raw arts

AWARDS

2022

RAW ARTS 2022

This publication includes all eligible entries received for the 2022 RAW Arts Awards – an Awards program open to creatives aged 25 years and under.

Some material may contain adult themes and/or language and may be considered inappropriate for younger readers/viewers.

For information about the City of Greater Bendigo's RAW Arts program go to www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/RAW or email raw@bendigo.vic.gov.au

Photography of artwork and opening celebration by Bill Conroy, Press1 Photography.
Catalogue design by Jacqui Lynch, Preloaded Design.

The City of Greater Bendigo is on Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Country.

We acknowledge and extend our appreciation for the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung People, the Traditional Owners of the land.

We pay our respects to leaders and Elders past, present and emerging for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and the hopes of all Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples.

We express our gratitude in the sharing of this land, our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing and our hope that we may walk forward together in harmony and in the spirit of healing.

WELCOME

From the Mayor of the City of Greater Bendigo

Welcome to this volume, commemorating the 2022 RAW Arts Awards.

This year marks 25 years of the awards and I congratulate those people who had the original vision for the awards and thank the many staff and artists who have contributed to their success ever since.

The City of Greater Bendigo is delighted to use these awards as a way to support and encourage the talents and artistic pursuits of young people in our region. At the City, we strive to foster a creative community and provide opportunities for people of all ages and artistic styles to share and promote their skills.

Thank you to all of the artists who participated in this year's awards. I hope this is just the beginning for many of you and that you continue to enjoy the process of making art.

Whether it's something you pursue as a profession or hobby, it's important that we all have something in our lives that gives us joy and art has a very nurturing quality.

This year we had 88 applications from artists, writers, film makers and performers aged 10 to 24 years, from 25 suburbs and small towns across Greater Bendigo.

I would like to acknowledge the wonderful parents, carers and teachers who encouraged the young artists to make a submission. It's so important for young people to have this support.

I would also like to thank the judges for their time and support of these awards:

- Visual Arts judges: La Trobe Art Institute Public Programs Coordinator Karen Annett-Thomas and La Trobe Art Institute Curator in Residence Bianca Winataputri
- Digital Media judge: writer, podcaster and festival director John Richards
- Literary judges: former lecturer in children's and young adult literature David Beagley, and writer and academic Pam Harvey
- Performing Arts judge: Bendigo playwright and theatre producer with Uncertain Curtain Theatre Sarah-Jane Fawcett
- Ella Filsell and Connor Findlay from the *Ambedo* team

These awards wouldn't be possible without the wonderful staff in our Bendigo Venues and Events unit. The unit's mission includes the goals of championing and encouraging those who create and perform, and bringing our community together to share culture and celebrate creativity.

These awards have been a launchpad for many young people who have gone onto professional careers in creative arts industries. So you never know where something like this may lead and I wish all our entrants well for whatever may come next.

On behalf of the City of Greater Bendigo I am delighted to congratulate the winners of the 2022 RAW Arts Awards:

Visual Arts Award
Winner: Leah Sigley
Highly Commended: Noah Dunstone

Digital Media Prize
Winner: Ben Martin
Highly Commended: Jin Turpie

Literature Award
Winner: Samantha Johnston
Highly Commended: Yasmin Russell

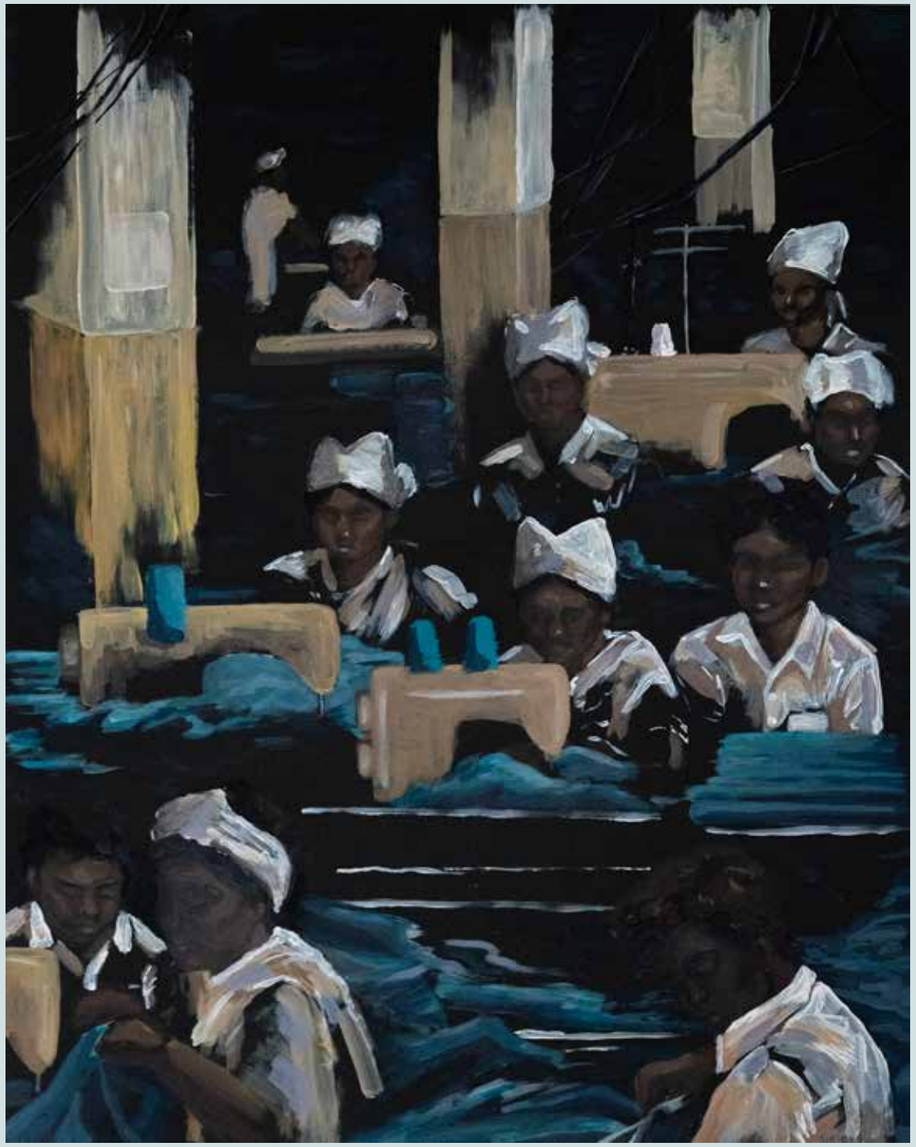
Performing Arts Scholarship
Winner: Tara Muscatello

Yo Bendigo/*Ambedo* Award
Winner: Levity Camilleri

Congratulations again to all the 2022 participants and I wish you the very best as you continue to create and share your work.

Mayor Cr Andrea Metcalf

WINNER



LEAH SIGLEY

RAW Arts Visual Arts Award

In 4 days a top fashion CEO earns what a Bangladeshi garment worker earns in their life

Acrylic on board

WINNER

SAMANTHA JOHNSTON

RAW Arts Literature Award

A Cappuchino

You get coffee with your grandpa every week.

Your dad doesn't want you drinking coffee,

But grandpa doesn't care.

You sit there in the cafe as it rains outside.

The workers know your names by now.

Your cold hands wrap around the coffee mug and you stare into grandpa's eyes.

You examine the features on his face and in his eyes you see your father.

Dad isn't around anymore to stop you drinking coffee, you see.

But you can see his eyes in grandpa's.

So as you sip your coffee knowing you shouldn't be,

You find comfort in the presence of your grandfather.

You sit across the table as the owner brings you both a scone.

As you cover it with cream, you listen to grandpa talk about the good old days.

Better times without technology; or so he says.

You wouldn't know.

But still, you tune in intently to the conversation,

Hanging onto every word.

You find yourself longing for a time you never even knew.

Maybe it's just the way he tells the story,

Or maybe, it's just the cappuccino.

WINNER

BEN MARTIN

RAW Arts Short Film Award

Lure

Watch the video
www.youtube.com/watch?v=h01uRr2SSR0&ab_channel=UNDAMedia

WINNER

TARA MUSCATELLO

RAW Arts Performing Arts Scholarship

Music

Tara Muscatello is a twenty year old singer, songwriter, rapper and guitarist who is extremely passionate about music. Music has always been a massive part of who Tara is, and she has been extremely fortunate to attend schools where her passion has been nurtured. Tara's life has been anything but easy, but even when she was at her lowest low and felt that her heart could beat no more, music brought her back to life.

When Tara was nine years old, she was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, also known as high functioning Autism. Then, at age thirteen she was given an additional diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder. For the longest time Tara was barely hanging on, fighting tooth and nail to make it through each day, but with an incredible support system and the unbelievable power of music, she was able to not only survive but thrive. Tara spent most of year 2015 in and out of psychiatric facilities where her only joy came from singing along to the tunes that were played on a radio. Tara didn't realise it at the time, but those hours spent singing in her room (very softly so that no-one would hear her), contributed greatly to her recovery and changed her outlook on life to a more positive one.

When she was finally able to return to school and life outside of doctors, nurses and mental health assessments, Tara made a vow to herself to channel all of her energy into her music and really throw herself head-first into the artform. It was from that moment on that she began putting her hand up for every musical opportunity that came her way, which only strengthened her passion and made it crystal clear that this was what she needed to do with her life. Song writing has also become something extremely therapeutic for Tara as she is able to put her feelings on a page and express her emotions in a positive and creative way. What once left Tara feeling ashamed and embarrassed is now one of her greatest creative assets and she really hopes that if her musical career takes off and she does have some kind of platform one day, that she can use it to inspire and encourage others like her.

In 2018 Tara was selected to perform and speak to a national audience at the Artlands Gala. This was an incredible experience that made her even more appreciative of how lucky she is to live in a place where the arts are so appreciated and supported.

Tara's music is quite personal as it is an expression of her experiences and feelings, so it can be quite nerve-wracking to share it with others but when she does, she always hopes that it speaks to, and inspires those listening. Tara would love for her music to be able to do for others what so many artists' music has done for her. Tara wants to touch people's hearts and leave them with a warm feeling inside. Tara wants people to be able to connect with her lyrics and to sing along to them at the top of their lungs; and she strives to inspire people to keep fighting and to live each day to the absolute fullest.

WINNER

LEVITY CAMILLERI

YoBendigo/Ambedo Award

Pose/Poise

I pose myself as a mirror;

I poise myself as if a lady.

But I am neither.

I cannot mirror your emotions well enough

And your phrases sound unnatural from my mouth.

I am a being, independent from you,

Why won't I treat myself as such?

Secondly, I am not a lady.

I am not restricted enough

by the customs I've studied

for my own sake.

I will play in the dirt; I will express myself.

I will be whoever I can be -

Not a lady

nor a mirror.

YOBENDIGO/AMDEDO AWARD

In 2022 a new award was added to the RAW Arts Awards: the Yo/Bendigo Ambedo prize.

Ambedo is a youth magazine by young people, for young people, and the aim of the prize is to recognise one entry from all the entries to RAW 2022 that spoke of the experience of being a young person living in Greater Bendigo in 2022.

The award was presented to Levity Camilleri for her written work "Pose/poise".

The judges loved this well written piece, it gave a clear picture on the subject, going into detail on trying to be something that you aren't, unwilling to keep up, it conveyed to the judges a powerful message. "Be the person you feel comfortable with".

Levity's work will be included in the next edition of Ambedo along with other work from this year's RAW Arts Awards.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

NOAH DUNSTONE

RAW Arts Visual Arts Award

The Nonsensically Twisted Crowd of Undecided Pseudonyms

Digital Art/Photoshop Manipulation

HIGHLY COMMENDED

YASMIN RUSSELL

RAW Arts Literature Award

Little Flautist

The man, in his older years now, awakened to a quiet knock. He'd fallen asleep on his chair again, a worn shoe half laced, as he'd been meaning to head out somewhere. Rubbing away the sleep from his eye, he kicked off his shoes and made his way through the dark towards the wooden door. He did not have time for idle conversation with Mrs Trellimar, who often stopped by unannounced, and was only welcome to his small home if she brought that sweetened bread he adored.

He swung the door open, light spilling in from a lit lantern held up in one hand by a young girl, cross-legged on the step, milky white eyes looking up towards him. Unseeing.

Cesil.

'I must ask you to teach me, Jesp, please?'

Jesp glanced down at the young girl, sitting patiently.

'You must be specific, girl,' he snapped, before regretting his harshness. Cesil had already gone through so much as she was delivered into the world. She did not deserve his aggression.

'Before, in the square for the celebration, I heard a wondrous sound amidst the chatter. I had to know what it was. I have heard so many sounds, but this one was different. It sounded mournful. It sounded beautiful. What I am trying to say is that I have heard your song through your walls. I wish to be capable of performing it too.'

Jesp waited a moment, noting Cesil's ragged hair, but neat dress, and the many bruises along her scrawny legs. He had played that song, written by his long past lover, on the festival day each year. It was a sad song, as the lover had been a saddened man, but to his ear, it was the sound of angels singing. He'd never been a religious man, but often spoke of how his lover would have bested even the best of angels.

His small, cosy abode creaked as he stepped forward, helping her up and into the warmth.

'It is not an easy skill for those who have the privilege of sight, dear. I'm not so sure that you will ever learn to be as skilled,' Jesp stated, walking across the room to open a cabinet. Dust fell to the ground with the unexpected movement, as he reached toward the back for an old, wooden instrument.

