fnewsmagazine

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago *arts, culture, and politics*

MAY '19

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fnewsmagazine

F Newsmagazine is a journal of arts, culture, and politics, edited and designed by students at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. The print edition is published eight times a year and the web edition is published year-round.

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The Literary Section Editor is part of our editorial team, fielding submissions of fiction, poetry, and hybrid genres for our online and in-print literary section. This editor should have experience with multiple genres, a good grip on grammar, a love for alliteration, and a winning team attitude. 10 hours/week, $13/hour.

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Lightning Round

SAIC students talk about luck, pop, and TV

Photography and text by **Kavya Kataria**

Nikita Singh, BFA 2022
Photography

Where are you from?
I was born in Piscataway, New Jersey. Now, I live in South Brunswick.
Why did you choose SAIC?
I was stuck between two colleges, and SAIC seemed more fitting for me because of its cohesive nature, and the fact that you can just be what you want to be here.
Who is your favorite musical artist?
I have a couple of favorite artists — One Direction, BTS, Troye Sivan. I don't have a specific genre I stick to, I just listen to whatever might catch my attention.
What is the most recent TV show or movie you watched that you loved / hated?
"Gully Boy" is this Bollywood movie I recently watched, and that was one I loved. I also really like "Peaky Blinders" and "The Man in The High Castle."
Do you believe there is such a thing as luck?
Yes, kind of. I mean, there's always a balance, between good things and bad things — every day I feel like something bad is going to happen and then something good is going to happen. I think it's just by chance that some people are luckier than others.

Bryce Civiello, BFA 2022
Architecture, Interior Design, and Designed Objects

Where are you from?
I was born and brought up in Colorado.
Why did you choose SAIC?
I chose SAIC for the studio and open critique environment.
Who is your favorite musical artist?
I'd have to go with . . . well, I don't really have an absolute favorite artist. I love indie punk rock and right now my favorite song is "Kay's Choice."
What is the most recent TV show or movie you watched that you loved / hated?
It's a guilty pleasure, but "Not Another Teen Movie." I hate it so much that I love it. Chris Evans is a doll. I also love the BBC Masterpiece version of "Jane Eyre."
Do you believe there is such a thing as luck?
I don't think that luck is some godlike power. I think it's more like the butterfly effect — just that people are in the right place at the right time. It's a combination of working hard at the right time and right place.

Gini Lee, BFA 2022
Photography

Where are you from?
I was born and brought up in Taiwan.
Why did you choose SAIC?
I want to become a photographer. SAIC's ranking in photography is really high, so this seemed like the perfect option for me.
Who is your favorite musical artist?
I would have to say that my favorite is Lauv. I am generally into the genre of pop music.
What is the most recent TV show or movie you watched that you loved / hated?
I recently watched the new episode of "Black Mirror" — "Bandersnatch" — and I loved it. I also watched "Maniac," which is terrible.
Do you believe there is such a thing as luck?
Yeah, I believe in luck. I think every type of luck is real, and some people are luckier than others.

Meenal Rahatkar, BFA 2021
Visual Communication Design

Where are you from?
I am from Aurangabad, Maharashtra, but now I live in Pune, India.
Why did you choose SAIC?
I want to do production design for the screen, which needs knowledge of a lot of things. I wanted to go to an art school and learn those other aspects, instead of going to a film school. No other school I found was as well-known as SAIC, or offered different mediums and majors I could explore.
Who is your favorite musical artist?
I have phases; I had a phase with Swedish House Mafia until they split, then I liked the Chainsmokers, and now I'm just listening to anything in the pop music genre. I'm obsessed with A.R. Rahman — his music is so original.
What is the most recent TV show or movie you watched that you loved / hated?
I just watched "Wild Child" for the first time, and I have to say it's a perfect early 2000s movie. I also really love "Jane the Virgin" and "Peaky Blinders."
Do you believe there is such a thing as luck?
I do believe in luck. I believe in vibes. I read this huge book about the science of your subconscious mind, which sort of made me believe in luck. It's basically about how the world around you is what you have created. Sometimes it's just the things that are deeply rooted in your mind that work in a way that seems miraculous, but it's really not. This is luck. I believe in it, but with a more practical approach.

Ella Fainaru-Wada, BFA 2022
Undeclared

Where are you from?
I am from Petaluma, California.
Why did you choose SAIC?
I was originally going to go to a liberal arts school with a double major in computer science and art. At the last minute, I applied to five art schools and I got into all of them. I thought to myself, maybe there's something here, and I ended up coming here.
Who is your favorite musical artist?
God, can you even ask that? I listen to a lot of indie music and alt. rock. My favorite song at the moment would have to be "Priestess" by Pumarosa.
What is the most recent TV show or movie you watched that you loved / hated?
My friends and I got like halfway through "Get Out" but we were interrupted, so we couldn't finish that. I would definitely love to.
Do you believe there is such a thing as luck?
I feel like luck is pretty equivalent to chance. I guess some people are luckier than others because things line up better. for them. I don't necessarily think that's because of anything.

Kavya Kataria (BFA 2022) loves anything as long as there's good music.

Waxing Philosophical

SAIC students were given the chance to ask an on-hand philosopher their most pressing questions

by **Heather Giovale**

Simon Anderson unpacks the philosophical import of chocolate. Photograph by John Choi.

Entering the Sharp cafeteria, I saw two posters reading "Ask a Philosopher" resting on a table that showed pictures of Socrates, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and bell hooks. Standing there was a man in a lime green and yellow jacket with two pins affixed to either side that read "Ask Me!" in big, bold letters. There were two large books in front of him, each a copy of Diogenes Laërtius' "Lives of Eminent Philosophers." This was Dr. Simon Anderson, associate professor of art history, and philosopher for the hour.

F Newsmagazine had set up the table hoping students would ask Simon their burning questions. They wanted to know what was on students' minds, and how they responded to being prompted thus in public. Simon, F Newsmagazine Staff Writer Leo Smith, and I sat down in front of a cornucopia of candy — students' incentive for asking questions. The editor organizing this event, Dustin Lowman, warned us to "expect rejection." So there we were, Zoom recorder in hand, awaiting rejection.

Eventually someone came up and asked, "What is this?" We explained and requested a question, reminding them that the reward was candy. They opened their mouth to say something, then hesitated. We would come to know this moment of hesitation well.

Throughout the hour of philosophical discussion, many struggled to come up with questions, not because they didn't have any, but because the pressure to ask was so great, and doubt overrode their thought processes. Because of this, some people simply walked away, while others thought long and hard to craft their questions.

Hannah Masters (BFA 2020) asked, "What makes an artist a genius?"

"Yelp. Or, like, Tripadvisor," Simon quipped.

Hannah continued, "You see that word 'genius' pinned onto a lot of artists. It's just kinda funny."

"Yes — we think that these people are geniuses forever," Simon said. "Even if they drive into a tree, we still think of them as geniuses. There are people who argue that it's a fairy-tale. The 'genius' myth allows us to focus on one thing rather than seeing the complex reality of the whole." He paused, then asked, "Do you feel challenged by it, being here in art school?"

"When I was thinking about going to art school," Hannah said, "I was thinking about it more in technical terms — working with wood, or ceramics, or other materials. But being a genius is a whole different responsibility than the technical side. I don't even think of it as a responsibility for someone to need to take on. I feel like the canon of art history gives you pressure to be this type of creative."

"I think it's good to think about constantly," Simon said. "It will help you in the long run."

Arianna Michak (BFA 2021, Sculpture) asked,"What are your favorite philosophy subjects?"

"Truth and beauty," was Simon's response.

What are we making? And, more generally, what are we doing with our lives?

"What about them?" Hannah asked.

"What about them? Well, I have two questions about each. How are they connected? And how do we know that we've found them when we've found them?"

"Do you think it's subjective?" Hannah asked

"No. I don't," Simon said. "I think if it was subjective we wouldn't have an art museum across the road. I think that's proof of our collective belief in certain kinds of truth and certain kinds of beauty."

This suggested the collective desire for art, but many people's questions stemmed from the anxiety of producing it. What are we making? And, more generally, what are we doing with our lives?

Because of these questions, I asked Simon, "If you were to have people read philosophy to answer their questions today, who would be the philosopher to turn to?"

"Right now, I think that we live in a rather decadent era where our answers are more likely to be other questions than answers," Simon said. "I don't think that's necessarily helpful in all circumstances so I prefer, right now, to think of simpler questions, like, how can I be happy?"

He went on to name a philosopher, Epicurus, whose philosophy revolved around that question. Epicurus theorized that satisfaction, big or small — eating good food, finishing an essay — is its own pleasure. So, how can you be satisfied?

This response was helpful in answering the general, underlying concern everyone seemed to have over what exactly to do with themselves as artists, and also as humans. However, despite this simple answer, Simon did note that his own happiness "relies on adjusting my ideas to the present reality, if I can do that and still sleep at night."

Because, sometimes, the present reality sucks. This came up during a conversation with Ella Fainaru-Wada (BFA 2022) who asked, "Why are people mean?"

"Because they're people," Simon said. "In other words, people are mean because they are often regarding the world from different dimensions and they often protect their worlds through meanness. People are mean because we live together in the world." Ella seemed disheartened by this answer. Earlier, Evan Marnell (BFA 2022, Art Edu) had asked, "Why do people fall in love?" It was an interesting contrast to Ella's question. Because of this, Simon gave her two chocolates, one for meanness, and one for love.

Hearing my peers' concerns out loud, I realized I had similar concerns. What does it mean to be an artist? Why are people mean? Why do people fall in love? But despite having asked, I hadn't taken the time to try and answer any of them. Simon's responses provoked inquiry, rather than leaving unanswered questions to fester. Some answers left me with more questions, and some answers I didn't want to hear. But I came to the conclusion that, while we never reach satisfying answers, the important thing is to keep questioning, delving into this study of life.

Heather Giovale (BFA 2022) is a freshman in the writing department. She is eager to incorporate new disciplines into her practice.

Repurposing the Wheel

An interview with Olly Moore

by **Dustin Lowman**

In generating new counting systems — "languages," he calls them — Olly Moore (MFA 2020, VISCOM) is not trying to reinvent the wheel, but rather, to repurpose it. Since an extremely young age, Olly has interrogated the fundamental assumptions of numbers, and counting, and examining the ways in which they influence people's thinking. For example, he connects our method of reading numbers from the largest number to the smallest (568, for example, starts with "five hundred," and concludes in "eight") to trickle-down economics, the idea that centering wealth on the upper crust first will eventually benefit members of lower social strata.

School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) Section Editor Dustin Lowman recently visited Moore in his studio to learn more about his motivations, his current projects, and how he hopes to apply his work beyond art school.

Dustin Lowman: Why don't you start by telling me how you got interested in counting systems?
Olly Moore: I was a really young kid, pre-elementary, and I would count the pages in books. So when I got to school, I was put in advanced math classes. But once they started trying to teach me how to multiply, I lost interest. I remember a moment when one of my teachers was trying to teach me double-digit multiplication. It was first or second grade. They explained the steps very clearly, and I understood what steps to take to get the answer, but I was trying to figure out how and why that happened. I got caught with why the numbers themselves were representing those concepts. Why the number seven, for example, meant the quantity of seven — the shape of the number, and also its sound.

DL: So that question got in the way of interest in multiplication, algebra, etc.?
OM: Yeah, the lack of an answer made it so I was uninterested in learning any math beyond simple counting. My work is still about simple counting. It's just really complex simple counting, different languages for it. There was a big break from that age until probably twenty-five or so. I studied art in my undergrad, and learned about constructing and composing works of art, which eventually led into a resurrection of my earlier work. I used a lot of that education to build these projects.

DL: So, you didn't have the express intention of applying your art degree this way?
OM: No, not at all. My intentions for studying art were rooted in this desire for freedom, to search for something new. Art encourages new ways of thinking, new discoveries. Exploration is a fundamental part of my work — conceptual exploration, abstract as opposed to geographic. In discovering a lot of this work I've recognized the importance of variety, of different ways of looking at things.

DL: You say "discovered" and not "come up with."
OM: Yeah. I think these exist in the world already. This ties in with exploration. I don't like to take credit for these things because we live in an ever-changing environment, and to claim ownership on parts of it separates us from it. Imposing, as opposed to witnessing has created a lot of problems.

DL: Is your overarching goal to discover something that people have overlooked about numbers or about counting?
OM: One of my goals is to connect these concepts with elementary education. I'm applying to speak at next year's National Council of Teachers of Mathematics conference. It's in Chicago, and it's a 100-year anniversary. If I'm able to get into it, I'll have a way into having this material become curriculum for children. I'm imagining me as a kid. If I'd had this way of learning numbers, being able to play with them, I would've really benefitted. Kids like to make up their own languages too, so if children can be given these languages, they might start building their own. Maybe kids can figure something out that adults couldn't even imagine.

DL: I think a huge strength of your work is its aesthetic power, that you've produced appealing images. Once viewers have the pleasure of seeing the patterns, they'll wonder what's at the root.
OM: A lot of the feedback I've gotten is people saying, "I look at these images, and I feel like there's something important in them." Whether or not they believe me and what I'm saying, they can still feel that the images themselves hold some sort of meaning.

