

BRAINCHILD

# BRAIN CHILD

A Literary & Art Magazine

Volume IX

“We invite you to tear your favorite pieces out and tuck them in your pocket—carry them with you, always. We are certain they will make the best companions for this journey, whatever that may look like.”



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# BRAIN CHILD



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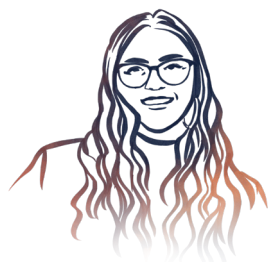
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# FOREWORD

Self-actualization is not linear. It is turbulent, unpredictable, and at times unbearable. To discover one's self is to confess, to acknowledge, and to accept. These things are not easy, but they are an inevitable part of life that we, at the very least, can try to navigate through creation.

***This magazine is one of identity.*** It is an intangible journey, a road trip home, a long, hard gaze in the mirror of life. When we take a step back and peer down at ourselves, it becomes evident that we are not simply a speck of dust. We are a coalescence of everything we've ever done and made, and the things that have made us in return.

The art we surround ourselves with holds weight and reflects our inner-most thoughts and ways of being. Thus, our ultimate goal for this edition was to create a collection of work that we would be proud to see reflected in that mirror of life.

This view of identity, to us, is more easily digestible when we can ask

and attempt to answer three crucial questions:

### ***Where do we come from?***

Art and literature can both be found in the toolbox of healing. They help us make sense of the past and tap into the parts of ourselves that would otherwise remain untouched, both as creators and consumers. *Frosted Flakes in a China Bowl* (p. 4) hits this nerve of nostalgia while attempting to shake hands with the past. *Windows Have Eyes* (p. 29) personifies the feeling of looking back on your life, and reminds us that the past is always shaded in some form or another.

Whether it be pleasant rumination or longing for what once was, engaging with this kind of work can help us feel less alone in what we can no longer control.

### ***Where are we going?***

Perhaps the most daunting part of this whole thing is the great unknown. The future is elusive, like an empty canvas, a blank page, or a foggy *Road Through Mountains* (p. 3). Sometimes, though, you come across a piece that reignites



that spark of hope you thought was dampened forever. *Space* (p. 58) bottles this feeling of relentless optimism and forgoes the price tag. Though the road behind us may have been long, we still collect reasons to believe, to hope, to know that the road before us is brighter, somewhere.

### ***Who are we?***

Some of us can answer this question in rapid-fire assurances, and some of us will prefer to have never been asked at all. The truth is, our sense of self is an ever-changing, contradictory, disorienting thing we may never be able to fully conceptualize. To attempt to pin down and capture such an abstract idea within the pages of a book is perhaps our greatest challenge as creators. *McChicken* (p. 36) begs the question: what do we do when our connection to our sense of self is severed? *Pondering* (p. 51) perfectly encapsulates the intense feeling of reconciling with this brand of uncertainty. Part of being alive means carrying with us this existential question that may never receive an answer.

Despite it all, every day we choose what defines us and make peace with the untold. We hope that this magazine will make that process a little easier. We hope that these pieces will serve as a translation for the indecipherable intricacies that are life. And above all else, we hope that within this collection of pages, you find some kind of solace. We invite you to tear your favorite pieces out and tuck them in your pocket—carry them with you, always. We are certain they will make the best companions for this journey, whatever that may look like.

**Isabella Kaufman, Editor-In-Chief**

*Thank you, a million and one times, to everyone who made this edition possible. You have changed the course of my journey forever, and for that I am so incredibly grateful.*

## YOU ARE WHO I LOVE *after Aracelis Girmay*

Olivia Meyer

You at a distance during the pandemic

You on the phone, talking to old friends  
You, waiting for their touch

You with a mask over your nose and mouth, breathing fine

You protecting the at-risk You are who I love  
delivering groceries, nursing the sick

You with gloves on your hands and a can of disinfecting wipes

You, taking your vitamins, reading the news reports

You, looking into the faces of the young as they party  
*Enough!* you say, which means, *I care for you. I miss you. Stay strong.*

You washing your hands, before eating, after eating and anytime in  
between because Dr. Fauci, Dr. Borio, Dr. Barry

You believing science is real, you, taking care of yourself

You are who I love, you  
spreading hope, not germs.

“ENOUGH!  
YOU SAY,  
WHICH MEANS,  
I CARE  
FOR  
YOU!”

*“You Are Who You Love” is highlighted as the winner  
of the 2021 Wick Honors Poetry Scholarship.*



## ROAD THROUGH MOUNTAINS

Kazu Okamoto // *Photography*

## FROSTED FLAKES IN A CHINA BOWL

Olivia Wachtel

I should go back to the library, smell the quiet strung over the shelves like someone pressed the brass piano pedal that dulls the edges of “Saints Go Marching In.”

I should drive down the humidity after her, stay in an orange motel, eat fruit loops, find the bus terminal where she cracks her neck after work, ask if it is too late to kiss her.

I should up and move, buy cigarettes every week from the gas station with a lemon-and-grape sign above the slushie machines, drink coffee on the fire escape in a hoodie and boy shorts.

I should go back to collecting homely rocks in empty peanut butter tubs, back to childhood sleepover snacks in heirloom dishes.





## WINDOWS HAVE EYES

Noel Frye // *Photography*

## LAST SATURDAY

Kazu Okamoto

There are so many things they can say about me, but  
not much I can say about them.  
They sit there like a flock of birds,  
gazing at me from their positions—  
tree branches, powerlines, rooftops, fences, benches;  
anything they can balance their little bloated bodies  
and bulging bloodshot eyes on.

Apparently they tell stories  
of wars that birthed crimson fields,  
long-gone lands ruled by giant mushrooms,  
animals so bizarre they excrete food, and...  
people  
to pass the time.

I wish I could understand them, but its too hard.  
All the clicking and hums mess with my brain.

The other day I noticed that  
people who can talk to them always seem happier.  
It pisses me off actually.  
Always smiling,  
laughing.

So I decided that today is the day I'm going to kill them all.  
Slice off their heads and drain their little bloated bodies,  
hang them in the sun and make some jerky,  
craft a beautiful necklace out of their eyeballs.

Yes—  
That sounds fantastic.  
That's what I'm going to do.

Just gotta get out of this bed first.



## ARE YOU LOST?

Abriana Rosu // *Print*

# THE COMPLEX

Olivia Wachtel

**To:** YOURKIDSGAVEMEYOURAOLs!!!\_listserv

**From:** SANDRA@yahoo.com

**Subject:** I had Sybil show me how to check who's opened this, so don't even THINK about deleting it, Marge!.

These are the things everyone should feel strongly about by now: the quality of lemon extract, the amount of disregard younger generations have for Jodi Mitchell, and, most of all, the fact that we are now part of the older generation who cannot keep their eyes open worth a damn past 9:30 and who cannot write worth a damn if we so much as eat some pesto that's too garlicky..

What I mean is, we are sensitive about all the wrong things. I say we should start having grimy hair in public. And grey roots. And that nasty but oh-so-writing-material nose hair that I know at least three of the men in this complex exterminate (not pointing any fingers, Rich).

What I mean is, we got here by the skin of our teeth, and I plan to take full advantage of every whim I never got to have as a slaving 22-year-old. As in, if I wake up at 4 in the morning and feel like sitting on my roof and eating waffles, that's what I'm going to do.

That's another thing we should care about: waffles. When was the last time you people had a good, honest waffle?

