

louden singletree

WRITING AND
VISUAL ART

from the UNIVERSITY OF
THE FRASER VALLEY



ISSUE 17/WINTER 2025

louden singletree

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FRASER VALLEY'S
JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY WRITERS AND ARTISTS

The *Louden Singletree* is UFV's literary and visual arts journal. Since its inception in 2009, the *Louden Singletree* has been a forum in which students, alumni, faculty, and staff of the university can share their creative work.

louden singletree

Issue #17

EDITORIAL BOARD

PROJECT MANAGER

Kelsey Robson

SOCIAL MEDIA

Skylar Janzen

Jorja Johns

COPY EDITORS

Xavier Ibraheem

Jorja Johns

Cassie Williams

LAUNCH MANAGER AND PROMOTIONS

Jorja Johns

Cassie Williams

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Caitlyn Carr

Carly Fleming

Rob Taylor

The UFV English

Department

FACULTY ADVISOR

John Carroll

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION

Skylar Janzen

PRINTING

Minuteman Press

Abbotsford

COVER ART

“LONG.LIVE.\$ELF”

MSAMI

Contents © 2025

Louden Singletree

or the authors

FIRST READERS

Maya Alfreds

Alana Awram

Jessica Blanchard

Didi Brown

Caitlyn Carr

Kayla Castonguay

Larissa Cline

Gerald Eggert

Carly Fleming

Jasper Fleming

Seet Gill

Heather Holland

Piper Hornall

Jack Keating

Anna McCausland

Gabby Paradis

Veronica Powell

Wren River

Sumitra Robertson

Brandon Routh

Contents

vii	<i>Editors' Note</i>	
viii	Leanne Dunic	Foreword
1	MSAMI	LONG.LIVE.\$ELF
3	Savannah Crabb	Chemical Peppermint
5	Jasmine Filpula	The Small Things Symphony
7	Jack Keating	Smoky and Sweet
10	Annabel Bot	Stomach-ache
11	Piper Hornall	Past, Present, Future
13	Carly Fleming	Coming Alive
15	Heather Holland	In Twenty Years
17	Alyssa Jones	Unrequited
18	Annabel Bot	So-called Sin
19	Noah Johnson	Dandelion Tea
21	Carly Fleming	What's Holding You Back?
23	Avery Dow-Kenny	If Anything Happens
25	Didi Brown	Queen
27	Olivia Brand	Cozy
29	Didi Brown	The Dragon Princess
34	Caitlyn Harding	If a Tree Falls
35	Arsena Eeg	De Stijl Arachnid
37	Shaune Lewis	Hologram
39	Caitlyn Harding	Mulberry Tree

41	Sarah Sovereign	with grief
43	Sydney Hutt	Alone Again
46	Sarah LeGear	Kintsugi
47	Arsena Eeg	One More Than One Is
49	Shaune Lewis	Maersk Maersk World
51	Shaune Lewis	The Disquiet of Unbeing #1
53	Shaune Lewis	The Disquiet of Unbeing #2
55	Bryanne Lane	Body and Blood
57	Jasper Fleming	21 Lines on Living From 20th Century Folk Songs
58	Lydia Gunnink	Trying to Sing Psalm 84
59	Spencer Wiebe	The Silence of God
61	Carly Fleming	Contained
63	Carly Fleming	The Spaces We Keep
65	Gavin Thomas	Not Karaoke
66	Olivia Brand	Asteria's Palace
67	Olivia Brand	Asteria's Palace
69	Bryanne Lane	Creating Culture
71	Émeric Gagne	Men's War
73	Sahib Bahia	SURZEN
75	Caitlyn Harding	Gaelic Girls
77	<i>Contributor Biographies</i>	

Thank You

To our sponsors for their financial contributions that made publishing this magazine possible.

Louden Singletree graciously thanks the following sponsors for their aid in this year's publication:



Air-Way Canada,
Pacific Hose & Fittings div.
Banter Ice Cream
Chilliwack Cultural Centre
Chilliwack E-Exit
Dares Country Feeds
Fieldhouse Brewing

Jimmy J's
Lepp Farm Market
Nerd Haven Games
Prime Signs
Sticky's Garrison
UFV Bookstore
Unika

Editors' Note

Every artist can relate to staring at a blank page, counting down the days—or minutes—to a deadline. We thrive off too much caffeine and an invisible yet urgent need to prove something. This magazine is a testament to all of you who defeated that ticking clock and won your internal battles to get these pieces on paper.

Welcome to the seventeenth issue of the *Louden Singletree*! We're so glad you're here.

We acknowledge that UFV is on the unceded and traditional territories of the Stó:lō people and we express our deep gratitude that we are able to work and learn on this beautiful land.

Thank you to everyone who brought this issue to life. Your vulnerability and passion shines throughout these pages and we are grateful to you for allowing us to partake in this journey. None of this would be possible without the contributions we received or without the efforts of our volunteer readers.

We extend a special thank you to Professor John Carroll who provided us with consistent wisdom and entertainment throughout his last year with *Louden*, and to the previous board members whose guidance set us on our path. To Rob Taylor who offered his help whenever it was needed, and to Leanne Dunic, UFV's Writer in Residence, for her thoughtful foreword helping us find our footing as artists.

Over these past two semesters, our Editorial Board blended the various strengths of our team to bring more well-deserved recognition to the *Louden Singletree*. The attestation of this is the incredible number of 153 submissions that we received this year. Before the forty final pieces were decided on, each submission was reviewed by three or more sets of eyes. The accepted pieces then went through three or more rounds of edits and proofreads before making it to the page.

It has been a privilege having a hand in creating this year's issue; from us to you, enjoy.

- The 2025 *Louden Singletree* Editorial Board

LEANNE DUNIC

Foreword

Dear Readers,

In my time as the Kuldip Gill Writer in Residence, I've spoken to a wide range of UFV student and staff writers. If one thing is clear, it's that we find ourselves in interesting times. Folks are processing endless challenges no matter what age. We are overwhelmed by AI fakery, plane crashes, a shifting world order, the price of eggs...

As our ground trembles from crustal plates and induced seismicity, how do we, as writers and readers, find a foothold? While it's easy to let ourselves be inundated and seduced by whatever flickering spectacle the algorithm has honed for our precise interests, it has become an act of cultural preservation and invigoration to seek out and create literature and art that requires our sustained attention. Writing can be that seemingly small act that creates ripples in the larger societal conversation. You'll find some of those ripples in these following pages.

In this issue of *Louden Singletree*, Sydney Hutt wonders "about colon/cancer, carcinogens" in their poem "Alone Again." In Avery Dow-Kenny's "If Anything Happens," students struggle to stifle screams in a school lockdown. Anxiety is ever present. In her poem "Wild Geese," celebrated poet Mary Oliver writes, "Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine." Our poems and stories connect us with one another. They are windows looking out on other worlds, but they can also act as a mirror. Is there anything more comforting than seeing yourself reflected in a piece of art, or to be told that your work resonated with someone?

Write to document.
Write to process.
Write to share.
Write to support.
Write to protest.
Write to grow.
Write to play.
Write to translate.
Write to organize.
Write to inspire.
Write to build a world.
Write to usher in a better era.

Find your voice. Find the voices of others. Connection is needed now more than ever. As Noah Johnson says in their poem in this issue, “plant ideas and perspectives like dandelion seeds.”

- Leanne Dunic

COVER ARTWORK / MSAMI

LONG.LIVE.\$ELF

Growing up my mother would always say, “Michy in life you have to make sacrifices,” and I used to think she sacrificed too much of herself: that she was abandoning herself and subconsciously, me. And so, as a child I promised myself I wouldn’t become an emblem of personal or familial sacrifice.

However, as an adult, I often feel conflicted by the sacrifices made in search of my autonomy. I feel a pull between two worlds: leaving behind the comfort of the past self, and being enveloped by the chasm of uncertainty that the new self possesses. Dancing between looking for a savior and reconstructing my sense of self I fear there is no map to my destination. There is no end to my sacrifices, and in turn, I will become the thing I promised not to become.

LONG.LIVE.\$ELF aims to capture the legacy of martyrdom between mother and child but also this new dynamic of self vs. self; ruminating on the self that protected and carried me this far that I have outgrown but can’t quite leave behind, and the self that I need to embody to better navigate a mutable world and achieve my aspirations.

In considering the past, present and future, the work becomes a meditation on the complex relationality of abandonment, sacrifice and self-actualization as legacy.



SAVANNAH CRABB

Chemical Peppermint

*Illness is just a word, Mother is just a word
With someone in it. Can I sing without words?
The slow winter light pours through my window
Long after I've stopped making sense, I'm just a sound.
- Kayla Czaga, "Song" – For Your Safety Please Hold On*

Chemical peppermint by the spoonful
to flush the words out of my head,
and settle my heart in the dark.
This freezing weighs me deep
into bed, I stare like the stuffed animals
with forgotten names.
To close my eyes isn't anything,
I dream of nothing.
I am 12 years old and
illness is just a word, mother is just a word

that is as relentless as you need it to be.
Like the hours abused in emergency waiting
for a white coat with someone in it.
Mother gives the words space to smother.
Last time she was here someone saved her
from a real invader inside her skull,
that was carved out in unconscious hours.
Now she pushes promises she couldn't have,
and I wait for a lorazepam and a diagnoses
with someone in it. Can I sing without words?

Each one wailing from the radio is vicious
against feigned sleep in the car coming home.
They gnaw out holes and burrow into the folds
to fester and spill out my eyes.
What do you want for dinner?
she asks because she's still alive.
I want to swallow the sun.
So I can thaw out this carnage
until I am stashed safely under the covers and
the slow winter light pours through my window.

Chemical peppermint in a pink pill,
and the freezing weighs
into somewhere I can't see.
I'm gazing out into the snowfall,
the shredded paper settling back
into a boundless blank sheet.
Maybe I could imagine
I am 22 years old
and the words will sing as they were meant to
long after I've stopped making sense and I'm just a sound.

JASMINE FILPULA

The Small Things Symphony

When I was a child
the world seemed to have more bugs.
It's surprising that a smaller perspective could view so much more.
The shadows of another world slip past us effortlessly.
What do we miss?
Even our own mortality can be blind to us.
You are a machine that runs and runs.

All the while,
life vibrates all around us.
Silken webs and the catacombs of anthills.
Harmony and destruction.
How many days pass before you forget to tune into the channels
of life around you?
"All in a day's work"
becomes a commercial designed to sell you something you never knew you
needed
until they demanded that you do.
Obey and commit.

