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dialogue



dialogue

Volume 50 Issue 2
Calvin College's Creative Journal

Editors' Notes

I've learned that there's an authenticity in physicality.

What I mean is that right now, as you are holding this book in your hands, you can feel the sweat from your fingers and smell the ink on these pages.

What I also mean is that this object is never the same object twice. You can read it again, and again, and again, and each time, your fingers will pockmark the page in different places.

With physicality comes the risk of destruction. You can rip these pages out, nick the corners, write all over every page. But I think this is why we create: because it is a physical expression of a temporary self. You and I won't live forever, and embodying ourselves in art isn't going to change that.

Someday, this organization won't exist, and every issue we've ever made will be eaten through by dust and mold. And that's okay. Dialogue isn't meant to be timeless. It's meant to be a piece of right now.

So take an issue. Take five issues. Read all of them twice. Rip the pages out. Plaster your walls with them.

Find the importance in what is temporary.

Taylor Hartson
Editor-in-Chief

This is the sixth and final issue of Dialogue I've had a hand in putting together. I'm humbled to have been exposed to so much of your art as my role has changed—literally thousands of pieces. Here I am now, turning those pieces into pages.

To do any of this well—to adjust a crop for a photo, choose a detail for a ceramic, or arrange a layout for a poem—we have to consider the concepts, purposes, messages, and ultimately, humans behind them. Pixel-pushing becomes an exercise in care.

This is how we hope Dialogue can be a structure of that evasive word “support” for the arts community here. Curation breeds empathy. I can only hope it's started to work on me.

And I can only hope to have contributed to an organization that tries to reciprocate that care—one piece, one person, one issue at a time.

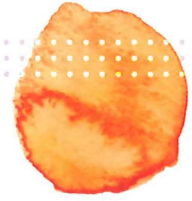
My job is to show off your work. So take a look.

Cotter Koopman
Layout Editor





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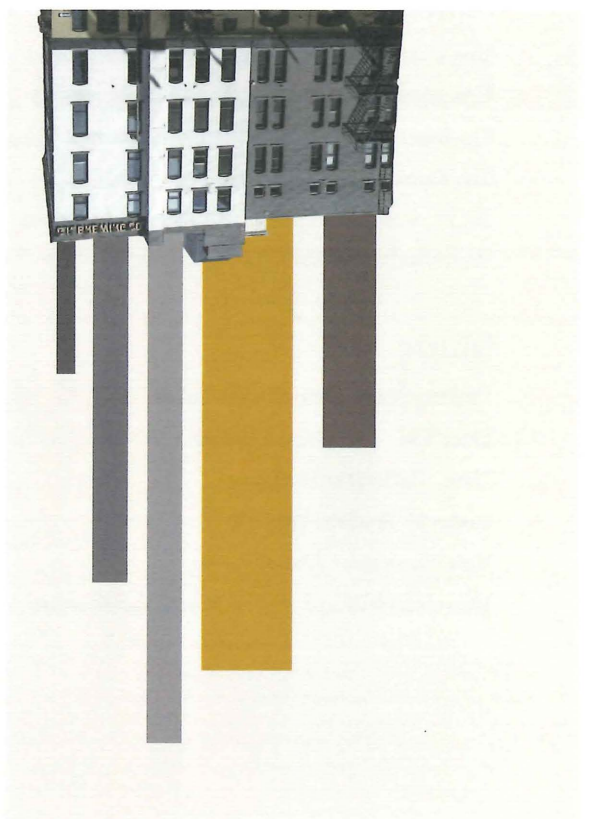
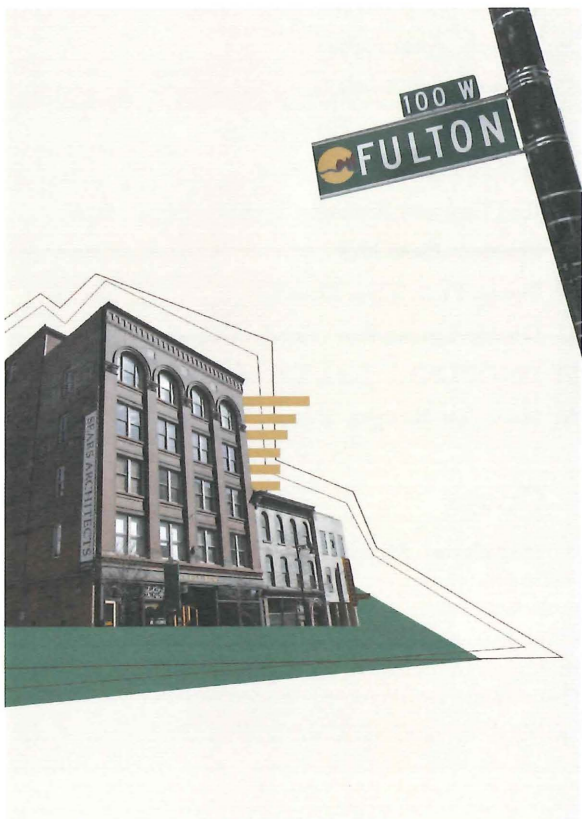
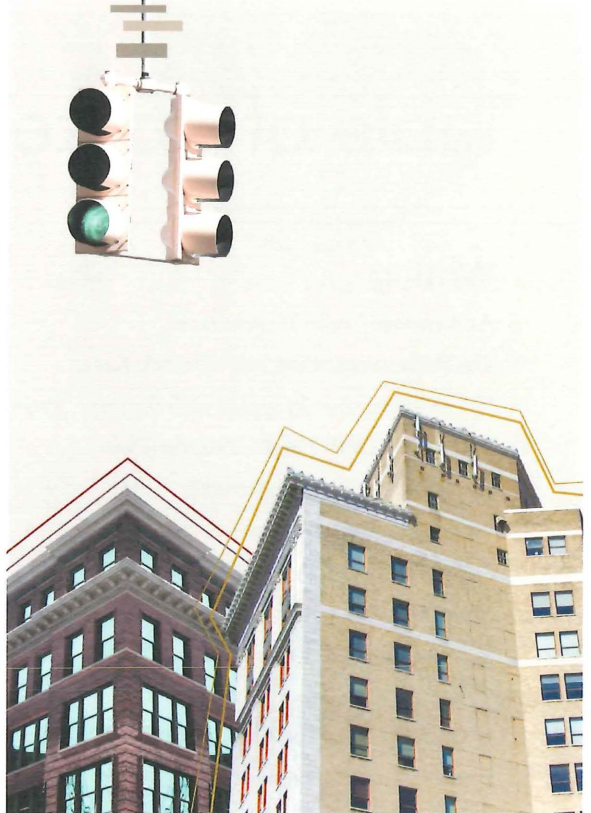
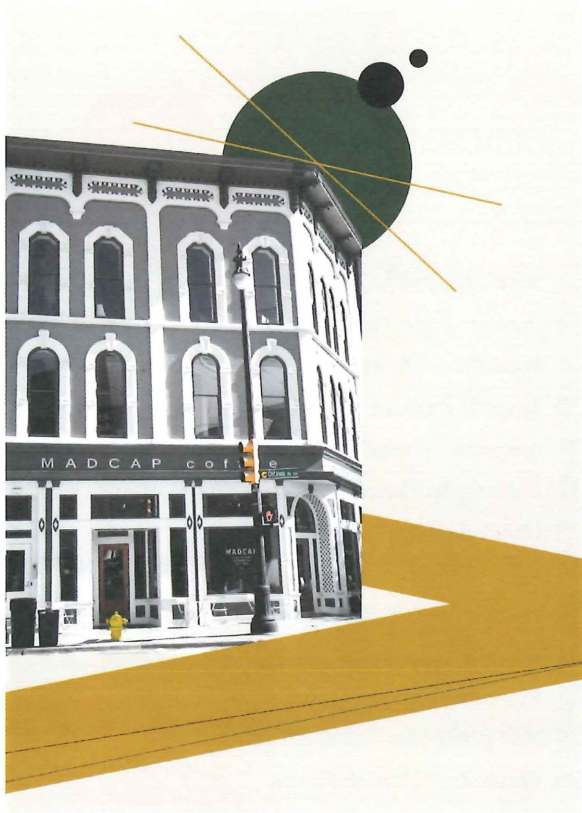
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Aş(k)ıboyası

Peter Wagenmaker

You put the colors
Extant hues Form unclothé
The colors back into

Fostered from greyscale stratified
Put the colors into
Redistinguished disjunctions

You put into my
Subject perspective standard
Back into my eyes

Overexpressed mantras
Put back my eyes
Patterning normalcy, faux diminuendo

You the colors my
Trust discovers breath did translate
You put the colors back into my eyes





Parallelism
Avery Gill



The Refinement of the Jedi

Derrick Kamp

“Let the past die; kill it if you have to.” A seething Kylo Ren’s words have been used by countless reviewers attempting to articulate Rian Johnson’s mission in writing and directing *The Last Jedi*. In adopting Kylo’s phrase, there’s the underlying argument that Johnson throws out fundamental Star Wars elements and inserts his own. And although this argument is usually paired with critical praise for the movie, reviewers using it miss a critical detail: Kylo’s a bad guy. His thoughts are amiss, twisted, and outright wrong; how could it be good to follow his lead? Johnson instead has Kylo’s ideals juxtapose the film’s themes. There’s goodness to be garnered from the past, but it’s crowded by misguided expectation and misplaced necessities. In *The Last Jedi*, greatness is found in shedding dogmatic, frivolous tradition and embracing the cruxes of the past.

Rian Johnson loves Star Wars. For evidence, just watch the endearing clip on *The Star Wars Show* of him tearing up at the gift of an AT-AT toy he yearned for as a child. And his adoration saturates the film. Just like *The Force Awakens*, *The Last Jedi* is chock-full of the Star Wars staples that fans come to expect: the duality between good and evil, stunning special effects, thrilling music, and massive ship-to-ship battles (or ship-through-ship battles, amiright?). But whereas *The Force Awakens* felt built by committee, *The Last Jedi* is written and directed solely by Johnson. This personal flair instills the movie with an exciting sense of freshness as Johnson plays with audience expectations by looking beyond the surface-level events and focusing on the core ideas and characters that drive his love for Star Wars. He recognizes Star Wars for what it is: a fantastical space opera with space wizards and laser swords. In a galaxy far, far away, physics plays second fiddle to sight and story, as explosions irradiate the black vacuum of space and heroes learn about the Force. Towards the characters, Rian understands it wasn’t a big, looming, wrinkly bad guy that made for a good villain; it was the visceral and tragically fallen character of Anakin that made conflict engrossing. And Johnson never saw a blindly optimistic hero; he saw the Luke Skywalker

