

VOLUME 86

Touchstone

VITERBO UNIVERSITY ARTS AND
LITERARY MAGAZINE



Touchstone is published each academic year by Viterbo University in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

The mission of Touchstone Magazine is to contribute to and praise the creative thinking of the Viterbo Community. Touchstone provides a creative outlet for publications of visual art and literature. It is also a learning opportunity for students to create a professionally published journal that expresses the culture and education of Viterbo University.

This year, 2022, celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Viterbo University Fine Arts Center.

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Viterbo University Mission

The Viterbo University community prepares students for faithful service and ethical leadership.



TOUCHSTONE

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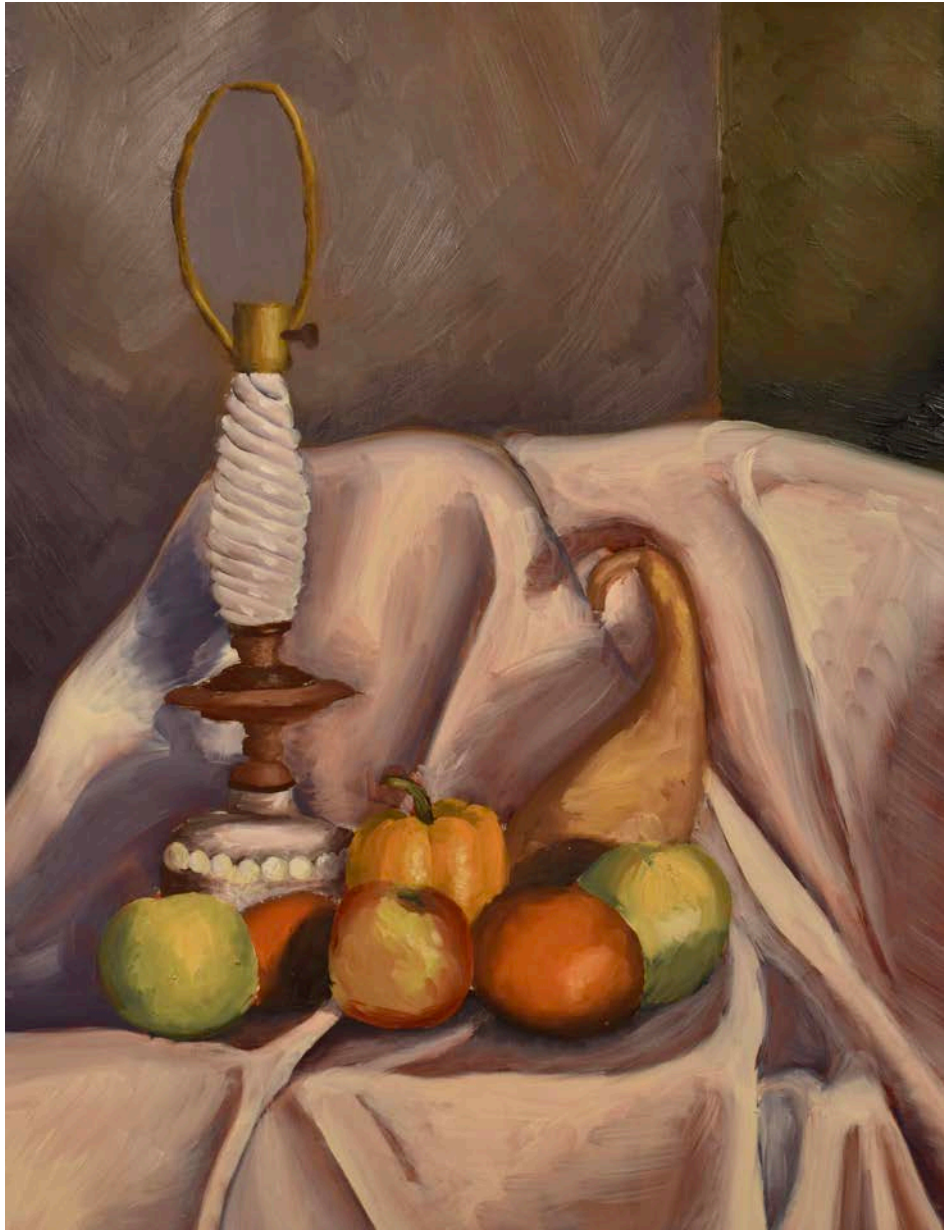
Gancheon Village

