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Masthead

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COVER • ALISHA SIAN • *This Life Is Endless Until It's Not* • Mixed Media (Graphite
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Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU) takes its name from the Kwantlen First Nation. We at pulp MAG encourage our readers and community to explore all the ways to further support decolonization; we work to support the efforts of Indigenous voices.

PULP MAG aims to be a safe, inclusive space for emerging artists of all types. We want to give a platform to unique voices with important stories to tell, no matter the medium. We believe in the importance of artist recognition, exposure, paying our creative talent, and in building a strong community to hold the work. At pulp MAG, we especially appreciate the avant-garde; we are ready to push the boundaries of art with you.

VIEWES EXPRESSED IN THIS MAGAZINE ARE NOT NECESSARILY SHARED BY THE EDITORS

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MIKAYLA FAWCETT
ANN-MARIE BROWN
KEVIN STEBNER
DONNY NIE

5 A.M Uber Driver

Asks where I've been all night—I tell him:

A man used my flesh to bed me in soil—as if this is the first year I have been planted—while he made promises in Cosmo shakers, and I left a little richer.

I'm the backseat's rattle. Once of hand-holding and conversations, now the underbelly of statue's corrosion, interrogation room demanding confession. Uber driver jaw opens. Boa constrictor after fast. There are other women in his molars. This is a second dusk. When it's paid for, they have want of sticky breath. Want is the car I got into driving off the freeway. Scream so loud my legs grow their own wind. Uber driver tongue razors: *If Mark isn't your boyfriend, then who is he?* The middleman. I am milk's cattle. Driver is farmer's carnivorous estate. Gluttonous consumption branding: Shattered hip. Bleeding thigh. Swollen neck. Sweaty palms electrocute red umbrella. For what are the boxes I encounter men in, but the packaging of their temptation? I am preyed into wrapping paper and reused at their convenience.

I've only ever had one femme Uber driver. A 3 a.m. fever dream. She hopes to angel evening work. Maybe someone threatened to make a casket out of her car and wants to see my porch sigh relief.

I run in lengths of cortisol. But for 35 minutes I am the thumb that hovers both. Dropped off at adjacent streetlights, two men become five stars—there is always extra gratuity for pleasure. Yet I am anonymous to both of them. The forgery of addresses is return-to-sender profit. Delivery is the only thing I can control.

Visual

Jacob Stroham
Photography
18" x 24"
2020

Field and Apartment Complex



Backspace

I'll find you in birthday cards,
stacked in shoeboxes,

you'll find me loading
your past onto a digital file.

Your eyes might hopscotch,
jump over our giggles,

hit backspace on a friendship
that crocheted its yarn into 10 years.

We built a family from scratch,
etched our initials in benches around the city.

You'd ask me, *why carve our names in wood?*
there's something of us that'll always live I'd say.

We let the world know we'd be permanent,
forgetting to tell ourselves the same thing.

Instagram is a lousy reminder,
you'll find me while scrolling through your feed.

I'll find you when I write the word friend
in lines about us in dark ink,

hide the bruising there,
paragraphs with words black and blue.

You'll forget holiday texts,
our loud phone calls and facetime giggles.

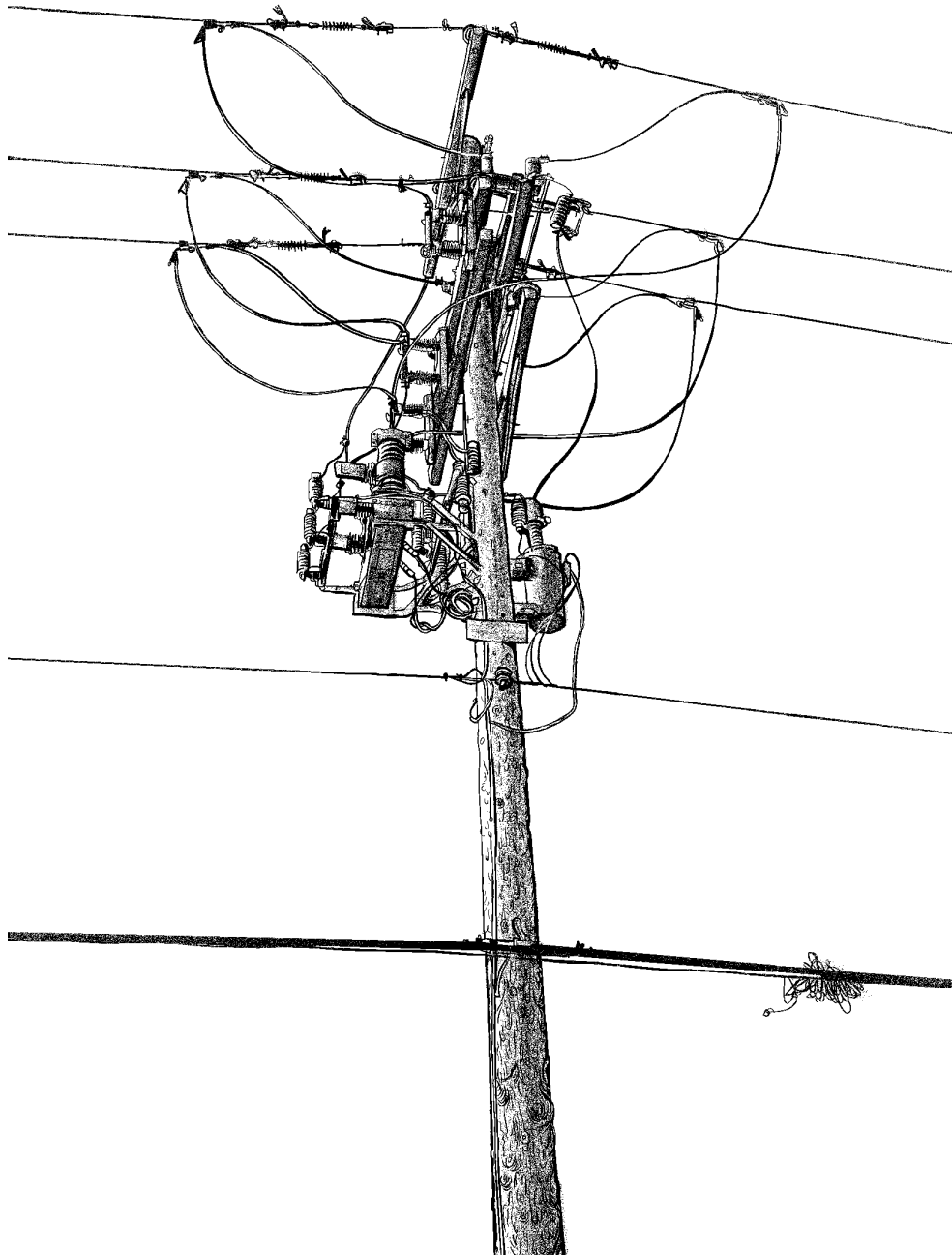
But I'll remember us
like kite flying on the beach,

even if soaring turned into diving
and I held onto my string like a parachute.

