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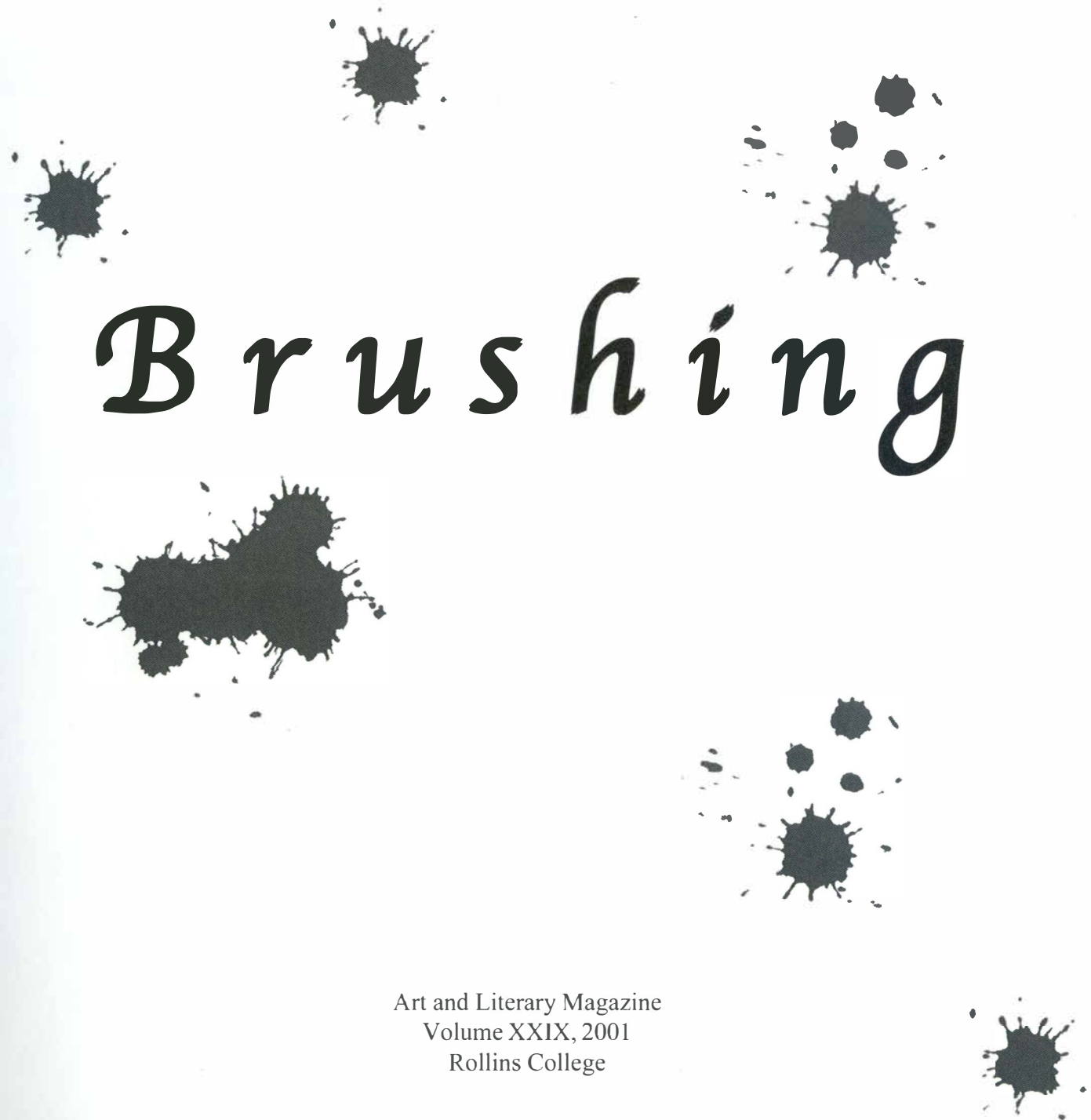


Brushing

Rollins College Art and Literary Magazine

2001-2002





Brushing

Art and Literary Magazine
Volume XXIX, 2001
Rollins College



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Anna Curran



The Lightning Field

by Christopher Joslyn

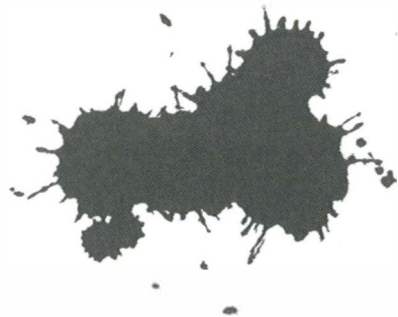
In Catron County, New Mexico,
Walter De Maria planted nails,
and bid them grow
Fertile, and magnetic.

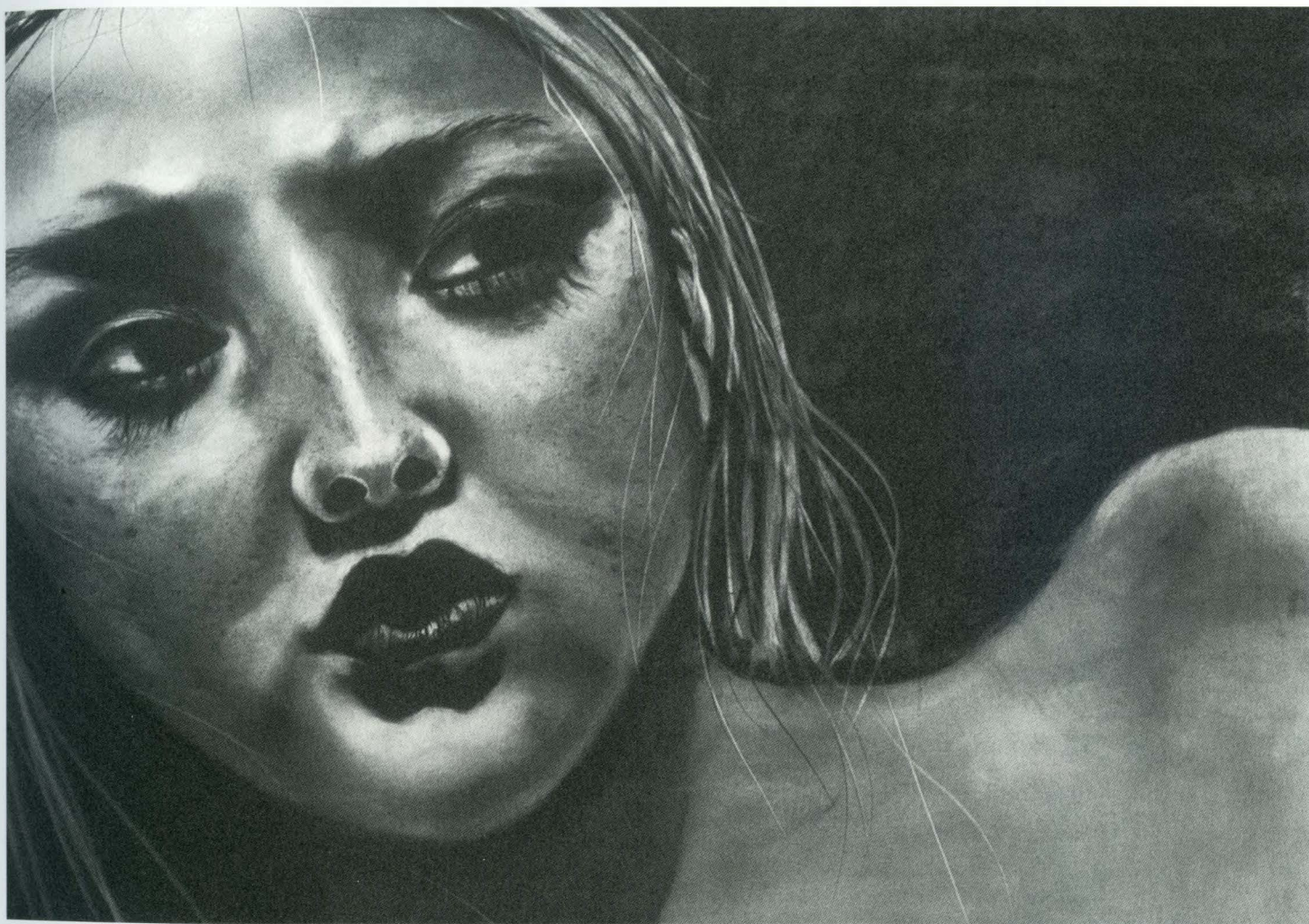
At sunset, a cloud in the east is illumined
by the last of the daylight, a half-mirror for the dawn,
and the last spear is buried partway in the earth
and the last measurement is taken, it is finished.

This, the lightning field, means business
the way the Roman Legion meant business,
the way a gunfighter means business, calling
out the elements while people watch, so he cannot take it back.

A forest of the dark Promethean past,
one exact mile by one thousand meters,
a marriage of steel, arranged to steal fire.
it brings the clouds closer, and now, lightning waits

It hesitates, a brilliant tendril, white and unborn,
Above this field, testing the land's sincerity,
And then in spark steps down and stands upon
this place which has been made for it.





Gaze
by Michelle Gongage
charcoal on paper





Untitled
by Lesley Gondeck
photography

A Wish

by Jennifer Clarkson

Turning the brass knob, and pushing
Open the wooden door
I peer through a window of time,
Straining to catch a glimpse

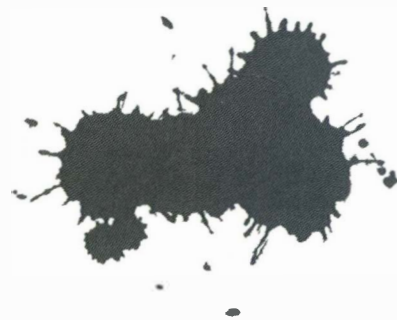
Of the secretary's in suit.
To hear the clicking keys of their typewriters
And the urgent ringing of their phones.

Or to smell the stale white dust of chalk
Billowing off the blackboard,
As the teacher scribbles furiously.

I dream
Of hearing the thunderous applause
Of the audience,
As the greatest stars dazzle
Me with their talents.

But all I see,
Are the cold gray steps
Leading down to the dirt floor
Of the empty basement
Filled with a youthful imagination
That time has stolen
from my white-knuckled grasp.

And there I leave the children
To live in their reality:
A make-believe world
Where I once resided,
But can never return.



Twenty-seven Forty-five Southwest Seventh Street

by Alexia Brehm

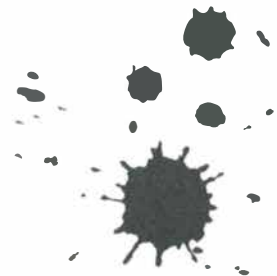
on our way there, I can never tell
when we are about to turn off of 27th onto SW 7th and
hit them.

so close to the city:
no subdivision, no brick wall denoting the location...
only their street name gives them a status.
Baba once called this "Harding Heights"
but those times are gone now,
and little guatemala now surrounds us.
funny how little havana is right around the corner.

yard is large and unkempt,
and with the bank next door:
always eerily lit. at any hour, one can stand and be seen.
guess it adds some security to the place.
I like to think of it as a gated community
of two bungalow houses on our one lot
but we are the ones who must open and close the gate
(dented by hector's niece's '79 buick in '94)

mah has told me about the fire:
valentine's day - marlena's in the back bedroom
and Gearheart is mad about an old lover.
letters, something about letters.
he spills vodka and sets fire to his mess.
I wondered if the spill was accidental and
maybe the spark was too,
but realize I am only hoping to excuse this man
I've never met
for all the heartache he has caused.

I roll out to see a shadier blue version
of Baba's house...smoke has escaped through the seams in the front façade
and created permanent shadows on the house in the evening
I am afraid to look any further...
"the fire was in the back of the house"
I remember her saying.



I breathe in and bitter ash permeates my mouth,
my tongue flaking the dust to gas.
as my eyes take in the sparkling specks dancing around me.
they wish for me to join their dance -
take part in this blackened world.
fire has come and eaten my palace:
I have nowhere to go.
soot smoothes the walls I once painted -
pink, I painted them baby pink.
my hand runs over the smoothness and comes off looking dirty -
she says we can't paint over it.
I am lost in my disbelief of what has happened and
what has to be done to rectify it.
a snake dangles from the open attic loft
until I realize it's a thick wire, wrapped among itself
(perhaps for comfort)
it scares me, looking up and seeing cavernous burnt area between the rafters and the roof -
the ceiling here used to make me duck - having grown so tall since last being in here.



I used to miss this house, now I detest it.
no fault of yours, I try to say...but the house has left.
there is no one to talk to anymore.
all the walls I painted, all the floors I scrubbed,
all of it hides from me (and my terrible anger)
behind a guise of blackness and char.
windows I took care not to paint are now broken,
laying on the floor they once looked down upon so sweetly.
things here are dead.
the air is stagnant and the floor needs swept.
and as I paint over old boards I have just chipped all the burnt paint off of,
I can almost hear them laughing at me: tempting me by keeping the basic structure of the
house alive,
just to once again, waste my time.
I work, I work.
"in vain," they say. but I do not believe they see the future and they can not destroy
themselves, so
I work, I work.