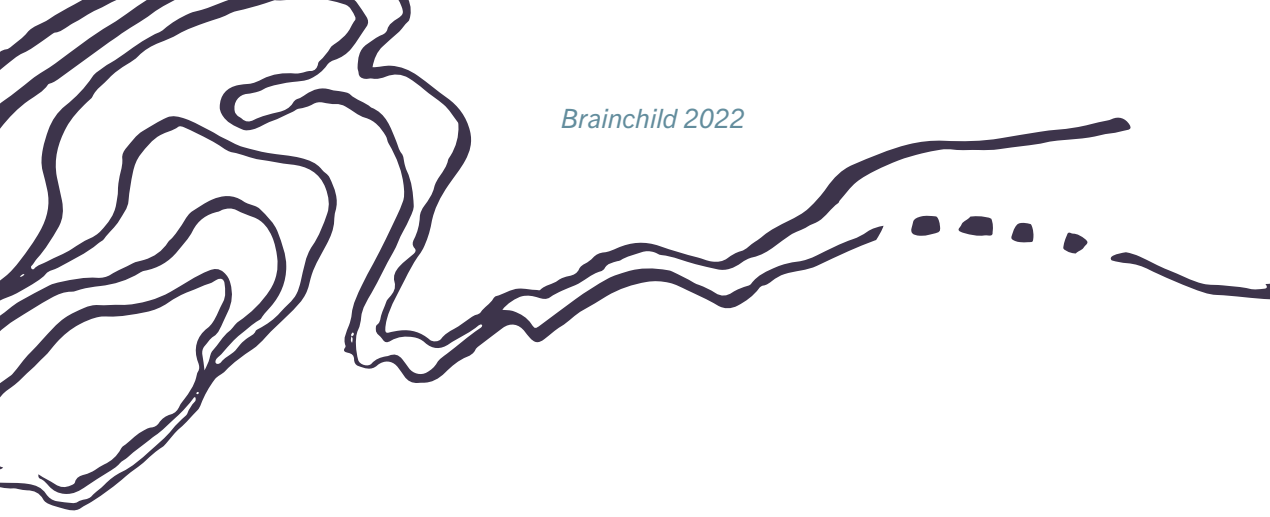
## “SYBIL HAD TORTURED THE DRAGONFLY WHEN NO ONE WAS HOME.”

At this point in her sporadic-but-in-theory-weekly email blast, Sandra fell asleep. Which was unfortunate because she was sitting on the roof eating waffles. It was less unfortunate when she rolled off the roof and into the soft bed of phlox she had decided to grow last month. It was a bit more unfortunate when the waffles fell after her and made a very loud “thwat” when they hit her ear, syrup and all. Sandra woke up after that.

Sybil had tortured the dragonfly when no one was home. She had meant to mercy kill it, like in the movies when you have to shoot a rabid dog so it stops feeling pain. In this scenario, the bug had been flapping in circles on the stoop for ten minutes, willing a broken wing and a mangled leg to work and get him off the cement. She had found it when she came home

from school, so it had probably been there a while. Sybil imagined herself all alone, bone snapped clean through so that it dangled like the thin wire of the dragonfly's wing. She would have sobbed and tried to walk on the leg too because she would have wanted to get somewhere someone would at least find her body. She would have made a racket like the bug, knowing it wouldn't solve anything, but driven crazy by the fear of being alone with an incurable problem.

For a while, Sybil just watched the thing, wings beating madly for a spell, and then going silent, as though it was panting and sweating. Could dragonflies sweat? Each time it started again, it looked like someone throwing themselves at a door, a frightening, panicky burst of brute force, enough to convince Sybil it might just get home on three wings and five legs. After a



while, though, she couldn't avoid the facts. It wasn't going to make it off the ground. It was going to die slowly, foaming at the mouth, almost blind with the windstorm sound of pure terror. She started looking around for a stick, worried about the bug's scaly armor. She would just have to put all her force into one stab because if she didn't cut through the exoskeleton on the first go, it would start that horrible beating of its wings, and she didn't think she would be able to work up the nerve again.

She wished someone was home who knew how to set a tiny wing. Or who would tell her to go inside and not look while they did what had to be done. But there wasn't any way around it. Sandra was still in the hospital feigning stomach pain so she could infiltrate the kitchen and get them to put waffles on the menu. And Grandma B wouldn't be

home for hours, and it might not even die by then, and it would have been her fault for ignoring the obvious. So, she found a stick and broke it into a frayed point and waited for the thing to stop moving. When it took a rest, she held her breath and cut right through its neck. It was so much more fragile than she expected. And she took a deep breath and looked to make sure it was dead, then realized its legs were still moving, slowly as though through water, even the one that was bent backward.

She had heard about this, how things still flail around in the moments after death, so she blinked once, twice, but after the seventh blink, she knew it might not stop moving. Was the part that looked like a head just a decoy? Had she just maimed it? It seemed wrong to poke the belly of an already broken animal, so she knelt on her

rattling knees and whispered her favorite song to it. Sybil knew the song would be ruined after this, but if the bug was still awake and panicked, barely able to sway his limbs to show it, then she figured the least she could do was sing. Hopefully it could hear her. If it had enough brain function to move its legs, maybe its tiny eardrums were working too. She decided to believe that because the world shouldn't be a place where things get cut open by a stick and are screaming inside but can barely move and never know that someone saw they were dying and was trying to sing them a lullaby.

After the song ended, its legs were still moving, so she bit her lip and ground the stick through the armored belly. It was still now. She blinked at the powdered exoskeleton sticking to the concrete, then stood and unlocked the door and went inside. She took all

the tissues out of the bathroom tissue box and then went back out. It took a couple tries to get the body into the box with a stick. Sybil could hear her cousin Tim in her ear, telling her this was why everyone should know how to use chopsticks. Like Tim would have the guts to be around a bug this long. The condo complex had landscapers come each month, so Sybil and Grandma B didn't have any gardening tools. Instead, she took the big salad spoon and dug a hole through the mulch and buried the dragonfly. There wasn't really any point in marking the grave, since she didn't know if dragonflies had families or how she would let any hypothetical relatives know where she'd buried the bug she had executed twice. So, she just went inside and washed her hands and left a note on the kitchen table saying she was walking down to the library.

---

The cat was making a sound like the suction thing they use at the dentist for people with really spitty mouths. The one where they tell you to close your lips before the thing even reaches the puddle of spit in back, so it ends up catching the bottom lip or the inside of a cheek with the horrible “THZZZZZ CHHHHH.” Clearly, the cat was going for a hiss, which wouldn’t have scared Barbara. She’d grown up with her mother’s seven cats. She knew a thing or two about hissing. Instead, it sounded like the little white tube at the dentist. Which did scare Barbara. Even though this particular cat looked like a huge cheese-puff.

She quickly put her cigarette out on the dumpster, shot at her blouse with some Dollar Tree perfume, and hurried back inside. The cat spat a few times victoriously as the big metal door slammed shut.

The cloud of gardenias from Barbara’s blouse mixed with the mildew growing on the ceiling tiles. It was the kind of scent you remember for years. Not great, but slightly better than mildew-and-cigarette smell. Looking up to see if the brown spots had grown, Barbara instead saw four paws and a big orange belly hurtling towards her through the broken ceiling tiles, all while making that awful, hygienic dental noise.

---

Sandra woke up to very bright lights and very many sounds coming in through her left ear. Blinking, she reached out for her laptop. She couldn’t find it. Then she felt hungry and reached for another waffle. Still nothing. Blinking a little harder now, Sandra saw that she was in the hospital. She wasn’t sure what to be most angry about: the lack of waffles (how is a person supposed to handle

“THIS IS NOT  
SENTIMENTAL.  
BUT IF IT WERE,  
THAT  
WOULD  
BE OKAY  
TOO.”

the shock of waking up in a hospital with extreme left-ear-concentrated noise, without the support of an Eggo?), the loss of her laptop (she had been on a roll and couldn't afford to lose her train of thought. What would her subscribers think?), or the fact that the bedding was a modge-podge of greys (What if a child ended up here? Just how is a kid supposed to get better when they're wrapped in a bunch of low-thread-count rain clouds?).

