

# POINT OF VIEW

2007-2008



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## AWARD WINNERS:

**Point of View Award:**  
ROHAN DACOSTA  
"Coeur Lucille!"

**Ray Mills Award:**  
DAREK PIECH  
"Coalescence"

**Ray Mills Award:**  
AARON M. CASSARA  
"The Affair with the Robes and Mirror"

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 **Harper College**

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Front Cover: DAREK PIECH  
"Coalescence"

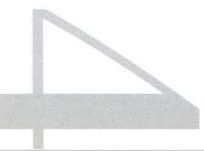
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Push the Car to Rantoul  
6 NANCY J. HEGGEM: Found time  
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Back Cover: DAREK PIECH  
"Coalescence"

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SCOTT STEDER  
Ceramic

*„Undulating Trio“*



If You're Stranded,  
Push the Car to Rantoul

Bob Mackey 4

Buckley's a town I don't trust,  
A predator  
With a glint in its eye.  
My doc stopped once for gas  
and found only porno  
(One of those big, roadside sex barns).  
In an empty, windswept lot,  
He met a meth-addled,  
geriatric hooker  
Driving a rusty station wagon.  
She had fewer teeth in her head  
Than bullet holes  
In her car's wood paneling.

It was the last time Doc lingered in Buckley.

I read a year later  
Of a domestic crime:  
A double-murder topped with  
suicide.  
They must breed fast  
Downstate  
To afford deaths in threes  
in a town of thirty-seven.

When my tire blew out,  
I hid beneath  
The overpass till the rain  
subsided.  
I saw no shadows that day,  
But  
I also saw no sun.  
Never spotted a single  
House while waiting for the tow –  
Just that huge, yellow sign  
reading: "ADULT."  
The truck driver fixed  
Me up in a hurry,  
And we drove off  
In opposite directions  
with identical haste.

Found Time

Nancy J. Heggem

The gift, found time, writing time, time slows down.

When plans change,

I am old enough and smart enough not to take it personally.

Neither the gods, nor the weather man, nor Mother Nature were planning  
on getting in my way.

Planes have mechanical problems, cars do not start, no one ordained it.

Take this gift, a chair, a table, no people, no rush, just the coffee vendor  
and my suitcase in a sun warmed square.

Replace the flash of typed text with the leisure of handwriting.

Thank goodness I have a pen and note pad from some sales vendor.

The thought that can't make a stand on a work day develops into a poem.

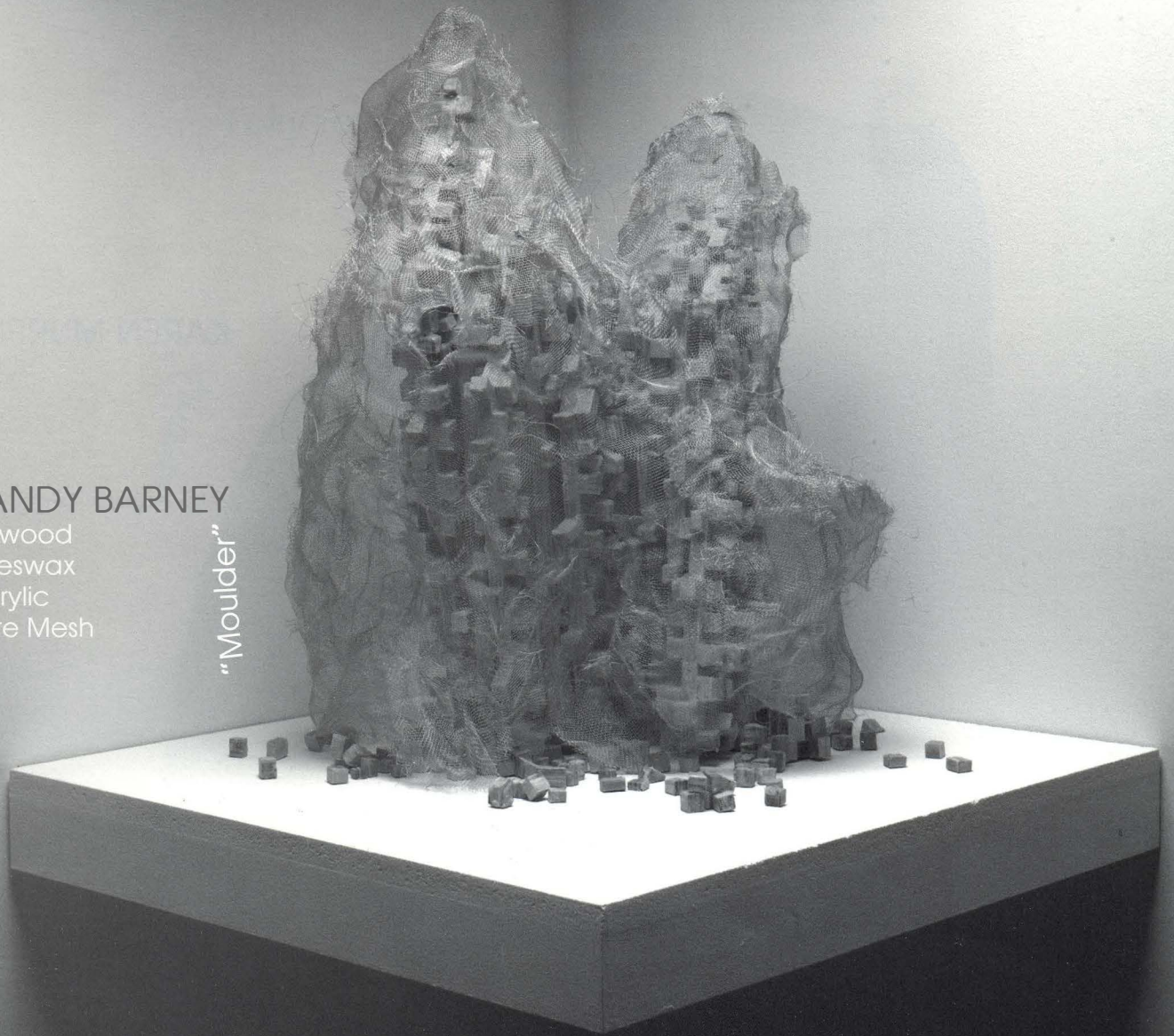
The old friend I miss whenever fall comes around deserves a letter.

Breathing slows, knotted muscles release, this feels so good.

You can't sell it or save it or give it away, but I found time.

SANDY BARNEY  
Plywood  
Beeswax  
Acrylic  
Wire Mesh

“Moulder”





KAREN MURPHY  
Clay

"Untitled"





Fairy Tale

Elaine Suzuki

She resides in a small room  
with honeyed wood floors.  
The walls are a pale lavender;  
flowered curtains with purple accents  
frame white window panes.

Sitting on a canopy bed  
in a flannel nightgown  
with ruffles at the wrists and collar,  
propped up by pillows  
is my mother—fairy tale cute.

Small in stature with a sweet,  
lilting voice to match,  
about 4'10" but believes she's still 5'2",  
Mom looks like the kindly, kimonoed,  
old grandmother in Japanese anime.

Her pure white hair is choppy and uneven  
because it costs \$10 to get it cut.

When not in her nightgown, she'll wear the same  
dark knit shirt with six extra inches of sleeve—  
far too many days in a row.  
Her comfy black pants once a foot too long  
are now ridiculously short.

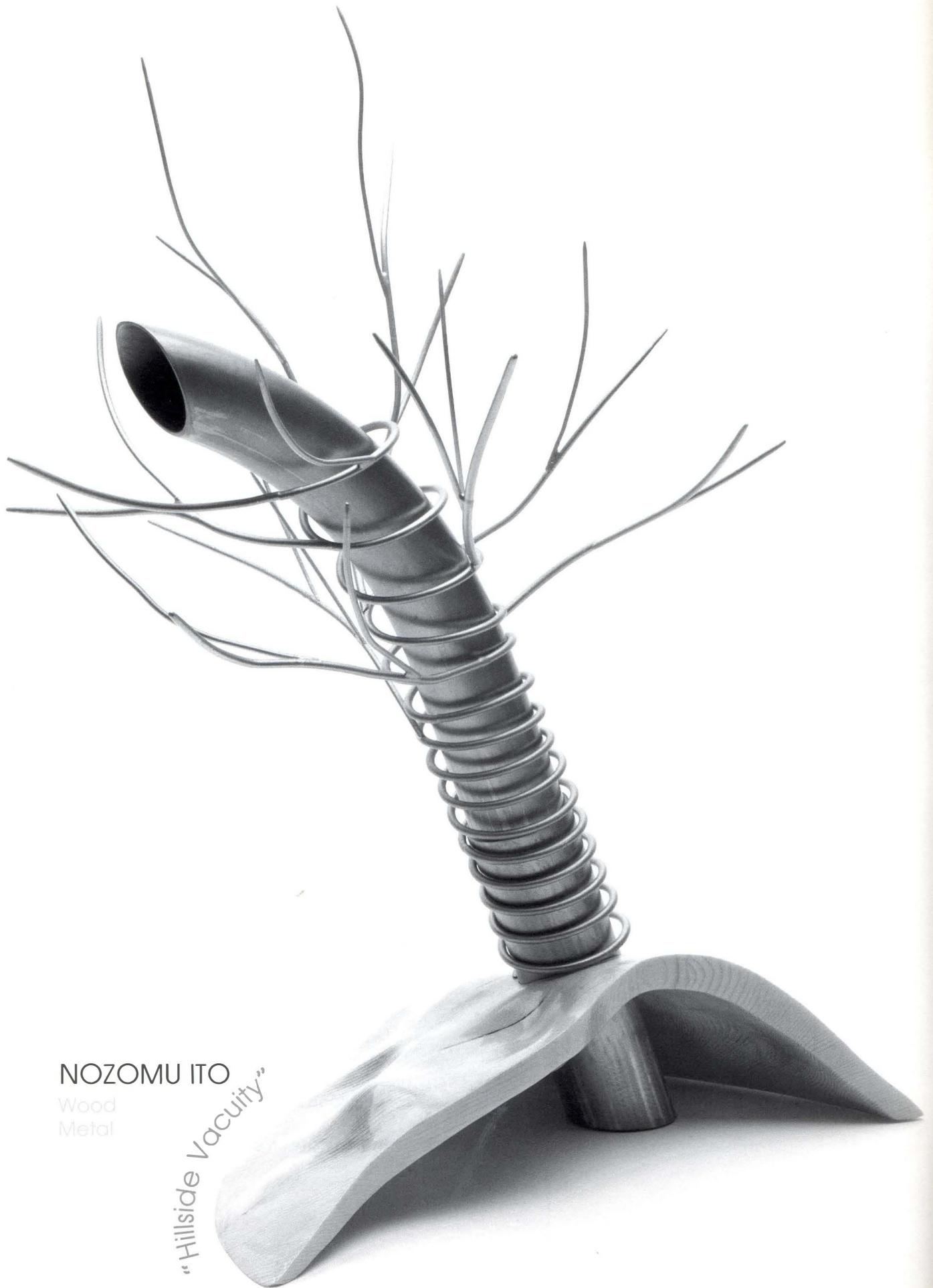
She wants to do her own washing.  
Her wardrobe—both lights and darks—  
is decorated with bleach splatters.  
I slip new clothing into her laundry, often.

