

Gambling the Aisle



Issue 12

Masthead

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Chute by Dave Petraglia

My Roommate, the Cop Tells Me He's Moving Out Soon

He says this in front of the blinds
that won't close. He says he's moving in
with a nurse, that cops all marry nurses,
that I should become a nurse so that I could
marry a cop and I want to tell him
that I hope I never get married and definitely
not to a cop and it's silent a bit and then he tells me
about a kid who got shot in the eye last night
and the bullet ricocheted around in his head
and came out the other eye, getting stuck in the socket,
and he looks at me, waiting for the question I'd ask
but I wanted to ask him if he can move out today
or not at all because I need money for the rent
but instead I just said, "How old was the kid?"
and he said, "I don't know, thirty" and he pulled
the blind and it fell on the floor so that the sun
basically beat the shit out of the apartment.

Clove Hitch

Awake,
we recall our former lovers, baffled
by the histories that brought us to this
bed, out of the rain, and into each other's
arms. Parts swam separate and
we noted their travels with smiles and
teeth and wet bites where the ropes
are just beginning to fasten down. We
test each other's readiness for such grip
with delicate nodding till our
rib cages touch and push everything close.

Till
our skin is too hot to hold, and the white
noise of our commingling breath begins to
drown out the hum of this April rain, and
we simply cease to notice that it's morning.



Untitled by Aurora Berger

On Pain: Emotional Forensics

Rachel Croskrey

Stage one. Blood in mid-flight hits another surface and is forced from its travel. Air wicks the blood to a softened circle — surface tension forces it to cling closely to its own molecules, forming a globe as studies show, not a teardrop. A circle like a drop of peanut butter or a lick of honey, not tears. Then it hits. *Contact and collapse.*

Stage two. Gravity, blunt force, or 2,500 feet per second destroys the spherical surface tension of the blood. It has irreversibly made contact. The blood has the beginning of an angle of incidence: arcsin times width over length: legs, hypotenuse. Angle of impact. *Displacement.*

Stage three. The patterns become most dynamic. They pat, splatter, splurt, stretch, reach. They color, soften, flavor. *Dispersion.*

Spheres and lines and mists of blood can come from different things: a knife pinning a femoral artery, opening it to the light outside, a rock crunching the joint between the cervical vertebra and the thoracic vertebra, bringing the beaded blood up to the stretched and ripped skin, the buildup of a Diffuse Alveolar Hemorrhage from the lungs, clotting, coughing, catching. The patterns differ based on whether the blood is influenced by gravity or the force of the blow (or heart) pushing it out of the body. An arterial splatter is dynamic: it comes in pulses, little pink balloons with tails overlapping, pushing in a projected pattern up the wall or the side of a car. A puddle of blood could be a dynamic or passive stain; the edge characteristic will reveal the nature of its expulsion. If there is a backspatter pattern around it and spots sprayed out from impact it's dynamic, coming from a bullet, a knife, or a bat — *force*. But if the spot is smeared then it's passive, a pattern transfer or wipe pattern, a hand or a handle or a hose dragged through.

Stage four. Retract. Bead. Rest. The composition of blood — erythrocytes, leukocytes, platelets — have time to settle in this stage. Sitting in that expiration pattern around the mouth or satellite stain by the knife edge or serum stain under the corner of the table, the erythrocytes, no longer flushed with warm oxygen and composed of red blood cells, have time to oxidize and turn brown. The leukocytes are white blood cells; they clot together though they no longer heal any wound.

This clotting separates them from the platelets, the fluid in which the erythrocytes and leukocytes float and the fluid that fills 55% of blood composition. *Retraction.*

Everyone notices blood, especially if they watch it release right in front of them. A blink, and suddenly color is sprayed across the wall and pooling on the floor. High impact, fanning up onto the windowsill, glass, curtains; low impact, a pool of red mixing with the green of broccoli on a cutting board. But you know that; you were the one to slip the knife through your epidermis and onto the cutting board. Even if you're not there to see it, the blood's characteristics and patterns tell the whole story. For instance, gunshot backspatter (just like hot chocolate) can have rings of bubbled air around its edges. Stagnant nail polish and brain spatter can leave serum stains with the separation of the liquid and the solid, water and nitrocellulose, water and plasma. A blender or a knife could fling strawberry pulp or blood to the wall with low-velocity impact making a splatter of 4 millimeters down the dishwasher door.

Those who study these blood patterns for a living make use of the Loccard's Principle, which — at its core — is that blood is messy. It gets on the victim; it gets on the aggressor: cast-off patterns, serum stains. When blood falls in a sphere and hits copier paper — stage one, two, three — the blood retains a smooth center with thirty or forty tiny arms reaching out. Just enough to block the first name on a driver's license. The pattern explains it all: the blood covering all but the 'ard' of Martha Richard's name after she cheated on her husband and he shot her. On fabric, however, the blood spot does not remain joined. Rather, the bulk of the blood soaks into the knitted threads and the would-be arms bead up into lines of drops. On the aggressor. On the victim. Everyone notices it.

Everyone notices blood, but most people just notice its messiness, its violence, its ability to cover coffee mugs, blankets, and fur in unappeasable red.