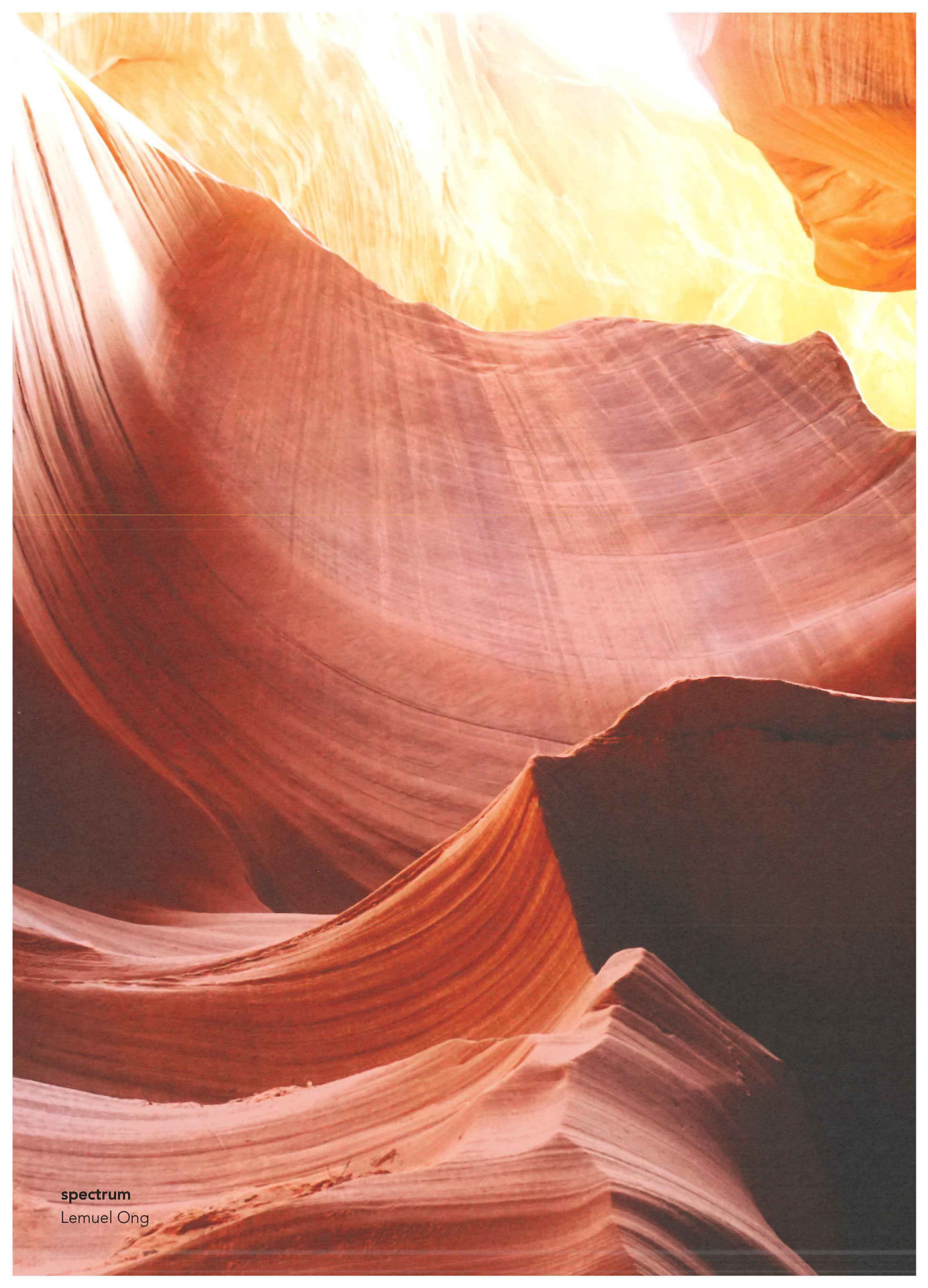
that ditched his training on Dagobah and nearly fell to the Dark Side. Johnson writes a fully realized Luke of the original trilogy who’s as fallible and real as the rest of our heroes. And by discarding these worn predictions of audiences and appreciating the central themes and core character elements of the past trilogies, Rian Johnson breathes unexpected new life and exciting stakes into the Skywalker saga while retaining a distinct sense of familiarity.

The characters tackle similar lessons about the past alongside the audience. Rey struggles with her history when her parentage is revealed. But when Kylo attempts to use her past as manipulative leverage, Rey realizes that her seemingly uninspiring legacy emphasizes that she is powerful, independent of lineage. Contrasting Rey’s lessons are Kylo’s attempts to violently destroy his past. By the end of the movie, he is a searing emotional wreck, unable to hold onto those around him, much less his own sanity. Most powerfully coming to terms with the past is our jaded idol, Luke, who’s again begrudgingly thrust into the hero’s journey. He is forced to learn from his barbaric mistake of almost killing his nephew. It’s through addressing—not destroying—this past that reveals his true heroism; he confronts his nephew and saves the Resistance without resorting to the violence that defined his past transgression.

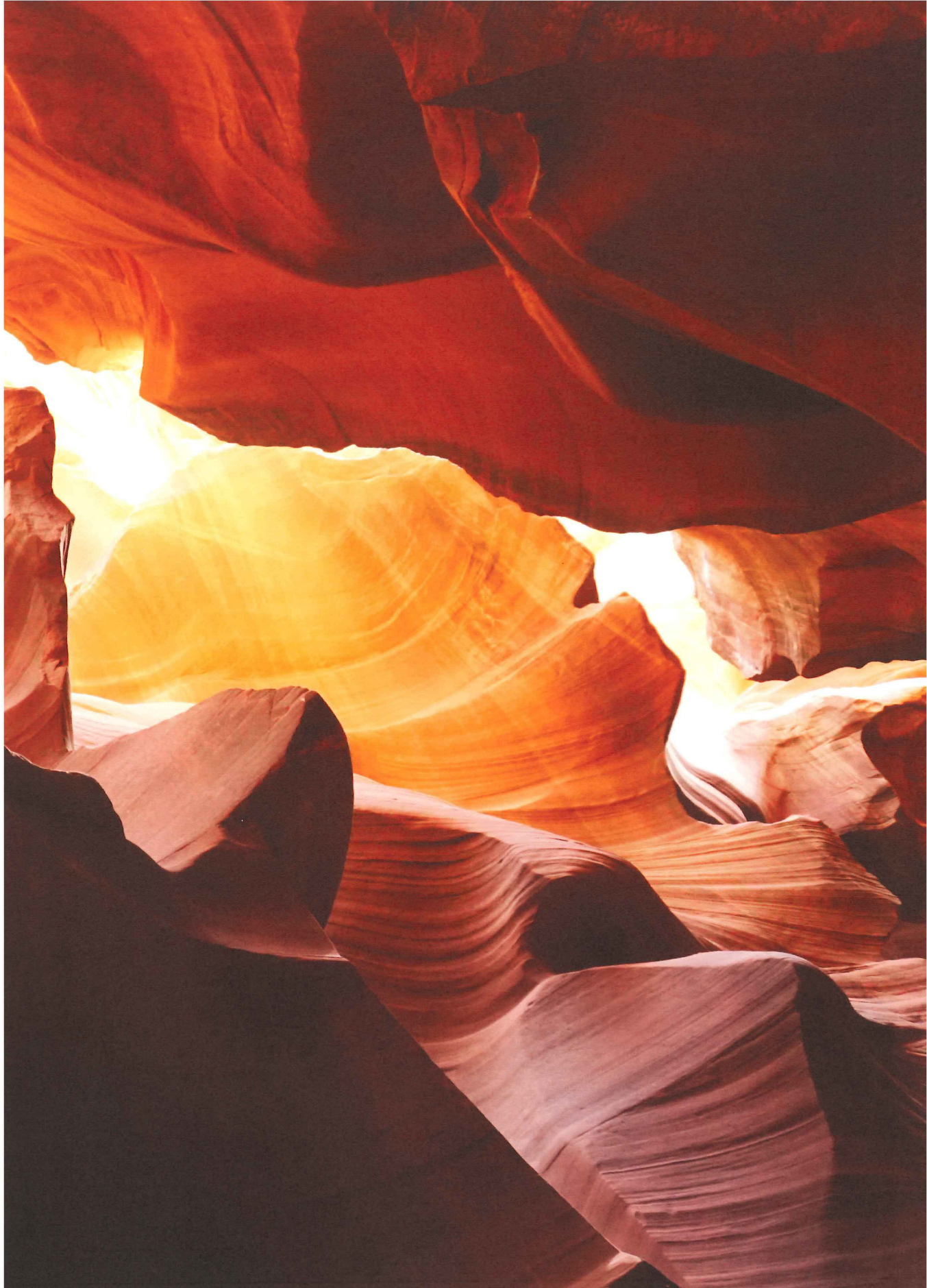
One of the most impactful shots of the Star Wars saga is of Luke and Yoda watching the gnarled tree burn on Ahch-To. The powerful visuals reflect Luke’s dramatic realization. He recognizes that the past strength of the Jedi wasn’t found in its dogmatic tradition or expectations; those things doomed the order. Rather, the fortitude and beauty of the order was founded in the crux of the Jedi religion’s pursuit for humility, balance, and peace. Goodness is found in returning to these core ideals. Rian Johnson runs this theme of reclamation deep throughout *The Last Jedi*, using the narrative and production to actively urge the audience to reevaluate what makes a film franchise or hero—even religion—truly great.

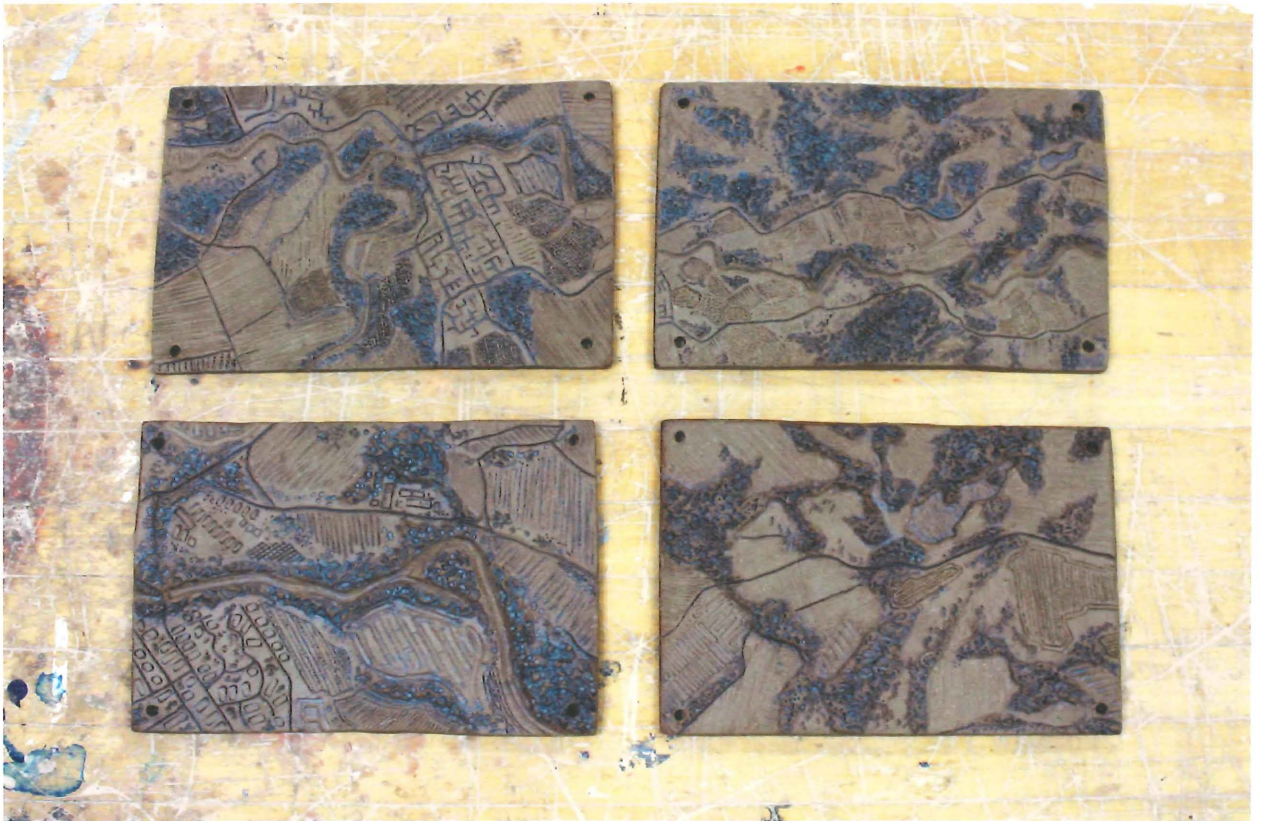
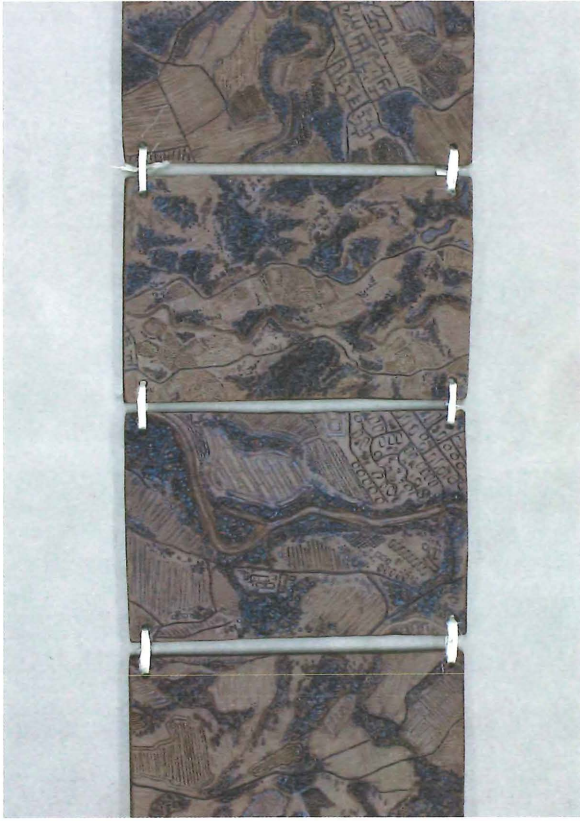


