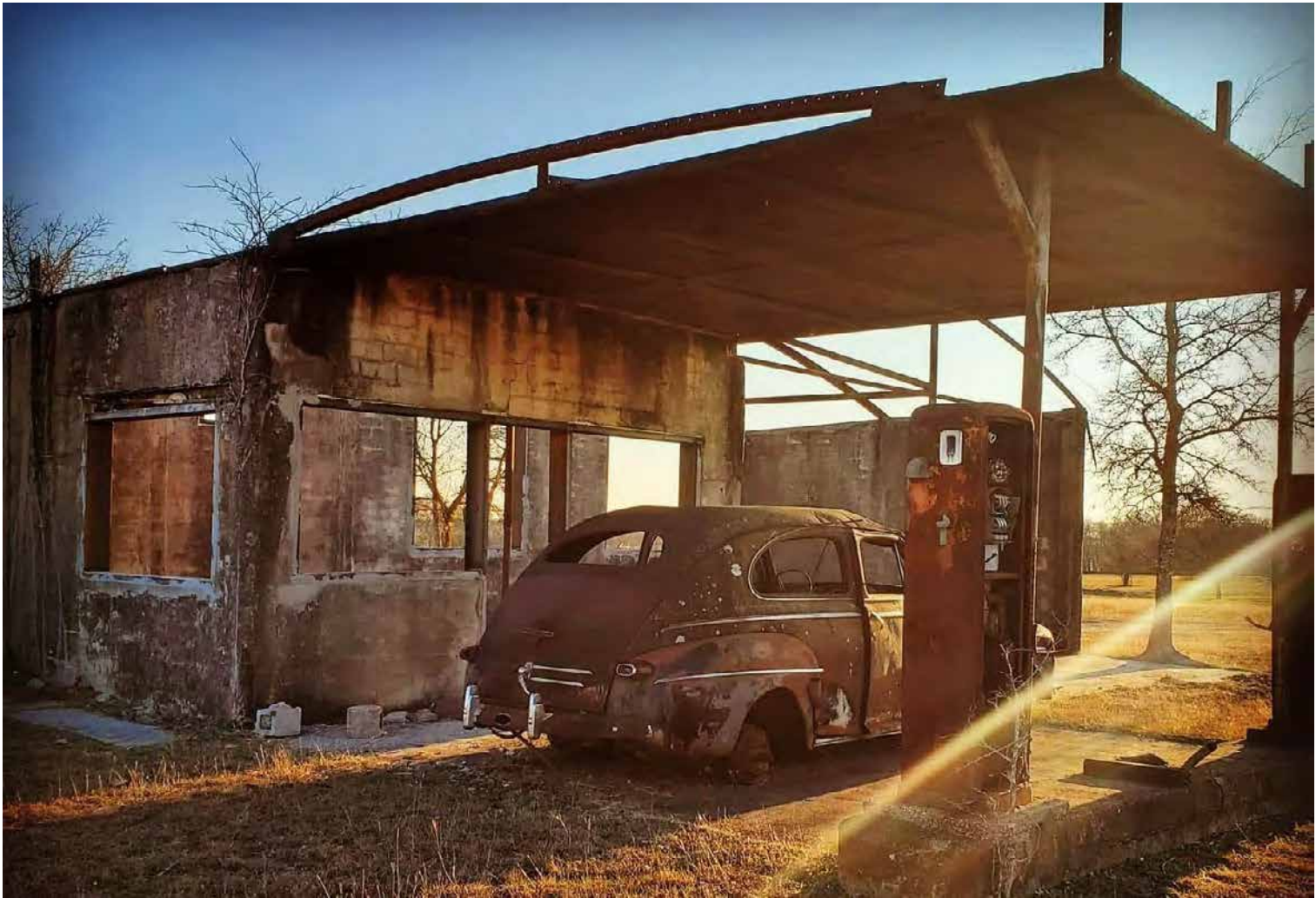


The Stone Circle

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Brianna Salyer

Frozen in Time

McLennan Community College
Journal of Literary and Visual Art

The Stone Circle is a semiannual literary and visual art journal published every fall and spring by McLennan Community College (MCC) in Waco, Texas. Students interested in creative writing, journalism, and publishing are encouraged to join the editorial committee. Visit www.mclennan.edu/stone-circle/ to read previous issues of our magazine, contact an editor, and find information about submission guidelines, writing contests, and events.

