

THE SWITCH
LITERATURE & FINE ARTS





The Switch may contain creative works that address complex themes and subjects such as trauma, substance abuse, and mental health struggles, among others. We acknowledge that some readers may find certain content challenging or distressing. The contents of this publication were produced and selected by students. The views and opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the perspectives of The University of Tennessee at Martin or the editorial staff of *The Switch*. UTM's obligation as an institution of higher education is to provide a platform for creative expression, viewpoint diversity, and open dialogue, which are valuable components of the academic process. We encourage readers to engage with the material at their discretion.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement.

The Switch: Literature & Fine Arts magazine is an annual magazine published in the spring by The University of Tennessee at Martin. This magazine is created and produced by undergraduate students with the help of The University of Tennessee at Martin's Student Publications.

Front Cover art *Sir Harry* by Emily Brown
Back Cover art *Sardine Dream* by Talena Moon Glover

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Letter From the Editors

Dear Reader,

Since my first poem was published in *The Switch* four years ago, this magazine has been a major part of my life. It has shaped my time as a student at UT Martin in ways I never would have expected, and has provided me with countless opportunities and connections that I will always hold close to my heart. I am endlessly grateful that I have had the privilege of watching *The Switch* grow and succeed, and that I have been able to be so involved in its development.

During my freshman year, *The Switch* took on the title it has now, and the identity of this magazine has evolved just as much as the students who create it have. We have met every challenge head-on, and we—the contributors, the staff, and the faculty who support us—have continued to work hard to create a beautiful and unique magazine each year that not only gives students invaluable publication and editorial experience, but also a space where their creative voices and minds can be elevated and shared with a larger community.

I first want to thank all of the lovely contributors who took the time to submit their work—I know how terrifying and vulnerable it can feel, but please know I enjoyed reading and reviewing each and every one of the pieces that were submitted. Each edition depends on you all, and we owe our existence to your continued support and submissions. I also want to thank my lovely and hardworking masthead, who have supported me and my vision for *The Switch* as I have navigated my position as executive editor. The edition could not have been created without your diligence, time, and energy, and I am so, so appreciative of that effort. Dahlia Bates has been a wonderful assistant editor and has done an amazing job at keeping everything organized and everyone informed. Our social media editor, Lily Stahr, has brought her own creative touch to our online presence and has worked hard to keep our followers up-to-date on events and deadlines. I am also incredibly grateful for the tireless work of Emily Brown, our art editor, and I feel so privileged that *The Switch* has been graced with her artistic skill and attention to detail. And, of course, I want to thank all of our volunteer staff, who took time out of their Wednesdays and Thursdays to hang out with us and help make the newest edition of *The Switch*.

I also want to thank Dr. Carter, *The Switch*'s faculty advisor and my most valued mentor here at UT Martin. Her guidance has been invaluable as I have navigated both college and leading *The Switch*. Without her advice and support, many of our achievements would not have been possible. From bake sales to the nitty-gritty logistic matters, Dr. Carter has always been there to support us, and she has certainly left her mark on the wonder that is *The Switch*. Finally, I want to thank Student Publications and the administrators who have made the publication of *The Switch* possible. Ms. Tomi McCutchen in particular has been in our corner for many years, and has always been dedicated to assisting *The Switch* through the process of publication. Without her and the university's support, we would not be able to elevate students' creative voices in the ways that we take such pride in doing.

Thank you all for allowing me the incredible honor of being the executive editor of *The Switch* this year. It has been a wonderful and rewarding experience, and I can't wait to see the direction in which the magazine goes in the future. I know it will be extraordinary, as it always is.

With immense gratitude,
Elle Edwards

Meet the Staff

Executive Editor ----- Elle Edwards

Assistant Editor ----- Dahlia Bates

Art Editor ----- Emily Brown

Social Media Editor ----- Lily Stahr

Dedicated Staff ----- Xavier Hinson

Hailey Russell

Sara Batts

Vanessa Wambaugh

Chris Craigie

Emma Abell

Chloe Jones

Hailee Gunter

Sam Gearin

Jonathan Nichols

Caleb Morris

Kennedy Williams

Jason Moss

Faculty Advisor ----- Dr. Maari Carter

Dear Reader,

The Switch has been a part of my college career since I arrived at UT Martin in 2024. I was part of the dedicated volunteer staff for the 2024-25 issue, and I had the honor of serving as the assistant editor for this issue. No matter how long I work on *The Switch*, however, there always comes a creeping thought in the back of my mind: What if we fail this year? What if we don't get any submissions? What if no one is interested?

And yet, like clockwork, my worries are proven wrong.

Again and again, I am pleasantly surprised by the amount of support we get; it feels a bit unreal at times. Submissions always flood in, with many talented writers and artists putting forward truly inspiring work. It's wonderful to see the efforts of our faculty, staff, and volunteers come together at the end of the year and create an issue worthy of showing off our contributors' work.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude for our contributors. It's reassuring to know that all around us are writers, poets, painters, graphic designers, and all sorts of other artists who are dedicated to their craft. Without them, *The Switch* wouldn't be a thing. They put their hearts, their souls, and their talent into their works, and I am extremely proud to be able to showcase them in this issue.

With all of that, I'm not sure where my initial doubts even came from. At this point, all I am left with is gratitude for a great issue this year and the hope that *The Switch* will grow to be even better next year.

With love,

Dahlia Bates, Assistant Editor of *The Switch*

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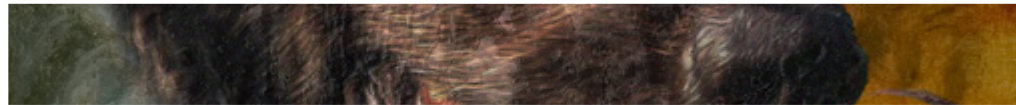
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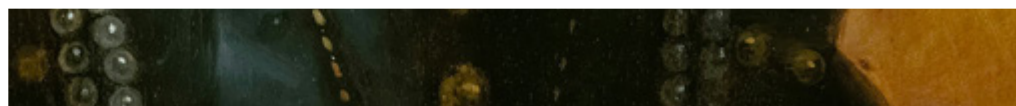
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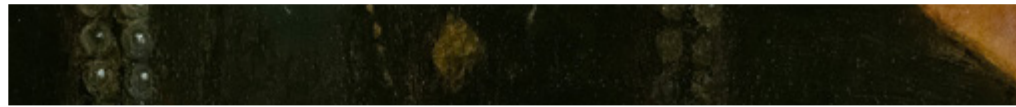
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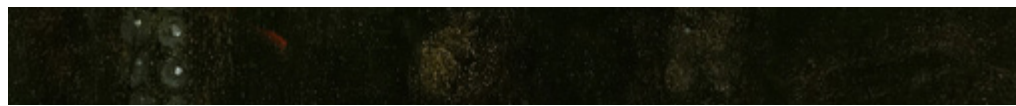
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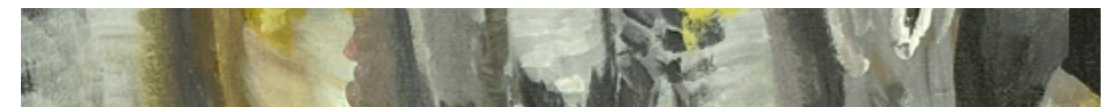
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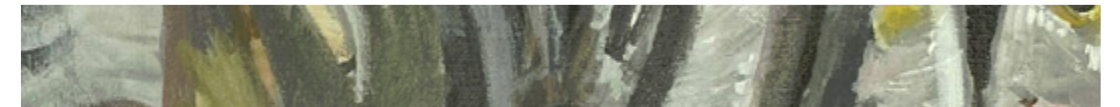
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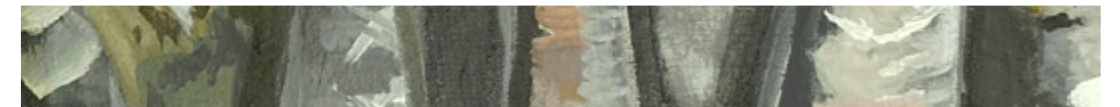
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A Way Out

There's a way out along the grassy lane if you close your eyes and imagine it long enough.

It stretches on and on in a gray, misty vapor that wraps its embrace into a shield of oblivion.

It twists and winds into a curve no one has ever seen the other side of.

A dizzying harmony of spirals and circle patterns engulfs all semblance of reality.

You'll never find your way back if you let it take you.

But really that's the point, isn't it?