Sandra was still wrestling with the waffle-laptop-sheets debate when a nurse came over.

"Oh, good, you're awake! How ya feeling? You had quite the fall. We couldn't believe you didn't break anything!"

Still unsure which complaint to bring up first, Sandra said, "I feel fine."

"Well, I'm glad," replied the nurse, not looking particularly glad. To be fair, she didn't really look any particular way. Her lips were in a perpetual half-smile-half-snore shape and her eyes had nothing to them. *Like a killer barbie doll*, Sandra thought.

Another good topic for her email blasts.

"Your daughter came right away, so she should be back soon. The only thing we found is the syrup from your waffle. It, well, it kind of dripped into your ear, so you might have some added hearing difficulty on the right side. We tried to remove as much as we could, but if you have any more issues with it, we can make a referral."

And with that, the decision was made:

"What about my waffle?"

## "WHAT ABOUT MY WAFFLE?"

"Pardon?" the nurse asked.

"My waffle! I was eating waffles before I fell. What happened to the waffle?"

The nurse blinked.

"Well, I guess they're back in your flower bed. But we can get you some food if you're hungry. Shouldn't be a problem," the nurse explained.

"But do you have wa-ffles?"

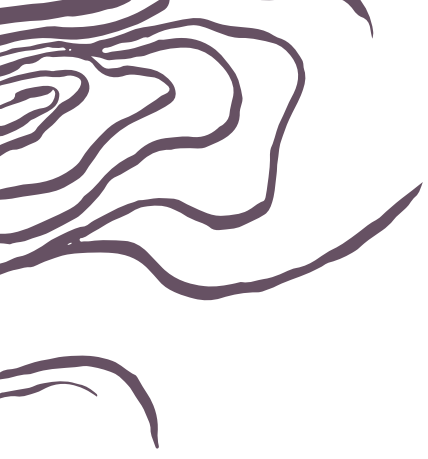
"We have pancakes...?"

Sandra sighed. Grey sheets, robotic staff, and no suitable breakfast options. It was a wonder anyone made it out of this place alive. Hopefully she could get her daughter to stop at Waffle House on the drive home, even if it would give her more time to scold Sandra about you're-too-old-to-be-sitting-on-roofs

and what-were-you-doing-emailing-your-entire-complex-at-four-in-the-morning-anyway and blah, blah, blah.

Sybil marched up and down the children's section and dropped a mound of books onto one of the study tables. The pile was so big that the thud got Sybil a dirty look from the librarian with the rhinestone-tipped glasses. She had an encyclopedia about bugs, volumes D-F and G-I of the general encyclopedia, a book about brains, a book about anatomy, a book about death, and a book about sound. She wanted to know from each book, respectively:

1. Do bugs know when they are dying? Does death scare them?
2. Are dragonflies evolved from dragons and/or dinosaurs? Do they live in groups or alone? Can they feel fear?



- 3. Do insects have brains? Can they hear things?
- 4. Are people brains different from bug brains? Do you need your brain attached to you to think? Can you hear without a brain?
- 5. How do things hear sound? Do animals know what music is?

These were the kinds of questions that her awful science teacher, Mr. Schumer, would have said were “off topic” and “distracting from the lesson.” *Well, Mr. S, have you ever had to execute an undying insect?* The thought fueled Sybil as she flipped through the thick, glossy pages. Unfortunately, she soon found that the books were about as helpful as Mr. Schumer.

She decided to try Googling her questions instead. That would’ve been the logical place to start, but Sybil

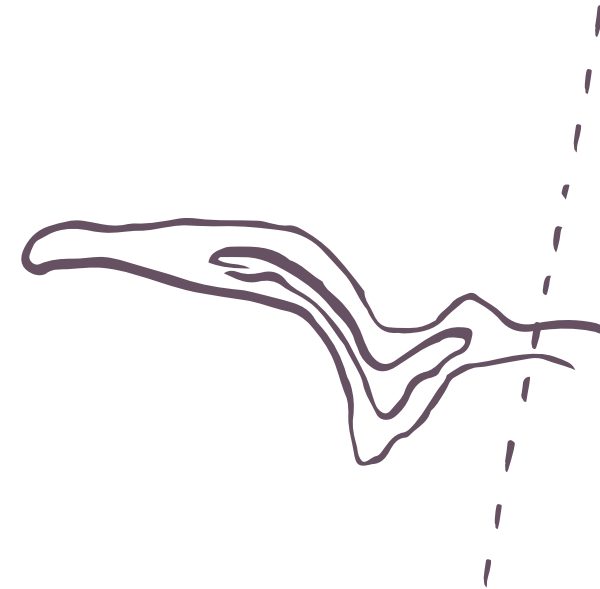
didn’t feel like being logical. She was a seventh grader who had just been forced to execute an animal, twice. She deserved some slack. Of course, the internet had answers, so she made a list:

- 1. Insects feeling pain → scientists divided.
- 2. Dragonflies used to be **HUGE**. 2-3 ft. wingspan. Nothing about dragons. Lived before dinosaurs??
- 3. Bugs have brains, can hear.
- 4. Pretty sure you need a brain to hear → **ASK SANDRA**
- 5. Hearing=eardrums=sound waves

Just then, the librarian got on the loudspeaker and announced that the library was closing, so Sybil packed up and started walking home. It started raining again as she walked, which was convenient because she felt thick tears start down her face and couldn’t

stop them until she had curled up in the shower for a long time and felt her fingers prune up.

Of course, the cat had not followed Barbara in from the alley. And the ceiling, while damp and mold-riddled, was not crumbling under the weight of an alley cheese-monster. Barbara’s imagination just liked to keep her on her toes sometimes. Apparently, it also liked to keep her on the verge of peeing herself, too. In her defense, it wasn’t that hard to accomplish, after three kids and a bladder whose limited warranty was long expired. Of course, the media wouldn’t have cared. She could see titles now: **IMAGINATION WINS; WOMAN FORCED TO BUY DEPENDS!**



**To:** YOURKIDSGAVEMEYOURAOLs!!!\_listserv

**From:** SANDRA@yahoo.com

**Subject:** Don't worry, I didn't break anything, I can still fall off a roof like the best of us, but the freaking syrup got me

The time has come for me to go to war. The Great Waffle War. Before you delete this (I can see when you do that too,, Marge!!!!), let me provide context. I woke up in the hospital. Because I fell off the roof. You should know this much by now because we all know each other's business. Which, surprisingly, I don't think is all that bad.

In the hospital, I found out that they use GREY sheets that might as well be steel wool, and they're apparently getting paid by the government to test out how a staff comprised of ROBOTS will work for a hospital. To top it all off, the kitchen menu consists of this KETO crap and all the fake milks you could possibly think up (there's pine milk now, for lord sake. look it up, people)

BUT they have no waffles, for crying out LOUd!!!!

You can imagine my dismay. And the dismay of hospital survivors everywhere in the tricounty area.

So, I'm staying here. I've got to be the voice of the inmates.

There's not a thing wrong with me, except the syrup that impairs my right ear. So before

you start telling your grandson never to watch the sunset with his friends on your roof (Rich), you should know that I am not injured or otherwise maimed from falling off the roof. I'm just on a secret mission to get the people what they want.

If Cleo tries to tell you I'm still at the hospital because I have "a loose noodle" or "a very serious brain tumor that grew so big it left no room in my head for my marbles," well, she grew up with ME as a mother, so that's probably fair for her to say, now, isn't it?

