

K I S H W A U K E E C O L L E G E



Kamelian

2019 Literary & Arts Journal

Kishwaukee College

2019 Kamelian Literary & Arts Journal

Realizing that educational institutions should encourage intellectual inquiry and being cognizant that we live in a pluralistic society, the following disclaimer is given.

The ideas and opinions expressed in *Kamelian* are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the attitude of the Board of Trustees, the administration, the faculty, or the staff of Kishwaukee College. Materials for *Kamelian* were submitted by students who have been enrolled in courses at Kishwaukee College during one or all of the previous three semesters. Outside jurors with professional credentials and knowledge in the respective fields reviewed all entries. The pieces selected for inclusion in *Kamelian* and the awards given were based on the jurors' opinions of their aesthetic merits.



On the Cover

Katelyn Ackland

Jewel Tip

Height: 5", Width: 7"

**Second Place
Photography**

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Jurors

Literature

Tracy Conerton
MFA Creative Writing,
Poetry

Natalie Gordon
Teacher
Director of Penguin Project
of the Sauk Valley

Art

Natalie Pivoney
NIU Drawing Instructor

Shane Elliot Bowers
Artist/Instructor

Awards

Literature

Short Fiction

First Place
Carley Anne Ackland
Close Encounters

Second Place
Carley Anne Ackland
*President's Private
Attic, No. 9*

Third Place
Akiyah Edwards
*Echo Hukoda's
Dream Journal*

Poetry

First Place
Sophie West
Old Florence

Second Place
Carley Anne Ackland
*Where My Dear
Heart Belongs*

Third Place
Yasmine Nanette Brooks
I Am Home

Essay

First Place
Josef McKee
Canis Lupus

Second Place
Dakota Montavon
The Show Must Go On

Third Place
Jenna Winterton
A Dreamer's Nightmare

Art

Photography

First Place
Chayce Sullivan
Organic

Second Place
Katelyn Ackland
Jewel Tip

Third Place
Chizuru Kamiuttanai
Grandma Sewing

Honorable Mentions
Robert Whitten
Head in the Clouds

Susan E. Pfothenhauer
Flowing Gently

Susanna Eschbach
Tractricious in Summer

Susanna Eschbach
Forest Treasure

Chizuru Kamiuttanai
First Frost of the Year

Two-Dimensional

First Place
Tim Keller
The Drop

Second Place
Callie Ackland
*From Which
Imagination Flows*

Third Place
Susan E. Pfothenhauer
African Violet

Honorable Mentions
Khala Wynn
Lonnie Watts

Yasmine Nanette Brooks
Beauty is Nature

Susan E. Pfothenhauer
Man as Microcosm

Emilee Jackson
Still-Life

Barbara H. Johnson
Sea Predator

Vidal Mancilla
Windy City

Three-Dimensional

First Place
Barbara H. Johnson
Emerging

Second Place
Tim Keller
Elevate

Third Place
Susan E. Pfothenhauer
Classes Cancelled

Honorable Mentions
Barbara H. Johnson
King Cobra

Spencer Mulso
The Circus

Susan E. Pfothenhauer
Plato's Cave



Chayce Sullivan
Organic
Height: 8", Width: 10"

First Place
Photography

Where My Dear Heart Belongs

I float among the apple trees
Listening to pink blossoms sing
Lessons told among the secrets
 Infinitesimal amounts
Dancing in the silver breeze
Lullaby of nature's song,
 Yes
Here, my dear, belongs

Smashed against the desperate wall
Walking, trudging, shoelace, shout
 Crunching back, away, forgot
Packing up what's left for not
 Opened eyes, inward cringe
Stepping through the shadows
 In and out of throngs
 Yes
Here, my dear, belongs

Wrapping up the moonlight
 Flying with the sun
Thoughts that wander too far away
 Dazzled in the brightness
Sunken ships repair, despair,
 Fear but float along
 Yes
Here, my dear, belongs

Carley Anne Ackland

Second Place

Poetry

Canis Lupus

When the wolves became absent, the elk became abundant.

When the elk became abundant, the plants became absent.

When the plants became absent, the rivers became large.

When the rivers became large, the land became scarce.

When the land became scarce, the mountain valleys became barren.

When the mountain valleys became barren, the ecosystem became diseased.

When the ecosystem became diseased, life left nature with the wolves.

The American wilds had long been untouched. Life bloomed in nature as it had for hundreds of years. Yellowstone National Park had an ecosystem so healthy and unique, it was a land of pure beauty. The lush mountainsides whispered with songs from the trees in the wind. Waves of grass crashed like a reckless sea against the prairies. The rivers flowed through the same land as they did every day. The plants painted the scene with such color, no artist could ever match it. The elk continued to live under the rule of the wolves, as they had for every generation. It was a tapestry of Yellowstone, a woven relationship of the land, plants, and animals. The pattern was unchanged, until the modern world came into contact with it, and from removing one string, we unwound the beauty of Yellowstone. In 1970, wolves were eradicated from Yellowstone in the hope that more elk would be present for hunting. Instead, this was the start of a domino effect of troubles that destroyed Yellowstone's beauty.

In 1871 the Department of Natural Resources in Yellowstone thought that a great way to increase profits would be to increase elk populations for hunting. The problem with this is that the animals of Yellowstone had been in an unchanged balance between prey and predator. So the only logical choice for the DNR was to decrease the predator population to increase the prey population. They then made a call to every hunter and gun wielding citizen to hunt any wolf they saw in Yellowstone. It took 100 years but in 1970, surveys showed that wolves were fully eradicated from Yellowstone, and this caused major changes that wouldn't be fixed for almost 50 years.

Now that wolves were no longer present in Yellowstone, the elk seized their opportunity to prosper. They began by expanding their territory to previously dangerous valleys. Without any predators the elk learned that there were no risks in grazing anywhere. This then led to an explosion in the elk population, and where there were elk, there were hungry elk. They would eat any plant they could. They ate grasses, shrubs, and tree saplings. Over many years the plants would die, but because of the excessive number of elk, the plants wouldn't be able to grow new generations. The annual plants were quickly wiped out, followed by shrubs, and trees after some years. After grazing the plants away, the elk would move to another new untouched forest or plain.

This slow loss of plants made the rivers grow. Before there would be grasses and shrubs to soak up the new rainfall, but as there began to be less plant matter to soak up the water, there would be more runoff leading to rivers. The forests slowly began to shrink, and so the strong roots holding the ground together began to weaken, causing dirt to be swept away in rain showers and flow into the rivers. With the increase of water runoff, the rivers became stronger, and so they would easily destroy the crumbling land. The rivers would grow and take as much land as they could. A flowing stream nestled in a valley quickly became a rushing river engulfing the land as it flowed down the mountains. Some valleys began to flood due to the amount of water passing through the land, and so land became scarce, replaced with rushing rivers and crashing rapids.

When the land was lost to the rivers, the mountains remained. They remained with the tragic revival of their youth. Turned back to barren rocks, they watched silently as their residents suffered. They watched as a disease swiftly moved through the ecosystem. Everything was affected with the symptoms. The loss of the trees meant the loss of beavers, for they used the wood to build dams. Most of the existing dams were destroyed by the new rushing rivers, and so without wood the beavers wouldn't be able to rebuild their dams. The dams would create wetlands and ponds that housed otters, geese, moose, and many more

unique animals. But they had all migrated in search of a new residence. Vultures and ravens, the birds of death, had to fly away in search of food, for there was no more death in the wolves' valleys. The land grew dangerous as coyotes, the bandit of the west, ran wild devouring every little morsel of food. The coyotes eradicated rabbits from the prairies, so then the coyotes started stealing mice. With harsh competition for mice, many owls, foxes, and bobcats suffered. And so a land once so beautiful and rich became barren and poor. All types of life left the park, from the delicate flowers to the sturdy moose. Even visitors couldn't stay to watch the mess. When the wolves left Yellowstone, nature left Yellowstone.

The land grew wounds that would not be healed until 1995 when eight wolves, from Jasper National Park in Alberta, were released in Yellowstone. After being absent for 25 years, the wolves went to work fixing the land they once cherished. They started to eat the easy prey of elk calves, as the mothers grew careless when the wolves were gone. This started to force elk to re-herd into large groups instead of being evenly distributed. The wolves then rebuilt their homes in the mountain valleys, forcing the coyotes out. When the coyotes left, mice began to prosper and could be found in every nook and cranny. Owls and bobcats returned to the woods to keep the mice in check, while foxes reclaimed the prairies. The elk began to move through the park as herds now, in search of new food, and they would think the valleys were safe. They quickly learned that the wolves had reclaimed the valleys, and so the elk had to start using migrations that would go around wolf territory. Without the elk in the valleys, the plants began to grow back. Willows would grow on river banks holding the land together. Beavers would start their construction on dams and lodges, and ponds began to fill up. With the wetlands returning, the moose started to return. Now that elk were being hunted again by the wolves, ravens and vultures could return to pick at the leftovers.