Space & Absence
Sebastian Larsen



spectrum
Lemuel Ong





Looking for Home Christina Weinman

When it rains the sky speaks with the trees

Patrick Jonker

The cloud-mountain silk hanging still, above,
are windows, paper walls, God's living blue;
our breath weaves through air in pillars plume
and slips cold to heaven's croft.

Those who claim to know the bones of trees
and think it a mineral, or a bond, or clay
don't see silt and water converging in sump cascades,
don't know the roots sing while they drink.

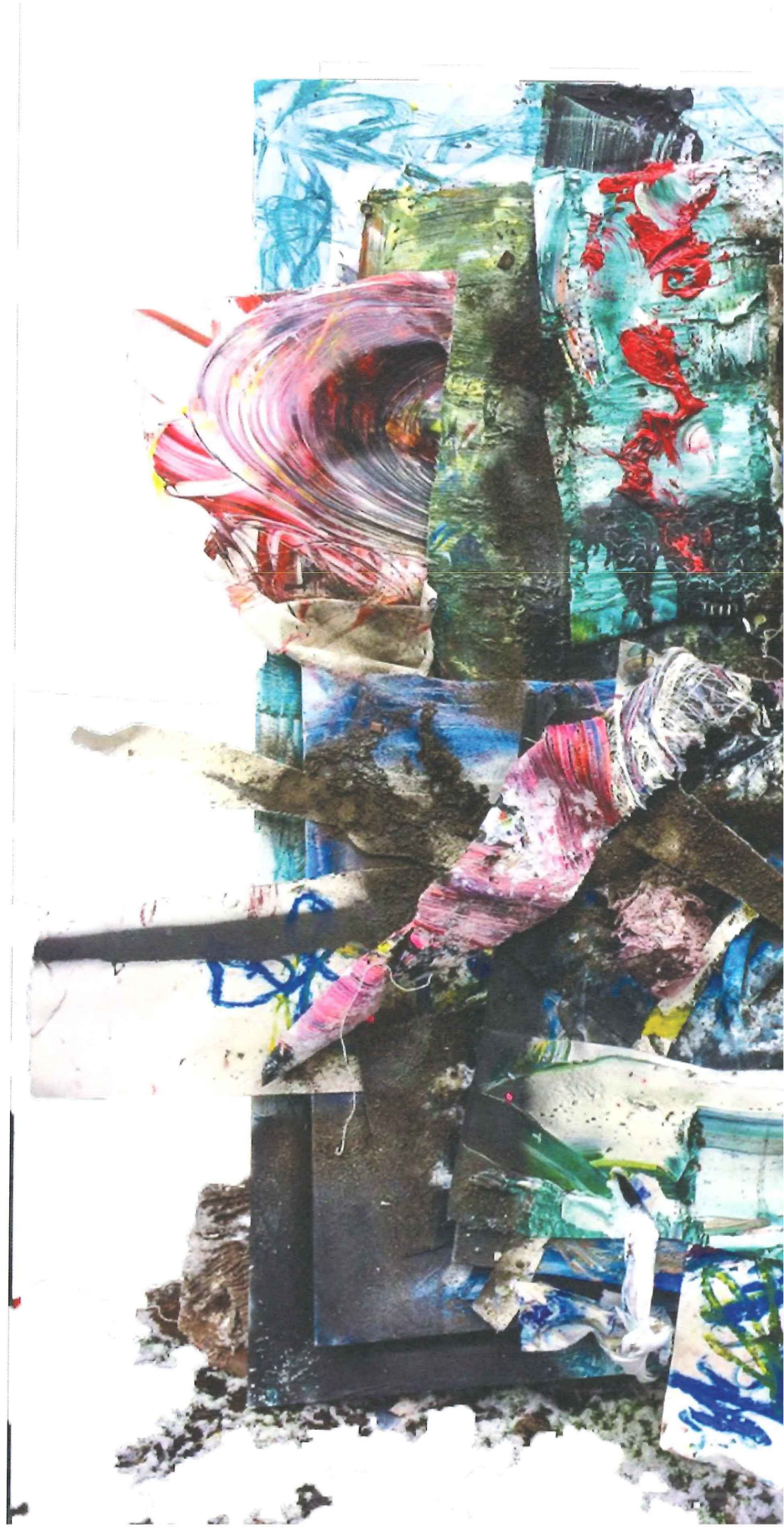
I saw the roots forming holy cloisters,
pressing arms against each other while scraping skin;
sitting underneath, I counted grass as it printed
lines of nature's own confession.

There were no windows here
but chlorophyll lace, a cellulose crypt,
Primordial currents flowing: silk water slips
in silence, wrapping arms around me.

Muttering arose from the rustle of rain
In the dirt and blades of green I missed.
Chlorine prayers I offer in purple acrylic
while the water runs around and under me.



Untitled Gene Hill







Mary had a Little Lamb

Yolanda Chow

Atonement is a neat little package that says we are all awful people who deserve to die, except that an innocent intervened in our place. We are no longer doomed if we say yes, it really happened—just like that. But not everyone does.

For them, who wins: justice or mercy?

He forgave before he ever bled, but it seems we drink more blood than living, breathing water.

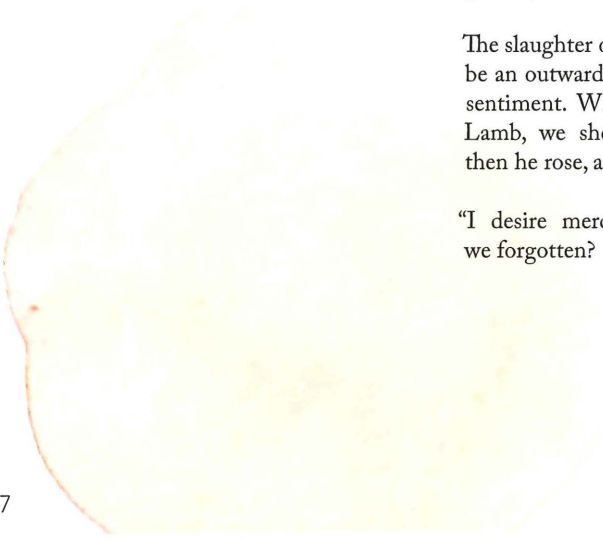
Perhaps it is not so much that we deserved to die as it is that we are destined for destruction if we are without life's creator.

Perhaps it is not so much that a sacrifice was required as it is that our own monstrosity was revealed in the murder.

Perhaps he was already merciful, but à-la-Flannery O'Connor, we didn't recognize it until we brought on grotesque horror.

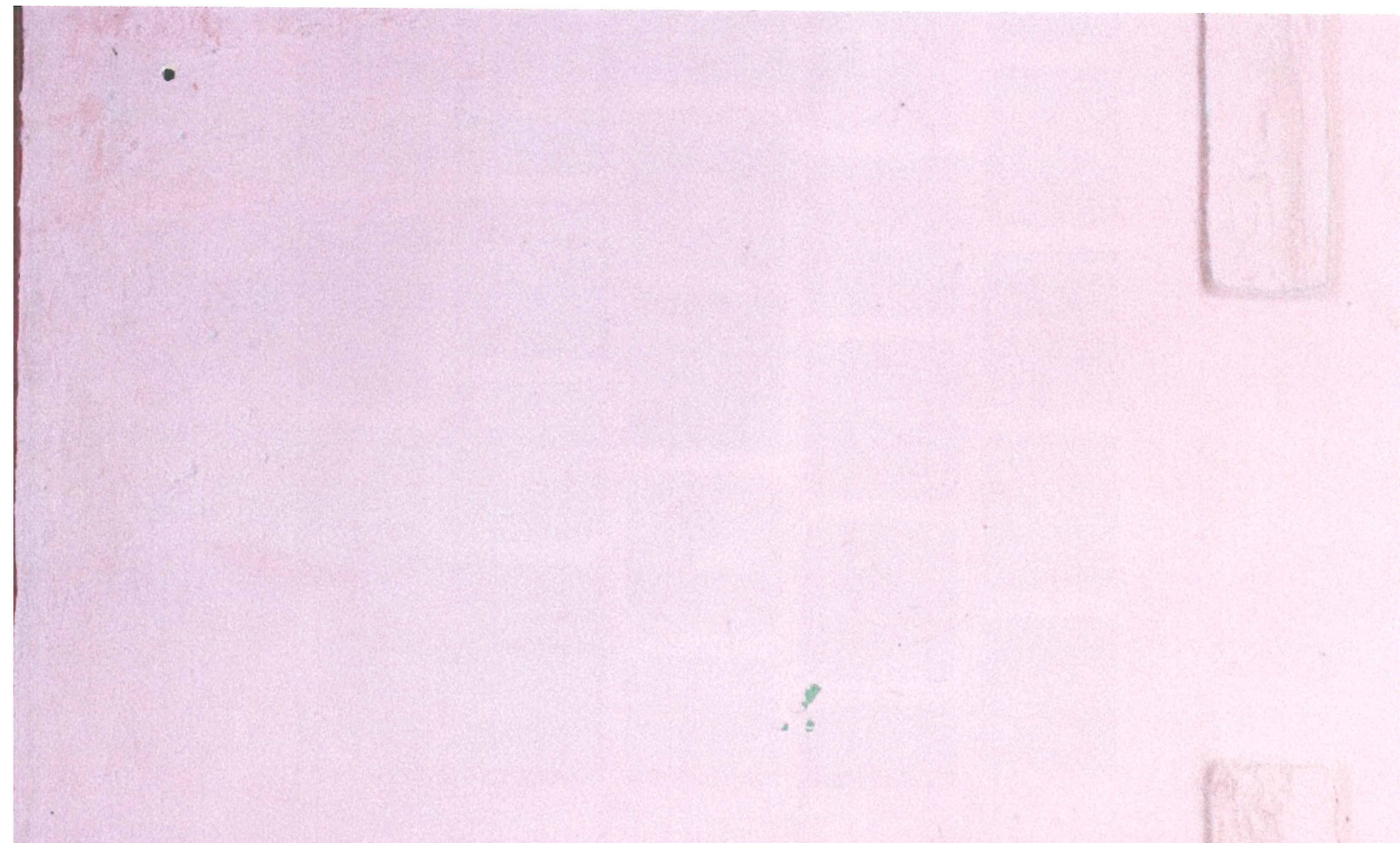
The slaughter of lambs was supposed to be an outward expression of an inward sentiment. When we slaughtered the Lamb, we showed our ugliness. But then he rose, and the story continued.

