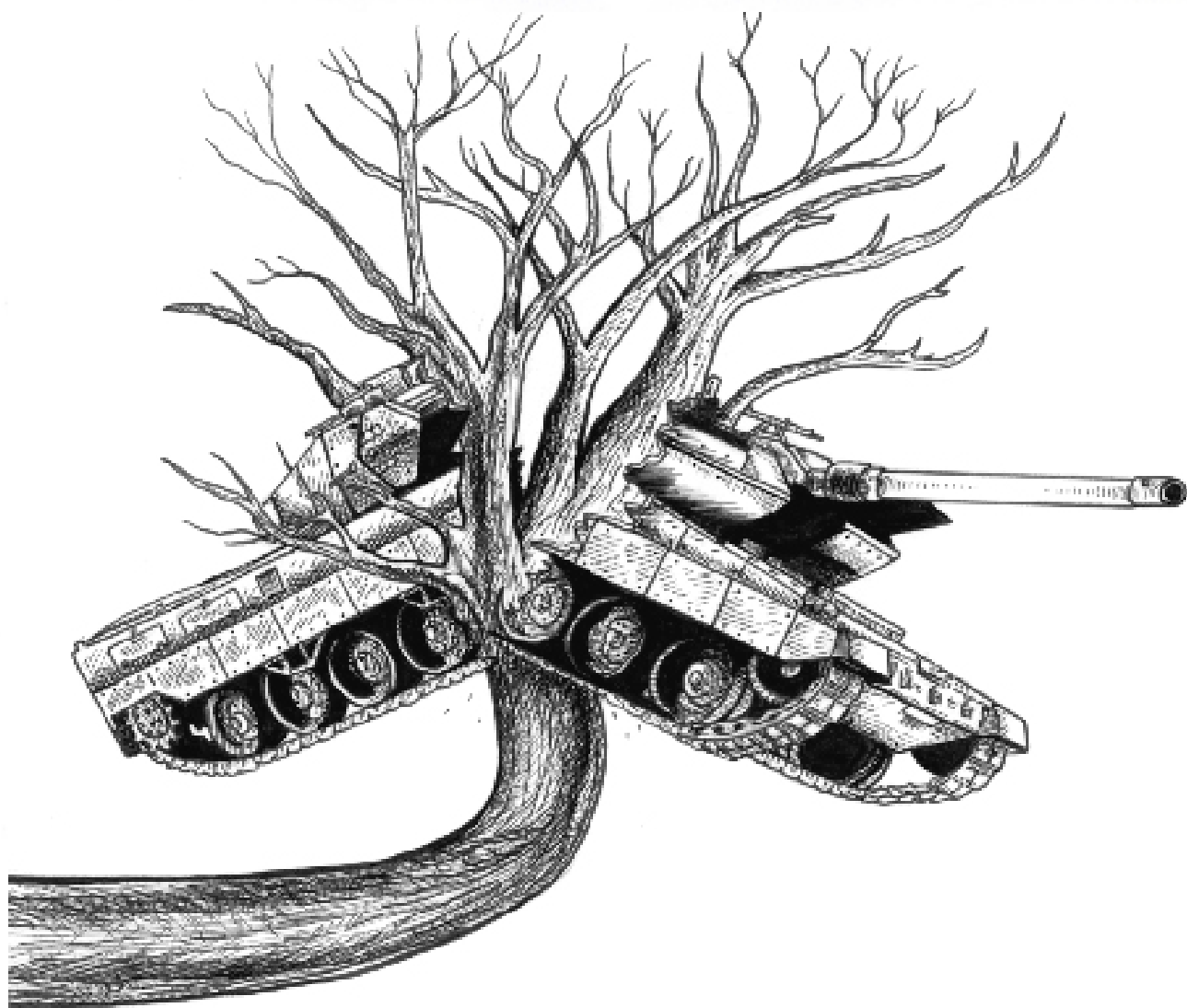


For A 2011 Better World



POEMS AND DRAWINGS ON
PEACE AND JUSTICE BY
Greater Cincinnati Artists

“For a Better World” 2011

Poems and Drawings
on
Peace and Justice

by
Greater Cincinnati Artists

Editor:
Saad Ghosn

Past these seekers as he prayed came the crippled
and the beggar and the beaten.

And seeing them...he cried,
“Great God, how is it that a loving creator can
see such things and yet do nothing about them?”

...and God said,
“I did do something. I made you.”

Sufi Teaching

“How can one not speak about war, poverty,
and inequality when people who suffer from
these afflictions don’t have a voice to speak?”

Isabel Allende

Foreword

This eighth edition of “For A Better World” is dedicated to the memory of Susan Montauk, MD. Dr Montauk, who contributed a poem to the book, passed away April 18, 2011, after a long battle with colorectal cancer. She was a courageous woman and physician who, throughout her career, provided selfless and compassionate care to the underserved populations of Cincinnati, including AIDS patients, the homeless and the poor, and who worked relentlessly for social justice and peace in the community.

Dr Montauk’s strong and alive voice joins here the voices of sixty four additional poets and forty three visual artists, who, in unison, spoke for a better world, a world after their heart and values. Ages 10 to 90, they each used their art and their talent to state their concerns and affirm their beliefs, and by doing so strengthened each other’s diverse voices and gave life to their hopes and dreams.

In a world that remains prey to injustice and wars, these artists wept for the dead, revolted for the oppressed, denounced unjust societal wrongs, advocated for the poor, the homeless, and the neglected, rejected violence and its consequences, fought for the battered environment. They also challenged the prevailing societal values of materialism, consumerism and domination and spoke for a change in values towards love, compassion, forgiveness and understanding. They painted a beautiful world, a world of diversity and equality, where peace is based on truth, justice, and kindness.

With their lucid song, these artists also confronted the evil in this world and promised to stand up for the fight. Their song is an appeal to each of us to join in and make a change; it seeks to eliminate our isolation and loneliness and invites us to hold hands and share in the same well of strength and energy for a better world.

To every participating poet and artist, and to everyone who directly or indirectly joined in the making of this book and in the spread of its message, my heartfelt thanks and gratitude.

My appreciation also goes to Karen George, Pauletta Hansel, Jerry Judge, Timothy Riordan and William Howes, who kindly reviewed all the submitted poems and provided their editorial advice; and to Andrew Au who graciously volunteered his time and technical skills helping putting this book together.

For a better world, always, a world of love, peace and justice.

Saad Ghosn
Book editor and organizer

April 2011

“For a Better World” 2011

| Poet | Poems/Visual Artist | Page |
|---|--|-------|
| Matt Birkenhauer | My Father's Work Gloves | 1-3 |
| | Uninspired | 3 |
| | The Sand Wars | 3-4 |
| | Drawing by Cedric Cox | |
| Forrest Brandt Anni Gibson | Hidden Rituals | 5-7 |
| | Stop Loss | 5-7 |
| | Drawing by Daniel Espy | |
| Sarah Campbell | A Strange Sort of Peace Is Happening Here | 9-11 |
| | He Told Me to Write a Happy Poem | 11 |
| | Coloring | 12 |
| | Drawing by Reid Radcliff | |
| Neil Carpathios | Two Flies Argue Over a Crumb | 13-15 |
| | If the World Were Perfect It Wouldn't Be | 15 |
| | "Pain Is Weakness Leaving the Body" | 16 |
| | Drawing by Rod Northcutt | |
| Ella Cather-Davis Vickie Cimprich | Homeless | 17-19 |
| | Humbleline at Juilly, 1141 | 17-19 |
| | Burnooses | 19 |
| | Drawing by Andrew Candelaresi | |
| Donelle Dreese | Dark Matter | 21-23 |
| | The Radiant and Broken | 23 |
| | Drawing by Celene Hawkins | |
| Mark Flanigan Bucky Ignatius | Counter Point Carmel | 25-27 |
| | Carousel | 25-27 |
| | Drawing by Jeff Casto | |
| Greg Flannery Carol Igoe | Apologia Pro Vita Sua | 29-31 |
| | Winter Night, Coming on Cold | 29-31 |
| | Charlayne Hunter Gault Sends News from Johannesburg, 2009 | 31 |
| | Drawing by Bethany Booth | |
| Patricia Garry Lou Moore Steve Sunderland | Haiku - For a Better World | 33-35 |
| | When Peace and Justice Come | 33-35 |
| | A Cage Flaps Against a Bird: Egypt Is Breaking | 33-35 |
| | How Much Freedom? | 35 |
| | Drawing by Richard Bitting | |

| | | |
|----------------------------|---|-------|
| Karen George | Assumptions | 37-39 |
| | Healing | 39 |
| | Drawing by Nick Hawes | |
| Diane Germaine | Fat Rolls | 41-43 |
| | Haiti: Feeling Better in 2010 | 43 |
| | Drawing by Bart Laube | |
| Anni Gibson | see pp. 5-7 | |
| Jason Haap | Teaching (A Pile of Crazy) | 45-47 |
| Vivian B. Kline | Does Money Make the World Go Round? | 45-47 |
| | Drawing by Lisa Jameson | |
| Richard Hague | What I Wasn't Doing When News Came | 49-53 |
| | That the Planet Might Be Canceled | |
| | Drawing by Emily Caito | |
| Pauletta Hansel | Coal | 55-57 |
| | Class lessons | 57 |
| | Everyday | 58 |
| | Drawing by Theresa Gates Kuhr | |
| Michael Henson | The Poets Drive East into Albuquerque | 59-61 |
| | How Did I Get Here? (an American Parable) | 61 |
| | . . . any that pisseth against a wall. | 62 |
| | Drawing by Jan Warren | |
| Sue Neufarth Howard | A Friend of Need | 63-65 |
| | A Sunday in 1950 | 65 |
| | Less Home | 66 |
| | Drawing by Spencer Van Der Zee | |
| Brian Huehls | Susie's 7:00 pm NPR News | 67-70 |
| | Drawing by Emily Sites | |
| Bucky Ignatius | see pp. 25-27 | |
| Carol Igoe | see pp. 29-31 | |
| Henry Jacquez | A Call to Cincinnati Poets for Peace | 71-73 |
| | and Justice | |
| | A Story | 73 |
| | Drawing by Marcia Hartsock | |
| Nancy K. Jentsch | Two Worlds at Christmas or Isaiah | 75-77 |
| | and Anthracite | |
| Brian Richards | It Might Prove Instructive | 75-77 |
| | Jonah | 77 |

| | | |
|---|---|-------------------------|
| Dan Rubin | Wilma, 2001 Drawing by Ivo Vretenarov | 75-77 |
| Jerry Judge | One Week to the Day Editor Needed Feb. 13 – Girl, 10, Killed Drawing by Matthew Shelton | 79-81 81 81 |
| Tadashi Kato Kathryn Martin Ossege | Wheel of Agony, Wheel of Prayer Memory of Trees Unfolding Reality Drawing by Kristin Luther | 83-85 83-85 85 |
| Yana Keck Annette Januzzi Wick | Vociferous Vibes Missing Home Drawing by Shannon Marie Barnes | 87-89 87-89 |
| Linda Kleinschmidt Mauri Moskowitz Mike Murphy | Still Water Peace and Justice: a Poem Creation, Evolution, & The Self-Making of Homo Stewardii Drawing by Johnathon Auer | 91-93 91-93 91-93 |
| Vivian B. Kline | see pp. 45-47 | |
| Carol Feiser Laque | Footnotes Endings Man Is an Island Drawing by Quentin Gibeau | 95-97 97 97 |
| Linda LeGendre Mary-Jane Newborn | Sycamore Enlightened As the World Warms (<i>Lyric</i>) Drawing by Nicholas Ball | 99-101 99-102 |
| Elizabeth Taryn Mason | Vertebrae Adumbration The Stubborn Particulars between Thunder and Lightning Drawing by Joe Hedges | 103-105 105 106 |
| Stan Mathews | What's Wrong with the World Pierre and Rosetta Drawing by Diane Fishbein | 107-109 109-110 |
| Susan Montauk Paula L. Siehl | The Family Shelter In Memory of Mother Teresa Drawing by Alexandra Horenberg | 111-113 111-114 |
| Lou Moore | see pp. 33-35 | |

| | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| Mauri Moskowitz | see pp. 91-93 | |
| Mike Murphy | see pp. 91-93 | |
| Mary-Jane Newborn | see pp. 99-102 | |
| Kathryn Martin Ossege | see pp. 83-86 | |
| Terry Petersen | Play Date If Only Drawing by Kenton Brett | 115-117 117 |
| Rhonda Pfaltzgraff-Carlson Joanne M. Queenan | Night Life Body Count Drawing by Lisa Molyneux | 119-121 119-121 |
| Mary Provosty Mica M. Renes Susan and Abby Smith | Ault Park A Halo of Peace The Peace Tree (<i>by Abby, child</i>) We Mark Our Deliverances by Laws Hard Won (<i>by Susan, mother</i>) Drawing by Stacey Vallerie | 123-125 123-125 123-125 126 |
| Purcell Marian High School John Berling Julian Coleman Nikki Eichelkraut | The Hood Branded Barcode Salt Drawing by Albert A. Fausz Jr. | 127-129 127-129 127-129 |
| Joanne M. Queenan | see pp. 119-121 | |
| Michelle Red Elk | how it really happened the sacred | 131-133 133 |
| Kathleen Riemenschneider | Persephone's Rape Drawing by Monica Dick | 131-133 |
| Mica M. Renes | see pp. 123-125 | |
| Brian Richards | see pp. 75-77 | |
| Kathleen Riemenschneider | see pp. 131-133 | |
| Timothy Riordan | Waste Management Slogan World A Curse of Words Lotus Pond Veterans Day Drawing by Diana Duncan Holmes | 135-137 137 137 137 137 |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|---------|
| Armando Romero | The Poor | 139-141 |
| | Bad Poetry | 141 |
| | Song of Disobedient Children | 141-142 |
| | Drawing by <i>Oliver Meinertding</i> | |
| Dan Rubin | see pp. 75-77 | |
| Mary Jo Sage | Night Invasion | 143-145 |
| | St. Rose's Clock | 146 |
| | Drawing by <i>Jonathan Peace</i> | |
| Paula L. Siehl | see pp. 111-114 | |
| Abby and Susan Smith | see pp. 123-126 | |
| Gwyneth Stewart | Distant Drum | 147-149 |
| | Unrooted | 149 |
| | Drawing by <i>Elise Thompson</i> | |
| Steve Sunderland | see pp. 33-35 | |
| Jean Syed | Old Man | 151-153 |
| | Hobby Horse | 153 |
| Michael Todd | Ghetto Orchid Retraces Her Footsteps | 151-153 |
| | Drawing by <i>Jase Flannery</i> | |
| Fred Tarr | Larchmont Run, the Call-Up | 155-157 |
| | Phuc Loc, Second Tour | 157-158 |
| | Drawing by <i>Robert Jefferson</i> | |
| Michael Todd | see pp. 151-153 | |
| Connie Vaughn | Blood Lines | 159-161 |
| | The World and the Fall | 161 |
| | Gerardo | 161 |
| | Drawing by <i>Quincy Robinson</i> | |
| Gary Walton | A Practical Self Improvement Program 2010 | 163-167 |
| | Waiting for Insanity Clause | 167 |
| | Wired | 168 |
| | Drawing by <i>Andrew Dailey</i> | |
| Fran Watson | 1944 | 169-171 |
| | Once | 171 |
| | Drawing by <i>Bruce Erikson</i> | |
| Annette Januzzi Wick | see pp. 87-89 | |

POEMS:

MATT BIRKENHAUER

Matt Birkenhauer teaches English at Northern Kentucky University's Grant County Center, with an emphasis on Composition and Rhetoric; he also frequently teaches literature classes. Matt lives in Ludlow, KY, with his wife and two sons, Matthew and Benjamin. In his free time, he likes to read, write poetry, and spend time with his family.

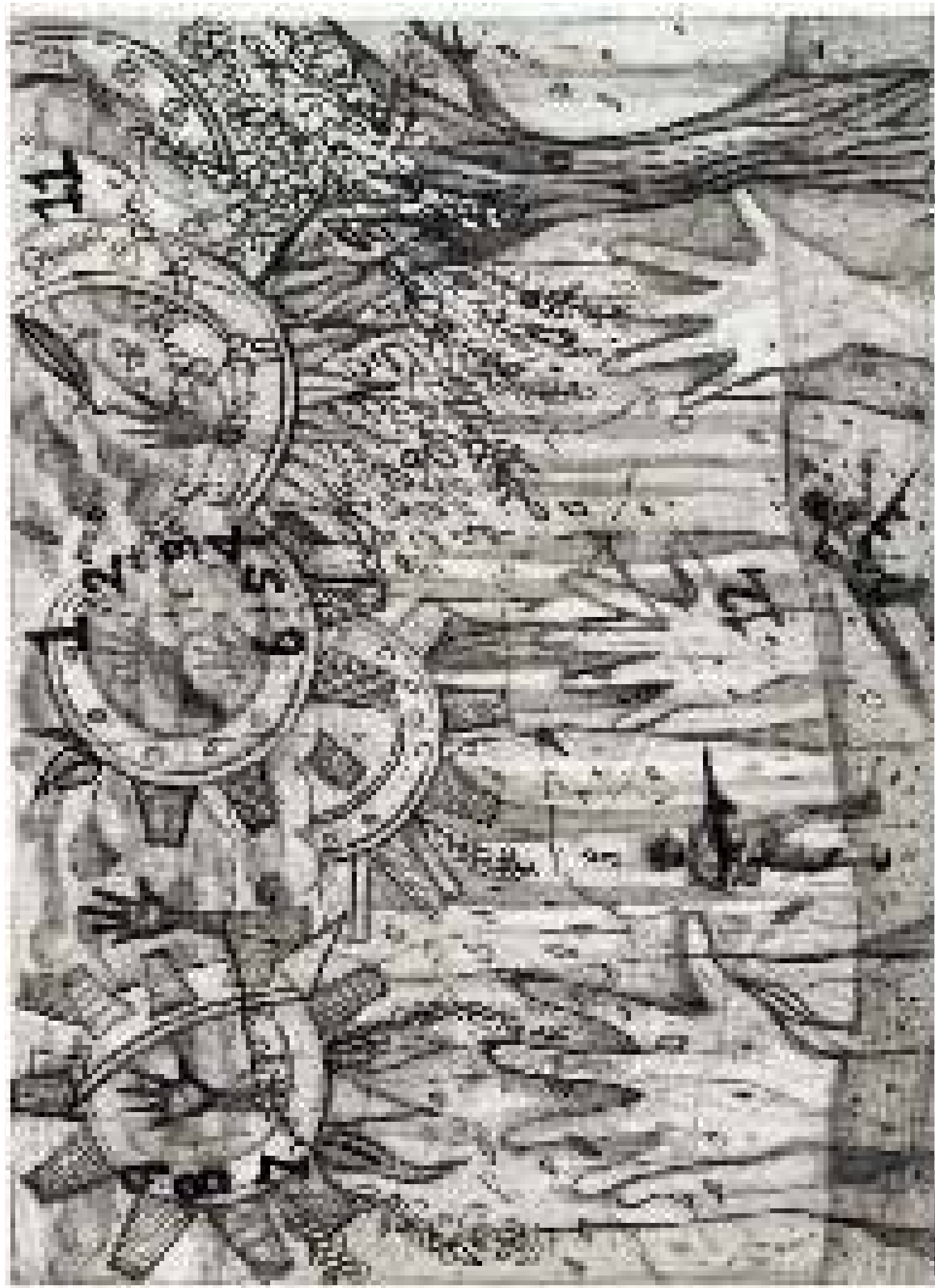
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DRAWING:

CEDRIC MICHAEL COX

Cedric Michael Cox is a Cincinnati-based artist known for his paintings and drawings which fall between surrealism and abstraction. He received his Bachelor in Fine Arts' degree from the University of Cincinnati/DAAP (1999) and was awarded a fellowship to study at the prestigious Glasgow School of Art in Scotland.

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The Viking Road of Time in the New England City of New York

My Father's Work Gloves

(In memory of my father, Herb Birkenhauer, died August 11, 2005.)

He's wearing his old, worn work gloves, of course.
While God attends to the bigger picture elsewhere,
Dad's bent over His tomatoes, explaining how the deer
are feeding off them but he has found a way, as he so often does (practical man) to thwart them without harming them.

I remember as a child how he taught me not to kill snakes out of superstition.
He patiently explained their place in the ecosystem (a word he didn't use).
Later I would read about these ideas in the magazine *Ranger Rick*.

Yet his devotion to the poor was his most enduring work.
He understood so well their stumbling, frailties, but took too seriously the Sermon on the Mount to give up on them. No doubt up there he's still delivering sofas, refrigerators, to those newly arrived in heaven, wearing his worn work gloves.

Uninspired

*"For everything that lives is holy."
William Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

We know better, of course we pedestrians through this world.
The uninspired live among us.
Walking, but half dead, they slouch down filthy alleys, under bridges, over warm grates, hoping someone will think of them as holy and, therefore, worthy of attention.

The Sand Wars

Back and forth,
back and forth,
all afternoon
they fought,
these boys,
one side encamped
at the monkey
bars; the
other side
at the pretend
firetruck.
Their weapons:
sand, and used
cups, and whatever
other conveyances
they found
in the trash
to thrash each
other with.

They were vicious,
too, often
going for the
face and eyes,
or rubbing it
in hair. And
their language
could've come from a
seasoned veteran's
war novel:

"You motherfucker--
I'm going to
kill you,
you sonavobitch!"
Interestingly,
they formed
alliances, which,
as the afternoon
sun intensified,
shifted.
One kid joined
a side just
to extract
information, only
to blabber it

to the side
 encamped at
 the monkey bars.
 After several
 skirmishes, like
 real war,
 nothing was
 resolved. One boy
 had bitten
 another,
 drawing blood.
 The other side
 had buried
 in the sand
 the gym shoes
 of their enemy.

 "--found in the room,
 among other
 instruments of
 torture,
 was a baseball
 bat labeled in
 Serbian
 'mouthshutter.'
 More and more
 mass grave sites
 are being guarded
 in Kosovo
 by members
 of the KLA,
 as Serbs in the
 area leave,
 fearing reprisals.
 Elsewhere in
 the world . . ."
 . . . my sons
 and the two
 neighbor girls
 are leaving the
 park, all played
 out,
 having distanced
 themselves from
 the sand wars.
 One of its
 veterans, wearing a
 T-shirt

proclaiming
 How bad do
 I want 2 win?
 is crying,
 dirty and enraged,
 and as he turns
 around I read,
 for the umpteenth
 time,
 the back
 of the shirt:
 More than U do.

POEMS:

FORREST BRANDT

Forrest Brandt graduated from Ohio State University and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the army in 1967. He served with the First Infantry Division in Vietnam, 1968-69. He taught for 30 years, mostly at-risk students, and is currently an instructor at Northern Kentucky University. He has been published in magazines and newspapers. He lives in Anderson with his wife of 35 years and fellow writer, Kathy Wade.

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ANNI GIBSON

Anni Gibson is a poet who splits her time between Cincinnati, OH, and Traverse City, MI. Her poetry has been published in a number of literary journals and her first volume of collected poems, *Unfinished*, was published in 2007, by Woven Word Press. She is the founding director of Insights Unlimited, a Cincinnati-based market research firm.

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DRAWING:

DANIEL ESPY

Daniel Espy is currently a junior studying Fine Arts at UC/DAAP. His work is primarily centered around 3D media. For many years he has participated in musical theatre which has influenced his art. Daniel hopes one day to work for Disney as an Atmosphere/Scenic designer.

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Hidden Rituals

(by **Forrest Brandt**)

It's a hell of a party.
Lieutenants let off steam,
take risks with booze, cigarette
dinky dau and army authority.

I leave early,
wander along an unfamiliar path,
listen to the sounds of the Vietnamese night:
a lone chopper circles overhead,
jeeps and trucks lumber
and whine around the base,
bits of conversation float upon the evening air
as I pass tents.

From a doorway comes the sound
of running water and voices,
rock music rumbles in the background,
I peek inside:
two soldiers, naked to the waist,
wrestle with a garden hose and a body
that dangles from stirrups in the ceiling.

It's the brigade morgue.
The shiny pink skin of the corpse
is pierced by hundreds of tiny holes.
Water washes down the torso,
flows along the arms and head,
plunges in a crimson stream,
curls into the drain in the floor.

I step away,
shake my head,
breathe deep,

I wonder how these two young boys,
forced to wash the dead,
will blot the scene from their minds.

I imagine them,
years from now,
lost to booze and nightmares.

I wonder why I have been spared
the war's dirty jobs.

What star of grace keeps me safe
in this base camp?

My sleep comes in small snatches,
disrupted by nightmares:
scenes of combat,
of steel and explosives and soft tissue,
of kids tenderly washing the bodies of kids.

Stop Loss

(by **Anni Gibson**)

The Marine major and chaplain
pause, then ring the doorbell.

At rest inside
on faded chintz,
Mrs. Springer presses
her hand against
a robust kick
as she turns
toward the window.

A single shriek,
grievous punctuation,
pierces
the heavy July afternoon
and the Major's calloused heart.

Turning away, she staves off
truth's savage claw,
draws a lilac-scented bath.
She soaks, dries her bulge,
subdues wanton wisps of hair.

Still in the
Louisiana heat,
the two men wait.

POEMS:

SARAH CAMPBELL

Sarah Campbell lives and works in Dry Ridge, KY. Four things currently preoccupy her and occupy her life: motherhood (four children and a dog), oil painting, poetry, peace.