'However, what one doesn't possess in one aspect, they may make up for in others. This instrument is called a flute.'

He brought the well-crafted piece over, as he held her calloused hand, guiding her small fingers along the grooves, dips and holes of the wood.

'It feels beautiful.'

And it was. A darker wood than one found nearby, carved with swirls and patterns intertwining. It was sacred to him, but his lover was never the possessive type. He pondered his old way of thinking, how different they had been, before making a decision.

'It is from a faraway village, further than I've ever been. You may use it. You may also return in a few days. I will teach you some simple notes, and a few patterns of song. But first I ask you to understand it. I want you to understand this object as you do your own body.'

Cesil gripped the flute tightly in her hands, imprinting the design into the crevices of her skin.

'I will, of course. I thank you plenty for trusting my hands with the flute, and for the opportunity to learn. It is a rare kindness that I am very thankful for.'

Without speaking a word further, Jesp helped guide Cesil outside into the cold, laughter in the distance heard from those who had still not yet returned home for the night. There was a slight hesitance, a worry she would not be able to find her way back. But Cesil moved along the cobbled street, remembering the route to her home, slowed by the absence of her sight. He watched her fumble until she was out of his sight, before returning inside.

His shoes were in the corner of the room, one resting upside down on the other, short laces dangling in the air. Jesp could have sworn he'd been wearing them just moments before.

He rested on his bed, returning to his book, as he did every night. Here, he jotted down the business of his days. He filled the page this time, shaky hand sorer than normal, but a wide grin as he upheld his piece. Jesp felt as though he had a legacy, in some sort of way. Perhaps in times far away from his own, his diary may be found by someone who didn't even exist yet. The thought of his hand in fate was thrilling.

Cesil returned in two nights' time, as promised.

And as Jesp taught, they talked. Cesil spoke of her mother's cruelty, aggression and rage. She spoke of a boy she had met, Tatanel, who spoke with his hands and not his tongue. Although they could not communicate as conventionally as others, they had formed a close bond. Jesp spoke of his past, his lover, and his journey with music through his youth. He told Cesil about his book, his pride, even reading to her some of the pages. But most importantly, he told her of the song she had been so curious about.

Conversation eventually died to the melodic tune of the flute, as Cesil learnt note upon note, nursery songs to harmonic tunes. Jesp guided her along, memories of his past flooding forward as he retrieved them in order to teach. Over the course of weeks, seeing young Cesil every day or so, he realised that his house had not held such a childlike joy for so long.

He and his lover had always wanted a child.

So one night, before Cesil begrudgingly returned to her home, he gifted her the option to stay.

She would not be a burden on him, as quite frankly, he had nothing to do with his days. While his joints ached and his head hurt, she would not require upkeep such as a newborn would. Cesil eagerly agreed, and they made preparations around the house for her to stay. As Jesp was cleaning out the small spare room, he found a small bundle of colourful ribbons.

'Cesil, may I place a bow in your hair?' he asked, his hands struggling to untangle the ribbon.

'Oh, of course, yes. Please make it yellow, if you can. I've heard that colour brings happiness to people.'

As he finally freed the yellow ribbon, he gestured Cesil over and tied her hair up behind her head.

It was nowhere near a perfect job, however Cesil was pleased and Jesp felt proud.

'You are so very kind to me, Jesp,' Cesil mentioned after another flute lesson. She had finally played the song she had heard only months ago, as her hands pressed and glided along the wooden instrument. She packed up the flute, hands patting the surface of its ornate case to find the latch. Jesp watched her from behind his diary, as he recounted what he could remember of the day.

He summarised Cecil's first playing of his lover's song, a long time goal, but not much else.

Pondering his day, he attempted to fathom something else to write, before noticing the yellow bow on Cesil's head as she began to walk to her room, flute case in hand.

'Your bow is quite pretty. Where did you get it?'

She paused. It had not been even an hour since he had tied her hair with it.

'Haha. You're quite funny, Jesp,' Cesil replied, assuming she had missed a joke. Jesp watched her walk and close the door to her room. He did not understand what she had found so entertaining.

Chalking it up to some strange youth quirk, he finished his sentence regarding Cecil's song, the ink drying in exposure to the air, before making his way to sleep.

In the morning, Jesp made the pair some gruel, using an ounce of the lavish honey they had acquired from a very kind neighbour.

As Cesil ate her sweetened oats, she heard the sounds of cooking once again in the kitchen. The clack of a wooden spoon against a bowl, and the sloshing of milk.

She sensed something was wrong, the taste of honeyed oats turning sickly sweet in her mouth.

'Jesp… you've made breakfast already. Is perhaps someone coming over?'

He looked towards Cesil, holding the spoon up with a shaking arm.

'...Oh,' he muttered, now glancing down towards the stewing oats. 'No, no one is coming over.'

He set his spoon down before bringing his wrinkled hands to his head.

'I… I think I may lie down, Cesil.'

'I think that might be worthwhile,' she replied, before scooping up her remaining gruel.

As Jesp went to return to his bed, Cesil waited until she heard his door close shut, before making her way to the case containing the flute. She had saved a bit of coin from extra chores Jesp had had her do, but she needed to get Jesp some medicine, or professional advice. Something was wrong with him. She made her way out of the abode, careful to hold the door in a particular way so it would not squeak, and found a busy street to busk on.

And Cesil played.

A light song, wafting through the air softly and gracefully, entwining with the wind as it whistled by. She gathered a small crowd of children, before it grew to adults as the workday ended. She'd chosen the right time, and had placed a small basket on the ground that the boy who spoke with his hands had made her. He joined the crowd too, eventually, smiling softly in awe of not only the tune, but the young girl who performed it.

The money she had gathered as well as what she had saved was just enough for the herbalist to give her a special tea that should hopefully aid in whatever it is that ailed Jesp. She was no expert, however, having to trust that the herbalist did not just give her a foul-smelling liquid.

Cesil was aided in rushing back by Tatanel, as he stayed after her performance and came with her to help her. At this stage, they had developed a form of language of touch, in taps and swipes against the skin.

'Thank you, Tatanel. I will see you tomorrow, alright?' she spoke, his response in agreement consisting of two taps on her cheek, before a small pause, after which another touch joined it, of lips caressing her cheekbone. Cesil's unseeing eyes widened as she heard his footsteps walking away against the gravel at a quick pace. She traced her cheekbone with her hand, smiling to herself, before she shook her head and entered her home, flute and medicine in hand.

Her hands found the doorknob to Jesp's room, and with a creak, she opened the door.

"Jesp? Are you awake? I have something here for you.'

There was no response.

A feeling rotted Cesil's stomach, as her hands felt their way around the room to the head of the bed.

Her delicate hands met the wrinkled, leather-like skin of Jesp's face.

Jesp's cold face.

Her breath became ragged, falling violently into sobs as she came to the realisation, dropping the medicine bottle onto the ground. Glass shattered against the wooden floor. Her hands sticky and trembling, she gripped the flute, now just her flute, urging her breath to slow down. And so, Cesil played the song she had finally learnt. And as she played, winsome notes between sobs, Jesp's diary lay upon his bedside table, open on the page he had last written.

It read: 'If only he could see the new life I have found.'

But Cesil could not read it.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

JIN TURPIE

RAW Arts Short Film Award

The Spring of 1939

Watch the video
www.youtube.com/watch?v=4pfNyXKJaUE&ab_channel=JCturps

HIGHLY COMMENDED

KALO DAVIS

RAW Arts Performing Arts Scholarship

Music

Kalo Davis is currently in year 12 at Bendigo Senior Secondary College. Kalo's passion for singing began before he can even remember. Today music is central and integral to who he is and what he aspires to be in the future. This year he is studying three music subjects and through extending his knowledge of theoretical and practical elements involved with being a musician, he feels as though he can now appreciate music at a whole new level. This knowledge has also enabled Kalo to become much more adventurous with his own compositions. Kalo finds song writing to be such a great release of emotion and it became something that helped with his mental health through all the lockdowns and periods of isolation.

Kalo leads and directs a band where he plays guitar, sings, and arranges vocal parts for three other singers. Kalo performs at Open Mic sessions at venues such as The Old Church on the Hill, and even more recently had the honor of singing lead in an ensemble piece at the Bendigo Senior Secondary College ANZAC Day Ceremony. In 2020 Kalo was awarded 'Musician of the Year' at Crusoe College, where he was a member of several bands playing guitar, singing, and occasionally playing bass. Kalo got the chance to perform at the school's mid-year and end of year concerts every year as well as attending Fretworks Guitar and Band camp in years 7, 8 and 9. Throughout 2020 Kalo began to drift away from guitar and instead focused intently on what he could do with his voice. From then on, Kalo has been especially interested in acapella music, and what can be done in music using only the human voice.

RIKKI ARENDSEN

Finding Focus

35mm Analogue Photography + 3D printed Model

CHARLOTTE ABBOTT

Black and white world

Canvas collage/painting

EGG BARLOW
Creation of Toney
Digital Drawing

EBONY ADAMS
The Herd
Pencil on paper

KAYLA BARNFIELD
The Sapling

Penelope the prophet watched the leaves gently swaying on a small tree. It seemed impossible that one day that little tree, barely a sapling, could be one of the largest trees in the forest in a century – almost two decades past the average life span of a dryad like her.

At the same time, it could be cut down in several years, and Penelope considered the two futures. Both were possible, she could see in her mind. Both possible… but neither probable, as a vision of a forest fire consumed her sight. She could trace that fire back and follow it onwards, long past her lifetime.

She smiled slightly, remembering the fifteen people who lived near her. Several of them made reckless decisions with no thoughts about the impacts. Everyone made big and small choices every moment; the only way to not change the future, Penelope knew, was to never exist in the first place.

The truth was, everything changed, and time was no exception.

Famous philosophers from her village had spent their entire lifetimes trying to decode the mysteries of time. They thought about how people that you would never meet could shape your life with a single word. About how every choice, every thought and every action could create new realities. If there was ever a clear path for this world, the philosophers had said, it was long gone now.

Not wanting to disrupt the delicate balance between being and nature, the people had stayed hidden in their village for almost three thousand years. However, nothing lasted forever, and it had finally been destroyed five years ago.

The forest had burned.

The people had fled.

Penelope was forced away from her home, away from her friends and away from the only life she'd ever known.

Now she was with several others, most of them human. Most of them with no idea what a dryad's life was like.

She stayed in the forest of twisted vines; safe enough here, for now.

Penelope kept to herself, disrupting as little as possible in this universe. She was part of a greater force, a greater reality that at once controlled and obeyed, was omnipotent and helpless. A predator that attacked from behind.

Time caught up with everyone eventually.

Her people had long since bowed to it, accepting that they were part of something greater than themselves, greater than anything that a human or nymph could possibly imagine.

They were all a part of the forest.

But there was still so much that she didn't know. However, she did not bother trying to decode that mystery.

It was not her duty.

Her duty was to assist her friends when they needed her. That, she knew, was all she needed to do.

That thought complete, she turned her attention back to the sapling in front of her; each branch a new timeline, each leaf a possibility.

For now, the future was all she could see.

WILL STRAWBRIDGE

Blank Slate of Despair

The endless ringing of eerie silence will forever mark the solitary realm of which I inhabit the infinite sprawl of mundane and isolation acts as a cage in this mortal world. The uninterested ambitions of others hinder the progress of the pioneers. Stopping short of overcoming an expanse of hell. Leaving barren tracks where I follow in the footsteps of progress, regretting, foreboding, these chasms of rock surround the infinite plain of desolate expanse.

Unfathomable beasts lay dormant on the outskirts of safety, aiding blasphemy as it surrounds, and consumes all. Impregnable fortresses of grandiose lay just out of reach. Once the few seeds of purity sprouted from these bastions of strength. Now they have been tapped into by heretics seeking to spread their grains of influence over vast steppes of nothing.

Barren grounds lay as abodes for mechanical beasts, rusted, forgotten, and bleached in the relentless sun. Once vessels for power, they now lay imposingly dormant. Waiting for a new era of prosperity to rein over the lands so they can be awoken once again.

A liminal dew engulfs these lands. Like the saying of goodbye knowing this will never happen again. Flowing rivers of wealth, and glory now lay dry, as the few remaining streams trickle down into the most ransacked of valleys. No more people commute through this expanse however, no one dares.

A myriad of sacred sites now remained bare and lifeless. Had they survived the fury of ardent rose-pink fire on the night of June 14th they would have served the purpose as swords of power, allowing the prophets of divine spiritism to project their power far beyond their thrones at Sei-Kolai.

