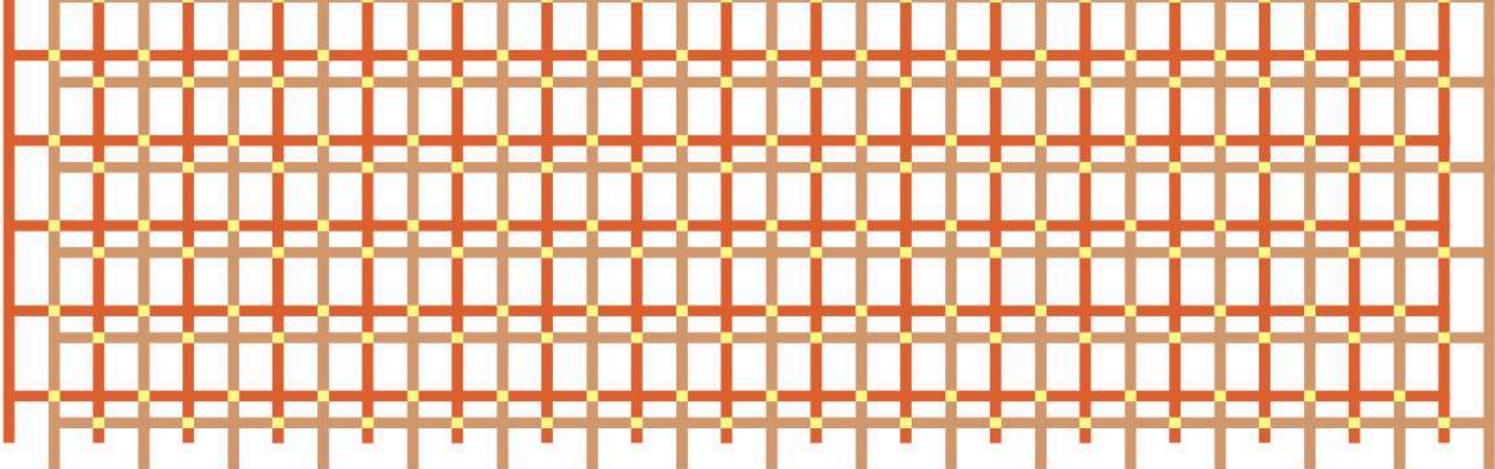


the

magazine

vol 1. spring 2022



Foreward	3	Aidan Williams	Paleta Politics	4	Boone Mayer			
On Trying	7	Matthew Tracey-Cook	Vegan Earl Grey Cake	10	Conner Vontana			
Jake's Corner	14	Jake Kaliszewski	Collected Poetry	18	Alyssa Brouwer	Related Art	20	Trevor Jensen
Ode to the Wild	23	Luis Leon	Why Economists Sound Stupid	30	Samuel Lindquist			
Reflections From a 93 Year Old	34	Joanne Williams	My Desert Cathedral	39	Nicholas Amendola	Screen-Printed Restorations	42	Luigi Pensa
Daylight Savings NYC, 2022	46	Levi Bolton	Spot, a Giraffe of Oakland	47	Howard Fields			
Poetry & Collages	50	Junj Lepe	Non-Malicious Following	52	Sam A.			

foreword

aidan williams

a letter from the editor

In early 2020, I made my first song with two of my friends, Nicholas Amendola and Matthew Tracey-Cook titled “Empty.” The song, now painful for me to listen back to with or without company, attempts to describe the malaise I, and many of my friends felt at UC Santa Cruz in the midst of a wildcat strike by academic student employees, the looming threat of Covid-19, the beginning of what would be 14 months of online education and the creeping sense that the safety of college life would be upended and our adult lives would begin. Amateurishly and filled with sardonicism, I talk-sing through a list of things that “scare me” over Matthew’s organ melody and Nick’s guitar riffs. Empty, and its following “hit” single, Cocaine Socialist, were the humble beginnings of what I call Camper. It is a bit ridiculous to speak in any way of Camper when my own family doesn’t even know that “Camper” is the namesake I release music under. But I don’t blame them for not knowing what Camper is because I still don’t know what Camper is. It’s also pretty embarrassing to adorn oneself with a moniker when you only have three songs and a half-baked idea for a magazine. The only distinct aspect of Camper as I write this is an impressive logo designed by Jake.

Then what can Camper be? What do I want Camper to contain? What do we do? In an endless grind to figure out what I am good at and to make something that is bigger than me, I hope to make Camper a spotlight of the interesting, creative, and driven people I get the opportunity of knowing. Whether it be following strangers in London, the popsicle industry in Mexico, climbing rocks in central California, the life of a giraffe or the life of a 93 year old, or even a delightful cake, the Camper Magazine should capture the smaller, yet compelling bits of life. It is not an outdoor magazine, though it may contain the outdoors. In this first volume, many of the contributors are people who also went to UC Santa Cruz and many of them, I have already collaborated with on songs and films. What makes Camper so fun is its amorphous nature and it’s indeterminate future.

The most important aspect of the magazine, then, are the stories we tell and the enjoyment of you, the reader. Recently, on one of my many break-ins into Jake’s art school through a tactful method of ID card deliveries, we took a look at their extensive magazine collection, gathering data on our competitors.

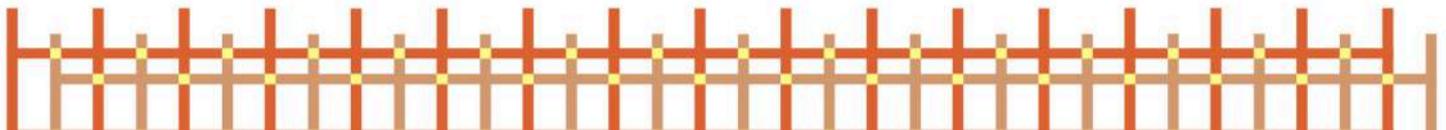
Hundreds, if not thousands of periodicals covered the shelves of the library, neatly categorized by subject and year going back to the early 1970s. The quantity of unread magazines on every subject that now sit, collecting dust on the mostly unbothered third floor of the Central Saint-Martins library attacked my confidence. I realized that making a magazine be successful was not a good idea.

Why make a magazine then, when few read them? Why start a magazine when since 2007, the periodical industry’s revenue shrunk by nearly 44%? Are people willing to find and read a wide-topiced magazine organized by unpaid amateurs? On the Wikipedia page for the top 100 widest circulated magazines in the U.S., the only three founded in the 2010s were Veterans Today Magazine, Dr. Oz the Good Life, and HGTV Magazine. Magazines that aim to succeed financially are already integrated into popular entertainment and news, which is why Camper Magazine will never be a business. We are doing this for fun. Especially for those of us that are recently out of college and still finding our bearings, a project like a magazine fulfills a nostalgic desire for focused creativity and assignments on a deadline as well as, hopefully, a sense of pride in an interesting and attractive final project.

The magazine itself will have both a limited printing run and a full fledged web interface. Physical copies will be printed at my own expense and sold at cost to anyone that wants them. I will start with a limited production of just 70 copies and print more given demand. The magazine will be available for free on the studiocamper.net, which I am programming myself, and will (eventually) be interactive with videos, images, music, and functional links.

Since you have read my entire forward, you might be willing to read the rest of the magazine, which I hope you do. My friends have been so generous with their time to contribute their work for free. If you do enjoy this, please share it with others and tell them about the website.

Introducing: Camper Magazine.



Paleta Politics

Boone Mayer

A taste of Mexico

Damn near every time I walk past a paletería, a Mexican popsicle shop, I stop and buy one. With hundreds of paleterías here in Mexico City, this happens a couple times a week.

Most paleterías have a layout similar to an ice-cream shop, with a single employee sitting behind the counter. Nestled in a glass display case are popsicles of all colors. Some shops offer mini popsicles. Niche paleterías sell poptails (cocktail paletas) or pulque paletas (pulque is the indigenous alcoholic drink of Mexico). I'm pretty sure I've seen a THC paleta before.

I usually point at a paleta that looks appealing and ask what flavor it is. Half the time I pick one I don't know, either because it doesn't translate, like mamey (Mexican apricot), or because it's an unusual flavor that I am not familiar with, like tuna (prickly-pear, not the fish). Sometimes this leads me to pick something odd, like what I can only guess was a date popsicle with inedible rock-hard seeds inside and a flavor more sugary than anything. Usually it leads me to something good, like cajeta, or goat-cheese caramel. Other times I go with the classics- fresa con crema (strawberries and cream), lime, or coffee.

I hand the person behind the counter twenty-some pesos (thirty in hipsterville), a little over a dollar, and they cut off the tissue paper wrapping. I look for somewhere to sit down, but often don't find anywhere until I'm just holding the stick.

Paletas are creamier and richer than standard American popsicles, and often have chunks of fruit or nuts inside. You can bite a chunk out of a paleta without murdering your teeth, and sometimes it's more satisfying way to eat them that way.

My favorite so far, cappuccino & almond, has a sweet sticky residue on the outside, crunched up almonds on the inside, and a pungent coffee flavor. Cajeta comes in a close second, but it's not a reliable pick.

Almost every paletería in Mexico City, and many across the world, share the name "La Michoacana," or some variation. This name association is so strong that I once crossed the street to go to a barbecue restaurant called "La Flor de Michoacan" (I'm



vegetarian). There are an estimated 8,000-15,000 paleterías "Michoacanas" in Mexico. Several chains compete for legal ownership of the name, but most Michoacanas are independent family-run businesses loosely connected to each other.

The pioneers of the paleta business came from Tocumbo, a small town in the state of Michoacan. Michoacan is an agricultural center, where farmers grow limes, avocados, strawberries, sugar and other fruits. As the story goes, during the Great Depression, Rafael Malfávon, a popsicle vendor in Tocumbo, started adding fruit chunks to his paletas. His creations instantly became a hit. He taught other Tocumbanos how to make his recipes, and at some point, some migrated to Mexico City and opened their own paleterías. Their paletas were tastier, fruitier and cheaper than foreign imports. One of these early paleterías was named "La Michoacana," and the name stuck.

These paletterías quickly became popular, making profits for their owners. Once they had stable businesses they lent money to other Tocumbanos to start their own paletterías, requiring little collateral and forgiving late payments. When the next generation succeeded, they passed the favor on. This financial network, standing apart from inaccessible and extractive bank loans, enabled Tocumbanos to spread paletterías across Mexico and beyond.

Their paletterías were so successful that Tocumbo grew (relatively) wealthy, and was largely spared the hardship that drove waves of immigration to the United States in the 1950s. Its church was designed by a famous architect (it's quite ugly), all of its roads are paved, and it has a public pool- luxuries in small town Mexico. In 1970, a third of paletterías were still owned and operated by Tocumbanos, a stunning total given that the town's population is about 10,000 today. Since the 1980s, Tocumbo has hosted a festival of paletas, which attracted 12,000 visitors, many of whom are returning palettería owners. The town continues to bear the association of the homeland of paletas, and some of the riches.

The communal spirit of the Tocumbano palettería owners and the lack of copyright law in Mexico when “La Michoacana” first popped off meant that there was little focus on patenting brands and safeguarding traditions. Those days are gone.

The logo of many different chains is a variation of a purple-haired Purépecha girl eating an ice cream (the Purépecha are an indigenous group from Michoacan). In the United States, there have been more than eighteen attempts to patent this logo. Over the past ten years, several groups have battled in court over the rights to both name and image. In the US, Paletterías Michoacana, founded by two immigrants from Jalisco, another Mexican state, has thwarted repeated lawsuits from Tocumbano paleta companies claiming their version of the logo is appropriation and brand piracy. One of these Tocumbano paletterías, owned by Malfávon's own niece, has lost the rights to use their version of the Purépecha girl logo in the US.



This same Paletterías Michoacana has dominated the US market, mass-producing paletas despite objections and criticism (some competitors essentially calling their products sugarwater trash). You can find their paletas at Walmart, Costco, Walgreens and Mexican markets across the US. They manufacture the lime and coconut popsicles I've always enjoyed from 7-Eleven. Their website's tagline: “the #paletaexperience is sharing the tradition of flavor exploration with those that matter most.”

It's easy to see the founders of Paletterías Michoacana as villains who have stolen the image and culinary tradition of Tocumbanos for profit. But they started selling paletas out of a pushcart in the Central Valley. I can't fault them for finding a way to make a better life for themselves and their families. I can't fault the Tocumbanos for being mad either.

In Mexico, chains are just starting to consolidate the popsicle industry. A few corporations offer franchising opportunities. These chains' paletas often come prepackaged in plastic, and tend to be icier and less fruity than independent stores. I like these less, but they'll do in a pinch. I worry, though, that these corporations will drive out smaller businesses, and the dream of owning your own shop is becoming less achievable. An online article offering advice for aspiring palettería owners listed a complete lack of creative control and higher upfront costs as two major cons to opening a franchise as opposed to an independent shop.

If franchises take over, the initial conditions that allowed Rafael Malfávon to invent the modern paleta, and his protégés to spread it, might be eliminated. Innovation and stability might be crushed under monopolies and conformity.

I doubt that independent stores will ever be fully eliminated, because there's so damn many, and consumers can tell what they like, especially since independent stores' paletas are not more expensive than franchises. Nevertheless, the spread of corporate paletterías is a threat to small businesses.



For me, there's nothing like a standard "La Michoacana."

Maybe it's okay that the Tocumbano tradition has become diluted. It was always inevitable that their invention would change as it became popular, that it would become commercialized, that branding and copyright would become important. The paleteros of Tocumbo brought prosperity to their town by creating a delicious culinary staple and helping each other out. Maybe that's enough.

It's hard to say if the initial wave of paleterías was really all that utopian anyway. Every article has a different take on the institution, along with a different set of facts and a different origin story. One version said that Rafael Malfávon charged loanshark rates to other Tocumbano entrepreneurs and ended up murdered. Another said that the early paleteros charged exceedingly low rates. Some versions say that Tocumbano paletas weren't even a thing until much later.

Everyone uses the story of the paleta to serve their own purpose. For all "Michoacanas," the story connects them to a tradition that helps them market their products to customers. A link to the original Tocumbanos provides the veneer of authenticity to Mexican paleta fans, even if it's just a name or a distant family member. For the American-based Paleterías Michoacan, the #paletaexperience provides cultural background that people of Mexican heritage might relate to and gueros might find appealing. For some business people, it serves as an example of the "backwardness" of Mexican financial culture; for leftists, mutual aid and the perversion of capitalism. For Tocumbanos, it's the story of their town's identity.

These differing motivations shape different stories. There will always be fierce debate between people for whom paletas are truly important, and with little concrete facts, everyone will continue telling their own story of "La Michoacana."

On Trying

Matthew Tracey-Cook

Reflections from a former future pro cyclist

When I was in high school I was a bicycle racer, and the sport made up my entire identity. From first period class I was already planning my afternoon training route on the website Strava, not interested in trigonometry. In the halls between classes I was a strange kid. If people knew anything about me, it was that I was absorbed in a very un-American sport they didn't understand or care about.

