

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 extending from its tip. The splash is composed of many fine, swirling lines of ink, creating a dynamic and artistic effect. The background is a light, neutral color, which makes the blue ink stand out prominently.

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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 square 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 at the bottom of the image.

Bell tower photo by J Intintolli

# COLLAGE

Fall 2016  
issue 24

*a journal of creative expression*



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# Letter from the EDITOR

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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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## 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*

## feverfew for two

Linda Gale Rose

*poetry*

type O negative character  
will enter any type of blood  
waited till the tide came in  
and washed out with the flood

swaying in and out  
we die a little every day  
but death is scarcely real  
but as an element of play

today I made a journey  
from the alone to the alone  
my divine attorney told me  
I am naught but what I own

where is home? I've never known  
I pray the lord our souls to roam  
for if I die just as I wake  
I pray the eyes make no mistake

as they rake through what has grown  
and draw a sword through catacombs  
if word is sent while I'm alive

then death is just a groovy dive  
and peace will wholly overcome  
whatever damage we have done  
the mystic energetic few  
will dance for their heretic crew

and I keep stirring up the stew  
just to see what went into it  
and that which says "do not disturb"  
without seeing, I intuit.



**Dani** | 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*



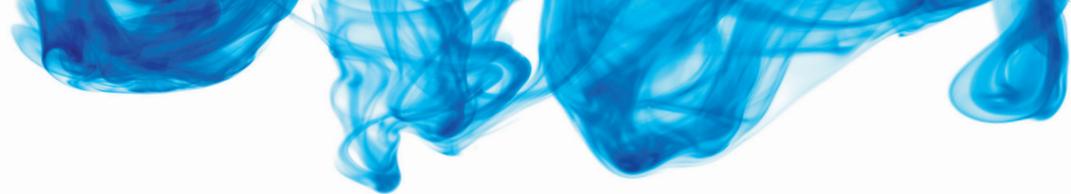
## Mansfield

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**

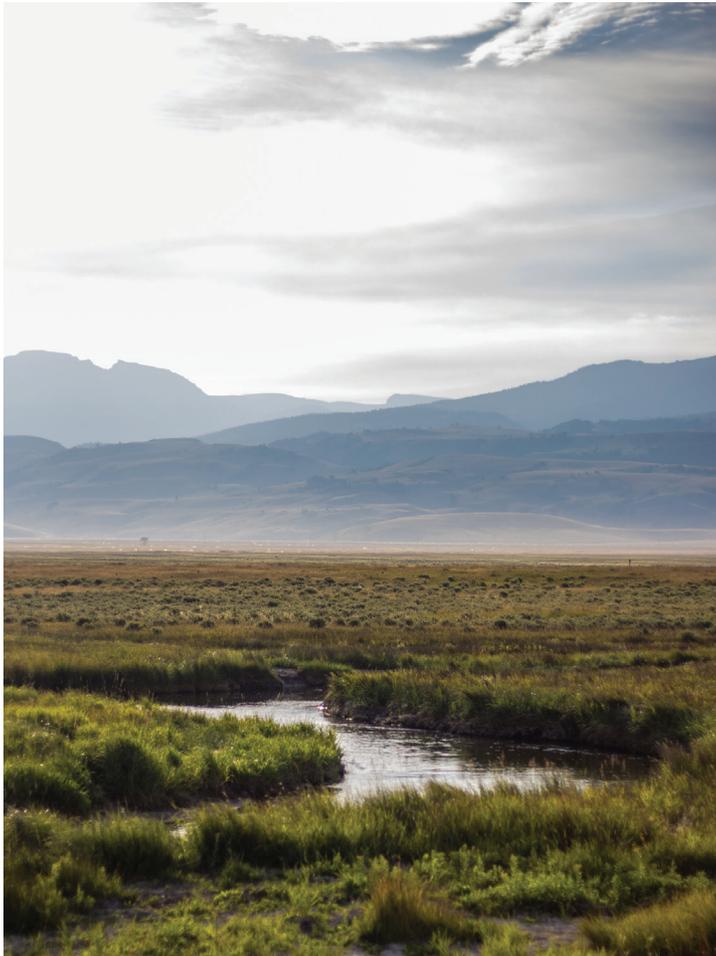
Ambre Rogue  
*digital photography*

**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.

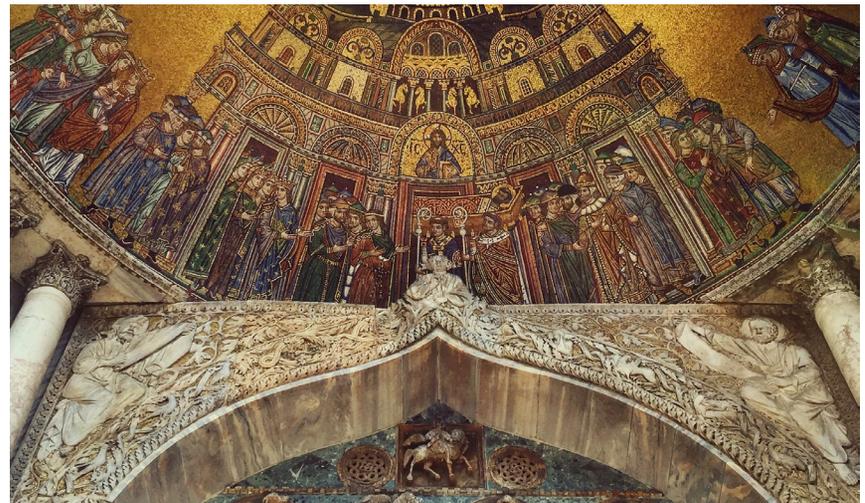
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**“We all have people in our lives that help us or are willing to help if we ask.”**

---

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 14<sup>th</sup> 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.

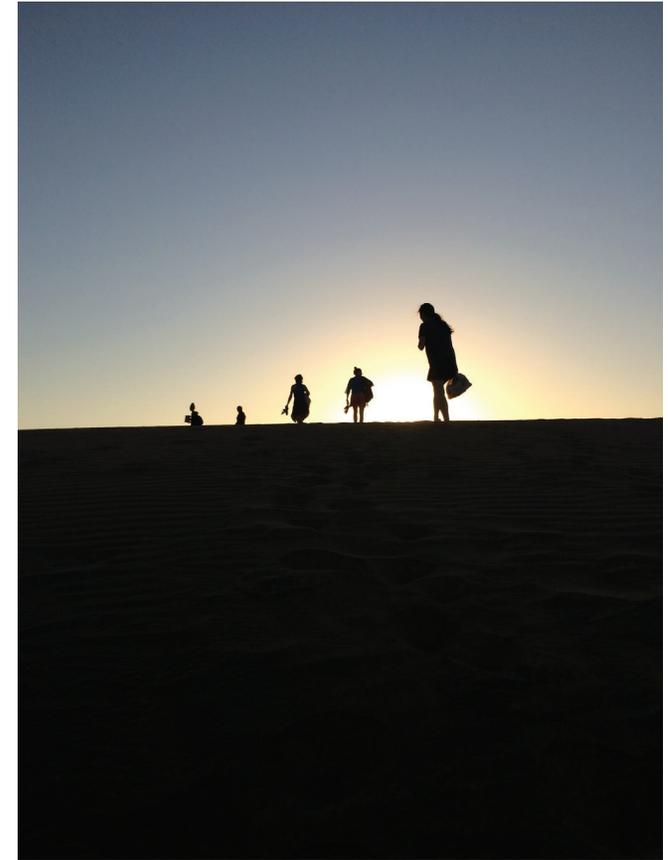
From dusk to dawn  
and back again,  
you'll find me.

