

a journal of creative expression

COLLEGE

Issue

WALTON

Fall 2015





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COLLAGE

issue **22** Fall 2015

a journal of creative expression



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I became involved with *Collage* the first semester of my freshman year when I submitted a short piece that was published in the fall 2012 edition of the magazine. Though I was thrilled to have been selected for the journal, I quickly found that I was more interested in the production aspect than in submitting once or twice a year. I joined the staff without knowing what to expect, but what I found exceeded my every expectation. For the past three years, I have been a member of a fantastic team that puts in every effort to generate an award-winning magazine each semester without fail.

This fall, I am so honored to have been selected as editor in chief for *Collage*, but I can in no way take credit for the phenomenal work you are about to explore. *Collage* could not exist without the immensely talented MTSU students who submit

their work to us. It would not come together without our outstanding staff, who dedicate their time, semester after semester, to guarantee an exceptional publication. We are also so fortunate to have the guidance and leadership of our adviser, Marsha Powers, who works tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure the survival of *Collage*.

On that note, I am pleased to present to you the fall 2015 issue of *Collage*.



Chloe Madigan
Editor in Chief

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The Watcher

Joey Prosser
pen and ink/digital coloring

A Good Night for Tea

Richard Bautista

fiction

The floor groaned as the old man shuffled across the room. He'd grown accustomed to the musty smell the house had acquired the past few years. The stiffness in his joints made housekeeping chores difficult. Rainy nights like tonight only made it worse.

“What was I doing?” he muttered to no one in particular. That’s when he remembered the whistling teapot in the kitchen. He trudged along the familiar path, careful of the transition from the hardwood floor of the dining room to the linoleum of the kitchen. He shut off the gas and brought the teapot over to the mug on the counter. He carefully poured the steamy water into the mug over the tea bag. As he let the tea steep, he dragged a stool over to him, the legs scraping across the linoleum floor. “That always drove you nuts, Liz,” he said as the glimmer of a smile passed across his face.

He settled his weight on the stool; his shoulders hunched forward as his fingers tapped a melody on the counter. He closed his eyes and struggled to remember the name of the tune, only to give up chasing the elusive title.

A few moments passed. He reached for the mug. He reminded himself to be gentle with it, the handle having been broken and repaired with glue multiple times. He should have thrown it out and gotten a new one, but he couldn’t bring himself to do it. It was Her’s.

The warmth of the mug soothed the aching joints in his hands as he inhaled the faint jasmine aroma of the tea. She had always liked jasmine. He set the mug back down, the tea still too hot to drink. With one hand braced on the counter, he stood up, clumsily moving the stool out of the way, the legs scraping across the linoleum floor. “That always drove you nuts, Liz.”

He made his way over to the sink, leaning on the edge as he gazed out the window. The rain had begun pelting the window more aggressively. It was too dark to see the backyard, which was just as well, as its current state would have saddened him. But he could still watch the raindrops dancing on the pane, illuminated by the glow of the light bulb hanging from the ceiling.

Startled by a voice he didn’t hear, the old man turned suddenly, his hand knocking the mug off the counter. He watched as it fell until it crashed on the floor, ceramic shrapnel and jasmine tea flying in all directions. He slowly lowered himself until he was kneeling on the floor. He began picking up the pieces of ceramic, a task made difficult by his aching hands and the tears welling up in his eyes. His breathing became labored. His chest tightened. He lost his balance. He threw his arm out to brace himself, pushing the stool. Its legs scraped across the linoleum floor.

“That always drove you nuts, Liz,” he said as the glimmer of a smile passed across his face. ■



Words for the Magniloquent

Jacob Smith

Poetry

As in daily life, the dream – or the vision?
Reality and thought in phantasmic collision,
In night they did come to enter mind through ear,
Escaping the mouth to a heart that is clear.

Semantics in dance, discourse in flight,
Opalescent gems scintillate and soften the night.
Softly she whispers of the intrinsic
Polyphiloprogenitive music.

Something Like a Flower

Davion Baxter

digital photography

Boldly she claims of the magniloquent speech,
The smiles that come from the lessons they teach,
And sadly she cries at how often unheard
Is the beauty of life in knowing a word.



Mano

Davion Baxter
digital photography

Worms

Savanna Erath
poetry

Yesterday, I found a Tupperware container
in the fridge with
your name on the lid.
Inside, there's a few clods of dirt
and some worms.
A whole family of worms.
A group. A colony. A batch.
You went fishing once,
on a whim. With a borrowed

pole. Why did you need so
many?
Those worms will never feel
fresh mud beneath their slimy
skin, and my fridge will never
be rid of them,
all because you can't even
leave without messing it up.
They'll shrivel up, those worms,

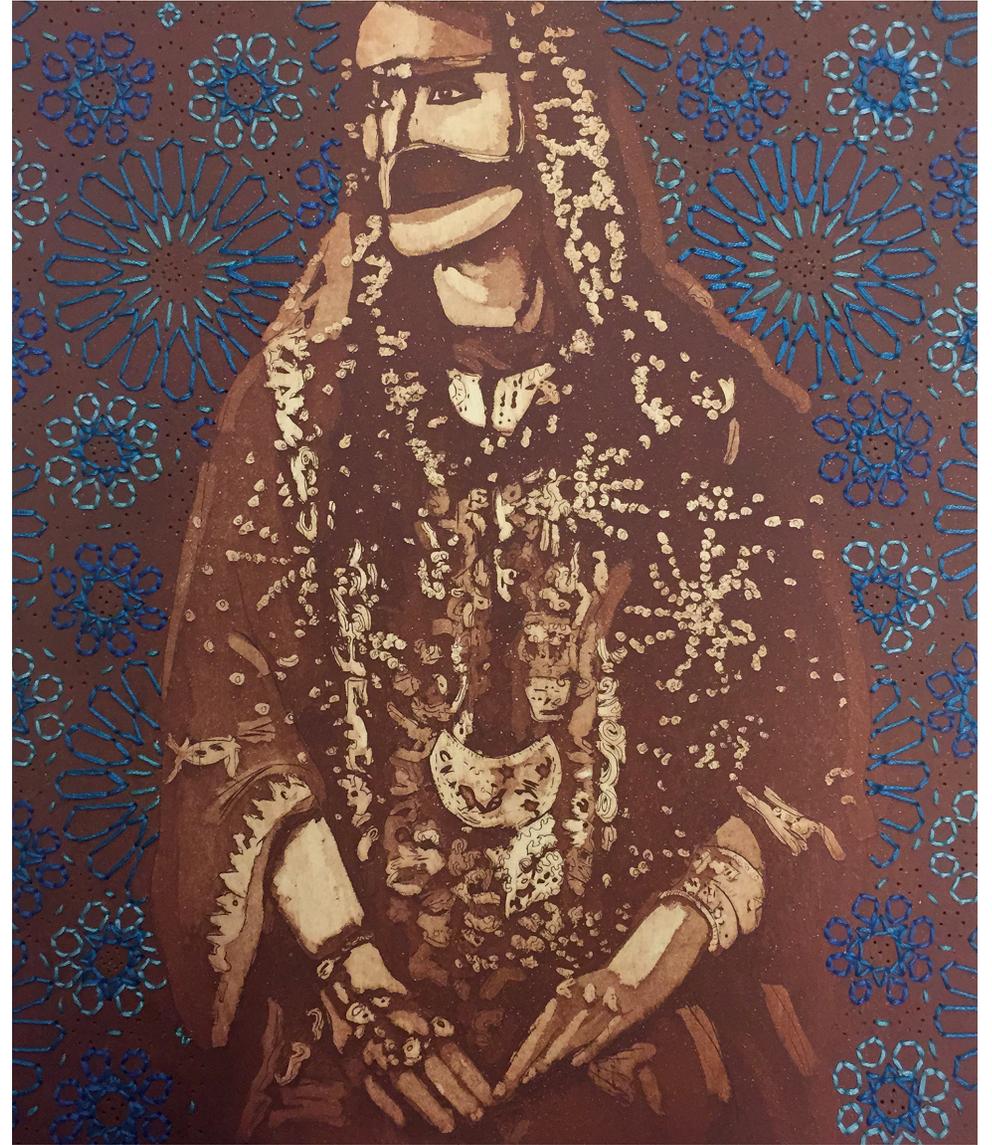
and die inside a plastic coffin laced with
spaghetti stains and BPA,
and your coat will sit in the back
of my closet, collecting dust, and
I'll still be here:
cataloguing all the other things you
left behind.



