



The Metropolitan Review

A JOURNAL
OF STUDENT
EXPRESSION

FALL 2013

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Special thanks to everyone who made this year's issue possible: our talented students, supportive faculty and professional staff, the Student Activity Fund, Dean Cynthia L. Ward, and a very special thank you to my fabulous assistant editor and recent Empire State College graduate, Lisa Nicoll.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed creating it.

*Karyn Pilgrim, editor
Lisa Nicoll, assistant editor
Metropolitan Center
SUNY Empire State College*

COVER: SUNLIGHT OVER MONTREAL © MICHELLE BUUCK

Submissions Policy

We seek the best of SUNY Empire State College undergraduate and alumni work in the arts and writing: art that captivates and draws us in, that astonishes or astounds, that compels us to look anew, that exposes, unveils, lulls or shocks; essays that probe, analyze, critique and persuade by their carefully constructed arguments and meticulously supported documentation (APA, MLA, Chicago Manual of Style all acceptable); polished and original prose including fiction with fresh characters and tight plots, flash fiction that sparks, prose poems that meander and flow, creative nonfiction that merges the personal and universal, journalism that interrogates timely issues on a local or global scale; short dramatic writing with great dialog and plots; poetry that transforms the ordinary to extraordinary; and new forms of writing and artwork that push the boundaries of form.

Open Submission Period: Oct. 1, 2013 - Jan. 15, 2014

Email Karyn.Pilgrim@esc.edu

Subject line MR 2014 Submission from (Your Name)

Format for Written Submissions

MS Word files only (no zip files), single spaced with no header or footer, just your name and email at the top of the first page, and page numbers at the bottom of each page. All outside sources must be cited properly in APA, MLA or Chicago Manual of Style. Please include a short personal bio (50 - 100 words).

For Artwork

Jpg or rtf files only; include a short personal bio (50 - 100 words) and artist's statement that explains the artwork including its conception and technique (100 - 250 words). The bio and artist's statement should be submitted as an MS Word file. Please don't send links to personal websites, but make sure the document can be opened and saved on any computer.

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James Baldwin's *The Creative Process: The Function of Artistic Solitude in Truth-Seeking and Social Justice* (critical essay)

Stephanie JT Russell

Artist/Author's Bio

Stephanie JT Russell ("Pina") is a visual artist, published author and cultural worker. She has exhibited and performed nationally and internationally at numerous world-class venues, including The Albright-Knox Gallery, Hallwalls, CEPA, Anna's Jazz Island and Cody's Books in San Francisco, The Improv Jam and Theater Jarry in Washington, D.C., Circolo Pickwick in Genoa, and 38 Awoloro Road in Lagos, Nigeria. She has been a guest lecturer at New York University, The New York State Theater Educators Association, Eastern Mennonite University, and Lincoln Center's arts education program for inner-city youth. Stephanie worked in Liberia during its civil conflict, teaching collective theater practices to high school students, former child soldiers and K-12 educators trained in conflict resolution management. Stephanie's published books include Zen: A Spiritual Journey, Everyday Zen and Personal Alchemy. Her most recent books, One Flash of Lightning: A Samurai Path for Living the Moment and The Zen of Small Things (a book of nature photographs and poetry), were released in 2005 and 2006, respectively (Andrews McMeel Publishing). One Flash was released in a second edition in 2007. Stephanie's poetry appears in the anthologies Words Upon the Water and Oakland Out Loud, and has been featured on poetz.com, and on the blog site of award-winning poet and visual artist Kim Shuck. Stephanie is currently working on a new manuscript, The Autobiography of Pinchas the Tailor. She lives in the Hudson Valley.

Artist's Statement

In the autumn of 2012, I decided to make photographs of the figure in the hallway outside my apartment. That space was an instant choice for two reasons. First, the floor above my apartment hall space ends at the roofline in a skylight that brings constant changes, both subtle and dramatic, into the entire hallway. This is counterbalanced by the light that enters the space from one flight below, through a glass door at street level.

Secondly, my experience of traversing this hallway is always a conscious one – consciousness of my thoughts, of the purpose for my exit, of my feelings upon returning, and

of the quality of light, which can sometimes noticeably change within the few seconds it takes to enter or leave the hallway.

In meditating on the purpose of photographing the figure within this unadorned, quotidian space, I experienced the hallway's flat, flawed white walls as a kind of neutral vector whose primary quality was that of stasis changed only by the movement of light, and the potential transformation by the presence of a human body. This struck me as a great opportunity to explore a dialog between the purely phenomenological-objective – the physical space

and the human form – and the ontological-subjective, in the range of choices that might be made during the shoot.

By leveraging the elements at hand – the figure, the walls, available light, and time – I hoped to find unexpected moments of pure persona that would emanate from a truth shared between each model and I. While I directed basic aspects of the shoot (“walk up and down the stairs slowly ... freeze ... raise your chin a bit”), these pictures are the outcome of collaborative dialogs, verbally and in silence, that occurred as I photographed the subjects. I took dozens of shots at each session, but found that “unexpected truth” in just a few of the images – namely, the ways in which a given model found an authentic interior reality for herself or himself within the hallway ... which in some sense was the transfer of an autobiographical experience I wished to share in some way. That sharing had to begin with the models; I hope it extends to the viewer as well.

I. Baldwin’s Prescient and Visionary Call

Written five years after James Baldwin’s return to the United States from a productive 12-year sojourn in Europe – wherein he produced numerous magazine pieces and his first novel, the autobiographical *Go Tell It On The Mountain* – *The Creative Process* is a polished jewel of Baldwin’s mature essayist craft and a vibrant expression of his exacting political conscience. While the piece is addressed, in a decidedly inclusive tone, to a broad audience of fellow artists, it must be absorbed through the prism of Baldwin’s existence as a black man in white-dominated America – the all-consuming context of his literary voice and humanist ethos – and within the arena of its time in American political life.

The Creative Process is grounded in Baldwin’s personal truth as an artist who channeled his vast talents into articulating the deepest ethical, humanist, and rational underpinnings of the civil rights movement. Having enjoyed the prerogatives of an independent, solitary expatriate writer abroad, in the early 1960s Baldwin felt compelled to leave Europe and bring his energies to the tide of public activism in which numerous American artists were already engaged. His homecoming was launched with a trip somewhat reluctantly made at the request of Philip Rahv, editor of the *Partisan Review*, who asked Baldwin to report on what was happening in the American South. That trip unleashed Baldwin’s prolific, enduring tsunami of literary reflections on the harsh realities of American racial inequalities and social discontents. Among his creative peers in the movement were Harry Belafonte, Nina Simone, Lena Horne and Lorraine Hansberry, with whom Baldwin marched on Washington, severely accused the highest political officials for the violence that ensued in Birmingham, and met with President John F. Kennedy and Attorney General Robert Kennedy to criticize their failure to acknowledge and rectify the country’s disgraceful position on race and authoritarianism.

Published a year after his stellar collection of essays, *Notes of a Native Son*, *The Creative Process* is a testament to Baldwin’s nuanced grasp of the existential aloneness at the crux of our shared humanity. Baldwin frames his knowledge of this condition within the fundamental apartness of the artistic experience, and within that experience, “the nature of the artist’s responsibility to his society. The peculiar nature of this responsibility is that he must never cease warring with it, for its sake and for his own.” Baldwin goes on to remark that “everything is always changing,” and “the truth about us is always at variance with what we wish to be.” While acknowledging his own

“grandiloquent claims” as to the artist’s vaunted gift for truth-telling, Baldwin nonetheless reiterates the artist’s innate capacity to exercise profound mechanisms of reconciliation with our least attractive truths, and embody the transformative accountability so urgently needed across the collective American mind.

Baldwin’s position on the role of the artist in political life was anathema to the House Un-American Activities Committee, whose members attacked and destroyed the careers of dozens of American writers, publishers, dramatists and filmmakers.¹ Fifty years later, the contemporary relevance of *The Creative Process* cannot be underestimated. Its deliberately universal *crie de coeur* addresses the timeless moral crisis that continues to deflect human society from our potential evolution into a just and equitable entity. Baldwin states that artists, whose working process unfolds in a realm of solitude where confrontation with the self is the unavoidable source material of the creative act, are best situated to address this moral crisis, which is simultaneously a crisis of the spirit and of the imagination. Baldwin further argues that the artist’s solitary relationship with spirit and imagination offers unique leverage for human awakening and transcendence, and by extension, for deep permanent change: “The artist is distinguished from all other responsible actors in society – the politicians, legislators, educators and scientists – by the fact that he is his own test tube, his own laboratory, working according to very rigorous rules, however unstated these may be, and cannot allow any consideration to supersede his responsibility to reveal all that he can possibly discover concerning the mystery of the human being.”

By underscoring the history of this peculiarly distinguishing factor of creative solitude, which has caused “all societies [to] battle[d] with the incorrigible disturber of the peace – the artist,”

Baldwin reinforces that the peace disturbed is both manifestly internal, within the individual, and unavoidably external, toward the world at large. Obviously, by the time *The Creative Process* was published, Baldwin’s own internal struggles with truth, solitude and reconciliation were long recognized, both within his craft and through his social-justice activism; yet, nowhere in the essay does Baldwin refer to himself, neither by name nor by inference to his public persona. Rather, he elegantly straddles the line between charismatic leader and rank-and-file soldier in humankind’s archetypal quest for consciousness. He positions himself shoulder to shoulder with an invisible multitude of art-makers, social critics and philosophical creatives, who stubbornly abide in resistance to the “fact that in order to conquer this continent, the particular aloneness of which I speak – the aloneness in which one discovers that life is tragic, and therefore unutterably beautiful – could not be permitted.” He posits the artist’s innate meditative solitude as an antidote to the “habits and fears that remain” in the American psyche, despite the colonial overthrow of the entire continent – thus charging the artist with a quality of individual accountability and authority that is intrinsically antagonistic to the communal delusion of national wholeness through mass distraction from the truth.

Until Baldwin, no single writer in modern American letters had so eloquently balanced a vigilant moral outrage with an equally profound advocacy for authentic universal brotherhood. His adult voice, still infused with the passionately certain reckonings of his years as a teenage minister, undeviatingly calls for transcendence from conditioned ignorance, from the bondage of hatred, from the erasure of cultural and personal identity, from the comfortable trap of authoritarian “stability.”

In *The Creative Process*, Baldwin's persona narrator is the fervid preacher who seamlessly couples unvarnished reality with stubborn hope:

We are the strongest nation in the Western world, but this is not for the reasons that we think. It is because we have an opportunity that no other nation has in moving beyond the Old World concepts of race and class and caste, to create, finally, what we must have had in mind when we first began speaking of the New World.

Baldwin's hopeful reference to an idealistic definition of the term "New World" is somewhat out of step with 21st century progressive political rhetoric – he is, after all, baldly omitting the grave iniquities of a "New World" nation-state built upon institutionalized slavery and the extermination of America's native peoples – but here, Baldwin's persona is speaking less as political witness than as a futurist visionary who cautions that "the price of this is a long look backward when we came and an unflinching assessment of the record." Again, implicit in this statement is Baldwin's charge to the artist as mediator of the truth across our past, present and future, wherein the lessons of our greatest beauty and our most abysmal flaws coincide.

Near the end of his life, civil rights activist Medgar Evers was asked by an interviewer to describe what was next for the civil rights movement in the aftermath of institutionalized desegregation. "People's hearts have to change," he replied. (One can almost see Evers shrugging at the obviousness of this all-telling remark.) Like Baldwin, Evers had the long-view vision to recognize that the road to justice will ultimately manifest in a profound spiritual awakening – an evolutionary moment that cannot be legislated into being, but can only emerge as an expression of authentic, shared human agreement. For Baldwin, that evolutionary work "is the war of

an artist with his society ... a lover's war, and he does, at his best, what lovers do, which is to reveal the beloved to himself and, with that revelation, to make freedom real."

II. The Post-20th Century Creative Process: Would Baldwin Nod in Approval?

In our contemporary era of planetary crisis, the reflexive, self-reinforcing instrumentalities of top-down power structures are the same that Baldwin's generation faced. And, as a journalist and much-documented public figure who experienced the dawning of both the television and computer technology ages, Baldwin evinced keen foresight of the sea changes we now witness in media pervasiveness, and in our technological capacity to scrutinize human activity and control information on a vast and unprecedented scale. Prior to his hopeful conclusion of *The Creative Process*, Baldwin warns that, "in order to conquer this continent, the particular aloneness of which I speak – the aloneness in which one discovers that life is tragic, and therefore unutterably beautiful – could not be permitted. And that this prohibition is typical of all emergent nations will be proved, I have no doubt, in many ways during the next 50 years." His prediction is chillingly accurate: our 21st century surveillance-saturated environment, coupled with an escalation of global political paranoia, has ramped up the repression of artist-activists and social-justice messengers around the world.²

The contemporary examples in these footnotes represent a modicum of the long historic continuum of censorship and imprisonment. Whether emanating from reactionary ideology or a base revulsion for displays of perception which cannot easily be digested within the bounds of restrictive conventional thought, human society's urge to abridge, lock away, and otherwise ostracize creative minds was

certainly among the bedrock of Baldwin's frame of reference in *The Creative Process*. Its timeless tone and substance were aimed at his late-20th century contemporaries, but could have been addressed directly to any artist of the 18th, 19th or 21st centuries. By extension, perhaps it is within the timeless dimension of active, conscious solitude that artists of every generation can and do locate the inner strength to meet Baldwin's challenge to withstand the duress of conventional censure.

