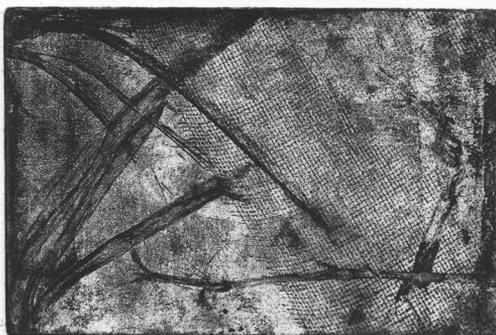
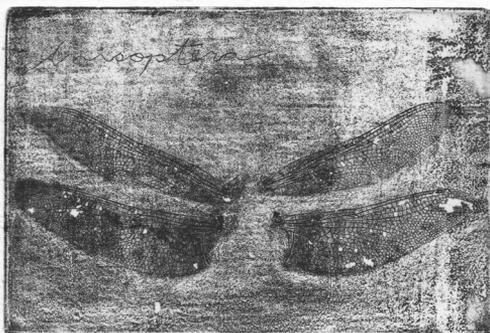


Mille Fontaines

Creative Macération



Mp

"Les Petits Souvenirs"

Kara James

Seventh Edition

Fall 2025

From The Editor

Dear Reader,

When we began conceptualizing this issue, we knew that it would reflect our current environment, a time of transition. As autumn falls, the vivid blues and bright greens of summer shift into soft browns and burnt oranges. Undergoing the changing of seasons is a natural part of being alive. Though conceptually simple: temperatures dropping, days shortening, plants bearing fruit... all caused by the Earth rotating on its axis to slightly tilt away from our Sun's warming nuclear fusion - simple - the emotions evoked can be quite complex.

Joyful for the crisp air and the crunch of leaves underfoot in one moment, one mourns the loss of carefree summer days the next. Thrilled to burrow into mounds of blankets with a movie and bowl of soup, waking up to grey skies or cold drizzles is downright gloomy. Going through our collection of contributions, we noticed this range of human experience presented. Rather than shy away from unhappy topics and present a world through rose-tinted glasses, we encouraged our creators to delve further, to plumb the depths of the sentiment behind their inspiration.

In that vein, our theme urges artists to sit and stew on their ideas until they are ready for harvest and expression, to allow projects time to mature before sending them forth to be shared and consumed. In this 7th Edition of our literary magazine, we hope this will extend to the reader as well. Let these pieces soak into you, softening rough edges with the comfort of relatability; possibly even inspiring a *Creative Macération* of your own.

Avec mes remerciements,
Charles P. DeLeon-Franzen

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Seventh Edition

The Wind, The Sea, and The Sky

Lilia Myers

“Maceration is a bone preparation technique whereby a clean skeleton is obtained from a vertebrate carcass by leaving it to decompose inside a closed container.”

Skeletons are definitionally not clean. Or maybe they are. Hard to know when they are trapped inside an only potentially functioning body.

Aix-en-Provence has bluer skies than Washington, D.C. Clouds form mountains over green hills in front of azure backgrounds.

Wind whips around a lighthouse. There’s a storm brewing over the Mediterranean. I take shelter inside the brick, looking out at rippling seas. The peace has been disturbed.

My bones crack, adjusting against one another, no muscle memory for them to rely on, to puzzle out how they align. They shift again. There’s another pop. Lightning crackles overhead.

My sibling asked for pictures of clouds wherever I went. Here they are preceded by towering buildings and flowing fountains. I hope they are having fun back home.

They prefer fluffy white clouds. Not the rolling storm clouds. And yet that’s all I see. That’s all I feel. That’s all I can bring back home.

Storm clouds and askewed limbs. This is what I return with. No matter the amount of tape. Or braces. Or canes. Or stretches. At the end of the day, the lightning strikes. The water falls. And I collapse.

I threatened to run to a French lighthouse, once. My friends said they understood. I wanted an escape. They asked for photos. Maybe the occasional postcard.

Bones decompose in a closed container. Maybe the closed container is me, struggling to get by, watching each day as movement becomes harder. Maybe eventually my skeleton will be clean.



Who Died Here?

Christina Bishop

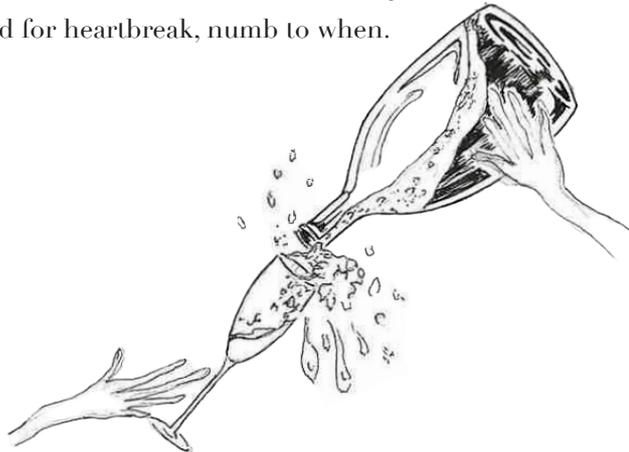


2025, Charcoal on Paper, 24 x 36 cm

Scars Still Burn

Violeta Báez

Tears run freely and yet I stay.
They warned me, I say.
Tears run freely and they wipe them away,
But do you know how much they weigh?
The tears, they wound me, the scars run deep.
The scars, they ache, I cannot fathom sleep.
Tears run freely and yet I stay.
I look for our happiness,
it was not all hearsay.
They do not know you here.
Your love, they do not find sincere.
Tears ran freely and yet I stayed,
But in my darkest days, I am afraid.
I smile but doubt is always near,
And every word, I strain to hear.
I want to trust but scars still burn,
And love is fragile at each turn.
Some nights I wait for the scars to bleed again.
Braced for heartbreak, numb to when.



Harbor

Elinor Gass



2025, Watercolor on Paper, 30.5 x 21.6 cm

The Fig Tree

Christina Bishop



2025, Oil on Cardboard, 24 x 36 cm

Artichoke

Bailey Bramer

The heart is the best part,
mother always said,
but you were bereaved to peel the way
to such a reward.

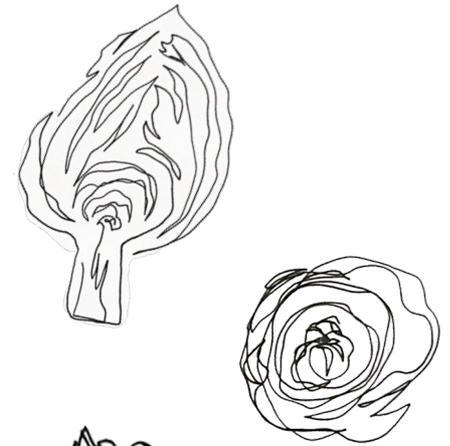
Sucking spiky leaves,
she would guide your hands
to the treasured core.
Soft hands.
Sharp leaves.

Melted butter
coating soft green underbellies
surface scraped of flesh.

You didn't eat enough
before discarding the leaf,
so mother was left
to suck them dry.

The heart was hairy
spiny tendrils sticking to your hands
too tired to collect your reward;

mother took the heart,
slipped nail beneath skin,
peeled away the scratchy scalp,
returning tender heart to you.



The Daily Masterpiece

Anika Hundley

Le matin. The Morning. The first stroke of sunlight appears at 6:33 a.m., thirty minutes after the Provençal songbirds begin their morning melodies. Twenty minutes after sunrise, the curtains are still drawn, and street vendors quietly trickle out of their hushed homes, towards Cours Mirabeau, Place de Verdun, and Fontaine des Prêcheurs. In this, the first colors are mixed; the orchestra tunes their strings and rosins their bows. Shop windows open; blossoms and bouquets are swiftly assembled across from the bell tower as it chimes seven times. Local vegetables are swiftly unloaded and priced, while antique books are stacked in uniform rows, their gold spines facing the sun. Brocante jewelry, long summer dresses, and vintage linens are displayed attractively in patient pursuit of purchase. The songbirds continue their melodies, and the madeleines come out of the oven. The paint is fresh.



Sammy Aldover
cathedral, 2022, Film Photography

Morning light peers through the curtains as they're pulled slightly open, allowing the first strokes of pigment to drift onto the canvas. Sunlight illuminates the stage. The scene is set.

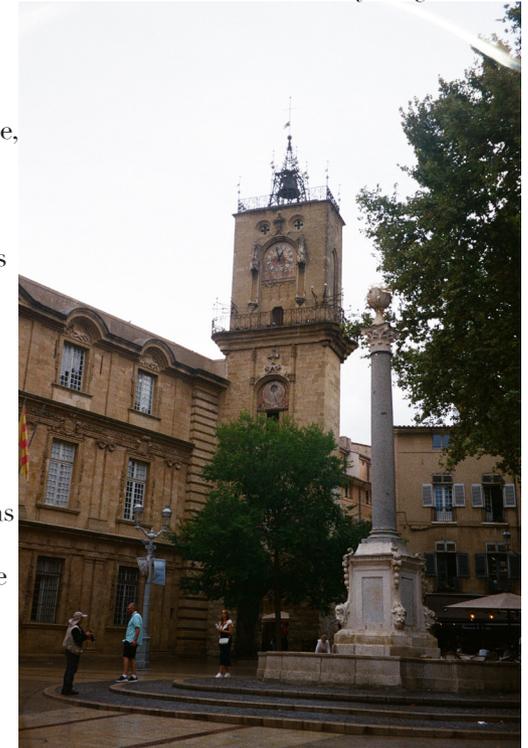
Forty minutes past the market's setup is the morning rush. Vibrant hues fill the landscape as the populace trickles out into the streets, each in pursuit of their respective schedules; often to enjoy a *café au lait* in the morning air, or to begin their habitual Saturday wander, straw basket in hand. The curtain is pulled further towards the edges of the city, as buses and bikes circulate. Pedestrians wander into the city center, all participating in the blissful dance between enamored attentiveness and absentminded

enjoyment, between eager visits to patisseries and window-shopping at fromageries. This is the color. The *mezzo-forte*. The beginning, the first brushstrokes, of what will be Aix's daily masterpiece.

Mi-matinée. Mid Morning. 10 a.m. is when the crescendo begins; the sounds of content conversation and hundreds of striding footsteps fill the stage. In this is the brightness of basking, the freshness of morning, the act of existence. It is the allowance of enjoyment; the reassurance that to be here is enough. It is a harmonization between the sunlight, the city, and all its saints. A melody begins to form.

