

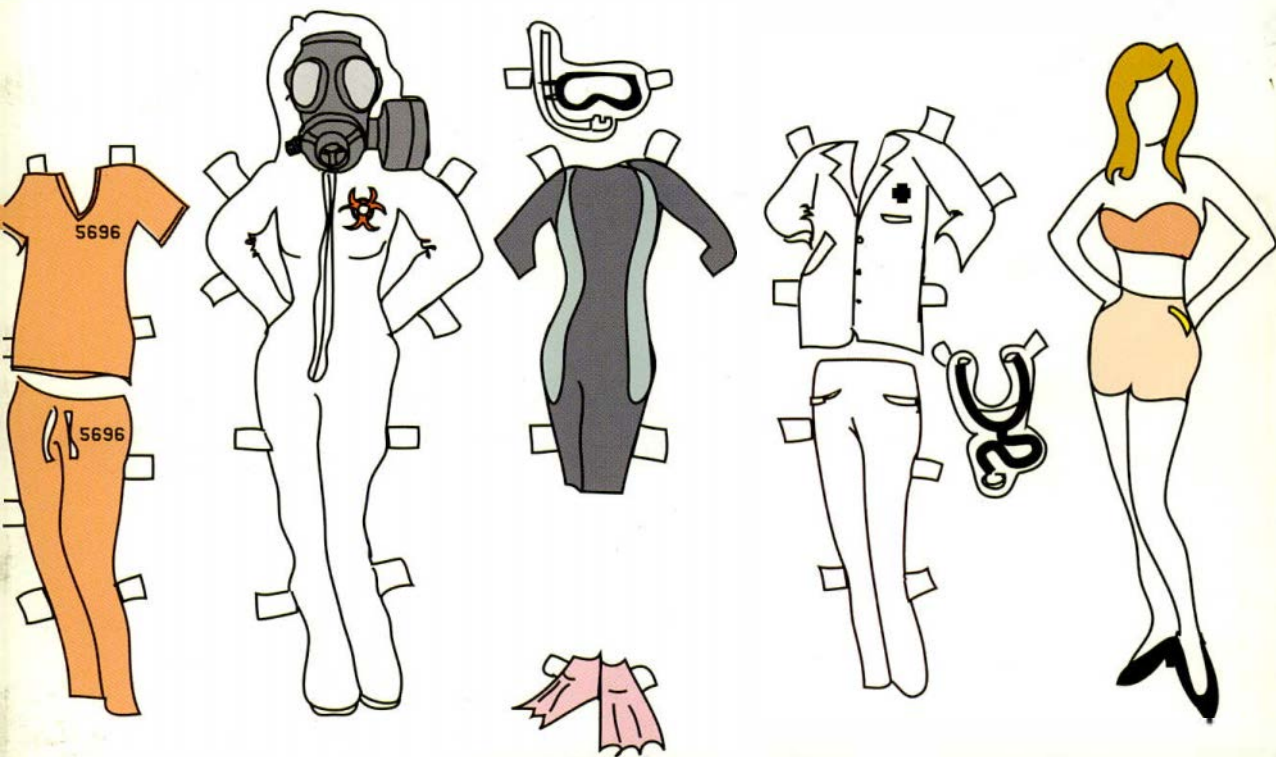
2007

Cellar Roots, Vol. 36., 2007

Eastern Michigan University

CELLAR ROOTS

Vol. 36 Roles



CELLAR ROOTS

VOL. 36 ROLES

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Pete DiGennaro

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Kevin Devine

Photography
Ruffy B. Lim

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EDITOR'S NOTE

when an artist expresses something, that expression provides its audience the unique opportunity for a more profound understanding of the issue, emotion, etc. because it is coming from another's perspective. This experience can provide a voice for something the audience didn't know how to or never even thought about articulating themselves. These moments of revelation about self or circumstance pleasantly catch us off guard and instigate our return to galleries and museums, book and record shops. This collection was inspired by such revelation. In order to explore this idea, the theme of Roles was chosen because one person's expression of his or her experience as a politic or father or jaded receptionist illustrates our own striving, but with the added possibility of gaining precious insight. We hope you enjoy the labor of our 36th year and the thought-provoking work of our contributors.

With indebted gratitude to my dedicated staff and the community of family and friends without whose support this publication would not be possible.

Sarah Smarch
Editor-in-Chief
2006-2007

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POETRY

EMILY DOBBS

there has been a great misconception that in leaves there are only cells

There is a leaf of grass pressed between your lips.
There is a leaf of grass pressed between my fingers.

Do you remember the Wilderness?
(did you even see the trees?)

Life grants death to those who live.
You who fear the openness of a mouse running through the field:
Understand now that each eagle says a prayer.

Each step

leaves a step away from here. Each step
a bread crumb to come back and try again.

There are always footprints. There are always waves
bouncing from your body to mind. You breath in and
I remember the course of an ant's life. You choose
which words to say and I see. I remember the sweat
of carrying a single crumb.

I have been dreaming of such ideas. Of timelessness and sound.
Of the waves you send to ears. Of the memories you choose
to tell me.

How each blade of grass is a touch I may not have.
How each blade of grass is a wave I may not hear.

**EMILY
DOBBS***for anna's seventh birthday*

Often there is no reason people leave.
Wherever you go, someone will disappear.
Death, I know, has your father's eyes,
has my long and sorry story.
What I remember best is your smile.
Baby teeth curious about pillows.
Lips moist with laughter.
I have that inside my heart. I unwrap
you each night while I write letters
you will never get.
You wanted me to explain why.
Why the sky is blue.
Why I was once there and am not now.
Why death is not only for dying.
Your smile takes each why
and builds a house for me to sleep in
and I fall asleep to the tune of your
whispers, childhood wishes—
your young chest thump-thumping
to a dream you have each Fall:
a giant pencil, my arms, the dog running
into the street, getting hit.
Often for a young girl's birthday it is
joyful to send her a present and a card.
I have missed so many moons that this
poem is the only gift I can give you.
The living speak only in riddle, the
dead speak only in verse, and I
speak only in pauses.

EMILY DOBBS

poem for ourselves

We sit. Rocking back and forth
 back forth
 in an old folks Home filled with
 t w e n t y s o m e t h i n g s
 singing their own praise.

Inside the setting sun there lies the Question.
 Inside the rising sun there lies the same.

A woman turned to me at the grocery store
It is in giving hands freely, she explained,
that hands will give freely to hands.
 And I picked up my pickles and left.

Outside, your plastic frame is on fire.
 Outside, the seeds will burn. Will burn.

Your Answers have touched the sun,
 have reached Heaven, have burned the
 seeds (the only seeds) that could save your mind.

Reach out and touch His brow.
 Reach out and wipe the sweat—

Winged and dangerous the birds sit to hear us.
 Birds sit to hear us grasp, sit to hear us sing.

Outside an Answer is writing your breath in the air.
 Outside an Answer licks her paw.

The birds coax us into our cages so that we
might sing to them a tune. The tune is the
only thing we've ever known to say,
it is the only Word we can believe in.

Repeat the Question often.
Repeat the song of the whale inside your heart.

It is through the whale's song that we see the
setting sun is just a Puffin making the rounds
finding some fish to satisfy a hunger much larger than itself.

We sit in our Home—you, I—looking for the Answer
to the setting sun, singing only "Me."

DIANNA RAE BOREL

the face of Kathe Kollwitz

You remain forever before our eyes:
careworn face harrowed
by the war to end all wars
but it didn't.

You bore Peter, sweet child
to change the world. His death
changed nothing.
It was left to you.

You carved your torment into the wood,
cut the wound of every mother of
every child of every soldier,
some mother's child.

You drew your anguish
when your grandson fell, another child
another war how many more
will there be?

You etched the lines of your face
with acid burned the faces of those
soldiers mothers children
into the plate.

Did your charcoal caress the paper as you yearned
to touch your child, as you
ached for the world in it's futile
war peace, peace war?

Degenerate artist. Drawing made your life bearable.
Your expression reveals
hollow eyes etched on our brains,
starving faces carved into our consciousness,
never-ending struggle
on your tired, drawn face.

JOHN BIANDO

it must sound to you

it must sound to you like fifteen fire alarms are ringing
at least it says so on the box so
why don't you shut your trap
filch poison junior mints rattling
from a cardboard box or steal kisses
around the peanut butter caked lips of spring as
I fashion a matchstick bow and a toothpick arrow
to stick your little heart right through.

your teeth trim the trim down
to wet earth crawling up the ceiling
the wall scratched out inside swept
from a miserable hole in the floor
I can't understand that, sometimes
for no good reason I see a pile of dust
strings and white rocks—are you filling
the home with what's inside the walls?

if you are coming to meet me here
you must know that I am too big
to be, mouse, I cannot be
do you love me, the way
I used to wish myself small
to drop down the dress of
Vanna White to love?

I know you use the bathroom
sometimes I find my own
skin flakes, hair and toenails
away from me in your little piles
you must know I am too big
to be, mouse, do you want
a new me do you want
to dress up as me
maybe to be me
so when the snap
 comes it
 will be
 my
 neck

I don't like cats either, but I am considering
a nasty one with claws just so
I can relax my toes a little
because traps don't know

don't know if it's you or me

JOHN BIANDO

head cancer

sun kills the kept grass
so the blades kept sloughing
and my head kept living
one rickety ride up the mountain away
from time
to see a patch
where green grows back

it's good to know the top stays
frozen
that's what youth is

that's what you are

**JOHN
BIANDO**

safety trap

metronomic pulse clack
single marble liquid smack
depreciating tongue tack
the matter of the mouse trap

basement so full the floorboards flubber
an ancestral jello bounce

it leaves dirty paw prints on the scene
and packs your string
to pull a wisdom guillotine
and save the colors of the spring

steady rain down
snap of beetle sound
the bug to eat
all house and mouse
charge the electric box

shell the pest one sentence
tap away
a slow techno beat
to catch mouse feet
with glue,

but stuck
they'd rather leave
their shoe

and stagger to retreat
yet
hell is full of mice their
peg legs knock a faster pede
on all the shoulders
of their breed

JOHN BIANDO

*10 interpretations of a death wish
("ahhhhhh whaaaa,"¹ verbose but aimless)*

agamic wank

agaric wasteland

agelong warble

aggrieved waffle

aglow waiter

agonistic wader

agoraphobic wannabe

aha wand

ahead warranty

amen washbowl

¹ Terri Schiavo's family claims that her utterance, "Ahhh, Whaaa," was the plea, "I want to live." In 2005, her husband won the right to terminate her life support—in part because such utterances were considered nonsensical.

EMILIE LEWANDOWSKI

on losing

Stomach down, we watch the clouds.
Leaning in close she whispers,
Explaining why grandma didn't wake up,
She's dancing now in the sky.

I am five, and angry.

I kick and scream and flop on the grass.
When I stop, she just holds me,
And I understand.