But know that I am not bananas. And know that I do not eat bananas. And know that I expect there to be much more nose hair grown out and cars without dust on their steering wheels when I come back. Seize the day and all that crap.

That's all for now.  
Beware the syrup.

SANDRA



---

By the time Sybil got out of the shower and fed Gerald, her betta fish, it was almost 5:00. She wanted to warm up something for dinner, but it was Friday, which meant pizza and movies with Grandma Barb. So, instead, she got the ritz crackers and made mini peanut butter sandwiches. Sandra was right; tiny food always makes things a tiny bit better.

Sybil wished she could text Grandma B and ask what time she'd be home. She could do that, of course. She'd had a phone since fifth grade when Grandma B heard on the news about a kidnapper who was caught because of the iPhone's location tracking software. But Grandma B didn't have the keenest ears. Especially when she was stressed—which she always was at work—and especially when her phone was silenced, as was work policy. Even though Sybil was sure Grandma B was

the only one who obeyed that policy. So, instead, she texted Sandra.

“Waffle news??”

Sandra either responded immediately or after 72 hours. There was no middle ground. Sybil assumed it would be the latter, so she put in her headphones and blasted Car Seat Headrest while she worked on her sudoku and tried not to see each little box as a tissue box coffin holding a maimed dragonfly. Of course, the harder she tried not to, the more she thought about it. Which made her start hiccup-crying again. Which annoyed her to no end, especially since she'd been voted Toughest in the Grade for three consecutive years.

In the middle of all this, her music was interrupted by a FaceTime call from Sandra.



## “SRY, JUST WOKE UP. GIMME 10 TO RESURRECT?”

Sandra had never seen Sybil cry—it was more of a Grandma B area of expertise—and she was pretty sure it might break Sandra’s brain. When Sandra couldn’t fix her steaming toaster last summer, Sandra herself had started steaming, so Sybil really didn’t think she could handle seeing a kid crying with no way to fix the situation. So she declined the call and texted, “Sry, just woke up. Gimme 10 to resurrect?”

“Since when do you nap??” Sandra replied.

Sybil didn’t have a good response, so she just turned her music back up and pretended to have fallen back asleep. But, of course, there was another FaceTime call. And of course, they would keep coming until Sybil answered. Because this was Sandra.

---

After the third expletive, Barbara hung up. You’d think yoga mats would be a nice, easy thing to sell and distribute. But apparently, school starting was making all the Xanax moms want to get Zen, which meant Walmart sold out of mats, which meant the distribution center was getting calls, which meant Barbara heard “fuck you” about twenty times before 3:00.

She was trying to get ahold of the manufacturer, who was supposed to be an all-American operation there to support all American distributors at all American hours. Apparently 4:35 pm was not an American hour.

Barbara realized she was getting a bit worked up. But why not? Sandra, her neighbor, had been getting away with screaming fortune cookie wrappers to passing pedestrians for years, just parked on the front steps, chomping

and reading. Why couldn’t Barbara offer some choice words to the next throat-clearing, condescending store administrator?

Unfortunately, Barbara hadn’t told anyone off in about twenty-five years, and she was worried she’d lost her touch. Plus, contrary to her granddaughter’s teasing, the manager had ears everywhere, apparently having nothing better to do than eavesdrop on the cubicles for a reason to chew someone out.

By the time 6:00 came, Barbara decided to put her foot down and head home. The worst thing that could happen was stores not having yoga mats to sell, which had already happened. Store managers could curse her on Monday.

As she walked out the alley door, she

lit another cigarette and dialed Joe’s Pizza. Looking down the narrow gap between the brick buildings, Barbara saw the air was the lovely pink-lemonade color it gets after a warm September rain. The dial tone rasped in her ear, the cat stretched at the end of the alleyway, and Barbara remembered how afternoons used to taste like sour candy in college.

She missed it a bit, but not enough to pine. The years had passed and couldn’t be relived, but she didn’t feel cornered by time. After all, she could still remember the jolly rancher skies over the highway and the bubbly love she had for everything back then, and it all felt very real and sweet still. Plus, now she had a wild-haired granddaughter, and witnessing Sybil discover all the textures of happiness was one of Barbara’s best times yet.

---

**To:** YOURKIDSGAVEMEYOURAOLs!!!\_listserv

**From:** SANDRA@yahoo.com

**Subject:** Still no waffles, but I'm coming back. I found out that people DO get better in this place. They HAVE to, just so they can escape all the damn vitals checks!!!

I'm coming home. No need to sound so excited, Marge.

The rumors are true: I have not completed my mission to give the people waffles. But if this place can stand three days of ME pestering them for justice without budging, then waffles will never be served.

And, to be quite honest, I don't want to spend the life I've got left in a hospital fighting for strangers to get a breakfast item that they might not even appreciate. I'd much rather be at home making waffles and milkshakes for Sybil, Barb, and me. And then making more for Rich when he passes on his daily rounds. It's the only thing that calms his nerves after I yell a fortune cookie wrapper at him. (Sorry, Rich. It's just too rich. You should see how high you jump)

You should know I'm NOT going to give you that "no place like home" crap. Really, home is only nice when you leave and come back. If you had followed my advice, you would know that already, but I know this condo complex. It's got the most inertia I've ever seen. Even with both me AND Sybil stirring things up, you all BARELY move.

For lord sakes, we're old people now. We don't have to give a pig's pink butt about ANUthing. We've become invisible because young people are afraid of aging, so they ignore us. You all act like that's some kind of travesty, but being invisible is a superpower!. Can a visible person walk around a supermarket wearing a Halloween cat unitard in the middle of July? No. Did I do that two months ago? Obviously.

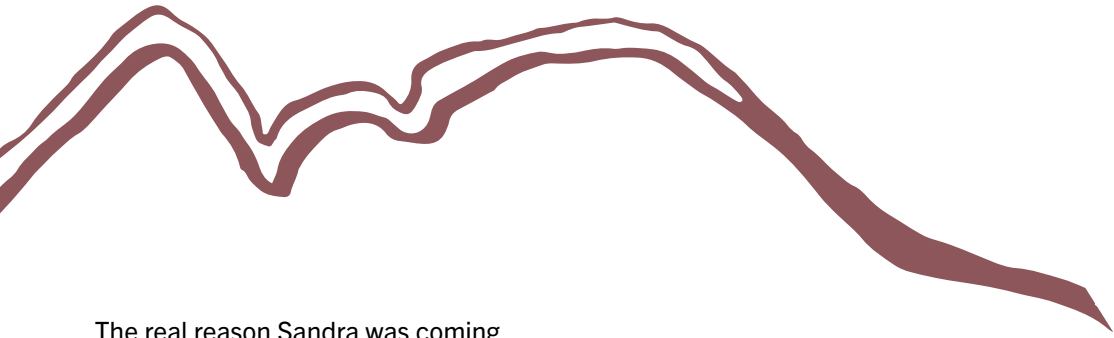
Which is another thing we should care about: embracing our invisibility. Only the people who really want to see us do. Which is great because usually we can rope them into doing something crazy.

So, I'm coming back because I'm sick of trying to be visible. And I hate these fluorescent lights. And I quite miss terrorizing you all.

This is not sentimental.

But if it were, that would be okay too.

SANDRA



The real reason Sandra was coming home was because Sybil needed to have a vigil for that dragonfly. Also because Sandra had to tell Barb about the whole incident, since Sybil was crying less and less these days. And if Barb didn't have hard evidence like tears, she would be afraid of being too nosey and she wouldn't press too hard for Sybil to tell her what was wrong. And these days Sybil was getting better and better at pretending nothing was wrong in the first place.

