

Masthead

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Brad Garber

unintended consequences

When I discovered that five months elapsed between the wedding of my parents, in Texas, and my unheralded birth in the same state of disarray I smiled knowing that global warming was truth and that I would live to the overripe age of one hundred and twenty even though a lifetime of paper cuts and swollen liver conspired against the Ouija board that had spilled its guts before the tornado jumped over the house in Wisconsin and the Mandarin duck showed up in the backyard threatening the virginity of every bird in the forest but I can't fault ignorance or lust and I never realized how powerful is serendipity and how it forces my genes to do impossible things in order to stay ahead of the mosquitoes that populate their young with my pumping blood or the colors that bathe the walls of my cave my hands outlined like crime scenes my good intentions screaming like babies in the night and the bones that protect me scare away inquisition their solid gazes like howling prophets in the dusty streets bringing about their own stonings



From The Beginning of Some Story I'll Never Finish by Anna Maddocks



Prologue Series Characters by Hope Thier

Merlin Flower

InTurn

A Myna saw me,
she hesitated to fly, to stay.
To a man on Mars, she's an alien.
For a few, just a bird.
she settled to stay-for awhile.
Scratching her head, she
moved jumpily,
her beak and legs yellowish,
the rest, brown, white black like me.



*From 'Language' is a Self Puzzle of Art
by John Chang*

Brain Bank

Susan Pashman

Brain bank's freezer failure could slow autism research.

-New York Times, June 13, 2012

—Getting kinda hot in here. Hot. Getting hot.

From the neighboring Tupperware carton:— Mmmmmm. Mmmmmmm. Mmmmmmm.

—Yeah, I said I'm hot. Hot.

Thumping from yet a third Tupperware carton.

—Mmmm. Mmmm. He doesn't talk, just bats against the sides of his box. Don't like him. Hate him. Hate him. Never talks.

—Hot in here. I'm liquefying. Melting down. Getting soft. Twelve million cells in the Frontal Lobe. Eight million cells in the Cerebellum. Three million cells in the Pons. Six point two five million cells in the Medulla Oblongata.

—Someone shut him up. Shut up. Shut up.

—Occipital Lobe, ten million. Parietal lobe, fifteen million.

From a Tupperware carton across the vault:—I talk. I talk in sentences. I'm high-functioning.

—I hate you, too. I hate the head-banger and I hate you, too.

—The reason it's hot in here is the freezer motor's gone off. It was set at eight below zero. Fahrenheit. But I can tell it's off. You don't hear it. And it's getting hot in here. Minus eight Fahrenheit in Celsius is minus twenty-two and two-two-two-two-two-two-two-two-

—I thought you were high-functioning. But you're not. You're a liar. Everyone's a liar. That's the trouble. All the time. Everyone lies.

—two-two-two-two-two-two-two-two-

—I said shut up!

—Thump. Thump. Thump. Thumpa-thumpa-thumpa.

—two-two- two-two-

—I know you never look at anyone even though you're high-functioning, so I'm gonna tell you what I'm doing. I'm ignoring you, okay? Not listening. Not hearing you.

—two-two- two-two-two-

—Not that you care what anyone thinks. Not that you care what anyone does.

From a Tupperware carton on a shelf near the vault's door, a new voice, feminine: —Of course, he cares. Autistics have feelings. We just don't register them conventionally. We don't read them accurately in others. But we feel deeply. Believe me, he cares.

—If he cares, why doesn't he shut up? Or just sign off, like by stating the Celsius reading as a logarithm? That would be more considerate of everyone's feelings.

—Never mind that. The temperature is way over minus eight Fahrenheit by now. We're liquefying in here.

—Thumpa-thumpa-thumpa-thumpa. Thump. Thump. Thump.

—two-two-two-two- two-two-

—Still, it's interesting to know the Celsius value of minus eight Fahrenheit. It's interesting that that's two hundred fifty point seven-seven-seven-seven Kelvin.

—Yeah?

—Yeah. Two hundred fifty point seven-seven-seven-seven-seven-seven-seven-seven-seven-

—Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump.

The female voice near the door: —We're all going to die if they don't fix the motor.

—Hah! We're dead already, you dumbass.

—We're going to lose our value to research, the whole reason we're here. And don't say bad words like that!

—seven-seven-seven-seven- seven-seven-seven-seven-seven-seven-

—two-two-two-two-two-two-two-two-two-two-

—I think it's probably up near thirty-two Fahrenheit by now. There must be a real moron on duty here tonight. Any attentive person would have noticed.

—I hate the guy on duty. I hate him. I hate him. I hate him. He's killing us. He hates us. He hates us. He wants us dead. I hate him.

—Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump!

The number two is no longer heard. Instead:—Thirty-two degrees Fahrenheit is two hundred seventy-three Kelvin.

—Everyone knows that. You don't have to be high-functioning to know that. Everyone who ever went to seventh grade knows that. And in Celsius, it's zero!

—Zero! Zero! Zero! Zero! Zero! Zero! Big-oh! Big-Oh! Big-Oh-oh-oh-oh-oh-

—Ask me something. Ask me anything. Just go ahead. Ask me.

—Will you shut up, dickwad?

From the Tupperware container near the door:—You could try to be more tolerant, you know. Even if you can't naturally sense it, you can learn to do it. Behavior modification. Positive reinforcement. B.F.Skinner. His daughter just wrote a book.

—His daughter was abused. Child abuse, Child abuse. Very bad. Very bad.

—No. That was a dirty lie!

—All lies are dirty. All people are liars. So, all people are dirty. All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Therefore, Socrates is mortal. The moon is made of cheese. Cheese is good to eat. Therefore, the moon is good to eat. Fahrenheit is not Celsius. Kelvin is not Fahrenheit. Therefore, Fahrenheit is not Kelvin.

—You're an asshole. I hate assholes. Therefore, I hate you, pisshead!

—Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump!

From the container by the door: —I think we should agree not to use bad language in here.

—You think that because you're a girl. Girls have breasts and vaginas and they don't like bad language. Fuck, shit, piss, dickhead, vomit, girl!

—Excuse me, but girl autistics are rare. And we are usually very high-functioning, too! Dawn Prince Hughes is a famous woman autistic who studies gorillas.

—Yeah, well, of course she does. That's because she *is* a gorilla! Dickwad, shit, piss...

—That, for your information, is another example of you not being considerate. And the artist Donna Williams is another famous and talented female autistic.

—Yeah, well, Pokemon man is autistic and so are lots of famous writers and musicians and they're all men. All of them. They play the violin and the piano. Boys.

—Yeah. But Temple Grandin is the most famous autistic of all and she's a woman!

—Nipple, breast, tit, vagina, fuck-a-shit-piss. Temple. Temple. Temple. Temple. Brainman—the guy from *Born On A Blue Day*—is a guy!

—You know, you're not just an autistic. You're a Tourette's too. You are one totally messed up brain, you are!

—Thumpa, thumpa, thumpa, thumpa, thumpa...

—Anyway, I'm guessing it's up around forty-three point six seven degrees Fahrenheit by now. So I think we should all shut up and stop driving the temperature higher.

—Forty-three point sixty-seven Fahrenheit is equal to six point four eight three-three- three...

—Oh, God, spare us!

—three-three-three-three-three-three-three-three-three-three-three-

—Tell him we want that in Kelvin, something with a concluding decimal.

—Forty-three point six-seven Fahrenheit is equal to two hundred seventy-nine point four- eighty-three Kelvin!

—Thank God!

—three-three-three-three-three-three-three-three-

—So, this is how we'll die.

—Repeating decimals never die. Just think decimals.

—I hate decimals.

—three-three-three-three-three-three-

—Thump!

