

SILHOUETTE



SUMMER 2021



A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear reader:

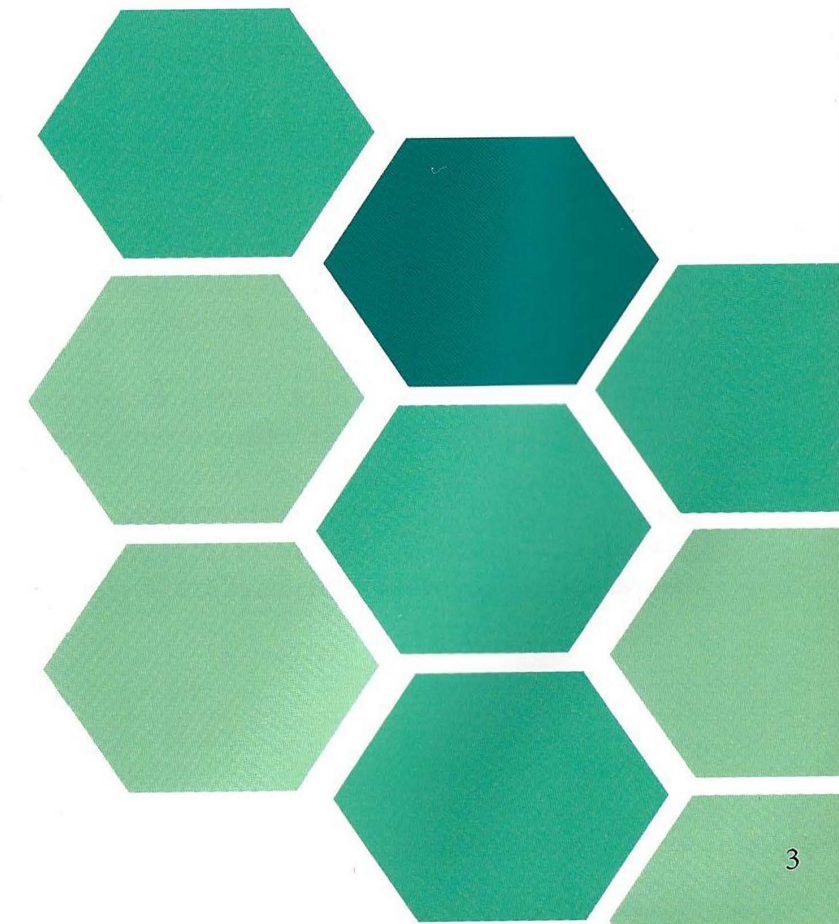
The copy of the Silhouette that you hold in your hands is a very special one. It's no secret that we're living in unprecedentedly historic times, and a print magazine is a labor of love when the world seems normal, let alone when illness, political unrest, and revolution are sweeping our nation and the globe. It's times like these when we might lose sight of the point of things like art and creativity, but it's also times like these when I firmly believe that they're more important than ever. As Cesar A. Cruz once said, "Art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable." Art in this time of unrest is a vehicle for important messages and a form of solace for the suffering. It is a way for us to give voice to our own stories.

I'm so grateful to each and every person who submitted their work to Silhouette this semester for continuing to create their own works of art during this pandemic and for having the courage to share them with others. Whether your piece was featured in this edition of Silhouette or not, know that I treasured each submission we received. Thank you for keeping the arts alive and thriving in our Virginia Tech community.

I want to extend my special thanks to the Silhouette staff, new and returning, for their patience with me as I navigated my first semester as editor-in-chief. Their dedication to their work despite my inconsistent emails and inexperience with Zoom meetings has made our magazine possible and I'm incredibly grateful for their creativity and hard work. I also owe many thanks to my predecessor, Leina, for always taking the time to answer my many questions even as she herself navigates post-grad life in a pandemic, and to Kiley Thompson for her reassurance and guidance. Finally, the biggest thanks of all go to you, the reader, for picking up our magazine and taking the time to appreciate the work contained within it. I can't wait to continue my work with Silhouette this year and watch it grow, and I hope this edition of our magazine brings you as much joy to read it as it brought me to work on it.

Cheers!

Isa Diaz
Editor-in-Chief 2020 – 2021



ANOTHER LETTER FROM A DIFFERENT EDITOR

Hello reader,

I think we can all agree that this past year has been a sh*t show. But things are looking up! I hope this magazine can find you in a time of renewed hope — and if not, I hope it can serve as a reminder that regardless of what you're feeling or going through, you're not alone in it. This pandemic has made us feel more separated than ever before. Art and literature, though, have and always will be a strong means of connection, no matter how far apart we may feel.

I chose these different design elements, the hexagons and the green color scheme, to correlate with different themes of the pandemic. The hexagons made me think of a stop sign (and were also easy to create) and the green made me think of growth and progress. Put them together, and you get something like a green stop sign — meaning no matter how much you feel like stopping during this pandemic or just generally in life, there's something great waiting if you just keep going. The cover is a piece featured in the magazine from Emma Edmondson called *A Journey of Self Discovery*. I feel this piece is an accurate representation of this year, as with isolation caused by the pandemic came a time of self discovery for all of us — of the good and the bad.

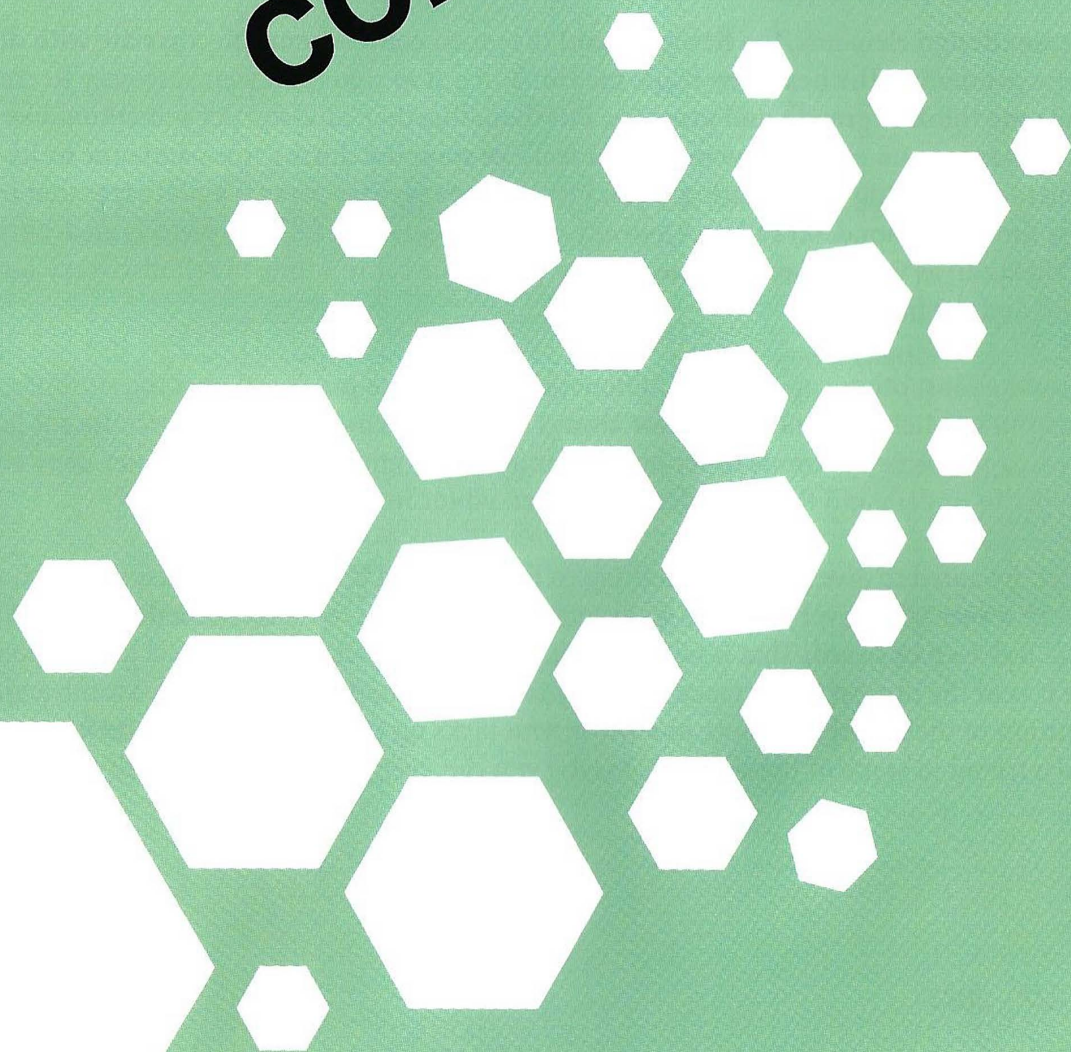
This magazine is unlike most other copies of the Silhouette in that it was produced over the summer. A special thanks goes out to Michael Hendrickson for always believing in me, Alexandra Perreira for her support and comedic relief, Kiley Thompson for her encouragement, and Tori Walker for her copy editing smarts and ability to understand the struggles of being an editor in chief.

