

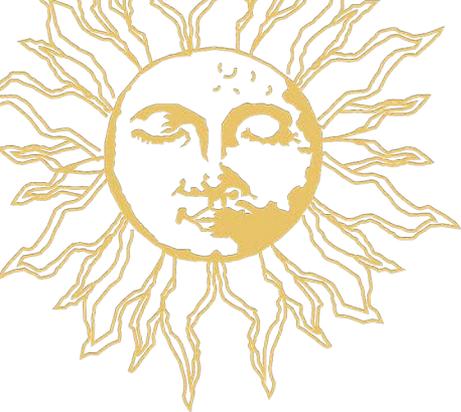
THE

MOBILE LIBRARY

Volume 2

Issue 2





Volume 2 Issue 2

Curated, edited, and published by The Aerogramme
Center for Arts and Culture

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OUR MISSION



THE MOBILE LIBRARY provides a multi-digital exhibiting experience for artists and writers to showcase their work during the pandemic closures. Each publication is unique, pairing 6 artists and 6 writers together at different stages in their career to build a collaborative experience.

For this issue, we curated around our theme of 'Spirituality.' Each artist and writer responded to our prompt questions: are you a practicing witch? Did you create your own tarot cards? Do you explore alchemy or the esoteric through words and visual mediums? How are you exploring these dimensions and worlds?

Accompanying this issue are two interviews, one from our Podcast and one from our Flat Files series.

Cover Image

Francisco Zarate. *Voodoo In My Blood Sleeps - The Higher Self*, 2020.



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PRAYERS OF IMPERMANENCE

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Untitled# 7

Acrylic on linen, 30cm x 40cm, 2019

A GUIDE I CAN'T SEE

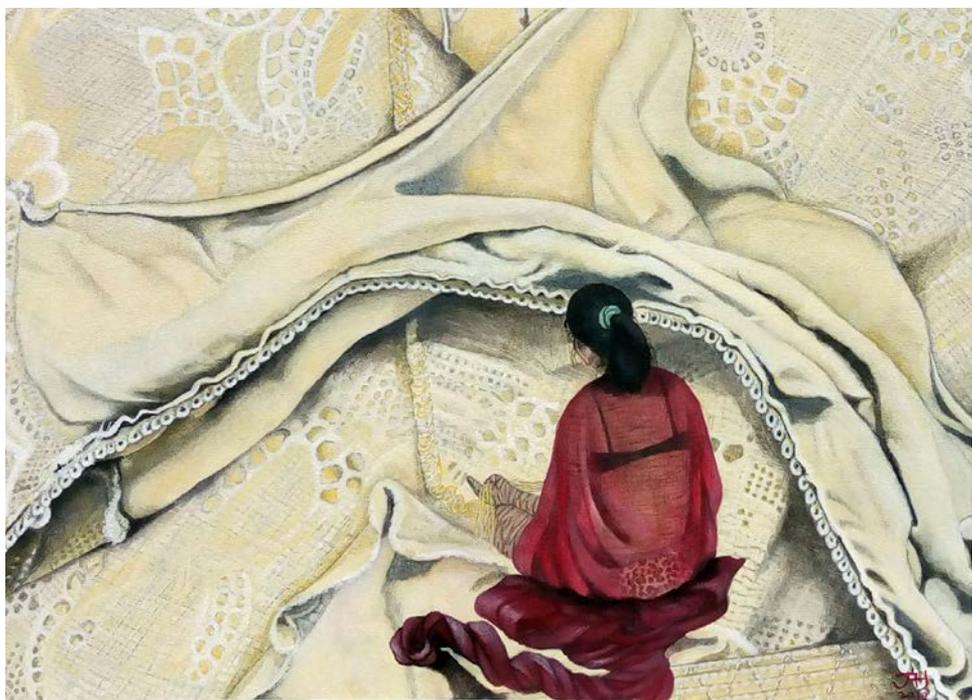
Light passes as quickly as
eyes tear up and dry
Yet the weightless possession of my direction is owned, in your
mind
by he who I cannot see
Those who lace strings, thread though my pores and pull
limbs twist around the slicing of my structure
you are the only one who seems to know my fate
hands hold it and I wriggle
wanting not to be crushed between finger and thumb
but pray I may
in the observance of my size
remain whole
still, it cuts me
I plead that my cries will not fill the rivers missing their salt
pass though the seasons in order to meet me in death

A REACHING

Reach up and wrap tightly
 You in my hand
 Held with strain
 so that bound we are
 and I never grow cold

Warm and reaching
 I know what for
 but the choices I've made are inedible
 and even the color yellow tastes of yearning

A blistering spread
How could it not
be coming in anger and tears
Once gone
 specks we become
You will have the world if
 You don't go
 Into the dipping of stars
 With their shared experience of being too far to grasp
That which never leaves can't return
They say
 Those that love come back
 They say
 Caring is letting stone fingers become flesh once again
 releasing their grasp on the free
 They say
 But a day will not come out of night
 And this I have seen



Untitled# 4
Acrylic on linen, 30cm x 40cm, 2019

A SUN UNAWARE OF TIME

stone
overlooking
carved by only the
moment passing
as footsteps

they know not how they wear
but eternal is memory
not of small humanity
but of the wind as it has never ended
but only begun

as we call it a companion to time
we whither
calling our lives long in advice to the small
and short in view of the setting sun
with tears in our eyes

words stretch

beyond the horizon
the mind sleeps
until we view the past as a flipbook
imagining the birth and death

seeing from up high
trees so old that they will eat us one day
we watch and see them fall

then we too fall
but do not land
only spin in sleep

tepid resistance

of stone
cold
warmed by sun
fragment of time
cold
warmed by sun
orange and visiting with an end
cold
warmed by the sun
eroded by root
cold
warmed by the sun
turned to dust
cold
warmed by the sun

never losing memory

stone
known by wind to rise
then to be carried



Untitled# 2, 3
Acrylic on linen, 30cm x 40cm, 2019

FINDING THE LESS FORGOTTEN

Come find
No walls but shelves
Gather dust on the things I've stacked
Tall and glowing orange
Light upon
your hands will fall
give it only time and
you too will be placed
among forgotten things
and those worn
by the oils of my fingers
one day I hope to know
if parchment grows translucent
from the many times
I held it close
Reading words adjacent to my hand
But one day this room will fade
Closed for lack of directions
If I were less selfish
Or full of some kind of insight
I would leave them for you
In words bound to one another
As I bind these trinkets
To the path of my steps

SEEING YESTERDAY

Pass me by
and I'll spend my moments looking for
a trace of you
the breeze of awakened earth
taunting my border with promises
of cooling air by my eye lids
I could drink this day whole
Given chances
I do
And it makes my stomach
Turn the color of yesterdays sky
In all its ignorance of
Overcast permanence
As it blows in full heart
Both to and fro



Untitled# 5
Acrylic on linen, 30cm x 40cm, 2019

GAYLYN

STORIES BY Evie Groch

ARTWORK BY Shane Smith

Jeanne had never been to a psychotherapist before, let alone a paranormalist. She believed in neither one, and in her 60 years of life had always followed her common sense, which had served her well – until now. Applying common sense to what ailed her would be like taking an aspirin to address a growing unidentified cancer. Something within her told her she needed help of the extra-ordinary type. Through word of mouth, she heard about Gaylyn, not exactly a psychic, but someone so intuitive, she could read your silence. It sounded promising, so Jeanne found herself in Gaylyn's dimly lit waiting room, rehearsing her story so she wouldn't sound like an idiot. Her hands clasped her near new purse as she anxiously drummed her fingers on its front panel.

Gone were the days when she could afford the best doctors, therapists, surgeons, and specialists. Olga, her dear friend and a former client of Gaylyn's, had assured Jeanne Gaylyn would work with her to arrange a reasonable payment schedule and perhaps, as she was known to do, not charge her anything if results were not forthcoming. Out of necessity, Jeanne agreed to see her. She couldn't go on with these unexplainable events and mind games being played on her.

When Gaylyn opened the office door, Jeanne was not expecting what she saw – a short, petite white-haired woman. She wore a stylish suit accentuated by splashes of color – ruby earrings and a matching bracelet. Most women Jeanne's age had given up wearing heels, but not Gaylyn. Jeanne surmised she must also



Liberty

Acrylic paint, pastel, and graphite on canvas, 4.5ft x 3ft, 2020

work out and envied her athletic build. This vision left Jeanne confused.

“Not what you were expecting, Jeanne?” Gaylyn offered. How did she know?

“I’m not into head scarves, crystal balls, séances, or other nonsenses. Is that okay, or am I disappointing you?”

“That’s fine. I just need some help. I hope you can help me.”

“Well, come on into my office, and let’s see what we can do.”

Jeanne at once felt welcome and comfortable. She chose one of the overstuffed armchairs to sit in. In it she felt supported, cradled, and secure.

“I can see you are a no-nonsense person, Jeanne. You have a good head on your shoulders and have always been able to reason your way out of things that bother you. But now, it seems, something so strange is wrapping itself around you, you cannot

extricate yourself without help. You're in quicksand and continuing to sink, waiting for a lifeline."

"You surmised all that from nothing I said?" questioned Jeanne in amazement.

"Your body and eyes told me what I needed to know. But what I still need to discover is what has happened to your recently to change your flow. May I start by asking you some questions?"

"Of course."

"Have you traveled anywhere new recently?"

"I don't think so. I don't do much traveling anymore."

"Have you eaten anything new to your digestion like a foreign food you've never tried before?"

"I just eat the same old – same old. Lactose free, gluten free, and low in calories. Boring, huh?"

"Not at all. But we have to rule everything out bit by bit. Have you purchased anything new for your dwelling – like a piece of furniture or artwork?"

"That's easy. No, I can't afford anything."

"Have you seen any new films lately or read any new books?"

"I don't go out to see films any more, but I have read several new books I took out of the library: *Peace Like a River*, *The Solitude of Prime Numbers*, and *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*."

"What an interesting list. Did you enjoy them all?"

"Some more than others."

"Did any of them disturb you?"

"How do you mean?"

"Were you nervous after reading them or upset?"

"Not that I recall."

"What about clothes? Bought anything new to wear lately?"

Jeanne was finding this line of questioning interesting. What could these questions show Gaylyn? What did they have to do with her affliction? Gaylyn hadn't even asked her about what was troubling her yet.

"No, nothing. I can't afford to shop for clothes very often."

Gaylyn finally asked Jeanne to describe what was making her uncomfortable. What were her symptoms?

Jeanne took a deep breath, looked around the room, and exhaled. She explained how when she was running errands, she was drawn to things she had never been interested in, like old vinyl records, books on magic, bright lipstick colors, pet shops. She was more than drawn to them. She was led to them, almost against her will. The draw was so strong, she was certain a magnet was pulling her to these things. She never bought any of them, but couldn't break free of the gravitational tug. Music she had never enjoyed was now calling out to her on the radio – country western and classical, two genres she never chose to listen to. And on her morning constitutional, she could no longer walk the path she had always walked. She was directed to an alternate path through parks and trails. She could no longer fight these inclinations; she was controlled by them.

“Have you ever heard anything so strange?” she asked Gaylyn, hoping for some assurance.

“Do you find yourself afraid of doing new things? Afraid you may like them?”

“Hmm, I don't know. Never looked at it that way.”

“Anything else new you bought or acquired?”

Jeanne thought for a moment and then remembered about her near new purse.

“Well, I have a purse that is new to me, but not exactly brand new.”

“How do you mean?”

“It's a strange story, but I can tell you if you like.”

Gaylyn leaned back on her chair, waiting for the tale to unfold. Jeanne had an old black purse she loved dearly. It had a compartment for everything she needed, and she never changed purses. She always carried that one. As faded and worn as it was, she couldn't bear to part with it. When the straps started to fray, she knew it was time to replace it, but she didn't want just any other purse. She wanted one like this one, which she knew she couldn't afford. In her Women's Bible Study at church, she let it be known that she could use a new purse or a slightly used one if someone had one to spare. No one in the group could help her, but Olga, her life-long friend knew someone with a closet full of purses and de-



Greener Pastures

Acrylic paint, oil paint, house paint, and graphite on wood pallet, 37.5in x 35.4in, 2021

cided to ask if she had one she was willing to part with for a good cause. It turned out her friend was willing to part with one that she had used only once. It was plain black and not colorful enough for her. She wrapped it up and gave it to Olga who delivered it to Jeanne.

Olga was not expecting the reaction Jeanne had when she unwrapped the purse and screamed.

“Oh my God, what’s wrong?”

“You won’t believe this.”

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Olga was not expecting the reaction Jeanne had when she unwrapped the purse and screamed.

“Oh my God, what’s wrong?”

“You won’t believe this.”

“What?”

“This is my old purse, but with a new front panel! It’s identical, down to the compartments and straps.”

“What a coincidence!”

“Can’t be a coincidence. It must be Providence, or the Lord interceding.”

“Is that what you believe?”

“I do.”

Gaylyn’s mind was piecing these events together. Jeanne could almost hear the wheels turning.

“How long ago did you take possession of the purse?”

“About two weeks ago.”

“And when did these symptoms appear?”

“Oh my God, about two weeks ago! Do you think there is a connection?”

“Did you have the purse with you when these events occurred?”

“Yes.”

During their hour together more details were flushed out, giving Gaylyn the data she needed to set Jeanne on the path to restoration.

“Jeanne, just listen with an open mind. I believe the interests you were pulled to and the objects that drew you were those of the previous owner of the purse. Is that the purse you have today?”

“It is.”

“May I see it?”

Jeanne handed it to her, and she started emptying it. When everything was out of the purse, she asked Jeanne if she could

identify everything as being hers. Jeanne identified everything but one item, a small bead that may have come loose from a necklace. That may have been left over from Olga's friend.

"Let's try something," suggested Gaylyn.

Gaylyn had Jeanne leave the bead out of the purse, return all her identified objects to the purse, and set the purse in front of her.

"Jeanne, there has been no proper and formal separation of ownership in this shared possession case. Let us jointly say a prayer of mourning for the end of the life of the purse when it belonged to another, and a welcoming prayer of rebirth for the purse in its new home. Let the borders and boundaries become clear."

Jeanne had never heard of this before, but all of a sudden it didn't seem so strange to her. She repeated the prayers after Gaylyn, finishing with a hearty amen after each.

When Jeanne left Gaylyn's office, her heart was lighter and her mood elevated. The next day would confirm or disprove the validity and effectiveness of the ritual they had performed.

CRITERIA

Tossing and turning. For over a week now. Little sleep. Fitful sleep. Dreamless sleep. Bennett couldn't understand what had happened recently to rob him of much needed sleep. He would lie awake at night trying to reflect on his life, his accomplishments, and anxiety.

Bennett had built a thriving career in advertising. His tactics weren't always aboveboard, but he was focused, determined, and hard-working. That should count for something. He wasn't proud of how he managed to finesse certain clients, but couldn't help himself. If there were competitors, all was fair play. When he learned that two competing advertising firms were planning to merge, he determined that bad publicity could be anonymously spread about them, resulting in a failed merger. He would then invite some of their clients over to his firm, Upward Dynamics, showing them his firm was solid, profitable, and able to address their business in a custom, tailored way. No one was ever the wiser, and he was never suspected, but now he was remembering these dealings, and they were bothering him.