Visual

Mikayla Fawcett
Digital Media
5.5" x 8.5"
2020

Telephone Poles Canadian Archiving



Behind Olive's Walls

Oh, hell no, I'm not dealing with Olive right now. I'm parallel parking on the street, backing up, and Olive's sleek Tesla hisses around me and slinks into the parking garage. In my building, bachelor condos like mine don't get spots in the parking garage, so Olive must have one of the big condos - not that I care. The air-conditioning in my car is broken, yet I bake inside my rust bucket for ten minutes just to make certain I don't run into her. I'm exhausted from a long day of planting bushes and pruning hedges in the August sun, and I don't have the energy to tolerate neighbours who squash joy under their schoolmarmish shoes. The worst is riding the elevator with Olive. I suspect our elevator actually has the ability to slow time.

I enter through the front doors carrying a case of beer and a bag of Maru Sushi. The foyer has new 'hardwood' floors and bright paint, but I miss the original psychedelic carpets. And there's Olive, pressing the button for the elevator.

What the hell? How is this possible? Olive sees me, her upper lip curls in a *what-the-fuck* expression and she checks her watch in confusion. Did she wait ten minutes, too? Did we wait exactly the same amount of time? I don't get her problem with me. She's unpleasant to everyone, but I swear she has a special hate-on for me. For a second I consider taking the stairs, but my tiredness wins. I stand beside Olive and the awkwardness between us is viscous.

Mahika enters through the front doors, towing her two year old boy, Hiran. When she sees me, she flashes me a smile. "It's a scorcher out there today. You must have been roasting."

Oh, good. With Mahika in the elevator, the ride will be tolerable.

"Yeah, I was dying out there." I wave at Hiran. "Hey, buddy." Hiran is adorable with enormous brown eyes. He hides his face in his mother's leg.

Mahika gives Olive a cool, "Hello."

Olive gives her an even colder nod.

Just as the elevator doors open, Mahika slips around me. "Sorry, Rain, I'm taking the stairs."

Fantastic. Olive and I step into the elevator at the same time, brushing shoulders. I hustle to the furthest corner, keeping a tight grip on my dinner, staring forward at the door. I check her out in my peripherals. Olive has a way of pursing her lips like she's trying to make them look bigger, and her new haircut makes me think of a nun who hacked off her blonde hair as part of a vow of celibacy. She sports a plaid shawl a ninety-five-year-old would wear, though she's probably in her late twenties, like me.

She reaches across me to push the fourth floor button. I stiffen until she moves back to her side. Olive chats, "I had to calm Magda down again, yesterday. She was going on and on about a homeless teenager wandering the halls. I can't seem to convince her that the girl with the wild hair, sports bra, ripped jeans, tattoos, and spattered hoodie is a condo owner."

When I'm into an art project, I don't notice paint on my clothes, "Sorry, geez."

My father is a black man from Barbados, and my mom is Irish-Canadian, so my sister looks African with beautiful ringlets haloing her head, but I look like a tan white girl with a huge mass of untameable hair. People don't understand that curly hair can't be washed and brushed very much. But, as my sister constantly reminds me, there are ways to get my hair to look tidier. But I like my natural hair. Why do I have to conform to society's idea of what hair should be like?

I wonder if Olive's problem with me is related to my race. The idea pisses me off and confuses me. It confuses me because Olive and I are both lesbians, and I feel like that should mean something.

We reach the fourth floor; the elevator doors slide open and it's as if we're escaping a burning plane. We leap out at the same time, bumping shoulders again. Olive shoots ahead of me, her butt wiggling from side to side like a professional speed walker. She stops in front of her door and unlocks it with a swish-click. I pass her door and hear, from inside her condo, a scream. It's not an 'I'm-being-murdered' scream, more like a 'my-sister-startled-me' scream. But Olive lives alone, so it makes me pause. She has left her door open a few inches.

Does this mean I have to do something? Like check on her or something? I don't want to go into her private space. The idea creeps me out. What if I just pretend I didn't hear anything and continue on my way? Yes, that's the best plan. I'm just going to keep going. She's probably

fine. I walk two steps and stop. But what if she's hurt or something? I put my dinner on the floor and push hair away from my face, thinking. I have to do something, don't I? I chew my nails, struggling.

*

When my grandpa died, I inherited his bachelor condo and his best friend, Ben. Ben was an old hippie who lived in the building. He had made up his mind that he needed to look out for me, so he showed up every so often to socialize. He was laid back and cool, so I didn't mind having him around.

I remember when Ben first told me about Olive. We were lounging on my balcony and he was smoking a joint, his long silver hair in a ponytail. He raised an eyebrow at me, like he had some juicy news, "There's another lesbian who just moved into the building. She has a mannish job, too."

I didn't like smoking weed myself, but I had some positive associations with the scent from fun times with my pothead cousins. Curious, I asked, "Is my job mannish?" I didn't care, anyway. Gender wasn't a factor. The outdoors gave me inspiration for my art.

Ben looked off at the balconies directly across from ours, "She's an engineer. An electrical engineer, like a safety officer."

"Come on, you know I'm so done with dating right now. I'm sick of it."

Two weeks later Ben's stance on Olive flipped. The strata council needed another member, so they voted Olive onto it. Ben informed me, *We shouldn't have let her onto the strata council. She's a complete psycho. I was entertained by this transformation: Psycho. Really? Wow.* And for weeks, Ben gossiped about how Olive was on the lookout for people violating bylaws. Olive was trying to get Mahika and Hiran kicked out of the building because of a few noise complaints. Ben told me, *Olive says Mahika should be keeping her kid under control.* I answered, *Yeah, Mahika should be using that off-switch that kids totally have.*

My first personal experience with Olive was a month ago. I had an issue with my internet, and the Telus technician asked for the electrical room key. I called Ben about it and he said, "You're out of luck. Olive's got the key. She has a Telus tech coming in later today."

Since Olive's appointment was going to be later, I thought I might go to her door and ask her if I could borrow the key. This is how that went:

Olive: No. Absolutely not. You're required to fill out an electrical-room-key request form to get a key before every contractor appointment. That is something you should know. Didn't you read the strata bylaws? It's your responsibility to read the bylaws. You can't just get the key.

Me: But if you give it me, I can quickly get my stuff fixed, and then give it back to you, super fast.

Olive: As long as it's signed out to me, it's my responsibility. I wouldn't trust a cavewoman like you with it. What do you think this place is? Your momma's house? Everything must be handled professionally. And Rain, you can't just hang a sheet over your window for a curtain. You're downgrading the building.

