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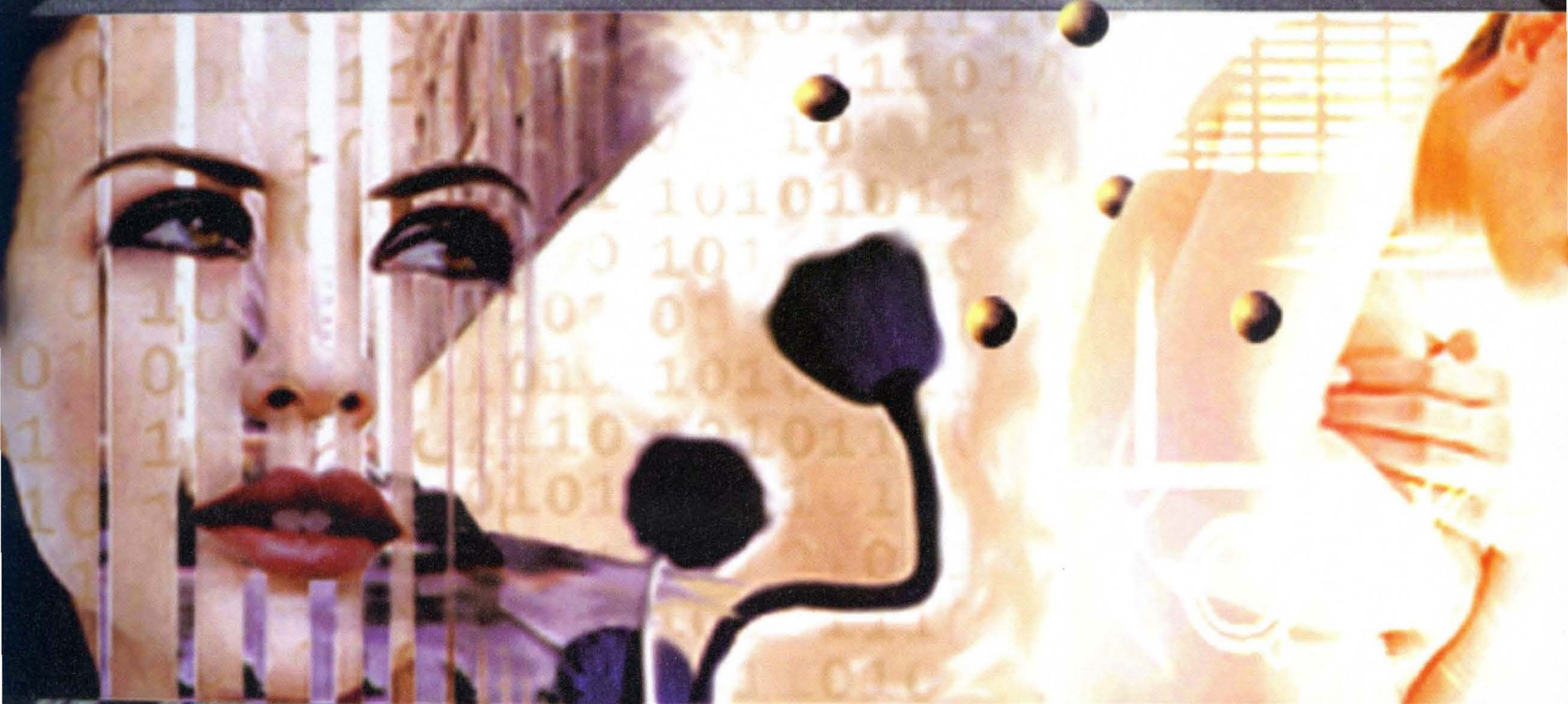
ROLLINS COLLEGE

BRUSHING

**ART AND LITERARY
MAGAZINE**

עזרה לילדים

BRUSHING



ART AND LITERARY MAGAZINE

Volume XXX, 2002

Rollins College

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Homesick

Dientje Francis

Before the sun is born
from the womb of the eastern sky
Misty dreams begin to rise

And in the haze, my soul awakes...transported

A rooster's soprano, crisp and clear
The neighbor's dog is barking again
His owner's curse; my father's grumble

The clanging clamor of my mother
in the kitchen. Breakfast for my father
before he goes to work

The sharp strong smell of the morning sea
toying with the scents of basil and mint
A taste of newness in the air

The baby cries; my mother calls to quiet him

As I hold him to the ceiling, he stills
Lashes softly wet, amber eyes shimmering,
Mouth poised to cry

A sudden smile. Here is the morning sun
I think. A wooly head of light brown hair,
A golden face cracked by a grin

To draw him close would be ...impossible

The stillborn sun prophesies the day
And in the growing light becomes
another morning cold and stale



Park Fountain

6"X4"

Color Photograph

Michelle Ramirez-Matabuena

Child of the World

Mika Ahuvia

I am a child of the world
Not of nation or of creed
I have a pure soul that fills me
And an identity of deeds.

I haven't a color or religion
Only my heart to be my guide
I look up only to the sparkling stars
And dream by the touch of the tide.

I haven't a language to speak
Or a book of laws to live by
I read my past in humanity
But look to the future in the sky.

Where I look behind me
Footprints mark the sandy shore
I'm walking to a land without a name
Only remembered in lore.

As I follow the trail I'd forgotten
My traits I shed like old skin
My true form awakens
My brightness bursts from within:

I am a child of the world,
Of sun, moon, stars and sky,
I wander with the wind
My heart my only guide.

Heather Gennaccaro

Clear water shoots into the air in three foot spurts,
long and slender,
only to have gravity rip it out of the air,
pulling it into a shapeless mass
and smashing it into the pathetic water that is waiting below.

Continual sloshing,
and Dismal splattering,
slices through the still afternoon air crying out in weak despair.

Each new miserable spray sends a gloomy amoeba pantomiming into the air,
only to be slashed into a million particles by the upcoming sword.

Beneath the dazzling flame lies a depressed pool of disturbed water,
swaying and moaning,
clawing at the smooth marble that surrounds it,
trying to find a way out into the lazy air.

A useless glass sheet,
continually praying for the motion to stop,
waits in hopelessness for the day in which it can be still again.

No matter how hard of a fight the pool puts up the attempt is feeble;
it cannot avoid being sucked into the fountain and being shot into the air in a continuous
motion that will never be stopped.

Gasping for breath,
the next wretched baton grasps for something,
anything,
to save it,
only to have gravity overpower and destroy it.

Spinning and morphing out of control,
the water jams into the pitiful underlying pool,
ready to continue the fight for it's anguished life.

Knowing that it can never win,
the water molecules continue to try to desperately hang onto one another.

If not,
they will be evaporated into a desolated life on their own.

Teddy Bear

Jennifer Clarkson

... You were real to the boy because he loved you.

Now you will be real to everyone.

– THE FAIRY, *THE VELVETEEN RABBIT*

The sun rises, a new day begins, and it never fails.

It won't occur to her to wonder where I am,

so here I will lie, face down and helpless

tangled somewhere in the heavy sheets.

Flippantly disregarded by day,

desperately needed at night;

would she love me if I wasn't here,

would she even miss me? There was a time

when I knew I was just a toy,

but her childish tunes have modulated to a sadder key,

and her missing prom picture makes me worry

that I have become more.

I wonder if she knows she's been holding me tighter lately.

Something about my soft fur tickling her nostrils

as she takes that last deep breath

before falling into a deep sleep comforts her,

and I'm almost glad that I can.

Old Faithful, I'm always here

to soak up her tears like a tissue and

part of me feels privileged to be chosen

over kleenex. I don't know if I'm real,

but I know I'm being used,

and if I could, I would run away.

Why doesn't she?



Untitled-Flower

8.5"X6"

Color Photograph

Mary C. Fitzgerald



Self-Portrait

12"X10.5"

B&W Photograph

Jane Ahlering



A Cats World

18"X13.5"

Oil on Canvas board

Tiffany A. Bagwell

The Affair

Meredith Gallo

There was nothing more than him. They sat together under the orange sky that was bleeding purple and luscious shades of blue. It was the time of sunset, as light gave way to the cover of night. Darkness would shroud their affair, bear their forbidden desires.

The tips of her fingers were icy and her hands quivered. She blindly searched in her bag and located her cigarette case. She drew one out; he turned and lit it for her. He had an acute sense of her in his soul. She slipped the cigarette between her roseate lips and felt the calming, dizzying effect ease her nerves.

She craned her neck back and exhaled a stream of smoke. It danced in the air and then dissipated, like fading affection for an old lover. He watched her, indifferent to her addiction. She was so much more fixated on him. They continued to sit in feigned ignorance of each other's presence to passersby.

Her hand rested on the stone bench and he slipped his over hers, as the sun was lost completely over the horizon. She turned and faced him slowly, carefully. His dark eyes stared into her, reflecting all the intense desires in his heart. She smiled, a nervous shaken smile, and lowered her gaze to her hand. The white line around her finger contrasted sharply with her tan skin, but then again, he had the same marking. It was the telltale branding of promises that refused to fade with the sun.

He put two fingers under her chin and raised her head up to his. Her eyes were pools of doubt and desire. He remembered how he had stood by only allowing himself to watch her. Unable to touch her, unable to gaze too long for fear of suspicion. He had seen her face look that way before. She had kneeled and gazed up at him with the same uncertainty, before tearfully professing her affections. There was nothing more than her.

She returned his stare and everything started to fade. The town, the street, and the people walking by slowly disappeared. Soon the only things that remained were he, she, and their hands intertwined against the stone bench. The rest of the world could collapse and Chaos had their benison to reign so long as they could have that moment.

Her beauty had arrested him from the moment they had met, and he was forever her captive admirer. She would lie awake and ponder if he were a blessing or a curse on her heart. Once she had seen him, she thought herself dead prior to that moment. The world had sprung alive with vibrancy, her greedy senses sought more and more. The throes and delectation of desire had never been hers before. They were only for literature, for her dreams. He was her awakening.

