



COLLAGE

A JOURNAL OF CREATIVE EXPRESSION

COLLAGE



FALL 2014
ISSUE 20





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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I always look forward to receiving and grading submissions for *Collage*, but my favorite part of the production process is seeing everything come together in the final product. This is the most rewarding part—finally seeing all of the selected submissions combined to design a magazine that celebrates creativity and knowing that everyone worked so hard to make it happen. I can go on about the abundant talent of the students at MTSU, but you won't be able to see it for yourselves until you turn the page and begin reading and admiring the beautiful and wonderful creations introduced to you in this issue.

Before you turn the page, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff members, our adviser Marsha Powers, and the submitters for their involvement in the creation of this semester's magazine. *Collage* would not be this outstanding without the time and dedication of each and every one of you.

With that said, I am pleased to present the Fall 2014 issue of *Collage*.



Caitlin Noonan
Editor in Chief

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REBIRTH

stone lithography

MIKA MOLLENKOPF

THE PHOENIX

poetry

REBECCA SMITH

With wings spread of wanderlust,
The phoenix burns the stars to dust.
Shattering the heavens with nary a cry,
The shimmering bird has tired of lies.

Memories flake down like fallen snow,
Crystalline forms that need not show.
Fire engulfs them and melts the hate.
The flickering ember has nothing to sate.

Gilded cage with patterns of old,
Splinters and cracks in showers of gold.
Talons that once clung to the perch
Now tear the metal like rotten birch.

A song echoes forth from the ruptured cage,
Somber cries from the days of rage.
Forgiveness glimmers in a molten heart.
With a flap of wings, the phoenix departs.

Rising high above the clouds,
The phoenix sees what wasn't allowed.
The sun that burns with unbridled might
Has long been waiting to end this night.

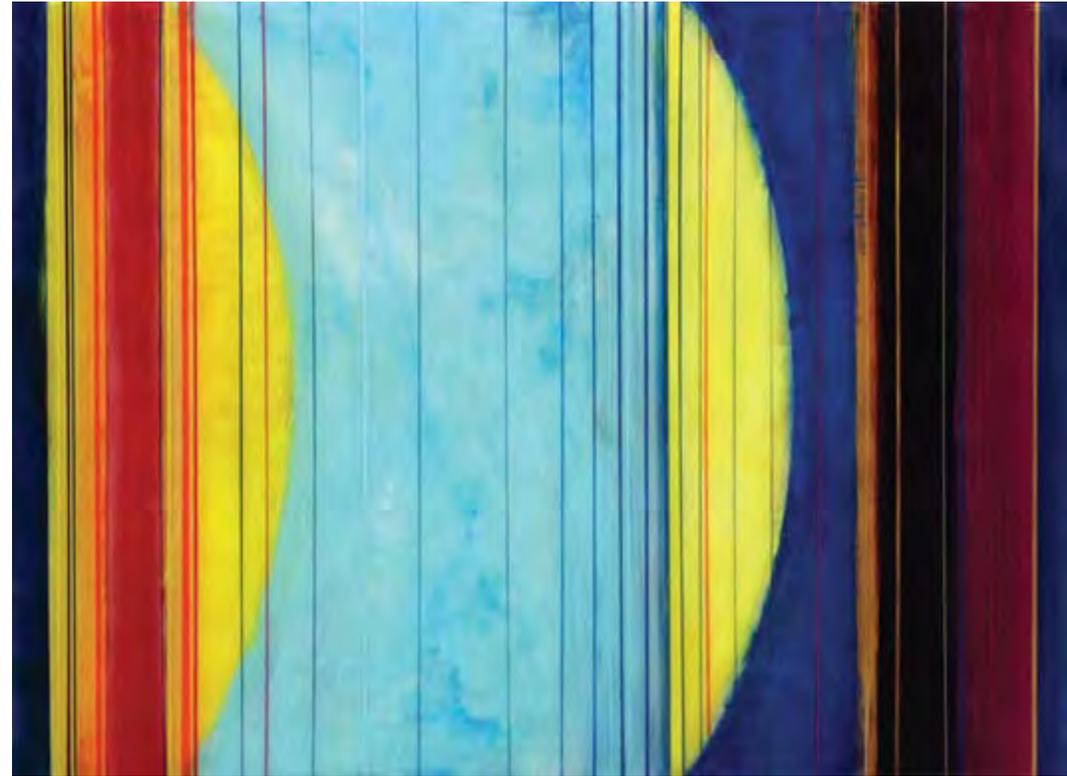
Carried gently on molting wings,
The sun is silent as the phoenix sings.
Feathers streak through the sky as stars.
Slowly, the flames expose rough scars.

Ashen and weakened, stoic and grey,
The phoenix greets the newfound day.
Alive at last with renewing strength,
The phoenix will finally rewrite its fate.

AZURE TOKEN

acrylic, oil, glue, and epoxy resin on panel

JOSHUA PETTY



TIME TURNER

photography

HALEY IMHOFF



REAL TALK

poetry

SAVANNA ERATH

an empty page is like an empty heart:
you can fill it with all kinds of
words and wisdom and art.
but, at the end of the day,
it won't really matter.
because pages burn and hearts
get broken
and nothing ever looks as good written down
as when it is spoken.

A PICTURE OF RAIN

poetry

CONNAR JOHNSON

Somehow the rain
found means to
ruin my day, but I
can't seem to
find it here on the square.

If I
were half the poet I
am an artist, I would
describe something less cliché
than the damp streets at night.

If I
were half the artist I
am a poet, I would
be able to
paint for you the distinct
orange glow from the lamps
reflected off wet bricks and asphalt
contrasted on a deep black backdrop.

Yet, If I
were twice the writer I
am an artist by a poet, I'd
be a quarter of the mathematician I
could have been if I had
pursued my talents rather
than my passions.
Then the rain's sway on my emo-
tions,
disgruntled or awestruck,



wouldn't have mattered.
Though it's not the
beaten, soggy, star-lit path I've
taken, I'm still adept enough
in my unkindled talent to
understand that comfort
is the price of the
pursuit of beauty.

TRUCK BED

photography

JAMES BRUMMETT

WE NEED HELP, THE POET RECKONED?

poetry

SHELBY REHBERGER

There are 673 tiles on the floor of the 2-bed room I share with a 60-year-old woman who was institutionalized after she had her stomach pumped of 83 Motrin PM pills at 4:38 am on October 2, 2012.

There is a whiny thermostat set to 81 degrees Fahrenheit in the room I share with a 36-year-old woman who was forcibly institutionalized for slicing her wrists exactly 21 times. The scars look like stars, with the universe pouring out to the beat of her broken heart.

My broken heart has beat 864,321 times since I kissed a man who felt his heart push the universe

out of his broken wrists.

The first time I felt a razor separate my skin, I held my breath until the red hit the white tile floor. I met a scuba diver in here who holds his breath until his head dips completely below the deep blue. Color has always made me forget how to breathe, too. There are 33 yellow chrysanthemums, 6 sprouts of baby's breath, and 4 bunches of greens in a 2-liter Sprite bottle on the coffee table in the common room I share with 11 other patients. I have never understood why there are 42 chairs on a ward that sleeps 25 but only has 12.

The nurses check my vital signs 4 times a day as if I

may be dead on my feet. Maybe we only die because someone tells us to.

My heart beats 73 beats per minute when the 62-year-old nurse checks my vitals for the 23rd time since I checked to see if ink still coursed through my veins.

A 29-year-old man talking about his 7 year now-ended marriage has my attention.

One day unbeknownst to present-me, he will love me for an as of yet undetermined period of time.

He came here 32 hours ago after failing to inject 360cc of potassium chloride into his femoral artery. I will spend 4 days, 21 hours, and 32 minutes on the Adult Psychiatric Services ward.

30 hours were spent sleeping fitfully, plagued by nightmares that were preferable to my current situation.

8 hours were spent consuming calories (you could hardly call it eating).

20 hours were spent vindictively recording my surroundings for posterity.

3 days were spent crying for everything I would come to lose.

2 days were spent falling in love with the man I met on the best worst day of my life. **CONT.**



LIBIDO
oil on canvas
JESSE BULLA

CONT. He strokes my thigh for 37 minutes in group therapy where 15 people talk about a collective 351 years of pain.

Not one of the 15 other patients, 2 doctors, 3 guards know that I'm falling in love.

My stomach does 7 somersaults when the 28-year-old doctor calls my name to see what I have to say 41 minutes into the 1 hour session.

"I think I love him" is choked back into a meek "nothing" as he squeezes my knee for the 63rd time that hour.

There are 51 cards in the deck that he, two others, and I play poker with, 31 minutes after lights out. His foot rests on top of mine as he lets me win for the 3rd time.

The nice nurse, a 41-year-old woman who said I wasn't really crazy, tells us to go to our separate rooms, his 4 down from mine.

14 birds singing 14 different songs wake me up 17 minutes before shift change where my vitals will be checked for the 110th time.

There are 94 blank pages left in the sketchbook I

managed to grab before the first ambulance and its 29 flashing lights showed up.

