

NAR

CHP Creative
Works Journal

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Photograph

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|-------|---|
| 1 | Bright Obscurity—Kim Tran |
| 2 | Instructions [...] Or Equidae, Let's Dance!—Philip Menchaca |
| 3 | Untitled—Li Ana Marcus |
| 4 | The Hopper Landscape—David Cary |
| 5 | Media Plastic Mary—Rachel Cheng |
| 6 | Hands of Love—Tiffany Tu |
| 7 | Twisted—Tiffany Tu |
| 8 | “To Rachel, In Calculus”—Jeremy Moore |
| 9 | The Fool He Called a Home—Rachel Cheng |
| 10 | Festive Blooms—Kim Tran |
| 11 | Sunset Surrender—Kim Tran |
| 12 | Untitled —Amanda Wong |
| 13 | Endless —Tandis Soltani |
| 14 | Ladybug—Monica McCallum |
| 15 | Weed—Monica McCallum |
| 16 | Halfway—Max Radin |
| 17 | How Marvin Became Magnificent—Philip Menchaca |
| 19 | Riding to Anaheim—Alejandro Komai |
| 21 | Better Together—Teresa Villaruz |
| Cover | Lotus Blossom—Kim Tran |
| Back | Escape—Cheryl Wong |

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BRIGHT OBSCURITY

by Kim Tran



Photograph

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INSTRUCTIONS ON THE WAYS IN WHICH A
ZEBRA AND OTHER ANIMALS OF THE FAMILY
EQUIDAE ARE ABLE TO SAMBA WITH JUST A
LITTLE ENCOURAGEMENT FROM A KIND, UN-
DERSTANDING, AND GENTLE INSTRUCTOR
WHO KNOWS THAT THE ART OF DANCE
COMES NOT FROM THE BODY, BUT FROM THE
HEART OR PERHAPS THE SOUL OR WHAT
SOME PEOPLE CALL THE SPIRIT AND WHAT AN
ATHEIST MIGHT CALL THE MIND, ALTHOUGH
SURELY AN ATHEIST WOULD NOT BELIEVE
THAT AN EQUINE INDIVIDUAL COULD
DANCE, AS DANCE IS NOT CONSIDERED TO BE
AN EVOLUTIONARY ADVANTAGE FOR SUCH
CREATURES
OR
EQUIDAE, LET'S DANCE!

by Philip Menchaca

Firstly: get a good pair of shoes.

Secondly: realize that titles can be misleading.

Thirdly: give up and go home.

UNTITLED

by Li Ana Marcus

There are many of them. Myriad. A horde. A treasure trove of little dreams that slip through the night. So many little bands of light drip from dreamcatchers in the morning sun.

Her eyes opened to the stale white of her room. She woke to the silence that breathed space, a soundscape waiting for the birth of form.

The days had passed by numbers, each side-by-side with the first as nondescript as the last. Segmented. Regimented. So many little uniforms off to win the war of her existence, of her persistence and presence in the world.

There had seemed no issue with such battles. Honor rose from expressions of worth, shown like trophies on a mantelpiece, bled black onto the white of the page. Clubs, organizations, leadership. These things that were meant to serve as rungs to serve herself had served. Life as worth. Life for service. Look at her go, ideals and such dreams in tow!

And yet, there was the world. Ideas yet to form. Blank canvas. Blank page. The world as yet unwritten.

That was the way of it. The basking dream in the morning sun that incited riots of color. Writings that merged into the blue tonal sound. Brushes, pens, and inspiration. That was the way of it.

Her eyes opened to the stale white of her room. She woke to the silence that breathed space, a life waiting for the will to form.

It is one of many. Myriad. A horde. A treasure trove of lives that escape the regiment. So many bands of bright color. The red of voices raised ascending, collecting, soar high into the morning sun.

THE HOPPER

LANDSCAPE

by David Cary

Empty rooms conjure forlorn hues
That cannot be worn as hats or shoes:
Only the eyes reflect gloom.

And empty rooms late at night
Are bright with dry yellow light:
But there is no one to blink.

And empty rooms echo with the faded
Voices of our fathers, drunk and jaded:
The haunt of mere memories.