It was all quite a mess. Too much of a mess to handle from a hospital bed. This was a 10-pm-wild-drive-across-all-of-Pennsylvania-to-find-some-respectable-onion-rings type of mess. Hopefully they could wake up a few condos and raise a few eyebrows in the process.





## WINDOW OF THE MIND PART 1

Nora Gast // *Abstract Study*



## WINDOW OF THE MIND PART 2

Nora Gast // *Abstract Study*

## WISHING FOR A WELCOME MAT

Chloe Ritzic

I wanted to cradle  
his heart through his head,  
but I couldn't pry the fingernails  
of his anger away from the comfort of his hurt.  
I wanted him to let me  
crawl around inside his feelings,  
drag myself through the threshold,  
let it become too messy  
to tell the difference between his footprints and mine.  
It was never fair.

He yelled at me to clean up after myself,  
but the dirt on my soles came from his floors.  
I slept in a soiled bed,  
hardly complained.  
I dissolved into anyone.  
I became friends with the moths  
born from the reek beneath my pillow.



## ABYSS

Maddie Powell // *Painting*



## A STOLEN MOMENT

Boyce Bivens // *Photography*

## NEW YEAR'S WITH NICKY'S FRIENDS

Olivia Watchel

Whenever I hear a voice  
like that, someone takes a thin  
letter opener and peels  
open a little slit at  
the top of my spine and starts  
dropping things down it like a  
laundry chute: a crumbling pale  
onion skin, some toenail scraps,  
a fallen eyelash. They catch  
on the sticky tendons and  
poke through the pores. Like when Cam  
told me all the girls he'd done it  
with or on or to, all I  
could think about was how long  
there would be spider legs lodged  
under my skin. That night I  
blinked morse code at the fan, begged  
it to floss the detritus  
stuck between my moldy ribs.





## WRAPPED UP

Sarah Joseph // *Painting*

## MCCHICKEN

Maria Teresa Guillen

Here I am, scared of ordering food in a McDonald's drive thru. I would never have thought that I would be scared of doing something so simple. Me, who I always picture to be fearless, unstoppable, brave; or at least brave enough to move to a whole different country, with an entirely different language, culture, and costumes.

Being an immigrant is not simple. Not because of the long nights where you can't sleep because you're missing home, or the cold winters that make you sick because your body is not used to the temperatures. And not even because of the people that make fun of my accent, or yell at me in the store because, "In here, we speak English." It is hard because sometimes, you leave your country being someone you are

proud of and become a shadow of who you were.

I remember running away from the police that tried to kill me. I remember armed guards pointing guns at me just because I was out at night. I remember them trying to intimidate me into "behaving" or "choosing the right side" since I was a child. But I also remember the amazing person I became due to all of that. I was the girl who made banners after school and made a bunch of kids follow her to the streets to protest. I was the girl who led local rallies against corruption and human rights violations. I was also the girl who had to run away from a man trying to strangle me for doing so, and the girl who went out the very next day to continue risking my life for what was



right. I was never scared.

In that new country, she realized for the first time that she left for a purpose. She didn't have that purpose anymore. And just like that, it felt as if she had slowly morphed from being the person she had always been proud of, to this scared being who just existed. Proof of this was that exact moment in a simple drive thru. The thought of having to speak up in a language she didn't quite understand, with people who simply just didn't have the patience to help her, made her anxious. But she was late for work, and that was her only choice to eat that day.

*Dios Mio.*

It was finally my turn. My hands were sweaty. My phone was in my hand, ready to be used as a tool. I believe that Hispanics love their santos the same way they love whoever made Google Translator an app. I just needed it—a McChicken. That couldn't be hard to ask for.

"Good morning, welcome to McDonald's. How can I help you?"

It was time for me to say something. Anything.

"God mornin. I want one machiken, please," was the only thing I was able to say.

"Excuse me, I don't think I quite understand you. Do you mean you

**"I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND  
HOW SUCH A  
SIMPLE INTERACTION  
WOULD MAKE ME FEEL LIKE THIS.**

**I USED  
TO BE  
BETTER  
THAN  
THIS."**

want a McChicken?" she responded.

"Yes, please. I want one mackchiken," I repeated, words going out of me really fast.

"Would that be it for you then?" she said, being annoyed at me by that point.

"Yes. Thanks," I just said.

"Up to the next window to pay," she responded and hung up.

I was shaking. I couldn't understand how such a simple interaction would make me feel like this. I used to be better than this.

"It will be \$4.39, please," was what,

yet again, distracted me from my thoughts.

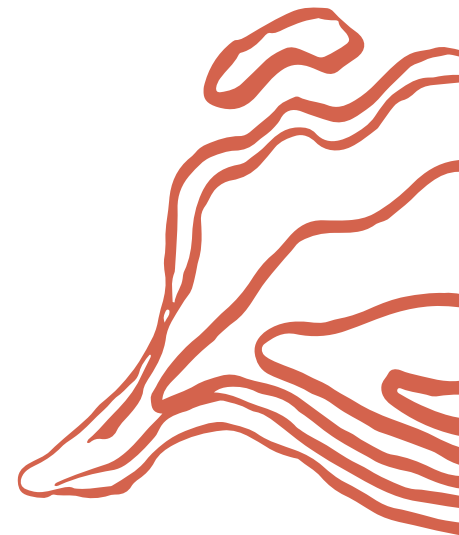
*\$4.39 por un machiken?*

I had to use the Google Translator. I didn't understand how something from the Dollar Menu was four bucks. And with my phone, I said just that.

"That's the price for the crispy chicken. You want it or not?" That was the only thing she said to me. And since I was in a hurry, I paid for it.

As I drove off, I thought about how this is my life now. And how I was grateful to be here, but I was sad to lose who I used to be in the process. It's just hard to think about that girl. That girl had to flee her fight because she realized

she was too young to be a martyr. She wanted to be here for her little sister, for her mom, for her family. She had to leave to ensure they didn't win and take away her life, as they had the life of several. So here she was, in this new country who welcomed her. And just like that, she realized even though she felt back then that her life was worth risking for change, in reality, the world would have gone on without her, and that would have been it. She wouldn't have mattered.





## EXPLORATION OF KNIT FORM

Georgia Coulter // *Knit Forms*

Photograph by K. Bodrock



## POETICS III

### TEACHING POETRY IN SCHOOLS

Patrick Moorman

I wanted to focus on my role as an educator rather than creator,  
but then one student drew a dragon  
and wrote a poem about how poetry should be a dragon.

All of them participated in creation.  
They spoke to each other,  
and I heard the pain.

Together they wrote:

“We are not spoonfed.  
We are not privileged.  
We do not drive nice cars  
or live in nice homes.”

It is so easy to write poetry that sounds poetic.  
Like a sense-memory without a backbone.

Someone my father knew  
wrote about the ‘Birdman’

and would describe him eating candles  
or binding books with erase markers.

Sometimes I would feel like they were the ‘Birdman.’  
I felt like they were playing with me and my prompts.

I’m a Catholic.  
I know how scary the truth is.  
Confession is like a conversation with yourself.  
I dreaded it. I think the glass panes dreaded me too.

I get this same dread writing poetry.  
It is a confession to yourself that you can’t take back.

But they read their work back,  
crinkled their eyes like a shrug at the abyss,  
and slowly handed those sacred confessions to a stranger.

I felt like this insular,  
useless thing for a long time.

But they helped me reignite that thing deep down  
where we put God  
and Buddha  
and Karl Marx  
and Ronald Reagan.

# JUDGE, JURY, AND EXECUTIONER

Morgan Bedilion

I've sentenced your shirt to hang  
for crimes not yet committed.

