Silhouette

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Those Hands

Amber Lewis

Those hands. They were broken as a boy by playing baseball without a mitt. The ball arched down with great speed as my grandfather, a young boy with red hair and freckles, stood at bat, as the ball broke every finger wrapped tightly around the wood. His parents didn't take him to the hospital. Grandfather's hands mended crooked. It was the depression era. It was a teeny village in Ohio; Lawshe, consisting of a barbershop, two churches—the Church of Christ and the House of Prayer, a small clapboard schoolhouse, two stores, and a depot. Grandfather eventually drove the rusty, white, old-fashioned Newport Rural school bus, served in WWII as a PFC on many tours for at least three and a half years, then worked for GM in Dayton, Ohio, for 30 years. Those hands played, drove, fought, defended, assembled, but never rested.

Those hands. My grandfather. How often I remember him, always dressed in olive green workpants, long sleeves—slightly rolled up, and always a hat upon his thick, silver hair whenever he went out. His eyes were cerulean blue; they could make the bluest oceans rage their rolling waves with jealousy. His ivory skin was covered in freckles and he was extremely thin, with an average height and a booming voice that could rumble through the town like a Texas thunderstorm. I marveled at how such a huge voice could come out of such a tiny man. But mostly, I remembered his hands.

Those hands. The hands that covered mine as they patiently guided my little four-year old fingers to make a c, an a, a t, c...a...t: cat. His long, slender, freckled fingers were my teachers as I marveled at what I had written on a plain sheet of paper... scrawled, really. I couldn't believe it. A word! I'd written a word! Those hands had patiently guided mine, without a quiver, or even a tremble. Nor had my grandfather uttered a word of complaint. He was sixty-four. Rheumatism was beginning to set in, yet he never said a word. He never even massaged his hands. Surely they must've hurt, but over and over he worked patiently with me until I got it. I watched my grandfather write cat gracefully with his beautiful handwriting, the pencil poised between his thumb and forefinger, smoothly gliding cat onto the paper in a tidy brown mass of arcs and sticks, much smaller and prettier than mine. I decided I wanted to write like that. Grandfather said he'd help me.

“You can do anything, girl.”

Those hands. I could've sworn they were magic. They were constantly in motion, painting, chipping, varnishing, cooking, mowing, raking, teaching, pointing. To him they were all he needed. To me they were everything.

Those hands. The fingernails on his right index finger and his thumb yellowed like an old page from a vintage tome. It was from the Viceroy cigarettes he smoked. I used to beg him to blow
smoke rings as a small child, upon his lap, nestled gently around his long arm, and he would. Perfect circles of white smoke wafting through the air. I would ask him to blow it out his nose; he would. He denied me nothing. No request was too great, tedious, or silly. It was unconditional love and I felt it. Then he would inhale the smoke through his nostrils and blow it out his mouth as I sat upon his lap in awe, he with a silly grin pasted lackadaisically upon his face. Silly as it was, I thought every grandfather should smoke something—cigarettes, pipe, cigar. Once, when I had an earache, he blew smoke in my ear after I promised him I wouldn’t tell mamma and daddy. Oddly enough, it made my ear feel better. Grandfather always knew just what to do. Those hands. It would be easier to say what they didn’t do.

Those hands. They were busy varnishing an old school desk for me in the basement, which smelled musty and earthy. Grandfather easily hoisted me up so I could raise the creaky, rusty window, caked with eons of dust. He showed me how to varnish; his hands smoothed over the oily, smelly varnish with a brush. I imitated him. He watched, hands poised at the ready, gesticulating directions, and swiping the oily scented air like you would bat at an annoying fly. To a ten-year old girl, it was euphoria.

Those hands. They were becoming more bunched up with arthritis, but I thought they were majestic. Grandfather painting the house white in large careful strokes, showing me how to do the same. Painting the porch grey. Paint the porch glider, flowerbox, and chairs bright green. He pushed back his hat and called it “a job well done.” He didn’t say that his hands hurt. He never even had aspirin about. He took me for ice cream for my help. To me it was the grandest treat in the world—better than money, better than anything I could think of. Grandpa drove us back from the dairy bar with a slight grin on his face, a cone in one hand, navigating the steering wheel with the other.

We watched the traffic on the concrete porch steps outside when we got back, eating our ice cream. Yellow headlights glared and red taillights flashed, and occasionally horns honked at us sitting on the steps of the little white house on the corner of Vine Street. Grandfather waved his salutation and I waved too. I leaned forward on the step like him. He pushed his hat back; I pulled my hair back. With three plastic bags that the newspaper came in, he patiently taught me to braid. He whistled “Camptown Ladies” and I joined in. He was the one who taught me to whistle when I was younger. Grandfather would point out certain cars and tell me whether he thought the owners were taking care of them or not. “Muffler’s bad on that one. Do ya hear it? Probably too lazy to fix it up.”

He valued hard work, especially an honest day’s work done with “your own two hands.”
Those hands taught me how to change the spark plugs in his car, not to mention the lawnmower, and comforted me when I needed it most. He hugged me when I needed it. He was just a man of few words. I suppose he didn't believe in wasting words when actions spoke for themselves.