The wolves grew and prospered; the eight wolves in 1995 grew to over 100 wolves in 2014, with 11 packs ruling Yellowstone. The mountains regrew their forest, the rivers slowed to a gentle flow, and life of all types returned to Yellowstone when the wolves returned. Wolves even caused a resurgence of tourism, bringing families back to see the beauty of nature. Scientists around the world have started to flock to Yellowstone to study how important prey and predator relationships are to the ecosystem. Finally, after about 50 years, life returned to Yellowstone, returning its beauty, its nature, and its continuation of life.

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Josef McKee

First Place
Essay



Robert Whitten
Head in the Clouds
Height: 8", Width: 10"
Honorable Mention
Photography



Susanna Eschbach
Tractricious in Summer
Height: 8", Width: 10"
Honorable Mention
Photography



Chizuru Kamiuttanai
Grandma Sewing
Height: 10", Width: 8"

Third Place
Photography

Old Florence

It's one of those creeping summer evenings
where everything falls into place,
where the shadows learn bike tricks underneath the trees
and where the squealing children
feel oddly protected
by the blind old lady on her porch swing.
Knobbly knuckles, knitting a new hat for her fresh born grandson
(Is it grandson, or great-grandson
or is it her sister's grandson?
She is so old now, it's hard to keep track of relations
just like it's hard to keep track of the rows.
It's hard to knit when you're blind.)
The joyful squeals remind her of when she was a child
swimming in the creek with her brothers
dancing barefoot across the arid shore
cutting skin on the indifferent rocks.
Bloodred knees and bloodshot eyes,
tokens earned on many an adventuresome summer night
back when she was a tomboy in a gingham dress
before her great white knight came to sweep her off the shore,
the gingham dress twisting itself into a flowing white gown
all the better for the blood to stand out.
The dress hid in the back of her closet for twenty years
but she doesn't know where it is now.
Blind women can't see old wedding dresses,
and its texture was nothing special anyway.
All she remembers is the faded brown of an old blood-stain
and the sugary purple of a wine-stain
tucked into the skirt
like a tipsy lady looking for a friend.
The woman folds her knobbed hands into her knitting
and listens to the shrieking kids
whizzing bicycles down the street,
remembers the bite of summer adventures
against her pale, knobbly knees
and that faded gingham dress.
She thinks of her sister's grandson
and how she will never see him,
but she will hear his joyful sounds
and some voices are more precious than faces.

He will snuggle into his hat
and she will snuggle into her porch swing
listening to the children play
and listening to the clack of her needles.
Suddenly she hears a new squeal—
the squealing of brakes—
and the summer air tastes dark
like blood from a cut lip or a bloody nose
dripping onto a flat, frightened tongue.
Squealing brakes and screaming voices,
the woman is frightened,
frantically wondering what has happened—
if the children are hurt—
and wishing
that her eyes
could have seen
what was coming
but no one can see the future
even with a good pair of eyes.
A good pair of eyes
or two cloudy eyes
can't see past that sniffing nose
at the best of times
or through their cataracts
at the worst of times.
She'd knit those kids a safety blanket if she could
but cheap yarn can only do so much.
Summer is a time for tears,
a season of sweat and scraped knees,
and shouting *Get back on the bike*
to the scabby boy on the curb.

Sophie West

First Place

Poetry

-before the survey-

hanging in the balance,
waiting for the light,
for good news,
bad news,
a party,
or a prescription refill,

a fresh coat of paint,
a window cleaner,
an engagement ring,
or a restraining order,

mulling over a stale mug of coffee,
two days old, and picking up the crumbs from your toast
one by one,
listening to the phone ring,
the clock tick,
and the faucet drip.
everything is measured.

-30-

Sophie West

Honorable Mention
Poetry



Tim Keller
The Drop
Ink & Charcoal
Height: 12", Width: 18"

First Place
Two-Dimensional Art

Echo Hukoda's Dream Journal

Background: A short story about a girl in a futuristic time and advanced world who writes down her experiences/ dreams to alternate realities she has with the help of her spirit guide.

ring, ring!

I've always admired the bell chimes every time I step into the lost and found store, it's like the sound of the start of a race for curiosity when you walk in. The lost and found shop is small but it has really cool knick-knacks from the times of old. You could really get yourself lost in all the things in there. The times of old were said to be very primitive to how we live now, so my Mima says. She witnessed the full energy transition when she was in her teen years and claims that when she was younger, they didn't have color telecreens which is a silly thing to say because she likes to joke a lot.

"how much for the hollow clamp box with the funny faces on it?" I asked in curiosity.

"four earth-bits" the man behind counter answered back.

The clerk checked out my item, I couldn't help but notice another funny thing I saw on the display under the register. It looked as if a book was bound by coils and I've never seen it in the shop before.

"Hey Kazzi! What's this wire thing under the register?"

Kazzi scratched his head while reaching for my request "ummm I don't know...let's see I think it had words on the back...it says BookFactory product item: Dream Diary"

My face lit up like a billion-watt coil machine! The words sounded very intriguing to my curiosity.

"how much you want for it?"

"They are actually the same price, but your always in my store so I'll tell you what I'll give you the box for free. How about that?!" he responded with a smile.

"OHHH thank you so much! You know I just love the stuff that's in here"

Kazzi wrapped up my things in twine and tied it in a knot, and I grabbed my findings from him and went on my way. Happy and elated with the new things I can add to my times of old knick-knack collection. Before I grabbed the door to leave, Kazzi yelled across the store all the way to the front

"AND THE HOLLOW BOX WITH THE CLAMP IS CALLED A LUNCH BOX. ASK YOUR MOM ABOUT IT WHEN YOU GET HOME SHE KNOWS! PEACE AND LIGHT"

"OKAY PEACE AND LIGHT"

As soon as I got home, I told Mima about what I had gotten from the lost and found store, I showed her the hollow box (that Kazzi called a lunch box).

"Kazzi said you would know about this"

"Woowwww, you really found this in that little old store?! We used to love these old things as kids... we used to show them off in front of our friends at school...now kids have no use for them"

"Now this thing" I showed her the diary

"Echo this is rare! Do you know what this is?"

"No what is it exactly?"

"It's paper!! Well its technically called a notebook"

"On the back it says it's a diary"

"You found a gem then! Diaries were something we used to write down our thoughts, feelings, and whatever else we wanted to write down that was going on in our lives. It would always start off like "Dear Diary" and you would just pour your heart out with your inner emotions, but everything is electronic, now you just send things through the air, she sighed. But this will be good for you to write down about the little adventures you like to take around the sector"

Nodding my head in agreeance, “Yea MIMA your right”

I took my things to my room and examined them a little more. Mima always talks about how she misses some things from her life before Nikola Tesla's second apprentice broke out of hiding and revealed who he was to debut the world's first alternating current conductor in 1992. She told me it was just too big of a shift for them at that moment in time, but they had to adapt because those were just the times and how life was going. It's just nice to look at, old stuff is pretty interesting and neat to me. The diary was what interested me the most. My dreams have been very vivid since I've been doing my meditations everyday like my dad suggested but I can't seem to remember them, so I figured it would be good to jot down some key things I do remember with the ink pen that came with the notebook. Writing on the paper was different than writing on the telecoms. With the telecoms everything you needed was there and you just hit the send button right on the screen. With paper the words were just stuck and didn't go anywhere. It was so cool to write with a pen on paper!

Every morning I made it a habit to write in my diary what I had dreamed about for two weeks. With each day that went by mediation helped my dreams get even more detailed and easier to remember when I woke up. On Thursdays I listen to binaural beats while meditating, it gives me really vivid dreams that night when I go to sleep.

So, like the past two Thursdays I set up my area for meditation, catered to all my senses. Incense, binaural beats, crystals, and a comfy pillow. A little bit into my session I noticed this meditation felt different. I felt more connected and centered than other times. Glancing at my telecom to check the time (because I check it to see how long I last in meditation, it was 7:41 pm).

When I decided to come out of meditation it was exactly 8:11pm which was the longest I've ever meditated. I was ready for bed after that long time of just breathing for an hour. So, I got myself ready for bed and not to shortly after I laid down is when I fell right to sleep. *GASPPPPP!* I woke up from my sleep sitting straight up and could not believe what I had dreamed.