The artist's private, internal source of veracity of which Baldwin speaks also has its potential social counterpart; just as did the artists of the civil rights, anti-HUAC, and anti-war movements of Baldwin's prime, we also can find in each other – in community – irreplaceable external sources for a reinvigoration of the spirit that springs from a vital exchange of ideas, energy, hope, and conscience. Artists, whose particular magic lies in the ability to create something from an apparent nothingness, are adept in the formulation of exploratory, interpersonal and inter-media dialogs; from the Bloomsbury Group³ to Fluxus⁴ to the AfroFuturists,⁵ the legacy of interchange among inward-looking artists continues to flourish. As the "information wars" go on, pitting corporate interests against consumer-users, and questions arise as to whether computer technology enhances or devolves the human gregarious impulse, artists continue to be at the forefront of communication experiments that reach across our preconceptions of time, space and consciousness.⁶ Further, digital and Internet media have furthered artists' capacities to create dialogical and exhibition environments without the need or expense of brick-and-mortar infrastructure.

It is tempting to consider the impact that digital culture would have had upon Baldwin as a writer, political philosopher and social creature –

and his impact upon it in turn. Would he have nodded in approval to the burgeoning culture of digital media art works and the Internet communities that have sprung up through the advancement of the technology? He would surely have had much to say about the vitality, the inherent and potential value, and the pitfalls of our relationship with technology – particularly its power to reach people across cultural and geographic lines, and the questions of human evolutionary consciousness and social order as our lives become more and more integrated with the growing digital landscape.

The Creative Process, cannily phrased in complexly conjoined terms of an invitation, an admonition, and an awakening, underscores Baldwin's gift for bridging the personal with the political, and abstract insight with the concrete act. Whether read by firelight in its original edition, or by Kindle on a subway car, its fundamental power sustains across the decades, touching the core ethical dilemma at the heart of every artist's existence: to master the delicate balance between private interior consciousness, meaningful aesthetic productivity, and deep engagement with the burning issues of public life – not a reductive matter of pitting the collective versus the individual, but rather, the great work of dissolving the illusory barrier between the two.

¹ Baldwin joined the activist efforts to disband HUAC. In June, 1961, Baldwin marched with W.E.B. Du Bois at a ban-HUAC rally. Baldwin also wrote the Foreword to Anne Braden's pamphlet, *House Un-American Activities Committee: Bulwark of Segregation* (Pub.: National Committee to Abolish the House Un-American Activities Committee, Los Angeles, 1964)

² See, e.g.:

New York Times, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/21/nyregion/police-arrest-artist-takeshi-miyakawa-thinking-tribute-was-fake-bomb.html>;

Animal New York, <http://animalnewyork.com/2012/drone-artist-arrested-for-drone-art>;

The Gothamist, http://gothamist.com/2009/07/13/performance_artist_arrested_in_cent.php;

KTLA.com, <http://www.ktla.com/news/landing/ktla-moca-artist-arrested-for-tagging,0,3039296.story>;

hyperallergic.com, <http://hyperallergic.com/9301/nypd-watercolor-outdoors>;

The Daily Beast, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/04/14/ai-weiwei-arrested-in-beijing-dissident-artist-finds-out-how-far-he-can-go.html>;

The Gothamist, http://gothamist.com/2010/11/26/chalk_artist.php;

New York Times, <http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/11/11/heres-a-surprise-for-underground-art-lovers-handcuffs>;

SF Gate, <http://www.sfgate.com/crime/article/Arrest-at-Oakland-Airport-over-odd-watch-4045525.php>;

The Guardian, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jun/10/sticker-lady-strict-singapore-divided>;

New York Times, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/18/world/europe/suspense-ahead-of-verdict-for-jailed-russian-punk-band.html?pagewanted=all>;

CNN.com, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/09/22/opinion/crabapple-occupy-wall-street/index.html>;

Talent Compass, <http://www.talentcompass.com/exclusives/spencer-tunick>;

Christian Science Monitor, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2012/0910/Indian-artist-jailed-for-anticorruption-cartoons>;

NPR.com, <http://www.npr.org/2011/05/04/135985475/hong-kong-graffiti-challenges-chinese-artists-arrest>;

The Washington Post, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/comic-riffs/post/profiles-in-cartooning-courage-how-artists-in-syria-iran-and-india-wield-their-free-speech-pens-against-powerful-forces/2012/05/12/gIQAaMgdJU_blog.html;

The Washington Post, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/in-northern-mali-music-silenced-as-islamists-drive-out-artists/2012/11/30/110ea016-300c-11e2-af17-67abba0676e2_story.html;

Article19.org, <http://www.article19.org/resources.php/resource/3383/en/artist-alert:-june-2012> http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jafar_Panahi

- 3 The **Bloomsbury Group** – or **Bloomsbury Set** – was an enormously influential group of associated English writers, intellectuals, philosophers and artists, the best known members of which included Virginia Woolf, John Maynard Keynes, E. M. Forster and Lytton Strachey. This loose collective of friends and relatives lived, worked or studied together near Bloomsbury, London, during the first half of the 20th century. According to Ian Ousby, “although its

members denied being a group in any formal sense, they were united by an abiding belief in the importance of the arts.” Their works and outlook deeply influenced literature, aesthetics, criticism, and economics as well as modern attitudes towards feminism, pacifism and sexuality. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloomsbury_Group

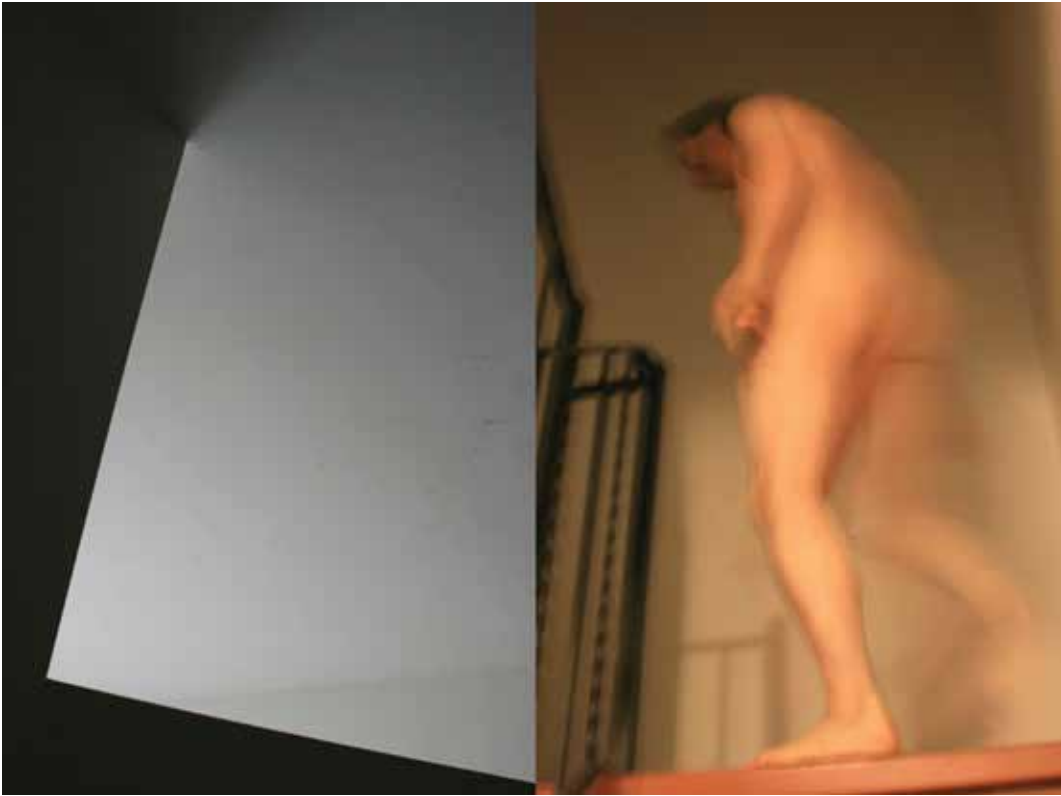
- ⁴ **Fluxus** – a name taken from a Latin word meaning “flow, flux” (noun); “flowing, fluid” (adj.)[1] – is an international network of artists, composers and designers noted for blending different artistic media and disciplines in the 1960s. They have been active in Neo-Dada noise music and visual art as well as literature, urban planning, architecture, and design. Fluxus is sometimes described as intermedia. “The Fluxus movement ... developed its ‘anti-art,’ anti-commercial aesthetics under the leadership of George Maciunas. Fluxus staged a series of festivals in Paris, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, London and New York, with avant-garde performances often spilling out into the street. Most of the experimental artists of the period, including Joseph Beuys, Yoko Ono and Nam June Paik, took part in Fluxus events. The movement, which still continues, played an important role in the opening up of definitions of what art can be.” Tate Online, *Fluxus, Performance, Participation*[2] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fluxus>

- ⁵ See, e.g.:

The Black Futurists are pan-diasporic, trans-generational, hyper-local, global, and gorilla. Tracking, exploring, sharing, and cultivating, producing influence that smells of the same funk, building maps of culture to create virtual, actual and mystical space to dial up the future. <http://www.boothism.org/blackfuturistsspeak/project/>

Post Black: Highlighting certain socioeconomic and cultural trends, this exploration discloses the new dynamics shaping contemporary lives of African Americans. Using information from conversations with mavericks within black communities – such as entrepreneurs, artists, scholars and activists as well as members of both the working and upper classes – this powerful examination gives voice to what the author has deemed “post black” approaches to business, lifestyles and religion that are nowhere else reflected as part of black life. The argument states that this new, complex black identity is strikingly different than the images handed down from previous generations and offers new examples of behavior, such as those shown by President Obama, gays and lesbians, young professionals, and black Buddhists. Contending that this new generation feels as unwelcome in traditional churches as in hip-hop clubs, this dynamic provocation dispels myths about current, popular black identity. <http://postblackthebook.blogspot.com/2010/03/afro-futurism-interview-with.html>

Afrofuturism is an emergent literary and cultural aesthetic that combines elements of science fiction, historical fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magic realism with non-Western cosmologies in order to critique not only the present-day dilemmas of people of color, but also to revise, interrogate and re-examine the historical events of the past. In an interview published in the fall 2012 edition of *Black Renaissance/Renaissance Noire* (NYU), Sanford-Biggers defines Afrofuturism as “a way of recontextualizing and assessing history and imagining the future of the African Diaspora via science, science fiction, technology, sound, architecture, the visual and culinary arts and other more



Metal (art), Stephanie JT Russell

nimble and interpretive modes of research and understanding.” Examples of seminal afrofuturistic works include the novels of Samuel R. Delany and Octavia Butler; the canvases of Jean-Michel Basquiat and the photography of Renée Cox; as well as the explicitly extraterrestrial mythoi of Parliament-Funkadelic and Sun Ra. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrofuturism>

⁶ See, e.g.:

Joseph Nechvatal, *Towards an Immersive Intelligence: Essays on the Work of Art in the Age of Computer Technology and Virtual Reality (1993-2006)*. Edgewise Press. New York, N.Y. 2009

Harvest Works: Founded as a not-for-profit organization by artists in 1977, Harvestworks has helped a generation of artists create

new works using technology. Our mission is to support the creation and presentation of art works achieved through the use of new and evolving technologies. <http://www.harvestworks.org>

Paper Tiger Television (PTTV) is an open, nonprofit, volunteer video collective. Through the production and distribution of our public access series, media literacy/video production workshops, community screenings and grassroots advocacy, PTTV works to challenge and expose the corporate control of mainstream media. PTTV believes that increasing public awareness of the negative influence of mass media and involving people in the process of making media is mandatory for our long-term goal of information equity. <http://papertiger.org>

Sunset Over Montreal, Sunset Over Venice (art)