He always had change for the ice cream truck. How I remember the folk song music tinkling through the air and grandfather jingling the quarters in his pocket, handing them to me: fudgecicles, creamcicles, ice cream sandwiches; to this day it gives me chills to hear an ice cream truck. Grandfather leaning on the porch working silver chewing gum wrappers into strange yet wonderful shapes. Perhaps he knew origami. Oh...it was magic. Forget Cinderella. Give me back those good old times.

Those hands. The older kids said the house across the street was haunted. It had been abandoned for as long as I could remember. The lady who had owned it died there. Her first name was Melanie, my mamma said. They dared me to go over with them... I did. It was twilight; the house was a two-story with peeling white paint, broken windows, and it creaked. It was a dilapidated old place with an unkempt lawn and looming trees everywhere. I cautiously grew closer to the side of it. I wanted to be brave like my grandfather. Besides, I was eleven-going-on-twelve. October's brilliant colored leaves skittered around my feet, but my eyes were on the house. My heart was thumping. My hands were upon my throat. At the top window I saw a ghost. Judas Priest! A ghost with a black eye and a thin finger pointing at me. Something hard poked me in the back. I dashed across the street to the safety of my grandfather's house, or at least his driveway. I don't know which was pounding harder, my heart or my feet. I was worse than Lot's wife. I kept looking back, expecting the ghost to come running after me, perhaps a whole host of them. Suddenly I bumped into someone and screamed. I realized I was screaming into my grandfather's face and stopped, still scared and shocked.

My grandfather had placed both hands upon my shoulders and said, "What seems to be the problem, girl?" He looked amused. I was breathless; sweat was pouring into my eyes. I was shaking with fear, just fumbling for words. "Just... just... glad you weren't... I dunno..." I trailed off.

"Just glad I wasn't the devil or the boogeyman?" He grinned. "Sorta."

"You've been across the street with that older lot of kids again haven't ya?"

I hung my head, which was answer enough. I couldn't get anything past my grandfather.

"I thought as much. I told ya to stay away from that lot."

I gasped and sputtered. "But... but... they dared me, I had to, and there's a spook in the window with a black eye and something evil poked me and..."
He began laughing/coughing/choking on his cigarette smoke. I felt disappointed. I thought of all people grandfather would believe me, surely not laugh at me.

"The house is old and creaky. It’s haunted." I said petulantly.

"Child, I’m old, and when I get up and down I creak too. That house ain’t no more haunted than I am."

He grabbed my hand in his and started dragging me back across the street. My heart raced and spun spider webs, it seemed.

"Where are we goin’?" I gasped.

"To face your fears. It’s a lesson in character."

I was really freaking out now, but grandfather was nonchalant, as if it were a trip to the grocery. He indifferently tossed his cigarette in the gutter and crushed the glowing orb of embers with the steel toe of his work shoe, all the while pulling me with his hand, mine sweaty, his normal. He made me take him to where I was standing. He reached in his coat pocket and brought out a small flashlight while I stared, fixated in horror, at the black-eyed ghost in the window pointing at me. He shined the beam on it and with his long, slender finger pointed to it.

“What do you think of your ghost now?”

I felt really stupid. It was a dumb old window blind, torn in one place, leaving a hole (the black eye) and twisted around with the cord at such an angle that it looked like a finger pointing. I couldn’t believe I had gotten so terrified by this. I felt the poking again and spun around. Grandfather was pointing to an oak tree. Its low limb was being bent by the wind, and if you stood in a certain spot, it poked you. I wanted to crawl under a rock; I was so embarrassed by my naivete.

“I’m so stupid!” I said, and nearly burst into tears.

Grandfather placed one hand under my chin and tilted it up to meet his gaze, while his other dropped gently on my shoulder.

“Girl, don’t ever say that. I don’t ever want to hear you say that again. The best of us have been fooled in our lives, but you’ve got something special going for you.”

“What’s that?” I asked glumly.

“Imagination. Creativity. A ghost with a black eye. Not just a ghost, mind you, but one with a black eye. You have a gift and someday you’ll treasure that gift.” His hand was comforting upon my shoulder and his eyes were smiling at me.

“Do you really think that?”

“I never say something unless I mean it. Now, you should know I wouldn’t waste my breath on you if I didn’t think so.”

I hugged him so tightly that I knocked his hat off, but he paid no attention as he hugged me back. And I knew it. He was being sincere. I listened. I never forgot.