*

Olive's door is still open, so there must be something wrong. My legs move and I enter Olive's condo. Her space is only suitable for the soulless: sparse bare furniture, stark gray walls, bleak black cupboards. In fact, I can't see any sign a person lives here. There are no dirty dishes on the counter, no coats strewn over furniture, no photos on the wall. Frigid water soaks through my running shoes; her apartments flooded, "Hello, Karma."

I find Olive hunched under her master bathroom sink, pulling at something, "Oh my god, why won't it stop? God, stop."

After her know-it-all lectures, I can't help but be a smart-ass, "Oh no, didn't you read the strata minutes? The hoses under our sinks are supposed to be replaced."

Olive's hand emerges from under the sink just long enough for her to finger me. I crouch down beside her and see a busted hose with water jetting from a crack. Olive is pushing the hose back together even though it's hopeless. I notice Olive's expression and realize she's freaking out. I feel guilty for being shitty. She needs to calm down and give up on the hose.

"Hey, you're panicking. Olive. Look at me."

She looks at me with a grouchy expression.

“Don’t panic. Just turn your condo water off.”

Olive sits up and water drips from her short hair. In a hopeless daze, she takes off her sopping shawl and drops it in the water. Her white shirt is wet, clinging to her body, revealing a pink bra, “I don’t have a ladder.”

“Let’s find something we can use.”

The water shut-off is in the ceiling, so we carry a dresser into the bathroom. The hunk of furniture must be five thousand pounds. My arms are burning and my fingers hurt.

“Why is this so damn heavy?”

As we set it down, Olive rips into me, “This furniture has been in my family for four generations and now it’s getting wrecked.”

Ah, so that’s why she’s freaking out so much.

Olive stands on the dresser and opens a panel in the ceiling. There are two valves inside the ceiling and I look on as she turns one of them.

“If you’re going to stand around my condo like a useless idiot, help me move my furniture.”

“Okay,” I’m surprised she hasn’t kicked me out yet. She must be desperate for assistance.

I wade into her bedroom; she has a four-poster bed that looks like an island. There’s a cedar chest, bookshelf, and a vanity table. I notice a book under the water and bend down to pick it up. It’s a corny straight romance novel.

“You like straight romance?”

Olive rips it out of my hands. “That’s none of your business.”

I lift my hands up in defense, “Sorry, geez, I don’t care what kind of literature you like.”

“It’s not mine. It was my mom’s.” Her face tightens for a second with some kind of emotion.

'Was' as in, her mom is dead.

"Sorry."

Olive sneers at the book and peels the cover open, "I don't know why I kept this. I hate these books. They're crammed full of bullshit. My mom read about these perfect men while Dad treated her like she was a joke."

I know what Olive's saying. I remember how Adriene, my ex, dumped me. I thought everything was going great and next thing I knew she was sitting in my car, saying, we just don't have, like, magic. We're like two people side by side, but we're not together-together, you know? I remember having no idea what she was talking about. My voice comes out soft, "There are so many lies, like we're all supposed to be on this happy high of love all the time or something. But it's not like that."

We're both quiet and I realize we're getting each other, and I think she's recognising it too. I want to know why she doesn't like me, "Is there a reason why you pick on me? Like, are you racist or something?"

Olive winces, "What? I never thought about your race. I'm not racist. It's not like that."

"But you have a problem with me. With my hair."

"I didn't mean it like—" Olive grimaces like her words taste bad, "I'm sorry."

Whoa, she apologized.

Olive looks away for a second, then exhales, "You're one of them."

"One of who?"

"Like Jessie McCormick. He wore his jeans so low his boxers stuck out. He graffitied the desks and didn't do his homework. Up until my senior year, the top student was automatically valedictorian, but my class decided to make the selection process an election. It was a popularity contest, so Jesse won."

"And I'm like him?"

"Yes, everyone loves you, even though you're a mess."

I'm flattered by the 'everyone loves me' comment but disagree, "No, everyone loves my sister. She's the pretty one." Amazed over Olive's confession, I pry further, "You act better than everyone."

Olive lifts her chin, shameless, "I have to be better. It's how I survive."

I get it. It's a way to protect herself.

Then Olive says *fuck* like eight times trying to peel the pages of the book, and I'm mesmerized by how her lips shape the word, her upper teeth pressing down on her bottom lip. And, oh my god, I like her. I *like* her. There's something so real about her saying the F-word over and over in such a bitter tone. It's like she's saying it to the stupid universe that created fathers who laugh at moms, and that created a world of people who can't love her. She's saying it for me, for women who are dumped for not being 'magical' enough. Suddenly I see that she's awesome-tough, someone who won't let put-downs stop her from doing what she thinks is right. Her short hair doesn't look prudish to me anymore. It says I'm going to be me and I don't care what you think.

I move in close to her and take the book from her, "We'll fix it. We'll dry it." I place it on a shelf.

She scowls, "It won't be the same, again. It will be all wavy."

"Say the f-word again. I like it."

Olive studies my face, blushing pink, "What?"

