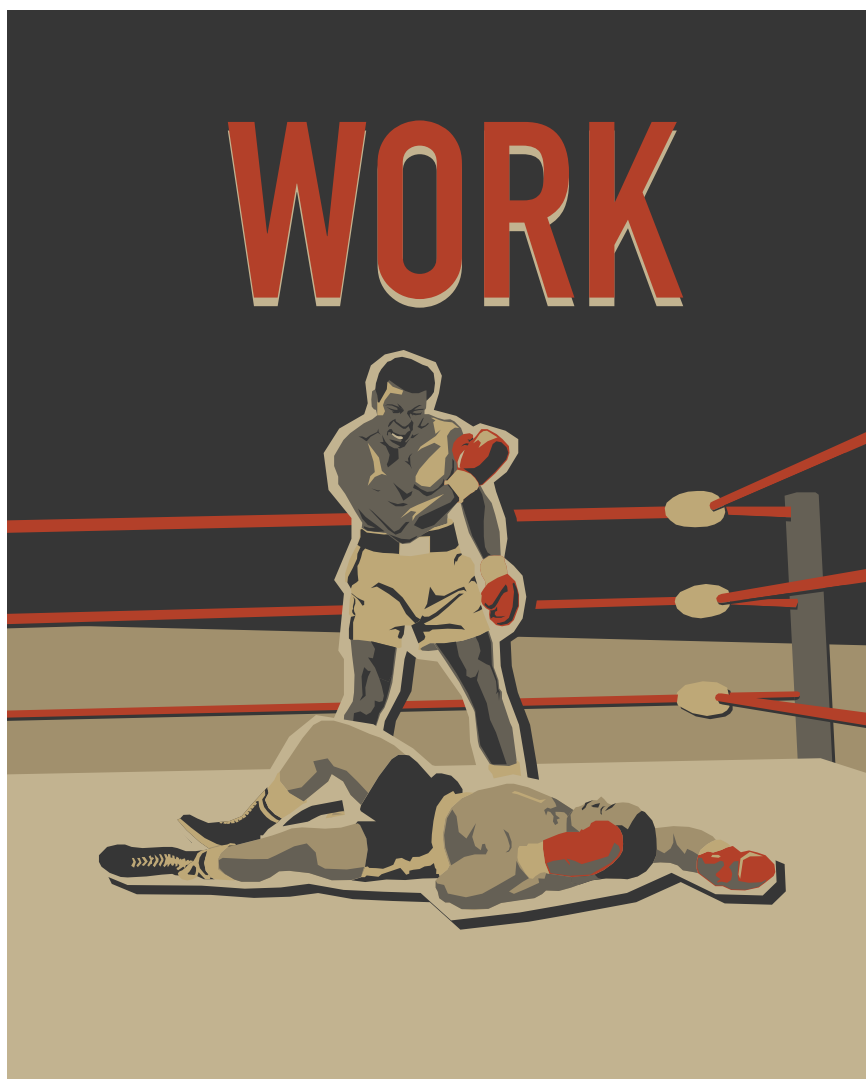


ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY

The Pierian

Literary + Visual Arts Journal



2025 Edition

The Pierian

Literary + Visual Arts Journal

FRONT COVER

Jalen Stencil is a senior of ASU earning a Bachelors in Visual + Performing Arts. His work has been featured at the Albany Area Arts Council and in the *Bridge the East* exhibition. His solo exhibition in the Arthur R. Berry Gallery will be held in Spring 2026. He is looking to expand his skills by going to graduate school to become an art therapist.

* * *

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ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY

The Pierian

Literary + Visual Arts Journal

2025 Edition

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LAYOUT + DESIGN
Ansley Simmons

The Pierian

Literary + Visual Arts Journal

The Pierian, Albany State University's online journal, stands as a testament to the enduring power of creative expression. Drawing inspiration from the mythical Macedonian spring—a source of knowledge that enlightened all who partook of its waters—our publication serves as a contemporary fountain of artistic and intellectual inspiration.

Within our digital pages, readers encounter a rich tapestry of visual arts, poetry, flash fiction, short fiction, and nonfiction. The Pierian takes pride in featuring works from both emerging and established authors and artists, fostering a dynamic dialogue transcending institutional and geographical boundaries. Our goal is to create a diverse mosaic of perspectives, reflecting the vibrancy of our community while embracing voices from across the region and beyond.

Our legacy traces back to 1967 when Emerita Professor Dr. Velma F. Grant established the Pierian Club for English majors at Albany State University. This visionary initiative later blossomed into The Pierian Journal, embodying a steadfast commitment to nurturing literary excellence.

Since 2023, The Pierian has been under the stewardship of dedicated professors from ASU's Department of Arts & Humanities in Visual Arts and English. This collaboration ensures the journal continues to be a vibrant platform, bridging academic rigor with creative exploration.

We invite you to join us at The Pierian, where every page turn promises a sip from the wellspring of imagination. Together, we continue to cultivate this fountain of creativity, allowing it to flow through our HBCU community and ripple outwards, enriching the broader landscape of contemporary art and literature.

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CHRISTIAN ANDRADE HERRERA

Southwest Georgia Mexican

My family came to this country and settled in a small town in rural Georgia
 Albany to be exact
 On the outskirts of the county
 with the biggest city
 In a 60-mile radius
 I grew up with cotton fields in my backyard
 Hundreds of acres of farming land for miles around

My family is a farming family in Mexico
 It was something familiar, at least
 I lived so far out
 I was the first kid to be picked up on the bus
 and the last one to be dropped off
 On the ride to school
 We would pass pecan orchards
 And depending on the season
 Cornfields, peanut fields, wheat fields
 I often think about my identity
 I'm too Mexican for my Georgia folks
 But to American for my family in Mexico
 So, I guess

I'm a Southwest Georgia Mexican
 I lived in the same city in southwest Georgia for more time
 Then, I lived in Mexico, but I'm still a Mexican citizen
 I'm a southwest Georgia Mexican
 We would buy Fried chicken and put some homemade salsa on it
 It was eating gizzards from the gas station
 And beans with eggs at home
 It was eating boiled peanuts
 It was eating watermelons in the summer (With some chili powder, lime,
 and a pinch of salt)

I am a Southwest Georgia Mexican
 Which meant only having one tiny Mexican store in town
 And having to travel 45 minutes to find a bigger store
 It was eating either pre-made tortillas from the store

or making them from Mazeca
But never getting them from the tortilleria
Being a Southwest Georgia Mexican is eating peach cobbler
and pastel de tres leches.
It was eating collard greens and sloppy Joe's at school
but eating nopales con chile at home.
Being a Southwest Georgia Mexican is learning to eat BBQ
and still preferring Barbacoa

I was a Southwest Georgia Mexican before; there were many Mexicans
I remember in school,
I was either the only Mexican in my grade
or one of the only ones in the whole school
Being a Southwest Georgia Mexican,
I listened to gospel music on the radio on Sunday mornings
while we went shopping for the week

I will always be Mexican and I will always be proud
But I will even more so will always be a Southwest Georgia Mexican
The place that saw me go from kid to adult
The place that nurtured me after being uprooted
I will always feel it in my heart
In my Southern soul
I am a Southwest Georgia Mexican

CHRISTIAN ANDRADE HERRERA

When Something Terrible Happens

Why is it that every time something terrible happens
We (collectively) love to say never forget
We said we wouldn't forget the Pulse nightclub shooting (yet we no longer talk about it)
We said never again after Sandy Hook,
yet Uvalde happened
We ask for gun reform and
We get nothing but blame from both sides
The Republicans this
The Democrats that
Fear-mongering amongst the people
If we reform this, they will take that
We change this, they will change that
Why do we care more about theoretical hypotheticals
and not the lives of the people around us?
We've kept saying never again after Columbine,
yet Marjory Stoneman Douglas happened
Why is it so easy for us to forget
to act like thousands of lives aren't affected by gun violence
We said never again too many things
Yet our outrage is short-lived
Yet I haven't seen the Second Amendment protect any young kids
Our kids aren't safe at home,
They aren't safe in public,
and what's worse, they aren't safe in school
We said, "We can't let Aurora happen again."
Yet, the San Bernardino massacre happened
We say no to racial and religious violence,
yet the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting and the Charleston church shooting happened
When will enough be enough?
When will we act?
When will we hold ourselves accountable?
When will we hold our elected officials accountable
This street cannot continue to run red
Before we, too, are tainted with the color
When will the stench of iron in the air and smoke be enough to spring us into action?
All these hashtags and social media posts
It seems like it's more performative than a play
I Stand with this, they type
They post black squares to protest police brutality and racial injustice
Yet, we have lost more lives since

When will enough be enough!
 They say change doesn't happen overnight
 Yet it's been many nights, and there still is no progress
 When did we become so jaded by the "mass shooting headlines"
 Prayers and virtual candlelight vigils
 We are so sorry for your loss
 instead of being sad about the loss
 The loss of a brighter future
 A future for My children, your children, our children
 I can't and won't let a child of mine be born
 Only for them to be taken away from me by guns