Michael Kroesche

**Taxi to Loft 345 Grafitti Inside a staircase before Nov. 15 reading and my own
small god is there calling me Jo— Ga**

find a star
sticks to thumb, smoke
from a balcony

cigarettes are cheap
65 rmb for a carton
I grab shuangxi

my happiness, my happiness

Guangzhou is made of cranes
thin necks lit

up. I can't see
the dirty lot
dvd stalls dotting side streets

an accident, you find
the first dead body
I've seen

that's a lie, but it's
the first I've seen
in reality

taxi emergency lights
going

HEY!!! HEY!!!

look

"tic tac tic tac"
a brief moment is made
more brief

SPOT --- LIGHTS ALL AROUND

Boona Daroom

Verisimilitude

The gigawatts
log the woodlands.
The Sky Gods all go
AWOL. On 42nd street
sits a Chianti-stained La-Z-Boy.
The happy and the sad
rock and apologize
Rxtified. We avoid these things.
Our tabernacles touch
plasma to plasma.
Day lights
the nebula.



*From The Beginning of Some Story I'll Never Finish
by Anna Maddocks*



The Ecstasy of the Porcupine (Self Portrait) by Dorian Katz



Ecstasy of the Squirrel by Dorian Katz

Nancy Scott

Four Dozen Years

is enough time
to start editing your myths.

Bury your years if you must
with no marker for later digging.
Back yards are full
of such unexplainable
moody early springs
and weepy falls.

Or write all your years down--
swear words, promises,
confession, repentance.
Publish or burn them as barter
to whomever you choose.

Better yet, crack your years open.
Peel them for the scent of eternity.
Jumble and draw them from an old bowl.
Weigh their dough and lick your fingers.
Then add something from your unlived life.



Untitled by Ekaterina Popova

An Interview with Cory Peeke

John Cross

On a recent unseasonably warm winter's day I sat down armed with a glass of gin, a keyboard, and a mind full of inquiry. Nearly one thousand miles away in La Grande, Oregon, Cory Peeke sat with his phone, ready to sate my interest in his art.

JC: I was just going over your resume, you've been getting some international attention lately.

CP: I have been a bit. I've been trying to get the work out there. I've had more luck with folks interested in my work in places other than the US.

JC: Why do you think that is?

CP: I don't know really. I do think other cultures have more respect for analog collage than folks in the US do, for all that matter they have more respect for art in general.

JC: I would tend to agree with you. Why collage? What is it about that medium that appeals to you?

CP: I got my undergrad degree in painting/drawing but I never really took to it. After my BFA I began to collect a lot of books dealing with sexuality and began incorporating text from them and eventually imagery. It just progressed from there. It has become a very natural, intuitive way to work. It just seems to fit.

JC: Your statement talks about the duality between what you see as our/society's need to invent new icons/images/vocabulary and our need to hold on to tradition. How does collage relate?

CP: I think that is really what collage is, a way to be at once modern and new but at the same time reference and build upon the past. Nayland Blake has a quote I like that I never get quite right but it talks about changing the captions on other people's family photos. He uses it in the context of queer art, making a community/art out of the bits and pieces of the larger culture. I see collage in much the same way. I, or for that matter most collage artists, take bits and pieces of detritus and give them a new life. The recent works of mine, where I build the collage on top of vintage black and white snapshots for example. These images have been abandoned, the people pictured in them have been forgotten, I find a way to give them a new purpose, a new life. And in that way I hold on to the bit of humanity that was already present in the picture while at the same time but putting my own stamp on it and

asking people to look at this thing they might normally ignore in a new way.

JC: I can also see a relationship to the layering of the images you select, and your tendency to obscure/blur/alter the faces of the people you choose.

CP: Indeed. It isn't so much about the individual as it is about the figure pictured being human. I want people to identify with that person, to be able to put themselves in their place instead of trying to put some particular identity/characterization on the figure pictured.

JC: Interesting, is that how you select the photos? I mean, are they selected for their sheer anonymity? Is there something about the time period they tend to come from that adds to their non-specific appearance?

CP: I think there is something about them that I identify with. Sometimes it's the setting, the people and/or the time period they represent. My father was a photographer when I was young and long before I was born so I grew up with examples of his black and white photos, ones he had developed himself in his own dark room, in my environment. I came to know some of my family, such as my grandfather who died before I was born, through those images. I think that affinity and connection carries over into my affection for the abandoned black and whites I collect and re-purpose. I want keep these spirits alive in some way.

JC: I can relate. There is an almost haunting connection when one looks at photos of relatives that were not known in life. I can certainly see this extending to strangers who lived in another time. They are all part of the traditional society we spoke of earlier.

CP: Exactly. I am still sort of astounded when I see my aunt or even my folks in person today because the image of them that resides in my mind is from another time. The images are my memory.

JC: Can you tell me about some of the more subtle symbols and imagery that works its way into your art? Why antlers, birds, toilets?

CP: The symbols I must confess are fairly random. I am drawn to things for a visual appeal/connection that I can't often put my finger on. Sometimes the importance of the imagery becomes clearer over time and sometimes not. I've always had an affinity for porcelain bathroom fixtures. I think some of this may be related

to the type of stuff I grew up with. The antlers may just have to do with my love of taxidermy. I am not a hunter and have no interest in it but have always been interested in taxidermied (is that a word?) wildlife. Perhaps this is for the same reason I like the black and white photos, they are the preservation of something once living, and staged to look like a particular moment in time.

JC: Another recurring theme is the grids and measuring devices.

CP: True. I think that is a holdover from when I was collecting imagery from the health manuals and sexuality texts. They would often have photos of people standing in front of a grid. I still find them in military photos of nude men. I think we have a thing in this society about trying to “size people up.”

JC: One last thing... Your earlier work was larger in scale and included much more color. The latest work seems quieter with the color reduced to dots. Maturity?

CP: Maybe. I’ve never been a very good colorist. I still use it if it feels right but more often than not I’m

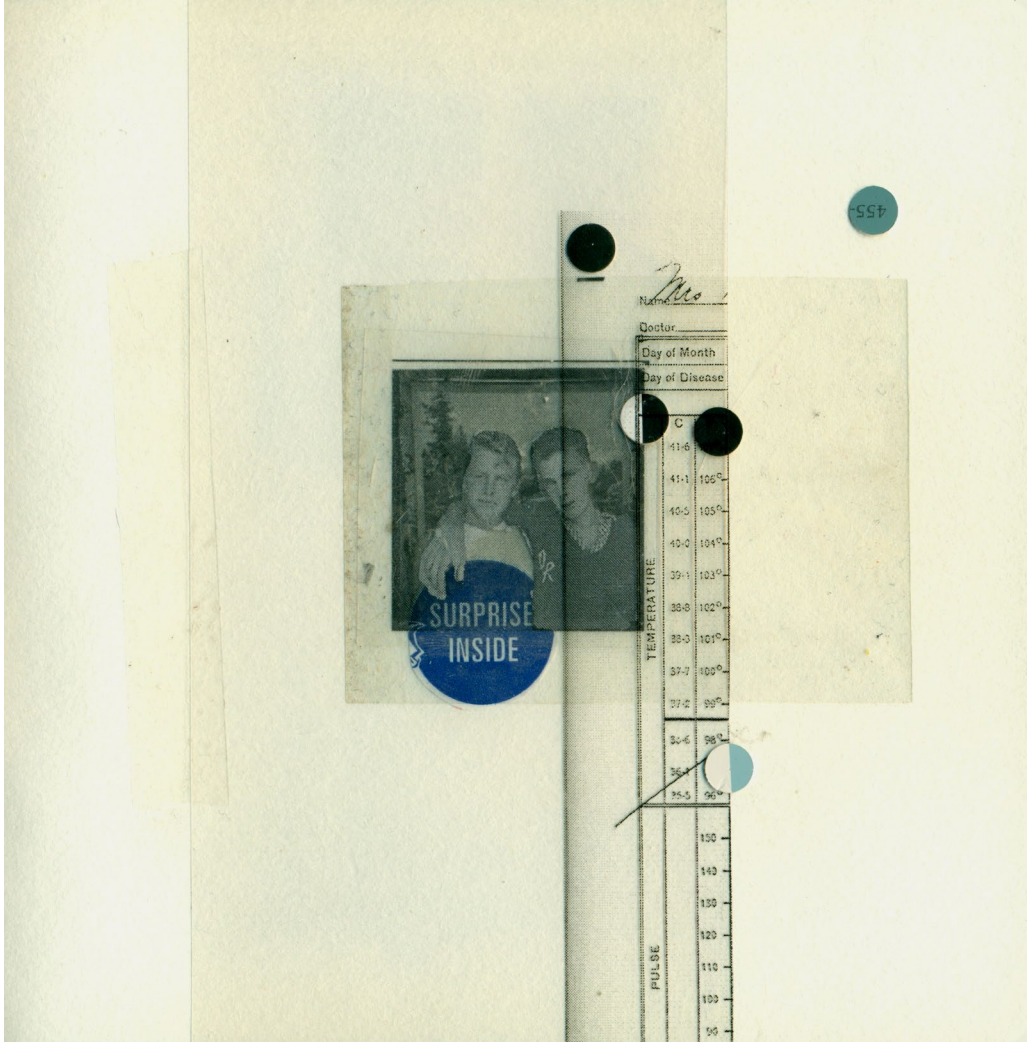
more concerned with the pieces fitting together in the “right” way no matter their color. As for the size I used to work small then did a series of larger pieces and am now back to small. I like the intimacy of the smaller works, both for my own process of working as well as in the way I want viewers to relate to them.