Time lingered in place, as the fire of their love consumed responsibility and awareness. He brought his gorgeous countenance closer to hers. Anticipation opened the floodgates of tension as she lowered her eyes and parted her lips. His fingers combed back her tresses as he pressed his mouth against her forehead. His nose traced down her face as she sighed. His legs leaned into hers. Their chests rose and fell rapidly. He lowered his hand to the hem of her skirt and his fingers wove a spell of enchantment around her. Chills tantalized her body, and she wrapped her lithe arms around him.

She moved forward, closer, unbearably aesthetic. He pulled her hair gently. Her head tilted back and she moaned, low and seductive. His lips grazed hers, teasing her, drowning her in a deep desire. He moved away to prevent a fall into his own dangerous yearning. But the air was too thin to fill his lungs the way she had filled his heart.

She opened her eyes. She was lost in him. She leaned forward and her lips mashed against his. Their physical beings blended together the way their souls had already merged. There was nothing more than love.

Judas Kisses

Jenevieve O'Neal

I never planned
to become part
of your charade.

My kisses for those
you intend to love,
innocent approvals,
have turned to Judas kisses,
bitter traces of poison
left on my lips,
killing softly those you bring
and the part of me that needs to love you.

I worry that you
have forgotten how. . .
stuck in a spiral
of laying them down
. . . to love.

I feel you
in dimly lit rooms
fumbling for ecstasy
betraying me over and over.

(Note: The words “fumbling for ecstasy” are originally musician Sarah McLachlan’s).

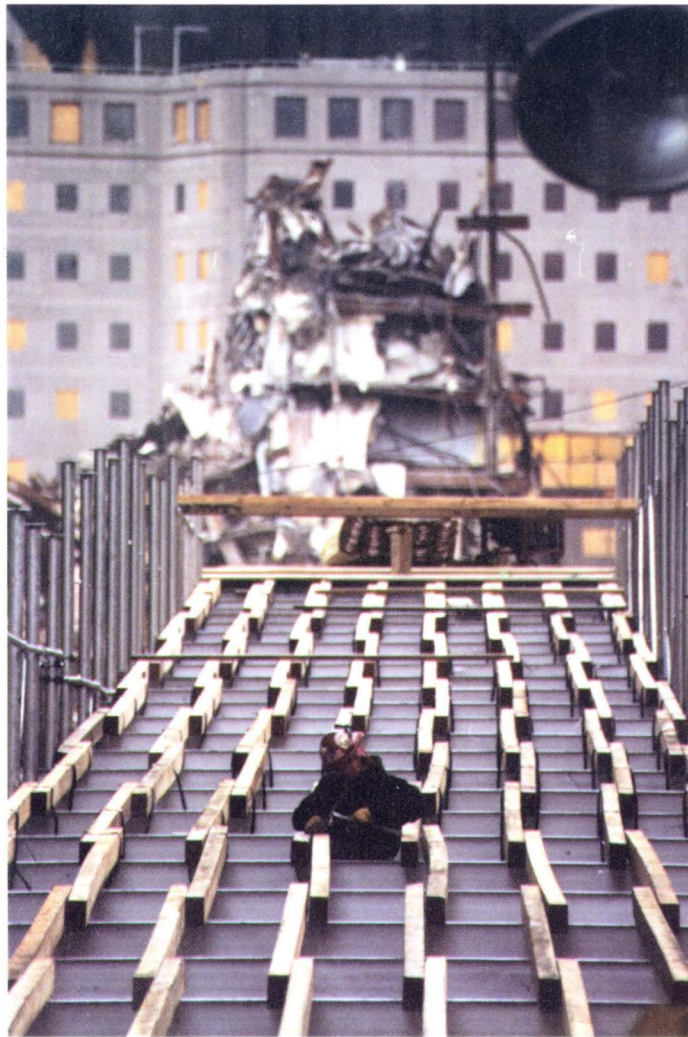


Lauren

9"X7"

B&W Photograph

Jane Ahlering



Ground Zero

3"X5"

Color Photograph
Jessica Crumlish

Girl

Alexia Brehm

take a hit for womanhood, girl...
you just made it to the major leagues.
the world is out to ravage you
and pillage everything you cleave.

miserable girl, cry...
but only as a defense
and when no one else is looking: run and jump in the daisies

take your flower skirt
and hold it over your head –
look through the cotton to the idiots
whose eyes fall below your belt.

don't be too strong
or show your weakness right away –
these things will be revealed
in due time, in due time.
because once you achieve greatness, they will credit it to a man
and you will giggle inside, knowing it was all you.

and when you show your weakness – you will invariably make a man look
better –
and this is always good for their egos.

Boiling Springs

Andrew Boudreau

The sun emerges from its nightly slumber
As the morning mist arises and dances with the soft flowing breeze
The crickets' whispers disappear as the birds sing their benevolent song

A baritone rumbling of an incoming train
Disturbs nature's symphony
As a rush of leaves flail in the wake of the iron beast
Only to find temporary shelter

A tree gives way to life's daily stress
My ears hear its raging dance
As it crumbles to the ground

Slow and elegant, a stream trickles its holding
Not able to fight gravity, succumbing to its force
Wondering on a set path
Until it becomes just one

Trout flourish in the watery veins
An early morning hatch of insects floats to the glassy surface
Newborn creatures struggle to take off from the pristine waters
But one at a time they are eaten alive, vanishing into the great abyss of nothingness
Never given a chance
Never even had one

Dawn

Nancy Scharf

Rose petal edges of the glowing horizon
Make a delicate welcome for even exhausted eyes.
A girl approaches from the East,
Blossoms of sunlight shine in her hair.

Slim fingers hook the toes of velvet slippers,
Straps of black ribbon dangling in the breeze.
Tear-stained face, lipstick gone, she steps gingerly,
Barefoot on the cobbled College lane.

“Paradise in Close Proximity...”

Nick Civitello

paradise in close proximity
yet, so far from my grasp
so far that it's difficult
to even contemplate
stroking those sweet, sullen shores
with the bottom of my lip



At Play in the Fields of the Lord

82"X60"

Mixed Media on Paper

Kevin Bourgeois



Untitled-Lilypads

8.5"X6"

Color Photograph

Mary C. Fitzgerald

Beware of the Rogue Attack

Charles B. Everett

Among lovers of chess, the aficionados, there exists a tactic known as the Rogue Attack. A last resort, reserved for the end game, the Rogue Attack provides the skilled player with a final counterplay, a chance to at once defend the King and annihilate the opponent's remaining pieces, ultimately pressing checkmate, and all of this with only a single pawn. It's not easy. Brett Braderast was explaining the relevance of this tactic to his audience as Glenn Lally tried to get comfortable.

"This chair's too goddamn big!" Glenn hissed. Glenn was 4 foot 9 inches tall and weighed 93 pounds. Everything was too big for him. Now his legs dangled off the end of the red throne-style velvet armchair like two goosenecks. It was embarrassing. "I look like a ventriloquist dummy!"

"All the chairs are the same size, Mr. Lally," whispered the attendant. "I'm sorry." Glenn looked around the cavernous dining hall of Brett Braderast's Estate home. It was filled with throne-chairs. The throne-chairs were filled with big people, royalty. They were listening to Mr. Braderast, "Mr. Brad," ramble on about Mastering Personal Rulership and Defending the Kingdom of You. Glenn sat up as straight as he could, moving from one side to the next, trying to get a better view of Mr. Brad. The room was gagging with the professional elite. An army general. A prime time news anchor. An NFL football coach. A fashion model. A CEO. An alcoholic ex-jockey.

"So when we come back after the Leadership Break," boomed Mr. Brad, "I've got a very special way to say 'thank you' for this week of sharing and personal empowerment. 'Seek To Rule!'"

The Roman historian Strabo blamed Rome's inability to conquer Britain on a dog. He wrote of the Celtic tribes and their use of the dogs that are today known as English Mastiffs. In battle, recounts Strabo, the Celts loosed the Mastiffs during gruesome search and destroy missions whereupon the dogs would maul the better-equipped Roman Legionnaires like Cornish hens. So feared was the breed that Caesar himself took as many as he could back to Rome to use as fighting dogs in the Coliseum. There, the Mastiffs, weighing as much as 230 pounds, were pit against lions—and often won. The Kennel Master was explaining this as though he were the only one in the world who knew it.

Glenn paced back and forth like a metronome as the Kennel Master spoke. The sixty-five Mastiffs housed in Mr. Brad's kennel wailed and threw themselves against the wire cages of their pens. "So, which one's Charlie?" Glenn yelled over the din of barking dogs.

"What?"

"I said which one is Charlie?!"

"Follow me!" The Kennel Master looked like an old fisherman, the kind of old fisherman that quits fishing and somehow ends up raising dogs for the rich. As they made their way to the end of the long row of kennels, the Kennel Master continued yelling at the dogs despite the fact that the only noticeable effect it had was to incite them even further.

"Quiet! Shut up! SHUT-UP!" He lit a little cigar, a cigarillo. "They think you're a kid."

"They don't like kids?" Glenn mewed.

"Oh, Jesus, not these bastards" the Kennel Master explained. "...SHUDUP! SHUT-UP! These bastards don't like kids, and they don't like people trying to touch 'em. Like kids."

"What in the hell are you talking about?!"

"I'm saying you gotta be careful with these bastards! No touching!"

He stopped in front of one of the kennels, the last kennel. "This is Charlie," he said.

Charlie stood in the middle of the cage, brutish, defiant. When he saw Glenn and the Kennel Master he charged

the gate, slamming himself against it like a freight train, slobber escaping in all directions from his broad muzzle. Glenn could actually feel his bark, like a base speaker, thumping against his sunken chest.