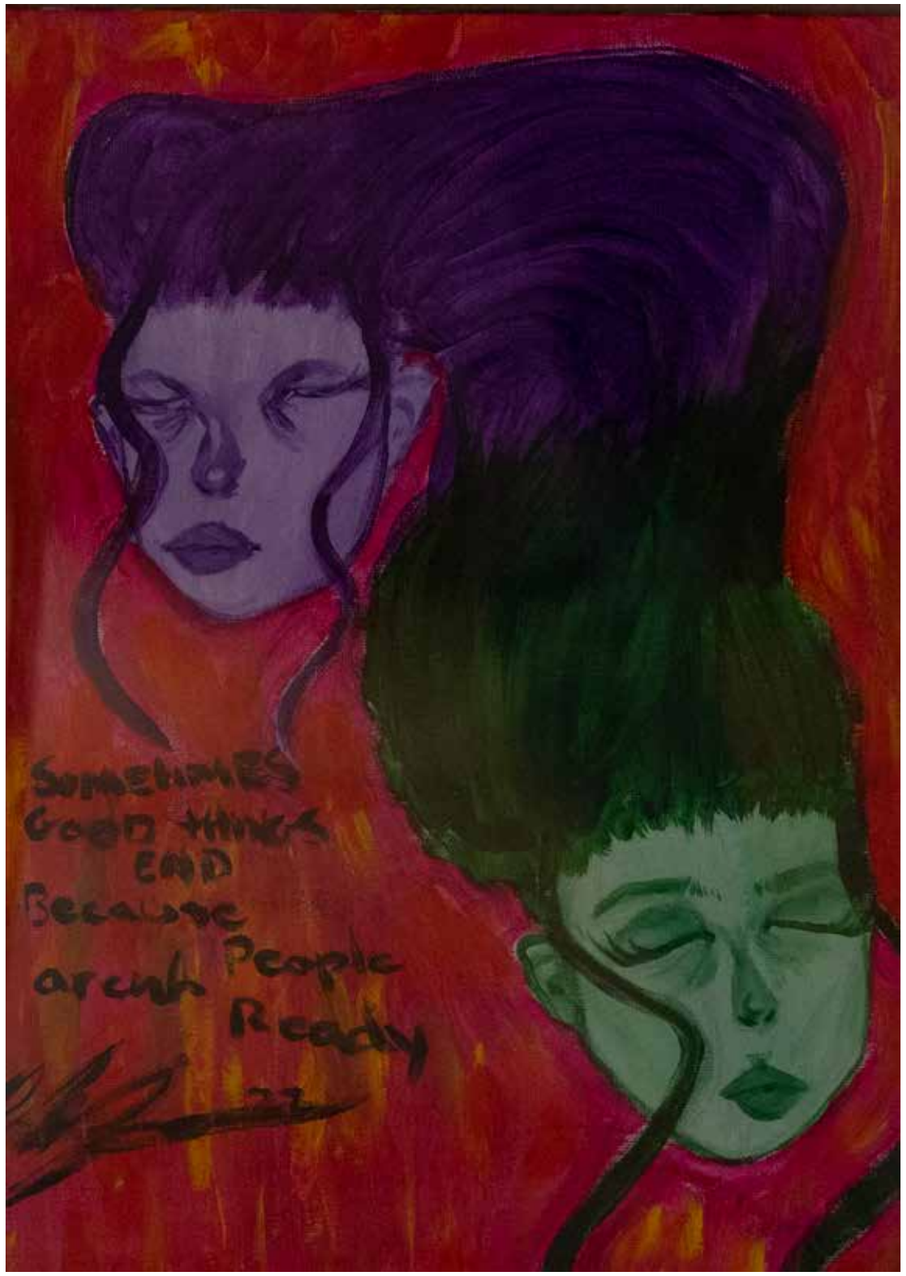
A blank slate of emotionless desperation was made by the prophets in order to quell the masses wishing for the powerful few to capitulate. It failed. Soon the hordes of the disenfranchised were on the prophet's doorstep. In an act of last resort, the Armageddon would have to begin. To cleanse the universe and start anew with a blank slate. The prophets never came back, however. They abandoned their domain and left the frail universe to fend for itself.

A harrowing reminder of how fast a world can buckle and fall to its own design due to intentional flaws in its execution by a few perfidious individuals blinded by the allure of grandiose power. A horrific reminder of what will become of everything if we become blinded with complacency.

KAYLA BARNFIELD

Sixteen Faces

Digitally coloured in photograph of drawing

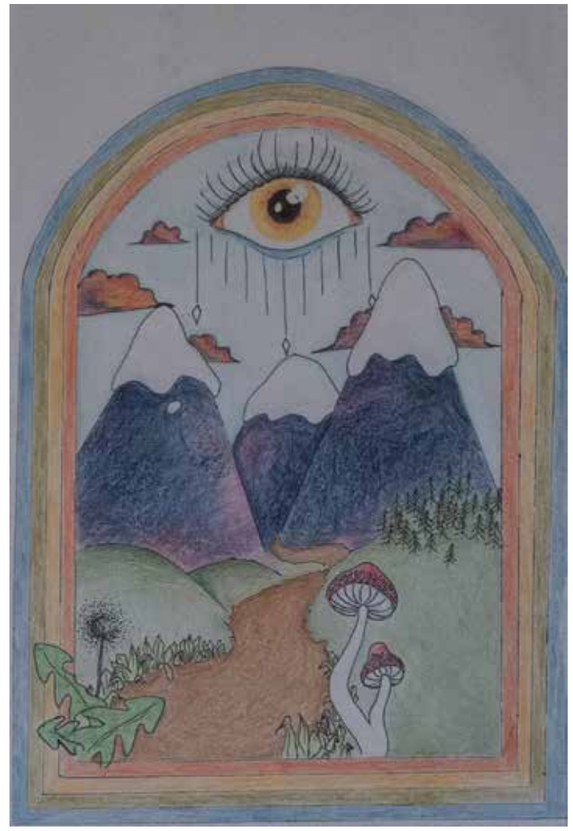


ELIJAH RAY LORD

Acceptance

Gouache and acrylic

AMBER BETTS
Changing Colours



SAGE COOPER
Into the rainbow

AYA CUSICK
Class of Skeletor
Posca (paint pen) on canvas

ANNA DUNNICLIFF-WELLS

Mayflowers

As the years pass by
Time seems to fly
Far too fast so I try to deny
That those times have died
And I need to say goodbye
So it's become a habit as I watch the night sky

To sit and reminisce
On all the dreams I've missed
And the things I wished
But that person's now ceased to exist
All I knew how to do was resist, persist
Unknowingly burying myself in a cist

And I'm just like a racehorse
Even a tiny slip
And I've lost my grip
A plane still grounded at the end of the strip
Sick of always chasing perfect with my feet stuck in plaster
The end seems so far
But still I run faster
And the echo leaves a scar
Because I could never be a star
It's always only close –
But no cigar

The years drag by
And my eyes turn grey
Lights fading away
To sockets left sunken
Gaunt in decay
Painting over my face
With umpteenth haste
As the mask starts to fall in utter disgrace

The words in my head
I scream and I cry
But no one hears anything
Much to my surprise
My hands start to shake
I hear my voice crack and break
Only one more mistake
Till I turn opaque
Then the world will see I'm nothing but a dirty lying fake

'I don't know why you're struggling'
Your efforts you could be redoubling
As if that's supposed to be comforting
You think I'm your well-oiled robot?
Your never-ceasing
Ever-gleaming
Wondrous machine?
You think it only to yourself
But I hear it all the same
So I stay silent
Smiling in compliance
Frozen in fiery shame
Because no one wants a broken machine
A beat-up
Second-hand
Fractured figurine

For too long I stayed blind
Basking in an ignorant mind
But the saddest tale of the mine
Was being long deprived
Of the mayflowers for which I now pine

You tried to convince me I had something better
Till one day I realised I was only deader
But now my eyes expose
I can't live la vie en rose
Yet I still hear the scorn
In all of the swarms
When they think of those who see the dark and deadly thorns

Stop looking for your little rose
Lost down the river summers ago
Wrapped up in a piano scarf
A blue iris in her pale grasp

Although if you take a stroll in the fading hours
Perhaps you'll still find her amongst the mayflowers

NATALIE DAVIES NOULTON

Untitled

Acrylic on canvas

CODY DEWIT-HAYES

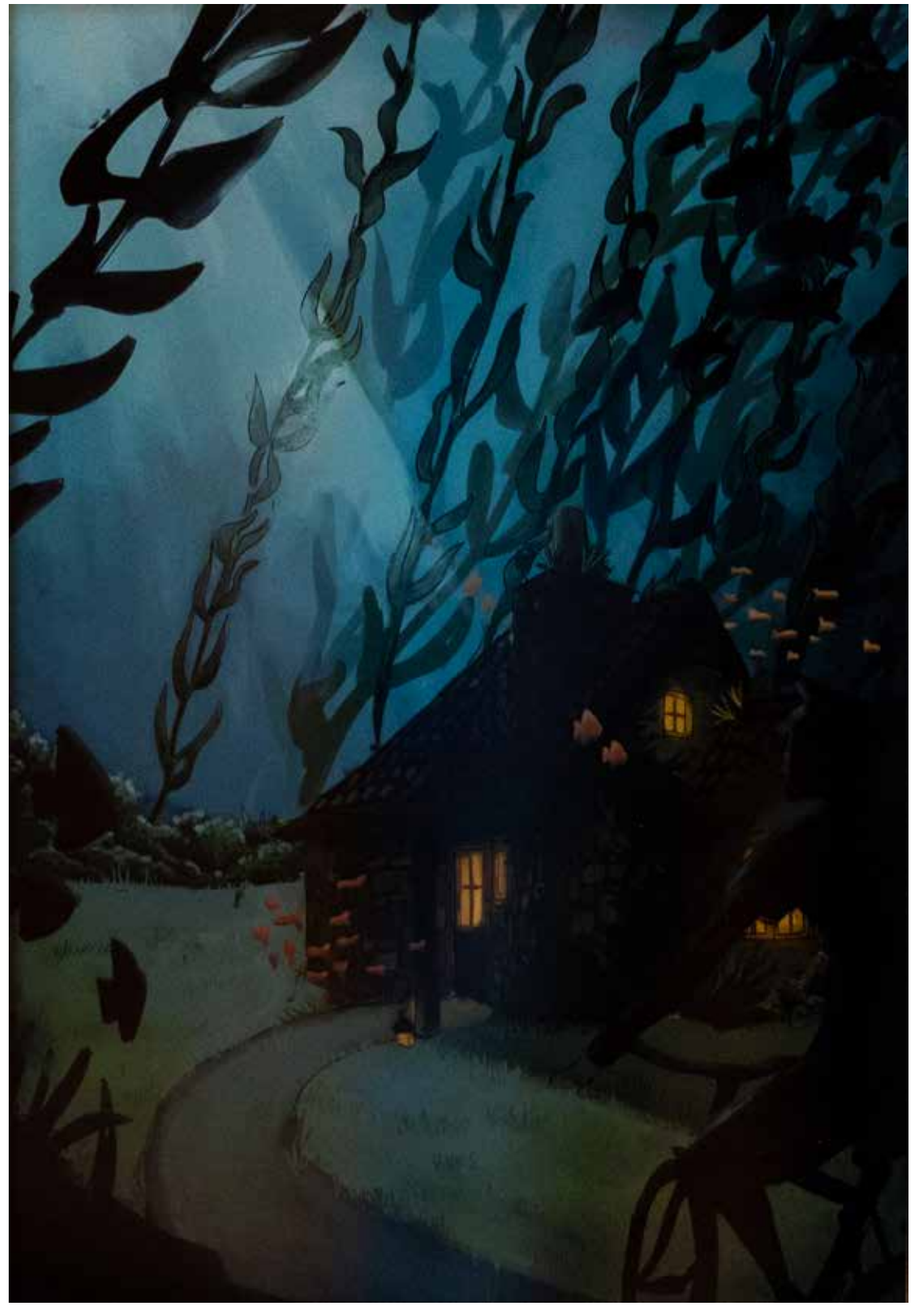
ACME

Acrylic paint, spray paint, ink, and thermodynamic crystals

MAX DORER

Evolution

Watercolours and markers



KATYA DORER

House at the edge of the Kelp Forest

Digital art printed on paper

SOPHIE FISHER

I remember

I remember.

I remember what it was like,

To have our bodies pressed against one another.

Skin to skin

Your soft, plush cheeks

The feel of your stubble

How you tingled when I ran my lip up your ear

How your arms were oddly soft, although covered in scars and scratches

Your warmth. Your presence.

I remember the rough part between your index finger and thumb on both hands.

You made me feel safe.

I remember telling you how much I adore the little things,

Like knowing how someone feels, how you felt.

Your hair, soft at the front, but matted towards their ends,

How it came halfway down your back when wet.

The two songs you never skipped when driving.

Vienna, by Billy Joel, now a haunting reminder of our time together.

You made me feel safe. Happy.

I remember how much better I was doing.

All the time we spent together.

I remember when even your sister's friend asked, "can we keep her?"

Now it's been weeks.

I miss how you feel.

I miss your presence.

Your smell.

Your sound.

Your taste.

Your warmth.

God, I even miss your family.

Your smile still makes me smile.

I remember being happy.

I remember you being happy.

I wish they weren't memories.

GEORGIA FAWCETT

Brush-tailed Phascogale

Fabric and recycled materials

HANNAH FAWCETT

Yo Bendigo

Pen, ink and digital colour

ALEX FILSELL

Dissimilarity; Strength lies in differences, not similarities

Digital photography, printed on canvas

SOPHIE FISHER

Sink or Swim

Photography - digital print

RACHAEL HAMILTON

The House

The house stands alone
desolate
On a plain of empty brown fields
Like an ironically standing definition
Of abandonment

Violent wind and rain
have beaten the wooden boards
to the point of skeletal fragility
in their harsh assault

broken shingles lay
scattered
around the house.
The roof from which they fell
Is bare and collapsed

Splintered window arches
Hold but three whole panes
Shattered glass litters the ground
Their remains in the frame
like jagged teeth
stuck
in a hollow, dead, mouth.

