



Pán Ku
LITERARY AND ART MAGAZINE
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P'AN KU

LITERARY AND ART MAGAZINE

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A Letter From Our Editor

Welcome to the Spring issue of *P'an Ku*! Spring represents new beginnings and transformations. I love this analogy when I think of the creative process for each magazine. We begin each semester afresh with more knowledge, new ideas, and new faces. As a team we come together to make each issue even better than the last, while learning and growing along the way.

This magazine represents some of the best art and literature at Broward College. It is my hope that as you turn these pages you will enjoy each work and be moved in some way. I am always amazed at the creative talent at Broward College and would like to thank each contributor for submitting their work. This magazine would not exist without you, and I hope this issue inspires you to continue on your creative journey. I also hope this inspires someone who has never submitted to *P'an Ku* to submit their creative works.

I have been a part of the *P'an Ku* team for the last four issues, and this will be my last. I will miss being a part of this tradition. I am ready for a new beginning, taking with me all I have learned. It has been a pleasure to be a part of the *P'an Ku* family and I have enjoyed the learning experiences and working with some amazing individuals.

I would like to thank Professor Santiesteban for introducing me to *P'an Ku* and for presenting me with this opportunity. Thank you to my fellow editors and team members for your work and dedication to *P'an Ku*, it has been a pleasure working with you.

Kind regards,



Kristin Alcorn
Editor-in-chief
P'an Ku Magazine

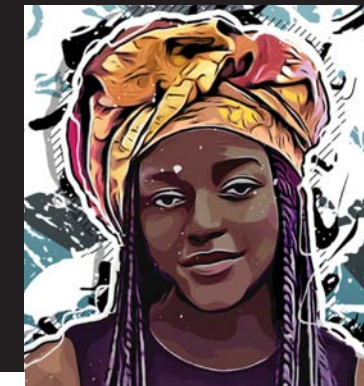
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Founded in 1964, *P'an Ku Magazine* is a student-run, bi-annual literary and art publication funded by Broward College. Our namesake is the Chinese god of creation. Chinese mythology holds that P'an Ku created the sun, the moon, the heavens, and the Earth. P'an Ku's breath became the wind, his voice the thunder, his blood the rivers, and the fleas of his fur, humanity.

We, the fleas.



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HYPERBOLE!



Olivier Morency

SOUVIENS - TOI DE MOI CHÉRIE



Olivier Morency

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Pearl of the Antilles

Her hair used to shine,
Washed by the salty sea,
Glossy and magnificent,
Combed to perfection,
Adorned in pearls.

She might've been prideful,
But her smile lit up the shores,
Her hands stroked her children,
Her voice lulled them to sleep.
They never went hungry.

Her feet drummed the Earth's skull,
But He never minded, for she was too pure.
Her hands stroked her neighbors,
Her voice welcomed them in,
Her house was always open to them.

Until the world looked on
As they beat her in the square,
Threw stones at her head,
Watched as her blood leaked.
They watched in silence.

Earth cried as her breaths became shallow,
As her voice died in her throat,
As her children's stomachs shrunk,
As her neighbors slept in the streets.
Everyone watched in pity.

She doesn't need strangers.
What she needs most,
What she aches for deeply,
Is for her children to rise,
For them to stop being Cain,

To turn to her and join hands,
To rebuild her pride and join heads,
To forsake their anger, throw out their envy,
Slaughter their hatred, instead of their brothers.
She calls for her children to tend to her wounds.

She's sending an SOS
To come bathe her in lovely oils,
To reseat her on her throne,
Adorn her in pearls once again,
And sing her anthem with pride,

Raise her hair up to the winds,
And let it blow for the world to see,
Combed to restoration,
Washed by the seas,
Forever, la Perle des Antilles.

- Alisha Loiseau



Saher Alwani, *Volcán Arenal*
Photography

Antonio Smith, *Earth!*
Acrylic on Canvas



Hometown

Time seems to move in slow motion in this town
On sunshine days the urge to find something different
Something worth smiling for is difficult to shake
And yet the oranges on the license plates
All look luscious and ripe for the picking
Nothing quite captures the feeling in my chest
When my thighs start sticking
I remember the last time I went to the beach
The sea touched the sky like my tires touch the road on I-95
Full of wide shoulders and lane closures
I'm starting to come to terms with the fact that
This is my hometown and it will always stay the same
But sometimes when the sunset is like liquid gold
And the music is just right on the drive home
This idle town inspires poetry within me

- Souleye Blanchard

The Color of Indigo

by Yewande Shitta-Bey

He's the only speck of black I've seen in this neighborhood all my life.

The first time I saw him, I was watching him from my window, watching him pluck endless weeds from Ms. Miller's lawn meters away. The sun had been unforgiving that day, its rays like whips beating down on his naked, brown back as though they carried the judgement of God. The sweat that bejeweled his skin must have been his repenting.

He'd been carrying out various tasks on the lawn since morning, and, as I found through glancing out my window infrequently, he toiled until the sun, tired of its punishment, reduced to a hazy ball of yellow peeking out over the horizon. The sky was a brilliant ombre, painted with tones of marigold, apricot, and cider.

I'm unsure what moved me then—perhaps it was sympathy that stirred within me when I witnessed the painful heave of his chest as he lay down in the middle of the cul-de-sac. Perhaps I'd simply liked the way the sky's rosy hue was akin to the tint of the wire-framed glasses on my nose. Or, perhaps it was the nudge of God, who, after giving His relentless punishment, decided that my solicitude was a manifestation of His forgiveness.

No matter.

Without another thought, I curled my pale fingers around the unopened can of pop from my windowsill, then left my room. And, though I was home alone, I flinched at every creak of the floorboard and whistle of a window as I shuffled to the front door. Ignoring the portentous reproach of my house, I stepped outside and spotted that speck of black. I stared long and hard at it as it lay like a shadow in the cul-de-sac. Then, after some deliberation, I called out to it.

“Hey, boy.”

He turns around.

I hold up the can of pop. “You thirsty?”

He nods feverishly.

I watch him as he stands clumsily, his movements redolent of exhaustion.

He gets closer, closer, closer—

He's almost too close, and once he's right in front of me, my head jerks itself to the side as an unfamiliar emotion rises in my chest.

Looking at the pavement, I hold the can out in front of me. The texture of aluminum leaves my fingers.

“Thank you, miss,” he says. The rich baritone rings in my ears.

I look at him. He looks back with thankful eyes.

“Thank you for the pop, miss,” he repeats. “Much appreciated.”

The pure, kind timbre of his voice has an unexpected effect on me, and I find myself offering to stay with him outside for a little while.

He accepts.

We sit on the sun-cracked pavement of the cul-de-sac. I run my index finger along its jagged crevices, half-listening to the ongoing *glug-glug-glug* next to me. Though we are right beside each other, an invisible barrier between us stretches out too far, too wide, and I'm afraid it'd make me unintentionally approach him as though he were an alien.

