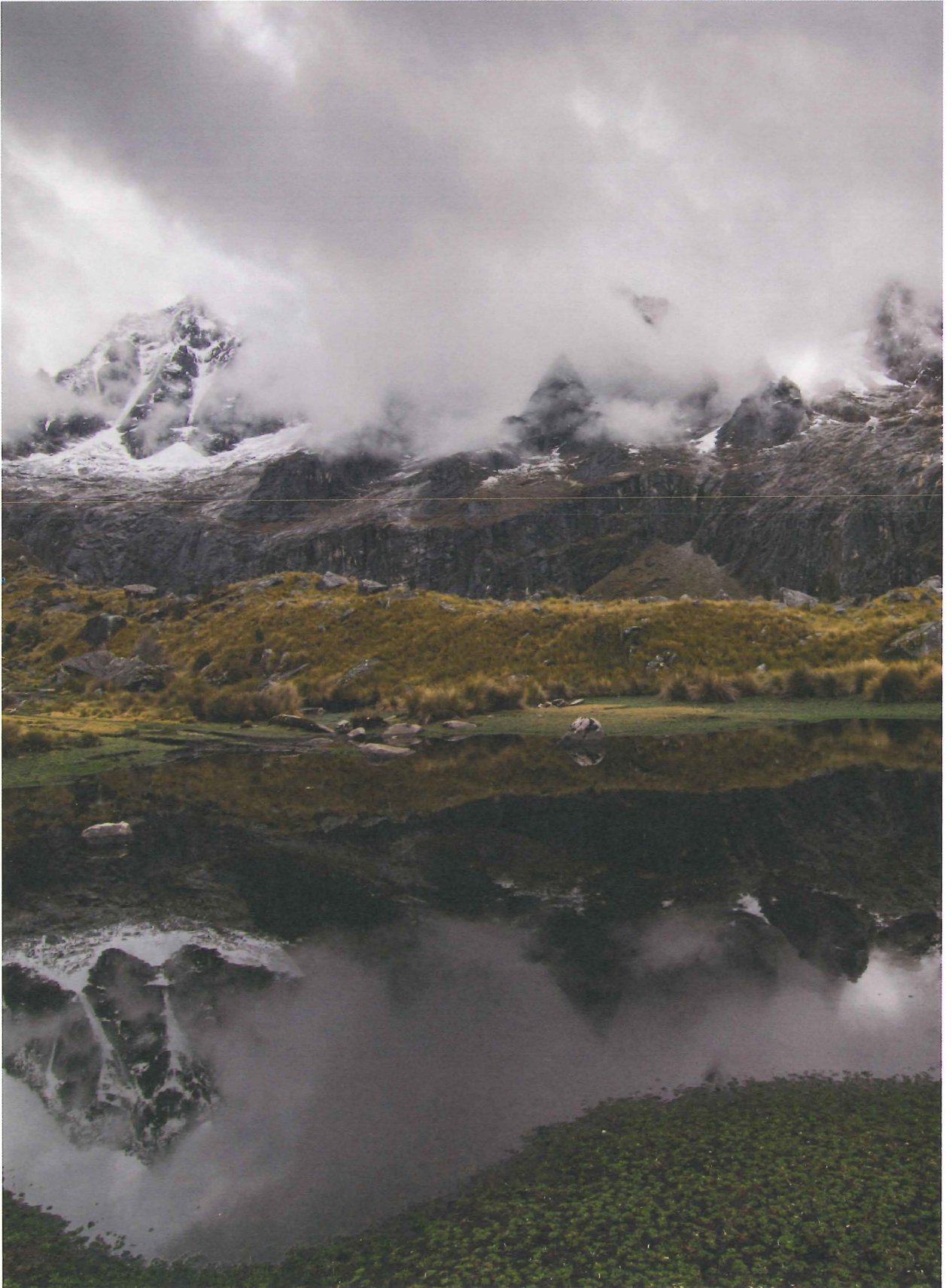
- Exploring Small** Gregory Manni
- Charlevoix** Hailey Jansson
- iWish** Hannah Kaylor
- boy in white, on his way to the moon** Isaiah LaGrand
- Dissolving Impressions** Artist Collaborative
- "Father Forgive Me," or how I came home** Michael Lentz
- Watch online at calvin.edu/dialogue.

Writing

- 5 **A Pulling Quiet** Gregory Manni
- 9 **Here** Jordan Petersen
- 12 **Her Garden** Laura Brand
- 18 **The Dam and the Sea** Sarah Vroegop
- 22 **Poison Ivy** Rae Gernant
- 27 **Time Capsules** Krisztina Milovszky
- 31 **dying bosoms and reconstituted leaves** Rachel J. House
- 34 **Chainsmoking** Leeann Randall
- 40 **Nothing to Hide** Michael Lentz
- 44 **Sitting in the Church Today** Stephanie Bradshaw
- 49 **Care Provider** Abigail Hocking
- 52 **moonflower** Katelyn Van Kooten
- 54 **The Android on the Moon** Marshall Morehead
- 59 **Exhale** Juliana Ludema

Music

- January** Conner Luymes
- Morning** Benray
- 052216** Bathwater for Jessie
- Weekday Blues** Jules Camp
- Song 4** L.A.M.P.
- Just Be Still** Conner Luymes
- Taco Bell** Douglas Fir
- The Sleepover** Cotter Koopman
- Faster** Maddy Wiering
- A Long Airplane Ride** Benray
- "Tim Allen" in E Major** L.A.M.P.
- Download Mixtape 49.1 at calvin.edu/dialogue.



A Pulling Quiet

Gregory Manni

Spider silk strands shimmer
They shiver
Maybe they're what ties us,
causes our quiver
What if we are delicately corded?
by a pulling quiet
Whisper to a paper cup and string:
soft secrets, wavering
Morse taps share tightly strung feelings
I can't tell you how I feel, but maybe you'll feel my tug
We'll be bound, wound, wrung
taut, brought, swung
into a sticky vulnerability
When I move through flickering tree'd forests,
I pull your silken vulnerables off me and brush
them on my clothes
But from now, I'll not touch them
I'll leave your thoughts on the bridge of my nose
and your emotion threaded through my left brow
Your sensitivities will stick to my lips;
my lashes will bat your passions
I will know you with my face.

Nesting

Miriam Kornelis







Here

Jordan Petersen

“Shit,” I mutter under my breath as my phone begins vibrating in my pocket. I don’t look to see who it is. I could probably narrow it down to about five people, but it really doesn’t matter.

Awakened from my mindless gaze into Palmer Park, I suddenly feel out of place, as if I had been copy-and-pasted into a landscape of a completely different color palette than the one I came from. But then, I suppose Detroit is a different palette than Grand Rapids.

Beginning the process of getting ready for my return journey, I start with anticipating the questions I might get if anybody found out where I had been the last six or so hours: *Why Detroit? Why didn’t you stop? Are you ok?* I also anticipated giving the same answer to all of these yet again: *I don’t know.*

I don’t know why this keeps happening. I guess it is just capability. When I get in my car after a long day, I can’t help but think: *I could go so many places right now. I could go to the river. I could go to the lake. I could even go across the state.* And that last one is the location I settle on.

It’s impressive really. I recently learned in my history class that French settlers thought Detroit was an obvious destination to due to its position on the river and resulting access to Lake Erie. People traveled days or even weeks to get there and trade furs with the Native Americans. I can get there in less than three hours. As I drive past landmarks with

names from this time period—names like Charlotte or Tecumseh—I’m reminded that in a different time and context, I’d be crazy not to drive to Detroit any chance I got.

And just as my time and context can bring me there so quickly, it can bring me back even quicker. I’m reminded of this as my phone begins vibrating yet again, as if I were on a leash that extended the entire width of the Lower Peninsula.

I don’t have any real reason to be here, and maybe that’s just it. Anywhere I go, it’s for a purpose. You know, from X to Y is my school time, later is my work time, and then I get to go home for my leisure time. Repeat.

Well, this is just time. No qualifier. I could go somewhere closer to serve the same purpose, but I never do. I go east until I can’t anymore.

If I do this enough, I guess this will have to be qualified. Detroit-time? Maybe then I wouldn’t come here so much. But then, maybe not. Time will tell.