Katie Lowndale

beauty is in the eye of the lightning-bug-holder

do you still remember summers when small rainbows arched above the green? when water droplets spewed from hose to skin, then skin to sky? or—

maybe you can recall tasting nectar from wild honeysuckles, sweetened by the sprinkler's soft mist—droplets pilling into crisp dew.

plucking holly berries (weary of tick bites and wasps) you'd gather buckets worth to scatter into mom's deserted bird bath out back.

while your parents bickered over overdue bills on the counter, you would skip cracked arrowheads on lakes of green. the sun felt *shy* then. yellow was more vibrant, too. the

do you still remember summers catered by divine creators, when a sky-bound artist was the reason we (alone) stand witness?

did you once consider that *you*, while parading through the garden, sought, created, and defined the beauty in drifting all alone?

Kennedy Williams



The Lights are On

Mickela Stewart



The Vermillion Room

Zundyl Luciano

sunset to sunrise

i only truly see You at Night.

during the day, if You happen to be out,
You're only there through passing glances in
a grocery store parking lot. unknowing.
daylight dulls You. it fuzzes the
curves of You. cameras blur the details, erasing You.

but Night—*oh*, at Night,
You glow brighter than every goddamn
star i've ever seen. every blemish, crevice,
divot—i know You intimately. whether we
dance or kiss or just sit on the back porch
talking about everything and nothing at all—
whether You're full, or i'am,
whether we're half-empty or drenched in darkness—

Night belongs to us.

my hands trace the shape of You.
Your lips bless every inch of me.
Eternal Woman,
—i bleed with Your fullness.

god's prettiest creation, woman of
my devotion, lady of the night
who keeps me company. You
belong to no one, least of all to me.

Emma Abell



Ceramic Heart Vase
Laura Telfer

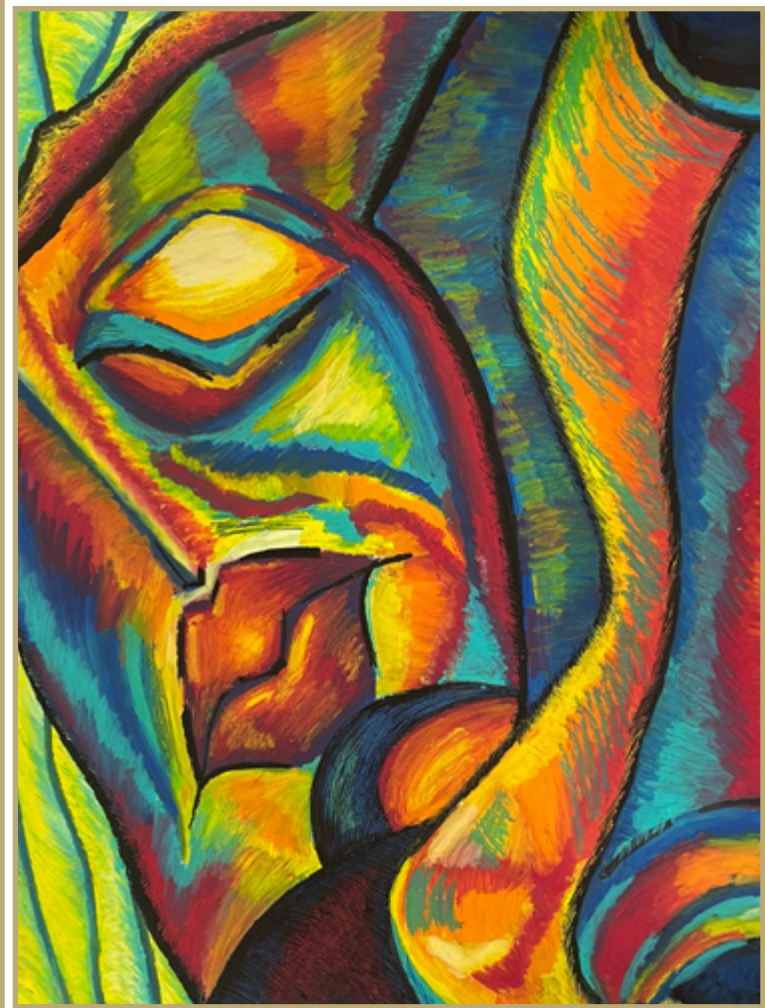
Ceramic Heart Vase #2
Laura Telfer



Body is Tea
Amanda Smith



Peace Be Still:
Mark 4:39
James Crowell



Candied Calypso

Natalie Munday



Ode to the Coffee Cup

Ode to the coffee cup, ah! so disposable and accommodating. College students, office workers, businessmen and the like, revel in your eggshell white and Caution Hot! top. You sit firm in a busy hand, like a warm newborn chick, waiting for the ripening, the steeping, and the cooling of a beverage well served. Could I have your grace, your modesty, your function and charm, I would warm the handshake of a thousand acquaintances. I would delight in the feeling of filling the hearts and souls of working men. I could lift my brim with joy, and sigh with rest as I flow outward to the world. But I am not so easily held.

Kitchen Counter

Mickela Stewart



BearInk

Ella Self

Moira Mathis



The Smile is Universal
Rubi Maldonado



James, Franklin, and The Dragon
Park Pig Poacher

April Hosey

AppleInk

Ella Self

No Sheets Given
Vanessa Wambaugh





Push and Pull
Mickela Stewart

Cigarettes to a Non-Smoker

Emma Abell

Listen, kid—I've been between the lips
of kings and peasants alike:
flashy French fashionistas keep me
at an opera-length while overworked overtimers cling to me
Like I'm the only heaven they've ever known.

I've been the wallpaper of convenience stores, the litter
linin' the sides of the highway, the secret stashed in the
hole of a teenager's mattress, the thing burnin'
circles in your grandmama's couch.

But honey, I'm impossible to hide. Everyone can smell the
stench of staleness from my swirlin' stream of smoke,
tucked between the course threads of your cable-knit,
his tailored suit, her bathrobe, their armchair.

I've been bummed, packed, and passed around
more times than I could count.
College parties, funeral home parking lots, strip clubs,
the bench outside the entrance to the emergency room—

I'm there, everywhere. They light me with matches,
bics, stove eyes, campfires, and they burn me nice and long.
Short hits, long drag, out through the nose—hell,
they even make shapes outta me with their tongue.

And when they've had their fill, or I run too short,
they finish me off on the heel of their boot or
the basin of their ash tray, scrape me out on
the concrete, drown me in the backwash
at the bottom of a bottle of Mt Dew.



The End of the Beginning
Olivia Cooper



Unwavering Flame
Talena Moon Glover

Misty Woman

Born in a wildfire, baptized in a hurricane
So far away from me
But I still feel you pulling on my chains
Gonna walk down the dark road
Towards that blinding light
Stay inside, misty woman
It's too cold tonight

Oh sweet honey
I went where the willows snapped
Saw the lost sailor coughing smoke
With your sister on his lap
Your mama's by the river
Papa's tomb is a pile of rocks
You've given me the key, oh sweet honey
Now I just can't find the locks

Midnight baby
Child of stardust and rain
The blood of centuries old witches
Flowing in your veins
You've got a nighthawk's eye
And a twisted pin's smile
With tears of hot mercury, midnight baby
You put innocence on trial

Misty woman, misty woman
Made me feel like such a fool and a dunce
You must have killed me a hundred times
But brought me back only once
Got the look of the long night upon your face
Sorry it went so badly
But you can't say you lost me, misty woman
If you never even had me



The Aristocrat

Zundyl Luciano

Ethan Elliott

The Making of a Stranger

It's strange how
Unknowing someone
Makes them into
Just another face in the crowd
And someone in fact
To be avoided
As all the tiny shreds
Of comfort fall away
And their individuality
Goes down the drain
And any memories you had
Together
Fade away
Born into a dying light
Of hazy grey
As a dead man
Walks alongside you
In your wildest
Unfathomable
Dreams
And you wouldn't believe
How far you've come
In the making
Of a stranger.



Kindled Stare

Rubi Maldonado

Georgia Read



Dandelion
Vicki Hassell

Francis
Vicki Hassell



i voted
Megan Flowers



Don't Look at Me / I Could Destroy Myself

The sun can be harsh and unforgiving, and I don't want to be seen in the light of day just yet. Look at me under the moon, look at the way I glow.

I can be beautiful.

Words are the bones of my art but they are also irresistible tools of destruction. They are all I have to offer, and all I ask for. They run through me like a river, waiting for a release.

Many have tried to stand the current, drawn in by the curve of its banks, by the way it feeds and feeds. The sight is all they want; the substance is too much to swallow.

The sound of the current is a constant whisper, a stream of words that never ceases. It pushes me forward, pulls me back. It is the source, everything flows from it:

*I want to be seen. I want to be known.
Look at me look at me look at me.*

Elle Edwards

Time marches on and the current moves always. It knows only confinement; I know only restraint.

How does one give form to something when the definitions have never been clear?

I could destroy myself easily.