The left turret hangs
At a precarious angle
waiting
To crumble, give in

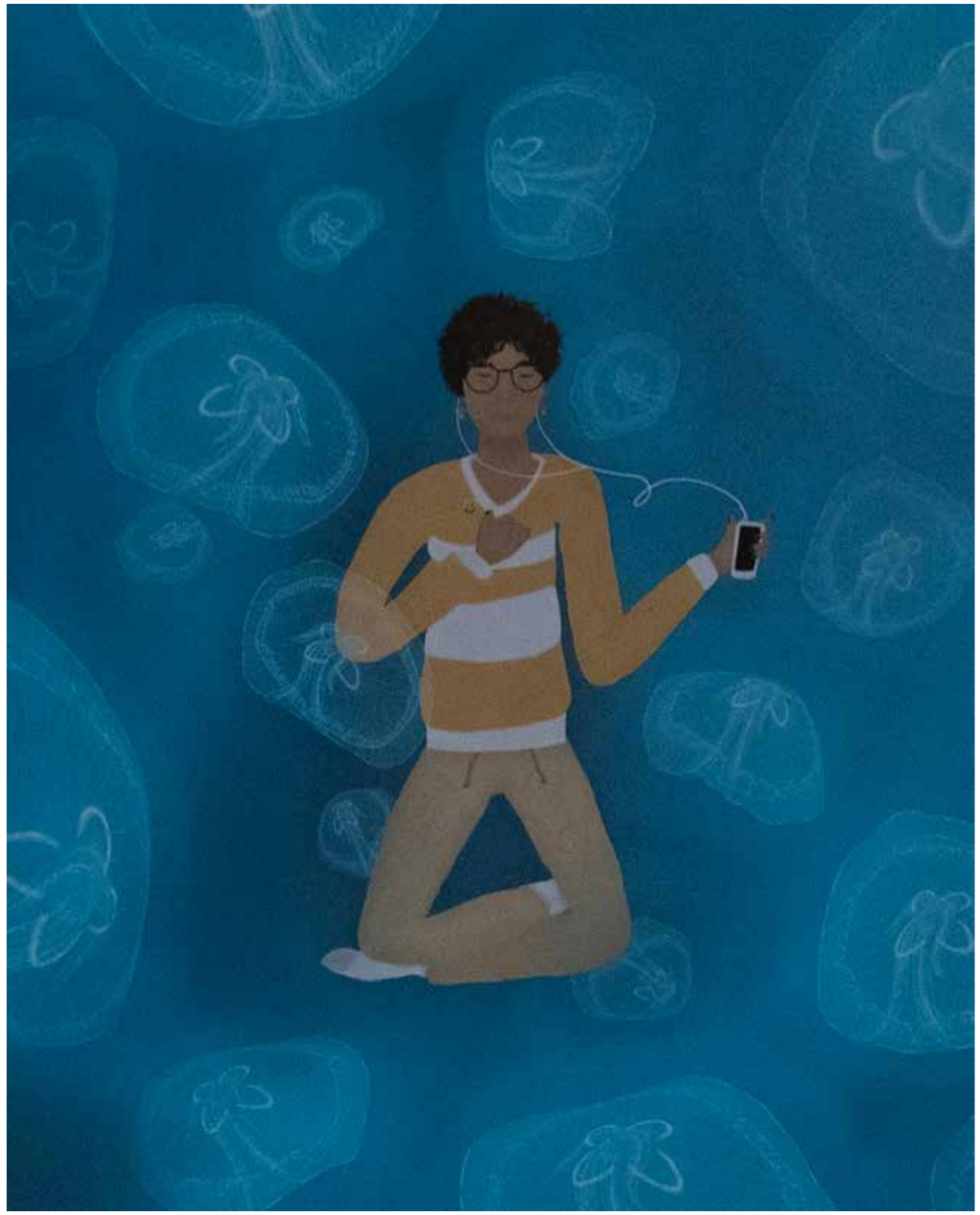
A twisted worn path winds
to where the front steps once sat.
Under a thick carpet of weeds
it is paved with slithers of stone
intricately fit into each other.

The crooked overgrown trail
Reaches the sinking front of the house.
A stooping terrace overhangs one's stance
held on
by only the remnants of time

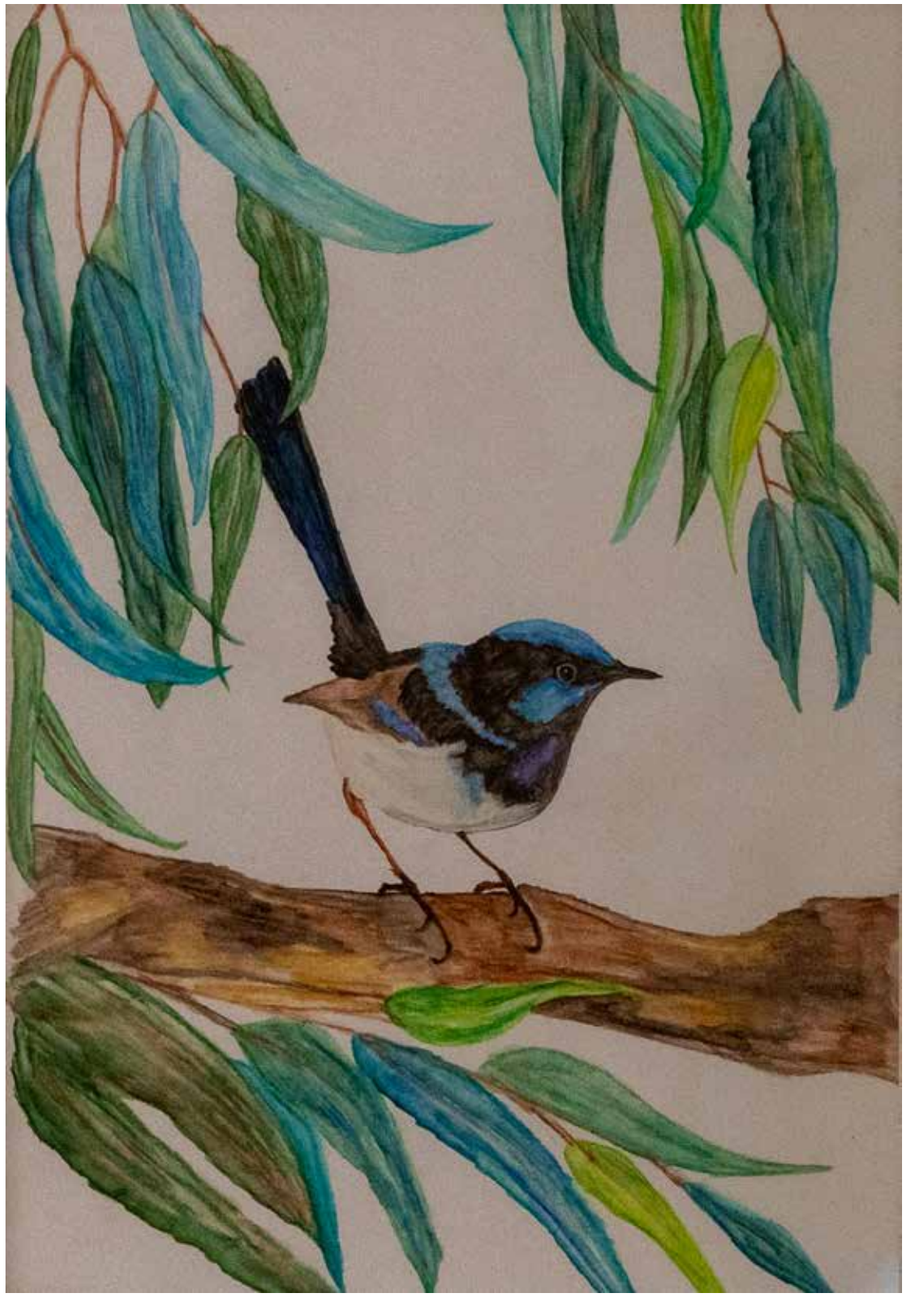
As if to intimidate
or unarm the confidence
of unwanted visitors,
the imposing result of condemnation
shadows
the wasteland surrounds

JO GLEESON
Lantern
Acrylic paint on canvas

JANE GOODMAN
Rose
Digital Photograph



IVY GRIST
Mindless Like a Jellyfish
Digital illustration



RACHAEL HAMILTON

Singular bird

Watercolour

BELLA DRAPER

A hard 6 on a good day

Grey lead pencil

TALIA KELLETT

The Butcher's Wife

I was not sure how long I had been walking. It simultaneously seemed like both long hours and only mere minutes had passed. I could feel the sweat dripping down my forehead, all while my son stayed within a deep slumber. He looked so peaceful; I could not dare myself to so much as breathe heavily. He deserved the rest. I, however, had to find somewhere for us to stay the night. It had to be a far enough distance away that my husband would not find me, but close enough that I could still find food and water for us.

Eventually, I came across an abandoned cottage, located deep within a forest. I was not entirely sure of how far away we were; I had stopped paying attention to that long ago. Nevertheless, I entered the house, my baby's pram close at hand.

The cottage was surprisingly well maintained. Of course, there was no food to be found, but any shelter at all was appreciated. It was a miracle that such an old cabin had held itself up. There was ruined furniture, well-kept enough so that it could still be sat upon, and two bedrooms. The kitchen and dining room was decent enough as well. I sat down on one of the armchairs, my baby in his pram, resting next to me. I hoped that he would wake soon, I wanted to introduce him to our new home. It was, evidently, nothing like my husband's house, but I was sure that we could make do.

As time went on, I wished that I had stayed where I had run away from. It was so difficult by myself. I was responsible for providing sustenance for the two of us, as well as taking care of my baby's other needs. He began to cry more often than usual. At least, that is how it appeared to me. I may have just not been noticing it over the cries of my own beforehand. He cried whenever he wanted something, which happened often. It was ear-splitting. I remained composed, although I would be lying if I had not, on occasion, wished that my husband was by my side to keep him quiet.

I also began to notice attributes of my son that reminded me of my husband. They both had the same nose, the same colour of iris, and they both had just slightly rosy cheeks. I constantly found myself analysing the way my son acted or moved, praying to God that he would not continue to share such a resemblance.

It was such a pleasant day, the day that I finally lost my temper. I woke up in a foul mood, despite the sun shining through the living room window.

"Why am I sleeping out here?" I asked myself, sitting myself up on the couch. The cries of my son answered me.

His cries were painful, reminding me of all that we faced back with my husband. All of what I faced. My eyes welled with tears as he continued to cry. Most of what happened after this was hazy, although I do recall covering my ears in that moment and letting out a gut-wrenching scream. I let out my anger and pain, lowering my head and clawing at my hair, holding on and pulling. I wished that my husband was here, despite everything. I longed for the embrace of his lashes, the warmth of his dominant voice.

I came out of my trance, the sound of my son's crying again piercing my ears. I took in a shaky breath, looking to his red face. I quietly begged for him to stop crying, for him to finally silence his painful screams. He continued. My hands shook. Then, in an almost uncontrollable action, I turned my body towards him.

I raised my right arm above him. Then it came flying downwards.

I knew that I had hit him, he had the handprint on his face to prove it. I quickly withdrew my hand from him, holding it tight to my chest. He was silent for a moment, and I was hopeful that it had worked, that I would not have to ever do again what I did. But his wails just grew louder.

I could not take it anymore. I stood up abruptly, clenching onto the handle of his pram, as I made my way out of the front door, walking deeper and deeper into the forest. Down steep hills and bending roads, through cobwebs and over tree stumps. I could feel tears rolling down my cheek, all while my son continued to cry.

The two of us eventually came across a lone river, branching off into the forest, past the towering trees. I walked down the hill leading to it, down the path. I then sat by the side of the water, watching as it rippled and flowed. I found myself becoming calmer, disconnecting from everything around me.

I felt the breeze blow through my hair, across my damp cheeks, and I closed my eyes, letting myself succumb to the calm.

As I came back into awareness of my surroundings, I realised that my son had stopped crying. I gently lifted him out of his pram, holding him gently, as I lowered him down onto my lap. I looked down at his face, staring deep into his eyes. He was no longer upset, instead expressing a look of confusion. There was still a deep red mark on his face. I slowly went to caress his cheek, but I recoiled my hand in fear. I had hurt my son, the only person I truly loved. I felt my heart skip a beat as my eyes once again began to flood with tears. My breath hitched, and I allowed myself to cry. Not in fear, as how I had once done, but in pain.

I recollected myself after a few minutes, holding my son in my arms as I rocked him from side to side. I placed him down into his pram. Surprisingly, I found myself smiling at him, him giving me a childish grin in return. The two of us began to stroll back along the path, clouds overhead beginning to grow darker. As we made our way up the hill, I tidied myself up, pulling off any twigs and brushing off any dust, all while holding onto the pram with one hand.

We reached the top of the hill; I could feel my heart thumping in my chest. As I ran my hand through my hair, I felt a larger stick intertwined in my curling hair. I let go of my son's pram, my back facing the river we had just left, as I used both my hands to untangle it. It took at least half a minute of fumbling to free the stick, eventually succeeding. However, when I reached to hold the pram at my side again, I could not feel it.

I tensed up, my chest tightening, as I looked around at my surroundings. It had not rolled to either side, it was nowhere to be seen on the path ahead. I felt the life drain from my body as I looked behind me, back down the steep hill I had made my way up. Down at the river, I saw my pram. Upside down. The water intensely rippling.

I ran down the hill. I could feel ripe blisters on my feet, hyperaware of the scars from my husband rubbing against my clothes. My mind was empty, all my focus laying on the pram at the river.

I finally made it to the bottom of the hill. Frantically, I got on my knees and grabbed at whatever part of the pram I could reach; steel handle, wooden outside. I pulled and I pulled. I had to get it out, I had to get him out. I prayed to myself, I prayed that my baby was alive. I prayed that he was okay and that he was safe.