"They told me these dogs were nice," Glenn yelled, "that they were like...like ponies..."

"Pawnies?!" said the Kennel Master. "Does that look like a pawny to you?" On his hind legs Charlie was over six feet tall. "Watch this," said the Kennel Master. He grabbed a hose from a spicket next to the entry way and charged Charlie's kennel, blasting the giant dog with water and screaming at the top of his lungs. He kicked the fencing. It was as though he were trying to extinguish a fire with gasoline. "He don't like that!" the Kennel Master said, backing up. "Does a pawny do that?!" Charlie now barked even louder, his jaws fizzing with hate.

"Well, no shit..."

"So, stay clear of 'em," warned the Kennel Master. "That's the point of that."

Glenn looked like a prisoner at the gallows. "Stay clear of him? That's gonna be kind of hard," he minced, running his tiny hands through his hair. "I'm supposed to ride him."

"You're a drunk, that's why!"

"I told you already," said Glenn, shielding the phone from influential passersby. "I've been dry now for almost two years!"

"But people think you're a drunk," his agent said over the phone. "It's got nothing to do with what you do, it's what people think you do, see? And people think you're a drunk. What I'm sayin' is this is the best gig I could book you. And besides, we gotta get you exposure anyway, let people see you can do other things than ride horses, see?"

"But I can't," Glenn moaned.

"Sure you can," the agent said, taking a sip of something on the other end of the line. Glenn could hear the ice clunking and clicking in the glass. "You can do this."

Glenn watched the empowered crowd of seminar attendees mill around in the hall and courtyard of Mr. Brad's estate. They were just finishing lunch, breaking up into their Power Groups.

"Look," urged Glenn in his little voice, "I'm 'sposed go do this thing in like 15 minutes, but I'm tellin' you, I can't do it!"

"Don't do this to me, Glenn! Mr. Brad's the biggest motivational speaker in the world right now. You know all the top people that are there right now?"

Glenn looked around him. The top people, each juiced up on their new sense of personal power and importance, were alternately shaking hands and Knighting themselves. Knighting one's self is a refreshing way to re-establish a sense of dignity and personal mission, explained Mr. Brad. To do so, simply get down on your knees and proclaim your allegiance to the Kingdom of You. Glenn watched as a retired general got to his knees and, raising one hand, growled, "I hereby knight me Sir General Hadley Rammer, Knight of the Kingdom of Me!" After a spattering of approval from onlookers he struggled to prop himself up again, reborn. This should be repeated as necessary, Mr. Brad encouraged.

"Look, you gotta call somebody," pleaded Glenn. "You said these dogs are nice, like ponies, but they're not! They're like these...like these lions, these hungry goddamn lions!"

"I said they were as big as ponies," replied the agent.

"Well I can't ride this one called Charlie, the one they want me to ride," Glenn said, dizzy with frustration. "I swear to god, this Charlie, he's a killing machine..."

"Listen to me, look, you're on this guy's Estate Fifty-Miles-From-The-Middle-Of-Nowhere-New Hampshire!" shouted the agent over the phone. "Where you gonna go? This is it, Glenn! This is what I'm saying; there's no choice. Everybody there's getting one of these big dogs, see? They just want you to ride the first one in. Just like a little pony." Glenn wiped a bead of sweat off his brow with the cuff of his jacket as he listened to his agent. "You should have a drink, relax," said the agent.

"You're telling me to have a drink? I can't have a drink!" Glenn snapped back. "I'm an alcoholic! No hooch for

the alcoholic!" Glenn watched the wait staff walk among the powerful with trays of hooch. "I'm not saying get a bottle, Glenn!" explained the agent. "I'm saying have a little drink and do this thing. You do this, and this goes well, and I think I can get you that gum bit." The agent's tone was encouraging. "You want that gum gig, right?"

"Yeah, I guess...Look, I gotta go. It's time."

"Hey, go do it!" his agent said, "You're the best there is, Glenn! Have a drink and do this deal! And call me when you're done."

Glenn hung up. The news anchor, Jack Vanderman, was on one knee. "I Knight me sir Jack Vanderman, defender of my Personal Realm of Power!" His voice was incredible. People clapped.

"Excuse me," Glenn said, stopping a waiter. The short waiter leaned down to offer a beverage to Glenn from the platter. "Yes sir, beverage?"

"What is that? Scotch?"

"Yes sir," the waiter said. "The Talister, 15 years." Glenn took four.

The little armor suit scraped and clanged like a drawer of cutlery as Glenn tried to walk around in the kitchen prep area. "It's pinching the hell out of me," he said.

"You look just like a little knight of the round table!" said Elise.

Elise was the event coordinator for the weeklong empowerment retreat and seminar at Mr. Brad's Estate. She was watching Glenn walk around with a miniature lance. The little suit of armor was her idea. "I love it!" she beamed. "Think this will protect me from Charlie?"

Elise laughed. "You are TOO funny!" she said. No one had ever called Glenn "too funny" before. "So let's go over this one more time." She took out her clipboard. "Now, when the lights dim and the trumpet music starts, that's when you and Charlie come out, right? Remember to keep the lance tilted up; otherwise, you could poke Mr. Brad when he introduces Charlie."

She looked at Charlie. He appeared to be having a hard time looking back. His head rolled like a daisy wheel. He was staggering. "What in the hell is wrong with the dog?" she asked the Kennel Master. "Don't tell me he's sick!"

The Kennel Master was holding Charlie by a pole and choker, like a dogcatcher. Charlie had a little saddle on his back. "I think he's tired," the Kennel Master said, "he's been barking and hollerin' and carrying on all day, and I think it just wore him out. That is, so long as he doesn't look at that little fella." He motioned to Glenn. "Then he gets crazy."

Elise looked at the Kennel Master matter-of-factly. "He'd better not get crazy, Larry. If this doesn't work out, it's your fault," she said. "You're fired."

"Fired?" the Kennel Master said. "Brett's not gonna fire his own fatha..."

"I'm just telling what he told me, Larry. 'Seek to Rule.'" Elise was stunning. She shoved the pen behind her ear. "And wipe the slobber off the dog's mouth, huh? He looks like a drunk. No one's going to want to take something home that looks like that." Charlie stumbled to the side slightly as Glenn stood behind him, his heart pounding under the armor like a jackhammer in a soda-can.

Outside, the dining hall buzzed with the tension of the influential. They had just finished receiving their seminar completion certificates and now stood loosely congregated around the stage that had been built for Mr. Brad's seminars. Mr. Brad stood on the stage, his hands on his hips, smiling at the pulsing throng below. "So maybe you're wondering," he said, "what does Mr. Brad have up his sleeve now? How could anything top this week of empowerment and learning before we return to our own lands to rule as the royalty we now know we are?"

Mr. Brad tugged on his pinky ring, smiling at his court, letting the suspense build. One night when he was driving to Concord high on pot and Coors he hit a man on the side of the road. He never told anyone.

"Before each of you leaves you'll meet your new mascot, your new companion, the companion of royalty...ladies and gentlemen...your own English Mastiff!" The trumpet music began. The lights dimmed. The small crowd burst into applause. "Right now, I'd like to introduce you to my own English Mastiff, Charlie!" Charlie staggered out. The terrified little knight clung to his back like a spider monkey.



Carl en Espana

24"X30"

Oil on Canvas

Kelly M. Johnson

The Boy

Darlyn Finch

He's out there every day, about this time.

The sun is high in the sky,
too hot for such strenuous work,
but still he comes.

No longer a boy,
but not yet a man.
He comes for my daughter.
Today she is not at home.

He rides a white bicycle.
A trick bike, they call it.
He wears no shirt; his muscles strain,
sweat-slick, as he wheels, spins, stands.

I am reminded of Tom Sawyer,
balancing a straw on his forehead,
walking the fence
in front of Becky Thatcher's house.

I spoke to him today,
told him "You're getting better.
The hard work is paying off."
His smile would have melted butter.

Does he know the hearts he will break with that smile?
Does he know he's breaking mine?
All that youth, beauty, striving.
I hope he finds what he's looking for.



Untitled-Dolphin

5"X3"

Color Photograph

Mary C. Fitzgerald

Water Sign

Nick Civitello

pressure builds
in the volcano under
seemingly placid waters.
if only they knew
what was going on
under the scorpion's icy exterior.
they understand the mystery
after the encounter The Glare
then they know
but no longer want to

Aftermath

Samuel G. Hall

steel pinioned wing throbbing
through a greenglow night.
Never knowing quiet velvet darkness.
Evening murmur stilled now by
tyrants voice of thunder.
Lips of lightning kissed a fierce farewell
to peasant dreams and pious prayers.
still the ingrained urgency
feeds your faltering heart.
Sear the sky!—unsearched truth
finds the last wanderer unprepared
for the common destiny.
Return to hell that spawned you—
Aweful night bird.

1976

Suzanne Beranek

Hot dogs, mac and cheese,
Pigs-in-a-blanket,
Lucky Charms, Cap'n Crunch.
Tangy Taffy, Now 'n Laters stuck to our teeth.
Creamsicles from the ice cream truck.
Barbies with my cousins.
A poodle named Peaches who licked Daddy's feet.
Crouching with my brothers on stormy nights, in the small, twin bed
decorated with Cat-in-the-Hat sheets.
The "Three Stooges."
"Bugs Bunny and the Road Runner."
"American Bandstand" while the vacuum roared.

Fighting over who was going to get the records when they split up.

Two blue eyes, four brown, frowns in 1976 – the bicentennial year.
The year we moved out.
Parades.
Red, white and blue.
Monte Carlos.
A cat named Independence.
A new world without him

She cries each night. I sleep in the next room.
I try to console her.
Now I wonder if he cried, too, after 14 years, four companions, a dog, his house.

We see him on Sundays.



