



# PRISM

OSU'S ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE / FALL 2008



# PRISMA

OSU'S ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE



"ANNE'S MAZE"

ANNA STRANE  
ETCHING ON BFK



© Prism Magazine  
Fall 2008  
Volume 45: 1

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**PRISM** is published three times annually under the authority of Oregon State University and the Student Media Committee policies for student, faculty and staff of the Associated Students of Oregon State University. Prism accepts submissions of literary or artistic nature year round from students enrolled at Oregon State University.

**COVER:** *Corona and Australis*  
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#### SEND SUBMISSIONS TO:

Prism Magazine  
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Corvallis, OR 97331

541-737-2253  
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Printed by Precision Graphics  
Tualatin, Oregon

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## BLINDED BY FEAR

ALEX MCELROY

I think the guy who works at Carl's Jr. is a pedophile. Most times when I pass he's standing at the register, perfectly still, grinning with just his lips, as if teeth would incriminate him. His stomach presses against his uniform — not so big that he's fat, but so he looks as if he's deliberately expanding it, like you'd do if you were trying to appear pregnant, but weren't. His hair, medium-length, black, shaggy, holds its shape as he carries trays to the counter, like a wig made of plastic.

Some days I walk past and he isn't smiling, his mouth pinched shut, eyes glazed, but none of the customers seem to notice. I think I need to nail his picture to telephone poles and front doors, tell every parent, "In accordance with Megan's Law, the guy at Carl's Jr. creeps me out."

I saw a *Today Show* special about a woman diagnosed with throat cancer. After introducing the curly-haired 34-year-old, the spotlight shifted to the human papillomavirus and its role in cancer. The usual boring, background information was given, and I picked up the remote; but I set it down and leaned forward when the screen darkened and *oral sex* came up. Apparently, the woman contracted the HPV by giving head — a phrase never mentioned by the old, bald doctors who preferred the term *fellatio* (which, I assume, gave it respectability).

At the tail end of the story, the woman cried on a bench — beneath a blooming sapling, beside rose bushes, and all the other metaphorical signs of rebirth that the producers could find at Home Depot — with her hands clasped, questioning how this could happen. She said she, not a decrepit 3-pack-a-day smoker, is the new face of throat cancer, all because of oral sex's false reputation as *The Safe Sex*.

One day, in my room playing video games after watching TV downstairs, I looked up and discovered a swarm of flurrying ladybugs. It was as if my ceiling had been slit at the chest and the insects were its beating heart. Some sprang towards me and back up, like on pogo sticks. Others crawled silently across the wooden tiles, ignoring my shooing hands.

They secreted a defense mechanism which smelled like piss, identical to the carcasses in my living room. I ducked beneath the pool of blood they resembled, and flinched at the few that dripped down. With both feet in the hallway, I turned off the light, darkening the world for the red flecks trapped within the fixture, and shut the door, unable and unwilling to recall if they were there when I woke.

In the early '70s a man moved to Norwood Park, Illinois. The Grexa's were one of the many families who attended his themed barbecues and even spent Christmas dinner with their new neighbor. He was charismatic, sociable and thrived on the company of others. The Grexa's only complaint pertained to the rancid odor of his house, as if a rat had died beneath the floorboards.

Apparently the smell didn't bother Carole Hoff, who married the man in 1972. She knew of his prison history, but was sure it had changed him for the better. His charm and kindness attracted her to him, the same kindness that enabled him to commit

his time to children's parties and hospitals dressed as "Pogo the Clown."

His charity fascinated the Norwood Park Democratic Committeeman. Unaware of the man's prison experience, the committeeman chose to praise the man's volunteer services and ignore the sexual charges filed by a male teenager.

The residents of Norwood Park couldn't believe the allegations against John Wayne Gacy — murder of a teenage boy. Gacy was, by all accounts, the perfect neighbor: a man defined by his generosity (with marijuana, which he offered Jeffrey Ringall to enter his car), charm (used to convince teenagers they *should* wear handcuffs), and showmanship (he always entertained his victims by dressing as "Pogo the Clown").

If a citizen as upstanding as Gacy couldn't be trusted, who *could* the people of Norwood Park trust?

Alex McElroy used to kneel beside his bed every night and pray for his grandfather to die in a car crash. His living will named Alex the sole beneficiary if such an incident occurred.

While leaving the library one day I discovered a trio of students at the entrance. They stood still, staring at those who passed. I scanned their feet for a pile of bills, anything to give meaning to their statuesque poses, but there was only carpet. They ignored my awkward chuckles when I aligned myself beside them, as if I was a naïve child and they were precautionous adults.

I shuffled past them, spreading the sliding doors with my weight, and crept into the courtyard. Every few steps I turned, hoping to see a change in their

catatonic state, but there was nothing, just three people, thumbs behind their backpack straps, legs stiff as pillars, refusing to join the throng of people entering and exiting.

Outside, in the courtyard, I shivered, unsure of which way to turn. I swiveled my head, glancing at the hoards of 18-25ers I didn't recognize. None of them had a minute for the environment, but a few gave their social security numbers to lackeys with change pinned to their hearts. They apologized after collisions instead of checking for their wallets, assured that accidents are possible. I stopped at the edge of the courtyard and looked up, but even the sun was hiding, a blanket of clouds pulled over itself.

John Wayne Gacy wasn't outside in a Carl's Jr. uniform, I didn't contract throat cancer by giving head to a ladybug, and, because my grandfather died in his bed, I had no money to book a flight and escape. But even if I could, would there be a difference? Would the guy from Carl's Jr. become the steward from American Airlines?

Our nervous systems send shivers up our spines and tingles through our fingertips to warn us of hidden threats: a cashier with a creepy smile, an outgoing neighbor, or ourselves.

Those three people had it right, refusing to participate with society, aware of its danger. But their defenses couldn't protect them forever. The library would close, force them to abandon their perch and rejoin civilization, with its rapists, adulterers and thieves feigning normalcy, pumping gas or bussing tables. But until then, they chose to protest with a silent standoff against mankind. I wanted to join them, gaze at humanity; but I balked at the thought of joining their world, just as they did with mine.

"THE COUPLE"

CALANDRA FREDERICK

PHOTOGRAPHY

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# HOMAGE TO A SWEATHEART

TARA PISTORESE

You live for laughs that boost  
your modest ego. Reading  
*Made in Montana* like a

package of meat, your derriere—  
turned art gallery—  
boasts the homeland

that created your aberrant  
love for leaping furious  
bonfire flames, and targeting

road signs with emptied brown bottles,  
that luster in the reflection  
of aurous headlights. I respond

to your text message, you *should*  
*write a book*, snuffing out  
chuckles at how, *annowed with skool*

you are. You write back, *I miss you*  
*sweaty*. I ponder whether to be  
flattered or disgusted.

