

The background of the entire page is a white surface with vibrant, abstract blue ink splashes and swirls. The ink is in various shades of blue, from light to dark, and is captured in motion, creating a sense of fluidity and creativity. The splashes are most prominent in the upper and lower right quadrants, with some darker, more concentrated areas on the left side.

COINAGE

a journal of creative expression

issue 24 Fall 2016

A fountain pen is shown on the left side of the page, with a large, vibrant blue ink splash emanating from its tip. The splash is dynamic and fluid, with various shades of blue and white highlights, creating a sense of movement. The background is a light, neutral color with some faint, abstract shapes.

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UNIVERSITY HONORS COLLEGE**

A black and white photograph of a classical bell tower. The tower features a pedimented roof supported by four columns. Two large bells are visible, hanging from the structure. The tower is set against a light background, and there are some blue ink splashes around its base.

Bell tower photo by J Intintolli

COLLAGE

Fall 2016
issue 24

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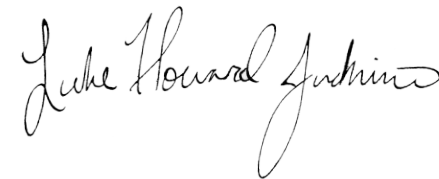
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“Art is not what you see, but what you make others see,” envisions Edgar Degas. Certainly, the works of Art within this new installment of *Collage* are a looking glass into ourselves and the student body of Middle Tennessee State University. Sifting through our record number of submissions this semester, I was evermore reminded how these various media of expression represent the student body in its most unique and diverse form. This issue of *Collage* will no doubt invite you on a journey through the various times, spaces, and experiences of our distinct student body, opening to all who peruse its pages the refreshing realities that are among us.

Before you begin exploring these magnificent works in the following pages, I would like to thank our staff members who devote a tremendous amount of hard work and talent, our beloved role model and adviser Marsha Powers who always encourages and uplifts us, all of our submitters who make this journal possible with their abundance of great submissions, and lastly, our readers

who take time to enjoy such beautiful Art. *Collage* could not be this outstanding without the determination and dedication of each and every one of you. Because of this dedication, my alacrity abounds with my anticipation of *Collage's* future. Since 1968, *Collage* has continued to reach new heights, and I am humbled to be a part of its legacy.

Without further ado, I am honored to present the Fall 2016 installment of *Collage: A Journal of Creative Expression*.



Luke Howard Judkins
Editor in Chief

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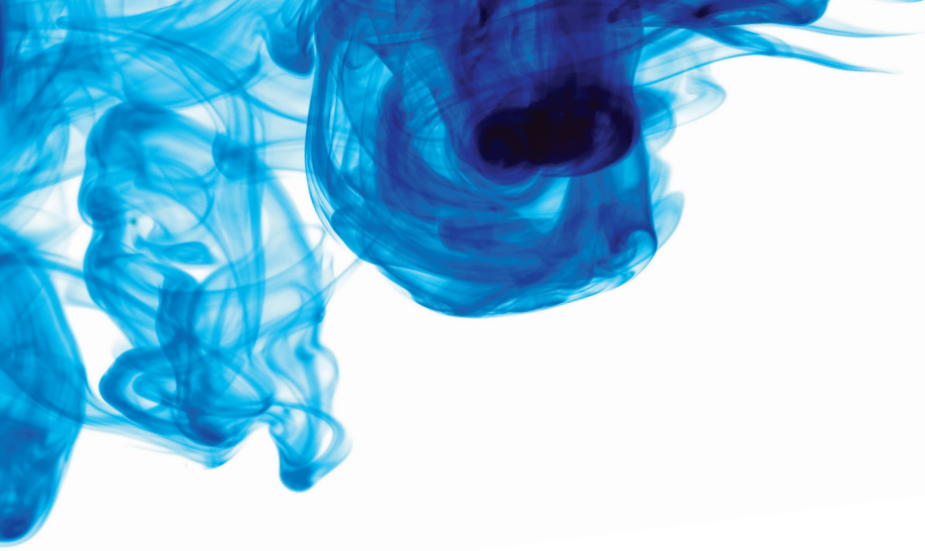
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Chimaera

Jaden Tabb

poetry

We are hybrid creatures.
Paupers and Princes,
Serfs and Kings.
We dine on gold,
Sleep in dirty sheets.
Counting quarters,
Driving cars.
Metal behemoths
With fire in their bellies,
Exploding them into the world
To the nearest McDonald's.

We watch electric signals
Burst across a pane of glass,
Painting with colors more brilliant
Than the concrete world around,
While drinking two dollar beers.
We are lords of our own shit
Sitting on porcelain thrones
Devouring the world.
Are we more like gluttonous rulers
Gorging themselves at Royal feasts?
Or like the ravenous beasts
Starved of truth and fed with lies?



Lydia

Alena Mehic
oil painting



Life in 3D
Andréa Forsythe
oil painting



New Orleans
Ambre Rogue
digital photography



Dance as Light as a Feather

Julia Strickland
digital photography

Broken Record | Tabitha Fuller *poetry*

Look me deep in my eyes as if it's possible for our souls to dance together in the sunlight.
See, I've been searching all this time
To find someone to give my all to —
A rhythm for my soul to dance along to.
I had hopes that, that rhythm would be your vibes,

But will you really be the one to silence my heart's cries —
The one to free my heart of the fear of being played like a brok
The one to turn my scars into healing melodies,
The one who strokes all my piano keys into a beautiful harmony.
If you are the one, we can make symphonies for centuries.
Let your rhythm be the reason I've always wanted to dance in the sun.

Perception

Evgenia Kim
mixed media



The Great Escape

Myranda Uselton
poetry

He left to get groceries,
and my mom pulled our travel-torn bags out
from under the bed,
and we fled like life was a race
until I could hold that house in the horizon
on my fingertips,
and when I squinted my eyes, it wasn't there at all.
And that night, I snored softly in a hotel
where no figures loomed in doorframes,
and Best Western felt like home.