A Beloved Arrangement

Sarah Al-Ansari

oil and acrylic with bead embroidery



Antique Tranquility

Sarah Al-Ansari

etching and paper embroidery



We Finna Put it on da Map

Kyle Baker

5.5' x 3' graphite and charcoal on paper

Fall

Kayleigh Thiel

fiction

Send.

My iPhone made a swooping noise as it let me know that my picture had been posted to my account. It was the first day of my senior year of college; hell yeah I was going to take a good morning pic. I had to document my life. I set my phone down in the cup holder next to my Starbucks venti nonfat caramel macchiato with extra whip.

Fall in Tennessee meant that it was raining, like a big hanging bag of students' tears had popped now that summer was over. No more amaretto sours on Mondays. Tuesdays. Wednesdays. Et. Cet. Er. A.

Even though it was morning, puffy rain clouds blocked the sun and feigned twilight. I had to squint to discern the difference between puddles and actual car lights. My phone vibrated in my

cup holder. I looked down at the alert.

My eyes didn't register anything but motion as this stupid ass gray Toyota came out of nowhere. It slammed into my side. Around my face, my windshield shattered as though it were ice cracking over a lake. The metal of both cars wrapped around my body like they were the tin foil and my body was the food-truck meat. The squealing of brakes made cars, cross-walking students, and associates at the university gas station stop their lives to look.

Abruptly, I was standing up in the middle of the road. Rapidly, the Earth shifted into view. My brain stormed with the images before me. My windshield wipers were still going – sqweeaaaaak, sqwaaaaaack. The lights of my car and the gray Toyota illuminated the scene. I guess I'd been crossing the intersection; my light was green. The

other car had tried to pass through his light, which had just turned red. Maybe he'd been late to a class.

“That’s why you always leave early! Never be late a day in your life.” My father’s words popped into my head and floated inside a gray mass that was no longer physically present.

What even was I?

A Raggedy-Ann version of my body was collapsed against the front seat in my car. I had always worked hard to lose weight, but I never realized how thin I actually was. My hair was blonde and now drizzled with blood, looking like some sort of sick November tablecloth. It didn’t seem right that my eyes stayed open. They couldn’t be mine.

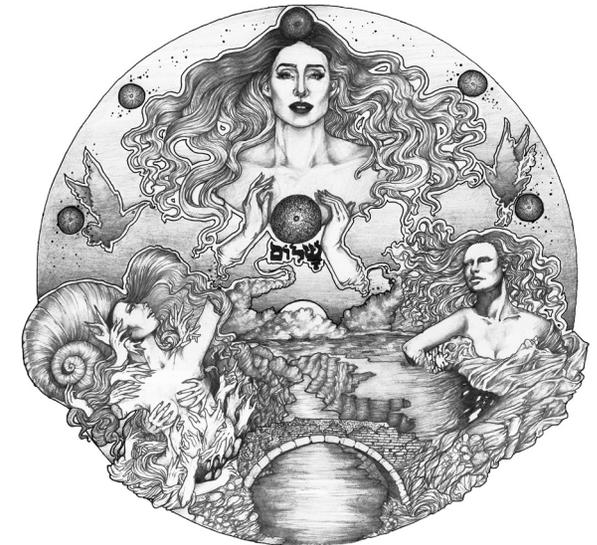
She was looking at a tree. A simple tree. But I couldn’t stop staring at it. Slivers of – energy? – dimly shined like an artist’s graphite that lined the bark. And as I stared at that stupid shiny tree, the rain felt different, like a biological spirit instead of scientific precipitation. The drops slid across my skin like watercolor against a canvas. I wanted to hold each individual drop in my palm. They detached in tiny bubbles from my being and splattered into puddles around me. The sound the droplet made amplified, as if by my touching this holy phenomenon, it became part of my senses. I had never noticed how beautiful was the rain.

Then I was looking at the tree. And nature’s calligraphy scrawled across each green leaf in the form of its veins and cells. The air felt different, as though it exhaled through the leaves, and blessed me with their invigorating xylem. Gusts sashayed through the branches, and I felt the weight of each individual branch that stretched away from the solid and stable trunk. As if it were my own memory, I remembered the seemingly infinitesimal seed that fell to the earth and blossomed over decades and centuries into the magnificent being before me. And I realized I had never noticed how beautiful were the trees.

The sounds of a screaming siren shocked me from my stupor. I honestly cared not what happened to my body, crude and disposable. There was so much I still needed to see. Had the world always felt so immense and full of wonder? Had it always sounded like an organic orchestra? Nature had never stopped being the Garden of Eden. I wanted to bury myself in the earth to become a part of this omnipotent structure that fueled everything. Overwhelmed by palpable perfection, I stepped toward the tree that glowed. Then I felt a tug, so peremptory and arrogant. The nagging feeling that I’d forgotten something shattered my clear reality and exercised my possession. I tried to ignore it but couldn’t. I turned to the chaotic mess of man-made lights and ripped metals. Unintelligible over the booming thunder of the storm, human voices screamed to one another. All I heard was their urgency.

My body was being moved. The Jaws of Life extracted Raggedy Ann from the front seat, and my phone clattered to the street. Rain created looking-glass domes on my screen. Abruptly, the bright screen pulled me toward it. I couldn’t stop. Water splashed up the sides of my feet as I forcefully stomped toward the light. Dropping to my knees in front of the device, I tried to swipe across to unlock it. But nothing happened. I couldn’t touch it. I couldn’t feel it. I couldn’t see my damn alert.

Furiously I swiped my fingers across the screen over and over and over again. My bloody keypad didn’t read spirit fingers. But I wanted, needed, to know. I’d died for this; couldn’t the universe at least let me know what the hell my alert was? ■



Kabbalah

Ian Cooper

graphite and ink on bristol



Ice Cream Sandwich

Erin Potter
oil and pastel on panel

Every Morning

Megan Smith

Poetry

Every morning I must swallow the madness
Reminded relentlessly by the pillowcase
Of my bedsheets mourning your absence

I thought by now we could move past this
But my blankets still recall your taste
Every morning I must swallow the madness

My heart has learned that letting go is a practice
But your side of the springs still misses the weight
And my bedsheets still mourn your absence

Is every lover's touch sweeter in past tense?
I still feel your fingers like ghost limbs I can't break
Off, and every morning I swallow the madness

I'm finding myself singing lullabies to the mattress
About some nonexistent love who could take your place
But my bedsheets are still mourning your absence

When you were here I never noticed the vastness
Now I spend every night desperately trying to erase
You and every morning swallowing the madness
And still, my bedsheets are mourning your absence

Cassiopeia

Heather Hickox

poetry

Home was no four walls
but four notes – an intro.
The smooth familiar crackle of vinyl
as the pin touches down,
and I think of you.
Messy hair and sleep in your eyes.
Track four on the B-side
of *The Queen is Dead*,
“There is a light that never goes out.”