Le midi. Midday. Two glasses of rosé clink. A young boy points toward a fruit tart in the window of a boulangerie; his mother holds his hand and smiles with assurance. Children swing their feet as they sit enjoying lunch, a woman buys a silk scarf and ties it around her neck. The city sings.

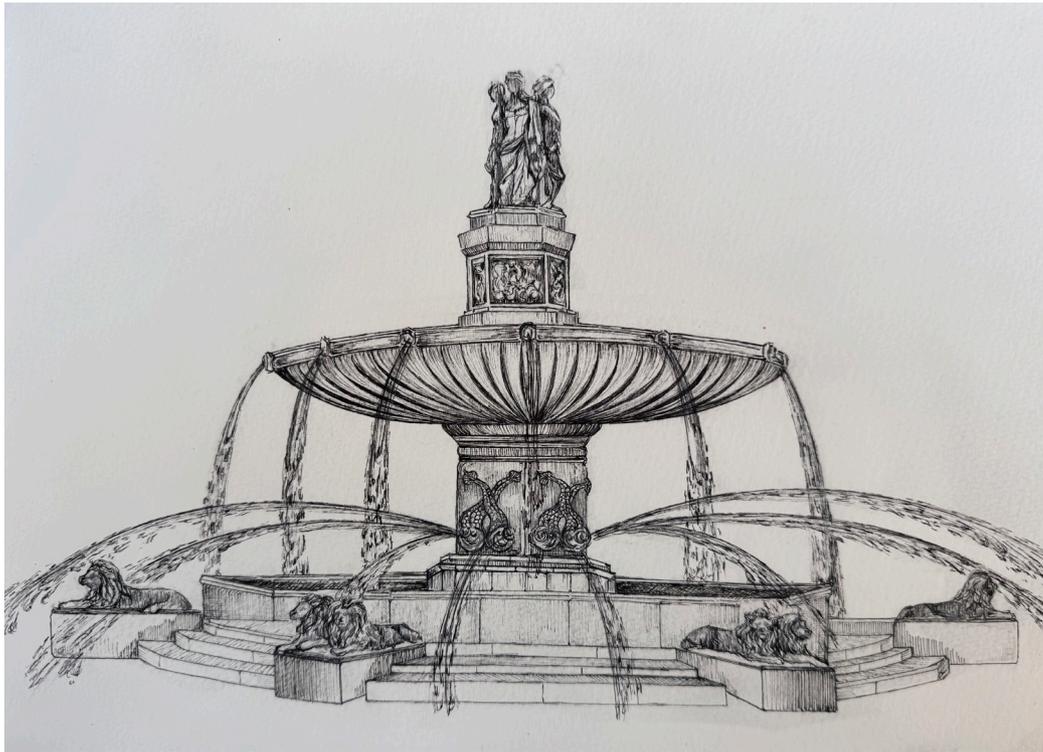
L'après-midi. The Afternoon. This chorus lasts until 1 p.m., lunchtime, when intermission approaches with calm insistence, as fervor is displayed by those early risers who now disassemble their displays and vacate their morning posts. This is the shading, the blending, the subtle emergence of detail as the crowd subsides. This is the softness of Saturday. The sun beats overhead, and a pair share an ice cream cone under the shade of a plantain tree. A brown leaf swings side to side as if it's waving goodbye, dancing in the wind one last time before falling onto the stone. The city takes a breath.



Sammy Aldover
belltower, 2024, Film Photography

Fontaine de la Rotonde

Christina Bishop



2025, Pen on Paper, 12 x 18 cm

Début de soirée. Early evening. 5 p.m. is the beginning of the mezzo-piano, the medium-softness of the evening, a dynamic that will remain steady until the sun sets and the music fades, in anticipation of tomorrow's harmonic concerto.

Soirée. Evening. At 7:23 p.m., just before its elegant exit stage left, the sun illuminates la Fontaine de la Rotonde, its water reflecting the golden light of the brilliant evening sun, creating the illusion of honey pouring out of its spouts. A pigeon dips its head in the honey then perches on the edge of the fountain, looking upward at the trees.

La nuit. Nighttime. Soon after the sun's finale, daylight fades, and the stage is dim. The moon proudly appears, welcoming the city's nightly commotion of connection, while hinting at the gradual beginning of the day's *au revoir*. The *pianissimo* begins its gentle rhythm as dusk's soft air blows through the city. Couples stroll down illuminated cobblestone streets, arms linked, in faithful conversation between loving glances. Dinnertime lasts late into the evening, and after finished plates of bœuf bourguignon, foie gras, and shared bottles of red wine, a wave of stillness seeps from the sky, as if to whisper *Bonne nuit* to each lingering lover and flock of friends. Being together was an activity, the intent, the purpose of today. Community was the concentration, and amusement, the medium.

One kiss on each cheek. "*Les bises*", they call it "*Bisous! Bisous!*" others say as they wave, parting in opposing routes. The curtains are drawn slowly, the music fades, the artist steps back, in careful examination of the harmony of color upon the canvas. The conductor lifts his arms once more, sharply signaling outwards, and the violinists lift their bows. The curtain is shut, the lights fade, the city's audience and entertainment retreat into their homes. The songbirds are asleep, and all the madeleines have been eaten. The paint begins to dry.

Togetherhness will continue tomorrow.

- Anika Hundley



Wishing to Burn

Bailey Bramer



I would wish for fire
to burn away the imperfections
I was so sure held me in place,
I was so sure stopped my bloom.

But fire never came,
and skin only grew thicker.
So I learned to grow without fire,
a birth without destruction.

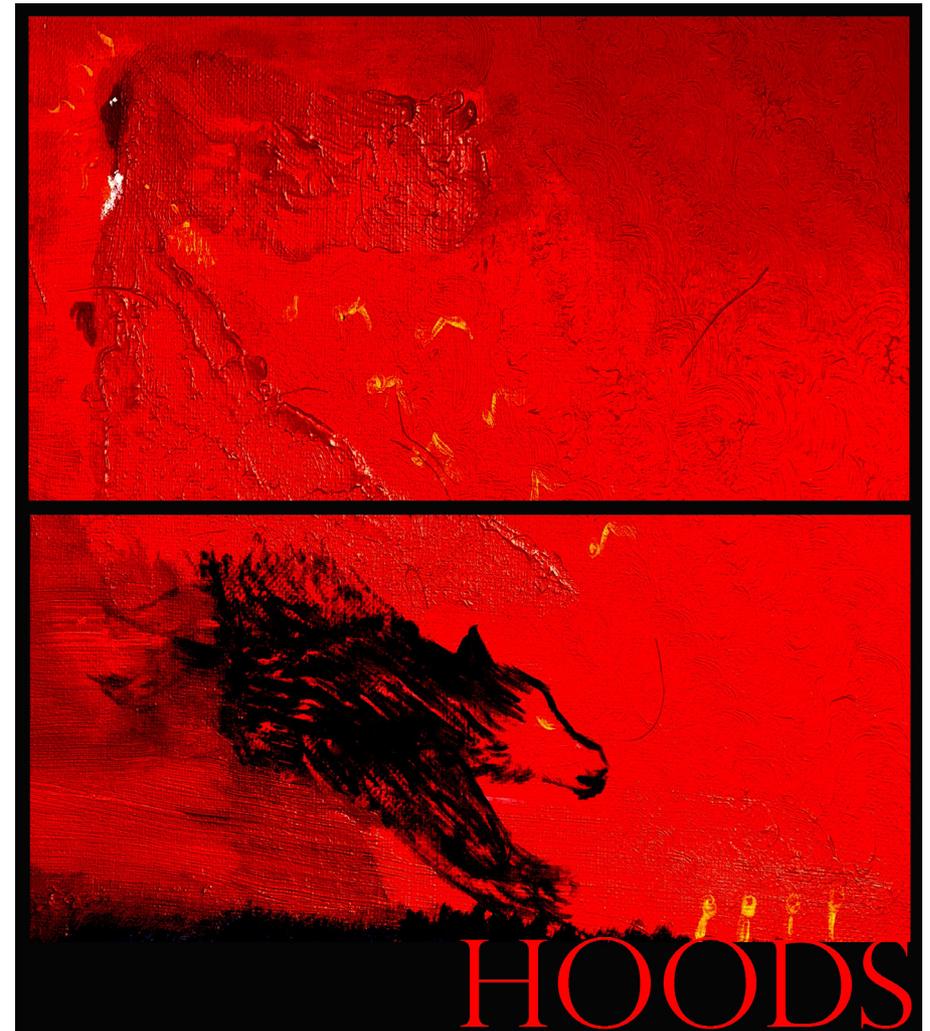


Grandmother used to console me
whenever I would cry
at burnt trees that stood
on the side of the road.

She would tell me, burning gave
new life. It awoke seeds
otherwise dormant
in pine cone wombs.

HOODS

Cheyenne Fykes



2018, Acrylic Paint, 67 x 77 cm

Le discours des sourds

Erika Neemeyer

-Bonjour, Madame, dit la mendiante. Assise sur le seuil de l'église en plein centre-ville, on la dirait invisible aux passants.

-Bonjour, Monsieur, dit-elle encore aucune réponse. Ce monsieur passe où il va, il s'empresse d'y arriver. Ou peut-être qu'il fuit les cajoleries plaintives de cette mendiante. Personne ne veut la voir vieille, cheveux gris et bouclés sous un voile, mains ridées qui portent un gobelet en papier à moitié écrasé, vide.

-Bonjour, m'dmoiselle, dit-elle, tendant le gobelet. Aucune réponse.

Personne ne veut voir la pauvreté. Personne ne veut s'en sentir responsable. Ne pas voir de mendiant, ne pas entendre de mendiant, ne pas répondre aux mendiants c'est comme ça qu'on est riche.

Une femme portant un sac Hermès s'arrête sur le seuil de l'église. Orange éclatant, signe de richesse, signe de moquerie, signe d'espoir. La mendiante se redresse.

-Bonjour, Madame.

La femme l'ignore. Elle entre dans l'église. Abandonnant le seuil et ses passants prolétaires, la mendiante la suit. Sûrement, cette femme reconnaît qu'elle a des moyens que la mendiante ne partage pas, que cette femme pourrait devrait partager avec elle.

Les pas de la femme riche résonnent. Cuir épais et poli contre le tapis rouge usé, déchiré et tricoté en patchwork. Les semelles en caoutchouc de la mendiante sont silencieuses. Ici, comme partout, la richesse fait du bruit. La richesse se fait entendre. Mais entendre par qui ?