He draws a perspective perfect 4-room house on one page, leaving the other 93 for me. I consider the concept of home. Maybe we spend our lives looking for a place that gives us the feelings that only a person can. ●

PUSHED BY IMAGINATION

oil painting
JASMINE GARY





AFFINITY

lithography

FELICIA CANNON



LOOK AT BIG GREASY

oil on canvas

KYLE BAKER

A WALK

poetry

RANDY SLOAN

Where rain meets soft swaying pastures,
Falling upon the tall, green grass,
There you'll find her full of laughter.
There you'll find my dear bonnie lass.

Where heaven's lamp cracks through the gray
And comes to rest upon her hair,
You'll find her walking with feet bare,
Gliding gently across the lea.

Where time cannot reach, there she lies,
In pastures green beneath gray skies,
There you'll find she always resides,
Walking among my memories.

POWELL STREET LURKERS

charcoal and graphite on paper

KYLE BAKER



WINDOWS

photography

HAMILTON MASTERS



MURKY WATERS AND STARRY SKIES

poetry

KATHRYN PARKER

Only the weak of spirit and imagination live in
Reality.
The rest of us sit on the rim,
Peering into the “real” world like children peering
into a forbidden pool,
Deep and dark and murky.
We dip our toes into it,
Sending ripples over the surface.
“Why do people want to stay there all the time?” we
wonder.
“Why not come up here?”
Sometimes, when we’ve splashed in it too much,
We get weighed down by its darkness and
depression.
We must climb back out.
The “sensible” people say we are weak,

That we can’t handle Reality,
That we should grow up.
We don’t care what they think.
We toss pebbles into the water
And write songs and poems about how miserable
“sensible” people are
And how miserable we are when we listen to them.
“Enough of this,” I say as I stand up from the
poolside and brush the stardust off my skirt.
“Let’s go flying through silver clouds
And dancing on golden suns,
And leave ‘sensible’ people to their dark waters
And dark existence.”
The other artists rise as well,
And we all leave Reality behind.

REFLECTION

photography

REBECCA POOLE



TO BE A STRANGER

song lyrics

LAURA MAAS

I want to be your every single day
to be your every night when you kneel down to pray
to be your stars, your moon, your golden setting sun
the end of your world before mine's even begun.

I want to be the swollen summer heat
to be the prickly grass beneath your itchy feet
to be the humid air inside your precious lungs
I'd give the broken sky that you may cool your tongue.

I want to be the vicious winter chill
to be the violent wind that roars over the hill
the snow that traps you in a dangerous haze
the blackest ice, your darkest days.

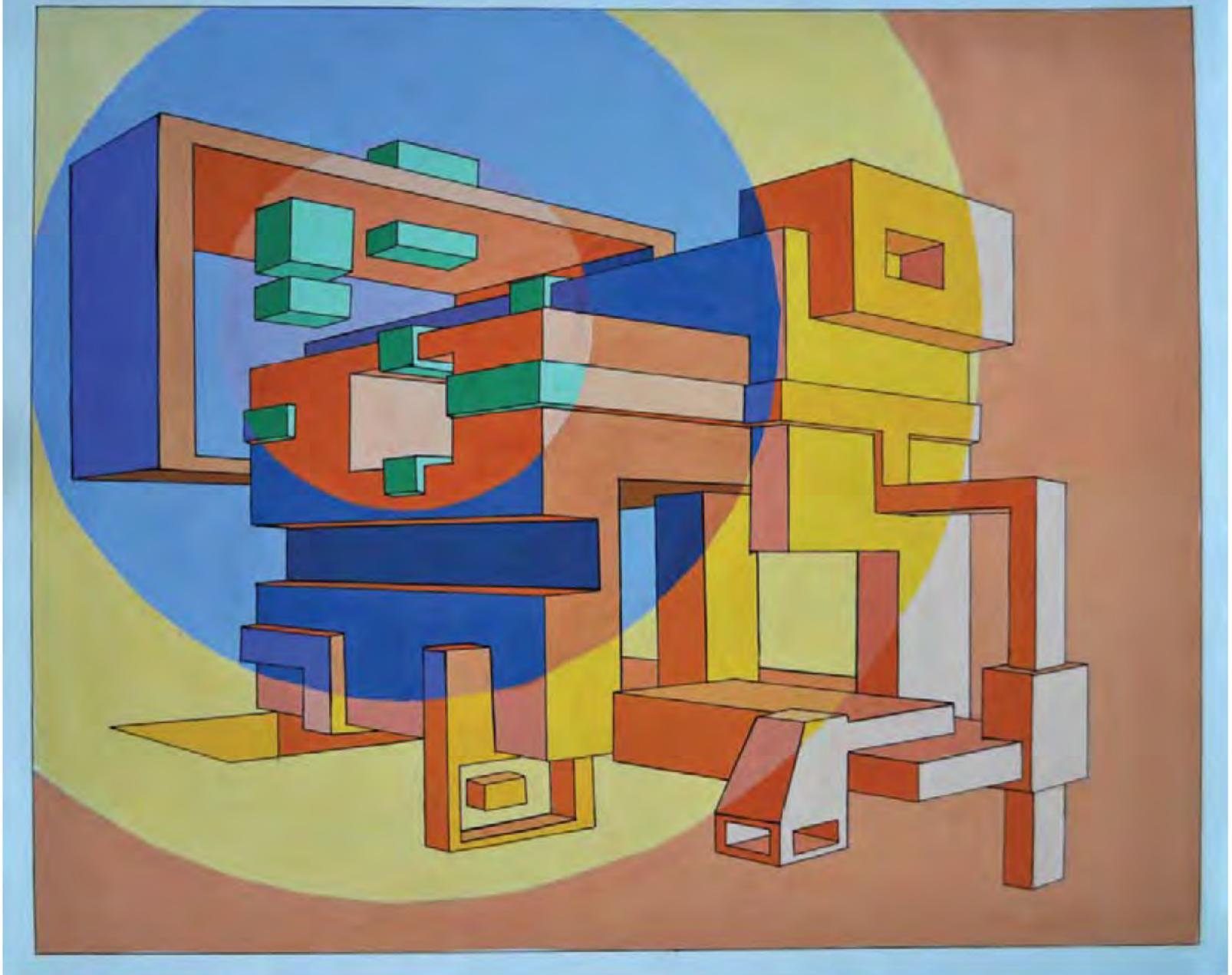
I want to be the sweet, sweet days of spring,
to be the reason why you open up and sing
the sky its softest and its safest shade of blue
the chilly nighttime air, the morning dew.

I want to be the dark, crisp nights of fall
a reminder when you stand to stand up tall
an eerie stillness in the air and in your soul
a silent wind through darkened hair.

But instead I'll settle for this life I've found
as a cobweb in your closet
a single sock upon your floor
an unwashed teacup in your kitchen,

a comely stranger at your door.





RETRO PARADISE

acrylic, ink

EMMA STOUT

WONDERLAND

poetry

MEGAN SMITH

Such blunders I wondered whilst a'dream
(Or surely I should suspect!
For once I heard I was a dream;
Fancied in a resting king's head)
And silly me, I could have sworn
'Twas he who was pretend.

What a world such nonsense was
That inquisitive atmosphere!
A prompt to ponder permanence
Or if I'm there or here?
Or, "What am I?" as it was
So common a query to hear.

First the caterpillar, then the pigeon
Did insistently inquire.
Although I failed to provide
The answers they required;
For contemplations of my own
Had left me much too tired—

Brooding over sealing wax,
Sails and ships and kings,
And whether they'd still be the same
If addressed as other things
Since Humpty Dumpty to me claimed,
"A name decides no means."



STRANGE FRUIT

Manet Noir lithography

ALISON FORD

So was I Queen Alice or Adalais?
Or were they one and the same?
And why was it the more I learned
The more curious I became?
Had these critters no sanity
Or was it I who was insane?

Yet even to know the direct effect
Will still produce no cause.
So the pertinence of what I think
Ranks low among my thoughts.
For inside nonsense, I've observed
That sense itself had lost.



NATURE CALLS

digital art

RUBY JAZZ

TO MY PAL THE PEN

poetry

CHRISTIAN RABORG

You spill your blood and soul,
Work endlessly day after day.
Get thrown, stepped on, and chewed on.
You skate across the surface,
Of a thin sheet of ice.
Marking every step,
Always leaving a trace.
You help me remember the victories,
But never forget the mistakes.
Your time is only limited.
For when you have given it all,
You will find betrayal in your owner.
The owner who once loved you,
And now easily replaces you.
All of this, all this hard work,
But at what cost?
The immortality of a thought.

PLASTIC HAIR

digital art

RUBY JAZZ





FLOOD OF LIGHT

infrared photography

CHRISTOPHER HAMRICK



OUTLAW TO GRANDPA

poetry

HEATHER HICKOX

Bakersfield bandit,
desperado
with a black cigar
firmly clenched between chattering teeth.
They slap on the cold, steel bracelets.
Folsom Prison
blues—
a thin cotton twill
that fights against the chill of the wind
that cuts and seeps and creeps
through the frozen granite walls of the Greystone
Chapel.

