

genesis

literary & art magazine
volume fifty issue two
fall 2021

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Letter from the Editors

We are thrilled to present this issue of the *genesis* magazine. *genesis* has been publishing student work since 1972 and is entirely selected, designed, and edited by dedicated IUPUI editors. This issue is filled with artists and writers exploring form, delving into immersive topics like death and fantasy, and appreciating the intimately human moments of daily life. Some are joining the discussion of art and literature that has been going on for centuries with ancient Greek and biblical allusions while others are creating entirely in the contemporary moment. All of the pieces offer vulnerability and creativity, and we are proud to share them in this issue.

We would like to thank our editors and apprentices, who have adjusted back to in-person work with understanding and enthusiasm, our faculty advisor Sarah Layden, who is always a patient guide, and our contributors, who are the heart of this issue. We are also thankful for each reader and hope that you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed making it.

Abby & Zoe
Managing Editors

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Birdwatching

Siren Hand

Morning coffee as normal.

I divide my front window into tic-tac-toe grid,
into nine-section,
into phone keypad.

It's easier for me that way,
to map how the birds come and go
free-form Patterns of Flight.

Take this, the case study—

At 11:37 (Local time):

one adult male sparrow darts
from Northwest Field of View (Keypad 1)
to sundeck feeder (Keypad 5), squabbles with
two already-present adult male sparrows over seed.
They peck at each other for greeting,
establish their status,
take freely from what's allowed.

Also 11:37 (Local time):

four adult female finches,
seven Adult male sparrows,
three adult male starlings
(all)
dig at the ground (Keypad 8),
scramble for the yield of another's destruction.
Seed spills from the feeder (Keypad 5 to Keypad 8).

At 1139 (Local):

two adult cardinals fly from east Field of View
mill at the Woodpecker feeder (KP6).

At 1139 (L):

two adult chipping finches hop along the path
from North FOV,
upset the whole roll-up in KP8.

At 1139L:

one military-aged male
–no, sorry, correction–
one adult male cowbird
glides from SE FOV
to ground food at KP8.

At 1139L:

one adult male sparrow departs from KP5,
to KP3
out of NE FOV.

1140L: their activity continues,
Nothing Significant to Report.

1141L: activity continues,
Nothing Significant to Report.

1142L: NSTR.

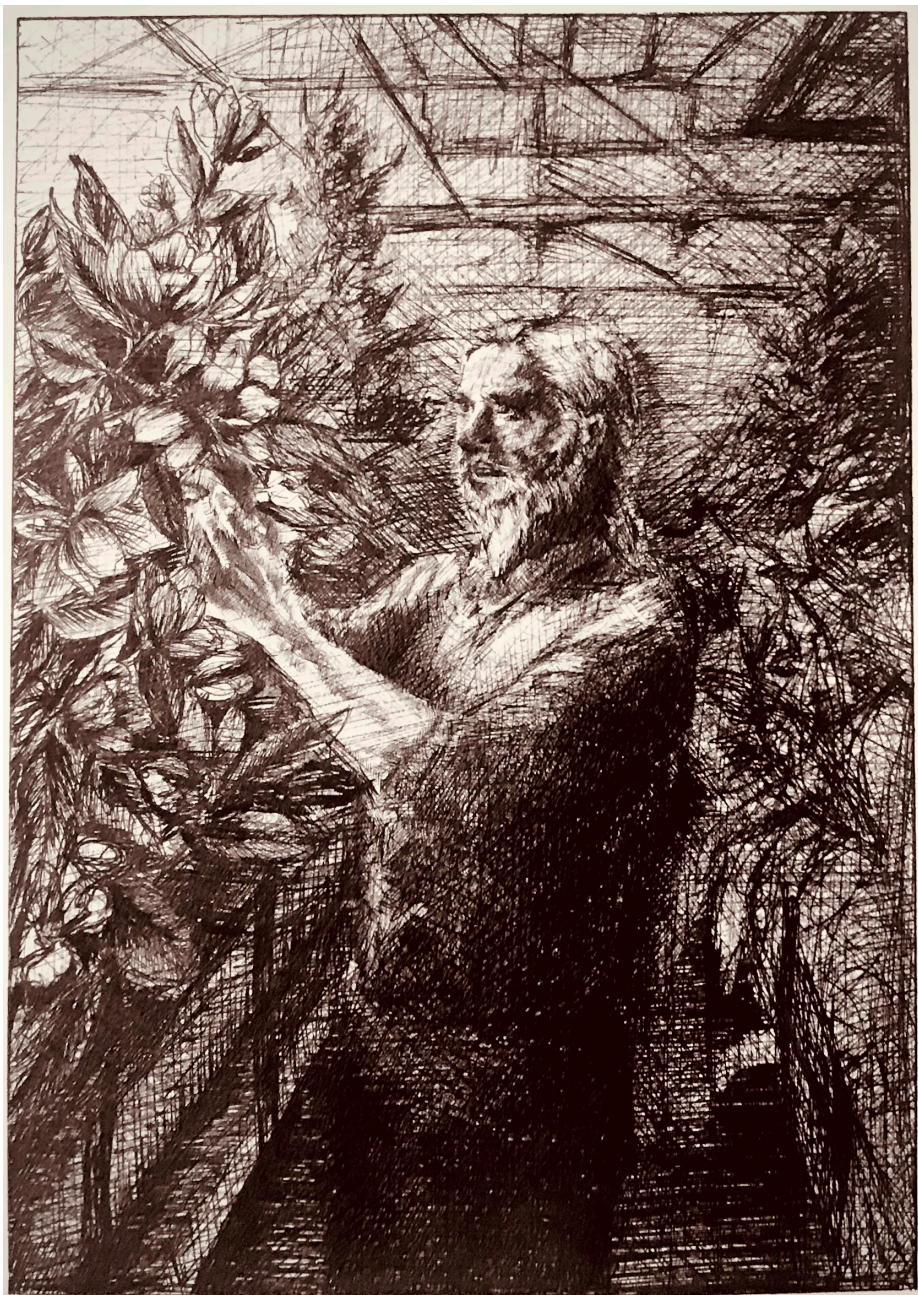
1143L: my dog blitzes,
tumbles in froth-mouthed uninvited explosion,
deepest joy at sunlight-scattered colors–
no soul left in aftershock
still.