Home was no four walls
but four corners.
Wherever we slept,
with my face pressed close to your chest.
So close as to memorize abstract constellations
of freckles that dance across your shoulders,
baked brown by the sun,
but an indeterminable shade of night as I study them
in the dark of our room.

Home is nowhere at this hour— 4 a.m.
The time of night when my queen stretches
to a king.
A vast ocean of cold sheets
pulled tight across your vacancy.
In the absence of your warmth,
winter seeps in.

Home was no four walls
but a forearm, draped across me,
holding me steady,
and growing heavier with each passing minute in the night.
Now, I reach blindly into nothing,
searching for that anchor
as I toss in cresting waves.
Endless black ocean turns me
‘round and ‘round and ‘round.

Home was a load of your shirts in the wash.
Extra rinse and fabric softener
you said reminded you of honeysuckle.
Now, no trace of you is left in the fabric.
You swirl free, tumbling through
soapy water.
I press my face to the cool sheets and inhale,
locking away the memory.

Home is nowhere now.
A foot dangles into the void,
and I turn.
Four limbs—
I spread, like a starfish,
and declare my territory.
Now all mine.
I stare through ceiling and insulated roof
and miles of silent, lonely sky,
finding Ursa Major in the pattern of shadows on the ceiling.

Home was the way the single beam of the streetlight
that shone through the window

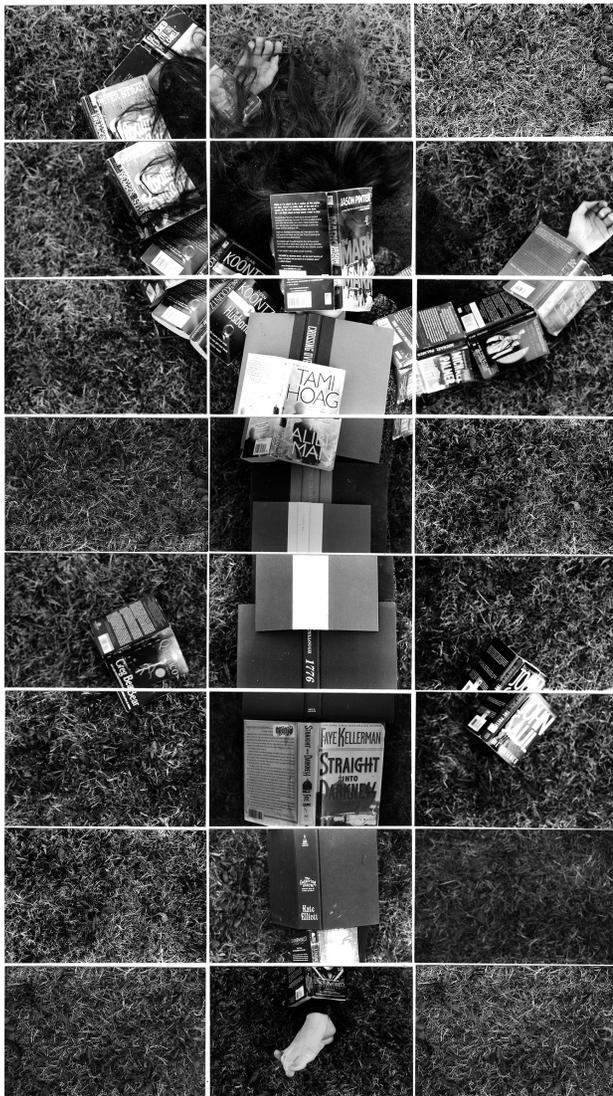
always seemed to fall across your face
in just the right place.
Illuminating the bow of your lip
or the tiny lines that had begun to form
around your eyes.
And I’m reminded of the night that lightning hit
the transformer beside the streetlight.
A shower of sparks rained down,
and in the darkness that followed
I closed my eyes and could still see every detail of your face.



Honest Abe

Lindsey Yost

scanography



Consumed by Books

Aiyana Smith
film photography



To My Sisters (High School Exit Strategies)

Megan Smith
poetry

The most important thing you can do for yourself

Is always read books.

Don't get sucked into the habit

Of staring bug-eyed at white lights

Spoon feeding you recycled story lines

Distracting you from your ability to imagine.

There is nothing more enlivening

Than letting language splinter into images

And emotions in your brain that

Will never exist

For anyone else

The way they exist for you in that moment.

Show up on time.

Even to your first shitty part-time job because

Well

It's really the easiest way to prove that

You might actually tread water in

The abyss that is "adulthood"

High school kids,

Don't blame them too much for being clumsy with your love

Don't let them do the same with your body.

There is no need to

Be the scratching post for a boy

Who does not yet recognize his fingernails.

Kiss the weird people.

Always kiss the weird people.

Trust me on this one.

Wash your hands of the idea

That everyone is going to like you.

Some people will not like you in fact

Some people will dislike you so much

That it will fuel the rogue embers

In their own stagnated healing

They will treat you like a Chinese voodoo doll

Do not worry

They are only puncturing themselves

To try and feel stronger

This isn't about you

And while I'm here let me tell you

Almost everything people say to you

Has nothing to do with you.

As a species we have perfected the art

Of projection so masterfully

We would rather point a finger like a nine millimeter

At someone else's lungs and hold our own breath

Than admit that we are the one who is breathing

Because that would make us responsible

For our own fear.

I know our family tree
Is rotting in black ice splitting off at the branches
And they never care to understand
How that roots into your gut.
I know that you are far too acquainted
With the heel dust of men you once trusted.
I know it is exhausting
To believe you can actually be loved.
But you are loved.
Please be absolutely certain of this
In fact in the times when you are feeling most certain of this
Scribble it on spaces between your
Toes and underneath the arches of your feet
Step into this unflinchingly.

It is infinitely easier
To be kind in almost every situation.
Knowing this is the golden ticket out of
The pits of your own resistance.
Most people will never realize this.
You are not most people.

If you are late to a job
Because you got mystified by a sunset
Twisted into a first kiss
Swarmed in the seas of your own tears that needed to escape,
These are exceptions to the rule of never being late.
Embrace the interstices of your limited experiences.

And most importantly
Don't let any "adults" tell you how to live your life.
We're all eating blindfolds for breakfast. ■



Adulthood

Erin Potter
oil on panel



In the Shadows

Jessica Byerly
film photography

Our Mothers' Daughters

Krysta Lee Frost

Poetry

we break
chilled mangosteens
against the tabletop
and speak like we are
our mothers' daughters again.
both our hands stained
by the fruit's flesh—
one white, one brown
but our hearts are made
of the same tin roof and sunlight,
the same river our mothers crossed
to get to school every morning.

her mother was beautiful
but stronger than mine.
sharp-tongued with cool skin.
my mother was soft-limbed
and lovely in a way that fit against
the roof of their mouths. in their
rum-colored voices they hum
that she is pretty, painting
her body with the shadows
of their hands.

as daughters we talk
about what our mothers still
carry, about how they've grown.
my mother, that same beauty.
that same shame for a body
that has already forgotten itself,
grown tough from the cold
of another country's
blue mornings.

she says i should be ashamed
to see my body bent for love.
because she was once bent back
and broken. because she never
knew just how two people
could bow.

and what she still calls love
is shaped like a man's teeth
on her skin. on mine.



Bisti Badlands

Ambre Rogue
digital photography



Digital photograph from Photo Society of MTSU Long Exposure Demo, Fall 2015.