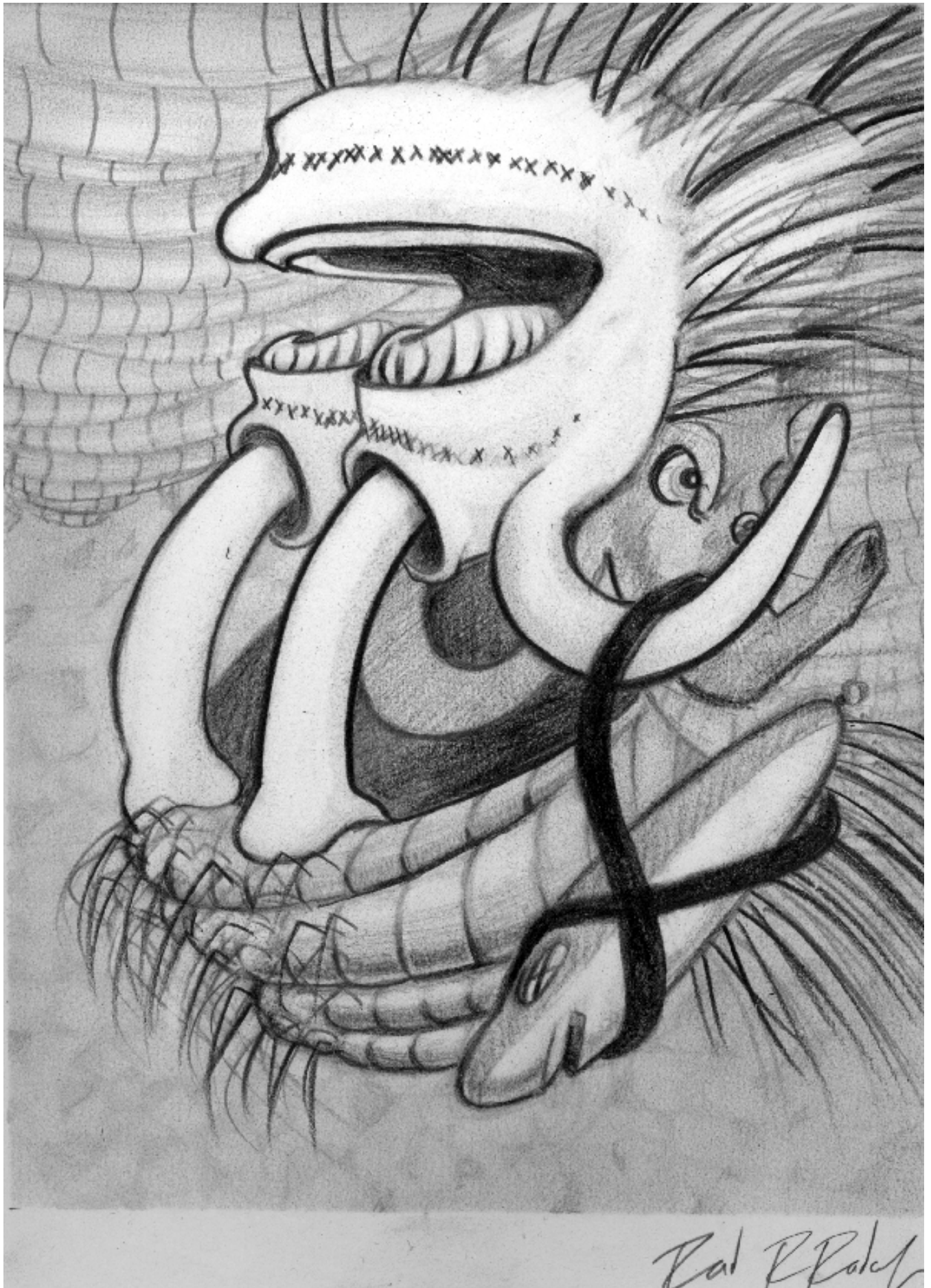
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DRAWING:

REID RADCLIFF

Reid Radcliffe lives and works in Cincinnati, OH. He received his MFA in drawing from the University of Cincinnati. He currently works as an adjunct instructor at Miami University Middletown, Cincinnati State College and the Art Institute of Ohio-Cincinnati. Reid is co-curator and founder of Museum Gallery/Gallery Museum where he regularly organizes exhibitions.

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A Strange Sort of Peace Is Happening Here

It is January, 2011.
May I tell you something
about this month, something
about myself this month?
This is what I want to tell you:
I have made both one
grand gesture of peace and one
grand act of violence.

First, my new year's resolutions,
which were to be healthier,
to be holier, and to have the words
"Peace Be With You"
printed on all of my everyday
shirts. I have already accomplished
this last, and it is my own effort
to push peace out
from myself into the universe.

At the same time, I ended my marriage.
I mean,
it has been over for a long
time, and he has been aware of this,
but he made me say the words.
So I said them.
The children don't know,
and our parents don't know,
but anyone who reads this poem
may know.

It goes against my very nature
to cause such dis-unity,
but I've been climbing this hill
of disappointment for years.
The coldness between us has covered
it in snow, and danged if I'm not ready
to grab a sled and go skidding
down to see what's
on the other side.

He Told Me to Write a Happy Poem

Because poem after poem
has been about depression
and brokenness and self-pity,
because he's never listened
to bluegrass music.
But the poem I want to write
is about dusty paintbrushes,
a new medicine every month.
I need to dissect with words
why I've stopped reading,
why I can't help being Catholic
but want to be a Buddhist,
why my husband links intimacy
with watching Nascar together,
why I can't articulate what I want.
I won't write every sad poem:
I've never been dragged
out of my house at gunpoint,
never seen all my possessions
covered in flood water
or spun in a tornado,
never been starving in a refugee camp,
never met an unfriendly penis,
never watched someone I love
slowly die.
I know good things – my mother
holding my shoulders
and telling me she loves me,
the laughter of my kids,
being barefoot on a beach,
sitting in church alone,
a clean bathroom, stars –
and I would claim what is mine,
but my wiring is mixed up
and the experiences
do not translate correctly.
Listen!
There is a well-protected seedling
growing in a hidden place;
I can feel it pushing through the dirt;
until I am brave enough to let it bud,
to bring out the flower
and offer it to the world,
these are the poems I will write.

Coloring

The colors of my childhood –
green, red, white –
the seasons
rolling through my Kentucky hills,
awing me, protecting me

But to my friend
the world was reds and blues and blacks –
welts, bruises,
and dark words swarming down,
dismantling things

Age brought realization,
and now,
by this noisy, gray ocean,
brings release;
I hold her tightly in my arms,
eyes open, paintbrush in hand.

POEMS:

NEIL CARPATHIOS

Neil Carpathios is the author of three full-length poetry collections: *Playground of Flesh* (Main Street Rag Press), *At the Axis of Imponderables* (winner of the Quercus Review Press Book Award), and *Beyond the Bones* (FutureCycle Press). He teaches and is the Director of Creative Writing at Shawnee State University in Portsmouth, Ohio.

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DRAWING:

ROD NORTHCUTT

Rod Northcutt exhibits his sculpture, site-works, and interactions nationally and internationally, designs furniture and interiors (as onesixtyfourth design), and collaborates with green/sustainable design collectives. He is currently an Assistant Professor of Sculpture at Miami University of Ohio.

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ROD NORTHCLIFF 2011

Two Flies Argue Over a Crumb

Let them argue.

They walk around it, they eyeball each other. They try to intimidate. Then a third fly, and a fourth

descend to claim the prize.

This is the history of the world. They strut and posture as flies do, they spread their tiny wings

to look bigger. There are many other crumbs on the table and floor, but this crumb must be something, they think, if so many

flies want it. They would kill for this crumb if it weren't for the man who now walks in with a swatter, swinging.

Lucky for the other flies, each fly thinks, for now we must disperse and join forces in survival. They fly

away and start butting their heads against a window. They do what they are programmed to do, like everything else

in the world. They pretend it doesn't matter, that crumb, but they are planning to return, you can bet, with reinforcements.

If the World Were Perfect It Wouldn't Be

There would be no need to tidy up the roadside rubble after war, during which two volunteer workers meet and fall in love. Carts loaded with corpses would not need to roll by, reminding the father to kiss his daughter on both cheeks and eyes and tell her a second bedtime story when he gets home. There would be no shards of glass the ants hoist on their tiny shoulders to lug off and install as windows in their colony, no bloody rag the robin flies away with in its beak to build a cozy little crib in the eaves under someone's gutter. No bridge to rebuild, employing hundreds of men with shirtsleeves rolled up. No need for the broom maker to work overtime as those two volunteers stroll into his shop hand-in-hand. There would be no old woman walking her dog on shattered bricks thinking she could never admit aloud, though it strangely seems true, that the undisturbed days were almost too quiet and dull. There would be no lessons to either learn or ignore, as a little boy sits in the grass holding a stone, trying to decide whether or not to flatten the powder cones of an ant village he has noticed in the dirt between his knees.

“Pain Is Weakness Leaving the Body”

I read on the back of my son's shirt,
this saying, a shirt given to him
by the marine recruiter.

I've never seen it leave, though,
even when my father's bone tore through
his shin and he screamed, almost operatic,
in the yard,

and later when he spasmed
on the hospital bed near the end. Or when
Jimmy Galloway chopped his thumb off
in middle school woodshop and blood
shot out like a hose full-blast
and we stood, our mouths agape.

Or me,
my sprained ankles,
colonoscopy,
cracked ribs.

Is it a perfect replica of us,
a body within our body,
expanding, pushing till there's no more room
for it to grow, so like a chick in the egg
it starts to pound on walls till the shell
cracks and it hatches, invisible, like a ghost?

Does it fly to the moon?

Does it take a swan dive into grass?

Does it meet-up with all the other weakness
in a secret place where they join hands
and dance a secret weakness dance?

Does it hover above our twisted, aching flesh,
thinking Geez to think I was kept prisoner so long
in that stink-mobile husk of meat armor?

Or does weakness need us to avoid, itself,
feeling pain? Without gristle and bone, sweat
and blood, saliva and tears, does it get so depressed
floating around that it also feels a smaller version
of itself inside swelling and inside that
an even smaller replica and inside, smaller still,
more weakness hatching, and it never ends, even
if we trace it to a subatomic seed because
inside the seed is a smaller seed?

I wonder if the saying rises, in haze,
from memory, in a kid somewhere who wore the shirt
proudly, if it in some way helps as he squirms
on dirt, his chest ripped open by a roadside bomb,

his legs lying like two logs a few yards away,
his one eye searching the sky

for the weakness leaving his body
as his other eye rolls away like a marble.

POEMS:

ELLA CATHER-DAVIS

Ella Cather-Davis is retired with her husband of 42 years. She writes poetry, essays and children's stories. She holds a degree in English Literature from the University of Cincinnati and currently attends the Osher Life Long Learning Center at UC. She is a member of the Greater Cincinnati Writer's League and Ohio Poetry Society. Ella's poems have been included in various poetry books.

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VICKIE CIMPRICH

Vickie Cimprich's first book, *Pretty Mother's Home - A Shakeress Daybook*, depicts the 19th century interracial, egalitarian Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, KY. Her work has appeared in *The Journal of Kentucky Studies*, *The Licking River Review* and the *Journal of The AFCU*. A 2010-11 grant from the Kentucky Foundation for Women will enable travel and writing in France in May-June 2011.

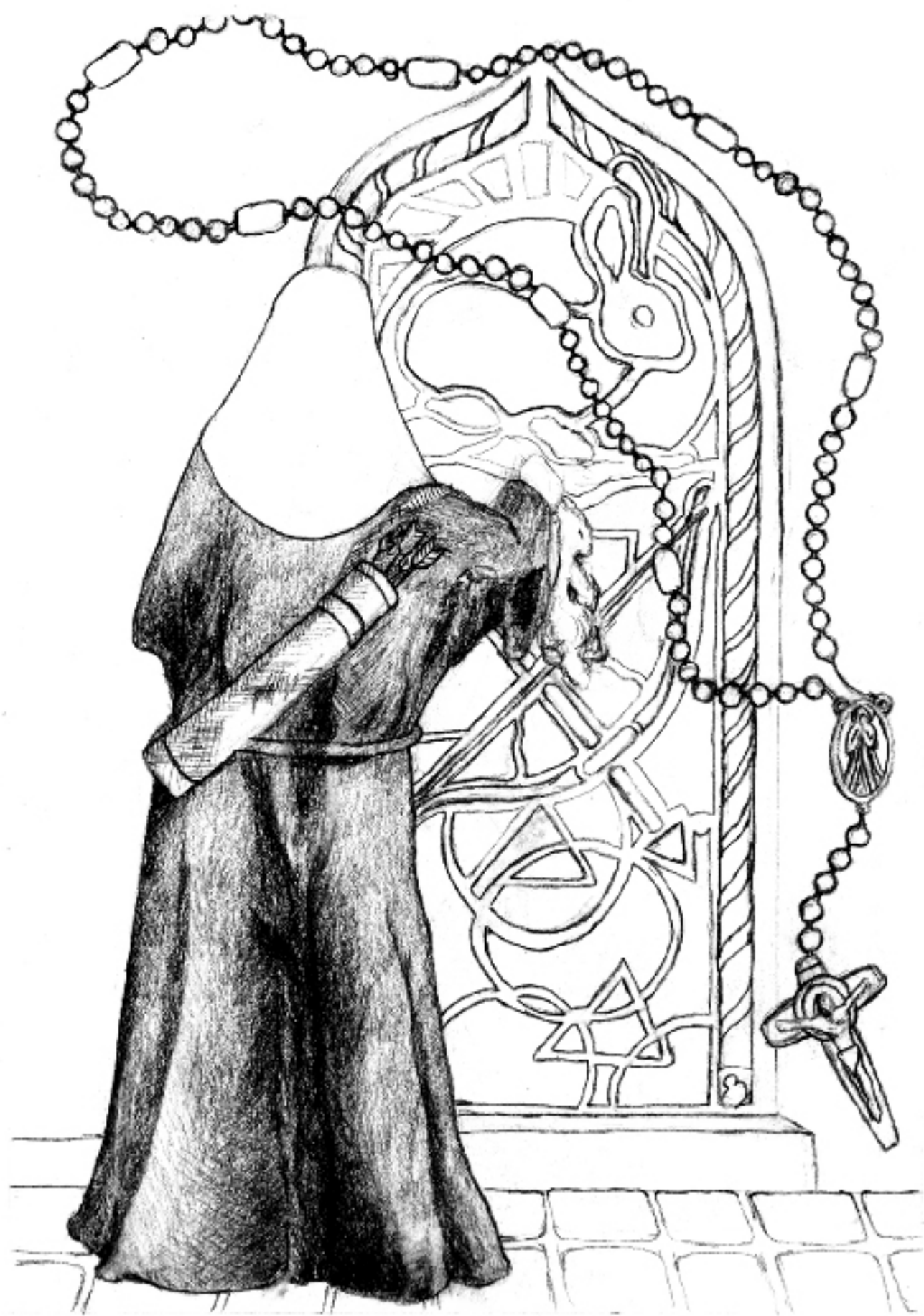
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DRAWING:

ANDREW CANDELARESI

Andrew Candelaresi has been making art since he could hold a pencil. As a young man he found his passion in mixing colors and creating interesting compositions. Andrew will receive his bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from UC/DAAP with a concentration in sculpture. He has developed skills in metal working, drawing, painting, glass blowing, plaster molding, and foundry.

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Andrew Candelaresi

Homeless

(by **Ella Cather-Davis**)

Will-work-for-food, standing
there at the intersection,
I can't meet your eyes.
I am driving to an appointment,
and --- I am late.

If I look, I must acknowledge
your sad situation.
So please excuse me.
I'm in a hurry,

(I secretly look – look away.)

You haunt me, like a gray ghost
rising from the river's fog,
or on the city street, where you
touch my elbow, tentatively whisper
Something --- about --- *money*.

Maybe if I can meet your eyes
I will know, I will understand,
If you *really* need money
Or something else.

But, I look away.

I think you are broken
Will-work-for-food,
you need a little glue,
or kindness or respect.

I remember dark despair
It is a hard place, a place
you do not want to return to.

Will-work-for-food,
Please forgive me,
I am very afraid.

I am looking away.

Humbleine at Juilly, 1141

(by **Vickie Cimprich**)

Half a life ago, before half
the family and many friends
followed Bernard to the white monks
and to Clairvaux,

she learned from her brother,
not then a monk, how to pull a bow,
release her arrow.

When Bernard took her for the hunting,
the cousins laughed, then.

Now, oftentimes at evening speech
among the nuns, Humbleine gives it out
that it was she who laughed loudest,
dangling her rabbit by the ears
before the men's faces and the boys'.

In late spring, lambing time,
she is told to go up on one of the granges
with several lay sisters, to the sheep.
In the morning snow, a hare comes
past the cottage window.
In her shoulders and fingers
she wants to shoot,

now that she has no bow.

Burnooses

(by **Vickie Cimprich**)

are what some of us
are born to. Mennonite caps,
veils, poofy Baptist buns,
shingle cuts.

One way or another
the fingers of our own hands
or others' run through

the different tangles.

POEMS:

DONELLE DREESE

Donelle Dreese's poetry is informed by a variety of social justice topics including poverty, violence, war, feminist concerns, environmentalism and peace. Her work has appeared in numerous magazines and journals. 2 of her chapbooks of poetry, *A Wild Turn* (2008) and *Looking for a Sunday Afternoon* (2010), as well as a book of environmental writing, *America's Natural Places: East and Northeast* (2010), have been published.

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DRAWING:

CELENE HAWKINS

Celene Hawkins works primarily in sculpture and installation art. She runs a sculpture studio and foundry with her husband, creating public and private commission work as well as doing fabrication for other artists. She has received various awards for her art and is included in a variety of private, corporate and public collections.

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Dark Matter

*(cosmic matter that cannot be detected
by observing any form of light)*

Dark matter, as scientists call it,
the inestimable, invisible actuality
that creates galaxies in the dark,
lacks the luminosity we find comforting
but we know it is there
because of how it compels
other bodies to move,
celestial bodies, including our own.

It reminds me of a city
I read about once
that forbids sculpture
because it casts a shadow
in the shape of a human.

The belief is that dark things
happen in dark places.

But what if we accept that there is more
than one, universe that is,
and that mystery is not wicked
but a bountiful reserve of intelligence
and kind as a rocking chair.

What is your dark matter
and does it compel you
to walk an iced granite ridge,
or are you pulled
like taffy into a lakebed of fear
waiting to be named?

Go there into the shadow,
cloak its valley
with golden aspens,
listen to the ultrasound
clicks of foraging bats.

They can give you
the answer in code,
a meteor shower
of staccato taps.

The Radiant and Broken

Today, I'm thinking about the people
who do all the right things
and still can't catch a break
with the wide net that took
twenty years to entwine.

I'm thinking about the people whose lives
aren't what they hoped they'd be,
who broke their fingers trying
to write the story for themselves
only to have it stolen by a nameless,
faceless, hollow-bellied judge.

I see beautiful people everywhere
sifting underneath furniture cushions,
passion hunting, gathering lint-caked coins
having fallen from blue jean pockets
one pale and dead winter afternoon.

This is for the lonely lovers
who have ever dreamt
of rolling in a bed of wild strawberries
until their hair turns red
and their eyes shimmer
like phosphorescent ponds.

This is for the ordinary hermits
who stumbled up from the bottom
of a shivering sea,
trailing eelgrass,
sculpted by a cold chisel
feeling useless as a dirty clothesline.

This is for the radiant and broken
who refuse to give up,
who drink their dirty water
from a cracked cup
and somehow manage
to always have enough.

POEMS:

MARK FLANIGAN

Mark Flanigan's "*Exiled*" series has been in print and online for a decade now—first in *X-Ray Cincinnati*, then semantikon.com—and currently can be found in *CityBeat*, Cincinnati's alternative weekly. His e-book of verse, *Minute Poems*, can also be found on the web.

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BUCKY IGNATIUS

Bucky Ignatius is a long-active Cincinnati poet and semi-reformed hippie who finds inspiration these days from family, gardening, singing out loud, travels with Ma Donna, and a life-raft of colleagues at the Greater Cincinnati Writers League and the Pendleton Art Center.

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DRAWING:

JEFF CASTO

Originally from West Virginia, Jeff Casto, possesses an MFA from the University of Cincinnati and a BFA from the Art Academy of Cincinnati. His work is both personal and socio-political in nature, fusing painting with sculpture, found objects with two-dimensional imagery. Jeff has exhibited throughout the Midwest and New York, and his work is in several corporate and private collections.

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CASO

Counter Point Carmel

(by **Mark Flanigan**)

“—As for us:/ We must uncenter our minds from ourselves;/ We must unhumanize our views a little, and become confident/ As the rock and ocean that we were made from.”

—R. Jeffers, “Carmel Point”

When you brought it to me—metallic lines
Of sea ghosts and their
Unquenchable beds, the repetition of rock
So monotonous it stood to prove itself,
I asked,
What foreign territory have I, against
My guide’s every admonishment, invaded now?

For once I only allowed myself
To imagine that which was memory:
The seagulls in Atlantic City hovering
Above the Good Humor man; the
No Swimming signs that basked in Santa Monica’s
lazy haze, and oh, don’t forget the day
Venice Beach whereon I, playfully,
Walked across a stretch of blackened
Sand, soon to discover—sullen now—it would follow
Me home.

How, despite your tender prophecy,
Can I be more at ease with this present
Than you?

Not a lack
Of history, of vision, or of
Mere sincerity on my part, I hope,
But an impatience more severe even
Than yours. This, and the voice
Repeating, *If my movements*
Only disturb, such
Is enough.

These words are mine, a mere
Poet’s; these words shared with
Somewhere a red-faced sea, tired
And embittered rock, careless winds;
And regardless of how often we may hear them,

No matter from whom,
I remain confident
Once more will never be enough.

Carousel

(by **Bucky Ignatius**)

Time has worn my edges
smooth, revolutionary zeal
gone from flower to seed,
and now, it’s thank-you notes
love letters too, and one-breath
meditations—small-change
contributions to the turning
of the world.

Good players know the game
by heart—a schoolyard carousel
where running children push,
jump on, leap off, to reel in
dizzy glee, trying not to puke
or fall too hard or scrape
a knee—a playful revolution,
and thrill enough for me.

POEMS:

GREGORY FLANNERY

Gregory Flannery has been a newspaper reporter and editor for 30 years. In 2009 he received the Best Feature Story award from the International Network of Street Papers. He has been arrested on matters of conscience three times, including protests against U.S. military aggression.

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CAROL IGOE

Carol Igoe is a behavioral psychologist working in developmental disabilities for the Arc Hamilton County. She is currently working on initiative to prevent lead poisoning of children in their homes and day care centers.

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DRAWING:

BETHANY BOOTH

Bethany Booth is an artist from Dayton, Ohio. She received a BFA from Wright State University with a minor in German. She worked for several years for artist Bing Davis at his studio/gallery in Dayton. She currently teaches middle school German in the Cincinnati area.

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Bethany Booth

Apologia Pro Vita Sua

(by **Gregory Flannery**)

Come the revolution.
Spin the wheel of Dharma.
Don't do unto others as they do unto you.

My mother used to buy six-packs
for 14-year-olds.
My old man complained that they got
premium beer
While he drank horse piss.
Nothing is so dangerous
as a well-formed Catholic conscience.

Is you is or is you ain't my baby?
I hope, therefore I am.
Bring on the storm.

Winter Night, Coming on Cold

(by **Carol Iggoe**)

A sparrow, small as a breath,
Froze, head gripped by ice,
On the bird feeder perch.

In the morning I found it,
Tiny head still dipped into the well,
Beak touching the sunflower seeds.

I could not free it,
Would not pull it apart,
Warmed its corpse loose at last,
Its death required tenderness.

Homeless shelters opened downtown,
From 10:00 pm till 8:00 am,
A night so cold
A sparrow would die
Eating at the bird feeder perch.

Charlayne Hunter Gault Sends News from Johannesburg, 2009

(by **Carol Iggoe**)

(Charlayne Hunter Gault was one of the 2 first children integrated into Georgia's segregated schools in the 1950s. She is a news journalist and moved to Johannesburg to continue her reporting after a career here with PBS.)

A child of 6 was taken, held by a stranger,
raped all night.
In the morning, her mother finally found her,
Blood dripping down her legs.

The doctors at the hospital
Did not press charges.
Most women there are blamed for their rape
In the rape capital of the world,
A country that was raped,
A people that was raped.

Is there no fiery angel
Hand aloft
to stay
The fathers' sacrificing hands?
No goat in the bushes?

Must blood still call for blood?
Oh, stanch the wounded country.
Enough. Enough.

POEMS:

PATRICIA GARRY

Patricia Garry, a long-time community activist in Cincinnati, is also a gifted psychic reader, hands-on healer and teacher. She is Executive Director of the Community Development Corporations Association of Greater Cincinnati.

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LOU MOORE

Lou Moore grew up in Cincinnati, received a degree in Finance from the U of Florida, then moved back to Cincinnati where he has lived ever since. He has been a financial advisor for clients, locally and around the country, for 30 years.

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STEVE SUNDERLAND

Cute as a button, Steve Sunderland, PhD, is a peace activist and a professor of peace and educational studies at the University of Cincinnati. Steve is involved in the fighting of the attack on teachers and all public service workers.

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DRAWING:

RICHARD BITTING

Richard Bitting (b.1950), an artist, composer and teacher, resides in Cincinnati, OH. His visual work is in museums and private collections across the USA; his music has been performed internationally. Mr. Bitting is an adjunct professor at the Art Academy of Cincinnati where he teaches Music in the 20th Century and Introduction to Music Composition.

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Soprano

No separation All coming together now. Fa-ra-dign shi-f-ting.

Oboe

seco

pp mf p mf p pp

Violin

arco senza vibrato

pp mf p mf p

Viola

arco

pp mf p mf p

Cello

arco

p mf p mf p

Rich Bitting

Haiku - For a Better World

(by *Patricia Garry*)

* Right in Front of Us

No separation
All coming together now
Paradigm shifting

* It Takes Effort to Make a Difference

The change continues
Building community is work
Leading on to joy

* Make the Work Fun

Always celebrate
Ev'ry community success
Each small step forward

* Egypt Got It Right

Poetry, parties,
Music on Tahrir each night
Best way to revolt

When Peace and Justice Come

(by *Lou Moore*)

When peace and justice come,
We will see
And we will feel
And we will know
And we will weep oceans.
For it is only then that we will understand.
We will see the jagged pieces of our
collective heart
ripped and left hanging.
And it will, finally, be okay.
And, we will remember.

A Cage Flaps Against a Bird: Egypt Is Breaking

(by *Steve Sunderland*)

A cage flaps against a bird
Too fragile to hold
Too surprising to understand
Too much a gate to freedom
The cage breaks
The doors open
The people spill out

How Much Freedom?

(by *Steve Sunderland*)

How much freedom is necessary now
That I have smelled the good bread
That someone in my courtyard is baking?

How much freedom is to be postponed
Until the police have decided to finish their lunch
And have me for dessert?

How much freedom lifts my heart
As I see the children in the streets
Playing at self government, kicking the
Can of the autocrats, and wildly, no
Beautifully, breaking the chains?

POEMS:

KAREN GEORGE

Karen George's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Still: The Journal*, *Blood Lotus*, *Vestal Review*, *The Barcelona Review*, and *The Cortland Review*.

She's been awarded grants from The Kentucky Foundation for Women, The Kentucky Arts Council, and co-won The Janice Holt Giles Award. Karen holds an MFA in Writing from Spalding University, and teaches writing at The University of Cincinnati's CommuniUniversity. Her chapbook, *Into the Heartland*, has been published by Finishing Line Press.