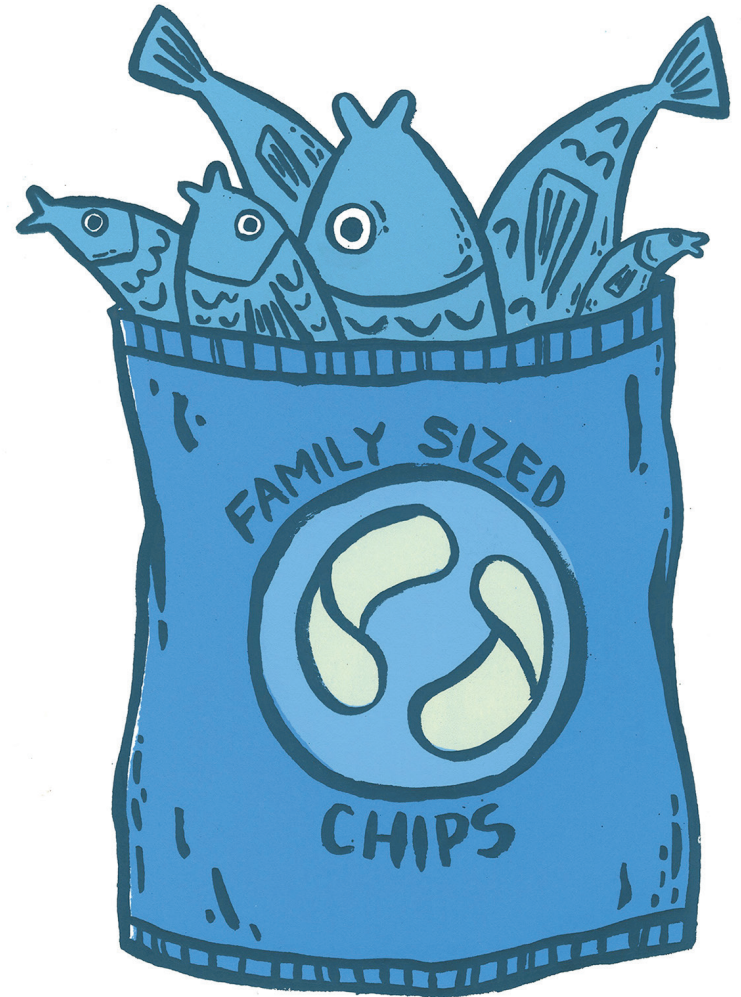
Treasure Island

Eric Breedlove
mixed media



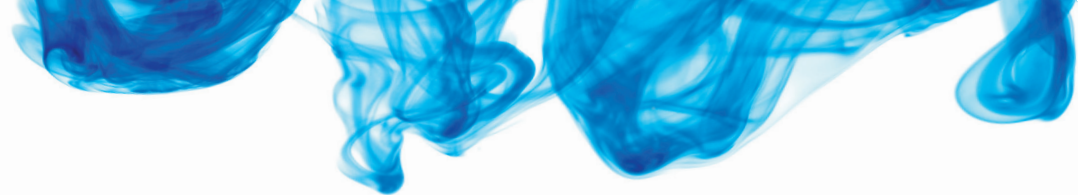
Mansfield

Eric Breedlove
mixed media



Fish in Chips

Ricki Le
screenprinting



Hanes® Comfort-Fit, Men's Size Medium

Mariah Mims
fiction

You opened the door in your gray cotton t-shirt and hugged me into it. Your arms wrapped around me twice. Your teeth tasted like the wine stained flavors of Lucky Strikes, lukewarm cherry cola, and cinnamon gum. My face pressed to the soft fabric filling my senses with the smell of sawdust, buzz cut grass, and your sweaty skin. You drove me to the city; you drove me wild. There, in the wild, we parked. The busy streets were sardine-packed with toy cars and plastic people. I kept tugging on your sleeve, the infrastructure of your stretchy shirt sending you bumping you into me. Under the blue lagoon moon in the midnight sea sky, we were like colliding planets in each other's gravitational range.

We glowed phosphorescently with craters in our eyes and half-moon smiles. Everyone around us was blue suede, and we were neon and gold. I put my hand on that soft seam, running my fingers across the collar. You pulled your chin in an angle away, so that we became a geometrically disconnected triangle that happened to be smiling at each other like fools.

My tongue tasted like 70-proof alcohol and your licorice lips.

We were walking and stretching on the yawning

fields of pavement when a homeless man came up to you and me like a prophet. He said he could predict our future for your five dollars and the last of my cigarette.

He said, "You got a good one."

He said, "You gotta keep him around."

Just on and on like that forever.

The stars of that Tuesday night freckled like disco lights mimicking our half-drunk dance in the knotted grass. I kept tracing my name and my heart into the chest of your velveteen rabbit soft shirt. My finger pulled the cotton in shapes as we pretzeled together, and somehow, I ended up with your shirt, two sizes too big over my own cold shoulders. I remember you kissed my knees and tied my shoes when it was time to leave.

"You were my god-shaped hole, my missing gold tooth, and my favorite t-shirt."

You were my god-shaped hole, my missing gold tooth, my favorite t-shirt.

Now, a year has passed and it's Tuesday again and I'm at your party in that gray t-shirt that stretches out across my back the way your arms used to do. I am

under the party lights; above, they are strung out and high like the hypnotic, neon hula dancers in their grass skirts in the grass field below. They are connecting at the fingertips and spreading like wildfire, and I'm here alone. I watch you with her, and I am wondering if you treat her the way I wished you would.