Visual

Ann-Marie Brown
Oil on Canvas
40" x 40"
2019

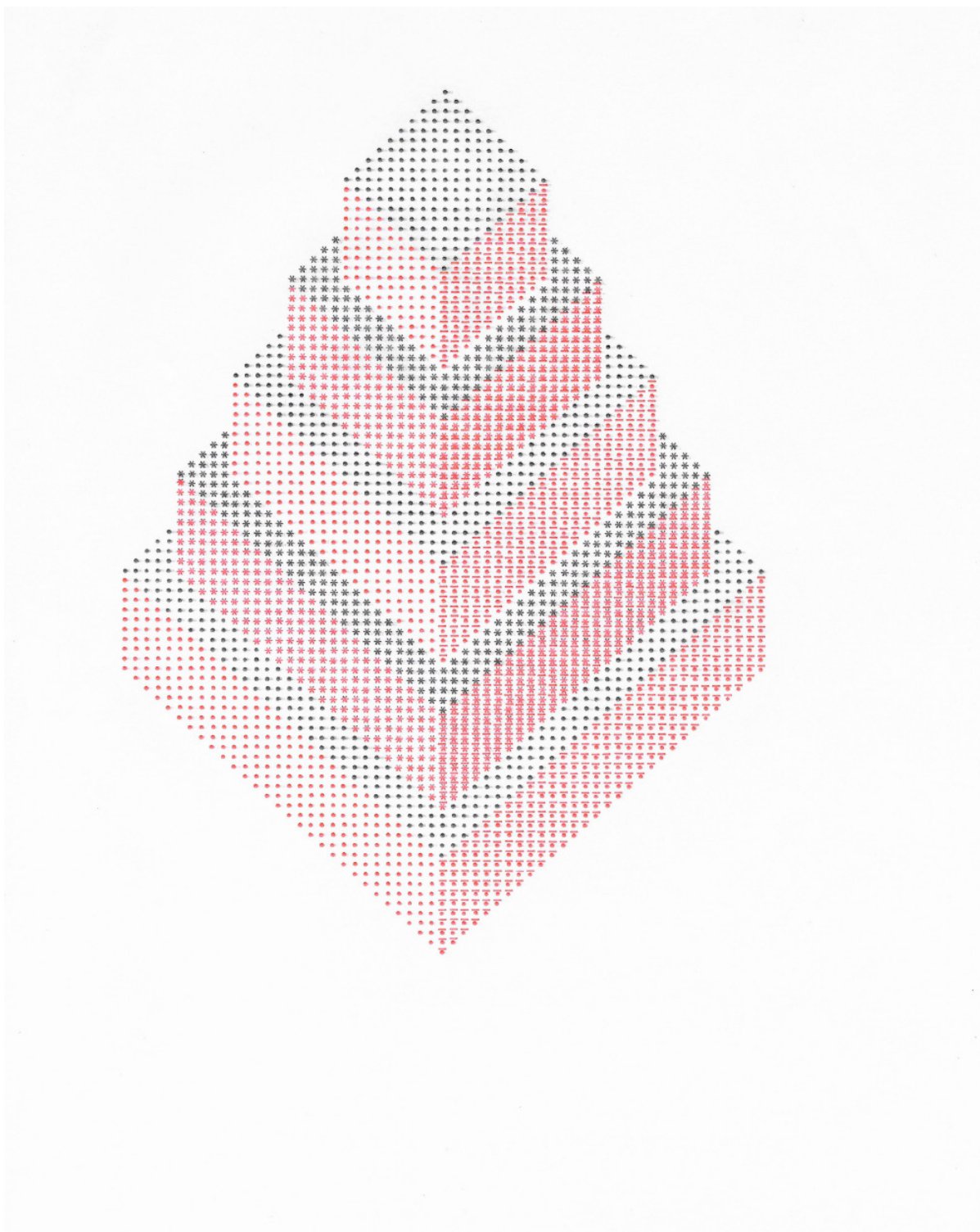
Under An Emily Sky



Visual

Kevin Stebner
Typewriter Ink
8.5" x 11"
2020

Matryoshka



Fire Escape

I'm the one that counts all the exits
just in case I

catch
on
fire

I smother heat rising
when voices ask

what
do
you
do?

animated hands create shadow
puppet films

on
white
walls

watch mouths fill rooms
with talk

of
honeymoon
vacations

I see my ashy outline near door frames
doorways ask if I

like
to
run

I tell them I've always been
the

one
to
escape

Visual

Donny Nie
Monotype on
Japanese Paper
25.5" x 32"
2019

Stage 2



Visual

Leave

Donny Nie
Watercolour
Monotype on
Paper
25.5" x 32"
2019



Sehnsucht

Sehnsucht: German origin. Intense desires for ideal states of life that are remote or unattainable; wistful nostalgia.

“The first few times are a bit difficult,” Seth says to me, placing his freshly manicured hand on my shoulder. He’s giving me his best attempt at feigned empathy. I blink away the excess moisture collecting in my tear ducts, realizing I’m only drawing more attention to a common side effect of being at the Auction House.

“I know that already,” I say, shrugging him off. I’m trying to hide the timidity in my voice, but, unfortunately, we are standing inside the Hall of Necessity. The frailty of my words echoes off the rounded swirls of textured ceiling, rolling back towards me across contrasting geometric floor tiles in the most disturbing display of mockery. Seth’s voice is much better suited for this room than mine. He smirks and hands me back my nametag.

“Only three more minutes until Spectators arrive,” Seth says, winking at me. “And you know what that means...”

“It’s time to bring in the next selection of auction pieces?”

“You’ve got it!” Seth snaps his fingers as he says this. He gets away with his cheerful, over-the-top persona because the voice modulator he’s using was originally that of a well-known broadcaster from several decades prior. I assume this is the reason the Governing Body allows him to take on the position of the Auctioneer. If he wound up here in some other way, the only other feasible reason is by accident, though accidents have ultimately been eliminated and are a rarity. He retracts his arm from my shoulder as he turns to leave.

“Oh! Why don’t you do it? You know where the Relic room is by now, don’t you?” He thinks this is a clever joke. This space is funded by the Governing Body and consists of only two rooms: the Hall of Necessity and the adjacent room, which is the Relic room. He should be calling on a Depiction to do this measly labour.

Instead, I nod and walk quickly across the immaculate expanse of the Hall. The faster I walk, the less I have to hear of him. The temperature inside here is crisp, the air old and still, my

shoes make a hollow, percussive sound against the tiles.

“Don’t get lost!” he adds, grinning his big, shiny chrome smile. His voice does not echo.

I can understand why someone might want to leave this position. I can’t deny that I’ve thought about it. I haven’t worked here very long, and I’m already in the habit of reminding myself that it’s the best paying job I’ve ever had. And my mother’s gone, so I need the money. But being around so many Depictions, and a mildly sardonic, charismatic Auctioneer like Seth takes a toll on a person, and it’s not just his derivative, perpetually happy persona that I find draining.

As I walk into the Relic room, I pause a moment in spite of myself and take it all in. The place is endless. Relics upon Relics stacked beyond what would constitute a room closure, every single one of them sealed away, hidden inside their cube shaped vessels. I can’t tell which is which, I only know which category each belongs to. It’s not important anyway, because every single one of them has been declared Insufficiently Useful by the Governing Body. I’ve never been in the Relic room by myself. To be honest, it might almost feel nice, if I didn’t know everything in here is only here temporarily, and will soon be decommissioned. Up until now, I’ve had Seth to “accompany” me, and each time we’ve retrieved the Relics, I’ve had to listen to his whole rehearsed spiel.

During my training in the first week, he told me: “once a Necessity is no longer established in Current Society as a Necessity, our Governing Body - or GB as I affectionately call them - will place these decommissioned Necessities, which are now called Relics, into the Relic room.

“From here,” he continued, “they are organized by category: Artifacts, Ideas, Historical, People, Phrases: Singular Words and Synonyms, Places, Popular, and Sentiments. After the allotted waiting period per category, selected Relics will be brought into the Hall of Necessity, where Spectators will bid on them.”

“And only Spectators are allowed to bid on Relics?” I asked Seth.

“You’ve got it!” he said as he snapped his fingers.

The contents of the Relic room are very appropriate. Each Relic looks the same. They are all the same size, no matter the category. I can’t tell them apart. Seth likes to remind me how the Relic room used to be called something else, but the word that the Relic room once

was called became a Relic itself, and now no one remembers what that word is. The presence of Relics marks the very definition of this permanently decommissioned word.

