



*the
Muse*

LITERARY & VISUAL ARTS MAGAZINE

stanlycc
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Stanly Community College
2023 Edition



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After a long hiatus during and after the pandemic, I am excited for the 2023 issue of The Muse! Even though there was a collective pause in our normal activities, people continued writing, creating art, producing music, and pursuing all sorts of artistic endeavors. As author Maya Angelou observed, "You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have." The beautiful words and art displayed in this issue of The Muse illustrate the enduring power of creativity. I thank everyone who contributed time and energy to make this publication possible. May The Muse bring you joy!



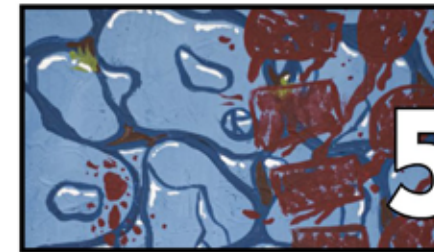
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Each year through our art show, and followed up through the visual and literary collection, The Muse, we, as a campus, are able to take a moment and appreciate the many voices and talents of the creative side of our students, faculty, and staff. The unique atmosphere that campus life brings to each of our daily lives is one that I treasure, and in many ways, shapes my visual language as well. Each edition of The Muse offers us archives of this talent that we can say were helpful contributors to the culture here at Stanly Community College, and that is something I am happy to be part of.

Disclaimer: Grammar and punctuation in the featured written works respect the intent of the authors represented. The opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily the opinions of Stanly Community College (SCC). All poetry and artwork is assumed to be the original and free expression of the artists represented. The Muse is a literary and art magazine published once a year by Stanly Community College's English, Advertising & Graphic Arts, and the Stanly Early College (SEC) Departments. No part of this material content shall be reproduced or used in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage retrieval system without the written permission of the College. Any comments or questions about our publication should be directed to Nicole Williams, Executive Director of Marketing and Outreach, at 704-991-0281 or nwilliams8263@stanly.edu.

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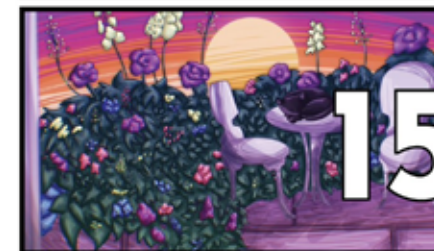
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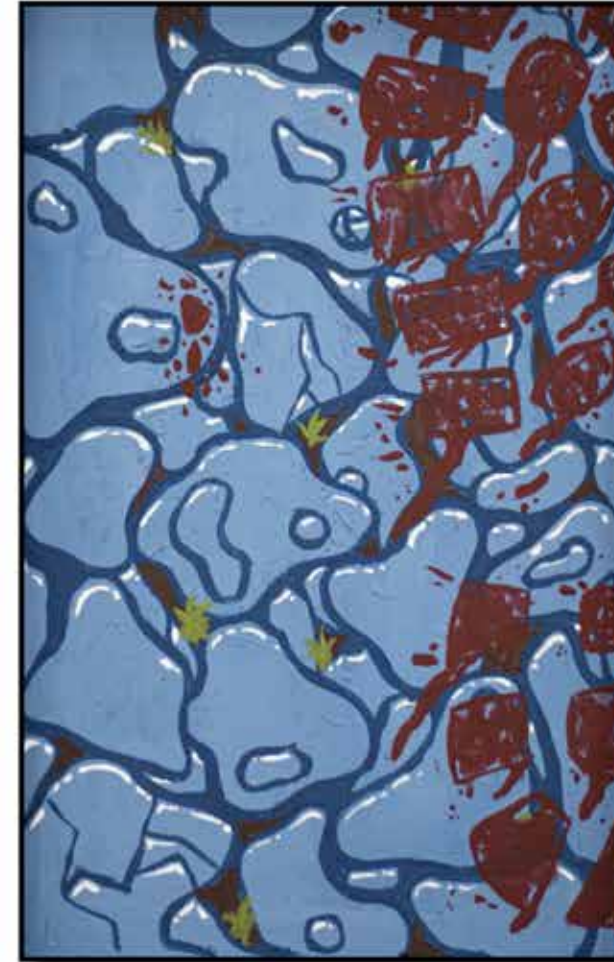
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“Mill Mountain Memories”

by Ryan Hinson

With rusted edges and missing bulbs,
Frozen with pride
in the Blue Ridge cold.
A star beckons from its lofty perch;
We're almost home;
we can stop our search.
Memories held in timeless fear;
A bereft smile bleeds
through slow, silent tears.
Pallid faces who know not of mine -
their likeness etched
in a fading shrine.
When I see your light, I won't be far -
goodbye, our last home;
our Mill Mountain star.