As my phone vibrates a third time, I finally leave my park bench. The pull is finally enough. I hesitate for a second before opening my car door. I do like this park. It’s a very nice park. And a nice day.

It’s a shame I can’t stay, but I know I’ll be back.

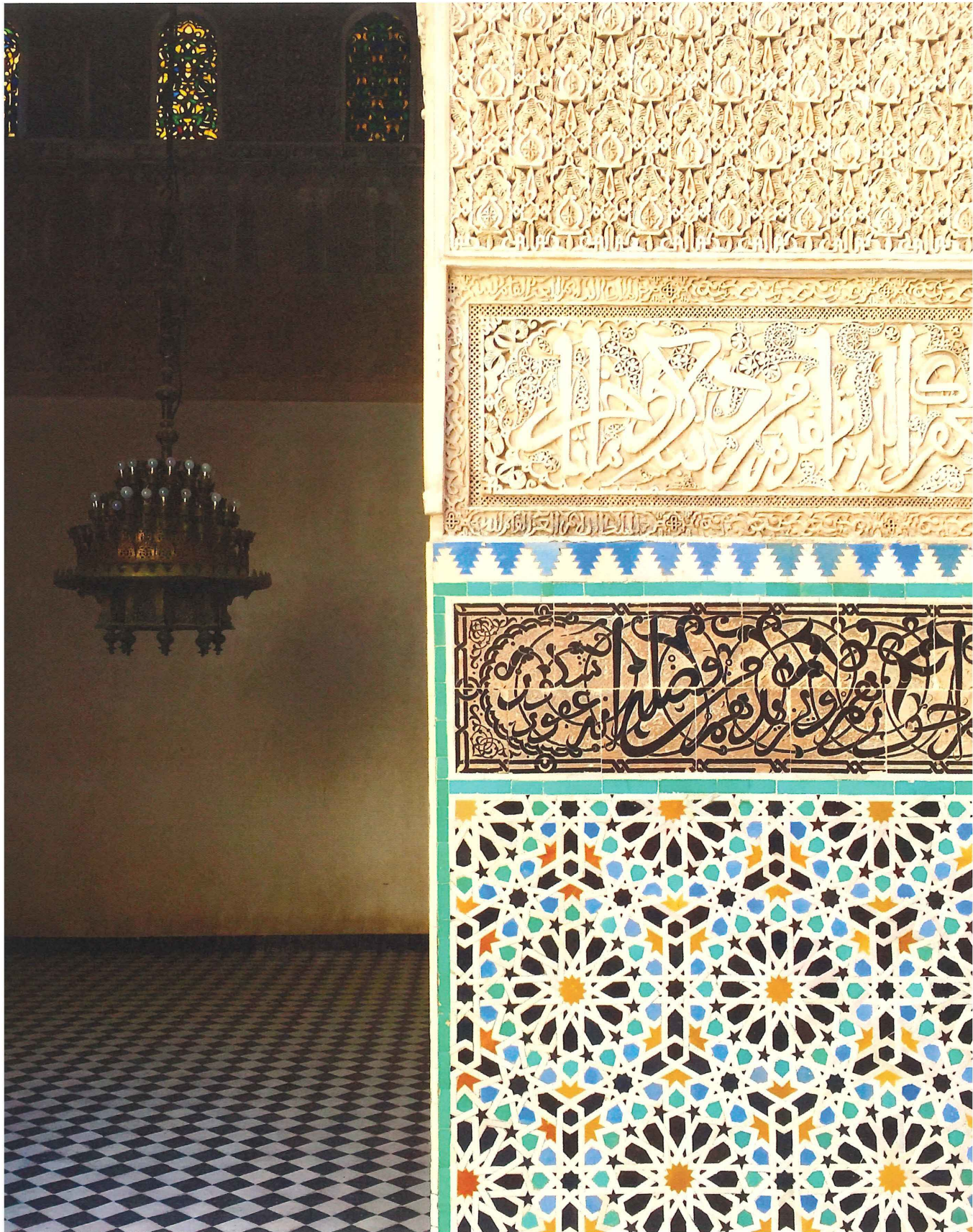


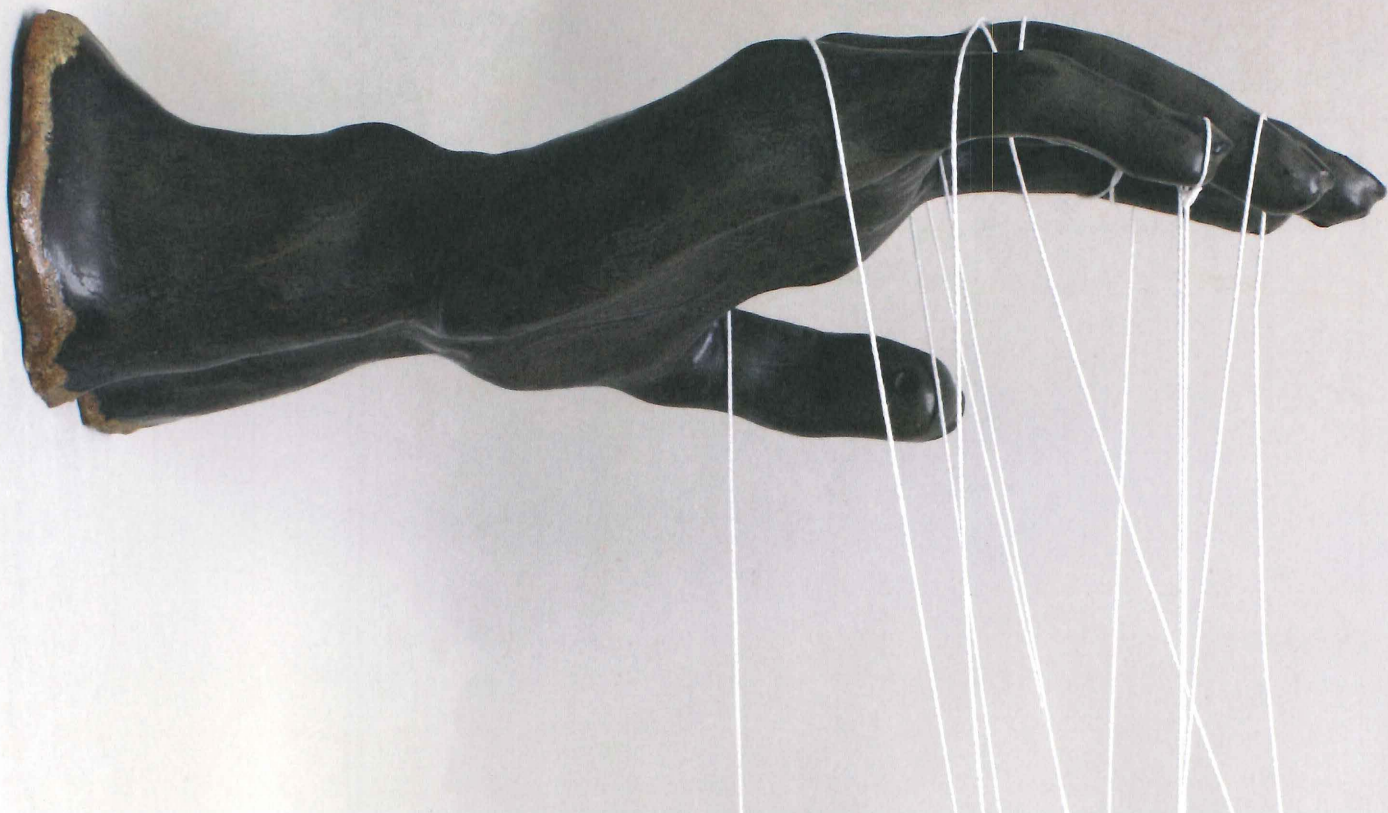


Her Garden

Laura Brand

She planted a garden of pencils,
fertilizing hexagonal holes with literature and ink.
Sowing the smartly collared descendants of cedars,
she constructed an homage to the branches
that stretch yearningly towards the clouds.
Their roots grew strong as they lengthened
in vocabulary and assimilated diverse dialects.
She instructed the seedlings in matters of grammar,
educating the shoots on syntax and inflexion.
Her creation: no colloquial crop.
The ferrules budded
in metaphor. Metal fronds
make haiku herbage.
From her garden she harvested ballads engaged
in monologue and soliloquy. Plucking particular plumes,
she would brew a graphite tea sweetened by clay and wax.
Whenever she drank this quixotic draught,
she would dream adventures in black and white.
And at autumn's end she gathered their manifold words
to store in the glossary of her mind. Her yield overflowing,
each script intimately known to her.
While parchment ground sleeps beneath the snow,
she prepares to sow again at springtime.