Within the Brink of Hope

86"X60"

Pencil on Paper

Kevin Bourgeois

Lake Virginia

Alexia Brehm

evenings by the lake, wet from the fog that hung itself for us to watch

and fake ducks bobbing that we argued about - the water has heard our words

(conversations and monologues)

the boatmen have steered clear of our dock to not be poised to shine their lights

on us dark people: presumed that we are golden-spoon-in-mouth-whiners, we hurl rocks at them to make them feel pain.

while we reveal our nakedness to each other, time passes slowly feelings are brought out by the darkness and solitude.

(in a cramped world, we have space to speak on the boardwalk)

and your profile in the streetlamps holds my hand and my hips cradles me against your body and we synchronize to the crests on the lake

you came out to see the stars fall and watch me on my back:

straining to see every last one before heading home to bed.

wishing on the bright ones, I wished my life away to someone who could use it better -

if that could ever happen.

the moon begs me to tell it more, but is so distracted with its reflection in the lake.

the tide is low but I can make it right with my tears.

Again

Jenevieve O'Neal

Our last night,
over dinner and wine
we pretend to be strong,
you more than I.

I wake with the light
while you're still sleeping
and memorize the moment,
your face pure of thought and serene.

I gather you in my arms
knowing I have failed you
by choosing to stay,
and I whisper to you
to hold on to yourself
in moments you would reach for me,
and know I never let you go.

Between "I love you" and "goodbye"
I was hoping you'd change your mind.
Instead you turned to chase
a dream more elusive than a mist,
more mysterious now to you than me.
And I watched you grow smaller
wondering how we fell in love,
if I'd be able to teach myself again.



The Sacred and The Profane

60"X40"

Acrylic and Mixed Media on Paper

Kevin Bourgeois

Hutchinson Island

Christyne Ferris

The wind cooled our sunburned skin with bursts of sea spray. Further and further from the colorful, caffeine-coated voices of families on summer vacation, Amanda and I brushed the world from our fingertips like specks of sand and forged ahead into the desolate splendor before us. Away from the soft slope of beaches dotted with bright umbrellas and brighter tourists, we climbed through a landscape of uninterrupted timelessness, of shape and texture both subtle and striking. The ocean stretched unbroken, calm at the horizon and restless at the shore, revealing a different shade of blue for every angle of the sun's rays. Frothy crests bore down on the land with a low rumble, a force guttural and ancient. The jagged rocks bit into our flimsy sandals, but we knew only the taste of salt on our lips, the windy dance of our hair, and the powerful magnitude of nature. We journeyed like two explorers in a world unknown.

First we walked on the towering rocks that pointed bony fingers at the sea and formed a cliff over its churning waves. Then we descended beneath the rocks to see where the persistent touch of water broke down the solid stone. The sharp edges of the cliff gave way to the smooth surface of its underbelly. The caves and crescents carved out by the crashing waves extended over and around us, embracing us. The sand beneath our feet was soft, constantly licked by the foam that quickly retreated after every splash. Due to the low tide, a few large stones stood exposed in the sand, and we believed that the ocean had designed and contoured them just for us. Seated side by side on the sturdy rocks, we contemplated and dreamed about all that we saw while our toes played in the breaking waves. Our soft voices, almost whispers, matched the gentle lapping of water as we followed our imaginations to glimmering sunsets on peaceful evenings, to kisses stolen here within the shelter of the rock's mouth beside a swaying ocean and under a pink and purple-tinted sky. "How romantic," we mused, picturing arms as strong as the rocks and lips as soft as the sand. We indulged in romantic childhood dreams until dusk forced us back to reality, where families greeted the settling darkness with games of charades and burgers on the barbecue.

A sense of time unknown to that beach accompanied reality.

Four years later I led him along a winding road looking for the spot I remembered. His fingers laced in mine anchored me and prevented me from trailing off too far along forgotten paths of memory. The sun, surrounded by watercolor streaks of pink and purple, sunk low in the sky, almost dipping into the water. The waves slid over the sides of rocks and then crept back to the sea. With the rustle of the wind, my dress billowed against my legs. The place I remember had not aged at all. The same salt air that coated my lips four years earlier once again filled my lungs. Little did this land realize that the whimsical high-school girls had disappeared. Amanda was engaged; we were both almost college graduates headed for the real world. But the beach remained the same, harboring all the childish fantasies that echoed in its caves and crevices. I felt the presence of the dreams and the dreamers. I explored anew the cliff and its secrets, and I envisioned the reaction of those girls as I walked with his arm around my waist, his fingers brushing the hair from my eyes.

Amanda and I don't giggle together anymore. We no longer wonder what it would be like to kiss the most popular boy in school, and we don't dream about being swept off our feet by exotic strangers. I heard the remnants of our giggles and musings that day, but I did not long for them. Yes, there was a certain freedom, a certain recklessness in our romantic illusions. For us, anything was possible, and we knew it would all come true. And now that it has come true for us, and we've brushed the dreams from our fingertips like specks of sand, we are left with only the reality. The reality of time and change. The reality of love behind the romance.

For the first time I am in love. The boy holding my hand on the beach taught me that love is much richer than what I dreamed about with Amanda. His arms around me are flesh, not rock; his lips are skin, not sand. He is not the exaggerated hero of a fantasy. He is real and vulnerable and, therefore, perfect. Our love is not as unchanging as this beach, either. It grows and changes, surprising me every day.

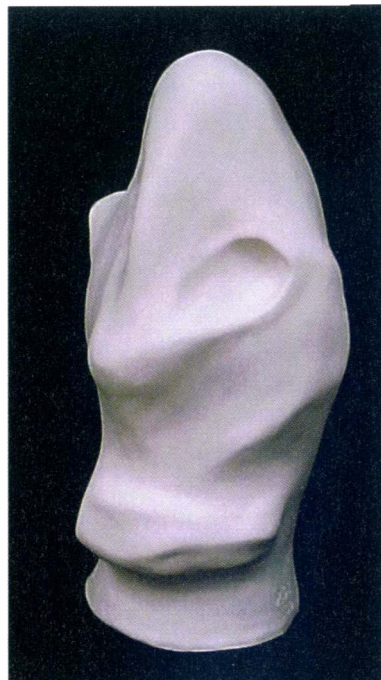
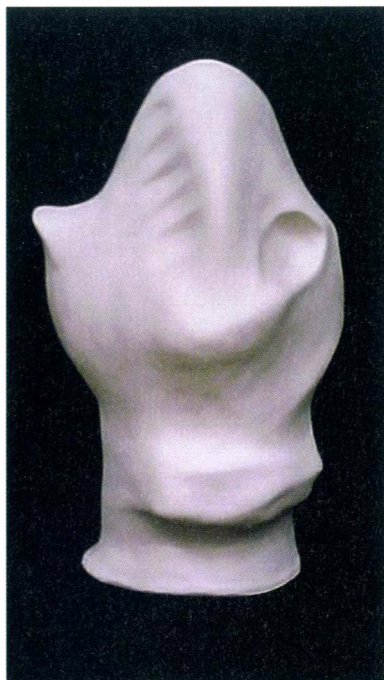
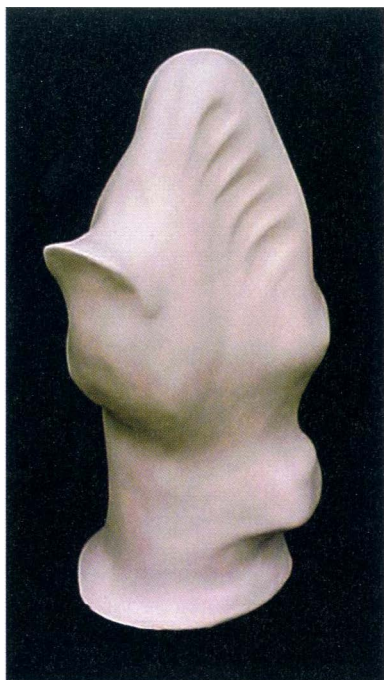
But the dreams still resound from those rocks. Voices as light as the air become as permanent as the landscape, just waiting to be discovered and take flight again.



The Separation of Emotion

40"X48"

Acylic and oil on Canvas
Tiphanie Windsor Perez



Enigma(3 Views)

Variable Dimensions
White Clay Sculpture
Robert Carson

Justification of a Smile

Jennifer Clarkson

For Cassie

We smile
standing on the edge
of a peninsula
surrounded by beauty,
and as youth radiates
from our sun-kissed skin,

beads of sweat
remind me
of their faith-filled oil
on every pulse point
of your pasty body,
and we watch you,

flecks of you.

Yesterday
the smell of your insides
rotting away
was so sickening
that I could barely stand
by your side,

to tell you, you were loved,
to hold your hand,
and brace your body
while it twisted and contorted,
your back arching
in what they say
only looked like pain.

But every time
your pounding heart
began its sprint
for the end,

I saw you
trying to escape
the evils
that blind so many,
and there

in the middle
of that circle of prayer,
your eyes opened
when you died,
So we smile.

2-9-01

Alexia Brehm

you see, I wait for him to come in
before my sleep begins

he won't wake me if I'm already sleeping,
but knowing he is there gives me peace
knowing he is home lets me sleep.

