



DENALI

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DENALI

Literary Arts Journal



Lane Community College
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BEAUTY

Laura LeHew

I want to speak in metaphors about the warmth that opens us all
[but it has all been said before]
the purple crocus resurrection and how tree fingers are splayed,
ready to burst
[you see it too, don't you?]
I want to sit you down and say how sweet the pink ladies are
and that if you buy them organic you might find them birthing life
[or seeds sprouting within]

but I bury some desires like apple seeds
lay them up on the windowsill in good soil
and watch for new growth



UNTITLED
Michael Phillips



UNTITLED

Colin Cavasher

i was on the bus this one time
back when it was too cold to walk
to work and
everyone on it was somewhere in between
waking up and
walking in and
none of us had families or
careers or cars (obviously)
and most of us radiated sick
calm.

the man crammed next to me was the
same man as the
man crammed on the other side of me,
both were wearing:
ironed shirts (no tie, too much starch),
gold rings, too much cologne, hair
gel and
they hummed to themselves,
pumping nervosa and sweating
oily secrets from their palms to their pant sleeves
and the woman in front of me-
this huge beast with a
walker
that took up
an extra two seats-
kept muttering
Lawd, have mercy!
under her breath
when
all of a sudden
a fight broke out between
an old man and a



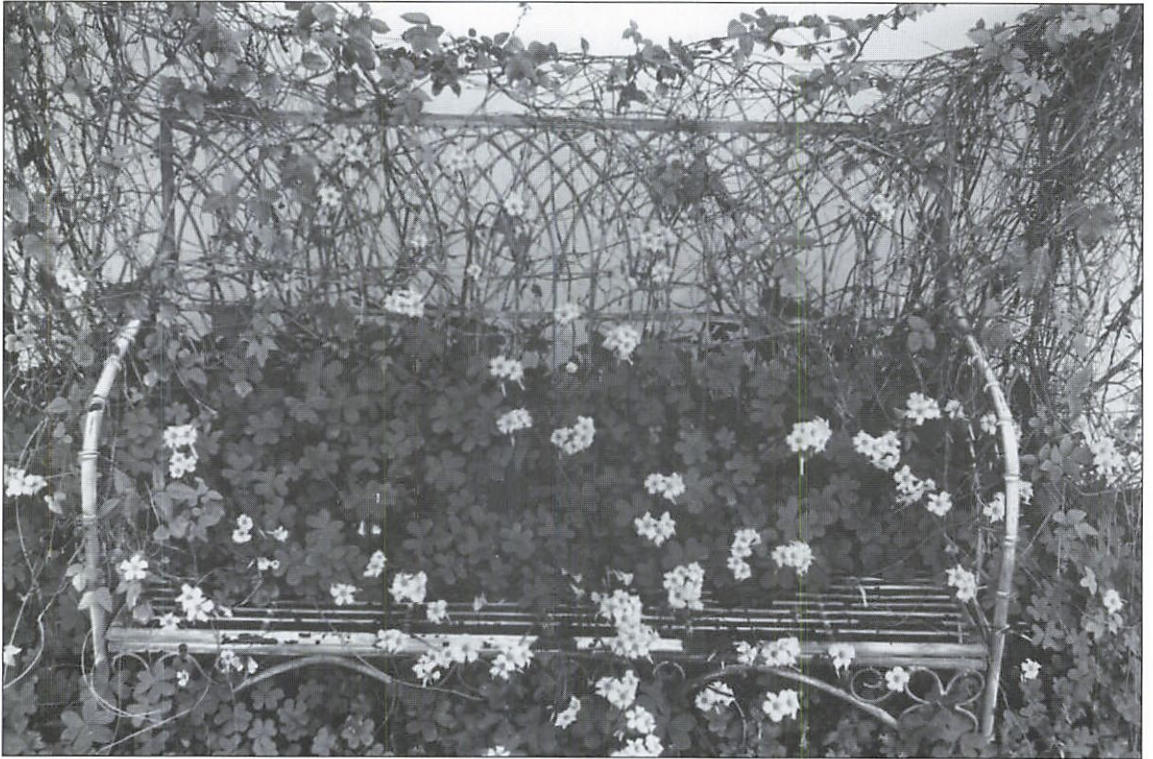
methadone queen-
her arms were these frail
batons
and she was screeching and hopping
and something about her baaaaag, man, whatthafuck?!
and then the old guy (he must have been pushing 80)
pulled a knife and it was real life right there, baby,
at 7:38 in the a.m.
pushing her way down your throat and kicking up your lids
and we all watched for a second,
turned and twisted awkwardly for the show
like bastards holding up a highway,
as they struggled
and cursed
until some jackass
with a latte
and a folded newspaper
and a management position somewhere (probably)
broke the whole thing up.

i went to work
and stared at numbers
and letters
and memos
and calendar dates
and nothing
was
even close
to
as real
as
that.



TANGLES IN MY MIND

Abbey Corbett



SAPLING

Margaret James

You cup the world in your hands,
its reticence pricks finger tips.
Your eye embraces—becomes the sun.

You as witness.

Asleep in the white house is Beauty—
she is peace. Her gown
grown animate

each gossamer thread a life;
the dead plucked by a harpist,
entwined like the raven's nest

with things shiny and sharp
entombed in a bramble—a thicket
grown wild and wicked that encircles

the house long gone dark.

You don't know how it happened, or why,
this seeming eternal sleep.
Where is the one, you wonder?

The kiss, the awakening?

You as the one;—
the world
in your hands.



BELLE VISTA SANS MERCI

Victor Schramm

Nature is violent-
carelessly thrown,
the young and full grown,
amidst frightful tones
die stoically, silent.

No, they're not martyrs-
Unsentient suffering,
stupidly hovering,
caprice alone governing,
the pretty pink flowers.

And yet, it's disturbing.
I feel like a witness
to criminal senselessness,
crimes 'gainst the witless
in cruel, heartless Spring.

I'm no good Samaritan-
I walk on by
because they can't cry
as cold, dead they fly.
I step over their skeletons.

When I reach home,
I'll probably smile
when I recall the pile
of those murdered, defiled.
I'll be guilty, alone.

But, there's no crimes in nature,
just assertions of stature.



TREE OF LIFE

Jayme Vineyard



SKYLIGHT

Jacob Brown



WREATH

Miles Briand

rot can exist within disinfectant
miss disenchanting
will you sate my mental state
invested in the seems of fate
more paint than a mental patient
I'm insatiable maybe
my money may be traceable
I'm pretentious but conscientious
no humor to be found in this hospice
no one prospers when the ape is counting
discounting truth in all its forms
the calm before the storm
the sweat before the swarm
dashing at 1000 miles per hour
and going nowhere fast
the ghost of christmas pissed
going straight to the heart, or the fist
if all are created equal than why so many
less-than/more-than equations
all is equal at equilibrium
the descendant of disaster
our spiritual "selves"
caught between a rock
and a cheese grater