Corduroy dripping blood-red down my wall,  
willingly torn from the cross 'round your neck.

Vanity accepted this sacrament graciously,  
a cherished donation to the church of lost causes.

The strangling scent of your chest—  
of your chest of drawers,  
draped casually around my neck,  
not yours.

This makes both too much sense for reason,  
and you, too close for comfort.

I've sentenced your shirt to hang.  
Its corpse, a welcome addition to the bones deep in my closet,  
dangling strangely on the precipice of its hanger: tomorrow.



# SQUISH/BEND/FOLD

Boyce Bivens // *Silkscreen Monoprint*

# THE BODY THAT NEVER BLOOMED

Annie Gleydura

Bit into chapped, coarse lips,  
white teeth stained cherry red.

Tongue braces itself for the wash of metallic blood to sting its taste buds.  
Little pudgy fingers twist the stem of a daisy between index and thumb,  
bottom scraped and scabbed from the rough trunk of a weeping willow,  
and round blue eyes wept too.

She tore each canary yellow petal from the head of the flower,  
reciting a game to determine her fate:

“He loves me not.”

Ten daisy stems sprawled limply across her lap,  
each drawing the same conclusion.

Her lungs ballooned inside her sunken chest  
as she writhed beneath the battering sun.

The air sent daggers down her aching throat as she cried out,  
beating her fist against her bruised ribs,  
pounding her knuckles against her frame  
'til flesh erupted with purple blotches  
like angry tulips blooming across a field of sun-bleached grass.

She blamed the little body for her misfortune,  
plucking each fingernail from its bed just as she did the petals,  
letting dark blood seep into the creases of her palm;

tore each golden lock from her throbbing scalp,  
tossed aside like the petalless flowers.

Blame the skull for making her cranium its captive.  
Blame the bones for holding her soul hostage.  
Blame the physic for cursing her psyche.



## DIAGNOSTIC CODES M73.7 G43.409

Boyce Bivens // Relief Print

## SEWER PIPE VEINS UNDER THE TEMPLE

Reilly Schrock

Sewer pipe veins with fresh graffiti.  
This place is not a temple—  
it's the smell in the alley behind  
Louie's, the broken bones of a child,  
the decolorized gaze of a man.

This temple is under  
construction, under the influence,  
Under the Flag for Which it Stands. This  
temple isn't unique and understanding,  
it's underfunded and under-appreciated.

Temples are where you worship—  
where you rest. But this place is  
the airport terminal as the elves  
are passing out coffee on the planes.  
There is no rest in the temple.

Only restlessness.





## PONDERING

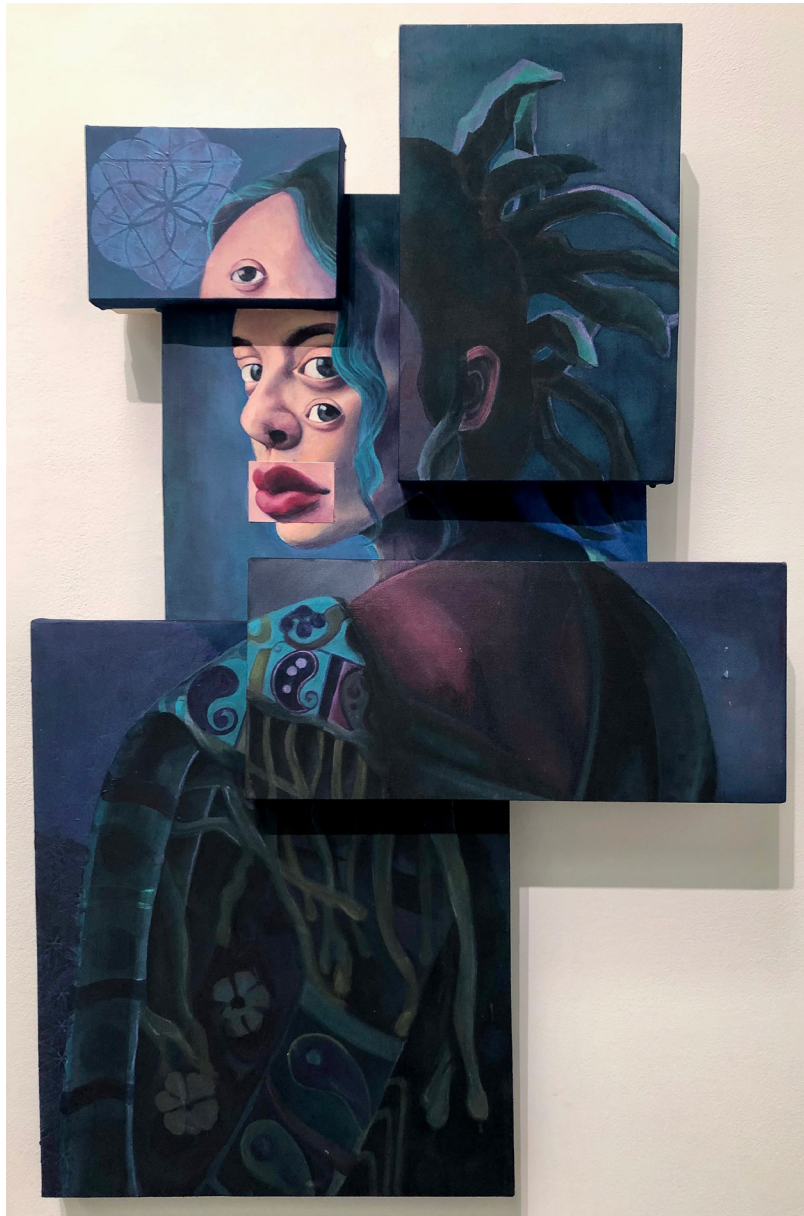
Maddie Powell // *Painting*

## MADE OF LIGHT

Angelina DiFranco

I dreamt of a light that split shadows  
and I woke up tangled in ice  
with the taste of homesickness caught  
in my throat, counting the ways a star can pretend to be human  
and swell in the spaces we abandoned.  
The woman in the mirror ripped out her tongue  
to forget the flavor of an empty house, and I kept counting,  
picturing my naked body on the dining room table again and  
again so I could hear what it sounds like and dance to it.





# SPLIT

Mia Mondora // *Painting*



# JULY

Ila Davis

another empty night in october, you fight the feeling of leaving. stare at walls 'til your sight gets fuzzy, lay in moldy sheets until your arms grow heavy with rot. heavy is the head on your pillowcase, chronic are the moths nesting in your gut. necks that once swiveled as you passed now fight forward through the crowd. even you stare past your reflection. golden feathers left un-preened shed and wither like dying grass in the summer. how do you figure you'll keep your figure with patterns like that? gaping jaws left empty, gotta funnel that energy somewhere. a fluorescent sky stretches out over hospital beds, the prom queen runs down a frozen field in her bloodied gown. one day you will run through that field, you swear. as the wailing motor pounds louder, and the ringing swells; you would do anything to keep feeling something. street lights pour and crash onto the roof of your car, cold sweat against the highway air. feels just like the coldest nights of july, and there are fireworks in your sternum. maybe you'll miss your exit. maybe you'll crash your car on purpose. maybe you'll scream and scream and maybe you'll turn into your driveway, and you will not go inside. park your car and stamp out the gas 'til you feel every impulse to burn blow out. stamp yourself out until there is nothing left but wisps of smoke. and then you will dry those moldy sheets, and you will start the flame again.