JC: I think you and I came from the same time period in art where formal issues trump imagery as far as composition goes but imagery trumps composition where content is concerned. I really enjoyed looking at your work and definitely enjoyed our conversation today. I wanted to ask about your ties to cubism and some nods I noticed to Francis Bacon but we are out of time.

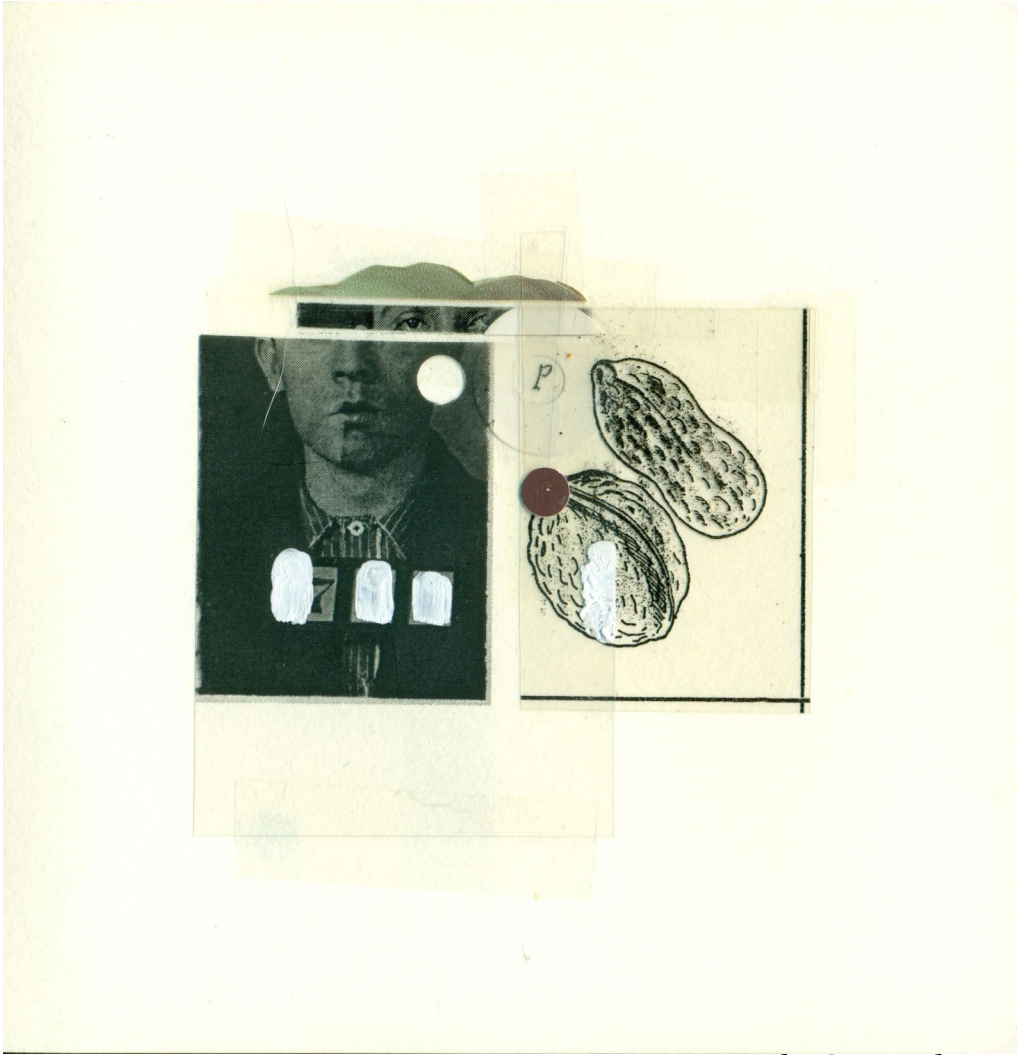
CP: Ha. Thank you, John. I’ve enjoyed this too. I totally agree with your statement about imagery, composition and content. This has actually helped clarify some things for me and I’m sure will be useful in the talk I’m preparing for Whitman College in February. Thanks for the chat and the opportunity!



