

SEA EYE

VOLUME 11, GOODB(EYE) ISSUE, SPRING 2022

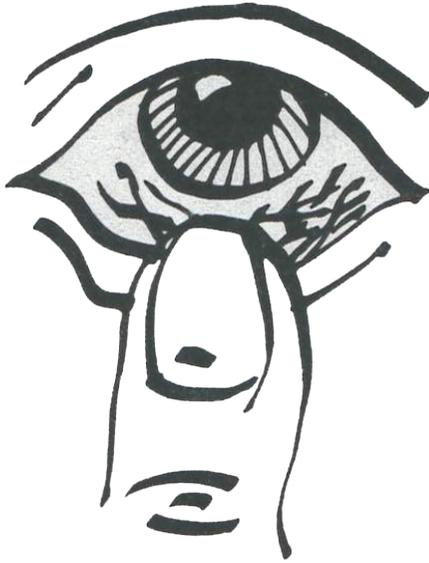


I want to get personal because this school has meant a great deal to me. I was born in this school as an individual. I was drawn to it by the ghosts that haunt this edifice. This building has not been—is not—its name. Its name has changed. There is no permanence to a building or a name. But the ghosts attracted me to this great institution sloping on the hill, this place that overlooks the San Francisco Bay, this unique, powerful, weird and clumsy magnificence of a creative force that attracts the weirdest human beings in the creative world because it has been shaped to do that by the ghosts that hover in this great place. People, make this place—those individuals who have shaped like clay the very sinew of this place. This small place in Northern California has echoed waves of creativity that have moved throughout the world. It was individuals, people like you, who came through this place. And you now will add to that ghostly number, along with the professors who have worked hard to shape part of those experiences throughout the 150 years that this place has existed. So the name may change, the building may take on different shapes, but the permanency is in your mind. It's in your body. It's in what you will produce. And you have challenged all of us because we have challenged you. And we have shaped your opportunity to change the world with your making. I want to join my colleagues in saying to you: step into your change. Do just that, and you will contribute to the ghostly presence of this creative force in the world. Thank you, and great good luck to all of you.

—Dewey Crumpler,
Commencement 2022



An Alien Show, International Artists Union, 2022



Hello, and welcome to the last issue of THE EYE ever to be published (probably)!

Half of the work in this issue comes from the spring of 2020, when the pandemic hit, SFAI fell apart, and a planned issue of THE EYE never made it to press. The other half comes from this year, in which SFAI is again falling apart (or really just finishing the falling apart that it had already started). So there's a lot of sadness and loss in this issue of THE EYE. It's been such a hard time, here and in the world. But at the same time a lot of good and meaningful stuff has come out of these last two years, and I think you can see that here too.

Anyway, at the very least, I'm glad we're taking advantage of being able to do one last massive, good-looking print job on the library's photocopier.

-B.A.

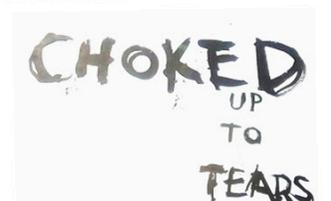
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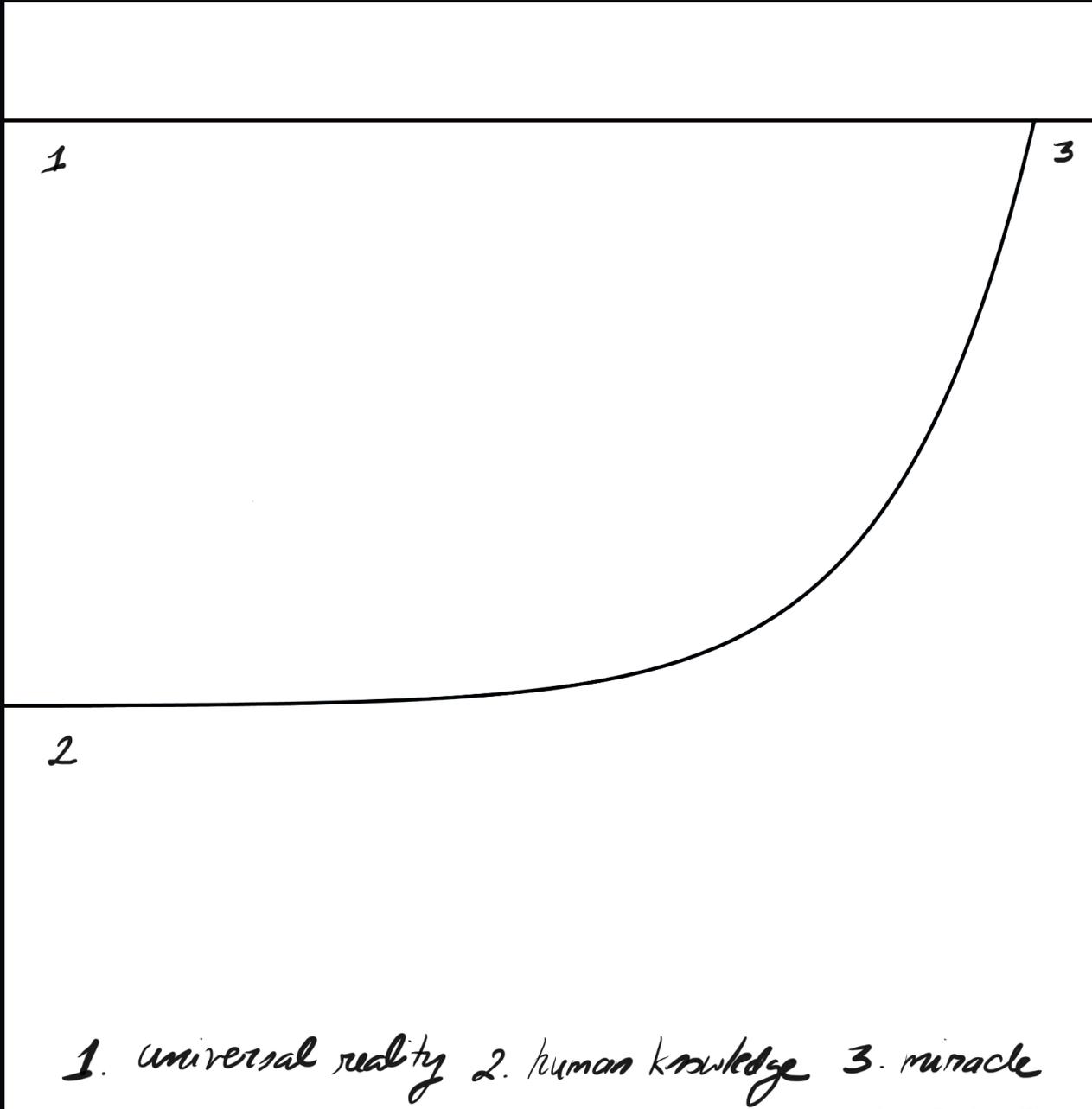
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Jeff Johnston, 2022



Jose De Los Reyes
Babel, Jose De Los Reyes



This is the first work I made
The memory is still fresh, and I feel that I



... when I came here.

... have gone round and back to the first day.

SFAI: The School as a Work of Art

Meredith Tromble

In January 2019, poet, singer, and songwriter Patti Smith performed in the gallery at the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI), drawn by the school's famous 1931 Diego Rivera fresco. Smith posted to social media that "The historic SFAI is a jewel, a work-centric atmosphere of communal process and artistic evolution."

On March 24, 2020, I, along with all the other faculty, staff, and administrators working at SFAI, received a layoff notice. SFAI was suspending admissions, just shy of its 150th birthday. The timeline our archivist was making for the birthday celebration, with pictures of the faculty meeting after the school burned in the 1906 earthquake, Henri Matisse's visit in 1930, the school founding the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1935, Marcel Duchamp and Gregory Bateson on a roundtable together in 1949, and Geoffrey Farmer's replica of the SFAI courtyard for the Canadian Pavilion at the 2017 Venice Biennale, would stop. What would this mean for contemporary art? Although I am a full professor and, at the time, was President of the Faculty Senate, I had little more warning of the layoffs than the security guards. The school had been attacked by COVID19 at a particularly vulnerable moment when the tech boom in San Francisco had pushed the cost of living out of reach for many prospective students.

I have been curious about what makes SFAI worth the tuition since 1974, when my painting teacher in Denver told me that if I was serious about practicing art, I should go to an art school like SFAI. From the moment I walked in the door, I felt different there, as other artists seem to feel different there. Alumni and



Patti Smith at SFAI

renowned tattooist Don Ed Hardy says, "[SFAI] looked like freedom to me." But why? School propaganda lists decades of famous artists, faculty, and alumni, from 19th century photographer Eadweard Muybridge (he of the galloping horses) to Ansel Adams, who started the photography department, to Academy Award winning director Catherine Bigelow. An SFAI alumna, Kehinde Wiley, painted Barack Obama's official portrait. But these names say only that the school produces artists, not how. I see my last chance to figure that out, the last chance to describe a culture that many people feel but few understand.

That mysterious school culture is emergent, greater than the sum of the school's parts. But the parts matter, of course, and the parts that matter most are scale, density, and irreverence. The scale is intimate. For the first fifteen years

of the 21st century, enrollment averaged 600 plus students. This is a humanly manageable number, a scale that counters anonymity and bureaucracy. Anthropologists disagree on the number of social relationships that humans can comfortably manage, and there is individual variation, but most of us have social networks of about 150 people. Remember the Kevin Bacon game, how quickly a highly connected person could link to lots of others? At SFAI, this means that after students have weathered their initial semester, they are highly likely to be socially connected, within one or two degrees of social distance, with everyone else at the school. They can ask a friend how to apply for an exhibition, or who's a great teacher, or if so-and-so is single, and get firsthand information. This communal process is supported by the physical structure of the school, which features two courtyards ringed by classrooms and

galleries. Everyone working at the school criss-crosses through these courtyards daily; even back office workers begin to look familiar.

The intimate scale, in concert with the composition of the building, promotes density. Here a chemical analogy seems most appropriate. Just as salts in a solution remain liquid until a certain density is reached, when they suddenly crystallize. The emotions and ideas that underpin art exist all around us, all the time. But to be saturated with those experiences, in the right conditions to crystallize art, is not that common. It's not just a matter of access to equipment, although that matters, as the class of 2020 found when they shifted to working at home in pandemic isolation mid-semester. To be in an environment where everyone you encounter is involved, one way or another, in making art, or thinking about art, or protecting and facilitating art, is stimulating. It can also be terrifying, but that's part of it. If you want to make art enough, you mix your psychic chemicals with your chosen medium and see what happens.

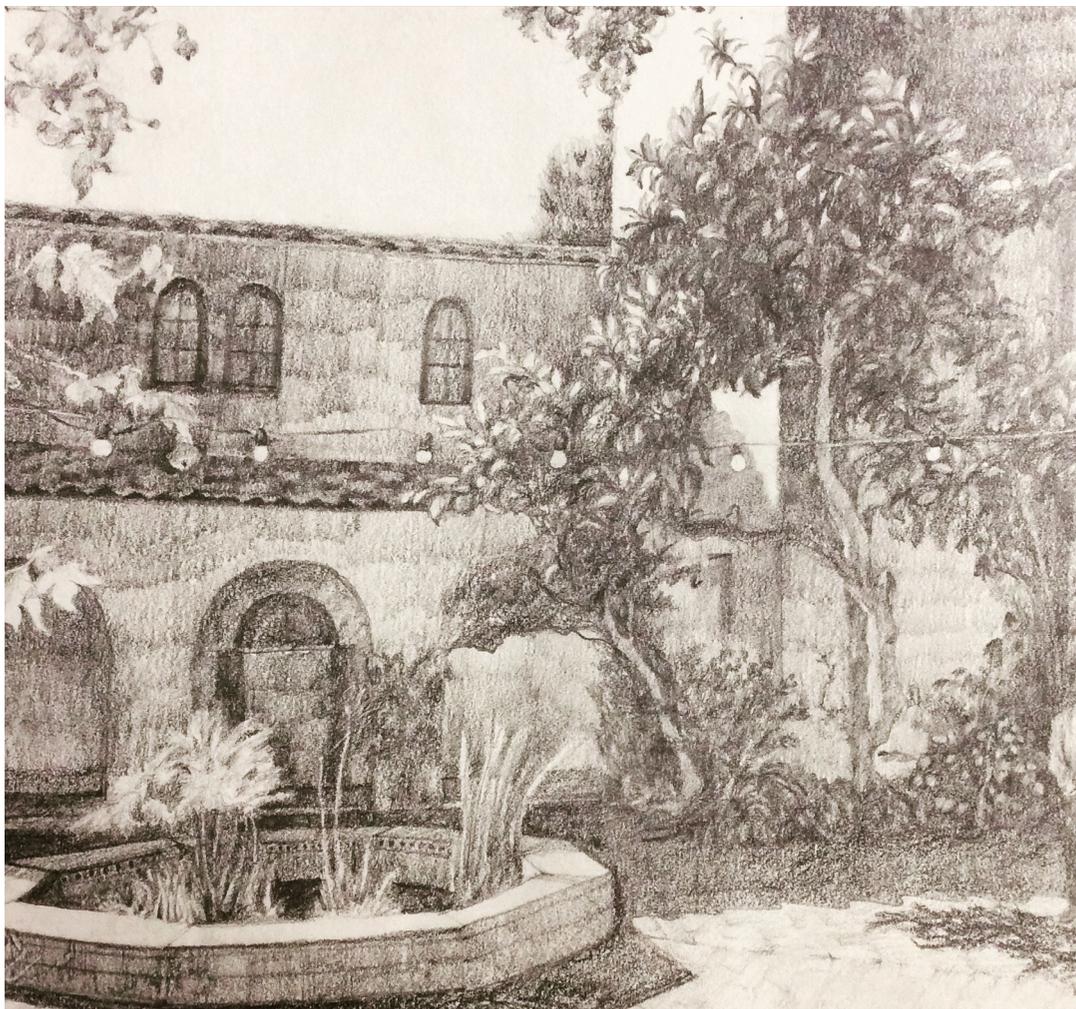
We teach students processes, we teach them histories, but we cannot teach them art, not their art. They have to make it to learn it. That's where the irreverence comes in. They can't be too respectful of the past—no one knows what their generation's coming into being, in their historical moment, means. In that way, instruction in art differs from instruction in other realms of knowledge: no one knows what our students need to learn. We find out together. We oscillate between "school" in the most common meaning of "an organization that provides instruction" and "school" in another sense of the word: a group of artists under a common influence, the influence of a community that has been continuously evolving since 1871.

Significant cohorts of alumni faculty have passed on SFAI's culture from the earliest days of the school. This is noteworthy as it is the opposite of best practice in universities; respected schools are cautious about hiring their own graduates—it magnifies blindspots.

This has been a pitfall at SFAI. Yet, when balanced with fresh views, contact with the lineage benefits everyone at the school as students, faculty, staff and administration learn from each other. It deepens our art culture, transmitting nonverbal, physical and intuitive knowledge that can be experienced along with ideas that can be voiced. The school, itself, becomes a living work of art that we are all making together.