Escape Route
Allyson Eudy



**Jenna Ortega as
Wednesday Adams**
Casey Stirewalt

“A Most Unlikely Love”

by Mackenna Moore

On the southwest coast of Fableville, there was a small town called Raine, and in this town, there lived a beautiful young maiden with the name of Faith. She was born on a stormy day in June. As her mother was dying while giving birth, a lightning bolt hit the building she was in and gave Faith unbelievable powers. Her father died when she was 5 from Alzheimer’s, which was a slow and agonizing fate for her to watch as her father began to fade into nothing.

As the years went by, Faith learned how to hide her powers from the people who were not as open-minded as her parents once were. The people of Raine were not very open to powers because it was new to them, and they would have probably burned Faith at the stake if they knew her truth. Faith lived a simple life until one day a threat came to the town of Raine, a king by the name of Asher. He was ruthless and cold with a black heart. At least, that’s what people say about him.

The townspeople decided to hold a party to welcome the new guest so no war would start among their kind. Faith was forced to attend by her foster parents. As Faith arrived, she noticed a tall and handsome man; she could barely keep her eyes off him. His eyes were full of joy and happiness, but his face showed a cold expression as he slowly made his way towards her and asked to dance. They danced for what seemed like hours but were only mere minutes as the lights began to fade and the only light was on them.

A smirk came over Asher’s face as he noticed her flustered expression as he moved his hand slowly down to her waist. He whispered such beautiful words in her ear but deep down she wondered his name. She was so curious, the question finally escaped her red lips, “Who are you?” she asked.

He looked startled, but he composed himself and whispered in her ear, “Asher.” Faith gasped and pulled away from his hold, now knowing she had been dancing with the enemy- her enemy!- the man everyone warned her about. Asher smirked seeing her reaction, seeing her startled look sparked something in him no one had ever done before. Asher in love was impossible; he couldn’t even love himself or the people of Berrisville, but she did

something, maybe poison. Asher couldn’t believe what he was feeling. His face was all red and felt hot. He thought maybe she poisoned him but didn’t know how since he hadn’t eaten anything she gave him. She did something; he knew she did.

He heard someone call his name, but he was too distracted by thought until someone began to pull him away, and he noticed shots being fired by Faith’s people. He felt betrayed, thinking that she tricked him, but even Faith was startled by the actions of her people. Faith began to panic, and in such panic, she felt herself begin to fall. As she went to the ground, she hit her head on a nearby table causing her to faint.

A couple of hours later, Faith began to wake up, but as she awoke, she noticed an unknown man in the corner of her eye. Was it Asher? She couldn’t tell. Finally, the darkness from her eyes left to allow light to enter her vision. As she was finally able to see, she noticed the man was her greatest enemy, the man she learned to love over time. In her thoughts, she wondered if he saved her or if she was traded to him by her people.

Then he spoke in his deep, calming voice about how he found her on a stake in the middle of the town because the people of Raine had learned her secret. While she was asleep, her powers went crazy, causing the townspeople to panic. He found her and took Faith back to his kingdom to protect her because even he had fallen in love. This story of two enemies becoming lovers, even when the town went against Faith, was to teach people that even the most unlikely can fall in love.



**The Frances
Thom**
John Lanier



Figure Drawing Study
Kristin High



Charcoal Portrait
Derek Kent



Clown Baby
Lexi Watts

“Getting Older”

by Kayleigh Morton

The honest truth
is that I love my youth
and the people that I know
I hope will come with me as I grow.

Do I sympathize with the flowers
that stand after decades of showers
who witness the shortness of the trees
while the humans do what they please?

Now I've outgrown the teen in me
and I'm slowly forgetting my ABC's
I am scared all the time
as my age begins to climb.



**Remians of
the Day**
John Lanier

“Pale Man”

by Summer Lowder

I've never really had a problem with long trips in the car. If I'm driving, all I really need is the occasional break to stretch out my legs every few hours, and if I'm just riding, I can usually sleep most of the way. As it so happens, my family used to live out in the middle of Nowhere, USA, so as a unit we all got used to long rides visiting family for the holidays.

My little sister, Izzy, loved car rides, especially when there was a clear expanse of field on either side of the road. That was the criteria for her game, you see; whenever we hit a stretch and she was particularly bored, Izzy would play something that she called “Pale Man.” Pale Man didn't really have an overall objective, just one rule: make sure he doesn't hit anything.

It was a game of pretend, something that she described as imagining a tall, pale man, running alongside the car. Leaping over obstacles and sprinting atop fences. Izzy always talked about how, sometimes the Pale Man would stare over at the car. She was eleven, at least at the time she told me that. And the way she looked at me when she did freaked me out so badly that I didn't look outside the car window until we were parked. I never liked the game.

I hadn't thought about it until a few nights ago. I was a couple days into a road trip with my best friend, Emile; we'd planned out a whole vacation across the United States for the summer before our last year of college. Both of us needed the novelty of taking some kind of sabbatical before actually finishing out school, and this seemed like the best option.