One day you will realize that the flies inside your house
are reminders of your true design.
Life is not made to serve one master
when the sky is a paintbrush,
the grass a piano,
and the bark of trees beg to hear you sing.
Let all creations hear your voice.
Stand outside and let it ring
so that they may echo back to you
that you are simply where you belong.

JACK KEATING

Smoky and Sweet

A small group of us carefully make our way down the cliff. There are new stairs now, with a small landing, and a large deck constructed around a peeling *Arbutus* tree. The wooden walkway is built against the first cliff face, just below Matt's Imperial Palace on Salt Spring Island. It's a somber procession, and the sense of loss would be palpable to anyone witnessing our group trekking downward toward Booth Bay. It's the summer of 2013 and we're missing one of our own.

At some point when he was still with us, Adrian told Matt that if he died, he wanted his ashes shot out of a potato cannon. Whether that existed in writing somewhere, I couldn't tell you, but as soon as that request became known, not a single person ever questioned it. Adrian always had an air of Hunter S. Thompson about him, for better or worse. Makes sense, as one of the movies we'd frequently watch as teens was *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Regardless of the original inspiration for Adrian's request, it would be honoured.

The day is warmly serene. We climb down the rough trail in relative silence, watching our steps, taking our time. I know every inch of this path; we've walked it, run it, stumbled up and down it hundreds of times. We find ourselves at what I now consider "Adrian's (or Age's) Spot." Somewhere between halfway, and two-thirds of the way down the cliff (depending on which route you take), there's a large outcropping of rock with enough topsoil on it to sustain a good-sized patch of grass. An enormous Douglas Fir set back from the cliff edge provides some shade when the sun is at its zenith. It has been a lush weekend, though not nearly on the same scale as the initial week of his passing. Still, a bottle of Jameson is as vital as sunscreen on our outing down to the water.

Adrian's dad, Pat, and his brother, Bo, are with us. We gather on the small patch of grass overlooking Booth Bay and Vancouver Island. Matt and Pat step up to the precipice as the rest of us stand behind and to the side of them. Pat holds a small container with the last of Adrian's ashes, and he speaks quietly to them for a few minutes. All throats are tight and the bottle of Jameson we pass around

does little to relieve the weight of witnessing a father say goodbye to his son, our friend, who only a year before would have been bounding down this treacherous trail alongside us. As Pat speaks softly to Adrian, Matt prepares the launcher. He loads the potato down the barrel with a wooden dowel, and then unscrews the back of the firing chamber to fill it with hairspray. The process only takes a minute, and when Matt is satisfied, he screws the cap back on and nods to Pat.

Pat lets out a heavy sigh, hands over the container, and then puts a steady hand on Matt's shoulder. The group of us standing behind them do our best to remain silent, preserving the moment. Through misty eyes we absorb all the beauty of our natural surroundings, and are grateful we can once again be together to honour our friend. The time of day we've chosen means that the shadow which normally provides some respite from the sun is reduced to a sliver. Our tears mix with sweat and our lips are wet with whiskey. Matt carefully empties Adrian's ashes into the barrel and then lifts the launcher, pointing it up and out towards the ocean. We hold our breath.

Matt presses the button, and a booming thud sends the little potato flying into the great blue yonder. However, while the potato is now many hundreds of feet away from us and falling fast towards the water, a small grey cloud of Adrian's ashes hangs in the air, just beyond the end of the barrel. It floats wistfully by Matt and Pat, and as soon as it's in front of us, a sudden gust of wind blows the dark cloud directly into our faces. The abruptness of the gust causes more than one of us to gasp in surprise, and, in doing so, we collectively inhale an uncountable number of fine particulates of what was once our dear friend. I receive a good amount of Adrian directly into my open eyes and mouth. We all start coughing immediately. My friend Lee, standing to my right, wipes grey streaks of Adrian off his bare chest. Half-blinded, I search unsuccessfully for the bottle of water I brought down to take to the beach. Desperate to clear my throat, I grab the Jameson and chase Age down in the most appropriate way possible. Dave uses his t-shirt to clean Adrian off his sunglasses, shaking his head and chuckling to himself. The coughing and spitting devolve into nauseating laughter. Matt and Pat, initially wearing expressions of shock and horror upon turning around and seeing our reactions, laugh themselves to tears.

Death has not diminished his sense of humour. We agree that Adrian's taking a final opportunity to show us how much he cares, and how close he feels to all

of us. At least, I'm sure that's what he'd tell us with a crooked smile on his face, like a kid caught red-handed in the middle of some good-natured mischief. After more happy tears and dusty hugs, we continue down to the beach, moving with some newfound urgency. If pressed, we'd tell Adrian something like, "We were just so motivated to help him complete his journey back to nature." We finish the climb down in half the usual amount of time. Honestly, we're just eager to rinse the rest of him off us.

That accident, as macabre as it was, granted us permission to laugh about everything that had happened since the end of March, and continue to heal. The days leading up to our little ceremony on the cliff had been tough but, like before, we supported each other, and made sure we all spoke our mutual appreciation and love out loud. After we sent him off and washed ourselves of the last of his physical presence, we felt renewed. The sun reflected brilliantly off the light waves as we swam. The air, the water, the warmth; everything was pristine. Things weren't quite back to normal, but we were having fun again, learning to carry on.

That was the turning point in my grieving process. By no means was it over, in a lot of ways it never will be. I think about Adrian all the time, and, when I'm in Salt Spring, they are all positive memories. Being covered in my friend's ashes is the most literal way of confronting their loss I can imagine, and I'm thankful it happened. We needed something like that to break the tension that had hung over us since he passed. I'm sure he got a kick out of it, too. One last prank at our expense, and we will always love him for it.

Now I know what this special kind of friendship tastes like. The texture is gritty, but it's a familiar flavour. Smoky, and kind of sweet.

ANNABEL BOT

Stomach-Ache

I dreamed I knew you again last night. We were young, eyes full of helpless hope and fistfuls of stars. I don't remember exactly what your eyes looked like at six, eight, ten, eleven, whichever it was. I don't remember enough of the dream now. It doesn't make sense anywhere but in my head, because I just remember you and me. Laying together on the floor of a house you no longer visit, the one with the yellow walls that I still drive by on my way to school. Beige carpet rough enough to burn under my elbows, knees. The dark hair you wanted so badly to grow long was falling in your eyes, and we were laughing so hard my stomach hurt in a good way. I had tears in my eyes, the sunlight liquid gold around us, and suddenly it was more fantasy than memory. I think I'll never have that—us—again. I hope you do. Your laughter is still ringing in my ears when I wake. My stomach hurts in a bad way. I wish I knew you again.

PIPER HORNALL

past, present, future

Is it bad things or is it good things that come in threes?

Part one of three, this piece reflects on all that is, all that was, and all that could be. Meant to be viewed during a period of reflection, *past*, *present*, *future* stemmed from a variety of exploratory darkroom techniques that manifested themselves into something, working in tandem with many bits and bobs found discarded in craft bins throughout the Lower Mainland's thrift stores. In an attempt to explore both identity and childhood, this work asks, "What burdens was I given and how do I carry them?"



CARLY FLEMING

Coming Alive

We're always on the cusp
of something.
As we run
hearts reckless with abandon.
Winter coats snapping
like wings
sailing on the tail
of the November wind.

Tiny granules shifting
beneath our feet.
Each step
a myth
imprinted
like the crests of woven residue
on the bed of the retreating sea.

The breeze bites
colour
into our cheeks
as we careen towards
the expansive in-between.
Where waking gradient skies
meet
churning waters of the deep.
Our bodies greet
the foaming mouth
of the shore.

Heads tipped back
arms agape
from our lungs escape
a shrill cry
the circling gulls cannot drown.
Sharp and fresh
we are

Coming Alive

HEATHER HOLLAND

In Twenty Years

In twenty years, maybe, I will understand the true significance, the true reach of our love.
When the lumbermen cut down the tree with the soft, copper flesh that
I spellbindingly carved our names into.
Long after the faint initials have been engulfed
by the cedar's hard, umber frame.
She bled our names, you know.
A blood bond linking us for eternity.
But I'd like to think that, perhaps,
the universe had linked us in star crossed paths
long before I had any time to intervene
in its miraculous plan.

In twenty years, I hope I see you.
Standing tall in a rancher somewhere scenic,
rocking a daughter in your arms that I can only hope is also mine.
Her innocent steel blue eyes would shimmer in the moonlight
and glow at the sound of your voice.
Your boisterous laugh would be the soundtrack of our lives.
Echoing through the halls and plastering into the walls.
We would be so ingrained in the particle make-up of our home
that not even the most skillful of carpenters
could remove our history from its sticky plywood sheathing.

In twenty years, maybe the world will end in fire, and everything will turn to ash.
You and I, all that we do, feel, experience, and love,
burned to ash.
Or perhaps we will be brutally massacred in a fashion never imagined before.
Maybe it was caused by supreme artificial intelligence of the near future.
You and I
turned to ash.

But, when our bodies, our tree, and our home
light up,
the glow will be so incredibly overwhelming;
the flames will spark with a passion that mimics our own;
the heat it will omit will be so strikingly outstanding;
that all will wonder why we burned so fiery, bright, and warm.

In twenty years,
or later.

ALYSSA JONES

Unrequited

and You, o man, who swallowed the sun
went searching through the sky
for something to love.
Swept up the stars
and let starlight consume you whole.

The heavens burn and shine and die,
yet the night is cold
against your skin.
You will not be satisfied
until the moon is devoured.

ANNABEL BOT

So-called Sin

Your mother cannot look me in the eye.
She believes I stole you, corrupted you.
As if that's something I could do,
given you're so impossible to deny.

Your father says that we're going to hell,
that what we have is foul and evil and vile.
You pretend it doesn't fill your throat with bile,
but I taste your guilt. I wish I couldn't tell.

I can't help but wonder if all parents are unfair
like yours. I hope not, it seems so bleak to live
like that, never true to yourself, never able to thrive
just because loving another woman is too much to bear.

But I love you anyway, sunshine painting your skin,
hands and heartbeats heavy with our so-called sin.

NOAH JOHNSON

Dandelion Tea

When my love discusses the weekly drama,
her heart and soul, is steeped and stirred,
delicately poured—in front of me.

Her soft lips, introduce serotonin filled
conversations that taste like ambrosia.
Digestible syllables—bliss.
Ballads that transfuse into my bloodstream
words that echo like sweet, sweet aftertaste,
replanting vocabulary within me
like a wildflower.

Her fingers spring with her palms, rejoicing
dancing like dandelions
praising the wind.
Her beautiful, blistered hands
landscape the conversation. As
I just slowly sip on every inch.
No sugar or milk needed
satisfied simply with her words.