Does it matter if that transmission is interrupted, if the communal evolution stops? Might the loss even jump-start something new? The 1930s diaspora of artists from the Bauhaus, the great German school, transformed art education internationally after the Nazis scattered the faculty. But SFAI is a different kind of school. The Bauhaus was distinguished by a program, a set of concepts about art education. SFAI is distinguished by its process, a lived approach to art education. You can shelve a concept and come back to it later. But processes are dynamic; they need to keep moving and growing. Like a living being, they can stop. Die.

How does this matter? Every living thing, eventually, dies. But as long as there are memories, there's more to their story. When, in Spring of 2020, I told my brave but terrified senior class about SFAI's previous closure for the 1918 flu epidemic, their eyes lit up. SFAI's history gave them hope. And our history is not going to go away, because we take it with us. SFAI will keep coming back to life in the works and networks of our students, and their students, for generations of artists to come. As my class of SFAI artists confronted conditions beyond our control, we needed the memory message from our 1918 ancestors. We ourselves will be artist ancestors for others, shepherding the things we care about into the future, despite the pandemic, despite the loss of SFAI as we know it. As we negotiate the connections between our pasts and our futures, we will remember what it is like to make a school as a work of art, and we will be the hope, the possibility, for it to happen again.



The Courtyard, Zidong Chen

Untitled

My circle of friends
After I stare out into
The vastness
When I look up into
The darkness
I realize how insignificant
I am
I'm a part of a species
Amongst many
When I encounter this
I get existential dread
I'm among you in this ocean
And like you
I produce sounds
But the sounds are many
And for many reasons
While mine are loud
They get lost in this ocean
In the vastness of existence
Muffled by the sounds
We all make
I close my eyes and listen
The sounds are life
The dead can no longer hear
While true silence
Is

-Sam De Lemos



if nothing was ever said/ is it still lying at the bottom / waiting to be carried up, Evan Pettiglio

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE DINOSAURS?!

About 65 million years ago Earth's dinosaurs came extinct - they died off forever. So did about 75% of all the kinds of plants and other animals on Earth at the time. About 65 million years ago a comet or asteroid crashed into Earth.



How much of our memories are false? how would we know.

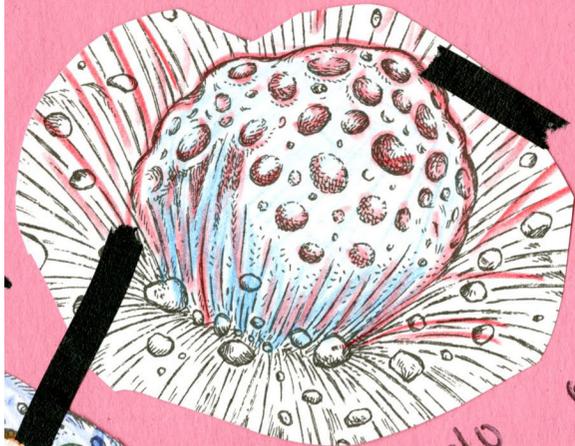
do we know in the universe to be real - If we can't know for certain

Solar winds blast particles into space.

our own histories how can we expect to know what has happened

in these galaxies?

In this part of the Sun, hot gases rise to the Sun's surface and give off heat. The gases cool and sink. The constant rising and sinking is called convection.



what do our memories mean in the universe our histories



How do we make sense of them - how much of



Ghost Story

Eleanor Scholz

October 2021

The lake water evaporated more than a decade ago, but we still call it the Salt Lake. What began as an extended drought—that dry uneasiness that hovered in the back of our minds for too long—morphed into a kind of behemoth, feeding off of its own horrible dust and heat, amplifying the pace at which our city became arid, chalky, hostile. The air lost that sulfurous brine shrimp smell that we didn't know we would miss until it was gone. Seagulls disappeared. Dust from the salt flats blew into the city, coating our cars and eroding highway signs, gathering in corners of our homes and irritating our lungs. We wore dust masks and pumped in water from distant and depleted reservoirs to clean our cars.

We mourned its loss, our strange and alien body of water that defied categorization. Too smelly and shallow to be a beach, too salty for swimming, too beautiful to write off as a wasteland. Pilgrimages to the lake were characterized with midges and salt-encrusted bird carcasses, long gray horizons that melted into the sky, and an overwhelming sense of peaceful desolation, even as the factories and freeways nearby churned away in the periphery. That the landscape always felt primordial, eternal even, made it infinitely stranger to see it disappear. We

all visited the lake as it receded further and further into itself, trekking through the mud, past hills that used to be islands, to find the last stinking puddles and pools reflecting the sky, blinking in the sunlight and shrinking daily.

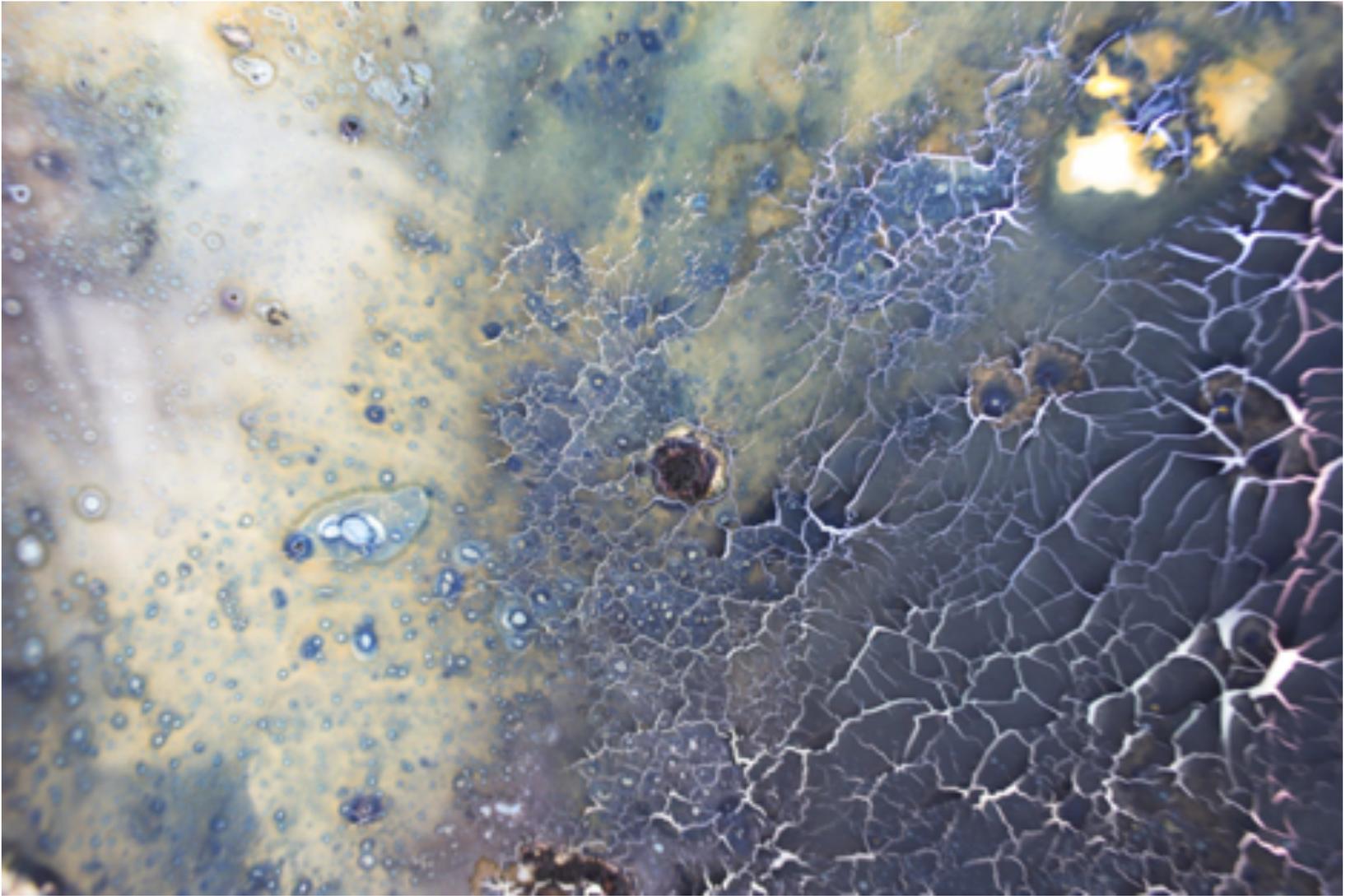
Oddly, the lake received more visitors once it disappeared than it did when it was full, and a sort of “lake mania” has swept through our city. Everywhere, images of the lake as it used to be, and as we thought it would remain: the failed boardwalk and trolley of the early 1900s, Spiral Jetty before it was abandoned in the middle of the desert, antelope island with its bison and working ranch perched improbably in the midst of such inhospitable waters as our beloved lake had to offer... t-shirts, murals, advertisements, guided tours of the former shorelines with helpful illustrated signs displaying the missing lake views—if anything, we identified more with the lake once it was gone, and felt special for having been there when it was still real.

Our waterless lake retains the alien landscape and impossibly distant horizons of its former self. Like a skeleton, the ridged, bleached desert extends into the distance in geometric lines mirroring the salt crystals left behind. We still visit,

feeling like astronauts on an alien moon, examining long dried lake beds that once supported life with a sense of detached disbelief. While the city celebrates and immortalizes what no longer exists, we find it hard to look directly at this new and brutal expanse that surrounds us without superimposing our memory of the old lake over it. We feel obligated to remember it as it had been, and in a way are unable to accept its death, even as we grow more and more accustomed to the salt flats and dust masks and desert temperatures of our own creation.



Lake, Eleanor Scholz, 2022



E. Leigh Daniels

Deep slate midnight tuscan teal

Cradle that indigo night sky in your hand,
dip it into the teal rainy day sf bay.
Now energize it with golden sunlight.

This is the darkest gold of blue's teal,
conditioned with the softest of silk.

This color shines royally and proud
as it engulfs a quiet solitude,
Immersing you into a soft soothing comfort.

-E. Leigh Daniels



Within, Gregory Blanche, 2020



Cars/Birds, Rigo 23, 1997

Fire Church

Meredith Martinez

A major snag in turkey vulture removal is that it is broadly illegal to kill them. If desperation is the mother of invention, most vulture infestation resolution strategies are extravagantly, baroquely inventive. In addition to light beams, fire hoses, sound cannons, and other means of imparting external force to disperse and deter a vulture wake, people have contrived psychological discouragements based on the macabre and touching hypothesis that vultures will not linger among their dead brethren, which researchers tested by laying a freeze-dried, taxidermized effigy of a naturally deceased vulture, obtained from the US Department of Agriculture and Wildlife Services, in a supine position on a walkway frequented by a vulture collective. For comparison and/or fun, in a different test, they suspended the effigy by its feet so that its head hovered over

the same walkway. They found that, while the vultures got used to the supine effigy, they abandoned the walkway following the introduction of the hanging one.

Consider the vultures encountering the hanging effigy for the first time.

What a day that must have been, in Sandusky, Ohio, at NASA's Plum Brook Station, adjacent to the domed vacuum chamber built to simulate the conditions of outer space, somewhere inside a 68-meter tower that held rocket engines for test-firings, where turkey vultures had been roosting for thirty years. In that thirty years' time, the vultures surely had encountered strange things before, apart from the rocket engine tests, which themselves were no small affair. Even NASA scientists get bored and cast around for ways out of the routine tedium

of daily work that pervades all industries, including rocketry, and some of them would not have resisted the temptation to annoy convenient wildlife. Obviously, pyrotechnics were involved, probably laser pointers, possibly missiles of various kinds, including rubber bullets, baseballs, and fruit. The vultures habituated to disturbances and harassments of every explosive, inventive kind. Even when the supine effigy showed up, installed by scientists doing actual research and not just horsing around in a space war silo, the vultures persisted in roosting.

But what a day it must have been for the vultures when, descending into the tower, they saw the taxidermized vulture hanging by its feet from their favorite walkway.

"Well, that's weird," one of them might

have said.

“Could be weirder,” another replied. “It’s full grown. Little baby guy would be weirder.”

“Weirder or grimmer?”

“Both. Doesn’t smell right, does it?”

“We’re all getting that. Smells like a shoe factory.”

Another waddled along the platform toward the hanging vulture, paused, sampled the air.

“Not getting shoe factory. I’m getting Windex, nail salon, hint of green banana.”

“And pickle. Lots of pickle.”

“I’m getting high voltage lines.”

“Yep, little bit of that, too. Well-sniffed.”

And what a day it must have been when, the next time they roosted, they found that the effigy had changed position. Where once it had been tucked in and sleek like a dive-bombing hawk, now it hung with wings positioned in an obscure semaphore, one up alongside its head, the other pointing across its chest. And the next day really took the cake. Still inverted, its wings were now at full spread, and its head was nestled against its chest.

“Hold on,” said the one who had suggested banana. “I recognize that. I’ve roosted in many an old church. I know exactly what’s happening here. Watch.”

This banana vulture took a few hops back, angled his body down, and then twisted his head so that he was looking at the effigy upside-down. The other vultures mimicked his posture.

“You’re right,” they agreed. “Now you point it out, that’s pretty fucking eerie.” “Know what it means?” the banana vulture asked.

The others grunted amongst themselves for a second or two.

“You’ll have to throw us a bone on this one, pal,” they admitted.

The banana vulture straightened up and looked around the silo. One of the oldest members of his wake, he’d roosted there for a long time. He would miss the smell of the men and their tools, their hormones and hair wax and deodorants, their lunches, coffee, the various things they smoked. He would especially miss the tall one in the butterscotch suit who chewed mint gum and those days when he would catch the vulture’s eye and click his tongue like he was egging on a horse so the vulture would know there was half a candy bar hidden for him to sniff out. The vulture didn’t like candy, but he would miss the small pleasure of play.

“Those of you that have roosted in churches,” he said. “What does that thing resemble?”

“Well, there is a strung-up, semi-naked man it kind of resembles. We’ll give you that.”

“And what does this place resemble?”

“Fair point. Steeple-y tower and everything.”

“It can only mean one thing,” said the banana vulture. “They are calling home their god.”

“Doesn’t smell like a church. Smells like creosote.”

“Explosions to welcome the return of their god.”

“Shit. This is adding up. What do we do?”

“Understand this. An explosion-loving god is no friend to us. We go.”

The researchers involved with the hanging effigy study were initially confused that their experiment had succeeded, and one quote-prone graduate student trucked out an old chestnut from his mentor to the groans of his peers. “We can go eyeball to eyeball with other creatures,” he said. “But their inner worlds remain impenetrable.” It’s true that there are limits to what proximity can teach, but it’s also possible to intuit correct conclusions

from misinterpreted data. The banana vulture recognized you can’t out-run gods who wish to manifest. The men would build fire churches where vultures were unwelcome until there was no place in the world left to roost. Still, he would miss the tall man, even as the man saddened him. Why would a person otherwise gentle in his life need a god who required such terrible flames?

