

Timber Creek Flight - Spring 2016



MOSAIC

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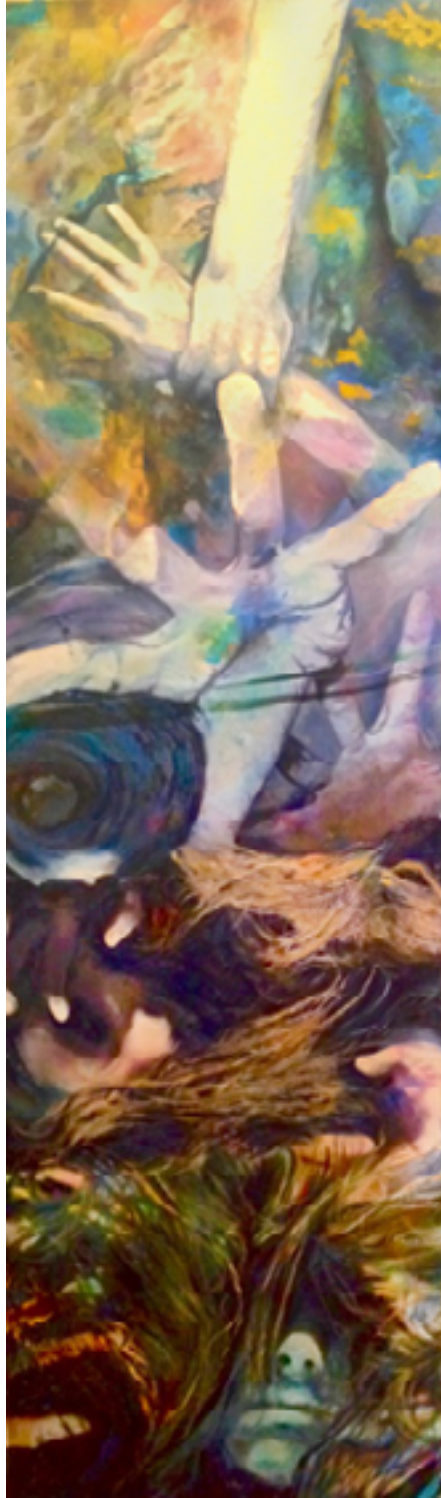
A mosaic is defined as a whole made up of different parts that together, form a pattern. The history of mosaics dates back some 4,000 years or more, and can be found everywhere from the ancient Roman world to 21st century America. Classic and revered, they are known for their timeless beauty and inherent individuality. Clearly, to represent Timber Creek, a mosaic is the only true choice. Our school is a machine assembled of distinctive, functional parts, united under a common goal. A coalition of diversity, our students pursue wildly different interests and extracurriculars, but in our differences can be found an underlying affinity. No matter what group or club you belong to, one thing is certain; Timber Creek has talent. Students have distinct and individual voices that, when united, make something truly beautiful and unique. Our students are our different parts, our excellence is our pattern.

Timber Creek Flight
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Untitled,
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Untitled,
Chrissy Fitch

Snow Globe

The crisp winter breeze swirled all around me, chilling me to the bone. It was always freezing in this clear orb of mine. I lay curled up in a ball, clutching my knees to my chest, desperately trying to warm my shivering body, but to no avail. The cold still tingled my skin, goose bumps forming all over my arms and legs. I slowly spread out my limbs, yawning and stretching after a bitter, sleep-deprived night. Hazily, I stood up and arched my back, scrunching my face in pain as I willed the cramps to go away. With each step, my feet sank into the snow, creating a light crunching sound. I looked at my surroundings, so barren and devoid of anything with which I could occupy my time. There was nothing here; there was only me.

Each morning, I wake up dreading the day ahead of me. I spend most of my days just sitting in the arctic snow, staring out into nothingness. I often find myself wondering what the outside world is like. How it must feel to have all that space and all of those things to do. I walk up to the thick, circular glass wall in which I am trapped and put my palms against it. I can almost taste the freedom, but I know I can never get to it. It's like the world is mocking me. I want so badly to break the glass that imprisons me, and burst out of this cold and empty cage. But I know, as I am constantly reminded, that I can never be free. I will be trapped in this prison for the rest of my life.

Tabitha Tommie

Untitled*

You and I sit at a poker table without poker chips. Hardly daring to whisper a breath, we face each other over the globe.

It's my turn to make a play, but I finish off my cigar. You eye me with disdain; I blow smoke rings in your face.

I reach out to graze my fingers across the Himalayas, sending the world spinning. You hold steady as tendrils of my smoke creep over the earth, longing to shut out your light. I set a single bony finger on the globe to cease its motion, and you hold your breath, awaiting my announcement. I nod, accepting my play. "Taiwan."

My smoke swirls over the small country, forming a cloudy vortex to suck out the last of your silvery lining. You sigh, but you didn't expect much better.

When you shift in your chair, it creaks, old like your bones. You lift your hand, bringing with you the golden mist you use to bless those who deserve no blessing. I wonder if you too recognize that as fact. I think you do.

You take your spin, close your eyes, and breathe. I watch the oceans and the continents smear like paint as the world turns until you finally stop the globe and look up.

"Amsterdam."