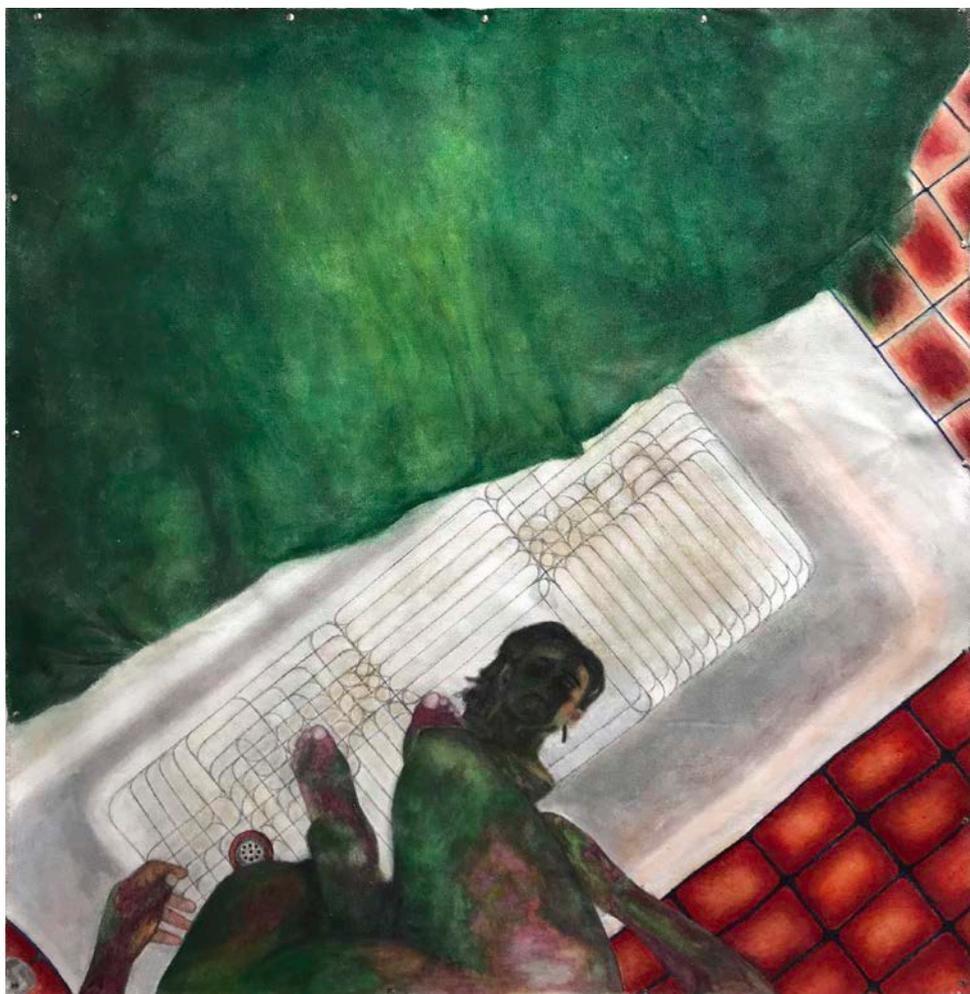
Throughout his career, he had believed that the ends justify the means and would bask in thinking the ends provided hundreds of employees in his firm with jobs and health benefits. He also recounted good deeds, like his company's frequent contributions to charities like the Salvation Army, Children's Hospitals, and Cancer Research. Upward Dynamics generated tax resources for his community, city, and his state. For a short while, he volunteered at

the local high school in Winchester as an English tutor. He found it hard to establish a relationship with students whose skills were so low, he couldn't relate to them, so he quit going. His own son and daughter, who were now adults and out on their own, had little contact with him, and he never understood why. Hadn't he and Tilda provided well for them? Sent them to the best universities? They used to come to visit when Tilda was still alive, but since her passing, their visits were few.

Tilda would drag Bennett to the performances of their offspring when they were young. Sasha, their daughter, played the violin, and her orchestra played monthly for parents. Jared, their son, was selected for poetry recitals and explaining his science fair projects. Bennett came grudgingly. When teacher conferences were scheduled, he let Tilda go on her own. He couldn't risk hearing any negativity about the kids' academic progress. It was Tilda who had put in the time helping them with math when they found it challenging, reading aloud to them from books of great literature, and helping them with practice spelling tests and history timelines and concepts.

All in all, Bennett, aside from a few twinges of regret, was rather proud of his life and accomplishments. His resume was impressive, and it would keep him in good stead anywhere he went, not that he needed any resume building at this stage of his life, his early 60s.

At times, his solo dinners consisted of take-out meals from his favorite markets or a stop in at a healthy fast food place. Lately he had been craving fish, and an Asian market near him provided him with a variety of freshly prepared choices from salmon and halibut to sable and basa. On this particular day, he stopped in here because he was craving their specially prepared poached salmon with creamy dill sauce. He was overjoyed to discover they had one serving left, but before he ordered it, Sam, the head of the fish market, came over to tell him that this last piece had been displayed all day and probably wasn't the freshest choice. In fact, Sam was planning to take it home for his own dinner so as not to compromise any customer. This simple confession had an adverse effect on Bennett, who, with his suspicious nature, saw it as a selfish act on Sam's



Meditation on Manhood and Masculinity
Acrylic paint, fabric dye, pen, and graphite on canvas, 4.5ft x 4.5ft, 2020

part. *Just because there's only one serving left, doesn't mean Sam can decide who gets it*, he thought. His competitive nature rose up to meet what he perceived as a challenge.

"I insist on having this serving, Sam," Bennett forcefully concluded.

"Bennett, please. Trust me on this. You don't want it. What about the sable? Look how snow white it looks. Here, I'll let you smell how fresh it is."

"Don't bother. I've made up my mind. If the salmon is good enough for you, it's good enough for me. Wrap it up, please."

"Bennett, please don't make me do this."

"Sam, it's done."

Bennett walked home smugly, congratulating himself on a demand he easily won and anticipating the subtle flavors of the fish. All he had to do was warm it up and sit down to a savory dish of his favorite catch.

Indeed, he savored every morsel, especially with a glass of Chablis. After dinner he plopped himself in his easy chair in front of his plasma TV and inhaled the news, most of it dreadful. He dozed off for a short while and when he awoke, he was feeling a bit queasy. He popped an antacid into his mouth and went to bed, hoping tonight he would get a better night's sleep than had been his experience recently.

Bennett's wish would not be granted, judging by the amount of tossing and turning he encountered in his first attempts at slumber. Something was not right. His feeling of discomfort was increasing, rising to a crescendo. Soon he felt gripped by a strange force against which he could not struggle. He sensed he was traveling somewhere. At last, he thought, I must be asleep because this has to be a dream. He could exert no bodily control over himself – could only acquiesce his status as passenger on a trip through darkness and light – through soundless visions of faces he recognized from long ago, mouthing words he couldn't make out. He endured sharp turns and downhill plunges interspersed with uphill climbs and alternating speeds.

Never having been a fan of rollercoasters, he found himself uncomfortable and fearful on this ride.

He couldn't discern how long he had been traveling, perhaps hours, but was growing weary, and he hoped it would soon end. His breathing was becoming labored, and his limbs were acutely aching. Dizziness overcame him, and as he felt he was about to pass out, he could see a tiny pinpoint of light in the distance. He made this a focal object and stared fixedly at it until he saw it grow and sensed he was approaching the end of the journey. His rate of speed was slowing amid a sensation he was leaving a world he knew and entering a foreign realm where all would be new to him and a return home not possible. This could no longer be a dream.

Soon Bennett's travel came to a stop, and he found himself standing atop a spotlighted white elevated pedestal awaiting contact. There was no place to step off. After a solid wait of indeterminate length, a holographic figure appeared at one end of the pedestal.

"Hello," Bennett ventured, squinting to make out the hologram. It seemed to be a figure of indeterminate gender in a flowing white wrap.

"Bennett Wesley," announced a voice emanating from the hologram. Bennett couldn't identify it as male or female. It continued.

"You stand before your final accounting. It's review and reckoning time."

"Oh, really," Bennett smirked. "Am I still dreaming?"

"You are not asleep."

"Prove it to me."

"How would you like it proven?"

"Show me who you are."

"I'm only a representation of spirits from above. For those who believe in God, I represent God. For those who don't, I represent the spirituality and humanity that have sustained you during life."

"During life? You mean I'm really dead?"

"You're really dead."

"How did I get here, and where am I?"

"You were visited during the night and led here by a force guiding you through light and dark, through a passageway that



Sentient Being
Acrylic on canvas, 5ft x 5ft, 2020

looked into your soul and delivered you to this station of Limbo.”

“Why Limbo? Isn’t it clear where I belong?”

“It is clear to you?”

“Damn right, it is. Uh, excuse the language. I belong in Heaven.”

“What is Heaven?”

“A place where I’ll be well taken care of, where my wishes will come true, where all my hard work and successes will be rewarded, where I’ll want for nothing.”

“On which criteria do you base your opinion?”

“Criteria? What criteria? I was never advised about any criteria! Had I known there were criteria, I would have prepared differently.”

“What would you have done differently?”

“I mean, it’s just not fair to test me before I know what to study, like my high school history teacher used to do. I have been successful, earned a lot of money, headed an advertising firm, contributed to charity, tutored students, and kept out of trouble. Doesn’t all that count for something?”

“Income and wealth are not part of the criteria. Neither are charitable acts.”

“That’s my point exactly. How was I to know these things wouldn’t count?”

“Would you have done only what the criteria required?”

“Yes – I mean, maybe, but it would have been fairer than this.”

“We don’t determine who goes to their ‘Heaven.’ If you have shown up here, and not elsewhere, we help your soul to a peaceful rest or to a place where you can earn your peaceful rest.”

“You mean like do-overs?”

“In a way. We really only have one criterion.”

“Only one? Well, I surely must have met it, with all my accomplishments. Let me have it – what is it? Do I get a say in whether I achieved it?”

“You do have input.”

“I can’t imagine what it could be. What is it?”

“Remember how you were rated on the most important ethic you portrayed in Kindergarten?”

“All I can think of is ‘plays well with others.’”

“Bravo! That’s it. As someone matures, we may refer to it as: relates well with others, but it’s essentially the same thing.”

“That’s the criterion? That’s it?”

“That’s it. What is your input?”

“Well, I dunno. Let me think. ...I provided employment for many people at my company.”

“Sorry, irrelevant.”

“I made sure my children went to good universities.”

“Irrelevant.”

“I tutored.”

“Irrelevant.”

“I loved my wife,” Bennett was now groping for examples.

“Did she know that?”

“How would I know? Wait, I think she did. And I loved my kids.”

“And they knew that?”

“Of course they did. I think.”

Bennett was not feeling so good about himself and his achievements right about now. Had he really missed the boat? Where would he wind up? He now believed he had crossed over. Had he prepared a will? Had he provided for Sasha and Jared? His company?

“So, Bennett, where do you think you belong?”

“Well, maybe I could have been a better friend to my wife and kids, to my employees, to my extended family. Maybe more patient with those I tutored, and not so focused on the ends justifying the means.”

“Very reflective.”

“So am I screwed now?”

“No.”

“Do I get a do-over?”

“Are you asking for one?”

“I don’t know. What will it entail?”

“Perhaps a short extension to set things right.”

“Really?”

“We’ll take it under advisement.”

“What happens to me in the meantime?”

“You stay right here until a decision is made.”

“Will I be advised of the decision?”

“No, you’ll just find yourself in context.”

“You mean I can find myself back home or in a new place?”

“Pretty much. Now just follow the guide behind you and have a seat and wait or take a nap.”

This is all about Sam and the fish, thought Bennett. The salmon has either given me digestive nightmares or killed me.



Existential Crisis

Acrylic paint and sharpie on canvas, 4.5ft x 4.5ft, 2020

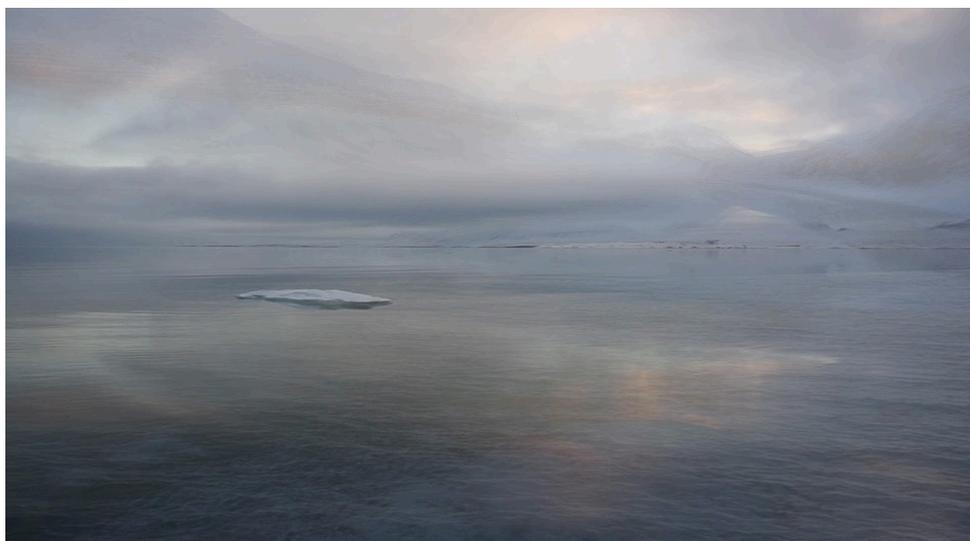
ARCHIVING WAR AND MEMORY

AN INTERVIEW WITH Katherine Akey

Through photography, printmaking, fiber art, and writing my work focuses on the transformation of human experience, especially that of trauma and conflict. Much of this is an exploration of the change of experience from history to myth, from mourning to commemorating. I always try to do this exploration through the experiences of individuals. Antoine de Saint-Exupery wrote that when a man dies an unknown world dies with him; photographic archives as well as personal histories, these are what is left when that unknown world disappears, these are where we can connect to the humanity of the past, these are where I excavate. My childhood was spent climbing through archaeological sites with my parents; their academic practice is the foundation of how I make sense of the world, dusty sites and overflowing vitrines that fill my memory. Now as an artist I explore history with my own archaeological tools, seeking the marks of individuals as they transform and fade with time.

CAN YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

I am an artist and historian currently based in San Francisco. I am from Virginia and Athens, Greece. My parents, professionally, live their lives out of Greece so, I spend a lot of my life bouncing between Greece and the United States. I got a B.A. in psycholinguistics at New York University (NYU) with an interest in anthropology and art history. I was looking at evolutionary aesthetics, at the way human minds and brains work by looking at the development of art



This is the Closest I'll Come to Touching You the Way I Want
Video, 00:10:07, 2021

and literature over the course of human history.

I got to the end of college, and I realized, the only career path forward in that field was a Ph.D. My family are academics, my older brother was at Columbia University doing a Ph.D. in physics while I was at NYU and so I knew what a Ph.D. looked like. I was working at labs at NYU, as an undergrad, and I loved my classes, but I didn't want to be a lab scientist. It was a kind of rigor, and it didn't appeal to me and made me reconsider why I was interested in that topic (psycholinguistics).

For me it came down to this understanding of humanity, art, and creativity and I was going about this research in one particular angle. After college, I took a gap year, and applied to about a million different graduate programs. I applied to programs in Classics, Linguistics, History, Art History, Art Therapy, Creative Writing, and Fine Art. And it was through being interviewed for grad school that I settled on the International Center for Photography in New York.

Nayland Blake, who founded and ran the M.F.A. program asked if I had any questions for him. I asked, "You started this program, it's your pedagogy, what do you want for your students?"

And he said that he wanted us to be empowered to make our own opportunities and to be the art world the art world wished we were. Every other program I spoke to said, “You’re going to leave with connections, a portfolio, a robust practice...” and that sounded great, but Nayland had this different attitude about pursuing art professionally. Even though it’s this weird little program at a documentary film museum run by a performance artist, literally in a basement underneath Bryant Park (at the time), it felt like the right place for me.

After that, we (me and my husband) moved to Washington D.C. where I had a couple of different jobs right after leaving graduate school. I was teaching at the Corcoran, which is now part of G.W., I was running a community dark room in D.C., but I also worked for the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission.

I started volunteering for them, and then they hired me. I was producing, writing, researching, organizing guests for weekly one-hour long podcasts episodes. Those episodes followed our involvement in the war from the spring of 1917 through 1918. I got to talk to researchers, historians, and passionate members of the community across the country who were participating in the commemoration.

At the same time, I did a research fellowship with the Carnegie Council for Ethics and International Affairs, designed to produce new bodies of research and study about the living legacy of World War I, and how the study of it impacts our lives today. I studied a body of photographs that an American soldier had brought home from an American Red Cross hospital in France. These beautiful large format portraits were of surgical patients who received facial reconstruction, what we know call plastic surgery, but at the time was something that was being made up.

I had a baby and lived through the first nine-months of Covid before relocating to San Francisco in the fall of 2020. Now, I am mostly having a studio practice and working on teaching next year. In general, my practice is photography informed, but not photo limited. In the last four or five years after leaving grad school, I’ve expanded and self-taught fiber arts, sound art, video, and more creative writing to meet the needs of projects.

WAS IT YOUR FELLOWSHIP AT THE CARNEGIE COUNCIL FOR ETHICS AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS THAT DEVELOPED YOUR INTEREST IN WORLD WAR I OR WERE THERE OTHER PROJECTS THAT INFORMED YOUR RESEARCH-BASED PRACTICE?

Darkness Shall Cover Me, was my first solo show about World War I exhibited this year. This was the first time a whole body of work about war had been exhibited, but my interest in The War goes back to my childhood. My dad introduced me to the subject when I was younger and my thesis in graduate school was about polar exploration, comprising of archival footage that I was editing and projecting as well as displaying photograms that I had built without image-based material in a dark room.