With this magazine, I wanted to give people something to look forward to in the fall — especially the featured creatives. In a year when everyone was so distant, they managed to create something that people can connect to and feel seen or heard. That is no easy task, especially when you might feel just as alone yourself. I believe it is of the utmost importance that they feel appreciated as well, at the least through this public recognition of their work. My note to anyone who picks up this copy of Silhouette is that I hope you can find a friend in some of these pieces. Maybe you can even create some yourself for the next issue.

Keep on creating,

Abbigale Evans
Editor in Chief 2021 – 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS



POETRY

<i>Or Current Resident</i>	Michelle Garcia	8
<i>Stardust</i>	Taylor Thackaberry	9
<i>Abstract Distractions</i>	Mason Keyser	10
<i>Holy Whatevers</i>	Michelle Garcia	14
<i>Maine</i>	Isa Diaz	16
<i>The Cosmos is Lonely like Me</i>	Isa Diaz	18
<i>Mountain Summer</i>	Isa Diaz	28
<i>These Hands</i>	Jonathan Kabongo	30
<i>Monolith</i>	Taylor Thackaberry	31
<i>Cardamom</i>	Michelle Garcia	35

PROSE

<i>I Said No</i>	Michelle Garcia	38
<i>Analise</i>	Adreanna DeMarino	43
<i>Bedroom Definitions</i>	Kathleen Walker	46

PHOTOGRAPHY

<i>Fire in the Sky</i>	Sean Stroud	11
<i>Brewing</i>	Brandon Kong	12
<i>Burruss Chandelier</i>	Victoria Carter	15
<i>Beacon</i>	Isa Diaz	17
<i>Unequivocally Free</i>	Sean Stroud	19
<i>Alter Ego</i>	Grace Kelly	22
<i>Full Steam Ahead</i>	Sean Stroud	29
<i>20/20</i>	Brandon Kong	34

ART

<i>A Journey of Self Discovery</i>	Emma Edmondson	20
<i>Ghost</i>	Emma Edmondson	32
<i>The Hallucinogenic Dalliance</i>	Grace Aulabaugh	33
<i>Girl's Night</i>	Audrey McGovern	39
<i>The Woman with Wavy Hair</i>	Kelsey Briggs	40
<i>Flowers I Forgot</i>	Tony Lin	42
<i>Waves Crash on Distant Shores</i>	Tony Lin	48

OR CURRENT RESIDENT

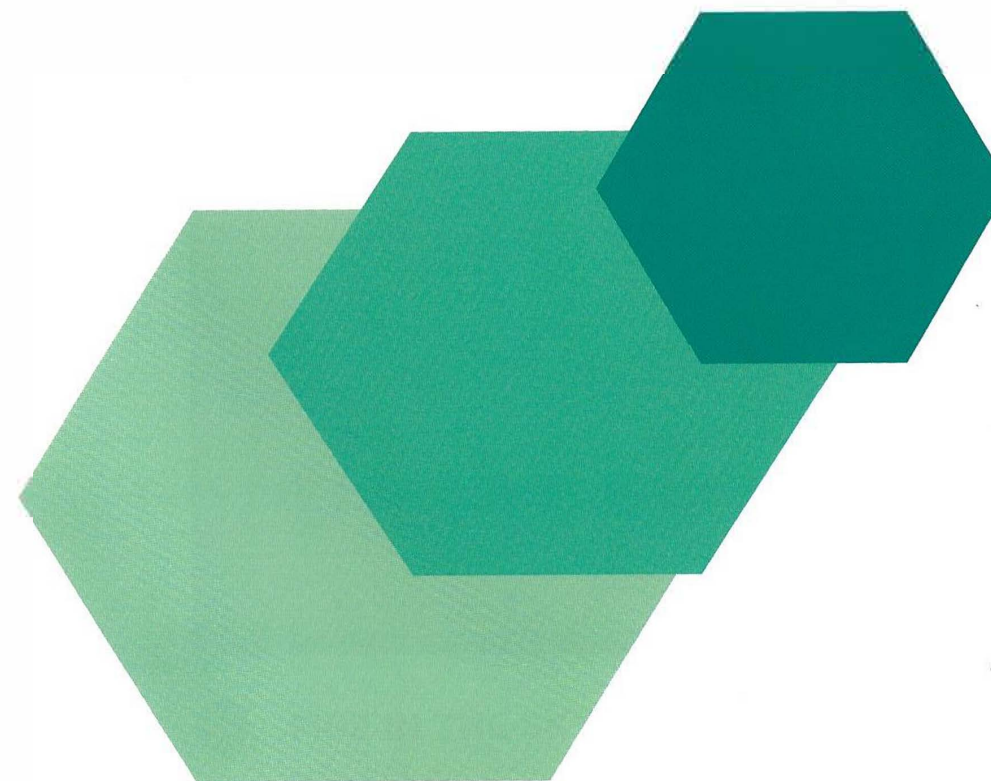
Michelle Garcia

Chinese Kitchen on N. Main has been alive longer than I have. *26th Anniversary, 15% off* boasts curly lettering, origin Microsoft Word. I am stunned by the permanence of things. Last winter an old friend of mine used to peer into the misty shop window with me, watching locals passionately devour steamed dumplings. We swore we'd try them one day but never got around to it. Dear Current Resident of Apartment E, take this booklet of coupons, for *Big Easy Savings, Priced Low Every Day*. If only they knew I wish I could buy time. That I wish I could fill my plate with heaps of minutes, that I wish we could have been permanent enough to make it inside. Maybe we would've loved their sesame chicken, or maybe we'd come back over and over for the house special, or the beef lo mein or maybe we'd deem it *whatever* and never come back, passing the open sign every night but at least we'd know. I've got a phantom limb taste in my mouth that wouldn't be there if you had just kept walking me home.

STARDUST

Taylor Thackaberry

So what happened to those burnt out suns?
Tallying the days till their end?
A supernova; one fierce enough to
Render the universes' threads unpinned.
Dark and famished, the mouth opens wide.
Until its sated, it consumes all as one.
Stars, planets, to be reborn again.
This is what we've become.



