

2010 Point to View



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"Cease"

pg. Cover

Vivian Stewart Award

S. Cindy Yim

"Mothers"

pg. 30./31.

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Printing

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POV

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Every attempt has been made to include all contributors and ensure accuracy of information. We apologise for any mistakes or omissions.

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Karen Murphy



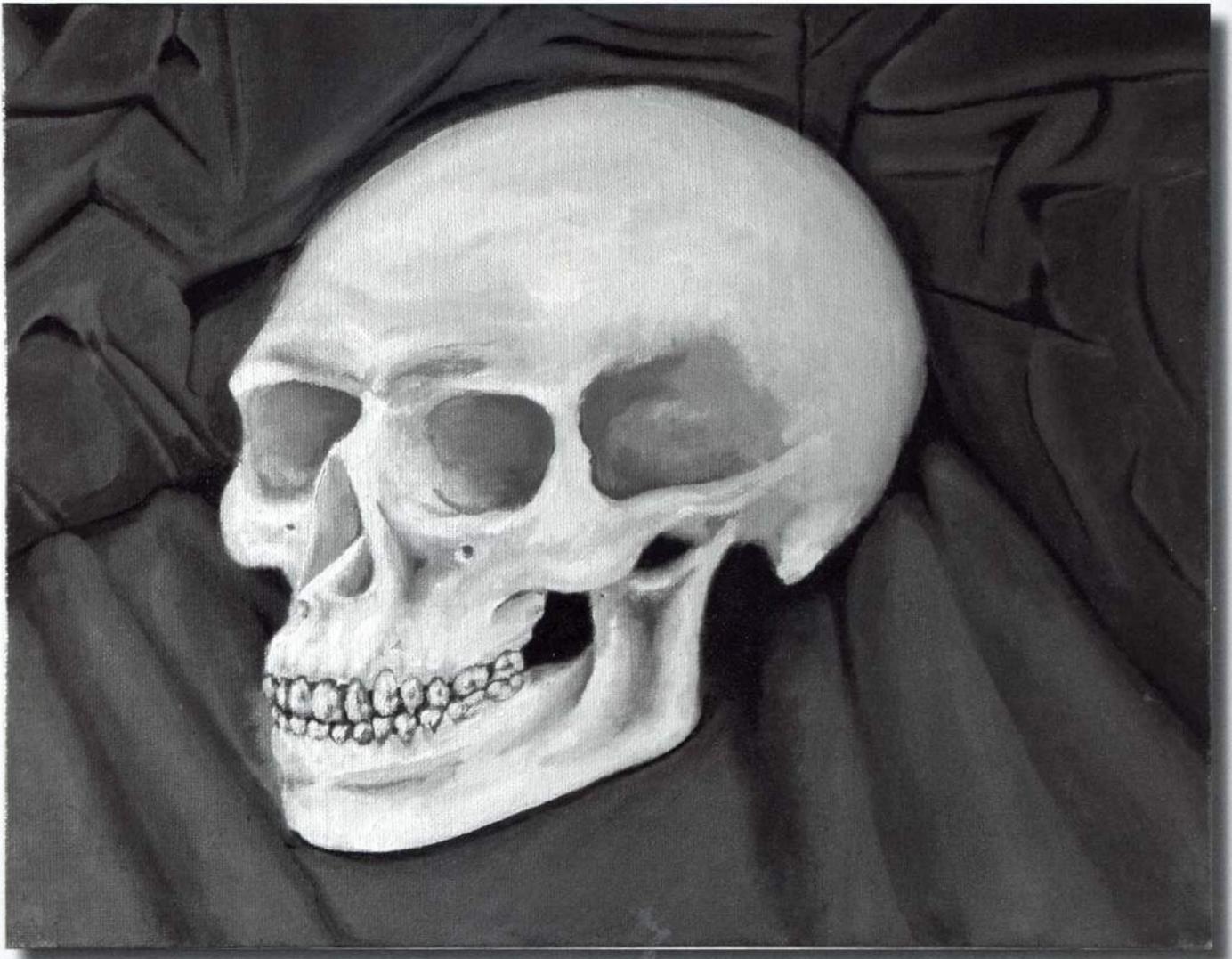
Kieran Peters

"A Touch of Gray"

As I sat on a blooming day
Sullen inside
A school building
I thought of red shoes,
Converse, that stretch up the calves
Like boots
But rubber soled, only for
The quirky and cute.
I saw these worn only once,
In a therapy group,
We'd sit passively peer by peer,
Round a carpeted room.
She chewed green gum
As briskly as words spilled
Onto clipboards.
Against the unbiased backdrop
Of beige hospital walls,
She hinted at the hues of life
That hung outside the doors.
Our medicated eyes
Fell slack on issued socks
Of fuzzy gray or brown
Or bluntly fading blue.
Rubber grips stopped our soles
From a slew of future falls.
Our wrists matched in
Strapping white bracelets.
We were residents
Dragged from our homes
Of misshapen rainbows
To heal in Neutral tones,
To delight in the visit of
A girl in red converse shoes

Nick Kohler

"Skull on Sheet"



"Graveyards"

Haiku 1

Skeleton arise
Emerge, clutch the frost ground
Ensnare the damned souls

Haiku 2

Graveyard keeper strolls
Holding a Chinese food box
Here comes Death, starving

Haiku 3

Red flowers I lay
Your lovely gravestone shivers
My eyes weep rivers

Chris Mikos

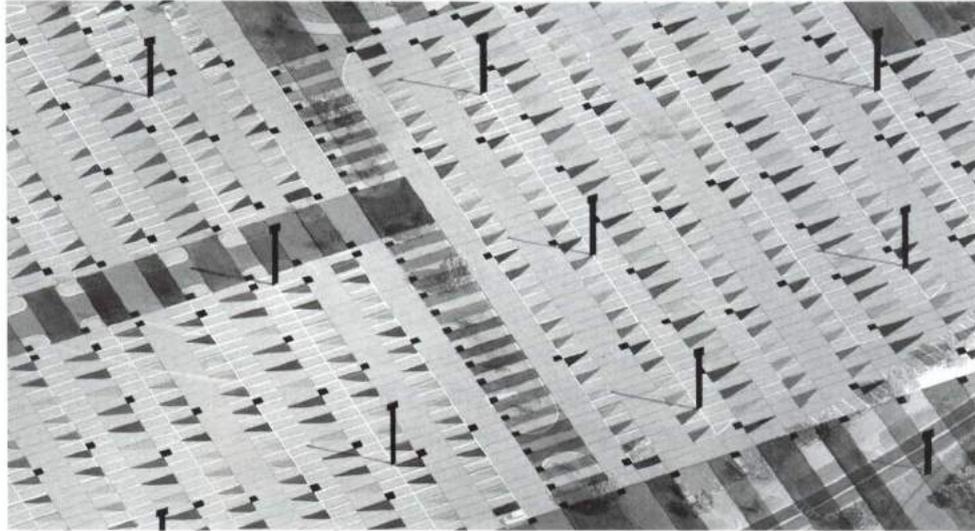
"Flower"

My Love,
I wait for you here in this field,
my crimson petals beg for your touch.
My stamen swollen,
quivering in anticipation.
Oh come to me, in your suit of yellow and black.
Fear not my thorns!
They will do no harm.
With your slender, supple hands
gently pluck my pollen.

Does your belly grow heavy with my seed?
Then go if you must!
Shamelessly spread my gift.
To the Tulip.
Is her pollen as sweet, or as bountiful?

David Cho

"Untitled"



Justin Hastings

"Where Are My Children?"

Where are my children?

I arrived home and walked in through the unlocked door
The silence that used to rest me now serves as something more
It sends shivers down my spine and a sharp dagger right through my heart

All is missing, everything in our home is gone

Everything but a picture staged on a box in the hall of you
The photo of you smiling with grace is now of a selfish smirk on your face

Not quite sure what I have done to receive this gift from you
But why the hole in Gavin's room, you forgot one of Kenzie's dolls too

I'm not really angry, I'd never let you know anyway if I was hurt

Thanks for leaving at least my clothing

Ha, should have figured you'd take my favorite shirt

I asked the police where my children have gone

They said all I needed to know was that they were with their mom

You can have everything... you already do

Just tell me where my babies are at, and remember how much I loved you.

Casey Giglio

"Inland"

I traded a name for a name,
a language for a language,
one continent for another—
East for West

geographical capital for cosmopolitan one, Minsk for Chicago,
I drifted within the skysrise-bred neon-braced car-clogged metropolitan vein till
my feet quicksanded into
the red white and blue soil of capitalism,
haunting the homespun grounds of Midwest,
as decades dribbled unnoticed.

But it started
small, a sneeze

that broadcast into a private tornado
of flashing roads, colorless sandwich-shaped luggage, Congo drumming of closing
car doors, beastly bellow of restless planes—
until alien landscapes were throwing judging glances at exhaust tails of our arriving muttering
cabs.