The results of the hanging vulture study prompted researchers to recommend the development of synthetic vulture effigies to combat nuisance roosting. A plastic model would provide the demonstrated effectiveness of the hanging (as opposed to supine) model in a cheaper form, less encumbered by US Fish and Wildlife red-tape and more resistant to weathering and other forms of deterioration. Furthermore, a synthetic effigy could be constructed to give the owner ad infinitum pose manipulation capabilities with no cumulative damage, thereby reducing the probability of vulture habituation. It’s interesting to imagine the reasons hypothesized by the research team for why a vulture wake would be more disturbed by a dead vulture who periodically changed position versus one who remained static in its death pose.

While prohibitions surrounding the most expedient removal remedy—i.e., shoot the bastards—usually induce frustration and anger, there are occasionally instances of grace by people toward vultures. For example, upon seeing one stuck in a pine tree sixty feet above the ground, an ordinary woman—not a vulture aficionado, but a Design Associate at Dorsey Furniture in Holden, ME—moved heaven and earth to free it. Why did she bother? “It’s not like he’s an eagle,” she said. “He’s ugly, but he deserves to live.”





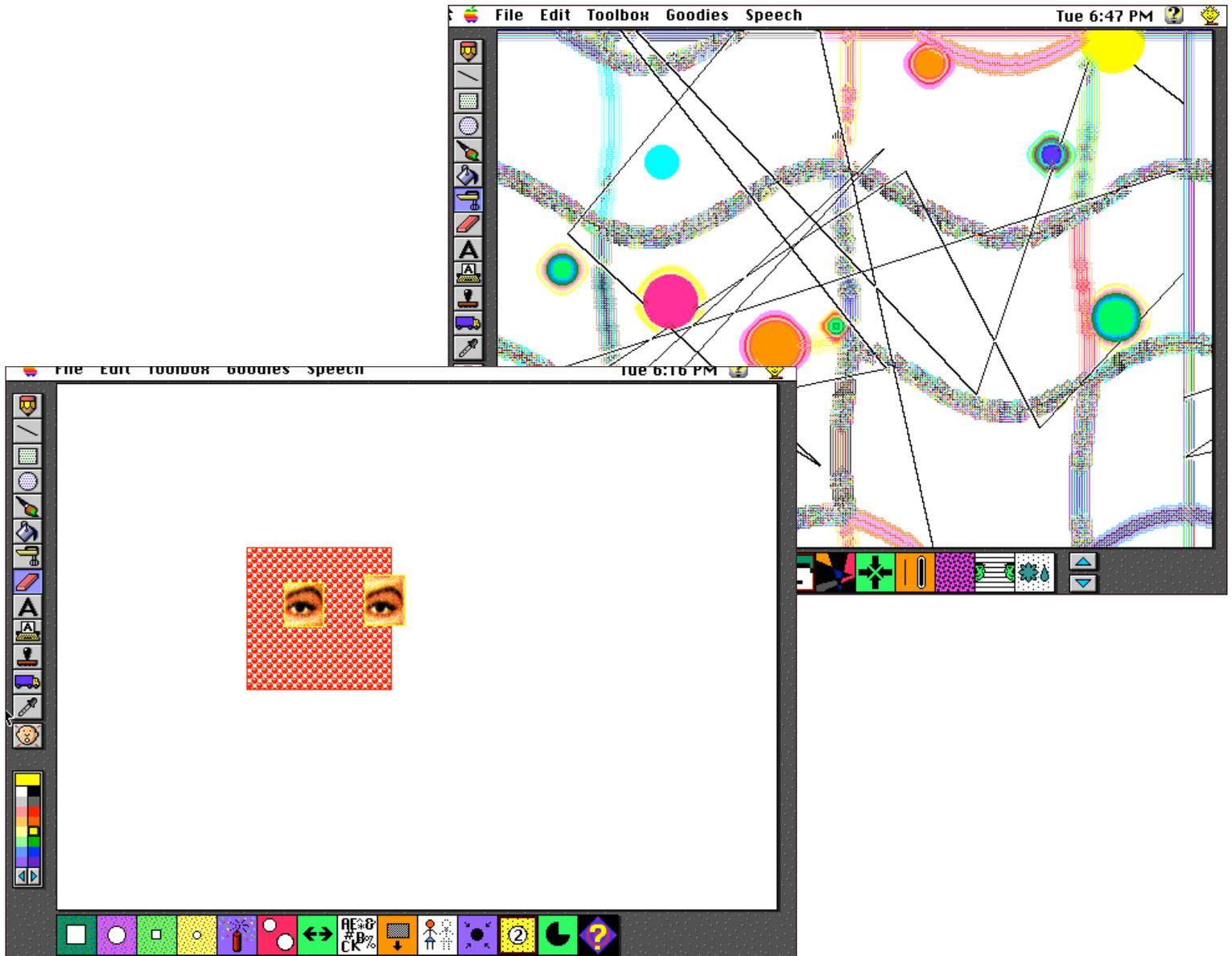
SFMOMA's Soapbox Derby, April 10, 2022

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LUCKY TO HAVE EYE IN S
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PERIENCED THE
THE HILL'S THE LAUGHTS
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COMMUNITY TRULY E.

Truly, E., Evelyn Hang Yin, 2020



Ren Spears

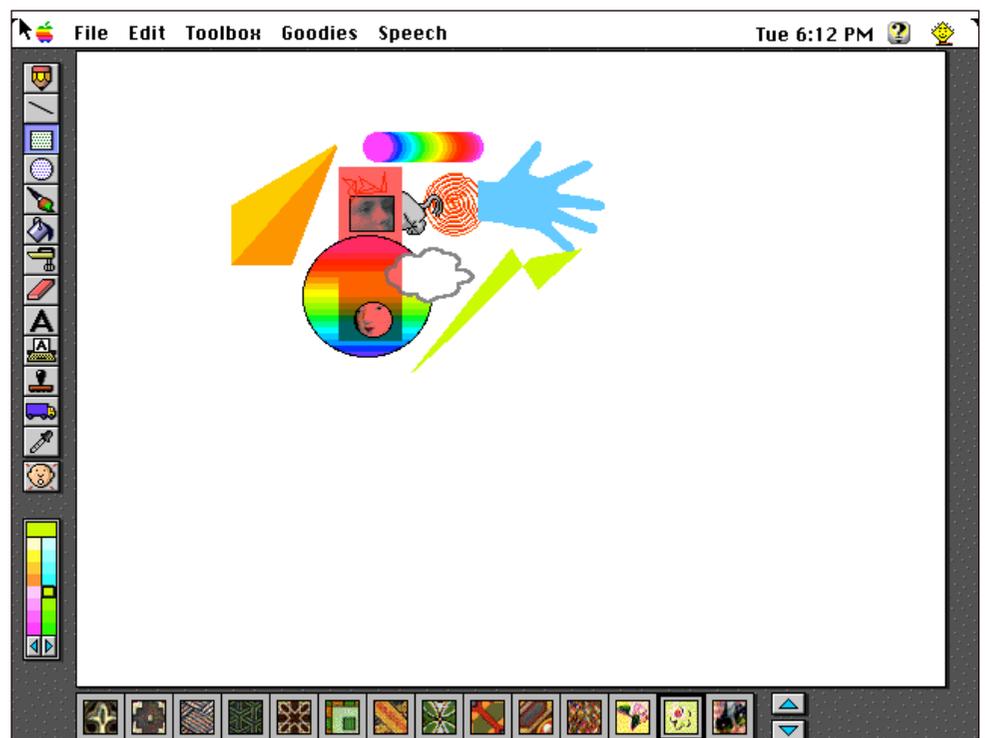


Some pictures people made at the DMS in KidPix on the former computer of Ted Nelson, pioneer of information technology, philosopher, sociologist, and coiner of the terms hypertext and hypermedia in 1963 and 1965, respectively.

Possible creators in order of likelihood:

- 1) Miguel
- 2) Michael
- 3) Carl
- 4) Haru
- 5) Someone else
- 6) Tim Johnson
- 7) Heather

(Images courtesy Tim Johnson)



May the Lineages and Magic of SFAI Live On

A reflection from writer,
historian, and activist
Rebecca Solnit

*NOTE THAT this is an excerpt
from an email to SFAI photography
professor Linda Connor. The “you”
referenced here is Linda.*

It's one of our oldest surviving cultural institutions, if you go back to its origins in the 1870s with the San Francisco Art Association, to which painters like Albert Bierstadt and photographers like Eadweard Muybridge belonged—I know about it because in my 2003 book on the latter man I tracked some of that lineage. One thing that stands out is how someone found a stash of Muybridge photographs from the 1870s or 1880s and sold them to buy video equipment for the new performance/video department in the 1970s, a beautiful example of continuity and change and the old underwriting the new.

But more than the sheer continuity as something worth protecting, there's something magic about the Art Institute, something that's fostered genius, originality, weirdness, over and over. It is not just the faculty or the students or the magnificent setting since the Russian Hill location opened, but some mysterious alchemical combination of that and the permission California and San Francisco give. A permission not to break rules but to be outside the jurisdictions in which some rules apply and are enforced—it's why at the height of Abstract Expressionism David Park and then the whole Bay Area Figurative movement could go back to representation.

The Art Institute stepped up to take care

of Jay DeFeo's legendary “The Rose” mandala-like one-ton painting when it became structurally unstable and it was encased in the wall of the first classroom I ever taught in in 1989, until it was excavated and restored on-site and the Whitney Museum acquired it. It was an early outpost of photography as art when a lot of institutions of higher education had not yet recognized it as art, and of course, its early photo faculty were among the great names of modernism—Ansel Adams, Imogen Cunningham, Minor White. Of course, you came as a very young graduate and sent many generations out into the world with cameras, but your impact goes beyond that—you were a huge influence on me in my twenties, as I mentioned with gratitude in my recent memoir, *Recollections of My Nonexistence*. Bill Berkson, the longtime organizer of the lecture series and teacher of art history at SFAI, was one of the first people to support me as a very young writer.

One thing I learned from the artists of my first book—several of whom were involved with the SFAI one way or another—is that before you can make art you have to have a culture in which that art is possible, and that means an audience, a community, a conversation. SFAI led the way in the postwar years in making such a culture and continues to feed the distinctly west-coast culture that we made, with talks, exhibitions, art, and also with the students who spread across the world with something of the vision the school gave them.

I think of Wally Hedrick telling me

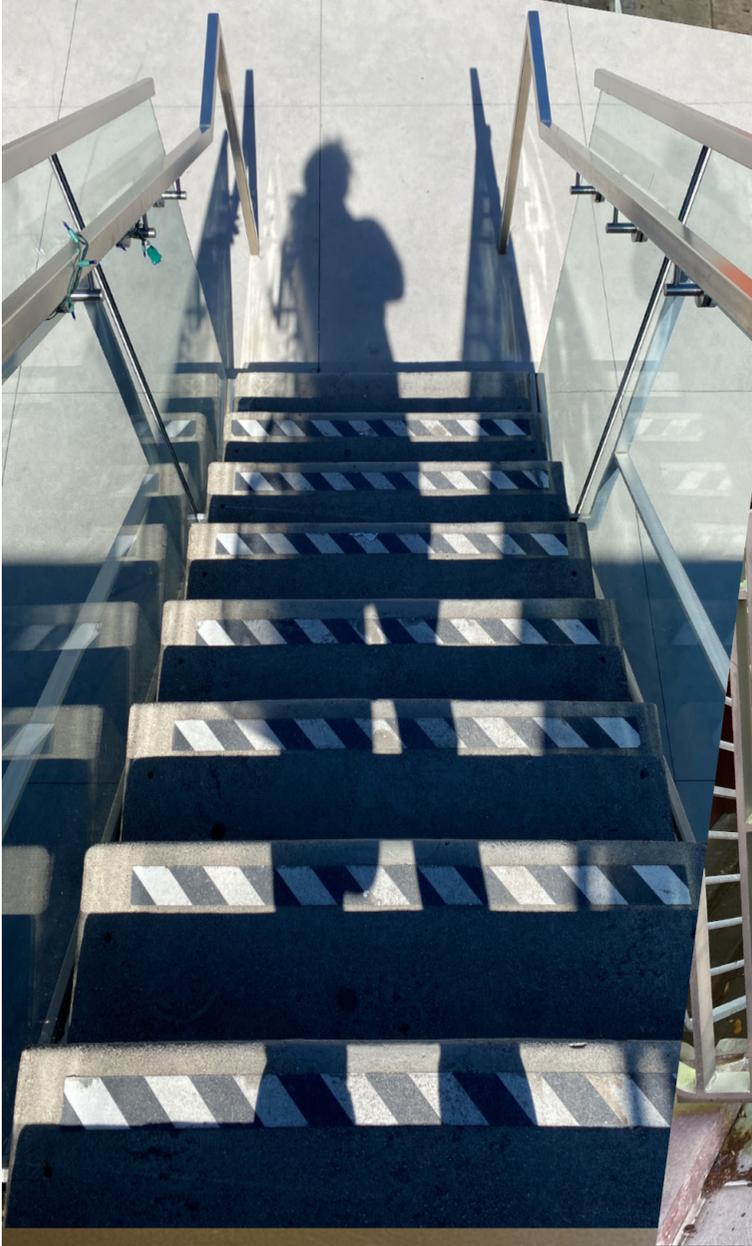
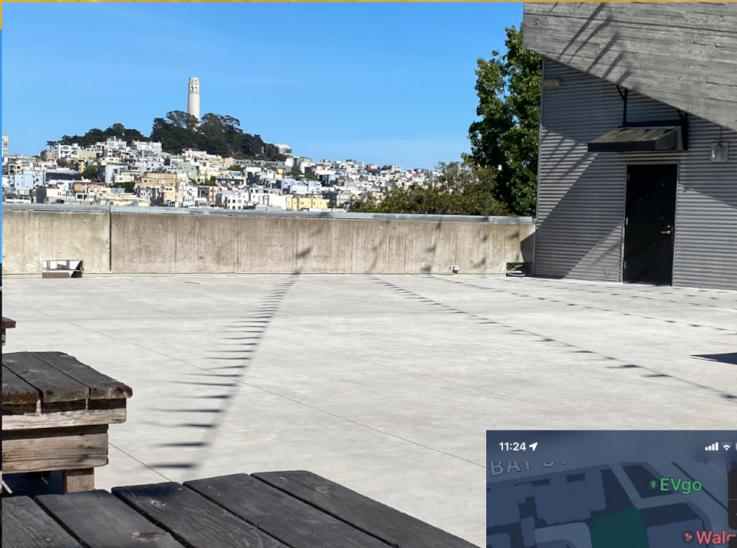
about the baseball games between the Abstract-Expressionists and the Bay Area Figurative painters back in the 1950s, and of how the Studio 13 Jazz Band, which lasted from the late 1940s to, last I checked, 2020, and was made up mostly of musicians with ties to the SFAI—and named after SFAI's studio 13 of course—and included some of the Bay Area's most legendary painters. The Chronicle reported in 2020, when the band played again, “Bischoff, who played Muggsy Spanier Chicago-style trumpet, got Park, a classically trained pianist, to loosen up and jam with him. They were joined on drums by Douglas McAgy, the school's visionary director who brought two giants of American painting out west to teach—Mark Rothko and Clyfford Still. Neither sat in with the band.” But Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead did.