July 17th
5:34am

Dear Diary,

This is going to start off weird but here it goes. My dream had started off with me sitting up in my bed rubbing eyes and noticing that I felt weird. Looking around the room things looked different too. Everything was mine, but it was pink all over the room. I began to look to the left of me because I saw something in my peripheral vision. A strange animal like figure seemed to be dancing and moving from the left side of the bed to the right. I was terrified at this point, I had no idea what it was. I watched the figure in disbelief and when I started to make out what animal I was even more creeped out. Directly to my side, I felt the energy of the presence. “How do?” At that moment in time I had no words for what I saw, which felt almost real. Here is a pink elephant in my room, on the side of my bed, that danced its way over to ask me How was I doing.

“I'm Ganesh! How do?!”

“Good I guess. who and what are you?”

As soon as I asked the question the figure suddenly shifted its presence to my room door standing in front of it as if to leave

“You've always been a question asker Echo. I am your spirit guide and it's time for me to show you something. Let's go, grab my hand, and hold it tight! I don't want to lose you on our first trip to the other reality”

Akiyah Edwards
Third Place
Short Fiction



Katelyn Ackland
Jewel Tip
Height: 5", Width: 7"

Second Place
Photography

I Am Home

I dream of escaping the cage you trapped me in.

Your fears attach to me, hiding beneath my skin

Stripping my spirit down

Piece by piece,

Choking me as I gasp for my own breath.

I contemplate giving in to this fight but then I hear a familiar chirp.

Its high pitch chirp is refreshingly encouraging,

Reminding me this is not the end.

My potential becomes visible once again, it flows in the breeze.

At my own pace I move forward,

Guided by the light airy clouds.

You can't catch me now.

I follow the warmth my heart desires.

I reach for that peaceful place where my heart sings freely.

I rise from the ashes like a phoenix:

My spirit reborn.

Yasmine Nanette Brooks

Third Place

Poetry

Noteworthy

See their Watching Place
of parallel horizons
For but hand or breath

Not by right but force
Do these citizens remain
Locked in quiet thought.

Thus describes the voice
Of silent orchestration
O great paradox.

Tarry now stranger,
To offer sweet translation
Choosing as you can
Changing sight to sound
Hiding readily from eyes,
Metamorphasize

Hands, then, set you free.
E'en tho you shed a tear, for
inked by hands art here.

Things once cherished, O
Purest Manifestation
Scattered cross the page

How now can it be
(I have found mysteriously)
Only grow with age

Callie Ackland

Honorable Mention

Poetry



Susan E. Pfothauer

African Violet

Watercolor & Coldpress

Height: 11", Width: 12"

Third Place

Two-Dimensional Art

Close Encounters

Margret

"I know it's not really part of your job, typically." My hands are frozen, I couldn't bend them if I wanted to. I press against the counter, staring at the man through the glass. His eyes are glazed over, but I think he's really trying to understand. He's incredibly old.

"I don't know much about him." I tell him. "Not who his parents are, or where he came from exactly, or even-" I give a high, hysterical laugh that I don't know. "Or even what his real name is. But-but he looks like this." I press the newspaper clipping against the glass with Torin's picture. It has been folded, unfolded, crumpled, spoiled with water, wrinkled with steam from the trains, and tattooed with a single footprint when there was a desperate moment and my evidence was nearly lost.

"I do know that he loves Beethoven." I said. "He might have been humming it. Maybe. His favorite time of day is three, when our house is filled with sunlight, and he hates scarves, so he probably wasn't wearing one."

The ticket master's face is still blank, eyebrows rumped.

"You have to remember." I said. "Please."

A gunshot breaks through the night.

Old Man

I used to watch everyone come in and out of these trains. People (women mostly), with endless differences. There was a lot you could tell about a person by the sorts of hats and shoes they wore. It was a science.

Then I was finally drafted.

People these days, they think if we pretend nothing happened, it never happened. That's fine for them, but then it might creep up on us again. I always hope that I'm dead before the next world war, then I'm twisted with terrible guilt. But what can I do? I'm practically as blind as a bat. War will do that to you. My hearing's also useless whenever I forget to charge my battery, like today. It was good until about eleven p.m., and then nothing.

And now there's this girl at my window. I can't make her out that well but I could swear she's no older than fifteen. She's trying to tell me something, pressing a piece of paper against my glass, but I can't make out what's on it.

There's a security guard around here somewhere. Maybe I'd better find him. \

A gunshot breaks through my silent world, and I seize up.

Security Guard

It's always a quiet time at the station. Just me, Tommy at my heel, and the old man at the ticket booth. An easy job that could get deadly in an instant. That's what I'm always reminding myself.

We already did the parole around the perimeter of the place. Now we're heading back to the front. Old man has PTSD from the war. I like to keep an eye on him.

I'm surprised to see a girl standing at his counter, talking, practically shouting at him through the glass. I stop where I'm standing, and Tommy halts beside me, his nose in the air. She's young, really young. She gives a strange, high laugh, and I wonder if she's mentally unstable.

Tommy's pulling at his leash. *Away* from the girl.

"Tommy? What? What is it?"

I look in the direction he's pulling. Nothing.

The girl's pressing newspaper against the glass now. "He hates scarves," she's saying, "he probably wasn't wearing one."

I'm ready to close in and figure this one out, when Tommy suddenly *yanks*, and I almost fall over.

Then I see the shadow. I hear the click.

I dive too late, and the gunshot breaks through the night.

Tommy

Humans have this idea that dogs can't see color. No joke. There are a *lot* of loons in this world, which is why I was lucky to get into *my* line of business. Some dogs have to jump through hoops just to get their daily bread. *Literally*.

I have *real* purpose. I protect my person.

We *always* take walks though the train station at night. The smells are interesting to the point of inebriating: trash cans, popcorn, money, cheese, ham sandwich, *three* different kinds of metals, lettuce, mayonnaise, bacon, tomato (must be a BLT), newspapers (hundreds of these), plastic, pigeons feathers, coffee, cigarette smoke (blowing in from the building around the corner), grease from the trains, shaving cream from the old man.

Sunlight? *That's* unusual.

There's someone at the counter. Harmless, but stressed out.

It smacks me suddenly, forcefully. I'd know the smell anywhere. I pull towards it. My person starts talking to himself: "Tommy? What? What is it?"

That smell is a deadly smell. I have to move. *Have* to. It's five feet away, crouched behind that column. Tall. Male.

I can feel its heartbeat: racing. Ready to shoot.

Everything around me disappears as I yank free.

Gunshot. Pain.

Torin

Sometimes I blame it on my parents. I never really knew them, which isn't my fault. Sometimes I blame my own crummy existence, which is.

The security guard and his dog have already been around. Now it's just the old man at the ticket booth. I have about thirty seconds to move.

A girl runs up to the counter.

"I know it's not really part of your job, typically."

My blood practically stops moving. It's Margret.

She's panting like she's been racing for miles. Her hands are chapped, they must have been freezing. What was she doing? Here? Alone? This late?

I listen to her describe me. She has that newspaper clipping with my picture. She even uses the name they had given me, back when I lived at the Birchwood's place.

Something shifts deep inside my gut, and I know I'm about to be crushed by myself. I can't let her find me like this. I can't go back.

My own gun turns around to face my chest. It was a prop, I'd never used it, never, but it had one shot.

Then that dog comes out of nowhere. Jaws open.

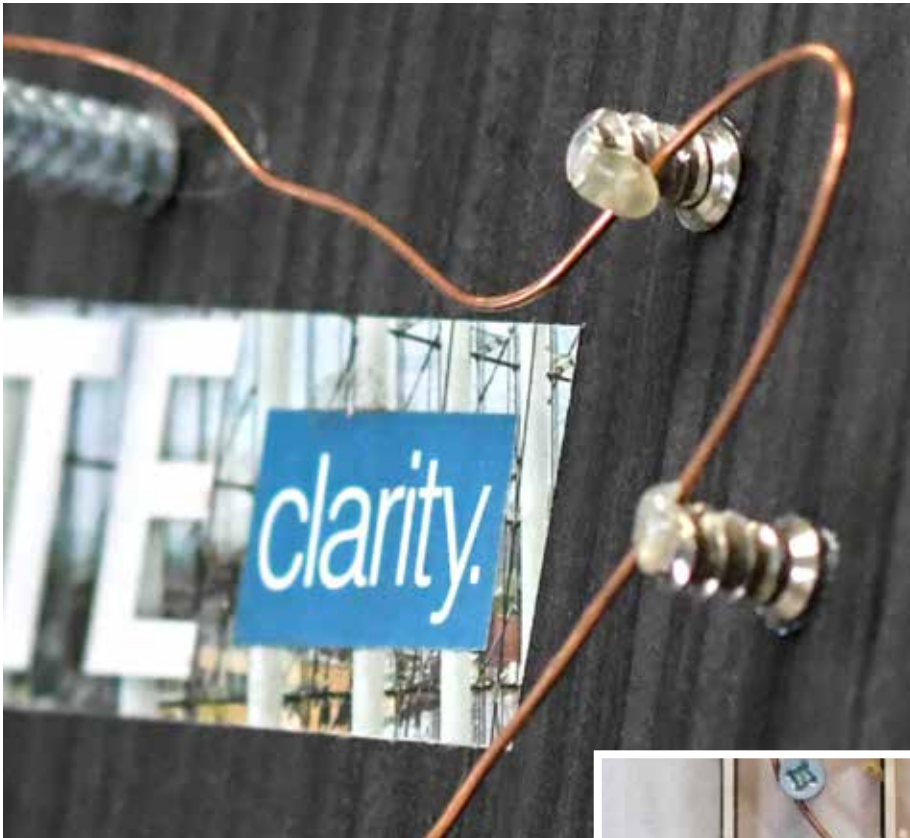
I panic. My mind seizes up.