TAYLOR BAILES

Class Insecta



TAYLOR BAILES
Forest of Osteen



HAYDEN BECTON
Castle of Confusion



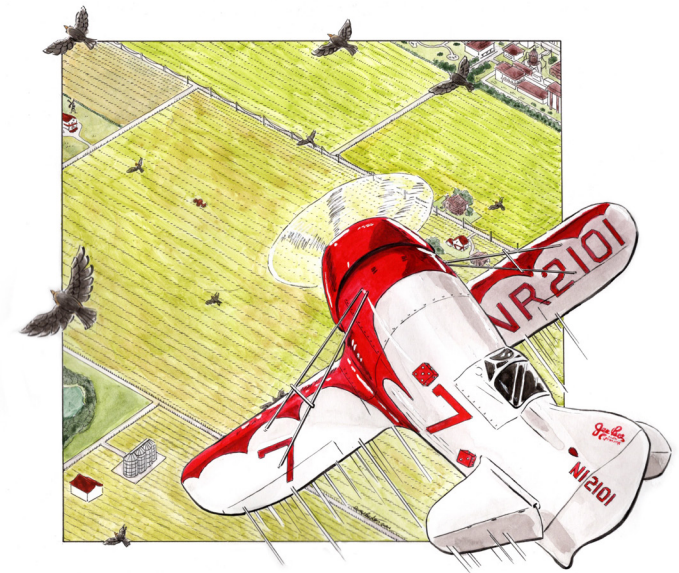
HAYDEN BECTON

Masters of the Sky

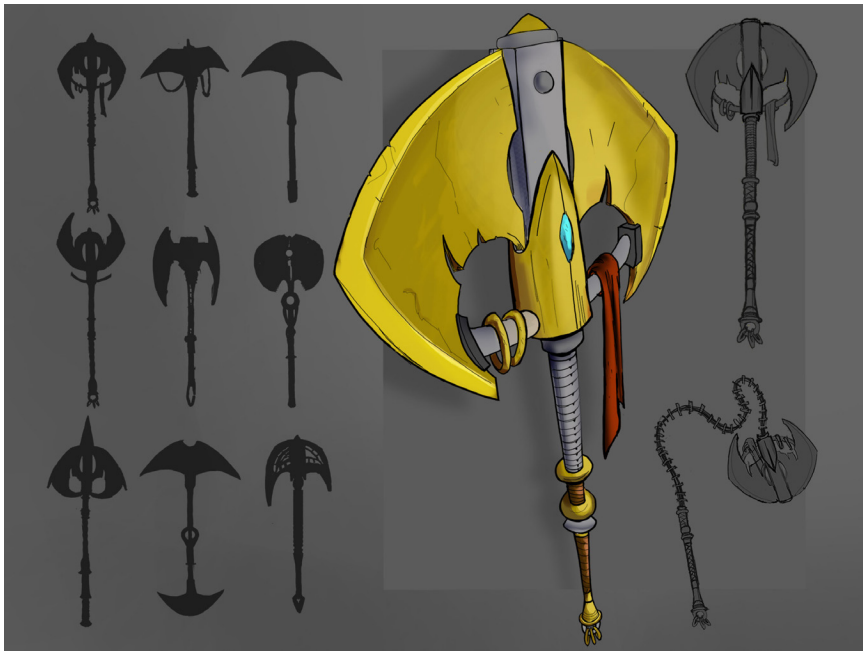


HAYDEN BECTON

Plane Above Plains



ELIJAH BOSTON
Judgement's Hand



ELIJAH BOSTON
Mushroom Hat



CULLEN BREAU

Garden of Eden



CULLEN BREAU

One Day You'll Thank Me



CULLEN BREAU

Portrait of a Figment



BAYLEE BROWN

I Hate Artist



LEMON BURNSIDE

Doodle For You



LEMON BURNSIDE

Made of Crushed Little Stars



REINALDO CABRERA PEREZ

Embrace nuestra cultra

I

En un mundo lleno de vibrant colors,
Where cultura and heritage intertwine,
Se celebra la vida con corazón y pasión,
In the dance of traditions, we entwine.

From abuelita's kitchen, aromas arise,
Sazón and spices, a taste of home,
Familia reunida, laughter and ties,
Our roots and values deeply sown.

La música salsa, a rhythmic beat,
Dancing to cumbia, feet move in sync,
Expressing our love, a cultural feat,
Bridging the languages, no need to think.

Palabras en español, warm and dear,
Whispered confessions, secrets shared,
Abrazos fuertes, wiping a tear,
In our hearts, Latinidad's declared.

Through varied tongues, we unite as one,
Orgullosos of who we've become,
Respecting our past, embracing the sun,
In this rich mosaic, we are the sum.

II

En el corazón, la llama arde bright,
A vibrant tapestry of colores y luz,
Where nuestra historia takes its flight,
En la cultura Latina, en la vida, la cruz.

Hablamos en Spanglish, a beautiful blend,
Fusing two worlds, like rivers converge,
Con amor y pasión, corazón extend,
La música, la danza, our souls converge.

Tamalitos, empanadas, flavors to savor,
Comidas caseras, a taste of abuela's care,
En la mesa, a union we savor,
Generations gather, love we share.

Bailamos al ritmo de bachata and salsa,
Guitars strumming, feet tapping the floor,
Expresando nuestra alegría, no falsa,
Latin rhythms unite us, forevermore.

From the bustling cities to pueblo tranquilo,
La comunidad, a vital part of our being,
Con la bandera en alto, our pride aguerrido,
Latinos united, history foreseeing.

Juntos somos fuertes, hand in hand,
Una familia unida, a bond so tight,
In this rich tapestry, together we stand,
Cultura viva, shining bright, a beautiful sight.

ALEX DAVIS

Dirty Dishes



ALEX DAVIS

Girl Fridge



DAIJA ESSIEN

In a Picture Daze



MEHDI HEIDARI

Bloody Moon



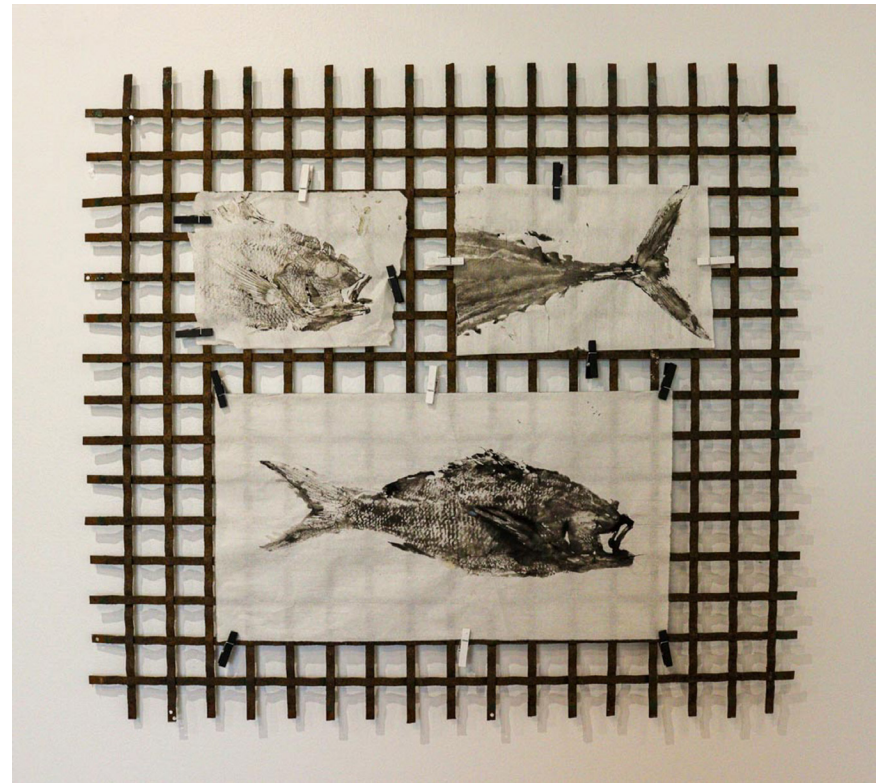
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KYA KELLY

Midori Express



KYA KELLY

The Bay at Funakoshi



KHALILAH KERSEY

Beauty Exists



KHALILAH KERSEY

Never Enough



LALI KHALID
A Dissonance



LALI KHALID
Lahore to Lake Superior



VYARKA KOZAREVA

A Rift In The Lute

Let's unroll the constellations of genes
Of our good lineage
And arrange them
In unison with the plain ikebana rules
Artistic abstract asymmetric
Forms of fondness in sepia tone.
It's impossible to exact
Who is who
Under mincing mimicry
When admiration is tinged with envy
Let's lay ingots of pain on sable melancholy
Just before the race is declared a race
The tarot cards will say nothing
To unarm any venous presentiment
Remember that
Ghosts will try to appall only those
Who dare to climb up
The rickety wooden stairs.

