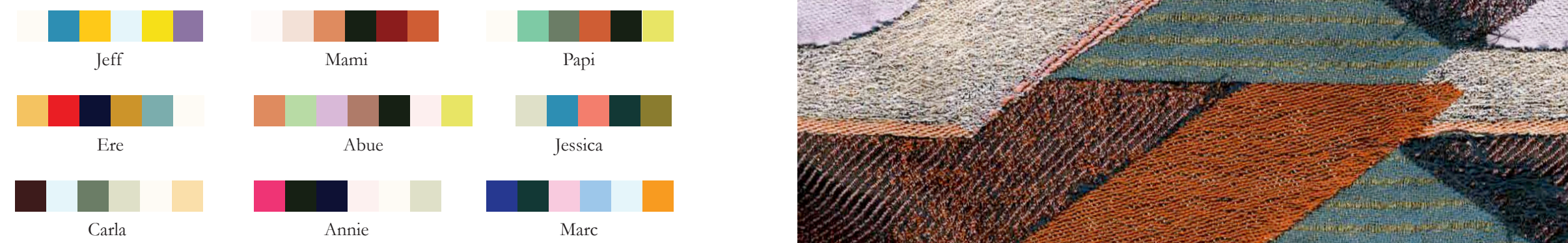


# Summer Peaches and Salt-Tinged Fog

Carolina Jiménez





*To each person I have loved, each of whom has given me a lifetime of memories to treasure. But especially to these nine. Thank you for your support, from near and far. I am so grateful to have each of you as companions in this wonderful life.*



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# Summer Peaches and Salt-Tinged Fog

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Fine Arts in Textiles in the Department of Textiles of the Rhode  
Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island

by

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2018

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Lecturer, History of Art + Visual Culture, Thesis Advisor

















morning light on the fresco and the blush pink juice.

concrete and plaster, and the weight of the world in massive stones. we spend hours walking through the city, delighting in the terracotta paint and the periwinkle walls which are thick--substantial and grounding as though they extend fifty meters into the earth, like they have been there forever. we walk through the park, the evening has turned damp. the light a bright gray. I feel like I am showing you a part of myself which you could have never know before. we run through the street as the rain begins. we arrive a day early

not color for color's sake, but because they amplify, heighten the experience of the space

we saw two butterflies dance as we sat on the edge of the pyramid of the sun.

rain in morning, rain in afternoon. gray, gray then light yellow, pure and crisp

we watched the waves lap into the cove, a wall of rocks covered with slippery algae. I thought of the tidepools back home, eager hands and eyes looking into a miniature world, mysterious in its complexity. our arms and legs grew tawny from the sun's retreat. a small audience gathered watching the surfers sit on their boards. they waited for the waves to grow. your arms were strong. I wonder if one day your arms will change, if I will recognize them or if the ghost of who we were in this moment will only belong to me in memory. my skin will not, with supple firmness, cast back a sunset. in its age, I will absorb. I will cast shadows upon myself. mountains and valleys upon my body and on yours too

languid, the way stretching feels in the morning, fingers outstretched and chest full of air

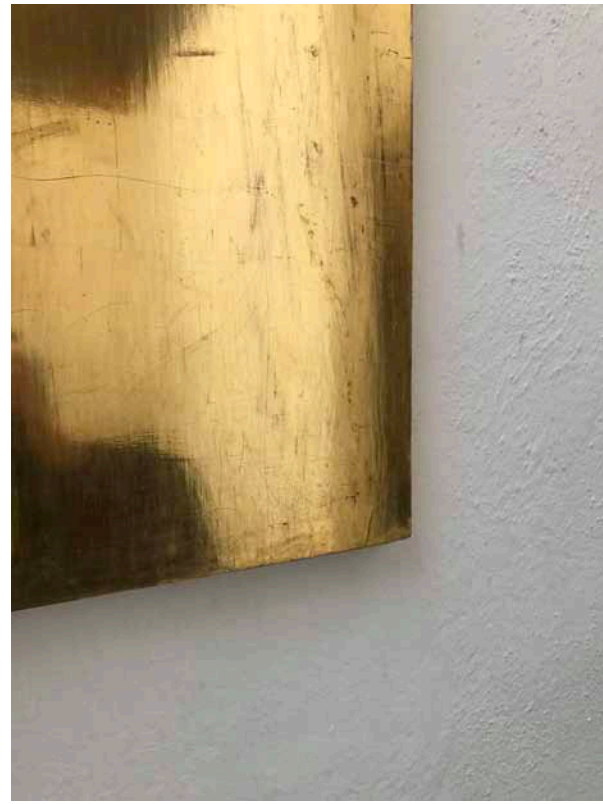
I have never seen you so full of emotion, so moved. and to think it was the sight of me that brought you to these tears. the sun falls behind the trees, but the temperature does not. the candlelight sings golden whispers onto the faces of people you have loved from all stages of your life

lights twinkle above, against the periwinkle sky

wild hair, wind whipped. the top layer of the ocean billowing and frothing as it rushes towards the cliff. I drink in the air, take big gulps as it surges towards me. cool in my nostrils from the moisture. and on the ground, the grass once green grows golden, overhead outstretched wings catch and throw shadows of the old pines. children bound down the hill towards the water, the gravel crinkles, crushes, with their small footsteps. paper tails rattle in the wind

we said, this is how we want people to feel

dirt path, smell of earth, ocean to my left. vastness. and expanse of blue



reflection of light, shadows on golden surfaces, golden surfaces onto white walls.

tenderness, you endear me to you in the way you hold your hands clasped to your chest as you fall asleep. we say women are soft, but when we say it to men, it is rarely a compliment. I love your softness, the sweetness of your eyelashes and the fullness of your lips. I love that these echoes of peace reside within, and that before I fall asleep I look upon a face of serenity

providence, ri

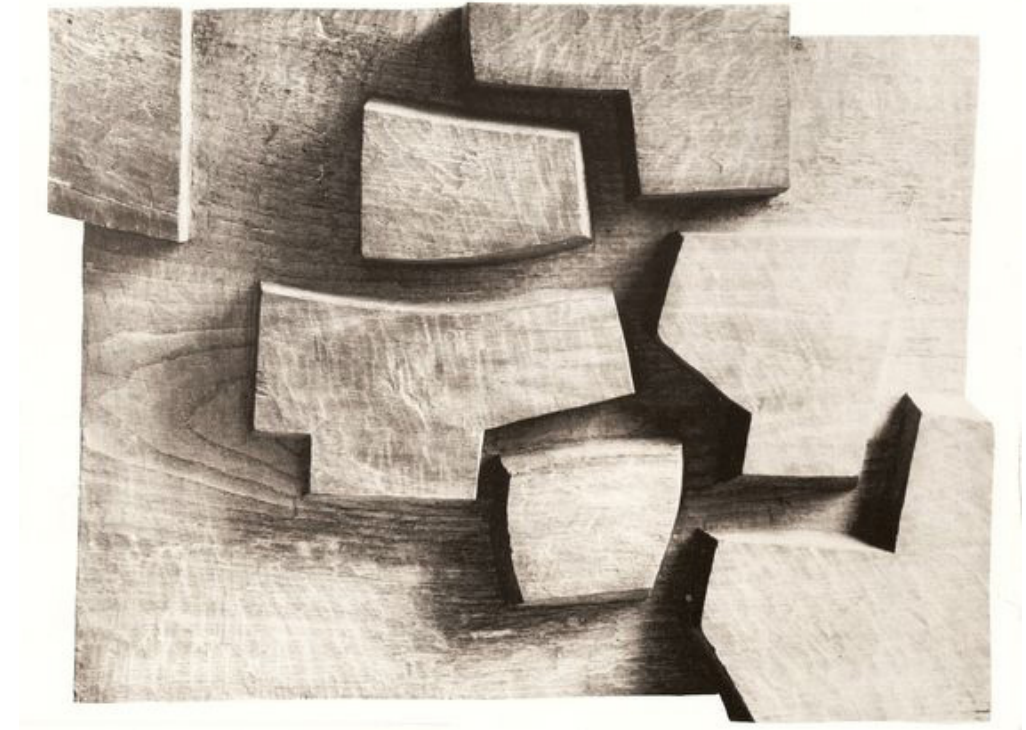
d.f., mexico

kawela bay, hi

playa del carmen, q. roo

almost in an instant, the night passed

this, this, this  
. a chorus, a chant from the arid grasses.



bundled, glasses fogged with steam hot from within our scarves, the night is still. cones of light set the snow alive, glittering as it drifts to the ground. fingertips cold, palm to palm, our two hands stuffed into a single jacket pocket

winter light, at the golden hour

longing, like the color of baked eggs, like a perfect spring yellow. tenderly

you fall asleep before me, you awake before my eyes have opened. the rhythms of our days meeting and departing. and in the middle, there is us. two adolescents--because we were, we were young--and we held on tightly, unsure of the things we couldn't see. like the nights spent without the other's hand clasped in ours. like cooking for one, or meeting each other for the first time every other week.

