Crosscurrents: Fall 2017

Associated Students of the University of Puget Sound

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Tacoma is a city built for autumn, for leaves turning from vibrant green to brilliant orange to a slow abscission, bare branches melting into the gray sky. There’s a feeling of hope, a feeling of change, the same feeling that I had as an incoming freshman to the University of Puget Sound. College is such a transitional time, a time books and movies tell us we’ll discover ourselves. Submissions to Crosscurrents this semester accurately capture that wonder and self-reflection.

Each year I work on Crosscurrents, I am consistently amazed at the effort and time put into pieces — from the technique to the creative process. I am so proud of everyone who submitted, everyone who took time to care about art, everyone who showed up to meetings and discussed work. Crosscurrents has become more than a collection of submissions, it has become a community. Each week I look forward to every contribution our editorial staff makes to the magazine. I look forward to their smiles, the din of chatter, and their purposeful submission review. This semester, I’m thrilled to include so many beautiful pieces that capture the voice of my fellow students. Thank you, to everyone who contributed to the magazine.

Best,

Talena Graham, Editor-in-Chief
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guest contributor

ETHAN STERN

Ethan Stern started as a ceramic artist and in art school he was introduced to glass. He started blowing glass when he was an undergraduate at Alfred University in Central New York State and continued to learn at the Pilchuck Glass School in Stanwood WA. He always loves the team effort that is required to blow glass. There is always a great community that gets created around glass making and especially at Pilchuck Glass School. He has been involved with Pilchuck for almost 18 years. He started there in 1999 as the driver of the school van in the summers and since then he has been a teacher, student and staff member. He is now a trustee on the board of the school and the chair of the Auction committee.

Find more of his work at www.ethanstern.com

AN INTERVIEW WITH ETHAN STERN

CCR: Who or what has influenced you the most? How does the medium influence the work that you produce?

E: After going to school to study ceramics, I quickly became enamored with the bright, dense and opaque colors achievable in glass. I began exploring the glass surface through carving and engraving, trying to exploit the available color palette. I worked to transform the appearance of a naturally shiny material to one that absorbs light and mimics the richness of the ceramic surface. Using the material as a canvas for carving and trying to deny the glass its inherent properties of reflection, refraction and optics, I dove head first into strong contrasts, graphic edges and loud pattern. After much of that type of exploration, my work has begun to change.

A few years ago I acquired a small collection of my grandmothers cut crystal when she moved out of the house that she had occupied for the last 60 years in Dallas, TX. These objects, deeply sentimental, filled with traditions and memories of family had a mystical quality in the patterns of refracted light they cast through their star shaped cuts. These are heirloom objects and remnants of a completely different time, not just in memories but also in Design style, fashion, process and industry.

When I brought these pieces of cut crystal back to my studio I started to consider my connection to these objects. I’m cutting glass, making and designing objects flying on the coattails of an industry once prolific in America and now long gone. The processes I use are almost the same, and even a few pieces of equipment that I have literally came out a factory that used to make objects like these. Some of the glass engraving wheels with which I cut patterns in the glass had cut hundreds if not thousands of objects before they even reached my hands. The objects that I am making with these tools don’t speak of the production environment that generated the brilliant cut crystal of 19th century America and all over Europe before...
CCR: What advice do you have for someone interested in glass blowing?

Don't give up. Most people are really attracted to glass blowing right away and they start to learn but find that the process is very challenging. You really have to stick with it and learn to work with the material in a creative way. You don't have to be a technical genius you just have to have good ideas and the rest will come to you. As they say, “Technique is cheap.”
UNTITLED
anj cunningham
A RECIPE WRITTEN IN MY GRANDMOTHER’S HANDWRITING

evan welsh

My left hand mirrors yours
in the years you’ve been gone
the tone of your voice has been moving away from me
the memories of you holding my head are
lightly smeared but mainly undamaged
notes written for my birthdays and the recipes my mother kept
always penned the same
your left hand scribbling slanted
cursive on a loose leaf page
profound love finding its way into all
the words falling forward onto themselves
listing every ingredient in no order
putting every direction down as you remember it
step by step
My left hand mirrors yours
and in that way I will never be missing you

for Linda Hertan
sweetness oozes from his lips like tree sap
clothing her in its heavy warmth
exploring
filling holes she hadn't known existed
you are enough it lulls
you are so much more than enough

she has rarely known sweetness to be sincere
sugar leads to cavities mama always said
more holes
rotten reminders of treats better left untasted

his sweetness is pure and unrivaled

cane sugar
cocoa beans
unadulterated by the hands of man

for the first time she tastes the rich soil and unfiltered sunlight
with which true sweetness grows
allowing herself to be filled by it
made whole

finding for the first time
beauty in vulnerability

sweet sincerity
Shrouded in silence and
dim moonlight
you inhale
to speak,
a shimmering drag
of air so often
lost in the
chaotic current
of this shouting
world.