Those hands. When I was twelve Patrick told me I couldn’t be a mechanic because it’s man’s work. I promptly informed my grandfather. He told me I could be anything I wanted.
Pointing with an index finger that was getting knobbier than ever, he asked:
"Who helped me paint the house?"
"I did." I replied in surprise.
"Who helped me change the sparkplugs in my car?"
"I did."
"Mechanics change sparkplugs, so I reckon Patrick’s wrong. What do you think?" 
"I think you’re right. I think he’s stupid."
"No, girl, only ignorant and—unfortunately—the ignorant will always be among us, because some people just never get it."
"What d’you mean?"
He sighed, a lonesome sound that seemed to sough through the trees.
"Child, when I worked at the factory I worked alongside blacks, both women and men. However, in those days, though they worked every bit as hard as I did, and did just as good a job as me, they made less money. Those were the days when Dr. King came along and I don’t recall ever hearin’ a better speaker, and believe me child, his was a worthy cause, but some white feller shot him ‘cause he thought he was better than the blacks, I reckon. That’s ignorance. I know. I’ve seen. I’ve seen what blacks can do and what women can do and they can both contribute plenty. Never buy into such bologna. Why, who knows what you have yet to contribute to the world? You might be one of the many who’ll take women a step farther, and that’s nothing to sneeze at.”
I had never heard my grandfather speak with such passion and conviction and it made a lasting impact on me. I never forgot it.
“Always remember that you can do whatever you set out to do; only it’s my belief that you’re going to be a writer.”
“Why?” I couldn’t help asking.
“Because you’ve always got your nose stuck in some book or another and a good reader makes a good writer. Why, you even read the ingredients on the cereal box.”
“It’s something to do.” I shrugged.
“Nothing wrong with that,” he said, cutting the air with his hands as if to say “case closed.” This is the period after the sentence.
Those hands. I was sweet sixteen, grandfather seventy-six. I was driving along State Route 41 to West Union, Ohio, to take my drivers exam, in my grandfather’s silver Oldsmobile. I was nervous. My hands were sweaty on the wheel. Grandfather looked over at me and said:
“You’ll do just fine. You’re my granddaughter after all. Worrying never solves anything. You ought to know that. Don’t worry about it.”
That was one of his catchphrases: “Don’t worry about it.” I tried hard to be calm; I knew he was right. If only I was like him. If the house were burning down he would calmly walk out.
The patrolman made me nervous. I waited cautiously at the bright red octagonal stop sign.

“You’re waiting too long. Tsk Tsk.”

I thought: just great. Now I became even more nervous. When he said to turn right I turned left. Fantastic. Another stop sign. Again I waited too long for the patrolman’s liking. He turned towards me and said rather impatiently:

“Just count to three and if no one is there then go.”

“I passed the parking and maneuverability with flying colors. I flunked my driving exam for being too cautious. I was scared to tell grandfather, but I had to. I was afraid he’d be disappointed in me. Silently I handed him the results.

The vein in his neck began to throb and his face reddened so that I clenched the car handle for support. Grandfather was sitting behind the wheel. I was prepared for the worst, but it wasn’t me he was disappointed in, nor angry at.

He exploded in choppy, unfinished sentences and savage questions and exclamations.

“Too careful!? Too careful!? What the... with all the nuts on the road today... hesitates too long at stop signs... that’s dumber than... than... what a joke... that feller’s a few shingles shy of a roof, I do believe.”

He had begun driving the ten miles back to Peebles, his fists gripping the steering wheel so tightly that his knuckles were white. I decided to get my two cents in.

“Grandpa, he told me that I needed to count to three then go if no one was around at a two-way stop. He made me nervous.”

“Well, we’re going back next week, and if it were me, I’d count 1-2-3 so fast, then floor it, that it’d blow the hat right off his head.” He said while furiously driving with one hand and gesticulating an officer’s hat flying out the window with the other.

I thought I would bust a gut laughing. Grandpa began to sound like Yosemite Sam. I laughed until my head hurt and my sides ached. All fears were quelled.

Next time I passed.

Those hands. Over the years making pancakes; flour, eggs, baking powder, milk; boiling water for coffee on the gas stove, keeping up the house and the yard. He insisted on using the same old faded-red push mower. His fingers were as gnarled as an old tree that’s seen many a rough storm.

“I ain’t gonna sit down and mow. That’s dumber than a whole box full of rocks if you ask me. That’s what’s the matter with folks today. They’re getting lazier and lazier. What next? Riding vacuum cleaners? Idle hands will kill ya faster than anything. Riding lawn mower!” He echoed while making circles around his ear with his finger.

Those hands. I knew he was dying of lung cancer. A nearly full bottle of Darvocets set nearby. If he absolutely had to, he
broke one in half and took it. He was so strong, so brave; he was my hero. Could I ever be that strong? What would I do without him? Would I be lost? I knew it would be soon, any day now maybe. I didn’t want to let go. My grandfather. He had taken care of me when I was sick, comforted me when I was scared or sad, taught me so much, but I had to tell him. I had to. He was sitting in his chair; it was brown and worn with age but it was his. He used to pile a dozen Oreo cookies on its arm. I approached him and said, with tears streaming down my face,

“I don’t want you to die Grandpa. I still need you. I love you. I just never thought... I took for granted that you’d always be around...”

I could say no more but sobbed like a small tot who has been sent to bed. I reached for his hands, now bunched up into claws with rheumatism, and he reached for mine. We held hands and embraced. I sobbed on his shirt. In a raspy voice, he said,

“Why, I know that Blondie. Don’t worry. Don’t cry. It is gonna be alright, child.”

Those hands. As grandfather lay on his deathbed on July 9, 1994, those hands were his only means of communication. His mouth was full of sores. He barely made a lump in the bed. He couldn’t speak, but he could hear, see, and most importantly he could use his hands. He made one fist for yes, two fists for no. He wanted to be baptized and saved. One fist for yes. Those hands. Dear god, how did you know to make such glorious hands? Grandfather used those hands until he breathed his last.