Still lost in translation,  
my eyes wander to the pot  
of purple flowers, decorated

with a home-made memento,  
made from a lined note-card.  
It is signed Cheezballe, next to

a red heart, the name I call  
you when you try to use lines on me  
that have been copyrighted by

sappy chick-flicks like The Notebook.  
In this moment,  
I am flattered.

## MILD SANITY

MICHAEL STONEBERG

A sane-asylum madman rushes out into a street with sandwich sign and crazy beard  
And he watches lonely birds peck at sweet nothings in the parks, and sings their  
jazz  
And his heart leaps at night-breath on his cheek in a wild ecstasy of flying love.

And when he catches fair hold of young maiden's hand, the stars scream Rape!  
And he runs from evil whispers in trees, and through moon-glow shadows of cruel  
night  
And exploding lights find him tucked under a bench in a sodden sweat of fear.

Tomorrow: he's in free cell waiting for the day when the door will open and he will be  
imprisoned  
And he sings out his sanity's song in cool morning light, thrown away in cold gray  
conformity suit  
And leaps round the spacious cloudy sky of 8x12 dreamspace while midnight cracks  
his skull  
And he howls at the moon in noon-time glory, and sings out of tune to the wind's  
whispered harmonies.

In high courthouse blues, he watches wooden drumbeat hammers falling and a bleak black  
ghost stand,  
All rise! shouts the incandescent sunshine, gray suits with silver gleam lock arms in  
brotherly love.

And he is free! free! free of the stinking mess of urine-doused apartments and lying thieving  
slumlord scum  
And he is free of yellow paper notices on the door telling him freedom exists, but elsewhere  
And he is free of you, and he is free of the red white and blue, and he is free of himself  
And so he sings his caged songs, and watches his thoughts dance in time to the  
phantasm of rhythm.

# TO MY EX-LOVER: A STUDY OF MY EX-FATHER

HALEY COLES

9

Somewhere in the  
Aging of my doubt your name  
Was tattooed on my fingertips,  
And now my book is open and a murk  
Is emitting from my knuckles, fingerpads,

I was in your town, city of  
So many naiveties ago.  
Of too-well-lit liquor stores for lollipops,  
The stores you had been at hours before,  
Alone.

If my father had possessed your spine,  
Bones too long for your back,  
He might be above the dirt, below  
Some stranger's home using your needles,  
It seems all junkies have the same snakeback, and  
Maybe dope would've made him talk.

But my father had perfect posture  
And I will never wish death on another  
Businessman, for they are only raped  
Kings, desecrated by bank digits,  
Defecators by insatiability,  
From torn childhoods, unwanted pregnancies.

You are still here, my father  
Got out, and I am left with a trust,  
Distrust, and a fat sentimental heart.

## HONEY

CAROLINE FOSTER

Honey, darling, sweetie-pie,  
Do you really think I'd lie?  
Honestly?  
My words are a crutch for you to lean on.  
No matter how much you scream on  
About trust, you know I'll always trust you.  
You should learn to trust me too.

Baby, sugar, buttercup,  
I love you till my heart fills up,  
Right?  
I really think you should understand.  
I'll show you how strongly I can stand  
Up, when it comes to our relationship.  
You learn to believe that I'm true.

So next time you walk through that door  
You know how to avoid ending up on the floor,  
Don't you?  
Harping on about this and that, giving me back chat  
When I deserve much more than that.  
Honey, you know that I'll always love you.  
You need to love me in the right way, too.

# VIBRATOR

COURTNEY LINDSTROM

11

I am not God  
you lonely girl.  
Every time I'm  
right don't say yes.  
All you do is  
use and abuse  
never caring  
that I might stop

Where would you be  
then? Getting a  
fix on the street  
asking strange men  
to fulfill wild  
imaginings.

You treat me rough  
but I can break-  
down easily  
with enough wear.  
I ask you to  
hear me cry through  
your moans of joy.  
Don't be ashamed

You don't mean to  
hurt me when you  
tuck me away.  
Forgotten 'til  
the next time  
you need a thrill.

I see how you  
change. Longing for  
someone of flesh  
but when they break  
your tender heart  
I'll be picking  
up the pieces  
inside of you.



## MINDS ARE FIRE AND TIME IS WAX

SHEA PEDERSON

**D***oes the body move the mind, or does the mind rule the body?*

Alice didn't come up with this question herself, Morrissey did, but it was something to ponder on as she thought of a good plot. She XYZed and wished that she had worn more comfortable pants to sit down in. These were the jeans that she had to remove an hour before having sex or else she would have a red ring around her torso and pockets imprinted into her hips. The extra bit of skin below her bellybutton covered the top button (this would be useful when she got pregnant — all those other skinny bitches would get stretch marks) and she poked her finger in it.

She was an envelope; full of promise. Like a seed. Alice smiled when she thought of this. Similes reminded her of sixth grade, when her teacher gave assignments composed of questions like “penguins are to the southern hemisphere as Santa is to \_\_\_\_\_.” Sixth grade. Jesus. Now she was in her thirties