But here
in silver darkness,
you turn thoughts
like stones in your
mind, speak before
you decide what
to say and weigh
those words
in the spaces between
our eyes.

There they hang,
suspended
in the nowhere
place
where we
slip
into sleep, where
we breathe slower
and touch softer,
where words are meaning-
less sounds
and the half-formed things are
full.
“QUESTION: ANSWER?”
matthew gulick

Dry alpine perfume of needled ocean:
Can you decode your notes for me?
Tingling bark skin nerves of wood:
What story does the ant tell itself?
And clear bright vaulted wind:
How can I learn your ancient tongue?
Rhythmic volcanic wavelength, frequency just low of hearing:
Is the meaning I sense inherent or given?
UNTITLED
allison macmillan

UNTITLED
tess wadsworth peppis
“I want to go for a drive,” says my roommate. It is May in Washington State and the weather is deceptively warm. If it was always like this, I think as the sun streams through my bedroom window, everyone would want to live on the Puget Sound.

She wants to go to the Olympics, nothing more specific than that. From our front door in Tacoma, it’s about two hours to Olympic National Forest. For once, I have no plans, and hours in the car with Madeline, destinationless, sounds perfect. My phone buzzes—a message from my boyfriend, who is almost done with the paper he is writing and wants to know if he can visit. I tell him I’m leaving for the day.

“Where are you going?” his green chat bubble asks.


Preparing for an adventure is my forte, so I pack a backpack with snacks for both of us, water bottles, a sweatshirt, sunscreen and other essentials. She grabs only her car keys. I have never loved her more.

We play music loud in the car and shout with glee every time we pass a sign for the Olympic Peninsula.

The landscape grows dramatic, and I feel the water and the mountains both calling to me, loud enough to drown out my lengthy to-do list. The sky is a bluer blue than I have ever seen. My soul rises like bubbles in a soda can.

A pivotal moment arrives: into the mountains, or out towards the water? A split second of uncertainty, and then “Let’s find a waterfall.”

The Olympics are a wonderland, and there is no shortage. One, Google tells us, is five miles away.

The car winds through alpine meadows rich with wildflowers. What evidence we see of fellow humanity—occasional little houses with toys in the front yard, signs imploring us to find Jesus—serve only to emphasize that this corner of the world does not belong to people and never has. I feel gloriously unimportant. We are tiny visitors in a land on a giant’s scale.

Eventually we see a sign for Rocky Brook Falls. After stretching out our limbs from the long drive, we head down the trail, which starts out wide and leafy, more a gentle stroll than a hike. A woman with a snowy-haired baby in her arms starts out just as we do. Sensing, I suppose, that we are not locals, she turns to us.

“You guys been to the falls before?”

“It’s our first time,” I reply. “Have you been before?”

She answers, “Oh yeah. We come all the time. Waterfalls are old hat for him.”

The baby looks at me with pensive, ice blue eyes. How lucky he is, to be a child of this place where natural wonders dot the landscape like so many quarters from a spilled coin purse, where magic is so casual.

As we walk, we hear the falls before we see them. A steady din, not so very different than the traffic that goes past our house in Tacoma. It grows louder with every step and I know, deeply, intuitively, that we are in the presence of something powerful. And then they are in front

CASUAL MAGIC

casey o’brien
of us, rushing with speed and grace down the mountainside to the pool below. We cannot hear ourselves speak over the crashing water, but words always seem inadequate in these circumstances anyway. Behind us, the baby giggles. For months, I have felt the weight of my own anxieties sitting on my shoulders like a heavy blanket, but in this moment, the sun hot on my bare shoulders, I feel a happiness as simple and pure as that child’s laughter. I feel awe. I feel whole.