I want to sit in a corner and cry;
all my work: gone;
left to burn by an old jealous lover.
he'll be bailed out and forgotten about by Miami-Dade police
long before this place is ever back on its feet.
I wish to hurt him - to take him by the neck and rub his nose in all that is here:
let him feel the way I do.
I want to break something - watch something break down, wither and die.
I can't, though, everything here is already dead.



Hawaiian Legend
by Jessica Crumlish
photography

Down the Well

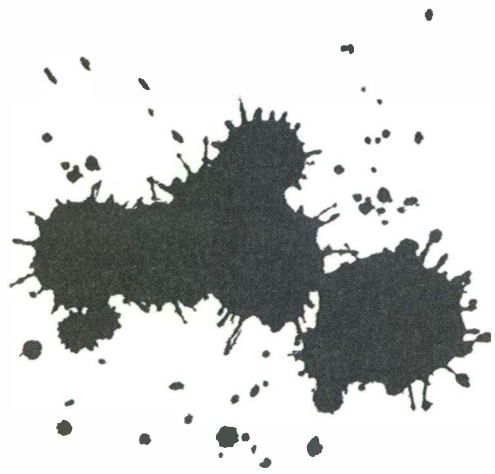
by Haley Ortega

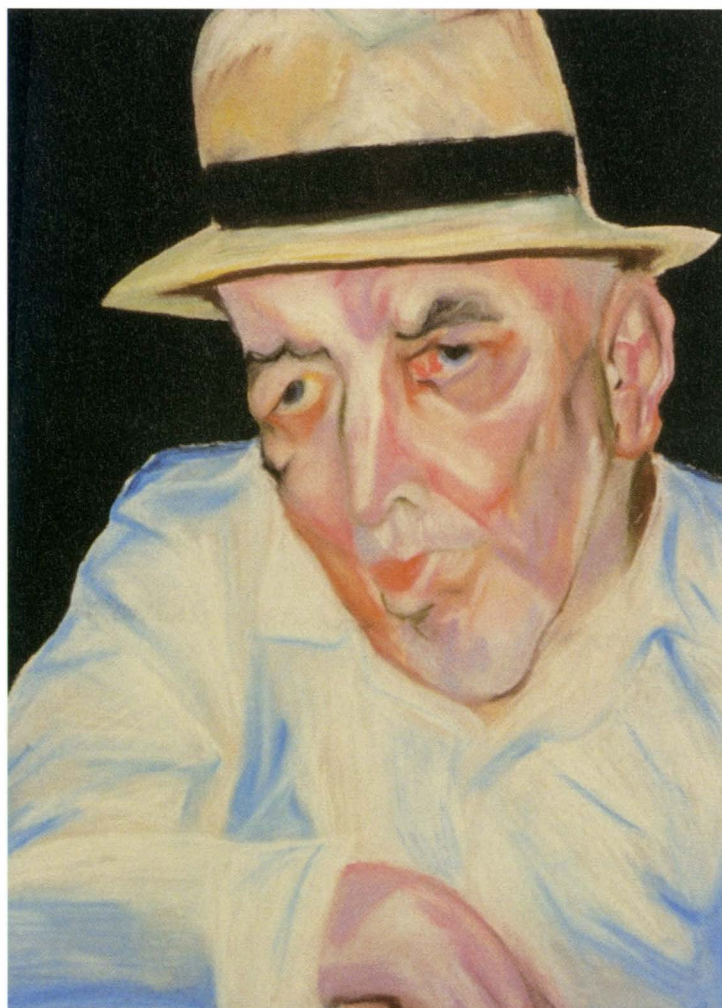
Well, here it is.
My second New Yorker poem.
Look where I am, Jo. Look at this
Duchess, traveling 'round the city without
No-ing a soul. Selling nothing.
I have left the SweatBox behind, along with
A Princess and all my places.
Traded them in for a chance and magic I have
To coddle and cajole to make my own again.
I think I'll go for a walk. I'm not dead yet.
Not even close.

People are good, people are good. And I belong with
Any place that will take me in.
Such a foster child am I. Such a woman.
God, am I a woman so soon?
Not yet, says the Barbadoan woman, who
Came here with me and Cliff even though
We tried to lose her in the airport.
Not yet.

I will wait. Here. Until things
Present themselves.
I will dream of Victorian Strolling Dresses.
I will cast off the skin of the summer moon
And, instead, sheath myself in the winter sun.

The Fae need to lend me their aid, I think.
If I'm to be swept up in passion for the stuff
That comes out of my head.
It's been six years.
I need lighter fluid to blaze up my brain.





Victor
by Madelyn Santana
acrylic on canvas



Man in Park #2
by Madelyn Santana
acrylic on canvas



Toledo
by Alexia Brehm
photography



Whitehall Road

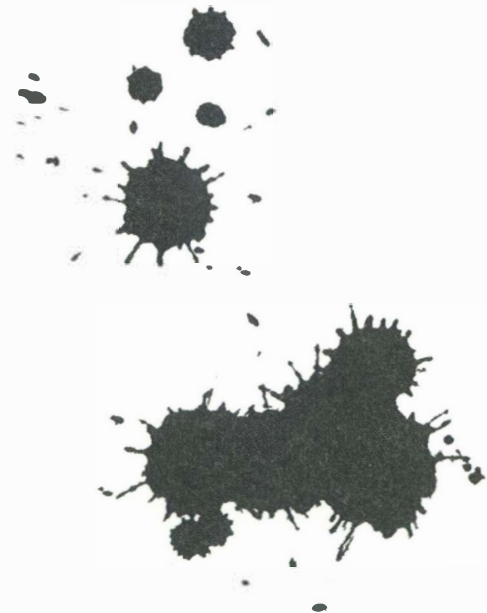
by Christyne Ferris

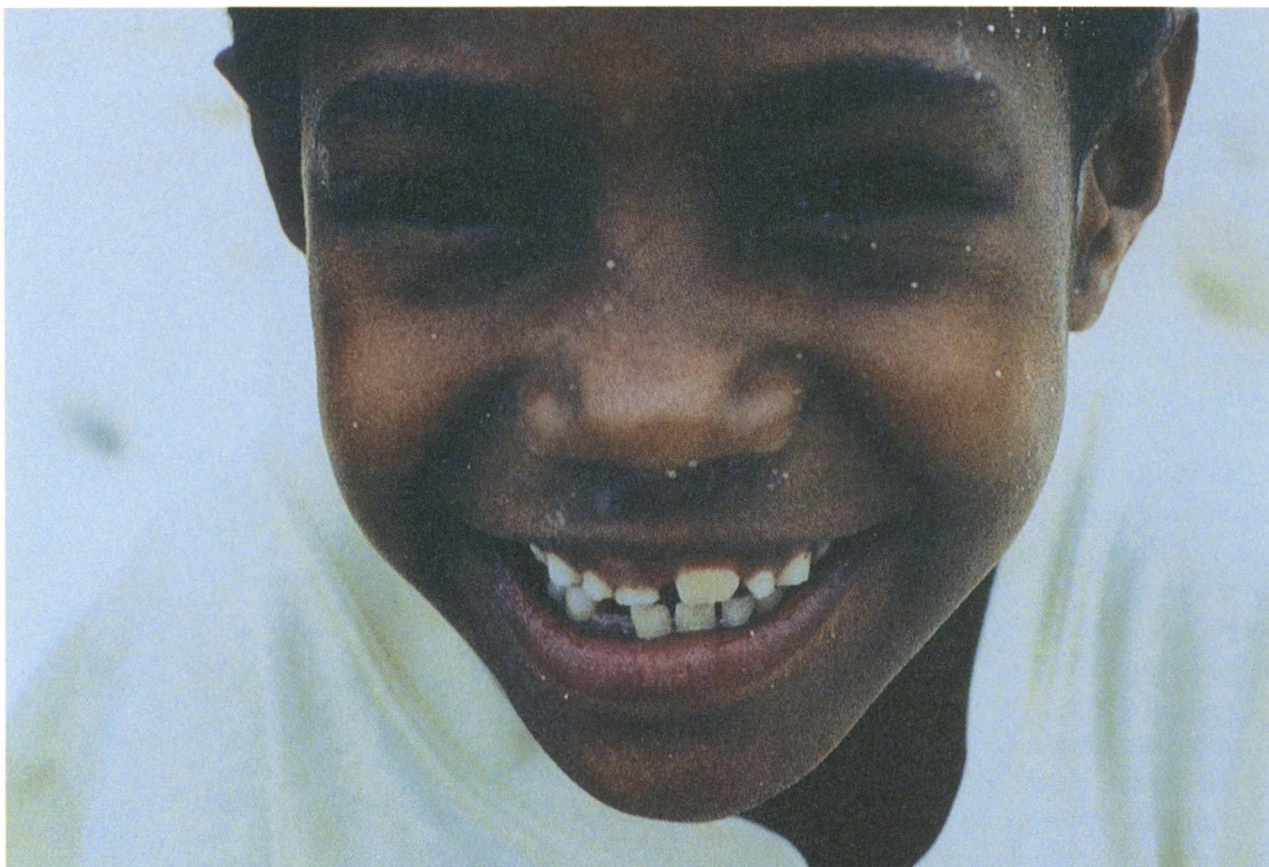
down the whitehall road,
as filtered starlight
paints the old stones blue,
london's leftovers
seep out of darkened doorways
and cavernous jacket hoods
to whisper to the sewers
 violent secrets
that need to be washed underground

past the banqueting house,
where satin-shoed girls
dangle from strong pale arms
 like jewelry,
my high-heeled boots
slam the sidewalk into submission

on westminster bridge,
ghosts of tourists caress my bare arms
and through their heavy silence
my thundering heartbeat
strikes louder than Big Ben
and beats the fog like a restless bird

away from trafalgar square,
I drown out the night music
of hot dog vendors
and drunk teenagers,
of numb wandering hands,
scheming libidos
and a double-decker bus
that doesn't notice
the emptiness of my absence.