And empty rooms grow beards of dust,
Untrimmed by shears lost in rust:
Disuse is the loneliest home.

And empty rooms are smoke-stained black,
Burnt by the pipes of wizards and hacks:
Imagination cannot conquer.

And the whole world is an empty room,
When the light is long and the heart is doomed
To run the paths and byways all alone.

And an empty room is an empty soul,
An empty soul a forgotten room, full
With space unfilled, old friends unmissed,
Words unsaid, dreams unmet, lips unkissed.
To be unseen, untouched, unknown, unfed
Is to live without and die with dread.

MEDIA PLASTIC MARY

by Rachel Cheng

Muscles: contracting, stretching
Across the movie screen
Movement: fleeting, shifting
Film's synthetic sheen

I told you I was young
So you should love me more
A body speaking sibilant:
Foreboding, fogging score

Skinny sliding; slipping slick
Over plastic, printed couch
Quiver: skewer heart and bone
Deep in your mother's house

HANDS OF LOVE

by Tiffany Tu

With your eyes wide open
And mine half-shut,
You warn me
“Don’t chase after the blind man’s dream.”

You show me your vision
Heartrendingly beautiful
For a minute,
The blind man’s dream fades.

Other times, the dream
Creeps upon me
Infiltrating my thoughts,
Blinding me to your vision.

My ears close
To your still small voice
How is your vision
Even possible?

Gasping, I breathe in
This shell of a dream
It fills me,
Chokes me.

You find me
Surrounded by this dream of broken promises
And show me the hands
That built your vision.

TWISTED

by Tiffany Tu

Why can't you just
Tell me like it is?
But no,
There you go again,
Playing to my fears,
Pulling on my heartstrings,
Indulging me and my dreams.

When has freedom of speech,
Freedom of the press,
Become the freedom to brainwash
The freedom to exploit
The ignorance of the people?

You—you who dream dreams
Of power, of riches, of fame
Know we still have the freedom to think
Yet what will happen in that day
Your control over information
Becomes complete?

“TO RACHEL, IN
CALCULUS”
by Jeremy Moore

Oh, why must you wear the lowest-cut jeans
on the days when we learn the most important things?

HOW MARVIN BECAME MAGNIFICENT

by Philip Menchaca

Let me tell you how it happened. Back last summer, right at the end when it's getting really hot—Marvin showed up. He was a short, funny looking kid. He had a flat top and wore thick black glasses. He always wore big, white shoes. We first saw him coming out from the Johnson's old house. They'd moved away two months ago, when George's dad lost his job.

At first, some of us wanted nothing to do with him and others of us were just sort of curious and others didn't really care, but wanted to get back to playing baseball. We were all sitting around in the empty lot, which we'd dragged a bunch of junk into in order to make a kind of hideout. We kept peeking at him through the slats. Finally, Joe said, "Come on, let's see what he's like," so we all came out from the lot and walked up the street towards him. Marvin had a stick in one hand and was running it along the fence, kind of making noises to himself. When he saw us coming, he dropped the stick.

"Hey," I said.

"Hey," he said. There was a bit of an awkward silence, where we looked at each other, kind of sizing the other one up. Finally, he said, "You got any marbles?" and we both went and got some marbles and drew up a circle in the dust and we all sat down to play.

Now, he wasn't bad at the game, but I was better and ended up knocking all of his marbles out of the circle pretty quickly. Well, as soon as his last marble flew out, he jumps up screaming about how I cheated. I wasn't going to let him say things like that, so I jumped up and before long we were really getting into it. One of us threw a punch, and before long we were spinning around in tight circles, swinging fists at each other. Now, I don't like scuffling, but I've done my fair share and everyone except Joe has a hard time knocking me down. So, before long, Marvin's on the ground, bleeding from where his glasses cut him.

Now I wasn't mad anymore, we'd settled things fairly, and I'd won. So I went over to give him a hand up. He swats my hand away, gets up, and he's crying. We all stood there, mortified for him, except for Joe who starts laughing his head off. Marvin grabs his marbles, comes over and shoves the Winner's Marble into my hand, then runs off home.