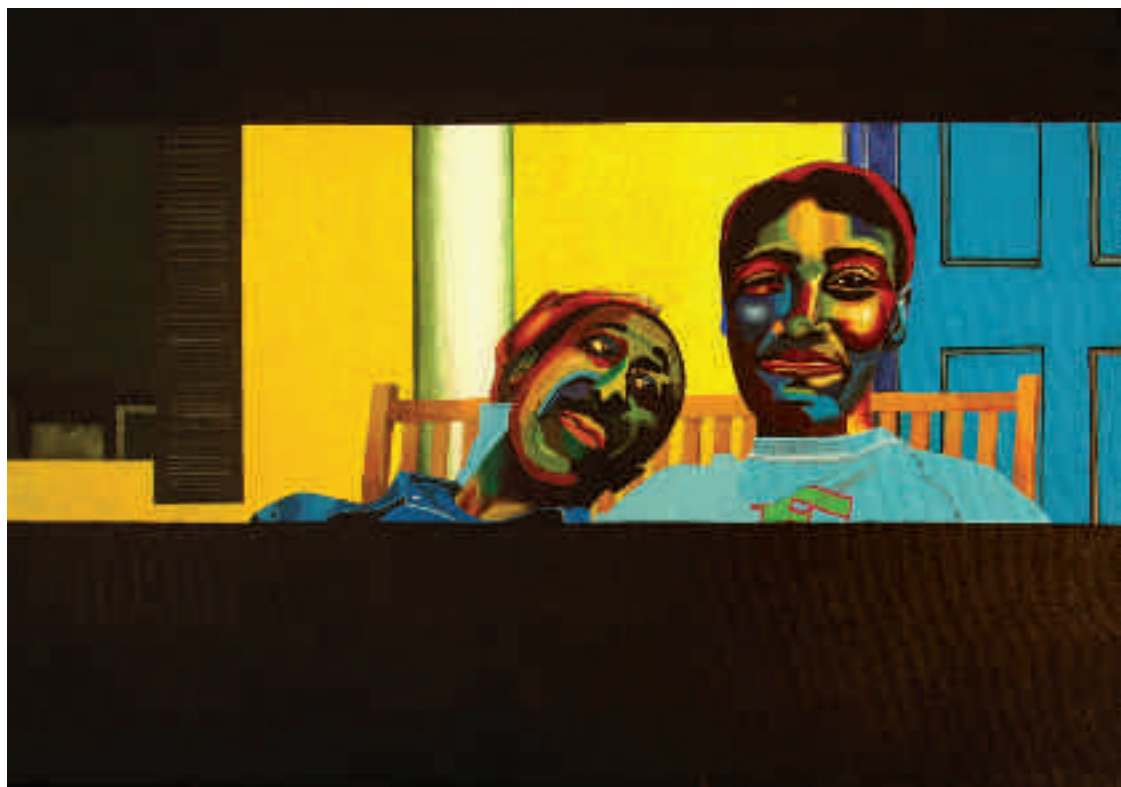
and had nothing going for her except being extremely good at word puzzles. God, her life was depressing. Alice was one of those women who leave their tampons on the top of the trash instead of wrapping it up in toilet paper because no one ever came over to her house. And no one in his right mind would ever want to. She told herself that she would stop this disgusting habit once she had a boyfriend or roommate or something, but she knew that that would never happen. She was just too depressing. It was like the time in sixth grade when she secretly promised to stop picking her fingernails if she ever became popular. Because then stuff like nail appearances would matter. But she never did, and so she still bites her cuticles to this day. And this is a bummer because once cuticles tear, they bleed forever. It's like cutting your legs when shaving in the shower; the red never stops leaking.

*The leaves are weeping too. The morning fog turns into her breath. Why is she so afraid?*

"IN LIVING COLOR"

JEFF ELLIS  
ACRYLIC PAINTING

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# "GANESHA"

CHRISTY TURNER  
CLAY SCULPTURE



# SPRING AIN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE

COURTNEY LINDSTROM

15

The chaste beauty to whom I lied, a sin  
not even God forgives. So I offer  
this day, a pear, a plum for peace to reach  
heaven by stairway. With my telephone  
I call upon the Pope to speak from ex  
cathedra—Papal I am not, but let  
him know this perpetrator wants to be  
a lamb. The wrath I bear to face of tar  
and feathering shall be removed by Mother  
Mary's palm. She can open her wings  
on this plebeian's plight, allowing my  
escape from turpentine and ruin that  
hampers this fool. Checkmate; my lamp is out.  
A rind covering tightly 'round my heart—  
affections peel away at it. I fain  
repent to win her crux and pamper mere  
delight I pine for. Stale my life has been  
without her. Coax the wrens to chirp my song  
they sing lyrics stating my devotion.  
And if by chance Hades triumphs, then prune  
me of my manhood. For I don't deserve  
a woman graceful as she. Dampen my  
spirit until I heed our vanishing  
ardor that barely binds us by a thread.

## LOOK-ALIKE

HALEY COLES

Shirley Temple with a cigarette  
Is a porcelain diaper  
With a nuclear baton.  
Tobacco in her lungs means no idolatry,  
No grenadine cherries popping from  
Plump wet mouths.  
I have never seen Shirley Temple smoke a cigarette,  
Because she wouldn't.

I am a curly angel too.  
When the hideous, gratifying wand  
Casts from my lips,  
All resemblance departs.  
I smoke because I am afraid.  
When my leaf-blanket is not wrapped around me,  
I am a cherub face with sweet insides.  
But my cells are thieves.  
I smoke because smoking is disgusting.  
I smoke so my outsides will match my insides.

When my aura is filmy gray and reeks  
Of drunk, filthy leather boots and beards,  
You cannot coddle me,  
You cannot smell the peanut butter and jam stashed in my skin.  
I smoke because I care,  
And if even the crickets in my closet  
Know that I care about them,  
I am Shirley Temple.



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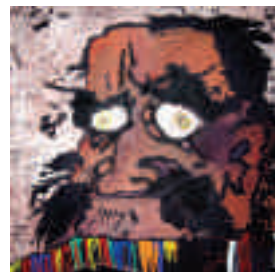
## CLUB FEATURE: MONTAGE

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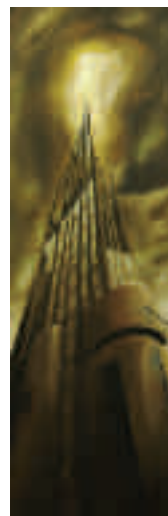
Montage is the student art group on campus. Its purpose is to promote the visual arts by helping artists show their work in the OSU and Corvallis community, taking trips to galleries and museums, meeting professional artists, staying updated on the current art world, and promoting collaboration among its members. Montage is opened to all students who have an interest in the art community.

*For more information, contact*  
Matt Lahmann  
[lahmannm@onid.orst.edu](mailto:lahmannm@onid.orst.edu)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Greg Luckeroth, David Rostal,  
Morgan Williams, Jake Baez,  
Matt Lahmann, Marne Elmore,  
Kim Myers, Sarah Lopez



“BOTTLES”

KAITLIN EMMERLING

PHOTOGRAPHY



## END OF THE ROAD

DOUG BATSON

19

**W**alking in the middle of the road at night is one of my hobbies. Nothing makes me feel more important.

And tonight I'm going someplace especially important.

I'm going to the place where the road ends.

One last perfectly measured concrete square of sidewalk, the kind that could peel the skin right off your knee and leave the gleaming, premature flesh beneath screaming when you were a kid; one last lip of asphalt and then my foot hits dirty grass and pebbly soil that skitters beneath my feet.

Here at the end of things, nature and humanity either kiss for one forbidden moment or faceoff for eternity.

Nothing but a diamond shaped sign reading: "END" with some half-assed, illegible graffiti tattooed on it to mark the "END" of civilization.