I wonder if you take her places. I wonder if you press her against the heat of your car sometime around midnight, when you ask her not to leave. I wonder if you kiss her till she feels it in her hips and fingertips. I wonder if you hold her hand in public. In all that wondering, I think, maybe I was just asking too much.

But, I hope she notices the way the edges of your mouth curve up like cursive lines of her favorite words. I hope that when you speak to her, instead of me, she notices the way your silver retainer lines up behind all of your smiling teeth.

I hope you know that I still think of the last words you said to me like a religious prayer over and over in my head. Just on and on like that forever.

I guess, in the end, I just want to say that yeah, I still have your shirt. I haven't given it back yet, but I promise I will. Once I get my heart stitched off the sleeve. ●



Untitled 3
Romerus Greer
oil painting



Axis
Jerry Miracle
mixed media



Down on Broadway

Ambre Rogue
digital photography

Patagonia
Janie Kullmar
digital photography



Jackson, WY

Guy Shelton
digital photography



North Shoreline

William Smith
poetry

There's a calm breeze blowing.
It touches my skin, chill in the night air,
And the cold water laps the shoreline.
This lake, a blue jewel in the dark,
Beset by the trees' umbrage,
Lurking before shadowy hillsides.
The blue-green light strikes my eyes.

I feel the solitude grasp my finger.
It's tugging at my life essence,
Drawing me to the shoreline.
This guide, a new hope in the dark,
Beset by the heart's homage,
Lurking before shadowy depths.
The newfound light strikes my soul.

Dream | Jonathan Elam
poetry

I followed the sun to the distant shore,
And there I saw beauty like never before.
As the sun hung over that endless sea,
Its embracing warmth was washed over me.
As the sky was filled with such magnitude of colors,
I was struck senseless in awe at such wonders.
The sight filled me with so much peace,
Such that all my inner strivings would cease,
If I could depart and go into the West.
For maybe there I could finally rest.



Katherine's Resort

Stephanie Van Horn
digital photography



Mystery of Nature

Jake Lewter
digital photography



Please Ask

Dylan Miller
film photography



I is a Lizard

Linda Gale Rose
poetry

todo lo que buscabas, eras tú
eres el pescado, y también, la red
so when I think to write a song for you
I end up writing it for myself instead

I plead for what I still had yet to learn
with noisy desperation I would yearn
one winter day he offered me a bone,
which I abused, as though it were my own

what we have sown, we sure enough will reap
look to the surface for the deepest deep
there's something here I can't stop speaking of:
what's there below is also there above.

the Love that lacks an object
is the best love that there is.
if I'm perfectly direct,
he is nowhere,
and I'm His.

Forgotten Letters

Devon Arnold
digital photography

During the summer of 2016, Ryan participated in *Honors in Italy*, a study abroad program sponsored by the University Honors College.



Ryan Bearden
honors student

Honors in Italy

Feature Story

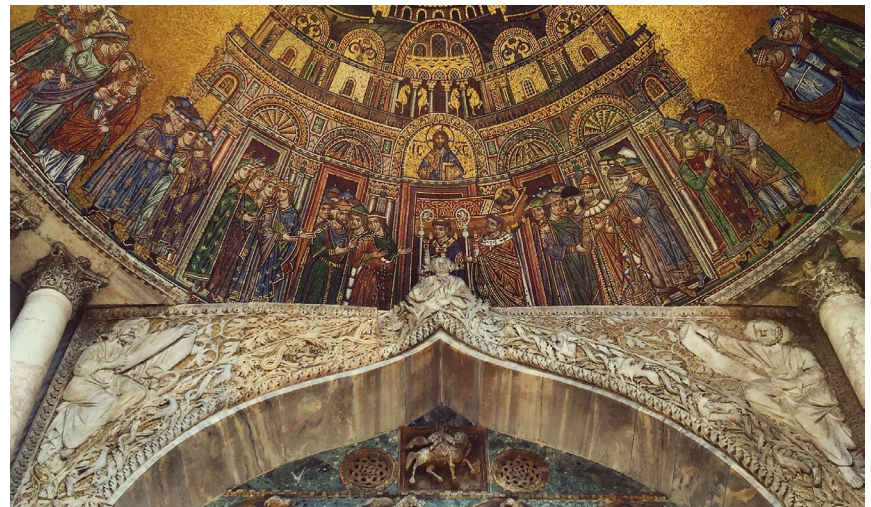
Defeat covered his face. I watched as stairs in the courtyard of the *Galleria degli Uffizi* now severed him from his wife. The bicycle looked like it weighed no more than 15lbs, but his white hair, speckled skin, and thin shaky frame was that of someone who had walked up too many stairs before. In my mind, I could see a younger him maneuvering staircases carrying moving boxes, baskets of laundry, and perhaps sleeping children – things much heavier than this steel two-wheeled contraption. The dismayed expression he bore was a lucid contrast to the triumphal shades of smooth oranges, yellow, and lilac that reflected off the Arno onto his face. Now, his wife, at the top of the four stairs between them, gracefully swooped her kickstand down. Her face was wrinkled, and her skin was spotted, like his, but there was a strength in her eyes. I watched as she left her bike and walked down the stairs. With both arms she hugged his bike into her body and lugged it the distance so it could be by her own. Again, she returned to the place it had been and hugged her companion. He softly spoke to her in a foreign tongue, and they embraced. Then the old man clung to her as they both made their way up the steps, the wife for the third time. She gently kissed his forehead; they mounted up and continued on their trek. As they rode away, side-by-side down the street towards the Ponte Vecchio, the Tuscan sun was setting. The absolute beauty of that situation crashed into me. We all have people in our lives that help us or are willing to help

if we ask. Never give up on your dreams. Love is powerful, universal, and more beautiful than anything we can see with our eyes.

“We all have people in our lives that help us or are willing to help if we ask.”