Shine: *A Tribute to Lightyear*

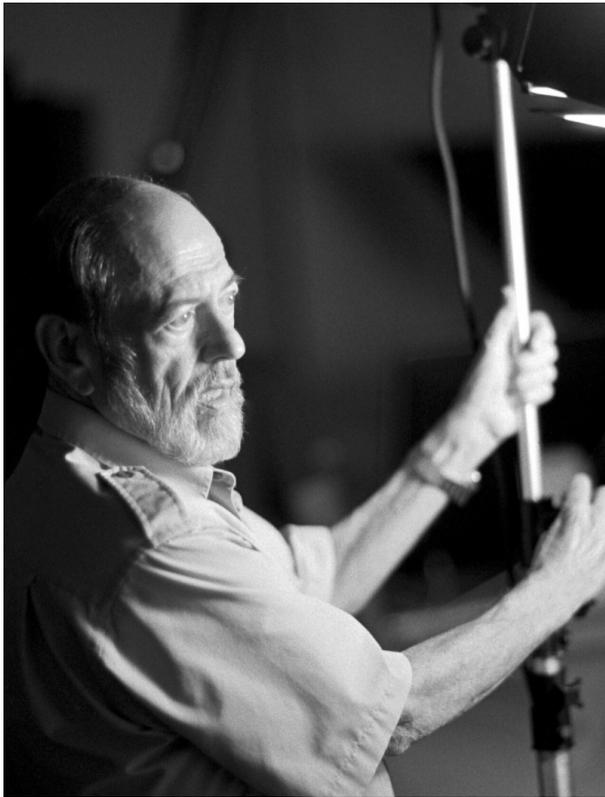
When AJ Holmes, President of MTSU's Photo Society of MTSU and Staff Member of their publication, *Shine-a Tribute to Lightyear*, let me into the McFarland Building, I got the sense that this is "where the magic happens." I found this to be the understatement of the year.

Within the new home of the Photography Department, I saw state of the art equipment alongside tried-and-true tools of the trade, and a commitment to ingenuity and excellence in every detail. Photographs were on display

on every wall, and one wall was superimposed with a large format class photo of the Middle Tennessee Normal School class of 1924. The history within the photograph was only enhanced as Holmes went into detail about the technical aspects involved with getting the photograph into large format. This theme of grand artistic purpose mixed with technical expertise carried over into our dialogue about the Photo Society. Made up of photo majors, non-majors and outside enthusiasts, the Society hosts demonstrations every Tuesday at 6:00 pm in the McFarland Building on relevant and useful skills for

photographers, as well as facilitating other opportunities. "Every week we have had record breaking attendance," Holmes remarked, emphasizing the rapid growth and community-based mindset present in both the Society and the Department. "Peer-to-peer support is crucial." This shows in their publication: Shine.

"Every week we have had record breaking attendance"



Professor Tom Jimison adjusts a hot lamp during the Editorial Photography course.

The officers of the Photo Society are also the editorial staff of *SHINE*. Thumbing through *Shine*, I can't help but see the same ingenuity present inside McFarland. The square-shaped book contains 44 full-page images without text, with other pages for a table of contents and advertisements. *Shine* is entirely funded by the Photo Society of MTSU. "Anyone at MTSU can submit, even alumni and faculty," Holmes remarked. It is completely free to submit, and up to three pieces may be published per person per semester. Perhaps the most intriguing thing about *Shine* is its promotion strategy, helping those



The McFarland Building, new home of MTSU Photography.

published beyond initial exposure. "We set aside 20% of our copies to distribute to galleries, displays, and visiting artists." The privately produced publication is available for only \$10.

"Anyone at MTSU can submit, even alumni and faculty"

As "*a tribute to Lightyear*," the book pays homage to its expert predecessors in MTSU's Photography Department. *Lightyear* was the acclaimed first photo publication of its



Photo Society members gaining hands-on experience during an Instant Film Demo, Fall 2015.

kind at MTSU, the brainchild of Photography Department Founder *Harold L. Baldwin*. The publication was incredibly successful, and today, along with the dedicated faculty, it inspires Holmes and his compatriots to push forward in the advancement of the art of photography and each other's success. With this past in mind and steady upward momentum, the future certainly looks just as bright for the Photo Society and *Shine*. ■

*Story by J.T. Cobb
Photographs by A.J. Holmes*



Whisk

Elizabeth Keller

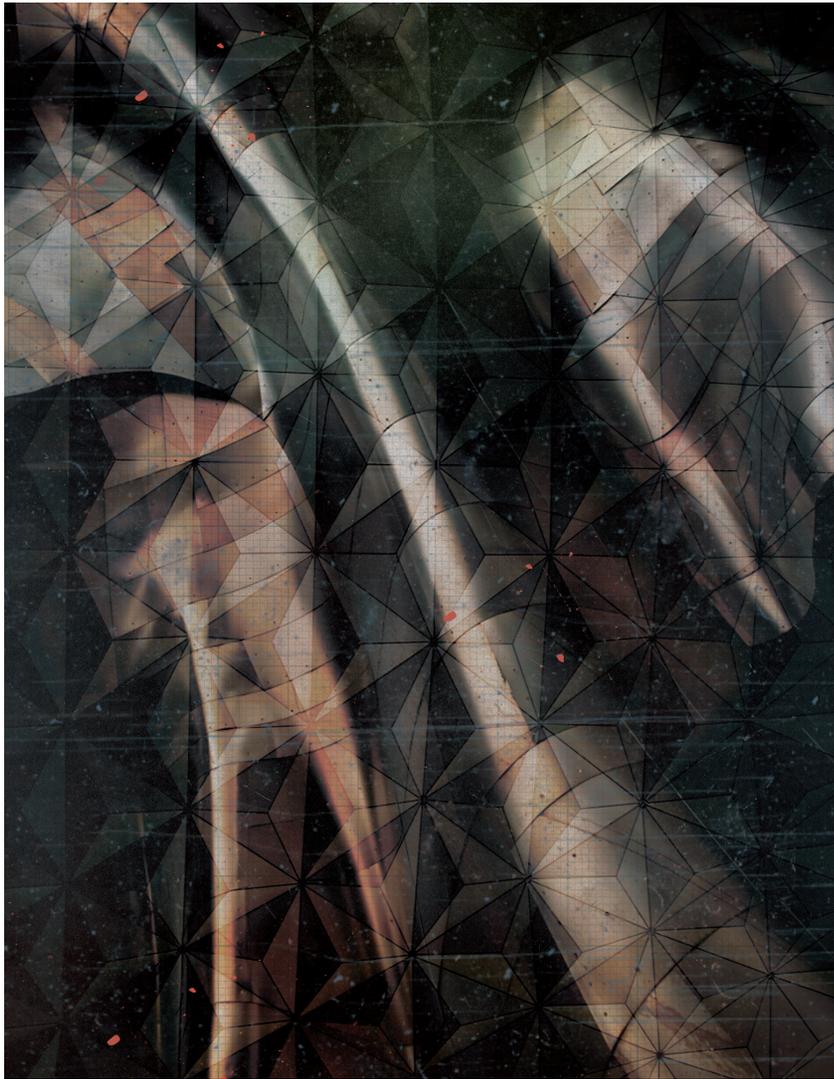
poetry

I take off.
my stomach drops
to my toes.
out the window, the ground shrinks.
I can't help but compare the hills to gumdrops
beneath my wings.
the pools of water glisten under the sun
almost as blue
as the sky I am soaring in.
the clouds welcome me,
no longer my superiors
but rather my peers—learning how to touch cheeks with the sun
and how to kiss the skylines of cities.

Something Better

Megan Starling

acrylic paint on poster board



EMP

Della Wheeler
graphic design

Silence

Hannah Allen
multiple composite in Photoshop





Carno's Castle

Ambre Rogue
digital photography

Stud Bulls

Amanda Brown

Poetry

In the heat
of summer, when the blackberries are ripe
and the honeysuckle is sweet
alone against the barbwire I
stand. Tossing
berries into empty
Turner ice cream buckets.