I think that the greatness of the Art Institute can be measured in part, of course, by its alumni who have gone on to make names for themselves. But more than that the myriad graduates left with a vision of what it means to lead a creative life, to become producers of meaning rather than consumers of meaning, to be part of a cultural community, to think for themselves, to understand how we see the world is cultural and culture is something we make and change and make over, and artists play a role in this, and this affects justice, truth, rights, nature, law and all the rest of our lives. The administration seems to have been chaotic for most of the last 85 years or so, but the administration was never in charge of the magic.

And it has been magic. May it long continue.



Evergreen, Rosa Sarholz, 2022





A Short Visit, Kimberly Keown



Frank Nunez

i wrote this because i had nothing else to do

Shaikha Al Salman

I am awake and i am alive, there is something to be thankful for in that but right now all i feel is tired. i have crawled back in bed after a great effort to peel myself out of it just to put the kettle on. i let it whistle for a while before turning it off. isabelle has sent me another playlist, life is just hot water and playlists right now. the short walk from my kitchen to my living room feels like miles when i am preparing dinner for one.

i lie on my back and stare at a new spot on my ceiling, i am thinking about that time we were together in that place and i did not know how to read your kindness. "lovestained" comes on, another staple

from all the playlists. i can't even make out the words because it doesn't matter anymore.

i feel sick to my stomach. i wish i could comfort myself but i don't know how to do it. i got another email today asking me what my plan was now that my original plans don't even count anymore. i pile it on top of the other things that don't seem to matter anymore either. i would call my mother but she is too busy swimming.

mish has called me again, he wants to know if i will be home for our birthday. i don't know. my headaches are unbearable and my apartment is shrinking. my food

tastes funny, there is a gas leak and a stranger in my apartment. he jumps when i lift my finger.

i sit on my bed and you sit on the train.

i sit in my kitchen and you are at your desk.

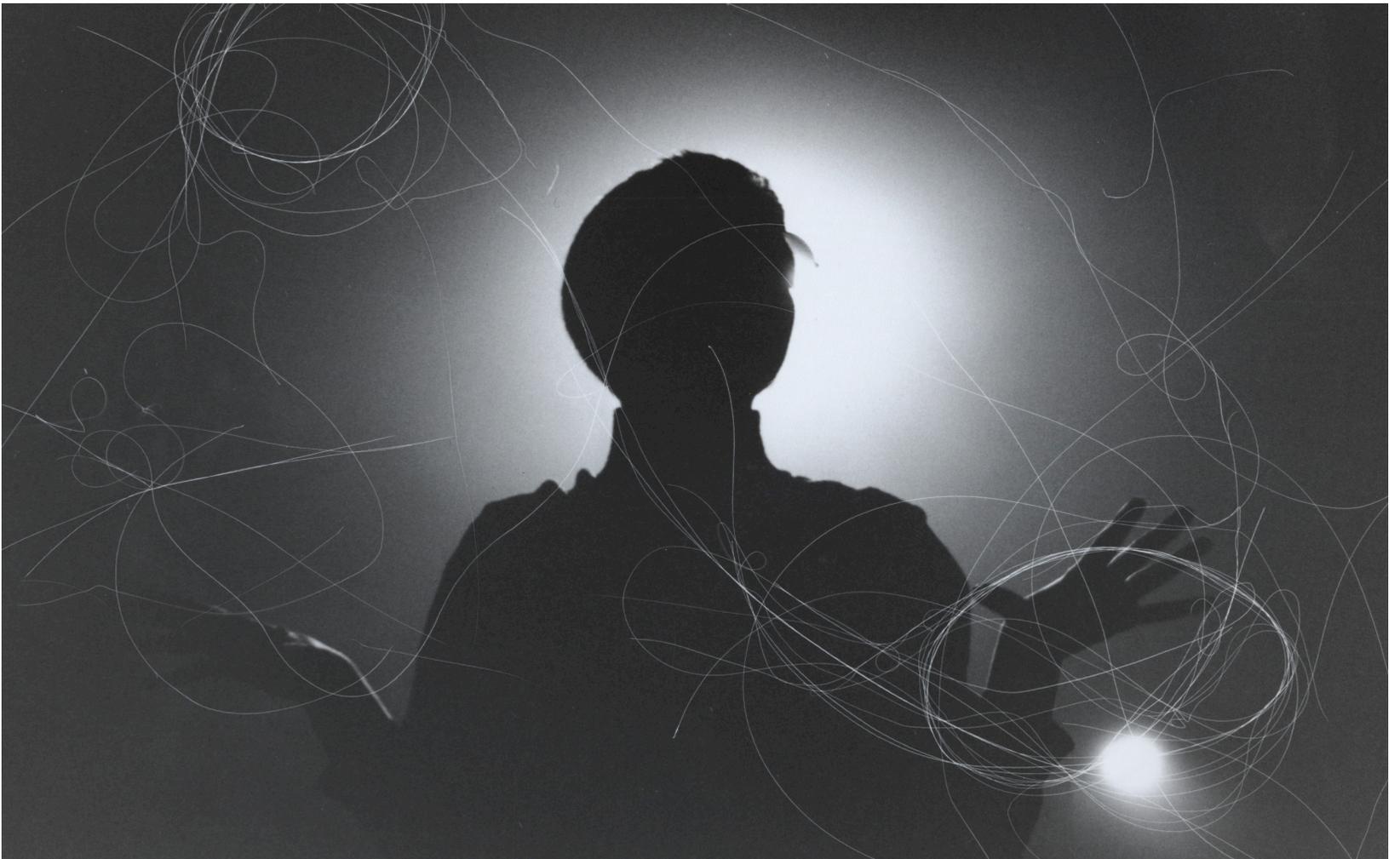
i call you from where i've been lying all day and you are waiting for a train at midnight.



Folie a Deux, Felicitia Norris



Frank Nunez



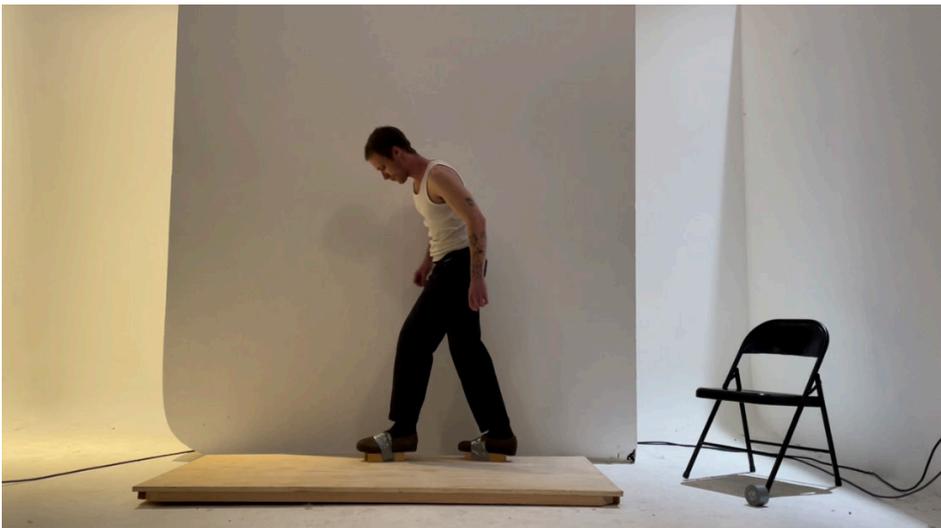
Ren Spears



Ukobach

Jackson Mayers

In numerous myths and legends a small fiery demon is tasked with the responsibility of keeping the furnaces of hell burning. This creature is known as Ukobach. Often Ukobach is considered a demon of an inferior order in reference to his place in the hierarchies of the underworld. This being is also credited as the inventor of fireworks as well as fried food. According to the book *dictionnaire infernal*, Ukobach is a demon of gluttony and serves the more well-known demon Beelzebub. Due to his obscurity Ukobach very rarely makes an appearance in pop culture despite his interesting and unusual characteristics.



Stills from untitled performance, Drew Hardgrove

After getting sick
Only meals were my friends
And I ate them all

I am quarantined here
Only water is warm
No matter how I beat myself
The shadow is always motionless

Make a mark in the air
Maybe hope is there
I beg it
Don't take my dreams away

Orange window
Dim candlelight
Devil's face
All the time

Everything in front is getting blurry
The hell is waiting for me
Isn't it?
I'm scared

To the weirdo, my unachievable teacher Jeannene Przyblyski

Sang Chi Liu

I doubt that anyone could be like Jeannene Przyblyski.

I do not have a picture of Jeannene. For a person who has no sense of fashion, I can only remember she wore jeans and a blouse every time I saw her. She was a female who did not need an outfit to stand out; she had her most loud and clear hoarse voice. Her voice was thin. Normally, it would be considered as femininely weak. I have been told that female leaders practice to make their voices count by intentionally using lower tones to vibrate the vocal cords. But her voice was an exception, full of contradictions, loud, clear, but hoarse. Thin, but with a strong presence. Perhaps because she stood upright, perhaps because of the perfect timing of her pauses, emphasizing the right words, perhaps because she always looked in people's eyes.

Jeannene was at the top of my visiting list when I flew back to the US last year after leaving for the pandemic. I asked to see her when I landed, and she said, "I am ill with a neurological disease and not expected to recover. I tell you this not to be sad, but so you will know why I may not respond sometimes." Jeannene is someone brave enough to communicate about her own death.

I have always wanted to be a teacher and an artist. Not because I have thrived in school culture—in fact, I struggled since I was little—but because every now and then, I met teachers who saved my life. The moments I shared with my great teachers I remember, and I've told myself I want to give the same to my future students. It is common to think about these things that my teachers gave me as gifts that I want to pass on to the next generation. However, the gift passing is only easy to imagine when the gifts are manageable. What if they are not?

Jeannene Przyblyski, who saw me clearer than I saw myself, died at the age of 62. It is tricky when teaching is not only about giving and sharing knowledge, but also about

helping the student to advance professionally after they graduate. However, the latter part is not a requirement. Jeannene gave me my first opportunity to be a TA in the US. She thought I could when I was all too afraid about the level of my knowledge in the history of Western photography. I did not do much as her TA, except I took over one of her classes. It was in 2019 when I led my first class. I was shocked after the class when she told me the only thing I needed was to be confident about myself, and to be aware of a student who attempted to take advantage of me because I was a young female and he was a man. That is Jeannene, a strong feminist, asking her student to challenge, to lead, to be aware, but not back off of the circumstance where nothing is easy for an Asian female.

This fall, I am entering a PhD program at Duke in part because Jeannene wrote me a letter of recommendation two months before she died. Jeannene never wanted me to do a PhD. She loved my art and she thought if I pursued an academic route I would stop making art. I was moved when she said so, even though she never directly complimented my work, but only asked me harsh questions during critique.

I once felt Jeannene drew a clear line between teaching and her private life. I would schedule meetings with her and she would give me a strict time limit and when the time limit hit she would take off right away. I once thought she only treated teaching as an obligation because of this. But soon I realized I was very wrong. Jeannene was addicted to Instagram. She often sent me posts that she thought would interest me. They were art by others, news, internship opportunities, and exhibitions. Everything she sent hit my interest. She never told me how great I was; sometimes when I did a poor job she told me quite directly. Instead, she simply put me and my work in her mind, all the time, so I occasionally received DMs from her.

Teaching contemporary art is ultimately an odd thing. A bunch of art lovers gather to

justify and challenge art's value. Jeannene didn't need to teach when we met. She was going to retire, but SFAI asked her to come back after years of serving as Dean at CalArts. But she did service even after SFAI shut down. We zoomed after I graduated, while I was quarantined in my room. We chatted about school, career, and private life. I wish it hadn't taken so long for me to realize this, but I think her biggest reason for supporting her art students was simple: she has a lot of love for art.

I have been to two funerals. Both of them were for great-grandparents, one who died at the age of 100, the other at 93. Excluding the people I know that died from suicide, those two are the only ones that I know that spent a long time waiting for their own deaths. They didn't have much ability at the last stage of their long lives. Trying to eat, sleep, exercise, and struggle through the all-too-familiar pain was the biggest part of how I saw them spend their last 10 years. They weren't trying to do much, frankly. Of course, these aren't the only two people I knew that left my life. One part of me, because of that, believes humans won't want to do much when they are waiting for life to end.

Jeannene was different. According to her family, she did not stop reading, learning, sharing, and exploring until her breath ceased. She also chose to do me the huge favor of writing me a letter of recommendation. I was in a difficult place as a transfer student who wanted to apply to a PhD program. After long hesitation, I eventually reached out to her for the letter with the awareness that her clock was ticking down. I wasn't feeling certain about if she would say yes, but she did. I always wanted her letter of recommendation, so I was happy, and thought that the fact she had said yes meant she had more time left than I had assumed.

A few days before my second round PhD interview, I learned that she had left me. And then all I could do is to imagine, why, why did she spend part of her last few months writing



Instagram Post, Jeannene Przyblyski, September 30, 2020

me a letter? How could this be so meaningful to her that she chose to do this? How could I take this gift? When I told my mother about this, she cried that someone else, other than her, could be so kind to her daughter. It is all too much to take. Why would a person choose to do so? Can I say it's simply because 62 is too early to feel done with life? No, it is certainly not about how old she was. I know for a fact that she would remain learning even though she was 90.

Not until Jeannene passed away did I know that, when we first met at the San Francisco Art Institute, she had already been diagnosed with ALS. I remembered she talked about her fight against breast cancer, so I always assumed her shaky hand was a consequence of that. I was dumb. A strong woman again, she always refused my offer to carry piles of books for her.

She loved bird-watching, something I know

nothing about. I remember I emailed her and asked her if chicken/penguin/ostrich watching counts as bird watching. And she said, "Strictly speaking according to birding protocols, chickens don't count as domestic birds. Ostriches and penguins wouldn't count at the zoo, but they would count in areas where there are endemic populations. But I just sort of like animals in general..." This is her, a nerdy version of a scholar, who can also take humor without laughing out loud.

I never asked her why she always made class be from 7pm to 10pm. She never seemed too tired at night. But I assume she woke up early as a bird watcher. Maybe she just didn't sleep? I don't know.

What do you want to do during the last part of your time when your clock is ticking down? I am still not sure how meaningful a PhD program can be for me. But then, obviously, Jeannene believed that supporting me to have

the chance for this journey was worthy of her physical struggle. I want to become a great teacher. But how will I guarantee I will be thinking about my students even when I am dying? I do not have a picture of Jeannene, but I still look at her through my memory. I see how much one can possibly love to teach, to be devoted to the art community and see people grow, beyond all the other things in life.