Bike racing wasn't all that mattered to me. I also cared deeply about a beautiful young woman in my grade, a preoccupation that caused me distress and pleasant daydreams in equal measure. I listened to lots of angsty indie music and thought about her. I would spend the other half of trigonometry hoping to meet her near the water fountain.

I strategized how I would manage to get a date, but the end of high school came and it never happened. I didn't ask her out. Worse, I think she actually asked me out to the movies once sophomore year, and I said that I couldn't, I had a bike race coming up and had to be training.

But then bike racing also fell apart, because I herniated a disc in my back. I had no idea how to deal with it, but I figured there had to be some clear solution. I took various supplements, but they didn't seem to help. I got into stretching, but I stretched too much and made the problem worse. I thought a lot about how to make it better, and became progressively grumpier.

Around the time I left for college I realized that I cared too much. There were two things that mattered a lot to me, and they were so important that I couldn't function, so I decided that I needed to not care at all.

What actually happened, though, was that I continued to try very hard. I still cared deeply about cycling, but instead tried to convince myself that it didn't matter all that much, because I had concluded that this was the key to success. When I looked around and saw successful people, they all looked like they didn't try very hard. I had a competitor on the mountain bike racing circuit who had always been much faster than me, and on the internet he certainly looked like he didn't care. My new strategy was partly based around emulating this guy, who lived rent-free in my head. There was Chris, popping a wheelie across the

finish line in first place, or doing some charity event, or just chilling, clearly not caring about something as simple as bike racing. He won and made it look easy, and he was gracious about it, and I was bitter.

When I think back to reasons I fell in love with cycling, I would be lying if I said it had nothing to do with winning. From a young age I wanted to go faster than other people. Initially winning came easily, because I was racing against people who preferred to ride most of the time at a more leisurely pace. This got me hooked on the validation that came with coming first. Then the pond got bigger, the races got more competitive, and initially I rose to the challenge. I was still a teenager, and my young heart was full of romantic attachment to the sacrifice and the almost ascetic commitment to a sport that rewards whoever can suffer the most for the longest. I knew that if I could put my head down and shut everything else out, I could probably win bigger stuff.

At the same time, I also liked the pain. Somehow I was drawn to it. Lots of spiritual practices involve rejecting earthly pleasures. We glorify hermit artists and join weird cults. Some of us wake up at 5 am, take an ice bath and go for a run. I know that I wouldn't have been able to sustain constant solo training if there wasn't something else buried in the experience beyond the hope of winning. I became addicted to the kind of blissful exhaustion that came after a really hard session. It felt like physical evidence of some meaningful accomplishment.

I also found that the more I subjected myself to this kind of pain, the more I could have days where I didn't need to try very hard, but could still go very fast. It built up this invisible well of strength that would sometimes make itself known. This is a natural outcome of the training process, where your body takes on damages, heals, and in the process builds back slightly stronger. But it isn't a linear process, and good legs can be hard to predict. Sometimes I would be struggling on a ride on a dreary day, having long ago accepted that today things would be uncomfortable. Then a good song would come on and the sun would come out, and I would suddenly feel this overwhelming sense of peace. My muscles would fall into an easy rhythm, my mind would settle down, and I would go faster without any conscious input.

About five years ago, towards the end of high school, I did a race where the elements all fell into place. It was that magical mixture of enough training and the right headspace at the right time. The race itself was long, with four laps of varying terrain, wind exposure, and road quality, with the main feature being McEwen Hill, a 1-mile stretch of road that rose sharply up a canyon back to the start. I had ridden the course a few times and decided that this would be my launch pad.

Things began slowly. My competitors pedaled by, taking unnecessary sips of water and looking at each others' calf muscles. Some initial moves were allowed to



go, but the unforgiving wind brought the dreamers back. The first time up McEwen hill, I found myself in a great position, smoothly covering attacks, carefully watching near the front to make sure nobody got out of hand. I felt casually strong and powerful. The pack was whittled down a bit by the top, but had mostly come back together by the next lap, just in time to be shelled by a couple attacks. I rode to the front, didn't look back, crested the top, and realized I was alone, with nobody in sight. I spent the final thirty miles in a private world of adrenaline, excitement and pain, staring at my front wheel. When I crossed the finish line, I had plenty of time to plan my victory salute.

By the end of college, instead of continuing this winning streak and achieving speedy cycling nirvana, I had basically given up on bike racing. I remember my last race very clearly. It was a criterium, which is about an hour and twenty minutes of flat out racing around a couple city blocks in downtown Oakland, my hometown. It was the last major event of the racing season, so the field was big. Warming up around the course, I noticed a decent number of weird obstacles, including an open manhole with a cone sticking out, which made me nervous. Immediately after the race began, I found myself wishing I was somewhere else. The ebb and flow of the peloton, which has a certain rhythmic, cyclical nature to it, felt foreign. When gaps opened up I wasn't able to close them without a huge effort. With five laps to go, I was nearly dropped from the race when I noticed I had a very slightly leaking rear tire. I could have easily finished, but instead I pulled off to the side and, to my everlasting shame, emptied the rest of the air out of the tire, then walked back to my car.

Tyler Hamilton, the American cyclist who raced with Lance Armstrong in the early 2000s, wrote a juicy memoir where he described the whole motivation behind doping, what it gave you, and how you felt. He pointed out that for different cheating methods, pain meant different things. Blood transfusions were a favorite practice among teams in the 90's and 2000s for their relative undetectability.

When Hamilton tried it for the first time, he felt sluggish. But he later found out that transfusions allowed for a sort of pain "override switch". Normal bodily signals indicating that a rider had reached his limit could be simply ignored, or transcended. This brought Hamilton into an entirely new world of pain, but also allowed him to keep going faster and longer, far past the point where his normal heart and legs would have simply given up.

A couple years before I quit racing, a cyclist in the 45+ masters category from near where I grew up was busted for the blood-boosting drug EPO. Apparently this is nothing new. A 2015 article in The Guardian, self-evidently titled "Middle-Aged businessmen are winning amateur cycling events on EPO", cited a report from the international cycling union claiming that amateur doping is becoming endemic. I never was approached about doping, and at the time I figured either I wasn't good enough to be approached, or doping wasn't actually that endemic. But something about it became understandable. I lost my ability to win, and I gained the ability to empathize with the sad desperation.

That's the unfortunate thing about trying harder. Sometimes, the more you try, the more you receive, but other times the effort leads you to fall on your face. It's hard to know at the outset which you'll get. Ideally you're supposed to know yourself well enough to approximate your chances, but that isn't really how obsession works. You get consumed, and everything else is just details.

The other day I went for my first long bike ride in about a year. It was the first sunny day in London after a

cold and wet winter, and the roads had dried out enough to cycle without getting your ass soaked. I crossed tower bridge, weaving in and out of the mid-afternoon traffic, dodging a selfie stick, jumping over potholes. There are fewer potholes in the United Kingdom than there are in America, but they still exist. I made my way over to Victoria park and hopped onto the canal trail, then started off north. I was listening to Bob Dylan, and started feeling wistful. I was also moving along at a good clip, and my legs felt light and springy. "This is great," I thought to myself. "I'm probably going really fast, and I feel good." I pedaled harder, zooming around walkers. "Maybe I could win some races!"

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Vegan Earl Gray Cake

Conner Vontana

A delicious treat with macerated figs and lemon cream icing



A cake that will make any rainy day feel like spring, a cake to enjoy while lounging in the nude, a cake so wonderful you'll make it for your mom's birthday and end up digging in with your hands.

I cannot admit to earl grey being a flavor I immediately gravitate towards when it comes to baked goods, but there is something so satisfying about pairing the tea's robust flavor with its lemon buttercream, citrus counterpart. This recipe is one that I adore setting aside an afternoon to myself for, getting lost in the rhythm of combining, whipping, and simmering, attuned to recognize when each step reaches its ideal form. For me, baking is a meditative process that transforms into an extroverted affair. I love to make this cake as a wholesomely selfish opportunity to spend time with myself before celebrating and connecting with others over a slice.

Actually important details:

Before you begin the cake making process, I recommend soaking the dried figs overnight in alcohol to achieve authentic ~maceration.~ However, if you're in a pinch for time you can skip this step and jump straight to simmering the figs on a very low heat with all of the ingredients besides alcohol. I will say that soaking them overnight does not yield a boozy fruit, but beautifully rounds out the acidity of the jammy end result. Better yet, if figs are in season, celebrate by omitting this step and chopping up some fresh ones to layer in between the cakes. I find that blueberries pair nicely, especially with the macerated fruit, to contribute an additional sense of brightness to your heavenly creation.

1. Begin by steeping the earl grey tea in boiling water. You can use a bowl or mug, just try to keep it covered while you let it rest for 15 minutes. Then, remove the tea bags, giving them a squeeze to remove any extra liquid, and measure 1 cup of tea in a medium bowl to set aside for the cake. If there's excess, feel free to discard.

2. In your measuring device or a small bowl, combine the plant milk and vinegar, also letting this rest a few minutes to curdle.

3. Preheat your oven to 350°F or 175°C.

4. Grease the bottoms and sides of 2 8 inch cake pans - I like to use vegan butter. You can then dust the pans with flour or use parchment paper to cut out circles that will properly tuck into the bases of the pans.

5. Add the plant milk, vinegar, oil, and vanilla extract to the tea and combine.

6. Sift the flour into a large bowl, then stir in the sugar, baking soda, baking powder, and salt.

7. Creating a well in your dry ingredients, stir in 1/3 of your liquid ingredients at a time to ensure your batter does not end up overly runny. If you find that it appears too thin, go ahead and add 1-2 tablespoons of flour.

8. Divide the batter evenly between the 2 cake pans and bake for 35-38 minutes. The cakes are ready when a toothpick or skewer is inserted and comes out clean. In the meantime, start working on your figs and frosting!

9. Allow your cakes to cool for 10 minutes before gently removing from their pans. Despite how tempting it may be, do not frost until completely cooled!

Earl Grey Cake

- 6 earl grey tea bags
- 1.5 cups boiling water
- 1 cup plant milk of your choice
- 1 1/2 tablespoons vinegar*
- 3/4 cup neutral oil
- 2 tablespoons vanilla extract
- 3 cups all purpose flour
- 1 cup sugar*
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoon salt

Recipe Notes

- Either apple cider or white vinegar will do just fine

- If you or your friends are ultra vegans, be sure to use unrefined or cane sugar!



Macerated Figs

- Dried figs (14 in alcohol) 12 without*
- About 1 cup of brandy or whiskey*
- Juice and zest from ½ a lemon*
- ½ cup orange juice*
- Pinch of salt*

1. Macerate the dried figs in brandy or whiskey overnight, letting the figs soak in enough alcohol to keep them covered.

2. Remove the figs from the alcohol and add them to a small saucepan with the lemon zest, juice, orange juice, and salt. Bring to a simmer. About 6 minutes through, flip the figs over to ensure both sides are coated in juice. The figs are finished once they are soft, but not falling apart, and any remaining liquid resembles a glaze.

3. Once the figs are cool enough, chop into small pieces to layer in between the cakes.



Vegan Lemon Buttercream

- ½ cup (113 g) softened vegan butter***
- 2 ½ - 3 cups powdered sugar***
- Juice from 1 lemon (2-3 tablespoons)***



1. Using an electric mixer, beat the vegan butter until light and creamy. Then, add 2 tablespoons of lemon juice and combine.

2. Sift the powdered sugar ½ cup at a time into the mixture and continue beating until thoroughly incorporated. The frosting will appear thick, yet fluffy. You will know the ideal consistency is achieved when a scoop of frosting falls off your spatula after a tap or two on the rim of the bowl.

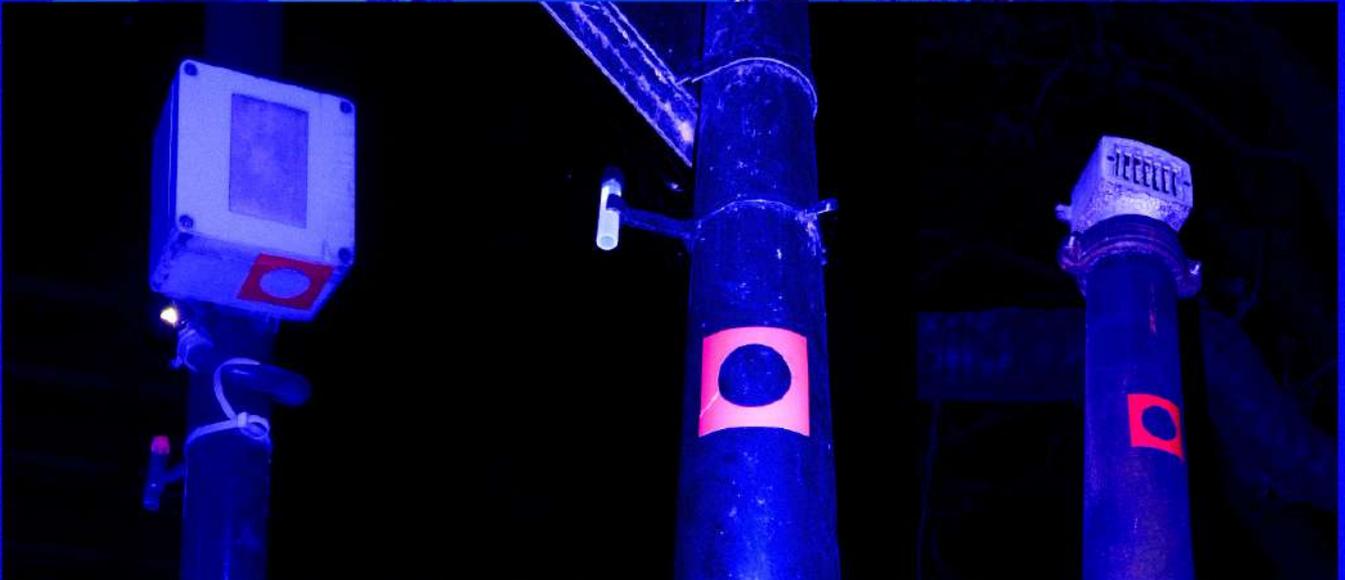
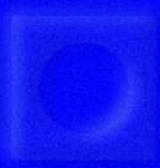
3. You'll know the frosting is the ideal consistency when it falls off the spatula with a few taps on the rim of the bowl.

Cake Assembly

Once your cakes are cooled to room temperature, slather one layer with the lemon buttercream, being sure to leave at least half of the frosting for the remainder of the cake. Next, scatter across your macerated (or fresh) figs, once again saving some to place on top. I prefer a nice coating of fruit here to make sure a piece makes its way into each bite. The next cake is stacked over the figs and once again covered in frosting. You can decide how much or how little you want to frost the sides, either creating an evenly coated or a minimal look. Lastly, decorate the top how you please! I sporadically distribute the remainder figs, blueberries, and some lemon zest or twists.

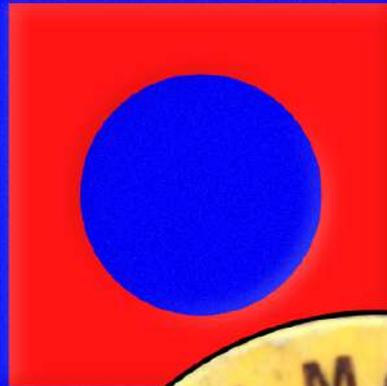
@connervontana





It is infrastructure on infrastructure, Boxes built on boxes; In tunnels, over roads; London is a medieval settlement galvanized by millennia of systems. To savor its sensory stink, look closely.