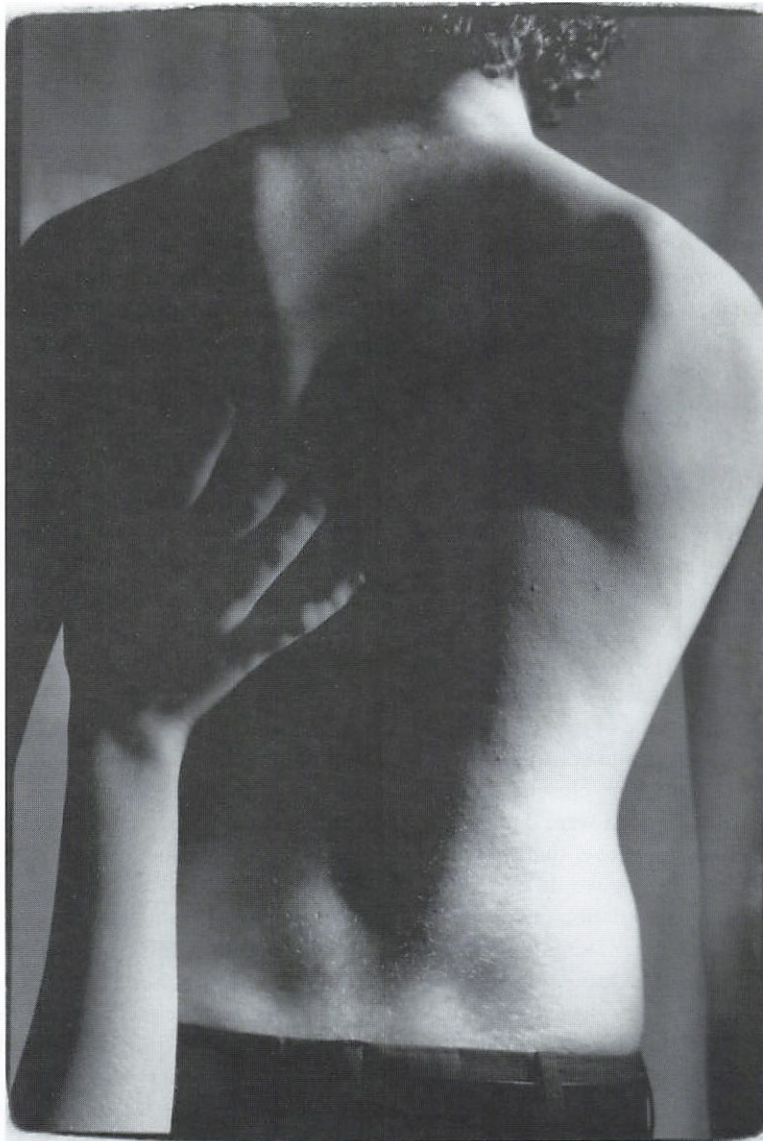
BABY BLUES

Camilla Beavers

I punched the horn, it wailed at you from my car.
My old, rusty, Ford Escort station wagon,
the side railing peeling off,
barely able to stay running in idle,
the black smoke spilling out of the rusted, holey muffler.
You're walking and turn to look back,
you see the wide, tooth enhancing smile on my face.
Stopping—you stare at me—the whites of your eyes showing.
Why don't you like me?
Is it because I follow you?
To the university, your classes,
to work, your home,
to the bar?
Does it bother you that I hide in the blackberry bushes as you take your early morning jog?
Press my face against your window
while you toss and turn on your baby blue sheets?
I leave smudged fingerprints on the drivers side window of your '95 silver BMW 740iL,
see the ones left only hours before.
I make deep footprints outside your house from all my different shoes.
Do you know I stole your favorite sweater from the bench outside your house?
You took it off after pulling weeds out of your mom's garden of not-yet-bloomed pink tulips.
You went inside to get a glass of water.
I can remember the early spring sun glinting off the ice.
Now I can sit in bed at night and smell your sweat around the collar,
the dirt under my nails creating crescents in the old fabric.
Your dad had bought you the sweater a month before he died.
That's why you liked it so much.
You're looking for it in a frenzy, but you can't have it.
It's mine now, it belongs to me.
I keep it in my closet, in the back, in a brown box that says 'Priority Mail' across the side.
And as I watch you walk to your car with the fingerprint's covering the window,
I think about the sweater in my closet,
and know you will never get it back.



JON
Ramsey Tainton



BRUCE, NINJA PENGUIN OF DEATH

Kory Owens

While resting on my laurels and playing another video game (to add already to the growing number of games I had defeated) I heard a knock at my apartment door. With caffeinated elixir in my bladder and munchies in my stomach, I parted the sea of discarded pizza boxes and cans and made my way to the door. Glancing behind me, I took a surveyed my apartment.

I spent most of my time on the couch. The faded grey canvas covered a broken-down frame and the cushions had seen better days. It had been there since I moved in and I hadn't had the heart to throw it away, nor the authority to do so in the first place. When all was said and done it had been there longer than me.

Next to the couch, or to me more precise, in front of said couch, was a table. But an ordinary table this was not. During a drunken binge with my comrades we somehow came into the possession of numerous business and traffic signs to which were converted to a masterwork table through the knowledge of 8th grade shop class and the tutelage of a nine-fingered angry midget of a shop teacher; the table now held up the source of my joy and entertainment: television, stereo, and consoles. I was an addict: my addiction and I were closer than ever.

Spots where floor could be seen were dark brown, almost black. I am not sure if that was the original color, but steam cleaning would mean the genocide of the indigenous population of Carpetopia. My bedroom, I use the term tentatively, was adjacent to the living room. The less said about that place the better, for I never really slept in there. It held only a bed and clothes that had not passed the point of "un-wearable stink." The kitchen was only a space where I kept my fridge and a shelf with cans of food and bags upon bags of chips. There

were no windows in any of the rooms, for natural direct light hurts my eyes. A small 3-bladed ceiling fan circulated the musty air to be less musty. This was my home; something in my gut was telling me to take one good, last look at it.

As I opened the portcullis to my humble abode, a chill wind overtook me. Stupid Lenny, my next door neighbor three doors down, must of left the damn door to the whole building open again. I would have to have a word with him once again. I glanced down to each end of the hallway and saw nothing. I pulled my head back inside and closed the door.

As I made my way back to the couch, the knock came again. I said aloud, "If this is some dumb kid playing an even dumber prank, you better pray to whatever God you believe in that I don't—" and I threw the door open, hoping to catch one of the little bastards from down the street in the act.

I saw nothing as I looked into the hallway.

"Damn those kids are fast," I exclaimed while casually closing the door.

"Quack."

"What in the—" I stuttered, whirling around. Nothing in a ten-mile radius could make that noise, not unless the mice were bilingual. I looked down at the source of the sound and almost fell backwards, half from shock, half from laughter.

There, upon the welcome mat, still soggy from last night's rainstorm, stood a penguin. Now this in itself was probably as far left of normal as you could possibly get, second only to Jesus and Elvis, both clothed as the other, appearing in a crowded train station and asking who had the best Ecstasy in town. But the fact of the matter was that the penguin stood there, as tall as a penguin could, dressed from head to three-toed foot, in the garb of a ninja.



A black, lustrous, silk mask had holes neatly cut for the eyes and beak resting on its short, little head. Around its neck, in stark contrast to the rest of the outfit, was a floor-length, blood red scarf. A small shirt made of the same material as the mask covered its stocky frame and pants were tied about the waist by a length of rope which hung down to webbed feet sticking, bare, out the end of the pantlegs. Apparently, the place that makes ninja penguin clothes did not make penguin ninja shoes as well. Sad that a ninja penguin would have to go barefoot in this day and age. His sword was slung over one shoulder resembled a katana, but was much shorter. It was a tanto, a smaller version of a katana, more akin to that of a nineteen inch dagger. Along the width of the handle on both sides was a small piece of cloth stretching from the base of the handle to the guard of the blade. I could only assume that this was to make it easier for the penguin to handle the blade. Along the penguin's rope belt were numerous pouches and a small ring of ninja stars. The penguin stood there with cold, doll-like eyes, ever watching, never blinking.

I laughed aloud and remarked, "A Ninja penguin. How nice." I slammed the door shut, merely shrugging off the appearance of my ninja visitor as a hallucination, a by-product of the ingestion of a two-week-old pizza. With much more force, the knock knocked once again.

"Go away!" I shouted, adding further proof to the fact that I was, as everyone around me already suspected, finally snapping.

"Quack," replied the monotonic penguin. If anything could be said for the penguin, he was a persistent little thing. It seemed as if my frosty, sword-wielding tormentor would not leave me be. I would have to find out first if it was real. If it proved true, I would take further action as necessary. I opened my door slowly and, truth be told, was shocked to not see a two-foot penguin dressed

as a ninja, standing in the shadow of my doorway. I almost felt a pang of despair at the departure—almost. So I closed my door once again and made my way back to the couch, ready to resume my torrid love affair with junk food and videogames.

