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Touchstone

VITERBO UNIVERSITY ART AND LITERARY MAGAZINE



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

The mission of *Touchstone* 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.

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



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Touchstone

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Roses from San Pedro de la Nave, Spain | 2024

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Maggie Olson

Untitled | Charcoal on Paper

Ascendant | **Ashley Tulley**

Loud voices bounce off our exterior walls

We seem to be lost in the silence

Trying to find the right words

So that we may too feel heard

Without any guidance

It's easy to get lost in the darkness

Grasping onto something

Anything to keep our heads above the raging tide

Did someone scream your name

As the sunlight turns the bright sky gray

What's that you feel inside

Why did you suddenly fade away

The tide around us is getting higher

Our oxygen becoming lower

But we are way too strong to surrender

No such thing as giving up

We start to fight back against the tide

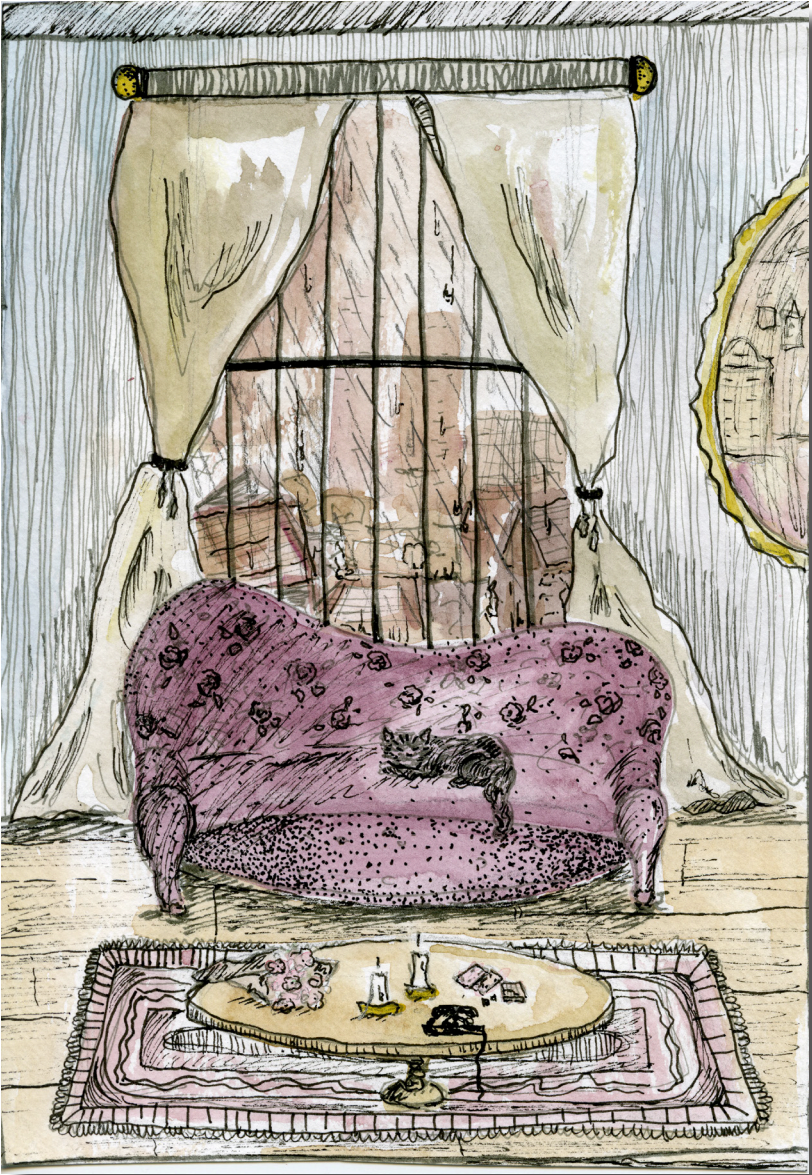
Gaining the strength to escape the darkness

At last we see the shining light

We can feel the sunshine on our skin

We survived the raging tide

Finding our reason to stay alive



Hope Regier

The Apartment | Mixed Media

Find me in an Empty Room | **Meredith James**

Find me in an empty room,
melting wax of the birthday cake I never got to eat,
burning my fingers.

Find me in an empty room,
disembodied laughter of the baby we never raised.

Find me in an empty room,
tatters of the wedding dress I never got to wear.

Find me in an empty room,
the shelves of books I never got to read.

Find me in an empty room,
with the family we never got to make.

Find me in an empty room,
awake and aware but never fully there.

Find me in an empty room,
the red wine stain; blood of regret.

Find me in an empty room,
where the whispers only seal my fate.