I shoot.

Carley Anne Ackland

First Place
Short Fiction





Tim Keller
Elevate
Collage
Height: 15", Width: 10"
Second Place
Three-Dimensional Art



President's Private Attic, No. 9

Ding always called it a new opportunity. This was his way of softening the blow, putting a ribbon on an ugly gift. There isn't any time to stop and smell the roses, he always told Ash, chewing on the penlight that he held in his yellowish teeth. Got to get a move on, can't stand around and watch the grasses grow.

They were always on the move. Traveling from an apartment in the West to a campsite in the South, by train, taxi, subway, bus (although Ding didn't like busses), and occasionally hitchhiking. Study the hitchhikers, like I used to do, and see if you can spot them: Ding could be identified by his knapsack. He wore that knapsack everywhere. Sleeping at the train station, walking to the grocery store for a newspaper, even in the shower. It was as much a part of Ding as his filthy work boots, or his greasy strings of hair, which were in danger of reaching the back pocket of his jeans soon. Ding loathed long hair, but he never seemed to have the time to cut it.

Ash didn't look anything like his father. His bright, hazel eyes contrasted with Ding's dark blue ones, and his rumpled hair and rather perplexed expression, which he always seemed to have no matter how hard he tried, looked nothing like Ding's rough, impenetrable face.

Ding would be standing on the edge of the road, looking anxious, keeping one knurled hand on the strap of his knapsack, the other hanging over the edge of the road, thumb pointed to the sky. Ash would be standing off to the side, baking in the heat. I could never tell what Ash thought of Ding. He never seemed to be afraid of him exactly. He certainly wasn't fond of him. Nobody could be. Perhaps it was because of the repulsive smell that hovered around Ding, like a protective charm. Or maybe the way he didn't really have any eyebrows, just folds of skin that hunched over and stabbed at you from across the road until you had to check and see if you were bleeding.

Ash, on the other hand, possessed the air of one-trying-to-keep-clean-even-if-one-did-not-own-a-bar-of-soap. He seemed intelligent, too, like a person who somehow-manages-to-know-a-great-deal-of-things-regardless-of-a-lack-of-schooling. The boy had a knapsack of his own, though not nearly as sturdy and large as Ding's. He kept a weather-beaten book inside of it, which seemed to be filled with facts that he thought everyone ought to know.

I overheard a conversation the other day. They were standing under the overpass while Ding squinted and cursed at a wrinkly map in his hands.

"Ding? Do you know how many bones are in an elephant's trunk?"

"Due for rain." Ding said, looking up at the sky. "We're gonna to have'ta keep moving, boy, or risk getting caught in it."

Ash tried again: "Ding?"

Ding's forehead sank over his eyelids. "What?"

"Do you know how many bones are in an elephant's trunk?"

Ding looked at his son for a moment just long enough to give Ash a familiar, withering stare, where one fold of skin sinks low and the other shoots up high.

"What," Ding said, "Is the matter with you?"

Ash didn't look at all put off by Ding's question. "I was just wondering if-"

“Do I look like I care about bleeding elephants?” Ding asked.

Ash took a dangerous second to decide. “No.”

“Are we on some ruddy Savanna havin’ a sodding picnic?”

“No.”

That seemed to settle the matter to Ding. He went back to his map. If it were me, I would have left it at that. I’d seen what Ding could do when he was in a temper (he always seemed to be either coming out of one, or falling back in), but Ash, clutching the blue, water-damaged volume, seemed bizarrely persistent.

“They don’t have any, Ding.”

“What?” Ding shot another estranging glare at his son, who looked unflinchingly back.

“They don’t have any bones in their trunks,” Ash explained. Ding pocketed his map and demanded who the blazes Ash was talking about. When Ash began to explain that elephants don’t have any bones in their trunk, but rather 40,000 muscles, Ding replied with a sharp blow to Ash’s ear.

I have examined the ring on Ding’s fourth finger before. It was a black rock, with dangerously sharp-looking wires that hooked together to keep everything in place. It was no wonder Ash began bleeding. He ignored the deep red trail trickling down his cheek and stared hard at his father’s back, daring him to turn around again. Ding didn’t. That’s when I began to suspect that, in some ways, Ding was more afraid of his son than his son was of him. That was the first real clue.

One can never get any proper sleep in my line of business. The problem with these people is, they never really stop moving. And you never really know when they plan on packing up and leaving. You have to keep track of what time and where and why. The latter is the trickiest bit. At the beginning, Ash was always asking his father why, and I was sincerely hoping that Ding would answer. But, of course, if he had, then my job would have probably been over, and that would have meant the end of my paycheck.

The job was almost done, anyway. I had everything I needed, and there was only one step remaining: telling Ash. It would be a bit problematic, finding a moment when Ding wasn’t within arms reach of his son. He could be so overprotective, as they always were. It never took very long to get the job done, however: telling Ash that he wasn’t who he thought he was. That Ding was not and had never been his father. That we had been watching him ever since he had been taken. That he needed to get Ding’s knapsack.

The latter set off a whole other train of problems to deal with, but they were no longer mine. They were Ash’s. Or, Ashwin’s, I should say.

Carley Anne Ackland

First Place
Short Fiction



Susanna Eschbach
Forest Treasure
Height: 8", Width: 10"

Honorable Mention
Photography



Susan E. Pfothenauer
Classes Cancelled
Underglazed and Crawl Glazed Ceramic
with Found Bowl
Height: 9.8 cm, Width: 10 cm, Depth: 7 cm

Third Place
Three-Dimensional Art





Yasmine Nanette Brooks

Beauty is Nature

Watercolor

Height: 8", Width: 10"

Honorable Mention

Two-Dimensional Art

Perennial Noise

open windows deaf

across small yard and ceiling

again green slithers

Susan E. Pfothauer

Honorable Mention

Poetry

The Show Must Go On

“CRACK!”

I'd race my little brother, Luke, down the stairs for front row seats to the show.

“No fair! Hey, get back here!”

Every little brother in the history of little brothers plays the blame game. When I peered over my shoulder to see Luke hot on my heels, he wore a chivalrous grin. Our eyes met, but in that moment his eyes reflected something; my own wounded moral character. His electricity shook my gaze. Determination; surging. Reminding me of what I'd done.

“Focus.” I reassured myself. I couldn't lose.

Closer and closer, our little footsteps got to the kitchen. With each pitter-patter, the hum of life began to crystalize in my mind. Clinking and clanging of silver utensils as they sing in unison. Mixed aromas of sticky maple syrups and your favorite jams to dress your dishes. Sizzling bacon grease flung from the pan, suspended in air, caught safely for another aerial leap. Pools of potted coffee to dip fresh toast in. The dust flaking off reminded me of synchronized swimmers you watched swirling around with every pleasing gulp. What a show it will be! My brother and I fought tooth and nail for the right to sit at the table. We were dazzled by breakfast at our grandparent's house, Mama and Papa's. That's right! I almost forgot about the best part. . .

“Your tricks won't fool me!”

My brothers' words snapped me back into reality. Tiny beads of sweat glistened from my pores. My polyester pajama onesie, cumbersome now. Breath, labored. Pulse, sporadic. We haven't raced this way in a while. Luke might actually catch me. I couldn't lose. . .

With a leap of faith only a numbskull, 7-year-old can make without breaking an ankle, I hopped down the last 8 steps. Clutching the bottom rail to shoot myself like a slingshot around the corner with the produced momentum. I took another glance behind me, Luke hadn't made the same reckless decision. I was scot-free, taking a shortcut through the living room. Hurdling over a sofa, sliding across the coffee table; I'm pretty sure I almost smashed a priceless lamp. Regardless, no one was the wiser. I had secured, what I thought to be at the time, my rightful victory.

Scampering into the kitchen, I pause; crestfallen. Not because of “what I'd done”, that hadn't hit me yet; but because the show I'd seen a thousand times seemed different today. . .

“Hmmm dada hmm hmm da hmmm!”