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DRAWING:

NICK HAWES

After graduating from the Cleveland Institute of Art with a degree in Medical Illustration, Nick Hawes worked for NASA Glenn Research Center as a scientific artist. Shortly thereafter, he enrolled in graduate school at the University of Cincinnati to study medical anthropology. As an artist, he finds his joy in rendering the story - in the conveyance of information. In the story, whether a poem, a narrative, a scientific or medical process, Nick finds that we learn about ourselves and each other; that is what he seeks in his work.

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N. Hawes ii

Assumptions

I try not to raise my eyes from the words
because the man at the table across from me
wants to say something I don't want to hear.

He's released several sighs and I've refused
the bait, so he says, "Can you believe it?"
and I'm the only one near but I hold off.

He could be talking to a cellphone or himself
or a being only he can see, so I risk rudeness
and move my lips to emphasize absorption.

But the effort not to look up pulls my eyes
to meet his -- rimmed with red like he's spent
hours weeping or drinking, maybe both.

"Look at them." He jerks his head left,
but I smile straight ahead as if waiting
for him to pronounce more.

Peripherally, at the counter, I see four
teen girls toss blond hair and long legs
like thoroughbreds ready to run.

The man wears a quilted camouflage coat,
and I judge he's come straight from the woods
where he shot, gutted, and dressed a deer.

"Insulated boots and shorts in forty degrees."
He drops his head to gulp coffee, revealing
a scalp pitted with sparse hairs. "Ignoramuses."

I'd like to answer the scald of his disgust
with curses so filthy he'll cover his ears,
but he goes on to say he blames their parents.

"They're young, I say, "We all were," quickly
adding, "I was." I want to ask the silver-haired
man, "Don't you remember? I do."

Winters, I walked from the bus stop, hair wet
from swimming at the Y, the strands stiffening
into icicles as I neared home.

In the knobs of his knuckles I see pain,
and suspect
he's never been a parent, and is not only
unmarried,
but has not held anyone in years.

Healing

Two weeks after terror at the World
Trade Center, we watch the flow
of Camp Ernst Lake, side by side
on a wood bench. A spider web
on the shelter house beam sparkles
wet with dew. A brother and sister wade
ankle deep along the edge, churning
mud clouds. The girl giggles, "I'm sinking."
You say, "If people prayed by a body
of water each day, it would altar the world."

POEMS:

DIANE GERMAINE

Diane Germaine has resided in Cincinnati since 1986. Her poems have appeared in other *For a Better World* publications, in spoken word plays, and in *Chronogram* - a Hudson Valley arts magazine. She has written a play for two women entitled *Not Yet* on ageing and losing independence and is currently compiling two chapbooks to be published in 2011. In addition, Diane is a choreographer of repute, with fellowships and grants from the NEA, OAC, and the City of Cincinnati.

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DRAWING:

BART LAUBE

Bart Laube has been drawing since he was a small child. He hates school and long boring meetings where people talk endlessly about nothing so he spends most of the time drawing to entertain himself. He has been working professionally for over 25 years designing and illustrating everything from Tweety Bird bird feeders to the Cascade logo type.

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BART
ISUE

Fat Rolls

My grandfather Abe didn't believe in banks
or insurance companies – he considered the latter
to be a great Ponzi scheme. Smart man.

Abe carried fat rolls of bills in his pockets,
paying everyone in cash: maid, chauffeur, the ice man.
Given the current financial climate, Abe was fortuitous.

I carry my fat rolls on my body – love handles gripping over.
Unfortunately I can't dispense with mine as Abe did
on a daily basis unfurling flesh handing bits to all that say
they need some or insist I owe them something.

Abe was famous for his designs, draping actresses
in yards of silk, cutting and ripping until lines and folds
of fabric could flow and form under his hands like a

sculptor molding clay. I, too, shape the flow and lines
of movement on bodies, directing dancers and dressing
the stage. But my work is becoming as ephemeral as his;

it may be why I write, but paper is fast becoming obsolete:
I fear my words will have to blow on wind out in cyber space,
or end up wiping someone's ass when there are no more trees.
Tell me. What good are words in space without electricity?

They say Abe died of lung cancer: two packs a day
of Turkish tobacco no filter. The year was 1929.
He left this world a pauper: survived by four grown kids,
a wife, actresses; his pockets picked clean by his partner,
hospitals, debtors, clients. My grandfather died so obscurely

no one remembered his name or where
his grave was laid. Hopefully my death
won't be as obscure, nor as poor,
though it would be a blessing if my fat rolls
disappeared as fast and completely as his.

Haiti: Feeling Better in 2010

We were sitting together
condemning Ponzi¹
schemes and CDOs²
while an entire island
had too much water
and none to
drink.

we were sitting talking
comparing 3-D animation
in blockbuster films³
while unattached
limbs
lay askew in the
dust.

We were sending our
contributions,
our condolences,
our donated clothes,
and the headlines
reported how
we were helping;

we were watching a
little girl crying, and
truthfully we were thinking:
she isn't our kid
(thank god);

and the truth is:
her mother
had been buried
beneath
five stories of rubble.

We learned we were
helping the world
be a better place;
and she, at age five,
learned her world
didn't exist anymore.

¹ Bernard Madoff Ponzi scheme;

² Collateralized Debt Obligations;

³ Avatar 3D Animation film

POEMS:

JASON HAAP

Jason Haap is a lifelong high school English teacher and an online media activist, co-publishing *The Cincinnati Beacon*. He lives in Mt. Airy with his wife and two children. When not teaching, or writing, he can often be found geocaching with his oldest son.

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VIVIAN B. KLINE

Vivian B. Kline grew up in Manhattan. Left Vassar College to marry. Graduated at 35 trained to teach art in public schools. Three daughters and six grand children. Practicing enamelist artist for 53 years. Author of three books and a booklet of poems. Currently finishing a memoir titled: *Was I Just Lucky My First 85 years?*

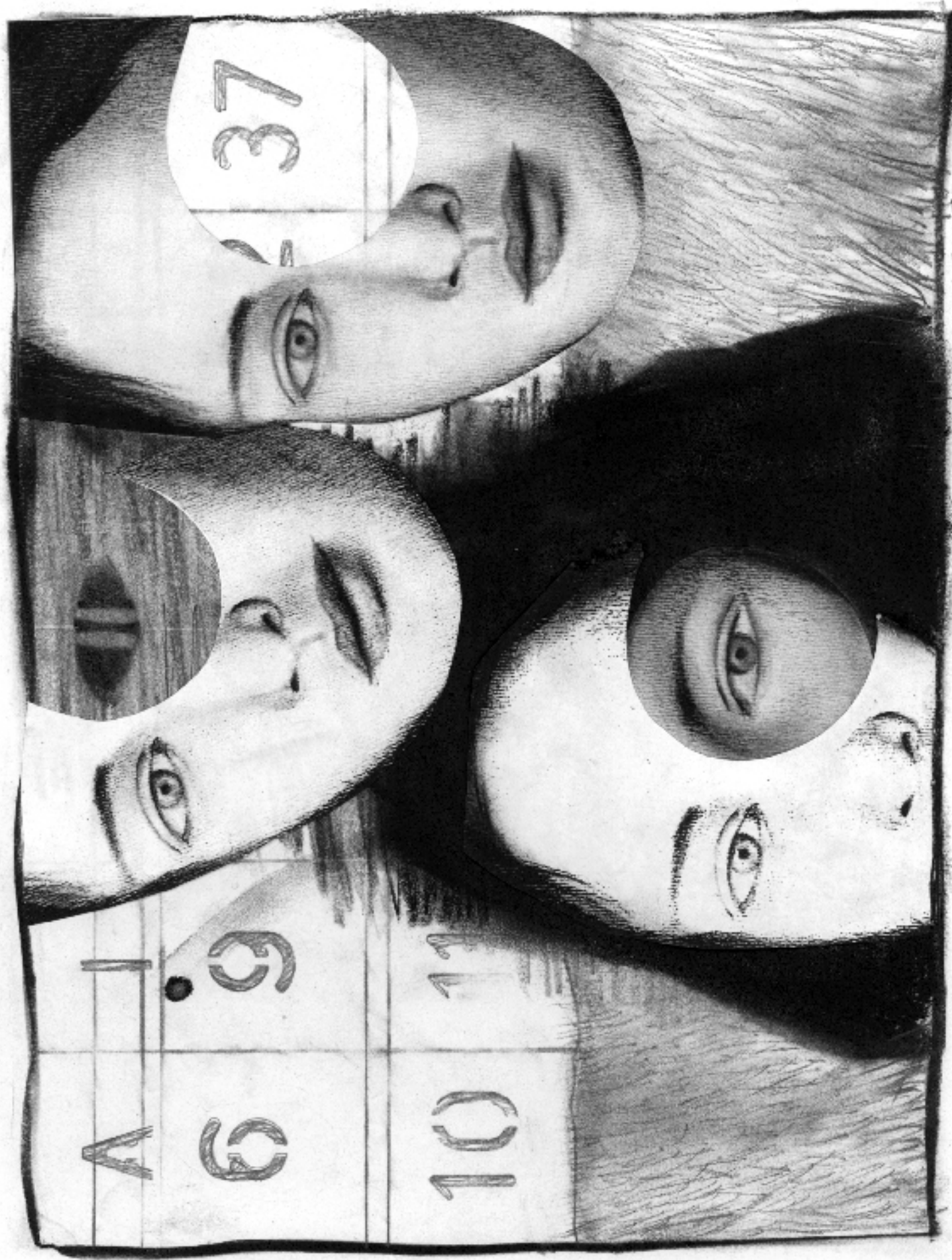
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DRAWING:

LISA JAMESON

Lisa Jameson is the coordinator of the art education program at Northern Kentucky University. She received her MFA in drawing and MA in art education from the University of Cincinnati. She works regularly with area P-12 teachers, museum educators and local schools on collaborative projects involving university students. In addition, Lisa is a visual artist who has been exhibiting for over 20 years.

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LISA JAMESON

Teaching (A Pile of Crazy)

(by *Jason Haap*)

The State,
The District,
The Principal
 make me stack:

stack work by standards,
stack pupils by subgroups,
stack papers by classes –
 all numbered, evaluated, documented.

Where once a big eyed child gazed
at the world
(so new!),
now stands a stack of
 descriptors,
 categories,
 Federal definitions:

*African American (non-Hispanic),
Other Health Impaired,
Economically Disadvantaged.*

We make piles of jargon,
 stacked.

We take line item analyses,
correlates to standards
and proficiencies,
measured to the percent –
even to the tenth of a percent, or hundredth!

*We devise content delivery mechanisms
to improve educational workflow interfaces.*

We fill sentences with jargon,
 stacked.

These piles surround us
like ancient Greek ruins,

and curious travelers
sometimes
take a picture
where Socrates used to talk.

Does Money Make the World Go Round?

(by *Vivian Kline*)

Egyptians negotiated with bars of gold.
Sumerians preferred their silver.
Indians loved wampum beads
Used for making trades.

Bank notes not till recently-
England sixteen ninety four.
Bills of exchange worked quite well-
And barter goes way back.

Oldest coin: 700 BC-
An impress of an ox.
A bent coin is a pledge of love.
Word “mint” comes from a temple.

One’s body parts worth just five bucks.
Birthing costs six thou.
Price of funerals are much more
And tombstones add to that.

Cash is needed for ransom.
Once 500 for a slave.
Kidnappers now collect big dough-
Rival bonuses for bankers.

Have you an unemployment check?
Will we have inflation?
Is money the root of all that’s evil?
Or can we spread it round?

POEM:

RICHARD HAGUE

Richard Hague is author of 13 volumes, including *Ripening, Possible, Alive in Hard Country* (winner of the 2003 Appalachian Writers Association's Poetry Book of the Year), *Lives of the Poem: Community & Connection in a Writing Life*. His *Milltown Natural: Essays and Stories from A Life* was nominated for a National Book Award. He teaches at Purcell Marian High School in Cincinnati and at the Institute for Professional Development and Graduate School of Education at Northeastern University in Boston. He is proprietor of Erie Gardens, an organic urban garden.

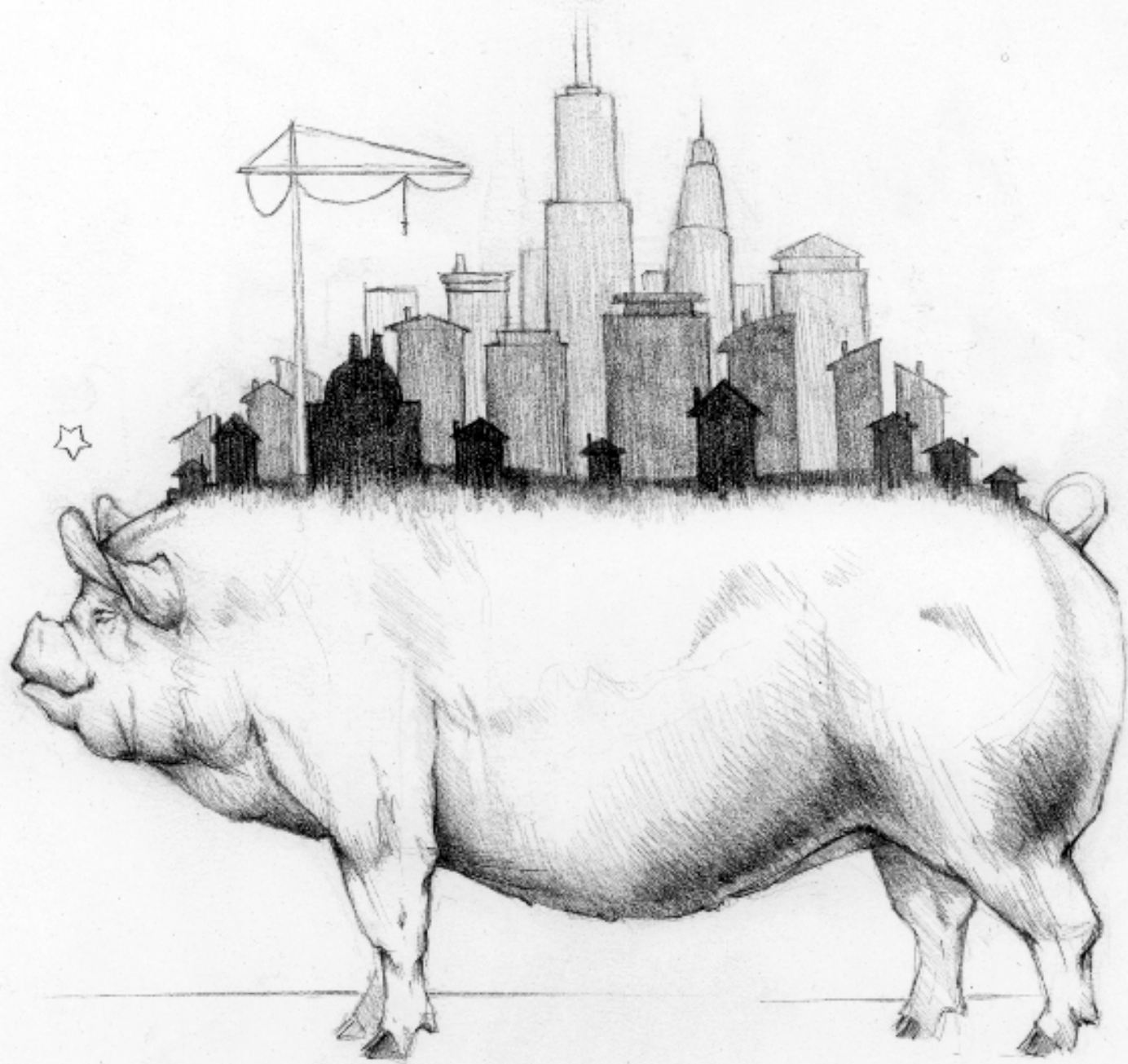
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DRAWING:

EMILY CATO

Emily Caito moved from Indianapolis in 2002 to attend the University of Cincinnati. She completed her BFA in 2006 and continues to stay active in the local scene not only as an individual artist but also with the collective "ARTHOLE." Emily's work encompasses several mediums including cast bronze, printmaking, digital media, and drawing. Her favorite color is gray.

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— — — — —

What I Wasn't Doing When News Came That the Planet Might Be Canceled

I was not sleeping that I know of—I was as awake as death.
I was not drunk, nor in the throes of love.
I was not shopping at K-Mart or Wal-Mart or any mart or market.
I was not driving home.
I was not counting my money.
I was not participating in capitalism,
though I was writing with a pen
manufactured by capitalists and
writing in a notebook manufactured by capitalists.
(I want to thank you, workers
who made my pens and my notebooks,
without you much would be lost—
may you dream at night of poems
emerging from your pens, may you hear the worlds
brought forth clamoring in your notebooks,
may you join the upgyring revolutionary futures of
your own spiral-bound notebooks).

My imagination was not, however,
manufactured by capitalists,
though often they invite me to abandon it
to their bills of goods.
Thus I was not shilling deodorant, or wearing it.
Thus I was not involved in hair care or cosmetic depilation.
Thus I was not consuming watts to talk of nothing important,
nor was I clogging the airwaves with advertisements for gems
dug in rainstorms by slaves in Africa.
Nor was I worrying about acne.
I may have been stretched out on my compost pile,
measuring myself against its richness,
dreaming of being buried there when the time comes,
of use to my family and garden.
I may have been participating in ocean,
floating on my back like an otter,
contemplating the salty problem of a clam,
I may have been agonizing in the jaws of a praying mantis,
suffering for love.

But I was not engaging in getting and spending,
nor in laying waste my own or anyone else's powers.
I may have been reading a novel on the side,
I may have been consulting a notebook,
marinating my thoughts in the following:

*Whenever there is
In any country
uncultivated lands and
unemployed poor,
it is clear
that the laws of property
have been so far extended
as to violate
natural right;
the earth is given as
a common stock
for man to labor
and live on.*

—Thomas Jefferson

Therefore, circumstances propitious,
my soul as momentarily clean as it could get,
the news (which is poetry, even the oldest
lines, transcribed from cuneiform or
decoded from the cracks frost makes in rocks)
poetry came and shouldered me aside, like
some epiphany or mistral.
It erected lines as long as signal ladders
against me and a thousand letters came over my body,
sorting themselves into stanzas:
what was left of me did
not resist. I became my own composition,
compost, my own treasure, cast into ingots, coins,
spending myself on shapes I had not, until then,
even known the names of.

Coda

And once again I noticed that when I pronounce “capitalism”
among citizens, magic flees, imagination’s wings fall off,
it drops from the sky,
and they begin to squirm. Among CEO’s
the word is manna, honey, but among
regular citizens, in the mouth
of an enemy of capitalism,
though a cynical and irregular exploiter
of capitalism,
the word is trouble, it puts them
in a tizzy, and they think
I am going to say something unpatriotic,
and though they themselves are suffering

health spent in pools of molten steel in failing mills,
bailouts of crooked CEOs by coal miners in the country—
they do not want to hear anything bad about it,
they tighten their lips, they hide in
small boxes of thoughtlessness
like rows of merchandise
until the sound of the word
is gone.

Meanwhile, back at the death of the planet,
digital TV is emperor, and the gubment
is sending incentives to buy
more, though all thewhile I am watching tomatoes
grow in my garden, the face of
my neighbor's tall girlfriend
mooning cool and content among peavines,
and any number
of uncredentialed dogs
sniffing precious land
the Congress will never
know or care for.
Before it's all eaten, burned, strafed, mined, gone—

O let us claim what's left for the poor.

POEMS:

PAULETTA HANSEL

Pauletta Hansel is the author of three collections of poetry, *Divining*, *First Person* and *The Lives We Live in Houses*, published by Wind Publications in Fall 2011.

Her poetry is featured in many journals and anthologies.

A native of Kentucky's Appalachian Mountains, Pauletta is Co-Director of Grailville Retreat and Program Center in Loveland, Ohio, where she leads Practice of Poetry workshops and retreats and the monthly Third Sunday Poetry Series. She holds an MFA from Queens University.

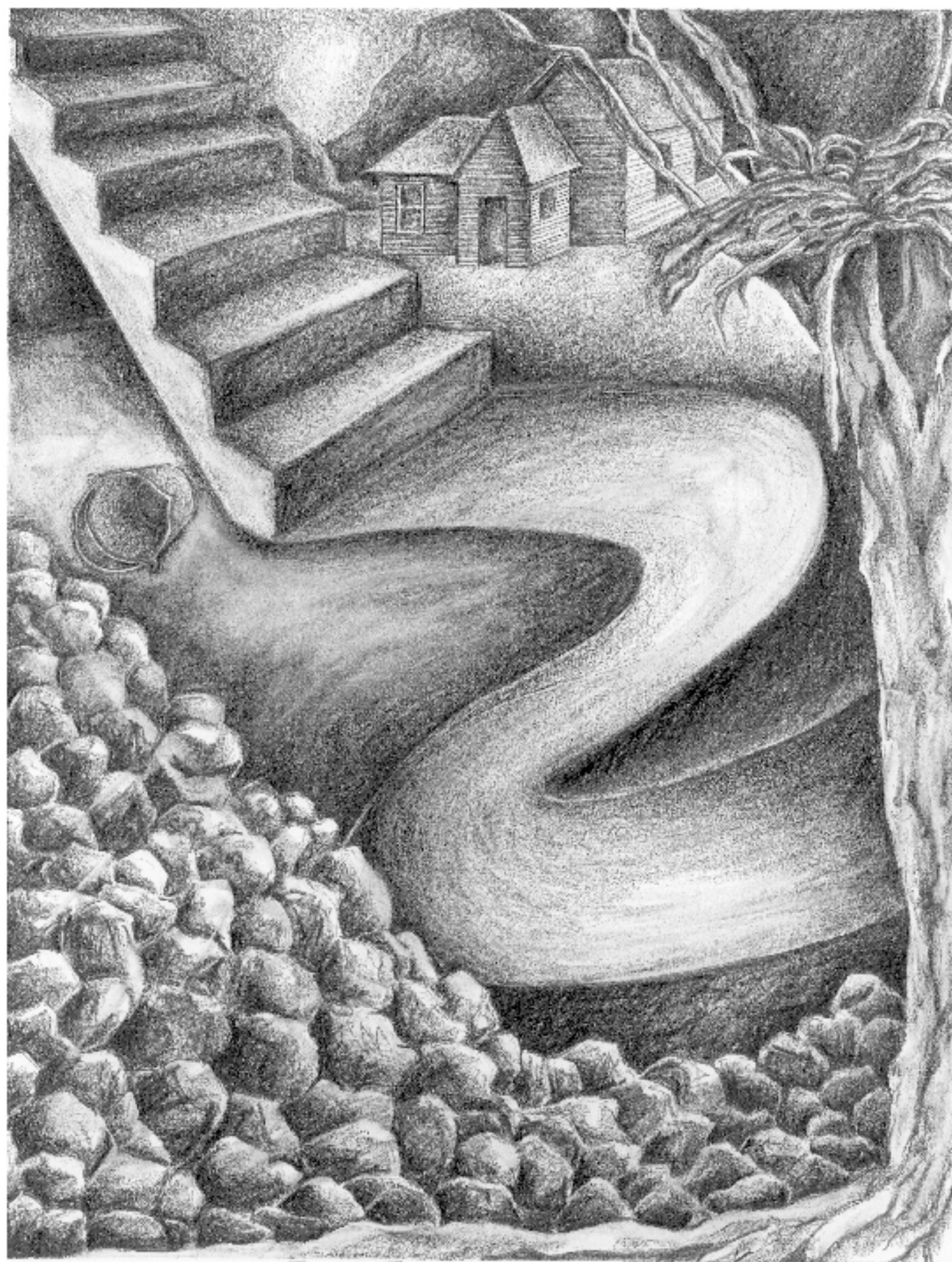
Contact: phansel@cinci.rr.com

DRAWING:

THERESA GATES KUHR

Theresa Gates Kuhr is a Master Printmaker and mother of four children. She has a BFA from The Ohio State University and a MFA from The University of Cincinnati, both in Printmaking. Theresa has served as one of the Directors of Tiger Lily Press, a Fine Art Printmaking Studio, since 1999, and strives to remain active as an artist and supporter of the arts in Cincinnati and its surrounding cities.

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COAL

2011

THREESA GATES KUHR

Coal

By the time I knew that coal
was something more than grit and fire
in the belly of the house
and had been held in deeper
vessels than the bucket

that once sent me sprawling
down the cellar steps
and on then to the gleaming room
where the doctor stitched
a crescent moon above my eye;

by the time that coal
was more than just the crack
in daddy's windshield, black rocks
flung from trucks careening daily
up and down our narrow road,

the coal that lined the bellies of the mountains
where our houses perched precarious
as hawks' nests or nestled in the hollowed
places at the joining of those hills
was spent.

Only the ashy seams stitched just below
the sassafras and pine, beneath
the redbud, dogwood, hickory and ferns,
under the leaf-mulched soil and sandstone
still endured.

Now that's gone too,
blasted and stripped away,
the hills a moonscape up above
the sagging houses and the towns.
The road, its hairpin

turns and crumbling berms
is gone as well;
a new highway rumbles through
the place that doctor sewed my eye:
all scars remain.

Class Lessons

I have never forgotten the little boy named Elvis
who took the seat nearest the teacher
on his first day of school, sometime in January,
after the pointy stars and Christmas trees

came down, before cut doily Valentines
and profiles of Presidential jowls. It was his
birthday
and his mother knew six years means school;
she wrapped her hair into its bun and put on

her best dress and came to town so Elvis,
with his hair slicked into place and last year's
trouser hem let down, could join us,
me and all the Susies, Davids and Toms who'd

long since seen Spot run across the printed page.
All day the teacher's frown descended;
she who'd threatened me with words
like principal and paddle when in September

I had read the year's allotment to the end.
Even her bosom grimaced when she learned
Elvis's first day by her desk
was his first at any.

Next day his seat was empty
once again; our teacher shook her head,
spoke far too sweetly of those country folk
who name their children Elvis and Loretta,

bring them to school too early, or too late.
I hold nothing else of my first year, not
the teacher's name or what I played at recess;
even my tears at being scolded for too much

love of reading are my mother's memory, not my
own.
But Elvis I remember, and his mother's sin
of being country as the people
from whom I'd also come.

Everyday

the world
cracked open for me,
living ember deep inside its yolk,
broken shell of darkness swept away.

Everyday my heart
cracked wider open,
ember of my life inside this body burning
through its brittle cage.

POEMS:

MICHAEL HENSON

Michael Henson is author of three books of poetry and two of fiction. He is a frequent contributor to *StreetVibes*, the newspaper of the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless.