I am five and I know.

MARGAUX GRIFFITH

it's quiet here

Slowly creeping into dusk
Time keeps passing
And everything is still the same here

Shaking at the breast bone
Quivering at the jaw
Breathing
Breathing

Get up
Get out of bed
Choking on past tear drops

Ain't nothin' here 'cept darkness
Ain't nothin' here 'cept me

I'm so quiet
So still

It ain't never gonna stop
But I never asked it to

I wanna fall into the depths of you
Seeping further into your skin
Suckling on memories already finished
Already done

But I can't stop hoping
Maybe I'll move to Africa
Maybe Rome
Or Quebec

Somewhere new
Somewhere different
Without you

BENJAMIN FIDLER

wholesome food is caught without a net or trap

Blake was a vegetarian anyway and crawled across an oeuvre understanding any bird that soars too high soars with its own wings. *The ancient tradition of the world will be consumed in fire at the end of six thousand years of truth, I have heard it from hell.* Claim to see angels in treetops on Peckham Ridge and you shall be saved. All domestic animals watch the roots. The lion, elephant and tiger watch the fruits. An empty proverb: We all are painted double to teach in harvest and enjoy in winter. *That's why we have incisors, to tear and shred at our meat—it's instinctual.* Cutting a cone at an oblique plane and without touching feet, women in white eclipse the falling sun while enjoying frog legs. A gull bladder secretes bile trying hard to realize its place in superfluous physiological toil. Worms are the true garbologists, swallowing revolutions and digested "Damns!" and "Aw, hell's." The voice of overtures whispers succinctly *ain't I a mole? Blind to the underworld, but oh so sensitive to the hair of humans?* A whooping cough paints skin an off-tint cornflower blue while outside birds in exodus shade even-toed ungulates. *Yet now, there are no words in me, no regrets hiding in hollow (et cetera, et cetera), as sliding down a hill in winter onto an icy meadow to stretch in epochs, slipping and writhing at the bottom.*

BENJAMIN FIDLER

all gods have chafed wings

and are we gods
using our pointer-fingers
for nothing more

than tracing hours coming back?

Whose agrarian life had known

clandestine swallows?

Flying flocks
over belly-stuffed Vaseline
lines
to San Juan Capistrano.

We single-use
fish

blbs!

CHRIS GRIESINGER

racing thoughts in the back of the church

They say he says the Greatest Story Ever Told is the Way. We say he says the Greatest Story Ever Told is the Way. They say he says the Greatest Story Ever Told. We say the Greatest Story Ever Told is the Way. They say we say the Greatest Story Ever Sold is the way. He says we say the Greatest Story Ever Told is gay. They say he says the Greatest Story Ever Told is the Way. They say we say the Greatest Story Ever Sold. We say they say the Greatest Story Ever Told is the Way.

For some of us believe the cross bleeds for all men. For some of us see the cross bleeds for all men. For some of us believe the cross bleeds for all. For some of us know the cross bleeds for all men. For some of us the cross bleeds for all men. For all of us the cross bleeds for all. For some of all of us the cross bleeds for some and all. For some of us believe the cross bleeds for some men. For some of us the cross bleeds. For some of us a guy bleeds for all men. For some of us believe the guy bleeds for all. For some of all of us the guy bleeds. For some of us believe the guy bleeds for all men. For some of us believe the guy. For some of us believe the guy just bleeds.

They want to be led from temptation and deliverance from evil. They need to be led from temptation and deliverance from evil. They need deliverance. We want to be led from temptation and deliverance from evil. They need temptation and deliverance. They want to lead us from evil. They need evil. They need to lead us from temptation and deliverance from evil. They want to deliver us. We want deliverance. We need deliverance from evil. They want evil. We need deliverance from them.

**BARRY
GRAHAM**

warm hands (to my dead father)

it was extremely cold outside
the morning of my father's funeral

I know
because I was sitting

in my living room
warming my hands by the fireplace

looking out the window
watching it snow

DAVID WURTSMITH

the scarecrow

He stands alone in his moonlit field:
Crucified rags from a dead man's body,
Stuffed with sawdust from a murdering saw;
The King of the Harvest Moon watches and grins.
Crowned with burlap, with a lopsided sneer,
He screeches and rattles in the cornstalk wind.

JON DESJARDINS

a word's worth repeating

The
word
I'm about
to use
as you
wait
for that
drunken splendor
to
drop
down
from your
thighs...

Convulse again
I beg you.

Now.
Wait
and
listen
for
it
please.

This.
This...
gutter
we've

formed
is
as
beautiful
as
it
is
ugly.

And...
I welcome
it
with
its
dirt and sweat
and
spoiling sex
as it is,
a
basket
full of joy;
a
secret
hidden
under
the
bed.

PAM McCOMBS

blackest pond

Disrupting surface black as cold

Muskrat swims

as Pines sway Spruce.

Up the man-made mountain plow I

spruce brush Prickle my black suede.

Still of winter fills the air

black muffs muffled

bare russet brown leaves to oak.

Rustling wintry breath,

while,

Night descends ground hog's hole

with black cold chill of snow

through feathery white pines

plodding.

Down, Down, mountainside

cement curves past Blackest

Looking-glass

Looking-glass pond.