Oil on Paper

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Spring Still-Life

Oil on Paper

Megan Messa

- 1) My best friend Perry was a domesticated, or fancy, rat. As a hooded black rat, she had a lopsided black streak from her face to her back haunches. With a white belly, she had speckles splattering up to hug her sides.
- 2) Smelling like freshly baked bread, Perry was as heavy as three and a half bananas.
- 3) Stolen: a piece of French Silk pie the size of a tortilla chip. The culprit launched herself off my bed, galloped across my room, and squeezed under the wooden chest my grandfather created for me, where my bulky hands did not fit. She left a trail of chocolate sauce on my washed bedspread.
- 4) After surgery, Perry wore a paper cup decorated with pink hedgehogs kissing that the vet turned into an e-collar. When forced in it, she rammed her head into the wire bars of her cat carrier sickbay. Instead, for fourteen hours a day I kept my hand on her shaved right side. We watched *Criminal Minds* together as I stroked her to sleep under a soft pink blanket.
- 5) Perry's cheeks bulged with banana bread. As I picked her up, she emitted a muffled squeak. Once sat down, she devoured her hunk with a relaxed body posture before swaggering over to me to solicit more.
- 6) Stashed items I used a ruler to thwack out from under my grandfather's hand made chest: five pencils of varying lengths; eight gel pens, the sparkly blue one chewed and now staining the cream carpet; a piece of paper containing the WIFI password; a red silly putty egg; the plastic wrappers of my tampons, which she stole from my emergency pack in my purse while discarding the actual tampons on the floor; all the tissues from a Kleenex box.
- 7) I joked Perry was a beautician in her past life. Every day she thoroughly cleaned my face, lavishing warm kisses on my cheeks, over my nose, across my forehead and my chin. She even gently cleaned my eyelids! I used to think her cleaning my eyelashes was a normal rat behavior and just another example of my weirdness until my friend with rats agreed with me that it was just another example of Perry being special.
- 8) As a youngster, Perry dashed around like a caffeinated toddler in a bounce house. Nevertheless, when Perry's sister-from-another-mister, Janice, was dying of cancer, Perry took shifts with her biological sister to ensure Janice always had a cuddle buddy. They would snuggle in Janice's favorite spot –a green, pineapple-shaped hammock. Perry chewed out a window in the back of the hammock.
- 9) Perry's nightly senior exercise: dragging 82 animal crackers¹ from a saucer cup to stash inside her wooden hut. While she was sleeping in my bedspread, I would steal her stash to be the following night's entertainment.
- 10) Miscellaneous items found in different hiding spots under my bed: secretly stolen trash; a red solo cup; seven shot glasses; a small fist-sized Pooh bear; a ripped up plastic Target bag; long pieces of fabric torn off bedsheets; a handful of Honey Nut Cheerios; a toast crust the size of a baby carrot; six goldfish crackers.

¹ Do not consider this piece a guide to rat snacks or enrichment. Please feed your rats a balanced diet of formulated rat food (no seed mixes) and **safe** produce and proteins as snacks. For more information see reputable sources (rescues, reputable breeders –not pet store care guides), including [The Ultimate Guide to the Top 100 Foods to Feed Your Rats \(smallpetjournal.com\)](http://smallpetjournal.com), Minnesota Pocket Pet Rescue's rat care guide, and <http://www.isamurats.co.uk/feeding-and-nutrition.html>.



Red Lily

Acrylic on Paper

Lauren Dolan

Cascades of glistening honey drip down the hive
Pouring crystalized golden streams
Flowing into captivating concentric layers

Bee

Sweet melody of buzzing honeybees
Harmoniously sweep through the hive

Matia Dalchow

Settling into prismatic flowers
Pollen dust paints their wings
An ethereal masterpiece