Michelle Buuck

Artist's Bio

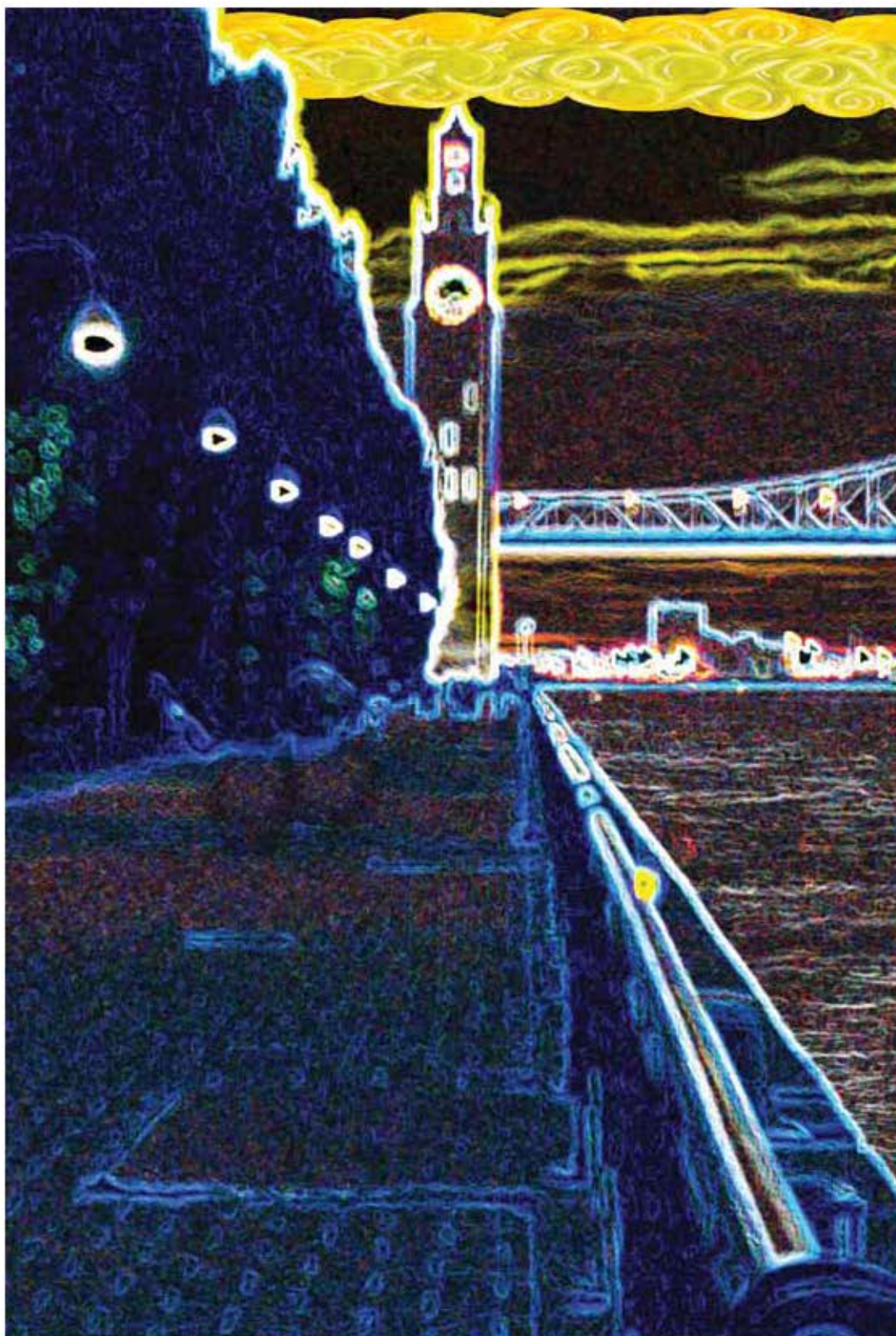
Michelle Buuck has always had a passion for artwork and creativity. Her artistic experiences include sculpting jewelry, photography, graphics and digital design. She is currently working toward her bachelor's degree at Empire State College.

Artist's Statement

Glowing Edges: Surrounded by a life of creativity and spirituality, I have always had a yearning and passionate desire to create beautiful artwork that would ultimately leave a person with a feeling of awe and inspiration. In 1998, I started sculpting jewelry; in 2000, I dabbled in photography; and in 2001, I went to Parsons for graphics and digital design. Using all of these talents and techniques I gained, I created my first works of art, which I have titled *Glowing Edges*. My love for night scenes and the mandala, once given to me as a gesture of love and meditation, is the stepping-stone into this work.

The digital art pieces shown here, *Sunset Over Venice* and *Sunlight Over Montreal* were created using photographs, hand-crafted jewelry, and various techniques in Photoshop. First, using the image/adjustment and the filter/stylize/noise palettes, I was successful in creating bright neon outlines, vibrant specks of colors, and beautiful contrasts between light and dark. Second, each piece of jewelry was scanned, duplicated and placed as a substitute for some object in the original photograph. For example, in *Sunset Over Venice* the pieces were set in a circular pattern to form the sun, and in *Sunlight Over Montreal* the pieces were set in a rectangular pattern to form the sky. I then sampled colors from the photographs to bring everything together cohesively.

As my work began to evolve, I remembered the love and inspiration I had for artists like Van Gogh and Gauguin and their use of bright colors. My pieces took on the feeling of mystery and adventure, and for me they became magical, as imagined in a dream state, not typical pieces you see every day. As a digital artist, I feel like my journey has just started, and I feel there are endless possibilities and opportunities yet to be discovered.



Sunset Over Montreal (art), Michelle Buuck



Sunset Over Venice (art), Michelle Buuck

Lenox, 1970 (creative nonfiction)

Shawna Kent

Author's Bio

Shawna Kent is studying creative writing and dance composition at Empire State College. She is a dancer and choreographer in the Brooklyn group Parents Who Dance, and a student of Tibetan Buddhism: The New Kadampa Tradition. She works at The Corcoran Group in Park Slope and has lived in Brooklyn for many years, where she raised two children.

A string of events took place in the decade between 1960 and 1970 that, for anyone who lived through that time, will never be forgotten. The first was in 1963 when our president was assassinated. In 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. was shot and killed, as was Robert Kennedy later that same year. In 1970, the year I visited Lenox, four students at Kent State were gunned down by the National Guard.

I was studying in Lenox and was sharing a room in an old boarding house on Main Street. The shootings sent a disturbing reverberation throughout the country, perhaps the world, that were felt even in a town such as Lenox, which was a sleepy quiet place, with little controversy. Kent State marked the end of a decade in which many notable tragedies had stopped the country cold.

Perhaps the residents of Lenox had locked their front doors that night against the faint memory of their own beginnings: the overthrow of the Native Americans, whose numbers were now exactly nil in this beautiful northern paradise that had once belonged to them. Yet, in 1970, in a town where the crime rate was 2 percent against the national average it was uncomfortable to contemplate something like the firing of M-1 rifles aimed at 20-year-old revolutionaries in T-shirts and jeans. Lenox,

all the Berkshires, and in point of fact, all America, had a tainted past, full of forgotten violence, covered over by fictional tales that were much more appealing.

Every year, in neighboring Tanglewood, when the weather turned mild, orchestras played under big white tents. People bought tickets to sit under them, or on the sprawling, well-kept lawns.

And, as I wanted to take advantage of what the Berkshires had to offer, I got a ride to Tanglewood one evening. On the way, I caught a glimpse of the famous Berkshire Hills, shrouded by night, but clearly majestic, faintly illuminated by stars.

The extensive grounds reminded me of my childhood escapades in summer evenings spent outdoors, trying to catch fireflies in glass jelly jars, running on cool, thick grass that looked emerald-green by moonlight. Our front lawns were the size of postage stamps, but to a child they were vast. The only dangerous elements to contend with were bumblebees and poison ivy. Later, terrible things happened, but those expeditions into our seemingly large world gave us our first experience of wonder.

On the concert grounds, lanterns threw illumination here and there in the dark. The sounds of voices hovered and then disappeared upwards into the black sky dotted with stars. I sat on one of those folding lawn chairs, lost in wafting sounds of beautiful music while wrapped in what seemed to be a living cloak of darkness. Those are nights to savor – refuge far away from disaster, the minutes stretching from one to the next like dewdrops delicately balanced along the strands of a spider’s web.

When the concert ended, I walked to the road and stationed myself on the shoulder to hitch a ride home.

A car pulled over. I could see two boys in the front seat drinking beer. The one who wasn’t driving reached behind him, threw open the back door on the passenger’s side and invited me to get in. He seemed friendly enough and I felt caught – clearly standing there waiting for a lift and unable to think of a fair reason to refuse theirs.

I got in, the doors slammed shut, the car screeched away from the spot where I had stood, and we hurtled along in the darkness towards Lenox.

“So where are you going?” There was something like drunken hilarity in the sound of the question.

I told them.

They looked at each other and laughed. Or maybe they chuckled. Maybe they guffawed. Maybe they roared over the misguided hope of my statement. That was the moment at which I peered into the dark and its meaning became one of finality.

When they got over the conspiratorial giddiness of what they were about to do, the boy who wasn’t driving said, looking at the road ahead of him,

“Oh, we’re not gonna take you home.”

A strange calm came over me. The lush shadowy hills now seemed eerily silent, the trees and sky seemed to be careening above me. The unlit soft blackness of this country road in the Berkshires surrounded me like a tunnel into eternity, the last ride of my life. As the car rushed forward in the dark, I found myself considering that this was the night my life would end, in this particular way, on this road, with these two boys driving towards Lenox on some random night.

Main Street appeared, and then disappeared. We drove right past the old boarding house where I was staying, I looked at it helplessly as we drove to the very end of Main Street and then took an exit onto the highway.

Violence doesn’t announce itself in advance. You are riding in the presidential motorcade with the top down, waving to adoring crowds up to the instant that the back of your head is blown off and blood spatters all over your wife’s stockings. You can be giving an inspirational speech about having seen the other side of the mountain, about doing the will of God, and the next day you are done giving speeches forever. You can be walking down the street and be felled by 67 rounds fired into a crowd of student protestors carrying nothing more dangerous than an armful of books.

Or you can be protesting the death of Charles Evers and his wife in Jackson, Miss.; and you will be no more and no less dead than anyone in Ohio would be when the local police open fire and pepper the dormitory with bullet holes. But

what you will be more of at a black university in Jackson, or on a dark highway just outside of Lenox, is forgotten.

Four students died at Kent State, in May of 1970. Nine were wounded, some seriously. They all began their day assuming they'd live a long life. Some were done with their lives by afternoon.

As we turned onto the highway, I felt an increase in my doom, if doom can be a thing of greater or lesser proportions.

The boy who wasn't driving, who I recall had short dark hair, told his friend to pull over onto the shoulder of the road. Then, this dark-haired young man turned around and looked at me for the first time since I'd gotten into the car. I must have looked concerned.

"We're not going to hurt you," he said, with some small amount of irony. "We just want to make love to you."

There was more laughter of some kind. I broke down and cried.

My defense in life has been to be matter-of-fact in the face of pain.

And though I was crying, I had a serious question for them: how would it be possible, I inquired, to make love to someone they didn't even know?

I think they were stunned.

There, on the side of the highway, I was asking them, in all seriousness, to offer an explanation of why they were doing what they were doing and I also was begging them not to. For a reason I will never know for sure, the dark-haired boy was stopped short. He looked at his friend and said:

"Turn the car around."

He jumped into the back seat with me. He put his arm around my shoulder and gently wiped some tears from my cheek, as if this was really what he would have wanted to do all along, had he thought it possible. He spoke to me as if I were his high school sweetheart, upset by some careless thing he'd said, or some forgotten date. He was now the supplicating one, tenderly declaring he was sorry and that he didn't want me to cry. And he was completely sincere; amazed, no doubt, that from an intended act of violence by the side of a road, he had ended up with his arm around a girl in the back seat of his car.

We drove off the highway and returned to town. I sat in back, laughing, all the more sweetly because of the recent tears and my reprieve. I was lucky. I had another chance to take a shot at life. We stopped to pick up my friend at the boarding house and went to the local diner in Lenox. It was a double date. While somewhere bugles played taps for the recently fallen, we sat at a booth, ordered hamburgers and cokes, and let go of what had happened – our bad history – which was less than an hour long. We put a song on the jukebox, something yearning and forlorn.

Boat India (photo)

Adam Fujita

Artist's Bio

Adam Fujita is a Bay Area native who has been an actor and an artist for many years. He is a performance studies student at ESC and is looking forward to graduate school after he leaves Empire State College. His works can be seen at adamkfujita.com.

Artist's Statement

I travelled to India with my wife last summer to go to a friend's Hindu wedding. We were in Varanasi in the north and went to see a performance on the Ganges River. This was one moment of the millions that are always flirting past you in India. Point your camera in any direction and you can be inspired.



Boat India (photo), Adam Fujita

The Changeup (short story/fiction)

Lisa Nicoll

Author's Bio

Most recently, Lisa Nicoll has written the book, lyrics and music for The Dove, an original musical exploring the effects of war on the interior lives of veterans and their families. The Changeup is her first published short story. She lives in Brooklyn.

Michael “Nettie” Antonetti and Raymond Presto Jr. barely stood a chance. Nettie: tall, athletic, an only child with a doting, gentle mother and a charismatic father who was a professional baseball player, currently pitching for the Dodgers. Not only food on the table, but flowers in the vases. Not only flowers in the vases, but white roses and pink cherry blossoms, cultivated by Mrs. Antonetti herself, in the back yard of the house they owned.