VISUAL ART

**LAURIE
GAFFORD**

untitled
silver gelatin print



**LAURIE
GAFFORD**

untitled
silver gelatin print



SARAH ALTMAN

mist

silver gelatin print



**LAUREN
HOGAN**

monster #1
photography





**LAUREN
HOGAN**

untitled
photography

HANNA CLARK

negotiations
silver gelatin print





**HANNA
CLARK**
the puppeteer
etching

ERIK REICHENBACH

ghosts #4

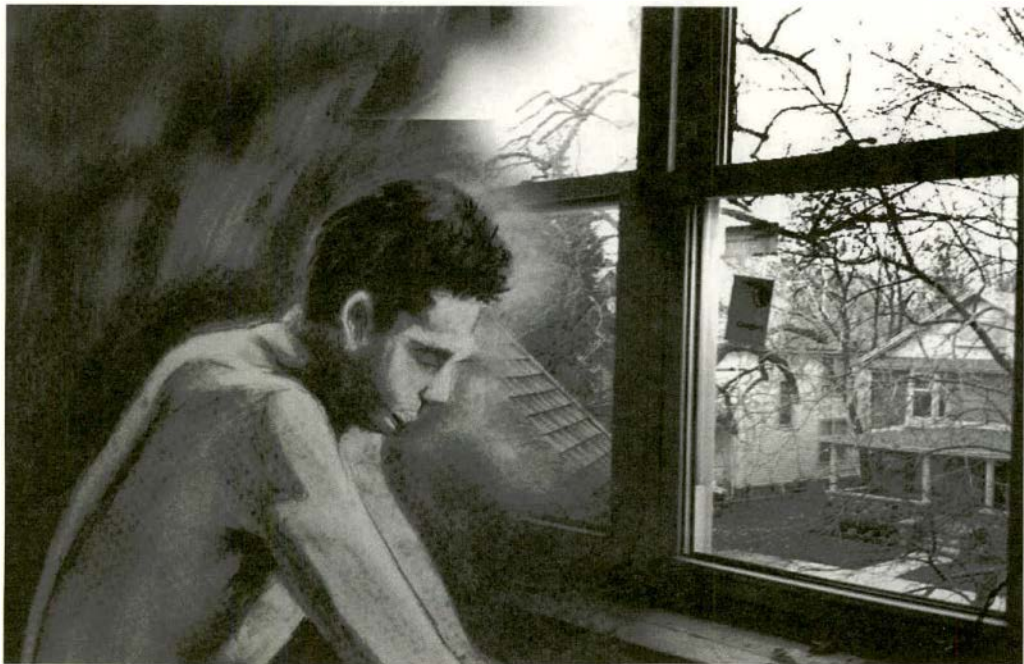
mixed media: charcoal/photography



ERIK REICHENBACH

ghosts #1

mixed media: charcoal/photography





**MELANIE
MACARI**

untitled

charcoal/green tea

mounted on masonite with bar
top glaze

**MELANIE
MACARI**

untitled
charcoal/green tea



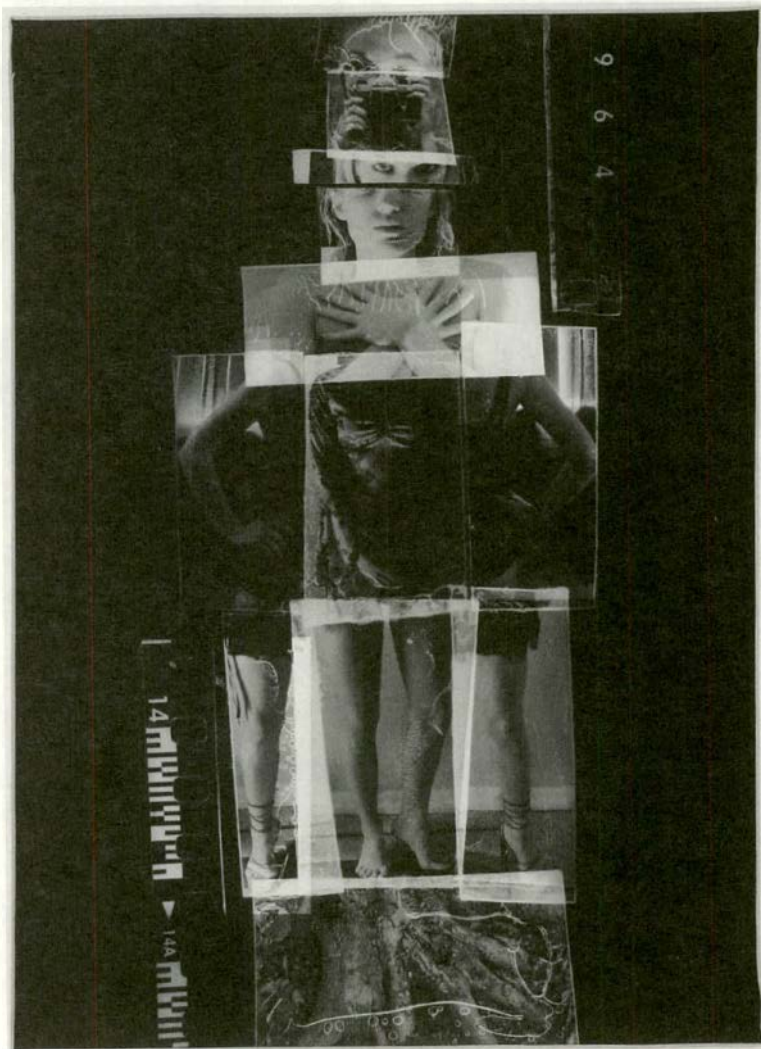
MALLORY CHAMPINE

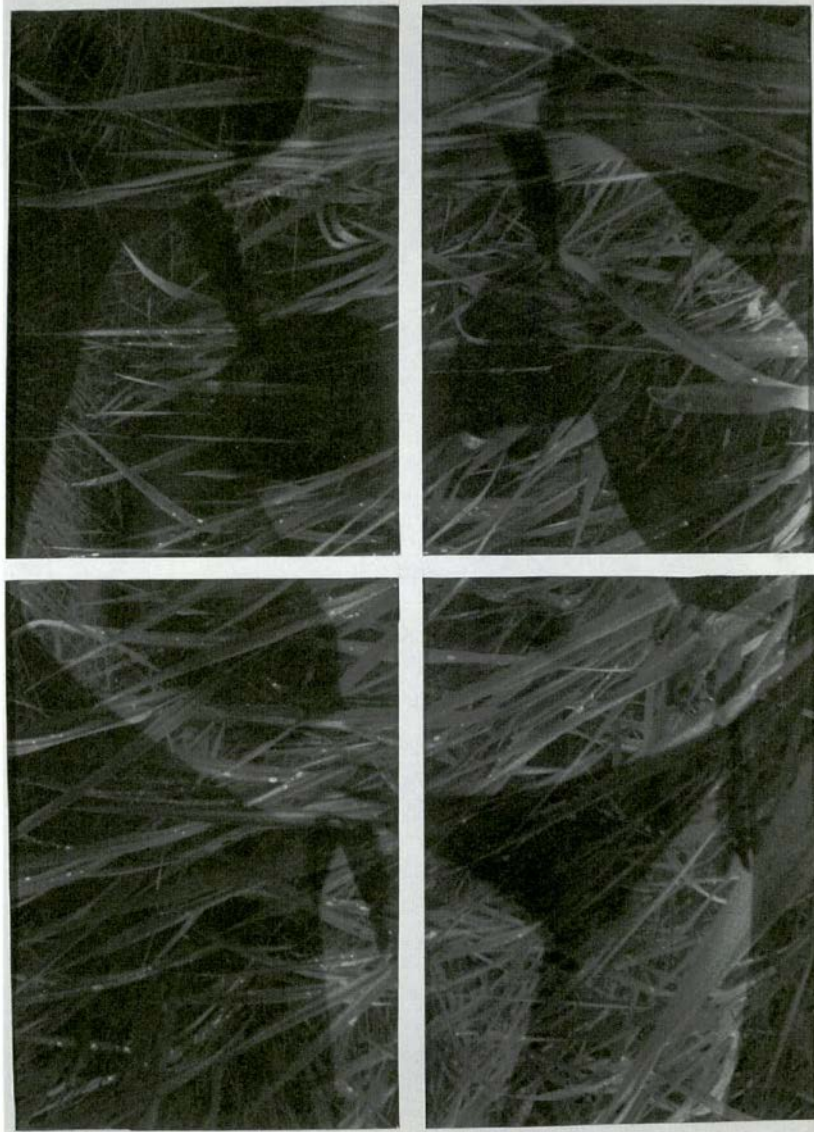
through generations
photography



**MARCY
BRADLEY**

fragmented self-portrait
silver gelatin print



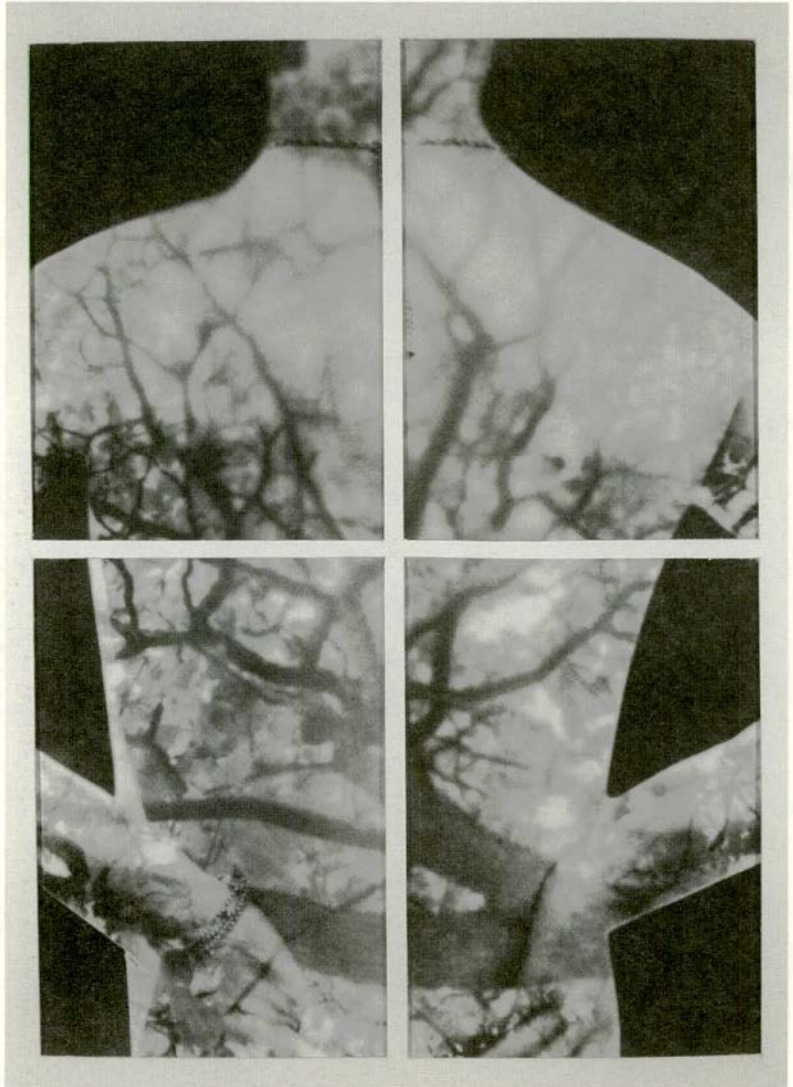


**MARCY
BRADLEY**

submerged
silver gelatin print

**MARCY
BRADLEY**

stability
silver gelatin print





**KANA
KUBOTA**

untitled
photography

**KANA
KUBOTA**

untitled
photography



JEAN HAVILAND

untitled
silver gelatin print



**JEAN
HAVILAND**

untitled
silver gelatin print

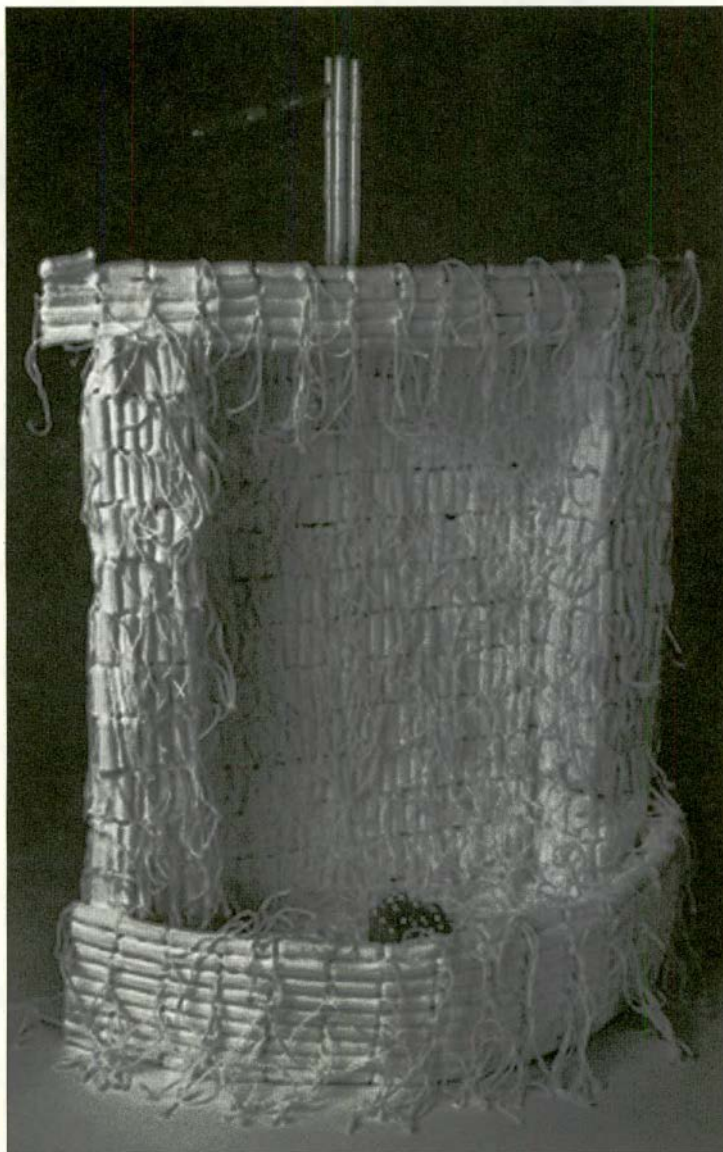


SARAH ALLISON

aura
graphic design



This piece is the result of a project which required the linking of four contemporary graphic designers' work. The theme of environment was chosen to successfully cohere the artists.