No solace for an outlaw—
A banked memory of that bank felony
haunts you, you can't escape.
Behind these walls, these bars.
Clenched jaw, balled fist
your palm remembers the weight,
the grip of the Saturday night special
but longs for the special Saturday night
gripping the neck of your old Gibson,
and two fingers of Jack.

With a voice heard through prison walls
and words that echo
across that yard
and those miles
you found the Cash that you were looking for,
in a hidden corner where no one dares look.
But, fortune favors the bold—
you were told.
Finally, freedom found you
in the midst of wailing chaos.
So you shed the blues
and made your way
toward happiness.

The warm Tennessee sun hits your face
as you slide from behind the wheel of that Chevy
and into the booth of our favorite diner.
Pecan pie and lyrics scribbled on a napkin.
From outlaw to Grandpa,
from gun to guitar,
no trace left of the Bakersfield bandit
but a twinkle in your eye
as the ding! of the diner cash drawer echoes
through the quiet space.
Your easy smile spreads.
Another piece, baby?

TIME WILLINGLY WASTED:

EXPLORING SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND

Written by Chloe Madigan

I went to England to study Shakespeare, which may seem a bit cliché. However, out of the plethora of English majors I have met, only a handful are as passionate about the Bard as I am. Many would prefer to study literature they consider more challenging, such as Joyce or Faulkner. Shakespeare is too over analyzed, too predictable. I, however, am obsessed with nearly every play and sonnet. Each time I am introduced to an unfamiliar Shakespearian work, I fall in love again.

In the States, we don't hold Shakespeare in as high esteem simply because we have no real cultural ties to his work. Yes, we can all agree that his works are timeless and influential, but they aren't necessarily relevant to us in the same way they are to the English. In Stratford-Upon-Avon alone, the Royal Shakespeare Company performs over 20 Shakespearian productions annually.

The first Shakespearian play I saw in London was Jamie Lloyd's *Richard III*. In what many considered a rather bold move, Lloyd took Shakespeare's original text for *Richard III*, abridged it slightly, and then set the show in a fascist dictatorship circa 1979. Gone were the simple sets and the ostentatious Elizabethan costumes of traditional Shakespearean performances. These were replaced with loud metallic music, pyrotechnics, and murder by phone-cord strangulation. Instead of a stately palace, Lloyd's production took place in a rather

drab, outdated office building. Richard's speeches were delivered as radio broadcasts and, rather than trap doors symbolizing "heaven" and "hell," ghostly figures emerged from a faulty elevator filled with smoke. Never in my life had I seen anything so technically astonishing.

The selling point for me, however, was the cast. Starring in the role of Richard was none other than Martin Freeman, perhaps best known as John Watson in the BBC's *Sherlock* and Bilbo Baggins in Peter Jackson's recent *Hobbit* trilogy. I was interested to see how he would take on the role of one of Shakespeare's most dreadful villains, given that he typically portrays the bumbling-yet-

brave hero or sidekick, the type you want to scoop up and carry around in your pocket because he's so gosh-darn precious. I was not disappointed in the least. Freeman's Richard was maniacal, vain, self-loathing, and needlessly violent: all the characteristics laid out by Shakespeare in his original text.

The following week we ventured down a shadowy alley near Marylebone Station to the Cockpit Theater to see an offbeat production of *The Tempest* presented by the Tree Folk Theatre Company. Again, this nontraditional performance seemed to take the adaptation of Shakespeare to an entirely different level: the actors were hidden behind enormous



888,246 ceramic poppies surround the Tower of London as part of the "Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red" installation in remembrance of every British military fatality during WWI.

“ PERHAPS I WAS JUST FORTUNATE, BUT MY STUDY ABROAD IN LONDON WAS ONE OF THE MOST THRILLING EXPERIENCES OF MY LIFE. ”

masks and Caliban—the terrifyingly primitive ogre-like island native—had a papier-mâché body that could literally break apart, fly across the stage, and rearrange itself. Despite the simple, unadorned set and rather amateur feel of the production, I was nonetheless captivated by the use of the colorful, nontraditional costumes as well as the addition of music and dance into the play. Though the script was taken directly from Shakespeare, the performance itself was folksy and unconventional. Had the actors not boasted strong Estuary English accents, the production could have passed for something you might see at a folk festival in the Appalachians.

It wasn't until my trip to Stratford-Upon-Avon that I experienced a more traditional Shakespearean production. After a day of exploring the little town known as the birthplace of the most well known poet and playwright in history, we stopped by the Royal Shakespeare Company to watch a performance of *Henry IV: Part One*. The role of Falstaff in the play was to be acted by Sir Antony

Sher, one of the most well known Shakespearean actors in England. For the third time, my expectations were exceeded, and I found myself utterly mesmerized by the performance. Sher's ridiculous, drunken Falstaff perfectly paralleled Alex Hassell's boyishly charming Prince Hal.

The final week of my study abroad program, I was finally able to see a show performed at Shakespeare's Globe. On our last Tuesday, with Groundling tickets in hand, we queued for over an hour to ensure that we could get the best standing spots in the "yard" for *Antony and Cleopatra*. The yard at the Globe is the dirt floor between the stage and the seats where spectators can stand for a discounted price. This discounted ticket comes with a price of its own, though, which is standing for an entire three-hour performance. Once the play began, however, the whole of *Antony and Cleopatra* seemed to take no more than a half hour to me. Every movement, every line, every scene change was delivered so fluidly that there was never a pause to analyze what just happened.

Standing in the yard also offered the best view of the performance. Consequently, anyone lucky enough to be standing as close to the stage as we were would also have had the best view of the soothsayer dissecting a goat to prophesize over its entrails and of Antony's near lifeless body being dragged into Cleopatra's tower as blood flows freely from his mouth.

Perhaps I was just fortunate, but my study abroad in London was one of the most thrilling experiences of my life. I had the opportunity to take some incredible classes, study the world's most famous playwright in the same city where he lived and worked, and made lifelong friendships along the way. As Celia explains in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, "I like this place and willingly could waste my time in it!" Don't worry, London, I'll be back to waste my time wandering along your cobblestone streets and history-laden back alleys before you can say *cheerio, mate!* ●



Getting ready to take the train to Hogwarts at the Harry Potter tribute inside King's Cross Station!



A view of the houses of parliament and Elizabeth Tower, which houses the famous Big Ben bell.



Enjoying high tea with friends at our residence in Hampstead.

YOGA POSES

prose

CONNAR JOHNSON

The class moved from the doorway to the first piece of art. They bumped into each other and fumbled very slowly with their hands over their eyes. Their elbows stuck out and hit each other like turnstiles.

“Okay, stop.” said Dr. Dan.

Most of the class stopped, but Arnold in the back of the huddle ran into Mattie, who stumbled into Jeremy, who didn’t move. He was basically a wall shaped like a human.

“Now turn towards my voice.” The professor was standing in front of the first piece of art and couldn’t help but smile at the flock of elbows making contact as they rotated. He covered his face with his clipboard. The logo for Colorado Adult Learning Center for the Differently-Abled lined up with where his mouth had been. When they had finished rotating, all that could be heard was the ticking of the clock above the door.

“Will we have time to take notes?” came a voice from the group.

“No, Trish. Just observe.” Dr. Dan stepped to the side. “On the count of three, you’ll drop your hands and open your eyes. Take in as much as you can, remember as much as you can, and feel from it as fast as you can. You’ll have thirty seconds. One.”

Tommy shifted on his feet.

“Two.”

Dakota twitched her arm.

“Three.”

The arms fell. Dr. Dan saw Josh’s eyes dart to the top left. Carolina’s went to the bottom right. Joanna was tapping her thumbs to her fingers at precisely one hundred and twenty beats per minute, two taps for each tick of the clock. Thomas looked straight to the top then leaned forward and looked at Eliza pointing with her pencil exactly where her eyes were moving. Marqueesha stared straight at the center of the painting. Annie was pulling gum out of her pocket.

“Okay, that’s time,” said Dr. Dan. “Put your hands back over your eyes and turn around.”

They seemed to turn around much more smoothly this time. The professor moved around to stand in front of the class now facing the doorway rather than the painting. “Jeremy, say something about the painting.”

Jeremy dropped his hands and his jaw simultaneously.

“Yes, everyone drop your hands and open your eyes. Just don’t turn around.” He took a step towards the class. “Jeremy?”

Jeremy’s eyes widened and darted downwards. “I-I-I-It was really colorful?”

“Was it?”

The human wall nodded.

“Good. Good. Who can tell me what colors were used?” The professor wrote something on his clipboard.

Three hands shot up.

“Arnie, I saw your hand first.” Trish looked offended by the statement.

“It’s Arnold, sir.”

“I’m sorry, Arnie. Go on.”

Arnold now looked offended. “Well, there was a lot of blue and purple.” Dr. Dan jotted something onto the clipboard again.

“Did anyone see any other colors?” he asked without looking up.

More hands were in the air.

“Marqueesha.” The hands dropped.

“Green.”

“All right,” he said while writing. “Any more? Did anyone see orange?”

There were murmurs of agreement and nodding heads. The professor noted it.

“What about yellow?”

Fewer heads nodded this time. He noted it.

“Anyone see red?”

Two heads tentatively nodded. Noted.