Part of my thesis included a book which was supposed to be a summary of our grad school experience, but I didn't do that and got sassed by professors on the review board for it. I had images from my show accompanied with one-page short stories about polar exploration and why I was interested in that subject. It was taking this approach that connected all of this knowledge and research to a more personal level.

This war stuff came after grad school. It took me from 2016 to 2020 to make Darkness Shall Cover Me let alone exhibit it. Four years was actually super quick for big bodies of work, but more forthcoming, I hope!

YOUR EXHIBITION, DARKNESS SHALL COVER ME, INVESTIGATES THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND NIGHT BOMBING. YOUR EXHIBITION STATEMENT AIMS TO LOOK AT THE TENSION AND LIVED EXPERIENCES BETWEEN BOMBER PILOTS AND BOMBING VICTIMS. HOW ARE YOU EXPLORING THE RIGHTS TO MEMORY AND TRAUMA? AND CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MATERIALS USED TO TELL THESE INDIVIDUAL STORIES?

Memory is a really tough concept and by extension, history is fraught. There is a lot of ethics, theory, and navel gazing we can do about memory and history and who informs who. Memory, in psychological and neurobiological terms, is super unreliable and if we



Home Again
Inkjet and collage, 14in x 14in, 2020

want to talk about the reality of what happened to someone, we're not getting THE truth of the experience, we're getting THEIR truth of the experience. It's complicated in that sense.

I try to use first person sources as much as possible with the hope of being a channel in which these people can speak to their experiences. I've never experienced violence, war, not even on a personal level and I question being an interpreter for these people. So, my goal has always been to take their voice and change how it's being presented but try to do so as undiluted as I can.

I struggle with that a lot, like my research project at Carnegie. I didn't know if those men in the photos consented to having their picture taken, one assumes, but I have a lot of trouble using the photos directly in my art. I found it easier to use words because somehow it feels softened versus using archival photos. There are a lot of artists out there who use archival photos of trauma and are successful, but I am not sure I can do that.

That being said, this idea of memory and trauma and whose right/access is it is one of the reasons we are having this big cultural debate in the States about Civil War statues. There's that quote, "history belongs to the victors", "we" get to decide what events in history we are going to place value on.

These decisions, they inform who we are, what we point to, what we teach, what memorials we erect or take down, and dictate what our cultural identity and collective memory is. That is very interesting to me, this idea of something moving from the personal experience to the family experience, to a private collection, to public memory and looking at where things fall through and where things don't.

In the context of my parents being archeologists, I would ask my dad what the greatest thing he's found, and he always says that archeologists, historians, and by extension humanity are mostly working with negative space. What information don't we have because it didn't survive through time, so this transmission from personal to public memory or from trauma to mourning to commemoration to forgetting. No matter how painful the experience was to live through, it will be forgotten and the power of it will dissipate eventually. But there is value in looking at that.

When you find these first-person sources, I'm primarily getting them from institutions like the Imperial War Museum in the U.K. or similar World War I specific museums and archives, you don't always know the context of these sources. Is this source a letter that was written to home and if so to whom? A sibling, to a parent, to a wife? Are you reading a journal that wasn't meant to be shared? Is it a transcription from an oral interview?

Sometimes you get this information, but sometimes its not accessible in the archive you're looking at. Going back to the Civil War statues, it is defined by who is remembering, when, and in what context. My personal experience working for the National World War I Centennial Commission, most Americans don't have a very strong, working familiarity with World War I.

It isn't taught very much. Either because it isn't taught or because it's not important to our collective cultural identity, especially when you compare it to World War II. What references can you point to about World War II? If you ask the average American about World War I, I have not experienced that someone can summon a picture or name a battle.

It is in making this work that I am trying to reconnect the context in which someone can remember these people and their experiences, I hope.

I think about it a lot in the context of photography, because although I don't make a lot of photographs anymore, I teach photography and photo theory. I use and highly recommend Susan Sontag's, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, even though it is a little outdated. She wrote her book post 9/11 but pre-Tumblr and it lacks a lot of contemporary contexts about social media and digital imagery, but the medium of photography is a really good place to go if people are interested in this discussion around ethics and memory. To frame an image is to exclude, and Sontag argues all photographs wait to be explained or falsified by their captions and what is the image without context?

You asked about materials, I try not to limit myself when it comes to media because of the needs of a project. Sometimes it's difficult because you're teaching yourself and to use that material well, you have to practice, learn, and spend money. It can be a slow

and frustrating process, but I've tried to let the first-person source inform my choices of materials.

For the quilted pieces in this show, there was one specific story I read that informed the topic for my solo exhibition about night bombing. A Royal Flying Corps Captain and his men had been trying to do night bombing raids but were missing their targets. Plains at the time were just past being made from wood and linen, maybe still in part, and there was no electricity. The world wasn't electrified and when you are flying at night, it is dark. This Captain described taking sugar blue paper and copying out their maps with charcoal and then he created a dark mode version of their maps. Rather than a white piece of paper with a map, it was a dark-purple-blue paper with charcoal given to pilots to memorize. And it helped them find their targets at night when flying.

This sugar blue paper, in the 19th century in particular, when sugar was transported in a party-hat shaped construction paper that was dyed. I looked up this dye, log-wood, and I really wanted to use it and that's what colored all of these quilt pieces. I played with acidity and different metal salts to push tonality of natural dyes, but some have iron and others have copper to push it from that inky blue to a more purple, brown, and black.

The fabric is linen. In fact, it's the same Irish linen used to make planes during World War I. Between 1415 and into 1416, planes had wood frames with stretched, starched linen. I did a ton of research to figure this out, and what I found was an advertisement from 1919. To preface, the war ended way faster than expected and the U.S. army had bought all this material and didn't need any of it and sold it off at auctions which is where I found this advertisement for bulk airplane linen.

The quilts from my exhibit are made from the same material as the planes and it's that process of reading a first-person source, thinking about the history, to create interpretations of aerial reconnaissance photographs from the war.

The large cyanotype pieces are made of silk and silk is another material that ties into pilots. Pilots wore white silk scarves around their necks to fill in the gaps in their cloths because their planes had open cockpits, and it gets really cold. Pilots also used

the scarfs as masks to keep them from inhaling the oil off the propellers because the oil would aerosolize as they were flying and there's no protection, so these pilots would get horrible diarrhea if they breathed too much of that oil. So those silk scarfs were used to stay warm and cover their faces.

The squeezes, being witness marks, are white direct word objects that I made. Those didn't really come from any one source; those were inspired by my dad. My dad is an archeologist and he's an epigraphy scholar and one way that epigraphers archive inscriptions is by taking impressions. They can do this with a certain type of liquid latex, nowadays there are new methods like taking 3D scans of inscriptions, but the best analog way of doing it is to take a squeeze. It's a scientific grade filter paper that is wet and then put up against an inscription, you slam a squeeze brush against the paper, you let the paper dry, and peel it off and bam, you've got a copy.

If you're good at making these, you can see the direction of chisel marks into the stone. And you can imagine if you come across an inscription and you're somewhere in Turkey and you can't pick up a stone or don't want to damage the site, this is an amazing way to make copies of an inscription to take back and study at your leisure. One of the amazing things about archives, they can protect things that stop existing. There are a lot of inscription squeezes that exist for whom the original inscriptions are gone, either they've been destroyed or lost.

For my trip up to the arctic, I visited the Byrd Polar Center at Ohio State University, an amazing research center for polar and arctic scientific research, and I saw their archives of ice core samples. They have these long cylinders of ice they've drilled out of glaciers, some that have melted twenty years ago! But we still have the ice core, so there's this wonderful sense of bending time. I thought this was a great way to immortalize these people's words, the everyday experience of The War, but to make an archival collection of inscriptions that no longer exist and in fact never existed. Going back to this discussion of memorials, World War I is an interesting turning point in the aesthetics of memorials. If you think about older, traditional memorials, you think about obelisks and



Langemark 3 January 1918
Linen, logwood, linen thread, and cotton batting, 37in x 41in, 2021

glory and they tend to be these very vertical, large, looming objects. Then you think about memorials made after World War I and you think about the Vietnam Memorial or the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin and suddenly everything is horizontal and sarcophagus-like, or sunken. It's about negative space like the 9/11 Memorial at the World Trade Center is this void.

So, there's this really big shift and yet, if I was going to make a memorial, I'd want to put these people's words on it. Glory, death, and sacrifice are all lovely sentiments, but the words are hollow. What does sacrifice mean a hundred years later about people you have no relation to or no real contextual understanding about. I think this is a problem with war in general and World War I in particular, minds don't grasp horror in abstract. There are days in this war where 60,000 casualties happened. That's a small city, but it's not very effective in trying to get you, as a human, to understand the experience of that day.

This particular day I'm thinking about, the first day of the Battle of Somme, there's a story I read about a man sitting in his trench and he's waiting for the signal to go over the top and run out into No Mans Land. It's so loud from the shells and gunfire that he's screaming at the top of his lungs to the guy next to him. So, he grabs the guy's hand, and they walk out together into No Mans Land. He writes home about this experience that it reminded him of walking to Sunday school with his best friend and that was all he could think about in that moment.

That's one person out of 60,000 people, but that, I hope, is way more effective at getting you to understand what sacrifice meant in that moment. So that's why I went to these words.

YOU MENTIONED HOW OUR MEMORIES CHANGE, ESPECIALLY WHEN WAR IS GLORIFIED, AND SOLDIERS (SPECIFICALLY YOUNG MEN) ARE FILLED WITH NOTIONS OF PATRIOTISM AND NATIONALISM. HOW ARE YOU BALANCING THOSE NOTIONS AS A WAY OF ARCHIVING WAR AND MEMORY?

Again, it's about context. It's almost unimaginable to us today, as a post-Vietnam American, to understand these soldiers willingly swarmed for conscription. There are people who committed sui-

cide because they were rejected from the army and didn't want to be seen as cowards. And maybe they had legitimate reasons not to fight, but this was an intense sense of duty and obligation that I don't understand myself because of the context to which I grew up.

This war was different because it conscripted and all of a sudden, the entire population across the world were involved, which was new, but it also damaged the land and the people in a way that never happened before. It's also the first modern war. You enter with horse drawn carriages and leave with machinery. Tanks are invented, gas warfare is invented, barbed wire is applied in a military context, machine guns and bombing civilians define what contemporary warfare looks like today.

They called the Battle of Verdun the 'Meat Grinder' because men would enter and disappear. Going into the war, the context of the conceptualization of the British male body is very different then coming out of it. Then you get this resurgence after the war, in the 50s and 60s, and again we see the glorifying of the Tommy (slang for soldier). You have this pendulum swing over the course of the 20th century that glorifies and infantilizing and mythologizing war.

If we pull out and look at Russia, does anything come to mind during 1917? Russia collapsed! It was an empire going into the war and then you have the Bolshevik Revolution, and the country ceases to exist. And all these smaller surrounding countries begin to seek independence while millions of soldiers of all different religions, ethnicities and creeds are fighting for "Russia" which stops existing. What is their understanding of the war, their role in it, their understanding of it?

The French, being a republic, were invaded by the Germans who almost took Paris. They came miles within capturing Paris in 1914, but made a navigation error, but they were in France for the entire four years. France at the time was on the defensive and had legitimate reasons to fight, but they suffered higher casualties than a lot of the other combatants and they almost had a coup in the middle of the war. And had a soldier uprising actually happened in 1917, they might have lost the war. You can't really overthrow your government when a quarter of your territory is an active war zone.

There was also a lot less censorship of the news and willing-

VERY LATE THAT NIGHT THERE CAME
INTO OUR MISSION OF THREE OBSERVERS
FROM THE BOMBED AIRPORT. HE
WAS JUST ABOUT ALL IN. SEVERAL OF
HIS FRIENDS HAD BEEN KILLED OR
WOUNDED, AND AS THE SMOKE WITH THE
DRINKING CANDLE LIGHT SHOWED UP A
FACE THAT WAS STILL QUIVERING WITH
THE HORROR OF WHAT HE HAD SEEN,
IT WAS A DENSE-GUTTER TYPE OF BOMB
HE TOLD US, THAT HAD LAY OUT SO
MANY OF HIS BALS. A BOMB THAT
SEEMED TO EXPLODE BEFORE IT BURIED
ITSELF IN THE GROUND, SO THAT BITS
AND PIECES FLEW HORIZONTALLY IN ALL
DIRECTIONS. BUT, APART FROM THIS NEW
FORM OF BRIGHTNESS, A NUMBER OF
MEN HAD BEEN FOUND DEAD WITHOUT A
MARK ON THEM, KILLED SIMPLY BY
THE FORCE OF THE EXPLOSION.

Jack Wilkinson
Filter paper, 19in x 23in, 2020

ness to acknowledge the war, and this continued after. When you look at the U.S. or England, amputees or disfigured individuals hid themselves because the public had a lot of trouble dealing with them. In France, there is an organization that exists to this day, to promote and support wounded veterans. And it's one of the largest organizations of its kind I've ever heard of, called Broken Jaws.

There's this huge cultural difference in the way the war is thought about and that's true about every war. As Americans, we're looking at World War II and we're thinking about it differently. Notably thinking about bombing. Do we learn about what we did to Tokyo or Dresden? We bombed probably hundreds of thousands of civilians, and I don't think we've reckoned with the violence, but we've come to a point where we can acknowledge and integrate it into our understanding of ourselves.

Just because we were on the "right side" doesn't mean we didn't commit atrocities. It's war, you're going to go somewhere to hurt somebody, and these men accepted that. How do we deal with that as a public? I have this quote by Jane Winter, "history is not simply memory with footnotes, nor is memory just history without footnotes. The two are inexorable, braided together by public domain, jointly informing our shifting, our contested understanding of the past."

LISTENING TO YOU SHARE THESE STORIES AND HEAR HOW IN DEPTH YOU GO IN ORDER TO RESEARCH A SUBJECT; I'M WONDERING HOW YOU MEDIATE BETWEEN SELF-CARE? AND HOW MIGHT YOUR WORK PROVIDE CARE TO OTHERS WHO'VE EXPERIENCE WAR AND VIOLENCE IN THE WAY YOU'VE BEEN SPEAKING ABOUT?

I'm a very emotional, empathic person. When I see a sad movie, I'm sad for a week. This research does make me vulnerable, and I've reached a lot of points, in the ten years I've been doing this work, where I burst into tears. When I was researching those photographs for the Carnegie Fellowship, I spent hours looking at these mutilated faces and one day I vomited. It hadn't bothered me for months, and then all of a sudden one photo did it.

I started to have nightmares about visiting the war front,

which I haven't done, and being blown up by an old shell. There's an area about the size of New Jersey, in France that's called the Red Zone, that's uninhabitable because of World War I. Unexploded shells are still in the ground and are collected every year by farmers known as the Iron Harvest. Hundreds of tons of unexploded shells that these farmers accidentally kick up when their farming and people die!

There's a whole section of the military there that come and dispose of ordinance from World War I and people are still dying. I would have nightmares about going to the front and walking around with my little camera and my tripod and losing a leg.

Whenever it gets bad, I would take a few months to disengage. In that sense of selfcare, there isn't any because I push myself to the edge, but at the same time when I reach those points, I backed off.

YOU SPOKE TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MATERIALS YOU USE, BUT THOSE MATERIALS LIKE QUILTING AND ARCHIVING HOLD SPECIFIC MEANING TO YOUR OWN LIFE. CAN YOU SHARE THOSE PERSONAL STORIES AS THEY RELATE TO YOUR ARTISTIC PRACTICE?

Whenever I tell people my parents are archeologists, I always get this Indiana Jones reaction and in reality, it is cool. What they do is amazing, but there's no chasing Nazi's or hunting for treasure, they're just researcher's and they do it in a particular way. For a long time, I couldn't see what an impact it had on me and how it framed my understanding of the world.

I'm one of four kids, and I'm the only who thinks about history. My youngest sister is a florist, my other sister is a physical therapist, and my brother is a physicist but none of them are thinking about history and art. But it did make us appreciate history, culture, craft, time, and objects. Plus, we got to grow up traveling.

My stepfather, who's the archeologist, is from New England and that's been an influence in my life as well. We'd spend a couple of weeks on Nantucket where he had his summer home which is a very unique environment. It has its own history around whaling and the arctic that I've drawn on for my residency.

My biological father was a navy brat, whose father served on submarines for 30 years, and he grew on navy bases in Guam, in Spain, and all over the place. And his life has its own legacy that bring influence.

My mother, who I spent most of my life with, is Appalachian. I've counted the generations before, and we think I would be about 14th or 15th generation. That part of the family got here in the 1700s and went immediately to West Virginia and stayed put in the mountains. That's unique in that there's a subset of Americans who can trace their family back to the 1700s and that my family was in one place for so long and its such an interesting place in terms of culture and craft and tradition.