La femme au sac Hermès s'arrête dans la nef pour regarder autour d'elle. Elle regarde les chandeliers en cristal, la chaire et les statues des saints sans intérêt. Ses yeux passent passivement au-dessus de l'autel et de ses colonnes en marbre, son crucifix en rayons de soleil. Quand elle aperçoit la charogne d'usage sur les murs et le tapis, elle fait une grimace.

-Bonjour, Madame, répète la mendiante, d'une petite voix pour rester respectueuse.

La moue de la femme au sac Hermès s'aggrave. Elle met son doigt manucuré devant sa bouche : « chut ! On est dans une église ! » Ses bracelets claquent.

.5 of a Woman

Sydra Minkoff



2025, Graphite on Paper, 42 x 59 cm

Camouflage

Christina Bishop



2025, Oil on Cardboard, 24 x 36 cm & Digital Photography

-Pardon, Madame. La mendiante s'excuse. Elle perd l'espoir que donne ce sac orange.

La femme riche soupire. Elle lève les yeux au ciel et pas de manière révérencieuse.

Le corps de la mendiante est fatigué. Il a mal au dos, le poids de la pauvreté. Elle s'assoit sur un des bancs en bois.

La femme au sac Hermès l'ignore encore. La mendiante l'observe. Elle pose le sac Hermès à terre. Elle sort de son sac majestueux un portefeuille aussi majestueux et bondé de cartes, d'espèces, de monnaie. La mendiante se redresse. L'espoir revient.

-Madame, que faites-vous? Elle s'assure de bien prononcer chaque mot les riches aiment ça.

La femme ne dit rien. De ce portefeuille elle retire un euro. Elle le met dans une boîte remplie d'autres d'euros et choisit une petite bougie votive. Elle prend une baguette d'encens et la met sous la flamme dansante d'une bougie. De cette baguette d'encens allumée, elle allume la bougie rouge. Sa flamme scintillante danse parmi des centaines d'autres éclairs qui s'entassent dans cette petite église. Elles projettent l'odeur de cire et de l'encens au-dessus de celle du vieux bâtiment.

La femme souffle sur l'encens pour l'éteindre. Elle ferme les yeux, se serre les mains.

Après un moment de silence, elle ouvre les yeux. « Je prie, » elle répond finalement.

-Pour quoi? Que désirerait une femme qui possède tout?

-Le pardon.

La mendiante décide de ne pas demander le pardon de quoi.

-Et ça coûte, ici?

La femme bourgeoise hausse les épaules. Il ne faut qu'un euro, répond-elle

-Ça veut dire que vous l'avez. Moi, je prie toujours, et ça ne me coûte rien, sauf un peu d'humilité.

48 bis

Sammy Aldover

L'autre femme n'aime pas cette remarque. Elle fait une sale tête. « Bonne journée, » dit elle, évitant le contact de ses yeux. La pauvre perd l'espoir. Apparemment le pardon de Dieu ne lui vaut qu'un euro, mais quant à la mendiante, elle ne lui vaut rien.

Les deux femmes sortent de l'église.

Mi-curieuse, mi-coléreuse, la mendiante reprend sa place sur le seuil. La femme riche s'arrête pour mettre ses lunettes de soleil.

-Vous faites quoi, maintenant ?

L'autre femme se pince les lèvres, gênée que cette pauvre lui parle encore. « Moi, je vais m'acheter un diamant. »

-Que vous ayez de l'argent pour un diamant, ça veut dire que vous devriez en partager, non ? La mendiante fait un dernier essai. Elle secoue son gobelet en papier.

La femme ricane à nouveau. « Tu t'enfonces ! Non, ça veut dire que je ne peux rien te donner. Il faut faire des économies où on peut, tu sais ? Bon, je m'en vais ! »

-Faudrait d'abord demander encore pardon à Dieu, je trouve.

-T'es qu'une vermine, toi ! Vermine !

-Bonne journée, Madame.

La femme souffle comme un boeuf et s'en va. Derrière elle persiste l'odeur de son parfum cher.

La mendiante s'assoit. « Bonjour, Monsieur, » dit elle au passant qui regardait la galère.

Il rit. Il s'en va.

Si une pèlerine prie pour un Dieu sourd, est-ce qu'elle a prié, ou tout justement souhaité ?

Si une mendiante demande de l'argent pour vivre aux piétons, et qu'ils ne répondent pas, est-ce qu'elle n'a fait aucun bruit ?

- Erika Neemeyer



2025, Film Photography



Une lettre qu'elle n'enverra jamais

Violeta Báez

Une lettre qu'elle n'enverra jamais.
Elle avale ses larmes,
prend la plume.

Ses mots, forts, dévorants,
chaque ligne, une confession.
Chaque trait,
une vérité qu'elle ne peut pas dire à voix haute.

Elle écrit le manque.
Elle écrit la douleur
qui s'accroche à ses côtés.
Elle écrit l'amour,
celui qui blesse
mais ne meurt jamais tout à fait.

Le papier écoute.
Il entend sa colère,
son espoir sauvage,
son désespoir silencieux.

Une lettre qu'elle n'enverra jamais.
Elle la plie une fois.
Elle la plie deux fois.
Elle la range,
pour épargner son cœur
de se noyer dans la douleur.

Et même si aucun œil ne la lira,
elle se sent plus légère d'avoir écrite,
une lettre qu'elle n'enverra jamais.



Touching Hands, Reaching Out

Christina Bishop



2020, Graphite on Paper, 18 x 24 cm

Simon Talbot in the Little City

Elliott Grassi-Montoya

There's something special about the little towns and villages dotted across the lands. Ones heard of only by the people fascinated by the geography and culture of a region, and not just its most popular and populous environments. I was in Tur Obel simply for work, but the little city had allured me for years.

On the early autumn morning of my meeting I stopped for a pastry and coffee. I chose to sit on a bench in the city's central lane, as it was on the way to the Hall of Records where the meeting would take place, and it was a good spot to people watch the common folk of Tur Obel. I watched among the many shops dotting the large road a fellow standing outside with a platter of cheeses, begging with his eyes for someone to try a sample, and follow further into his fromagerie, which of course no one did. Down the road, beneath a particularly large elm, pluming with yellow leaves, stood a man singing a ballad with the confidence of a jester, and the skill of a fool. I, of course, donated to his wonderful cause.



Christina Bishop, *Chamonix in Autumn*, 2025
Oil on Cardboard, 24 x 26 cm

Clearing in Le Tholonet

Maeve Gilmartin

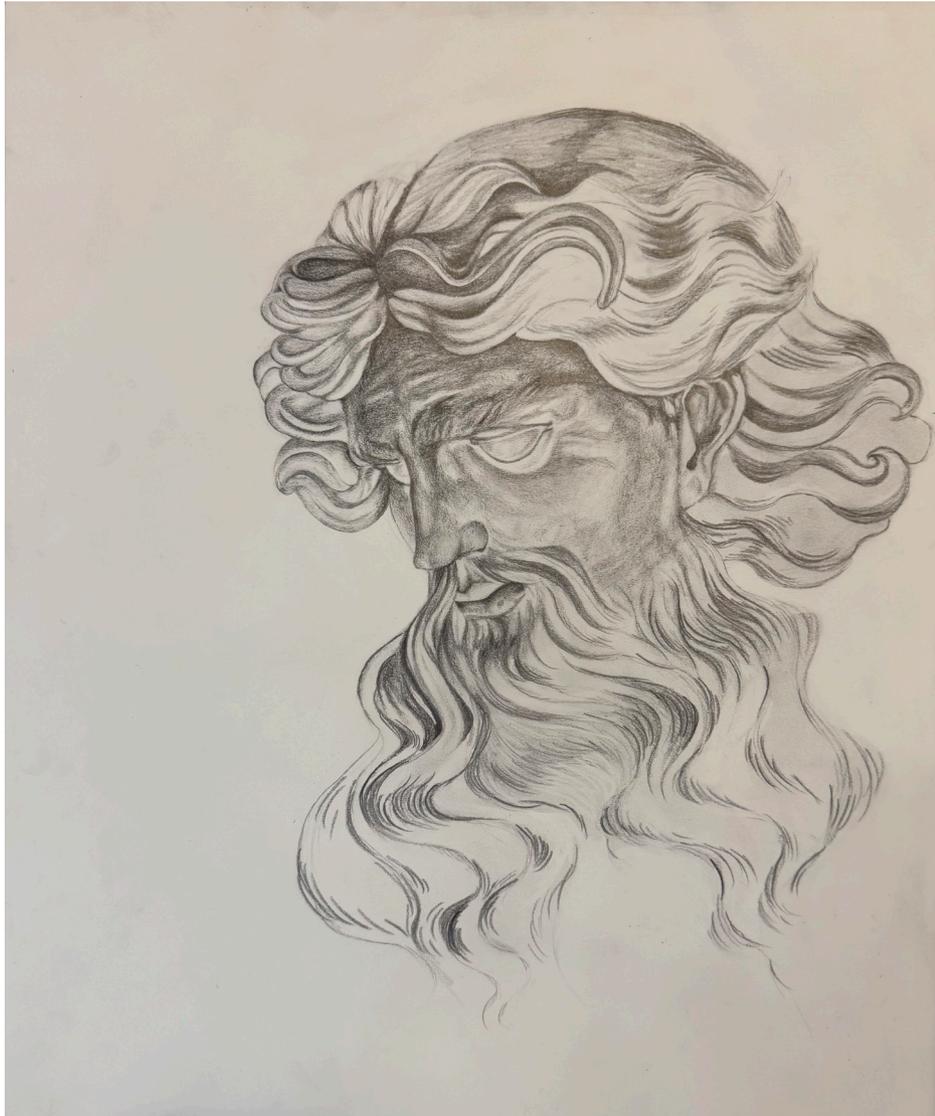


2023, Oil on Gessoed Cardboard, 8 x 8 cm



Untitled

Christina Bishop



2025, Graphite on Paper, 18 x 24 cm

By far the most eye catching creatures across the great lane were the pestering pigeons perched atop a heavy man of stone. The man was encased across the top of a broad building, a bank of some sort. He looked utterly entombed, his flesh flowing into the rock, though his face was tranquil and stern, as well as splattered with bird droppings. As the pigeons upon his head skirmished over the crumbs of crumbs, I laughed in understanding, and decided to throw one of my many little pastries to sow chaos among the avaricious critters.