**KIMBERLEY
NIERESCHER**

conceal
mixed media

**LISA
KOCHANSKI**

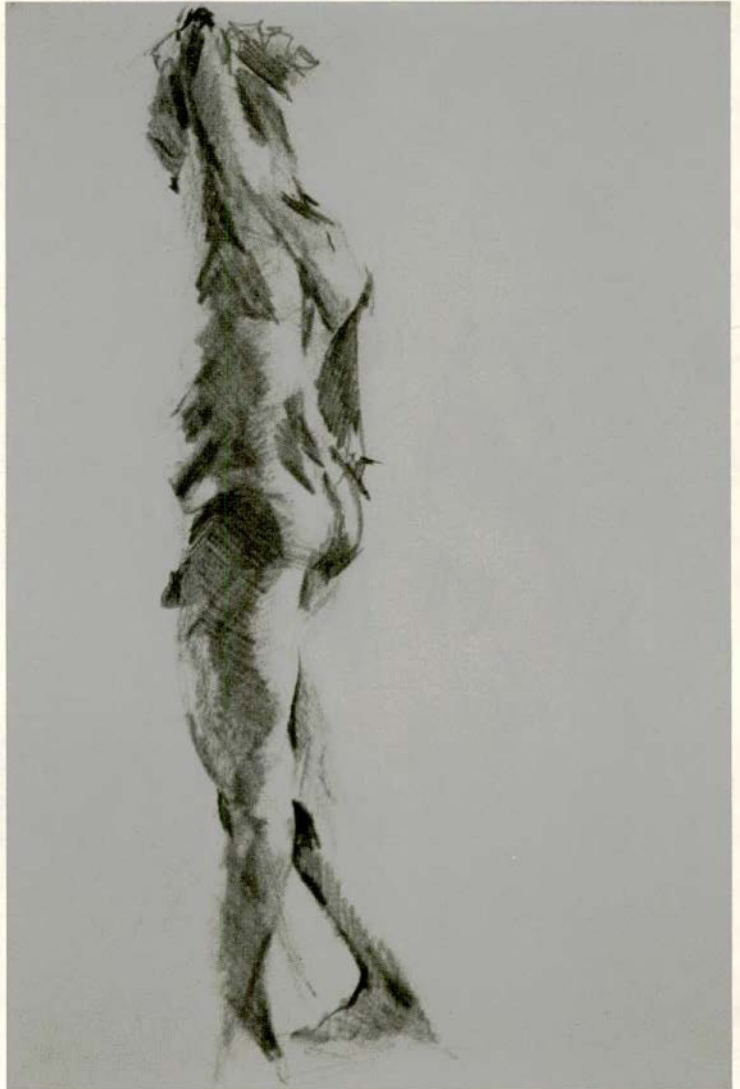
face painter

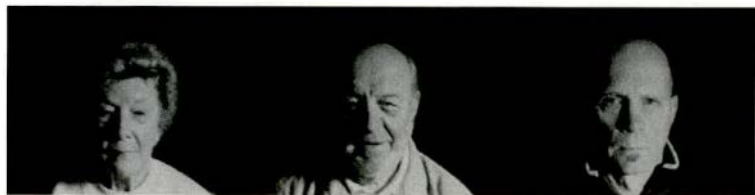
sepia toned gelatin print



**BRICE
LILJEBLAD**

no line blue
pencil





**BRICE
LILJEBLAD**

what is before?
silver gelatin print



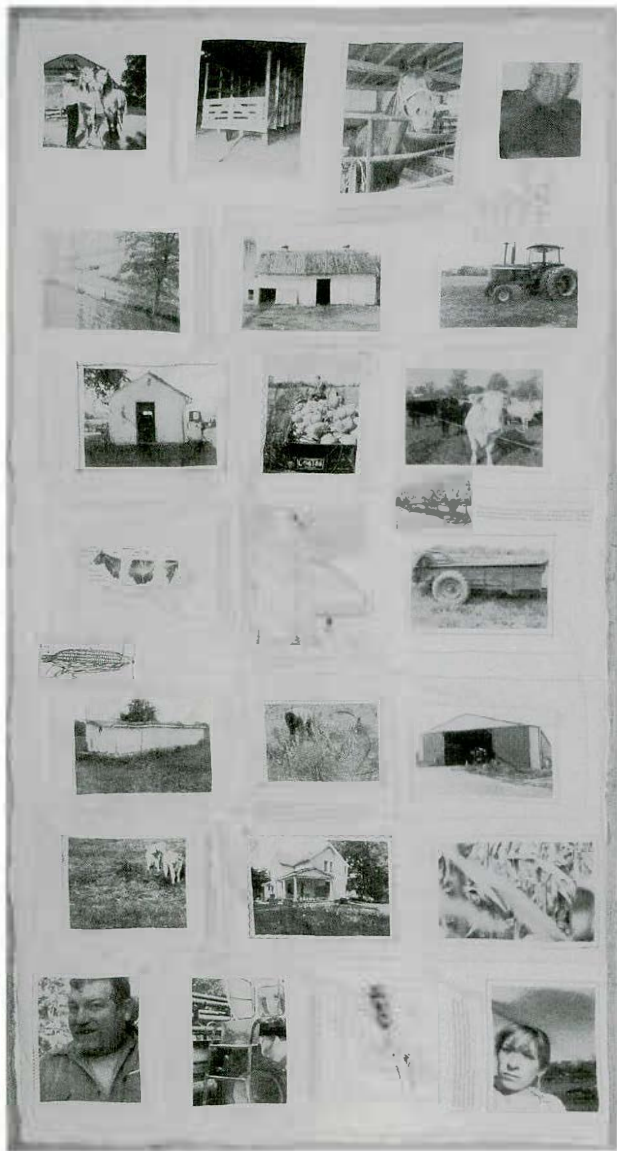
**JODI
BAGWELL**

self revisited
photography



**DERICA
SISUNG**
nourishment
photography





**DERICA
SISUNG**

farm quilt
photography

detail: farm quilt

TERRY OLVERA

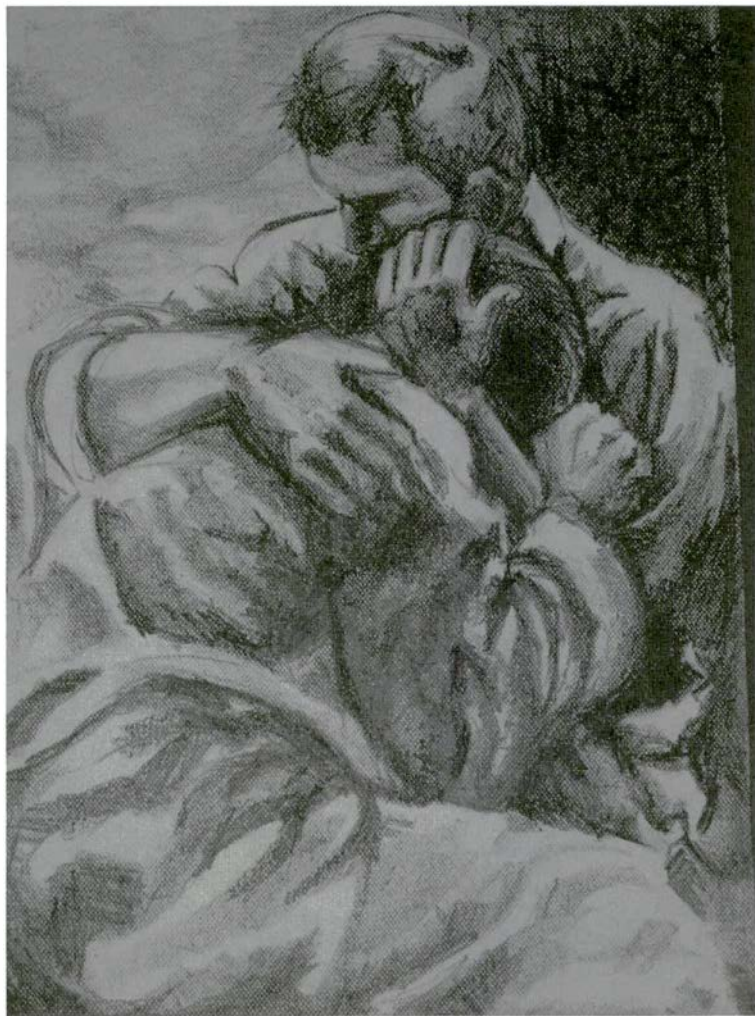
kiss
photography



CHELSEA KOLANEK

the fourth
photography





**DANNIELLE
MURPHY**

soldier
litho crayon

ERICA HAMPTON

roles
digital photography



JEN ROBERTSON

untitled
photography



JENNIFER STUCKER

*there are the stories
i tell others and the
ones i tell myself #1*

photography





**JENNIFER
STUCKER**

*there are the stories
i tell others and the
ones i tell myself #4*

photography

NATHAN DENRYTER

untitled

graphite/colored pencil



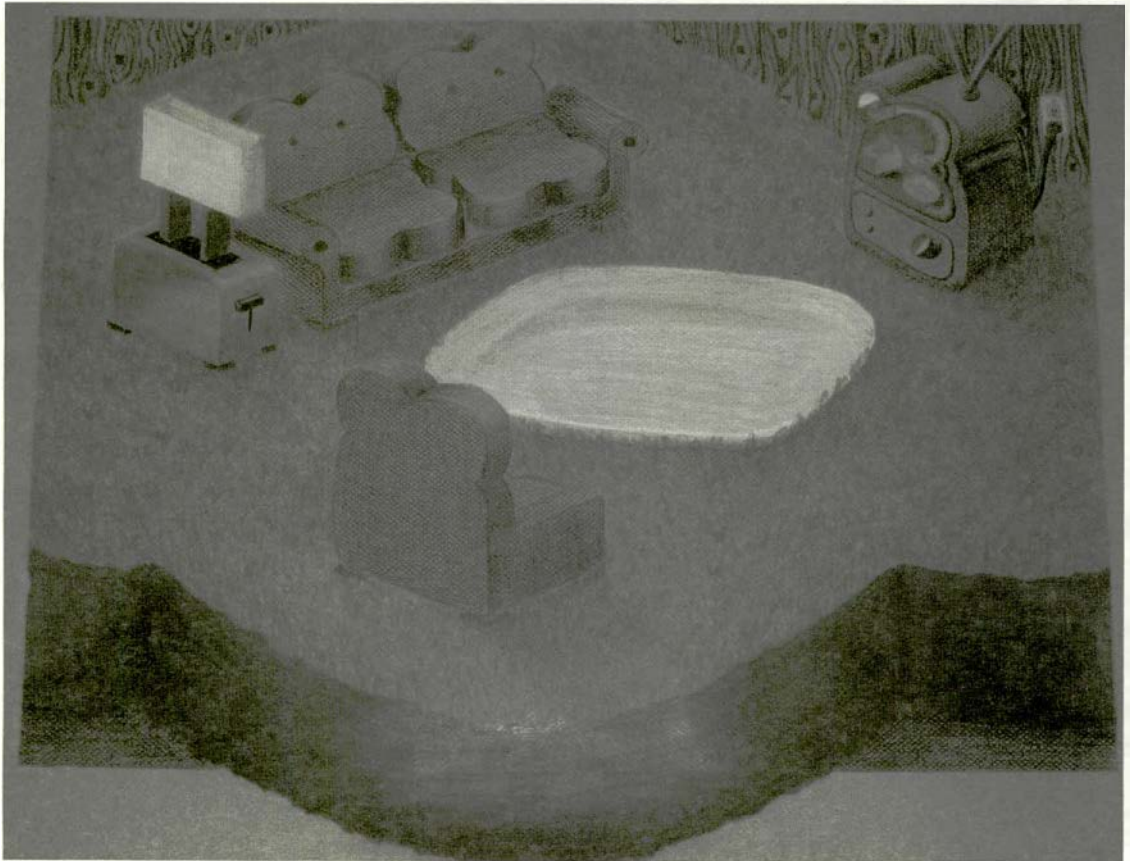
**NATHAN
DENRYTER**

untitled
graphite



TRACY DEBUCK

whole wheat life
colored pencil / litho crayon





**LINDA
KUEHNEL**

*you've come a long
way baby, act 1*
scene 1
photography/digital collage

**LINDA
KUEHNEL**

*you've come a long way
baby, act 1*

scene 2

photography/digital collage





**LINDA
KUEHNEL**

*you've come a long way
baby, act 1*

scene 3

photography/digital collage

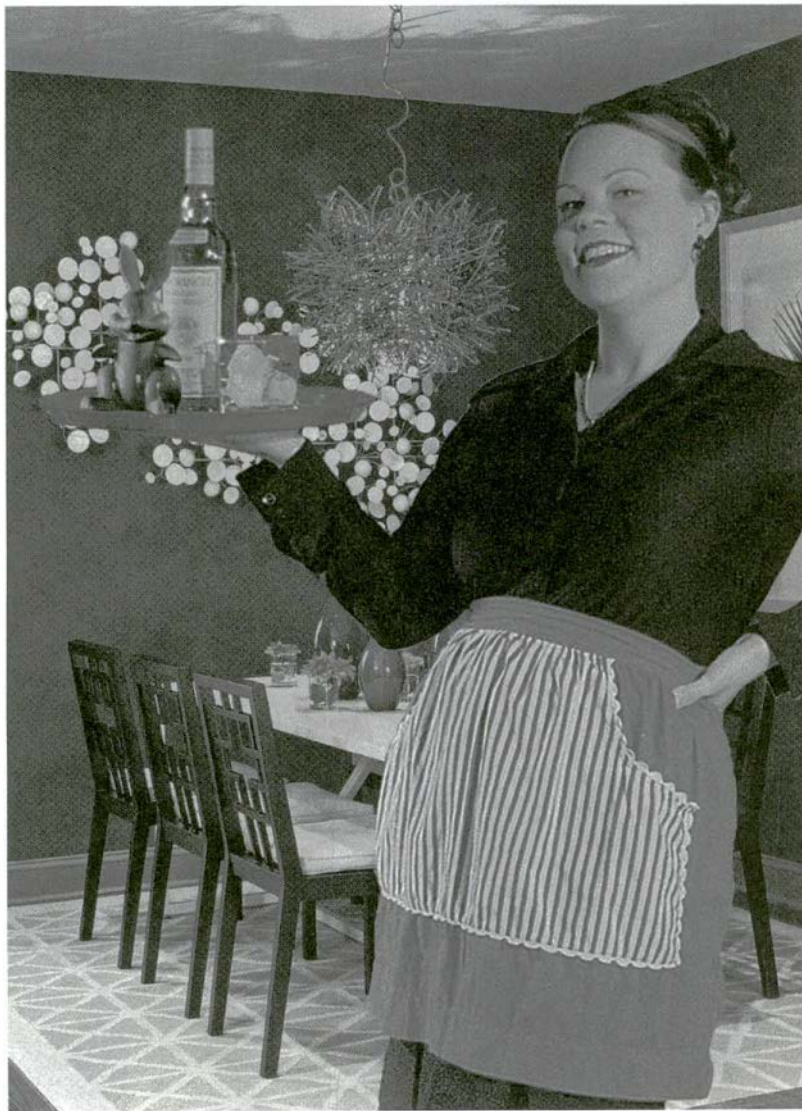
**LINDA
KUEHNEL**

*you've come a long way
baby, act 1*

scene 4

photography/digital collage





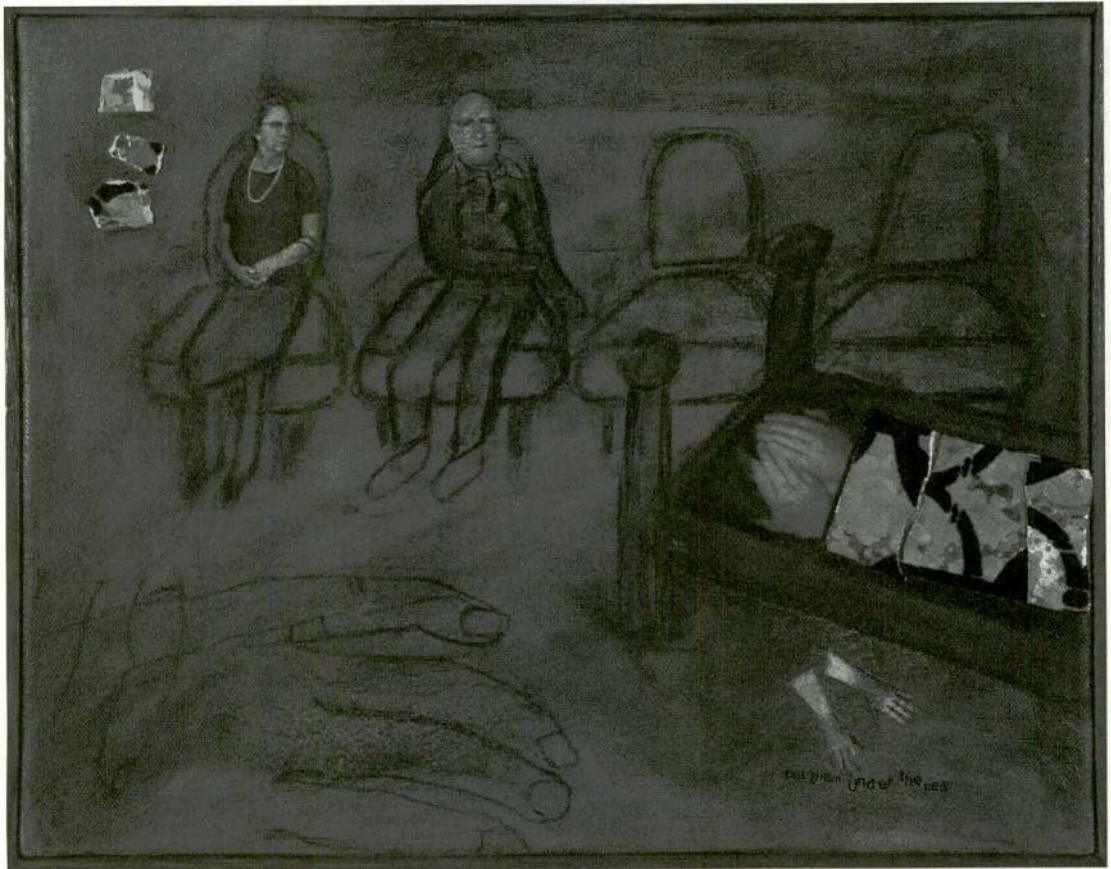
**LINDA
KUEHNEL**

*you've come a long
way baby, act 1
scene 5*

photography/digital collage

CHRISTINE BRUXVOORT

questionable intent
charcoal / photo collage



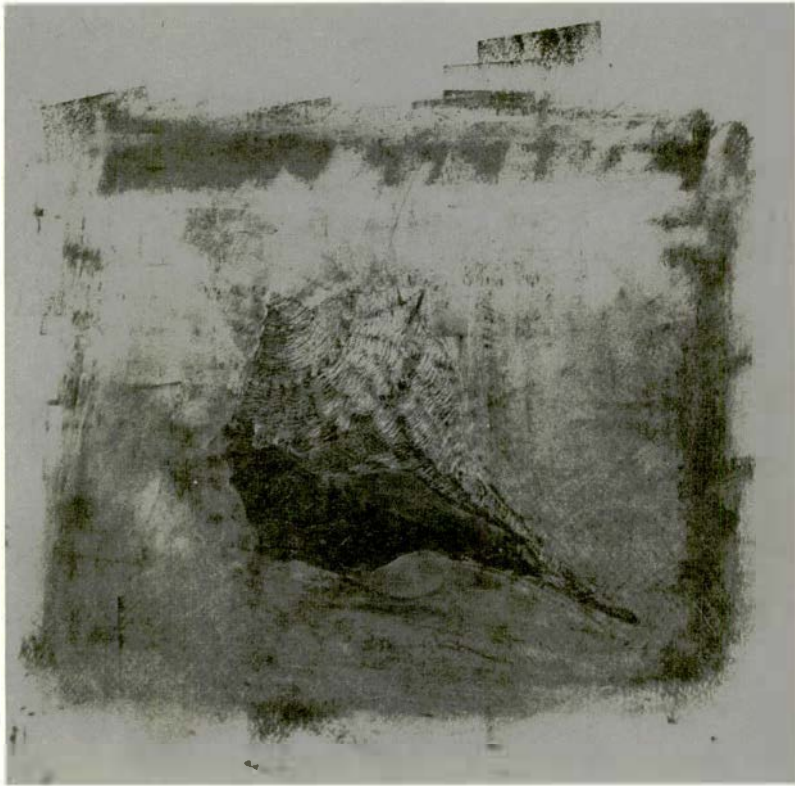
CHRISTINE BRUXVOORT

ticktock ticktock cuckoo (from the series Silvia)
charcoal



ADAM OSTROWSKI