I nod. "Second time this week. Any idea what's going on in Bangladesh?"

You drop your hand and look away.

I can't blame you, I can't blame myself, and I cannot blame the game. It's fair, nothing but chance, though we both wonder, is there is a reason you often land on London? Is there an equation to determine why my finger gravitates towards Korea?

Of course, we don't have an answer.

With both of our turns taken, the tsunami hits Taiwan, and to forget their troubles, someone gets high in Amsterdam.

Sarah Ulery



*221b,
Edie Mahle*



*Untitled,
Sloane Miller*



Big Sur,
Emily Ghizzoni



*Panseys,
Katie Roosa*

Two Worlds

I tread water,
Struggling to take one last breath.
I take in the air
And submerge into a new world.
The riotous sounds of the real world
Are silent.
I can hear the blood coursing through my veins.
My hair glistens in the soft rays of sunshine.
I close my eyes and dream of a weightless world.
My dream is interrupted by a violent gasp for air.
Water filling my lungs, I reach for the surface,
So far away.
I engulf as much air as I can.
Two different worlds, so close to each other.
I am stuck in the one where people fight
Over the melanin in their skin, and the Being
They sing their praises to, the world that
Does not know love.
If only I could drown in the water
That holds my dream.

Elise Hodges

Human

There's a war
There's a war waging,
There's a war waging between your brothers.
There's a war happening behind curtains no one can see past
But we all see the shadows of moving figures and falling bodies and we know what it means.
It's a war of fear, of hatred and discrimination
Where everyone has the infection of fear
Too busy forcing the weak into their servitude, to be the submissive of another's fear.
What gives us the right to preach love and peace when we are to blame?
We have created the pit of loathsome monsters
Creatures
Waiting for the next model
The next follower
The next mortal treasure
To put them at the top of the chain of loveless souls
Waiting for the next poor case of a human to devour
To show everyone how strong they are for preying on the weak
The meek
The lowly in heart
Stop.
When you bring your fingertips to the glass screen of the knife in your hand,
Press backspace, take it back, take back your fear of man and fear of your brothers.
Replace it with the love of human.
When you feel your feet keep walking past your brother in peril,
Press backspace, take it back, take back your fear of man and fear of your brothers.
Replace it with the love of human.
Let the fear of hurt govern your hands
Let the fear of ignorance govern your eyes
And let the fear of silence move your lips
Don't be silent, don't be loud
Just be the human.

Coal Cambridge



The Young Guitarist,
Daniel Kleveland



Roadtrip,
Kamron Goppfarth

Baby, It's Cold Outside

As I step outside, all I hear is silence.
I've never heard silence quite this loud.
Him and I are only inches away from each other, but it feels like kilometers. I am shivering and chattering my teeth.
Even my hair is cold.
There are no white snowflakes falling from the sky, but everything in my own perception seems white.
It is cold – as much similar to his stony heart.
The once beautiful trees, are now an atrocious brown color, and have no leaves – resembling myself.
The sidewalk is more faint than the lightest shade of gray.
I walk past him, with our shoulders sliding against each other.
I keep walking away and putting one foot in front of the other into the middle of the hard concrete of the street. As I am walking I am wondering, is he following me? Don't look back, remember that you are not supposed to care. Keep walking, just breathe and keep walking.
I don't even look into his eyes.
I cannot.
If I do I will be nostalgic of all the times he's looked at me like I wasn't worthless – like a actually meant something to him.
He is speaking, although I have no idea what he is talking about.
I cry.
Then, I decide to open my mouth.

This is what I say:

Stop. Please, stop. There's no need to lie to me anymore. I am not naïve enough to believe that I was something special. I didn't just want to be special - I wanted to be special to you. But you won't let me, even though I have spun my wheels trying. I have attempted so many times to understand why you're so cruel, and cold; even though your skin is so soft, it is warm, and I've heard your heartbeat, and at times mine and yours have pulsated together. Or the fact that my body fits, perfectly, against yours.

We used to be so open. Well, you might've not been. I know I am crying, but I can't stop. Because every time I kiss and hold you, I think of her – I think of her kissing and holding you! It's not fair! Why are you doing this to me? Just tell me so I can get over it! Please!

This is what you wanted this whole time. While I tried to trust you, when my gut told me I shouldn't, I tried. And this is just another reason to not believe in anything; not to trust anything; not to trust in anyone. You are the reason I can't sleep at night. You are the reason I wash my hair everyday. You are the reason I feel pointless. Now that we're not together, I feel like gravity has dropped to zero. I feel so empty, because I have a hard time wasting time on you.

I start sobbing, but then- I hold myself up.

Wait... This is what you want, right? You want me to feel powerless! You want me to cry! You want me to feel worthless. Now I know that if I disappeared, no one could ever say that they loved me! No one could would care! You wouldn't.

You've succeeded. Congratulations, honey! You did it! So now that you have won, go mess another poor girl. Tell her that she's beautiful. And while you're at that, why don't you keep seeing my friend? You spend more time with her, anyway. She doesn't care about you. At least not like I do. She isn't there to hold you when you cry. She doesn't know all your secrets. She doesn't take care about you. She doesn't care about you.