And chaos I did sow, as the birds tumbled off the statue, plummeting to the cobbled ground, to get even a tiny piece of the little cake. I soon came to realise that my silly little jest came at a cost, as once I was satisfied watching the near dozen pigeons scurry for scraps of pastry it was already too late. I perhaps underestimated the problem solving capabilities of a creature that was domesticated specifically for its ability to track. The most perspective of the pigeons quickly realized that the cake must've had a source, and that the source was most certainly the old man holding a small bag of quite similar cakes. I hastily stood, and booked it down the closest alleyway, knowing that I would either need to find somewhere indoors, or finish all five of my remaining pastries before the birds caught up with me.

I continued downward through the passage, its beige walls were sporadically lined with green doors to peoples homes. At the alley's end stood an open air kebab restaurant, the smell of which was so delightfully delectable, I nearly stopped in my tracks for a prolonged whiff. But I held strong, and the fluttering coos behind me hurried my pace. I turned rightward onto a crooked and diagonal road, which soon inclined upwards towards a small square with a fountain which some teenagers sat upon. I dashed, stuffing a cake down my throat with no time to focus on its delight. Though I'm not in poor health, I am also far from my youngest and spryest years, and I struggled to climb up the steep road, the only motivation upwards, being the near pecking I felt down my back. As I reached the fountain, I peered at its bizarre depiction of a winged marmot, with strangely human eyes.

I had no time to admire the statue further, nor read its plaque, so I continued rightward towards a thankfully downhill road, quickly scarfing the next cake. Behind me, among the pigeon coos I heard laughter from

the teenagers, certainly toward my unfortunate circumstances, someday they'll understand. I continued onwards through the limestone streets which merged into a commotion of striped canopies, treasures, and trash known as the daily market. I selfishly hoped that perhaps the pigeons would become distracted by the many baked, boiled, and battered goods for sale about the stalls. Of course, the pigeons held no care for my selfish desires, and had tunnel vision for only my perfect pastries. I bumped, shoved, and 'pardon'-ed my way through the crowd of shoppers, locals and tourists alike, getting groceries for their coming lunch. Passing by a cacophony of dissimilar smells, both fishy and sugared alike, I finagled another cake from the bag to my mouth, with as much grace as I could possibly muster. As the flock flowed with zero grace through the crowd, an air of anger arose about the shoppers, directed at pigeon and me alike.

I often find the people of Tur Obel to be easygoing, but the anger of man, is alike in the majority of the world. Shouting, yelling, and unnecessarily crass insults flew across the market with as much grace as the pigeons. But angry people are quick to distraction, and once I was no longer the focus of attention, as people grew angry towards each other's anger, and a near food fight broke out, I was able to slip away, back onto the main road from which I had started.

I took the briefest moment to snatch the penultimate cake and devour it. I thought for just a second, that perhaps I had lost the horrid flock of pigeons, but around half of them soon emerged from the pandemonium. I had hardly a clue what to do, but then I remembered. My meeting! The one I was in town for, it was on this very avenue. Would they really be all too mad if I arrived two hours early? So with a reinvigorated spirit, I dashed up the road towards the grand spire of Tur Obel. The singer had begun another poorly sung ballad, and the cheesemonger held just as many samples as before, but all I could hear were the many coos behind me, and all I could see, was the hall of records ahead, with its dark baroque doors, carved with elegant flourishes. As I reached its steps, I seized the last cake and ate it, flinging the bag to the pigeons, and slamming the door behind. I had won. Though I did end up getting fined for littering a few days later.

- Elliott Grassi-Montoya

The Pigeons (series)

Violet Sibley



2025, Charcoal & Graphite on Paper, (various sizes)

Blue Coast

Trinity Brindeau



2025, Oil on Canvas, 20 x 25 cm

l'orange

elm

My head has been slanted to the right
for years now. I feel the weight of it
sink into my palm, eyes
wandering away from the table to flick
up to your lighter. A warm stomach mocks
the lingering sun on the backs
of the knees. When was the last time
you skinned yours? The waiter
at this place is
classically slow, hands
cracked and prickled
by broken glass. I say
between slow breaths
that I'm thankful for
retrospect.
Smile between sips.
Laugh before a drag.
My chin digs deeper
into my hand and it hits me like a wave.



Schuylar Daniel

l'orange

2025, Oil on Carboard
12 x 12 cm

la bouillie d'avoine

Helen Gross

La bouillie d'avoine est un aliment qui veut tout dire. Repas humble et simple, elle appartient à tous. Elle a peu de saveur ; un plat simple qui profite des parfums des fruits, du sucre, du beurre ou du miel. Offrez-lui ce que vous avez, et elle sera reconnaissante ; clémente et loyale, elle aspire à plaire à tout le monde.

Cuite dans l'eau sur le feu, la bouillie est le plat de l'égalité et de la vie paisible. Un étudiant la prépare seule au micro-ondes le matin, avant que le soleil ne se lève dans l'est. Ailleurs, sur un feu de camp, elle mijote dans une casserole entourée de jeunes rieurs, installés devant leurs tentes lors de la première nuit de leur périple en voiture. Également dans le piano de cuisine dans un restaurant ou cuisinière haut de gamme dans un palais, un chef prépare l'eau de la même manière pour ses clients. La bouillie est sucrée, et elle est disponible. Fiable. La bouillie d'avoine n'était pas votre premier choix, mais elle vous nourrit, sans protester.

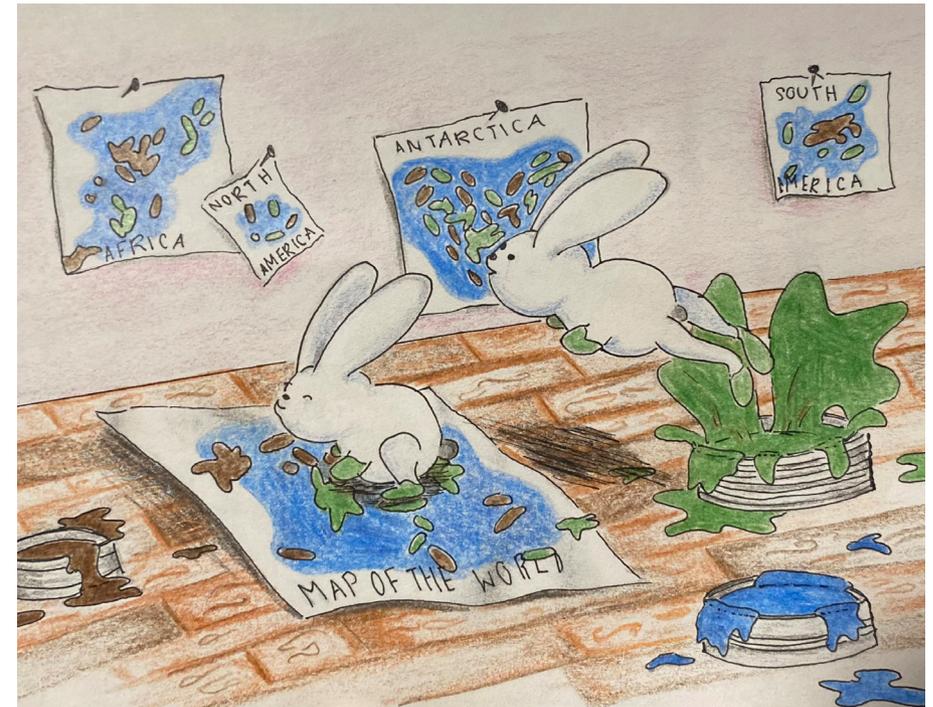
Garnissez-la de fruits de votre région. Garnissez-la du dernier peu de sucre que vous pouvez offrir. Cela ne coûte presque rien. Emportez les flocons dans un sac en plastique et savourez ce mets n'importe où. Appréciez son humilité, sa patience et son dévouement.

Être humain c'est de manger la bouillie d'avoine.
Être humain c'est d'être la bouillie d'avoine.