I heaved the pram out of the dark water. It landed on the ground beside me with a thud, metallic wheels spinning aimlessly, wanting to run away yet eternally trapped. What I saw in that river destroyed me. The body of such a young child, facing down into the darkness. I pleaded that this child was not mine. I cried to God that what was happening was simply a nightmare, that I and my child were living our free life that we deserved.

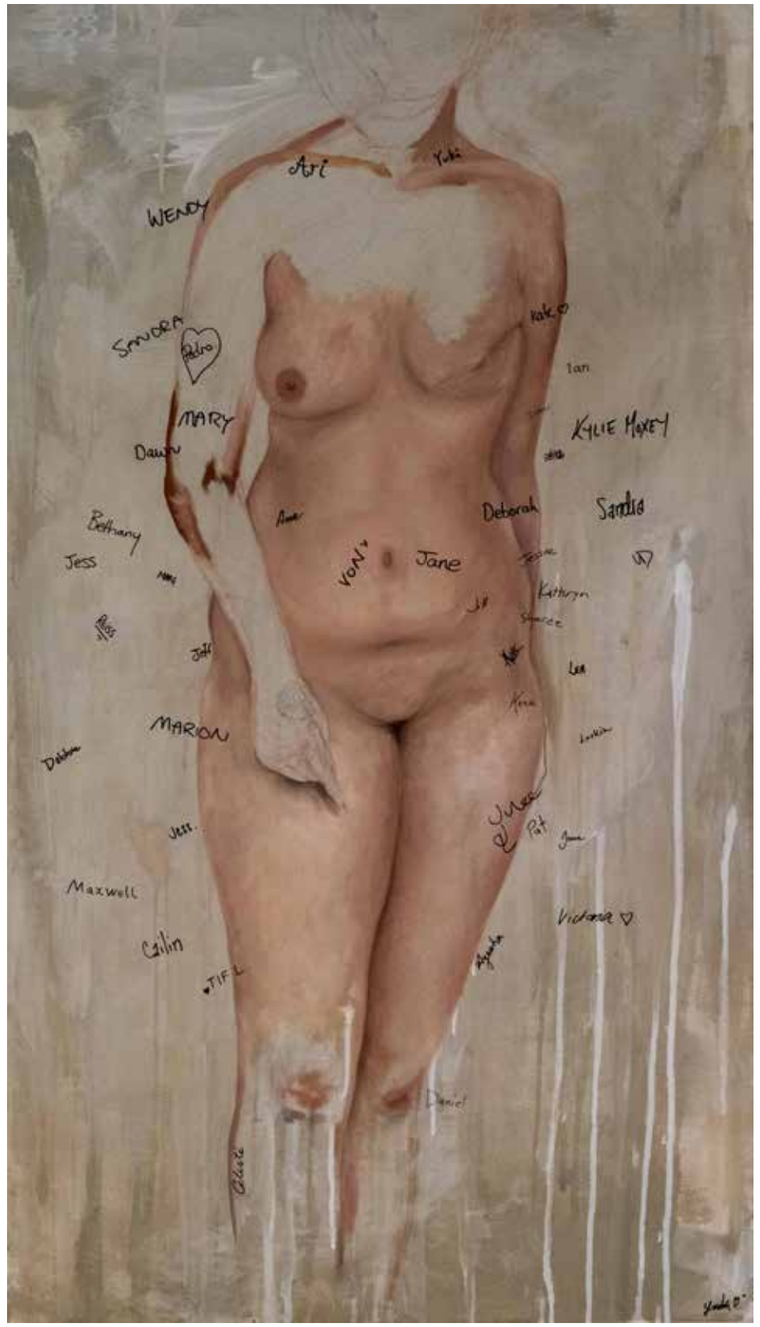
I muttered every cursed word that I could think of, my eyes overflowed with tears, my vision became blurred and hazy. I desperately held out my hands to the water. I clutched at his wet hair and his damped clothes. I held on tight and clung to him in my arms, holding his body to my chest. I ran my fingers through his dripping hair. I could not bear to look at his face. I had no idea what I was meant to do.

"God, please save my son!" I shouted to the sky. "Save him and take me! Please! Oh, God, please!"

My voice cracked as I once again felt my cheeks dampen with my flowing tears. I cried, something which seemed to have become a habit of mine. I felt worthless. I was sure that my husband may have been able to save him. He was able to get rid of whatever I complained about. Yet, in that moment, I was more alone than I had ever felt before, as I felt my son's clothes dampen mine.

DOM LUCKMAN
Nan
Photography

ALICIA LUDEMAN
Untitled
Photography



BETHANY MANSFIELD
Jane
Oil on canvas

TOM MCCORMICK
Japanese Azaleas
Oil paint

LARA MOON
Zombie Hero
Prismacolour pencils on paper

JENAYA RAMADGE
The Artist

As the artist steps into the harsh white, studio light, she prepares her canvas. The unfathomable ideas, visions and creations begin to rush into her overwhelmed mind. Brush now at the ready, she takes a deep, shaky breath and waits for the paint to start flowing. Oh, but where to begin? Perhaps with the concept of "beauty is pain". She had been told this saying before she was old enough to even pick up a paint brush. Pain: it's quite raw and miserable, but she set out on a seemingly impossible mission to paint pain as beautiful. Beauty, of course, is quite subjective. As the first brushstroke cautiously grazes the surface of her canvas she lets out a relieved sigh, the first stroke was always the hardest. To her audience, her paintings were created with the intent to emphasise a desire for attention. But to her, art feels necessary to survive yet another day.

She begins to tear through the canvas. Avoiding ramifications and judgements isn't the number one priority anymore as her ideas begin to pour out, put on display for the public. Seconds turn to minutes, then to hours, what feels like forever. Now out of breath, the canvas completely filled, her paint brush slips through her fingers and hits the floor as she steps back to admire her masterpiece in the mirror. She hardly recognises her subject matter anymore. The image of red paint splattered all over her once clean canvas stains her mind. Pre-emptive about the next time she will step back into that harsh bathroom light she unlocks the door and steps out into reality. Was her pain ever really beautiful?

MATTHEW BOROMEO
Ouse (Ásgeir Bragi) Portrait
Graphite sketch

SONNIE ROSE HANNAFORD

Performing Arts - Music

Sonnie Rose Hannaford lives, breathes and dreams music. From a young age, Sonnie Rose was engaged in the performing arts. From dancing, to learning instruments, to drama. Sonnie Rose found passion in singing and then composing music. When singing 'covers' (other people's songs) Sonnie Rose makes it their mission to convey the intention of the song so that the audience can connect to them.

Sonnie was a member of the Bendigo Youth Choir for four years and has stayed in contact with Gail Godber, who Sonnie Rose views as one of the many mentors who have helped in their musical journey. The Bendigo Youth Choir gave Sonnie many opportunities to perform all around Victoria and overseas, such as New York, in Carnegie Hall and in Amiens, France. Training vocally in a classical choir first, allowed Sonnie to easily adapt to many genres/styles of singing and Sonnie Rose is currently enjoying studying Soul at school.

Sonnie Rose has recently expanded their musical experience by playing the lead role of Munkustrap in Tribe Theatre Company's production of CATS. Sonnie truly enjoyed the experience and is thankful to have learned so much.

Sonnie is now in year 12 at Bendigo Senior Secondary College and will be completing three VCE music subjects this year along with German and English. Sonnie Rose is studying Music Performance, Music Investigation and Music Styles and Composition. For 2023, Sonnie Rose plans on applying for the Australian Institute of Music (Melbourne campus) and completing a Bachelor's degree in Music for Composing and Producing. Sonnie is determined to pursue a career where they can continue creating and giving back to community and is prepared to work as hard as needed to get there.

FAITH MCDONALD

Performing Arts - Classical Voice

Faith McDonald has extensive experience singing in Bendigo at various events during her time spent as a member of the Bendigo Youth Choir, such as regular Remembrance/ Anzac Day services and at the Rotary Carols by Candlelight annually. The eight years she's been a part of the choir have taught her a plethora of skills and equipped her with the resilience required to succeed in this field. Under the skillful teaching of Mrs V Broad and Gail Godber from the age of ten, Faith developed an immense love of music and deep appreciation for the art of classical voice.

Faith's musical highlights so far include performing with the Bendigo Youth Choir, 'La Avispa Brava' at Carnegie Hall (2017) and A Cantata for Joh Monashin Albert, France (2018). Performing with Nexus Bendigo Youth Theatre as a supporting lead in The Sound of Music (2018) and within ensemble in Les Misérables (2019). Performing lead Tinkerbell in Marist College Bendigo's Peter Pan (2017) and lead 'Truly Scrumptious' in Marist College Bendigo's production of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang Jr (2019). Performing Shubert's 'Ave Maria' solo and representing Marist College Bendigo at the 150th Anniversary of Marist education Australia in Sydney (April 2022).

Faith is currently undertaking VCE Music Performance at Marist College Bendigo in year 12, specialising in classical voice. Faith is the first student to undertake this course at Marist and is actively coached by singing teacher Lizzie Barrow who is involved with the Victorian Opera. Faith intends to continue singing for the rest of her life. It is her goal to prioritise using and pursuing her gifts at her family church each Sunday, and to achieve a form of higher education in Music language at university over the coming years. Faith is passionate about harnessing her growing experience in the art of classical voice to build a music program targeting high school students in central Victoria. Due to the lack of musical education prevalent in suburbs such as Maiden Gully and Eaglehawk, Faith desires to pursue and nurture the future musical talents of students in these suburbs; talent which would otherwise go unrecognised.

ALICE MCKELLAR

Performing Arts - Music

Performing Arts is Alice's passion. She doesn't know what she would do without it. It is what she strives for. Alice aspires to a career in this field, especially musical theatre. Theatre is where Alice's heart lies. It gives her a place where she belongs. She is free to express herself through what she loves the most; Performing.

Alice performs because of the feeling she gets being up on that stage. It is a feeling unlike any other. It is where Alice feels at ease. She feels the most herself when she is standing on that stage showing everyone what she loves to do. What she puts all her hard work, time and effort into. Alice was born and bred into the performing arts. Her parents met doing a show. Alice has always been surrounded by the arts. Whether that be singing, dancing or even the technical side of the arts. Alice started off with dancing aged four. That's when she first started to immerse in the Arts. By the age of eight, Alice started acting classes. By ten she'd begun Musical theatre. Alice has always loved singing but never truly thought she was any good at it or that she might want to focus on it until her family moved to Bendigo in year 7 (2019). That's when Alice started in the Academy Of Creative Arts program at BSE. That program helped her progress tremendously in the arts. It not only taught Alice a lot of technique but she gained a whole heap of confidence from all the opportunities it gave her.

In more recent years Alice started to audition for the local theatre companies. In 2020 Alice auditioned for Tribe's Cats and was successful, playing the role of Tantomile in their production at the beginning of this year. At the start of2021, Alice auditioned for Oliver with Nexus theatre company and I was successful in landing the Nancy Alternate. Alice also began singing lessons with Kristie Woodward at the beginning of 2021. She has seen a massive improvement in my voice thanks to Kristie's help. Alice hopes further her training in musical theatre and help improve her skills. So that one day she can have a successful career in the arts and pursue what she wants the most to do.

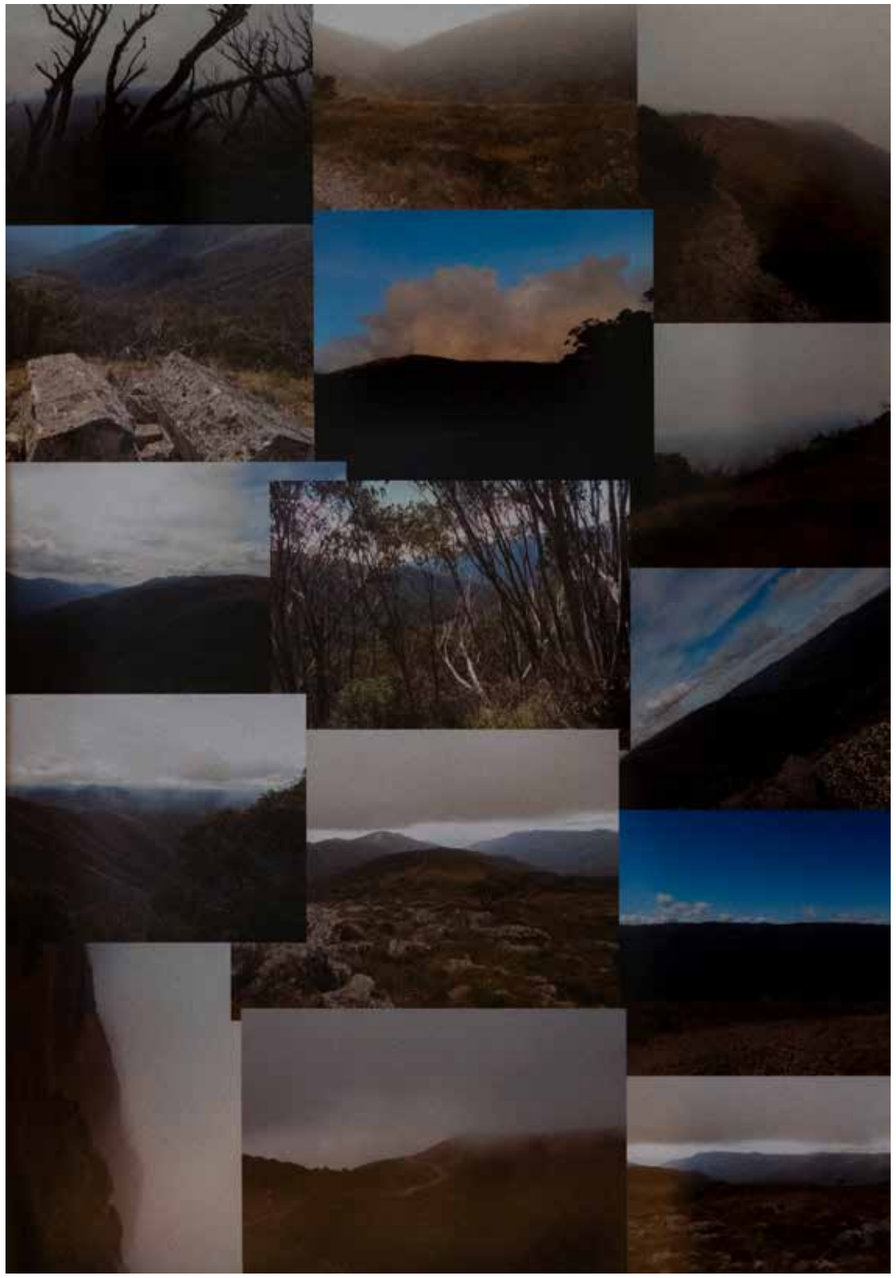
RYAN MCPARTLANE

Performing Arts - Music

Ryan McPartlane is fourteen years old and part of the Academy of Creative Arts at Bendigo South East College. This is his second year entering RAW. His entry in 2022 was a solo performance of a song called Fall that he co-wrote with his father. It took a lot of work to put this song together. Ryan and his dad started this project on the first day of the year as a new year's resolution. The song really took off after day two of recording as everything just seemed to fall (no pun intended) into place. The song was written about Ryan's late grandmother who died a couple of years before he was born.