ABSTRACT DISTRACTIONS

Mason Keyser

We come for the sights and the sounds
And Stay for a time
To be alone to be around
sit back and unwind
What's become of us now
Too hard to define
We're abstract distractions
Fleeting through time

The miles divide the space in between
What is conserved, what is conceived
What is a moment if not but a year
Alone on some tumbling big blue sphere

What was once clear soon fades away
Land of redemption calling my name
As soon as you go so with it the world
Better take your time and give it a whirl

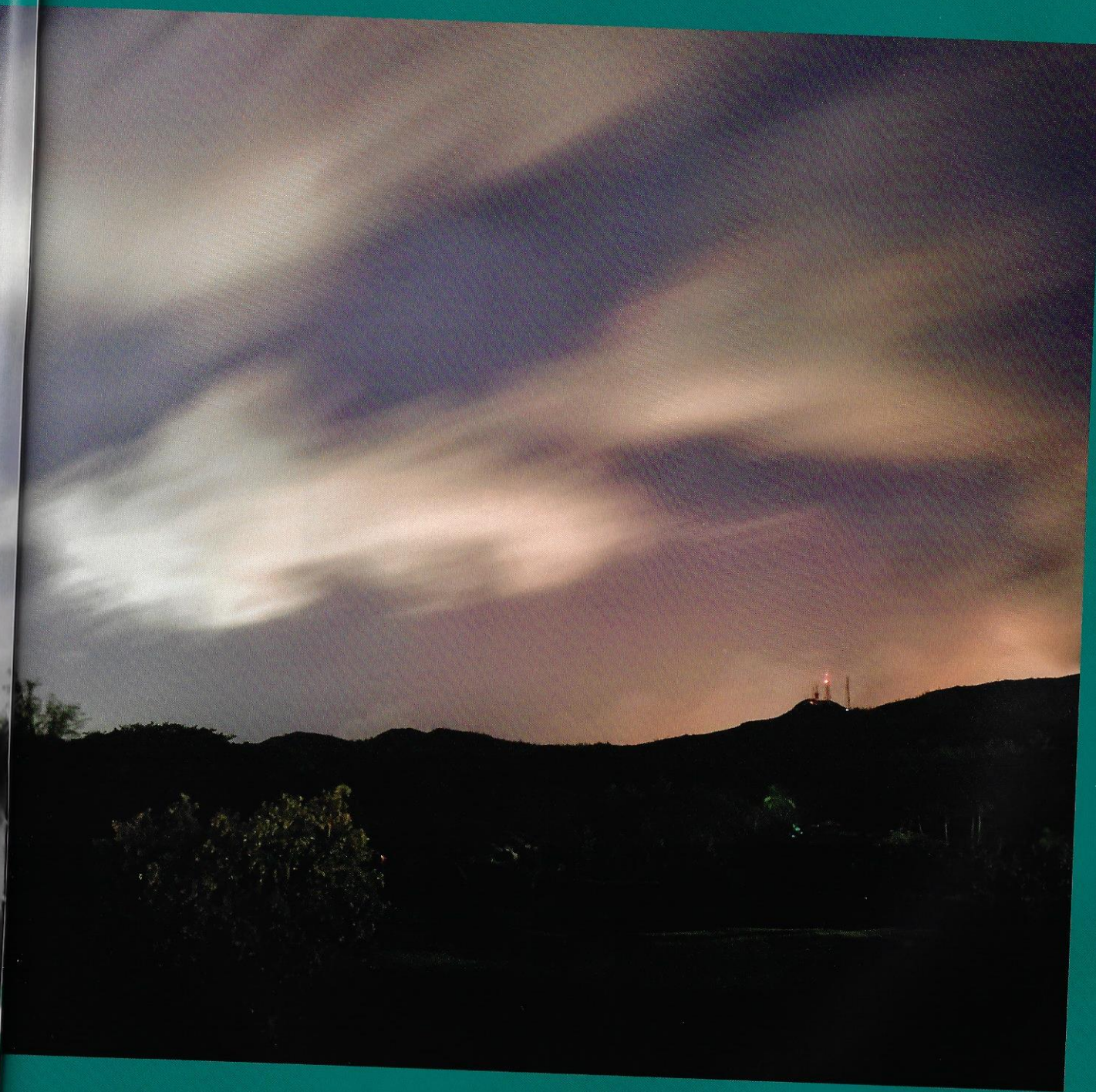
To live is to die is to live so it seems
Again and again towards the supreme
Found in the time we choose to share
Together today and the devil may care

Sundogs rise in an open sky
Burn away the fog
Sundogs rise in an open sky
Come to carry me off



FIRE IN THE SKY

Sean Stroud



HOLY WHATEVERS

Michelle Garcia

Chipped coffee mugs half-filled with cheap liquor,
makeshift blanket forts, a locked door. Lipstick
rubs off when you scrub your lips in the shower
but guilt does not; it sits like a sore and festers.
You start to believe in the permanence of these
holy whatevers: paresthetic leg under the weight
of you, static electricity, the pins and needles
of knowing someone almost fully. I say almost
because we never really do. No matter how
easy it becomes to sacrifice sanity, how natural
it becomes to wear each other's smiles like
sweatshirts in a too-hot September, there is more
to a person than who they were when they left.
I thought he was composed of magic, under his
skin a gleam of nirvana; if you asked me I could
have sworn he was a god in another hourglass.
Those sacred trivialities: strands of my hair
on your perfumed pillowcase, arguments about
the universe under halcyon skies, a litany
of touching and colliding. The whole world
would call us blasphemy, would deem us sinful.
But I kept my toothbrush in your medicine
cabinet. I kicked your leg in my nightmares.
When you pick your lip, does it still bleed?