* * *

“Thank you for your assembly,” Seth projects effortlessly to the crowd. He is standing at the far end of the Hall of Necessity. I am at the back of the Hall, behind nearly 100 Spectators and their Depictions, behind the concessions counter. I watch as the Spectators talk amongst themselves, laughing alongside some of their companion Depictions. Some of the companion Depictions have voice modulators, but there aren’t many. The rest of the Spectators are enjoying their drinks with their silent companions as server Depictions who are employed by the Auction House carry around trays of glasses filled to the brim with more drinks. That’s another reason why most others might not want to work here. There is so much wealth being paraded around within the confines of this room. It’s almost sickening. All the little clusters in the crowd slowly hush and turn their heads towards Seth to listen to his announcement.

“Again, thank you all. Today’s Relics are here for display,” Seth says, gesturing to the eight sitting on the table next to him. There is one from each category.

A chorus of clapping from the Spectators swallows up all other sounds in the Hall. The sound is so jarring to my ears, I feel as though I’ve been slapped in the face.

“It’s a very valuable commodity, a Relic,” Seth dives into his recurring speech. “Relics are some of the most desired pieces available today. Although each Relic may have held great importance at a previous period in time, they are no longer considered Sufficiently Useful to those of us who contribute to Current Society. In the GB’s decision to hold Auction for Relics, we honour those who contribute to Current Society by eliminating the Unnecessities from public existence. Our overwhelming thanks to all Spectators, the Governing Body, and also to the Relics. May we be surrounded by only what is Sufficiently Useful, Current, and of Necessity.”

The Spectators now become Seth’s echo. “May we be surrounded by only what is Sufficiently Useful, Current, and of Necessity.” Some raise their glasses as if to toast this occasion. I hold back a sneer while my knee bounces. I realize I’m waiting for the Relics to be announced to the room. I’ve been told there are two reasons why I can’t know which of the Relics are chosen to be auctioned off before the Auction is already underway. The first is that I am not a

Spectator. The second is that I am still within my probationary period of working at the Auction House.

“Now, a few brief reminders for those who are first timers at the Hall of Necessity,” Seth says, pausing, and Spectators and some of the companion Depictions share a chuckle. The term “first timers” is exclusively used by the Hall of Necessity, and nowhere else in Current Society. Only those who are present for each Auction can hear, understand, and Interact with this compound word. I tried to explain how the Auction works to my mother before she died. We were outside of the Hall of Necessity, and the more I spoke, the less I could recall any of the language surrounding the concept of my workplace. What really astounds me, is how a GB run facility can get away with keeping a Relic. Especially since the purpose of this word is purely to land that one “joke”. It is a rarity that there are first timers when it comes to anything regarding Spectators. Seth continues.

“Only Spectators can bid in the Hall of Necessity.” He makes eye contact with me for a fleeting moment before adding on, “all those found attempting to bid without appropriate Spectator classification will be arrested.”

I scan the Hall for any distinguishing characteristics or irregular reactions from the masses facing Seth. Nothing.

“Relics that do not receive bids by any Spectator will be considered permanently decommissioned, which the Governing Body has now designated Unnecessities. All physical and metaphysical experiences connected to an Unnecessity will be eliminated from both Spectator existence and Otherwise.”

There is a murmur from a few Spectators.

“That’s new,” I hear one close to me whisper to her companion Depiction. The Depiction nods in silence, still obediently facing Seth and the Relics.

“Lastly, Relics from each category will be allotted to the top bidding Spectator. Those who are not allotted the Relic – Spectator or Otherwise – will experience this Relic as an Unnecessity, and all physical and metaphysical experiences connected to this particular Relic will be eliminated from public existence.”

The clapping commences once again and I, startled by the abruptness, drop a glass despite my attempt to catch it. It hits the ceramic tiles and shatters, but luckily none of the Spectators notice as they continue clapping, or at the very least, the echoes of their clapping are still resounding with all their might. The companion Depictions, however, all turn to look at me. They have all stopped clapping and their claps also lack echoes. An Auction House Depiction comes over immediately to clean up the broken pieces.

“The first category of the day is Phrases and Singular Words and Synonyms.” Seth picks up the Relic and holds it with one arm above his head. The Relic unfolds and expands, revealing the phrase *A Long Time Ago* contained inside.

“Oh, Heavens!” shouts one Spectator, overcome by such a profound strand of words.

“It can’t be,” another says in disbelief while bringing his hand up to his gaping jaw.

“That’s what I’m bidding on today,” says yet another, this one a bit louder than the rest as she is succumbed by what’s left of the drink gently spilling from her hand.

Seth lowers his arm, setting the open Relic down. The Hall falls eerily silent for the vast number of beings occupying the space. I can’t help but feel relief that it wasn’t during this moment that I dropped the glass. I look at all the Spectators, all equally silent, all equally consumed by the concept of having possession of this Relic.

Seth’s voice pierces the silence. “We’ll start the bidding off at, say, fifty thousand?”

* * *

“SOLD!” Seth barks in his remarkably quick auctioneer tone to the sea of faces crying out to him. “Sorry! There are no spares of this Relic, maybe next time will be your chance to pin down a different one, because the sport of *Bowling* has been allotted to the highest bidder. Thank you for your generous bid, Spectator.”

A few other Spectators murmur an echoing response of thanks, and Seth watches as a carrier Depiction transports the Relic over to the appointed Spectator. The Spectator squeals in delight, bouncing up and down with glee. As soon as the Relic is within his reach, he snatches it away from the Depiction.

Upon making contact with the Spectator, a sound louder than thunder and more hollow than the crack of a whip escapes from the Relic before it vanishes from sight completely. At least a dozen Spectators dispersed amongst the crowded Hall are thrown to the ground by an unseen force as their accompanying Depictions stare obediently forward, unaffected. The Spectators convulse rapidly, thrashing the air with their bodies.

“I knew that one might strike a few people down,” Seth says, winking to one concerned onlooking Spectator. I realize that I do not hear the entire joke he is making and wonder if my face mirrors the same terrified look I’m seeing on this Spectator’s face. “They’ll be fine!” Seth says to the crowd, even though it feels like it’s addressed specifically to me. “Let’s move forward.” Seth snaps his fingers.

Several Auction House Depictions move into the crowd towards the fallen Spectators, now displaying what seems to be a sort of catatonic state. The Depictions carry trays with glasses in hand, at the ready. They bend down, one by one, and offer each of their respective Spectators a refreshment. Seth clears his throat, and I realize he’s looking at me to also join in and help.

“Let me tell you a little bit about this next category before we dive in,” Seth resumes.

I walk over with my tray of glasses to the nearest Spectator lying on the floor, her eyes open and blinking as I approach her. She looks at me as I move closer.