We sit in silence until he finishes drinking.

“Thank you,” he says. “You folk around here are generous.”

I hum. “What makes you think that?”

He takes a moment to think before he responds. “Ms. Miller paid me much more than people in other neighborhoods. And, the kids in them neighborhoods never gave me a drink—no, they didn't like Black folk too much.”

“Ah.”

We fall silent again.

He clears his throat. “I like your glasses. I ain't ever seen ones like them before.”

“Oh!” I chirp, surprised. I gingerly take the glasses off my nose, and the world loses all of its cherry romanticism. “Daddy bought them for me. My mother doesn't like them, though. Says they make the world look all bloody.”

Precious tufts of air leave his lips in a little laugh. “Really?”

“Yeah. Do you want to try them on?”

He nods eagerly.

I hand the glasses to him and watch as the excitement etched across his features fades into discontent once the glasses rest upon his broad nose.

“Your mama was right,” he mutters, almost apologetic as he hands the glasses back to me. “The world does look all bloody.”

A small smile plays on my lips. “I happen to like the color red.”

He chuckles. “To each their own.”

We continue to speak. I learn that he is my age, though his soul appears to be much older, as he knows many things I do not. He speaks of proverbs I've never heard of, tells me childhood stories that are bizarre, sings songs of Sam Cooke and Aretha Franklin which are only a little familiar, recites hymns that seem to be from another world—

And the more I speak with this boy, the more ignorant I feel. Yet, I continue to talk to him. The allure of his enchanting voice draws me in, its color more beautiful than that of the sunset. Looking back on it, his voice held a unique pride and integrity I suppose you'd only find in a Black, a voice deemed to be best when silenced. Its quality made his muddy skin turn umber in my eyes, his eyes suddenly pools of honey I drowned in, what I thought was a poor body now seemingly abled, surely sculpted by the same God that hated him.

The shade of his voice—I couldn't quite place it, and that bothered me. And so I continued to talk to him to see if I'd find it, long enough until it began to feel sinful.

His voice echoed, even after we said goodbye and my back was turned to him as I entered my house.



His voice, something dignified, something sincere, something wise, something—

That night, I decided his voice was the color of indigo.

...

Ms. Miller quite liked the way her lawn looked, and so the boy and I were able to continue meeting in the evenings under the sunset. With every conversation, I grew more enamored of his intoxicating indigo. I began to want to taste the indigo that rolled off his tongue on my own, to see if the flavor of his words were as profound as their sound.

The little flame that had flickered alive in me when I first heard his voice had grown larger and more dangerous with my increasing want, setting my very being ablaze.

The ardor must have been mutual, for one evening, in the midst of silly jokes and playful banter, and when my gaze was up at the sky, I felt the brush of his soft lips against my cheek. It was barely there, only lasting long enough for his warm breath to tickle my skin, lasting short enough to be a figment of my imagination. My skin tingles where his lips had been, however, so I turn to him.

The shock toward his actions mars his face. "Was that a kiss?" I ask, though the way I say it reveals that I already know the answer.

He says nothing, so I look into his eyes. I stare into them long enough to see a golden reflection of myself floating around in his irises. I see an emotion I'd never seen in them before—worry.

Heat and temptation coursing through me, I bring my hand up to the side of his face to soothe his fears away. He flinches as my fingers caress his cheek as though they are scorching slivers of white flame burning his dark skin.

In an instant, I press my lips against his. His mouth opens slightly in a small gasp, and I take the opportunity to search for the taste of indigo.

My body is screaming, writhing in guilt, but the heat swelling within me spurs me on—anti-miscegenation be damned! So as the rest of the world cried in agony, he and I fell deeper into the abyss of our love. Amidst my high, I sense a newfound brightness enveloping us, a spotlight from Heaven itself.

What a cruel pasquinade.

Which curious neighbor of mine had flipped on their house lights and witnessed our sacrilege, I will never know.

And, whichever neighbor spoke of it to the devil that night—had Satan snap his fingers to make the boy and his indigo disappear—I will never know.

...

The love I had developed for the boy became the addendum to our forbidden story.

He'd left me with stinging lips, the taste of a foreign hue, and bittersweet memories.

It took months for my anger and pain to subside. It took even longer for the most intense of my love to pass. It was only then that I understood what was so mesmerizing about his voice.

His voice was his and his alone, yet it also had no owner—the boy was nameless, his identity stripped by this persecutive world.

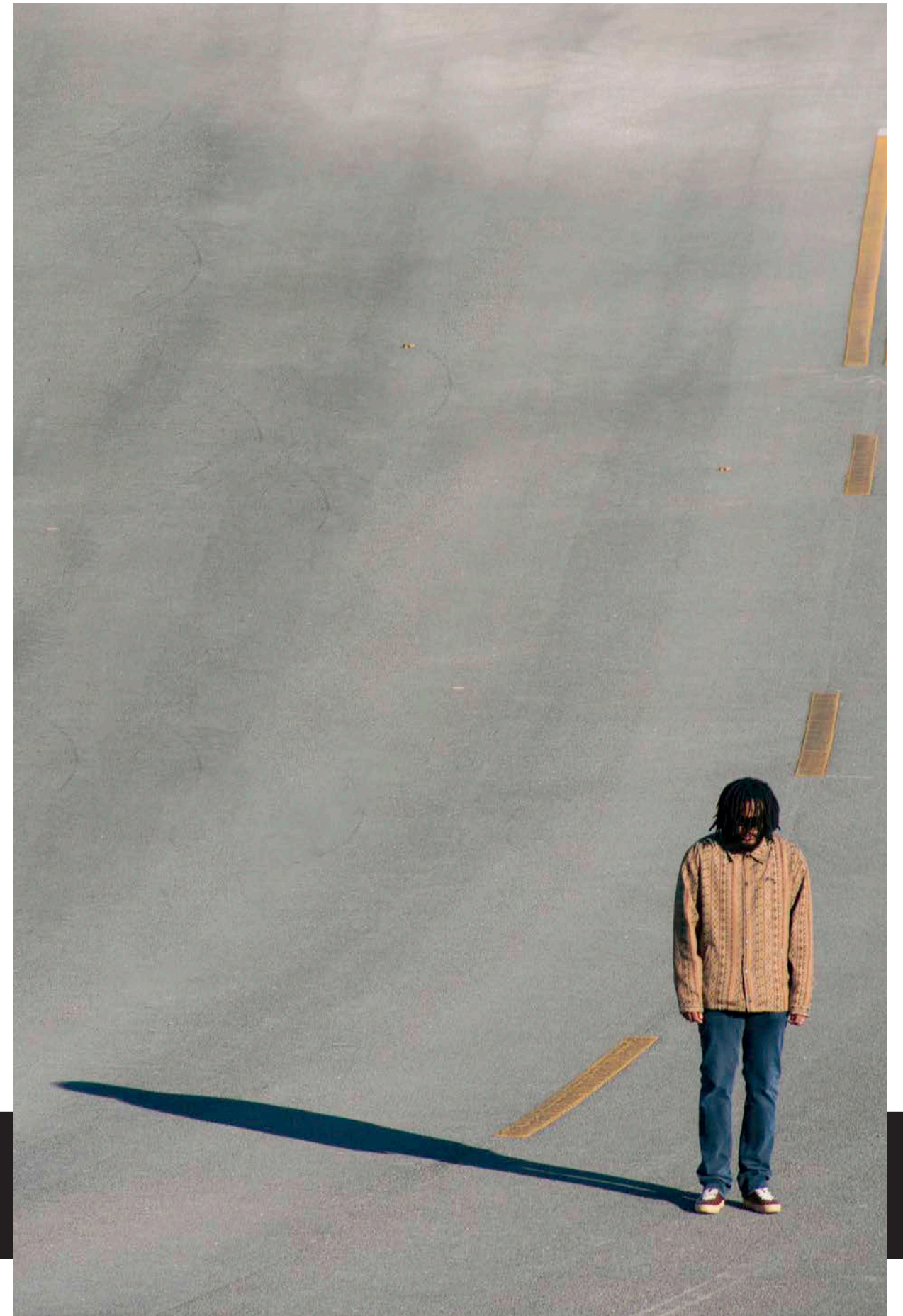
His voice was the color of indigo, though it tasted like midnight blue.