I insist she bathes at least once a week,  
each time telling her,  
"Sitting in three inches of water is not a bath."  
She worries that I spend too much on utilities.

Occasionally, there's a solo trip to the mall.  
Mom always returns triumphant.  
This time with a designer watch.  
(She didn't find any of the six  
possibilities I brought home  
acceptable.)

The band doesn't fit properly.  
Only in the right light  
can she see the numbers on the face,  
but I can't return it to Neiman Marcus  
because, "They don't like when we do that."

Without comment, I pay the credit card bill  
for a \$250 straw hat.  
It suits her.



NOZOMU ITO

Wood  
Metal

*"Hillside Vacuity"*

when the sun comes up

aaron m. cassara

i avoid depth  
without twilight  
when we gather  
around my coffee table  
before sleep,  
because my brother  
always passes  
out on park benches,  
when he drinks  
himself into oblivion.

i think it's motion sickness  
from the bus ride  
home from the south side.  
he knows a girl down there,  
pretty, she rocks an afro  
and dangly earrings,  
she has a poodle.  
they usually rendezvous  
at a classy jazz club  
off 18<sup>th</sup> and ashland.  
they always make a splash  
on the scene.

i know because  
i've gone with them  
a few times.  
they tend to be the center  
of the dimly lit  
hipster hangout,  
with talk their of apocalypse  
and classical music.

i always find him  
in the early morning, and  
as i shoulder his weight up the stairs  
he rambles on about  
some premonition  
he had, the hazy  
night prior.

## A Morning Visitor

Elaine Suzuki

Pushing Snow and Grey-Skies  
out the door and back to school,  
I see the Dowager Sun has  
deigned to visit my home.

And she's brought along her  
charming grandchildren.

The children quickly force  
their way into my living room.  
Two elderly companions follow,  
tiredly.

The boldest streams of light  
burst into the room and challenge  
all to a test of strength.

Drapery pulls away her faded skirt.  
Brittle book jackets pretend not to hear.  
Photographs robbed of their color  
melt further into the background.  
"Who's next?" the bullies roar.

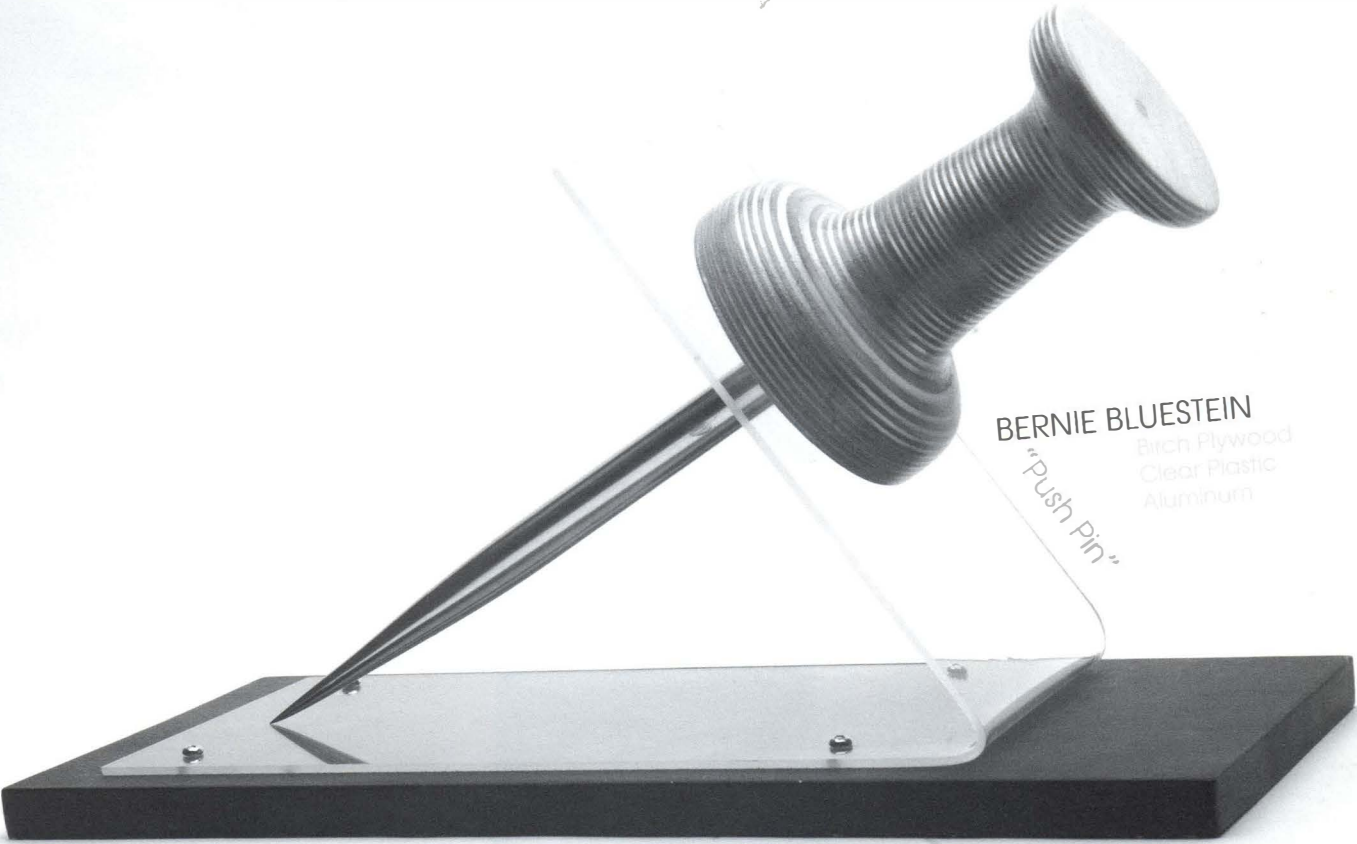
On the other side of the room,  
teasing rays play Duck, Duck, Goose!  
"Duck!" sparkles a ray to the sleeping TV.  
"Duck!" flashes another ray  
to the book sprawled on the sofa.  
"Goose!" laughs the ray to the  
shiny green apple who made it to  
the top of the bowl.

The companions have settled themselves  
comfortably in the corner.  
Dust bunnies dare each other  
to draw closer and create shadow ears.

In the gentle warmth of the companions,  
dust motes play a game of tag.  
The cleverest draw near floor registers  
hoping for a burst of speed.  
The timid hover just out of range.  
A few refuse to play.  
Instead, they float and jump  
practicing for next week's competition

The twin beams play dolls.  
Hers is a fading violet.  
His is a spider plant with tentacles  
and poison spitting tubers.  
She nurtures and feeds;  
he destroys the universe.

Grey-Skies and Snow will be home soon.  
The Dowager announces her departure.  
She has another appointment  
on the Westside of the kingdom.  
She and the children mustn't be late.