Her astonishing words
plant ideas and perspectives like dandelion seeds,
spreading a new form of energy within my soul.
I am not opposed to the life that breathes
from her encouraging acclamations.
She lifts me up continuously, and
continuously blows me away
with how unbroken I feel within her presence.
She is my home, where we both exist together
in a wildlife garden—our collected, curated community.

Her reliable rebirth
as she perpetually plants herself
along my side.
She speaks with pride
whether through her eyes or exposition.
My girl graduates to goddess
with all the life she creates with every conversation.

At the end of her story, I set the empty cup aside,
she tells me the recipe and I continue to listen.

CARLY FLEMING

What's Holding You Back?

My inspiration for creating this photograph came from answering the question, “What’s holding you back?” When I asked myself this question, the most immediate, truthful response that came to mind was me, myself, and I. I wanted to make a visual representation that depicted how I felt about this question and my answer: conveying the struggle of chasing our dreams and the challenge of not holding ourselves back. It is an impossible task, at times, not to become our own worst enemy. I appreciated the different degrees of shadow in the background of this photo as a visual representation of the evidence of our own self-sabotage that we can see all around us when we are the ones thwarting our own attempts. Although, sometimes, we just can’t see it at the time for ourselves. The question should really become, “Who’s holding you back?” Though the answer for many of us might not change.



If Anything Happens

I knew what a classroom looked like. Walls painted in an off sort of cream colour; whiteboards and projectors and rows upon rows of desks, the material of which was somewhere between wood and plastic. But never had I seen it from this perspective, huddled on the floor behind the teacher's large oak desk, cocooning us in an L-shape against the wall. From here, all I could see was the teacher's back spread broad like a mother bear, and the reflection of the doorway in the shuttered window that spanned the entirety of the opposite wall.

Darkness consumed all twenty-eight of our fragile forms. The only light was that from the hallway, which filtered through the long pane of glass next to the door. It cast a runway of muted gold along the left wall of the classroom, far away from us.

I shifted my feet which had long since fallen asleep. Had it been one hour or four? It felt like days. And yet, I was as alert as if I had just woken from a month of sleep, eyes wide and unblinking, perplexed by the reflection in the window. If anything, anyone, moved in the hallway, I would see them. What I would do with this information, I did not know. I glanced quickly to my right. Mika, the smartest kid in eighth grade and my best friend since the year before, sat as still as a statue, gaze fixed ahead. He too was watching, waiting for the inevitable.

A loud thud echoed through the school from somewhere below us. A wave of gasps filtered its way through the students. Then, silence took us once again. My heart pounded viciously in my ears, my eyelids fluttered at every beat. I knew it as sure as my own name that if my heart beat any faster I would die of a heart attack right then and there.

Someone, somewhere, in the labyrinth of walls and corridors that made up the school called out, their voice deep and muffled, taunting. I tensed, breath catching in my throat. Something moved next to me and I looked down to see Mika's hand in mine. It had been there, tightly gripping mine, for half an hour now, or perhaps we had been like this the entire time.

Mika stared at me with pleading eyes. It was only then that I realised how white my knuckles were. When I shifted my fingers, there were small half-moons dug into the meaty part of his palm. The marks would last for weeks, possibly even scar. I could see it so clearly: years from now when we finally graduated, we would laugh about the time I nearly took a chunk out of his hand. The image was shattered by a strange popping sound and a rupture of screams down the hall. My heart leapt, racing beyond what was humanly possible.

Someone was sobbing silently. I scanned my peers, body turned numb long ago. One girl, a few people down, had her phone out, trying to hide the glow it emitted with her jacket. I could just make out a text screen, but the words grew blurred the more I tried to focus on them. My gaze drifted out at the classroom where my bag sat neatly tucked under my desk, my phone in the front pocket. A strange knowing chill cemented me to the floor.

The yellow splatter of light suddenly vanished as a dark figure loomed in the doorway, peering through the glass at the supposedly empty classroom.

Breathing was a figment of the imagination, I decided, for I had not taken a breath in minutes.

The doorknob rattled slowly, then viciously. Out of the corner of my eye, I glimpsed people covering their mouths to stifle screams they did not trust themselves to withhold. Mika leaned closer to me, wide eyes never leaving the reflection in the window. His breath was hot and shaky against my ear as he whispered,

“That’s not the police.”

Perhaps I died at that moment. Or when the banging started, and the door began to split. No, it had to have been after the teacher stood, spreading her arms wide, for I remember the darkness before the screams began. And then I remember nothing at all.

DIDI BROWN

Queen

O grand and glorious creature,
highest of queens upon the earth!

Richer is all your natural finery
than hoards kept by rulers long dead.
You are bright as fiery topaz
in a gown of velvet adorned with pearls
and onyx; your eyes are perfect,
purest, precious rings of gold.
You languish on pillows and blankets
from which you hardly stir
except to wander the lofty halls
that you did not toil to build or buy.

O terrible tigress, lofty lioness,
foulest she-dragon breathing fire!

No crown you bear between your ears,
no spoils won but fur and feathers
from woodland battles where blood
was spilled on leaf-littered earth;
the rabbits are your prey and subjects.
Neighbouring kings who dare stray
into your domain must face the wrath
of the greatest warrior in the land.
They flee before your spitting tongue
to hide in their castles and lick their pride.

O wicked tyrant splendidly sovereign,
fast do you hold to your cruel statutes!
You will not be disturbed on pain
of mangled hands and bitten fingers.
You will not be denied your dinner when
demanded by your bottomless belly.
You will not be touched without rhyme
or reason, or else a bath be in order.
You will not be ignored when you
desire praise, petting, or pampering.
Your every command will be heeded
by all who hear at any time.

O princess powerful and pitiless,
your majesty outshines the sun and stars!

I am your humble servant, a page
huge of height and clumsy of foot,
attending ardently to your needs.
You are foolish, despotic, wicked —
but I love you, indeed, I love you more
than all the treasures in the world.
For as long as you live, I am yours.
I ask for little in return, only
your love warm and wild as
a simple beast can love another.

O cat curled up on my lap,
you are not a queen after all.

OLIVIA BRAND

Cozy

Cozy is a digital painting inspired by the comfort of a warm and peaceful home. With winter raining down in ., I have found myself sitting by the warmth of the fireplace and reading with my cat. I wanted to encapsulate that atmosphere, and used the fireplace, my cat, and dried flowers to convey the feeling of comfort. The fireplace symbolizes a place of warmth and stability, both elements that turn a house into a home. It is in our nature to feel secure around fire as it meant survival for our first ancestors. My cat represents the feeling of comfort as he peacefully sleeps beside the fire without any worry. Cats are often on high alert in unfamiliar environments, hence showing the viewer just how calming the space is as the cat is settled and sleeping. The dried flowers are meant to represent capturing a moment in time by preserving the beauty of the flower. Just like the piece's conveyed feeling of being in a comfy and safe place, the flowers are dried out and presented as a reminder of a fond memory. I chose warm-toned colours to create the sensation of gentleness in the artwork and to make the viewer feel the warmth of the atmosphere. The digital painting is made with an acrylic and chalk texture as I feel it has a very smooth and gentle touch to it. Nothing beats sitting in a warm and cozy place while taking in a good book.



DIDI BROWN

The Dragon Princess

Based on the English ballad, "The Laidly Worm of Spindleston Heugh"

The sun burned Rowena's back as she carried the trough of milk to the foot of the Heugh, where the dragon lay waiting for its meal. She grunted, her strong arms trembling under the weight. For seven years, she had been chosen to carry the milk that appeased the beast and prevented it from terrorizing the land. The milk slapped against the trough, and droplets splattered her filthy apron. Her back ached, and she desired to set it down to take a rest. But she gritted her teeth, and took the last fifty paces to the stone bowl in the ground, where she dumped the milk, and it sat stagnant like a sad white puddle. It was no longer cool, for it was midsummer and the bowels of the cattle were aflame.

She wiped her sticky forehead and leaned against the Spindlestone. The heat was unbearable, and she imagined being consumed by a dragon's fire would be no less pleasant. The grass was yellow, and dry, beneath her as she slipped down to the earth in exhaustion. Her heart pounded within her chest, faster and faster as time went on. Was the dragon displeased with her offering? Would she be eaten like the prince? He had come to slay his sister, who was cursed by the witch that ruled the land with an iron fist. The people suffered for his failure, and they feared the queen, for she was cruel and wicked. Rowena was merely a dead farmer's daughter, and the cows were all she had. Because of the dragon, there was no milk left to live on.

"Come, Margaret, you wretched lizard," she cried hoarsely. She shook her first at the Heugh. "I've got your milk. Come, come, taste it and leave us be!"

The only answer she got was a thin trail of smoke snaking into the vast blue sky, which was deep azure and made her think of the sea. But the sea could not be drunk, and she was terribly thirsty. Her vision warped, and the glen wavered before her eyes. What she would not give for water! Delirious and hot, she crawled to the trough and leaned over it on her hands and knees. If the dragon would not

drink it, then she would. Like a cat, she lapped up the milk with only her tongue, and forgot all else. Even lukewarm milk was better than poisoned water from the well, or scraping chicken bones with her blackened fingernails. She lapped, and lapped, and lapped with a hunger and fury only known to beasts in a drought.

Hot breath blew the wet hair from her neck, and she froze. She slowly lifted her face, still white and dripping with milk. The dragon's scaly muzzle was inches away from her, its nostrils flared and plaque-ridden teeth bared. Its breath stunk, but not with rotted flesh; no, it was the sour smell of spoiled milk. Rowena's nose wrinkled and she recoiled, but she remained kneeling, for she had not the strength to stand. She usually went away before the dragon came to collect its tribute, for she did not desire to be roasted or eaten. It was common knowledge that the dragon had once been the princess, but she had never seen it in person. She was, quite frankly, disappointed.

"It is mine," it said. "You taint it with your tongue."

"Oh, I'm sorry," Rowena choked, "that my tongue isn't worthy of the milk that came from my cows."

"The wizard said to give it all to me." It grumbled and blew smoke at Rowena, who coughed. "There is not much. What are you hiding from me?"

"We're in a drought," Rowena said. She licked her bleeding lips. A boldness had come upon her, when all knew that it was not wise to speak back to dragons (even enchanted ones). "We have been for the past few years, and so there is no more than this. I wish there were."

"You wish," said the dragon thoughtfully. "I wish as well."

"Uh huh."

"I wish," it continued, "that I was beautiful again, and my brother ruled beside me. He tried to kill me, and now he is bones. Bones cannot be kings."

"You didn't *have* to eat him."