syracuse, ny

an attic warmed by air that has moved through layers of the house. sleepy contentment

new york city, ny

layers built on layers, we were only passing through

sea ranch, ca

mango salsa, the bright flavor of lime and cilantro. barefoot on the kitchen floors, layers of paint on the kitchen cabinets, rough like barnacles on the underside of the pier

closely, closely. drawn near

the piano in washington square park, the small restaurant on thompson, our favorite ramen place on 6th ave. A makeshift bedroom, bleach white muslin pulled across a handmade screen. we would sleep behind this whisper thin barrier. the whole world was outside that window, and from one moment to the next it felt like the world was in the room too

one moment to the next, all same but different

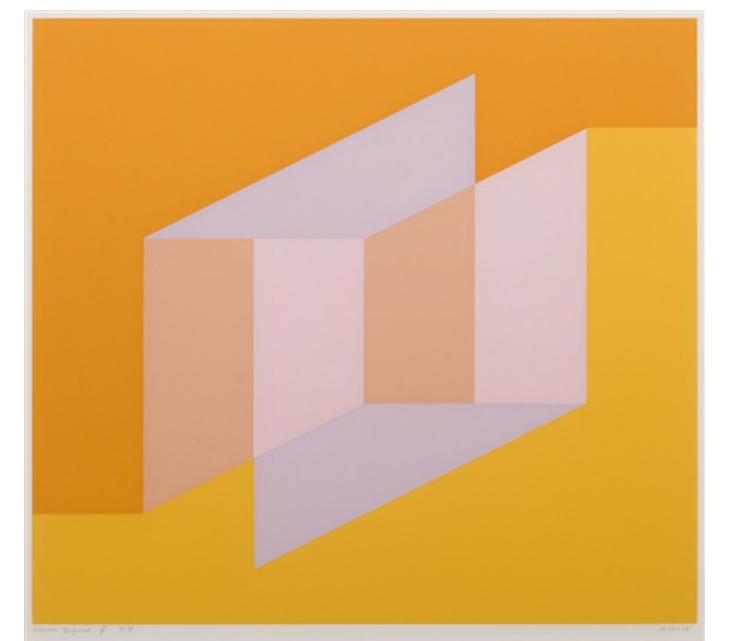
sticky summer air, silken slip and cotton dress. both of us in sunglasses. garden in the plaza and greek style paella. tree lined streets and brownstones. you hold my hand and twist the ring again and again and again, i feel your rock-roughened hand memorizing its shape

subway riding, cold in anticipation. nerves. I forgot my number and panicked

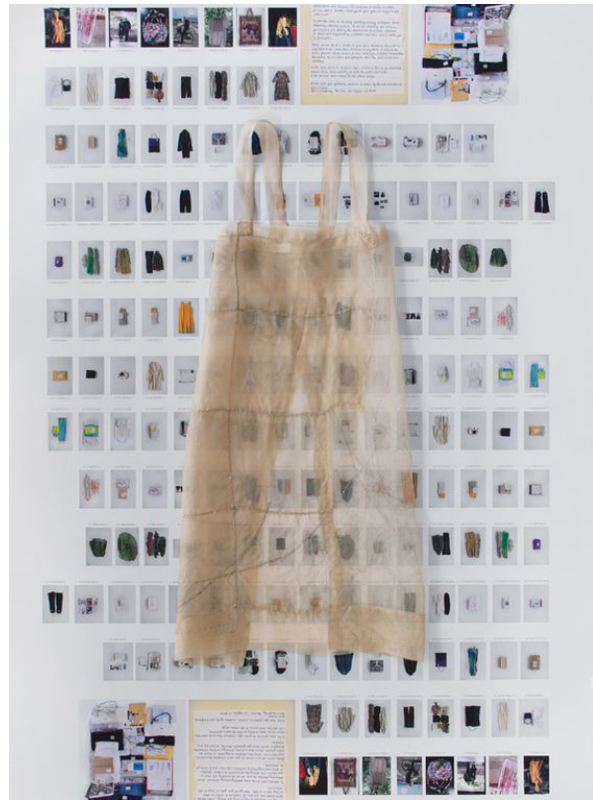
in the fall, chilled air and the feeling that there is something to be discovered around each corner. slick ground, smell of rain and watching shadows disappear

I remember each season, with its distinct smells. new york city means hot trash in the summer, and the faintest smell of fire in winter.

take on the world, step in front of step in the winter, in the almost-rain snow



We walked through the house and it was quiet. The sun shone, it streamed through the wide windows. It reflected color from the vegetation onto the white walls. It cast the monumental forms into shadow. *Have you ever seen such a brilliant pink?* I thought to myself. I imagined that even on the dullest days it would brighten the room. It was comforting--what may have seemed jarring to others was the closest way I could relive a place lost to me. A place I perhaps never knew but which at once seemed to be within. With him beside me, this color felt like home. I noticed how the wall was awash in the reflection. Like it had been bathed in a cool watermelon juice, like it had been stained by the luscious red of the *nopal*, like it had become jealous of the *pitaya* and taken its clothes for itself. And I stood in awe of what a simple pane of glass did to transform the space, such strong materials at the mercy of a single, fragile plane. We walked through the house; the gold sparkled and illuminated the high ceilings. It was like a direct connection, a path, a <sup>21</sup>passageway to the sky. Confined, protected in this space and yet completely aware of the world outside. The comfort of a space to explore and contemplate before preparing yourself to step out into the world again. I could picture us here, and when I picture us here, I picture us full. A space that feels like ours, with all the things that bring us joy, all our memories, of our past and the people we want to be. On the roof, those planes of color were mesmerizing, magnetizing. Absorbing, accumulating, impressing upon us. In our retreat back through the narrow passage I marveled at the warm yellow, dissipating into the cool white. I saw its blurry edge hit the carpeted floor. How does one create such a magnificent space for oneself? What might it actually feel like to live this way? Is there a danger to living in beauty? To enrobe oneself in it? To cloak, to bask, to meditate. The air seemed fresher here, the world calmer. The volumes more robust, the cool materials cooler and the warms even warmer. The air is still; the whispers and rustling of the trees just beginning. In Syracuse, I would sleep with the windows open. My room was tucked in the attic and on cold snowy nights it would heat with millions of tiny atoms dancing and fighting, pushing, jostling each other up, up, up. Saturday mornings when the sleep had been cleared from the sky, when sunlight overwhelmed the clouds, we would whisper together. And tenderly, I traced your face over and over with my mind.



teal tiles, overcast sky.  
cozy under the covers

the mattress was on the floor, the apartment cold from emptiness. I listened to you talk, imagined your life here. you said you lived with tio pepe and that tio freddy lived upstairs. papi was friends with them. he would visit and sit for hours in this very apartment enthralled by the baseball game on your tv. he was here often because he didn't own a tv himself and that this is how you fell in love

you draw us closer to you.  
you encircle and enfold us

you stopped me before i went to meet friends one evening. you took a picture, I wonder what you saw. perhaps you saw yourself in me, our matching hair and eyes. or perhaps it was papi's smile. or that you knew that one day I would think of this moment and remember the way I feigned exasperation but loved your pride in me. gray turtleneck and jeans, and a leather belt I took from the guest closet

I watched the woman sit on the moon,  
singing in a foreign language

yellow streamer, silk around your neck

I would close my eyes, I would feel my cheek against her back, I would hide myself within her shirt, I would grasp the hem with my small fingers and watch the aisles pass as we shuffled together. my skin prickled with the cold, small hairs standing upright

smell of warm laundry

tenous, but beautiful, the prismatic  
membrane of a sudsy bubble.

I started school when I was five. I remember asking you which day the week started on, and then I rehearsed. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday...but when I got to school, my teacher told me the week began on Sundays. later I realized in spanish, weeks begin on domingo. I remember wanting to give you a hug when you got home from lab, but the formaldehyde still lingered on your clothes and hands.

sand under my fingernails,  
rice dust on my palms

cut a piece of sourgrass, jaw clenching



the surface of the water, taut like a just-made bed. vessel sending the reflection into a fit of shivers and quakes.

I fell asleep during a boat tour one of our first days in amsterdam. I was exhausted from finishing my studio final and succumbed to the lapping of the river and the sound of the guide's constant murmuring. as I floated to the surface of my dreams, I saw my mother enraptured by the city, her face alight. have you ever been struck by the tenderness of another's wonder? I realized how little I knew of my mother's hopes and dreams

giddy with our amber drinks. and mami  
always wore amber around her neck,  
sometimes with a small wing embedded,  
time

amsterdam,  
netherlands

d.f., mexico

**mami**

syracuse, ny

san diego, ca

tuxtla gutierrez,  
chiapas

jewels and velvet, and angels in the tree

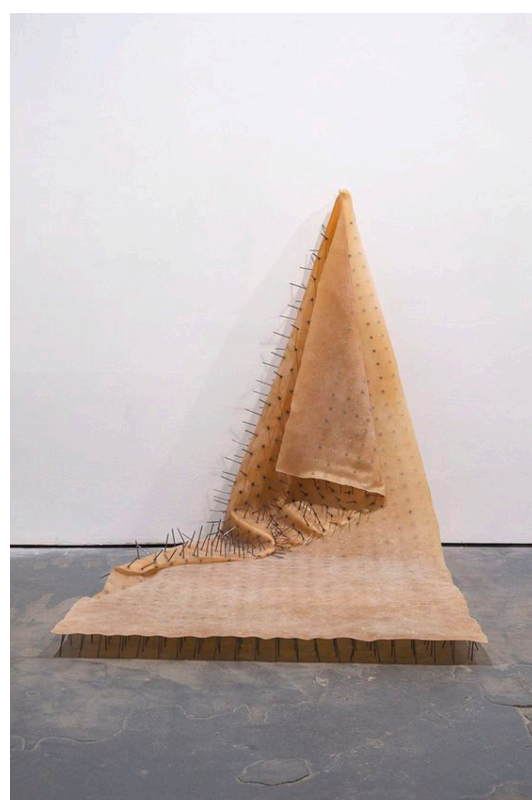
I picture my mother reading in bed. flannel pajamas and feet tucked in socks. light from a small ikea lamp and my father asleep beside. her nervous foot bounces against the comforter

heartbreak is oxblood color, but me  
open in sadness, deep and moody.  
but maybe it is lavender, because we  
know it will be over soon

rolling down the grass hills, barely. more  
like mounds. small red cuts on my arms  
and legs, emerald green grass

your crooked teeth. you lips curl over the edges and pull away to see your grin, you make papi dance with you in the kitchen, i laugh along. the air smells like oranges and cloves and cinnamon. my feet touch the cool travertine. you spin around cheering, ebullient

pull off the sweat soaked socks, clammy  
feet, but you still grab them, massage  
away the aches



my tears cut a trail through the thin veil  
of concrete dust on my face

late at night, I could feel a constricting of my chest, the snow outside no longer comforting, but like a blockade against my travel home. even the clinging of the flakes on the evergreen bushes did not ease me. clasp myself tightly, I settled into myself when I heard your voice

you can always come home

we would fill the bucket with cold water and in the heat, you would pour it over my head, you would, with a blue washcloth, scrub my arms and legs and belly and wipe away soap suds from my pinched eyes

long naps, birdsongs, and cousins  
swinging us in the hammock, colors to  
describe the severity of movement

dripping turquoise

my mother held a fistful of Esteban's hair in her clenched hand. one moment we were all walking towards an empty house, and the next half of my cousin was hanging inside a well. it felt like the moment on a busy morning commute in New York when one person suddenly stops walking and you and another are suddenly thrown together, acceleration and compounding

thick air, heavy and oppressive.