Bbag by Cory Peeke



Suprise Inside by Cory Peeke



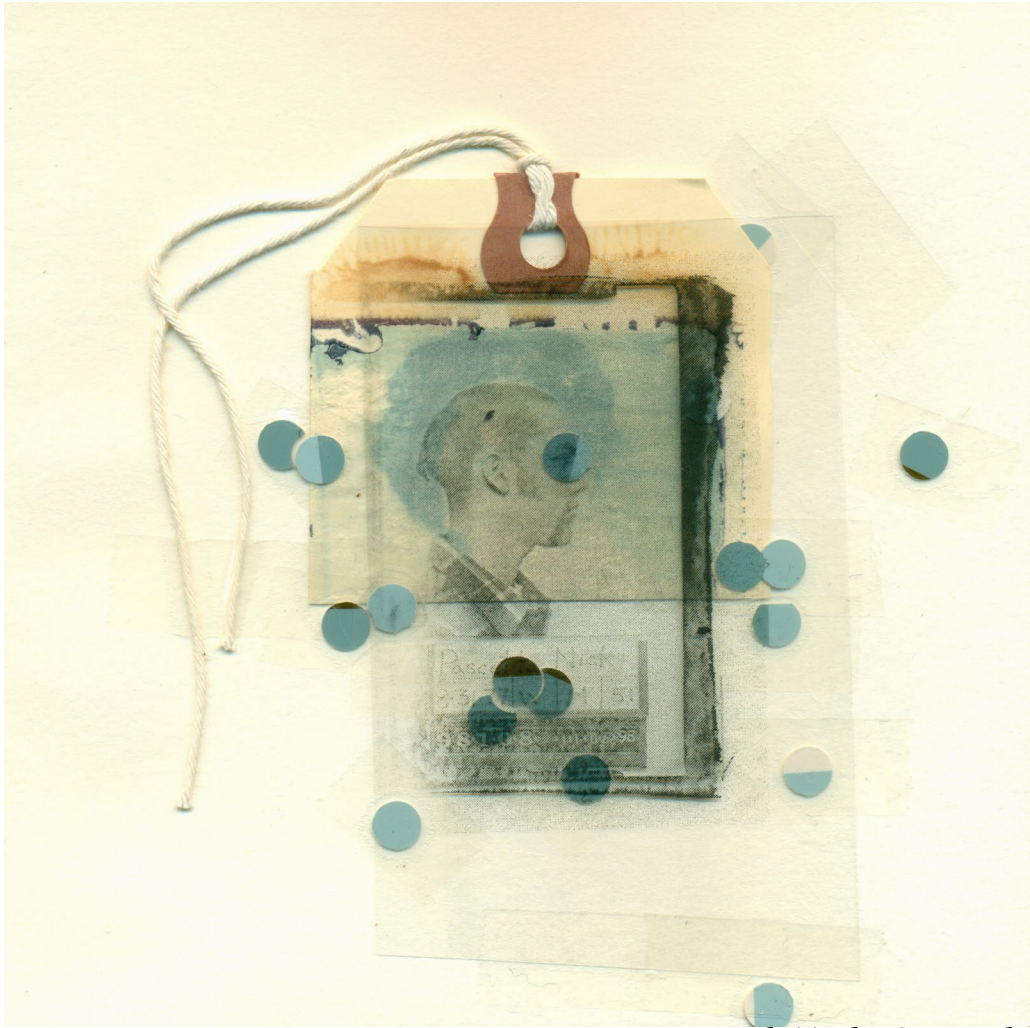
Nuts by Cory Peeke



Urinal by Cory Peeke



Reader's Digest by Cory Peeke



Lady Tag by Cory Peeke



Eye Sea by Cory Peeke

Like Lichen

Jack Galmitz

Living as a painting requires multiple images of your body repeated (exactly) as if you were lying on a copier or flattened so that it is surfaces of color or laid one on top of another in randomness, non-sequentially, like pagodas in a morgue you must be willing to not talk, not cough, although your mouth may be as open as a sea bass striking a lure the lighting must be poor to enable ambiguity to play its part say like the bluish-gray of a television on an off-white wall, smoky, trailing off to the skylight or floor you may have to submit to strips of your skin cut off and placed in grids and your eyes have circles painted in iodine red or black of caviar you may stand against a wall extremities muscles tightly tucked for classical affect you may have to lose arms for lobster claws or your head replaced by a fish's fins or more you may be in a corner of a floor in miniature representing the entropy of man in the new world order it's unsure or you may be cut up in approximation of boxes, rectangles, overlapping the blood most important of all it may have to be repainted depending on the contours your organs may be redesigned as to placement, feet separated standing on your heart or if it is already black from smoking it may be centered with arteries and veins stretched like tentacles to the edge and beyond imagine you're in a frame, on your stomach, a square cut out to expose your entrails, plastic sheet of 2" diameter covering exposing it like a peek within a construction site and its progress so you'll either be one of a kind which is rare or more likely a multitude if you have tattoos they'll be used accordingly or a realist might just prop you in chair by a standing lamp with a magazine in your hands in a room for boarders a dog at your feet on a carpet asleep give it some thought as there are other things to practice than being art art is incommodious at best, decorative at worse, shocking in obscure references think of the body as crusty lichen grown on a cement and brick wall mark rothko

Alan Britt

Feeling Small

When the earth was all there was,
in the old days, it was alright
to choose which side of the harvest moon
you preferred but, nowadays,
we don't know an atom from a hole in the ground;
we don't know where we rank
on the cosmic scale & that worries us.

Brings one amber grain of Palm Beach sand
into perspective, as William suggested.

We no longer know if we're orbiting
in or out of control, or if our orbiting
has anything to do with existence
that resembles the afterlife, whatever
that is or isn't.

Anyway, find someone who blows opium
up your robe & rub your furry thighs
against her atoms that vibrate like blood-red hibiscus,
gold pollen, if you prefer, or dirty yellow of the last canary
flashing inside a West Virginia coal mine off & on,
on & off.

Certain Elements Combined

Jon Steinhagen

They are training for something. We are aware of this. There are nine of them we know and a few more whom we do not clearly know. We listen to everything they say when they are near the things we use to listen to them. We can see them together and apart. There are many of us as well. There are perhaps more of us than them and that is a small comfort.

Osteraas is the youngest of them. He is sixteen. He is big for sixteen but not fat. He frightens most of us because he is the youngest and the most passionate even though we are aware his passion is most likely imitative. He is in love with a girl named Ima. She lives in the village.

We should not be observing them. We should be infiltrating them. One of us should be infiltrating them. This is in some ways impossible now. So we are telling Ima all she needs to know about Osteraas and them and we are encouraging her to love Osteraas. Ima does not want trouble with anyone. Not with us and not with them. And anyway she is in love with Osteraas only not as much as he is with her and that is all fine and dandy. We are grateful she is so young.

All of them are big on gun rights and wary of Washington. Osteraas never concluded this for himself because he is the youngest and because he was born into it. He was born hearing it. He has grown up to be big for his age and most frightening while hearing all of it. That's him there carrying his Level 1 gear like it's as light as an egg sandwich.

Osteraas shows Ima everything on their first date. The FRS radio. The four magazines of thirty rounds each for the rifle. The compass. The military-style knife. The 9mm sidearm. The two magazines for the sidearm. Ima gives him something to wear. It is her necklace. The necklace has a gold-plated heart-shaped locket depending from it. There is nothing in the locket. Osteraas wears it. At night he sprawls on his bed and thinks something holy has happened.

The eldest one of the group does all of the talking which is mostly the same things over and over again said the same way or nearly the same way. We are hearing him again now and it's all many of us can do to keep from saying his words along with him.

"If we were free in this nation we would not need a birth certificate or a driver's license or a building

permit. We would not need a social security number to get a job."

Osteraas is in the woods with Ima. He is showing her something. He is showing her how to make a bow drill fire. He is telling her only two percent of the population can make a bow drill fire. Ima asks him if he is wearing the locket. He puts his hand on his chest.

We are doing and have been doing for some time a great deal of sitting. Much of this sitting involves a great deal of listening. A great deal of this listening is listening to nothing or more accurately listening to silence. Listening to silence is different from listening to nothing. Carvel taught this to me early on. Carvel said to me and the others on several occasions Listening to nothing is impossible unless you are in a vacuum or in outer space. Listening to silence is listening to everything that can be heard when there is nothing being said. We are always doing a great deal of listening to everything that can be heard when there is no talking. We have learned to listen to textures. We are hearing the rapid paddy of someone using a handheld communication device. We are hearing an overlap of something small and hard being freed from a cellophane wrapper. We are hearing another overlap of the scrubby process of a bag being opened and closed followed by the mushy crinkle of a plastic bag and unmistakableness of coins. Carvel is so used to everything he can call off nickel or dime or quarter as he hears them. This is very amusing for a little while. Gollenweiser has taken to showing off as she can differentiate coughs and clearings and phlegm. She calls out bronchitis or cold or congestion or allergy or smoker as she hears them. Her favorite is Too Much Nasal Hair. None of us are able to challenge her ears. We have never been able to challenge Carvel's ears. They have their specialties and it is all very entertaining for a little while. We listen and we nod. We hear something we cannot identify. We want to hear it again.

Osteraas has his hand up Ima's shirt and we are all remembering what it was like to be young and intense. We think Osteraas is too young to be so young and intense. He has failed to teach Ima how to make a bow drill fire even though he has been a thorough and patient teacher for one so young and intense. We watch Ima practicing the bow drill fire on her own when no

one is looking. She cannot do it. She gives up and walks away and then comes back to it which is a new kind of persistence to us.

Osteraas is telling her he is not a racist and not paranoid. He is telling her without telling her he is not a misconception. Ima takes off her shirt.

We are listening to the leader never call their militia a militia. He is always saying Defensive Organization.

Some of us are doing and have been doing a great deal of watching. The watching some of us are doing occurs separately from the listening some of us others are doing. Somewhere the two things are being wed. Gollenweiser continues to not understand why one is separate from the other. Carvel tells her there is a place where it all comes together to be seen by someone or a group of someones. In some ways at many times the listeners are envying the watchers and the same is true for the watchers envying the listeners at many times.