The shock of a stack of pizza boxes striking my face as I hit the ground was less than the shock of what caused my unexpected sojourn floorwards. There, standing in all its ninja glory, was that damn penguin. Picking myself up off the floor, I sat down in front of Pengy, as I'll now take to calling him. As I sat, it stood, still watching me like a sentinel of old, guarding the forbidden secret as to why it was here, and who sent it. Who sent it? That made me think. It was my birthday soon, could this be a prank? Maybe this was a doll that my friends had given me and decided to have a little bit of fun with at my expense. I reached a hand towards the penguin, ready to find a card or tag. Much to my surprise, the penguin reached a flippered wing out and slapped my hand, rather forcibly, away from its body.

"Wow! Animatronics!" I exclaimed in nerdish glee, thrilled at the prospect of a small robotic penguin in my house. This would definitely make it into the blog. I reached my slightly red and sore hand out towards the direction of the penguin, which was again slapped away.

"Quack." The penguin shouted.

I, not in the most of conversational moods, picked up whatever was in arms reach, a member of the pizza box high rise that I so rudely destroyed during my unexpected bout with gravity, and flung it at my penguin nemesis.

The right half of the pizza box fell on the floor much like a leaf falling from a tree. The left half fell serenely like a lotus blossom, three seconds later, a couple feet away from its mate. However peaceful this scene was, the penguin holding the unsheathed sword was not. I was right, the cloth



helped the penguin hold onto the sword, which was now causing a slight ringing in the air, as well as making the penguin's image take a quick run from cute and cuddly to mean and menacing. Still holding, or rather clinging to the idea, that my penguin attacker was a robotic toy, and a very well made one at that, sent from my friends, I called out,

"Okay guys, good joke. You really got my blood going. Olly olly oxen Freud or whatever the damn phrase is. Come out now." No reply, except for my frantic breathing. The penguin, with speed and skill unmatched by any human I have ever seen living or dead, sheathed the sword behind its back in the scabbard with robotic precision. The ringing in the air stopped, but my rapid heart beat and hungry breaths did not. They continued at their canter, with no sign of letting up.

"Please guys, this isn't funny anymore, come..."

"Quack," the penguin rudely interrupted.

"Don't interrupt, you rude...penguin." I had finally gone crazy. Here I was, sitting on my floor, which was not the most biologically safe thing to do, arguing with a sword wielding penguin dressed as a ninja.

"Quack," the penguin laughed. Before I had the chance to fully appreciate the concept of penguin laughter, my chilly, unwelcome guest walked, or rather waddled past me, and jumped higher than any penguin I have ever had the privilege or pleasure to meet, onto my collage of a coffee table. It pointed its hand, or rather flipper, in the direction of my couch.

"Quack," it ordered. Taking my cue, I went to my archaic couch and sank down into it, relishing its embrace. How many nights had my friends and I sat on this very couch, playing videogames for hours on end? Those days seemed so far away now and how I wished to be there with them, instead of here with it.

"Quack!" the penguin ordered once again, this

time much more forcibly. I looked at it, and saw a business card resting on the table between its webbed feet. I reached a shaky hand, the one not previously slapped twice away, towards my penguin captor. The penguin took a step back, allowing me easy access to the card, which I picked up and read:

Bruce, Ninja Penguin of Death.

I couldn't help but laugh. The penguin, in a moment of mercy very unlike his character, allowed this to go on, before slapping his foot on the table, much like a judge trying to get order in a courtroom. I stifled my laugh and focused my attention on Bruce, much like a student or child who had done something bad and was caught in the act. His flipper was outstretched, and was turning over and back, over and back. It took me a minute to realize that this was a command to turn the card over, which I then obliged.

For one reason or another, you have been marked for removal from this world. So let's cut the bullshit and get straight to business.

Marked for removal? The mere concept of my impending doom seemed like a joke and a very cruel one at that. I mean, here I was, in the prime of my life, however shitty a life it was, but it was the prime, damnit, and I was enjoying things. I decided not to make things easy on him. Rage against the dying of the light and so on. So, I decided to deliver a ninja move of my own, a very shoddy kick in the direction of the short shinobi, but I only succeeded in over-extending my leg, making myself a prime target for the penguin.

The penguin, with ninja skill, leapt on my chest. Not much for a fair fight at this point, I slapped him off as hard as I could, sending him flying across my room. Much to my surprise and dread, however, the penguin bounded off my wall, and landed one footed on my floor; a very catlike maneuver for a penguin if you ask me.



I jumped up with a quickness and ran to my door, frantically reaching for the handle. The knob turned in its hole, but didn't open the door. I ran past the penguin into my bedroom and shut the door behind me. I am not afraid to say I cowered behind and to the left of the door, which was cut in twain as easily as the pizza box. I threw some very filthy pillows at him, which then made my room look like I had detonated a duck.

I decided to run full force at the door that led to the outside hallway once again, determined to either break it or me in the process. However, as my feet started to fly, they did not notice the rope embedded with a hook in the wall, the end of which was now held by a very angry looking penguin. I hit the ground hard and tried to push myself up, but the thunk noise mere inches away from my neck convinced me otherwise. I turned my head slightly to look at the blade of the tanto embedded almost half way into my floor. I felt webbed feet walk up my back and another card was this time dropped in front of my face. He pulled the sword from the ground, sheathed it, and leapt over my head, landing with his back turned.

“Quack.”

Taking my cue, I righted myself on the floor, and read the card

If you are reading this, it probably means that you tried some half-assed escape attempt to postpone the inevitable. Didn't work, did it? Well I hope you learned something...

I glanced, very angrily I might say, at Bruce. “Why me?” I asked. “What have I done to deserve this? Surely there are more evil people in the world than me much more worthy of your morbid gift.”

“Quack,” agreed the penguin, as he slowly sunk

his head. Something I had said must have had an effect. I had not noticed the other card now laying on the floor, which he scooted over with his foot. I was beginning to have hope that maybe, just maybe, I could talk my fate free from the grasp of this penguin. I picked up the card and read it aloud

If you are reading this card, that means that you have now tried to talk you way out of this. Whether it was bribery or a moral plea...

The card stopped suddenly, as did my voice. I looked up at Bruce, who was now slowly walking, head down, towards my door. “Bruce,” I called out to him. “The card, it's not finished.” Bruce turned around and looked me dead in the eyes. I am not sure how, but a faint smile seemed to cross his beak. It mimicked the same over and back motion previously done, and I mentally smacked myself. I turned the card around and read aloud once again.

...but you forgot two important things. One, you can't bribe a penguin. Two, morals don't mean a pile of beans to a penguin. Have a good afterlife... B.N.P.o.D.

They say that right before you die, a thousand things go through your mind. Your life flashes before your eyes and you ponder that one great question in life; why are we here? Well, I am here to tell you that, for me, that is a pile of shit. The only thing that went through my mind was the ninja star that I saw a split second before it was thrown in the hands of a fiendishly grinning penguin. And the only question that mattered was this: how in the hell could a penguin throw a ninja star?

And, a micro-second before the shuriken, the answer to my final question in life struck my brain. Because, he is Bruce, Ninja Penguin of Death. ♯





EMILY

Travis Backmeier



OLD GOLD

Sonya Petroff

Trying to catch your eyes
it's a struggle for me.
This maddening lifts my dress
causing a raucous
Easy-on, easy-off
an all-access train
vibe empowered
releasing reckless will
he penetrates
The monsoon of my wooded sensate
bringing brilliant sun.
Old gold.
We wear it well.