8 YEAR
BIG SAN
= 384 FT



Happy eating for all!



RS OF
NDWICH

of sandwich

It's been a delicious run!



Carolina Torres



Todd Molinari

The Dress

Naomi Alessandra Schultz

The dress arrived, as most things do, as a notification on her phone. She glanced at the screen to find a photo of a compact bubble mailer leaning up against a trio of ubiquitous boxes on her front steps. She was vaguely stirred, in the second-rate way that follows on the heels of an initial sparkling glimpse of a thing online. Oddly, she felt more apprehension than anticipation. Pausing the show before it could auto-start another episode, she closed her laptop, wrenched herself from the couch, and opened the front door to snag the bubble package. She left the other boxes where they lay, uninterested in their contents and unready to face their clutter.

The package was obnoxious to open. When she finally found a tag to pull, the thing broke away without yielding the requisite gap through which she could slip her fingers. She jerked at the caustic plastic bubbles for a bit before taking a kitchen knife to the thing.

When she had first seen the dress on her feed a few days prior, she'd been smitten. It had adorned the body of her favorite sister in a social post—not her own sister, of course (she hadn't talked with her own sister in months)—no, the famous sister who most aptly approximated her own sense of self, or the self she could be, maybe, if she had a lot more money and a stylist, and maybe a therapist.

The dress had caught her eye because it reminded her of an outfit she'd seen years ago, in a 90s remake of that cult 60s Italian film. The cut of the dress had indicated curves, but it wasn't yelling about them; it was avant-garde in a way that was hot this season, with a smart-slash-sexy

utilitarian look about it (though what utility it might serve she had no idea); and it gave a nod to hip hop (but in a respectful, non-appropriating way). The fabric had seemed technical and sporty but also soft and pliable. It was a collab between that Bronx-based streetwear label and a French luxury brand that was now directed by that Ukrainian designer. In any case, everyone was saying that with this look, her favorite sister was finally on top, and the feed images proved it: never had the sister looked more badass and radiant.

Anyway, after she had liked the dress image on one app, the ad for it kept following her around the internet, and eventually it had seemed to make sense to drop a week's worth of pay on it. But she had to admit she'd had a foreboding feeling ever since she clicked "Place Order." Her account balance was near zero again, and she could barely recollect now exactly what the dress had looked like.

She pulled the tissue-wrapped mass from the bag and peeled back the sticker that denoted its luxe provenance. As she lifted the thing from its wrappings, she puzzled at its texture and hue. This wasn't the shade it had been online—was it? This color looked like nothing, like a void, a bruise; fleshy, but deadened. It had been vibrant in the photos, lifelike, imbued with meaning. And—this fabric. Squinting, she couldn't make out what the hell it was. It was thin, basically diaphanous—she could barely even see it—but it was strangely unyielding to the touch, even rough, as if made of burlap or sandpaper. Maybe it was silk that had been gnarled and distressed to feel more humble? She ran her fingers along the edges, which, she remembered, were supposed to be adorned with hand-stitched faux fur. And indeed these weird mangy furry bits were clearly attached by hand, with such tiny odd stitches that she had to bring the whole thing up to her nose to even imagine she was seeing them.

She knew that the luxury brand was

working with village artisans from that war-ravaged region, and supposedly paying living wages, but she couldn't help envisioning the miniscule fingers that must have sewn those details, not to mention the faux animal from whom the fur had been yanked. As she mused, the dress seemed to prick at her with invisible cactus-like spines, and small dots of irritation rose to the surface of her skin. Was the weft of the fabric run through with nettles, with tiny thorns? She couldn't see a thing, but it smelled rusty, like iron, or blood.

She shook out the garment. Was it a dress? It looked a bit more like a bodysuit now, or like the skin of a snake, or like a wraith. She peeled off her old t-shirt and tried to step inside. Pulling it up around her chest and shoulders, she felt a chafing, constricting sensation. Her skin started to go a bit numb. She was having a hard time catching her breath. Was it too small? She smoothed it around her belly.

But when she looked down, she could see neither the dress nor herself, a strange feature of the thing that hadn't been mentioned in the ads. She felt for her phone to snap a few selfies, but the camera wouldn't focus in on her. Out of breath, she threw the phone down and sank back upon the couch. She really didn't feel like herself at all lately.



Eye (L'occhio), 2009
Gregory Blanche

115 - DeFeo, J.
A WAKE FOR THE ROSE



MAY 21, 1973

GUESTS

Jean Conner
by on Hushman
Juditha Furo
Katerina Brinsky
Alex Powers
Annie Schneider
Fred Martin
Mr. Wong
Gina Aydar
Dr. Art Hoyt
Dan Looker
Tina Selig
David Potkin
Richard Korman
Suzanne Foley
Deey Menck
Diane Kuhn
Stacy Bunnell
Bruce Conner

The Rose in the Wall

Becky Alexander

Before it was purchased by the Whitney Museum and cautiously, painstakingly restored, Jay DeFeo's now-iconic painting *The Rose* sat in a classroom at the San Francisco Art Institute for twenty-six years, slowly falling apart.

SFAI had not been DeFeo's first choice as a long-term home for the painting, but the painting was homeless and enormous—almost eleven feet tall and weighing nearly 2000 pounds, in places more than eight inches thick with paint. It needed a home. And SFAI had space, having just expanded into a large new building that doubled the school's footprint. DeFeo had been teaching

there in recent years, and Fred Martin, who was SFAI's director at the time, was a friend and a fan. The painting, according to Jay, "was very dear to his heart." Jay and Fred conceived of it as a mutually beneficial arrangement; the painting would be stored but also seen. It would be installed on the wall of the new conference room, a high-ceilinged classroom tucked away in the back corner of the building with enormous north-facing windows overlooking the San Francisco Bay. The thought was that the painting would live at SFAI until it was acquired by a museum. But while a number of museums expressed interest, in the end they shied away from the challenges and the costs of taking on the work. DeFeo had worked on *The Rose* from 1958 through through 1966 in a slow, organic process that involved laying down layer after layer of paint and then carving back into those accumulated layers, adding, scraping away, growing the painting, at one point even enlarging the dimensions of the entire canvas with extended supports so that by the time it was finally removed from her studio the movers had no choice but to enlarge the window by cutting a hole in the wall to get

it out. Under the best of circumstances oil paint is slow to dry, and using it the way Jay was using it, sculpturally, drying fully was out of the question. The painting became fragile and unstable, sagging under its own weight. Any museum that acquired it would have some serious conservation problems to solve, and the solutions would be costly. And so *The Rose* stayed at SFAI. And stayed, and stayed.



One day last year, at the height of the pandemic, it occurred to me to look for lingering traces of the presence of *The Rose* on the wall of the McMillan Conference Room. The building is made from board-form concrete, a style of construction in which the imprint of the boards that hold the wet concrete in place as it hardens remains visible on the finished surface, making each stretch of wall distinct and distinguishable, like a fingerprint. It's a raw, unforgetting style that shows every crack, every repair. It seemed impossible that whatever hardware was used to install *The Rose* on the wall

would not have left a sizable mark. But I was having trouble remembering what the walls of the room looked like inside. It had been a long time since I had been in the McMillan—since pretty much anyone had—and its door had been locked for months. I asked the security guard to open the door, then immediately realized he shouldn't have gone to the trouble. A false wall covers the concrete one that once held the enormous painting.

The falling apart that is happening at SFAI right now is both an extension of and an eerie parallel to the falling apart that happened that year, although that time felt like it had a longer lead-up. The ominous signs had been there for years: declining enrollments, increasing debts, and a 20 million dollar fundraising campaign for the shiny new graduate campus at Fort Mason that stalled out midway through. Whispers about a merger with the University of San Francisco that would save us from impending disaster got slowly louder through the fall of 2019. But then the pandemic hit, the merger was unceremoniously scrapped, and we learned that there had been no Plan B. The school would simply close. Then, as now, students were told they would need to transfer elsewhere if they wanted to continue working towards a degree the following year. Then, as now, there was so much that needed logistically to get done, and all of it had to happen inside a cloud of chaos, heartbreak, and anger. Faculty and staff were confronting their own layoff notices while trying to help students finish the semester and transfer out of the school. Meanwhile the city had gone into lockdown, the campus had closed, and classes moved awkwardly online. Students came one by one to clean out their studios. Staff came one by one to clean out their desks. People who had worked together for decades said goodbye over Zoom or not at all. Staff still working on campus spent their days packing up artwork to ship back to students already scattered across the country and the globe, or throwing abandoned sculptures into massive dumpsters that quickly filled up with the overwhelming quantity of things left behind. I helped out a bit repainting studio walls white and throwing things away. It was hard not to see how fine the line is between art and trash, between something worthy of hours of labor and thought, and something worthy of a landfill.

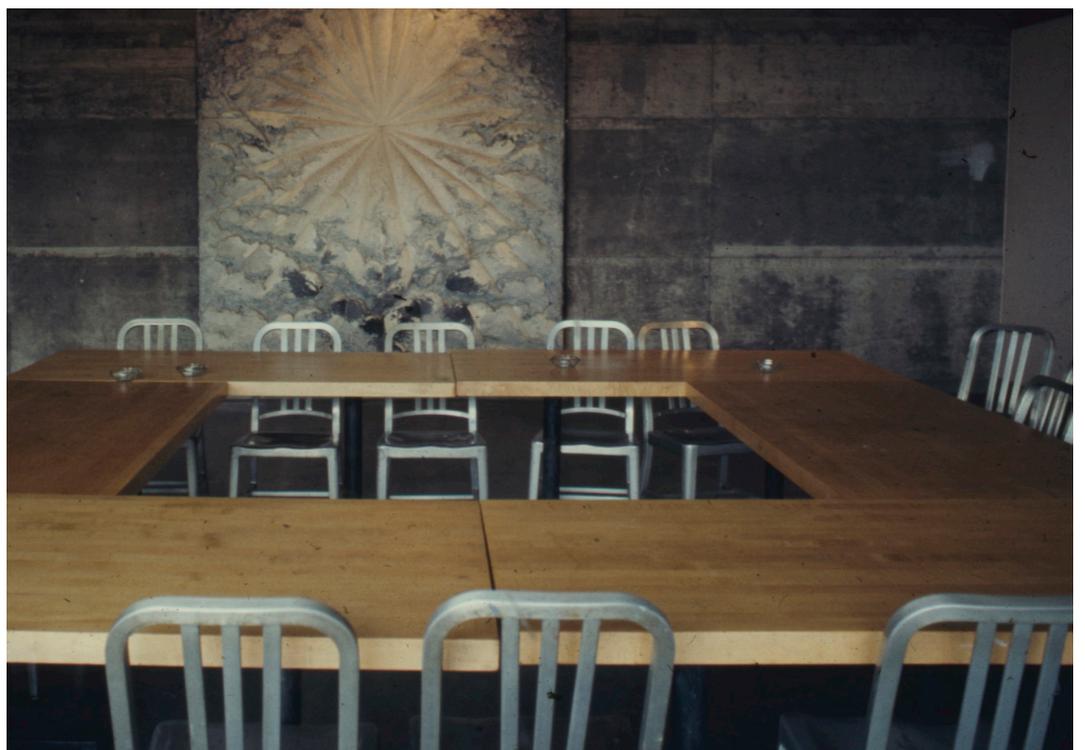
I would have been laid off then for sure, but the library had fortuitously just received grant funding for a year-long project to digitize its collection of SFAI-hosted lecture and symposia recordings, so my salary was still covered and I stayed. Over the following months, SFAI reversed course, leadership

changed, and the school gave existence another shot. Students, faculty, staff and alumni gathered virtually in an attempt to reimagine a viable future. I worked on the digitization project from home for months and then from campus when restrictions were lifted a bit. Coming back was stepping into a time capsule. Mail sat in mail slots labeled with the names of people who would never pick it up. The shelves in the ceramics studio were full of work that would never see the inside of a kiln. More than anything, the campus felt then (as it does now) like the physical manifestation of an inflection point, an emptiness with equal space for the ghosts of the past and those of the future.

But! Join me in thinking back to 1969 when The Rose first came to SFAI, and the school had just built a brand new building because the old one was bursting at the seams. Many factors determine the fate of a school, but one of them is simple demographics, and with the Baby Boomers hitting college age, enrollment at SFAI was at one of its all-time highs. The new building was expansive—new gallery, lecture hall, cafe, the cavernous sculpture studio, the wall of sun-filled painting studios. The new conference room was dedicated to non-studio classes with The Rose a silent auditor sitting at the back of every seminar. As semesters went by, and then years, with the painting still on the wall, it began to feel less like it was on display, and more like it was simply part of the room. The Rose began to suffer a sort of casual neglect, with students leaning their chairs against it, or tacking notes to its pliant surface with pushpins. Residue from all the many cigarettes smoked during classes built up on the painting's surface, while the paint itself continued its gradual downward slump. Something needed to be done.

A first effort at pulling together momentum and funding for a restoration effort took place in 1972, led in large part by Jay's good friend and fellow artist, Bruce Conner. Some renovations were planned on campus, and Jay and Bruce were worried about how vibrations from the jackhammers would affect the already fragile painting. Jay got in touch with Tony Rockwell, the head of conservation at SFMOMA, and Rockwell developed a two part plan. The Rose would first be cleaned and stabilized for transport by protecting its surface and carefully filling in the spaces between the grooves and bulges so that jostling couldn't cause the paint to crack or slide further. The second part of the plan, the actual restoration work, would be done at SFMOMA, pending additional funding.

Part one took place, but part two did not. Additional funding never came through, though not for lack of trying. Bruce Conner, in particular, tried. He advocated for The Rose, looked for funders, and held screenings of his short film *The White Rose* which he had made in 1965 documenting the removal of the painting from Jay's apartment. At SFAI Bruce organized a "wake" for The Rose, now entombed and in need of reanimation. But no dice. The money was nowhere to be found. The Rose stayed as it was—encased in plaster in the McMillan, so tall that it poked up from behind the false wall that had been built in front of it. It was still a presence in the room, but now it was a nearly invisible one. It became a myth, a legend, a ghost. Curator David Ross, who would go on to direct SFMOMA and later the Whitney Museum, taught in the room in 1980, and later remembered the feeling of it: "[T]hough not one person in class that day had ever seen



Jay DeFeo's *The Rose* in SFAI's McMillan Conference Room

the painting, we all sensed its presence—the unmistakable propinquity of a living thing imprisoned.” Students would sometimes leave roses on the upper ledge of the false wall in tribute.

Nearly two more decades went by.