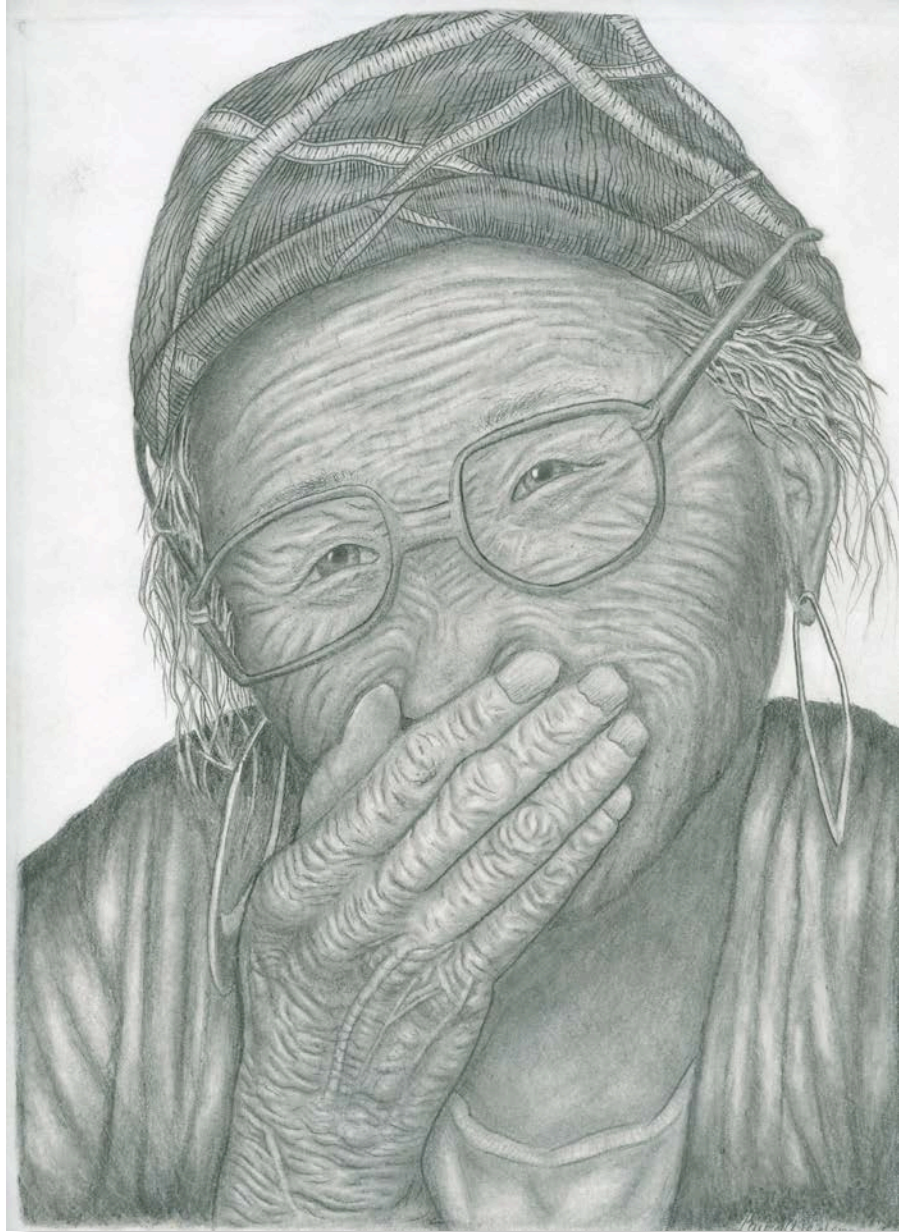
Maid Rite with French Fries
Oil on Canvas

Mackenzie Hanson



Condiment Holder
Stoneware

Dan Stokes



**Granny Hears a
Dirty Joke**
Graphite

Laura Weidemann

We were feeble
found
unwanted
leftover
stolen
saved
lucky
leftover.

Residuals, scattered across the world,
olive oil skin folded into white flour.

Suppressed
grief swells
by the day.
Chinese
sisters
in trash,
they decay.
Surviving
bodies taken
to markets,
our futures
in smugglers'
pockets.

Without maternal touch,
our necks on swivels
soothing ourselves
side to side
left to right.

Where else
to direct
pain
but
on
bodies
so fortunate.

Indulge
your yellow
fever
and cheap
buffet.

Better not
soil your
spoils,

for
Chinese
leftovers
get tossed
away.