My grandfather is that last person in my direct line to live in West Virginia. At this point, when my grandfather passes, we will have broken a three hundred plus year old chain of living in the same holler (what we call valleys in West Virginia). And that is a weird and intense thing for us to make sense of and no one wants to go live there, no one wants the farm, and we'll probably end up selling it and that'll be that.

I have been photographing my grandfather and the land trying to reconnect with some of the culture and craft knowing that that connection has a timer on it. Which is where something like the quilting comes into play. I learned to quilt when I was a very young girl and is super important to Appalachian home life. Everything is a practicality and a craft second, but its also an art form and people took a lot of pride in, especially my great grandmother. I love the reuse of cloths into quilts, I'm actually sitting here with one of my great grandmothers' quilts that is made out of my mom's dresses.

My dad loves this quilt because it has a number of pieces of cloth from dresses he remembers her wearing when they were first courting each other in college. What a piece of history, right!

I named my daughter after my great grandmother, and I have pictures of her as a baby sitting in a chair draped with a blanket my great grandmother made out of my grandfather's cloths and here's my daughter posing on it and sleeping with it.

The root of all of these crafts is about survival, no one at the time was educated and my grandparents in the 40s and 50s are the

first people in my family to make it past 8th grade. My grandfather went to law school and became a lawyer. His daughter went on to become an archeologist and do fieldwork in Greece. That's a huge jump in just two generations!

I'm trying to be more appreciative about the craft and bring it into my practice. Those quilts were a good opportunity to do that. I don't think they read as quilts, certainly not in the traditional sense, but the application of skill is there.

AS A NEW MOTHER, YOU SHARED THE DIFFICULTIES OF BALANCING AN ARTISTIC CAREER AND A NEWBORN AND THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING RESOURCES LIKE THE ARTIST RESIDENCY IN MOTHERHOOD. CAN YOU SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH THAT PROGRAM AND HOW YOUR WORKED HAS EVOLVED?

Having a kid is the most profoundly transformative experience. I had my daughter four months before Covid and my experience as a mother is entirely colored by the pandemic. And I think there's going to be a lot of writing and researching about what that does to us as parents.

That time as a mother and an infant is valuable and space should be made for it, but we don't think about it in that way in America. I went back to work five weeks after having my daughter. I had a C-section, and I was hurting when I went back to work but I felt obligated! I had that pressure to do it all and one of those pressures was joining a residency to force myself to keep making work.

The residency was started by Lenka Clayton after she had a child and it's a D.I.Y. residency. She provides a contract that you go through and fill out, answering questions like where am I, what are my needs, and how do I hold myself accountable to meet these goals. And you design your framework for you to work within. It gives you time and space to make it what you need and what you can fit in.

I decided I was going to start in the beginning of March 2020. Two weeks into March, I was trying to teach three fine arts classes via Zoom while trying to breast feed off camera. That residency didn't happen. I couldn't tell you now, if it was postpartum

depression, was it Covid, an existential crisis but I was a mess. I was nonstop crying, my hair was falling out, no sleep and it felt like the lowest point in her infancy that June/July. I couldn't make any work because her studio was her nursery, but she was home 24/7 and I was freaking out that my career was over. I went back to the contract for the residency I failed to start, and I realized what I needed was a break. I need to give myself permission to not make work.

After that we relocated to San Francisco in September 2020 and that provided me with a separate room for my studio and provided us with safe, close childcare which we didn't have in D.C. My daughter was older at that point and her reliance on my body changed and I eased myself back into the studio. It felt really overwhelming to start anything big and so I asked myself, what can you do that's bite sized?

I wanted to make something about motherhood, one thing about quarantine, and one thing out of the archive. I had this book about my grandfather that I had started in 2017 and I never found time to print or finish. And so, I finished it. Just that was like breaking the dam.

I made another book about our daily quarantine walks around our new neighborhood and then I made another book about my mother, me as a mother, and me as a daughter, and my daughter. They're little sixteen-page books, mostly photos and a little bit of writing. They didn't have to be amazing, but it gave me the confidence to get back into the rest of my work.

YOU ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON A NEW PROJECT EXPLORING THE FLORA FROM THE WAR. I AM REALLY INTERESTED IN THIS PROJECT BECAUSE IT MAKES ME THINK ABOUT HOW WAR IS ABOUT OCCUPYING LAND AND CHANGING THE PHYSICAL LANDSCAPE. ARE YOU INTERESTED IN MAKING THE LANDSCAPE THE SUBJECT IN YOUR WORK? IF SO, WHAT THEMES ARE YOU EXPLORING AND HOW DO YOU HOPE VIEWERS WILL INTERACT WITH THE LANDSCAPE AS IT RELATES TO MEMORY?

Do I want to make the landscape the subject, no.

Full disclosure, I'm really early into this project but I don't think that's where my interest is. There are a lot of different landscapes and a lot of different experiences of the conflict. There are these stories where men talk about flowers and birds.

I will say, I have a very Anglo-centric research practice so far and have been mostly talking about British men and less about the French and Germans. This is something I really want to work on, but the language barrier has been a huge problem despite reading French quite well, I'm just struggling with access.

This project is about these people and their relationship to the environment they're living in. There are some stories in that mud and blood landscape, a gunner writes in a letter home about a little creek and this creek is where he goes to shave his face in the morning. But in the creek, its several years into the war now, there is a human rib cage and it's been totally skeletonized and catches all the leaves and sticks and muck. On the other side of the rib cage is very clean, clear water and this is where the gunner goes and fills up his cup and shaves his face, right at the edge of this human rib cage.

That is a psychopathic thing to say in such a flat affect, but it really tells you about what living in that landscape was like. The bird thing is heavily informed by the British. They have this real affinity for bird song and the idea of the bucolic and bird watching. Foot soldiers would write home, in incredible detail, about the kinds of birds they saw and if they were similar or different than the birds back home. And these letters were sent to bird periodicals that were published in England.

I did this little sound piece about nightingales, but there's this soldier who talks about the barrages and the first thing you'd hear after the barrages ended were nightingales singing. And that reminded me of a story from England where this famous cellist, Beatrice Harrison, who was practicing outside in her garden one evening in the summer, heard a nightingale singing along with her cello. She told a friend about it who loved it so much that they went to the BBC radio, and they decide to play her, and the nightingale live over the BBC radio.

The British loved this, and they keep doing this broadcast for

decades after. Eventually Beatrice isn't there, but they keep broadcasting a nightingale from a garden. And I had this realization, you've got World War I veterans, about half a million, who go home to England and sit there every spring and listen to the nightingale sing and there's probably a few that remember hearing the nightingale after the barrage.

There's this instance in World War II where the broadcast was supposed to happen, but a raid was leaving to Germany and the BBC decided to not broadcast because the Germans could listen for the positions of the planes via the radio. But they recorded it onto vinyl and so we have this recording of the nightingale, and you can hear the planes leave and then you hear the planes return, eleven fewer in number. So, there's this loop between both World Wars and with this bird. That's really cool.

They had gardening competitions during the war. You'd be up in the front lines for about a week and then you'd get rotated back to a village and you'd get to rest and then go back to the front. And so, when they were off the lines, they had these amazing vegetable and flower gardens, and they'd write home asking for seeds. And it's just incredible they were doing this as a means of survival and enjoyment in the middle of this conflict.

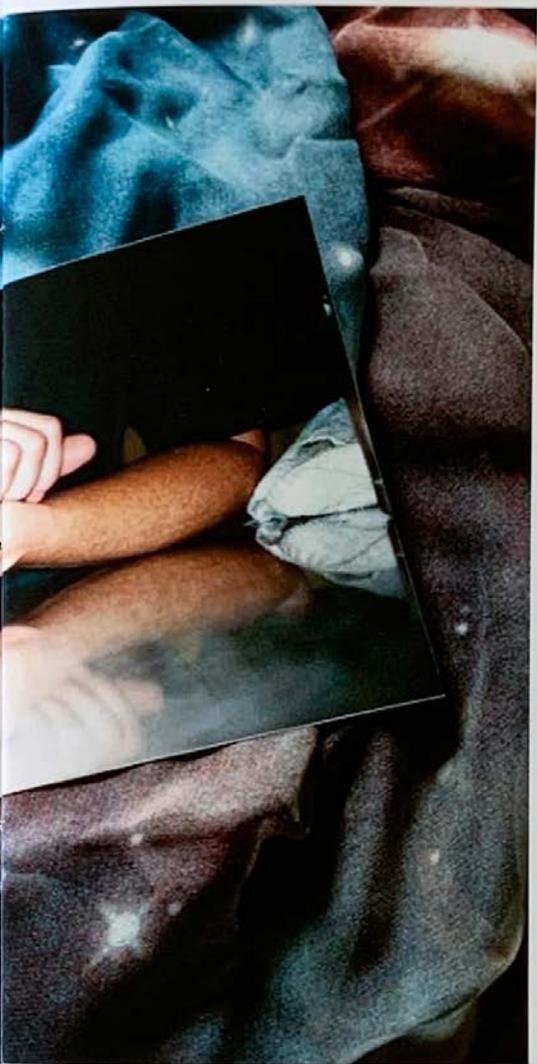
So, its stories like that that I'm thinking more about coping in this environment rather than the landscape at large.

DO YOU HAVE ANY CLOSING THOUGHTS?

Yeah! I've got a video piece from the arctic that's about love and longing and being separated and explorers and whalers and that's going up in a film festival in Copenhagen in the New Year. I have an audio piece about the nightingale titled, War Comes to the Nightingale, that's going to be apart of this really awesome project called Future Nostalgia FM which is a sound and radio based curatorial project.

I'll be teaching some classes at the Penumbra Foundation. The first one about writing and photography and then later in the year, hopefully, one about art and motherhood. Other than that, I'm here in the studio trying to grow plants for this new project, doing my reading, and working on what's next.





Mothers' Hands
Inkjet prints, paper, and linen thread, 16 page book, 2021

ALCHEMY CONTAINED

POEMS BY Jacob R. Moses

ARTWORK BY Maria Brudasca

At one point
I was balancing
yin and yang
within a chamber

This has been
a detox of light

Knowing that
subjugation
can drain
life forces

This has been
a detox of dark

Knowing that
sublimation
can drain
pain thresholds

I gave the light generously
I hoarded the dark discreetly

Once my heart
was a window
for all to view

Now it is a safe
where one may only guess
the contents within

Perhaps a hidden combination
will allow my healing to unlock

I am the dichotomy of
absence and abundance

Kept top secret in a box
where my negatives
have yet to be exposed
and my positives
slowly develop



The Hermit
Pencil drawing, ink, watercolors, digital collage, 200mm x 300 mm, 2015

ILANA

ILANA - we had met at JFK
We took an El Al plane to Tel Aviv
Depressed as I was during my whole stay
Your presence made me never want to leave
From old Jerusalem's great Western Wall
To mystical turquoise backdrops of Tzvat
Misunderstood – and yet you would enthrall
You saw the beauty behind my blindspot
We danced in discotheques and our tour bus
We rocked out to Sex Pistols and Kelis
Ensnared by rhythms and the moves we'd bust
An anarchist milkshake mixed by MCs
I came from New York; you came from Quebec
Valued companions on a pilgrim's trek

COLLAGES OF YOU

Cerulean zest filters noise
Ocean dreams skimming surfaces
Leaf enmeshed rolling hills
Lightning transmuted new worlds
Air empowering lunar multiplexes
Gold encrusted ceramic clay
Emerald garnished cirrus clouds
Sun shadows suspending sanctuaries

You are a collage of the elements
Present as an apparition of Gaia

As the mist silences the mind in flux
As the dreams wash upon the shore into fruition
As the curving altitudes become fertile
As the electric awakens the luminescent
As the moon displays visions of all frequencies
As the fragile shows its beauty
As the nebulae reflect the trees
As the solar winds guard this Eden

I see you in the distance
Coming closer each time



Temperance

Pencil drawing, ink, watercolors, digital collage, 200mm x 300 mm, 2015

UNDER THE LUNAR ECLIPSE

Heaven hemorrhages
Life leaks lunar lament

I am bloodshot in my third eye
My tears soothe the irritation

Stroke of the witching hour
Spectator of shifting satellites

Only a trace of light
Forms a slight crescent

Only a sleight of hand
Forms the traits of chaos

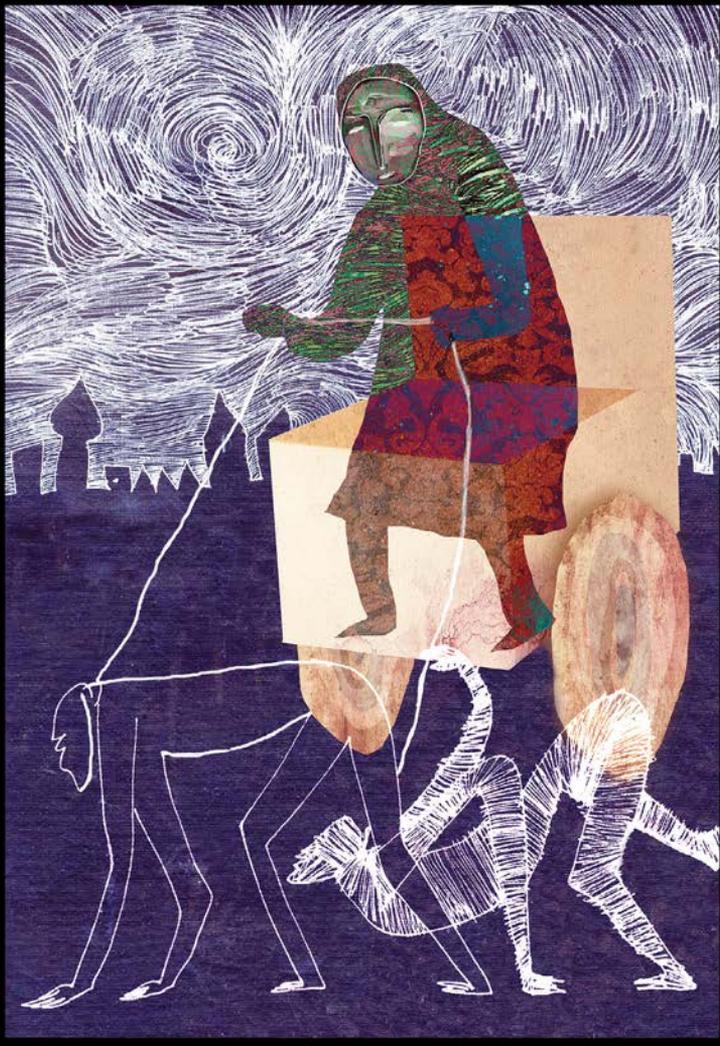
I offer gifts to ancestors
This season of the witch