Youth
by Jessica Crumlish
photography

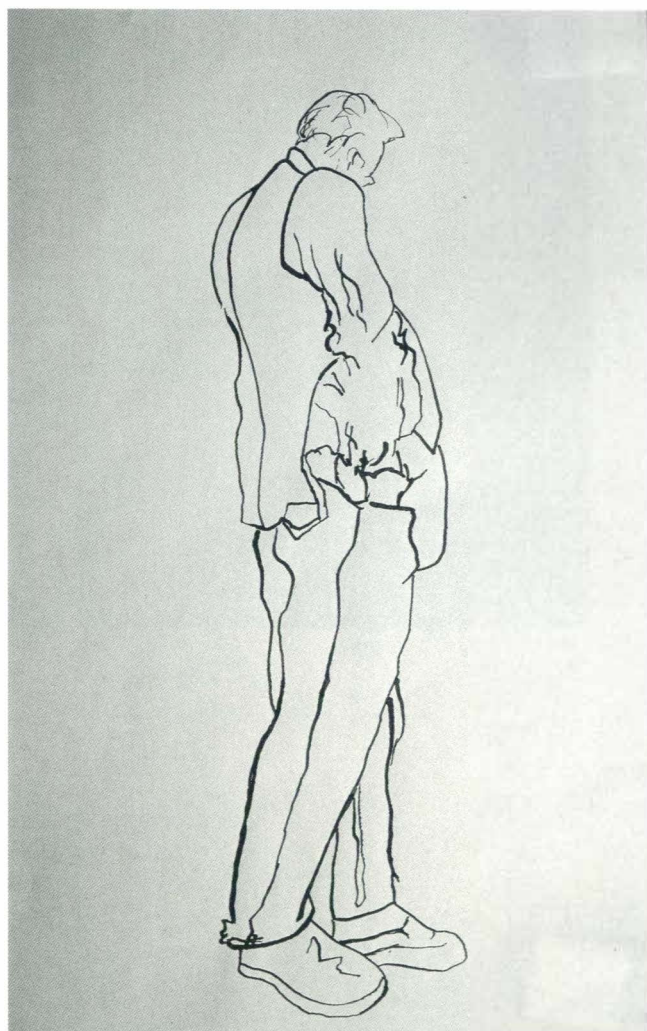


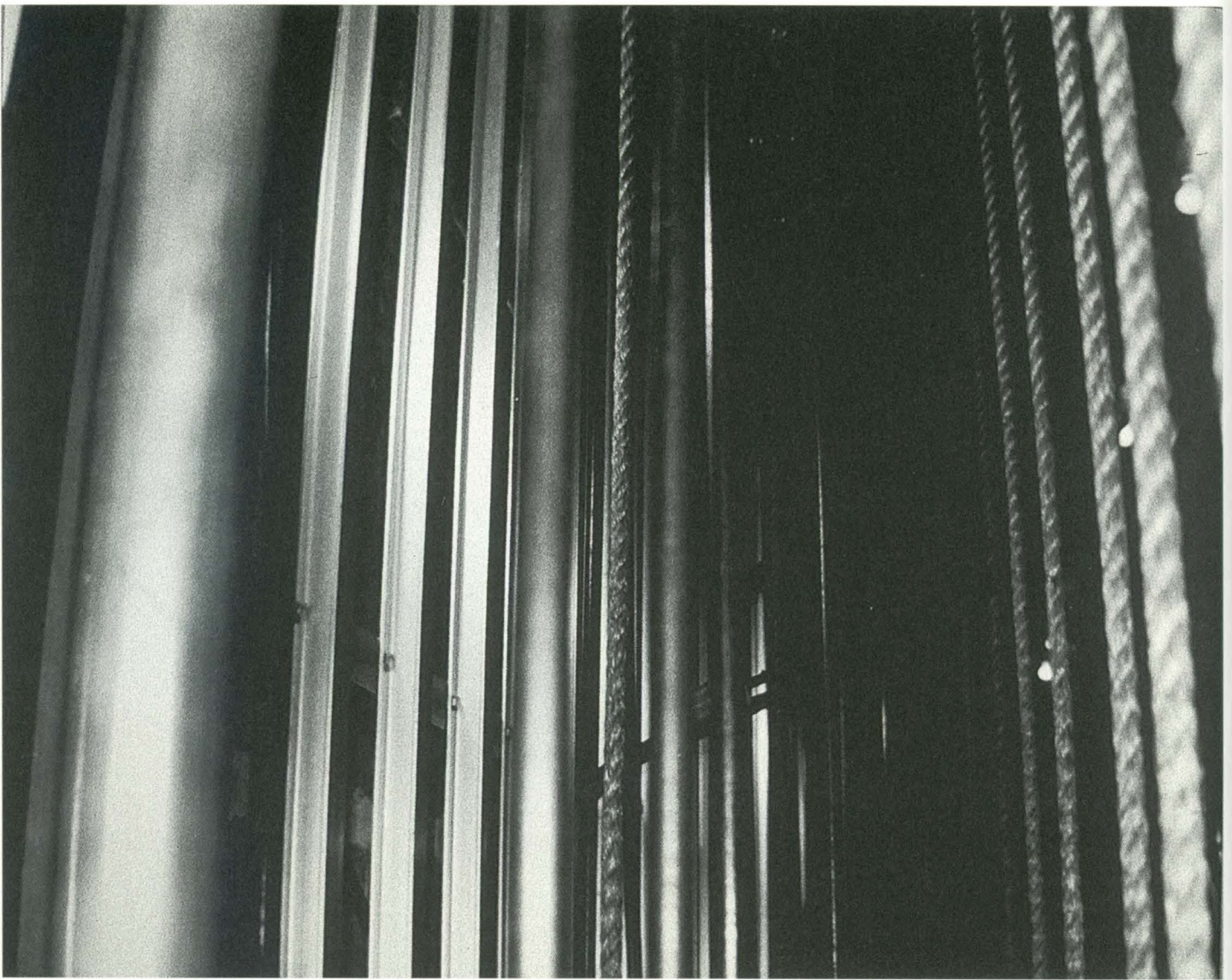


Woman Figure
by Anna Curran
ink on paper



Man Figure
by Anna Curran
ink on paper





Untitled
by Lisa Steinfeld
photography

Untitled

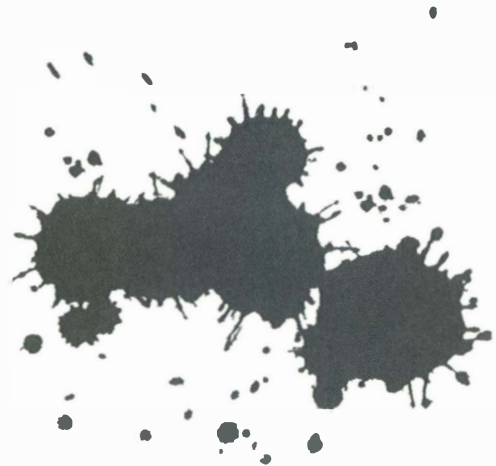
by Aliu Oluseyi

Huge metal pan, drab in its dark
Suit, stained with finger tears.
Crackling embers and reddened
Coal frolic beneath in coarse
Cadence.

A dark wrinkled face distinguished
By bulging ripe eyes laps the steam
And yellow smoke to fill the enclave
Inside.
Smoke's a staple, a choking delicacy

Brittle pieces of tarnished bones locked
In a mass of graying dung strut by
En-route the makeshift pass and its
Rolling viscous putrid broth.

The eyes twitch and blink, engulfed
In the rusty rehearsal.



The Lighthouse

by Tanya Grae

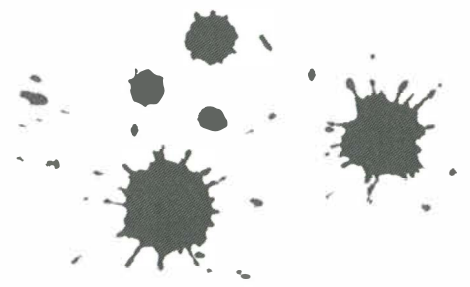
Each tide returns a white roar
resounding fate's hand—
through darkness, the silence,
one lighthouse searches.

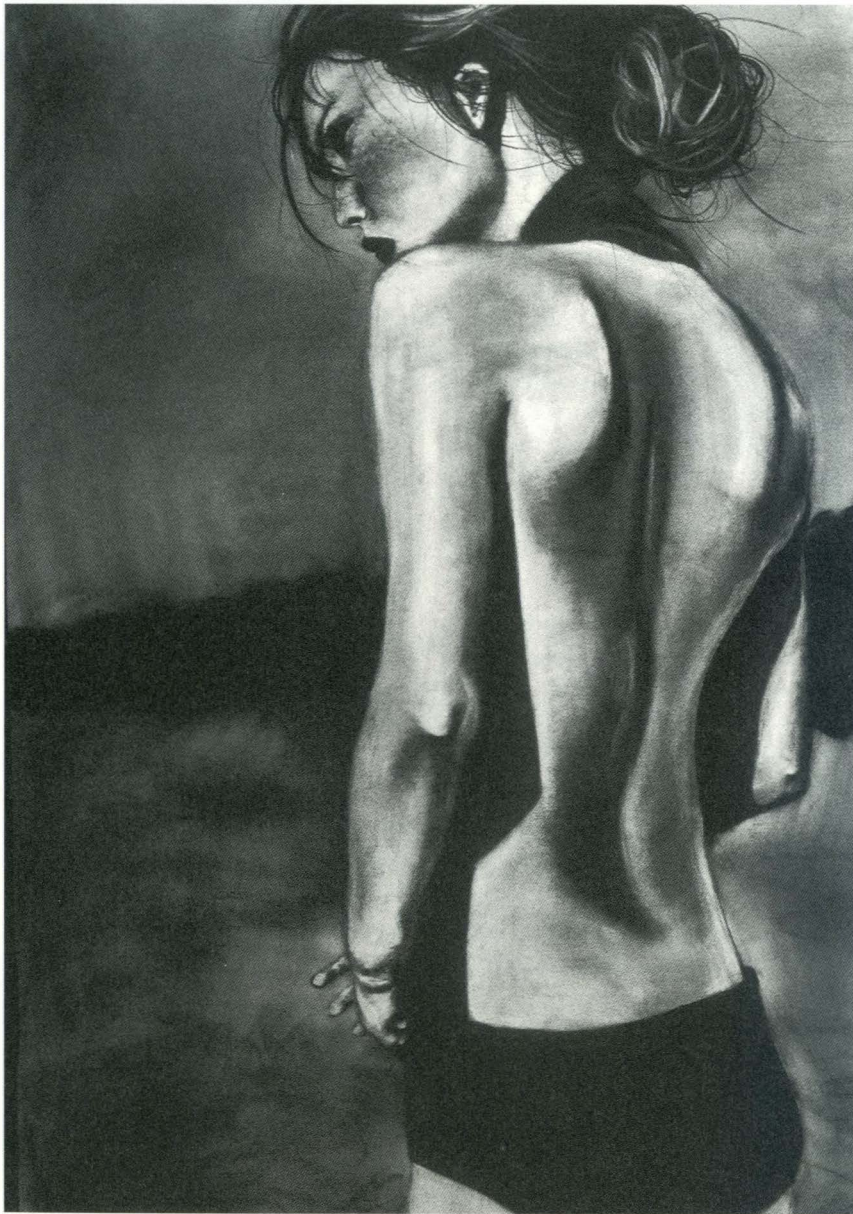
In storm, in calm, fighting all
enduring absence,
somewhere beyond, he sails,
the beloved captain.

Ancient stars cry leeward, while
simple faith guides him
through winds of change, battering
his course adrift, blind.

Alone with his soul, the sea
is fire and womb—
shadows dance wild with fear and
mystery, the truth.

For wrestling with woe, yet there—
standing undaunted—
the pale moon laughs back at
the beacon in distress.





Sultry
by Michelle Gongage
charcoal on paper



Across the Sabula Bridge

by Rachel Gramer

Across the Sabula Bridge, out of Iowa and the clank of silver
above the brown flow of the Mighty Mississippi,
you take a right, breeze through the fish air,
and hit town at 35 miles an hour, materializing from the bluffs,
emerging among August leaves and the vague scent of orange.

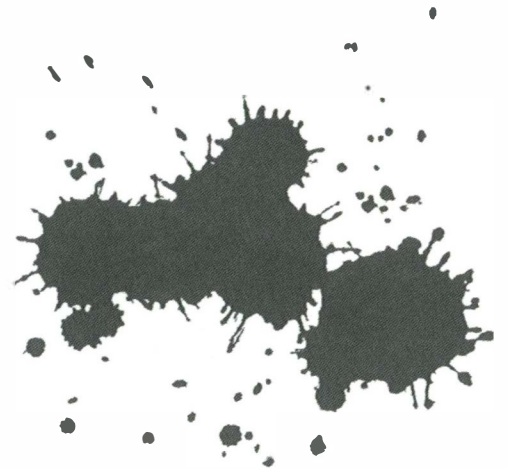
You can go to Tastee Freeze, suck grape shredded ice through a straw,
and lick up a sundae with the tickle of peach core against your upper lip.
You can drive down Main Street, park at Cindy's two-chair beauty shop,
clear the Pabst neon sign over Manny's Pizza, take a seat
in the corner booth, and mark the tentative foam on cream soda.

Across the Sabula Bridge, there is everything to do
that you did yesterday, that you can do tomorrow,
and sooner or later you'll end up at the cemetery.
Everyone in Savanna does.

Diagonal to the black Baptist church, across the highway
from the Chevy dealership, the cemetery has always been
at the edge of town, even the Catholic section.

Once inside, the path only fits one car at a time
beneath the white crunch of gravel and black relief of shade trees,
beside grave stones gleaming with death on your heels
and high monuments of gray weathered age to remind you
of entire families that vanished beneath this same cool wind,
beneath the pelting rain of afternoon storms that erased their names,
leaving only numbers where words should have been.
Everything now is dry brittle grass and drooping leaves in the sun,
it's an Illinois summer and still a surprise to find the cemetery dead.

On this afternoon, my family arrives after a twelve-year absence,
after driving 1300 miles following the stench of manure.
We are no longer the same people, my mother's hair is shorter,
my grandmother's wrinkles deeper, and I am no longer yea high.
But when we come here, it is as if nothing has changed.
Uncle Paul's still at the garage, Betty's still above the print shop,
and we are still passing by the living to visit the dead.
As far as I can see, up and down four diminutive hills
all the way to the woods, graves line the grass
and flowers dot the graves, purples, reds, bright pinks, deep blues.
Silk and real plants, in pots and in urns,
cemented in the ground and hanging from shepherds' hooks,
not all the plots have flowers, but most have two or three.
In Savanna, people live for their dead,
and even though my mother has been away, she knows how to come home,
how to proceed across the gravel, step around the fading stone crosses,
speed by the lonely crypt vandalized every Halloween, and come to the edge



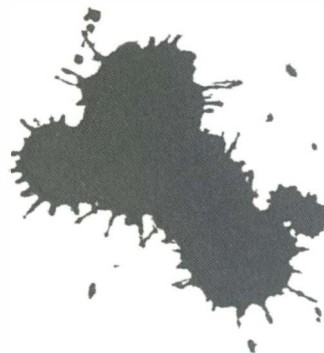
where the stones are a shiny brown or dull gray and nearly always flat.
Some have parents' names, some say *God Bless Our Baby Boy*,
others have dates. *July to September 1960. April 1971.*
This is where the children live.

My mother stops suddenly, I never know how she finds it,
except that I guess it's something a mother remembers,
where her child is buried, even after 23 years.
This stone has one day carved into its polished surface:

March 23, 1977.