After that, we pretty much ignored Marvin because any damn fool should know not to cry after a fight. At first, Joe would sometimes pretend to burst into tears when Marvin was around, but then that got old so we just tried not to notice when Marvin was there or sometimes we'd go off into the woods someplace that Marvin didn't know about yet.

One scorching day, we were all lazing around in the empty lot, too hot and tired to do much of anything, when Joe brings out his marbles. I've got mine with me and it's too hot to play anything else, so we start up a game. It's a pretty close game and we're down to our last marbles and I'm really hoping he doesn't knock mine out because I've been trying to get my Oxblood back ever since he'd won it from me at the beginning of the summer. My dad brought it back for me after a trip and I'd never seen another marble like it. So, I'm sitting there with my fingers crossed and I've even got my toes crossed, when Joe shoots his marble and misses. It's my turn now, so I lay flat down, aim carefully and shoot. I strike his marble and knock it right out of the circle. We all give out a cheer because the game's over.

I get up to collect my marble, and Joe won't give it. I start to get mad because it's mine and I won it. He collects all his marbles and begins to walk away, so I yell after him and grab his shirt. He turns around and catches me one right on the chin and I go down. Now we're all hollering, but he must have hit me pretty hard because I can't seem to get myself together. It looks like Joe's just going to walk off with my marble because no one's about to stop him, when suddenly Marvin yells out "That's his marble! Give it to him!" and then we all go quiet because it's Marvin.

Joe turns around, walks over to Marvin, and pushes him to the ground. Marvin jumps back up and then they're scuffling and Joe's got his arm wrapped around Marvin's neck and Marvin's hitting him anywhere he can reach. It's looking like it's going to go pretty rough with Marvin, but then he somehow breaks out of Joe's grasp and clocks him one right on the side of the head, but it's not enough and Joe knocks him down. I figured that was just about the end and that no one would be getting what they wanted today, when Joe blubbers, "Here's your stupid marble!", flings it at Marvin, and takes off. For a moment everyone's too stunned to say anything and then we all start laughing because it's funny and too tense. Then we all go help Marvin up, and talk about what a good fight it was and about what a rat Joe is. Marvin picks up the Oxblood from the ground and holds it out to me and I let him keep it because I figure if anyone won anything that day it was him.

RIDING TO ANAHEIM

by Alejandro Komai

She was jealous of his pockets. He had pulled out an itinerary, pen and map, marked out the course he had followed to arrive at the train station – two buses, a two-block walk – and marked out a return trip as well. To be polite, Zamira only watched with peripheral vision. From an inner jacket pocket he had pulled a pamphlet for the mission. A fax of a scan of a Xerox from twenty years ago, it was brief, faint. By the window, he gazed down while she looked out – the closest you could come to direct inspection. Graffiti streamed past the window. Several large illegible names and a pair of Groucho glasses marked this wall in Fullerton. A project came to Zamira's mind, something to do for her community after making her fortune. The walls could be covered with panels of animation, the trains passing fast enough to blur them into life. A project she could give to her community or to Disneyland.

Putting the pamphlet away with one hand, he removed a deck of cards from the opposite breast pocket. Clucking her tongue she turned into the car. It's not fair. Women don't get clothes with pockets. Jeans pockets don't count. You can't even fit your hands in them. A credit card, your license, loose dollars but it's hell to retrieve them. Slacks don't get pockets either if they're nice. Dress shirts sometimes have a breast pocket but there's no business of keeping cards, wallets, maps, pamphlets, and pens on your chest. Zamira fingered the badge-shaped pocket on her orange-striped shirt. Wimpy decorous vestigial dress shirt pocket!

Inside the car the various passengers were making friends with strangers. How do they do that? A young man and woman are chatting across the way, his laugh obnoxious and his arms waving too much. Young people are stupid, she thought. The girl had a pink sequined purse in her lap. Purses, she thought, are a submission to pockets. Thus I am more oppressed by those who bow down than by all the merchants and tailors in the world. In the history of the world. She renounces womanhood every time she thinks about purses. She will claim a different gender for her own.