We of the ways of wizards
Make sense of the chaos

Working with it
Not fearing it

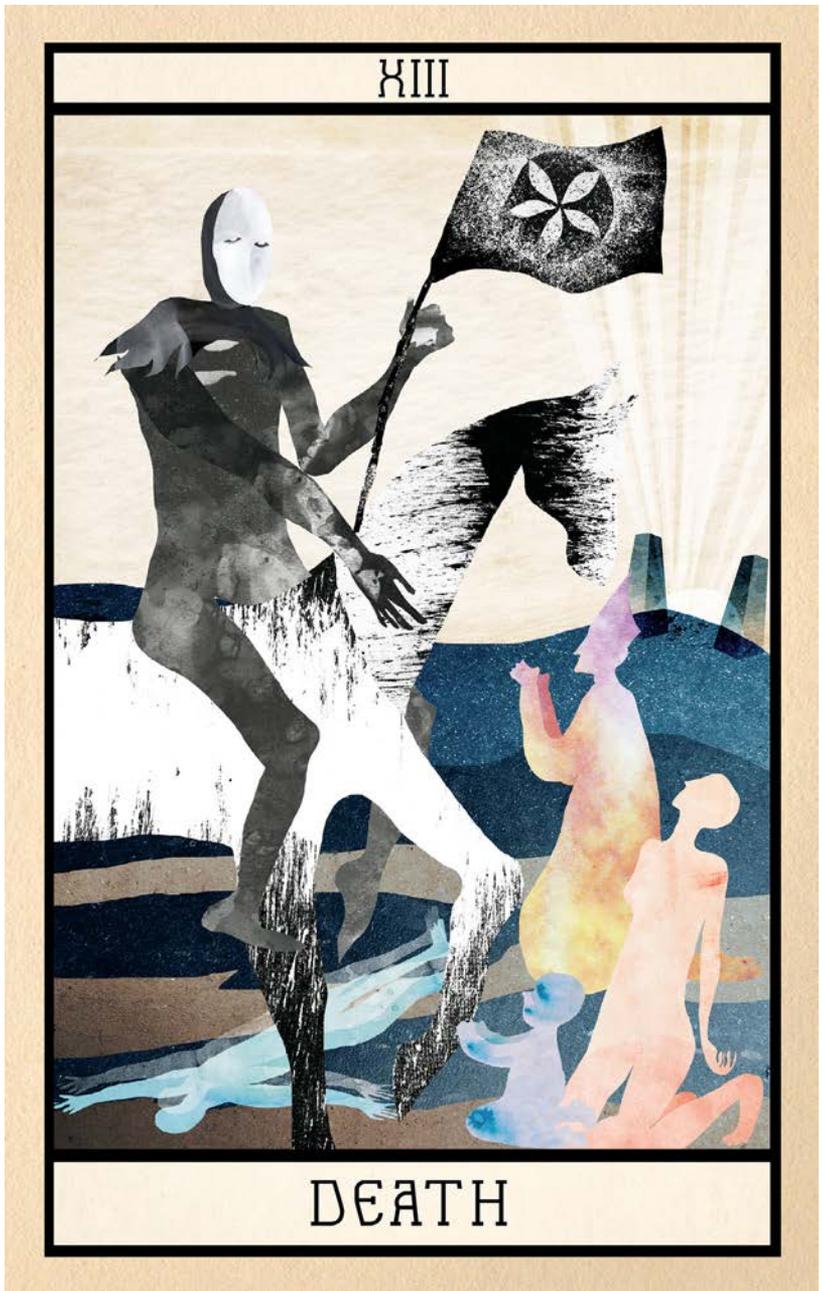
There is no natural order in me
Only humankind creates its illusion

VII



THE CHARIOT

The Chariot
Pencil drawing, ink, watercolors, digital collage, 200mm x 300 mm, 2015



Death
Pencil drawing, ink, watercolors, digital collage, 200mm x 300 mm, 2015

QUEEN OF THE CARAVAN

Heaven hemorrhages
Life leaks lunar lament

I am bloodshot in my third eye
My tears soothe the irritation

Stroke of the witching hour
Spectator of shifting satellites

Only a trace of light
Forms a slight crescent

Only a sleight of hand
Forms the traits of chaos

I offer gifts to ancestors
This season of the witch

We of the ways of wizards
Make sense of the chaos

Working with it
Not fearing it

There is no natural order in me
Only humankind creates its illusion

The High Priestess
Pencil drawing, ink, watercolors, digital collage, 200mm x 300mm, 2015

II



THE HIGH PRIESTESS

AN ELEGY TO A KNIGHT

POEMS BY Walid Rezk

My deep condolences to a noble knight
Whose soul ascended heaven at night

Rivers of tears are not enough to shed
For a gentle heart and a face of a kid

You were always a kind-hearted man
Everyone knows you becomes your fan

You always left good memories with everyone
You left life without a setting sun

Your thoughts exist everywhere
Nobody will forget your care

You planted love in every heart you met
That's why your sun will never set

Nobody is going to forget your smiling face
Your memory decorates every place

Everyone prays for you day and night
You took with your every joy and light

Although you are no longer in front of our eyes
You are now the celebration of all the skies

Everyone laments the gentle heart
Who suddenly decided to depart

Angels really belong to the sky
Whose memories will never dry

Rest in peace our gentle knight
You are always there before our sight

ANUBIS

The Nile has been running here for millions of years
Carrying all the good and removing our fears

I built the first great civilization on earth
I eliminated the world thirst and dearth

I was born a soldier defending my land
Sacrificing my life for a grain of its sand

Anubis and Horus are forever ready
Protecting Egypt and always steady

I am a pharaoh and here is my fate
Teaching the world how to love not to hate

The Nile is my blood that flows in my veins
Look into my face to see Egypt's mounts and plains

The map of Egypt is carved into the wall of my heart
I taught the world the first writing, music and art

I am the sleepless eye that protects Egypt from any harms
Who dares to get closer and Egypt is between my arms

I command every Egyptian to stand upright
To defend our beloved by day and night

Pharaohs become lions in battlefield
Right and faith are always our shield

The Nile is life artery in time of thirst
That's why we always put it first

Egypt always seeks for peace and justice
Always make them her regular practice

Egypt never seeks for war or conflict
Egypt is the land of love you all expect

If war is imposed on Egypt and its land
Anubis is carrying his spear in each hand

Horus is above fluttering his wings
Celebrating the victory he always brings

Egypt can protect herself against devils of hell
Ask the Hyksos, Tatars and all those who once fell

Ahmose, Mina and Hatchepsout are always there
Sending to the world all the love, peace and care

Peace has always been our first call
That's why Egypt will never fall

FOREVER YOUNG

My heart is forever young
A divine hymn to be sung

I love everyone and always forgive
As twice as I take, I always give

I try to be nice as possible as I can
Of peace and love I am a great fan

Life is short to waste in hate
Let tolerance be our only fate

Love people and nature around
Only the base of justice we must found

Leave good mark on each heart you meet
Let your nice memory your main good feat

Whenever you go spread love and affection
Be much nicer than people's prediction

Treat everyone equally be always fair
Show everyone your respect and care

Being respectful is something you never regret
You will be rewarded more than you expect

We are on earth to make it a paradise
Listen to me and follow my advice

Dream big and complain less
Sadness never lasts and neither does happiness

Think positively and always be optimistic
You cannot change your fate by being pessimistic

Let live, love, and learn your goal
Carve them deep in your soul

The heart that does not know envy lives longer
It has better destiny and grows stronger

My heart is forever young
A divine hymn to be sung

PALM TREE

I am a palm tree in the vast space
The desert is my home, my place

The Arabs are my folks everywhere
They water me with love and care

I am the symbol of their glory and wealth
I am the source of their dignity and health

In the middle of the desert standing upright
Witnessing every moment of joy and fight

My roots go down to the deepest earth
I protect Arabs from famine and dearth

I feed everyone passing by and every astray
Every animal feeds on my leaves and hay

I am the first food Arabs ever know
I stand still whenever storms blow

I have saved people of desert through the ages
Read history books and tour religious pages

I have been the shelter of the different prophets
I have been the wealth of Arabs and their profits

I am the beauty of desert, I am the palm tree
I am the absolute beauty man's eyes can see

TRAVEL

I am going to travel chasing my dream
Crossing every ocean, sea and stream

I am determined to achieve every goal
I am going to stand up every time I fall

My heart refuses to settle down on earth
With every travel I make I get a new birth

My wings are born to flutter so high
My feathers promise to visit every sky

I never get tired, I never get old
I pursue every dream I once called

On every land I leave a deep mark
In the vast space I am a singing lark

My sun always sets to rise fully again
Spreading warmth, eliminating every pain

Life is too short to waste in one land
I travel to touch each grain of sand

Travel never stops teaching
Life never stops preaching

Every new land has its own magic
Charming beauty sweeps every logic

I was born a pharaoh to master the whole earth
Everlasting traveler since my ancestors' birth

THE AUTOPSY OF SISYPHUS

STORY BY Josh Poole & Travis Wellmen

ARTWORK BY Francisco Zarate

Mount Kyllini rose like crown from the agrarian basin, its rocky peaks thrust above a coniferous wood line to bask in the Greek sun. Below, the shallow wetlands of Lake Stymphalia dappled the valley with pools of water broken up by tall grass and long lines of trees that seemed to form phalanxes with an agency rooted in the historic soil. The deepest of these pools would scarcely obscure the height of a man, but they still retained the coolness of a past winter. Surrounding the lake itself was a thin turf of grass filled with hundreds of thousands of green frogs that, should you step near, would spring into the air. The density of this population was such that, should you startle a single frog, it would land near another, and that frog would jump and itself land near another still until a wave of the frightened amphibians would roll into the waters.

Between the lake and the peaks of Kyllini stood the dense patches of conifers separated by rock formations that ringed the entire lower half of the mountain. The trees became sparse the higher the elevation until dwindling into solitary specimens that, in their contorted stances among the rock, appeared to be mountaineering up the slopes. Just below the boiling peak, nearly a mile above the cool reprieve of Stymphalia's waters, a team of archaeologists chipped away at the robust dermis of ageless stone.

"Remind me again why I chose to this over a job in archives?" A tall student with dark hair and a linebacker's build complained as he shoveled out a marked excavation.

"You're going to get him started ag—" a girl began to reply,



Mask to Face Death
Watercolor, collage, India ink and winsor & newton marker on old paper
43cm x 29.5cm, 2020

but was cut off by a distinguished, professorial voice.

"Imagine sitting in an office," a man with a thin ribbon of mustache began from atop a large rock. "To the east is the employee restrooms, and to the north is the coffee pot." He cleared his throat. "Here, I can see the Northeastern Peloponnesus, Achaia, Chelmos, and Corinthia, the birthplace of Hermes himself."

"Yeah." The tall student thrust the shovel into the dirt. "But at least I'd have A/C."

It has to be here somewhere, the middle-aged Professor thought to himself before hopping down from the rock. His exposed knees visibly absorbing the shock and distributing it down into argyle socks and tobacco leather boots.

"Let me recite to you a Homeric verse, 'For there, though a god, he used to tend curly-fleeced sheep in the service of a mortal man'," the Professor said, and stared up into the students bored eyes. "If Hermes can tend to sheep, you can work a bloody shovel, Thomas."

With a sigh, the student returned to his labor while the rest of the team scarcely held back boisterous laughs. Professor Dabney S. Fairbanks, incapable of not edifying himself further, returned to his perch above the excavations to survey his dominion. There were three graduate students under his command, them being Thomas, the tall but mostly worthless son of an investment banker. Cecilia, a petite blonde who seemed to move more cubic earth than any of the others but whose academic inclinations either still lay dormant or existed in a plane beyond the Professor's perception. Lastly, there was the gangly Douglas, who refused to go by anything but his birth name and only took his nose out of the books to blow the seasonal allergens out of it.

"What exactly are we looking for, again?" Thomas asked, flinging a shovel-full of dirt over his shoulder.

"Artifacts from the cradle of culture," Professor Fairbanks replied, running a hand through his jet-black hair. "Pottery, weaponry, anything to justify the University's expenses in sending four Americans overseas."

"Anything to get tenure, right Professor?" Thomas retorted.

"Tenure?" Professor Fairbanks laughed. "Who needs tenure

when you can have permanence in the annals of history.”

The group continued working, with Thomas shoveling away while Cecilia took narrow samples of soil and sifted through the grains as Douglas spent most of his time marking off the site locations on a tablet. Professor Fairbanks, of course, had spent the entire afternoon without realizing his boots weren't laced. When he finally did move to do something, that being to point out that Thomas wasn't working fast enough, he tripped over the laces and spilled out onto the rocks in a painful heap.

“Professor!” Douglas exclaimed, but the others remained nonplussed.

The student rushed over to Professor Fairbanks, who had already risen to his feet and brushed the dirt from his clothes.

“The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart,” Professor Fairbanks quoted Camus with a sigh.

“Are you okay, Professor?” Douglas asked, adjusting his thick-framed glasses below his bucket hat.

“Right as rain.”

“How much longer are we going to be out here?” Thomas asked, indifferent to the Professor's well-being.

“As long as you're willing to be out here,” Professor Fairbanks replied. “You're welcome to call it a day at any point. I don't run a sweatshop.”

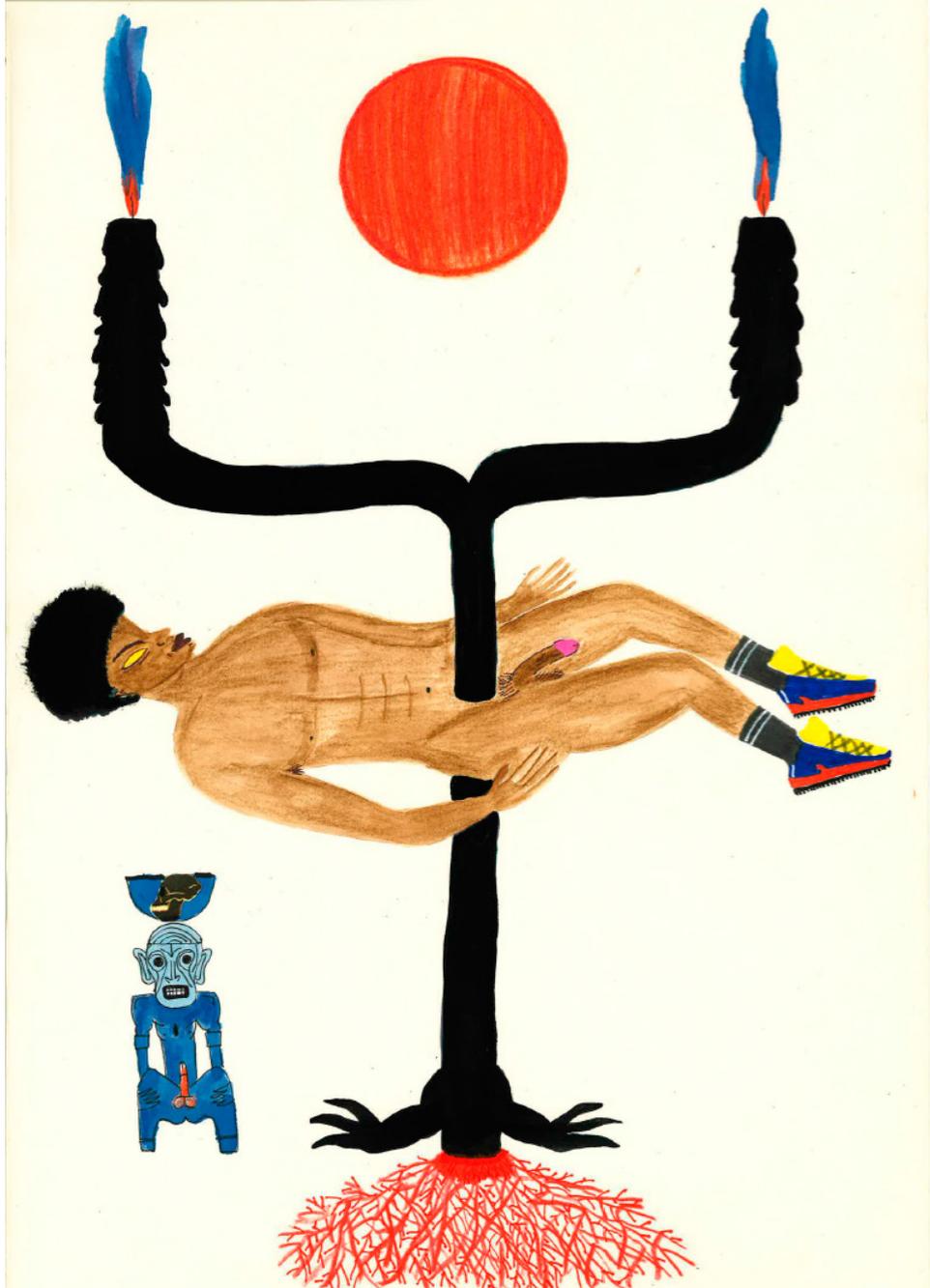
“Good to know,” Thomas replied, plunging the shovel back into the earth.

“I would like to go down to the lake, to be honest,” Douglas said. “I mean, we've got what, two more weeks of excavating left to do?”

“I'VE got two more weeks of excavating to do,” Thomas retorted.

Cecilia, meanwhile, was still digging through her own section of rocky soil with a fine-tooth comb, searching for any unnatural fragments or objects. She had been quietly focused the entire excavation, unable to find anything, but unwilling to stop looking.

It HAS to be here, Professor Fairbanks thought to himself once again. *I can feel it.*



Datura

Watercolor, collage, India ink and Winsor & Newton marker on old paper
43cm x 29.5cm, 2021

He looked down at Lake Stymphalia, at the smudges of green, tan, and blue within its soggy perimeter. There were dozens, perhaps even hundreds of birds on the lake, a sort of polychromatic mania that fluttered about like autumn leaves. He imagined Heracles shooting them out of the skies with his arrows soaked in the Hydra's blood. He wondered what the students would think if he told them what they were actually searching for, or the strange, nameless group of people who had funded his expedition.

They mustn't know. He thought to himself.