There are other things just as messy, just as violent as blood patterns that many people are unable to read. Mean spirits spatter onto each other, spotting, flinging, high-velocity-impacts. Friends wound friends. Stage one. Their internal blood spattered by

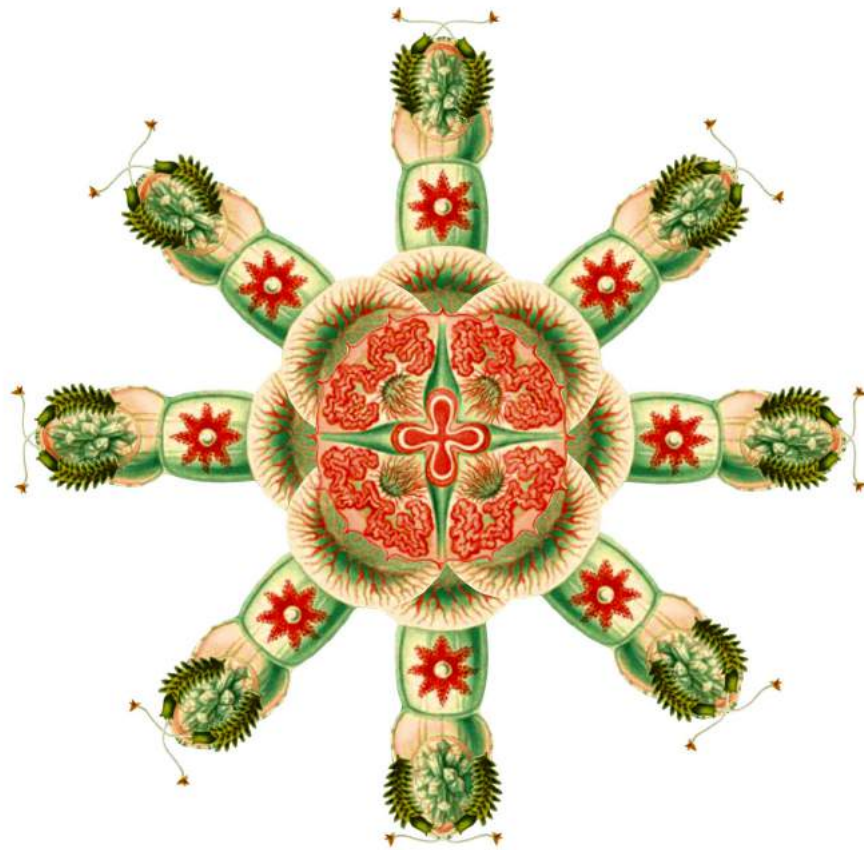
the cut of a joke at dinner, sprayed up on the wall in a pattern of angel wings. Stage two. Stage three. Feelings are hurt. Some might cry, some might put a hand over the wound and blink once, twice. It tends to scare people, all that emotion, all that blood. It gets everywhere. Stage four.

You can see it and still not understand it. If you're there when it happens, it's obvious what caused the red dripping down the wall in dozens of two-inch streaks. But when you walk into a room, say a bathroom or an office, with drip stains and drag marks all over the floor and you don't know how they got there — that's when some people don't know what to do. There are those people who can't seem to say the right thing in the face of emotional pain — they get light-headed even at the thought and have to leave the room. And there are those people who, upon seeing others' pain, spill their own emotions everywhere with no

regard. It's like they see blood everywhere so they feel comfortable with painting arterial strips up and down everyone's shirts: 'I know, I haven't seen you in like three years! Well, no my vacation was okay — my dog just died and my divorced parents stayed at my place for two weeks and my mom has to figure out if she's going to do chemo, so I guess my Christmas vacation was okay. How was yours?'

Emotional pain is as obvious as a trail of blood — as tangible as if one had put their hand in the mixture of blood and plasma and smeared it down the hallway wall — flow patterns, drip trails, satellite stars gleaming up from the floor. It's just that no one cares to understand the Alpha Beta Gamma functions — x-axis, y-axis, 90-degree angle of a stain; it's too hard to wrap a mind around the viscosity, the plasma, the blowback.

It's a taxonomy of pain, and very few are any good at dealing with it.



The Weathervanes Eagerness by Bill Wolak



Untitled by Aurora Berger



Untitled by Aurora Berger



Augur by Dave Petraglia

James Croal Jackson

Emily Cut Her Head Off With The Musical Saw

between her legs the fast song halfway done
her knees strangled the sound she bent out
her violin's bow popped off the crowd's
gasp the banjo player slouched drummer
the steady beat they played on and watched
like a song can continue after music
has slumped from a body

Unnamed

december and last(s/ed) through august the first one the healthy one nine months jack who lived thirteen days went the second but did it ever live we went through all the¹

and everything that goes along with a baby until the polite ultrasound tech starts to look nervous and stops answering my wifes questions and i dont see she says i dont²

see a baby in there im sorry and hope sinks not slowly like a stately seaborne vessel but fast and vicious like your stomach when something in you [her]³

but dies is a relative term it never formed probably not something wrong at the instant of cellular division when a child was supposed to form she carried it two weeks⁴

and cancer came next for her for us embryonic cells imprison a fickle violent organic effluvium dispossessed our second child of his or her first bike learning to tie⁵

his or her shoes being pretty or cool dorky unique or boring falling getting up being happy sad nervous excited tense calm a little brother or little sister somebody at least⁶

our son jack three and not knowing any of it just wanting to play the cells never formed an embryo went haywire and attacked her body cancerous but did could⁷

should we consider this a death or short circuit of nature did it die was it real hard to believe it when it happens ready for anything but not that never⁸

past survivals trials leave you somnolent in the rhythmic ebb and flow of your life a clock is reliable until⁹

its smooth glass face disappears and its hands become hypothetical it start(s/ed) in^{10 11}