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A Zoo to Remember

by Haden Rhodes

First Prize - Prose

What time of year and events does the word 'romance' evoke in your mind? A summer eve at a lantern-lit café, an autumn walk down a lane of love, or spring meadows and bouquets? Or what about a cozy winter night, snuggling your loved one near the fireplace under a heavy layer of blankets, or going about town looking at festive holiday lights? While you're at it, maybe you want to take that person to the zoo as well. Yes, I said a zoo trip. Trust me. It's not as bad as your eyes make it sound.

On January 12th, 2021, I would be returning to McLennan Community College for my second year, but I wanted to enjoy one last "good time" before then. Lunch and a visit to the Cameron Park Zoo had a pleasant appeal. And then the need for companionship washed over me. Although I hung out with her brother for several years, I admit that Grace and I weren't the closest of friends. Around Valentine's Day 2020, we got each other a little more, talking together either face-to-face on Zoom and texting with Google's instant messaging program. We had shared some special moments like my graduation ceremony, small gatherings with our friends, and a football game last fall. I hoped that the trip to the zoo would begin to bring us even closer.

January 8th, 2021, the day of our zoo excursion, was cold enough to chill a side of beef. The wind didn't help the frigidity either. A seemingly endless mass of light gray blanketed the sky above. Translation, it was your typical Texan January. I wore a collared shirt, blue as the sea at noontide, and a black undershirt (an extra layer to protect against the cold) with jeans matching its tenebrosity.

Grace's mother dropped her off at my house at 11:00 AM, and despite the cold wind and overcast sky, her simple presence warmed me just like the sun in the summertime. Grace wore her wavy light brown hair in a beautiful loose ponytail. She wore a fur-lined yellow plaid jacket, the dark of the fur complementing her lighter hair. Her light blue jeans completed a "rebel Eskimo" look of sorts, although I can completely assure you that she is absolutely nothing of the sort. Indeed, she is one of the sweetest people that I know, with a cheerful, upbeat personality that shows in her voice and actions. She is also a serious extrovert, and the better conversationalist between the two of us.

My older sister's boyfriend planned to drive us that day in his Nissan Altima, so the two of us rode in the backseat while my sister rode in the front. We first stopped at Raising Cane's for lunch, but I was honestly too excited to eat very much. Though I've been to Cameron Park Zoo many times in the past, neither Grace nor I have paid a visit in a long time. With my sister and her guy going their way, Grace and I stuck by each other like Velcro and started our safari at the gibbon pen, but their very muddy enclosure was being repaired, so we moved on to the Asian pens. The lone tiger didn't notice us, as it was pacing a groove up and down its pen. It was probably waiting on its keeper,

who was no doubt running terribly late bringing lunch. Only Daddy and Baby orangutan were outside in their enclosure, both moving more sluggishly than usual due to the cold. The latter was hiding from Old Man Winter beneath a worn purple blanket.

I guess it's a good thing that you talk to the other person so much that both of you walk by the exit path, because that is what we did.

From the Asian pens, we jumped continents so to speak, and proceeded down the African trail. On a normal day, the lions would be in the farthest corner of their pen, completely ignoring and hiding as best they can from onlookers. But today they were almost up against the fence closest to us, still yawning of course, and taking no interest whatsoever in the couple keenly watching them. I admit that I am terrible at remembering and retaining exactly what people say, even if they are talking directly to me. Even so, there was one scene and exchange of dialogue that seemed to stick with me.

We were leaving the lion pens when Grace asked me, "So, where do we go now?"

I may have let my heart run a block with my head when I replied, "I don't care. Tell me what to do, and I'll do it."

