



the plum creek review
spring 2017

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table of contents

- 1 **What a guy.**
Ava Poen
- 2 **Untitled (Light Painting No. 1)**
Zachary Vaughn
- 3 **tonos de piel (hermanas)**
Victoria Albacete
- 4 **How to Change a Tire: For Beginners**
Sofie Rimler
- 8 **shift**
Gracie Freeman Liftschutz
- 9 **Window-side reflections**
Ananya Gupta
- 10 **window**
Victoria Albacete
- 11 **Holy**
Nia Owen
- 12 **Murakami is in the air**
Ally Fulton
- 13 **Undoing**
Mia Silvan-Grau
- 15 **banana**
Sofia Smith Hale

- 16 **I miss you most**
Rob Jamner
- 17 **my hand as it may exist**
Gabe Schneir
- 19 **Couch Ghosts**
Harper Watson
- 20 **femininity**
Victoria Albacete
- 21 **She Woke Up with Her Shoelaces Tied Together Again**
Alison Liebowitz
- 23 **Untitled**
Zachary Vaughn
- 24 **pomegranate poem**
Nick Bassman
- 25 **18**
Gracie Freeman Liftschutz
- 26 **I don't mean to brag, but**
Sofie Rimler
- 30 **space love**
Jourdan Lewanda
- 31 **When It Did Begin**
Ally Fulton
- 32 **Clay Street, a dead end**
Ava Poen

- 33 **Act V Scene i**
Zoe Ginsberg
- 34 **el cráneo**
Victoria Albacete
- 35 **The tenant upstairs**
Ananya Gupta
- 36 **cosmos**
Jourdan Lewanda
- 37 **If you drop a mirror and it cracks**
Sofie Rimler
- 41 **Natural History**
Zachary Vaughn
- 42 **The Memorial**
Olivia Hanson
- 43 **Untitled**
Zachary Vaughn
- 44 **A love story with breathing problems**
Ananya Gupta

Front Cover **throwing light**
Victoria Albacete

mirrors, digital photography

Back Cover **Tenby**
Nia Owen

medium format color film

What a guy.

Ava Poen

Rodeo sidewalk
Wet with dew;
Never thought I'd have two

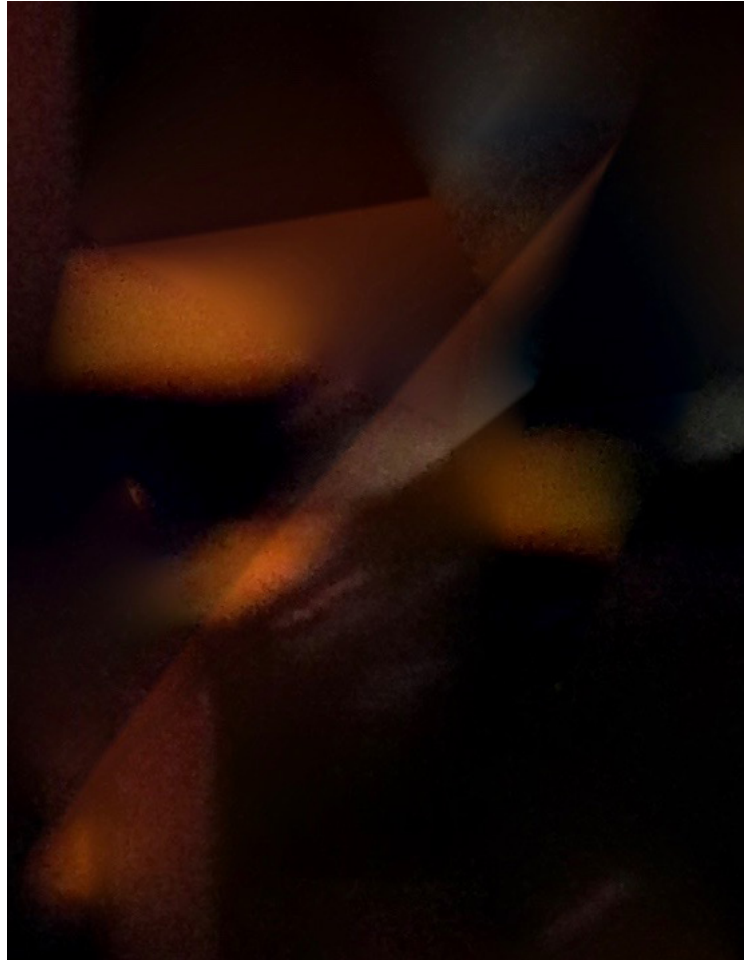
Quarters, two pennies.
She says she's ready
To talk bigger things,

But I just woke from this
Twenty-day nap, man.