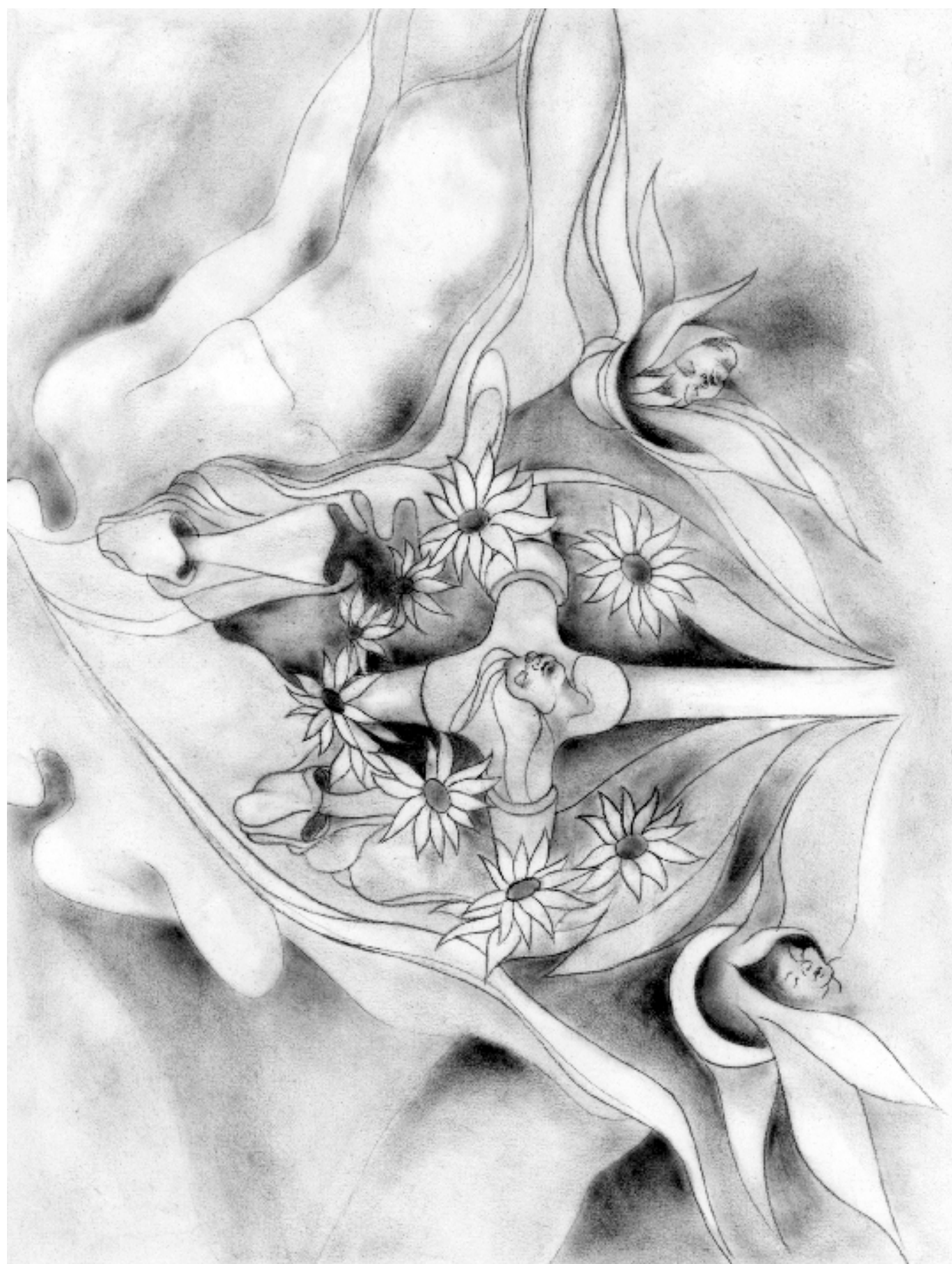
Contact: michaelhenson642@gmail.com

DRAWING:

JAN WARREN

Jan Warren has been an artist since childhood. She holds a B.S. in Design from the UC/DAAP and an Interdisciplinary M.A. from UC College of Arts & Sciences. She has attended sketch groups and workshops in fine art, portraiture, classical drawing and figure drawing. Jan worked as a Medical Illustrator for UC College of Medicine for 21 years and for the past ten years, has been a Medical Illustrator for Cincinnati Children's Hospital.

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Sam Warden

The Poets Drive East into Albuquerque

For Fred Whitehead

Route 66 falls
straight as an Acoma arrow
down into the valley of the Rio Grande.
We roll past signs of twisted neon,
the white bearded ghosts of the Okies,
fast food endless fast food restaurants,
a pipe metal cross wreathed in plastic flowers
for some poor anonymous saint
martyred by the caesars of internal combustion.
A girl crosses Coors Road with her hands going pitapat.
A man and woman argue in the asphalt of a McDonald's.
Children burst into furious desert flower.
I want to know,
what detoured the pilgrims
who stay in these sad faux-Navaho motels?
And are they under a curse?
I want to know,
whose souls are kicking up the dust of the trailer park?
But we are silent as a pair of Trappists gone AWOL.
For the wide, scattered city lies before us.
The low, salmon-colored houses of the neighborhoods,
the sun-struck downtown towers
and above it all, solid and somnolent
as gods who have just made love,
the sun-mottled Sandia Mountains.

How Did I Get Here? (an American Parable)

I sat down in the street
With a basket on my head.
My stomach was a train wreck.
And my brains were made of lead.

How did I get here?
What did I do?
Where's my missing innocence?
And where's my other shoe?

I don't know how I got here
And I don't know where I've been.
It must have been the Kool-Aid
It might have been the gin.

How did I get here?
What did I do?
Where did I put my common sense?
And where's my other shoe?

I don't know where I've been
And I don't know where I'm going.
I don't know up from down
Or the kind of seeds I'm sowing.

How did I get here?
What did I do?
How did I lose my relevance?
Who took my other shoe?

. . . any that pisseth against a wall.

1 Samuel 25:22

At the end,
half-starved, out-gunned,
choking with the smoke,
the last, bloodied half-dozen men
limped out of that house
with their hands up.
Each of them threw a weapon or two
onto the pile where we showed them ----
an AK,, a few pistols, a shotgun,
and some rifles left over from an earlier war.
At the start,
they were over a hundred.
And now, just these six.
We could not believe
they had held out so long.
One was surly, no more than a boy
and one was blinded with blood.
One chewed his fear like a hard crust
and one gazed at his shattered hands.
One had already soiled himself
and one knew he was already dead.
The wind came up.
The smoke cleared.
They blinked in the clear mountain light.
They looked to us
And they wondered, what next?
We turned to our captain and asked
No prisoners, he said.
He looked away and said again,
No prisoners.

POEMS:

SUE NEUFARTH HOWARD

Sue Neufarth Howard: Cincinnati native, published poet, visual artist, retired. Graduate of Miami University, Oxford, and UC Evening College. Member, Greater Cincinnati Writers' League (GCWL) and Colerain Artists. Several prize winning or Honorable Mention poems in Ohio Poetry Day Contests since 1998.

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DRAWING:

SPENCER VAN DER ZEE

Spencer Storm van der Zee was born on a wooden ship at night, during a lightning storm in 1636. The artist refused to speak for the first century of his life, communicating only through drawings. Spencer van der Zee continues to live and work in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Contact: spencervanderzee@gmail.com



SPENDER VAN DER ZEE

A Friend of Need

When his mother died in his arms, ex-cop Joe
began his cemetery beat in an old battered
truck, seeking grounded timber to carve
for walking sticks he gives away,

looking for lost souls on the verge of self-harm.
The deeply distressed take heed.
He makes a connection, offers a gift,
their name on a sketch of Jesus.

Joe sees an armed stranger in distress, leaves
his truck, approaches from the side, never from behind.
Like a man still wearing a badge, walks boldly, softly.

With eye contact, he pushes a button on the valve
in his neck, utters, "My Friend," a breathy, raspy
sound. He's a former smoker, two packs a day;
Cancer survivor. Throat surgery took his voice, his job.

His offering - a pencil drawing of Jesus. Asks
the stranger for his name, writes it into the hair
on the sketch - inquires about his troubles.
Joe's taken away four guns this way,

one from a young man on the mausoleum floor,
January 12. In the book of visitor's notes that day
this entry: "Mom I wanted to see you. I tried
to kill myself today but a man found and helped me."

*(Found poem, based on the article,
"Cemetery: Gathering Timber, Helping Lost Souls,"
by Cliff Radcliff in the Cincinnati Enquirer,
Sunday, February 7, 2010.)*

A Sunday in 1950

Mother took me to visit her friend Betty,
banished to a Rest Home - a mansion
spooky as The House of Usher.

We ascended creaky stairs to a
low-light room, windows barred,
Betty gaunt, in gray, perched
on the edge of a rusty iron bed.

"This is no house of rest," she said.
"Imprisoned here, a grim
workhouse, we're judged insane...
for long hours made to scrub dirty
floors and filthy latrines, launder our
bedclothes to earn our keep, fed
paltry morsels of tasteless grub.
Like Salem witches, so easy for
wives to lose freedom. A roving
husband need only find a doctor
willing to believe the tale of his
woman deranged. I'm trapped for
life while my cad of a mate runs free."

Mother, who came in the spirit
of cheer, was left to ponder the truth,
powerless to offer resolution.

Fifty years too soon for liberation.

Less Home

Among any large group of trees in the city,
makeshift neighborhoods - camps

versus street, shelters, couch, car,
making do with a patchwork of discarded

scraps on a rugged nugget of land, less home
than you or I, a homeless adaption.

We all have a need for setting up a home,
a need to be settled.

Seven days a week, sunup to sundown
living a pioneer's life, just surviving

without electricity, running water,
heat, showers and laundry,

resisting pelted rocks, eggs,
harassment, threats, beatings,

bonding with like settlers, making their
own rules, needing to know those around them.

Makeshift neighborhoods - less home
but more light inside which the heart stirs.

*(Found poem - from an article in the
September 29 issue of City Beat,
A Simple Rough Life.)*

POEM:

L. BRIAN HUEHLS

Brian Huehls has worked in land planning and residential architecture in the Cincinnati area since the early 70's. He uses his poetry as a medium to understand and connect with people. In both his design and place making he seeks peace, security and harmony in nature. His work and poetry have been strongly influenced by the poems and essays of Wendell Berry, particularly his essay *Standing By Words*.

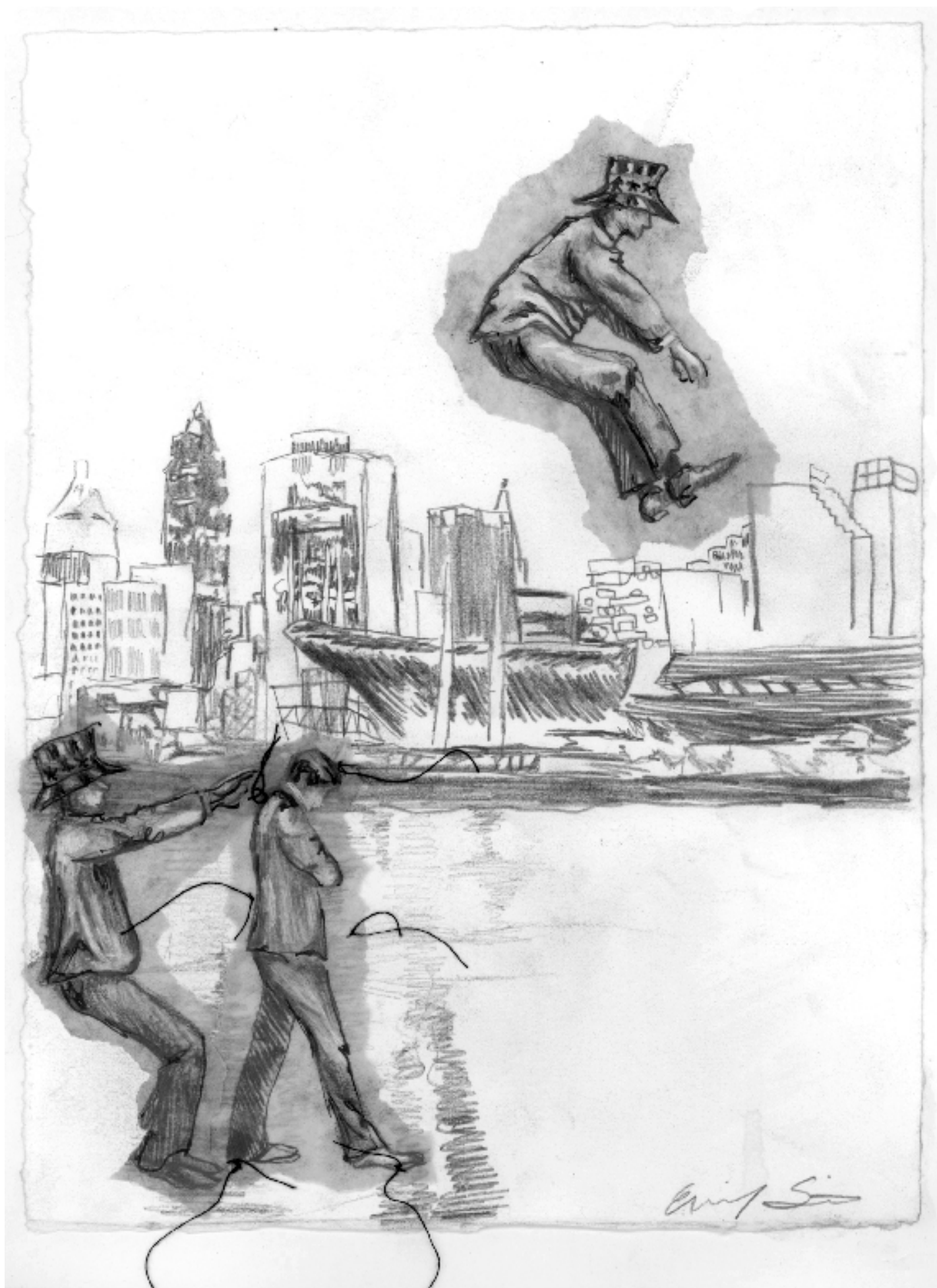
Contact: lbhuehls@hotmail.com

DRAWING:

EMILY SITES

Emily Sites is currently a senior in the Fine Arts program in the College of the Design Architecture Art and Planning program at the University of Cincinnati. Her focus is in 3D media and print making.

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Susie's 7:00 pm NPR News

On the kitchen table are newspapers with all the world's news.
The wars, roadside bombs, strategies for winning peace, more bombs.
How do we ever win peace, can we not make some of our own?
Two Thousand and Ten has ended, where's the New Year?

The New Year looks like the old year, a never ending story:
Politicians with principles they think all should be living by;
Armies that value killing over talk, people suffering;
Bankers, hedge funds, the new economy where rich get richer.

We have confusion and injustice to just owning a home.
I see the empty storefronts, malls and streets with vacant houses.
Household, city, county, state, Federal BUDGETS... BUSTED.
What is it that is happening to our living?

From economic excess
Economic recess
Touching everyone
It's personal
Life changing
Listen
Hear

NO
NOT ME
I work hard.
I need my job
What about my house
I have three kids in school
I've worked here for twenty years
Surely this must be a mistake
My job is my life... It's who I am
Downsizing... Downsizing How can I live
I've specialized and done all you asked
I just taught two days of training
I can't just leave end of day
Tomorrow I have work
What are these papers
There is no more
LEAVING NOW
NOT ME
NO

In the conference room next door,
There was another conversation

You may listen if you like...

NO
NOT ME
LEAVING NOW
There is no more
What are these papers
Tomorrow I have work
I can't just leave end of day
I just taught two days of training
I've specialized and done all you asked
Downsizing... Downsizing How can I live
My job is my life... It's who I am
Surely this must be a mistake
I've worked here for twenty years
I have three kids in school
What about my house
I need my job
I work hard
NOT ME
NO

The very next month, the down sized Company showed a profit.
Susie's nightly financial report showed this as improvement.
The stock climbed as the downsizing continued shedding people.
It came to pass many profits increased...The Great Repression ended.

The local family dinner down the street soon closed.
Twenty of the 100 downsized lost their house.
Eighteen families had kids drop out of college;
Eight of their jobless kids just joined the armed forces.

NPR's Nightly News showed three of the eight...silence.
All killed in our war just this last year.
One father committed suicide.
Susie's news is numbers news.

They say we are in a global economy.
Technology has made us global citizens.
Facebook helped spark the Egyptian revolution.
We are a melting pot starting to melt again.

POEMS:

HENRY JACQUEZ

The Trappist monk/poet Thomas Merton said, “The poet enters into himself to create. The contemplative enters into God in order to be created.” Henry Jacquez is currently in the Diaconate Program at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary of the West (The Athenaeum of Ohio) studying to become a Deacon. He is a past President of the Greater Cincinnati Writer’s League and loves the collaboration of poetry and prayer.

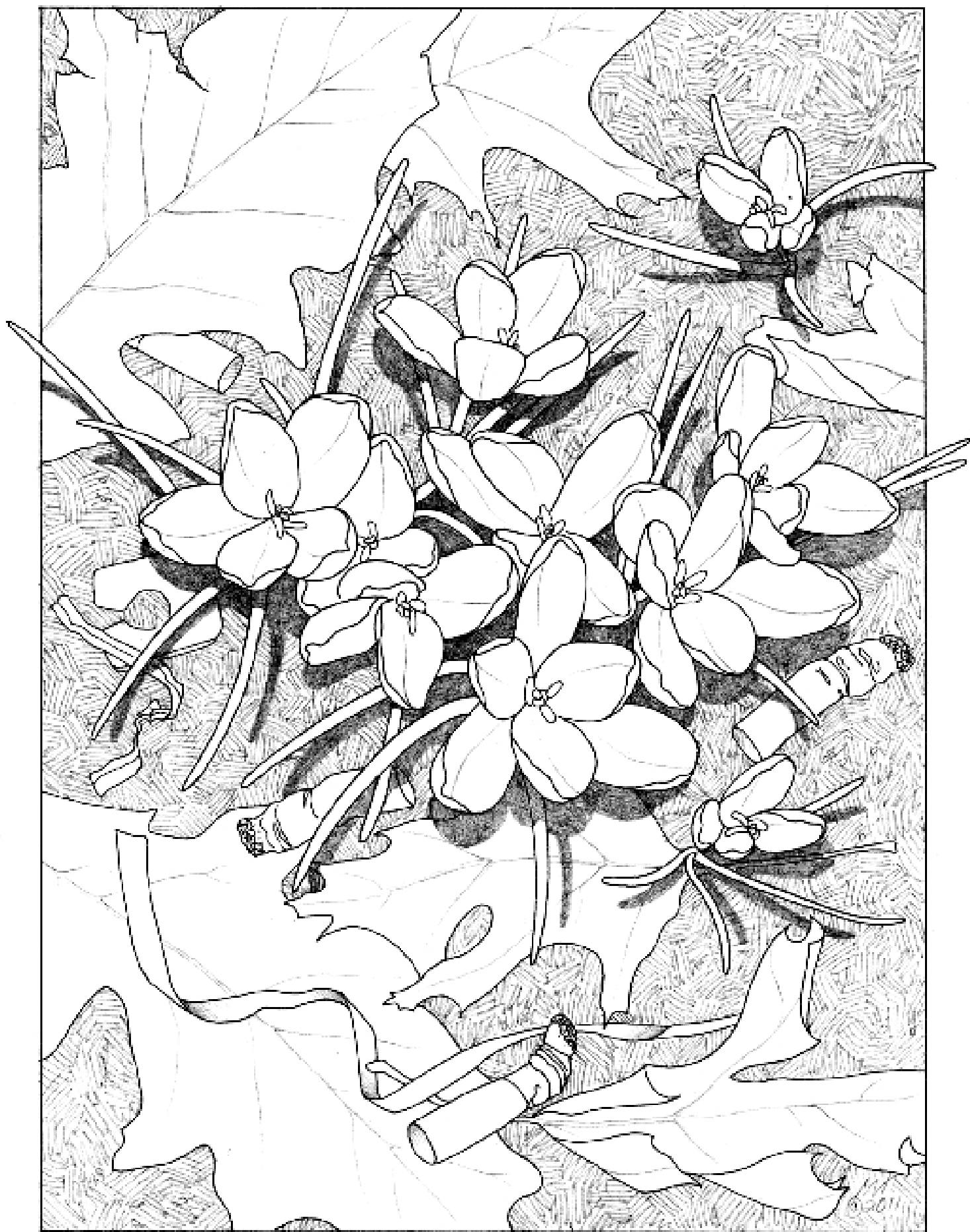
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DRAWING:

MARCIA HARTSOCK

Cincinnati artist Marcia Hartsock specializes in medical and scientific illustration. A Certified Medical Illustrator, she creates accurate, concise and colorful images for medical and health education. A graduate of the University of Cincinnati DAAP, she earned her Master’s Degree in Illustration from the prestigious ISDP program at Syracuse University. Her clear, colorful illustrations have won national awards, and have been exhibited both in this country and internationally.

Contact: marcia@hartsockillustration.com; www.hartsockillustration.com



Marcia Dartso

A Call to Cincinnati Poets for Peace and Justice

I like peace and I like justice.

I like the way a tiny violet
Shares its purple beauty
With a colony of clover.

I like the way hickory bark
Curls and shags against
The skin of its tree.

I like the way toothed leaf
Oak leaves grip their limb
As winter pulls down a cloud of snow.

I like the way pinecones nest
On layers of brown and yellow needles
Cross-stitched in the fabric of December.

I like the way St. Therese of Lisieux
Lived her humble life as a prayer
Her little way to God.

I like the way Ted Kooser bargain shops
For a poem at the local thrift store
In worn trousers, a plain shirt,
And a neighbor's smile.

You might ask yourself,
What do these things have to do
With peace and justice –
A call to Cincinnati poets?

I will tell you,
Probably nothing -
But nothing done
Can spread like bacteria
Devouring a forest of evergreens
Pointing toward Heaven.

A Story

The quiet fall
Of a grain of wheat
Is heard –

Peace and justice flows directly
From the blood of the crucified Jesus
Through his spear pierced side

Runs down along battered ribs
Whipped ripped slashes of skin
Swollen legs, bruised knees
Nailed feet into the shroud of history

Of soup kitchens in basements
Of abandoned schools where the hungry
Line their pockets and ask for seconds

Along dim lit alleys where the glimmer
Of hope is in a full dumpster

Toward rehab centers where mountains
Of promises reach for God

Into homes of abused spouses, abused
Children caught between dialogues of anger

Out along cardboard ghettos where
The homeless define home

Around the corner to a stranger helping
A stranger in arm, in prayer to his feet
Toward a warm shelter, a warm meal

Beyond the court house, the county jail
Beyond the scars of meth, beyond himself

Flooding the marble floor at the Basilica
Where he lay prostrate, face down
Out of love for his neighbor.

POEMS:

NANCY K. JENTSCH

Nancy K. Jentsch hopes that she can help others experience the beauty and goodness that surround us and that she can contribute in some way to the preservation of that beauty and goodness for coming generations.

Contact: jentsch@nku.edu

BRIAN RICHARDS

Brian Richards, author of a half dozen poetry chapbooks, operates Bloody Twin Press, which publishes handmade books of contemporary poetry. His novella, *In Rain*, appeared serially in *House Organ*. *Enrridged: Selected Pieces, 2000-2010*, has recently been released (March 2011).

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DAN RUBIN

Dan Rubin resides in Northside with his wife and two children. Once a month he participates in a local writing group. He is currently working on his first novel about an elderly Russian artist who discovers a passion for graffiti.

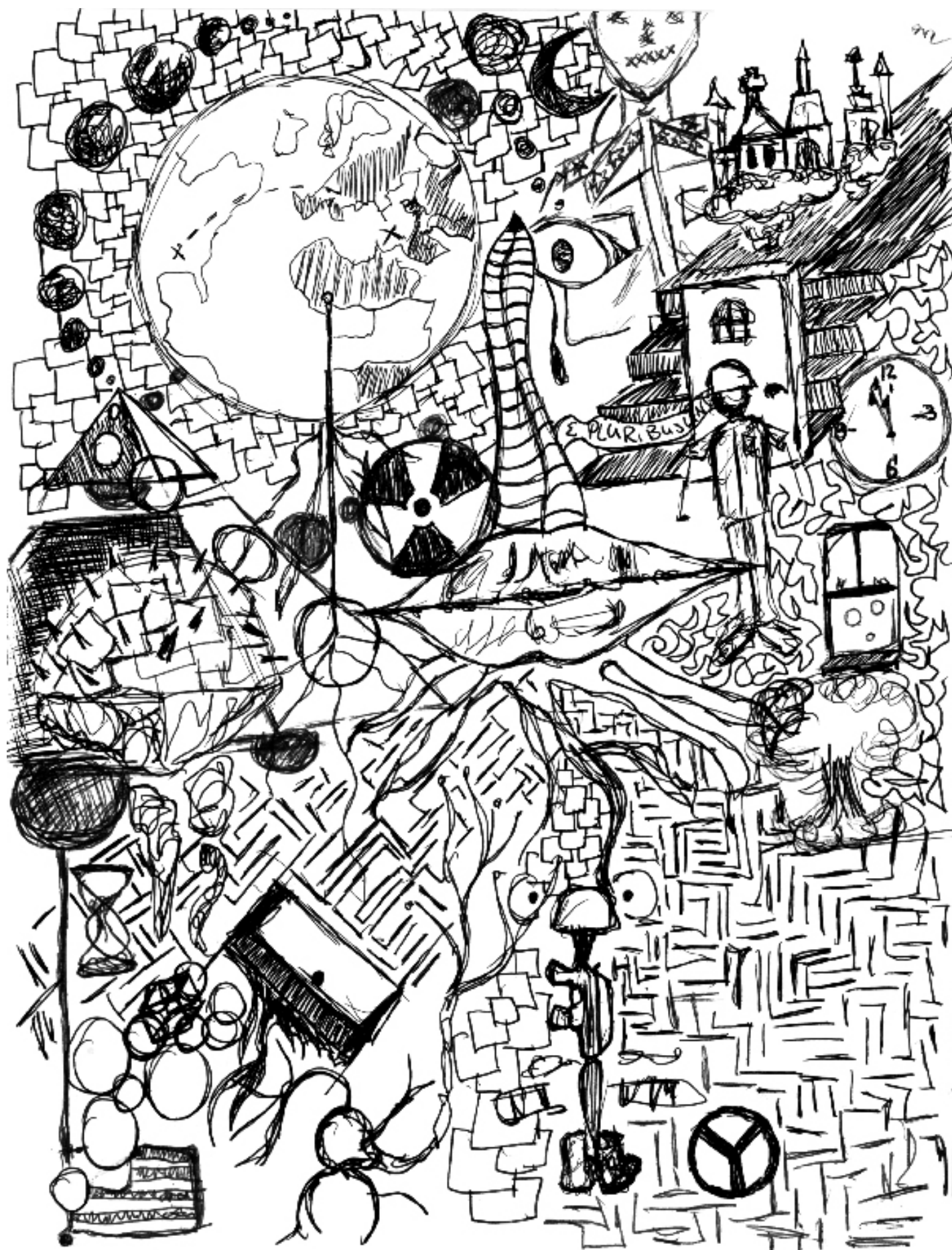
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DRAWING:

IVO VRETENAROV

Ivo Vretenarov, age 22, is originally from Sofia, Bulgaria. He currently lives in Cincinnati, Ohio, and studies at the University of Cincinnati/DAAP, working towards a degree in fine arts, with a concentration on Photography, Installation, and Sculpture.