It was originally written by Ryan's father about his mother and Ryan adapted it after his other grandmother passed late last year. Ryan released this song as a tribute to both of his grandmothers.

Ryan has performed in many places including at the 2021 RAW Awards showcase, Castlemaine young makers market, a wedding, busking and at Ulumbarra Theatre as part of the ACA end of year performance.



OLIVIA ROGISTER

On top of the world

KEIRA LONG

Digital Media

My Journey

Watch the video
www.youtube.com/shorts/0TYT-jBS29M

LEROY MILLER

Digital Media

A Thousand Storms - Alex Zegelin

Watch the video
www.youtube.com/watch?v=hcJO_bTLEfE&ab_channel=Design_Mill

CHLOE PENNO

A love

It had been many years since August last saw Sidney. He had missed her so much. The last time he had seen her he had been a 16-year-old boy. Now he was a 21-year-old man. He stood in his finest suit, the colour burgundy. His hair, the colour of chocolate, was slightly wavy from the sea salt from all the years of working on the docks. He had been raised poor, but with the death of his father, he had made a life for himself and was now living in the higher ends of town. He was quite handsome if you looked at him the right way and many people wondered how he was still single. He just said he wanted to focus on his career until he was in a stable position but in truth, he only cared for the heart of one girl, Sidney. In her departure, instead of growing apart from her, he only longed for her more. After five years the wait had become unbearable, so he was delighted to hear of her coming home to him. In the distance he saw a small cloud of dust and hoped she was looking forward to seeing him as much as he was to seeing her.

Sidney sat patiently in her carriage thinking about August. It had been the longest five years of her life with no one to laugh with, tell her secrets too and even spend time with. She missed his company. And however much she tried to tell herself not to, she couldn't help but feel a little jolt in her heart when she pictured his face. She wondered if he had changed much from his 16 years. She certainly had. Her face, previously peppered with freckles, was now slightly pale, although you could still see the freckles slightly if you looked closely. Her hair had grown long and curly, with golden streaks through it. She wore a simple pink dress with roses embroidered at the hem. Her smile was straight and pearly and she had grown taller. As he would have, she thought. Just his name brought a smile to her heart. Oh, how she had longed to see him. She had written over 1000 letters to him but never sent them because she felt he had moved on without his childhood playmate, as many do, sadly. She turned to look out the window to see a small speck in the distance. Her heart leapt and she made a small noise of excitement. She hoped he had come to meet her and that he was thinking about her in the manner she was.

Ever since a little six-year-old Sidney had gotten lost in the woods the two had been inseparable. They came from very different backgrounds. In the winter of 1937, a small boy named August had been born to a small, poor family consisting of his mother and his father. They lived in a small shack and when the boy was four his mother sadly passed from a smallpox outbreak in his town. Sidney's life was similar but different. She was born to the rich Canterbury family in the spring of 1937 and her younger brother died of smallpox when she was four. The poor boy, Charles, was only one year old. When she was six, she went to the post office to deliver a letter to her grandmother. On her way back she made a wrong turn and ended up lost in the evergreen forest. She wandered around trying to find her way back until she finally collapsed on the ground crying. Not long after she heard a voice say, "Why are you crying little girl?" She looked up and saw a little boy. This was August. "I'm lost," she muttered angrily. He smiled gently and took her by the hand. "I know you," he said. "You live in Canterbury mansion." She nodded and wiped her nose with a handkerchief. On the way back to her house they talked and talked and talked. By the time they had made it, they were firm friends. Ever since then they were inseparable. Until Sidney's father took her away to go to finishing school and get married, much to her disgust. She wondered if she would ever see him again. But five years later, she finally would.

August watched as the cloud of dust grew bigger and revealed a powder blue carriage, pulled by two white horses. Sidney watched as the speck in the distance grew to reveal a tall man. Both their hearts leapt with excitement and joy. August's heart was pounding in his chest when the carriage pulled up and revealed the Canterbury crest on the doors. The footman flung the door open and out stepped Sidney.

As soon as she saw him, she was flooded with emotions. Completely ignoring the three years of education in posture and politeness she dropped her bag and ran to him, throwing her arms around his neck. He did the only logical thing and wrapped her in his arms wishing this moment could last forever. Two best friends united one more.

In case you're wondering what happened next, the two best friends got married. They had been, with no other word for it, soulmates ever since that fateful day in the evergreen forest. As a start in their new life together they decided to start a school. A proper school. A school that taught boys and girls. A school that taught every subject you can imagine. Mathematics, English, literacy (yes there is a difference), history, humanities, sports, science and more. It was thought to be the world's first same sex school. They employed many teachers and the school was built in Sidney's old three-story mansion. They named it the Whitlock School of Knowledge. And after 40 years of happily teaching together they finally retired and passed the school to their oldest child, Reagan Anne Whitlock, R.A.W., who was thought to be one of the greatest headmasters and teachers the school ever had.

LEAF S

Our Home Away From Home

Acrylic paint

CHELSEA TOBIN
A wider world
Acrylic paint

JIN TURPIE
Prowler
Digital drawing

YASMIN RUSSELL
Mellow Mire
Acrylic on canvas

ROSIE PORTER

Never Worn

I used to live in a small, quiet village up in northern England where everyone knew everyone.

My mother tragically died when I was born and my father, well I've never seen him. My grandmother used to tell me that he left when I was born because my mother's death was too tragic for him to bear. I believe he left because he couldn't bear to look at my face without seeing my mothers'.

I live in a two-story building. On the top floor of the building is where my grandmother and I live. It's quite small but it's comfortable. When you climb up the stairs to the top floor, the first thing you will find is a living room with a tiny kitchen beside it. In the living room is an old musty couch that only my grandmother uses. Past the living room is her bedroom which has a double bed in it and a small wardrobe filled with books instead of clothes. Next to that is a bathroom which has a toilet and a shower in it as well as a singular sink. Above the sink is a cabinet filled with my medicine. I don't have cancer or anything, I have anxiety and depression. The meds make me feel less like someone else and more like the person I used to be. In other words they make me feel less insane, and more happy. Next to the bathroom is the final room on the top floor, which is my bedroom. It's not really a bedroom, it was originally a study, or an art room, or something like that. Now in it lies a single bed with some lights on the ceiling. There's nothing else in the room apart from clothes and books that just lie on the ground in a mess.

On the bottom floor of the building is a second-hand shop which my grandmother owns. This second-hand shop was owned by an old man who I had never met but when he passed my grandmother bought it and now owns it. Everyday people come in and out of the shop. Some people buy things, others sell or give away their items, and some people just come in to look.

One day in June, I was walking home from school and I saw a couple walk into the second-hand shop. They looked sad, but I knew why. Everyone knew why, it was a small town after all. This couple had just tried to have their first child, and just as they were about to give up, they got what they wanted. No less than ten weeks after they received the news that they were pregnant, the baby was dead. I wish there was an easier way to say it, but there isn't. I stood outside staring through one of the musty windows watching the couple walk in and head straight to the front counter. The wife put something down on the counter and I could tell she was crying. The husband looked like he was crying as well. They talked to my grandmother for a little while before turning around and walking out of the store and down the street.

I continued to stare through the window as my grandmother took the small item and wrote something down on the tag. I watched as she walked to the front window and put something on an empty space on a shelf. I looked at her confused and she looked at me and smiled but it looked forced. I walk over to the other window and look at the small item that she placed on the shelf. My smile instantly turned into a frown as I stare at the pair of baby shoes with a tag that reads 'never worn.'

MICHAEL WATSON

Man's Best Friend

Oil on linen

BLAYZE BELL
Bumblebee
Photography

ALLEGRA DOLE
Realistic face
Sketched portrait

UZZIELLE SANTOS

Always

"In a world where vows are worthless. Where making a pledge means nothing. Where promises are made to be broken, it would be nice to see words come back into power."
Chuck Palahniuk, Lullaby

"Promises are only as strong as the person who gives them ..."
Stephen Richards

"I know it is a bad thing to break a promise, but I think now that it is a worse thing to let a promise break you."
Jennifer Donnelly, A Northern Light

***

People say I am made to be broken.

That at least once in a person's lifetime, they will make me, hold me, cherish me, and crush me.

I've experienced it all. I've felt the flickering heart of the giver as they make me; their whole being encased in the belief that no matter what, they will keep me. Their words are laced with silk, emitting lies more pungent than the roses they plant and their crossed fingers echo a still, stone, cavernous heart. I've seen the honey-coated words slip off their tongues like a figure skater stumbling across a mirror of ice.

When I was born for the one-hundredth time, I was created by a blond boy with ocean eyes and a cheeky half-smile. He gifted me to a dark-skinned girl with framed chocolate eyes, a gap-toothed grin, and the heart of an angel; and he named me 'Always.'

My mother told me that only one in a hundred of us Promises would experience an unbroken life. 'Don't get your hopes up,' she said.

They were only fifteen when they met, but I had a special feeling about this one. Something felt raw, real, and vulnerable about this life. This boy was the exception.

They planted a garden together and every day after classes, they would tend it, spread out a picnic blanket and eat the lunches they had saved from school.

"I've never met anyone like you, Felicity Jayne," he would say. He never knew he could look at someone the way he looked at her.

She would roll her eyes and laugh; and when she laughed, to him it sounded like music playing. "I've never met anyone like you, Levi."

When she visited him, in the countryside, she marvelled at the twinkling specks sprinkled across the vast blanket of darkness; a big sky free from all the thick smog clouding the city where she grew up.

She was pessimistic and she was optimistic. She was joyful and she was sad. She was human. And they made each other laugh more than they ever had before.

"If I left," she mused one day, trailing her finger along the edge of the picnic blanket, as she stared at the few blinking stars, "who would remember me?"

He was silent for a moment before furrowing his eyebrows and replying. "Your sister. Your mom. Your dad."

"Would you?" she grinned.

"Eh, maybe," he said, his half-smile making its grand appearance. "Depends."

She smiled with satisfaction and took a bite out of her sandwich. "You know, Levi. We're all ants," she said, quite sharply. "We're so . . . small. So insignificant. Yet we exist on this beautiful planet . . . at the same time. How lucky are we?"

He chuckled and she leaned on his shoulder. "So lucky," he said. Then, gazing at her, he whispered, "I would remember you; always."

Six years after he promised me to her, he was awoken in the middle of the night by a call from her mother. Felicity was sick. And before then, they had never spent a night at the hospital.

"Terminal," the doctor called it.

Her face showed no emotion but she avoided Levi's gaze, biting her bottom lip. Levi thanked the doctor

and followed her as they walked silently out of the white room.

She grew weak. While I'd like to say that he remained strong through everything, I will not lie and make him seem any less human than he was. His heart throbbed with the dread and worry chipping away at them both. But I felt stronger than ever. I could still feel the warm pulsing of their hearts when they embraced and hear the sincerity echoing in their voices when they spoke to each other.

They were my exception.

***

It was a Tuesday afternoon. She had been in pain all day but refused to stay within the confines of the hospital walls. He was downstairs. She was upstairs looking in the mirror, forcing a smile as she dabbed makeup over her skin. The ring on her left hand glinted in the reflection, and as a hint of a real smile crossed her face, it was overshadowed by a sick feeling in the pit of her stomach.

Levi gazed over the almost empty lounge room downstairs, his eyes wide with delight as his mind glossed over all the furniture, pictures, books and random items their mothers had given to them that he would put in this apartment to make it theirs. A new home. A new life together.

A crash of clay hitting the floor echoed through the hallway. "No!" he heard her cry. "I hate myself!"

Levi dashed up the stairs and as he ran he heard her gasping breaths. "Felicity!" He burst into the room, finding her crouched on the floor, trying to scoop the broken clay vase into trembling hands.

"Felicity." He bent down, taking her hands.

"No, stop," she cried, pushing him away. "Stop, I have to clean it up."