We are listening a great deal to anger. We are hearing anger over changing demographics in the country and anger over soaring public debt and anger over a troubled economy and the anger over the perception that the President's initiatives are socialist or fascist or sometimes both. Gollenweiser told me yesterday she wants to be a watcher. Carvel heard what she said and told her she is fine where she is and how she is a damn fine listener. Someone coughs. Gollenweiser says Went Down Wrong Pipe without even thinking about it. We have never met the watchers but someday when this is all over perhaps someone will throw a party for all of us and then we can know who we are.

The eldest of the militia is talking again.

"The people of this country and some people around the world are waiting just waiting for a certain kind of individual I mean individuals like the ones you see here because we're supposed to be down there making the decision to go to war against the evil and greedy new world order that is now in existence."

Osteraas is so young at sixteen his voice cracks when he is excited. We made fun of this at first but do not make fun of it anymore. He says nothing when he is in the presence of the leader and he is with the leader moderately often. He speaks when he is spoken to and the leader never speaks to him only speaks at him.

None of us can get a clear picture or complete picture of Osteraas or the leader or anyone and Carvel tells us not to worry because Someone is.

We are listening to Ima show Osteraas how to have sex with her and we are making nervous jokes about

everything we hear but we are in reality anticipatory and eager and interested in this moment between them. We can only imagine what the watchers are seeing. We wonder if the watchers need the sounds to understand. Of course they don't. And we don't need to see. Many things we have to look at and listen to carefully but not this. There is an overlap of dead leaves.

Gollenweiser calls off sick one day because of a cold. She returns the next day and doesn't say anything about anything.

We are collectively seeing and hearing now how they how all of them are always at Level 10. They are not doing civil ambushes. They are doing military ambushes. They are practicing concealment. They are doing fire team movements.

Someone late in the game says we have been stupid because we could be getting everything at all times. We ask how. Someone says The Locket. We are asking Ima if she can get the locket back and when she asks why we say because we want to put something in it. Ima says she doesn't know if she can or even if she wants to.

And because of this we are recalling what it was like to be young and intense but we are not recalling when this youth and intensity died within us. We begin to worry because it is alarming to us now to realize we did not know it died within us at the time it died within us. We want that locket back so we can put something in it so we can hear everything clearly at all times because it lives around Osteraas's neck until Gollenweiser says All we'd hear is his heartbeat.

There is a day when plans are being discussed and everything is being made clear for them and likewise to the unseen us. We end what we are doing because beyond the listeners and the watchers there are some of us who will be doing the ending of them because that is their specialty. We understand this in them and in us and it is anyone's guess if Osteraas will come out of it alive although there is no reason to think otherwise except for the fact that there is always a reason to think otherwise because anything could happen. We have all we need for now and all we need to prevent anything further from happening and so we look as long as we can and listen as long as we can. Just a little longer. Anticipating the ending. Because Ima has finally figured out how to make a bow drill fire and Osteraas is very much more in love with her because of this and for other reasons and because all we can see and hear is a spark, a spark that will lead to a fire.



Abstratctions in Reality by Allan Gorman

Bryce Journey

A Collection

Half my lawn was tainted with lead so they tore it up and took it away.
Somewhere there is a pile of half-lawns yearning to be whole and well.



*From The Beginning of Some Story I'll Never Finish by
Anna Maddocks*

Paedophobia

Becca Miller

I hate babies, that is to say, they probably hate me. In my presence they experience the irresistible urge to cry, fuss, scream, squeal, spit, poop, and vomit. As I hold them awkwardly and helplessly, watching for my chance to pass them off to the next victim, I don't see how anyone could call these creatures "bundles of joy" or treat them like little gods. Baby, infant, bairn, bambino, suckling, nursing, urchin, cub, whelp, bratling—so many ways to describe that living being which vaguely bears a physical resemblance to humanity.

A baby is a delicate and dangerous creature from its entrance into the world until its transformation into a walking, talking toddler around the age of two. Oddly enough we call them terrible when they hit the critical age of two, but I often wonder why we won't say it earlier on in their development. The babies I'm talking about aren't adorable angels who turn into terrible tyrants after twenty four months of existence. Drop those rose-colored glasses and behold the reality: breakable figurines that SCREAM at you. Monsters in human form. In the womb they look like little parasitic aliens and when they come out they look like bloody messes. We call them beautiful but in reality they're gross, sticky, bloody, smelly creatures which we need to sanitize and purify before we take pictures to commemorate their new life.

The cycle appears to be endless; I hate babies because they hate me, and they probably hate me because I hate them. All animals sense fear and babies are no different. They can easily perceive that I'm clueless, ignorant, afraid, and potentially dangerous. They can detect the enemy and respond appropriately by screaming once surrendered into my unskilled and trembling arms.

I'm not sure that I hate babies as thoroughly as I might wish. It sounds strange that I want to dislike babies, but honestly, that seems like the easiest answer. If you just write me off as a baby-hating, misandrous, radical feminazi, then I can just dismiss you as a close-minded, patriarchal prig. Or if I amuse you with my humor and sarcasm, then maybe you won't take me seriously and I can do the same and avoid the deeper issues behind this fear.

When I say I hate babies, I'm not being honest with you or myself, I'm embellishing my statements with sarcasm and hyperbole, maybe because it is easier to claim that I hate babies than to acknowledge the truth that I am afraid of them. It's easier to simply give all the reasons why babies really aren't beautiful and in fact are quite disgusting. In part, I just want to tell the other side of the story in a society who's discourse is dominated by baby-lovers. In part, I want to amuse you and justify my behavior around babies. Probably most of all, I want to avoid analyzing and confessing the reasons why I dislike babies.

Even though my heart races in the presence of babies, I don't cringe at the mere thought of babies. I enjoy the idea of babies, the smiles carefully photographed and the happy infant in her mother's arms. I find smiles from all people of all ages to be attractive, so a smiling baby will cause me to reciprocate. A wailing child will produce a parallel response. Whenever I try to hold a baby it erupts into tears and hysteria—the feeling is mutual but I have to act a bit more dignified as I frantically hand the child back to her watchful mother whose been hovering anxiously, ready to snatch the child out of my arms at the first sign of the inevitable meltdown.

I cannot pinpoint the moment when my discomfort began or completely explain why I have these overwhelming feelings of inadequacy and incompetence. I certainly did not always dislike babies; my four-year-old self absolutely adored my newborn sister and had her heart set on holding the baby at the hospital. But my sister told me I couldn't hold the baby because I was too little. This event, forgotten by my family who insist I never really wanted to hold the baby, is forever etched in my mind. Maybe because one time I was told that I could not hold a baby my subconscious has fixated on that idea until this prophecy self-fulfilled. Maybe my feelings of inadequacy stem from that moment when I was informed that I was too young, incapable, and inexperienced.

I am in good company as a victim of paedophobia, one who is gripped by the fear of babies or who experiences animosity towards children. Numerous websites are dedicated to the unification of baby-

haters. A simple google search returns the following posts: "I hate babies. Is it Normal?" "It bothers me, but I hate babies." "Why do I hate babies so much?" "Do You Hate Babies? Join friendly people sharing 20 true stories in the I Hate Babies group." "We hate babies, we really do!" And the list continues of social media where dozens confess their hatred of babies but most of these websites are equipped with that invaluable feature, anonymity, whereby one can speak one's mind and avoid negative repercussions in the real world. If these people's motivations are anything like mine, they just want to avoid shock and judgment by those baby-lovers who appear to be dominant and make us feel guilty for being different.

It's easier to hide behind anonymity.