There
Vienna's carefully cobblestones streets—
neat little briquettes—

shone with cast-iron dignity
stacking redsand horizons of a civilization
like living gleam of red faces pride sweating out of concrete pours.
Dark caves of Opera House scowling out of silent archways,
paneling of plaid on Mozart House windows, stretch-tension of arc-metal bridges,
meticulously kept carrot colored buses perfectly squared
like crayola-dipped legos.
with accordion joints panting between stops.
While curled under the other cheek of Europe,
gaping grey banalities
of passive Kalinsky street were quietly buried
in the empty closets of no-longer-my-room.

Then,
encrusting the thigh-high high-heel leathered boot of Italy,
was Rome's reigning damp gothic of interloping architecture
crouching over darting ant-hills of espresso-eyed natives
the skin of scurrying centuries glaring down
on the foot bed of pounded streets. A love affair
between modernity and antiquity.
Colosseum cascading under the tyranny of time, bedrock of Jews shouldering eons of spectacles,
games, executions, crumbling human Atlas now grateful for sweeping masses of Ray
Charles and Elton John worshippers.

It seemed too much this uncensored strangeness displacing
my childhood case
its proverbial jars of syrupy comforts, uncorked
one by one,
until a furtive echo of this weirdworld slid its finger along
the orphaned rims playing them
like the New York Philharmonic.

Months trekked on. We were nomads.
Torrent of domestic diaspora ebbing
my forcibly reconciled family of a dozen further out into foreign waters.

Rootless travels finally capsized us into the over-caffeinated buzz of LaGuardia Airport—
an interlude before super-sized futurescapes of Chicago would let themselves be seen.

In midst of cultural hyperventilation, a new me was already coalescing below the surface.
It wasn't apparent yet, but once the dust settled
I realized I was never
going to rekindle the part of me that was conceived in the perplexing commune of Red Russia—
its fineboned fingers still clutching a fragment of my unpolluted years—
the weeping motherland of great artists, athletes, engineers all hiding in their 80 proof bottles.

Dianne Batzkall

"Hornbill Odyssey"

Hornbill Odyssey



Dianne Batzkall 2010 ©

Hilde Hasvold

"Patrick"

In two years, we've never left the apartment.
You come in and say, "Hi. How are you?"
I say, "Fine" and we walk into the bedroom.
You turn the light on and take off your clothes.
I turn the light off so I can take off my clothes.

"Get on top so I can play with your boobs."
"No. I don't want you to see my fat rolls."
"I don't care about your fat rolls."
"Oh, that was nice of you to say, but I still won't do it.
Now move so I can lie down."

You push your hips forward and I feel a rip and a burn-
I give you a smack to the head for hurting me.
Eight minutes in and I'm bored so I start talking.
"How was your day at work?
Where'd you go for lunch?
Did you get the oil changed?"
You just moan and I can't decide
If it's out of pleasure or irritation so
I just think instead.

Why am I doing this?
Who is this person?
Why do I want him to say, "I love you?"

You clasp your fingers in my hair and breathe hard onto my neck.
You're finally done and you get up to leave.

You kiss me goodbye and ask, "What's wrong?"
As he walks out the door
All I can say is, "Next time-
You can fuck yourself."

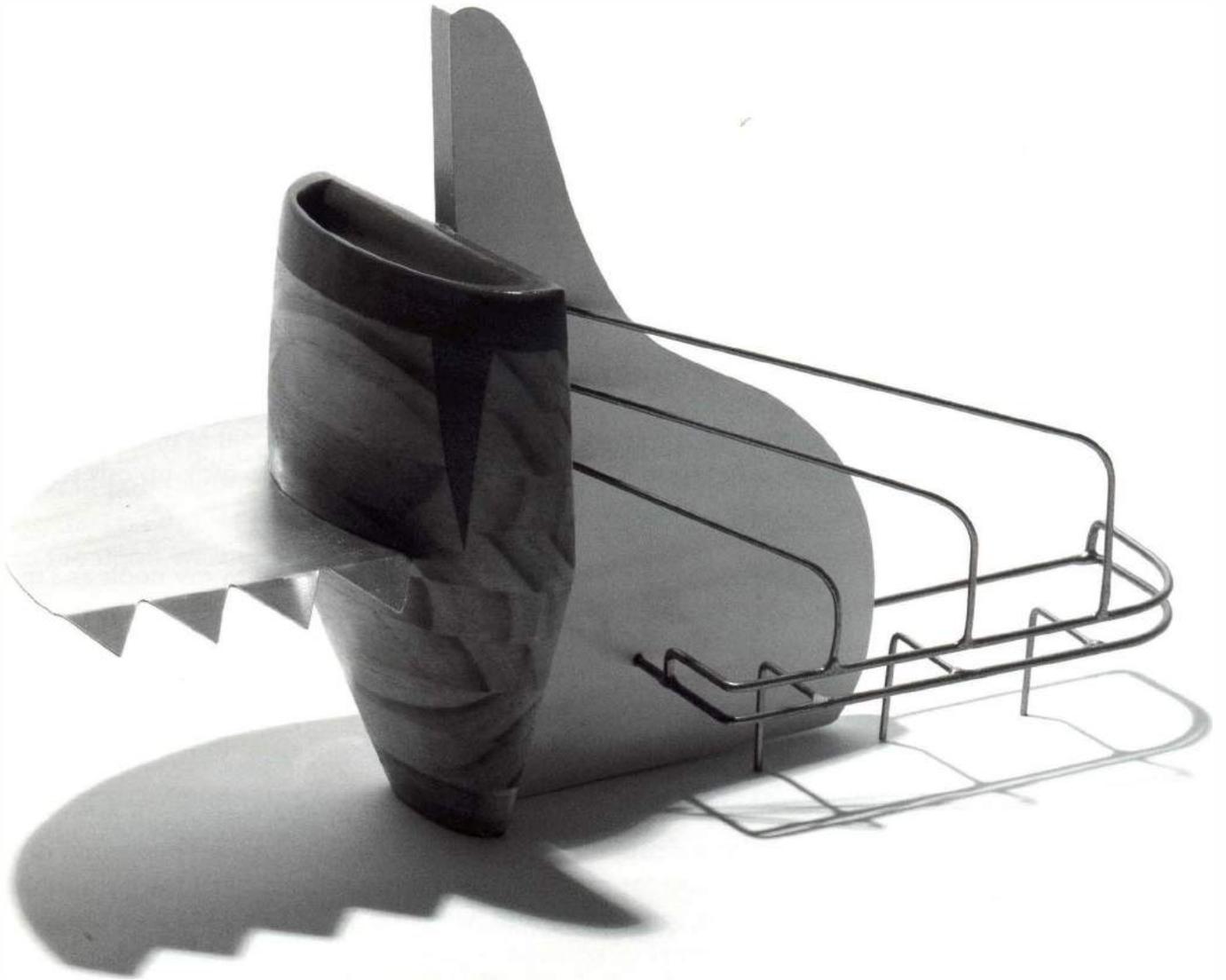
Nick Kohler

"Tired of Thinking About It"



Urszula Chlastawa

Untitled



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S. Cindy Yim

"Eddie"

I'm smoking a cigarette and lying naked in bed next to some guy I just fucked. I don't really know his name. It's Tim or Tom or some shit; I sure as hell wasn't listening when he told me. I popped a few Valium about an hour ago and my body feels like it's turning into sludge. I'm practically stuck to the bed in my euphoria. My eyes won't open all the way.

This guy puts his arm around me, and I flinch a little. I don't like to mix intimacy with casual sex. He pulls me closer and kisses me on the lips. I turn away and take another drag off my cigarette. Tareytons. My favorite.

For some strange, masochistic reason, I enjoy the feeling of shit clogging up my lungs. The way it burns in the back of my throat. The way it sometimes inflames and blisters my gums.

I don't know how or why it happened, but I fell in love with a man named Edwin. He's some skinny Croatian immigrant with a British father ten years my senior who speaks charmingly fractured English. His accent is thick, his vowels long. "Let me see what time is it," he'll say. "I don't want to fuck up our friendship or something retarded like this," he's said. We're friends, I guess.

This guy kisses my shoulder and buries his head into my neck as I'm sucking on my cigarette, and I am unexpectedly reminded of a conversation I had quite recently. A certain male friend of mine and I were sharing the dirty details of our latest sexual exploits over shot after shot of Jim Beam. After listening to a few of my stories, he looked at me and said, only half joking, "What are you, a third wave feminist now? You're fucking guys left and right these days."

I wondered what had prompted this reaction. We were both telling stories of equal vulgarity. For a drunken split second, I thought about punching him in his smug face. I resented him for making the comment, but I kept my composure and took another shot. Then I turned to him, wearing something halfway between a shit-eating grin and a whiskey grimace and said, "I don't fuck because I'm a feminist, which I'm not, I fuck because I'm human."