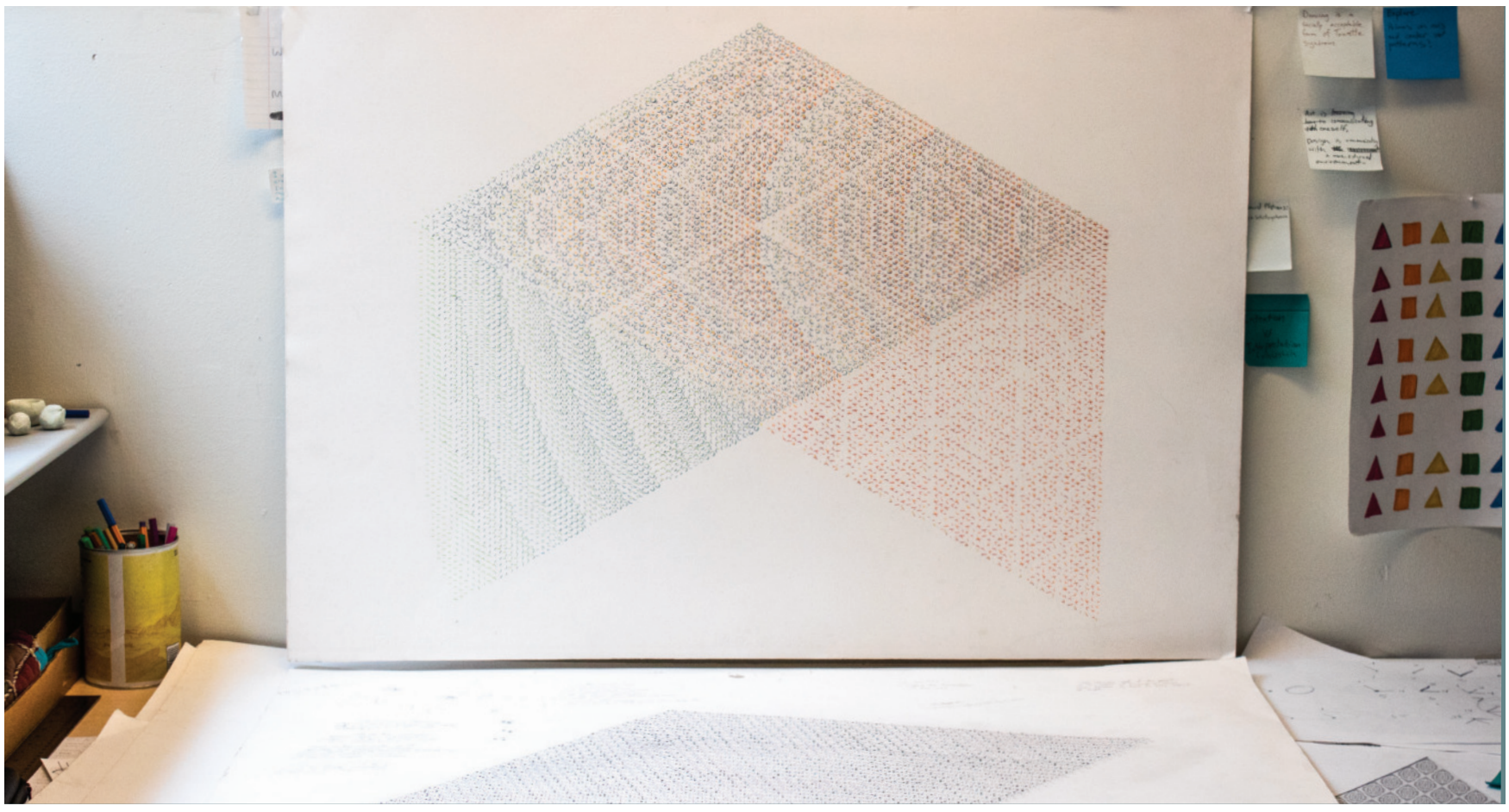
DL: Do you ever worry that someone would use it for evil?
OM: [laughs] Yeah, for sure. But I think the more diverse that the languages can become, the less likely they are to produce evil. I think it's when things get too one-sided that evil tends to come out.

DL: So is this your main project?
OM: This is the most current work. I would say this is my favorite language I've discovered.

DL: And you made all of these materials?
OM: Yeah, so now I'll explain how this works. The system I've been using is a center-out reading. So you start in the center and read spirally, and also fractally. For each mark, if it rotates, it doubles. So one rotated doubles to two, two to four, four to eight. Through all the combinations of these marks, you can create exactly sixty-three numbers, and none of them double.

DL: So each line rotating doubles, and each image rotating also doubles.
OM: Right. So you can image this one, which is seven, derived from four, two, and one. If the image itself rotates, you automatically know that it's related to the number seven, and it's doubled, so it makes fourteen.

DL: Whereas the numerals "7" and "14" don't have as clear a relationship?
OM: They have almost no relationship. If you rotate it again, you'll know that it's fourteen, doubled, which is twenty-eight. So you can see the relationship between the quantities, and between numbers in general.



Visual representations of Olly's languages, each of which took roughly 100 hours to produce. Photograph by John Lane.

Dustin Lowman (MFAW 2020) is the SAIC editor at F Newsmagazine. In 2020, he would like to see a cardigan elected president.

Survey Says: Politics

F Newsmagazine surveys the student body for insight on their voting habits

by **Dustin Lowman**

Every month, F Newsmagazine conducts surveys of the school community, seeking to learn what students think about prominent cultural topics. The second survey, conducted the first week of March 2019, focused on students' voting habits.

It's a historically divided time in U.S. politics. As F reported in a recent analysis of presidential approval rating statistics, Donald Trump's tepid-but-not-sensationally-bad rating — at the moment, 41.9% — is the result of an unprecedentedly polarized public. Outside a circle of like-minded peers, politics has become a subject you only broach if you're prepared to lose friends or get written out of wills.

Amidst all this, students' long-held reputation for representing the political left remains intact. A 2018 survey of America's college students done by the Panetta Institute for Public Policy found a majority (52%) of students self-identifying as Democrats, 25% as Republicans, and 23% as independents. Wondering about the extent to which the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) community follows suit, F asked about their political affiliations, voting habits, and thoughts on prospective presidential candidates. After collecting 60 responses — 49 from U.S. voters, 11 from non-U.S. voters — here are some significant findings.

Demographics

Of all 60 respondents, 22 responses came from freshmen, 11 from sophomores, 8 from juniors, 4 from seniors, 4 from first-year graduate students, 2 from second-year graduate students, 4 from staff/faculty, and 2 from alums. 38 identified as female, 16 as male, 4 as nonbinary, 1 as agender, and 1 as genderqueer. 29 identified as white/caucasian, 8 as Asian, 6 as black, 5 as hispanic, 2 as African American, 2 as Indian, 2 as Latina, and 1 each for Latino, Latinx, Jewish, Chinese, Russian, Native American, and Vietnamese (these results represent 5 students who listed multiple races/ethnicities). A majority of students (23) don't vote in Illinois, with 17 other states listed (11 didn't say).

Unsurprisingly, Democrats dominate

Of the 49 U.S.-voting respondents, an overwhelming 33 identified as Democrats, including roughly two-thirds of women, two-thirds of men, and all 3 nonbinary students. 7 reported no political affiliation, 3 declared independence, 2 allied with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), and 1 wrote in "Leftist." Only 1 respondent marked "Republican." The remaining 2 opted for more colorful responses: the decisive "not assholes," and the Captain Beefheart-influenced "Fast 'n' Bulbous."

Voter enthusiasm is (pretty) high

Rating how closely they follow politics on a scale of 1-5, 33 people marked either "3" or "4," 6 marked "5," and 5 each marked either "2" or "1." 29 said they always vote, 23 said sometimes, and only 6 said never. 22 voters participate in local, midterm, and presidential elections (with even distribution across graduation years), 6 in only presidential elections, and 6 in only non-presidential elections. Oddly, 9 who said "sometimes" also said they vote in all three of those election categories, and 2 who said "never" vote in 2 of them, calling into question the veracity of self-reporting.

Single most important issue: Climate Change

With 18 total issues mentioned, Climate Change/Environmental Issues topped the list with 15 mentions, including 11 undergrads, 2 grads, and 1 staff member (1 did not list a year). Healthcare came in second, with 13 mentions — notably, all 4 first-year grad students mentioned healthcare, while only 7 total undergrads mentioned it, which is a disproportionate result, given the 45-to-4 ratio of undergrads to first-year grads. Education came next with 10, followed by Civil/Human Rights with 7. A combined 20 students listed Civil/Human Rights, Immigrants' Rights, Women's Rights, LGBTQ+ Rights, and Workers' Rights.

Most popular presidential candidate: Bernie Sanders

While a majority of people (23) claimed no strong feelings about any single candidate, Bernie Sanders topped the list with 11 favorable mentions, including 7 undergrads, 1 grad, and both alums (1 did not list a year). Elizabeth Warren came in second with 4 positive mentions, Beto O'Rourke had 3, and Kamala Harris was neutralized with 1 positive and 1 negative mention. 9 students' main feeling was somehow anti-Trump, including the "Fast 'n' Bulbous" party member's sentiment, "bye bye orange boy."

Non-U.S. citizens' concerns about status

Asked how the result of the 2020 presidential election will impact them, 7 of 11 non-U.S. citizens reported concerns about their status in this country. 5 felt they would benefit from additional SAIC resources for international students, including how to contact their embassies, having international students speak on the importance of voting, and general information on how/when to vote.

Trust yourself

Respondents checked "I do independent research" a total of 44 times, "I consult friends/family" 26 times, and "I vote based on endorsements" only 8 times. None of the 8 checked only "endorsements," and 7 had checked all three. This means people trust themselves and their inner circles significantly more than people on the outside.

While 60 responses is not enough to make conclusive statements about the SAIC community, the results indicate a basic political uniformity. Only 1 respondent claimed to be right-of-center, and 5 unaffiliated people wrote in left-wing political issues in the free response section. Responses were usually proportional to the demographic breakdown, meaning political sentiments and voting habits are more or less shared across various groups. Curious about specifics? Check out the voter results on the F Newsmagazine website.

Political affiliation

among 49 U.S.-voting respondents

33	Democrats
1	Republican
7	None
8	Other

Most important issue

15	Climate Change
13	Healthcare
10	Education
20	Civil Rights

Presidential preference

11	Bernie Sanders
4	Elizabeth Warren
3	Beto O'Rourke

Basis for opinions

44	Independent Research
26	Friends & Family
8	Endorsements

Illustration by Catherine Cao

Dustin Lowman (MFAW 2020) is the SAIC editor at F Newsmagazine. In 2020, he would like to see a cardigan elected president.

Let There Be Lightfoot

The lowdown on Chicago's mayor-elect

by **Leo Smith**

In a historic runoff election on April 2, Chicago elected Lori Lightfoot as mayor. Chicago is now the largest U.S. city with a woman as mayor, and the largest city with an LGBT mayor. Lightfoot ran on a platform of change, promising major reform in police, schools, housing, and corruption. Lightfoot won all 50 Chicago wards, bringing in 74% of the vote, though at 33% voter turnout overall was low.

This year's municipal elections brought a fresh crop of young, grassroots-elected candidates from a network of community organizations. Lightfoot is, by comparison, less progressive than these other newly elected politicians. She is not endorsed by anti-police organizations like Black Lives Matter (BLM) or the Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100). Her governing experience comes from appointed positions in city and state government. Though she promises change from within, some progressives mistrust her policies and promises.

Illustration by Catherine Cao

Campaign Promises

Lightfoot's main experience with public office has been in police oversight bodies, including the Office of Professional Standards and the Chicago Police Board. As such, one of her primary campaign promises has been to reduce violence and reform the police department. Her priorities are increased accountability, more civilian oversight, and improved training. She promises to reduce gun violence in Chicago by treating it "as a public health crisis."

She also promises to fight corruption. According to a University of Illinois Chicago report released last year, "Chicago continues to be the most corrupt city in the country and Illinois continues to be the third most corrupt state." Lightfoot served as Chicago's federal prosecutor from 1996 to 2002, during which time she assisted in an FBI anti-corruption operation, Operation Silver Shovel, and helped convict corrupt alderman Virgil Jones.

Lightfoot condemns the Rahm Emanuel administration's closing of 50 neighborhood schools, and promises to establish Level 1/1+ elementary and high schools in every Chicago neighborhood. The Chicago district is the only Illinois school district with an appointed — not elected — school board. Lightfoot promises to create a "fully independent, elected school board."

Among her education plans is a proposal to raise taxes on hotels to increase grant funding for Chicago artists. In her announcement she said, "There should be no reason why artists are leaving Chicago to go to New York or L.A. ... We need to make sure that we create the environment here where they can thrive and feel like this can be their home."

Her other campaign promises include improved housing affordability, protecting immigrants from the Trump administration, supporting LGBT Chicagoans, and legalizing cannabis.

Professional History

From 1996–2002, Lightfoot worked as a federal prosecutor in Chicago. In 2002, she was appointed to Chicago's Office of Professional Standards (OPS), a Chicago Police Department (CPD) disciplinary body which would be later abolished for its ineffectiveness.

In her two years at the OPS, Lightfoot sided both with and against the CPD. In some cases, such as Officer Alvin Weems' shooting of Michael Pleasance, Lightfoot recommended firing the officer, calling it "cold-blooded murder." In the case of Officer Phyllis Clinkscales, however, Lightfoot went against the findings of her OPS investigations and ruled the shooting justified. During the 2019 mayoral campaign, she declined to comment on this case.

After a return to private legal practice, Lightfoot was appointed by Emanuel to head the Police Board, an oversight body, and the Police Accountability Task Force. Under her leadership, the task force compiled a report concluding that the CPD has a history of serious racial discrimination.

Lightfoot continued in her role as head of Police Board until 2018, when she began her mayoral campaign. The Police Board handles the CPD's most serious disciplinary cases and makes firing decisions. According to her campaign materials and the Chicago Tribune, firing rates doubled (from 37% to 72%) under Lightfoot. However, the number of cases brought before the Police Board dropped sharply during that time, skewing the statistics: The actual count during her tenure only rose from 19 officers fired to 21.

Future Questions

Chicago's mayor-elect has never held elected office before. As such, policy questions linger. Lightfoot has yet to release a comprehensive budget plan.

Her relationship with the Chicago City Council also remains uncertain. Political consultant Marilyn Katz told The New York Times, "None of them [the aldermen] owe their elections to Lori, and so for the first time in perhaps 55 years, you may see the emergence of the kind of Chicago city government that during that time has only existed on paper — a weak mayor/strong City Council government."

Next to the notably diverse, young, and independent new crowd of aldermen, Lightfoot looks less progressive. Maria Hadden, 38, unseated 28-year incumbent Joe Moore in their North Side district, to become the first openly LGBT black woman on City Council. Hadden has ties to Black Youth Project 100, an organization which has repeatedly criticized Lightfoot.

Anti-police activists like BYP100 and BLM have expressed their mistrust for Lightfoot's police policies. In 2016, BLM disrupted a Police Board meeting she was overseeing and rushed the stage. They maintain that as a former prosecutor, her stance remains too tough on black communities and too lenient on police officers.

Many LGBT groups have celebrated her election, but not all. Groups such as #StopLightfoot protested her despite her lesbian identity, saying: "Her stances on policing and rent control fall into a legacy of decades-old anti-gay and anti-trans political suppression."

Lightfoot promises change, backing it with her history as a self-proclaimed reformer. It remains to be seen whether her ideas will be enough to change the system she has worked in for so long.

Leo Smith (BFA 2021) is a staff writer with an English BA. Their vinyl collection consists of one (1) Tchaikovsky piano concerto.

THE VIOLENT PAST, THE VIOLENT PRESENT

Artist and educator Jefferson Pinder discusses his newest project, “This Is Not A Drill”

by **Luis López Levi**

After World War I, **decorated African-American soldiers returned to the United States to face Jim Crow laws. Discrimination was nothing new, but 1919 was a year when racial tensions were particularly high, culminating in multiple nationwide riots collectively known as the Red Summer.**

One of the largest riots happened in Chicago after July 27, 1919, when African-American teenager Eugene Williams crossed into the “white” side of the city while swimming in Lake Michigan. White men pelted him with stones. Eugene Williams drowned. The ensuing riots caused the deaths of 15 white people and 23 black people, as well as leaving 500 injured and 1,000 black families homeless after their houses were burned down.