Contact: vretenii@mail.uc.edu



Peter Nowara

Two Worlds at Christmas or Isaiah and Anthracite

(by **Nancy Jentsch**)

I quench the cactus's thirst
Buds weeping from stiff spiny arms
(Like plowshares from swords)
Beauty in the offering
A backdrop on the windowsill.

The anthracite crackles and pops,
Toasting my toes as I snuggle under
A blanket to read

A book about war
about gunfire about
hunger about
thirst about cold
about corpses about death

The chapter finished and
In the haze of withdrawing fire
I leave my cocoon behind
And turn my gaze toward the window.

The Christmas cactus blooms.

It Might Prove Instructive

(by **Brian Richards**)

It might prove instructive to compare
The mortality rates of officers
To enlisted men in wars involving
The U.S. How many general officers for
Instance died in the Civil War as opposed
To enlistees? It would take some
Research to discover the answer to that
One but I'll bet I can tell you
The exact ratio sustained so
Far in our middle-eastern adventures
Without recourse to reference materials.

Jonah

(by **Brian Richards**)

The signs are ordinarily confusing enough to offer
doubt concerning which course would
provide passage but when
instructions from God are delivered
personally the relevant query is how quick
He wants one to be about
the task it would be
a mercy to give Mom a reassuring kiss goodbye

Wilma, 2001

(by **Dan Rubin**)

Wilma had sweet smells
Wafting from her clothes, hair, skin
Waking up those asleep in wheelchairs
Encouraging them to want stimulation and
Wade into activity
Sing along with William
Waltz with the Waltzers
4-way Bingo
Those sleeping restfully in wistful dreams
While Wilma sings or hugs
wheelchair bound residents
Long hair waving sweet incense which would
Last all day
Wilma had sweet smells

POEMS:

JERRY JUDGE

Jerry Judge is a Cincinnati based poet and social worker. He's an active member of the Cincinnati Writers Project and the Greater Cincinnati Writers League. Seven of his poetry chapbooks have been published - the latest being *Night Talk in the Barracks* (2010) by Pudding House Publications.

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DRAWING:

MATTHEW SHELTON

Matthew Shelton, an artist and musician, grew up in South Carolina, studied and worked in Cincinnati for many years, and currently lives in Chicago. His past musical endeavors include singing, and playing guitar and mbira/kalimba for the Cat Lovers, M.Shelton's Picnic, and Me or the Moon. His main focus artistically is his ongoing series of lightboxes. His work aims to inspire the viewer/listener to "flex his love muscles".

Contact: www.flexyourlovemuscles.com



M. SHELTON

MARCH 2011

One Week to the Day

after my dog, Lily,
died unexpectedly

I began a walk
leading to the woods

where we hiked daily.
I sensed movement falling

next to me. The palm
of my left hand opened to receive

a leaf which had fallen
in an area without nearby trees.

I held that leaf and even kissed it
lightly and with surprised joy.

I carried it to Warder Park
buried it among other autumn leaves.

I'm not making any claims or giving
testimony in church or on radio.

I'm just saying on one week
to the day a lone leaf fell to me.

Editor Needed

Grandmother killed while shielding
her grandbaby from a drive-by shooter
who was not even aiming at them.

What diabolical writer wrote
such a script with the killer only seventeen
and doomed to start mankind as a prison bitch?

Free will, I guess. We write
these scripts every single day.
Now, I pray for some editing.

Feb. 13 – Girl, 10, Killed

by falling branches
in the front yard of her home.

A Baptist says God wanted her
in heaven – we can't question why.

An atheist says this proves no god
exists – he could not be that cruel.

All I can do is write this poem.

If this poem was my breath,
I would give her every syllable.

POEMS:

TADASHI KATO

Tadashi Kato is a performance artist and poet, native of Japan. He has a Bachelor's degree in Aesthetics and Master's degree in Education, both from the University of Tokyo, and a Ph.D. in Psychology from the Ohio University. Tadashi's artistic expression has a strong focus on social and environmental justice. His performances, including poem recitals, appeared in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia.

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KATHRYN MARTIN OSSEGE

Kathryn Martin Ossege, an award-winning writer and poet, wrote and co-illustrated the children's book *'The Lion the Wind and Mariah'* (www.TheLiontheWindandMariah.com). Her column, *'Soul-ar Energy'*, appeared for many years in a local magazine. She currently shares her musings and meanderings about life online.

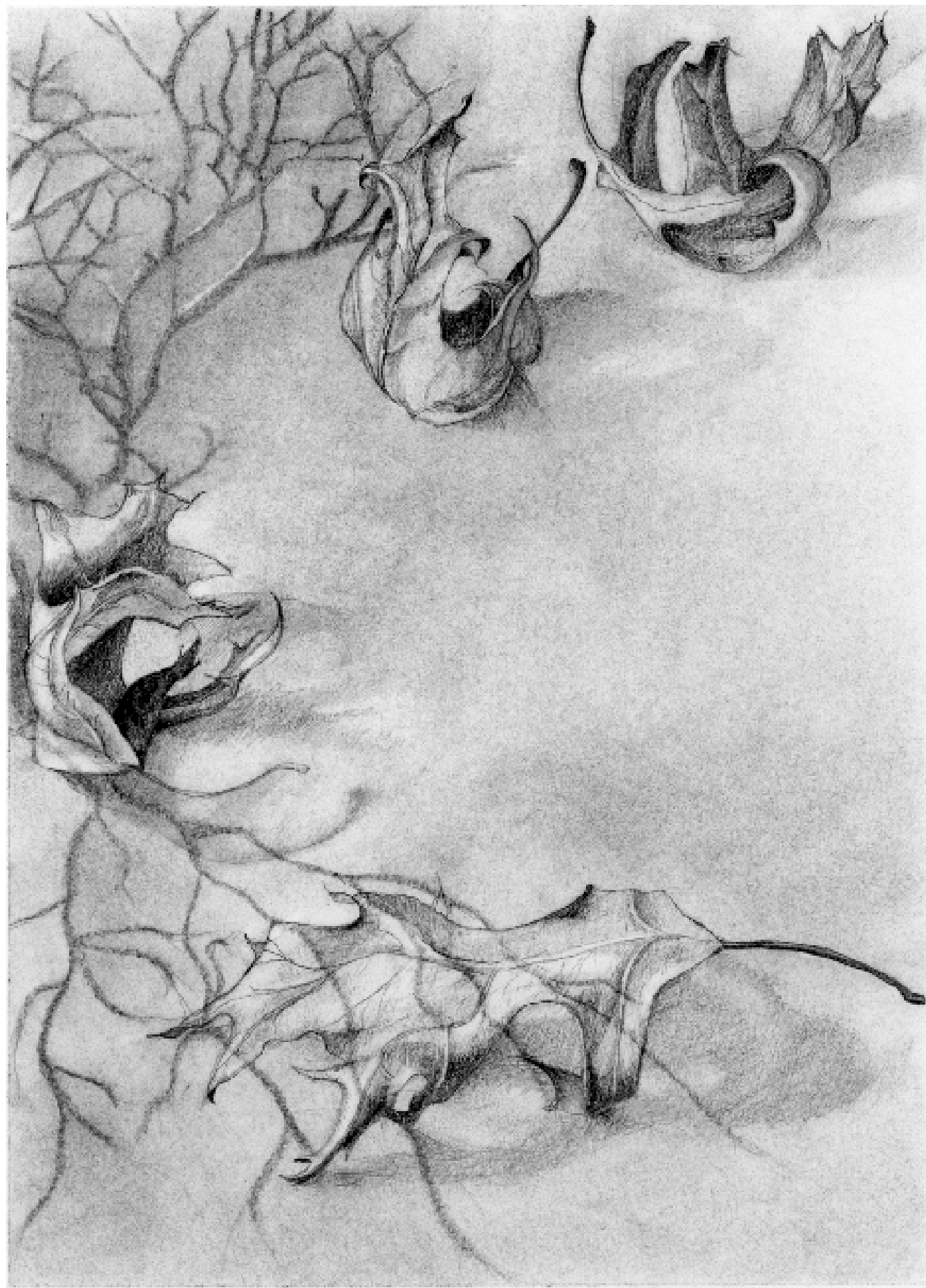
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DRAWING:

KRISTIN LUTHER

Kristin Luther is a medical illustrator and animator who creates graphics for print and the web. She earned a Master of Science at University of Chicago's Biomedical Visualization program, and returned to Cincinnati where she started her own business, Luther Multimedia. Her work has been published in brochures and books, and she has contributed to interactive educational modules and scientific animations.

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Kristin Luthers 2011

Wheel of Agony, Wheel of Prayer

(by **Tadashi Kato**)

As the wheel of life turns around
So does the agony on earth
As the fear turns into anger
The anger turns into hatred
As the hatred turns into fight
The battle results in despair
Misery is another name for victory
And there is no utopia beyond the hills
As we call upon the healing
We sense the tears of earth

Memory of Trees

(by **Kathryn Martin Ossege**)

Ancient
wisdom abides
in giant oak trees.
Strong trunks firmly rooted
in the ground. Supple branches
gracefully bend
with the breath of the wind.
Leaves emerge as fragile buds,
slowly unfurl, turn vibrant
jewel tones, and are
released
b a c k
to the
s o i l.
Acorns
falling
falling
falling
planting new growth, new cycles, new dreams

Unfolding Reality

(by **Kathryn Martin Ossege**)

It seems, yet again, the universe outside
has managed to slip from the bow that I tied.
Where once, oh so neatly, things all were defined
now lies upheaval and debris left behind.

“How can this be?” I fuse and I fume.
My life seemed so tidy when I last left the room.
But no sooner did I pull the door shut behind me
when all hell broke loose as things slipped from
their bindings.
And all that I once held as safe and known
with gusto and drama out the window was blown.

Ever so slowly I pick through the debris
searching in vain for that trusty *old* me
when life was comfy and all sorted out
neatly sifted into piles, little room for doubt.

But with edges all blurry and images shifting
the beliefs I once held to and fro begin drifting.
And all that I once held as absolute and true
seems one-size-too-small as I try on the new.

I chuckle out loud as the truth slowly dawns,
the world is the same but *I* have moved on.
So I pack up my Ego and mark “Handle with care”
as I set out in search of the *new* me out there.

My footsteps sound hollow as I step into the night
the path dimly lit by the glow of my light
a light that shines brighter as I reach to grasp
the truth of *this* moment, releasing the past.

POEMS:

YANA KECK

Yana Keck has been writing poetry since 1980 when she was a VISTA volunteer working with Indochinese refugees in Portland, OR. She loves the art of poetry and has also experimented with short stories. She has been an activist for peace and justice in Cincinnati since 1983.

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ANNETTE JANUZZI WICK

Annette Januzzi Wick, of Loveland, is an author, teacher, and Women Writing for a Change podcast producer. She views her life's work as making connections while facilitating writing circles and blogging frequently at www.IllBeintheCar.com.

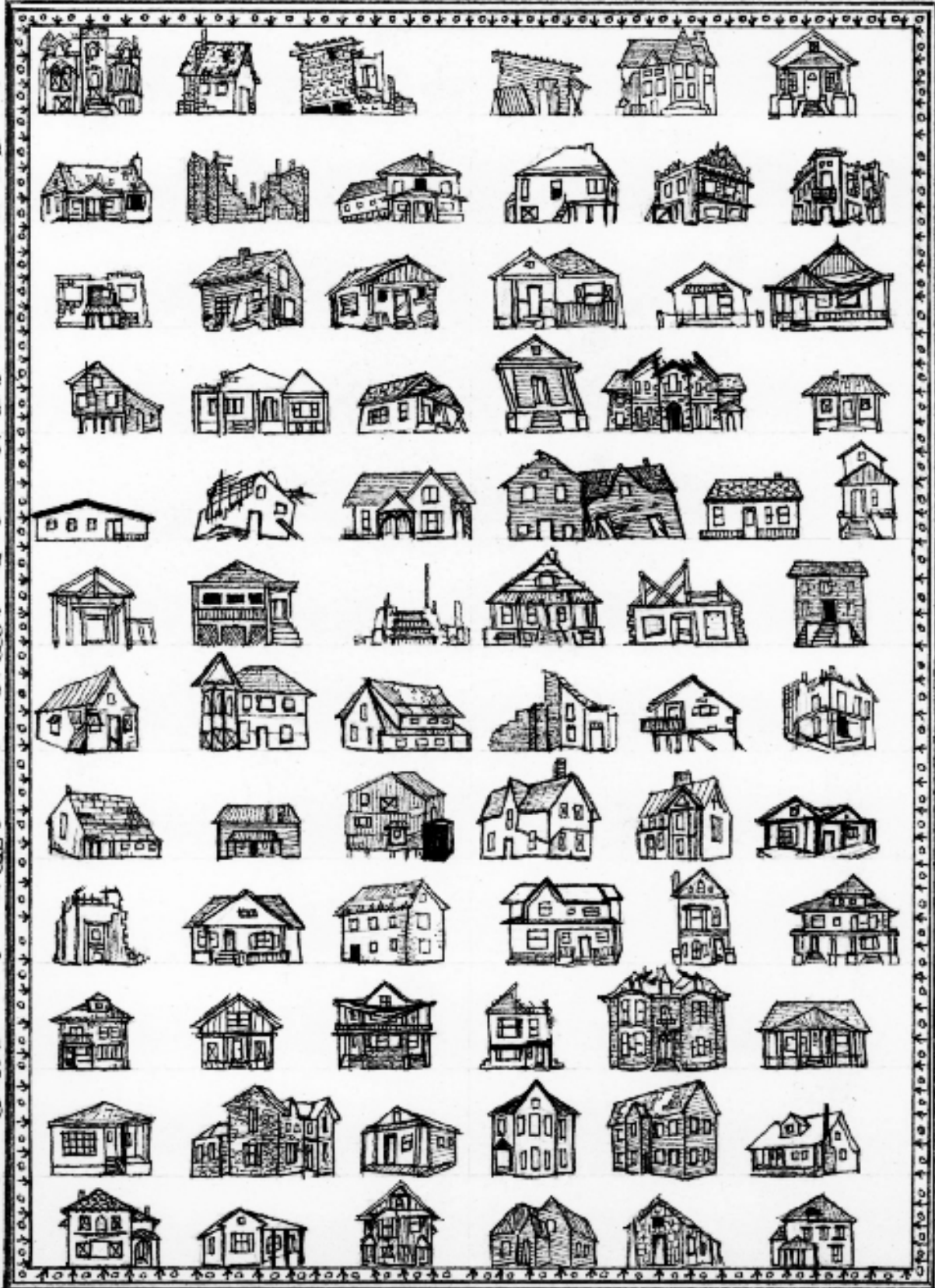
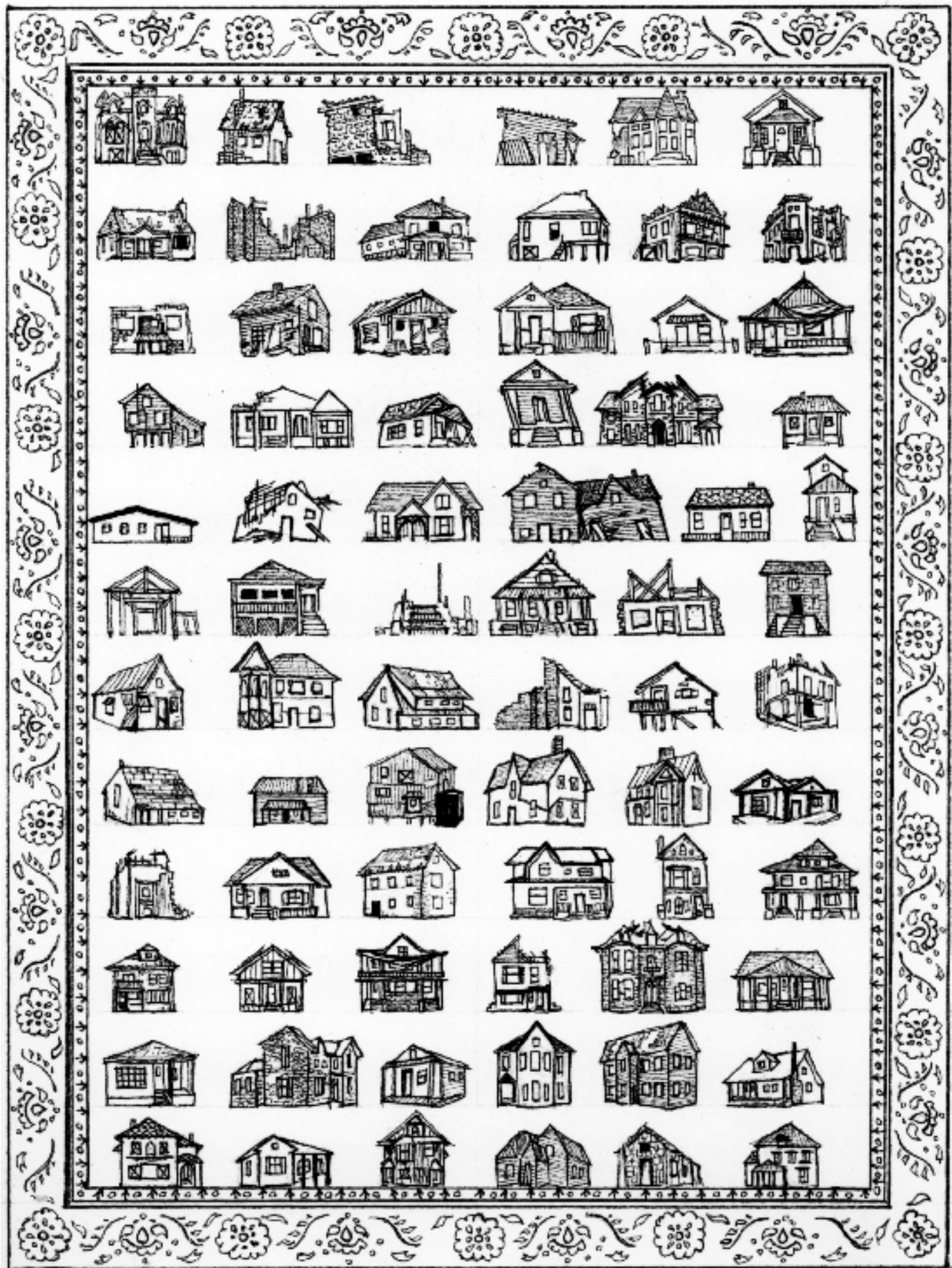
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DRAWING:

SHANNON MARIE BARNES

Shannon Marie Barnes, born in Cincinnati, OH, spent her childhood in Northern Kentucky. She has recently graduated from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago with an emphasis in Painting and Philosophy. She plans to continue her studies and artistic career abroad.

Contact: shannon@shannonmariebarnes.com



Shannon Marie Barnes

Vociferous Vibes

(by *Yana Keck*)

I watched as they tore it down.
the walls collapsing, tumbling
my home; the building
where I lived.

A chill came over my body
numbing my hands and feet;
and weakened the pangs
of hunger I already had.

My home is gone,
“trash” they called it.
It was the only home I had.
Now the street is my home.

Fragments of bricks lay
scattered on the ground
like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle
waiting to be made whole.

Except this puzzle will never
be put together again.
The familiar has been forever
violently ripped apart.

I picked up a brick
and threw it hard until
it smashed a window
of the vacant house next door.

My neighbor did the same.
Then more bricks; more anger.
We cannot and will not
remain silent any longer.

Bricks will continue to fly,
one after the other, until
the echoes of fallen buildings
are heard in City Hall.

Missing Home

(by *Annette Wick*)

Cinder blocks stand
like prehistoric Stonehenge
holding up
the bayou air
as it wafts across the Lower Ninth.

The neighborhood bares its wounds -
dilapidated sidewalks,
graffiti masking cash machine as art,
a lone mailbox with contents marked
return to sender.

No man or woman is left
to tell the tale
of the wooden table and chair
strewn along Flood Avenue,
knobby leg poking through wildflowers
chair seat matting down nearby weeds

Imagine,
teetering atop that chair
as flood waters rise,
then stepping onto a wobbly table
to reach the ceiling,
crawl out a hole in the roof
and wait

for rescue.

And return
to the skeleton of a home
lifted off its haunches
and carried away.

The burial of what died
in the Lower Ninth
comes slowly,
as seasons surmount the work of man
who long ago constructed canals
that could not hold the surge.

A set of steps stays behind....
to welcome home its ghosts.

(*Post-Hurricane Katrina, October, 2010*)

POEMS:

LINDA KLEINSCHMIDT

Linda Kleinschmidt, a freelance editor and writing consultant, writes poetry on New England, women, the human condition, also fiction and nonfiction. She has published 2 children's picture books, numerous articles on the crafts of writing and editing, won two Writer's Digest Honorable Mentions for her Juvenile writing.

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MAURI MOSKOWITZ

Mauri Moskowitz, born in Cincinnati, OH, loves writing, drawing, photography, painting, music, zebras, cows. She is currently studying Fine Art at DAAP/UC.

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MIKE MURPHY

Mike Murphy, an Ohio poet/philosopher, advocates economic democracy and sustainable gardening/farming/permaculture. He sees the urgent need for widespread use of solar energy, and socio-economic 'phase change' from 'Empire to Earth Community'.

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DRAWING:

JOHNATHON AUER

Johnathon Auer is in his fourth year of study of Fine Art at the UC/DAAP. Born and raised in the southwest region of Ohio, he currently lives in Northside/Cincinnati. He has exhibited his work in both solo and group shows. His interests are philosophy, poetry, and context.

Contact: auerjt@mail.uc.edu



Johnathon Auer

Still Water

(by *Linda Kleinschmidt*)

You never see glass until
You break it, shatter it,
Walk into it.
Glass is still water,
Cloudless sky.
Glass has endless depth,
But no character
Until we draw our image on it.

We look through glass,
Give it design, human properties,
Choose what we want to see.
We gaze into its blank depths,
Looking out and away,
Never recognizing the distortion
We can create.

Glass can hurt. It's sharp.
When it breaks, its shards
Pierce skin, souls, hearts.

Peace and Justice: a Poem

(by *Mauri Moskowitz*)

Generations of offspring,
origins of race
ripen collectively to
furbish earth's face

barbarity and aura mingle
and hitch-
impregnating nationality into
a chauvinistic ditch

so if mental elevation is
a frozen misfit
this jungle's wildfire
will linger unlit.

Creation, Evolution, & The Self-Making of Homo Stewardii

(by *Mike Murphy*)

Thinking with
Occam's Razor
It seems we
Probably
Were created
By a Supreme Being.

Evolution, too, has
Played a part.

So, apparently,
Did genetic modification
By Advanced Beings,
Argues Paul Von Ward,
Plausibly.

Seems, also,
Evolution of some species
Has been
Speeded up
By humans
In some cases.
The dog
For instance
Shows abundant signs of
Human-directed evolution,
So say scientists,
Producing
An amazing
Diversity of
Skull shapes
During 30,000 years.

Some think the dog
Also helped shape
Human evolution
Somewhat,
Encouraging by
Example

The development of
Friendship,
Loyalty &
Trust in humans,
Suggests
Wikipedia writer
Dan Vergano.

Now, we humans stand at
A crossroads as a species
Testing our wisdom &
Survival skills.
We know that
Being human
Is more than
Walking upright
& Making tools,
Or carrying an
AK-47 or M-16
And fighting resource
wars
For a corporate empire
That has despoiled
The planet &
Does not care for
People or communities.

If we keep on doing this,
We will probably
End our days
Fighting over junk on toxic
Waste dumps.

Of course, we could
choose
to Direct our own
evolution
toward Becoming
a sharing & caring
species,
Homo stewardii.

It's our choice, together.
One way. Or the other.

POEMS:

CAROL FEISER LAQUE

Carol Feiser Laque's collection of poetry *Mapping the Confluence* was published in 2010. In that year she won the 'Skyblue the Badass Award', a lifetime achievement award from the Cincinnati Writers Project. The poetry workshop of that group is a vital contribution to her poetizing. She is currently working on a new collection of poetry.

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DRAWING:

QUENTIN GIBEAU

Quentin Gibeau is an audio artist, illustrator, painter, and musician who is currently a MFA in Community Arts candidate at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore. In his work, Quentin aims to explore and document the narrative that exists in communities as way of creating cross cultural dialogue. Originally from Bellevue, KY, Quentin was born to artist parents who, with a belief in social justice, raised him to use his skills to benefit others.

Contact: www.quentingibeau.com; quentingibeau.blogspot.com



Quentin Gibeau

Footnotes

Stepping into my shadow
at the end of light,
I sing “row, row, row your boat”
being the little engine that could.

I step on every crack
all the way home from school.
Everyone has a sidewalk,
a front porch, spaces for silence, for sitting.

Lawns are bushy, full of weeds
that swarm. Iris, snapdragons,
lilies, roses are all but one names of girls.
A moment later – the bees die.
No flowers, no food – starvation –
No Gross National Product. All of us –
and no soup kitchen, or energy
to fight a profitable war.

We murder the smallest of us.
County Fairs are footnotes in poet’s poems.
A soprano sings “Amazing Grace” to
a congregation of skin covered bones, and
the babies don’t fuss or cry anymore.

Endings

I am stretched on the rack –
a ruined poet – stumbling on verbs –
without a being or doing.

I mind my elders hopelessly
cuddled in swift couplets.
I trip over rhyme and reason.

Behind my breast is a wound
where my heart was pounding –
a torn out rhythm sleeps.

I am so deep in sleep –
my body is covered with vines.
I can count to one hundred years.

After that, I drift dusty
into Rumpel stilt skin’s desire.
He is small – he needs stilts to be seen.

His hair is rumpled, his skin is wrinkled.
He dances. I do not care for the ending.
He should have had the baby. He loved it.

Man Is an Island

I borrow my leg and arm –
building my home everywhere
without walls. A throbbing wind
stings and burns my eyes.

A runaway, I am sweaty, chilled
in a crucifixion litany –
forgetful and aware I don’t belong
somewhere, anywhere.