How long does one watch after the upset,
wait for destruction reset
for no trace
for next pattern
for life to return to normal?

If I wait
watch, perhaps

I'll see Bright Boy—
slim cardinal, not yet witness to how
his body will shimmer,
will scatter in the sun
will form both
fountain and
firework.

I divide my front window into tic-tac-toe grid,
into nine-section,
into phone keypad.
It's easier for me that way,
to sit:
still
watching
waiting
wondering
if they'll all ever come back.



The Vine Grower

Louisa Coello

Graphite and ink on paper, 8"x10"



Storge

Louisa Coello

Graphite on paper with digital color, 11"x14"



Alive

Megan Vogeler

Oil paint and sawdust on stretched canvas, 18"x24"

Fungal Body

Thalia McIntire

Maybe I should embrace the black mold.
lean into it, you know,
Allow it to the point where looking at me induces nausea.
Let any eyes that lay upon me
be glazed over with gray lichen
in punishment for their crime.
I could be a home for so much life,
the spores in my lungs that wheeze when I speak,
the worms boring holes beyond my eye sockets,
the rats and rodents carving out a den in my abdomen.
A corvid could make a nest in the space where my heart used to beat.
I could be a walking reminder of mortality.



Parking Garage Dream

Emma Schwartz

Oil on canvas, 30"x40"



Herbie Sits in a Field for 10 Years

Mason Runkel
Digital Photograph



Reality Built

Megan Vogeler

Oil on stretched canvas, 30"x40"

There Were 87 Work-Related Real Estate Deaths in 2019

Corlan McCollum

You walk into a room, and there's a pony and a man who's clearly been trampled to death, bled out in the corner. You assume the pony did it, but it's a small room in a regular house, and the door wasn't blocked, and the pony doesn't look very aggressive or even very big. The dude could've gotten out, probably. But holy shit, there's a dead body, and you were just trying to get this house ready to show to this young couple looking for a starter home, and they didn't sign up for this! You didn't sign up for this! So you take the rug out of the living room and roll up the body, and the entire time you've got this pony breathing down your neck. How did a pony get here? Who even is this guy? So you unroll the rug and check his pockets, which are empty, except for a few dog treats. All that for nothing. You give the treats to the pony, because you don't know, maybe they like them. It seems like it does. So you roll the body back up, drag it to the backyard, and put it in the shed. The pony follows you out, expecting more treats, but not being too forward about it. This horse is so chill, you think, there's no way it could've killed this dude. You can't have this pony following you around while you try to show the house, though, so you lock it in the shed with the body. Then you go and clean up the blood and hoof prints just in time for the buyers to arrive, and the first thing they do is comment on how they'll have to get a rug for the living room. You laugh at that a bit, and they ask you what's so funny. You don't know, so you tell them that there's one in the shed, but they'll have to wait until someone comes and changes the lock because the current owners lost the key. So you take them around the house, and they think it's charming. And you come to the room that you found the pony in, and there's nothing special about it, and the couple is planning to use it as an office, or a nursery maybe.

And then as you're all walking back into the living room, and they're all excited about buying, you hear a wood door cracking outside and the bray of an unbridled and bloodthirsty pony charging out of the shed. You run to the back door, a sliding glass door that leads out onto the back deck, and you see the rug has fallen out of the shed and unrolled to expose the corpse to the world. And the beast is lined up with you, kicking the earth, preparing to charge. So you think to yourself, *Oh, it was probably the treats*, and the pony bursts through the glass and rams into you, sending you flying across the room and you break your spine when you hit the wall and die instantly.

Fantasyland

Emma Yuan Fecteau

“Jia raised her metal fans and a windstorm of flames erupted around Lord Ren, engulfing the once proud northern invader. He screamed as he died, clawing at the flames that blistered his skin. She did not turn away until the dark lord fell to the ground with a thud. The war was over, and the pyromancers of Kai’an were safe at last.”

-Warrior of Fire by Lianna Chen

As a general rule, main characters possess a great deal of luck. Jia was no exception.

Her luck began with her beauty, milk skin that never blemished and hair that never tangled and black eyes that could enchant the heart of any man. On the battlefield, when her enemies sent thousands of flaming arrows in her direction, she would emerge unscathed. Soldiers who dared to oppose Jia always attacked one at a time and were tripped by suddenly appearing holes or blinded by convenient rays of sunlight. In fact, it was common knowledge that any opponent who had the misfortune of encountering Jia on the field ought to run in the opposite direction. The reason was simple: Jia was Lianna’s main character, and even the most skillful of enemies were no match for the power of a writer’s pen.

Over two years had passed since Lianna Chen had finished Jia’s story for good. The northern invaders were defeated, and the remaining soldiers from Lord Ren’s dark armies rotted away in dungeon cells. Jia now tottered on the tallest roof in the District of Pearls. The sunbaked tiles felt warm beneath her cloth slippers. There was a swift snapping sound as she opened two fans, one balanced in either hand. The sleeves of her black hanfu billowed around her, giving her the appearance of an eager crow. From her vantage point, Jia could survey the city for miles.

Lianna Chen was fascinated by ancient cultures, and the world she’d created reflected that. Anjiang, the capital of Kai’an, was built into the sloped shoulder of a yellow mountain, with a peak that scraped the orange sun. Wood-thatched slums retreated towards the tumbling waters of the Xianhe River, while others disappeared among the red pines of the Weida Forest. The Lotus Palace was built into a cliffside at the highest point in the city and cast a creeping shadow over the lesser dwellings. Few knew the true measure of its size and grandeur, though Jia had dined with Emperor Ming himself on many occasions.

“How do you know Lord Yan is coming this way?” asked Shen, who

crouched beside her. His own fans were tucked neatly into his billowing sleeves, and his lined face was fixed into a permanent frown. He wore his gray hair drawn into a too-tight knot, which gave his face an eternally strained appearance. “There are dozens of paths from the hatchery, he might’ve taken any of them.”

“I can sense it,” said Jia.

“How?” Bo snorted. He was the last of Jia’s rooftop comrades. Nineteen and bulky, his own two fans were dwarfed by the size of his massive fists. There was an impish grin on his broad face, the look of a boy who beckoned trouble.