BERNIE BLUESTEIN  
"Push Pin"  
Birch Plywood  
Clear Plastic  
Aluminum



MEGHANN M. LOTHSON  
Stoneware

*"Remedy"*

Raspberries  
Lovingly Transplanted

Bob Mackey 4

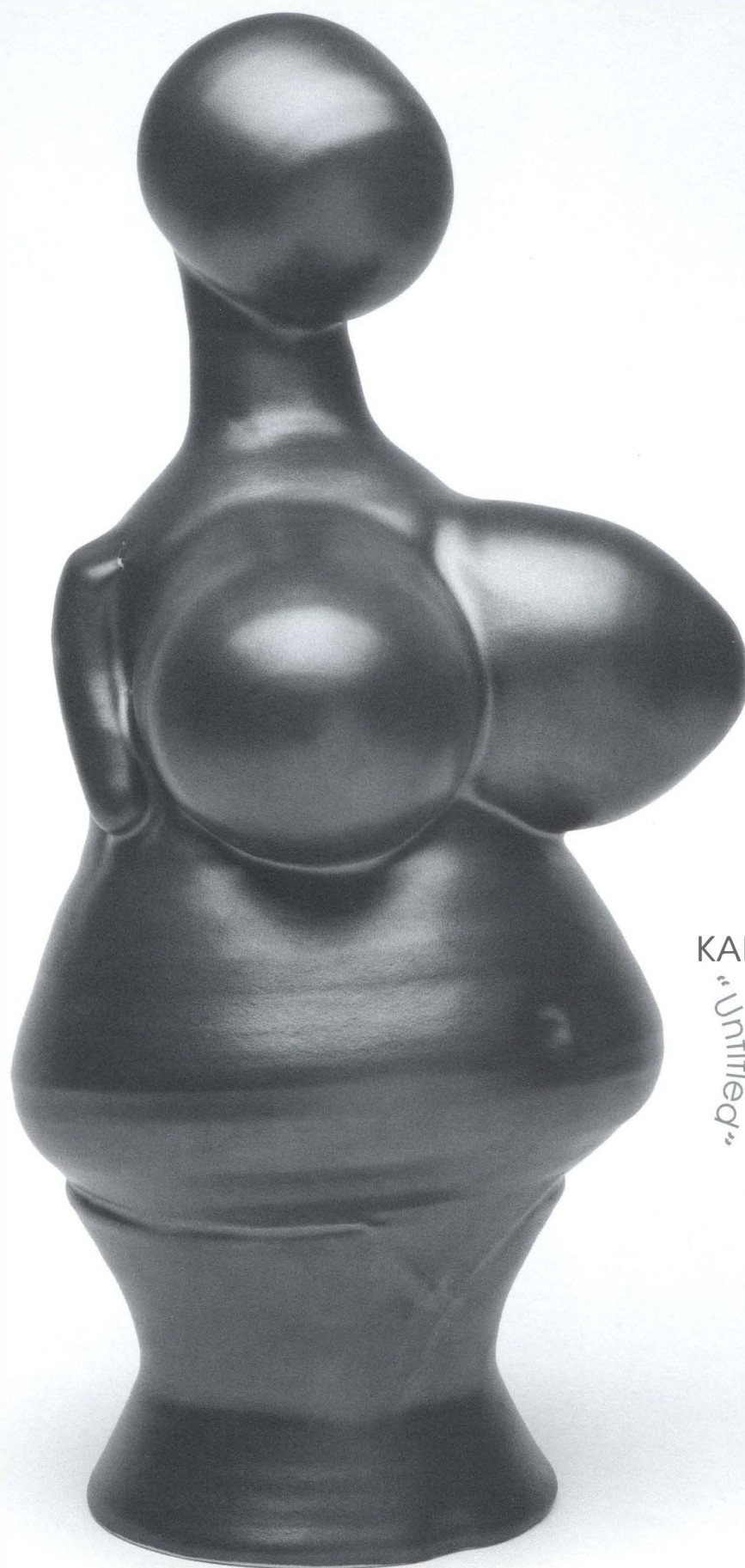
Mark, then, this lonely knoll –  
    Not quite a hill, still, softly sloping –  
    Upon which sits this prickly, moping  
Bark, its wood pitch as coal.

Hark how once it stood there,  
    Beneath the shade made cruelly cold  
    By stolen light, fright'ning to behold,  
Dark below leaves less fair.

Stark, the difference here;  
    She, in Ra's rays, May's rains yet bringing  
    Vigor and life, rife now with stinging  
Shark-teeth, forgets fear.

His arms, so strong and gentle, rest,  
    A savior held in rooted mesh,  
        Forcibly feeding fruit from flesh;  
        She sups on hands she once caressed.

Lark sings, morning heat  
    Enticing men, when thus emboldened,  
    To taste o'erripeness, her golden  
Ark: lies, sickly sweet.



KAREN MURPHY  
Clay

“Untitled”



Being A "Grown-Up" Student

Peggy Rodriguez

There's a squalling in my ears,  
Pulling, pulling on my leg.  
A voice cuts through the noise;  
"What have you done for dinner?"  
The space we live is shambles.  
Everywhere is rubble, I'm forever stepping over,  
And through the door I'm always climbing!  
My books are calling me;  
"Come with us to the corner."

Oh, there it goes!  
The floor is wet and sticky.  
Furry beast, come do your duty-  
What is that odor you brought with you?  
Is that a scratch in my throat?  
I think I'm getting sick-  
Thank you for sharing!  
My books are calling me;  
"Come with us to the corner."

My eyes are so heavy;  
My head is aching so.  
The tears, they urge to flow,  
I bite my lip to keep them back.  
That gnawing in my belly-  
Is it vexing, longing, or anger?  
Yes, it's anger- no it's anguish.  
I think I'm going crazy!  
My books are calling, calling.  
My pen and paper, they are lonely.

Are those mud prints on the carpet?  
Another slice-  
"Where are my blue socks?"  
Why am I the keeper?!  
Oh there's that squalling!  
My books, they call to me;  
I cannot drown their voice,  
Nor shall I ever want to.  
My books, my pen and paper,  
They're part of me, they're who I am.

Now what is that pounding-  
Is that the door or is it my head?  
That is iiiiiiit!!!!  
I shall give each one a knife,  
And they can take just what they need.  
As long as there is enough left  
For my books, my pen and my paper....

Some Days a Street Musician  
Plays Beneath My Window,  
Depending on the Weather

Ian Michael Taylor

I  
Some days, a street musician plays beneath my window,  
Depending on the weather.  
He makes little money,  
Nickels and dimes mostly, I imagine,  
And never draws a crowd.  
People passing sometimes pause to be polite,  
But no one listens closely, and,  
For their earphones and cell phones, many can't.  
To them, he is background music,  
Like in an elevator, pleasantly easy to ignore,  
Even as they stop to watch and throw  
(Before they quickly continue on their way)  
A nickel or a dime into the cardboard guitar case  
He lays open in front of him.

II  
He looks rather young.  
He could be in college,  
But I do not imagine that he is,  
And, as he plays, a young woman  
In an apartment across the street  
Occasionally leans out her window and admires  
The young musician playing beneath mine.  
I know her only framed in brick,  
Clay pots and blooming flowers,  
Leaning out her window  
To watch and listen.

III  
Her expressions change with the music;  
Bending with the harmonica buzzing in her ear,  
She crosses her legs, leans further forward.  
Her back contorting to an ecstatic lullaby,  
She rests her head against her hands,  
Themselves resting on steel,  
Until violently stirred by a wail,  
Cracking near castrato, but soon calmed  
As, kissing her ears softly, he sighs  
Of sorrows he may or may not know.

IV  
Some of his songs shoot major chords  
And happy melodies about street;  
They bounce off brick and steel;  
He sings of love not lost.  
She smiles sadly till he strikes  
A minor chord, an accidental,  
Or a grace note out of key.  
She drops her face slightly as she sighs,  
Though I cannot hear.  
Her smile softly fades.

V  
When everyone is eating dinner  
And the streets are mostly empty,  
He puts his guitar away, and,  
With his harmonica still around his neck,  
He begins walking home.  
When he is out of sight,  
She fades from the window  
And into the darkness of her apartment,  
Where I imagine that she paints blue  
Pictures of city sidewalks  
And wanderers, lonesome and oblivious.



COLIN DENNY  
Oil

"Side B"

Specific.