Those hands. They were clasped together in his coffin. He never told me he loved me. He never had to. I knew by his hands. His actions spoke louder than words ever could have. Lung cancer killed him. He worked with his hands until his death. He was 79, I was 19. It was July of 1994. I just had to touch those hands one last time. Oh, so cold, distant, all magic gone. Stiff, dry rocks in a dried up, long forgotten creek bed. I wanted to scream and inside my mind I was:

Get up! Get up! I’m selfish and I still need you. Look at mamma. She’s so thin. You need to point to her and scold her. Tell her to get some meat on her bones. Stand up and shake your fists at everyone for crying like babies. Anything. Please. Anything. Anything at all. Just touch my cheek one last time. Run your fingers through my heart and tell me it’s like sister’s. When they bury you, they’re gonna bury my heart.

I was as silent as he. I felt numb, yet I felt everything. My tears fell on his unfeeling, still hands. So cold... so cold. So stiff, quiet, unfeeling. Reality wins.

Love you grandpa Posey. I love you so much. Dear God, if these are idle hands, let my hands always be busy.
**Bitter Knitter**

**B.J. Holtzapfel**

**White Prism Color Pencil on Black Paper**
Sovaynuarr

It's not enough that we're the fools from an Adam and Eve picture book because we're so in love in the not-anymore truthfully all I care for is that war

A march of titans in a blinding cascade through my veins

(are you prepared for the true definition of enthralling?)

Let's touch our hearts in a physical sense intermingle fluids in a harmony, screaming, "free yourself, leave yourself, cynically undying!" please yourself, reaccept the summer and flay the blinding vein

(are you prepared for an analogy for rapture?)

"awe isn't in the same caliber today," as, perhaps, some elder might say so travel to-and-fro in a summer glow basking in the shadows of titanic march

It's well enough that we're fools acting out a Hamlet and Ophelia storybook but let's get serious: we only care for that war basking in a march of titans cascading blindly through our veins

So travel back and forth in a summer court and let's touch minds in a literal sense

(are you prepared for allusions to ecstasy?)

Here's your riot of blinding night titans and with the last of the first stark white breaths they'll be acting out the romance setting the worlds apart
Why Bro Shouldn't Become an Alcoholic  Taryn Malone
(Or, the Way Our Conversation Should Have Gone)

I'm going to become an alcoholic.
Really?
Yes.
Why?
Something to do.
Are you bored?
Sometimes.
You should take up Mahjong.
Mahjong is not a vice.
It could be if you gambled on it.
That's true.
Yes.
Or you could get drunk and play Mahjong.
On the computer?
Yes.
By yourself?
Yes.
What good is a vice if you don't share it with others?
I would be playing against other drunks.
You play against the computer, bro.
Which was obviously created by a drunk man!
Then you are copying him.
Yes.
Vices are no good if they're mere imitations of someone else's.
But lots of people are solitary drunks.
How many alcoholics do you know?
Few.
And why do you think that is?
Coincidence. Circumstance.
Because the only people who think they are interesting are the
other drunks.
Or Mahjong addicts.
Shut up about Mahjong!
I was just trying to make a point.
That only an alcoholic would get.
It made enough sense to piss you off.
Or not enough. I've got an idea.
What?
I think you should marry an alcoholic.
Why?
Then you could deal with the turmoil that drunks have without being addicted to the actual substance.
But then I would be addicted to her.
It's different.
Not really.
What if you became an alcoholic, drove onto the highway, and hit me?
I wouldn't-
And I died?
-remember it anyway.
You asshole!
If I were shit-faced right now, that last comment wouldn't have hurt me so much.
At least then you would have an excuse.
Yes. A good excuse, too.
Not for me.
Why not?
Because you just proved to me that you are rude when you are sober.
Not deliberately.
I found you out!
There's a difference between honesty and rudeness.
Much like there is a difference between alcoholics and you-
which is also the reason that you will never be an alcoholic.
What's that?
You are admitting that you have a problem before you even have one.
How so?
True alcoholics try to fight you—either literally or figuratively—if you tell them that they have an addiction problem.
I could do that. Figuratively, that is.
Not if you're consciously making a point to become addicted.
That defeats the entire purpose.
Not if my purpose is to become an alcoholic.
True alcoholics are in denial! You're too honest to be a good drunk.
A minute ago you preferred the term "rude."
You're honestly rude. How's that?
Better. I have a question though.
What?
Why do you even care?
You mean, care if you become an alcoholic?
Yes... I think so... Yes.
Well, let me ask you this—does it matter to you whether or not I
care?
I asked first.
Save the best for last.
Just talking to you is excuse enough to need a drink.
I'm sorry. Okay. I guess I see you as sort of a shrink-like figure.
That's scary.
I know.
But that's not a good enough reason.
True. I suppose I'm afraid that if you become an alcoholic, you'll
have hangovers, start canceling classes, get fired, and have no
more reason to be here to talk to me.
It could happen.
Yes.
You could find another shrink, though.
Yes.
And it's not like you'll be attending this college forever.
This is true.
One day, you'll move on. One of us is bound to, you know.
Eventually.
Yes. Probably both.
That's scary.
I know.
Well, answer my question now.
What was it again?
Does it matter to you whether or not I care?
Not enough to change my mind.
You're brutally honest, you know.
Yes. It's a habit of mine.
Speaking of habits...
Here we go again...
Forget everything I said.
About my being your shrink?
No. That was the only honest part.
Oh. About my becoming an alcoholic, then?
Yes. I'm sorry that I mentioned it.
Me too.
This never happened, okay?
Agreed.
Penned by Dante, yet
written by fate
the lament of Francesca
occurred too late-