(Endnotes)

1 December 2011

2 January

3 February

4 March

5 April

6 May

7 June

8 July

9 August—Jack born August 20

10 June 2015—a thirteen-day pregnancy, ended but unpunctuated

11 Back to the start, forever, remembering, each day like a little lost word, a little, unnamed ghost.



Blade by Dave Petraglia



Loki by Dave Petraglia

A Slow Death

Stephen O'Donnell

They were seeding the clouds. Burning the last reserves of gasoline to block the rays. People were dying in the cancer wards, but still they kept trying to lace the sky. The cities below like hollowed ghosts, the skyscrapers forgotten totems, most of them dark, most of them unlit. The airports and airfields were still hives of furious activity. Worlds unto themselves. Whenever she went out there she would stop a while at the fence to watch them. Sometimes she went for no other reason but to look at something living. They stood around smoking in orange jumpsuits, their visors peeled back or thrown on the ground at their feet. Any place she looked, men had gathered in groups. Waiting for their shot. To gun the little turbine engine and scream up through the clouds. The jumpsuits couldn't stop the radiation at that altitude, and most of them had lost their hair already or else had sheared it themselves. They refused the chemical therapy because they knew that would put them in the ground faster than anything. Those boys wanted to fly. To go out at a hundred thousand miles an hour, not wilting away in some cream-walled hospital ward. They would, to a man, be dead in a year or less. They had nothing to lose, and they knew it.

The world was slowly burning away to nothing, the population slowly choked under a contagion of tumours. Her husband had hung himself last summer. She didn't feel melancholy about it anymore. A week before he did it, he told her that living in a world without flowers was like marching down the road to hell. She thought he might have been right about that, and then she got to thinking that perhaps the world had been smouldering since the first light of the first dawn.

There had been attempts to leave. The off-world ship, assembled just beyond the atmosphere. That was more than fifty years ago. Communications went dark in half that time. When there was nothing left to burn the embers cool, the smoke no longer rose. The solar wind lifted and spread the ashes.

She had the job and it left her so tired and broken that she no longer turned those kind of thoughts over and over in mind. She had gotten very thin and

once, when she caught sight of herself in the mirror, she shook her head and clucked her tongue and looked away. You should see a doctor, she thought. You should see a therapist. You should shut the hell up.

She slept with the thin metal blinds slanted so that when the sun rose the air in the little room became stifling. She would stagger from her bed clad in sweat and slap the faucet to life and then suck at the trickling hot water.

I don't deserve this. I could've been born forty years ago and lived a long life.

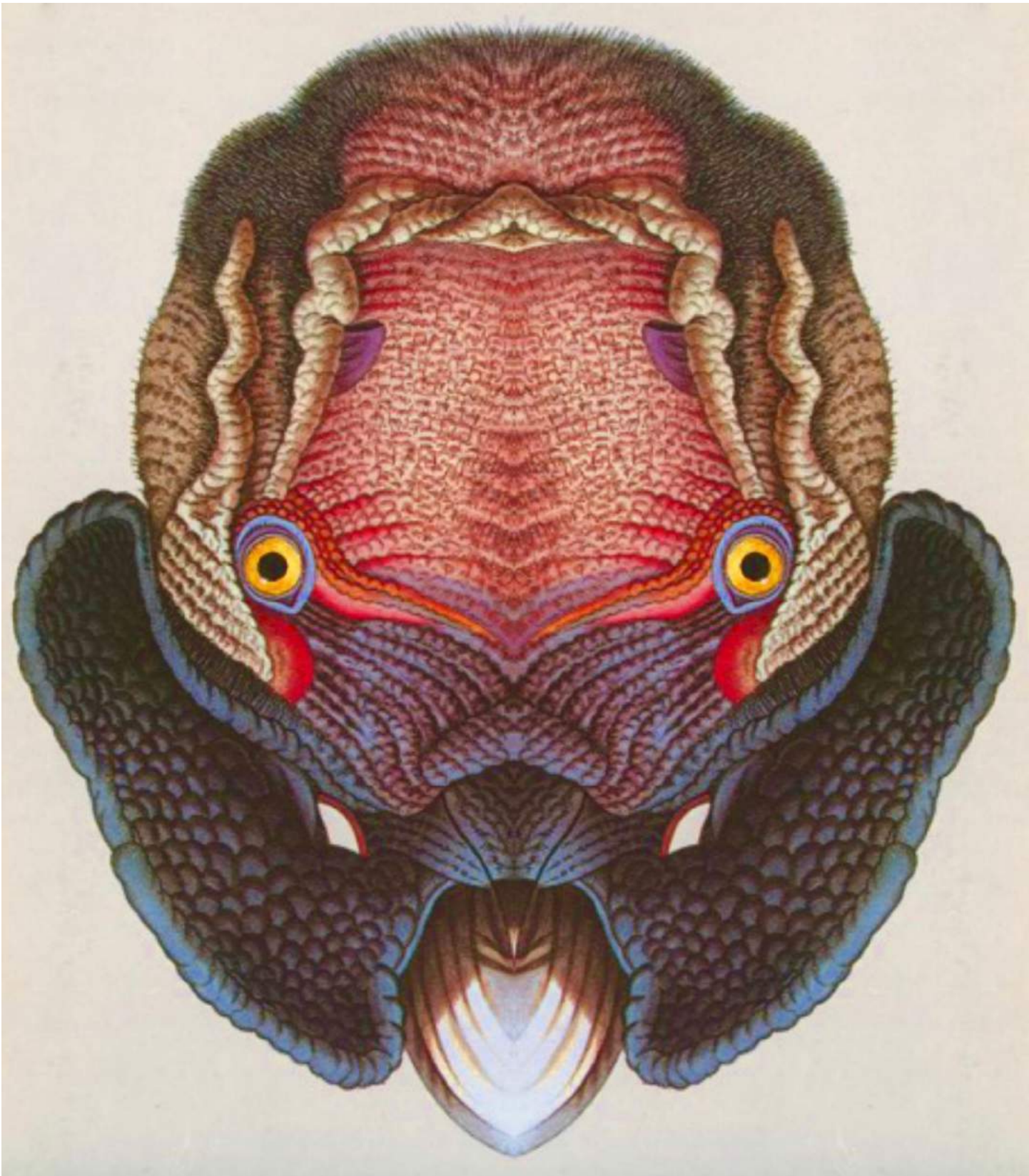
She would look out at the racks of concrete buildings that slowly boiled in the sun and damn the world.