Tommy spoke up. “There were other colors, but most of the painting is cool colors like blue and purple.”

“Good, Thomas. Good,” the professor said writing it down.

“I’m Tommy. Thomas is over there.” He pointed to Thomas, who was looking at the ceiling. Dr. Dan erased and rewrote something.

“I’m sorry.” He looked up. “Now, Annie, what was happening in the painting?”

Annie popped a bubble with her gum. “Was the girl about to blow the guy or something like that?”

A few snickers broke out in the class. The professor didn’t seem to notice while he was writing.

“Did anyone else see that?”

No one responded.

“Did anyone think something else was happening?” There was a beat of silence before Trish raised her hand.

“Okay, Trish. What do you think is happening?”

“Well, I was just going to say it looked to me like the naked woman was bowing to the naked man who was bowing to the weird blotch of color or maybe the woman. It was a weird pose.” Dr. Dan was writing quite a bit now.

“Can the rest of you agree with that?” Again the class nodded. Annie popped another bubble.

“Who can tell me the name of the painting?”

No one said anything. Dr. Dan looked up from his clipboard.

“No one looked at the title?”

There was complete silence. The professor saw Trish looking down, Jeremy scratching his head, Eliza playing with a button on her blouse, and Thomas craning his neck to see what was so interesting about Eliza’s blouse.

“No one looked at the title card beside the painting?” The class shook their heads and Dr. Dan wrote something on the clipboard.

“What can you tell me about the technique of the painting . . .” A few hands went halfway up. “Mattie?” The professor didn’t even look up when he called her name.

Mattie played with her hair as she spoke, “It looked like he wasn’t really using a brush for color.”

“Interesting,” Dr. Dan said looking up at Mattie while jotting more notes. “What do you think the artist used?”

“A razor blade.” **CONT.**



NOSTALGIA

watercolor

MAGGIE MCPHEETERS

CONT. The class all looked at Mattie. Dr. Dan stopped writing and raised an eyebrow and a corner of his mouth before writing a short note.

“I only say that because the colors are in thick blocks that are really smooth.”

“Do you think that the artist used something else for the lines and figures?”

The class went back to looking around as they had been. “He probably used a brush or marker or something and put the colors over the drawing with the razorblade.” She dropped her braid on her shoulder. “That’s why the colors don’t really stay in the lines.”

“Very good. Very . . .” Dr. Dan looked down as he wrote more notes then looked back up, “Good. Does anyone else have anything to say about the artist’s technique?”

The class looked around at each other and confirmed no one had anything else to say.

“Okay, now for the big question,” the professor said dropping his clipboard to his side and sliding his pencil behind his ear, “How did the painting make you feel?”

A janitor opened the back door, breaking the silence. He slipped back out with his trash cart once he realized a class was in the room.

“Come on, guys. We’re doing this from memory, and it’s completely subjective. There are no wrong answers.”

The class stood in silence again.

“Okay, I’ll choose. Carolina, what did you feel when you were looking at the painting?”

Carolina dropped her hand with the nails she was chewing to her side. “Well,” she looked around at her classmates staring at her, “it made me feel like I was in a dark place, but I can see the bright exit.”

“Okay, okay. Now we’re talking.” The corners of the professor’s mouth curled up. “Who can build on Carolina’s feelings? Did anyone feel something similar?” A few hands were finding their way up.

“Dakota, another state, what did you feel?”

Dakota started popping her knuckles at her waist as she answered. “Well, I get what Caroline was saying.”

“Carolina,” she corrected.

“Sorry, Carolina was saying,” She cleared her throat.

“But it didn’t look like the figures were trying to reach the orange spot like it’s an exit. They seemed indifferent to whatever that spot was or content with the darkness.”

Josh raised his hand higher as Dakota stopped talking.

“Okay, that’s good. Josh, do you have something to add?”

Josh put his arm down and started to turn around to look at the painting but caught himself. “Oh, sorry. Yes.” He twitched as he spoke with a nervous voice. “I think I remember the figures wearing masks.”

“Were they wearing masks?” Dr. Dan touched his pencil to his temple, raised an eyebrow, and tilted his head.

“Well . . .” Josh caught himself from turning around again. “Maybe the colors made it look like masks.” He looked down at his hands. “Anyway, it seemed like, I don’t know. It reminded me of that idea where you only show your true self when you’re anonymous. It’s like if your name or your face isn’t on something, you are free to be naked and vulnerable.” He looked up to indicate he had finished his thought.

“Wow, Josh.” The professor tried to meet Josh’s eyes.

“You make a really good point.” He shifted his gaze to the class as a whole. “Does it matter if they are actually wearing masks or not?”

“IT MADE ME FEEL LIKE I WAS IN A DARK PLACE, BUT I CAN SEE THE BRIGHT EXIT.”

The class stared back blankly.

“No, what matters is that the artist made Josh here feel something.” Josh bowed his head and flushed red in his cheeks. “He found something that the painting has to say to him. Carolina found a message of hope. Eliza found contentment in the darkness.”

“That was Dakota,” Thomas said. Eliza looked at Thomas, surprised that he had been standing so close to her. She crossed her arms over her chest. “Right, Dakota.” Dr. Dan scratched his forehead.

“Do you guys want to look at the painting again?”

Without giving a verbal answer, the class immediately turned around.

Dr. Dan moved around to the front of the class again. He noticed that the first thing all their eyes went to was the white piece of paper to the right of the painting.

Yoga Poses

Erin Rosa Starling

India ink and diluted oils and acrylics

64" x 72"

“Yes, Erin was one of my first students at the center.” The professor looked at the painting and tilted his head.

Arnold noticed there was very little yellow. It was only used as highlights in the orange part. Marqueesha noticed the colors didn't stay in the lines. They may have matched a different drawing of a landscape but were put over the figures in this painting instead. Jeremy noticed the purple blotches of color going across the figures' faces like masks. Mattie noticed the man's penis was not erect. Joanna noticed the woman's breasts were not perfectly round but pear shaped.

The professor hugged the clipboard up to his chest. “She was special just like all of you.”

Thomas noticed Eliza had lowered her arms and a blue edge of a bra was peeking out the top of her blouse. Jeremy noticed Thomas and turned his head towards the painting with his hand. Dr. Dan noticed Eliza smile then look down. She buttoned her blouse all the way to her collar bone then let out a breath from her nose and bumped her shoulder into Jeremy. Annie noticed her gum had lost its

flavor. She spit it out into the wrapper she pulled out of her pocket.

Dr. Dan took a step backwards and smiled before turning around. “Now she's in a museum. Take a good look at this painting again before we move on.”

Carolina noticed the warmth of fingertips running along the side of her thumb. She didn't look down or move her hand. Her lips became thin and her cheeks rose as her face turned red. Dakota noticed Josh's hand slowly tracing Carolina's wrist as he stared at her and moved closer. She didn't notice that the orange area of the painting lined up perfectly with the curves of their necks and that the woman's index finger in the painting pointed towards the museum's emergency exit.

“I think that's enough time,” said Dr. Dan, breaking the silence. “Let's move on to the next painting.”

The professor moved to the door to the next room. Most of the class followed. Tommy continued standing in front of the painting, staring at the orange spot and wishing the green over the woman's belly button had covered a slightly larger area and the man's leg had bent just a little less. He wiped a finger under his right eye and joined the class in the next room. ●

DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS

graphite

ALY BOOKER





HELLO, RESURRECTION

poetry

LAUREL O'NEILL

This used to be someone else's story.
This used to be the kind of thing
you heard about on the news
but never listened to.

This used to be someone else's story,
but now it's yours, and you
can't lift yourself from the pages.
You did not deserve this.
You can't
imagine someone who does
now that you're living it.

This used to be someone else's story and they
probably handled it better than you.
You have no idea
what comes next, so you're trying to remember
what comes last,
what better looks like.
The shape of the new self.

But you've never seen that headline, only
leads
that bled out. This is
the opposite of a miracle. The bullet
left the gun so long ago, but
it hasn't hit
quite yet. But

it will.
That's what happens,
if you don't beat it
to the punch.
Except you don't want to. You want
to get out of the way
as soon as you remember
how to move.

That new self you're working on is
coating your hands. It's
ashes, and you don't know how to rise,
how to build something
you've never seen. You're just
feeling it out.

That's a little like getting there.

Your skin looks a little cleaner in the mirror
with each day that passes.
The ink stabbed in is scrubbing off.
Some days you can't even
read it on your face.

This used to be someone else's story,
but now it's yours.
You're still working on
that ending.



SINKING DEEP IN MERCY'S SEA

oil painting, encaustic, mixed media

CHELSEA BASTOKY

GATHERING DUST

prose

REBECCA SMITH

Click. The doorknob turns awkwardly in my hand, squealing with anger at my improper installation. I'll fix it one day, promise. It laughs at a mantra whispered for over a year. I walk into the dark room, momentarily touching cool bronze with the backs of my fingers. The ashes within burn my hand.

Fumbling blindly in the pitch-blackness, I grip a cord and pull it taut. Light flickers into life. I gaze back at the light switches across the room. I'll fix this wiring problem eventually. Promise. The fan shudders as the cord snaps back into place.