Dptych: Two Dreams

A Cloud of Noise Like Fies

Walking on a barren plain,
Something to see- I turn my eyes
Like Abel toward the angry Cain:
A cloud of noise like flies.

Buzzing on horizon near,
They rise and clutter up the air.
Stirring up unwanted fear,
The dots unfair and everywhere.

I stand and look with strange delight,
While they my vision overwhelm.
When I was young, I wanted sight,
So tread I to this unclean realm.

I get what I have always craved:
A crowd to share my secrets to.
For this my whole life I have slaved.
Inside, this fate I always knew.

I close my eyes one final time.
My lump swallowed into my chest.
If I looked down, a swath of slime
would offer me my only rest.

In my final unspoken hour,
All am I; thing to be devour'd?

A Siren with a Gaping Maw

I look out from the thrashing boat to
see my head dashed on the rocks. I
turn to hear a gutting gloat: A misty
figure, laughing, mocks.

When I see closer it
appears: A siren with a
gaping maw.
My hands fly up to bleeding ears
Hear the voice like a rusty saw!

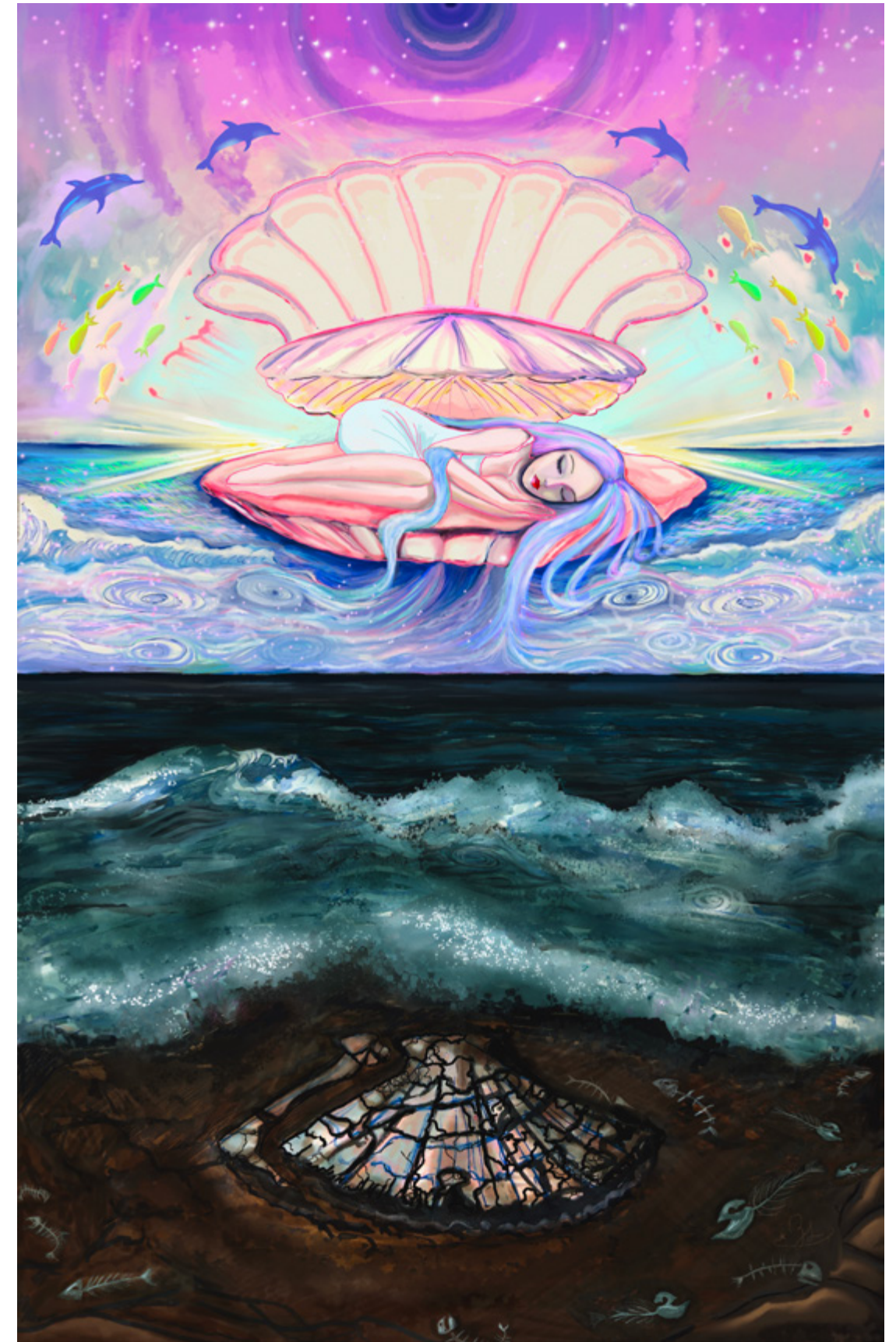
I stumble, into the water
falling, reaching out for a hand
to hold, washing up on altar
cold, knowing this the only land.

She grabs my hair and drags me up
while I peer into empty eyes. She
sees my heart a thing to sup and
drinks up all my wanting cries.

For just a moment, I am there,
swimming around a water clean
The heaven shore, a place that's fair
I am an infant yet to wean.

Then I remember waters red
She bashes me, my heart is bled.

Moira Mathis



Sea Goddess

Zundyl Luciano

Sabbatical

Sometimes I wish I could not exist
In the world for a while.
It's not that I want to leave this life in exchange
For another somewhere else.
Nor do I wish to erase my footprints from
The soils of existence,
I'd just like to unzip and step out of my body.
Like someone arriving home from work
After a long, cold day; taking off their coat
And hanging it gently in the closet
For tomorrow.
If I could, I think I'd like to float around
In the cosmos for a while.
Looking down on earth without weight,
Finding out how close I could get to the sun
Before the heat forces me back.
I would try to grab hold of a star,
And watch it glow in my hands.
And when it starts descending,
Catch it by its tail, and ride it down to earth again.
But if I decided not to go that far,
I could settle for climbing oak trees.
As a kid, I remember following
Their long, crooked trunks with my eyes,
Thinking they looked so tall they could
Brush the clouds with their branches.
I'd like to climb a branch that high.
Maybe not so high as to grab stars, but high enough to feel their heat.
I'd climb along the dry, silvery branches
Until I was at the top where I could rest
And look down on an orange fire
Burning in the gloom of spring twilight.
Safe from the flames, and only being touched
By the distant smell of smoke.

Ethan Elliott



Sun-Kissed Crimson

Tre Cathey



Sir Harry
Emily Brown

hocus pocus our food
should choke us

Megan Flowers



Spare

Can you believe I've still got your old key?
You didn't exactly ask me to
Return it, though. It's *just* like you to keep
A door left open. Come. Summon me through.

This place is darker, more abstract than I
Recall. But what's it been? Six whole years now?
You have the same numb, homesick look inside,
And I'm the fragments you've shaved off somehow.

I bet another year will pass by,
And I will still be able to upend
The books you've wedged between your heart and mind.
Without a single word, I'll know their end.

I'll leave your key beneath your bed tonight.
Until tomorrow, I'm here to rewrite.

Kennedy Williams



Out of Service

Ethan Elliott



Reflections in Red

In one of my classes, I sit beside a girl that is about a year younger than me. Most days, her hair is pulled into a messy bun on the top of her head, with stubborn yellow strands trying to escape it. Every morning she comes to class in a baggy, comfort-colored t-shirt—usually with a band on the front that I’ve never heard of. She keeps the lower half of her body hidden, no matter the time of year, inside loose-fitting blue jeans. Her sneakers are painted with colors that fill the sky after a rainy afternoon, and their soles are scuffed from years of being loved. On the rare days she comes to class on time instead of early, I notice her head stays down and her headphones on until she slips into her desk. She rarely talks, but when she does, it’s a witty joke paired with a sideways glance at me to see if I caught it, and her contributions to class discussions are deeper than anything I could have thought of. The notes she takes are written in a beautiful red cursive, with exciting cartoon doodles spreading across the once-white cover of her notebook. The old backpack she carries around is covered in individuality—movie references, song lyrics, souvenirs, and pins. On the outside of her upper arm, she has a quote tattooed from her favorite musical, *Hamilton*: “And when my time is up, I have done enough.” It peeks out when she raises her hand, but is otherwise almost entirely hidden by an oversized t-shirt. Her phone screen is filled with small cracks, and a few keys are missing from the laptop she uses to write with. Some days she carries dark bags under her eyes—her skin pale and her movements inward. Her demeanor is mysterious, reserved, and pensive. At the end of class, she waits until the professor is finished talking to start packing up as a small gesture of respect.