Mama, pleasant and jovial, sang tunes as she seamlessly buzzed around the marble island in her plaid apron which read “World's Sweetest Grandma.” Glowing as she danced on stage in the sun's spotlight. She was larger than life itself. When the tune she hummed faded, you'd almost start to clap in admiration. Waiting wishfully for another. It was after her lovely performance I'd noticed this particular morning's anomaly.

“Mama, is something wrong?” I gestured confusedly toward the stove.

“No breakfast today?”

Luke, arms crossed, no longer wore his fiery determination as he sulked into the kitchen. He was pretty sore. It's hard being the little brother sometimes. Trying to prove yourself. One could say the same about big brothers.

“No fair. You started on ‘3’ and not ‘go!’”

“Whatever you say, sport.” I commented condescendingly.

“Boys.”

An imposing voice sternly uttered one word from behind a “Daily Chronicle.” Papa, dark-haired and mustachioed; was filing through the newspaper as the steam from his coffee rose to meet his spectacles. He sported a tailored 44 extra-long “Joseph A. Bank” suit. No cuffs, no bellbottoms, medium lapel, his watch calibrated, shoes shined, and never seen in a wide tie.

“The more suits you have, the longer they last.”

A common quip he'd site.

I remember wandering into his wardrobe once. Getting lost in a maze full of different fits and colors. There had to be at least 40 suits in that labyrinthian, dry-cleaned cache; with shoes and ties to match. I wonder how many had never seen the light of day? One would assume Papa slept and woke in a “Joseph A. Bank, Brooks Brothers, or a Finns Limited.”

Mama told us once, Papa mowed the whole lawn in the full getup! But get this, after mowing he had time to trim the roses, spray the weeds, water their shrubbery, then head out to his demanding white-collar job; unscathed.

“Boys.”

His utterance echoed. One word is all it took to kill two birds with one stone. Once a race has started, you adapt. Once a race has ended, you reflect. What racer do you aspire to be in the many races you'll face? I couldn't help but feel ashamed. This time, for what I'd done.

“We'll be having breakfast a little differently today, or should I say, you'll be the ones to prepare it!” Mama wondrously proclaimed.

All of a sudden, I was swiftly guided onto the tightrope; a rickety, over-used step-stool. Mama's breath, like a gust hitting me, struggling to hold steady. Papa's eyes peering out the sides of his glasses. I couldn't hear his fingers leafing through the pages anymore. Again, sweating, but amplified by the preheated stovetop radiating. The uncertainty began to set in.

I took an egg, felt its weight in my hand. I didn't move for what felt like forever. I couldn't. This wasn't how I'd envisioned the grand finale to go. . . Head down, not looking my grandparents in the eye in fear they'll see through me; displaying my own moral failure, as Luke's had. There were no shortcuts to takes. There were no rules to bend. Am I really no good? Will I be found out? No. Focus. . . I couldn't lose.

I half-heartedly tapped the egg to the pan, nearly dropping it altogether. I began to shake uncontrollably. Am I a fraud? I mean, I did go on “3” . . . even took the easy route. . . but was what I did really that bad? Focus!

I glanced at the egg. Will this moment be the difference between success, or a chain reaction of many flops to come? This isn't the first time I'd cheated either. . . Have I already fallen too far down the pyramid to be redeemed? Is this who I am and ever will be? A Liar. Fraud. Cheat. Liar. Fraud. Cheat. Written all over the lines on my terrified face.

Mama, empathic, reading every word.

“You gotta crack a few eggs to make a good omelette, sweetie!”

Stop thinking. Adapt. Focus!

“CRACK!”

Papa's coffee; cold and untouched. He'd set his paper down now, stood tall, and walked to place his hand on my trembling shoulder. The whites pooled into the pan; yolk a bit disheveled, with shells peppered around the edges. It was anything but an exemplary start to an omelette. Mama delicately plucked shells from the mess to console me. Hidden tears jumped from my cheeks onto the burning skillet, the evidence erased by the heat. Then I felt something. The touch of another hand, Luke's. At once our eyes locked. There was no hiding anymore.

To my surprise, Mama happily exclaimed,

“What an incredible start!”

“Can you boys come over to cook for us all the time?”

Papa flashed his million-dollar smile, patting my head.

“I'm proud of you boys. You're growing, but just look at how much room there is left to continue! If you allow yourself. We'll always love you.”

As a kid, I'm not sure I consciously grasped what was being said to me. I just knew my grandparents listened, and said what I needed to hear in the right moment. That unconditional love shown to me paved the way for a growth-oriented state of mind.

“Luke, I don't know if I admitted fault or not on that day; but I did cheat, many times over. I'm incredibly ashamed and I apologize. . . hopeful my admission will help me set a better example for both of us, and for others, in the future.”

I can finally forgive what I saw deep in those reflective eyes years ago.

What do I take away from this experience today? The show I refer to “Breakfast” is emblematic of the ever-changing ups and downs we encounter every day. The black, white, and all the shades in between. I'm constantly evolving to whatever shade is thrown at me. Fully realizing, however, I'm continually going to make mistakes, follow through with poor decisions, and undoubtedly regret some of my actions. Such is life, and I'll face it head on. The problems we face are meant to be solved, and by making the effort to solve them; we choose to seek a meaningful life. That's choosing to live, choosing to continue racing regardless of circumstances, choosing to perform as many grand finales as it takes to get it right. Whether it's a brother, an egg, expectations, you name the opponent; the true opponent you face, and many fail to tame, lies within.

The show must go on.

Dakota Montavon

Second Place
Essay



Barbara H. Johnson

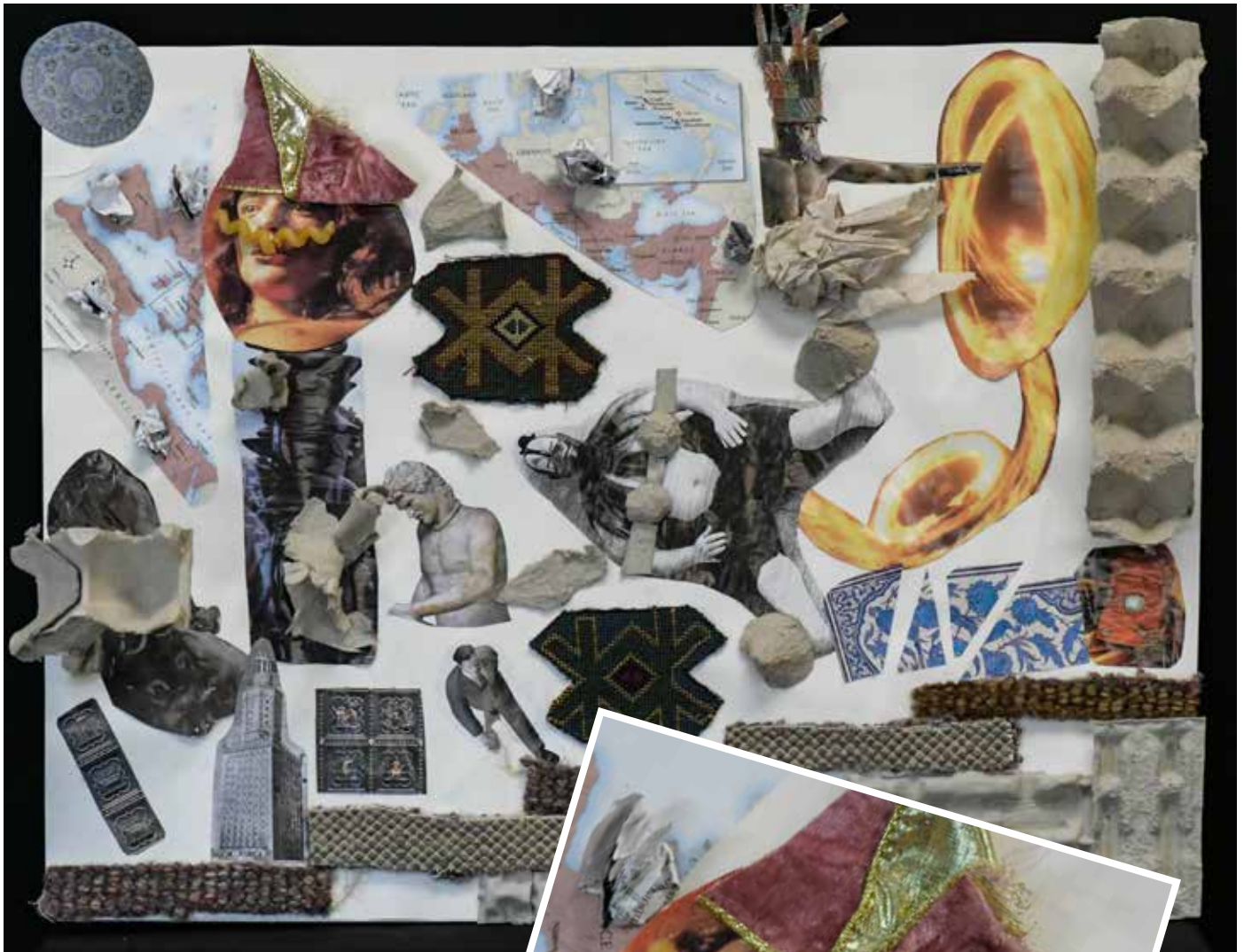
Emerging

Sterling Silver, Opal, Carnelian

Height: 2.5", Width: 2", Depth: .5"