"Oh, but I did! He would not kiss me to break my curse. He did not trust me, so I am still here rotting in the country while my stepmother ruins the kingdom. Borrowed I shall never be 'till the world comes to an end."

With an arched, haughty neck, it began to drink the milk, slurping with a long red tongue that made a stupendous noise. The milk was gone very quickly, and Rowena looked at the empty stone bowl sadly. The dragon's expression was quite similar, its large yellow eyes wide and yearning. It was as thin as her cows and its

ribs showed through the delicate scales on its sides. Its wings were all shrivelled and small, holes pockmarking the membranes. A thin bracelet that may have once been a crown fit snugly on its wrist, glinting in the sunlight. So, she was still dreaming of her days as a princess, before the drought. Before the witch-queen, and her curse. It caught Rowena staring and fixed her in an intense, judgmental gaze.

"You would not understand my pain," it sniffled, and great hot tears dripped down its long nose. "I was beautiful once, and she hated that. She turned me into a beast so she would not have to endure being less beautiful than me, and she turned my own brother against me. I loved him. Oh, I loved him!"

It wailed, its serpentine body writhing pitifully in grief. The long tail whipped in the empty air and the wings fluttered like dying butterflies struggling to take flight. Rowena watched in silence and hugged her scrawny knees to her chest. She picked at her threadbare clothes, the brown worn to an off-white. Her stomach twisted inside of her, reminding her of her hunger. Then, rage bubbled up inside her chest and fueled her to stand in defiance. With her hands clenched at her sides, she faced the dragon head-on with her legs wide apart and her feet firmly planted. "Listen!"

The dragon went still, and its ears flicked. "Listen," she said again, louder. "It's the witch's fault, that's what. She put us all into this mess because of her vanity and greed. Your brother died because of her. My father and mother died because of her. Only we can defeat her."

The dragon slowly turned towards her, ears drooping and head lowered. "How? She abandoned me here because she thinks that she has won, but she still has power over me. I would be as meek as a lapdog in her presence. I cannot fight her the way I am, not without my brother. He is dead."

"I'll fight with you," said Rowena. "Your brother was brave, but not kind, and that's why he didn't kiss you. I know you loved him, but he was a man of the sword and bow. He couldn't save you, but I will."

She stepped over the stone bowl and approached the dragon. The sour milk smell soaked into her skin, and she battled with her revulsion. There was no wonder why the prince did not kiss the poor beast—it was in such a sorry state! Rowena took its face in her large, rough hands, and looked into its eyes for what seemed like an eternity. It made no move to resist her. She leaned in and touched her lips to its horrible snout, which was wet and warm. She did this three times,

for she knew something of the Old Magic (it liked things to come in threes). With a soft hiss and a gentle roar, its scales melted away until Rowena held a human being instead of a monster. But Margaret had been there all along.

“Ah!” The princess exclaimed. “I am free! It was not my brother who would break the curse, but a peasant girl unlooked for. You have taken care of me all these years, and I am ashamed that I do not know your name.”

“Rowena,” she replied breathlessly.

Margaret clapped in joy and rose to her feet unsteadily. She was naked, except for her long golden hair that was plastered to her as if by slime. She had green eyes that sparkled like emeralds in a fair face, and Rowena did not blame the witch for her jealousy. Margaret laughed, a sound that may have once been musical, but was croaky with years of dragon smoke. “Rowena! Rowena! I could say it all the years of my life. You were named after a sacred tree, and so you have transformed me.”

Stammering, Rowena unhooked her poor brown cloak with clumsy fingers and fastened it about the shoulders of the princess. Margaret’s cheeks were rosy as she blushed and wrapped her slender arm about the waist of the sturdy peasant girl as she took tentative steps forward. She had the grace of a fawn, shaky and peculiarly light, and she stumbled several times before she gained her balance. For seven years, she had crawled about with four claws beneath her, so her human body was as foreign to her as if she were born yesterday. It amused Rowena, but she kept that to herself.

And so together they went to the shore and boarded poor Prince Wynde’s old ship, which was still harboured between the jagged rocks amidst the fairy-foam. The rowan planks were strong, untouched by age, and the bite of salt by the magic properties of the wood. It was a magnificent vessel, the prow carved in the form of a swan with an arched neck. The white sail snapped in the fierce wind, and with the cry of gulls it steered them to Bamburgh Keep. The sea-facing wall of the castle soon loomed up before them with its moss-streaked stones and ancient grandeur. The guards on the wall spotted them, raising their voices in celebration.

“Margaret! Margaret! The king’s daughter has returned! Princess of pearls!”

The witch-queen heard their cries and retreated in bitterness to her chambers in the highest tower. She clawed her perfect face until blood ran down her porcelain skin like red rain. She crumpled to her knees in silence. That is how Margaret and Rowena found her, powerless and afraid, knowing that her hour had come at

last. Her black hair hung lank as rotten seaweed to the ground, her beady colourless eyes peering at them with a sharp gleam. She shuddered at the pretty princess Margaret, who stood in the doorway in her borrowed brown cloak. Rowena was large and stony as an ox beside her with a grim face. The princess squeezed her hand, and she approached the witch-queen without fear.

*“Quit your potions, undo your spells,
Beautiful you shall never be,
The curse is broken, now by me;
Till the world comes to an end,
Beautiful you shall never be.”*

At the touch of Rowena, the witch-queen shrivelled up into a horrible, hideous toad. All her gold and jewels tumbled to the cold stone floor and her voluptuous black gown was empty. The toad croaked as Margaret scooped it up, kissing it on its knobby face right between its rolling red eyes. Then she let it go, and it hopped right out of the door and down the dark stairwell. It was said to haunt the castle for years to come, and it was called the Laidly Toad. It would do no more harm, except scare scullery maids. The guards cleaned out the chamber of foul cobwebs and evil sorcery with fire. The black smoke could be seen from leagues around, filling the hearts of those who saw it with joy. The sun shone upon Margaret and Rowena as they stood on the battlements, with their hands clasped, and their hair mingling against the sky, heralding a new era of peace and prosperity for the kingdom.

CAITLYN HARDING

If A Tree Falls

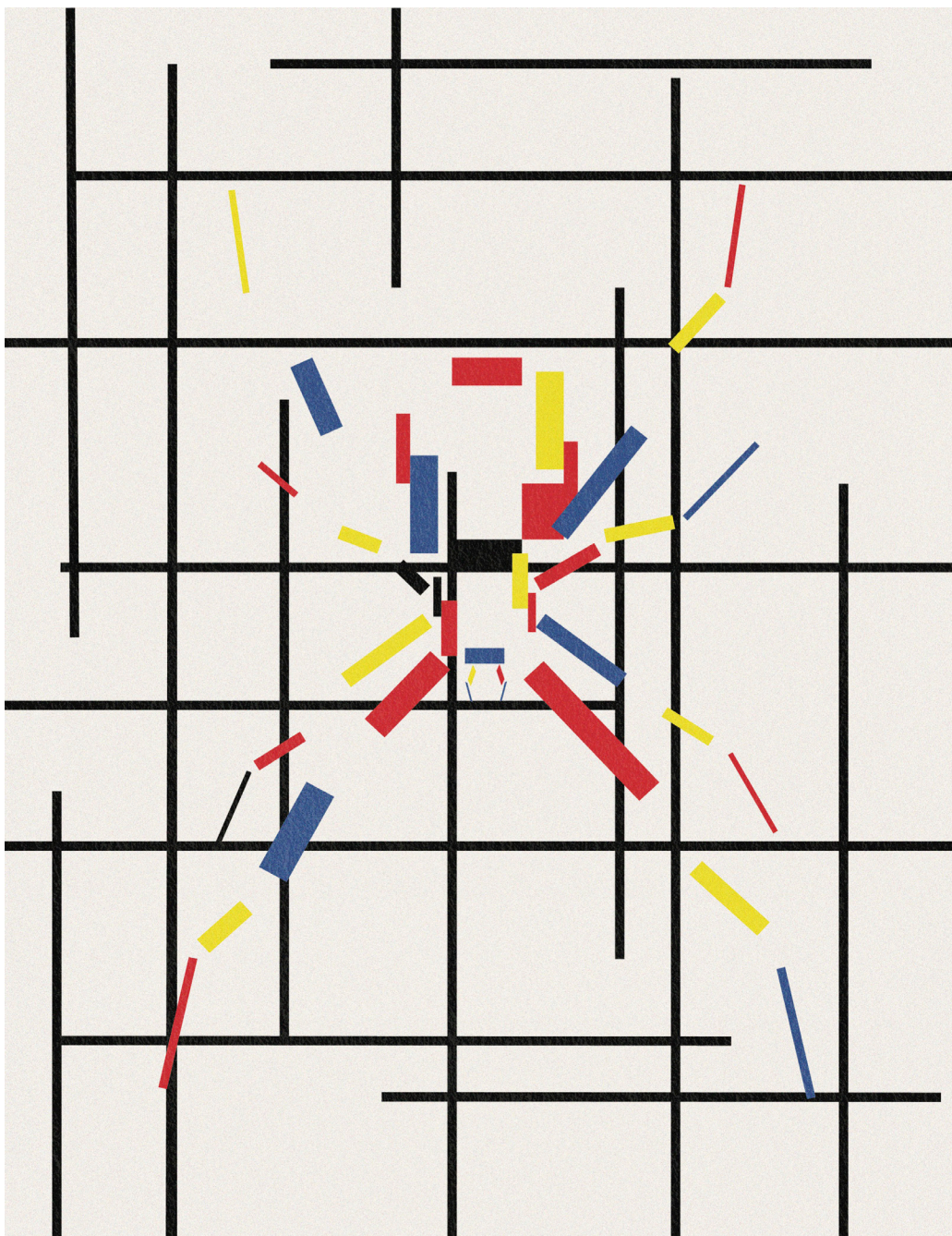
Let it. Let its thick trunk and tender bark
rip through the roof of my hollow home,
shingles falling like confetti.
Let its wiry branches poke and prod
at the sticky sofa and caress my
Grandmother's photograph,, let her
smile scrape clean off the wall,
fall and shatter, leaving broken glass to ferment.

Let the storm dampen
the walls and soak the dense carpet
and let the tree settle,
become a part of the space, live,
grow moss, house a squirrel or two.
Rip it all open and turn it into a new home,
make sure it is filled with love and
hope and
family.
Let it fall
Let it all fall.

ARSENA EEG

De Stijl Arachnid

This spider poster was inspired by the De Stijl art movement in the 1920s and 30s; adopting the use of primary colours, abstract lines, and shapes—with my own touch of breaking the fixed grids often seen in the De Stijl style.