Find me in an empty room,
searching for the one person I will never see.

Find me in an empty room,
that is padded,
and locked.

Every room is empty without you,

But in every empty room, I will look for you.



Elise Weinbender

Roaring Mountains | Mixed Media

A Normal Day in the City | **Peyton Blough**

Hospital	Outside the hospital
Tree	The trees blow in the wind
Blue	A blue bag flies away in the air
Walk	As people stroll the streets
Time	Time moves slowly
Song	The distant songs playing from distant stores
Can	A man playing music on cans on the sidewalk
Fan	With fans around him tossing change in a bucket
Green	The green money flying into the bucket
Desk	And a desk for sale across the street
Writing	Written across \$50 dollars first come first serve on it
Apple	Apple cores in the road
Count	And countless pieces of trash along with it
White	The white garbage truck passing down the street



Cheyenne Sanders

The Figure | Terra Cotta

| The World Around Us | **Jayna Schema**

Cracks People hide their cracks from the world.

Hope Hopeful that others don't see in.

Together Together trying to find ways out,

Party to find ways to part with the past.

Running Trying but always running back to it,

Chaos in the chaos of our world

Peace Trying to make peace with what our lives
have become.

Seeing Seeing a different way than before,

Believing Believing something that was never-
thought possible.

Seep The memories seeping the mind,

Enter entering into imagination.

One Only one person there, yourself

Time Then time,

Breaks breaks.



Camille Olson

Backyard | Acrylic on Paper

Mental Images | **Milla Krainak**

Eyes open and closed
Really what this shows
So many different views
Knowing that does not lose

Understanding from my life
Unlike some other strife
Confidence within the days
Including all those stylish slays

With a personal idea of trends
And thinking what may blend
As part of living with less sight
Discovering those true delights

That please each and every sense
Then not enjoying with such a lens
Of only believing those being seen
In the world where many can glean

Much through their eyes as so seem
Apart from other senses that truly mean
Lots to those in the world without sight
Allowing them for such a different light

That light creates images in the mind
Of what could possibly seem for blind
Individuals in this reality thinking upon
How the world may be so brightly drawn

With color throughout lots of things
Vivid imagination within always rings
True while internally construction pics
And when others begin describing specifics



Gretchen Cortez

Roses from San Pedro de la Nave, Spain | Oil on Canvas

Great is the Meal to Serve a Worm |

Felicia Sedbrook

Little pain in an apple
Feasting on fleshy memory
Refusing to give pause
Chewing through rot without a mouth

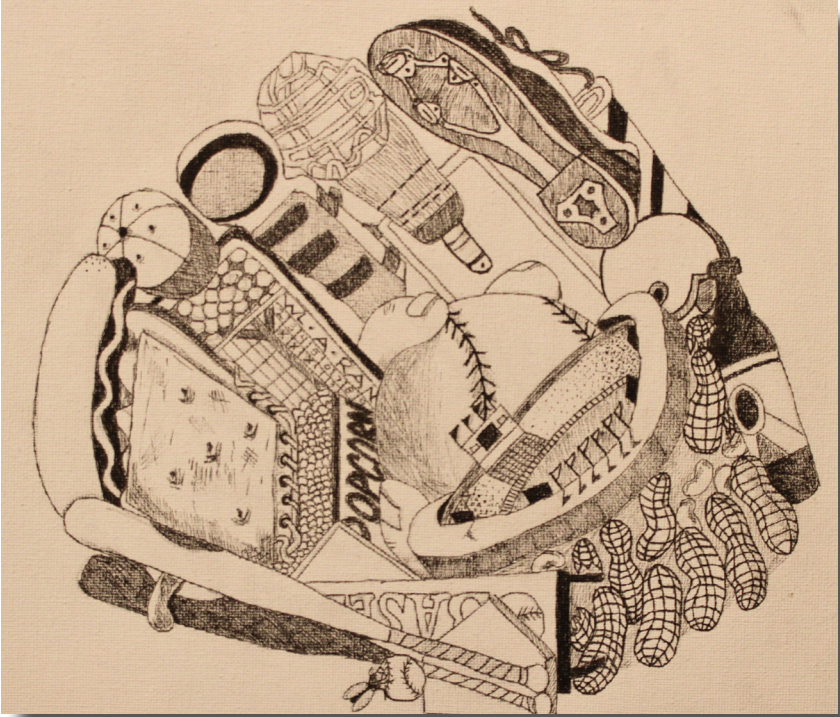
Feasting on fleshy memory
That kept so many cold
Chewing through rot without a mouth
Leaving a trail of sweet ooze