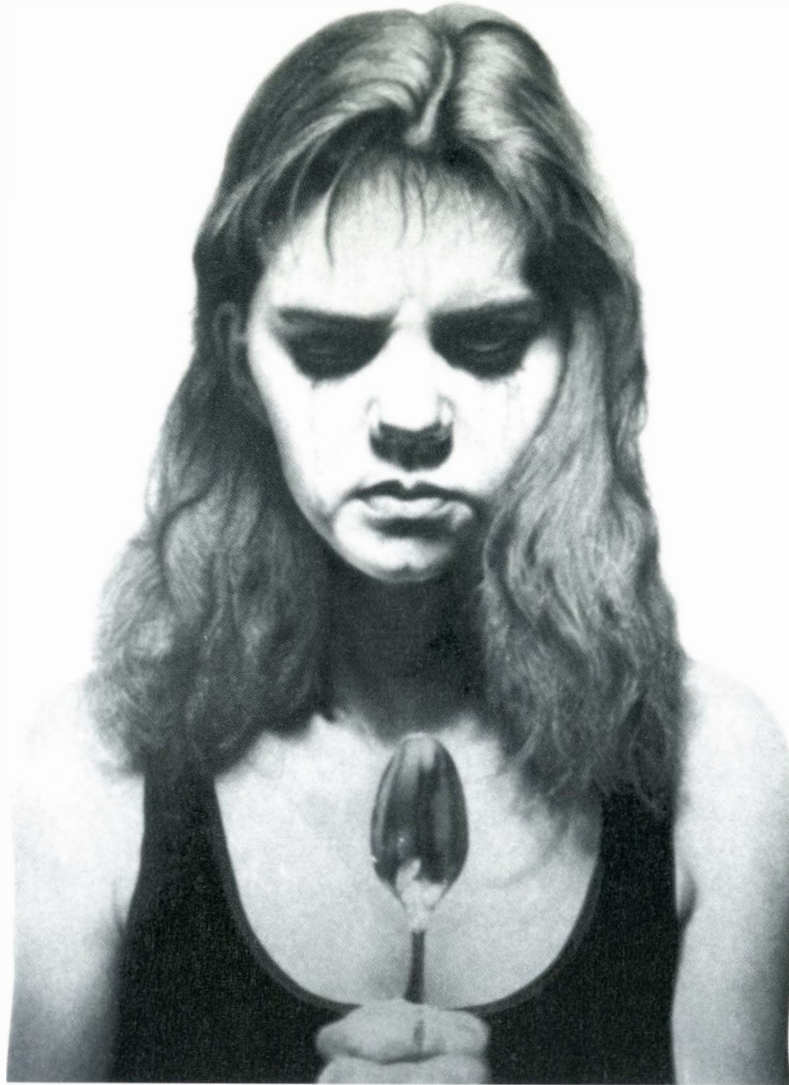
watching his light flicker on through the blinds and the glass,
it stutters a shadow behind me on the cold grass.
the building across the way sees me as a silhouette
as I face it, waiting for his shadow to appear.
he is this thing I am in purgatory for to sit and to watch
with all of his others – with all of his whores.
I listen to his voice as he says something nice only to unbutton her
shirt
I smell the crumb cake he awkwardly bakes to feed her high-class senses.

she is light and floats as a feather –
he catches her in a trade wind and he is off;
not catching sight of the weed he left behind –
he fancifully shifts himself in every way possible.

and as the darkness falls even deeper,
his light suddenly fails to illuminate my space.
he has turned in, and she is beside him.

although they may not be asleep for a while,
the darkness gives me no choice but to crawl home
with my small ego and weary night eyes.

I fall in to bed alone, exhausted and missing him.
and when I go to turn my light out, I wonder
who is waiting for me to notice them outside my window.



Tyranny of Substance

32"X40"

Pencil on Paper
Kevin Bourgeois



The Vegetarians

12"X12"

Colored Pencil
Ashli Gagliano

The Barbie Doll Median

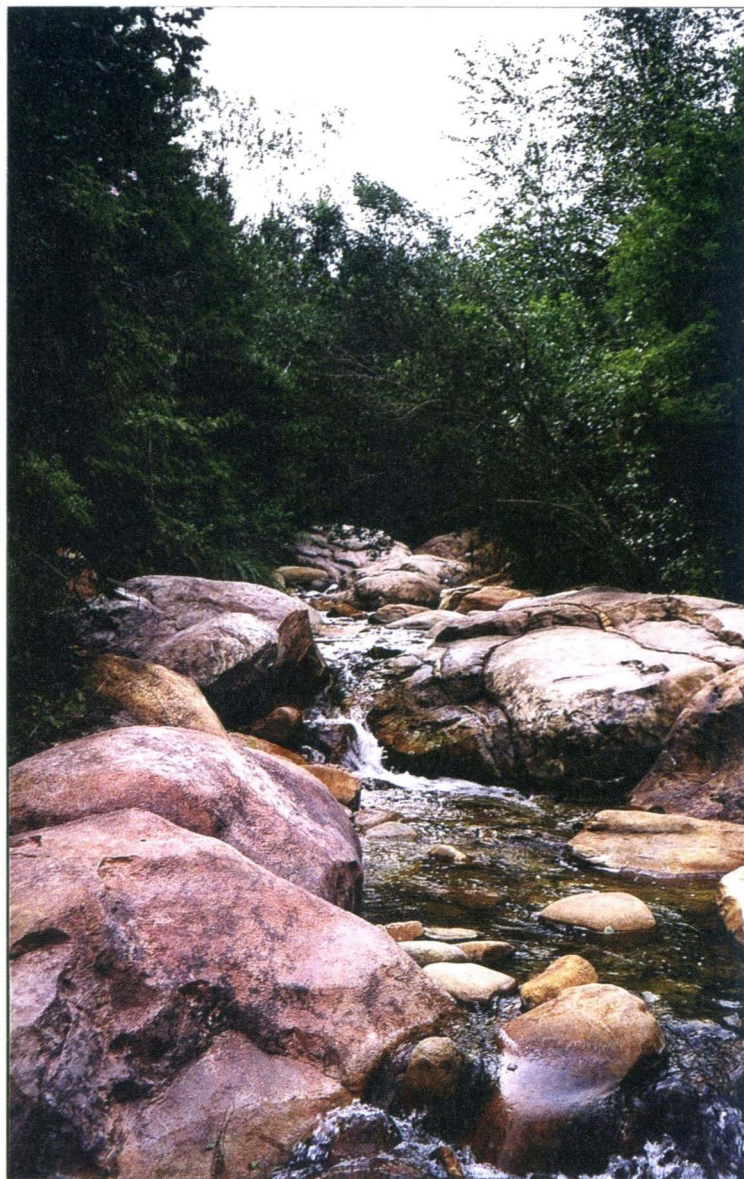
Nancy Scharf

Last night I abandoned the Barbie Doll median.
You remember what that is, don't you?
When the whole big colliding world becomes safe since you've decided
To like what all the other kids like.
Because you're little and scared, with no one to tell,
And you need friends, and to be the same as everyone else.

Starting out with the logical, you go to the store.
You can always buy what you need.
Searching the aisles until the perfect pitch pink demands your attention,
You march directly to Barbie and her unmistakable pals
Staring through the brittle cellophane, the color seeping into your brain
Until you finally realize that you too love Barbie.

All your life you follow the golden girl's brazen lead,
And it usually works just fine.
Mostly, whatever you need appears and keeps your feet on the path.
But yesterday I saw a pair of eyes that once held me so captive.
Still alive, wide open, but vacant, so vacant and blue as the aquamarine sky
When you sat in the backyard with all your friends.

Triumphant, you unveiled the fabulous blonde in her latest sensational fashion,
Pretending, and landing safely in the median.



Tranquility

4"X6"

Color Photograph

Michelle Ramirez-Matabuena

I Am: A Poem of Interpersonal Communication

Lydia Julia Henderson

For My Muse: John Benjamin Franklin Woods, III

I am a flower unfurling, the tight petals of my rosebud releasing slowly to the dew
Of a long forgotten morning mist.
I explode in your sunshine, my past lying shattered on the floor
Like Van Gogh's white roses.

I am an iceberg hurling recklessly to the warmth of your Equator
Where, as your equal, my icy heart will melt in youthful passion,
Though I'm old.

I am a Virgin awaiting sacrifice on the altar of your passion,
A Pagan princess anticipating the piercing of my heart
And the penetration of my soul.

I am a dancer, loose and limber. The rhythm of my heart pounds
To the drumbeat of my body. I throb to the possibilities to
Love, just one more time.

I am a singer, slightly off-key, my voice rising strongly and vibrantly
In ecstasy to your orchestral arrangement of my womanhood.
(Oh, please conduct me!)

I am Aphrodite, your goddess of love. I am Venus, second planet from your sun.
I am Lorelei, enticing you to crash upon the lonely beach of my heart.
I am Eve. Come taste my juicy red apple.

I am a wave crashing over your head, a volcano erupting
From the rapture of your touch, and a hurricane blowing gale strength
From the shipwrecks of past relationships into
The calming harbor of your heart.

I am a writer. Tell me your story, all of it. Live with me a happy ending.
I am a listener. Whisper in my waiting ear all those soft sweet things
You haven't said, and I haven't heard, in too long a time.

I am your friend, holding your hand across the miles, maybe forever.
I am your communicator. Please keep talking to me, for as I come to know
And understand you, I come to know and understand myself.

I await with joy and anticipation all that may come from our communication.



Taking Flight

24"X6"

Pencil on Paper

Ashli Gagliano

Searching for Familiarity

Catherine Echo Bacon

Darkness.

An impenetrable silence envelops me within the pitch-blackness of night. I have no sense of where I am, as I cannot even feel the ground beneath my feet. Yet I know I am standing quite still within my tomb-like surroundings.

Suddenly blinding me, a shaft of light infiltrates the shadows of before. It lingers before me, allowing me to regain my vision, which quickly adjusts to this faint, new visitor. The barest glow slowly grows to a full beam of light, illuminating ivory, tiled floor below me. Dust plays in the shaft of light, amused by its new visitor.

But the visitor soon becomes bored of its uncovered host and, out of curiosity, toddles along its path ahead of me. Slowly at first, I can see tile by tile emerge from the blackness. Two...three...

I begin following my would-be torch, in the hopes that it might lead me from this unsettling silence. Four... five... My foot lands solidly on the tile before me, but it startles my flighty companion.

Six..seven.eight.

I try increasing my speed to match pace with the brazen light, but my footfalls remain even. I am able to move forward, but not fast enough. Nine.Eleven.Fifteen.