She had to watch the consoles and relay the messages and read whatever text flashed up, always the same, NO RESPONSE, and she'd sigh and get up slowly and walk to the clean room, relishing the blast of cold air.

She sat outside smoking on the little bench, looking out to the north where she knew the airfield was. The city was spread out like something left there to congeal. A faint and sharp crackle would come across the air every so often. Another jet gone supersonic. They looked just like small goddamned beetles. She thought about how she would end it and that waiting for it to end was a losing proposition. Hopped up on morphine, screaming for your dead ancestors to save you, it was, all of it, a losing proposition. She stood up and took a long pull and almost ached with the hot smoke. She knew how she would do it. There would be no more emotion to it than turning off a light switch.

From the hill, she could see clear down the central avenue. Dogs teemed in gangs along the streets, all sinew and teeth. She exhaled, and the city was lost for an instant in the thick blue smog of the cigarette smoke. She flicked the butt away and walked across the baking concrete courtyard and sidled in through the double doors.

On the relay screen a light was blinking. A light she'd only seen in old training films. RELAY RECEIVED.



The Fever of Light by Bill Wolak



The Velocity of Astonishment by Bill Wolak

An Interview with John Cross

Adam Van Alstyne

Adam Van Alstyne: You've been with *Gambling the Aisle* since its inception in 2012, and you've decided to move on. So, like any scorned lover, I first have to ask: why are you leaving us, John?

John Cross: The decision to leave GTA was not an easy one, but was one I've seen looming on the horizon for some time. The simple answer is I've become increasingly busy in my own artistic endeavors and my commitments to my teaching career. It's a good thing for me.

AV: What was your fondest memory working for the magazine? Worst moment?

JC: I'll answer in reverse...the worst moment was writing the letter of resignation. It was one of those times where you just sit there staring at what you've just typed, afraid to hit the send button. GTA has been an important part of who I am. Sifting through the art submissions, interviewing the artists, and writing the articles have all been a great challenge to my artistic intellect, as well as a source of great pride. The interviews, in my opinion, were tough and thoughtful. Each artist challenged me to think in new ways about art. That is a hard thing to give up.

The best moments, and I stress the plural, were when the three original editors got together to brainstorm what this mag would become. I specifically remember the scrawling doodles and notes executed on the paper table top of the [Copper Pot restaurant] and the discovery of the Dark and Stormy as the official cocktail of GTA!

AV: I'm sure it was a hard letter to write, and I hope you know it was harder to read. The art we've featured has always been our magazine's "edge," and your interviews were the soul of each issue. Jenna, Pat, and I are at a loss for how to replace you. That said, what advice do you have for our as-yet-unnamed next art editor?

JC: I would say to get organized and keep up with the calendar. I was forever behind on tasks! Better yet, I'd say keep the integrity high. As an artist and an arts editor I have little patience for bad art (especially when I create it). Make sure the art selected fits your vision of what truly meaningful art is. Find art that challenges the viewer to think in new ways, art that doesn't simply impress or look cool. I always quote the lyrics to a Red

Hot Chili Peppers' song, "My little white ass is tickled pink when I listen to the music that makes me think." I've always just substituted the word art into that line; it's a motto of mine.

AV: When Pat and I were in grad school workshops, we always used to find the negative critiques more useful than the positive comments. For you, what makes "bad art"?

JC: Basically, and I know I am very biased, any art that has the sole purpose of being pretty or of impressing the viewer with talent, or that is highly self-indulgent conceptual art. I believe art is a form of communication—meaning it should, in its highest form, say something to the viewer. Don't get me wrong, there is room for all art and artistic endeavors in the world. I just feel the best art elevates itself above the need to impress or feed narcissism.

AV: I think that's pretty spot-on, particularly regarding the need to impress the viewer with your talent. With that in mind, let's feed your narcissism a little bit. I think the pieces you've submitted here are fantastic, particularly the "Dis a Symbol" set. Tell me about where that series came from.