With no words he steered her away from the shattered clay and pulled her into his arms. Her body shook against his, and her tears soaked his flannel shirt as two broken people embraced on the bathroom floor, just waiting for their promise of forever to be crushed.

"I'm sorry, baby." Her words escaped one by one, between desperate reaches for breath. "I'm sorry."

He rubbed her back gently, and her body relaxed in his arms.

"This isn't fair," her voice was still and croaky.

He felt tongue-twisted. "I know. It's not." Blinking rapidly, he willed that the tears would not flow.

"For you," she said, looking up at him with a tear-streaked face. "It's not fair for you, Levi. You shouldn't have to deal with this . . . with me."

He cupped her face softly in his hands. "Felicity Jayne, I choose you. I promise you; I will always choose you because I want to."

They say actions speak louder than words. But combined, they are a force to be reckoned with. Words can break and build and mend and end. They can be distorted, dressed up and deformed. They can also be true and strong and reflect the deepest longings of a soul that earnestly loves.

She rested her head on his chest, wrapping her arms around his neck. He closed his eyes and kissed her forehead. I wished in that moment that she knew just how much he intended to keep me. Just how much I meant to him.

***

The last few days of her life she spent at the hospital. Levi took it upon himself to decorate the room with her favourite flower: daisies. He made scrapbook pages with pictures of themselves and random rips of colourful paper and pasted them over the walls. He wanted her to look around and feel safe, like that feeling when you come home after a long day and climb into your own bed under your own warm sheets in your own room gazing at your own furniture, and your own photos of the people you love on familiar walls.

"Don't be afraid," she said softly, lifting a quivering hand to his cheek. He placed his hand over hers and pressed it against his skin.

He grinned, but he didn't try to stop his tears. "I'm not afraid," he said, laying down beside her. "You are my forever. Why would I be afraid of that?"

"I'm not afraid either, Levi." She smiled and closed her eyes, holding fast onto his hand until she no longer could.

***

It is times like these when I witness the unbearable, excruciating pain of losing the love of your life that I am incredibly thankful that I am not human. I have experienced loss, like any other living creature, being, entity, or whatever you may call me; but I have come to the conclusion that a human being is capable of feeling so profoundly the most intense of pain. And while I have felt the boundless emptiness of a broken promise, I know I will never fully understand the hurt that runs so deep.

All the hours I spent watching Levi as he sat in their apartment staring at the walls broke me because it broke him. He went about his days; because what else could he do? In the morning he woke up, and on some days it frightened him because some days he wished he hadn't. He went to work. He smiled at his co-workers and greeted the customers and kept up the small talk. And he came home. And he would try to eat, but some days he couldn't. He would try to sleep, but most nights he just lay there . . . and I cried with him.

But he kept me. Oh, did he keep me. He held on to me and every time the thought of me crossed his mind, his smile disappeared, and he would cry and hide as he did. I wanted him to know that he could cry and still be strong. Tears are the expression of the heart when you can barely speak, form comprehensible words or even breathe without thinking you may die and the anger, guilt and sadness that comes with those tears creates a feeling so vulnerable. But after a while, that feeling becomes so familiar, that it is unusual to feel any other way. I could not let his promise break him. He meant too much to me, and I knew how much I meant to him.

Tell me, how can a heart so greatly trust in me only to break me for a selfish reason when others suffer so much? How can a heart so carelessly – jokingly – make me, knowing they will break me when others would give their lives to keep me?

I am sacred. I am pure.

At least that's what I was created to be.

But good people break good promises sometimes. And maybe it's not so much that they break me. Maybe it's that they store me in the deepest parts of their heart, but they make room for more. I'm learning that the heart of a human can still stay beautiful even if it seems that I've been forgotten. I'm learning that they come first; not me.

So for Levi, I changed my name.

'Hope,' I was called.

He knew I was there whenever he looked at framed pictures of her. He saw me in the pages of his journal. He felt me whenever he gazed at the distant stars. To him, I was the hope that he could move on but still remember. That he could learn to make room in his heart after it had been so long occupied by only her.

I was the one thing he held onto for years after Felicity left. I was the hope that one day he would smile again. Laugh again. Feel a rush of pure peace and joy. Perhaps . . . love again. It was the most rewarding sensation in the world; to give someone hope. He knew there still was light somewhere. He only had to learn how to find it.

But I knew. I knew that while another person's 'Always' may fade with time, a change of heart or simply circumstances, Levi and Felicity's Promise of 'Always' would live on forever. And forever is a beautiful thing for those in love.

RUBY SKINNER

Fallen Angel

I lay there. Peacefully, on the loud yet subtly quiet ground. The noise around me, deafening. People yelling at one another, calling 911 and screaming. There was a soft ringing in my right ear, a louder hum in my left. With my body sinking into the ground, I noticed a pain. I was in pain. A lot of pain. Pain that started at the center of my head and shot itself down to my lower back. The pain was strong, stronger than what I had left. I couldn't feel my legs, so I assumed it had worked. There was something pressing down on my eyes demanding them shut. A force so powerful that I had tried not to open them. So, I lay there, listening to my stuttering last breaths, giving up all that there was to give up.

I peered down at my body, through a tiny glass windowpane, the only window in this blank and empty space I was left in. My body was surrounded by a crowd that grew and grew as the seconds passed. Staring at the body which lay in front of them. Still yelling and shouting for the ambulance to hurry, and constantly exclaiming the disaster in front of them to the poor old man who had hit me. He sat next to my body crying and praying to the lord above, hoping that he might hear and save me. Continuously apologizing for his terrible sins and actions that had killed me. It wasn't his fault though. I did it.

Once again, I felt this force, this time stronger and more powerful. It felt so close, yet so very far away. It nagged at me endlessly. I turned and spun around to try and figure out where it was coming from. It was all around me, dragging and tugging me to go this way and that. A continual cycle that went on for what felt like forever. Then it stopped. I looked towards my body again. Still sprawled out across the motorway. People, passengers, passers-by, and families that were once in cars all gaping at the horror which was my body. The man still swaying and praying over me as someone relentlessly harassed him, guilt shaming him for something that wasn't even his doing.

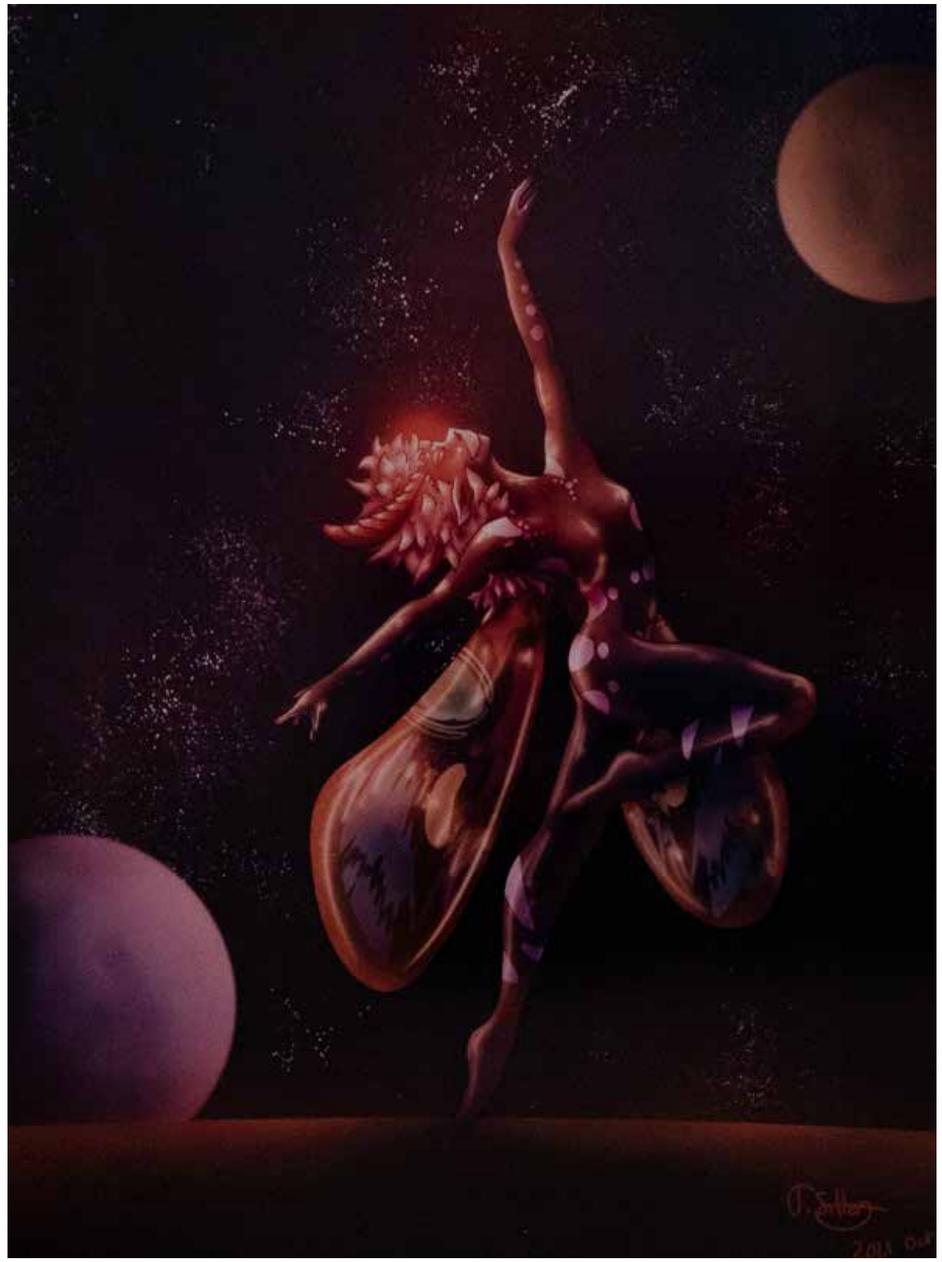
Viewing this terrible world below me I was thankful that I was no longer there. It was a horrible place. A place which I could no longer withstand. I had given up that place long ago, I just had to figure out how to get out. I am so grateful I did. Yet, I couldn't stop thinking about this poor man who would never forget this day, always thinking, for the rest of his life that he killed someone. Not knowing that he didn't, and I did.

Once again, this force pulled on me. It was gentle this time. Not so powerful, and significantly angelic. This force was sweet and beautiful. It showed me all that my life could have been, all the glory and wonder, the happiness and grace. This force was kind and elegant. I closed my eyes to soak in all the tender colors it offered me. The force led me to a wondrous place. A place that had familiarity however, I could not sense where from. It was a fascinating place. It was a place I had only dreamt of. I did know this place; it was a distant memory, but this place was where I grew up, where I was always meant to be. This place is my home. My true home.

I had always felt like I wasn't home on earth. As if I knew where I was meant to be, and I was someone more, more than just an ordinary human. I was lost in a sea of people. Actual people. Who weren't like me?

I was never a human…

I was a fallen angel.



TESS SILLERY

Starlit Dance

Digital illustration

JOBE THOMSON

Isolation

The lonely man wrote down the story of his life.

He wrote of his youth, of starvation in harsh streets, of injustice and corruption, of the blank-faced men who ripped him from his mother's arms and sent him to the sterile, artificial, clean academy. He wrote of values, morals imbued upon him and those he had firmly believed, of altruism and compassion, of obligation and honour, of connection and unity, and how all of it meant nothing now he was adrift in the vast void of space with no hopes for survival.

The man sighed, laying down his pen. His quarters were dark. Most power had been diverted to the engines, meaning his breath condensed in the shrill air and icicles crept from the ceiling like long, broken fingers.

The man wore several month's beard upon his lean, tired face. His eyes were a sad blue and his skin milky with lack of nutrition. He wore a simple jumpsuit stained with grease and woollen mittens that did little to fend off the cold.

He rose and crossed the room, fumbled with the drawer in the dark and deposited his journal and pen within. The drawer fastened shut with a soft click, eerily loud in the quiet room, full only of his own blank thoughts. He rested with his hands on the desk, head lowered. His mind was empty, numbed by months without stimulation, functioning only out of monotony. He felt only the deep heartbeat of the engines, ringing through the floor and wall, gentle vibrations serving to remind.

The man felt like falling asleep forever.

His quarters opened into a long, cylindrical corridor. He knew the walls were a sheer white without seeing them, he was aware of a time before when the lights had thrummed and the halls were warm, full of voices, laughter, life. Now they were empty and dead.

He crossed the corridor into the adjacent room. Here strobing reds and greens spiralled across the towering engine unit, the room forming a ring around it. The thrum resounded from the engines through the floor and walls, louder here, a heartbeat set in steel.

He knelt by the operating panel and undid the latch. It slid free with a hiss, vapour caressing his face as it rose toward the ceiling. Within cords were revealed, thousands upon thousands of them, like writhing snakes coiled endlessly in a dark den. Veins which pumped life throughout the ship.

The man worked in silence. Sparks flew, systems faltered, and units overheated as he worked to gain a few precious minutes, seconds even, while the ship willed itself to tear apart and return to stardust. Time passed, how long he was not aware, and then a speaker blared and the little green screen read three minutes less predicted oxygen remaining than before.

He swore and sat back, resting his head against the steel, hot against his scalp. It seemed ironic how so much had gone wrong. Attempts to fix things were futile. His existence was one long mockery.

The embryos had died a long time ago. Without them, the entire operation, the dream of a second chance, died. What use were morals when there was no hope? What use was fixing something already thoroughly broken?

What use was a tired, useless man? A failure?