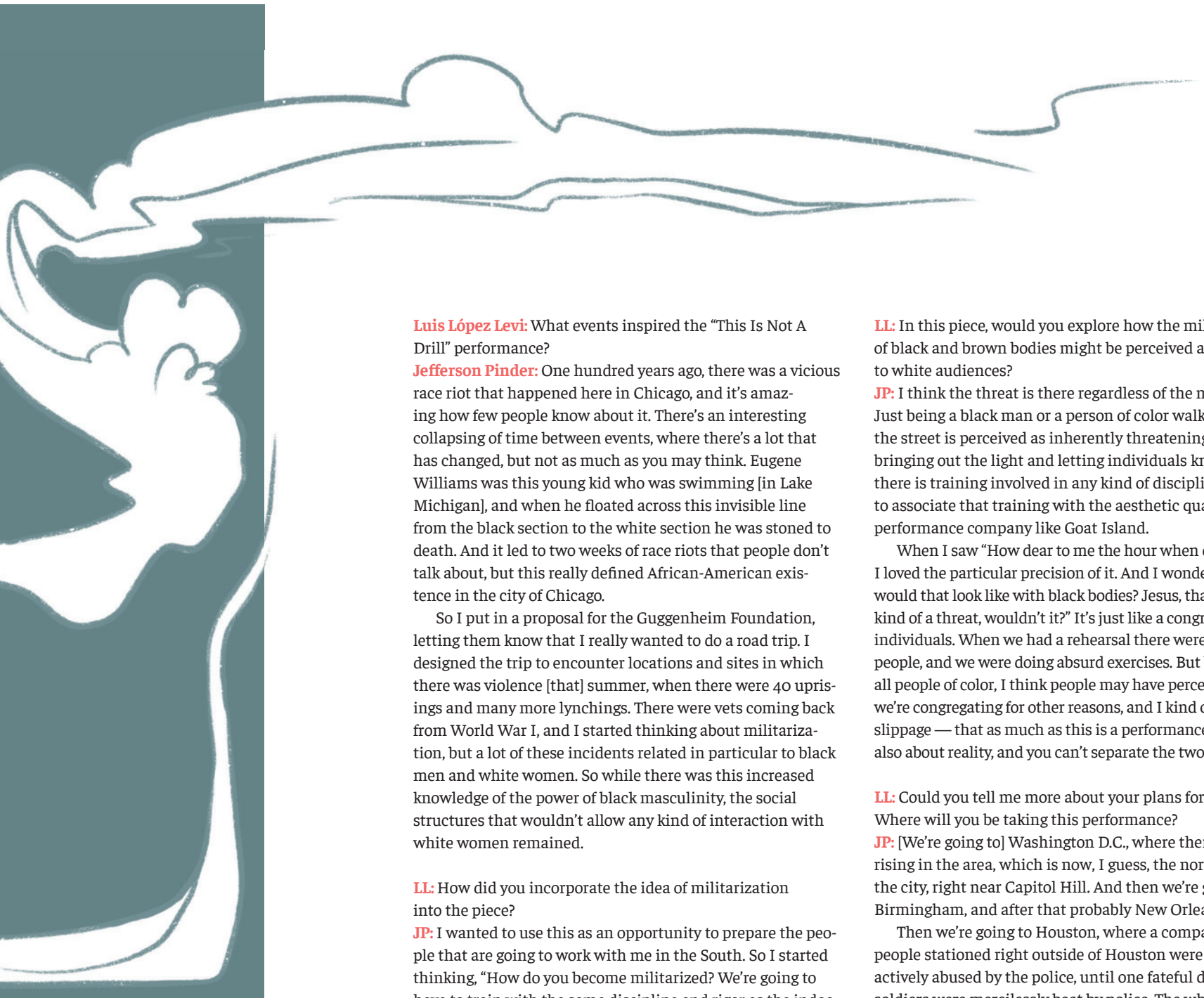
To commemorate the riots’ 100th anniversary, artist and School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) Sculpture Professor Jefferson Pinder will present a series of performances titled “This Is Not A Drill,” to be presented in various cities, mostly in the American South.

Pinder — who became a Guggenheim Fellowship Recipient in 2017 — focuses his interdisciplinary practice on performances, video work, and objects that respond to historical and cultural representation in the African-American experience. In his work, Pinder often explores the idea of working one’s body through exhaustion.

This idea will appear in the cycle’s initial piece, inspired by Chicago performance collective Goat Island’s 1996 work “How dear to me the hour when daylight dies,” which touched on themes such as violence, loss, and mourning with constant, physically demanding actions. Pinder’s first piece in the series — to be performed May 10 and 11 at the Chicago Cultural Center — delves into the militarization of black and brown bodies.

In an interview with F Newsmagazine, the artist explained his motivations behind this summer-long project. A Marine veteran himself, Pinder assembled a group of performers, including other veterans, to explore the creation of a militia as they revisit sites of historic racial conflict. The goal is to investigate how much — or how little — the situation in these places has changed.

Illustration by Catherine Cao



Luis López Levi: What events inspired the "This Is Not A Drill" performance?
Jefferson Pinder: One hundred years ago, there was a vicious race riot that happened here in Chicago, and it's amazing how few people know about it. There's an interesting collapsing of time between events, where there's a lot that has changed, but not as much as you may think. Eugene Williams was this young kid who was swimming [in Lake Michigan], and when he floated across this invisible line from the black section to the white section he was stoned to death. And it led to two weeks of race riots that people don't talk about, but this really defined African-American existence in the city of Chicago.

So I put in a proposal for the Guggenheim Foundation, letting them know that I really wanted to do a road trip. I designed the trip to encounter locations and sites in which there was violence [that] summer, when there were 40 uprisings and many more lynchings. There were vets coming back from World War I, and I started thinking about militarization, but a lot of these incidents related in particular to black men and white women. So while there was this increased knowledge of the power of black masculinity, the social structures that wouldn't allow any kind of interaction with white women remained.

LL: How did you incorporate the idea of militarization into the piece?
JP: I wanted to use this as an opportunity to prepare the people that are going to work with me in the South. So I started thinking, "How do you become militarized? We're going to have to train with the same discipline and rigor as the indoctrination process of any branch of the military."

So I started pulling in people. At first I thought it was awkward because there's a weird kind of nationalism that is sometimes associated with something like this. But actually, every major black militant movement was initiated by soldiers coming back from fighting and then having to deal with discrimination, with actual injustice, when it comes to race. In these moments, when [these soldiers] are trained, they're weaponized physically. They're taught particular things that become ingrained, and they're not easy to let go. So when you're under stress, you go back to your training.

And as much as I think the piece is going to have artistic merits, it's also about training a group of people for what to do when someone lays their hands on you. We're kind of venturing into this idea of what empowerment looks like, and how we can take this collective trauma and use it as motivation and inspiration to make something new.

LL: In this piece, would you explore how the militarization of black and brown bodies might be perceived as threatening to white audiences?
JP: I think the threat is there regardless of the militarization. Just being a black man or a person of color walking down the street is perceived as inherently threatening. We're just bringing out the light and letting individuals know that there is training involved in any kind of discipline, and trying to associate that training with the aesthetic qualities of a performance company like Goat Island.

When I saw "How dear to me the hour when daylight dies," I loved the particular precision of it. And I wondered, "What would that look like with black bodies? Jesus, that would be kind of a threat, wouldn't it?" It's just like a congregation of individuals. When we had a rehearsal there were six or seven people, and we were doing absurd exercises. But because we're all people of color, I think people may have perceptions that we're congregating for other reasons, and I kind of like that slippage — that as much as this is a performance piece, it's also about reality, and you can't separate the two.

LL: Could you tell me more about your plans for the summer? Where will you be taking this performance?
JP: [We're going to] Washington D.C., where there was an uprising in the area, which is now, I guess, the northwest part of the city, right near Capitol Hill. And then we're going down to Birmingham, and after that probably New Orleans.

Then we're going to Houston, where a company of army people stationed right outside of Houston were being actively abused by the police, until one fateful day when soldiers were mercilessly beat by police. The whole company took this four-mile march from Camp Logan into downtown Houston. They were going to go to the police station, and they never made it. That is probably the best example of a weaponized group of individuals that weren't going to be hindered or held back, but unfortunately it was tragic.

The last piece I'm going to do is going to be back here in Chicago. It's a piece called "Float," and it's going to happen on July 27 — the day Eugene Williams was killed. We're going to get as many different people out in the water and we're going to float in Lake Michigan. It's going to be a really quiet, meditative moment, a zen experience of getting over 100 people on flotation devices and putting them together.

Luis López Levi (NAJ 2020) is a former arts reporter, avid podcast listener, vinyl enthusiast, and lover of folk music from around the world. He never turns down free chips and guacamole.

Yasmin Belkhyr Verses the World

How the poet manifests her vast ambition

by **Darshita Jain**

Illustration by Ishita Dharap

In 2013, when Yasmin Belkhyr was winning poetry awards and publication opportunities, something did not feel right. The fellow poets in these publications and the magazines themselves were not publishing perspectives that she related to. She did not see youth poets or poets of color or women poets. In an impulsive move, she used a Tumblr post about wanting to start a publication of her own to build her team. Within a week, she had a full-fledged staff and over a hundred applications from poets.

Now, six years later, Yasmin Belkhyr is the founder and editor-in-chief of Winter Tangerine, Honeysuckle Press, and Dovesong Labs. A graphic design student in Massachusetts, she works freelance for the TED blog, produces bi-monthly issues of Winter Tangerine online, hosts live and online workshops, and facilitates internships, an annual award, and a fellowship program. She is the author of a book of poetry titled "Bone Light," published in 2017. She has not taken a vacation in four years, and every six months she has to stop using her computer or her hands get numb. She thinks it could be carpal tunnel syndrome. She is 22.

"All the work I do is online. I'm always on my laptop, doing one or the other kind of work. Responding to emails, reaching out to people, trying to figure out a grant — sometimes my eyes start watering and I have to stop. That's when I get up and make some tea," she tells me over the phone. She and I have had to reschedule this call thrice now even though we are always online. We are both stirring our versions of tea. Hers is Moroccan, which she finds difficult to make without all the original ingredients, but she claims to have found a recipe that makes her happy.

Born of a need to create a space that did not cater to white literary tastes, Winter Tangerine has been the go-to publication for writers of color, queer, and gender nonconforming writers for the last six years. What is interesting is that the publication doesn't market itself as one. Nor does it put out ads. Founded in 2013, Winter Tangerine has more than 10,000 subscribers.

I remember the first time I met Yasmin at Poet's House, an independent poetry library with more than 60,000 volumes in New York, which is also where the Winter Tangerine workshops happen. Yasmin was the first person I met at the door. I wouldn't have known her in a crowd. She blended in, smiling and giving coffee to everyone. She introduced herself as Yasmin — just Yasmin. If you didn't know Winter Tangerine and its history, she was easy to mistake as a fellow student.

This is a person whose resume reads like that of a poet twice her age. She has two jobs, one full-time school degree, and a publication to run. She has all the enthusiasm of a 22-year-old, but feels older than her age. She has years of experience in her backpack. She knows what she wants to be a part of, and what she absolutely does not. While sipping tea, we discussed travel, beaches, family, and the languages we speak. She speaks three: Darija, a Moroccan dialect, English, the language she thinks in, and a little bit of French. Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP) came up, because it is that time of the year. Yasmin says she is on a panel next year. Her plan is to go to her panel, buy some books and then hang out with her friends in her hotel room. Trying to do everything and attend everything, she says, "is a recipe for exhaustion."

She is preparing for two workshops on the Friday she and I finally get to speak. Feathered We Remember is an online workshop for women and femme identifying people which engages in the speculative. With magical realism and alternate realities being a huge part of Yasmin's own writing, she is excited to see how fantasy and truth intertwine in other people's lives. The Winter Tangerine staff is entirely online, all working from different parts of the world, so creating a syllabus for both the online and New York workshops is definitely a challenge. But that is where the community and collaboration processes come in. Having attended one myself, I knew the amount of work that might have gone into designing a syllabus that extracted such varied responses from one single prompt. And we were writing at least three poems every day.

She didn't want to add terms like "diversity" to the Winter Tangerine mission statement because diversity and inclusion are what Winter Tangerine was built on. "It was always a place for people traditionally on the outskirts, so it was never really a surprise for us that we are 'diverse.' That's who we are," she tells me. What Winter Tangerine does have in its catalogue is the term "disrupt." It does not tread lightly around trauma, invisibility, or erasure. The urgency and immediacy of work produced is never sugarcoated with a need to explain. The safeness of Winter Tangerine lies in the faith that the people building and entering this space are also people who understand and won't demand an explanation from the marginalized about their own pain.

> ***"I am sick of white men considering the worth of my work. I am not writing for them."***

"It's not radical. I think it should be the standard," Yasmin says. "I am thinking about what can we create that is not for white people, not considering the white taste. We are not centering a canon that has exploited us." Some other organizations centered around people of color are Cave Canem, representing African-American voices in publication, and Kundiman, for Asian-American writers.

For someone with one of those faces which is always smiling, Yasmin does not hesitate to talk about all the things wrong with her industry. "I am sick of white men considering the worth of my work. I am not writing for them. Their perspective, which has so heavily influenced the literary world, is no longer one that is needed. What is needed are the voices of women, of disabled people, of queer people, of people of color. What is needed is that which has been silenced for so long."

Publishing in the U.S. has always been a whitewashed industry, 79% of all published writers being white according to Publisher's Weekly and Lee and Low's Diversity Baseline Survey. In 2017, only two surveyed poetry publications published equal or more women writers: Granta (53.5%) and Poetry (50%) . 73% of poetry published by women in 2014, though, came from white-identifying women. From educational qualifications to application and reading fees, published work overwhelmingly comes from people who can afford to be part of the process. It creates an unevenness, leading one to wonder whose stories hold more value. "It's just a strange and unfair practice that I think really should be abolished. I can't afford a $40 reading fee!" Yasmin says.

When starting Winter Tangerine, another intentional decision was to be a publication that doesn't charge any reading or application fees. Their poetry workshops also have scholarship and financial aid options. "The day I hear a good reason for reading fees to exist that I agree with, or makes sense to me, I'll hop on that ship, but right now I am just baffled by the fact that there is this practice in the world — especially organizations that have money charging fees to emerging writers," Yasmin tells me.

The internet has clearly helped in democratization of contemporary poetry. #PoetryTwitter is a place where writers talk openly about financial concerns, including reading fees, freelance fees, and editing fees. Emerging writers are being championed by somewhat established writers who are in open dialogue with each other. Writing has become more real; it is not isolated in your own room anymore.