Ray lived in an apartment. The parlor floor of a two-story walk-up on a street the Prospect Expressway exited onto. It would be hard if you were Ray not to draw comparisons between your family and your best friend's. Ray: short, swarthy, the second of two boys, with a pale and weary mother and a father who was a butcher in a neighborhood three subway stops away.

They met on the playground when Nettie was 4 and Ray was 3. They played well together as their mothers watched from the bench. “Be nice if this could last,” Mrs. Presto would say, tucking hairs into her kerchief. Mrs. Antonetti would smile warmly, but, not being of the same mind as Mrs. Presto, would then only take a deep breath and let it out slowly.

Her husband, Ray's father, had begun acting peculiar where the Antonettis were concerned. He didn't like them, plain and simple, he said. What kind of father leaves his son to be raised

by the mother? I don't care if it's the Dodgers or the Pope himself payin' your wages, a real man takes a real job and raises his boy to be a man. The last time Nettie came over for supper, her husband had made fun of the boy and his father.

“Say, Nettie. How's your old man?”

“He's fine, sir.”

“What's that?”

Nettie cleared his throat, put down his fork, and sat up straight. “He's fine, sir.”

Ray Senior chuckled and looked at his son. “That's not what I hear.”

Mrs. Presto could see the veins in Ray Junior's neck contract. He kept his eyes down and reached for his glass of milk. And like a wrecking ball, Ray Senior's fist pounded it out of his hand. It smashed when it hit the floor, splashing milk and scattering glass to the corners of the kitchen. Mrs. Presto cried out. Ray Junior froze. And Mr. Presto pointed at Nettie.

“Now that's a reflex. Your old man lost the game for Brooklyn last week. How's he expect to play in the majors with a changeup like that?” He mustered up his best Desi Arnaz as he cut a piece of meat off his T-bone and leaned in toward Nettie. “Lucy, you got some 'splainin' to do.” He smiled. He had gristle in his teeth. He turned to Ray Junior.

“Clean that shit up, boy. And get your friend to help.”

On the day their sons’ relationship would throw its first major curve, there had been great gusts of wind in every direction. No one thought too much of the tornado warning, as this was Brooklyn, and tornadoes didn’t touch down in Brooklyn in 1955. The boys of the neighborhood had gathered at the rotary that marked the southwest corner of Prospect Park. Tarred over, it made the perfect ring for practicing bike-riding tricks. This day, they were riding their bikes into the gusts, hands-free. The challenge was to stay suspended for as long as possible. Like fledgling hawks learning to ride the thermals, they plunged, headlong, headstrong, into the gale force. Mothers’ voices were carried in all sorts of directions on these wild winds, and the boys simply could not make them out.

“Was that your mommy calling?”

“I didn’t hear nuthin’.”

“Sounded like yours. Sounded like she said your bottle was ready.”

The slightly more sensible of the group slowly began drifting home. These were, coincidentally, the boys who were losing the balance game.

“This is boring” was their exit. Nettie, encouraged by his father to think on his own, to heed his intuition, especially on the mound, decided to pack it in, too. The winds were picking up, the streets were emptying out, and the sky was darkening.

“C’mon, Ray, let’s go. It’s no fun anymore, with everybody gone.”

“You can go,” Ray said. “But I ain’t no baby. I’m stayin’. Besides, my pop’s at work till 11.”

“Well, what about your mom? It’s getting pretty dark.” Nettie ducked as a thick branch flew horizontally over their heads.

“What are you, afraid? C’mon, just try one more balance. Then we’ll go.”

Nettie suddenly couldn’t hear Ray over the pitch of the wind. “What?” he called, and then, “Hey – what is that?”

“Whoo-HEEE!” Ray hollered.

“It sounds like a train, Ray. I don’t think it’s a real train ...” They had been warned of this strange whistle in assembly, in science class, in math, in gym, even. Everyone was talking about the whistle and the hail. If they heard the whistle or saw the hail, they were supposed to go underground. Or at least get in a doorway. “Ray, COME ON!” Nettie was shouting his throat raw, but Ray didn’t hear him.

For the first time in his short life, Ray’s eyes were not downcast. His whole face was tilted up like a wolf at full moon, and his eyes were wide open, and Nettie didn’t realize that it was this fact that was scaring him more, even, than the winds.

“Ray, knock it off! Don’t you hear that?”

Ray typically held his chin up and angled to the side, but his gaze always remained on the floor, on the toes of his own shoes. “Spittin’ image of your father,” is what neighborhood people would say to him. To strangers, he seemed defiant and bold. To Nettie, he just looked how he looked, and to see him look so different gave Nettie the feeling that he was in the presence of a stranger.

“Ray, what are you doing? Come on!”

“Who-HEEEEE!” Ray sang, insistent as a tea kettle boiling over, but Nettie couldn’t hear him. He could only see Ray’s bared teeth, as his face contorted into a smile to produce the long “e” sound.

“Ray!”

“What? It’s rain, Nettie. It’s just rain.”

“But there’s a whistle, and they said the rain could change to hail in, like, a second.” He pointed to the sky. “It’s changing.”

“NETTIE. HAIL IS JUST RAIN. JESUS.” Ray let out another howl, directly into Nettie’s ear.

“Ray, it’s not just rain, and it’s coming! It’s coming!” Nettie jumped as a tricycle was dragged across the pavement by an invisible hand. The sound reminded him of the chain link gate at the field, where it scraped against the upheaved concrete only much worse, and the trike was coming straight at them. When he jumped up to clear it, he used his right leg to kick it behind him, and away from Ray. As soon as he did, he thought he should have let it hit Ray. Then he’d be off his bike.

“What are you doing? What’s wrong with you, Ray?” he shouted, but Ray didn’t hear him. All Ray could hear was the symphony of disorder that was holding him up. He let go of the handlebars and screeched out another “Who-EEEE!”

At that, Nettie made a decision. Nettie’s intuition – the part of him he relied on when letting the ball go – made a decision. And Nettie’s training allowed him to obey it. “Sorry, man, but I gotta do this.”

He kicked the back tire out from under Ray and grabbed Ray from behind, to catch him when he fell. He used his arms as hooks, slid them under

Ray’s armpits, and locked his fingers behind Ray’s neck. He had watched Dominic, an older boy at his school, use this move in a fight to subdue his opponent.

Ray began kicking, screaming, and biting. Nettie had not expected biting, and felt in over his head. Then a horn blew and the sky opened. But rain didn’t fall, rocks did. *Hail*, Nettie and Ray thought, together.

A horn blew again. Nettie and Ray turned. Mr. Presto was pulled up alongside them in his car, his face the purplish red of fresh ground chuck. “What in the hell are you doin’ to my son? Why, you little punk.”

Nettie froze. “Sir ... ,” he began, not knowing how to finish what he might say to Ray’s hulking, red-faced father.

“Get in the car. The both o’ yuz.”

“Are you kiddin’ me? Are you *kiddin’* me?” Mr. Presto stepped on the gas before Nettie had the back door fully closed. The screech the tires made matched the whistle, only sounded less benevolent to Nettie, and more familiar to Ray. *The wind at least is nature*, Nettie thought, and he began praying harder than he had ever prayed before, that God would please let him stay alive, first, and that his mother was okay, second. He usually prayed for his mother first, but this day, hoped God would overlook his selfishness. If he wasn’t even alive, he couldn’t pray for his mother, he reasoned.

In the back seat of Mr. Presto’s ’47 Chevy sedan, dirt-caked and blood-stained from deliveries, Ray nudged Nettie gently on the ankle with his own drenched and dirt-caked shoe. The winds pushed the car side to side while branches, sneakers and garbage rained upon them from all angles. Nettie looked up and saw the old Ray again – lids down, chin up – and Ray jerked

that chin, only enough for Nettie to understand, in his father's direction. Then he rolled his eyes – revealing a little bit of new Ray, eyes-not-downcast-Ray – and with his pointer finger at his own temple, drew circles, the universal sign for crazy. Nettie smiled and turned his own gaze down at the floor. Mr. Presto was spending a lot of time looking in the rear-view mirror.

“Hey, Pop, what about our bikes?” Ray shouted over the howling storm and blaring car horn, which Mr. Presto had taken to leaning on. Nettie couldn't believe the guts Ray had.

“Gone,” Mr. Presto yelled back. It seemed to make him happy to say that. Mad, and happy.

“Tomorrow,” Nettie mouthed through clenched teeth, eyes still very, very downcast. “We'll look for them tomorrow. For now, please shut up.”

“I mean, unless your folks wanna spring for two, seein' as how you thought it would be funny to beat the shit outta my kid and his property in the midst of a national weather crisis. Look at me when I speak to you, boy.”

He barked that out at Nettie, who had never been barked at before, and had never gotten used to adults cursing, especially in front of kids. Especially at kids. Nettie knew Ray's father wasn't like his father, and got the feeling he didn't like many people at all, but still, he had never accused Nettie of something. And Nettie had, up until this moment, never been wrongly accused.

“But Sir, I – ”

“You talkin' back to me, boy? Hey, Ray Junior, tell me he ain't talkin' back to his elders.”

“No, Sir, he ain't.” Ray shook his head and rolled his eyes at Nettie. His father couldn't hear him over the winds, but Nettie got the feeling it wouldn't have changed things much if he could.

“You hear me? I'm talkin' to you, Junior!” Ray's father grabbed a mostly-empty bottle of Pabst Blue Ribbon he had been balancing between his legs and threw it over the seat at his young boy's head. “You answer you father when I speak to you!” The bottle hit Ray above his left eye, and when it did, the warm beer and spittle that was mixed up inside spilled out and covered his lips. Ray spat on the car floor. He looked at Nettie and said, “Great aim,” to try to make him laugh.

Nettie's eyes stung from the odors in the car and from trying not to cry, and at this moment, his intuition was instructing him to take an action his training didn't support. A metal trash can crashed onto the hood of the car and the boys were tossed to the floor.

“Jump out of the car. Get out of here,” his intuition told him, loud and clear. “There are no other cars on the road. You know how to fall. You'll roll. Slowly start opening the door now, while he's making noise.”

But parents, you obey. And dangerous situations, you assess. And parents and danger had never met in his experience, in all 11 years of it. A tree came down then, causing Mr. Presto to brake and veer. The boys' heads knocked together. “I said look at me, boy!” he yelled again, at whom, the boys didn't know. Dozens of empty beer bottles clanged into each other on the floor as Mr. Ray Presto Senior sped up and slammed on the brakes, again and again.

“He always drives like this,” Ray shouted to Nettie. “It's fine.”

But it wasn't fine at all, not to Nettie. "Pitch yourself out of the car. Pitch yourself out of the dangerous situation." His intuition was as relentless as the storm.

It felt like bases loaded, bottom of the ninth, a tied game, a full count, him pitching, and a known faker at bat. There was this kid Tommy who, everybody knew, spent all his time figuring out ways to get hit by pitchers. That was his game. That was how he got on base – by mean tricks, by forcing an error on the other team, by *lying*. And the thing was, he was good at it.

Nettie's intuition suddenly had his father's voice. "What do you want to do here, Nets?"

I want to check my catcher for the signal.

"That's right. He's your partner, not the batter. You're playing catch with the catcher. That guy with the bat isn't even invited to the party. Now, what kind of throw does your catcher want to catch?"

"I don't have a catcher, Pop. I'm in a car, and I don't have a catcher. It's worse than having Marty Pacziek for catcher." Marty Pacziek was a terrible catcher. He never learned his batters, and he got the signals mixed up.

"No such thing as a bad catcher. Only a bad connection, and that's on both your heads. Never blame a poor pitch on a weak catcher. The ball is in your mitt, pitcher."

"So what?"

"Nettie. Who's the best catcher of all time?"

"Roy Campanella, easy."

"So, he's your catcher."

This is a lesson Nettie failed to grasp when his father first offered it. But crouched on the bloody floor of Mr. Presto's '47 Chevy, he heard it and he grasped it like it was the last ball of the game. He remembered, then, one last thing his father said on the topic of bad catchers.

"You're the pitcher, Nets. It's your game. You put whoever's face you want to see behind that catcher's mask. Heck – no matter who your catcher is, you might want to ask yourself what Roy Campanella would suggest you throw to shut this game down."

Nettie and Ray turned and looked at each other. Their eyes wide open, they mouthed "Sorry" and shook their heads. Nettie meant "Sorry I stopped you when you were balancing." Ray meant "Sorry I got you into trouble."

And then Nettie, whose palm had been resting on the handle since his intuition first told him to put it there, heard the whistle loud and clear, like a coach's. He looked out the window and saw flying debris and rocky rain. He closed his eyes and gripped the handle tighter. He looked at Ray beside him and shouted, "Campanella!" He grabbed the back of Ray's head the way he had seen his own pop grab the back of Campanella's when they had a very secret strategy to discuss, and he spoke into his ear. "Roy Campanella. You can be Roy Campanella. I can pitch us out of this game. Do you want to be Campy?"

Ray didn't understand why Nettie was talking about playing right now, and smacked his hand from his head. "What are you, crazy?"