SHAUNE LEWIS

Hologram

One hopes to be seen as they seem,
that curated troposphere boundary,
that paper wrap veneer of
aesthetic perfection in this holy
domestic primate renaissance.

Do you know the bone and viscera,
how eyes move in concave volumes?
That unyielding ocular
gray matter interface,
that most subjective projectionist.

Microcosm cells recapitulate flawless command
though generations are soon lost in flutter and crackle
each game of telephone is finite.
A critical mass, an unrecognizable form
is birthed, but there is no warm welcome.

From womb to tomb, one diligently maintains
that precious fleshy scaffold,
that singular melting vehicle.
I'm afraid it all spoils eventually and is
discarded, repurposed, particulate.

Are you the papier-mâché form?
Or, is that you in the hollow of it,
nestled in the striated chamber of animus?
Or, are you in the ether, conducting that perfect
hologram and more?

Salutations from the third dimension.

CAITLYN HARDING

The Mulberry Tree

Inspired by "The Mulberry Tree" by Vincent Van Gogh (1889)

Autumn rages in the garden,
frantically swaying about
in winds much like Zundert.,
Yet in hues of yellow and orange
that only dream blissfully in Saint-Remy.

The hillside rugged and rocky,
a marvellous mulberry stands alone,
basking in her spotlight.
She poses in place,
a cocky grin along her lustrous branches;
she knows
she is the most eye-catching feature
at the asylum.

My dear brother,
if only you could see her glory,
how she moves with nature's blow,
how her leaves slowly fall and kiss
the rough terrain below her.;
If only you could see her prepare
for the short lived winter ahead,
the kind we never knew as boys.

She stares me down everyday,
gives me a wink and a nudge,
reminding me that as long as I am here,
she will be too.

With all my love to you and her,
Theo,
I believe I am getting better.

SARAH SOVEREIGN

with grief

With grief, we may lie down alongside our loss and keep time with the ache of our hearts.

I created this image in July 2020, navigating Covid—and in just a couple of weeks my dad would be diagnosed with terminal cancer. Editing it after, I felt like this figure—everything I did was with grief. With grief, I took Facetime calls with my family, drove back and forth to the hospital when allowed, to hospice—I collected condolences, had conversations about funeral flowers, watched the moon rise on my first day alone without my dad. I felt the shroud through all I did—I wondered if I would ever feel normal again, and, if there was a normal without him in it. Some days the shroud was light—and some days, like the figure, I felt trapped underneath the complex, tangled mess of everything—wearing layers of masks, goggles, gowns, and gloves. At times it felt like I'd never removed them at all.

After my dad passed, I went to the river and sat on the banks. Just like the figure I was held by the land, together relearning a world without him in it.

The years since have held deep healing and creativity. As an artist, I hold space with grief, exploring and expressing what grief means to me in the context of my own experiences with it. I walk it with flowers and memory and deep compassion, the shroud less heavy than it was—and some days, heavy even now. Today, I write this from a space of healing, beauty, and hope—still, *with grief*.

Created with the help of model Adrienne and Siobhan D'Souza of Shiverz Designs.



SYDNEY HUTT

Alone Again

The fridge is full
of leftovers now
and I refuse to
throw any
once-edible things
out; the glass shelves

sag under so many
chipped, ceramic
shadows and there is
a container of
clumpy basmati
peeking from behind
every sticky jar.

I'm alone again
and there is so much
more of everything:
soap, socks,

time, silence.

I discover
I only have to make
half a pack of meat
now, and how much
there is, in our bodies,

in the absence of it.
I used to wonder
about colon
cancer, carcinogens
as we crumble-fried
another pound of
ground pork.

But I am thinking
about vegetables again,
the stripped carrots
gleaming under pot lights;

a golden pepper's prance
awakens this prone
tongue.

I'm alone again
and nothing is

hacked, ripped, banged,
thumped, burned, warped,

or boils over; nothing blares.
I have tossed the
air purifier, that polluter

of peace, deprived it
of the power necessary to
continue its insufferable
monologue,
its daily claim
of doing good.

I use a hammer to uninstall
the doorbell; all your
FedEx and Amazon
drivers are stumped

by my refusal
to be summoned.

SARAH LEGEAR

Kintsugi

Tendrils of relapse
tear through my spine,
creating crackling fissures
splintering through my collarbones.
A skeletal symphony
of fractures exposed.

My scars hold stories.

You know them
and still
paint the crevices
with gold.

ARSENA EEG

One More Than One Is

One More Than One Is came from a place of believing in yourself in an unconventional way, looking through the lens of any long-term mental illness, disability, or personal barrier. The original thought being: “I am more than what I am,” to describe the feeling of knowing your own potential and desires for your life, but feeling burdened by the things that may be holding you back—with all the hope that you are truly more than what you are. I wanted to illustrate the feeling of being stripped bare and vulnerable, an abstracted picture of one’s own self-image, with a halo of inner light radiating from the subject itself. The form of the figure itself was inspired by the ballerina scene from *Destino*, a short film by Salvador Dalí and Walt Disney.



SHAUNE LEWIS

Maersk Maersk World

Two subjects—one hundred international units per
laboratory grade halcyon
Elizabethan arcadia
eventide.

The hummingbird is still between my eyes
while I discreetly hydrate the hydrangeas.
This is bliss—polychrome flora
wonderment.

We comrades, Spielbergian nostalgia possessed
pedal frictionless through prologue alleyways.
Tangerine luster warms our
bodies.

In the aubergine dim I say I once lived here with my brother
whose chicken bones still litter the gutter
from here to Duffin's Donuts.
My loneliness still haunts that Vancouver special.

You are a kind friend. Goddamn you're kind, but
coaxing out the content of your heart takes time.
We kick a discarded ball, half-assed in the
street light luminance

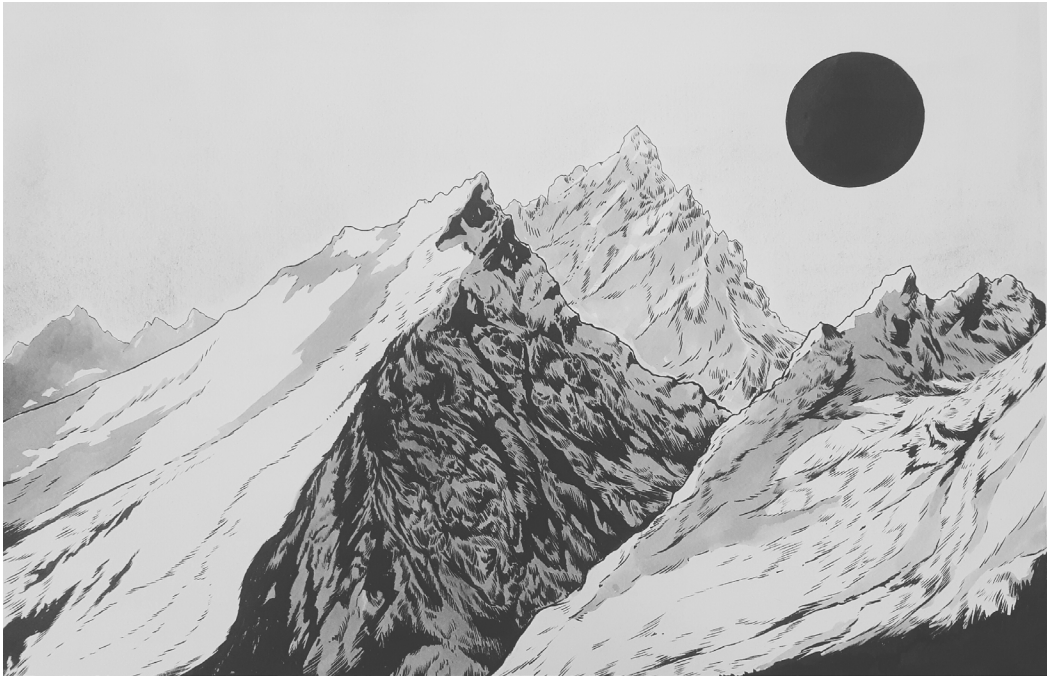
and you say the thing that troubles you:
She's getting married to the other guy
and you sob because it's
terminal.

Corrugated cuboids move north along the vacant Knight
Street artery, past refracted backscatter lights of the city.
You sigh,
It's a Maersk Maersk world
and I tend
to agree.

SHAUNE LEWIS

The Disquiet of Unbeing #1

Antithetical to the celestial body that imbues us with warmth, a monolithic form looms—eternal, yet made of absence.



SHAUNE LEWIS

The Disquiet of Unbeing #2

Antithetical to the celestial body that imbues us with warmth, a monolithic form looms—eternal, yet made of absence.



BRYANNE LANE

Body and Blood

Body and Blood

Do you experience any fear in your body?

If so, where? How does it manifest?

As tightness? As a painful radiance?

As a dead, hard spot?

- Resmaa Menakem, "Your Body And Blood" — *My Grandmother's Hands*

There's a thin line between my grandmother and I
that I run my fingers along but never cross.

Delicate as ruin, rugged as the autumn moss
that creeps beneath a rain-soaked window, dry
and crisp and guilty. Couldn't tell her why
a daughter doesn't visit, finds the curtains gaudy
and bares her teeth like a terrified animal. Oddly
crafts her cries of the same words she wrote
on the wrinkled yellow paper of a Post-it note.

Do you experience any fear in your body?

Half-managed, tempered with the same
spoon she used to serve us dinner, then
thrown at the wall in a room of no men
(they were watching the game). Cradled name
that she called me once, but now I'm grown, framed
mistakes remain unspoken, impolitely, lest
we forget what once was. Who else can attest
that the pain is desperately shared? Hardly fair
to pass it on, but I must listen with care.

If so, where? How does it manifest?

You could say it starts in the chest,
tight as the straps of an apron. Out
for blood, made of mud, in a drought,
parched in the sun. There's no rest
to this dissonance, no love expressed
without hurt, her blood in mine. Gradients
made from her childhood home, French Canadians
who fiddled and farmed and fought, no play
without a lesson. Must the fear stay
as tightness? As a painful radiance?

In the many spaces we feared,
there was soft light, and land
known before us. Flares fanned
by ancient hand, pain smeared
across a bloodline, love geared
to meet an end, words that rot
like spoiled grain. She caught
me throwing out food, told
my mother I'd be cold
as a dead, hard spot.

JASPER FLEMING

21 Lines on Living From 20th Century Folk Songs

Tonight, when I came home from work,
I'm just a dusty thirsty soul,
a dusty dirty cowhand.