“I didn’t get the piece, did I?” she asks me. I shake my head no and lean down to her.

“Gosh. I am so thrilled,” she says, looking like she might cry from happiness. She smiles and swiftly lifts herself up. “Is that glass for me?”

And with that, she walks off with her drink in hand and disappears into the crowd again.

I stand there, amongst the Spectators and Depictions, altogether confused. I look around, and the rest of those who have fallen are back up, too, as if they never were down in the first place. None of them seem concerned in the slightest.

“So, without further ado, our next category is People,” Seth announces, lifting the next Relic above his head. This time, as the Relic opens, a bellowing scream is released into the air. I freeze. Something is wrong.

A Spectator near me gasps.

“How remarkable,” another speaks softly, overcome with emotion.

Another cry screeches across the rounded swirls of the ceiling, abruptly slapping down onto the geometric tiles and vibrating as it snakes its way over to where I’m now standing in the middle of the Hall of Necessity. The sound of the woman’s voice rings in my ear.

“Oh my God,” I croak. I know who it is. I’d recognize that voice anywhere. I don’t even have to see the Relic unfold to know that the Person who is inside is my mother.

She screams again, this time hoarser, and I release the tray from my grip. Nobody looks this time as each of the glasses shatter, drinks now seeping between tiles. Spectators and Depictions are watching in terror as Seth tries to address the issue that is my mother.

“Technical difficulties, folks.” Seth tries to say lightheartedly. He recloses the Relic and my mother’s cries of desperation are abruptly silenced. I’ve never seen him reseal a Relic before. The crowd stirs with uncertainty, and Seth drops it back onto the table as it was before. It feels like this time he’s being less careful with it, the Relic containing my mother.

Fuck fuck fuck. What do I do? What *can* I do? The Spectators have grown silent again, much like they were at the start of the Auction.

Start the bidding at 10 thousand,” Seth says. Does he have a less cheerful tone?

The room continues to be silent. And quieter, and quieter still. Even the Auction Hall Depictions stop moving to look at what’s happening.

“Going once...” Seth says. And nothing.

“Going twice...” Seth says, more definitively this time. Still nothing.

There’s nothing I can do. Tears well up in the corners of my eyes. I don’t even get to say goodbye, she’ll be designated as an Unnecessity, and here I am standing in a crowd full of these Spectators. I silently plead for someone to save her.

“Save her,” I hear the echo of my thoughts escape as I exhale.

Nobody hears me.

“It’s decided,” Seth says. “On behalf of the Governing Body, we thank this Relic for any contributions it may have made in a previous period. May we be surrounded by only what is Sufficiently Useful, Current, and of Necessity.”

As the Spectators and their Depictions repeat the phrase, he picks up the Relic one more time, this time raising my mother over his head with both arms fully extended. The protective casing disappears. He quickly drops his arms and looks at me. My mother’s screams become indistinguishable from mine as they both fill the air and echo across the Hall of Necessity. I am catapulted from where I am standing, tears flying from my face as the whole force of my body weight slams against the tiles. Everything disappears and I lose my vision.

I open my eyes to see Seth standing over me. I blink a few times. My cheeks are wet.

“The first few times are a bit difficult,” he says to me, placing his hand on my shoulder.

Visual

Ann-Marie Brown
Encaustic & Oil
on Canvas
20" x 30"
2019

What Trees Know



There's Beauty in Dying Things too

My mother doesn't remember her name
No matter how many times you say
Maria! Maria! Maria!
The word passes by her, like a sound without rhythm

Because the blood I carry holds one certainty:
The disease of forgetting.
One day the letters of my name won't line up to make sense.
The syllables will sound out of tune,
broken and foreign.

They say that in the brain's last seven minutes of life,
It remembers the days that once had meaning
So
as the final brainwaves flood in like a beach during high tide
and the theatre in my mind plays one final dream,
know,
that even if it's just for a moment,
I'll think of you

as those in prayer realize no one is listening
And my incense withers to embers
I'll remember you, mom,
This much I can promise you

Because I'll never forget your name
Even when my own leaves me blue.

Visual

Jacob Stroham
Photography
18" x 24"
2020

Excavators and Apartment Complex



Candy Crush

I used to work as a candy cook. It's less fun than you'd think...

The easy money was in summer fairs. There'd be a diesel generator for whatever was going on, and rather than really cooking with propane, we'd just be electric and make cotton candy. You haven't lived until you've spent 12 hours a day making coloured bags of flavored sugar spun under the sun then used a saline rinse in the shower to refract rainbows out your nose.

I did it for five years. But that first summer I'd spend my breaks reading Professor Heinz Pagels under the trees sitting on the brown grass and muddled pine needles – quantum science stuff for the Grade 10 plebes and small-town nerds. He was married to Elaine Pagels, the religious studies prof, but then he died rock-climbing one summer. They were obviously twiddling with each other's stuff, whether it was the god particle or a particular god.

I was reading away, like some nerdy quark, when a carny came by. You can't observe something without changing it: knowing its mass but altering where it is or fixing its location by stopping what it's about to get up to. She had braces, wore dirty coveralls with straps beneath, obviously hadn't cleaned up in a week, and was covered in clown-style stage makeup. We had something in common. She sold twisted balloons for \$5 that cost a penny, I sold spun sugar for \$5 that maybe cost as much. Not likely, but maybe. She stared – hard. For some reason I stared back. She had braces, and with her red nose and mask of pancake makeup, she looked straight into me with a boldness the girls in high school never did. Maybe it was the difference in paint or the wig and nose. The anonymity of it all. I was more like the girls at school though. I was neither bold nor daring.

What was I going to say to a clown in coveralls? It was a question. And I was a shy kid. She didn't smirk. She looked straight into me, almost smug but like a collaborator, not a competitor. She'd won something, and she knew it. The black knucklebone crosses on her white painted cheeks lifted, and the crushed dry pine needles I was sitting on gave off their ripe summer scent, enough for me to inhale its resin through the cobwebs of sugar. The moment broke when a few kids started calling, so she showed them her rainbow socks and got to work with the

balloons.

We traded that look for the rest of the week. Over and over. It was like we were daring our teenage selves to do something about it. We were, of course, sweaty in the summer heat, wearing unwashed clothes, and coated in grime: her in stage grease and me in glucose. Dare I watch her, white and shining in the silver-flecked face paint? I dared very little, actually.

On the last day of the fair, she came to our booth for some cotton candy. You see, folks working these things never *buy* – it's always barter. She asked how much. I just gave it to her and asked what she'd share. She was older than me, and one shoulder of the coveralls fell over her peeling shoulder, tanned from all the sun of the fair and smelling of old sweat after the long day in the August sun.

She handed me a balloon. A short pink tube twisted into the shape of a dog with a small bulb at the end of his nose. It smelled like strawberries.