Emile and I had agreed to take shifts driving for the first week of the trip, which was fine with me. I've never had much issue with driving to new places, whereas Emile needed a break from it every once in a while, to calm his nerves. I'd known the guy since middle school, and he hadn't changed much since then- generally anxious, but loaded up on pretty much every drug that might help counteract that. Whenever we stopped to switch off on drive-shifts, he'd take a couple of valium and sleep until we made it to a hotel.

When Emile drove, and I was in the passenger seat, I found myself trying to stay entertained. Once all the normal topics of discussion had been exhausted between Emile and I, the ride was relatively silent, besides maybe whatever was playing on the radio. I had a tendency to tune it out, anyways; they never played any songs that I liked.

During these stretches is when I started to think about it. That game, Pale Man, that my sister had been so infatuated with when we were kids. It took a little imagination, something I don't really tend to pride myself on, but I thought that I might as well give it a try.

In my mind, I made up the form of a man. A tall, thin man, with pale skin. That's about as much as I could muster without giving myself a headache. As the car began to move, the Pale Man began to move. I imagined him running as fast as he could, leaping over rocks and dashing on top of fences. It was something to do, at least for a while, until a sudden jolt stopped the car, and my eyes whipped away from the Pale Man outside.

Emile had slammed the brakes. When I asked him what was wrong, he just looked at me funny, responding with a soft “How did you not see that?” I told him I wasn't really paying attention. He'd been pale as a sheet, though, still rattled from whatever had crossed in front of us while I was spaced out. I offered to drive, and he immediately agreed.

The rest of the afternoon was uneventful on the road; Emile had taken his handful of pills, conking out for another few hours until I had to shake him awake at the hotel. A pit had formed in my stomach during the last stretch of the ride. For some reason, the way that my game of Pale Man had ended earlier left me unsettled. The only rule that Izzy had ever given for it was to “never let him run into anything”, and I had this vague feeling that I had disobeyed by pulling my attention from the Pale Man so quickly. Had he run into something while I was looking away?

After a moment, though, I realized that thinking about it was just silly. It was just a stupid kid's game, why was I worried about breaking the rules? Nothing was going to happen.

I still had a hard time falling asleep that night.

The next morning, Emile was ready to drive again. He seemed to be feeling a lot less nervous, something that I wish I could've reciprocated. I was wide awake for the next two hours, trying my best to avoid looking out the window. Emile and I talked a bit, but I ended up falling asleep shortly afterwards once my nerves had settled enough to close my eyes.

When the car jolted, I half-expected Emile to be panicking at the wheel again, like he had the day before. But, when I opened my eyes, I wasn't in the passenger seat anymore. I was driving. Emile sat upright, yelping softly as he woke from his own nap.

“Dude! What the hell?!”

My blood ran cold. When had I gotten into the driver's seat? Just a few minutes ago, I was riding. Emile stared at me like I was nuts, absolutely baffled. He explained that we'd switched off about an hour beforehand, but I didn't remember that happening at all. There was motion outside of the car, and whipping around, I just caught a glimpse of something white moving by the window. Something...pale.

My knuckles tightened around the steering wheel. Something was very deeply wrong, but Emile didn't seem to notice. I put the car in park so I could look around.

It was dark out.

It shouldn't have been dark out; it had just been morning.

The headlights of the car beamed into the empty road ahead.

Everything was incredibly still, for a moment. And then that pale flash came back, darting in front of the car. Emile seemed to notice it, this time, and he grabbed my arm.

"Oh, God, that's it. That's the thing I saw yesterday."

As soon as the words had left his mouth, something jumped onto the hood of the car. It shook the whole vehicle, and Emile screamed. It was pale, faceless. Long, lanky. Its neck was cocked at an unnatural angle, as though it was broken. As though it had run into something headfirst.

I'd broken the rules.

And the Pale Man knew it, too.



The Flowers Have Eyes
Sky Bruce

"In The Lair Of The Dragon"

by John Ballinger

In the darkness, our fears take shape. Twisted, corrupted amalgamations of what we wish wasn't and will never be real. Feathers, scales, nails, and claws that shine and glisten throughout their length. Whether it be a physical manifestation of utter horror or an apparition of one's past...

A sound of steel being struck against flint echoed throughout the cave as I tried to form a semblance of fire to guide my way through the pure black ahead of me. I worried that something may show up from the sounds throughout the cavern. A figure, a sign of life. I wasn't sure if it happened or when it happened, I should be relieved or terrified...

One last strike before the steel went dull. A flame emerged from the flint inside the crown of the torch, lighting up my immediate surroundings. Stalactites covered the ceiling as water dripped down from them. I trek forward as my only source of hope shimmers throughout the cave. After about 100 feet, I reach a circular room. I step foot into the entrance of the large room as several torches lining the wall ignite seemingly all at once...

In the center of the now lit room, gold shone throughout accompanied by objects familiar to me but unknown seemingly at the same time. In the middle, a dragon lay asleep. This one was not like the others, however, for it was hollow while still retaining shape. A single snort escapes the dragon's nose as it slowly awakes, opening its eyes, staring directly at me...