Going down the road feeling bad.
Mother of the flock, oh Lord.
Father of the pastureland.

Trouble in my mind, I'm blue.
Ever since I was born, I yearn.
Nobody don't love me, it ain't no lie.

I drunk up all a' my money.
Y'all ever heard that before?
We lived alone, my house and I.

When the train comes along
I'm going away, free to be free.
Pawn everything in my name.

Freight train, run so fast.
I don't stand in need of company.
Pawn my watch, my chain.

Trouble in my mind, I'm blue,
but I won't be blue always
'cause the sun's gonna shine on my back door someday.

LYDIA GUNNINK

Trying to Sing Psalm 84

“Repetition and variation.” My partner narrates from the textbook, her articulations translating into cluttered text in my notebook. We fabricate eloquence from the formal content, formulating connections between a cacophony of terminology clamouring in a congested—

“chickadee-dee-dee”

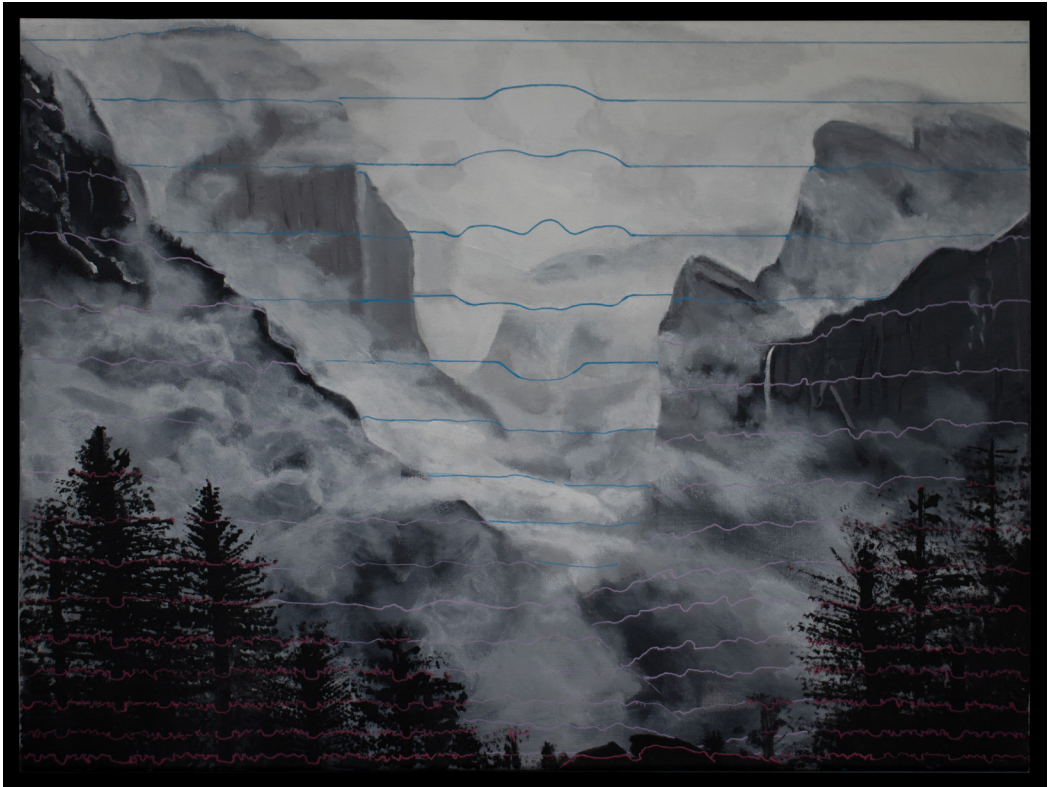
Simple song interrupts
outside the classroom window
before she flies away
to find a home,
a nest for herself
and I long to follow.

SPENCER WIEBE

The Silence of God

Religion and spirituality remain subjects of significant interest to me, as they have been a part of my life for as long as I can remember, even as my opinions and beliefs continue to change. With this piece, my aim is not to condemn or praise religion, but rather to capture a feeling that is universally experienced by anyone who has practised it, regardless of what specific faith a person may follow, and whether one is devout, uninterested, or simply experimenting. When an individual might ask for assistance, clarity, or other divine guidance, the physical response people receive is always silence. While an individual may interpret this and future events in several different ways, silence is always a part of it.

The piece focuses on these feelings of faith, doubt, and anticipation through a mysterious foggy landscape, with a colourful representation of sound echoing off the terrain, while an unknowable force remains silent. I wanted to emphasize sound within the painting, and I hope both the background and the coloured waves are able to create a depth and mental message for a viewer.



CARLY FLEMING

Contained

The sound of immersion and thick bubbles,
carbonated,
they multiply and congregate
only bursting at the surface.
Teetering waves envelop a white fury
as it is tucked beneath,
carried under.

It's muted in this space.
There is a light, sweet humidity,
a sense of pressure too.
I stand on the soft, dark carpet,
watching,
amidst a garden of wooden benches.
Windows, normally meant to let in sky,
brace against water.
It's dim in this place.

Deep blue light shimmies and curtsies,
in shapes that mimic foreign waves and crests
never seen within these concrete walls.
It takes light to illuminate the history
within each fold of water.
The tales they tell:
of hard ice
and fresh seals,
the high winged span
of the Albatross,
the swooning dance
of Northern Lights.

There is a hushed collective
Oohs and aahs
from silhouetted spectators
as the beast descends.
Tendrils of fur are suspended and tousled,
lighter than air itself.
Like tentacles, they billow in their varying shades
of white and cream.
The polar bear rolls and unfolds
from the waters embrace.
Held in the expanse
for a moment,
dazed.
It slowly looks, listens.
Gently pawing the water, before
giving way to one powerful stroke, then another.
I wonder if this is what it is like to be

surrounded

By walls that limit, rein in, domesticate.
How easily we forget
what it truly means to contain.
Maybe it's just another form of violence
we confuse with "educate."

CARLY FLEMING

The Spaces We Keep

The Spaces We Keep is a black and white self-portrait. It was created using masking tape and a makeshift camera tripod. Resourcefulness makes the creation process that much more enjoyable, in my humble opinion. Rather than using a timer to take the photo, I filmed myself completing continuous movements in the box and later took screenshots of different isolated images like the one below.

Creating and re-creating art is something that has always given me immense joy. The creation of this photo was inspired by John Dykstra's photo, *Penalty Box*. I marvelled at the creativity of his photograph, and wanted to try creating something similar while also making it my own. Through this image, my intention was to explore the different ways we box ourselves in and try to communicate this concept.

I wanted to create a feeling of hesitation and tension in this photo, where the viewer can discern for themselves whether the box is in the process of being created or dismantled. The lack of "completeness" held greater interest for me than if the box was fully formed. I find that it communicates the conflicted emotions that many of us feel as we try to define the boundaries of the spaces we choose to keep. How, at times, we may feel closed off in relation to the rest of the world, which may cause us to redefine the lines of our inner worlds.



GAVIN THOMAS

Not Karaoke

[kar-ee-oh-kee]

noun

1. Empty orchestra | Japanese, from *kara*, empty + *ōke*, short for *ōkesutora*: orchestra
2. desperately attempting to gather enough air
to speak
three words
might they dance across the space between my lips
and yours
3. {might they}¹ linger(ing)²
as if to transcend this moment
into all eternity.
4. {Might they}¹ call(ing)² your name
and cross(ing)² the infinite abyss
that swallows my every good intention.
5. {O some}¹ (a)² great distance {there is}¹ between our eyes,
yet somehow my heart is touched
by every beat of yours,
6. an orchestra, once a broken karaoke recording
made instrumental, by the pulling of strings
rhythmic, and
wonderfully made.

OLIVIA BRAND

Asteria's Palace

Asteria: The Greek mythological goddess of the night sky.

Asteria's palace is formed by the
boundless brickwork of the infinite.
Its scaffolding is the drawn lines
of constellations, mapped by scholarly hands.
Her children are dancing
before indigo curtains of pleated velvet.
Their heavenly performance halted,
disturbed by the unnatural

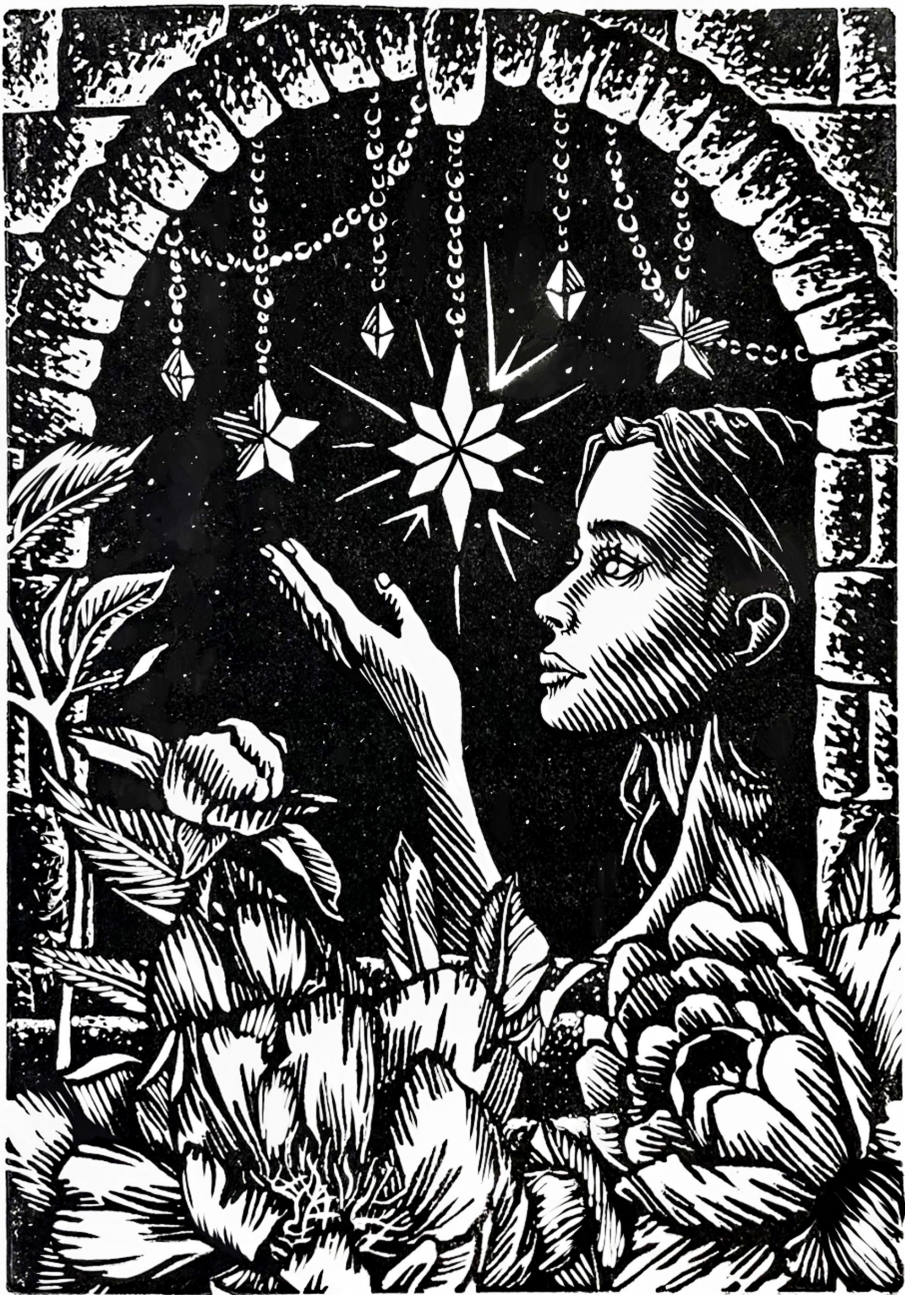
glow from panes and concrete posts,
tainting the streets and stretching out shadows.
A light in one's pocket,
a synthetic glare in our grasp.
The artificial flame that smothers her cosmic act,
justified from the urge to control.
We are quick to forget the
curtain strings beyond our reach.