When I started working in the SFAI library I had just turned 24. It was my second real job out of college. The first had been at a real estate agency, a job I took out of pure necessity, hated intensely, and quit without a backup plan. I remember walking into the school for my interview and finding my way up the stairs to this beautiful, haphazard little gem of a library. I remember my soon-to-be boss, Charles, giving me pre-interview instructions to “not bother dressing up” and my soon-to-be coworker, Claudia, asking the hard-hitting interview question, “Do you think you’ll feel safe going home in the evening after work?” They seemed so great. They turned out to be so great. I got the job and knew I had found a place where I could crawl back into my own skin. I took some classes for free as a staff perk—painting, ceramics, screen printing, a little of everything. I took a film history class in which we learned zero film history facts, just sat each week in a darkened room watching three different films projected at once on three different walls while our instructor, Jun, made cryptic, koan-like pronouncements that seemed tangentially related to what we were watching at best. Later I watched Jun talk to some students about their own film projects and suddenly understood his generosity as a teacher, how, as he talked to each student, their work deeply, fully filled the space of his attention. I’ve learned that teaching at its best is like this—a generosity of sight, a generosity of imagination, a fullness of attention. It’s a fundamental human need to be seen fully. We’re all looking for that, but it’s not always easy to find. The world doesn’t always offer it up, especially not to us weirdos.

Weirdos are, and have always been, the heart and soul of SFAI. To describe what SFAI has been and what it has meant to those who have studied, taught, or otherwise found themselves spending time within its walls is inevitably to tell stories about weirdos, with the best of these stories standing in for something larger and deeper—anecdotes that capture some feeling about the place that no other telling of it could. Jeff Gunderson, who has worked in the library and archives since the year I was born, is a connoisseur of these stories, and so I have heard an endless supply of them: the student who liked to climb up the bookshelves built into the library’s walls

and hide in the alcoves above them, waiting quietly to be discovered. The gay Anglican priest who founded the first suicide hotline and taught in the humanities department at SFAI in the 1960s, on one memorable occasion inviting students to bring snacks to their final class and eating six or seven cookies that, unbeknownst to him, had been laced with LSD. These stories often take the form of a joke, with a setup and an affectionate only-at-SFAI-style punchline, but the undercurrent is something more heartfelt: a sense that this is an exceptional place, a place in which the unexpected, the intense, the funny, the strange, the uncomfortable, the beautiful can happen. A place that is gifted with a certain kind of buoyancy because it is free of the weight of the world’s expectations. At its worst there can be a real ugliness to this kind of freedom as well. It can be used as an excuse for cruelty, ego, misogyny, racism, bullying, sexual harassment, you name it. I’ve heard plenty of those ugly stories at SFAI as well. But at its best it’s a refuge, a mutual holding open of space.



I saw *The Rose* in person at the Whitney Museum for the first time this past February. I thought, with so much built up build-up, it might disappoint, but it did not disappoint. The sight of it hits you from across the room. It is luminous, sculptural, a force. An enthusiastic docent lingering nearby told me about how he had seen four different people come visit the work for days on end, sitting quietly and taking notes. Each one of them had eventually told him that they were working on a book about the painting. (SFAI alum Jordan Stein recently published *Rip Tales: Jay DeFeo’s Estocada & Other Pieces*,

an elegant, insightful book loosely centered around a less well-known piece that Jay was working on concurrently with *The Rose*. You can check out the library’s copy if the library is still open.) If *The Rose* and its story are having a moment, it’s about time. The work itself is undeniable, but so is its story. The story of *The Rose* takes the form of a fable, and so can be told in different ways to mean different things. An obvious telling is a familiar one: the story of the lone artist, struggling and sacrificing in solitude to realize a singular vision. Jay gave so much of herself to the work, artistically, emotionally, and mentally, and when it was over she was depleted. It’s possible she may have even sacrificed her health to it, given the lead in the white paint she exposed herself to for so many years as she worked, and the cancer that later ended her life.

But I’m more interested in a different telling of the fable.

In 1992, three years after Jay’s death, Whitney Museum curator Lisa Philips began planning for an exhibition of Beata artwork, and became convinced of the value of acquiring *The Rose*, resuscitating it, and showing it at the Whitney. She and David Ross, who had become the Whitney Museum’s director, took up the cause. At this point it wasn’t even clear if saving *The Rose* would be possible. No one knew what might be going on beneath all of that plaster after all of these years. But where so many other movements towards acquisition and conservation of *The Rose* had fizzled out, this one took hold. They took the chance and began the work.

My favorite of the tapes I digitized for the



Conservation of *The Rose* in the McMillan Conference Room

grant-funded project that spared me from the 2020 layoffs comes from this moment in The Rose's story. It is a recording of A Day With the Rose, the symposium that took place at SFAI in 1995 when The Rose was at long last removed from behind the wall in the McMillan Conference Room so that it could be restored and transported to the Whitney Museum. The symposium brought together the whole crew: Lisa Philips and David Ross from the Whitney, conservators Tony Rockwell, Anne Rosenthal and Niccolo Caldarado, Jay's ex husband, the artist Wally Hedrick, Pasadena Art Museum Director Walter Hopps who had helped jailbreak The Rose from Jay's apartment and gave it its first museum show, poet Michael McClure, writers Rebecca Solnit and Greil Marcus, Bruce Conner of course, and Leah Levy, Jay's friend, consultant, and eventual trustee of the Jay DeFeo estate, who made it her mission to care for DeFeo's work and legacy after her death, and who has fulfilled that mission faithfully for the past 33 years. These were Jay's people, the community friends and supporters who took up the cause of The Rose and didn't put it down, not just over the months, not over the years, not over the decades. When they came together to talk about The Rose it was part celebration, part remembrance, part victory lap. Bruce Conner speaks first, dressed all in white. "Well this is a great event for me," he says. "About five days ago I was feeling exuberant and happy and delighted. Now I'm feeling kind of weepy."



Loving an institution (let alone an employer) is a thankless project: it will never love you back. SFAI has already laid me off once, in 2009, and yet a few months later I came back for more, as have some of the students who were left completely in the lurch in the spring of 2020. They gave this place a second chance it didn't deserve, and are now being rewarded for their forgiveness and trust by being completely let down for a second time. To watch a second round of merger talks drift into chaos, to watch students once again stranded at the very last minute, trying to transfer out of SFAI after every school's transfer deadline has passed, their student visas and ability to stay in the country suddenly in doubt if they come from other countries, is mind-boggling. I have a certain appreciation for the optimism and hope that got us all to this point, but putting students through this, let alone doing it twice, is immoral and unconscionable, and I feel ashamed to be a part of it.

With SFAI once again teetering on the brink

of dissolution, the obvious question becomes: what actually is SFAI? What would it mean to lose it? Everyone agrees that the school is not its building, and yet the idea of the school without 800 Chestnut Street (leaky, energy inefficient, and hopelessly ADA non-compliant, but a vessel for so many memories, the home to so many ghosts) feels untenable anyway, like a stab wound. I've heard people say, and believe myself, that SFAI is its people. And yet its people come and go, and have been coming and going uninterrupted for 151 years. No one in particular is SFAI, and yet collectively, somehow, a lineage of people have held onto and created the school. When I think of who these people have been, I can't help but think of who they have been for me, the particular array of amazing weirdos who have become so precious to me over the years: The collector of animal bones and painter of anthropomorphic turnips; the intense and tidy projectionist who built bicycles in the lecture hall's cave-like projection booth; the patient filmmaker and repairer of old cars; the sensitive ceramicist with a green thumb who unsuccessfully attempted to befriend the mice in her apartment by leaving them gifts of crumbs; the grumpy but kind model boat-building cinephile; the sun-loving writer and accumulator of beautiful odds and ends who gifted the library with a beautiful but trashed typewriter picked up off the side of the road; the antique computer enthusiast who furnished SFAI's Digital Media Studio with a 90s era PC, a dot-matrix printer, and an Atari with a box full of games; the mischievous performance artist with a strange and wonderful mind who live-streamed through the halls in a green screen body suit; the novelist and dancer with a deep well of insight; the gentle and generous printmaker with an endless appetite for the flea market; the tattoo-sporting art theorist and medieval reenactor; the secretly competitive life-long athlete and historian with so much empathy for anyone having a hard time.

These are just some of my data points, my small constellation of stars picked out of the sky. If you're reading this there's a good chance you have your own set of stars, equally strange and wonderful, equally precious to you.



There is such beautiful audacity to a painting that is too big to fit out the door. I like to think of the day Jay enlarged it. I imagine her thinking, this painting is coming out through the side of this building or it's not coming out at all. It's a reckless kind of faith, as all art-making is to some extent—faith that it is worth putting a thing into the world that has no inherently quantifiable value and no



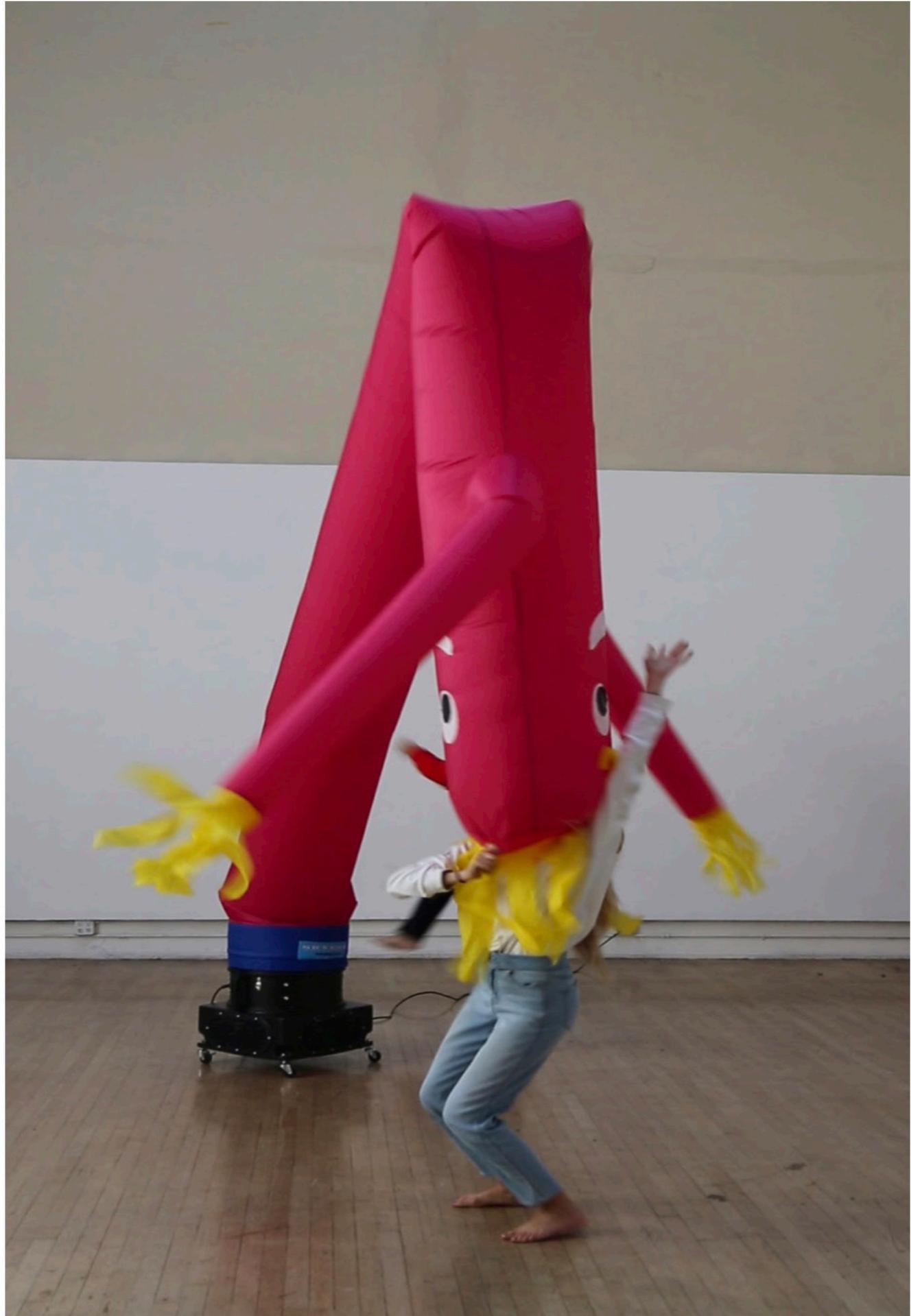
Jay beside the hole in her wall—still from Bruce Conner's *The White Rose*

practical purpose. Art school collectivizes that act of faith. To root for a dying art school feels a little bit like rooting for Tinkerbell in the stage version of Peter Pan at that strange moment of audience participation after she has downed the poison: clap if you believe!

One story of The Rose is a story of the solitary artist—her fortitude, her audacity, her perseverance. Another is a story about community, equally necessary to the project of bringing art into the world. Both are stories about believing something hugely impractical into existence through sheer force of will and a little bit of luck. Both are stories about faith. Without it, The Rose would never have made it out of the wall. With it, it still might not have. There's just no way to know ahead of time, but you can clap if you believe. I don't hear you, clap a little louder! Okay, that's good, now just keep clapping.



The SFAI Library 2018/2022



We told



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NEW LOOK

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The Surprise

It should not have been
such a surprise
that our tower,
our studios & classrooms,
our library, books, & dreams,
our meadow, our clay, our earth
was not our land.
But it was.

—Thor Anderson



Hilton Als



Sound Sofa, Caroline Stadelmann, 2022



c a k e Pictogram, Jose De Los Reyes, 2022



If You Don't Like It, Change It (performance still)
Caroline Stadelmann, 2022



Amber Fenton



i can only hold/what i can reach (detail), Evan Pettiglio

Laura's Ashes

Kim Keown

My little sister is not a ghost. She said she was going to die and become an angel...

As a child, I was told to pray, "...if I should die before I wake..." I kept myself from sleep, terrified of dying. I used the time to feel the fear; to obsess over infinity and the finite. I had questions but at 5 had already learned it was safer to be invisible. Musing about mortality brought me to ponder "being" and I often wondered about the nature of being and what made me me. I realized I was attached to who I was in particular in spite of my situation.

From there I spun out to if I would still be me after death and what a complete non-existence would be. I guessed nothing.

I was lucky to spend a good portion of each year with grandparents. I was able to transform into timeframes, head spaces, of others; live there with them when they needed me. I could fuse the different durational perspectives of a youngster with an elder.

The thing about time is that one cannot go back and erase past events. Almost ½ a

century later, the house – my stepfather's – that my mother moved to after I left, is being sold. I was informed "they can't find Laura's ashes."

When I can finally actually disappear, I don't want to take up land space. I don't want to be chemically embalmed. Cremation releases 573 lbs of carbon per person into the atmosphere. Sky burials appeal to me -the body parts are wrapped in gauze and there is a relationship between the feeder and the vultures – but this I cannot do. It is not in my culture.

I woke up, in the house I never lived in, early to a cow bawling. I had left the window open. She sounded distraught and I was not going back to sleep. As I dressed the scene ran through my mind... "You're a slut just like your mother!" This was my stepfather's X. Insults, screams, were vehicles to carry shame from a drunk woman traveling to a girl nobody believed. Some of us are just in the way, observers, mirrors reflecting the insanity. "You are only 14 years old!" "I am only 12." I was always compelled to clear up falsehoods. What I never got to say was that I was told I could go alone, and followed by that man. Now, this memory, a warning I didn't know how to heed.