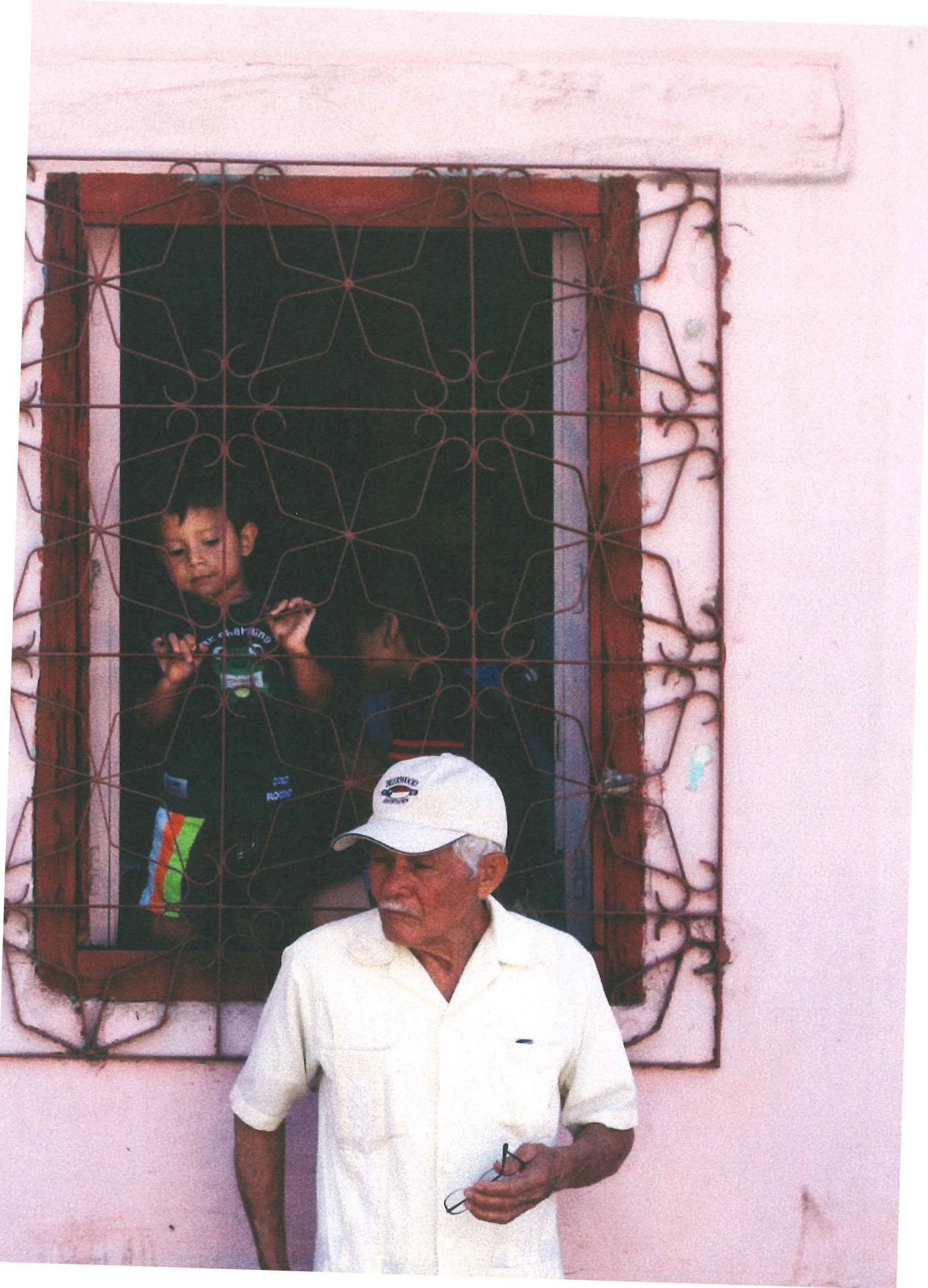
"I desire mercy, not sacrifice." Have we forgotten?





No. 6





Koi Boiz
Laura DeVries





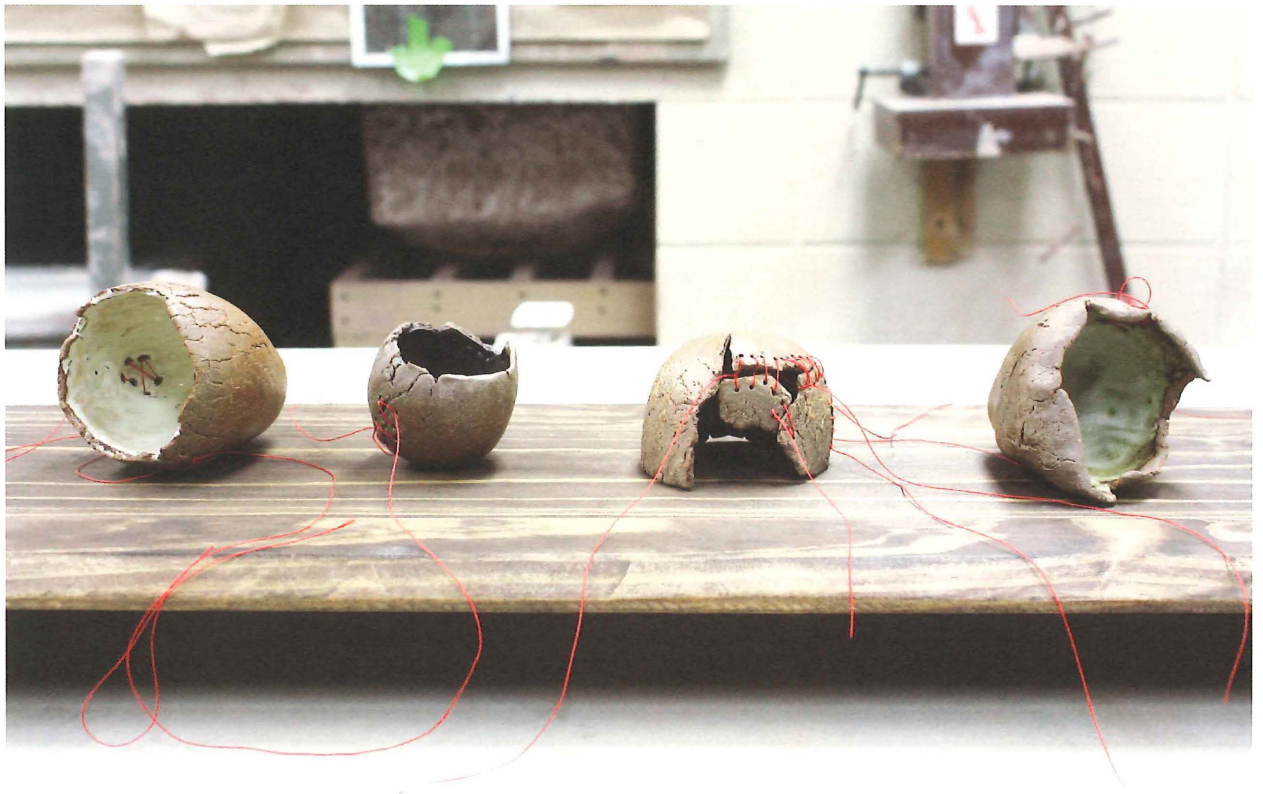
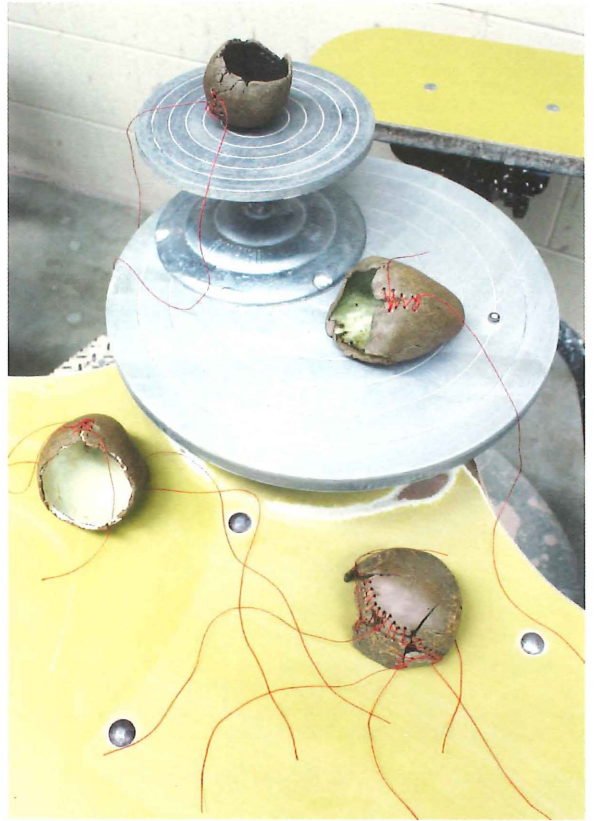
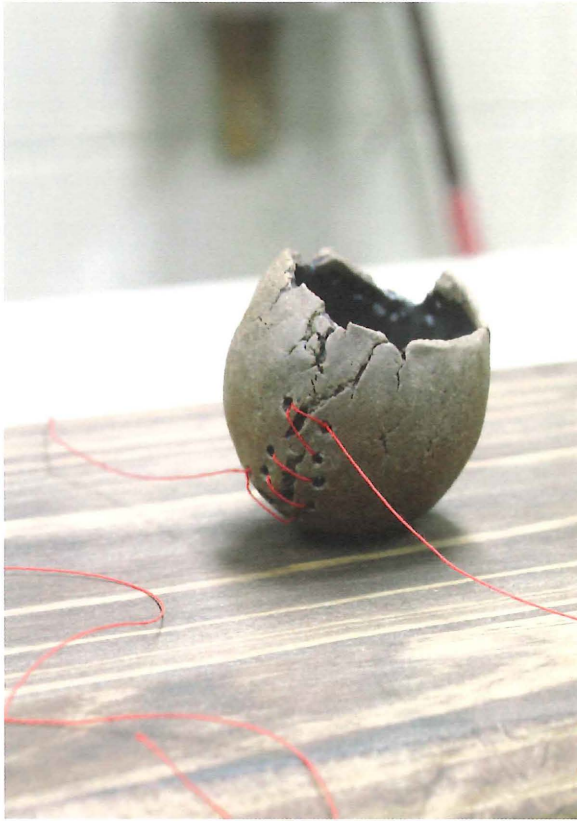
Applesauce