# NOVEMBER

Ila Davis

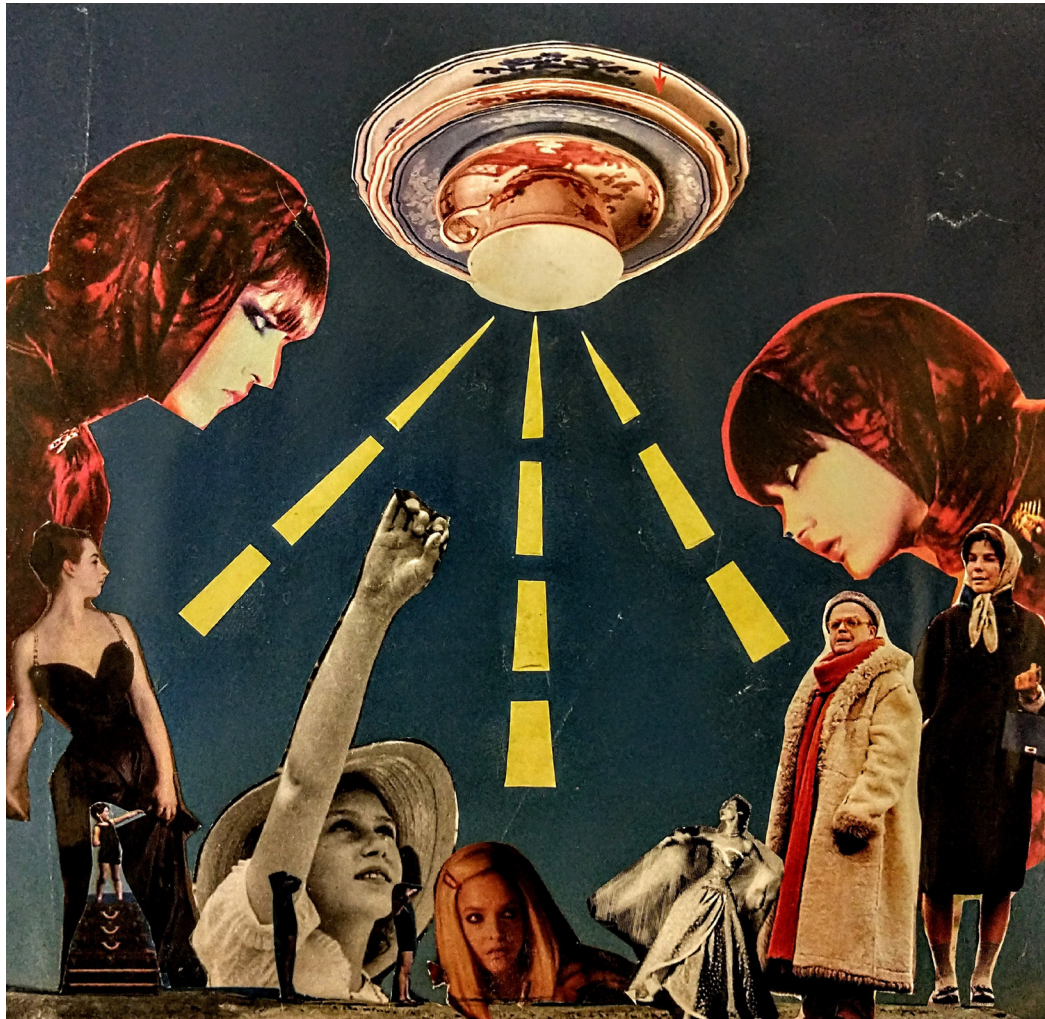
i will tip toe around the house and try to make myself feel pretty.

gentle feet and gentle hands become violent in the face of uncertainty. heat crowds in around you as the warmth drips out my body, and you ask me how can i still be freezing? you ask me again and i become undone. and you ask and you ask. you will take that uphill stone and roll it atop my shoulders and you will not care if i cannot bear the weight. then that sound rings out— the cracking of collarbones, and the ripping of ribs into angel wings. and i will scream wild until blood pours out of my mouth, and i will use my pretty pink hands to rub red on my mouth. “doesn't my lipstick look wonderful?” i will sing. tell me my lipstick looks wonderful. tell me i am wonderful, with my soft body and my rolling curves and my perfect nipples and my small, shaking, cold, soft body. do not call me your angel and expect prayer to your name. i will become all that you want, with my halo crown and flushing cheeks, my gaping mouth and bloody knees, and i will tear it all out until you are repulsed and begging me, no more. you will be the one shamed and scorned, and i will scream your name into the walls until it is nothing more than drywall crumbs and ashtray dust.

i will not be gentle for you. i will slice your achilles until we meet eye to eye. i will make you bleed like you did me and i will kill you.

and i will kill you.

and i will kill you.



## FLYING SAUCER

Anna Kaper // Collage

## SPACE

Patrick Moorman

Humans evolve, go back in time  
to make a teensy, itty bitty speck  
of something  
work towards something

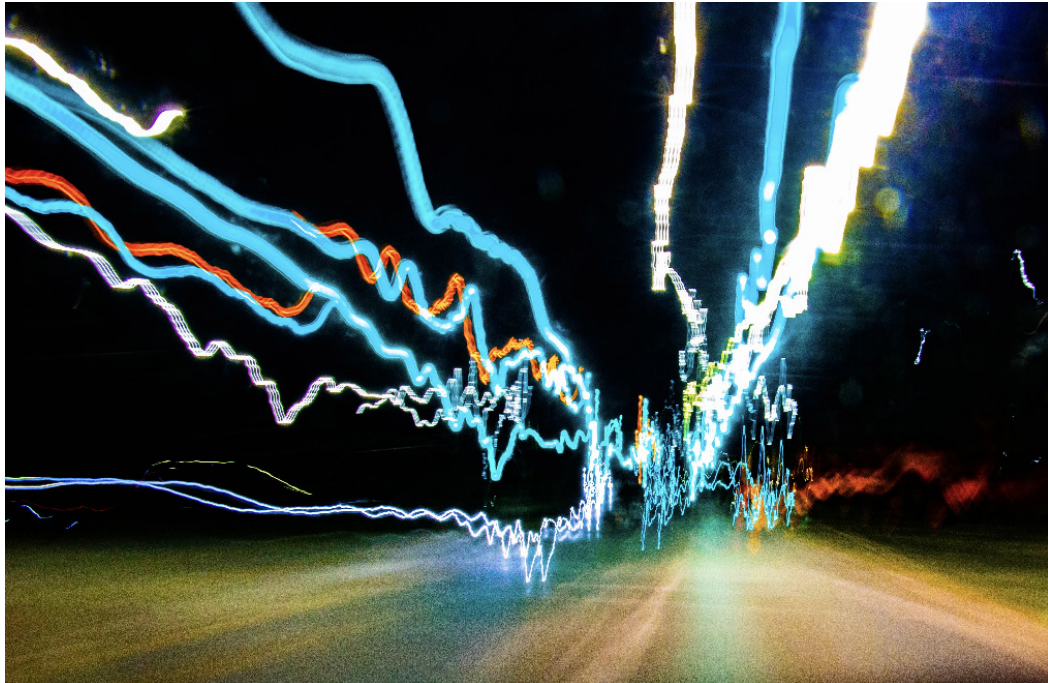
profound.

There is threading deep in the gut  
that pulls us towards where we need to go.  
It is the thing we know  
and the thing we can't escape.

Perhaps we are solitary caretakers of the universe,  
and we just keep creating a new wave

of tiny people  
to be tiny people

together.



## **STREETLIGHTS**

Kazu Okamoto // *Photography*



# CONTRIBUTORS

## **OLIVIA MEYER** *(she/her)*

*pg. 02*

Kent State University

Olivia Meyer is a sophomore Fashion Merchandising major who is interested in using fashion as a platform for social change and empowerment. Mesmerized by the power of clothes to enable people to do great things, Olivia is a firm believer in the idea that improving one's exterior can help one's interior shine to its fullest potential. In addition to writing poetry, Olivia enjoys ballroom dancing and spending time with her friends and family.