Because it's not just the end of the road, no; it's the end of the entire neighborhood. The entire fucking *city*. All that's ahead of me now is wheat fields, and long past those, long past the last sagging shadows of telephone wires, there's hills. Then mountains.

Mountains cloaked in drenching fog. Mountains

themselves mounted by blinking cell phone towers.

I like this place. I like being able to step out of my suburban home, where the only quest is finding a porn site that won't give my computer viruses and the only adventure is cleaning the toilets. I like being able to leave that place and come here, where everything feels so goddamn *epic*.

Of course, the walk gets longer each year. As time passes, as more gorgeous houses are added onto the labyrinth of suburbia, the place where the road ends retreats further and further. When my family first moved here, the road ended right after our house. You can still see the overlap in the asphalt where they decided to add on years later.

Someday, the place where the road ends won't exist at all.

Someday the road will slither on and on, and at its nurturing side will be the sidewalk. And then that road might turn into a street. That street into a highway, that highway into an interstate, that interstate into a bridge. A bridge crossing the ocean.

But for now, I'm here. And for no apparent reason.

But I guess I could say that about any moment of my life.

# "EXHALE"

KARISSA BRISTOW  
PHOTOGRAPHY









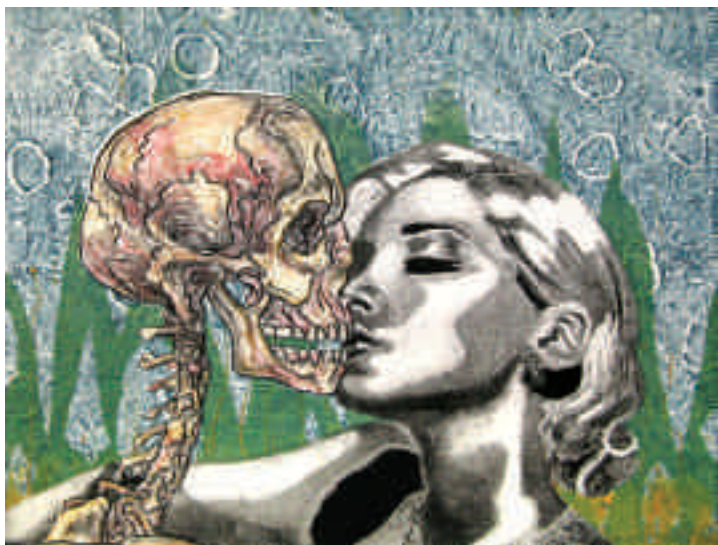
## EXISTENCE

STEPHANIE MCCLURE

The itchy normalcy  
    Bland secretaries  
        Methodical nurses  
    Marigold docs  
Severed patients  
    whose vision is tunneling  
Frightened faces  
Circular sight  
    tumors that bulge in the darkness  
Parents who cry out to God

    silence

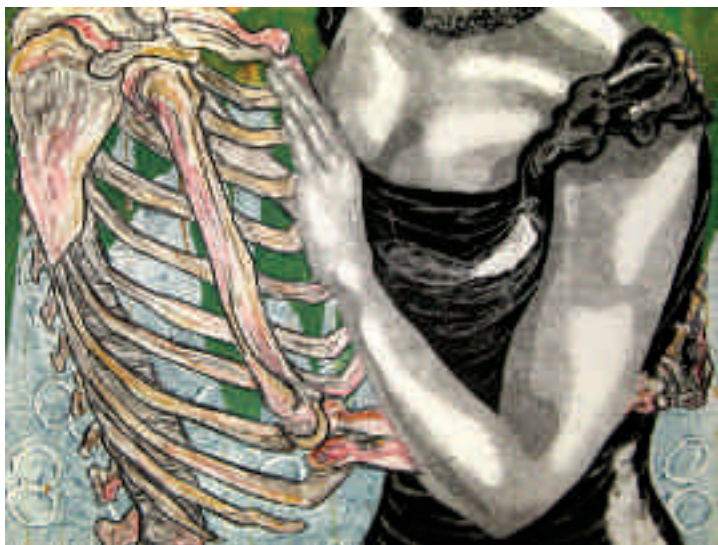
Peaceful sufferers  
    meditating on the peculiarities of life  
Recognizing life is now  
Life is ineluctable  
    The clock ticks  
        blue  
Elapsed chance  
Tranquil expiry  
And cloudless dirt.



"MORTAL EMBRACE"

23

ANNA STRANE  
MONOTYPE PRINT  
ON BFK



"DANCING DRAGONFLY"

KATY WEAVER  
PHOTOGRAPHY



# 100 DEGREES IS BETTER THAN 116

HALEY COLES

25

*Dedicated to June 2*

This past week the sun has not been shriveling my retinae from rearview mirrors, nor from sideviews either. I drive through streets, and they are empty, one-way, ashy.

Thanks, lightning bolt, for setting the southern desert on fire.

My vision has not been deteriorating, and I don't have to smell as many junkies and whores because they stay inside, better not to taste bits of burnt cacti in their mouths. Most of these filthy Phoenix streets are mine; they were my father's, he was in big business.

The day before he hung himself in his best suit and tie, he gave Downtown to me, gave the mountains to my brothers. These days though I can't see the mountains, the early monsoon winds carry the fire smoke across them all.

No thanks Dad, for killing yourself, but

Thanks for doing it before the sky got too hot.

## MEMORY OF BREAKFAST

STEPHANIE PLEASANT

I sit this morning sipping away  
Earl Grey in the mug I might  
Have left with you

Reminiscing  
About that morning we met early  
You made breakfast  
Did I want my own mug  
You asked. No  
I could bring one later

I watched cartoons  
As you cooked  
Talked to you across  
The bar as I sat  
Tried to guess  
All our day would hold

It seemed like we might stay  
Forever  
Talking and guessing  
The sound of Tom and Jerry  
In the background as sausages  
Sizzled in the pan

We sat and designed  
The day away  
All morning, enjoying  
The breakfast you made  
The planning of a memory

My days are full now  
But I sit here for a moment  
To remember with my mug  
Of tea as the dawn  
Lights the kitchen



“SPIN”

CAMBRIE CALDWELL  
PHOTOGRAPHY

27



"ARTIST BOOK: WILLY OR WILLIE?"

KIM MYERS  
MIXED MEDIA



# A LIFE REVISITED

TARA PISTORESE

29

Slinking down 42<sup>nd</sup> street, her bright red  
stilettos stand out against smog billowing  
skies. They form the path  
followed by her tightly toned physique.

Handsome passersby lose the  
rhythm of their breath as she struts  
around a corner and out of sight.