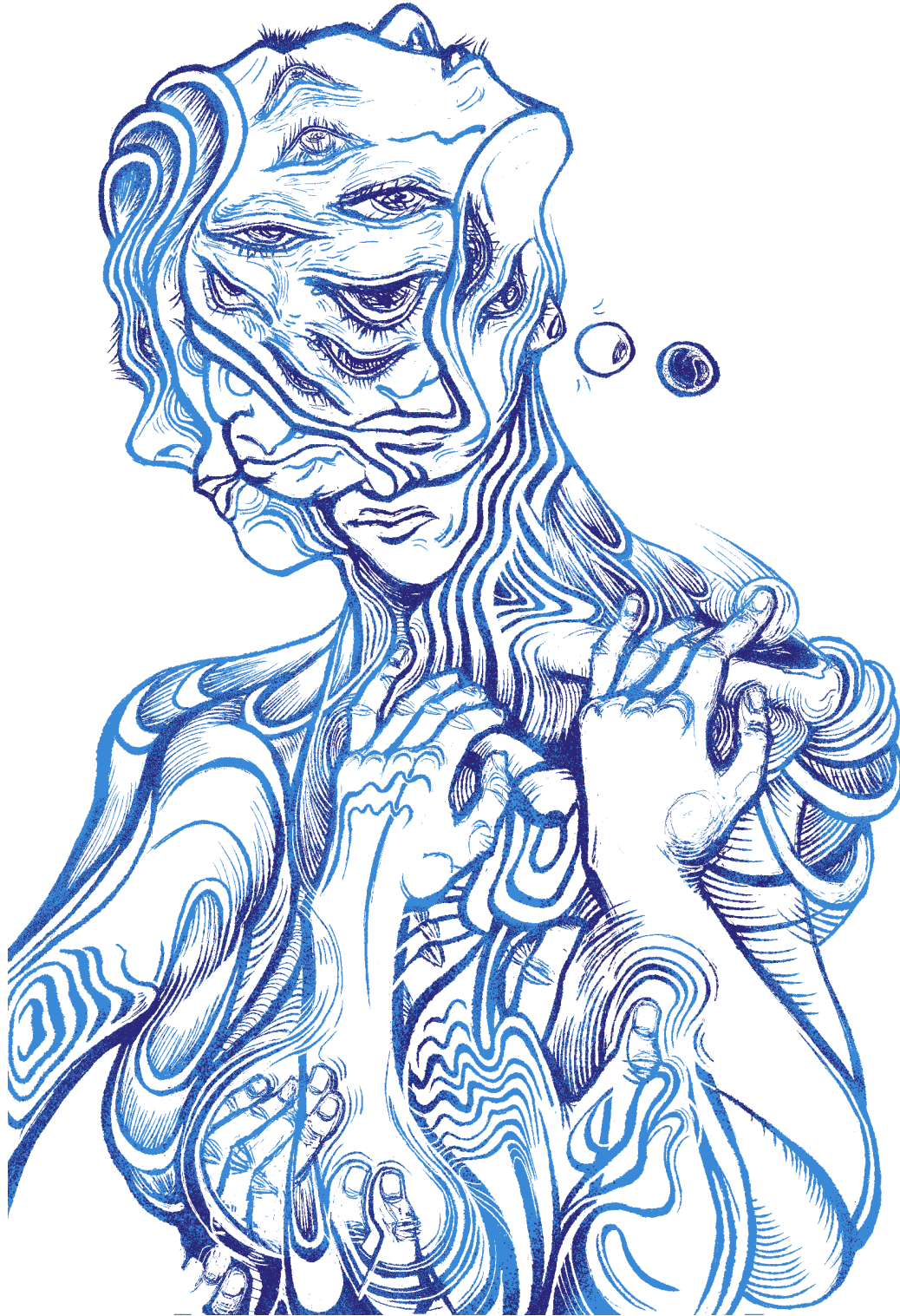
My hand shook when I took it, and her pointer finger drew across my pinky as she gave it to me. She stared straight into me, both of us dirty and stinking, me with blue-dyed sugar coating my ears & hair, melted from the sun into rainbow strings rather than grains (or maybe it was both), and her caked on sweated-through clown grease sealing up every pore.

You cannot observe a particle without changing it. I was seen. I was changed. I knew with the pines, the heat, the ripe stink of us in the sun, the paperback tight in my back pocket, and the crust of candy super strings in my hair exactly where I was. I'd completely forgotten what I was meant to do or be. Later, I knew it was the first moment I could spread at ease under the sky, choosing my own direction.

Visual

Mikayla Fawcett
Digital Media
5.5" x 8.5"
2020

Proprioceptive Parsing



Bios

Alisha Sian is a long-time dweller in the world of graphite pencils. Her drawings explore mysterious territory—the strange borderline between realism and abstraction—in order to convey the complex beauty of different faces, bodies, and experiences. Using intensified contrast and expressive line work, she strives to emulate the delicate balance of harmony and chaos reflected everywhere she looks. A career as a Registered Nurse from KPU, her South Asian heritage, and her compassion for all living beings each play dominant role in her goal with every drawing—to find solace in the darkest of places.

Andrea Josic (she/they) is a queer Bosnian-Canadian poet, performer and comedian based in Tkaronto (Toronto, Ontario). AJ has been competing in slams across Turtle Island for four years and was the champion of the 2020 Toronto Poetry Slam and the 2019 Feminine Empowerment Movement Slam. A graduate from Ryerson University's journalism program with a minor in English and the former Fun & Satire editor at The Eyeopener, they are an award-winning journalist and multidisciplinary artist. As a textbook Aries, she hopes to cultivate healing and community joy in her work. Find them on Twitter and Instagram @localdollarama.

Ann-Marie Brown is a Canadian painter currently hunkered down on the west coast in the company of rain & bears.

Chlöe Rowat is a UBC undergrad student studying English and Creative Writing. She recently finished her Associate's Degree in Creative Writing at Douglas College, and while attending was a First Reader for Event magazine. She is also a theatre educator, and has developed two musical theatre programs for youth and teens across Metro Vancouver. Chlöe spends her spare time directing plays, songwriting, and is currently learning to spreche Deutsch. She also enjoys (re)watching television shows with subtitles.

Claire Veliath: I live in Langley with my husband and two daughters. Some of my interests include sexuality, gender, sustainable living, feminism, the psychology of racism, mental health and coping with trauma, but my greatest passion is telling stories. I've been taking classes at KPU part time since 2013; I'm in my fourth year of study and I'm majoring in creative writing. I've published a short story in Pulp in Summer 2015 (issue 11). I've published a poem in Pulp in Fall 2015 (issue 12).