## **KAZU OKAMOTO** *(he/him)*

*pg. 03, 06, 59*

Kent State University

Kazu is a student at Kent State University.

## **OLIVIA WACHTEL** *(she/her)*

*pg. 04, 09, 34*

Kent State University

Olivia is a senior honors student at Kent State majoring in English. She also has minors in creative writing and psychology. In addition to writing, she enjoys knitting, reading, and meeting new people.

## **NOEL FRYE** *(she/her)*

*pg. 05*

Kent State University

Noel is a freshman art education major and is on the track and field team at Kent State. She loves photography because it taught her to find the beauty in everything around her—from weird rusty objects on the side of the road, to rotting tree stumps in the woods, to her sister's eyes peering out of a dirty window. Things that she used to see as ordinary, or even ugly, can be transformed through the perspective of a camera lens.

## **ABRIANA ROSU** *(she/her)*

*pg. 08*

Kent State University

Abriana Rosu is a student at Kent State University, studying Visual Communication Design and Theatre Studies. As an artist, she works in many formats, but her focus is in illustration and comics. She is drawn to comics because they are the perfect blend of literature and art. Where drawings fail, words speak, and where words fail, drawings speak. She feels that comics act in a complete way, as the mind does, with both words and images. To see more of Abriana's work, visit her website at <https://abrianaart.weebly.com/>.

## **NORA GAST** *(she/her)*

*pg. 29*

Kent State University

Nora Reilly Gast is a Junior Studio Art Major at Kent State University. Her primary focus is Glass working, however drawing contributes largely to her work and sculptural mediums. Nora uses cerebral themes of the unconscious, trauma, and interpersonal relationships as a part of her inspiration and artistic process. Organic forms and shapes take life in both her three dimensional and two dimensional work, as well as non objective subjects.

## **CHLOE RITZIC** *(she/her)*

*pg. 31*

Kent State University

Chloe Ritzic is a freshman Fashion Merchandising student at Kent State University. She loves clothes, reading, writing, art, the outdoors, and creating as much as she can. Her biggest inspirations are her elderly cat Stella and dog Oliver.

## **MADDIE POWELL** *(they/she)*

*pg. 32, 51*

Kent State University

Maddie Powell is a first year Visual Communications Design major at Kent State University. Painting is their form of self expression. They try to make statements through their art, whether they be about mental health, human rights issues, or self love. Recently, they have been trying to branch outside of their typical art style and experiment with new mediums and techniques. They hope to continue exploring new art forms and topics they are passionate about.

**PATRICK MOORMAN** *(he/they)*  
pg. 43, 58

Kent State University

Patrick Moorman is a preservice teacher at Waterloo Highschool taking classes at Kent State. He is an active member of the Wick Poetry Center, running workshops within local surrounding communities. He did not consider himself a poet until a fourth grader wrote, "Poetry should fly to your heart / like you take in love" in response to the prompt, "What should poetry do?" This made Patrick realize that everyone is a poet, they just don't yet know it.

**BOYCE BIVENS** *(he/they)*  
pg. 33, 46, 49

Kent State University

Boyce is a current Printmaking major at Kent State. He creates multimedia print based works exploring identity, queerness, community, and the medicalization of trans and disabled bodies, often reflecting his own experiences. He frequently uses relief, screen, risograph, letterpress, and combined processes. See more of his work at @boyce.bivens on Instagram!

**SARAH JOSEPH** *(she/her)*  
pg. 35

Kent State University

Sarah Joseph is an architecture student at Kent State University. When she's not working on

studio projects, she enjoys painting and drawing. Sarah has been creating artwork for as long as she remembers and finds that it is a great stress reliever and a way to express herself. In the future, she hopes to continue her passion for art and incorporate that into the field of architecture.

**MARIA TERESA GUILLEN** *(she/her)*  
pg. 36

Southwestern Michigan College

Maria Teresa is a Venezuelan asylee who came to the US searching for a better life. Her work wants to voice the many struggles immigrants face silently and showcase how resourceful and resilient people who confront injustice can be. She loves to read (especially if it is anything from Cassandra Clare), spend time with her family, cuddle with her dog Loki, and hang out with her friends.

**GEORGIA COULTER** *(she/her)*  
pg. 41

Kent State University

Georgia Coulter is a student and entrepreneur at Kent State and is currently working on developing the brand into a living portfolio of research projects related to architecture, fashion, and design. The first collection of the brand @giacoult was an exploration of research on knit structures in architecture. Each collection includes an investigation/research period as

she tries to grow her craft and technological capabilities. Currently the brand platform is instagram but the website is in the works to become an online store with the referenced sources available.

**MORGAN BEDILION** *(she/her)*  
pg. 45

Kent State University

Morgan Bedilion is a first-year Theatre Design & Production major at Kent State University with a minor in Theatre Performance. When not studying or writing, her passions lie on the stage and in the practice room. Morgan hopes to pursue a career in the arts and enjoys all things creative.

**ANNIE GLEJDURA** *(she/her)*  
pg. 47

Kent State University

Annie is a sophomore Fashion Merchandising major with Creative Writing and Fashion Media minors. She hopes to become a fashion journalist in the future.

**REILLY SCHROCK** *(he/him)*  
pg. 50

Kent State University

Born and raised in Akron, Ohio, Schrock is a senior Digital Media Production and English student at Kent State University. He'll be

graduating in August 2022. Schrock is an aspiring writer, filmmaker, and poet. His debut short film, 'Idle Hands' is currently under consideration at several film festivals throughout the state of Ohio. Link for the site to the film: <https://reillyphschrock.wixsite.com/idlehandsfilm>

**ANGELINA DIFRANCO** *(she/her)*  
pg. 52

Kent State University

Angelina DiFranco is currently a junior double majoring in dance and English at Kent State University. She is a first-year member of the Kent Dance Ensemble, received the May O'Donnell Memorial Dance Award, and was given the dance faculty award for outstanding achievement as an emerging artist. She is infatuated with integrating choreography, particularly dance for the camera, and poetry. Angelina recently collaborated with Kent State's Female Filmmakers Initiative, choreographing and performing for their latest production. She has been published in See Chicago Dance Magazine, Luna Negra, and Brainchild. Angelina is beyond thrilled to pursue dance professionally and considers it a privilege to work alongside artists.




**MIA MONDORA** *(she/her)*

pg. 53

Youngstown State University

Mia Mondora is a multimedia artist from the state of Ohio. Painting was her main passion until getting to explore different media, specifically sculpture and ceramic art forms in college. Focusing her work around portraiture talks about the human condition. Currently Mondora's concepts are similar but add in the layer of humans in relation to the organic world, the importance of this symbiotic connection.



**ILA DAVIS** *(they/them)*

pg. 55, 56

Ivy Tech Community College

Ila is a 22 year old student at Ivy Tech Community College. They have always had more emotions than they are able to carry—a chronic crybaby. Ila found solace in poetry, acting, and drawing as a way to unload some of this weight. They are drawn to stories of introspection, obsession, misplaced desire, and rage; as a way to cope with their own past hardships. Ila has been doing this ever since they could talk, and plan to do so as long as they are able to share stories.



**ANNA KAPER** *(she/her)*

pg. 57

Kent State University

Anna Kaper is a Freshman Fashion Design Honors student at Kent State University. She aims to revitalize the value of craftsmanship in art and our daily lives. In what little free time she has, she can usually be found cooking up some elaborate new crafting project and satisfying her insatiable appetite for knowledge and adventure. You can find more of her work on her Instagram @anna.kaper\_