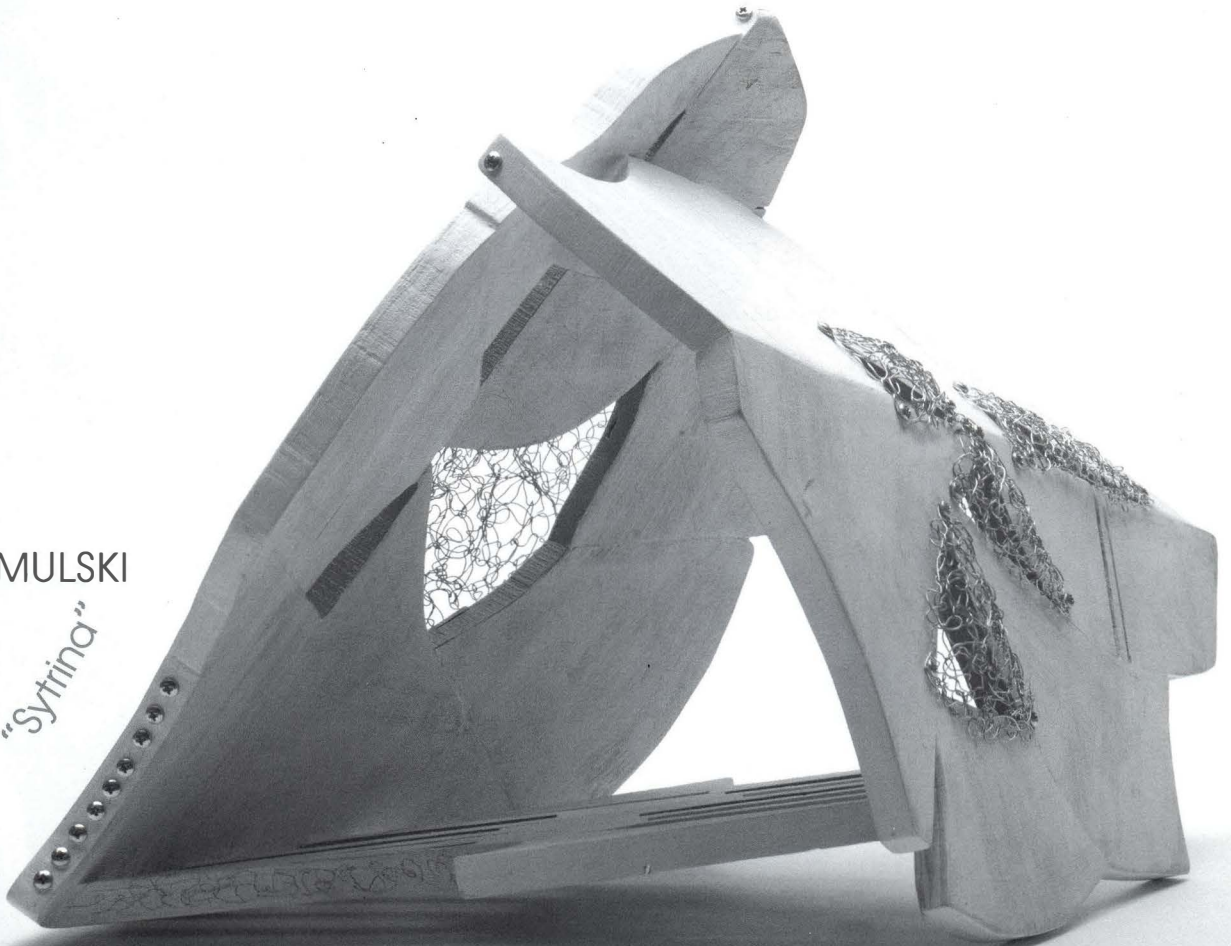
Colleen Lynn Davidson

Tell me if his sweater is cerulean or sky blue  
moss or forest green.  
Is it soft like cashmere or itchy wool?  
Does it smell like sweat?  
Maybe cookies, or cologne?  
Does he wear his sweater on good or bad days?  
Does he love this sweater?  
Or does he wear it because his mother made him?

KASIA SAMULSKI

Wood  
Paint  
Wire  
Screws

*"Sytrina"*





ROBIN SNYDER  
Markers

"Blue Self"

*RS*

the affair with  
the robes and mirror \*

aaron m. cassara

i avoid direct eye contact  
with her,  
because she always knows the contents  
of my pockets,  
and I understand what she means  
when she blinks twice  
before looking down, or once  
without hesitation,  
and then smiles at me.

we rattle  
the walls,  
cities,  
and local taverns,  
a chance encounter  
at the redhead piano bar,  
our meetings less frequent  
every time.  
a common misconception  
between friends.

what happens when the shutters  
are pulled?  
what happens when  
you kiss me on mouth?

a smoke screen,  
an illusion.  
we keep it friendly.

she avoids me,  
often.

there is a certain warmth  
about her,  
when she wants there to be.  
she tries too hard.  
she never stays long.

i am wearing my favorite  
smoking jacket, with the gold  
trim on the collar.  
she smokes.  
my back facing her,  
i watch her blow smoke rings  
through the mirror.

she is wearing my robe  
and nothing else.  
the robe is open.

\*a line from *perelandra* by c.s. lewis

Tariff  
Victoria Ertl

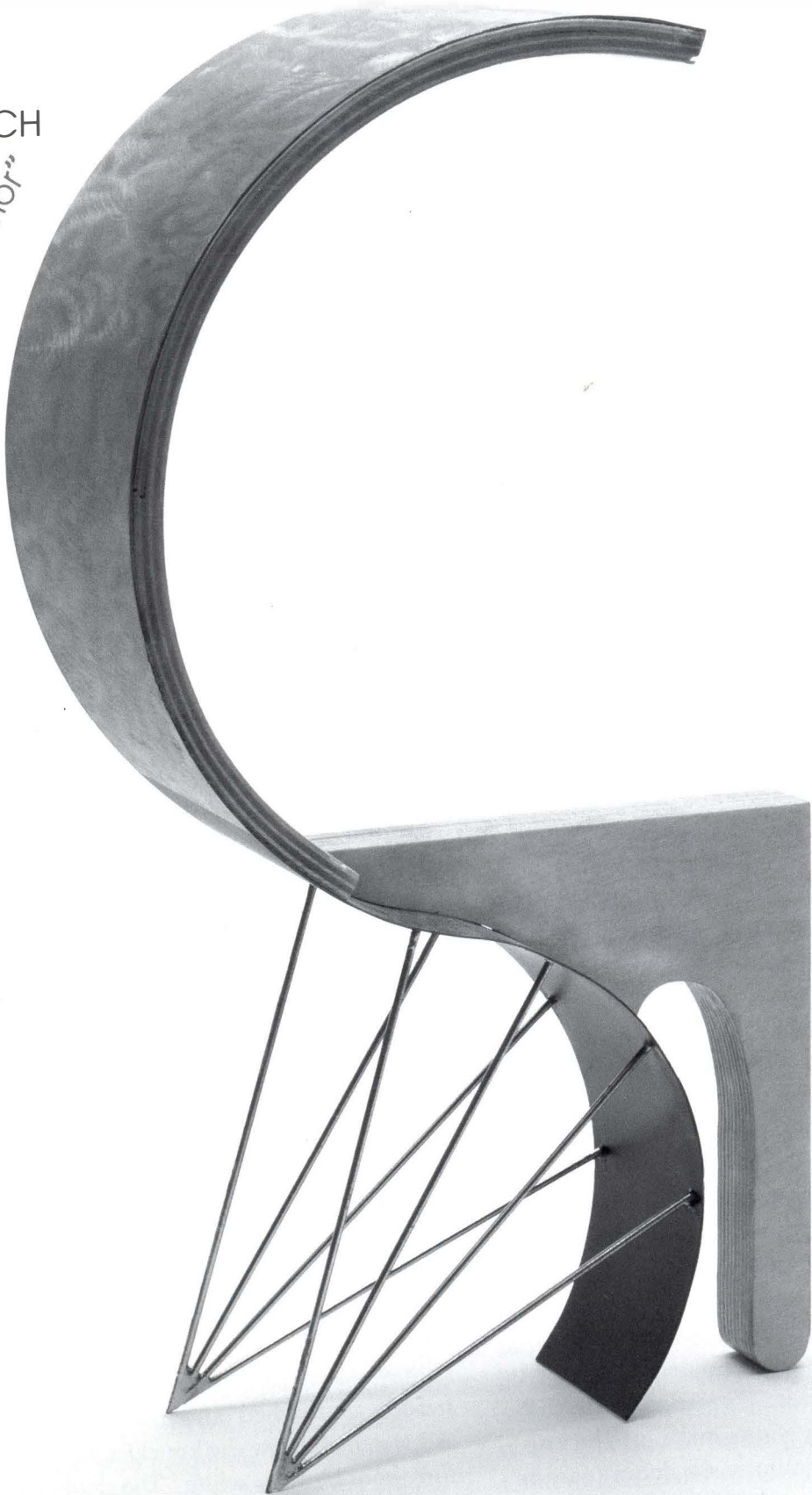
I want to jump down your throat,  
jumble with your bile,  
as you walk the fifteen feet to your car.  
Necktie hidden by a coat  
bought half a world away.  
Blank faces in unfitted suits,  
see the flush side of your cheek  
covered by a two-day old shave.  
I can see past your eyes,  
catch coffee as it filters through lips  
that you wouldn't want to be called  
pretty.  
I smile,  
off white triangle framed by chapped lips.  
But I'm not as easy to swallow  
as cranberry salad,  
chewed once,  
when it soured on  
your tongue.



STEVE CZECH

Wood  
Metal  
Copper

*"Infrangibilis Amor"*



Coeur Lucille!

Rohan S. DaCosta

There it is. My hero. Out in the cornfields. I sat on the wooden porch, watching it. I watched it because I adored it. Its incredible brawn hunched over the earth, and grew up into the atmospheres. With amazing strength and unmatched wit, it crushed German war planes with its bare hands. My daddy was a fighter pilot in World War I. He stood tall in the fields, emanating rays of honor and grace. He stood in the fields when the day turned red, and shadows advanced upon the corn stalks. He stood in the fields until the silver moon rose, sovereign over the humble night. He parted with himself under the stars, and came inside to be with his family.

By this time, I was washing the dishes. Father told me that I had to take care of the household now. My mother got sick a few weeks back. It's getting worse with every day. We don't think she's gonna make it. The way she gets in the late hours, it's a miracle she doesn't pass on right under her eyelids. I wash and rinse, not knowing how things are gonna be around here. Thank God I don't have to wash much. Ma can't really eat because of her

sickness. Seems like her sickness is just eating her right through. And Pa, well Pa never eats. I mean, I've never seen him eat. It's like the man gets his energy working in those fields. Night after night he comes in, walks into the living room, goes to the desk, and pulls out a book and a fresh cigar. I retire to my room adjacent to Ma's room. I open the window almost half way and let the breeze breathe in. As the white drapes blow and the night stars pour in, I turn the dials on my radio. I stood in front of my window with my hands placed on the chipped window sill. I was a girl, and yet still I fancied being strong in this world of mine. The hours pile on, one on top of the other, and the house gets lonely. Pa sits in his favorite chair, cigar in mouth and reading. Pa never sleeps either. I lay on my bed beside the radio, and began to doze off to the sounds of Bessie Smith. Ma began her battle with things and the way they were. The slow hoarse moans could be heard from within the walls next to mine. I turned off my radio and crawled under the sheets. Soon the shrieking and howling would come, and I had to get some sleep before morning came again. Somehow I always managed to slip into the embrace of sleep forgetting about father. How the hell did Pa deal with all that hollering? He never slept. Was he scared? He had to hear it. Or was he too involved in his own world of worries and turmoil to notice the illness murdering his wife every time he sat down to read a chapter? I decided to leave these thoughts to the day. Tomorrow was a new day, full of new worries and new turmoil. The hero was the only object rooted into the course of time, hit with every wave, and kissed with every moment.