“Trust me,” said Jia. “And if you can’t trust me, trust Lianna. My writer still guides me.” It was true. She felt drawn to this narrow road, though it wasn’t any different than any other in Lower Anjiang. Peasant women peddled carts of apples and persimmons, a trio of elderly men hauled jars of water from the well on the street corner, and barefooted children ran from door to door trying not to get underfoot. The establishment where they were perched was an old bath house whose patrons were prone to carelessness where clothing was concerned.

Minutes passed while the three pyromancers baked beneath the unwavering sun. Shen remained still. Jia placed one fan between her teeth to free her left hand, which she used to wipe wisps of sweaty hair from her forehead. Bo took out his mobile cell phone and began to text.

“Please tell me why you insist on bringing that accursed artifact everywhere?” grumbled Shen.

“Relax,” said Bo. “I’m just letting my friend know I’ll be a bit late for dinner. He’ll get worried if I don’t call.”

“Our ancestors have used Kai’anese carrier pigeons for generations.” The lines on Shen’s forehead tripled as he spoke. “This generation has no respect for old traditions.”

Bo smacked at the device, and Jia saw the screen had gone dark. “The internet service is so awful here. I bet this never happens in other realms.”

“Other realms are not our concern.” Shen’s eyebrows, which resembled rain clouds, had disappeared into his hair. “Lianna built a beautiful ancient world for us. Shouldn’t we fight to preserve what she created rather than trying to change it?”

Bo shrugged. “We only have to preserve our world if Lianna’s writing a sequel, and *Warrior of Fire*’s been finished for over two years now. Which is a shame, really. I always hoped she’d make me the main character of her next book. No offense, Jia, but you have to admit I do provide a certain comedic appeal. Perhaps I ought to cross the Fourth Wall and sell Lianna on the idea myself.”

“No fictional character has left Fantasyland for years,” said Shen. “Besides, you wouldn’t last five minutes in the Realworld.”

“I’d last longer than you—”

“He is here,” interrupted Jia.

Shen and Bo fell silent. On the dirt path far below, four soldiers marched alongside a horse-drawn carriage. They wore only leather breastplates and shoulderpads over their black hanfus. The red feathers sticking from their caps bounced with each step. They were household guards, Jia guessed, hired to protect a lord who was rich enough to afford them but not important enough to justify a royal escort. No match for three seasoned pyromancers.

“This should be quick,” Shen began. “We have the advantage of surprise. I’ll take care of the two in front. Jia, you aim for the—”

A garish tune erupted from Bo’s cellphone, a modern jingle that sounded out of place among the bustling streets of Lower Anjiang. The people below, peasants and guards alike, all looked up.

“Now!” Jia shrieked.

She sprang down from her perch and crashed down onto the nearest soldier. He crumpled beneath her and groped for his fallen spear. Jia knocked him senseless against the side of the lacquered carriage. The soldier ahead of her unsheathed his sword, but before he could advance, Jia swung her fan in an arc. Orange flames burst from the silk tips and flared outwards. The maneuver merely singed the guard’s silk robes. The young guard’s pimpled face stretched wide as he recognized her, and he was on his knees in an instant.

“Spare me, Lady Jia! Begging your pardon a thousand, thousand times.”

More flames flashed from Bo and Shen’s fans; they made quick work of the remaining guards while Jia pulled the carriage door open. A lord quivered within, stinking of sweat and silk. His watery eyes were stretched wide.

“What are *you* doing here?” he squealed.

“Did you think I wouldn’t find the man who stole from my sister?” Jia demanded. “You’ll need to find another way to pay off your bad debts, Lord Yan. Now tell me where it is.”

Lord Yan’s round face turned a brilliant shade of red, and Jia was reminded of the lanterns that decorated the District of Pearls. As he stood, the top of his balding head brushed the padded ceiling. He lifted his seat to reveal a hidden compartment, where a quaking sound came from within. The bird fluttered its gold-tipped feathers and fixed Jia with two pearly ochre eyes. In their depths, Jia

detected a strange wisdom that surpassed lesser animals.

Shen pulled the disgraced lord from the carriage while Jia lifted the goose out of the carriage. Lord Yan's youngest guard was still apologizing profusely.

"Talk about a wild goose chase," said Bo.

"Comedic appeal," Shen scoffed. "As if!"

Lord Yan's beady eyes were trained on the animal in Jia's arms. "How did you know where to find me? Does the House of Everburning Flames have spies in their employment now? What foul modern devices do you possess?"

Just Lianna's luck, Jia thought.

"Regarding foul modern devices." Shen glared at Bo. "Next time you're on an important stealth mission, I suggest you silence your phone."

...

Hours later, Jia brooded over one of many balconies that protruded from the stately manors in the District of Pearls.

"So this is what great heroes do when their stories have ended," said Mei. Jia's sister was a thin woman, with glittering black eyes and a face rounder and paler than a full moon. "I never imagined I'd witness the savior of Kai'an staging an ambush for a goose thief."

Jia withdrew from the balcony and into her room. Flames burned in braziers at every corner, as they did all over Jia's manor. The estate was the ancestral home of a treasonous lord, granted to her by the Emperor himself after Lord Ren's defeat. It was a far cry from the filthy orphanage of her childhood. Halls of vermilion timber posts led to spare bedrooms, libraries filled with dusted scrolls, and luxurious lounges. Jia's bed was so massive that a family of seven could've laid side by side. A steamed bath filled with lotus petals seethed in the corner, guarded by two stone lions. Wooden lattice windows lined each wall, tinted red by the lanterns that glowed in the streets beyond.

"The city watch already knew," said Mei. She was heating up an ancient teapot in a microwave. "They were waiting at Lord Yan's house to arrest him. Your interference was unnecessary, as it is often these days. But you already knew that. You just wanted to take the credit. Song Jia, savior of Kai'an, the guardian of geese. The defender of ducks. You must be very proud."

"You should be thanking me." Jia settled on the sprawling bed. "The eggs

of golden geese are more valuable than any other export in Anjiang, and we both know that a dozen members of the City Watch aren't equal to a fully-trained pyromancer."

"Perhaps." Mei removed the teapot from the microwave, dipped her finger in the water, shook her head, and then placed it back inside. She watched the teapot rotating through the window like a giddy toddler.