The apple blossoms and the peach trees cover
the scent of manure.

Almost.

From the cattle and their silage
across the dirt road.

The sweetest fruit
is in that meadow.

But there are stud bulls
over there. With horns
not docked. And angry from the heat.

Inside the trailer, the pressure
cooker boils.

Sealing the succulent summer
fruit into jars. To trap
their essence
for the coming cold.

Barefoot I carry
the buckets. Past him
under the tractor, working
covered in black
oil. And angry from the heat.

What Do You See?

Jamekia Young-Weeden

poetry

I am love, I am hate
Destiny trapped inside of fate
Beautiful redemption, unspeakable sin
I lead some to drown, teach some to swim
I am the bitter, the sour, the sweet
Victorious triumph after defeat

I am the hunter, I am the prey
Crimson light in the darkness of day
I am the queen taking back her crown
I am the lost that you think you found
I am spirit, I am flesh
Rhythmic heartbeat against a chest
I am the nightmare embracing the dream
I am the whisper inside of the scream

I am laughter and wasted tears
I am courage, gift-wrapped in fear
I am shame, I am pride
Forgotten knowledge the world tries to hide

I am student, I am teacher
Ravenous wolf and sanctified preacher
I am the riot, I am the calm
After sunshine, the Cat 5 storm
I am silence, I am rage
The chapter in verse, stuck on this page

I am the poet, I am the song
I am the righteous, most times I'm wrong



Untitled

Cayman Seagraves

acrylic on canvas

I am the master, I am the slave
Sometimes new life, sometimes the grave
I am the afro, the relaxer, the braid
Hot like fire, cool as the shade

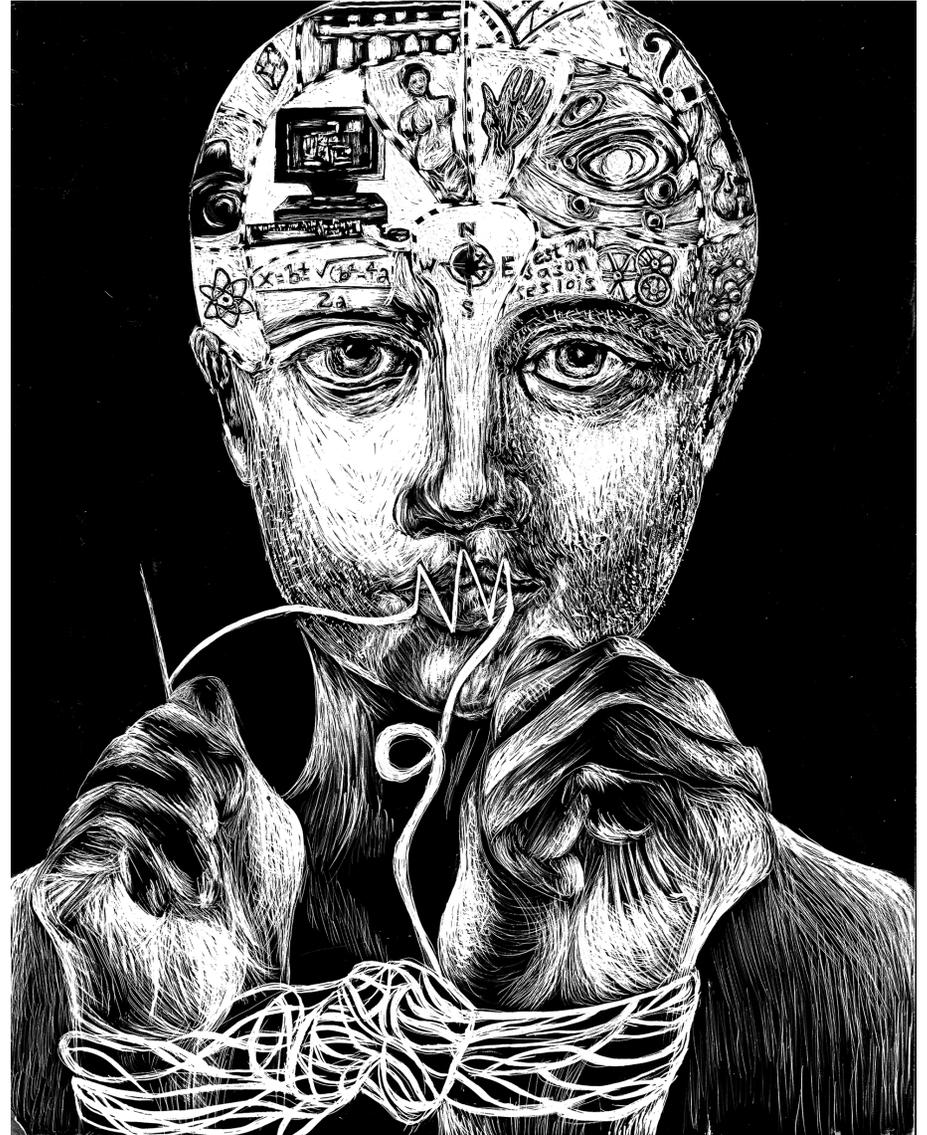
I am the apple, bruised and diseased
Strange fruit still growing on Uncle Sam's trees
I am justice crying out for peace
I am the fist, beat-down in the streets
I am judge and I am jury
The tattered flag that made it back to glory

I am the lies, I am the truth
I bleed the red, the white, and the blue
I am you, looking back at me
What do you see?
What
Do
You
See?
I am the puzzle
Do you need a clue?
I am America
In ebony hue



Free Thought

Brianna Carroll
scratchboard



Possibilities

Brianna Carroll
scratchboard



The Tea Cup

Leah Bailey
fiction

It was white with pink flowers hand-painted on a delicate surface. One fragile teacup, all that was left of a complete set.

The set had been beautiful on their wedding day, a unique gift to last the years. But it proved too easily broken to weather the tempests continually befalling it.

The first piece to break was the teapot, left too long on the stove while the shrill ringing of the phone anxiously urged bad news. As the tears fell, the stove remained on, forgotten, and the teapot cracked under the heat. Thought useless and beyond repair, it was thrown out.

Next came the sugar bowl, knocked over by the flailing arm of a crying baby. The sound it made as it hit the floor could not be heard over the screams of the infant, and it was swept away without a second thought.

The creamer and a teacup simply went missing, never to be seen again. In reality, they were buried outside by the eager hands of a little boy, intent on hiding his stolen treasure.

Two saucers and two teacups were broken by everyday use, a job they were never designed for. One cracked in half in the dishwasher, and the last became a saucer for the cat.

And finally, all that was left, after twenty-five years, was a single teacup.

“I’ve met someone else. Years ago,” he said, barely able to disguise the relief in his voice to finally have it out. “I’ve been waiting for the right time, kids out of the house and settled.”

And finally, all that was left, after twenty-five years, was a single teacup.

She froze at his words, staring at the fragile cup in her hand. Steam rose slowly from the hot tea as she stared into its depths, unable to look up. The cup trembled, and she realized it was from the shaking of her hand.

Gripping it tightly, she tried to steady herself. She couldn’t breathe. A hairline crack appeared in the china like an eggshell cracking under the pressure of a new life, and gradually she became aware of the hot liquid seeping through, burning her skin. A small drop of blood fell to the table as a sharp edge, newly created, began to pierce her flesh. But besides her betraying hand, she remained immobile. A spectator.

She heard the guilt in his words as he promised it was over, if she wanted it to be. As he promised to stay, his voice unsure.

He droned on and on, his tone at once both apologetic and defensive.