I gaze around the room, trying to recall what is necessary for summer break. A photo stares back at me from a frame perched against cold bronze. I look away instantly. A stone forms in my stomach, heavy as a metal jar.

I always seem to leave a mess on my queen-sized bed. Only half of it is accessible at a time. I grab at the books covering my side, pushing them onto an already-overflowing bookcase. Did I read any of these novels last time? I meant to, promise. They are all precious to me, even as their covers lay untouched.

Various statues stare blindly as I toss too-small clothes onto a chair. A shopping trip is in order, eventually. Maybe. Probably . . . not.

Empty hangers creak in the closet as a pile of clothes forms around the chair. I'll do better next time, promise. The pewter dragons huff at my words, while carved wolves whine in disappointment.

A misplaced toss almost snaps – the figure of a coiled rattlesnake. A rocking horse nickers in amusement.

My side is clear for the moment. Stuffed animals press against the wall, their paws blanketing the other half of the bed. I smile at them. They gaze blankly back. Upon my pillow sits a proud dragon. His crimson scales are mottled gray. Age has worn his golden belly to a dull brown. He glares at me, demanding an explanation for my long absence. You know I have school. College waits for no one.

I snicker as I gently lift him. You're gathering dust, friend. We need to get you out more.

You're the one gathering dust, he snaps. Wings spread as he belches smoke. Heat sears my hands. His golden eyes flash as he roars. Such a foolish girl, ignoring the present and denying the past. Fangs gnash as he squirms. The world is moving along and you are stuck in this tiny room. You are the one who is turning gray.

I tremble and sit back on my bed. Tears itch at the corners of my eyes. The pungent aroma of stale air wafts up from the mattress. The dust coating the shelves, the statues, the bed, the urn, weighs heavy on my shoulders. I can feel it staining my hair, leaving a grimy trail on my skin. A sob wells up in my chest. I stamp it down, scorch it with flames, and swallow the pain.



THE CALL OF ADDICTION

blender and photoshop

JESSE HUMPHRIES

I want to go home.

You are home, he says. For once, his trademark smirk is gone.

You are home. ●

TRICK OR TREAT

prose

EMILY ANDERSON

We met at my house, like we do every year. Right after school, we ran with our pillowcases full of every type cloth you can think of. I, the leader of our little crew, had taken the honor of mapping out the neighborhood for our adventure that night. It had taken some time, about two weeks of planning and maybe a few not-so-sore sore throats (those were scouting days). I was prepared. “Okay, we are starting here tonight.” Both Maya and Mandi agreed. They always agreed. Sometimes I wished they would get the nerve to challenge me, to make me work to keep the position. But I knew that would never happen. They never wanted to be noticed. They hid behind the fear of being judged and made fun of. I didn’t care. I liked the attention. I wanted to be seen.

“We should start getting ready. Don’t you think?” It wasn’t really a question I needed to ask, but someone had to ask it. It was the confirmation we were all waiting for. Time to get serious. I ran to my room and pulled out the white plastic bag. I ran my fingers over the Walmart quality velvet and played with the fringes pulling away from the shirt. I sprinted across the house, while Maya and Mandi sat on the couch, waiting for my next direction. I went to get the makeup, the most important part of a costume. Back in the living room, I screamed for Mandi and Maya to come see the completed work of art. It was perfect. Not too scary, not too sweet. Just right. I mean, who wouldn’t want to give candy to an electrocuted girl?

It took about two hours (perfectly on schedule). It wasn’t dark just yet, but it was getting there. You know when it’s a little bit foggy and you turn the lights on in your car to be safe? The little kids, still not old enough to go out on their own, were finally going home to sleep while their parents ate candy and waited for the real trick-or-treaters. The kids who know what they are doing. That was us. But we weren’t the average trick-or-treaters. We had a strategy: where to get the best candy, who hands out more at the end of the night, who just wanted to scare a few innocent kids. It was a game, and we were going to win.

Slowly, we inched towards the door. I was in the front, followed by my two companions. They were too afraid to take the lead. Whenever they somehow ended up a footstep in front of me, there was an automatic head whip in unison. “Is this the right way, Emily?” It never failed. Sometimes I would purposely lag behind to see how long it would take for them to realize I was no longer guiding them. The longest count was to five.

Sometimes, I wished they didn’t notice I was gone, that I could hide in the background like everyone else. It must be nice for them, not having to make any decisions, not having to worry about other people. For once, maybe I didn’t want to be in control of everything; maybe I didn’t want to be the first one noticed. People told me not to take that for granted, that not everyone got to be seen like I did. I didn’t believe them until that night.

“Have fun!” My mom called as we rushed out of the house along with the rest of the neighborhood kids. I always laughed at the others. So simple, never taking what they were getting into seriously. They didn’t know the third house on Weatherford only served pretzels or that the house right next to the cemetery handed out king-sized chocolate bars.

They just randomly selected houses to annoy with their constant knocking. Average kids, blending into the stereotypical image of Halloween. I liked to watch them. Critique their choices. But never for too long—we had business to take care of.

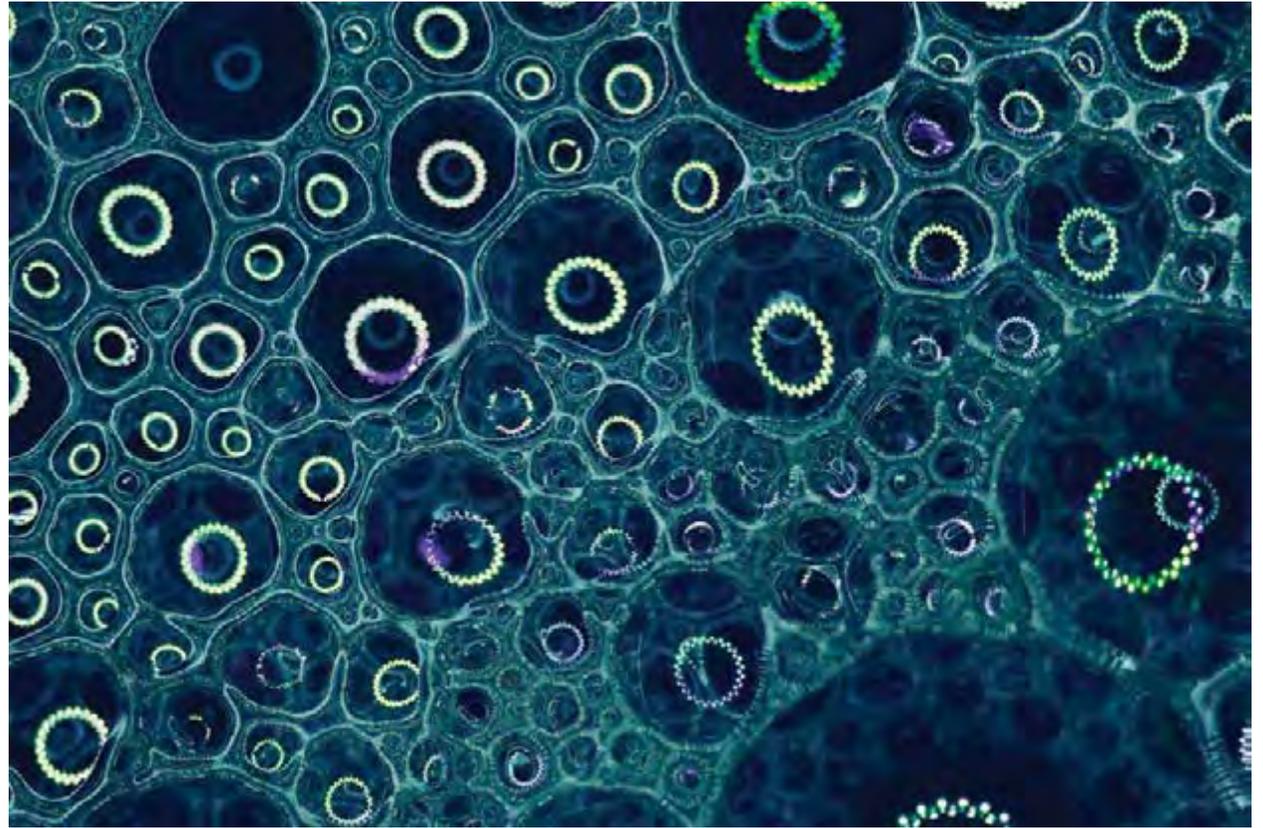
“Here.” Being in charge, I went to the door first. A perk of leadership: being the first one noticed, the one that is remembered, seen. Knock, knock, knock. Three times is all you need. Enough to let the owners know this was no trick but few enough to know you were on a mission and were there for only treats, no chitchat. Within thirty minutes we had hit fifteen houses, my plan was perfect. Our candy bags were filled up. I had planned for only two drop-offs, to empty our bags and have a snack, but we were ahead of schedule, so I decided it was okay to relax and stop by the house for a bit. We ate some candy and joked about the ignorant children outside. After about ten minutes, I decided it was time to get back to business. “Let’s go.” Immediately Maya and Mandi stood up (of course).

“SOMETIMES, I WISHED THEY DIDN’T NOTICE I WAS GONE, THAT I COULD HIDE IN THE BACKGROUND LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.”