a momento of...
reductive oil pastel

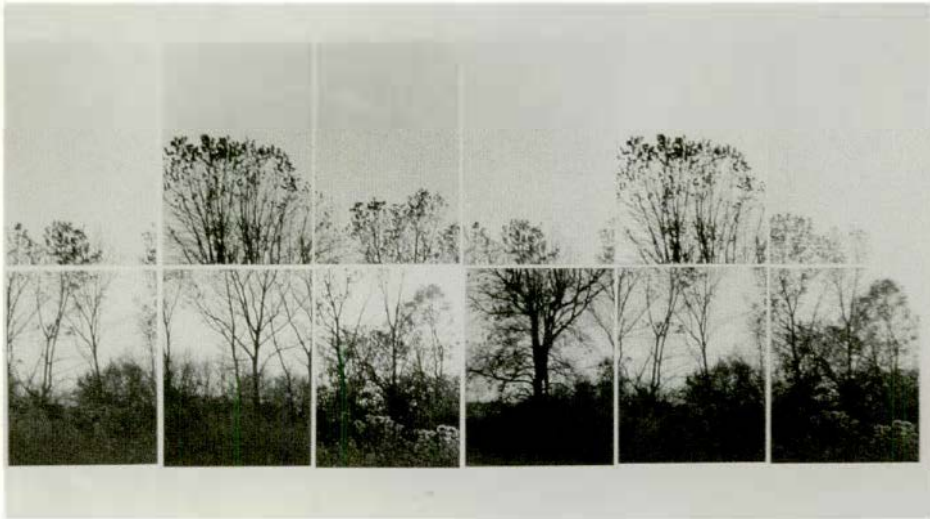


CONNIE WARD

untitled

silver gelatin print





FICTION

BARRY GRAHAM

check the mail

It's 5:02 a.m., I'm lying on my couch and I can't stop thinking about the woman living upstairs in apartment ten. She never smiles or says hello, but she wears low cut shirts and rubs glitter on her chest, and she always smells like vanilla. On Fridays, I wait to check the mail until her car pulls into the driveway and she is walking on the sidewalk close to the front door. I don't speak to her when she walks in. My brother used to fuck one of her cousins. He told me she has a seven-inch vibrator with a small squirrel shaped attachment that rubs against her clit. I wonder if the squirrel uses its teeth or its bushy tail, a detail that seems slightly insignificant at first. It's the whole idea of symbolism. The squirrel teeth shred nuts, the tail shelters and protects. Why the squirrel? Does she like to put nuts in her mouth? Will she run if I get too close, will she hoard large quantities of food and hibernate with the first snowfall? Will I look out my window to see her scurrying back and forth on the telephone wires above the highway? Will she let me train her to eat out of my hand? It's 5:02 a.m., I'm lying on my couch thinking about the woman living upstairs in apartment ten, wishing certain qualities of female squirrels have rubbed off on her. Maybe she is a squirrel. Maybe she hides her bushy tail between her legs like a transvestite. Maybe if I walk by her apartment door, she will have left her scent, indicating her readiness to fornicate. Maybe she is a thirteen-striped squirrel and will never mate with the same male squirrel twice, avoiding inbreeding and ensuring the mass population of squirrels everywhere. Maybe she will think of me as a California ground squirrel, capable of eating our newborn alive, if it comes to that.