Then the storm came. I woke up one morning and put on my brother's jeans. My brother Thomas; he was older than me. Pa and him had a kind of bond. Thomas is gone now though, so Pa's got me. Thomas went out west last September to go look for work. We haven't gotten any letters from him yet. Pa's still waiting though. So with these jeans, too spacious for my skinny limbs to fill, I walked out onto the porch and saw Pa standing at the foot of the stairs with a rake. He was looking off into the distance. Somewhere off. Whatever it was, I sure as hell didn't see it. Then there were the sounds of the winds. Thunderous hissing came from every direction. Then came the dust. The thick, ominous shadow slowly crept over the powdery blue sky, and steadily approached our farm. I watched my father. And as I watched, I saw the knuckles wrapped around the rake turn from blush to white. The shadow fell over us, and the thin sands whipped my hair into my face. "Go check on Ma, Lucille!" yelled Pa. I ran into the house. Right then I wondered if our neighbors had seen the dust. If

they did, were all of their fathers still standing out there staring into it? I wondered what my daddy thought he was gonna find out in that dust. Then I laughed. Pa came in walking through the front door, then he picked up the phone. I suppose he was aiming to call the neighbors. "How's Ma?" he asked. "Ma's fast asleep. I just don't get it. Of all times." I dug a few potatoes out of the pantry, and walked over to the sink, to wash them. Through the window above the sink the sky was churning. Wide-eyed I stood, potato in hand, as the shadow slowly twisted and twirled from red to brown, then from brown to black. I turned over my shoulder and saw that Pa was watching, too. Beads of sweat dripped down the creases in his forehead. I turned and continued preparing dinner as the man in the background mouthed words into the phone.

After a few hours it seemed as though we had both decided that this giant cloud of dust invading our town shouldn't interfere with our daily routines, and that normalcy was the best way to turn the skies blue again. Maybe it would just pass on. Pa was reading again. I lay on my bed in deep afternoon listening to the voice on the radio announce the event at hand. I sat up and got to thinking. What if this thing doesn't just pass on? What's gonna happen to us? I wondered if my brother heard any news about this yet.

The next few weeks went by slowly. Our daily routines were so engrained in our minds and bodies, that it was enough for me to decide that I was going crazy. Then we started doing some unusual things. Me and Pa spent days sweeping and cleaning up all the clods of dust on our porch, and on our window sills. It got hard to breathe. The air was thick. And at nights, I didn't let the window open. All the windows shut, and the doors locked. The town was suffocating. Over this and the next month, Pa watched the gradual destruction and decay of his crops. One night I watched him walk out into the wind and through the field. I got on my slippers and followed him. He stopped walking and settled beside our oak tree, which was now showing signs of illness. I hid amongst the corn stalks and watched him fall to his knees. Tears rolled down his cheeks as he ran his fingers through his hair and stared up into the dust. I can't explain why, but I ran. I ran through the stalks screaming. I knew he saw me, and that made it worse. I was his only daughter. I was supposed to be strong. I ran into the house and fell onto my bed. I cried into my pillow. The shrieking and howling began in the next room. Ma was sick, but somehow I felt more sorry for myself. Pa didn't come back that night.

The next morning, I went to see how Ma was

holding up. Ma was dead. She wasn't breathing anymore, and her lips had lost their rosy vibrancy. I wasn't scared. I knew it had to happen. I kissed her forehead, and cried the tears of guilt. I was relieved. I pulled a dress out of my drawer. I put on my slippers and ran out into the fields to find my father. I stopped when I got to the dying oak tree. I expected to see my Pa hanging by the neck under the tree with a ladder on the ground. But he wasn't there. The winds began to pick up. I kissed the tree. My hero. Gone.

I stayed the next two days, in the soiled crooks of the house. I opened all the windows at night and listened to the winds howl. I let day turn into night as the dust came in, burning and tearing at my lungs. Ma was beginning to smell. I didn't care. I was so tired. How could he leave his ladies here alone? I didn't know what to think. The incredible strength and unmatched wit suddenly diminished and withered in my mind. There was no more routine. No more normality. The one thing that was sure and constant had gone. And now uncertainty had come. I had to face the mystery of me. And as the tides of red dust rushed into the house, I began to pick myself up. I stood on the front porch before the fields of red corn. The sun poked holes through the looming shadow. And now I knew what to do. I had to leave this place, this scorched earth, the fruitless gourds, those sunken in cows, this ghost town, this ailing country. The ground was overflowing, too many bodies. Those malnourished hopes were food for fear of blooming death; this somber finale of flowering fatality. This disease would retire us all.

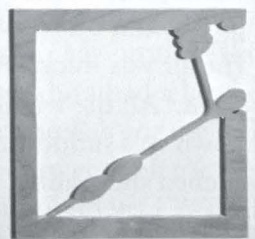
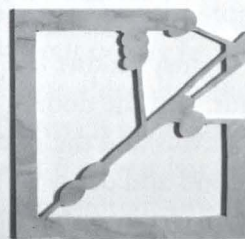
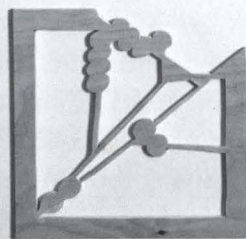
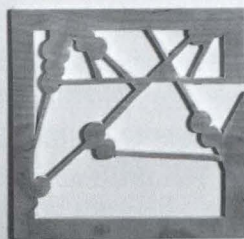
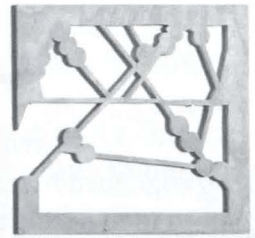
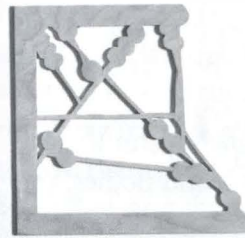
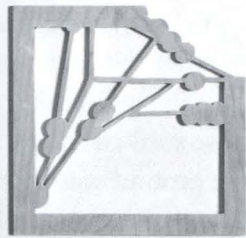
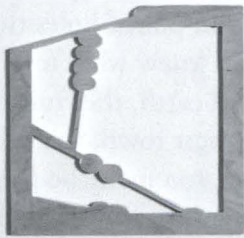
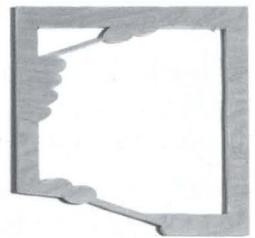
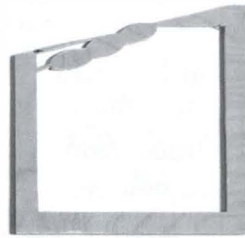
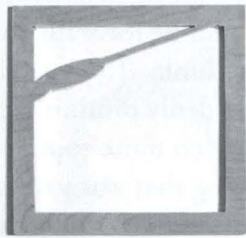
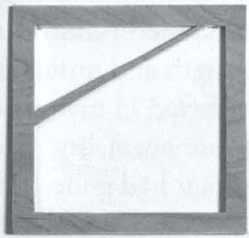
Well that just wouldn't do. No, not for me. Those sentiments became the strings that carried me back through that doorway. There was something I had nearly forgotten. I would find the bookcase in the corner of the living room; coughing as I shuffled and clawed and stopped upon my family heirloom. The Holy Bible; the words hollowed out to make room for a nickel snub-nose .357 caliber magnum. It was the only thing Pa left me, and I would need it where I was going.

As I left, I blew a kiss back for the house, and Ma. I stood waiting on the side of this dirt Oklahoma highway. I suppose one day I'll tell my grandchildren about how I survived the Great Depression. I really hope by then I'll have better stories to tell. An old pick-up rolled out of the dust, and the rumbling motor began to steady as it slowed before me. I don't believe in fairy tales. I ain't got no sparklin' ruby heels to click together. All I got is my pretty red dress, and this Bible at my hip. If anybody asks, my daddy was a preacher.

MIE IKEDA

Wood

"1st 12 Hours"



To you, Stranger

Victoria Ertl

Somewhere this will find you  
and you will not know my voice  
or the direction my hips sway,  
but will discover my secret sloth.  
Laziness is embodied into the folds  
of my membranes so tightly  
that it is much easier to let paper fly on  
the tail of the wind.

## A Lesson in Natural Selection

Ian Michael Taylor

As chance would have it, Karl awoke from a restless sleep the moment his dear friend Jason was unceremoniously executed by a middle-aged and mildly schizophrenic homeless man for the contents of his wallet: a ten dollar bill; a maxed out credit card; and a photograph of a young woman on a park bench, with brown locks, a brilliant smile, and a faded blue knit cardigan that she had found in the attic some summer day on which they had nothing better to do than make love and rummage through their childhood. Jason would someday marry her, someday be a famous writer, have a Huggler orange 1969 Camaro, two-and-one-half children, a white picket fence, et cetera, et cetera. Now he would be buried in the family plot, and she would someday have two-and-one-half children with another, on whose shoulder she would, perchance, poetically cry.

Karl fell easily back asleep. In the morning, it would be his job to report the untimely death of some young student, who had also been his friend, as interns at local papers, paid only in premature cynicism and college credit, must often cover the trivialities too obscure to lift from the Associated Press.

He would report that Jason had a bright future and a loving family and fiancé who were devastated and that police arrested the suspect having a temper tantrum at a nearby gas station because Jason's credit card could not buy said suspect a pack of cigarettes. Painting the incident as a monstrous tragedy, he would contrast the suspect's history of crime, mental illness, and violence with Jason's school activities, hobbies, and awards, his ambitions and idiosyncrasies, perhaps not his penchant for marijuana, and it would be beautiful and morose and buried on page 5 of the local news between recent community announcements and an advertisement for a Helzberg diamond ring.