Two years before I was born, my mother was 20
and she pushed Charity Ann from the tissue luxury of her womb
into the harsh light of the hospital delivery room.
Shoulders jammed, then arms slid out, plum-size hands
drenched in blood folded over the dripping umbilical cord
and slumped onto the cold silver of an examination table.
My mother distant, sweat melting tears,
my father no help, not a wet washcloth nor a sloppy kiss,
only inept and powerless, watching with a narrow expression
as his baby girl's eyes were pried open and her pink fluid mouth
probed with white-gloved fingers and long pointed instruments.
She did not breathe.
Her whole life was silent.
Part of my mother was born dead that day, and he watched.
Then he wiped his drool and turned away, wandered into the hall,
returned to plaid and beer and bowling on Monday nights.
He might go by the cemetery now and then, everyone did,
and perhaps he would ease his truck over the gravel, weave his body through the hills,
drag his boots across the flat graves, and greet the daughter he never knew.
But he never did.

My mother now leans down in faded blue jeans to begin pruning.
With paraffin hands, she wipes dirt off the stone,
rips out paling blades of green, clears weeds from the corners,
arranges the flowers we brought, and tidies the surrounding grass.
I want to look away but don't because I see the earth beneath my feet,
my toes touching my sister's grave, her lungs choked to the world,
and my mother's tears dropping just above Charity Ann's empty eye sockets.
All of us tied by genetic cord to the man who was useless in '77, divorced in '84,
over a thousand miles and a dozen years away, forgotten.
But across the Sabula Bridge where nothing ever changes,
Charity Ann remembers him as husband and father.
She doesn't mean to hurt us,
but her tiny rib under the dry earth pokes up through the years.
Because it is the curse of the dead not to forget,
her red hand reaches through the grave to seize my mother,
and when I say I am afraid of marriage, it is only this:
these stillborn bones clutching her white throat,
because once she was married, once she had a child,
once she was home, once she was trapped,
and the bloody fingerprints on her neck don't know she's moved on.



Untitled
by Camilla Nygaard
photography



Fall

by Jenevieve O'Neal

By now you know I am not crazy—
that my discretion always returns in the Spring
after he and I have grown another year older.

It is time again for me to engage
the delicate occasion between October and January
when I face the prospect of
mothering insanity or
reaching for enlightenment as it meanders by.

Perhaps the wind will gently carry me
like the paper my heart rests on,
scraping the pavement now and then
and stopping to touch it before
I permanently drift away
and cannot determine where I am or where I've been,
only me and you and now and the feeling in October that makes me close my eyes.
And I know you will wait for me.

If (11)

by Alan Nordstrom

If you can learn beyond what others teach you
And think outside the box of their clichés;
If you resist those preachers who beseech you
To close your mind and blindly holler praise;

If you can see how advertisers tempt you
To glut your life with luxury and junk
And know that being honest won't exempt you
From being bamboozled by alluring bunk;

If you can stand aloof from mob reactions
And stand alone on righteous principle;
If you can reconcile combating factions
And broker peace in broken lives woeful,

Then you'll have proved your liberal education
And proudly trod the road of true salvation.

Urban Refreshment Meets Corporate Refreshment

by Jessica Crumlish
photography





Two Boats
by Michael Holecek
acrylic on wood



Boathouse
by Michael Holecek
acrylic on wood

The Mirage

by Nick Civitello

I take to romance like a pelican
Adapts to the harsh and arid desert
I grow weary; the sun-bleached bones bake in the dirt
Taste the cruel air as it burns my lung again

But my mind is wrought, though my health has suffered much
I'm still confounded by my hellish station
My unbreathing brethren beckon, jubilation
Fills them, as, from the heat, my senses lose touch

And yet, what's this that lies over the horizon?
My hopes soar as I spy the hue of evergreen
Rising from this base place, a sight to be seen
A paradise, in which I might live on

She's there, silhouetted by the purest sun
I will give her my all, though I be in need
And no matter what, her word I would heed
My angel, my life, my most holy one

Perfect and mine from her toes to her thumbs
But as I am to reach her, and those pleasant glades
My oasis and angel, the illusion fades
And I am left to final tears; my breath succumbs



Patience
by Michelle Gongage
ink on paper





Two Female Figures

by Solar Pope
oil on canvas



To Sell a Girl

by Jenevieve O'Neal

When the rage subsides little is left,
save for the dwindling energy she will now extend for a dollar,
passion that usually appears in wiry, red hair, harsh glances, and crass words.
She smoothes out her bitterness for the occasion,
like a wrinkled, cotton dress.

He is quick, nervy, anticipating,
he is everything for she has grown numb,
letting what remains of herself flow into him
as he finds his place inside of her too easily.

The motions by now are easy: his back, his hands, his lips.
They are all the same, it is the faces that escape her,
dozens of faces she could never recognize, would not want to.
In her mind they are like a grand Van Gogh painting,
all smearing into one another, barely distinguishable.

It is a feeling so familiar,
a distance she occupies
that keeps the world and its ugliness
at arms length.
A space between what life is and what it should be,
a secret room in her house of hopelessness.

It is a feeling so familiar,
like stillness and aching bones
before a hard rain on a plain, gray, metallic day
that couldn't decide whether or not blue was actually an option
and so it just stayed.



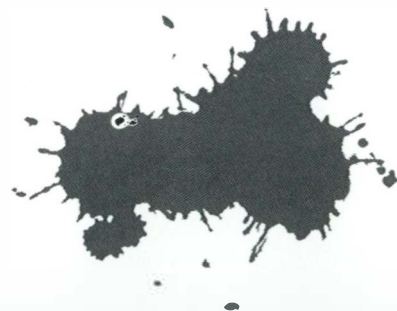
Retiro Park

by Alexia Brehm

Hot...this day is hot. I stand watching over the lake, only to take my mind off of the magicians behind me; the fortune tellers who will paint your life and the cartoonist who will draw it: all working from their pittance booths, each consisting of two tiny chairs and a low folding table. In the middle of the crowd down the path a ways, the real magician plays with a stick, lit with flames at both ends. He drops it twice and the people stop laughing.

So I am watching the lake: lovers in a boat, rowing haphazardly, almost coming too close to me. Easier to look at, I focus on a man rowing while his wife talks. Ducks chatter at me, claiming they are a couple, too. But they notice I throw nothing and so they move on to those who do. A man and his small son approach my peaceful space and decide bread should be the merienda for the lake creatures. Fish jump ferociously for the bread crumbs, mouths agape and oscillating; the majority of them only taking in air. The boy is delighted that he can so easily control the actions of the fish; that with so little bread, he can play Bread God. He maniacally laughs at the fish who maneuver awkwardly to catch his loot. His father is amused as well. The fish that gather at our shore outnumber the population of the park, and are gill to gill and slapping fins and tails to be free from each other, once the feeding has stopped. But the boy finds more at the bottom of the bag, and so the flapping and slapping noises of water thick with fish once again commences. I cannot help but look at the chaotic frenzy fish will go through for a few bits of wheat and flour.

Turning back to return home before the moon catches me out this late again, I see the park venders panicking, trying to fit in their last customer, looking for a fool to buy their oldest good. And the magician, the magician walks home alone, mouth ajar, still breathless from his last tiring performance of the day. But before descending into the bright lights of the Metro, he stops at a bakery open late and, with all the pesetas he found in his up-turned top hat at the end of his show, buys himself a loaf of bread.





Kiwi
by Michelle Gongage
photography



I Belong to Chicago

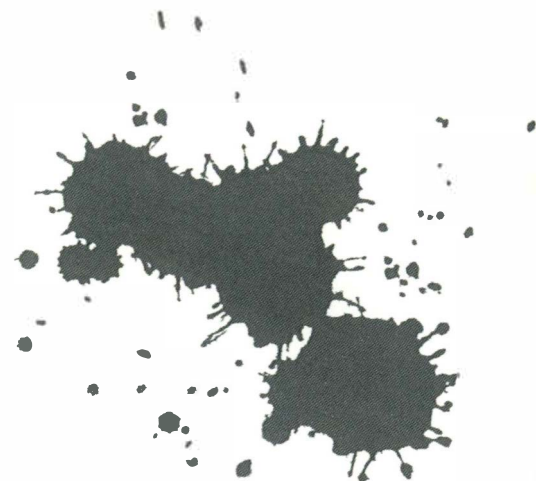
by Christopher Joslyn

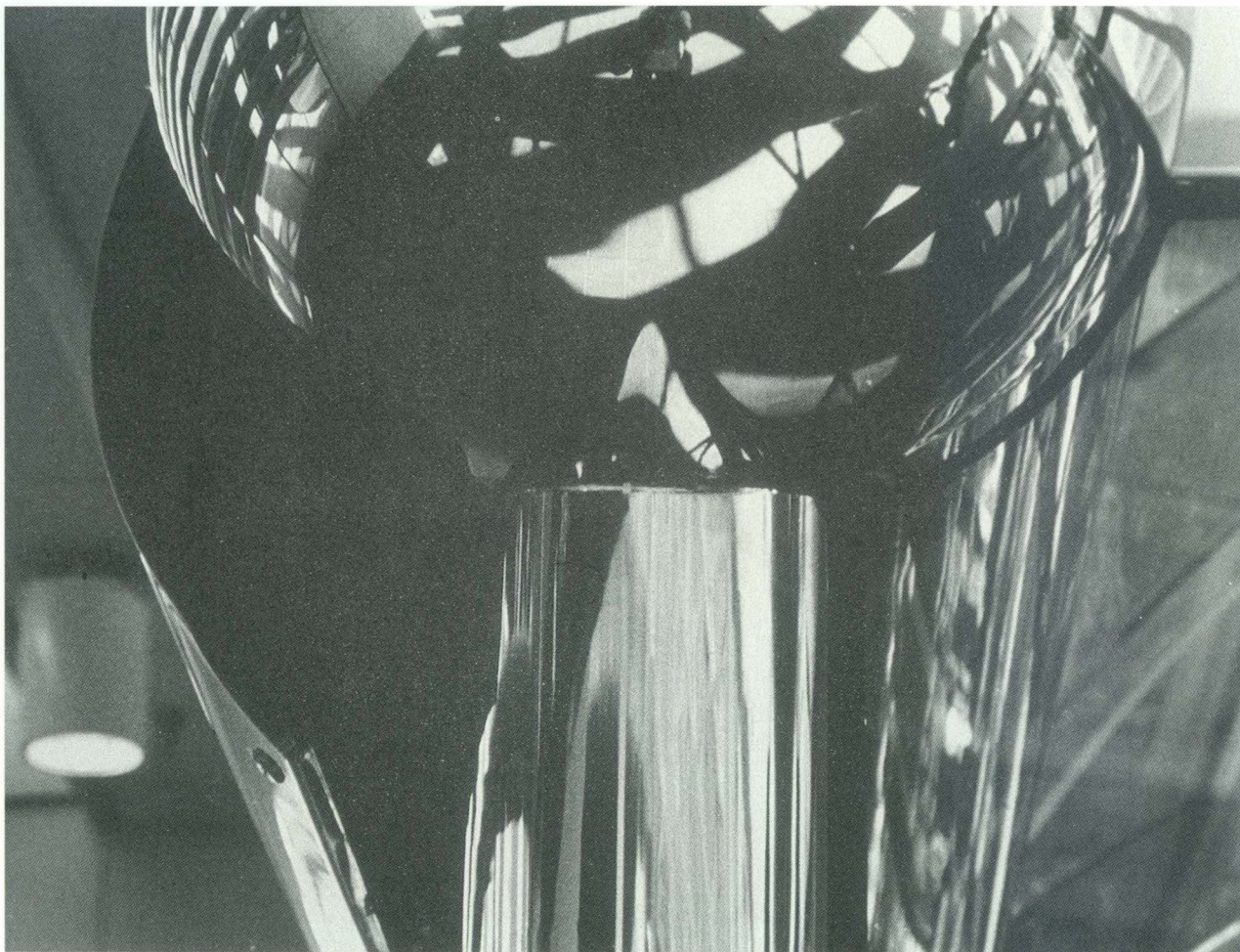
I belong deeply to Chicago,
a citizen of the great fire,
eating rude in restaurants,
drinking Irish in crowded apartments,
new world joyce blind & babbled, crowned
prince of whiskey, one who knows
the meaning in emeralds.

I belong deeply to Chicago,
exodus'd city lost its wealth in robbery,
like they say, 'gone to the dogs'.
my great grandmother cannot return to the room where she was born,
instead she suffers illness in the metropolis of debris,
sharing a zipcode with the long-dead al capone,
she says her prayers to the saints.

I belong deeply to Chicago,
Cook County Illinois,
the home Whitman never had
though Sandburg stayed there in his stead.
I am property of the sox, the mob,
the tenements, the tenants—

I belong to Chicago,
I belong deeply to Chicago,
I am not there but I cannot go from there,
captain of a sinking ship,
I remain aboard as she slips to the horizon.
For even if music mixes well with the ashes of the dead
I'll dance my damndest jig, and sing my damndest bittersweet 'kathleen'
until the final bottle has been dropped to the floor
and the final funeral is held, a cross displayed above a spray of flowers
and death belongs to Chicago
and I belong deeply to Chicago.