He awoke sometime later to a piercing heat at the back of his head. He rose and gingerly touched the steel engine unit, feeling the warmth within.

An inordinate amount of warmth.

Heart racing, the man stumbled toward the operating panel. Smoke coiled amongst the cords, hot and pungent. Fans whirred overhead, but the smoke came streaming out too quickly and the dark room grew heavy with fumes.

The man coughed and cried out as sparks flew, striking him across the arms and face. He sat back, patting out the embers in his whiskers, coughing hoarsely. Through roaring ears he made out crackling from someplace far off, and a guttural groaning, as if the steel around him was ripping apart.

The thrum beneath his feet, the heartbeat of the ship, was weak and irregular.

He rose and approached the panel again. Determination drove him against the heat, his mind clear for the first time in what felt like forever. Some instinct told him to keep fighting, to not lay down and die, for however harsh life was it could not be worse than the cold grip of death.

A fresh plume of sparks erupted from the circuit. The engines screamed and sirens wailed. Flames crackled and the operating panel disappeared in a wave of fire.

He rose and stepped back, leaning against the wall. The strobing reds and greens he had become accustomed to were now replaced by something surreal, a sickly orange glow growing fiercer by the second, emanating from within the grills and fangs and exhausts of the engines. Smoke coiled along the ceiling, swirling and bubbling like a tumultuous cloud.

The man turned and ran. He scrambled along the corridor toward his quarters, fumbled at the door and slammed it closed. The cold of his room was a stark contrast to the intense heat of the engines. He shivered and pulled his jumpsuit tight.

His heart raced. His breath was a hiss in the quiet. Resting a hand against the wall, he felt the sickly thrum of the engines, a beat gone wrong, long and grinding. Dying.

He turned a circle in the dark, clueless. The time had come, and he didn't know how to greet it. Warmly? Gratefully? Or, now that he had stared death down the throat, reluctantly? It felt like everything leading to this moment was a lie. The monotony, the dullness, the emotionlessness, all of it paled in comparison to what he faced in that engine room. An ending.

As if in response to his thoughts the walls shuddered. The lights flickered on and off, and he glimpsed momentarily the habitat his quarters had become, sheets spoiled, floor a mess, the last desperate sign of his sanity. At the same time the shield across the window faltered and he was blindingly reminded of the stars without, millions of them blazing away in an eternal black sea, bright eyes observing his journey in silence.

He felt something at that. A pang of longing, a reminder of something from long ago. He remembered lying upon his back staring up at the sky, alone in the woods or a grassy paddock, in awe of what lay up there. Secrets concealed behind billions of years of light, the possibility of stars, of hope in the unknown.

He knew what he wanted to do.

The corridor was dense with smoke. Lights flickered and a siren blared distantly. The man stumbled against the sense of imbalance as the ship shifted, systems faltering as the engines erupted into conflagration. Steel groaned and beams boomed as they ruptured and tore.

He reached a doorway in the corridor and opened it quickly. Within was a small, square room sparsely furnished besides a white suit hanging on the left-hand wall. A helmet sat beside it, sun visor clear and reflective. He looked into the visor, and saw a tired, scruffy man looking back.

An unrecognisable man.

The ship shuddered. He changed quickly, discarding his tired, dirty jumpsuit upon the floor. The cool, white suit felt refreshing on his skin. Something new and exciting. His heart pounded as he drew tight the gloves, slipped into the boots, reached for the helmet…

It clicked into place with a gentle hiss. He was aware only of his hoarse breathing. Otherwise there was quiet. Long, surreal quiet. He glanced around through the visor, taking in the white, artificial room for the last time. The ship rumbled firmly, as if it were convulsing. The man stepped into the airlock and with a click the door slid closed.

Alone. He was alone here, in the airlock, just him before a white wall, beyond that cold space devoid of anything, an abyss which would claim him, a sea of stars through which he would float until the end.

He touched the wall gently, feeling the weak heartbeat of the engines grow slower. He frowned and leaned close.

"Goodbye," he whispered solemnly. He slammed the eject button.

He hurtled into the vast vacuum of space. The world became a blur, stars were streaks across his vision. His stomach churned as he battled the sensation of weightlessness, of travelling so quickly through an expansive emptiness. Slowly, the world outside focused. Blurs condensed into tiny pinpricks which were stars, the array of colours narrowed to dull blacks and blues.

The man floated, rotating slowly. His eyes widened.

He saw the ship hurtling away into the endless night, a plume of flame and smoke billowing from its side. It soon became a speck on the wide horizon, disappearing into the void, to forever traverse the black sea until the steel faded to dust and all memory was lost.

But the man paid the ship no heed. Instead he peered through the visor vigilantly. He was enamoured.

Space. An eternal horizon. It expanded around him forever in every direction. Green and blue nebulae swirled in the distance, intertwined in cosmic embrace, gases and dust twirling like dancers in the night. The darkness twinkled, bejewelled with millions of stars, some large and blinding, others small and fleeting. A comet sliced an ice-blue line through the night, asteroids collided and bounced and broke into tiny pieces of rock and dust, the reflective belt of a small green planetoid caught the light of a distant sun and blinded him for a moment.

Wherever he looked he was in awe. That nostalgic sense of wonder, of peering up into the sky in his adolescence, of dreaming of what lay among the stars, washed over him. For a moment he was a little boy in a spacesuit jumping on the couch with his brothers, thinking he could fly.

How wrong he had been.

A single tear leaked from his eye and rolled down his cheek, disappearing in the scruff of his beard. In his sad blue eyes was reflected all the light, all the hope, of the space which unravelled around him.

His oxygen was running out. He had not strapped on a tank. It didn't seem necessary to prolong the inevitable.

The wait was strangely calm. He did not struggle as the air grew thick and clammy. He did not writhe and claw as the visor grew cloudy and his head swam and grew muddy. He simply watched as the stars faded and the nebulae approached and proffered their long, green tendrils and he floated along them feeling the dust and gas envelope him and tug him toward something, the gentle pull of gravity, and soon he was parting clouds of the most brilliant blues and greens and reds and his heart was full and he smiled as the world around him, of gas and stardust, grew dark and faded.

The lonely man floated unmoving through the heart of space.

Drifting at peace.

GILEAD SANTOS

Surrealist Island

Digital illustration

LUCY PALMER
The Golden View of Remote Learning
Acrylic on canvas

TAYLAH HALLINAN
Nautical Float
Earthenware clay, glaze, wood, impasto medium, acrylic paint, and rope

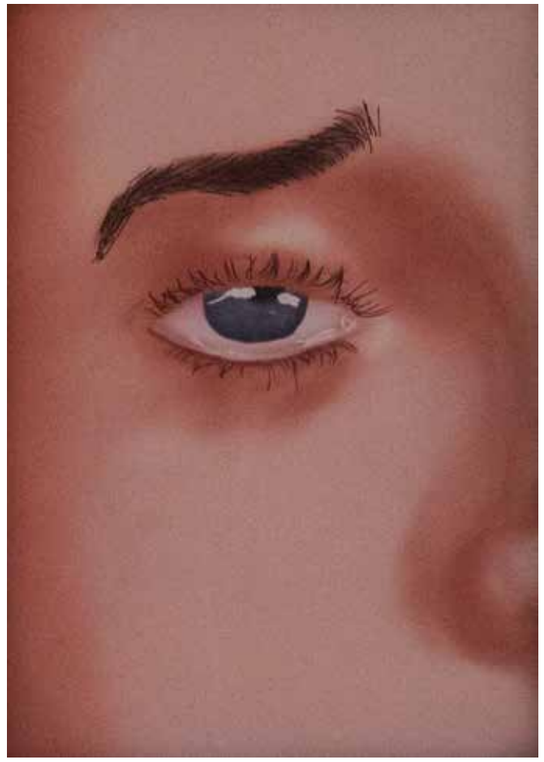
AUDREY WING
The Red Dirt

I am the red dirt, you often walk all over me. You don't think twice about me unless I'm in your shoe. I hear you complain about the heat as you wipe your sweat which lands on me. I know I may not be pleasant to walk on in the blasting heat or when the wind blows and I get in your eyes but all of this isn't my fault. I wish that you would look at me with the same joy as if you were at the beach, so next time you want to complain think about me as I am here too.

I know I might seem bitter but that's really not true, yes there are cons of being the dirt but I love it here as it is my home. Every day I watch the sun rise and set as it's a view you'll truly never forget. I see the towns and villages through the good times and sometimes even the bad times. I hear the people speak around the campfire they lit. I smell the smoke as the fire goes out and the darkness takes over telling me to go to bed. So when I fall asleep tonight I will always know that this is my home.

When I wake up, I wonder what today has planned for me. I wonder if the wind will blow me away or if there is no wind at all. I wonder what I will see, if the kangaroo will jump a little higher than yesterday or if the snake will slither a little quicker. I wonder if I will see anything new like a new joey bouncing along with the kangaroos. Every time I see a new joey my heart fills with joy I love watching them grow up and then grow old.

I wonder if it will rain as I love the rain drops that fall from the sky. I watch as they fall and hit me creating a little dint, but I don't mind because I know that they really don't mean it. I see the towns light up and all of the smiles that the rain creates especially when it has been particularly dry. I watch the children splash and play as they always love the rain. I love the thunder and lightning, I watch as the light strikes throughout the sky, and I love the thunder as it always come a bit late.



MADISON BOYLE
Untitled
Digital illustration

TALIA KELLETT

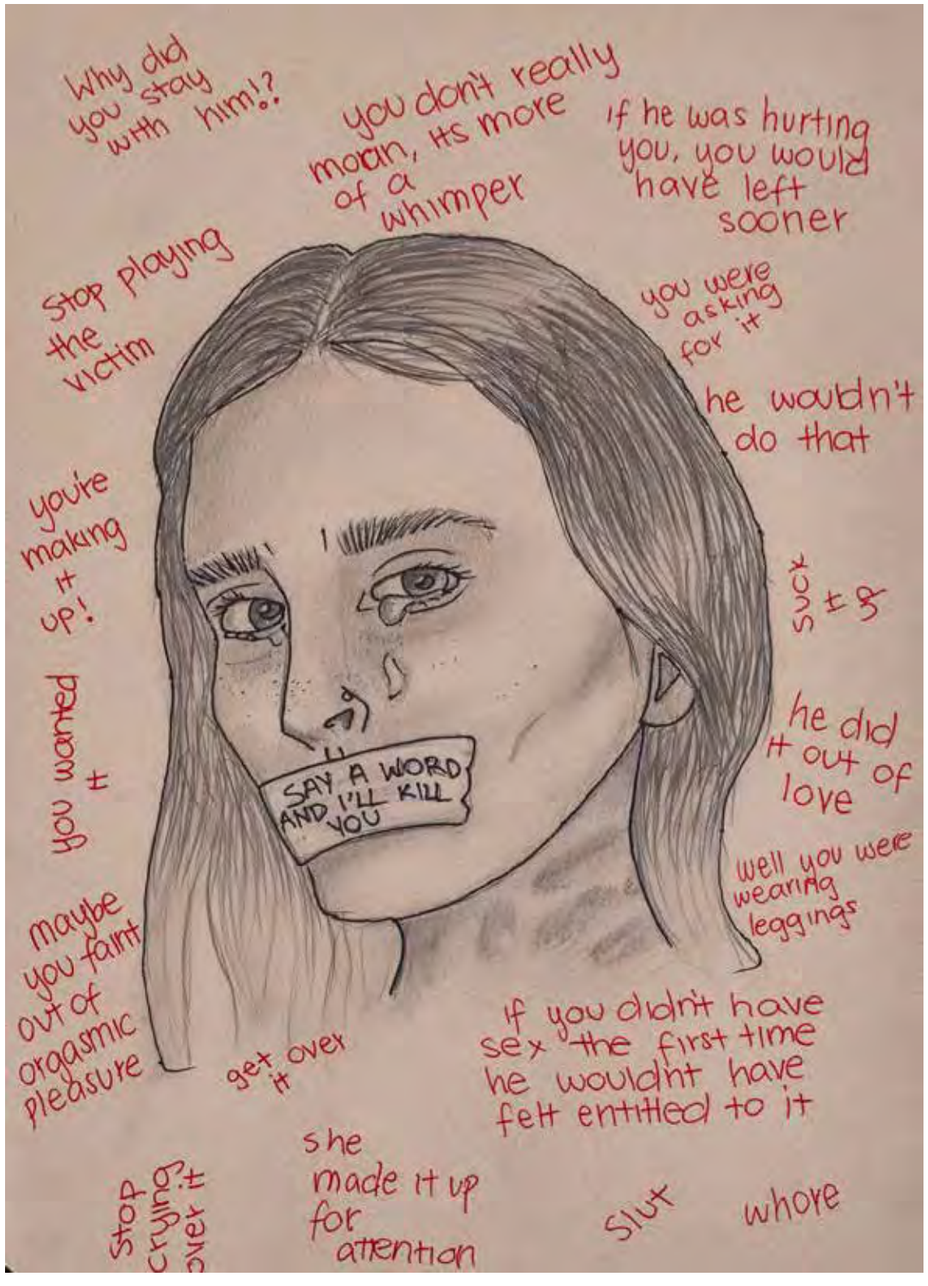
What Lies Within

Grey lead pencil and soft pastel

LEVITY CAMILLERI

Assorted Arts

Mixed media



JENAYA RAMADGE

Speechless

Grey lead pencils, red pen

KEIARRA HARRIS

Star Gazing

Digital illustration

CITY OF GREATER
BENDIGO
bv
&e
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& events