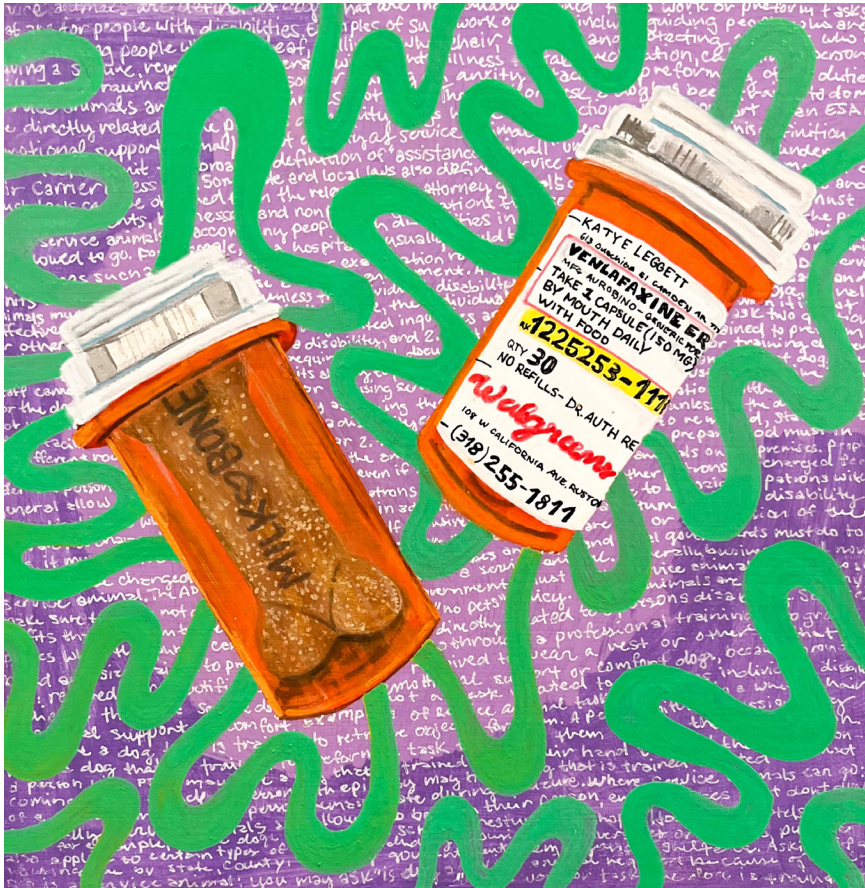
VYARKA KOZAREVA

Variance In Trust

If today was one sentence long,
It would contrast my rough competence
And the riot of terms.
I still believe that I know
What is important
While my small wars remain
Between empiricism and theory.
Once god promised freedom from sin
And blood discharge of sugar and hypocrisy.
I still don't know the best soil
For the universal intentions to divide,
And what happens to fish
That fail to become the infinity symbol.
Born in captivity, my pain is intrinsic—
It destroys bones, slowly and surely.
The flesh is only a mantle
On which I attach my smile
In poisonous days
Puzzle- headed by sentiments,
Not too strong, not too flaccid.
God will forgive my asymmetrical faith
If scolding is his way of loving me.
I have already learnt that
The scaly seams lie under the burnt shades.
While I'm sleeping tight,
The doubt is in its lurking place,
Like a grenade in the cranium,
A disguised seeker for the next host
To explode.

KATYE LEGGETT

Kinds of Medicine



EMILY LEIBOWITZ

Bottines Bleues



EMILY LEIBOWITZ
Mind the Algorithm



LISA LOFTON
Appointed Time



BILL MARABLE

Under Surveillance

Agents against 'Woke'
ban, monitor
revise, exclude
like
'Natives' intruded
like
ships didn't deliver slaves
like
separate was equal
like
history was meant to be revised
like
they want to see it.

BILL MARABLE

we sorrow, we Blues

"If you want to make beautiful music; you must play the black and white keys together....".

Richard M. Nixon

Ours has been the black
bone, the flat
the base of the melody

The sharp explosions
contrasting against the
pale tones of the home keys

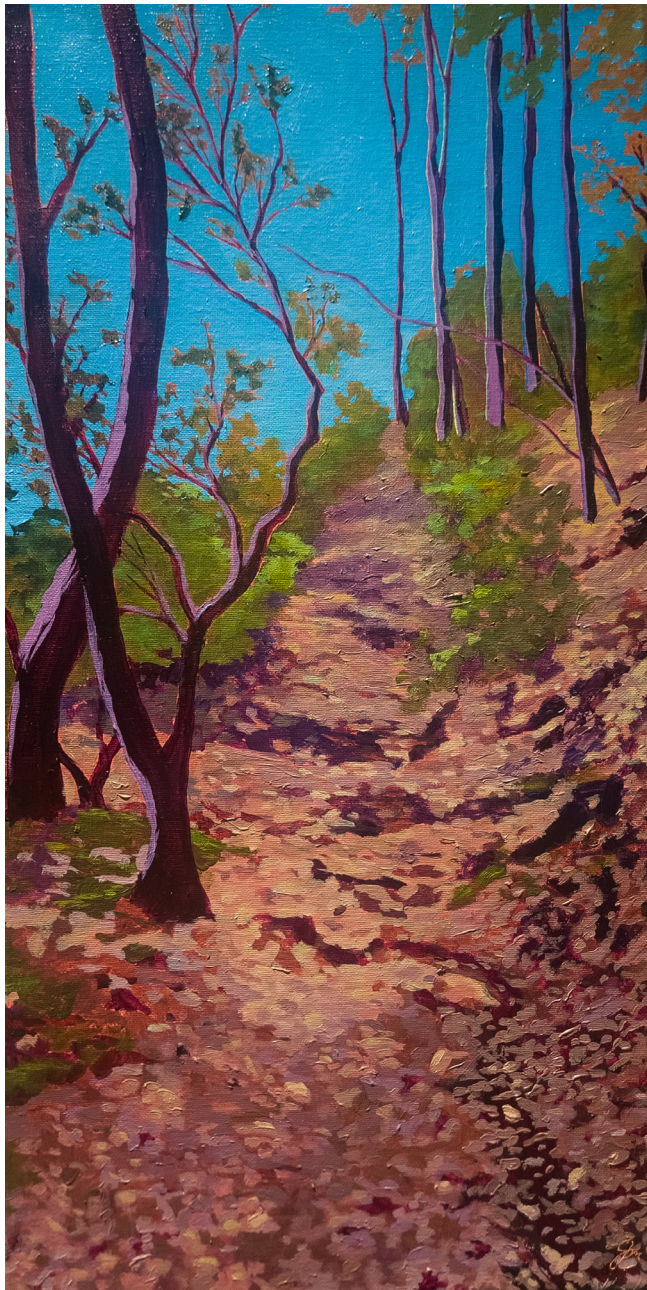
The 'Harmony Makers'
solutions important
enough to be missed