He says he doesn't want me to let go of him. Then I accidentally look into his eyes. He gives me that look, like he's in pain. At this point I don't know what to believe. I look down at my feet and they are purple, and they become numb. I fall to the ground and sit. He is all I have ever tried to believe in. So I decide to again. It is all that I know.

But the weather is still cold – like his stony heart.

Renée Garrett



Untitled,
Karen Jacobi



Untitled,
Chrissy Fitch

I hope my footsteps send your head throbbing as I rejoin you after our last dispute. We've got business, and I need an advantage; this is the type of case I typically lose. You've got confidence in predictability, but I've got confidence in the fact that the boy of around fifteen years has already got Daddy's pistol loaded and in his hands.

I brought wine. Red, a little light for my taste, but I know you'll need it. I pop the cork and let the waterfall of blood red tears cascade into a first glass, which I set in front of you. Then I fill a glass of my own, taking both my seat and a sip.

You eye me with disdain, ill approving of treating these matters like the events they are. I lean back and cross my legs. I'm not celebrating the demise of a soul we carefully crafted together; I'm simply respecting the arch of its character. You don't see that, but you try the wine all the same.

The boy's hands shake, and he clamps his lower lip between his teeth. His eyes squeeze shut, and I'm convinced I've taken the play without any real effort – at least until his arms fall to his lap, bringing the weapon away from its target.

I glance over. You're eyes are closed, your breaths shuddering, just like the boys. I tap my fingernail on your glass, and you jump, maybe mistaking it for the small firing of a gun. When I catch you eye and simply nod to the drink, you oblige, snatching your glass quicker than I thought possible for someone of your exhausted state.

I sit back once again, swirling my wine. "You know," I remark, "for a society that views these happenings as such tragedies, you'd think they'd make it harder on those who attempt to blow their heads off to attain materials with which to do the damage."

You close your eyes again, just for a second. When you look back up, you refuse to meet my gaze, instead glancing back to the boy.

He's up on his feet now, the gun still at his side like a loyal pet. He stumbles to his desk, where he sweeps his discarded school work to the faded shag carpet. Only one notebook remains, and he struggles to flip through the pages with his trembling fingers. But he lands on my personally favorite page, possibly his least favorite to confront; this one belongs to his mother.

Doesn't matter that his best friend walked away once things turned south. He was never his first love's love, his father's less than comforting words leave him scrambling towards perfection with no avail, but who cares? His mother - or at least she was supposed to. She should have seen. When he got sick after stomaching nothing for dinner. When he cried for days after their dog died. When he tossed his books out into the front yard in the rain. She should have seen, and she should have felt it, and she should have done something besides asking if he was okay. All of that in his words, at least.

As the boy starts adding onto his final farewell to his mother, writing so fervently his words are almost unrecognizable, your eyes narrow on the scene. Your lips move no more than a whisper when you murmur, "What on earth is he doing?"

"People always blame those who care the most," I chime. I finish my wine and pour myself a second; you fix me with a puzzled look; I take my time, take a drink, and inquire, "Did you even bother to read his profile?"

Your hand drifts to your coat with hesitation, and I nod. You reach inside and pull out the boy's most important papers, the ones summarizing pivotal moments in his lifetime, namely the ones that led him to his father's weapon safe. I wait while you smooth the creases in the folded papers. You scan the profile, skipping to find the part that depicts his latest actions and thoughts as he turned rogue.

In short, neither of us want our creations to go haywire, but we can only shape them so far before sending them off to mix with the rest. We have no control over what they do once they leave our hands. But when they turn down a darker path - that's when we differ on how to handle them.

You prove this when, after coming to a particularly perplexing clause, you frown. You reach into the scene, holding your breath, and give a book a shove off the shelf across the room from the boy. The number hits the floor with a thud that makes the boy jump and jerk the pen off the side of the paper. He glances back out of common nature, and if it had been any other novel, he could have continued writing. But he can't. Because this one demands that he silently set the pen down, leave the pistol on the desk, get to his feet, and creep towards the book.

"Clever." I nod my approval of your move. "And let us see how this plays out."

I ignore your wary glance and watch the scene. The boy retrieves the novel and flips, not to the first page with print, but to the first page with words - those of the girl he loves, the one who doesn't love him back. The one he shut out, believing it to be for their mutual benefit. Little does he know that you and I have been watching her as well.

Once again, he reads the note she wrote him in the cover of the book she gifted to him for no reason in particular (after all, those are the best gifts), his gaze tracing the scrawled purple letters. There, she promised him that even with everything else crumbling down around him, the two of them would hold on through the demise. They hadn't. But, of course, she wasn't at fault.

The boy lingers on her sign off. Love, E. She loves him, or at least she did. He doesn't doubt that. But he's in love with her, and she was never sure if she felt the same for him.

Even I feel the ache in his soul, though you're the one who curls in on yourself just slightly. But I'm not prepared when you look up at me with a clear, eternal gaze and say, "Isn't it agonizing how one word can have two such juxtaposing and powerful meanings?"

I sigh just slightly. "Enthralling, yes," I reply, "how agonizing it is for humanity that they don't always share a specified degree of emotion or thought on one said subject."