JC: The series came from a need to not be self-absorbed. I had just finished a series of paintings about separation and communication that were tied very closely to my personal situation. Once that situation resolved itself, once I was no longer wrapped up in that quagmire, I was at a loss for what to do next. Happiness can kill creativity if you know what I mean. I decided to do a series that pays tribute in a way to some of my heroes in art.

The "Dis A Symbol" series is a nod to Mark Rothko's paintings. His minimalist works have always been a source of inspiration for me, but I am not a minimalist. I wanted to take his composition, the rectangle floating over a rectangle, and make it my own. The idea with Rothko's work is to sit in front of it and stare at it, almost meditatively, and dissolve through the surface. I wanted to make paintings in which the surface was so intricate that one might reach the same meditative state by being absorbed by the surface rather than dissolved. The titles are a play on words, too. My prior work was heavy on symbolism. Here, I literally wanted to dis symbolism and to

disassemble through that meditative state. Also, the act of painting is an act of disassembling what you see and reassembling it in a form of translation into paint.

AV: You have previously mentioned Rothko as a historical inspiration of yours. What current artists are you excited about?

JC: I always struggle with a question like this. On one hand I sometimes feel like the old guy who only listens to classic rock and hates all of the new music the kids are listening to. On another hand I have a really hard time remembering names when I see really new art in galleries and museums. I would say that for the last few years I have been a bit obsessed with the paintings of Marilyn Minter. She works in large scale, on metal using enamels. The imagery is both beautiful and grotesque at the same time. And the surface is exquisite to the eye. Her latest work features multi-layered imagery, a sort of combination of high fashion, imperfection, and graffiti. I've also been really impressed with the sculptural work of Nick Cave for very similar reasons.

That being said, I have been purposefully trying not to be influenced by other artist as of late. I am looking at nature and science and the visually tactile world around me. I sometimes see a color on a thing and think that needs to be painted--not the thing, but the color, if that makes any sense.

AV: It does, and I think that comes through in your works that are featured here (the "Low Hanging Fruit" pieces come immediately to mind). It seems that, like most artists, you have gone through distinct "phases" in your career. With the benefit of hindsight, what, as an artist, do you regret?

JC: Not studying my craft more diligently. When I was younger I just wanted to set the world on fire with my art. I had all the passion in the world, but I was impulsive and only interested in quick solutions. I'd be a much better painter today if I had really just focused on the technical aspects of painting, color theory, brushwork, etc. In many ways the work I am doing now is like me trying to get my skills to catch up with my maturity. I am much more interested in the surface quality of my work than blowing people's minds with my thoughts. I believe in the work more now. Then again, I doubt I would do it any other way if given the chance to do it all over again.

AV: What are you working on for the summer?

JC: I've been working on a couple of paintings based on NASA photos of the sun and solar flares. Or I should say I am working on brush control

and color theory and using the NASA photos as an excuse. I am also working on a large scale mural as a commission for Left Hand Brewing Company. I've kind of stumbled into a new role, specifically public works. As a result I have been trying to reconcile the commercialism of these murals with my high-minded ideals about what art should be. In the end, they are a great way to practice my craft on a highly visible scale.

AV: Well, that's important work, despite the challenge. FDR commissioned artists (including Woody Guthrie) to commemorate WPA projects.

JC: The WPA really brought the US into the forefront of the art world!

AV: For every young artist, there is that moment when you formally decide to "go professional." What was that moment for you?

JC: There are two ways for me to answer that, I think. One, I made the decision when I went to college at 18. I basically just made up my mind, I'm going to be an artist. Done. So I followed the regular path, college, BFA, work at menial jobs, MFA, work at menial jobs, start teaching, realize I'm making a living as an artist/educator, never look back.

Two, I am still not a professional artist, but I did stay at a Holiday Inn last night.

AV: Ah, the wit that makes us love you makes its appearance. As an art professor, there are established techniques and skills for you to teach. Beyond the basics, what do you try to impart to your beginning students?

JC: Beyond the basics, I try to tell them exactly what I've told you today: don't be so impulsive, learn your craft really well, learn your art history, discover your heroes and learn/steal from them, make art that speaks to the world instead of just to yourself, and that talent is really only reflective of hard work and dedication so don't try to impress me with your talent.

AV: That's all I have for you, Johnny. I'd like to thank you, sincerely, for doing this interview, and for everything you've brought to *Gambling the Aisle*. You've been a mentor and a friend, and without your eye and mind nothing that we've done would have been possible. That you will be "sorely missed" is an understatement. On behalf of the other editors, we wish you the best of luck in your mission to keep the art world honest.