you hear the wind through the receiver, you ask me if its cold, if I warm enough. if I am getting enough rest. I asked, "how are you mami" and I can hear your silent hesitation clearly, like a shout in my ear. wavering, like a trill on the piano, and our tears fall together

naked grapes, translucent orbs, small  
veins revealed as my mother peels the  
red skin off

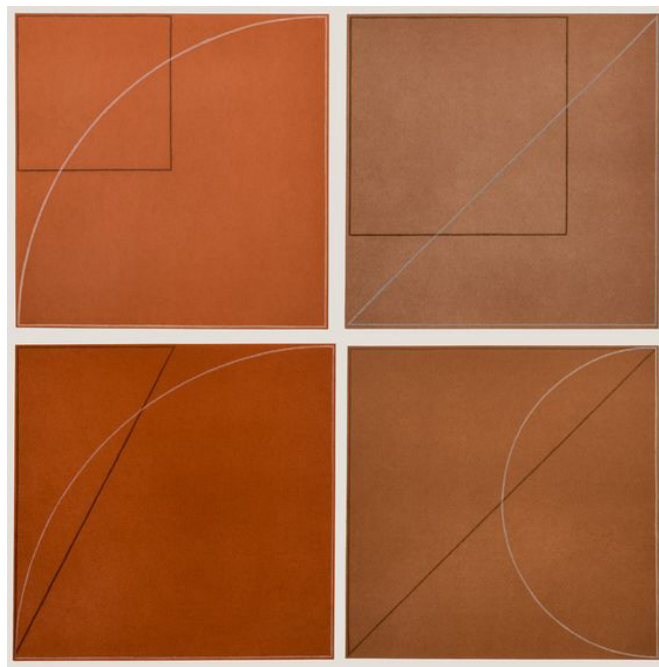
caught in a downpour, hiding under the  
shelter of a portico. I watch her push  
her mother in the wheelchair down the  
gravel path.

you sit for hours reading, the lights turn on as the sun falls. my pink flushed cheeks hot from the inside but to your touch, cool from the air



My mother and I have the same hands, and hers are like my grandma's. When I look at my mother's hands I see the life she has lived. Her slender fingers propel me into the future and the past at once. These are the hands that soothed me when I woke up sick in the middle of the night. The back of her hand cool on my forehead, the darkness of midnight set alive by the lamp. My memories feel like the color peach, or of summer peaches that she would cut up tenderly. The smallest and greatest act of devotion, her constant care. I see her hands and think of the valentine she sent me in college. "Happy Valentine Day, I love you forever," it read. A simple hand written phrase on a heart she cut out of pink tissue paper. I look at her hands now on the steering wheel. How many hours have we spent this way? She joyfully singing, unabashedly, unashamed, wholly herself and me next to her, her child, her heart embodied, today her friend and she my confidant. One day I will look at my hands and they will look like hers do today, and I will think back to this moment: the two of us driving along the San Diego River, with the windows down, weightless and perfectly at ease. I will remember the dry grasses, the salty air and the feeling<sup>23</sup> of wind between my fingers. I look at my mother's hands and see my own, I imagine what hers were doing at my age. I think of her walking through the streets and markets of Mexico City. An adventurer, she fills her heart with the sights and sounds of this place. She wakes up early to swim at the Olympic pool. Her feet chilled by the mosaic tile of her small washroom. I can feel those tiles on my feet now. Windows cracked open, the sounds of the city outside. I think of all the ways I know my mother, but also of all the ways that she is unknowable to me, and I to her. Of all the questions I hope to be able to ask her and the parts of my life I hope to share with her. There is a picture of her, she is standing in the backyard of her mother's home. Pregnant and coy, she eats a mango staring at the camera. Shoulders pushed back, hair brushed out of her face she stands as a column, poised. See the light fall on her orange dress, the shadow cast on her tanned legs. See how her skin disappears into the wall behind her, see her petal lips. See a picture of beauty and strength. Feel the weight of her body. Feel her arms around you. Remember yourself as a child. Remember the times that she picked you mandarins from your piano teacher's front yard. Remember the skin, remember the segments, remember those pale orange granules and the clinging pith. Think of how she would listen to you practice while she stood under the shade admiring the many orchids carefully tended by Alice's hands. Remember her as a reservoir for your strength, remember that she has to replenish this herself, for you and your sister. Remember her faithfully calling her mother each Saturday. Remember this today, as you call her. Feel the rippling in your chest, feel the loss before the loss.





gathered nectar, sweet capsules



prickles on my skin, your beard when I say goodbye

papery bark covered the floor in the eucalyptus grove. the trees were cream, luminous in the dim light. they shone in the reflection of dark trough of water. the wind pushed ripples across its otherwise still surface.



face transformed. suddenly like a child, fondly beaming

dark teal, depth of water and reflection of sky

fly-grabbing, insect-catching; a secret skill, a past life

on Saturdays, we would walk from the apartment in the *postal*, down the street to Parque Odesa, and we would ride the swinging dragon. I can hear the sirens of the police car ride, and remember the plastic ducks bobbing along a lavender track, waiting for someone to choose them and check the marking on their undersides. I saw a pitaya for the first time at the market and begged to try it. It was watery and flavorless compared to its bright skin. I remember the mornings were cold and silvery green, but the sun came out while we ate lunch on a plaza. and we walked through the city and we hid under an awning as the humidity broke into rain

it was a sunny afternoon, the last time you swung me around. I remember walking on the raised edge of a flowerbed and motioning for you to spin me. and once it was over, you said you told me I think that's the last time, and I was sad because I didn't know that I should have savored it more fully.

lines adrift in space  
trembling as they hold two planes  
apart, in tension

san diego, ca

on quiet sunday's, when mama had left for work, and we both sat quietly reading, you would look up with a playful smile and ask if we should go to the bookstore. So I would browse the aisles as you sat looking at the books on mathematics. I would step carefully down the carpeted levels of the old theater, would gaze skyward to the ornately painted ceiling. And after we had our books, we would sit next door at Pannikin. I breathed deeply the smell of brewing coffee and waited for my cup of hot chocolate, the whipped cream frothy on my upper lip, cinnamon sprinkled, a fragrant whisper

like the dappling and the soft touch of changing light, it is not repeatable

a town, quiet with its summer stillness. stūfing in its charm

you always say we are lucky to feel the sadness of loss, because it means we have loved another deeply. we have let the person become dear to us, become embedded with us. and so if we lose them, they are not lost, because we keep them near

d.f., mexico

papi

drive along the coast just because, to see the sunset fall across the caramel cliffs

papi sleeps, like a polar bear, wrapped in his cream-colored sweater.

you would give me puzzles to solve as we drove together, and I would sit with the sound of the radio growing quieter in my head.

playa del carmen, q. roo

palenque, chiapas

a pleasant reminder, that when I round the corner that the evening sun shines

brooklyn, ny

faded colors on stone, ancient hieroglyphs with hidden meaning

watch the blinds move in the breeze, the shadows danced

curled up on two chairs, I felt the density of sleep upon me. deep green carpet, rough on my outstretched hands.

first dance, last dance. world blurred through glassy eyes. *te quiero*. white button down shirt. remember? you would iron these before work, a pile slowly hung, orange and blue and plaids. and we would sneakily go to the mall. shoes for you, shirt for me. and a chocolate to take for the ride home.

blush faces, white petals, tips the color pink. thank you.