Midnight blue, a shade that was bold yet melancholic and afraid.

Midnight blue, a color from the sky though the boy had come from dirt. No matter how close to transcendence he came, the world seemed to find a way to pull him back down.

The world was unfair to some people that way.

Perhaps it wasn't that God had hated one of His sons—maybe He loved him, and it was only his world that hated him.



Joseph Pierre, *Dark Knight Highwayman*
Photography



Jeannette Martiarena, *Little Things in Life*
Photography

Waterville

My mother cried alongside her sister
in the room filled with unknown faces.
Me in my mini-suit being held by my cousin
as we made our way forward in line.
I was just happy to be in Canada.

Walls were grey like the sky outside
and the room was cold as snow.
Uncle Yvon's mustache was bouncing
as he wiped his eyes.
I was just happy to be in Canada.

Antoine adjusted me as he took a step
and we were next in line.
"C'est ton Grandpapa . . ."
I recognized the man who lay there.
I rode on his lawn-mower.
I sat in his lap while we opened presents.
I saw him in his gown with the tube around his face.
I knew this man.

Two decades gone and I cry at his headstone now,
not for the man I knew,
but for the man I wish I knew.
For the Grandpa I only know from old pictures when
I was just happy to be in Canada.

- Michael Blackstock

Dreams

I dream about us.

I dream about us in a car laughing
and there's a flash of light.
Our car flips,
I see you, upside down,
nothing but white in your eyes,
nothing but red on your face.

I dream about us tight-rope walking
in between the two hotels by your house.
You jump up and down.
I blink my eyes
and fall to grab your hand.
All my strength fails.
Everything goes black.
I hear your bones crack when you meet the floor.

I dream about us swimming in the ocean,
back and forth between orange buoys.
Racing: 3 laps, 7 laps, 10 laps.
From the depths of the darkness beneath,
I see a shadow appear under you.
As you scream and the water crashes,
I look up to find you, but you're gone.
Swimming underwater, I see you
being dragged into the darkness.
Neither of us will come back to the surface.

I dream about us on an airplane.
Just me and you going to LA,
your favorite place ever.
The flight is completely empty,
just me and you sitting in the front row.
Hours pass as you nap on my shoulder.
I guess I doze off a little, too.
We wake up to a blaring alarm.
The cockpit is empty with the nose pointing down.
We sit in the pilot and co-pilot chairs.
When we stop seeing clouds
and see the beautiful green fields below,
we squeeze each other's hand and look away,
forcing ourselves not to look down.
Right before we crash, you pull me in close
and say it's just me and you until the end.

I dream about us, but you're gone.
I drive your curvy neighborhood to your mom's house.
I walk up the sidewalk to the beige front door.
I knock 3 times and hear the familiar sound of the lock turn.
My eyes tear because I want you to be there in the doorway.
But I see your mom, and she falls to the ground.
I hug her as she cries and cries and cries,
I try to be strong, but I simply can't.
Your dad turns to see us: a mess on the floor,
and he drags both of us inside.
We sit on your bed and cry and cry and cry.
Your loss hits us too hard.
I don't know what to do without you.

I dream about us.

- *Tori Brown*



Antonio Smith, *Rastro*
Stoneware, Cone 10 Reduction



Gina Pollina, *Coffee Haus*
Acrylic on Canvas



Donna Mendez, *Dogs Without Their Masters*
Acrylic on Cardstock

Meadow

Gemstones in the sky
Beckon for us, my love.
Won't you come dear?
Set your head on my shoulder,
Time your heartbeat to mine.

The orb of the night is full,
It greets us from above.
Won't you come, darling?
Let's align the creases of our palms,
Amuse the deep beyond with our voices.

The figures in the hovering ocean
Blow kisses from their seats.
Won't you come name them with me?
Is that the gladiator or the unicorn?

Where are you, my beloved?
Haven't I waited long enough?
Waited for the warmth of your skin?
Ached for the union of our fingertips?

No beloved graces the grass of our meadow,
No feet meet mine under the blue blanket.
The song of your heart has stopped singing,
They will never again beat in rhythm to mine.

Your left hand will never bear my name,
Though the simple gold band in my pocket
Reminds me endlessly of the future we lost,
What will never, and what was yet to truly be.

Oh, but how the meadow calls for you,
Longing for your toes to dance across its grass.
How the blue abyss sighs for your absence,
Wanting to see the sparkle in your smile.

On nights when I lie in our meadow,
Admiring the painting laid above me,
I imagine you admiring it too, from a different seat,
The seat of my heart where you'll live forevermore.

- Alisha Loiseau



Nalani Dean, *Black Girl Joy*
Photography



Jeannette Martiarena, *Mini 007 in the Park*
Photography



Joseph Pierre, *Yokai Tentman*
Photography

This Way Comes

by Zayna Diaz

Kali woke as she always did. Alone. She rose from the bed and tiptoed across the cold tile to the kitchen. The coffee was ready, so she poured herself a cup, stared at the scalding liquid, and placed it back on the counter. A ring of brown was left behind. She left a note saying she'd be back and signed it. She left the sleeping house.

Fresh snow blanketed the ground and swallowed Kali's bare feet with every step she took. She went further away from the house, toward the tree line where they'd last spoken. Deeper and deeper into the woods, past the tree she'd marked with red, the color faded and almost invisible.

She eventually came upon the car, the black paint standing out against the colorless snow. He'd driven it off the one-lane road and tucked it between the foliage. The front was carefully crashed into a tree, enough to do some damage. Enough to throw anyone looking for it off.