Overlooked idiosyncrasies, gestures, and behaviors like these turn me into an auditor of crowded rooms—they are so fascinating, yet pushed aside when one considers another. For example, a long glance into a glass of red wine, or the direction they tilt their head while traversing through a hallway of strangers; these are actions that stutter at us, offering a glimpse into the beautiful, infinitely complex interior lives people lead within their head. They give us a key tagged “do not duplicate,” allowing entry to hidden upstairs rooms. Philosophies, conclusions, perspectives on love are mysteries hidden in plain sight, poems with explanations, and watermarks on stone tablets.



Sardine Dream

Talena Moon Glover

Still Life #2

Emily Brown

The other day, I wanted to get to class a little early to give myself time to grab a coffee from Starbucks. As I was on my way to school, I came to the same four-way stop that I always do. It's usually pretty empty, so I typically roll through it without coming to a complete stop. Although this time, there was a little old man—probably in his 80s—that came to a stop at the same time I did. His pick-up truck was rust-red, and he had a large trucker hat on—the kind that veterans wear. A handicapped sticker hung from his rearview mirror, and the engine hummed loud enough that I could hear it vibrating with my music turned $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up. I wasn't in a rush, so I put my hand up and waved, signaling him to go first. He started to move forward again, and as he passed me, his hand waved back at me as a small thank you for letting him go first. Isn't that beautiful? I imagine the lives of the people I meet, watching them play out on the screen in my head. The man I met at the four-way stop, for example, I picture dropping off some peas at a friend's house.

“Paul! What ya know?”

“Oh, nothin' new. Cousin Jim died a few weeks back, and Peggy broke her hip. She sat on the floor for an hour 'for Gene stopped by—he was dropping off some peas, too—and found her laying there in the utility room.”

Anyway, when I arrived at school after waving the older gentleman on through the four-way stop, I parked in a lot full of mostly empty cars. I put mine in park and started to get ready to leave, before I noticed a girl sitting in a red Toyota Corolla in front of me. She had her feet on the dash, showing me cream-white worn-out soles. Her seat was halfway reclined back, but I could still see her head. One hand rested on her forehead and the other in her lap. Her eyes were closed, and I thought she was sleeping until I got out—her car was barely vibrating, loud enough to where I could hear the beat to a song but not the lyrics. *Oh*, I thought. *She isn't asleep—she's listening to music. Right on*, I breathed silently out loud as I stepped out of my car.

tragedy play
Megan Flowers



Once I started walking to Starbucks for a coffee, I thought about that girl the entire way there. I wonder if she was tired from a late night, trying to get a couple more minutes of rest before class. Maybe she stayed up late studying for a midterm she didn't prepare for. If that was the case, was she just lazy, or did she have a lot on her mind this morning? I wonder if she realized people could see her laying in her car and just didn't care, or if she didn't realize anyone could see her at all? I wondered if her eyes had bags under them, like the girl that sits beside me in class.

Like most days, I got home and went outside to watch the world go by; time slows down, and gives me an appreciation for life that only lasts while I'm outside. It's cathartic and one of the main ways I decompress from stress. After I've grabbed my speaker, a drink, a lighter, and some cigarettes, I'll stand in front of a cheap red lawn-chair so that I can fall back into it. Instead of ruminating on problems and stressors, or reflecting on the things that sit in the back of my mind, I'll just observe—soaking in the deceptively dull world around me, unfolding its beauty like a piece of origami. I'll look down at my driveway, finding all the cracks that run through it like veins carrying blood. Some are deep, some are shallow, some are wide. In some spots, pale, yellow grass grows out of them like patches of hair in a young man's beard. I think about how much those insignificant spots have been mowed over and poisoned, wondering how they still manage to keep growing. Their tiny roots underneath the concrete don't get much water, and when they do, rain fills up the crack, drowning them. A few cracks are big enough to create a small puddle that reflects the sky. At night, you can see it reflect a long, silver moon that creates a blurry white bridge from one side of the puddle to the other. Night owls, such as I, take out their trash or walk their dogs, and a solitary streetlamp flickers periodically, illuminating the light-addicted bugs crowding it. Cicadas hum in the summertime, and all of the rodents gallantly come out in search for food. Stray cats, with their hair knotted up, strut down the middle of unoccupied streets. Insects slowly crawl on footpaths trying to find their way back to the dirt. The smoke from my red-tipped cigarette twists up and into nothing, reminding me of the steam in my coffee from earlier that day.

After a few drinks, I'll start feeling a little chatty and call up a friend. If they stop by, I'll welcome them in and offer them something to eat. We'll take our shoes off and sit down, regardless of all the holes in our socks. Our words become like the small cracks in my driveway, winding in random directions, carrying patches of red tulips instead of pale, dehydrated grass. Sharp edges soften, and even the cracks in my fake-wooden floor seem like they are a small part of a beautiful design.

Treasure.

In everything that is red, I treasure.

Sunburns and mosquito bites. Flushed cheeks and bloodshot eyes.

Appreciating the small details in life—not just in nature and people, but everywhere—keeps me in touch with my own humanity. I can't put it into words because I don't know why it is, but it makes me a better person—not only to others, but to myself as well. Bags under someone's eyes reminds me the importance of sleep and stress management. It reminds me that you can't barricade every room that has a "NO SMOKING" sign on it. It reminds me that people are infinitely more complex than how I know them, and an old man at a stop sign in a beat-up red pick-up truck forces me to think about my own mortality. It makes me remember that one day, I too might be his age, and then I think about all the wisdom he may have that I don't know I need.

The fleeting and changing nature of life.

How easy it is to waste it.

How fragile.

Nature, in all her unyielding glory, offers a way out of my head—a person I can go to that's completely unspoiled. Some nights, I look at the moon and let my mind wander around it. I wonder if it had a personality, what would it be? I know that the moonlight was made for lovers and criminals, philosophers and melancholics, which leads me to believe the moon is—without a doubt—a person of pleasure. Someone you can go to sit down under and forget about the world for a few hours with somebody willing.

Red. The color of love and hate, of everything strong. It leaves lasting stains, coats the blood keeping us alive, and catches our attention in stop signs and fire trucks. Outside, the old man in the rust-red pickup truck drives by. Red tulips grow from cracks in someone's driveway. A student lingers in a red car with music turned loud. Someone burns a red-tipped cigarette with a friend after a long day, and another leans over a glass of red wine, staring at their reflection. Eventually, I'll fall back into my red lawn—chair again as the night comes alive. The next time I sit beside that girl in my class, the sunlight will shine through the window as it always does, highlighting the contrast between her flowing red cursive and the plain white notebook paper. Red.

Sam Gearin



p > .05

you're a significant outlier in my dataset
of every person i've ever met;
none have violated all my assumptions
like you.

i didn't intend on conducting another case
study
yet here i am
attempting to reject my null,
widening my confidence intervals,
swirling you into all my analyses.

non-parametric tests never served you well,
always decreasing my power
and avoiding my attempts of plotting you
on bell-curved distributions.

but your smile carries an effect size i can feel —
a Cohen's *d* approaching three,
skewing my interpretations of us, of me!

yet the margin of error
binding my feelings to reality
is embarrassingly underwhelming.

and all my models are either biased or fail
to converge —
we are only two independent variables
with no main effects, no interaction.
just two distant profile lines
that'll never intersect
the way i dreamed.

p > .05

*a result i must survive,
staring back at me
from SPSS output,
saved directly
from your flash drive.*

Sara Batts

Breaking the Program

Olivia Cooper



Twelve Thirty

Mickela Stewart



Sleepless, the Unfamiliar

I have not chosen to be predator any more than you
have chosen to be prey. The circle of life demands
that there be both.

— *Billy, The Muzzleloading Forum*

Shadows tossed by a small yellow nightlight
stretch across the grid-block ceiling.
The fan's blades turn dutifully and yet quietly,
asking no acknowledgement of its airy embrace.

The beady gaze of an antlered animal spans the
room, its butchered body resembling flesh and yet
absent of life. Its shadow climbs the wall
like a spindly hand of bones hovering,

hesitating.

The nightlight's mellow beam falls too upon a
pale branching skull, darkness clinging to the
hollows of the eyes, the gaping, empty nose.

Milky bones and lifeless eyes and shadows.
This room offers only whispers of a life I never
lived. I yearn for the warmth of the familiar and
yet sleeplessness prolongs the disquiet night.