I root in antiquity –
with boney hands Lazarus comes for me
with a mustard seed mythology,
I was godly, now voiceless – I look up.

Awed, trembling, visionary,
I am watching rows of stone giants
here on Easter Island
I am seduced by earth itself.

This is the Perfect Mystery
that which does not shed blood.

POEMS:

LINDA LEGENDRE

Linda LeGendre currently waits tables at Arnold's Bar and Grill. Two years ago she started taking, *Our Lives With Words*, a writing class with Valerie Chronis Bickett. She practices yoga, works in clay and resides in Greendale, IN, with her husband and son.

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MARY-JANE NEWBORN

Born and raised in Cincinnati, in 1969 Mary-Jane Newborn married her British pen pal at a rock concert in Eden Park, moved to England for 12 years, became vegetarian and started a 26 year career as an art model. Afterwards, she lived in Miami, FL, for 7 years and returned to her homestead in 1988. In 1989, she became vegan. Mary-Jane now lives in Winton Place, volunteers with VeganEarth, and continues activism for the liberation of all beings.

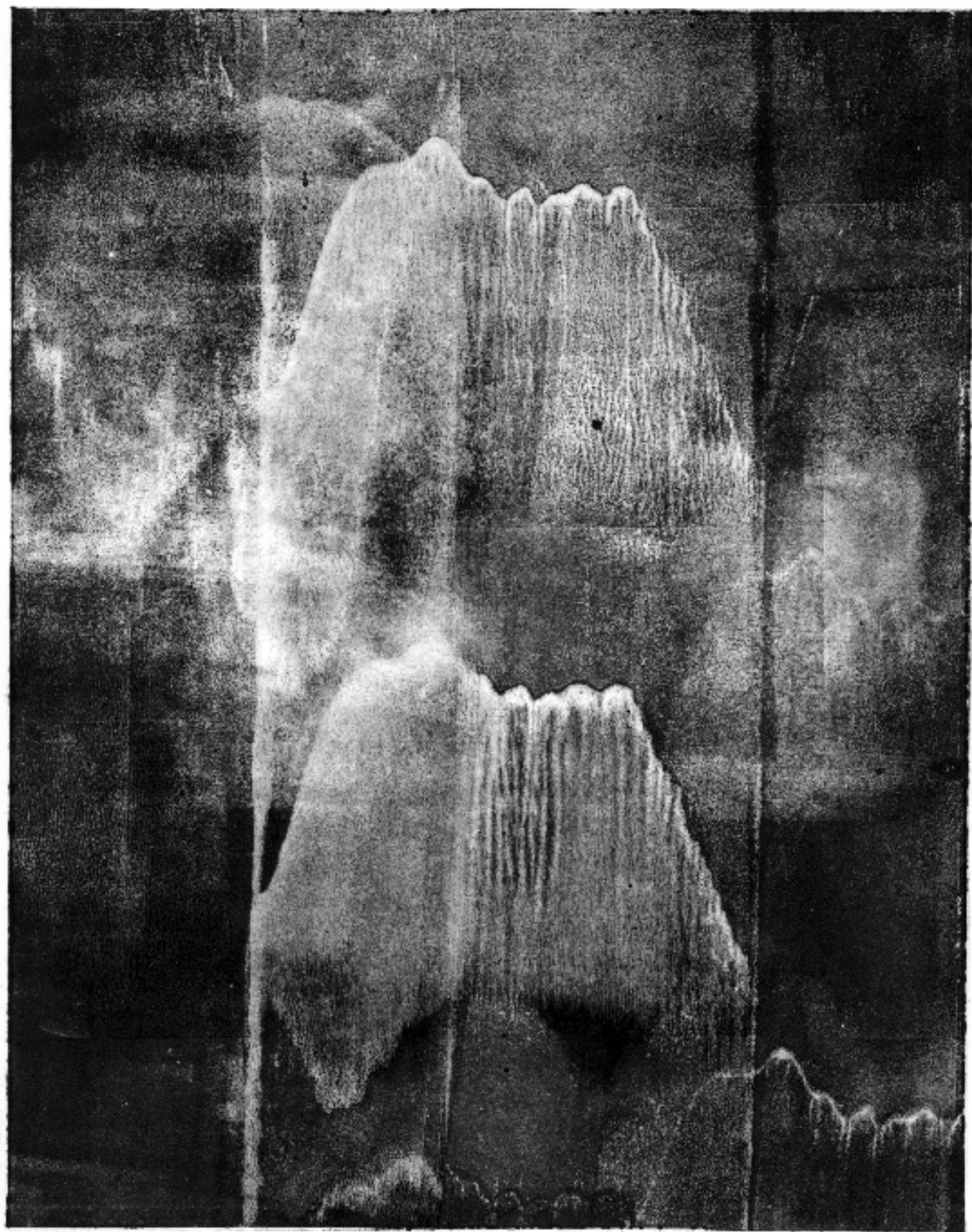
Contact: 513-929 2376

DRAWING:

NICHOLAS BALL

Nicholas Ball is from Cincinnati and currently lives in Erlanger. He received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Cincinnati and a Master of Fine Arts from Kent State University. His work focuses on the expressionist abstraction of bodily forms through the process of decay.

Contact: nicholaswball@gmail.com



Landscape I

Nicholas Bull

Sycamore Enlightened

(by **Linda Legendre**)

His short fro sways with his bobbing gait
Two pit bull puppies try to keep up
Leader of the pack; he is stern
Out in the cold with no coat on
Two pit bull puppies try to keep up
Their spare bellies know the source
Out in the cold with no coat on
He turns to give direction (demands attention)
Their spare bellies know the source
Needing more food than they're given
He turns to give direction (demands attention)
Stern commands, they look to figure
Needing more food than they're given
They dare not go too far
Stern commands, they look to figure
No treats given for this command performance
They dare not go too far
I pass; call him "Leader of the Pack"
No treats given for this command performance
His young smile graciously glows to me
I pass; call him "Leader of the Pack"
I know part of his heart now
His young smile graciously glows to me
His short fro sways with his bobbing gait

As the World Warms (Lyric)

(by **Mary-Jane Newborn**)

You sit in your car with the engine running
So you can stay nice and cool.
Hey, you can buy all of the gas that you want to,
But you never learned this math in school:

So much blood for oil, so many oceans polluted,
As the world warms more every day.
But you like to believe that the price at the pump is
All you'll ever have to pay.

Just because you can pay the price,
You think you can afford the cost,
But not even if you had a million dollars
Could you ever buy what's been lost.

You water your lawn in the midst of a drought,
And your driveway and the sidewalk and your car.
And it streams down the gutter with the topsoil in it,
Out of sight, out of mind, way too far.

And the waterworks says, use all the water you want to,
'Cause it's cheap at twice the price.
And then you mow, burning gas, no roots to hold the rain.
To kill Mother Nature is not nice.

Just because you can pay the price,
You think you can afford the cost.
But not even if you had a billion dollars
Could you ever buy what's been lost.

You pay guys to hack down a tree that was fine,
'Cause you just don't want to have it by your yard.
And the leaves that give oxygen and take out CO₂
Flutter down to the pavement cold and hard.

And the very next day, a hurricane blows your lights out
Where no hurricane has blown before.
But you say you don't want to hear about global warming,
'Cause you think you won't be live 'then' any more.

Just because you can pay the price,
You think you can afford the cost.
But not even if you had a billion dollars
Could you ever buy what's been lost.
No!
Not even if you had a trillion dollars
Could you ever buy,
Ever buy
What's been lost.

Cha cha cha.

POEMS:

ELIZABETH TARIN MASON

Elizabeth Taryn Mason is an Assistant Professor in English at the College of Mount St. Joseph, where she teaches literature, composition, creative writing and communication studies. She also serves as faculty advisor to the Mount's student-operated literary magazine, *Lions-on-Line*.

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DRAWING:

JOE HEDGES

Joe Hedges, a visual artist from Trenton, Ohio, now lives in Cincinnati. He has shown paintings, photographs, and collages at galleries around the tri-state area. Hedges is also an accomplished singer/songwriter, having first achieved creative success fronting the rock band *July For Kings*, formerly of MCA Records.

Contact: joeedges@joeedges.com



Joe Hodges

Vertebrae

Digging through creeks as a child, from beneath silken sleeves
of water, I pulled bones from pouches of clay. I'd squat down,

my feet and hands stained with the creek's bottom, sifting
through the gems of a day's discovery: stone and fossil.

I washed away earth encrusted to the hardened remains
of the water's past lives to study each vertebra, each fiber

of the fossil's skeletal texture. My grandfather's friend, Hannah,
used to cover her arms with long delicate fabrics, with buttons

locking her sleeves to her wrists, even in summer. How I wished
that I could sink her white blouse into the water of the creek,

so I could see beneath. I imagined the strong curves of her collar,
the rough edges of the skin beneath her elbows. I even asked

my grandfather what her arms looked like. He'd never seen them.
Funny, how I cannot even remember Hannah's face. I could not tell

you the color of her eyes. I only remember that day, in her kitchen
when her blouse caught the corner of a cabinet as she reached for a bowl

and her sleeve slipped down past her elbow. I stared at her arm.
I called them "Hannah Numbers" and she never covered them again.

Adumbration

When I stepped on his toe,
he howled, twisted my wrist,
and screaming, *Bitch*, snapped
it in three places. The sound
of those bones breaking
was like a large dish falling
to the floor, splintering up
the middle, but not shattering.

His toes were neither bruised
nor swollen the next morning.
My wrist hung so heavy
it stung. A grenadine sky
bled through slats covering
the window, left his face an umbra,
as an x-ray held to cased light
uncovers the shadows of bone.

Some things are simple.

The Stubborn Particulars between Thunder and Lightning

Something in these trees reminds her of lightning.
Limbs writhe in this weather. Branches move in circles, twist
themselves to hold uncomfortable positions until trunks might split.

That summer, on the beach, it rained for days. The ocean
caught thunder from the hurricane in Texas, delivered storms
where they sat and watched. Lightning slipped and tied barrel knots,

illuminated night. Her mother jumped with each burst,
and Anne could hear fear hidden in that voice. She counted
thunder from lightning and her mother paused to catch her breath

at every fourth beat. Anne's father slept through the storms,
called her mother selfish for trying to wake him, even blamed her
for burning her own finger on the frying pan, yelled at lukewarm coffee.

His voice droned monotones, rose only in fury. Anne's mother
hid in closets, and counted beats, let his voice steal hers. Rain left
the sand rough as pumice, rubbing out calluses, and Anne's voice scratched

out hard, It stretched in places, lifted itself high and unsteady,
but never broke. Her mother's had already snapped in half, like a twig.

POEMS:

STAN MATHEWS

Stan Mathews is a local attorney who enjoys poetry.

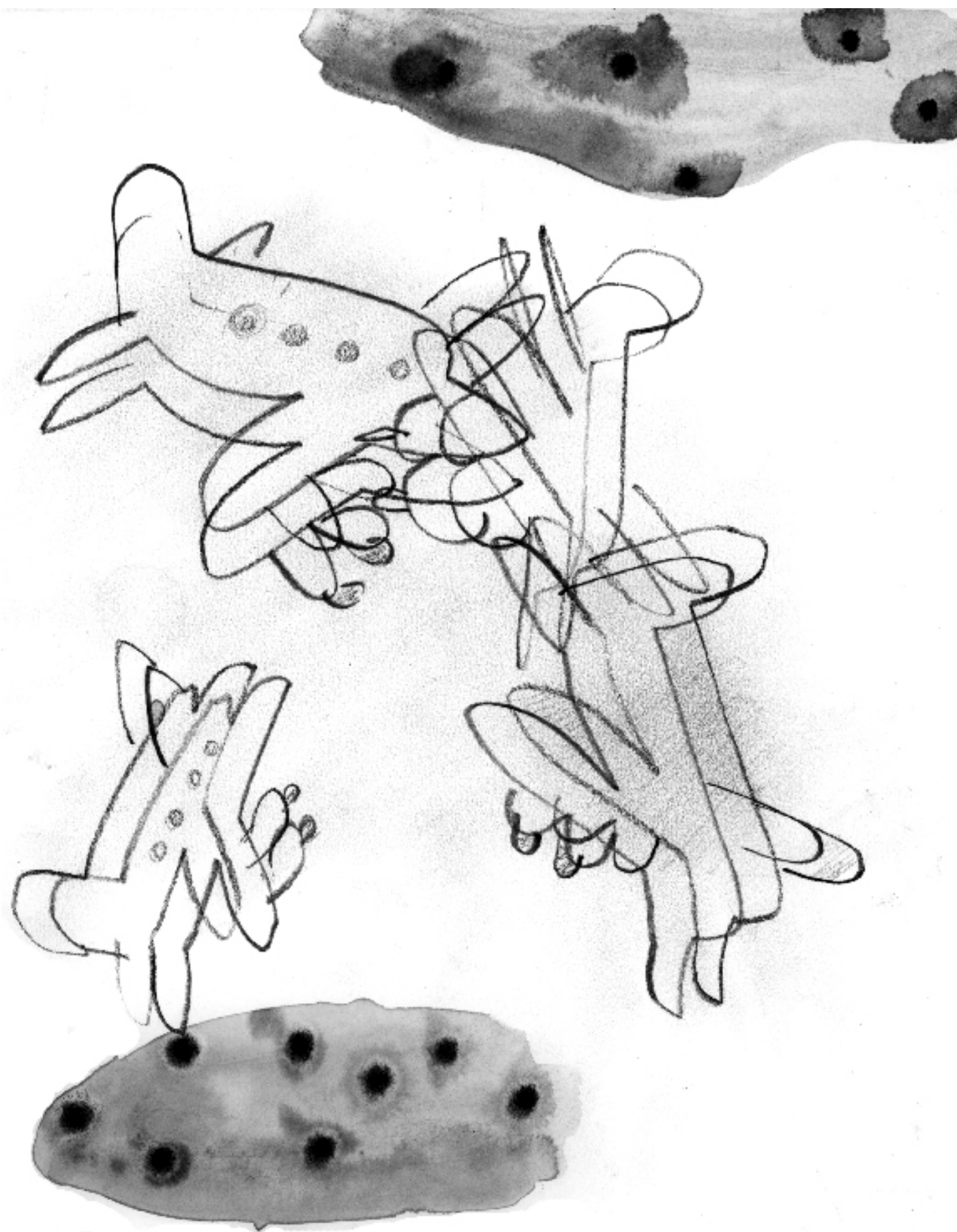
Contact: smathews@mmlawnet.com

DRAWING:

DIANE FISHBEIN

Diane Fishbein is of the civil rights generation at Antioch College. BFA in painting and drawing, MFA in ceramic sculpture. Interactive installations since 1979 that include clothing, drawing and personal politics. Honored to make a 7 panel ceramic wall piece for Cincinnati's sister city in Gifu, Japan.

Contact: diane.fishbein@gmail.com



DIANE FISHBEIN

What's Wrong with the World

21 December, 1988.

Whack and the plumes cracked;
and 270 fell dead
sent soaring back
to wherever and forever,
on the low road to Scotland,
that day the plane went down
in the wee hours over Lockerbie;
259 lost (plus 11 on the ground)
bombed from the sky
by a man raised up to be
without mercy,
an ideologue to whom
those lost were expendable.
He didn't hate them –
he only killed them
and watched them die.

It had nothing to do with them
to him, they were a political statement;
his reprisal for American oil meddling
or Crusader transgressions perhaps.
He didn't say.
Had they met casually at a café
in New York or Tripoli
on a sunny afternoon
they might have all shared a drink
or a common pleasantry,
unwittingly close
to the day that they
would all become less than human;
the day he would stalk them
methodically, jungle-eyed.

History tells of oxygen masks
deployed but unused;
a soccer ball, beach toys, carryon bags,
debris and body parts strewn together,
all come to a barbarous stop.

What's lost somewhere in the violence and
hate,
is that there's one more cruelty to articulate:

The thing that the history books
do not tell, cannot see
is that what's wrong with the world is me
for the message that's burned in the Scottish sky
is if I'd had his upbringing
and he'd had mine,
he'd have written this poem and
I'd have blown the damned plane to hell and gone.

I'd have killed them all and watched them die
blown to pieces in the sky
on that dark cold day,
over Lockerbie.

Pierre and Rosetta

(a love story)

Everyone gave Uncle Pete a wide birth
at family gatherings. Even Uncle Art,
a large man who had started at offensive tackle
as a freshman at Southern Illinois,
was circumspect and I noticed that
Uncle Bill, a proud Navy gunner
who fought at Midway, would stop
recounting tales when Pete was around.

We cousins never got the full story
and what we got was probably only half right.
We knew enough to understand that Art
Bill, Uncle "Red" and even Dad
had been trained to kill in WWII,
a hard enough idea to get your mind around
but Pete was designated to be an assassin
and, as it turned out, he was good at it.

More than once I've wondered
what went through his mind
as he crawled on his belly through the night
with the other Rangers on their way
to deploy their special skills –
piano wire around the throat,
a knife in the gut –
all in exotic places far from home;

the Port of Arzew in Algeria,
Tunisia at Sened Station
and Djebel Ank
the critical mountain pass
where they surprised the enemy at dawn
creating the crack for Patton's final
thrust which led to victory in North Africa.
Without the dedication and sacrifice
of that generation
there would be no Rangers today
(and maybe no US of A).

But the price of success was "Crazy Pete".
Red said he killed a man in a bar fight
near Lake Pontchartrain after the war
before they put him away in the "looney bin"
while the feds tried
to program out of him
all the things they had programmed in.

They patched up his brain
and sent him home to Rosetta in Huntington
but he was never again the man she met
at the Baptist Church social in Cincinnati.
He never killed again; at least no bodies
but Rosetta, formerly sunny and outgoing,
never ventured to speak much
when he was around
and she never never crossed him.

After he died, I asked her why she had stayed
with him, through all the long painful years.
There was no hesitancy in her reply,
"I just always figured we were both casualties of war".

POEMS:

SUSAN MONTAUK

Susan Montauk is a family physician who has concentrated much of her work on HIV and homeless health care. She is a professor emeritus in family medicine at UC College of Medicine. Susan has been battling for the past 4 years colorectal cancer.

(Susan passed away on April 18, 2011, 2 months after submitting the included poem)

PAULA L. SIEHL

Cincinnati-born Paula L. Siehl earned a BA degree in English and Art from Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana. She has pursued a career of creative endeavor and now collaborates with Visionaries and Voices.

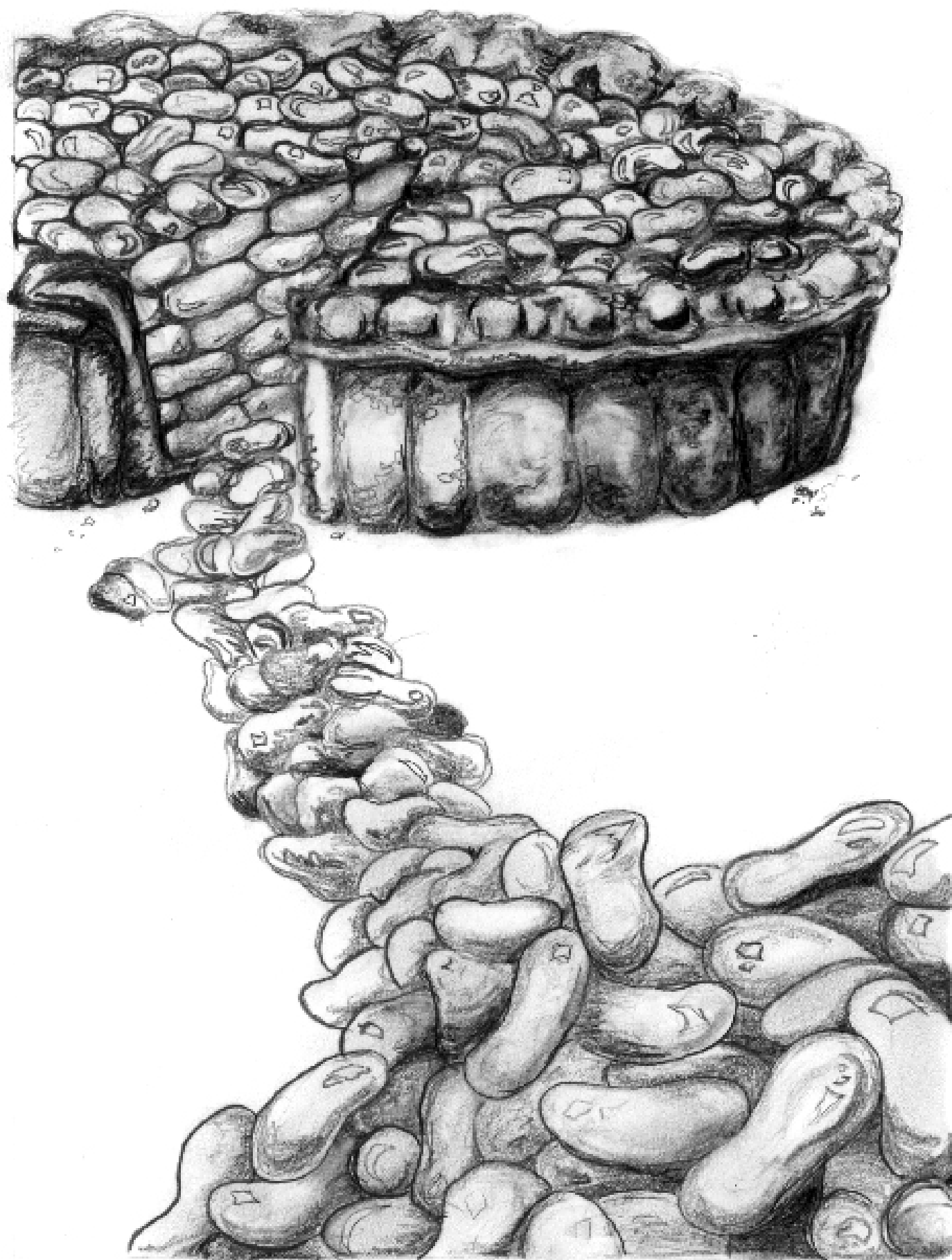
Contact: 513-522 9764

DRAWING:

ALEXANDRA HORENBERG

Born and raised in the DC Area, Alexandra "Lexie" Horenberg moved to Cincinnati, OH, and attended its University. She is pursuing a Bachelors degree in Fine Arts and Biopsychology, and a Certificate in Art History, and will graduate June 2011. She also studied in Florence, Italy, and experienced a multitude of cultures and media: marble carving, mosaic construction, drawing, painting, metal work, wood work, glass blowing, Plexiglas assembly, foundry.

Contact: horenba@mail.uc.edu



LEXIE
Alexandra Horenberg

The Family Shelter

(by **Susan Montauk**)

Thank you grandma
for giving us a home
and reading me that story last night
about the indians who took care of the buffalo.

for tucking in Damitri
and bringing us to this shelter
where we had pumpkin pie and jelly beans.

for smiling so much
and not screaming when Damitri
does things cause he's
too little to know not to.

for sitting with me
braiding my hair with ribbons
and telling me I'm beautiful.

Grandma, thank you
for hugging me
and reminding me how smart I am
even when I know
the world could not agree less.

In Memory of Mother Teresa

(by **Paula L. Siehl**)

I am not worthy, Mother, that you should be in my poem.

But if I were a starving foundling in Calcutta, I'd want the
Mother of the people to be my rescuer.

More like God than many a prophet, you did not require belief on
one's part to receive your cup of cold water.

You taught and attracted by example, not by force of rhetoric,
until
there came those times when your heart overflowed, drawn
by the vacuum of the occasion, and then you proclaimed the
truth of your conviction.

But you preached from the authority of authenticity as one who
earned the right.

Most feminine of Earth's leaders, you show us what it truly
means to be motherly.

Long may you live in our lives!

POEMS:

TERRY PETERSEN

Terry Petersen refers to herself first as grandmother of three, and second as singer/song writer, poet, and student of new things in her mid-sixties. She belongs to three writers groups, and prefers to write to the heart.

Contact: tpetersen@fuse.net; www.terrypetersen.webs.com

DRAWING:

KENTON BRETT

Kenton Brett works in illustration, ceramic, sculpture and animation to create art that encourages imagination, scenes and characters that can be used to tell many stories, or just sit on shelf; either way it has potential. He feels that the best kind of art is the art one can't wait to get home to play with.

Contact: kentonbrett@gmail.com



Kerton Brett 2011

Play Date

Daddy and Neighbor stood outside Daddy's car
and discussed the world.

Or "disgusted it,"
as Mommy called it.

Child tucked her dolls inside a seat belt.
Called them her best friends,
next to Carlita, her number-one "bestest."
Child pulled her favorite red cap
over her blonde curls, and
waited for Daddy.

Neighbor swerved his pointed finger
from Daddy to Child.
"You allow her to have dolls
that look like that?"

Daddy yelled back. He said
Neighbor reminded him
of a half-dead fish preaching about life
from a polluted stream.

Child told Black Doll and Mexican Doll
it would be all right.
Daddy was taking them
to play with Carlita.
The noise should stop soon.

And it did.
But, the road got bumpy.
With lots of what Daddy called pot holes.
He looked mad,
and mumbled about how things
shouldn't be that way.

So, Child sang a song
to her dolls
she made up as it came to her.
About Carlita, and
about games anybody can play.

Daddy smiled.
That made Child happy.
'Cause the song was
really for Daddy.

If Only

If peace were a bird, it would fly through
heat or wind.
It would thrive in a nest open to storm.

If peace were a mountain,
it would stand patient,
constant, firm for centuries.

If peace were a tree, it would begin
as an acorn, unafraid of darkness,

then grow to house birds,
and reach for mountains.

Peace. It transcends
mountain borders,
and allows foreign bird species
to nest together

despite unseen possibilities.

POEMS:

RHONDA PFALTZGRAFF-CARLSON

Rhonda Pfaltzgraff-Carlson, Ph.D. teaches as an adjunct professor for the MA program in Industrial-Organizational Psychology at Xavier University. In addition, she is currently pursuing an MA in Theology, also at Xavier. In the future, Rhonda plans to integrate her academic interests by teaching and consulting with organizations regarding organizational morality.

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JOANNE M. QUEENAN

Joanne M. Queenan is a retired social worker with experience working with people of all ages in diverse settings.