The side windows were frosted but not enough that Kali couldn't see inside. Empty and cold, her bag still on the driver's seat, the car seat still strapped down in the back. It looked the same as the day they'd left it there after sitting inside for hours. They'd whispered so as not to wake the baby, then spoke normally, then shouted so loud that Kali was sure they could be heard from miles away.

Fresh snow continued to fall as she strode onward, white covering the branches of the trees that were streaked with more and more red.

The spot was right next to a stump, where trees were uprooted and used for fires. It was a convenient little ditch, Kali thought. Close enough that he wouldn't strain himself, far enough that it'd take months before anyone found it. She had run a great distance before he found her. Before he finished the job and dragged her body back into the woods and tossed her into the little ditch. The red was on the ground, too, but now it was hidden beneath white. If she knelt and squinted and cocked her head, she could probably make out her own dead green eyes staring back at her. Staring through her, at nothing.

Kali made her way back to the house and stopped at the edge of the woods. The lights were on inside, so she waited. He came out eventually, looking just as he did two months ago at the beginning of winter. Frantic, his eyes searched and searched, arms clutching their screaming baby to his chest. He never was good with children.

He sprinted to the car and quickly strapped the baby in the backseat before he jumped behind the wheel and sped off, like he did every morning Kali woke. Her lips curled into a smile as she watched him leave. She went back inside and sat at the kitchen counter, running her fingers along the rim of the mug where the coffee had gone cold.

She'd wait for him to return.

Mom

Your clock ran out in the midst of your prime.
Why did you have to leave so early?
We never said goodbye.
Didn't you know,
We weren't ready to stand on our own.
Many nights I felt your presence.
I felt my covers pulled to my neck
And smelled Dettol roaming through the air.
The following morning,
The sunrise was brighter than usual,
Your way of letting us know,
It wasn't a dream.

— Jennifer Freeman



Tyeera Blair, *Sankofa*
Photography



Jeannette Martiarena, *The Calm Before the Storm*
Photography

Losing My Children

She was a driven, single mom, working day and night, never finding the time to rest. In her mind, parents had one job: to love and support their children unconditionally. She worked until the crack of dawn, sometimes one or two jobs, making sure all their needs were met. They went to the best private schools, they ate the best, they wore the best, and they drove the best. She was a praying mother, always on her knees asking for their protection day and night. Her main prayer was that they would never have to experience the childhood that she had. She worked so hard trying to ensure that they had a better life than she ever dreamt of. But was it worth it? Now, they're all grown up, and she's constantly up all night thinking and questioning herself: Where has the time gone? There's no memory of her ever cuddling with any of them, rolling on the floor, going for ice cream, watching a family movie, going on vacations, or simply laughing out loud together. Each day, she ponders as many thoughts run through her head. She didn't do it right. As she stares out the window, she struggles with an abundance of thoughts that revisit her. Maybe, just maybe, the kids could have done without all those worldly things. Maybe, they only needed more quality time with what could've been the best mom ever. Her emotions overwhelm her as she whispers, "I didn't do it right."

-Jennifer Freeman



Joanne Rouza, *Deception*
Photography





Sofia Gonzalez Alvarado, *A Mind, A Life of Mine*
Ink, Charcoal, Colored Pencil on Paper

This Art Once Lived Inside Her

But she was not afraid,
for the red creating abstract art on the white tiles was mesmerizing.
She watched it flow and tried to interpret what was being painted.

She swore it moved with the illusion of life—
and maybe it did,
as this art once lived inside her,
filling her up and warming her body—
her body which felt colder with each passing second.
But she continued to watch,
believing it to be angelic creation and heavenly fate.

And suddenly she hated art
and how fast it moved.
She wished the brushes would stop.
But it was too late.
Paint can't be removed from the canvas,
only painted over with another color.

But there were no other colors,
only red.
And eventually,
nothing but black.

– Sofia Culotta-Louzan

Toes Curl

The loud sound of music
distracted me as I felt my
body being moved.
The bed creaked as the large
body came and went,
almost like a swing
but not as innocent.
I could feel all the sweat,
all the saliva, all the blood,
and all the useless tears
dried up on my skin.
It made my toes curl
but I just couldn't move.
An evil smile looking down
was not how I imagined
this moment to happen.
The only thing I liked was the
song the oblivious played.

– Sabrina Rangel

Remains

She'd heard many words,
Descriptions fell from mouths,
Like drips of saliva turned to acid,
But none were good enough.

“Monster” for example, ill-fitting.
Touches more on who he is,
Rather than what he did . . . plus
Monster made her think of tentacles.

“Animal” she'd thought was a given,
Considering humans were in fact animals.
“Scumbag” wasn't bad, though it lacked depth.
But the word no one thought of? The one that fits?

“Thief.” Yes, that was it, she thought.
At the core of it was the worst,
Most vile and repulsive act of thievery.
He had robbed her, stolen her innocence.

He'd looted the rest of her childhood,
Taken her purity and spat on it,
Purloined her greatest treasure,
Then left her with nightmares to bear.

No, come to think of it,
Words simply weren't enough.
Not for the cruelty he forced on her,
Nor the abyss of pain resting on her chest.

No, words couldn't possibly explain the itch of her skin,
As if it wanted to slip off her bones and well . . .
Drop into a useless heap, drip, and melt into goo.

Words couldn't account for the gap in her memory,
Not after he . . . maybe her brain was gifting her,
Giving her an escape, a loophole, no matter
What her memory couldn't account for, her dreams would.

There were no words, and maybe there never would be
For then, for now, for after, but she'd have to look
If she had any chance of looking into the mirror again,
Any chance of sleeping soundly as before,

Of feeling safe within her skin,
She'd have to find those words,
She wouldn't get back what he stole,
But she'd learn to live with what remained.

– Alisha Loiseau



Sofia Gonzalez Alvarado, *Bits of Me*
Graphite on Paper

Here Lies My Weakness

by Noemi Thompson

Have you ever experienced a dream where you were running away from something, but despite how far or fast you went, you reached nowhere? When I began facing difficulties with my depression and anxiety, my life came to a halt as if a leash were holding me back. I looked at my reflection in the mirror and saw nothing but a look of dismay upon my face. My stomach was wrapped up in a ball, the rage I carried with me burned me to the core, and in the same sense, I considered myself unworthy. Unworthy of happiness and prosperity. The idea that I had a disorder that could only be treated but not cured discouraged me. I felt small, delicate, and dull. This was holding me back in ways that made me feel like I could not move forward in doing what

I wished to do. Life was throwing at me one of the biggest obstacles I would have to conquer for many years to come. This life-changing event was the leading reason why I decided to pursue a career in psychology. Although life can be challenging, perception is key to making your weakness a strength.