Peter Wagenmaker

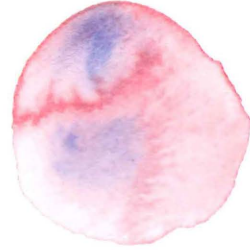
You're a screen door I
noticed in passing and
decided to open after
imitation of the cat.
I cannot smell the pollen
and don't mind the mud,
alighting into the aproned
embrace of humidity, grasping
at her bowl of blackberries to
meld with Nana's molasses still tucked in
my teeth, calling eventide through
the garden wild—just
imagine Sky's wide sweetness
when I catch you



Mis-placed James T. Owens, III



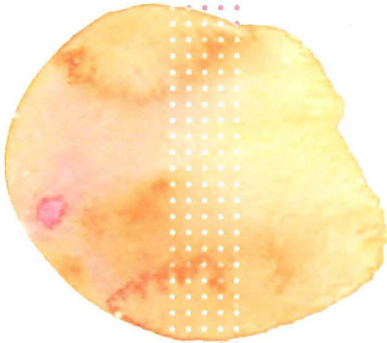
Mis-perfection James T. Owens, III



Mencolek

Lauren Moose

The only thing I like more than the documentary
Jiro Dreams of Sushi
is watching dish soap attack the grease of dirty dishes.
Also, I think I grind my teeth at night,
perhaps from chewing too much gum.





Spearmint
Hannah Kaylor





Eucatastrophe
Miriam Kluitenberg

Stigmata

Emily Joy Stroble

The city looked like a basket of eggs had dropped. They were aiming for the factories. They hit Santa Maria Del Grazzi. We heard the airmen used steeples to orient and target. It made them seem all the more savage to us. Mama took it personally. She was a good, religious woman. The cathedral was as much a symbol of her as her pearls, her wedding band, her pristine Bible.

“What kind of man uses a Cathedral to drop bombs?” I heard her say over the telephone. Mama always repeated her confessions to her sisters, and her confessions were usually a litany of other people’s sins.

I realized, as I felt the wind whistling in and out of the gaps in the walls, that from my childhood I had pictured my lost ancestors sheltered here in an in-between realm—my grandparents, my Aunt Lucia, and Giovanni, the cousin I’d never met but grieved because Mama held my wriggling body close when I was too small to understand and told me he died fighting. That was the last war. All of them, in my child’s mind, lived in the layered catacomb of echoes and shadows of the Cathedral. The ancient residents of Milan were buried in the floor, the carved faces on their stones sanded to a peaceful smoothness by the feet of the their distant children. The more recent dead, I imagined, watching safe and comfortable in the curves of the arches and rafters, from which the echoes of the choir returned like an independent voice.

Maybe they thought we were all movie gangsters who wouldn’t give up unless our family was tortured. But everyone in the church is already dead. They don’t even speak to us. The echoes escaped the naked tomb in yellow smoke and dusty splatter.

I took to praying at the plague chapels instead. There was one at almost every narrow intersection off the main roads in the central part of the city. When the fear of deadly contamination was so strong that it finally drove even the faithful from the churches, frescoes and crude statues of the Madonna and healing saints were painted and sheltered in alcoves on the corners of buildings, seeming to perch on the shoulders of crossing streets.

“What? Are you going to give up heaven as well as school? You are killing me Martin!” My mother screamed at me when I told her I wouldn’t go to the rubble pile any more. It wasn’t a church.

“God’s not in the damn church Mama. He wasn’t home when they bombed it, or He was, and He’s dead.”

“What are you saying? Santa Maria, save my son from blasphemy and hell.” She crossed herself and moved her lips in a rosary speed stripped of meaning.

“Mama stop, just stop!”

“Do you want to end up like Simon? What do you think? Was it the alcohol or the demons that destroyed his mind first?”

I had never walked out on my mother before.

At the cross of Via del Marco and Corso de Portia Ticinise, toward evening as I heard the remaining bells ring mass, I saw Simon, crumpled in a drunken stupor, his chin folded into his ash-colored beard. His bald head’s shine dulled by dirt. My heart sunk. “Speak of

the devil," I muttered. I felt chalky, everything in the air around me clinging to my sticky skin, just looking at him. My steps slowed as I thought about which other plague chapels I could go to. God, I could smell him from here. His rotting body leaked all over. I could smell the wind disturbing bombed-out house guts too. Ash. Dust. Smoke. His hands were outstretched, begging, and he mumbled in the intense, unsettling tone of those who argue with invisible people—just jabs of sound.

Everything was photographic brown except some red in his hands. It was Blood. Rich. Thick. Shining. Wounds shot straight through his palms. His eyes met mine in thirsty desperation.

"What? Say again?" I asked.

"Marks of the Cross!" he rasped. I finally comprehended.

"Yes, yes, I understand. How?" I shifted my weight from foot to foot, reaching out and retreating, and finally ran home. He called after me. Mama telephoned a priest who promised to talk to the bishop. The news spread street to street.

Mama pressed her soft palms to my face. "See how God speaks to you even when you abandon him?"

The new saint could not be left on the street. He had been sent to us, a message that God suffers with us since the bombing of the cathedral, that he is on our side. She put my white sheets on the sofa. She crossed herself when she smoothed them for him. She crossed herself when she washed them after they were soiled. This human sick was holy. At first I sat in corners and watched the religious adults swarm like bees. But the apartment was small. I started walking with my friend Piero up and down the streets.

"My grandma said he was possessed," sneered Piero.

"Father Bonti says he has been freed because of his prayers," I said.

"Does he still have fits?"

"Mostly he sleeps." I felt like I had to defend him.

In a stretch of hot, dry days, our apartment became a shrine. Neighbors and strangers, even the ones who had not breathed the air of the cathedral in months came with baskets. My mother received the gifts to her saint in her battlefield cathedral and snorted to me and the flock of aunts in the kitchen.

GOD'S NOT IN THE

DAMN CHURCH,

MAMA. HE WASN'T

HOME WHEN

THEY BOMBED IT.

"He's atheist, and he was here hanging on Simon's hands and begging for his missing son," I heard her whisper, sneering.

"You heard that poor Simon's own son died last week. His only support, small as it was, gone," said my aunt mopping her round face with a handkerchief.

"God's providence. He would have died alone in the street," my mother exclaimed, crossing herself and pressing her rosary into her breast.

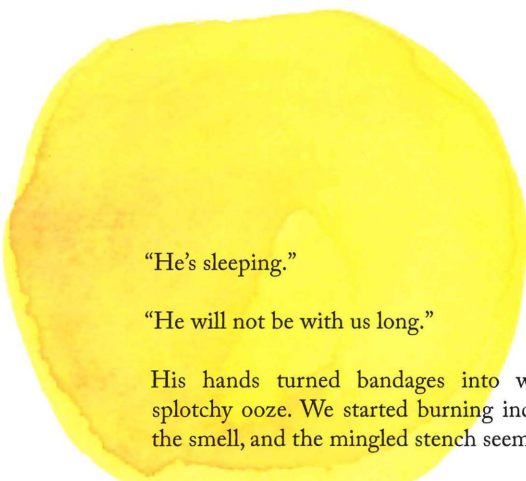
"We should get a doctor," I said. But Simon convulsed in panic at the prospect.

"These divine wounds cannot be healed," my mother said. The priests who were present murmured.

Simon would talk to the priests, and they listened for hours parsing fevered ravings from prophetic oracles. Then they stood on our fire escape and argued about the true story of how he had received the marks.

"Martin," Mama caught me as I snuck back in one night. "Go and speak to Brother Simon."





“He’s sleeping.”

“He will not be with us long.”

His hands turned bandages into watercolors of splotchy ooze. We started burning incense to cover the smell, and the mingled stench seemed profane.

I twisted my face into the sadness I knew I should feel. My sofa and the carpet I had picked during the tense moments of radio shows, the kitchen where I had been shaken and scolded in the most horrific words my mother knew—all of this was a relic. And this cathedral also held the dead—I was stiff. I hovered in limbo with Piero between the plague chapel and my house those summer nights.

“He’ll be dead soon and then you can have your house back,” said Piero.

I didn’t know what to say. “It’s an honor to have someone with the stigmata.”

“It’s not. He did it to himself,” Piero blurted out in front of his door.

I grabbed his arm, “No! That’s not true.”

“I saw him do it with a nail out of Santa Maria.”

“And you didn’t stop him?”

“I didn’t realize what he was doing until I heard about it. I thought he was just...nuts.”

“That’s a lie. You just hate the church. How could you not see?”

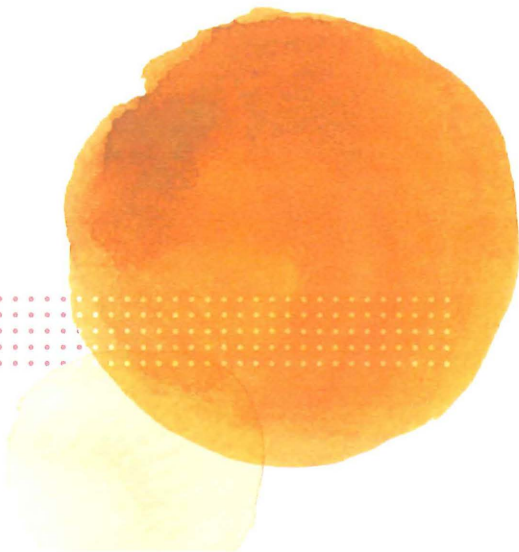
“He was whimpering, kinda swallowing it down, and rocking like he does. I don’t give him money. He’s always been sick in the head. I avoid him. He’s degenerate.”

“He couldn’t have done both his hands. Even stone drunk.”

“Think, Martin. If it was the stigmata, wouldn’t he have it in his feet too?”