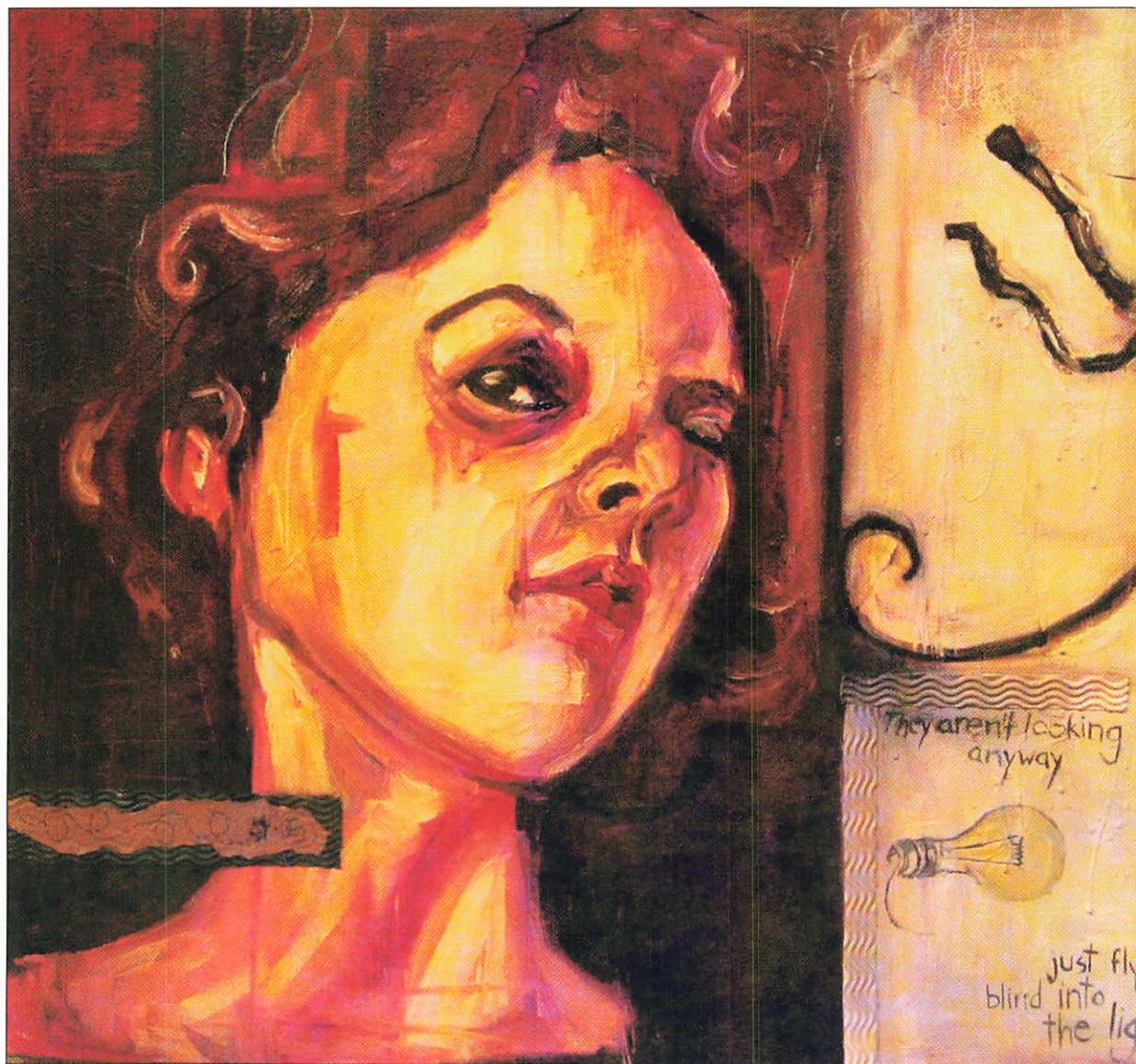
UNTITLED
(ALUMINUM CAST WITH GOLD LEAF)

Jackson Snellings



SELF-PORTRAIT WITH BLACK EYE

Allana Ross



ANARCHY

Laura LeHew

Let the arts
free martinis
from their shackles
of habitat.

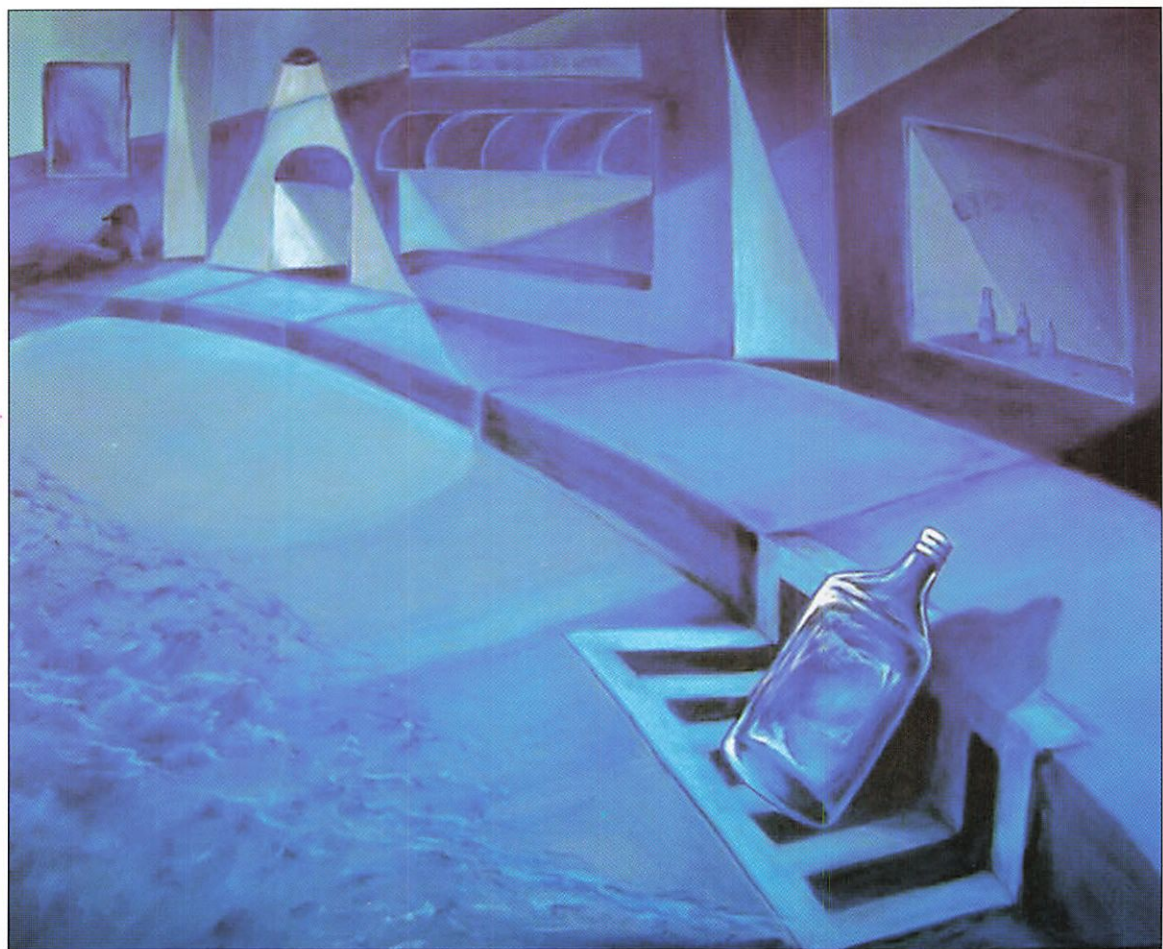
Incite art,
let the remains
create community;
Every door is a wall.

This is not the revolution
I envisioned.