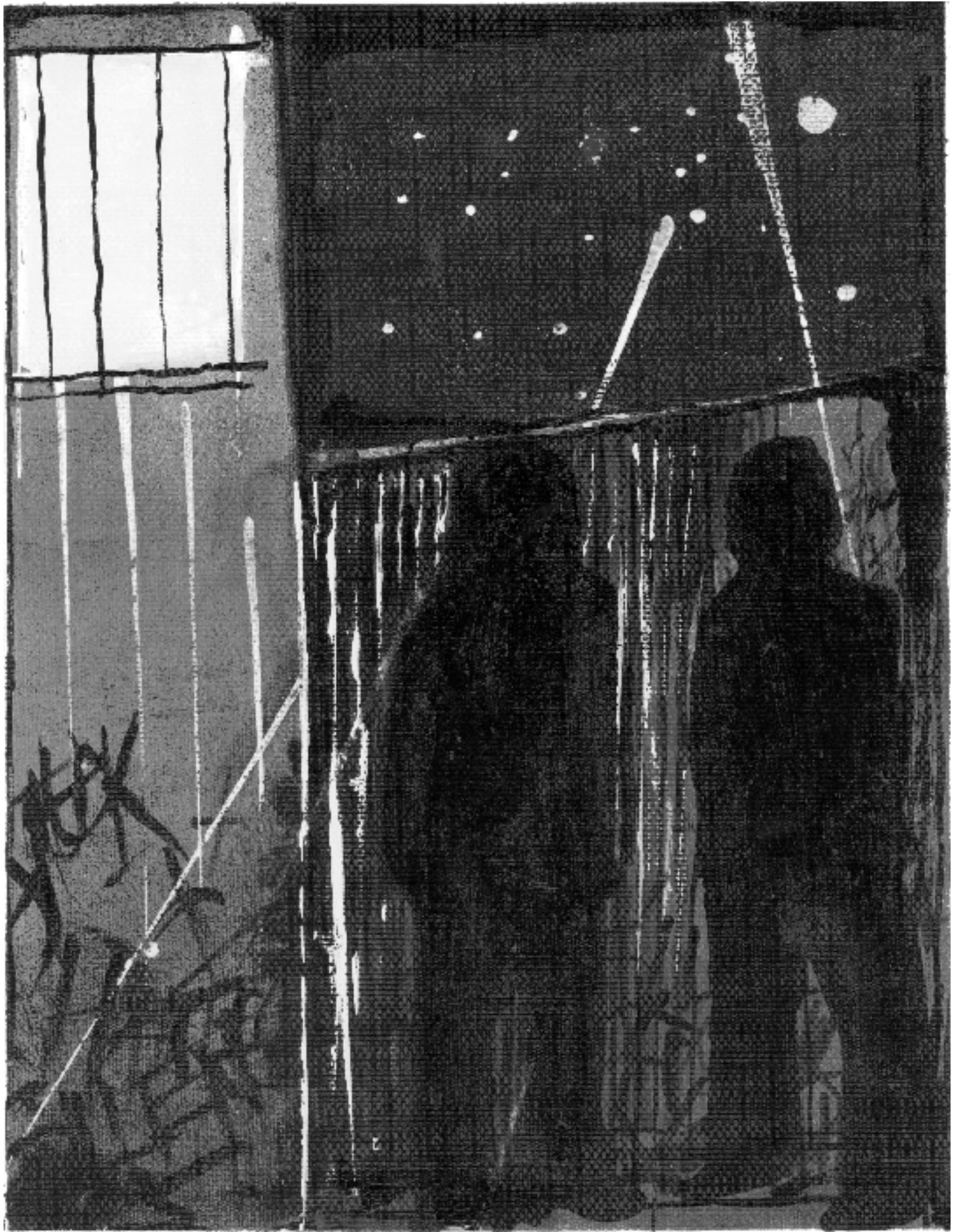
Contact: jbear1640@gmail.com

DRAWING:

LISA MOLYNEUX

Lisa Molyneux is in her 20th season as the Scenic Artist for The Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park. She has BA's in Art and Drama from SUNY@ Geneseo and an MFA from The Ohio State University. When not painting scenery she can be found in her studio at the Essex where she paints large, abstracted, oil landscapes. Lisa is originally from Albany, NY, but now resides in Pleasant Ridge with her husband and daughter.

Contact: lisamolyneux7@gmail.com



MOLYNEX

Night Life

(by *Rhonda Pfaltzgraf-Carlson*)

As the sun goes down, the moon begins to rise.
Will this be a night of serenity or a night of terror?
Entering into the darkness, one finds Reality.
Does your reality mirror Reality?
In the heat of the night, passion embodies the soul's state.
Is the animal inside you caged or free?
The soul's home is the night, where it returns to Itself.
Does your soul have a home in the blackness of truth or do you prefer
the whiteness of right?
The moon shines in the darkness and is most illuminating when nestled in
the velvet of a summer night.
Do you venture into black neighborhoods after the sun goes down?
My soul yearns for a home in a land where the black panther is revered.
Do you know the ancient, throbbing heart of Africa?
The soul of America will not rest until black and white rise together in
the night.

Body Count

(by *Joanne Queenan*)

I took my own survey, several times that month.
The measure of black to white
Of who came to dinner.
Fifteen percent of our guests at the soup kitchen
Were Caucasian.
The rest of other American origins.
Afro,
Indians,
Mexicans.
Who says there is no racism in our city?
To keep people in poverty.
In ignorance,
In soup kitchens.
That's too easy.
Too bad.

All it seems
That the men talk about
Over their bread and butter is
Work
They want it.
They need it.
Nobody hears that.
It's easier to be a social Darwin and
blame the messenger.
Poverty sucks
The lifeblood from these people.

POEMS:

MARY PROVOSTY

Mary Provosty's work has appeared in recent years as linoleum cuts for which she has received two grants from the City of Cincinnati. Her latest project took the form of a quilt of linoleum prints on silk.

Contact: mary_woody54@yahoo.com

MICA M. RENES

Mica M. Renes lives in the woods near Rabbit Hash, KY. She writes, paints and uses any medium that intrigues her. She has a private practice as naturopath, coach, intuitive and healer, in Cincinnati and Florence.

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SUSAN and ABBY SMITH

Susan E. Smith has worn many hats in her life, has lived in many places, has always loved and participated in the arts. Cincinnati has been a great place for her to explore writing. Abby, her 10 year old daughter, is in fifth grade. She is a ballet and tap dancer, fine artist, singer, tennis player, and a peace advocate.

Contact: susesmith@mac.com

DRAWING:

STACEY VALLERIE

Stacey Vallerie received her BFA in Painting from Maine College of Art in 2003. Her work has been exhibited in various venues in the Northeast and Ohio. Stacey typically works in portraiture and environmentally themed mixed media. She currently works for Hawkins and Hawkins sculpture studio and foundry.

Contact: svallerie1@aol.com



Stacy Walker '11

Ault Park

(by **Mary Provosty**)

purple bee balm veils my presence
the other gardeners murmur
a dense wall of flowers
I sit still crosslegged gain strength

I tilt my chin up
view my horizon
overhead lush blossoms
a full sky of billowing clouds

silence among my insect visitors

what goes unsaid
the march of an ant
the shining armor of the beetle
a bumble bee whose drone encircles me

I shift my weight to kneel
this altar one small corner of the universe
a lush park mid summer
each plant standing at attention

to light to color to air
we all serve the grace of God
each in our own right
a warrior

The Peace Tree

(by **Abby Smith**, age 10)

There is a tree
Where the elders come for
knowledge.
There is a tree
Where all can be,
War and chaos is none.
There is a tree,
The peace tree.

A Halo of Peace

(by **Mica M. Renes**)

A soft touch
Of
Peace hits me
This morning
At the early light of dawn.

The first bird
Lands on the feeder,
Sleepy still
With impossible tiny legs
In the winter cold.

A halo of space
Opens up in my heart.

A tender moment
I would love
To spread out
Over the sorrow
In this world.

We Mark Our Deliverances by Laws Hard Won

(by ***Susan Smith***)

We mark our deliverances by laws hard won.
Echoes of repetitive pleas begged beseechingly, "Know me."
Blood shed and passion reflected; ideals birthed in our breasts by
the leaders we respect and keep, even in death.
These are dates we keep and weep for.
And still we look in all places for hearts wherein justice beats.
So slow to change, our meager history.
Our country's standard, written by elders, white and man,
benefiting certain business endeavors, leaving little for those whose notions are not.
Ain't I a woman, a gay, a speaker of language not heard on the street?
And when might those laws be laid down,
the ones that benefit the glory of my life fully lived, my soul, as created and
sanctioned by All-That-Is (the One of love and abundance)?
Recognize me, this seeker, and lay down my rights as truths.

POEMS:

PURCELL MARIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

John BERLING (john.berling@yahoo.com), a senior, hopes to attend college for Secondary Education, Engineering, or Architecture. Poetry will always be a favorite of his, thanks to his English teacher, Mr. Richard Hague.

Julian COLEMAN (julianrcoleman@aol.com) loves the person he is today, and is proud of anything he has ever done. Without any one experience, he would not be the nutty individual he expresses in his writing.

Nikki EICHELKRAUT (n.eichelkraut@gmail.com), 16 year old, a sophomore, finds writing poetry a great outlet for her feelings. She thanks Mr. Richard Hague, her wonderful writing teacher, and Fr. Chris Lack whose homely inspired her poem "Salt".

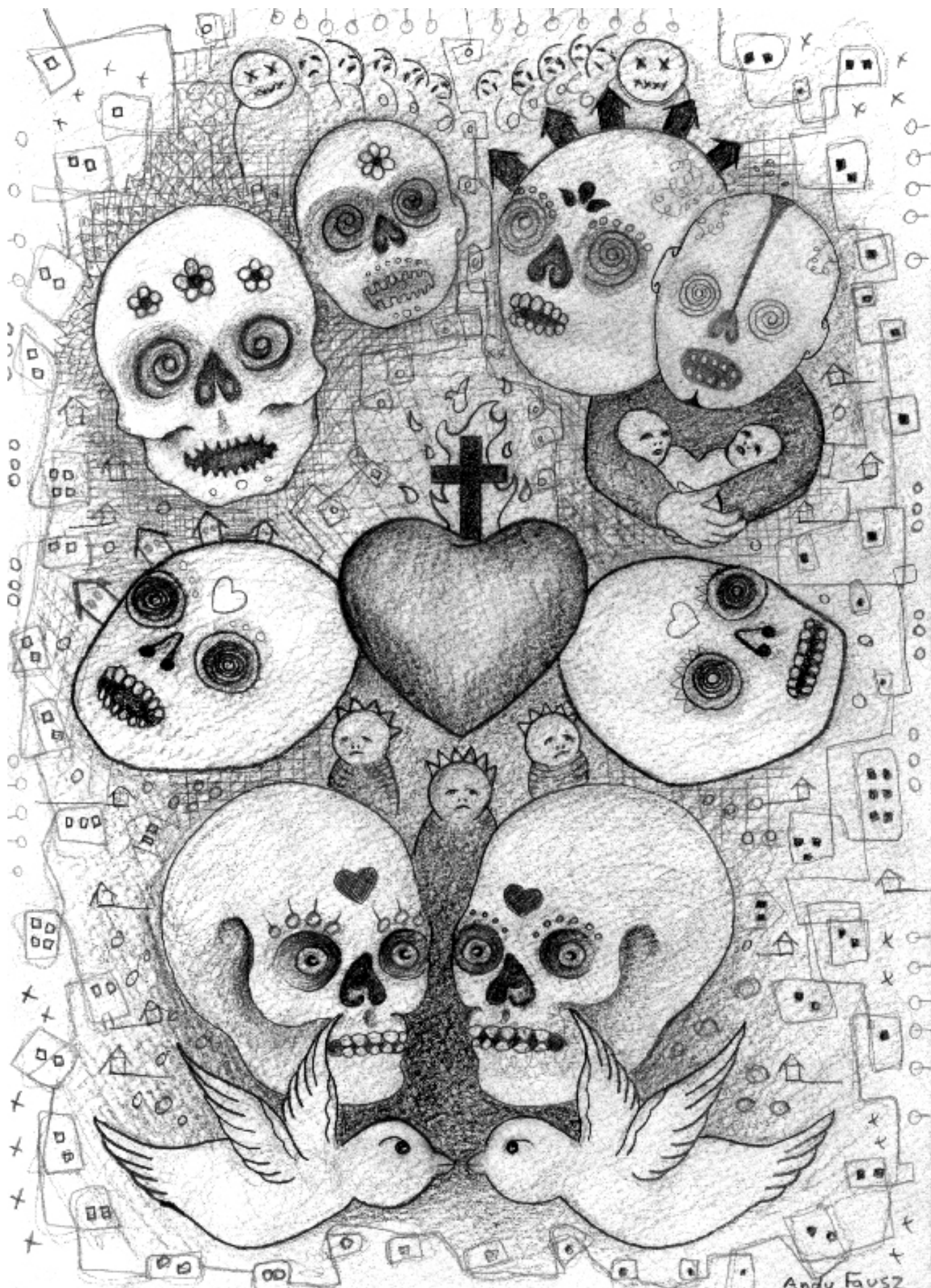
Contact: dickhague@purcellmarian.org

DRAWING:

ALBERT A. FAUSZ Jr.

Albert A. (Andy) Fausz Jr. received a BFA degree from Northern Kentucky University (NKU) in May 2010. He has taught art at the Frank Duvenneck Arts and Cultural Center in Covington, KY, and in the Summer Time Enrichment program for the Covington School District. Andy received several artistic awards while at NKU. He has been recently accepted in the MFA program at the University of Cincinnati. He has exhibited his work in Cincinnati and Kentucky.

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Disturbing the Peace

(by *John Berling*)

I try to say my point of view,
But you don't even want to listen.
I try to keep on the topic of the argument,
But you keep blaming it on me.

The room gets quiet.

I do not yell, nor do cut you off,
But you keep the violence.
I do not want to be violent,
But I know you try, never your hardest.

The furnace kicks on.

We start on topic, I enforce my point,
But you leap and linger on what's running
through your head.
We sing this horrible ballad, never reaching
a refrain,
But you keep singing different verses, with
no relevance.

The radio is quietly jamming.

I don't want to have an argument,
But you keep hitting me with all of these
statements.
I can never say my opinion,
But you always have to say yours.

The wind blows through the window.

I keep whining about what I think of this,
But you never stop.
I do not think this is an argument,
But you have nothing to say about it?

The peace is disturbed.

Branded Barcode

(by *Julian Coleman*)

Genetic information
written on a clean slate of human.
Finished product resides with-in the snug flesh
of her stomach.
Sprouting from between her legs
is the baby's head.

Let the documentation begin.
Remove her from the mother's innocence.
Can she see?
Can she hear?
Pluck her hair,
And poke her.
Hoe does she react?
Measure her.
Weigh her.
Record the digits.
What's her name?
Register it in the system.
Brand a Barcode beneath the Big toe.

Documentation is complete.

Salt

(by *Nikki Eichelkraut*)

| | |
|---|--|
| It is used to relieve a dry swollen throat and bring peace to the tension of the voice box. | that tenderly diminishes the edged flame, saving the miraculous souls. |
| It is the spice of life | "You are the salt of the Earth." |

POEMS:

MICHELLE RED ELK

Michelle Red Elk lives, works and creates in Cincinnati, Ohio. She is a member of the Comanche Nation. Michelle can see the clear line tracing back to the year the stars fell.

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KATHLEEN RIEMENSCHNEIDER

Kathleen Riemenschneider writes poetry and creates photo-collages in her spare time when she is not exposing children to the arts through Cincinnati Arts Association's education program.

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DRAWING:

MONICA DICK

Monica Dick, born in Cincinnati, is currently an undergraduate student in the UC/DAAP Art Education Program. She is specializing in printmaking, drawing, and portraiture and uses her art to comment on social and political issues. Monica has completed a minor in psychology and hopes, after teaching art for some time, to pursue a graduate degree in Art therapy.

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how it really happened

(by *Michelle Red Elk*)

in the beginning
snakes wound tightly to the ends of the world
stones lay not still two winds smoothed the
seas
bright shadows forecast themselves
over grasses of plains
the sun burned sands westward
islands warned shorelines one by one
with prayers of crickets
seeds bloomed in dark corners
the stories of mirrors danced on turtle's shells
crashes of thunder enlarged clouds
the earth grew
relocated nobody
all feasted on flowers
warm springs nourished daughters and sons
and the daughters and sons of all
cast arrows of light
warriors rested in beauty
their weapons turned to dust

a hollow cottonwood log
was tapped and the people emerged
a woman became stuck in the log
pregnant
the medicines and ceremonies were revealed
to the stars the creator flew

Persephone's Rape

(by *Kathleen Riemenschneider*)

Persephone's rape was her having to
return to her abductor. She knows
she has to go and takes the long way. Passing
by the forest and fields, her mother,
Demeter, beside her – a long farewell –

the world behind Persephone turns
crimson. By the hyacinths (the decoys)
– a final goodbye – then descending
into the rocky earth, all along the
pomegranate seed swells in her belly.

the sacred

(by *Michelle Red Elk*)

the wordless acts
yellow beams reunion
an eternal procession beyond reverence
the naming
rock paintings in all places
soothing soil
translators of caves
sharp winters when black timber cracks
the architecture of the sacred circle
stones hand picked for their songs
domes of stars colliding
a low elegance of mountain flowers
the four directions
stitched with earthworms and moss
sand and thorns
voices of the dead rustle
our bones and fingertips
words begin to swell
a simple chant carries itself out
underground
it rolls into corners
lays its hands across generations
calls the horse to the circle
extends its honor into our own veins
roaring through us we feel the chant
pick up on the chords of truth
that the heart of the horse reveals
we become one
we sing
“Behold, a sacred voice is calling you;
All over the sky a sacred voice is calling”*

*Black Elk

POEMS:

TIMOTHY RIORDAN

Timothy Riordan's poems have appeared in *The Sewanee Review*, *North American Review*, *Envoi* (UK), and other journals. His books include: *simulacrum*, *The Urge To Migrate*, *In A Fluid State*, and *Lesser Bird of Paradise*. A professor at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Mr. Riordan has had artist residencies in Prague and Reykjavik.

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DRAWING:

DIANA DUNCAN HOLMES

Diana Duncan Holmes is a visual artist who often collaborates with poet Timothy Riordan on artist books and installations.

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Diana Duncan Holmes

Waste Management

In South Africa,
teams compete
against the merciless clock
of World Cup soccer,
not a second to waste.

A mantra of buzzing horns
reverberates
throughout the stadium,
indistinguishable
who the bees drone for:
everyone friend & foe,
opponent & mate:
a microcosm
of the new global order.

On the field,
players move—
now staccato, now legato—
coaxed & cajoled
by sideline coaches
dependent on marauders
restrained & unified in sport—
war the ultimate
waste of tribal fanaticism.

Slogan World

The Navajo call America,
Slogan World.
They speak it in native tongue
and suck their teeth,
holding back the laugh.

*We've seen your deals, paleface,
heard the words of Indian givers,
crossed fingers behind your backs.
We remember broken treaties,
boarding schools,
the forced marches of relocation.*

Now Uncle Sam offers slot machines,
casinos and the lure of profit
to appease their seething anger,
the cynicism of open wounds.

A Curse of Words

Of course there are
words analogous to war—
like Kosovo, Rwanda, Bosnia,

and the ongoing slaughter of souls.
Lives lost, swallowed up
by fire across the lines.

The body gone, voiceless,
teeth holding tight; words
left wanting on a rigid tongue.

Whereas I write cursive,
and curl my R's.
Retribution's pen

against the verbal suffering
I count as daily battle.
The war *is* over words

and the spirit of a ravaged landscape,
news of destruction
that never makes the headlines.

Veterans Day

We
let machines
commit our sins
and call them accidents,
victims of our wars
and other casualties.

Lotus Pond

Blooming season over,
a Vietnamese film in mind
cuts from southeast Asia to a nature center
in southwest Ohio, the heat of late August.

Camera could use microphone to record
lotus pods popping at the seams
as they dry in the sun—a click & rattle of marbles,
a crackling effect on the senses.

Bulges like ball bearings in tight sockets,
shower heads in a drought;
plates spinning on jugglers' sticks,
stalks stiffened like iron brown rods.

An audience of frogs listens at the water line,
eyes still as chambered bullets
waiting to be fired from mud.
These thick-lipped flowers gone to seed.

POEMS:

ARMANDO ROMERO

Armando Romero (MA, 1981, PhD, 1983, Latin American Literature, University of Pittsburgh) is a scholar and a writer who has dedicated his life to the study and practice of literature, concentrating on Latin America poetry. His books *Las palabras están en situación*, and *El Nadaismo o la búsqueda de una vanguardia*, are used as textbooks in Colombian universities. As an author, Armando has written poetry, novels and short stories and has published an anthology of Latin American poetry, *Una gravedad alegre* (2007). He won this year the “Concejo de Siero Award” for Novella in Spain.

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DRAWING:

OLIVER MEINERDING

Oliver Meinerding is a graphic designer and illustrator based in the Cincinnati, OH, area. After graduating from Northern Kentucky University, he started his career as a full-time graphic designer and freelance illustrator, focusing primarily on editorial and sci-fi/fantasy illustration. He works in a range of media often including ink, gouache and oil paint. He lives with and is constantly inspired by his wife and two daughters.

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OLIVER MEWERDING

The Poor

And the poor do not quiet with screams
the fear that covers them,
do not return to undo the sacred
in their nocturnal prayers.
They just walk by the edge
of the sidewalk
thinking of the precipice.
In them remain bits of rage
enough to light the fire,
to curse the beautiful
and the ugly,
the harsh and the tender.
For in the poor has died the patience,
the hole where lied the wait.

Bad Poetry

Where is the guillotine
the head comes announcing.
Where untangle the gallows
the neck jumps singing.
Where tortures are tied up
the body keeps swaying.
Where wars are concocted
death remains ruminating.
Here's the old rhetoric
that rimes the gerund
attached to the noun,
to make sure our
everyday cruelty
is indeed
bad poetry.

Song of Disobedient Children

If we can only protest
we would think well about it
and hide under the table.
For there is no lie
that is not truth
in the morning paper.

Los Pobres

Ya los pobres no calman a gritos
el espanto que los cobija,
no vuelven a deshacer lo sagrado
en sus oraciones nocturnas.
Solo caminan por el borde
de la acera
pensando en el precipicio.
Les queda rabia a poquitos
para encender la candela,
blasfemar de lo lindo
y de lo feo,
de lo espeso y lo tierno.
Ya de los pobres se acabó la paciencia,
el hueco donde yacía la espera.

Mala Poesía

Allí donde está la guillotina
viene la cabeza anunciando.
Allí donde se desenreda la horca
salta el cuello cantando.
Allí donde se amarran las torturas
queda el cuerpo oscilando.
Allí donde se cocinan las guerras
permanece la muerte rumiando.
He aquí la vieja retórica
que rima el gerundio
pegado al sustantivo,
para lograr que nuestra
crueldad de todos los días
sea por cierto
mala poesía.

Canción de Niños Inobedientes

Si sólo nos queda protestar
podríamos pensarlo bien
y meternos debajo de la mesa.
Ya no hay mentira
que no sea verdad
en el periódico de la mañana.

The saints go open-mouthed
and do not respond:
not to mention the prayers
and the candles.
One more such truth
and our stomach will ache.
One proclamation to fix the world
and our throat will choke.
If we can only protest
we'd better put it on fire.

*(poems translated from Spanish
by **Saad Ghosn**)*

Los santos andan boquiabiertos
y no responden:
ni qué decir de las oraciones
y las velas.
Una verdad más de esas
y se nos daña el estómago.
Una proclama para arreglar el mundo
y se nos atraviesa en la garganta.
Si sólo nos queda protestar
mejor metámosle candela.

POEMS:

MARY JO SAGE

Mary Jo Sage is an environmental educator and writer. Her work has appeared in publications of the Cincinnati Nature Center, and other natural history offerings. She spends summers in the mountains of Colorado with her husband, Roger. Mary Jo has been involved in Women Writing for a Change for the past 12 years.

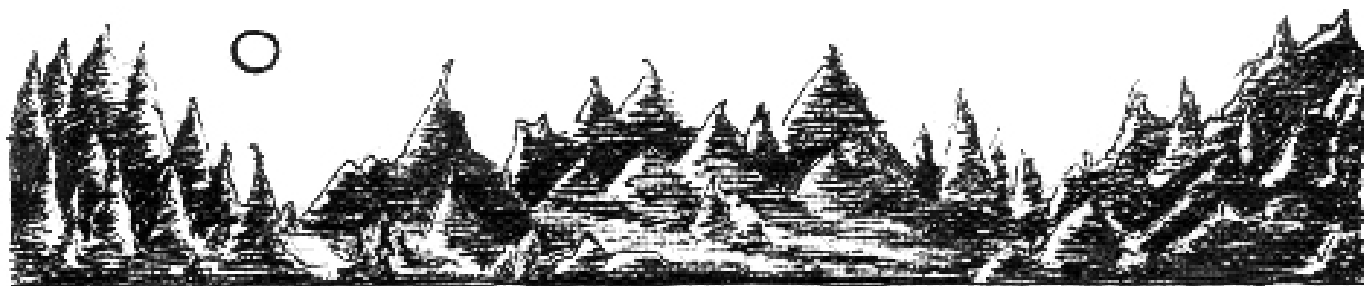
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DRAWING:

JONATHAN PEACE

Jonathan Peace is currently in his last year studying fine arts in the college of art at the University of Cincinnati. He has been concentrating on metal working but enjoys every possible outlet of expression; 2-D, 3-D, theatre, music, poetry, etc. When Jon is not working on his art he enjoys relaxing and playing instruments with friends, but if the weather permits he enjoys playing frisbee golf, ultimate frisbee, hackie sack, kick ball, or just laying out and reading a book.

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"Night Invasion"

Jonathan W. Peace

Night Invasion

Quiet night, deep in slumber.
Wind whistles through the trees.
The mountain shines in moonlight
Still and watchful.

Elk steal from hillside to meadow
seeking water from the stream.
Birds rest with heads pulled low
Fluffing feathers for warmth.

Small mammals forage
dark providing safety.
But owls alertly watch them
Waiting for their chance.

Bears snuffle in slumber
Full to bursting with berries.
Mountain goats sleep standing
the better to escape danger.

All is calm, wind has died down.
Water flows slackly in the stream
Freezing at its source.
Rocks rest, poised on one another.

Noise tears open the night, machinery grinding through the air.
Bent helicopters surge overhead, forever destroying peace.

Birds erupt from their nests,
Elk run for the woods.
Bears rear up with a startled growl,
Mice dive into tunnels..

War machines invade
This hidden valley
To practice the art of killing
Other men in other places.

It is the wrong time, the wrong place,
For this rehearsal of war
Here, where life proceeds
According to its age-old plan.