polished granite, the color of freshly-caught salmon

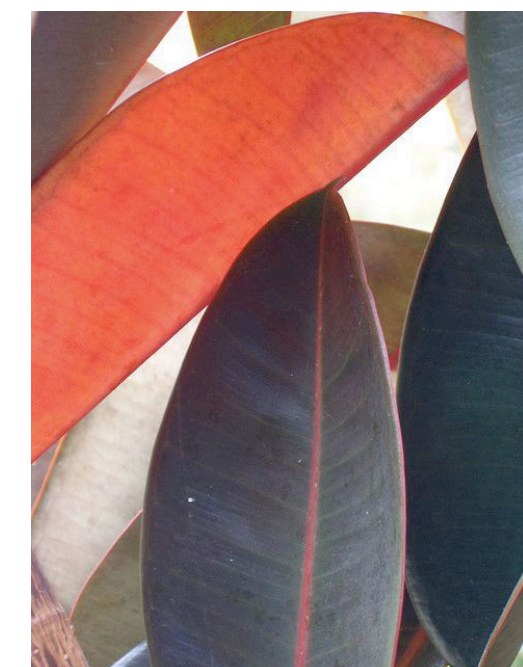
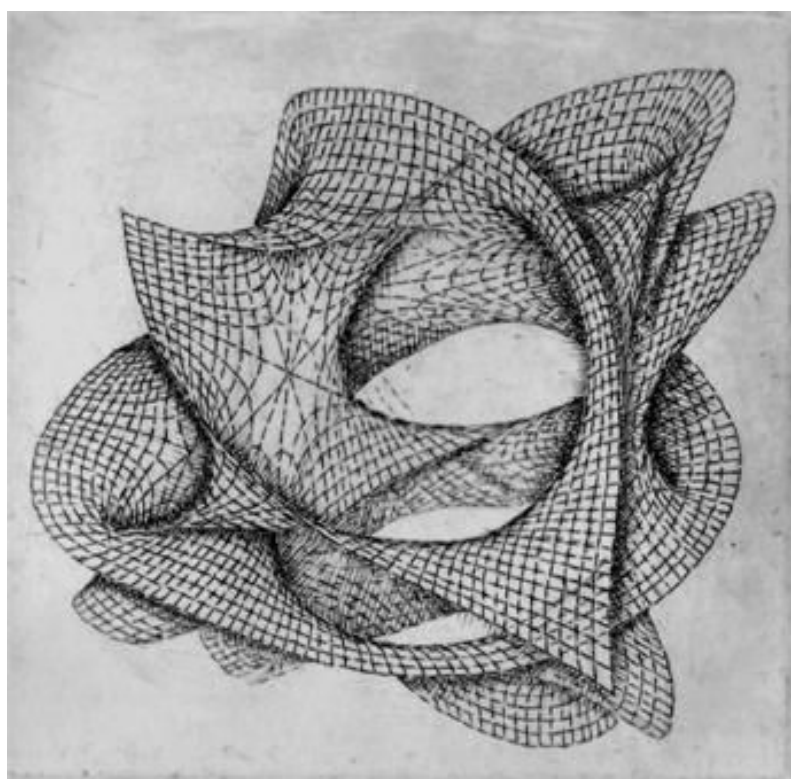
hundreds of steps rose out in front of me, each one seeming taller than the last. this man-made mountain, which my small body could not understand. you lifted me onto your shoulders, fifty pounds weighing you down, the sun in our faces. we went up and up until at last we reached the top

smell of coffee in the morning, freshly ground beans, and the clinking of your spoon against ceramic

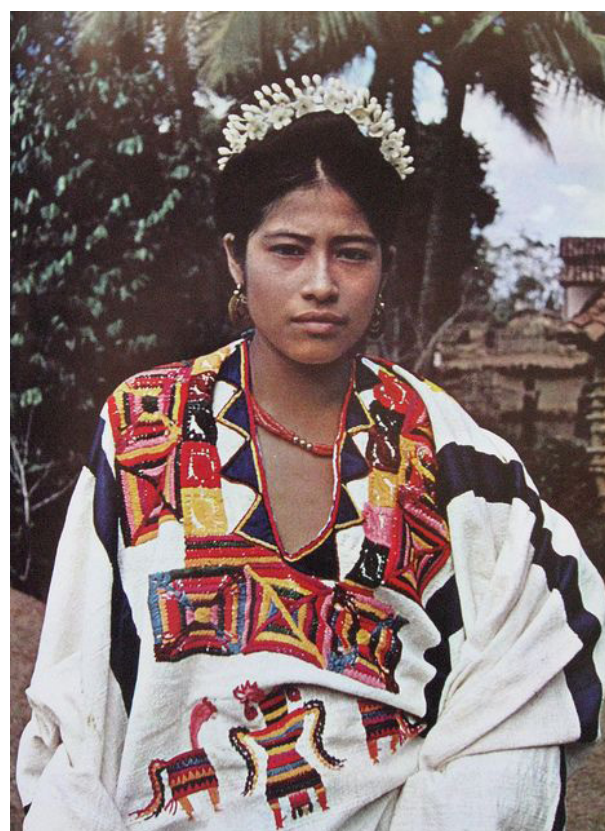
verdant overgrowth, sprightly greens reaching towards the clouds

I think you may have reached out and touch the noguchi sculptures when I looked away. And even though the day was crisp and you were bundled against the cold I saw the joy that I had also felt the first time I saw these blocks of stone transformed

stone, chiseled edges, hands worked over, and sunlight spilling in through the windows



When I was twelve my family took a road trip up the coast of California ending in Klamath Falls, Oregon. The cabin we planned to stay in emerged among tall grasses and dandelions. We stretched our legs along a dirt road, sat on fences alit with chipped red paint. The cabin was full of fruit flies and a musty smell. Or like an animal had crawled into this safe haven to find rest in its final days. Sensing the discomfort of his three *niñas* my father ushered us back to the car. The weather turned as we drove into town, the clouds rolled in and a few solitary raindrops clink clink clinking on the roof of the car. The summer air erupted with the smell of soil and wet asphalt as the water revived the dry earth underfoot. Caught in a summer rainstorm, thunder roiling like a garbage truck in the early morning. We ran out of the car and into the grocery store, sloshing and splashing through the puddles that had so quickly accumulated. I lifted my face so the plump droplets could wash it of dust and sweat. The sensation of danger and safety mixing, my small hand grasped firmly by my father's. Sometimes I think about that simple gesture, feeling grounded or tethered. I think about the way kites raise and fall with wind, at the small tugs you give the string to guide the kite higher. We would go to the park and run along pockmarked grass, we would sit on the ground and untangle the kite's string. In my mind's eye, I picture my papi in his office, sitting over a pile of papers each with notes and figures undecipherable. A wall of books, yellow spines, blue bindings, a slight smell of chemicals in the air. When I picture my dad, he is younger, his mustache free of gray hairs. He tugs gently upon those whiskers, lost in thought. Outside, the Eucalyptus trees rustle. Growing up, I would go to my dad's office before school. We would drop my sister off and we would drive, descending into the fog of Point Loma's early mornings. A thick web of moisture suspended in the air, with it time seeming to stand still. In it, there were traces of all colors, faint but unmistakable, salt tinged. I ask my dad about his childhood, we would fall into memories of coffee beans roasted on large stovetops, of great-grandmothers who were so fierce that they would test bubbling sugar cane with their bare hands. Transported, I could picture the house he grew up in, the creek he almost drowned in, the reason he would often decline to get into the ocean or pool with us on holidays. I imagine these memories as if they were my own, washes of colors the closest I can do to translating them into forms.



26

scarlet, the color of a tomato salsa  
drenching crisp fried tortillas in the  
morning.

before going to sleep, she would lay in darkness listening to *La Mano Peluda*, a call-in radio show of ghost stories. and I would climb into her bed and wriggle under the covers to feel her steady breath.

sopa de fideo, the lightly burnt  
noodles and plump raisins, like buoys  
bobbing across the surface

tears of joy, tears of sadness

wooden box, black lacquer and  
fragrant interior. loops round and  
round, letters like secrets carefully  
stored

I would rustle in my grandma's suitcase and find her makeup. And she would let me put on the coral lipstick. and I would smile with my small teeth. she blinks at me, squeezing her eyes together, like a camera taking a picture. and perhaps she is, photographing the moment with her mind.

the trees swayed with music, as we all  
did. I think we were made to dance the  
dance of purple jacaranda's at night

when I awoke, the sun had all but disappeared. my mom called out for me. *Arreglense* -get dressed- she said, we were going out for a walk. past children running through the streets and parents sitting together on sidewalks we arrived at the city plaza. teenagers walked together in the balmy night, treated themselves to shaved ice from an old man's cart. the syrups seeped into the newly shaven ice, the sound of the blade moving over the block of ice was almost as refreshing as I imagine the treat to be

pouches filled with soda, the snap of a  
straw puncturing plastic

san diego, ca

abue

tuxtla gutierrez,  
chiapas

walk along the *avenida*, I am indebted  
to the ocean, it has given me a lifetime  
of memories. on one side, and then  
the other, it is all the same water called  
by different names.

we celebrated my grandma's 85th birthday, gathered around a long  
table, bathed in yellow light from incandescent bulbs, and flowers in  
her hair, a crown of living beauty.

under the kitchen table, the table cloth glowed from the afternoon  
light, and my abue would sit underneath with me as the world grew  
pink, and the shadows of the trees danced on the makeshift walls.  
and in our fabric forts, the lamp would illuminate us with a pale  
orange glow and i would squeal and jump into her open arms as my  
dad pretended to be a wolf outside.

abue's hair turned lavender from her  
shampoo, but I think she liked it and  
kept doing it on purpose

*cuenta cuantas veces puedo girar la bula hoop, count how many times I can  
spin this bula hoop.* around and around and around, it danced on my  
narrow hips. abue counting he turns and laughing crinkly-eyed with  
joy. sun spots on her face swallowed up by the creases of her skin.

brightly colored wrappers, the metallic  
kind, not the white plastics that we see  
now. sparkling, shining

children's hands are soft, but so are the  
faces of grandparents. Both like warm  
toffee pudding.