Madeline grabs my hand in hers. Her brown eyes are alight with excitement and triumph: miles away our peers are curled over laptops in the library, and we have this. Gratitude for the grinning woman beside me courses through me and I squeeze her fingers.

I look up and realize that all the other visitors are left. We could be the last people on earth, the two of us on a mission to see every waterfall, climb every mountain, swim in every ocean. A lifetime of days like this.

“I want to get in,” I say, realizing only as the words leave my lips how true it is. Seeing the falls is not enough. I want to touch them.

I abandon my clothes on a log and jump into the pool at the base of the falls, bare-assed and thrilled, before I have a chance to think about it. She shrieks with delight. More than anything else, my friend loves a rule breaker.

The water is a slap to the face, breathtakingly cold. It is harsh and clarifying. I am electrified. This waterfall wakes me up in one moment.

How long, I wonder, have I been sleeping?

A happy yell bubbles from my chest and disappears into the constant roar of the falls. For us, this day will become friendship legend: the day of the naked waterfall swim. But in the lifetime of this place, our visit is a fraction of a moment, one memory imprinted onto the sunny rocks among thousands of others. Road-tripping families, lovers, the very young and the very old. And two women on the cusp of who they will become, playing like children on the first real day of summer.

I think of all the lives it has touched, how many other hearts must have soared here, and laugh long and deep.
GOOD POETS ARE JUST GOOD MAGICIANS
aidan regan

Sometimes dreams fall out of your mouth like knocked out teeth, scattered and spit in syllables left stranded, left to be repieced together by a pair of unfamiliar hands long after.

Something’s caught tight between the voice you should have and the language you do. “That’s normal,” says language. “Is it true we used to speak like songbirds?” wonders voice.

Someone you hadn’t met yet sensed you coming, heard your footfalls (which speak louder than you do anyway). Even when your feet say “um” and “like” their message is clear as day.

Somehow we hear you over the sound of your own voice. The bottle is carried to shore, and that’s more of a message than the one it contains. It’s enough to be carried. It’s enough to listen.
Perched on my dresser sits a jar of ink black sky swirling with stars illuminated by the light of the moon. Beside it, a bottle of sunbeams and cumulonimbus clouds. A pod of whales swim in a glass of water on the nightstand beneath a bouquet of blooming cherry blossom trees. Jackets hang off hooks in the closet pockets still stuffed with the aroma of fresh brewed coffee and handfuls of contagious laughter. The bed is covered in rumpled rolling green hillsides and snowy mountain peaks. The drawers in the desk are crammed with scraggly paint brushes, pencils worn down to the nub, fragments of old conversations, discarded lines of poetry, and little parcels of kind words packed away for a rainy day. Rainy days themselves are stuffed into mugs at the back of the kitchen cabinet along with the coziest blankets and the best books. Strewn across the tabletop, seashells and sand dollars sit, saltwater soaking the carpet below. The couch is crusted in dandelion tufts waiting for a wayward summer breeze to spread their wishes on beyond the door stained with goodbyes, beyond the walls papered in memories.
PREQUEL TO A LOVE STORY: HAIR
sara salgado

all the while ear-tip burnt &
bent-locked in iron

it will shine more this way
this is the way,
doll-brain, baby-face
mira mija, good hair
good hold on chair

all the freckled-kissed boys at school
would love this

they wanna see how low my volume can be
heats it so compact,
my crying curl my crying girl

all coil together
burn over loyal
smoke is the color of my mother too
thought 350 was just oven cook
snake down a kink smooth crook
selected works

FOR THE LOVE OF ORCHIDS
lauren knox

CONSECRATION
sam kaplan

THIS IS MY FINAL DESTINATION
yuki morgan

Selected for their strength as works of art, both in craftmanship and insight, the following pieces are explored by Puget Sound faculty to exhibit their depth and recognize their achievement.
In Lauren Knox’s painting, “For the Love of Orchids,” the traditional subject matter of flowers is approached with an innovative and unfamiliar perspective that breathes new life into the tradition of the still-life as much as it does into the vibrant orchids portrayed on the canvas. Painted with a starkly dark background, the flowering orchids jump off of the canvas with vibrant illumination. Ideas of abundance, beauty, and pollination are some of the first to come to mind.

Further investigation leads the viewer to realize that the orchids are growing up and out of an anatomically accurate human heart; very much tied to the theme of love. More interestingly, though, is how the flowers’ roots have become the veins of the heart as if everything has been morphed or mutated into one hybrid organism. The blending of plant and animal recalls our connection to the natural world with surreal accuracy, delicacy, and allure.