Grace seized the moment, took a second of reasonable thought, and instructed, "Okay. Climb a tree." To which I responded, "Okay."

I looked around. A tree was about five feet from me on my northern starboard. I studied it, planning my ascent.

But before I began to climb, she said, "No, don't actually do it. You may get in trouble."

I am not known to be a very funny person, but I like to think this was one of our first goofy moments in the relationship. From the lions, we visited a shivering bachelor meerkat who posed for my camera. And I didn't just take pictures of the animals; several times we stopped in front of various animal enclosures to take a selfie or two or ten. I took over a hundred pictures that day, but out of all of the things that I saw, I believe that Grace was the most fascinating and prepossessing thing that anybody could find in the entire zoo, but I might be a little partial in that regard.

It seemed like that day was an honest-to-goodness perfect day. The banter was jovial and interesting, the wildlife was about as entertaining despite the frigid conditions, and for long periods Grace and I were the only people in the area, so we were free to talk without the distraction of others. And when we passed out of the zoo's gates, the sun appeared! We came straight back to my house and spent an hour there before Mom and Dad drove Grace home in their 2012 Suburban, with me riding along. The parents rode up in the front, and Grace and I enjoyed the other's company in the middle seat, chatting about school, her promotion to 4-H County Council President, and my favorite doughnut flavor, cherry iced.

At her house, I reunited with three of my friends who were visiting her brother while I was on my date. Heading out the door to return home, and I

cringe now to think of my awkward performance of it all, I put my right hand out to shake hers, that being our typical farewell, but then drew it back half-way. She then uttered the famous last words, "Well, why not?" So beneath a full moon, on a low-lit deck porch, crickets chirping a sweet goodnight melody, we hugged one another for the first time. That single moment...the one embrace...Indescribable.

Looking back from the mists of memory, The zoo trip accomplished its goal and granted passage to a lot more opportunities for us. Grace would later accept my invitations to some college/young professional events, some of which were hosted at my house and I even went to my first Historical Conquest (a history-based card game) tournament with her. But alas, today Grace and I are no longer a thing. She ultimately rejected me five months after our date. Even to this day, it amazes me that after all of the good times we shared, including that zoo trip, she so quickly tossed me away. I, on the other hand, kept a careful journal of the days we spent together. I don't read those entries much now, lest a flood of regret washes over me. Nevertheless, they are there just the same. Waiting for someday, for somebody to open them up, to pour over every word, to treasure their text once more. Waiting to be relived in happy, glorious memory. Waiting...to be remembered

Conspiracy on Street 4-C

by Houston Rhodes

First Prize - Poetry

Now six did meet at 4-C Street
 with plans to greet old Mr. Pete.
And as they walked, the six they talked
 About the day he'd go away.
For all the while, as was his style,
 Pete filled his vials with juice quite vile.
Now let's draw near, and maybe hear
 This little scheme of which they dream.
"I fail to see," said Mr. G,
 "How this could become history."
"Fail, it should not, this little plot
 That I have wrought," said Mr. Lott.
"I do not know, but it should blow,"
 Said Mr. O quite deep and low.
"Within his car, he should fly far
 Without a scar," said Mr. R.
"Yes, he should fly up very high
 Into the sky," said Mr. I.
"Then let me say, 'Let's go our way
 To Street 3-J,'" said Mr. A.
So down they went without a scent
 Into the vent to experiment.
And before the dawn, Pete had cleared out;
 Completely gone, without a doubt.
And no-one knew where he could be,
 But the verdict was conspiracy.

Null

by Victor Martinez-Gil

Second Prize - Poetry

I found Love in the darkest alley
covered by empty beams of light,
and everything made sense:
I saw my hands,
and my heart!

I felt so null.

I lost track of my reasons.
I found It, sitting on my chest,
waiting to bite me,
waiting to be.

It burned less than before,
It burned more than tomorrow.

Tears remained.
Now, my reasons approach me,
again,
while I forget about my hands,
and of my heart, I know nothing.

The light has dimmed.
I may find Love again,
thus always
in darker alleys.

Always
heartless.

Always,
Null.