*"On Display"* COLIN DENNEY  
Oil

## Home

Victoria Ertl

The painted pictures in my photo album  
appear pleased, but the artist was weary of sagging  
staples of silhouettes of similar sad pictures.  
I lost my bangs and learned to slump,  
eyes cast to floors littered with torn tissue  
paper. Nothing changed and nothing stayed  
as I learned that priority never came with options.

“I just want to go home.”

Home was a new roof every hair style,  
and friends became candy wrappers  
buried in seats of a smoke-stained Chevy Venture  
I was allowed to grow roots,  
but they were trampled on  
and poisoned by vodka and broken ideals.

“I just want to go home.”

He came to me one day  
with low lighting and cheap food.  
His thumbs were perfect  
and he understood  
why my smiles were weighted.  
My hand was always filled,  
even as pen segued to ink on papers  
that promised a roof with a man that liked  
the cleft in my nose and legs  
that will never wrap around pretty.

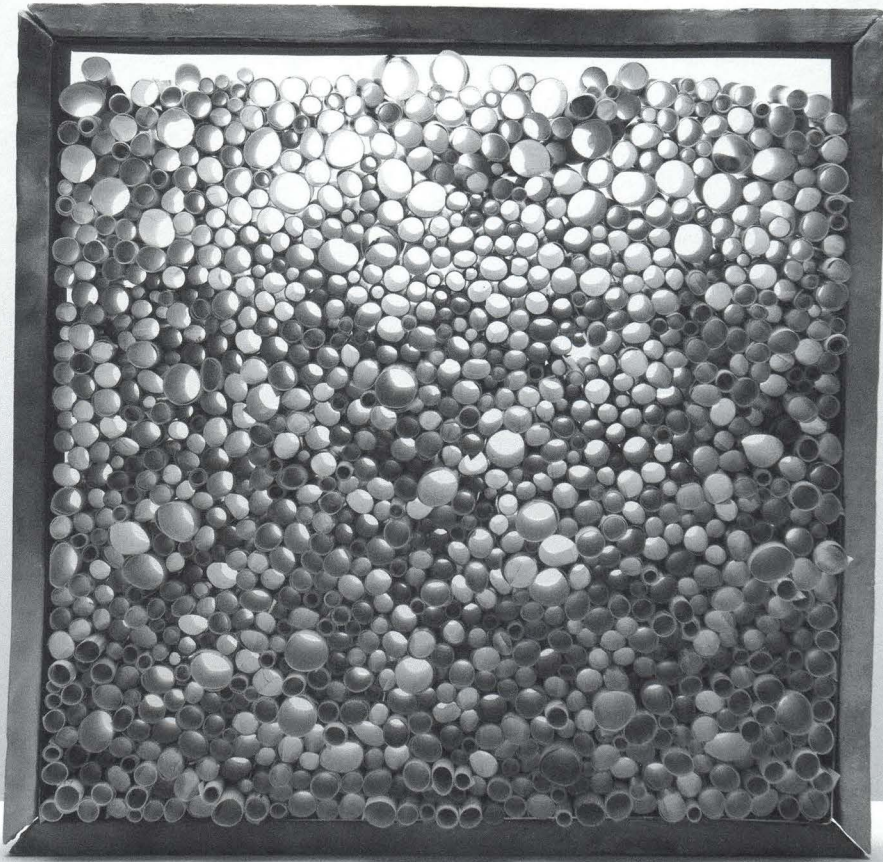
“I just want to go home.”

An armful of possessions is a start of story  
that requires no paint to fill in flesh and blood, no  
artist to manipulate a second in time.  
Home is where those thumbs intersect with  
cuticle and bone, I'm already here.



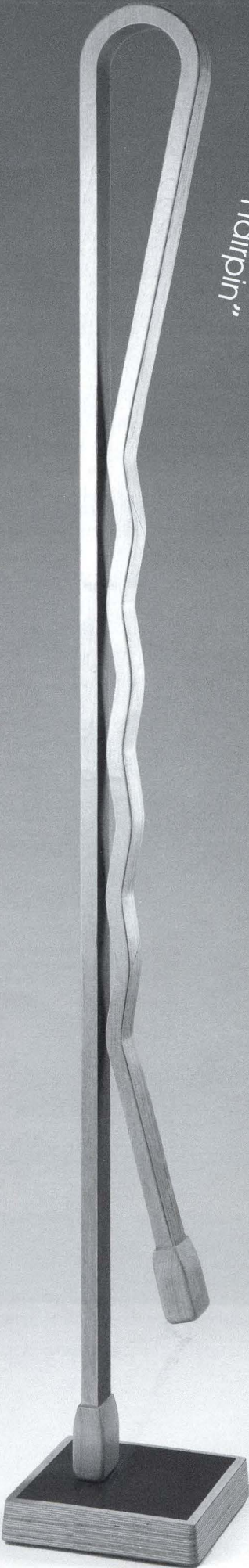
TODD TOSI  
Mixed

“Untitled”



BERNIE BLUESTEIN  
Birch Plywood

*"Hairpin"*



## The Passenger

Jason Knol

Jim pulled his hood over his head as he left work, saying good-bye to no one. His ten-to-six shift at Taco Bell was finished, but he couldn't stop thinking about an earlier customer. The man was a familiar stranger from Jim's past who had a penchant for appearing randomly, and always in the most unpredictable and unlikely places. Jim thought about the way the guy's bulging eyes hadn't looked up or made contact with anyone that afternoon. He had just sat there, eating, like he was biding his time.

Earbuds jammed into place while he walked, Jim turned on his minidisc player and let David Bowie's *Low* envelop him. He tried to block out the face of the familiar stranger from earlier, though he wondered if the man's appearance meant what he thought it meant. Instead, Jim focused on the beauty of the music; each note, each beat, each word so meticulously placed in exactly the right spot so as to achieve perfection. It never ceased to amaze. He walked down Green Street in Champaign, past his alma mater, not noticing anyone.

Listening to *Low* always created the same ambiguous mix of awe, envy, self-empowerment, and determination that Jim often experienced in the presence of greatness, because he knew it was the same kind of greatness that he would one day achieve. Good grades and a degree in painting didn't lead him to that conclusion, nor did his knack for overcoming adversity in the most unbelievable ways. It was just a gut feeling that dated back as far as he could remember.

He turned up the music a bit louder, enraptured as ever. Jim believed that perfection was not just an ideal, but something that could be actualized in an infinite number of forms. So he hoarded anything and everything that he felt verged on flawlessness, studied it, and tried to find the commonality between them all, though it still eluded him. Subway's 6" meatball sub was not perfection. The whopper, with or without cheese, was not perfection. The cheesy gordita crunch was not perfection; but it was damn close. That's why Jim worked at Taco Bell, and really, he found that it was the perfect metaphor for how he lived his life.

• • •

Jim walked into the living room, dropped his backpack

next to an empty chair, and sat down. His roommate and best friend, Dave, paused the hockey game he was playing and turned to look at Jim, who seemed far more somber than usual and offered none of his common off-color greetings. "Something wrong?"

"Nah, just... thinking about something." Jim unintentionally stared, lost in thought, at his framed reproduction of Dalí's *The Persistence of Memory* hanging on the wall above the television.

"Well?"

"Well what?"

"Well, what are you thinking of, ass?"

Jim wasn't sure exactly how to tell Dave about the phantom-like stranger that appeared in his life from time to time. "There's this guy I see once in a while..."

"Oh shit, you're gay?"

"Fuck you, I'm being serious. It's this guy about our age; I think he went to high school with us, actually. Anyways, I saw him today at work. He was eating alone in a corner, but it was really weird because I didn't see him come in, and I usually make it a point to look at people when they're ordering."

"So?" Dave asked, playing the Scully to Jim's Mulder.

"So I saw him a few years ago when I stopped at the 7-11 on my way home from the hospital."

"You mean after you...?"

Jim subconsciously pulled his long sleeves down a bit further. "Yeah. Anyways, I tend to see him every six months or year or so."

"And you remember this stranger's face so well?"

"That's the thing, this guy is weird lookin'. He's got curly hair and bug eyes and the same 'I'm just starting to get facial hair' pube-stache every time I see him. Like if Groucho Marx was a homeless teenager—but without the glasses. Plus he just has a weird-shaped face, like too many features were forced onto a tiny canvas. He's not quite a mutant, but he's one of those faces you can't forget."

"So freak-o freaks you out so much that you can't stop thinking about him?"

Jim sighed and put his chin to his chest before speaking quietly. "I think he might be my guardian angel."

Dave half-chuckled, unsure if Jim was joking. After an uncomfortable silence, Dave relented. "Seriously?"

"Dude, I don't know. It's not like I'm 100% convinced myself. Are agnostics even allowed to believe in guardian angels?"

"I dunno. I think you might have to believe in a higher power by association then. Just call him your fairy godfather."

Dave paused. "So did this guy save your life before and you never told me? I don't get why you would think he's so important."

"He never saved my life, but after I saw him that time at 7-11, I realized that every time I see him I happen to be going through some serious shit in my life. He just shows up at the right time, y'know? And then it's like seeing him is some strange cosmic reassurance that everything is going to be okay; that I'm going to make it."

Dave shifted slightly in his chair. "So what kind of serious shit are you going through now that's suddenly gonna be okay?"

Jim looked above Dave's head, at the poster of Frank Zappa sitting naked on the toilet. He smiled and shrugged. "I don't know."

"Maybe seeing this guy means you'll finally get a real job and put your degree to use."

Jim dismissed the comment with the wave of a hand and a "Meh."

"You know you actually have talent, right? I mean, you working at Taco Bell is like God raising Sea Monkeys. And it's much easier for me to make jokes about you stroking when you

hold a job that pertains to painting.”