You're not pleased with my answer, maybe simply because I provided an answer to begin with. But you bite your tongue; I tend to win debates. So I play along, nodding back to the scene and pointing out, "It appears you don't know him as well as you imagined."

Sure enough, the boy carefully closes the novel and places it back on the shelf. He closes his eyes; deep breath in, shallow breath out. And he walks back to the desk.

He stares down at the pen and the pistol, the open notebook in between the two. You will him towards the one he should take up. I will him towards the one that will bring about a swift end to it all.

And he reaches towards the gun.

You slam your fist down on the table, sending our wine glasses shaking. I almost jump; you don't lash out often. Nor do you typically raise your voice, but now you snarl, "Why do they insist that escape is the answer?"

Oh, but you're full of the same simple questions. I shrug, spreading a grin. "Because it's consistently pinned directly between their eyes."

Of course you knew that, but it takes me saying it for you to break down to what you're really trying to get out. After all, you aren't pleading with humanity; you're pleading with me.

"Then why do you allow them to deprive themselves of our challenge?" you insist. "In that case, they get out, and we both lose this game."

It's a rare moment in which you cause me to falter, the thin rim of my glass tilted at my lips. I pause. Then I set my drink back down and lace my fingers together on the table.

"Tell me," I say, leaning towards you, "if one of our creations is miserable, is anyone winning?"

You take a breath, ready to argue, but I continue before you can sputter a single word. I tell you, "We both know the answer. But the bigger question is this; isn't aborting them a smooth stalemate for all three of us?"

This time, I let you reply. But you let your breath out with a single nod. "It is," you admit, "but it's not the only solution. We can all still win. You've succeeded so far. If you allow me to guide him through the night, to gift him light, he will be reborn into a purest soul. He will live on, misery in his past, and we'll all have emerged victors."

I blow out a breath, drumming my fingers; as we speak, the boy twist the weapon around in his hands, his gaze drifting between the journal, the book, and the pistol. You're correct, in your own way. I'd rather not terminate the boy, but with his drawn out distraught, it may be the choice of mercy, as well as the guarantee. The last part - that's where you differ, and also where you gain my respect.

"You're betting on chance," I tell you. "You believe so whole-heartedly in the idea that this isn't the boy's darkest night. You insist that your cards can and will save him. But you can't ensure that. You can't ensure that his path will improve."

“ And you plan on denying him the possibility that it does?” you snap. The boy tightens his free hand into a fist. “If you let him out, you ensure that he concludes his time on earth terrified and alone when he has years ahead of him, none of them yet determined.”

I pause. Glance away. Then I nod to the bottle of wine and ask, “Are you going to drink any more of that?”

You sigh but shake your head. I grab the bottle by the neck and take a swig straight from the rim. It doesn't burn my throat, but I wish it does.

This is where you get me. The majority of the time, you talk me into allowing a second, third, fourth chance to those who believe their chances have run out. Only when things are particularly morose, particularly for me, do I cause the soul to slip away. Because when it comes down to it, we both work based off of logic, and yours is just as strong as mine. The two of us aren't the only players in this game. And if one party simply walks away from the table, none of us can claim the crown.

So I stand. Your eyes widen in shock, and you almost speak, but I raise a hand.

I finish my second glass of wine and resolve to hold you with a steady gaze. “Well then,” I say, setting my glass opposite your own. “You know I love the challenge. So I'll withdraw my hand from this round in favor of another game to come.”

You relax, and the boy drops the pistol at the sound of the front door swinging open somewhere else in the house. “Happy birthday, honey.” The warm tone that reminds me of the wine we just shared - that's his mother's call. “I got your cake. Your sister should be on her way from practice, and your father's conference got cancelled, so he's on his way from-”

The doorbell chimes throughout the home. His mother sighs, telling him to “Hold on, I'll get it.” But the boy doesn't reply. He freezes, nearly caught, before he scrambles to shove the pistol in a drawer and slam it shut.

“Jay.” His mother's voice typically lacks even a hint of strain, but the day clearly hasn't been typical. “It's Elise. She wants to say hello.”

He's out his door before he can give the pistol a second glance. But of course he never closed the drawer properly, and of course his mother will stumble upon it later. He'll be confronted before something else comes along, and he'll confess, and his mother will know, she'll see, she'll feel the same type of pain he has. And his father will finally cry, finally shoulder some of the blame. His sister, a background character throughout his life, will listen to his music for hours on end, late on a Tuesday night. His first love may come in, she may not, but as soon as she's gone for the night, the phone will ring and his childhood friend will be on the other line, begging to know what he meant when he said all he'd ever wanted was to run.

And you'll win. In these cases, you typically do.

I regard you and your small smile framed by wrinkled dimples. You take a drink of wine directly from the bottle, and I almost reach to snatch it back, but I decide you deserve it.

"I don't understand," I admit once you've sat the bottle back on the table. "I don't see how you can craft such simple messages with such uplifting effects. I can do the same with disaster, but with redemption? My moves are like the blackest holes in the universe; once you get in, it's almost impossible to get out. But you... Somehow, you manage to pull them through." I take a breath, tug my sleeves, and smooth my jacket. "And frankly, I admire that. You're a worthy opponent."