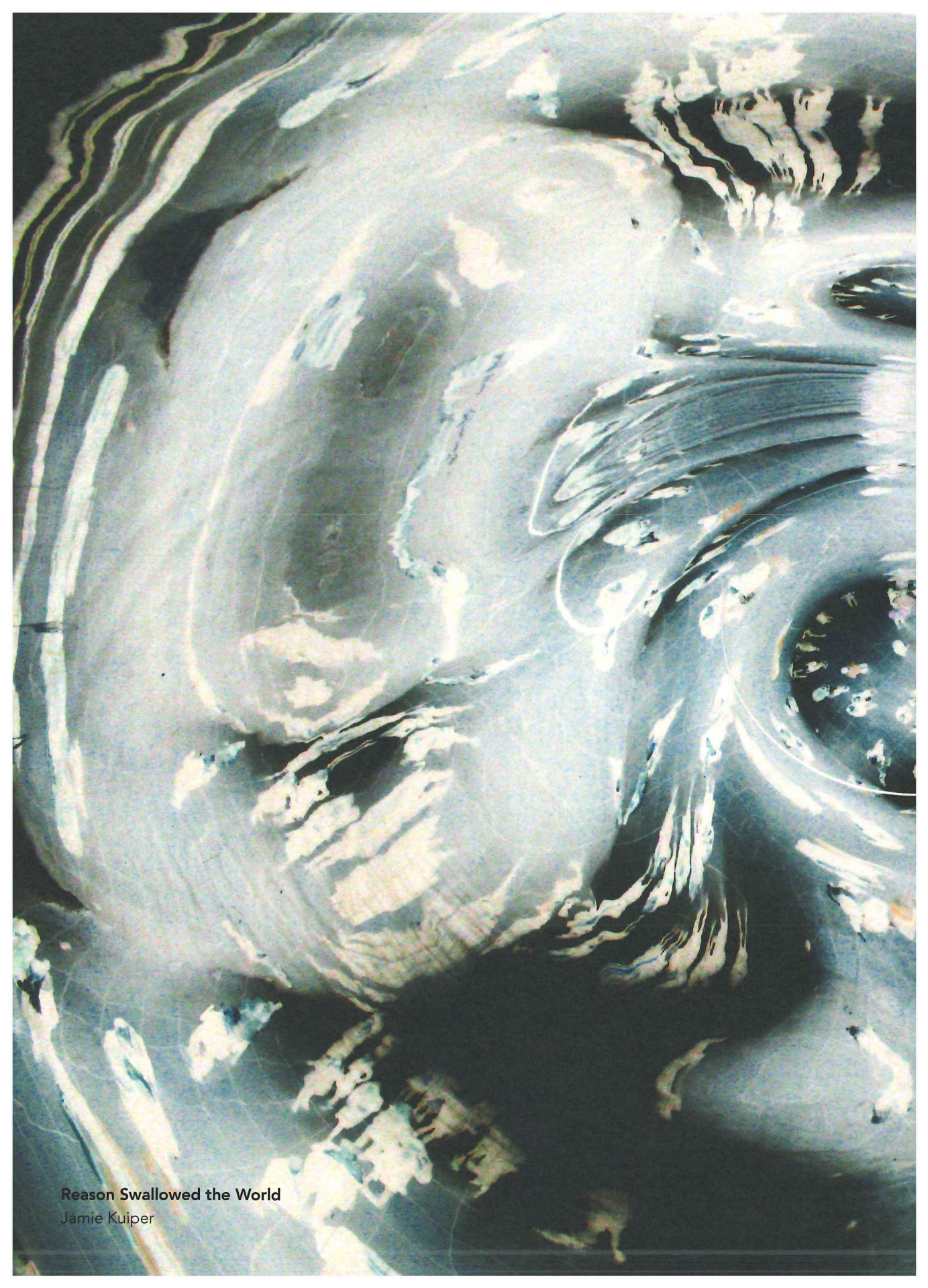
He shoved his door open with his shoulder, stepped in, and slammed it shut.

“Poor bastard,” I said to the blank, rolled-back eyes of the plague chapel Madonna.





Love Squared
Mimi Mutesa



Reason Swallowed the World
Jamie Kuiper






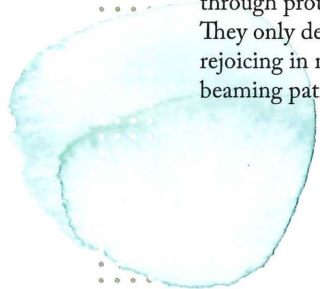
Steadfast

Alexandra Johnson


The scratched names of loves thought eternal
do not distract weathered tendrils from worming their
millimetered way into the old soil renewed
By digested sins and decomposing memories—
Their anchors thirst for fountains overflowing.



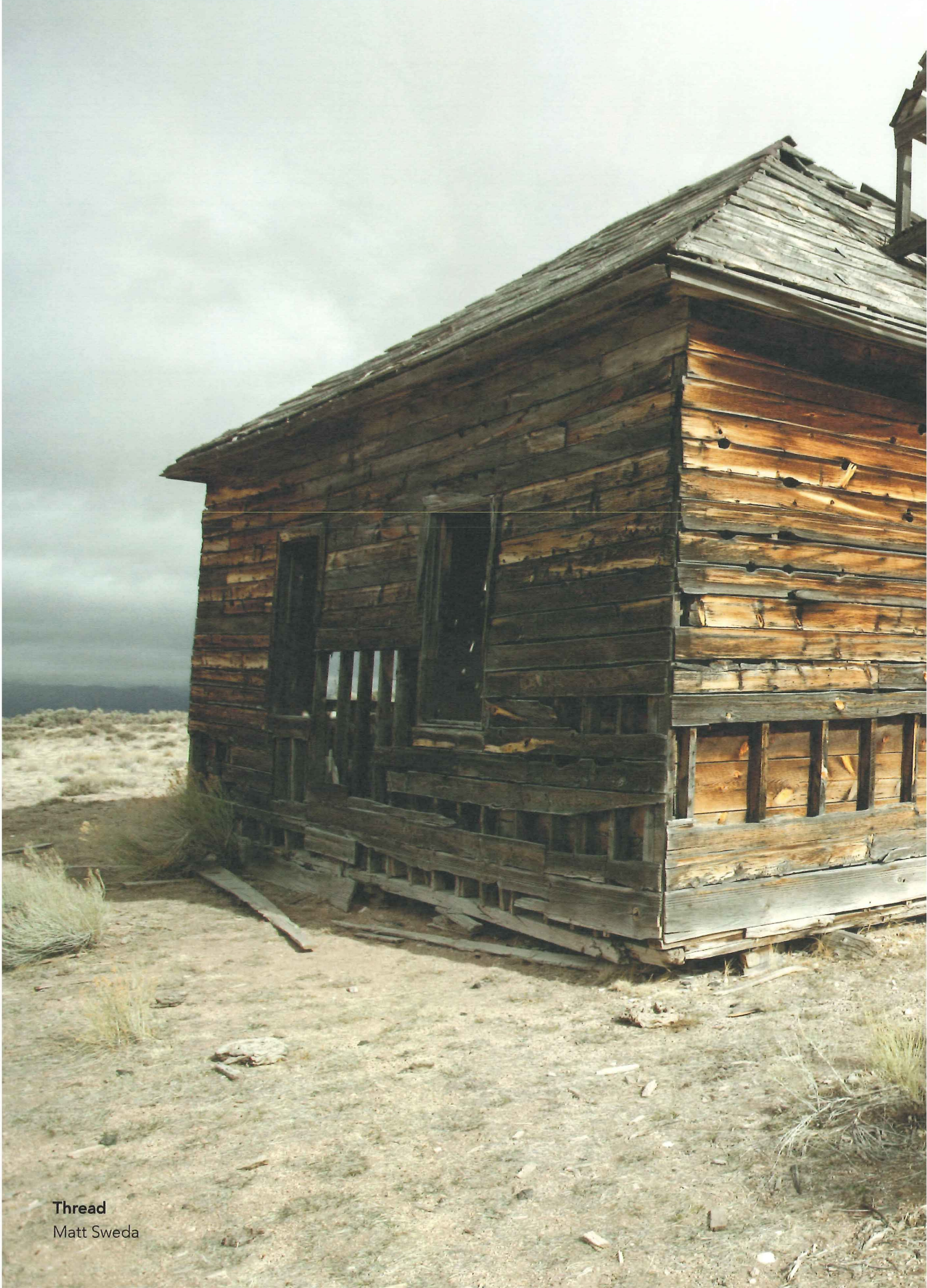
Branches create halos, stirring the breeze as if
tasting the hue of the heavens and rollicking
in its variances. Years skirt around the
ever-stretching base, unable to
halt the cyclical revelations of
budding, turning, dying leaves.



The oak knows little of themselves: of
insect's slow hunger, of seconds and smog seeped
through protection, of metallic embraces that carve purpose away;
They only delight in the Sun's cloak—
rejoicing in nutrient tongues,
beaming patiently towards the infinite sky.







Thread
Matt Sweda





Sun and thunder

Patrick Jonker

i.

Being with people is forgetful of persons.
Where is the soul if not in ourselves?
I should find myself whole,
alone, in music,
and sit still on a stage with
wood body against me
a dusted chalk slate beneath,
a gray-black sea.

—when song begins
sonic waves make whitecaps
wash in, pulse out,
shroud molt sound
tumbles down—

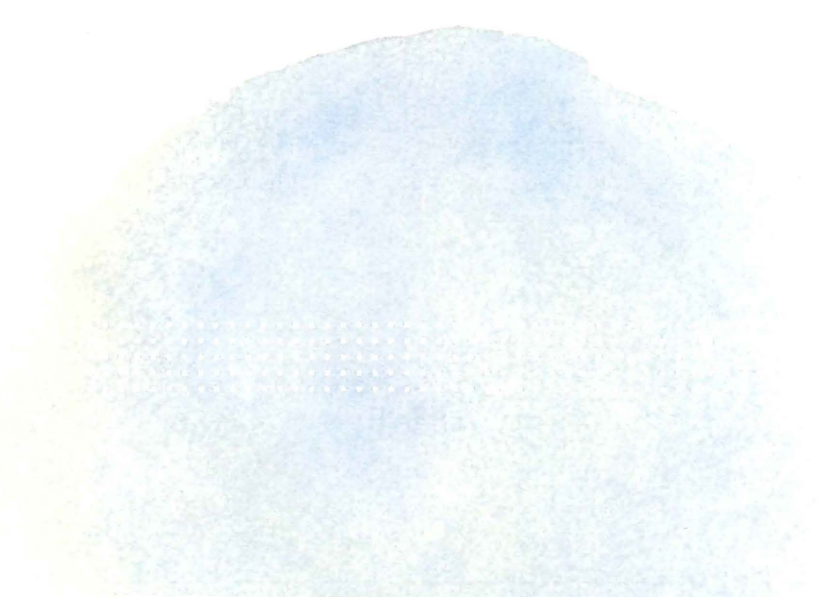
I appear dissolved
on the backs of breaking
waves that follow silence
a self that shifts sands;
people pass and say
“What a difference the water makes!”
Moon-pulled volume
tugging at ships and shorelines.