While few openly confess to hatred of infants, most mothers experience depression after childbirth. Post-Natal Depression, or more colloquially "baby blues," occurs in 50% to 67% of all mothers. The symptoms are obvious: appetite-loss, nausea, anger, resentment, bitterness, suicidal tendencies, or simply the inability to enjoy life. We don't know why women get depressed, but it seems to be most "prominent in new mothers who feel that they are not enjoying having a new baby in the way they expected to." Apparently we just need to lower our expectations, that way we won't feel resentful towards these babies who invade our lives. However, these negative attitudes towards babies seem to be different from mine by virtue of the fact that I've never reproduced and therefore cannot experience post-natal depression. I am not angry towards a specific baby or bitter about a major life change or disappointed by unfulfilled expectations, I simply experience depression, anxiety, and frustration in the presence of babies.

I feel guilty for disliking babies, as if it's unnatural, which maybe it is. I feel pressured to conform and act like I love babies. When someone passes around a picture of a baby I murmur the requisite "aww" and move on. There is no need to make a scene. This is no time to start an argument. There is no need to alienate people.

I write now to defend myself to you but maybe I am my own severest critic and accuser. I'm ashamed of my inadequacy around babies and feel like I fail to fulfill some standard of femininity. Girls are supposed to love babies. Girls are supposed to be good with babies. Girls always babysit more than boys. Good Christian girls get married, have babies, and

raise a happy family. These expectations may never have been voiced, but their influence is undeniable. If I did not feel as much pressure to be good with babies, then I would probably be less afraid, and consequently more capable. But societal expectations have perpetuated my fear of failure and I've always run away from things that I cannot succeed in. My hand-eye coordination is barely existent so I avoid archery, baseball, volleyball, and all sports where my failure lets down an entire team. I avoid change because I do not know how to act in a new situation. I am controlled by my crippling fear of failure and inevitable embarrassment and since I have no idea how to successfully quiet a child, I capitulate and join the ranks of the baby-haters.

Behind that simple label and façade hides a nervous individual too scared to admit that she's really not sure it's worth the effort to change when improvement seems nigh impossible. So when I say I hate babies, I'm really saying I'm uncomfortable around them and I don't want to feel bad about it anymore. I'm saying I want to resist the culture which tells me it's my female duty to adore them. I'm saying I don't want to be pressured. I'm saying that my maternal instincts haven't kicked in yet, if they ever will, and I want to be done apologizing for it. I'm done accepting maternal instincts as the norm, or adopting the glorified image of motherhood. It's okay and even natural and normal to dislike babies. I'm not the only one, neither are the hundreds of other women who think they are the only ones. Let me be the voice calling out: Stop trying to be unique and start building consensus and fighting social conditioning which indoctrinates you to believe that you're inferior and should be ashamed.

Desperate for approval and validation I've suppressed my awkwardness around babies and tried to conform into what I believed to be the perfect image of femininity. The nursery superintendent at my church asked me to leave the room when I failed to pacify a crying child and both of us were on the verge of meltdowns. She told me to go to the kindergarten room and see if I could find my niche there. Walking down the hall I was too embarrassed to stop by the room. I kept walking and I guess I'm still running away today. Someday that retreat will end and I'll turn around, but until then it's easier to hide than face my fears, it's easier to hate than to love, and I'd rather defend myself and feel a little guilty than try to change and fail.

Mark DeCarteret

summer deities

as soothing as the so-so thought shaded-in
or the dashed-off word sung at a note not so tuned,
how we'll wait it out, half-thawed & thinning on top
(tell me how many winters have we been embedded in snow now?)

what was once awe, these moments we had seen through
to some end much more kind than its imagining,
when won-over or conned by a dishwasher's hum
or the well-meaning shade of said season

we wished only to dine on the food that fell down
from the tables of those gods in name only

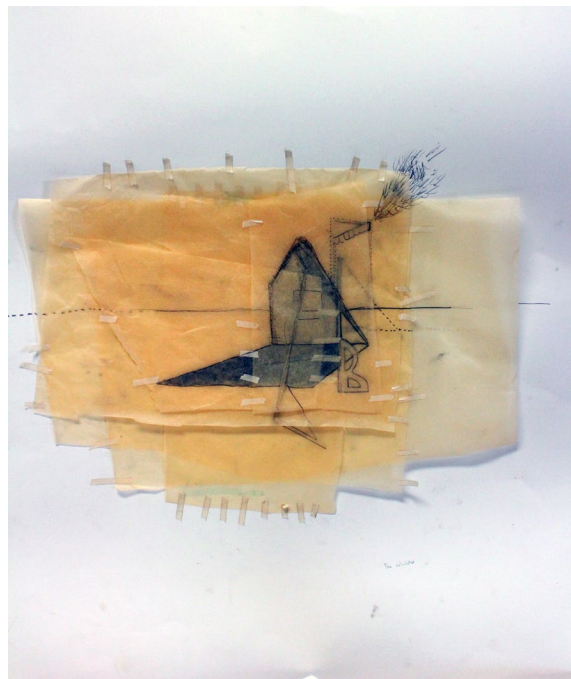


*From 'Language' is a Self Puzzle of
Art by John Chang*

Brian Barbeito

I Expect I'll see the Ocean

I expect I'll see the ocean there and it will be a complete thing in itself but with green bits of sea plants that float and live on the top of some of the waves but not all. The birds will come down because they see something beyond the whitecaps and go under the water while the small plane passes in the distance like a toy in the sky. Back across the way if I look there will be people driving remote control cars that race up paved walls and then fly through the air ready to land without hassle or worry on good spring shocks. That man that is not right in the head will be digging for treasure and only finding broken conch shells while the older blond woman sunbathes naked by the grasses. I shall smell salt in the air, and the bits of shells that are not ancient brown will be preternaturally white and tumbled and waiting along the shore. A machine will come in the distance at dawn like it does full of solitariness and with its purposeful tires and baskets. Puffer fish and trigger fish will be there and out longer will be tuna and barracuda and sharks and if the boats go in that direction the sharks will come for the chum and the men will be hardened and weary and yet oddly happy and spry with the deep tans of natives more local to the environs than even the fish and fowl or frogs or crickets or anoles that hide from the birds in the early mornings under perimeter hedges. And she will be there, and we will know in a flash like a diamond or a perfect pyramid waiting for something in the sun, or a feral cat running to catch a prey, like the first wave seen or the lights of the carnivals after dusk in the thick night or like a heron in the cloudless darkest blue sky flying, what to do and where to go and who we are.



*From The Beginning of Some Story I'll
Never Finish by Anna Maddocks*

It is Eventual

Brandy Abraham

Memo. That and her husband's name were the only two words she could make out. She sat in her desk chair, a foot away, and would not pick it up.

"Clare, are you going upstairs?"

She looked up. She had worked with John for five years and he was the only one who called her "Clare," otherwise it was Mrs. or Ms. or nothing at all.

"You don't want to be late for the meeting," he said. "You know he won't like that."

She sighed. It breathed out of her, the dislike.

"Our elevator's out," he said, leaning his elbow on the cubicle edge, bracing his hand to his face, smiling. "You should take the one on the first floor."

John knew how much she hated working for her husband. One night, he caught her stapling the cushions of his office chair, embedding the metal clips into the seat and back. She was kneeling. Using one hand to steady the chair, she rested her head on the edge, and hit it again and again. She remembered saying to John that this was something her daughter did once too. To her chair, though, some time ago.

Clare gathered her papers and stuffed them into a creased, black presentation book.

"You'll do fine," he said.

Clare reached for her heels, which were discarded under the desk. She reached her bare feet out and pulled them forward with the tips of her toes, slipping them on.

She had never liked heels. They never made her feet look sexy.

Her husband bought her a new pair every Christmas. They would be tucked under the couch or behind his desk, somewhere so he could pull it out after their daughter had gone outside to play with the sled.

He would give it to her and she would love it.

Their daughter would come down and cry because the sled fell into the backyard ice fishing hole. Her husband would hold their daughter and go fish out the sled.

She would try on one heel and stand up while her husband wasn't looking. He remembered how her toes pressed against the tops, curling into small fists.