“We weren’t careful enough,” she said, interrupting him. It was the first thing that came to her mind, the first thing she could grasp at to shut him up, to stop the flow of damaging words. He stared at her, his eyebrows raised in shock.

“That’s hardly important now –” he started to say to interrupt her and regain control. But she stopped him once more.

“With these,” she said.

“The set. Remember?” She traced the gilded edge of the porcelain with one finger. “All fresh and new on our wedding day. And we didn’t pay attention.” She began to shake her head. “Now look at it. One flimsy cup is all that’s left.”

She tightened her grip, watching it give under the stress.

Pulling her arm back in one swift motion, she watched it shatter against the wall, exploding into a million tiny pieces. ■

Color Poem

Megan Starling

poetry

It's what I imagine before God's planetary creation

The shade of a subway tunnel when the train's left the station

It's all the colors together, or no color at all

The lonely depression right after the fall

It's slimming and classic; it's monochromatic

Like dusty pictures found in a trunk in the attic

It's the burnt scent of tires spinning on asphalt

The table-top complement to iodized salt

It is philosophical whispers in slumber-party beds

And polished shoes at a funeral, when a loved one's found dead



Purification of the Gladiolus

Jasmine Gary

33" x 18" acrylic on Masonite board



Sparks

Hannah Berthelson

poetry

It is both a blessing and a curse to have
so much enthusiasm for life,
so much love for absolutely everything,
so much passion for beauty,
because too many people believe
they must be cerebral firefighters,
dousing the sparks and lights of fascination
that blaze in the eyes of captivated spectators,
the flames of creativity and wonder and inspiration
that have the atypical ability to build and not to destroy.
Never stop being the curious pyromaniac,
the craver of those dazzling sparks of life
that glimmer in every feature of creation,
a gleam that many pass by without
further inspection,
a tiny forest fire extinguished by
waterlogged minds.
Always let it catch your eye,
because what a miracle it is
to be able to see it.

Disconnected

Christopher Hamrick

digital photography

Cataclysm of the Moon

StarShield Lortie

poetry

No one ever spoke about the moon
that way before and I leaned forward,
curious, balancing on a seat I'm sure was
never mine. His words shook loose everything
I knew to be true. His argot included "daring,"
"triumphant," "cataclysmic" and illuminated
the moon's power over us all. I leaned back
realizing I was dying to get lost in a cataclysm
of the moon. The manuscript before him wafted
thick with ink and cellulose and I remembered I
read somewhere that the moon slips away from
the Earth by an inch and a half a year

– *We will all die of loneliness* –

The thought passed through me like the tide
pulling wet sand through my bare toes, but he
kept reading, turning his hands, his fingers, in
circles to emphasize the roundness of the moon,
telling us how the moon is triumphant in its wholeness.
I watched his lips move, the roundness of his o's
imitating that triumphant stance of the moon, the
openness of his laugh. The soft plumpness of his
bottom lip when he paused consumed my attention.
I imagined pressing my lips to his, sealing a connection



The Battle of Redemption

Jasmine Gary

27" x 30" acrylic on Masonite board

too large for either of us to name

– *That same moon is six feet farther away
from me than the day I was born* –

His lips stopped moving and he stepped back peering
over his perfectly rounded glasses, the sound of clapping
shattering my reverie. I sucked in my breath and slipped

outside, his admirers swarming him like moths to a
midnight porch light. The sweet summer air was thick
with crickets singing their own love song to the moon
as they suspended their belief that she won't come back
again and again. I looked up, breath coming hard and
deep. She hung low over the river: huge, orange, whole,
eclipsing that lost six feet to extinction.

Growing Pains

Lauren Schumacher
poetry

Delicate, dark, durable earth;

I was hidden in it just at my birth.
I couldn't see through it, at least not quite.
It's crumbling now as I thought I saw light.

I start to grow, or so I thought,
but just so you know, it feels like I'm not.

I try to force my buds toward the sun,
but I'm lacking energy and nothing's enough.

This force bearing down is killing me now.
They say it's growing pains, but I don't know how.

How can I grow when I feel myself wilting?
I keep pushing upward but my hopes are all giving.

I'm pushing out my emotions in rhyme.
To be honest, I know I'll never bloom in time.

I hoped to grow to a full and beautiful plant,
but as each petal falls, I know that I can't.

One by one, a step closer to dying.
"You'll make it," they said, but I knew they were lying.

Lyrics dance in my head up to death,
"I've given up hope on the days I have left."
"So I'll cling to the hope of my life in the next."

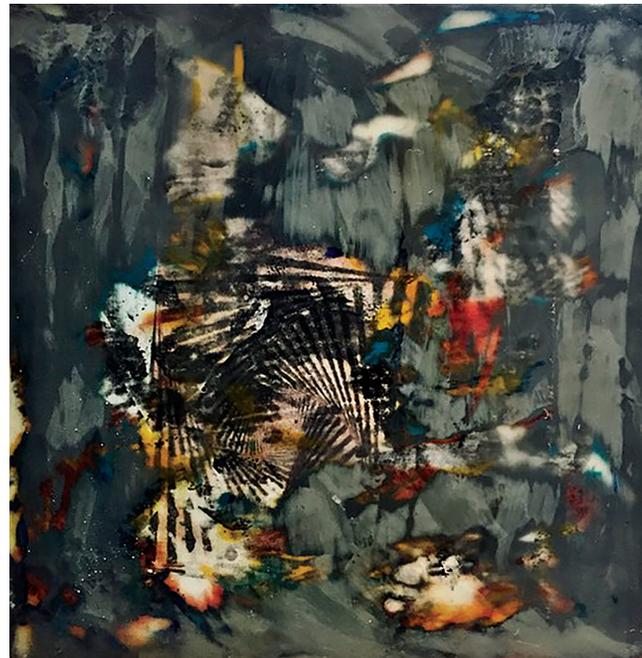
But what fulfilled dream could possibly follow,
a hope to fill this dark, empty hollow?
Doubts and doubts circle my mind,
but we'll cling to that hope because it's all we can find.

I begin to let go as I feel myself fade.
It's all I was for and for all I was made.



Exposure

Keisha Lambert
encaustic



Burn Rhythms

Keisha Lambert
encaustic

The Waffle Artist

Heather Hickox

fiction

We smoke Marlboro Reds until our fingertips are stained a dull yellow, the color of butter as it warms to room temperature as the fats and oils separate from one another. We drink cup after cup of burnt coffee with so much milk and sugar that we drain the shaker.

“Excuse me, Flo?”

The perpetually irritated waitress with her fried, peroxide-blonde hair and her thick legs striped with varicose veins walks to the table.