—but the string snaps
a missed note next
and there I sit still, alone.
Nobody to speak of the
shaking sound, the sculpted wood
or to give life to the wind
that warbles the sea awake—



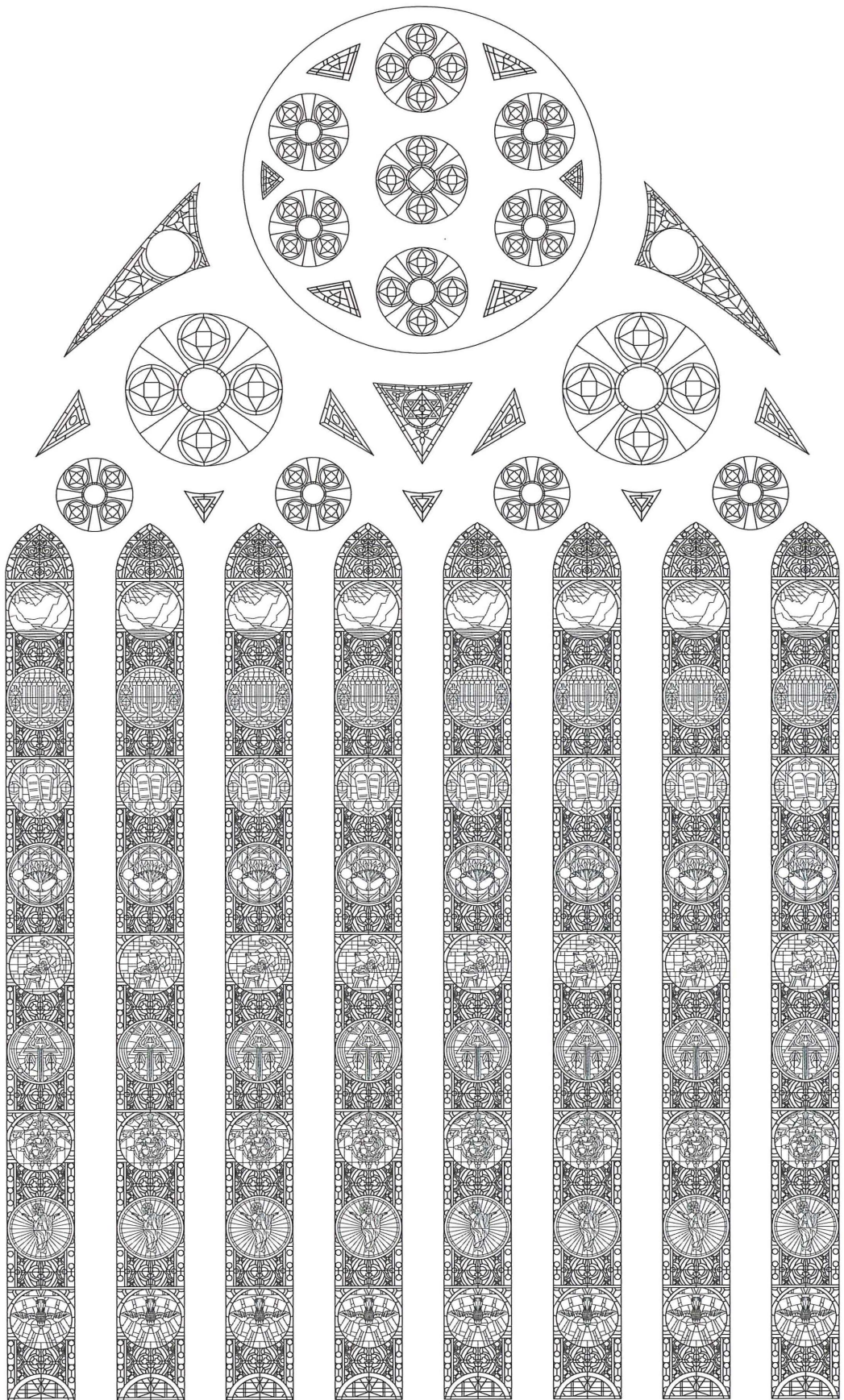
ii.

Mom taught me the cello with a violin creaking on her knee.
I was a crushed-up kid, summer-bleached by sun and thunder,
who scraped with the bow like a bowl of ice cream after baseball
and would cry when it came to be empty.
Running for my friends' pity, I would shed tears and see-you-tomorrows—
they would console me as I marched to my room.
But the scrapes were my home and were for my parents, as they
listened on the porch under rainfall and trees that grasped the ground:
Mom, Dad, me and a warble, and the beat of the rain on the rooftop.









Lunar Cycle

Connor Bechler

1

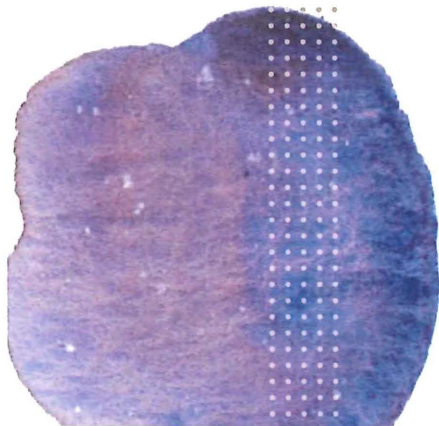
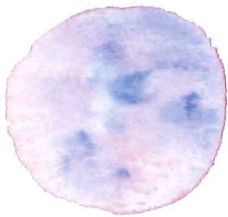
The moon brushes back tangled cloudy tendrils from her face
Scattering, flour-like, cold dandruff down
In generous handfuls, which sift mutely
Through the electric light of dim multicolor strands and warm street lamps,
To cake the road with white powder and black icing

2

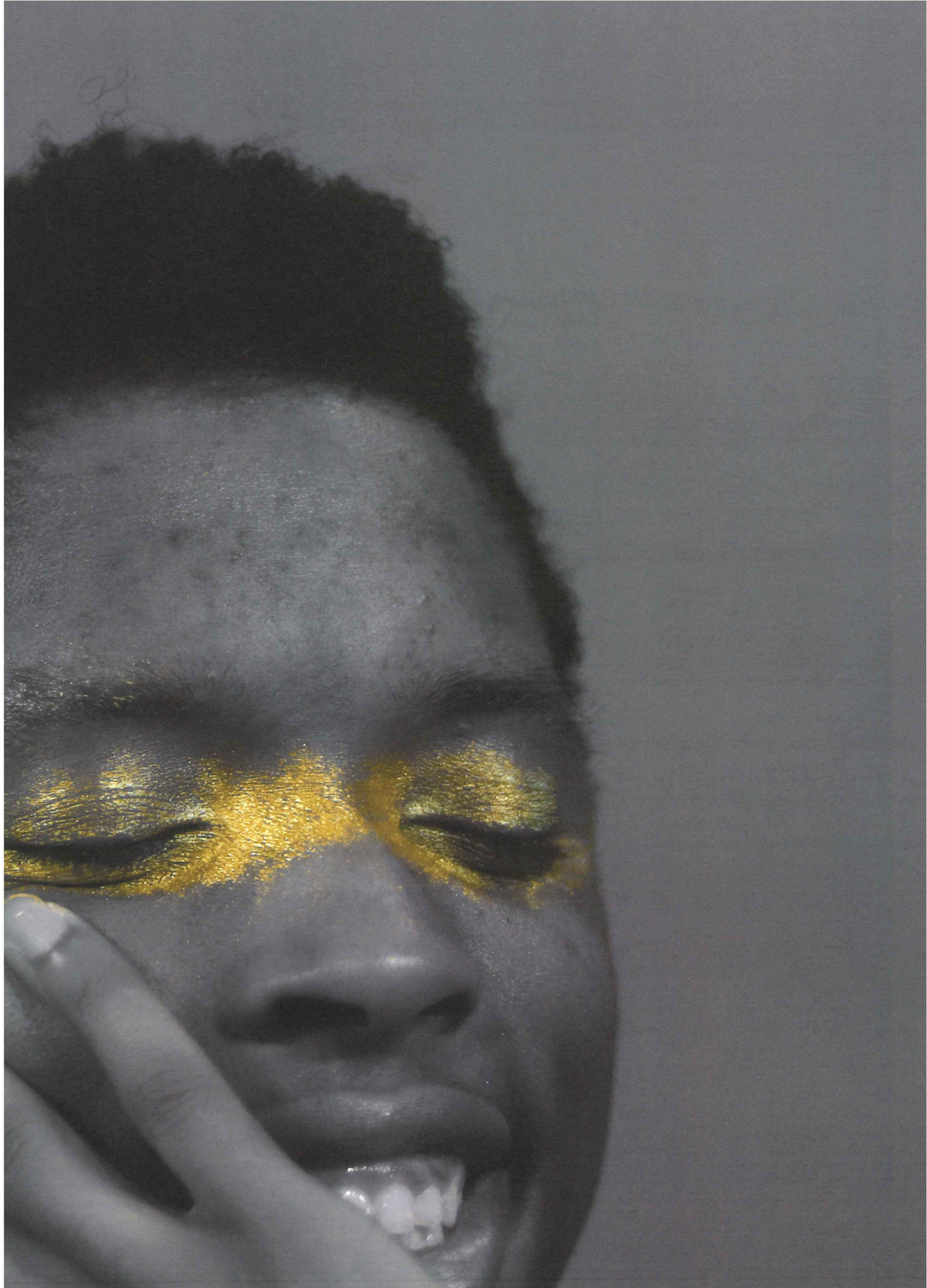
The pocked lunar scape of the lake ice—
As the mob of alighting ducks shriek
—Raises an alien rattle in reply,
The last daylight skittering across its surface

3

Cruelly the scimitar arcs up
Yet the wound on the sacrifice's blue hide
Opens perpendicular:
Bloody fire springs out to consume it
Until nothing is left besides the crescent blade
And the sky's black ashes