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

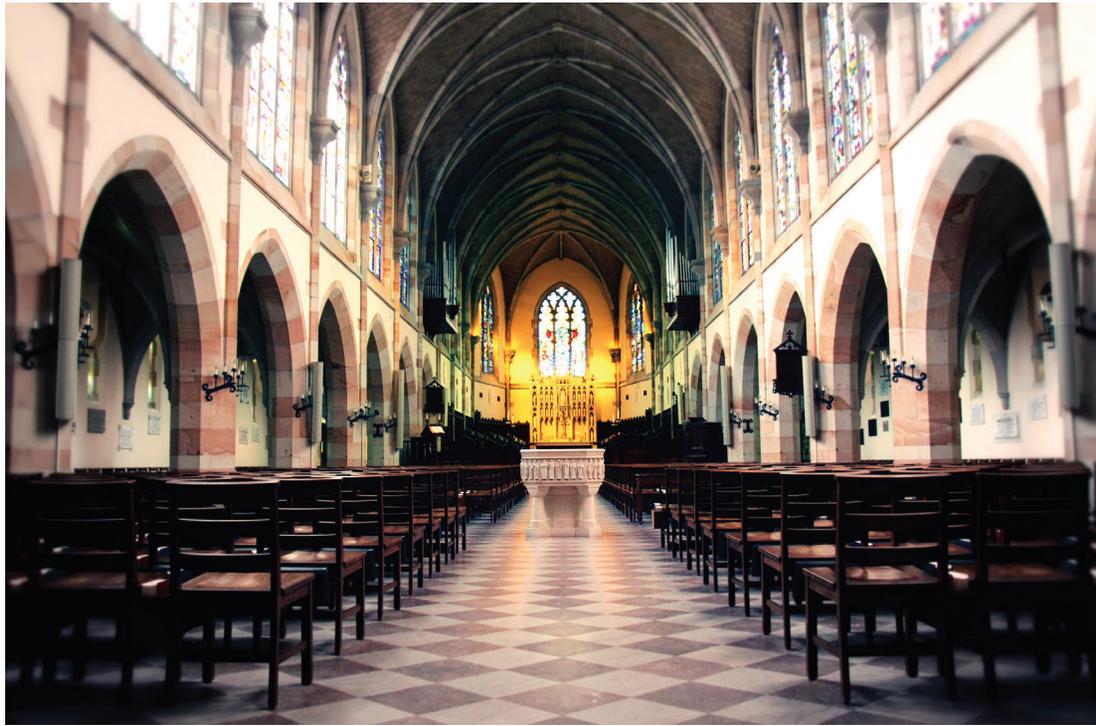
Janie Kullmar  
*digital photography*



# Hidden Portal

Daniel Zajac  
*digital photography*





## All Saints Chapel

Jake Lewter  
*digital photography*

## Harmony

Stephanie Van Horn  
*digital photography*



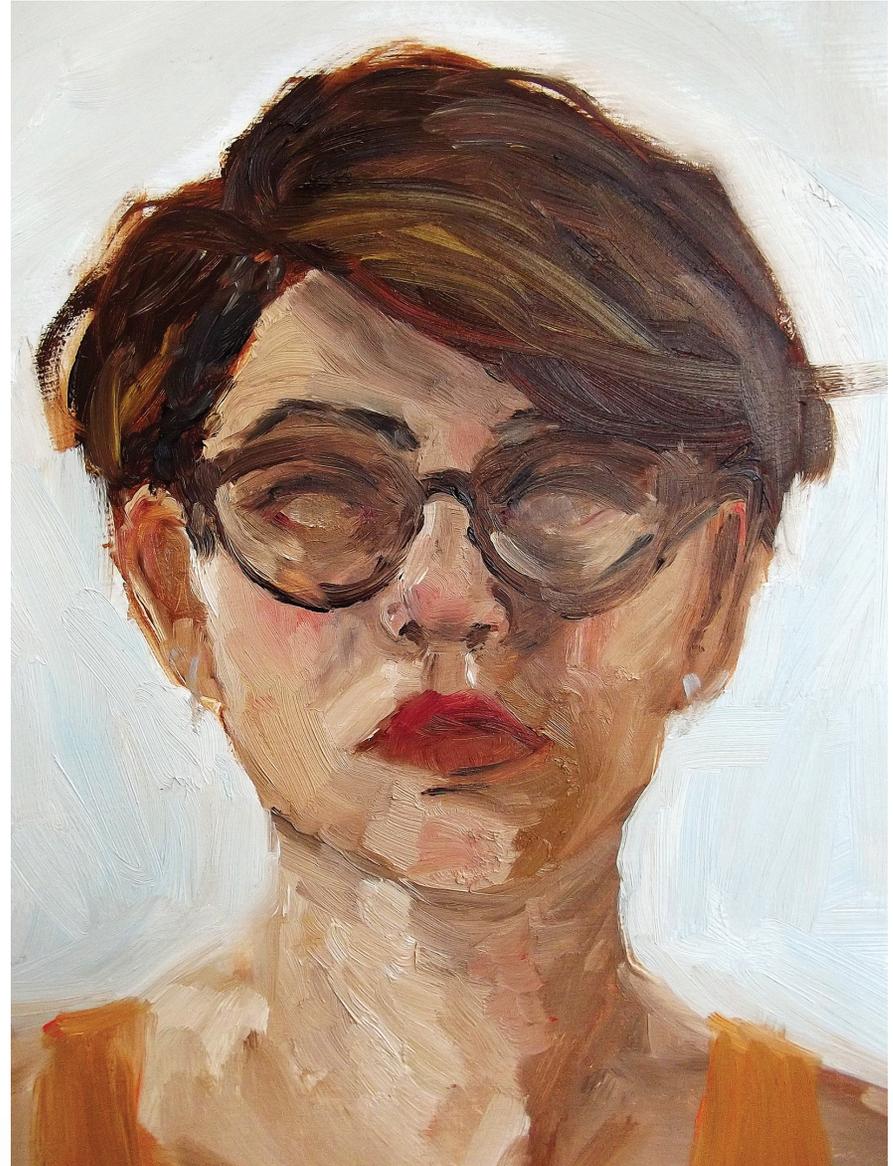


