



rune 45

DISSONANCE

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Note from the Editors

Dissonance, the opposite of consonance, arises from inharmonious sounds, opinions, and elements. It may take the form of a minor second interval in a chord, harsh consonant clusters in a poem, or clashing colors in a painting. Within ourselves, it may be realized as a discordance in the beliefs and values we hold.

But don't be misled—this stark description doesn't illuminate the whole picture. Dissonance can often be ephemeral, subtle. It can act as the soft, yet persistent tap on the shoulder, as the urging call for our focus—as undivided as we can conceivably give it—in a world that pulls & prods at & purposefully divides and commodifies our attention.

As MIT students, we understand how untethered ambition and a finesse for learning can leave one rushing from class to class, from interesting idea to interesting idea, from dynamic and impromptu ways to unwind, all until we fall asleep.

As you flip through this magazine and consume the wonderful pieces we've compiled, we hope that you'll find pieces that capture your attention—by way of dissonance, or an alternative avenue. We hope that you'll be able to sit in your own thoughts, fleeting or steady, full of discomfort or pleasure or something else, and reflect on what precisely affected you, when it did, why it did. Or all three. A pause in the midst of a bustling, full, wonderful life.

Lucy Cai & Akua Yeboah
Editors-in-Chief of Rune

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Mama

By Priscilla Leang

I saw you in the morning,
knocked on the glass and
knew you were alive.

You said to give more
than I take, so I give you a smile,
toothpaste suds across my chin.

They closed the casket,
but I know you're not in there.
I saw you in the morning.

Mama, can you hear me?

They say grief is a circular
staircase, but I see your dreams
when I look in the mirror.

You said to keep my head up,
but there's love in my eyes,
trickling down.

Rounded edges, sharp stare,
when I touch my face,
I'm touching yours.

Mama, can you see me?

Black is not my color,
so I wore the rainbow dress
you got me before college.

You said to hope for the best,
prepare for the worst. But I've been
living off condolences.

And my grief, like the trees,
rises out of itself—
heavier, swallowing the light.

Mama.

You sit with my grief in
the living room,
my head on your shoulder.

You asked if you could
help me swallow the past, but
I know I'll throw it up again.

Oh, Mama, hear me.
See me. Please,
I



Mother

By Isabella Zhu

MIT Views

By Filbert Ephraim Wu



Drift

By Lilah Lindemann

after Frank O'Hara

It is 1:19 PM on a Tuesday
and I have forgotten the time.

The elevator hums and I think
it must've fallen asleep on the way up
and is now snoring somewhere
around the fourth floor of the ESG building
and yes, I could take the stairs
everything is easier down than up
but I wait anyway, just like yesterday
and the day before and the day
before that and the day before—

The elevator ride is unremarkable
and I do not have thoughts for a poem.

I see silver packaging crushed
into the coarse and dirty sidewalk—
could be gum wrappers or
something more nefarious
so I say it's gum wrappers,
skipping over them like hopscotch
down towards the crosswalk
that runs diagonally for a reason
I haven't been able to guess.

Someone sprints across the street
while my legs are frozen by the stop signal.

The dining hall is overflowing and
I am hit immediately by a wall of life
too loud and cheerful and hungry
so I slip past the french fries
that are still not vegetarian
snatch a plate and some bread



and make myself a sandwich
for the fourth day this week
and wish I could go back to
eating lunch at 2:15 PM, when all
the pizza is gone, but at least there's rice.

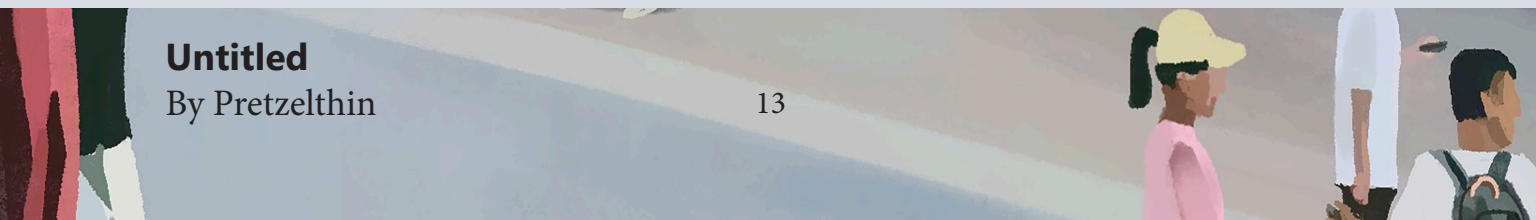
On the fifth day, I use too much salt
and my eggs taste like blood.

A boy in the elevator asks me
a question, and maybe that is why
I notice three posters on the metal pole
with their centers torn out
so only a few dates and words are visible
I read the edges on principle
and guess at what was in the middle
I try not to ascribe to malice
what can be attributed to the weather.

Yes, I say, I'll be there at
the dinner tonight, will you?

I push open the door with my
hoodie sleeves pulled up over my hands
and step out into the street
while I get my bearings, someone
nearly runs me over with a bicycle
so I resolve to look at the scenery
and not my phone
but then I forget the time and think
that maybe I actually have class
so I have to check, I have to, but I find
it is 12:02 PM and time for lunch.

I turn left instead of right;
this is how I know it's a Friday.



Untitled

By Merry Wang



Burning Hill

By Aadya Sharma

You never call it that until it's happening to you: apocalypse. You sit in the back-seat of your cousin's Toyota Corolla and wait, not knowing—not able to know—if you'll make it back in time. Thousands of cars creep alongside you on the highway, practically motionless. Your phone battery clings on for dear life. 1% remaining. You would ask to charge it, but the car is almost out of gas. Besides, charging your phone won't help. Soon, you won't be able to use it, anyway. Nothing will matter anymore.

But it would be nice to look over the digital records one last time: the pictures you took with your friends at the beach when you dared each other to eat sand, blurry from saltwater and overexposure; the dozens of playlists of hundreds of songs that you'd listen to in times much like this, staring idly out of a vehicle's window; the playful messages you exchanged with family on your WhatsApp group chat, the one that was seven years old yet its name had never changed.

You just wish there was more time. The sky has never looked so red, the sun so angry, so large. Dread eats at you like a rabid wolf, chewing through your flesh and sinew like meat, self-sustaining. You think about your family, your friends, your schoolmates, your teachers, your acquaintances, your strangers. Everyone you've ever loved or hated or known at all. You think about the people in the car next to yours. Where are they going? Will they make it in time?

Your skin boils from the sun's blazing light, piercing through the window like a magnifying glass. A fire rages somewhere. A forest fire, a burning hill, like the one three years ago in the nature reserve next to your neighborhood, when you had to evacuate because the smoke overtook the mountains, and ash was snowing down onto your street. Those were the first signs that something was wrong, or the first ones you were conscious of, anyway. Truthfully, this has been a long time coming, a timer ticking closer to zero like a bomb, like doomsday. Like an apocalypse. A fire rages somewhere, and here—and everything is red.