The problem with bones, or the fragments of one's bones or even, ashes, is that there are still physical remnants to be attached to. The problem with attachment is discussed in Eastern religions as the root of suffering.

History repeats itself. I had left home early to avoid being witness to the power my stepfather seems to feel entitled to exercise over my mother; to ignore stepsisters playing victims to eke love, manipulation their only recourse. If only. I would have relished this sad process of my mom's decline in memory, if she were, not taken. If her graceful disassociation had been awkward resistance? No, this was not in her vehicle.

I had to check on the cow. I never could ignore another being's suffering. There was one thin wire between me and the herd of cattle – beeves not for dairy, grass fed, some nursing calves. As I walked up the dirt road, the mist was in the hills, still rising from the field. The cattle, black, white, some with curly brown hair, ate and walked through high wet grass and huffed through their nostrils. I could still see their breath, hear their loud smokey grunts in the 6am air. As I neared, they turned and stared, not nonchalantly; the collective glare, intimidating. The bawl

often ended in a scream that echoed off the mountains, ringing in a high note of pain. I kept walking. When I got to where I could see her, she was the only one that looked at me disinterestedly as if to say, "there is nothing you can do for me." "Mourning a calf," I gathered. The gnarled 100 year old trees still standing reminded me that the King gave(entitled) land – he claimed and never saw – to settlers of Vermont if they promised to farm apples.

It is also said, "time heals all wounds." If the wounds don't kill you. Doesn't time also heal the wounds of others? Going back to help, why didn't I protect myself? The insults screamed and whined again, this time from stepsisters, with the force of wasted time. My replies, water, poured onto an old stone wall in the hot summer sun. Only one accusation slightly based in reality about a pickle jar I was given; had not taken. People fight over stuff. But even if I had even thought that anyone threw away the "cremains" of MY sister, I wouldn't blame them. My mom had kicked the can down the road and maybe now couldn't recognize the box. In what closet? "This is a trigger for me! Who

does that Kim? Leave ashes for 30 years?" The things I didn't say, "its actually very common," "it's been more like 40 years," "I was only a kid." "Why move them? Our parents are not dead yet!"

The thing about me is that my compassion puts a target on my heart and others see this as where to twist the knives already lodged there. I had lost a sister but nobody cared. Still, I was aware that in their lifetimes, my mother and one of my step sisters had each lost a child. However, I don't have another 50 years to recover from this assault that demonstrates ripples of ill will throughout a family that never had really merged. For now, I am prevented from helping my mother. Tragic because they view her as already gone, and I do not. And, Laura is ashes only to them. To me she has surpassed time and galaxies as a free form of energy that many years ago blessed me with a visitation, and advice... life is to be enjoyed, when possible, otherwise endured.

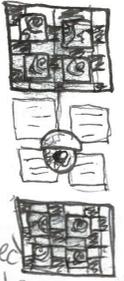


crowded cage/too many keys/that are mostly bells, Evan Pettigilo



This piece is multiple in one

- **2** → 24" x 24" panels with checkered backgrounds w/ glazed neon green swirls...hypnotic
- **8** → 8" x 8" mixed media on canvas hung on checkered panels. Inspired by master anatomy studies. Swirls represent the hypnotic trance culture & society hold on a population. These pieces are expressing gratitude for all the people before me who made it possible to study art today, as a woman. They are also expressing the trance we can find ourselves under, accepting the status quo.
- **4** → 10" x 10" stream of consciousness writings about time. Covered in tracing paper.
- **1** → Paper mache eye ball. You are being watched. How will you challenge the aspects of our current culture to participate in the creation of a more just & equitable world?



This piece is a bridge to get me where I'm going



Bianca Lago

FALLS FOR FIRES Acrylic on Canvas 16"x20"



Falls for Fires, Tora Woloshin, 2019



Solace, Francesca Balagtas, 2019



Species Take Over, from Screen Reflection Series, Christa Grenawalt, April 2020

Disembodied Sympathy

Mikayla Mayes

Present time, there are crusties in my eyes. The carpet moves, she casts out wines and anxious footing from the side of my bed. I was almost there, in dreamland, but she is just loud enough to keep me from sleep. Belgium is asking to go to the bathroom, nicely, and I feel like a terrible parent because it's at 2 am and the last thing I want to

do is get dressed. Pulling up some ragged article, I don't see myself in the large floor length mirror as I dress in the dark. My skin numb, but familiar with the repetition. I open the door. On the stairs she stops twice, bending back to check if her tail is still there. Maybe she is in a stupor too, though I doubt it. Downstairs the air is thick and weirdly undisturbed. I stick out my tongue in search of a breeze and hold it there, nothing. Neither disappointed nor excited. No left or right. I can't quite tell

but I am pretty sure I am floating down the street as if the sidewalk is a still pool of amniotic fluid. My mind is disconnected from the rate that Belgium is pulling me. It's like I never woke up. Birthed or Unbirthed? She stops and goes for her tail again, Ouroboros, Ouroboros, Ouroboros. It's echoing through my floating head. On a normal night I would say this: "This is the second night of her diarrhea" (as if this statement is somehow proof of its endlessness) "I am coming to terms slowly, slowly with

the fact that she might stay this was forever, poopy and gnawing on her tail." This is something I might say to a friend on the phone, in search of disembodied sympathy. I am sickened with myself because, even in my half awake state, I know of these statements that escape me at times to be ridiculously dramatic, hyperbolic. But tonight (if such a thing even exists) I feel distant from them. Away from all of it. Usually, I would say I feel things from the surface of my skin melting on through to the inside. But nothing stirs on the outside tonight. Which makes it easier to ignore the broken microwave of yesteryear, the day before old film of splattered pizza roll...covering my inside surfaces. Corroded, stuck, protected feelings and only a vague perception of what's beyond the microwave door. Trapped or safe, trapped or safe, trapped or safe. Always my question.

Belgium pulls me down the hill with all urgency in her little paws, to me it seems automatic. Like a calculator. Like she doesn't really feel it. I don't believe that she needs to poop, she is acting. Does this mean I shouldn't believe her? No, it doesn't. Good for her, I don't have the strength to act with urgency anymore. Especially at this ungodly hour.

I find myself suddenly there, I am here, I am not here, at the bottom of the hill about to cross the street to go sit in front of the church. The one where Marilyn Monroe got married.

Did Belgium poop yet? I can't remember. This church sitting WAS THE PLAN, but it was one THAT MY BODY MADE WITHOUT CONSULTING ME.

I see two figures walking briskly on opposite sides of the street.

They reach the cross walk and one of them crosses, the female. The other does not and he also does not wait. They catch each other's eyes but do not speak. 6 feet. 6 feet. Far enough away from each other to be strangers or vague acquaintances and now they walk at the same pace in the same direction. Strange but familiar. I watch them quickly disappear. And crane my neck, looking about for some other observing eye, some kind of witness to this oddity. But there is just Belgium, the poop blob and me. I recognize this distance. It is the same distance I once felt when I closed my eyes on the couch while sitting next to my previous partner, just before she became my ex. And the opposite kind of distance I felt when my dad died.

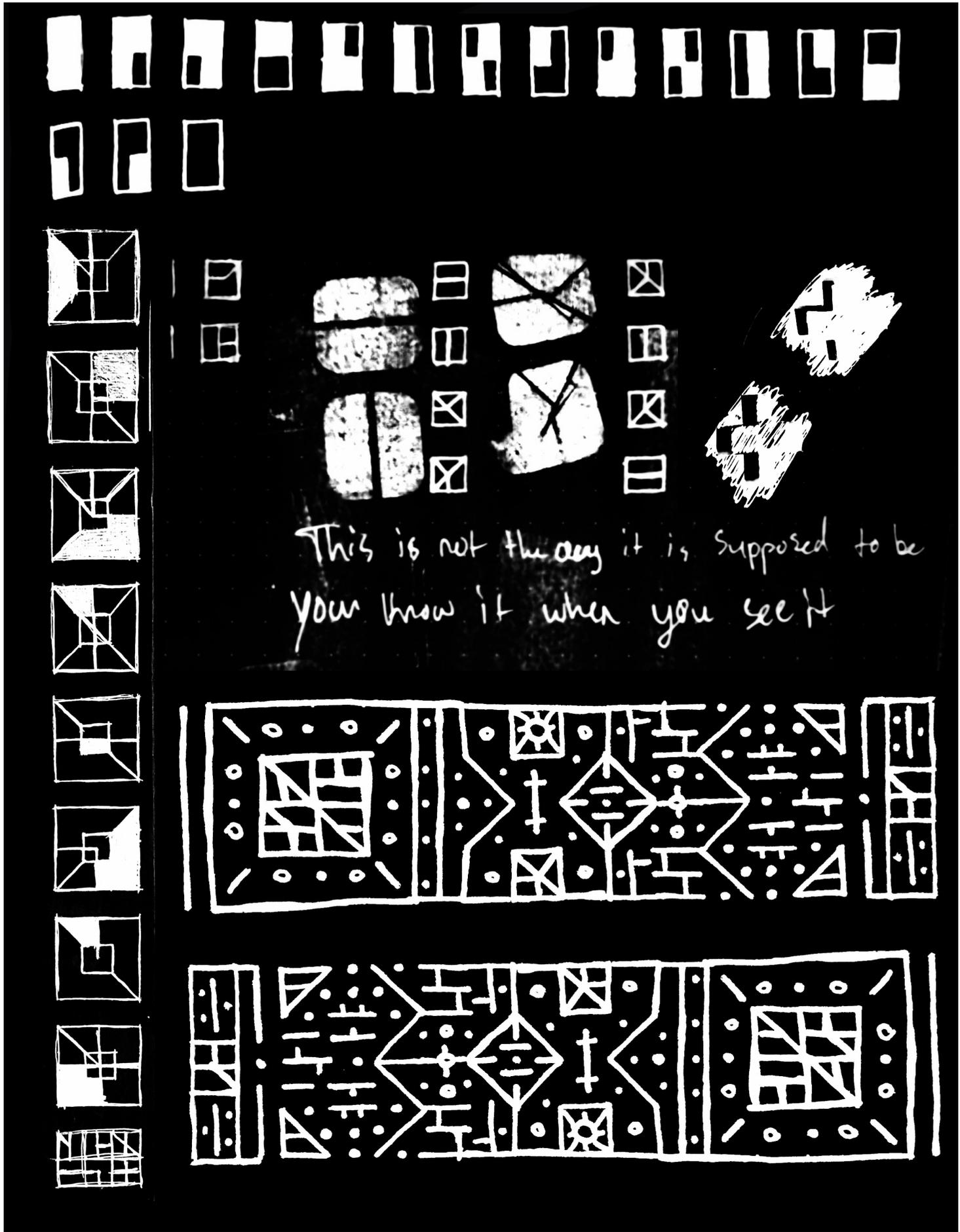
A brief Parenthetical (Oroboros, let me take a quick moment to explain what that is.)

There are other vague figures outside also dressed in tight black nimble-looking clothing. Acrobats? or stagehands in a curtainless Blackbox theatre? There seems to be a rhythm to their movements. I am the one-off kilter, stumbling in my bubble womb. Appearing and disappearing. Falling through time slices. Observation and memory.

Belgium pulls me to the park, and I am suddenly scared, a fear I feel I haven't felt in years. I see this park every day and it is still so unfamiliar. Maybe this is necessary. Like the time I walked by Golden Boys Pizza and unknowingly walked onto a 50's period film set. I thought I had broken the space time continuum.

I can't fully grasp why but there is still no breeze. I see another acrobat on the far end of the grass but am unable to determine any feeling of relief at the proximity. Orby sniffs the ground. She is on her own time.... Totally oblivious of how I

am feeling. Typically, I envy her for this carelessness but today though, she is a mess. I know this because I can see her trying to regain control over her identity as a dog and not just a poop machine. Sniff sniff, sniff sniff sniff. She looks like she is trying to squeeze herself into a pair of shoes that are too small for her. I am in less of a stupor now, but the air is still, still. I have always known how intelligent she is. Regardless of whether I want to be aware of this information or not. I have noticed that Humans generally like to dumb their dogs down a little, with cuteness maybe some baby talk. I am part of this human group. I think it's because if we actually developed an acknowledgeable language between people and dogs, we would have to pay attention to the times we have neglected to take them for a walk or fed them something subpar. We are afraid of their feedback or maybe in general their critique of us. Instead, wolf and woman, two words which neither Belgium nor I really seem to be any longer, longer, longer. Wolf and woman take walks down city streets at ungodly hours and we speak to each other with a plausible deniability. We disappear and reappear like something I learned about subatomic particles in quantum theory many years ago. However, with ourorobos, I know there are moments when she understands me deeper than most humans in my life. In mechanical time, it's been about 10 minutes which is odd considering where we are. Here, floating heads, sniffing wood chips and she still hasn't pooped.



This is not the way it is supposed to be
you know it when you see it

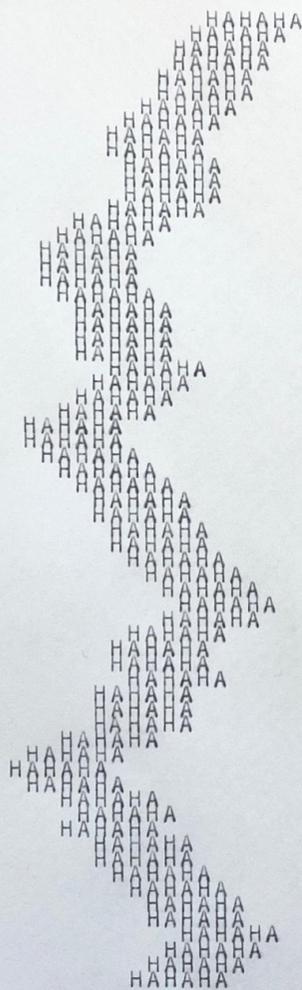
This is not the way it is supposed to be, Raven Deshalecoweney Kemp, 2020



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HA HAHAHA,



HAHAHAHA,

HA



Clock at the Musée d'Orsay on a Sunday in 2013, Nivedita Madigubba

A wordless breath of air—as long as our health permits /
 Short spurts of breath in between urgentspoken words—as long as we are permitted / Short spurts of
 wordless breath—as quick as we can be / A long drawn out
 surge of air—as empty as it can be



Izzy Dier



SFAI Film Club. Left to right: Robert Gardner, Alfonso Estevez-Font, Christopher Coppola, Kevin Smith and Mauricio Dell'Orso. Missing Hermann Lederle, Peter Novak, Ken Chu, Panos Panagos, Varda Hardy. Photo by Varda Hardy.



Jose and Chris, Photo by Tim Johnson

On the deck of an aircraft carrier, somewhere along the Nile, a stork delivers Hell to Caesar in a hand basket: The Fall

Karl Daum

Mom says there's no way they left me alone up there with the news on. "We would never have done that."
"Really?" Dad asks.