Close the lid, drop the can
And talk until your mouth is dry.

Untitled (Light Painting No. 1)

Zachary Vaughn



tonos de piel (hermanas)

Victoria Albacete



digital photography

Get the jack, wrench, and spare tire
from the trunk to loosen the lug nuts.
If the lug nuts are tight
place the wrench on the nut and
stand on the wrench arm to use your full weight.

You may be asked to lie
on your side, your knees pulled up to your chest.

You may be asked to lie
on your stomach. Use the jack to lift the vehicle off the
ground.

Transrectal ultrasonography uses sound waves to create
images of your prostate.

Your doctor will use the images to identify the area
that needs to be numbed with an injection to reduce
discomfort.

Your doctor will retrieve thin, cylindrical sections of tissue with a spring-propelled needle.

Will likely recommend only light activities for 24 to 48 hours.
Will prescribe no sexual intimacy for a week or two.

You probably need to put your flat tire and tools back in the trunk. Next to the mouthwash she bought when she stayed an extra week at her parent's place in Vermont.

Don't leave anything on the side of the road.

Call your brother.

Take an antibiotic for a few days. Find her lube in the glove compartment.

Get plenty of sleep.

The entire procedure usually takes about 10 minutes.

shift

Gracie Freeman Lifschutz



Window-side Reflections

Ananya Gupta

I keep a little piece of lead in my pencil box on lonely days.
Blunt force leaves shadows you wouldn't believe, I
draw the same girl each time; curling lips charcoal eyes, but
I can't quite get the smile.

Blunt force leaves shadows you wouldn't believe
bumps along my skull like words that could not escape
pressed up against eyeballs but that smile continues to evade
Little piece of lead is spread too thin.

Bumps along my skull like the worlds that could not escape
peering through gray scale, shatter lines
little piece of lead is spread too thin on my face, I
tried to sharpen not disfigure.

Peering through gray scale, shatter lines,
like stubborn blinds on dorm room windows
I tried to sharpen not disfigure that same girl
sitting static, on ledge, brown boots cold nose.

Like stubborn blinds on dorm room windows, I
draw the same girl each time; curling lips charcoal eyes,
sharpen not disfigure features that manage daylight, no gray scale.
I keep a little piece of lead in my pencil box everyday.

window

Victoria Albacete



Holy
Nia Owen



medium format color film

Murakami is in the air

Ally Fulton

always he tells me when he kneads
long baguettes to fill his anger
or else the crust won't crack.

but anger, a half full balloon that floats
two feet above the floor,
comes to rest beside him no matter

where he stands. I can see through him;
a slowly melting windowpane held together
by the missing cats and thieving magpies outside.

Undoing

Mia Silvan-Grau

I met her in early fall, we were born
shortly after. It is in vain
that I considered us a unit. There was no *here*,
no *this moment*, that I saw
the birth. It was not missed.
It was after, that I labeled it that, I hold that guilt

with me today. Our friendship was guilt
but the crux bore
a black cape surrounded in mist
which ran through our veins.
It was one late night in February I felt the first sore
bursting through capillaries scaling my skin, screaming: *I'm here!*

I ignored it. I would not hear
that we circumnavigated this earth differently. The guilt.
I wanted to inhabit it. We couldn't just soar
in its axis. For that, I was burned.
At one point she flowed through my veins
I couldn't see through the mist

that thickened, after every fight, I missed
the soot that she held in front of me, begging me to hear
her wings flapping unevenly, the ones I broke in vain,
an attempt to ground her, to tether her to me. I am guilty.
She was flaming, didn't want to burn
anyone. I was a trickle of water and saw

the light, wanted to warm myself. Now I'm sore.
I tried every remedy, every herb, every mist
no amount of aloe can soothe this burn.
I presented myself at her door, wanted her to hear
my side, for her to see the burns. I walked out a vessel of guilt.
I took the knife and ripped open each vein

for her to see the anatomy, beneath burnt skin. All in vain.
I wanted more of her than she could give. I wanted to soar
fire and water, wings of guilt.
Each vilified the other, missed
the breaking in the fire, or the drowning in the ice. Here
we stay at an impasse. I ask this of you, continue to burn

the way you do best. In the coming years I hope you soar.
You taught me to pay attention, to hear the sound of rustling wings burning
to leave. The guilt will stay, even when I've missed you a thousand times over. I regret nicking
the artery and not the vein.