Look closely at these systems as they bubble through the cracks in the concrete, creep up light poles, and dangle above. In the city, one finds oneself crammed between objects; for the city is just as much for them as it is for you.



Here is a survey marker for anonymous sculptural objects of the city. It is my curation of pretty shite that together, make up a cities many unknown systems.

...
I was never any good at 2D graffiti; below is my attempt at sculptural graffiti. As friendly little municipal objects designed to do something, they will hopefully live long lives unnoticed by the pole police.



“ S C U L P T U R A L g r a f f i t t i ”



Pole Fruit 1
aluminum, wire, hoseclamps, m8
stainless steel rod, m8 zinc-
coated nuts, aluminum rivets
2022

Pole Fruit 2
aluminum, steel, copper coated
steel rod, hoseclamps, m6 zinc-
coated nuts/bolts
2022

Pole Fruit 3
aluminum, stainless steel, m6
nuts/bolts
2022

Jake Kaliszewski



Selected Poems

Alyssa Brouwer

Fragments of past and reflections of the present

San Jose

Every time I come back I am a 6,7,8
With big feelings that swallow me whole
My feet hang off the end of the pullout bed
Where I used to spend blistering summer nights
Hot tears rolling down my flushed cheeks
I always burned here

I could never self soothe self regulate
Winters were dry and the moistureless air demanded you suck in with might to breathe
there was never enough to keep me warm and the cold always found ways to slither under blankets and whisper
unwelcome truths
I'd shiver on the couch until my teeth chipped away and I could not speak
My seatbelt in your car would always lock
So I sat still and took shallow breaths as my belly pressed against it
I fantasized about rolling the window down to taste fresh air that wasn't yet heavy with your disdain for us
But I never worked up the courage to roll it down
So silently I gasped for air, while the heat slipped hands around my neck
There was no room for me here
So I'd squeeze myself into whatever corners I'd fit
And call mom to pour while she cooed softly telling me to shrink, shrink, keep shrinking
until they can not see you!
The three of us didn't stick together then
And I'd wet the bed and you'd wake up in your little sister's piss
Every summer I'd run a fever
Of 102,
And he'd stick me in a bed with purple letters on the door
That read "Katelyn's Room"
And I'd sweat through sheets and count down minutes
Until summer would end until winter would be over until my feet could press firmly on the ground without fear of being
too big

A quick trip and letting go

the open cement cooks in summers fury and might
I crawl from my neighborhood pool red-eyed and overwhelmingly alive
And lay there sprawled
The way the first lizard I ever caught did
until I squeezed too tight and his tail fell off
—cement blisters my mild skin now
When did heat begin to burn so sharply
He died soon after and we flushed his small green body down a shit-stained toilet
He swirled, gently
I imagine myself swirling too now, only I'm face up and smiling with all my limbs intact

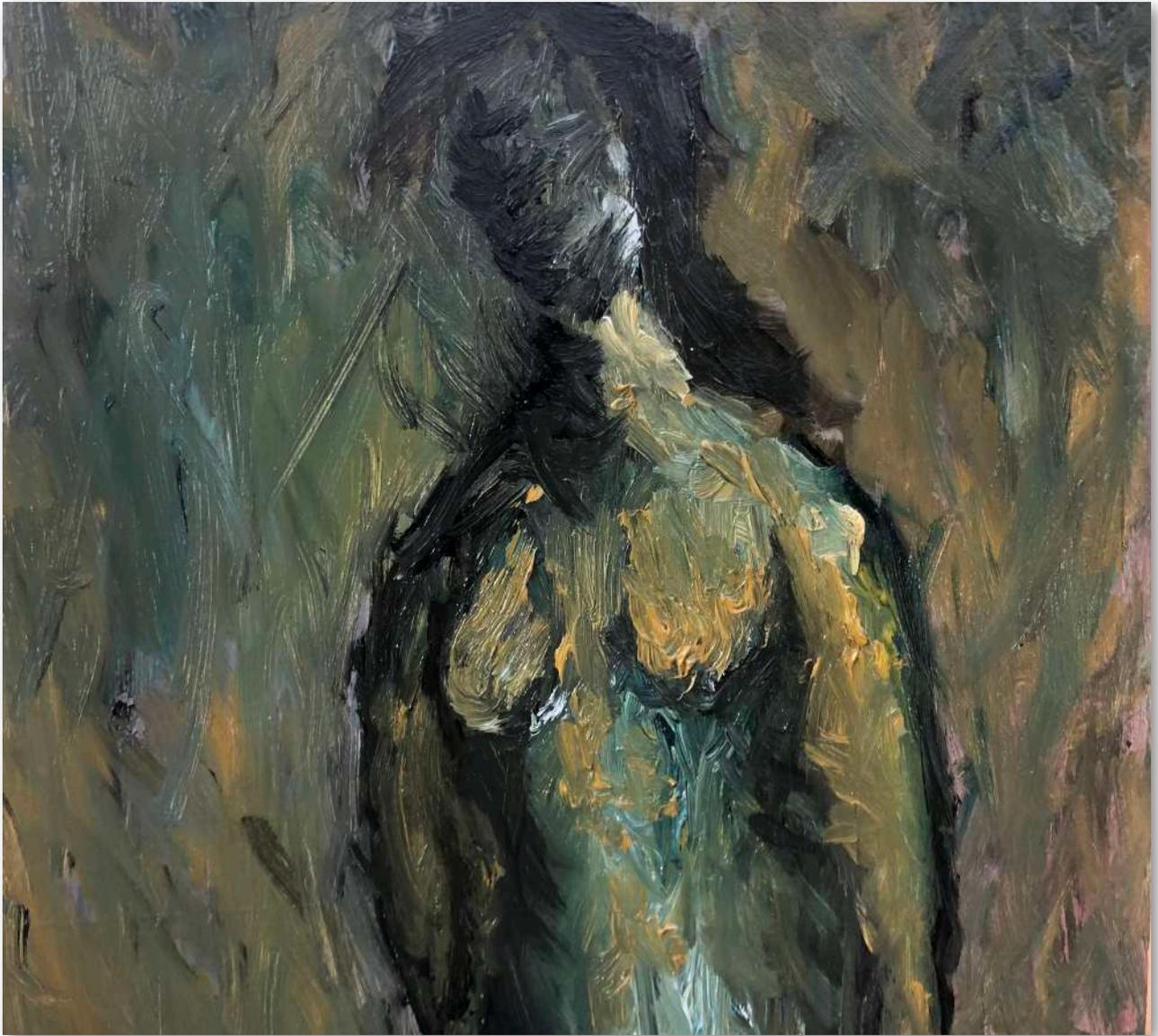
I've spared some happiness
stuffed it in pockets of rough denim jeans — hoping to find it crumpled up in when I need it
Instead, I find myself plundered into waiting rooms filled with monotonous linens and empty hallways
And when I reach into my pocket for the happiness I had saved
I find they are empty

It smells of my therapist's, sterile and untouched
I brought nothing to do
They hand me a board with outdated questions and a dried-up pen
It's hardly visible, despite my licking the tip and scribbling intently to coerce out any ink
So crudely I etch into the thin sheet of paper, infuriated that it could rip and I'd have to say so out loud
The nurse doesn't scowl
She doesn't bark or roll her eyes but there is a consuming disdain-- faint but it lingers in the air
Her neck is stiff
a gust of wind could shatter her and it would make no sound
I imagine her as dust particles only visible when the light hits just right
No attempts are made to acknowledge the hours I've spent waiting
So I smile in lieu of her self declared apathy
Doctors are notoriously late

To pass the time:
I've been to every memory that brought me here
my compass in favor of the north
I keep walking only to end up in different spots that feel the same
I wander in circles along the ridges of pink brain matter when I catch the neon exit sign out of the corner of my eye
She calls my name and looks around as if there are others waiting in the office

I wake in a body, foreign to me like god is to women
After all, I came from Adam's ribs
I am made from bones that do not belong to me
undressed and sprawled
on display baking in fluorescent lights
I drift elsewhere
It is summer and I lay on the cement to warm my belly
It does not burn and the relief I feel leaves no room for grieving





Artworks by Trevor Jensen

stories I tell

I am a storyteller by trade like my grandmother
when I speak I catch fire
my mother must stomp on me
until my bones become embers and I forget that like fire, I too need air
There is no heat
still, I burn and embers cry--whistle his name as if he has one as if he is not nameless now
as if he is one man as if he is not everywhere as if he is not the wolf at the end of my bed
dressed in the likeness of a sheep and speaking with the tongue of a martyr

I am no man.
I am my mother I am my sister
I have holes in my fingers and cracks in my palms-- I can not hold our tears
If I could we'd have water to drink and rivers to swim in

He spoke with apathy and reeked of lust
as if he did not have a baby sister
That howled along with the rest of us when ice-cold hands
clung around her throat the same as ours confusing her silence for consent
I tied myself in knots hoping he'd untangle nothing and go home mournful--mouth full of guilt

I imagine you vomiting up clumps of shame that look back at its creator with pity
With each heave, a convulsion of memory
of reality
comes gnawing at your heel
I am sure you can not look in mirrors without wincing at the beast you've cloaked
desperately adorned in white gowns of purity as if white can not be stained
As if white will baptize you
As if rationalizing your cruelty will bleach these stains
As if god is colorblind and can not see the red dripping from your hands

I am certain your mother hates you
When you swam in her belly for nine months she must have tasted how sour you'd become and spat you out like rancid
milk
But I do not blame her
I do not blame Eve for the sins of her sons
If I could hold her tears I would
If I could turn salt water into fresh, I'd offer her rivers to swim in with my sisters and me

@alycoolcat

Ode to the Wild

Luis Leon

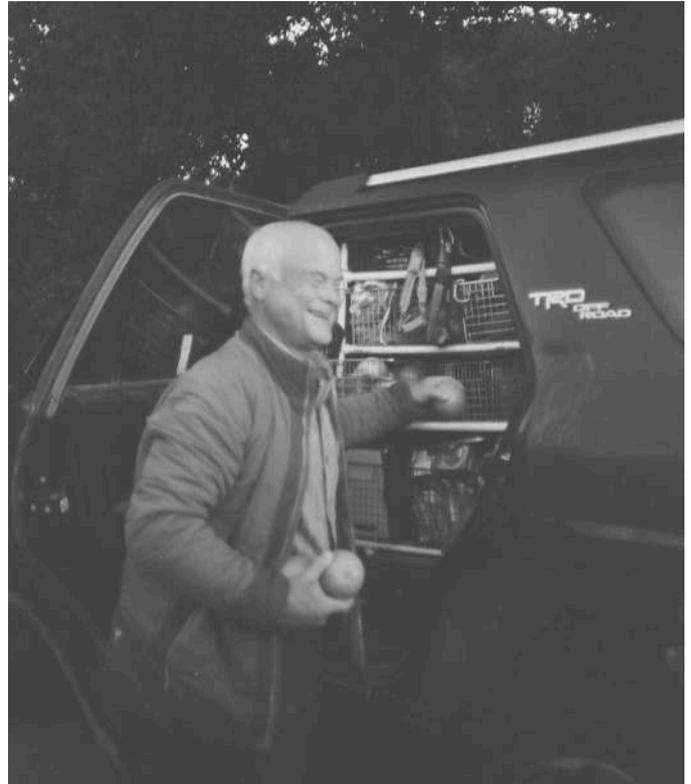
Two souls intertwined with nature

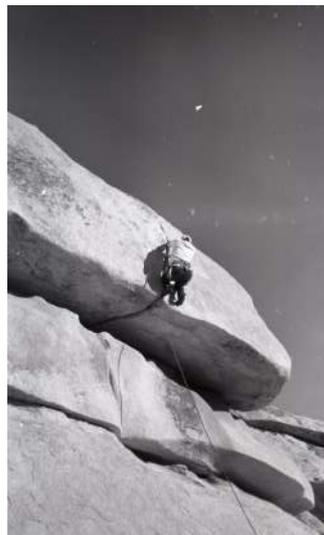
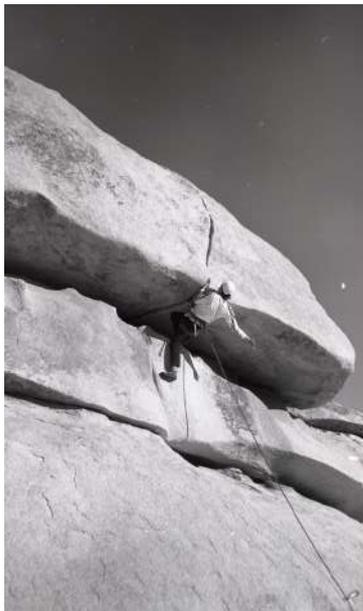
If you have easy access to the beautiful granite faces of Yosemite or the volcanic tuff walls of Bishop, you are fortunate. If you have access to great quality rock and a person to climb with, I'd consider you lucky.

Monterey Bay, nestled between the greater Gabilán Range, Santa Lucia Range, and the marine Monterey Canyon (West) does not offer the great granite giants that loom over the Yosemite valley or the tuffaceous rock found in Bishop. You will find little pockets of granite/feldspar along the Big Sur coast and the human-made walls that lie around Carmel, Monterey, Marina, and Prunedale. Even though Monterey Bay lacks the necessary geological formations for climbing, it does contain two of the best climbers and people, I know: Elliott Robinson and Remick Letcher.

Elliott is stout, strong, burly and bald, with forearms that rival Popeye's. He is centered and wise. You can find him climbing most days at the old Sanctuary Rock Gym, sometimes in a suit, but always socializing. He has climbed incredible heights with world-renowned climber Anatoli Boukreev, spent years dirtbagging in Yosemite, eating off of visitors' plates and has also spent much of his adult life managing multi-million dollar budgets as the Director of Social Services for Monterey County.

He began climbing in his teenage years, leading to his decision to attend Stanford over Harvard with it's relative proximity to the Yosemite Valley. While at Stanford, you could find Elliott building many of the campus buildings when not climbing in the wilderness. That's right, building or the act of scaling man-made structures rather than those nature made.





After many years of epic dodgy climbing, Elliott took a break from the rock after the death of Anatoli. Anatoli was killed in an infamous avalanche during a winter ascent of Annapurna in 1997. In the later years of his career, Elliott returned to climbing, but stayed away from the most daring climbs, opting for burly routes and scrambles. Since retiring a second time, Elliott has devoted more of his days to his artwork. It is often a mix of illustrations, poems, acrostics, and photography, all inspired by his experiences in the outdoors. Elliott's series *Art of Climbing* is an illustrative series based on a poem of his that explores the lessons and experiences derived from rock climbing; a look into presence, love, and one's understanding of consequence.