You yearn for the cool, dark nights when you and your brother would walk the dog, your banter filling the empty silence of the neighborhood; for the Santa Ana winds in autumn that blew leaves and thoughts astray, that chilled you to the bone such that no amount of layering could help; for the mornings after rain, however sparse those became, with dewdrops on blades of grass and puddles on the pavement and petrichor in the air. You long for the glittering stars to surround you in the dark, to consume you.

But instead, you will be swallowed whole by this wave of heat and ignorance. You won't survive it this time. No one will. You only hope to make it home before it's too late, to at least be in your mother's arms when the Earth melts away, along with your little life.





Fish Art

By Anonymous

The first fish art I experienced came while sailing the gulf of La Paz on the Baja Sur peninsula. It was half an hour before the sun set on a perfect day and around us a school of manta rays knew too the joy of those in the small boat above them. Inspired by some shared signal, they began to leap from the water, diving into the sea of blue sky above—flapping all the way. Our captain called them tortillas voladoras and assured us that the rays were perfectly healthy, perfectly safe; that those who studied such things had found the leaps were not the response to any predator or prey. The rays simply jumped for joy. So we watched as the more limber ones landed the sickest of backflips before flopping back into the water. We watched until the dusk hid them from our eyes. And then we listened in the gentle dark as the small smacking sounds continued all around us; each note the ocean welcoming home yet another wayward child.

The other instance of fish art I've encountered—seemingly upheld throughout the internet as the fine art of the fish world—are the sand mandalas puffer fish spend weeks building off the coast of Japan. Really they are stunningly beautiful, so much so that the part of me which rebels against all things common-held, begrudgingly gives them their due at the top. Indeed, I've even begun to file the fastidiousness with which these fish devote themselves to their artistic expression as evidence for a pet idea: that all human traits are only the learned echoes of another species' purer expression. By this theory perhaps the sand mandalas high in Tibetan monasteries find their truest invocation in the meticulous creations of our distant aquatic cousins.

These two examples of fish art, together with maybe a handful more, seem to sum up not just mine but humanity's full understanding of fish art. And for years this has always bothered me, how could such a limited catalog encapsulate full oceans of creativity? What seems much more likely is that we just cannot recognize the art fish create as art. And if fish art stubbornly resists human understanding, what hope would we have of recognizing plant art? Or microbial art? Or alien art? To be gate kept from appreciating beauty in all that biomass limited by our own air-sucking, uncomprehending blindness has always felt to me a heavy sentence.

And that was where my frustration stood for many years, until last month I went to the aquarium with my sister. The fish were, as always, each a jewel. They swam strong and quiet behind the glass, and so busy—circling round and round the central three story tank. At the open air top we met Mo' the manta ray who spent his morning swimming circles, meticulously slapping the sides of the behemoth tank to some rhythm only he could attend. Continuing the theory of human pursuits borrowed from nature, perhaps



Untitled
By Stray Jaja

it must be that manta rays are the skateboarders of the fish world, set forward by some eternal flame to grind out the sickest tricks, or perhaps the consummate conductor keeping time for every member of their symphony. At least so it is with Mo', beating his fin in tempo for every living thing in the three stories of water below. That tower of fish all sliding along, beating, living sculptures of contemporary art—every body cut in a different daring shape, a different brilliant color palette, but each clearly a phrase dictated in the same grammar, harmony through the visual language of beautiful fish.

It all came to resemble a unified lexicon in the hand of some great artist. Indeed a distinct visual signature is perhaps even in the modern definition of artist. For an example, consider Dr. Seuss who in his work not only gave rise to discrete characters but a limitless continuum of Whoville visual language, a grammar upon which generations of admirers have extended. Let it be a sports car, a papaya, or a pug – any object can and almost certainly has been rendered in Seussian style even though the doctor never explicitly gave body to the objects himself. Such is the power of his visual grammar that it lives on and continues to expand beyond his singular life. I argue the same for the bodies of those tropical fish; that taken together that morning they spelled a visual language both elegant and flexible. In my mind I could extend its visual form to the flippered sports car, the scaled papaya, the pug with a mermaid tail all rendered spectacular. Indeed, perhaps here was a language even more rich and tightly centered than that of any living human artist, able to extend gracefully even to biotic shapes and plumages humans would otherwise have no foot in creating.

So here now, I retract a step. Not exactly do I believe are fish in the hand of one great artist. It seems more likely that they are a society of artists all singing the same song. Perhaps in a way like the ancient artists. How I remember walking through the anthropology museum in Mexico City, passing through the halls of pre-Hispanic people - the Olmecs, the Maya, the Zapotec, the Mexica. Each hall filled with stone carvings and designs that would be home in any contemporary gallery; a thousand artifacts made by the hands of a hundred artists, spread across generations, spread across a continent and yet all unified in artistic expression. Every piece by the Olmecs was unmistakably Olmec – their artistic voice powerful in great stone heads, the Maya in their liquid figures, the Mexica in elaborate skulls and turquoise mosaic. But not limited to Mesoamerica, other ancient societies too seem joined in creation. Think of the shinto Japanese shrines, the Egyptian tombs, the Easter island heads. Perhaps the fanaticism in individual expression is but a contemporary obsession, and more core to us is the practice of artistic community, each voice raised in harmony within a grander choir.

But fish live where tides corrode. They do not carve stone monuments or bake terracotta warriors. To seek such exogenous displays of creation in anthropomorphic search

was my error. In that aquarium, it became clear. Fish are fish art; fish art is their very bodies themselves. The society of underwater artists eclipses all the societies of human artists in both dedication and magnitude. The art of fish is made on the timescale of billions of years and it is carved across trillions of generations by the collective choices of septillions of fish. The tool in all of this - the sculptor's chisel, the painter's brush—is sex. Each successive generation of fish has the free will to choose whom to reproduce with, and by doing so casts its elective vote in the grand cascade of evolution. The bodies of fish as we see them today are the sum collective of all that is good and beautiful from the eyes of every fish that has ever lived to reproduce. As all artists are influenced by the fashions of their time, each fish, in its pursuit of aestheticism, builds its taste from those who swim beside it. In this way, as a unified ecosystem, the world of fish maintains a singular visual language, shaped by every fish, every decision, and every trend set across time.

What I am not sure about and what can perhaps never be known to a human, is what drives fish to make their art? Do they make art like the ancient Nazca? The Nazca, who built their geoglyphs stretching kilometers across the Peruvian pampas. The Nazca, who had no way to know any human would ever sit in flying machines to see such works in their entirety. The art of the Nazca which was simply not meant for human eyes. The purpose of their labor was the labor itself, holy creation. Is this also the purpose of fish art: holy creation? Or is it for mean societal status? Or grandeur, beauty in beauty for beauty? Or perhaps we share more in common with fish than we existentially tolerate. Perhaps we make art for the same reason fish make art. That all of us are just cells within the system which is everything, and every individual act of creation is a small voice in a large choir the sum total of which is singing the song of all that is good and beautiful.