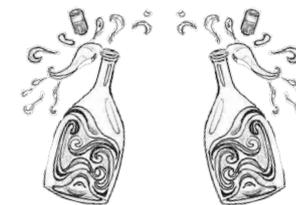


Hop, Skip, and a Jump

Helen Gross

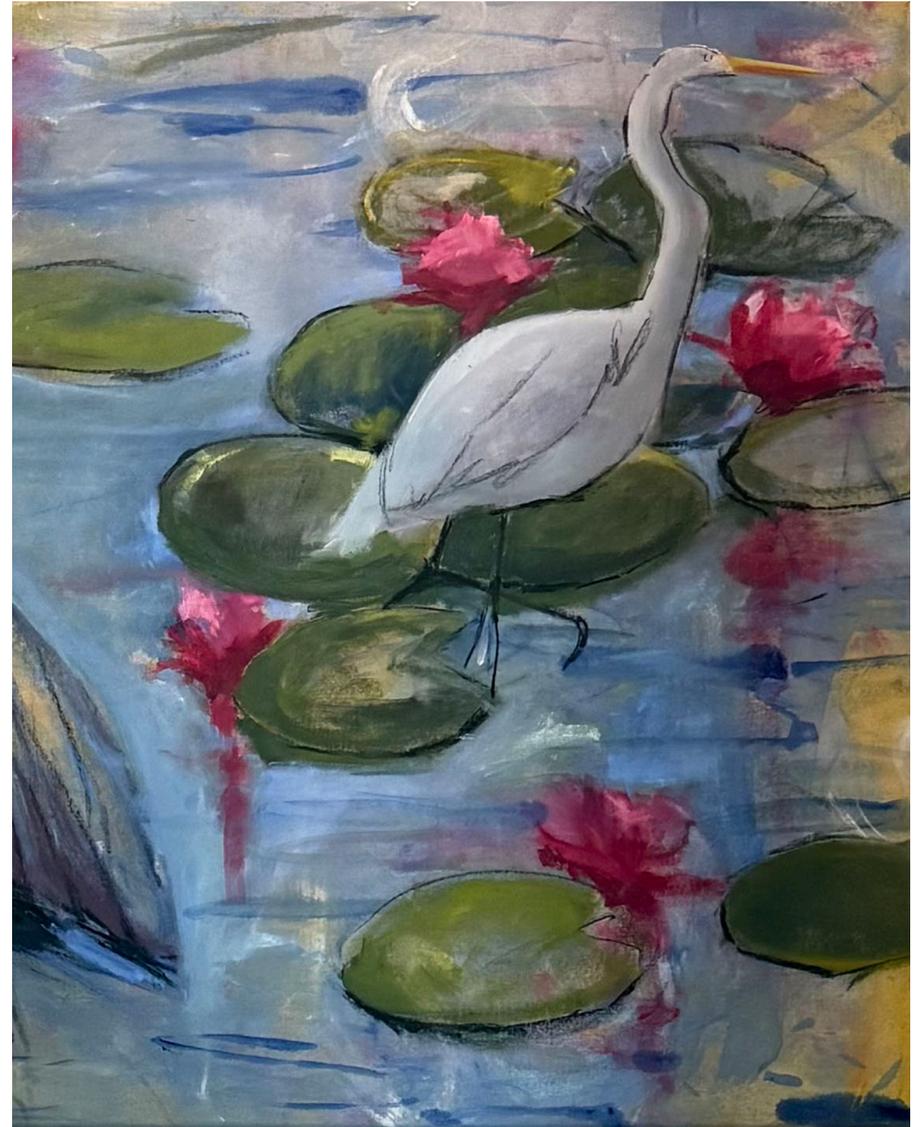


2023, Colored Pencil and Ink, 15 x 25 cm



Hérons in the Lilies

Virginia Kostmayer



2025, Oil and Charcoal on Canvas, 76.2 x 127 cm

Rose in the Garden

Iruka Nwosu

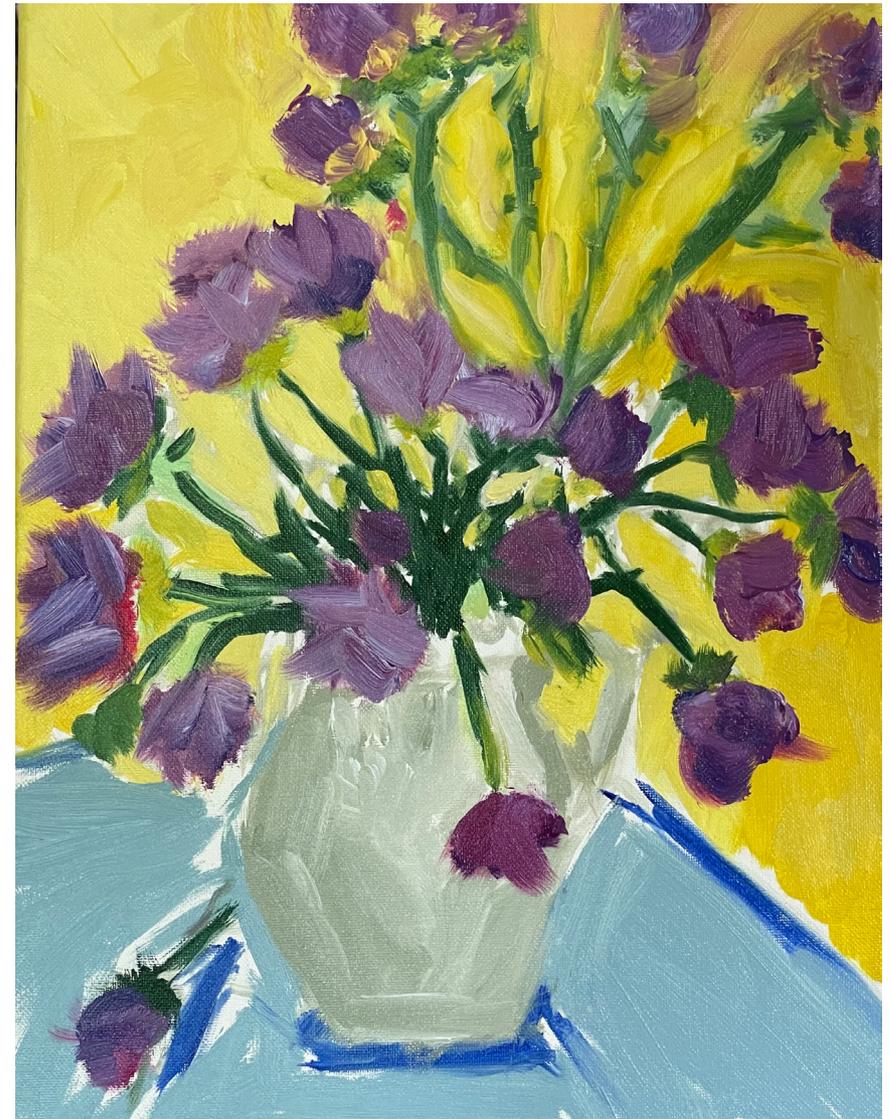
As moonlight spilt into the night sky, Rose couldn't help but say hello. Hello to the calming breeze which tickled her skin so familiarly. Hello to the stars which littered the sky in their own fashion; not dictated by anyone, or any man despite the fact that men so liked to dictate that which cannot be dictated to hold that which cannot be held. If only she were a star, Rose thought to herself. It must be such a wonderful thing to be so far away from the world, yet so revered by it.

Rose sat on the edge of a fountain swinging her feet, like she did when she was young, and like many do even in old age; it seemed that some things like the joy of elevation transcend age, as if no matter how big they got, humans liked to feel small sometimes. What a funny thought! Rose thought to herself despite the pigeon which pecked beneath her feet, lightly bumping its chest against the sides of her shoes, somewhat frantically but with not nearly enough urgency as one would expect of a pigeon. It seemed to read her mind and waddled off with laughter accordingly. *Hello to you too*, she whispered. Or maybe she should say goodbye. Of course every hello was just an RSVP for a goodbye, a promise of an ending, and surprisingly one of the few promises that hurts less when it's broken. Goodbye then, she decided. Goodbye to the light and goodbye to the sound of chatter in the streets, to the people who loitered in the garden, or maybe it would be more appropriate to say the person who loitered in the garden, because truth be told out of everyone, only one person mattered to Rose; at least in this moment, this night, this darkness in which revelations were beginning to dawn upon her.

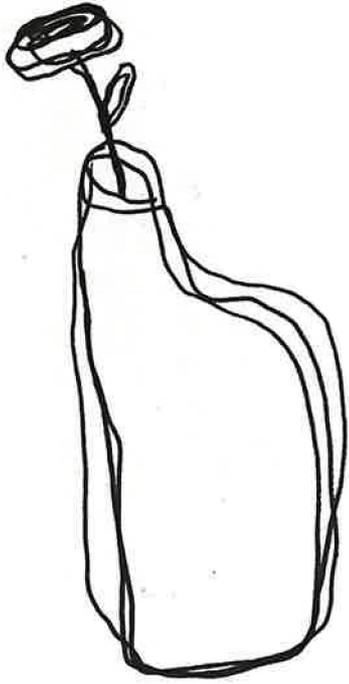
In the morning, when the light returned and the sounds of people in the street drowned out her own thoughts, she might forget this person: Steven Stewart. Ew! His name stung like a poison, even though mere hours ago it seemed to rattle around in her brain like a melody, to sing to her like the birds sing to the sky in the morning. Now this was a truly funny thought: how quickly things change. Rose looked to her feet and her eyes met dirt, the pigeon was nowhere to be seen now, even though

Thistles in Jill's Studio

Alessia Redwine



2023, Oil on Canvas, 30.5 x 41 cm



breadcrumbs and the odd scrap of salami dotted the grass—the remains of what looked to be a delicious sandwich, one that she would have probably packed for herself to fuel her mind while she and *him* sat in the garden and watched people go about their lives. Of course the pigeon had missed all the good parts, of course he had pecked only at the dirt and the grass, causing a ruckus and reaping no benefits, and of course he had left Rose all alone.

She slumped into the fountain, to physically prevent herself from taking any other melodramatic action and so that she could at least be held by something if not by Steven. There was no water pouring from the fountain and no water in the fountain; it had been empty, completely dry for the better part of the week, and already the world had adjusted. People and animals alike

replaced the water, miraculously managing to be just as energetic and alive as the cascades that once poured down from the top of the fountain. Rose wedged herself, with more effort than one would think, between the base of the fountain and its outer edge. She was enveloped by cold stone, smooth and completely unnotable, she thought as her fingers stretched out against the ledge of the fountain. There was not much she could say about the stone, which was undoubtedly unforgiving in nature, as each touch left a lasting impression of cold, like the familiar breeze that was very quickly becoming unfamiliar as it dropped in temperature, although the difference between the stone and the breeze was that Rose, as warm as one could be in the middle of an autumn night, could lend the stone some of her warmth—and of course the fountain would steal it, just as it seemed that everything and everyone was stealing her joy lately—whereas the breeze would pass her by and pay her no attention; it would stop for nothing, not even her. Goodbye warmth, she sighed. Goodbye pigeon, goodbye stone, goodbye

Steven. All Rose could hope was that she would not be forgotten—as this fountain and its unremarkable stone surely would. She hoped to make her mark on the world, as did everyone, but hours ago she had hoped to make it with Steven, and now she was alone; a flower trying to plant her roots in stone.

Moonlight now completely filled the sky. It was still dark and much of the park was obscured, but voices could be heard from afar as people walked, or rather stumbled, home from the bars, the clubs, the parties, the celebrations of life and sometimes death, of friendship and of love; love, which Rose could now admit to herself she hadn't felt for some time; what she felt with Steven was the love of past love, which is a suitable substitute for a while until nights like this, where it becomes clear that sometimes the love of past love is really an absence of current love. Surprisingly, Rose was not sad. What was the point of mourning something that had died long ago? she thought, starting to swing her feet again, not realizing when or why she had ever stopped, or why she had ever let someone steal part of herself.

Rose unearthed herself from the fountain as she heard the squeal of the train, an unusual sound at this time of night, but one that was not unwelcome. She looked through the gate of the garden towards the tracks. A small train, white and blue, like stars in the night sky, sped along, carrying people and their stories. Rose stood in the grass, a witness to their adventures, and remembered how Steven would talk about their life, their adventures.

“Don't worry,” he'd start, his voice anything but soothing, “in a few years, when I own my own company, you won't have to worry about a thing. I'll buy the world and let you have a piece.”

Of course, “their” adventures were Steven's adventures and Steven's adventures only. Rose was the afterthought, the trophy wife, the woman that would be happy forfeiting her own life so that Steven could live his to the fullest. No thank you! Just as the train had come and gone, so did Steven. He was gone from her mind. She lay down in the grass, to be with herself, with the Earth; maybe if she lay here long enough, she thought, she could plant her roots and begin to grow again.

So she lay for hours and hours, watching and listening to the world, allowing the night to fully envelop her. It struck her



Just the Beginning

Christina Bishop



2025, Oil on Cardboard, 8 x 8 cm

that she didn't know herself at all; she knew the basics, her favorite color, her favorite food, her favorite pair of pants that went with every shirt; but nothing more. It seemed that despite all facts and logic it was possible to grow apart from yourself and now every next step was an enigma. Where would she go when she left the garden? Left or right, home or elsewhere? Would she run to familiarity or wander in the unknown? Thoughts flooded her mind.