And then Nettie, whose hair was on end just like his pop's was whenever he pitched to the Cardinals, turned from Ray and faced the door. He did what his father instructed, conjured Campy behind the plate, on the sidewalk of Prospect Park Southwest. He could feel his

friend tug on his shirt, but he didn't look back. He was in the zone. About to let go of the pitch. Watching for the cue from Campanella. Mr. Presto hit the gas and hit the brakes, and hit the gas and hit the brakes. There's the rhythm.

Campy raised an eyebrow. *You got it? 'Cause here it comes again.* And it did. *That's it.* Campy signaled for a changeup. *Let it go,* he said with a nod and a punch to his glove. And then Nettie pushed the door open and let himself fly.

From *As I Lay Me Down to Sleep* (art)

Grace Mateo

Artist's Bio

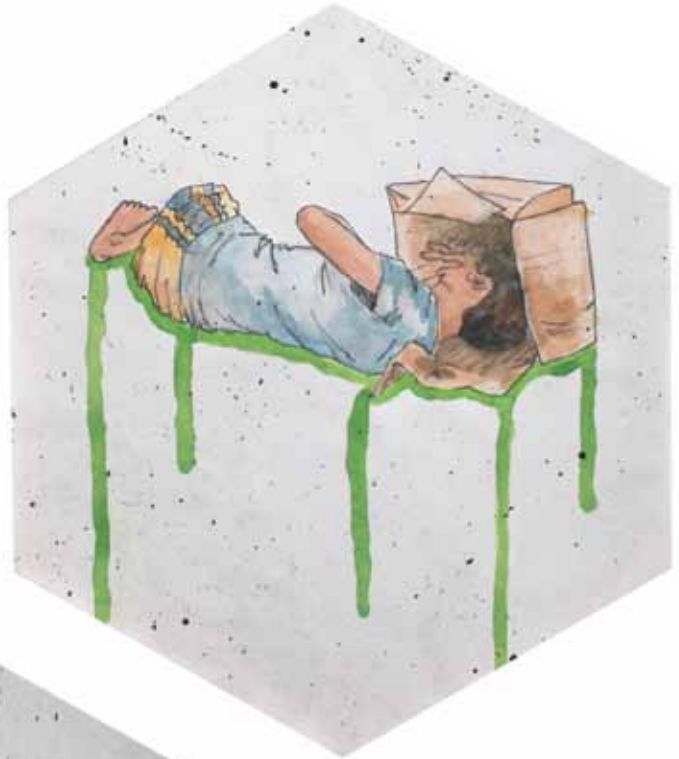
Grace Mateo is completing an interdisciplinary B.A. with a concentration in visual arts and arts management at Empire State College. Her goal is to own and run a gallery.

Artist's Statement

These works bring attention to the often overlooked issue of child homelessness. I extend the feeling of innocence by creating ethereal sleeping children with watercolors, while highlighting their importance through the use of solid ink outlines. The *As I Lay Me Down to Sleep* series is based upon research of gay teen runaways.



Sleeping Girl (art), Grace Mateo



**Box Boy (art),
Grace Mateo**



Sleeping Boy (art), Grace Mateo



Whole Art (art), Grace Mateo

Mimi, Mrs. Kiwi and King Lear (a one-act play/drama)

Lester Thomas Shane

Author's Bio

Lester Thomas Shane came to ESC as a working theater professional with extensive acting, directing and writing credits. Currently, he is on the faculty at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, the New York Film Academy and Pace University. Rather than radically altering his career path, his studies grant him the opportunity to explore a greater depth and breadth of knowledge, which he believes will provide him with a richer experience of the world and self that he can integrate into his work.

Artist's Statement

In Shakespeare's tragic masterpiece, *King Lear*, the aging king decides to divide his kingdom among his three daughters. He tests them by asking each how much she loves him. Goneril and Regan flatter him but Cordelia, Lear's youngest and favorite daughter, remains silent, saying no words can express her love. Lear flies into a rage and disowns her. The French king marries her nonetheless.

Goneril and Regan treat Lear abysmally. He flees their houses accompanied by his most loyal servant, a fool, and Kent, a nobleman. Meanwhile, an elderly nobleman, Gloucester, is tricked by his illegitimate son, Edmund, into believing that his legitimate son, Edgar, is trying to kill him. Fleeing the manhunt, Edgar disguises himself as a mad beggar.

For befriending Lear, Gloucester is accused of treason. He gets blinded, and, guided by his disguised son, ends up near Dover where Lear also has been brought. There, a French army, led by Cordelia, lands to save her father. The English reach Dover, and capture Lear and Cordelia. Cordelia is executed and Lear finally dies from grief while holding her corpse.

I wrote *Mimi, Mrs. Kiwi and King Lear* as my final project for the Winter/Summer Institute Residency, "Would You Still Love Me if You Knew?" Using theatrical techniques, we explored illness and perception, constantly bringing our own experiences into the creation of our work.

My mother had dementia. Observing her illness helped me understand Lear's character. His paranoia, jealousy and rage are classic symptoms of dementia. Exploring this connection felt right for the work we were doing in the residency. As my mother's illness progressed, she no longer recognized herself in the mirror. During one of my visits, as we entered the elevator in her building, she looked at the mirror on the back wall and introduced me to her friend, Mrs. Kiwi.

Lear's lines are Shakespeare's.

The set is the lobby of an apartment building. Two elevators, Number One and Number Two, are center stage. Standing in front of Number One, MIMI, a small woman in her late 70s, flips through the mail. She wears a powder blue running suit.

Elevator One's bell dings. The doors open and MIMI gets on. We can see into the elevator and see the mirrored back wall. In the mirror, we see her reflection. The doors close.

Elevator Two's bell dings. The doors open and KING LEAR and THE FOOL get off.

LEAR: Are the horses ready?

FOOL: Come, N'uncle.

THEY exit.

The doors of Elevator One are scrim and the lights come up inside Elevator One and we see MIMI and her reflection in the mirror. At first she stands with her back to the mirror still looking at the mail.

MIMI: Bills. Bills. And another Publisher's Clearing House Sweepstakes. Max must be crazy the way he keeps entering these.

(SHE turns to her reflection and speaks to herself)

What about your husband? Does he do this? I like to play the scratch offs. Max says the sweepstakes is at least free. Free? We subscribe to Time, Prevention, Kiplingers, Fortune, Consumer Reports and Money. The scratch off's cost a dollar. And, I've won. Many times. Many times. Five dollars. Ten dollars. Once, I even won 500. I always send half to my son. I tell him, "We won." So when I play, it's not just for me. Did you ever meet my son? I'm not sure if

you did. He lives in New York but comes to visit all the time. I'm just not sure if you met him on one of his trips. He's a good boy.

The elevator dings

My floor. Bye-bye. Say hello to your husband for me.

The interior lights go out.

Elevator One opens. MIMI steps off. The doors close behind her. She looks to the left and then to the right. Confused. She presses the call button. The elevator dings and the doors immediately open. MIMI steps back on. She stares forward as the doors close in front of her.

Inside Elevator Two. LEAR and THE FOOL.

FOOL: Thou should'st not have been old till thou had been wise.

LEAR: O, Let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven! Keep me in temper: I would not be mad!

Elevator Two dings and the doors open LEAR and THE FOOL step off. Elevator One dings and the doors open and MIMI steps off. She looks at them as they walk off. She shakes her head confused. She waits for Elevator One to reopen, gets on, and immediately begins speaking to her reflection.

MIMI: Mrs. Kiwi! Nice to see you! Did you see those two? Did they just move in? I don't think I ever saw them before. Funny looking. The old man seemed to be upset. Do you know him? Do I know him? I get so confused lately. (slapping her forehead) It just doesn't work right some days.

The interior light goes out. Elevator One dings, the doors open and MIMI steps off.

THE FOOL enters the stage area.

MIMI: Didn't I just see you downstairs?
Do you live on this floor? I'm sorry. Have
we met? Mimi. Mimi Reichman. 5R. I think.
I get confused.

FOOL: And I am a fool.

MIMI: Don't say that. You seem like a very
nice man.

FOOL: I am the King's fool.

MIMI: Oh, you work for Mr. King? Is that his
name? I don't think I met him either. Did you
just move into the building? Please forgive me
if I don't remember. I forget things. I have a girl
who works for me. Cordelia. A lovely girl. My
best friend, really. She helps me remember. I
would never call her a fool. I don't know what
I'd do without her.

LEAR enters

LEAR (to FOOL): How now my pretty knave?

MIMI: You must be Mr. King

FOOL (correcting her): Lear.

LEAR: Does any here know me? This is not
Lear. Does Lear walk thus? Speak thus?
Where are his eyes? Who is it that can tell
me who I am?

FOOL: Lear's shadow

MIMI: I have those days where it feels like
I must be someone else. I look in the mirror
and I have no idea who that person is. Well,
I need to get going. It was lovely meeting you,
Mr. ... King?

FOOL: Lear.

MIMI: You're Mr. Lear?

FOOL: No, I'm the Fool. He's the King.

MIMI : That's what I said. Mr. King. Isn't that
what I said?

LEAR listens confused.

LEAR: O, Fool, I shall go mad.

FOOL: Let us withdraw, t'will be a storm.

*Elevator One dings and opens. The FOOL
gets on.*

MIMI: Come by anytime for coffee. 5R.
Reichman.

*The elevator doors close. MIMI exits. LEAR
wanders off in the opposite direction.*

*The interior lights of Elevator One come on.
Inside, The FOOL, and Mrs. Kiwi (in the
mirror) face forward in the customary elevator
riding stance.*

MRS. KIWI: Have you worked for him for a
long time?

*The FOOL's eyes dart side to side wondering
where the voice came from.*

MRS. KIWI: Yes. It's me. Mrs Kiwi.

FOOL: Aren't you just her reflection?

MRS. KIWI: Are you just his?

FOOL: No. I do profess to be no less than I
seem; to serve him truly that will put me in trust;
to love him that is honest; to converse with him
that is wise, and says little; to fear judgment; to
fight when I cannot choose; and to eat no fish.

MRS. KIWI: Fancy talk. Doesn't make you any more real.

Or any less. But staying away from fish is sometimes a very smart thing. I don't care what the doctors say.

You think I'm not real. But you're talking to me. Does that make you crazy? Or a real fool?

Mimi talks to me. I listen. Isn't that real? When you look in a mirror, who do you see? Is that really you? And who does the you in the mirror see?

FOOL: More shadows.

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more; it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

MRS. KIWI: Wrong play. Wrong king. I may not be real but I know what play I'm in.

The elevator dings. The doors open and LEAR gets on.

FOOL: How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?

LEAR: You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave: Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears do scald like moulten lead.

MRS. KIWI: Sir, do you know me?

LEAR: You are a spirit, I know: when did you die?

The elevator dings. The doors open. MIMI gets on.

MIMI: Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight? I will not swear these are my hands: let's see;

FOOL: O, look upon me And hold your hands in benediction o'er me:

LEAR: Me thinks I should know you, Do not laugh at me; For, as I am a man, I think this lady To be my child, Cordelia.

MRS. KIWI: And so I am, I am.

MIMI looks at MRS. KIWI and is about to ask her a question, or correct her. Instead, she considers the possibility and accepts it for what it's worth.

MIMI: Am I in France?

MRS. KIWI: In your own kingdom.

MIMI: I fear I am not in my perfect mind.

LEAR: Pray, do not mock me: I am a very foolish fond old man.

The elevator dings. The doors open.

FOOL: Will't please your highness walk?

LEAR: You must bear with me: (to all of them) Pray you now, forget and forgive: I am old and foolish.

LEAR and FOOL leave.

MRS. KIWI (after a long pause): We are such stuff as dreams are made on.

MIMI: Wrong play.

The elevator doors close. The lights fade.

End.

Beauty of Vision (art)

Jenn Crissey

Artist's Bio

Jenn Crissey is a student at Empire State College in the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies with a focus on art education and the process of creativity. She is “focusing on my own path as an artist while concentrating on how to align this with my teaching.” Crissey has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Buffalo State College in Art Education. She resides in Buffalo where she works at 464 Gallery and as a substitute teacher.

Artist's Statement

I create artwork because it is my passion and I love to paint. I began drawing and painting at a young age and it has always been a part of my life, and when it is not, there is always something missing.

The artwork that I create is closely based on the many ideas that I find in my studies at Empire State. I utilize color and shape with layering to manipulate images into creative pieces. My main focus is how we see things, our perception, along with the study of the eye and the brain specifically. I create art that does not look like something we have seen before. I want to envision all the images we hold in our minds and what that looks like on the canvas. The arts are a process of questioning and the seeing comes before words. There is never just one view and we see art in the context of a multitude of things. Surroundings and life situations have an impact on how we understand and

view art. We bring many things to how we see. My artwork looks into the arts and cognition and how we create in order to change our perceptions. It represents the many ideas and functions that occur within the eye and the brain while viewing art and creating artwork. There are endless possibilities to art and the use of imagination shows us that the arts enrich our lives and take us from the repetitious monotony of the everyday.