It was early May when I received information that would affect the way I viewed life: the diagnosis of my depression and anxiety. The strangest part was knowing I may have this, though hearing it made me feel so much worse. I wanted to reach out to a friend, but after all the times I've ignored messages and calls—and isolated myself—who would listen to me? Racing thoughts of negativity poured into my mind and

haunted me that night, feeding my insomnia. The following afternoon, after my diagnosis, the warm sunlight from my window crept through my blackout panels just enough that it shined precisely on my eyes, causing me to wake up from my sleep. I rolled over in my bed to view the time on my dusty outdated clock. Who has the time to clean when they're depressed and want to sleep all day, right? Yet again, it was past 2:30 p.m. Again, my feelings of hopelessness took over, and I was numb. What is the point of even trying to get help if this is an obstacle I will face my whole life? Finally, I decided to sit up and take a deep breath. The planet felt as though it had come to a standstill, and one lonesome question appeared in my thoughts: "What's going on with you? Make a change!"

That afternoon, I leaped out of my bed and scrambled for my laptop. I reached out to my doctor and made an appointment to see a psychiatrist and get therapy. Ultimately, after all the things I have been through and living with this illness for so long, I took my first step into becoming a

better me. I feared facing this challenge, but I knew I should do what was best for myself. The first visit made me uneasy. I did not know what I should anticipate or what to even say, but the comfort my counselor gave me could not have been better. I poured out my emotions and told her exactly what I had been feeling over the last five years. I admired that I felt heard and that she had so much empathy and compassion for everything I had to say. When we ended the session, her words engendered a feeling of weight being lifted off my shoulders. On that first day, I knew that I wanted to help others the

way she helped me.

After months of accepting treatment and therapy, I noticed a change. I walked up to my bedroom mirror and took a good look at myself. There I was: a piece of myself I could identify. I could not help but smile back and think, "Wow." It had been such a long time since I had seen myself in the reflection looking back, and to be able to recognize the person I knew was still there made me finally feel overjoyed. The racing thoughts reappeared; however, they were insightful. I felt optimistic and inspired. In addition to healing my mental health, I also made a huge decision to start college and begin studying to earn my bachelor's degree in psychology. I am on my way to

becoming a mental health counselor after multiple years of procrastination.

You may ask me why I would go into a mental health field knowing the severity of pain I endured dealing with depression. Yet, that is precisely the reason. I want to encourage others who have similar stories. I want to support the growth

of another suffering from any mental illness and show them the right path. The conflicts of isolation from friends and family, belittling myself, and losing who I was are not anything I would want anyone to go through alone. Though the difficulties may still come and go, I have the ultimate feeling of persisting in anything that life throws my way. I will not permit depression to define who I am. Despite the challenge, I will keep pushing ahead because I now know that perception is the key to making your weakness a strength.

“perception is
key to making
your weakness
a strength”



Bryanna Del Rio, *Balance*
Ceramic, Raku



Ariana Carapaica, *Hiding in the Shadows*
Ink on Paper



Donna Mendez, *Bacterial Interface*
Digital

Reflections

by Heather Tidwell

I peer into the mirror and see the same reflection that's greeted me many times before. I graze my cheek with my fingertips, feeling the soft skin. I sigh, wishing my appearance would change. I tilt my head to the side, but the reflection doesn't follow. I narrow my eyes in confusion, watching as the eyes in the mirror stay motionless. I put my hands on my hip, yet the reflection stays put. I let out a frustrated sigh. Then, I see the reflection's lips curve into a smile. My heart races in uncertainty as I reach my hand out; this time, the reflection does the same. I feel the cool glass of the mirror as our fingertips touch. I move my other hand to touch the reflection's cheek. To my astonishment, I feel the same soft skin as before when I touched my own cheek. I yank my hands away from the mirror, feeling sweat bead across my hairline. The reflection's smile deepens, and her hand passes the threshold of the mirror and grasps my wrist before I have time to react. I struggle against her hold, but this only causes her grip to tighten. I attempt to swallow down the lump of fear in my throat. Her smile widens, but it's void of any emotion. My body lets out an involuntary shudder.

The reflection takes her hand that's not holding me and jabs her finger into my chest. I look at her, confused. The smile never leaves her lips as she keeps her finger pointed at my chest.

"What do you want?" My voice shakes.

She shakes her head, still smiling.

With trembling hands, I grab the hand that's near my chest, and she immediately reacts. She

writes out of my hold and points her finger at my chest again.

I grow more agitated at her confusing antics.

"You," she grumbles out. Her voice is the same as mine.

Realization washes over me like freezing water. It leaves me shivering and uncomfortable.

"No." I shake my head furiously.

The reflection replaces her empty smile for a furious glare.

I feel fear creep up my spine.

She takes a step forward, slowly passing through the mirror. Instinctively, I shrink back with wide eyes. She stands mere inches in front of me, completely still. Her nose shrinks. Her legs lengthen. Her hair grows. I watch in shock as she manifests into what I wish I could be. The fear and uncertainty from moments before fade away, leaving me completely calm. I look at her with a newfound understanding and give her a compliant nod. She smiles again, but this time, it's not empty. This time, it's filled with malevolence. Before I have time to ponder the change of emotions, she grabs me by the shoulders and pushes me into the mirror.

Inside the mirror, it's cold and dark. I can only see out of the mirror, into my old room. I see the reflection look at me with satisfaction. Dread fills every fiber of my being. I try to walk through the threshold, but it feels like an invisible barrier is keeping me from passing. I bang on it, but it's no use. The reflection smirks at me, then turns away.

My reflection is gone.



Nalani Dean, *In the Midst of It All*
Photography

Hills Alight with Memories

by Miniver Kundra

The news reports that a wildfire is searing a path to the Xiangs' house. The family would have had time to evacuate were they not already three-hundred miles south, bathed in the sunshine of a tropical province, where blue waters, palm trees, and varicolored flowers dot the landscape. The fire isn't a normal fire. Its nature is more characteristic of some luminosity found in a dream. At the cries of their two children, the mother and father debate whether they should drive home and salvage what they can—if they can—or remain safe where they are, out of the fire's reach.

The father is eager to return home. Goaded by the pleas of his children and those of his own conscience, he tells his wife they can make it back in time before white flames consume the neighborhood. "That house is our entire life," he tells her, panic-stricken. "We have to go back and save it. We can't just give it away to some mutated fire!"

The mother counters that their safety outweighs any physical possessions. "Going back is useless. We can move on as long as we're all okay. The house can be replaced." She means what she says. However, a dark secret lies beneath the floor of her tongue, and a hint of it slips out in her tone. The house is a longsword, bent and rust-eaten, and it pins her to the mountain.

The father raises an eyebrow. "It's not so much the house we need to be saving," he challenges

her. "It's everything inside of it. Did we not break our backs getting to where we are today?"

In the end, he wins the argument, aided by passion and the rhetoric of their two teenagers.

...

Driving north, their van rockets past verdant hills and farms crouched between them. The father notices that the closer they get to their destination, the more his wife's expression hardens. She seems at once irritated and circumspect. She balls her hands into fists and watches the landscape flicker by.