First Place

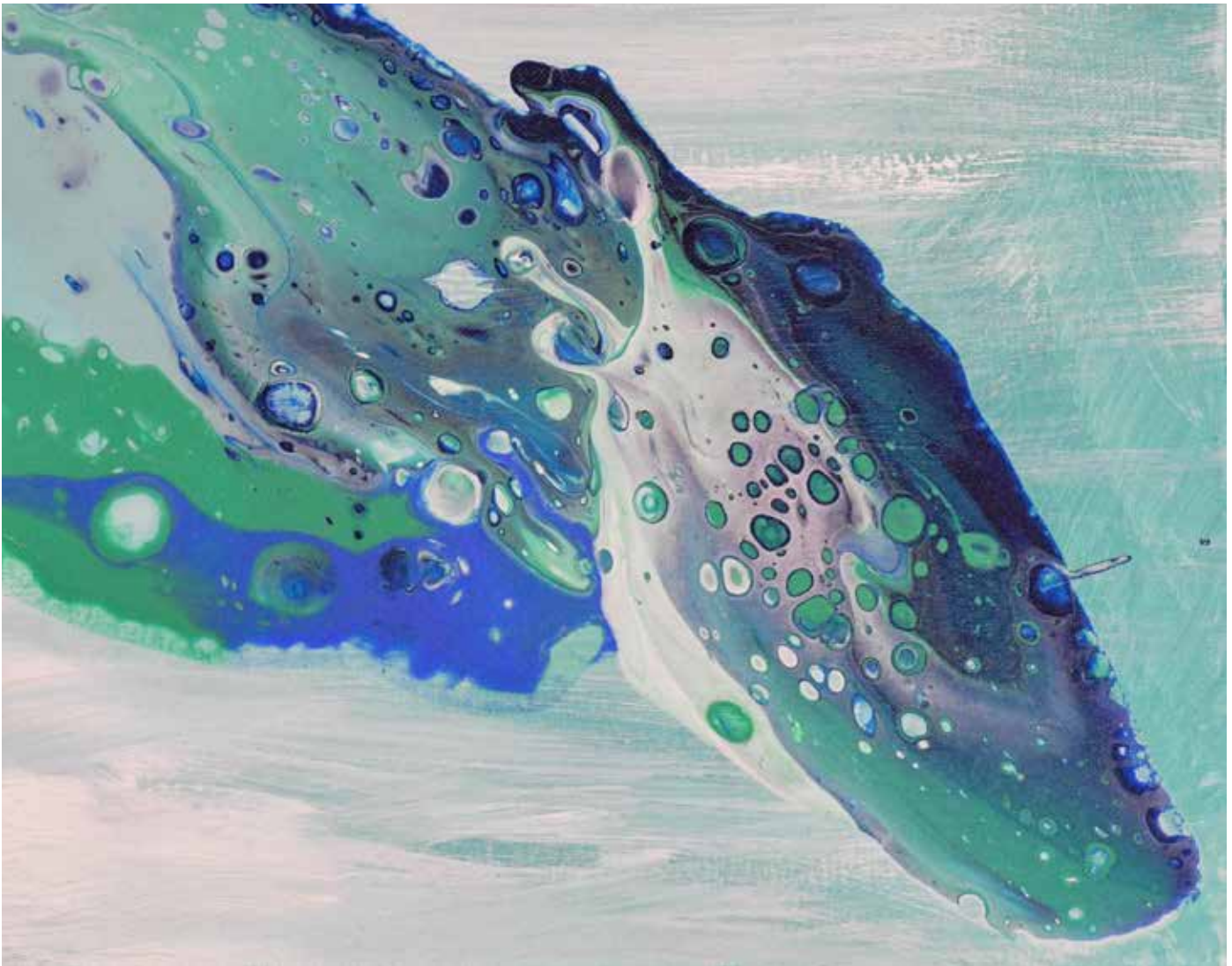
Three-Dimensional Art



Spencer Mulso
The Circus
Mixed Media
Height: 18", Width: 24"

Honorable Mention
Three-Dimensional Art





Barbara H. Johnson
Sea Predator
Acrylics
Height: 11", Width: 14"

Honorable Mention
Two-Dimensional Art

-the night to the sleeper

Moontime,
the night closes its fists around me
and rocks me to sleep,
whispering in my ear
that tomorrow
is fresh around the corner.
I lie belly up
like a dead fish in an aquarium
and watch the walls swim
beneath the paint,
waiting for the night
to close off my spinning head.

*(O you foolish sleeper—rest your eyes
and close off your mind
to the turning clocks.*

*They circle
around your head
like vultures
waiting to pick
pick at your remains.*

Tick tock, child.

Tomorrow is a new day,

full of new creatures and places.

Maybe it's time to phase you out, little fish.

Today is gone, and tomorrow has little room to spare.)

Sophie West

Honorable Mention

Poetry



Callie Ackland

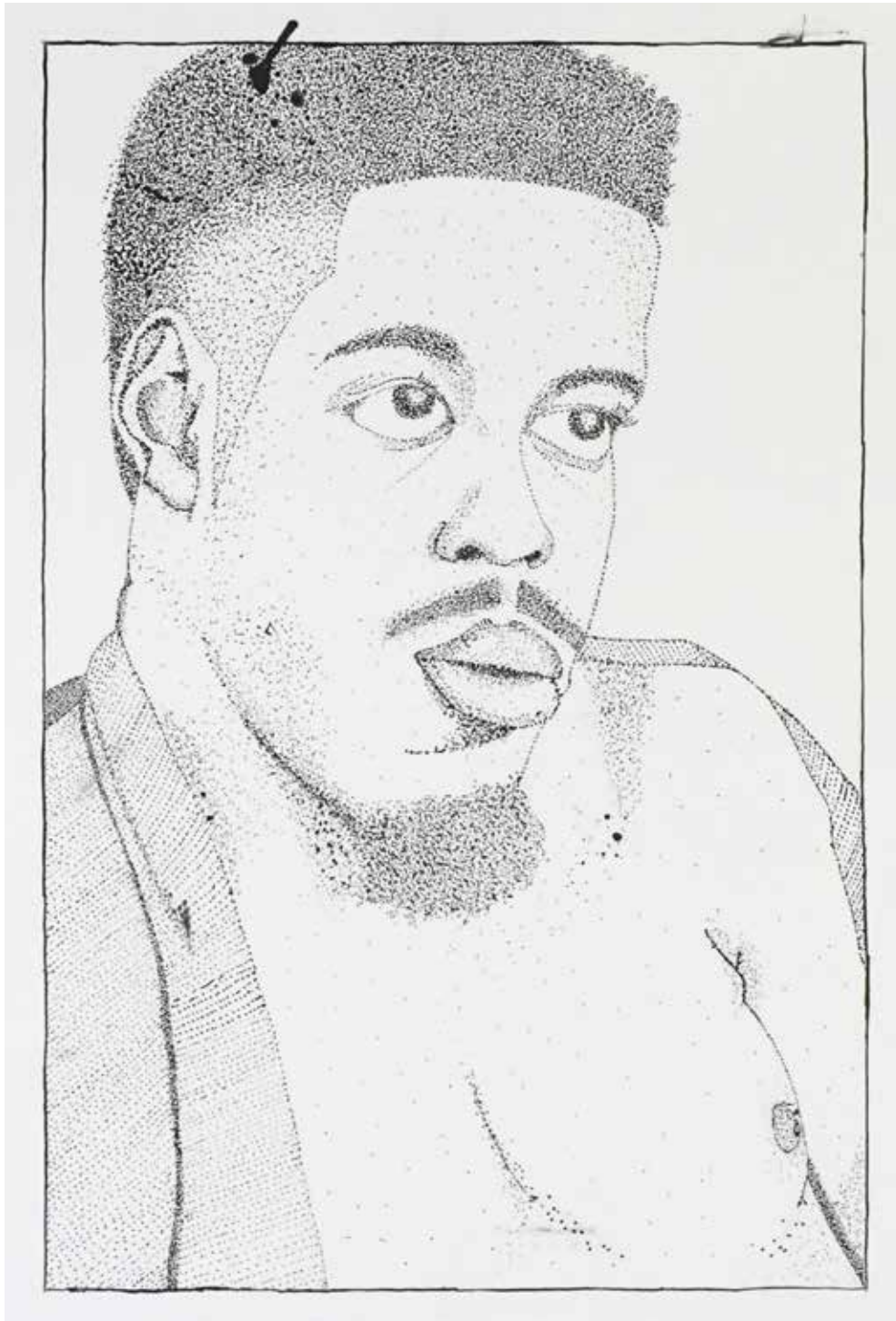
From Which Imagination Flows

Oil Paint

Height: 28", Width: 22"

Second Place

Two-Dimensional Art



Khala Wynn

Lonnie Watts

Pen and Ink/Stippling

Height: 17", Width: 11"

Honorable Mention

Two-Dimensional Art

A Dreamer's Nightmare

Here lies a dreamer. She's a fearful girl—beautiful, but full of naïvety. She does not realize that her maturing dreams, once innocent thoughts, can indeed be devilishly painful things.