I felt paralyzed under the glare of the dragon. Unable to move, unable to think. My eyes dance around the room to find a potential way or or solution but my search turns up empty handed. My eyes glance to the familiar objects in the hoard of the dragon. They take me back years upon years. Regrets, failures, things that I would rather leave in the past and never look back to...

Suddenly, my mind breaks free from its trance of remembrance after the sight of so many vestiges. The dragon, finally taking action, starts sprinting towards my location in the hoard. Panicked, I ran away from the dragon seeking shelter behind a group of stalagmites on the floor. Behind my temporary cover my eyes stray away from the dragon, choosing to focus on the objects from my past. One blade sticks out compared to the rest of the nostalgic objects in the room. A sword all too familiar to my eyes. "Lux Cordis" was its name...

An inscription lines the blade on both sides of its ever shimmering edge. "Tua maxima fortuna est praeteritum" Your greatest fortune is in the past. Upon seeing the bladed vestige I bolted to it, leaving everything up to chance. Live or die. Pass or fail. Everything was the flip of a coin...

I grabbed the black, leather handle with both hands. One at the pommel, another at the crossguard. When I unsheathed the blade from the mountain of gold and memories, there was no strength or anger. Instead, there was relief. The feeling of letting go and accepting everything that was never left up to chance as some things were never truly meant to be...

I turned my sword valiantly towards the dragon whose eyes became locked with my own. No words were spoken. No second thoughts were considered. In an instant, I ran towards the hollow-scaled dragon. The dragon swiped its claw at me and I slid under, running my sword through the underbelly of the scaled beast...

The dragon made no noise as I cut through its stomach. It simply faded away as did the rest of the cave. The only thing remaining in my hand was Lux Cordis. The blade's golden crossguard shimmered under the gleaming sun as I looked over the green hill. I smiled and sheathed the blade in its scabbard attached to my right hip. I took a deep breath and trekked down the hill towards the castle in the distance...



The Caves of Valyria
Jordan Holt



Buttercup and Lilac
Holly Drye



Flowers
Taylor Guinn



Sunset
John Lanier

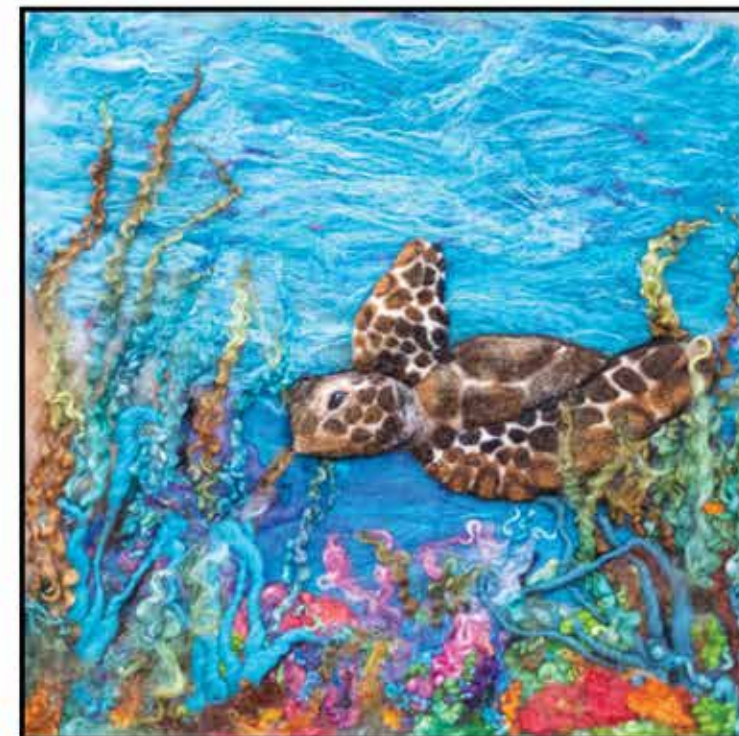
“Pixelwood”

by Joshua Keese

Pixelwood was hard to create
Like me trying to get a date
There were many struggles along the way
But I got past them without a sway
Adding features to amp it up
I released a beta version, until it was time to go up
I checked out the game, not expecting anything
Until I realized, there was someone already checking
Within an hour the game got 100 views!
I was surprised with the very great news.
I slept on it for a day
And it had more than 1k!
The number went up again
Climbing and climbing, like it would never end!
Going to 2k, then 3k, then 4k then 5
You should have seen my eyes!
But then something struck.
My game had a bug!
I got to work
And there was a thug!
He started adding players
In an uncontrollable way,
It crashed the server
And put me out of my way.
I soon got it fixed,
And sent out the update.
Although it was small,
It caused a deflate.
Soon the game died
At 7k views.
Although there are still regulars,
It is less than a few.
(Play the game at <https://pixelwood.joshkeese.repl.co>)