Beauty of Vision (art), Jenn Crissey

Woman's Shame, Societies Gain: A Case of Japanese Sex Slave Trade (critical review/essay)

Kinyofu Mteremeshi-Mlimwengu

Author's Bio

Kinyofu Mteremeshi-Mlimwengu trains women in wholistic birth and parenting issues, and also on life and health issues. Hundreds of families have been touched by her passionate support of their birth and beyond experiences. She is founder of Choose to Evolve™ for personal and professional development and author of Empower Up, a hands-on collection of daily empowerment messages with an interactive journal for those wanting more out of life. Kinyofu is a writer for the Brooklyn Crime Examiner on sex trafficking in Brooklyn and is finishing up her degree in Human Development with a concentration in women's advocacy in at Empire State College.

Up until recently, many women were wholly dependent on men for financial stability. Lacking jobs, financial security and political backing, they often became victims of various types of oppressions. Feeling that women needed guidance and structure, husbands would take over the father's role as protector and disciplinarian, sometimes crossing the line into abuser. Facing economic difficulties, families in struggling countries or communities might cross another boundary by sacrificing the women's sexuality as a means to an end. Because it is common knowledge that some men are willing to pay for sex, a woman may either choose to, or be forced to, commodify her sexuality for the pleasure of the power holders. In the global economy, women's futures are negotiated in exchange for financial benefit of others, leaving them further oppressed. Driven by unequal power dynamics between genders as expressed through social norms, exploitation constitutes an intersection of abuses that range from personal to social to economic to sexual. The results are that economies worldwide benefit from free labor obtained at the expense of the oppressed – in the case of this study, women and their sexual labor.

Between the 1860s and the 1930s, an entire culture of exploitation of women was unfolding around the world. Women experienced limited rights which fell in line with the belief that education and financial independence for women was impractical. In America, women were likened to children with simple minds that needed male guidance. Many women were prevented from working and acquiring education and were subject to male rule. In the early 1860s, black women, as slaves, were chattel property by way of the law and were treated in many unjust ways. Later during post-slavery, black women received slightly less abuse, but abuse just the same. American women in general were not granted the right to vote until 1920 (50 years after African-American men). In Europe, not only was it customary for all European women to get married, it was critical for their survival. Also, any property that the woman owned was passed on to her husband upon her marriage. Globally, human trafficking became a growing asset for the pornography, bride trafficking, prostitution, domestic, and farm labor industries. All countries were similarly affected by human trafficking – especially areas where women were the most vulnerable and facing poverty and/or conflict.

With this in mind, this paper will focus on the experience of sexually trafficked women in the historical period surrounding World War II in Japan.

In Japan as in most if not all other countries, girls have traditionally been considered less significant than male members of the family – a situation which persists today – and, therefore, must be prepared to do what is best for their family and community (Matsumoto & Juang, 2008). In *Sandakan Brothel No. 8*, written by Yamazaki Tomoko (and translated with historical reflections by Karen Colligan-Taylor), Yamazaki describes sex trafficking in Japan. Colligan-Taylor reinforces Matsumoto & Juang's argument by saying that Japanese women were required to follow the commands of their fathers first, then husbands, and ultimately their sons.

Yamazaki introduces us to the *karayuki-san*, which is a term that means Japanese women who work abroad. It literally means “going to China” and with the progression of time, also came to mean “going to Korea, Southeast Asia or Siberia,” but more importantly, it signified a (Japanese) woman who is an emigrant prostitute. What follows is a condensed history of prostitution in Japan and the unfolding of the story of a Japanese *karayuki-san* named Yamakawa Saki.

Women-for-Hire, a Historical Perspective

As early as 1185, due to traffic between two major Japanese capitals, organized prostitution evolved to accommodate traveling men. Between 1378 and 1573, prostitution gained official recognition by way of the Bureau of Prostitution's recognizing and taxing prostitutes. In the 1580s, the first “pleasure quarte” was built, followed by a series of brothels in the red-light district of Yoshiwara (present day Tokyo)

which was established in 1618. In 1872, due to international objection, a law was created to prohibit the buying and selling of human beings, but the Japanese government allotted for those whose only option was prostitution by requiring licensure. The fallout from this prohibition left many women without work but opened the doors to a group of enterprising men who willingly organized the women's transportation to another country so that they could continue to support themselves as prostitutes. The women were not charged for the passage, but based on history yet to be revealed, the men were probably remunerated, one way or another. This was the beginning of a trend of collecting and trafficking women from Japan for sale in other countries. According to Colligan-Taylor, by 1910 there were approximately 20,000 Japanese women registered as overseas prostitutes and 47,000 registered in public brothels.

It is interesting to note that the men who conducted the buying and selling of the girls usually came from the same culture and, therefore, had the propensity to know exactly how to lure the women. These men had similar low-economic backgrounds as the women, but now as traffickers or procurers, they had increasingly more financial resources. Ironically, they too were victims in the game of exploitation. As Yamakazi shares throughout her book, the belief in and need for money moved these men to exploit their own daughters, sisters and wives. This was indeed a money game. Everyone benefited except the women who were exploited. The Japanese government not being an exception, encouraged further exploitation of these women in their quest for global expansion. Where there was new territory, military presence or tourism, the presence of women-for-hire equaled financial gain for the government. Colligan-Taylor discloses that a leading Japanese statesman used the apparently lucrative economic contribution

of the karayuki-san to promote “the emigration of women as prostitutes particularly to regions undergoing rapid economic development ... their presence was influential ... in forging modern free enterprising economy (Yamazaki, 1999, p. xxii).” Japan’s competitive spirit and intense desire to catch up with the West moved them to leave other Asian countries behind during the “Abandoning Asia” era, which began in 1885. This ruling thrust “attitudes of contempt and ... aggression” toward its sister countries and allowed for the further exploitation of Asia’s lower-class women (Yamazaki, 1999, p. xxii). As a result, Korea and China, unwilling to embrace “civilization,” were caught in the middle of Japan’s imperialist moves. Along with Japan’s gain in international power came more land, more business, more men, and a need for more karayuki-san. Given the nature of the acquisition of women and the annexation of Korea and Taiwan, this demand was not hard to fulfill.

Fast forward to 1919, and we can see continued economic benefit of the Japanese government as supported by the work of the karayuki-san, who generated an economic balance despite the Chinese boycott of Japanese goods (Yamazaki, 1999). In 1920, Japan decided that the karayuki-san were no longer politically necessary and released them. According to Ringdal, this reduced supply of Japanese women created a demand for women from other places. It is important to note that the karayuki-san were, upon return to their country, left without any means for survival despite the economic gain they provided for their country. Brothel owners turned to the poor farming families in Korea and conditioned the captured women to act like Japanese women. However, with political opposition from Korea, traffickers were forced to expand their reach to “girls of Russian, Jewish or Chinese origin” (Ringdal, 2004, p. 328).

Osaki’s Story

It is during this time that Yamakawa Saki’s (respectfully called Osaki) story begins. Yamazaki Tomoko, a Japanese housewife with an interest in women’s history and the secret life of the karayuki-san, encountered Osaki, whom she realized was a former karayuki-san. Over the course of three weeks, Yamakawa conducted her unorthodox research with a series of informal and unassuming questions. Through her friendship with this 70-ish-year-old woman, Yamazaki became uniquely privileged with information about karayuki-san that is often not told from the woman’s perspective. Most karayuki-sans do not know how to read or write and are very protective of their deep, dark, personal stories. As it was, Osaki provided Yamazaki with stories of her lived experience in bits and pieces and incidentally without knowledge that she was actually being interviewed.

Osaki was the youngest of three children born to parents who were day laborers with a farming background. Her father died when she was 4 years old, leaving her family without steady income. Her older brother went to work as a live-in babysitter on a nearby farm and the mother did what work she could, but still the family struggled. Soon after, her mother married her widowed brother-in-law and moved into his home with his six children, leaving her own children behind. She rarely came to visit and ultimately her new husband influenced her to abandon her children. Osaki’s brother moved back home to take care of his sisters, but not having any money, this was a huge obstacle. At the age of 10, her older sister went to work as a maid in their village, but was soon sold overseas as a prostitute.

Before World War II, maids were not only asked to do all the housework, but to serve as sexual playthings for the amusement of the father or eldest son in the household ... [and] ... because one was expected to make personal sacrifices for the economic survival of the family and village, it was not uncommon for the most dispensable members of the family, young girls, to take jobs as maids or baby-sitters in nearby towns ... or to be sold out of the region to work in brothels or geisha houses, farms or factories. (Colligan-Taylor, 1999, p. xx)

Six years of near famine followed before it was arranged, by her brother, that Osaki, now at the age of 10, would accompany an easy going gentleman named Yoshinaka Tarozo, who would take her to work abroad. Yoshinaka told her that “every day is like a festival, you can wear nice kimono, and every day you can eat as much white rice as you want (Yamazaki, 1999, p. 53),” indicating that she would be living the good life. She and her brother agreed that this move would be good for the family. She had heard stories about girls going overseas and sending back a lot of money. The potential to be able to support her family was not only encouraging but also empowering. She was joined by her two childhood girlfriends, at her request for companionship. Yoshinaka gave each girl’s family 300 yen, and together they set off from a town near Nagasaki to North Borneo in the South Pacific Islands (1,500 miles across water on the other side of the Philippine Islands and about 900 miles from Saigon). Now in Sandakan, she and her friends worked as maids and were spared from the brothel life until the age of 13. It was on the night of their birthday, essentially, that they were forced to “take customers.” Each of the girls protested, but to no avail because their boss (Yoshinaka) would

not release them unless they paid him 2,000 yen each. Not having any money, they were trapped in Sandakan Brothel No. 8, forever in debt.

In exchange for their sexual services, they received two yen for an hour’s stay, and ten yen for a night’s stay. The money was split with Yoshinaka, who paid for their room and food. The girls paid for the necessary kimonos, accessories, toiletries and cosmetics, which cost them about ten yen a month. They also were responsible for their weekly doctors’ visits at 10 yen per visit, with a 30 yen fine if they missed a visit. Osaki realized that if she took in many customers a night, she would make more money than if she took in one overnight customer. Her intention was to make enough money to buy her freedom. Osaki revealed that on her worst night, she took in 30 customers. The girls were told that if they got sick and couldn’t work, they wouldn’t get paid, and if they borrowed money, it would only increase their debt. Additionally, if they got pregnant, they would have to work up until their last month. Oftentimes, the babies were given away after birth.

They were trapped in this lifestyle for an undetermined amount of time without any real control over their account balances as their boss managed the numbers. Also, the girls never went to school and couldn’t read, write or do arithmetic. From her earnings, Osaki made sure to send some money home to her brother “so he can be a decent man,” she said to Yamazaki. After being sold again a couple of times, her luck changed when one of her clients took her in as his concubine. Mr. Home, an Englishman, paid her 1,000 yen a month and gave her relative freedom. She suspected that she was a front to cover for his affair with a married English woman, which was fine with Osaki because there were less demands placed on her as compared to other concubines. Over time, Osaki was able to send at least 1,600 yen

to her brother. He, in turn, built a house and got married. At the age of 20, Osaki returned home for a visit, with the financial support of Mr. Home. Upon arrival, she was not properly welcomed by her brother, nor the community. The shame of what she did abroad followed her. She was not made to feel comfortable even in her brother's house, the one her money had built, as both he and his wife continued to take financial advantage of her. She was an outcast in her own place of birth.

The rest of Osaki's life is quite unique, both because she was able to live past the age of 30 and because she never returned to prostitution. Thanks to her savings and her subsequent marriages (after she became broke) she was able to find support. Her first husband didn't last long because he was abusive. Her second husband, fortunately, was decent and financially responsible. Together, with their son, they moved to Manchuria and eventually moved back to Japan where Yamazaki found Osaki living as a widow, alone, and in extreme poverty.

Big Business

Osaki's story is just one representation of women's experiences around the world. Historically and presently, civilian and military men have satisfied their sexual appetites in numerous ways. During WWII, women classified as "foreign nationals" played the role of "comfort women" and serviced the Japanese-military troops. Colligan-Taylor asserts that it was known in the West as "legalized military rape of ... women on a scale ... previously unknown in history." She adds that "approximately 139,000 women were forced to satisfy the sexual needs of Japanese military troops" (Colligan-Taylor, 1999, p. xxv). Carmen M. Argibay reports that these "comfort stations" were instituted only after a series of military rapes in surrounding neighborhoods. In response, comfort stations were established

to: 1) restore the image of the Imperial Army; 2) reduce resistance in occupied territories; 3) keep the military men disease-free; and 4) protect military secrets (the comfort women were isolated by locale and language and were essentially clueless and vulnerable.) (Argibay, 2003, p. 376 - 377).