Elle Edwards

All Things New
Madalene Sisemore



Kisses Felt in the Wind

May these words I write break off into pieces
Separated letter by letter
As if each of my sons and daughters
Birthed from the seeds of life's true currencies
May the problem child, filled with aggression and anguish
Only hold tainted reflection towards the beast living inside of you
May the little cynical child, filled with doubt and riddled with question marks
Only push you to break apart from the foundations built without you in mind at all
May the golden child, though she is radiant, filled with so much hope and promised abundance
Only remind you of how beautiful even your shattered remains can be to the world around you
May my children fuse together as one in the shape of a magnifying glass
Shining upon you, and your magnificent glory you think no one sees
May my children fuse together as one in the shape of a scalpel, tweezers
Picking and prodding at your essence only to remind you
That you are alive
We know you
We see you

Kat Armstrong

Floating Away

And for some reason, I stood there completely mute.
Nothing you said did I manage to hear or understand.
I became a ghost for a moment, and you were only a blur of movement.
I moved my lips in response, but I can't remember what I said.
You asked me what I meant, but I just nodded and waved a hand.
I really just wanted your eyes to go away so I could hide a little easier.
It has become increasingly difficult to hide as of late.
(Have you noticed that, too?)
I floated away down the sidewalk a while afterwards,
And no one saw me for miles.

Katie Lownsdale



Ghost Town
Heather Alexander

Somewhere down south 1993

Isabella Thomison

Yeah I'd had a bit too much to drink that night. Half my daddy's moonshine and then a whiskey or two. Gone half mad and pissed myself too. I think I passed out down on what's it called now--no I don't remember. I just remember you picked me up. Yeah it was that shitbox you stole from your old roommate. Went back to your trailer and never really made it back to dear old dad. Guess you could say we shacked up.

You caught a charge down at the state penn 10 or some years ago so you never really held a stable job. Me, I sold pot and that was enough for us to stay hot in the winters. Remember your 23rd birthday? Me and my buddies took to his truck and I shot probably a dozen birds so you could have something nice to eat but you never really were the sentimental type. No that's alright! Don't get me wrong. I remember when you wiped the vomit off my chest after I shotgunned

God knows how many beers at that Metallica show. Couldn't sleep cause of how much fun I had. Made love to you all night long. Yeah sex love rock & roll huh? That's us.

Your sister came over once unannounced in those early years. You told her we were just real good friends 50/50 on rent. She didn't mention my odds and ends all over the house in your bed on your nightstand.

Or that time I phoned you in some unsobor stupor Tennessee blackberry wine and I develop a mind of my own and she picked up instead. Probably didn't care. Don't matter now. My favorite black shirt was covered in your hair.

Suppose what I'm trying to say is you and I really have something. I know you like I know me. Like I know the dirt road I grew up on. Knew it was love when we were both wasted listening to Springsteen and you lit the wrong end of your cigarette like some stupid teen.

First time we kissed, 2am I guess you had the flu or some shit but you didn't even try to say you weren't in your right mind. We both knew by then. Always were decent enough not to lie to each other.

Damn, the days really flew by.

But yeah, I'll marry you, old friend.

Nightmare:
Intrusive Thoughts

Zundyl Luciano



Papa

Ashley Ramlow

Wildflowers and Flowers Don't Mix

The thorns from the beautiful divine rose that you are
I used to use them to climb up to your intricate center
The tiny red droplets forming from my fingers never bothering me before
But now after all this time
The thorns started intertwining themselves,
Cutting into my train of thought,
Seeping into my skin like tiny hooks
As they twist and spin, the syllables in my mind—
Leaving my words, and their true meaning lost in translation
I was never supposed to behold a beauty
So graceful
So gentle
As the way your curls fall
But still I'd cut myself over those thorns a hundred more times
If it meant getting to see your rosy fair skin again
If it meant holding you by your delicate petals
I never put you in that vase to seal you or lock you away
You could never truly be contained, you know that
But because with good water, with good shelter,
The particles of your essence would never wilt
In this garden, there's trees, flowers, grass and weeds
Like a dandelion, no matter what I turn into,
I will be yanked from the very ground that steadies you
The ground that builds you up over and over again
In order to ensure that my existence doesn't overpower or suffocate
What is a rose?
A flower
What is a dandelion?
A weed
A wildflower
We come bred from the same ground
Watered by the same rain
Illuminated by the same beam of light
And yet classified differently
Regardless of the beauty we express
We don't exist in this garden
We won't exist in this garden
So wildflowers and flowers shouldn't mix
Wouldn't want to confuse the trees

Kat Armstrong



The Monarchy

Nicole Bell

Stare from the Shadow

Emily Brown



A Gaze of Love

*Deep grey-blue waves under the rising sun, painting
the breaks in the wave a pale golden color*

*Or the rocky tops of slate mountains, dusted in
a delicate layer of amber-tinted snow*

*The tinged outlines of a storm cloud as the sun peeks
out from behind it; a spillage of warmth into a sky
laden with rain*

All of these sublime scenes of nature are captured
within eyes that hold me in their gaze, as if I rise
the sun itself above the silvery grey landscapes
of who we were before.

Sunlight laden onto the pages of books, the purring
of a cat...

Our music is the sound of soft kisses, lines read
aloud, and an oft-adored laugh.



The End of the Beginning

Olivia Cooper



The Vivid Vibrant Vices

April Hosey

What Remains

Vanessa Wambaugh



Dinos at the Airport

Emily Brown



Batty Babe
Natalie Munday



False Prophet
Talena Moon Glover

Pretty in Pink
April Hosey



A Husk Reborn
Heather Alexander

The Girl with the Stained Glass Smile

Ethan Elliott

The crowds gathered every morning
In the town square,
Waiting to catch a glimpse
Of the girl made of stained glass.
She sat in the same place every day,
On an old brown splintered bench
In front of the stone courthouse,
Waiting for the sun to strike her.

No one was quite sure how she got there,
Or when she first showed up.
But they didn't give much thought
To those kinds of questions;
All they ever asked was
"Why would anyone want to be
Made of glass?"

The usual morning symphonies
Of singing birds, church bells, and windchimes
Became replaced with murmured voices,
Flashing cameras, and the sounds of parents
Yelling at their kids not to get too close,
Or the glass may cut them.

Amid the voices and flashes and fanfare,
The girl sat silent, with a smile.
A smile that never changed, looking
As though it were carved into her face.
Her smile was white, which stood out
From the crimson red in her eyes
And the blues underneath them,
To the yellows, greens, purples
And oranges in her hair, face and body.

Every color bound by a stark black line,
Flowing through her body
Like a river released by a dam.

Folks gathered around her like crows
In the hot sunlight.
Waiting, perhaps, for her to move
Or speak, or for something to happen.
And when the sun moved into position,
And the rays finally struck her,
The glass began to shimmer,

Illuminated by the sun and glowing
Making the girl look like
A captured star there on the bench.
"She's so beautiful!" they began to say.
"Look at how bright she is! She's utterly
Breathtaking!"
Some even shed a tear or two at the sight,
And made sure to snap plenty of photos
For the stories they would tell their friends.
And once the sun subsided, or a cloud
Obstructed it, the crowd began to thin.

The glass was no longer shining, and the show was over,
Until tomorrow, where a new crowd would line up.

I think about the girl often.
I wonder about her.
What was her name? Did she have one?
Did she have a home beyond the bench
In the hot summer sunlight?
Was she always made of glass?

And I think, too, about the crudeness of stained glass.
How it looks so broken from a distance,
And is only truly valued and admired
For as long as the sun dances off of it.
How it looks like so many broken pieces weaved together
To create something accepted as beautiful.