My left foot falls upon the fourth tile to see my visitor shine upon the twenty-fifth. Fearful, the shaft of light instantly flies ahead of me, using its full speed to escape my sight.

Darkness... again.

My tired sigh resounds within the restored stillness. Alone... again.

Then, out of spite, my temporarily lost visitor returns full force into my face, illuminating the hallway but for an instant before it blinds me with solid, white light. I fall backwards, my body landing on cold, hard tile. I try to cover my eyes with my hands, but even through that, I can still see the surge of painful, white radiance.

The light begins to die away as I sit upon the ground and, soon enough, I can see only the gray, residual light that tells me I can open my eyes. As I do so, I realize that I am sitting just outside of my office at the school. The hallway is uninhabited but for me, and everyone's doors are firmly shut.

I rise to my feet and examine the dusty hall about me. The shaft of light has cleared away the darkness, so that it feels like a normal school day. Probably about lunchtime. After all, isn't that usually about the time everyone's gone like this?

Or maybe they haven't all left...

I can hear subdued notes coming from somewhere further down the hall. A sorrowful tune of slow, methodical count quietly begs for an audience. Unanswered for so long, its continued inquiry has settled into the cracks of the tile, hoping only to bother the pests that have already left.

I pursue its question down the hall, in the hopes that I might find whomever poses it. Although the light has finally chosen not to abandon me, I need more than just the brilliance of an empty hallway to keep me company. I pause for a moment; the light is dimming in response to my movement. Perhaps I keep jealous company at present?

Perhaps not. The light returns to its former gray-toned position.

I continue my stride forward, and the music grows in its intensity. A distinctive scale of notes flows forth, each plucked by a skilled hand. Melancholy washes away as the tune picks up an almost angry strain that races to be done with itself. Pushing forward, the question no longer begs for attention; it demands it. I respond by continuing along my path towards the source of the music; I am about to turn the corner.

The song suddenly returns to its former bleak tone. The notes begin to resemble... what? Something...

Stride into the light, my Lady,

The clear tones of one trained in the art round the corner before me. From deep within the recesses of the soul drips the smooth, masculine voice to accompany the lute.

Stride into the light.

My lips begin to move, anticipating the lines to come...

Fair as fair was once so true,

Regain my anguished sight...

I realize I am singing alongside the unknown voice. Unknown...no. Before I turn the corner, I know whom I shall see.

I take the last few steps forward and lean against the corner of the walls. The hallway stops short before me, with only but one door to my far left. Again, it is closed. However, that is not what interests me.

There, at the end of the hall, is a familiar window seat. I have been here before, and so has he. Light dances through the dust-worn panes to land upon crimson curls. He bends forward, delicately strumming his lute, losing himself in his tune.

“Ashley...”

Startled, his pale, white countenance instantly rises from the face of the lute. Crystalline azure eyes meet mine in fear at first, but soon they regain a sense of mixed sorrow and joviality. He halfway smiles, pulling his thin lips together in contemplation of my appearance. My eyes dawdle upon his light-brown freckles, but he hardly seems self-conscious. Rather, he quickly regains his slumped sitting position to softly strum at his lute once again. Sitting there, in his plain brown peasant’s outfit, he almost seems to blend in with the hallway itself. However, the bright crimson curls that fall about his shoulders beg otherwise. He is certainly human.

But he will not speak.

As he never does... at least, beyond the few words of this one song.

I sigh in slight desperation, as I bend my knees to crouch upon the ground. Rubbing my hands upon my knees, I watch his fingers deftly pluck the lute.

If only he would speak, maybe it wouldn’t make this so difficult. I must be dreaming again... How long will it last this time? How long must I sit here, listening to him pine for Miranda, unable to do or say anything that could possibly change this repetitive scene? They say you’re supposed to be able to subconsciously direct your dreams, to change them, if you so desire. Con-artists... whomever ‘they’ are.

My gaze returns to the once-again bowed head of the young Bard Ashley. I try to block out the continual weeping of his tune, but that only brings back the memories. His insatiable lust for life sparkling in his eyes as he sang of love undying, all the while watching golden locks dance in the firelight. His gentle words begging advice for how to tempt those golden locks his way. The shock engraved upon his face as he must have realized that he was actually taking his last breath—although he set it up, he hadn’t truly wanted to end his life that early. I guess he figured that Miranda would somehow hear his last gasps and come running in to save him, to smother him with kisses, rather than to allow him to deprive his last breath with the noose.

She didn’t hear him.

No one else did either.

I shut my eyes, trying to still the tears before they came. I had tried screaming at him once, when we were sitting here like this. I screeched at him that so many others had had to die—why did he have to just toss his life away like that?! And for a girl, no less! He had had so much else to live for—his family had stayed by him in his decision to join the rebels; his childhood friend Wesley was still there to listen to and banter with him; and he, himself—what a waste of life... But no! he couldn’t deal with the fact that Miranda had—

Gods above. I don’t even want to think about it now. I remember, when I lost my temper, he just stared at me, uncomprehending that he had ever taken such a fatal step. Although I myself am technically dead, I know very little about the Great Beyond. Perhaps, in his version of perdition, he knows nothing of what actually happened? Maybe he’s just sitting here, waiting for Miranda to walk down that hallway?

“I’m sorry to disappoint you, Ash,” I muttered, just to hear something besides that all-too-familiar tune.



Untitled-Boat

3"X5"

Color Photograph
Mary C. Fitzgerald

Persuasion

Dientje Francis

Silky ribbon red and rich
Tying my body to this world
How easy to cut you clean and deep
And watch you swirling over fingertips
Pouring softly to the floor
In a rippling, darkening stream
Like rubies, rarest jewels
Darkness and fire tied together

How easy to watch you thicken and swell

Then oozing and ebbing and suddenly brown

And in the humming silence that comes afterward
What would I say to him?
Precious gift
Tonight I would give you back
To the one who kindly gave
A silky ribbon from his heart
And tied it around my neck
I wear you still against the day
When crimson tides begin to swell
And even silken ribbon gifts
Are torn and stolen away

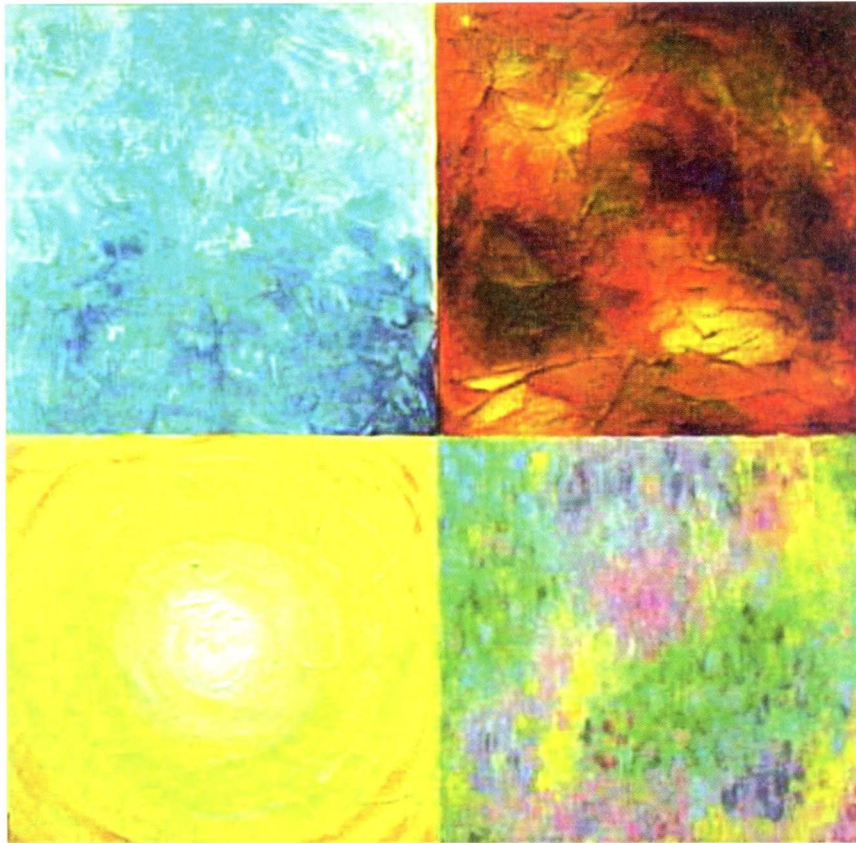


Strange Paper Sculpture

15.5"X21.5"

Charcoal on Paper

Tiffany A. Bagwell



Texture of the Seasons

24"X24"

Oil Paint and Mixed Media on Canvas

Tiffany A. Bagwell

Unsuccessful Replacement

Elizabeth Logan

Self, the alien corpse of blurred reality,
Rots exposed atop a social pedestal.
Estranged thoughts twist with ordinary pain
And ferment to feed a cancerous tissue on the mind

*You've stopped noticing me-
I wore thigh-highs and red lipstick.*

Sex on the beach swirled with Captain Morgan's
Forming a conglomerate of wishful thinking-
A mythical panacea to life,
To fucked up childhoods, growing up too young
And to being alone.

*Daddy never loved me, that's why I needed you-
You watched me wilt and didn't care.*

Time and space have ceased to exist,
Drowning in a vacuum of self-isolation
People and places blur together
Trapped beneath tangled memories, wrapped around shards of normalcy,
Clinging to a warped reality
Happiness has become an intangible entity refusing to blossom.

From birth Till death do us part, I am forever bound to be alone.

One Sunday

Alexia Brehm

random windows squint as eyeballs appear between pinched blinds
all just to watch a piece of paper blowing down the sidewalk.

and innocent ears accidentally lean into the light of the evening while
listening to "adults" struggle with relationships from balconies next
door.

open windows provide a tv for all your nightly dramas

people come and tell you even when you do not want to know.

street lights fall on sidewalks and cut lovers in half so everyone can
see they are walking along now, and think that that might mean something

time slows for no love and even quickens its pace when it sees some
people coming.