banana

Sofia Smith Hale



mixed media

I miss you most

Rob Jamner

when I put the last dish
in the drainer, when I light
a candle and set
it on the coffee table,
when I merge onto the freeway.
I want to share that quiet,
a page turn, a rustle
of adjusting on the couch.
I want to brush my teeth
in the same bathroom.
I want to walk through our neighborhood.
I am ready
to call a place
our neighborhood.



my hand as it may exist

Gabe Schneier

digital photography 17

my hand as it may exist

Gabe Schneier



Couch Ghosts

Harper Watson

A true crime show blaring on the TV. This, years after my mother has moved away. She slumps on our couch. Wants me close to her, wants me to drink and tell her who I've been since she left. I'm caught up in her ghost crying in the same place. Her pupils different sizes, laughing and laughing. She says "I'm better now, I am, I'm happy and healthy." Someone on TV stabbed dramatically over the sound of the dishwasher. Her ghost in the mess on the counter, forgetting to clean. And the absence, abcess, my hands at the stove, burning food to survive while she sleeps for another year. The glass of whiskey-and- water, the ice melting. Her ghost at the door, promising to drive, dark circles becoming tire tracks under her eyes. She pours me more wine. I am fourteen years old, pulling the phone out of a pile of crumpled paper. Calling my dad at work. Mom's not safe. Please come home. "Do you remember," she says, real now, melting into the couch, "how we used to get up early and make an entire pound of bacon on Sundays?" Yeah, all sunlight, talking quiet about the Bible. Pray for Ruth. I still catch myself praying over my frying pan.

femininity

Victoria Albacete



She Woke Up with Her Legs Tied Together Again

Alison Liebowitz

**content warning: the following content may be triggering.*

She is accustomed to going for runs without watches.
supposes she is decent at estimating
her distance traveled,
after so many strides.

fearing that the ease at which she loses her footing
is reminiscent of
the rate at which she lost her mind,
she scrutinizes her scraped knees,
and out of habit
hastily gathers evidence,
for a crime she will never report.

on occasion,
when the demands of automatic deliberations
muffle the patter of her footsteps,
she draws polygons with her breath,
marrying digits to inhales, exhales,
and lungful suspensions.

as her rickety legs
solidify into concrete blocks,
she pauses
and sculpts a refuge within herself.

upon realizing that submerging her face in
buckets of ice water
remains her only genuine connection
to the flesh she adorns herself in,

she seeks validation in
silhouetted tree lines
that mirror heartbeat fluctuations.



Untitled
Zachary Vaughn

pomegranate poem

Nick Bassman

after a ritual by C.A. Conrad

for Yosh Paterson

from the pomegranate in my hands stained crimson your
spoon clefts pale flesh for the forgiveness of seeds
this is patience this is my body which i shed for this is
your apartment it's small my house is mortgaged past
salvation my mother she cradles her migraine like
she cradled my body your mother she taught you
to untwist my tendons from their tangle of
misshapen music you did this for me
in misty San Francisco the orbits of your
thumbs on my forearms like scoops of a
spoon plucking spots of crimson from the pale
now the plink of sanguine seeds into
porcelain you see patience
is more than waiting no patience is
the fullness of an urgent sea yes patience is loving
the pregnancy of a pause my mother
she cradles this-is-my-body like how i cradle
this pomegranate in my palms and in your car
rushing starlit down Laurel Canyon you told me
i carry sadnesses like you wouldn't
believe but Yosh believe me i do and you told me
my life has been about the getting-there but Yosh—sweet
traveler—you are already and always
there, begotten, here, the seeds—
the fruit is in our hands



digital photography

I don't mean to brag, but

Sofie Rimler

I have been pretty since age five when I got my ears pierced.
(1955)

I have been pretty since I realized that with a little blush,
I'm practically a porcelain doll.

I have been pretty all my life.

It must be my eyes.