You sigh through that smile and watch as the boy joins his first love on his front porch. "I'd hope so," you say, "though I'd imagine the two of us as counterparts rather than opponents. Our only opponents are our own creations."

I grab my empty glass and clink it against your own. "I'll agree to that."

You nod, and we remain silent. I set the glass down and shove my hands in my pockets. Possibly of your devising, the boy takes his own hands out of his jacket, almost reaching for his love's hands, but instead reaching for an explanation and an apology.

"They're an incredible army against the two of us," you muse. "Against one another as well. And..." You trail off and gesture to my chair. "Sit. And do you ever question if, as a whole, they'll discover a way of control us both?"

If not for your question, I may not have followed through with your request. But I take my seat and laugh. "Not once. And do you know why?" I lean my elbows on the table. "Fear. They're terrified of losing control, but they're terrified of having it as well. They find comfort in the unknown, in the idea that everything can change in a second. If they knew their path, they wouldn't even desire to take it."

You refill your glass before tipping the last of the bottle into mine. And simply, you say, "I'll agree to that."

And I nod. "Anything to keep the game in play."

From there, we hold our silence, for once simply watching the scene you've set to play. I'll have to revel in the beauty of it all, and naturally I'll have to allow you to share the pride. Though it's one with billions of games of its own, our creation, ever changing, is one of passionate and brilliant plays.

Sarah Ulery

Are You There?

He's tall like the Empire State Building.
He's sweet like the honey from the hive.
He's funny like the comedian that lives in your head.
He's loving like the dog you had when you were 10.
He's fading like the morning dew.
He's slipping away like the waves when the moon moves.
He's gone like the power in a lightning storm.
He's not here anymore.
Where is he?
Lost?
Is he real?
Come back, I need you.

Elise Hodges



*Dan Powell/The Old Cowboy,
Daniel Kleveland*



Untitled,
Lauren Bonham

Dust and Time

When you stay away from a place, or an entire section of your life, for too long it slowly detaches itself from you – or perhaps you detach from it. Sometimes you forget about it, sometimes you refuse to think about it, shove it away in a drawer and at least try to forget. It's these things that always seem to come back bigger and with more purpose, sometimes they come back swinging, more forceful than they had been in round one, purely because you've ignored and neglected them.

That's why it was weird, weird setting foot on the stone path he used to skip across, weird coming back to the house he'd spent countless weekends at as a little boy, coming back to the house he had not returned to in...well, longer than he cared to admit.

It hadn't changed, not really. The white fence still stood, perhaps fainter than he remembered. The pathway to the old door still had all the cracks he used to skip over as if it were some nonsensical hopscotch course. The porch was still adorned with plant pots however their soils were bare. The same wooden swing bench still sat to the side of the door, the striped pattern on the cushion faded by weather and time...

A small boy races up the three wooden steps to the porch as quick as his short legs will allow. Scrambling up onto the bench he kicks his feet out enthusiastically, willing the seat to swing back but having almost no effect on the stationary wooden bench. Beside him a man chuckles softly at the young boy's efforts.

Unlocking the door he stepped into the house, overwhelmed at how the interior, too, had not changed much at all since he'd last set foot on the wooden floors. It looked the same, quiet and stale, layered with a thin coat of dust and a lot smaller than he remembered. His feet felt heavy as he passed through the small living room off to the left of the hall. Sheets that had probably once been crisp and clean were now slumped over the tired furniture leaving an outline of dust around their edges, preserving their bodies on the floor.

The narrow shelf made by the mantle of an old, neglected fireplace sat bare, its picture frames, candles and knick-knacks packed away so long ago that not even the dust had a chance to imprint their shape upon the plaster. Moving through the room he saw where hooks were still hammered into the wall, now hanging empty, their frames long removed and packed away. He tried to recall what once hung there...

Craning his neck back he stares at the photograph sitting in a heavy wooden frame hanging high on the wall. At this low angle the picture is strange and distorted but he can make out white, a lot of flowing white. And next to that is a lot of black. The two colors are pressed close together and bordered by a leafy green. Taking a step back causes the vague smudged of white and black to sharpen into people. A man and a woman who look a lot like the people he can see through the front window, huddled close on the wooden swing.

He stood like that a several moments before his feet would finally carry him from the room. He moved throughout the rest of the house sparingly, looking, finding, remembering, touching a shelf or a chest of drawers here and there but otherwise keeping his distance. In the out-dated kitchen the same small dining table sat in the same corner, surrounded by the same wooden chairs. Across from the sink and beside the empty shelving, an ancient clock was set into the wall, it's pendulum motionless and its hands having fell out of time at four, thirty-seven on some forgotten day long ago...

Watching the wooden circle swing back and forth, back and forth, he sits upon the counter beside the sink. The pendulum arcs up, hitting its topmost point for a split second before crashing back down, and then up again on the other side. Dooown-UP. Dooown-UP. Dooown-UP. He's watching the circle bob back and forth between its two peaks, too captivated by this simple act to even notice that the two sticks on the yellow-white clock face are moving as well, the pendulum reminding him so much of the wooden swing outside – he wonders how he can get the swing to do his favourite Dooown-UP, dooown-UP. Eventually he headed back down the hall and out the door, feeling as though he had disturbed some sort of peace that had settled throughout the old house along with the dust, accumulating over the years of silence and stillness.