the sun was hot on my bare shoulders; the summer air thick with  
what could only be described as a tropical torpor. every inch of the  
small corner store was covered with paletas and papas. comic books  
and soccer magazines. bottles of soda sat stacked on top of water  
jugs that had been delivered earlier in the morning by a man on a  
yellow rickshaw. he had yelled *aguuuuuu* and rung a shrill bell the full  
length of the neighborhood. my sister and I walked the few houses  
down to my abue's

blue plastic, pink plastic,  
translucent. and the ripples make the  
street seem as though its made of  
liquid too

stretching, the fibers and colors  
intertwined



She sat in front of her house, the large metal doors propped open so that if you took a step off the sidewalk you'd would find yourself directly inside her living room. She held her hand out towards us as we approached, squinted her eyes as she squeezed our hands. Her skin was soft--almost transparent, and I knew from our times playing in blanket forts that if I pinched her skin it would stay in that position before slowly receding back to the curve of her arm. I leaned over her, breathing in her lotions and arnica, smelling traces of the *dobladitas* that she had made for us earlier that day. With a kiss on the cheek, she shuffled my sister and I into the living room. It took a second for my eyes to adjust to the dim light inside. I slipped off my sandals and felt the cool rust-colored tiles under my toes. Together they formed an endless grid, disrupted in only a few places by the wear of daily life. The chips and cracks revealed the terracotta beneath the worn glaze. As I walked, I could hear the gentle tap of the balls of my feet against the satin finish, the ground growing warmer from the sunlight that fell onto the floor through the open doorway. The ceiling disappeared as I walked down a narrow passage to the exterior courtyard. The tiles gave way to cracked cement, as the jungle that had once stood there fought its way back up to the surface. The pale yellow of the plaster walls seemed to emit its own light. I would have believed that it glowed, but patches of aging plaster revealed the brick behind it. I ran my fingers against the chalky surface, tracing the edge of a line of ants that were steadily making their way to a small hole too high for me to see. The trees rustled with a slight breeze that moved past me, into the house, and out to where my grandma was still keeping watch over the neighborhood. The backyard was wild. There were plenty of nooks to hide in and the hanging laundry reminded me of colorful sails, waiting to whisk me away. Aloe was planted along the back edge of the garden, and my mother would break pieces off to soothe our sun-kissed limbs and swollen mosquito bites. There were birds of paradise and two large trees between which stretched out the netting of a colorful hammock. I walked over to the hammock and lowered myself into its grasp, feeling it support me and feeling the tension of the fibers as only the tips of my toes connected me to the ground. When I lay down I kept one foot out, straining to touch the earth. I kicked and felt the way my small movement swung me back and forth under the dappled sunlight. Swinging under the trees, the darkness of my closed eyes would suddenly alight with the reds and pinks of my thin eyelids.



roll down the <sup>28</sup>ass hill, cuts on our arms.  
white chapel turns blue in the evening

I wonder if I will always be a young girl in your mind's eye. the one with a mischievous smile. the one who ran across the courtyard in darkness and in anger and in fear bit you with all her might. I don't recognize that little girl in myself, the darkness doesn't make me afraid. remember when the sky turned red, and it rained small flakes of ash.

late nights, we waited for you. we worried  
for you. engine stirs, sleep in the car

crimson red, let me hid under your canopy

balboa park and the lily pond, the colors that run. rich and light,  
interchanging on the surface of the water. the fullness of my red  
dress flirting with the breeze

reach up the sky, little petals. arms open to  
take in the warmth of the sun

san diego, ca

in darkness, just a single light,  
let it light your way

catch your tears, the dew drops of pain. still, in a dark night, wipe  
away the watery orbs, within which our fears live

buttercream, quiet the way it settles,  
separation

providence, ri

tea, the color of rust or rain-soaked clay  
and gray brown wood.

we walked through your office, carpeted from side to side. walk on  
the hot asphalt, clouds hang heavy before a summer rain. afterwards  
we walked on sidewalks cracking with tree roots. and your home was  
quiet, but it erupted with the sound of a record spinning, needle  
meeting plastic. hazy, like living in someone else's dream

memories in objects, collections from  
travels and past homes

louisville, ky

ere

brooklyn, ny

my arms grew raw from the ceaseless barrage of the volleyball.  
stinging, soft skin already flushed, turned a deeper pink. I looked  
across the court, wooden floor. You looked strong and agile. Awash  
in admiration

rewritten, how I saw you then may not  
have been how you felt

playa del carmen, q. roo

seattle, wa

footsteps on the wood floor, squeaking  
against the waxy film

the fabric floats in the wind, billowing  
like the sail of a boat, like the caress of  
a lover's hands

tuxtla gutierrez,  
chiapas

steam rising,  
veil upon the window

narrow streets, with embankments of frozen snow like winter's  
own attempt to the replicate the joys of sand castles on the beach.  
back in her apartment, we rested in the incandescent glow. the many  
photographs accumulating like layers of posters and newsletters  
upon a bulletin board

crinkled bad of pink doughnuts,  
sweetness in the air.

you married us, sun beating on your shoulders and on mine. your  
hands outstretched to us, bringing us together. your arms, covered  
with the stories you tell about yourself. to make yourself plainly seen,  
which hides the tenderness that asks for a delicate touch

bubbling, bubbling how the fountain  
moves, sapphire paint through the haze

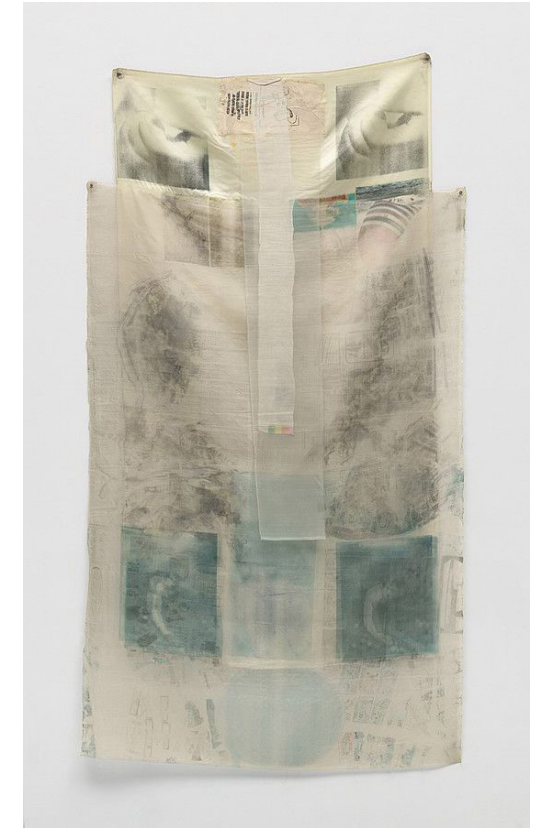
we each got matching glass animals the size of our fingertips, beaded  
eyes, coal. small green turtle and panda. cobblestone streets rolled  
before us. plaster walls like canvases, the whole city birght, light.  
some robin's egg blue tiles, pinkish flesh tones and blushes, brighter  
pinks. jute and brick. many hues in the shadows. the surface of the  
water was coated in pollen and from below I would look up to see  
the bits of flowers and leaves thrown across the sky

darkening, your skin deepens as it meets  
the sun

crisp, the bougainvillea like paper  
lanterns strung across the fence



Before we moved, we had an ochre-colored couch, which I would climb and she would sit in. I would balance on the backrest, trail my fingers across the rough stucco walls beside me. And sometimes my foot would slip or sometimes I would reach my small toes out to touch her hair. I would slide down the cushion until I sat next to her. Her coarse dark hair, thick like a horse's tail cut straight across the middle of her back. Her two front teeth winking at me behind her mauve smile. And she was big, but I was small. I was sticky; I would follow her. I would trail after her like the tail of a meteor entering the atmosphere. The day after her ninth birthday she woke up covered in small red blisters, chicken pox that I promptly acquired. We sat solemnly, bathed in pink calamine lotion, but it was spring so we could feel the breeze through the windows and we could smell the jasmine from the courtyard. I felt closest to my sister when we would visit Mexico. Here, in stolen conversations whispered in English we felt the relief of having one another. White cotton sheets, like a ritual blanket laid out, our place to share small fragments of truth. We would lie next to each other, mosquitoes zzzzz-ing by our ears. We would laugh together at the strangeness of the milk and the pudding-thick heat and we would speak quickly. Swimming in the ease of our second tongue, grateful to be free for a moment of our own limitations. We were split in two. I could feel it in myself but I could see it in her too. Before school one morning, I looked up at her, olive skin and gray sweatshirt, the concrete blocks painted rust red, and I saw my future. She was my crystal ball, like everything she experienced I was able to understand before having to feel it first. I could know her thrills or sadness or fear as my own before confronting it myself because the distance between two bodies is not always the distance between two minds. When we moved, she painted her room the color of Thrifty's mint chip ice cream--my favorite flavor because it was hers first. She would climb into her bed and beckon me as I passed. And I, a vessel for her thoughts, would sit upon her flannel comforter and run my hand along its green checks. And when she left for school, I might sit in her room for the afternoon, or tip toe in and out in the silence of our empty house. Or I might sit at the piano and play my favorite piece she had learned, which I had taught myself with her sheet music. The notes of the prelude would drip steadily like a soggy rain and I would think of her in Seattle, in the grayness, putting together pieces of herself, rearranging them to find which ones fit best.



perforated walls,  
lights glowing from behind

<sup>30</sup>  
in a moment of panic, you ran with me. we clamored up the dusty pink stairs, slipping on the slickness of the stone as a voice called out after us. my face was flushed from both the heat outside and the sickness rising in my chest. and when we paused, sitting inside the belly of the auditorium, we laughed out of relief and at my dramatics

i feel like i've held your heart in my hands, that I have protected it, I feel like I have been your mother and your daughter and your friend.

dough stretched out across my hands,  
its weight bending, pulling its own mass towards the ground

steam, and yet we would not let that stop our conversation. endless laughter, inseparable

pass you in the quad, exchange knowing smiles under the starless sky

sleep beneath the canopy, sleep beneath the trees. wake when the sun dips below the chapel, suddenly our faces feel cold

flurries; we soon became well acquainted. we grew to love the still midnights that we would happen upon after long hours in the studio. the falling of snowflakes that sparkled as a sheet on the ground. the wind would knock the air out of my stomach, my lungs squeezing in my chest. cold air within me

my glasses would fog when we would walk inside, the smell of stale beer on which had dried in layers was enough to send us back home. but sometimes we would stay and we would dance for hours. throwing our heads back in laughter, we would beckon our friends to join, and the floorboards beneath us would strain with the weight of our combined movements. in the morning, we found the old walls cracked from our festivities, a trace of our collective joy

we trudged through embankments of snow that passed our knees, and in the spring we watched them slowly melt, the ice reformed into slick black sheets. the days would grow longer, but we would miss them. stuck for hours in a prison of our own making

home, take off our shoes, under blankets. limbs heavy. eyelids like lead

syracuse, ny

days could come and go, see only moments of sunlight

remember the large stones that have seen so many years, the whirling lights hovering in the air above the plaza

my hands were always more adept at a certain kind of mess, I learned to make things neater, but it never felt the same

july evening, moonlight and a butterfly in my stomach

los angeles, ca

a tiny refrigerator. we went to the market, ate cheese and fresh vegetables and shared our meal with an older Italian couple. staying up late, chocolate muffins. and the coolness of the grotto. look up, within the courtyard, like a slice, you see the people move.