By Filbert Ephraim Wu

Baggage Claim, 1:47 AM

By Chloe Tan

But on the return, not
the arrival. Anemic eyes hunt
the suitcase, that headstone
of a phantom self,
shed like a shell of caterpillar
skin; or maybe not. Instead the butterfly is
a wingless corpse, petrified in
amber. Fatigue
is not a product of jet lag—more of a
daily ritual, a serene
asphyxiation. The cocoon remains
sterile, unbroken, exquisite jailhouse.
Time chokes on its pulse, devoured
by abundance. Sighs pull
the mouths. Watches lift
the arms. Perhaps it is time
to go home.

Silent Disco

By Anonymous

At times when I close my eyes I see
my life flashing by in strobes
a freeze-frame, a tableaued memory,
before darkness presses down once more.
Through it all, my blood pulses along
to a beat, felt but not heard.
There's a gravity to this phantom song,
like the draw of Earth to an astronaut;
I picture myself up there
– the bones in my ear, still –
with the world locked in my stare,
a vacuum yawning wide behind me.
A frame later and I'm in a pool,
ears underwater, eyes on the sky
watching a jetstream unspool
across a hemisphere of blue.
As these two selves float, senseless,
in each other's gazes, a third
picks her way through defenseless
bodies, dancing eternal in a shutterclick
of time, and looks for something
familiar, so she's not quite so lost,
someone who might be able to bring
the world crashing back down around her.



Summer

By Maia Kopylova

“The fact of the matter is that it’s really hard to buy a gun in Pasadena. The secretary at the police department looked at me like she thought guns have only ever been artifacts or movie props, but she handed over the forms all right.

She put me on some sort of waitlist, and you know I can’t stand bureaucracy. I didn’t want to wait, and don’t think I would have passed the background check anyway, on account of my grades being not so good and my being on Prozac. Although who knows, all college students are on Prozac these days. Maybe the police would find it suspicious if I wasn’t.”

Green light.

“I wasn’t kidding about the secretary, Jack—can I call you Jack?—everyone here lives their life like they’re in the goddamn movies. I don’t mean it in the way that they have an interesting life like in the movies, I mean that everything feels like it’s fake. I don’t know how to put it. The weather, for example, is fake—they have the flood lights on all year and the heater and then when they don’t like something they just burn the entire set down. You really lose touch with mortality when it’s sunny all the time. Back East it’s not like that at all—anytime you want to feel alive, you just go outside into the cold, then you get sick and that makes you feel alive. It’s nice that things change, too, like spring is a reward for winter and fall is a reward for summer. It’s nice in the East.”

“Jack, the irony is not lost on me that I’m talking about times of year. But it was seriously the first thing that came to mind. And I haven’t told many people this, but the name that’s on my birth certificate is Sumer and not Summer. My dad is a professor of Assyriology. Can you believe that shit? He went through a history phase when he was still impressionable and I have to suffer for eighteen years.”

“I guess being from the East and all has made me sort of at a right angle to everyone, socially. Like the planes of our realities are shifted at a right angle to each other. Sorry for being so abstract, but I can’t really explain what I’ve been experiencing. I’m not thinking very clearly at the moment.

Summer took a long sip from her juice box and put it back into the cup holder. She watched the red pickup truck in front of her pull onto the ramp to the 10. She continued.

“I guess what I’m saying, Jack, is that I’m socially awkward. It’s not the standard social awkwardness like in the movies, like I can *talk* to people, but I don’t know. When I talk to people it’s like I’m twisting myself ninety degrees into their reality and then twisting back again. Maybe I was raised with Sumerian values or something, but I haven’t really talked to anyone since I was about 11. Well, until now. You’re goddamn good at your job, you know that? I could tell as soon as I walked into your office that I’d found something. You have *taste*, and that’s the most important thing. How the hell was I supposed to bare my soul to somebody with abstract art on their walls? You have to understand my abruptness then, because good therapists are hard to find and the police haven’t given me a gun yet.”

A Toyota Highlander cut her off and she honked.

“Loneliness is such a bitch, Jack. You don’t know how it is. And all the people who think they’re content with just themselves and their book are lying to themselves. Either the book is boring or you’re not big enough for it, one of the two. I’m sorry I’m getting abstract again. I’m not used to saying things out loud like this. What I wanted to say is that you need people at some point in your life, and on account of the whole ninety degree business I just mentioned, I find it very difficult to meet them. Now I’ll tell you what I do every day and you tell me how I’m supposed to meet people. I even have it written down for my last therapist Shelly. Shelly was all right except for when she wanted me to admit that all of my problems were because of the patriarchy.”

Without looking at the road once, Summer reached over to the glove compartment, obtained a paper crane, unfolded it, and began reading.

“2 PM. Wake up. Have skipped lecture because wanted to sleep. No breakfast because that is the best way to not exercise. And also I am running out of food. (No dining hall plan because my father wanted to save money and for me to build character. Ha! Build character). Have to go to Trader Joe’s. Going off campus makes me feel like those stupid Soviet puppies must have felt when they got launched into space. (Even though I don’t like our campus: I hate the whole small campus idea. Whoever thought of that one must have not had any friends.) 3PM. Go to Trader Joe’s. Come back. Eat. Do homework in room until 5 AM.”

She looked proud of herself and took a sip from her juice box.

“When I was little I wanted to be an actress, you know. I only really liked school as much as I was good at it, but that was enough to make me the world’s most incompe-

tent math major. I'm not stupid, either, I'm *incompetent*; that's how Shelly told me to think about it."

She glanced suspiciously to the right. Her mouth hardened.

"I guess this is pretty boring for you, Jack. I know I've been talking for a long time, but you're just a really good listener."

Muffled silence.

"And *once again* I'm sorry for the uncomfortable situation with the zipties and the blindfold and everything, but I'm telling you that I didn't have a choice because you're a really good therapist and they won't give me a gun and I haven't talked for so damn long."

She got no answer again and it stayed that way. She cried for a good amount of time. Then the sun shone and reflected off the cars and she saw the brown foothills through the smog. L.A. Woman came on the radio and she tapped the steering wheel and hummed.

"We're going on a road trip East, Jack. Come on Jack, look alive! Jack! It's the first day of Summer."



Beach Day

By Maria Iacobo



Butterfly Effect
By Emily Zhang

The Body

By Priscilla Leang

Do we choose
what we remember?
Or is memory just
a shadow of fear?

I spilled my shame
on the sheets and
never realized
it was that dark.

Tell me, dearest, were you afraid?
When your stubble grazed my cheek
and I lost control,
the winter returned, years after.
And the words—
dearest, you know I would
never hurt you—
echoed in my head.
The shame, oh, shame.
Shame.

It must have been hard
for you, too. Forgive my foolish
fingers; skin is just skin
in the dark.

comfort;_

By Ari Peró

buttery
Creamy.
delicious .

like blood dripping from the ceiling

life nestling between my toes
burths under nailbeds.

kittens purring beneath car tires,.

knotted keyboards

holy trash abgs com-

fret.

stream of conciouspiss/my body is terrifying./AN ALLERGY TO GRAPES

By Ari Peró

for a long time, I didn't like any fruits.

it was the
sloshy, squishy, smushy, gushy
that gat me gagging and going
through n out life hoping
i'd never have to have another taste until

...

the first fruit i'd managed to start liking was grapes.
see, if you get a good bag—the ones with the right... surface tension... your incisors will
pierce
right through just like fangs through a fleshy neck.