Within no time, we had visited another ten houses. It was complete bliss. By following my perfect blueprint, we were beating all of the other kids to the good houses. I was on top of the world and my two admirers were following close behind. Nothing could have gone wrong. Or so I thought.

That's when I saw him: the ghost. Now, we knew he wasn't a real ghost (those don't exist), but he came and went with the silence of one. No one our age had ever encountered him—we had just heard the stories. Every Halloween, a boy, dressed in all black, would "haunt" our neighborhood. He would chase down kids and steal their candy, but he would do so in a way that you never saw coming. One second you would be scouting out your prey and the next you would be on the ground, your night's winnings gone. He was infamous. Maya and Mandi never believed he actually existed. They were too afraid to even imagine the possibility. I, on the other hand, didn't just believe in him—I hoped he was real. He was my idol. Not the stealing candy part, but his ability to plan out his night with such perfection and never get caught amazed me. He knew your every step, always able to adapt to any mishap. We heard of kids trying to trick him, trying to see if they could show him up. They thought they were so clever. Those were the ones that lost their candy every year. The ones whose nights he would go out of his way to ruin.

There he was, slowly creeping up to his victim, a fairy princess. I stopped and watched in awe. He was a genius. Then out of nowhere, he looked up, as if he knew he was being watched. I couldn't move. I needed to look away, pretend I didn't see him (I didn't want my candy stolen), but I was stuck. His head turned, and he was looking directly at me. Our eyes locked, and in that moment I knew he was scared. He had never been caught before, and there I was, studying his movements. It wasn't until the little girl started crying that I was released from my trance (Maya and Mandi were still a few yards behind me). I watched as he snuck away through the woods. Suddenly, I no longer wanted to trick-or-treat. I wanted to follow him, to know him, to memorize his every move. I glanced back at Maya and Mandi. They would be okay without me. Next



thing you know, I was chasing after the ghost.

I had a late reaction. I hesitated too long. By the time I got to the edge of the woods, he was gone. I could hear my friends calling for me, but they were no longer my top priority. They needed to learn how to fend for themselves anyway. Luckily, it had rained earlier in the day, so there were footprints. As I started to follow the trail he so generously left for me, I began to wonder where he was leading me. Did he have a secret hideout? Was he playing a game with me? Did he even know I was there? I didn't care. I had to know. I needed to know how he did it. How he calculated every child's movement and remained invisible, I needed to learn his ways.

I walked through the woods, careful to watch for any changes in the path. Nothing.

He just kept going forward. On and on. And seemingly at the same speed the whole time. The footprints were the same distance apart, about two of my steps. There was no way I would be able to catch up. It was getting really late too; I had

CONT.

LATHER
photography

CHANELLE DESPINS

CONT. probably been following him for a good half hour. But I couldn't stop. This could be my only opportunity to see him. So I kept going. Abruptly, the footprints stopped, as if he had vanished. I didn't know what to do. There was no sign of him anywhere. I got my flashlight out and scanned the ground for any sign of him. And there it was. One single piece of candy. He knew I was following him. Someone of his expertise would never lose a piece of his treasure. He knew, and I was willing to take the bait. Sure enough, a few yards away there was another piece. I was on the prowl again.

It took about fifteen minutes to reach the field. I couldn't contain my excitement. The ghost was willing to meet me. He offered up his stash to lead me to this spot. What was he going to say? What would I say? I had no idea, but I started running. I saw the clearing, the opening in the trees. I was shaking. I had waited my whole life for this moment, and here it was. I stopped at the tree line. I wanted to see him before he saw me. When I got there though, he wasn't there. I stepped out into the field, flickering my flashlight onto the trees. He was nowhere in sight. He was playing a game. He just wanted to see a little girl get lost in the woods. That petty loser. I was distraught, angry at myself for being so stupid. I sat down in the grass,

not ready to go home. I didn't think I could handle getting yelled at by my parents. So I sat, my head in my hands. I didn't cry, but I wanted to. It hurt knowing how awful people can be. After a few minutes . . . I looked up.

There. Sitting right in front of me. There. I was shocked. He knew I was following him, and this wasn't just some trick. There was his stolen treasure, his takings from the night. I stood up and looked around. Why would he leave this? He worked so hard to get this and to just leave it for a little girl was out of character. I cautiously stepped up to the bag and sitting on top was a note. I was confused. A note? He must have been there way before me to have had time to write this. I picked it up.

Thank you.

Thank you? No explanation, no nothing. I grabbed the bag and sprinted home, tears filling up my eyes. I was so angry. I didn't even care about the grounding I would get or the silent treatment I would be forced to deal with for the next few days. I just wanted to go home and scream in my pillow. I wasted the perfect night of trick-or-treating on him.

It wasn't until the next Halloween that I understood the note. We were out trick-or-treating again when we heard a group of kids gossiping. "Yeah, that's right. No more ghost." "What happened?" "Why are you asking me? I never saw him!" "How do you know he's gone?" "He returned the candy bag he stole from me . . ." That's when I knew what the note meant, when I stopped taking being noticed for granted. All this time he was just a ghost who wanted to be seen. ●



AEGRUS

poetry

ANNA HOUSER

Eyelids hang as heavy
as the copper kettle that's been sitting on your
front porch
for the last nine years, weeds clambering over the
rim in lazy ferociousness.

Cheeks feel like your daddy's deck the summer
before he made us varnish it: sturdy,
but with sharp edges that do their best
to leave a scar.

Tongue is a dry rope that's spent an eon hanging
useless at the ocean's side,
salty
and flaking
and sedentary.

Fingers twitch and pull and jitter back and forth
in constant fearful indecision like your mother
every year
before she cuts her birthday cake,
eyeing every person in the room
before she tries to
make the sizes fit.

Smell of old clothes slides from the top shelf
of grandma's closet, down the stairs and past the
living room
before reaching the faded magnets and crocheted
and useless doilies
on the fridge. She's kept them there since 1971 to
remind herself that
no, some things
don't,
and won't,
and can't

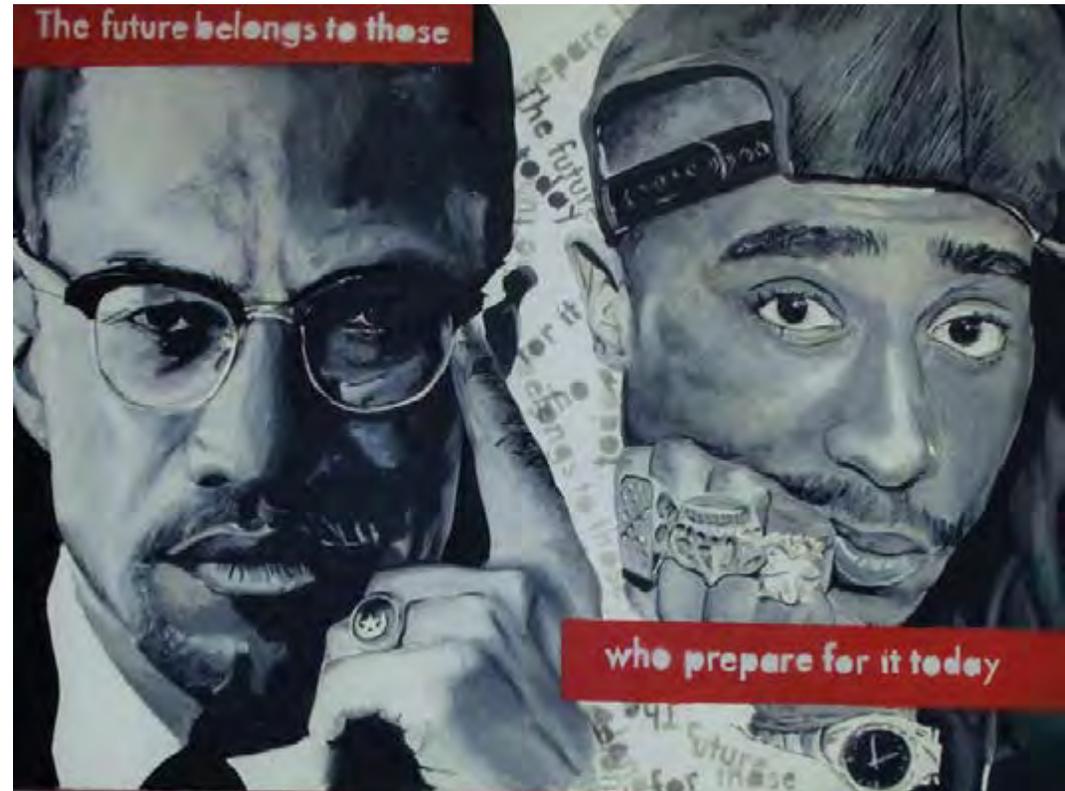
fall apart without at least
a little effort.

Mirror tells me these unkind new things
about this flesh. Fear shakes me.
Hands pull at the unfamiliar texture of aging skin.
Mind reports the change but denies Emotion the
chance to grieve.

Prediction army-crawls to join the others,
and unflinchingly warns me that it's just the
beginning

unless I can get these mottled hands to bend
the chilly metal bars of past and present,
and wrench them sharply towards a twisted
but less fragile future.

