

SPRING
2024

Submission Guidelines

We accept submissions year-round!

All submissions must include your email, first and last name, and the title of your piece. Make sure to specify if you would like your name to be listed as “Anonymous.”

For artwork, include the medium/material used and the title, if any. Photography and photographs of any artwork should be .jpeg or .raw files of the highest possible quality, with resolution greater than 300 dpi.

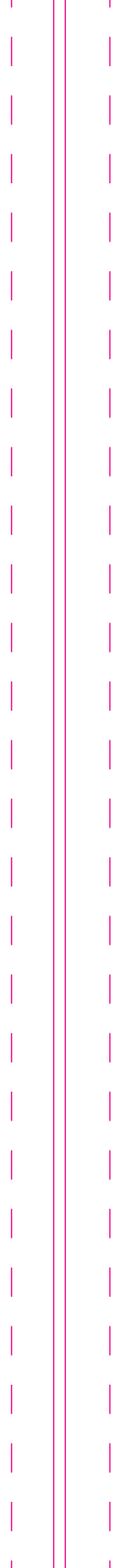
Essays, short stories, poetry and other written works should be no longer than a few pages. Written work should be in .doc or .docx form.

The deadline varies year to year, and guidelines are subject to change. Send inquiries and submissions to red.jacket@montgomerycollege.edu

The Red Jacket is Sponsored by

Department of English and Reading
Montgomery College, Rockville Campus





Credits

Art Editors

Riya Roy, Jeanne Gnahoua

Fiction Editors

Jacob Roe, Killian Sibug

Layout Editors

Jeanne Gnahoua, Ziv Sarig

Poetry Editors

Barbara Nalls, Karter MacLean

Faculty Advisor

Shweta Sen



Cover Art by Rachelle Lee

The Red Jacket Logo by Nico Nucci

© 2024 Montgomery College
All rights reserved.

Table of Contents

Creative Writing

Her Voice Echoes Stella Biles	1
Three in One Evodi Kabamba	3
Literary Opinions Susan Boroskin	8
Paper Shreds Brandon Rodriguez	10
A Man Called Tempest Eleanor Smedberg	12
Three Crows Lena Wilson	13
山羊歌 The Sheep Song Helen Zheng	17
A Mine Disaster's Legacy Susan Boroskin	19
A Daughter Never Grows Katya Aliev	22
Fools' Gold R. Nair	24
Sunflower Fields Stella Biles	24
Drip drip drip Katya Aliev	25
THE NOISE! Eleanor Smedberg	28
Eating Lunch Outside Josie Lunsford	29

Table of Contents

Visual Arts

Untitled Blessing Bonnoh Makieu	2
Old Man Stephanie Lal muan puii	7
Mizo Community Stephanie Lal muan puii	7
Unique Jeremy Rios	9
Moonlit Growth Rachelle Lee	11
It's Better Alone Jeremy Rios	14
Circle of Life Xin Ray	16
Untitled Blessing Bonnoh Makieu	22
Lost Attraction Ishaan Ramola	23
On the Road by Dawn Eric Goss	23
Pressure Makayla Castillo	26
Absorption Makayla Castillo	26
A Cheeky Smirk Xin Ray	27
Untitled Blessing Bonnoh Makieu	29

Her Voice Echoes

Stella Biles

It's so hollow now, she cannot be found
Knock on wood, she cannot be found So
help me now, although it's not around
You stare into the sun and she is pluto
bound
When they fall down
It echoes

They cut class judgement day
Hopped the picket fence
The tears were dripping down her face
So they split the difference
Then they fall down
And it echoes

The sky was green, and her eyes were red
The clouds would sing, until he was dead
The melody flows down the interstate
As they laugh and they cry and they die
In the sky
When it echoes



Untitled

Blessing Bonnoh Makieu
Photography

Three in One

Evodi Kabamba

I'm a Congolese girl born in Zimbabwe holding an American citizenship. All three countries in one me. In the real world, they're sometimes separate, doing their own things in their own corners. But in my world, Congo, Zimbabwe, and the United States have been forced to work together, to somehow collaborate to help me communicate with the people around me.