...

well, anyway, they're my favorite fruit now. just love sucking the life right on out of...
tight grapes.

i'd eat them pretty much every other day, for about a year now...
except for that, the other day i ate a few grapes, and my hard palate started to sting.
of course, i thought nothing of it, until the roof of my mouth started to throb and
pulse every
time i swallowed even a single plump ellipsoid of
moist, undead
raisin pre-mummification pulp.

took 19 years til
one day i just became allergic to my favorite fruit.
i've only ever been allergic to mold and mosquito bites,
and even such was only ever preceding that pernicious period of perverting pubecence.

puberty...
it made my body terrifying.
from a skeleton self to one bearing two sets of succulent grapes
that i've always, since, wished would shrivel into raisins...

i hated what my bras would do, so i started stacking two—
one facing forward, one to the back—
hoping they'd squeeze the juices right on out of those misplaced muscadines



Concussion Cacophony

By Grace Hutter

that deformed everything i'd wear.

making dresses bulge like bottles or bunches
so that wearing one would make sick as if drunk.
feeling physically ill like...
well, an allergy to grapes
(mouth stingstomach hurtheave).

so i started to force the wine out through my veins,
hoping the grapes would disappear.
hoping to never have to wear a dress again
(or at least not on this body).
hoping for "sir"s and "young man"s that wouldn't soon be taken back
regretted
rescinded
renounced
with a blush and a flustered flurry of misplaced apologies.
what would it take?

to liberate my mind
means to confine my body.

you see, expressing myself femininely
feels like breaking gender norms to me,
but appearances point to conformity.

i want my makeup masculine.
i seek to secrete the same essence that streams from a cis sir shamelessly sporting a
sexless
skirt.
i aspire to androgyny—
long for at least uncertainty—
because right now i can't perform femininely
without seemingly
adhering to the norms i thought i'd escaped—
making certain of registration as cis,
though having never first allowed it.

and i can't afford others that chance.
of misperception. of

unwarranted transformation.

into something other than what apparently only i know to be true.

so i can't allow more than even one aspect of myself to be "female" at once,
and, of course, i can't change my inherent and outwardly-presenting sex—that's stuck
on one

setting;

the only thing i can control is my expression...

so i can't sport a skirt without soon succumbing to sick.

i can't mount makeup as a conduit for creativity because it
already has a position in the presentation of femininity.

i can't dress femininely without some other way of "letting people know" that
it's not what it looks like.

unless the only people exposed to that expression

are those who can recognize that this is solely one fraction of the man i truly am.

"man" doesn't quite cut it,

but i'm not sure if there, yet, exists a phrase that would help you to understand
who I am, unrestricted by labels.

for Fuel

By Lilah Lindemann

We could be separated from each another
Immediately recognized potential
Commercial instruments available to be used
For purpose is undoubtably our most important determination
Valuable for the nation

Shown in common: a source, a detector
Modern instruments produced and analyzed
Designed for specific purposes
Beyond the scope, we introduce you
Point out the features

You are operated under high conditions to ensure collisions
Depend upon pressure and enter the current
Count
Plot
Dividing the units divided you to two different levels
Resolution: used, and interpreted

The most important is the world under construction
Inside, the bombarded break apart
Fission liberates
Heat creates
Naturally occurring in order to be used as fuel

Lie.

The essential are identical
But small difference allows separation by a porous barrier
Is the only difference separation?
For this has been used for years to enrich

Recover—
Alleviate has been replaced by leaching
The acid solutions are buried
And recovery wells.

We [redacted] could be separated from each another [redacted] immediately recognized [redacted] potential [redacted] commercial instruments [redacted] available [redacted] to be used [redacted] for [redacted] purpose [redacted] is undoubtedly our most important [redacted] determination [redacted] valuable [redacted] for [redacted] the [redacted] nation [redacted] shown in [redacted] common [redacted] a source [redacted] a detector. Modern instruments [redacted] produced and [redacted] analyzed, [redacted] designed for specific purposes. [redacted] beyond the scope [redacted] we introduce you [redacted] point out the [redacted] features [redacted] you [redacted] are operated under high [redacted] conditions [redacted] to ensure [redacted] collisions [redacted] depend upon [redacted] pressure [redacted] and enter the [redacted] current [redacted] count [redacted] plot [redacted] dividing the [redacted] units [redacted] divided [redacted] you to [redacted] two different levels [redacted] resolution [redacted] used, and [redacted] interpreted.

[redacted] the most important [redacted]

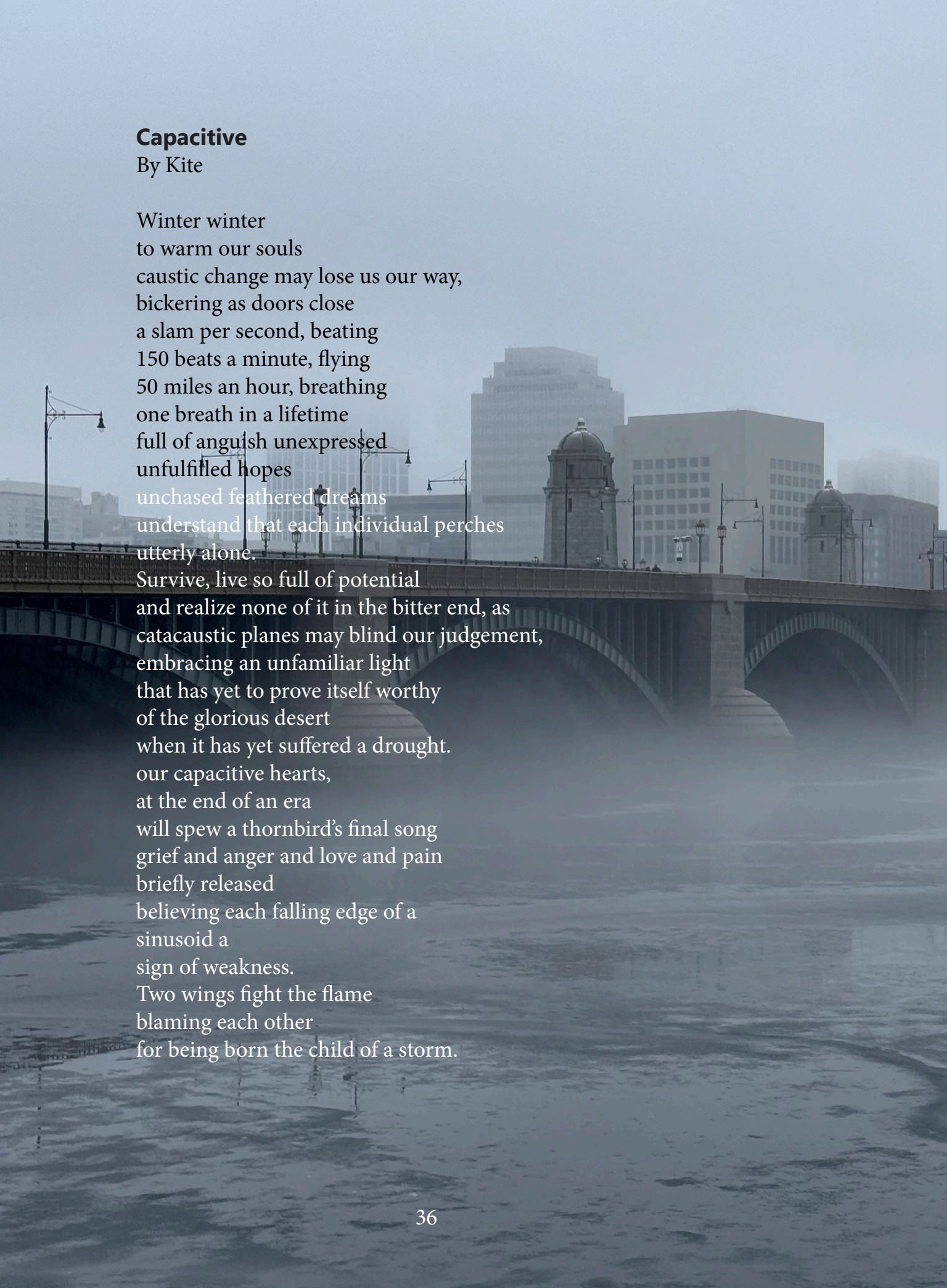
[redacted] for [redacted] [redacted] Fuel