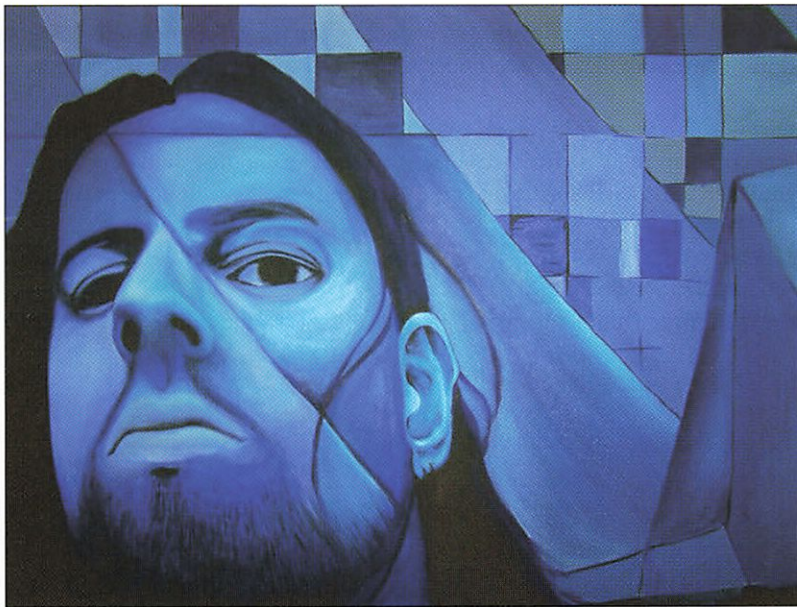


BLUE BOTTLE

Lang Swartzwald



ROBIN



SELF
PORTRAIT



A GIRL IN RED SHOES

Kuei Ying Chang

A girl in red shoes
Taken away by a foreign man
From Yokohama harbor by a boat
Taken away by a foreign man

Mother's lullaby kept turning in my head when the soldiers came to our street. They came by a jeep in the middle of a hot summer day while the street vendors were setting up their shops to sell what they had for the day. There were my favorite vendors who had goldfish and wind chimes. There were other vendors who were selling big blocks of ice, bamboo rods, and fresh fish for dinner. They all had different rhymes to sell their goods. Vendors rhymed; tofu sellers tooted the horns; jingling sounds of wind chimes cooled the air on the street. Vendors' rhymes and sounds of the street jammed all together and reached the blue sky of the mid-summer day.

All came to a stop when a jeep zipped into the street.

The soldiers had helmets on. The driver looked around with a stern face while the others opened sacks of candies. They were wearing khaki uniforms with clean white under shirts. They were also wearing dark sunglasses and chewing gum.

Dad told me that the occupation army soldiers were living on top of the hill. "Are they making candies there?" I wondered. "Did the soldiers come all the way from America to hand out candies? Why do they wear sunglasses when they give candies to children?" Questions grew while my mother's song kept turning in my head.

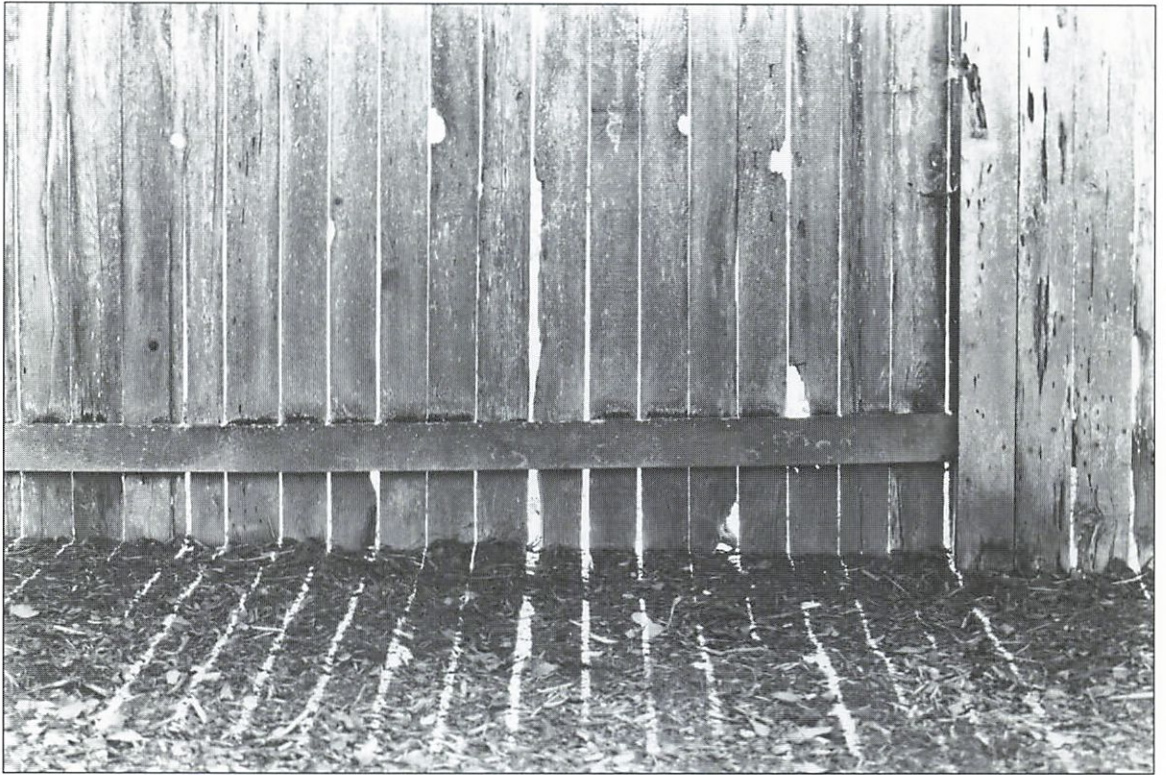
A bunch of children surrounded the jeep with glee. "Gibu-mi-chocoleito! Gibu-mi-gamu!" they shouted. Vendors kept silent; the children's choir filled the air.

I stay away from the jeep. I kept myself away from the jeep so that the soldiers would not see my new red shoes. ❁



UNPARALLELED DISPERSION

Dominick Barbero



MY FAMILY IS COUNTRY

John Bartlett

-My family is country-
Whether it is in the deep rolling green of the Appalachian Mountains
Or the seemingly endless golden waves of wheat in Wyoming
-My Family Is Country-
Whether it is in the souls of black folk,
with skin like that of aged copper or worn bronze;
or the smooth white skin, like that of wild calla lilies
tanned from generations of working on a combine
-My Family Is Country-
The sweet smell of fresh cornbread
the pungent smell of corn beef hash or sauerkraut
black beans and rice
or my mothers chili
watermelon, chicken and grits
-My Family Is Country-
It could be the foot stompin', hands clappin'
"Oh my lawd, lawd, lawd, lawd"
Or the deep resounding of a pipe organ playing Agnes Dei
That shakes you to your very core
-My Family Is Country-
They could be playin' the front porch blues
With Great Grandma on the mandolin
And Great Grand Pap playin' the bones
Or absorbing the sounds emanating from my grandmother on the piano
Playing hymnals from a book that has been passed down for generations
-My Family is Country-
My family could be fit'n'go somewhere
Or doing a load a warsh
-My Family is Country-
Fighting for freedom of oppression
Or fighting thru the great depression
I am of my people and for my people
For we have within us the strength to conquer anything
-My Family Is Country-



IMPOSTER

Dylan Kennedy

I made dinner tonight
Something I was really proud of
I ate it by myself
with wine
and music
It wasn't something anyone else could have enjoyed
as much as I did
My friends around the corner
They made a big elaborate meal
too
They shared it with a friend
I cooked the food
Something I'd never done
Unsure of the results
Lemon pepper
Coconut milk
Shrimp and noodles
Red hot pepper
Ginger
Sat with rabbit fur coat
Remember my hat
I remember your dress
Green like the forest
And the light in your hair
before it changed
And the light in your eyes
It always changes

And the way you sighed
And the way you sigh
And the sad hard love
in our hearts
Lying on the floor
Bed
Wine to fuck heads
Midsummer-late Winter's tale
of the best time
and a sweet memory
But consider:
It could be better
and would--
Sorry
I'd only do me worse
and prove myself to be an imposter
in the face of composure

Thanks for the shrug



UNTITLED

Seth Ruhnow



SPRINGTIME

Colin Cavasher

springtime is coming
and there is a
feeling to the air as if
we are
all
holding our collective
breath
but-
the girls are singing in their showers,
soft and sweet and untouchable,
and they are
unpacking their best
underwear
and soon
this city will explode
with
curves and scents and eyes-
the sway and languid grace
of a thousand perfect asses that
i may not grab
and
a million different awkward moments which
i will not indulge in
and
a city full of women who
i cannot love.

these walls and words
are the corners
and the foundations of my house
are built upon bourbon,
and i am tired of
thinking
about love.

my hunger will be
a different animal,
a sweet thing gone mad
and
i will whip him
with pills and whiskey
and feed him
all of our anger and awkwardness
until he shrieks and wails and
shakes the darkness outside sleeping windows
and puts fear into the hearts of my neighbors
and i am
insane once more.

springtime is coming
and
i am
holding
my
breath.