The students finished up their excavations while the sun still hung over the mountains, having found nothing. Thomas was the first to retreat from the site, followed by Douglas as the two withered down the steep mountain trail towards the lake. Cecilia stayed a while longer, sifting through the remains of an excavated pile before succumbing to the same temptation of cool, clean water. She tossed her trowel into a five-gallon bucket with a tremendous thud, one that signified to Professor Fairbanks that she'd ended her day in utter disappointment. He cleared his throat, and relayed one of his pearls of wisdom.

"There's an entire world to unearth, Ms. Parker, and we've only dug a small hole in all these centuries." Professor Fairbanks smiled beneath his spindly mustache.

"We'll find something soon, I'm sure of it," Cecilia replied, and began making her way down the slope before turning around. "Are you coming?"

"In a bit," the Professor replied. "It's my turn to do a bit of work, I imagine."

Cecilia smiled, and disappeared into the pines. Professor Fairbanks sighed, pulling a piece of paper out of his back pocket. On the paper was the image of a scanned text, one in Ancient Greek that the Professor translated to English with his own clumsy, illegible writing.

Face the Lake of Heracles' hand

Against the bronze-beaked flock

Climb above the wooded ring

Beyond the trees that cling to rock

Among the pebbles a boulder stand

To mark the life of Corinth's King

Professor Fairbanks eyed the large, rounded boulder that he'd stood on for most of the day, picturing it as some sort of great memorial stone whose markings had faded in the elements. He ran a hand through his hair, looking down at the mythical lake below and wondering if the entire thing wasn't just an elaborate plank being played on him by the department. He couldn't help but laugh at the thought, kicking a small stone down into Thomas's excavations only for it to clack against another stone. The Professor shook his head, once again amazed at how lazy the student had been at clearing his excavations of any potentially unnatural items.

Professor Fairbanks hopped down into the shallow dig, grabbing the pale, rounded stone and lifting up. The stone, however, didn't budge. With both hands he tried again, hoisting with all his might, but still, the stone did not budge. As the sun still had another hour or two left in the sky, the Professor pulled a trowel out from his back pocket and began carefully exhuming the site. As he peeled away layer after layer of clay and rock, it became clear that the round stone wasn't a stone at all, but a human bone.

The Professor continued digging, his day of lackadaisical efforts firmly behind him as he rushed into the dig like a ravenous animal. In short order, he had freed an entire femur, a hip, the majority of a ribcage, and part of an arm. The bones, however, disturbed him. The entire skeleton was covered in bones spurs at such a volume that it looked more like the bottom of a barnacle-laden ship than a skeleton. The thickness of each bone too, was much greater than the average human, with the femur itself being as large around as his own forearms in spite of being normal in length. At last, just before the sun set over the horizon, he unearthed the skull in a frenzy with completely disregard for his normal, tedious safety.

Professor Fairbanks rose to his feet and stood in awe at the specimen. He'd never seen a figure so torn and weathered by their life, having seen only those kind of bone spurs in the arms of older longbowmen. The skeleton upon the mountain, however, was covered in its entirety, with the slender columns of its arms and legs rough like tree bark and heavy, twisted balls for joints. Each bone appeared to have been broken countless times. Even the ribs featured a strange structure, with vertical growths connecting each rib to one another in a solid mass littered with hairline fractures and cracks.

The skull was the only piece of the skeleton approaching normalcy, with the only abnormality being a few fractures across the face and a strange thickness to the forehead that caused the brow to swell beyond its normal confines. It was, he thought, the find of the century.

In an instant, however, the sun vanished, as if some enormous hand had enveloped it, crushing it like a firefly. The low rumble of thunder, at first distant and vague, grew into a cacophony that shook the cyclopean rocks loose from the mountainside. Lightning flashed in unnatural vortexes, screaming down to the mountain stone and spraying pieces of the obliterated rocks in all directions. The Professor shrieked, leaping into the dig to take shelter with the specimen as a wind, telegraphed by the bending and snapping of trees below, ripped up over the mountain in a terrible roar. Professor Fairbanks held his ears, yelling at the top of his lungs in an effort to dull the painful ripping and tearing of the wind upon his flesh and the emulsifying debris that battered him.

In his agony, however, he heard a voice boom to him in what he instantly recognized as ancient Greek.

"Stand up," it said, the voice as powerful as an earthquake.

The Professor obliged, standing up to find that the storm had dissipated, leaving only the ruin of trees and shattered rocks all around him as the sun reappeared with pale evening light that cast a red hue upon the manifested cloud sheets. He turned around to see a figure standing next to the excavation. It was a man, taller than any person he'd ever seen before with dark brown hair that fell in heavy curls upon his shoulders. His chest and shoulders were



Protect Me
Watercolor, collage, India ink and Winsor & Newton marker on old paper
43cm x 29.5cm, 2020



Voodoo In My Blood Sleeps - The Higher Self
Marker, watercolor, ink, china, collage on antique paper, 43cm x 29.5cm, 2020

broad, and he wore a white robe that cascaded like Corinthian columns down to his knees with an immovable mass. What perturbed the Professor most, however, were the winged sandals that the man wore.

The figure spoke in a booming voice that rattled the ground in an earthquake, and the Professor immediately recognized it as ancient Greek.

“You have tread upon sacred ground, mortal.”

The Professor shook away his fright and concealed his total fear, standing straight as he could before responding in the same, archaic tongue.

“I am a scientist. I seek only to understand. I was given this, a poem.” Professor Fairbanks removed the scanned letter from his pocket and displayed it to the Being. “I meant no insult.”

“You have not insulted me,” the Being boomed. “You have disturbed the rest of Sisyphus, who I deigned to sleep after centuries of toil.”

“I did not mean—”

“I know your intentions, mortal, do not lie to me. You sought fame among men, but now you have the attention of the Gods.”

The ground around the edges of the excavation began pouring into the depression and covering the bones.

“No! No!” Professor Fairbanks screamed, throwing the soil out of the site, trying to recover the skeleton.

The Being moved one of its fingers, and an invisible force flung the Professor out of the cavity and across the nearby rocks. He was quick to scramble back to his feet, however, and was soon digging at the site where the bones were covered entirely. With every handful he threw, dirt which had somehow gained an agency would fall into the site. For hours he scratched at the ground as the Being watched silently, uncovering one or two bones before the dirt would again cover it back up.

“What have you done! Why must I suffer, Hermes!” The Professor screamed as he continued clawing at the ground.

“You must suffer the fate of Sisyphus, you cannot leave this mountain until you have finished your excavations,” the Being said. “Let my eyes see your letter once more.”

The Professor pulled the letter out of his pocket, covering it in the dirt and blood of his shaking hands.

“It’s there! It’s all there! It’s how I found it!”

The ancient Being scanned the writing with weary eyes.

“Hades.” He muttered, and, in a rapture of lightning and thunder, disappeared.

Professor Fairbanks returned to the ground, picking up the trowel with hands already moist with blisters and blood. The ground crawled towards him to equal the amounts removed with every thrust of the spade. As the storm raged around him he cried, shrieking to the Gods and to his fellow mortals for aid. In Lake Stymphalia below, a bronze-beaked bird stared at a small group of students enjoying the cool waters, ignorant of the plight just above them on the ancient mountain.



The Naked Heart

Watercolor, collage, India ink and winsor & newton marker on old paper
43cm x 29.5cm, 2020

EPISODE 7: A NEW LENS

A PODCAST INTERVIEW WITH Juan Esparza

A GUIDE TO ART, ACTIVISM, & CULTURE, is a podcast bringing the voices behind today's creativity to you. Providing a platform for our exhibiting solo artists to share narratives behind their practice, this podcast also delves into social issues seen in museums and in art collections. We aim to focus on themes of decolonization, representation, and appropriation within the frameworks of art and activism.

Hosted by Zoë Elena Moldenhauer

ABOUT JUAN ESPARZA

Currently based in Silver Spring Maryland, Juan was born in the city of Aguascalientes and is from the small town of Tepusco, Jalisco. His family emigrated to the United States when he was only three years old.

Retrospection is a driving force in his creative process and is inspired by his Mexican American upbringing. Through the use of printmaking and animal symbolism, he creates expressions of nostalgia from being raised in a Mexican household and traveling to and from Mexico throughout his life.

Instagram: @justjuanofakind

Today's topic: A New Lens

Joining me is Maryland based printmaker, Juan Esparza, who spoke with me about their artistic process, reclaiming Mexican stereotypes, and the struggles with representation of privilege to pursue art.

ZOË ELENA MOLDENHAUER: Welcome Juan!

JUAN ESPARZA: Thank you for having me.

ZOË: Yes, can you introduce yourself?

JUAN: Yeah, so my name is Juan. I'm an artist currently based in Maryland. I work primarily with printmaking, and I've really been working with printmaking since I've been in college.

ZOË: And we met at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), in undergrad.

JUAN: Yeah, how is that we met? Was it through HLSU?

ZOË: I think it was. I don't think we had shared any classes together. I'm trying to remember now, but I think it was through HLSU which was this student organization that you and I both participated in for four-three years.

JUAN: I think it was through HLSU because I met Inga in one class that we had together and she said, "Hey you should show up!" and I said "OK." And then, yeah, I just started showing up.

ZOË: I feel like a lot of the friends I met through that organization; I have also featured on The Aerogramme Center. So, I'm excited to also now be featuring you as well, which is a body of work that you made during your senior thesis at MICA and a lot of the work that you submitted which explores identity, and memory and heritage

can you explain the general thesis of that work?

JUAN: Yeah, so a lot of the ideas that I was working with was referencing going to Mexico, being Mexican and things that I didn't think I would miss like speaking Spanish was something that I would miss all the time.

So, I really felt homesick and maybe not even homesick, but culture sick where all the little Spanish TV was on all the time, the music in Spanish, speaking the language. Everything was just missing and that's when I really felt more connected by being disconnected because I realized how important it was to me. And since then, I've just continued working with that idea and being really nostalgic now as I look back on time that I spent in Mexico and the important things that I feel I need to highlight.

ZOË: Those feelings come when you're in Maryland, reflecting on your time being in Mexico. Do you have that feeling when you're in Mexico wishing that you were back in Maryland or is it just sort of a one way?

JUAN: Well, definitely I do feel that way, but it's more so because we don't have Wi-Fi, or the cell phone signal isn't that good. But when I'm there, time just passes by way too quick. But as I've gotten older, I've really started to realize how much I like being there and the time that I want to spend there just isn't enough. I just couldn't spend any more time there, but I'm already looking forward to taking some time. Hopefully about a month or so there.

ZOË: That's a good chunk of time.

And your work specifically uses themes of animals. In your exhibition, you talked a lot about farming, but also the significance of the donkey and using cultural stereotypes, but as a way to reclaim them. Can you explain more of that as well?

JUAN: Yeah! So, I've always liked animals ever since I was



Bear
Linoleum, 10in x 10in, 2021

in high school, actually, taking my first art classes. I don't think there's too much of a deep meaning there, I just think they're really cool. But as I've gotten older and realizing the stereotypes, and like you mentioned, reclaiming them because there is always a negative connotation to donkeys of working hard. But it's always hard labor and it's not necessarily celebrated, but it is something that I think needs to be highlighted because there isn't anything inherently wrong with hard work, and its oftentimes stuff that needs to be

done.

Agriculture is the main source of income, whether it's agriculture as in farming or raising animals, livestock, and that's really the main way of living back in my hometown. Animals were always present one way or another. Whether it's my grandpa who had them or I would see my uncles have them or just walking by the street, you would always just see animals, so it's always been present. And as I've gotten older, I started thinking more critically about the animals and their role that they take place culturally.

ZOË: It is sort of a hot button topic; I think a very politicized topic that you're kind of exploring. Like the underlying-- or something that sort of present in your work but that isn't sort of the forefront of it. I really like that connection, like a social issue but also something that's spiritual.

JUAN: I really like the way that you brought that up because in large part something that I have to navigate when I'm creating art is what it is that I can say, what I can't say, what is OK for me to say, and what I think isn't OK for me to say. Because even though I am Mexican, I've grown up in the United States since I was three years old, so I have a degree of removal from the culture. Even though we would travel back as often as we could, sometimes year by year, sometimes every two years, I've only ever been in Mexico for a snapshot. At most, a month or two out of the year, but then there is 10 other months, and there's countless things going on at that time.

Especially because of the time that we would go. We would always go during summer, so it's the tourist time. It's when all the kids are out of school, it's when people ask for time off, so it's very different seeing it versus my last trip, which was in early November. And I mean it's completely out of season when it comes to people travelling. Because it's after the summer and then before the holiday season. So currently we're in between Christmas and New Year's so

right now is peak where people are traveling there, visiting family, some of them stay for both, someone only stay for Christmas or New Years, but seeing it in November, I mean it's so quiet. There's so little going on, but at the same time there's still so much going on for the people that live there. So, as a tourist, because that's the way I see myself, I've only gotten a snapshot so it's hard for me to navigate what it is that I can say and what I can actually comment on because I don't know. I genuinely don't know what's going.

ZOË: You're talking about representation, but also how you're using art as a way to kind of bridge both identities of being an artist, but also being -- I guess you're calling it a tourist -- going from two places at once. I am interested in how art is a part of that process of thinking through these ideas. What is your process when you're thinking about these split identities?

JUAN: When it comes to process, I have always been an artist that works very intuitively. I don't like having things totally planned out 100% or if I do have it planned out, I always allow myself to adjust things as I go. I work primarily with printmaking, and it can be a little bit diff cult. If I carve something out of wood, I can't necessarily go back. I always allow myself to work through it and to change the drawing as I go.

When an idea comes to mind, I like to make lists. I'm old school, so I always write things down in pen and paper. I don't like having things really digital because there's a degree of removal there. But I'll just make a list of different animals, different things that I like, and then write a little bit about why they're significant.

For example, when I think about farm animals, I start making a list of what I see. So, there's chickens, there's donkeys, cows, fowls, goats, sheep. And then from there I start picking out the significance of them. So, there is a bit of a research because sometimes they're nicknames for other things, right. Or there're sayings that reference them. I started out by writing and then from there I just allow myself to



A Rezar
Woodcut and Chine Collé, 25in x 37in, 2018

draw, look up pictures to see what they actually look like. Always allow myself to be playful with them.

ZOË: Something I was thinking about when looking at your exhibit and sitting with your work, was looking at the donkey as a representation of you, is that...?

JUAN: It's funny that you bring that up because my mom would say, "ay que burro eres." Basically, it's like "oh, you're so donkey" if you're going to translate it, but basically, it's you're not listening. I would just think of myself as it, yeah, so kind of personifying it. But I did see a lot of myself in it or people that I knew. So, there's also the personification of my grandpa and of my uncles, in a broader sense the people that I've seen growing up. But there is definitely a sense of self there.

ZOË: And some pieces you've titled in Spanish, but others not, and I'm wondering, I think because you have these specific phrases in some works. I'm wondering how you're kind of bridging, I guess, the Spanish culture with your art?

JUAN: I don't think it necessarily has to be a completely literal. Sometimes the title is just come to me easier in Spanish or I'm specifically referencing a specific memory (nostalgia) that I want to reference, and it just happens to be in Spanish. It just comes down to the piece and then how to working on it.

ZOË: The piece that I just kind of pulled up quickly, *En la calle* is the same image of the donkey, a humanoid donkey, surrounded by a crowd of people, but it's printed in four different colors. Can you also share the significance of the color choices? I know it comes with an interesting story.

JUAN: So, for *En la calle*, basically the colors choices that I have, specifically the green and yellow that one is referenc-

ing maseca is what they use to make tortillas. So, I was referencing that because we eat tortillas with everything. And it's something that I would see all the time, it was in the center of our small town, so as I'm driving to the store I see it, on the way back home I see it.

But then there's also pink with pink which is a reference to my uncle's house because for some reason the house was painted pink. Mexico is known for really bright colors, so that's where the neon green comes in with the pink and yellow. It's just again nostalgia and referencing back to different buildings where the general idea of colors that I see. The use of multiple colors, one, it's a way of creating editions when it comes to printing and then there's the idea of once you start getting to print where it can exist in multiple periods of time. So, a memory can also exist in multiple periods of time, or you can see it multiple different ways as you're getting older. So, it's just highlighting that as well.

ZOË: Because memory is not reliable, and it changes so often.

JUAN: Yeah, memory is super reliant on what's currently going on with you as well, because you'll remember things differently depending on what's going on.

So, if you're super stressed out about something and you think back to a time, I don't know last year, it's hard to pick out, "Oh, I was doing the same thing back then". Whereas if you were to look back on it [that memory] in a couple months when you don't have that going on, you're not going to pick out the same details. So, memory isn't reliable, and it does change. Also, as you realize why certain things are happening and why certain things happen at a period of time. And you start to process that as well.