Winter Tangerine, too, exists entirely online. Yasmin cannot picture a WT office space, but it used to be the dream, when Winter Tangerine was the physical Winter Tangerine Review. The printing, designing and publication channels allowed for around 1,000 people in and around New York City to access the issues. But the online version, she says, is an alternative model, which allows people who are reading and working for the magazine to live full lives and yet be able to access it. Everyone works online on an honorarium basis, including Yasmin. Grants, private funding, and money from workshops and book sales allow for tiny honorariums end of every year. "I'm not sure a physical space is right for us," she says. "I just want to be able to pay people and pay them fully. An office isn't on the list."

In a wish-granting-factory universe, she wishes for Winter Tangerine to be fully funded, to be able to pay her staff fairly, offer workshops for free, and offer other kinds of programming. For her own life she just wants to work, have fun, get some time to read more YA books, watch movies with her friends, go to the beach, and hang out with her family.

"I just really want to be able to do the work I want to do, with Winter Tangerine and also with all other parts of my life — work on a variety of projects in different mediums and still have the ability to not get burnt out — find a balance," she says. "That's the goal. I think it's really hard when you don't have a trust fund."

Darshita Jain (MANAJ 2020, INFP) calls herself quixotic. On most days she oscillates between being the human version of the exclamation mark and a question mark.

Jafa's Guiding Light

A review of Arthur Jafa's incisive video and the show that happens to be set up around it

by **Leah Gallant**

"Prisoner of Love," at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (MCA) through October 2019, is structured around the recent acquisition of a single piece. Arthur Jafa's film "Love Is The Message, The Message Is Death" is the guiding light by which other works from the museum's permanent collection are illumined. Jafa, the artist and filmmaker, is finally getting the Vermeer treatment: There are other artworks, but "Love Is The Message" is basically a one-piece show.

Jafa is deserving of this treatment. "Love Is The Message, The Message Is Death" is a lucid, searing, seven-minute vision of America. Set to Kanye West's haunting "Ultralight Beam," an onslaught of video clips ranging from the pixelated and water-marked to flashes of works by contemporary artists, shows a multiverse of black Americans both known and anonymous. There's Obama on C-SPAN singing "Praise" at the podium of Methodist University; there's the unarmed Walter Scott being shot in the back. There's a young boy slapping his mother in the face and screaming, "Wake up! Wake up!" There's Angela Davis and Beyoncé and revellers grinding at a dark party. "This is a God dream," the chorus sings, then, "You can never go too far when you can't come back home again." The film cuts from a policeman tackling a young bikini-clad woman onto a green lawn to a molten sun. What kind of home is this? James Brown crumples onto the stage. What kind of promised land?

But Jafa is neither celebratory nor mournful. "Love Is The Message" passes through time and emotional tenor like an all-seeing eye. He concentrates the vast archive of black life on film — via news clip, YouTube upload, surveillance footage, and music video — in all its irreducibility.

Outside of the screening room, however, the exhibition takes a different tone. It consists of a seemingly random assortment of big-name artworks from the MCA's permanent collection, one per cherry-picked artist, ranging from Bruce Nauman to Kerry James Marshall. Over the course of its three-month run, these works will be rotated with others from the collection. But the show is weighted so heavily by the majesty of "Love Is The Message" that they feel like afterthoughts, which is saying something for an exhibition that includes David Hammons, Lynda Benglis, and Doris Salcedo. The wall texts attempt to impose some order by suggesting broad themes that the artists do not themselves invoke. "Treating the themes of life and death as mysteries, tragedies, and celebrations, the artists reflect upon a cycle that inevitably touches each one of us," reads one. With the vaguely humanist tone of a Waldorf teacher, they risk flattening the expansiveness of individual works into a how-to manual for a more just world.

Can art stand still without being asked to perform its usefulness?

In places the show feels particularly contrived, as with the corner earmarked for quiet contemplation, beside a David Hammons sculpture that incorporates two gold-leafed Thai buddhas. The only difference from the rest of the gallery seems to be the addition of one more standard black museum bench than usual (how does Hammons feel about being parked in the contemplation corner?). Beside it, visitors are invited to write their responses to the show on small squares of black paper that they can affix to a large board. (Notes I read on my visit run the expected gamut of any public writing exercise, from "Brown Lives Matter" and "Silence Will Not End Hate — Speak" to "Danielle Was Here" and "Contemporary Art Is Like Religion, I Don't Really Understand It, But It's Cool.")

Some artworks seem to be tasked with filling out a diversity quota for the show, rather than included for their synchronicity. Catherine Opie's enormous photograph of an empty chair, an homage to Australian performance artist and fashion designer Leigh Bowery, who died at age 33 of AIDS-related causes, ticks off the queer box. Other selections betray the show's unflagging wholesomeness. It's not surprising that the Edgar Arceneaux piece, for example, is a demure mirrored work, and not, say, his unsettling and brilliant "Until, Until, Until" (2016), which deals with Ben Vereen's blackface performance at Reagan's inaugural ball.

If there is an intentional gesture here, it is to value and welcome viewers' responses so much that the feedback wall is not tucked just outside the gallery, but in the gallery itself, among the artwork. There is a legible effort to crack open the space of the museum, to make contemporary art not just accessible but actively welcoming. Although it sits awkwardly within this show, I support this reorientation of a museum's purpose. But Jafa's video, like much of the other work in "Prisoner of Love," is much more expansive and unwieldy than a sound bite or a slogan, and that's what makes it a masterpiece. It cannot be explained. "Love Is The Message" carries no message but itself.

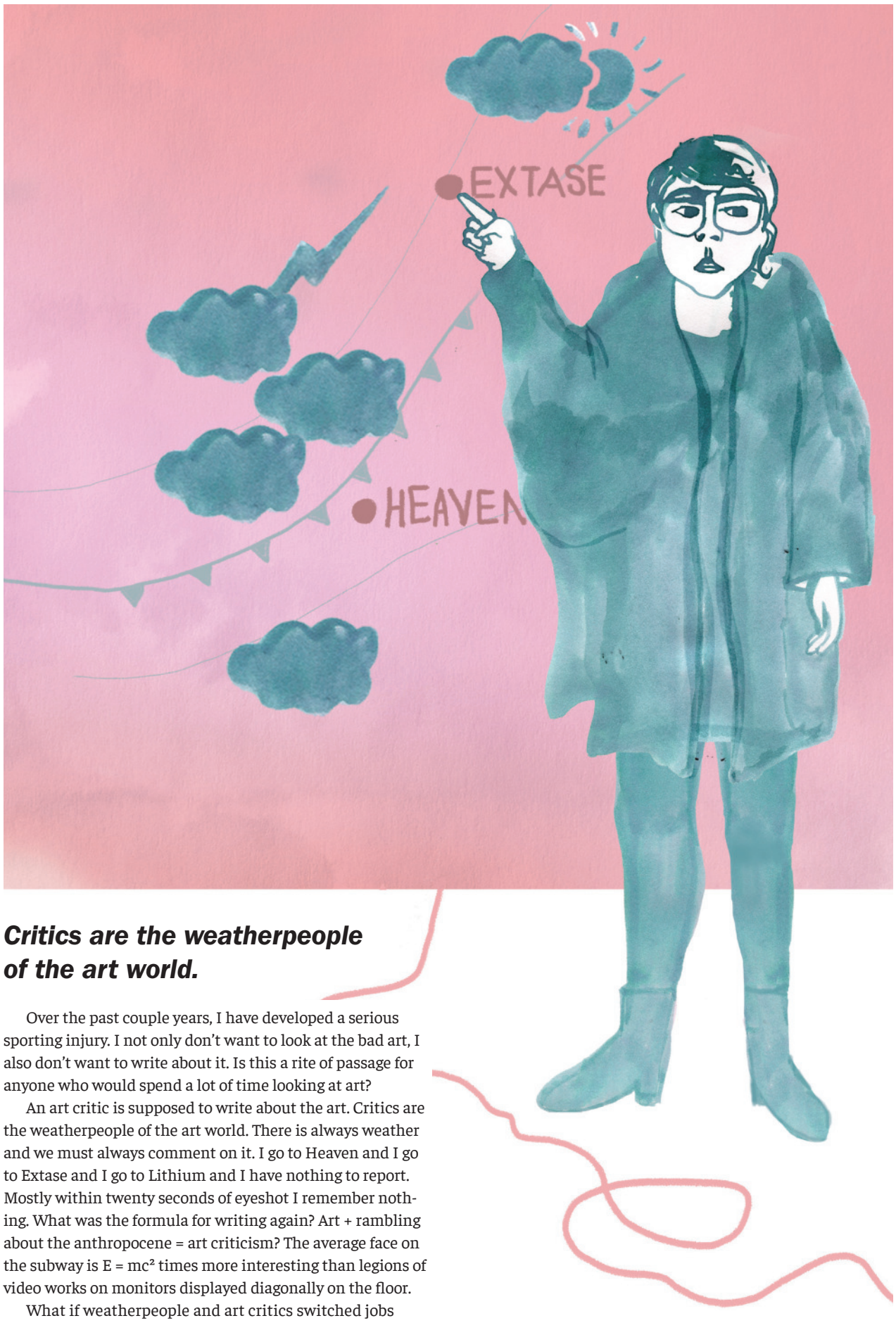
Installation view, "Prisoner of Love." Work shown: Arthur Jafa, "Love Is The Message, The Message Is Death," 2016. Image courtesy of the MCA Chicago.

Leah Gallant (NAJ 2020) is the Arts editor at F Newsmagazine. Like Brad Pitt, she is mostly made of water.

Windchill Factor

Some proposals for art critic Ruslana Lichtzier

by **Leah Gallant**



This is the second in a series of letters to art critics. The first, which was to the late John Berger, was published in November 2018 on F Newsmagazine's website.

Dear Ruslana,

Sometime in September, I tore your piece "Partial Aphasia" out of the Art EXPO-funded art publication THE SEEN and put it in my coat pocket. I wanted to write you this letter in response, but I didn't want to lug the whole SEEN around. Naturally, I lost "Partial Aphasia." As the weather grew blousier, this process repeated itself several times: I tore "Partial Aphasia" from a copy at the top of a stack of SEEN, left it in a pocket, and never saw it again.

I began to write you from the polar vortex and now it's spring.

In "Partial Aphasia," you describe the process of writing about art. You write in a way that is not high on the fumes of the self-reflexivity of this action, but thinking with heart about the role of art criticism as a stepping-stone or a brackish swamp between the artwork and its viewers. It serves some intermediary function between the looker and the thing looked at. But what does it do, and how?

"Art and. . . ," you write, is the formula that art writers follow. They must always put art alongside something big and important to prove its relevance: Social Justice, for example, or Politics. The text's job is to provide art historical context, but it's also to summon some broad-shouldered, square-jawed discipline on which (the artist claims) the artwork depends, some flint-eyed discipline from which the art dangles like the babe in an 80s romance novel cover. Certain social theorists are a safe bet, as is ethnography, and, better yet, autoethnography (only in the art world does ethnography get to be really, really trendy).

This easy reliance on other disciplines applies to everyone floating around in the art world: to artists when they dredge together their statements, to curators in their wall texts; to art writers, that sodden clump formerly known as art critics, who now cower under the more mild-mannered moniker of "art writers." There is some difference between art writing and art criticism, which is that one has agreed to play nice. Art writing is criticism defanged.

And you don't care for the easy formula of "art and. . . ." because it relies on some other external thing to rationalize its being. You want the molten core of the artwork and do not know how to get it out for someone else. Isn't that what the experience of writing about art is about? Like trying to get a walnut's meat from its shell? But there is no haveable meat, or the meat is not haveable like that.

What you are describing is both good art and the problem of writing about good art. But this reaction has become increasingly rare for me. The most teeth-chattering experience I have had in a while at a museum was last summer's Thomas Bayrle show at the New Museum.

So what about the critic's responsibility to bad art, or art that is simultaneously very boring and very bad, like shoals of men from a dating app?

Critics are the weatherpeople of the art world.

Over the past couple years, I have developed a serious sporting injury. I not only don't want to look at the bad art, I also don't want to write about it. Is this a rite of passage for anyone who would spend a lot of time looking at art?

An art critic is supposed to write about the art. Critics are the weatherpeople of the art world. There is always weather and we must always comment on it. I go to Heaven and I go to Extase and I go to Lithium and I have nothing to report. Mostly within twenty seconds of eyeshot I remember nothing. What was the formula for writing again? Art + rambling about the anthropocene = art criticism? The average face on the subway is $E = mc^2$ times more interesting than legions of video works on monitors displayed diagonally on the floor.

What if weatherpeople and art critics switched jobs for a while?

I think of the artist Lenka Clayton standing outside in a blizzard in Berlin, painting the snow onto a secondhand landscape painting. I had no sensory experience of Rhona Hoffman or Baby Blue or LVL3 other than trying to warm my toes by the space-heater. All I feel when I go to the openings is industrial-strength ennui, and even this has been thoroughly picked clean by several decades of autofiction writers. The weariness is omnipresent in Lynn Tillman's "Madame Realism" stories, but I don't want to read an experience I'm already trying to escape. And that isn't really art criticism, it's the ever-expanding field of "art-adjacent writing."

Art should not be "treated as a proverbial doormat to such ruminations," you write.

But if the art is really dull, I think the adjacent approach is the only way to make something worth reading. I know that I have really nothing to say about Sarah Lucas other than that she is truly the equal of Jeff Koons, and that the only way I could find anything to write about her work would be to get as far away from it as possible.

I think it departs from art criticism, which is tightly moored to the art itself, and becomes something else. But those ruminations (depending on the specific ruminator) can be very fine indeed. Like the scene of an art viewer weeping in Ben Lerner's "Leaving the Atocha Station." Lerner's other novel, "10:04" — whose title refers to the clip of Back to the Future from Christian Marclay's 24-hour montage film "The Clock" — can be considered one very autonomous catalogue essay.

Writing is an alchemical process. In this respect it is like any other art. You can start off with a sausage and end up with a book about them, or, if you are Dieter Roth, you can start off with a book and end up with a sausage.

You end with an ultimatum. "I am done with writing; of authoring with false conviction. The one thing I will write about now, is my experience," you say.

What is this new art writing you propose? Have you, since the publication of "Partial Aphasia," conjured anything that illustrates what you mean? Or was this the sort of text, that, like the most convincing manifestos, burnt itself on its own pyre?

Site-specific fashion + digital flaneurship + Žižek = Sincerely, Leah

Illustration by Ishita Dharap

Leah Gallant (NAJ 2020) is the Arts editor at F Newsmagazine. Like Brad Pitt, she is mostly made of water.