The choice of orchids is an important one. The majority of orchids are perennial epiphytes, plants that grow anchored to different species of trees or shrubs, and all orchids are myco-heterotrophic, relying on the parasitism of fungi during germination, seedling growth, and sometimes throughout adulthood. The symbiotic and parasitic nature of orchids brings an interesting skew to the symbolism in the painting. The flowers, detailed with expert brushstrokes and color, are blooming, healthy, and resonating, which brings to question how they might be obtaining nutrients and nourishment in this hypnagogic illusion.
the boy gasps for breath as he reaches the top of the steep stairs behind his nonna’s house. he sprints away, renewed, his sandals slapping on the cobblestones, warm in the marbled sunlight that follows him as he turns a corner—

he stops short. ten paces before him stands a tree, a juniper, with blue-green spines and a trunk so perfectly straight as to have been stretched from a seed by God’s own hand.

beside the tree rests a bench, a wrought iron creature in a battle with the upturned stones trapped beneath the tree’s powerful roots which lie, coiled, like a rusted chain around the ankle of an ancient prisoner.

reverence overtakes the boy and he steps across the uneven pathway toward the tree’s low-hanging branches that sway kindly in the autumn breeze, a breeze that tousles the boy’s dark curls as his mama used to.

the church bell rings, as it has every hour of the boy’s short life, but he does not hear it; how could he?—he has stepped into a dream, a haven, lightly scented with juniper and framed in the afternoon sun.

How do we locate transcendent meaning within the physical world? This question is an immense one, to be sure, and that it lies at the heart of Sam Kaplan’s “consecration” says something about the poem’s ambition. As with many poems that engage capacious ideas effectively, “consecration” does so through its focus on particularities—in this case, the juniper tree, wrought iron bench, and partially unearthed stones that its young subject apprehends. Whether the boy has lost his mother or whether he has simply outgrown her tousling of his hair is left unsaid, but when we meet him he is running to his nonna’s. Stunned by its form and color, the running boy halts before a skyward-reaching juniper, but the bench and rocks make equal claims on his attention. The bench is a “creature / in battle” with the stones, which are trapped by the juniper’s roots “like a rusted chain / around the ankle of an ancient prisoner.” Coupled with the Mediterranean setting, these lines recall figures from Greek mythology who were chained to rocks in jealous punishment by the gods: Prometheus, for bringing fire to humankind; and Andromeda, for her vain mother’s boasting. Both figures would be rescued, Prometheus by Heracles (though not before an eagle ate his liver daily for a near eternity), and Andromeda by Perseus (saving her from the sea monster Cetus). Though the juniper roots first seem the chain and animate bench the monster, that stones should be captive and bench forged of iron enacts a series of reversals in which the poem’s syntax evades neat allegory. Instead, we are left with an image of the boy contemplating this abutment of natural and built environments, an arriving hero charmed to worship by juniper spire and iron pew entangled in rock more venerable than that on which the Christian church is built.
The village is so remote it has a single stop along the north most train line all to itself. The train is an old, deep brown and carries as much freight as it does people, which is not much to begin with. You can watch the suburbs devour the city, rural towns devour those, and then finally come the swaths of field so large, your gaze wanders from the window to your lap before one ends and another begins. The train will slow to a grating stop before a lonely outpost, seemingly in the middle of nothing but a strip of green and, beyond that, a larger strip of blue. There is much field to pass before you reach my village, but friendly farmers and their curious children will point you in the right direction. When dirt paths become riddled with stones, you have reached it. You will pass below the entrance, a torii so weather-beaten its twin posts have been bleached white, you will meet rows of roofs so thickly thatched they stoop low over their walls, and at last you will reach the rocky shore. There you will see, quite distinctly, the sidewalk that leads directly into the sea.

Some think it is a remnant of a failed civilization, like the ones textbooks tell our children about: that the ocean swallowed in shame. Others scoff and say it’s a project long abandoned by the gods or a structure the government ran out of funding for. The stories turn over like leaves at the first bustle of feet, new pairs of which come steadily through March and April and get chased away by the mid-June rain. By then some villager’s aunt or son has died or remarried or gone missing; these new stories rise like the watertable and stick like the slick, inescapable sweat. During these times, the sidewalk is left to itself. But not for long.