## Current Events

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

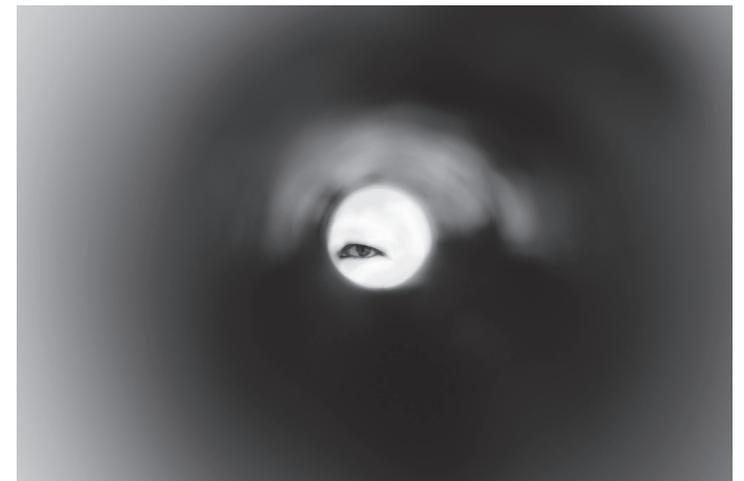
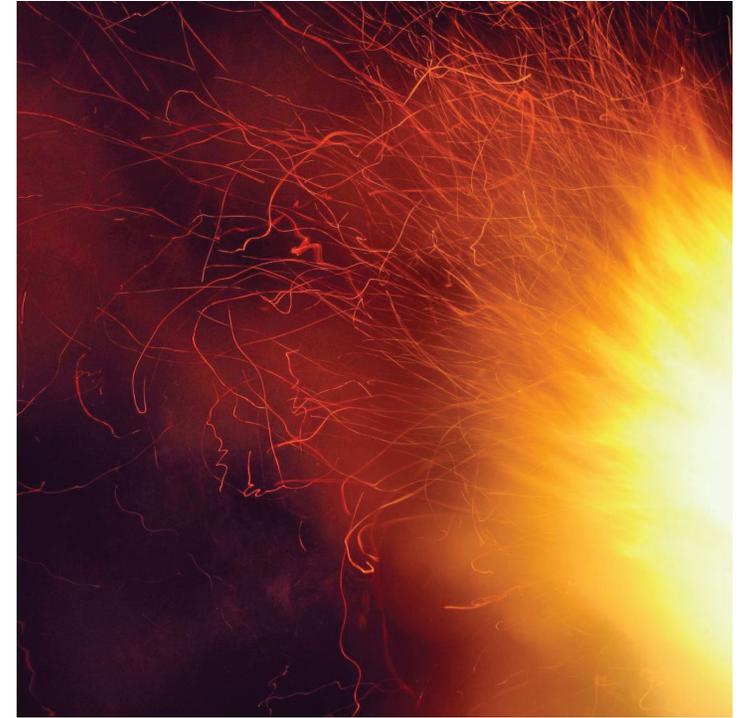
And I find solace in the thought  
Of someone new holding me  
O, the intimacy  
Conventional face, small nosed  
Made to last will he  
Stick around in this web we cast?