The school administrators had washed their hands of it too. Everyone seemed to pass the emotional-political baggage that comes with the end of the end of history down the line.

> "Tell the kids." "Tell the kids." "Tell the kids." No one told the kids? Somewhere Catherine O'Hara screams: KARL!

So at 6pm, there had been a pack of ten year old wolf-children running around on asphalt somewhere in America without a clue about civilization.

And later that night, Mom and Dad had let NBC raise their feral son with backlit shadows—I who emerged sleepy-eyed into the blue light of the 21st century for dinner, the silhouette of the falling man afterimaged into my nascent political conscience. My phantom twin, the son of Mars, bled the beasts whilst I was nourished in the Luperca.

> If you give a wolf a house of cards, he'll ask to play fifty-two pick up. If you give a pig his iron, he'll build a cauldron of



steel. If you give a curious George a vial of invisible ink, he'll draft figments for your lying eyes.

It embeds a Truman Show-like latent anxiety—an historical dissociation—what, a world capable of both fomenting and caching events while the cosmic soup around these instances inflates. Just who did the Patriot Act put behind the TV screen to watch us watch the world? Through the fossil record weaves temporal subterfuge: a "Rip Van Winkle" effect, a "Time Enough At Last" trope, a just-missed bus... such monumental FoMo far exceeds the damage done by

finding out your favorite cat died a week ago while you were at summer camp. They tell you in the car. Actually, on the side of the road. On the way home. A full six hours after they had picked you up. They knew all this time? How far had they planned to drive?

Maybe it's closer to learning that the pilots of downed planes rarely put out distress calls. Frogs. Water. Left the kettle on. Hypoxia. Coma. Black?

> Icarus dicarus dock—A Bush ran down the cuckoo clock. The clock struck twelve—and all the Bulletin of the Atomic



Photo: Still from *Flop*, live performance, Karl Daum, 2019

Scientists and all the top brass couldn't bring us together again.

For centuries, empires passed through Afghanistan, without villages ever knowing their rule had changed hands. And on the day we watched the Saudis sack Rome on television to pundit poetry written in chyrons with not panacea, but panic—I had finally caught the rerun as a remedial grunt in the culture wars. What had been a Tuesday for me turned out to be, all along, the day an Empire fell in the shape of a waiter from on high—a hanged-man tarot premonition of surrender, and sacrifice, but more

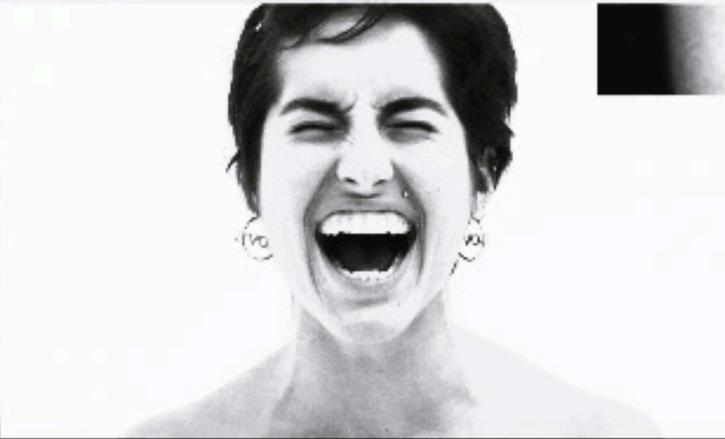
importantly, suspension in time—a limboed a-history animating a body that passes through/between/among/despite this and other worlds, unaware until at once expelled from the Garden and forced to face its reckoning.

In this way falling dreams that end in a shout and a reverberating mattress look less like the inherited trauma of monkeys in trees and more like the cynical tauntings of a god who will one day reveal one's waking life had actually just been sleep. This, I swear, is scarier than simulation theory. E pluribus punctum. Quit selling me lies; I'm sick of waking in

empty houses.

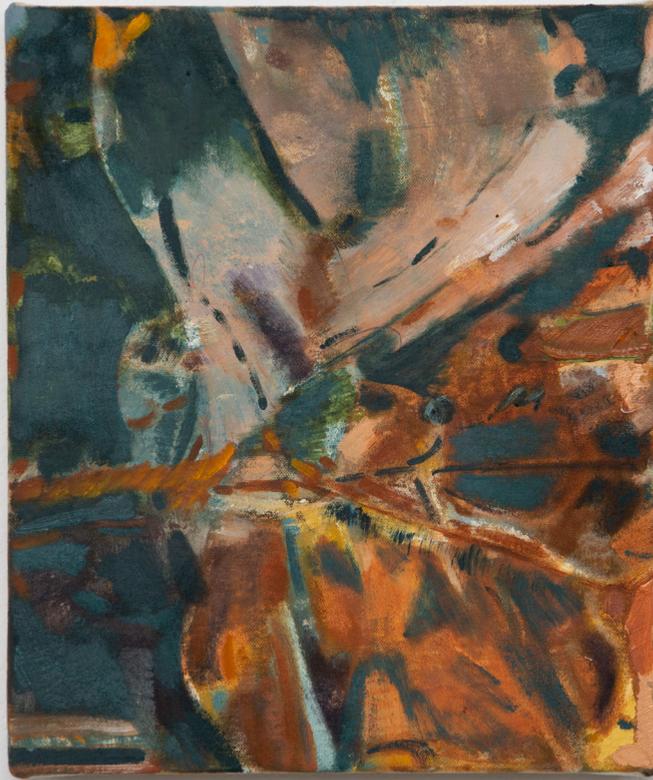
> It's a world of laughter, a world of tears. It's a small world after all, it's a small world after all? It's a fall world after all... though the rings are deep, and the layers divide, a golden bough is not an olive branch but an invitation down.

At the fall, what shape will my body take? Perhaps that of the Ouroboros.





Pissed Off Faces of SFAI, Julia Fairbrother



Jacob Littlejohn

Turning yellow

Ujjayini Sikha

One can always say it's going to be a beautiful sunset,
But can you say that about the sunrise?
Another day, another dawn - how many have there been?
The mind can work it out, the heart does not want it to.
That would be indulgence into treacherous grounds,
And one too many heartbreaks to count.

The shiny rivers of the skin have their own stories to tell.
Of the times when these rivers were not so deep,
When blood galloped through them,
When I owned the road and heads would turn,
When they sought me, more than I sought them,
When those equations held up like everlasting truths.

The winds, they turned long ago,
Perhaps they were always this way -
I was just facing another direction then.
The day stretches with all the expanse,
But they say it's contracting.
So I wonder if we are part of the same?
It's hard to know now what I knew then,
whether I knew anything at all.

I remember who I was once though, and I wish to tell you,
But I see the mistrust in your eyes,
And hurt as I am, I cannot blame you.
After all, I have been wrong before, I know you know.
How do I tell you, when I don't trust myself anymore?
That my certainty is an act, an act I must hold on to,
As dearly as the ground beneath my feet.

How do I tell you, I was wrong, I am sorry,
I didn't know what I was doing,
I really wasn't.
But I have hurt you, I see that now.
I wish you'd forget and let things be,
Because I don't want to say I am sorry.

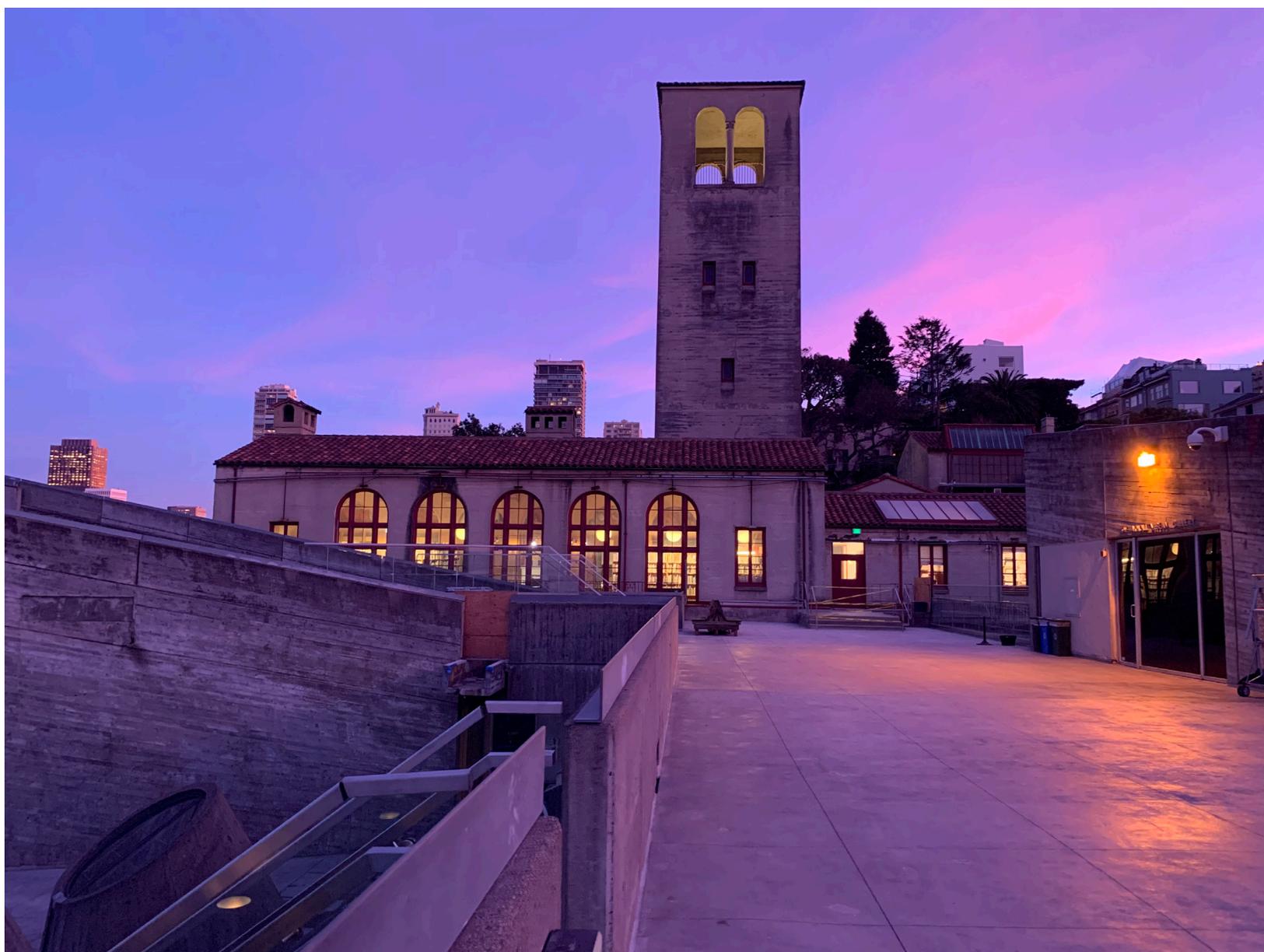
Now I seek them, more than they seek me.
The abandonment hurts, the leftovers sting,
Not calling the first, second, third,
or even the next to last dibs sings.
Maybe it's the mind playing tricks, or maybe not.
One can reason with the mind,
But the heart is a child, it knows what it feels.

So many leaves have fallen, the ground looks yellow.
Trampled and squished, the leaves will disintegrate tomorrow.
I wonder - however yellow and brown and mottled,
Wasn't the leaf happier on the tree?
Will the tree remember the leaf, will the leaf remember the tree.

The demons come at night, they always have.
Only they don't leave after tea,
They want lunch and dinner too.
They say look forward,
But what if leaving forever is the only major act left forward?
They say let go, let go,
But how - when that was all I ever was?

The bed and body protest as I sit up,
Reminding me - oil, oil oil!
To what end? - I ask, ever so often.
The body wants to let go, the spirit says, why should I?
After all, it is a beautiful world.
Grandkids came running to me yesterday,
Stranger friends smiled to me in the park,
And She even asked me for my recipe,
The grandson and I did math lessons together,
And oh, how cool was the bargain at the thrift store!

The sky lightens, with all the the stirrings, whirrings, creakings,
Yes, It's going to be a beautiful sunrise, I am going to be in it.



Amber Fenton

“The simple truth is that people who engage in creative practice go into the studio first and foremost because they expect to emerge from the other end of the creative gauntlet as different people...to become more of whom we’d like to be and, just as important, to discover more of whom we might become. We may make things because we enjoy the process, but our underlying intent, inevitably, is self-transformation.”

–Peter Korn, Why We Make Things and Why it Matters

I reflect on this passage for the way in which it ties together what creative practice means for those of us who

are creators. So many of us turn to our studios in search of a process that fulfills our need to create and allows us to communicate better with the world. I reflect on this in the context of SFAI as a whole - an institution that has fostered our endeavors of self-transformation from student to artist.

Since its inception in 1871, SFAI has engaged in its own practice of transformation from the California School of Fine Arts to the school which we know today. What has persisted throughout all this time is a set of underlying values - that we are a community of artists in search of a place where we are able to propel ideas forward. This school has historically been at the vanguard of redefining what art is, embracing the capacities for photography, performance, and technology to express new concepts before others caught up. No matter what the name is, the artists have been here, pushing the boundaries.

While at SFAI from 2014 through 2018, I worked my way through mediums and concepts, coming out the other side a far cry from the person I was when I began. I was a student who wanted to be a photographer, who then became a writer, became a teacher, and became an artist and a craftsperson. I have this community of educators, staff, and fellow artists to thank for who I am now.

An integral part of SFAI’s culture has always been its state of flux. The only constant in the history of this school is the changes it has weathered, some of which were embraced and many others reviled. What holds true, however, is that the spirit of SFAI will never subside - so long as we remember the ways in which we have been transformed by it.

–Cera Diebel



*



*



New Construction, Collin Pollard, 2020



*

**We Were Here* (Photo Series), Caitlin Stone-Collonge, 2019-2020



IT IS A KILLER TOWER!

But...

HAUNTED
(NOW) FOR
SURE
↳

It IS THE
COMMUNITY OF
ARTISTS WHO MADE
THIS SCHOOL.

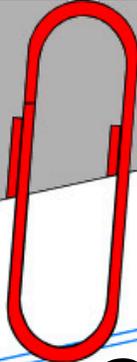
Support
Them

WWW.SaveFineArt.com

Goodbye is USUALLY HARD

But this
WAS

Some Kind of Tragic



GO ASK LOLLY!

Dear Lolly,

It's so hard to say goodbye. Is this really the end?

With Sadness,

Al Nerves

Dear Al Nerves,

Hard to comprehend the doom that impends.

Let it welcome a time to mend. Oh, I know the

vibe that does portend! But don't upend, start a

countertrend! Learn from friends, perhaps

bartend, do not misspend (nor become a reverend).

Regardless, never pretend it'll ever be the same

again. Though we're on the downtrend, never let

them condescend. Your integrity you must defend.



Pawing Off,

Lolly



We Were Here (Photo Series), Caitlin Stone-Collonge, 2019-2020