Like most group work, not everybody does their fair share of work. Usually, one person ends up doing all the work because the other two slacked off, the so-called "lazy ones." Naturally, the final presentation is mainly composed of the ideas of the one who did the most work. To give the "lazy ones" the benefit of the doubt, their lack of contribution isn't always that black and white. Maybe "Lazy Number One" was initially excited to work on the presentation and did their share in the beginning, but suddenly they got sick and couldn't contribute all the way to the end. And maybe "Lazy Number Two" wasn't confident in their brilliant ideas, so they only shared the teensiest idea they were most confident in. Looking from that perspective, it wasn't really the "lazy ones" fault. Regardless of the fact, it's undeniable that one person still did most of the work.

For me, the one who did most of the work decided to make English the main idea of the presentation. Well, it wasn't his original idea. "Lazy Number One," Zimbabwe, started it off. When he got sick, the United States decided to keep it going because he really liked Zimbabwe's idea.

Being born in Zimbabwe, an anglophone African country, English was one of my first languages. I learned how to speak, read, and write in it, and I had plenty of practice with it at home and at school. For some weird reason, I've always remembered this one moment when I was working on spelling with my sister. I was having trouble spelling the word "island." With her weird but effective teaching style, she said "if you know how to spell "is-land," then you know how to spell island." Along with my first memory of learning the English language, English was a part of me for the first

six years of my life that were spent in Zimbabwe.

Since then, I've been living in the United States. My siblings and I have always shared the same sentiment that we are incredibly grateful that we came from a country that already spoke English. I've seen firsthand the struggle many immigrants go through when they must deal with learning English on top of all the other problems they experience as first generations in a new country. Of course, I did learn English in a different country, so I had an accent and had to go through the adjustments of British English vs US English. But for the most part, my transition from Zimbabwe to the United States was made easier with my prior knowledge.

In summary, the United States really loved Zimbabwe's idea, so he decided to keep and improve on it. Zimbabwe did have another idea, but it wasn't included in the final presentation because the United States wasn't too fond of it. As soon as he got sick and couldn't elaborate on it, the United States simply decided to scrap it all together. Who was going to stop him?

Shona was the idea that never made it to the final presentation. One of the most widely spoken languages in Zimbabwe, I learned to speak Shona in school. I had to read a series of Shona schoolbooks, so I also knew how to read and write in it. The church we went to was mainly Shona, some English too, but I knew all the Shona songs. Along with English, Shona was a major part of my life in Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, its life was very short-lived.

When I moved to the United States, Shona was scrapped. Many immigrants share the experience where our parents want us to fit in with the American culture as much as possible to avoid things like bullying or feeling different. Some are encouraged to continue learning the languages of their country, while others are encouraged to adapt to their new environment. Both are quite different experiences in the immigrant journey, and unfortunately for Shona, mine was the latter.

Though I already spoke English, anybody would know that I wasn't from the United States. To hide that, my siblings and I mostly spoke English at home. I also spoke it at school. Spoke it at church. Spoke it with friends. Shona was left with nobody to

communicate with. I couldn't just go to the library and pick out a book in Shona, those didn't exist. It wasn't even until 2016 that Shona was finally added to Google Translate. Slowly but surely, Shona was stripped and stripped from my memory.

Just the other day, I was taking pictures of my brother and his fiancée. As they were looking through the masterpieces I had captured, my future sister-in-law said "maita basa." Which is a way of saying "thank you" in Shona. Sure, I know that now, but when it was said, the phrase held absolutely no value to me. I hadn't even realized I was being addressed. They laughed and joked about how I really forgot Shona just like that. I thought it was quite interesting. There we were, three people with similar upbringings. All Congolese people who had lived in Zimbabwe and moved to America, yet we were all at various levels of the same language we grew up speaking.

Now "Lazy Number Two," the partner who only shared her smallest idea because she wasn't confident in her other ones was Congo. Since they didn't only want a single idea to work with, and Zimbabwe's second idea was certainly not making it in, the United States had no choice but to use Congo's idea in the presentation. She hadn't given much detail on it, so the United States used the little information he was given and ran with it.

Congo's idea was French. I've never been there, but I know it runs through my blood. My parents were born there, so were my two older siblings, but I wasn't. Everything I've ever learned from Congo has come from my parents including French, my other first language. Though it was my first language, I never learnt it to its fullness. French was solely a way of communicating verbally, with my mom and other Congolese adults around me. I couldn't read it, nor could I write it.