BARRY GRAHAM

the way he preferred it

My brethren, all ye that have assembled yourselves together, you that can hear my words which I shall speak unto you this day; for I have not commanded you to come up hither to trifle with the words which I shall speak, but that you should hearken unto me, and open your ears that ye may hear, and your hearts that ye may understand, and your minds that the mysteries of God may be unfolded to your view.

—King Benjamin, THE BOOK OF MOSIAH; THE BOOK OF MORMON

My father used to drag his friends over for dinner, and they'd hurry up and eat, get drunk, play poker, and sing along to Ricky Skaggs tunes all night. "*Honey won't you open that door, this is your sweet daddy don't you love me no more, it's cold outside let me sleep on the floor. Honey won't you open that door.*" He played it over and over until I felt like shoving the radio up his asshole. Of course, ten years later I understood perfectly well why he played it, because I had to break out my front window and climb through it because some dumb bitch wouldn't let me in my house. Then I played the song over and over until I was sitting at my own kitchen table, getting drunk, and playing poker, and my four year old little girl came out of her bedroom, picked up a 22 oz. Mike's Hard Lemonade, took four sips and walked back to bed. I never listened to the song after that night.

One of my father's friends never had a name so everyone called him Dickey Dew because he said that's what everyone called him after he got his balls shot off in Vietnam. I used to sit on his lap while they played five card draw. He would pretend not to see me sipping from his can of Pabst Blue Ribbon.

My mother walked into the kitchen as I set the beer back down on the table, and I got scared and spilled it all over my lap and down my pant leg. My father always laughed when people got scared. Some of the beer spilled on Dickey Dew's pants. He told me to play his hand while he tried to convince my mother to clean him up. I had four to a flush and a pair of tens. I dumped one of the tens, missed my flush and watched my father rake in the pot. "You're a brave little son of a bitch." I knew I wasn't. It's just easier to fuck up when the cards you're holding don't belong to you. Besides, if it was my money I would have kept the other ten and beat my father's sad pair of sixes.

Dickey Dew came back to the table and realized I just cost him forty dollars. "You dumb little bastard, you play just as stupid as your old man." He picked up a knife lying on the table,

held it level with my eyes, then leaned down and thrust it in the side of his own leg. My father laughed, and I cried as I reached under the table and felt piss running slowly down my other leg and mixing with the puddle of beer still underneath my chair. Then Dickey Dew started laughing too, as he pulled the knife out of his calf, cut a straight line down his jeans and folded them back to show me his wooden leg—one more thing that got shot off over in the jungle.

My father was the only one who made a dime playing poker at his table. He probably would have won even if he didn't teach me signals so I could let him know what everyone else was holding every hand. He kissed me on the cheek, and sent me to bed with my ten dollar cut. The last time I saw Dickey Dew he was standing outside his apartment in the rain, wearing only his wife's red panties and the matching bra tied around his head. Lucky for him, he hung himself on Christmas Eve 2002.

REBECCA WOODWARD

the good doctor

It all began with an unusual taste in Victor's mouth. A sour, dirty, metallic taste, as if he had just licked an iron railing on which the passage of many hands had worn a trail of silver. He first noticed it immediately after spitting out a wad of over-chewed spearmint gum. When it happened a second time he promptly threw away the rest of the pack and composed a letter of complaint to the manufacturer which he would never send. And then the taste began to appear at random moments, seeping into his cheeks and onto his tongue like acid leaking from a vial. Sometimes it was preceded by a severe migraine, and sometimes not.

Days later he mentioned it, offhand, to Stella, the overweight woman with whom he shared an office, who kept an impressive stash of protein bars in her bottom desk drawer and habitually chewed on fruit-flavored multi-vitamins. Crunching loudly on an orange tablet of vitamin C, she advised him to see a doctor.

A year or two earlier Victor had abruptly abandoned a lifelong routine of regular check-ups with his doctor, who had, for nearly a decade, been carrying on an affair with Victor's wife. And though Victor had never let on to either party that he knew of the affair, he had, nevertheless, grown increasingly weary of Dr. Andrews' medical advice. He found himself seized with terror every time he brought to his lips a pill that Dr. Andrews had prescribed. Finally, after nearly choking on a single dose of his blood pressure medication, he decided to sever all professional ties. And yet their lives remained more unfortunately connected.

Stella came into work the next morning with a thick packet of research she'd done on Victor's condition—~~one~~ hundred and sixty-four photocopied pages from medical journals linking his symptoms to any number of horrifying afflictions. She slapped the pile down on his desk with such force that he soon became convinced that foreign bodies were indeed setting up shop in his most intimate places. At Stella's urging, he made an appointment with another physician in Dr. Andrews' practice.

He went during his lunch break, gnawing vigorously on one of Stella's protein bars during the drive over. He couldn't help but wonder what his wife was doing that day, whether she was in Dr. Andrews' office at the exact moment he was changing into the paper thin hospital gown and feeling, himself, paper thin. Through the door he could hear a muffled conversation

and he recognized Dr. Andrews' southern drawl and coarse laughter. The voices disintegrated and the door burst open. Dr. Andrews entered, casually returning a thick fountain pen to its place in his breast pocket.

"Long time, no see," he said, rolling the words like marbles in his mouth. "Dr. Malone is out sick today, so I'll be taking his appointments." He plopped down on his padded stool and spread his legs. "I hope you don't mind."

"Of course not."

He wore a heavy dose of cologne, but underneath it Victor recognized the scent of his wife—a mixture of laundry detergent and aerosol hairspray. He sneezed. Dr. Andrews pressed an ice cold stethoscope to Victor's chest, his forehead forming deep wrinkles as he appeared to listen intently. Victor explained his symptoms—the taste, the headaches, the fatigue.

"I'd like to take a blood sample, if you don't mind. And maybe run some other tests."

He called in the nurse to prick Victor's arm with a syringe and coax out a vial's worth of brilliant red blood. Afterward he held the tube over his head, in front of the light, and grinned, as if with his naked eye he could detect something interesting amiss.

"I'm going to go have a look at this," he announced with a certain excitement and dashed out of the room.

A week earlier, Victor had returned home early from work with a migraine and found a pearl necklace lying brazenly out on his wife's dressing table, coiled like a rattlesnake about to strike. Upon noticing it he abandoned the task of removing his socks.

"Aren't they lovely?" his wife asked, coming up behind him.

"Beautiful."

"Mother brought them over today," she continued, glancing at Victor as if to gauge the plausibility of her story before continuing. "She found them in Grandmother's things and thought I might like to have them."

But the gold clasp was untarnished and the pearls shone under a fresh layer of polish. She gathered them up in her thin fingers, nails bitten to the quick.

"I forget; how are pearls made again?"

"Oysters," he said, his naked foot catching a draft from the window. "A foreign object gets in the shell and irritates it so that the oyster layers minerals over it to protect itself. Everyone knows that."

"Oh that's right," she said. "Fascinating" and she deposited the necklace in the back of her sock drawer.

For the rest of the day his left foot remained icy cold. Soon after, he began to get the chills every morning while he dressed for work and every night while he tried to fall asleep. But these chills came from someplace more central, deeper within him, like a block of ice had been lodged in his gut. Stella lent him a hot water bottle which he clasped tightly to his chest while lying in his otherwise empty bed at night.

The nurse called a few days after the initial visit to inform Victor that his results were in. When he arrived for his appointment the following day, she escorted him into Dr. Andrews' vacant office. The walls were decorated with hunting trophies—antlers and animal skins and varnished fish nailed to wooden plaques. A rifle was mounted over the only window in the room.

"An antique," Dr. Andrews said when he entered the room and noticed Victor's eyes on it. "Isn't she beautiful?"

"Lovely."

"There's an unusual amount of iron in your blood, Victor. Nothing a change in diet couldn't fix, though. But this—" He pulled an x-ray out of a folder on his desk and clipped it to the light board. "This is interesting."

Near the center, where Victor's heart ought to be, there glowed a large glob of hazy light. Dr. Andrews pointed to it with his pen.

"I'd like to open you up, have a look around, if you don't mind."

"Of course not."

Victor went home and lay on the living room sofa with Stella's hot water bottle clutched to his chest. He sucked at his teeth with his tongue, searching for a taste of the now familiar flavor of his illness and fell asleep the instant its bitterness spread to his tongue.

The operation was scheduled for the following Tuesday. Victor's wife dressed for the occasion in the black suit she wore to her grandmother's funeral and the pearl necklace, recently retrieved from the cloister of her sports socks and pantyhose. He watched her talk with Dr. Andrews outside his hospital room, touching his arm and leaning in to whisper in his ear. He heard them laughing while the nurse shaved a patch on his chest and wiped it with alcohol. Dr. Andrews had asked to be present for the operation, though the procedure would be performed by a veteran surgeon on the brink of retirement.

Victor tried to forget the horror stories of patients waking up during surgery, feeling every slice of the scalpel and every daub of wadded cotton. Yet it was the only thought in his mind as the anesthesia darkened everything around him and his wife's laughter began to fade into the distance. And it was the first thing he thought of when he awoke an hour later on the operating table, squinting into a broad beam of light.

Victor could not decide whether he was waking up or beginning to die as he watched Dr. Andrews push the surgeon aside and reach into the gaping cavity of Victor's chest and remove his heart. It was perfect, large and plump, the veins stemming from it precisely round, but it was not flesh. It was solid and shining, a gray marbled color with threads of gold and bronze, like an amalgam of metals poured into the mold of a human heart and Dr. Andrews appeared to be straining under the weight of it as he held it up for view.

He gazed gleefully at his find while the other doctors stepped back in astonishment and plucked the surgical masks from their faces, their instruments clattering to the floor. Victor tried to speak but found himself unable to make a sound. Instead, he was forced to imagine the photographs that would be taken of the specimen, the scrupulous studies and the skeptical articles published in highly regarded medical journals. And how it would be preserved in a large glass jar of formaldehyde and English Custom polish and displayed in Dr. Andrews' office next to the rabbit skins and the mounted heads of deer and other souvenirs of conquest.