But not so much
adored that we sometimes
perform out of tune

It is then in
off-key flats we
sorrow, we Blues

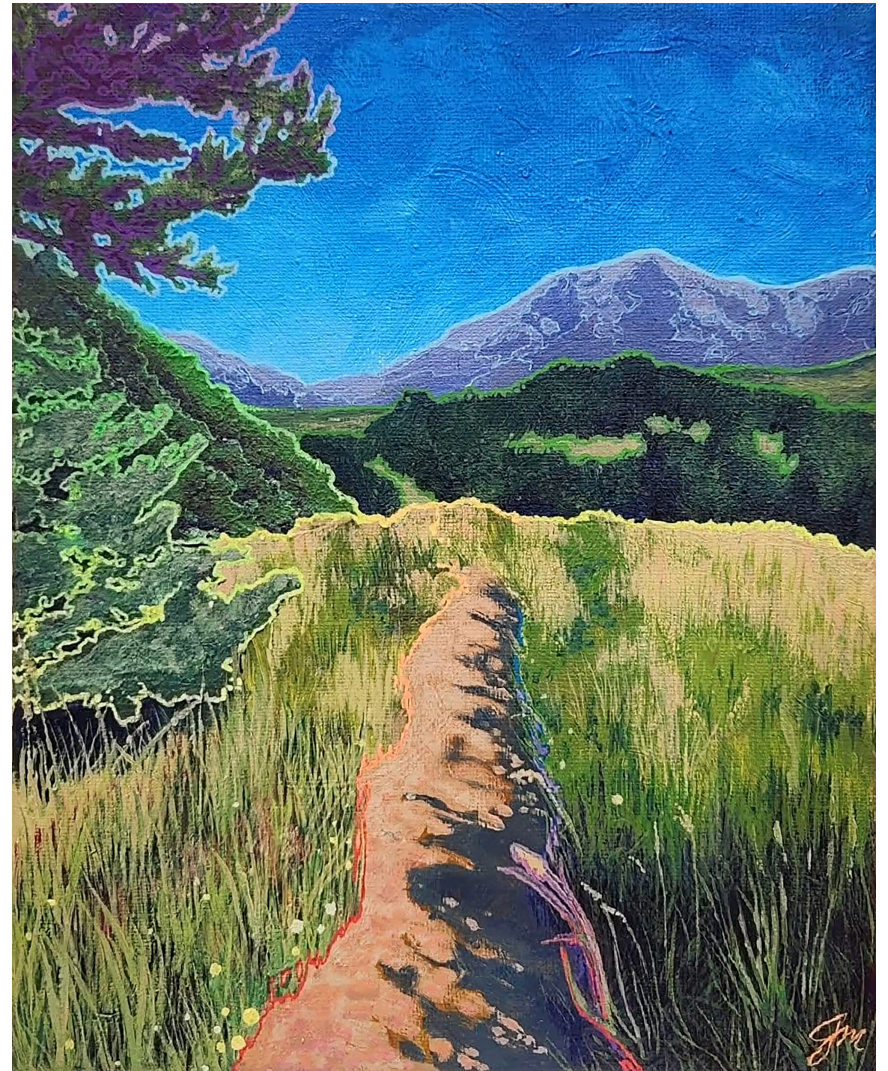
JOSHUA MASTERS

Amicalola Trail



JOSHUA MASTERS

Nature Trail



TANNER MAXEY

Will You Stay With Me



LEON MILLER

Experiencing what it is Like to Truly Make Love

What does it mean to truly make love

It is letting go to what feels right body, mind, and soul

The body because there is physical attraction, for sure

Mind, in that you believe this is right in every respect

Emotions because of the feelings you have about yourself and life

And soul because it opens you to the very depth of your being

Truly making love transforms the thrill of romance into a lasting serene ecstasy

As if you have entered a dream that nothing can disturb

Hoping this, that has begun, will have no end

It is understanding what beauty really is and means

Embracing in your arms what you have already taken into your heart

Day after day and night after night the feeling only deepens

And you experience happiness, joy, and pleasure in many different ways

Walking hand-in-hand by the sea

Candlelight dinners

Dancing to your favorite song

But with each variation there is the same delight

Variations are different ways to experiencing what true love feels like

Even during life's coldest days

There is a warmth that the harsh things in life can never diminish

Until you realize that you are having a taste of heaven while living here on earth

Because once you start truly making true love the pleasure never stops!

LEON MILLER

Life at the Bottom of the America that People Dream of

I was born at the bottom of the America people dream of
They dream of transforming their reality into all they are hoping it could be
Believing that if they have the will
American opportunities will provide a way
And though I was born at the bottom
I too had hopes and dreams
But hardliners in my hood constantly warned
Better get my head out of the sky
To get the best of what America has to offer
You got to be strong enough to face reality for what it is
But, there were also elders who advised
Just let your inner voice be your guide
And, above all, always remain true to yourself
For it's by knowledge of the self
That you will be able to withstand
The slights of those who try to make you feel small
Because of where you come from and their impression of what you are
And what you're not
Yea, I grew up from the bottom
Experienced a reality oh so concrete
Taught how to get by
By keeping it real
Wise like the serpent
But inconspicuously discreet
I learned that life at the bottom has its drawbacks
But it also has its own rewards
If you stay true to the game
And learn to play the game for all its worth
So, I gradually begun to realize the contentment that can be gained
By always staying true to who I am and where I'm from

SARAH MINTER

Finally Got You Right Here



ABBY MONARCH

Bridge



ABBY MONARCH

Never Really Cut



ABBY MONARCH

The Lesson



JEFF NEWBERRY

*Can You Look This Over?
-For a Student*

I'd rather look at you, bleary-eyed
and lost this morning, a creased copy
in your left hand, your body language
all ellipses, a trail of dots leading
to a sentence that never ends. I'd rather
tell you that proofreading is not proof-
texting. The ideas you seek
in my mind can't blossom in yours.
These words mean nothing
more than what you give them.
I know that every moment to you
is like a ping on your phone,
sudden and insistent, words
that matter only if you check them.
You're on the right track if you love
the feeling of failure, the life we learn
to embrace as we delete and start over.

JEFF NEWBERRY

Poem on the Last Day of the Year

I'm seeking meaning in these words,
letting them sieve through my mind
like sand, an image of Time once
seen on my grandmother's tv screen,
the opening credits of Days of Our Lives.
The title made me think of numbered
hours, the way the church taught me
God counted, waiting for Armageddon.

On New Year's Eve, 1999, my wife
and I attended a party where, after
midnight, the power failed for a minute
or two, some random surge I ascribed
to the End of the World. For a second,
I wanted it to be—let's just be done
with it all, just pull the plug on humanity.

Those around me gasped when the power
came on. We cheered. Their faces flowered
in the welcome glow, each relieved laugh
easing some weight in my chest. We kissed
each other. We wove into each other's
lives, all of us collections of subatomic
particles mixing with each other, making love
out of nothingness. I want that certainty

now, over two decades into a century
that feels like the ending credits after
a movie you didn't know you enjoyed
until the denouement. You wait in the dark.
There may be a post-credit scene. There's
always he promised hope of a sequel.

JEFF NEWBERRY

Sea Glass

It begins in disaster. A maker's perfectly-formed
vessel thrown from an errant ship shatters to shards,
its promised stability broken not by a storm—
but by what's natural, the rocky bottom of all seas.
The fragments let go of their insistence of wholeness.
They settle among the silt and clouded waters, obscured.
They tumble in lost waters, their transparent past
scoured by salt, bleached in brine, forever separate
from that which gave them life, a simple vessel.
But tides do more than whirlpool and flood.
The salt does more than scrape. The cold depths
cannot hide a thing forever. The diurnal and nocturnal
ebb and neap change a thing. What was once sharp,
fragmented, hones to crystalline smoothness
and strength. Found on a lone stretch of beachhead
like some discarded jewel, this thing made more
precious: a gem formed in violence shines
like the distant stars, unknowable and inviolable.

BAILEY POOLE

At Da Sto



BAILEY POOLE

I Luv Webs



BAILEY POOLE

My Brothers Keeper



MEGAN REÁTIGA PARRISH

Blind Vision



MEGAN REÁTIGA PARRISH

Inner Speaker



MEGAN REÁTIGA PARRISH

Livingroom Vacation Collage Series (4)



NOLO SEGUNDO

Arriving At Old Age In America—the View of A Seventy-seven Year Old in 2024

Now the old mans says,

‘What did I do with my life?
What did I change?
Whom did I help?
What did I learn?’

and then he adds,
‘Why am I alive?’

The war is long over--
all the wars seemed over
until a new one was born
in an evil and empty heart.

But now the old man sees
that a different kind of war
courses like a blood-soaked
ocean wasting the once solid
land of the free and the brave.
Minds are shrinking, hearts
collapsing, souls dying as
the evil-minded are freed
of ancient restraint and
mass murder is on the menu,
a daily special it now seems.

When human nature is denied,
then it will roar up, like the
broken beast it's always been
but now no longer cowed by
fear of God or fear of humanity.

HYEKYUNG HANNAH SEO

Cover with Serenity



MARKEL SHANNON
Drowning Canyon



MARKEL SHANNON
Fragmented Signal



MARCELA SINNETT

El Peso Del Oro



MARCELA SINNETT

El Venado



ENOCH SMITH

Medal Wall

Every runner wants a medal.

Sure, every runner who enters a race gets a T-shirt. Heck, in most races the only requirement for getting a T-shirt is paying the entry fee. What's the sense of accomplishment in that? A true sense of accomplishment for a runner is having a medal draped around their neck after crossing the finish line. T-shirts can be bought; medals have to be earned.

There are many ways a runner can earn a medal. A runner can get a medal for being the first one to cross the finish line. In most races medals are awarded to both the first man and the first woman to cross the finish line. Many races divide the runners into five-year or ten-year gendered age categories, from the little kids all the way up to the elderly. Depending on the race, being either the first person or one of the first three people in the age and gender bracket to cross the finish line earns the runner a medal. A lot of races have a Masters category so that the fastest person that's at least forty-years-old gets a special medal, a Grand Masters category for people over fifty, and a Super Grand Masters category for people over sixty. One doesn't necessarily have to be the fastest overall runner to get a medal; they only have to be the fastest in their age group.

Then, there are the finisher medals for anyone who completes a race. Most smaller races don't have finisher medals. On the other hand, most races that have a large turnout do award finisher medals because every runner wants a medal, and the likelihood of getting a first place medal in a race that has hundreds or thousands of runners is very unlikely for the average runner.

Similarly, every runner who enters a long-distance race also receives a finisher medal. Sure, completing a 5K race can be difficult, but completing a half marathon or a full marathon is a far greater challenge. Each distance requires a lot of training prior to race day. Then, once the big day arrives, the runner must stubbornly push through an unlimited amount of excruciating pain, exhaustion, and self doubt from the starting gun to the finish line. Any runner who completes a half marathon, a marathon, or a longer race—50K anyone?—has accomplished a great feat; therefore, that runner has earned their finisher medal.

But why do runners want medals instead of T-shirts? Nobody wears medals out in public. Once the runner gets home or, in most cases, gets in the car after the race, the medal comes off and is never worn again. A T-shirt, on the other hand, can be worn repeatedly for days, weeks, and years after the race has ended. So why does every runner want a medal?