"Try not to blow this one up, will you? Putting out fires is much harder than starting them."

"It's not as if we can't afford it," said Mei. "We are fortunate that the foreign realms love our golden eggs."

The microwave wasn't the only modern appliance in the house. Jia still did a double take whenever she saw the washers and dryers in her bathroom, and their stainless steel refrigerator never looked quite right in the traditional kitchen no matter where they moved it. Mei was head of the Royal Hatchery which bred golden geese for the Emperor. The foreign realms of Chicago and Cedarbrooke were always happy to trade modern appliances for rare Kai'anese gold.

Mei lifted the jade teapot and poured two cups. "Admit it, you just like showing off."

Jia placed one hand over her chest. "Me? Never."

"Lianna Chen isn't coming back. She isn't writing another book. Your adventures are over, Jia."

"I don't have your talent for calligraphy or silkweaving or tea making." Jia pulled away her silk hair ribbon, and a curtain of dark hair tumbled to her waist. "Protecting people is the only thing I know how to do."

"Which is precisely why you should join the Council of Heroes."

At once, Jia became fixated on unwinding her braids.

"I know their laws," her sister continued. "You're of age now."

"We've been through this," said Jia, as she dragged a bamboo comb through her scalp. The tresses parted without interruption, as always.

"There are ninety-nine realms in Fantasyland. Haven't you always wanted to see the City of Valor and the Fourth Wall?"

Jia shrugged. "Why should I? I like my life here."

"You just like being special." Mei set a cup of tea beside her. "You like being the only one around here who can do any good. What have you actually done since Lord Ren was defeated?"

“You never know when there could be another invasion.” Jia put the comb aside. “People around here like feeling protected, and I like protecting them. It’s a mutually beneficial relationship.”

Mei stood, and her silver hanfu rippled. A butterfly pin, their mother’s, held her hair in its complex updo. “You’re already a hero, Jia. You don’t have to keep proving it to all of us. But beyond the borders of Kai’an there are at least ninety-eight other main characters in Fantasyland with stories of their own, and most of them are training in the City of Valor. Imagine what you could learn from them! But as I said, you like being special. You like being the only main character around. It makes you feel better about the fact that you have no purpose anymore.”

Jia sipped the tea. “You’ve added too much water, Mei. This batch is bland.”

“I know you, Jia. You only insult me when you know I’m right.”

Her sister swept out of the room. Jia tucked the comb back in her drawers, and rummaged around in the sea of hairpins and undergarments to withdraw a small photograph, which depicted three people. The tallest was Professor Henry Monroe, a cheery man with bright cheeks and a glass monocle tucked near one eye. Two young women flanked him; Ellie Monroe, a straight-backed blonde girl who had inherited her father’s pink cheeks and poor vision, and Lianna Chen. Lianna’s black bangs marched across her pale forehead. Her black eyes kissed in the corners, just like Jia’s.

Jia’s mind wandered to a warm winter morning many months before.

...

For a single day the snows had relented and the whirling winds stopped. The Xianhe river thawed and buds burst on every tree, even though spring was months away. The long grass tickled Jia’s legs as she walked with Lianna through the weeping Weida Forest, their stomachs filled with Mei’s delicious tea. Snub-nosed monkeys swung from the defrosted trees, where they called out to each other and pointed at Lianna. Herds of reindeer ran across the paths ahead, their black snouts flaring, their curved ivory antlers and slim heads cocked towards the two women.

“They know who you are,” Jia guessed. “They know you created them.”

“It’s amazing.” Lianna beamed. There was a smattering of freckles across her nose, and strands of her bangs peeked beneath the brim of her hat. “They’re

just as I imagined them in my head. Everything is, especially you.”

Jia felt a warmth spread through her, not unlike the unexpected spring.

“I’m almost done with *Warrior of Fire*,” Lianna continued. “The final draft is due next Friday, and Professor Monroe’s pretty strict about due dates. I’m in the final phase of editing.”

“I see.”

“Some main characters have special requests for their writers,” said Lianna. “I wanted to ask if you had any for me?”

“I destroy Lord Ren’s armies?” Jia asked. “I become the savior of Kai’an?”

“You do,” Lianna vowed.

“Then there is nothing else that I want.”

“Nothing?” Lianna frowned. “Don’t you want to be with Bo?”

“I don’t love him.”

Lianna tucked a flyaway hair behind her ear. “I guess I’m not as good at writing romance as I thought.”

“I didn’t mean to insult you.” Jia shifted her boots, which crunched in the half-melted snow. “Bo’s wonderful, he’s the best friend I’ve ever known. But I don’t want to be with him. I don’t want to be with anyone. Not all stories need to be about love, do they?”

“I guess not,” said Lianna. Her gaze was fixed on two twittering partridges, which hopped on a gray branch above their heads.

They walked a bit further. “So you’ve always wanted to be a writer?” said Jia.

Lianna smiled, and a clump of nearby peonies burst into bloom. “Pretty much. When I was applying to college I tried to convince myself that I was going to be an engineer. For the money, you know? But I barely lasted a semester.”

“Do writers not make a lot of money in the Realworld?”

“Nope.” Lianna’s thin shoulders slumped a little. “I mean sometimes, but it’s super rare. I never would’ve switched majors if I hadn’t met Ellie’s dad. He showed me the portalstone and the way into Fantasyland.”

Jia nodded, astonished that a craft so integral to her own existence could be so undervalued.

“It’s hard keeping Fantasyland a secret,” said Lianna. “But I understand why. If other people at Whiteriver State found out what the portalstone can do,

everything would go to shit. The U.S. government would probably take it and try to make bombs with it or something.” She gazed at Anjiang with all the fondness of a mother seeing her firstborn. The orange sun seemed to gleam a shade brighter. “God, I’m so glad I didn’t go to Purdue.”

“Purdue?”

“It’s another college in Indiana,” Lianna added. “Which is the last state you’d expect to find any magic. But I’m glad my family moved from Cali. Meeting you is the best thing that’s ever happened to me.”

“Will you come back and visit?”

“I promise,” said Lianna. She handed Jia a slip of paper. “This is for you. Professor Monroe takes photos for his class wall and he had a few extras. Just so you have something to remember me by?”

“It’s perfect,” said Jia.

...