My Once Dear Friend

It's 2 AM.
I suddenly wake.
There's a distant alarm.
Then a louder one.
Your frantic knocks on my door.
You say there's a fire.
I can see it in your eyes.

The next minutes are a blur,
While knocking on doors
I silently pray
Everything will be okay.
As people start leaving
and security arrives
I hesitantly leave with adrenaline high.

When we can return you stay with me,
we barely talk but I don't sleep.
There's something you're not saying,
there's something in your head
But you don't say a word until around 2 PM.

You call me and say you need me by your
side.
When I get there my fears are realized.
I know before I'm told.
You started the fire.
You devised and innocent guise.

Even after I knew
and put pieces together
you continued with lies;
I'll remember forever.
You had been through so much in your life
here so far
but dragged me on the ride you called
rapport.

In the hours that follow
we pack up your things,
Get a few friends
And go in displace.

The next morning we take the drive to your
house,
And as we say goodbye
I can't help but wonder why.

After we stayed at my family's.
That's where we found the truth
They caught you on camera
Not forged an excuse.

Now we'll never forget what you had been
through
Or the people you touched
Or the feelings you ensued
You are part of our story
As we are part of you
But in the end you hurt us.
You hurt them.
You hurt me.

The fire in your soul wasn't strong enough
To extinguish the anger in your heart.
You set fire to the good,
And illuminated the bad.
You got the attention, my friend

But how did that work out for you in the
end?

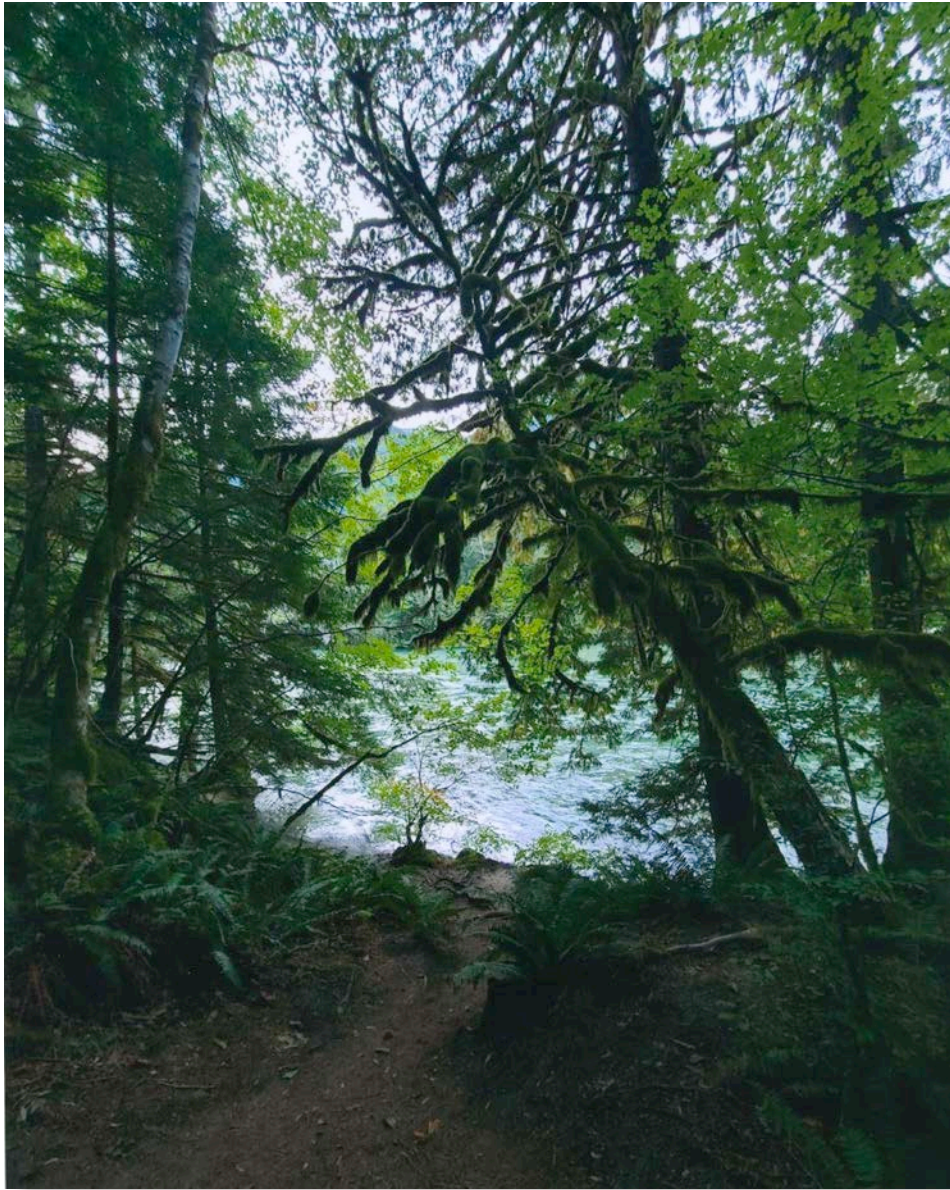
In burning the building,
You burned our friendship
And left me with more questions than
answers.