I have been pretty since I realized
I could exude the confidence of a week-old
egg salad sandwich, and no one would be able
to detect how wrong I was
until it was too late in your mouth.

I have been pretty inside a mouth before.

I have been pretty swishing around in a backwater lake,
cavernous and cold.

I have been pretty most days.

I have been pretty because I hold myself together with thumbtacks and three pieces of Double Bubble on occasion.

I have been pretty from clavicle to ankle on special ones, like Aunt Helena's second marriage.

Where do you see yourself in ten years?
What did you do for Labor Day?
Have you ever been on a thirty-foot boat
out by the Cape?

I have.

I have been beautiful for two weeks now last Thursday.
(1972)

I have been beautiful because of my commitment and integrity in the work environment.

I have been beautiful because I laugh at all the right times, but not too hard, lest my nose curl up like a squirrel's.

I have been beautiful in the eyes of several suitors, each one more handsome than the next. They all wear the most fetching pastels, and are always prepared with a new joke or line. We get tipsy on their parents yachts, me wearing my pink and blue one-piece, Nicholas Muran leaning over to say, “you have the softest legs.”

I was beautiful even on my thirty-first birthday, when I noticed the smallest of crow’s feet beside my eyes. I traced the faint lines with my pinky, then noticed the rock on my ring finger. When Rob asked for my hand in marriage, it was not a joke like all the rest. Rather, it was taken quite seriously, “like Russian spies with a three minute phone call,” he later said.

I was beautiful while laying across the hospital bed during the birth of my first son, my sweaty legs spindled up in harnesses. The boy needs to be cleaned of the blood and mucus first, but will look so good in pastels one day. We all vacation in the south of France now.

I was beautiful at my daughter’s baptism, even during a vomiting spell, when the porcelain doll Aunt Helena brought was ruined.

I bought her a new one after I lost the extra baby-weight and
ventured out of the house, of course.

I was beautiful at the kids' high school graduation,
where egg salad sandwiches, foie de gras and Tab
were served.

I was beautiful at my granddaughter's first day of preschool,
and all throughout retirement,
where joining a game of canasta is easy
and being called "miss" is rare.

I will be beautiful in my casket, all made up by the
undertaker, who will have access to my color palette:
pale pink and burgundy.

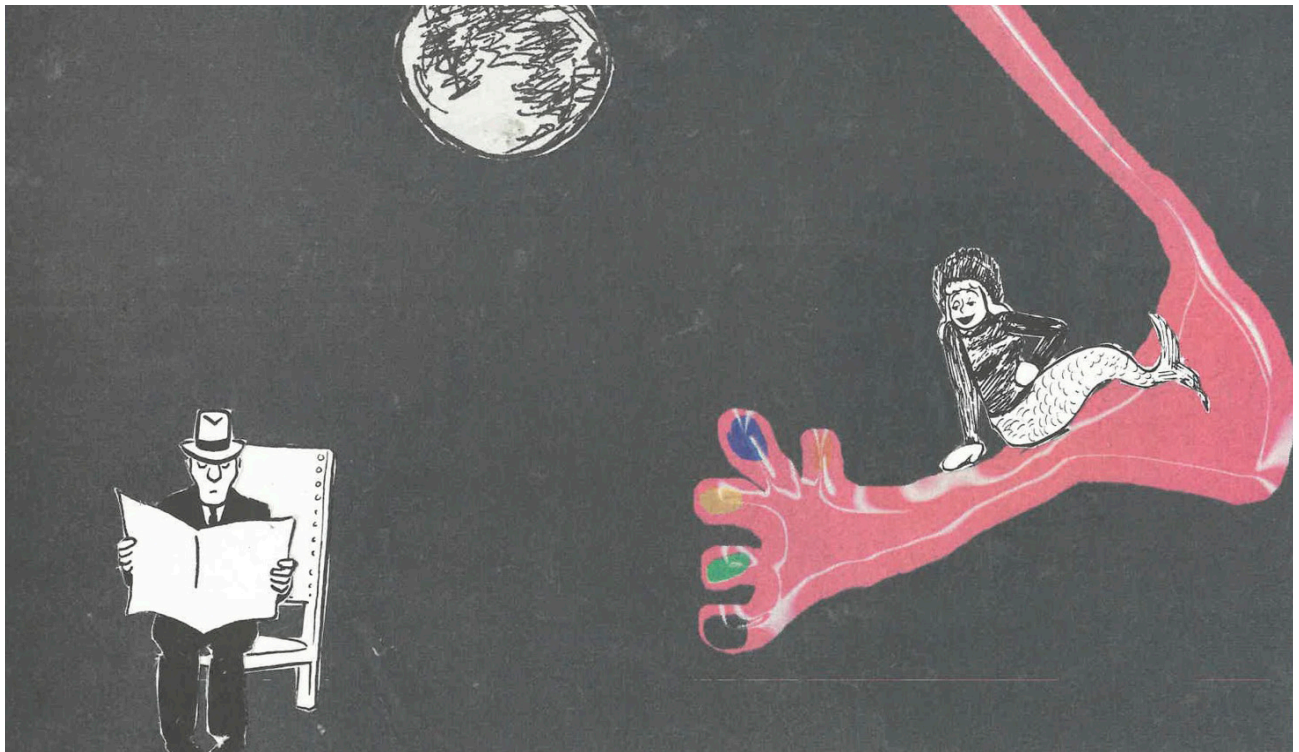
I prefer clip-on earrings in my casket and no lace.
I won't be made to look like a hussy
in front of my grandchildren.