That kept so many cold
I've felt the hand in the grave
Leaving a trail of sweet ooze
Burrowed in the spine

I've felt your hand in the grave
And great is the meal to serve worms
Burrowed in your spine
And on your distant heart

Great is the meal to serve worms
With recycled hunger
On your distant heart
Yet never did it kill you

With recycled hunger
Refusing to give pause
Yet never did it kill you
Little pain in an apple



Aryn Marble

The Game | Mixed Media

| Case: Iron Slaughter | **Felicia Sedbrook**

Ten paces from the stovetop, seasonings down the sink

And a hard-earned leak, drips rusting from a scrubbed bare

Wound, where I caught him, this incapable tool

His moronic grime, the murdering fool pointing still, dumb

Ex-lover aiming for the slaughter, water, soap, suds, a scour

I cannot prevent the devour of an iron victim: the skillet



Linnea Peterson

Dump Out the Colors and THINK | Mixed Media

Hierarchy | **Andree Gonzalez-Lawrence**

Preferences L

E

V

E

L

S

The successors among those who

shifted

Among the directions of almighty

Participants equally in **differences**

To which ever

detail

Furthermore, the

rejected

finds

Are only made stronger.



Mahlivanh Fleckenstein

Bluffs Over Train Bridge | Oil on Canvas

| Dino's and Doubt | **Anna Becker**

Why do we try to do everything to the extreme extent of perfection or to the level of impossible? Only we believe it is necessary and every time we try even in our complete success, failure brings out our insanity. If this weren't the truth seen in my life, I would be diagnosed a saint and not a writer by the dammed blood of an impatient need to do something un-worldly by nature.

It's in my name I say, it's a sin sometimes, during my AA meetings it's my substance abuse problems, which currently I am sober, so that's a win on the account that I can articulate my words to you here and now as I am. When I was in rehab, they must have sedated me with sugar and forgotten I work inversely to the average head. Who could I be to only care and seem to be the silly game of the republic playing out the projected windows of our homes?

Not with the way I paint, my drawings come alive months after they were created Lucretius style, and I write like I was born in the wrong generation.

All this to say I don't get to be my age, and the gift of intelligence is not a gift given, it is a burden that if not through the cold love of Christ, kills through boredom or curiosity of the possible outcome....

The dreaded paranoia that everyone around is going to kill me because I know too much only to find out that paranoia is because they have no idea what they are possibly doing. The sugar they put into their systems with their wants and desires, the devil they give their bodies by leaving salt on the table for another to pour on their head when they're dead. The bible says, salt your own food, I assure the reason is all but logic for my God can

not do math but only anatomy and psychology. So, when you read the bible remember, time is the devil, and my God isn't a mathematician he is the artists behind your body.

Yes, I said he, he as is the bridge between the energy of us, you, and the sight of seeing the rainbow of color that gives way for the co-creation of our love for living the life we have been given nevertheless what has been burned.

I was told once, to find the simple line, the white rabbit, but that will not suffice for my God, for the Lord of Light has matter much more than a day's worth of time. In the matter of color, a glisten of empathy understands and shows me how to be who others need so I can hear myself through them.

This is how the anti-social outsider created the inside imagination of their own, it's a philosophy not to be followed but seen.

We read the word of the Lord, Mark 6 verse 4 "Then Jesus told them, 'A prophet is honored everywhere except in his own hometown and among his relatives and his own family.'"

This is why I don't tend to enjoy the time of my own home, not the space between my parents and I, as many wise do not. They cannot hear what they have already programed their projections to have in sight, as I have said, drawings can come alive if set so free to be.

And when the five thousand were fed, verse 31, "Let's go off by ourselves to a quite place and rest awhile." I am that I am – We are for I am – I am for we Are – We got me here – Here got me for We are I am.



Cheyenne Sanders

In the Hands of God | Oil on Canvas



Gretchen Cortez

Braganca, Portugal | Oil on Canvas

| Lotus | **Anna Becker**

For quite a while, I have wondered what is it that differentiated my world from our earth?

Cosmic, that is the word given to name what has accumulated in the senses between our ether. Oh, how we share a world, whispering and walking on the same earth, true light to be seen in.

I can see a warm field brush upwards, the sun nearing fourteen, grass grazing its last glimpse of glory, the trees taking one more turn for fall, and her walking towards me like a lunatic. To look at the beauty of the earth, with her eyes, and to walk towards me with her back facing the mountains, it is not luck but the Lord. That by all interference, she coordinated a spot for me, how shall I to be for her?