Asteria's palace is vast and vacant
as dark waters that carry a sailor,
once guided by her kingdom's frame.
Forgotten is its fleeting silhouette.
Her children are dying,
hiding their faces behind black curtains,
frightened by a burning audience of
downturned heads.

OLIVIA BRAND

Asteria's Palace

Asteria's Palace is an ink print that was inspired by my love of stargazing. Asteria is the Greek mythological goddess of the night sky, who became a symbol that represents my love of the stars. During the summertime, I found myself venturing to open spaces away from towns and cities where I could see the stars and planets. It provided me with a sense of being grounded by my environment and brought me tranquility. This piece came specifically from a journey to Golden Ears Mountain, where a group of friends and I slept on the beach of Alouette Lake, gazing up at the Milky Way and wishing on passing comets. In recent years, I have noticed the night sky around my hometown has grown dimmer as Langley has been further developed with townhomes and city squares. It saddens me to know that the stars are slowly disappearing due to light pollution. I made this piece as a reminder that the night sky (*Asteria's Palace*) is beautiful and a precious part of the world we live in. I believe we should be cautious of light pollution just as much as other sources of waste created by humans to preserve the beauty of the stars. I chose to make this piece as a print because the thick, black ink represents the depth of the universe with its many layers and the precise grooves of negative space to represent the glow of the stars that withstand the darkness of space.



BRYANNE LANE

Creating Culture

*Culture is how our bodies retain and reenact history—
Through the foods we eat (or refuse to eat); the stories we tell;
The things that hold meaning for us; the images that move us;
What we are able (and unable) to sense or feel or process; the way we see the world.*
- Resmaa Menakem, “Creating Culture” — My Grandmother’s Hands

We are people who never stop laughing, even
when we can’t stop crying. There’s a hunger
for a good joke, sprouted from us younger
than spring: an ancient comedy. Breathe in
our howls and squeals, better to believe in
what we can hear. We planted this tree
long before they called it tree. No mystery
why we pick apart which part of us came from
which relation, whose mother made our chests hum.
Culture is how our bodies retain and reenact history—

even the ways we’ve hurt and been hurt become seasoning
on the meals we share. The way our stomach must constrict
from the threat of new loss, still asking for seconds, pinpricked
tastebuds savour the salt and the grease, pincherries sweetening
our collective memory. Love and pain are not based in reasoning.
This is why we laugh at memorial, cry at birth, why we dwell
in our past as we build our future, why even the pungent smell
of a Cuban cigar might fill the air with hope. We are a people
who belong to ourselves, who belong to each other. Never feeble,
through the foods we eat (or refuse to eat); the stories we tell;

every place we've ever been touched by our weathered hands,
picking up the threads of our tales, passing them along by
names, forgotten ones renewed by time. We don't know why
we seek out pain from each other, but there must be plans
to make it stop. A return to the past, to never-hallowed lands,
to escape the modern harms and breathe makes only half the truss
of this work. The pain is as old as the night, and never mistrusts
the one that wields it. The love feels new, even though we know
it's always been in there. Should we fish it out and let it grow?
The things that hold meaning for us; the images that move us

plastered together across the walls of family homes. It becomes a gift to hurt
because we've loved. We were made of light and water and stones, assembled like
a chorus of the cosmos, glinting in the sunlight, never expecting the pain to strike
with the back of our first hand, nor the sorry to cross our first lips. We left the dirt
with our top halves but the roots extended to the water table. Will we always exert
the force of this love with our limbs? Will we laugh when the hurt remains, swirled
together in our last breaths like smoke and sparks? When the culture is unfurled,
like a spring leaf pressed within our fist, it keeps the wrinkles we've pressed into it
to remind us who we are. We are a people, a hunger, a memory, a pain, unable to split
what we are able (and unable) to sense or feel or process; the way we see the world.

ÉMERIC GAGNE

Men's War

This is a small piece, only being 8x6 inches in dimensions. It was done by using graphic pens. It represents a Northeastern Woodland war dance. It was intended as a study so that I could familiarize myself with drawing Indigenous fashion. I have many projects in my head that would require me to familiarize myself with such esoteric things. For example, I want to create a biographical graphic novel of Akiatonharónkwen, who led the Oneidas during the American Revolutionary War, or some other similar figures.

In the illustration, the performer wears a fedora resembling a gustoweh. A gustoweh is a traditional Haudenosaunee headdress. He wears a bear-claw necklace which bounces up above his shoulders as he is dancing. His second necklace is a wampum belt. Wampum belts are created from quahog and whelk shells and symbolize an agreement between individuals or nations. They are the most valuable products in Northeastern Woodland culture, as they take enormous labour and signify a serious commitment. At some point in time, after colonial influence, it became a fashion trend for wampum belt owners to wear their belts on their bodies. You can imagine what it represents, to wear such a valuable and communal object to essentially flex on others. Not that there's anything wrong with having such beautiful regalia nowadays, or that people can't collaborate to make a set of regalia.

Furthermore, he wears a sash, breechcloth, cuffs, wampum bracelets, and decorated brooches. He holds an eagle feather fan, and a tomahawk in his hands. The tomahawk is highly symbolic of war in Indigenous and non-Indigenous American culture. Like the war dance that the figure is performing, it has more to do with peace than anything else. Although useful tools, small axes are useless during war. They were often diplomatic gifts. Tomahawk throwing competitions originated with the Mi'kmaq, and the Acadians, who at the time had good relations with each other. Although the war dance can be done in preparation or celebration of war, most conflicts would have ended with the ritual. In the Precolumbian Northeastern Woodlands, there was not much to gain from war. It was hard to coerce people when there was not much power one could have over another.



SAHIB BAHIA

SURZEN

i've never had faith in anything as much as my mother does in routine
firm that when people plant themselves like seeds
with intention and care
they live a life worth leaving

this however, has never gelled well with me
for as long as i can remember
i've existed as this tangle of hair in a shower drain
a mess of compulsion

during a particularly tumultuous time in both of our lives
her divorce
my anxiety-fuelled failure of 11th grade calculus
she would make routine pilgrimages to the gurdwara
often twice daily

though never awfully religious myself
the thought that all my most misanthropic tendencies
are not my own, but
part of some greater cosmic intention
that there's absolution
it's nothing if not comforting

things eventually sorted, as they tend to
she'd finalize the separation
i'd redo calculus that following summer
the crops were reaped
she never strayed however
visiting that same temple
with that same resolve

though i questioned
as any obnoxious teenager would
she always answered sincerely:
“god only goes half the distance”

today my mother is in india
fighting another fight
in what seems to be a cosmic conveyer of them
she often asks me how i’m doing, if i’ve eaten, where i’ve been
as any mother would

things i’d often hear and feel agitation towards
as if her desperation for details was malicious
or an attempt to waste my time
i’d race to finish conversations

i now breathe deeply
fish the devotion and ask
“tusi gurdawara nu janda a?”
though she doesn’t have one near
she prays before bed in its place

now when calling about the garbage or if i’ve been taking my meds
i tell her what colour bins i left out,
that i take my pills with water every night,
and that i try to pray for her even half as much as i know she prays for me

doubtful i’ll ever live as intently as she does
i awake every morning
pray in my quivering punjabi
and water my seeds

CAITLYN HARDING

Gaelic Girls

When we were children, the elders told us the many myths of our country. The ancestors spoke to them, whispered hymns of our people, the legacy of the Gaels. They told us to believe in unicorns, sea monsters, goblins and ghosts, and to be weary of the water. *"The water between Lewis and Shiant Isles is rough,"* they'd say, as it thrashed around in the distance from the cottage, where our elders gathered the young up to tell us these stories. All us children from the neighbouring villages sat criss-crossed on a coarse beige carpet, anticipation flowing through our bodies. We sat on the left side, the boys sat on the right. Boys were the pride of the land, they were the fishermen, the hunters, they would grow into men who tossed cabers. We were an afterthought, a faint whisper in the wind. An unimportant side effect of the human race. We would grow up to be wives and mothers, or hags and witches, no inbetween.

From the window at the cottage, the water's white swells enveloped the ocean, crashing against the cliffs our mothers dragged us away from, knowing that we would be swallowed by its mouth. *"Many sailors go out there, only to wash up on the shore days later,"* they would inch in closer as their words sought daggers into our little hearts, pointing a rigid finger against our soft noses. *"They sank their boats, killing every last sailor aboard, our best men, we gasped, wretched things they are, very strong, they've got green beards, told from those who trembled in fear yet lived to tell the tale."* We balled our fists together in anticipation, knuckles as white as the swells, holding our breaths. *"Boys,"* they'd look to the right-side of the room, *"if you become sailors, you should be careful of storm kelpies, or the blue men of Minch, some call 'em. Be wary of blue men."*

We met them once. We were girls, at the cusp of our teens, being fitted for training bras, and kissing Cameron and McGowan boys. We stood on those cliffs, the ones our elders said the Gods carefully crafted, the ones our mothers told us to never go near, and we looked down below at the agape mouth of the sea. We could see ourselves being eaten alive, gnawed at one by one by its sharp

waves, bodies of the girls who never would dare to set sail. At the bottom of the jagged cliff, where the thrashing water met our land, we saw blue men. We froze in fear as the waves crashed against the rock violently, the water rising up the cliff. They elbowed their way to the top with the aid of the ocean, grasping at the top edge, their cerulean hands inches from our petrified feet. They stood in front of us, glaring down at our small frames, peering into our guts, wondering what we would look like inside out. They did not look as the elders described. They stood like men we knew, spoke like men we knew. If we held up a mirror, the blue men would look exactly like her uncle, his brother, their friends, the boys who looked at us with hungry eyes at the school dance. But our fear kept us hostage, our feet planted hard to the soil, we were just girls, *we* were never told to keep away.