Watching the smoke curl up to the ceiling, I think about Eddie. He'd probably be furious if he found out about what I was just doing. The reaction, however, would be a bruised ego, nothing more. I don't even know if extracurricular fucking is allowed, just that he's not kissing on anyone else for now.

Kissing this guy, I tasted Eddie—vodka spiked sweet tea and Parliament lights. I daydream about him too often. I could never tell him any of this; it'd be a heartbreaking disaster. I figure, even after we inevitably part, I'll always have the saccharine memories of the countless lazy Sunday mornings we spent melting into each other, hiding from the sunlight streaming through his windows. Or that one night his power went out and we spent twelve hours cuddling and smoking in his bed, surrounded by candles and talking about our pasts, presents, futures.

I'm suddenly exasperated with myself—with these silly and hopeful romantic aspirations. This shit's bad news. We're supposed to be friends who just happen to fuck. There can't be any love or even feelings, really. Not if we want things to work. So I tell myself I'll fuck and fuck and fuck, and that all of these silly dreams will fade sooner or later.

If circumstances were different, I think we could have something. If he wasn't moving back to Europe in less than a year, if I wasn't planning on leaving for college in a couple, I think we'd be more than just fuck buddies. But maybe not. Probably not.

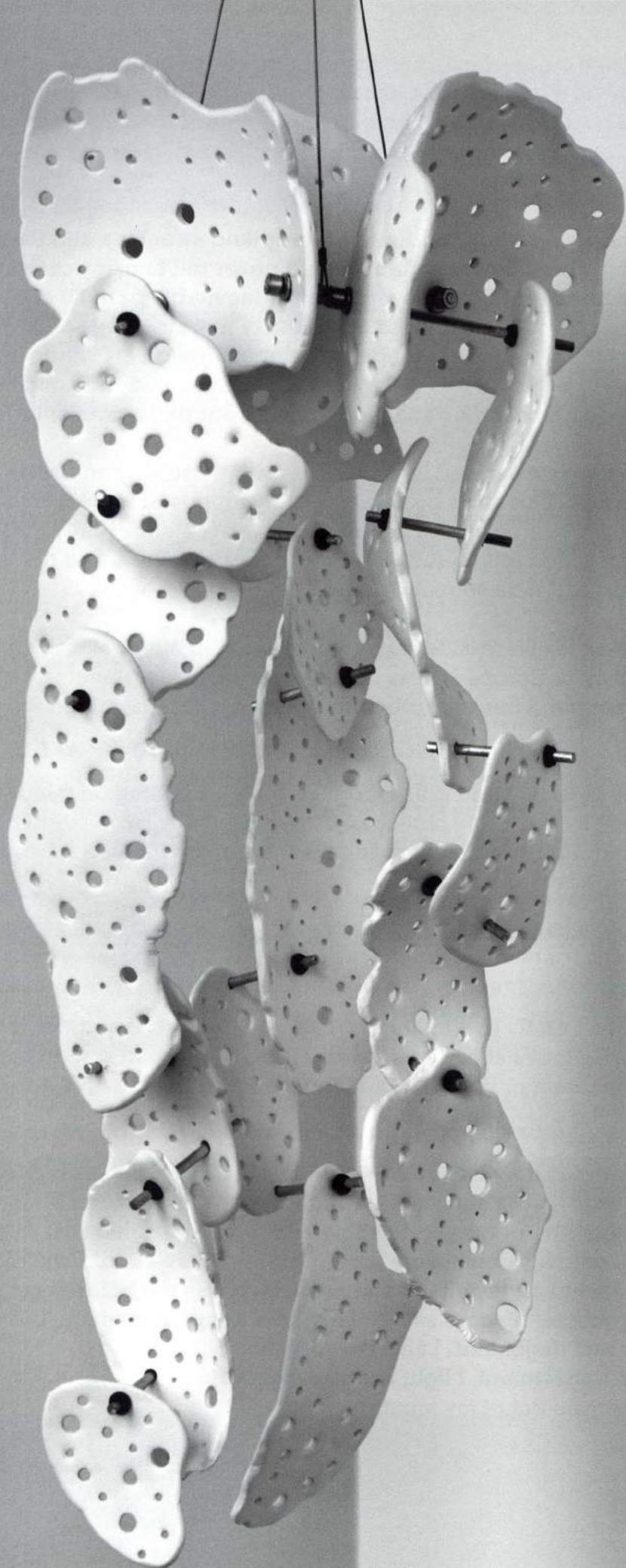
I finish my cigarette and crush it on the beer can sitting on the bedside table next to me. I hate fucking non-smokers—they never have ashtrays. Exhaling my last drag, I straighten myself up and hop off the bed. My limbs drag down to the floor, warm and fuzzy.

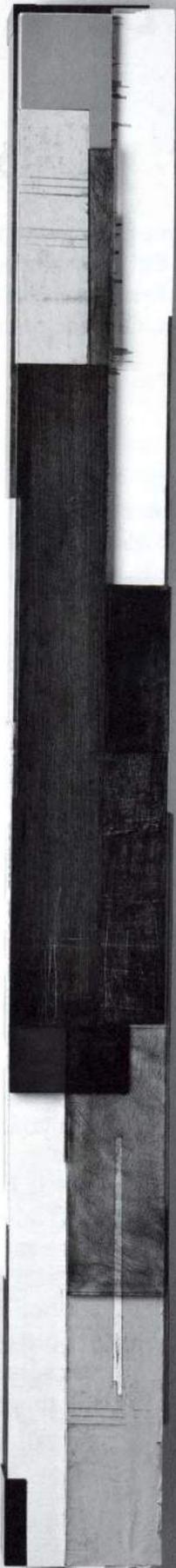
"Goin' already?" this guy says. He seems surprised. I'm surprised that he's surprised.

"Yeah, I don't really like to linger," I say, pulling up my panties and hooking my bra back on. He looks at me, and I swear I see a twinge of something—maybe disappointment, or even chagrin. But I'm too stoned to give a shit. Besides, he's not the one I want.

As I finish dressing, this guy comes sauntering over, still naked. His body nauseates me a little—not because it's a shitty body; he's slim and athletic, the way I like them. But it's not Eddie. He comes up to me, standing real close. His flaccid dick is practically grazing my jeans, and I feel like I could choke. He lovingly places a hand on my cheek and leans in to kiss me before I go. I reluctantly reciprocate. He says something about keeping in touch, but my hearing is foggy and disjointed. I nod insincerely. Walking out of his apartment, I light another cigarette. I need to get that taste out of my mouth.

Todd Tosi
Untitled





Ashley Schroder

"Dear Abel"

12/30/08

Dear Abel,

I was at the mall today and saw Elvis ornaments. One with purple glitter, the other light blue. Neither had aviators, like you always wore. But they made me think of you. Did you really like Elvis? You must've told me that at some point, though I can't remember anymore. The ornaments were fifty percent off. I bought two. One for each of us.

11/27/08

Dear Abel,

This weekend marked the three-year anniversary of Jordan's death. Remember him? That short Filipino boy with the heated temper, bowl-cut hair, and crooked teeth? Every once in a while I'll think about him, how I was one of his only high school friends that attended his graduation party.

He killed himself five months after that party.

I still remember his wake. I couldn't cry, not while supporting Kaitlyn as she contracted with sobs. I still feel guilty from time to time. Not because he kept calling to hang out, and I'd ignore it. It's more the fact that he and I were both only children.

The only difference is that I still am one, that I didn't asphyxiate from gas fumes, that my parents didn't find me dead in the garage.

07/15/08

Dear Abel,

I came across that mixed cd you made of The Doors while I was cleaning my room today. I haven't listened to it yet, which is weird, considering the reason I'm holding onto it. But you don't need it anymore, so there's no rush, I guess.

Dana asks me about it occasionally, wants it back. But I distinctly remember you telling her to give it to me. She hated you back then, jealous that you were hung up on Bethany, so she happily gave it over. Now she wants it back. But it's got your handwriting on it, so I just lie and say I misplaced it.

04/10/08

Dear Abel,

It's been over a year now. So I can't say, "If only I could go back a year," because it wouldn't make a difference. You still wouldn't be here. For some reason, it was different when it was less than a year. It felt like I could somehow turn back time, make all the pain go away, pull Bethany out of depression, bring you back.

But it's been over a year now. So never mind.

04/01/08

Dear Abel,

Today's the one-year anniversary. Of when it actually happened, I should say. That's what's important anyway, isn't it? What they mark down in stone?

01/01/08

Dear Abel,

Just got back from the annual sleepover with Dana, Bethany, and Kaitlyn. Remember how, two years ago, you texted Bethany "I loved you"? She left our sleepover, pissed and worried you'd done something stupid. Then she found you, drunk and passed out on your lawn in your Superman t-shirt.

Thanks for ruining this New Year's, too.