The Heart of Juneau
Tracy Adams



The Sea Garden
Tracy Adams

“I’m Lost, but I’ll Find Myself Soon” by Keyli Garcia Hernandez

I feel lost. I don't know what I want to be when I grow up; I have an idea of what I would like to do, but I'm not sure if that's really what I want. Ever since middle school, I've always felt pressured to know what I wanted to be when I grew up. Everybody else seems to know what they want to do. I know there are some people who don't, but lots of them do. Sometimes I think that if you're fifteen and you know what you want to do, then you just want to do something that your parents want you to do. I feel like they say that's what they want to be or do just to please them. The thing is that I'm not like that. I'm not saying I'm different or that I want to be different, but I just don't care what they think. I don't care if they think that the way I'm living is wrong or if they think that the way I want to live my life is wrong. I want to have a job that makes me happy, a job that I enjoy. I don't want a job where I'm just waking up to make a living. I know I'm only fifteen, and it's obvious that I'm not going to know what I want to do when I'm older. There are a lot of kids my age who do know what they want to do.

It's not just about me not knowing what I want to do; it's also about me knowing who I am or who I want to be. I feel like I'm just living, that I'm just here following the same routine every single week. It gets tiring at some point. You're just there wishing you could do something different for once, but you feel like you can't. Every day I came home after school wanting to do something different besides work and just doing nothing. I try to make myself do other things, but it's hard to stick to them. I want to find joy in the little things, but sometimes it's hard to do that. There are a lot of things I want, but I feel like I don't do anything to get them because I feel like I can't. I feel like I shouldn't feel like I can't. I mainly think that because of what others might say, but at the end of the day, it's my life, and I feel like I should do it. I'm also scared, but I don't really know what I'm scared of. I feel like it might be that I'm going to fail in life, that I'm going to be unhappy. I try to live my life the way I want to, but living is just hard sometimes, and I guess that's how life is. Soon I will stop thinking about how hard life may be, and I will stop being scared about failing and being unhappy. One day I'll stop feeling lost, and I'll know what I want to do with my life, but right now, I'm walking down a little path to find myself.

“What is the Nature of the Soul?” by Abigail Wahl

What is the nature of the soul?
Is it the “thing with feathers” Dickinson loved so dearly?
Or is it the substance of a higher plane?
One so eternal and ever-lovely we cannot see it until we have been freed from this:
This life, this world, these chains?
Is it the all-encompassing sign of a benevolent creator,
who cared so much as to give us a piece of itself as guidance?
A fourth-dimensional protégé
Made to carry us home.

What is the purpose of the soul?
Is it to be studied like a botanist discovering osmosis
and proclaimed too special for everyday understanding?
Or is it to be loved by children on lonely Sundays
and tucked into the creaky floorboard of a grandparent's kitchen?
Is it meant to steer us clearly past tribulation?
Or to give us the hope that we will persist in its face?
A vessel of inspiration
for the scientist and child alike.

Did the soul have a beginning?
Brimming over the precipice of existence like water boiling in a pot,
Reaching to envelop humanity in its warmth?
Or has it always existed, even before humans?
Waiting to greet us at the front door
With a soft symphony in its eyes?
Either, I have been told.
Does the soul rest in our hearts or our minds?
Regardless, it is to be loved.

“The Universe Speaks”

by Milo Snyder

“No, no, I can’t tell you everything,” it said, “How could you ever understand it all?”
“Oh, please do try!” Man spoke, chest vibrating with sound. With heart.

The Universe stretched itself into a comfortable position. Planets hovered by its ears, water lapping by its toes. It wiggles its fingers and clouds swirled, its mouth gaped open and sentience spilled out.

“What you do not know fills galaxies and overflows. Where could I possibly begin?”

Man stood up, and they pondered. They reached their hands into the air and imagined that they had the power to control the skies. Man watched as the clouds moved in a steady march above them. Man laid down and clutched the grass blades. They thought and thought. They thought about asking questions about the grass. Was it alive the same way they were? What made it grow at different rates? Did grass ponder them as they pondered it?

Too simple, thought Man. What question is worthy of the Universe?

They sat up from where they had relaxed in the grass. Could the Universe read their mind? Did the Universe know about them? Wait, what did they know about the Universe?

“What are you?” asked Man, eyebrows raised in curiosity.

“What am I? I am vast. I am alive. I am a witness. I am the stars, the planets, and the comets. I feel the pulse of life. I am the pulse of life. I see you. I am you. I am inside of you and all around. I am the grass you cling to and the clouds you stretch towards. I am the entity that keeps you safe. I am the danger you need protection from. I am abstract. I am undefined. I am tangible. I am all that your mind thinks, your heart feels, and your body feels.” The Universe spoke, mouth never moving.