ZOË: Does it come easier to do your work after a trip, coming back from Mexico, or is it something that you sit with for a while before you feel that inspiration to make a body of work or a print?

JUAN: It's something that I work with. But usually what I do is, I'll make a list, like I have mentioned before, with different ideas, different stuff that I like, and I'll just work out sketches. And then sometimes I'll be doing whatever it is that I'm doing, and I'll be like, "Oh, I could do this for that." I'll go back and edit drawing a little bit. It just kind of depends on piece itself, but I don't usually sit down and say, "OK, you got an hour to plan this out."

It just takes its time and takes its course.

ZOË: So you sit with a memory for a while and that is part of the process where you think about what you want to say and how you want to represent your home. Also, your identity and how that is translated through into the process.

JUAN: Yeah, yeah, I guess you could say it is process based. I work a specific way to really highlight an idea, but I sometimes things just need to cook more. Or sometimes you have an idea and it's just not working right so you have to let it simmer you got to let it cook for a little bit, adjust it, adjust it, adjust it and then it works out. So, it depends on the idea it and depends on the piece.

ZOË: How do you see your work evolving or what you hope your work will evolve into as you grow?

JUAN: So, something that I've been looking at a lot is expanding medium is something I've been working out. It's something that I've always struggled with is when I start getting comfortable, I immediately feel like I need to make a switch. So, I want to expand out mediums. I would love to start doing things with textiles or fabrics, broidery possibly because I think it lends itself very well.

Going from printmaking to embroidery because it is very process based. You spend a lot of time on little details, so it works well with my personality. But ideal wise, I've spent a lot of time thinking about my time spent in Mexico, but then

on the other cultural side of it I've lived most of my life here in the United States, so I want to start highlighting that, growing up in a Mexican household, because there's a lot of day-to-day things that I see as cultural, right.

Either television, so highlighting media, I think about sayings so maybe illustrating that, food, traditions there's a lot for me to unpack with that, and the other idea that I was thinking of is the in between. Because growing up the way that we would mostly go to Mexico, because we were a large family, we're total six, we would always drive down to Mexico. So, there's the United States and there's Mexico, but then there's the in between of us going there.

And that's a whole thing in itself where you're stuck in a car for two and a half days with five other people, and yeah, there's a lot of landmarks that aren't landmarks that we see as "OK, we're getting close." And then the whole border situation is a whole other thing because there's that point that some experience there that have to be unpacked, so those are the two general directions that I'm thinking about.

Focusing more so on the United States and being Mexican here, and then also the in between of getting to and from.

ZOË: The whole U.S.-Mexican border is such a fascinating subject in itself that it's this invisible line drawn in the sand, but that it has real consequences that affect people every single day.

JUAN: It is a way of, how do I say this, of blending the cultures because privileged takes a part of it. I'm very thankful and grateful to be able to say that I can go between the two [countries], and that's not the case for, you know, so many people. And there's a lot of things growing up, seeing things, I mean, literally seeing people trying to cross, but they're not allowed to while I'm in the car waiting to go where they just check your passport and you're good to go.

So, there's a lot on pack and as I've gotten older, I started realizing the impact of privilege. There're things that I



En la Calle
Woodcut, 11.5in x 11.5in, 2018

feel like I can say, but are there things that I should say for others? Yeah, privileges is a big thinking point for me.

ZOË: In private conversation, you've spoken about the conflict that you feel as not just someone who has the ability to travel freely between one country to another, but also that you're an artist. That you come from a traditional Latino household, but also being able to pursue art and trying to find that sense of belonging-

JUAN: Yeah, that in itself is a whole can of worms to unpack. Being first generation, right, is so broad. There's the most baseline typical definition where you're the first generation your family to go to college and first generation is so hard to navigate in itself because you can get different amounts of help, but people want to put everything in one basket when that's just not the case.

ZOË: And also, internal conflict of having to justify art as a career choice that there's more fluidity. And that creates, yeah, I think just a lot of internal conflict. And I experienced that myself because it's about the hustle more than anything.

JUAN: Yeah, without a doubt. I wanted to do art. I wouldn't have really gone to school had I not studied art. Unsure. But I started out trying out illustration, didn't like that, trying out graphic design hated that even more and it wasn't until I got into fine art where I really decided, "OK this is what I like, and this is what I want to pursue."

Yeah, I mean, there's definitely that struggle of wanting a "proper" career. But yeah, I mean, you can make it work for sure as an artist. It's just like you're saying, it's about the hustle. There's always an element of guilt, too, because I'm here in the States, I'm studying art. Meanwhile, there's people back home that want to be a nurse or a doctor who don't have opportunities for it. And so, there's always an element of guilt.

ZOË: Also, from experience, looking at how little representation there is for Latino or Latinx artists out there trying to make a name for themselves. Something I'm interested in; is how you're navigating or how you're thinking about who your audience is?

JUAN: My audience is always going to be very Mexico centric. So, people who are from Mexico or, you know, have lived in Mexico, people who can relate who come from a small town, who have similar experiences. That's always been the audience that I have in mind.

And if it reaches more that's good but that's, at the very least, that's who I want to make art for. Because I think of my parents as sort of the audience that I want to get at. My parents, my cousins, where if they're able to understand my art and if they're able to say. "Oh yeah, like I understand this" then that's a successful piece for me.

It's not about somebody from down the street who gets it, right, because they might not have the same experience and to me. That's never mattered, it's always been with the idea of can my parents understand it, and can my cousins understand it because that's really what the experience is about. It's about Mexico and navigating that. My answer has always been that. I've always thought of my parents as the big audience and then framing it from there.

ZOË: Yeah, it's a celebration of shared culture, a shared identity.

JUAN: Yeah, getting your work out there it's super-super hard! And everybody wants something different out of their work.

Some people create art more so as a side thing, I think that's where I'm at currently. Other people, they need it as their job, so they're going to approach it very differently. Like I care about people who have a shared experience who have a similar upbringing who may be feeling the same way, that's who I want to make art for.

ZOË: Where you in curatorial studies? Or where you working...

JUAN: I was not curatorial studies, but I was part of the exhibitions department. That was my work study job. So, a couple days a week I was helping either put up shows, take down shows, I was gallery watching whatever it was in the gallery space we were doing that.

Yeah, it was really interesting being exposed to that side of it [exhibitions] or seeing the work that was coming in. I think because I was exposed to that I really felt a bit disheartened/disillusioned with art. So, after graduating I just didn't really feel like creating and I think a lot of it was just the work that was being put up just wasn't what I wanted to see.

ZOË: Working in the curatorial department, how did that shape your work in any way? What do you want to see when you're in an exhibition space?



JUAN: I mean, I think accessibility is a big issue with art because with a lot of pieces you need to know something about the process, or you need to have some sort of background knowledge to understand it. Where in a broader sense, that shouldn't be a thing. Art should be accessible; art shouldn't just be made for artists when it should be made for the people. Like whoever your audience is, right. But it should be made for a broader sense, not just people who work in galleries or curators or other artists.

I believe that art shouldn't be made just for that. Obviously, if that's who you want to make it for, that is your decision. But in a broader sense, art should be accessible, and it should be for whoever wants to see it. Or if you just happen to be walking by. That was another thing! A lot of these galleries on campus, you had to be on campus to see, so it just wasn't accessible.

I think that was my biggest take away is art is hard to



understand. And it's not taking away anything from the art if it's not accessible, right? So, if the art is accessible, it's not taking away from it. You shouldn't need a degree to understand the intricacies and all the details for it. Obviously, you can take away from it, but you shouldn't need to know everything about a medium to "get art."

ZOE: So, accessibility would be an artist drawing from a very specific moment in history or is over complicating their artist statement?

JUAN: I think a lot of it is, is being overly complicated with art. I think you can use a lot of buzzwords, and this goes for anything, right? If you're reading an article, you will see a lot of buzzwords, where I'll be honest, I'm reading something I need to go Google some words because I'm not getting it. So, it's just not accessible for people, it comes down to artist statements, to the piece itself sometimes.

You know, like it's hard to navigate that as well because sometimes your ideas just genuinely revolve around process. But that's not the most accessible thing, but then it's framed in a way that it supposed to be accessible. It's a super fine line and I just think that a lot of people weren't aware of it and weren't conscience of having to navigate that.

ZOE: I think because it's [that language] always being seen in galleries, unless you step outside of it then you're suddenly aware of the trends that are happening. I can definitely speak to going to many gallery openings or exhibitions and being alienated from a space or from an artist. As you're saying, it's just inaccessible in some way.

JUAN: So, I just started being a teacher, just a couple weeks ago and let me tell you it's a struggle. But something that I have been thinking about constantly is contemporary artists

Los Zorrillos y El Gato
Linoleum, 13.5in x 24in, 2021

and presenting that to my classes.

Because art is a very antique thing. Who do we think of when you think of art? You think of the Mona Lisa? You think of all these dead artists who are fantastic, but there are countless artists that are currently making art that are super, super great, who are really addressed issues like accessibility and representation, but they're just not being talked about. So, that's something that I'm trying to highlight.

We're at a point where art has never been more accessible, but at the same time it feels very alienated because social media is one of the...yeah, it's a blessing and a curse. But there's so many artists that are currently making out. It's so easy to see their work because there's online galleries, there's the artist pages themselves, so why not highlight them? Why not bring that to the forefront?

Definitely you need to learn art history, but you can also learn about what's going on now. And I think now it's the best time because you can do anything. I mean really, there's never been a time where every art movement is currently taking place right now. You can be the classical painter and that works, but you can also be super conceptual and that works. You can take sculpture in whatever direction if you want functional, form, vessels, ceramics or if you want to be completely off the wall and work with whatever medium, right? So that's something to be aware of where now you can really do anything but why is that not being talked about?

ZOË: Given a chance like what would you like to see? Besides accessibility?

JUAN: I think of community and having to display art is the first step. So, I would like to see more small gallery places and art just being displayed in restaurants in common settings.

ZOË: Another artist that I interviewed spoke a lot about art being accessible. That every person should be able to purchase a piece



Carcel de Ojas
Woodcut, 25in x 37in, 2018

of art for their home-

JUAN: There're craft fairs around here, art fairs and I've tried to go to that. And seeing art for sale and it's, you know, it's inexpensive and I see people buying it this and that. But I think making art accessible part of it has to go price as well. You don't need to spend \$5,000 on a painting.

You can buy a print and prints are fine. So, I think the way of going about it where you can only have art if it's original that's also not a healthy mentality. It comes out to honesty and then how are you trying to just fill space? Or is that how you work? Accessibility just raises so many questions about art and about what the next step is because there's so many things you need to do to make it accessible, there isn't just one solution.

ZOE: Who are some of the people that you're looking at? Or what types of readings are you doing?

JUAN: I don't think I'm look at anybody in particular now. It's just more so whatever I'm feeling that day. So, if I'm thinking sculpturally, I will look up different sculptors, I'll just browse social media. I think that's the biggest inspiration for me currently. Because there's so much good work out there and there's such a variety of styles in any medium, so I look at printmaking a lot, because that's what I like, and there's so many different ways of handling the medium.

Some are very classical, traditional wood engraving, but that some of them are much more abstract process based, so I'll just hop on Instagram and look. That's really what I'm looking at now because you'll see when they [artists] post it [their work]. A lot of stuff you'll see, the progress, and it was made last week, so you know which is very current, very contemporary, and not just something that was made "contemporary" but was actually made in the 90s, right? Because those 20 years everything changes. I also have a big interest in clothing and sneakers. So, I'll browse

on Instagram and just go down the rabbit hole until I find something that's cool.

ZOË: What I personally like about Instagram, when I'm researching artists, is its from their own words. And it's done informally so it's not full of that art statement jargon.

JUAN: There's definitely something autobiographical about it, but there's also a lot of them [artists] that are just posting the process, and it's a very raw artwork. For some people you only see the finished work, but for others you see the process. And not so much finished work. So then that's what's important to them. Yeah, I love Instagram. I think it's one of the good things about social media where it's easy to get exposed to a lot of things.

Just don't spend 8 hours on it.

ZOË: And you spoke before, a little bit, about going to art fairs and something that you and I had started before The Aerogramme Center was The Aerogramme Center was this collective. We were trying to find a way to support artists but also ourselves.

You had graduated a year before me, I graduated, and we were both kind of feeling like there wasn't that sense of community because we didn't have the facilities that we were used to at MICA, and it became a big deterrent in holding ourselves accountable for being artists. And again, that internal guilt that we feel because we weren't making art [after graduating] and so how do you justify that kind of degree?!

JUAN: Yeah, for sure I mean the facilities of school were super nice and anybody that's in college, listening to this, you're going to definitely feel it when you leave because the facilities, no matter how good or bad they are, they're still going to be better than whatever you have at home.

That's one of the hardest things. And then just having a space to work because working in your bedroom is really hard or working in your house. Even if you have a

separate room or, it's on a different floor like the basement or anything, it's so hard to remove yourself because you still know you are at home. But at school we were given studios, what junior year? Some people got it all junior year or half of junior year and then senior year you receive at least a studio space. Which was awesome because you got to see so much different work all the time, you get to just have a space to work in that's removed from your house because working in your apartment when it's late, you have your roommates there and they're playing Mario Kart, you don't want to do art.

There is a degree of self-discipline, but having a separate space, it just helps you think differently. Then you also have other responsibilities. Then you have to get a job to support the art making, but then you're tired...

ZOË: It's definitely a safety net being in a school because you were paying for that. And earlier iterations of what this art collective was, was sort of like a book club where it would be a group of artists that would meet like once a month and share what they're doing.

JUAN: Yeah, because the idea of a book club right, you get assigned a book, you read it and then you check in about it. So having a similar art club or collective you kind of hold each other accountable to be making. Or maybe not making, but you're researching or you're doing something in the creative process so you're holding yourself accountable for it as well as holding each other accountable. And I think that's super helpful but it's hard when you're an adult just finding time for stuff.

But I think now, because this was all way before Covid and before Zoom took off, I think now would probably be the easiest time to get it set up because there's already so much leg work done for it.

ZOË: Do you have any final thoughts? Are there any projects you're working on?

JUAN: I'm currently trying to figure out different mediums. I want to do something with patches because I like cloths, like I mentioned, and I think that would be a good way of also presenting art. Stick it on a denim jacket so I'm just working on really expanding out the mediums. Maybe going back to painting since I've been so averse to it. Just thinking of ideas, how I can present them differently? Where I can present them? Do I want to present them because that's a whole other conversation.

ZOË: And that's all we can do right now, but it gives you something to focus on when you're stuck inside.

Untitled
Ceramics, 2018



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ANCHOVY

STORIES BY Emil Čolić

ARTWORK BY La Hun

“We should help it,” Roderick meowed, looking up at the colossal birch.

Vince sat, gnawing at something in his shoulder fur. “It’ll be fine. It got up there by itself.”

Their tails danced through the air in contemplation.

“What if it got up with one of those big red trucks and can’t get down now?”

The human peeked over the edge of the large branch, as if it knew they were mewing over it. It hiccuped.

“Come on. *Dino’s* is closing. We’ll miss the good sack.”

Roderick furrowed his nose. “They have weak legs, Vincent.” He circled the trunk, searching for a way up. “And there’s more to life than scraps.”

As the human shuffled around, a bottle slipped from its hand and shattered on the footpath. The poor thing groaned.

Vincent dropped a grey clump of something from his mouth. “I’m not thinking about scraps. I’m thinking about us.”

Roderick shot a look as sharp as his claws. Vincent changed tack.

“I just mean. What do you wanna do? Help it - How? Then find its house? Get it to feed us out of a can?”

“It’s no Anchovy à la Trashbag.”

Vince's sigh rustled his whiskers; his eyes narrowed. "You sound like a boxshitter."

Roderick bore down on his brother.

"Don't use that word."

Vincent stood.

"Why not?"

"It's offensive. We're half inside-cat."

"Maybe you're that half."

Roderick hissed, arching his back. Vincent stood on his hind legs.

They both leapt first.

Limbs and tails and hints of red mixed in a heap like a forkful of Dino's spaghetti bolognese.

They'd stop. Circle one another, then dive back in.

Their cries attracted the attention of local humans.

A young one taped them on its phone through a window. An elder one emerged from a door. A warrior in a soft regal gown. Hard plastic rollers in its hair and a broom in its hand.



It swept at the pair, droning in its odd dialect. The barbs were sharp and bent in every direction.

Roderick bolted beneath a parked car, and Vince backed off the other way.

Before retreating, predictably in the direction of Dino's, Vince turned back.

"Look at that. A roof over your head. Just how you like."

When the coast cleared, Roderick crawled out. He climbed the tree quickly, never looking back.