It was too late for both
Passion and Rebellion

The tail of Judge Minos
with scales of reddish brown
did like a mammoth whip,
knock her down.

As the winds carried her away
She spoke with expressive sway:

Oh woe is me
to have loved
when That love
was meant not to be.

Now and Forever,
peace is to me a dream
That far-away fantasy
An eternal nightmare's scream.
The reason being,
is that I'll never have
what I can still sense and feel;
reality is never in the seeing
reality tells a much different tale.

The fruits of my life's passion,
I'm now afraid,
were atop a wall too tall to scale.

What does a lost soul do?
in this vanished world,
with a mind still very able to try
but only now, in Hell, is it forever to fly.

To Be Cursed-
forever waiting and wanting
can this truly be my fate?
for that it is, I am filled with hate.

Why only now is it much too late that I am bound?
never to arm my faith in life and turn around,
never to find that strength and reason before it dies,
to have fulfilled that potential
that wherein my consciousness still lies;
to have Blazed, and Conquered and Rectified.
if another chance ever should I have to recall
I'll finally see atop life's fruitful wall.

If truly impossible,
then I'd gladly die again in vain,
for that would be better
than this approaching after-life of pain.

My Dew

Nikki Blankenship

My head spins around the stars
As the true stars, stars of eternity
Hang in the eternal sincerity of your eyes.
As the deer pants after streams of water
I have panted long for you.
A body lay under the heavy heat of a cracking sun
With burning sand filling crisp crevices along a face
And then a drop of rain ran down a scabbed lip
And gave life to a cement tongue.
Just as you came and gave refreshment to me,
Dew upon my soul.
Your self-sacrifice is my virtue
And allows me to flourish.
When my hands beg to touch you,
I hope they communicate my gratitude,
Though it is often shelved because of the passion you inspire.
The passion makes me dizzy
As I am always engulfed by you,
So still I know
I love you more!
TERRY HORNER-PHIPPS

OIL ON CANVAS

Published by Digital Commons @ Shawnee State University, 2006
FIFTEEN ATTEMPTS

REBECCA COX

OIL

Published by Digital Commons @ Shawnee State University, 2006
DOMICILE:
The home is often considered a place of comfort, security, and symbolic of the family and the internal. Within the visual context of Domicile, my current body of work, I utilize the domestic interior to explore the photograph as a visual metaphor for the psyche. I have come to see myself as an artist whose images are punctuated with a bircollage of influences. In my research of photographic images, I have found a place where I may create my own subverted reality and confront the psychological connections between the viewer and myself. I hope for this dialogue to find its place within the concoction of reality ad fantasy, physical and mental, and beauty and despair. It is critical that this discourse take place-this flux of understanding-so that the singular image functions on its own and within the series, in context and comprehension.

This body of work explores the history of confessional photography, the female concept of domestication, the power of the “film still” and where the future of beauty may be found. I often address these approaches within the context of film theory in regard to influences such as psychoanalysis, spectatorship, identification of the subject as a mirror, and the concept of present/absent binary. Most importantly, I hope my creation of an aesthetic and psychological experience succeeds in the transition of artist to viewer-to welcome and invite interpretations-yet keep them at arm’s length.
EGGS, 2005 FROM DOMICILE SERIES
ALLYSON KLUTENKAMPER
ULTRACHROME PRINT

Published by Digital Commons @ Shawnee State University, 2006
VINES/VEINS, 2005 FROM DOMICILE SERIES
ALLYSON KLUTENKAMPER
ULTRACHROME PRINT

60x40 INCHES

https://digitalcommons.shawnee.edu/silhouette/vol2006/iss1/1
HONEY, 2004/2005 FROM MIS-EN-SCENE STUDIES 24x20 INCHES
ALLYSON KLUTENKAMPER
ULTRCHROME PRINT

Published by Digital Commons @ Shawnee State University, 2006
UNTITLED (DRIS), 2003/2005 FROM MIS-EN-SCENE STUDIES 24x20 INCHES
ALLYSON KLUTENKAMPER
ULTRACHROME PRINT

https://digitalcommons.shawnee.edu/silhouette/vol2006/iss1/1
UNTITLED (FLUID) 2004/2005 FROM MISE-EN-SCENE STUDIES 24x20 INCHES
ALLYSON KLUTENKAMPER

ULTRACHROME PRINT
UNTITLED #12, 2002 FROM PLACEMENT SERIES  20x20 INCHES

ALLYSON KLUTENKAMPER

ULTRACHROME PRINT
RIBBONS, 2004 FROM DOMICILE SERIES 60x40 INCHES
ALLYSON KLUTENKAMPER
COLOR PHOTOGRAPH
THREE RIGHT FEET

ANNA CARTER

PINEWOOD, NAILS, CLOTHES, SHOES

https://digitalcommons.shawnee.edu/silhouette/vol2006/iss1/1
UNTITLED  

TERRY HORNER-PHIPPS

OIL ON CANVAS
Poem

Sarah Gatti

You resurface, drenched, from silt-filtered sea floors to rise, swoop above the fog-capped waves and torment, so gently--to deride the ruthless heart who expelled you, water-heavy girl too determined to isolation.