Schrödinger's Groundhog Sounding Schrödinger's

The metaphysics of "Russian Doll"

by **Leo Smith**

Quantum physics gives rise to many insane possibilities. Most of us are familiar with Schrödinger's cat, the famous quantum thought experiment where a cat is both alive and dead until you observe it. But what if, instead of observing the cat, you were the cat?

This is the position in which Nadia (Natasha Lyonne) finds herself in "Russian Doll," Netflix's fantastically metaphysical and heartfelt new sci-fi dramedy. At first glance, it may appear to be a stylish "Groundhog Day" update: Nadia and Alan (Charlie Barnett) are trapped in a bad day, living and dying over and over. But "Russian Doll" takes the time loop concept to a new level by exploring its science fiction underpinnings. Instead of a loop, Nadia and Alan are trapped in a thought experiment called quantum immortality.

This experiment poses fascinating metaphysical questions, which the show answers brilliantly. What is quantum immortality, and how does "Russian Doll" apply the idea?

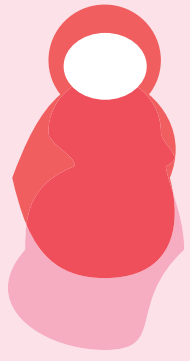
A little quantum background: One controversial consequence of quantum theory is that the state of a subatomic particle changes when observed. Until observed, a particle is in all possible states at once.

Obviously, this goes against conventional logic. How can a thing be in multiple states? How can the laws of physics depend on the intercession of a conscious observer?

Erwin Schrödinger objected, which is why he devised his now-famous thought experiment. Until observed, Schrödinger's cat is both alive and dead.

There are a few obvious questions that arise from this (besides "What's the number for the local chapter of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals?"). One I always had was, isn't the cat observing itself? We might not know if it's alive, but the cat certainly will. What state will the cat experience, or, in this case, will Nadia experience?

She could experience one of two things. One is the Copenhagen interpretation, which involves statistics, analysis, and other things not conducive to punchy TV dialogue. But the second solution is the multiverse theory. Rather than two contradictory possibilities coexisting inside one universe (or box), what if, instead, two universes branched out — one for each outcome?



In one universe, Nadia dies. Her experience ceases, so she does not experience this universe. But in the other universe, she lives. In fact, in her subjective experience, she keeps on living indefinitely. This is quantum immortality. If every death is a 50/50 shot, it generates versions of you that go on living, potentially forever.

Here is where "Russian Doll" deviates from quantum immortality. Rather than immortality, Alan and Nadia remember the many universes in which they die. Some of those causes of death include stairs, open trapdoors, stairs, electrocution, stairs, falling air conditioners, stairs, bees, and also stairs. And because Nadia and Alan share a timeline, no matter their causes of death, they always die at the same instant.

This is the grim paradox from which they must escape. Not only does the show present a multiverse model, but it also presents a moral multiverse — one where they are punished for making the "wrong" choice. "We didn't help each other," Alan says in "The Way Out."

And the right choice, in a 2019 TV series, is to help one another. To connect in a lonely world.

This solution is morally aligned with shows like "The Good Place," "The OA," or "Maniac," another recent Netflix series that has a similar central relationship to "Russian Doll." (The central relationship is handled far more convincingly and tenderly in "Russian Doll," in my opinion.) This moral pop philosophy — we must help one another, we must connect — is a trend worth noting in an age that thinkpiece writers are quick to call cold and distant.

This series also teaches us something as artists: the value of reading outside your discipline.

Another philosophical question the show raises is the continuity of identity. In the finale, we are left with only two timelines: one where Nadia remembers the ordeal, and one where Alan remembers it. Do the more than 15 variations they recall living out still exist, or not? (This is similar to the identity dilemmas of cloning.) And which one, in the last two, "is" Nadia? Which one "is" Alan? The one changed by their experience, or the one who forgets it?

This series also teaches us something as artists: the value of reading outside of your discipline. We can search for artistic ideas in places far removed from our art studies — places like science, philosophy, and theoretical physics. If you look at Leonardo da Vinci's notebooks, in between the sketches are endless lists of scientific queries: how geese's feet work, how to square a triangle, how hydraulic repairs are made. This intellectual curiosity that reaches beyond the art world is something we should emulate.

In some ways, disciplines like science or philosophy are more concrete than art, but in other ways they are more alive with possibility. If we understand these frameworks, we can do things like spin quantum physics into a story about love and recovery. "Russian Doll" is not precisely "accurate" to quantum immortality, but it negotiates between logic and character in the way only art can. It demonstrates the human capacity common to both art and science: the capacity to imagine infinite possibilities.

Illustration by Catherine Cao

Leo Smith (BFA 2021) is a staff writer with an English BA. Their vinyl collection consists of one (1) Tchaikovsky piano concerto.

COMEDY CRASH COURSE

An interview with Damon Royster

by **Dustin Lowman**

It's 9:15 p.m. on a Sunday, and I'm in a sparsely populated bar on iO Theater's second level. At a high-top table by the window I study a lengthy list of questions I prepared for Damon Royster, comedy writer, performer, and teacher. I love comedy. I want to get it right.

I took Royster's Level A (out of a possible E) improv class at Second City. Watching him conduct the class was itself a crash course in comedy; everything about him, from the things he said to the body language he used, was funny. It was the first time I'd seen a comedian up close, the first time I could see the gap between your average funny person and a person for whom comedy is their livelihood.

Royster's got convictions. In class, and during the interview, he was unafraid to criticize shows and fellow performers. All practitioners have field-specific preferences, but Royster seemed especially willing to share his. To me that meant an opportunity to ask the questions I've always wanted to ask practicing comedians.

Royster performs all over the Chicago North Side. He can be seen playing with the iO Harold Team Comet, his indie team Regular Girl, The Bar at CIC Theater, and the LGBT improv team Baby Wine at the Annoyance. He was a recipient of the 2017 Bob Curry Fellowship at The Second City. He also teaches beginner improv and writing at The Second City, as well as improv at the iO Theater. Writing credits include: "Love, Factually," a Christmas parody at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

Dustin Lowman: Do you do comedy full-time?
Damon Royster: No. It's getting close. I have a part-time legal assistant job at a law firm. It's about 30 hours a week. It's not super fun. But I had a corporate job last year, from which I was fired ... unfairly. I like this job better. I like being in an office where someone can just yell out "Fuck!" real loud. Because it's not corporate, we can all speak more freely, instead of the fake chipperness at a corporate job. It's harder to be real in a corporate environment. Also, at that corporate job, I didn't tell them I did comedy. I worked there for three years, and they slowly figured it out. I was so quiet that people just started asking, "So what do you do?" Sometimes I'd take off for an audition or something, and I'd have to tell them. They were just floored.

DL: Is the structure of your life representative of other performers and teachers at Second City?
DR: Yeah, we pretty much all have a day gig. The dream is this, to have a part-time job, and then do comedy at night, because a full-time job plus comedy will kill you. I don't know how I survived 2017. Did not sleep much, but I did a lot. Most, if not all of us, have jobs, but it's a lot of baristas, nannies, bartenders, waiters.

DL: At what point can people start paying their bills purely with comedy?
DR: Sadly, I don't think they can in Chicago.

DL: Not even the Mainstage people?
DR: With that, the pay you get is good, but it's not forever. You've gotta remember that those performers are always being evaluated to see if they're needed for the next Mainstage show. So there's always the feeling that it's a temporary thing, not something you can rely on. There's a lot of turnover. Each show is only a year-long commitment, and then they start writing the next one. But the Mainstage is the paying gig, so once you get that you can start auditioning for commercials and setting up meetings in L.A. and New York for when you move.

DL: What's your ideal next step? Saturday Night Live?
DR: I would love to write for "SNL." I definitely don't want to be in the cast. I'm a very controlling person. My first few improv classes I was very much controlling the scenes, trying to take them in the direction I thought they should go. In writing you just naturally do that. I'm learning to collaborate more and say "yes" to other people, which was not easy for me. I'm learning to let go of control a little bit
.
DL: Are you more critical than your peers?
DR: Yes. Easily. I don't think I'm the most, but I'm definitely one of the most critical. It's kind of pompous of me,

Illustration by Shannon Lewis

admittedly. But one reason I wanted to get into teaching is that I was tired of seeing people get up onstage, in improv especially, just throwing spaghetti against the wall, hoping it made art. I think that by putting myself in a classroom setting and giving guidance, even the tiniest bit might help turn the tide, especially with choices I used to think were right but I now know aren't.

DL: What separates a good choice from a bad choice?
DR: There's the basic stuff like not saying no — not denying your partner. I just gave notes on this. The scene was very weird, two people were talking in the shower in a gym, then two more people came in and said, "It's time for our two o'clock meeting in the shower!" and the other two said, "We don't do that here, you're in the wrong place." That completely shut down the scene. The audience got so quiet. They didn't know what to believe. It's all made-up, so when you deny anybody, it makes the audience question what you're doing. So, obviously, don't deny stuff. Also, if you choose to do a more grounded, realistic scene, you're never gonna hear an audience member say, "Man, I wish they were pirates," or, "I wish they had been in space." To that point, if you play a pirate, or a spaceman, no one's ever gonna say, "Man, do you remember that complicated plot they had? I remember every detail!" They're gonna remember how you played your pirate, what the relationship was. Or a single funny thing. They remember that more than crazy, extraneous details in the scene.

DL: Has your taste changed over the years?
DR: No. That's a cool thing I learned from a writing teacher here named Michael McCarthy. He's written for "Sesame Street," "SNL," "Mike and Molly." He used to tell his students, "You just have to wait for your talent to catch up with your taste," because your taste is always right. The stuff you like is always the correct thing that you like, but you need to wait a minute for your abilities to get up to the high standards you set for yourself. That's a hard thing to say to a class, because it sounds like you're saying, "You're not talented." I would never say that to a Level A class, but I think about it when I see people who are frustrated. You just need to wait for your abilities to get to where your head's at.

DL: Do you get impatient thinking about career objectives?
DR: I do. I do a lot. Especially recently, I'm seeing a lot of people garner success. There's one guy I did two sketch shows with at Second City, and he's now written for "Big Mouth," "American Vandal," and he recently got hired as a correspondent for "The Daily Show." His name is Jaboukie Young-White. He's great, but he's also 23, and I'm like, "Oh no, I'm 30, what am I doing?" So that can be frustrating. I wish him luck, because he's very talented. He deserves everything he has. I try to remind myself of the rule of keeping your eyes on your own paper, remembering that other people's success is not my failure. That's something I have to remind myself at least once a year — well, once a month.

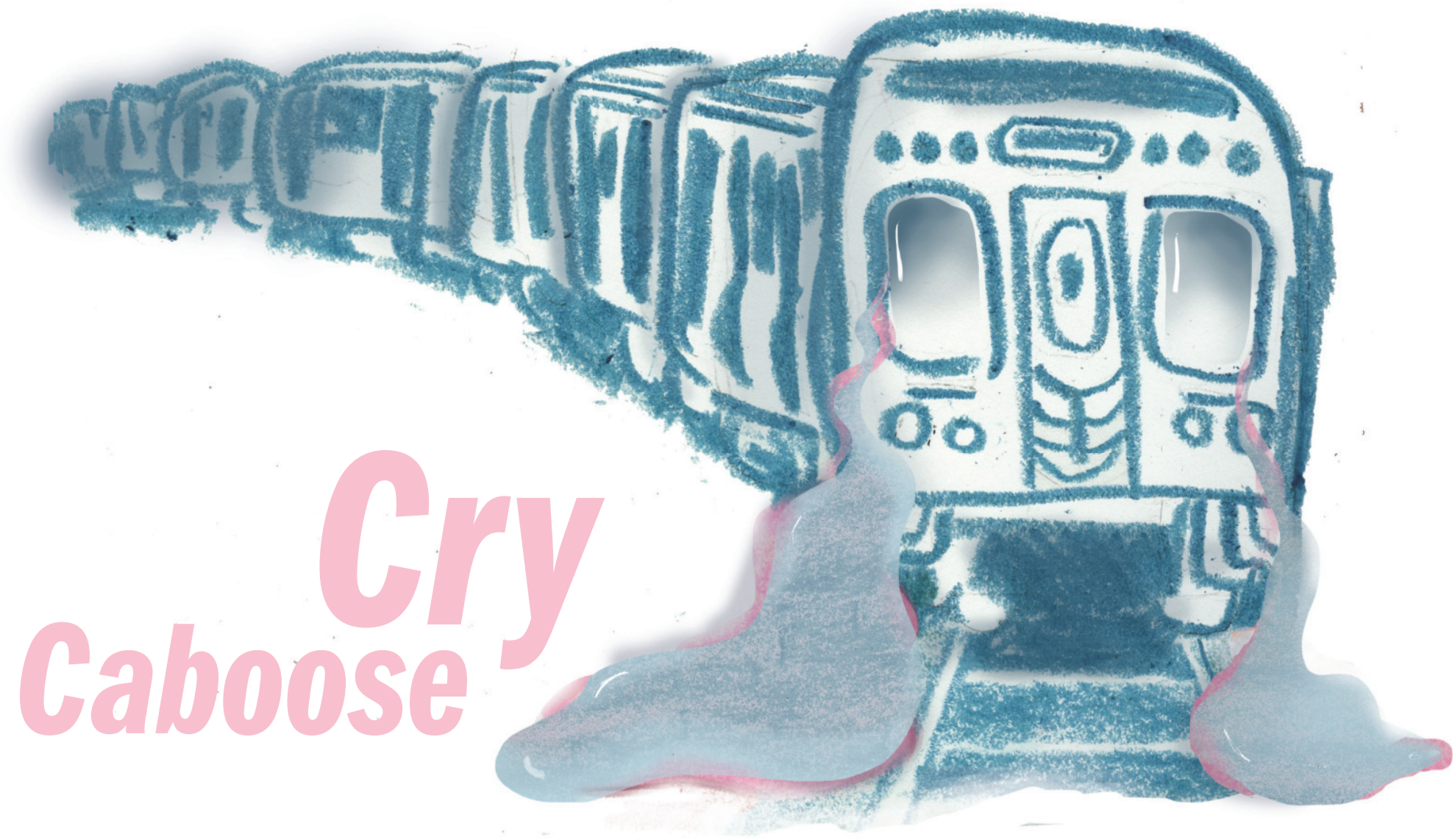
DL: Do you feel pressure to make your comedy political?
DR: No. A lot people, especially a lot of young people, think they need to infuse their comedy with their stance on the world. That's not my feeling.

DL: Do you think you're in the minority, having that opinion?
DR: I think I am. Especially the times we're in now. In the Bush era, I probably would want to do more political comedy. That was poking fun at something that was still trying to be serious. Everything we're in right now is a total joke. In a recent "SNL," the cold open was Kanye West in the White House with Donald Trump. But that's what actually happened. In the Bush era, that would be a fun joke, like, "Oh, what rapper would show up in President Bush's office? Let's watch!" I think for this moment in time now, I don't feel the need to go political. As for social commentary, I'm a gay man, and I do talk a lot in my writing about that, and about how the world feels about the gay community.