She has the class of a 1950s star—  
one who has dined with Audrey, Sinatra,  
countless others.

Her step comes to life in a hustle  
past the subway: the shadows acting-  
out the memory of a filthy night  
as a high-priced Manhattan lady. Not

the first, hardly the last. Her mind revisits  
his sticky breath and the way his Spanish  
lips spat her name from his tongue,  
“Logorrrrrrhea.”

Her mind creates un-pleasantries  
her words never could. Her nose stays  
tilted toward the grey.

## BEAUTIFUL

BENJAMIN SELL

“T here,” I said, holding my hands up for inspection. “I’m sterile.”

“Thank God,” Jason said. “An entire generation will now rest easy knowing you will not be reproducing.”

I reached for the paper towel dispenser and Jason stopped me.

“Your watch,” he said, pointing. “Take it off. And you need to wash all the way up to your elbows.”

“Really?”

“Really,” he said. He indicated his own thorough cleaning, still in progress.

With a sigh I stepped back to the large stainless steel sink and pumped the foot pedal that worked the soap dispenser. The iodine-based soap turned my arms a jaundice yellow as I scrubbed.

“Look,” I said. “I’m Chinese.”

“Clever,” was all Jason said.

A bit surprised I didn’t get a laugh, I dried my hands and started to strap on my watch.

“You can’t wear that in there,” he said.

“What? Why not?”

“Bacteria and crap can hide underneath it, can’t have you acting as a Trojan horse for the ebola virus or something.”

“What the hell am I supposed to do with it, then?”

“Well, you can stop bitching and stick it in your

pocket like I do, or you can put it in one of the lockers out there. There’s room for your purse, too.”

“Funny, dick.” I slowly pulled my pocket open and flagrantly dropped my watch in. “Happy?”

“Very. Let’s go in,” he said.

Jason nodded to the nurse behind the counter. She smiled back, recognizing him. The nurse pressed the button and the metal double doors to the unit swung open in opposite directions. Jason motioned for me to follow and stepped through. Inside, the walls were covered in posters detailing infant CPR, proper breast pump cleaning techniques, and pictures of some of the unit’s former residents, now gap-toothed grade schoolers and shaky toddlers.

To our right were two rooms about the size of a mini storage unit with facing walls made of glass. One room was dark, but the other had what looked like a giant overhead projector in the center, with a big heating unit in place of the lens. A male nurse was carefully placing a plastic dome over a tiny form on the flat part below. Catching my eye, he smiled politely and then pulled a curtain shut, blocking my view.

To the left was a classroom-sized area with six wheeled contraptions that resembled giant barbeques, the ones with the multiple racks for grilling hot dogs and hamburgers or chicken or whatever all at once. These barbeques were made of clear plastic and each had a small quilt covering its top. A nurse had the side of one barbeque open and was working with something inside while another sat on a desk chair typing on a laptop.

I could hardly believe I was here, walking into the neo-natal intensive care unit, or NICU, as Jason had called it. I had hesitated when Jason asked me to come. What was I supposed to say? Sure, I’ll come see the living, breathing proof of your hypocrisy. Sounds fun. Maybe we can get an ice cream afterward!

“She’s in the other pod,” Jason said.

“Pod?” I asked.

"Yeah, these big rooms with the isolets are called 'pods.'"

"Isolets?" I asked, pronouncing the unfamiliar word slowly.

"Yeah, the things the babies are in, they're called isolets."

"I thought they were incubators."

"They don't use those anymore, for a lot of reasons. The isolets are a lot nicer, you'll see."

I honestly couldn't believe what I was hearing. Here was my friend, my drinking buddy, reciting medical terms like fucking Doogie Howser. I mean, a year ago we were sitting around watching Sunday Night Football and this guy suggested we take a shot every time John Madden said something painfully obvious. Crap like, "if he catches the ball in the endzone, that's a touchdown, six points." We ended up so shit-faced Jason actually got into a fight with a stop sign and won.

"Right in here," Jason turned into the next pod. We walked past two isolets, both empty, and stopped at the one closest to the window. Behind it in a glide rocker was Amy. She was covered by a yellow hospital gown and a tiny stocking cap protruded from some blankets underneath. A black bra sat on the windowsill atop her neatly-folded shirt.

"Oh, hey guys," she said, glaring at me. Then, to Jason, she said, "Glad you're here, I'm starving." She started to get up, then glanced at me and back at Jason. He appeared unsure for a moment and then suddenly recognized her intention.

"Hey, Mike," he said. "Would you mind giving us some privacy for a sec?"

"What?" I glanced at the bra, sudden realization heating up my face. "Oh yeah, no problem." I turned my back as Jason pulled the curtain surrounding the isolet. I heard him asking Amy about how many ounces gained, and something about breast milk.

I was reminded of a phone call, months ago,

from Jason informing me that he'd hooked up with his friend Amy for the first time.

"I think we're setting up a regular thing," he told me.

"What? What happened to 'no bitch is gonna tie me down?'"

"That's what's great, man. Regular sex, no strings. I told her I'm not ready for a relationship right now, so we decided to be 'friends with benefits.'"

"And she's cool with that, she won't get attached?"

"She says so, so probably not. Anyway, it's sweet. We can still go out and meet chicks and if I fail to hook up I can always call Amy."

"You lucky bastard."

"I know, right?"

I should have talked him out of it. It's what he would have done for me.

The curtain screeched open, startling me out of my memory. Amy stepped past.

"Okay, well I'm going to get some food. You boys have fun. Goodbye, baby. Mommy will miss you." She kissed the bundle in Jason's arms, and walked out.

Jason now occupied the glide rocker. The blanketed bundle was cradled in his arm. A plastic tube and three wires led from between the folds of cloth to a large monitor above the isolet and a small plastic device filled with condensation attached to the wall. I sat down in a nearby office chair.

"Why did she have her shirt off, man? Was she like breastfeeding or something?" I asked.

"Nah." He hefted the bundle in his arms slightly. "She's still too small to breastfeed. It's called 'Kangaroo Care.' Babies this small can't maintain their body temperature very well, so they like us to hold her skin to skin, to keep her warm. It also helps her to be able to hear the heartbeat and smell us. It's a bonding thing, for both her and us."

"Wait, so if she can't breastfeed, how does she



eat, a bottle?" I asked.

"She's actually too small to swallow at all. She has a tube that runs up her nose and down into her stomach, they use a syringe and push milk directly in. I'd show you the tube but I don't want to wake her up."

"Uh, that's cool," I said. I fought the urge to gag as I imagined a burly nurse shoving a tube up my nose. "What was with that look Amy gave me? What's her problem?"