Yet through healing I now know
My worth has no tie to you.
You may have tried to drag me down,
And burn me too

But I now know my worth
And I hope one day
You, my once dear friend, will too.

My Once Dear Friend

Clare Henschel



Washington
Wonderlust
Digital Photograph

Livi Pappadopoulos



Grey Skies

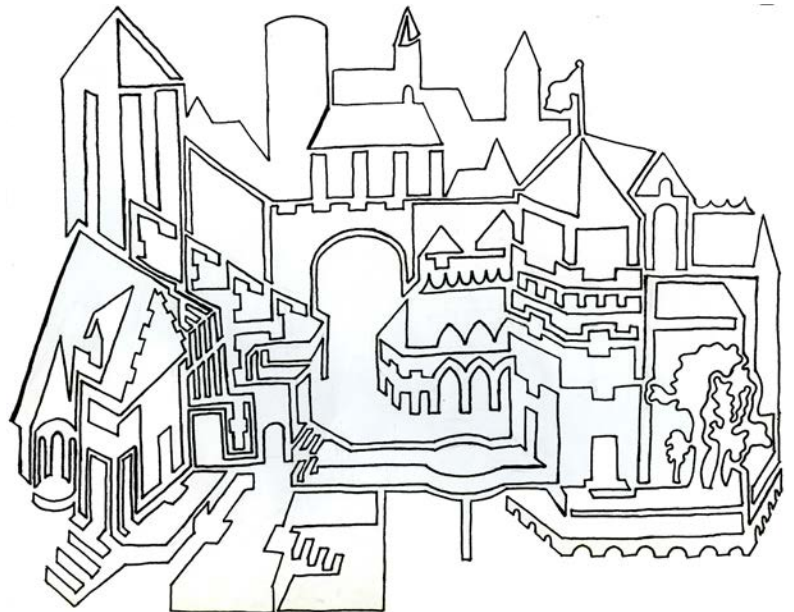
Woodcut

Allison Mormann

Lost in Line

Pen on Paper

Nicole Mikula



To say her name is princess
is to try and fail to tame her.

She will slip through the stones
and the cracks
in your palace walls,
and steal out onto the moonlit hill, where her shoes will fall
from her feet
like drops
of snow.

She will dangle them from two fingers, let her
bare, brown calloused soles be
stained green
and black and magenta
from the dewgrass,
and the dirt,
and the deadberries pressed, kissed
down deep
to the soil.



Life and Death
Acrylic on Paper

Meredith James

I watched the orange black butterfly
that was me
sunning on a flat rock
unmoving
because I hadn't wanted that kiss