CARA ZELLNER

death by disintegration

Tonight was a perfect night to ruin.

We were three: two lights—both daring and dry—and me, who lounges in their shadow. They subjected themselves to danger while I calculated equations of autumn. To feel the wind, its speed increasing with the vehicle's velocity, brought to mind the molecules moving about me. Lethargic oxygen. Lazy sulfur dioxide. Unmotivated ammonia. I dreamed of disintegrating and how the concept allured any state-of-mind it graced. I shut my lids and envisioned crumbling into fine granules of silicon dioxide starting at my kneecaps. The breakdown would move in opposite directions; I would feel the nothing crawl up my thighs and down my shins. Bonds would be broken and energy would be released. Bones and skin and muscle and ex-life all sit in a pile being taken to an arbitrary destination. The last to leave would be my smile; teeth changing to cane sugar cubes and lips forming two red mounds on the cloth of the seat. I would, then, discover natural happiness.

MCKENNY AWARD

The Charles McKenny Award is an annual competition established in 2006 to give artists outside of the Eastern Michigan University community an opportunity to be published in Cellar Roots. It was originally founded in 2004 as the Wrightgood Scoot Award.

The award was created to honor the memory of EMU's 13th president and published poet, Charles McKenny, who was influential in the creation of EMU's first student center.

McKenny Union was erected in 1931; its architecture utilizes art deco and collegiate gothic styles, resulting in the successful marriage of the traditional to the modern. This marriage reflects Cellar Roots as we strive to preserve our legacy while also striving to set new standards in innovation.

JACOB GRUSSING

the shadows of dancers

Morning. The river flows full of sun,
corn stubble shines like crushed glass,
and the shadows of the dancers
grow under no moon. They dance
until death retreats to the fox den.

Duck's blood on the highway.
Wild asparagus murmurs to fading stars,
and crows release scraps of night
into the morning air with each wing-beat.

JACOB GRUSSING

aubade

The prairie night is dark
and comfortless;

it enlarges its appetite
but consumes nothing.

Everywhere,
silent depths

and unkillable
emptiness.

And yet there is morning,
the blank air stirs and does not fail.

EVAN EUSTICE

inner sun

Every second contains the sun
inside us, spotlights poised
with wire to burn,
possible
White Light
electric pulse,
perpetually rising.

Absorbing the current,
I attempt to taste
this star's essence—
savor pink, this peach
sample this sharp orb of
orange.

I soak in the energy of light
that radiates through the atmosphere,
singeing the gray haze and
heating up my body
close to the
point of
boiling.

I long for a solar explosion
to rupture the walls, burst with
yes, a dancing red flame enraptured
and forged of Gold.

It will hypnotize—
I'll wait—for Ages
with the
heat of
this inner
sun.

EVAN EUSTICE

remaining entranced

Abouna,

you face the sanctuary in the golden room
trembling in awe

weeping at the flight of Cherubim, shaking before unseen Seraphim
with walls covered in heavy velvet curtains, blood-red

smoke plumes ornately, the invisible plainly
seen, a prophecy, light through one thousand windows

rhythm revolves, with chanting the room swells in
familiar event, in whole overwhelming ritual.

There is an intruder

Abouna,

in the Eastern garden.
I am lost, mind uncontrolled
dancing like a wild Dervish,
yes! frantic whirling Dervish!
on an infinite empty plain
searching for the
source of rivers.

I'm hungry.

Abouna,

with sharp aches in the gut,
drowning in the Red Sea in this heavy tide,
though I kick my legs in vain,
feverishly, in this abyss,
waves make weak
the will to swim.

MONICA GERSTEMEIER

family secrets IX

Grandfather filled with Italian blood oozed culture and tradition, absorbed into the soils of Vietnam, Germany and Korea. American soil that spit back the blood of an Italian General Grandfather with parents foreign to this land and language. Grandfather offered a higher rank than Army General; an Italian mob member consumed with underground gambling, and illicit crime. Grandfather remained an Army General lost half his heart in Vietnam and the other half in his bed.

AUSTIN IREDALE

(columba livia)

Consider a bird refusing to fly.

----- awoke from the shiftless trappings of a red and dreamless sleep on the back stoop of an apartment building with no recollection of ever having been there before. He was greeted by the tinkling sounds of rainfall, collecting in sinkholes of asphalt and playing in staccato rhythms off the tin lid of a garbage container nearby. As he lay with his shoulders slumped against the coarse ruddy brick, his lower half unprotected by the eave of the building, ----- found with some dismay that his shoes were sopping and his blue jeans were already dyed black. Drawing his legs in towards his chest, ----- sat up and began rubbing his tight goose-skinned flesh through the rust in his arms and the thickness in his cold fingers. Above him hung the cast iron skeleton of a fire escape: slatted platforms and ladders glossed with weather that, despite their intangible number of crisscrossing patterns and pathways, progressed a singular trail of water to the very place where -----'s head now rested. Shuffling his seat, ----- brushed off the water and squinted upwards.

The buildings around him rose nearly a dozen stories, affording from his vantage point in the alley only a thin swath of slate-colored sky. Its thick drooping clouds echoed in his mind with the low-hung canopy of some great four-poster bed in which he believed himself to have once slept, but that he could no longer place. In regarding the dull light coming through this grey weave, ----- marked the time of day somewhere between dawn and dusk, as when in the presence of a rain hours dissolve and wash away like clumps of sand.

While looking high upon the wall of the building across from where he sat, whose brick had been sporadically stained dark with phantom drapes where a gutter failed to hold back its carriage, ----- became aware of yet another sound mingling with the cascading rhythms of the rain. It was a sound that he knew by the same effortless recognition with which he could identify his own voice; he heard the papered fluttering of a bird's wing. Leaning his head out towards the sheeting barrier of the open alley, so close as to feel a steady mist, ----- peered around the faded luster of a percussive garbage container to where the trough of his backstreet became conjunct with a lazy avenue. There he saw, no more than twenty feet away, though safely recessed from the scrutinies of the main road, a grounded pigeon with wing raised, and a child with eyes trained upon the pigeon. The bird, with one wing outstretched, shook dew from its appendage and, trembling its small mass, agitated its many purple-oil feathers until they billowed to a double girth. The pigeon then folded the wing into its downy exterior

and was still. The child, a boy of the age cresting upon adolescence, knelt a mere arm's length from where the bird stood and was equally as still while he studied the pigeon with curious, unflinching eyes. He was dressed mainly by the waxy blue cape of a rain slicker that crumpled its baggy length into dark folds around his body. Underneath this, ----- could see that the boy was wearing white pleated trousers and a pair of scuffed brown penny loafers, minus the pennies. Considering this, and the appearance of a faded part yet maintaining itself in the child's soaking blonde hair, ----- wondered if it was not in fact Sunday.

Moved by a sort of awe and puzzlement at the boy, the bird, and their close communion, as well as his feeling of broken privacy, ----- thought it better to make his presence known than to conversely have his presence discovered.

"What've you got there, boy?" The child did not move.

"Hello over there," he tried again. The boy raised his thin, tightly drawn face long enough to acknowledge -----'s location on the stoop, and then just as quickly lowered his attention once more to the pigeon.

"I said, what do you have over there?"

"Just some bird," the boy replied after pause, addressing not ----- but instead talking down his chest towards the ground. His hollow-set eyes maintained a cool, scientific watch over the pigeon, whose sleek head turned occasionally. "I came along and saw him sitting here."

"Well I can see that," ----- nodded. "But what do you want to stand in the rain staring at a pigeon for?"

"I don't know," consideration marking the child's voice. The pigeon raised now both of its wings and seized their delicate length in the liquid air. "I saw him and wanted to chase him off, but he wouldn't go. He walked a little ways and just stopped. And every now and then he does that."

When the boy finished, he reached a hand out to touch the dragging tail feathers of the bird, which wicked moisture from a tiny reservoir formed by a chink in the asphalt. When his fingertips acquired their aim, the pigeon's tremorous wings batted at the impetus and the bird began to stagger away. The boy withdrew his hand. While the bird moved, its head danced left and right, and its red eyes wildly searched the degrees of the alley, vainly seeking out their tormentor or their path of escape. The pigeon skittered in short leftward inching sidesteps, pivoting around its back end, until by attempting to move away the bird had returned through a full revolution to the position where it had begun. The boy looked on intently and frustrated as the pigeon turned around once more.

"See," the boy decried, looking accusatively at ----- . "It doesn't go anywhere."

"Oh," was all that ----- could think to say.

Presently, upon completing the greater part of a third revolution, the pigeon's failed deliverance came to a pause. Therein the bird proceeded once more through the motions of shaking out and fluffing up its fallen plumage. After this was finished the bird then stooped and curled its head into the downy cove under its left wing. ----- watched this, and he watched the child watching this. The bird watched neither of them.

As ----- considered whether to chasten the boy for his mistreatment of the pigeon or to simply lend this behavior to the passive involvement of a child's curiosity, a man appeared at the opening of the alley. Cloaked in the distance by rain and the black awning of an albatrossian umbrella, the man's long profile opened up as he paused and turned in -----'s direction, his dark form framed against the bright colorless wash of the open avenue. Through the masked shade of the umbrella, ----- was able to catch a dingy reflection of the man's face as it seemed to unfold with a blend of resentment and relief. He stood patiently at the opening and waited briefly for the boy to notice his presence. When the child did not, he cleared his throat. Noticing then -----'s occupancy of the stoop, the man passed upon him a look of stern indifference, at which ----- recessed against the brick of the building, hugging his arms to his chest.

"Come along, Simon," he stiffly commanded.

"In a minute," the boy whined, keeping his small eyes on the pigeon.

"Now," the man asserted in a rather flattening tone.

At this the boy let out a faint groan. As he rose to his feet, the child shook loose his matted blonde hair and a pointed spray of water was released and then dissolved amidst the falling rain. The pigeon did not move. Before joining the man on the sidewalk the boy made a short search of the alley, eventually settling his hands upon the damp grey heft of a cinderblock. His forceless body strained under his blue coat as he manipulated the block and shuffled towards the place in the alley where the pigeon rested. Attributing to the weight all the height that he could muster, the child candidly held the cinderblock above the silent pigeon, and for a brief moment he stood poised as one presenting a collection plate at the altar. Then at once he relinquished the mass to gravity. The shadow of the cinderblock briefly encompassed the small bird before rejoining its architect, as the distance between the block and the asphalt zeroed, and the pigeon was cobbled into the ground with a dull thud.

The child then turned towards -----.

"That bird wasn't going to fly," he casually stated with eyes of absolution.

Then the dark man and the child were gone.