Clare nodded and huffed air out her nose, pushing her lips out. John did the same.

Her stomach tied itself in knots as she walked. Each pump of her leg, each tap of her wide heel against the floor pushed her forward and each time she thought she would fall to the ground, and timber into pieces. She had been doing this for too long. The walk toward her husband, as if he was across the room, waiting, and she full of breath lunged at him instead.

Clare missed the last step before the bottom of the stairs, grabbing the bar, her papers spilling out from the folder. She could feel the heat in her throat. They parted and out slipped the steam, melting the room around her, catching the papers on fire.

"Come on," one said.

"Dammit," another.

Three steps forward and five steps back; Clare moved very little. The first floor elevator was overfull. They were a large mass, throwing hands into the air, crying, and singing for the elevator light to blink on, although knowing it would take so long to return to the bottom floor. They swayed with each other, bumping elbows and hips and briefcases, toasting how late they would be.

"Come on," one said again. He gripped his watch. Rubbing the face clean. Clare leaned towards him. Knocking elbows. She saw that under the first layer of skin, there pulsed a blue-green woe. It ached him, rubbing it back, smudging the layer back into place, he sighed. It emptied him. Clare swore he became so small. It pushed his lips to his chin and pulled them out, twisting, peeled, and white. She would not look at him. Their elbows were touching. She could feel a heartbeat in that.

The elevator light blinked on.

Clare let him sidestep her.

She was the last to cram into the elevator. The door closed and she was no longer alone. A man

breathed onto the top of her head, tickling her hair. She felt its unevenness.

“What floor?” he asked. Wiggling a hand across the bottom of her back to reach the buttons, everyone cried out, hands grabbing to make sure the elevator would stop at their floor.

She would get off at the 30th floor.

The motion pushed her forward so her nose was almost even with the door opening. A man coughed behind her. She felt the wetness. It dripped down her back, sweating down into the creases of her dress. He towed his forehead with the back of his hand. She could see his largeness reflected by the door.

At each floor they stopped. On the 21th floor, she could see the outside windows, unshaded. The birds hung on the outreaches of the sky like tiny bobbles. They were so much like trinkets. The people pushed past her.

A woman’s phone rang behind her, and Clare moved forward, pushing herself closer to the elevator door.

Her hand rested on the shocking metal. The elevator shook, so lightly, as if too many people leaned to one side, and then the door opened.

Her hand slid against the metal, the opening was only large enough for her eye to see the dark from the other side, and it was lit with graffiti. The words blurred into a blue-green woe and the pictures pointed up and out and away toward the elevator door. It reached out to her and smudged the spot below her eye, lifting up the layers of her skin. She could make out a hand before each floor, painted like the color of the graffiti, just the fingers.

Clare saw the metal strings of the machine, they dangled from the escarpment before each floor, and electric static hung on them like sparklers. One touched her and she backed away, hearing the door close, she rubbed the spot and smoothed her face.

The door opened on the 30th floor.

Pushing herself forward, she remembered making a plaque with her daughter, once, her hands were small and cracked.

Her husband was gone then.

He was at the front desk, turning around. His suit was brown and he had worn his too loose white dress shirt, tucked in so the bottom made his pants bulge.

“The meeting’s over,” he said. “You can go back to work.”

He flushed a hand through his hair. “We need to reschedule that meeting with Sherry,” he said to his secretary. “Can we figure out why my chair won’t swivel?”

Clare stood and listened.

“Did you need something, Clare?” He didn’t look at her. “I think that we need more lighting in here,” he said. “Call Bob Pavlock and see if we can’t get the lights changed over.”

Clare hated how his face was so white and his hair always looked damp. He wet it with Wet Looks every morning and it smelled like shoe polish.

It fell in tendrils around his forehead, greasy.

Clare walked across the office, past the secretary, nodding to JoAnn in the third cubicle. She slept with her husband once.

She opened the door, walked across the carpeted floor, using her husband’s

chair as a stepping stool; Clare stepped from the heater to the window. She knew how it opened.

She squeezed out onto the balcony, the edge so minute.

And jumped.

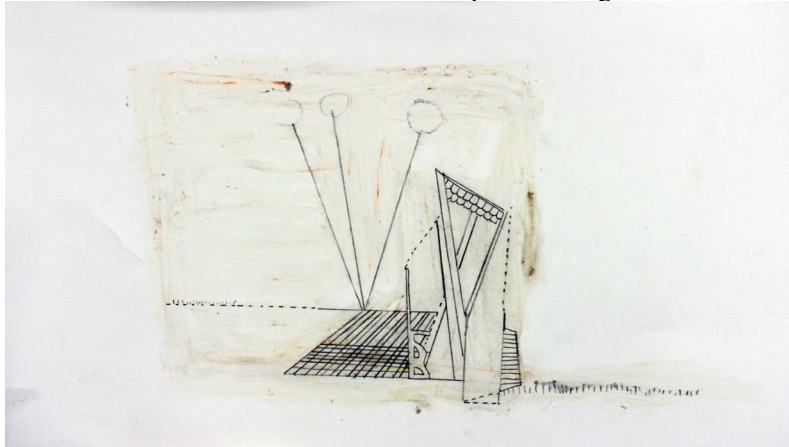
No one called for her, assuming she had gone back to work, her husband reviewed three proposals, ate a tuna fish sandwich from the deli, met with Sherry Kurn, had sex with Sherry Kurn, and made an international phone call to Bangladesh.

Clare heard this from a painters box under the window.

She fell there once before, the time she jumped from her husband’s window meaning to die.

She cut her eye, and it bled onto the wood. The spot was still there and she fingered it, listening, tracing her hand against the spot.

She did not know if it was still there.



*From The Beginning of Some Story
I'll Never Finish by Anna Maddocks*

Bryce Journey

Monument

At a sparkling gem rest area just off I-680 in North Dakota
there is a monument,
a great granite block heavy as memory,
with a bronze plaque bolted endlessly to the block,
and words carved in steel for the traveler, heavy-eyed but eager for sights to
bolt to their memory,
words carved in steel so that memory might last forever and never
fade,
words carved in steel that read: "Nothing of any import happened here."



There Are No Others Around Me by Taryn Wells

Dan Sklar

Ben Gazzara Says It All

You wanted to be an actor because of
Ben Gazzara,
a man with the best name in the world.
This is a man whose voice sounds
like nothing else but man.
You wanted that voice that name.
When Ben Gazzara said anything,
it was true even if it wasn't.
Ben Gazzara would stand there,
black hair, and tell you some things.
Sometimes you spend all day outside
listening to birds and thinking about
Ben Gazzara.
It's like he knows something you don't know
and even though you do, he knows it better.
Ben Gazzara knows it better than you.
“What are you doing out there in the sunshine?”
“Listening to birds,
watching the cat,
and thinking about
Ben Gazzara
—famous, not too famous, famous enough.
Any movie where Ben Gazzara
looks into your eyes
and tells you a few things.
“You've got to think like a cat.”
It's better to write about Ben Gazzara than
what will get you in trouble with authorities.
And when you write a play you think of
Ben Gazzara.
How would Ben Gazzara play it,
what would Ben Gazzara do?
You have a cat named Ben Gazzara
and one named John Cassavetes.
You would like to get drunk with
Ben Gazzara
and you know he wouldn't kill you.
He couldn't kill anyone.
Ben Gazzara is an actor and a pussycat.
He wears that white suit white shoes
and red shirt untucked in *The Big Lebowski*
and looks straight into the camera,
bonfire beach party night,
“Hello, Dude. Thanks for coming.
I'm Jackie Treehorn.”

Bait

Kirby Wright

The fire dies. I throw in a chair with lion head arms for warmth. The feet extend back into my bedroom, claws scratching stone.