When my granddaughter asks what I was like, don't say I was
pretty.

Say I was well-prepared for the occasion.

space love

Jourdan Lewanda



When It Did Begin

Ally Fulton

I try to find the origin,
but I have a compass in a world
with a magnetic field
due south. It casts me toward all

I do not know. There is a fruit that
falls from my head, lands first in my stomach
stretches sinews to my knees until I'm filled
full of earth and condensed liquid of clouds

I cannot see. It is dusk;
the water spends years seeping
into your eyes, where
darkened hills draw
themselves around your body and

I cannot hear anything. There are echoes,
drift wood wind chimes when our arms
brush together to make the smell
of sunlight, so soon

I try to find the origin; where the rocks
are big bangs as we move them the stars squeak
in silent interludes propel the fruit's blood
through our veins to tell us the world can still be real
even if it's upside down.

Clay Street, a dead end

Ava Poen

Maybe she turned too fast.
Chew the fat
And call it good.

Hey now, do you know
That crew-cut dandelion boy?
Yeah, that's the one.

He turned too fast:
Soon as the white paint dried
Hard on the wood shed, he left

And never did call home again.

Act V Scene i
Zoe Ginsberg



digital photography

el cráneo

Victoria Albacete



You're a sick, slick bastard.
Because when you promised me music,
I didn't know you'd pluck and strum my veins
to the bass of my stomach drops.

When you asked me for an open mind
and cranked open my forehead
I didn't think you'd find enough space
to climb inside,
and stay.

swallowing shots of gunpowder, dry, because maybe
if I strip away enough layers of my throat,
it might be easier to swallow-
if only for a little while.
Acid reflux like a reminder
don't believe him,
don't believe him,
don't-

Nerve endings crackle under your orders.
When pulse turns to electrocution,
you're a sino atrial short circuit
and I've begun to revel in the tremors.

You're a sick, slick bastard,
I want to-let you out.
Let me?

The tenant upstairs

Ananya Gupta

**content warning:
the following content
may be triggering.*

cosmos

Jourdan Lewanda



If you drop a mirror and it cracks,
Sofie Rimler

they say you'll have bad luck.
Most say it's 7 years,
some say 13.
Because 13 is a spooky number.
I always thought it was just an awkward number—
awkward like Aunt Caroline hitting on the coat check boy
last New Year's Eve—
But 13 is too many years of bad luck.
You can bar mitzvah a kid in 13 years.

Ben says when you smile into a mirror,
it's actually you in an alternate universe
making fun of you.
When he told me that, I said, that's ok—
I was mocking her, too.

Barbara with the thin, rectangular glasses from book club
says if you drop a mirror, you're stupid.
If you want to break a mirror, you should just
put it out of its misery and do
it the right way. Throw something at it.
Something hard like a rock,

or a lamp, or your
recently acquired cuticle cutters.