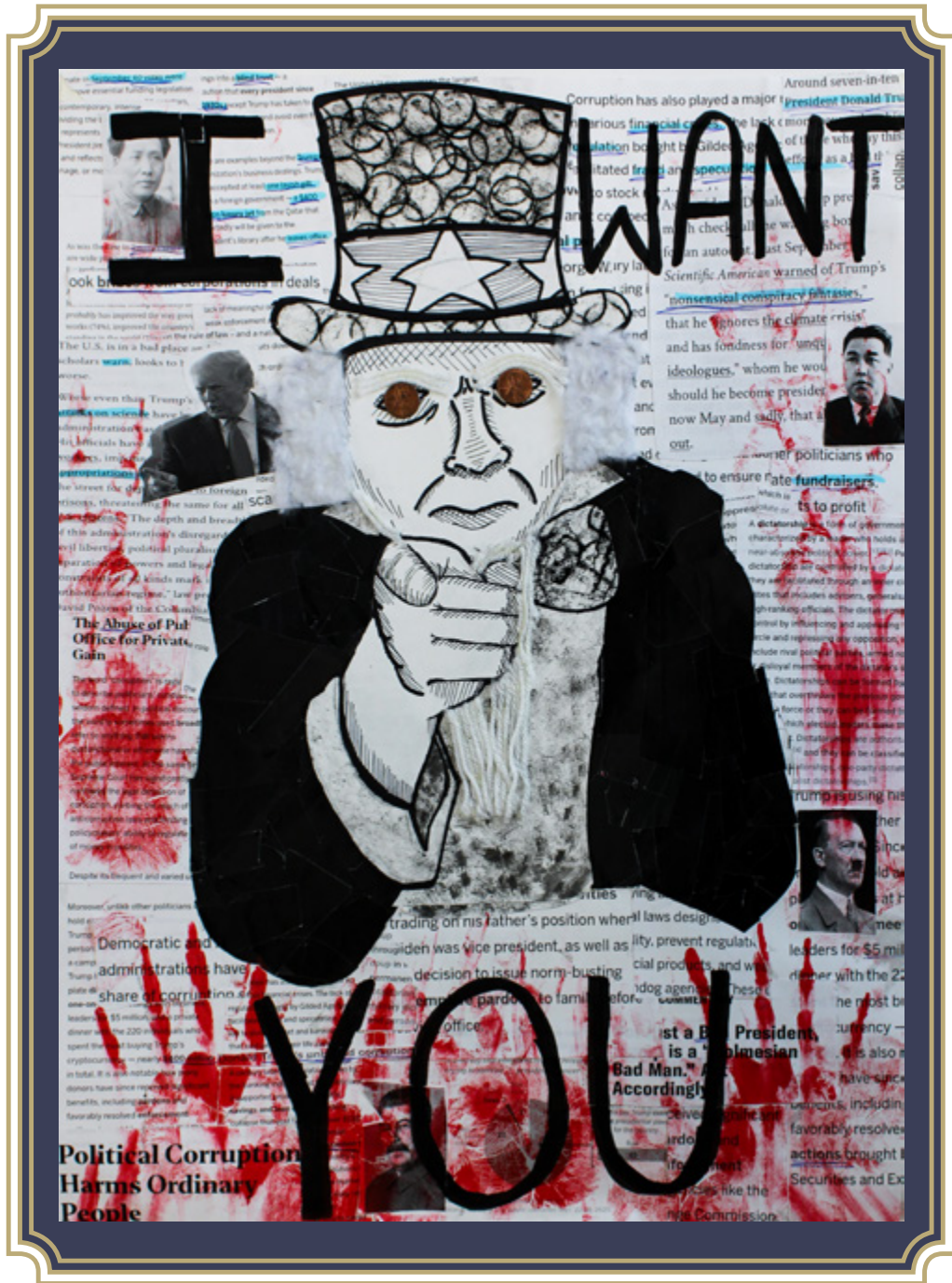
Bath Time Ashley Ramlow

Reflections Georgia Read



Control

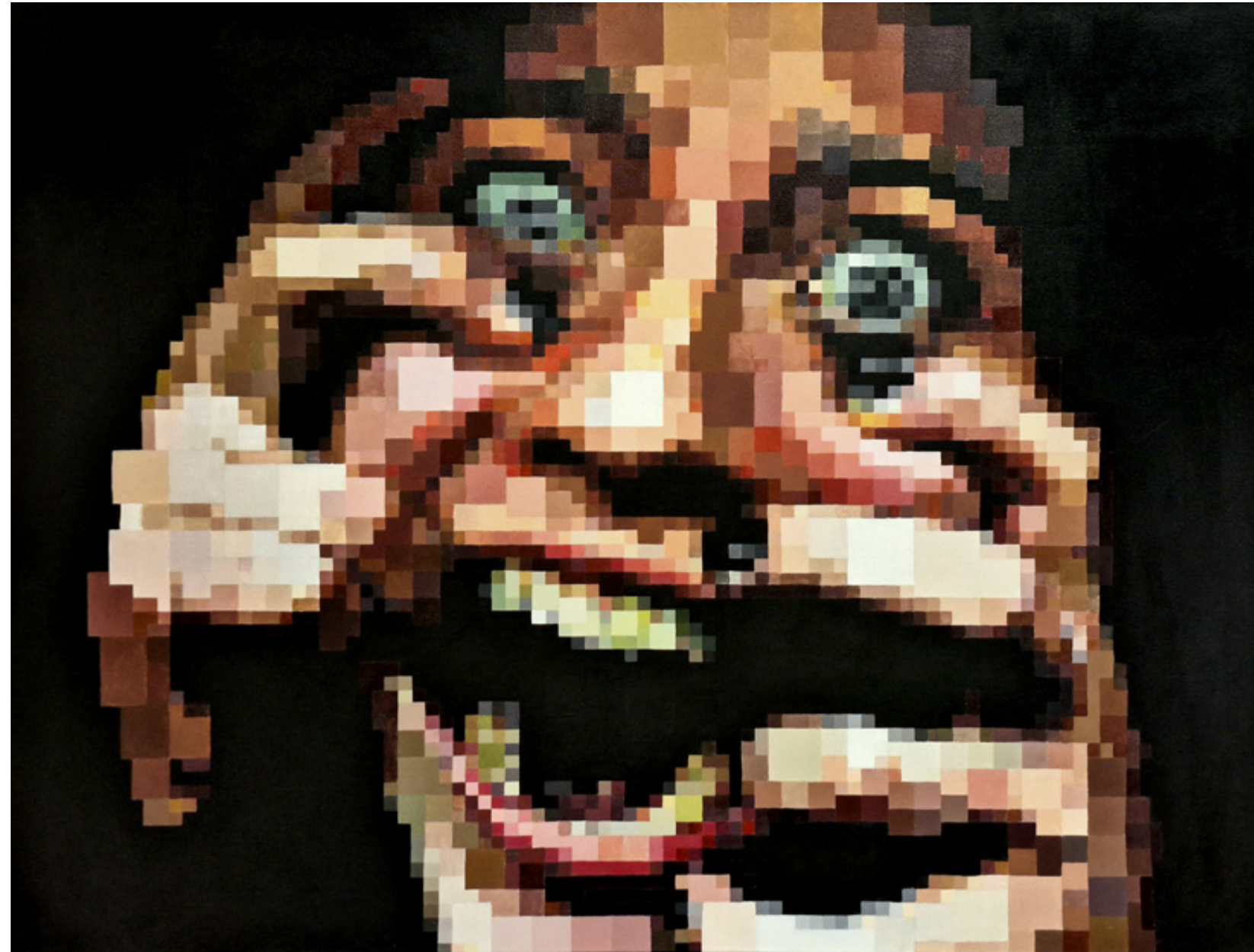
Adeline Rounsefell



Song for Yesterday

This year I am jailed for beating the human experience
 sailing in your carotid artery. Holding back vomit
 and your hand when I turn around
 the bend in your eyes.
 What are you doing tomorrow?
 Today I'm your coconspirator.

Isabella Thomison



Mental Blocks

Amanda Smith



Everybody Plays the Game

April Hosey



Wild Winter
Ethan Elliott

The Coming of

I remember the first time I knew it in me like you remember the first time
 you and your dad gutted that deer with your bare hands.
 I remember when I was young and I begged someone to love me;
 I think that was the first time I saw it felt it heard it revered it.
 That thing that's always been there. When you weren't. Especially when you weren't.

But then it was always.

You don't know what it feels like.

That's why you think it's unnatural. An aberration.

Maybe I'm not supposed to put it into words. But if I had to,

I'd tell you I'd rip myself open a thousand times with your rusted old tetanus ridden skinning
 knife to fit it all in my forsaken body. And I'd rip everything in there out, and you could survive
 on my raw venison when I'm in its arms forever.

I think maybe in another life you understand. It's not a question of the knowing
 You know I know we all feel it. It's between us. And you know if I had to choose
 between you or it

I'd choose it every day and that day is coming.

You don't get it because you don't know what love is. You haven't gripped it felt it in
 your hands and felt it peel back layers of dermis showing what you really are
 underneath.

You don't know what I am:

I'm insatiable and I have forfeit myself forever to my matrimony my fullness my ecstasy.

I am what I am: an appetite.

Or maybe

I am what I am for I no longer am; for I am nothing.

Isabella Thomison



Survival
Emily Brown

The Prototype
April Hosey



Trigeminothalamic Tract

I'd love it if you stimulated my trigeminal nerve—
electrical impulses on a platter,
with Merkel cell waiters,
ready for our chatter.

Don't let distraction spoil our feast,
my tracts are all wired, my ghrelin's increased.
A synaptic tasting — your voltages are just right,
let's dine on impulses, dear, tonight.

Meet me on the third floor,
where my thalamic neurons await.
You flood my glass with more and more and more
until I'm way past the gate.

Soon I'm drunk
on glutamate and oxytocin galore.
Drenched in your aromatic pheromones,
and craving your touch,
even more.

Hana Tortuga
Natalie Munday



Sara Batts



cat and mouse
Megan Flowers



Amidst Shade and Sun
Tre Cathey

Time at the Statue Garden

When I wander away from you,
I find myself on a lush path.
Around me, the people I know,
still, stone bodies across a hedge.