BURRUSS CHANDELIER

Victoria Carter

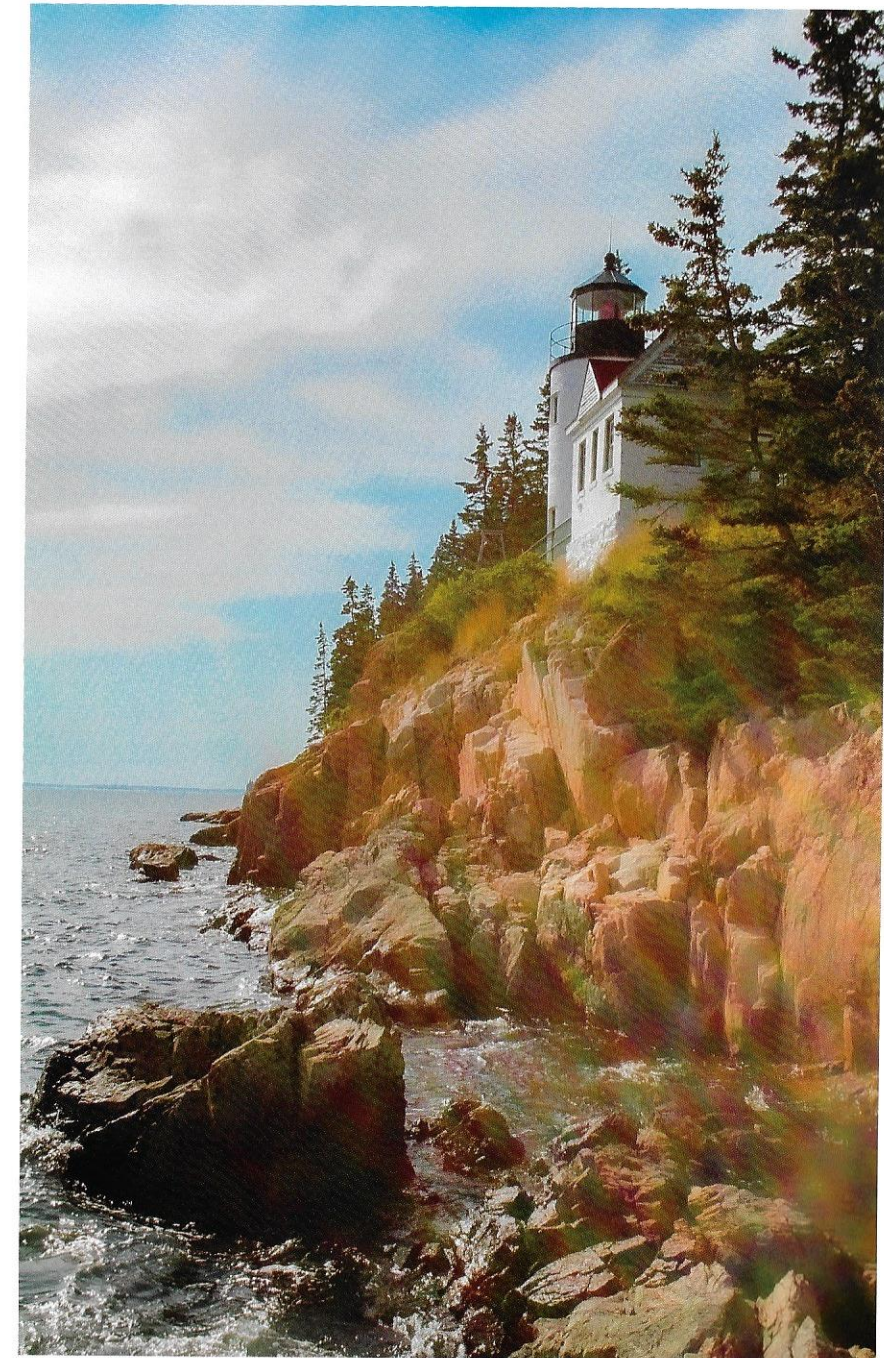
MAINE

Isa Diaz

At fifteen I knew nothing of the world
and even less of the heart that frantically pounded
like a rabbit in the concave of my ribs, but somehow
I knew even then that I belonged here, among rough cedar trees
and spongy earth and cobalt seas with the sun on my neck
and the salt spray kissing my summer freckles.
The Atlantic North graced all of my earliest stories, my imagination
infatuated with a mysterious land of silver mist and towering pines
and lighthouses standing watch on rocky coasts,
but never did I imagine her summers would seduce me so
at the still tender age of nineteen, all awkward legs
and frizzy braids and wonder.

June is summer like raw cookie dough from the tub but August
is summer fully baked, golden and warm and oozing
from the inside out, and I feel like a child crouched
on the rocks of Sand Beach in my sneakers and socks,
fingers dancing over routs of snails and casts of crabs,
barnacles scraping my tender palms.
The sunshine makes it all feel like a painting, red rocks
framing this cove and the sea beyond and I wish
more than anything to be a bird, a green lobster, a white seashell
in the hands of a little girl with fascination in her eyes,
to be a blade of golden grass in the breeze or the weathervane
on an old lighthouse at the very edge of the sea,
to forever be a part of this strange and perfect ecosystem.

It's sunset now and the beach is made of pebbles and
the water is like ice, a shock to the veins, and I run in unabashedly,
shrieking and flailing, curls flying, and submerge my whole body.
I feel invincible, eternal, all at once young and like I have lived forever.
Peonies blossom in my ribcage as I turn my face to the sky,
child of late August, outpouring of euphoria,
gleeful in my long-awaited deliverance to where I was always meant to be.



BEACON

Isa Diaz

THE COSMOS IS LONELY LIKE ME

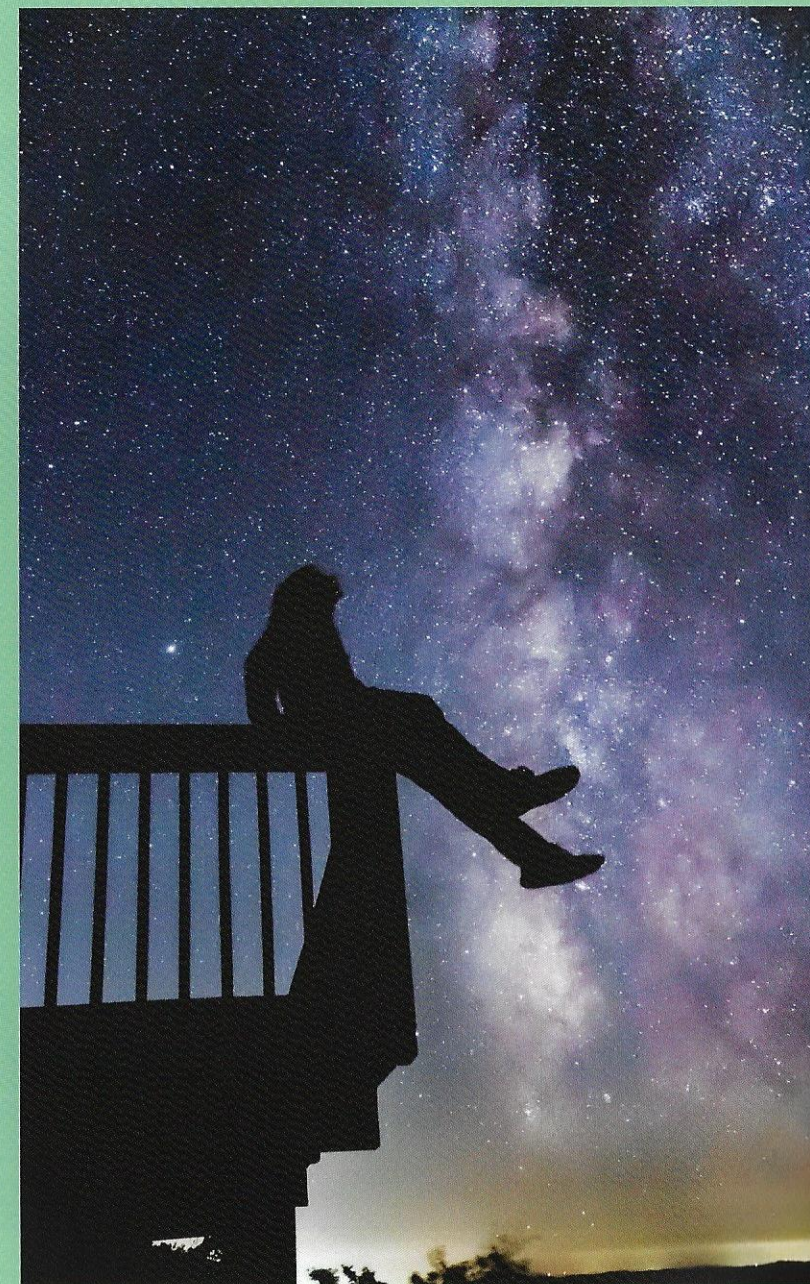
Isa Diaz

Every black hole
(said the scientist)
was once a star.

People
(said the philosopher)
are made of the stuff of stars,
of carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen.

I want
(said the lonely person)
the sunshine, the fresh air,
all the red strawberries and clay-soft avocados in the store, every drop of
water in the ocean, to feel the gaze of someone
who loves me,
to feel their heart pound beneath my cheek,
to crawl inside them and make a home
in their ribcage,
to grow, to consume everything
I can get.

Perhaps
(said the poet)
the stars, so far away from one another, are lonely too.