Modern Fire

*by Lisa Steinfeld
photography*





I Feel Alone
by Lindsey Elkin
oil and acrylic on canvas



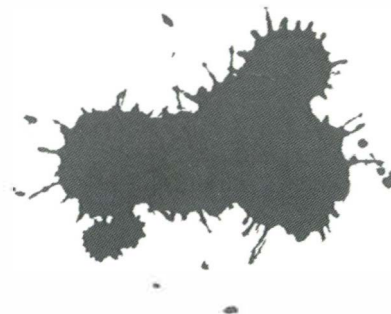
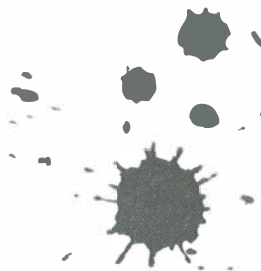
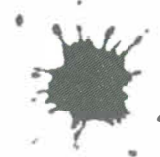
Untitled
by Camilla Nygaard
pastels and acrylic on canvas

For My Mother

by Jody A. Magras

For my mother, Dhalia Peru Magras

There are so
Many things I want to
Tell you.
I sometimes forget
All the things you've
Done for me and
Sacrificed for me.
It's hard for me to find
The words to thank you.
For I love you more than
Life itself, and would
Gladly give up mine
For your happiness.
I would fight for
Your honor.
Give what cannot
Be given.
Sacrifice all that I am
On the altar of shame.
I would never leave you
If you needed me.
I could never survive
Without your love
And support.
I have always
And will always
Need you,
No matter how distant
I may seem from you.
Always MY savior.
Never a disappointment.
For the bond between
You and I
Can never be broken
Or separated.
Forged in the
Halls of heaven,
Made from the strongest material,
Everlasting
Through death.
I Love You Mom.



Jackson Mississippi Elks Club, 1996

by Randall B. Robertson

Papa Rock told him to come
WOKJ air waves a soulful stir
Little Milton cries the night's
guttural pulse in folks and horns

Into that school night, my bed a brother
Into an old-fashioned screen door downtown
Abiding the back door white man and child
flow the music harmonica fine

A twelve year old can sense
in and out of place though not of age
freedom and honesty, color stretch
the room in black and white



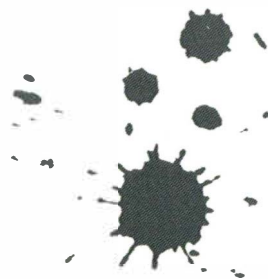
2000

by Alicia Stevens

i am the peasant girl
wearing blue jeans,
clutching a bundle of
roses between my knees,
scratching the skin
and completing the sight,
until the sun breaks
the mist and the clouds combine.

watching the movement of
the sparrow's eye,
tormenting its wing with
holly vine.

i am the woman without
a diamond,
i am the child without
a purse.





Rollins View
by Michael Holecek
acrylic on wood



Jazz

by Christyne Ferris

The machine grunted
and jerked forward
sending nervous strangers
lurching into one another.
We quickly pulled back,
composed our balance,
and smoothed rumpled skirts
or touseled hair,
cursing dirty inertia all the while.

Then we saw her
running alongside the ranting trolley
in faded Mary Janes
and a green bowler.

Without effort,
with a clumsy spool of cloth
tucked under her arm,
she charmed that dumb heap of metal and wire
to bow to her,
to screech and shower
its blue sparks of fire.
With a collective glance
we looked to her,
the sovereign of the streetcar,
as she produced a crumpled bill
and stepped softly over our trash littering the center aisle.

She had no smell,
no beauty,
just expression,
so we all squeezed together
to make room for her
New Orleans jazz.



No Such Thing as Atlanta

by Rachel Gramer

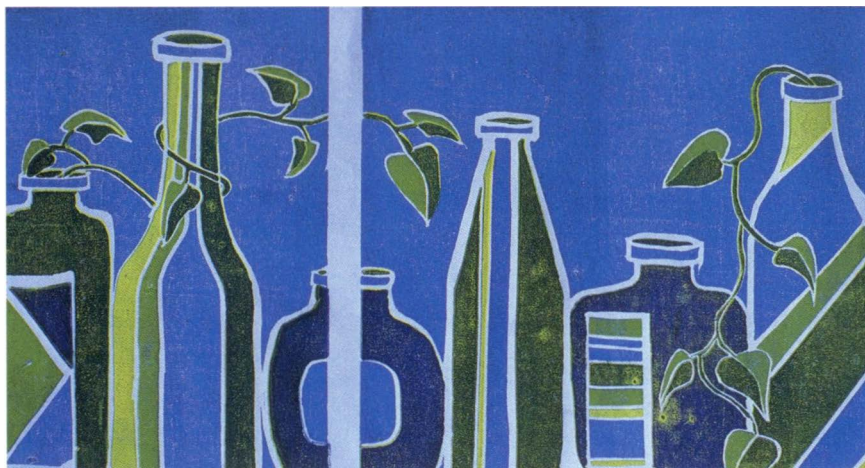
When Kim told me to pray for her, when Scott was the most desirable engineering employee in the Southeast and they might move to Atlanta, I felt as if God had ripped me from soil, rinsed my roots of nutrients, and plopped me on display in a glass bowl of clear nothing. A platypus in an alien ocean, strained flippers and beak shut tight, I couldn't close my eyes. I saw the color of chaos swirl-- I was expected to pray for God's will, and so out of practice, I did the only thing I could think of: after Wednesday night choir rehearsal, I drove through winding wet black streets -- to shampoo her carpet. In warm, floating light, I picked up bits of ribbon and cracker while Kim rummaged through the dress-up box to find a pair of off-white tights. As the children slept, I piled blocks and boats and Barbies with no clothes into the toy basket along with balls and Bambi and bits of cows. With busy hands and idle mind, I began to wonder: when Madeleine returned to tinkering with Ken's jeep, and when Dean went back to eating Ernie's ears, would they be round Georgia peaches without even knowing it? And would their fuzzy dimples disappear, rotting in the Florida sun?

In Madeleine's room, the same wondering stalked the air, only the past overtook the present and I could still taste the heat of the summer Kim was pregnant with a reluctant Madeleine. When August humidity shimmered off her in drops, I fanned her with conditioned air and the newest arrangement of "How Firm a Foundation," promise in her round belly, solid ground beneath my feet. Now, as I tucked hospital-white sheets beneath the corners of Madeleine's mattress, I cursed myself under my breath for not remembering exactly what her hair had smelled like, or how soft her chin felt against my index finger, or the precise shade of awe on Scott's face during his first few hours of fatherhood. In the ensuing four years, I learned more than lifting corners, lacing shoes, and wiping mouths. Despite my schooling, I discovered that there are feelings for which no words exist: like when a three-year-old sits in your lap, freckles and bows and clamped fingers and whispers an "I love you" that glides through months in an instant as soon as you fluff the tiny plaid pillow she once hugged to her chest when she thanked Jesus that you loved her and always wanted what was best for her,

Amen, and then I have to resist the cramping desire to wrap myself in her pink comfort and sink to the floor beneath the weight of my black questions. How many more nights would I tuck her in and read to the sparkling blue eyes that ignited life in me? Once more would I watch Scott crawl into bed beside daddy's girl and wake her to spoil the surprise, then clap and sing at the blue ballerina in frills and satin, twirling in the new year?

While Kim scooped up dirty socks and clean sweaters, juggling baskets of laundry to the sofa—the blue one without the coffee table nestled in its cushions—I vacuumed the play room. Hoover and I sucked up everything: paper under the desk, twigs by the door, two braided rugs, one lamp cord, half of my choked tears, and the strength of the house's silence. I filled my ears with the memory of Dean's breathing on the night like this when he was born to January, ice on the grass, and puffs of visible breath floating before pedestrians. Christmas bells had faded ringing, and Kim was warm and weightless in the maternity ward. I had never held life so young and pink and quiet, and with my tense shoulders and wet hands, you'd have thought he was the Christ child himself born to long-married Mary with the help of a heavenly epidural and a choir of winged obstetricians. Thank you for coming, Kim said, and I don't like being all alone with him on this medication and you won't believe how much it hurt and I said I know you're not about to slice me with that scalpel, no way—and, and I'm so glad you're here. As Dean's weight numbed my arm, pressing me into the cracked leather chair, I sunk beneath the holy night in desert paradise.

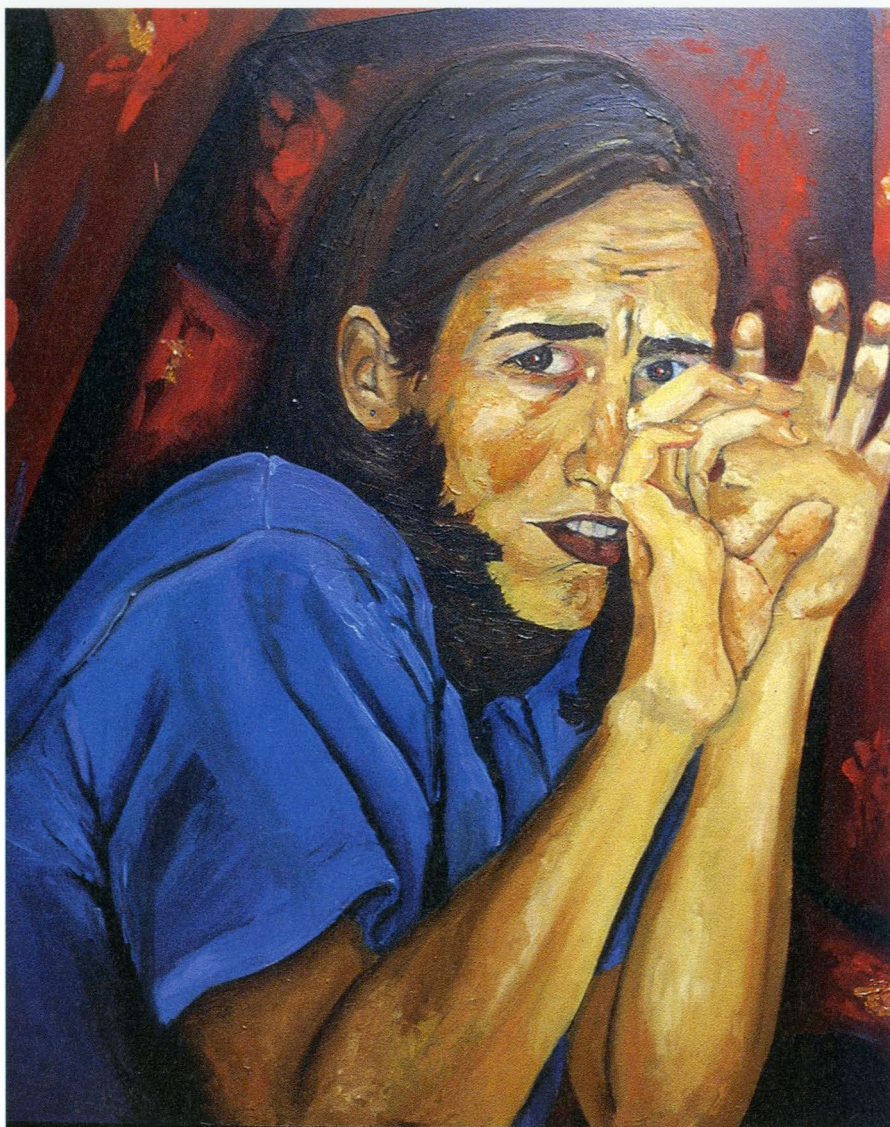
And now I can't lick the breath in my mouth for all the joy in his eyes as I push his toddler swing through the trees, heat circling him like smoke, his delight thrown to the sky in streamers of laughter, clear as the answer of birds. They're all inside packing, and I'm distracting—but only Dean who smiles to the leaves and falling twigs, breezes to me, and screams, afraid I'll catch him—and the fun will end, and we'll have to return to a place where the walls are white instead of air and the ground is hard instead of green. So I let him believe he's in control of his plastic plane and strong branch world, the same way that God allows me to pretend I'm steering, that I decide who flies and falls in the tree sky where I never see walls and my plan is good enough. But goodbye is here, so we crash to a halt. Time slows to walk beside us to the car where the plane is packed with the puzzles and clocks, and between goosebumps and giggles there's no more pretending, only blue crystals of unknown. There's no more soaping and stepping with bare toes, only silence as God grabs the wheel and reaches into the glovebox for the map with the city burned out, all of Georgia a bit of cinder. He shakes His head at me, points to the exit marked never, and steps on the gas. Pale as ice, they all disappear, leave me waving to the wind—caught, bagged, tagged—and wishing there's no such thing as Atlanta.