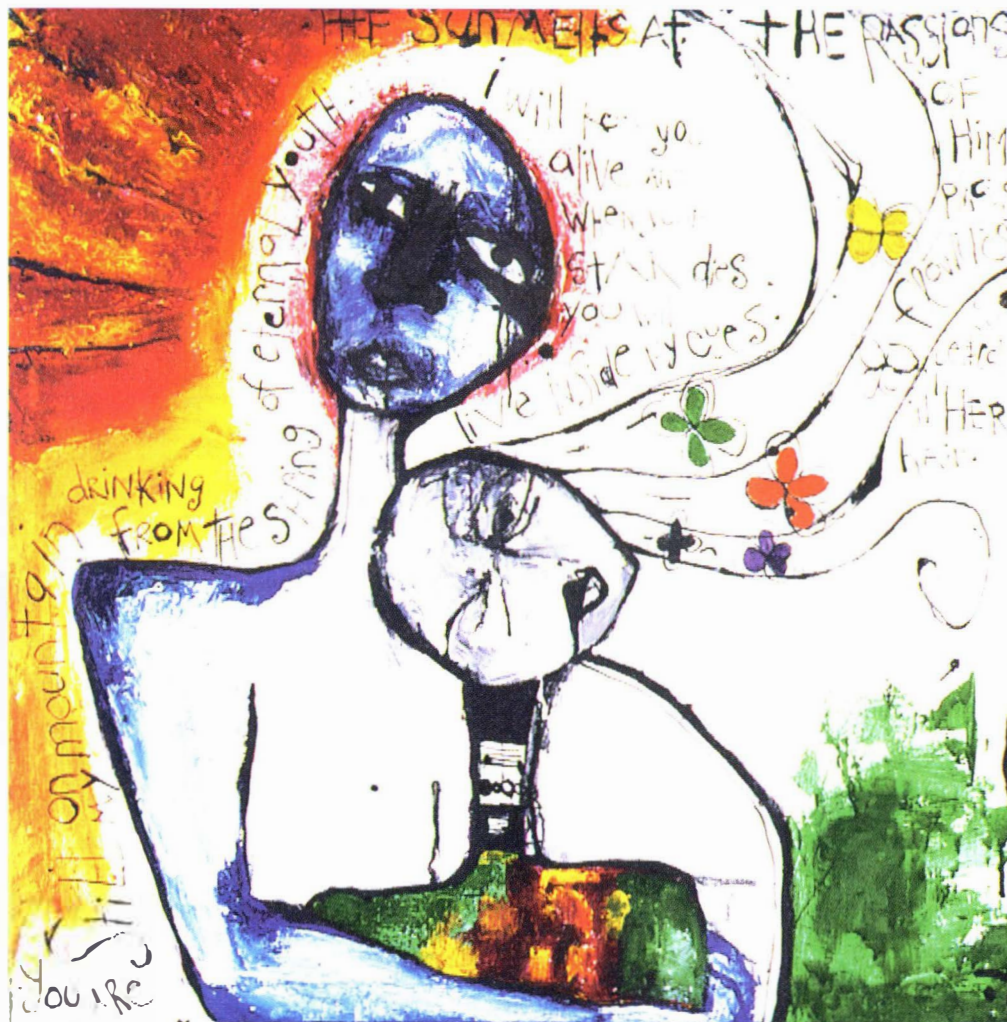
Grandmother

Jennifer Clarkson

I may not look like I notice,
and I may not act like I care,
but I watch, and I look, and I wonder
at your vibrance, your strength standing there.

For you have taken life's hardships
(don't think it has gone unseen)
and remained a strong, loving woman,
with ambitions, and goals, and dreams.

I love you and think of you often.
I admire the things that you've done,
and hope that someday someone sees *me*
through like eyes, and believes that *I've* won.



Summertime Love

36"X36"

Acrylic, oil, and Ink on canvas
Tiphany Windsor Perez

You Had Flowers: *In Memoriam*

Dientje Francis

You had flowers (I remember now)
Burning reds and oranges
What were they?
You never said
“tangerines and roses”
you mocked me that first night
I lay deep in your bed
Dreaming
That morning I stood outside afraid
And then your warm hand on my neck
You laughed at my quick intake
“careful or the cold might freeze
your heart and it might break”
it might break
I had flowers too today
Lilacs and lilies in a trembling hand
Placed on newly turned earth
They shivered in the whispering wind
As I stood there and remembered

Darlyn Finch

Kathy and I grew up together on the banks of the Trout River in Jacksonville, Florida. I should say I grew up in spite of Kathy, since she did everything she could to make sure I never grew up at all.

She was a year younger than me, but was a head taller and outweighed me by a good thirty pounds. She was raw-boned and gangly, with a big, shaggy mane of auburn hair. I was little, skinny and bookish, with a quick wit and a smart mouth. Kathy was none too swift, and I, although intelligent enough in book learning, lacked the common sense to keep my big mouth shut. She whipped my tail on regular occasion.

Kathy was the kind of friend your mama was a little afraid to let you play with. And Mama was right. Unfortunately, there was a severe shortage of little girls in our neighborhood, and most days it was play with Kathy, or play alone. I usually chose to play alone, or read a book.

We lived in a little white frame house on the top of a hill that sloped down to the river. Trout River Boulevard ran in front of our house, and made a cross with Ridge Road. We lived where Jesus' head would have been on that cross. The Harrington's lived on the corner of Ridge Road, in Jesus' right armpit. It was saying such things out loud that got me all those lickin's.

Still, once or twice a week, Kathy would show up, knocking on our door and asking me to come out and play. Mama would put Kathy through the third degree, always ending with, "If I let her come out and play, do you promise not to beat her up this time?" Kathy would assure Mama that she had no such intentions, and Mama would buy it. Loneliness would outweigh my good sense, and off we'd go to Kathy's house, with me feeling I was marching to my doom.

Kathy had gotten a waterbed for Christmas. That fact alone was enough to give her a certain notorious status in the neighborhood, since most of us had never even seen, much less slept on, one of the things. Plus, this was the sixties, and waterbeds were all tied up in our Southern-Baptist minds with free love and the so-called sexual revolution. Jacksonville didn't really have a sexual revolution, and it was doubtful that Southern Baptists even had sex. At least none of them admitted it. Their babies just appeared, straight from Heaven, without all that nasty stuff.

In any case, Kathy found that she couldn't sleep on the waterbed, because it made her seasick and queasy. So she asked her daddy to move the mattress out to her playhouse, which he did.

Kathy's playhouse was another source of fame in the neighborhood. Her big sister, Lisa, had gotten a Volkswagon Beetle for her birthday the previous summer, and Kathy got the wooden box the car was delivered in. The whole Harrington family had gone down to Mayport and picked up the new Volkswagon straight from the ship. They used a great big crane to unload it onto a flatbed truck, then Kathy and Lisa's daddy pried off one side of the box and the whole neighborhood stood around and admired the funny-looking little bug as Lisa proudly drove it down the ramp, tooting the horn all the way.

Once Kathy's daddy added a door, a window, and a peaked, shingled roof to that box, we kids in the neighborhood speculated that Kathy might have gotten the best end of the deal. When he installed the waterbed mattress for us to jump on, we knew she had.

Once Kathy had lured me to her house to play, we'd start out playing house with our baby dolls, or Wizard of Oz, or Bonanza, but we always ended up in that playhouse, just jumping up and down on that waterbed mattress until we were tired.

Then we'd lay where we fell, riding the waves and trying not to upchuck.

We'd have a grand old time, until it started to get dark. Mama had firm rules about being home by dark, and she was the only person I knew that I was more scared of than I was of Kathy. So as dusk fell, I'd try to get home.

"I guess I'd better get going now," I'd say, but Kathy would cut me off.

"You ain't going nowhere; we ain't done playin'," she'd say.

"But I have to be home by dark, Kat," I'd whine, and she'd step in between me and the playhouse door.

"I'll tell you when you can go home," she'd say. If I tried to go around her, she'd start pounding me.

One time I slipped out the playhouse window, which momentarily threw Kathy for a loop. She wasn't all that bright. But once she got moving, she was pretty fast. Small and wiry, I got a good head start, but she had much longer legs. She caught up with me at the curb, where she grabbed one of their garbage-can lids. She started hitting me on the head with it as I ran for home. Run, whack! Run, whack!

Home never looked farther away.

Mama came to our kitchen door, opened it and hollered, "Dee Dee, are you fighting?"

"No, Ma'm," I yelled back. "I'm running!"

When Kathy saw Mama was involved, she stopped chasing me, at least, but the humiliation stung for days.

I decided I'd had enough. I'd read my Bible enough to know that David slew Goliath, with the Good Lord's help. It was time. I had to learn how to fight, instead of run.

I had a big brother who was a student in judo. Why didn't my brother come to my defense, and whip old Kathy good for me? Well, for one thing, boys didn't beat up girls back then, even when they deserved it. For another, there was that smart mouth of mine. My brother was as likely to be a victim of it as anyone, and he didn't mind using me as a punching bag himself, from time to time.

But this time he took pity on me, and decided to share a little of his knowledge of self-defense with me.

"Now, Dink," he said, "all you really need to know how to do are two things: You need to know a good throw, and you need to know how to pin your opponent."

He went on to show me how to use an attacker's forward momentum to pull him, off balance, over my hip and throw him to the ground. He started by demonstrating on me, over and over, until I finally begged him to stop, and let me practice for a while. What a thrill it was, the first time it worked on him. He wasn't a very big guy, but he was four years older than me, and with this simple judo throw I was tossing him to the ground with very little effort. God, I felt powerful!