By moving to the United States, French got extremely lucky. It could have shared the same fate as Shona. At first, it seemed like it was going to. Since I was mainly speaking in English, I didn't get the chance to practice speaking in French. For a few years, it became hard for me to even hold a conversation with someone. The only reason I didn't completely forget it was because my parents spoke it, so by constantly hearing it, I could understand it. Speaking it was a different story. Fortunately for French, the United States

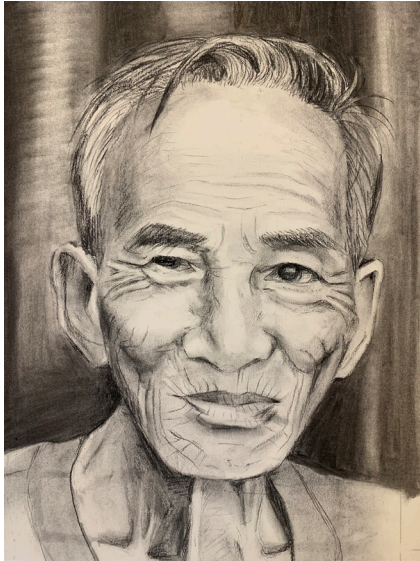
was more well versed in French than it was in Shona. I started taking French class in sixth grade.

That did me good. I finally learned to read and write in the language I previously only knew how to speak in. It was a huge accomplishment for me. I finished all the way to AP French in high school and feel more comfortable than ever conversing with someone in French than I did when I first came here. Looking back at it, I'm glad that I was able to keep the French language, but still a part of me wishes there was more.

As a francophone African country, French is a widely spoken language in Congo. But it's not ours. The languages that do belong to us were the ideas that Congo was too nervous to share out loud. Her lack of confidence was in vain though because they were amazing ideas.

I learned French from my mom, which is the same way I could have learned Lingala, Tshiluba, and a bit of Swahili. But I never did. To this day, my mom doesn't know why she never taught me and my siblings the languages of our people. That hasn't stopped me though. I have managed to pick up on some words in Lingala and I can understand the main topic of someone's conversation. Tshiluba is so close yet so far away. My aunt speaks it, so I take advantage of hearing it all the time she's on the phone to familiarize myself with the beautiful language.

Today I stand as Congo, Zimbabwe, and the United States' final presentation. Despite the mishaps along the way, the presentation is done; I am complete. I'm grateful that I tried my best to hold onto the languages that life gave me. If I get to have kids, I will pass that on to them in the way that I know how. I couldn't deprive them of the beauty of language. The beauty that connects us to the places that make up who we are, the people around us, our identity. The very same one that connects me to my own special three.



Old Man

Stephanie Lal muan puii
Charcoal on Paper
g.a.b55 on **Instagram**



Mizo Community

Stephanie Lal muan puii
Digital
g.a.b55 on **Instagram**

Literary Opinions

Susan Boroskin

A timeless shift

From works we lift

So high, the drop

Leads to their stop.

What makes a book

Glorious, we took

Away from its roots

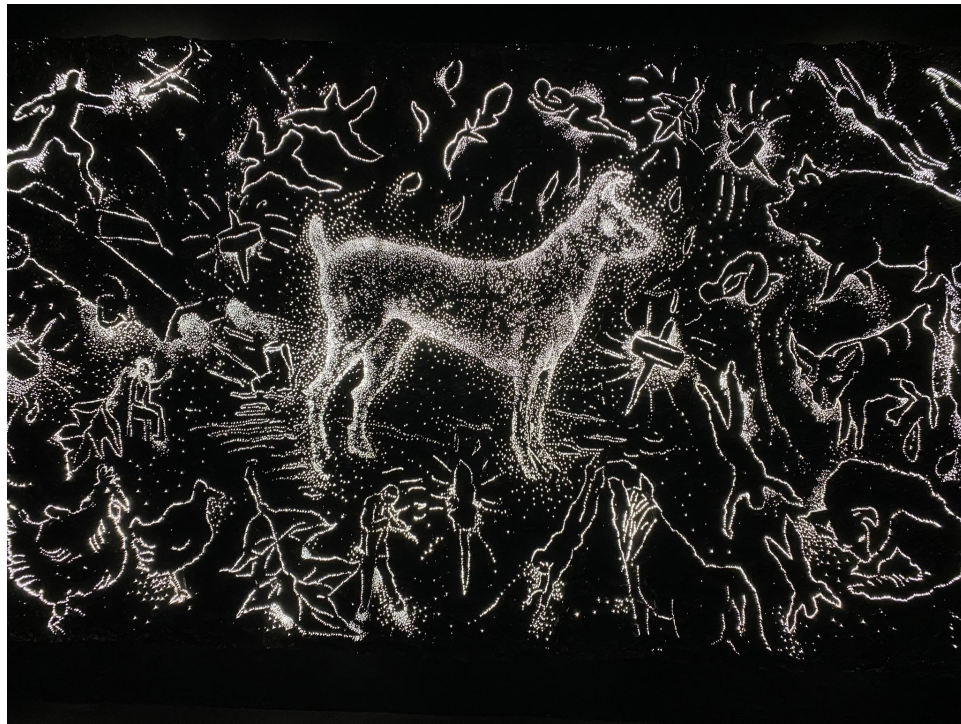
And its author's pursuits.