Man set their head to the earth; the grass tickled their cheeks and the sun kissed their nose. They wondered about how all of this would be possible. They were speaking to the Universe, how could they also be the Universe? If the Universe was them, why did they not share the same knowledge? Where did it all begin? As they stood again, they came up with a better question: where did it all end?

They walked a while until a river was in sight. Man sprinted through the trees and stopped right on the river’s edge. They knelt down on the gray and brown pebbles, toes curled around the terrain like talons. They splashed one of their hands through the twinkling water. The water let Man’s hands skim it.

“I don’t understand,” They spoke, looking at the sky. “How can you be so contradictory? Are you the water I just touched? Are you my hand that passes through the water? If I am you then why can I not control the skies and turn the planets to my will?”

The Universe blinked at Man, emotionless eye movements that had no hidden meaning. Death expanded and contracted with the Universe’s pupils, deep black and reflective.

“You cannot understand. You do not see as I do. Your lens, your view, is all that you can comprehend. You are selfish. You act as though I control it all. Did you even listen to me? Have you ever listened to me?” The Universe asked Man; its word dripped with anger yet the tone never shifted. “I am not the controller, I am the being. I am everything. I am nothing. You speak of me as though I am one of your gods. Your response was predictable. Your response was human.”

“You’re right. I will never understand.” Man stepped into the river, walking to the opposite shore. They sank lower into the water with every step. The fish glistened under the surface, traveling in schools, looking for algae to eat.

“I know that you are everything but I cannot truly understand it. You are in these fish but you are also the algae that they eat and the rocks that the algae grow on. If you are everything, does that include ideas and things that do not live?”

“Are ideas not included in everything? Is water not part of everything? Maybe that would help you to understand. I will use something you know. I am water. I am in every living thing and I influence all those not alive. I am in the air but, like water particles, I am also the air itself. Does that help?”

“Yes, yes, that helps some. I see a little more,” Man blinked as the river splashed around them.

Man paddled their arms to the center of the river; the rocky bottom was out of reach. They kicked and splashed until their heels could dig into the sand. They stalked up the shore: panting and huffing. They shook the water from their hair in droplets. The river welcomed back its lost droplets with a silent bwoop. The shore welcomed back Man with waving leaves and warmth. A plain of trees, hills, and more bodies of water extended into the horizon, but Man was tired. Man plodded

over to a soft moss bed and sat down gently. They closed their eyes and basked in the sun, thinking to themselves. Then, Man rolled to the ground and kissed the moss softly, as if kissing a dandelion whose seeds could fly off at any moment. Then they gave a second, stronger kiss to the bark of a tall tree.

"Did you feel that?" Man whispered into the tree.

"No."



Headless
Holly Drye



Scarf Girl
Taylor Guinn

"Duck Dogs" by Shelby Lehn

Duck dogs have an important job in a hunter's life. Duck dogs do their best to retrieve ducks for their owners; duck dogs are always ready for work, even at 4 am.

I have a duck dog named Max. Max gives it his all anytime we hunt, giving it his all on every retrieve. Max is the best at jumping and trenching through the muck and water. All-season Max gives it his best in pursuit of the game. On the ride home, Max always falls fast asleep in the bed of the truck, and the wind blows his fur dry. When we get home as I recline in my chair, Max watches me intensely as I call my buddies to tell them of our treasures.

The best part of having a duck dog is his friendship and loyalty. When I leave home, Max waits at the door patiently for my return. Before I go to sleep, I'm sure to tell Max how proud I am of him, and then he lies down next to my bed and falls asleep.



Bald Eagle
Casey Stirewalt



The Mystery of the Deep
Allyson Eudy



Space Marine
Derek Kent

“Human Impact” by Lilly Medlin

The observation was first made when the sky turned gray. For months, and even years before this, there had been warning signs, signs that seemed obvious now. Perhaps if people had spent more time observing these signs and less time fighting with each other things may have ended differently. Before long, however, people began to accept the sky's new color as a freak of nature, an oddity that could not be explained. Then, other bizarre things began to happen. Fields for planting became barren and the seas receded until miles of new coastline appeared. We were not the only ones affected by these oddities; the animals were as well. Birds flew south until their presence was just a distant memory, and the bears of the north began to be common elsewhere. Many great scientists tried to solve these issues, but with no known cause, the problem was unsolvable.

Then the rumors began. At first, they were just innocent speculation, a way of staying sane amidst the chaos of the ever-changing world. But as time marched on, people were becoming more desperate for answers. No matter how ludicrous the theory, or how absurd the origin, everyone had their own idea of the source of the issues. Some people eventually saw the disasters as a way to profit, taking advantage of others' panic to support their own greed. Even greed, though, has its limits. Soon money had no true power and people began to steal to survive. People were so fearful of the cause of the natural incidents that they were unwilling to cooperate, even if it cost them their lives. Cities became empty, devoid of human life except for the occasional traveler who was careful to leave quickly. Those who remained were careful to isolate themselves as a way of protection since they feared others' opinions.