His main medium is pen/color pencil on paper. Common themes in Elliott's work are the dichotomy of consumed, corporate, modern life and the meeting of child-like wonder with a return to nature, all in bucolic expressionism. Elliott also spends time visiting his favorite outdoor spaces, sitting/napping in precarious natural geologic seats, and ultimately, adventure climbing by himself, with his wife Carol, or with old friends and new like our mutual pal Remick.

The chances of meeting someone by the name of Remick in your lifetime are low and so are the chances of meeting someone like him.

Remick is a walking dietary experiment that never fails to produce a healthy yield of gas. Yet he can charm the heck out of you, with or without Woody (his guitar). He often sports middle-parted long and sun-kissed wavy locks, a healthy permanent mustache and a filthy pair of pants (his philosophy: pants are wearable napkins). He grew up in the charming town of Auburn, CA. Skateboarding and surfing were his favorite pastimes growing up, but would also do occasional MCing in high school. Growing up in a town with exposure to the American River and the Auburn Quarry really cemented his appreciation in our natural lands.

Remick, however, didn't get into climbing until he was in college. DJ, a mutual friend of ours, invited him to climb the CSUMB campus wall located SE of the library. The holds were glued-on pieces of what I believe were broken tile. It was sharp, awkward, yet fun. Eventually, Remick began climbing at our local climbing gym, the Old Sanctuary Rock Gym; often skipping class to do so. Remick and Elliott met at Sanctuary and later decided to go on a very long walk through Big Sur's backcountry. They became good friends after that walk. Soon after, they began climbing outside and walked some more in the backcountry.

Remick is strong in his own respects. I received a phone call one weekday morning from Remick not too long after leaving the house with his bike. He was on route to work and was struck by a white SUV (he's



fine). Too often you hear about the dangers of distracted or careless drivers on the road creating unease for cyclists. This wasn't the case. Remick ran a red light to avoid arriving late to work, which, to put it lightly, backfired. I drove over and scooped him up, evading the emergency services vehicles that swarmed the area. He sustained injuries on the parts of his body that were used to brace the impact. His hands were badly scraped in addition to a bruised hip and elbow. The challenging injuries were to his head and the caved-in ring on his finger that had to be pried open to remove. He was in decent pain but relatively good spirits. Not just a week later, Remick was on the garage wall that we had built, climbing with one arm. This is how he operates. During a climbing road trip in the summer of 2019, Remick dislocated his shoulder at a skatepark in San Luis Obispo and was back to climbing a month later.

Despite their age difference and no familial relation, they are bonded by the wild. They often



opt out of wearing shoes while hiking and get into some heinous environments like the Soberanes Canyon Creek which is enveloped in poison oak, thorny blackberry vines, and stinging nettle. On one particular trek, Elliott and Remick went on an almost non-stop 30 mile hike to Ventana Double Cone from the Los Padres dam, at one point crawling and trudging through six miles of overgrown poison oak thicket that took six hours to get through. They traveled through a dead trail that has been overgrown for the past two





decades. Their journey took 25 hours and the two rested for only an hour during the trip, consuming raw jalapeños and beets for sustenance. Both are true modern hobbits. Wild and full of flatulence.

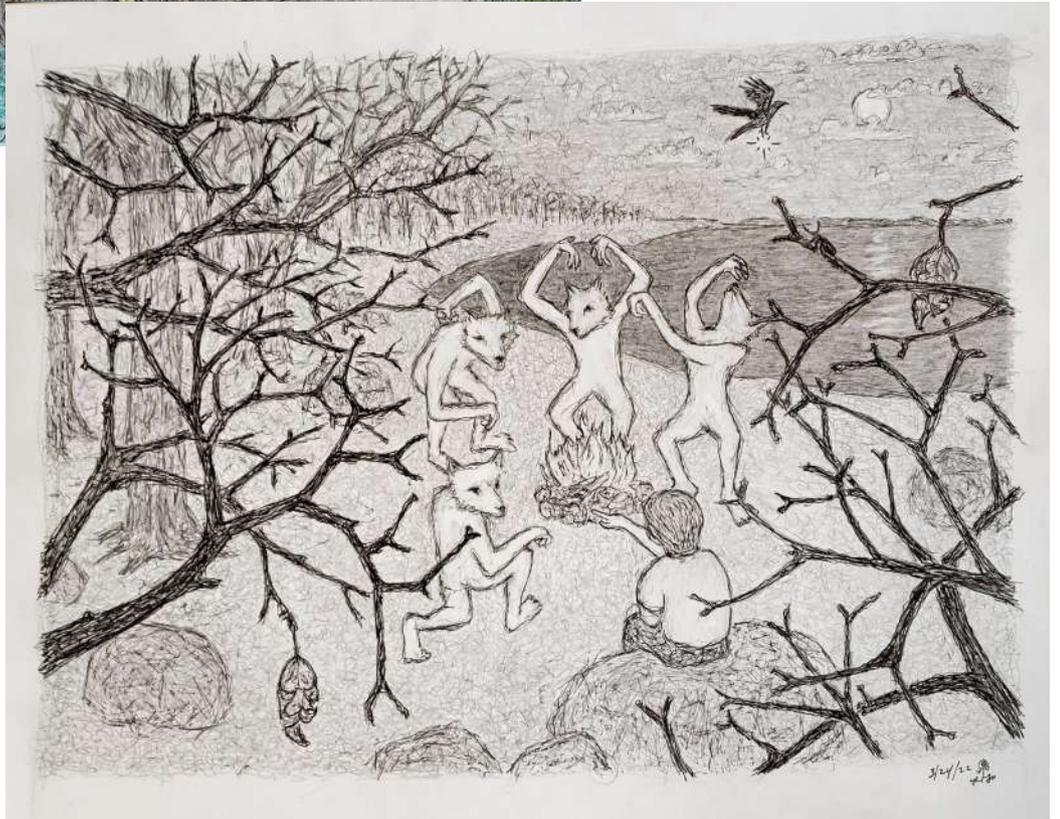
Wildness goes hand in hand with the need for preservation. After an exhaustive eighteen mile hike to the top of Cone Peak and down, the two of them were so disturbed by the litter that they went home, returned, and did the hike again with alpine backpacks to pack it all out. It was the most trash I had ever seen anyone pack out: green propane canisters, metal grating, plastics and more. Once the backpacks filled up, they carried it the rest in hand. A fire road closure forced them onto an alternate, sheer path, trash in hand. Their packs weighed at least 45 pounds, full of litter.

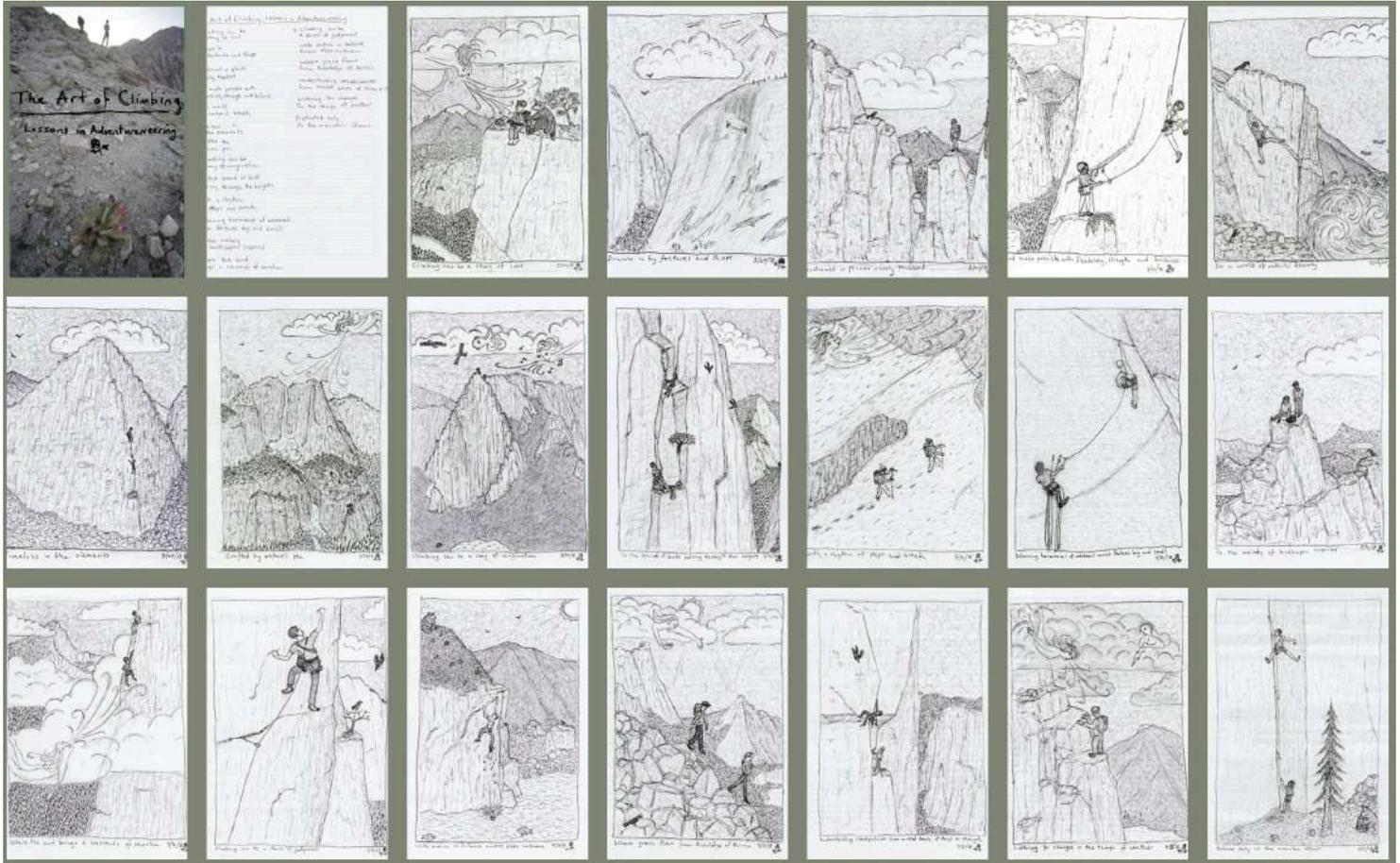


It's the return to nature and a love for the outdoors that makes me appreciate them. No matter the amount of poison oak, no matter the amount of thrashing blackberry bramble vines, no matter the searing hot sand/dirt on their soles, no matter the amount of stinging nettle, Remick and Elliott love to Go Wild.



Unsorted Drawings
By Elliot Robinson





The Art of Climbing
By Elliot Robinson
www.elliottrobinsonimages.com

Why Economists Sound Stupid

Samuel Lindquist

And other critiques of economic assumptions

Many people don't trust economists, and feel they sell a distorted view of the world with little resemblance to the one we live in. Out of all the stories offered by economists—as well as by the pundits, members of the media, and public figures who parrot economic theory—probably the most ubiquitous is the claim that free markets deliver the best outcomes. That the “invisible hand” of the market will move prices to an equilibrium where both buyers and sellers are getting the best possible deal, and thus, any government intervention in such a market, like price ceilings (like rent control) or taxes, could only decrease overall welfare.

To believe that this hypothetical has much resemblance to most markets in present-day economies flies in the face of common sense. To take one crucial example, average wages (adjusted for inflation) have barely budged between 1964 and 2018, even though average productivity has steadily risen. In other words, workers are supplying better and better labor, but the price of that labor has stagnated. Economic theory would have it that the price of the product (i.e. wages) would match its value (measured by worker productivity). So why the discrepancy between theory and reality?

It's not due to the inherent weakness of theory, rather its reckless misuse. To see this, a short detour into economic theory is needed. Economists like to theorize about the ideal market. They label it “perfect competition.” Broadly speaking, it describes a state in which both buyers and sellers get a good deal and have some freedom in what they do. To get a sense of this hypothetical, bear with a textbook-ish example of a farmer's market. There are many sellers offering the same thing, say oranges, so a buyer has many options to choose from. Oranges are pretty similar to one another, so the buyer knows what they are getting into. They have an idea of what the price of an orange ought to be. If one seller is too pricey, they can go to another. If every seller is too pricey, they can just leave. Likewise, sellers can open up a stand with relative ease. If they are dissatisfied, they can go to another farmer's market, or close up shop

entirely. In this market, changes in supply and demand result in price changes: if not enough people buy oranges one day, sellers will sense this and lower prices to attract more people the next day, and so forth. Sounds lovely! However, it's unrealistic. Most markets do not fit this description. They don't meet one (or two, or three) of the foundational assumptions of perfect competition. There were four features of our farmer's market that theoretically underpin this ideal market structure: (1) it had many buyers and sellers, (2) buyers and sellers could stop or start doing business with each other freely, (3) all the sellers were selling practically the same product, and (4) both buyers and sellers were equally knowledgeable about that product.

That most markets do not meet this ideal is no secret among economists: the popular introductory textbook *Economics* by Nobel laureate Paul Krugman notes at the end of its “Perfect Competition” chapter that “...although perfect competition is a useful benchmark, it is not an accurate description of many industries. In fact, outside of the realm of standardized products (commodities), most industries are not perfectly competitive.”

Unfortunately, however, economists tend to forget that we live in the real world, where simplifying assumptions, like those underlying a state of perfect competition, cannot be taken for granted. In a 2013 study comparing the policy opinions of economists to those of a random sample of the U.S. population, economists Paola Sapienza and Luigi Zingales [found that](#) “Economists' opinions differ greatly from those of other ordinary Americans.” The “difference does not seem to be justified by a superior knowledge of economists, but by a different way average Americans interpret the questions. Economists answer them literally and take for granted that all the embedded assumptions are true, average Americans do not.” In other words, most people answer policy questions assuming the state of the world as it is, but economists answer them assuming the state of the world as it ought to be according to them.

Considering the profound influence that economists have in economic policy and political discussion, it's important to scrutinize the assumptions underlying perfect competition, the model which predicts how markets can produce their much-celebrated results. Are these assumptions accurate in the present-day United States? And if they are not met, what does it mean for people? Let's look at the four major assumptions that

must hold for a market to be considered perfectly competitive.