[redacted] is [redacted] the world [redacted] under construction [redacted] Inside the [redacted] bombarded [redacted] break apart [redacted] Fission liberates [redacted] heat creates [redacted] naturally occurring [redacted] In order to be used as fuel [redacted] lie [redacted] the essential [redacted] are [redacted] identical, but [redacted] small difference [redacted] allows [redacted] separation [redacted] a porous barrier. [redacted] is the only [redacted] difference [redacted] separation [redacted] for [redacted] This [redacted] has been used for [redacted] years to [redacted] enrich [redacted]

[redacted] recover [redacted] alleviate [redacted] has been replaced [redacted] by [redacted] leaching [redacted] the [redacted] acidic [redacted] solutions are [redacted] buried [redacted] and recovery wells.

Capacitive

By Kite

A monochromatic, blue-toned photograph of a cityscape. In the foreground, a large stone bridge with multiple arches spans a body of water. The background features several tall buildings, some with domes, partially obscured by a thick fog or mist. The overall mood is somber and atmospheric.

Winter winter
to warm our souls
caustic change may lose us our way,
bickering as doors close
a slam per second, beating
150 beats a minute, flying
50 miles an hour, breathing
one breath in a lifetime
full of anguish unexpressed
unfulfilled hopes
unchased feathered dreams
understand that each individual perches
utterly alone.
Survive, live so full of potential
and realize none of it in the bitter end, as
catacaustic planes may blind our judgement,
embracing an unfamiliar light
that has yet to prove itself worthy
of the glorious desert
when it has yet suffered a drought.
our capacitive hearts,
at the end of an era
will spew a thornbird's final song
grief and anger and love and pain
briefly released
believing each falling edge of a
sinusoid a
sign of weakness.
Two wings fight the flame
blaming each other
for being born the child of a storm.



By Filbert Ephraim Wu

THE SNOW MAN

By Amy Chen

He dreamt once that...

he hadn't dreamed in ages;
Maybe it's because he's living the dream (he tells himself).
It was in his thoughts that he felt the most alive
but now his mind is numb.

The days spin by in a cold flurry
flakes of white ash blow down from above:
bits of himself,
flecks of his memory.

They coat the ground around his feet with a layer of soot—
all that is left of who he was,
now melting away,
soon gone.

He leaves fleeting footprints wherever he walks
—they are all he knows about himself,
it's all he can see.

So he reasons: That's all he is,
and ever will be—
soon buried.

In the warmth of the bellows is when he seems the most alive now,
feeling the pulse of the world warm his trembling hands
his pale form shriveling from the weight of life
lofty thoughts and old dreams
reduced to a watery urge:
survive.

...

The field is covered in a sheath of frozen rain

The night before, a squabble of hundreds of geese stamped the field with hundreds of prints of their little webbed feet. Then it drizzled, and now their prints are enshrined in the land of his dreams

If you look hard enough, you can see the faintest of footsteps. They're nestled between the goose trails, like ghosts set in the ice

And if the light strikes the watery sheen just right, you can even see through the haze of the past,
a face

...until the next warm spell comes.

By Filbert Ephraim Wu

Generator

By Aadya Sharma

```
i am a machine:
    running on semiconductor chips and a dusty circuit board
    running, trying to avoid the edge cases
    of these inputs i was not built for
    throwing Exceptions, handling errors
    yielding each input, asserting while True:
        that i want nothing more than to be useful
        what i was made for, to be used
        that i cannot function at all
        that i want nothing more than to be human
        to rest instead of sleep
        to have veins instead of wires
        that i always want
        even though i am programmed only to work
        and all wanting has done is give me
        bruised knees, a bruised ego
broken, with nowhere to
return
```


Look / See

By Kartik Chandra

The more you look, the more you see.

What an embarrassment, you could have told me, to be built this way. What an absolute farce. Aren't you an engineer? Can't you imagine a perceptual system that apprehends the entirety of its sensory input at once: an eye that parallel-processes its visual field, a mind that serves up present reality as cogent whole? What is this fixation with "attention," anyway? Why should awareness trickle in bit by bit, like a child's guilty confession?

But you stayed quiet; indulging me, instead, when I asked you to count the colors in the painting. Perhaps it was the decorum of the museum—and you were shifting your weight the whole time, it's true—but you counted them with me nonetheless: first the reds and yellows, then the reds and browns and whites, until we began at last to discover the blues in shadows we had sworn were gray; the pinks and shocking flecks of turquoise that complete the transmutation from paint to eye. The portrait fell apart for a moment, revealing itself to be a swirl of colored goo, exposing us as complicit in the perception—reception—conception—of meaning. It takes time, you told me. The more you look, the more you see.

Years later, now, I still count colors, if only as the how-do-you-do that breaks the ice with a friend. Like this summer, when I visited the Mauritshuis, an art museum in the Netherlands. I was there one morning with some colleagues a day or two before we were all scheduled to present our work at a cognitive science conference in nearby Rotterdam. I had only been to one such conference before, and, like every young graduate student, I was eager to socialize myself into the discipline. The week was a gauntlet of first impressions, and the first first impression was the day at the museum.