The night is sharp, the moon is blue
No birds are singing in the bath.
The wild vines are left to grow,
Moonlit, I leave behind my pledge.

Curious eyes wander past me,
while I stand frozen in the mist.
I see my ghost step forward, and
with the figures, begin to dance.

They spin the air with gaiety,
Silver fingers caressing wrist.
My eyes whirl with the swirling sand
My heart beats that it has a chance.

The waltzing tune ends with a break;
Something there in the wood kicks up. My
heart stops beating and my fingers shake.

Maybe it was a dewdrop,
falling on the sand.
Then some bird heard it beckoning,
and found a place to land.

As this poor bird began to sing,
it finally felt it could fly.
wings began to flutter,
but nature could not deny
the fox its vicious meal.

From the leafy clutter,
pounced a predator fresh with
zeal. It tore into the feather'd flesh
Love sings, but passion makes it real!

Gasping, and with frightened
shudder I move the evil leaves apart.
Wonder and fascination leave
my lips. My chest, relaxing, sighs.

All it was, was just another
lonely, confused, wounded
heart. A now-lost fawn, and too
naive
for it to begin to realize.

When I turn back, the dance is done.
The statues have had all their fun.
My eyes are home, within their dome. Returned, the
heart accepts its part.

I look at the statues one final time. I
know how many worlds apart we are.
As long as there are words to rhyme,
Heartstrings may stretch, but never far

My eyes pass over inscription,
Sorrowful, and all that I know.
I think I see a silver tear
slip through a crack in the still stone.

We all commit a lover's sin
But never a crack must we
show. A moonshine's luster will
appear On statues wild, and
alone.

Were I to try to kiss those lips,
or fingers touch the sculpted ribs,
and then feel flesh give way to me,
while I faltered, what would I see?

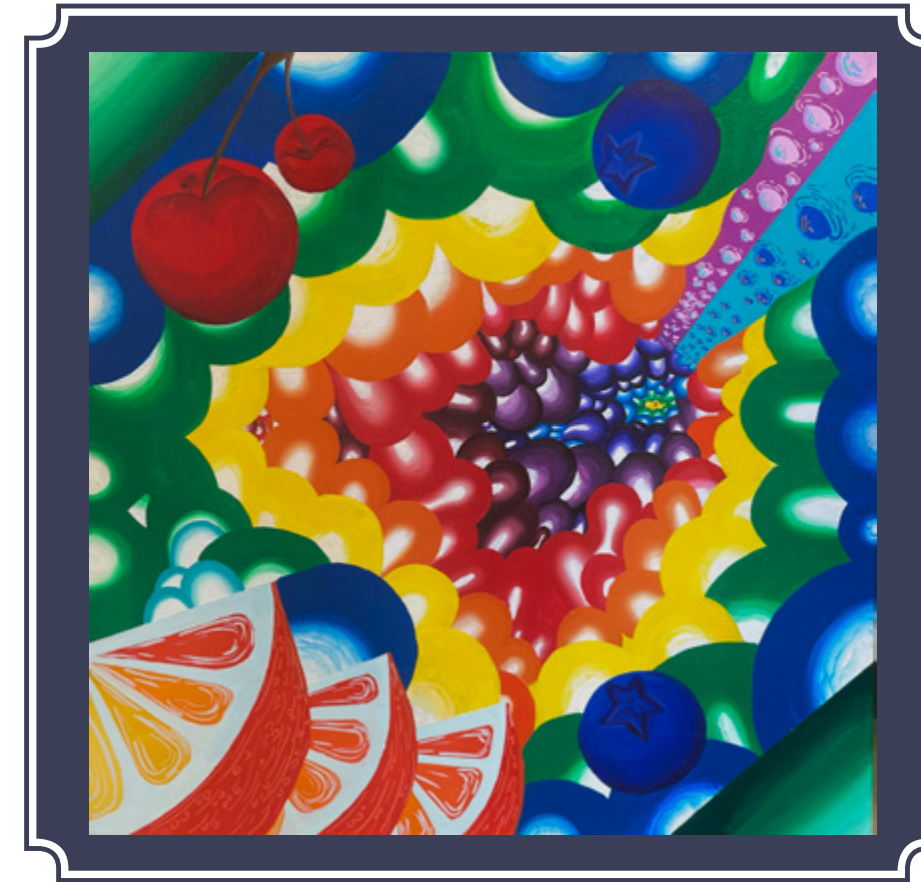
So always I return to you,
soft, discrete, and quietly in the night.
Slipping under covers, turning out the light.
My ears catch one last note of blue: The
crickets, left to sing their praise; For the
stone, moon casts her rays. Next to you,
at last I lay.
Eyes closed shut, but too soon is it day.

Moira Mathis

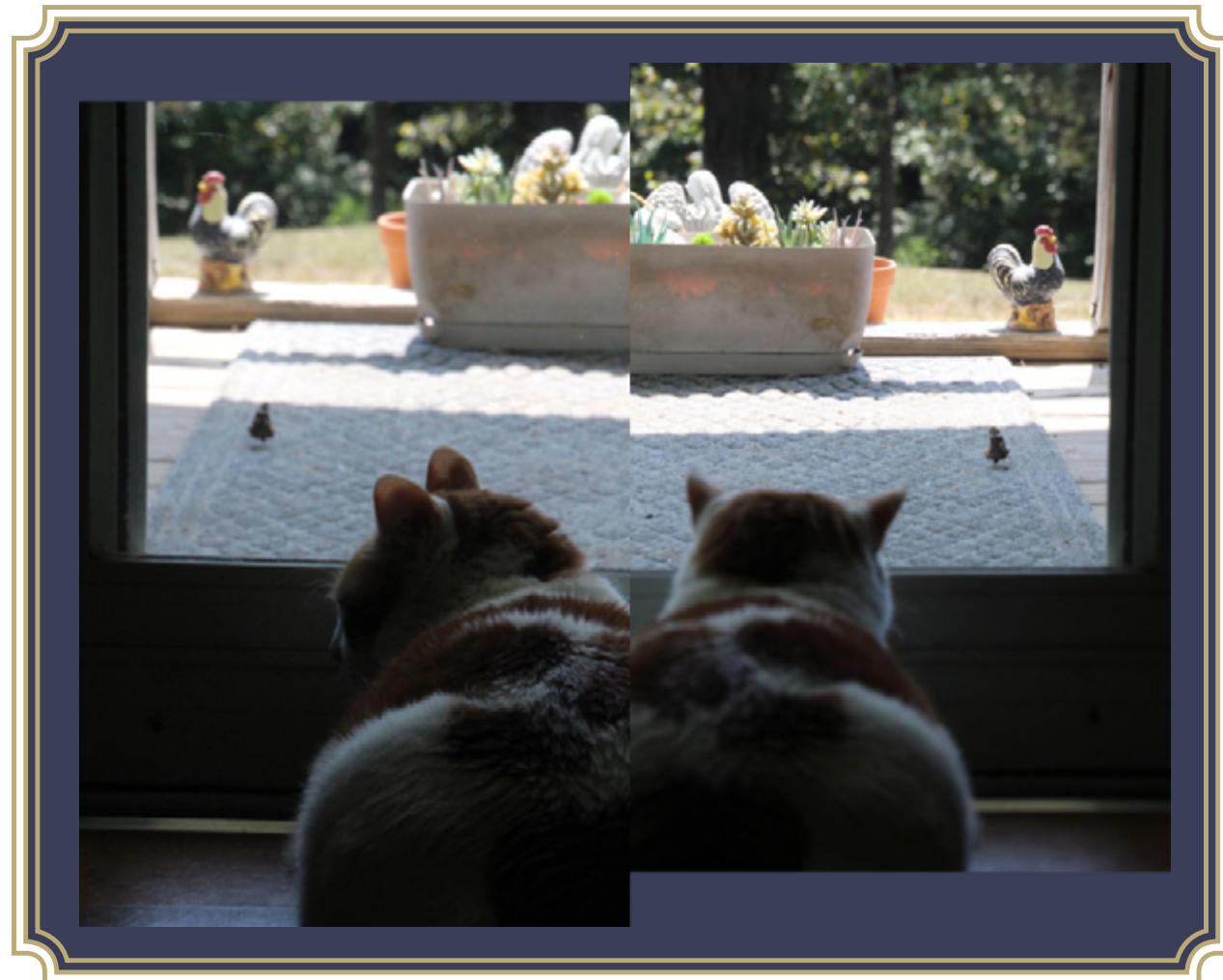


Curiosity
Vanessa Wambaugh

The Schemer
Moira Mathis



Cascade
Heather Alexander



Twisted
Amanda Smith





Artist Bios

Emma Abell is a junior English Writing major with a minor in German. She enjoys all things nature, literature, and crafts.