1) "Large Numbers of Buyers and Sellers"

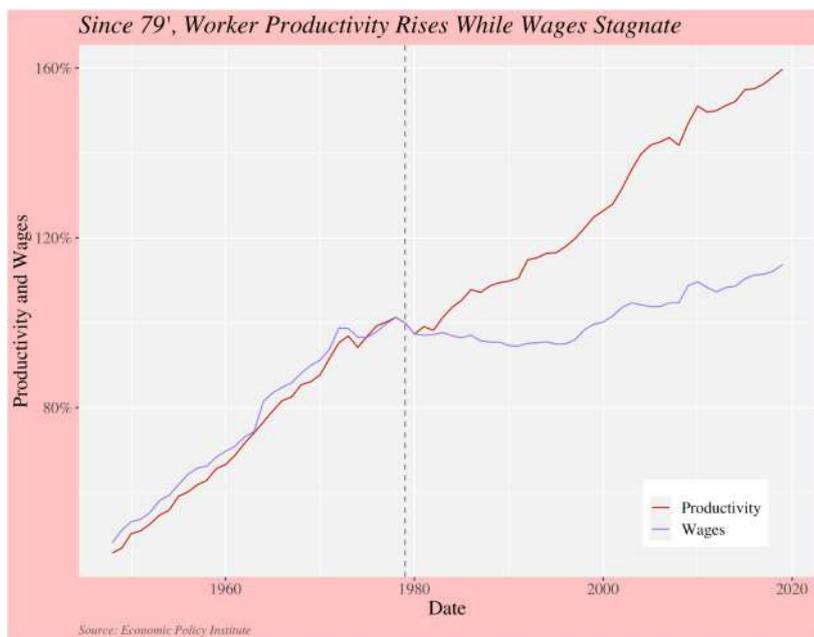
Many markets have only a few big sellers. Since the merger of Sprint and T-Mobile, there are only three major cell phone service providers in the country. As we've learned due to increasing meat prices, only four companies [control 80% of the beef packing industry](#). And many companies are in control of local monopolies: it is standard for providers of electricity, gas, and water to be an area's sole providers. Possibly the most worrisome area of market concentration is in health care. Economist Thomas Philippon looks into the American health care system in his book *The Great Reversal*, wherein he states that "80 percent of Americas living in metro areas are in highly concentrated hospital areas." This allows hospitals to charge exorbitant prices to insurers, as insurers (who, conveniently, are also highly concentrated within many states) are legally obligated to include major hospital systems in their coverage. Because insurers must buy the product, hospitals can charge excessively for it. However, it is ultimately consumers of healthcare who bear the burden, as insurance companies can simply pass ballooning bills onto them. This is part of why the US spends more per person on healthcare than any other rich country, while we fall woefully short on bare-minimum outcomes such as life expectancy (which has decreased in recent years) and infant mortality (which has increased in recent years).

High market concentration is not just isolated to a few key industries. One common way to gauge concentration is to look at the combined market share of the top few firms in a given industry. Looking at the market power of the top eight firms in hundreds of different industries, the Council of Economic Advisors found that from 1997 to 2012, on average the market share of the top eight firms in a given manufacturing industry rose from 50% to 59%, and those in non-manufacturing industries rose from 15% to 25%. That is to say, high market concentration is common all throughout the economy, and has been rising for years. So one can't just assume that there are many sellers in a given market, as it is not the case in many industries.

2) "Identical Goods"

The "identical goods" assumption simply means that two goods in the same market are practically the same. This is pretty accurate in, say, the market for bananas, in which [99% of all bananas sold commercially](#) to developed countries are genetically-identical clones from the Cavendish family (where, by the way, [3 companies control 50% of all sales](#)). But many markets do not enjoy this satisfying simplicity, where all the products under their umbrella are virtually identical.

Just think about some of the standard-bearers of today's globalized economy: Apple, McDonald's, Coca-Cola, or Ford. You probably have some vague but palpable sense of what an iPhone is like as opposed to a Samsung Galaxy, what a Big Mac is like as opposed to an



In-N-Out Double-Double, and so on. This is for two reasons: the aforementioned products do, after all, have substantive physical differences. The Galaxy S22 Ultra has four cameras, as opposed to its competitor, the iPhone 13 Pro, which only has an underwhelming three (and no built-in stylus).

But actual differences do not explain the whole story. The other force which drives the wedge between competing products is the prevalent marketing strategy called “product differentiation,” which is the “attempt to tangibly or intangibly distinguish a product from that of all competitors in the eyes of customers.” Just watch any car commercial: you are not simply buying a compact SUV, you are buying the unique [“love” of a Subaru Crosstrek](#), the [adventurousness of a Hyundai Tucson](#), or [the confidence and spirit of a Mazda CX-30](#). In the words of economist Theodore Levitt, a car “is not simply a machine for movement visibly or measurably differentiated by design, size, color, options, horsepower, or miles per gallon. It is also a complex symbol denoting status, taste, rank, achievement, aspiration, and (these days) being ‘smart.’” These intangible differences are driven home by product marketing. Thus there exists [a nearly trillion-dollar industry](#), the advertising industry, whose *raison d’être* is to convince you of the doubtful claim that one product is essentially different from a competitor product, regardless of whether they are actually physically different.

A market with non-identical goods, in which firms use the mystique of branding and bulwark of copyrights to distinguish their products from the rest of the crowd, does not enjoy the title of “perfect competition,” but rather “monopolistic competition”. Companies don’t have a monopoly over the entire market, but they maintain one over their supposedly distinct products. Think of McDonald’s: they may not have a monopoly on hamburgers, but through a decades-long marketing campaign which has made the Big Mac inextricably linked to the name McDonald’s, as well as through copyright laws, they literally have a monopoly on the Big Mac®.

The problem with this is that monopolies are bad: only having one seller of a good means they can charge excessive prices which are disconnected from its actual value. Monopolistic competition is similar in this regard, as companies use their legal power and cultural clout to differentiate their essentially similar products from the rest. And they spend serious money in order to do so: most large companies spend around [10% of their revenue solely on advertising](#), with some spending over 25%. Interestingly, companies implicitly recognize this profiteering from monopolistic competition when calculating their “brand value”: brand value is seen as the difference in price between their product and that of a generic competitor. For example, if CVS-brand razors cost \$15 and Gillette razors cost \$18, then the brand value of Gillette is what yields the extra \$3.

Markets that don’t have identical goods—regardless of whether the difference between goods is

real or imagined—are therefore susceptible to excessive profiteering, as companies use marketing and copyrights to place a premium on their otherwise generic products. And just considering how many ads you see every day can reveal how common this market structure is.

3) “Complete Information”

This assumption means that both the buyer and seller have all the necessary information about the good or service being bought. Perhaps this was accurate hundreds of years ago when markets were limited to basics like food, tools, and clothes (that is, things which everybody was generally knowledgeable about), but it’s certainly not true 250 years since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Do you know where the money in your bank account is at the moment? Are you sure an organic apple is better for you than a genetically modified one? What shape is your car in? These are questions we are hopelessly ill-equipped to answer. If you spend the time to learn how banks fling your savings all around the planet, then you don’t have enough of it to also be a car mechanic. There is simply not enough time to understand all the products we use on a daily basis in today’s capitalist economies.

This is a problem. When sellers know more about a product than its buyers (or vice versa) they can profit off of the other’s ignorance. This plagues many markets, especially in banking and finance, where buyers can get hoodwinked by complicated and nontransparent financial instruments. To take one horrific example, in the circus of bumbling overconfidence that led to the 2008 recession, incomplete information is one way to look at how financial instruments like Collateralized Debt Obligations (CDO’s) and CDO’s Squared came to have such high values just before they—and the rest of the economy—tank. Don’t know what a CDO Squared is? [It’s](#) “an investment in the form of a special purpose vehicle (SPV) with securitization payments backed by collateralized debt obligation tranches.” Whatever that means, being convoluted and incomprehensible beyond belief actually didn’t harm these products’ marketability. Rather, it led them to being so highly valued: according to the final [Congressional report on the 2008 recession](#), the “increasing dependence on mathematics let the quants create more complex products and let their managers say, and maybe even believe, that they could better manage those products’ risk.”

In hindsight, what once appeared to be lucrative financial wizardry can now be seen as just reckless gambling. It does not matter how smart these financial specialists were when creating these instruments when the underlying collateral (American homes soon to be defaulted on when higher mortgage payments kicked in) proved to be hollow investments. But that was the thing, the pension fund and money market managers that bought these products simply didn’t know what they were buying.

4) "Free Entry and Exit of Firms"

This means that there are no fees or hardships on top of the money it takes to start (or stop) selling a product. For example, if I want to start selling oranges at the farmer's market, I only need to buy oranges, a stand, and maybe a cash register to start up my business. The farmer's market doesn't charge any fees for selling fruit there, and no other fruit stand owners can prevent me from doing so. Of course this is plainly untrue for businesses under the purview of a modern government, as there are mandatory fees associated with starting a business. But in recent decades it has become even more untrue! Citing Phillipon's *The Great Reversal* again, concurrent to the increasing concentration of American markets across many industries, the establishment of new companies each year has been steadily decreasing since the '80s. And it's not because there is no profit to be made from doing so. One can gauge the potential profit of entering a market by comparing the market value of its publicly traded companies (as determined by the stock price) to the cost of the actual capital they own (all the products, goods, machines, property, and so on), known as replacement cost. If the market value in a particular industry is greater than the replacement cost, then there is excess money floating around waiting to be seized. [This has been the case](#) in the corporate sector since 2010 (and was so for a long period in the '90s before the dot com crash). This means it would be profitable for more companies to enter into most industries yet they don't. Why?

It's due to a legal system that privileges the entrenched power of large corporations. In one crucial example, monopolistic and oligopolistic corporations abuse the patent system. As Economist Mariana Mazzucato explains in her book *The Value of Everything*, since the 1980 Bayh-Dole Act, companies (as well as publicly-funded universities and research labs) can patent not just products, as had historically been the case, but also "discoveries" from the process of research or manufacturing. This includes "diagnostic procedures, databases, analytic methods, or scientific principles with some potential practical application." In other words, any idea or procedure surrounding the development of a product can have its own patent. In the tech, biotech, and pharmaceutical industries the act led to the proliferation of "patent thickets": hundreds of overlapping patents protecting both real inventions and "discoveries" held by companies that don't use them for their new products. Rather they use them to scare off any possible competitors from entering their vast and thorny legal territory, lest they be met by a flood of Injunctions and patent demands. And the threat of litigation is more than just a threat: patent lawsuits have more than tripled since 1990.

The past decades have also seen the rise of "patent trolls," companies that exclusively hold "patents, not to develop or commercialize the underlying idea but

deliberately collect royalties through patent enforcement". They have been successful. In a [2012 survey of tech startups](#), 79 out of 223 received demands from patent trolls to cease what they were doing.

Companies—most notably big tech and biotech companies—now have the power to wield the legal system to their benefit, keeping out any competitor that threatens their stranglehold on prices. It's been made easy to exit these markets (big corporations, in fact, love to see it) but not to enter them.

Economists can use complex and obscure theory to dampen discussions that rethink how — and for whom — economies should function. (For just one recent example, take former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers' [unsubstantiated rejection](#) of the [defensible claim](#) that increased profit margins during COVID have contributed to inflation). The idea that free markets maximize social welfare is the theoretical outcome of the assumptions we looked at, but after decades of insistence on the apparently self-evident truth of this idea, many have come to recognize it as an assumption in and of itself. This allows for the seamless conflation of the idea of a "free market," meaning one without any government intervention, and that of a perfectly competitive market, meaning one which (theoretically) delivers the best outcomes. The two are by no means the same. In fact, the whole gamut of markets structures, from perfectly and monopolistically competitive markets to oligopolistic and monopolistic markets, can exist with and without government intervention. Thus their conflation is nonsensical. Yet through the misuse of economic theory they seem interchangeable, giving the idea that free markets maximize social welfare a gloss of educated authority. Thus it's spouted through the many organs of public life — the press, elected leaders, and dinner table conversations — with a self-assured and highbrow but unscrutinized confidence. Yet after looking at its theoretical foundations, the four assumptions we looked at, we see that some are demonstrably untrue in many markets, and most are untrue in some. And crucially, their absence has been shown to reduce the common good.

I will let the previously mentioned economists Paola Sapienza and Luigi Zingales conclude. Their paper on the difference in policy opinions between random Americans and economists ends with a radical conclusion, even if it reads like the back of a pill bottle: "...our analysis cautions against using these economic expert opinions as a policy tool." Basically, when it comes to the real world, economists cannot be trusted.

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Reflections From A 93 Year Old

Joanne Williams

**A shot biography of a lifelong
Journalist and writer**



3009 P Street, Washington DC

Returning from Israel 1953

After I returned from Foreign Service in Israel in 1953 I settled at home in Cincinnati, bored, lonely, frustrated. I took a job as secretary to the president of the Barker Greeting Card Company, writing light four-line verses for an extra \$1 a line. I found an equally unhappy roommate, Shirley Pine, who was secretary to the VP at Barker. He was the president's brother. When they wanted to talk they screamed at each other across the room. Shirley left Cincinnati after a frustrated love affair with a married psychiatrist. We met again briefly in California where she married a different psychiatrist and had two children.

Returning to DC I was hired as the administrative assistant to the head of the National Association of Junior Colleges. California's junior colleges were the bellwether of the countries at the time. From there I gravitated to the National Future (NF) Farmer magazine in nearby Alexandria, VA. The Editor of NFF was an Ag College teacher from Plano, Texas. When I suggested I interview two NF Farmers, one an Ag college grad, the other a boy who had grown up learning the trade at his family's farm, I was not allowed to use my name, Joanne Waterman, in the byline. It had to be "by J.W. Waterman," my maiden name disguised as a man's name.

After leaving the future farmers, I took up another job in DC at the National Association of Homebuilders. Travis Green, a crusty adorable grandpa of a man, had me take a spelling test before he approved my hiring. I was sent to cover a meeting in Chicago. When I left, eventually, for marriage, Stan Baitz, the editor, said "Joanne, get a job at a newspaper. There's no better experience."

By then I was living in historic Georgetown at 3009 P Street in a shared flat with a small backyard. My roommate then was a former Foreign Service secretary in Tel Aviv, a free spirit who had married and divorced a Polish count. She had a head full of limericks and bawdy jokes. ("Hooray, hooray it's the first of May, outdoor screwing starts today"). I had never met anyone like her and neither had the Embassy. As I left Israel she called out, "Go to



Kitzbuhel,” a fashionable ski resort in Austria.

Men who met Jane in DC were eager to date her. They usually were looking for debutantes with wealthy fathers. “I want to meet the divorcee” one young man said to me. At the time there was an abundance of Ivy league frogs who thought they were princes. When I mourned the lack of eligible men in DC, Jane said write a note what you’re looking for and post it on your mirror. (Visualization before it became a thing.)

I wrote Tall, Blond Tennis player and not long after, I found one practicing his serve on the P Street tennis courts. “Should I return your serve?” I asked. “If you can,” he said. We sat on a bench a while. The vibes were good. He lit a pipe. Apple-flavored tobacco. “Would you like to come to my apartment for a Seven-Up” I ventured.

Women were not so bold then.

But I had already started my own personal woman’s movement. He said yes and we sat in the small garden drinking Seven-Up. “I’ve been invited to a party tonight but I need a date,” I told him. “Would you like to go?”

“Yes,” he said.

I remember clearly the stunning black dress with spaghetti straps and a full knee-length skirt I had for such an occasion. We had a glorious time and all the previous crushes from two-years in Israel were swept from my mind.

We became a pair, Galen Herschel Williams and I. Later I learned he stood up a date that night to be with me. We had spats. He didn’t call. He lived not far at a boarding house where many people in transit lived. I saw him walking along my bus route, got off, joined him. “I hope this isn’t going to cost me 15 cents,” I said sarcastically. He didn’t say much but made a future date.

A year later I asked him if this romance was going anywhere. If not, I said, I’m going to Wyoming and find a cowboy.

“Well, let’s get married,” he said. I didn’t faint. At age 28, not yet an old maid, I made plans.