My room has a sliding glass door. Students slide it open, stroll past my bed, and leave through an oak door. I am the campus shortcut. A coed wearing a mini and platinum bouffant enters. She locks the glass and takes off her bouffant. She's bald. "I'm Bait," she goes, unbuckling her skirt. She tears off strips that were eyebrows. "Velcro," she admits.

We listen to the chair howl. Bait moves against me—I want to resist, yet can't. I feel as if I'm cheating on a lover. "Eat," she instructs. "Eat like a shark." Bait forces me to do things I ordinarily would not do. Soon I learn the taste of her salt.



*From 'Language' is a Self
Puzzle of Art by John Chang*

Contributor Bios

Brandy Abraham is an emerging fiction writer who enjoys conducting literary experiments. Her work has appeared in *Cardinal Sins*, *Temenos*, and *Postcard Shorts*. Her poetry is forthcoming in *Stone Highway Review* and *A Narrow Fellow*. She is currently serving as the Editor of *Cardinal Sins*, an art and literature journal from Saginaw Valley State University.

Brian Michael Barbeito is a poet, essayist, and translator; he was born in Ontario, Canada and lives in the greater Toronto area. Published collections of his work include *Vignettes*: prose narratives, *Postprandial*: a prose poem novel, and *Notes from November's Noon*: a chapbook in fictional letters. He is a Pushcart Prize nominee for the short story *The One Single Note* (Lunatics Folly, 2011), and for the short story *Motel by the Stereo Sea* (*Mungbeing Magazine*, 2012).

Alan Britt read poems at the World Trade Center/Tribute WTC Visitor Center in Manhattan/NYC, April 2012, at the *We Are You Project* (WeAreYouProject.Org) Wilmer Jennings Gallery, East Village/NYC, April 2012, and at New Jersey City University's Ten Year 9/11 Commemoration in Jersey City, NJ, September 2011. His recent books include *Alone with the Terrible Universe* (2011), *Greatest Hits* (2010), and *Hurricane* (2010). Britt's work also appears in new anthologies and many other publications. Alan currently teaches English/Creative Writing at Towson University and lives in Reisterstown, Maryland with his wife, daughter, two Bouviers des Flandres, one Bichon Frise and two formally feral cats.

John Chang's work expresses the duality of his Chinese and American experience by juxtaposing traditional and unconventional symbols and images through the application of mixed media. Deconstructed Chinese Calligraphy layered over segments of world history and references to modern pop-culture depict his personal transformation.

Boona Daroom is 29 and lives in Brooklyn.

Merlin Flower is an independent artist and writer.

Jack Galmitz was born in NYC in 1951. He is contributing editor at Roadrunner Haiku Journal. His most recent books are *Letters* (2012, Lulu Press) and *Views, a genre study*, (Cyberwit.net, 2012).

Brad Garber has published poetry in *Cream City Review*, *Alchemy*, *Fireweed*, "gape seed" (an anthology published by Uphook Press), *Front Range Review*, *the NewerYork Press*, *Taekwondo Times*, *Ray's Road Review*, *Flowers & Vortexes (Promise of Light)*, *Emerge Literary Journal*, *Generation Press*, *Penduline Press*, *Dead Flowers: A Poetry Rag*, *New Verse News* and *Mercury*. Nominee: 2013 Pushcart Prize for poem, "Where We May Be Found." His essays have been published in *Brainstorm NW*, *Naturally magazine* and *N, The Magazine of Naturalist Living*. He has also published erotica in *Oysters & Chocolate*, *Clean Sheets* and *MindFuckFiction*.

Bryce Journey is a Language Arts and Creative Writing teacher with Omaha Public Schools and an English Adjunct Professor at Iowa Western Community College. She has a Master's degree in Education and English and a BFA in Creative Writing. Her poetry has appeared in the National Library Association's annual anthology, *Blind Man's Rainbow literary magazine*, *Scisortale Review*, *Apropos*, *Temenos*, *Fortunates*, and is upcoming in *Red Clay Review*. Her poetry was a prize winner in the *New Era* magazine's annual international literature contest.

Dorian Katz is a visual artist and curator at the Center for Sex and Culture in San Francisco. Animal and human characters populating her art stem from historical milieus and conflate queer histories, invented narratives and scientific data on animal sexuality and gender behavior. She received an MFA in Art Practice from Stanford University. To see more of her work, [click here](#).

Michael Kroesche was born in Salt Lake City, UT. He received his BA from the Univ. of Southern California in 2008 and his MFA in Poetry from the Univ. of Nevada, Las Vegas in 2011. His works include a chap book, *Summer Hymnals*, published by Elik Press in 2004, and his poems have appeared in *Interim*, *The Chiron Review*, *The Breakwater Review*, among others, and have also been incorporated into orchestral pieces. He recently returned to Salt Lake City after teaching for a year in Guangzhou, China.

Susan Pashman is a philosophy professor and the author of the novel, *The Speed of Light*. Her essays, poems and stories have appeared in such journals as *The Texas Review*, *The Portland Review*, *Dan River Anthology*, *Midway Journal*, *Burning Word* and *The Battered Suitcase*. Her most recent story will appear in the next issue of *The Indiana Review*.

Cory W. Peeke was born in Sturgis, Michigan in 1968. He received his BFA in Fine Arts from Kendall College of Art and Design and his MFA from the University of Idaho. His work has been published in *Mein schwules Auge 8*, edited by Rinaldo Hopf and Axel Schock, published by *Konkursbuch of Berlin* as well as the *Monongahela Review* and *Creative Quarterly*. His works are included in the permanent collections of Eastern Oregon University, Lockhaven University, the Solara-Simpson Housing Group and the International Museum of Collage, Assemblage and Construction.

Ekaterina Popova was born in Vladimir, Russia in 1988. She moved to the United States in 2001. Popova has a BFA in painting from Kutztown University, PA. She currently lives and works outside of Philadelphia and exhibits her work nationally.

Nancy Scott's over-500 bylines have appeared in magazines, literary journals, anthologies and newspapers, and as audio commentaries. An essayist and poet, she has published three chapbooks. Recent work has appeared in *Burnside Review*, *Contemporary Haibun Online*, *Thema*, and *Wordgathering*. She won First Prize in the 2009 International Onkyo Braille Essay Contest.

Dan Sklar teaches writing at Endicott College. Recent publications include *Harvard Review*, *New York Quarterly*, *Ibbetson Street Press*, and *The Art of the One Act*. His play, *Lycanthropy*, was performed at the Boston Theater Marathon in May 2012.

Jon Steinhagen is a resident playwright at Chicago Dramatists and published author, recently in print and online in *Monkeybicycle 9*, *Alliterati*, *SmokeLong Quarterly*, and *Bodega*.

Hope Thier graduated from Minnesota State University, Mankato in May 2012 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting. Currently, she is a Master of Arts candidate in Painting there. She grew up for the most part in Moorhead, MN and then attended Northern

Michigan University for two years. Painting, photography, and ceramics have always played some strong role in her decisions and actions. She enjoys spending time around other students and the learning atmosphere that comes with it. Her professional goals include becoming an art professor and a painter.

Taryn Wells was born in Massachusetts in 1981. She received a B.A. in Studio Art from Boston College in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. Her artwork is a dialogue that explores the complicated world of racial identity and the desire to find my place within it as a multiracial individual.

Kirby Wright has been nominated for two Pushcart Prizes and is a past recipient of the Ann Fields Poetry Prize, the Academy of American Poets Award, the Browning Society Award for Dramatic Monologue, and Arts Council Silicon Valley Fellowships in Poetry and The Novel. *Before the City*, his first book of poetry, took First Place at the 2003 San Diego Book Awards. Wright is also the author of the companion novels *Punahou Blues* and *Moloka'i Nui Ahina*, both set in Hawaii. He was a Visiting Fellow at the 2009 International Writers Conference in Hong Kong, where he represented the Pacific Rim region of Hawaii. He is the 2011 Artist in Residence at Milkwood International, Czech Republic.