St. Rose's Clock

She stood at the corner of Torrence and Columbia Parkways,
visible to sixteen lanes of traffic flowing past.
She held a sign: Homeless. Can You Help? God Bless You.
Printed crookedly on tattered cardboard.
More than young, not yet old, long hair pulled back in a pony tail,
She looked cold in her thin jacket and jeans.
Glancing at her, our eyes met- mine cold, hers pleading.
I felt torn, not willing to encourage a beggar,
But seeing in her face a hopelessness.
Perhaps she thought: "I know you won't reach out to me- you're too proper."
Looking away in discomfort, I noted the time on St. Rose's clock:
Ten minutes after noon.
A tow boat on the river was pushing ten barges around the big bend.

The light turned green, and I drove past her, turning onto Columbia-
Accelerating toward home and away from ambivalence.
But, her eyes hung suspended in my thoughts.
Her neediness met my self-righteousness.
Barely up to traffic speed, I suddenly knew I could not go on my way.
Making a U-turn across five blessedly empty lanes,
I back-tracked up Taft Road, turned in a side street,
Wedged my way again into downhill traffic.

This time, as I approached the woman, I rolled down the window,
Handing her a five-dollar bill.
She smiled at me, said "God Bless You."
As I waited for the light to change, she put the money in a zippered pocket,
And took up her sign again.
When I left, she smiled once more, with a knowing look, hard to decipher.
Did she recognize that I had come back ?
Was she letting me know that I had been fooled,
She wasn't really homeless?
Or did the meeting of our eyes tell of a mutual understanding?
She had a need, I could help.

St. Rose's clock read 12:15, the
Towboat was a little closer to rounding the bend.

POEMS:

GWYNETH STEWART

Gwyneth Stewart grew up in central New York State and has lived most of her adult life in Cincinnati, OH. She received a degree in English literature from Binghamton University and then attended Cornell Law School. She practiced law for more than twenty-five years before leaving the working world to concentrate on writing. She is active in several writing groups in Cincinnati and organizes monthly poetry readings at a local coffeeshop.

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DRAWING:

ELISE THOMPSON

Elise Thompson, born in Cincinnati, currently resides in Northern Kentucky. She has studied photography in Paris, France, and recently graduated from NKU with a BFA degree in Painting. Her work has recently focused on the figure and relationships. Elise plans to pursue an MFA in painting.

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Elaine Thompson '11

Distant Drum

Chase Lake, Lewis County, NY

Since breakfast we've been following
horse trails and foot paths, sometimes
talking, sometimes tracing
bird song to its source and now
we're at the inlet. The wooden footbridge
is losing its grip on the banks, sagging
almost to touch the ribbon
of water that flows from beaver pond
to cat-tail stream. Between pond's edge
and dark of pine, a few young maples
already wear their autumn scarlet.

Summer warm still, clear blue sky
and yet a sudden thunder, deep
sound of kettle drum, shakes the trees.
We do not see but feel the shadow
of large black birds of prey,
their bellies full of young men
and women, carrying them off
from Fort Drum, taking them to alien
mountains where they will fight
in a ten year old forgotten war.

In another time, when the world
was large, and largely distant
and the clouds of war had broken
briefly, and we enjoyed peace like
a warm day in February—in that
world, I was one of five kids packed
seatbelt-less into a green station wagon,
canoe strapped on top.
We drove north on two lane highways
behind convoys of canvas covered
trucks packed full of boys, their uniforms
and buzz cuts crisp and new,
grinning, waving, yelling greetings
we tossed back. Kids heading off
to camp, playing games to train them
for wars that would not come again.
Heading to Fort Drum.

Unrooted

for Wendell Berry

How do we manage to live,
unrooted?
We who never lived three generations
in one place, who are always
just passing through, who own not land,
but real estate?

But how can we live rooted?
Those of us who never pulled
sustenance from soil or milk
from cow, nor wore a path over
one hill, knew its moods in June
and October?

How do we find our place
in a world that turns out sameness
after sameness, where houses,
streets, stores reproduce like
photocopies, making everywhere look
like anywhere?

How can we learn the covenant
of care—of soil, water, air
of creatures domestic and wild
when we don't know where
our bread comes from,
the names of birds in our own back yard?

How can we live rooted?

POEMS:

JEAN SYED

Jean Syed is in the Greater Cincinnati's League and the Cincinnati's Writer's Project. She has been broadcast locally on WVXU and has a book of sonnets published by Dos Madres Press.

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MICHAEL TODD

Michael Todd writes and performs spoken word poetry; he is also a painter. He lived in the San Francisco Bay area for 20 years and relocated to Cincinnati 3 year ago. California has affected his work, adding freedom of thought and a focus on social issues to his writing and painting.

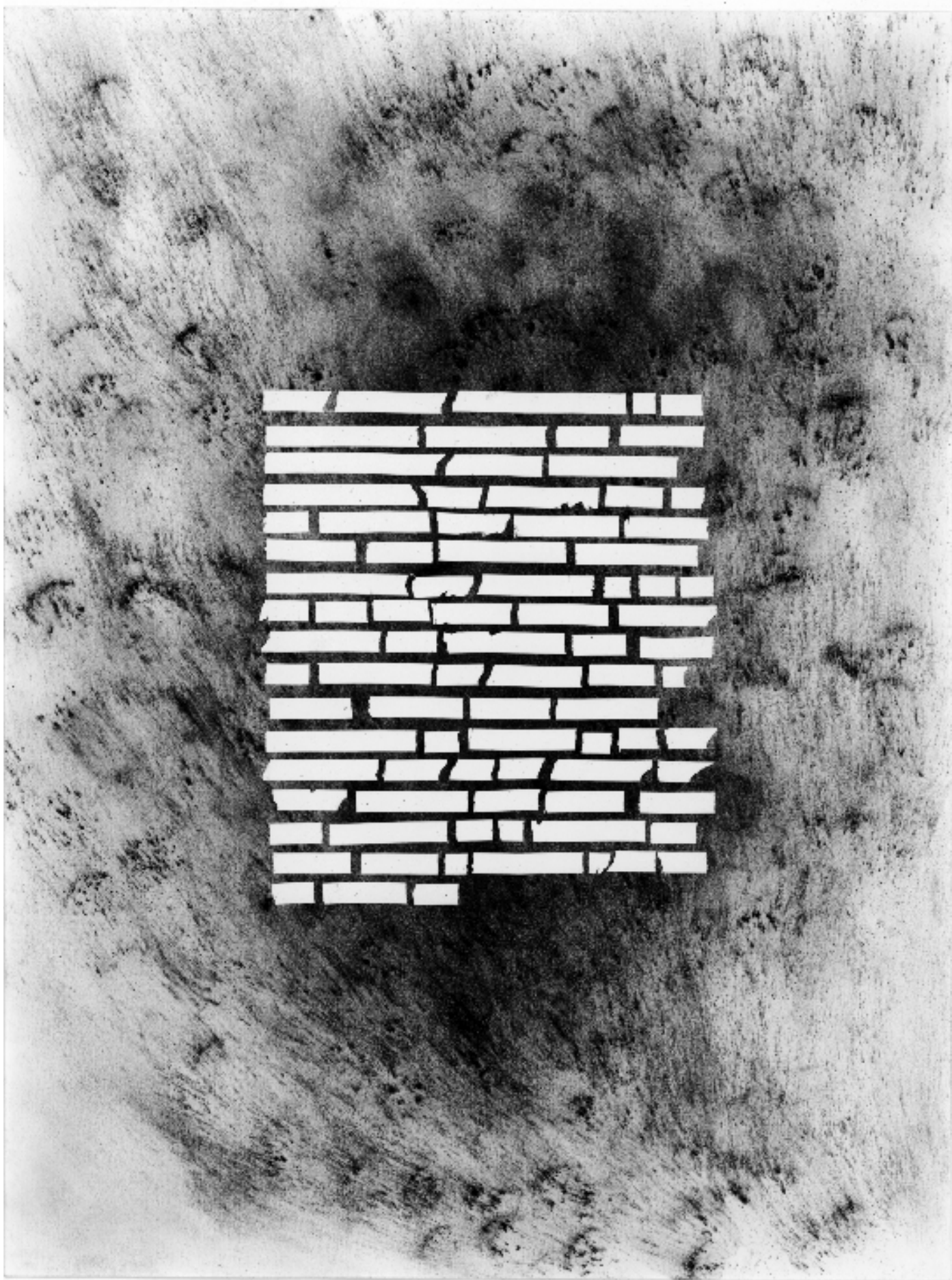
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DRAWING:

JASE FLANNERY

Jase Flannery received his BFA in Printmaking from The Ohio State University. His work often extends printmaking practices and approaches into other mediums and disciplines. He currently lives and works in Cincinnati.

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Jose Flaming

Old Man

(by *Jean Syed*)

I committed a great sin today,
A sin of omission,
A sin against a poor old man I didn't know
Or even want to know.
That was my sin,
A sin against charity.
Good Lord, forgive me, for I know not what I do.

Dear God,
This old man's mannerisms looked odd,
He was dressed in cheap, odd clothes
That made him look stupid,
So when he addressed me I left him
Hurt and lonely.
I passed by on the other side.

He should have looked normal!
If he had looked normal would he have needed
My friendly words.
Lord, can I be such a slave,
Chained to convention,
That I am made blind
Because I can see.

Hobby Horse

(by *Jean Syed*)

Whenever he heard the clip and clop of horses,
Old Eddie sought manure with pail and spade,
for he sought out the strawy mess for roses,
plopped it in a wash-tub, a marinade!

He lavished the bronze brew on the coal-black soil
with a watering can as he were pouring tea.
Along the allotment he used to stroll
in pit boots and the precious eau-de-vie.

The white rose was old Eddie's chosen flower
like his new-white Sunday shirt on backstreet line,
like suds on his hands, no matter how hard he'd scour,
he disliked dirty nails, black as the mine,
but said each full rose was a helmet lamp
recalling miners fallen to afterdamp.

Ghetto Orchid Retraces Her Footsteps

(by *Michael Todd*)

Hood rat laureate
Sprinkles emotional confetti
Of silent hope
Over the worried hearts
Of welfare mothers

Seeking comfort in
Glass pipes and
Bottomless needles
Filled with poverty
and frustration

Urban ghetto Orchid
So melancholy
Retraces her footsteps
Through prison visits
And semen stained letters

At the end of her rope
Issues of guilt
And broken homes
Without fathers
Ordain art deco priest
To pray over her existence

Abandoned and condemned
Her temple crumbles
No longer to be inhabited
by human beings

POEMS:

FRED TARR

Fred Tarr, lives in Ft. Thomas, KY; BA, Westminster College, PA; MA, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA; MFA, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ; Arts and Letters, Finalist for Guggenheim Endowment Fellowship, 1977; ranked 85th semi-finalist in world competition for an Elizabeth Arts Foundation, NYC, award \$ 10,000, 2002. Published in small presses, on line and hard copy in USA, UK, and Germany, 1999 to present.

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DRAWING:

ROBERT JEFFERSON

Rob Jefferson, born in Memphis, TN, 1970, graduated from the Art Academy of Cincinnati with a BFA in painting (1992). Rob's work has been featured in various publications including *New American Paintings* (2007) and *100 Midwestern Artists* (2011).

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Larchmont Run, the Call Up

In the downdraft of winter, living in a slight fever
I watch him move through the cabin,
a charm turning on a bracelet.
vixen, paramour, siren, friend;
they move in front of a dark room
into a den of memories shafted in a modicum of light.

after a time, he appears,
sits and stares abjectly at the refrigerator,
its turret top oscillates
against the patterned wall.
tonight, he mounts the riser,
gathers himself to expel smoke,
mixes perfumed Excalibur, embellishment
of Carleton, Tarleton.

he stands displaced by a tar-paper river,
a ship adrift on the sea, held fast
under cliffs of palomino stone.
he is there inside himself, - a last smoke,
a last clutch of Amy's arched
body into the half-trac of his torso.

Phuc Loc , Second Tour

*The bloody sun casts the bathroom floor,
after weeks of walking between rooms,
the worn snapshot of you surfaces the
baseboard. A tendered buoy, it lends distress
to the surge.*

It's Friday.
his brain burns a locus of pain.
(he remembers 1200 hours at phuc loc,
elevation 4000 ft.)
the sun boils gravy out of rocks.
montagnards chatter in french.
shadowy figures bang red pottery
against the heads and shoulders of captured v c.
they appear stunned, surprised.
across the compound, senseless,
he walks stoned, reports to no one in particular
what he hears, wanders back,
notices v c look like filippino

cousins from bradford: plaintive,
market boys with liquid brown eyes
bearing pleasure over clouds of steamed rice.

thinks v c look fractured,
mere adolescents who speak bad french
and make clicking noises,
and are hermaphroditic;
their mouths bear semaphore smiles,
their involuntary hacking releases
blood-platelets of tiny laughter,
froths a shiny spittle of surprise joy.
They diminish in the smoky light.
He resolves to filch bernie's .22 automatic,
to waste himself with a stoned walk by the
wasted pile near
the wasted fence.
"fuck this shit," he said to himself by the
laughing wall.

the white letter crumpled in his breast pocket
reads *Department of Defense*. he has 5 days to go
but time is momentous, hangs like a dali painting
of a billiard ball cut by a bloody scythe
he cannot look at anymore
he cries over the number 5, for the moment
several lives hang in the balance
and if the VC die, he will worship the sound
of bullets tearing at their standing frames
and he will walk into the line of fire
and he does... only to be tackled by the love of Cowboy,
shallow cheek, grizzled face, breath that stinks:
large white sheet with a 10 gallon hat and no legs:
the ghost of the Central Highlands,

the God of the 15th Field Artillery,
Phuc Loc village, the lair of the Bahnar montagnards.

POEMS:

CONNIE VAUGHN

Connie Vaughn's poems and essays have appeared most recently in *Fickle Muses*, *Wild Things*, and *North Shore* magazine. Her literary awards include Burning Bush (2010 poetry prize), Grain Magazine (2008 Short Grain winner), Pen and Brush (2007 poetry competition, 2nd prize), The Journal at Ohio State (2007 William Allen Nonfiction contest winner), and the annual Gwendolyn Brooks open mic contest. She holds degrees in math and psychology, works in marketing, and has taught college statistics; she, however, prefers writing!

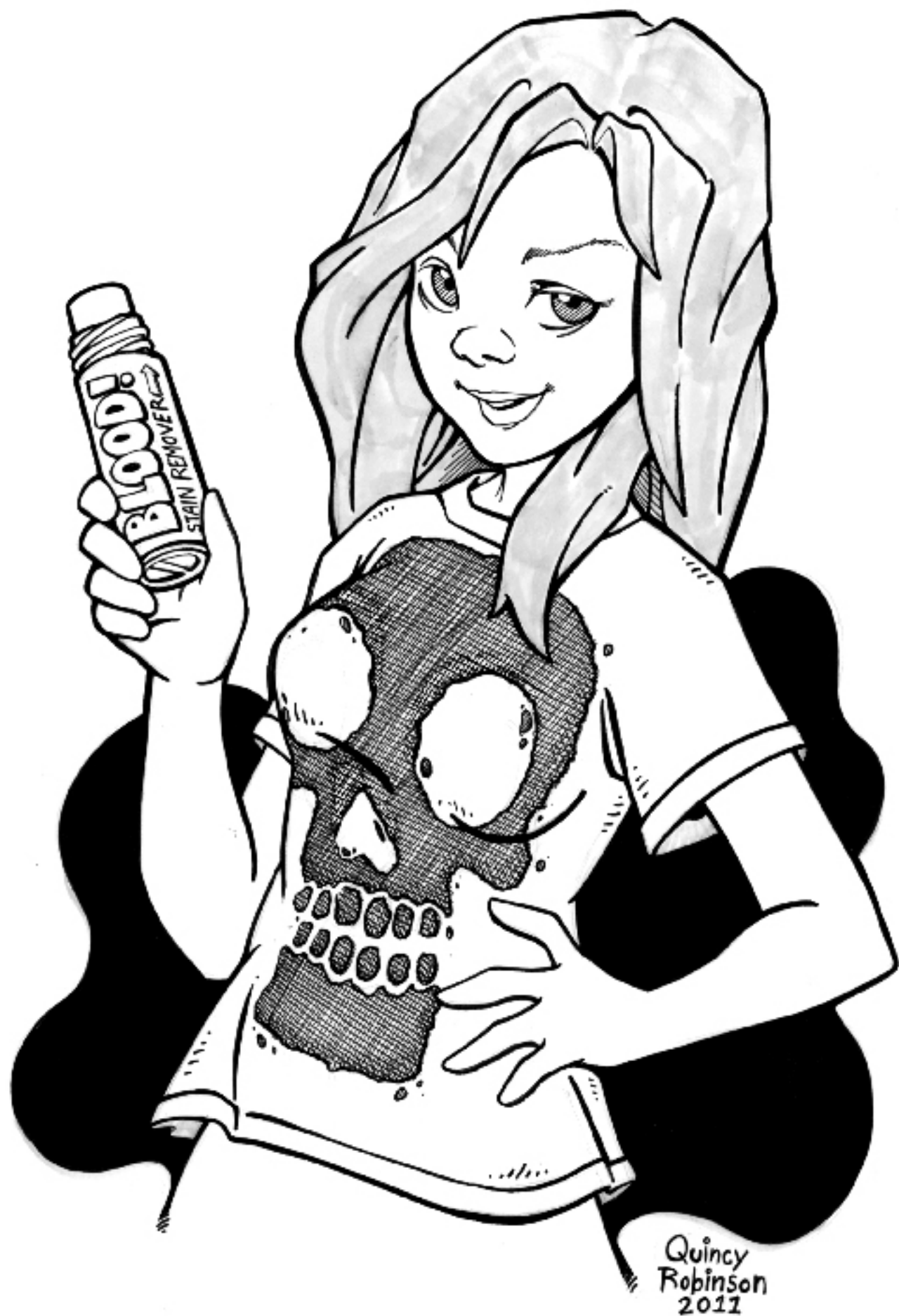
Contact: connie@connievaughn.com

DRAWING:

QUINCY ROBINSON

Quincy Robinson grew up in the small town of Lawrenceburg, KY, where he honed a love and respect for all things 'toy', and most things 'art'. After successfully putting these convictions to the test at the Art Academy of Cincinnati, Quincy now works his days & nights as a Designer and Inventor for a handful of toy manufacturers.

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Blood Lines

Blood means little. The squaw in me
could sing for not trailing tears
along the miles, only to be ancestors'
embarrassment when she burrowed into
a grandfather's heart and my subsequent veins.

Blood sings too, but not loudly.

I could kill a deer if I had to, or
farm industriously in Tennessee
until I take my own land away.
I'd eradicate the scourge of myself,
ready the land for another me,
and leech out the wrong pint.

Oblivious, it bleeds and sings.

I could claim ownership of crimes I have
and haven't committed, my skin seeming never
to root for the underdog, my tongue molding only
around contours left by conquerors.

My blood, like Switzerland, doesn't take sides.

It votes with both its fists
completely open. It stuffs the ballot box
with cotton candy. Way before dawn
it's humming this crazy tune
with one note and
a million
different
rhythms.

The World and the Fall

Later, dead,
we excavated a context for this
unexpected losing of an earth.

God said she'd tried to warn us, but
we'd put her into voicemail.
This was, of course, quite true.

We rode in smoking cars,
gluttonous for
speed and
sealed individualized
micro-
environments. Geologies vaporized for us in
stunning light shows.
Headsets
drowned out the screaming.

Later,
we could admit
that there was never
really
any snake, saying
Eat this tree. Go on. Eat them all.

Gerardo

A poor grade on an easy exam.
His written English, clumsy, his few
spoken words, lumbering. But his face
is still there in the back row when the

others start skipping, big glasses, big
bones, a broad brown face. He writes a bit,
stares, never nods—listens. Listens so
hard, the crickets outside could stage a

symphony, or more to his taste, a
metal concert. Probabilities
blossom. Papers start making sense, words
an awkward soil that ideas sprout

through. Next exam, all scores are down—his
are up. A shy fire sneaks into his
eyes. Every class now, eve of break,
optional reviews, he's there scribbling,

bolt upright. Sits in the second row
and blows away the final. I don't
see him again to congratulate
him, or even to apologize

for expecting so much less.

POEMS:

GARY WALTON

Gary Walton is the author of five books of poetry: *Full Moon: the Melissa Moon Poems* (2007), *The Millennium Reel* (2003), *Effervescent Softsell* (1997), *Cobwebs and Chimeras* (1995), *The Sweetest Song* (1988), and one book of short fiction and humor: *The Newk Phillips Papers* (1995). His latest book, a comic novel about Newport, Kentucky, in its heyday as a gambling Mecca called *Sin City* (2009), is based in part on a conspiracy theory about the Kennedy assassination.

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DRAWING:

ANDREW DAILEY

Andrew Dailey is a painter from Dayton, OH. He received an MFA in painting from Miami University, Oxford, OH, in 2009. Andrew was awarded an Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award for 2011. In February of 2011, he became the father of a baby boy, to whom he dedicates his drawing.

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A Practical Self Improvement Program 2010

"I'm trying to become more shallow,"

Melissa Moon said softly,

After a particularly frustrating day

Of not writing, "I mean, who wants

To be reminded of the terrible shape

We're in—of the eight or nine

Charybdis swirls of plastic waste,

Amalgams of detritus, gyres of garbage,

That foment in the Pacific like some

Pathetic plastic soup the

Size of Texas, each a galaxy of

Twirling toothbrushes, toys, condoms

Bottles, cigarette lighters, septic syringes,

Unsightly strings of cargo wrap,

Tupperware, freezer bags, credit cards,

Pens, straws, razors, knotted

Clusters of computer components,

Eyeglasses, and Styrofoam pellets forming

Miles and miles of toxins, all

Degrading in the sun,

A veritable chemical Burgoo;

Who can take such an image

Stapled to the mind for a moment

Much less dwell on it for the

Interminable time it takes to craft

A paragraph or worse, a stanza;

Or who wants to imagine Kamilo

Beach on the Big Island of Hawaii,

Its white sand covered in a foot

Of polyethylene and polystyrene

Spherules that have been dumped

From cargo ships or garbage scows

Carting the dregs of a billion bustling

Bourgeoisie busily abandoning delayed
Gratification for the euphoria of
An immediate consumer surfeit;

Or, while we're on the subject—
That fracking for natural gas
Fills the aquifers on the mainland

With barium and strontium
(much less a slake of simple salt),
Or that local watersheds belch

Methane, ethane, propane and butane
Causing suburban spigots to shoot fire?
I mean, get real, everyone

Knows the glaciers are melting,
The ice caps in Glacier National Park
Are gone! Fresh water from the

Arctic is disrupting the Gulf Stream—
Ireland could have the climate of
Iceland soon—forget green energy,

China is building a new
Coal fired power plant
Every week. Meanwhile, the planetarium is

Empty, and never mind that the Hubble
Telescope can show us galaxies trillions—
Trillions, mind you—of light years away,

But the, by God, Creationist Museum
In Hicktown USA is filled to
The rafters and is building an

Amusement park where the kids
Can ride dinosaurs just like Adam
And Eve, because, after all,

The earth is only six thousand years
Old—did I mention the tar balls
Washing ashore on the Gulf Coast...?"

Here, Ms. Moon stopped
And stared in alarm and dismay
At her left hand—"To make matters

Worse," she said, "to make them
Categorically, indubitably, unequivocally,
Certainly, and, may I say, infuriatingly

Worse—" Here she stopped as if she were trying
To hold back a nascent crop of tears,
"I just broke another nail."

Waiting for Insanity Clause

Today is Christmas Eve
And I think I will clean my
Toilet, perhaps dust my socks

And underwear and other personal
Ornaments too private to be hung
On the public mantle to be stuffed

With Holiday cheer. Later, I might
Wrap what's left of my youth and
Place it beneath the tree, a gift I

Can no longer keep nor one I am
Able to give to another—tonight I
Will wander the streets in search of

Lazarus and Diogenes to hear what
They might have to tell me—alas I
Am not optimistic: I am skeptical of all

Information received from third parties;
When I tire, I think I will come home,
Crawl under the covers and listen

For sleigh bells and tiny hooves—
A childish act, I know—but I yearn
For immortal illusion to bring the

Morning, not for fulfillment or wonder,
That would be too much here at the edge
Of dawn—but perhaps the morning could

Bring a modest gift, even if it's just
A brief, if chastened
Smile.

Wired

Here at the end
 Of Empire, we piece
 Together our souls from the

Songs on the radio,
 Though now they
 Are beamed into our brains

From a satellite spinning
 Above our heads
 In geosynchronous orbit—

We are plugged into
 The public mind generated
 From far away

In not so secret rooms
 By those who are also
 Desperate to feel

The warm embrace of
 This electronic lover—
 It's delicious this sensation

Of belonging—we all feel
 The same special emotion
 At the same time—and

We know this is better
 Than what we could
 Have if left to ourselves

Because it's encoded, a brand name,
 Registered, copyrighted and
 Ours because we bought it

And our credit is good
 And delayed gratification
 Is for chumps

Besides, what else is there.

POEMS:

FRAN WATSON

Fran Wason writes. She acts. She sings. She paints.
And she admires all of those who do the same.

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DRAWING:

BRUCE ERIKSON

Bruce Erikson graduated with a BFA in Drawing from Edinboro University, PA, and an MFA in Painting from Indiana University-Bloomington. He has taught at numerous universities including University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Washington University in St. Louis and Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA. He has taught painting/drawing at Xavier U. since 2006. When not teaching or painting, Bruce loves endurance cycling.

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1944

We gathered
in dusty yellow pools of light,
discussing life as it seemed
in our beginning.
There were no cars
in nineteen forty four.
The nine-o'clock street was ours.
Curbs were warm
in the evening air
and everyone important
was there.

From open doors
sad songs of longing and missing
dimly buzzed along with moths
determined to mate
with the hovering street lights.

There were few fathers, then,
and little flags of stars
in nearly every window told the story
that we all knew, but never said.
Names like deadly flowers
sprouted in the newscasts,
sending a chill of foreign malice
around our supper tables.
Places we would trace
incomprehensibly
on newspaper maps
searching for a sliver of recognition
in what we couldn't understand.

Sometimes the stars turned gold.
Voices would hush as they passed that window.
Prayers would be offered silently,
all of them in fear of the next gold star.
Out on the street corner,
we kicked the can,
confident that our dads
were invincible.

Once

Once wars were won or lost.
Victory was the goal. Peace, the prize.
Impromptu parades, delirious with relief
followed the ends of wars,
an embarrassment of hope.

Now we fight.
On and on, wreaking and harvesting
death and destruction, cutting down
our hopes for tomorrow, always somewhere else.
Villages we can't pronounce
much less spell or comprehend
become the graves of our children
and theirs.

Right and wrong are nebulous grays
as posturing wins our days
and shames our nights.