Runners prefer medals for several reasons. First, medals are more durable than T-shirts. A race T-shirt will fade after several washings, and it will start to show signs of wear and tear over a period of time. A medal won't fade or rip. It is usually made from some material that will hold its shape and color for a lifetime. Another reason that runners prefer medals is because they can display them somewhere. In my house, I have a special "medal wall" where all my running medals hang. My medal wall is in the dining room, right next to the dining room table. It's in a recessed portion of the wall with three shelves that display my medals, trophies, plaques, and other mementoes that I have received from numerous races over the past several years.

However, the biggest reason that runners always want medals isn't to display them on a wall or to boast about winning.

The biggest reason that every runner wants a medal is because each individual medal has a story to tell.

And, oh, what stories the medals on my wall tell! Many of them tell stories of tremendous accomplishments where I pushed myself harder and farther than I ever thought I could. Some medals tell stories of my travels to race locations far away from home. Then, there are the medals that tell the stories of festivals and other events that the race was only one small part of, the stories of holidays that the race celebrated, or of historical dates that the race commemorated. My medal wall has a lot of medals, and every single one of them tells a very unique and individual story.

As I hold a race medal in the palm of my hand, it may appear as nothing more than a shiny piece of metal attached to a colorful neck ribbon. But what may appear as a trinket to other people is so much more than that to me. The heavy, metallic object may feel cold in my hand, but the memories that it conjures up feel very warm in my heart. As I examine the medal, I can remember the temperature and other weather conditions on the morning that I earned it; I can remember the crowd of fellow runners that I stood with at the starting line; I can remember what happened at certain landmarks that I passed during the race; I can remember how I felt simultaneously exhausted and accomplished as I crossed the finish line; I can remember sharing the stories of my day's experience with the other runners who started the race with me while they simultaneously share their own race stories with me. Yes, every medal on my wall brings back very fond memories that I will treasure for a lifetime.

And that's why every runner wants a medal.