The truth in solipsism is stocked
on the 4th shelf to the right
in Dave's Hardware Shop,
next to the welding tools,
and is still waiting to be purchased
by a younger hand
than mine.



LOST PROPHETS

oil on canvas

TRAVIS WASHINGTON



THE BUSINESS OF FALLING IN LOVE WITH STRANGERS

prose

SAVANNA ERATH

I have always been able to find the beauty in anonymity.

That is my job, after all.

I am a taxi driver, so was my father before me and his before him. It's an honest job, an honest living. Not glamorous, by any means, but it pays the bills. My wife has grown to dislike it. She tells me it is dangerous these days, what with the increasing crime rates. All the psychopaths on the news. She worries about me, and I about her, for I believe she frets needlessly.

I tried to explain my reasoning, once.

The people of this city do not see me the way my wife does. To them, I am as much a fixture of the environment as the high-rises surrounding them. As intangible as the car I drive. I am untouchable. So normal, so familiar to the citizens here, that I often cease to be a person entirely, becoming instead a sort of comforting landmark. A refuge of sorts.

And, tell me, have you ever known anyone to mug a landmark?

That is not to say there is no danger in my job. There is. But, there is no more danger in my line of work than there is in being a bank teller. A park ranger. A busboy.

I am content. Though I may not always adore my job, I am comfortable with it. It has shown me the

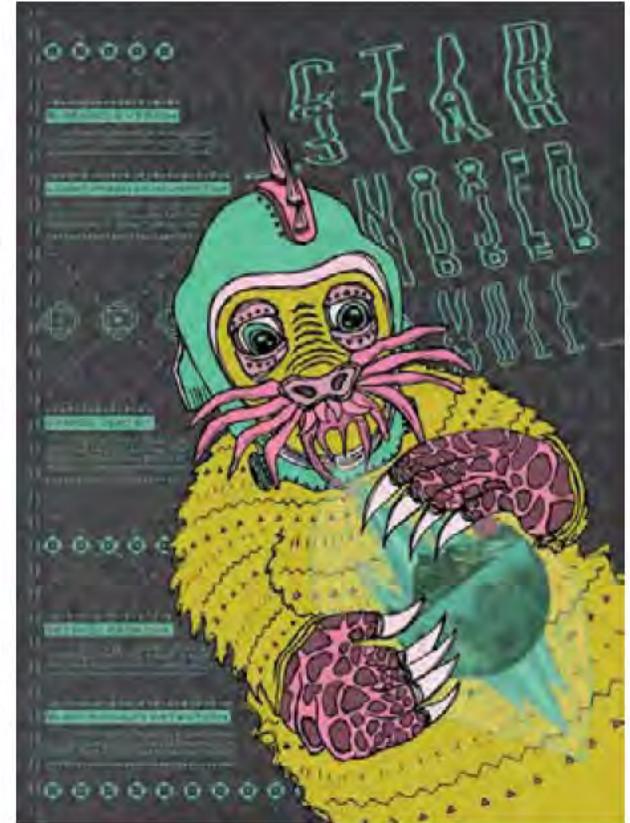
city. Mapped it out for me in long, late night drives illuminated only by the orange glow of back alley streetlamps and in early morning drives all the way across town, the wheels of my small yellow island racing over the pit-marked interstate pavement.

And while I may not love my job, I love this city. With all of my heart. With my soul. When it sleeps, I sleep. When it wakes, I wake. My car and I are connected to the lifeblood of this place. We flow with the traffic, and we observe the lives that intersect our own. The lives that briefly flirt with ours and then disappear again just as quickly, melting into Main Street and 8th Avenue and Hickory Lane. They leave behind nothing more than a faint trace of body heat on the black leather backseat and the occasional wallet, notebook, or cell phone.

And herein lies the beauty, the majesty of this grand anonymity. I meet so many people, day and night, that eventually, their faces blur together and their voices blend, but their stories? The pieces of themselves which they share with me? Those I will carry forever. It makes the job—the long nights, early mornings, low wages—all worth it. It shows me over and over again that the world is so much larger than myself.

I will never forget my first run.

I was twenty-two and I'd just dropped out of community college, having only attended the first three weeks of class. When I'd come home on that last day, my father had opened the door solemnly.



STAR NOSED MOLE

digital illustration
CHRISTINE CRAFT

No mocking expression. No "I told you so" sitting patiently on his lips. Reclining back in his La-Z Boy, he'd sat me down in the living room and informed me he was retiring. The room was silent for several minutes, and, when all of his patience was finally exhausted, he raised one brow and waved his hand toward the garage.

"Well. That car ain't gonna wash itself, is it?"

You report for duty tomorrow morning, and I'll be damned if my taxi is out there on those streets with even one speck of dirt on it. So get to it." And though the words sounded rough and sharp around the edges, he was smiling with his lips curled back into a grin that was uniquely his own. And that was it. My fate? Sealed.

A taxi life for me.

Back then, I might have been a little resentful. I had believed it was my father, not fate, which had pushed me to my career. Like it was the weight of his expectations that had kept me from succeeding in college.

I was also nervous.

I knew how to drive a taxi, of course. I knew what to say and how to act. When to talk and when to keep my mouth shut. Those were valuable skills passed down to all of the men of my family, even if they didn't enter the business. My father said it was "just in case," but I knew. I knew that, eventually, one way or another, we all made our way back to the yellow cab. We all took up the mantle.

Although I knew how to conduct myself in *theory*, applying it in real time was still a bit of a stretch. I was an awkward youth. I wasn't good at talking to people, especially strangers, and I'd often say either too much or nothing at all, making conversations stilted and one-sided.

So when I pulled up to the curb on that first day, after being hailed by a young woman in her early twenties, probably very close to my own age, I was terrified. I put the car in park and waited with bated breath as she opened the door and slid inside. For a few moments, silence stagnated the air and I forgot all etiquette. She cleared her throat, and I

was grateful for it, twisting around to look at her through the smeared glass separating us.

I smiled.

She smiled.

"Where to, ma'am?" I asked, my voice sounding more like a boy's than a man's. She was devastatingly beautiful. She had long black hair that curled around her face like a velvet curtain and big bright eyes that shone with intelligence. Her nose was rather long and sharp, hooking slightly inward at the end. On anyone else, I'm sure it would have looked quite severe. As it was, it suited her. Made her eyes look all the more bright. Her smile that much more compelling.

Her eyes crinkled in amusement, and she answered in a confident, open tone:

"The corner of Jefferson and Whitewood."

Back then, I didn't know the city the way I do now. I had to consult the small, fold-out travel map in my glove compartment for several minutes before I was ready to depart. All that time, she sat in the backseat, staring out the window in silent contemplation, a small smile on her face.

Once we were on the road, I felt myself begin to clam up again. I wanted to speak with this woman but I had no idea what to say. What to ask. What to think.

Before my insecurities could run away with me completely, I was rescued by her charitable grin. She caught my eye in the rearview mirror, and I smiled sheepishly, tilting my head. She nodded back, like we shared a secret, and then she asked me:

"New to the business?"

"Ah, yes." I felt a flush creep up the back of my neck. "Can you believe it? A cabbie, consulting a map."

She smiled again, and I felt it like a blow to the stomach. She really was gorgeous.

"That's not so bad. Though, I could have given you directions if you'd only asked." Though the words had the potential to be quite cruel, the way she said them with such sympathy and enthusiasm put me strangely at ease.

"I'll remember that. For next time."

That seemed to satisfy her. When I looked into the rearview mirror once more, she had settled back comfortably in her seat, staring again out the window, that grin still flirting with her lips, turning them up at the corners.

The rest of the ride was completed in companionable silence, and when I pulled up to her stop at last, she unbuckled her seat belt and leaned forward. She slipped a piece of paper, along with her payment, between the glass. In explanation, all she said was:

"For next time."

I waited until she had exited the vehicle before opening the slip of paper, my hands slightly unsteady. Inside, a name and a telephone number were penned in neat, blocky lettering.

On my first run, I met my wife. ●

TENNESSEE SUN

poetry

RANDY SLOAN

Warbling birds on branches precede billows,
Wisps of gray on the eastern horizon
Fill the firmament. Announce your advent
Till you drape across the Earth's curvature.
Spray the green with your blazing, orange blood.
Trickle through these wooded stained glass win-
dows
Like one hundred candles trembling in the leaves.
Scatter shades on skyscrapers with your gaze,
Warm the worn vinyl brick siding with your haze,
Let babbling streams slip through your lustrous
hands,
Dye the heavens with creamsicle orange
And the yellow from a lemonade stand.
Die to the opulent, neon lit night
For now, you lie temporarily slain
Clutching and clawing at the horizon,
Surmounting insurrection, you shall rise
And relish in the dawn of your victory,
Justly claiming your ethereal seat.
But for now, burn brightly, Tennessee sun,
Follow the path of your predestined trail.
Across her face let your fingertips run,
Gently lift up her ethereal veil.
Carry away the pristine, morning dew,
Illuminate the softly bristling trees,
Make Moses's burning bush burn anew,



GRAND CANYON

photography

MIKA MOLLENKOPF

Consume, yet preserve, these whispering leaves.
Warm tinges of peach and apricot hues
All sprawl across the hilly horizon
Soften, scatter, and dissolve into blue.
Perhaps, a storm may invade your twilight,
Heat lightning, like paparazzi in the sky,
Silently flashes whites, purples, and grays.