Liberated in the awning of such oddity, that I am me to her. The fortuitous itinerary I journeyed in, a true stoic I stood sundered by the cunning depart I once felt from within myself. Had I taken a conclave to use my pyrometer and gather up the temperature, surely, I would have flown too close to the sun. Such thought was great fun, I made headway in how I bobbed along, sailing alone in my slothful river.

The tasteless offbeat foreigner jump'd in, how whimsically risqué were the ripples that irrigated my rugged rage. In such a humorous aberrant breakage of my own character, I climbed up the inquisitive wonder of love as if I had been cosmically controlled to do so.

For she is my Lady, laminated to be the love only a lost soul born of a vagabond could have dreamt. Up in the obscure, lingering within a wish she found a way to make me the scintillation.

Grown down in grass valley, from the Gramineae I scend to see her imminent loom towards I. Frozen, flushed, fabricated, all the frequencies of her feelings, they lay in my being like silk lace. Her pleach pin'd and weaved a way for the suavity to steam out of sight. Such was shaped as if no longer I own my own lungs for, I surrender to the sound of her chiffon. Truly I say with fair faith, I not seen before, my eyes only fooled my sick fever. Something happened, a drop of her medicine, a suckle of dandelion syrup in lotus tea.

Only the purest perspective could have pluck ye I, the touch heard from such redolent of honey and almonds. Brown sugar caramelized with the morning birds; a candy walnut shared like a midnight cosmopolitan. Hand baked and fresh from the oven, dearly touching her hair and feeling the taste of tonight's desert drizzled on dazed.

What I am most unfamiliar with, the voraciously desire yet knightly honor of chivalric control. A philosopher I name myself, nonetheless, a prophetic person of passion, and for her to take my desire of self-control, a magnificent moment of polarity pulses me to feel like a person.

Once left naked in a garden, I am waiting in obeying order, remaining steadfast in adverting tenebrous thoughts of fruit. Thankfully patronaged, for had Varuna not blessed a gyration to query, then one could have made the midnight moon wince at our supernal.

Munificence shook the rocks stacked around the bend where we sat. Listing into the waves prolapse, we were a translunar cascade of empyrean. I wonder not farther, for the sky ignited us in imagination, the cold abyss of my aghast revitalized, and, my heart sang a warm timbre once again.



Lexi Oestreich

Tired Young Woman | Graphite

A Letter to the Space Between | **Ryan Dettbarn**

I'm afraid to live in the silence because of what I might find. I'm afraid of that in-between space and all that lives there.

I supposed I could bear it if I really tried.

But not today.

It can't be today, or this week, or the next because the noise is too loud in the coming days. There is no room for silence.

Is that where they find us? In the space between. In that silence. Is that where you send them to meet us halfway? Is that where they can smile again? Is that where I can smile again? Can they reach us from where they are in your arms? If they can I just want to say...

Hi.

You're missed. You're loved. You have a name and a face, and you deserve both. You will not be lost to those left behind. Never. I'm sorry it ended the way that it did. I'm sorry that you're gone. It does nothing of course but know that it's true.

I wonder how many times I might have seen you. Run into you in the hallway. Bumped against your shoulder in the stairwell. Brushed past you on the street.

I'm sorry that I didn't really see you.

But know that you were seen. You were. You were seen and valued, and I hope you know that. I really hope you do.



Nathaniel Powell

Patience | Mixed Media

A Few Sentence Story Snippets |

Ryan Dettbarn

Rotting meat festering in the baking sun. The thick scent of sick hangs lazily in the air as the man wipes the salted sweat from his brow. Handle turning, metal grinding against metal as the stinking curls of meat ooze out, plunking limply into the dirt with a dull THUD. Turn the handle, crank the gears, grind the meat.

She had cut off its head and stuck the body in an envelope, yellowing and crumpled at the edges. Granted it was a stick person drawn precisely on an index card, but still. Pretty disturbing for a 5-year-old. If you were to ask Cindy, however, if it was supposed to be scary, she'd simply giggle, ringlets bouncing, and say that no, it was funny. A clever inside joke.

A granite statue of a beaming child just a bit larger than her thumb. That is all Natalie Dean was bequeathed in her late grandmother's will. Just a simple little trinket and a whole lot of disappointment. Sure, she had liked it well enough as a child, but it seemed silly now, the cold surface seeping into the skin of her palm. Silly and worthless.

Symbols he didn't understand. Symbols that seemed completely and utterly random and, in all honesty, a little psychotic. But what else should you expect from a crazed asylum patient who had to have her eyes removed after nearly clawing them out. She said she couldn't stop seeing the worms cloying at her retinas, but the doctor said it's just paranoid delusions. So did I. Until I began to see the worms too.