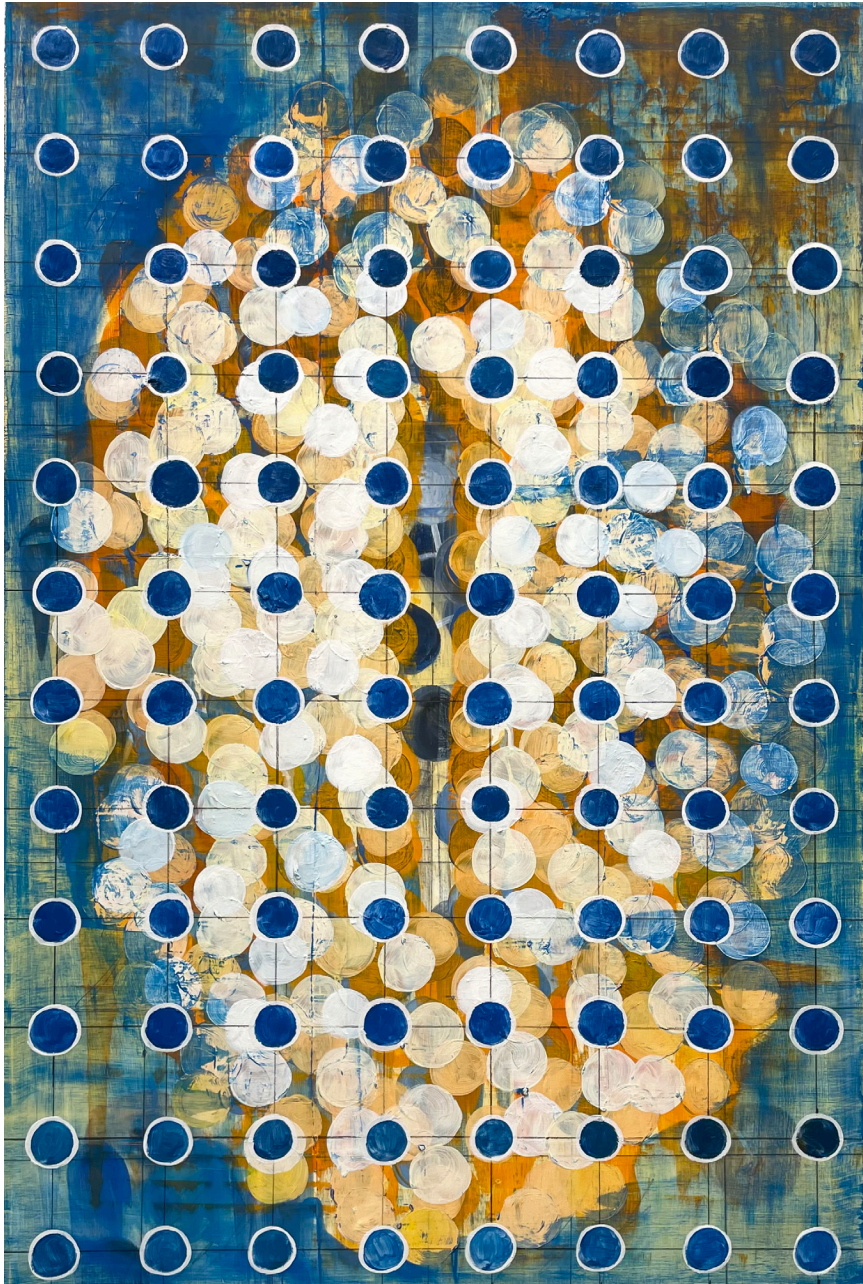
JALEN STANCIL

Work



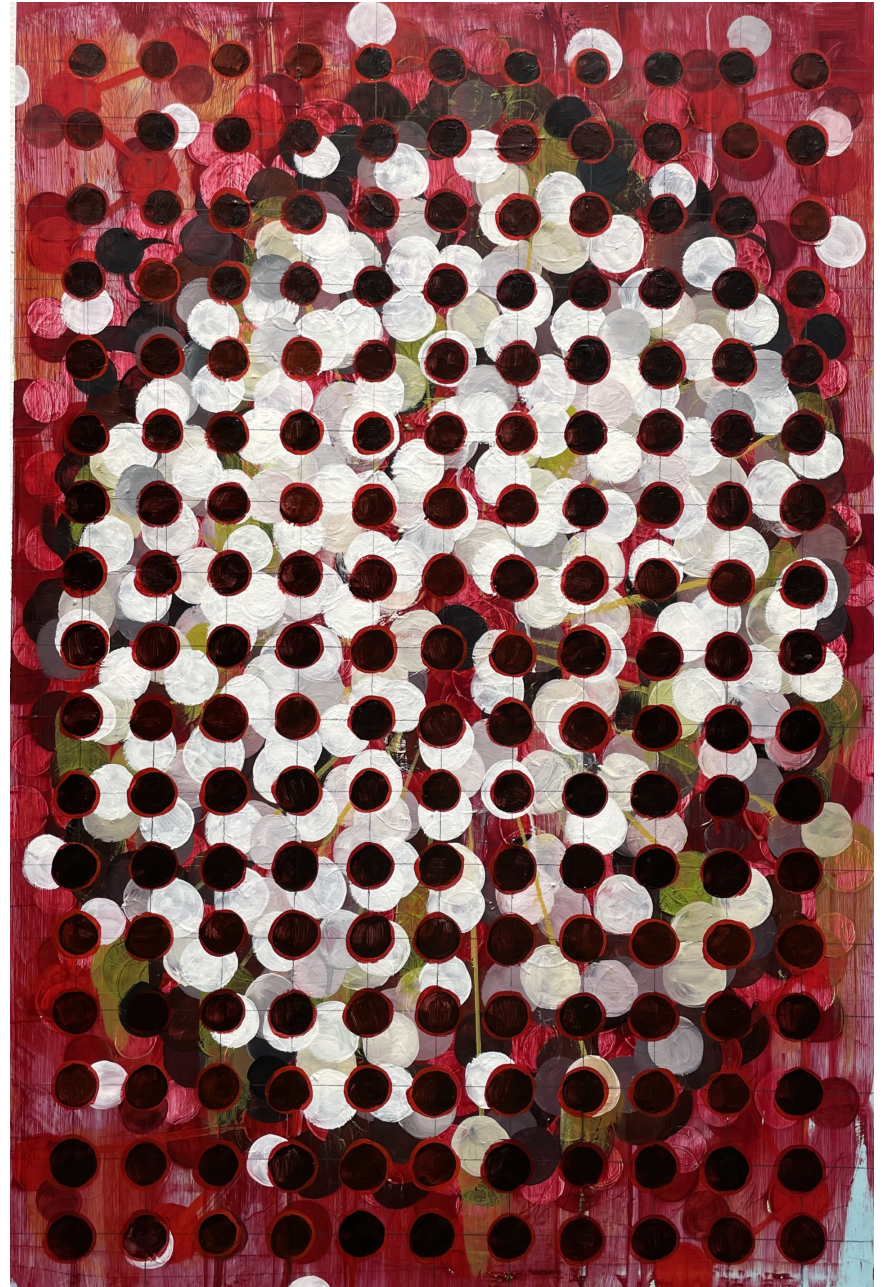
SCOTT THORP

Presence 3

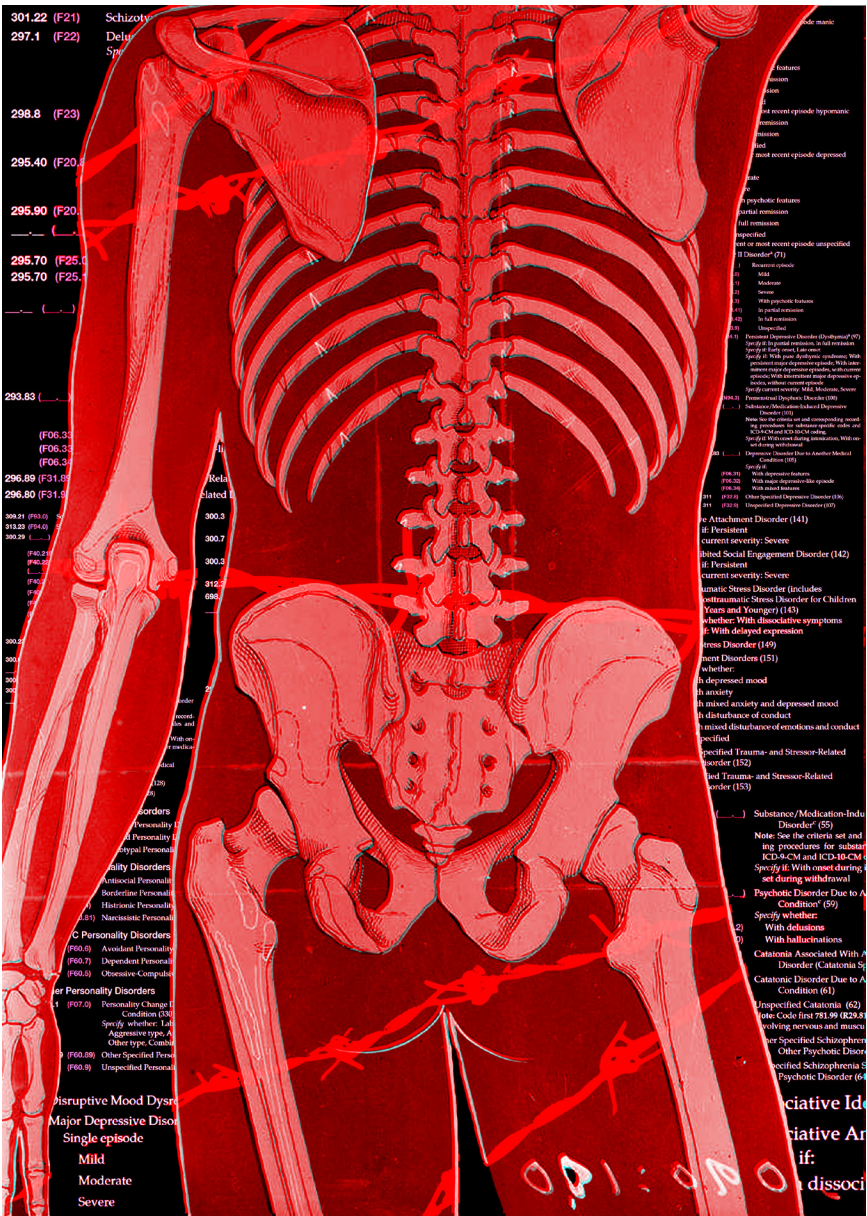


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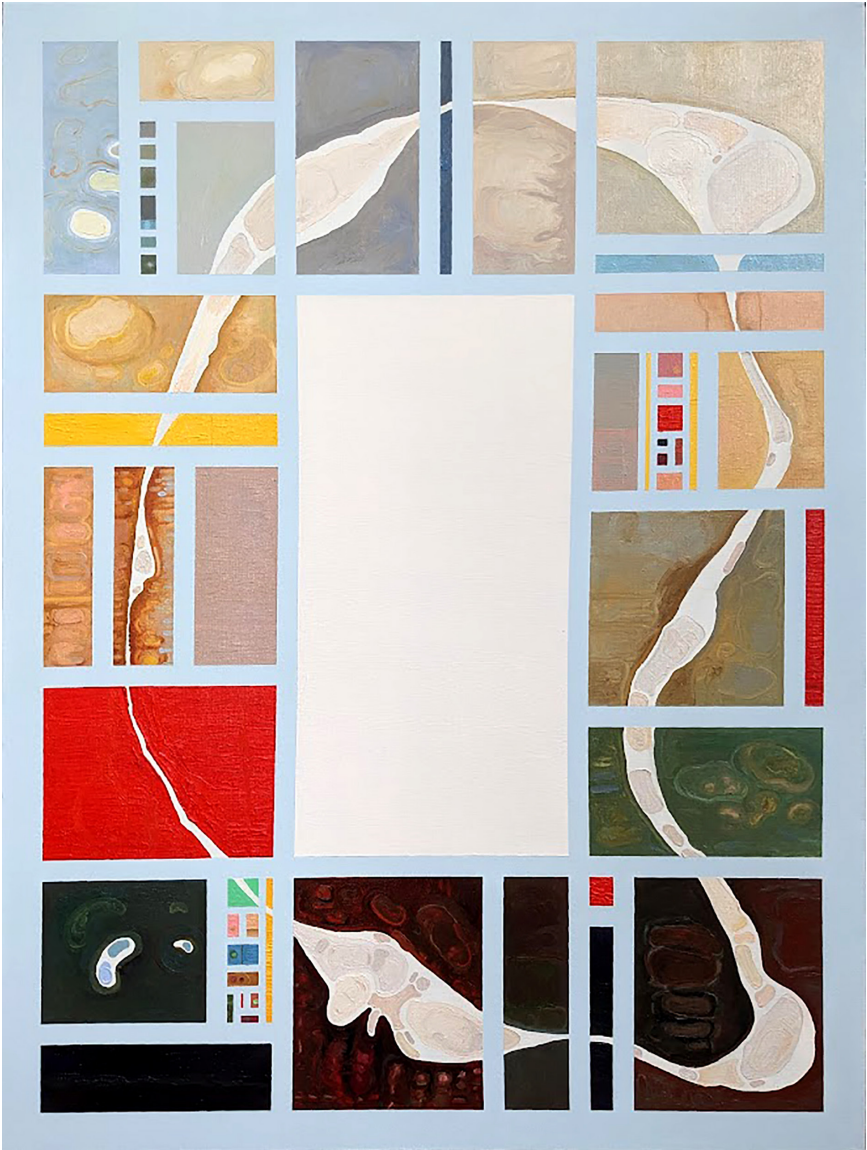
Presence 4



JORDYN WALKER
Protocol



JOANNA WHITE
I Need to Digest That



JOANNA WHITE

Waiting For the Light to Sprout



JOANNA WHITE

Your Gentleness Has Made Me Great



CHARLES WILLIAMS

My Old Friend, Gordon Parks

On a sunny Saturday in December, I drove two and half hours to Atlanta, saw the big gold dome of the capitol gleaming above I-85, closed my eyes, turned over my will and life to a higher power, hit the blinker, and merged across three lanes of traffic to exit 250. I took a left on Peachtree and headed to the High Museum of Art to see an exhibit called *Giants: Art from the Dean Collection of Swizz Beatz and Alicia Keys*. I made my first sojourn to the High when I moved to Georgia in 2004, and I will head there most any time just to check out the art. I often wander the museum finding my favorite pieces and communing with them. I call it visiting my “old friends.” An old friend might be the artist, a person in the artwork, or the artwork itself. I have these old friends all over the country and a few overseas, as well. (I hope I get to visit them again.) Among others at the High Museum, there is the woman in *The Blue Mandarin Coat*, works by Howard Finster who inspired me to pursue art, a towering painting by Julie Mehretu, a sculpture of the *Tobacco Demon* by Alison Saar, and, of course, Kara Walker’s mural. In December, though, I went specifically to see the *Giants* exhibit.

I had investigated the show beforehand and was enthusiastic. The collection includes works by several big name, famous artists, and I was excited to see work by Odili Donald Odita who taught at Florida State when I was in graduate school there. I tend to gravitate to the paintings in an exhibit, and I was not disappointed. The entrance to the exhibit was flanked by two massive portraits by Kihende Wiley, the artist who painted President Obama’s portrait, and the show concluded with two massive paintings by Amy Sherald, the artist who painted *Frist Lady*, Michelle Obama’s portrait. Everything in between was equally amazing, including sculpture by Nick Cave and an installation by Ebony G. Patterson.

I spent a good bit of time wandering through, seeing, learning, and thinking about over a hundred works of art, and I am so grateful to Swizz Beatz and Alicia Keys for their generosity.