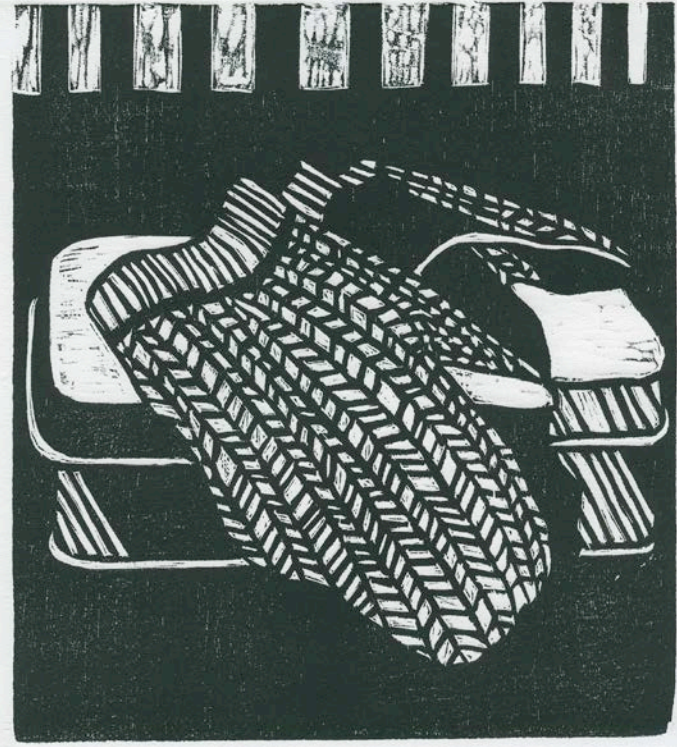
I saw the black orange butterfly
that was you
flitting from stone to stone
restless

because I hadn't told you that I am afraid
of sandpaper butterflies
crashing into my face
unbothered
because they don't register pain

I wonder what it's like for you
to only feel touch
when your abdomen is eaten
accepting it you tell me
because it doesn't hurt too bad

Butterflies

Julia Baier



Warm Up

Woodcut

Kira Peters

Sleepy Sosa

Oil on Paper

Hailie Metz



I feel a constant longing
For something more than the world;
More than what mere earth can give.
There are friends who don't call
And family I never see.
I can't be angry with them,
But they won't know how lonely I feel.

The ebony sky looks down and smiles
And I smile back, drawing pictures in my head,
Trying to forget my bittersweet dreams.
At least they don't visit me too often.
When they do, only He and I know.

I wish the stars could take that ugly orange
And cast it into oblivion somewhere.
I don't want the city lights and their dreams;
Where the stars shine, I want Him,
But He is waiting in another place.

At least He calls; at least I can see Him when I pray.
He bears my bittersweet dreams,
Taking them into the black night sky.
"I won't tell," He says to me, "God already knows."