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*

**M**y 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 than 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

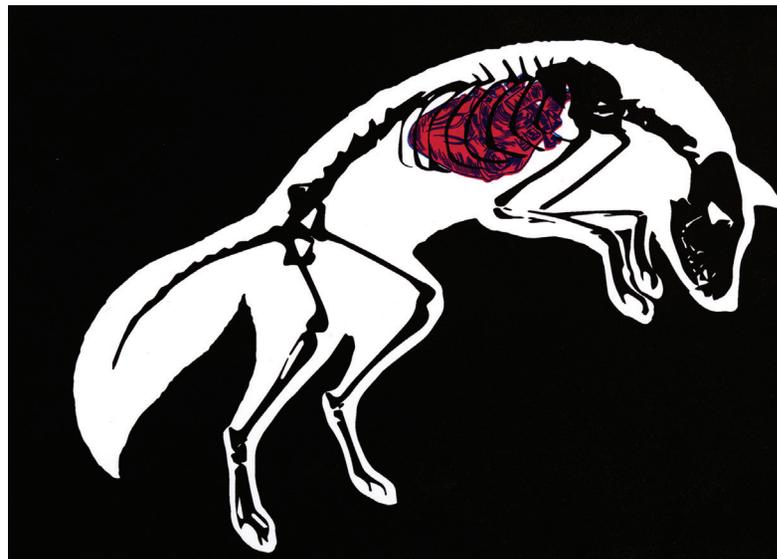
and we're back to cutting our feet



# 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 likes 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.

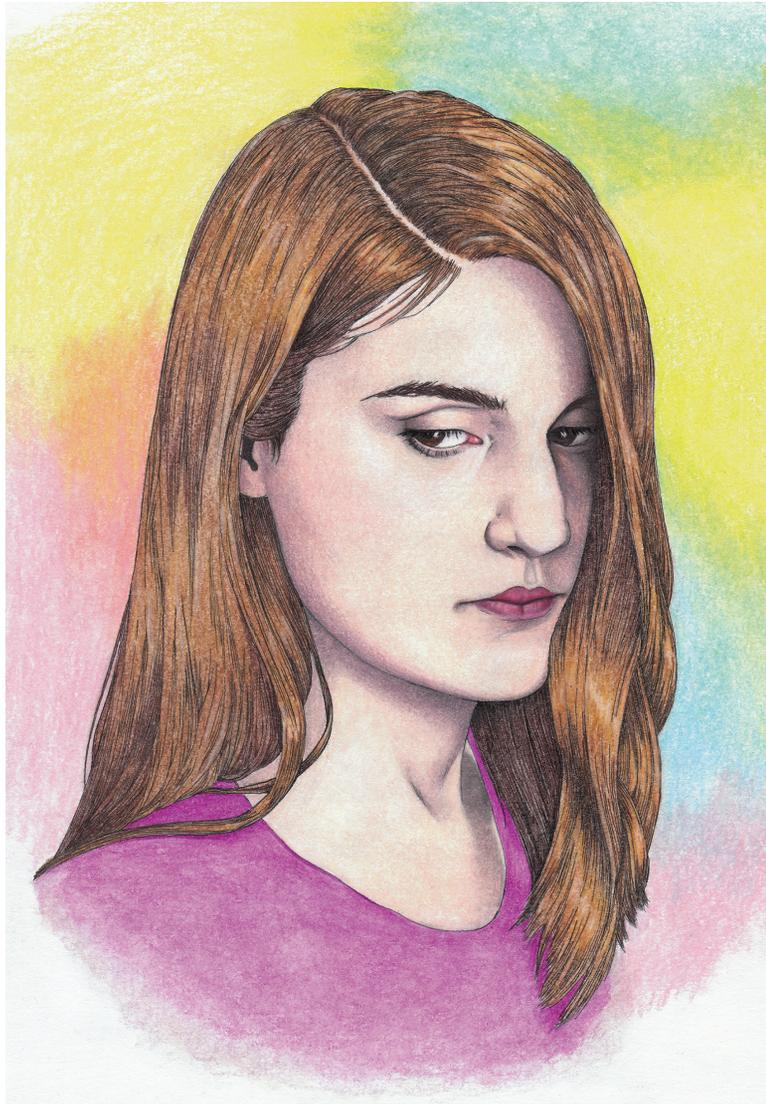


The reason is simple  
The logic is concrete  
You cannot deny it  
You cannot befriend me  
You must despise me — I am the divergent.

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

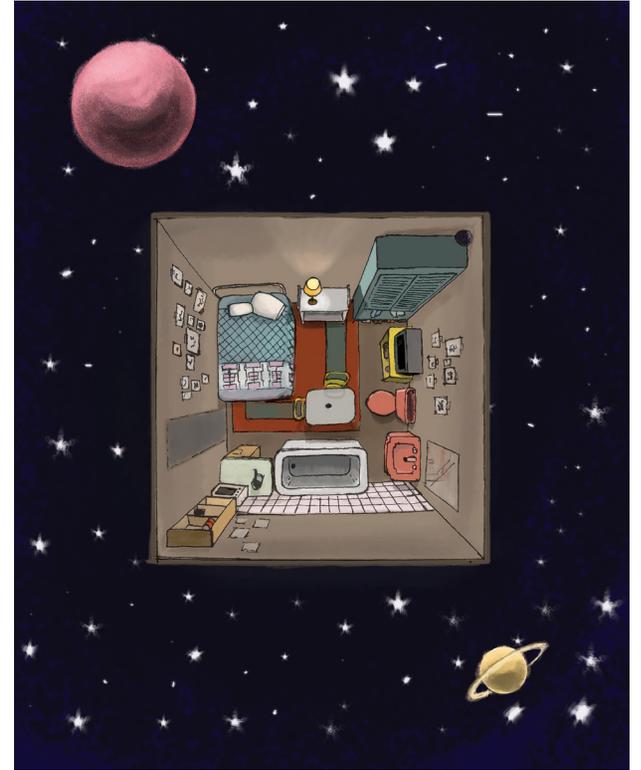
Blake Mason  
*film photography*



## Introvert

Karin Albrecht  
*colored pencil*

**Room**  
Oscar Davila  
*mixed media*



## 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

## Submit to *Collage*

*Collage* accepts submissions year-round. Submission forms and guidelines are available at [mtsu.edu/collage](http://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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**Gold Medalist Certificates**  
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**Silver Crown Awards**  
2007, 2008 & 2011

**Gold Crown Awards**  
2012, 2013 & 2015

### Southern Literary Festival Writing Contest

**Third Place Literary Magazine**  
2016

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## Policy Statement

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

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

## Production

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Adobe Photoshop CC  
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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



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