Zamira shifted her attention back out the window as the train rolled out from under an overpass. Somewhat lower than the train and its tracks and gravel, a weeded hill sloped and leveled out at a chain-link fence. If it were standing beside the train, the fence would come to half the train's height but it was set at the bottom of a gradual decline and several yards away from the tracks. Its topmost point just approached the height of the wheels. Beyond it, four circles leaned on wooden tripods. Farther out, a scatter of children stood a few yards behind an adult holding a quiver and bow beside a single child. From the train it was clear he shouted instructions to a boy who faced the target. Zamira saw all this in the instant her window emerged. The instructor leaned in and handed the boy the bow and an arrow, which the boy cocked. He caught himself looking into the window of the passing train. That something beneath an orange-striped dress shirt was pushing it out into

crinkled angles surprising the boy into shifting his sightline upwards. Then he made eye contact with the woman on the train as it was passing, beyond the target, beyond the fence, at the top of the slope, past the window, past the well-pocketed man. All this happened the moment the train rushed out from the underpass.

Zamira ceased thinking. Each fluttering worry was turned aside and she watched the boy and he knew that they were breathing the same. In, as he pulled back the bow, out as he locked eyes with her. The span of time was measured by two breaths each.

They did not know what they were doing, but the boy's face revealed his fear. The arrowtip rose as they inhaled and it set itself in a direction parallel with his gaze. He did not mean it. He wanted to shoot the target.

His mother was a sharpshooter when they said women couldn't be sharpshooters, but her family did not know this until her funeral twenty-seven years later. So she gave her son a choice between archery and taekwondo for a summer course at the local recreation center. He had observed taekwondo for one day, but decided he didn't want to wear different clothes all the time, especially clothes without pockets.

The woman in the train did not know anything about shooting or archery or war, but she knew the arrow was pointed at the pocket of her orange-striped shirt. She knew this without the clutter of words she used to sort through her life. Words that ensnared the boyfriends who wanted to leave, that kept her cousins entertained, and that earned the job at Disney.

In truth, Zamira did not have time for dying. The company needed her in Anaheim for the newest attraction at California Adventure, the proving ground for artists in her position. A movie due for release in three years was concurrently competing within the company for a new ride set to release in four. That kind of project promised job security. Opportunity. Connections.

Six years later the boy would ride the attraction as a young man who never saw the associated film. One recurring creature was clearly a riff on Harpo Marx, continually pulling items of unlikely size from his inner coat pocket: a fishing pole, a ladder, a piano. That he could recognize. Living his entire childhood in Anaheim, the young man only began visiting Disneyland after moving into his own apartment. He rarely caught the references having missed so many movies as a boy. Mars would have been less alien. Strangeness, more than anything else, attracted him.

For all the fear in the boy, Zamira felt none, but was focused on this moment as her last. All visions and phrases dried up to that moment before the boy in the field released the arrow. At that exhalation, she imagined the arrow soaring over the target, the chain-link fence, up to the window, through the window, over the man with several pockets, and into her body. She also thought the man with pockets smelled like Old Spice aftershave and then thought that he must be cheap.

The boy would not know the mantle he was taking up. He would not tell his mother. Apology was all he felt when he released the arrow.

Its arc initially followed parallel to his sightline, tipping only slightly through time, burying itself a yard from the circular target as the train continued to roll.

BETTER TOGETHER

by Teresa Villaruz

That damn quack doctor had told his wife that he needed more exercise. It was either this or take up yoga with his wife and her girlfriends and he could not stand estrogen at that concentration. It wasn't even that he was out of shape. In fact, for someone his age, he was in great shape. At his age, as long as he wasn't dead he was in great shape. He quickened his pace as he rounded the corner.

"Hey Sammy!"

"Morning Marj! Looks like it's gonna be another scorcher."

"Oh goodness, I hope not. My azaleas can't take much more of this heat."

Stupid bitch. Watering her damn plants when the state was in the midst of a water shortage. No wonder she never had a boyfriend for more than a month. All she had in her life were those damn azaleas and that was where all of her love and attention went. If his wife had been that way...well, if his wife had been that way she wouldn't be his wife. Connie had always been very level headed about those sorts of things. As a boy, he had always been told that showering a woman with gifts was the way to her heart. That notion went in the crapper when he met Connie. The first time he bought her flowers, she chucked them at his face and he knew it was love.