Aggravated, the father suddenly glares at her sidelong and snaps, "You know, at first, I thought you were scared of confronting the fire. But now I'm convinced it's your family you're scared to confront. There's something you're not telling us." Paranoia rises like dark smoke in his chest. "What? Are you worried you'll be figured out?" He then takes a deep breath and steadily exhales it. "Are you the fire-starter?"

The mother keeps quiet. She's curious about what state they will find their house in, so curious that she begins to quiver and crackle. The house might be burned to a crisp or left glowing on the mountainside. Either way, she prays there will be nothing left of it.

The father rages on. "Sure was convenient of you to force us into taking this vacation. This isn't a normal wildfire. It's an anomaly. The odds

it started while we were away? Not likely."

Still, the mother emits no words or rebuttals. She doesn't defend herself, nor does she offer an explanation.

"Mom, by not responding, you're telling us it's true," the son chimes in. "Are you hiding something bad in our house?"

The quietude only lengthens.

"Why won't you answer us?" the daughter shrieks. "Have you killed someone? Are there human remains hiding in the walls? In the pond? Underneath our beds?"

"Let's simmer down," the father says. "Your mother hasn't been herself lately. She's been grave and gloomy and kind of withdrawn." He says this as if his wife isn't planted in the seat beside him. His words melt her insides. "If she's somehow responsible for the fire . . ." he trails off, fanning the thought away. "Whatever she's hiding, it doesn't matter. We just need to make it home."

As a distraction—to slip into a reality where there is no fire—the Xiangs discuss a time that came before.

"Will we have to live like we used to?" the daughter asks, staving off tears. She calls to mind the one-bedroom apartment she and her family shared when they first migrated to the province. A time before her father climbed the ranks, hit pay dirt, and they were able to eat beef at every meal.

"I don't know," the father tells her.

"Remember how we'd all squeeze into the kitchen and sit around the tiny card table with that ugly ceramic vase on it?" the son asks. "The one we stuffed with all kinds of junk?"

"Weeds. Sticks. Coins. Rice," the father muses. "Safety pins."

"Hard candy."

The mother wears a faraway expression on her face.

"We'd have to squeeze into every room," the son adds. "No place to get away from one another. No escape from the ceramic vase."

"Where did that thing even come from?" the father wonders. He smiles and shakes his head. "I'm just glad I don't have to look at it anymore, along with that whole claustrophobic apartment."

Haunted by the memory, and her mother's eternal silence, the daughter bursts into tears and cries out, "Please don't tell me we have to go back to that!"

Their rush is everlasting, hindered by time and traffic, threatened by the stranger in the

passenger seat. Their anxiety tangles with the network of highway bridges and endless stretches of express lane. The father exceeds the speed limit in fits and starts. He grows frustrated as the road clogs with cars and semi-trucks, and he implores them all to allow their van to shoot through. His teenagers won't stop crying, and his wife won't tear her eyes away from the window.

Hours pass until they finally reach their town, where the sky has dimmed to an afterglow. Instead of the flowers from earlier, now white fires dot the landscape as if, ceremoniously, tealights have been staged for miles across every dip and curve.

"Amazing," the father says, barely above a whisper. "The hills look like a starry night sky."

The mother lifts her eyes but sees no stars, only a haze of lavender that's outshined the city lights.

Passing through a thicket of trees and into the valley, the Xiangs feel as if they are entering a netherworld. The flames are ghosts in mourning. Their soft glow calms the family's hearts with an illusion of tranquility. The smoke is pink and silken and moves with the grace of a ribbon strung high in the wind.

"Why are some buildings on fire while others aren't?" the son asks. "Shouldn't there be like a giant, all-consuming blaze?" He squints. "And the fire is white with a sort of dark pink layer around the edges."

"It's not a normal wildfire," the father reminds him. "But its intentions might be the same."

"Did the other fires look this way?"

"No, not like this one. You see, all these fires look different but act alike. If they're maintained properly, *mutated* fires will flow around a house like water around a river stone." His eyes survey the hills. "See how it looks like the fire sneezed all over the place? It's because the land needed to be reglazed. In *milkcoat*. It's a fire retardant. It's supposed to stop the spread of a wildfire kind of like a magic circle would." His heart speeds back up as sweat beads his forehead. "But it looks like the fire's already passed through."

"You think the *milkcoat* is giving it those colors?" the son asks.

"Most likely."

"We added another coat," the daughter tests, frantically moving her eyes from her father to her silent mother. "Right?"

All heads turn toward the mother, who pretends she has burned away with the biomes under those dry patches. The daughter buries her head

in her lap and cries harder.

The Xiangs, at this point, are so close to home they can smell the scorched jasmine in the planters out front. A silence hangs between them as they anticipate the fire's aftermath. As their house rears its head from the foot of the mountain, the whole family—save for the mother—let out cries of gratitude. Joy ignites in them at the sight of it still standing there. But white flames are slowly eating it away, dissolving its structure one bite at a time.

The father steps on the accelerator, dodging debris and fallen stars. The mother melds her eyes to the house, hoping it will burn up before they can reach the front door. Seconds later, the car comes to a halt and everyone flings themselves from it. Unlike the rest of the family, the mother maintains a calm pace and skirts the fire brigade that stretches each hose into a wand. The house flaunts a contemporary design. Its walls are of sleek black stone and glass panels that have taken the form of paper lanterns. The mother pauses out front while her family fights their way inside, throwing all caution to the flames.

"Be careful in there!" a disembodied voice shouts at them. A hose shuts off. "The fire might have passed, but it's not safe to go in yet!"

The Xiangs ignore the warning. Wending around mild heat and smoke, the father rejoices when he finds that some belongings are salvageable. He smothers flames as if they are candle wicks, using an expensive article of clothing. The children disappear down the hall and return moments later with their arms full.

The father flashes his wife one last suspicious glance. "Let's go!" he barks.

The mother doesn't move. She slowly looks around, making little attempt to save anything. In the courtyard garden, she watches her family leave her in their wake. Stoneware flickers into starlight. The pond boils fallen leaves and colorful plastic fish, and she can't help but liken it to certain memories. Without warning, her eyes swell with tears when they meet the crawlspace door, which stands sentry on the left wall. She

inhales through her sleeve and moves carefully over to it.

...

A few firetrucks later, as the house sits damaged and hiccupping pink smoke, a brigade volunteer speaks with the family. "I'm so sorry for your loss. I could only imagine what it would be like to lose everything I own." He looks at what remains of the house and then at them. "How are you all feeling?"

The children contest for the spotlight. They show him what they managed to save. The laptops. The gaming console. The headsets their parents gifted to them last spring.

"It looks like we'll be okay," the father puts in. He takes an exaggerated breath of fresh air. "Our insurance will cover the cost of the damage, so we'll be able to repair the house, sell it, and build a new home. Maybe one even bigger this time. In that way, it feels like we all came out squeaky clean. Reborn even." He smiles nervously, feeling the loss of it all. He still wonders about the fire's origin. "At least we were able to save a few things."

"Running into a burning house with your children might not have been the wisest decision, though," the volunteer suggests.