Upwards | Emily Annett



The Dam and the Sea

Sarah Vroegop

I have to remind her to open her box too often. Like, way too often.

It was just supposed to be a coping mechanism, this box. The doctors said it had helped a lot of people, but some people abused it, so we had to be sure not to. And it did help, for a while. The little black box let her remove her feelings and pack them away. She'd shelve it and then sit down and get a lot of work done, completely removed from everything she was. With the box, she could rebuild her life without her explosive feelings getting in the way.

Then she started forgetting to open it again. It was fine the first time; forgetfulness happens. I told her she'd left her feelings in the box after a few hours, and she stood up, turned around, retrieved it from the shelf, and opened it. The emotions returned to her quickly, and she settled into herself again. She was okay.

The next time she waited five minutes after I reminded her before actually doing it, and I watched her for every second of it.

We're so far down the road now that I set timers to remind her to open the box when I have to leave. I call her on my way home. I wake her up in the middle of the night to make sure I haven't forgotten. I watch her eyes to make sure that the light is still there. Sometimes, I hide the box, but she always finds it. I can't bring myself to throw it away; part of me believes it's keeping her body alive.

...

"Please. Please, open it," I beg her now.

"I don't want to."

"But how can you know what you want? You've taken all your emotions out and kept them in that box for the past two days!"

"I know. And I know I don't want to open it. This is a decision based on logic and fact. I do better with them in the box. It's better to just leave them there."

"Please, please, you aren't yourself without them, and I miss you!"

"I remember what it was like when I was on them, okay?" She says, looking up from her desk. "I was depressed. I couldn't ever get any work done. That's no way to live. I have to be productive. That's how people are successful."

"But I remember too," I say, actually pulling her arm away from her computer and wrenching her around to face me. I search her eyes, desperately looking for the light. "I remember! I remember you used to laugh at reruns on television. I remember you loved the beach in the winter and... and strawberry pancakes!"

"This way is better. I don't have to feel like I did anymore; I just put it all away, and then I'm done with it."

“That’s no way to live.”

“You don’t know. You never knew what it felt like, you never understood what I was going through, so you don’t know at all now. I’m not opening that box again. Not now, not ever. This is my choice. I don’t want to feel like that ever again, so just keep them all on the shelf. Don’t touch them.” She has no anger—it’s all in the box—and that somehow makes this argument even darker; it is me, volatile, against her, stoic. She is the cement dam, and I am the sea.

Later that night, I look to where the box is usually on its shelf. It’s not even there. I don’t know what she’s done.

The next day, I call on my way back home, but she doesn’t pick up. I have an argument ready for when I get back. I’m prepared.

I get home, and I look to where she usually sits at her desk, but she’s not even there. I run around the house, looking for the box and looking for her.

I don’t know what she’s done.





Poison Ivy

Rae Gernant

Enjoy some spiced tea
beneath an oil sky
where fine royalty cross paths
with shiny garden shears

Timing is everything for finding
Just take some leaves
from the vine nearby
offensive,
untended,
and entirely wild

A find!
as foreign envy claims—
Hand-picked and warranted
by privilege

What then follows but a protective cry:
Boiled tea
in boiled hands

How civilized.

MIU MIU STORES,
88.977.1900. MIU MIU'S
WOOL AND COYOTE FUR
TOLE AND WOOL BRA
ND SKIRT, AT SELECT
IU MIU STORES.
ALKE HOSIERY.

BEAUTY NOTE: DARK
BERBERGINE EYE-
NER IS A SUBTLER
TERNATIVE TO
ACK. CHANTECAILLE
JMINOUS LINER IN
OLA FITS THE BILL.





Folded Vessel Series
Olivia Rozdolsky





Time Capsules

Krisztina Milovszky

1

No song can be heard
Between the metal branches—
The birds are all gone.

2

Battery-powered
stars lit up the tin heart of
the ballerina.

3

The walls oozing mist—
Green blades weighed down by dew drops—
Early morning crawl.

4

There's dust on the keys
(the blacks are almost grey now)
ghostly concerto.

5

A tiny leaf falls
and greets the rushing river
with a last caress.







dying bosoms and reconstituted leaves

Rachel J. House

the pubescent ginkgo leaves litter, on the sidewalk, striated with dewy bands,
each tending towards detritus, glistening.
gusts peel the cemented edges back, exposing vein-bordered fenestrations,
the ground beneath bone-dry.

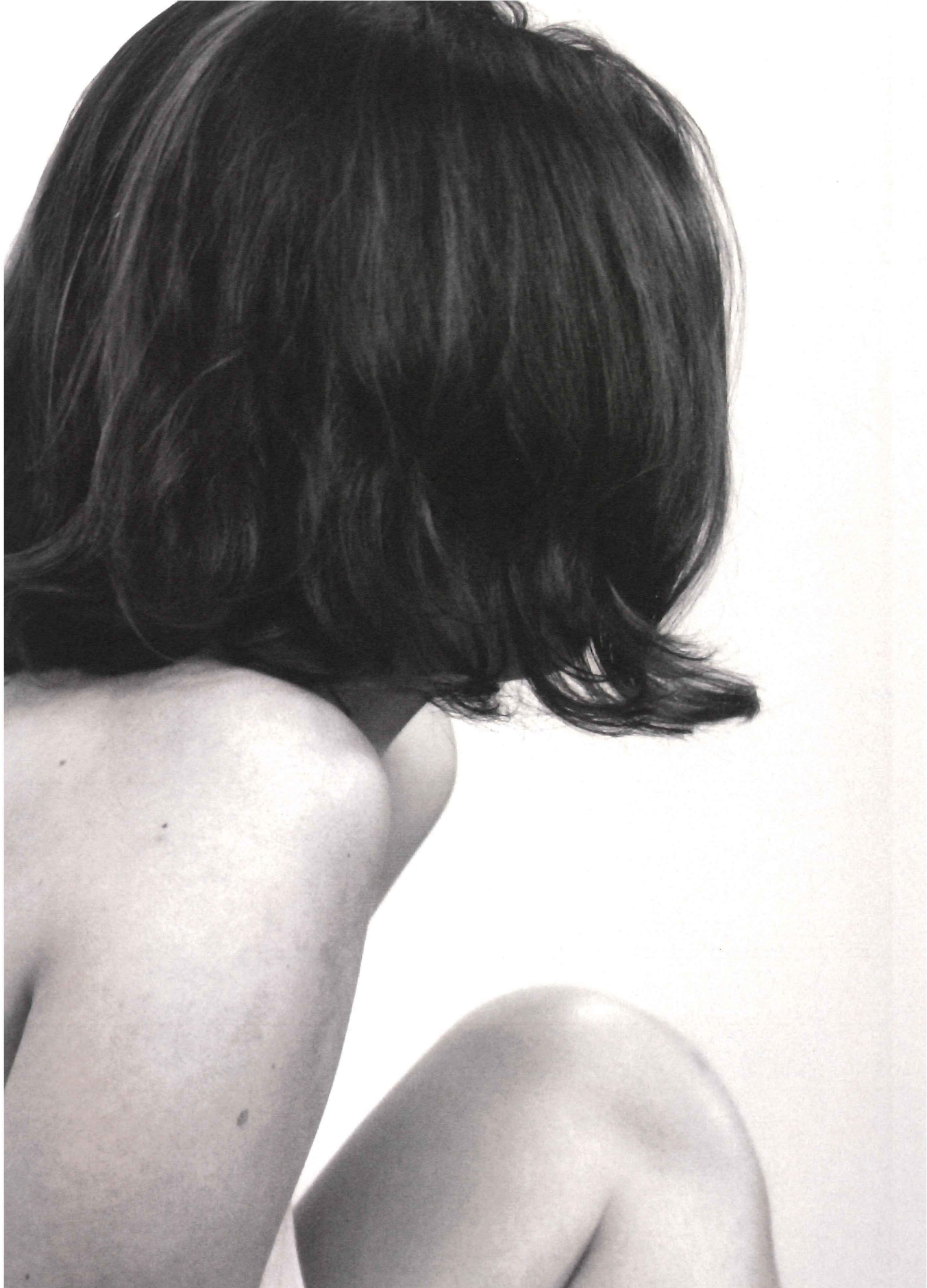
in your multitudes, I have died a thousand deaths.

a leaf: the apex adipose beneath bare chest doth stand;
soft foothill bravely wastes away without your suckling hand;
the buxom breast now only bud is firm beneath the sway
of groping stands and swift forays, a pyramid she stays.

in my minutia, I have lived a thousand lives.

sing praises to the one who dances on the dead,
grinding each into soil,
into molecular moments ready for reconstitution.