"What? She gave you a look?"

"Just like the worst glare I've ever seen. Is she pissed at me or something?"

"Well, she didn't really want me to bring you..."

"What the hell? Why? You can't bring your best friend to see your damn kid?" One of the nurses turned her head sharply toward us.

"Keep your voice down," Jason said. "She's just not very fond of you because we were talking the other night and I accidentally told her about you and Maxine."

I could feel my face heating up. Who in the hell did he think he was, telling her about that? What happened to 'bros before hoes?"

"That's none of her damn business. Great, now every girl in town is going to know about it." I started to imagine spending Saturday nights alone for the rest of my life.

"Sorry, dude. I asked her not to say anything."

"Did you tell her the whole story? Did you tell her about the advice you gave me?"

"Of course not, and don't you go telling her either. I can't have her all pissed at me too."

"You're a dick, dude."

This whole kid thing had really changed him. Months ago, there's no way he would reveal something like that. What a hypocrite. Maybe I should tell Amy about the night he tearfully confessed to me over a plate of greasy nachos that he had hoped

for her to miscarry. Like actually wanted it to happen, even showed me the ad he'd clipped with the motorcycle he wanted to buy with the money he'd saved for the baby. I tried to tell him it'd be okay. Paying child support isn't that bad, I told him. His dad did it for years and managed. He told me that wasn't it. He was afraid to be a father, afraid he'd fail his kid somehow. I told him he was a responsible guy, he had a good job, he'd make sure the kid was taken care of. It wasn't the end of the world. I even managed to avoid telling him, 'I told you so.' He told me I didn't understand and ordered some Jager bombs. I don't really remember much after that.

A shrill beeping, not unlike a smoke alarm, erupted from the monitor above the isolet. The screen was flashing and I nearly jumped from my chair, afraid that something had gone catastrophically wrong. Jason's only reaction was a quick glance at the monitor and then back at the baby.

"What the hell is that? Is something wrong?" I asked.

"Nah, we're cool. The pulse oximeter thinks her oxygen level is low, but it's not correlating with the heart monitor, so it's probably just loose on her foot."

"I have no idea what you just said."

"You guys okay?" a female voice asked from across the room.

"Fine, it's not correlating," Jason called back. "You mind shutting off the alarm?"

"Sure thing."

A young nurse appeared from behind the still half-closed curtain. A silver name tag held up by a beautiful pair of tits said her name was Patience. She nodded at me, smiled at Jason, and then stretched across the isolet to hit a button on the monitor, affording me just a glimpse of the pink string that was her underwear's waistband. The alarm stopped.

"Thank you," Jason said.



"No problem."

She smiled again and went back to one of the other isolets in the pod.

"Oh my God, dude. Now I see why you come here so much."

"You mean besides the fact that my premature child is here?"

"I mean a certain nurse with a certain ass into which I'd like to place a certain tap."

"What? Oh, Patience? Yeah, she's really great, takes great care of the babies here."

"Not to mention she's smoking hot. You get her number yet?"

He didn't move his eyes from the bundle in his arms. The pose reminded me of a picture message I'd received the day of the birth. Jason cradled it in his left arm. His right pulled back the blankets, revealing a tiny hand and an oxygen tube leading to a tiny nose. Tubes and wires entered the blankets at all angles. The message was titled, "2 lbs 14 oz. Our little miracle." It wasn't supposed to come until August, so I was understandably surprised when I received the message during class one day in late May.

It was his face that surprised me most, though. It was obvious he was scared shit-

less, who wouldn't be with a birth that came three months early, but there was something else, too. This was not my friend who goes out on Saturday nights, drinks two pitchers of beer, and then drives home. It was like looking at a picture of someone else, someone older. He was completely focused on her, as though they were the only two people in the world at that moment and I could tell from that picture that he would die for that tiny thing in his

arms. To be honest, it scared me a little. I couldn't imagine ever loving anything that much.

"Hey, man," he said. "I think she's getting a little cold. You mind grabbing me a warm blanket?"

"Uh, sure...where are they?"

"Over there, under the counter, in the warmer."

I swiveled in my chair and spotted it. The warmer looked like a giant microwave installed in the counter. I bent down, pulled the handle, and looked inside as a puff of warm air baked my face. White blankets of various sizes stood in neat stacks. I grabbed the topmost one and handed it to Jason.

"Thanks," he said. "Hey, I wanna thank you for coming with me today. I know you really don't like hospitals, so this must be pretty uncomfortable for you."

He didn't know the half of it.

"Oh, no problem, man, it must get pretty lonely here by yourself," I said.

"Yeah, sometimes, but holding this little one makes it worthwhile."

"I'm sure it does," I said, not really sure at all.

"I'd let you hold her, but only Amy and I are allowed to, doctor's orders."

"That's cool; I don't need to hold it."

"Dude, she's a baby, not an 'it.'"

"Whatever."

Jason exhaled loudly, then asked, "Why are you being such a dick today?"

"Why? Seriously, you don't know why? You go and tell fucking Amy about Maxine and I'm not supposed to be pissed? That was between you, me, and Maxine, no one else. Now I've got your stupid fuck buddy all pissed at me."

"Don't call her that."

"Really? You're getting all high and mighty about her too? Where the hell do you get off, man?"

HERE WAS MY FRIEND, MY  
DRINKING BUDDY, RECITING  
MEDICAL TERMS LIKE FUCKING  
DOOGIE HOWSER.

It was funny, here we were, surrounded by babies and nurses in a hospital and we were having this big blowout. I'd never had such a heated argument in whispered tones before.

"Don't get pissed at me because you made the wrong decision. You could be home with both of them right now, instead of here angry with me."

"The wrong decision? Are you serious? Are you forgetting who it was that finally convinced me to make that 'wrong' decision? Are you forgetting who it was that called the doctor's office for me when I was too scared? Are you forgetting who drove us both there and home again after the surgery? Everyone else told me 'no way, don't do it, don't be selfish.' You were the only one who even suggested it might be okay to just deal with it."

"I thought it would be best for you. I knew you weren't ready."

"You knew I wasn't ready, yet here you are, shoving your baby right in my face, a blatant reminder of everything I don't have right now because of you."

"Because of me? I was only trying to help you out, I just helped you feel better about a decision you'd already made. You can't pin it on me, it's not my fault. You were the one who made the final choice. You

were the one who decided you couldn't be a father."

"I never would have been able to do it without you. I thought we were partners, man. I can't believe you. I can't believe we're here. I can't believe you're sitting there holding your fucking kid. How could you do it? How could you go through with it after making me feel like I never could?"