In pairs we drifted through marine spaces, unsure of where our sand-sooted feet should emerge, unknown of ways. One last diatribe eternalized for me since you've returned. Our palace of coral and gems-just glitter now.

Sickening sunlight from low-sloping circles of icicles to puddles where mermaids drown (as they can) you circle above my head in ringlets, converging on frailty and cruelty and all the disparate sentence, conjoined words that begged for you, cried mercy when plunged as an iceberg into my heart when you left me only bare-limbed and shaking, where in company of the dead, I had only to whimper, and then feel the flesh come onto bone once more, whole-created and flung into your mind's marine, salt-water, Sistine.

To swim onward, ever sinking downward, so fed on your ungenerous urges, those paltry portions, miserably nursed until the milk from my chin fell alongside my tears, pulled to the bottom as an anvil, as an anchor, to rust sun-deprived and undiscovered until Poseidon's next rape.

From native rhythms I emerged, hair heavily stretched across the torture rack of my back sandbagged, crawled once around your grave of a bed to kiss your form and choke on sea foam, myself then drunken in the flood of the gulf.

Betrayed by my tongue, by my silence, with a mouth full of brine left only to the blue lines between the yellow suns and memories like barbs stuck so deep they could not find a place to embed. Only my gills and fins, food for Ketea, when silence you took and down into a great well of introspection I drowned, and without you, died.

Quietly as the vessel evaporates, goes the water out, first a trickle then a torrent, loosed, as a sick seal pup bobs in the ocean before slipping under, now root and stem disengage from under water, now toppled, as your anchor would have me, flat as a seam, unzipped forever into a blue and purple diadem I hold only for myself.
Pirate-Ninjas with Jetpacks and Rocket-Boots
Searching for Booty

Wade Thompson

There was once a group of big, burly pirates who had trained for many years to be ninjas. They were legendary for their deadly ninja techniques and their pirate-like pirating. Countless precious gems and stones had they stolen with their unique abilities and every one had been put back to purchase a pair of rocket-boots and a jetpack for every member of the S.S. Fire Dragon Beast. Once these items had been procured, the captain addressed his crew.

"Argh, yeeeargh. Finally, we have futuristic jetpacks and rocket-boots, argh," began the giant, grizzly looking man. "Now we can fly, and... uh... steal things!"

A triumphant cheer arose from the deck at the conclusion of the captain's speech. He stood in front of the mob and let the excitement build, then he returned to his cabin. Captain Blood Meats was huge and ripped, and he had quite a manly beard/mustache combo, but he had a soft side as well. In his free time he would practice making rainbows using an ancient ninja secret.

Everyone knew of the captain's strange hobby, but no one dared poke fun at him because he had a sword for one arm and a cannon for the other. What the captain says goes, and after several hours of rainbow making, he addressed his rough crew once more.

"Argh, it be time to use our jetpacks and rocket-boots to steal more booty!" exclaimed the exuberant captain.

Then, from the crowd, came the expected response: "Argh, what be we saving up for this time... argh?"

Captain Blood Meats let the question hang in the air for a moment. Then: "We be saving up for matching uniforms!"

They set sail immediately, heading toward the north, where Diamondplatinumopolis would be waiting. Many times had those rambunctious ruffians looted the beautiful city. When morning broke the city was in view, and the ferocious pirate-ninja warriors were ready. Hundreds of battle-hardened men launched off the deck of the S.S. Fire Dragon Beast, armed to the teeth with various ninja weapons. The sky was black and the air was filled with the roar of jetpack engines. No one below
could have possibly been prepared for the approaching onslaught.

Some of the jubilant pirate-ninjas launched a blazing salvo of shurikens and flaming throwing stars that peppered the streets below, while others fought the pterodactyl-riding guardsmen who had been summoned to defend the gleaming metropolis. They grabbed what they could in between fighting, which wasn’t difficult because the whole city had been constructed out of platinum and diamonds.

Captain Blood Meats landed atop a building to watch the unfolding chaos, and started making rainbows to celebrate. His life story was playing out before him, only now it included jetpacks and rocket-boots.

How exotic flying is, thought the captain. Life is beautiful for those who can fly.
Burning boxes at dusk

James Weaver

I find the wind dancing, out on the edge of the woods, February's short sun just down. Behind me a woman moves back and forth

In the window, light shifting her shape like she is calling in different voices,

Praying in different tones, as this small fire of boxes bows to the earth, then rises again. I am not this fire, but I have been bent down by the force of wind and have risen again.