"It was worth the risk," the father says, a bit defensively.

The volunteer then turns to the mother, who sits like a pale dragon on the curbside. She surprises everyone with her sudden appearance and by opening her mouth. "I'd hoped the whole house would have burned to the ground," she finally admits to them. Her family directs their heads and accusations at her. They wait for her skin to flake away and reveal a plate of scales. Then their eyes grow wide, noticing she carries something grotesque in her arms.

"I didn't set the fire," the mother says, softly. "You're all ridiculous. Unbelievable." She stares forward and hugs the ugly ceramic vase to her chest. "I just miss what we had before that rotten house took it all away."



Bryanna Del Rio, *Big Blue World*
Ceramic, Horse Hair Raku

Mind and Self Flow Like Idoto to the Sea

Tranquil waves of bliss on
The surface,
Like an ocean, can take all
Secret pissing.

Much play
With troubles washed away,
But pressure and beasts if you
Go too deep.

So keep yourself with well
Made boat,
Crew, and tools
To swim or float.

You can be consumed
Beyond the seeming
Safety
Of the warm and
Playful sand,

Or be lost in taunting waves
That throw about and
Never quench
Thirst that must stare now
At ocean's dark abyss.

On land's surface
My eyes hold no envy,
Like a great child
Beholding every happy treasure,
Imagined,
Like sand castles
Accepting nature's shifty fetters.

Waves can be surfed
But never tamed,
Rejuvenating and
Often taking
Life
And castles alike.
Specks of sand
Specks
Before foamy turquoise claws

That roar with quiet strength,
Baptizing children
And claiming a friend.

Life's a beach
Then death
With every breath,
Out and in
Amen.

-Mark Grant



Savanna Coleman, *Wandering*
Photography



Raven Suarez, *The Shanghai Bund*
Digital

Sofia Gonzalez Alvarado, *Failed Femme Fatale*
Ink



Accumulate

You are the coat in the back of my closet,
Tags off, hanger on,
Never worn, merely gazed at,
Kept pristine by the sea of surrounding clothes on the rack.

I make excuses on why to keep you:
What if I need you down the line?
(Such good quality is hard to find)
What if I regret saying goodbye?
(The future is an unpredictable thing)
What if I never see you again?
(Loss is an emotion seldom dealt with at my young age)

Would I notice if you were gone?
In 9 months' time, would my eyes be drawn to the space you once occupied?
Would the thought of your fabric still cross my mind?
Answers aren't given without action, and I fear the unknown.

So, I'll hold onto you a little longer,
Open my closet doors and touch your collar as I browse.
Maybe I'll wear you out today.

- Mia Orris

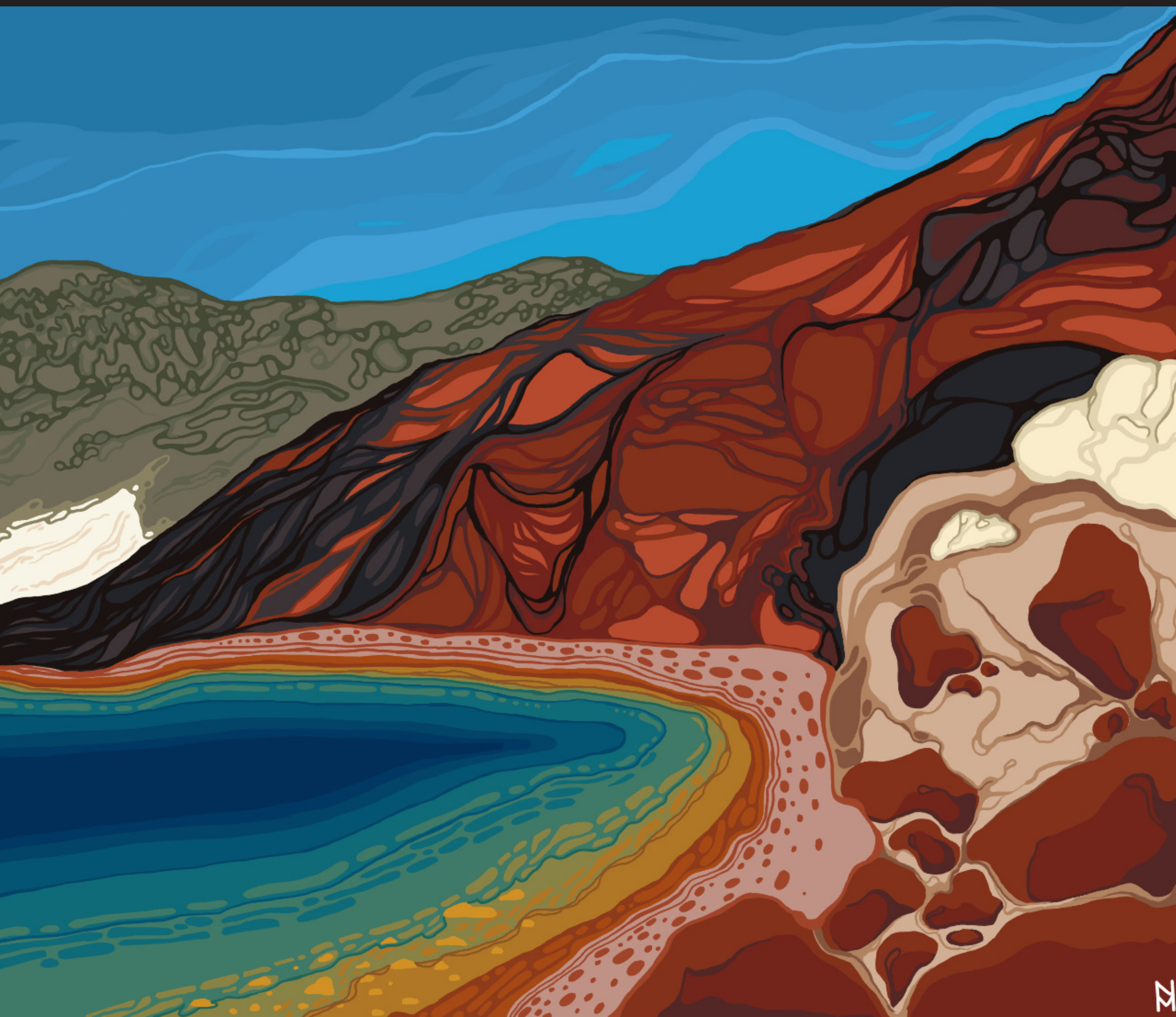
When I First Laid My Eyes Upon You

It felt like my heart
had been jolted awake from eternal slumber—
crashing into freezing waters,
energized and violent
like it was trying to break out of my chest,
snap my ribs in two and escape—
joyously jumping up and down,
causing earthquakes inside me
and leaving me short of breath.