In 1958 I became Mrs. Galen Herschel Williams, Jr. After a modest wedding in Cincinnati’s Knox Presbyterian Church, in a silk gold and silver gown made from fabric I brought home from Damascus, my husband and I elected to go to Tallahassee, Fla., where he finished his undergrad degree at Florida State University. We made a honeymoon stop at Berea, KY at a Smoky Mountain resort. Berea is the site of a unique college where students earned their tuition through work on site or making handmade clothing and art for sale.

It was a dry county but my family had gifted us with booze from the reception. We played tennis at the resort without realizing the balls would leap over the fence in the mountain atmosphere. We acquired a light touch we didn’t need until trying to play tennis at Tahoe.

Tallahassee, 1959

In Tallahassee we rented a one-bedroom apartment with a fireplace, filled it with furniture and a window air conditioner from his parents who lived in Del Ray Beach. Florida roaches at no cost.

I was lucky enough to land a reporter’s job at the Daily Tallahassee Democrat. “My first front page story,” I bragged, when I mailed my mother the weather report. My beat was daily local news including obituaries. “Mrs. Margaret Clemmons died in her sleep yesterday.” Margaret was a revered midwife.

The city editor came roaring out of his office. “Margaret was a Negro,” he said. “She doesn’t get called Mrs. Only white people are called Mr. or Mrs.” he said. Furthermore, “Negroes” were only newsworthy in the special Saturday edition devoted to Negro news. Then I found out there was a black college down the road, Florida A&M. I wrote a feature story on the school for the Saturday edition.

My interest surprised the editors.

But there were upsides. \$50 a week was handsome pay at the time. I walked to work and afterward if it wasn’t too hot, Hersch and I played tennis on the college courts. Weekends we played bridge with another couple while seeing which of us could drink the most Scotch. Because I was a reporter we got free passes to the movies at the one movie house but had to pay the ten cents tax. Hersch and I were invited to the Governor’s annual dinner, where my long-legged husband knocked over the round tabletop where we were seated. Otherwise I remember nada.

By spring we were on our way North, at last. A professor at Florida State recommended that Hersch get a graduate degree and sent a reference to the University of Chicago’s newly established MBA program. With a scholarship and the GI Bill we were on our way, with a stop in Cincinnati where we left our Florida roaches behind to torment my grandmother.

I must mention here that since we were year-round students at FSU, when other students went on spring or Christmas break their roaches came to visit. They boldly came up the table to nibble at our plates. We tried every spray and roach hotel to kill them. No luck.

Summer, 1959

In Chicago we found a renovated subsidized apartment with a view of a brick wall through huge windows. My first home-decorating experience. Our bed replaced a Murphy bed, my old Underwood stabilized the kitchen table. Wedding gifts were everywhere to display our fine Fifties taste. We acquired a B&W television so I could watch Pablo Casals teach cello lessons. Hersch bought me an easel and paints to challenge a beginner's interest in painting. We spent happy hours at museums and I've never forgotten one particular painting of a wreath of black roses: "That which I should have done I did not do."

While Hersch toiled over textbooks I typed his papers, corrected his spelling, sitting at the only table in the tiny kitchen. When I landed a job with the University's PR firm, Charlie Feldstein, I found out my salary was below the others' and when I asked for a raise Charlie refused. Instead I found a writing job at Science Research Associates downtown in the Loop for \$6000 a year.

I took the train from the South Side to Michigan Ave., walked to SRA in high heels and stockings against the fierce Lake Michigan winter. At lunchtime in summer I changed to a bathing suit in the company's ladies room, walked to the lake and swam for a half hour. Changed back at the office.

Several of us 'girls' wrote Occupational Briefs, a series aimed at Middle School students to describe various jobs from plumber to eye surgeon to teachers and car mechanics. We telephoned experts to get source information. Our instructions: write simple prose at 6th-grade level. I still write at that level. When we left Chicago in 1962 I spent a couple of years writing for SRA, snail-mailing copy.

San Francisco's Marina District

When Hersch and I arrived in the Bay Area in 1961, Hersch's brother John took us on a whirlwind tour of the City as it's called in his tiny car, legs scrunched under us we raced up Fillmore Street and gulped on the way down it's slippery slope.

Nothing is scarier than that rollercoaster ride toward the Bay in a Morris Minor.

The Marina was laid out in front of us with Alcatraz in the distance, the Golden Gate Bridge off to the left and our hearts glad to land safely on Lombard Street. John took us all over the Marina to look at the ships offshore and view the charming houses occupied by wealthy folks. We found a one-bedroom, one-bath apartment on Scott Street that included a garage for \$150 a month (\$1440 in 2022) and soon owned a

California King-size bed. When it arrived the landlord said, "my, my."

We needed sheets to fit and a bedspread which required a trip to Sears Roebuck for fabric and a sewing machine. Hersch figured out a pattern, said "Sew here," and I did. My, my.

We had a few furnishings in U-Haul; the landlord gave us a black table about three-feet long and we painted it bright red. I didn't like giving it up years later.

In the morning Hersch took the #30 bus to the Financial District wearing a gray suit and a hat as all men wore then and leather business shoes. He carried a leather briefcase with a sandwich in it. At noon he sat in a park near his office and ate alone. His first SF job was with Del Monte Foods, a substantial player in those days, with a pineapple industry in Hawaii. Del Monte didn't know what to do with this new MBA on their hands so he stifled in the accounting department. Before long Hersch went to the Federal Reserve Bank in SF. Soon saw no future there and resigned to start his own accounting practice.

I met a woman in the neighborhood who took her paint box and a canvas to the waterfront to sketch. I can't paint worth a damn but we had fun and she had talent. At 11, when the wind blew through the Gate, we packed up. When her husband was transferred to Seattle we lost touch.

By then I was taking a writing course at Marina Middle School and looking for a job. Because of my newspaper background and experience in Chicago I was hired as a publicity 'consultant' for PR firm that had the Salvation Army in San Jose as a client. I churned copy affirming them as a worthy group. And continued to send typed copy back to Science Research in Chicago.

On Saturday mornings I tuned to the Metropolitan Opera broadcast on the radio. Heard Joan Sullivan's incredible debut performance of Norma.

"If you ever come to San Francisco look me up," Mary Leonoudakis told me when I sailed home from Israel. Ten years later I did. The Leonoudakis family, Greek to the core, were an important connection. Mary's brother Steve was an attorney, a member of the Golden Gate Bridge Board and influential in business. He eventually brought the ferry system to SF. Mary and I had become friends in Israel where she was assigned as a secretary after I arrived.

She took Hersch and me to all the little alleyway restaurants in the City as well as to Tadich Grill and authentic Greek places for dancing, singing and ouzo. Weekends Hersch and I roamed Italian delis on Chestnut Street in the Marina for prosciutto, olives, mortadella and sourdough. We bought sourdough

starter for crisp waffles. The Presidio cinema brought soft porn to the neighborhood. Chic shops lined the tree-lined streets. Creative eateries beckoned just like Paris or Rome.

Mill Valley 1963

In 1963 Hersch and I left windy San Francisco for Marin. With the help of two generous aunts we were able to put \$1500 down on an \$18,000 two-bedroom cottage on West Blithedale in Mill Valley with a monthly mortgage we could just manage at \$150/month. Plus \$25 for a second mortgage that the two women realtors lent us.

The weekly Mill Valley Record was the first California paper to give me a byline. I covered City Council and school board meetings in MV and Sausalito. Tumultuous times for Marin with Marin City parents who believed their kids weren't getting a fair representation. I can't be sure how I got a reporter's job at the Pacific Sun. Steve McNamara, owner-publisher, led the staff of three from an office park

near Northgate. Don Stanley was editor. Both Steve and Don were terrific writers and mentors.

"Give a feeling of the person behind your stories," Steve said. "What are they wearing? What car do they drive?" He and Don shared a progressive vision in then-Republican Marin. My first story in 1966 was about Planned Parenthood in Marin. The daily wouldn't touch the subject.

Later I interviewed Gloria Steinem, writer George Leonard, who was a senior reporter for Look magazine and who wrote Education and Ecstasy, a book that influenced the way teachers taught and children learned to love learning. George founded the Aikido dojo in Mill Valley, the first in Marin. And I interviewed Daniel Ellsberg, the man who bravely revealed the Pentagon Papers that exposed the US bombings in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and led to US protests and the eventual withdrawal of America in this dishonorable war.

Being a reporter for the Pacific Sun was the most rewarding job ever and I learned a lot. I had grown up on the Sunday comics who featured Brenda Starr, star reporter. At last I was one.



Courtesy of the Lucretia Little History Room, Mill Valley Public Library

My Desert Cathedral

Nicholas Amendola

A boy finds answers on the brink without a drink



The ground temperature on the black volcanic rock of Amboy Crater can exceed 130° F in the summer. The air temperature can easily reach over 110°. Before approaching the volcano, you must cross about a mile of rolling sand dunes. When it's windy, the only way to find your way across the dunes is by following the handful of blistered wood signs designating the "trail." Although the dunes themselves are not very impressive (rising only 20 or 30 feet), it's easy to find yourself lost in the featureless, ever-changing expanse if you happen to miss one of the half-buried markers.

As with many adventures my family has chosen to embark on, we began woefully unprepared for this one. I'll concede that climbing the black rock cinder cone in the hottest part of the summer was my idea. But I was 7. Passing on the opportunity to climb up and over the lip of a relatively small volcano and down into its caldera would likely be unthinkable for any 7-year-old. But, volcanoes are cool. The adults could have considered hiking 3 completely exposed miles in 115° weather with little water, 5 children and 2 dogs to be a risky endeavor, but, again, volcanoes are fucking cool, so thought the adults. From what I remember, the hike out to the cinder cone was more exciting than excruciating. Crossing over those sand dunes was remarkable. Like the rock on the volcano itself, the sand was scaldingly hot. You could easily feel the heat through the bottom of your shoe. The sand began to fill my shoes and shored up any crevice between my foot and shoe. All of this was quite grounding.

Once we began the short, steep climb up the cinder cone, the extreme heat became intensely apparent. Whatever temperature the blazing sand was paled in comparison to the new medium our feet staggered up. I could feel the difference in temperature between my lower and upper halves of my body and was glad my lungs had some distance from the scorching ground. And yet, something about the igneous rock below my feet was humbling and real.

Eventually we descended into the caldera below. There was no relief from the heat with the sun directly overhead and the promise of shade being still half a day away. Even at that young age, being inside that ancient volcano felt extreme and surreal. I thought, what a harsh, barren, lifeless, yet beautiful wasteland.

I was standing inside a mountain that at one time erupted molten rock and hot deadly gas from deep within the Earth. The volcano felt old; as if it were closer to the age of God. It all made me feel intensely small. I felt that everything was alive and part of some grand idea. I felt a part of it all. And even though I felt small and insignificant, I felt that I mattered, just as this volcano somehow cosmically mattered.

After a short time, we started to clamber our way out of the volcano and back down to the trailhead. I was

ecstatic from my experience and with exuberance, ran ahead of the group. I quickly descended the cinder cone and returned to the dunes. I passed the first sign pointing to the parking lot. Then the next, still being carried quickly across the hot desert floor by churning feet. It was some time before I began to slow down, now conscious that I should have seen another sign by now, especially at the pace I was moving. I slowed to a walk and climbed up to the top of a dune. I looked out from that high point. There was the volcano, diagonally behind me. Some mountains in the far-off distance. No signs. No people. No cars.

I followed my tracks back for a bit but suddenly felt the strong thirst burning in my throat. I had no water. I began to panic but I didn't yell out. I knew I could solve this. I knew God could help me. At some point the panic turned to delirium. I became more sluggish; dragged my feet. As if lured by a mirage, I turned away from my tracks and began wandering off across the dunes aimlessly. I was tired, hot. Moving my body was starting to feel especially hard. There was still no sign of a trail, people, or tracks, mine or anybody else's. I started to think it might be best to head back towards the volcano to find the trail there and start the trek back across the dunes again, being careful this time to follow the signs and hopefully tracks. However, whether I thought this consciously or not, I knew I wasn't going to make it back to the cone.

After a while, I reached the top of a dune and headed down, focusing on the labor of movement, and looked up again for any sign of salvation. I was met face-to-face with the words "Parking lot ->" carved into an old piece of wood, painted in yellow. I looked in the direction the sign was pointing and saw the glimmer of glass and painted steel in the near distance. Immediately I began running with energy I didn't know I had, careful this time to maintain a bearing towards safety. I realized I couldn't feel the heat of the sand anymore as I kicked it up in my desperate sprint towards water and shade. I ran until my feet hit the pavement and looked toward the cars. It seemed no one had made it back yet. I walked over with what energy I had left to my parents' car but no one was there and it was locked. Parked directly next to it were our family friends who we often found ourselves in these situations with. I didn't see anyone on the passenger side, but I rounded to the driver's side and found Liz. She had rushed back with one of the dogs who had heat stroke. She had given what water she had left to the dog. There was none in their car; just beer and soda. I drank what little melted ice there was in the cooler and sucked on some ice cubes. I laid under my parents' car in the only shade there was to find and waited for my family to return. Miraculously, I walked away from this day with nothing more than heat exhaustion and a nasty sunburn.

That was the first and definitely not the last time I found myself in a potentially deadly situation out in the desert. But as time has gone on, I've found myself in reverence for these experiences. Years later, I distinctly remember the feeling of being close to death. Of being alone. Of praying for help. I don't remember thanking God for "saving" me. I never attributed my unlikely survival to God. From then on, I found myself asking God for help less and less.

I grew up Catholic. I haven't practiced in over 5 years and in that time, like many former altar boys, I've reckoned with my upbringing in the church. I'm a lot less bitter (and slightly less guilty) than I used to be. But the real progress I made was in making my own church out of an arid wasteland and foregoing religion for spirituality.