The human was snoring. Its breath made Roderick's eyes water. Strange characters were scrawled on the poor creature's face.

Roderick climbed on the branch above the human, keeping watch.

His eyes were tired from the fight, and so soon, he rested.

When he woke up, sunlight mottled the branch below where his human had been.

On the ground, Roderick saw a gigantic puddle of vomit. It looked like it was filled with half-chewed fries, but it was hard to tell from this distance.

His legs felt like jelly, and he dug his claws into the tree. The ground was far. Too far.

Beside the vomit, Vince stood waiting with a meatball in his mouth.

BAY AREA STARTUP BREAKS GROUND, FIRING 50% OF STAFF IN METAVERSE

From ordering a taxi with the tap of your phone, to ordering dinner with the tap of your phone, to ordering toilet paper with the tap of your phone, Silicon Valley is known for fundamentally transforming how the world works. And now, NamaStay Inc, a startup that creates guided meditation apps for dogs, claimed one more 'first'.

It started last Tuesday when the entire company was invited to an all-hands meeting in the Metaverse. Employees were spawned into one of two duplicate virtual meeting rooms upon logging in. Both were designed to look like art galleries with renderings of the company's signature products in ornate frames. A stage stood before the crowd.

For the first twenty minutes, the crowd spoke amongst themselves as they awaited the delayed arrival of CEO Jack Metal. With the holiday season approaching, many were wondering whether this would be the announcement of the Christmas party theme or the much-anticipated new bonus structure.

The meeting was filmed on a staff members' phone and later uploaded to YouTube. At the time of writing, it has received over 4 million views.

When Metal appeared on stage, he asked his team to quiet down before he began. "I know you're all busy, and I am sure you are all wondering why we've called you into this meeting today."

His avatar, in jeans and a Balenciaga NFT hoodie, began to pace slowly back and forth across the stage "We've had a really great run with some of our iconic products. However, some of our



Toys
Oil colors, wax pencil on canvas, 125cm x 125cm, 2021

big bets, like the PujaPooch wellness packages, were not as well-received as we would have liked.”

The voice-processing AI identified the shakiness in Metal’s tenor and his avatar began to sweat cartoonishly.

“Nobody likes to lay people off. Especially not me. And especially not when it’s half of you.” Metal continued, “I’ve only done this four times in my career, and every time I get terrible heartburn”.

In the foreground of the recording, a Junior Account Manag-

er, whose avatar was a large anthropomorphised platypus in a business suit, mumbled concerns to a colleague beside him about his rent which had just gone up.

The colleague replied, “I’m signing for a mortgage next week. I’m nearly forty. This might never happen for me again”. Her Darth Vader avatar modified her voice, but its worried tone was still audible.

“If you are on this call, you are in the half of the company that—”

And that’s when the employees found themselves suddenly transported to a scenic mountain top in Switzerland. On the stage, their CEO had been replaced by Roger Federer.

The tennis pro began an impassioned monologue about the unique wonders of his Nordic homeland. “The lakes are like nothing you have seen before. Isn’t that right, Robert DeNiro?”

As Robert DeNiro apparated in from stage right, a cartoon squirrel avatar named Katie Pickman, whose son had been in and out of hospital for months, broke down in tears.

It appeared that NamaStay had been using the ad-supported version of the Metaverse, which plays an unskippable ad after 30 minutes.

“Book now with coupon code FEDERER10 and get \$10 off!” Federer signed off before lobbing a tennis ball towards a ski field.

When the staff were teleported back to the gallery two minutes later, Metal’s avatar was eating lunch. He quickly wiped his mouth and tried to speak, but the words couldn’t come out.

“Ahhh, on mute! Technology! Am I right?”.

The crowd didn’t respond.

Metal then hastily informed the employees in the room that they are the 50% who are being terminated. Belongings were to be picked up from the office by close of business or incinerated

The employees began to move around erratically, strafing left and right, and jumping ten feet into the air. They charged towards the stage but were met with an invisible barrier. A senior member of the HR team managed to scream “You’re a real fuc-” before the crowd was duly muted.

“Your Metaverse accounts will also be immediately disabled”,

Metal continued.

The avatars, one by one, began to disintegrate, catch fire, or melt into the marble flooring, depending on their unique retrenchment animation.

It was only fifteen minutes later that Metal realized he had confused the two meeting invite links. In fact, the staff in the other gallery were supposed to be fired.

This point was later clarified through an all-staff email.



The Feet Are Sinking into the Dreams
Acrylics on canvas, 232cm x 275cm, 2020

NECRONOMÉMON

Casey Sullivan and I stopped being friends after a weekend at her grandmothers' manor. A hundred boring rooms and a forest between you and the nearest Blockbuster. But I'd stay out there and drag Mom too because Casey and I weren't just friends, we were *best* friends.

That Sunday, our mothers insisted 'fresh air' by the lake would do us good. I suspect it was to distract us while they drank enough merlot to stand one another. We weren't outdoorsy, but neither of us was into makeup either. Nerds, I guess, is the term.

Casey flipped rocks revealing slimy things while I obsessed over my *Pokémon* cards at the water's edge. The sun shined across the pride of my collection, a holographic Charizard. I'd traded a pile of weaker monsters for it.

The night before, we'd each won one battle. I was planning moves to win tonight's tiebreaker when a heavy gust blew in, flinging my cards into the water.

Now, I could cry over those cards to this day, but never in front of Casey. It didn't matter if other kids thought I was lame. She couldn't. So I mourned Charizard in quiet, allowing only a thin film of tears to form. Casey rested her hand on my shoulder as we watched the dark water carry away that night's entertainment.

So there we were with nothing to do, two Moms who didn't want to hear it, and four hours till bedtime. Like ice cream to hot pavement, it didn't take long for us to fall onto the worst damn thing for us in that hellish place.

This happened to be in the library. The books there were

dense, leatherbound and far less intriguing than the ladder that slid along the largest shelf. Sweaty palmed, I'd climbed to the top rung to show Casey how scared I wasn't, when the glint of it caught my eye.

The book was held shut with black glassy metal. Bound in a strange scaly pelt. As I ran my fingers down the it's ribbed spine, I knew the clasp would flick open easily. Just for me.

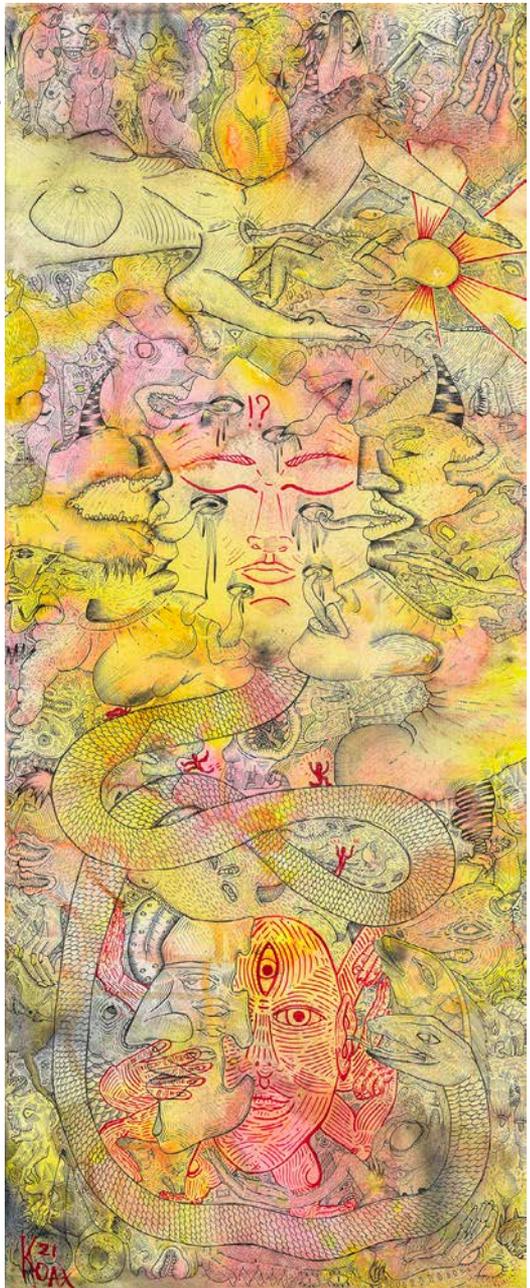
I tucked the volume under my arm, but it slipped, hitting the floor with a thud. I scrambled down the ladder and Casey's eyes darted to the door. No parental supervision appeared.

Inside that book were aversions unimaginable. Had we been older, our minds more rigidly tied to this dimension, the contents might have driven us mad. It was written in some impossible dialect I shouldn't have known, yet somehow understood.

Entranced, the book's gibberish poured from my lips.

Lights flickered, and the room shook. Thunder clapped from the cloudless sky. Books crashed down from shelves around us. Casey backed into a corner of the room. Far from me.

A black substance I now know as ichor oozed from between



the floorboards. The goo piled, heaping on itself, forming a hulking dark mass. Arms and legs like tree trunks.

Slits all over its body opened one by one, revealing hundreds of eyes. They dotted its flesh like chickenpox. My legs froze as the mucus-yellow irises stared down at me then directed themselves to Casey.

Two lumbering steps later and the beast was standing over her.

I found it in myself to bolt over and insert myself between them.

Casey gripped my hand.

The creature roared into our faces, spraying us with the foul odour of thawed fish fingers. Teeth swirled around its mouth like a whirlpool.

At first, death seemed close. But something in its eyes that told me it would never hurt me. It stepped back and, like a puppy that's learned to sit, its expressions softened.

His name was Karl, I thought.

Definitely a Karl.

We stood alone for a moment before the library door swung open.

Casey's grandmother stood in the opening.

A weird woman. I'd only ever seen catatonic staring out over the grounds in her robe. Usually slouched in her velvet seat, the woman now stood unravelled. She was tall and dominated the doorway.

Her eyes were open and all white, she began to scream.

"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh!"

Red goo emerged from her beneath her robe. It weaved along the floor before taking the form of a hideous, gigantic worm. Its body was janky and unspeakable. Dozens of gills striped its body, birthing arms that looked human.

"YOGGOTHNTYH!" the old woman shouted.

Obediently The Worm lunged. Its hands clawed at Karl. Their

No Zombie

Acrylics, technical drawing pen, Chinese ink on paper, 89.5cm x 47cm, 2021

fingers poked his many eyes. He needed to get away. To slow it down.

As if Karl could hear my thoughts, he retreated and knocked a bookshelf onto the advancing Worm. But that only slowed it for a moment. Its wiry arms flung heavy books at him until he cowered, trapped in the far corner.

I tried to go to him, but Casey pulled me back.

The Worm charged for Karl, leaving a putrid trail in its wake. It wrapped itself around him and squeezed. Karl's moans grated at my very soul. It felt as if they were my own.

In seconds, he'd burst back into goo, vanishing through the floorboards.

The snake, too, dissolved, retreating back into the grandmother's robes. She rolled back down to a hunch, lifted the dark book from the floor and exited the room without a word.

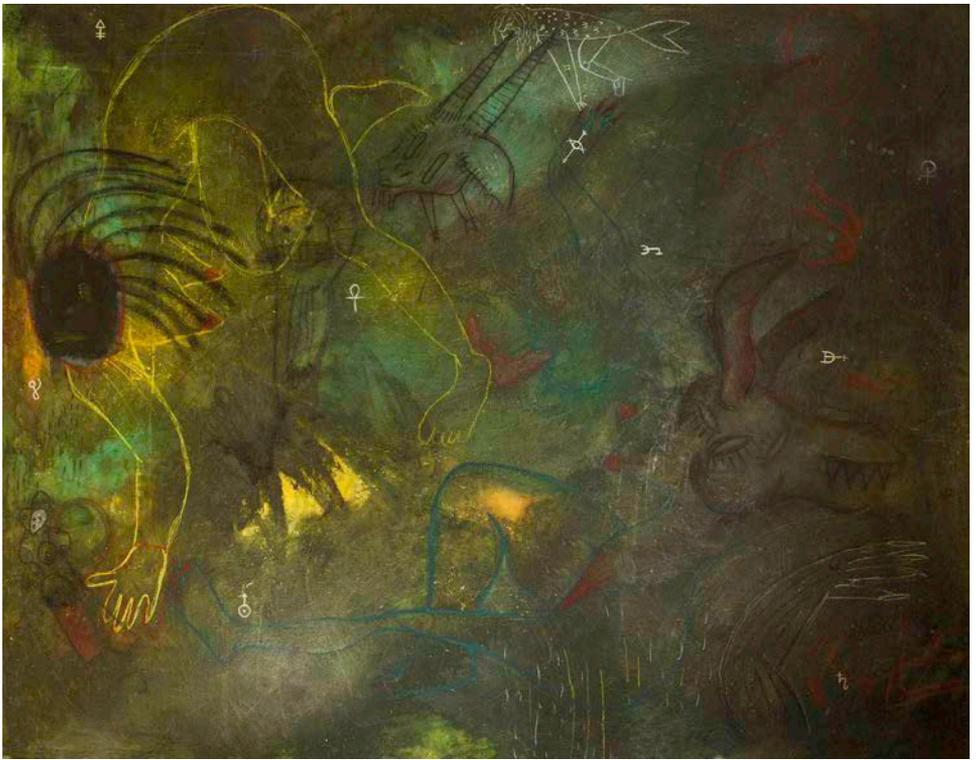
"Hey!" I shouted at the empty doorway. "He was mine!"

Downstairs we found our mothers sleeping on the sofas, an episode of *Friends* playing on the TV. Casey flicked through channels and asked if I wanted to watch *Buffy*.

I shrugged. My sleepless little mind was preoccupied. The book called out. Only a few rooms away. So easy to sneak in. To slip it into a duffel.

Casey could never know. A possible tattletale.

The next morning, I asked if Casey and I could drive back in separate cars. All the way through the forest and onto the highway, I stroked the tome's spine. I thought of Karl and how I had traded one friend for many more.



Mercury
Oil colors, wax pencil on canvas, 172cm x 222cm, 2021

THE CAULDRON

POEMS BY Emily Reid Green

ARTWORK BY Olena Kayinska

We are swirling without consent
Old crones circling third rock slow
Romance the ingenues spinning innocent
Brittle bone metronome meets butterfly

We are swirling without consent
No fingers but our own will do
Still the boys stand by fingers poised mid-air
Craning soon straining belts and shirts and sins
They devolve into men
Too upright for their own good

We are swirling without consent
No spell to cast so tongues and dicks away
Magick is our heart and tidal wave
And so rise again again again

We are swirling without consent



Cemetery of Sleep
Acrylic on canvas, 95cm x 160cm, 2021



Children Bury the Beetle
Acrylic on canvas, 100cm x140cm, 2020

SHE

A SOMONKA POEM

Perhaps a witch–
woman without disguise
naked power
moonglow makeup
shadow strength.
Before a rose
undone by scent
silk petals
the blush of romance
thorns fast forgotten.

TACTILE: A SOMONKA POEM INSPIRED BY 5 OF SWORDS, PAGE OF CUPS AND KNIGHT OF SWORDS

You will never know
the blue-black heart on my sleeve—
its frantic grief beat—
as anything but a bruise,
shame that fades with forgetting.

The hand remembers
only what the palm has met:
You are no stranger.
Fingers rove in search of scars,
calculating a trauma.



David the Psalm-writer
Acrylic on canvas, 85cm x 135cm, 2019

UNLEARN INSPIRED BY THE DEATH TAROT CARD

Now is the moment to steer ourselves,
to blink back daydreams and shoulder the morning.

There will be muscles sore and more to tread
in the small hours where bent and frayed we worry
our hair, rip cuticles.
Stand in someone else's footprints.

Why the memorized violence?

Our penance habit is homegrown and so
time to live a stranger,
lose the star to a new moon
and orient under our own power.

Say goodbye in a foreign tongue
made light by a new sun:
We will dawn.



Ganmushpia
Acrylic on canvas, 175cm x 135cm, 2021

CLEANSE INSPIRED BY THE CHARIOT, SIX OF CUPS AND DAUGHTER OF CUPS

Because moonlight is forgiving
she will drown by midnight, anonymous
under the silver tide.

The apple too she holds or rather the apple
an engraved reminder
of a job well done,
of hunger. After so many centuries
the flesh cannot remain untarnished.

Now token.
Now taunting.
And the water whispers too,
promises camouflage for a lonely heart,
and the evil eye conspires to swallow her tears.

At least one of us will have our fill.

And so she opens, pours forth a downward
spiral, trusting muscle memory to stone
sink until another sunlight.



Desert Sand Witches
Acrylic on canvas, 85cm x 145cm, 2020



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