Our journey began in Murfreesboro, Tennessee inside the Paul W. Martin Honors College building, Room 202. As students enrolled in the Honors College signature program, we met several times prior to the beginning of the semester. Most students, including myself, began reading the assigned works as soon as they were accepted into the program. First, we were introduced to the authors that lived in Italy and shaped their country and changed the world through their writings: Vergil, Anicius Manlius Severinus Boëthius, and Dante Alighieri. Their major works were read and discussed in depth. Next, we traveled to Italy to see world heritage sites and study abroad. Shortly after we arrived in *Roma*, we met Professor Troncarelli, who was kind enough to prepare a collection of original manuscripts for us during our visit to the *Biblioteca Angelica*. After he gave us a tour, he guided us downstairs to a private classroom where an original 14th century illuminated manuscript of Dante’s *Divina Comedia* was carefully passed around with awe.

On our trip, we were guided through ancient Roman ruins in Ostia Antica; we stood in the shadow of Mount Vesuvius; we threw euros into the Trevi Fountain; we experienced the beautiful mosaics and Byzantine atmosphere of Ravenna; we leaned in Pisa; we were cultured by the very city that birthed the Renaissance; we attended mass held by the worldwide leader of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis, in St. Peter's Square. From the awe inspiring sites to the little cultural nuances, through cultural exchange and experiencing human universals the trip was a constant learning and growing experience. Plus, I got a daily workout — hiking an average of 12 miles a day. If it were not for the copious amounts of pizza and gelato I consumed, I may have withered away. In the end, we did more than merely walk the streets of the Eternal City and climb to the top of the famed Leaning Tower: we experienced the world of Vergil, Boethius, and Dante. We now share something with Michelangelo, Christopher Columbus, Marco Polo, Galileo Galilei, Niccolò Machiavelli, and even Pinocchio. I cannot speak for every member of my cohort, but if you ask, I imagine they will tell you it changed their lives forever. ●



Daybreak

Harrison Thrift
poetry

I watch as you
dream, my heart
swelling with love.

The sun dances
softly on your
sleeping face.

Your chest rises
and falls in
a slow rhythm.

Your face, lax,
mouth agape,
angelic and serene.

The world outside
joins in your slumber,
peaceful and silent.

But with day's light
the world will wake,
and so will you.

The demons that
plague you will
try to haunt you.

The worries of the
world will try to
drag you down.

The people will
try to slander
and maim you.

Fear not, my darling.
I'll hold you in
my arms forever.

Fear not, my dear.
You're safe with
me, I promise.

Let not these
things trouble
or worry you.

I'll kiss you
until it hurts,
until it doesn't.

I'll always be
by your side,
forever, my love.

From dusk to dawn
and back again,
you'll find me.

So sleep and dream
and worry not,
my darling, my love.

Soon you'll wake,
and here you'll find me,
forever by your side.

Dunes of Concon

Janie Kullmar
digital photography



Hidden Portal

Daniel Zajac
digital photography





All Saints Chapel

Jake Lewter
digital photography

Harmony

Stephanie Van Horn
digital photography





Current Events

Blair Bandy
digital photography

Self Portrait

Nicole Zelenak
oil painting



Help Me Smile

Nicholas VanDeWalker
song lyrics

Verse:

Oh my mother
Please forgive me for what I've done
Oh my father
We both know I'm not the only one
Oh my brother
I'm so grown but still the little one
Oh my lover
I've been your darkest days under the sun

Chorus:

And I'm just trying to do my best
But I'm so tired, so let me rest
Cause there's so many things inside my head
If you'd just give me your hand
And help me smile

Verse:

Oh my bottle
You've given up on me
Drunken and empty
Inside my sheets
And my last cigarette
Is melted on my teeth
Seems like my own body has
Given up on me

Chorus:

And I'm just trying to do my best
But I'm so tired, so please let me rest
Cause there's so many things inside my head
If you'd just give me your hand
And help me smile



Vulnerable

Jasmine Weatherspoon
digital photography



Hell in Pictures

Callie Morgan

poetry

You should have been born a spider
Though eight eyes are not enough
To keep you from leering
Hoarding a forsaken gallery
You love the little boxes they come in
Shiny new and not me
Eight years should have been ample
Time to wash the guilt down

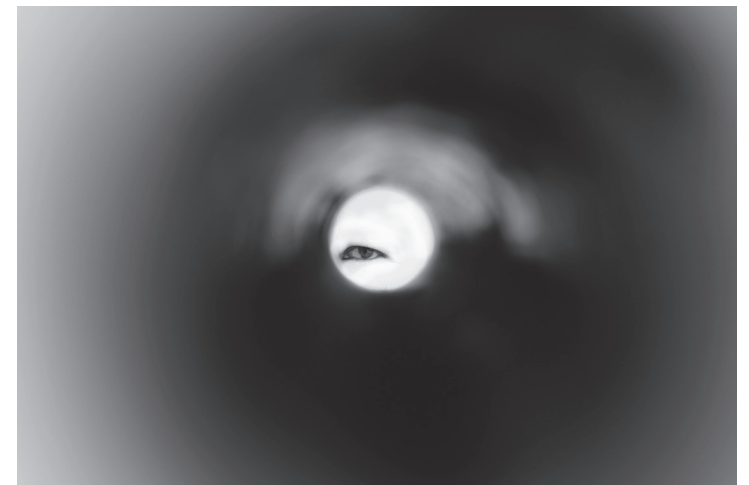
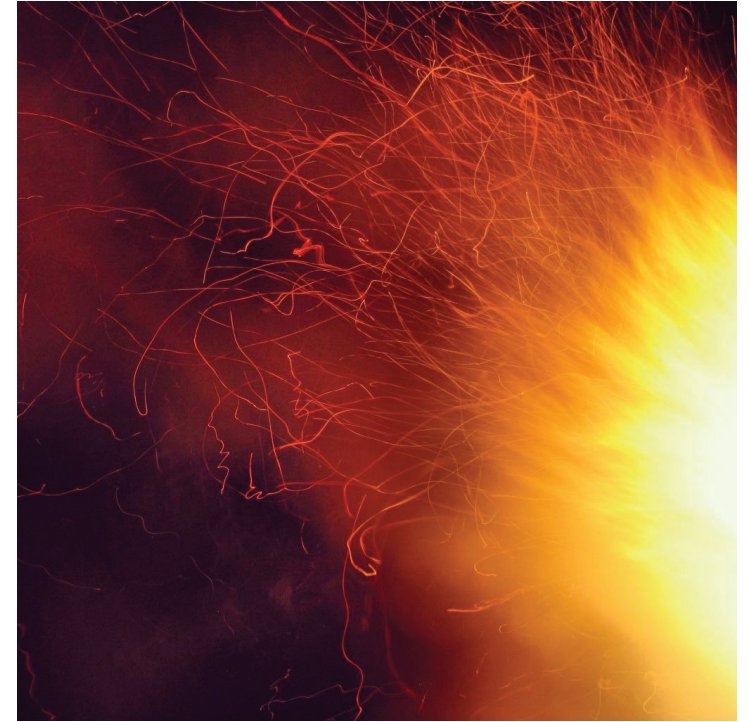
And I find solace in the thought
Of someone new holding me
O, the intimacy
Conventional face, small nosed
Made to last will he
Stick around in this web we cast?