UNEQUIVOCALLY FREE

Sean Stroud

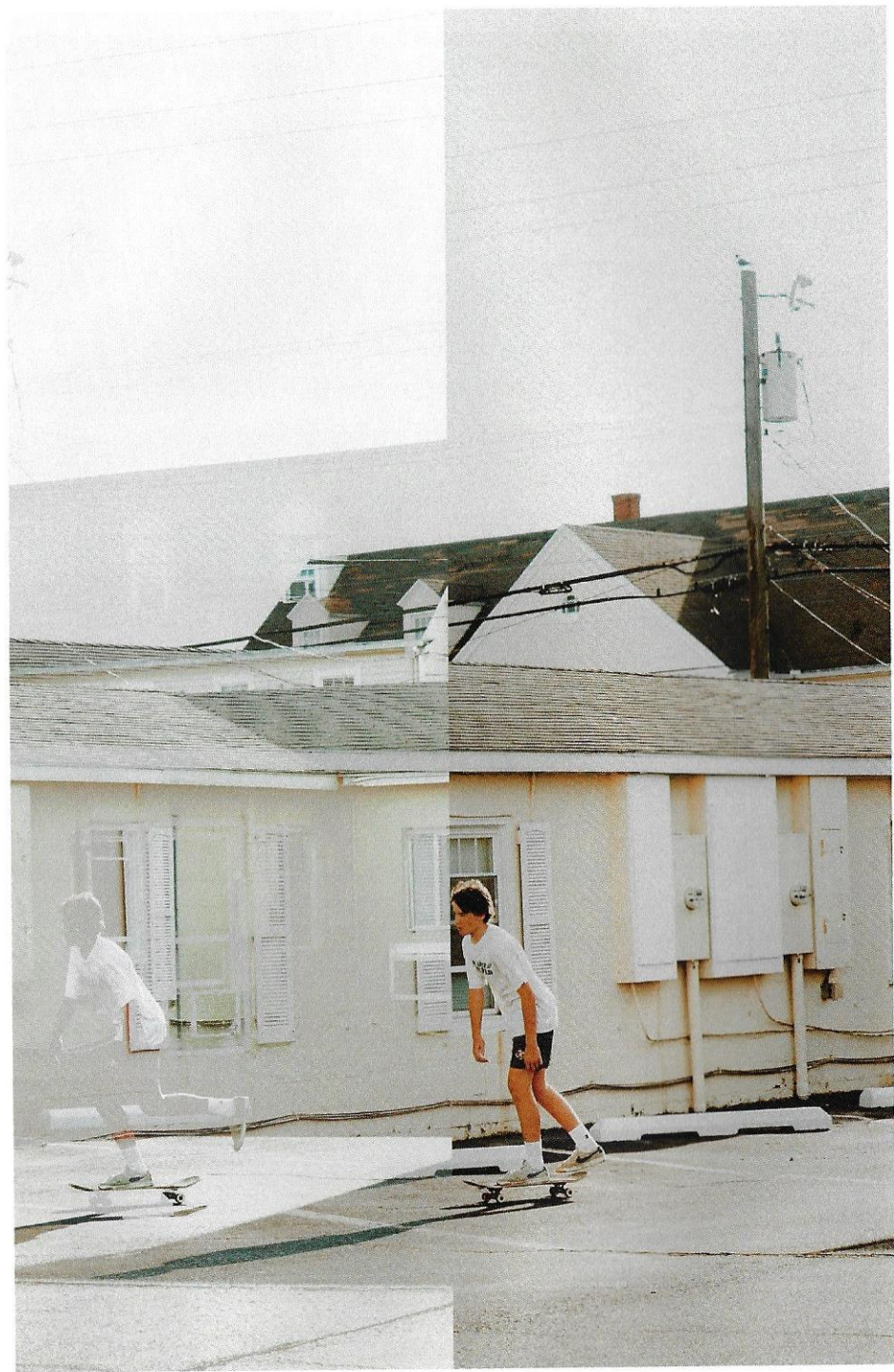


ALTER EGO

A six-part piece

Grace Kelly









THESE HANDS

Jon Kabongo

crafted on African land,
sculpted the land of the free—
free of charge.
Gyves shackle the neck of these palms
with creases short and long.

These hands,
calloused on the lighter side,
narrate stories of inhumane treatment.

These hands,
durable as the buildings they built
yet sensitive to touch,
infect oppressors with guilt.

These hands,
with the tips of their fingers
that revolutionized the sounds that make us dance —
never felt an equal chance.

These hands,
with numerous lines
that still don't surpass the number of times
the line was crossed —
shake the other



MONOLITH

Taylor Thackaberry

For the weak of mind and body
the wilderness makes no concessions;

I hike with breath-cloud in my face
up monolith stone impressions.

My companions all turned back
I head forward with only will

to see the other side of a rock,
predictable--but the next? Something

is pushing me forward, and it's not
the sight of jagged peaks below.

I hike because I am here. I want
to see my footprints in the snow.

Before chalk-colored piazzas
and tiles, garden terraces,

Before we spoke tongues,
different tongues
and cut cloths to wave in those blue skies,

Before the boats sculled across the lake
The wind blew,

and wandered lost between these hills.
It did not exist to move us.

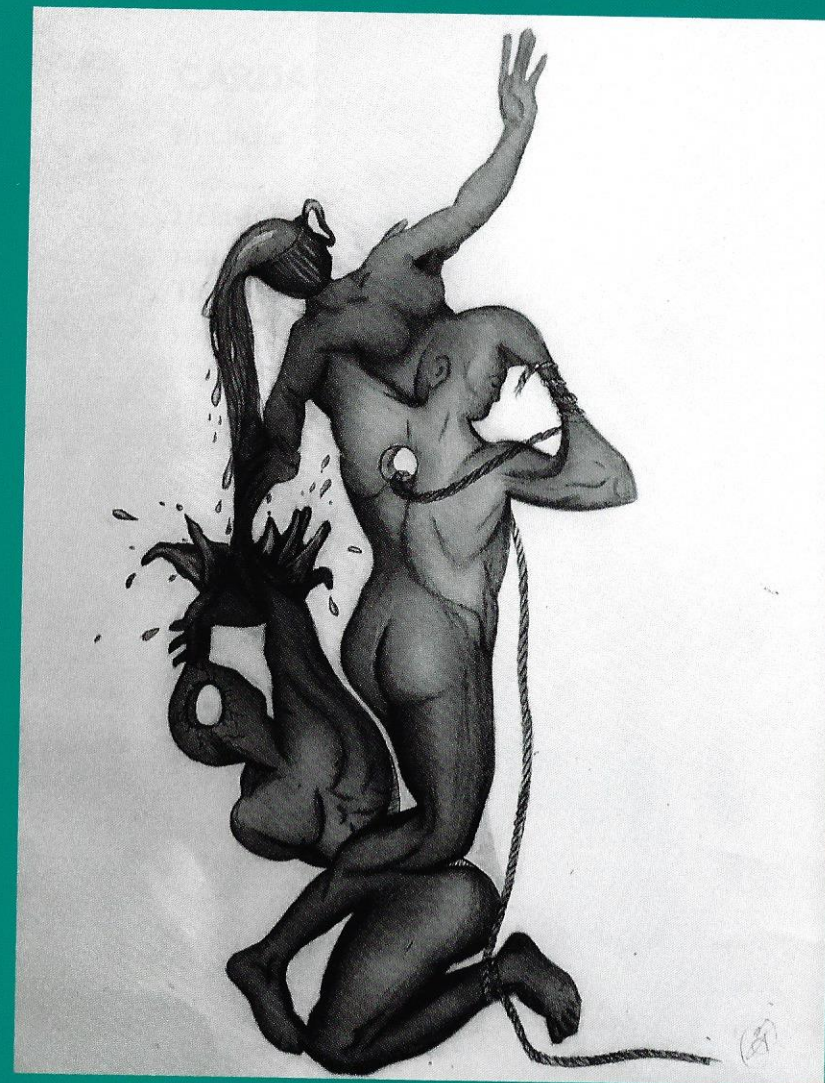
Up here, it wanders too.
The only sound

except for cowbells' and sheepbells'
hollow voices.