08/06/07

Dear Abel,

It's been a while, hasn't it? I haven't really known what to say. But it's my birthday, the first since you've been gone, so I feel ready to write again.

I'm not gonna lie, I'm still mad. You should be here. You promised to get me into The Doors and Elvis this summer. So I've started listening to them on my own, Elvis at least. I need to find that mixed cd of The Doors you made.

I'm just mad at you for not being here, for not buying me a smart-ass birthday card like you did a few years ago. God damn you, Abel, for being so selfish.

04/08/07

Dear Abel,

Just so you know, that sucked. I never want to see Bethany cry again.

The priest talked smack about you during the eulogy. He said you died a boy, not a man. That you never got to be married or have kids, all of which you would've done with Bethany. He was right, but tactless as hell.

I am so pissed at you right now, so pissed at you for getting drunk and drowning. I don't care what we said about staying in touch. I'm done. I'm so pissed at you for dying I could spit, or scream, or even steal your goddamn aviators right out of your casket.

You couldn't have known at that party what would happen to you later that night, how it would affect all of us today. But I couldn't think about that. I was too busy supporting Bethany and the rest of our friends.

But this time, I did cry.

Karen Murphy
Untitled



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Adrianna Delligatti

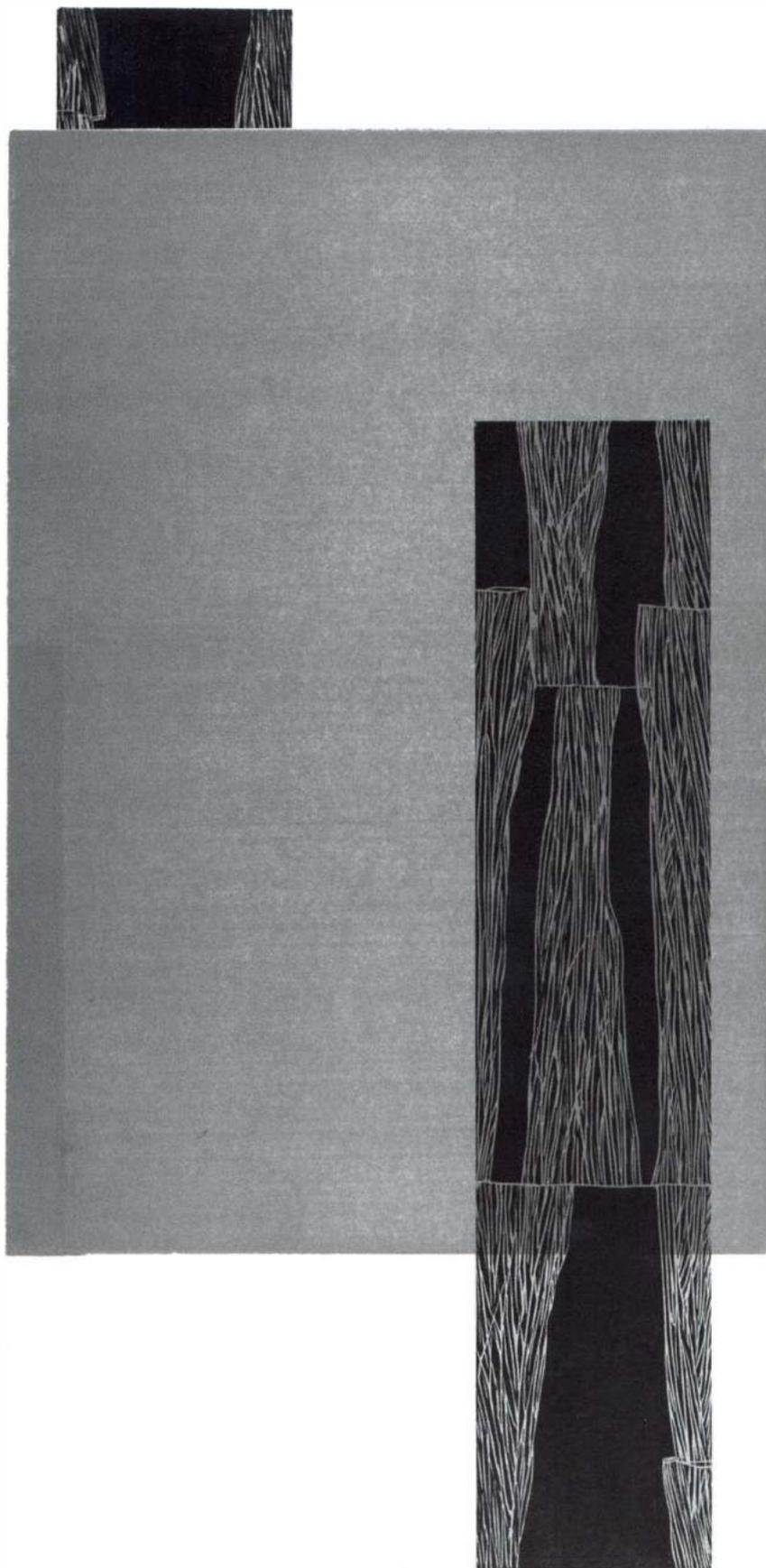
"Because You Promised"

When I die
I want to be cremated
Into human debris
When I die
I want to be thrown in the ocean
Into the breeze
When I die
Bury me in a white dress
Into the soft earth
When I die
Bury me in a black dress
Into the cold ground

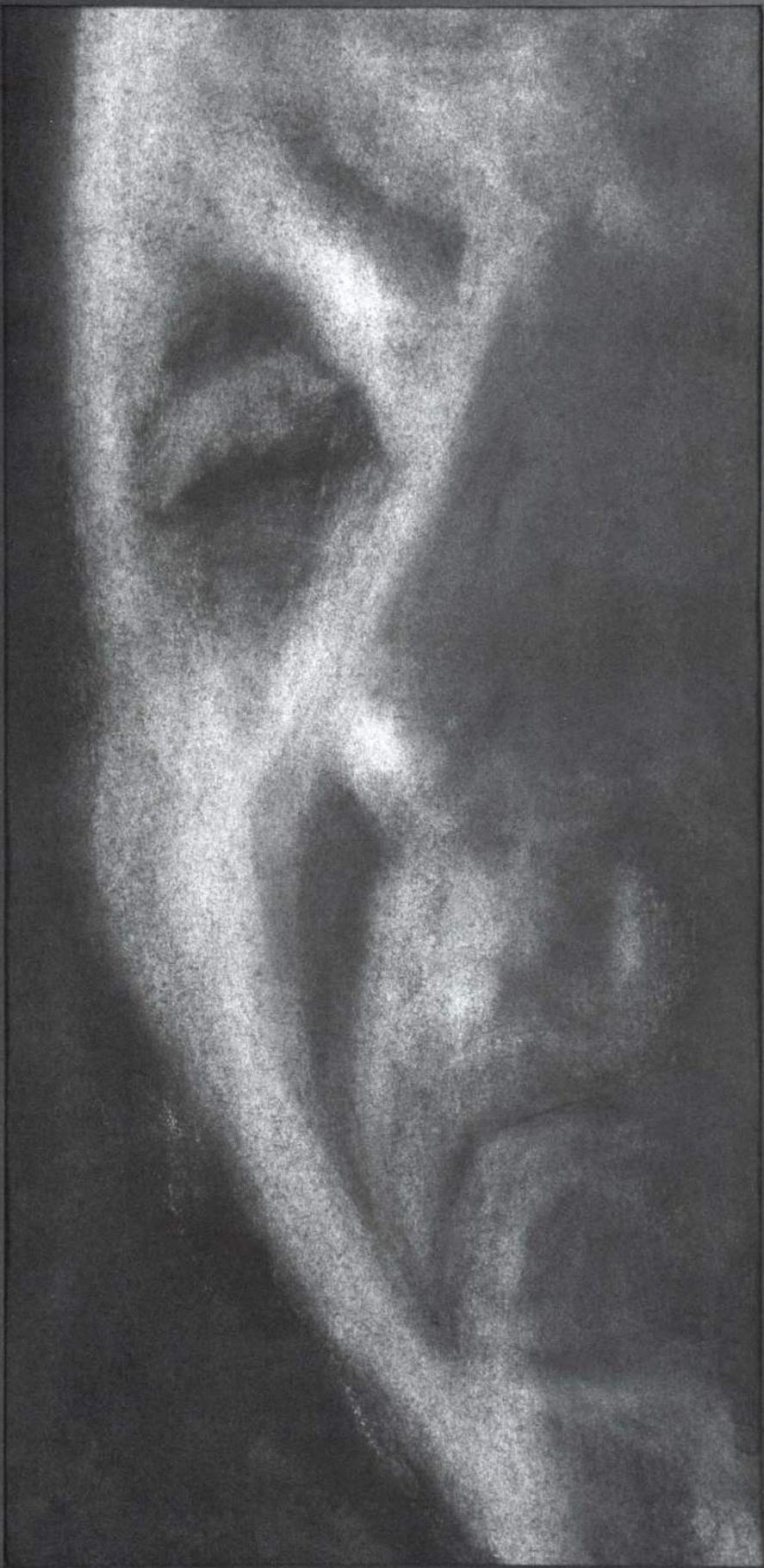
When I die
Put red Converse on my feet
Because I am not in Kansas anymore
When I die
Drink at my funeral
Because to cry would be a cop out
When I die
Play "Highway to Hell" at my funeral
Because you promised you would
When I die
Also play "Sympathy for the Devil"
Because you promised you would

"Innert"

Kasia Stachowiak



"Dirty Dream"



Cooney Dimitris

33

Rebecca Fowler

"Chasing (A Sestina)"

How I watched when you walked
Your gangly, silly legs
Surrounded by nebulas of dirt
That clung to sweat
While I ran, always behind
Just barely

I said it audibly, barely
How is my run the same as when you walked?
Still, I remained transfixed on your shapeless behind
Propped up on tower-like legs
While chasing you, I'd sweat
In our garden of dirt.