Pictures are how you see the world you wish you could experience. Some sort of falsified reality that is almost better than the real thing. That's probably why I do photography, to capture what I wish was real. That's why I now tack a picture of his face to the body. Now he is alive and real and mine. Now he is smiling at me and it's genuine. It feels real.

"How could you lose your ticket?!" Kyle's voice blares over the phone's speaker, jarring Andrew from his panicked scrambling through his desk drawer. "I don't know, I just did!" He hadn't actually, he had sold it to another friend and now that he had figured out its worth, he was looking for something else. His pocketknife. "No worries, Kyle, we'll make it aboard the last shuttle to Mars. I promise."

"I suppose not," I offer, when asked if I'd be mourned when my body was found.

Adrenaline is running through my veins, but blood is spilling from his.

How many times do you think something needs to be repeated before someone hears it? Once? Twice? A hundred times? What if *no one* hears it? What if there's no one *to* hear it?

Do you think that a weed believes itself to be a flower?



Anna Becker

Transmute The Un-percivable | Acrylic on Clay



Camille Olson

Grandpa's Cherry Tree | Acrylic on Paper

| Choice | **Carter Steger**

When the tragedy of fate turns life
into something by which we cannot abate
Suffering plights the air,
filling our minds with countless despair

Our once formed smiles, gone, normed by sadness
Like a flower meeting frost
We wilt,
Fearing all hope is lost

The green of our lives fades into brown,
Built upon ours stems when one does frown,
It makes deafening silence scream so loud
When watching yourself becomes an event, so horribly profound.

The spring of life will never fade
Through hard times and rough,
Is our measure made
A choice then, how we return to the world

As reprobate scorned by fate, cursed to forever spew quiet hate?

or

As a welcoming sight, for those who share in our burden of plight?



McKenna Hunter

Home-cooked at College | Linoleum Print

| Thawing Thoughts | **Milla Krainak**

Staring at a wintry sky
Taking the deepest sigh

Gazing into an open sea
Where some reflections may be
Confusion though, not honest clarity

Thinking that could begin
At times spent not within
Try to explore other depths instead
As each attempt continues on in the head

Strength among those rings of trees
Courage inspiring such great memories
Back upon many experiences and events
That did not seem so enjoyable in the moment

When at a most difficult trail
Envisioning every possible fail
Then pause and recognize things
All the beauty and inner peace offerings

Even relieves stress in town
Follow on a simple path down
Let worries go as those feet may
Instead occupy the mind in another way

Greater happiness amidst this
With experiences apart from business
In a day that includes more troubles and blues
Turning around attitudes by simply lacing up shoes

And with steps outside to discover that new muse
True inspiration in this world, so available in all hues
Art and creativity found as darkness comes to a close
Certain motivation could also be hidden underneath those

Layers that make truths less clear
Clouding judgements with worries and fear
Not able then to understand what seems quite near

Natural beauties once again though in our minds
Sights and sounds returning thoughts on skies and winds



Lexi Oestreich

Hot n' Cold | Pastel



Sarah Rodriguez

Hexagon Cardigan | Crochet

Face of an Apartment Building | **Felicia Sedbrook**

An apartment's face gazing through
Someone's laugh, feet kicking
In the air and someone sobs

It's eyes winking glimpses
Of sleepy times, 'Badass!' echoes
Through the night and dogs bark

It's nose exhales spices to
The sidewalk, a vacuum rattles
During a sneeze and someone sings

It's the expected routine to ignore
Each other's lives and enter the yawning
Face to our designated role



Mahlivanh Fleckenstein

Ethereal Dusk | Oil on Canvas

| Souvenirs | **Noe Pacillas**

Some nights are short

Some days are long

But what kills the body is not overwork
Mental side is
what poisons us

You tend to think about your life

What choices or what you should have done

Here you are flashing your memories

To realizing man shit was not so bad

As a child you never really needed to look at that
mental side of yourself

Then come again we thought love was given to
anyone or anything at all cost

As you grow up through the years

Love that was so easy to find

Becomes extinct, due to trust

An easy "how you doing"

Could save millions of friendship

But yet we stick to laughing it off.

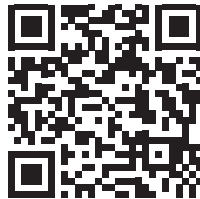


McKenna Hunter

Melancholy Blue Bird | Acrylic on Clay

For more information on majors
and minors please visit:

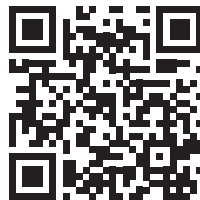
Art Education



Art Track



English Education



English