Untitled
by Camilla Nygaard
lino-cut print



Sushi
by Camilla Nygaard
lino-cut print



Phobia

by Kelly Johnson
acrylic on canvas

Invocation

by Christopher Joslyn

hail dionysus,
both feet in the fields,
grapeskins stuck in
his beard, stains on his
clothes, alcohol coming
off his breath.

let me tell you where dionysus is now:
he is sitting on the curb outside a mexican restaurant
listening to the music they pipe into the place,
he is riding a city bus at seven in the morning
with no breakfast in his belly.
he wanders up to me on the beach
barefoot
before dawn,
playing his harmonica
and asking me for wine.

hail dionysus,
purple man of the moon,
purple man of woman
who understands, who
understands, who bids us
dance, and drink, and
SPEAK—

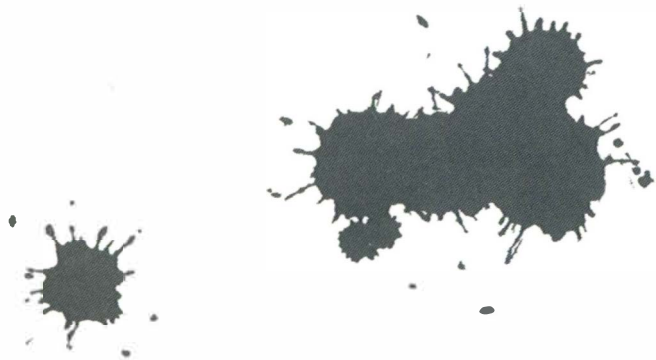
hail dionysus, snake in the flesh
swallowing his own tail,
fermenting the blood of the children of the world—
hail dionysus mocking apollo as apollo rots in the hell where dull gods rot—
hail the lust of the goat—the naked man—the naked woman—the garden of hair and
sweat and flesh—hail the poem—hail the poem made real—the voice speaking the poem—
the body breathing the voice—the earth holding the body—hail dionysus giving electricity
to the earth.
Be with us tonight, dionysus, bacchus, you smudge-stick god of skin and tambourine,
bring us some of your magic so we may feed ourselves,
give us some of your drink so we may not thirst in the desert of the day.

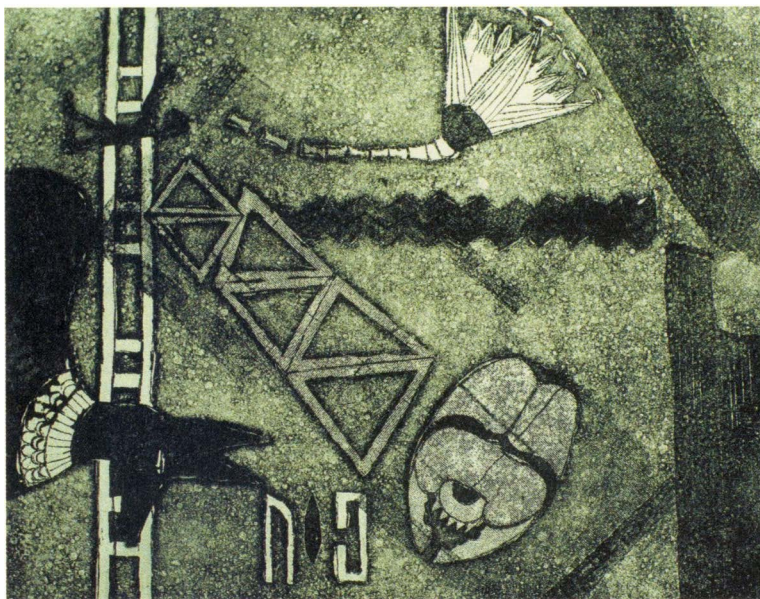


Mr. Tambourine Man

by Roger Drouin
for Bob Dylan

Can't sleep, can't move. Still right here, just here.
Come bring me the night breeze, open up a window,
fill the night with your spontaneous grace, playing
& playing like the world is your audience...all eyes
upon you, the man in the blue jeans & dark sunglasses, blowing your harmonica
for the wretched innocent rebels against reality kicked aside by reality—
the unpublished poets who sing on street corners,
the starry-eyed hipsters wondering our cities with a vision,
the heroes who race chariots of steel, through the silver glow of the moon,
the bourbon bums who find bliss and pain in the same bottle,
the lost college kids searching for the truth, drunk and high,
the old factory workers, lying in their graves, with wrinkled hands and tired souls,
the bartender who is an expert of ontology,
the teacher who teaches Thoreau in the May breeze, and does not forget
Kerouac—the honest and holy poet of the soul,
the long haired bohemian princess, revealing her beauty at the concert,
the subterranean dreamer, strumming his guitar in the shade, waiting for his escape
...Blow that harmonica for all the lost souls,
thirsty for your melody, your sweet sweet melody—
You are their muse—the only hope for
these angels roaming the night in search of justice.

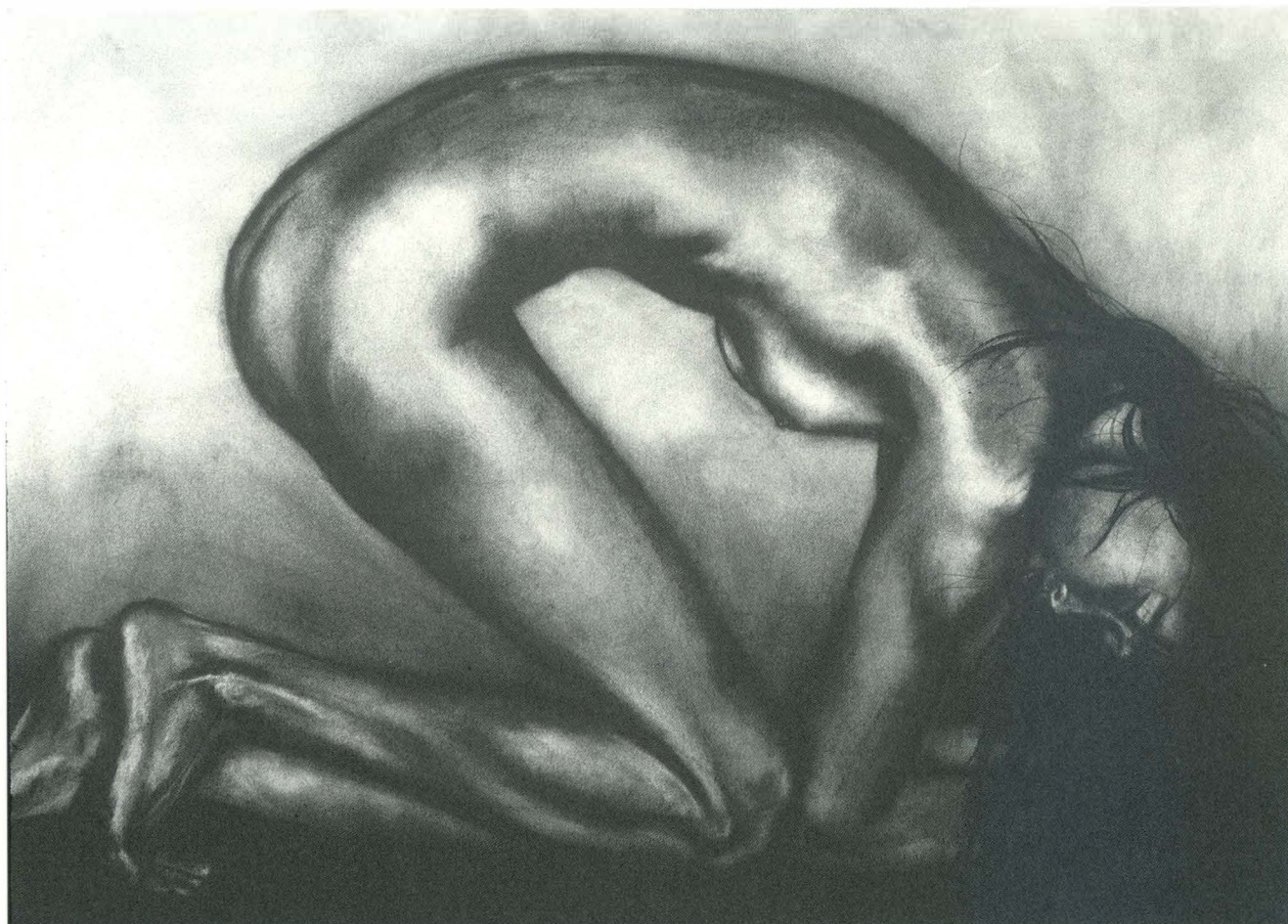




Egyptian Dream
by Solar Pope
intaglio

Return to Origin
by Solar Pope
intaglio





Abandonment
by Michelle Gongage
charcoal on paper

Divine Intervention

by Nick Civitello

Panic, panic, panic. That was about all that was going through Art's head as he stood above his ex-girlfriend's fresh corpse. He watched in confused horror as her life seeped through the newly-made fault in her skull, staining the white, hexagonal tile in his basement a dark, viscous crimson. What the hell had he done?

He knew that no one was downstairs with him, but that didn't stop him from pacing frantically and purposefully around the entire basement. Was he looking for someone who might implicate him or help him? He returned to his original position; next to the desk, across from the couch, near the TV, standing over the corpse. What the hell had he done?

Art looked back down at Des; he gazed into her eternally blank stare, her red lips (now a little more red than usual), and her fair cheeks, which became fairer and fairer as the blood flowed forth from her massive head wound. What the hell had he done?

Then something occurred to him: what if she wasn't dead? After all, he hadn't really checked; he had just kind of assumed. Maybe it wasn't too late. These thoughts comforted him as he tried to garner up the courage and will power to touch her. His trembling digits darted forward into the air around her tranquil visage, then relinquished just as suddenly, still trembling. They held their place as Art's breath drew shallow and snakes of sweat began to slither down his brow. He had to do it.

Determined, his hand advanced once more on its charted course. And yet, just as its destination was about to be met...

"Whuddarya kidding me? She's sooo dead!"

Art jumped, screamed, and convulsed in a startled, little spasm as he heard a voice behind him. He tripped, falling flat on his back, right next to the dearly departed. As he opened his eyes, moaning in pain, two figures hovered above him.

"Smooth move," said the one on the right. "Why don't you two get a room?"

Art looked to his right, into those vacant eyes again. This time, he got a much closer look. He sprang up to his feet jumping, screaming, and convulsing in a startled, little spasm. Once on his feet, his wide eyes leapt to the spot he had traced the voices back to. There, he was finally able to observe his attackers.

"Don't worry," said the one on the left. "We're not going to hurt you. We're here to help you out." They both looked about Art's age- he was a Senior in high school. This one was a young black man in a black suit, with a black tie, black shoes, and a white dress shirt. The other looked like a trendy, young, suburban kid, with bleached-blond hair and Abercrombie from head to toe.

"W-what do you want?" Art stammered.

"Like he says, we're here to help," said the Trendy. "Well...sorta. I'm Iago, and this is Jules. We're professional apparitions."

"Hey, you guys'd better get outta here...I swear, I'll..."

"What? Call the cops?" chuckled Iago.

"Look, kid," Jules began. "Nobody can see us or hear us except you. We're here to help you get rid of this thing."

"Art, honey!" his mother called through the closed door at the top of the stairs. "What are you doing down there?"

"Uhm...nothing, mom! Everything's fine!" Back to Jules. "So...so I'm insane? I'm seeing ghosts and hearing voices, I must be insane!"

"That's a possibility," said Jules. "But regardless, you have to do something about this situation. Panicking and screaming like a little girl isn't going to do you any good."

"What can I do? She's dead!"

"Yeah, no kidding!" Iago said, chuckling again. "That didn't stop you from trying to give her CPR or whatever before. Why

don't you tell us how this happened?"

"Well, see...Des and I had been going for like a month, but then she started seeing her old boyfriend on the side..."

"Get to the part where her brain ends up on your floor," said Iago.

"I am! Jesus! She...she came over to talk about us, and I broke up with her. She got all upset. Started hitting me, and kicking, and yelling. I just grabbed her by the shoulders and pushed her away...I didn't hit her or anything! Only...she fell down, and...and...hurt her head on the corner of the desk."

That's when Iago went to pieces with uncontrollable laughter for the first time. "It's not funny!" Art yelled.

"No...heh, no, you're right," Iago said, getting a grip. "See, it wasn't the story so much as how you told it."

"Ahem," Jules interjected. "Shouldn't we be helping rather than mocking?"

"Oh, all right. You're better at that, though. You start."

"All right." To Art, "So what are you going to do?"

"Well, what do you mean?"

"Have you examined your options?"

"No, no. What are they?"

"Well...let's see. You could go to the authorities, and explain the accident to them. I'm sure they'd be very understanding."

"What?" Iago broke in. "Let me tell you something, kid, the only things cops 'understand' is donuts and how to beat the crap out of a perp. You're 18 now, so you'll probably get a gas chamber bounce...life, if you're lucky."

"Ohnoway, noway, noway, noway..."

"Ok, ok!" said Jules, trying to restore calm. "So nobody likes that option. I thought I'd offer up the moral highground before any of the other alternatives."

"What...what kind of alternatives?"

"Let me handle this!" said Iago, gleefully. "I got an idea the second I walked in. You two looked so cute, sprawled out on the floor together. Since the anguish of guilt is going to torment you for as long as you live, why not kill yourself? After all, the State's gonna do it if you don't! Why not save them the trouble?"

Horror filled Art's eyes once more. This was his help?

"Whoa, whoa! Nobody's killing themselves!" Jules said.

"Is...is he right, Jules? I mean...about the guilt? Maybe I should just...oh, but I don't wanna die!"

"You don't have to. Don't worry, there are other ways out of this."