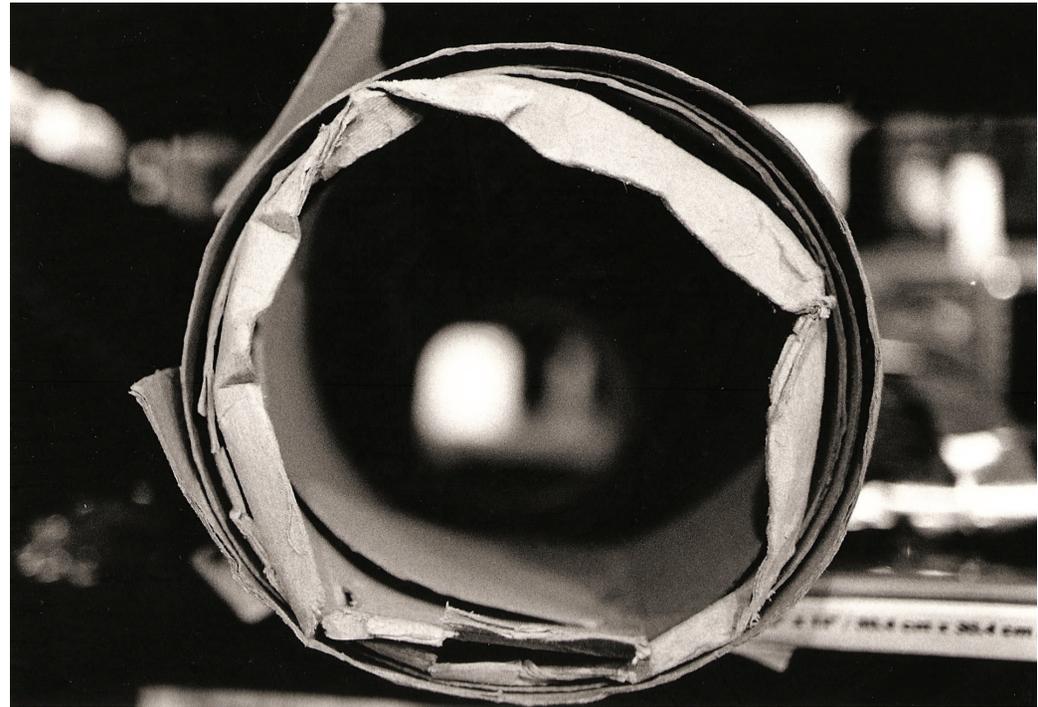
“Flo? Screw you, kid. Y’all sit in here all night, crammed five to a booth. Y’all need to be orderin’ some food or be on your way.”

“Alright. One piece of toast, Flo. And sugar.”

“My name is Maggie, wiseass.”

“Sugar please, Ms. Wiseass,” Terry snickers.

The waitress marches off to barely toast a piece of doughy white bread that she then serves on a tiny cup saucer with another saucer loaded down with pats of warm butter wrapped in gold foil and sticky packets of grape jelly and honey. As she slams the freshly filled sugar shaker down, the small metal flap of the lid flips open, and a dusting of sugar spills onto the table. Terry sweeps the sugar into a pile and into his hand, and tosses it over his shoulder like it’s salt into the hair of the unfortunate woman that sits in the booth behind him.



Tattered

Tiffany Murray

black and white film print digitally scanned

“Enjoy,” the waitress sneers.

“Thanks, Flo,” Jodie answers.

Jodie lights another cigarette with the last glowing ember of the one she’s just smoked to the filter. She opens her notebook covered in black velvet and a sequin gothic cross, pulls out a pen with purple ink, flips to a page with a tiny corner of blank space left— mangled song lyrics, quotes, and ideas are scrawled in every inch of the tattered book— and she begins to write.

Wake up, Maggie. I think I got somethin’ to say to you, she scribbles.

“Why that song?” I ask, looking on, half interested.

“Hmm, you know,” Jodie half answers as she closes the notebook, pours more sugar into her coffee, stirs it with a dirty finger, and takes a sip.

Suddenly, the jingling of bells wakes us from our penetrating boredom.



Curious Eyes

Bryan Long
digital photography

“It’s him,” I say.

A squat, older man of about fifty stands in the doorway searching for a booth – not an easy feat on a small-town Friday night as the truckers, drunks, and chain-smoking teenagers crowd the booths of the local Waffle House. The Mecca of late-night dining calls to a certain crowd, lured in by the scene just beyond the thick Plexiglas windows. The fluorescent glow hypnotizes, and patrons are soon transformed into slow-moving zombies planted in wooden booths, growing roots through the waxy tile floor

as they memorize the scattered-covered-smothered menu selections. Terry whispers a play-by-play of Joe on the Grill’s every move.

“Watch, now he’ll get a ladle full of batter. He’ll put it in the waffle iron and crack some eggs. Now he flips the bacon. Watch...”

As Joe scoops up the thickening lumpy batter, Terry says triumphantly, “Told you!”

The squat man with the dirty, flannel, grease-stained jeans

and mechanic’s hands with thick, oil-stained knuckles and split fingernails makes his way to the counter and sits facing the grill with his left side in our view. He orders black coffee and one waffle.

“It’s the same order every time,” I whisper.

Terry reaches over to grab the soft pack of smokes from my shirtfront pocket and gives my boob a squeeze. I knock away his hand.

“Back off! Watch this.”

Maggie Wiseass sets a cup of burnt coffee, a waffle, and a sticky pitcher of syrup in front of him.

“Here you go, hon.”

Here it comes.

The mechanic slowly reaches into his pocket and pulls out what we’ve all been waiting to see...a single bag of plain M&M’s. He rips open the candy and pours a few in his palm, shakes them like dice, and, grabbing one tiny M&M at a time between his thick fingers, begins to place them in each separate waffle crater. He takes his time, making sure he doesn’t have the same color candy in two neighboring spaces. His face slowly changes; the deep creases around his eyes seem to relax, and the tension in his jaw visibly eases. He is creating. He stops, takes a sip of coffee, studies his waffle canvas, and continues.

The five of us sit crammed in the hard booth – cigarettes smoked to the filter, cups empty, and the toast congealing with grape jelly sitting on the table in front of us as we watch this... Waffle House Hoffman, this Pollock of Pancakes... or Waffles, whatever. **(cont...)**

(continued from page 29)

We watch, staring, enthralled.

The mechanic grabs the small, sticky pitcher of syrup, pauses, takes one last look, and douses his art, drowning his creation in maple. The warmth of the waffle, fresh from the iron, melts the colorful shells, and the spectrum of candy colors swirl together, diluted in the syrup. Running rivulets of red and green, pools of blue, and strokes of the brown melting chocolate stain the waffle canvas. A slight smile appears on his face, and a second later, the man picks up the waffle, the creation of abstract breakfast art, with his dirty, bare hands...

Jodie gasps.

In three bites, the man shoves the waffle into his gaping mouth, and the art is devoured. Gone.

Carrie and Terry light fresh cigarettes.

Kenny pulls a black Sharpie from his back pocket and sets to drawing a bullet with butterfly wings on the laminate wood of the booth.

Jodie pulls out the notebook and purple pen.

“Flo, coffee please,” I yell out.

The mechanic slaps a ten-dollar bill onto the counter and nods to the waitress as he makes his way out the door. The fluorescent light flickers overhead casting a dull, yellow haze over the tableau, and Joe cracks two eggs at once onto the grill. Sizzle, and the night drudges on. ■



Dominican Trade

Rosa Westfall
digital photography

Six

StarShield Lortie
poetry

He handed me a drawing
designed by young hands
the words, quiet and breathy,
the image he pressed
with a thick thumb
the bird marking the poem
of my seedling heart.”