By September, the heavy heat grows bored of us and decides to flatten some other latitude. This is when I get up, gasping, and pack my bags for the 15 hour flight to Washington. I do not know what becomes of the sidewalk then because mother and father tell me nothing about the town while I am gone. They feel less alone this way, they say, like they’ll blink and suddenly I’ll be back. When I finally free myself from the plane cabin, make the two bus and three train transfers, and step down beside the overgrown bench and rusted sign reading Umisoto, they are there to bring me home. Over plates of sugar-cake and mochi, they prod me with questions, scowling at my short responses. I’ve been at school all year, I laugh. What I want most is their news, which they know, and they dart past my diversions like koi. At last, their dam breaks. Their stories descend upon me. The rice crop was a little less this year than the last, which will do, mother’s in-house sewing business took off better than expected, the foreigners this year wore exceptionally wonderful noses, did I hear about Michiko-chan eloping with that girl from the village to the north? Their voices quench my thirst better than the tea in my hands. Eat, drink, they urge me, and I do so they will continue.

It is early morning. Father’s eyebrows had knit together the way they do when he is willing to humor my request, but not until mother has left the room. That was answer enough for both of us. The engine has been broken for many years so I must paddle with sturdy, heavy strokes from the stern. I pause for every stick and leaf and patch of algae. I hold them in my hand and match them to their place of origin along the shore. Why I do this, I am not sure. No matter how I get there, the fishermen will see. Soon everyone will know. Hanazaki-san’s boat was in a new place today. At noon. Isn’t that the family whose daughter left us? For Washington? Yes, that’s the one.

Father was hesitant to let me borrow his boat, even after I told him I’d joined the university sailing club. I’m sure he still remembers. I was five when I fell overboard. My nails left behind gouges the length and
shape of spider’s legs in the railing. There was a tremendous crash as the surface shattered around me and pulled me down as hands above dragged me up and I thrashed blindly because I did not know which to trust. All of my senses began to close: my ears, my nose. Something sparkled in front of my eyelids, distracting me from my panic. I opened them unthinkingly. A fluted silver roof hung with rust and moss shone inches from my feet. It had four triangular panels, two long and two short, each across from one another, that sloped generously into a pronounced flare at its edges. They were joined at the top by a figure the size of my fist, which I squished my face up as small as possible in an attempt to view it in detail. My toes patted gently upon the worn metal and the tug-of-war jerked in my father’s favor. I was on my back at the bottom of the boat, coughing and sputtering, as father gunned the then-living motor back to shore. Yane, I blurted between mouthfuls of water. Father could not hear me until breakfast the following morning, by which time he would not hear me. Eat your rice, he muttered, slamming his cup down as mother frowned.

Michiko wanted to know what happened the moment third period ended that day. I told her I fell and nothing more.

I stab the paddle into the water and the boat swirls to a stop. It drifts perfectly in line with the sidewalk, a tan square connecting the water to the ink-colored boulders guarding the shore. I am near the place we had been when I fell, I am sure. Picking up the black-and-grey stone tied with braided twine beside me, I check it is securely attached to the boat’s hull. Then I drop it into the water, plunging in with it.

Undersea, light filters through the waves as they do on golden evenings. The anchor charges past me, its string grazing my elbow, as I stare directly ahead of me. My feet are planted on the same silver fluted roof. Patches of moss cling to it desperately, and it is brown and clumpy instead of green and soft. I walk towards the center of the roof panels, where they meet at a metal figurine. The water pats my face and arms and tugs the hem of my dress. The figurine is starfish-shaped, I realize, reaching out to caress the smooth metal arms.

Returning to the roof’s edge, I hedge a glance at the seafloor. It is fine sand a few shades lighter than the glowing aqua stroking my face and shoulders. I leap, pushing off the roof, and the water-hands’ touch quickens as the roof complains metallically. My landing is gentle and calls up barely a puff of sand. From this new angle, I now see the roofed building for what it is: a train station. A cracked, weary bench sits inside its three walls. The fourth is open, facing a line of tracks running off into the distance in either direction. There, running between the tracks and the bench, is the sidewalk. It looks the same as it does on land: out of place.

Suddenly, I recall that I need to breathe.