GHOST

Emma Edmondson

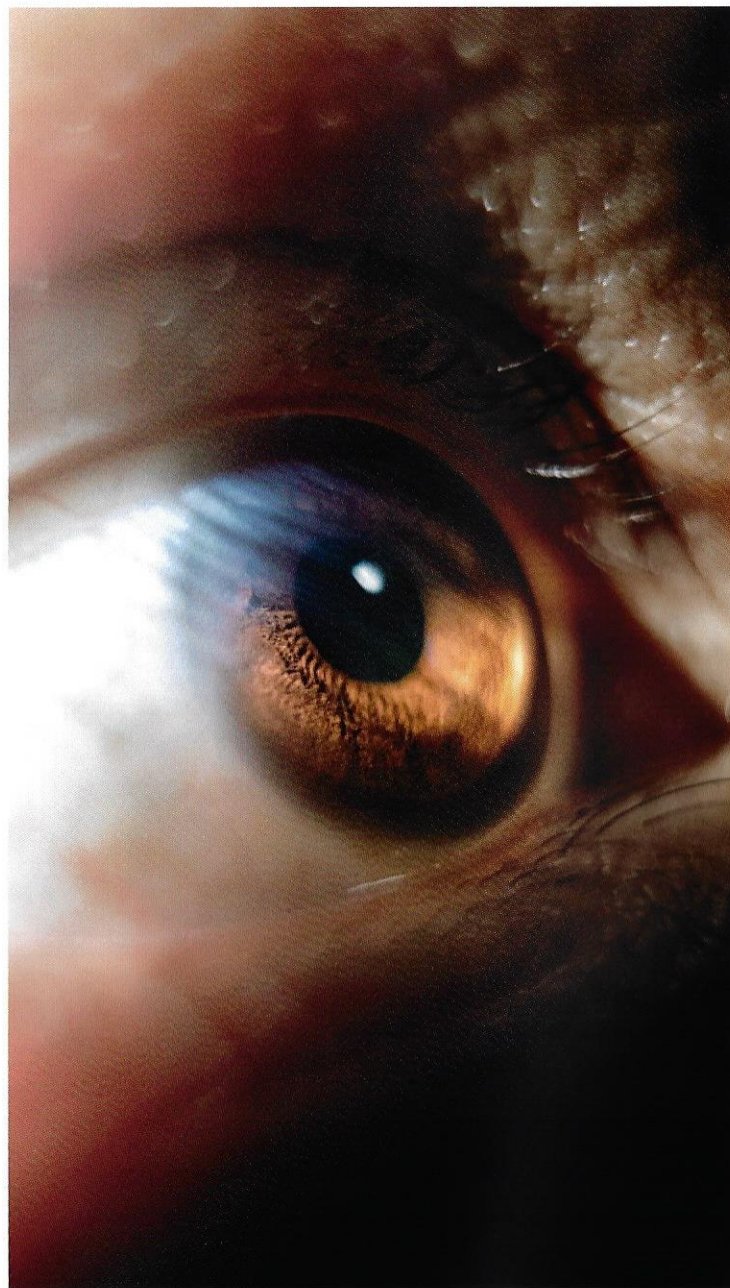


THE HALLUCINOGENIC DALLIANCE

Grace Aulabaugh

EDITORS' NOTE

The Hallucinogenic Dalliance is an interpretation of Giambologna's sculpture, *Abduction of a Sabine Woman*. Aulabaugh cites Salvador Dalí as inspiration for the surrealist nature of the drawing. It shows a woman pouring herself out into two men, one of which is missing his brain, and the other, his heart. Aulabaugh says, "In love, reciprocation is unpredictable and not guaranteed."



20/20

Brandon Kong



CARDAMOM

Michelle Garcia

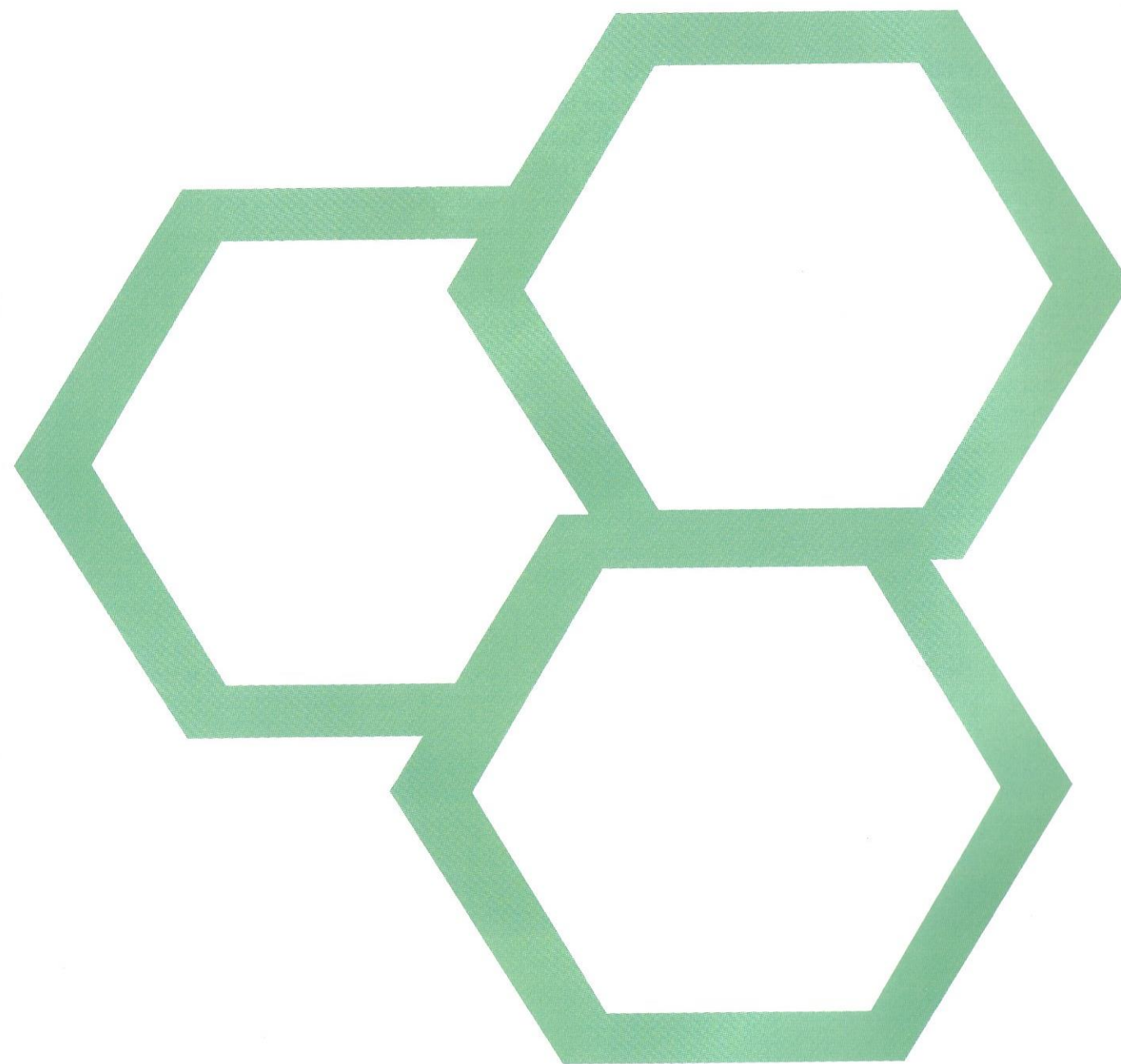
Heat-induced goosebumps, strands of hair shed on wispy bedsheets,
you and I loved with the fever of a thousand and one Julys.
This one tastes different already, this watery, bloodless summer
void of eager touch, as bland as the dust under a desert moon.
These days, I have too much breath for my own liking
and these nights, I wish I had a body to inflate.
A shoulder to bite without breaking skin, threadlike veins
snaking across a forearm like English ivy, an asymmetrical birthmark
like a pile of spilled cinnamon above the navel.
Yours.

How it tasted less like cinnamon and more like cardamom,
which was living proof that the body is a false prophet,
that it is capable of turning disciples into skeptics,
that all love is senseless.
It is July now
and I am remembering those afternoons and mornings,
cardamom seasoning the tongue, how I called it communion
and called you my God.