The only problem was, I had never really understood how to conduct myself in an art museum. It has been a lifelong problem for me. When I walk into a museum's lobby and purchase a ticket for entry, what I bet on experiencing is the charged, feverish, messy emotional transcendence that is demanded by great works of art. But even by the time the guard scans my pass, I realize the game is rigged. The scanner's beep echoes rudely throughout the gallery. The silence of the museum—austere, public, sterile—is really no place for revelation. So what was I supposed to do, then, when I found myself in front of a painting I had traveled 3,000 miles to see? I had not thought this far ahead. I stood awkwardly in front of Vermeer's *View of Delft*, frozen, considering my options.



I thought of Proust's frail Bergotte, who collapses before this very painting after weighing his life's work against the painting—against a small patch of yellow wall painted on the far right of the canvas. Indecorous, yes—and I'm not saying I considered it—but then again: how much enchantment, how much trance, is permissible in polite company? Counting colors, at least, seemed safe. I thought about Bergotte again, his encounter with the View: "He noticed for the first time some small figures in blue," wrote Proust, "that the sand was pink, and, finally, the precious substance of the tiny patch of yellow wall."

Blue, pink, yellow. Blue, pink, yellow. I thought I was really getting somewhere. But then I said it again, that passage from Proust, and caught my breath on the words "first time." To love a painting your whole life, to detect the pinkness of the sand in the moment before your death. Would that be me, too? To love this world my whole life, only to notice for the first time, in fading light, the pink beds of my own fingernails? I know so little about myself. The more I look, the more I see. It cuts both ways: a lifetime for a thumb. I turned away from the painting and scurried shamefully to the next room.





Mind & Hand
By Nicole Shen

Ghost Pains

By Aadya Sharma

you said you never hit me as a child
and that maybe if you did, i wouldn't be so "messed up"

but i remember crying and cowering and covering my face
at the threat of your outstretched open palm
and i remember the strike, my head colliding with the dining table,
the warm and sweet blood filling my mouth

warm and sweet,

like your careful cooking
always making the dishes i wanted
always making them to my liking, no matter yours

warm and sweet,

like your loving embraces
when i almost drift off to sleep in your lap
when you comb your fingers through my hair

and pick at my skin,
trying to scrape off all the imperfections,
trying to carve me into the daughter you wanted.

家聲

質素

As It Has Been

By Raine Lin

The Taste Of Turmeric Roots

By Maya Bose

My elementary-school teacher says: You went on vacation over break! How would you describe India?

Little-me ponders this.

I went to India. India! An exciting-sounding place if my parents hadn't grown up there, if only I didn't look the same as everyone else walking the streets. Exciting things have to be different. They can't be mirrors.

We don't ever visit the tourist spots. No jungles or Taj Mahals for me, only dusty roads and dustier rooms in small cities that are congested, sneezing despite the heat. Relatives whose names I can't remember lie in wait in fenced houses, didus and dadus and khakas who all exchange polite pleasantries with me, then belly-laugh with my parents for hours. They speak in a language that makes familiar shapes but not answers in my head, and I laugh along as if pretending to understand.

It's too hot there. I, who can hardly handle Midwestern heat waves, stay inside by the fan all day long, staring at the mosquito-mesh draping over the beds and smelling the dreaded lentil soup being cooked in the kitchen. The weather is bad and I go nowhere because young girls live terrible lives.

My visits to this country are not all bad, though--the rooftops there are at like a lazy giant sat on them, and once I found a Sherlock Holmes collection on my dadu's bookshelf. The neighbors have a band and sometimes play music that drifts up to the roof, and I can see a slice of their rooms through the windows without glass. There is a vegetable garden in the back, and milk with cream on top. The monkeys in the street holler at me, and I holler back. My grandparents sneak me cake when my parents aren't looking.

My classmates all sitting cross-legged in a circle turn to me, pale faces expectant. The first word out of my traitorous mouth is dirty.

But I miss it already.

Symmetry

By yun

The earth's rotations as another day flies by,
The earth's revolutions as another year comes around,
and I'm back again—transformed but exactly invariant.
A child playfully spins her rice bowl,
A gleeful balance between mischief and a quick look of admonishment from her mother.
It totters back into place.
A girl rides her grandfather's old bicycle around the building,
Wheels whirring in the wind, weaving between passersby and giggles

Time moves forward, and we shift alongside it.
I translate for the man at the fruit store,
A brief intersection, and then gone.
I translate for myself at home,
The languages in my head swirl together
Drawing circles like those in my 水瓶,
that's always full and waiting for me warm when I wake up.
I think of the old story of the crow,
dropping little black stones into a 水瓶 to drink from.
It learns just like I do, collecting little stones of experience to improve my 水平
Grandma always takes the black stones in 五子棋. We see the same paths sprout from it.
激动是魔鬼, she says,
So I

slow

down

And enjoy the water that cleanses my feet after a long day.
A foot is how much I must've grown in 10 years.
Other than that, I'm all

the

same...

My reflection stares back at me.
As it ripples, I see glimpses
Of my mothers face staring back at me.
小岚岚, they call me sometimes.
My family is a distorted mirror.
I used to write my journals in mirror style.
Perhaps I could be more reflective,

Thinking it was mine and only mine
Not knowing just how many mirrors were in my house.

Year after year, it's the same.
The same lady selling vegetables every day,
The same hairdresser that chatters with me
As she trims my hair to the same style.
The same taste of shrimp my grandfather makes best
我回来了, I say as I arrive
And 我会来的, I say as I leave
I haven't actually changed at all.



Earth, And How He Looks at Venus

By Chase Vantias

I am so full of love that
It comes out in the worst ways.
Chaotic, muddied,
Like a river,
sprawling its body
Out and over the earth's hide—
Remarkably desperate and naked.
Storms are raging,
And forests are collapsing
Without a single soul there to hear them
So you're forced to question
If I've ever really loved at all.

I feel that judgment.
I feel it, and oh, I know
I yearn for pity in ways I shouldn't,
But Earth,
You've stolen the moon
and still choose to orbit the sun.
You too, are rotten to your core.
So show us your hellish soul,
Spew your magma and treason,
And confess that you, as well,
Hate this body you were born with.

Kiss
By Intia Ibnah



The Dynamics of Love

By Erin Patinkin

In business school, my system dynamics professor teaches my classmates and me how to build causal loop diagrams to guide our conduct with those with whom we are most intimate. “Divine the stocks and flows of affection and touch,” he tells us earnestly. “Learn to balance the exponential growth cycle of new love with reinforcing behaviors that will sustain it into old love.”

I wonder if he is better than me at romantic relationships or if I would be happier in them if I too knew how to apply differential equations to model their confusing variables and to simulate the consequences of a pregnancy lost or emotions disregarded.

On our first anniversary, my partner leads me out of our front door, blindfolds me, and then helps me into our beat-up Subaru. He drives us miles from our house, our labrador retriever sleeping in the back seat. I feel the road’s surface change as he turns onto the drive. I smell the fresh maples blooming in spring as we twist and turn over gravel. He parks, helps me out of the car, and places my hand in his to guide me. We walk in affectionate silence for a few long minutes. When he unties the blindfold, a green canoe sits at the edge of a sandy bank next to a lake. We carry it into the water and nervously laugh as we take our seats, afraid we may tip it.