Brave, ragazzi! the locals cheered as we passed

florence, italy

carla

before we had ever met, I saw you on the airplane. I told my mom that I thought you were in the architecture program. I remember the humid heat of august and how our shoulders grew hot and our faces were dewy with sweat. next to each other for months, side by side, could you read my mind?

I scooped the plaster onto one of the sticks, four sides, a large mound, chalky and wet at once

new york, ny

for those days we went to sleep in the early hours of the morning, waking to grab a loaf of bread and stealing jam from our hotel. and we would fall headfirst and heavy in to an easy slumber. waking in darkness. we roamed through the city of lights, walking to the top of the city and along the river.

concrete cool in shade, hot underfoot.

I remember endless laughter as night would fall and coming home on the subway at 5 am. I remember seeing a man walking his dog in the early morning and the little dog's walking handstand and thinking I would never see anything so simple and wonderful.

tree uprooted, its roots trailing across the open field.

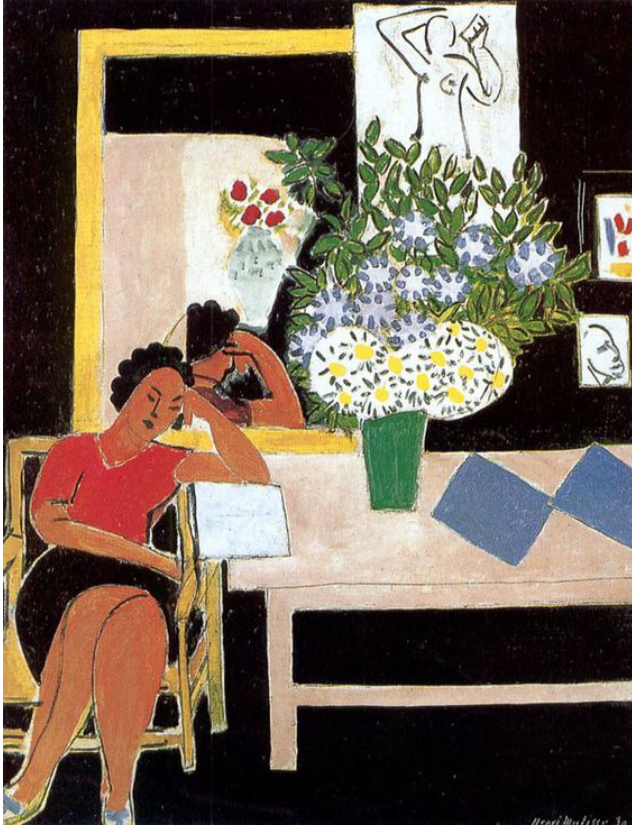
it floats to the surface, it shimmers. it glides. despite seeming weightless. it feels solid

lights bright against the darkness in our eyes



We watched the old city speed past us. She, peddling as hard as she could, and me, on her bike rack behind, both of us balancing as we hit each cobblestone. The shaded arcades and the tuscan yellow and the reflection on the plaster covered buildings slid past and through us, depositing fragments. She weaved through throngs of tourists and warned me when to grip my sandals tighter with my curled toes. When we would cross the *vialle*, she would tell me think light thoughts and I would whisper *light as a feather light as a feather light as feather* which may not have helped because each time she started laughing. I lost my sandal once, but we turned around and I scooped it as we passed. That spring, we shared a room with creamy terrazzo floors; I would feel the tiles cold on my feet even in the afternoon. Our room was bright, with clear gray light spilling in through the windows. In the mornings, we would open our eyes, our beds matching in their coordinated comforters, both of our dark brown hair splayed over the pillowcases. Buenos dias. In my green room the previous year, she would bound through my open door and jump on my bed. We would lay awake for hours until suddenly it was four am and we knew that we needed to go to sleep. The wooden floors groaned with our footsteps as we readied ourselves for bed. The year before that, we lived on opposite sides of a small hallway. I leapt from the door of the bathroom to my bedroom a mere four feet away and heard her cough-like laugh as she caught a glimpse of me. She was there in the many moments I became myself: when I burst open the doors of the library one late Thursday evening to run after the boy I liked and give him a kiss goodbye. We spoke to each other in that mix of spanglish that grew out of years living in Southern California. Each winter we would watch as our tans would fade, we would resign ourselves to the remainder of the school year fighting the cold and fighting our loneliness with impromptu dancing and the comfort of homemade chocolate chip cookies. And she swore you didn't have a sweet tooth, but could I please make some? And I would mix in the chocolate chips looking out from our drafty kitchen window and would see the world grow silent as snow dampened the noises around us. We would walk home from studio through the sparkling flakes, savoring the wistfulness of a memory that would always feel heavy from our exhaustion. And even though our senses were dulled from fatigue, I can still feel the prickling of my nose hairs as they crinkled with my steady breath, and I can still see the steam in front of me that blurred and softened the edges of everything around us. We would come home just before daybreak, when it still felt dark but the birds were waking up.





32



there and then you're gone

drive through the wooded area, rustle of the trees, drive along the cliffs

cardboard boxes disassembled and then we crawled inside. chocolate peanut butter cups and bad tv. we make plans that don't seem likely anymore. lets share a closet full of flannels. I'll move back, I promise

and then whose house is this? I have it in my memory, and yet don't know to whom it belongs

slow, like the still pond.  
slow, like the afternoon stroll

we sat on the field one afternoon, the plastic from the lawnchairs sticking to our bare legs and leaving its gridded imprint behind our knees. quietly we murmured about our sisters, puzzling to see how we would become like them

scoops of ice cream,  
here and there

summer solstice, should have been spring eqinox. we waited until someone passed through the gate and snuck inside. and after we watched the hang galiders at the port, looking out across the water, sunset sherbert across the clouds

water trough, clear blue  
concrete and wood  
the sides of the building

flair my arms...with rhythm  
gasp of air. held you tightly,  
as this moment

the summer I lived on Benvenue, I would wake in the morning to sunlight beating down upon me through the skylight. I would hide my head under the covers as I waited to start my day. in the afternoons, I would carry armfuls of peaches and plums, sweet and their flesh dripping with juice

wind against my bare breasts, am I  
ashamed or exhilarated. but we are  
laughing

berkeley, ca

the sun would set and our weekly ritual would begin. we would prepare for ourselves mounds of ice cream in clean white bowls, we would pile blankets upon ourselves, we would sit content in a mellow silence

san diego, ca

doughnuts and coffee and ice cream milkshakes, and laughing at a sneaky strawberry unwilling to be cut. walk outdoors, sounds of sea lions, smells of them too.

nap under the heavy blanket, my feet  
are cold, my hair still wet.  
smell the fire

## annie

the surface, like hammered gold  
or silver reflects the surrounding  
environment, refracts and amplifies it.

you came to my studio and I let you stay with me for the night. lay your head on my lap, everything will be okay. rest here, my small studio. the palest blue walls, like white's longing to become color

providence, ri

smoky barbecue, and sandals on my  
feet. watermelon slices, refreshment

we snuck away and took pictures together with wigs and plastic glasses. so easily we slip back into our ways, like a favorite pair of jeans, that were misplaced and suddenly you find again. we haven't changed much.

teal blue, plastic leis

brooklyn, ny

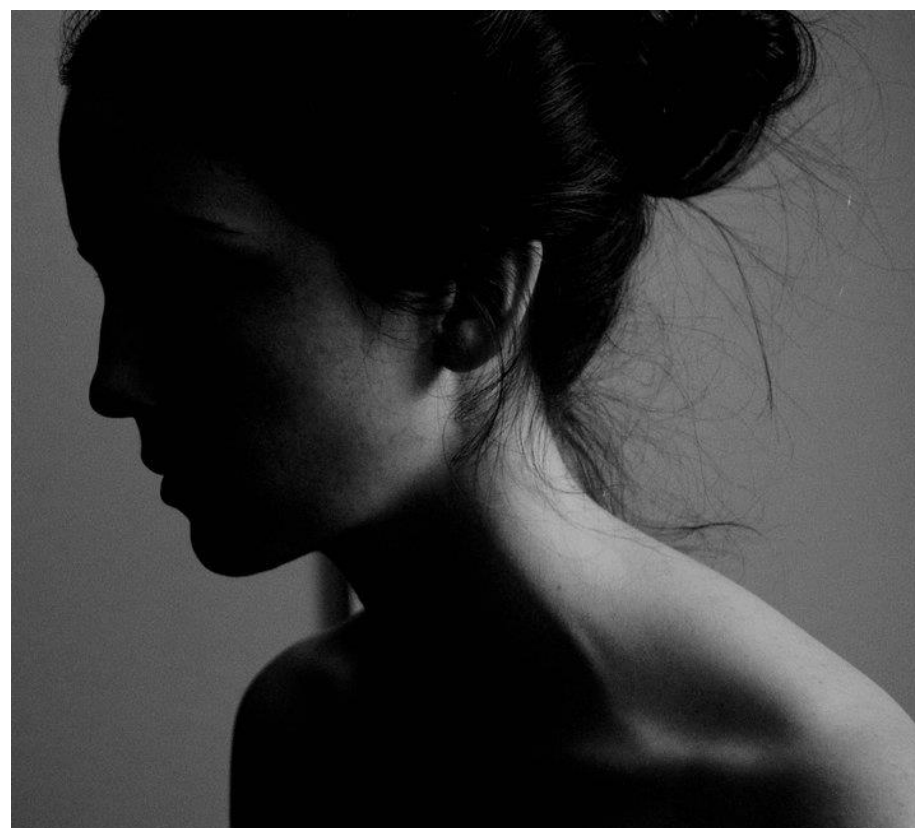
early morning, saw you waiting in the lobby. what a wonder that this is how we live now. I meet you in mid-twon, grab a pastry and juice--the color of freshly mown grass--and we sit silent for a while. no need to say a word.

watch you in the makeshift office,  
command the room, watch your  
hands, as I have done so often move  
across spreadsheets and emails

catalina island, ca

we laughed at your insistence, quiet anger. fleeting but revealing. bouncing on the dinghy, flying over the ocean. the town is illuminated, its small buildings far away. we are nestled between two hills, wonder if the feral pigs are near

ethereal and also embodied. reflecting  
the quiet beauty.