In the light of day, this girl had foolishly thought that all her dreams could be easily obtained. However, she soon realized that dreams left unattended, for even a moment, can get lured away and destroyed. Now, as she covets her dream, she's let fear take root, and a new nightmare has arrived.

She's a dark-haired sweetheart with chewed up nails and a face contorted with confusion. Lost is that spark of curiosity, and her confidence has retreated deep inside. The blankets—the cover that used to bring her comfort—are twisted around her legs. Even with the discomfort, she continues to lie there, motionless, with her tormented head laid on a pillow of rock. Microscopic thoughts penetrate through the peace and pick at her unconscious like needles. Blood and fear pump through her veins; her breathing is thready, and sweat is heavy on her pores. Thoughts of lost opportunities torture her, and a sense of urgency settles in her gut.

She pulls at her unconscious, wrenching herself from the misery. Her dark eyes, now wide open, blend with the night, and her heightened senses absorb every detail surrounding her. She can still feel the essence of the dream—see the horror of that moment when it transformed, turning against her. Memories of it haunt her every thought like a living, growing being. A sort of demon echoing her regrets back at her, every time amplifying them—twisting their appearance until they grow larger and grotesquely out of proportion.

She knows that inside her mind, the monster has the advantage. If she could only get it outside of her head...

Almost intuitively, she reaches out toward the answer, curling her trembling fingers around the nearly forgotten weapon by her beside. She stares at the object clutched between fingers drenched in cool sweat. As her eyes adjust to the night, she can make out the outline of a sleek pen and the almost blood-like drop protruding from its tip.

Like torn fragments the thoughts come: open the prison door; free the monster—the devilish thoughts from their mental prison. This dream is terrible, alive, and painful; give it what it needs in order to heal. Write...clear the mind...make the intangible words and thoughts visible for all.

She sits up, the panic in her chest urging her to use the pen as a salve for the pain and a weapon for the fear. Answering the bidding, she reaches out and grasps the parchment that had been lying previously useless by her bedside. She begins to write, and it amazes her how something so small and insignificant could become such a lifeline.

"Sometimes," she writes, her pale lips mouthing the precious words, "I'm afraid I'm going to get locked inside of my own mind—lost in an imaginary world of imagery, dreams, and nightmares. It's there that anything can happen, yet what transpires is not real. Anything I wish will come true, yet anything I fear will haunt me.

"A maze of slippery thoughts and long-forgotten ideas surround me. What happens if I get lost? What happens if I can't get out, paralyzed with this fear of the unknown? What happens if I want to get lost—if I want to get away from this miserable reality? Here, at least, I can't err; I can dream as well as anyone else. In this place, the only mistake I can make is to believe too wholly in the power of imagination.

"Dreams can be beautiful, but they can also be discouraging. Why? Because without a clear purpose and constant care, they evaporate into nothingness—simply a foggy memory that stands for lost moments and energy. Dreams are just that—dreams—unless you can work up the courage to extract them from your mind.

"I love dreams, and I hate them. They speak of opportunity for the future, yet they remind you of wasted time, causing you to curse your past choices. Why are you always denied success? Why does death always overcome your dreams before you can really understand your need for them clearly?"

"When will it end? When will you make something that lasts through the cruel cycle of time?"

Taking a moment before proceeding, she lifts her chin, and closes her eyes. A glistening teardrop escapes, slipping from the corner of her eye. It's a sign she knows—an exterior sign of a deeply personal internal change.

Taking a breath, she continues: "But I now realize that dreams are a necessity. One cannot live without dreams for the future—dreams to do better, to become a better version of yourself.

"Before this, I was convinced that I must let go of my dreams in order to make my life whole again, but now I understand: putting a dream to a slow, agonizing death may seem, at first, like the best way to remedy the problem, but it will only cause further pain in the future. You can't spend your life afraid that time will destroy your youthful daydreams. Instead, you have to fight for what you believe is right in the present, and realize that dreams aren't always as they first appear. Sometimes dreams don't die, but, rather, transform—the death of one dream becoming the birth of another. You'd have never known that, however, unless you had first chosen to shed the fear and follow the unknown. The choice is simple: either I must fight for the dream, or I must set aside any chance of ever achieving it in order to give myself the peace I need to survive."

Like the snap of a rubber band as it loses its tension, the muscles in her arm and back clench once more, then begin to relax. The page in her hand is covered with her thoughts, fears, and dreams; the words are crammed together, fighting even on the page for space in order to prove their importance. Though the chaos on the page appears overwhelming, she at once feels the clearness in her head. That cluttered mass of constant worry that was once caught in the recesses of her mind is gone. In its place is a calm reassurance and an orderly space, cleared of the night's terrors.

The pulsating beat that was once thumping at her temple has begun to subside. Her heart rate is lessening, becoming less sporadic and more soothing. Her muscles continue to loosen, and the pen slips from her grip. A metallic clink sounds as it hits the floor, and she finds the sound to be calming, like the beginning phrase of a lullaby.

Slipping under the silky sheets, she drifts away, her mind clouded by the prospect of new ideas. The pillow, that had once seemed hard and cold, caresses her features. The dreams that appear before her are only fragments, but they speak of opportunities yet to be discovered.

This dreamer's nightmare has only been set aside for a moment; in the morning, she will have another chance to face the nightmare, but this time in the light of day. She will then be able to decide whether the dream is worth fighting for, or whether it is simply another untold fantasy that will die like the many beauties of her youth.

Sleep is a friend; dreams are a lovely companion. Nothing is as precious as a dream, but precious things can easily be broken. Nightmares are the common assailant, and they have the power to generate fear and regret, causing you to believe that your dreams can only live in the imagination. Believing you will never be able to live a dream is painful, and knowing you have never tried—and never will—intensifies that pain.

"When does it end?" you may wonder. It doesn't end. Throughout life, you will encounter many dreams. It's your choice which dreams you will choose to follow, and which you will leave behind. You cannot have them all, and the dreams you do try to create will require a resistance to pain and failure.

The nightmare won't be gone in the morning. It won't be gone until a choice is made, and, even then, new nightmares will surface. They will always be there ghosting your every move. Nightmares shadow all dreamers, but only those who succumb will feel their true wrath.

This girl—this innocent dreamer—is asleep now, having fought and won the first of many battles. Now, she waits patiently for the dawn of realization. She knows her choices—now all she needs is the answer.

Jenna Winterton

Third Place

Essay



Susan E. Pfothauer

Plato's Cave

Ceramic, Underglazed & Glazed

Height: 5 cm, Width: 8 cm, Depth: 7.5 cm

Honorable Mention

Three-Dimensional Art



Emilee Jackson
Still-Life
Oil Pastel
Height: 19", Width: 25"

Honorable Mention
Two-Dimensional Art

Worlds

No one at school understands what I go through
because they are from a world foreign to me.
A world that taunts me from a distance.
A world I only get small bittersweet tastes of.
A world I can't keep
for it is quickly stolen back from me.

That world is fluency.
Fluency, the ability to say what you want to
easily and articulately.
Fluency comes naturally to 99% of all humans.
But not to the overlooked 1%

Welcome to the world of stuttering
The world where we fight for every sound.
The world where just the act of talking is a chore.
The world where talking is tiring.
The world where we are shunned, made fun of.
Where we fear our own names.
Where people say we must be fluent.
Where people say we lie because we can't be fluent.
Where people say we are dumb
because didn't you know?
Stuttering is a sign of being stupid
A sign of lying
A sign of forgetfulness
A sign of fright
A sign of being different.

No stutterer wants to be seen as different
or special needs.
We want people to listen,
to be patient.
We don't want to be rushed
to be shunned
to be talked down to
to be something that isn't human.

We really aren't that different, ya know?