"Remember," he said, "the most important thing you have to remember, once you've got your opponent down, is to fall on her and pin her before she can get up and kick your butt." I had no argument with that, and he spent the next couple of hours perfecting a choke hold on me. How excited I was, when I tried it on him, and, although I was smaller and lighter, he simply couldn't get up.

For the next few days, I went around practicing on anything that stood still for more than a few seconds. I threw and pinned my brother some more. I threw and pinned my daddy. I threw and pinned my mama (just once; she didn't like it much), and then I moved on to my dog and my cat. When the dog and the cat would no longer come near me, I threw and pinned my much-beloved walking doll, Kristina.

Finally, I was ready. Kathy was sure surprised when I called her on the phone and sweetly asked if I could come over and play. Sugar wouldn't melt in my mouth.

I took over my Thumbelina doll, in the precious little pink footie pajamas. Kathy had one just like it, in blue footie pajamas, and we liked to pretend they were twins. Since I was feeling generous, I let her be the mama, and I was the daddy. We played the afternoon away; me in delicious anticipation, and she in blissful ignorance.

The sun took forever to begin to set, but set it finally did. We were in the playhouse, on the waterbed.

"Well, Kat," I said, still dripping sugar, "I reckon I'd better get started home."

"Oh," she said, "your skinny old mama won't start hollerin' for ya for at least another fifteen minutes."

"Don't call my mama names, Kathy," I said. "Move out of my way, now, I'm going home."

Her look of surprise at my boldness was priceless, but it was nothing compared to the astonishment on her face when she came barrelling toward me and I grabbed the lapels of her button-up shirt, stuck my bony hip out, and, using her own forward momentum, threw her neatly, with a loud "SMACK!" onto the waterbed mattress. Momentarily stunned that it had worked so perfectly, I almost forgot to fall down and pin her, but luckily I remembered, just in time.

Still holding the lapels of her shirt, I laid my scrawny body across her chest, and pulled the collar across her

throat. Between the pressure of my weight on her chest and the collar pressing on her wind-pipe, Kathy was having a hard time breathing, and found she didn't have much to say. Her blue eyes grew very broad, and even bluer. They were her one truly beautiful feature, and looking into them, filled with shock, gave me a delicious, terrible surge of joy.

I let her lay there and squirm for a while, then I offered to let her up.

"I need to go home now. If I let you up, are you gonna give me any trouble?" I loosened up on her collar just enough to let her talk.

Her face was crimson; she was beyond furious. "Let me up, so I can kick your ass."

I reapplied the pressure on her wind-pipe, and laid there for a few beats more. She struggled heroically, but still couldn't move.

"Well, if you're gonna kick my ass, I guess I won't let you up."

Kathy was a little slow, so we had to repeat this process a couple more times. I knew my mama was wondering when I would get home, but she was also wise enough not to come looking for me. She just let the thing play out, like it needed to.

Finally, I asked Kathy again. "I'm not having much fun here, and I know you ain't either. I'd like to let you up now, and go home. Whaddaya say?"

I loosened the shirt across her neck. It had an ugly red mark on it that I guessed wouldn't go away for a day or two. Looking at it made me feel a little sick.

"Ok," Kathy said. Her voice was quiet, and meek.

I looked into her pretty blue eyes, and I could see that she knew she was licked. There was something else in those eyes, but I didn't know its name at the time. Today I'd call it respect.

I slowly untangled myself from Kathy's prone body, and stood to my feet. I reached out my hand, and helped her up.

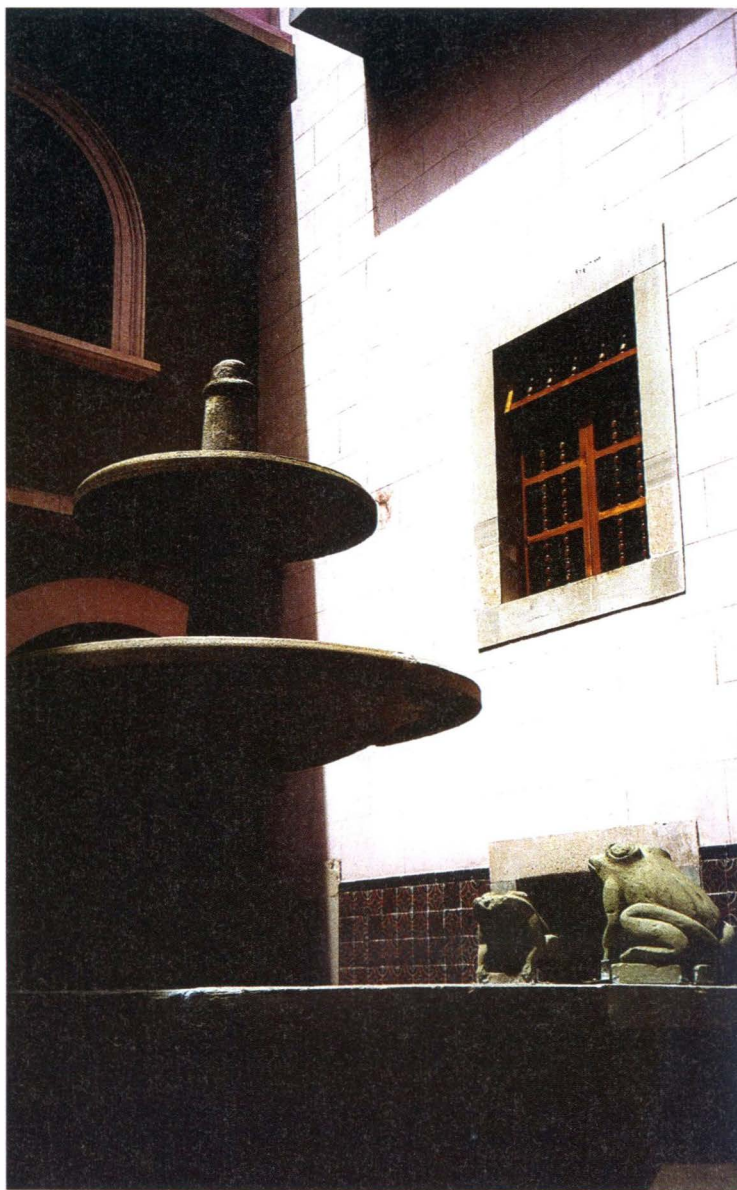
"Bye, Kathy." I said.

"Bye, Dee Dee," she said. "See you tomorrow?"

I considered for a moment.

"Okay," I said.

I walked home in the dark, feeling forty feet tall. Mama had the porch light shining for me.



Patio Mexicano

4"X6"

Color Photograph

Michelle Ramirez-Matabuena

Baby Born with Angel's Wings

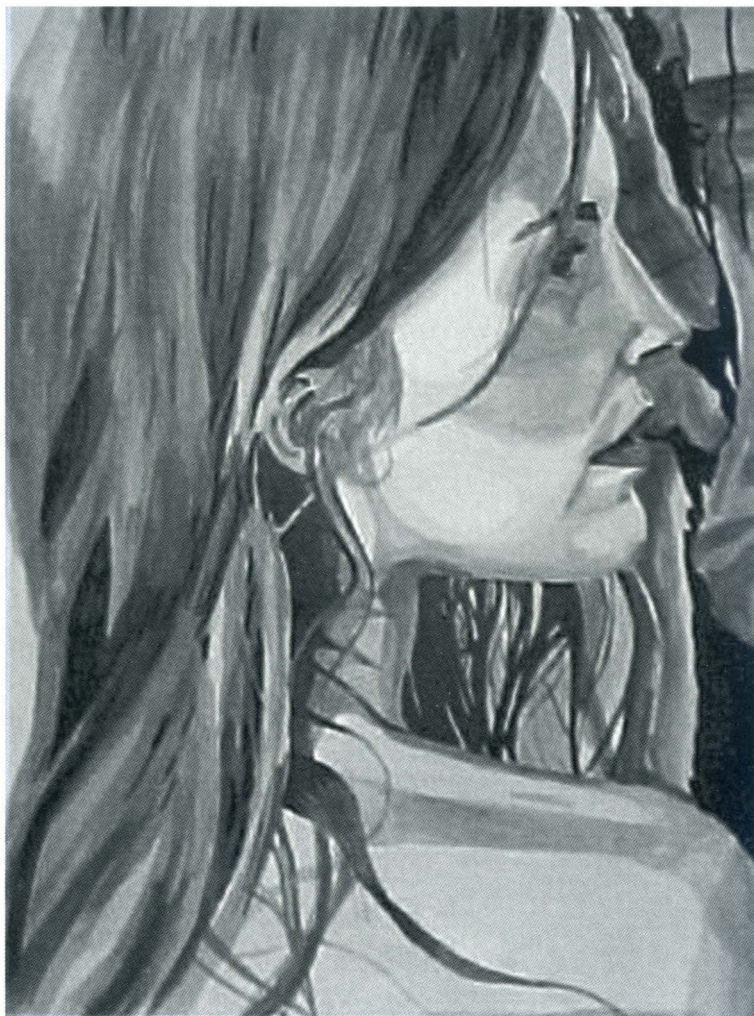
An interview with the mother.

Jennifer Clarkson

Well see, Mary had visions.
She had angels commin' down
tellin' *her* what was goin' on.
I *had* no warning,
and I don't care *what* those doctors say-
no amount of epidural
can prepare *any* woman
for a three foot wing span.

But you know,
I'm feelin' a little relieved
'cause I never really was a believer,
I just knew Mary was bangin' that boy.
But now, I'm convinced,
'cause I swear to God
(and he can testify to this one)
no angel child
could have come
from the last man *I* slept with.

So wipe me clean
And call me a virgin,
'cause thank the *good* Lord,
this has *got* to be
immaculate conception.



**Portrait of Girl in Black
and White**

10"X13"

Pen and Ink on Paper

Stacey Perry

Cover Art and Inlay

Kevin Bourgeois

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Colophon

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