It was nearly barren dirt
Enough nutrients for a small sprout to protrude barely
Despite enough work to drown in sweat,
That stuck to you vigilantly while you walked
On faithful legs
Leaving our hopelessness behind

You never looked behind
At me, falling in the dirt
My sore, stubby legs
Keeping up with the dirt clouds, barely
You continued your walking
While I chased you across each sea of sweat

She never would sweat
That girl you met with the pretty behind
Everyone looked when she walked
Her hands never knew dirt.
But when exposed to the true sun barely,
She somehow sported a tan on her legs

Her too-perfect legs
That, when she was near, made you shiver and sweat
Because they were covered barely
(Along with her behind)
Her face always free of dirt
Never beside her had you walked

Behind,
In her dirt
You walked.

Kinga W. Huffman

"Untitled"



Rebecca Fowler "The Dictionary"

Warm translucent tears run the length of a candle
God bangs around pots and pans
For a moment, it is day.

As quickly as the light appears, it is gone
Taking with it the hum of a modern home.
Silence has an unnerving presence.

The basement stairs still screech for relief
In the stillness.

My father's chair, cool and encompassing
Devours my minute body

A shimmer scurries across the dark desk
As golden edges of a volume play with elusive candlelight.

Pages crisply crinkle in small hands,
While eyes run left to right

Again and again.

Darkness subsides, unnoticed.

Richard Pokora

"April First"

Sleepless and restless
preoccupied with a calming field of poppies
when with the naïve.

A harmless blossom, red velvet petals
smooth on the skin as a silk pillow-cover on the skin
the flower's excretions sooth the suffering.

Spirit alone with the gentle prick
was his preoccupation
the shiny-sharp
manmade
medium — became anticipated -
as it slid inside a bursting blue vein
his blood bubbled red, gurgled around the needle
the same red as the poppy's petal.

As his blood boiled, his breathing became heavy
as he nodded into the familiar warm slumber
his face pressed,
not onto velvety red poppy pedals of the past
but, onto a cold cement basement floor
unrealized by him.

Prickly-poppy seed pods
unripe as he
provide this ease

as body consumes itself,
providing the ultimate utopia
his white light beckons.

The glistening scarlet of another poppy stain
is not a resurrection
his trademark smile now permanently altered
disfigured -
by the cold cement.

Alone

as he lies on the coroner's table
his covering - a cold aqua-blue plastic sheet
becomes Steven's field of poppies
his utopia realized.

Sharon Kiss

"Self Centered"



Evan Jones

"Sound"

It's a sound of
Distasteful discomfort
Of unraveling unease
It's a sound that flays the mind
Twists sanity
It creeps into every conversation
Breaks rhythm
Slaughters the soul
Once you hear it
You hear it everywhere
Even where it should not be
Especially where it should not be
The sound makes you paranoid
It carries curses
Devours your dreams
Eviscerates your energy
Fragments your fantasy
It makes you wonder
It makes you dread
It forebodes
It forbids
It foreshadows and it forgets
The sound is the beginning
And the end and of the end
It stings
Like a thousand needles in the heart
It sings
A dreadful dirge of doubt
This sound
Is the sound
Of
Silence.

S. Cindy Yim

"Mothers"

Your mother was home last night.

I'm not sure why, but you've been on my mind an awful lot lately. I can barely remember your face — I wonder if you still have a beard. Are you still wearing those amber-tinted '70s aviator glasses? That one winter, when you shaved your beard into a moustache, your mother had remarked that you looked like the Unabomber. I laughed and you sighed. Do you still wear those awful Birkenstocks with white socks and plaid shorts? I remember that your nose was quite big and that your lashes were long. I recall that you had big brown eyes. But the shape of them, how they were spaced...and just how big were they? I don't know. I can't remember.

See, I was thinking about you and me and how we don't get along so easy anymore. It was just one of those days, I guess. I was out for a casual drive, chain smoking. I was driving around my—what used to be *our*—neighborhood, admiring the Christmas decorations. I was messing around with the radio when I came across that song you liked so much—*The Chain* by Fleetwood Mac. It made me think of you sitting on that moldy looking foldout couch in your mother's living room, bawling your eyes out like a little kid, sobbing in rhythm to the song. I remember your bad days; I remember them quite well. Do you remember mine?

I found myself driving around the street your mother lives on—the street you used to live on. I resisted for a while, but a commercial for some grocery store chain came on and they mentioned peanut butter cookies. Your mother always made the best ones. They were as gooey as molasses, and she'd always put a Hershey Kiss in the middle so that they looked like tiny witches' hats. Remember how she'd bake two batches every Halloween? One for us and one for the trick-or-treaters. As the commercial faded away, I turned into your old cul-de-sac. I just wanted to see. I just wanted to see if maybe she still lived there—I wasn't entirely sure. I wanted to see if maybe you were there to visit for the holidays. Well, I saw her car parked in the driveway. Yours wasn't there. I saw that the lights were on—that warm, amber glow I always loved—about the same shade as your old glasses. I felt tempted to pull up behind her beat up old Saturn and ring the doorbell. I wanted to bask in that amber glow again. I wanted to laugh with her again.

I do miss you. On my bad days. But mostly, I miss her.

You hated so much of what she was. She grated on your nerves. I remember perfectly well how much you despised speaking with her. I still don't know why, really. She was so chipper and warm, like a goddamn ray of sunshine. I loved her for you on your bad days, when you couldn't think of a single nice thing to say about her. I wonder if you're like that still. But then, maybe I'm nothing but an outsider looking in. Maybe you just never told me about her bad days.

I remember her so well, too. Her fine, sand-colored hair and the crow's feet around her eyes from long nights of waiting up for you while we were out at parties. Her favorite shade of lipstick was cherry glow. She was so small and always looked so fragile, like a talking knick-knack. She squeaked

when she laughed, and since meeting her, I do it too. I remember the little mole near her right eye. When she'd go out with her boyfriend, she'd darken it with an eyebrow pencil.

But anyway, I sat there in front of her house for a while, listening to my favorite aria which just happened to be on the local classical channel. *Vissi d'arte*, it's called. You'd like it, I'm sure. It tells the tale of a young artist whose life has become a big tragedy. She sings about how she lived her life for art and love—just like you, right? But then, I only really knew you when you were unhappy. Maybe you've changed. Maybe your woman makes you happy now. I hope she does.

I sat there for a good ten minutes. I put the car in neutral and turned the radio down and just waited. I listened, too. I listened to the silence. For what, I'm not sure. I half expected to hear her voice whispering my name as if to wake me from an afternoon-nap that went on too long. I thought that maybe your mother would look out the window and recognize me, or at least my father's car. I wanted her to come out running, to knock on my window and wave with both hands the way she used to do. I wanted to embrace her, to kiss her cheek and tell her how much I miss her. I wanted her to hold me the way she held you. But nothing happened. I caught a glimpse of her as I pulled away. She was walking into the living room with that mug she got you at Disneyworld. She was probably sipping Earl Grey—that's her favorite, isn't it?

Battling the desire to ring her doorbell, I turned off the radio and tossed my last cigarette, half-smoked, out the window. The desire was so strong, too—with the heavy burden of longing in the pit of my stomach, I sighed. I hungered for her sunny smile and kind eyes. You have your father's eyes. Hers are the calm color of the ocean. I wanted so badly to be held in her delicate little arms that my spine shivered and twitched as I left. My bones ached.

When I came home, my mother was praying. Her tongue was flapping at the speed of light and she was rocking back and forth, back and forth.

"Hello," I said. She finished up a sentence of her prayer before answering.

"Oh, hi," she said. She licked her lips and continued. "I'm so depressed."

"I'm sorry," I said.