Anthologies we make

For our own sake

But leave behind

Stories, declined.



Unique

Jeremy Rios

Ger3x_2023 on Instagram

Paper Shreds

Brandon Rodriguez

To my sweet loving puppy Sophie

You came into my life when I was broken
When I felt separated from the world

I had you

When I ate breakfast you were right beside me
Waiting not for food, but for paper to shred

You would leave a mess
And I would have to clean up

You drove me insane
When I had to clean up your mess
When you ran like a free spirit

But it was cute
Not the mess, but your innocence

Your life

When you were here
You gave me courage
You gave me company

You're not here but you still live
Through what you taught me
Through what you gave me

Memories

You tore my heart to pieces
Like paper shreds

But I will put them back together
And never forget

Your life
Your presence

Rest well



Moonlit Growth

Rachelle Lee

Photoshop Composite

sunlightsleep on Instagram

A Man Called Tempest

Eleanor Smedberg

Tempest meant to test man's mettle,
thunder of the earth.
Mighty Gale to soothe the sea,
rule of breath, mark of worth.

Sharing their same rotten fate,
soon she too did fold.
Left to tend the storm alone,
Tempest growing old.

One bright day the planet shook,
ringing as if struck—
by some great beating fist, perhaps,
or tired hand of luck.

Whipping winds and drought of soil,
crops withered and died.
Roaming beasts grew louder with
their magic land's outcry.

Tempest set out to determine
(allies close at hand)
What disturbance so profound
could plague their very land.

A valley, stricken, sick with greed
lay graying, vast, before them.
Of course, this cursed place contained
the source of their misfortune.

Within the valley, deep and gray,
he found a mighty rift.
Not of dirt or rock, far worse:
The universe had split.

Great fear tempted the mage,
and yet he stepped into the rime.
Lying there, so small, a star,
unknowing of its crime.

High Tempest took the star in hand
and turned it in his palm.
It spoke to him so gently, then,
with twinkly breathing song.

“Great storm” it said “so mighty! Yes,
So beastly and unwell!”
Harsh images came to the mage
of that star as it fell.

A sky so thick with red like blood
which climbed to reach the stars.
He understood, then, why it tore
across whole worlds, that scar.

So moved by the bright thing’s voice,
he knew that it must stay.
High Arcana begged and claimed
traditions to obey.

“It’s distant, not of our two suns!”
The wise old man exclaimed.
Brave Tempest was not moved, said he,
“But it too has known pain.”

The wizards argued, pleaded, cried.
Suns set, and rose, perhaps.
But in their place unknown by time,
only words had passed.

Finally, High Tempest stood,
his mettle only hardened.
He spoke what solely he could say,
“Of this, I am certain.”

Arcana, wise enough to see
a passion so unrivaled,
ceded to his desperate plea
of haven for the child.

Tempest took it home, the star,
and placed it in the sky.
It looked to him so gently, then,
alive with soft, sweet light.

He knew a peace more honest
than since she left him lost,
Great Tempest found himself alone,
now certain in his post.



It's Better Alone

Jeremy Rios
Photography

Ger3x_2023 on Instagram

Three Crows

Lena Wilson

The greenery and trees are weaved as one,
Beyond this encasing of Earthly woes,
Branches bending towards the solace of sun,
Shunned from me- the consequence of three crows.