When the moonlight was starting to wane, something that would only be noticeable to someone who had been watching the sky for hours, she rose. She turned back, reluctantly, towards the fountain, now feeling sore from the time she had spent cocooned inside of it. Out of everything in the garden, it suddenly seemed to shine the brightest; a beacon of light in a sea of dark green leaves and grass. Something on the ledge of the fountain caught her eye. It was a bouquet of flowers, not as extravagant as one might think, but rather a collection of beheaded wildflowers, strewn about on the ledge, but undoubtedly placed by someone, maybe even the pigeon, Rose joked with herself. She picked up the flowers, tossing them up and down. She couldn't remember the last time she had been given a bouquet of flowers, and yet the world had given her one right then; she hadn't had to ask or beg or hint that she wanted it, it was just given to her, like one would give a friend flowers after a performance; and hadn't she performed after all? Hadn't she spent years performing for Steven, performing for the world, so that everyone would think they were the perfect couple? She stood alone in the garden, her stage, with her ears perked, listening for the sound of applause, or entertained whistles, maybe laughter, or even angry boos, but there was no one in the audience; only Rose.

Bouquet in hand, she bowed for herself. She hadn't known it until this moment, but she was her only audience. Rose tossed the flowers aside, into the fountain, and she clapped for herself. As she left the garden, weak streams of daylight broke through the clouds. In the fountain, the flowers bathed in sunlight and began to shrivel; beautifully brittle.

- Iruka Nwosu



Marseille

Trinity Brindeau



2025, Charcoal on Paper, 59.4 x 84.1 cm



The Sea, My Father

Bailey Bramer

sand castle girl
saltwater father
wash her away with your tide

take what she's built
with your wetted sand
and pull it back to hide

sand castle girl
saltwater father
hit her again with your wave

knock her down low
perhaps just to show
the sun won't shine again



Sammy Aldover, *coasting home*, 2023, Film Photography

Dreams

Lilia Myers

In my dreams there is a girl dancing in a cascading ballgown with her love on the Cours Mirabeau. It's the middle of the night, empty enough that they have room, no one pays them any mind, or if they do, the girl does not care. She's too wrapped up in the moment, her moment, in the arms of someone who cares about her, in the steps she knows by heart. It's a waltz, though there's no music to accompany it. The girl and her love don't mind. They keep time with each other, they know each other well enough to read when the next step is, recognizing the signs from her dance partner. Her love spins and dips her. She smiles at him. She glides through the moves with ease. They keep waltzing into the night.

Most people in their 20s who choose to study abroad don't view it as their last chance to travel. Most people studying abroad don't take up a portion of their suitcase with a cane, braces for multiple parts of their body, boxes of tape, medicines, lidocaine patches, and a prayer that it would be okay. Most people aren't more held together with spit and glue than joints and ligaments. Most people studying abroad have room in their suitcase for an extra going-out outfit or stuffed animal or books from home.

I knew it was a risk, travelling. I felt it in my bones, stepping off the plane in Belgium, nauseous from the pain of sitting still for 7 hours, dizzy from lack of sleep, panicked because the time on my ticket and the gate say different things. I knew it was a risk, but I did it anyway.

In my dreams I'm the lead in a musical. I haven't performed like that in years. I haven't been able to. I can't guarantee consistency in my physical ability. In my dreams I'm climbing ladder after ladder, doing my job as a professional in the theater. In the dream there aren't bulky braces knocking me off balance and hitting the rungs, causing my supervisor to worry if I will be a liability. In my dreams I do my job, and I do it well. In my dreams I'm independent, and at peace.



Framing

Elinor Gass



2025, Digital Photography

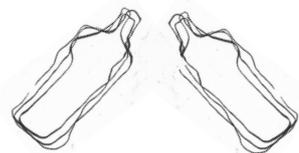
Professionally, I'm a stage manager. This isn't an exaggeration, or aspiration, this is something I've been paid to do. There's something incredibly powerful about being feminine-presenting, walking into a room with combat boots and a cane, and still being the most commanding presence there. When I'm not in a show I work in the scene shop, in lighting, I spend time as a sorority girl, or modeling. My social media is full of photos taken with my cane just out of frame, or set aside for the day. I recognize that I am lucky that I can do that. That I can put on tape or a brace and disguise it with my outfit rather than having to rely on visible indicators. That I can still climb ladders and carry stage lights with long-practiced ease most days. I suppose I should be grateful I can do any of it at all.

In my dreams there's a girl expertly commanding a small sail boat. She easily balances on the bow, looking out over the sea. She has the strength to make the adjustments needed to tack, in full control of the vessel. She is comfortable there. She doesn't lose her balance from the waves. It's easy for her.

When I was in high school I was the captain of my varsity cheer team. When I was in my first year of college I ended up on crutches once a month. I spent the following summer in two knee braces. I got my first cane shortly after.

If you've never felt yourself fall apart, there're no words to describe it. To know there're things you once loved, that you may never be able to do again. To watch yourself go from 14 hour days to 3 hour days that still wipe you out.

We went hiking in Cassis not long after I arrived in Aix. I could barely walk for the next week, struggling to get to classes. But how can I not push myself to do all I can when I do not know how long I'll be able to get up the mountain at all.



In my dreams I do so much that my joints have stopped letting me. In my dreams I function perfectly, as expected. But dreams aren't meant to be realistic. They are unachievable fantasies. I can still dance, I can still perform, I can still work, I can still sail, but there are limitations. Limitations don't make me lesser, they just mean that it's time for my dreams to change.

There's a clock ticking over my head. I watch each year as I get worse. But that doesn't mean the time is worthless. I want to do as much as I can, and see all there is to before the clock runs out. And if that means climbing a mountain in the French countryside with a cane and two knee braces, so be it. Until I can no longer walk at all, I will not be stopped from doing all that I can.

- Lilia Myers



Elinor Gass, *Contemplation*, 2025, Digital Photography

Alluring Aix

(falling in love)

Madeline Paige

A beauty hard to describe
is appealing to all.

To the birds
the city is filled with breezy wind
the wind is filled with the smell of croissants
the people are filled with the croissants.

The people are in love with Aix from
the lively city music to
the free spirit to
the beautiful outfits.
The long skirts blowing in the wind.

I wander
I wonder
I walk into stores
and say Bonjour.

There is magic
in these streets

beautiful
alluring
aspects of Aix
that are unlike any other.
The fountains are gorgeous
and historical
and unreal

so unreal
I feel like time is slowed down just for me
to take it in

I am in love with Aix
Oh my sweet, alluring Aix



Sammy Aldover
rainy streets
2025, Film Photography

Anxitété

Amélie Kaufman

Mon cœur commence à battre encore plus vite
Un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq, sept, six, huit, dix, neuf, onze, vingt.
Ce que j'essaye pour me calmer ne marche point
Ma peau est froide mais je sens une chaleur violente.

Toutes les méthodes m'échappent, ma gorge est fermée.
Je suis étouffée, asphyxiée, détenue
Dans ma propre prison de cerveau verrouillé.

C'est comme si j'étais ici visible et nue
Ma langue enfle et je n'sais pas comment la lâcher
Quand elle enveloppe mon cerveau comme un son aigu,
Je sais que je ne peux pas être soulagée.

Je panique et je me plains et mon corps s'enflamme
Un nœud se forme donc dans mes intestins, et
Mon estomac se retourne plusieurs fois, et
Dans un moment de silence tu me condamnes.



Sammy Aldover, *waiting*, 2025, Film Photography

Pigeons

Lilia Myers

Have you ever noticed there aren't any pigeons flying around at night? Do you ever wonder where they all go? I assume they are asleep somewhere away from prying eyes, resting after a long day of fiending after *pain au chocolat* and attempting to trip unsuspecting tourists, or whatever else it is that pigeons do. They like to disappear. They make a considerable impact on the ecosystem of the city... and then every night they are gone as if they were never there. I find it lonely, walking around at night. I miss my feathered friends.

I do not know what time it is, exactly, when all the pigeons leave. There is no mass migration, hundreds of birds in the sky every night. There are no feathers blocking out the remaining rays of the sun. When the restaurants have all cleared out, and everyone is settling into their nights, the pigeons, too, have left.

Earlier in the evening, at approximately 6:45, when the sky was still bright blue, the sun only beginning to tilt towards the horizon, a pigeon landed on top of the opera house. Perhaps he, too, wanted to listen to Beethoven's *Triple Concerto* before the opera started. It's easy to get lost in the music. The violin and the cello go from dance to sword fight in an instant, the bows dueling swords that will never touch. They sing, they scream, the musicians never opening their mouths. The pianist fights them both, joining the rise and fall, the cacophony of noise that has everyone so entranced.

The first movement ends, and the second begins. This one is quieter, at least in parts. It forces the audience to lean in close, the violin just a whisper. It hums in conversation with the other two instruments, backed by the orchestra. The audience dares not breathe, afraid to break the tension of centuries-old precision.

The pigeons do not hold the music in the same regard. In that quietest moment, two pigeons begin to fight. They had been perched on a gutter, and I suppose it was a dispute over who got the prime spot to view the concert, but they made quite the ruckus. Even the violinist on stage was glancing at them. Of course, more notable than the two battling birds are the rows and rows of others. Every windowsill is lined with pigeons fascinated with the classical music being performed for them. I commented to my friend on the phone later that being a pigeon in an opera house may just be my dream job.

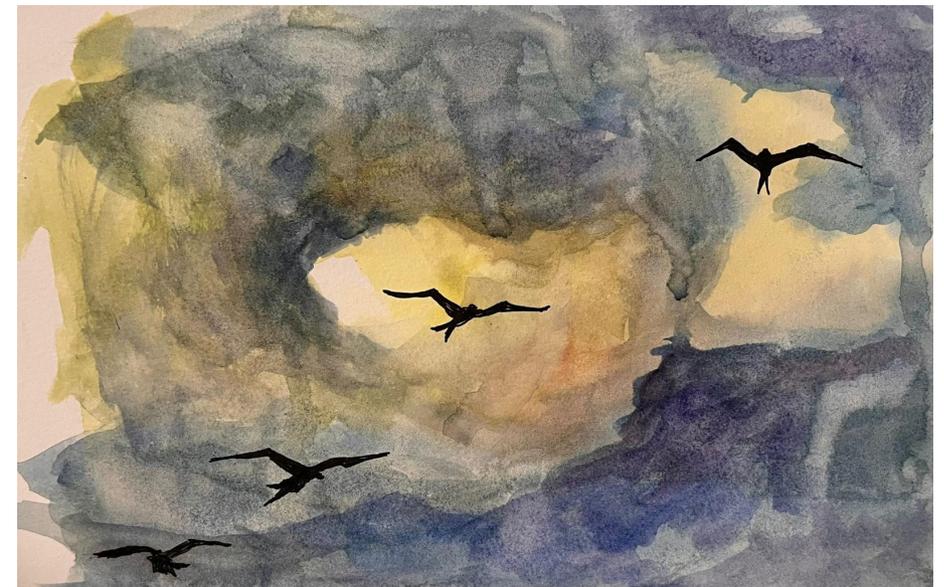


I do not know exactly where my love for pigeons really all birds comes from. I think it started as a running joke with my friends from home. The origin does not really matter. It just means I send them a daily pigeon photo now. Something to let them know I still love them and am thinking about them despite the time difference and distance.