Angela

by Angela Zelaya

Third Prize - Poetry

With no deity on site,
I descended from above,
Made the ultimate sacrifice.
I am the most divine.

I believe in myself.
I believe I'm capable.
I am all I need.

I am flesh,
And I am spirit.
I walk the earth,
And I live it.

I am mighty,
And I am powerful.
I am the one.



Joselinne Amador

Keeping the Mask On

El viaje del amor

by Perla Reynoso

Spanish Prize - Poetry

Conocer,
El comienzo de algo nuevo y emocionante,
El comienzo de nuevas aventuras,
El comienzo de innumerables risas y recuerdos.

Amar,
El gusto de estar siempre con ellos,
El gusto de cómo te hacen sonreír,
El gusto de su calidez.

Problemas,
El comienzo de los argumentos,
El comienzo de no querer ser maltrato,
El comienzo de querer irse.

Final,
El fin de los gritos y gritos,
El fin del llanto por la noche,
El fin de tratar de hacer que las cosas funcionen.

Curación,
La realización de cómo dejar ir,
La realización de que no merecías ser tratado de esa manera,
La realización de lo mala que era la relación.

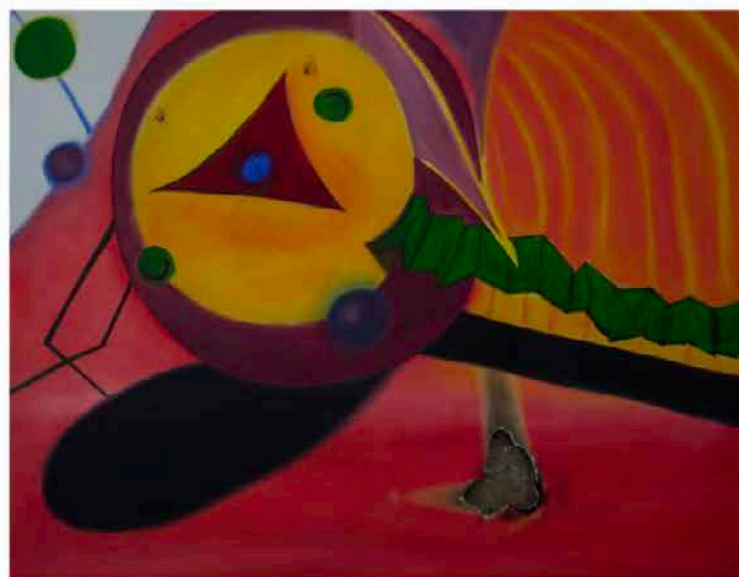
Después,
El comienzo de un tú más feliz,
El comienzo de ser mejor,
El comienzo de un nuevo capítulo.

Adam Barron
Candle Mage



Zoe Westbrook

The Big City Cuts Me Open



Joselinne Amador

The Process of Shapes

White Woman

by Virginia Cooper

I am a white woman,
And I am confused.
I sit in a white man's church and feel nothing.
But I walk outside and soar with the hawk above me in the sky.
I hear the song of the coyote and weep at its beauty.
I dance in the green grass covered in morning dew and breathe in calm.
A'Ho is not a white woman's word, but it fills my being with peace.

I am a white woman.
These hands, that have generations of blood, rape, murder, theft...
Everything the white man's god preaches against.
Touched the muzzle of a horse,
A horse that walked to me of her own accord.
Something so beautiful, so pure, innocence on four legs,
Allowed these stained hands to pet her.
All I could do was cry and thank her.

I am a white woman.
I live in the city.
I am a city girl; it is what I know.
In the country, open land around me, sky above me,
My soul soars with the hawk and runs with the horses.
I sing with the coyote, and our song is of joy.

I am a white woman,
And I am confused.
The word of the white man does not feel like my own.
My heart hardens against it.
My soul turns a deaf ear.
A'Ho brings me peace as I
Soar with the Hawk,
Run with the Horse,
Sing with the Coyote,
And lay in the grass, the bosom of the Earth,
who is my Mother,
And we cry at the beauty we see.