They flew to me, from midday's gentle kiss,
And out they struck at midnight's fatal cry,
My mind was pried from blessings of bliss,
Devoured with lust and left to die.

Away they soared once they scavenged my soul,
Feathers falling upon my forsaken form,
My newfound void - nevermore to be whole
My heart gone- amidst Satan's swarm.

I, without daisies, lay in summer awe,
With three crows stalking upon yearning claws.



Circle of Life

Xin Ray
Mixed Media

山羊歌 *The Sheep Song*

Helen Zheng

雪荧

Ram horns upon white hair and lashes, within those luscious flutters of snow was a glowing gold.

A firefly; a caress of light danced lost within the blinding snow. Alas, those frail pairs of wings will lay a gentle kiss, on the ghastly pale face of one lonely winter road.

When the sun kisses those cheeks, the coldness will finally melt from its face, filling them with a rosy hue of pink.

A flower will blossom here with petals; wings of gold, swaying ever so gently to the melody brought by the winds. A linger of old sleet and gold in its sow.

山羊歌

On the mountain peaks the winds were harsh, scarring the face underneath. When the moon is lulled to sleep by the song of the sheep, the snow will pick up, joining in with an aria so serene.

When will the sun come to meet us? The sheep, the snow, the covered greens, and the children on this mountain hums this song awaiting.

Strumming the strings of an instrument carved from woods of the forgotten Spring, plucks of sharp melodies now grow dull with age. An old song to soothe the forgotten souls. From these wood and wool woven strings could you hear this mountain's reverie?

Ram horns upon white hair and lashes, within those luscious flutters of snow was a glowing gold. A firefly; a caress of light danced, lost within the blinding snow. She gazed with nothing but drowsy serenity. To taste salt on a smile will melt the snow but this one's tears had long frozen with the cold.

As much as she wishes for the snow to continue to blow, for so long she has grown used to it to call home. Sadness glazed over her honey orbs and the ache long planted within the red soils of her chest bones.

To the young— the children of the sun who will grow, may this song bring you a new face, one kissed by the sun, one where the sheep will no longer sing but graze on the vast uncovered greens.

海眼

The unmelted white will soon be left behind, and the leaves finally open their emerald eyes.

The murmurs from the ivory depths start to fade. To the soils they will return, back to dust where pain no longer sang, setting the chest of ivory free in the evergreen plains and sky faced waves.

A Mine Disaster's Legacy

Susan Boroskin

I was but a child when the mine collapsed. The date was March 3, 1872, just four years after the Avondale Mine disaster. The small community in which I resided, after hearing about the horrors at Avondale, never would have believed it could happen to us - to me. My mother, whenever Avondale came up in discussion, would say "Hush now, Billy. We don't want no bad luck here."

Avondale was a stone's throw away from my hometown of Scranton, Pennsylvania. Lackawanna, our mine was called, which meant "stream that forks", a reference to the Lackawanna River that did fork. It went up in 1860, five years before the end of the Civil War, five years before my father knew what it felt like to feel safe in his own home, without the threat of being kidnapped because of the color of his skin.

When word came around that African Americans were finally free from the oppressive, far-reaching constraints and fears of slavery, he picked me up, as I was only around 6 years old at the time, light enough to be thrown around, and hollered so all of our white neighbors could hear, that what had been owed had been paid. I never fully understood the meaning behind those words, but I knew they were important.

After he set me down, he sang a song he had picked up during a brief trip to Oklahoma to meet a man named Wallace Willis for some reason or another. The song, "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" was about escaping, physically from the bonds of slavery or religiously to the waiting arms of Jesus. My father sounded like God himself when he opened his mouth and let freedom ring out. With nothing but his voice, the sounds that came out when he sang "I looked over Jordan and what did I see" was as emotionally swooping as the frequent change in notes. The tempo, slow but methodical, allowed any listener to follow along with the chorus of "Coming for to carry me home"

But after the mine collapsed, I was never again gifted with hearing the sound of my father's voice, talking or singing, yelling or whispering. Working in the coal mine was the only job a white

man would give my father, and even then, he was often given the hardest, most dangerous tasks that coal mining had to offer. I often heard him praying late at night, asking God to save me from his way of life, to provide for me, and take care of me. Those prayers have now disappeared with my father's body.