"Art! You okay down there?" his mother called again.

"Fine, mom! Everything's fine!" Back to Jules, "So, what else can I do?"

"Well, let's think. Did she drive over here?"

"No...she walked. She doesn't live too far from here."

"Did anyone know she came here?"

"I don't know...my mom did."

"Obviously. But..."

"Hey!", Iago broke in again. "You know what that means, right!? You gotta kill your mom!"

"Shut up, Iago," Jules commanded.

"No, seriously, she's a witness! You gotta kill her!" He began to chant playfully, "You gotta kill your mom, you gotta kill your mom, you gotta kill your mom..."

"Shut up, Iago!", shooting a heavy look his way.

Iago caught it. He shut up. Then he continued the taunt under his breath.

"Anyway," Jules began, ignoring his partner. "We can tell your mom that she left through the garage there, ok? And, in a way, it'll be true."

"What do you mean?"

"Questions slow us down. Just listen to what I say and you should be ok. Do you have some sort of a tarp that we could roll her up in?"

"No, no, we don't."

"A comforter or a blanket? Anything like that?"

"Art, honey? I'm going to the store, I'll be back in half an hour!"

"Ok, mom!" Back to Jules, "She's gone! This helps, doesn't it?"

"Helps us out a lot. I need you to get the following things from upstairs: a box full of trash bags, a ton of cleaning products, a big, old suitcase or duffel bag, and some kind of heavy weight."

Art procured the items without thought or hesitation, as Iago, at Jules' request, tried to control his laughter. When Art had returned with the trash bags, the cleaning products, the suitcase, and a few weights from his old lifting bench, Jules laid the bomb on him.

"Now...what kind of tools does your father keep in the garage? Any saws?"

"What do you...?"

"There's a lake around here, right?"

"Well, yeah, but..."

"We gotta put her in it."

"Wait, but..."

"But what?"

"We're just gonna...I mean...can't we..."

"What? There's nothing we can do to give her a proper burial that doesn't result in your going to jail. We gotta throw her in the lake."

"Ok...ok. But...?"

"Yeah?"

"What are the saws for?"

Iago, who had been silent for quite awhile, erupted in sadistic laughter again.

The saw trembled right along with Art's hand, dangling inches away from Des' exposed flesh. They'd had to remove her clothes for this part of the procedure. It was the only time in Art's life that he would not relish seeing a girl naked.

"Wow. Dude, your girlfriend was hot!"

"Shut up, Iago."

"I can't do this...I can't do this..."

"You have to do this, Art. There's no other way."

Art said nothing.

"Quit being such a wuss. Just cut her," Iago said. "She'd have done it to you."

Art thought on that.

"Yeah, she would've. She cheated on you didn't she? You sorta accidentally killed her for it...but who cares? I don't! She deserved worse!"

Art's hand stopped trembling so much.

"Yeah! I mean, c'mon, man! What a blow-pig!"

"Whutsa 'blow-pig'?"

"It's my word...think about it. But that's besides the point...are you gonna let this stupid, little whore treat you this way and just get away with it? Well, are ya?!"

"No..."

"Are ya?!"

"No...!"

"Are ya?!"

“No!!!”

“So cut, her, man! Slice her up good!”

“YEAH!!!!”

Art cut himself off from the task at hand as he cut off Des’ right arm. He tried to pretend she was lumber or anything else besides a human being. However, having his face get spray-painted by her arterial blood was somewhat counter-productive toward that end. Still, he zoned out and kept on cutting. He was so cut off from the reality of the situation that he didn’t even notice his mother come in the garage door until she screamed, “Art!”

He spun in horror, facing her with one hand on the bloody jigsaw and the other on the meat that was his girlfriend. “Uh...hi, Mom.” It was the last thing she would see or hear. The groceries hit the floor as she suffered four simultaneous cardiac arrests.

Art, Jules, and Iago stared at the fresh body for a second in silence. Then, from Jules, “Do you have any more trash bags?”

Iago formed a new plan, and Art acted on it to the best of his abilities. As he spread the gasoline over the two bodies, and all over the rest of the house, he thought of what he’d had for breakfast this morning. He wondered how he’d gone from breakfast to torching his house to hide the evidence of two separate manslaughter charges.

“Good, good!” Iago supervised. “Now let’s spark this badboy and ride off into the sunset.”

“Wait, wait,” said Jules. “You think the cops are that stupid? We have to make this look like a real fire, unless you want him to run off to Mexico for the rest of his life.”

“Blame it on bad wiring, ok?” To Art, tossing him a lighter. “Light it up and let’s get outta here.”

“Thanks, guys,” Art said, flicking the lighting. “I really appreciate-”

“No, don’t!,” Jules yelled.

“Huhn?,” he said, flicking it again. Jules was too late; Art’s clothing, which had been soaked with gasoline, burst into flames. Iago’s maniacal cackling rang in Art’s burning ears.

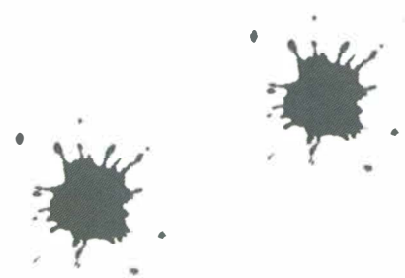
“Iago, you asshole!”

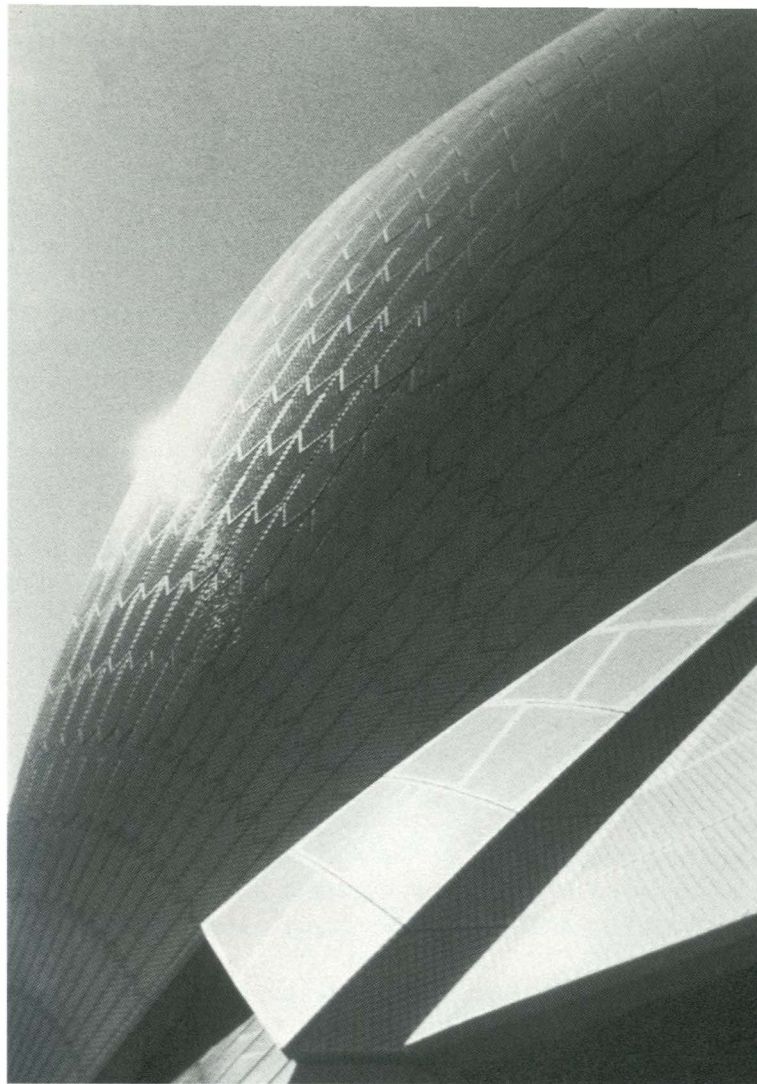
“Sorry,” in between giggles. “I just couldn’t resist!”

“Um...um...” Jules’ composure, which had not faltered once in this entire time, was rapidly draining. He looked all around in confused panic while Iago continued to laugh his ass off. Art, who had begun to swat furiously at the flames, awaited Jules’ calm reason. He would find a way to get Art out of this.

“Stop, drop, and roll!” Jules shouted, as he dragged Iago up the stairs. They seemed to dissipate and fade away as they reached the door. Or maybe Art was just in shock because he was burning to death.

As he lay there roasting with his late mother and ex-girlfriend, Art wondered how the newspapers would explain this, or if this was even important enough to make it into the news.





Sydney Opera House
by Michelle Gongage
photography



Daffodil Scars

by Alicia Stevens

and their eyes were watching god
crouched in a corner
breathing to herself
wishing the moments would stop
so she could stand up straight
alone in this world
fully aware of the lights
and the sounds
created solely for her
for god, shuffled under gazes
and sibilant satin teeth

folding knees under snow,
she counts time backwards,
and boards up the holes,
picturing cowardice
blue bones and daffodil scars.

Please note that most of the first line of
this poem is a title from Zora Neale Hurston.



Wishing Well
by Lesley Gondeck
photography

"Hemorrhoids," Al whispered.

The receptionist didn't hear him. How could she? Phone crunched to her ear, she was penciling in an appointment as he talked to the crown of her head, a sleek pelt of mahogany hair gathered at the neck by a puffy white band. Al leaned over the counter to glance at her hand. No wedding ring.

"I'm sorry," she said, erasing as she hung up the phone. She swept the peeling onto the floor, then looked up with dark eyes as frisky as an otter's. "Why are you here to see the doctor?"

Broken nose. Too violent. Torn cartilage. How? Sports. A water-skiing accident on Lake Ivanhoe. She'd notice he was walking, though. Or she'd think he was a klutz. Only youth made ailments glamorous. "Hemorrhoids," Al said.

"Do they bleed?"

"No, they hurt. Like hell."

"So I hear," she said primly, checking the book. She wore too much mascara; it gave her lashes a granular look. "You'll be seeing Fred Kramer. Someone will call you, sir, if you'll have a seat."

Sir. Before Al married Carolyn, sweet young things called him nothing but Mackie. Even after the divorce, before he hooked up with Clancy, he could count on at least a few to sigh "Al" rapturously over margaritas in some dimly lit naugahyde booth. As a pal, no one could top Clancy, but she wasn't the rapturous type.

Instead of taking a seat, Al paced the corridor between adult medicine and ob-gyn, where several pregnant women leafed through magazines. Poor gals—they probably had hemorrhoids too. At least he wasn't hauling around a medicine ball in his belly. Women definitely had it worse in the physical decay department. Clancy hadn't had a kid, but stretch marks striated her hips as if little worms were burrowing just below the skin. Although she lectured Al about aging gracefully, he knew they bugged her. She bought lotion with Vitamin E. Why not just admit it's all downhill after 30? American business didn't invent planned obsolescence, after all. God has been practicing it for eons.

At the announcement of his name, Al followed a matronly nurse into the treatment hub. She weighed and measured him (5'8", 161 pounds—in boots, Al reminded her), then led him to a cubicle. After taking his blood pressure, she opened a drawer under the examining table and handed Al a paper sheet. "Strip below the waist," she said cheerfully. "Fred'll pop in in a minute."

Al pondered that ominous verb for several minutes as he waited on the table with the sheet draped over his lap. There was paper beneath him, too, which crinkled every time he shifted his clammy butt. What if hemorrhoids were just a symptom? Visions of barium enemas, polypectomies, and colostomy bags danced through his head. On the counter by the sink rested boxes of plastic gloves. The staff probably kept

*"Why not admit it's all
downhill from 30?
American business didn't
invent planned
obsolescence, after all. God
has been practicing it for
eons."*

instruments in an autoclave somewhere. Al wished it were in the room, so he could check the temperature of the steam with his probe. Folks always assumed management was minding the sanitation, but after eight years of inspecting restaurants in Orange County, Al knew just how much crud lazy bastards tried to get away with. Maybe he and Kramer could discuss cross-contamination, one man of science to another. When, though? Before or after the exam? God, what if Kramer were gay? That was the problem with HMOs: You never knew who was going to be poking around your orifices.

The door opened at the same moment as the knock. In walked a pale, balding man with the sloppy kind of mustache that drips after the guy eats soup. His badge read, "Fred Kramer, P.A."

"Good morning, Mr. MacFee. What can I do for you?"

"Quick question," Al said. "I know M.D. But P.A.? Is that a new specialty?"

Kramer laughed. "Physician's assistant."

"I get it. 'I'm not a doctor, but I play one on TV.'"

"You didn't say that!" Clancy sputtered. She was sitting on the lid of the toilet grading papers and drinking Diet Coke while Al lay in the bathtub. That was part of the prescription—a hot bath twice a day and cortisone cream.

"I did."

"You're awful."

He laughed. "Besides, it didn't seem fair he should have all the fun."

"Come on, it wasn't that bad," said Clancy. "Did they put you in stirrups?"

"I had to curl up in a fetal position and wonder if this guy was gay."

"Big baby. Women put up with these indignities all the time."