Chainsmoking

Leeann Randall

She holds the cigarette between her fingers lightly, as if the object is foreign to her. The day is bright and fair, and she sits perched on a backless wooden bench, looking back at the passersby. She takes light drags, leaning forward to ash her cigarette in the brick fire pit in front of her. Occasionally, she lifts the thing up and rolls it between her thumb and her forefingers, watching as the cherry-bright end slowly eats away the paper. How did she end up here, she wonders? A year ago, she would have been the pedestrian ambling past, glancing down at the poor soul choking her lungs with burning poison.

She feels the heat touch her hand and reaches to put out her cigarette. She stands up, looks around, sighs, and sinks back down. Delicately, she opens her pack and pulls out another, placing it between her lips and lighting it. She inhales deeply, exhales lightly—once, twice, and again. The calming sensation creeps from her lungs through her limbs, tingling in her toes and buzzing around in her head, cooling her thoughts.

The smell, so often complained about by others, comforts her.

...

She remembers sitting in hazy lounges, reclining in overstuffed leather chairs, laughing at familiar jokes with familiar faces. She remembers the rain, tumbling over her car windows in the dark, her favorite song playing as she smoked the first cigarette she had smoked alone, in a place where they used to meet. Before that, she remembers a different car,

looking up at him as he smiled down at her, bringing a cigarette to his lips, using his free hand to lace her fingers in his and stroke her thumb with his own.

She remembers lying on her stomach in a bed not her own, blankets tangled up at her feet, turning to watch as he pulled his shirt back over his head. He sat on edge of the bed and leaned over to rub her back lightly, bending down to kiss her, to whisper in her ear. *Would you like to come out to smoke with me?* The corners of her mouth turned up, and her eyes crinkled at the edges. She borrowed a sweatshirt and allowed her hand to be taken, allowed herself to be led outside to the garage.

Cold air greeted them, and he sat in the beat-up armchair. He lit up as she settled herself at his feet, leaning against his legs, pressing her toes against the heater. Sweet tobacco scent filled the air as they reclined in pleasant contentedness. Skin on skin, the skin of his fingers to the skin of her cheek, his mouth to her ear and her neck. Smokey kisses, lips on lips. She smiled against his mouth, enjoying the taste of affection and cigarettes on his tongue.

...

The end of her cigarette again warms her fingers, and she kills it in the ashes of a hundred others. She sits still and waits for inspiration to come to her. What is to be done? What is there to do? She does not know. She lifts open her pack and rattles it, counting the number left inside. She is determined not to buy more. She plucks one from its package and lifts it to her face.

She enjoys the inhale but is reminded why she wants to quit by the slight burn in the back of her throat.

...

A day at the beach, sandy and hot and breezy. Kisses in the water, wandering hands underneath the beat of the waves. *What if someone sees?* He just smiled. His hand brushed her newly tanned skin on the way home.

A day at the zoo, all lemonade and *look, a polar bear. What about the lion, his lazy ass hasn't moved all day.* With him smiling down at her, she felt lucky. She felt like she found something special. For the first time, she felt like she could see her future laid out before her—the years a pattern of colorful squares, as sweet and benevolent as playing Candyland as a kid.

A night in his house, his bed, waking up to his snoring every twenty damn minutes, but feeling rested in the morning nonetheless, smiling over French toast and enjoying a little Bailey's in her coffee.

The kisses, the smiles, the late nights and early mornings are burned in her memory. But she also remembers the ache. Heaving, heartbroken sobs, collapsed on the floor at two in the morning, utterly alone.

Another woman somewhere—more than one—sleeping soundly in their beds. And here she is: missing the other feel-good drag, the inhale, of being

with the man she loved. Having to quit him like a dirty habit.

She remembers the fear: fear of rejection, fear of leaving him, fear of being wrong about him. The fear of his goddamn temper. Walking on eggshells, walking in a minefield, but never walking away. Waking up in the morning and feeling like shit because he was angry again, and what if she couldn't fix it this time?

She remembers him screaming, arms wide, moving towards her. She placed a hand on his chest, heart pounding, trying to steady him, but a vice-like grip closed on her wrist and shoved her away. He tried to make up for it later, apologizing with his mouth and his hands between the rows of an orchard. As if he had done something else, something trivial, as if it were only to be expected, as if she had some fault, too. *You can't really blame me, can you? I was angry.* Bullshit. But she believed him. She believed his shining green eyes and the way he held her close and kissed her hair.

She believed him when he said he wanted to respect her. *Finally, a man that respects me,* she thought to herself. But somehow she still felt small.

And then there were those nights, spent in his bed, where she did not wake up feeling like her life was a romantic comedy. In the dark, nowhere to go. *No, I don't want to. Can't we do something else? Can't we just go to sleep?* No, no they couldn't. He took what he wanted from her and smiled at her afterwards, running his fingers down her back and kissing her

cheek like she had asked for it. Waking up in the morning to a thank you and feeling like she did the right thing to make him happy, when in fact she had done nothing at all. You're supposed to make sacrifices in relationships, right? A nagging doubt in the back of her mind, calmed by a warm hug and a warm breakfast.

How did she not know?

...

She lays her head in her hands, her lit cigarette coming dangerously close to her messy blonde hair. How could she have known? How could she have known when his charm protected his lies, when he intoxicated her, when he manipulated her into being something outside of herself? When his brutal charisma shaped her into what he wanted: a twisted, foreign form?

A rush of anger fills her but then, slowly, a sense of peace. A little idea begins working its way through her, touching all those memories as it pushes itself towards the front of her mind.