An unrestrained power made reticent
Briefly forges day from the charcoal night.
We will revere with limited senses,
Glaring from the outskirts of paradise,
Fingers entwined around chain link fences.
We, the characters of tales not yet told,
Gaze at a transient city of gold.

ERASER SHAVINGS

poetry

TATIANA SILVAS

Scribbled pen marks
out what was written in error,
Messy hair shoved from bright eyes and

Metal chairs
Scrape
tile floor where tennis balls are missing.

Hearts rashly beat with the newness of youth.

Converse and Jansport label them as whole while
Laughter
links them.

Hand sanitizer and sweat
Linger
in hormonal hallways.

Wrinkles in shirts are lacking at eyes,
Aches soak in hearts, not bones,

Moments are made up of eraser shavings,
rash heart beats,
and hand sanitizer.

Mistakes made under shelter of eraser shavings,
hand sanitizer, and tennis balls
slow
hearts rashly beating
into
cautious beats.

No more do eraser shavings mark hearts rashly beating.
No more do tennis balls guard from harsh tile.
Hearts are without hand sanitizer,
Growing coldly cautious.

UNTITLED

mixed media
ERIN ALIQUO





GRAPEFRUIT TIME

acrylics

ALEXANDER LEE



GRAMMA'S KITCHEN

poetry

STARSHIELD LORTIE

In that kitchen she bakes, covered in flour dust,
Christ-dust she sometimes calls it,
apron hanging loose around her hips,

Heat waves relay the smell of freshly made family
treats—
apple pie and birthday cake and anise cookies—
creating an aromatic familial sanctuary.

She talks about the importance of pie dough
consistency, her knobby, wrinkled fingers
kneading in time to her own well-worn rhythm.

She leans in close as she drapes the dough
into the Crisco-ed pan. Unintelligible whispers
spill out like secret ancestral recipe ingredients.

Frosted fudge from yesterday's lesson waits
impassive under the fluted glass cake cover,
a perfect pyramid of dark brown squares.

In that kitchen, a fight breaks out. Grown
granddaughters
become bitter enemies. Their relentless
competition
for her attention agitates her refined refuge.

A pot gets thrown, barely missing its target.
Melting butter and sugar and chocolate
coat the walls, the ceiling, the hot bodies.

Dishes fall, epithets fly, and death threats are spit
into puddles of batter and tears and blood.
An open hand burns into exposed flesh.

The life of the pies, and cakes, and lemon bars
suffocate beneath their passionate rage. Her life's
work is silenced by their unresolved hatred.

Her baking lessons evaporate in the fervent
attack as any thread of family connection
is pulverized to dust with the flour.

In that kitchen, she inches on her knees,
quiet and careful, swabbing away drying remnants
of a deeply rooted unwillingness to let go.

She works into the night alone, scrubbing at stains
that will never come out, resetting her world to
“fine.”

Her unintelligible whispers become exhausted
sighs.

She wipes everything clean—the cupboards, the
walls,
the windows, the oven—until surfaces shine,
reflecting nothing but the breaking dawn's light.

Later, she stands at the kitchen table
rolling out dough for biscuits, her grandmother's
ancient juice glass cutting perfect circles over and
over.

On the wall behind her, yellowing with age,
“Be It Ever So Humble, There Is No Place Like
Home,” hangs stoic on its rusting wire, sticky with
steam and grease and time.

COLLAGE

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ABOUT COLLAGE

Collage is a biannual publication of the Middle Tennessee State University Honors College. All submissions are reviewed anonymously and selected by a student editorial staff. The materials published by *Collage* do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the *Collage* staff, 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 works, such as art, photography, short stories, essays, short plays, song lyrics, and poetry, may be submitted digitally to the website or may be turned in at the *Collage* office, Honors 224, between the hours of 7:30 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 top-scoring 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 letters of recommendation.

CREATIVE EXPRESSION AWARDS

Each semester the *Collage* Faculty Advisory Board selects four submissions to 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.



ART
SINKING DEEP IN MERCY'S SEA
Chelsea Bastoky



POETRY
GRAMMA'S KITCHEN StarShield Lortie



PHOTOGRAPHY
REFLECTION Rebecca Poole



PROSE
THE BUSINESS OF FALLING IN LOVE WITH STRANGERS Savanna Erath

COLUMBIA SCHOLASTIC PRESS ASSOCIATION AWARDS

Gold Medalist Certificates – 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014
Silver Crown Awards – 2007, 2008, and 2011
Gold Crown Awards – 2012 and 2013

PRODUCTION NOTES

TECHNOLOGY

Adobe InDesign CC2014
Adobe Illustrator CC2014
Adobe Photoshop CC2014
Apple Macintosh Platform
Windows Platform

TYPOGRAPHY

Caecilla LT Std, Various Weights
Gotham, Various Weights

PAPER

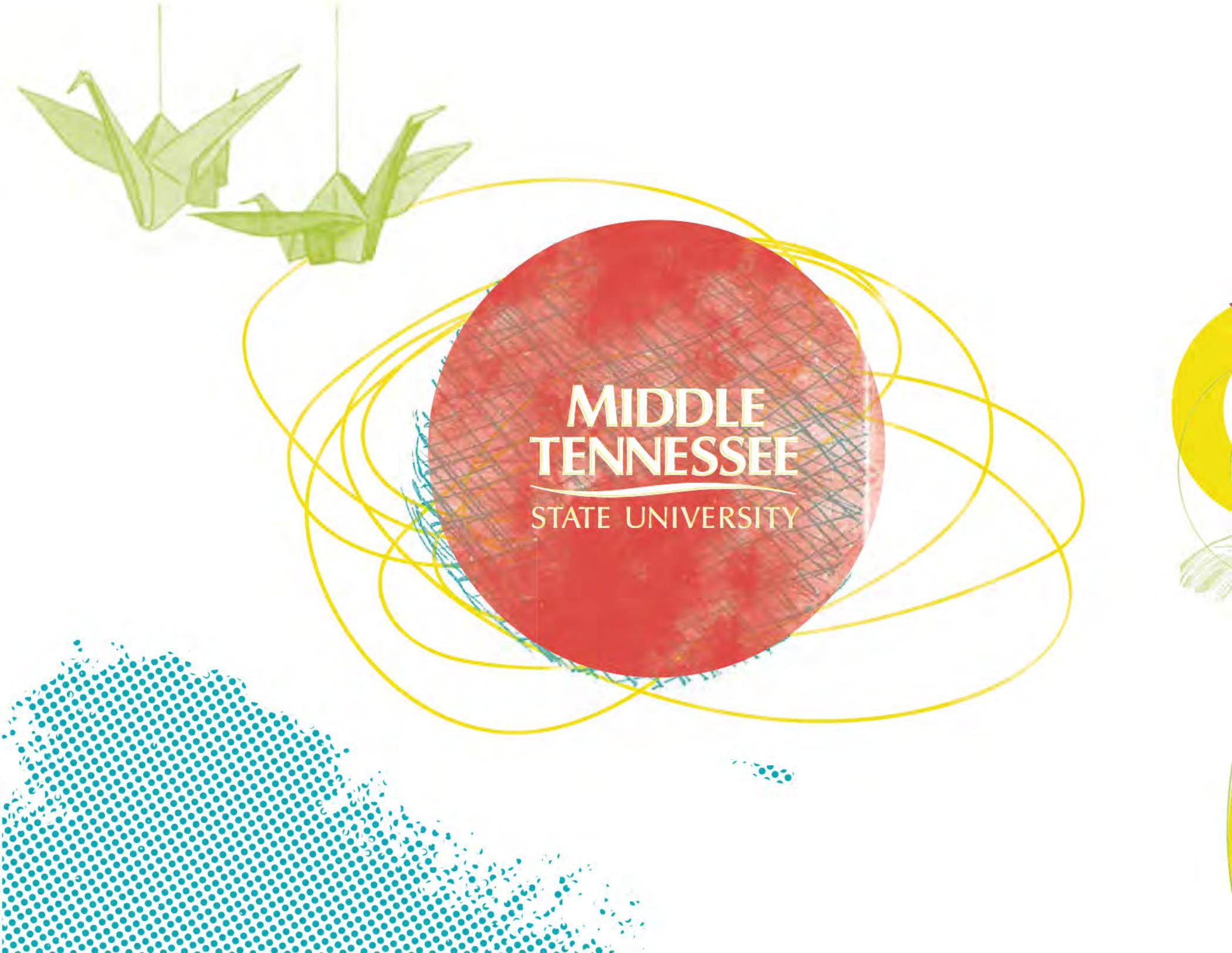
100 lb. Athens Silk Cover
80 lb. Athens Silk Text

BINDING

Saddle Stitch

PRINTING

Lithographics, Inc. of Nashville, Tennessee printed approximately 2,300 copies of *Collage*.



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