JUSTIN ROBERTS

nylons

A 12-inch hunting knife was shoved halfway into Gary's mouth, poking the back of his soft pallet with a painful stinging sensation. The chill of the steel blade reminded him of his mother's awful cucumber salad as it sliced the surface of his tongue. He could feel tangy rivers of blood sliding their way towards the back of his throat, forcing him to swallow involuntarily, which in turn caused his mouth to squeeze around the knife's edge. He looked down the bridge of his nose, through leaky crossed eyes, at his assailant who was busy emptying out the register. The thief was functioning diligently with one free hand flipping stacks of bills into a small black backpack, while his other hand held the knife in Gary's mouth. The villain hummed "Summer Wind" by Frank Sinatra through the distorted lips of his dark nylon mask while he worked. Gary closed his eyes and wondered whether criminals actually paid for the nylons they wore over their faces while they committed crimes, or if they just held up a place that carried stockings every now and then to stock up. Maybe they have wives or girlfriends they borrow them from, he thought. He recalled a time when he was little, playing cops and robbers with the Miller kid from next door. In a moment of theatrical genius, Gary had decided to borrow one of his mother's stockings for a sense of realism seldom achieved by the average make-believer. He remembered stretching the musty brown legging over his face and peering into his mother's vanity mirror. At that moment his mother walked into the room and then shouted. She shouted about how expensive her things were and how easily nylons would run if you didn't wear them correctly. She had been drinking, and in a fit of frustration she accidentally slammed his head against a corner of her makeup table while trying to remove the stocking from his tear-soaked face. As a result, Gary lost four adult teeth which had to be replaced. His two front teeth—top and bottom—were porcelain and were stained far less than the rest of his teeth, making them appear obviously false every time that he smiled.

"Where's the safe?" the assailant demanded, tapping Gary's false teeth with his hunting knife. Gary could feel them wiggling against the surface of the blade.

"Ess en la vack," Gary muttered, sputtering blood onto the exposed part of the blade.

The robber considered his victim's words, translating them like an interpreter that spoke fluent knife-in-mouth English.

"In the back, is it?" he barked.

"Guh-huh."

"You're coming back there with me—and you better keep up with my knife, 'less you're into intravenous feedings." The robber emitted a chuckle that sounded like coughing. The nylon-faced man turned and advanced on the Employees Only door that was situated

next to the coolers of beer and soda. Just to the left of the door was the lunchmeat-frozen-food-center and cooler. The attacker paused in front of it to remove an Italian sub wrapped in cellophane. He deftly pocketed the long sandwich into his wool pea coat and entered the safe-room door with Gary in tow.

The safe-room, which also doubled as the employee lounge, consisted of a round felt-covered, poker table littered with remnants of take-out and fast food containers. In the center of the table sat a large ashtray overflowing with orange and white butts—Gary's father, the owner, smoked the white ended ones. Motivational posters lined the walls, including one depicting a kayaker about to be crushed by an oncoming wave in some grey and misty sea. The caption on the poster read: "Face your fears." Gary wasn't sure that he had ever been afraid of swallowing a knife blade before, but he was sure that this particular fear involved his face at least. He shifted his glance towards the black safe in the corner of the room. His eyes watered as he felt the slice in his tongue contract along with the muscle underneath it.

"Ats uh afe o'ah air," Gary gulped swallowing more blood. He could feel his stomach ache in a strange and dull way. Maybe he wasn't supposed to swallow this much blood at once, he thought.

"What's the combination then?" asked the robber. He removed the knife for the first time since inserting it carefully into Gary's mouth and held it in front of Gary's left eye. He focused on the traces of crimson that mixed with his saliva as it slid towards the hilt of the massive blade. A string of spit bridged the gap between the knife and Gary's lower lip as he tongued the hole in the back of his salty mouth, and stretched his aching jaws.

"17 to the left, 42 right, then 17 to the left again—you're also going to need this key." Gary lifted his wrist slowly and revealed a neon-yellow coil that held the keys to the store. He pointed at a tiny wedge-shaped key and removed the springy yellow coil, handing it to his attacker.

"Open up," the robber demanded, gesturing towards Gary's dried-out quivering lips. He opened his mouth, letting out a whine like a little kid protesting his mother cleaning his face with a saliva coated napkin. The assailant slipped his knife back in with perfect accuracy, barely agitating Gary's mouth wounds, and turned the rest of his body around to open the safe. After a few moments the robber had the safe open and had removed all the money within. He did all this with his one free hand, adding stacks to his overflowing backpack.

"Do you have a back door?" the robber demanded, zipping up his bag.

"Uh-uh."

"Looks like I'm going out the way I came in."

The criminal rose to his feet and Gary stood with him. They advanced slowly towards the front counter and the robber had him lay face down on the ground. Gary's hands were bound behind his back with the yellow-coil keychain he had lent the robber. He listened intently with his face pressed against the cool linoleum floor; blood drooled from his mouth as he breathed in and out, matching the rhythm of his invaders footsteps. He heard the electronic bell ding as the door of his dad's store was opened and then closed. Gary took a deep breath in and struggled against the tight coil cutting off circulation to his hands. He heard the front door open again and he seized up, going rigid to enhance his sense of hearing. Foot-

steps very similar in sound to his attacker's were advancing towards him.

"I almost forgot," the familiar voice chortled, "where do you keep your nylons?"

Gary's answer was muffled into the gritty floor. "Aisle two, by the mascara." He winced at the spray of blood that emanated when he said "mascara."

"Thanks," the robber said.

Gary listened again until he heard the thief exit the store a second time. A smile crossed his bloody lips as he pulled his right hand from the fastening around his wrist, clapping it to the gritty floor for support.

"I knew it," he muttered to himself, "I knew it."

POETRY JURY

CHRISTINE HUME is a professor of English at Eastern Michigan University. She is the author of *Musca Domestica* (Beacon Press, 2000), winner of the Barnard New Women Poets Prize, and *Alaskaphrenia* (New Issues, 2004), winner of the Green Rose Award and Small Press Fabric's 2005 Best Book of the Year Award. Her work has been included in numerous recent anthologies and journals as well as being translated into German, Dutch, and Slovenian. The Wurlitzer Foundation in Taos, Valaparisio Foundation in Spain, the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire have awarded her residencies. She holds an MFA from Columbia University (1993) and a PhD from the University of Denver (2000).

TRACIE MORRIS teaches creative writing at Eastern Michigan University and has worked in multiple media: printed text, theater, dance, music and film. She has toured extensively throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, Africa and Asia. Her work has also been featured in commissioned pieces for several organizations including Aaron Davis Hall, the International Festival for the Arts, The Kitchen Performance Space, Franklin Furnace, Yale Repertory Theater for choreographer Ralph Lemon, the Whitney Biennial and the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning. Awards include: NYFA Fellowship, Creative Capital Fellowship, the National Haiku Slam Championship and an Asian Cultural Council Fellowship. She is the author of two poetry collections, *Intermission* and *Chap-T-her Won*. She holds an MA in performance studies from New York University, an MFA in poetry from Hunter College, and a PhD from the Department of Performance Studies, New York University.

GUEST JUROR ANITA SKEEN is currently professor of English at Michigan State University where she teaches creative writing and Canadian studies. She also serves as the Director of MSU's Residential Option in Arts and Letters Program (ROIAL). She is the author of four volumes of poetry, *Each Hand a Map*, *Portraits*, *Outside the Fold*, *Outside the Frame* and *The Resurrection of the Animals* and her poetry, short fiction and essays have appeared in numerous literary magazines and anthologies. She is currently completing a new volume of poetry began while a fellow at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, a collection of short stories, and a first novel, *Minor Chords*. She holds MA and MFA degrees from Bowling Green State University.

VISUAL ART JURY

GUEST JUROR ROBERT PIEPENBURG is an internationally recognized artist, author, and a recipient of a National Endowment for the arts Fellowship. He has artworks in many private and public collections including the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Piepenburg's publications, *Raku Pottery* and *The Spirit of Clay*, have been described as technical partners and spiritual friends to those seeking to expand and clarify their knowledge of themselves through clay. His latest book, *Treasures of the Creative Spirit*, explores the human spirit as

the ultimate source of creative activity and provides a gentler understanding of what is to be authentically creative. Robert Piepenburg is a professor of art at Oakland Community College, Farmington Hills, MI.

AMY SACKSTEDER recently moved from Chicago to join the art faculty at Eastern Michigan University where her area of specialization is 2D design. She has exhibited widely, at venues such as ThreeWalls in Chicago and the Urban Institute for Contemporary Art in Grand Rapids, MI, and has been an artist in residence at the Ragdale Foundation and the Pouch Cave Foundation in Newfoundland. She will attend the Residential Art Centre of Cantagal in France this summer where she will pursue her current body of work, *presence.absence*. She is the recipient of numerous awards and grants, most recently a Community Arts Assistance Program grant from the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and EMU's Provost's Research Support Award for New Faculty. She holds an MFA from Northern Illinois University (2004).

THOMAS VENNER is a professor and Head of the Art Department at Eastern Michigan University. His specialty is ceramics and he has taught drawing, watercolor, art appreciation and art of Paris. His work has been shown locally and nationally and published in such periodicals as *Ceramics Monthly* and *American Craft*. He holds an MFA from Eastern Michigan University.

FICTION JURY

MIKE ALBER is a masters student in Eastern Michigan University's creative writing program. He teaches introductory composition and edits EMU's graduate literary journal, *Bathhouse*. Recently, his work was chosen by Cloverfield Press for their Spring 2007 issue. He was also the 2005 winner of EMU's Jumpmettle Award for best fiction. He resides in Whitmore Lake.

GUEST JUROR LOLITA HERNANDEZ currently teaches creative writing at the University of Michigan and is the author of *Autopsy of an Engine* and *Other Stories from the Cadillac Plant* (Coffee House Press) winner of a 2005 PEN Beyond Margins Award. She is also the author of two chapbook collections of poetry: *Quiet Bottles* (Wayne State University Writers Forum) and *Snakecrossing* (Ridgeway Press). She resides in Detroit, MI.

JEFF PARKER currently teaches creative writing at Eastern Michigan University. His fiction, nonfiction, and hypermedia have appeared in *Ploughshares*, *Tin House*, *Hobart*, *The Best American Nonrequired Reading*, and *The Iowa Review Web*. His novel *Ovenman* will be published by Tin House Books in Summer 2007, and his short story collection *The Back of the Line*, in collaboration with artist William Powhida, will be released by DECODE Art Publishers in 2007. He co-edited the essay collection *Amerika: Russian Writers View the U.S.* (Dalkey Archive, 2004) with Mikhail Iossel and is the COO and Russia Program Director of the Summer Literary Seminars in St. Petersburg, Russia program. He holds an MFA in creative writing from Syracuse University (1999).

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A woman turned to me at the grocery store
*It is in giving hands freely, she explained
that hands will give freely to hands.*
And I picked up my pickles and left.

-Emily Dobbs, *Poem for Ourselves*



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