Jia clung to the photograph and traced the outline of Lianna with her fingers. Why hadn’t Lianna returned? There could be any number of reasons. Perhaps Lianna died in a freak accident. Perhaps she’d quarreled with Professor Monroe, and he wouldn’t let her enter the portalstone anymore. Perhaps she’d abandoned Jia and was writing a new story. The thought of this made hot tears fill Jia’s eyes. What had become of the woman who created her?

“What am I supposed to do without you?” Jia muttered, as she clutched the wrinkled paper to her chest.



Evil Among Us

Megan Vogeler

Oil paint on stretched canvases, 36"x72"



Sirens

Louisa Coello

Graphite on paper, 11"x14"

Poppy

Sage Justice

Helios creeps along a red sky
spider sulking on the ceiling,
reclusive in the hot midnight.

A corpse woven in silk
waits to be plucked
and hand-delivered
into the arms of loving Death,
mouth slacked, slivered eyes,
the sweetness of rot
not yet settled in.

Yellowed skin hung like drapes
over frail, unfeeling bones,
pale in the shivering clover fields,
September chill slithering
through cracks in the windows.

No You left in this body.
No use clutching its cold claw.

Outside, quaking aspens shudder,
their unseeing eyes frozen
as wind carries through them
the spirits of the Gone.

The Worker of the Woods
hammers away in early morning,
nails his ghost to every tree.

When Helios first touches the land
if you crane your neck just so,
you may hear him.

Questions for the Sculptor

Sage Justice

Who are the angels

A: Beggars cupping hot thermoses lapping
up milk with shriveled tongues

Who are the devils

A: There are none

Then who commits the atrocities

A: Swines in uniforms squealing for stolen mothers

Who are the cherubs

A: Skeletons cutting out Valentines
with safety scissors

Who are the ghosts

A: City rats scouring empty nests in human
skulls retching bile and tar

What is heaven

A: A blank canvas

What is hell

A: She's sealing letters with red wax

Then who is the punisher

A: The cracked silver hand mirror buried in the backyard

And who is the god

A: Threadbare hands caked with clay

You ARE the Blueprint

Sidnea Hearn

The way her blackened curls and coils
lay against her head,
framing the heightened cheekbones of her
beautifully structured face.

Her hips dip shaping her hourglass,
Sculptured body, swaying
left, right, left, right
as she walks.

The way her satin lips are soft
to the touch,
softer than brown skin
that has been dipped in cocoa
and shea butter,
softer than the cotton ball clouds
that form in blue skies.

Mesmerizing to the eye she is
unbothered by unkindness that she may
receive from others.

Strong Black Woman,
your heart of gleaming gold,
Why dim your shimmer, why
bleach your skin, or
change the way you look?
You are the blueprint!



A Different Perspective

Megan Vogeler

Oil on wooden panel, 45"x35"



Red Room: The Transformation

Megan Vogeler

Oil paint on masonite, 24"x36"



Recovering Eden

Louisa Coello

Oil pastel on paper, 18"x24"

Tarantella

Siren Hand

The bartender swings the bottle over two glasses
set on the altar of Friday night.

*Don't worry, you'll need this:
this week has bitten you.
Poison in, poison out, love*

The communion rolls down my throat
to a choke point—
I brace for better against polished wood,
ask for another,
sweet lemon shot turning my mouth.
Shove a ten in the tip jar to a turned back,
sway to crusted velvet couch that's probably
cradled too many lovers—
set seasick glasses on the low table.
We punch this week in the face:

to your health! One for the soul!

I slam one glass, hold my second;
sweet lemon shot turns my mouth again
as I pass the liquor through a loose-lipped kiss
to someone who hasn't legally seen God.

We don't dance,
we pulse
we free-form flow
into hours when
only the Divine
would be awake,
strobing:
our shadows play on a gridded confessional wall,
stained glass chandeliers paint us holy.

Brick grit and decay fills our lungs,
The Spirit reminding us of our dusty return.
Driving bass smothers creaking floorboards
still saturated with Tampa tobacco
hand-rolled through the years

into Gulf salt and sweat, sour carpets,
stained shame of a thousand weekend escapes.

We pulse:

Hear our prayer.

Hear our prayer.

Hear our prayer—

have mercy on me.

D.C. al Coda

Siren Hand

I (A)

“Drill Sergeant, can you burn my flag?”

I wave away his smirk and motion, *Give it here.*

The Private pries the Velcro flag from his uniform

fuzzy from wear (fuzzier than his rank),

embroidery tension-frayed from everyday tear.

The sparkstart of a lighter

a flame

a flashpoint—

This is one thing, among us, I say,

but be careful who’s watching:

we wouldn’t want them to get the wrong idea.

It’s one thing, to burn the edges of this patch,

make it good as new,

acceptable for wear.

It’s another to burn it out of boredom.

This is your flag, too. Care for it as you need to.

The questioning refrain:

and when people burn it for protest?

Covered under free speech. All of it:

The right to burn a flag

To kneel with it,

To fly it upside down in distress—

If a protestor feels there’s need for it.

This cloth is voice, and presence, and power.

If not for all, then for whom?

II (A)

It’s 12:49pm. My heart is pounding

the drumroll of another Civil War

in my throat

in hours of/and seconds

in prayer

in refrain

beating like a flagpole on the Capitol steps

and there is no place for this type of wrong:

this spark of a flashpoint,
a flame,
a warning:
*This is one thing, among us,
but be careful who's watching*
some dead flag parades the halls as a living victor.
I wonder if the hands of Clio's clock stopped
if she watched from the hallways of the House,
wonder if her gaze was in glee or horror,
if it was some rebirth of a nation, again.
How many has she midwived?

I(B)

*Private, are you asking because in August
A Black football player kneeled*
(kneeled: as in protest
as in prayer
as in reverence
as in acknowledgement)
*instead of burning it, or putting his hand over his heart,
instead of complying to violence?*
Some considered this the greatest offense, disrespect to our flag—
never like recoloring it black and blue
(as in brutality,
as in bruising from
the finger-deep press to find a pulse
of the Black cadaver).

III

*This cloth is voice, and presence, and power.
If not for all, then for whom?*
Give a name to the distress.
Signal however you can.
Make your grief unmistakable—
your questions, unavoidable.
The sacrifice of symbols is a sacred voice
People will always judge you for it
seek ways to invalidate
it. You. Your life
heart
beating in refrain:

This is your flag, too. Care for it as you need to.

burn

make new,

acceptable .