Then she continued to pray. I walked into the kitchen to brew a mug of Earl Grey, and I just let it sit for a while. I wasn't in a tea drinking mood, but just wanted the smell around. I imagined myself being at home with your mother, making cookies and watching sappy Christmas specials on the television, snuggling under one of those quilts she was always making on the moldy looking couch. I imagined her bony fingers running through my hair.

You weren't there, but your mother was home last night.

Adrianna Delligatti

"Your Leather Armored Jacket"

I.

You unwrap the present slowly
Carefully folding and creasing the paper
A slow strip tease of a present
The paper peeling like an orange or a banana
Finally you lift the lid of the box
As if it is a treasure chest you have discovered
And reveal your new prize
A leather jacket carefully hunted for
I went from store to store to store
Agonizing over color, cut and style
It creaks and whines when you lift it
Its newness obvious in its unblemished sheen
The scent of new leather wafts around us

Your excitement crackles through the air
You jump up and slip it on over your naked shoulders
You wear it like a king, it is your cape
And I, I am your adoring subject
Fawning at your feet, kissing your skull ring
As if it is a gigantic ruby that leadens your hand

You pull me up; wrap me in your old jean jacket
Hold me tightly to you and sing me praises
You give me a crown of ribbon
And declare that
I am your queen
And our dingy apartment is our court

II.

We hightail it out of there; I'm your getaway driver
I'm the Bonnie to your Clyde
Not that we're Old West bank robbers
No, you just like to hustle pool with the wrong people
And I'm there in case things get out of hand
There's blood dripping down the side of your face
Sliding slickly onto your leather jacket
It gleams and glints and the scent of it makes my nose itch
Why do you have to pick fights?
Does the leather imbue you with stupidity?
Does it make you brave? Courageous?
You think you're so sexy
You think you're hot shit
You are no knight in shining leather, my dear.

I coax you from the car, stumbling from your weight
As we navigate the stairs as if they are a mountain pass
You mumble in my ear about how sorry you are
How it will never happen again
How much you love me, Babe.
Your words slur and loop about
A drunken flight of a bumblebee
And sometimes I wonder if I can save you from yourself
Wonder if it's enough that I clean your wounds
Put you to bed, and wake you periodically
Because you got another concussion
I wonder if our love is enough
To keep you alive.

III.

You leather jacket still hangs
In the closet, next to my jean one
I take it out sometimes and inhale
What is left of you other than the car
The scent of leather is faded beneath
The scent of you that the jacket has absorbed
The cigarettes you smoked and the cologne
You wore along with the blood you spilled
That night at the bar when hustling those bikers
Didn't turn out so well.

I press it to my face, the leather old and worn
Like my memoirs of you slipping away slowly
The zipper is still busted and the right cuff
Has teeth marks but it's still your jacket
It still has a bit of you left imprinted
Do you remember what happened to the zipper?
I don't. And were the teeth marks were from Johnny's dog
Or that stray you tried to rescue?
Even when my memories of you are dissolving
Like your body beneath the damp, scented soil
This jacket will help me keep you for just a little longer
At least a bit longer than I kept you. I hope.
When I am eighty I will press my face
To the soft leather and think fondly of you.

Justin Hastings

"The Clown"

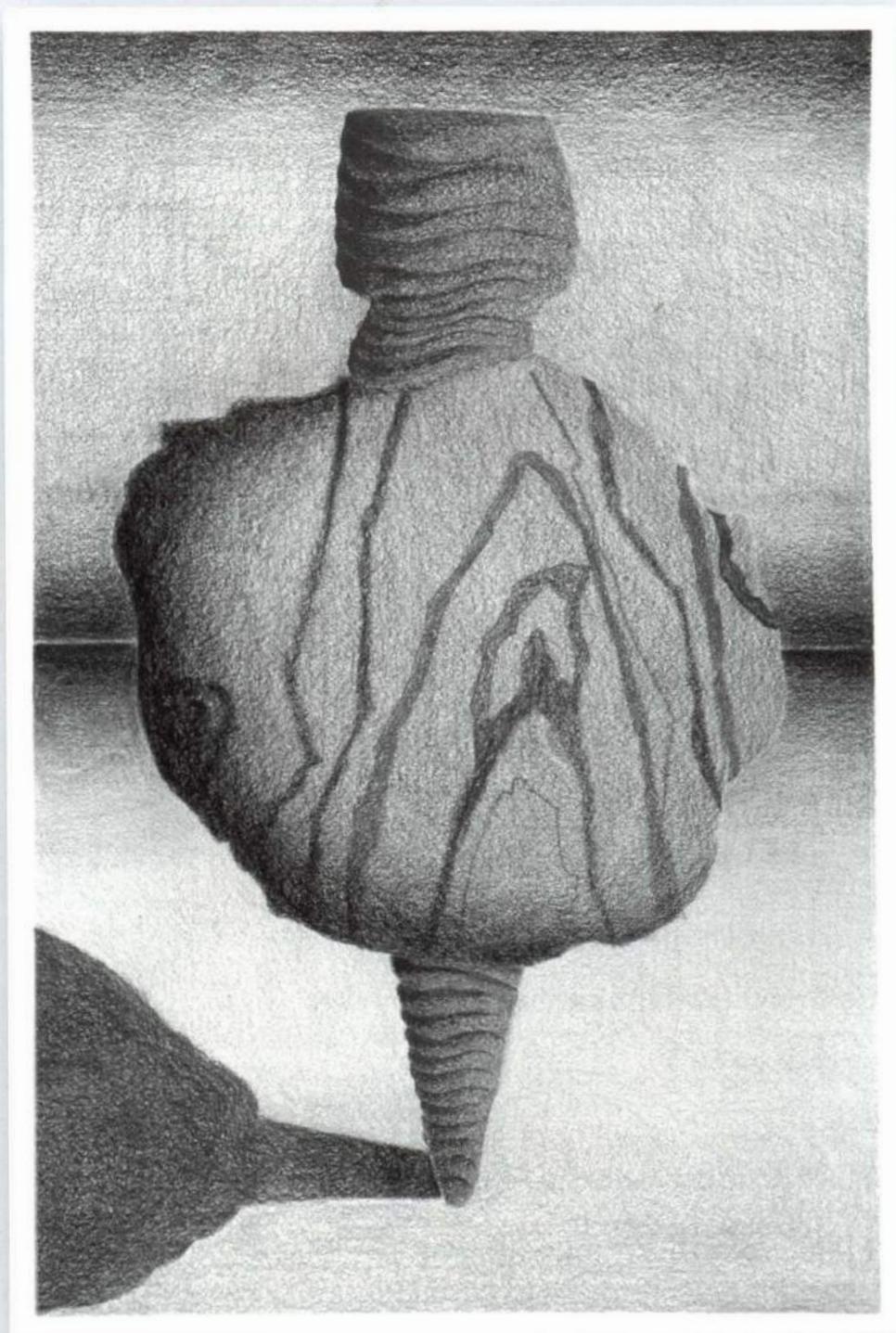
He wakes up at sunrise
Paints his face in reds and whites
A big fake smile grows ear to ear
A squeaky nose
And a water squirting boutonniere
A nice rainbow jumpsuit
And some oversized shoes
Here for all your entertainment
Your laughter
A variety of animal balloons
No one ever was to think twice
Of the man in the great clown suit
Hiding behind his jokes and gags
Underneath a shell of a man
Hiding behind his painted mask
Some magic tricks and an empty laugh
That character was all he had

Ryan Cuatchon

"Hula"



"Yarn & Drumstick"



Brian Marodoro

"I'm Just Jealous"

I'm ticked off at my mother
For guilting me out of my sick day
To accompany her up to Schaumburg.

Even though I grew up here,
I hate this town!
It's old, it's dirty
The traffic sucks
And the collage of people
Fucking irritates me.
I don't want to overhear English conversations
Let alone Spanish, Indian and Chinese banter!

I'm sick with a backache and bladder infection
But I'm sitting in a Mario Tricoci salon
So someone who calls herself
A "Specialist"
Can cover up the mix of yellow, gold and orange
That is my mother's out-of-a-box hair color.

You would think
A classy place like this
Could afford comfortable
Waiting room chairs.

Watching some of these women walk in
With their big hair, long nails,
Tight pants, even tighter sweaters,
Five inch heels and sparkling jewelry
Pisses me off even more.

These bitches come in for Hair Therapy-
My psychiatrist doesn't even charge that much!
Cucumber Refresher and Brown Sugar Body Exfoliation
I hope they bring the leftovers out here, I'm kinda hungry!
Natural Lash Extension
Lady, with tits like that, no one is looking at your lashes!
Hot Stone Therapy Massage
Please let me be the one to stone this whore!

And I sit here
Wondering
How am I
Going to afford
Cat food and tampons this month?