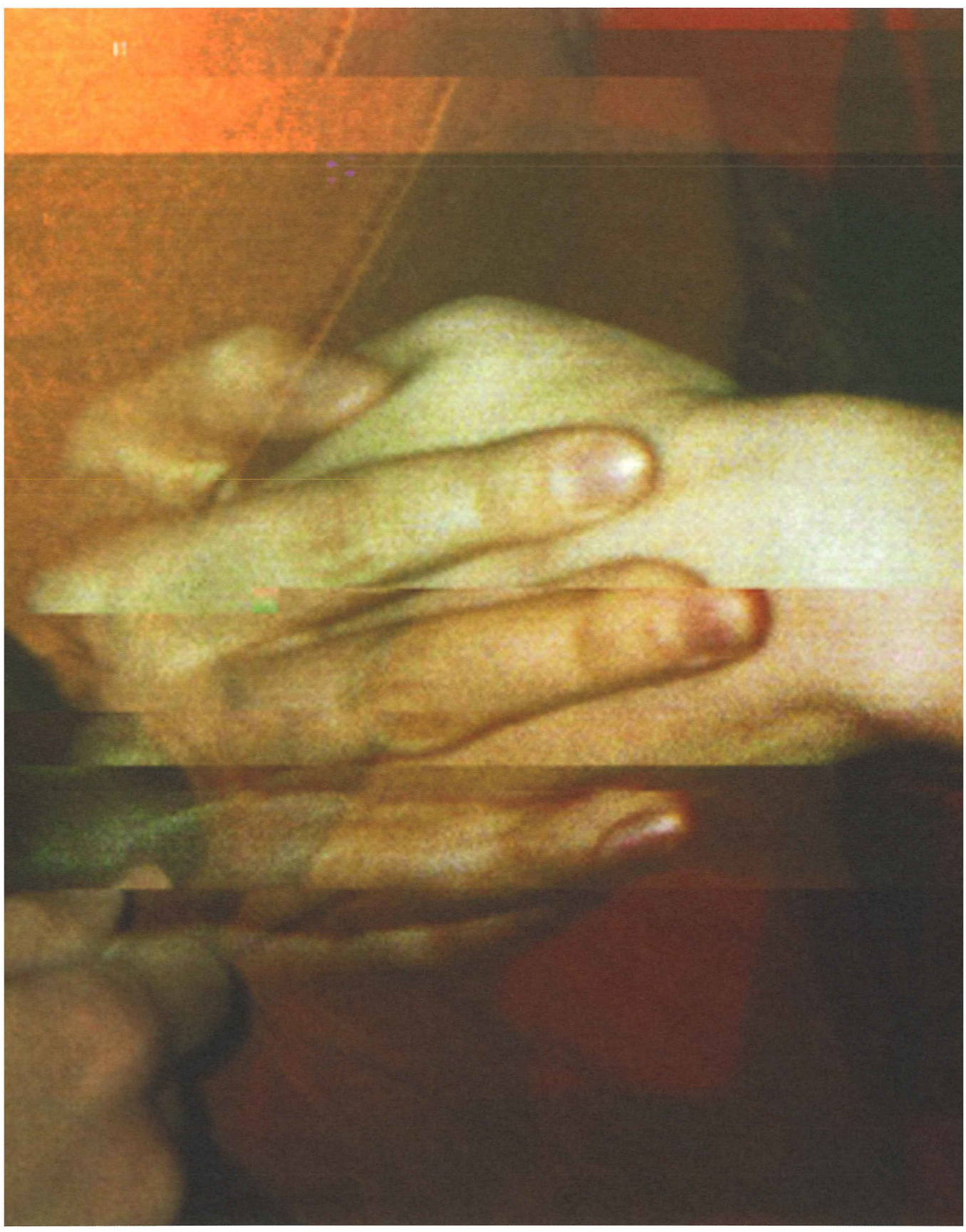
It is not her fault.

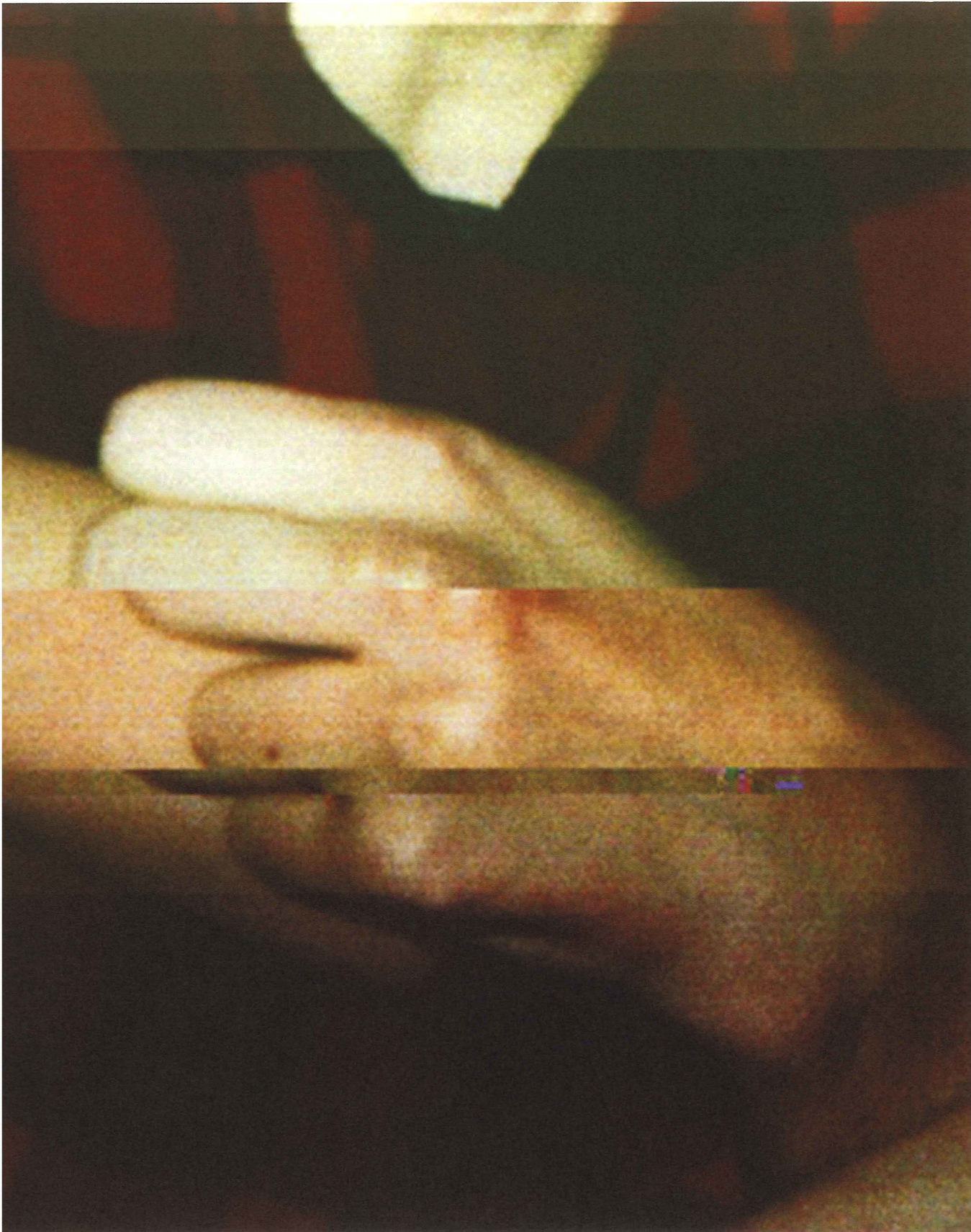
It is not her fault.

She stands tall and straight. She tosses her cigarette into the fire pit, pauses, and chucks the whole pack in with it. She is not coming back here. There are other memories to be made—other, better vices to enjoy.

Landscape | Brenna Mahn







Nothing to Hide

Michael Lentz

Mom rang the dinner bell at six o'clock. We took our places as she put the last, hottest dish in the middle of the table. She sat down, bowed her head, closed her eyes, and stretched out her hands. She was waiting for us to join her in prayer, but she was not waiting for Dad.

"Heavenly Father," she began with a deep breath, "we thank you for—"

Dad came into the room and pulled his chair back from the table, taking a seat. Mom only paused for a second.

"—and please bless this food to our bodies. Help it to nourish and strengthen us. Make us clean, give us peace, show us mercy. Amen."

She began to eat without another word. Dad looked at each of our faces with an unearned smile as he unfolded his napkin. He had been in the process of painting the upstairs hallway that connected all of our bedrooms. The color he chose was a deep crimson like the color of actual blood.

After dinner, us kids ran to the backyard to play till bath time. When Mom had finished cleaning the kitchen, she called us back inside. We were old enough to bathe ourselves, but she still sat outside the bathroom to remind us to be quick. I went last. Mom agreed to read one book while I waited, even though I wanted her to read ten. We sat together on a folded drop cloth, our backs against a wall in transition from color to color.

When it was my turn, I washed every part I could remember. It was only my third or fourth time in the bath alone. After about ten minutes, Mom knocked on the door, which was the signal to drain the water and dry off. I put on my pajamas, and she ushered me into the master bedroom to say goodnight to Dad.

"Did you wash everything?" He asked without looking up.

"Yes!" I said, trying to figure out what was written on the papers spread across his desk.

"Inside your ears?"

"Yes," I said. *Did I?*

"Do they feel slippery or dry?"

I felt my ears. They were slippery. I must have washed them because soap is slippery.

"They're slippery." I told him the truth. I had nothing to hide.

"You didn't wash them. They're slippery because you didn't use soap," he said.

"Goodnight, Dad."

He leaned over and kissed my forehead.

I shuffled past Mom, who had remained in the doorway.