You have the right.

if there's need for it.

II (B)

I emailed the Architect of the Capitol to ask

If any clocks were broken during the riots.

“None of the historic clocks were damaged on January 6,”

As if Time kept going,

with or without the whole Nation behind it.

D.C. al Coda

The thread from his Flag shrinks from the heat

coiling tightly

blackening into crumbling

rubbing into good-as-new

into January 7th,

into some refrain of a spotless nation

put back as it was supposed to be— no one ever the wiser.

Nina

Sage Justice

Burning Earth, its punishing flames
pink and orange in our devastated youth

lick our ankles up to the scars on our knees,
engulfing us in Sappho's feverish grasp.

We paint dogs with their teeth bared
all canines and frothing spit.

Growl at passing men on sidewalks
off our oppressive leashes, uncaged

unwilling to paint ourselves pure
and be blank canvases in a jeweler's display.

Inside on Aphrodite's couch, though
we purr like lions, stroking each other's cheek

and melt, all curly hair and dimples,
floral dresses with deep pockets.

Deep enough to carry all our love letters,
like this one. Sealed with *besitos*

and all the blood we can drink.

I Prayed to Santa Fe

Julia Rose

Led by the Sisters of Loretto, the Loretto Chapel was constructed around late 1870 in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The Sisters of Loretto were a group of nuns responding to a request from New Mexico's Bishop to educate the young women of his territory. With the assistance of a prestigious French architect, Projectus Mouly, the Loretto Chapel slowly came to be. The outside is influenced by gothic architecture. Its ceilings stand twenty feet high; arches rise to a point. The quadrilateral supporting structures that protrude from the sides of the church, the *buttresses*, are a slightly warmer beige color than the walls themselves. The entire church is made of sandstone. If one were standing directly in front of the Loretto Chapel, like I am during a vacation in the driest heat of June, Our Lady of Loretto's likeness would look down on them atop the building's center protuberance, rock robes shaped to be forever rippling in the kind of breeze New Mexicans scarcely experience. My parents take pictures, my siblings' interests are glued to their phones, and I busy myself by challenging a circular window above the chapel's front door. Sizeable, and as on-display as Our Lady's statue, its panes are webbed like that of a single veiny eye; I find myself in a staring contest with it, the Cyclops-church, shuffling my sandals on the sidewalk beneath me as I squint in the sun. Our two-week trip has led us here, and I feel nothing yet.

As a child, I'd flip through my mama's scrapbooks, page after page of shiny, rectangular photographs developed from disposable cameras. Once, a snapshot of their wedding day stopped me. Mama and Dada's beaming smiles radiated through the plastic scrapbook sleeve, wide and white and young. I'd carefully slid the picture out and held it closer to my eyes. Behind them was an altar with a priest's chair. My dad's suit was grey; he wore large, round glasses and was just starting to bald. The sheen on the photograph made my mother's dress glow a rosy pink. I figured they were in a "*church*," a type of the various (they did not have a regular church when I was young due to frequent moving) grand buildings our family would visit some years on Easter, where we children had an obligation to sit quietly.

Growing up, my parents did not venture so much as to even place a Bible in my lap. The few times I visited my friends' churches (my friends' parents had rules like sleepovers on Saturday included attending mass on Sunday, but I never held any friend, thus this ritual, for long), I refused communion because I didn't know what a "body of Christ" was and I was scared to stand afront a priest. I moved my lips to hymns I did not know and responded only with "thank you," in response to any churchgoer's well-meaning "God bless you." In high school, my friends would post on social media about their love of God, yet I found every

different carved pair of eyes on a church's Jesus shrine not to be sorrowful, but indignant of the things He must have known I was doing: thinking of sex at night, of kissing girls and boys; flipping my parents the bird every time their backs were turned. My parents are flawed as parents, as people, and I resented them for justified reasons, but in my high school years, I was pigheaded when it came to any type of forgiveness. Now, in a way, I pity them. My mother's parents emigrated to the States from Mexico. She grew up in Chicago, one of seven kids, a poor Mexican family. My father is from Vermont, and his parents have both passed. His father killed himself when my father was about to start college. My father's mother lived for a long time but died from a lung cancer so bad that when her doctor found it, they stitched her up and sent her home. Neither of my parents have had easy lives.

I do not know why my parents did not teach my siblings or I about religion. They expected us not to sin, but failed to ever explain what a sin is beyond something bad; they did not explain God beyond someone *you'd ought to respect*. When my siblings and I reached adolescence, old enough in my father's eyes to make our own decisions, "God" was only said in conversation between my parents and I as an exclamation before a door slam. I'm not sure if my siblings ever privately pushed my parents to teach them the word of God, but my siblings are about as religious as I am. Right now, my teenage sister has a scowl on her face; on the car ride from the hotel to the chapel, she'd leaned over to me and whispered that churches make her uncomfortable.

Religion is only one aspect of my parents' and my tumultuous relationship. The summer before I started college, I wanted to leave our small house in Bristol, Indiana, which was the catalyst of a screaming match that ended with my father telling me I wasn't his daughter anymore. Since then, we have mended, but in the way a patch is sewn onto a torn pair of pants: the stitches are newer, obvious, and the pants don't look like they did when the price tag wasn't cut off yet. A patch is never like the original finished product. But such is life, and even that, and all the times I wished my parents dead in my adolescence, could not prevent me from yearning for my mother's powdery kiss on my cheek and my father's throaty laugh when I was in college. My parents were nearly two hundred miles away from me. After my sophomore year, when I was twenty, they asked me to come with them, my younger sister, and my older brother on a two-week trip to Santa Fe, New Mexico. Eager to rebuild a relationship (certainly more eager to travel to a state I'd never been to), I accepted.

A few days into our trip, my family and I were seated for dinner in the long booth of an Italian restaurant. (My dad said we'd had enough of this Mexican food, at least for one night.) Our talk was of the sights we'd seen, the adobe houses and cactuses and the preachers on the dusty cobblestone streets of Santa

Fe. Santa Fe oozes religion. From the dozens of churches to the lasting influence Catholicism has on native culture, Santa Fe is a holy city, and my parents, whose eyes had lost their shine for God in raising four children, were starstruck. They were giddy. Only recently before the trip had they returned to attending church in their small town.