Heather Alexander is a junior art major at UTM. She spends free time crocheting, taking walks, and learning about art history. She draws inspiration from a vast number of things, including non-western art, hip hop music, and films.

Kat Armstrong is part of class of 2029 and is currently majoring in Agriculture Science Production. Outside of writing, she does enjoy reading from time to time and indulging in many genres of film in their free time. What inspires them to create are the fundamental aspects of the human experience that we all face in our day-to-day lives. Armstrong creates to give voice to the challenges we face on a global scale and towards the things we take for granted every day.

Sara Batts is a senior Psychology major with a minor in Neuroscience. Her work is focused on the intersection between art and science, originating from teachings of Experimental Psychology and Neurobiology. In her free time, she enjoys baking, hiking, and writing.

Nicole Bell is a Graphic Design major and Computer Science minor aiming for class of 2029. Her dad was an Art major at UTM as well, so she basically grew up in the UTM art rooms, and this really influenced her love for art. As she has gotten older, she has gained a specific passion for colors found in nature. When she wasn't experienced at traditional art and physical mediums, she would always take photos of sunsets, butterflies, and flowers. She likes to post the colors of the world that a lot of people don't get the chance to admire as a reminder to slow down and see the beauty in the world. She strives to bring that same magic into her art with color and her own creativity, whether it's with digital or physical mediums.

Emily Brown is a junior majoring in Graphic Design who views art as a powerful tool for storytelling and communication. She hopes to one day work as a graphic designer for a museum, using her skills to help expand learning and education. Her favorite subjects to draw are cats and wolves, which make frequent appearances throughout her work.

Tre Cathey is an upcoming sophomore and currently going through his Bachelor's degree in Studio Art. He gained an interest in art and photography his second semester of his junior year in high school. He only wishes to display the beauty the eye can see and capture, just in case he, or others, may not see those moments again.

Olivia Cooper is a freshman Graphic Design major. She enjoys listening to music while drawing and crocheting. One of her main inspirations for creating is whimsical and otherworldly things like fairytales or wildflower fields. Her family and their support is also a large portion of her inspiration.

James Crowell is a senior majoring in Mass Media and Strategic Communication major with a concentration in Media Design and Content Production. As a follower of Christ, his life and work are centered on sharing the truth of the Gospel through both word and action, allowing his faith to shape how he sees, creates, and communicates each day. At the University of Tennessee at Martin, he is developing creative and strategic skills to use media not just for storytelling, but for meaningful impact. Whether through photography, design, or messaging, he strives to blend technical excellence with intentional purpose, reflecting the beauty of God's creation. His goal is to use modern media as a vessel to communicate eternal truth in a way that captures attention and leaves a lasting impact.

Elle Edwards is a graduating English - Creative Writing major with a minor in Women and Gender Studies. They love to read, write, and play whichever video game they are obsessed with at a given time. Their friends, boyfriend, and two feline daughters are what keep them going, and they have immensely enjoyed working with The Switch throughout their college career.

Ethan Elliott is a UT Martin graduate who majored in Mass Media and Strategic Communication with a concentration in News Editorial. When he's (rarely) not writing or thinking of new ideas, he also enjoys photography, reading, watching football and other sports, spending time outside, and seeing friends and family. Inspiration is something Elliott usually doesn't have to struggle for. Everything from a dry broken tree, a bluejay in a birdbath, a pink sunset over an open field, to a snow-covered bench, is bound to show up somewhere in my writing. So watch what you say to him, because chances are he'll end up using it.

Megan Flowers is a graduate of the 2025 UTM class with a bachelor's in Studio Art. Their work is a summary of what they experience daily. Based on their exploration of gender, personality, and role in this world, their paintings are their tools of navigation. They are also inspired by objects that grab their attention and ones they can almost identify with. They love anything with bold color and plus-size representation!

Sam Gearin is a senior studying English with a minor in Legal Studies. He enjoys listening to music, watching movies, reading, and writing—his creative medium. All kinds of things inspire him to write, but above all are the human moments between life that keep him grounded in meaning and beauty.

Talena Doon Glover is a junior Studio Art major. Their favorite medium is acrylic paint and ceramics. In their art they like to use fish to represent issues in the world and their personal life, while also using expressive color and form.

Victoria (Vicki) Hassell is a junior majoring in Natural Resources Management. If she is not studying or making something, she is probably outside admiring whatever critter wanders into eyeshot. Nature and animals are what inspire her!

April Hosey is a Junior Studio Arts major in the class of 2027. She creates pieces based on her own experiences, things on her mind, and stories that she feels would convey or communicate something she feels is vital to others. Storytelling is a very important aspect of her art, as well as the focus on humanity and the different viewpoints everyone has.

Katie Lownsdale is a third year Music major. Katie loves music and writing and can almost always be found listening/playing music or writing in her notebooks. She's currently obsessed with the band Radiohead, and her favorite author at the moment is Haruki Murakami.

Zundyl Luciano is a senior graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Graphic Design on May 2nd, 2026. As an avid reader, she believes enlightenment can be found through imagination. She also gains inspiration from surrealist and whimsigoth art, such as that by Inka Essenhigh and Ayo Takano. Her inner world embodies a myriad of colors that she must put out into this realm. She views her artwork as her children.

Rubi Maldonado is a third-year Graphic Design major. Her dream is to travel the world and learn many languages. She is a curious artist who sees art as a form of expression and exploration.

Moira Mathis is a junior pursuing Theatre and Psychology. She always keeps a journal on her, and likes to jog on weekends. Her art reflects priorities, impulses, values, and beliefs in life. She hopes that art will serve to clarify and transform these reflections into a better future. These new things, in turn, can help the art be more beautiful and complex, more simplistic and authentic.

Natalie Munday is a sophomore Graphic Design major. She loves art and getting to express herself, even when it is not for everyone. It allows her to be who she is and art is that. She doesn't know who she would be without it.

Ashley Ramlow is "the girl with purple hair." She is a 20-year-old Psychology major with a deep love for the arts and hearts.

Georgia Read is a first year student at UT Martin. She is currently majoring in Studio Art with a minor in Psychology. In addition to her major and minor, she's involved in several music ensembles and just started getting involved with the theatre program here! She's inspired to create by practically everything she encounters—she's had a pencil in her hand since she was six months old—and she thinks it is very important to be in tune with one's creative side; the arts are her favorite way to express her experiences and the way she sees the world around her.

Adeline Rounsefell is a freshman Graphic Design major from Rossville, Tennessee. She is a multimedia artist that uses traditional and digital techniques.

Ella Self is a junior Graphic Design major. Traditional art is a hobby for her, and she currently works to create digital graphics for different professional and social organizations.

Madalene Sisemore is a third year English major from Dover, Tennessee, and art has been, well... her "thing" for her entire life! Most people know her for her love of literature, but lately she's felt called to make her love for art equally known. Creating art gives her purpose, fulfillment, and excitement to live, and she hopes that her work can pass on these gifts to others as well.

Amanda Smith is a senior, pursuing her Bachelor's of Fine Arts: Studio Art, graduating in the spring of 2026. Her work portrays mental health and negative emotions. More recently, in her Senior Thesis Exhibition "YOU ARE NEXT," she primarily focused on race and class, with an emphasis on police brutality, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and how the two parties treat or "deal with" people who are in poverty or are homeless.

Dickela Stewart is a senior Studio Art major set to graduate with a BFA in fall of 2026. What inspires her to create is the intense passion that she has held for art for a majority of her life. She enjoys meticulously inspecting reference photos and representing the details as best as she can in her work.

Laura Gelfer is a Senior Studio Art Major and Pre-med Student. She was recently accepted into Trinity Medical Science University. She loves to incorporate her passion for science into her artworks. The hands on process side of creating is her favorite. Even when the piece doesn't go as planned, she believes that an openness and flexibility lead to growth and a deeper respect and understanding of the material and yourself as an artist. She is blessed to have ten great siblings, one of which is an awesome little sister with amazing photography skills; she does the photography for all Laura's art work!

Isabella Thomison is a first year student. She is majoring in English and minoring in Philosophy. Isabella is most interested in the subversive and the transgressive in poetry.

Vanessa Wambaugh is a freshman Graphic Design major. She has been drawing since she was young, and even though she started off with silly little doodles, she enjoyed making them. She's been on an artistic journey throughout her years in school, and college has been a great growth opportunity for her skills. She is excited to continue pursuing her passion for art and apply it to a career setting in the future!

Kennedy Williams is a senior English - Writing major with a minor in Sociology, and she loves writing poetry, short stories, and creative nonfiction essays. When she's not reading or writing, Kennedy loves to watch Game of Thrones, learn about weather and outer space, and play video games. Her biggest writing influences are the American South, childhood memories, and her beloved cat—Vinny.