As soon as we were tucked into our beds, lights out, doors closed, I heard Mom go into the master bedroom. Minutes later, Dad went downstairs.

I lay awake in the bottom bunk, underneath my brother, staring at the glowing yellow light leaking in below the door. When Dad returned to the hall, I heard him shake the paint can and pry off the lid. I was comforted by the sound of the paint pouring out of the can into a dish for the roller—a soft pitter-patter at first, then a steady flow.

For a while, I was content listening to the slow, sticky swiping of the roller against the wall, the occasional metallic clicking of the roller in the dish, and the flow of paint from the can when the dish was dry but the wall needed more color. Dad was silent, and I was silent. I couldn't sleep for wanting to be with him. He didn't realize that we were sharing this moment. All I could see of him were the narrow shadows of his feet as I tried to decide whether or not to join him in the hall.

I rose and floated from my bed toward the door. Sliding my toes under the door, I placed my right ear against it, trying to be as close as possible while hiding. His breathing was calm and steady. In the darkness, I felt close to him. I thought I knew what was happening in the hall. I thought I knew how he spent his nights. I looked down at the door handle. I grabbed it to open but released it almost immediately, thrusting my arm back down against my side, as stiff as possible, terrified of myself.

A lifetime passed. I looked down at the handle again. I reached for it more slowly than before, knowing how desperately I wanted to be with him, knowing

how impossible our connection seemed. As I was about to pull the door open, Dad stumbled against the wall and I heard paint spill on the carpet.

“SHIT.”

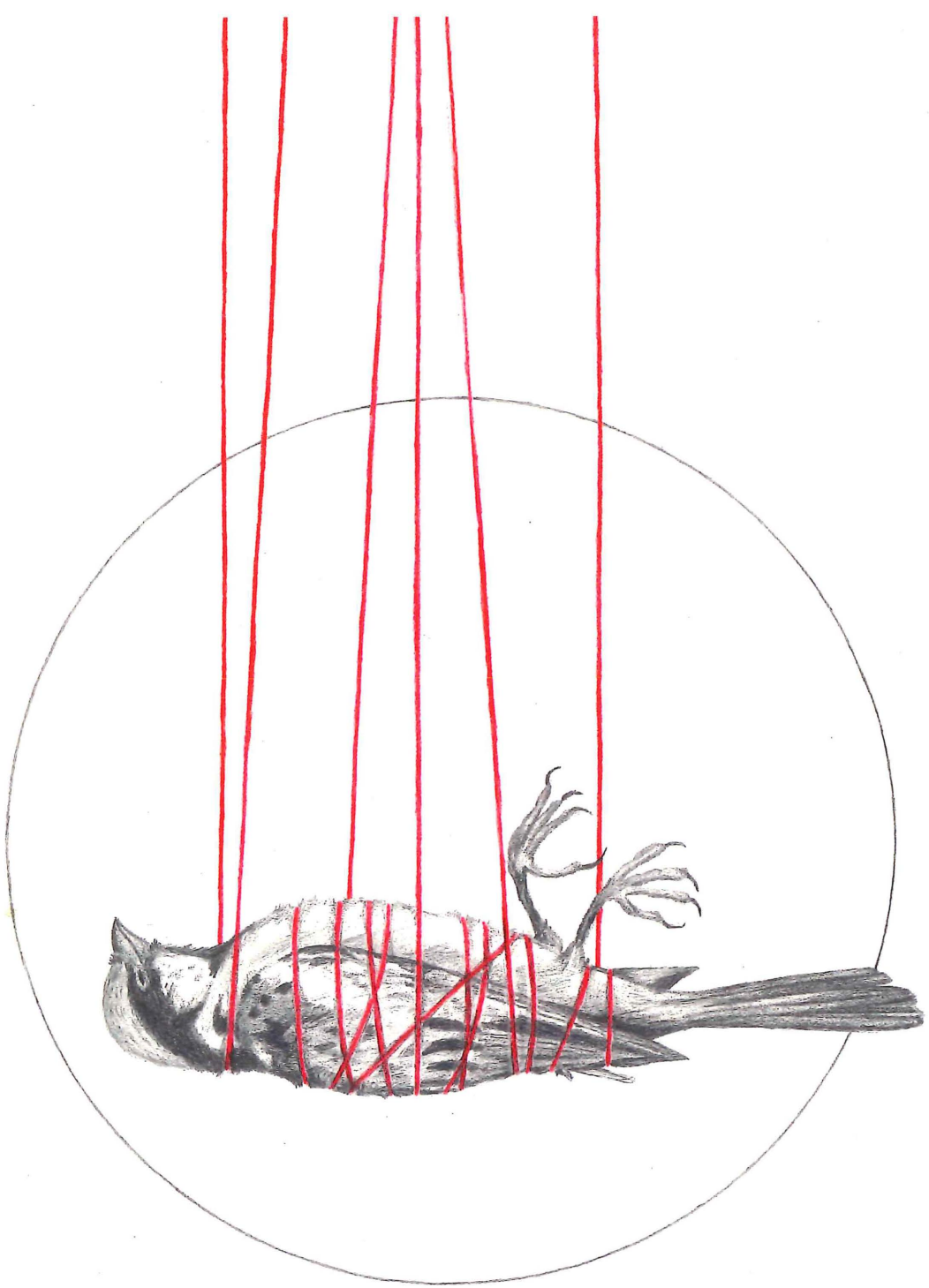
I jumped back and bumped into my dresser, knocking myself down. I tried to remain as still as possible. I didn't want Dad to be mad that I was awake. He threw the roller to the ground and stood breathing heavily for a moment before turning to go downstairs in search of a sponge and a cleaning agent.

In the silence that followed, I slithered back to my bed and hid deep within the covers, trying to control my heart and my fear. I was surprised that I hadn't heard the door to the master bedroom open. Perhaps Dad had not made enough noise to wake Mom. Or perhaps he had made enough noise to wake her—she was just avoiding the argument. Or perhaps she had already been awake, standing as close as possible to her own door, afraid to enter the hall, knowing how desperately she wanted to be with Dad, knowing that their connection was impossible.

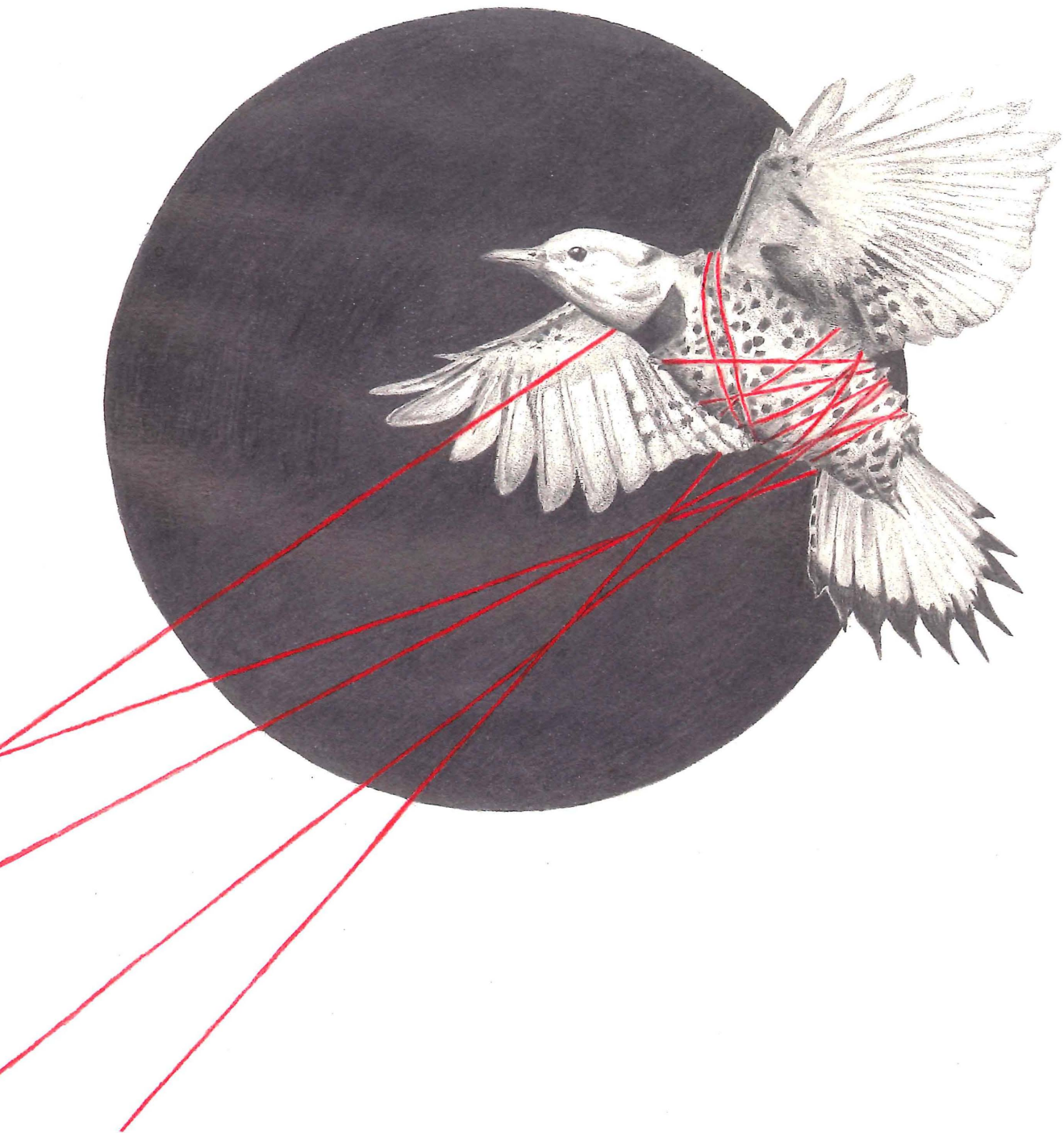
When Dad returned, he began working to eradicate the stain. I lay on my bed, imperfectly still, hypnotized by the variation of shadow and light under my door as Dad cleaned. The sound of furious scrubbing lulled me to sleep.