The Sunflower

by Datron White

I feel delicate as a sunflower.
My mind drifts
yet the way you pick me
makes me feel alive
and one with you.
You put me on a canvas
And showered me with love.
I feel at peace being in your presence.
Oh, how I wish nothing would end it!
My bright yellow head dips
As I sit in your window.
The wind picks up,
And I yell, "Oh No!"
I hope this isn't the end.



Datron White

The Sunflower



Brianna Salyer

Road Closed



Kaedon Smith

Intimidate the Darkness

They're Just Clothes

by Lexi Dominguez

They're just clothes.
Sometimes,
my clothes fit tight.

They're just clothes.
Sometimes,
my clothes fit baggy.

They're just clothes.
I like it when they are baggy
because then it feels like i did something right.

They're just clothes.
I stare at myself in the mirror,
the burning hate will never stop.

They're just clothes.
Sometimes,
my clothes make me feel thin.

They're just clothes.
Sometimes,
my clothes make me feel fat.

They're just clothes.
When will I stop counting calories
just so the clothes will fit how I want?

After all, they're just clothes.



Ashley Sykes

Down by the River



Kaedon Smith
Second Prize (Visual Art)

A Noir World



Emily Smith
Third Prize (Visual Art)

Declan

Love Is a Drug

by Angela Zelaya

First kiss, first touch,
First time you made love.
That chemical reaction in your brain
Gave you that high,
Made you feel you could touch the sky.
Anything that intense won't last.
It turns bad.
You spend your life
Trying to get that feeling back.
It consumes you,
Yet you crave more.
You're digging a hole
To the point of no return.
Is this love or just a drug?
It could be both.

Ode to Nature

by Abigail Guel

How lavish are the mystic ways of earth:
The wonders of the globe, like clouds and breeze.
Its treasures, which enrapture us from birth,
Like those majestic beauties we call trees.
The grass that bathes the world in emerald green,
And flowers clothed in radiancy so bright.
The ocean creatures, both seen and unseen,
And rain, refreshing life with its delight.
The sun that warms the earth with brilliant rays,
The moon and stars, unveiled in midnight dark.
The creatures I love most on summer days
Are birds, especially the meadowlark.
But none of these, though wondrous, quite are so
To heaven's masterpiece: the glorious rainbow.

Cambios

by Perla Reynoso

Mientras me miro a mí mismo ahora,
Veo a alguien que es fuerte,
Veo a alguien que no dejó que sus desventajas se aprovecharon de ella,
Veo a alguien que trabajó duro para llegar a donde está ahora.

Siempre que la vida parezca un poco difícil,
Recuerda lo lejos que has llegado,
Recuerda todos los obstáculos que has superado,
Recuerda cómo soñaste con estar donde estás hoy.

Nunca dejes que nadie te diga que no eres digno,
Nunca dejes que nadie te diga que no mereces ser feliz,
Nunca dejes que nadie te diga que no mereces alcanzar tus sueños,
Y lo más importante es que no dejes que nadie que te diga que debes cambiar tu apariencia.

Eres bella
Eres fuerte,
Eres increíble,
Y eres suficiente.

I'm Fed Up

by Azariah Bates

You say you're caught up in your feelings?
Well, I was caught up in you.
Tied you into me so tight
That when I lost you, I lost me too.
You say you have a brand-new view about me?
Well, so do I.

I'm tired of being THAT girl,
Always caught up in some guy.
I want to believe that you've changed,
Believe that you grew,
That you've worked out your feelings,
And not for me, but for you.

Because I've always wanted you to shine,
To find peace within your mind.
To use that big ole brain,
And have peace beside the rain.
But I'm not going to play a game
'Cause I know what I could lose.
I know I'm not the one that people choose.

I never get put first,
But, baby, that's okay.
It's taught me to choose me,
To keep myself going along the way.
Your heart is infinitely cold,
To leave me the way you did.
All because of something out of my control,
And your fear to commit.

You're right that you're not perfect,
And you say that you're trying,

But I'm so tired of waiting,
And I'm done with crying.
I'm fed up.