In fourth grade,
Mr. Alexander with the big, soft hands said
when you breathe onto a mirror,
it fogs up because of condensation.
But what's condensing?
I asked Genevieve's husband, Bernard, this question.
He's in oil.
We were at the Krespi's Fourth of July party in Sagaponack,
and my fourth sparkling glass of Whispering Angel
was beginning to drip in the humidity.
He said he didn't know how it works,
but recommended I ask the hosts—
Their water bill was twice as high
as the rest of the village combined last year.

My real estate broker from Brookline says
if you really love yourself
and aren't afraid of looking bad,
you should install fun-house mirrors in your house
instead of normal mirrors.

Janice and Phil who are in biotech did this
at their second place over in Guilford.
Janice makes funny noises in the bathroom
because her reflection in there
has a pogo-stick figure and a watermelon face.
Ben says those two are fucking weird.

They say the tip of a mirror shard
is sharper than the eye of a diamond cutter.
How sexy would cutting yourself on a diamond be,
I asked Ben.
It's like, fetch me a fucking 14-karat gold band-aid
while you're at it, right?

Ben and I joke that the Japanese
are going to invent bot versions of ourselves
that we like more than each other.
He holds me and complains about his boss Bill
until he falls asleep.
Sometimes I can't tell if he wishes he stayed in Seattle.

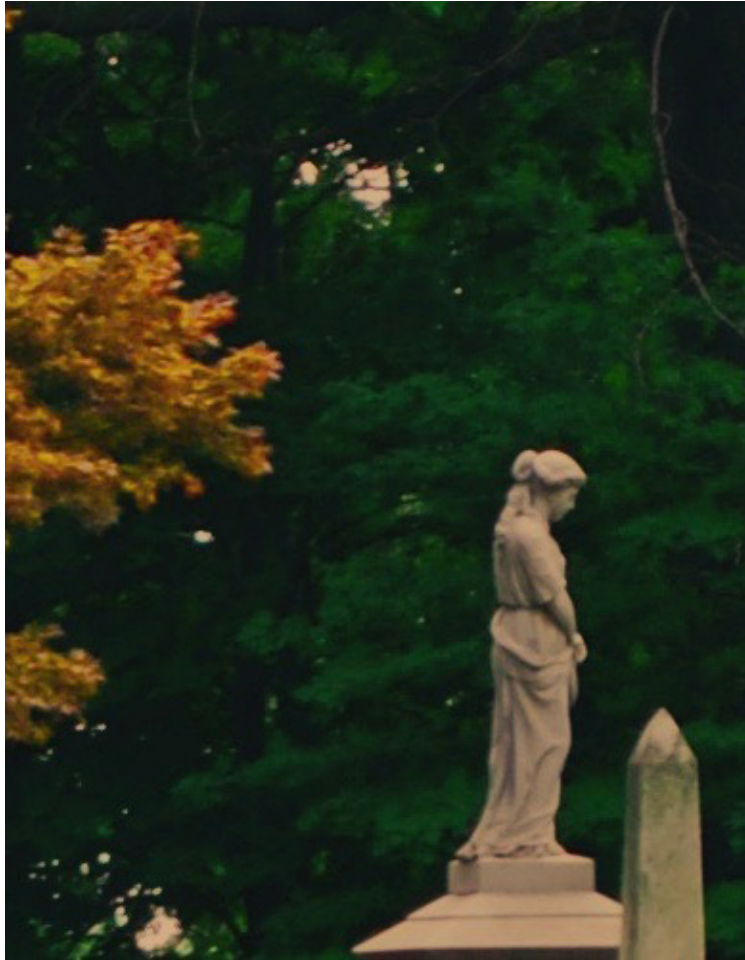
In Serbo-Croatian culture,
mirrors are sometimes buried with the dead
to prevent spirits from wandering and to keep
evil men from rising.
And if you don't cover mirrors at night while people
are sleeping, wandering souls can get trapped.
For how long do they get trapped?
And do you see them in the mirror the next morning
when you're deciding
whether or not to change underwear?

Will Ben be here in the morning?

Cora with the curly hair and Talbots jeans
claims biotech is going to see the biggest upward spike
the market has ever seen.

Victor Strauss, whose wink at me
in the conference room
looked more like a twitch, asserts Guilford is old,
better to buy on the Cape.

If you really want to see yourself clearly,
get a prescription and a good shrink.