"Look, dude. It wasn't easy. You think this

was my first choice? You think I didn't try to take Amy to that same doctor? She wouldn't have it, she wouldn't listen. She offered me a choice, either get on board with the whole thing or turn my back on my kid forever. How could I not do the right thing?"

"The right thing? Listen to yourself. When it was me, the 'right thing' was abortion."

"You know I was scared shitless the whole time, that I wasn't ready. I was crapping my pants right up until she was born, then, I don't know, once I saw her, held her, I was suddenly so glad we made the right choice. I'm sorry, man. I know you'll never feel that now. I can't imagine what I'd feel like now if we had lost her. I'm sorry for my part in your loss, but I'm not trying to flaunt her in front of you. I'm just happy and I want you to be a part of whatever new life I have now, that's why I asked you to come here."

The volume of our conversation had been slowly increasing as we continued, so I wasn't really very surprised when Patience appeared once again.

"Guys," she said. "I'm sorry to ask, but could you keep it down? It's not good for the babies, especially her." She pointed at the contents of Jason's arms.

"Sorry,"

Jason said. "You got it."

We spent the ensuing silence avoiding eye contact with one another. Jason

stared down at his arms and I found excuses to look around the room. According to a poster on a nearby wall, doctors were now recommending flu shots for infants as young as six months. On the table were some doctor's notes. How the hell do they weigh urine?

Maybe if I asked, he'd let me hold it. We could pull the curtain; none of the nurses would need to know. Maybe I'd hold it, even pretend to enjoy

I HAD NEVER REALLY BEEN THIS CLOSE  
TO A BABY. I HAD ALWAYS  
IMAGINED THEM AS CRYING, SHITTING  
BALLS OF RESPONSIBILITY.

myself. Then, when I went to give it back, all it'd take is a slip, a too-early release and then maybe he'd understand what I was feeling. Maybe, as the blankets unwrapped mid-air and their occupant did a slow-motion horizontal pirouette he'd know what it was like to feel something missing. I wondered if it would sound like a cantaloupe striking pavement. Would it cry, or would there be silence? Maybe just the echo of smashed honeydew punctuated by Jason's gasp of sudden realization.

I watched him as he stroked its head, kissed its fingers. No effect of our argument showed on his face or in his movements. I was agitated, he was calm. This was the guy who didn't speak to me for nearly a week when I said Luigi could beat the crap out of Mario? His priorities had changed. This was why we no longer went out together twice a week. This was why he wasn't interested in spending his money on new TVs or hockey tickets or a motorcycle anymore. The baby was his only priority.

Could that have been me? Would I have had the balls to grow up and rearrange my life? When I first found out Maxine was pregnant, I imagined I'd have to take the kid on the weekends and give up something like half my paycheck. I imagined doctor's appointments and diaper changes and never sleeping at night. I never imagined what I saw in Jason's eyes. It never occurred to me I might get something back from all that hassle.

It never occurred to me what I had lost.

Jason stirred a little, surprised. He looked down and smiled.

"I think she's waking up," he said.

He started to unwrap the top of the bundle he held, revealing to me the features beneath the stocking cap.

"Michelle," he said, "meet your Uncle Mike."

It was the first time I had ever seen her face. Her

skin was deep red, like a bad sunburn. The feeding tube was taped to the side of her face, leading into her nostril. Another, the oxygen tube, crossed her face, held in place by two sticky brown pads. Her eyes, now open, were deep and black. She was looking right at me.

"Can she see me?" I asked.

"You're probably a bit blurry, but yeah, I think she can see you."

The pictures I had seen failed to convey how truly tiny she really was. Jason placed his hand atop her head, and it didn't even fill his palm. I know people always say that babies resemble porcelain dolls, but she really did. Not in skin tone, but in terms of pure size.

It was a little scary. All those tubes and wires hooked into and onto her like some kind of cyborg, the clinical surroundings, and her minuscule, fragile appearance combined with the spectre of eighteen-plus years of responsibility painted one terrifying picture. I couldn't imagine how Jason could handle coming here every single day. I couldn't imagine how I would have dealt with it.

She moved her head, turning slightly, like she was trying to get a better view of me.

"Uh...hey there..." I said.

Then that tiny creature, that amazing, three-month-early miracle fixed her eyes on me, holding my gaze. We saw each other. Her mouth elevated slightly, a petite version of a smile.

I had never really been this close to a baby before. I had always imagined them as crying, shitting balls of responsibility. I saw Jason in her, I saw him reflected in her eyes. I saw the future, his future, still scary, but not impossible. I could see exactly what it was I had given up.

"Jason," I said. "She...she's beautiful." ❖

"CORALSCAPE SEDUCTION"

ANNA STRANE

LITHOGRAPH ON BFK



# SERPENT, BUT I STILL HAVE MY LEGS

HALEY COLES

37

I have been called serpent,  
But I still have my legs.  
Because cat, you  
Will still lick my torn ears

And my torn lips. I've been called  
Diseased, accused of carcinogenic contagion.  
My dripping mouth can make  
Braids with my femininity,

And those are the times when the furniture  
Blooms, stained.  
My arthritic fingers can only play love songs  
To affliction, to you, Madeline.

I named you that because you are  
Pretty and wicked like me.  
You have curled up to my crippling  
Blood left on the couch,

Soaking from inside me  
Back down into dirt.  
If I weren't an apathetic scab-picker or  
An origami morning star,

Maybe real poets and pianists  
Would love me.

Instead,  
I will have your gray claws.



## CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

### KARA PESZNECKER

SENIOR, PHOTOGRAPHY

*"Corona and Australis Borealis," "Phoenix" (cover/back cover)* – Kara Pesznecker is in her last term as a photography major at OSU and is working hard at her studio CenterEarth PhotoArt. She got a crazy idea that it would be fun to paint her models with constellations making the stars fit the form of the body. These two pieces were part of a preliminary series that eventually lead to the creation of a series based on the twelve Zodiac signs.

### ANNA STRANE

SENIOR, FINE ARTS

*"Anne's Maze," "Mortal Embrace," "Coralscape Seduction"* – These pieces are loosely based in the power of femininity and its delicate form while also addressing inescapable mortality. I enjoy that they can feel a bit satirical if viewed from a certain mindset.

### ALEX MCELROY

JUNIOR, ENGLISH

*"Blinded by Fear"* – This essay is about the monsters that tuck you in. I enjoy writing about the seediness of suburbia and the condemning of our neighbors, even though their biggest faults are only failures to keep their home lives concealed. Right now, I'm contemplating writing the next great American novel.