“And do you know the story of Juan Diego?” My mother asked. Her pixie cut was a dark, dyed magenta. She’d told me my father picked out the color. Our waiter’s arms, bright and crisp in his pressed white dress shirt, suspended over us as he balanced our large pizza on the metal C-shaped pizza stands. I held my tongue from saying something mean (“How, Mama, on Earth would I know that, since you’ve never told me?”), instead just shook my head, raised my eyebrows for her to continue, not prepared for the story of a miracle she’d share with us over the clinks of silverware against dinner plates and ice cubes in water glasses.

The Virgin Mary appeared in Mexico in the 1500s to an Aztec farmer named Juan Diego. Her skin was coffee-colored, like his, and a ribbon was tied around her swollen belly to show she was pregnant: the holder of immaculate conception. She pleaded for him to go to the local bishops and have them build another church so her children could pray. It was the first time the Blessed Virgin appeared without fair skin, and she did this so she would be familiar to Juan Diego and the indigenous people of Mexico. This apparition is now referred to as Our Lady of Guadalupe.

“So she was brown?” I asked, picturing the white Marys that result from a Google Image search. Across the table, my father was on his phone, looking at pictures of lizards he’d taken on the walking trail outside our hotel. I thought of Juan Diego, how he might have reacted if Our Lady had appeared with a snowy pallor, like a ghost. I didn’t want the story to end.

“Yes, she was brown... so was he.”

My mother speaks Spanish fluently, and as soon as I was old enough to understand she was speaking on the phone to her sisters in a language I did not know, I was envious of her understanding and wished to speak in her mother’s, and my mother’s, tongue. Even after expressing my interest to her, I wasn’t taught much more than *pendeja* (stupid; of a feminine subject) or *cállate* (shut up). Ignorant of the Spanish language as I was, I have my mother’s Latina nose, dark hair, and olive skin, so my role models were of those sorts, Selena Quintanilla’s music and the poems written by Pablo Neruda that I did not understand but cried to anyway. In a way, I am an imposter of my culture, admiring those who are Mexican than I was, never becoming more Mexican myself.

Full of pizza and magic stories, we returned to our hotel, where my father announced that he had decided what the family would be doing the next day: visiting the Loretto Chapel of Santa Fe. I was angry because my request to go to

art museums had been denied, so I bummed one of my mom's cigarettes, crept outside, heard my tie-dye lighter's spark ignite into flame. Shadowy mountain-scapes greeting me under a star-studded Santa Fe night, I tell you, is like how it feels to take the first drag of a cigarette after thinking about having one all day. I watched as the smoke curled and billowed in front of me, the air around it dead, before slowly dissipating against the range of bluffs. My mind was on Juan Diego, and on my mom, the way her eyes glittered when she'd say, "Our Lady of Guadalupe," the way her accent swallowed the *G* and made the sound of a *W*. Our Lady gifted Juan Diego a tangible miracle, guiding him to the top of Tepeyac Mountain where a bush of roses grew in December. He piled them in his coat, his tilma, and when he revealed them to the bishops who didn't believe him the first time, Our Lady's likeness marked the tilma like paint, and the bishops fell to their knees. I pondered on Our Lady's apparition, if she appeared to Juan Diego in a cloud of smoke or if she just popped on and off like a lightbulb. I wondered what I'd have done if I were Juan Diego.

The next day, when I am inside the Loretto Chapel, the first thing I notice is a spiral staircase located in the back corner, known as The Miraculous Staircase. Miraculous it is. The staircase turns twice, lacks support railings, and is roped off with velvet crowd control barriers. Though shielded from my and every other tourist's reach, it glints from a glossy finish my fingertips ache to caress. The wood curves like flowing water. Beyond the staircase are double rows of mahogany pews and a golden *T*-spread Jesus statue, front and center. I tip my chin upwards to the ornate marble, see that inside, the veiny eye is a circular, stained-glass mosaic window that casts a rainbow projection on the floor. Carved, naked angels draped in stone satin sheets dance along the trimming. It is one of the most divine places I will ever stand.

A voice drones from surround-sound speakers set up at every corner. The modern technology, black and sleek, is out of place. I am reminded of Juan Diego when the voice explains how the staircase before me entered the chapel like a thief in the night. The Loretto Chapel was built without access to the second-level choir loft, and after the nuns prayed to the patron saint of carpentry, a man with a donkey appeared and built the masterpiece, then disappeared without leaving a name or taking a penny. I am fascinated to hear the staircase was built without nails, secured only with wooden pegs. The second floor of the Loretto Chapel is inaccessible because the church is no longer used for services, so the staircase's twirling steps are obsolete.

What might it be like to walk a staircase that has not been used in years? In this moment, looking up at the twisting helix, my dress tickling my ankles, my parents forming the sign of the cross in front of the sorrowful Jesus statue, I understand what nuns feel when they grasp rosaries; what preachers feel when

their voices echo during a sermon. I've always wanted someone to pray to but cannot forgive the exclusions in the Bible, the stories of Westboro Baptist Church and those like it; I cannot forgive my parents for never teaching me about God, never introducing me to the statues they prayed underneath and shaped their life around. Jesus is a stranger to me, but standing in front of The Miraculous Staircase, the staircase that was built by a mystery man who only meant to aid believers in singing their hymns, I think, *I could believe in this.*

At the front of the church, next to Jesus, is a vigil shrine with rows and rows of red glass votive candles. They're so small I could cup one in my palms, and some are burning, some are not. In front of the candles, on a podium, is a wooden box with a slit. The box dons a sign that declares, "Donations are welcomed." I ask my mom for a dollar, choose one of the many wooden sticks resting in the vigil sand, light it against a candle already burning.

"You need to pray when you do that," my mom says behind me. The stick glows like the incense I burn at night back home. "Pray to Jesus."

A portrait depicting Our Lady hangs on the wall to the left of Jesus. I hadn't noticed her when I first entered. I wonder why, in New Mexico, with street markets full of indigenous natives selling their copper ear cuffs and sand art, Our Lady of Guadalupe is not the one with the center shrine. Why Jesus is gold, and not dark with mestizo features like those that have stood in this church for centuries. Our Lady looks at the ground in her portrait; Jesus holds my gaze.