EDITORS' NOTE

I Said No is a graphic reminder of the ongoing problem of sexual assault in college life. It shows the lesser seen side of sexual assault—the recovery. It reveals the difficulties in coming forward to close friends and the incessant flashbacks that interrupt a regular day. The detail and personalization in this piece helped us nominate it as our Editors' Choice this year. We hope it can shed more light on the issues of sexual assault as well as make those who have been victims feel less alone in their daily struggles.

Girl's Night is a tribute to the Guerrilla Girls, an anonymous group of female artists who devote their time to fighting sexism and racism within the art community. Audrey McGovern effectively captures their message with this violent graphic, inspiring women everywhere to fight for their voices to be heard in the creative sphere. The work uses a sample from the painting *Judith beheading Holofernes* (ca. 1620) by painter Artemisia Gentileschi. McGovern says, "This digital piece is meant to be a modernized form of female rage."



I SAID NO

Michelle Garcia

It's not about the act itself but the aftermath. After it happened I couldn't pass by a mirror for months without resurrecting the image of handprints on hips, the kind that didn't scrub off in the shower no matter how hard I tried, burning my bones, the memory of bruises reddening my ribs. I remember slinking back into my father's sweatshirt and leaving in the morning like nothing happened. You were fast asleep and I didn't wake you-- just slipped on yesterday's wrinkled clothes, ran my hands through the knots in my hair you made when I was too dizzy to tell you to stop, and put last night's unfinished homework, stained amber by your cheap liquor, back into my school backpack, unfeeling. And then I didn't feel anything for the rest of the year. But after I left your dorm room that morning I got coffee. Two cups of half & half coffee creamer into a medium-sized styrofoam cup of dark roast. I took the window desk on the third floor of the library and wrote a mediocre essay on the dark lady in Shakespeare's Sonnet 130 through a post-structuralist lens. At the campus ice cream shop that night, over double scoops of mint chocolate chip in a waffle cone, a close girlfriend of mine asked me what was new in my world, and I said, *Nothing much, just looking forward to Thanksgiving break*, and adjusted the collar of my shirt so she wouldn't see what you did and bombard me with concern. That was the beginning of my fear of love. It's not about the act itself but the aftermath. The cavernous space between the me I knew and the me that couldn't be touched without the compulsion to scream. If anyone asked about you then I would've lied through my teeth and said something along the lines of *We're good. We're not together anymore but we're good*. I wouldn't have told them about the way you made me swallow a pill *just in case, I don't know, just do it*. I wouldn't have told them about crossing paths with you later that week, that all-knowing smirk plastered on your face, and how seriously I contemplated the height of a rooftop and whether or not it could eradicate my suffering. It's not about the act itself but the aftermath. It was the way I kept going, pretending we were still best friends, that the night never happened, that we just fell asleep and nothing more, and you took nothing.

Everyone has their own share of myths. This is the one I've been telling. Until now.



GIRL'S NIGHT

Audrey McGovern



THE WOMAN WITH WAVY HAIR

Kelsey Briggs



FLOWERS I FORGOT

Tony Lin

ANALISE

Adreanna DeMarino

As I drove, I thought about Analise's soft face and how happy she looked when I proposed to her on that rooftop bar next to the skyline. It was a warm, August night and we were warm too from the red wine and feelings, I guess. I got down on one knee and told Analise that I wanted to spend the rest of my life with her. I told her how I knew she was the one from the moment we met in that introductory psychology class. I watched her eyes twinkle, and I thought she was just as pretty as paintings in showrooms or two people holding hands under a table. She said yes and started crying and hugged me and kissed me the way the sun rises.

After I put the ring on her finger, we looked out towards the city and saw all the small people tending to all their small tasks and I couldn't help but think that what I had just done was even smaller. How many men down there had just asked their girlfriends to marry them because they were twenty-eight and had been dating for a few years, so it was what they were supposed to do? How many of them had beautiful girlfriends that liked to paint their nails red and read science books?

I watched all of them tend to lives that I would never know. Lots of them went into stores or came out of restaurants, cherishing the small, mundane things that, I presume, made their life feel whole. Men with grocery bags to take home to their small daughters, so they could cook a meal together or little boys in red shoes hurrying to keep up with the large steps of their parents.

Are their steps large, or do they just seem that way to little boys?

Before I knew it, I was crying as I turned towards the cathedral. I thought about Analise's pretty face in the snow and her beautiful bare feet in the sand. I thought about how she made me take so many pictures with her the night we got engaged, making sure I touched her waist exactly the right way. I thought about how smart and secure she was with herself, how she seemed to know exactly what she wanted and who she was. How her favorite color is purple and she likes numbers and math because it involves problem-solving, coming to the most logical conclusion.

Her parents are from Connecticut and she likes to visit them in the summers. She's traveled to a lot of places, but her favorite is Paris, because they eat small portions and walk everywhere.

When I arrived at the cathedral, I opened my car door and stepped onto the icy sidewalk. Even though I was wearing nice shoes, I left footprints in the remaining snow, an impermanent indication that I'd been there. It started to flurry again, so little, white flakes stuck to my black jacket and melted, leaving my clothes damp with circular markings.

Entering the church, I held my breath. I was not ready to make small talk with people who didn't know anything about my life, except the outside -- my job, or what car I drove, or that I was getting married today. But not me. I wish I could talk to them about the snow last night, how I watched it fall until it was thick in heaps on the sidewalk. Or the bird I saw fly that day on the highway, with feathers like melted gold that ripped in the daylight.

Despite what I wanted, I talked to friends and family about where they were sending their children to school or what they ate for dinner last night, but mostly I talked about Analise. When it was time for the ceremony to begin, I walked down the aisle with the people who seemed closest to me. We started towards the back of the church, next to the baptismal font and the organ playing songs with a black hue. I joined the congregation of men and women wearing nice outfits sitting in long pews on either side of the cathedral.

I watched the tears in everyone's eyes as they watched two peoples lives merge into one. They looked in admiration for the beautiful ritual they were about to witness, in admiration at the groom, an animal in the cage of life. I made it to the end of the aisle and waited for the inevitable, Analise in her white dress. I first saw her from behind the baptismal font, her beautiful brown hair tied up in a bun. Her dress structured and silk, with long, white gloves. She looked like a renaissance painting of a fair woman meant to be admired.

I started crying before I knew it. I cried because she looked so beautiful but didn't realize the beauty in anything else. I cried because pictures of this wedding would be on the Facebook pages of people I barely knew. I cried because, even though I hated our apartment, I knew we would buy a house and get locked into a thirty-year mortgage that I would work my whole life to pay off, no different from the people I see out my window. I cried because I knew I would never have wings like that small, yellow bird. I'd never fly away from this life of terms and definitions. I'd always be a part of a plan, an actor on the grand stage of life with a wife and, eventually, children who would also play their role. I'd always sacrifice beauty for convenience, for the house closest to the school, for the job that makes the most money, for the apartment in the building without character, for the wedding in the cathedral.