Each light post on the freeway illuminated us in flashes- portals, passageways. We danced in the darkness. We could feel the constant hum of the wheels on the concrete through our feet. Along the harbor drive, the air surged and almost suffocated; we could hear the music from Humphrey's as it carried on the breeze. In the hills, the unlit roads were dense with fog. We wound our way through arching trees until we reached the coast. I remember waking bleary eyed and sunburnt, and tucking my legs under me on our quiet ride home. We would traverse up and down California, stopping along the way to stretch our legs. We danced on the hill side, we dove into ponds nestled between large rocks past a parched field. Trips to mountains and to deserts and to islands. Mist and sunshine and climbing hay bales. We watched our shadows grow longer, stretching out fifteen feet across the sand. We wandered through painted rocks, the lyme containing the earth and daring it to breathe. We smelled the rotting of fish and the stale lake, the wind pushed into our faces, taunted us. We wandered over to graffiti covered water tanks and tried to climb their heights. I remember her auburn hair and the time she dyed it dark, and she painted her nails to match and her clothes did too. And slowly the pigment faded away, until one day our hair was exactly the same color. Twisting the strands together we would guess to which of us it belonged and we mused over how indiscernible they were from one another. It was as though we were slowly melding together, like two lumps of taffy from the old-fashion candy store in the mountains. We sat on her couch and felt the air chill us slowly, and she offered me a thick blanket to sit under while my calves stuck to the leather. Her house had the perpetual smell of autumn, like spices and the color burnt sienna. The deep wood of the coffee table reminded me of her first house in Berkeley. We danced and sang with strangers and I left her before going back to school. And sometimes I would think about the trees in her backyard and the steep hill she lived on and the deep green darkness of her room at night. I would think about the distance and the time between us and she would go to sleep before I did, but I was three hours ahead. And two years later when she had moved, I spent the summer with her and found a shirt I left and I wore it until it had holes in the side, and I patched it with little bits of silk and cotton.



watch the landscapes move past us,  
 goodye to our city, hello to farmlands and  
 garlic fields and the smell of fresh grass

I remember the time we drove up to berkeley with your dad and  
 it was barely a week after I had come home from school. my head  
 kept drifting backwards as I struggled not to fall asleep. but each  
 time sleep swallowed me I let out a terrible gasp and your dad was  
 convinced I had sleep apnea

I almost loved you or maybe I did

I came over to your house, welcomed by your entire family.  
 lebanese dishes spread across the table. hello to your mom and  
 dad and sister, aunts and uncles and cousins. sit down next to your  
 family and join in the laughter.

tacos in the morning  
 and in the evening.

walking down newport avenue after getting ice cream and wrestling  
 you in a hug. heard the waves crashing, but it was too dark to see  
 them clearly. under the moonlight, the frothy tips were illuminated.

smile wide. balancing, jumping leaping  
 over each other



hear the campanile strike  
 ringing across the evergreen trees and the  
 steps where students gather

staying over the one time I visited berkeley and annie wasn't there,  
 friends came over to your place and when I fell asleep I thought of  
 all the times I missed out on because I went to school across the  
 country. And that summer we walked around outside, and saw yvonne  
 at the park. It had been years, but I still felt your twinge of sadness

berkeley, ca

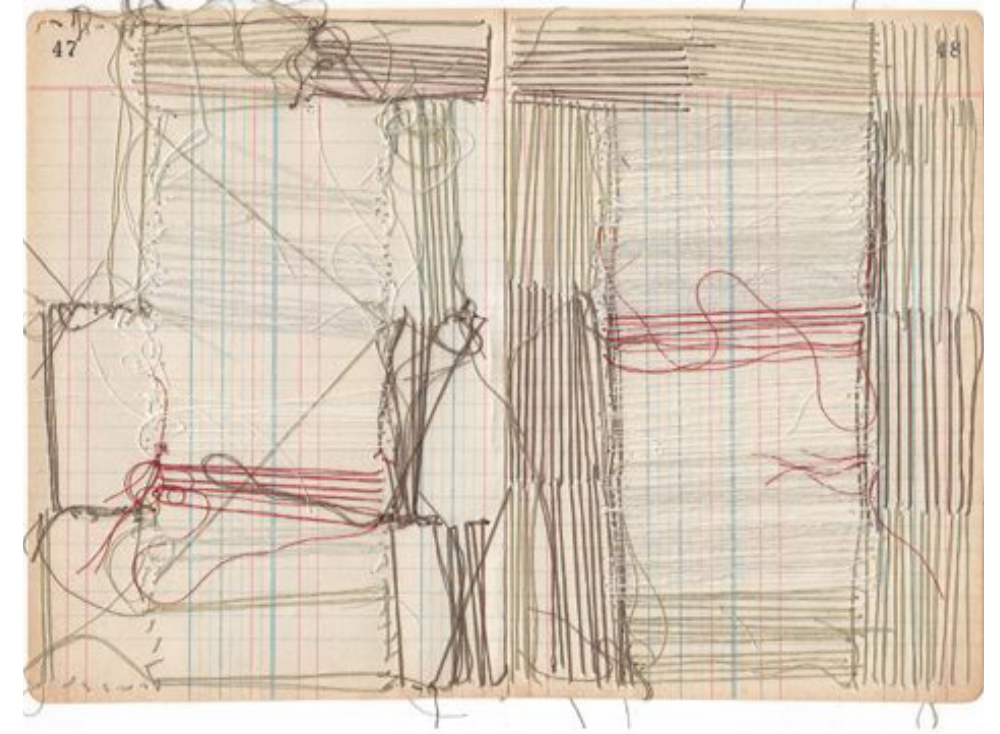
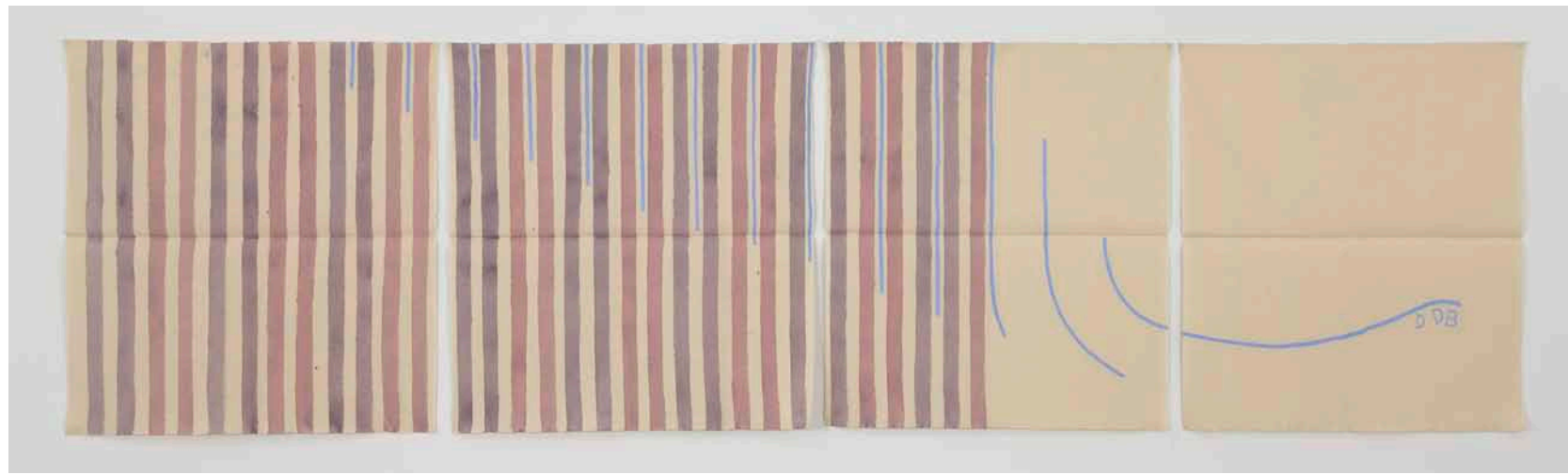
new years eve we piled into your parent's  
 living room, tee shirts and jeans.