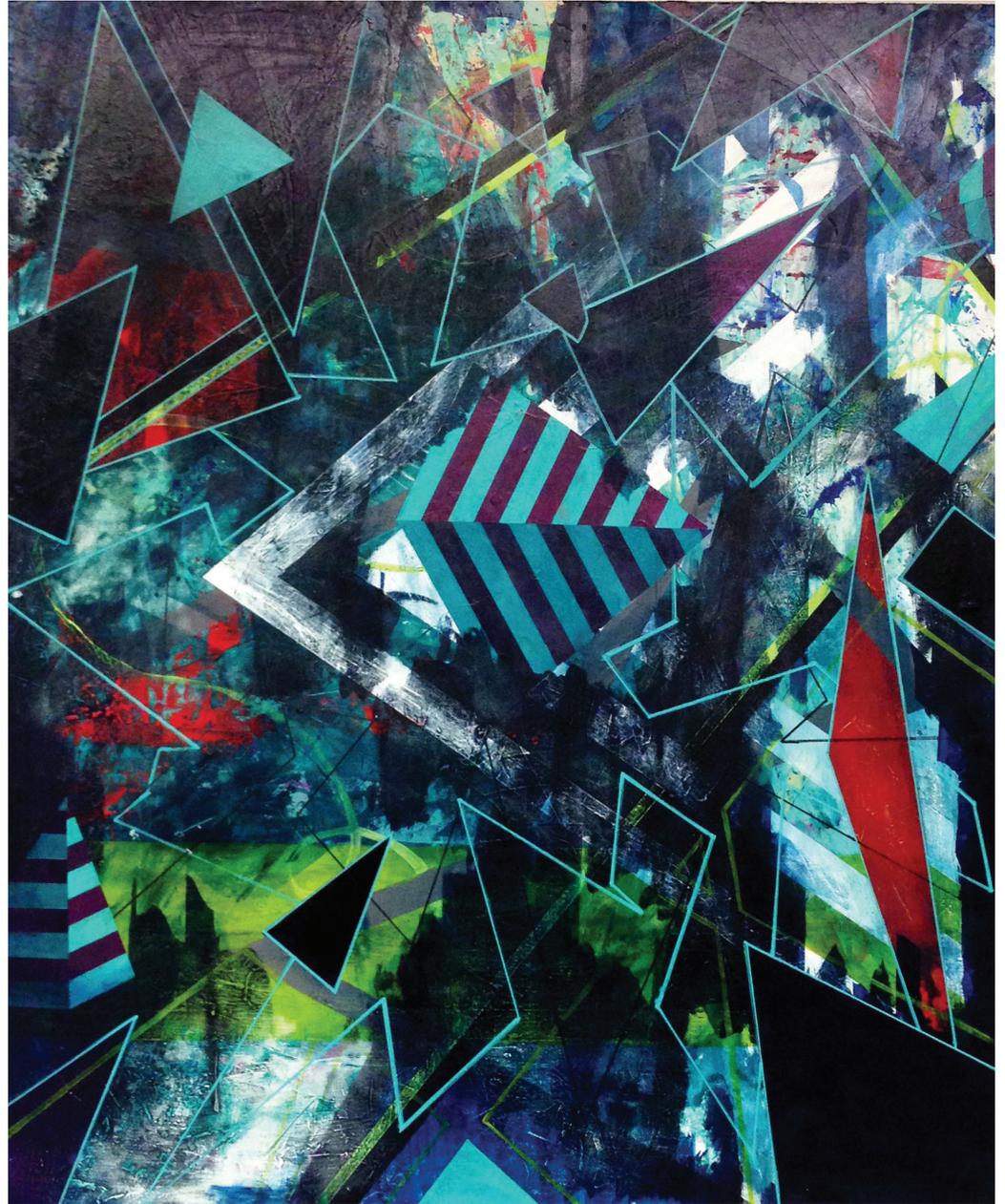
fluttering with nostalgia,
he drew his thumb
the air from his lungs
and it floated there
on the simian crease
was breathing life

His weight shifted back
that six-year-old boy
slid away with a blink
that time travel
and the bird
became a whisper of dust

a little blue bird
“I drew this when I was six”
floated across his moist lips
into the center of my palm
“It fell out of an old book
that stole the whole
His hand was warm, eyes

reflected a stormy blue
along the thick of my hand
lifted the bird to its feet
its six single toes bobbing
as if the heat from my body
into its flat form.

and the years between
and the man before me
the dust kicked up by
sparkled on the air like mote
blue as a summer sky
in my tiny hands.



I Ain't No Homewrecker

Jessica Maraschiello
40" x 60" acrylic on panel



Time

Keli Hardin

digital black and white photography

Careo

Anna Houser

poetry

They warn us about dark alleys
when we're young and as fresh as those
Florida oranges
still on the trees in the commercials for breakfast
juice,
but like all fruit there has to be some bruised or rotten
ones.

You know, the ones that fall down early
and get smashed up, mashed up
on the ground and trampled by the feet of harvest
haulers –
peels ground into the dirt,
flesh crushed and bursting,
weeping juices as they
sink, seeping innocence into
cannibalistic tree roots.

When you browse through the supermarket
on Wednesday afternoons, looking for deals
on ripe bananas, dodging housewives and fruit flies,
there will be

Fresh Bananas For Under A Few Dollars

but some of them will be stained up, bruised up,
picked over
by the fruit flies and those housewives, brown
and sticky and spotted
and uncomfortable to look at.

They tell us about those alleys, yes.
To avoid them and go instead only where
it's clean, where it's bright and safe,
where it's cheerful, kind, helpful, hopeful,
and smells like those chocolate chip cookies
realtors bake before an open house.

But oh my darling, those alleyways don't disappear
because the house smells like cookies.
That fresh fruit bursting in your mouth
like summertime and humidity cannot revive
the dead. Those green,
unripe bananas cannot hide
the blackened, gnat-eaten carcasses
of their older siblings –

and while I will never be a

Fresh

Florida

Orange

I can promise you,
I've got a peel that's been ground and crushed,
trampled back into the unforgiving earth,
a sticky, used-up carcass
unpleasant even to the gnats –
but somehow, there's still juice left,
and it's enough to flood an alley.

COLLAGE

a journal of creative expression

Middle Tennessee State University
Paul W. Martin Sr. Honors Building, Room 224
1301 E. Main Street, Box 267
Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37132

About Collage

Collage is a biannual publication of the Middle Tennessee State University Honors College. All submissions were reviewed anonymously and selected by a student editorial staff. The materials published by *Collage* do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the *Collage* staff, University Honors College, MTSU student body, staff, or administrators. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or utilized in any form without written permission from the editor or adviser of *Collage*. Inquiries should be addressed to Collage, Middle Tennessee State University, 1301 East Main Street, Box 267, Murfreesboro, TN 37132.

Submit to Collage

Collage accepts submissions year-round. Submission forms and guidelines are available at <http://capone.mtsu.edu/collage/>. Creative work, such as art, photography, short stories, essays, short plays, song lyrics, and poetry, may be submitted digitally to the website submission system or may be turned in at the *Collage* office, Honors 224, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Submissions are accepted from MTSU students and recent graduates.

Policy Statement

Collage: A Journal of Creative Expression is an arts and literary magazine featuring submitted work chosen by a volunteer staff in a blind grading process. The staff attempts to choose the best work without regard for theme or authorship.

Although *Collage* is a publication of the University Honors College, staff members and submitters are not required to be Honors students. Staff members are selected each semester from a pool of applicants and must have at least a 3.0 GPA and two recommendations.

Creative Expression Awards

Each semester four submissions receive Creative Expression Awards, one from each major category: art, photography, poetry, and prose. Literature winners receive the Martha Hixon Creative Expression Award, and visual winners receive the Lon Nuell Creative Expression Award. Winners receive \$50 awards.



Bisti Badlands

Ambre Rogue
photography



To My Sisters

Megan Smith
poetry



We Finna Put it on da Map

Kyle Baker
art



The Tea Cup

Leah Bailey
prose

Columbia Scholastic Press Association

Gold Medalist Certificates – 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 & 2014

Silver Crown Awards – 2007, 2008, & 2011

Gold Crown Awards – 2012, 2013, & 2015

Technical Specifications

Technology

Adobe Indesign CC
Adobe Illustrator CC
Adobe Photoshop CC
Apple Macintosh Platform
Windows Platform

Typography

ITC Avante Garde Gothic, various weights
Bodoni, various weights

Paper

100 lb. Athens Silk Cover
80 lb. Athens Silk Text

Binding

Saddle Stitch

Printing

Lithographics, Inc. of Nashville, Tennessee printed approximately 2,000 copies of Collage.



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