DL: What about political correctness? Do you think excessive focus on political correctness blunts comedy?
DR: I think it does a little bit. I do think we are a little too careful with each other. I do miss that era where ... there was a "Chappelle Show" sketch where there's a white family with the n-word last name, and he just did it, but it's weird because that stuff leads to Trump voters feeling like they can say whatever they want, which leads to Charlottesville. It's hard. I don't like how careful we are, but I do think because we weren't careful in the mid-2000s, people think they can say whatever they want now. Political correctness limits what people who aren't a part of that particular group can talk about, so I think the solution is to hire more diverse voices. I would be more comfortable if there were more black writers writing about black stuff, or more gay/queer people writing about queer stuff. That's what we need to help fix it. I love Matt Parker and Trey Stone, but they're still two white men, tackling all these issues. I think it's still two of them, plus Bill Hader sometimes. It's about bringing in the right writers.

DL: In Chicago, do you feel that comedy is a haven for diversity?
DR: No, it's weird thing I've been dealing with. There is a growing pocket of POCs, and they are very vocal about getting their voices heard onstage. I am still performing with majority white people. Sometimes I feel — do you know the term "Uncle Tom?" Sometimes I wonder if I'm seen that way. I know I'm not that, but I worry other people will see me that way. I grew up in an area that was predominantly white, in the Chicago suburbs, and I genuinely find what might be considered "white humor" funny. "Mystery Science Theater 3000," not a lot of black guys watch that show. Black nerds, yes. It's fun for me, because I can go back and forth. I love "The Boondocks," which was a very black show, and I get that humor, but I can also understand "Friends" and "Seinfeld" being funny as well. For me it's fun, I get to laugh at everything. Sometimes I think POCs feel like they have to like only one type of thing, to make sure their point is heard. I would love if everyone would just come together a little bit more. In the end, funny is funny. I think I can be funny to a variety of people, and I don't really do — especially in my improv — anything specific to my race or my orientation. I try to do something human. Whenever I perform, I try to make sure I'm doing something that's relatable to everyone.

Dustin Lowman (MFAW 2020) is the SAIC editor at F Newsmagazine. In 2020, he would like to see a cardigan elected president.



Caboose Cry

An ode to crying on the train

by **Cat Strain**

My second semester of graduate school, I left my evening class and took the Red Line to Wilson. Between Lake and Clark/Division the journey was typical. I was in a middle car with a teen off her shift from Chick-fil-A, a mother with her two kids, and a Columbia student who looked far too studious to be attending that school. Rolling through to Addison, flanked by a man too old to own a skateboard and a suburban 50-year-old, I cried a river into my scarf.

No one wants to cry in public. Especially a 24-year-old woman with competing credit card bills, cats, and a thesis to consider. Later, as I opined to my peers about my lack of emotional fortitude, it struck me that perhaps that farce of a train ride didn't mean that I was broken. Or that I wasn't actively taking care of myself. My peers were quick to chip in their stories, turning their stress mountains into laughable molehills. "Oh, we've all done this! It's a rite of passage," they assured me. I've changed my style of makeup so watery eyes aren't my primary concern. I think that's why some folks wear lipstick. To distract you from their pallid eyes.

Looking back, I am still unclear as to what triggered that episode. I was balancing my schedule and focusing on my health. I slept sometimes. I had, and still have, friends I can depend on. Is it ridiculous that what triggered my crying could be those 40 minutes between work and home where I can be still and do nothing? Commuting has become the only downtime I don't feel guilty about. It's a measured set of space and time where I feel allowed to engage in socially unproductive activities: watch Netflix, read a novel unrelated to school, nap. Maybe it's a safe space to cry in, too.

At this stage of the academic game, it often feels like your destiny is just to keep up. So maybe I was done chasing my breath. Maybe it was the inaction that was intolerable. I wonder if, as I adjusted to commuting and the travel became more commonplace, my millennial logic urged me to turn it into an advantage. Ya know, guilt. "I can read on the 'L' without getting carsick, so might as well get some work done," I thought. (This is rather crap the more you think about it.)

> *I've changed my style of makeup so watery eyes aren't my primary concern.*

Oh my sweet baby Jesus, transit is traumatizing in and of itself. Every morning at 8 a.m., thousands of us squeeze into metal tubes, ignoring each other. None of us want to be there. It's only tolerable because CTA is limbo, a temporary social equalizer, and we know that this train ride will never happen again. Aside from the bros going to Wrigley, I'm not exactly convinced of the legitimacy of public transportation as a platform to have fun. My first summer in the city I saw a dude waterfall a fifth of Tito's into some Calcium Tropicana. Endearing, but why can't we keep those activities in the home? The "L" is for crying.

Chicago is lawless. It's tiresome. It's cold. I'm in graduate school. I wanna be able to sit down without fielding strangers' auras, apologizing for my Trader Joe's bags, and fretting about my emails. This is a simple case of productivity guilt. It's my belief that capitalism has uprooted the playing field. We have been taught to equate work completed with an individual's ethics and personal worth. We've idealized the hustle. All this to say that we — or at least I — need to learn to enjoy things without evaluating their cultural worth.

So, I'm gonna embrace my public crying. Turn it into a public presentation. Let the tears come. At least they're valid and true. Emotional woo-woo, but I'm sick of pretending that this incessant grind isn't tiresome. I wanna take care of myself, and if I can't find a way to relax, then goddammit, I'm gonna do it on the train. And eat Cheetos Puffs. Call my mom. In that order. I can get back to business when I get to my stop.

Illustration by Ishita Dharap

Cat Strain (MANAJ 2019), like meow. F+ editor and recovering Catholic.

Proverbs Out of the Mouth of the Midwest

A journey through my grandmother's dictionary

by **Jill DeGroot**

My grandmother loved words. She kept a giant handbound dictionary so worn the title had disappeared. The once-bold text became ghostly, the spine cracked and frayed. My sisters and I thought it was a spell book because of its top edge gilt: the brushed gold leafing on the outer edges of the pages that warded off perspiring fingertips, dust mites, and most importantly, evil.

She read this dictionary daily. She'd assign herself ten words a day to learn and integrate into her vocabulary. There was also a certain indelible magic in the way she spoke in idioms — proverbs my mother told me, that her mother told her, somehow always involving being broke ("I don't have a pot to piss in"), an admonition ("People in glass houses shouldn't throw stones"), or frustration ("Some people step in shit and come out smelling like a rose"). The sayings' expressivity and heartfulness broke the stoicism within a lineage of women hardened by life in the rural midwest.

"A bird in the bush is worth two in the beak."

Idioms and other proverbial sayings simply rolled off my grandmother's tongue. I remember fondly how she laughed when recalling a coworker who, in noticing her usage of these funny little phrases, started repeating them in conversation — but kept saying them incorrectly: "A bird in the bush is worth two in the beak," and perhaps the most unfortunate: "Never buy a pig in a pope."

These sayings have trickled down the family tree. Even now, my mom prescribes this charming quip for horrible bosses: "Shit rolls downhill." This saying has military roots, first cited in Gene Schulze's 1970 novel, "The Third Face of War": "If he wanted to go from top . . . echelon . . . trust, travel, down to dealing with the enemy — Shit rolls downhill."

My sisters and I knew this sentiment well. My grandfather had a long list of rules, and when a rule was broken, more rules would appear, the kind you don't know exist until you unwittingly break them. He had a chair in which nobody else could sit. He had a cup from which nobody else could drink. He had a forbidden candy jar that my sisters and I would sneak into, lifting the glass lid as slowly and quietly as possible, smuggling candy into pockets. Sometimes the lid would land back down just a little too hard and we'd scatter — shit rolls indeed.

After my grandmother passed in 2010, my grandfather packed away all of her things, bought new furniture, new carpeting, new windows, a new car. The house I had spent so much time in suddenly became unrecognizable. He took down the framed photos of my sisters and me that my grandmother had hung on the wall and replaced them with photos of his own. He hoarded my grandmother's possessions, controlling her even after she had died. My mom wanted some of the portraits of her family, but he refused. My grandmother's dictionary was stowed away with the photos and the rest of her belongings, untouched and collecting dust. And as it goes with all types of losses, life goes on. People move on. We didn't push it. Let sleeping dogs lie.

Nine years later, in 2019, my grandfather asked my mom to house-sit while he was away. We were alone in the house for the first time. I walked through the quiet house admiring the ghost of what it once was. The bedroom my sisters and I shared was now filled with a hodgepodge of wicker and rattan outdoor furniture: my grandfather's new "wicker room." Our old toy room was now a storage space packed high with boxes, bins, and unidentifiable junk. The Tandy 1000 home computer where I used to play Dave Baskin's 1984 game "Bouncing Babies," which involved catching babies thrown from the windows of a burning building, no longer booted up.

And then there it was, my grandmother's dictionary, lying flat on a bookshelf in the hallway. Opening it up, it was exactly the same. The frayed edges, the gilt, the cracked spine. I considered taking it home with me. Would my grandfather notice it was missing? Did I care? I could almost hear my grandmother's voice say: It's better to ask for forgiveness than permission.

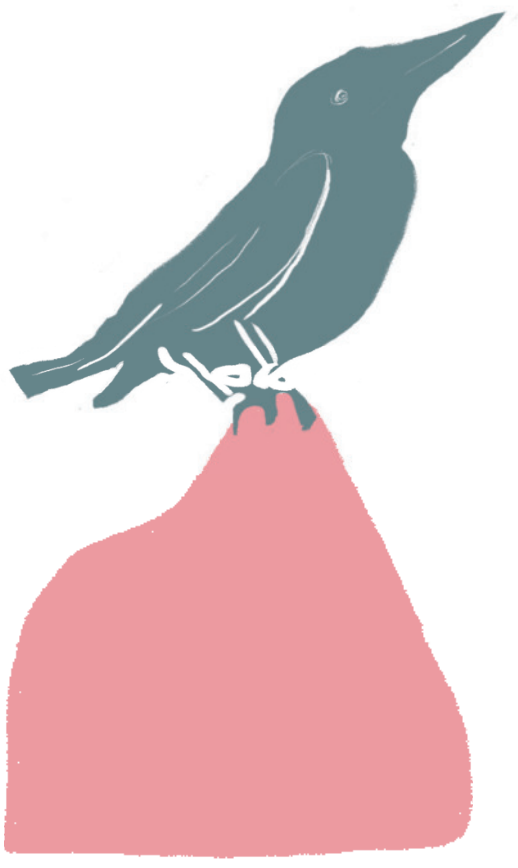


Illustration by Ishita Dharap

Jill DeGroot (MANAJ 2020) is a Chicago-based editor, writer, and performer. She is the co-artistic director and editor of Cacophony Magazine.

Fuckboi Rehab

An in-depth look at the fuckbois we know and hate

by **Georgia Hampton**

Almost every friend I know has, at one point in their adult life, encountered a "fuckboi." Fuckbois are seemingly everywhere: on Tinder, at the bar, they're even your friend's friend from college. Always on the search for new romantic exploits, they leave a trail of confused ex-partners and messages left on read in their wake. And, apparently, you are guaranteed to meet one. A quick Google search offers up an onslaught of listicles on the subject: How To Spot A Fuckboy, How To Tell He's A Fuckboy, 27 Reasons You Will Still End Up Dating A Fuckboy. Everyone has met this person, has been hurt by them, and will likely be hurt again.

The notion of a "fuckboi" — sometimes spelled "fuckboy" or "fuckboye" — isn't anything new. Before this, it was a "player," a "cad," or just a manipulative jerk in the ways of romance. As long as people have been attracted to each other, this kind of person has existed. They are incapable of communication, apathetic to your feelings and needs, and evade responsibility for their actions to an Olympic degree. They may promise all the trappings of a relationship — emotional intimacy, affection, support — but, as a rule, they never deliver. The fuckboi play-acts romantic connection until it no longer suits them. And when the relationship (or whatever they choose to call it) inevitably comes crashing down, none of it is their responsibility.

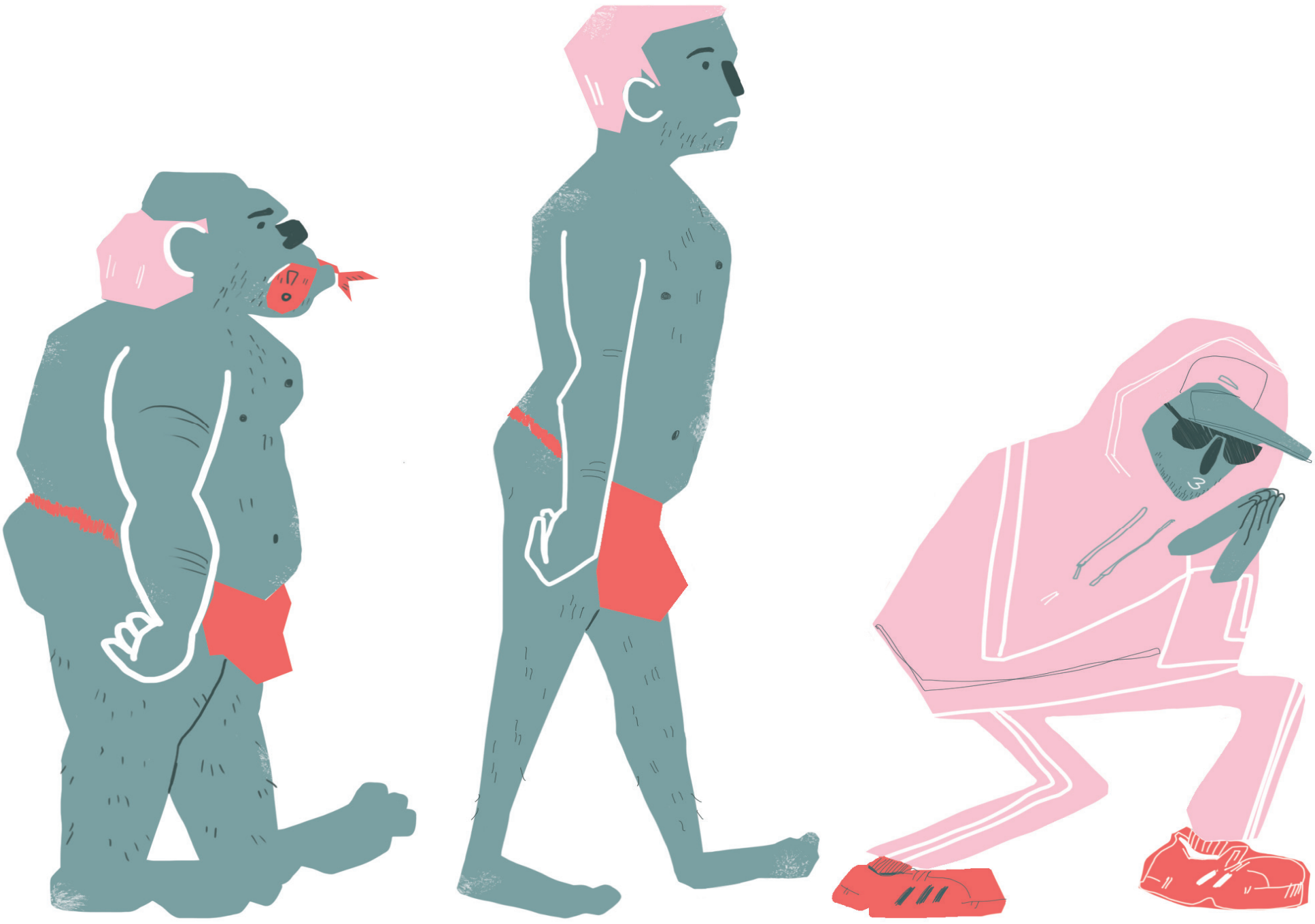
The internet offers an endless barrage of definitions for this kind of person: a "womanizer," a "manipulating dick," a "weak, contemptible man," and so on. Fuckbois aren't always men, though most online content written about them focuses on male, heterosexual "fuckboys." But this kind of behavior isn't restricted to heterosexual men, or to heterosexual relationships. I really can't stress it enough: fuckbois are everywhere.