Out on the wooden swing bench that creaked and protested under his weight and with the afternoon sun still well up in the sky but beginning its weary descent, he watched the grass of the lawn, slightly long and obviously neglected for some time as the weeds pushed up amongst the green blades, spilling over and scrambling across the pavers. The boy has this infinitely fascinating and endlessly amusing game of ripping the thin blades of grass from the soil and, holding his hands high above his head, he lets the green pieces rain down like confetti, fluttering to the ground and mingling with the lawn until he can no longer tell the difference between them. And then he repeats this process, rip, hold, throw, repeat. It never gets old. He likes the way the strips of green roll through the air, end over end, picked up by the breeze and sent tumbling across the lawn.

The woman on the bench watches him chase the grass flying through the air, plucking a stray blade from beside her feet and handing it to the boy, only to have him throw the piece up again and follow it as it flutters to the ground.

He was no longer the little boy from his memories, not really. His eyes were still blue but they were by no means bright with the wonder and insatiable curiosity they had once held. He was no longer able to amuse himself with things as simple as falling grass flitting in a breeze. He knew this, and yet he still felt like he knew that little boy. The one on the swing, the one staring at the photographs, the one watching the pendulum, the one playing in the grass. He felt calm, a relieving peace wash over him as he relived those moments.

Despite the years spent away, despite the dust and time gathering upon the mantle, he could still picture this old house as it had been once. Around him the weeds sunk back into the soil, the plant pots sprouted their vibrant flowers and the bench upon which he sat swung with ease once more. Inside the sheets scurried away from the furniture, kicking up clouds of dust that swirled away into nothing. Photo frames slid onto their hooks and memories slipped behind their glass. A small flame flickered to life inside the pit and he sighed happily.

It struck him as odd, being able to conjure these memories so vividly after they'd been shoved away in that drawer and forgotten about for all of these years. This place that he had shut out so forcefully still welcomed him as it always had. Time is just as easily swept under the rug as dust is, and it was so easy to forget all that time spent away, all those years spent ignoring and trying to forget. Slipping back into the warmth of the house and the memories settled him. There was a feeling of security that he found in the swing and the photographs, in the clock and the grass, something so simple and naïve that it could only have been discovered by a child.

Pushing up off the bench he traced his old steps along the makeshift hopscotch course, right up to the gate which he pushed open with a loud creak that threatened to pierce through his dreamlike vision of the house behind him. He let the gate swing gently on his hinges and turned back towards the wooden bench once more. Making a final promise to himself to return to the memories of a boy untouched by dust and time.

Luka Perez

Mirrors

There is so much to be seen in young eyes
The sparkling shimmer of naive hope
Shattered spirits falling like broken glass
Her eyes hold my reflection
Almost exactly, she emulates my soul
The day my sister said she wanted to die
I knew she had followed my example too well
That precious child, my closest friend
Whom I had cried with and fought with
And played with and prayed with
Had been stabbed with the brazen blade that bullies brandish
Leaving her an empty husk of what she once was It scared me, how we resembled each other
How the shards of our broken minds seemed to meld
It was then that I realized how alone we both are
Completely isolated in the pursuit of happiness
And though our perception of life is shrouded
By the heavy cloak of self loathing
We travel this road together
Hands clasped in sisterhood
Never letting go

Anonymous



*Nouveau,
Edie Mahle*



*Landscape of Kolkata, India,
Kamron Goppfarth*

Face yourself

Tell me
Can you feel that?
Can you feel the breath of life against you?
Can you feel the motion of the cosmos when you take a step?
Can you feel the waves of the sea cease?
Just because you hated the smell of sea water.
Can you feel the atoms of existence shifting gradually?
Every so slowly
One by one
For you.
Can you feel the envious sun?
It hates you
It's loathes you
Because you brighten my life more than some lousy star in the heavens could.
Can you hear that?
The dogs, the wolves
Howl
Begging in agony
For their alpha to come back and lead them to eternal life.
Can you hear it?
Right there
That sound
That's my heart and with every beat
It speeds up even more
Can you feel it?
Pounding in my chest
You can and yet still
You toy with me endlessly
You want to see my demise
My downfall
You want to look it in the face
But you can never face yourself in the mirror that long.

Coal Cambridge

Empty arms and burnt out lightbulbs

Her skin was soft
Like velvet
Like fresh laundry against your chest
And it reeked
It reeked of the aroma of fresh morning rain
And her hair
Blonde as sunshine with flakes of ground coffee beans peeking from her roots as
she pulled her hair up from the heat of the hot summers day
The eyes she wore were not her own
They were transcendent
Otherworldly
Ghostly
Ghostly
And void of life yet they could resurrect a dying soul and a lightbulb on an old porch
She sat there
Arms empty of love and compassion
Her heart damaged from war and betrayal
And I knew
She could never love me

Coal Cambridge



Negative,

Isabella Avery



Untitled,
Katie Orgunov

The Timber Creek choir room is almost always devoid of silence. A boy holding back his clear tone as clearly seen in his clear blue eyes hums the baritone melody to a well-known carol as he and a girl with nails painted jet black to match her dark hair tie the risers up in bows for the holidays. Another, a girl in a large winter coat, plays her own rendition of a vaguely familiar tune on a piano in the practice room at the end of the back hallway. A trio harmonize in the ensemble room, rehearsing choreography in front of the large mirror on the wall. Two bump into one another, and they laugh so hard they lose their place and have to restart the music.