Ok, enough nostalgia. One more lap to go. He had to get back to the house to fix the electrical wiring. If he hadn't been around, the entire house would have fallen apart by now. Gah, why was it that the last lap always feels like a death march? Arm-pit stains had formed on his gray t-shirt and what little hair he had lay matted to his head. That deodorant was definitely not working; even he could smell himself. He lifted one arm and gingerly sniffed the pit, trying to be slick. Nope, definitely not Old Spice. His scalp felt like it was burning. Connie told him to wear a cap, but then he would have hat hair. Well, maybe not hat hair considering he had more scalp showing than hair. Obviously his hair was not in good condition if he had to put sunblock on it before going out. The damn Rogaine was not working. Fifty bucks later and nothing. Connie hated that he used Rogaine. He had the foam kind, the one that could be masked as a shaving cream bottle except for the fact that it said "Rogaine" in giant letters. He couldn't really understand why she judged him for using it. Quite frankly, she could do with some Rogaine herself. But if he ever suggested that, his balls would be launched into his body, and that wasn't even the worst of what she was capable of. But that was why he loved her. She was ballsier than most men he knew, and he had been in the armed forces. His little potbelly bounced up and down with each step. He passed yellowing lawns and dried up trees.

"Sammy-boy! Whatcha up to?"

"Hey Frank! Just following orders from the Missus. She threatened to divorce me unless I get back my figure. I told her no refunds, no exchanges, but she keeps insisting that she wanted me in the condition previously agreed upon. Anyways, I don't remember agreeing to stay a stud for her, but you know what they say: Happy

wife, happy life.”

“Ain’t that the truth. My wife keeps nagging me to spend more ‘quality time’ with her. In her world, that’s watching ‘Desperate Housewives’ and ‘Dancing with the Stars.’ Why else do you think I’m out here in this God forsaken heat?”

“Doesn’t that air at night though?”

“She has it on DVD.”

“Wow. Where are your balls, Frank? Did your wife take them and hide them in the flowerbed with your masculinity?”

“Haha, nice one you cocky bald-headed, beer-bellied son of a bitch. So where are you off to now?”

“I have to fix the electrical wiring. The Missus broke it again when she was trying to fix it herself. I told her not to tangle herself up in man’s business, but she never listens to me.”

“Wow, you really need to get a grip on your woman.”

“Is that so Mr. Desperate Housewife?”

Poor Frank. If people didn’t already think his wife was nuts, they’d think she was trying to turn him gay. Women never realize that making a man watch a chick flick or soap opera or whatever is the equivalent of castrating him. That poor son of a bitch. He’ll never get out alive.

His grumbling stomach brought him back to reality. That banana he had this morning was not holding up. Connie had put him on a strict diet ever since the doctor told her that he needed to lose some weight. There were a number of choices available, no doubt about it, but nothing actually edible. All they had in the house right now were some boca burgers and something suspiciously called tofurkey. There were a number of other gelatinous blobs, but he could not figure out for the life of him what they were, nor was he hungry enough to actually attempt to eat them. Honestly, he had gotten a better meal out of his little blue pill than the tofurkey. Lately, he’d been forced to live off of takeout and fast food. The sad part was that he couldn’t even eat it in his car because then his wife would know. And after going into the fast-food joint, he would have to Febreeze himself because his wife could smell the oil. That woman had the nose of a hunting hound.

But he loved her. He loved her despite all of the grief she gave him. It was true that he couldn’t remember the song that was playing when they first met or the color of the dress she was wearing. Hell, half the time he didn’t even remember their anniversary. But he knew the way her eyes sparkled when she got good news and the way she would tiptoe in front of her vanity. He knew the way her shampoo smelled and the way she farted after she accidentally ingested dairy. He knew that he loved her more than anything in this world. Of course, he would never admit it but she knew and that was enough.

He got back from his walk, opening the gate to their house. Sure, it was small, but it was more than big enough for the two of them. Connie had her garden and he

had his sixty-inch plasma TV. From where he stood, all was good in the world. Wiping his feet on the mat, he came in through the side door.

“Honey, I’m home!”

He grabbed the dishtowel, trying to mop the sweat off of his head, and sat down at the kitchen table.

“Honey! You here?”