As the years trickled by, there were fewer and fewer people still living. Abandoned cities were occupied once again, but not by humans. Wildlife had reclaimed areas that used to be toxic to them. Roads became overgrown with plants and trees grew to heights unseen before. And on the day the last human died, a bird built its nest on the ruins of the Empire State Building.

“What Is Everything?”

by Chiashe Yang

What is everything?

Everything is how the world goes quiet when I
give you a hug

Everything is that sense of comfort I get when
you place your fingers between mine

Everything is that awkward walk to your car
when you come pick me up

Everything is how I allow you in my life when I
know I shouldn't

But you say you “love” me so I do, because it's
you.

Everything is the ups and downs, the smiles
and frowns.

Everything is you and me regardless of how
terrible things may be.

Everything...

What is everything?



Bubbly
Allyson Eudy



Drippy Sky
Bruce

“She : A Short Story”

by Aidan Pilato

She sits at her daughter’s bedside in a room with pale white walls, warm rays of sunlight illuminating the scene with their outstretched arms. The woman in the bed cradles a tiny baby in her arms, gently rocking back and forth as her child fusses and cries.

“I love my grandchildren,” says the lady by the bed. “They are just so wonderful.”

She stands in the corner of the kitchen in the midst of a large group of people, all surrounding a young boy sitting at a table wearing a party hat. She sings “Happy Birthday” along with everyone else, and when they finish, the boy takes a deep breath and blows out the candles placed neatly on a slice of cake in front of him. Everyone applauds.

“I love my grandchildren,” says the lady in the corner. “They are just so wonderful.”

She sits in the second row of a large church sanctuary, wearing a beautiful blue dress. She watches as a tall, lanky boy wearing a long navy robe and square cap proudly walks up onto the stage. The boy takes his place standing beside a host of other teenagers dressed similarly. Everyone applauds.

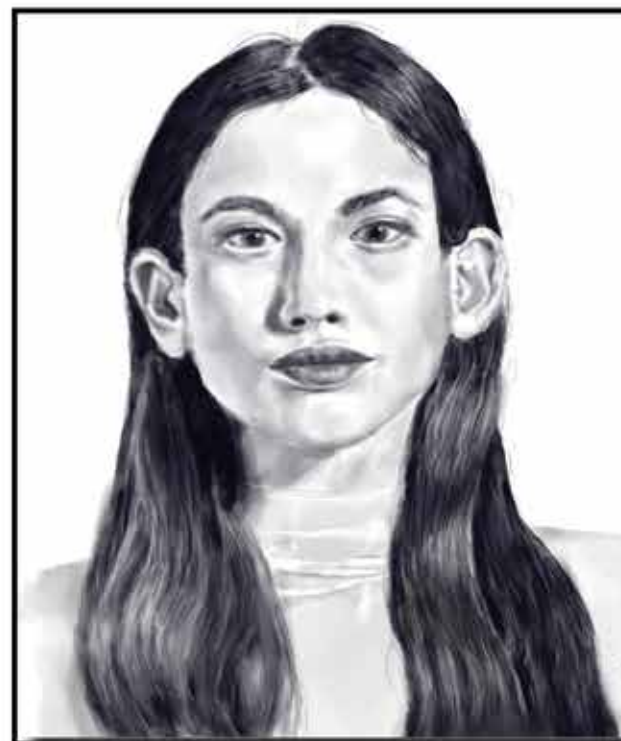
“I love my grandchildren,” says the lady dressed in blue. “They are just so wonderful.”

She slowly stands as a young woman in a flowing white dress gradually makes her way down the center aisle, rows and rows of men and women donning suits and dresses turning to face the bride as she proceeds along her path. The young woman arrives at the end of the hall, where she joins a tall, lanky young man dressed in a suit and tie. A big man mutters some words, and the groom and his beloved share a kiss. Everyone applauds.

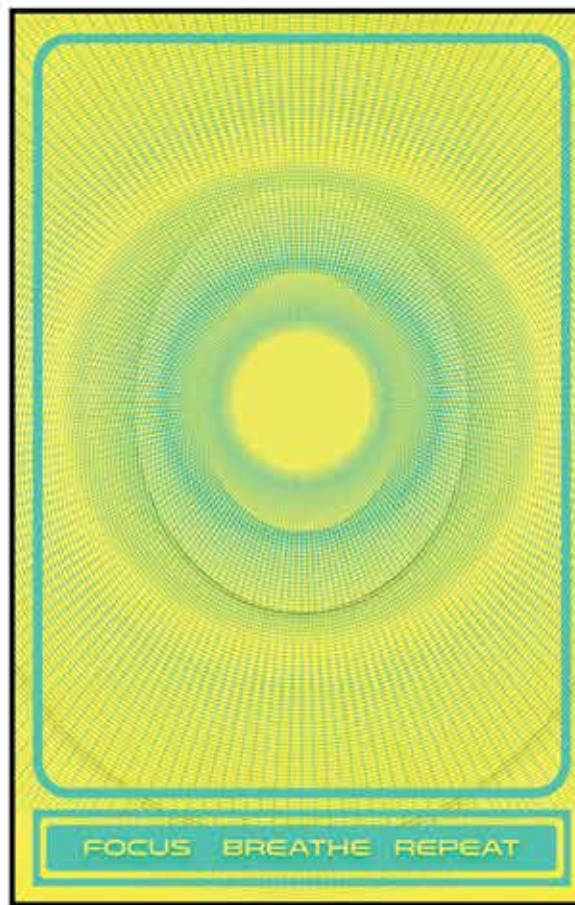
“I love my grandchildren,” says the lady who stood slowly. “They are just so wonderful.”