Like this fire, I am not this wind, though I have ridden along the tops of trees in times of rain

And no rain. Like this wind. My father said in the few moments between day and night, Between light and dark, a man can imagine himself anew. He can plant his bent bones in the damp soil, ride in the belly of the breeze,

And watch the whole world, without yesterday or tomorrow. Like this fire. Like this wind.
HELEN

Age: 97    Education: Two years of college

Occupation: Retired librarian

Special Note: The Lewis County Public Library in Vanceburg, KY, was recently re-named The Helen H. Rayburn Public Library, in honor of this woman, for her years of dedication, hard work, and continuing commitment to the library.
I.

Does the gemstone buried deep
in the earth's crust
have a molten memory?
It once pulsated and throbbed
as the iridescent jelly fish
in the blue depths,
before strange currents
washed it ashore.

As the tides recede,
she lies exposed,
cushioned by silica sands
so impressionable, they shift
in deference to the quiet,
translucent mass of glorious
amethyst and turquoise tentacles.

The evening sky glows a requiem
of magenta-filtered sunlight.
Each autumn leaf faces an arduous death by transformation. When will it come? In a violent night of merciless, raging winds? Or on a quiet afternoon, in a peaceful, sweet moment of release? Once on the ground, a melange of colors, like vibrant inks, continue to seep into the verdant green. In time, the dew will work its wonders, and all color will fade away. Intricate traceries of veins in dark patterns lay matted in a forgotten, damp corner.

And even if no one notices, it still holds profound metaphors, and transcends itself.
KYLE TREDWAY AND HIS THUNDERCATS TATTOO
ADAM LIDNER
(COLOR, CHANGED TO BLACK AND WHITE FOR PUBLICATION)

SCENTED MARKER ON PAPER

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Have you ever reached into your dream bag
Only to find that your dreams have crumbled into dust?
You pull out your
dream-dust
And it slips through your fingers.
It blows away in a rush of
wind.
You cry icy tears that burn your face.
They melt in your hands,
cracked and deserted.
Yes, your deserted hands with nothing now to hold onto.
Only empty words escape your lips.
Empty words with heavy weight
That fall to the ground before your feet.
Words like care, heart, love.
Words, once so light could float on air like smoke.
Words that were used so effortlessly.
Love was effortless.
Heart meant even more.
Care was genuine.
No! No longer in this REALITY.
They only existed in your dream bag.
Now they are only empty, heavy words.
What do you have now?
You can cry more icy tears,
That is all you have.

Oh, and your empty dream bag.
STRAIGHT LOUNGIN’

ISAIAH PARKER

BURNT WOOD

Published by Digital Commons @ Shawnee State University, 2006
Tom looked at his reflection in the mirror; he almost didn't recognize himself. Every day he wore a three-piece suit, but tonight he was wearing blue jeans and a tee shirt. Like a superhero's costume this is what he wore, and it fit him well. The jeans were tight, but not too tight, and the shirt showed off his pecs and flat stomach. His pastor wouldn't know what to think if he saw his favorite deacon dressed like this, nor would his son's Boy Scout troop. Thankfully, it was too late for either of them to be out. It was a warm spring night, which meant his prey would be out in abundance. Since his wife and kids were out of town, he was going hunting.

As he left his apartment above his business he checked to make sure that the door was locked. He did not want any unexpected visitors. Tom got in his Ford and drove off to his hunting ground, the seedy part of town where the "trade" offered their services. He was in his element, the hunter hunting the prey. Most of the potentials that he saw were too hardened by a life in the streets, too willing, too old, too crack-addicted, or all of the above. He was a loving husband, father of three sons, Boy Scout troop leader, respected businessman, a deacon at his church, and he would not dirty himself by touching the crack-addicted trash.

Then he spotted his prey, standing nervously on a dim street corner. Tom appraised him. He looked to be about 18 or 19 years old, a throwaway, somebody no one would miss. Tom pulled his car over in front of the kid.

"Hey kid! What's your name?" he yelled.
"I ain't no kid! And my name is Jack!" the kid responded.
"No harm meant." Tom said. "So, how much for a quickie back at my place?"

"One hundred bucks," young Jack replied after a moment's hesitation.
"Fine. Get in my car and we'll go."

On the ride back to Tom's place, Jack told him his life's story. Jack had played on his school's soccer team and had just turned 18 a week ago when he told his parents he was gay on his birthday. In a rage they had kicked him out of the house with only the clothes on his back and no money, on the very day of his birthday. He had no other family, and once his friends
found out he was gay they would have nothing to do with him. He had no money; was tired, hungry, and desperate. Tom nodded sympathetically and rubbed Jack's thigh, inching closer and closer to his crotch.

When they got to Tom's apartment he took Jack in through the back door so he would not know what kind of business he owned and be scared off. Tom led Jack up the stairs into his apartment. When they got in the apartment, Tom took a good look at Jack. He looked about 5'7", with hair the color of hay, and deep blue eyes. The kind of eyes you could drown in. He had full lips and a soft but manly face that he did not yet need to shave. The kind of face that every girl dreams of; he looked like he had the innocence of a Kansas farm boy, an innocence Tom would soon take away. Slowly, nervously, Jack began to peel his tee shirt off, exposing his six-pack abs and hairless torso. He was muscular but supple. There was a small, thin line of hair that ran from his navel into the waistband of his jeans. Ashamedly he lowered his jeans, revealing his white boxers, which contrasted nicely with his smooth, flawless, honey-colored skin. His calf muscles were well formed and had a light dusting of fine hair. Tom licked his lips; he was going to enjoy this one.