This kind of person is, of course, terrible. They're manipulative and dishonest, with little respect for the needs of their sexual or romantic partners. But the conversation around this subject is almost always one of inevitability. "There is surely no guy or girl who dates men that hasn't encountered a fuckboy in the last couple of years," a Pedestrian article muses. In conversations with my friends, time wasted on "another fuckboi" is met with anger, sadness, and frustration. But it's also met with a generous helping of bitter resignation, that this is somehow just part of the contemporary dating landscape.

Online content reflects this idea. There's an abundance of listicles commiserating on the disruptive experience of having your heart broken by a fuckboi, but very little content directed toward the individuals who perpetuate this behavior in the first place. And so, this behavior continues and the listicles keep getting written, bemoaning the misery of being disappointed by another manipulative, dishonest prick.

What I propose is reframing the way we talk about fuckbois and the treatment of this behavior.

Illustration by Katie Wittenberg



What's the problem?

This endless cycle not only does a disservice to the people on the receiving end of this behavior, but to the fuckbois themselves. It tells the recipients, "This is the norm, get used to it," and tells fuckbois, "You have nowhere to grow, this is all you've got." The victims of this behavior end up doing all the emotional work post-breakup, and leaves the fuckboi mildly inconvenienced, perhaps, but ultimately unchanged. And I think we can do better than that.

What I propose is reframing the way we talk about fuckbois and the treatment of this behavior. It's unproductive and exhausting to look at the dating scene as a noxious swamp you have to courageously wade through indefinitely until you (hopefully) find your way out of it. And it's unhelpful to see fuckbois as a monolith that, like time, serves as an assumed constant in the living world.

The behavior associated with a fuckboi is manipulative, disrespectful, and dishonest. But it's also deceptively easy to conform to without realizing it. And it's necessary to explore these traits not only as a way of recognizing them in future partners, but recognizing them in ourselves.

Relationships the fuckboi way

A fuckboi enters relationships from an inherently selfish place, and that dictates their behavior toward the other(s) involved. Their intention could be any number of things — companionship, sexual satisfaction — but always with a flawed idea of what a romantic relationship is and how it works. For a fuckboi, a partner is only as relevant to them as their ability to serve a need. Which puts the partner in a position where they must fill a disproportionately long list of expectations to keep the fuckboi around.

The fuckboi's partner is the one meant to perform the more difficult, vulnerable parts of a romantic relationship to keep the fuckboi's attention. For example, by both making plans and accepting the fuckboi's unreliability in sticking to those plans. A fuckboi's partner is meant to be available, vulnerable, communicative on behalf of both members of the relationship because, in this context, the fuckboi is not responsible for these things.

A relationship with a fuckboi isn't really a relationship, though they may call it that. It is a transaction in which the fuckboi is inherently receiving something and their partner is giving that thing to them. So you can imagine how surprised the fuckboi may feel when their partner gets mad because of their lack of communication, lack of empathy, or lack of responsibility. To the fuckboi, the relationship never required any of those behaviors from them.

This is why the fuckboi disappears with no explanation. This is why the fuckboi doesn't communicate to you what they see as the guidelines of your romantic endeavor. This is also why the fuckboi offers excuses like "I just don't think I'm emotionally capable of being in a relationship," and why they're often found getting cozy with someone else shortly after ending things with you.

That idea isn't wrong. The fuckboi isn't emotionally ready to be in a relationship. Clearly. But they haven't made the connection between that feeling and how it could change the way they treat new relationships going forward. So the cycle continues.

How do we all fit in to this?

It's tempting to read all of this and think "I could never do that to someone." But it's easier than it seems. Consider your relationships and why you are in them. Is it for comfort? To what degree? Consider the way you communicate with your partner. Do they know the answer to "what are we," and if so, are they comfortable with that? If not, why not? Does it feel easier to wait for your partner to "figure it out" rather than discuss it? Why? If you've just ended a relationship, consider how and why. Did you communicate that the relationship is over? In what way?

It can be hard to offer another person our real, vulnerable selves. So it feels safe to treat romantic relationships as a way of filling a need rather than a mutually beneficial connection between two people. That way, you're less likely to be hurt. In theory. But it also discourages emotional growth, where you never confront the fear of vulnerability and attempt to dismantle and learn from it. And that's a massive disservice to both your future partners and yourself.

The problem with labeling someone as a "fuckboi" is that it is dangerously easy to convince yourself that you could never be that thing. But you can. That's how fuckbois become fuckbois. Sure, there are the stereotypical frat bro fuckbois who keep lists of the women they've slept with and consider their fuckboi-ness a badge of honor. But like with many things, the insidious nature of this behavior keeps it hard to fit all fuckbois into a simple, identifiable category. And you don't have to have a list of women you've slept with to be guilty of exhibiting fuckboi behavior.

It doesn't stop here

This is the beginning of the conversation. There's more to be said about ghosting, about defining relationships, about teaching yourself empathy. Fuckboi behavior is learned and it can be unlearned, but only through recognition of this pattern and a willingness to dismantle it. I plan to continue this conversation here, but you've got homework too. Start thinking about your role in romantic relationships, even in friendships. Revisit them. Look again. What behavior can you let go of?

Georgia Hampton (MANAJ 2020) is the News editor at F Newsmagazine. She is most certainly wearing a turtleneck.

Driving to the Indianapolis Airport

by Brianna Douglass

It was 14 this morning after the snowstorm,
ice's film webbing together and clotting
the pond. We drove by it slow, slick road
mirroring the water, the black tucked behind
the tiny Midwestern middle-of-nowhere house
that spoke of an Arthurian swirling murk.

As you saw crosses hung on houses' inner
walls, I shivered in the idea of hands
locked beneath the pale crust, let
myself mar our happy conversation
to excise the darkness from the ice.

We cradle different kinds of desire. I
want the lyrical move from line to line
of tree branch small feet make; you
the yellow light above a turning page.

Maybe it was the impending parting
made me linger there in the cold water.
A homesickness for understanding, for
mornings in the snow, grown like so many
unwanted shoots buried for safekeeping,
finally forgotten, left green and wild.

When you dropped me on the concrete,
endings crawled with me across the floor.
We separated, split husk, to settle
in the holes we dig for ourselves.

Glass

by Will Russo

It's said there are no straight lines in nature. Look out:
fog freezing over the lake, cloud layered
in steam — whirlybird song, every chimney's
discharge. A horizon curves so slightly
we're fooled. Winter brings ease of neglect.
Slighted field lights. A walkway ramp.
Slants of these kinds. Ridged roof of pavilion.
Branches stall with wet heaviness, once exploding.
Loss lends distance, such glimpses of white
and road. Cutout park. Windows — gridlocked,
square and stretching like city. How they screen.

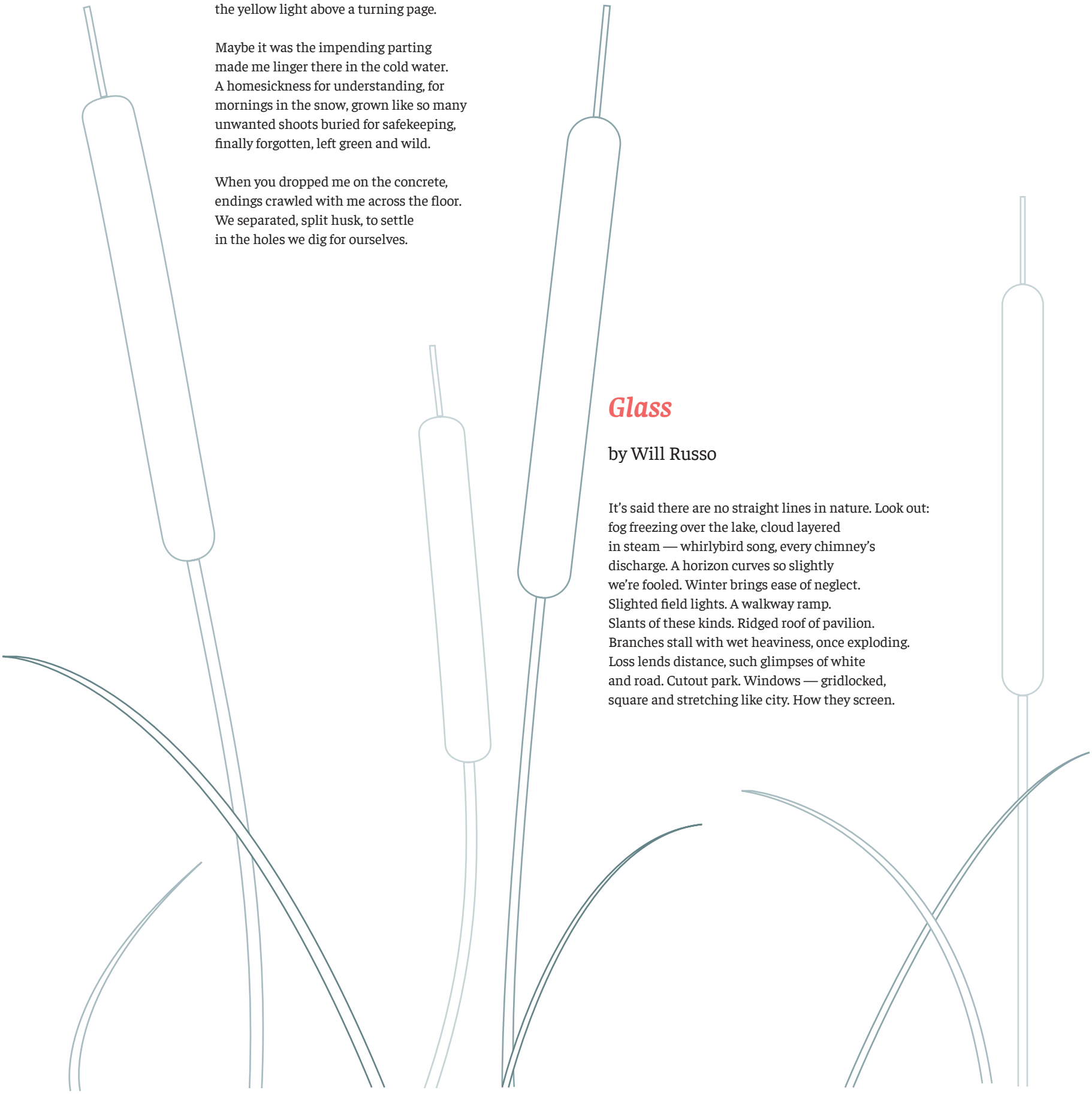


Illustration by Unyimeabasi Udoh

Brianna Douglass (MFAW 2020) is a poet and sometimes fiction writer from Fort Worth, Texas. She doesn't have anything particularly clever to put in her bio. **Will Russo** (MFAW 2020) is a poet from New York City.

Hems

by Sean Chumley

My mother never died.

When the doctor said cancer she sucked her teeth and said, "Well, that won't do. That won't do at all," and she evicted the tumor on the spot. "Anything else, doc?"

He wiped his rimless glasses on the hem of his mint-green sweater and said no. In the elevator down she held out her hand and said, "Whaddaya say, kid? How about a Happy Meal?"

The drive-thru speaker offered a boy toy or girl and my mother always knew to get the Barbie. I had the ballerina one that spun around on her pink base, the Japanese one with her flowing kimono sleeves, the holiday one in her white sleigh, Skipper, and — my favorite — the mermaid whose tail changed colors in my hot bathwater. Where are they now? Where are they now?

Years earlier she cut a ragged hem on an old black dress and painted my face green. I carried a plastic jack-o'-lantern in one hand and a broomstick in the other. She walked me around a cul-de-sac a few blocks over from the house, hunting for M&Ms. When older kids hurled rocks at me she caught them in midair and flung them back, one by one, each bloodying a bullying nose. Mothers dressed as children begged to find out why.

"Your kid's an asshole," was all she told them.

The neighbors quivered in fear of her the rest of the night. Their trembling hands dropped Smarties into my bucket, where they landed with reluctant thuds among the Starbursts, Reese's Cups, Tootsie Rolls and Twizzlers.

When I say she never died, I mean she never died. Death knocked on the door — just a courtesy, as Death can pass through doors and walls — and stood at the foot of her bed, pointing a bony finger. "Not now, you old cuss," she said, and Death skedaddled.

That first time, she was 75. At 83, Death came back and she laughed in its face. "You again?" At 91, she spat at the ground by the hem of Death's smoky cloak. At 93, she said, "We can keep playin' this game if you want, buddy, but let's face facts. It ain't gonna happen."

When Death came for me, I asked her permission to go. She was 128. "No son of mine," she said, before falling asleep. I nudged her shoulder. Wouldn't you like to come with us? She opened a single eye and saw Death looming behind me. "I raised you right. Let me know how you like it."

I turned to Death and shrugged my shoulders. We left, Death and I, holding hands as we walked across the grassy lawn and into the clouds. I expected Death's hand to feel cold and bony and sharp, but it was warm and sweaty and soft. Like my mother's.