She had a point. Clancy always had a point. As Al sloshed the water, his skin prickled from the heat. He couldn't remember his last bath. As a kid? He and Clancy both preferred showers. Carolyn used to lounge in the tub for hours, though, especially after a concert. "I'm like my reeds," she used to say. "I need a good soak." In glasses all over their apartment, little cane reeds sucked up water night and day. Carolyn cut them herself for her oboe, the most finicky instrument on Earth.

"Listen to this," Clancy said. "Everybody complained about the topics in the book, so I said, 'Fine. Write about something close to you. Write about TV if you have to.' So Jiwanda writes, 'There are many benefits to watching TV.' My topic sentence, from the board. 'You can learn a great deal from education series on TV, learn about crime, rape, killing, and all variety. If you didn't have TV to watch the world will be a mess because people would not know what to do.'"

Al studied Clancy as she read. Such a tall voice from such a compact person. Her stocky legs barely reached the edge of the tub. Yet her Kansas twang gave coherence to even the sorry products of Florida education. When Al met her two years ago, she'd just left her megabuck job selling commercial real estate. "I'm downwardly mobile," she told everybody. Big joke. But Clancy was one of the most serious people Al knew. Even though she had a master's degree in marketing, public schools wouldn't employ her without the official seal of approval. While she was taking education classes, she was teaching at a "business college"—English, because of her background in sales. To keep the financial aid rolling in, the school begged students to stay in class. Al called that coddling. Education reform through capitalism, Clancy retorted, although she wasn't seeing any of the profits. She claimed she was gunning for the prize:

The instructor with the best student attendance every quarter won a black-and-white TV.

Amid some awful sentence, Clancy glanced up, and the amusement wrinkled around her green eyes smote Al right in the solar plexus. Will you marry me, Clancy? He could ask her now. Clancy would love it, just her sense of humor. He could hear her telling the story: "And your grandfather proposed to me in the bathroom!" But then the kid would ask what they were doing there. Nothing like having his hemorrhoids writ large in the family history. And what if she said no? Of course, she wouldn't say it flat out; she'd recite her whole creed of downward mobility—how she'd been rushing, rushing toward some mythical goal line, and now she wanted to sit and smell the flowers like Ferdinand the Bull. They'd have to pretend that Al hadn't really proposed. But thoughts they buried in silence would seep up to the surface like toxic slime, and soon all sorts of invisible cancers would eat away at their relationship. As soon as she got her teaching certificate, Clancy would join the Peace Corps and head for Eastern Europe, as she'd always threatened to do. Only this time she wouldn't try to convince Al how much he'd love teaching Poles the three-sink method of dishwashing. She'd just up and go.

"Television is going to be a real asset for those who love to watch television," Clancy read, then lay the paper on her stack. "You can't argue with that logic."

Now. This was the moment. Al stood up and reached for a towel. It wouldn't work. Even if they married, they'd get divorced, and for the rest of their lives they'd both feel like failures for being two-time losers.

"Your backside's all red," said Clancy. "You look like an ape."

"Flattery will get you nowhere, my dear," Al said. "Do me a favor and get the box of gook out of the medicine cabinet?"

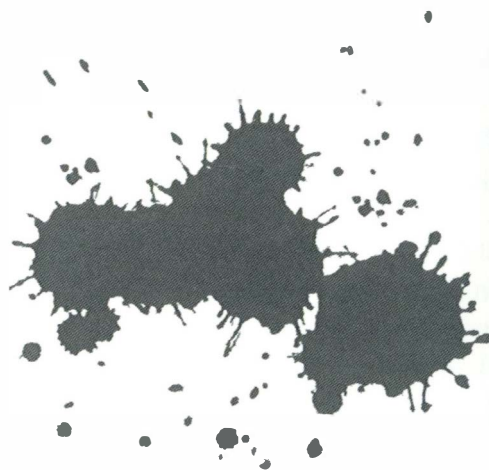
As Al finished drying off, Clancy pulled out the disclaimer sheet and browsed through the side effects. "For external use only. Has not been shown to be mutagenic in laboratory animals. If pregnant, blah, blah, blah.... Here: Apply a thin film to area under consideration."

Al tried to imagine how he was going to manage this. "Clancy," he said, "how would you like to do the filming?"

"Me?" She batted her eyelashes. "Oh, Al, I'd be honored."

Al bent over and gripped his cheeks. Who would have ever thought...?

"Lights, camera, action," Clancy said. "Filming."

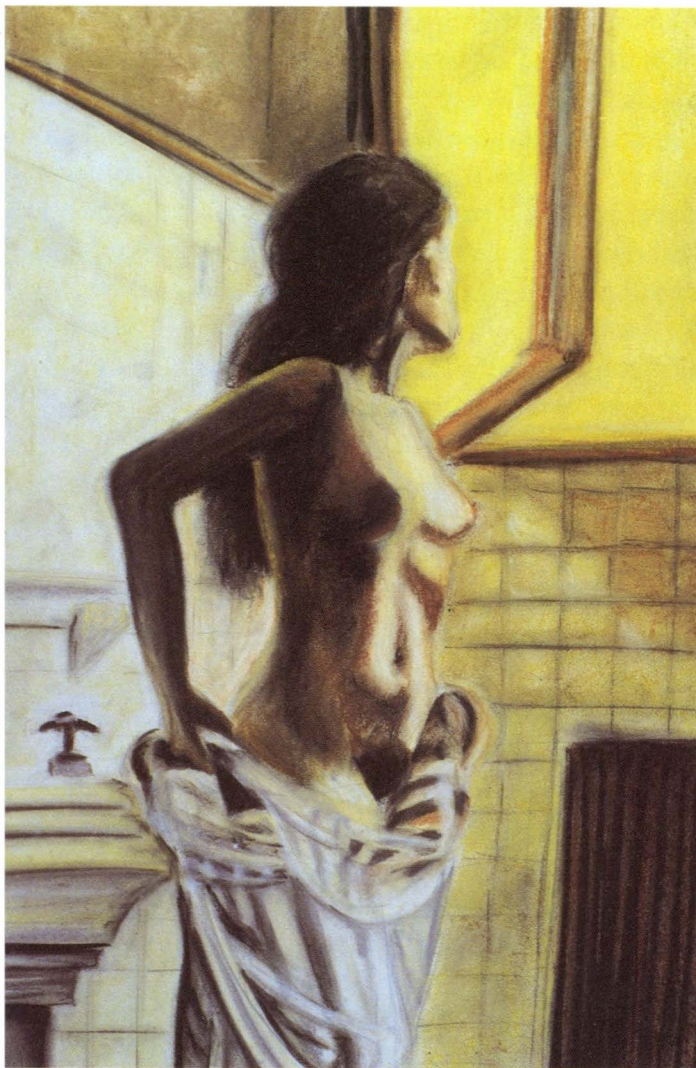


Seventy-five Cents Profit

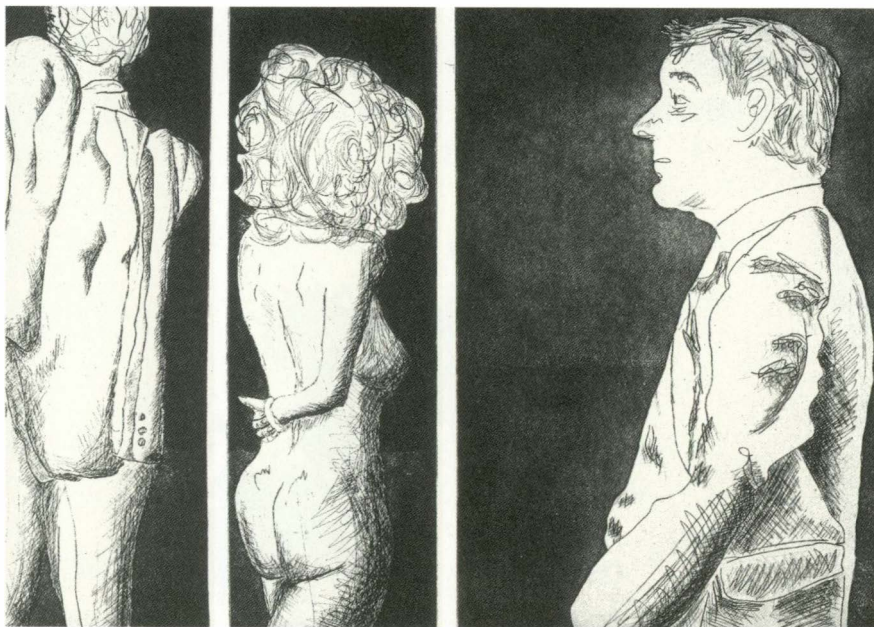
by Alexia Brehm

Champ and me
made two nights of last weekend -
met a few guys who called themselves "men"
saw them curl up and cry -
(left alone) and sighed
pitied the poor souls we call our own
and weren't sure of the time we would return home.
time flew and our collective hair took wind -
our faces taking the full brunt of whatever the night had to offer.
i have become accustomed to the darkness
guiding me through tiny hours and dimly-lit rooms
that house people I will never see again
and those who will always remember me.
a button, a drink and we're off:
she and I, hands held to keep each other stable
we steady ourselves mid-night and perform a "conference" in the stairwell:
all in the hopes that someone might hear us.

my eyes close that night
to a calvacade of Christmas lights and secret smiles -
a happy end to a dreary day.
tomorrow I shall wake and wish for it again.

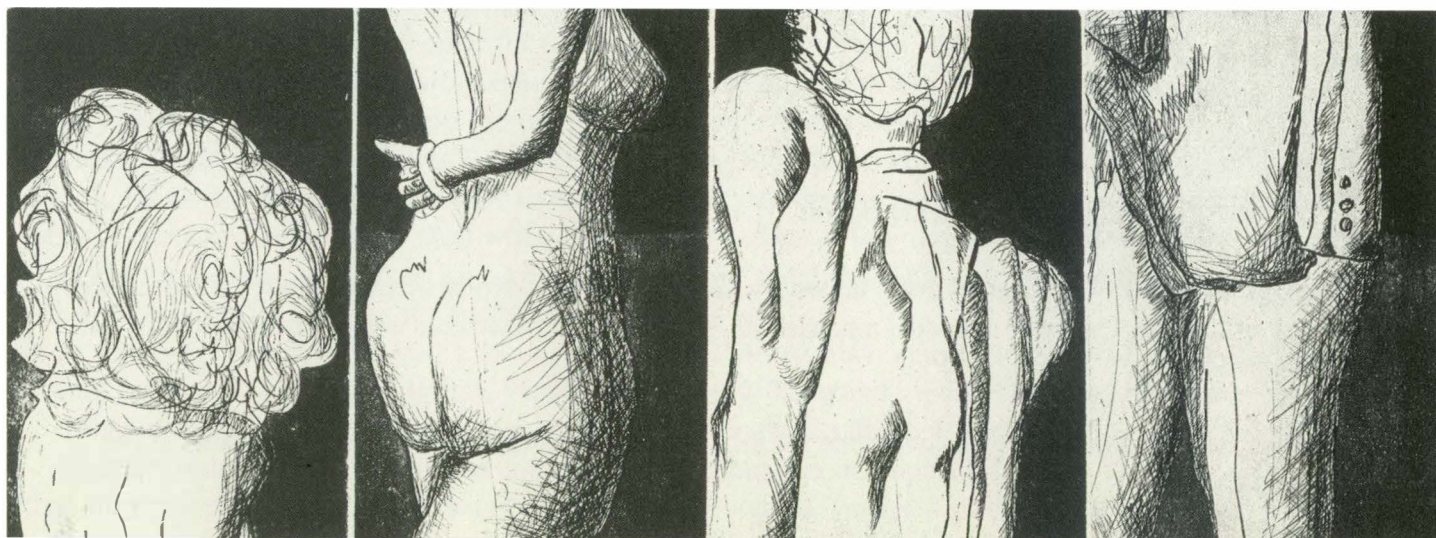


Daydream
by Michelle Gongage
color pastels on paper



Why Didn't I See It?

by Anna Curran
intaglio



Ahead Behind... Ahead Behind

by Anna Curran
intaglio



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Michelle Gongage

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Michelle Gongage

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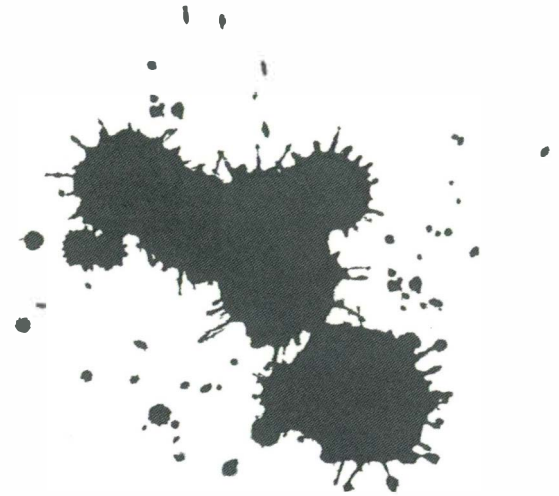
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Colophon

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