Emily Rowland

Honorable Mention

Poetry



Susan E. Pfothauer

Man as Microcosm

Acrylic & Oil Pastel on Stretched Canvas

Height: 36", Width: 24"

Honorable Mention

Two-Dimensional Art



Chizuru Kamiuttanai
First Frost of the Year
Height: 8", Width: 10"

Honorable Mention
Photography

Frost Lines

three o'clock haiku

paper pen two feet away

sunrise amnesia

Susan E. Pfothauer

Honorable Mention

Poetry



Barbara H. Johnson

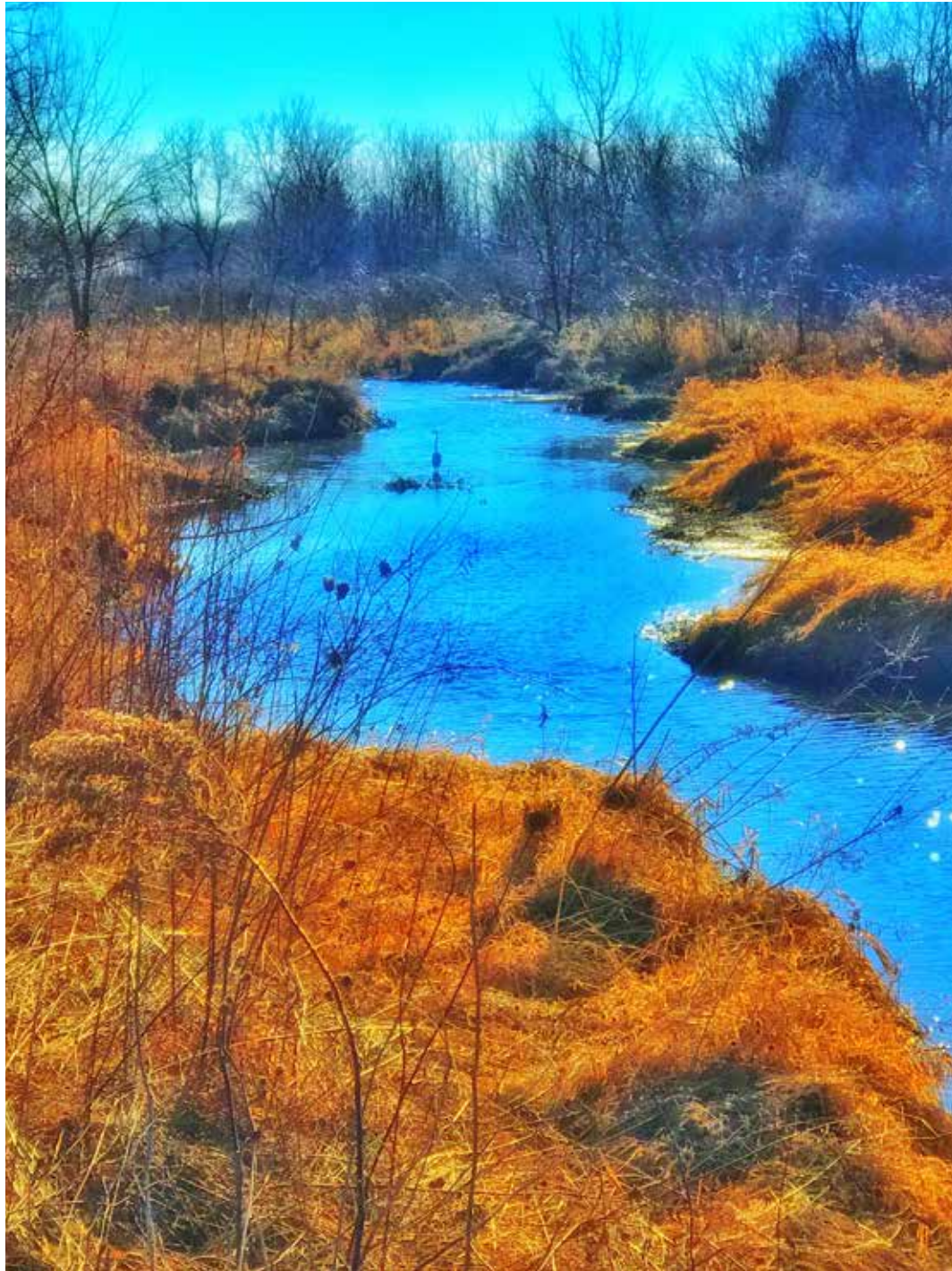
King Cobra

Sterling Silver, Jade, Jasper

Height: 3.5", Width: 1.75", Depth: .75"

Honorable Mention

Three-Dimensional Art



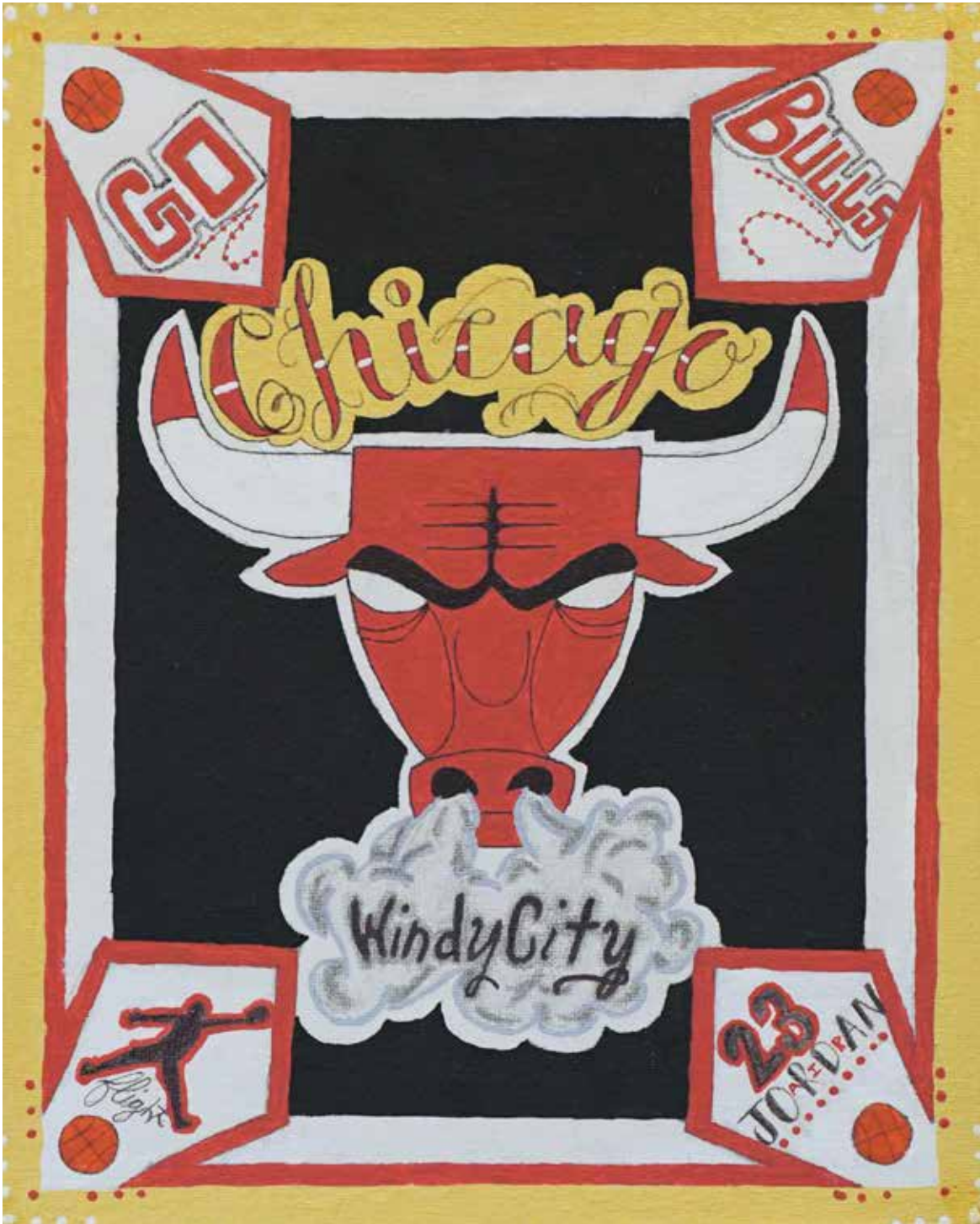
Susan E. Pfothauer

Flowing Gently

Height: 10", Width: 8"

Honorable Mention

Photography



Vidal Mancilla
Windy City
Bulb Painting
Height: 14", Width: 11"

Honorable Mention
Two-Dimensional Art

Credits

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Associate Professor of English

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Multimedia Designer

Kishwaukee College

Artwork Photography

Elyse Roberts

Social Media Specialist

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Miles Halpern

Beth Hanson

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Connie Kessen

Kishwaukee College Art Gallery

Amy Smith

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