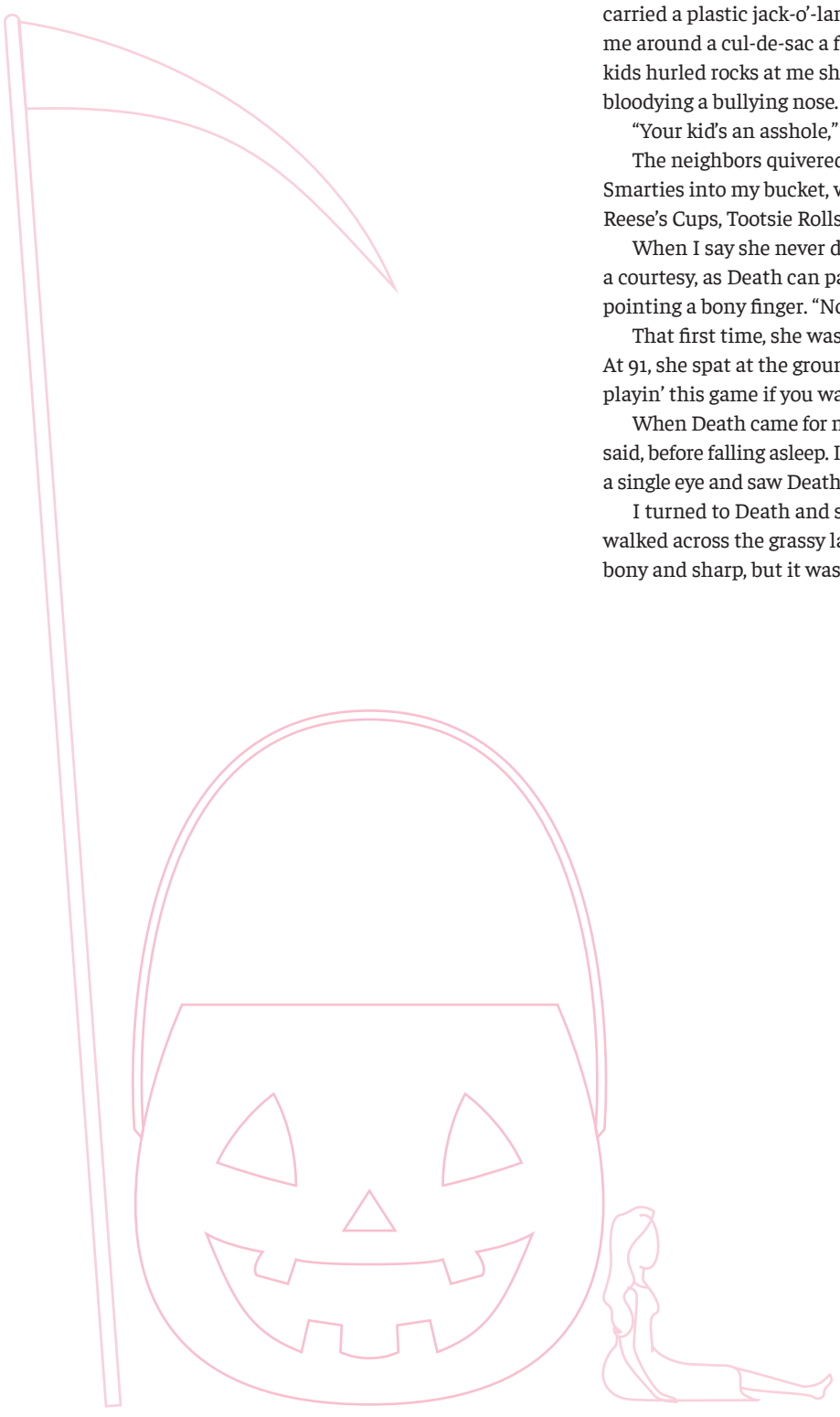


Illustration by Unyimeabasi Udoh

Sean Littlefield Chumley (MFAW 2020) was born in South Carolina, where he never really fit in. He'd love to stay and chat, but he has cookies in the oven.

Permission Slips

by Tricia Park

When I was in kindergarten, my best friend and I had crushes on the same boy, a kid named Duncan. It seems so improbable to me that I'd have a crush on someone named "Duncan." Maybe because it makes me think of Duncan Hines cake mixes or its homonym, Dunkin', of Dunkin' Donuts fame.

Anyway, irrelevant. Apparently, when I was five, Duncan was eminently crushworthy. Or, more likely, my best friend, Donna, was crushworthy. Donna liked horses so I read "Black Stallion" and "Black Beauty" and manufactured an obsession with "My Little Pony." Donna liked tuna fish sandwiches so I asked my mom to make them for me even though the smell of them made me gag. I didn't really care about Duncan at all, to be honest. He was completely uninteresting to me, and I didn't really understand why I was supposed to be interested in him.

Duncan is a blur — a little boy with a sandy blond bowl cut, wearing a plaid, cowboy shirt with snap buttons and dungarees, and a face that I can't remember. But I do remember our rivalry. Oh, I think he likes you, Donna would tell me, and that would be my cue to insist, oh no, he likes you. He really likes you. I can tell.

I think the next boy I liked was in first grade. It's weird, I'm realizing just now as I'm telling you this, that I don't remember my elementary school crushes anymore. I can kind of see them in the distance. I used to remember all their names; names like Josh and Dan and Mike and Luke and Matt and John and Chad. Oh actually, there *was* one named Chad!

Chad was this cute hilarious Filipino kid with big brown eyes and spiky black hair. I remember how nice he was. He told lots of jokes and always made us laugh as we sat at our four-squared desks at Sacred Heart School. Our modules rotated, so you never sat with the same group for very long, but I do remember the time he and I were tenants of the same desk clump. I think he once let me borrow his scissors or something, or sat with me when all the popular kids were in the opposite corner of the room doing something popular.

The next boy I remember was named Dan. Dan Ho. A heck of a name to handle for any other kid at an all-white preppy school full of preppy rich white kids. But not for Dan Ho. Come to think of it, though, I'm not sure "ho" was a thing back then, so maybe his intense popularity was an anachronistic accident. He was literally before his name's time.

Dan was Korean, like me, but somehow, despite his diminutive size and Asianness, was embraced by the cool clique. He had a shiny mop of black hair that he was forever flicking back with a sharp nod or a swipe of his hand. He was amazingly quick on the soccer field, racing smoothly from end to end, hair flopping in the rare, Pacific Northwest sun.

My first boyfriend was Taiwanese-American. We were together for seven years. My second boyfriend was half-Asian; his mom was Japanese and his dad was Norwegian. He remains the most beautiful man I have ever seen. We were together for seven years, too.

Illustration by Unyimeabasi Udoh

(Is the seven-year itch a thing, then?)

Since then, though, I'm pretty sure I've only been with white men. No wait, there were Asian men, I remember now. But they were also half-Asian, maybe one Korean fling.

I don't know when or how I came to believe that being with a white man was the goal. I do know that I thought procreating with a white man would be the goal. I wanted beautiful half-Asian babies — the best of both worlds.

When I was a kid, I didn't have double folded eyelids. (If you mention double folds to white people, they look at you like you're crazy. What are you talking about, they ask as they peer closely at your face. What fold?) It never bothered me or even occurred to me to notice it until Donna's older sister mentioned it once. Rub your eyes, she said, miming a finger over her eyelid. That way your eyes will look bigger.

I went home and rubbed my eyes and, wouldn't you know it, it worked. My eyes seemed to double in size. But the trouble was the folds didn't hold overnight. When I closed my eyes to sleep, they would vanish and I would wake up to the same eyes, now small. I could no longer ignore that my eyes were ugly. To make things worse, the folds were asymmetrical — sometimes one side would hold and the other wouldn't, giving my face a lopsided look, like a stroke victim.

I learned all the tricks. I learned to rub my eyes raw and bright red. I would stand in front of my full-length mirror, stomping my feet when the folds didn't appear, a panicky feeling rising in me as I saw one round eye emerge and one flat one. The best days were when they folded neatly and stayed; on those days, I felt pretty.

I learned about the glues and the sticks to poke the skin back. I learned to cut tiny crescents of scotch tape and sleep with them on, training my face overnight. No more lost hours; these were literal beauty rests. I still travel with a spool of scotch tape in my makeup bag. How prepared you are, people say backstage when their sheet music falls apart, relieved when I hand them the familiar clear tape.

My eyes are now permanently folded. I don't know if it's a result of the years of scotch tape and willing them to be rounder. You had the *sangapul* surgery, right? My female Korean friends ask me. No, I say, and their eyes widen. Oh, how lucky you are.

Many of my female Korean friends have had the surgery. It used to be that getting *sangapul soosul* was a gift your parents gave you as a graduation present, before college, with the understanding that college was the most valuable time. The time when you might meet your husband, so it was critical that you be the prettiest you could be. You can tell when they close their eyes; you can see the deep groove where the incisions were made, often still red. A telltale mark. The permanent scar that makes their eyes round.

Tricia Park (MFAW 2019) is a Juilliard-trained violinist and has performed in concert on five continents. Her writing has appeared in Cleaver and Alyss Magazines.

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April 30th - **Relaxation Day,** 4-6pm, 2nd Floor Sharp
May 1 - **Breakfast for Dinner,** 9:00pm until supplies last, Neiman Center, 2nd floor
May 2 - **Tea-Lief**, 4pm until supplies last, MacLean Lobby
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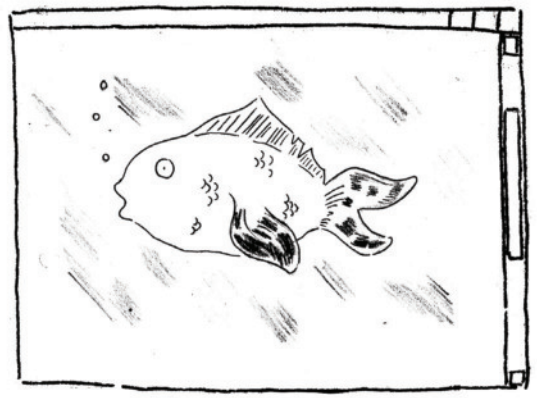

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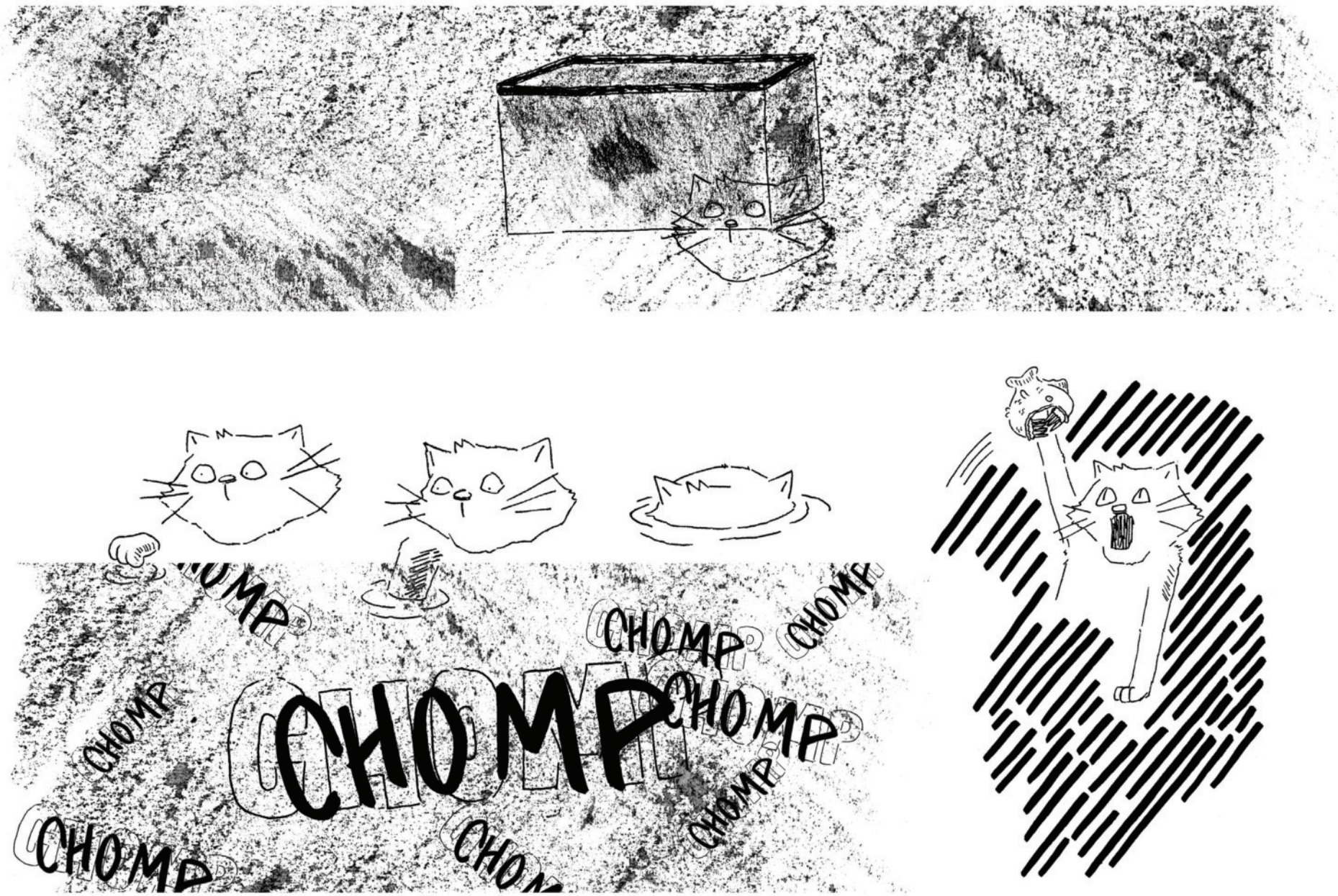

TAKE YOU BACK, DO DO DO
TAKE YOU BAAAAAAA
Maybe if I head out soon I could grab some Mcdonalds before dark...

7:15 PM
HUFF, HUFF, HUFF
HUFF
7:30 PM
8:15 PM
SNAP!

UNTITLED
ZiFei Xia

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May

Fashion 2019
May 3
Exhibition:
Friday, May 3
9:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Film, Video, New Media, Animation, and Sound Festival
May 8–11
Check website for screening times

Art Education Graduate Symposium
May 8
9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Apprentice Teacher Showcase
May 9
6:00–8:00 p.m.

Show Don't Tell: The 2019 Visual Communication Design Show
May 10
5:00–8:00 p.m.

BFA Writing Program Reading
May 11
5:00–8:00 p.m.

Design Show
May 11–28
Reception:
Saturday, May 11
6:00–8:00 p.m.

New Arts Journalism Symposium
May 11

Visual and Critical Studies Undergraduate Thesis Symposium
May 11
10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Post-Baccalaureate Annual
May 11–13
Reception:
Saturday, May 11
4:00–7:00 p.m.

MFA Writing Program Reading
May 14
4:30–7:30 p.m.

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