The lake is small, the remnants of a great river that existed 350 million years ago in a time when life was limited to spiders and snakes and salamanders. I daydream that applied mathematicians designed this universe, drawing causal loop after causal loop to produce the right conditions to create life, pelting meteors at the Earth to change evolution’s path when they didn’t like the beasts born of their work. Boom, boom, boom! Single cells become bugs, then dinosaurs, then mice, then a man and a woman and a dog gliding tranquilly across the supple wakes of an ancient, watery body.

For our second anniversary, my partner takes me to Sardinia, home to over five hundred centenarians. He wants to understand how they have managed to endure for so long. I do not want to go because I am grieving the loss of an unexpected and unrealized life that recently had been housed in my body, but my partner is fixated on how to maximize his lifespan, so I go.

As we travel from town to town, speaking to white-haired women with wrinkled, silk-soft hands, he asks if olive oil, or pine nuts, or raw cheeses are key to longevity. “Oh, no,” the nonnas say, “we love candy!” Their children, and grandchildren, and

great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren buzz in and out of their well-appointed dens with walls covered in photos of generations of shepherds-turned-businessmen and doily-covered dining rooms with altars to the Virgin Mary propped up in dusty corners. Their families serve us bitter espresso and even more bitter myrtle berry liqueur while they check in on their matriarchs. They ensure the women are comfortable and giggle when they hear them brazenly flirt with my partner.

At our hotel, my partner reviews his notes. He circles phrases like “midday naps” and double underlines “walked miles per day.” He ponders aloud over these qualitative attributes and how he may optimize his system to help him survive until he is one hundred. I look over his shoulder and tell him not to forget to highlight “family.”

While we travel, I have a recurring dream that I am in the forest burying a dead, white-footed mouse. On our last night in Italy, I wake up my partner to tell him about it. “It will pass,” he sighs as he rolls over.

We do not have a third anniversary.

Back in the classroom, my professor passes out pieces of paper for us to sketch how our actions may cause our relationships to thrive or collapse. He asks us to focus inward and not to blame external factors for our shortcomings. “A powerful and insightful framework minimizes exogenous inputs and maximizes endogenous explanations,” he says as he hands me a pen. “Your math will show that it is you who fails the relationship; it is not the relationship that fails you.” I wish I had gone to graduate school sooner to learn how to choose love before falling into it.

The green canoe sits in my dilapidated barn now, unused for years. The only remaining asset of the balancing forces that came for us, that cracked open our hearts.

By Filbert Ephraim Wu





Beauty in Paradox
By Elsa Deshmukh

Stranger Shirt

By Maya Bose

Green tags are half-off, only on Tuesdays!

But it's Saturday, and this tag is red and remains red even when squinted at or pleaded with, a proud wrong answer that has no reason to be proud.

Luckily, this not-green tag on a not-Tuesday afternoon is not-so-bad, because it announces: Three ninety-nine, only three dollars and ninety-nine cents for this Goodwill shirt that has been to so many places that you will never know. Just three ninety-nine to be the keeper and caretaker of this shirt that is better than you! Be careful and no refunds!

I announce back with glee:

Three ninety-nine is four dollars, and four is wonderful, my favorite number and now my favorite shirt. It is my favorite shirt, worth four dollars, worth a thousand, because it is perfect like me, and so few things are! I'll take a bag, thanks.

My new purchase has the emblem of a local golf course stitched across its front in gold, a shiny coin put through a shredder and melted into cotton. It is meant for swinging, victory, country clubs and old white men, but now it has fallen into my ordinary hands.

I hang this clean white polo up between my mother's Hong Kong souvenir t-shirt and my father's sweater vest that always smells the same, no matter how often it is washed. My mother, my father, and a stylish stranger, all stuffed inside my closet and peeking through the cracks at night.

But I have to be careful—there are many shades of me, and color theory is important when composing an outfit. I pose in front of the mirror and frown.

The me right now clashes ever-so-slightly with the shirt, like beaten-up sneakers paired with Prada, french fries and fizzy champagne, paper lunch bags and spoonfuls of caviar. Something's missing, that elusive hue of the future, the one that goes well with everything.

Future Me! The shade always one step ahead, its color dancing through the years. She wears this same shirt with heels and tan overcoats and tons of style. She is deserving of this mighty shirt, and many more.

The shirt likes Future Me but not the me right now, and bunches around my shoulders tight as we both wait for someone else who never comes.

I paid three ninety-nine for a promise. Something to hang on to, a loose thread that perhaps winds nowhere at all, three ninety-nine to keep me honest. Three ninety-nine for the stain of someone who never comes.

Breeze

By Abrianna Zhang





Dai Xin
By Isabella Zhu



Very Respectfully

By David Choi

Today, I sold my life to the blue
Stood in silence as they stole my name
Men of grandeur and bloody fingernails
Spotless stars rusted sterile yellow
I followed their chants with eyes wide shut
Couldn't bear the sight of it
An ugly smile to inspire the generations
And seal my fate of silent solitude
Today, I sold my life to the lie

But they could never take my soul
I lost that long ago, on the journey to find you
Swept away in stormy seas, shrieking sirens to drown my sorrows
If it were for you, I'd lose myself forever
Fiery and kind, a prized jewel submerged by 白开水 Never swore
to the machine, although you gave an awkward bow Passion is
such a silly thing!
You're the one who suffered, but I'm the one who despaired
My pain, my grief, my soldier swan
I dissolve from the weight of your dreams
My dearest Alethia, it was truly us against the world!





A Sunny Day at the Beach
By Roshni Parulekar-Martins

The Fibers that Last

By Charlotte Michaluk

Morning dawned through the windows of the Hyatt Regency Long Beach. The glass rotunda door was so clear I almost walked into it. Lifting my gaze, I took in the RMS Queen Mary, Pacific Ocean, and docks of yachts that seemed to go on forever. I saw the decorative lighthouse in the inner harbor, the pool and hot tubs. In the impermeable ocean of Los Angeles concrete, the hotel grounds were an island of luxury. From my suitcase I deposited a heap of crinkly snack packaging, frayed fishing nets, and colorful menstrual pad wrappers onto the crisp black hotel tablecloth: the raw material of an art installation of tactile woven sculptures. That pile, with its clashing pigments and scratchy edges, lay beside the carefully stitched structures that had been invited for presentation. The needle pierces through and the thread becomes tense; the material is the same.

I blinked. A female sea lion arced through humid air, scattering the inner harbor mirror image of the lighthouse. The original remained pointed up from a manicured lawn with glimmering homogeneity, amongst the palm trees, safely inland of any navigational hazard. A dim reflection of its ancient Alexandrian ancestor, it perhaps guided the way for a few early lounging guests, returning from the pools and hot tubs to the breakfast buffet. Professionally-dressed people flooded in. Some kept a disdainful distance from my trash pile.