I have issues too my dear
I talk and talk until there are no more ears
Tirelessly looking for someone who cares
Suitable like you seem, I still need more
Shut me out of these hell trap doors
Keep me away from that eight-year sin
If I left I know I will not love again

Those pictures you loved
But never scrapbooked
Replaced me whole
At least I can cook
A standard domestication
So you keep me wrapped
Around a finger or two
Did the pictures teach you too?

I curse your name for not keeping it away
At least let me believe it is primordial decay
Not some obsession
That writhed inside you
The same way my womb will
That lovely face and crooked dad nose
Lied
But I forgave
For you are perfect in each way
You have dealt me great pain
That I swallow every day
But those eight eyes damned me
To live this way

Fire | Eleanor Lieder
digital photography



The Eye | Barbara Harmon
digital photography



Mother | Ian Cooper
screenprinting



Remorse
Ian Cooper
screenprinting



Things in Life | Patricia Karl *nonfiction*

My father died alone the day after Christmas. No one knew until rent was due on the 1st. The landlord found him there.

I flew back home the next week to handle his affairs. The landlord had thrown everything in the basement to free up the apartment. I went to pick up his things. I didn't think I'd have enough room in the car so I cleared out the trunk. When I arrived, I was brought down into the basement. My eyes fixed on the pile.

Two bags of clothing and two small boxes. That was all my father left behind. I thought, "This can't be right, where's the rest of it?" My father lived alone in a one room apartment downtown for the last 20 years of his life. He owned no home, no car, no tables, no chairs, no dressers, no paintings, no pots, no pans, no nothing that resembled a life — or so I thought.

Is it sad that a man's life can be reduced to things stuffed in two bags and two boxes, or does it make treasures out of those things?

My father loved to write. Ever since I was a young girl he would write me letters. Poems, too. Hello to you, my daughter Patricia. I wonder how you've been.

I do love you, my daughter Patricia. For you the sky is blue. Bright; vivid. I do smile in time, just as smiles walk across my face as I look at you.

He was also a meticulous record keeper. Half of those boxes were filled with records. In his files, I found birth certificates: a mother, a father, brothers, sisters, sons, a daughter. I found death certificates: a mother, a father, a son. Wrongful death suits and newspaper clippings. Marriage certificates and divorce papers. College transcripts. Draft papers and honorable discharge papers. Custody papers and child support papers. USPS employment contracts and retirement papers. Certificates of achievement in poetry and letters of appreciation.

Poems, too. Pages and pages and pages of poems. Stacked pages bent in half, bound into makeshift books. Poems on the great loves of his life. Poems on the sorrow of losing parents, a child. Lamentations of war. Notes on Plath poems and Dylan lyrics. Poems about the bustle of life. Poems about Monday, poems about Saturday, fall and summer and years gone by. Observations through the eyes of an autistic mind.

We pieced it together after my brother was diagnosed.

When my father was growing up, autism wasn't a ready diagnosis. Even if it was, my grandparents would never have let it define him. So my father carried on with life as we all do, just in his own way. He loved his small one-bedroom apartment, his daily routines of opening mail, writing, scheduling events, running errands. He was meticulous, ritualistic, controlling, stubborn, and set in his patterns.

This isn't easy for a young girl to understand. Why did he have to stand and arrange the objects on the table before he could sit down when we went out to eat? Why did he get mad when we didn't follow his itinerary? Did he always have to get that glass of milk and mashed potatoes and ask me the same opening questions every time we got together? Why did he scream at Christmas when the ham wasn't cut just right? Even during my early childhood, I remember begging my mother not to take me for visitation on Sundays. As I grew I began to challenge everything he said, to purposefully do the opposite of the patterns I knew he cherished.

Yet tensions, like the angst of adolescence, ease with time. Understanding took root and I began to see my father for who he was and why he was the way he was.

I tried to see all the I love yous and the I'm proud of yous, rather than the repetitive speech and altered syntax in his letters. I tried not to be annoyed by his calls, which seemed to drag on and on with circular conversation. I tried, I really did. But the bond had been skewed from the start, and I never really got there.

At the bottom of a stack of old letters my father kept, I found unopened Thanksgiving and Christmas cards I had sent him that year. I found a calendar whose days had been marked off only through October. Why did he stop marking off days? Why wasn't he opening his mail? Was he so sick that he abandoned the rituals that guided his life, and I didn't even know it? Very possibly so.