BEDROOM DEFINITIONS

Kathleen Walker

book

leather and paper; leather and paper and bigger-on-the-inside; leather and paper and escape; ideas; ideas of ideas; ideas of people who are real; ideas of people who are not real; to read; to be read; to be held; to be smelled; to be touched; to be touched and held and smelled; libraries.

bed

for sleep; for night; for day; for stories; for sheets; for pillows; for stuffed animals; for winter warm; for summer too-warm; for blankets; for love; for sex; for sex with orgasms; for sex without orgasms; for sex with fake orgasms; for no sex but still orgasms; for the idea of sex; for the idea of stories; for the idea of love.

seashell

fragile; gray; barnacle; fragile gray barnacles; held to ears; to be heard; to be listened to; illusion; from the sea; from the ocean; from the waves; stolen; stolen from the waves; stolen from the ocean; stolen from the sea.

doorstop

for stopping; for the cessation of inertia; for the prevention of inertia; to keep still; to keep closed; to keep things out; to firm barriers; to make strong barriers; a defense; a line of defense; a last line of defense; a stop; an end; an end to motion; an end before a beginning can begin.

cup

is half empty; if half full; is all-the-way full; is all-the-way empty; water; soda; juice; spills; gets left in bedrooms; I leave cups in my bedroom; my therapist says it is because I have depression; tiktok says that too; there are too many cups in my bedroom.

zoloft

SSRI; antidepressant; orange bottle; round-mint-tablet; round-mint-tablet in orange bottle; CVS; CVS on tiger boulevard; CVS in pendleton; CVS seven minutes from my barn; CVS where I get my sumatriptan; medication; I take medication; I do not want to take this medication; I am afraid all of the time; my doctor says that this will help me be afraid only some of the time; this makes me afraid; humans do not like the unknown; and I am afraid all of the time.

necklace

silver; chain; worn around the neck; a silver chain worn around the neck; pendant; letter; a pendant that is a letter; an initial; a name; an initial of a name on a silver chain worn around the neck; not to be confused with a collar; not to be confused with bondage; I wear a letter around my neck; I do not tell people what the letter stands for; the letter does not stand for my own name; anyone who knows my name can see this; I wear a letter around my neck and it reminds me of dirt; of clover; of knowing; I wear a letter around my neck and it reminds me of being sure.

poster

paper; picture; to be hung; to be looked at; to be hung and then to be looked at; to decorate; for rooms; for dorms; for houses; for expression; for personality; for passion; for expressing and giving personality to passion; about movies; about Star Wars; about schematics; my poster is all about movies and Star Wars and schematics; schematics of the Imperial fleet; a birthday gift; the friend who gifted it knows nothing about Star Wars; the Death Star is big and scary; big and scary and vulnerable; an Achilles heel; a single Achilles heel; the Death Star only has a single Achilles heel but it is still one Achilles heel too many; I have many Achilles heels; each one is an Achilles heel too many.

jacket

to make warm; to make un-cold; to trap heat; denim; black denim; black cheap denim; lined; lined with fleece; lined with cheap fleece; Walmart; Walmart little boy's section; \$19.99; warm; warmer than it looks; for Virginia; for West Virginia; for hiking; for mothman hunting; for winter; not for summer; it is summer so I cannot wear it; I cannot wait for winter; voting and Christmas; I will wear a jacket when I vote; I will wear this jacket; I will vote and I will wear this jacket; I will feel powerful.

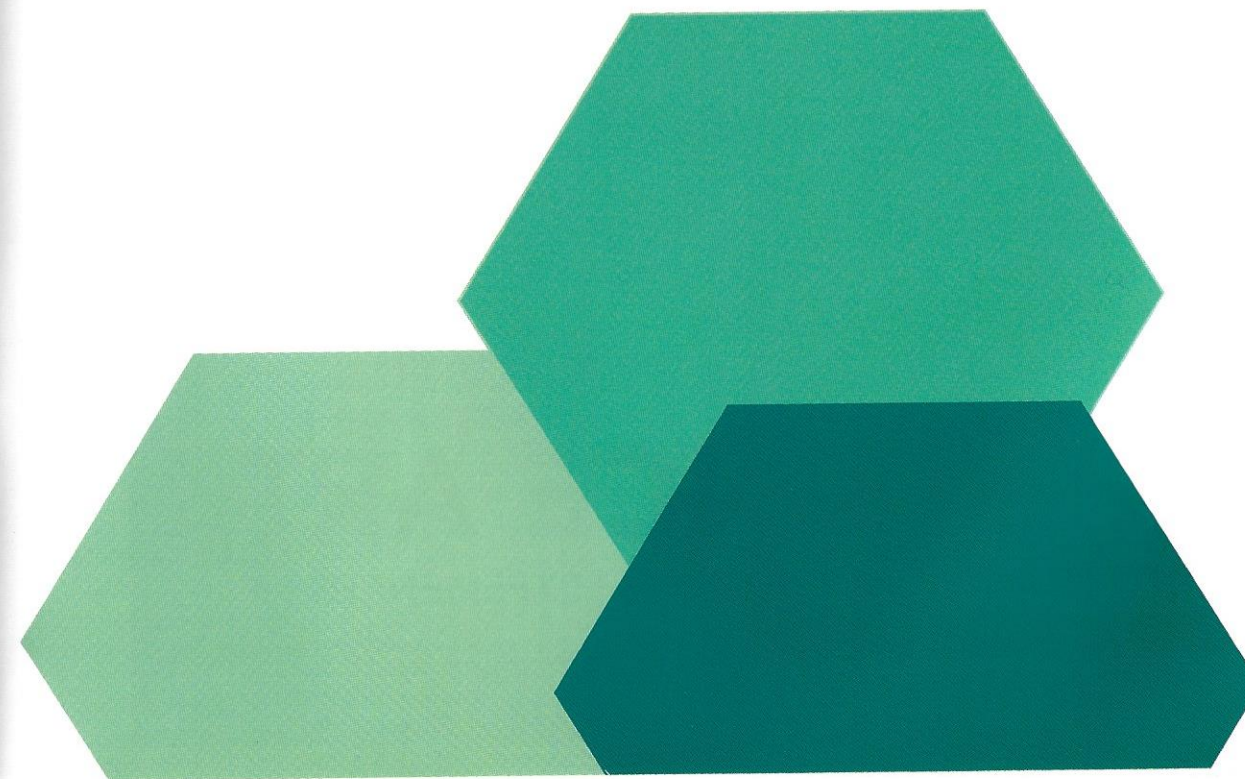


WAVES CRASH ON DISTANT SHORES

Tony Lin

STAFF PAGE

Abbigale Evans.....	<i>Editor in Chief and Designer</i>
Isa Diaz	<i>Editor in Chief</i>
Tori Walker.....	<i>Copy Editor</i>
Audrey McGovern	<i>Designer</i>
Clare Carter	<i>Prose Editor</i>
Kate Hammond	<i>Prose Assistant</i>
Arden Faires	<i>Photography Editor</i>
Reganne Milano	<i>Photography Assistant</i>
Safyque xRichardson	<i>Photography Assistant</i>
Grace Turner	<i>Poetry Editor</i>
Rachel Redding	<i>Poetry Assistant</i>
Rachel Temple	<i>Art and Design Editor</i>
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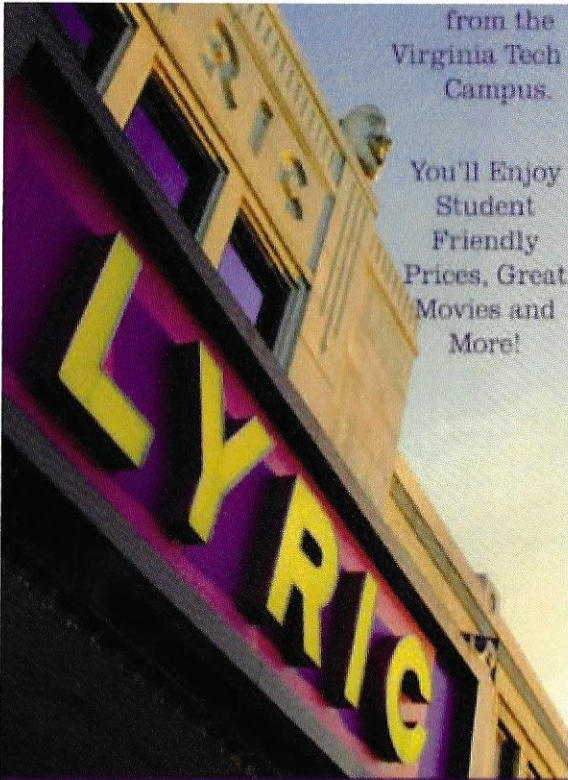


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that out

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somewhere,
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