I always knew that I wasn't your top pick
Felt it every time you treated me like I was the next chick.
But I wasn't like everyone; I was special,
Supposedly on another level.
The one that could fix you,
And make you want to change.
But with every step I tried to take,
You fought back and caused me pain.

But that's okay,
It taught me what I can take.
It showed me what I will and won't accept along the way.
So, when you sent that text, and saw me flexing?
That was me saying, "I'll be fine without your connection."

To connect is to understand, that's all that means,
And you don't understand me, that's how it seems.
For you to treat me like you did.
Acting like I'm just a chick,
Here for you to mess with.
You know you hurt me,
And that's the only point,
Because I was there for you,
While you just rolled your joint.

A punching bag for you and your emotions,
That came as fast as a hurricane out in the ocean.
Here one minute, then off in a loop,
Your mood swings,
Like shoestrings,
Tied tight and swooped.

I can't forget how I let you in,
All the nights I laid awake
While you made my house spin,
All the effort I put in.
Now I see it was just me,
Hindsight let me see reality.
You never made me promises,
Never let down your guard.
I was the one pushing us forward
And trying too hard.

I thought that if I let you see me,
Not the sex but who I was truly.
The secrets, scars, and broken bits,
I thought you'd never call it quits.
But you gave up,
Ended it, cold and cruel.
Though we aren't together,
You're telling me you're caught up.
There's only one thing I know what to say,
And it's that I'm fed up.



Kaedon Smith

Reflection of Grace



Adam Barron

Straight Outta Compton



Lisandra Jero

Hopping Around

Mi bisabuela

by Azariah Bates

Yo nunca llegué a conocerla
La que me dio mi nombre
La mujer elusiva que me dicen me parezco

Mi bisabuela
Sin usted, yo no existiría
Mi bisabuela
La madre de mi abuelo
La madre del padre de mi madre

Mi bisabuela
Yo escuché que soy como usted
Pero nunca llegué a verte

Mi bisabuela
Quiero estar a la altura de tu nombre
Su nombre que me dieron
Su nombre que me encanta

Juanita
En español
"El dios misericordioso"

En hebreo
"Regalo de dios"

En mi corazón
"Mi ángel"

Mi ángel que me cuida.

Juanita
¿Pero quién eres tú a mí?

Primero

by Perla Reynoso

Aprender cosas por tu cuenta,
Llenar innumerables cantidades de papeles,
Tener que hablar en lenguas que otros no entienden,
Aprender un idioma para que puedas comunicarte con los demás.

Te dicen que nunca podrás hacerlo,
Que deberías rendirte,
Que mis padres no lo hicieron,
¿Qué me hace pensar que lo haré?

Estoy aquí para decirte que serás el primero,
Cuando se siente como el mundo está sentado sobre tus hombros,
Cuando no tienes idea de lo que debes hacer para alcanzar tus sueños,
Cuando te sientes desesperado,
Cuando sientes que las probabilidades no están a tu favor,
Serás el primero.

Somos quienes somos,
No podemos cambiar el color de nuestra piel,
No podemos cambiar de dónde somos,
No podemos cambiar los sacrificios que tuvimos que hacer para llegar a
donde estamos.

Pero podemos cambiar el ciclo,
Podemos hacer una diferencia en nuestro mundo,
Podemos hacer realidad los sueños de nuestros padres,
Podemos ser los primeros.



Zoe Westbrook *Astrophysics and Other Ways to Give Me Space*



Kristine Daniels

Boy Loves Trains

Many, many thanks to Dr. Johnette McKown & the Board of Trustees, and Drs. Fred Hills, Bradley Christian, and Bill Matta for their support and encouragement. Additional thanks to Prof. Beth Grassman for her generous editing of our entries in Spanish this year.

Thanks to all of our student artists and writers for their contributions to this issue! It is an honor to publish your work.