There is no pain, however. My chest is as still as my heart is quiet. My senses are alert and functional. I hear the soft puff my steps make as I walk to the bench. I feel the water swirl around my dress as I tuck it under me to sit down. A light taste of salt coats my throat. Glancing up, beyond the overhang of moss along the roof, light glitters and spins in jagged circles. It is tranquil here. It is alive. It is beautiful.

Kicking my legs back and forth beneath me like a child, I wait for the train. My heel bumps something. I turn, surprised. It is an ivory rock the size of my palm. There’s another one behind it. Piles more lie behind them. I reach for the one I bumped. Tiny holes cover its surface—no, tiny lines. The rock is made of layers and layers of them, forming a spidery lattice. Some of the others have thicker layers surrounding them. They look like the pumice father would bring home, several each for mother and me. But these don’t float like father’s did.

I slide off the bench and onto the station floor, scooping piles of
these strange rocks into my skirt. I arrange them into shapes, first on the ground, and then on top of one another. The sea tips them over playfully and scatters my designs apart. That makes me smile.

This is the longest I have ever waited for anything, I am sure, and I still feel so perfectly at ease. I am certain the train is coming for me. It will take me back to Washington, where I show my geology professor the pumice. I will check out books from the library about Japanese industry. I have a hunch about the sidewalk’s origin now. The evidence is all around me. Volcanic eruptions and rising sea levels must have reclaimed this place. It is not a divine project, no do its plans sit in some government bureau. It was simply forgotten.

I will bring the true story home. I will turn the others into mist. I will give this old town something real to whisper about, once that train.

PROSE REVIEW
professor mike benveniste

Yuki Morgan’s “This is My final Destination” is a spare, gemlike piece, characterized by an evocative reticence. I might call it crystalline fiction. Throughout, the piece is organized around the wistful, perhaps apocalyptic image of “the sidewalk that leads directly into the sea.” That image – elaborated, more fully, in the sub-aquatic conclusion – permits the story to oscillate between the fantastic and the quotidian, and evokes the narrative enchantment of films like La Maison en Petites Cubes, the concision of imagist poetry, and our Anthropocene futures; but also remarking, less grandly, on the uncanniness of simply being home.

On its surface the story recounts little: a memory, an imminent departure, a boat trip. But these are conjured like a half-remembered childhood dream, full of portent and foreclosed possibility. The narrator’s recollection of a brief fall into the neighboring sea functions not only as a memory of angst, but as a trace of the un-glimpsed, though she “squished [her] face up as small as possible in an attempt to view it in detail,” as the “silver roof hung with rust and moss shone inches from my feet.” Inches, once, but a now an impossible distance. This space between the half glimpsed and its revelation, in the story, is the space of waiting. Waiting for an arrival or a departure, this waiting becomes a suspension between two states, between now and then, who we were and will be. But in this suspension, there is something else – possibility, who we could, or might yet, be. And this is the space that the story as a whole so delightfully occupies, and literalizes at its close. Near the end of the narrative, in anticipation of her return to Washington, our narrator explores the submarine sidewalk and its adjoining underwater train station, musing on what has become visible from “this new angle,” dislocated spatially and temporally.”Facing a line of tracks running off into the distance in either direction,” she decides to wait. The story, indeed, dwells thematically, dramatically, and generically between a world that is thoroughly known and it’s uncanny other. This waiting, this interstitial space between fantasy and the quotidian, this unforeclosed future – “it is alive. It is beautiful.”
STORM
emily harman

you tried
to hold the sky
to touch the blue gray clouds
the wind inside my twisted veins

your fingertips traced my thundercloud skin
like you could find shelter beneath my ribcage
just under my swollen heartbeat
between the bruises lining my thighs

and my shivering teeth pressed
against the warm blush
of your lips

I wish that I bled water instead
of words
She refuses to cut basil flowers because they are beautiful, but all beauty self-destructs and the basil leaves must die if flowers are allowed to grow.

Conflicting roots tangle inside her lungs until the capillaries in her wrists turn green, threatening to burst from her fingertips, reaching down. She is a force to be feared, not reckoned.

Scattered ceramic pots may hold her labors but never her uncontainable roots. Windowsill succulent leaves, like her pupils, are ever-expanding spirals, pulling me in, a fly trap, a sweet prison.

She may be beauty, but she is raging light, blinding and searing the evergreen moss. Spreading an ivy as soft as rose petals until it is too late to let go of the poison.
I was gutted and mystified
Seeing pixels arranged to look like
My parents, twenty-three years old.
Her voice, inherited by my vocal chords,
His hands, attached to my wrists.