When visiting museums, I often find that I am drawn to a particular piece, and I wonder why. Sometimes it is obvious. The work is historically important, masterfully crafted, displayed in an interesting way, or given an interesting context. It might simply be that it was created by one of my favorite artists. Sometimes it is about the journey, like standing before Picasso’s *Guernica* in Madrid. Sometimes, though, it is kismet. There is something up in the universe, something about time and space that led me to a moment when I look at a work, and it tells me all that I need to know about that point in time, about my existence, about life. It changes my perception. That’s what I love about art, and that is how on that day, Gordon Parks became an “old friend” who I will visit in museums. I had studied Gordon Parks and admired reproductions of his works, but I have not had many opportunities to see actual prints. On that Saturday, though, amongst those paintings and installations, amongst all those wonderful colors, there were several black and white photographic prints by Parks, and I kept coming back to them. Now, I am a polite person, and most of the time in a museum, I make sure everyone has a good view. I am typically self-aware in that way, but not that Saturday, not in front of Gordon Parks’ photographs. My attitude was like “Run along and look at something else for a while. This is my moment.” I selfishly consumed those images.

There was one of Parks’ photographs, in particular, that, in turn, consumed all my attention, and it is now indelibly part of my perception of the world. The photograph is called, *Black Panther Members at Chapter Headquarters* in San Francisco, California, 1970. I am no expert on the history of the Black Panther Party, but I admire people who try to make a difference despite having all odds against them while navigating troubling and confusing times. I was drawn to the photograph because of its historic importance,

and there is no doubt that Gordon Parks is a master with the camera. This was more of one of those kismet moments, though. I felt as though I was supposed to be looking at that image in that particular moment. When we think of the Black Panthers we often think of guns, berets, and sunglasses. Maybe we think of bold speeches or threatening language. Maybe we think of conspiracy and the brutal end to their story. Gordon Parks captured something deeper, though. Parks was known for his ability to get close to his subjects, to become a part of their lives, and photograph them in a way that revealed their humanity. There is an honesty that Parks captured in his photographs that is rare to see. In his photograph of the Black Panthers, I see five young men sitting around a table in an office. A couple of guys have on their shades, but the ones who do not are looking straight into the camera. Everything about their presence and their eyes... These are not men who are posturing or posing. It is real, and it is honest. All I could think is that they looked exasperated. They were so tired of the treatment, the actions, the oppression. There was a courage brought about by exhaustion. They were men who were doing all that they knew to do to remedy something so overwhelming. There was nothing macho about it, but there was no doubt that they would not back down from anything even if it meant death, and they were fully aware. Parks showed us that awareness in the way that Leonardo da Vinci showed us the awareness of Jesus in *The Last Supper*. I could read everything that was ever written about the Black Panther Party and not learn what I learned about them by looking at that single Gordon Parks photograph. It was truly moving.

I was getting tired, and I went to the café to grab a snack and cleanse my pallet so to speak. Then I would stroll around and visit with some old friends before I found my way home. As I sipped on a coffee and nibbled on a pastry, I had this thought. Photography literally means writing with light. Film and paper are coated with light sensitive material -- chemicals that essentially rust to varying degrees when exposed to light. Everything in

photography seems backwards. When projected, the lighter parts of the negative image let through more light. More light makes the chemicals rust more to create the darker shapes on the print. The darker parts of the negative let through less light, and less light makes less of a reaction, creating lighter shapes on the print. A man with a camera in 1970 said or did whatever it was that made these men show their true selves. He adjusted the lens, the aperture, the shutter, and he framed his shot. He pressed the shutter release to expose the film for a fraction of a second, and 55 years later a piece of paper with some chemicals on it had a profound effect on my life and my perception. That is the power of art. Isn't it? An artist manipulates materials in such a way that merely by looking we are changed -- our thoughts, our feelings, our vision. That's why every dictator and despot throughout history has wanted to control art and harness its power. Such people want to limit the art that we can see, and they want to show us only the art that promotes their will. What in that moment made that photograph so important to me?

Regarding the experience, I was mostly humbled. A master can make a piece of paper speak volumes and tell stories across decades, even centuries. I wondered why I even make art when there are people like that who are so good at it and so many amazing works to behold out in the world. It haunted me a bit as I walked toward the elevator. Then, the answer came again: Good or bad, it is the act of trying and doing it despite everything that is my stand. It is all that I know to do with this world and when I don't do it, I feel ill. I just don't really have much of a choice in the matter. I was on my way to the elevator, going to visit with some old friends before I made my way home. Instead, I found myself again standing before the Gordon Parks photograph wondering, questioning, discovering. The staff would have to remind me when it was time to go home.

JOSHUA LEE YATES

Creature



JOSHUA LEE YATES

Mysterious Purple House



NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

CHRISTIAN ANDRADE HERRERA is a first-generation Mexican-American immigrant raised in Southwest Georgia. He is pursuing a PhD in Biomedical Engineering in California with a passion for the sciences and the arts. He is a proud 2x graduate of Albany State. When not in the lab, he likes to beak, read, write, visit local beaches, and travel.

TAYLOR BAILES is a science artist. She makes works based around exploring the themes of observation and uses her findings as opportunities to be curious. She works with a variety of mediums, most prominently in watercolor. Currently, Taylor is earning her BFA in Studio Art at Louisiana Tech University.

HAYDEN "DENNY" BECTON is a freelance cartoonist whose work consists of sequential art and storytelling through still drawings. Becton's work explores a mix of comedic expression and adventure narratives. Becton has studied at New York Academy of Art, participating in exhibitions that expose him to various artistic perspectives. Becton continues to make comics and refine his craft.

ELIJAH BOSTON is a Concept Artist and Illustrator based in Louisiana. Boston's work explores design directions for environments and characters for entertainment media; as well as ways to tell stories, rooted in fantasy and his own writings. Inspired by a long history of books, television and video games, Boston's work is based in his own interest in exploring the limits of narration.

CULLEN BREAUX creates autobiographical artworks through assemblage of found materials, infusing his work with history and nostalgia. His accolades include Best in BFA at Louisiana Tech (2024), the Phoebe Mathys Endowment, and exhibitions at the Masur Museum. Breau graduates May 2025 with a BFA in Studio from Louisiana Tech Universit

BAYLEE BROWN creates humorous single-panel comics inspired by daily life. From working in a restaurant to time with family and the challenges of being a young woman, she utilizes the mundane nature of living. Using bright colors with a simplified character style, she brings lightheartedness to embarrassing or uncomfortable moments, making the work approachable.

LEMON BURNSIDE, from Bastrop, Louisiana, creates sculptural ceramics exploring childhood nostalgia through toys, doodles, and playful forms. They earned a BFA from ULM (2024) and are pursuing an MFA at Louisiana Tech (2027). Their work has been exhibited nationally, including Emergence in North Carolina. Awards include Gretchen Dean Best in Show and Outstanding Student in Ceramics.

REINALDO CABRERA PEREZ is a first-gen PhD student at UC Irvine studying how bilinguals develop and use their languages from childhood to young adulthood. He holds dual B.A.s in linguistics and Russian studies from the University of Florida. He is a published author of peer-reviewed articles and translated a Russian-English mystery novel.

ALEX DAVIS, an oil painter based out of Ruston, Louisiana, uses a variety of still life compositions and portraits to provoke viewers to reflect on their environment by exploring things like nostalgia, sentimentality and the female experience. She is currently obtaining her Bachelors of Fine Arts with an Art History minor at Louisiana Tech University with an expected graduation date of 2025.

DAIJA ESSIEN is a multidisciplinary artist whose work investigates the layered construction of Black identity, particularly in the south. Drawing from regional history and personal experience, she examines how external markers, such as clothing, hair, and self-presentation, shape perception and belonging. Her work explores how these expressions shift across different social and geographic spaces, revealing tensions between visibility, erasure, and self-definition. Through painting, printmaking, and mixed media, Essien creates work that reflects the complexity of identity shaped not only by culture, but by place.

MEHDI HEIDARI (b. 1994) is an astrophotographer from Iran whose work has been published online by NASA, ESO, and the International Dark-Sky Association. He has been an MFA candidate in photography at Louisiana Tech University's School of Design since 2024.

MAGGIE HICKEY received her BFA in 3D Art from Georgia Southern University. While her work centers on ceramics, she incorporates mixed media, including wood, metal, 3D modeling, printmaking, and found objects. Influenced by a deep connection to nature, Maggie's process is rooted in curiosity and playful experimentation, reflecting physical and conceptual environmental elements.

KYA KELLY's artistic pursuits work to challenge the boundaries that separate a viewer from an artwork, utilizing materials such as silver gelatin prints, metal, and wood. Her work in alternative photographic processes explores themes of human connection, interaction between communities and with art, and perception through film photography to composite printing with negatives in the darkroom.

KHALILAH KERSEY is an artist from southern Louisiana living in northern Louisiana. Her business, studioKMAK, exists to encourage connection between people by highlighting the mundanity of everyday life and responding to it with compassion and wisdom. She aims to make work that calms the viewer down, invites them over for coffee (or tea), and asks them to rest for a while.