...

He got the paint out of the carpet that night. I never found even a faint hint of red, no matter how hard I looked. There was no evidence, only a blind memory of his mistake.



Tethered Series
Mark Randall



Sitting in the Church Today

Stephanie Bradshaw

Sitting in church today, I tried to listen to the sermon, but my thoughts flew up into the rafters and began to build nests of ideas.

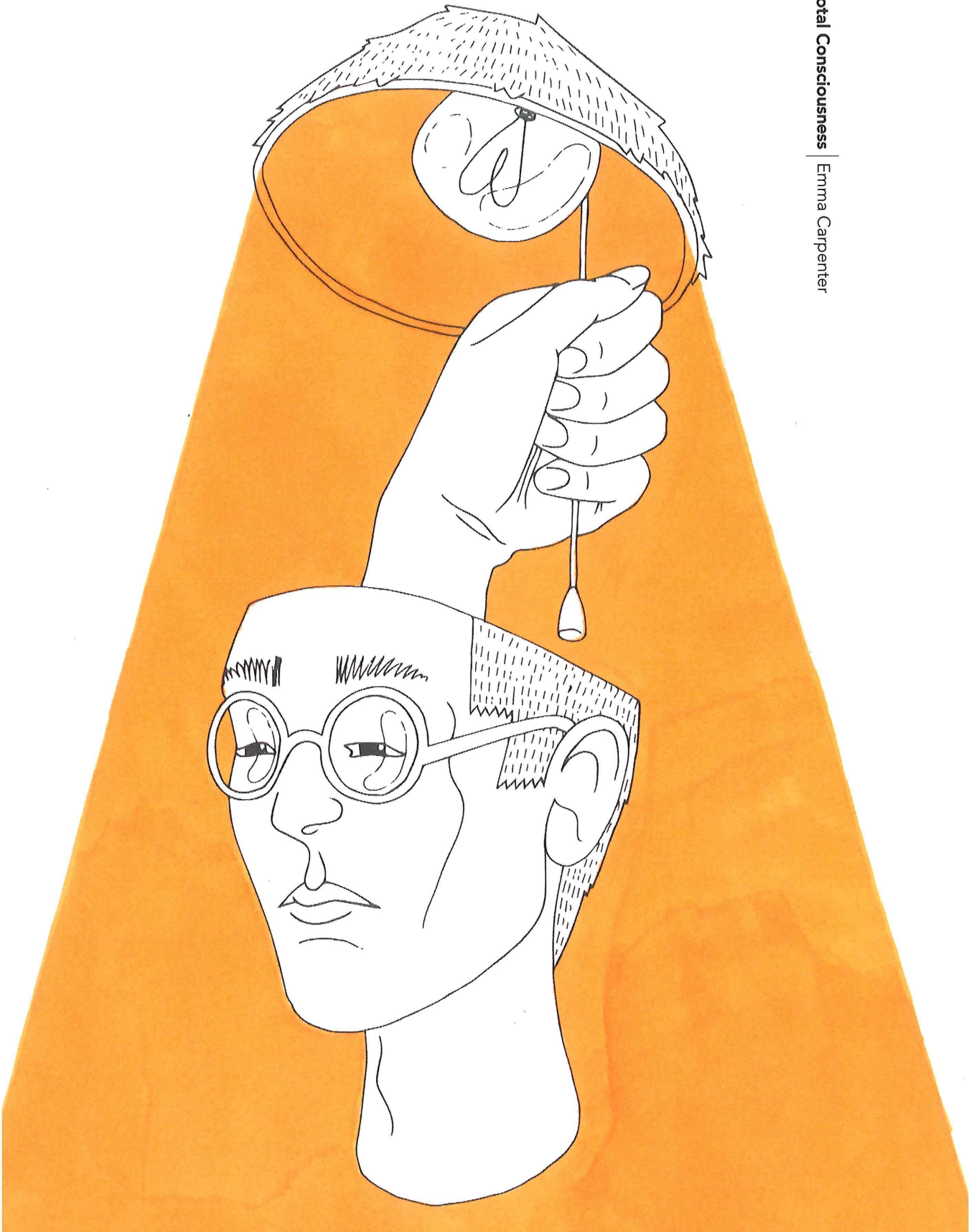
Uncomfortable, I shifted around in the chair, trying to find a better position. Sliding my foot across the floor to stretch, sprawling out, I attempted to break the invisible chains that constrained me to the structured, straight-backed chair, but I was unable to break free. I was kept grounded, restricted.

My thoughts took flight, draping ropes over rafters until the whole chapel was full of swings. Can you imagine how terribly distracting it would be for the preacher if the whole congregation were moving up and down, trying to hit the ceiling with their feet, giving each other underdogs? It's ridiculous! It's wonderful!

As feathers fell from the beating wings of thoughts—hammocks, gliders, and recliners also flew into the chapel. I thought of all of the best ways to sit and decided that perched up in a branch of a tree was the best place every time. My thoughts landed on the rafters, weighing them down until the beams sunk out of the ceiling toward the floor, creating enough room for people to sit and dangle their feet.

With our heads in the clouds, what better place to hear the voices from heaven?