Donnie Nie is an emerging painter based in Toronto and Chicago. She is a current MFA candidate at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and a 2019 BFA graduate from OCAD University, via a full-scholarship. Her paintings and sculptures underline the exhaustion and exuberance, of overwhelming possibilities in mundanity. The artworks reference sensations and processes of consumption, to embody a continuous, and subtle shaping of an individual, through the accumulative effect of innocent routine.

Harpreet Kang is a Creative Writing student at KPU. She writes poems and sometimes reads them out loud. As an artist, she uses her poetic voice to share her experiences as a brown femme moving through the world. She's an awkward Punjabi girl whose father has given her the writer gene so she can be badass on paper. Poetry has been her lover for years. She hopes to keep the relationship alive forever.

Jacob Stroham is a BFA student majoring in Visual Arts, whose interest lies in recording the urban landscape through analogue photography.

James Gifford is an active editor and Director of Fairleigh Dickinson University Press. He's taught in six countries on two continents and lives in the Fraser Valley. His recent writing is in SAD Mag, Abridged, and The Nashwaak Review. He is also an alumnus of the first cohort in the KPU Music department. Find him on Twitter @GiffordJames.

Bios

Kevin Stebner is an artist, poet and musician from Calgary, Alberta. He produces visual art using old videogame gear, and produces music with his chiptune project GreyScreen, post-hardcore in his band Fulfilment, as well as alt-country in the band Cold Water. His first book of poems, *Sunshine Policy*, is out from Straw Books. Stebner has spent the quarantine preparing two new manuscripts, his first novel, and a large amass of typewriter visual poems. He is also the proprietor of Calgary's best bookstore that's in a shed, Shed Books.

Insta: @revolutionwinter

Mikayla Fawcett is enthralled with natural science, human-environment relationships, and things that thrive in abandoned places. They are miniscule within the universe; they cope by falling ever more in love with the void and all the tiny things that live there—and by making things collaboratively or alone. Comics at thehereafternow.ca. Instagram: @scarecrowscribe 1. Archive Article; Digital illustration; October, 2020 2. Nestle; Digital Illustration; July, 2020 3. Half-Blind Semi-Automatic: They Meet Again In Passing; Digital Illustration with Migraine; September, 2020 4. Proprioceptive Processing; Digital Illustration; June, 2020 5. She Loves Sweet Smooth Beats; Digital Illustration; September, 2020

Satnam Kaur Purewal is a second-year business student at KPU. She gets her love for writing from her grandfather who recited his poems loudly in his village's town square. She hopes to be as brave as him one day. She spends her free time walking with her King German Shepherd named Amigo and writes whenever inspiration strikes.

Sydney Peters is a writer of poetry and fiction, residing on the unceded lands some refer to as British Columbia, Canada. She is in the final year of her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with a minor in Creative Writing at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. As a writer, she has an especial fondness for surrealism, lyric, and free verse poetry. Sydney's work often implements haunting imagery, local and family history, as well as plants and wildlife. Her poems have most recently been published in *pulp Mag* and *Papeachu Review*.

pulp MAG

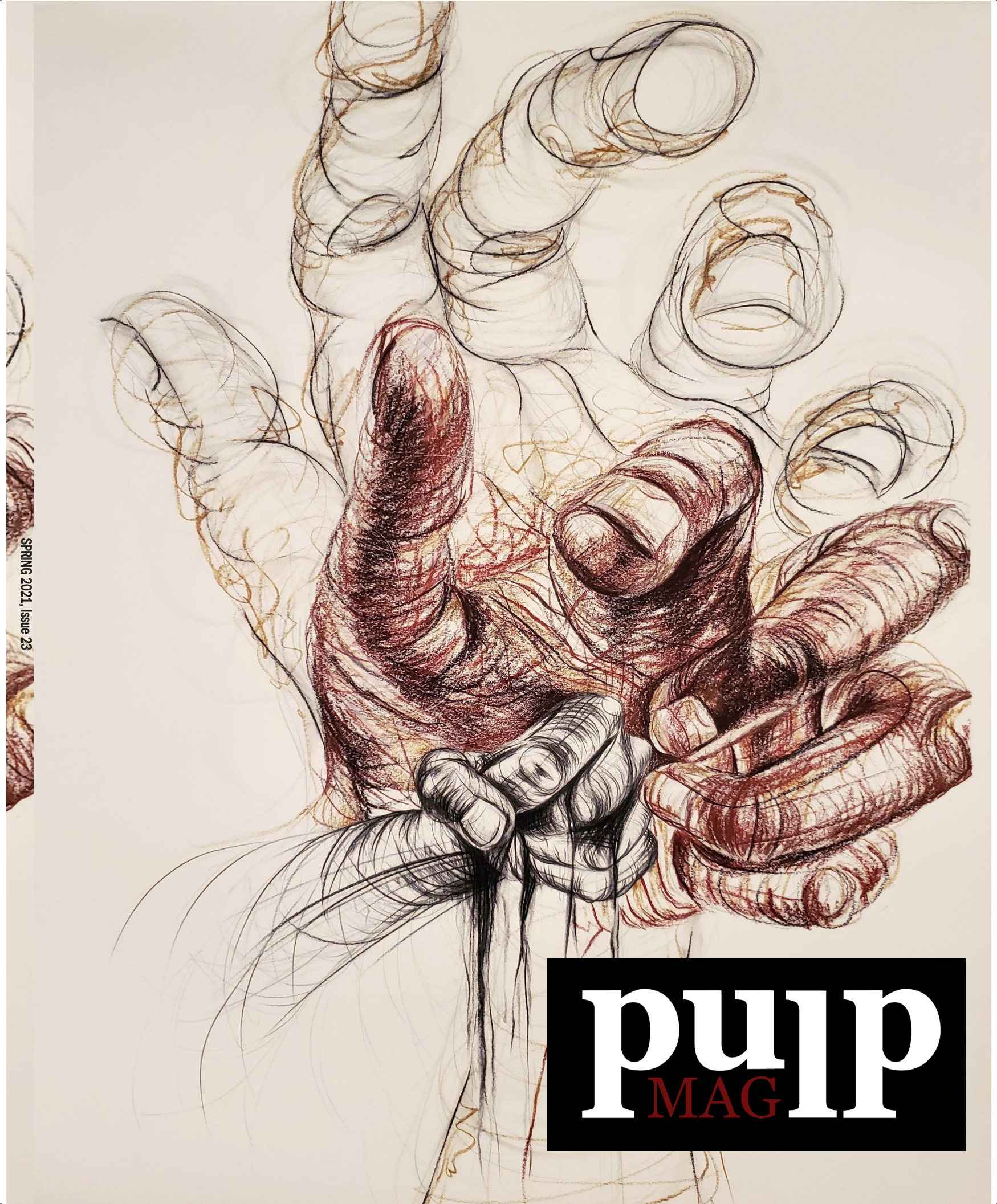
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