There is a feeling of invasion, coupled with excitement and curiosity in going through the things in life a man feels are important enough to keep. Especially a man like my father. At first, I thought the things silly. Old paperwork, pens, his letter opener, his forest green Army jacket, an old t-shirt with the USPS logo on it, his handkerchief, a Starry Night coffee mug. Yet, in those few things, I found his whole life. I found a piece of his soul and a piece of mine, too. All in two bags and two boxes. ●



Embedded Figure

Lydia Shattuck
oil painting



Untitled

Jessica Rose
ceramics

When I say, I am disabled. . .

Anthony Timbers
poetry

When I say, I am disabled . . .

I am not asking for your compassion

I am simply displaying my given label.

When I say, I am disabled . . .

I wince in pain and embarrassment as it leaves my lips

Because now I struggle mightily to finish tasks that came so easily

Just a few short years ago.

When I say, I am disabled . . .

I am not asking to be helped, simply preemptively stating my possible shortcomings.

Forewarning you that my exterior does not necessarily match my interior.

When I say, I am disabled . . .

I am not asking for your pity

I am expressing to you that I am different then I once was.

When I say, I am disabled . . .

I am asking you to imagine that man I used to be,
strong quick-witted funny and intelligent.

When your mind meets that man in your imagination,
Please tell him I said hello and that I miss him.

Marlboro Man

Megan Starling
poetry



He never once cried, that Marlboro Man,

Not even the night his life first began.

He says tears of blue are for the yellow,

And he is a strong, red-hearted fellow.

He is macho — so fine — a man among men,

He can't be compared with sweet Mother Hen.

Of rearing children he pays little attention,

Except for punishing, spanking, detention.

Of cooking he knows little, of sewing he knows less,

Of cleaning he prefers to leave everything a mess.

He is much too busy, you know, for tasks such as these,

While earning his wages and relaxing in the breeze.

When it comes to the subject of domestic carnality,

He never could commit himself to a chaste morality.

His wife doesn't know of his secret endeavors,

But it isn't her fault, for he is sneaky and clever.

This Marlboro Man, our hero adored,

Will always be given the highest awards.

There's yet to be a day that we will see

A man who can't be described such as he,

That is, until we stop stereotyping.

Temper

Megan Loveless

poetry

walking on eggshells

pacing the floors

the hints of outbursts

are never ignored

settle in the background

I'll be safe there

until trouble is sought out

in the promise of a mistake

apologies land on closed ears

and slammed doors

I'll never be perfect enough

to dodge the bullets

we'll dance around the subject

to walk on safe ground

blame is for the one

who spoke opinion too loud

soon there's painted smiles

glimpses of what should be

until someone breaks the eggshells

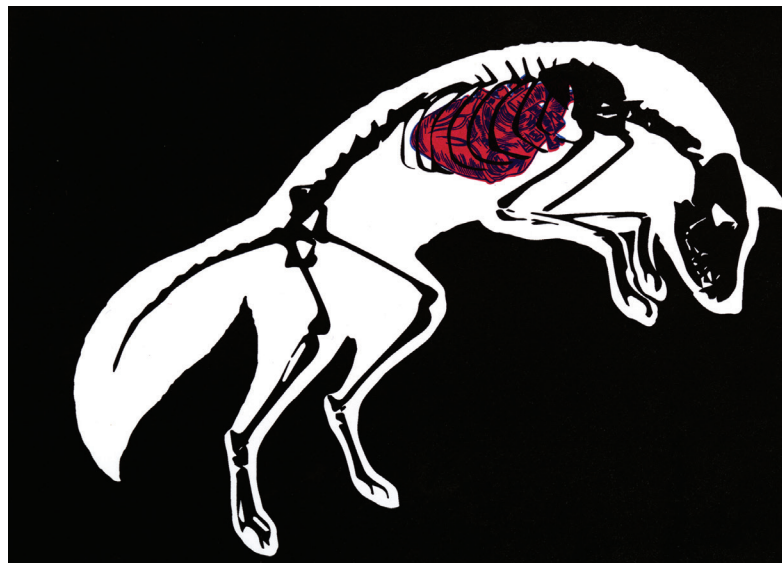
and we're back to cutting our feet



Dollhouse

Amanda Taylor

digital photography



Playful at Heart

Iska Frosh

letterpress



The teddy bear's head thumped down the stairs as the boy descended, clutching his teddy's paw in one hand while grasping the stairway spindles with the other. His teddy stared blankly at the ceiling as Gabriel dragged him across the living room floor to the kitchen. Outside, faint color smeared the clouds, streaking the sky above the hollow his home overlooked, but Gabriel paid it no mind as he rubbed the sleep from his eyes and stood in the doorway, watching.

"Dishes aren't clean again, huh?" Gabriel's father shoved the dishwashing tray into the dishwasher roughly and then slammed the door.

"No, of course not. I'm such a failure," Gabriel's mother smiled, but it wasn't the smile she used when she looked at Gabriel. It was different somehow. He didn't like it. She lifted her hands into the air helplessly. "At everything. But then, you could load the dishwasher, too."

Gabriel passed them in the kitchen, tiptoeing across the cold tile. "I only did all the laundry," Gabriel's father said. "And I'm trying to make breakfast for him."

"He never eats in the morning. Not until we're in the car. You know that."

"And I'm trying to change it. It's not healthy."

"Not all of us have to be exactly like you, do we?"

It took three tugs, but Gabriel finally got the balcony door open. He didn't bother shutting it as he crossed the porch to the ledge looking over the trees. Yawning, he settled into place, propping Teddy up beside him. The bear slumped dismally, staring at the weedy underbrush beneath, and Gabriel adjusted his head so that Teddy's gaze matched his own. Together, they stared out over the tree line into the darkness.

"I know what you're planning on doing. Fast food for breakfast? It's not healthy for him."