A song created for the Avondale disaster, and named after it, circulated and spread before our mine collapsed. I later understood it not only as a tribute to the people lost to the depths of the mine but also as a warning about mining's dangers to future generations. When I first heard the song, the tale about the "A hundred and ten of brave strong men [who] Were smothered underground", I knew the song was about loss and grief but I only associated that grief with Avondale and no other mine. "The women and their children" who had no thoughts of the danger and death soon to come, could never be my mother and I. Or so I thought.

The song spread, as many songs did, through word-of-mouth in my small town. Cousins and distant relations of the poor souls lost mourned through singing, and for a while, that song with its large range of high and low notes could be heard anywhere near a tavern or a bar. The vibrato brought tears to many eyes, and at some points, the lyrics ceased to be sung and were shouted down the streets for every ear to hear. No one would soon forget the story of Avondale.

I remember clearly on the morning of our tragedy, my mother embracing my father before he went to the mine per usual. But on that particular morning, my father had forgotten to take his lunch with him. After the disaster, my mother blamed herself for the longest time. "If only I'd brought his lunch to him earlier, called him up out of the depths of that mine, maybe he'd still be here." Then she would burst into tears. Nothing I said could console her. When she realized he had left his lunch, the sun had already passed its peak. She threw on her shawl and grabbed my arm. I whined, begging her to let me stay home, hindering her every footstep. I also blame myself in part for delaying her. Finally, she scolded me hard enough to make me put on my coat, for it was still quite chilly, and dragged me out of the house as fast as I could go. But my fastest was not fast enough.

When we reached the mine, a small crowd had already

gathered. My mother asked one of our neighbors what was going on. "A large noise came from the mine. We're worried it might a been the structure collapsin'. That there mine's old, ya know." He shook his head in pity, already having given up hope. My mother stood stock-still, shocked beyond words. The whirring of the shaft's elevator brought her out of her stupor and she dragged me to the front of the amassing crowd. "Where's my husband? What's happened?" The miners coming out of the shaft were covered in rubble, blackened from head to toe so you could hardly tell if they were black or white. "There's been an accident, ma'am. Please step back." That was the only explanation we got until much later that evening, when the torches and lanterns were snuffed out, signaling the end of the desperate search for survivors. My father never came out of the mine again.

Whenever I hear someone singing the "Avondale Mine Disaster" song, my heart flutters in my chest. Whenever voices join the chorus, I cannot help but join in too. I sing for the souls lost to Avondale as much as I sing for those lost to Lackawanna. Whenever I hear "Swing Low Sweet Chariot", I cannot help but smile and recall my father's voice as he sang with joy and pride. I often hope he could see me now, graduated from school, with a career as a teacher, far from any mines. I hope he would be proud that his prayer has come true.



Untitled

Blessing Bonnoh Makieu
Photography

A Daughter Never Grows

Katya Aliev

Stroking her soft black hair
She's just a babe again
Melting into my arms
Eyes shut and soft breathing
I watch her age dissolve
Dark silky hair the same
As twenty years before.



On the Road by Dawn

Eric Goss



Lost Attraction

Ishaan Ramola

Photography

byshanu on Instagram

Fools' Gold

R. Nair

From the yacht's cabin
Neon lights are Miami.
The oligarch leers.

Sunflower Fields

Stella Biles

Sunflower you see
The blue sky and me
Soon you'll grow so tall
That nothing will matter at all

When you're in the fields
You can't see past to the trees
And the way it feels
Is like a million falling seeds

Sunflower you hear
A ringing in your ear
Soon you'll grow so strong
That you will hear my song

Your life will hold so much more
Than the shapes you draw on the bathroom floor
Some may surpass you, others may not
But just worry about you
You're all that you've got

Sunflower you dream
Of a love that you've never seen
You might think you'll come of nothing
But darling let me tell you, this is only the beginning

Drip drip drip

Katya Aliev

Drip drip drip

Water is leaking
The faucet sound
Covering my sound
Of illness and

Splash splash

It spreads out
Covers my clothes
Sickness all over
Myself, my bathroom

Flush flush

My problems away
Until they reappear
Hiding in shadows
Of ill-fitted clothes

Drip drip drip

My guts falling
Out my mouth
Into the bowl
Mirror says "more"

Splash splash

Onto the floor
Knees can't stand
My weight anymore
I'll do better

Flush flush

I need glory;
Just a civilian
In the battle
Of the bodies.