“You make jokes about my cheesy burrito all the time.”

“Yeah, I know, it’s like the Fort Knox of smegma.”

They shared a laugh. “It just pisses me off to see you completely wasting your life. Do you have some master plan I’m not aware of?”

Jim considered this question. “I don’t know. Some of the time I feel like there’s some kind of destiny-thing in place, like something huge will happen; I just don’t know what, or when, or how I’m supposed to get there.”

“Yeah, I know how that goes.” Dave continued to nod at his own comment. “So tell me more about bug-eyes. Have you ever tried talking to him?”

“Hell no! That’d be like breaking the fourth wall. I figure if I talked to him, he’d magically disappear or somethin’. It might just erase all existence...” They sat in silence a minute longer.

“...So what’d you get tonight?” Dave asked, knowing exactly the effect it would have. Jim stirred from his thoughts, and a grin slowly crept across his face. He pulled his backpack between his feet and opened it up.

Every payday, that is every other Friday, Jim stopped at Record Swap on his way home. He walked in, gave the owner a fifty dollar bill, and picked out exactly fifty dollars in records. The flat \$50 was one of Jim’s small OCD quirks, but the owner of the shop didn’t mind covering the tax for the sale to accommodate such a loyal customer. Jim pulled his new treasures out one at a time.

“I got Iggy Pop’s *The Idiot* for \$8, Devo’s *Freedom of Choice* for \$4, The Smashing Pumpkins’ *Pisces Iscariot* for \$15, *Autobahn* by Kraftwerk for \$13, and five random albums from the \$2 bins.” Jim always said that the only music worth listening to has been committed to vinyl. Dave just considered it another oddity in Jim’s never-ending search for perfection.

“Nice haul.” Dave noticed the rare happiness on Jim’s face each time he got to show off his latest purchases. “So what’s doin’ for tonight?”

Jim glanced at the TV and noticed NHL ‘07 paused on the Xbox 360. “Wanna play a game online?”

“Sure.” Dave quit the game he had paused and connected to Xbox Live as Jim grabbed a controller. They always played together as the Pittsburgh Penguins, as Jim wouldn’t touch the controller unless they could be his favorite team. Tonight they were matched up with the Toronto Maple Leafs, who were controlled by LeafsGuy99. “Ninety-nine? Oh man, I hope it’s an eight year old. I fuckin’ love playing little kids.”

“Good luck, guys,” a child’s voice said through their television speakers.

“Nice,” Dave laughed as he prepared to dominate.

• • •

One hour, two beers, and three Maple Leafs victories later, Dave whipped his controller at the hardwood floor in anger. “Fuck Xbox Live and fuck little kids!”

Jim laughed, not meaning to mock Dave’s frustration. “What’s wrong with you?”

“I’m not playing with you anymore; you can’t pass for shit.”

“So what? I had a hat trick.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah.” Dave turned off the TV and the 360.

“We still got fuckin’ owned by a third grader.” He sighed, “My life has lost all meaning. What now?”

“I don’t care.”

Dave’s poor attempt at puppy-dog eyes met Jim.

“Berlin?”

“Why? So you can try to get with Angie again and fuck

away the pain of getting beat by an eight year old?”

“He beat you, too!”

“Yeah, but I know it was your fault, so I don’t take it personally.” Jim smiled as he watched Dave’s face turn red with anger. He knew that as much as he personally strived for greatness, Dave’s dignity lay in the smaller things. Dave would be content to lose the war as long as he won every single battle along the way. Conversely, Jim only had to win the war. And he found Dave’s anger over such insignificant losses to be rather amusing. “Pride goeth before the fall, bitch. It’s just a game.”

“Fuck you. Let’s go,” Dave put on his shoes and left. Jim finished his beer and followed Dave out the door, down the hallway, and to the elevator. They stepped in and Dave pressed the ‘L’ button. He turned to Jim. “Your turn.” The elevator doors closed and Jim unzipped his pants, pulled out his dick, and shook it at the camera mounted in the corner. He put it away, the ‘L’ above their heads lit up, the doors opened, and they left in no particular hurry.

• • •

Dave got behind the wheel of his rusted ‘92 Corolla and reached over to unlock the opposite door. Jim got in and instinctively turned on the radio, going through the presets as Dave deftly switched between reverse and drive, back and forth, slowly but surely un-parallel-parking his car from a very tight space. Jim stumbled upon “The Passenger” by Iggy Pop and turned the volume up as they pulled into traffic.

I am the passenger/and I ride and I ride...

“I fuckin’ love this song,” Jim said almost mournfully.

“That’s because you have a hard-on for ‘70s glam rock stars.”

“Very true. But firstly, Iggy wasn’t glam when he went solo; that shit was done after *Raw Power*. And secondly, it’s this song in particular I’m so in love with. It’s amazing; it’s so simple and catchy, but it makes me feel empowered, like the world is mine for the taking.”

“You sound like *‘he Vagina Monologues*.” Dave felt obligated to keep Jim’s delusions of grandeur from growing. “And besides, the reality is that you live with me in a shitty ghetto apartment and work a fuckin’ scrub job.”

“Yeah, I know.” Jim felt only slightly wounded by the remark; he chewed the skin next to his thumbnail and spit little bits of it on the floor.

...So let’s take a ride and/See what’s mine

After the song ended, Jim broke the silence.

“Do you ever feel like there’s nothing stopping you from being anything—entrepreneur, porn star, president—except yourself?”

“...Sometimes. I guess.” Dave found the peculiarity of Jim’s questions to be unnerving. Jim waited a few seconds longer before he continued his thought; he knew what kind of response it would garner.

“I used to think maybe I was Jesus Christ.”

Dave choked on disbelieving laughter. “What?” He looked over at Jim, who was stone-faced. “Why the fuck would you think that?”

“Why not? It’s like I said; unlimited potential. I mean, I could still be him, right?” Dave glared dubiously at Jim, who went on unfazed. “When did Jesus start pullin’ miracles?”

Dave reluctantly confessed. “He was a little over 30, I think.”

“There ya go. So I’ve got maybe 8 more years of trying to get laid, and then if I’m not turning water to wine, then you can tell me I’m not Christ.”

“What fuckin’ ever.” Dave parallel parked three blocks down from Club Berlin, slamming the gear shift into place. They

left the car and walked the distance with an uneasy air between them. When they finally reached the club, they showed ID and paid the ten dollar cover. Jim coughed as they were greeted by a wall of sound and a haze of smoke.

• • •

“Angie!” Dave shouted once he had reached the bar. Angie was one of the bartenders. The one Dave had slept with a few times.

“Hey, Dave. Hi, Jimmy.” She always called him Jimmy, and he always responded with the same annoyed face. “Jack and Coke, Red Bull and vodka?”

“Yup.” Dave grinned as he surrendered all hope to her bob-cut blond hair, red lips just a bit too thin, and that same tight, short white shirt he saw every time they met.

“Thanks.” Jim slapped a five dollar bill on the bar and made his way to the opposite side of the club; to a section with nice couches that were a safe distance from the bass-assaulted dance floor. He sipped his drink as he watched the DJ drop the needle on another shitty dance album. “I thought they all used iPods now...” He didn’t realize he was actually speaking.

“What’s that?” He turned and spotted a cute, petite Asian girl looking at him with inquiring eyes.

“Oh, I was just...” he motioned towards the DJ. “Just commenting on how much I hate things.” He finished his drink. “Hi, I’m Jim.” She said her name was Missy, or Mindy, or Ming Lee. He motioned towards an empty couch and they sat down. Talking to girls was never much of a problem for Jim. It was finding a connection without using his dick that seemed to be the trouble. And they always seemed to recognize his wolf-in-sheep’s-clothing act, try as he might to convince them otherwise. To Jim, sex was a moment of clarity in all of life’s chaos, and adding a relationship to the equation would nullify the whole point of it. So he set his mind on autopilot and continued the conversation without really being present, his mind back on the bug-eyed phantom.

“You go to U of I?” he heard her ask, somewhere in the distance.

“No, I did that already. Full-time dreamer. What about you?” He instantly regretted asking. Jim listened to twenty minutes of white noise and stared at her breasts, while visions of doggystyle danced in his head. When she finally asked him another question, he feigned being unable to hear over the music so that she would repeat it.

“I said, ‘Do you still live around here, then?’”

“Yeah, I live with my friend Dave. He’s over at the bar, trying to get with this one bartender...” Jim craned his neck to look and pointed over the sea of people, but his scan stopped cold when he noticed two bulging eyes staring at him from a distance. Chills shot up Jim’s spine.

“Which one is he?”

A strange urgency gripped Jim like a panic attack, and he felt the overwhelming need to flee. “Uhh... shit. Y’know, I don’t even see him anymore. I think he might’ve ditched me. Listen, I need to take off. I’m really sorry. Can I get your number?”

“Yeah, sure,” she replied. He entered her number in his phone under ‘Berlin Asian’ and the fear grew inside him as he made his way towards Dave.

• • •

“Nothin’?” Dave asked, half-disappointed and half-expectant, as Jim neared.

“Nah, not tonight, man. I think we gotta get the fuck outta here.”

“Why? What happened?”

“I saw that guy again.”

“And?”

“And he was staring at me, but it was real fuckin’ evil. I don’t know how else to describe it. Like in horror movies, the way Jason just kinda stands there and stares the victims down and then boom! he’s magically behind them, choppin’ off heads.” He turned around and scanned the room again, but there was no sign of the stranger.

“Settle down, chief. So a guy was staring at you. So what? Maybe he likes you.” Dave smirked, satisfied at his own joke.