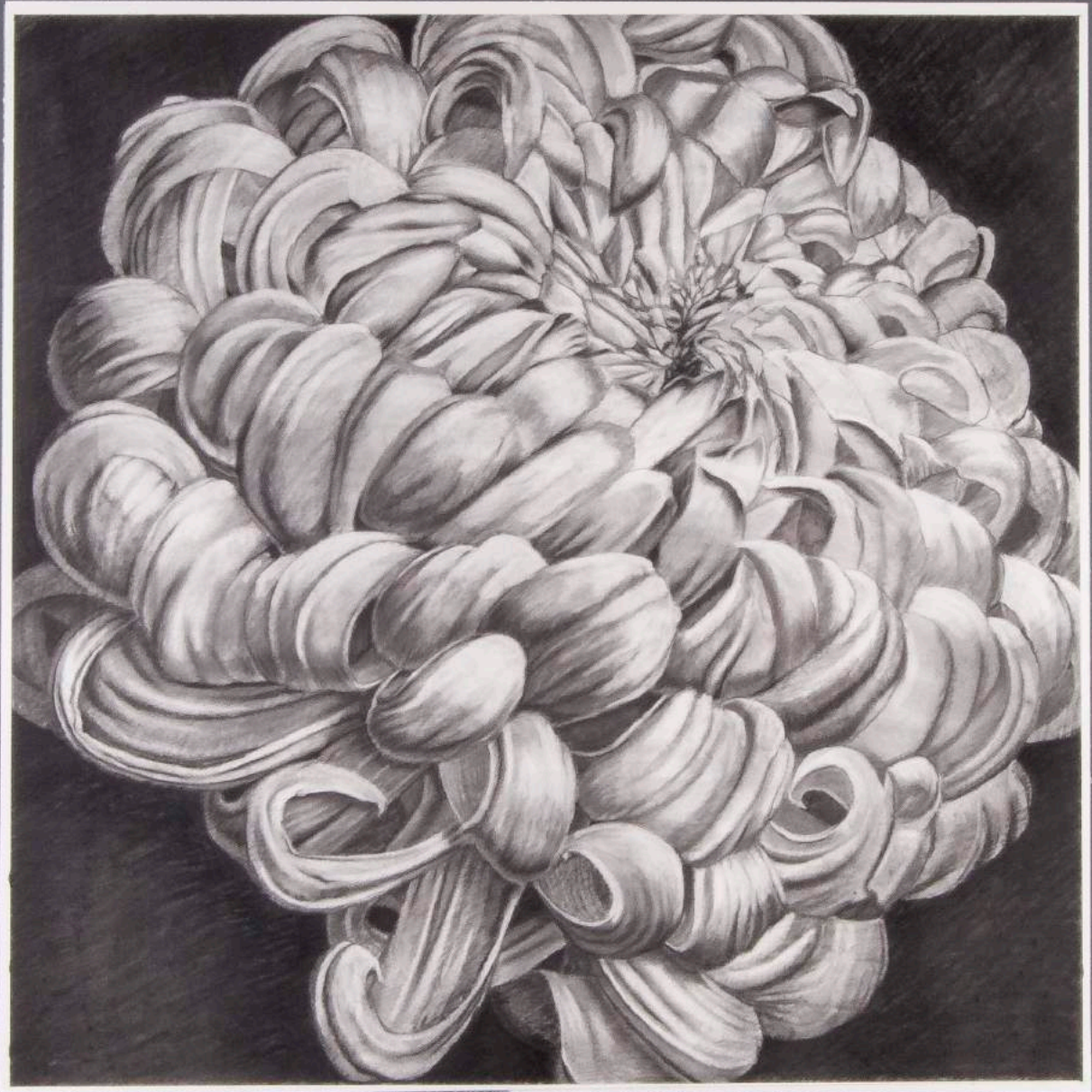
JC: Thank you, Adam, for the friendship, the influence, the late nights, the fantastic conversations, and for letting me contribute to the birth of GTA!



Low Hanging Fruit I by John Cross



Low Hanging Fruit II by John Cross



B(l)oom II by John Cross



Dis A Symbol I by John Cross



Dis A Symbol II by John Cross



Dis A Symbol III by John Cross

The Art of the Photograph

Aurora Berger

The swishhhhhh-click of the printer is the only reliable constant in my life right now. Hour after hour the print head glides over the expanse of white paper, depositing infinitesimal dots of ink. I sit at my desk, watching as a machine transforms a roll of paper, inch by inch, into a piece of my own artwork.

The print falls to the floor as I slide the blade across the base of the paper feed and release my photograph. With only two hands I don't have any choice but to hope that the short fall won't hurt it. I gingerly grasp two corners and slowly pick the print up and move it into the lit studio. Once I get it onto the table I inspect the piece. Black and white, the photograph lies before me. The curling paper it's printed on is unassuming, but the photograph startles me. My bare shoulders in the photograph are tensed, carrying a world of stress that I couldn't see before. Even on my screen, the picture seemed innocent. Now, in the large print before me, the tension is palpable.

I'm barefoot, which is stupid. The floor is covered in sparkling shards of broken glass, but wearing shoes for as many hours as I've been here is just painful. I slide a sheet of plexiglass into the wall cutter, measure off 35 inches, and release the clamp. The blade makes a horrible screeching sound as it rips into the plastic, and the acrid smell of burning chemicals fills the air. That can't be healthy to breathe. I heave the plexiglass onto the worktable and begin to peel off the protective coating, yanking at the giant adhesive sheets. I wear gloves when I work with this stuff, but they're thin cotton. Meant to protect the glass from me, not the other way around. Already several pairs have slices on the fingers where the soft fabric has given way. I survive the glass, but sure enough, the sharp corner of a metal frame brings scarlet blood beading to the surface. Bleeding hands means I need to take a break, because I have a rule when it comes to framing: no blood on the art.

Some theorists say that photography isn't art. There is no paint brush, no canvas, no delicate handling of pigments. It's the processing of machinery. They would

sooner accept my drawing of a landscape than my photograph of one. Time and time again they remind me that photography is a byproduct of painting, never an art form in its own right.

Four years ago, shopping for my first college drawing class, I remember how thankful I was to be a photography major, thinking how much money it would save me in the long run. The only art supply you need for photography is a camera, right? I ruefully look back on my own naïveté as I realize that I accidentally cut the plexiglass an inch too short for my frame. Twenty-five dollars, gone.