NO REST FOR THE WICKED WHO ARE BOUND UP WITH THORNS

Aimee Aiden

Beauty's but a fleeting thing and I need that bright white light that fills my heart when I look at you, someone textured and new and untried by me...the lifting sacred light that lessens the weight of the scales hanging on either side of my heart.

It is a light like no other, like standing on the beaches of Hawaii facing aquamarine water and endless sky...perhaps it's a falsified light but it works; that is, before I wake and it's torn mercilessly apart from my soul by the reality of what I've done.

Beauty comes and hurts you in many shapes and sizes, both predicted and surprising, sometimes through falling, sometimes rising, and I have loved so hard, have loved them all.

I will never, never lie down again in the same bed we lay on when we were thirteen, playing Nintendo and looking at your stolen porn magazines. I will never wake up in that bed after having sex with my best friend making myself a cheater and marking my formal entrance to the high of success in the art of theatre...she was so clever, drinking just enough to be sick at the bar, but not enough to not remember it all...because of the last Adios Motherfucker, I could unsteadily put my arms around you in the elevator. I will never kiss a boy I knew from 7th grade, now 21 but still afraid with his fine steel lip ring, the finest thing I ever tasted and he will never say to me again, "May I?" with his beautiful guitarist's fingers—not cocky now—just the boy from 7th grade in a quiet moment his eyes gone steely blue to match the sky because more blood is flowing through us like a river through time, childhood to here, it's the same bed, under a big window, and I can see all the stars and the city lights and I won't ever feel him

breathing under me again when he says, "Does this feel weird to you?" and I will never say, "No... does it to you?" and he will never again reply, in a moment I thought would change my life, "No. And that feels weird to me." The most beautiful lyrics I ever heard.

Never.

I shall never let you touch me again, in this unholy kind of conversation, that involves no words, that I can't resist. I'll never follow you into shadows again, looking for a place to fuck, at once feeling dirty and ashamed and liberated and titillated by this new, exciting game—I can never have a first again, after all—won't ever be back in Dyment Hall, a homesick girl away at school, in a matchbox of a room...304 and that adds up to 7. It will never be that afternoon again when I lay there on my green sheets, you asleep facing me, and I marvelled at how there were no flaws upon your face... I marvelled at how I could foresee how now all my plans would have to change—There you were, an angel made of polished sand, blackest eyelashes, twitching hands—And I will never watch you fall asleep or wake again, my heart hurting with echoes of pleasure and emptiness, knowing I could never know you completely. I won't ever be altered by those hands anymore.

Never.

I will never run so far on a cold beach again, to find tidepool rocks overlooking wet sand and kids and dogs and couples and kites. I won't climb to the top of those wet crags again, being a kid again, and almost get hit by a crashing wave and feel my blood burn as I stumble into you and our skins brush. Will a cigarette ever mean that much again? Literally and figuratively walking through



dunes in the dark searching for the path, finding it, then stepping off, climbing a fence, and jumping right off the cliff, together. To land in a soft, soft embrace of earth and fantasy, overlooking the sea. The time it took to smoke a cigarette was all we thought we'd ever get, and so we made the most of it—the embers burning much too fast. I'll never try to make it last again with you, never say, "If only I was my brother's younger sister," intoxicated by the smell of salt and pine and leather, and I'll never despair again before your hazel eyes, I will never let you have another chance to kiss her, later, on someone else's couch, to own that body and mind and mouth.

Never.

I'm never going to stare at you across a stage again, the way I did the first day when you appeared and I was scared shitless of performing. I'll never lust after your sweaters again...will not repeat the turning moment when you looked down at me with eyes a nameless color and handed me your pen. I won't ever dig around behind the stage for it again, it's all already lost...I was dragged out by my hand, not unkindly, but in the bitter cold and it wasn't romantic but it was saving me to hear you say, "I'll take what I can get," and so it was. Beautiful in its great stupidity, a dark field rolled out behind you, dark trees bordered the field, a dark sky hung over my dark heart and I let myself be wrong and flawed and helpless and ashamed and vulnerable and floating in your sinewy embrace, strong for your size, carnal, for mages. I'll never let you come close enough for me to smell your careless scent again. I'll never let us want so hard again.

Never.

And I will never sit in a scorching bath again, the tub scrubbed clean by you, a gift...my head lying back on the white porcelain, languishing in peace and steam as I listen to you drumming in the other room, across the hall, through two doors but it's as though there's no distance between us at all.

Never.

I'll never wake up with all my makeup on, and smudged, safe in the softest bed I ever felt under the platinum light of dawn, hearing the sterling songs of birds outside the blinded windows and feeling a frightening sense of belonging as I realize you have unconsciously slipped your hand onto my knee while still asleep—what a funny thing to do to an acquaintance—I won't ever wake up feeling that beautiful again. I won't ever be at home again.

Never.

It is a string of fleeting moments we lead, let them pass or jump on in—make your choice and live with it. That bright white light will lead you there, but where, exactly, is there? Perhaps it isn't good for a human soul to search so hard for something she can't define.

But it is a beautiful light nevertheless, in Godly moments, for good or ill the person reaches out to make a connection, to tempt his or her fate—it is a moment so un-man-made—If we have done nothing else, at least there was beauty and a story, and maybe we are not lost for, as He does, as She does, as Gods do
we sacrifice
we take
to create. ✠



INFINITY

Abbey Corbett



MONKEY

Lindsey Brown



UNTITLED

Brook Kaje



WAISTBAND VODOO

Anthony Hall

To any casual observer Phil looked like an average guy standing on his back porch on a warm Sunday morning enjoying the dawn and doing a little bird watching before the day began. It would take the casual observer several minutes to realize that there were no birds out on this unseasonably warm Sunday in January. It would take this same casual observer several more minutes to realize that Phil wasn't looking towards the trees in the park but down the block at the home of his neighbors David and Judy Merrick. If this casual observer did notice these things they would cease to be a casual observer and become what Phil's Granddad used to call a "peeping-pecker."

Not finding anything to his satisfaction down at the Merrick's he turned back into the house and walked through the kitchen. As quickly as he could Phil made a b-line to the safety of his one private domain in the whole house, the garage. It wasn't that he had anything particularly pressing to do in the garage it was just that he didn't feel inclined to "volunteer" for any of the chores that his wife inevitably had waiting for him.

The inside of the garage looked like the bastard child of a junkyard and a swap meet. It never ceased to amaze Phil how much junk a small family could acquire in the span of a few short years; half an engine block sat on the floor covered in dust, an unfinished birdhouse his son Tim had started in the sixth grade. In one corner there sat a huge box of Christmas decorations that was filled to bursting. What struck Phil the most about that box was that he couldn't remember the last time they had a tree; not since Debra's Uncle Luke nearly burned down the last one a number of years

ago with a glass of whiskey and those rank cigars of his.

All in all the garage was like virtually any garage you might find on Jennings Lane or anywhere in America for that matter, that is, with the exception that it was the hiding place for Phil's special collection. Now many men have something hidden or secret that they keep just for themselves and in this Phil was no different. Mr. Donner over on Willow Street had a collection of baseball cards wrapped in plastic and tucked into the crawl space of his attic. He had intended to hand them down to his son but unfortunately for Mr. Donner he was beset with six daughters and had no son to whom to give them.