By this time, the sky is a deep azure. Not quite night, but somewhere mid-sunset when you cannot see the sun or the colors in the sky. The pigeons are still out in droves. We've reached the *entr'acte*. It is 7:45 now. I can see a singular star in the deep blue of the sky. I am still caught up in how enchanting the evening has been. It is cold, but not uncomfortable, sitting on the wooden chairs in the outdoor theater. To me, there is nothing better than getting to dress up and listen to live music. It is something I believe everyone should experience at least once in their lives.

The next section of the performance starts, and this time, when the house lights turn off, it feels dark. It is an opera now, a story about Icarus.

Immediately, I am enraptured. It is hard to drag my attention away from the full paintings and grandiose statues of mythological characters that cover the stage or the intricate lighting design that highlights the actors. I cannot help but compare what I see to my experience working in American theaters - where I found a community of friends. People who I wish I could send photos or recordings of this, if only to get their take.



Maeve Gilmartin, *birds in the sun*, 2025
Watercolor & Micropen on Paper, 17.8 x 23.5 cm

Every once and while, there is a flap of wings. Not only that of Icarus's descent - though almost all my attention is taken by the wax feathers making their way down the stage - but also the greens, purples, and grays of the pigeons leaving the opera house, retiring to wherever it is that pigeons go in the evenings. I do not know when the pigeon who was on top of the stage left, or when the last one on the windowsill departed. All I know is that by the time we reached the end of act one, the only wings in the theater were made of wax and stone, and the world was shrouded in a deep purple.

It's 10 P.M. leaving, after dancers and soloist musicians. Not too late, but it's properly dark now, the stars out in full force where once birds dotted the sky. The stars are identifiable from anywhere in the world and yet the sky looks so different here. No matter how hard you try you can not stargaze in Washington, D.C.

There is a real chill in the air, patrons of all ages wrapping their coats closer around them as they walk out, chatting about their thoughts on the show. There is not a bird in sight, wax or living, only feathers they dropped in their haste. No quiet "coo" accompanies the chatter filling the streets.

I have a million thoughts in my head about the show; the tech they used, the singing, the writing. My best friend was raised by an opera singer. I want to call her, tell her all about the show, but for her it's midday, and she's still out with her friends. It's okay, we will talk soon. Perhaps the pigeons, who are long gone by now, are sad they missed the end of the show. Maybe next time the actors could perform earlier, or the pigeons could stay later instead of following Icarus into the sun. Of course, they do not know that is what happened, they did not see the end of the show, and that's tragic, isn't it? That they missed it?



Violet Sibley, *The Pigeons (series)*, 2025,
Charcoal & Graphite on Paper, 7.6 x 12.7 cm

It is impossible to see everything, and yet, don't you sometimes want to be everywhere at once? Travel the world and still see your best friend's play? But even when live streamed, Act 2 starts at 3 A.M. and you can't always force yourself to stay up. Even the pigeons rest.

It hurts, being so far away from anyone and everyone I have ever loved, surrounded by the small pieces they have left with me. Do you think Daedalus collected the fallen feathers, too? Do we not all look for little pieces of those we love to hold onto? Friendship bracelets line my wrists, matching keychains weigh down my pockets and pigeon photos fill up my storage.

Still, they must go away at some point, friends and pigeons alike. To rest, to explore. To pursue their dreams. But the difference between pigeons and friends is that one is only a phone call away. While they may have left their metaphorical feathers with me, they also left their hearts, and a promise to call. Pigeons disappear every night, and I simply trust they will return, much like my friends have done with me after numerous guarantees and "see you soon"s. Everyday, when I see the pigeons again, I am just as happy as the day before. I can only hope my friends feel the same when I finally return to them as well.



- Lilia Myers

Tunisian Cat

Virginia Kostmayer



2025, Oil on Canvas, 25.4 x 25.4 cm

Si j'étais un chat

Adélaïde Walton

Si j'étais un chat, tout serait merveilleux.
Si j'étais un chat, je pourrais être paresseux,
et si j'étais un chat, je serais mystérieux.

J'observerais silencieusement les personnes
lorsqu'ils franchissent les portes vitrées,
leurs yeux s'illuminent lorsqu'ils me voient,
plus que lorsqu'ils reçoivent leur café.

Ces humains idiots, ils ont l'air si perdus,
des mains parcourent ma fourrure, encore et encore,
Je me retourne, ils me caressent le ventre,
ils cherchent clairement du réconfort auprès de moi.

Je grimperais sur chaque perchoir sur les murs,
Je m'allongerais sur les fauteuils rembourrés,
Je fermerais mes yeux plissés et respirerais,
respirerais l'odeur des grains de café.

J'observe chaque chat en sirotant mon café -
ils se prélassent, se promènent, se délectent de l'attention,
J'aimerais pouvoir rester ici avec eux,
Si seulement j'étais un chat, la vie serait un jeu.



Le Pastel & Chant du Monde

Adélaïde Walton

LE PASTEL

La couleur de l'automne est le café
Immobile, dans sa tasse, il attend
Il commence par une couleur brun foncé
jusqu'à ce que sa surface soit touchée par le lait

Tourne,
tourne,
tourne
Les couleurs s'entremêlent
Marron et blanc, blanc et marron,
Marron clair, caramel, orange

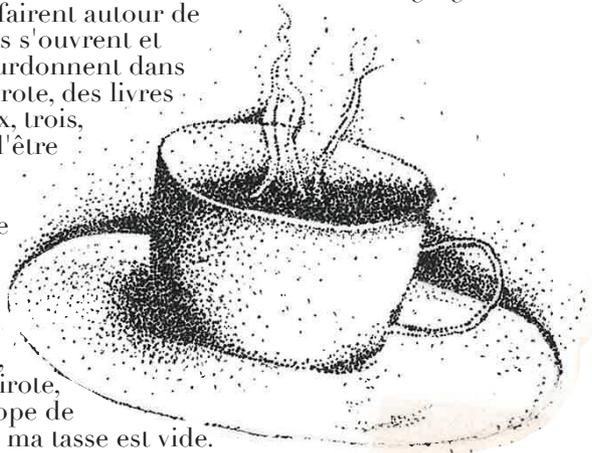
La saison du changement :
Les feuilles tombent, la température chute -
Je dis adieu aux souvenirs qui s'estompent
Je m'enveloppe dans la chaleur d'un avenir inconnu

Un visage familier dans ce café
M'apporte un réconfort inattendu
Chaque semaine, nous nous connaissons davantage
Malgré le changement qui nous entoure

Je m'assois dans mon confortable fauteuil bleu
Le serveur sourit avec sympathie,
car bientôt ce sera l'hiver,
mais d'ici là, je serai parti

CHANT DU MONDE

Je m'assois, je sirote, je sirote, j'écris, le café chaud me recouvre la gorge,
je sirote, je regarde, les gens s'affairent autour de
moi, entrent et sortent, les portes s'ouvrent et
se ferment, les mots français bourdonnent dans
l'air, je sirote, j'écris encore, je sirote, des livres
éparpillés sur les tables, un, deux, trois,
suppliant d'être vus, d'être lus, d'être
entendus, je sirote, je sens la
connaissance de ceux qui sont
devant moi, leur présence lourde
dans la pièce, quatre, cinq, six,
un livre à gauche, un autre à
droite, je sirote, j'écris, une
personne me sourit, il est facile
de sourire quand on est assis ici,
le temps passe vite, je sirote, je sirote,
je sirote, un drôle de son s'échappe de
mes lèvres, quel est ce son ? ah ! ma tasse est vide.



Nature Morte & Rotten Fig

Christina Bishop



2025, Oil on Cardboard, 12 x 18 cm



2025, Oil on Cardboard, 8 x 8 cm

The Machine

Christian W. Poole

“I’m sorry sir, but check-in isn’t until 3:00pm, you’re going to have to wait. Like I said earlier, you can wait here in the lobby or you can walk to the nearby parks if you wish. I can give you a map to help you look around if you would like. Today is lovely.” She was being serious, I didn’t want to believe her at first but when she repeated herself I knew it was true, the hotel wasn’t ready to take me yet. It’s frustrating and I’m frustrated. Not at the front desk clerk, no she’s nice and just doing her job. I’m frustrated at the timing of it all really. I did my nine hour flight and took the bus from Marseille. I was so ready to just have a room to myself where I could lay down and stretch my legs. I’d hardly slept on any of those flights either so the thought of sleep was overwhelmingly dragging my body to the concept of a bed. But I had to take those desires and place them elsewhere as I moved my suitcase out of the building. I had to find somewhere to sit for the next few hours. But I had to be careful because I couldn’t let my sleep catch up to me if I sat down somewhere too comfortable for too long. I did that on a bus once and woke up on the clear other side of town. What a ride that was huh? I chuckled to myself thinking back on the memory. Glad I learned my lesson.

I was told that the city of Aix-en-Provence was known for its fountains and now that I got a chance to look at them, I was not disappointed. I rolled my suitcase to the right of the bench I had positioned myself on to observe one of these many fountains. I made sure to not sit too comfortably because if I overly admired the architecture, I could feel myself slip into the sleepy trance that took me on that bus so many nights ago. My eyes now darted from between every curve and chisel mark in the fountains foundation, thinking of how skilled craftsmen were able to see such a vision in the stones that these designs were once carved out of. To have such talent is something that I could only marvel at, knowing that my hands were not as talented. Even just looking at the carvings I could feel my fingers rubbing the edges of the stone despite not actually touching them. This attention to detail triggered my muscle memory in a way that I was unfamiliar with as I’ve never been a stonemason. How many years of practice must go into someone’s work to invoke such a feeling in me? Surely more than I’ve ever done. As I continued to lose myself in the artwork I couldn’t help but notice that my peripheral attention kept getting drawn away by something else. I gave in, what could be so unique that it was making my eyesight cheat on this fountain that I had suddenly fallen in love with? Any person could’ve bet money on a guess for what I saw and they would’ve lost that money. Sitting across the fountain, next to another bench was a fortune telling machine.