Natural History
Zachary Vaughn

The Memorial

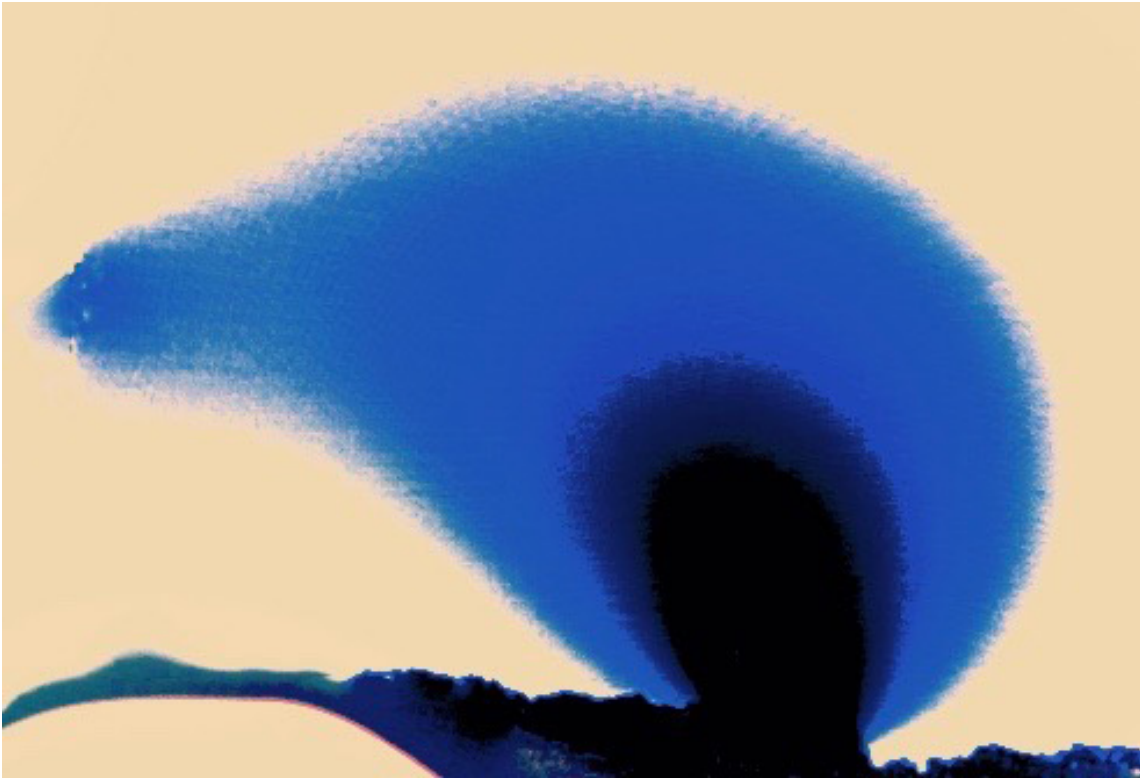
Olivia Hanson

My mother poured my grandmother's ashes
In a circle around an oak tree with a two-lane road and weeds beside.
They were in a plastic bag.

She handed us poetry and asked us to read.
"Hope-is-the-thing-with-feathers-"
I rushed in indictment of Emily,
That her canary never suffocated in the dark.
"I've-seen-it-in-the-strangest-land"
I wished that we had buried her, my grandmother, so that she would not be in the air.
"Yet-never-in-extremity"
When I cried it was with teeth and eyebrows set: a final surrender
To death in the air. To what and whom I cannot save.
This is for us, my mother had said. To me it seemed one more concession
To a world that did not expect her to stay good.

My grandmother's sister stood on her other side:
A beneficent intrusion.
"This was enough," she said when it was over. Said to my mother,
"Isn't that a good word?
Enough?"

Untitled
Zachary Vaughn



digital photography

A love story with breathing problems

Ananya Gupta

I imagine a cup- -string- -cup communication with you,
and the echo *echo* is a great heads up.

Makes impact absorption easier.

You keep t-
 tu-
tugging

twisting solid lines---dotted

inching away
 like a challenge.

Extended- -**accepted**, risk keeps us calling
ash cinder.

You and I
 You and I
 You and I
 You and I
 You and I
 You... I
 You? I.

I
 blowtorched china,
 blistered by blue orange flame,
 which is to say love,
 didn't have enough air for complete combustion.
 And the smoke,
this smoke,
 Isn't worth the asthma.