I lifted my face up to the ceiling and saw a kaleidoscope of flying colors, but all around me, heads were bowed like soldiers offering themselves openly to their punishment—decapitation.













moonflower

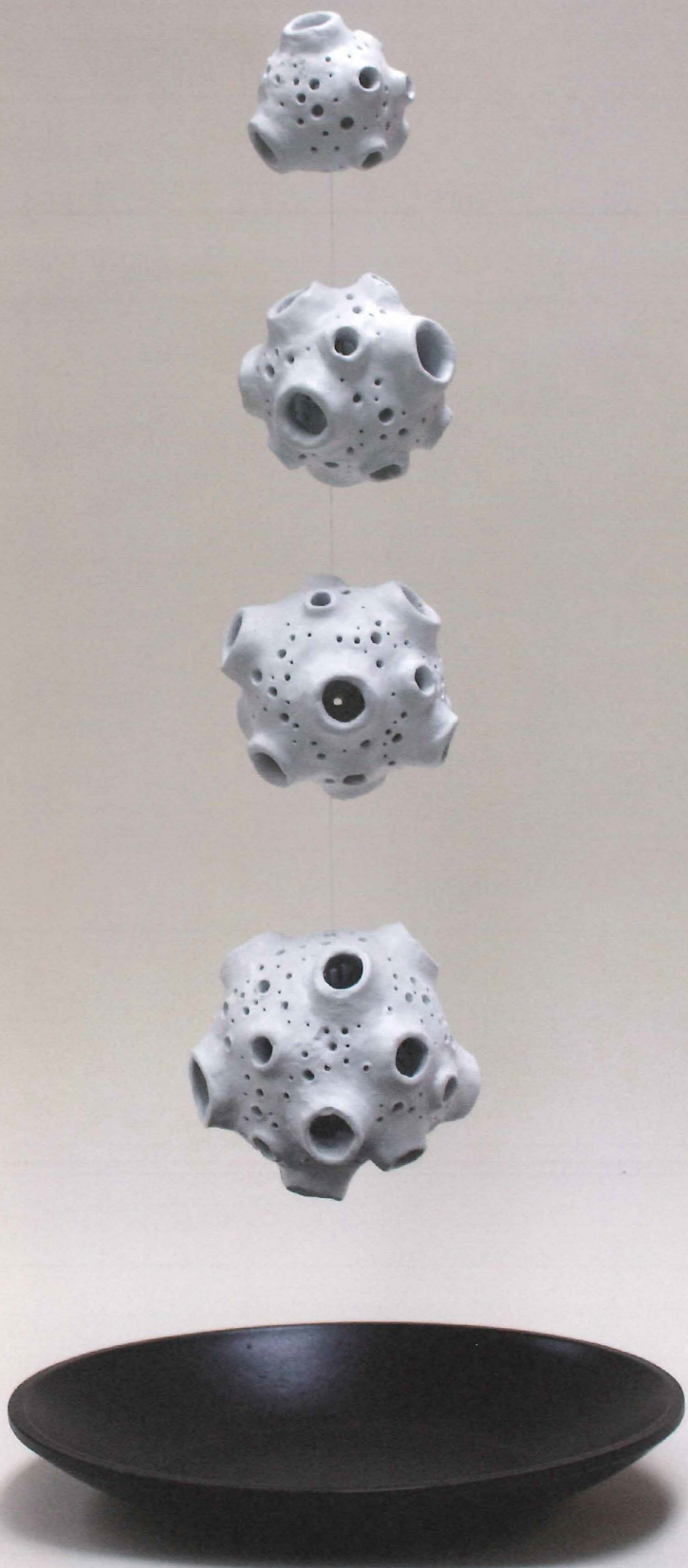
Katelyn Van Kooten

the moon floats alone
in an unrippled sky

a pale petal cradled
in a blue plastic pool

tugged from the bud
by impish breezes

stone rose
too soft to sink



The Android on the Moon

Marshall Morehead

Watching the man is like seeing onto the set of a silent film—existence in grayscale. He steps out from an airlock and onto the surface of the moon.

Opening the airlock door further, the man makes room for a small, dilapidated android to follow him through. Its tiny gears and suspension bands turn to power delicate metal limbs up and down.

The two shamble along in the direction of a clearing in the midst of several other capsules. The clearing bears traces of boot prints and rover treads etched into the soil. An accumulation of thirty-three years traversing from one capsule to another.

Reaching the clearing center, the man stoops and lays his back to the ground. The android idles nearby. Its luminescent eyes shine on its creator.

“I never told you about that day, Ero.” The man shifts his helmet to look at his companion. “You’ve only known this emptiness. I was never sure you’d understand.”

The man fell silent, breathing in deep the stale oxygen that his tanks will supply for an hour more.

“I’ll tell you now,” he says at last. “The whole thing, so our tale doesn’t die with me.”

The man turns his head, looking upwards once more.

“It looked much like it does now. Except there were lights, Ero. So many lights.”

...

Williams and Olenski were walking to the greenery when it began. Their horrified voices blasted over the com-link; we needed to see for ourselves.

We watched until our tanks fell to critical, forcing us inside. At a loss, we tried contacting Houston, but all we received was static. For a while we tried to figure out a way home. There were too many of us and not enough fuel for the lander, and they’d never had a fallback. There hadn’t been a need. This was humankind’s most glorious enterprise. We were planting the seeds of the future. We couldn’t afford fallback.

“Keep your minds together,” Toni said that first night. She took the hands of those seated nearby, mine being one of them. As I looked into her eyes, a tender smile on her face, I could see hope still there. “Our home may be lost, but we still have each other.”

It wasn’t long until death caught up to us: Kapura was salvaging parts from the lander, removing the core power-couplet, when it exploded. His body was blown to bits and incinerated; Rudisha ran out of oxygen; Martínez lost control of a rover near a ridge, falling down the cliff-side to the maria basin far below; the rest were obliterated by a meteor shower. Through it all, though, Toni did her best to comfort us. She had stepped up, become our great matriarch, and done her best to keep our delicate solace from shattering.

Still, as we grew old, the deaths of our friends only reminded us that one of us would end up alone.

To keep our minds busy, we began to treat the colony like our personal vacation resort. We spent less time on maintenance and more playing games and watching films. We lived in this manner until twenty years had passed, and only four of us remained: Toni, Lena, Jackson and myself. For a while, the four of us were fine. We played more games, watched more films, tended the greenery. We laughed together and made memories. However, as time passed, Jackson began to draw further within himself. Soon, he ceased talking, and no matter how many times we prompted him to speak, he never opened up. Toni remained strong, assuring Lena and I it'd be O.K. I did my best to follow her example—Lena took things harder.

Then Jackson disappeared, his suit missing.

"We have to go after him, Toni!" The tortured shade of love glimmered in Lena's eyes.

"He made a choice, Lena." Toni said. "We did our best, but this is how he wants it. Not everyone can withstand this isolation."

"Toni—"

"Lena!" Toni snapped, her voice cold. Goose bumps spread across my flesh and a chill ran down my spine. There was a harsh glint in her eyes I had never seen there before.

Lena glared at the older woman, then rushed from the room. We listened as Lena put on her suit and exited the capsule. She never returned.

It was during that time I built you, Ero. From the wreckage of rovers, our lander, spare parts. The wires powering those eyes and turning those gears came from the heart of this colony. You're a part of us, Ero. A remnant of what was.

Toni died before you woke. I found her in bed, her skin so cold and her face frozen in a permanent

grimace. All I could think of was how warm she had once been. The moon changed her: cold like the vacuum of space. It shaped her like wet clay, fashioning her into a reflection of its character. It had shaped us all, and though the heat of life's kiln burned too hot for some, Toni had emerged stronger than ever. What's it done to me? After I cremated her body, I worked until you were finally wired correctly. If it wasn't for you, Ero, I'd have gone mad. You're the only one to talk to, here.

You know the rest.

Five years have passed since Toni died. I've had plenty of silence to consider my life and purpose up here. I wondered how I could have lived, back home. Then I realized it isn't my home anymore. It hasn't been for thirty-three years. Look around, Ero. It's cold and gray—nothing else. How could I have made it this long? No one should live like this.

Well, I've realized that even in the face of our heartless reality, we always had each other.

Soon it will be only you, Ero.

...

The last man on the moon lies prostrate and silent, staring up at the only source of brilliant, natural color in his existence: a blue and green marble dappled brown, white, and beautiful.

The air pumping into his tank whistles higher and higher. Abruptly, it stops.

For some time, the gentle luminescence of the pintsized android's eyes continues to shine upon its creator. Then, beneath its battered exterior, gears turn—slow, careful—and its dilapidated neck shifts higher to look up, in an existence grayer than gray, at an orb of magnificent color.







Exhale

Juliana Ludema

Veined mirrors refract
moonbeams as floor boards

creak. Shards shiver,
puncturing carpal bones

when gasps waver,
fading as time brings

static sleep. Trace
cutaneous rivers,

cold souvenirs
of captured breath,

and sigh.

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Founded in 1968, Dialogue is Calvin College's student-run creative journal, showcasing pieces submitted, edited, and curated by undergraduate students.

Dialogue publishes work in six categories: prose, poetry, visual art, photography, music, and film. Blind student juries for each genre evaluate all submissions and select the finest pieces for publication.

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