Separate, the students create a bright, ever-present buzz. But together, they crescendo a sharp staccato that echoes off the walls and throughout the school. Once the dissonance breaks, they reign their voices back to whispers of legato as they end the piece and leave it resonating through the room, through the body of the choir, through each singer's soul.

Then, only then, are they still. And then, only then, are they silent.

But it only takes a moment of awe for smiles to crack, for the singers to look between their friends, their directors, empty space, and laugh. That moment is just as magical as the silence it follows, which in turn is as sweet as the song they brought to life.

They sober up. And they do it all again.

Sarah Ulery

Nothing? What an interesting idea. It's a paradox in itself, isn't it? Because nothing is still something. If I were to guess, you'll hate me for rambling, but maybe you already do, or maybe I'm overreacting about the fact that your jacket was gone earlier today. I didn't even see it on someone else. But who cares? Because it could have been. And because that someone clearly wasn't me.

I'm rambling again, and like I said, if I were to guess, I'd say you'd probably hate that. I speak too quickly and too breathlessly, and the words trip over the trembling of my bottom lip on their way out. You never said anything about the way I speak my mind like I'm afraid you don't want to hear it. In fact, you never showed a sign that you minded. But oftentimes, my head lies to my heart.

While I come to you with an abundance of words, you come to me with few: I have nothing. It's either a misunderstanding or an insult, really. Either you don't think you have me, or you know you do, but you've determined that I'm not enough to satisfy your longing for the entirety of the world.

So I dare you to look me in the eye and spill those words from your pale lips. I dare you to hold my gaze and tell me that I'm nothing, and you surprise me by accepting the challenge. But when your voice quivers as you breathe those words, there's nothing but sorrow. No malice, no way you would intentionally lift a finger to cause me harm. And I'm forced to ask myself, have I been blind the whole time? What kind of demon told me you might truly have the upper hand?

You don't. I do. Because you've confided fears in me. Your broken soul cascades from your lips in only three words when I fumble to show mine in millions. Maybe that's why I'm defensive, maybe because I don't understand myself enough to find security in another. But if I'm realizing that now, it must mean something, right?

You're in the same place I am, really. The entire struggle of being unsure of the others motives. I don't know why we doubt one another after all this time, but I'm clearly in a better place to assure the two of us than you are. Everything's up to me. Finally I'm in control, and guess what? I don't like it. I want to be told I'm your everything, but I can't. I have to convince you, not because I've done anything to make you doubt me. You doubt yourself and therefore everything you want to believe in, including me.

So I'm the one who has to step up. I don't have a choice. And I guess if I don't have a choice, I'm not really in control, am I? So much for that illusion. It's not important anyway. Illusions never are.

What's important is you and the poor, misunderstood concept of nothing. You can't comprehend it, and neither can I, really. But I'll swallow my pride. I'll force myself to conquer your nothing with something.

Sarah Ulery



Liu,
Jessica Han



Screenshot 1,
Antonio Mendez (oil)

Questions

Hi, I'm sorry,
I couldn't help but notice you were looking at a book of poetry,
And I don't mean to brag or anything,
But poetry is kind of my thing,
And I really needed something to break the ice,
And I'm running out of bad puns,
So I'm awkwardly introducing myself in a Barnes and Nobel,
But in my defense you're illegally cute,
Anyway,
Now that we're talking and you're deciding if I'm attractively weird or not,
Can I ask a few questions?
What's your name?
How tall are you?
How tall are you in your favorite shoes?
Who's your favorite poet?
Do your fingers fit in mine like puzzle pieces?
Why do you smell like sunshine?
Does your name taste like mine?
Do you like girls that write you sappy poetry?
What about sexy poetry?
Can I touch your soul and see if it feels like mine?
Do you believe in fairytales?
The kind with princesses and fairies and happy endings?
Can you be my happy ending?
What makes your eyes shine like galaxies crafted just for me?
Who built you with star dust?
Do sea turtles flock to you when you go out at night because you're brighter than every star and moon in the sky?
Am I starting to look more cute than weird?
No? I'll keep going.
Are your feet firmly on the ground?
Can you catch this dizzy dreamer and make her feel whole again?
Do you want me to describe how you look to my starstruck eyes?
When's the last time you sat on a roof and hummed?
Why have I lived so long only guessing about you?
Can I wake up to the sound of your smile every day?
How do you take your coffee when you just wake up with your hand folded in someone else's?
Is it your finger prints on my heart strings?
Can they stay there forever?
Can I read you a poem by a hopeless romantic in a Barnes and Nobel that asks too many questions but loves the taste of your name so I'll write you weird poetry and talk about sea turtles because they're adorable and you're adorable so you'll think that's cute and forgive me for comparing you to a sea turtle?
Can I ask you dumb questions for the rest of my life?