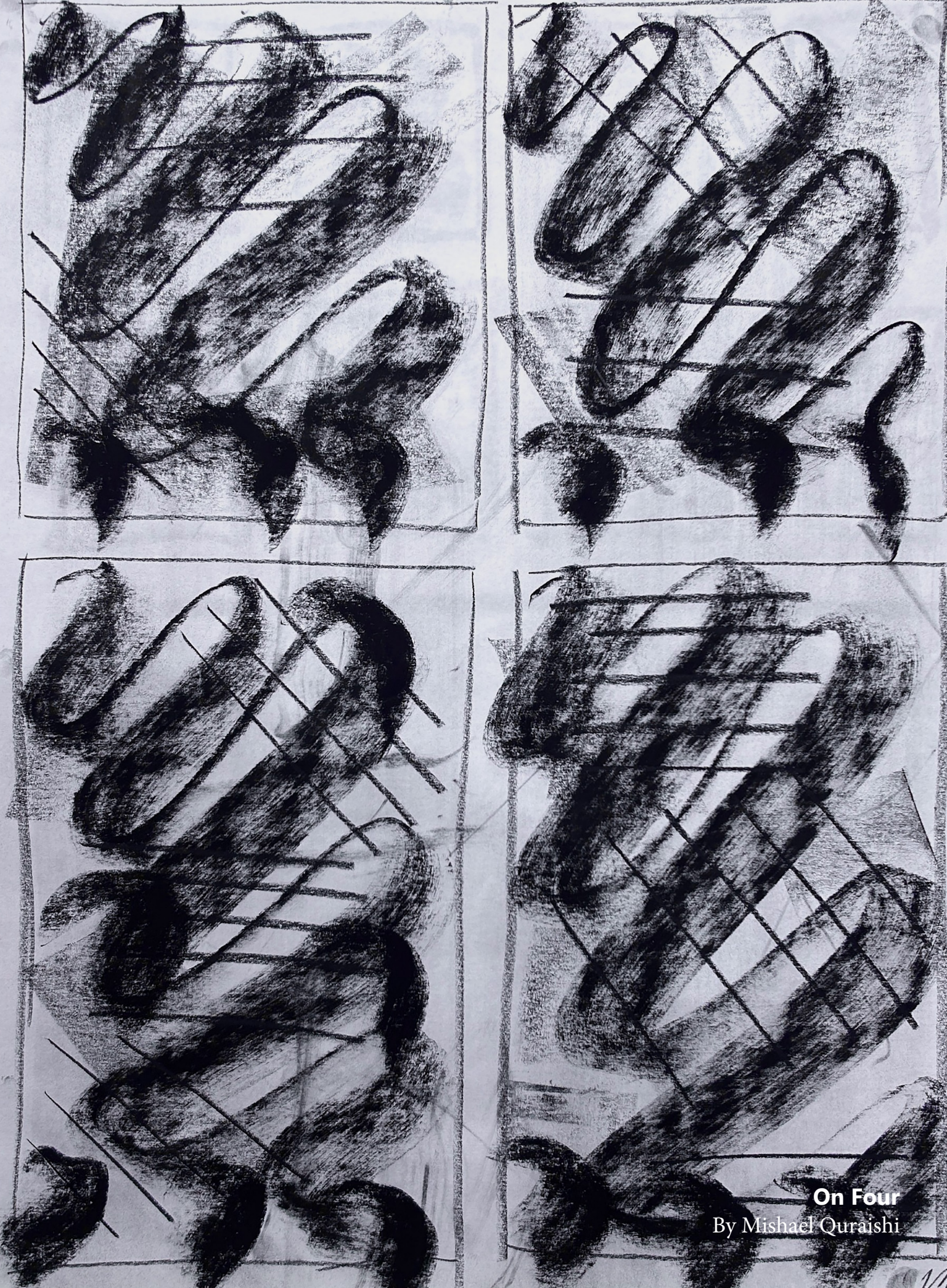
Harnessing agricultural production and focusing immense human labor on meticulously grinding rocks, stone age civilization ripples extend to the current day via monumental architecture that rises from the sand. Harnessing technological and economic success, a monumental achievement of polymers meticulously mass-produced into clothing and packaging scatters and scintillates our attention. Each differentiated product grasping for a rod and cone in our eye and a neuron in our brain: delightful, durable, discardable.

Feet on the sand, under the hot sun, on miles of deserted beaches, at some point the demographic of discarded items shifts—single use packaging to flotsam: polymer nets, lines, sun-bleached brittle. My pace becomes chicken-like, pecking plastic and every spindly rope strand from the sand. To create new, functional, aesthetic objects, one must see potential in things people pass by, and visualize finished products from a variable palette of colors and textures. As an upcycler, every fiber, every encounter, is valuable. But if I move too slow, the fibers threaten to snake up my arms and consume me. A flood of discarded colors and textures flows through my hands—a wealth of rope, braided, twisted cordage, and monofilament, nylon, polypropylene, polyester, and

polyethylene, recovered from coastal marine animal breeding grounds, food wrappers, chip bags, personal care products, worn clothing, my childhood ballet tights, home-coming balloons, and yarn scraps, each piece accreting physical and emotional weight to an ever-growing project. Rlecaltodares is the circular unification process. Almost an instinctual desire, my hands wrapped thousands of stitches forming the material into a nest, a human-sized basket. I did not realize until afterward the resemblance to the kufar, a traditional boat dating back millennia, and perhaps the storied vessel that preserved society through an overabundance of rain. Its concentric pattern both physically and symbolically mirrors the rings of a tree, juxtaposing distress from synthetic ghost nets, with newfound comfort and vitality. The colors spell “captlad.” The word describes the feeling of being supported and is associated with comfort. When the world feels like a flood of transient objects, how much is needed for a human to feel supported? How do we balance the resources that support short-term human lives and comfort, with the long-term preservation of our civilization?

This is an invitation to see cast-aside material as a pallet of color that sparks inspiration, and to reevaluate the boundary between disposable and desirable. Upcycling teaches that everything and every moment, every grain of sand holding up our feet and every fiber winding tighter around our bodies, is eternal. Creation is metamorphosis.





On Four

By Michael Quraishi



On Sixteen

By Mishaal Quraishi



Burden
By Vivian Guo

This Too

By Noah Phoenix

All at once, I understood that
this too is the afterlife

The point just past flame's devastation
where newborn seeds of numinous wisdom
will spill over into conscious thought

And I am here alone in my kitchen
doing dishes at the end of the world

And there You are just past my vision
alive and true and storied

And the fact that I have been here
before doing this just as I am now
is never a before but an *after*

Dante knew nothing of what comes next
here in this place where every hellsent spark
lights up the path so clearly

A path of promise, tightly held
where now my hands are empty

All at once, I cast forward whale-like
into the open sea

I hear the song of my grandmother
she sings to me

And where is she now but holding
me at the moment of my birth

And where am I now but here
alone in my kitchen

Washing dish
after dish
after dish

I think it's here, this *after*
After is where I knew You
but where You are gone

What comes next is remembering
the spiral the tick tick the tower
the waking dream

Come softly now
this too is the home we wished We'd made
to begin with