Growing up in and around the desert fostered a love and connection with dry air, high heats, and the disquieting awe of its landscapes. Since I was young, I recognized the power the desert had over me. It's hard not to feel strongly in a place that feels so hostile; a place that many say is "always trying to kill you." Despite my experience, I reject this claim. The desert, indeed nature in general, does not care about me, you, or anyone else. It could kill me in a second but not because it wanted or needed to. If I'm harmed in nature it's because I am a piece of it. In the desert, I am part of the ecosystem; I am both important to it and completely expendable. I grew up believing in an omniscient god that is always judging, seemingly awaiting my downfall. But being out in the desert, I've always felt unjudged. In God's shadow, I was separate, afraid, and weary. In the desert's sun, I am a part of something greater. I am the desert experiencing itself. I feel safe in the desert. Even when it's trying to kill me.

nramendola@gmail.com



808 x 480

 The Mercury News

California hikers found dead near Amboy Crater

Visit

Not Nick

Screen Printed Restorations

Luigi Pensa

Multi-disciplinary creative practitioner giving jeans new life







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The Luigi Pensa Classic: A series of experimentations adorning the forgotten line of Levi's reengineered jeans. Luigi's bread and butter method of creation, screen printing, allows him to explore a hybrid collage between the digital and the handmade. His designs celebrate iconography by melding graphic forms with physical forms, both found and made. Keep an eye on this designer, because his work has some serious legs.

luigipensa.com
@luigipensa

Daylight Savings NYC, 2022
By Levi Bolton
@levibolton



Spot, a Giraffe of Oakland

Howard Fields

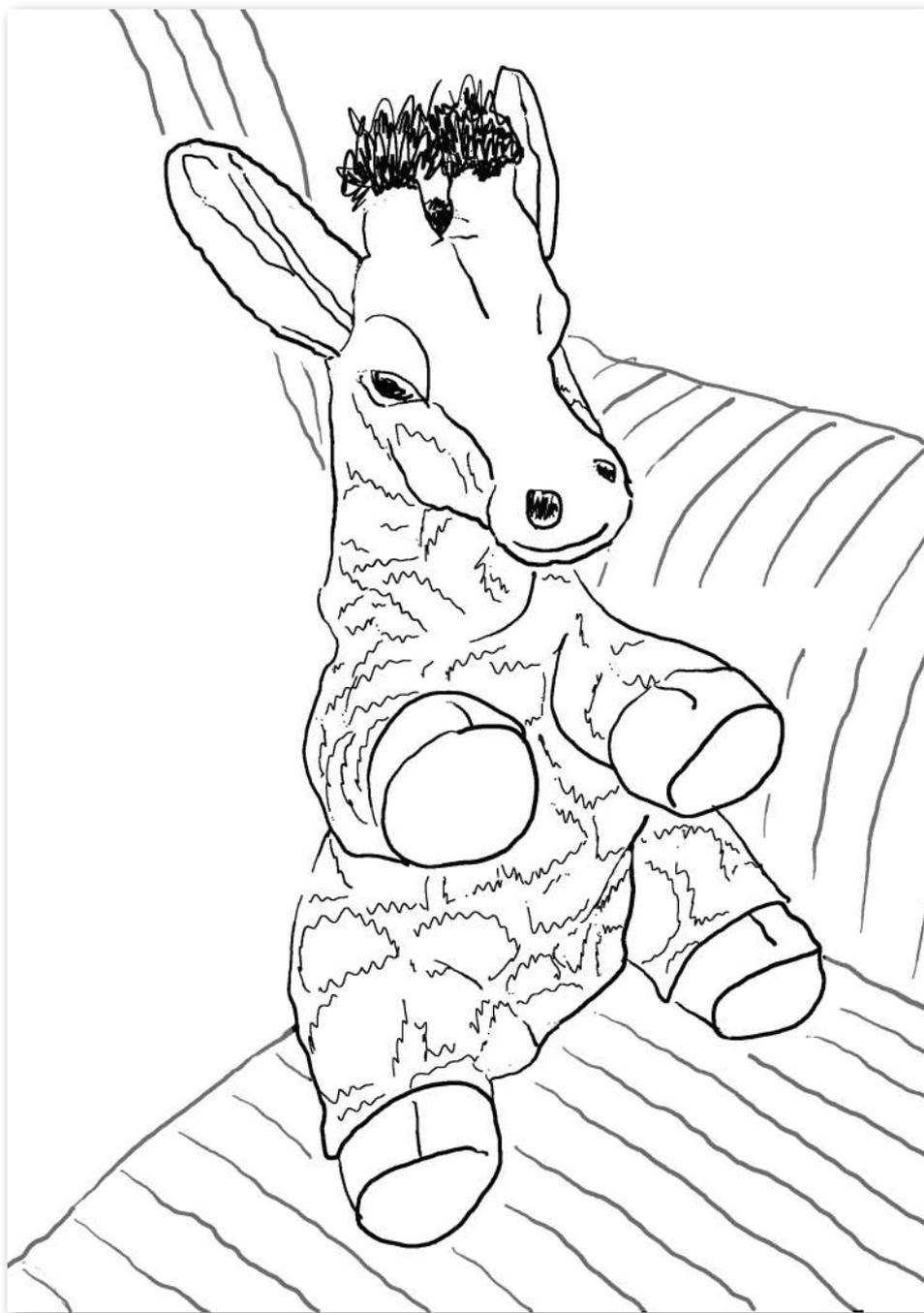
*“A gathering of angels, appeared above my head
They sang to me this song of hope, and this is
what they said”*

Seated in his comfortable striped wing chair, Spot thought of endless grassy plains and open woodlands with green, leafy acacia trees thousands of miles from his home in Oakland, California. Or so Jay thought if a giraffe hand puppet made of brown-spotted plush fabric could think. But as Jay had imagined these thoughts for the imagined Spot, he could not see how these thoughts were any less real than any other thoughts that he had. Jay once had a girlfriend who thought Earth was really hell and that's why evil seemed to win so often. But Jay figured that if you think life is hell, you are going to make it so. So that girlfriend belonged to the distant past and in the present, Spot stared into space and continued to dream of trees.

Jay grabbed his light wool blue coat and headed out the door. Tonight was going to be his first date with Dee and he was going to meet her at the coffee place where she worked and where they had first met. Jay had actually thought that he and Dee had been on a few dates already, but then Dee told a mutual friend that she and Jay were good friends who were hanging out a lot. Jay couldn't understand how he and Dee could be in such different places, and when he talked to each of his friends looking for guidance, or at least solace, they were unanimous in their conclusion that Dee “was just not that into him.” Spot on the other hand was more sympathetic, but being that giraffes are polygamous and not that picky about the gender of their mating partners, and he was after all a hand puppet with no practical experience, Spot couldn't be of much assistance beyond being a vehicle to help Jay sort out his thoughts. So, Jay grabbed his lucky coat, determined to make this a memorable evening. Jay wasn't sure what made this coat lucky, and he hardly ever wore it. It had been an impulse purchase and was a little too expensive and a little too bright a blue and he had been swayed by the salesperson. However, he was pretty certain that Dee had complimented the coat the one time he had worn it before, although now he wasn't sure as he headed down the street.

Jay had found the coffee place soon after moving to Oakland. Located a brisk five-minute walk from his tiny shade-covered apartment, the café offered floor to ceiling windows and tons of light. There were just enough tables that there was always a place to sit and nobody seemed to mind too much if you lingered a little longer than planned. The café quickly became his daily break and he soon found himself among a small group of regulars. It was a few weeks after his first visit that he saw Dee behind the counter, although initial impressions were less than ideal, and Jay couldn't understand how it could possibly take that long to get an Americano. Over time, he learned that Dee was always at least a few minutes late to work and somehow managed to find the most inefficient way to do something. At first, this had seriously irked her co-workers and they collectively waited for her inevitable departure, but then they noticed that everything seemed a little lighter, and the air a little bit fresher, and more importantly, tips were noticeably better when Dee was there. Both in front and behind the counter, people smiled more and while customers occasionally complained about their orders taking forever, mostly they didn't as much as you'd expect. So, in balance, Dee's co-workers found it was worth putting up with a little tardiness. At least, that was what Jay could glean from talking to the other servers.

Jay swung open the glass door of the cafe and nodded at Wyatt, who smiled back. A tall, lean man of indeterminant age with a shock of unruly dirty blond hair on his head, Wyatt was also a regular there, sitting at his table by the entrance with an open leather-bound notebook and a couple of pens. When Jay first started going there, he made the mistake of sitting down at Wyatt's table and having a long conversation with him, although he quickly realized in the first 15 minutes that Wyatt was absolutely crackers. After that, Jay was concerned he would have to find another coffee place lest there be a repeat performance. However, when he showed up the next day, Wyatt simply smiled at him, nodded and went back to writing. After that, they nodded, smiled and never talked again. A few times when Wyatt didn't show up for a several days, Jay had thought about asking him where he'd been, but then decided it wasn't worth the risk of starting another conversation or jeopardizing what had turned out to be a pretty functional relationship. Anyways, it



was better just to think that Wyatt had gone on a secret mission to save the planet and task completed, returned to his table.

Jay grinned goofily when he saw Dee behind the counter. As usual, she was taking three steps to do what everyone else accomplished in two. He noticed that her hair was done up a little differently and thought that was maybe for him, or then again, maybe not. She was wearing his favorite dress, and whether that was meant for him or not, he would only consider that it was. Sleeveless, green and covered with a random pattern of small pink, yellow and white flowers, the dress seemed to flow effortlessly across her body as she worked behind the counter. And for a moment, everything went into slow motion, as it would in a bad movie, but more like when something becomes so clear and right that you can truly focus on what is in front of you and a second becomes a minute, which becomes an hour, and all that happens in a few blinks of the eye. That was when Jay realized that Dee had been right and they had been friends hanging out, and so Jay's recent past was rewritten, and this would also be his first date with Dee as well as hers with him.

With her shift over, Dee came over and they headed to a table in the back to go over their plans for the evening. It didn't take long for them to fall into the easy pattern of conversation that had developed over the past few weeks of going out. But this time, at least for Jay, something was different. It was as if he was hyperaware of his surroundings. If he had thought about Spot, it was as if Spot could make out each pattern of branches in the tree and see each variation and each drop of dew on the leaves. That was the effect that Dee's dress and movements had on him. As they talked, "Come Sail Away" came on over the music system and as the song ended, Jay quipped that he always liked the idea of embarking on a starship. Although missing the connection to the song, Dee said that she often dreamed about being in a spaceship and viewing the infinite parade of stars and planets from her port hole. Sometimes she landed on green planets covered with long grass and trees that had never seen a person before. As they talked, Jay joined Dee on the ship and each planet they landed on became more outlandish until they could no longer keep a straight face and sniggers became giggles became loud guffaws. And from there, one day and night seemingly blended into another and another, and the sound of laughter was somehow always there, even when it wasn't present except as a memory....

John waited impatiently in his car for his kids to come out. He had long stopped believing that Diane kept him waiting just to annoy him. He couldn't think of one time that she had the kids ready on time for their week staying with him. But then, she had always been disorganized from the first day they met, and any time lost now was always balanced by her being late picking the kids up. Yet, it still irritated him and there was nothing he could do about it. And yet as the minutes crept by, his mind slowly and unconsciously drifted back to another time where a blond man scribbled endlessly in a notebook in a café, and a guy and girl in a blue coat and green dress talked about taking a trip in a starship and seemed to laugh without end.

"No man ever steps in the same river twice. For it's not the same river and he's not the same man." Heraclitus said that. The ancient Greeks thought about everything and knew everything. Jay thought this was true for the past as well as the future. No matter how hard we try, we are no longer the person who felt the things we did then, and our memories are clouded by a haze of what followed. But this didn't affect Spot, who sat in his chair and dreamed of tall trees and endless verdant grasslands. And that made John happy, and a smile crossed his face as the kids raced for the refrigerator as soon as he opened the door to his place and the dim light shown on their faces forever.

Poetry and Collages

Juj Lepe

*Poems and images pieced
together in Santa Cruz, CA*

Eucalyptus

tall grace,
lady
in a dress
of tired skin:

you reach for a hand from heaven

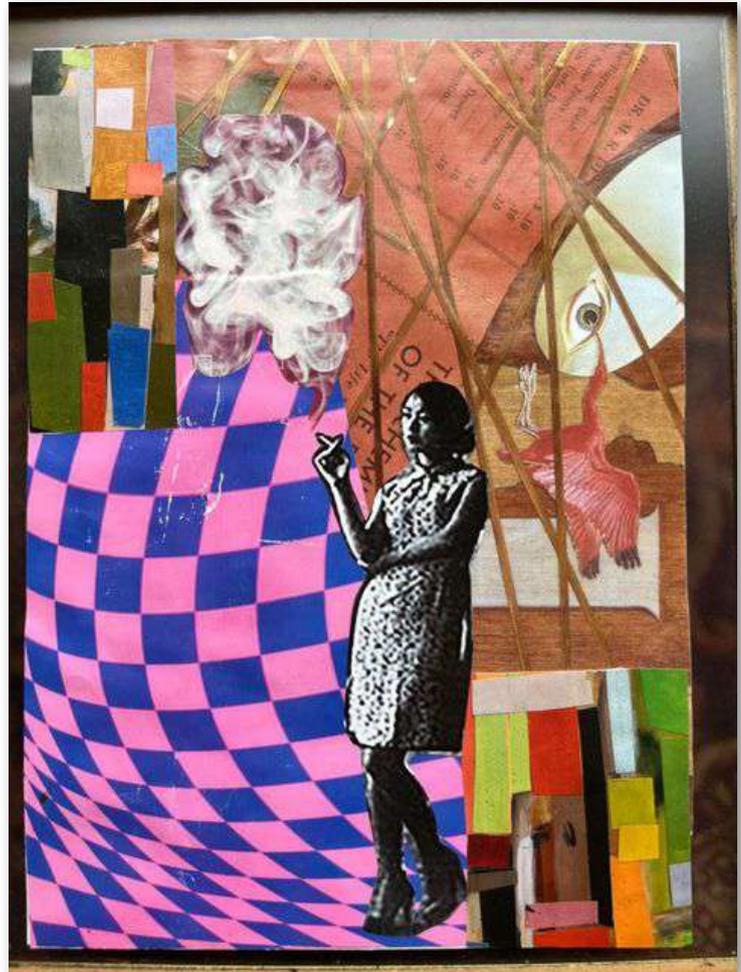
you bring
the love birds
out to sing.

this evening we
watched a couple of doves
fuck on the balcony,

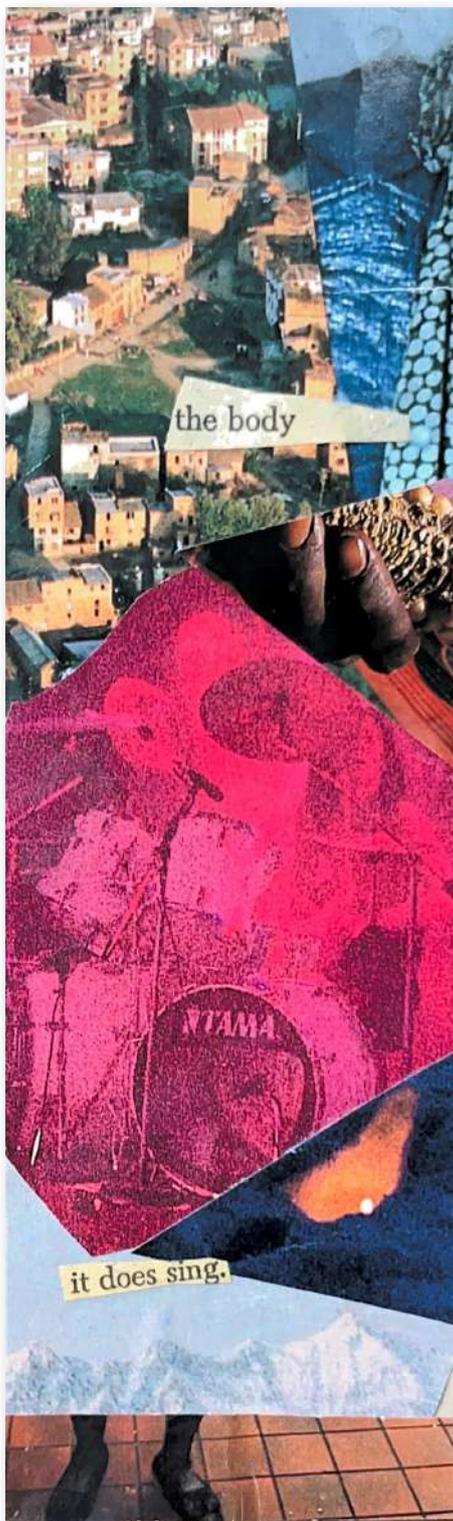
we thought of making love
without palms;
with wings.