Their slimy hands slid around our waists, whisking us in closer to their hardened forms, their decrepit faces inches from ours. The men opened their mouths, letting out the stench of the sea, their voices a cacophony of melodies. In unison they said:

Be wary of the water. Be wary of blue men.

Contributor Biographies

SAHIB BAHIA is irritating. He's in his second-year of business at UFV and wants to go into law, specifically public defence. He also likes to speak more than he listens, a tendency reflected in his reading-writing ratio. He keeps a banana and a coke on him at all times, and his biggest creative influences are Richard Siken and Young Thug.

ANNABEL BOT is a second-year Bachelor of Arts student majoring in French, and minoring in Creative Writing. Their lifelong dream is to publish the novel they've been working on for what feels like forever. In her free time, she enjoys reading and writing both poetry and fiction, as well as procrastinating schoolwork with the help of her cat, Tiger.

OLIVIA BRAND is a second-year Bachelor of Arts student who is pursuing a degree in Graphic + Digital Design. She has always loved storytelling through imagery and visuals, both in drawing and writing. It's her dream to design book illustrations, and it stems from her passion for creative writing. After taking a creative writing course at UFV, which she thoroughly enjoyed, she is compelled to continue story writing as a hobby.

DIDI BROWN is a first-year student at UFV pursuing a Bachelor of Arts, and her true passion is writing. She loves books, especially classic literature, historical fiction, and old school fantasy. You can often find her daydreaming about fictional worlds, and characters. She proudly identifies as a huge nerd, and the main inspirations for her work are fairytales, folklore, and mythology. She wishes she had a pet dragon, but since dragons aren't real, she'll settle for her cat.

SAVANNAH CRABB is a third-year English major at UFV. After graduating she hopes to attain her Masters in English Literature, and eventually become a university professor. She has loved writing and reading her whole life, and never wants to stop learning about it. She wants to thank her professor Rob Taylor, and

her brother Daniel for inspiring her to indulge in self-expression and creativity.

EVERY DOW-KENNY is an author and illustrator from Abbotsford, B.C. currently pursuing a Library and Information Technology Diploma after graduating in 2024 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Arts and Creative Writing. Her debut novel was released in January 2025, and she currently works as a Page at the Clearbrook Library with hopes of one day becoming a full-time creative. You can find more of her works on her website www.averydowkenny.com

ARSENA EEG is a second-year Graphic + Digital Design major at UFV with a passion for print and publication design, and all things creative. She is currently spending her time working on her novel *Impermanence*, and a design project titled *You Will Be Okay*.

JASMINE FILPULA is a poet and writer from the Canadian prairies. Her work explores themes of womanhood, nature, and nostalgia, weaving vivid imagery with quiet reflection. She is currently working on her debut poetry collection while balancing her love for film photography, gardening, and slow, intentional living. Through her writing, she hopes to remind others of the joy in creating, and the healing found in self-expression.

CARLY FLEMING has recently completed her studies at UFV with a major in English, and concentration in Creative Writing. She has always found immense pleasure in the act of creating, and in its ability to communicate ideas, and relate to others. Her work tends to explore nature in its various forms, often calling into question empathy, ethics, and what it means to be alive. She aims to contribute to the world through art and words in a vivid and profound way. In future, she plans to obtain her Bachelor of Education so she can teach Elementary and continue to produce creative projects on the side.

ÉMERIC GAGNE is an art student from Mission, B.C. He specializes in pens. He is working toward creating grand narratives through sequential art. Stories of unfair hierarchies, history, ecology, hope, and utopia. Although currently, his work revolves around smaller projects and studies. He holds a deep appreciation

for monochromatic work and idiosyncratic styles. He aims to create dark angular forms with a plethora of cross-hatching layers or with pointillism. His influences are Jean Giroud, Daria Schmitt, Barry Windsor-Smith, Philippe Druillet, Tom Bloom, Wayne Barlowe, Hirohiko Araki, and many other similar artists.

LYDIA GUNNINK is a fourth-year UFV student who lives and writes in Cloverdale, B.C., and spends her 40-minute commute mentally scrawling poetry as she admires God's gorgeous creation. Lydia has been published before in the 2024 issue of *Louden Singletree*, where her poem "Mid-War Celebration" appeared. She keeps telling herself that one day she'll publish her novel, *From Frost to Fire*, but she'll probably continue to procrastinate by writing little poems inspired by her faith. If she isn't writing, she can probably be found on a stage or around her family and friends, all of whom she loves very dearly.

CAITLYN HARDING is a UFV Creative Writing student, graduating in Spring 2025. Born in Vancouver, she is passionate about literature, storytelling, mental health, and creating a positive impact in the world. She hopes to have a career in publishing, and as an author, using her pen to say something important (hopefully). When she's not writing, she's probably playing with her three nervous rescue dogs, obsessing over Beyoncé, travelling, and reading an obscene amount of books.

HEATHER HOLLAND is a second-year student at UFV, residing on the unceded territories of the Stó:lō people. She is pursuing a major in English Literature with a minor in Geography. After graduating, Heather aspires to become a secondary school teacher, hoping to inspire students to develop their writing skills and nurture their creative expression. A lover of the outdoors, she feels a deep connection to nature, with water holding a special place in her heart.

PIPER HORNALL is an artistic polymath and virtuoso from the Fraser Valley whose works have been disseminated across journals, zines, and galleries alike. Whether candid or elaborate, Hornall's desire to express themselves shifts between stanza, paragraph, frame, and craft, powered by an endless fascination for crayons, cats, the simple wonders of life, and all things sentimental. When she is not plugging away at her next project, she can most likely be found curled up with

a book, and having her next best day ever.

SYDNEY HUTT is a recent graduate of UFV, with Bachelors degrees in both English, and Education. She has the privilege of being a mom to two incredible daughters, and works as an English teacher in Chilliwack. You can find her poetry and essays in various forms online, and in print, including previous issues of the *Louden Singletree*, *Raspberry Magazine*, *Motherly*, and *long con magazine*.

NOAH JOHNSON is a 24-year-old Canadian poet and artist living on the unceded territory of the Stó:lō Nation. They aspire to give asexuality more recognition. Noah is a Virgo, enjoys hyping up their partner's amazing jewelry business @sharonleejewelry, and likes bubblegum ice cream.

JACK KEATING is a third-year student of English, and Creative Writing at UFV. He is grateful to his family, and friends for putting up with him, and to his incredible partner for supporting him. Having found a love for creative writing a little later in life, Jack is lucky to have learned from some amazing instructors at Douglas College. He cherishes being part of a close circle of fellow writers that keep him motivated. He writes speculative fiction, some personal narrative, and will return to screenwriting. Once he read a poem at an open mic and it went okay.

BRYANNE LANE is an emerging writer based in the Fraser Valley. Her work includes poetry, creative non-fiction, and short stories. She is in the final year of her Bachelor of Arts in English Honours, and is very excited to be featured in this issue of the *Louden Singletree*!

SARAH LEGEAR is a biology major who loves poetry. She was really inspired by the advanced poetry course with Rob Taylor last year, which is where her poem was created. She is usually very busy with science-y courses but uses poetry as an outlet, and has had a wonderful time exploring the art, and all its different forms.

SHAUNE LEWIS is pleased to explore the craft of writing after spending two decades as an animator. He is from Powell River on the Sunshine Coast and currently

lives in Abbotsford with his wife Jessica, their infant son Joseph, and their pup Ralph.
IG @shaune.g.lewis

MSAMI (b. 2000, Botswana) is a visual artist who specializes in painting. She explored multidisciplinary art through the IB Diploma Program (2018) before moving to B.C., Canada to pursue a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Arts at UFV. Her practice incorporates painting, and film photography, shaping her conceptual approach. She has exhibited in galleries across Botswana, Canada, and England. Contact m.msami.art@gmail.com Social media @msami.art

ALYSSA JONES is a dedicated reader, and writer with a deep appreciation for storytelling in all its forms. She particularly enjoys crafting fantasy, and romance novels, with a special affection for poetry. When not chasing word counts, she can be found overly committing to her yearly reading goals, cafe hopping in search of the perfect iced latte, or hiking scenic trails.

SARAH SOVEREIGN is a therapist and artist in the Fraser Valley. Her art often unfolds themes of grief, joy, storytelling, and the things we leave behind us. Under the Creative Counsellor, she offers counselling across B.C. for adults with ADHD, those navigating grief, creatives exploring their practice, and those delving into the self, self-worth, and self-esteem. You can find more of her work at www.sarahsovereign.com and www.thecreativecounsellor.ca

GAVIN THOMAS is a fourth-year English major who plans to go into the Bachelor of Education. He discovered his passion for poetry in his first year at UFV, and has continued to pursue poetry as a creative outlet. This is his second time being published in *Louden Singletree*. Currently, he is working on his fantasy novel, *Swords of Psychomachia*, but hopes to continue to publish poetry as well. Other than English, Gavin loves the outdoors, sports, spending time with family and friends, and most of all Gavin loves his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

SPENCER WIEBE is a prolific creator of all things strange, and fantastic. As a vigilant consumer of games, music, film, and stories of all sorts, Spencer thrives when ingesting a steady diet of art. As such, he can often be found exercising an

inexhaustible urge to make something.

The *Louden Singletree* is UFV's literary and visual arts journal. Since its inception in 2009, the *Louden Singletree* has been a forum in which students, alumni, faculty, and staff of the university can share their creative work.

Contributors

Sahib Bahia
Annabel Bot
Olivia Brand
Didi Brown
Savannah Crabb
Avery Dow-Kenny
Arsena Eeg
Jasmine Filpula
Carly Fleming
Émeric Gagne
Lydia Gunnink
Caitlyn Harding
Heather Holland

Piper Hornall
Sydney Hutt
Noah Johnson
Jack Keating
Bryanne Lane
Sarah LeGear
Shaune Lewis
MSAMI
Alyssa Jones
Sarah Sovereign
Gavin Thomas
Spencer Wiebe