Metal framing is held together by tension. While I normally love the process of framing, the size of these prints is worrying. Two pieces of framing wire have snapped on me already today, something which isn't supposed to be possible. Nightmare images of framed artwork crashing to the ground keep flashing through my head. The thin filaments that hold them up are braided, making the wire strong enough that the cutters can barely slice through it. So the fact that they keep snapping is scaring the shit out of me. The tiny metal threads slice into my hands as I carefully loop and tie the wire, praying silently that this time it'll stay in place.

How do you define art? It's not an easy question; theorists have been fighting about it for centuries. Is it a matter of aesthetics? Or perhaps it's more complicated, a matter of creation and intent. Yes, the camera obscura was invented for painters. But in 1851 when Louis Daguerre painstakingly printed his first image onto a sheet of silver plated copper, sensitized with iodine and developed with mercury fumes, the rules changed. The Daguerreotype was something new, an image that had not been painted, and yet, it existed.

Photographers have been struggling for recognition for nearly two centuries, trying to prove that what we do is art. In the early 1900's Photo-Secessionists

fought to redefine photography through Pictorialism, using soft focus and altered negatives to bring the human element back into a machine-based art. It is their memory that I honor today.

I hang my exhibition by myself. Normally I'd have somebody help me, but today the silence feels appropriate. It's just me, alone with my art in an empty gallery. Measure, mark, hammer, hang. Mathematically divide the space, find the center, hang a photograph of myself in the building that has witnessed me become the artist I am today. Hundreds of artists have inhab-

ited this space; today, I join them. This is the end, of this series of photographs, of my time in this gallery, of my undergraduate career.

With enough practice, I can usually get the measurements for hanging the art right on the first try, except in the corner where the floor isn't level. Lights hung, numbered pins in place, my name in three-inch vinyl on the wall, I lie on the floor of the gallery. Breathing in the space that holds my very education in its cathedral-like expanse. Some small piece of me will always be here, slotted in amongst the paintings by Bonnatere and Audubon, anchored in time and space. Staring at the rafters above me, I take a deep breath. This is it.



Untitled by Aurora Berger

J Mari

she tells me she's listening to Duke Ellington

alcoholics smoking
cigarettes on bus benches
waiting for spring tsunamis or summer death

women i cannot have
erect like pine trees glowing at dawn

solitude like bleach on midnight floors

the small pigeon, pink-eyed
and smooth light gray
untouched by feline yet

or the rot that will eat it
stiff

like a broken piece
of slowly crumbling sculpture.
This is no argument against the morning or me
or concrete waves splattering like blood from a bull's neck.

Postcards

Yo fui la más callada
de todas las que hicieron el viaje hasta tu Puerto.

Julia de Burgos, Yo Fui la Mas Callada

1.
Willie, when Eloy showed me the wedding rings
I broke out in tears. I was so innocent, didn't even know
why I followed you to Bolivia.

2.
Write me a poem that will bring me back to life, papi.
Be my distraction, or I am going to find a tall, blue eyed angel
with baker hands and lips like James Dean.

*A dormir se van ahora mis lagrimas
por donde tu cruzaste mi verso.*

3.
Negro, I've murdered myself so many times the effort is starting to hurt.
Someone stole my poetry. They wanted to teach me to write on paper.
As if everything I do isn't already written in blood.
I begged mama to help me die, but she refused,
had to slash my own wrist.

*Todos los ojos del viento
ya me lloraron por muerta.*

4.
Do you think ghosts can ask for asylum in Cuba?
Willie, take my clothes off. Look at my scars
without crying and tell me I'm beautiful. Don't lie,
don't cry. I need to drink a cup of coffee with you
reading me Ginsberg, Simic, and Julia de Burgos.

Yours forever, The Ghost.

Secrets Taken Back

We face this place again—
another uncertain night; we roam
alone in the autumn-dry rows,
corn fields lingering way past
their yield, crisp and whispering,
hidden like ghosts after harvest.
Your shadowy fingers stretch
to a golden moon afloat,
waxing with promise between
fickle clouds shimmering
like a glimmer when transition
hints, inklings of what we did
back then in silence, passion gone
feral, unknown to the child
or her assumed father—sudden
death, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.
But a daughter is left on earth,
and cash will suffice for now.

Rhubarb Pie

Lindsay Haber

Before she was given the cheapest grave stone from *Thoughtful Memorials*, and before her family members showed up on the damp day they lowered her into the earth, and before the stroke that reverted her to a state of infancy and left half of her face saggy and drooping, and before her left leg was amputated from the thigh down, and before her body bloated to twice its size and eight of her teeth fell out, and before the years everyone told her *you know, you shouldn't be eating like that, take care of yourself before it's too late*, and before the vintage Barbie collection was displayed on every shelf and table of her apartment, and visitors thought it was strange and even she was ashamed by it sometimes but couldn't stop herself from buying more, and before the months she taught a class of first graders but couldn't finish the year because they were making fun of her, and before she would have given anything to be her beautiful cousin as a teenager, and before she was an adolescent pulling out the hair on her scalp in swift tugs until there was nothing left, before all of this, she yelled, *I hope you die* to her father because he wouldn't let her get the ice cream cone with the rainbow sprinkles, five minutes before the heart attack that killed him; she never knew he was thinking about other things: thinking about the Giants covering the spread, thinking about changing the clocks for daylight savings, thinking about rhubarb pie.