**marc**

san diego, ca

met you at the basketball court, hear the  
 sound of rubber hit the blue painted  
 ground. wearing matching hats, the  
 canyon barely beyond

when we were young, we ran around the backyard of jeff behm's  
 house, filling water balloons and water guns. and the water splattered  
 all over my glasses, fogging from the heat and my laughter too  
 only blue behind me. ocean fades into  
 sky, beneath a layer of fog



birthday night, laughing together  
 jump on your back, squealing

drive up the coast, take the ferry. we ate terrible bean chips and for  
 a moment felt the sea spray on the deck outside. arrived at sunset,  
 annie's dad met us and we rode on choppy waters to the other side  
 of the island. in the morning, I was the last one up. no sheepish  
 smiles because there was nothing to do but rest anyways

catalina island, ca

see your face on my screen, say hello to  
 your roommates, you say hello to mine.  
 hours without a word passing content  
 to spend a few moments with company

friday afternoon, when we went for lunch. hawaiian, where our  
 friends had suggested. old fast food tables, like the ones from  
 ortiz's, the ones that had belonged to subway before. those were  
 lemon yellow laminate, we would rest our glass soda bottles.

and we will wait for you each time. add  
 an hour, see you later. strolling in with  
 lanky arms and curls wet, unhurried



The three of us spent a long weekend on Annie's boat, we floated there bobbing gently in the protected cove. Every evening at five, we would jump into the ocean and swim counterclockwise around the slick belly, and every evening we would take turns rinsing off with warm water from the spout. As the sun fell, the hills darkened in stark shadow. The light was glowing behind them, casting a cool darkness that moved towards us. Our faces were flushed with the daylight that had beat upon us throughout the afternoon. We would lounge sprawled on the built-in couches. Belly down, we would kick our feet back and forth. I remember the feeling of brushed cotton against my skin and the crispness of our clothes as the salt air settled into the fibers. His hands on the wheel, wearing the captain's hat and the drawing he made of himself looking out across the water. When we were younger, I would see him doodle on the back of old sheets of homework, creating a world for himself. I wonder if this is where he would retreat while sitting at his drumset, eyes closed in concentration and transcendence. His basement room was a cool respite from the summer heat. We could see the bay from the upstairs window, watch the lights turn on across the city, see--on the clearest evenings--the way the smoggy haze dissipated as night drew near. I remember the damp sand under layers of dry earth and the fire that made my hair smell like smoke. We were not fast friends; tentatively we progressed from moments of quiet uncertainty into a playful banter that bounced joyfully until returning--this time with comfort--to silence. And so, on the boat, the three of us met the morning silently. Each of us content in the others' presence, but free to live within ourselves. The weekend slipped away quickly, but afterwards I could still feel myself rocking back and forth when I closed my eyes.



we sang altogether,  
to the dulcet sounds of the guitar

we pretended it was cold outside and took pictures in front of  
the christmas tree. and the air smelled like chlorine and salt. the  
observation tower was lit, small streamers, bulbs, globes of luminosity

we built a fire and dug our feet into the sand. our faces and fronts  
grew hot while our backs grew colder. our bellies full. walk to the  
roof, yell into the night

we shared my twin bed for the  
weekend. spartan room, but it felt cozy

face wrapped into a giant wool scarf. protect us from the cold and  
then we ride the bus. sit by me in studio, dusty and white lights. and  
then, even though my pile of work has not grown smaller, we walk  
to my favorite indian restaurant

clear blue eyes, reflect the bright snow



that morning we took pictures under  
the pier. overcast sky and seaweed  
beneath our heels

watch the grass rustle in the wind,  
our eyes squinted against the sun

I cried on the way home from that little mountain town, I cried  
because the day was perfect. I cried because I was going to lose a  
love, I cried big salty tears because I was going to miss you, my best  
friend. I remember thinking my sadness was heartbreak, but I think  
it was beauty. The four of us met early morning, it was twilight, got  
hungry in the car

I remember a fire in the mountains,  
walking through a forest arm in arm,  
our next five steps illuminated by our  
small flashlights

julian, ca

home but I can picture you at your  
desk, living room and sparkles the dog  
at your feet

syracuse, ny

jessica

san diego, ca

dipped our fingers in the dye, hold  
hands to see the colors in a row

we grew up between my room and yours, between camps and trips  
and parties and fear and excitement and sadness. so I remember the  
colors of your room, and when the unicorns that lived on your  
shelves for years were finally moved out. I can picture the wall  
behind your bed plastered in hundreds of happy faces, halloween  
and tournaments and dance recitals

overstuffed sofa, see the red stain,  
from when we were painting our nails

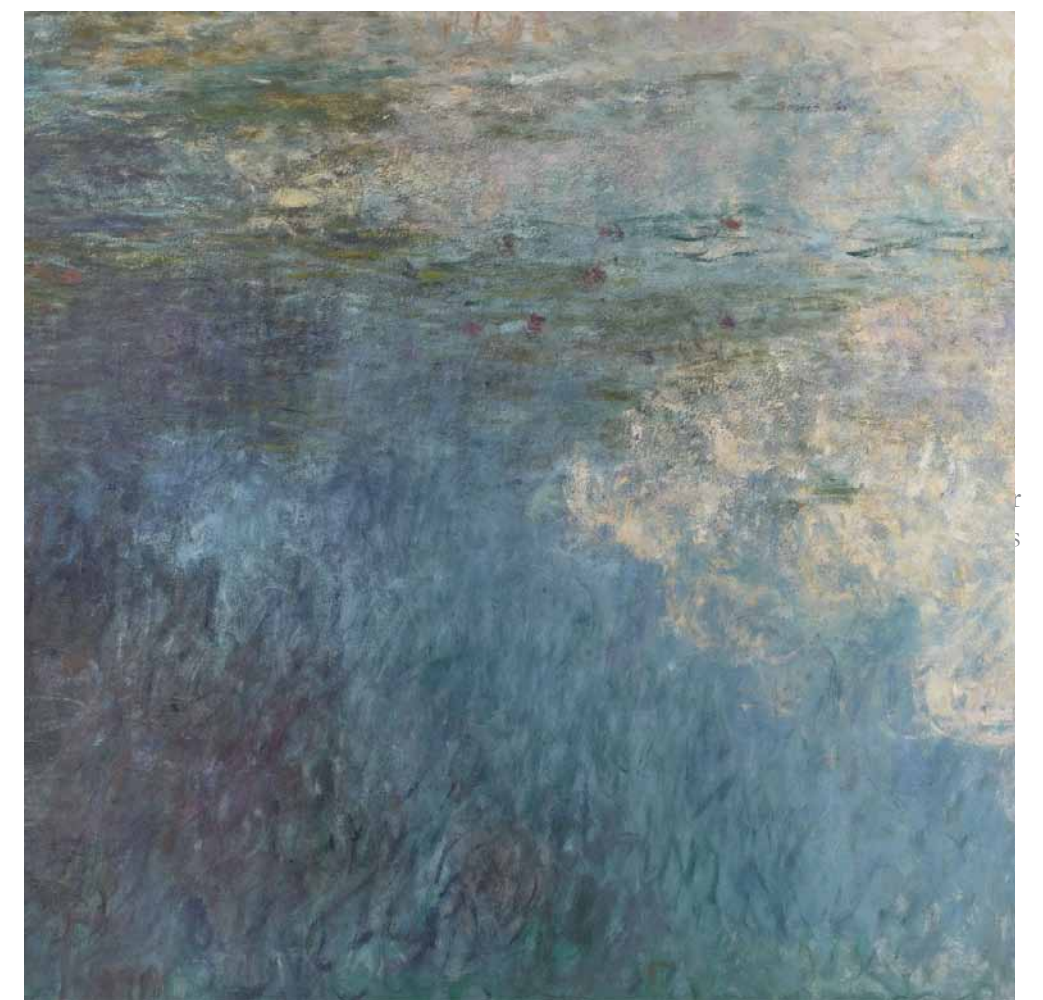
are you asleep? our eyes grew heavy, long pauses between blinks,  
longer blinks still. do you remember that night we tried to stay up  
until five? we laughed. do you remember making me laugh so hard  
I fell off your bed backwards? we laughed harder. I don't know if  
we ever realized we were falling asleep

light bounces easily off the surface,  
the colors are deep, varied. subtly  
moving from dark to light

morning meant waking,  
pick up soft pink peonies.  
cold room in june

we ate burritos by the cliffs at sunset, we sat in the back of my  
boyfriends truck and laughed and planned our lives out. we sat in  
the same truck in the darkness, silent. feeling small and great at the  
same time

hood of the truck.  
look up, winter air



Together we saw the earth ripple, like when one tosses a sheet over the bed. It seemed gentle, slow. Slower, still, than waves crashing. Later that day, we sat and watched the cliff edge get slowly devoured by the lapping of these waves. We heard them as they met the rocks and felt the spray on our cheeks. We watched this tenuous earth pretend it was solid, the dust under our fingertips betraying its fragility. We sat at the edge of a continent and watched as the sky turned, like a cut plum, from orange to purple. If I catch a glimpse of a lavender sky I think of her, looking over a different ocean, adrift on a small island. Of her legs powering up mountains and the delicious rush as she rides down. I think of all the languages and words that drift together in her thoughts and the ease with which she now beckons them. I think of how she has found herself among orchids, tending to them and learning their habits. Of how she said she finds them dull in their idleness, but she cares for them diligently nevertheless. I think of this as I imagine the island, and of her future there. And I wonder if she will have children who look out over the ocean themselves, or if she will remember the fires on the beach or running into the water at midnight, or the tidepools at the end of the coastline and looking up the rock face. Of the striations and the time that they reveal. Or will she remember the cement sidewalk during lunch and the way the fence marked us with crisp lined shadows? I remember picking her up after dance class and doing homework together in my grapefruit colored room. And the distraction of our conversations and our secret code for when our parents were behind us. I think of how our faces changed, but her laugh is still the same, and the way that we are very much like the ocean and the earth. Because we seem to stay the same, or we seem to always change, but I'm not sure which. And I think of the depth and chaos in each and the stillness of them too.