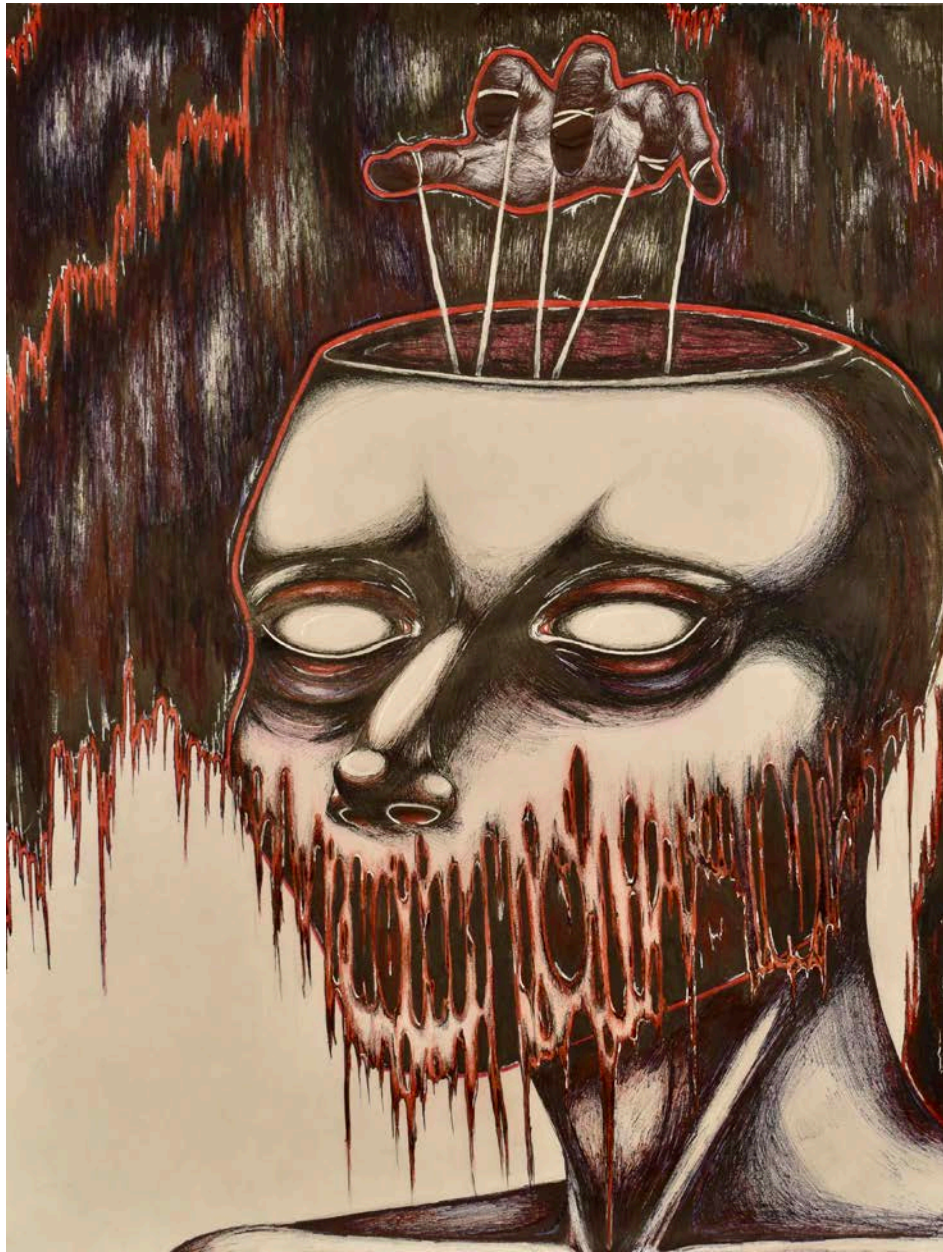
Perfectionism
Stoneware

Connor Hagarty



Koi Pond
Acrylic on Canvas

Kieran Sween



Transcendental

Lexi Oestreich

Ventriloquist

Ink and Colored Pencil Drawing

Thump, thump, thump.

It kept happening night after night. “Mommy!” I would shout, but not once did she believe me. “Go back to sleep.” She would tell me every single time. I always argued, but she never listened. Why would she never check? Was she scared too? I would lay there with my blanket as armor. My life saving defense. Darkness would seep all around prancing and purring as if it danced out to seduce me. Each time I would bat it away. This time was no different. Thump, thump, thump. The air went silent. Every muscle in my body froze yet convulsed so rapidly I might hurt myself. “Momma” I muttered. The word stuck in my throat.

Thump, thump, thump.

Except this time the final thump my closet door squeaked open. The tendrils of darkness returned caressing me, but they were different. Were they wet? My bed behind me sagged down, something heavy sat there. A cry was battling its way out of my voice, but a wandering tendril found my headfirst. All I remember is blackness with the imprint of a creature darker than the void that engulfed my room. It came from my closet. My closet? I can’t feel my limbs, almost like they are floating in water. Floating forever away I exist. I can’t tell where I am. Black eats everything here. Small bits of white speckles flash in and out against the blackness feeding its hunger. Wait a way out? A door cherry red, like the color you’d seen in an old pop ad. Its frame illuminated by an LED streetlamp. I haven’t seen this color in so long! How long? My body floats yet refuses to listen. My head, I still have control over I discover. I rock against the door.

Thump, thump, thump.



Hug Thyself
Acrylic on Canvas

Alex Ciesla

The face in the mirror.
A face full of light,
But look at the eyes. See
the suffering,
the aching.

They're crying for help,
Yet no one comes to wipe the tears.
For the façade is too strong.

No one looks deep enough to see those broken eyes,
Yearning beneath the smile
Needing one observant soul,
One fellow broken soul,
To see behind the mask
And look in the eyes of another injured soul.
A life that fills up the cup of what life drains out,
A life that can be saved one face to the other.
But until that day,
Those eyes,
That shining light,
That mask of the truth,
That face in the mirror,
Only saves itself.

The Face in the Mirror

Clare Henschel



Sylvan Lake, SD

Gretchen Cortez

Sunday Gulch Trail View

Oil on Board





The Dogs Resting in the Snow

Oil on Board

Sherri Lisota



Happiness
Collage and Calligraphy

Chloe Swanson

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and minors please visit:

Art Education



Art Track - Ethics, Culture, and Society



English Education



English