"How's it any different to have fast food for breakfast than to have fast food for supper?"

"I'm busy! And worn out by the end of the day."

The cool morning air felt chilly against Gabriel's bare arms, and he shivered, snuggling closer to Teddy for warmth. It wouldn't be long now.

"Maybe if you didn't go to the gym every single day

of the week, you'd have more time."

"Look who's talking! At least we can afford a gym membership. All of your hobbies cost a fortune. A hundred dollars here, a thousand there."

"Are you kidding me? We can't afford any of it. We're drowning in bills. Just look at this stack! And I don't have any hobbies. What? The traveling? That's for work!"

"Oh, I see. It's for work when you go the beach with your friends. But no, what I was talking about was the poker nights."

"Like you don't spend half your time with your friends. And you know I can't stand them."

"Believe me, the feeling is mutual."

Gabriel sighed as he leaned into Teddy, resting his head against the stuffed bear's. The two remained steadfast in their gaze as they waited. It wasn't long before a sliver of burning orange light appeared on the horizon. It reflected in Teddy's hard button eyes.

"I'm taking the car this morning. I have an important meeting, and we may be going to lunch. You take the kiddie van."

“Oh, no you don’t. Not this time. I’ve driven it every day this week.”

“It’s for work. Don’t be so petty.”

“Petty? I’m not the one who comes up with excuses to get my way every single day of the week. You should have planned ahead.”

“I never wanted to get a van anyway.”

“Neither did I!”

From the ledge, it was impossible to distinguish whose voice belonged to whom. But it didn’t matter. The sun was now rising quickly, overcoming the dark forest where it spent the night to rise high into the sky. Gabriel whispered the story to Teddy as he stroked his soft fur, carefully smoothing it into place.

“Oh, great. Now I’m running late. You’ll have to take Gabriel to school this morning.”

“Me? Again?”

“Yes, you. Do you want me to lose my job? Do you know what that would do to us?”

“I’ll take him to school if you talk to him about Teddy. He’s getting a little old for a stuffed animal, isn’t he?”

“Oh, leave him alone. He loves Teddy.”

“He treats that bear like it’s his family. I don’t like it. Just talk to him? Please?”

“Fine.”

The sky glowed with a myriad of colors Gabriel couldn’t name, though he tried to remember every morning. He focused on the colors now. Wrapping one arm around Teddy’s waist, he warned him to do the same. Looking at the sun made his eyes fill with tears.

Silence and then a sigh. “Working late again?”

“Yes, and I’m not happy about it, if that’s what you think. I’d rather be here with you, believe it or not.”

“I’ll do it this morning. We really shouldn’t fight in front of him, you know?”

A pause. “I know. Did you see Gabe’s hair?” A short laugh. “What a tangled up, blond bird’s nest.”

“And his scalp is so sensitive. It’s going to be a fight to get a comb through it. In more ways than one.”

“I’ll do it this morning. We really shouldn’t fight in front of him, you know?”

“Oh, he doesn’t notice. He’s too busy watching the sunrise with Teddy. It’s kind of cute, isn’t it? I’m sorry, babe. I just needed my coffee.”

“Besides, it’s not serious, the fighting. He knows that.”

“I feel kind of bad though. He’s been asking me to watch the sunrise with him for weeks. Goes on and on about it.”

“He’s been asking me the same thing.”

“Well, it will rise again tomorrow.”

“We’ll watch it then.”

Gabriel sucked in his breath in a quick little gasp, eyes wide. He glanced at Teddy. Maybe this time...

“We could have watched it today, if you hadn’t started in on me.”

“Me? I attacked you? Boy, it must be nice to live in your world. Always the victim! It’s your fault we missed it. Not mine.”

“No, it’s never your fault, is it? Typical.” Their voices rose and then muffled as the balcony door slammed shut.

Gabriel sat still, jumping only when the voices rose in pitch. He wound his fingers in Teddy’s fur, and the bear drooped towards him. Heads together, they faced the sunrise. ●

The Forest in my Backyard

Jessica O'Neill
poetry

Like the acclaimed Robert Frost, I enjoy walking in Nature and,
At the risk of sounding cliché,
Nature Teaches Humans great things

5 acres deep, untouched, used
For the growth of trees
Stepping in the woods, the lone
Human raider, stealing from Nature
Her silence and natural state

What can I learn from you, Mother?
Why am I compelled to journey in your forest today?
Am I seeking out your silence — which I soon find I've
Disturbed — or is it that I'm bored?
Still I push further, push onward, move.

Entangled I become. Where can I go to get out of Her trap?
Not wanting to harm Mother, how can I break free of
These binds without hurting myself either?
Little forward — little back. The change I make distinct,
As if I have stamped on Her and I permanently.
Nay, I did not want to! But, poor Lady, we often put
Ourselves *before* Her.

O, So Divine, when we realize with our Human
Mind that the Law has hidden itself in Plain View.



Early Rains
Brooke Fitzwater
digital photography

Puppy Prison
Emily Watkins
scratchboard

The Villain

Mahmuda Akter
poetry

I flew 13,000 miles, 13,000 miles away from home
I flew through the clouds, above the ocean, across the world
I flew to a new nest leaving all behind
I flew.
I left my past, my dreams, my friends
The grandma who loved me more than herself
The tree I planted 15 years ago
I left my essence.
I lost my dignity, my love, my hope
I lost my home, my brother
The memories are hazy now
I lost the land beneath my feet
Tumbling and falling I reached here.
Searching for a sense of security,
A better future, perhaps
Searching for new dreams, I sailed,
To the land of the free and the home of the brave
To my last resort.
I am the one who lost it all, the one who is hollow
Eager only to survive
Yet, it is I, who is the terrorist
I, who must suffer
Endure the agonizing disgraces and judgments
I must suffer, despite all.