James Croal Jackson

Smartphones

Want
led us
to this
world
of cameras
in palms
capturing
the world
without
knowing it.



Untitled by Aurora Berger

Contributor Bios

Aurora Berger recently graduated from Prescott College in Prescott, Arizona with a BFA in Visual Arts and a BA in Art Education. Her work has previously been shown at Art Intersection in Gilbert, AZ, the Sam Hill Gallery in Prescott, AZ, and the Weil Gallery in Corpus Christi, TX, among others, and two of her photographs have been published in the Albion Review.

James Blevins is an award-winning poet who studied English and Creative Writing at the College of Central Florida. His first published short story, "For All the Bending," was included in the 2016 Scythe Prize collection. His poetry has been published or is forthcoming in Pretty Owl Poetry, Alexandria Quarterly, Literary Juice, AZURE, Two Hawks Quarterly, and THAT Literary Review.

Rachel Croskrey is an English major with a concentration in Creative Writing at Cedarville University. She greatly enjoys stories of other people's lives and one can often find her reading or watching those accounts. Her work can be found in the Cedarville Review, Gravel Magazine, and The Writing Disorder.

Lindsay Haber teaches in the First-Year Writing Program at Emerson College while earning her MFA in fiction. She is currently writing her second YA novel while working towards publishing her first. Her writing has appeared in Print Oriented Bastards and FiveontheFifth. In addition, she has a story forthcoming in the Fjords Review. She is thrilled to be a 2016 nominee for the Pushcart Prize. In addition to writing, she loves canines and the outdoors.

James Croal Jackson's poetry has appeared in The Bitter Oleander, Rust + Moth, Isthmus, and elsewhere. His first chapbook is forthcoming from Writing Knights Press. He is the 2016 William Redding Memorial Poetry Contest winner in his current city of Columbus, Ohio. Visit him at jimjakk.com.

Danny Judge's prose has appeared in many literary journals, including Litro Magazine, The Boiler Journal, Portland Review, and Lunch Ticket. He is the Editor of The Indianola Review, a quarterly lit journal. He lives in Iowa with his wife and son.

J Mari is not into the bio thing. He's forty years old, barely published, and happy to have a drink with you if you want to know more.

Stephen O'Donnell is a writer from Dublin. He is currently seeking a publisher for his first novel while working on his second. Previously he has had short stories published in The Gambler Mag and The Bloody Key Society.

Sergio A. Ortiz is a two-time Pushcart nominee, a four-time Best of the Web nominee, and 2016 Best of the Net nominee. He took second place in the 2016 Ramón Ataz Annual Poetry Competition sponsored by Alaire publishing house. He is currently working on his first full-length collection of poems, "Elephant Graveyard".

A Best Small Fictions 2015 Winner, **Dave Petraglia's** writing and art has appeared in Bartleby Snopes, bohemianizm, Cheap Pop, Crack the Spine, Chicago Literati, Gambling the Aisle, Hayden's Ferry, Medium, McSweeney's, Necessary Fiction, New Pop Lit, North American Review, Per Contra, Pithead Chapel, Points in Case, Prick of the Spindle, Popular Science, Prairie Schooner, Razed, SmokeLong Quarterly and others. His blog is at www.davepetraglia.com.

Ron Riecki wrote "U.P.: a novel" (Great Michigan Read nominated) and edited "The Way North: Collected Upper Peninsula New Works" (2014 Michigan Notable Book), "Here: Women Writing on Michigan's Upper Peninsula" (2016 Independent Publisher Book Award), and "And Here: 100 Years of Upper Peninsula Writing, 1917-2017" (Michigan State University Press, 2017).

Yvette A. Schnoeker-Shorb's work has appeared in many publications, including Depth Insights

Journal, Watershed Review, Terrain.org: A Journal of the Built and Natural Environments, SLAB: A Literary Magazine, Kudzu House Quarterly, The Conium Review, Caesura, the anthology Talking Back and Looking Forward: An Educational Revolution in Poetry and Prose (Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group), and others, with work forthcoming in Weber—The Contemporary West, Green Hills Literary Lantern, The American Journal of Nursing, Clockhouse, and others. In addition to past Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominations, her work received Honorable Mentions in 2016 from both Port Yonder Press and Erbacce Press. She has been an educator, a researcher, and an editor, and is co-founder of Native West Press, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit natural history press.

Bill Wolak is a poet, photographer, and collage

artist. He has just published his twelfth book of poetry entitled “Love Opens the Hands” with Nirala Press. His most recent translation with Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, “Love Me More Than the Others: Selected Poetry of Iraj Mirza”, was published by Cross-Cultural Communications in 2014. His collages have been published in over a hundred magazines including: The Annual, Peculiar Mormyrid, Danse Macabre, Dirty Chai, Hermeneutic Chaos Literary Journal, Lost Coast Review, Mad Swirl, Otis Nebula, and Horror Sleaze Trash. In 2016, he was a featured poet at The Mihai Eminescu International Poetry Festival in Craiova, Romania; Europa in Versi, Lake Como, Italy; The Pesaro International Poetry Festival, Pesaro, Italy, The Xichang-Qionghai Silk Road International Poetry Week, Xichang, China; and Ethnofest, Pristina, Kosovo. He teaches Creative Writing at William Paterson University in New Jersey.



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