This new recruitment process involved the old yet modern form of coercion, deceit and kidnapping. The victims were between the ages of 15 and 22, poor, believed that they were being loyal citizens going to "nurse" the warriors back to health, or were prisoners of war (Argibay, 2003, p. 378). Most women were from Korea, but also China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaya, Vietnam and the East Indies. During this time, the military felt that it would not be good for the morale of Japanese soldiers to view their Japanese "sisters" performing such degrading work (Yamazaki, 1999). How ironic, as just a few years ago, they threw their "sisters" into the ring for other men to use and abuse. Ringdal states that Japanese soldiers, who were largely isolated from women, held the belief that not only was it good practice but also good luck to have sex before combat – especially if the soldiers were virgins. It was thought that a soldier's duty was to initiate the inexperienced young man with a visit to a brothel; it served him well as a warrior, and their witnessing his act would prove him to be good warrior stock. This is evident in their belief of a connection between sexual prowess and warrior power. With the advent of contraception and fun-loving women, soldiers, recognizing free sex, reduced their use of brothels. Soon an epidemic of soldiers were complaining of syphilis and doctors (and brothel owners) realized that the "good time girls" were carriers of infections. The clever brothel owners saw this as an opportunity to promote the safety of their brothels given government-instituted health routines that regulated the transmission

of sexually related diseases. Additionally, Japanese military authorities recognized that when the “military brothels were in place, the number of rapes declined drastically” (Ringdal, 2004, p. 328). This thinking appears to neglect the possibility that the men could be taught to tame their desires. Instead, the brother solution replaces untamed violence against women with controlled violence in the name of subjugation, a more subtle form of violence. Either way, this image depicts hegemonic male power over vulnerable women and addresses men’s desires and not women’s. The underlying theme is that women are the lesser citizens.

Each player – in the process of sexual exploitation, from the distressed families to the deceptive deal-makers, to the cunning opportunistic businessmen, to the military and the government alike – not only performs a critical role in the deconstruction of women’s sexuality, but also in the development of a particularly exploitative economic society. According to Ringdal, “by the 1920s, Asia had the largest sex industry in the world and ... the highest number of prostitutes” (Ringdal, 2004, p. 318). Colligan-Taylor adds that Thailand reported making more money in the sex trade than in any other industry. The karayuki-san proved to be good for the country and the economy by helping to expand Japanese colonization while further laying the foundation for institutionalized and government supported sex slavery. Culture being the backdrop to the construction of society, in this case it also led to the deconstruction of women’s agency in society. This example from Japan is replicated in countries globally, including the United States.

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Excerpt From *A Pool of Blood* (fiction)

Michael Freeman

Artist's Bio

Michael Freeman is grateful for the many opportunities that Empire State College has given him. He is the recipient of the Richard Porter Leach Fellowship for the Arts and the 2012 Nicholas Pekearo Endowed Scholarship for Creative Writing. "I never knew I had a talent for writing before I came to the school and my professors at Empire have really inspired and taught me to go for it." Since attending school in 2010 he has written a full-length, musical-theater piece, several short stories and essays and a full-length screenplay. "I plan to pursue writing as a profession."

Artist's Statement

In this excerpt, a woman is dreaming her death. The story of what happened to her is in the dream. This is the only way she can tell us what happened to her. The lines in quotations are her waking moments. I was inspired by surrealism. I am attempting to tell a painful story through a distinct use of imagery over a concrete narrative.

"I want you to come home."

Then she woke up and her eyes snapped up at the ceiling. She was not used to waking up this fast. A group of women in strange costumes were standing around her, their hands all over her. There was a large woman who looked more plant than human who stood at the foot of the bed, a knife with a curved blade in her hand. This tree woman took her arm, a tree branch, and cut open the bed sheet with an unexpected precision.

Then she was underwater; the ocean current was pulling her deeper and deeper. She was out of control and this seemed like a natural state. She gazed up at her reflection that refracted on the surface, her only friend there.

"Falling and falling."

Catch. A dismantled metallic object; it comes together.

This amazing feeling, the hook between her legs, her head swinging up and down. Now she's going up again. Bubbles of laughter are climbing to the surface as the ascent begins, sweet caressing on her way up and the sun waiting to smile to her on the surface.

When she rose and bobbed up and lay adrift in the flotsam of body parts her nipples were red as roses and her skin was purple and blue. This was something in the making. Where was the fisherman? Couldn't he see her in the water? He never left her alone. An amputated hand appeared in the air above her. It looked alien.

The hand nudged a vacant cloud, high in the sky, which drifted toward her. She seemed to be familiar with it. She smiled about it through tears of laughter as the cloud hovered lightly above her. It dropped down like a coin in a casino slot machine and wrapped around her body with a heavy force. As it melted, she lost

all of her breath and her body quaked and turned pale, a disappointment – she looked much better in blue and purple. She looked up after the trembling ended and the sky was the same solid color; it promised a life that was very open and forever.

Fifty-Ninth (photo)

Taylor Monique Hudnell

Artist's Bio

Taylor Monique Hudnell earned her Bachelor of Science degree with a concentration in fashion art and design from Empire State College in September 2012. She attended the Fashion Institute of Technology prior to attending Empire State College. She is well-rounded in the visual arts, with talent in drawing, painting, graphic design, printmaking, ceramics, and photography. She is currently working for a privately held, full-service real estate development, design, ownership, and management company at the World Trade Center. She plans on pursuing a Master of Arts degree in arts administration.

Artist's Statement

My photographs narrate my experiences growing up in New York City. I am inspired by the urban landscape around me. My camera has piloted me throughout the concrete jungles of Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens. It has compelled me to explore places that I never visited before, and reintroduced me to places I visit quite frequently. *Fifty-Ninth* is a special place on Roosevelt Island at the base of the Queensboro Bridge where I feel at peace as I capture the sun setting over the architectural magnificence, urban decay, fast-paced daily grind, and isolation that New York City has to offer.



Fifty-Ninth (photo), Taylor Monique Hudnell

A Tale From Waiter's Limbo (creative nonfiction essay)

Harold Machroli

Author's Bio

Harold Machroli is a 62-year-old individual who is constantly reinventing himself. Learning never ends for him, but incites continual change. He is working towards a bachelor's degree in Community and Human Services. He has plans for going on for a master's degree, and will "decide as I go what I will choose for my studies." His goal is to be able to be a help to others in recovery, whether that means from drugs, alcohol, overeating, gambling, or whatever it may be. He plays guitar, crochets, knits and makes jewelry. Creativity and creative endeavors serve as therapy for him.

After 26 years of doing volunteer work, humanitarian aid projects, and missionary work abroad, I decided to take a furlough and come back to the States for a visit. I hadn't seen my family for all those years and figured I'd better get a visit in as I wasn't getting any younger. My plan was a simple one. Take some time visiting my family, sort of like giving my last hellos and goodbyes, and then head back to Russia, the latest country I had been working in. I made it as far as New York City, renewed my visa at the Russian consulate and had one foot here and the other in Samara, Russia, a quaint town 1,000 kilometers southwest of Moscow.

I postponed my trip for a week. "Why not," I thought. My work had been my life for so many years it couldn't hurt to take a little time off for relaxation. I then turned that perfectly valid assumption into an excuse to change my mind and decide to stay here for a longer period of time. I would get a job and settle down for a while.

What I had not counted on was that my homeland was now a foreign country to me. I suffered reverse culture shock. My parents gave me some money to survive on, but I had no concrete plan on how to re-enter the

American culture. I did not know the first thing about getting a job. My work never required a resume, I didn't have one. My work experience was not that of a normal 9 to 5 job in a capitalistic-based job market I couldn't re-educate myself fast enough. My money ran out quickly and I became homeless. In my mind going home to live with my parents was not an option. They couldn't support me. Besides, living in rural central Illinois, two miles away from the nearest town of 2,000 population was not a solution. I became a member of the New York City shelter system.

That was a rough time for me, yet it did have its benefits. While living in a shelter, I qualified for special programs that offered training in computer skills, resume writing, and job interviewing skills. Within a year, I was back on my feet. I had obtained an administrative assistant position, with a good enough salary that not only allowed me to rent my own apartment, but to live comfortably. I settled down in Park Slope and shared an apartment with a charming woman from England who needed a place to stay. I had an office space that could be converted into a bedroom which proved suitable for her needs. My share of the rent was only \$350 a month. I was no longer stressed out and worried. Life was good. I was at

peace feeling that I had arrived to some state of security and stability and that my life was on an upward swing.

At the time I acquired my position at the Love Stores, a chain of health and beauty aid stores in Manhattan, a Cuban airplane burst into flames and crashed at the airport in Quito, Ecuador. I had lived and worked in Ecuador some time ago, for seven years, three of those years in Quito. It was in Quito where I experienced one of the scariest times of my life. An earthquake occurred some miles north of Guayaquil, a coastal city. Although Guayaquil was approximately 100 miles west of Quito, the tremors could be felt there. From one moment to the next what had been a peaceful existence turned into chaos. There was a huge chandelier in the living room of the house I rented. It swung back and forth very precariously like a pendulum. It was quite alarming feeling the house jolting back and forth making it almost impossible to get proper footing to escape outdoors. The week after the earthquake, there were a series of aftershocks that took my breath away. I and my companions slept only sporadically and had little appetite. Just as soon as we thought it was over, another tremor would hit, causing us to fear another possible major quake that could even be worse. To comfort ourselves and to feel somewhat safe, we slept huddled together in the living room. No fatalities occurred except for the extreme stress and fear we experienced.

Life can be like an earthquake sometimes. Security and safety are only as solid as those values one places faith in. When adversity hits, life has a way of testing our faith, provoking us to re-evaluate values and beliefs, as if to say: *Let's see what you've built your foundation on.* Life challenges us sometimes.

That's precisely what happened in December of 2005. I lost my job and the challenge began. The thought that I wouldn't bounce back and find another job speedily never occurred to me. Life threw down the gauntlet but I was not going to be defeated. I'd wake up excited, wondering what my next job would be. Eagerly, I checked out the newspapers for available work as I enjoyed my fresh cup of morning coffee. Certainly, I was qualified for almost all of the administrative assistant positions I read. Piece of cake. Email resumes, wait for responses, and schedule appointments. When they saw me dressed in an elegant new suit I bought for the occasion, who could turn me down? A new job would be mine within weeks.

Weeks turned into months. My foundation was shaken. From one moment to the next, everything in my life began to change. I'd get my hopes up for every interview that this would be the one, only to come home disappointed. The next day the cycle would start all over again. Have you ever seen the movie *Groundhog's Day*? It's about a man who wakes up to the same scene every morning and relives the same experiences from the day before, only with a slightly new twist each day. His life is stuck in a moment of time, as mine was then.

In May of 2006, the stress took a toll on me. I wasn't aware of it at that time, but early in the month there was an 8.0 magnitude earthquake near the Kingdom of Tonga. Unlike me, you probably know where that is – off New Zealand. This earthquake was a little bit stronger than the one I experienced in Ecuador, and like it, didn't do much damage and caused no reported fatalities. It did generate a tsunami that was powerful enough for Hawaii to be warned of its occurrence. Considering how strong it was, the people of the area certainly had good fortune in not suffering any major damages or losses. In retrospect, I see this event as a symbolic omen

of what was happening in my life. My body was suffering serious illness on the inside that, so far, had not caused me any apparent major damage.

I came down with a very bad cold. Theraflu, I figured, would work wonders. It didn't. Maybe Alka-Seltzer, then Nyquil? No. Someone suggested making a strong ginger tea to clear my lungs. The results: a worsened cough and twice as much mucous. Nothing worked. Sleep decided to elude me, eating was impossible, the discomfort was agonizing. Now I was worried.

One weekend, I couldn't stand it any longer. Visiting a hospital emergency room was the last thing I wanted to do, but now it seemed like the only thing I *could* do.

It was crowded. I couldn't believe how many people were there. People in wheelchairs. Mothers with babies and with children that could not sit still nor keep quiet. Didn't they know I was sick? Young men anxiously pacing up and down. Elderly men and women with sad and pain-filled faces. People angry that they had to miss their Saturday night Bingo, or whatever other evening out was planned. Everyone was extremely irritable. The pain, discomfort, annoyance, anger, and so many other emotions hung in the air and almost suffocated us. Very few chairs were vacant. We were shut off from the outside world. All of us who needed help were encapsulated in the domain of waiter's limbo. And boy did we wait! We sat there for hours wondering if we would be deemed worthy to be called into the emergency room at all.

Every time one of the nurses came out to announce the next patient's name we collectively held our breath, each one of us praying that we were going to be the one blessed with a ticket to heaven. Then, the uncalled would collectively

sigh with anguish and grimace with pain. The joy of the fortunate one who was ushered in was like a dagger plunged into our unbidden hearts.

I was too weak to hold my head up. I waited for hours but could not sit properly. I would twist and turn, trying to find a comfortable position, to no avail. Every child's cry, every complaint from a disgruntled patient, and the silent indifference of the nurses in charge added to the pain and distress. No comfort could be afforded me anywhere. My pleading with the nurses failed to bring any respite. I was banished mercilessly to my place in limbo. What was I to do? I returned to my mother's womb. I laid down on the floor and curled up in fetal position. At last, I found some measure of comfort. Six months earlier, I had been strong and confident. Now I was a helpless child curled up in the hands of fate.