She bursts with affection
“His gift was the ring, lapis lazuli.”
He replies, laugh of sterling silver.
This youthful joy untouched by blur of alcohol,
For on that celebration of her birth, she learned
My brother grew in her.

Three years estranged,
While my father and I watch her live through me.
His malachite spirit solemnly
Hardened over the abandonment,
Makes tarnished circles of his life.
Love looks like mistakes looks like
Diamonds thrown out car windows looks like
His hands on my wrists
Adorned with the gift, turquoise and a silver band.
Jacob’s always meanest on Easter morning. Bigger, stronger, smarter, he finds all the backyard eggs first, hoards them in his blue basket, laughs when I ask to share. I learned last year that it’s better not to cry: Mom believes in unfair and I can see her standing in the kitchen now, ready to enforce it with a wet towel, a cigarette dangling between her lips to show she means business.

Jacob says that girls shouldn’t eat candy, anyways: all their hair will fall out and they’ll warp like an orange shriveled on the counter, like Mom, disappearing inside loose skin and fierce addiction, to nicotine and to men. He says these habits can’t be kept by real women, and I know he means the ones in the magazines stuffed under his mattress that he won’t let me touch.

But sometimes he forgets I’m a girl and he shows me the fastest route up the cottonwood in Ms. Sandy’s front yard; he pulls me out into thunderstorms and covers my face with mud and teaches me to beat my chest like Tarzan, strong and proud and alive; he takes me to the tunnel under the highway and shows me how he can write his name in pee on the concrete, makes no comment about my inability to do the same. We admire the graffiti along the walls and make plans for its elaboration once he figures out how to buy paint.

This year, Jacob eats all the Easter candy in front of me. He turns each jelly bean over in his mouth, frozen in staged concentration, then yells out the flavor and moves on to the next. He eats each chocolate in one hasty bite, barely pausing to tear off the foil, which he crumuples and drops to our bedroom floor, triumphant in his mess-making.

Later that night, after he turns off his reading light and falls silent in the top bunk, I slip from my bed below him and collect the wrappers from the floor, take them into the bathroom and smooth them carefully against the cool porcelain of the sink’s edge until the chipped squares reflect the weak fluorescents. I lay each one out on the cold tile floor in a tinny mosaic, a fragmented quilt. I then hide them in the back corner of the toothbrush drawer, stacked on top of last Christmas’s collection, the secret of them sweeter than all the bubble gum jelly beans in the bag.
Worms have five hearts,  
and we still think we know  
something about love.  
I’ve been sacrificing to worms,  
but most love notes end up in landfills,  
while the worms in my garden grow fat  
off of a diet of love letters  
spelled out in unapologetic clichés.  
Worms know how to make something  
pretty out of words.  

Don’t pity the worm that even when cut in half  
writhes until it forms a grave  
so it too can decompose.  
Nor the worm, stranded on sidewalk,  
who still knows enlightenment  
doesn’t come from the sky.  

Lay me to rest among the worms.  
Let them dine on my body  
and turn me to roses, and  
may no one be tricked  
by the pricks on my spine,  

Salvation, at last!
You make flowers bloom on windowsills
in the middle of a storm;
all the water they drink
will be poured by your gently cradled fingers
shining like gold in midday summer heat.
You create life
from water and wishful thinking,
and the newborn souls will soar like clouds
on the winds of every breath you take.
You will miss them in the sky,
as mothers often do. Nevertheless,
you will hum your lullabies
as the night sky strikes
and receive love cast down in the form of April showers,
so all your rivers stay plentiful
and your greens ever growing.
about the cover artist

SOPHIA MUNIC

Sophia Munic is an print maker fascinated with how to apply traditional printmaking techniques to sculpture and collage. Her recent work focuses on translating simple shapes from two dimensional images and incorporating them into sculptures, investigating how this change in dimension alters the image itself. She is intrigued by the properties of color and how they can alter an object. Even when a piece is abstract, color can describe the work itself.

When she is not working on sculpture she layers her screen prints onto old drawings to see how one print can transform an old drawing. She often uses this method to explore her intrigue with selfie culture and individuality. The cover is an edited version of a print of her original illustration “Stuck Between Two Lovers.”

Find more of her work at sophiamunic.com