“Upstairs! I’ll be down in a minute! Let me just take a quick shower.”

“Quick? Who are you kidding?”

“Oh shut up and quit wasting my time.”

Boy, he really could drive her nuts. He never appreciated anything she did. She grabbed a scrunchie and tied her thinning, graying hair into a bun. Her hair had just gotten too thin to be washed everyday, sad as it was. She reached into the shower and turned the knob, waiting for the water to warm up. The damn piping in this house was terrible. The water took an eternity to warm up and if anyone flushed the toilet while she was in the shower, she would be scalded. She wanted to get a plumber to fix it, but Sammy was just too damn cheap to invest in something like that. He had it in his head that he was some sort of Renaissance man who could paint, sculpt, and fix plumbing. He better not try to fix the electrical wiring while she was in the shower. She was not about to take another shower in the dark. In the forty some odd years they had been married, the only talents he had exhibited to her were for watching Sports Center and for farting. Why did he always have to watch Sports Center anyways? It wasn’t as if he actually played any of the sports that he watched. And his farts were not just any farts. They were those record breaking loud ones that rocked the earth to its core and smelled as though he had ingested some mixture of rotten eggs and spoilt milk. Her mother had told her not to marry him. She had wanted her precious baby girl to hold out for someone better, maybe a lawyer or a doctor, but definitely not some chunky used car salesman from Queens who smelled of cheap cologne and curly fries.

But she loved him. There was no other explanation for it. There was no way in hell that she could have put up with all of his shit if she didn’t love him. Not even Mother Teresa could have done that. But yes, try as she might and against her better judgment, she did love him. She loved his shiny bald head and chunky gut. She loved that he never remembered their anniversary because she couldn’t remember it either. She loved his off-key renditions of Marvin Gaye in the shower and the way he always smelled like some sort of mixture of Old Spice and sweat.

The condensation from the shower fogged up the mirror and made the air thick and heavy. She stuck her fingers into the water and then stripped down and hopped in. She grabbed the loofa and squeezed some soap onto it. Massaging her neck, she let the heat loosen her muscles. God, she was tired. She had been tired for ten years. She let her mind float and wander while she absentmindedly ran the loofa

over her skin. And there she stayed in there until her fingers got all pruney.

Stepping out of the shower, she wrapped herself in her robe and her hair in the towel. Those damn ugly towels that Sammy's mother had gotten them for their last anniversary. Poop green and a rough, cheap cotton. But they used them because Sammy loved his mom and she loved Sammy. She looked into her vanity, tiptoeing as she examined herself. God, she was getting old. She tugged her skin attempting to reverse the havoc that gravity had raged on her face. A lifetime of sunbathing had left sun spots on her once even skin tone. The crows feet and the laugh lines were deeper than ever. It looked as though someone had etch-a-sketched them onto her skin. And there were bags under her eyes from years of late nights and early mornings.

She grabbed her bifocals off of the sink and attempted to wipe the condensation off of them, but they just fogged right back up again. When she was young, she used to love looking at her naked body, admiring the smooth skin and toned muscles. But those days had passed and now she was old and forgotten.

"Honey! You have to see this! Come look and admire the skills of your man!"

Oh God, he was getting more and more impatient the older he got. It may have been that he sensed that death was coming and wanted to bug her as much as possible before then.

"I'm coming! Give me a sec, will ya?"

"Holy shit! How long does it take to take a shower?"

"I'm sorry, but not all of us can just wash our cocks and be done with it."

"Damn woman! Are you PMSing? Do you want some Midol?"

"Sammy, for Christ's sake. I haven't had my period in twenty years!" She smiled and knew it was love. Next thing she knew, the lights went out.

"Sammy! Not again!"

"Whoops! My bad!"

CHSC/NAR PAGE

11-20 West Side Story

Pre-show dinner, and UCI's production of West Side Story

11-21 CIE Coffee Hour

Learn about the exciting study abroad opportunities available and find the program and location that's best for you!

11-27~11-28 Thanksgiving Break!!!

12-8~12-12 Finals Week!!!

Good luck everyone!

12-16 CATS!

World famous Broadway hit of CATS at the Orange County Performing Arts Center!



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