The guard approached and intimidated me, saying, "You can't lie down on the floor here!"

I counterpunched, "If no one attends me immediately, I'm staying right here. Call the police and have me arrested if that's what you want."

This was the only bit of peace I could manage under the circumstances and I was determined that no one was going to rob me of it.

Not even this scene ruffled anyone's feathers. I am convinced that only the guard, those still waiting in limbo with me, and I knew it happened at all. The outside world went about its business unscathed. About an hour and a half later, still lying on the floor, I was called, attended to, and diagnosed with pneumonia. I was admitted to the hospital to get the rest I needed. I felt somewhat at ease knowing that I would be healed soon and returning to a state of normalcy.

Did I say normalcy? The course of my life was about to change. An internal earthquake had erupted without my realizing it. What I thought would be a routine stay in the hospital turned out to be anything but.

Once settled into my room, the doctor popped his head in the door.

“Have you been tested for HIV lately?”

This struck me as odd. “Why are you asking me this?”

Silence. The kind that screams at you, demanding its presence be acknowledged. Then, “Oh, it’s just a precaution, your immune system appears to be compromised.”

I did not know it at the time, but what the doctor knew was that I had PCP, a pneumonia usually found in people with cancer or with HIV/AIDS.

My preliminary test results? Positive for HIV.

I later came to know that two earthquakes occurred at the time I received my test results. One very forceful and obvious, in Java, Indonesia. It was devastating. 6,000 people were killed. About 200,000 people were left homeless. Whole towns and villages were levelled.

The other earthquake was silent, not at all obvious, and happening in my hospital room in Brooklyn, New York. It was no less devastating than the one in Java.

How does one react to this kind of news? I don’t believe my reaction was very different from the people who experienced the horrors in their beloved homeland of Indonesia. They were stunned, shocked, and left wondering what turns their lives were going to take from now on.

A newspaper reporter for The Guardian, John Sturcke, was an eyewitness to the tragedy. He reported in his May 27, 2006 article, “3,500 Dead in Java Earthquake:”

“In the hardest hit Bantul district, Subarjo, a 70-year-old food vendor, was sobbing next to his dead wife, his house completely destroyed. ‘I couldn’t help my wife ... I was trying to rescue my children, one with a broken leg and then the house collapsed. I couldn’t help my wife, he said. I have to accept this as our destiny, as God’s will’” (para 34 and 35).

In a Brooklyn hospital room, I too was agonizing over having to accept my destiny.

Looking back on that time now, I think how amazing it is that Subarjo and I were suffering similar types of fate. His challenge was an earthquake; mine was a disease that struck me like one. Both of us were going to have to re-evaluate our lives. What next? I had to get the confirmatory test results in early June, about two weeks away.

What I went through must have been similar to what those others who were struck with disaster experienced. I had to gather up the pieces of my shattered life and figure out how to put them together. I had to learn how to function in a new way. Was I strong enough to handle this at 55? Would I be able to work? What would my friends say? How was I going to relate to people? I simply couldn’t tell my mom! She was too old; it would kill her. That meant I couldn’t tell any of my family, because they would tell my mom. How long did I have left to live? Oh, you can’t imagine all the torturous thoughts that paraded through my mind. They marched on endlessly, pounding their drums and banging their cymbals as loudly as was possible. While I was salvaging my life, think what poor Subarjo must have been going through as he tried to

cope with his grief and pain, and wondered what turns his life would take, what he was going to have to do not only to survive but to embrace a new beginning without his wife.

The social worker and head nurse assured me that this was not a death sentence and that new and improved medications would keep me alive. Minimizing the seriousness of a chronic illness that could eventually kill me was not reassuring, no matter how well intentioned they were. I didn't need reassurance. Staying alive wasn't the problem. Coping and how to live was. I wonder just how much thought we put into what one goes through in a personal tragedy, whatever the cause. In a natural disaster, we become humanitarian and send aid. With friends and relatives, we try to be brave for them and hope it will inspire them not to fall into the doldrums. All I needed was an act of kindness, someone to show me that they cared even though they couldn't possibly know how I was feeling. No food, shelter, clothing or brave rhetoric would do the trick. Just a little empathy and compassion. At that time in my life that was nonexistent.

I decided I'd just wait for the confirmatory test results. I had a slim hope that this was just a bad dream and it wasn't going to be so terrible after all. I should have known better, after all, I experienced the aftershocks of an earthquake firsthand.

Two weeks later, it was time to get the results. I went back to the dreaded hospital of doom.

"OK, Doc, give it to me straight."

His reply was short, businesslike, and to the point. "You've got full-blown AIDS."

"When do I die?"

"You've got a 50 percent chance to live longer if you take your medications."

The visit was over. He went his way, and I went mine.

Again, my world was rocked. This second wave of destruction numbed me. Amazingly, my path intersected with Java again as its people, too, were struck by a subsequent earthquake, theirs happening two months later. It generated a tsunami that killed approximately 700 people and left 74,000 homeless. Among all of the major events that happened at that time, none are as significant to me as these earthquakes that occurred as I was experiencing a major upheaval in my life. The victims of the earthquakes, like me, experienced sudden change; one moment we were on top of the world, the next sick and reeling, not knowing what to expect.

After leaving his office, I went to the waiting room and sat down. I was feeling more stunned and shocked than when I received the preliminary test results two weeks earlier. *What do I do now? Who do I turn to? Time to re-evaluate. Time to make some major changes. How do I start?* Not a thought came to mind. I felt alone and it was overwhelming. I sat in that waiting room for three hours, this time voluntarily. Waiter's limbo was now a paradise of sorts.

The truth of the matter is, I was one among millions, each one of us going through the same process, each one of us experiencing a unique set of circumstances. I wonder how Subarjo fared.

Tool User, Griever and Artist (creative nonfiction)

Sara Marie Tomerlin-Hedger

Author's Bio

Sara Marie Tomerlin-Hedger studies creative writing and social action at Empire State College. Her poems have appeared in La Bloga, The Blue Guitar, and KDVIations. In 2011, she was invited to read her poetry on the France Kassing FM radio show hosted by UC Davis. She lives in Syracuse, N.Y., with her husband and son.

Like most things it started in elementary school. With a rib splitter, Miss Baker strove to separate man from animal. Children, sitting in the comfort of Freon-cooled classrooms, heard the lecture, and all the while I stared at the clock hands, inching. I was one of those kids, the ones you ask “What’s your favorite subject?” and they answer “recess” without blinking, and maybe Grandpa will chuckle like he knows something you don’t, but I wasn’t joking. I could feel the teacher’s breath from the seat in the first row, where she kept me so I wouldn’t miss a beat. I remember she said we’re different from animals, and held up her right hand, wiggling her thumb.

So clean her hand was, and it sparkled with jewelry and pink glitter polish. Her skin was as pale as turkey flesh. Her manicured nails were made up of keratin, like the horse’s hooves I rode in rodeo. Her hands were soft as tissue, all 27 bones rich with marrow, same as beef ribs.

She wrote on the blackboard working her metacarpal, flexing her dorsal tendon (not to be confused with a whale’s dorsal), a list which I have never forgotten – “tool user, griever and artist” – these things were ours alone. Tool user was cracked by the crows in big cities using cars at red lights to break open nuts (Davies). Griever

was undone by the elephants who mourn for the dead in ritualistic ways, holding exposed bones gently in trunks, weaving back and forth (like mother at Grandpa’s funeral) sending ultrasonic songs for miles (National Geographic). Yet art was ours alone, or so archeologists boasted, until a more precise method of scientific dating found that the infamous handprint cave paintings were older than first thought, and are actually from the time when Neanderthals ran Europe (Joyce). And now it’s highly likely that those hands – beautiful as they come – were not human at all.

Works Cited

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Treasures (art)

Takako Martinez

Artist's Bio

Takako Martinez has a concentration in computer graphics, but she has taken painting and drawing classes to involve her hand-drawing skills.

Artist's Statement

The work *Treasures* was actually the first painting she executed for the Life and Painting study. She explains: "While I struggled to draw exactly what I expected, the class taught me appreciation for hand painting and drawings."



Treasures (art), Takako Martinez

African-Caribbean Dance and Costume Design (photos)

Takiyah Williams

Artist's Bio

Takiyah Williams graduated with a Bachelor of Science with a concentration in business studies from Empire State College in June 2013. Among her many interests, she teaches African-Caribbean dance and is a choreographer and costume designer.

Artist's Statement

I was born in Trinidad and Tobago and began performing at 8 years of age at my local community center. We migrated to the U.S. when I was 12 years old and I continued dancing, expanding my Caribbean repertoire with traditional African dance, drums and culture. I was a member of a traditional West African dance company and visited West Africa (Senegal and The Ivory Coast) to study traditional African dance with native villagers.

Costume designing is an artistic expression that has resonated with me because of my exposure to dance and theater, as well as my participation in Carnival in Trinidad. My appreciation for costume designing began when, as a member of an African dance troupe, I began designing and constructing my own costumes because of my creativity and love for art. Developing these skills led me to design costumes for school shows, the Labor Day Parade and Halloween. Costume designing gives me the opportunity to research what the costume represents, to construct it correctly so as to properly depict the particular group that I am representing. I enjoy participating in performing and visual arts and my work is a reflection of the rich cultures that I have absorbed.



Silver Samba (photo), Takiyah Williams

This costume is a tribute to Brazil's Carnival, one of the greatest shows on earth, and applauds the beautiful women who dance the samba in their stiletto shoes all day.



Rain Forest (photo), Takiyah Williams



Jola Dancer (art), Takiyah Williams

Jola is an ethnic group from the Mali region in West Africa. The dance is done for a good harvest. The dance has lots of gyration and pelvic rotation movements and the beads on the lappa of the wrap/sarong skirt swing from side to side, keeping the rhythm of the music, which keeps the dance vibrant.



T&T Land of the Hummingbird (art), Takiyah Williams

Trinidad and Tobago is the land of the hummingbird (the only bird that propels backwards), which has become an endangered species.

Love and Pride (poem)

Edwin DeLoatch

Poet's Bio

Edwin DeLoatch sees himself as a “happy-go-lucky life learner.” Learning is his passion and he never intends to stop learning. He has been a New York City police officer, professional photographer, master personal trainer and a manager. He put his education on hold many years ago to take on a career and raise two wonderful children. He graduated with his associate degree in Business, Management and Economics in June 2013, and is continuing on towards a bachelor's degree, and beyond. His future plans are to own his own business.

Poet's Statement

What specifically gives me a sense of pride about my Hispanic culture is the selfless love that has always been a part of the Hispanic heritage. Hispanics in all facets of life have made a difference in the lives of others. When I was a kid, I remember Mr. Sanchez down at the corner store. He would always tell the neighborhood kids to do well in school and would give them extra candy when they made purchases. I also remember Police Officer Lopez, the transit cop that kept our subway station safe. He also would tell the kids to do well in school and to come to him if they ever had a problem. One could never forget Mrs. Carmen. She babysat all the neighborhood kids whose parents worked during the day. Even if she no longer babysat you, she would ask you if you were hungry or if you needed help with your schoolwork. I am so proud and honored to have met these few heroes that have made an impact on my life.

My favorite poets are Langston Hughes and Gwendolyn Brooks. They are my favorite poets because I identify with them and their style of poetry, which never gets old, and I am always able to draw inspiration from them when I read their work. My poetry is like theirs, in a way, because I love to write about ethnic culture, urban themes and situations, ethnic family dynamics and relationships, as well as racial issues. Langston Hughes was born in Joplin, Mo. Many of his poems are based on ethnic themes and heritage. Gwendolyn Brooks was born in Topeka, Kan., but grew up in Chicago. She was an objective poet yet at times a protest poet who wrote about black situations and the underclass.

I also draw inspiration from the musician Carlos Santana, a master guitarist who was born in Mexico and started playing the guitar at the age of 8. He went from playing on the streets for small change to playing in front of thousands of people for thousands of dollars.

Love and Pride (poem)

I close my eyes and smile as pride runs through my veins
No time for hurt or sorrow today, pride replaces pain
Selfless giving from hearts of pure blood, sweat, and tears
Incredible strength and fearlessness passed down throughout the years

Caring, loving, style, and grace
Footprints that can't be erased

Movers, shakers, difference makers
Indeed we leave a mark

Standing by on corners, delivering your orders,
Even taking your children to the park

But also leaders of communities

Perhaps in a long black robe sitting on the bench
Listening to arguments, interpreting the law,
When one finds himself in a pinch

A heritage rooted in love, delicious meals you've never heard of,
Overcoming obstacles, putting forth a fair share,
Standing tall and making a difference when no one else is there

In a world full of promise where nothing is out of reach
No matter how big or small, there is always something to teach

Take pride in knowing wherever you look
Hispanic heritage across the Américas
Will forever be etched in our history books



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