"Before you continue, why don't I get us some wine?" Tom asked before Jack could take his boxers off. "It will help you loosen up."

"Okay," Jack replied as his body turned red from the embarrassment at the thought of what he was about to do.

Leaving Jack in the living room, Tom went into the kitchen and poured two glasses of red wine. Smiling, he added two things to Jack's wine. The first was a drug that would paralyze Jack while keeping him conscious, and the second was a little blue pill called Viagra. He wanted him aroused for what he was about to do. Tom returned to the living room and handed Jack his wine. Poor Jack was so nervous that he sat on the couch and drank the wine in one big gulp.

"So Jack, are you still a virgin?"

"Yes, I-" was all that Jack was able to say before the first drug kicked in and he slumped over on the couch, unable to move. Tom walked over to the boy and began to rub his chest. He loved the feel of a young man's skin. So sensual, not rough...
and hairy like an adult. Since Jack was only a teenager the Viagra quickly took affect, and his erection poked through the opening in his boxers.

"Very nice," Tom said. "I like big boys, and I love virgins. Virgins are so innocent and pure."

Tom took off the boy's boxers and took in the view. The sight of the naked teenager aroused Tom. The tears running down Jack's face only made him seem more innocent. He rubbed the boy's dick a few times, then picked him up in his arms. He couldn't have weighed more than 128 pounds; carrying him to the basement would be easy. The smell of Jack's body was like an aphrodisiac to Tom, and he couldn't wait to get him in the basement.

Jack was scared. He did not understand what was going on... what was this man doing to him? He wanted to tell the man to stop touching him; he wanted to run, but he couldn't and he didn't know why. He did the only thing he could do-he cried, red-hot tears rolling down his face.

When they finally got to the basement, Tom laid Jack on the floor face-up and turned on the light. At the edge of his vision Jack could see some strange machine. Tom went to the machine and turned it on. He looked at Jack, at the tears streaming down his face, his chest rising up and down with each breath, at his body covered in sweet-smelling sweat. The boy looked so vulnerable, so sexy that Tom ached with desire. Tom quickly opened a hatch on the side of the machine and pulled out a tray the size of a person's body. He then picked the boy up and laid him on the tray. Taking one last lustful look at the boy, he shoved the tray back in the machine with the boy on it and shut the hatch. Tom would go and dump the boy's clothes at the local Goodwill donation bin while the machine did its work. Tomorrow the boy would be nothing but a handful of ashes that he would use to fertilize his garden. He became aroused at the thought that the boy would die an aroused and frustrated virgin.

Jack didn't understand what was going on. What was this thing the man had stuffed him in? It was getting hot... very hot.

"Oh God!!! THE PAIN!!!"

In this weary world, who are the Gods, and who are the Monsters?
All the Drive with No Passion

Between existence and death lies a story,
All the persistence with every breath and no glory,
Every day’s redundancy is a new surprise,
Every day in front of me a new disguise,
I smile; you smile, we’re all happy, it’s fun,
He smiles, she smiles, and we’re all laughing as one,
In the end, it will all make sense,
So we pretend, and that’s our big defense,
All the drive with no passion,
All the shock with no re-action,
Built up to be brought down; but please maintain your grin,
And you can’t win.

Poem

An old patio table with rusted legs greets me as I slowly sip coffee not nearly strong enough.
That’s OK she tried her best.
The door slides open revealing the scent of apples and cinnamon.
Morning, I say quietly hoping not to chase away another perfect moment as she slides her hands over my shoulders onto my chest.
I wonder if she can feel my heart racing.
Apple pie? I ask knowing the answer.
No silly she laughs you don’t like apple pie, a candle.
And you don’t like coffee I reply.
The rusted patio tables shakes as the autumn wind announces the short arrival of winter.
I’ll learn to like it I say, apple pie.
If you promise to keep smiling.
My self-esteem committed suicide one day.

It just got up and walked out that door.

It looked back at me a time or two, but just kept on going.

It walked a ways before it reached its cliff-

A White Chalk Precipice Sublime.

And I just sat there Motionless-

While it took its Final Leap.

It jumps through space to this day. And, I see it float by Every now and then.

I wave at it and bid it come to me; But it only just glances a quick look or two back at me, with that same dull stare in which I had look at it— that very day it disappeared.
SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING:

KYLE ROONEY
ALLYSON KLUTENKAMPER
JIM JORDAN OF RAINBOW LANES
RYAN ADKINS
FIVER THE RABBIT
NO REASON WHY
SEVEN MINUTES
MONICA STAFFORD
MICHAEL BARNHART
ADAM JORDAN
MATT CRAM
STAN WORKMAN

AND THOSE WHO SUBMIT WORKS TO THE SILHOUETTE. (PLEASE KEEP’EM COMING)