“Dave. Asshole. List-en-to-me.” Jim held Dave firmly by the shoulder and brought his face down to Dave’s level, making sure their eyes met at no uncertain distance. “Something very bad is going to happen, and I have to get the fuck out of here. Now.” Jim felt his chest tighten as his breathing became more and more constricted.

“I told Angie I’d wait around for her...” Dave’s voice whined with uncertainty.

“The hell you will, dude. We’re leaving now.”

“Well at least let me say goodnight to her.” He pleaded, trying to save some semblance of affection for Angie.

“Angie!” Jim screamed across twenty feet of patrons sitting at the bar, his words miraculously cutting through the hum of the club. “We’re leaving! He’ll call you!” Dozens of eyes turned from Jim to Angie, whose stunned face preceded a very awkward wave goodbye. Dave shrugged and waved back, only to be dragged out by Jim.

• • •

“What the fuck was that all about?” Dave demanded as they marched towards the car at a quickened pace.

“I told you, I saw that guy—”

“Your guardian angel?”

Jim stopped walking. “He’s not my guardian angel. I just saw him at the club and he was... different”

“Well you changed your tune pretty quick. What do you mean, ‘different’?”

“I don’t know. He looked furious with me, like I’d wronged him. Like my very existence was a slight against him. I’ve never seen him like that.” Jim was almost out of breath.

“Come on, let’s go.” The day had gone from strange to stranger, and Dave wanted nothing but the fresh start of a new morning.

• • •

Dave turned on the car and merged into traffic, not realizing that Jim had failed to turn on the radio for possibly the first time ever. At the first stoplight, he turned to Jim, whose face was more pale than usual. Dave could sense that he was genuinely spooked. “Don’t worry, man. I’m sure it’ll all be fine.”

The light turned green and Dave hit the gas. They glanced to the right and were blinded just before impact. No brakes squealed; there was just the cold, harsh sound of metal-on-metal to hold the night still. It looked like someone took a bite out of the passenger’s side as the car spun out of control.

When he regained consciousness, Jim tried to open his eyes, but the pain forced them shut. He heard the whine of an ambulance draw near as he became aware of the warm blood sticking to his skin. He called to Dave. There was no answer. Everything fell silent as Jim heard crunching glass under feet approaching the car. He knew who it was.

“I expected more from you after two thousand years.” The hammer clicked back, and the shot echoed through empty alleys and hollow rooms. “Consummatum est.”

Romance

Elaine Suzuki

I open the door and find  
keys, coins, and a Taco Bell receipt  
scattered across our entry way table.

Your socks and boots are flung  
about the living room.  
It's my foot that finds  
the puddle of melted snow.

Your paperwork battles  
my school work for dominance  
of the breakfast table.  
Opposing laptops  
open and ready for a game  
of battleship.

Of course,  
there's nothing to eat.

I open our bedroom door  
and find you  
waiting with a pizza.

VALERIE LESCH

Wood  
Metal

*“Untitled”*





"Aggression"

MARY JANE KIRKWOOD  
Ceramics



a man i once knew

aaron m. cassara

i knew a man  
once, couldn't  
take the constant vibration,  
the blood money rotting  
in filthy sewer grates, drank  
himself into a back porch basement.  
there was a crack in the lone  
cement wall,  
dirt poured in, formed a mound,  
reminded him of the cahokia indians.  
cats, from the neighboring  
junk lot frequented  
his hole, shat where he laid his head.  
he ran out of booze, would lick  
the insides of broken  
whiskey bottles.  
he found a million  
dollars down there, all in  
ones.  
burned one every day  
until the end  
of the world.

Victoria Ertl ~

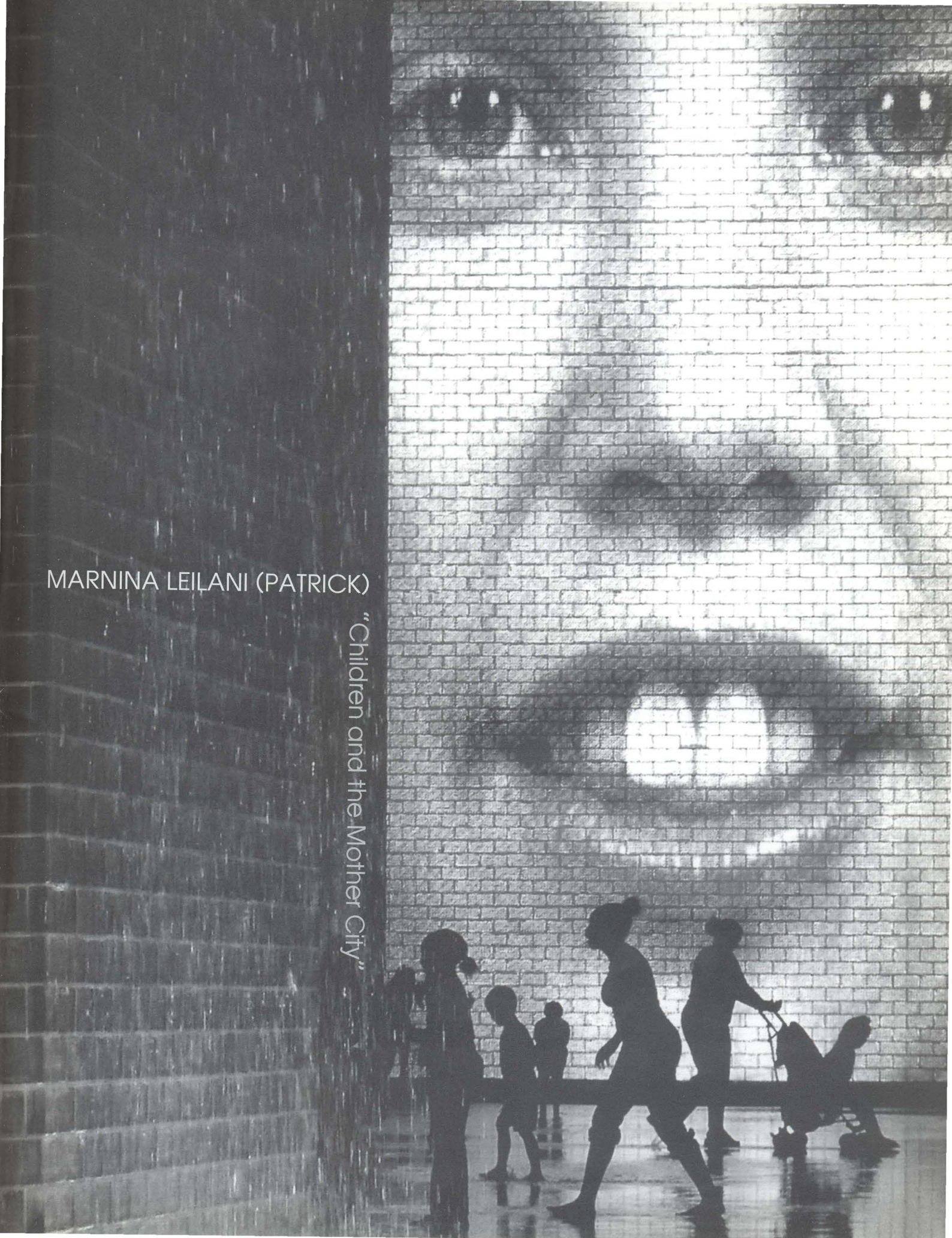
We are,  
not as we were before  
our feet have outgrown  
all of our shoes

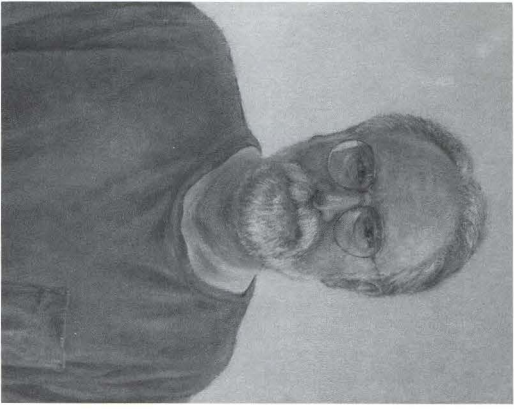
a pity  
for the soles surely had roads  
left in them

you'd rather be somewhere else  
I'd rather be here  
& our shoes like their harem  
their wicker bins

MARNINA LEILANI (PATRICK)

*“Children and the Mother City”*





SANDY BARNEY

“Faculty”

CHUN CHUN NG  
Intagio

*"It's The Best of Time, It's the Worst of Time"*



## The Widow's Garden

Justin Heyde

I planted glass shards and kamikaze hearts in the widow's garden,  
And the flowers bloomed into AK47's, skeletons, and smoke stacks,  
I planted car crashes and heart attacks, polyester skin and lips of wax,  
Faulty smiles, bullets and bibles, amputated limbs, candy coated grins,  
And they bloomed into a girl without eye sockets,  
With chainsaw hands and a peacock feathered skirt,  
A fuchsia-flavored tongue and silk gossamer hair,  
She spun a web for the wooden boy with puppet strings,  
His little legs danced like flapping angel wings.

COLIN DENNEY  
Mixed



Note from the Literary Editor:

# You Are Beautiful

aaron m. cassara

Note from the Art Editor:

Collaborating my styles with the typical theme for the POV was a challenge at first. My style of graphic design tends to be a little abstract and eccentric. But I decided to stick with the same type of style the Point of View tended to have throughout the years. But with a cleaner, fresher spin on the magazine. I use a lot of typography and text rotation in my work, which is present here. I wanted to make sure the pieces were accented by a nice looking caption, but not overly done so it would ruin or take anything away from the piece. I thoroughly enjoyed working on this magazine and with all of the people involved. Thank you to everyone involved.

steve czech



DAREK PIECH

Wood  
Metal

*“Coalescence”*