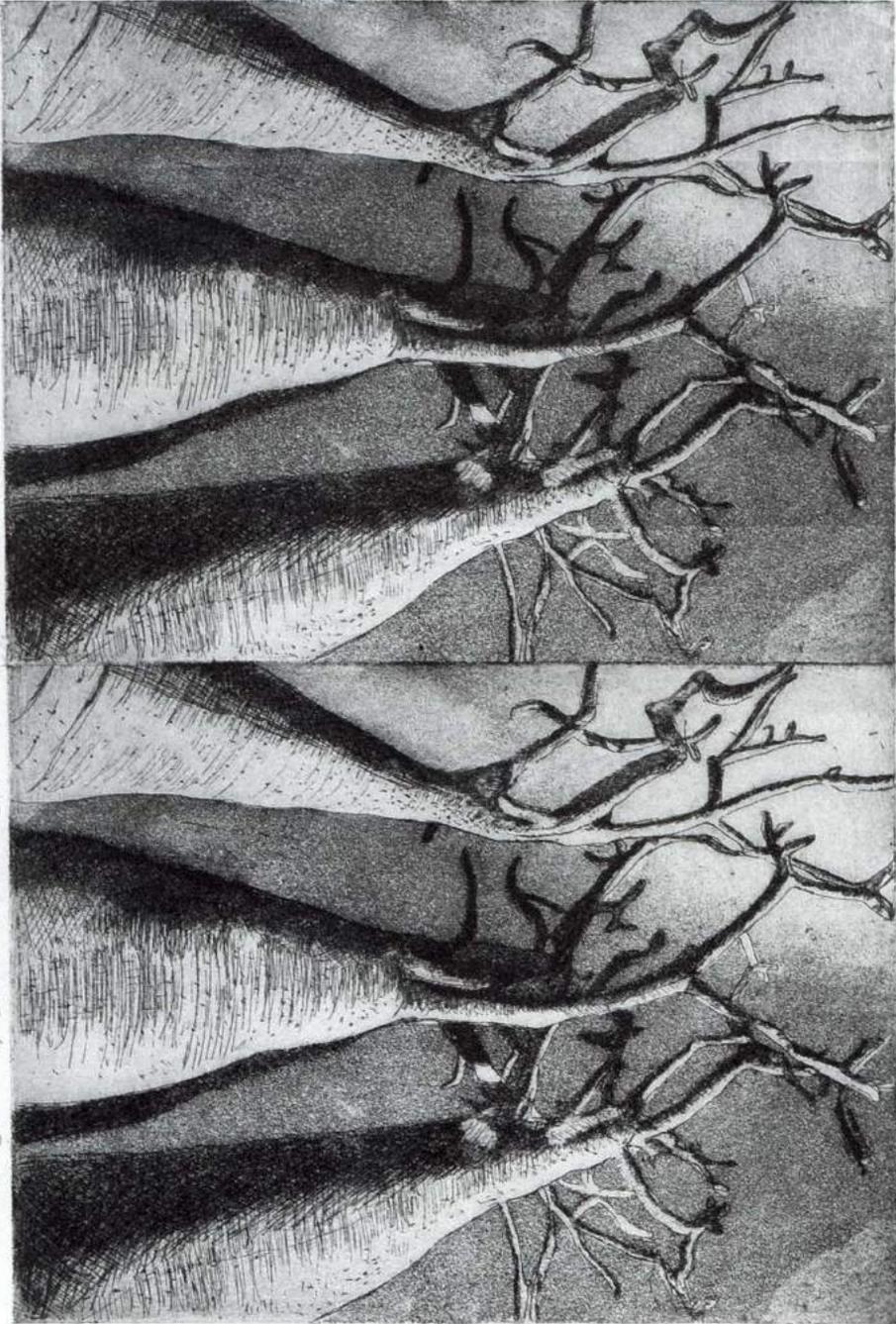
"Lost for Words"

Her hands lay crooked and limp on the keyboard,
Her fingertips waiting for words to appear,
Waiting for words she feels will never come.
A minute passes.
Still no words.
She pecks at the keys with the tips of her bitten nails,
Forming a bland sentence with no meaning.
Another minute.
She finds herself glaring at the simple statement
Hating it for being so synthetic,
Hating herself for writing it.
Yet another minute goes by.
She rips the paper from the platen,
Tosses it over her shoulder, missing the trash can behind her.
She places a new sheet in machine, aligning it between the fingers.
Then she repeats.
Sitting.
Staring.
Waiting.
Words form in her mind.
Drifting aimlessly.
They have no relation to what she tries to write,
Only how she feels.
Frustration.
Hindrance.
Disappointment.
Irritation.
Failure.
She hears these words echo in the corners of her mind.
It angers her.
Infuriates her.
Emotions flood through her veins,
Wrapping a tangled web around her.
Her bony fingers settle on the keyboard once again
And suddenly they begin to move.
She types.
Doesn't think.
Just types.
The words are not choked.
They are not restrained.
They come out in sentences.
And for all she knows,
They have no end.

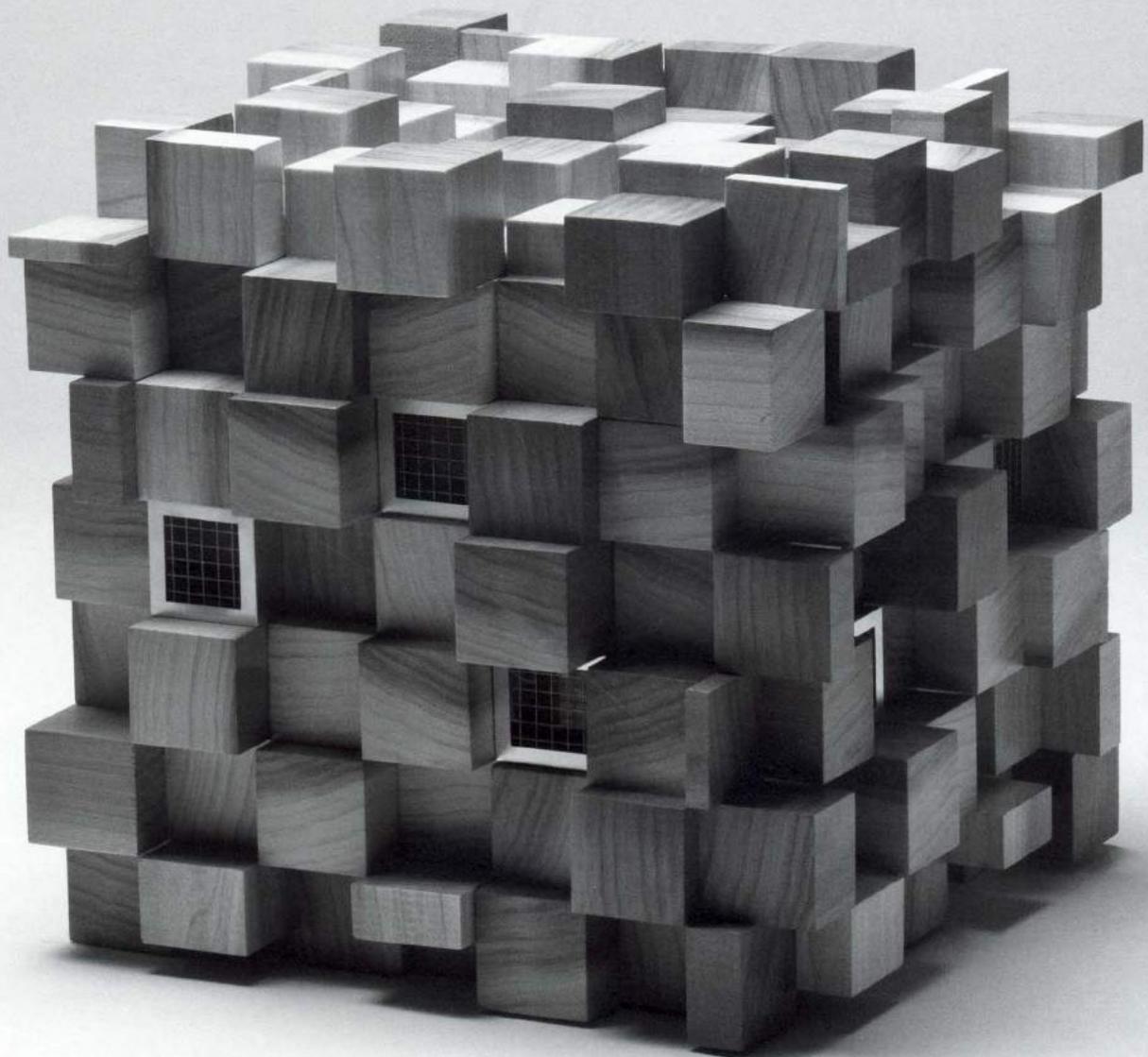
Audrey Wison

Jacklyn Bae

"Tree"



Tree
Jacklyn 09



Darek Piech
"The Ark"

39

"Runt"

I stare out the murky
Double-paned window,
My reflection breathing back on me.
I am not distracted
By the layers of trails pressed into the glass
By the unrequited hunt of cold, wet noses.
My neighbors claiming their grounds.