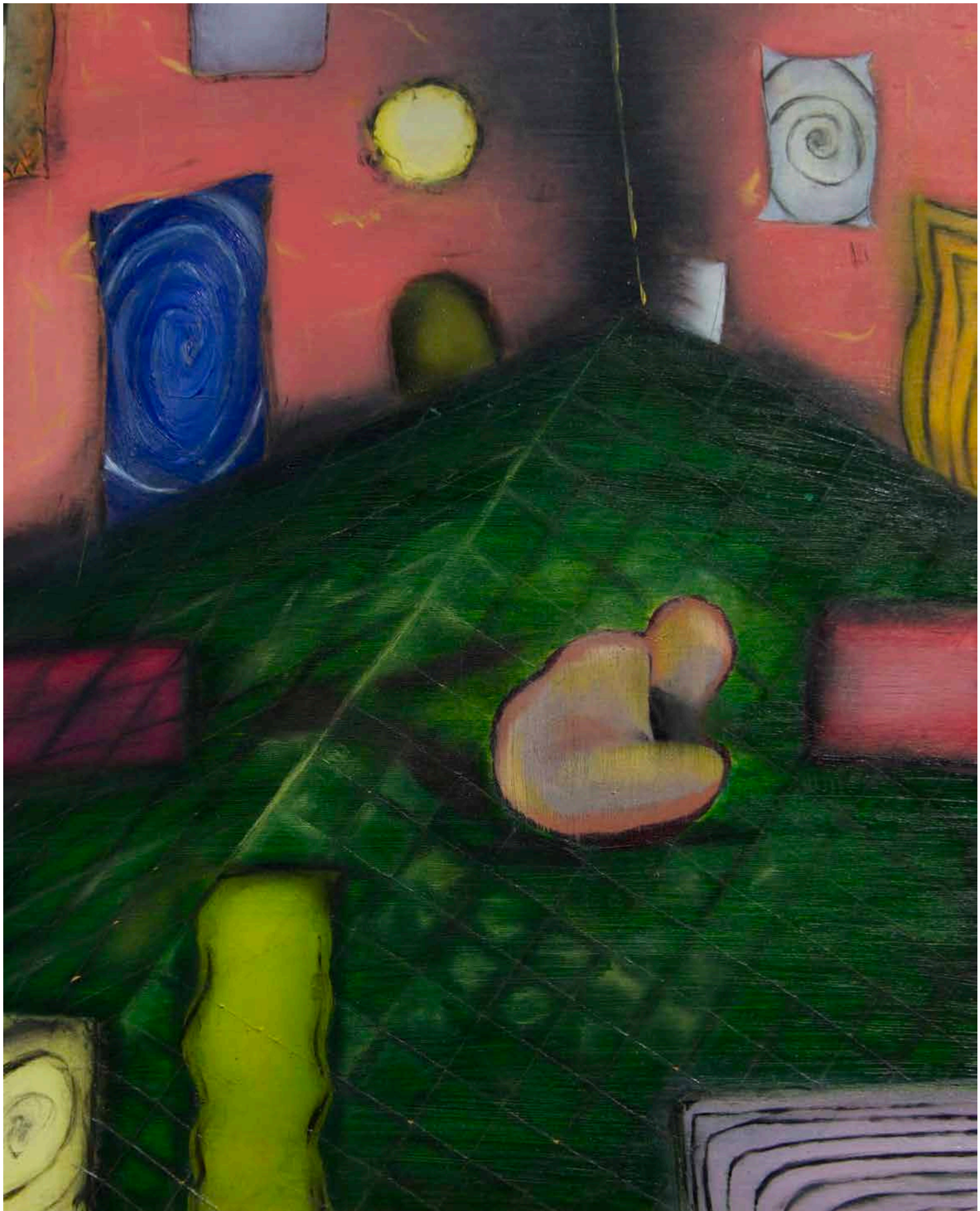
Thank you to all the faculty and staff whose donations to the MCC Foundation make this magazine possible. Without your support, we would not be able to fund our prizes and recognize our students' exceptional talents.



Brianna Salyer

Final Destination

Submission deadline for
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Joselinne Amador

The Choices in Our Head