LALI KHALID is a visual artist based in Chicago. Born in Pakistan, she holds a BFA from NCA Lahore and an MFA in Photography from Pratt Institute, where she was a Fulbright Scholar. Since immigrating to the U.S. in 2011, her work has explored themes of diaspora, identity, and belonging. Khalid has exhibited widely across Pakistan, Europe, and the U.S.

VYARKA KOZAREVA is from Bulgaria. Her work has appeared in Adelaide Literary Magazine, Ariel Chart, Poetry Pacific, Basset Hound Press, Bosphorus Review of Books, Mad Swirl, Ann Arbor Review, Fevers Of The Mind, Juste Milieu Lit, Trouvaille Review, Aberration Labyrinth, Triggerfish Critical Review, Sampsonia Way Magazine, Synchronized Chaos Magazine, Toasted Cheese, The Big Windows Review, morphrog, Tipton Poetry Journal, Wildfire Words, Wellspring Literary Journal.

KATYE LEGGETT is a painter and mixed media artist from South Arkansas, where she earned her BA in studio art and History from Ouachita Baptist University in 2024. Katye was named outstanding senior in the department of art and design at her alma mater. Katye's work has been displayed in many exhibitions and festivals nationally. Katye is a current first year MFA student at Louisiana Tech University in Ruston, Louisiana.

EMILY LEIBOWITZ is a designer and artist from Austin, Texas. She holds a BS in Apparel Merchandising from the University of Arkansas and a UX/UI certification from George Washington University. Now pursuing an MFA in Graphic Design at Louisiana Tech, she explores femininity, identity, luxury, and consumerism. Her work blends minimalism and maximalism, using digital and physical media to balance order and chaos.

LISA LOFTON, a life-long art hobbyist, likes to dabble in a variety of art mediums ranging from sculpture to textiles to photography. She is a graduate of the Design and Media Production Technology program at Albany Technical College and subsequently taught as an adjunct instructor for the program for eight years. She is a firm believer that art is the highest form of expression capable of transcending all barriers and conveying universal experiences of humanity.

BILL MARABLE, , is President of the Griot Collective of West Tennessee in his home town of Jackson, Tennessee. His poetry has appeared in the Skinny, Spilled Ink, the Pierian Journal and most recently Black Fire This Time Vol. II

JOSHUA MASTERS, raised in Raleigh, NC, is an MFA candidate at Florida State University with work exhibited in ArtFields at the Jones-Carter Gallery in Lake City, SC, and the 14th Biennial International Miniature Print Exhibition at the Center for Contemporary Printmaking, Norwalk, CT. Their mixed media artworks are used to advocate for the belonging and comfort of disabled and queer communities.

TANNER MAXEY is an artist and educator whose work explores memory, loss, and impermanence through ceramic burnout and fragile forms. Drawing from craft and personal history, his work questions the nature of legacy, asking what holds more meaning: the moment of loss or what quietly remains.

LEON MILLER (AKA Jah Tah) is an instructor of Ethics, Tai Chi, Yoga, and Meditation. He writes journal and magazine articles in the areas of The Philosophy of Religion, Intercultural Relations, Ethics, and Value Creation. He has four published books, a number of published poems, and now, as well, several musical singles: Come to Paradise (Jah Tah featuring Kari Vilgats), Mother of the Earth (Jah Tah featuring Manek), and Street Life (Jah Tah featuring BSK and Bass).

SARAH MINTER is a current student at Albany State University, seeking her BFA. As a visual artist, her primary focus is to tell stories through her artwork, and she is influenced by the many medias she has seen throughout her life. Her dream is to one day share the expansive world she's been creating since childhood, and tell deep and intricate stories through a compelling visual medium.

ABBY MONARCH is an oil painter based in North Louisiana. Her work explores the grief of growing up by inserting herself into the environments she can't fit into anymore.

JEFF NEWBERRY Jeff Newberry is the Poet in Residence at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, Georgia. His most recent book is the Pushcart-nominated How to Talk about the Dead (Redhawk Publications).

BAILEY POOLE earned his Bachelor's degree in Visual Arts from Albany State University. His artistic philosophy asserts that art has no singular face and can be found in anything and everything. Poole approaches art as fundamentally shaped by perception, determined by how one receives and interprets images and artworks, discovering meaning in unexpected places.

MEGAN REÁTIGA PARRISH is a Colombian mixed-media artist and musician from Bogotá, now based in the U.S. Her work fuses printmaking and photography, channeling the raw energy of the music videos she grew up on and the surreal worlds of Japanese TV. Bold, nostalgic, and cinematic, her art captures the echoes of a past that still pulses through the present.

ANNIE SCHOUDEST is an illustrator who primarily works in ballpoint pen. Being a tattoo apprentice, her works aim to elevate the status of tattoos in the art community.

NOLO SEGUNDO, pen name of a retired teacher who became a published poet in his 70s in over 225 lit mags in 18 countries and 3 softcover books published by Cyberwit.net, the latest titled 'Soul Songs'.

HYEKYUNG HANNAH SEO is the Accounting Program Chair at Albany Technical College, guiding students to success in accounting. A dedicated educator and keen artist, she balances structure with creativity through painting. She is married to Dr. Seong Seo, and a proud mother of two sons.

MARKEL SHANNON's artwork spans a variety of mediums, from cartoon-style digital drawings inspired by rubber hose characters to complex 3D sculptures. His work resonates with both younger audiences and art enthusiasts. In addition to photography, Markel creates immersive worlds with Blender, embodying the spirit of a true jack of all trades.

MARCELA SINNETT is a Salvadoran-American artist exploring identity and cultural erasure through mixed-media printmaking and fibers. Her work blends the lore, religion, and culture of Indigenous Salvadorans with contemporary beliefs and politics. In a fast-paced world, she turns to slow, intentional practices to connect deeply with her art.

ENOCH SMITH is an English Instructor at Albany State University. In addition to pursuing his PhD in English with an emphasis on Victorian Literature at Georgia State University, he is an aspiring author and screenplay writer who is looking to create the next great episodic streaming television series.

JALEN STANCIL, born in Atlanta, spent his early life surrounded by art, but nothing caught his attention like the murals and graffiti covering the buildings downtown. Since then, he's been captivated to create something as flashy and eye-catching as those works that first inspired him, while spreading meaningful messages that others can walk away with and remember.

SCOTT THORP is an artist, writer and educator specializing in creativity. He currently holds multiple roles at Augusta University, where he serves as Chair of the Department of Art and Design and Associate Vice President for Interdisciplinary Research. Scott earned his MFA in multi-disciplinary art from the Maryland Institute College of Art. He is also a contributor to the international art magazine, ArtPulse, writing on technology-based, contemporary artists.

JORDYN WALKER is a Digital Arts student Georgia Southwestern in Americus, GA, interested in health anxiety, patienthood, and disabled embodiment. "Protocol" (2024) demonstrates the psychiatric pathologization of physical pain that serves as a barrier to diagnosis and treatment..

JOANNA WHITE completed her MFA at Florida State University in 2005, where she focused on installation and inter-media projects. Currently, she is Professor of Art at Eastern Florida State College in Cocoa, Florida. Her work has been featured in several solo shows, and in museum exhibits at the Tampa Museum of Art, the Boca Raton Museum of Art, the Museum of Florida Art, the Brevard Art Museum, the Florida State University Museum of Fine Art, and the Albin Polasek Museum.

CHARLES WILLIAMS is a Professor of Visual Art at Albany State University. he serves as the Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. He has lived in Albany for 21 years. His artwork is mixed media painting and drawing.

JOSHUA LEE YATES (b. 1989) is a non-disciplinary artist and Assistant Professor of Multimedia and Film Production in the Communication Arts Department at Georgia Southern University. He lives in a stranger's backyard with his hairless cat, Roux.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

deadline April 1, 2026

ABOUT THE PIERIAN

The Pierian, Albany State University's online journal of literary and visual arts, invites submissions through April 1, 2026. We seek original, unpublished works that challenge readers to look beyond the ordinary, think critically, and explore universally shared human experiences.

Our pages welcome a diverse array of creative expressions: poetry, short stories, one-act plays, personal essays, and visual art (submitted in 2D format). The Pierian is open to all voices. We welcome submissions from writers and artists everywhere, including but not limited to ASU students, faculty, and staff, as well as contributors from across the state, nation, and globe. Our goal is to create a rich tapestry of perspectives that transcends institutional and geographical boundaries.

Since 2023, The Pierian has been published by dedicated professors from ASU's divisions of Visual Arts and English, ensuring a commitment to academic and artistic excellence. Together, we continue to nurture the wellspring of imagination flowing through our HBCU community and rippling outwards, enriching the broader landscape of contemporary art and literature.

SUBMISSIONS

We accept submissions online through April 1, 2026. Each submission window allows for the inclusion of up to three individual works in one submission. You may include any combination of written works and/or visual arts in a single submission. We hope you'll join us at The Pierian, where every page turn promises a sip from the fountain of creativity. For more information and to explore our archives, please visit <https://www.asurams.edu/academic-affairs/college-of-arts-sciences/arts-and-humanities/eng-ml-mc/the-pierian/>

The Pierian

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