He sits by her bedside in a room with pale white walls, the last few rays of sunlight caressing the scene with their retracting fingers. The woman in the bed delicately grasps his hand with her own, trembling. He looks into her tired eyes as the last ray of sunlight disappears through the window and he whispers,

“I love you, Grandma. You are just so wonderful.”



Portrait Digital Drawing
Kristin High



Focus Breathe Repeat
Josh Gooch



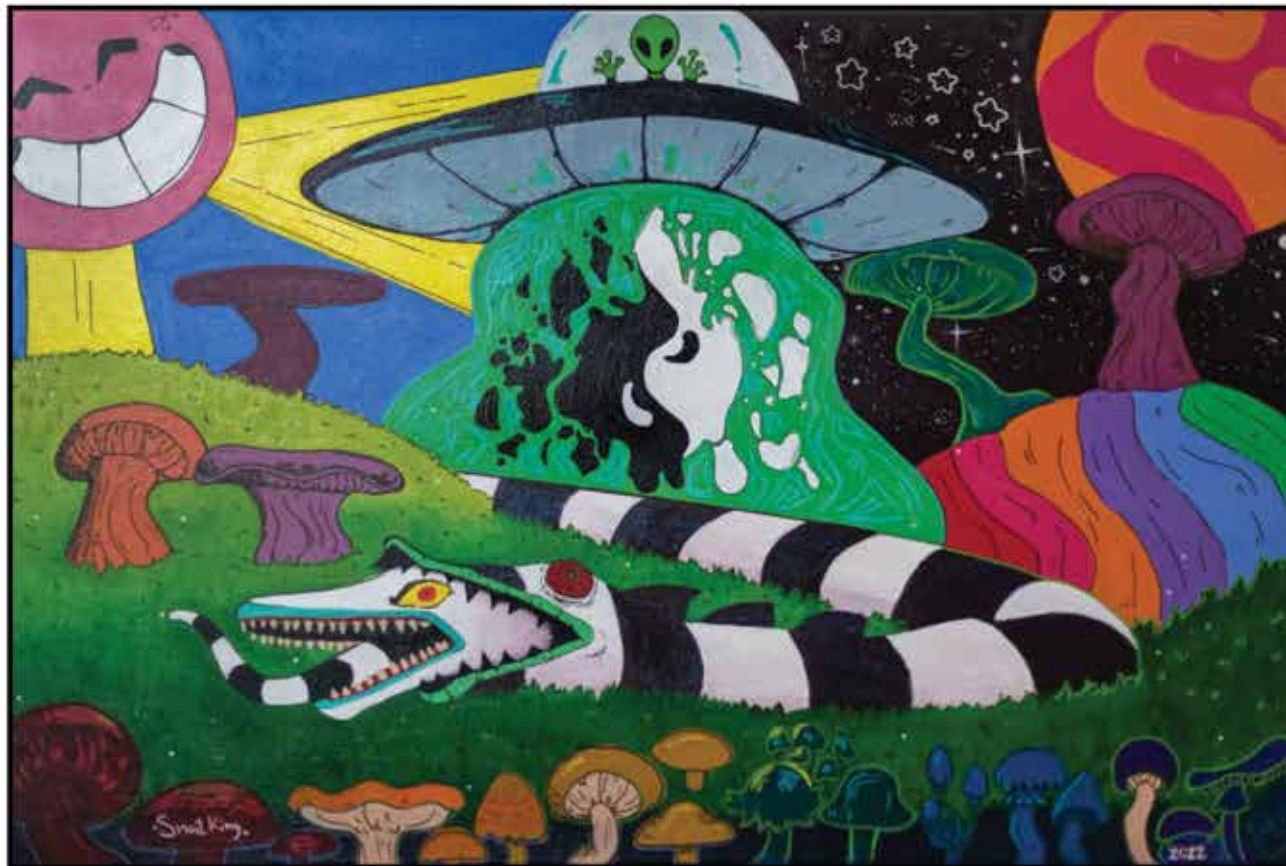
Horse Jumping
Charlize Colon

Joker
Casey Stirewalt



**Austin Butler as
Elvis Presley**
Casey Stirewalt

Shapes and Colors
Lexi Watts



Kratos
Casey Stirewalt