Unlike Mr. Donner, Phil's collection was an obsession. Phil's collection was dangerous. Phil's collection was something that, if it were to be discovered, would rock the entire neighborhood. Phil's collection was a collection of underwear. This collection was not just of any old underwear, however, but a collection of underwear belonging to the wives of Jennings Lane.

Now before you go off and start calling poor Phil a pervert and report him to the police there are a few things you should now about him. Philip J. Freeman was born to loving and supportive parents and was one of the few kids he knew who had the luxury of growing up with both of them in the same house. Philip J. Freeman married his wife Debra twenty two years ago and raised two healthy, smart, and happy kids that ask him for money a little too often in his estimation. The most important thing you should know about Philip J. Freeman, what he would want you to know if you found



his collection, is that in those twenty two years of marriage he never once had an affair with another woman.

So how did he come into possession of a trunk, skillfully hidden under the Christmas lights, filled with the underwear of his neighbors you ask? Philip, or Phil to those of us who know him well, started his collection very much by accident three years ago at a Fourth of July party. That year the Madisons had a big barbeque in their backyard and invited the entire neighborhood. Though the Madisons were a bit stuck-up for Phil's taste Debra insisted they attend. Phil decided that he didn't have to like Scott Madison to drink his beer so what the hell, right? As the party dragged on into the night good old Frannie Frink, or "Fast Frannie" as she was called in high school, began to drink too much and became a little too friendly.

Frannie was the type of woman on whom age did nothing but make her a little more appealing in a slightly trashy way. She always wore tight pants with high-heels in the after-noon and bright pink lipstick. She made it a regular habit to retrieve the morning paper from the front lawn clad in only her frilly pink bathrobe. The paperboy always threw short at her house and the men of Jennings Lane were eternally grateful to the lad for his bad arm. I don't want you to think of Frannie as a home wrecker or a hussy its just that she was a naturally flirtatious woman whom the men of Jennings Lane loved having as a neighbor and whom the women of Jennings Lane kept an eye on like a hawk.

During the Fourth of July party "Fast Frannie" got a little hammered and somewhere between the star spangled banner and the beer cooler she decided that it would be funny to take off her underwear and go around trying to tuck them into the breast

pocket of all the men. Though it was a hoot watching her stumble from husband to husband with her skivvies in hand it wasn't long before the angry looks from their wives told the men of Jennings Lane that the jig was up. Phil, along with Mr. Donner, was elected to help "Fast Frannie" Frink back home before she became the victim of a lynching at the hands of an angry mob of soccer moms.

It wasn't until the next day, and after his hang-over eased up a bit, that Phil found poor Frannie's unmentionables tucked in his jacket pocket. At first he considered returning them but then thought better of it. He decided that he didn't want to explain to Debra why he needed to go over to Frannie's so soon after the latest adventure of "Fast Frannie" rides again so he decided to just throw them away. Like many garages Phil's had a box of junk destined for the dump, and not thinking much about it, he tucked the undies into the box and tried to forget about them.

Unfortunately for Phil he couldn't forget about them. Every time he went into the garage he felt the presents of the underwear almost as if they were a person in his garage with him. The more he tried to forget about them the worse the sensation became and the more he found himself thinking about them. He constantly was fascinated with the idea of having a pair of underwear belonging to his neighbor sitting in his garage and the fact that nobody but himself knew about it drove him to the heights of obsession. It wasn't that Phil wanted to have sex with Frannie it was that he had something powerfully personal belonging to someone he knew, someone most of the people on the block knew, and that it was a secret. Whenever he was around Frannie after that he had this strange sense of intimacy that he thought of as a kind of voodoo.



This obsession so gripped Phil that before long he started thinking about the other wives of Jennings Lane.

The first time Phil actually took a pair of underwear from one of his neighbors he felt so guilty that he nearly threw them out. While collecting for the community canned food drive Phil was invited in by Cindi Madison and asked to wait in the living room while she sorted out some cans from the kitchen to donate. While waiting he noticed that Mrs. Madison was doing laundry that day and folding it in the living room while watching TV. There among the tube socks, blue jeans, and gap t-shirts sat a stack of Cindi Madison's underwear. Once, when Phil was ten, he stole a chocolate bar from a grocery store. He never forgot how fast his heartbeat or how scared he felt as he walked out the door with the candy bar under his little league jacket. Staring at Mrs. Madison's underwear, Phil was ten all over again in front of the racks of Nestlé, Oh Henry's, and Mr. Good Bars. Almost as if it acted independently from his mind his hand shot out and grabbed the pair off the top and clumsily shoved them into his jacket pocket. When Phil left Cindi Madison with an armload of canned food she had no idea that peaches and green beans weren't the only thing Phil was taking from her house that day.

Later at home Phil swirled with a mixture of

exhilaration and terror at what he had done. The rational side of his mind kept telling him how wrong he was to have taken the underwear and how it wasn't normal, something that had always been pretty important to Phil. But another side, a strange and capricious side that Phil had never known himself to have, reveled in the act. What frightened Phil the most was that he wasn't entirely sure he wanted to resist this new side. After a while Phil consoled himself by believing that what he had done wasn't really all that bad. He firmly knew he wasn't a sex maniac and that his obsession had nothing to do with sex really but with a knowing and with secrets, secrets only for him. He constantly joked to himself that Scott Madison could afford expensive imported beer that had a fancy sounding name but when it came to his wife's underwear it was strictly a JCPenney's economy special.

Aside from this strange proclivity, despite what you might think, Phil is a pretty normal guy; he loves his wife and never forgets her birthday, he is active in community causes, he calls his mother up in Odenville once a week to check on how she is doing, and if you live in Phil's neighborhood chances are he has a pair of your underwear or those of someone you know stashed in a small wooden trunk hidden in the Christmas decorations in his garage. ♣



HOW TO MAKE A DIAMOND

Kitt Jennings

I am mostly carbon
under tremendous pressure.
I am single with three kids and one bedroom.
I am tweaked out and working the assembly line.
I am on the street.
I am on the bus.
I am sleeping in the park,
And I want your change.
I said I want some change!
I just want a change.

I am mostly carbon under tremendous pressure,
but I have not yet become a diamond like you,
the shining beacon at the tip-top
of this office building pyramid scheme
rat-pack mountain, you:
squatting over the gashes
you've ripped in the earth
and to the core of countless nations.

I am the voice of the brown
the fucked
the blue collar
the poor,
screaming from the gutters
the projects
the meth labs
and the dried up desert towns
abandoned by the oil barons.
I am screaming, saying: Hey!
If we all die, realize
that you would not even know how to live
without us to give a cheap source of labor,
or subservient behavior: lack of eye contact
as we work in your yards, your fields, your of-
fices,
your restaurants, factories, gas stations and body
shops.

We the people who deliver to your door
cannot afford not to whore ourselves out
like this,
and let me tell you, we are pissed
at being kept in our place.
At being hired out to build this space
separate and unequal and never to code.

I am mostly carbon under tremendous
pressure
and I am tired of using my hands
to frame shitty houses that will close in
on people just like me.
I am tired of fabricating, assembling and
packaging
products that nobody needs and then
hocking them
to people just like me.
I am tired of paying White Bird Clinic
to rip the teeth out of my head
because I don't have insurance.