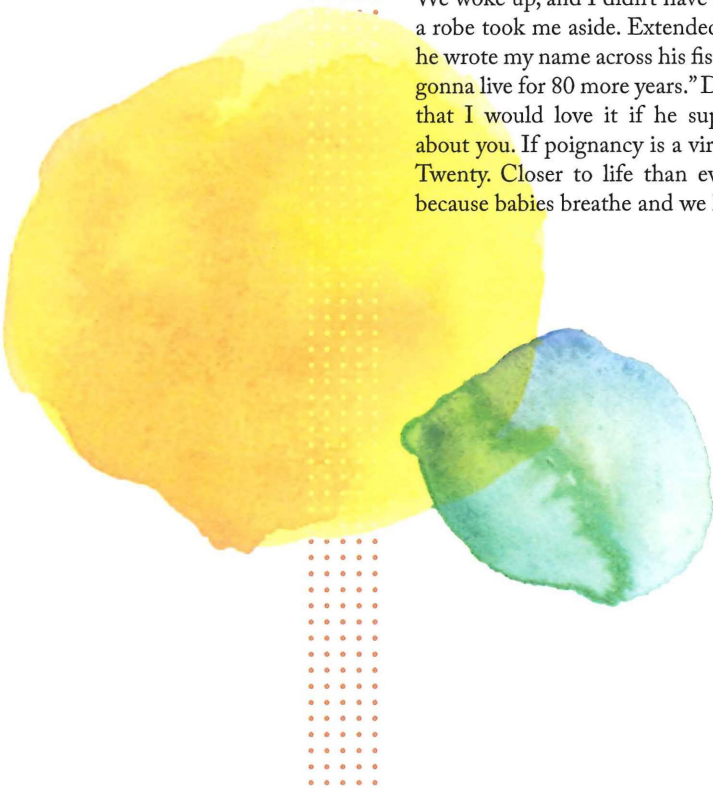


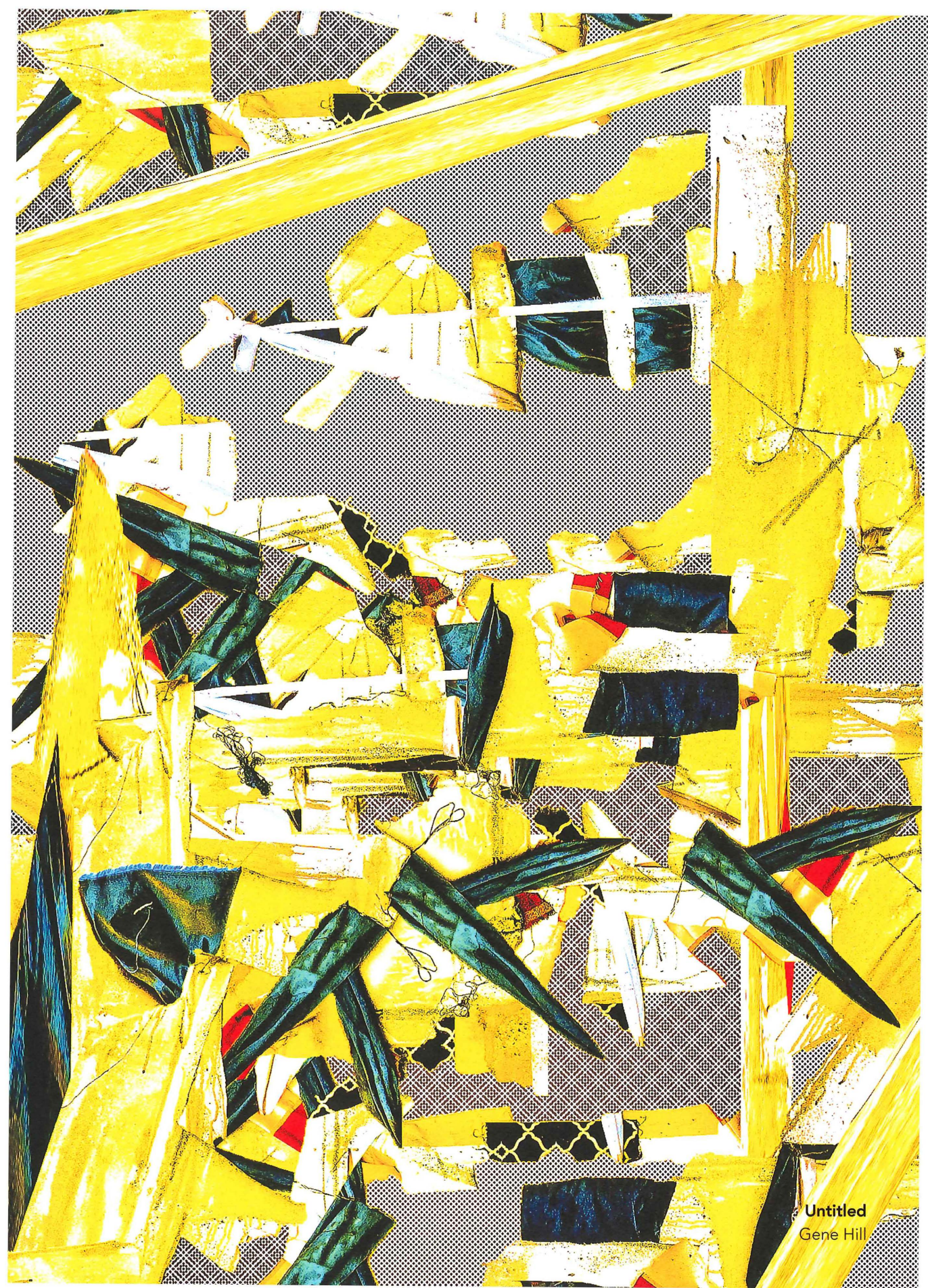
If Truth is a Vice, Then We are Humanity

Ethan Hohn

Seven days after your birthday it feels like just another Tuesday. Yesterday you got a black eye while waiting for my sandwich, which wasn't, well, good. I guess it is just another Tuesday.

We woke up, and I didn't have any dreams. A man in a robe took me aside. Extended arm to nimble wrist, he wrote my name across his fist. He said, "Son, you're gonna live for 80 more years." Depressed, we told him that I would love it if he suppressed his opinions about you. If poignancy is a virtue, then I am a saint. Twenty. Closer to life than ever before but baffled because babies breathe and we haven't yet.

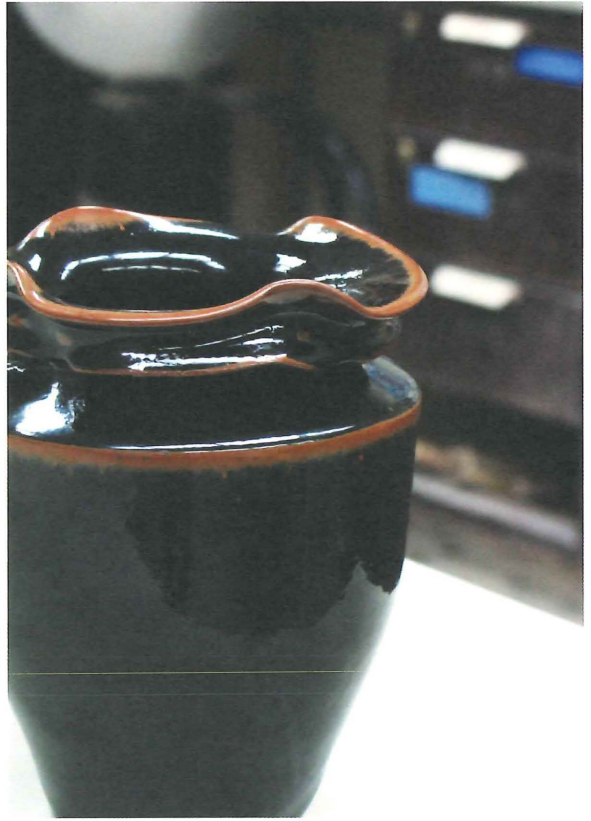




Untitled
Gene Hill







Double-Lipped Vase Rebekah Inman



Bacchanalia

Maia Madrid

I'm only really sentimental when I'm drunk. Wine flowing through my veins is a wonderful lubricant for my emotions, which are typically rusted to a halt somewhere deep in the labyrinth of my amygdala. In vino veritas, the old saying goes, and I certainly think it's true. When I'm drunk, I feel a queer, Fitzgeraldian urge to walk through the fog near the docks, staring into the mist. If I'm in the mood for it, maybe I'll even quote some Shelley, or Swineburne, quietly revelling in the pomp of those tired old names. Never do I feel sad. The nostalgia you see in my eyes may make me tear up, but not because I'm heartbroken—only because I'm overwhelmed with the Possibilities.

I imagine stepping out onto the floor of an old, poorly lit speakeasy, extending a single aloof hand to you, raising one straight eyebrow. You take it and we step onto the floor, waltzing to some truly terrible three-piece quartet. Perhaps in reality I could barely walk a straight line (a bottle of wine is a powerful destabilizing force), but in this fuzzy, golden world we're the most striking couple on the floor. I soon tire of you, though, and my temperamental, sentimental drunkard of a heart moves on to the next dream, the next leather-bound romance. Now, waves of white wine gently caress the shore, and I stand alone, staring with all the drama of a silver screen queen into the inky abyss of the darkened night sky. I speak the truth of my heart to that void. I receive no response, and I ask for none. I smile, a sardonic half-moon of burgundy teeth. Even if you were there, I think, I would bare my soul to you. It's lucky you aren't. My capital-r Romantic soul is quite sure that announcing to your face that I adore you would absolutely ruin the dramatic tension, and that would be a terrible shame after all this time.

Wine makes me read Cummings. I never do, normally. It's awfully pretentious stuff—and if I'm being honest, he's rather a nonsensical sort of poet, but then again, so am I. No one better to read when the world begins to blur than a true romantic (with a lowercase-r, of course). Besides, I will admit to a pretentious streak, and on this side of paradise, at least, it's only a minor sort of sin. As I drink my fifth glass of wine, I cheerfully agree that love really is ever the every only god, and raise a glass to that hell of a universe out there. I'd rather like to explore that universe with you. Tenderly, I imagine diving through the Milky Way and swimming in the depths of the stars (with a Dionysian blessing to guide us). I taste your lips—a delicate, decanted merlot—and it goes to my head more quickly than three bottles could, earthy and heady and smooth, smoother than I could possibly imagine. The touch of your hand sends shivers like vines down my back, and I know I've grown irrevocably attached to your rich eyes and intoxicating laugh. I barely even need to drink from my glass to be besotted. I still do, though, and I will, glass after glass and love after love—a constant stream of new emotions pouring from a dusty old bottle—for I know that it is better to be wild with manufactured sentimentality than soberly serious. After all, what grand romance was ever written sober?

*STARING WITH
ALL THE DRAMA
OF A SILVER
SCREEN QUEEN*





UNTITLED 2
James T. Owens, III



for Cutie, Track 10

Molly J. Vander Werp

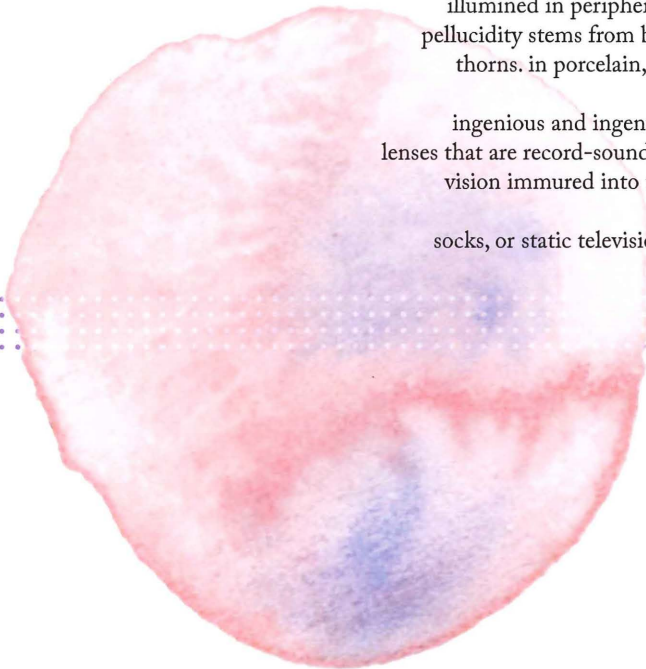
the ingénue of rose-colored air
holds the sharp corners of the world on
the question-mark curve of a hip—

affinity masquerades iniquity,
a love lens like light through paper shades:
milk-sweet, mink-soft. masked.

illuminated in periphery, or hindsight,
pellucidity stems from black & white and
thorns. in porcelain, red runs pink.

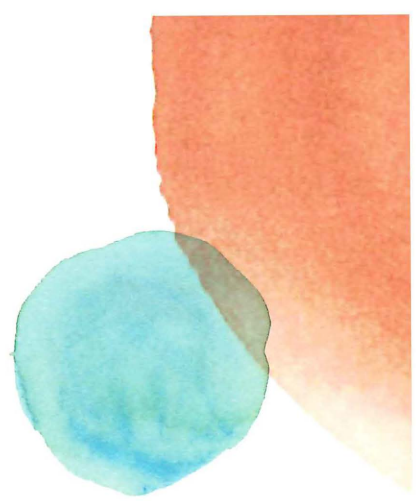
ingenious and ingenuine, the same.
lenses that are record-sound scratch-soft translate
vision immured into the fuzziness of

socks, or static television, or blindfolds.





Hold That Thought Emma Carpenter



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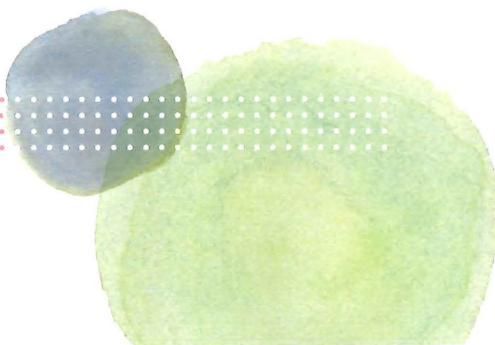
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About dialogue

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.

Dialogue only publishes images depicting individuals after verifying a composition meets the ethical standards of the context and academic discipline in which it was made.

In addition to submissions, the Dialogue editorial staff is always looking for students interested in doing layout, helping with promotions, or serving as a juror.

Visit calvin.edu/dialogue to learn how to join the staff, join a jury, or submit your work.