Emily Gogle

Point

When I was young I loved watching the point dancers,
Spinning on the tips of their toes,
Dancing as if suspended on a fine cable.
Tilting, swaying, the wind ripping through their gossamer dresses,
Eyes shut against the agony,
To me they might as well have been saints.
To tip-toe that line,
To become the thread and the eye both,
To stay upright,
It must have been divinity. They must have been blessed.
But the spotlights are like fire to the shrouded flesh,
The sweat pooling at the hollow of their hallowed throats may drown them,
And beneath the bindings, mortal flesh tears, blood pulses,
It is nothing but human strength that keeps them upright,
Swaying like skyscrapers who must bend to the will of the wind or crumple entirely.
There is beauty, divinity even, in the basic suffering of human.
In the flex of muscles earned, of talents nurtured into fruition by attentive hands.
There are no blessings to the ballerina,
But her bloody toes that keep her standing,
The corded muscles of her thighs that keep her moving,
The aches and the pains that keep her humble.
She needs no prayer, only music, only lights, only an audience, and by her own grace watch her play her part,
Watch her become, with one panting breath, her own holy litany.

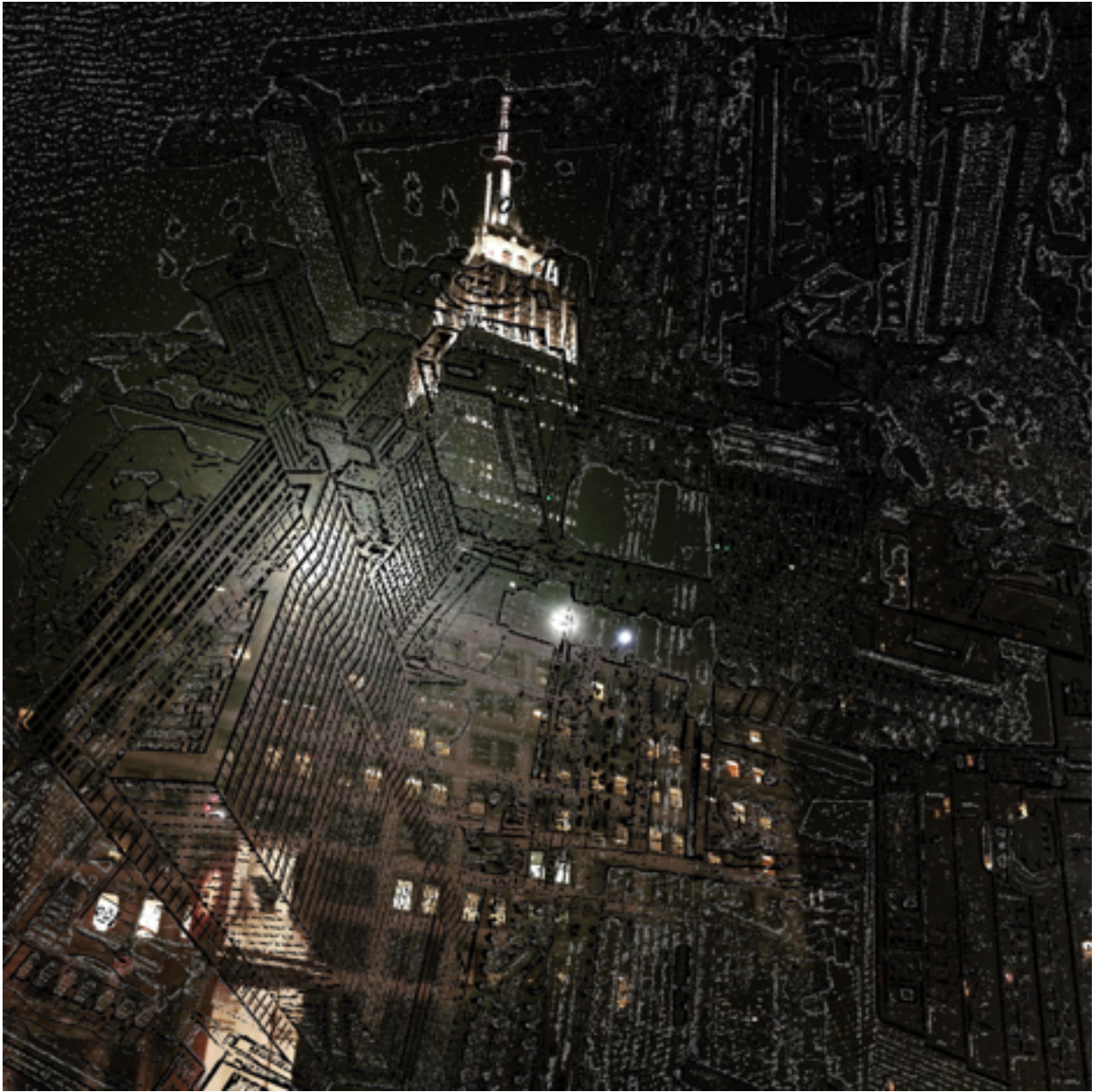
Emily Gogle



Fy,
Jessica Han



*Untitled,
Sarah Trinh*



*Untitled,
Bella Fluhr*



Screenshot 2,
Antonio Mendez (oil)