I had to rub my eyes to make sure that my fatigued brain wasn’t playing a trick on me. That happens sometimes when I get too tired, I’ll see things. Nothing as crazy as this, but if I go without sleep for over a day I will catch glimpses of things moving at the ends of my vision. Typically they’re black streaks that make me think a person has sprinted by me, a slight scare makes me jump sometimes. I get paranoid when I don’t sleep, like I’m an animal with an enhanced flight or fight mode. But this machine wasn’t that, this was real. As real as the fountain and the bench sitting next to it. People walked past it, obscuring its view of me but nobody interacted with it. Maybe it’s been sitting here in Aix for many years - a local attraction, I wouldn’t know, I’m not a local like these people. No, this felt very out of place. I got up off the bench, grabbed my rolling suitcase by one hand and curiously approached the machine. It bore many similarities to the old “Zoltar” fortune telling machines that my parents would see at carnivals back in the day, there was one in pretty bad condition at an antique shop back home. The man inside the box looked similar enough to what I remember. The caricaturized Turkish man with his Ottoman style hat and mustache? Was he supposed to be Turkish? I don’t know, he’s definitely a dated model with a hint of cultural appropriation. His glass box was the same as the old machines with chipped red painted wood that made up the lower half. There were noticeable differences here however. And what caught my eye the most was the writing on the front. Typically where that classic “Zoltar” title would be was some scribbled language in yellow script. I couldn’t make out what it said, it looked nothing like any language that I’ve ever seen, not Turkish, not Arabic, hell maybe not even human. Oddly enough I didn’t dwell on it. What I did focus on was trying to turn it on, I wanted to see if I could get some sort of fortune out of this animatronic man. Oddly enough, there was no power cord. Was it internally powered with a battery or something? Seems like an impressive upgrade for a machine with such a decayed case, that didn’t feel right. There also wasn’t a coin slot or even a bill slot where I would typically pay to have some fortune given to me. In its place was a hole about the size of my hand. Next to it was a dispenser for a possible paper fortune so I had to do something to have this man predict my future, or whatever a fortune does. Maybe he’d tell me that I won \$1000, that’s technically a fortune is it not? I had so many questions surrounding this machine, maybe he’d have answers for me.



Against my best judgement, partially due to my tired rationality, I placed my hand palm-down into the open slot. If I had any sleep I would've likely not stuck my hand into a mystery machine but I wanted to get somewhere with this man and the slot was conveniently the size of a hand. Maybe it scanned my finger prints, or a laser viewed my palm and read a fortune like an in-person fortune teller? Yet again, that felt too advanced for this simple looking box. Maybe my hand wasn't even supposed to go into it, maybe I placed the dollar bill in that slot? Yeah, what was I thinking? That made way more sense, how impulsive was I to just stick a body part of mine into a mystery machine like th-?

"Ow! Fuck!"

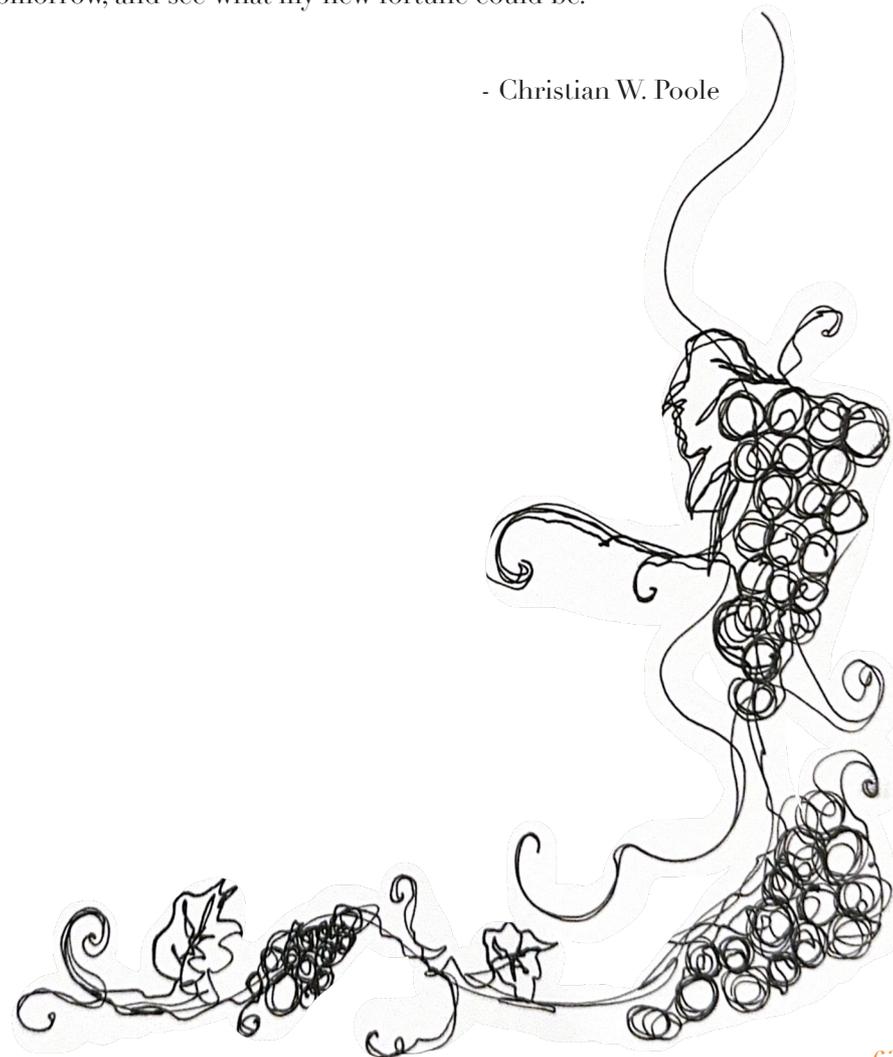
My rapid thoughts were interrupted by the feeling of my finger being pricked by a needle that I couldn't see deep within the machine. Just like a blood test at the doctors only that this came as a surprise and hurt a good bit more. I yanked my hand from the machine, and held my pointer finger in my fist. I was bleeding, but not bad in any sense. I didn't linger on the pain for long. I quickly became distracted as the man within the machine lit up in animation. His eyes glowed red and the box emitted entrancing music, ominous really. His mouth didn't move but his body jerked around in weird robotic motion while the music grew louder around me. My eyes widened to take in the whole scene that I was witnessing. I felt paralyzed by shock, only for him to turn off completely. Eyes dim again, head resuming the original position and the music stopping. His display and dance had spontaneously ended as if I'd ripped the power cord out of a TV while watching a movie. As I stood there for a beat, processing the entire event that I activated, the little paper slot dispensed a piece. My fortune? I tore it from the machine and turned it over to read, "*Return to the hotel.*"

Following its directions, I once again grabbed my suitcase and made my way to the hotel. It wasn't far and that whole ordeal couldn't have been more than half an hour? Once I made it, I walked right back through the front door and approached the same receptionist who had turned me away not so long ago. She had that classic customer service smile across her face, not in a bad way by any means, just the classic smile you put on at work. She was happy to see me again, clearly recognizing me from earlier. As I approached the desk she spoke first, "Welcome back sir. Great news, due to some spontaneous changes your room is available a little earlier than expected."



"Thank you." I said plainly, I didn't question it. I felt as though that fortune man had something to do with this. I took the keycard and she directed me to the elevator. I opened the door to my small and simple room, closing it behind me. It took me only a few steps to reach that bed where I simply fell flat right onto it. Embracing the sheets with my chest in a long awaited union, I could feel my eyelids become heavy as my mind played over the machine that directed me back here. Why was he there? Why did it tell me to return? How did he know? So many questions. Maybe I'll ask him tomorrow, and see what my new fortune could be.

- Christian W. Poole



Les Fleurs du Kansas

Kaia James



2025, Reduction Woodcut - Oil Based Ink, 18 x 13 cm

Amor, Amour, Amore...

Violeta Báez

Amar es desnudar el alma.

Es ofrecer el corazón como un acto de fe,
sin garantías, sin certezas,

solo la esperanza de ser acogido con ternura.

Amar es permitir que las lágrimas broten sin pudor. Es el encuentro silencioso de dos miradas que se reconocen entre la multitud. Es la risa que nace de la felicidad pura,

las manos que se entrelazan con naturalidad,
y los silencios compartidos que no requieren explicación ni consuelo.

Amar es la paciencia de quien no exige,
la valentía de quien se queda cuando todo duele. Es esfuerzo cotidiano, una elección reiterada en medio del cansancio, una siembra constante en suelo incierto. Es cuidar del otro sin renunciar, y crecer juntos sin dejar de ser uno mismo.

Amar implica sacrificio,
no por deber, sino por convicción.

Es ceder sin sentirse menos,
pensar en el "nosotros" sin diluir el "yo".
Amar es comprender sin necesidad de palabras,
sentir que algo profundo vibra en sincronía,
como si los corazones conversaran
en una lengua secreta que nadie enseñó
pero ambos comprenden.

Amar es permanecer.

Es elegir, día tras día,
la piel, los gestos, las grietas y la belleza del otro.

Amor, Amour, Amore.



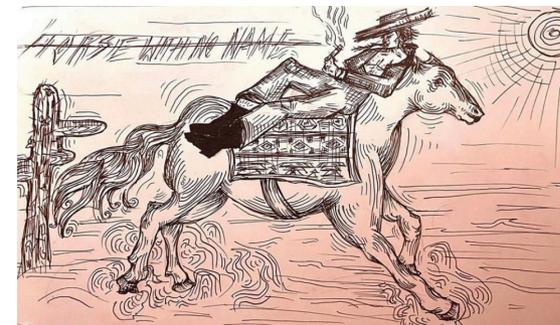


For more information about *Mille Fontaines*
please visit: millefontaines.org

Mission Statement

Mille Fontaines provides a platform for artistic expression regardless of media, genre, or language. It highlights the work of creatives, giving them the opportunity to be heard and recognized. More than that, it puts art and artists in conversation, pairing visual art with the written word – enhancing it all with excursions into audio and video spheres.

Centered on the ACM-IAU community in Aix-en-Provence, *Mille Fontaines* is often an important space for students to share their experience of living and learning in Southern France. In doing so, it becomes a crossroads for various cultures to interact through art.



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