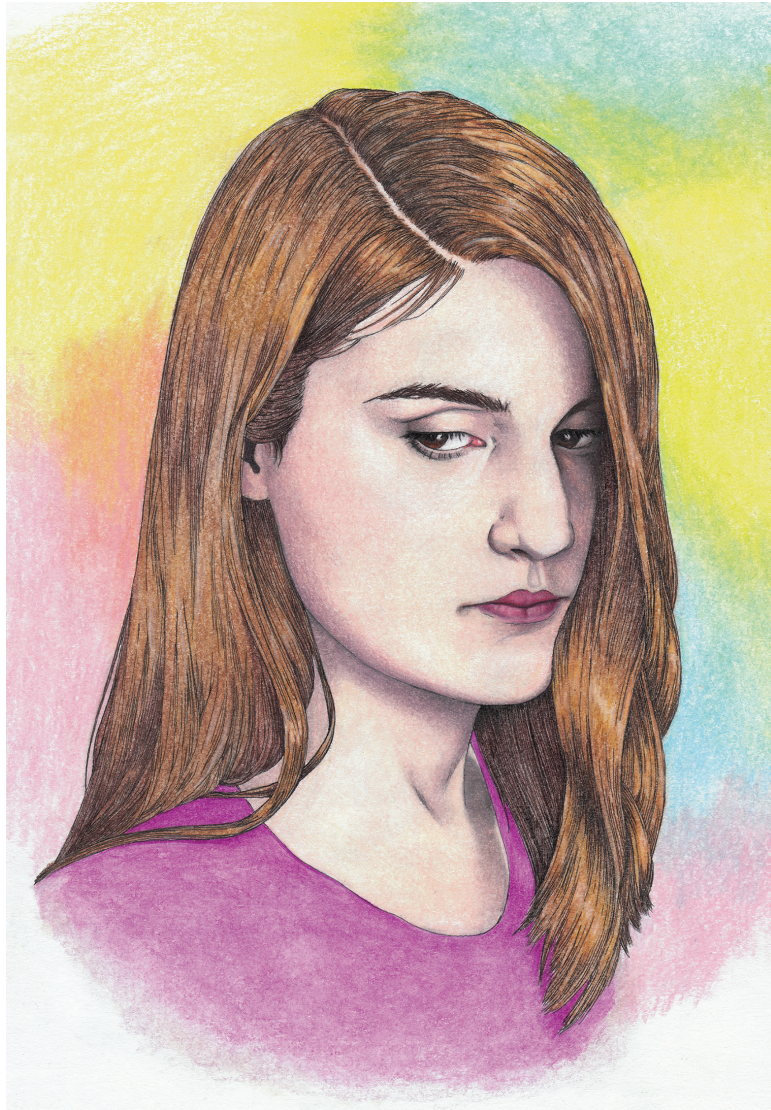


The reason is simple
The logic is concrete
You cannot deny it
You cannot befriend me
You must despise me — I am the divergent.

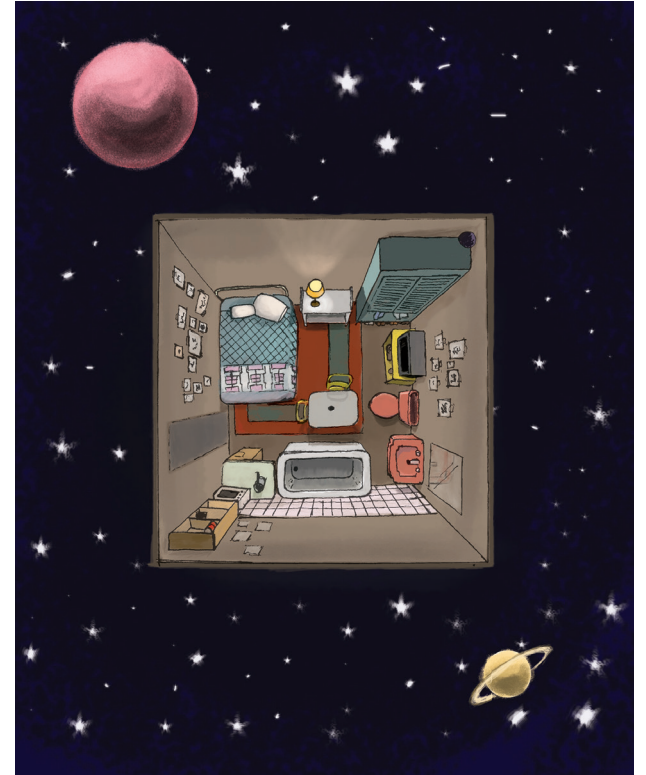
I am the one who chose to believe in the presence of an Almighty
You don't believe in
I am the one who lacks the perfect complexion
I am the one who tries too hard to speak your language
I am the constructor who builds your nation's structure while my home falls apart
I am the alien, the villain in your world
The daunting unknown.

Chattanooga Skyline

Blake Mason
film photography



Room
Oscar Davila
mixed media



Introvert
Karin Albrecht
colored pencil



Map to the Sole
Abigail Potter
oil painting

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

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Collage accepts submissions year-round. Submission forms and guidelines are available at mtsu.edu/collage. Creative work, such as art, photography, short stories, essays, short plays, song lyrics, and poetry, may be submitted digitally from the website 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.

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2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 & 2016

Silver Crown Awards
2007, 2008 & 2011

Gold Crown Awards
2012, 2013 & 2015

Southern Literary Festival Writing Contest

Third Place Literary Magazine
2016

About *Collage*

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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 letters of recommendation.

Production

Technology

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Adobe Illustrator CC
Adobe Photoshop CC
Apple Macintosh Platform
Windows Platform

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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.



Dani
Alena Mehic
art



Down on Broadway
Ambre Rogue
photography



Marlboro Man
Megan Starling
poetry



Sunrise
Leah Bailey
prose



collage
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