Pressure

Makayla Castillo

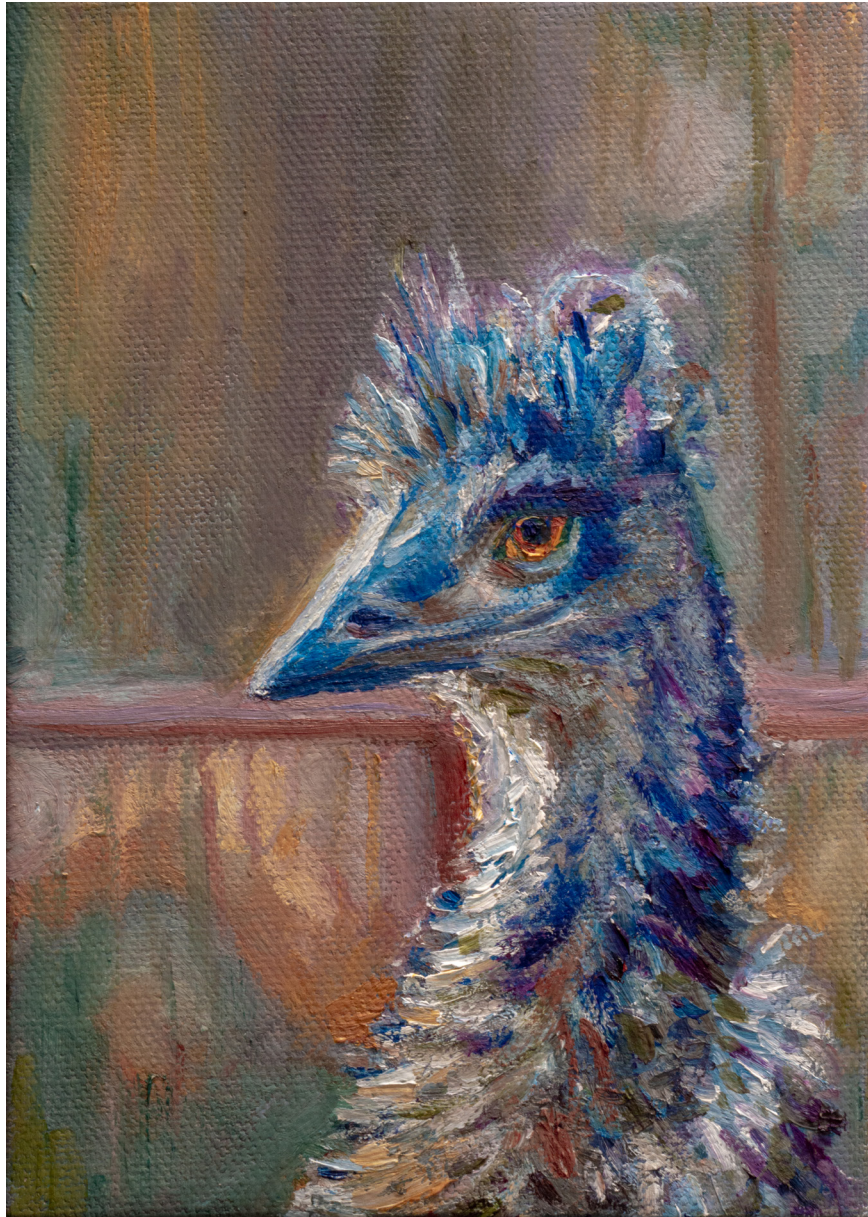
Alcohol Markers on Paper
mjoycreative on Instagram



Absorption

Makayla Castillo

Alcohol Markers on Paper
mjoycreative on Instagram



A Cheeky Smirk

Xin Ray
Oil Painting

THE NOISE!

Eleanor Smedberg

ringing around every
mini moment moving slowly
making messy minutes
(making me within it)
can you hear the noise?

so commanding
(do you listen?)
permanent & sure of
its demanding, neatly given:
tie up attention
(kill apprehension)

alone is lonely
without noise
to keep my empty company
i prefer to keep the peace
(& have my thinking done for me)

Eating Lunch Outside

Josie Lunsford

Oak trees loom above
A resigned girl sits, swallows
a fistful of raw deadlines

Her nails squeeze the blood
from broke and wearied fingers
In a dream she is sleeping



Untitled

Blessing Bonnoh Makieu
Photography