But right now
They have all gone,
Retreated into their carpeted pagodas,
Their twilight of closeted corners,
Their crispy catacombs of clean laundry.

Right now
The lusty full-bellied chipmunk
Is mine.
The skittish Christmas coated cardinal
Surveying the graying deck,
Is unaware of my rumbling appetite.
Even the towering cranes,
That inseparable pair,
Teetering on willowy stilts,
Pay no mind
To the fiery eyes that greet their trespasses.

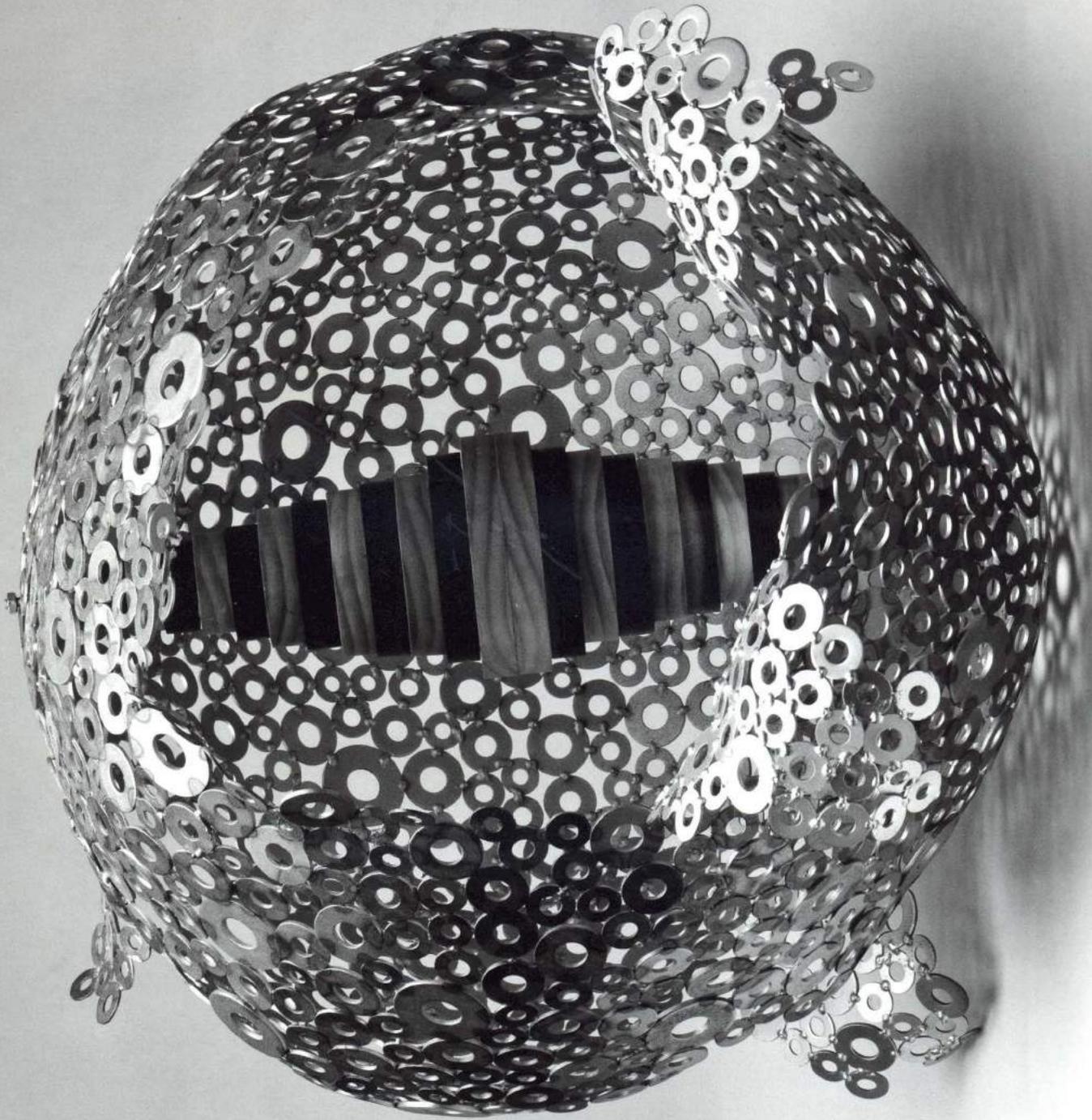
Right now
I can enjoy the spoils my silence affords.
I lean in
And push my nose into the print of another.

The lifeless vinyl swings aimlessly
Shuffling its yellowed teeth against my fur
I dislike these synthetic sky scrapers,
These outliers of my cherry-wood-floor-bamboo-bookcase-leather-couch-jute-rope-
post-cotton-blanket-dominion.

I fold up my paws
Neatly twisting them into a pretzel.
My human brother will be back soon
Maybe the others will not notice
And I will tell him about my day.

Victoria Claus

"Five From Two"



"Virus"

Christian Valencia



Jessica Fathke

"Guarded"



Maria Daniels

"Lassie"

She had been ill, and her increasing ailments were not responding to the prescribed treatments. Her visible weakness confirmed that she was not getting any better. The vet explained to us there was nothing more that could be done. Mom, my younger brothers and I were heartbroken to know Lassie was suffering, and we could not help our beloved collie. Mom could not fathom putting her to sleep, and could not face us to explain the cruelty of dying alone. She decided to bring her home to be surrounded by the people she loved. We gingerly rested her on the blankets in the back of the station wagon. Carefully, we cushioned her body from the bumps of the road, and my brothers kept an eye on her in case we needed to pull over. She did not move or make any noise in response to my brothers' worries, "Are you ok, Lassie?" I knew Mom was crying though I heard no sound. Our ride home was filled with a thick sadness and a heavy heart. The deafening quiet forced us to dwell on somber thoughts; the glare from the unwelcomed sunshine did not warm the atmosphere in the car.

My brothers and I carried her into the house and gently placed her in her bed. She winced and moaned but looked at us as if to say, "I'm ok." I ran upstairs for a blanket and her favorite toy, a stuffed bear she would steal from my brother's room. I covered her and rested the bear by her neck. I laid down on the floor next to her, and softly caressed her snout. Looking at her, my eyes welled up with tears; I wiped them away and got up. We took turns in taking care of and feeding her. I would give her a drink by using a dropper in her mouth, and Mom would smash the dog kernels and feed her tiny bites. She barely picked up her head, she was so weak. We tried to keep her comfortable.

I went to sleep in the living room to stay close to her. I knelt down and caressed her head; she felt warm, soft, and embraced my touch with her tired eyes. I softly whispered a kiss and told her, "You are my best friend and a great dog." I couldn't stop thinking of her and the wonderful times we shared. I remembered when we walked her to the groomer's for a full

salon treatment. People on the street would stop to pet her; they admired her beauty, and she smiled and wagged her long tail with enthusiasm. Lassie did not just walk like a dog; she pranced. She was elegant and regal. The ladies at the salon called her Queen Lassie. When she came out, her tri-colored coat shimmered in the sun, and the purple bandana around her neck she wore with pride. She looked beautiful and knew it. The groomer's was only three blocks away from home, but it was a lot longer on the way back. We all walked straighter, and Lassie, head held high, would lead the way home.

I was fighting to calm my mind and wrestled with moments of sleep. Unable to hold the serenity for long, the swift movement of troubled thoughts continued to win. I finally got up to check on her, and she was not in her bed. The bolt of shock woke me, and I desperately searched for her. I was scared not knowing where she went, but I was terrified of finding her. A haunting thought echoed in my head, "dying alone." I needed to find her and face the unbearable truth. My eyes had adjusted to the dimmed light, and I saw her. She somehow got to the porch and was just lying there. I froze trying to focus for any movement or life. Nothing! I ran to the doorway of the porch—I saw a lump of a dog in a gruesome sea of death. I fell to my knees and crawled to her. My pajamas became drenched in an inexplicable liquid. As I shivered, blinded by emotion, my trembling hand reached out, and my fingers touched the most awful, cold, stiffened, and empty shell of my dog. An explosion of pain went through me, and I cried and cried. I managed to get up and ran to get my mom. As I stumbled up the darkened stairway, my shoulders, hands, knees, and feet guided my body to her bedroom. The flood of emotions and devastation exhausted my mind, muting all efforts of speech. I shook her shoulders trying to get her out of bed. She instantly knew what happened from my grief-stricken face.

The raw exposure of pain, suffering, and death made me aware of the fragility of life. Lassie showed me how to enjoy simple things and even in her last days how to face death. The happiest times were when I didn't even know they were happening-- when I combed her long smooth fur, the long walks in the park, and when we played fetch. She always knew how to cheer me up. Lassie tried to spare us from the pain, and in the end, succumbed gracefully. Death is final, the story is in the journey and what is discovered, embraced, and lived.



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