### CALANDRA FREDERICK

SENIOR, ENGLISH

*"The Couple"* – For me, photography can be such a powerful artistic medium. Unlike other art forms, it can perfectly capture a moment in time, exposing the beauty of a situation. I took the picture "The Couple" when a friend and I were hiking in Cinque Terre (Italy).

### TARA PISTORESE

JUNIOR, ENGLISH

*"Homage to a Sweatheart," "A Life Revisited"* – There is inspiration in natural wit and the comedy we should recognize in daily life. When writing, I try to achieve completeness of creative thought—not necessarily completeness of narrative—while consistently taking advantage of the power of language.

### MICHAEL STONEBERG

SENIOR, ENGLISH

*"Mild Sanity"* – It's impossible for me to explain this poem, but I felt it, and it bubbled up from somewhere, and I recorded it with the love and care I felt it deserved.

### HALEY COLES

SOPHOMORE, ENGLISH

*"To My Ex-Lover: A Study of My Ex-Father," "Look-Alike," "100 Degrees is Better Than 116," "Serpent, But I Still Have My Legs"* – All of my poems are to some extent true. My poems are based off real events and I have skewed certain details. "100 Degrees..." and "To My Ex-Lover..." are both poems I wrote following my father's suicide. I wrote all of these poems to discover more about myself, as writing poetry is the only way I know to do that. If I don't write, I will die.

### CAROLINE FOSTER

SOPHOMORE, ENGLISH

*"Honey"* – My poetry usually themes around love and "Honey" addresses a violent side of this emotion. I intended to challenge the readers' concepts of what constitutes love, hoping to convince them at first that the speaker sounds genuine, and then ask them to take a metaphorical step back and reassess the situation.

### COURTNEY LINDSTROM

JUNIOR, PUBLIC HEALTH  
MANAGEMENT & POLICY

*"Vibrator"* – I explore my sexuality openly and find the stigma of female masturbation repulsive. It should be embraced with love, respect for one's self, and passion. *"Spring Ain't What it Used to Be"* – I based the poem off one word—ex cathedra—and surrounded it with a palate of words to make lines pop with rhythm and imagery.

### SHEA PEDERSEN

FRESHMAN, NEW MEDIA  
COMMUNICATIONS

*"Minds are Fire and Time is Wax"* – Most of my work is the result of intense periods of boredom. I don't aspire to do anything particular with each story. Instead, I type whatever is on my mind. Maybe this is why I have to revise a piece so intensely before I feel even slightly comfortable with it. I am very self-conscious.

### JEFF ELLIS

SENIOR, MERCHANDISING  
MANAGEMENT

*"In Living Color"* – With an urban feel and inspirations stemming from a broad range including graffiti and Mondrian, my pieces incorporate a personal creativity which speaks from my soul.

### CHRISTY TURNER

SOPHOMORE, UNDECLARED

*"Ganesha"* – Ganesha is the Hindu god of removing obstacles, as well as the patron of arts and sciences. With that in mind, I sculpted his likeness last spring when I got bored studying for finals.



## KAITLIN EMMERLING

SENIOR, PHOTOGRAPHY

*"Bottles"* – I've always been fascinated by flea markets. It's impossible for me *not* to find something beautiful in the midst of other people's "has been's." These colorful bottles were among many things that caught my eye as I wandered through rows and rows of old treasures in San Diego, California.

## DOUG BATSON

FRESHMAN, BIOLOGY

*"End of the Road"* – I do my best to blur the line between prose and poetry, and try to say exactly what I want with as few words as possible while still retaining story and character. With luck, "End of the Road" will soon be only one short section of a larger novel.

## KARISSA BRISTOW

JUNIOR, GRAPHIC DESIGN

*"Exhale"* – I love the thrill of not knowing how my work is going to turn out until it is finally completed. Yes, this is nerve-racking, but seeing the final piece finished always makes that stress worth it. Smoke is a fascinating subject because it never does what you want it to. It can affect someone physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually. Whether that is positive or negative is up to you.

## STEPHANIE MCCLURE

JUNIOR, ENGLISH/EDUCATION

*"Existence"* – One meets many people in numerous settings, but occasionally we stop in the buzz that seems to define our lives and learn something profound from someone just passing by. This poem is inspired by the many people met and friends made during my visits to the neurosurgery department at OHSU.

## KATY WEAVER

SOPHOMORE, NEW MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

*"Dancing Dragonfly"* – This image was taken in remote Eastern Oregon at Olive Lake. My younger sister was sitting down by the lake and realized she had accidentally injured a dragonfly, so it wasn't flying away. I took advantage of the moment to get some great macro photographs to document its short life.

## STEPHANIE PLEASANT

SENIOR, ENGLISH

*"Memory of Breakfast"* – Often the result of moments of introspection, reflection, elation, and at times scholastic desperation, I find writing both liberating and challenging. I thoroughly enjoy it, as the results are generally worth the effort.

## CAMBRIE CALDWELL

SOPHOMORE, NEW MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

*"Spin"* – "Spin" was taken in the evening at Disneyland \*. The colors are dreamlike: reinforcing a fantastical perception most develop at a young age in regards to Disneyland \* that carries over into our imaginations as adults. Spinning teacups are more than just clever portals into the world of Alice's wonderland...they denote that while life spins all around us in a whirlwind of color and time, our existence is still an enjoyable process.

## KIM MYERS

SENIOR, FINE ARTS

*"Artist Book: Willy or Willie?"* – I distorted a book from the 1800s to my own liking. Sometimes things aren't what they always appear to be.

## BENJAMIN SELL

SENIOR, ENGLISH

*"Beautiful"* – "Beautiful" is based in part on my own experiences in the Neo-Natal Intensive Care unit during the two months my daughter spent there. The setting is one that has remained vivid in my mind, and it seemed an interesting backdrop for a story about innocence and maturity.

## MICHAEL BROSCART

JUNIOR, GRAPHIC DESIGN

*"Before School Starts"* – At 5:30 a.m., an early spring morning, the OSU campus speaks a serene tone stretching farther than one point of view can consume. For this resume, I stitched 38 points of view together creating what I call a privileged moment.

"BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS"

MICHAEL BROSCART

DIGITAL PHOTOMANIPULATION



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# PRISM

OSU'S ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE

PRISMA

“IF MY FATHER HAD  
POSSESSED YOUR SPINE,  
BONES TOO LONG  
FOR YOUR BACK,  
HE MIGHT BE ABOVE  
THE DIRT

*“To My Ex-Lover: A Study of My Ex-Father”*

*Halley Coles, pg. 9*