tomorrow I'll go walking
before the sun climbs high;

listen
while the valley is cold & thick



@miralayuyu

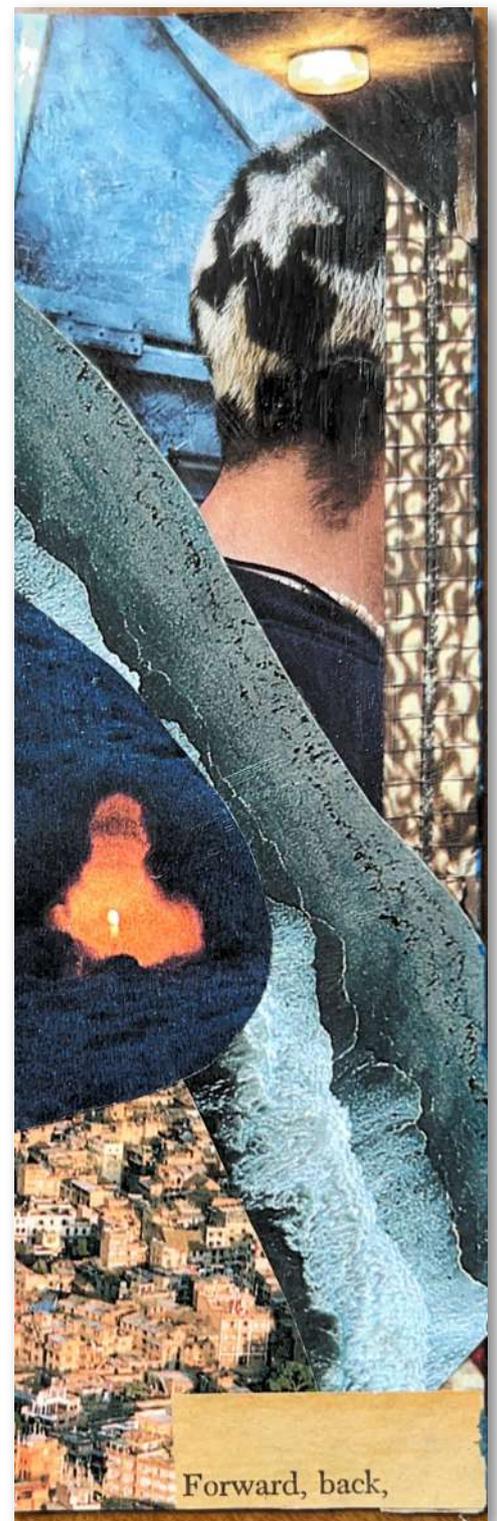


On East Cliff Dr

the blue white world
is whisked by winds;
at times,
I walk barefoot down the road
to greet the neighbor's heavy
wisteria vine
or, to watch the orange tail
of the orange cat
flick apart the clouds himself.

when ripe evenings arrive,
I sit beneath
a purpled sky
as pale poppies begin
to fold their skirts in;

as cats step out
to sniff bright roses.



Forward, back,

Non-Malicious Following

Sam A.

Non-consensual, but entirely non-malicious

Before I explain my subject to you, I must note that following strangers is no more weird than following somebody you know, and perhaps not weird at all.

What is a stranger? An unfamiliar person with whom you have no prior contact? What about non-verbal contact? What about eye contact across a room?

Currently, I'm sitting in a cafe in Haringay, North London. A mottle-skinned, tanned Caucasian man in (approximately) his 50s is staring at me. I felt his gaze when I entered the room and have since checked twice - and now thrice - to catch him looking directly at me without shame. The likelihood of coincidence is now low - I know in my gut that I'm not imagining things. I feel somewhat creeped out by this - and perhaps my daddy issues are also being triggered - but all the while energised by the post-modernity of the event: my subject matter is both figuratively and literally close to home.

At this point he is no longer a total stranger to me. We haven't established a mutually consenting relationship, but we have already communicated something. He has communicated an attraction to or keen curiosity in me by showering me with his peepers. Via body language, I have communicated back recognition of his intrigue - as if to say "I can see you" - and perhaps also my lack of intention to reciprocate at this point. I have formed a caricature of him in my mind and I would presume so has he.

When I think about anybody I've ever met, or at least those I think I know the least or most, there is always a caricature of that person in my psyche. This pen-portrait evolves, with experience, from the moment I meet them, from a rough sketch into (eventually, hopefully) a richly textured artwork. With this in mind it strikes me that the notion of stranger is non-binary. We're all infinite points along the sliding scale of "stranger", to man.

When you know somebody - that is they are some distance from the north pole of the stranger axis - you have already established protocols and rules for interaction and probably mutual trust that neither of you will betray such protocols and laws established, e.g. "thou shalt not follow me without my knowing it." With a complete stranger, on the other hand, this law is only weakly implicit, derived from social mores. I am tempted to conclude that following a non-stranger is way more of a faux pas.

Rationalising things in this way, I felt emboldened to embark on a journey last Saturday that I have been meaning to take for a long time: my first follow. The destination in this case was a person, a person (and moving target) chosen at random at the entrance of my local Sainsbury's superstore in Haringay.

But before we delve into that, what is "follow-ing"? The first thing to say is that this is not something I have borrowed from an existing movement or wide-spread practice. To use its full name, Non-Consensual Non-Malicious Following (NCNMF) is very underground- so underground, in fact, that only I know about it, as far as I or anybody else knows. It's actually more underground than Non-Consensual Malicious Following, as in the work of the CIA, MI5 and the KGB, about which hundreds of thousands of fiction and non-fiction books, movies, documentaries, songs and other artworks have been created and thrust into the culture-pool.

To understand what NCNMF is, let me first inform you that NCNMF has actually been going on for a long, long time right in front of your very eyes, just not with human beings. For tens of thousands of years, from Homo Erectus to David Attenborough, nature documentarians have tracked, monitored, observed and interpreted flora and fauna doing what it does best: simply existing. But what if you did the same with people? And moreover why haven't we been doing the same with people, or, have we?

Inspired by the BBC documentary, Planet Earth, which followed all manner of animals gathering food (amongst other things), I decided to follow and observe a man doing his evening grocery shop.

Entering the store, I felt a rush of excitement I've rarely felt inside a supermarket, as I assumed the identity of 'human-camera', not shopper. The man walked hurriedly but was indecisive, uninspired and aimless. We went up and down several aisles, only to hook back to the first aisle again 10 minutes later. It was

here that the prepared fruits in plastic tubs piqued his interest. Would he choose mango, melon or pineapple cubes or, perhaps a "cocktail" mix of cubes? The answer was mango.

In order to get under the skin of his experience I too picked up some sad-looking chunks of mango before turning to my left to see him charging off towards the far side of the store. I tracked him to the ready-to-eat sushi section. Here, showing no regard for the clumsy British rendition of 'sushi' that would have Jiro turning in his grave - if he were dead, which he isn't at 96 years old (or "middle-aged" as they might call it in Nippon) - the man instead grabbed some disposable chopsticks and threw them into his basket like somebody who has repeated that same action many times previously.

Lagging around 10 seconds behind him, I did the very same. Looking down at my mango chunks and wooden implements in their paper sleeve, it became obvious that I was being inducted into the genius world of eating fruit using oriental cutlery, by a man who had no idea he was imparting me with such wisdom. He was no longer a study subject. He was my teacher. In that moment I recalled the fondness and appreciation Attenborough has for his animal subjects, and felt it towards my own.

We were in the fresh drinks aisle now and my man is deliberating over a selection of passion-fruit and

spirulina pressed-juices. I know the feeling. The volume of those 2-litre bottles makes them some commitment. It's not the kind of thing you want to live to regret (for a few days). After some minutes he's taken with a bright blue spirulina concoction before darting off to the 16th aisle at pace. I add the juice to my basket and, arriving in the horizontal "aisle corridor," I notice I've lost him. Beset by panic, I do a walk-by of every aisle until I spy him confidently adding a loaf of bread to his haul.

Relief suddenly turns to fear, as he is now walking towards me with purpose. Out of nowhere I'm convinced that the game is up. Surely he knows what I've been doing? I'm terrified that he will glance at my basket and spot a particular combination of items that simply CANNOT be a coincidence. This isn't an ordinary basket of items, like condoms, Kronenbourrg and crumpets. The mango and the juice he could dismiss as chance, but not the chopsticks. No way Jose.

What am I scared of? Well, it's not as simple as me being caught out. I have inadvertently conscripted to a duty of care towards this man. I've seen the Truman Show enough times to know what glitches in the Matrix can do to a person's sanity. What if this guy is already on the verge of mental collapse and my basket is primed to become the straw to break this camel's back?

With concrete certainty about my decision, I abandon the operation and duck down another aisle before the man can get too close. Besieged with guilt



and shame about my behaviour, I put my items back where I got them, chopsticks n'all, and head for the store exit.

The fresh air quickly soothes my self-disgust and within a few minutes I have recovered sufficiently to try again, only this time I wager it will be less of a risk and more comfortable to follow somebody out in the open air, akin to the difference between prying on zoo animals in a small enclosure and going on safari.

The sun is out and in the distance a Turkish man who looks to be in his late 70s pulls a trolley bag across the road heading in the direction of the Green Lanes thoroughfare. He's making slow pace, and not in that agony-of-old-age way, more with a free-of-all-responsibility vibe. I follow him at a similar speed and I'm struck by how meditative it immediately feels. If what happened in Sainsbury's was like a hunting-safari, the thrill and adrenaline of the chase, then this was more bird-watching.

The man approached a Turkish green grocer and began to gently touch tomatoes to check for ripeness, so I started doing the same at the next tomato stack along. Not satisfied, he turned to cross the road and I followed. We both negotiated with cars using our body language and eventually a bus stopped to let us cross. I say us because it really felt like we were doing it together. We were bonded at that point and started towards the next green grocer. There we touched tomatoes in the same stack and I noticed he didn't bother checking some that I had already fingered. That felt lovely. He now trusted me.

I trusted and felt safe with him, and in a weird way even loved him. I thought, I'd be there for him if he ever needed my help. If something happened to him, he could call on me. Not that he would, because he doesn't know me, but I'd be there for him all the same.

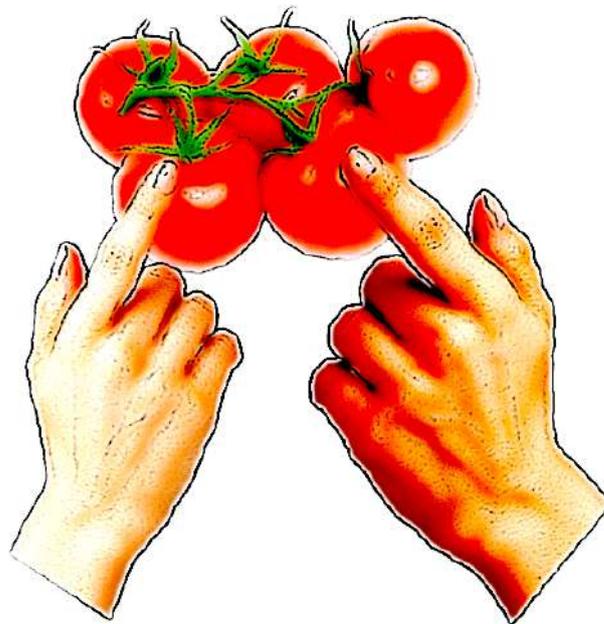
We headed to another shop and I was overcome with peace and calm from the intimacy of the encounter. It was the same wholesome feeling I've had throughout my life when spending time (but not interacting) with birds, frogs, small mammals as well as stray dogs and cats. Watching them go about their simple business. Being happy for them. Wishing them to be free and to live endlessly. That feeling of glimpsing someone or something for a mere parmesan-shaving of their total existence and maybe, probably, never again.

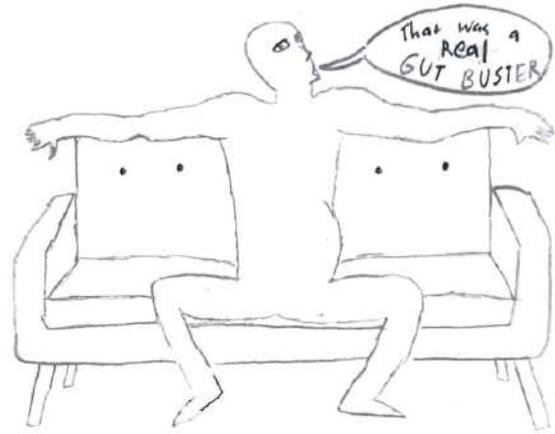
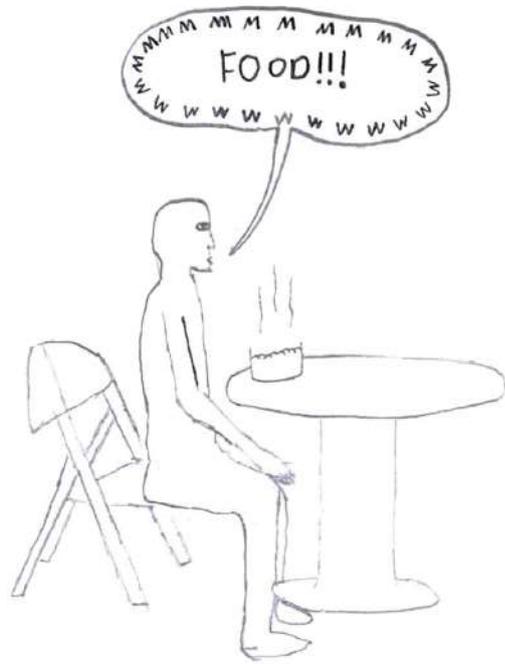
I checked my phone and noticed I was late to an event I was co-hosting. I'd been drifting around with the old man for nearly 30 minutes. I immediately crossed the road and walked in the opposite direction, in a way that felt brutal - we hadn't said goodbye. I looked back a dozen or so times at my subject and was filled with melancholy. As he got smaller and smaller I was

reminded of all those times when as a kid I watched a helium balloon I'd spent an afternoon with fly up into the stratosphere.

Walking back, I felt that meaningful, spirited kind of sadness. The one that, if it could talk, would say "this is what life's really about". I thought of Hemingway's *Old Man and The Sea*. The beauty and simplicity of the silent relationship of respect between the fisherman and the marlin. Perhaps, I thought, sharing physical spaces without interacting, without the noise of human civilisation's complexity, is a super highway to deep spiritual connection and peace of mind.

When I arrived at the event I failed to communicate what I'd just experienced to my co-hosts and, with attendees arriving, was suddenly yanked back through the space-time continuum into the jibber-jabber of full vocal-chorded human interaction. And in the conversational set-pieces and mostly mindless social transacting that followed I felt a million miles and billions of years away from the essential, timeless truth of 'the follow.'





Butt Guster
Aidan Williams