- Sofia Culotta-Louzan



Bianca Ornela Joseph, *Little Puppy*
Charcoal on Bristol



Donna Mendez, *Red Beach*
Digital

De Onde Eu Sou

I'm from the dirt of my parents' footsteps,
the dust that marks our path.
I'm from the songs they sing,
from the hymns of Ramalho and Valença and the rebellion of Buarque.
I'm from the stories that keep us together, woven by sweat and tears
and the constant fight against obscurity.
I'm from the cries of my people near and far,
pushing against silent submission.
I'm from the small mundane things that we do
to say we are here.
I'm from a sea of words,
where I find my consolation.
Matilda's cunning playful glare,
Katniss's determination.
I'm from the machinations of song,
my heart echoing drumbeats,
my body singing melodies.
I'm from the tearful fights in the shadows,
fighting constantly to find my way through the valleys of life.
I'm from the comfort of Psalms,
those who echoed my pain,
my joy,
and say it is well in my soul.

- Isabella Almeida

The Journey

My knees ache, but I continue walking.
I must keep pace—there is no stopping here,
for I am transporting precious cargo.
I will carry the weight
of my ferocious heart and mighty brain,
if not to brave a safe passage forward.
The path is almost never clear.
Trekking through battlegrounds,
I will charm my ugly way past crafty beasts,
before I find a patch of light to guide me.
It won't be easy—men fueled by jealousy
will try to coax me to slumber.
Now sickly sweet, with ease,
I could give in to the temptations of sleep.
But my journey isn't over.
I will wipe the sand from my eyes.
I have a whole world to change, so
I will continue walking.

- Isabella-Mia Lavaniegos

Jeannette Martiarena, *My Mother's Ashes*
Photography



Flea Bytes

Isabella Almeida wants to use stories to make something beautiful out of what is broken.

Sofia Gonzalez Alvarado speaks through her works. She believes that if you scream at a surface, it will hear you out.

Saher Alwani is a capturer of all things beautiful.

Michael Blackstock is a communications major. He lives in Hollywood with his mother and sister.

Tyeera Blair is not the best with words, so she sees creativity as a way to communicate. She discovers more about herself through her lens, brushes, and computer.

Souleye Blanchard doesn't consider herself much of a poetry writer but more of a poetry consumer. She always has a book in her bag and a pen in her hand.

Tori Brown is eighteen and enrolled in Broward College through early admissions. "Dreams" is her first publication.

Ariana Carapaica was born and raised on Venezuelan soil—in Caracas. Dreams that were once oppressed now inspire her.

Savanna Coleman always has her camera and sketchbook with her.

Sofia Culotta-Louzan finds writing poetry the easiest way to convey emotions that feel too complex.

Nalani Dean is an African-American female creative who views everything as art.

Bryanna Del Rio is a budding artist who fell in love with ceramics after a class she had last year. She enjoys throwing on the wheel and loves the thrill of Raku.

Zayna Diaz enjoys writing and reading almost as much as watching sports, but not more than she loves sleeping.

Jennifer Freeman is proud to say that she started her life over at the age of fifty-three. She is a proud mom of three and grandmother to six. Writing has helped her deal with many unanswered questions from her past.

Mark Grant feels deeply connected with his impulse to create and share stories. Writing poems offers him a challenge and gives him a sense of clarity, creative stimulus, catharsis, acceptance, and accomplishment, which he values and is glad to display. He also writes under the pseudonym "Arrow."

Bianca Ornela Joseph is proud to say that art is part of her life. Without it, introducing her would be boring; she would just be a girl who doesn't know what she aspires to be in life.

Miniver Kundrata gathers the dregs of fantasy and repurposes them into stories.

Ainhoa Lasso gravitates toward the process of making and admiring art. She looks forward to studying art's remarkable qualities with great enthusiasm.

Isabella-Mia Lavaniegos is on a continuous path of discovery.

Alisha Loiseau sees writing not just as a means to glorify God for the talent He has given her but to tap into and express emotion. Her writing is a tool that can entertain and enlighten the world. When not writing, she is museum-hopping and exploring new foods.

Jeannette Martiarena is just a young woman in her fifties who has decided to give her lifelong dream of becoming a photographer a shot. She knows she has a long way to go and much to learn, but she is not stopping.

Donna Mendez takes inspiration from nature, dreams, surrealism, and mental illness to express their view of the world.

Jonathan Morency has been drawing for most of his life and plans to keep it that way. He uses art to describe thoughts, emotions, and even stories he can't put into words.

Olivier Morency taught himself how to use Ableton and play the piano, euphonium, and trombone. He hopes to make more beautiful music on a professional scale and maybe start an art business with his brother.

Mia Orris is a senior at the College Academy who loves creating. Although she doesn't plan on pursuing art in the future, she will always keep it close to her in stacks of sketchbooks and clumps of pens.

Joseph Pierre is a creative who enjoys an array of mediums. Someday, he hopes to combine everything he's interested in into one big production.

Gina Pollina uses art as a mental escape. She enjoys drawing and painting images that come directly from her head. She will draw her surroundings and render them into paintings, reflecting her sporadic style.

Sabrina Rangel is a nineteen-year-old Venezuelan immigrant who has always enjoyed writing and reading. She likes writing poetry the most, as she finds writing longer fiction a bit intimidating.

Joanne Rouza is a Haitian American majoring in film production. She wants everyone to experience what she sees daily but through her two lenses: film and photography.

Yewande Shitta-Bey likes to write words that express and evoke nebulous feelings.

Antonio Smith is exploring more contemporary approaches to ceramics and is having fun growing with *P'an Ku* along the way.

Raven Suarez is an avid lover of digital art, plants, and movies. She is a loving mother to her toddler—making her a fully online student—and is excited to announce that she will be graduating this semester.

Noemi Thompson is thrilled to start college after so many years of procrastination. She has bloomed into someone courageous and optimistic, someone she could never have imagined being.

Heather Tidwell aspires to publish a book—whether it be academic or a collection of short stories. All in all, she hopes to continue a life filled with writing and books.

FCSPA AWARDS

1st Place NON-FICTION, **Christa Hopkins** (Spring 2021)

1st Place ARTWORK, **Ainhoa Lasso** (Spring 2021)

1st Place CONTENTS PAGE, **Kristin Alcorn** (Spring 2021)

2nd Place GENERAL EXCELLENCE, ***P'an Ku Magazine***

2nd Place POEM, **Nemeche Blake** (Fall 2020)

2nd Place ARTWORKS, **Mikael Semexant, Antonio Smith,
Maria Jose Berru** (Spring 2021)

2nd Place CONTENTS PAGE, **Kristin Alcorn** (Fall 2020)

3rd Place POEM, **Shirleen Groves** (Spring 2021)

3rd Place ARTWORK, **Ellana Sunshine** (Fall 2020)

3rd Place TWO-PAGE SPREAD DESIGN, ***P'an Ku Editors*** (Spring 2021)



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IT IS SAID THAT
THOSE ENDOWED
WITH CREATIVITY
ARE POSSESSED
BY THE SPIRIT
OF P'AN KU.