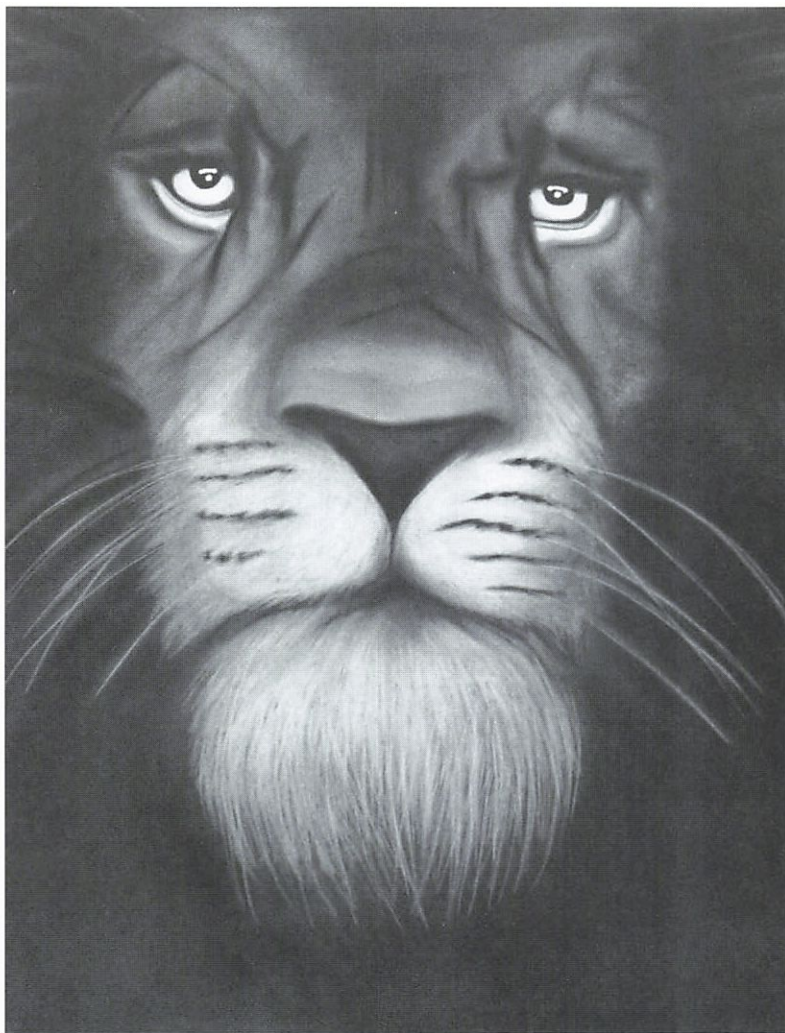
And there are plenty of people just like
me
all over this world. We stand
behind the fences erected to protect
smokestacks built on working-class backs,
behind the wheels of taxis that will drive
privileged drunks home,
behind every brand name
and every corporate shame,
there lives churning, grumbling hordes of
us.

And we are ready.
We are ready to do something
about all this anger, and let me tell you,
we cannot afford therapy.



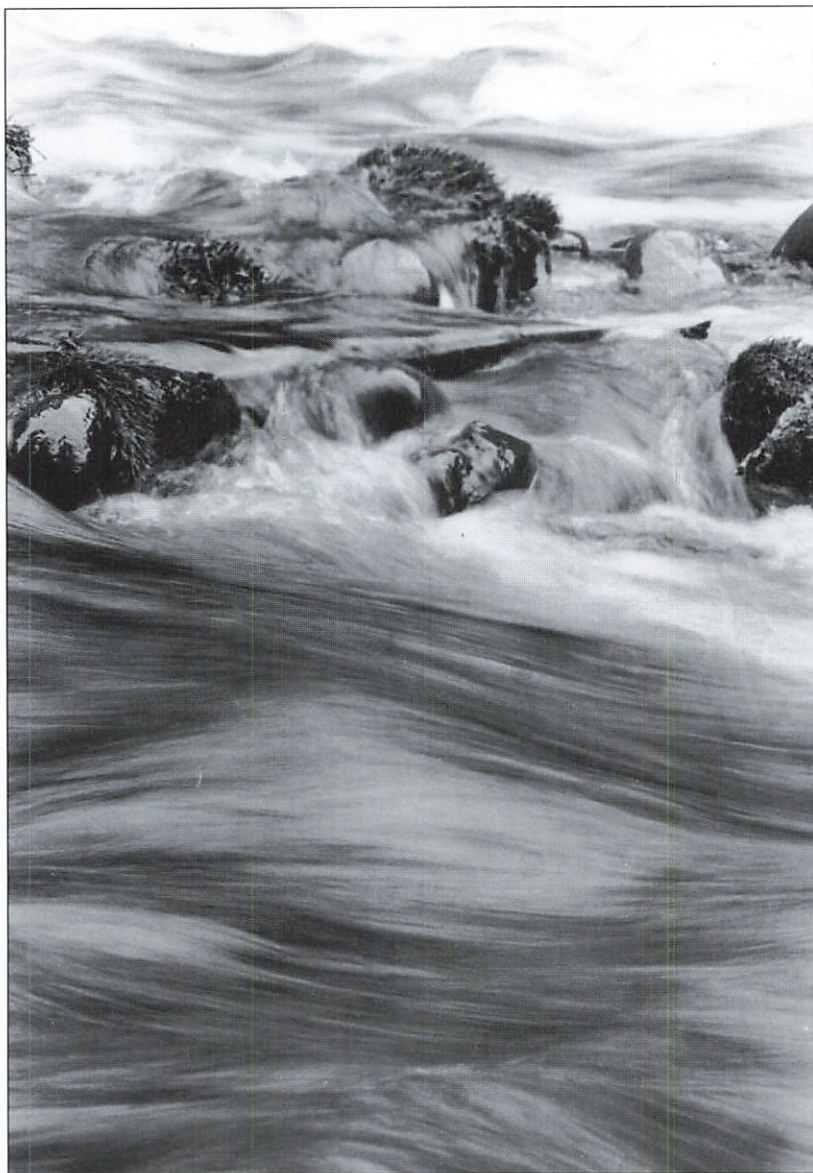
UNTITLED

Shannon Plascereia



MOVEMENT

Allana Ross



Inside Photograph:
"Vast" by Travis Backmeier

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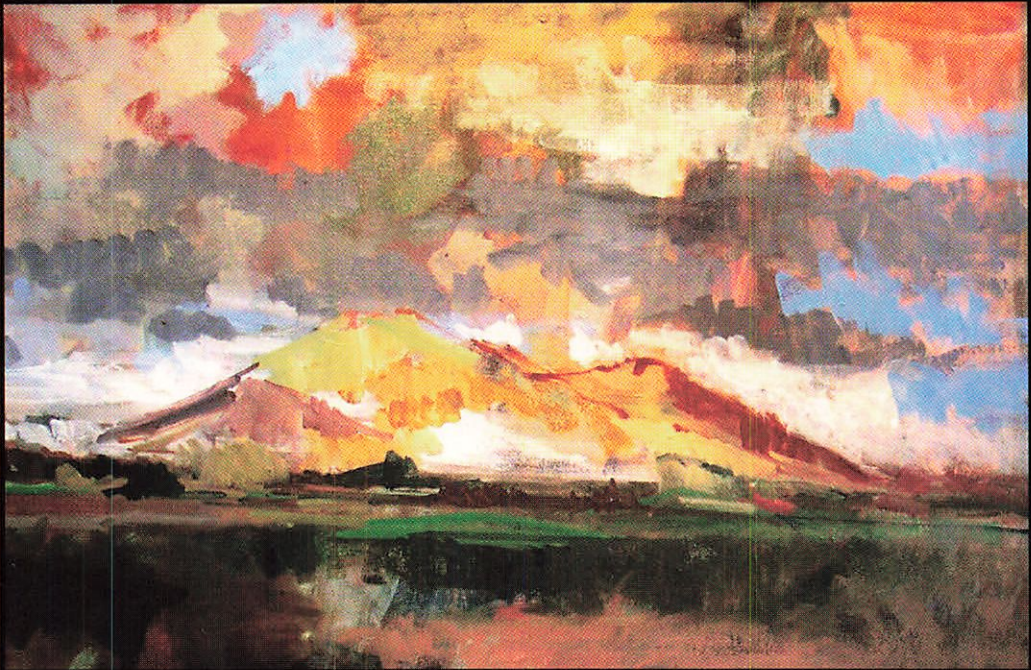
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