As I light an awaiting candlewick, I close my eyes to Jesus and think of how I want to believe in something good, and the staircase convinces me goodness is not an idea but an action one gives to others, something that I can achieve even with the sins that I've heard stain my soul. I am sixteen again, my mother crying, "*You have nothing to offer your future husband,*" after she finds out I am not a virgin anymore, and my sexuality bloomed like a daisy's petals: once they opened, there was no closing them again. I hear the Christmas carols that background the noise of our house in December, "Hark! The Herald's Angels Sing," fanfare over my father's spitting "*Fuck you!*" to his eldest son (who doesn't talk to any of us much anymore). I think of the Virgin Mary appearing to a confused indigenous man, mirroring his teak skin so she would not be a stranger to him, and I remember when a classmate in third grade called my skin dirty, and I didn't understand because I didn't know myself as anything but white. Then, I pray—the first time in a holy place, in the Loretto Chapel, I pray. I leave those moments in Santa Fe, where I pray to Our Lady of Guadalupe, even though I don't know how, and I bring with me The Miraculous Staircase and Juan Diego. When I open my eyes, the wick burns and builds, hot and smoking, then eases into a soft, orange glow. It is a miracle.



El Movimiento del Dolor

Louisa Coello

Digital - Procreate, 11"x14"



Untitled (Tampon)

Emma Schwartz

Oil on canvas, 45"x55"



NYC Subway

Emma Schwartz

Collage, 22"x30"

Artists' Notes

Louisa Coello is a junior Drawing and Illustration student at the Herron School of Art + Design within IUPUI. She creates and produces art with the desire to contribute to growing a culture of beauty and authenticity. In art, she has found a way to express herself and enrich her community. Her inspiration flows from many sources including the art community, nature, and diverse cultural backgrounds. She hopes to further this practice as an illustrator in the professional world.

Emma Yuan Fecteau is fascinated by the concept of self-aware fantasy heroes and breaking the Fourth Wall.

On “Fantasyland” — This chapter is an excerpt from a larger novel, which she plans to traditionally publish before 2024.

Siren Hand is an Indianapolis (IN) writer and disabled veteran who uses poetry to process and communicate their veteran experience. They served as a Geospatial Imagery Intelligence Analyst and Drill Sergeant in the US Army for nine years, and now attend IUPUI for Creative Writing and Sociology. Additionally, Siren develops community interfaith discussion spaces through Hollowed Ground, is the Access & Disability Chair for Southern Fried Poetry Inc., and is the Founder & Curator of OBSERVE THE WORD POETRY which examines how poetry and poets give back to our communities for positive, lasting change. Siren has a wonderful partner, Adam Henze, and three dogs who are complete jerks.

On "Birdwatching" — Siren Hand examines Post Traumatic Stress Disorder of military service members through the eyes of a drone footage analyst in their poem, "Birdwatching." Hand draws from their own time in service as a Geospatial Imagery Intelligence Analyst and nine-year veteran of the US Army.

On "Tarantella" — Though Pagan for the past twenty-or-so years, Siren Hand grew up in a strictly Lutheran Missouri Synod family. Tarantella uses religious and spiritual language to translate spiritual & physical experiences and examine different forms of worship—healthy and unhealthy.

On "D.C. al Coda" — Siren Hand reflects on their experiences as a nine-year US Army Veteran and former Drill Sergeant, as they intersect with civil rights protests and the events of the January 6th Capitol Riots.

Sidnea Hearn is a junior attending IUPUI majoring in Creative Writing with a minor in Africana Studies. She knew early on that she wanted to be a writer and illustrate her own books. Taking her first creative writing course during her freshman year, Sidnea fell in love with the art of writing poetry.

On "You ARE the Blueprint" — For this piece, Sidnea wanted to author a poem that would uplift and empower Black women. Black women don't receive much respect or acknowledgement in society as they should. Therefore, she wanted to show well-deserved appreciation and representation for ALL Black women.

Sage Justice is a senior studying Creative Writing at IUPUI. He is interested in writing poetry and horror stories in the future, working towards a life as a professional writer and editor.

Corlan McCollum is a real human being from Pittsboro, Indiana, who loves to explore the worlds of his characters. He won "Best of Fiction" in genesis in spring 2021 and is going for best of three.

Thalia McIntire is a disabled nonbinary trans woman who is in love with the concepts of death and decay. She has been writing poetry her whole life, but was motivated by the pandemic to be more prolific. Some of her interests include DnD, video games, art, and punk / DIY.

Julia Rose is a Creative Writing major at IUPUI. She has been writing poetry and stories ever since she was a child. Writing is Julia's favorite hobby, but she also likes nature, fitness, and long, existential conversations about what waits for us on the other side.

Mason Runkel is a 6th year senior studying Photography and Journalism. Mason's written and photographic mediums play into each other and allow for a creative expression of learned and studied realities, scenes that are found, and not created. His work often takes him to the small towns, forgotten trails, and banally beautiful areas of the United States. Mason's photography studies the human effect on the environment around them for better or for worse while attempting to remove himself as the photographer as much as possible. After graduation, Mason hopes to pursue a career in motorsport journalism and media production.

Emma Schwartz is senior Drawing and Illustration Major. More of her art can be found on Instagram @emmaschwartzart.

On "Untitled (Tampon)" — "This piece focuses on the over-sexualization of the female nude. In this piece, I depicted a woman who is naked and putting a tampon in. After my preparation for this painting, I began to question when and how is a nude woman seen as sexual versus undesirable? In this painting, I chose to focus on a time in a woman's life when she is doing something that is not meant to be sexual in any way. I want viewers to reevaluate how they look at the female nude and when it is acceptable to see a female body as an inspiration for ideas."

On "Parking Garage" — This piece was completed through taping off portions of the canvas and then blending the paint within.

On "NYC Subway" — This is depicting a group of people on the subway.

Megan Vogeler is currently a senior working towards getting her bachelor's in Painting and associate's in Interior Design. Her work currently focuses on emotions, contentment, and the idea that as humans we often fail to recognize that life is not just black and white.

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We would like to thank the following:

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Liberal Arts Student Council
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